

DESTINATION ROCHESTER 2030

Downtown Master Plan



A framework for *economic redevelopment, creative placemaking,*
and a resilient path forward in the Downtown

ADOPTED ON AUGUST 17, 2020

Cover Photo by Peter Bruckner

Detail of 'Space Moose Mural' by Bianca Mireles



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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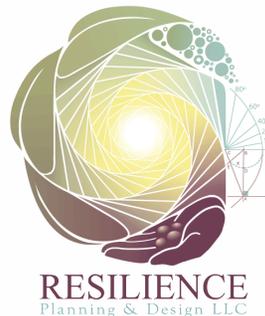
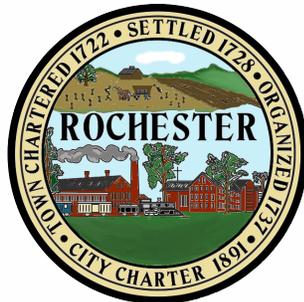


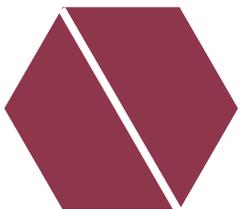
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Detail of 'Honeybee Mural' by Rachel Carpenter



Introduction

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

This Plan is intended to be a working document and a resource for the implementation of a **BOLD VISION** for Downtown Rochester. The Vision is intended to excite and mobilize the many partners needed to bring this Plan to reality. The findings and identified actions in this Plan will be used to:

- Program downtown improvements in the Capital Improvement Plan
- Guide updates to downtown land use regulations
- Support requests for the funding of projects
- Attract private sector investment
- Cultivate public-private partnerships
- Revitalize the Downtown

This Plan is intended to inform these positive changes in the Downtown so that they may benefit the entire City, but many of the details will need to be refined during implementation. This plan is also intended to be educational, and to support the many participants and decision makers that join the implementation process once it is already underway.

Anyone that picks up this Plan should be able to understand where Downtown Rochester is headed, and how they can participate in bringing about these positive changes.



Photo Courtesy:
Matt Wyatt



Photo Courtesy:
Matt Wyatt

BACKGROUND

Historically, the City of Rochester, also known as the Lilac City, was an active mill city with a strong textile and shoe manufacturing industry developed along the Cocheco River. Today, the City has a population of ~30,000 and is one of the largest cities in New Hampshire. The relics of Rochester’s industrial past are visible in its buildings lining the Cocheco River and in the Downtown. As suburbanization, manufacturing decline, and other adverse trends took their toll, Rochester’s Downtown began to suffer.

Understanding the wide benefits downtowns offer cities, the City of Rochester set out to update its 2003 Master Plan for the Downtown in 2019. This Plan incorporates the findings of several recent plans and studies completed by the City. To assist in this process, they hired Resilience Planning and Design LLC as the project consultant. Market Square Architects and Applied Economic Research were also brought on to provide research and analysis that greatly informed this planning effort and the resulting implementation plan.

Early on in the process a Steering Committee was created to inform and direct this project. The Committee was composed of City staff, Board and Committee members, residents, and other stakeholders. Monthly meetings were held and the Steering Committee took a very active role in all of the outreach efforts.

The total acreage of the Downtown is 150 acres. The geographic boundary for the project area is identified as a red line on the aerial image. This helped to focus the planning process on the core area of the Downtown. However, the resulting success of the Downtown will benefit the entire community.



A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

This vision statement provides a compelling image of where Downtown Rochester will be in ten years' time. Visioning helps us picture the changes we would like to see made, and writing the vision in the present tense commits us to making it a reality.

Downtown Rochester Vision Statement: *With popular arts and culture activities attracting visitors and new residents, Downtown Rochester has become a destination. It's become a mixed-use, 24-hour per day/7-day per week (24/7) environment for living, working, shopping and entertainment, serving as the economic engine of the City. Redevelopment efforts have successfully harnessed the City's assets, honoring the unique characteristics of the City and building off existing Downtown activities. The infrastructure within the Downtown has received a significant investment that is now visible as functional and attractive streetscapes with wide sidewalks and bike lanes, comfortable gathering places, street trees and native plantings, and the creative integration of art in several forms. Sculptures and murals continue to be incorporated throughout the Downtown, and short-term art installations and signature events draw visitors to the City on a regular basis throughout the year.*

Diverse and inclusive housing units have been constructed in existing buildings and as a component of new infill development activity. These new residents are now playing an important role in the local economy. A successful maker space, the many accomplishments of the Economic Development Commission, and a thriving Main Street Program have fostered an environment of creative entrepreneurship. As a result, existing businesses are prospering and a wide variety of new businesses and services now occupy storefronts throughout the Downtown. This commercial activity supports the needs of residents and visitors, and contributes to the vibrant and eclectic Downtown that makes Rochester a unique and popular destination.

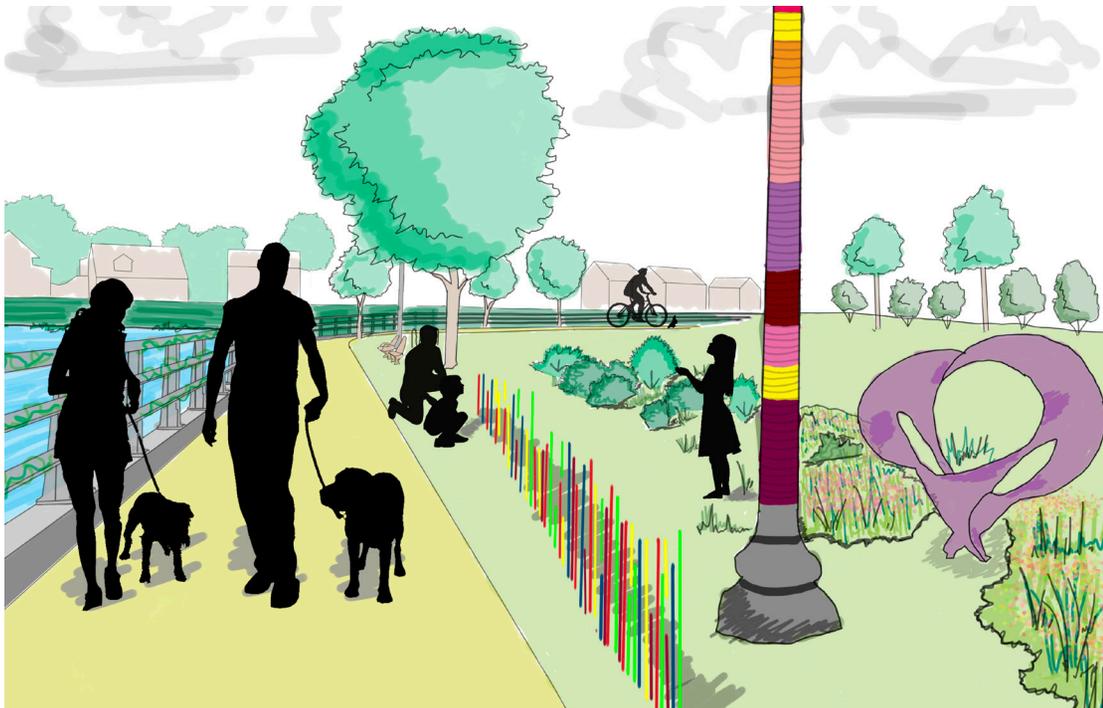
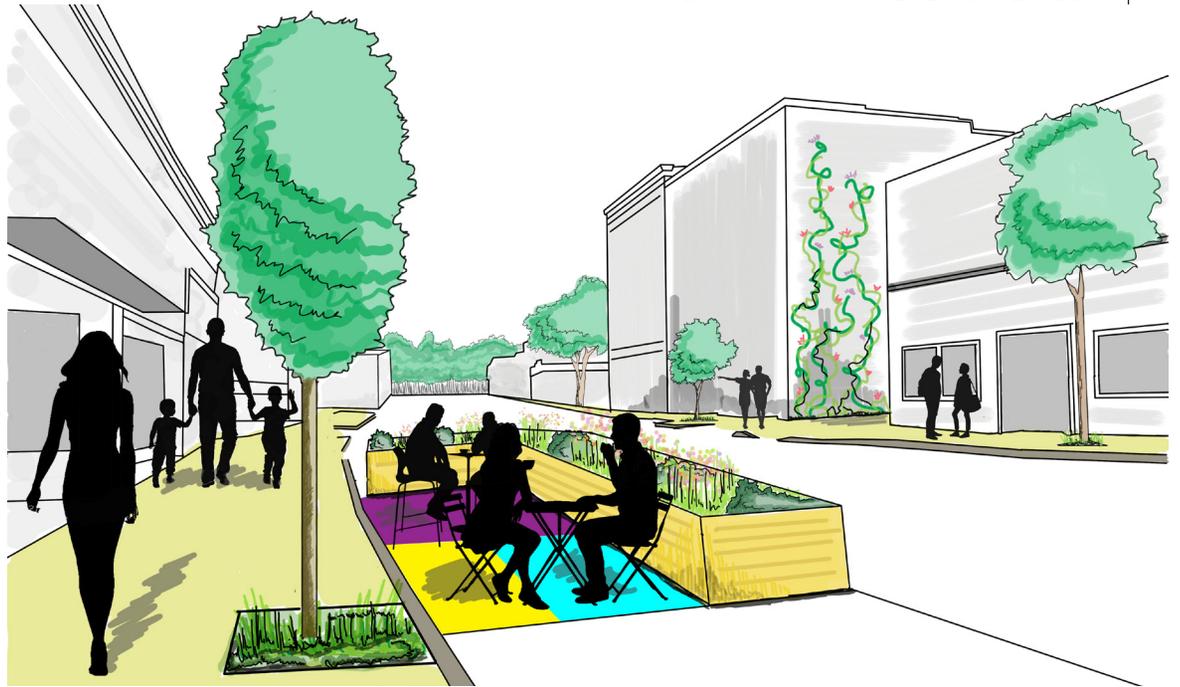
The completed Riverwalk and new boat launches encourage residents and visitors to experience and connect with the Cochemo River in novel ways. The many pocket parks, planting strips, and trees incorporated in the streetscape and parking lot upgrades, and in new development projects, not only provide important green space, they ensure the Downtown is attractive and inviting. This commitment to integrated green infrastructure is also a reminder of Rochester's resilience as a community.



Photo Courtesy: John Gisis

A Dynamic Downtown Streetscape

Rochester's downtown streetscape is **VIBRANT**. Residents and visitors are enjoying the myriad of shops, restaurants, and businesses; street trees and climbing vegetation beautify the city landscape; and community projects, like parklets and pocket gardens. This showcases Rochester's unique identity and creates gathering nodes within the built environment.



An Arts & Culture Corridor

Rochester's Riverwalk presents an opportunity for creative placemaking, integrating **PUBLIC ART**, serving as a recreational asset within walking distance of the Downtown, and providing a public space for all ages. Sculptures and temporary improvements add color and life to the landscape. A sensory garden provides a place for children to experience nature and serves as pollinator habitat. These gardens feature native, season-long blooming plants.

2030 VISION THEMES

RESILIENT



- High quality, energy-efficient, and well-maintained built environment
- Adaptive reuse of buildings
- Public and private investment
- Future-focused planning initiatives
- Green infrastructure incorporated into redevelopment initiatives

CREATIVE



- Innovative infill development
- Arts and culture are leveraged to enhance public spaces and engage residents and visitors
- Fostering entrepreneurship and small business development

WALKABLE



- Mixed use development
- Provides opportunities for aging in place
- A vibrant streetscape
- A well-connected, multi-modal transportation system
- Green and complete street corridors join with off-street multi-use paths (Riverwalk)

INCLUSIVE



- Diverse uses, activities, people, and events
- A broad range of housing options
- Grassroots driven leadership and action
- Cohesive branding of Rochester's downtown assets to visitors and residents alike

KEY ASSETS

There are a number of key assets that were identified during this planning process that help to define Downtown Rochester and are critical to placemaking efforts here. Placemaking is a planning approach that was used to develop this Downtown plan, and will be vital during its implementation.

Here are a few of the most significant downtown assets identified:

PEOPLE

The many individuals, organizations, residents, and visitors that informed and shaped this Plan make Downtown Rochester special and are the key to future success. Rochester’s culture includes a spirit of giving - its philanthropic history has resulted in the ability for many Downtown projects come to life (such as the Rochester Opera House).

HISTORY

The commitment to recognizing and celebrating the City’s rich history will continue to inspire and inform the character of the Downtown.

RIVER

The beauty of the Cochemo River and its recreational resources present many opportunities for Downtown properties to reconnect with this river corridor.

ARTS AND CULTURE

The artists, installations, special programming, and events already present in the Downtown represent a significant opportunity to attract residents and visitors while branding the Downtown as an arts and culture destination.

