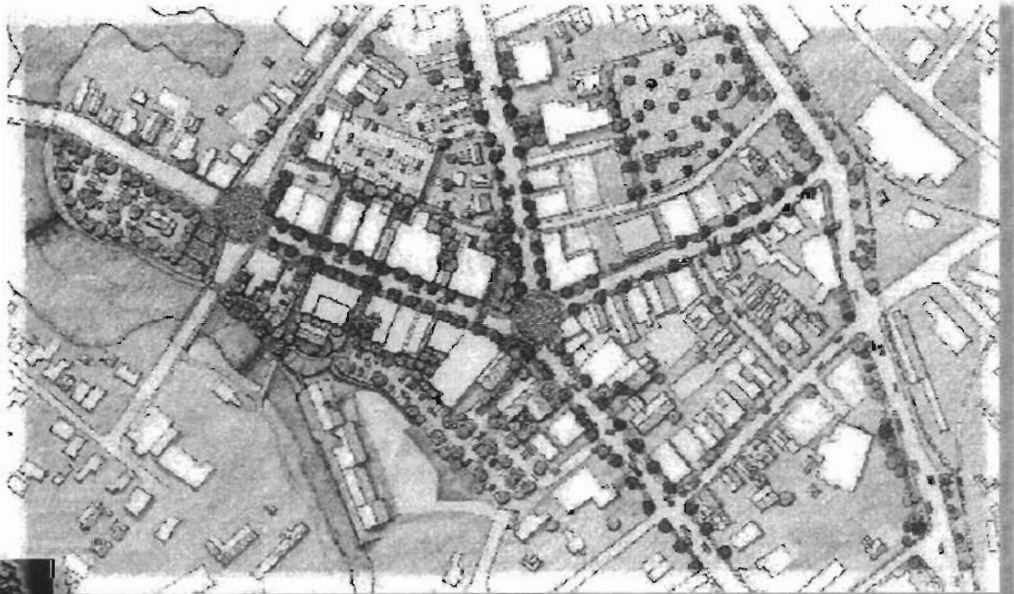


PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN ROCHESTER

FINAL REPORT



June 2003

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Draft for Review and Approval
June 10, 2003

This version of the Plan for Downtown Rochester: Final Report has been prepared as part of the public review and approval process. It has been approved by the Downtown Master Plan Committee. This version includes minor wording changes and other corrections noted in their final review, and an addenda requested by the Committee which is located at the end of the document. This addenda, along with any other required changes or amendments that may arise during the approval process, will be incorporated into the final version.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Downtown Master Plan Committee

Peter Anderson
Harvey Bernier
Cynthia Copeland
William Cormier
Terese Desjardins
Anthony Ejarque
Melodie Esterberg
Al Felgar
Patty Kairo
Sandra Keans
Elaine Lauterborn
Pieter Meulenbroke
Al Miltner, Jr.
Nate Pardue
Janet Pelly
Lisa Stanley
David Tinkham
Richard White

Department of Planning and Development City of Rochester

Mr. Ken Ortmann, Director
Mr. Michael Behrendt, Planner

Consultant Team

The Cecil Group, Inc.
Bonz/REA, Inc.
Rizzo Associates, Inc.

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I. PLAN SUMMARY

The Plan For Downtown Rochester

This is an overview of planning recommendations that can guide the future for Rochester's downtown. The Plan expresses a vision for the downtown, indicates how it could be achieved and suggests specific actions that will lead to success.

A downtown is the heart of a community. It should have a special vitality and character that express its civic image, drawing residents and visitors alike. It should be an economic resource, providing opportunities for business that provides jobs and generates tax revenues. A downtown should be a great place to live, offering unique spaces within close proximity to many other uses. By combining these diverse qualities and uses, a successful downtown plays a positive and central role in the life of the community. It becomes an active urban place that is densely populated and used by all the citizens, in different ways and at different times.

This plan also addresses the future for two village centers in outlying residential districts, Gonic and East Rochester. At a smaller scale that is appropriate for the clustered neighborhoods around them, the village centers can provide an identity and value that contribute to the uses around them and convey a sense of community

Unlike the past, Rochester must take deliberate, planned steps if it is to have successful centers that fulfill these roles.

Rochester's historic downtown evolved "naturally", fulfilling an economic and civic role as the dense regional center where manufacturing, housing, stores, banks and other businesses gathered. It was the municipal center, a place for entertainment and gatherings, and a place for special events. It made common sense to create buildings constructed close together on small lots because when people used horses, trolleys, or railroads to move around, and when they walked between destinations, it was simply the most practical thing to do.

But this was before there were cars, highways, or shopping malls. Most of the traditional downtown remains, inherited by today's citizens. But its vitality has eroded, largely due to changes in economic and transportation patterns. This trend can be reversed if there is both a shared vision and consistent strategy for action. A newly successful downtown will require the joint efforts of the public and private sector, and the active participation of its citizens.

The summary describes the vision for the future, and the goals that must be met within the next ten years in order to accomplish its promise. It describes key clusters of specific recommendations that are contained in the Plan. It then shows how a step-by-step process can be used as a practical approach to implementation.