ECONOMY

The existing population in the surrounding region represents economic opportunity that can be captured in the Downtown while promoting the many opportunities for new development activity.



Photo Courtesy: Matt Wyatt

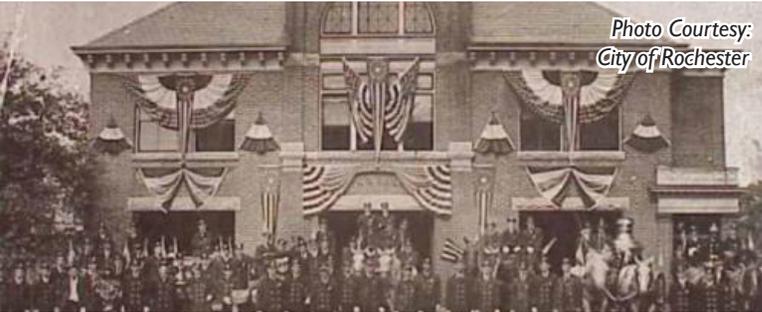


Photo Courtesy: City of Rochester



Photo Courtesy: Resilience Planning



Photo Courtesy: Matt Wyatt



Photo Courtesy: Matt Wyatt

THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROCHESTER'S DOWNTOWN

Downtowns like Rochester's are complex environments with many different elements. Each of these elements are interconnected and somewhat dependent on each other. They contribute to the physical form and function of the downtown area, and they provide the unique context that gives Rochester its identity and character. During this planning process, the City and its consulting team utilized a holistic approach to analyzing the Downtown's resources based on three infrastructure types that appeared to be present. The purpose was to better understand how these elements currently exist, how they related to and impact each other, and how they could be improved in Rochester.

Built Infrastructure: refers to the buildings, transportation network, utility systems, and other human made elements.

Social Infrastructure: refers to the organizations, individuals, traditions, and cultural aspects that bring a human component and sense of community to the Downtown.

Natural Infrastructure: refers to the natural resource areas, plants, soil, water and other living elements that provide a range of ecosystem services to Rochester residents and visitors.

In many cases, the implementation actions developed for this Plan have the potential to positively impact all three of Downtown Rochester's infrastructure types in a positive way. Doing so will provide a more comprehensive approach to the revitalization of the Downtown, and ensure the City sees an increase in the natural capital, social capital, financial capital over time.

BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE



NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE



SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE



WHAT HAVE WE HEARD?

The four major findings from the outreach efforts are included below. In this planning process, participants asked the City for:

A Multi-Pronged Redevelopment Strategy

- Develop strategies to ensure downtown-wide redevelopment of vacant buildings and empty parcels that meet the vision of the Downtown Master Plan.
- Improve building facades, explore ways to temporarily activate vacant storefronts, and create incentives for redevelopment. Ensure land use regulations and code enforcement promote these activities.
- The City should take an active role in securing properties for redevelopment and upgrade city infrastructure to support future economic activity.

A Safe, Clean, & Walkable Environment

- Improve safety of Downtown by actively reducing crime and addressing issues such as drug use and homelessness.
- Invest in a vibrant pedestrian realm by adding outdoor gathering spaces (plazas, etc.), seating, lighting, green infrastructure/landscaping/ planters, bike lanes, and pedestrian pathways.

Build Off Existing Assets

- Capitalize on the Downtown's proximity to the Cocheco River by supporting the expansion and improvement of the River Walk.
- Build off the existing energy surrounding the arts in Downtown by creating new opportunities for arts and cultural activities, displays, and programming.
- Coordinate access from the regional highway network, the Coast bus system, and Skyhaven Airport.

More Programming and Events

- Continue to organize and promote a variety of community events in the Downtown in all seasons throughout the year.
- Cultivate a diverse audience by hosting a range of events for families, millennials, teenagers, the elderly, and everyone in-between.
- Create opportunities for flexible programming and activity in the Downtown.



*Photo Courtesy:
Matt Wyatt*



Action Plan

The Action Plan identifies seven overarching implementation initiatives for the City of Rochester to pursue. The results of these efforts will revitalize the Downtown into a lively and livable destination. These initiatives are also depicted on the Implementation Map and are described in greater detail in the following section of this Plan. Each implementation initiative includes tools, resources, specific action items, and related case studies to assist the City in moving forward.

01. INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS AND COORDINATED INVESTMENT

Improvements to the streetscape, traffic pattern, and public infrastructure systems are needed and will serve as a catalyst for new development. The Implementation map identifies **primary Complete/Greet Street corridors** that should be centered around new traffic patterns, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, green infrastructure, and streetscape amenities (such as lighting and street furniture). **Secondary streets** should also be upgraded and incorporate facilities to close any gaps in the Downtown bicycle and pedestrian network. **Intersections** are highlighted to identify where redesign should occur to enhance safety and walkability. **Off-road boulevards** are off-road multi-paths that consist of a combination of separated bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure with vegetative buffers, street trees, connecting neighborhoods to the Downtown. **Gateways** should include a mix of signage and landscaping to communicate to users of the road that they are now entering the Downtown.

02. ARTS AND CULTURE AS A DOWNTOWN ANCHOR

Arts and cultural facilities, businesses, programming, and events have replaced retailing as the anchor generating activity in the Downtown and should be a central focus in downtown revitalization efforts. Rochester's **arts and cultural assets**, some of which are marked on the Implementation Map, should be leveraged to attract both existing and prospective residents and visitors to the City. Existing and proposed **social gathering spaces** are also marked to indicate places where additional placemaking improvements can be made to enhance the accessibility, comfort, image, and activities that can occur in these spaces.

03. A TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF) DISTRICT

New private investment is beginning to occur and it's important to capture the increment in values to wholly or partially fund infrastructure upgrades through the creation of a Downtown TIF District (defined on pg. 33). A proposed **TIF district** boundary to consider is marked on the Implementation Map.

04. RIVERWALK AND WATERFRONT CONNECTIONS

Rochester does not currently capitalize on its river frontage. Implementing the Riverwalk Plan will greatly enhance the Downtown environment and reconnect the Downtown to the River. The proposed **Riverwalk** is shown conceptually on the Implementation Map. **Open spaces** in and around the Downtown are critical assets and present opportunities to connect these spaces to the Downtown through enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities, green infrastructure installations, and wayfinding.

05. THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The Economic Development Commission should explore options for greater direct involvement in the redevelopment of Downtown properties. This may require creating a Business and Industrial Development Authority or forming a non-profit corporation. As the Riverwalk expands and parking lots are upgraded, incentivizing **rear facade improvements** of buildings facing the river and parking lots, shown on the Implementation Map, will create a more attractive environment. High-priority **redevelopment opportunities** are also shown on the map and present opportunities to create additional public space and high-quality mixed use development, housing, and commercial space.

06. LAND USE REGULATIONS AND ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES

Removing regulatory barriers and streamlining the development review process will make it more clear and predictable, and in the end will attract greater development interest. This should include clear design standards and design review processes for developers, architects, and engineers.

07. PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Establishing partnerships and encouraging cross-sector collaboration will be the key to success in implementing this Downtown Plan. The City should actively work to pursue and strengthen partnerships to complete these implementation actions to build public support and community trust.

01 INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS & COORDINATED INVESTMENT

Improvements to the streetscape and traffic pattern in the Downtown were identified as a priority in this planning process and in the recently completed City-wide Transportation Master Plan.

These investments should be carefully coordinated with efforts to upgrade other aging infrastructure that needs to be addressed in the downtown (water, sewer, drainage, etc.) as identified by City Staff and Focus Group Participants.

The current condition of Downtown Rochester's streetscape falls short of contemporary models, and favors vehicles and thru traffic over pedestrians. However, pedestrians are more important economically for a vibrant and thriving Downtown. This initiative aligns with the fact that the City needs to complete a major project that signifies a commitment to a better Downtown.

Concord, Keene, and Manchester are all successful examples of re-orienting a downtown to a more pedestrian friendly environment. In each case the investment enhanced not only the residential market, but also strengthened retail and service activities by encouraging residents and visitors to spend time downtown rather than just pass through. The current Downtown traffic patterns are also inefficient and confusing. This discourages people from staying and exploring the Downtown and should also be addressed during this initiative.

The first step will be to commission a detailed infrastructure analysis of the systems in question to determine the scope and timing of these projects. Then detailed designs can be developed and funding needs can be more accurately identified. With this information available it will be possible to schedule implementation, and it is possible that these efforts will need to be phased to be implemented successfully.

Case Study: Main Street - Concord NH

For Concord, the motivations for redesigning the City's historic Main Street were fostering economic development and improving access. With it came an enjoyable and safe place to be and an attractive place to work, shop, dine, and live. The project resulted in an accessible street for pedestrians, bicyclists and automobiles, that served as a catalyst for the regeneration of Concord's retail core. By creating an attractive, comfortable, safe, vibrant and sustainable setting, as well as a destination for residents and visitors alike, the improvements have helped to preserve and enhance the economic vitality of Downtown Concord. This was achieved by reducing the vehicular travel lanes from four to two, considerably widening the sidewalks, and creating gathering spaces that can facilitate public art, small pocket parks, and events. Main Street has also become an integral and primary part of the City's open space system, and a common ground for the community and visitors to New Hampshire's Capitol City. **Funding** for this project included a Federal TIGER Grant, obligation bonds and transportation impact fee funds appropriated by the City of Concord, and Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Betterment District funds.



Photo Courtesy: City of Concord, NH

Streetscape and Traffic Pattern Changes

The most visible aspect of this initiative will be the changes to the roadways and streetscapes in Downtown, but these improvements should also signal the big changes that have taken place below the surface. This will be accomplished to some degree by integrating green infrastructure solutions that collect and filter stormwater and can accommodate large street trees. Improvements should:

- Be informed by a downtown traffic circulation and connectivity study.
- Be guided by a Green/Complete Streets Policy adopted by the City.
- Include the establishment of important sidewalk connections at recommended locations.
- Be coordinated with the completion of the Riverwalk.
- Result in improved bicycle accommodations in the Downtown.
- Include traffic calming measures that improve safety.
- Improve bus stop facilities in front of City Hall.
- Be informed by an updated City Street Lighting Policy to enhance security in well-traveled areas and encourage pedestrian activity.
- Identify key crosswalk locations that would benefit from improved crossing treatments (bumpouts, markings, etc.).
- Manage parking demand efficiently and make the best use of public lands for parking as possible.

- Make the best use of public/city-owned land in designing streetscape improvements.

Complete and Green Streets

Complete Streets are streets that are designed and constructed to accommodate all modes of transportation, including automobiles, buses, bicyclists, and pedestrians to the greatest extent possible. For too long, streets have been designed primarily for automobiles and this has had detrimental impacts on the environment and our communities. Nowadays, towns and cities are shifting their transportation planning practices to routinely design and redesign right-of-ways that are safe, convenient, and accessible for all users of the road. In planning for its Downtown, Rochester should advocate for traffic improvements that increase pedestrian safety and access, facilitate a well-connected bicycle and pedestrian network, and accommodate for public transportation.

Smart Growth America and the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) have acknowledged that Complete Streets **ARE** Green Streets, which are streets that integrate vegetation and stormwater management systems within the right-of-way. The City should evaluate the potential for green street investments to transform the public realm and create economic, social, and environmental benefits for all street users.

01



Photo Courtesy: John Griss

01

Integrating Green Infrastructure

Integrating Green Infrastructure requires the dedication of space within the built environment for the use of street trees and other natural elements to address urban problems as identified in the Greening America's Communities Report for Rochester. Green infrastructure systems are designed with vegetation and other natural materials, providing many ecosystem services to the community, including improved

air and water quality, reduced heat island effect, and mental and physical health benefits. Given that approximately half of Downtown is currently impervious surface, the Downtown's proximity to the river, the need for green space in Downtown, and the need to disconnect and update the stormwater infrastructure, there is a real opportunity for expanding green infrastructure in the Downtown area. Additionally, these techniques will assist the City in meeting its goals for MS4 permit compliance, which regulates stormwater pollution in Cities. **Green infrastructure tools for the City to consider in its Downtown include:**



BIOSWALES AND RAIN GARDENS

refer to a swale or depression that is planted with a combination of vegetation, such as trees, shrubs, and grasses, that collect, slow down, and filter stormwater runoff while also providing visually appealing landscaping and urban habitat.

STREET TREES AND TREE BOXES

are one of the most economical green infrastructure practices available. Tree boxes are a pre-manufactured concrete box which is installed in-ground, filled with soil media, and planted with a tree. They act as a compact bioretention system where space is tight, diverting stormwater runoff.

GREEN ROOFS

are living roofs that are partially or completely covered with vegetation and a growing medium, planted over a waterproofing membrane. They capture and filter rainwater, insulate the building, and reduce urban heat island effect.

STORMWATER PLANTERS

are a type of bioretention system adapted to fit into "containers" within urban landscapes. Integrated into tree boxes or urban landscaping planters, they collect stormwater from pavement and filter it through soil and plants to treat pollutants.

VEGETATED CURB EXTENSIONS

are a traffic calming device that narrow road width, provide a safer pedestrian environment, and slow the speed of traffic. Additionally, they incorporate stormwater treatment into their design, filtering and infiltrating stormwater from the street.

Tactical Urbanism

Planners and policymakers work to improve the public realm in cities, yet progress can seem slow. The cost of making improvements can be prohibitive and there is often a lack of resources allocated for this task in municipal budgets. Strategic planning processes with long-term implementation horizons can also make it difficult for planners to be responsive to local social and economic changes and to actively engage citizens in the process of planning. To combat this, temporary interventions have been increasing in popularity in cities as a way to make improvements that are relatively low-risk.

Tactical Urbanism is a process where flexible, action-oriented, and short-term projects are initiated to advance long-term goals related to street safety, public space, and more. It typically focuses on the re-purposing of underutilized

places using temporary materials, transforming them into more dynamic public spaces. Also known as DIY Urbanism, Pop-Up Placemaking, or Urban Acupuncture, this approach refers to a city, organizational, and/or citizen-led approach to neighborhood building using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions to catalyze long-term change. These strategies should engage the public and tweak designs while the City waits for the funding to make larger-scale infrastructure changes. This also helps to build momentum and support, and get some early results until projects can be completed. The examples below show pop-up elements that can be incorporated into a tactical urbanism demonstration. These projects inspire action, foster community identity, and perpetuate activities and improvements that make a City a better place to live, work, and play.

01

Streetscapes

Photo Courtesy: Jon Geeting



Traffic calming planters

Photo Courtesy: Team Better Block



Intersection art

Photo Courtesy: National Public Radio



Creative crosswalks

Photo Courtesy: American Association of Retired Professionals



Temporary bike lane

Photo Courtesy: UA Sustainability Blog



Colorful, painted seating

Photo Courtesy: The Wichita Eagle



Utilizing alley space for a pop-up park

Photo Courtesy: Trevor Dykestra



Interactive play features

Photo Courtesy: American Association of Retired



Moveable seating

Public Spaces

01

“Communities build powerful connections around the shared experience of ‘making’ a vision for the future together.”

—Team Better Block

How can the City support Tactical Urbanism?

- Use tactical urbanism when designing streetscape changes Downtown to engage the public and refine design solutions.
- Design a clear process that involves all relevant City departments for approval of Tactical Urbanism projects and reduce barriers to entry and aim to make it as streamlined as possible.
- Pilot Tactical Urbanism projects in City-owned venues or on publicly-owned land with citizens and nonprofit groups.
- Designate a central contact or community liaison for a Tactical Urbanism program. Identify a staff person to answer questions and help citizens navigate regulatory and policy issues.
- Seek guidance from researching other cities that have robust and successful Tactical Urbanism programs.
- Measure the impact after pop-up projects. Collect data on different indicators to see if projects are meeting their intended purpose (e.g. street liveliness, impact on traffic and businesses, etc).

Programming

Photo Courtesy: American Association of Retired Professionals



Pop-up concerts

Photo Courtesy: Urban Activators



Fun and games

Photo Courtesy: Cooper's Ferry Partnership



Community dinners

Photo Courtesy: Midtown Yoga in the Park



Outdoor classes

Infrastructure

Photo Courtesy: Streetcolor



“Yarn bombed” bike rack

Photo Courtesy: Darren Stone



Painted utility pole

Photo Courtesy: American Association of Retired Professionals



Infrastructure as art

Photo Courtesy: Unknown



Memorable street elements

01. INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS & COORDINATED INVESTMENT

#	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
I.1	Develop a detailed plan for upgrading the Downtown's aging infrastructure systems, such as drainage, water, and sewer, which includes timing of projects and associated costs.
I.2	As recommended in the City's 2019 Transportation Master Plan, the City should complete a Downtown Traffic Circulation and Connectivity Study to further analyze alternatives to make the downtown roadways more inviting to non-motorized users. This includes analyzing intersection improvements, traffic calming, and integration of on-road and off-road bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.
I.3	Undertake short-term low-cost traffic pattern and signal improvements to ease traffic flow.
I.4	Complete a sidewalk inventory of the Downtown. Systematically connect the pedestrian network in Downtown, prioritizing sidewalk construction in areas with the highest foot traffic that links Downtown destinations.
I.5	As streets are redesigned, plant street trees and construct other green infrastructure systems into the Downtown street network.
I.6	Construct Complete Street improvements along North Main Street, South Main Street, and Wakefield Street.
I.7	Adopt a Complete/Green Streets Policy to ensure all streets are designed to accommodate diverse transportation modes to the greatest extent possible.
I.8	Incorporate Tactical Urbanism into transportation improvement projects to test design solutions and engage the community.
I.9	Provide convenient public bicycle parking in Downtown, linked to pedestrians, bus stops, and parking facilities
I.10	Install landscaping, pedestrian amenities, and site furnishings in Downtown locations to provide areas that can serve as informal gathering spaces.
I.11	Implement the wayfinding improvements outlined in the Rochester Wayfinding Study. Specifically, install signage targeting 12 municipal lots from North Main to Columbus Ave, vehicular directional and pedestrian signage on the Municipal Campus and Downtown, and gateway signage on all major routes coming into downtown.
I.12	Develop a long-term parking management plan and assess parking garage feasibility. In doing this, assess the need to expand existing parking supply to meet future needs, and metrics to inform this investment.
I.13	Complete the design improvements outlined for the municipal parking lot located on Union Street, as outlined in the 2016 Greening America's Cities report.
I.14	Update the City Street Lighting Policy to enhance security in well-traveled areas and encourage pedestrian activity.
I.15	Encourage small scale, incremental development that infill vacant lots, and the revitalization of underutilized buildings.
I.16	Investigate the feasibility of creating a facade improvement program to incentivize property owners to improve the exteriors of their buildings. The non-profit organization, InTown Concord, in Concord, NH recently launched a facade improvement grant program that can be used as an example for guidance.
I.17	Integrate temporary and/or permanent public art installations into the streetscape and built environment.
I.18	Create a public process and develop Master Plan documents for East Rochester and Gonic that are modeled after this Downtown Master Plan.

02 ARTS AND CULTURE AS A DOWNTOWN ANCHOR

A 2016 study of Rochester's arts economy found that the nonprofit arts and culture sector is a significant industry in the City of Rochester. The arts and culture sector generates \$12.3 million in total economic activity. And now, the arts have replaced retailing as the Downtown anchor. This includes spending by nonprofit arts and culture organizations (\$4.4 million), and an additional \$7.9 million in event-related spending by their audiences. This spending supports 405 full-time equivalent jobs, generates \$8.1 million in household income to local residents, and delivers \$1 million in local and state government revenue. This economic impact study sends a strong signal that when we support the arts, we not only enhance our quality of life, but we also invest in the City of Rochester's economic well-being.

As a result, the arts are envisioned to be a core aspect of Downtown Rochester's redevelopment efforts. This should include further coordinating and marketing events which will help establish a regional recognition of Downtown Rochester as a destination for art and culture.

Another strategy that will assist with branding

Rochester as a community that celebrates the arts would be establishing a program utilizing requests for proposals (RFPs) for public artwork in public spaces. This can be done by utilizing short-term installations that could create demand for an art walk and associated art and culture wayfinding Downtown. The arts should also play a role in major infrastructure investments in the Downtown. Creating spaces for permanent art installations within the streetscape should be an outcome of this Plan.

Another creative initiative that should be used to inform the design of upgraded infrastructure in the Downtown is Tactical Urbanism. This is an opportunity to integrate artists in the design of temporary tactical urbanism experiments that will allow the City to try new roadway configurations and other infrastructure changes and collect feedback before implementation. There is also significant opportunity for the City to support and grow the creative economy, which includes sectors such as: design, literary arts, performing arts, culinary arts, and film and media. The strength of the creative economy is often linked to the quality and quantity of the infrastructure that support it.

Case Study:

Arts in Public Places - Austin, Texas

This is an ongoing program of the City of Austin's Cultural Arts Division of the Economic Development Department that began in 1985. The Art in Public Places (AIPP) program collaborates with local and nationally-known artists to include the history and values of our community into cultural landmarks that have become cornerstones of Austin's identity. A map and walking tour of these art installations is available to the public.

The TEMPO project launched in the spring of 2015 with an open call to Austin-area artists to submit proposals for temporary artwork on City-owned sites. The community is then invited to discover these artworks and attend special events. A map of the installations and more information about each artwork is available online. In 2018, TEMPO expanded to include wall-based artwork. Through the TEMPO 2D program, twelve local artists were selected to create hand-painted murals, vinyl adhesive artwork, and fiber art at locations across Austin including public parks, the Austin Bergstrom International Airport, and other high-profile locales.

Photo Courtesy: Phillip Rogers



Photo Courtesy for all photos on this page: Matt Wyatt



Converts underutilized spaces into interesting places

What is Placemaking?

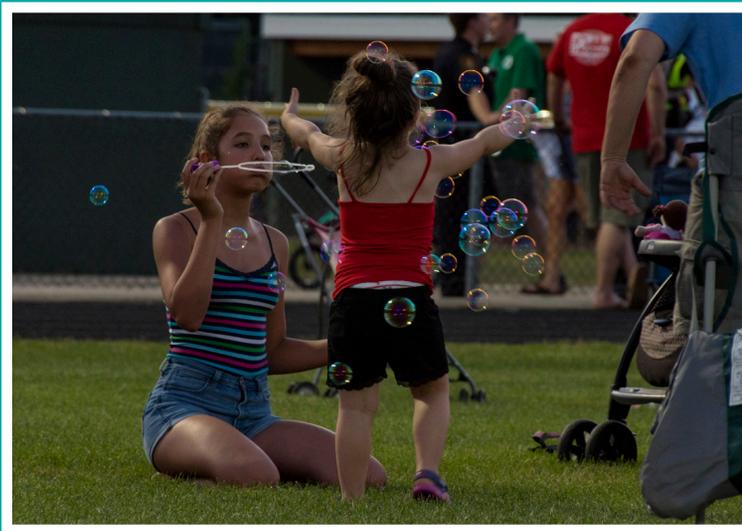
As both an overarching idea and a hands-on, people-centered approach for improving a neighborhood, city, or region, placemaking **INSPIRES** people to collectively reimagine and reinvent **PUBLIC SPACES** as the heart of their community. Strengthening the connection between **PEOPLE** and the **PLACES** they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.

- Project for Public Spaces

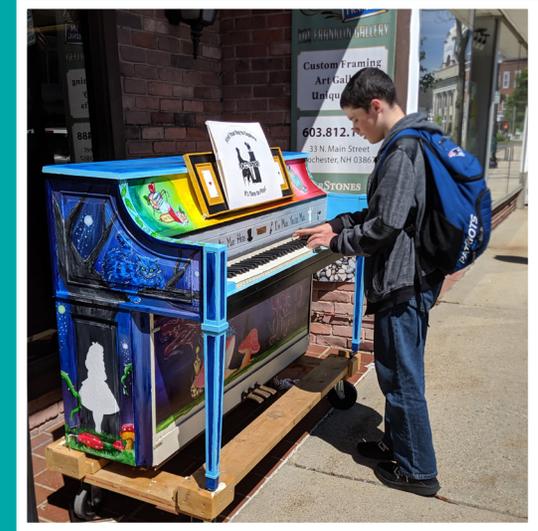
02



Supports grassroots public involvement



Celebrates community identity and diversity



Embraces artistic expression in the public realm

02

Four Key Qualities of Successful Places

According to Projects for Public Spaces, “great public spaces are where celebrations are held, social and economic exchanges take place, friends run into each other, and cultures mix. They are the ‘front porches’ of our public institutions—libraries, field houses, neighborhood schools—where we interact with each other and government. When the spaces work well, they serve as a stage for our public lives.”

SOCIABILITY - This refers to the social capital present in a public place. When people see friends, meet and greet their neighbors, and feel comfortable interacting with strangers, they tend to feel a stronger sense of place or attachment to their community that fosters these types of activities.

Measurements? number of women, children, & elderly, volunteerism, social networks, evening use, street life

ACCESS & LINKAGES - A successful public place is easy to get to and through. It’s visible from a distance and up-close, and is walkable, convenient, and well-connected to other key destinations.

Measurements? Traffic data, mode splits, pedestrian activity, parking usage patterns



USES & ACTIVITIES - Activities are the anchor of any great place. They are what attract people to a place and make it special or unique. If there is nothing to do in a place, it will remain empty and unused.

Measurements? local business ownership, land use patterns, rent levels, property values, retail sales, # of use permits and type

COMFORT & IMAGE - A good public space will be comfortable and have a positive image to the community. Comfort includes perceptions about safety, cleanliness, and the availability of places to sit.