The Vision...

Working with members of a committee that was assembled to advise the City on the downtown's future, a vision for Rochester's downtown has been framed:

Downtown Rochester should become widely recognized as the attractive and economically successful heart of the city and region that surround it. It should serve Rochester's citizens through the activities, events and uses found there; with a new vitality, it should also draw visitors and patrons from outside the city. The downtown should retain the flavor of a small New Hampshire center that was built through industry and linked to a rural countryside.

Densely clustered buildings within the core of historic streets should be filled with a contemporary mix of shops, businesses, residences, cultural, and civic destinations. Open spaces, plazas and parks should celebrate the history and civic heritage of Rochester, and serve as gateways marking the passage to and from the central areas. The changing character of the Coheco River as it passes through the Downtown should be visible and accessible, providing a unique natural contrast to the urban development along its banks. The edges of the downtown should provide a wide range of uses within sites and along roadways that feature a generous landscape as a common feature. The downtown should be easy to get to, providing a pleasant environment for pedestrians and convenient places to park.

And Specific Goals to be Accomplished...

The City, its businesses and its citizens should work together to accomplish the following goals, so that within ten years the Downtown...

- Supports sufficient concentrations of special stores, restaurants and services to create a destination that attracts both Rochester residents and visitors who will be drawn by the range of activities, continuously filled storefronts, and pleasant environment lining the central streets.
- Attracts a concentration of new arts and crafts, restaurants, entertainment, and cultural activities that reinforce one another and distinguish the district.
- Adapts underutilized existing buildings to serve as housing or live/work studios in the upper floors of former commercial buildings and expands convenient services and amenities that reinforce the downtown as a great place to live.
- Becomes a more substantial contributor to the City's tax base by virtue of significantly increased property values resulting from rising demand for downtown land, buildings, and rental space.
- Celebrates its history by preserving the character and continuity of the historic buildings that are concentrated along North Main, South Main, and Hanson Streets and by preserving individual buildings and features that are significant links to Rochester's past.
- Provides a series of plazas, parks and open spaces, and special sidewalk areas that are pleasant to see, enjoyable to visit and are excellent venues for special events and festivals by virtue of the well maintained landscape and amenities found there.

- Includes more numerous visual and pedestrian connections to the Cocheco River, so that residents and visitors have opportunities to see and enjoy the changing scenery and dramatic drop of the river as it passes through.

- Initiates new open space, pedestrian and bicycle connections to and from the downtown that provide pleasant, green links to neighboring areas.



- Provides new and expanded programs and events that appeal to the family-oriented character of Rochester and also introduces visitors to the Downtown area.
- Emphasizes the character of a “country city” by featuring high quality landscapes and tree-lined streets.
- Uses the theme of the “Lilac City” as an inspiration for unique plantings, signage, and other features.
- Experiences substantive improvements to existing properties and new construction that lifts property values for surrounding areas.
- Enjoys the advantages from substantial roadway intersection and signage improvements designed to calm traffic, enhance convenience for patrons and residents of Downtown, and make pedestrians safe and comfortable.
- Provides adequate convenient parking along streets, near businesses, and in common lots that are connected to an excellent pedestrian network.



The Challenges

Rochester's downtown, as defined for planning purposes, consists of several hundred acres of land at the junction of the roads, rail and river networks that serve the city and the region. The downtown has many assets, including handsome historic structures, major investments in civic and municipal facilities, attractive open spaces and a dramatic stretch of the Cocheco River. It has many active businesses, from retail and restaurants to services that are important to the community. Many people live here in homes, apartments and the historic Wyandotte mill along the river's edge. Thousands pass through the city center daily, filling the streets with traffic for much of the day.

But there are several key challenges for the future, which can best be overcome through coordinated planning and joint public and private actions:

- Downtown as a retail center – The downtown needs to regain the continuity and mix of uses required to maintain a vital retail role, and there are vacant or underutilized ground floor spaces that need to be refilled.
- Downtown as a restaurant/entertainment destination – While there are several restaurants in the downtown and the City-supported Opera House, the downtown as a whole does not draw enough visitors as a general destination.
- Downtown as a business center – Once the center for services, finance and business offices, much of the downtown office space is underutilized and significant floor area is vacant.
- Size of the downtown and economic balance – Many of the downtown properties were built or improved to satisfy both local and regional needs during an earlier economic era. With shifts in the economy, the local demand for goods and services simply does not require the full use of the land or buildings in the entire downtown. Buildings and lots lie empty or underused in notable locations.
- Downtown building conditions – Because of the low demand for downtown space, building revenues do not encourage reinvestment or improvements. If it is very difficult to make a profit on building improvements (or even maintenance), the building stock declines in condition, further pulling down their real estate value.
- Image and character – The downtown, despite many excellent public improvements, handsome



buildings and private improvements, suffers from a negative image where there are deteriorated buildings, empty spaces, and inappropriate uses.