Measurements? crime statistics, building conditions, environmental data

Creative Placemaking

Creative Placemaking is a technique used by communities to engage local residents, improve public space, and contribute to healthy, sustainable communities. It's a set of strategies aimed at improving community well-being and prosperity, while also fostering conditions for cities to define, draw attention to, and distinguish themselves. It can be as simple as a sculpture that makes a public park a more inviting place to visit, a cultural festival that draws new visitors to a Downtown, or a theater performing works by local and regional playwrights. The success of creative placemaking as an economic development technique begins with the direct benefits that come from bringing people out to visit the Downtown. The success of creative placemaking is dependent upon collaborations between civic stakeholders

such as governments, businesses, non-profit organizations, artists, and citizen groups.

In the planning process, partnerships and shared leadership are created to build momentum and harness the power of the arts to improve quality of life and revitalize buildings, neighborhoods, and cities. Many creative placemaking tools exist to cultivate connections between people and place such as mixed-use development, municipal cultural planning, creative industries, public art, and urban design. The end results of creative placemaking can be inspirational, as initiatives are typically built off a community's assets and include place-based strategies. In urban planning, civic partnerships have used creative placemaking to transform communities and inspire positive investment and change.

02

*The
Downtown
already
features
examples
of creative
placemaking
in action.*



Above: A vibrant mural painted by Bianca Mireles on the former Charter Trust building, facing the Union Street municipal parking lot and supported by Bernier Insurance.



Above: The Rochester Museum of Fine Arts (RMFA) has art galleries in the Library and the Community Center.



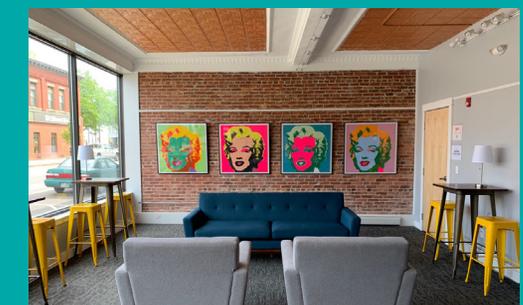
Above: 3 large metal sculptures were installed along Route 125, created by Adam Pearson, and will be anchored along a paved walking trail leading into the Common.



Above: The historic Rochester Opera House



Above: The RMFA commissioned NH artist, Nathan Walk, to install a large metal sculpture on the front lawn of the Community Center.



Above: Rochester Performance and Arts Center

02

Creative Placemaking Initiatives

CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

This refers to cultural festivals and other programming that focus attention on local heritage. These events aim to increase civic pride, support local artists and cultural institutions, and stimulate social and economic activity in a Downtown. Rochester should continue to build and sustain a robust arts and cultural event schedule. The AHA (Arts, History, & Architecture) Festival is a free arts and culture event which takes place the 2nd Thursday of each month in Downtown New Bedford, MA from 5:00-9:00. It involves downtown museums, galleries, arts organizations, merchants, and restaurants. Each month’s event is themed and draws 2,000 visitors from the city and surrounding towns and features art exhibits, live music, theater performances, and lectures. Another example is “Art on Main” in Concord, NH. In 2018, non-profit organization, Creative Concord, partnered with the City to debut the first Annual Outdoor Sculpture Exhibit, which was extremely successful. “Art on Main” is a 24/7, open-air, year round outdoor art exhibition featuring numerous works by professional artists from the New England area.

CULTURAL FACILITIES

Cultural facilities are often focal points of community activity and are unique assets for Downtowns and the creative economy. Rochester has seen the redevelopment of some of its historic buildings into successful cultural facilities in recent years, including the Opera House and the Rochester Performance and Arts Center. These museums, theaters, and galleries provide anchors for community revitalization, economic activity, and community development through the arts.

PUBLIC REALM INITIATIVES

Many public spaces in cities are underutilized because of their layout, lack of activities, and few amenities. The City’s Planning Department, with help from

local organizations, should find creative ways to activate public spaces, such as parks, trails, and streetscapes, through design and art.

CREATIVE ECONOMY INITIATIVES

According to Richard Florida, author of “The Creative Class”, the distinguishing factor of a thriving community in this new economic age is the ability to attract and nurture what he calls the emerging “creative class”, which includes writers, artists, entertainers, designers, architects, software developers, scientists, and engineers. Since the City already has a burgeoning “creative class”, Rochester should work towards supporting a creative economy cluster and find ways to attract and support artists and other cultural entrepreneurs.



Above: Creative Placemaking Impact Model from MassINC and ArtPlace.

Case Study:

Harnessing Arts and Culture for a Vibrant Downtown Nashua, NH

02

Downtown Nashua's revitalization has been centered around the arts, evolving from grassroots organizations and partnerships among Great America Downtown Nashua, City Arts Nashua, and the City of Nashua (to name a few). Below are some of the initiatives that have revitalized Downtown Nashua, boosted tourism, and improved quality of life.

- **GREAT AMERICAN DOWNTOWN NASHUA** implements a variety of events and programs, such as Nashua Main Street Pianos (which are decorated and on display from May-October). In conjunction with City Arts Nashua, Nashua International Sculpture Symposium, and Positive Street Art, they also initiated a **PUBLIC ART WALKING TOUR PROGRAM** in the Downtown. This included the creation of a free app that directs users on a walking tour to view 10-15 examples of public art in the Downtown, including murals and sculptures. As you approach a piece of art, the app provides an audio description of the work, its artist, and facts about its creation. Since Rochester already has an interactive map of public art locations, this could be a project to replicate using existing digital infrastructure
- **POSITIVE STREET ART** is a non-profit organization that initiates, coordinates, and promotes workshops, events, services, and activities designed to meet the educational, social, and creative needs of people in under-served communities. They have a robust **PUBLIC MURAL PROGRAM** that has created beautiful murals on public and private buildings throughout the City.
- The Nashua **INTERNATIONAL SCULPTURE SYMPOSIUM** is an annual community event designed to elevate the awareness and appreciation of outdoor public art in the City. Artists are invited from around the world to spend three weeks in Nashua creating public art, which is then placed throughout the City. NIMCO, a local machining company, donates space for the artists to work. Residents of Nashua serve as host families, opening their homes and providing a place for the artists to live.
- **CITY ARTS NASHUA** is a volunteer arts services organization aiming to enrich quality of life by providing leadership and support to strengthen the City's arts and culture. They work closely with the Nashua Arts Commission, local arts individuals and groups, community organizations, business, local and state government, and with national arts organizations. They host the annual Arts Awards and the annual Art Walk weekend and manage an online GIS map of public art throughout Nashua.
- **ARTVENTURES NASHUA** is a public art program that facilitates temporary art projects, performances, and special events to create a more fun and pedestrian friendly environment for shopping, dining, culture, and entertainment Downtown. This program was designed by City Arts Nashua and is funded by the City of Nashua, inspiring collaboration, positive media attention, tourism, public safety, community engagement, and economic investment in the Downtown.



02

Identifying Creative Economic Opportunities

MAKERSPACE

Makerspace facilities provide shared tools, workshop space, and access to education and training. They can include any combination of wood and metal shops, fine arts studio space, a computer lab, light auto and general repair, co-working space, career development facilities, and commercial kitchens. These spaces and the programming provided attract residents of the area who lack workshop space and are interested in learning new skills or sharing their knowledge. They can also serve as a workforce development resource. Locating such a facility in Downtown Rochester would create another anchor for activity in Downtown and would support the burgeoning Creative Economy.

Several other New Hampshire Communities have successful makerspaces that can serve as a model for Rochester. One such example is the Manchester Makerspace (<https://manchestermakerspace.org/>). This 501(c)(3) non-profit organization is supported by members who see themselves as lifelong learners. The Manchester Makerspace provides their members with access to shared space, tools, and mentorship for the benefit of the surrounding community. This includes local makers, teachers, students, entrepreneurs, and artists of all ages.

FOODLAB

Similar in many ways to a makerspace, and sometimes found in the same

facility, a food lab is a space dedicated to entrepreneurial food production activities. From commercial kitchens available for members to use and host classes in, to tinker kitchens and food halls, these spaces are scalable.

Tinker kitchens are foodlabs that serve as a makerspace for cooking, allowing members to utilize the space anytime and experiment with small-batch cooking projects. Typically, they also host a variety of cooking classes and other group gatherings. They can even serve as a pop-up restaurant for aspiring restaurant owners to use as a launching pad. Some versions of foodlabs function as food halls providing space for a variety of small artisanal eateries in the same structure. While it might be best to start with the use of an existing commercial kitchen space in the Downtown or in a new Makerspace, if successful, this facility could eventually grow into its own space Downtown.

This Tinker Kitchen in San Francisco serves as a nice example for Rochester to work toward. Tinker Kitchen is a bit like a “kitchen playground” where home cooks can have access to the commercial machines which restaurants and specialty food makers use. The facility features multiple ovens, a commercial deep-fryer, and even a real wok range. The Tinker Kitchen also provides access to a commercial pasta extruder, ice cream making (batch freezer, Pacojet, and even liquid nitrogen), chocolate-making tools, and a drum coffee roaster and a dual-boiler espresso machine.



02. ARTS AND CULTURE AS A DOWNTOWN ANCHOR

#	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
2.1	Develop a cohesive brand and branding strategy for Downtown Rochester as an arts and culture destination, focusing on its unique assets.
2.2	Inventory historic, arts, and cultural resources and develop a city-wide Cultural Asset Map that identifies relevant businesses, organizations, and institutions.
2.3	Building upon the Cultural Assets Map, create a city arts interactive online map showing visitors and residents where to find public art and cultural places in the Downtown.
2.4	Integrate artists into the development review process to ensure public art is incorporated into downtown development projects.
2.5	Establish an Arts and Cultural Overlay District. Support the conversion of existing vacant buildings into spaces for creative business and commercial enterprise.
2.6	Update zoning in the Downtown to allow for Makerspaces and live/work artists studios.
2.7	Support the creation of a Makerspace that will provide a facility for creative arts, sustainability initiatives, personal projects, and workforce development while contributing an additional downtown anchor of activity and community building.
2.8	Create a Creative Economy Task Force that includes representatives from the broader arts community, economic development organizations, and City staff to improve and expand the viability of the creative economy in Rochester.
2.9	Build upon the existing sculptures on Route 125 and create a public art walk/sculpture path that leads into the Downtown.
2.10	Create an approval process and supporting application/forms/resources for temporary pop-up projects, Tactical Urbanism installations, and events.
2.11	Develop a process that partners property owners with artists to increase public art in the City.
2.12	Review and update the City's special events permit to ensure that there are no regulatory barriers to achieving the City's vision of hosting diverse, exciting events (examples include food trucks, festivals, etc.).
2.13	Increase the number of events held in Downtown in all seasons throughout the year and at different times (weekends, evenings, etc). Consider a holiday pop up market to fill vacant store spaces, a Downtown Street Fair (pedestrian traffic only), and/or an Art Walk/Festival.
2.14	Continue to improve advertising and marketing of Downtown events and programming.
2.15	Identify opportunities for cultural programming and heritage based tourism.
2.16	Assess possible Downtown locations for the Rochester Farmer's Market.
2.17	Create opportunities for flexible programming and activities and informal gathering spaces in the Downtown.
2.18	Organize a volunteer neighborhood watch. Work with the Police Department to employ safety protocols and walking patrols.

03 RIVERWALK AND WATERFRONT CONNECTIONS

Rochester does not currently capitalize on its river frontage. A fully implemented Riverwalk along the Cocheco River will greatly enhance the Downtown environment and reconnect land uses and people in the Downtown with the river. It will also facilitate greater access from the Downtown to larger green spaces at the edge of the Downtown such as Hanson Pines to the North and the Fairgrounds and land behind William Allen School to the South. This access will be a selling point to new Downtown residents and businesses. This investment should be matched by a comprehensive set of pedestrian connections and green infrastructure projects that radiate out from the Riverwalk and reconnect the Downtown to the River. The creation of this Riverwalk along the Cocheco River will serve three principal purposes.

Enhancement of Pedestrian Mobility and Circulation: A Riverwalk will enhance mobility and the circulation of people within Downtown Rochester by encouraging pedestrian travel within the city and providing an alternative to motor vehicle travel. Once completed, pedestrians will be able to more easily and enjoyably reach their destinations. The Riverwalk should also serve a diverse population representing all ages and abilities.

Connecting the Urban Center to the River Corridor: Access from the urban core of the Downtown to natural segments of the Cocheco River corridor will be enhanced. The final design should have an appreciation for natural resources associated with the river and should result in improved air and water quality, protection of sensitive areas, and wildlife habitat. Areas of the riverwalk are also well suited for outdoor dining, retail, and economy activity. The City should identify opportunities for these uses along the Riverwalk and work with property owners and developers to encourage these during the site plan review process. Access from the riverwalk to mixed use activities and buildings should be These elements will enhance the experience along the Riverwalk and create a setting that will attract pedestrians.

Provide Opportunities for Recreation, Education, and Healthful Outings: The Riverwalk will provide users with opportunities for recreation and relaxation, improved health, awareness of natural resource areas, and opportunities for social interaction. Respect for and consideration of private property rights as well as public user rights will be central to this design. The trail corridor will be well marked, easy to access, and will provide information

Case Study: Riverwalk and Waterplace Park Providence, RI

Built in 1994, Waterplace Park and the Riverwalk are situated within the heart of the City. Waterplace Park and the adjacent Riverwalk have a welcoming and thoughtful design, which has become a focal point of Providence's revitalized downtown area. But what really makes these great places is the wealth of activities they host. Between the annual Convergence art festival, the WaterFire installation which runs on selected nights most of the year, the Summer Concert Series, and long-term installations of public art, there's always something going on—and all of these events are free. In 2019 the Riverwalk was extended, new green space was created, and a pedestrian bridge was constructed.



Photo Courtesy: Liz West

WYANDOTTE FALLS BUILDING

The resulting Riverwalk also presents opportunities to increase the resiliency of the Downtown area. With natural resource areas and open spaces set aside along the river corridor these areas will absorb flood waters, help cool the City in summer, and provide other ecosystem benefits. This amenity will also support Economic Development efforts within the Downtown, and may support the shifting of some land uses and rear façade upgrades.

This four story renovated mill structure on Bridge Street, shown in the photo below, currently houses 72 residential units managed by the Rochester Housing Authority. As the City turns its attention back to the River, these units could be relocated to a new facility in the Downtown area. That would allow for the redevelopment of this structure by the City to accommodate a mix of uses and public access.



HANSON PINES BRIDGE AND TRAIL

03

Located adjacent to Spaulding High School just north of the Downtown this park and trail system serve as a model for future green spaces within and adjacent to the Downtown. Connecting the Riverwalk to Hanson Pines will create an active pedestrian and bicycle corridor, and an opportunity to expand access to an urban forest. Beyond the recreational value, these green spaces are critical for carbon sequestration and preserving air quality.

Photo Courtesy: Resilience Planning



Photo Courtesy: Rochester NH Riverwalk Facebook Page



03. RIVERWALK AND WATERFRONT CONNECTIONS

#	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
3.1	Complete the engineering and construction of the entire Riverwalk.
3.2	Formalize access points to the river for water activities that are safe, clearly marked, and don't negatively affect vegetation along the river or lead to erosion.
3.3	Construct boat launches at key locations to facilitate river activity, such as kayaking and canoeing.
3.4	Establish locations along the Riverwalk for permanent and temporary art installations, gathering nodes, and performance spaces.
3.5	Identify pedestrian connections and green infrastructure projects that radiate from the Riverwalk.
3.6	Create and install wayfinding and interpretive signage along the Riverwalk.
3.7	Support projects and programs that expand the Riverwalk and enhance river activities. This includes future planning and design efforts and plans to improve river access and redevelopment opportunities such as the one presented by the Wyandotte Mill.
3.8	Work with Police Department and Recreation Department to ensure the Riverwalk is safe and active, and recruit and train interested citizens to serve as ambassadors.
3.9	Explore ways to connect the Riverwalk to trails that lead to other parts of the City and to nearby communities.



04 TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF) DISTRICT

New private investment is beginning to occur in Downtown Rochester, and it is important to capture the new increment in values to wholly or partially fund infrastructure upgrades in this area of the City.

Rochester currently has TIF Districts identified in other areas (the Granite State Business Park and the Ridge District) to aid in the funding of improvements, but the Downtown area has not had access to this economic development tool.

A TIF District would demonstrate to private investors the City's commitment to investing in the Downtown. The resulting TIF plan would provide a mechanism for analyzing infrastructure needs and a plan for how to finance them. This could include investments in roadways, lighting, wayfinding, landscaping of the streetscape, and snow removal systems compatible with the character of the district. A TIF would also allow for the acquisition of property in the district, funding administration, maintenance and upkeep of the TIF District and TIF funded projects. The first step will be to carefully analyze the

feasibility of adopting a Downtown TIF District. This includes the evaluation of possible private investment proposals to understand how much public investment would be supported by the TIF revenues. These scenarios help understand the potential for a relationship between a private investment and the amount of public investment it could support in the first year after completion. Lebanon, NH completed such analysis in 2018 and may serve as an example for Rochester to consider.

The creation of a TIF District would not happen in isolation. Such an effort should be coordinated along with the Downtown Economic Revitalization Zone, and should contribute to Downtown improvements along with Impact Fees and other tools. It will be important to examine the current use of RSA 79E in Rochester during this analysis to ensure that it does not negatively impact the potential of a TIF District. If a potential conflict is identified there is flexibility in how RSA 79E can be utilized locally. The proposed TIF District should include all the parcels that allow first floor commercial within the Downtown area and is shown on the Implementation map on page 16.

What is a TIF District?

A powerful economic development tool for funding desirable public improvements that stimulate community development, business growth, and new job creation.

How Does a TIF District Work?

A district is created with boundaries that include areas where public improvements are needed and areas where new development or redevelopment is likely to take place. Then an inventory of the properties within the area is completed. This establishes the base value of the district.

After development or redevelopment activity the taxes on the base value continue to get distributed in the usual way. The additional taxes derived from the new value are then dedicated for use to benefit the TIF district and/or to service debt on a bond used to fund the improvements.

What can TIF be used for?

Acquiring, constructing, reconstructing, improving, altering, extending, operating, maintaining or promoting improvements to the physical elements of the district area.

04

Case Study: Claremont, NH

Although smaller in population, Downtown Claremont, NH is similar in many ways to Downtown Rochester. In 2007, the City implemented a Tax Increment Financing District and constructed a parking garage and began the redevelopment of the Sawtooth Building.

This activity resulted in private investment in two adjacent mills which now house a Common Man Inn, and Restaurant and State offices. The Sawtooth Building was partially demolished in the process, and is now home to Claremont Makerspace.



Source: Russ Thibeault

04. TIF DISTRICT

#	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
4.1	Identify the boundaries and carefully analyze the feasibility of adopting a Downtown TIF District.
4.2	Create the TIF District and an initial plan that identifies what infrastructure improvements and property purchases it should fund.
4.3	Once established market the TIF District along with the Downtown Economic Revitalization Zone and other tools that will facilitate new development activity.

Case Study:

Keene, NH

Keene adopted enabling legislation for a TIF District (RSA 162-K) in 1982. In 2000 the City identified an area where development or redevelopment could create new tax value and new jobs. The City then identified public improvements and infrastructure needs in the same area that would benefit the district.

An inventory of the assessed value of the proposed district showed that there was \$12,546,000 of existing assessed value in the district. New development activity within the proposed district was projected to create \$8 million of new assessed value. Once the final TIF plan details were completed the district was created and the public improvements were constructed. To date \$21,962,100 of new assessed value has been created within the development district resulting in \$824,457 of additional tax revenue every year, and over 2,000 jobs. have been created within the district.



Photo Courtesy: Downtown Keene NH Facebook Page

05 ROCHESTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Rochester Economic Development

Commission: The REDC is a dedicated group of stakeholders working to promote economic growth, vitality, and the diversity of businesses in Rochester. The REDC is composed of stakeholders, residents, and leaders dedicated to promoting economic growth, vitality, and the diversity of businesses in Rochester.

The Economic Development Commission consists of eleven (11) members, two (2) of which members are ex-officio. The Mayor and the Economic Development Director are the ex-officio, non-voting members of the Commission.

A Place-Based Economic Development

Approach: More and more communities are recognizing the value of harnessing the power of placemaking to yield economic development results.

Place-based economic development is the practice of using a community's public amenities, assets, and strengths to make economic progress. Focusing on the features that make Rochester special, building on

existing assets, and using them to attract new investment and strengthen existing businesses is key to this approach. Taking a holistic approach to economic development, the REDC should examine ways to improve workforce development, housing options, and access to technology.

The Economic Development Commission should also explore options for greater direct involvement in redevelopment of City-owned downtown properties. This may require creating a Business and Industrial Development Authority to exercise the powers and duties granted to such an Authority by RSA Chapter 162-G, or by forming a non-profit corporation to receive, acquire and redevelop downtown properties. Such a change would enable the Economic Development Commission to more easily explore future options for greater direct involvement in the redevelopment of Downtown properties.

Case Study: St. Albans, VT

The City of St. Albans has worked to strategically use public funds in order to attract private investment. That has proved to be successful. But they didn't just spend public money and cross their fingers about the private investments. Agreements with private entities were negotiated in advance. Additionally, knowing what public funding options are available for a community is beneficial for stretching municipal dollars for financing various portions of projects. For the St. Albans projects, tax increment financing (TIF) funds were used for financing parking upgrades and transportation enhancements which included the streetscape improvements on Main Street. In addition, State funding was quickly identified and accessed for cleanup efforts of hazardous materials parcels to be redeveloped. These proactive lessons should inform and inspire efforts in Rochester going forward.



Photo Courtesy: St. Albans Downtown

05

Many examples exist in New Hampshire of this type of Business and Industrial Development Authority including the Dover Business and Industrial Development Authority, Belknap County Economic Development Corporation, and the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation (MEDC).

Over the past several decades, MEDC has been involved in commercial and industrial development, downtown revitalization, financial planning, and securing funding for a number of business non-profit organizations, and

community agencies. Many of the significant (and difficult) projects completed in southwestern NH have core financial infrastructures built by MEDC.

Economic Revitalizations Zones (ERZs): The ERZ tax credit program, which is detailed in RSA 162-N, offers a short term business tax credit for projects that improve infrastructure and create jobs in designated areas of a municipality. This tool is currently available to the City and could be further utilized by a Business and Industrial Development Authority to encourage development activity along with TIF and other redevelopment strategies.

05. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

#	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
5.1	Promote the Economic Revitalization Zone within Downtown to stimulate reinvestment and redevelopment.
5.2	Identify ways to further utilize the Economic Revitalization Zone tax credit program along with a Downtown TIF District and other revitalization strategies.
5.3	Create a detailed development feasibility plan for the redevelopment opportunity sites identified in the Downtown Plan. This would include researching property ownership, site constraints, ease of assembling parcels, willingness of the property owner to sell/redevelop, as well as assessing total economic impact.
5.4	Explore options for greater direct involvement from the Economic Development Commission in the developed and redevelopment of Downtown properties through the creation of a Business and Industrial Development Authority.
5.5	Work with the Historic District Commission to leverage tax funds that will support rehabilitation of existing buildings, and to revamp the sign and façade program.
5.6	Establish special grant programs or other ways of providing design assistance, building renovations, workforce development, housing options, and marketing to potential tenants.
5.7	Develop a Downtown business identification and recruitment plan.
5.8	Develop public relations materials and a marketing strategy to implement this Downtown Master Plan.
5.9	Support and help implement private sector initiatives that are consistent with this Downtown Plan.
5.10	Begin marketing and public relations efforts for Downtown businesses, available spaces, and initiatives.

06 REGULATIONS & ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The City of Rochester should continue to remove regulatory barriers and uncertainty in an effort to attract development interest in the Downtown. This continued refinement of the regulatory process will make it more user friendly and predictable for applicants.

A new component of this work should be the creation of a **Form-Based Code** with clear design standards. This new regulatory approach would focus on the location, height, and mass of buildings. It places greater emphasis on the buildings physical form and relationship to the public way than it does on the uses within. There is a realization that uses change, but the buildings in the Downtown exist for generations. In order to ensure that this approach fits with the context and character of Downtown Rochester it is recommended that architectural standards and streetscape standards also be included.

The HDC has been a critical player in the Downtown and their work can be seen in several restored properties and the many Buildings that have been renovated to house new uses while retaining some of their important architectural elements. Over time the City should also work with the Historic District Commission (HDC) to find ways to shift their role in the regulatory process. For instance, It would be advantageous to have the HDC serve in an advisory capacity to the Planning Board for redevelopment projects in the Downtown.

Given the interest in attracting new development to Downtown Rochester there should be an evolving first floor use requirement. Initially non-residential uses should only be required along critical transportation corridors. In these areas a limited depth of the first floor should fall within this requirement, and building amenities such as lobbies, rental offices, and workout facilities should be allowed. Over time as the number of residential units and new businesses increases this standard can be revisited.

Case Study: Form Based Code & Design Standards Dover, NH

The City of Dover's Central Business District was identified by many stakeholders as a positive example for Rochester. Dover was the first New Hampshire community to adopt a Form Based Code, and did so in 2009. Since then the City has added additional districts and refined their standards. In 2019 the City added architectural design and streetscape standards as well. This should serve as a good example for the City of Rochester because the standards have been in existence and have resulted in development projects that can be reviewed and visited.

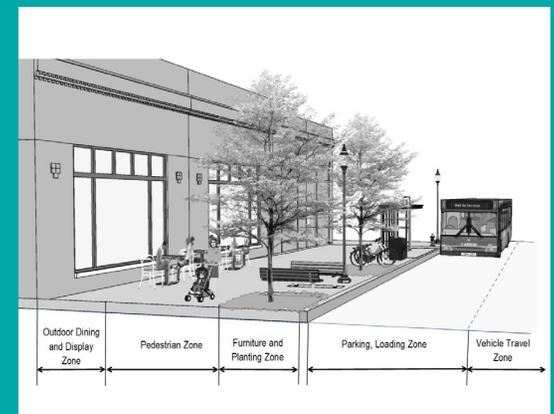


Photo Courtesy: City of Dover



06

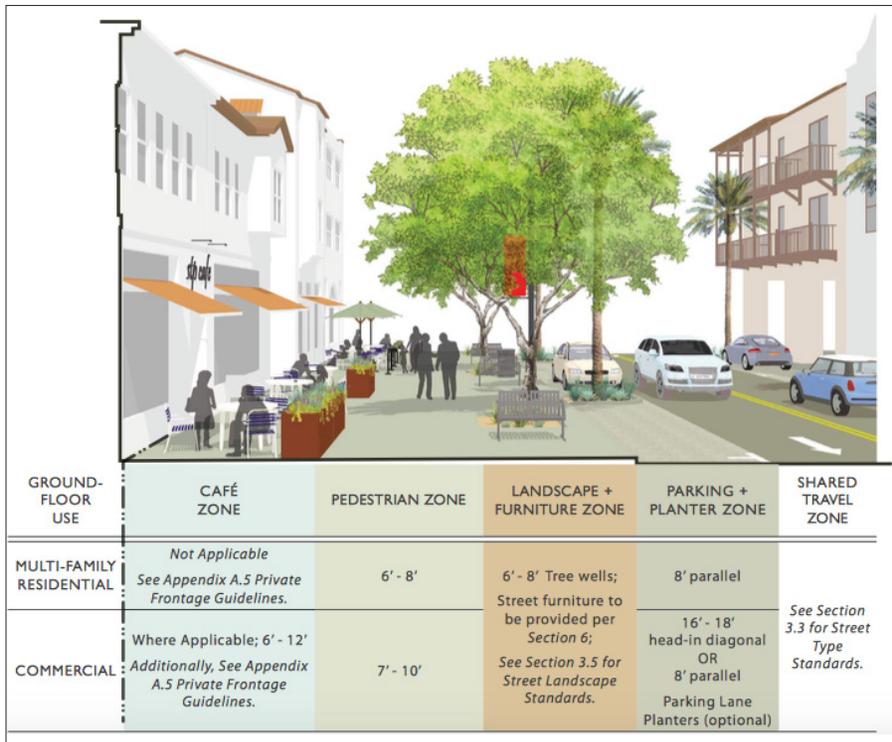


Photo Courtesy: Form Based Codes Institute

What is a Form Based Code?

A form-based code is a land development regulation that **fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm** by using physical form (rather than allowable land uses) as the organizing principle for the code. A form-based code is a regulation, not a mere guideline, adopted into city or town law. A form-based code offers a powerful, visual, and user friendly alternative to conventional zoning regulation.

The left-hand image shows how form-base code regulations can be applied to a Downtown environment to enhance walkability, the public realm, and the overall streetscape.

06. REGULATIONS & ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

#	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
6.1	Record regulatory barriers and uncertainties as they are identified so they can be addressed and resolved annually.
6.2	Map the regulatory process and produce a user friendly handout to guide applicants and increase consistency between City Departments.
6.3	Transition to a Form Based Code regulation from the existing zoning ordinance to create a more user friendly and visual regulation to guide development and redevelopment efforts.
6.4	Develop architectural standards and streetscape standards as a component of a Form Based Code.
6.5	Develop energy efficiency standards for development review.
6.6	Perform an assessment of code enforcement activities and needs.
6.7	Investigate new approaches to code enforcement that would allow a phased approach linked to the proposed projects size and scope.
6.8	Work with the Historic District Commission in an advisory capacity on design review of infill development projects.

07 PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Developing strong partnerships between the City and local organizations, businesses, community members, and developers will increase capacity for Downtown improvement projects, build public support, and improve the quality and authenticity of those projects.

The City can partner with developers and others to reimagine new uses and configurations of properties that align with the vision for the Downtown. Local groups, boards, and organizations will also be strong assets for piloting placemaking projects, building momentum for the Riverwalk, refining City policies to align with the Downtown Master Plan, and breathing life into public spaces within the Downtown through activities and

events. Collaboration is a way for groups to pool resources, create social capital and strong relationships, and build trust within the community.

To authentically take a collaborative, placemaking approach to economic development, the City of Rochester should develop creative investment strategies and downtown projects that:

- Work with existing infrastructure and assets
- Leverage existing funding or projects
- Catalyze community partnerships and grassroots support
- Transform the way we think of leadership; placemaking encourages collaborative leadership at all levels and assumes that community wisdom is on equal footing with academic and professional planning expertise.

Community Events

Rochester already has a number of events and activities that draw residents and visitors in or near the Downtown. Some are large multi-day events and some are smaller, monthly or weekly events that bring people together. These events should be promoted throughout the region and new events should compliment what is already being done.

- Rochester Arts Awards
- Performances at the RPAC
- Concerts on the Common
- National Night Out
- Festival of Trees
- Holiday Parade
- Free Comic Book Day
- Porch Fest
- Fireworks Festival
- LGBTQ+ Pride Festival
- Trick or Treat on the Town/Zombie Walk
- Wings and Wheels
- Rochester Writer's Night
- Rochester Fair
- Memorial Day Parade
- Foley Run
- Farmers Market
- Business Round Table
- Sidewalk Talks

...and more!



Photo Courtesy: Matt Wyatt

07

Potential Local Partners

One of the City's main assets, as mentioned at the beginning of this document, is its people. There is significant work already being done in Rochester by community members that are making it a better place to live. Partnerships between these groups and the City can further Downtown improvement efforts tremendously. They include:

Rochester Main Street

Certified National Main Street program; Focuses on economic development, historic preservation, and urban design,

Rochester Economic Development Commission

Attracts new business and industry to Rochester by improving labor force, education, and quality of life,

Rochester Riverwalk Committee

Fundraises, plans for, and coordinates the construction of the Riverwalk,

Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce

Provides resources to businesses, visitors, and the public in Rochester and surrounding communities,

Strafford Economic Development Corporation

Connects local businesses with financing resources and technical assistance.

Greater Rochester Young Professionals Network

A networking group of young professionals (18-40 yrs. old) in the greater Rochester region,

Rochester Commission for Arts and Culture

Supports, encourages, and recognizes Rochester's arts community. Manages comprehensive website of arts and cultural resources and event calendar,

Rochester Historical Society

Manages the Historical Society museum and offers educational programming,

Rochester Museum of Fine Arts

A community art initiative dedicated to increasing public accessibility to contemporary art made regionally, nationally, and internationally. Located in the Community Center and Public Library,

Rochester Performing Arts Center (RPAC)

Provides an intimate venue offering affordable entertainment, programming, event and rehearsal space, a recital hall, practice studios, and an art gallery.

Rochester Opera House

A vibrant historic theater built in 1908 and beautifully restored. Presents high quality theater performing arts, theater, dance, and more.

Rochester Listens

Build, strengthen, and sustain civic infrastructure through facilitation, public discourse, and dialogue focused on community issues,

Rise Up Rochester

Unify the City through grassroots revitalization, beautification, and Downtown improvements.

Make Rochester Great

Improves the City through positive action and revitalization projects.

Rochester Housing Authority

Establishes eligibility and rent requirements for workforce housing.

Rochester United Neighborhoods

A grassroots network made up of citizens and elected officials committed to reducing crime and fear of crime, improving quality of life, and building community.

Rochester Rotary Club

A community service and volunteer organization serving the Rochester community.

City of Rochester Departments

Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, Public Works, and the Police Department should be involved in the implementation of many of the recommendations in this Plan.

Rochester Planning Board

Reviews site plans and drafts and interprets land use regulation

Rochester Historic District Commission

Preserves and enhances the character and built infrastructure in the Historic District through development review.

Rochester Community Center

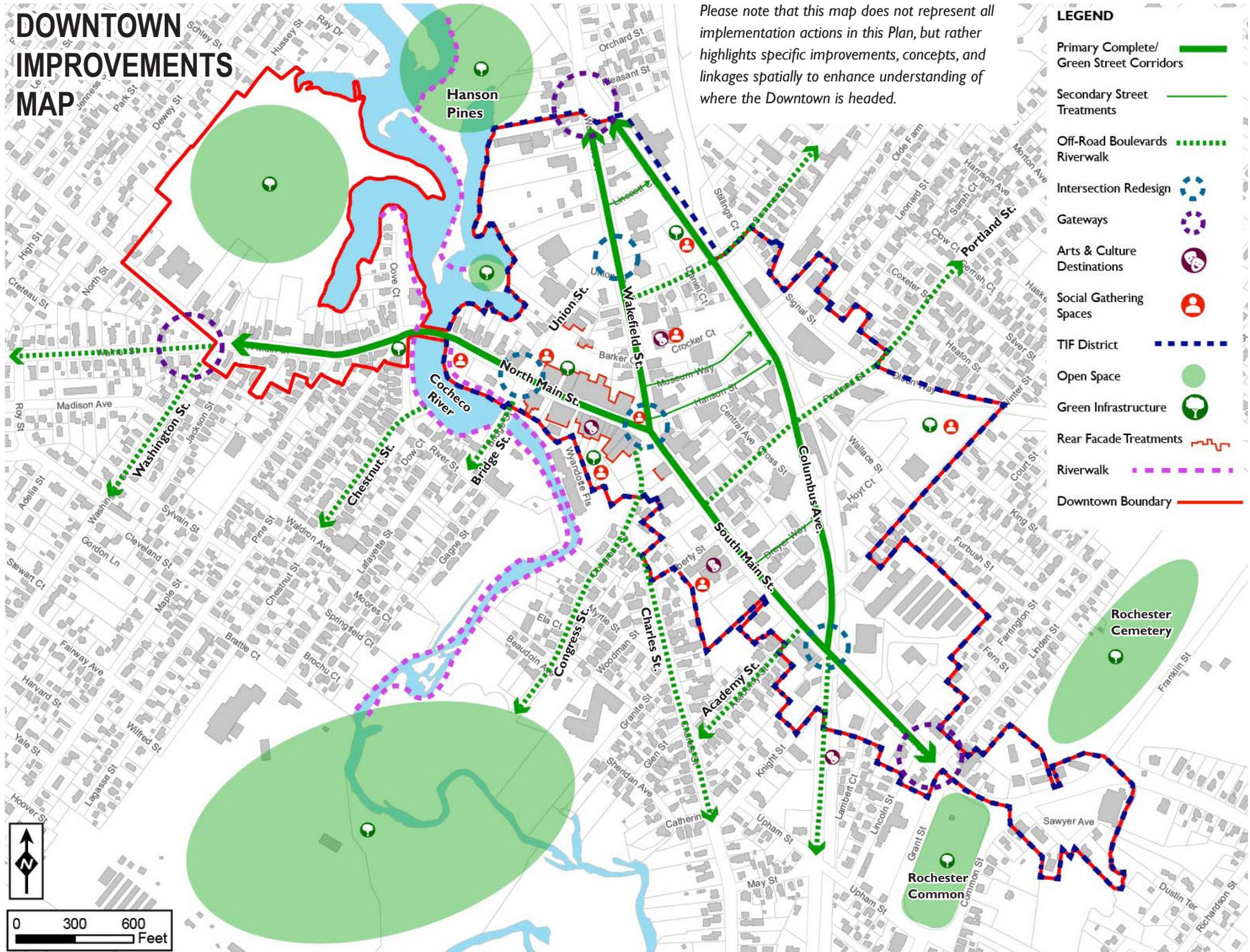
Manages recreation facilities and offers programming and community services for families, children, seniors, and everyone in between.

Rochester Public Library

Provides community members with free access to information and materials that fulfill educational, intellectual, and cultural needs. Provides equipment, programming, meeting rooms, and more.

07. PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

#	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
7.1	Track performance measures and progress made on implementation actions in this Downtown Master Plan annually.
7.2	As a Downtown stewardship group, engage with the City Council, Boards, and Committees throughout the year to promote implementation of the Downtown Master Plan, and to acknowledge the progress being made.
7.3	Initiate a semi-annual “State of the Downtown” report from this group to the City Council.
7.4	Identify organizations and individuals to share the Downtown Master Plan with and engage in its implementation.
7.5	Implement a beautification program for additional downtown properties that are in need of better stewardship.



RESOURCES

Below are resources that may be helpful to the City during the implementation phase of this project.

POP-UP PLACEMAKING TOOLKIT

by the American Association of Retired Professionals

TACTICAL URBANISM AND THE ROLE OF PLANNERS

by Laura Pfeifer

CREATIVE ECONOMY TOOLKIT

by NH Creative Communities Network

HOW CITIES CAN GROW THE MAKER MOVEMENT

by the National League of Cities

THE MAKERSPACE PLAYBOOK

by Maker Media

BUILDING VIBRANCY: CREATIVE PLACEMAKING FOR GATEWAY CITY GROWTH AND RENEWAL

by MassInc and ArtPlace

FORM-BASED CODES: A STEP BY STEP GUIDE FOR COMMUNITIES

by Chicago Metropolitan Agency of Planning

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN PARKS

by the National Recreation and Park Association

URBAN STREET DESIGN GUIDE

by the National Association of City Transportation Officials

URBAN STREET STORMWATER GUIDE

by the National Association of City Transportation Officials

MADE IN PLACE: SMALL-SCALE MANUFACTURING AND NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

by Smart Growth America

POP UP PLACEMAKING PROGRAM

by Holyoke Redevelopment

CULTURAL MAPPING TOOLKIT

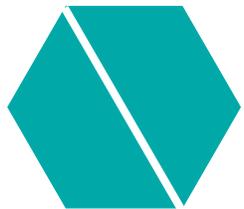
by Arts Now

REBUILDING DOWNTOWN: A GUIDEBOOK FOR REVITALIZATION

by Smart Growth America



Photo Courtesy: John Gisis



Existing Conditions

This section of the Downtown Plan summarizes the inventory, analysis, and outreach tasks completed in 2019, and highlights the information that informed the updated vision and implementation plan.

- **Downtown Planning Projects** – this entailed collecting and analyzing other completed efforts related to the Downtown for direction.
- **Outreach & Engagement** – this required reaching out to the community for their feedback and direction on the future of Downtown Rochester.
- **Market Analysis** – this involved looking at the City and surrounding region to better understand the ability of the economy to support activity within the Downtown area.

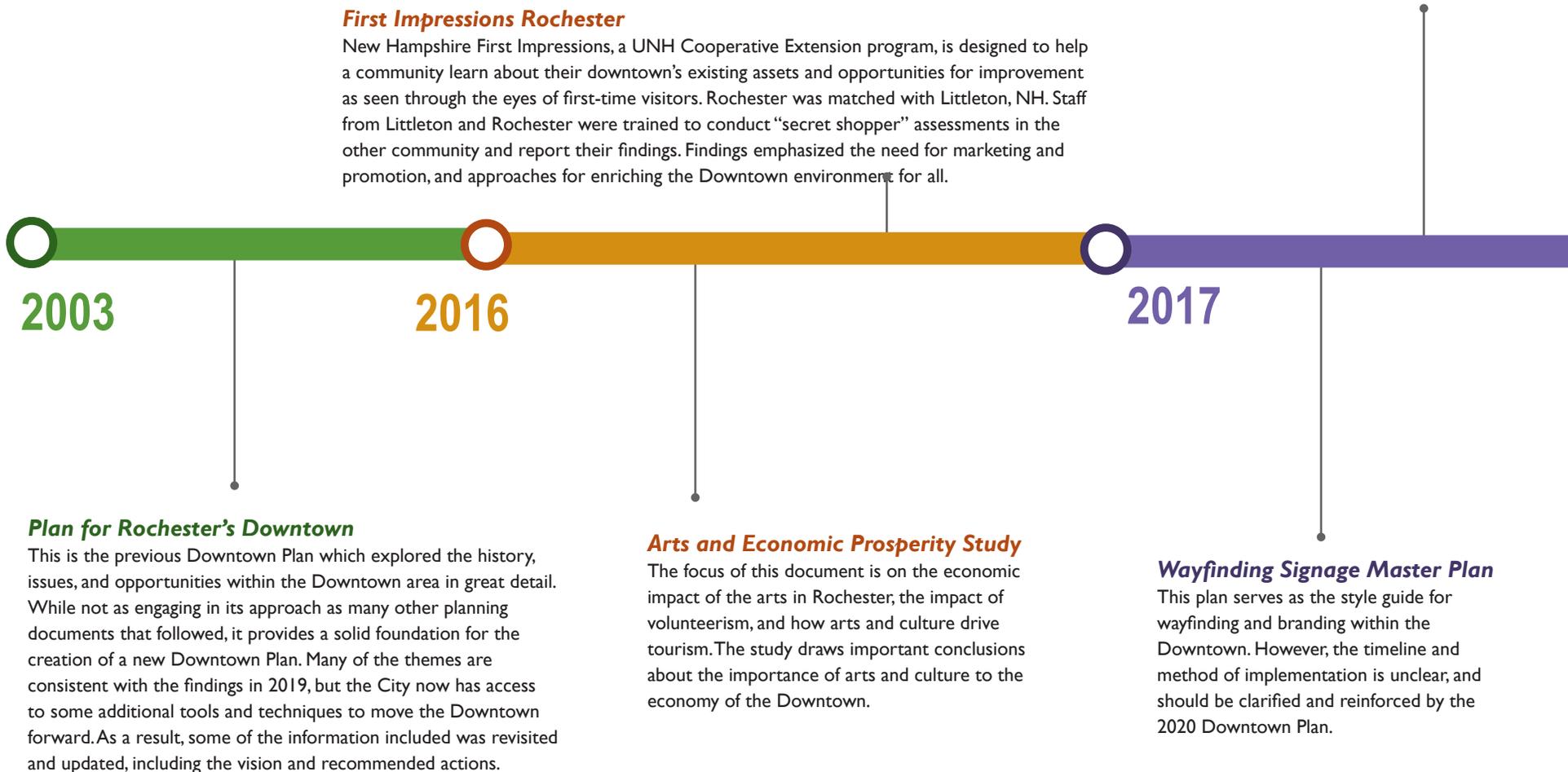
The City of Rochester has been busy with a variety of planning initiatives since the adoption of the 2003 Plan for Downtown Rochester. The purpose of reviewing these initiatives is to identify what we know about the study area, and to identify any remaining recommendations that should be incorporated in the new plan for the Downtown. This was simply a way to establish a baseline understanding of the Downtown area before further analysis, outreach, and planning occur. This initial analysis required collecting and reviewing each of these previous planning efforts completed by the City for the Downtown to better understand the data gathered, emerging themes, and implementation actions identified.

These sources of information are listed in the graphic on pages 46-47.



Photo Courtesy: Resilience Planning

TIMELINE OF DOWNTOWN PLANNING INITIATIVES



Downtown Rochester Housing Workshop

This effort focused on how to best accommodate a range of housing types at various levels of affordability in the Downtown. The stated goal being revitalization without gentrification.

Greening America’s Communities

The focus of this project is only on a portion of the Downtown area; however, the recommended green infrastructure approaches can be incorporated throughout the Downtown and can radiate out across the city over time. The suggested green infrastructure solutions incorporate pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, stormwater management and flooding mitigation, while enhancing the attractiveness and usability of the Downtown.

Rochester Riverwalk Master Plan Update

This is an update of the 2007 Riverwalk Plan. It presents a captivating vision, outlines the myriad of benefits this project has to the Downtown, and discusses some aspects have been implemented already. The challenge that remains is how to fund this project and move it to completion.

Transportation Master Plan

This city-wide plan includes important data and analysis related to the transportation infrastructure in Rochester. It also addresses the need to accommodate a broader set of transportation modes in the Downtown, and suggests that the traffic pattern and key intersections in the Downtown be studied further before implementing future infrastructure changes in this area of the community.

2018

2019

Historic District Design Guidelines

These guidelines serve as a manual to encourage historic preservation within the Historic District which falls within the downtown project area. However, it has been noted that this resource does not address infill development, and may be intimidating to developers looking to redevelop existing structures.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Update

This Plan presents an overview of existing demographic and market data that inform the Plan’s recommendations. This effort overlaps nicely with many of the themes identified in the other earlier planning efforts related to Downtown Rochester.

Downtown Density Update

This study highlights the important role that land use regulations play in the redevelopment of the Downtown. This includes removing regulatory obstacles and updating the zoning and site plan regulations while considering the interplay with design guidelines and the historic overlay district. The document also addresses non-regulatory barriers. This project resulted in important regulatory changes, but more must be done to move the Downtown forward.

Redevelopment Scenic & Salinger Block

Chinburg Properties has acquired downtown Rochester’s vacant Scenic Theater and Salinger block buildings as part of a \$8 million project to create 52 market-rate apartments and two commercial spaces. “The Scenic Salinger,” will involve preserving and repurposing the Scenic Theater and Salinger block’s historic facades. Chinburg company has approval from the Planning Board and Historic District Commission to knock down the dilapidated rears of the structures and replace them with a new, four-story structure.



Photo Courtesy: Michelle Mears



Photo Courtesy: Resilience Planning



Photo Courtesy: Resilience Planning

EMERGING THEMES FROM PAST PLANNING PROJECTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Attracting investment will require a shift in the development focus from elsewhere in the City to the Downtown. In order to do this and become a “complete downtown” the area must become a mixed-use center. Other needs include marketing, façade improvements, wayfinding, and removal of remaining regulatory barriers.

HOUSING: There is an identified need for a diversity of housing opportunities. Since the 2003 Plan was developed, the City has been working to create a clear regulatory path for creating new housing units. Yet some regulatory and non-regulatory barriers still remain, and generating alternatives to market rate housing still presents a challenge.

ARTS AND CULTURE: The arts are an investment that deliver community well-being and economic opportunity for the Downtown. There is a clear need to support the Opera House and other existing arts and culture resources and activities while initiating additional opportunities that serve as a catalyst for activity and change Downtown.

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS: An investment in infrastructure is needed and will create opportunities to incorporate traffic calming measures, improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities, gathering spaces and natural amenities. This will improve safety for all modes of travel, the aesthetics of the Downtown, and help identify the Downtown as a destination.

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES: With a commitment to a complete streets and incorporation of a green streets policy, the City can accommodate pedestrians, bicycles, and public transportation options in all future transportation improvements while improving water quality and generating other benefits (clean air, carbon sequestration, improved aesthetics, etc.). It is also important to ensure that parking requirements are flexible and creative to support the evolution of the Downtown.

SENSE OF PLACE: Rochester’s history and architecture are unique, and important to the look and feel of the Downtown. Historic preservation, the arts, green infrastructure investments, and economic development initiatives can work together to improve the quality and appearance of the Downtown.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE: With the Cochemo River running through the downtown and several large green spaces at the edge of the Downtown, there are many opportunities to incorporate natural resources into the built environment. These investments will reduce heat island effect, clean stormwater, limit flooding, provide habitat, improve mental and physical health, add beauty, and provide many other desirable benefits.

RECREATION: The open spaces and natural resources within and adjacent to the Downtown also provide places for activity, community building, support the health of residents, and provide amenities for visitors. This includes the Cochemo River, the rail trail, and nearby parks and open spaces (Hanson Pines, the Riverwalk, the schools, Rochester Common, Rochester Cemetery, etc.).

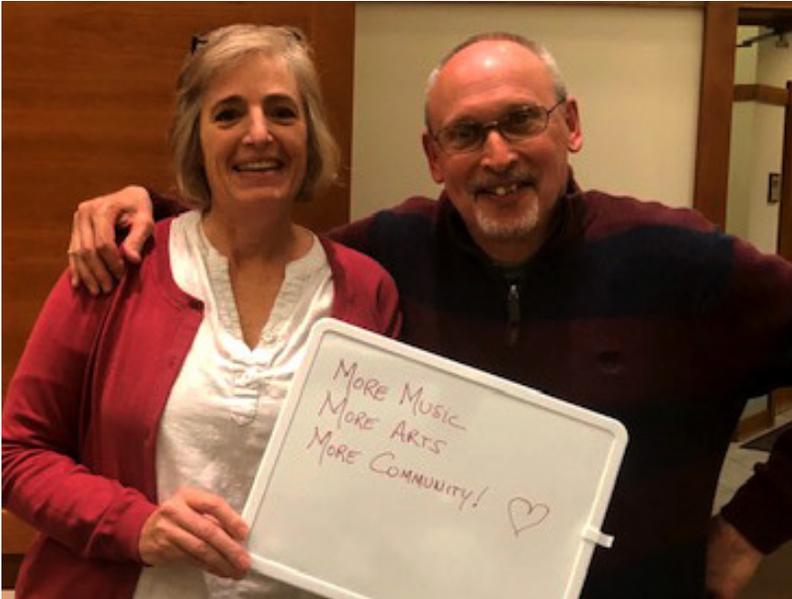
STEWARDSHIP AND LEADERSHIP: Earlier efforts called for a group to serve in the leadership/stewardship role promoting and coordinating efforts in the Downtown. Becoming a Main Street community seems to be a positive step toward this goal. Working together with a focus on the future of the Downtown will allow for better coordination, communication, marketing, and training. It will also be necessary to assist the City with implementing the many actions and initiatives that have been identified in this Plan.



Photo Courtesy: Fosters



Photo Courtesy: Michelle Mears



PUBLIC OUTREACH

With a renewed understanding of the existing conditions in Downtown Rochester, the City of Rochester reached out to residents, employees, business owners, and other stakeholders. This commitment to a broad outreach campaign ensured that this Plan and its implementation actions directly reflect the goals and priorities of the City's residents and visitors.

To accomplish this the City selected a variety of outreach techniques in order to connect with the greatest number of people about what their vision is for the future of Downtown Rochester. These techniques included:

- Focus groups
- Community Events
- A Visual Preference Survey
- An Interactive Map and Feedback Form

A summary of findings from each of these techniques is included in the following pages.

What we heard from the involved stakeholders is:

- That they want strategies to ensure Downtown-wide redevelopment of vacant buildings and empty parcels that meet the vision of the Downtown Master Plan.
- A call for improved safety downtown by actively reducing crime and addressing issues such as drug use and homelessness.
- Interest in capitalizing on the Downtown's proximity to the Cocheco River and the existing energy surrounding the arts in Downtown.
- Continue to organize and promote a variety of community events in the Downtown in all seasons throughout the year.

Focus Group Sessions

On October 9, 2019, six focus group sessions were held at City Hall. The goal of these sessions was to learn about the various perspectives, goals, and priorities of different stakeholders who live or work in Downtown Rochester. Stakeholders were invited to participate in the following group discussions about the future of the Downtown:

- Building owners/business owners/Economic Development Committee members
- City staff and officials
- Arts/culture
- Non-profit organizations
- Development and design professionals
- Downtown residents

The following themes emerged from the focus group discussions:

Arts and Cultural Assets - Art and culture is the central theme and an economic driver for the Downtown.

Equity - There are a range of perceptions and realities related to permit/approval issues, parking, and crime/safety that need to be

understood and addressed. It is important to have members of all socio-economic groups living, working, and shopping Downtown.

Green Space - The River needs to play a bigger role in the Downtown along with other natural resources and green spaces.

Incentives - A Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district is needed downtown. The City also needs to get creative with the buildings they own if they want to encourage redevelopment (give them away, upgrade and rent or sell, or demolish).

Infrastructure - (water, sewer, stormwater) will need improvement/replacement. Transportation infrastructure needs to be studied and changed to make walking, bicycling, and driving in the downtown safer and easier to navigate. Ample parking exists but wayfinding is needed, but future parking solutions need to be planned for.





Community Events

During the public outreach phase of this project, the City hosted one interactive community forum which consisted of two back-to-back sessions. The forum sessions were held in November of 2019 at the Frisbie Memorial Hospital Conference Room, and free child care and refreshments were offered to limit the barriers to participation. The sessions were designed for community members to learn about Rochester's Downtown Master Plan Update, and for the public to have the opportunity to ask questions and offer their feedback on goals they believe should be included in the updated Plan.

Additionally, members of the Downtown Master Plan Steering Committee set up tables to promote the project and collect feedback through

a Visual Preference Survey and an in-person version of the interactive map at several events between August and November of 2019. A list of the events attended are shown below.

- Chamber of Commerce Expo
- Rochester Pride
- Porchfest
- Spaulding High School football games
- Farmers Market
- James Folley Run
- Rochester United Neighborhoods
- Weekly Senior Events

The feedback from these public events was incorporated in the overall results presented on the following pages.

Visual Preference Survey

There were **433 respondents** to the Visual Preference Survey.

Another key component of the community engagement process was a Visual Preference Survey (VPS). Visual Preference Surveys (VPS) allow citizens to rate visual concepts of building designs, landscape characteristics, architectural styles, and streetscape features. The VPS was created to provide an opportunity for citizens to participate in the development of the Plan, and for the City to collect feedback that can help inform future Downtown improvements. The VPS was available for community members to take online and in-person at events, and at City Hall. The feedback collected gives the City a sense of what participants want to see in Rochester's Downtown and informs the Downtown Master Plan document.

For Rochester's VPS, three categories were defined as being central to the evolution of the downtown environment.

Built Infrastructure

This category related to buildings, streets, sidewalks, stormwater systems, and other physical elements often found in a downtown area. Participants expressed a preference for traditional building materials (such as brick).

They also viewed murals as mostly favorable with mural content often dictating their preference. Mixed use buildings that are compatible with the surrounding built environment, yet also unique (variations of color, texture, architectural detail, etc.) ranked high. Bicycle infrastructure, wide sidewalks, outdoor seating, and a mix of vegetation (street trees, perennial gardens, etc.) were all rated as positive streetscape features. There was also a preference for green stormwater infrastructure systems as opposed to a conventional stormwater drainage system.



This indicates a strong desire to preserve the character of existing buildings while encouraging infill development with new mixed-use structures. It also demonstrates support for transportation infrastructure and streetscapes that accommodate all modes of travel and incorporate green infrastructure solutions.

Natural Infrastructure

This category related to parks, trails, connecting with the river, natural components of streetscapes, and other open spaces. For the most part, the natural infrastructure photos received positive ratings. However, some of the concepts were new to participants, like the green vegetated building wall. There was strong support



for canoe/kayak river access, public spaces integrated with vegetation and seating, off-road bike paths, and unique architectural features that incorporate natural systems.

This indicated that participants are interested in incorporating natural elements into the Downtown with more intention, and realizing the many benefits they provide in an otherwise urban and impervious environment.

Social Infrastructure

This category related to gathering spaces, plazas, seating, art, and other elements that draw people together. Similar to the natural infrastructure category, the social infrastructure photos received mostly positive ratings.

Participants especially liked images with outdoor restaurant seating, natural play spaces integrated into the built environment, patios with events and people dancing, the glass moose sculpture, and a sculpture of stone turtles. A vibrant and active streetscape and public realm is a commonality in the images most favored by participants. Overall, they indicated a preferred streetscape and public space amenities like movable seating and public art. They also indicated that they prefer flexible open space that can accommodate a variety of programming and community events.



Photo Courtesy: Trip Advisor



Photo Courtesy: Philadelphia Streets



Photo Courtesy: Smart Growth America

Online Feedback Form and Map

The City also created an interactive map of Downtown Rochester, and asked a series of four questions to obtain feedback about what the residents and property owners would like to see or change in the future. This was available online and was displayed at several community events. There were 157 respondents to the online map exercise.

QUESTION	SUMMARY OF COMMENTS
<p>What is your favorite place in Downtown Rochester?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rochester Common • Parsons Square/Central Square • Restaurants/Pubs (especially Revolution Tap & Grille and its outdoor dining, others include The Garage, Magrillas, Moe's) • Retail Stores (Jetpack Comics, Skeletone Records, Riverstones Framing, antique/thrift stores) • The Opera House • Public Library • Factory Court • The River Walk • The bridge over Cocheco River • Farmer's Market
<p>Please name one thing you like most about Downtown Rochester.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic buildings/architecture • Walkability • It's potential • Free and plentiful parking • Proximity to Cocheco River • Sense of community, small town feel • Small, independent, local businesses • Annual events and festivities • Arts/cultural scene • Wide sidewalks, landscaping, street trees • Nothing/not much
<p>Please name one thing you would like to change in Downtown Rochester.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelop and fill empty, vacant, dilapidated buildings • Improve building facades • Improve vehicular traffic flow • Reduce drugs, crime, and safety issues and address homelessness • Needs more businesses and a higher variety of stores (coffee shop, pharmacy, breweries, market, etc) • Increase overall aesthetics and cleanliness • Continue improving pedestrian environment (more color, public art, pedestrian space, landscaping, outdoor seating, lighting) • Increase diversity and frequency of events for all ages and family friendly attractions/places to visit downtown • Its reputation

Please share one idea you have from away that could work in Downtown Rochester.

- Pocket parks
- Pedestrian only areas of downtown
- 2-way traffic flow
- A Fanuel Hall open market
- Better parks and open space and utilization of the river
- Green infrastructure to manage stormwater
- Brewery/coffee shop
- Downtown street fair (crafters, vendors, etc)
- More downtown programming and activities (food trucks, outdoor movie nights, live music, magic tricks, etc.)
- More gathering spaces and outdoor seating
- More pedestrian police patrols
- Redevelopment along the river
- Pop up shops
- Bike lanes
- Artist studios and a Maker Space

MARKET ANALYSIS

A Great Place to Live and Have Fun

During the Fall of 2019 Russ Thibeault of Applied Economic Research completed a market analysis of the City of Rochester and the surrounding region to inform this master planning process. The results indicate that the Downtown is not currently realizing its full market potentials, and has been languishing for several decades. New investment in downtown has been sparse during this time period, and property values have fallen. As a result, the Downtown no longer has the critical mass to attract local and regional shoppers. **Turning this situation around will require recognizing that the Downtown's most immediate opportunity is in creating an attractive living environment.**

The good news is that the Downtown is already seeing a resurgence in residential investment. Creating an attractive downtown living environment will allow Rochester to capitalize on the strong regional residential market opportunity,

and will help attract Rochester residents back to Downtown. It will also help attract regional big box shoppers to Downtown, and enhance the Downtown business and entertainment environment. All of this will work to reverse the falling downtown property values.

Commercial Sectors

Rochester as a whole is a major retail location drawing shoppers from a wide market to the north, east and west. This demonstrates that there is potential market support for a stronger commercial presence in the Downtown. The Downtown area, however, has not participated in the City's growing retail presence and now lacks the critical mass to function as a regionally significant commercial activity center. Over the last decade or so, Rochester's Downtown has been losing rather than adding businesses, and retail probably cannot lead the way to a robust Downtown in the short term. The most immediate commercial opportunities lie in promoting and



Photo Courtesy: Revolution Taproom Facebook Page

enhancing the existing arts and culture offerings in conjunction with promoting more professional services and dining offerings. This can be accomplished while also attracting start-ups and regional players. This would enhance the Downtown's appeal to the shoppers visiting nearby suburban big box retailers, and would help set the stage for an improved residential environment. Downtown Rochester should continue to be the service and entertainment center for the area (banks, restaurants, legal services, government agencies, medical offices, performance arts, visual arts, etc.) and can build on this role in the coming years.

Residential Sector

The local and regional housing markets are strong. The Rochester market area is expected to add 1,700 new residential units during the next five years, and vacancy rates are extremely low both regionally and locally. Rochester is beginning to be seen as the next opportunity for new housing serving the regional market. This largely because building sites are more available and affordable than in Dover or Portsmouth, and the approval process is less burdensome.

However, rents are lower and this can pose a challenge to the financial feasibility of proposed developments.

Both millennials and empty nesters want a mixed-use environment with entertainment, arts, and natural amenities. Rochester's Downtown can provide that with some investment in improvements. This plan must create a vision of the Downtown as "A Great Place to Live and Have Fun", and then commit to doing the things that will make that happen. If Rochester wants to play a greater role in this available opportunity, it will need to invest in infrastructure to reflect contemporary expectations.

This includes:

- Creating a pedestrian-friendly environment;
- Capitalizing on the proximity to the river; and
- Coordinating, publicizing, and marketing its art and culture offerings

Downtown Rochester's Geographic Region

- **Captive Market:** 5-minute drive time—expected to regularly visit Downtown for convenience goods and services;
- **Primary Market:** 10-minute drive time—expected to visit Downtown, primarily if the Downtown offers competitively strong or unique retail and service offerings;
- **Secondary Market:** 20-minute drive time—expected to visit downtown for specialty retail, services and for special events with broad appeal.

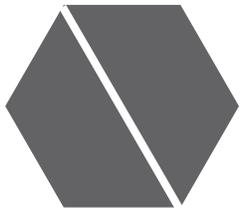


Photo Courtesy: City of Rochester



Major Market Related Take-Aways

- The population density of Rochester’s captive market area is impressive and potentially capable of supporting a more prosperous Downtown:
 - 11,000 people are within a 5-minute drive of Downtown. This represents a daytime population of 13,000 and estimated 6,300 jobs.
 - 25,000 people are within a 10-minute drive.
- The broadly defined market includes 100,000 people within a 20-minute drive, and can provide support for specialty retailing and events with a strong draw.
- Although not a primary source of support, projected 2018-2023 income growth indicates additional market potential as well:
 - 5-minute drive: \$57 million in additional income
 - 10-minute drive: \$146 million in additional income
 - 20-minute drive: \$525 million in additional income
- Projected 2018-23 growth in households provides an opportunity for more downtown living:
 - 5-minute drive: 150 households
 - 10-minute drive: 350 households
 - 20-minute drive: 1,550 households



Appendix