- Downtown as a residential district – While it houses many people, the downtown could provide a more consistently pleasant or complete environment for its residents in terms of amenities and services.
- Circulation and parking – Traffic is congested at times, parking is in short supply in key locations, and the pedestrian environment is compromised by the speed and volume of traffic channeled through the downtown today.
- Economic contribution – The downtown is an “underperforming asset”. With low demand and low property values, it could contribute substantially more to the City’s tax base. Similarly, contributions to employment and other indirect benefits are low today relative to the downtown’s long term potential.

The Planning Process

Planning Area

The limits of the downtown can be defined in several ways, but for the purposes of this process a planning area was used that concentrated on the areas that flank the major arterials that converge in the center of Rochester. In general, this consists of all of South Main Street north of Columbus Avenue; all of North Main Street from downtown to Strafford Square; all of Wakefield Street from Main Street to the intersection with Columbus Avenue; both sides of Union Street. It also includes all of the side streets between Main Street and Columbus Avenue, as well as the first blocks of Congress Street and the Portland Street extension as they stretch south of Main Street.

While it is adjacent to the downtown, the area east of Columbus Avenue has been considered as a separate sub-area of the City. Similarly, the land flanking South Main Street below Columbus could be considered as an adjacent area to the downtown. These adjacent areas were considered as part of an overall study area in the information gathering phase of the plan, however, so that their influence on the downtown could be understood.



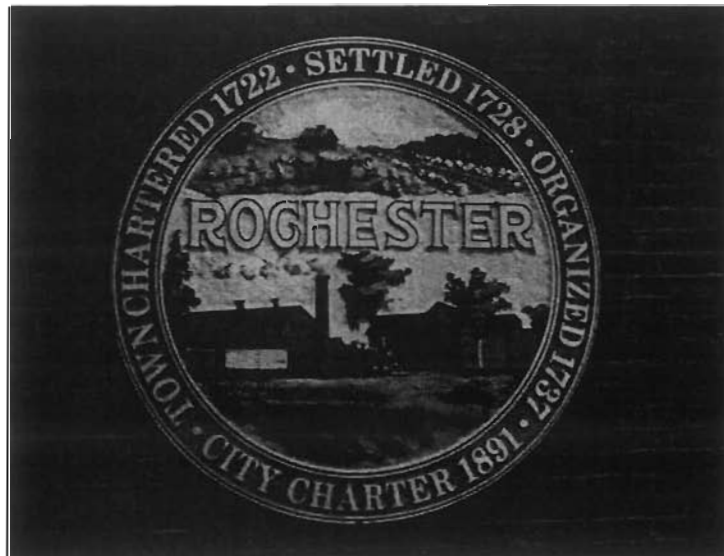
*Figure I-1
Overall Study Area*

Drafting a Plan: Participants and Process

The City of Rochester, through its Planning Department, has sponsored an extensive community planning process over the past two years. This effort is intended to direct City policies, regulations and actions to best support the goals of its citizens. This study of the downtown (and the centers of Gonic and East Rochester) will become a separate chapter in the comprehensive plan. As an integral part of the process, the City Planning Department is then directing a process to consider improvements to the existing land use regulations – principally zoning ordinances – to better accomplish the priorities developed during the community wide planning discussions. The entire effort has been linked to active community participation. As part of the community participation, a special Downtown Committee was appointed by City Council to provide input and advice to the Planning Board at each step.

To provide specialized expertise and technical assistance, the Planning Department engaged the services of an urban design team led by The Cecil Group, Inc. This firm also provided the skills of planners and landscape architects, and added subconsultant specialists in economic and real estate consulting (Bonz/REA Real Estate Advisors) and traffic and infrastructure planning professionals (Rizzo Associates).

The Plan has been developed through research, interviews, discussions with community residents and the active involvement of the Downtown Committee. Prepared as a draft plan, it will be issued for public review and comment. Once it is revised, it will be reissued for inclusion in the citywide land use plan, and formal approval.



Key Recommendations

A Complete Downtown: Mixed Use Center

The Plan encourages a concerted public and private initiative to expand the range and number of uses within the downtown area, to regain a vitality that is essential to its future.

A healthy downtown is different from any other district in the City because it contains a rich mix of uses that are interwoven within a tightly knit area. It must contain enough amounts of compatible uses to create a “critical mass” of activity and identity. As it stands, today, the mix of uses and the level of activity no longer effectively fill the large downtown area inherited from a previous era. Revitalization must include adding new uses and expanding the success of existing uses.

Like most northeastern cities, Rochester experienced a dramatic economic shift away from the traditional uses that built the downtown in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The virtual disappearance of manufacturing eliminated jobs for numerous residents who once lived and shopped within the downtown’s environs. The dispersion of larger retail and office uses to fresh sites, new buildings and highway-convenient locations further reduced the viability of downtown uses that heavily relied on the foot-traffic created by the constant goings and comings of everyone drawn to the regional center. The railroad, once the principal form of long-distance travel, disappeared as an activity-generator, and the depot was lost.

These trends have shaped the challenges for tomorrow. Many businesses rely on locations within active, attractive places to be successful. But, today, many of the downtown buildings are underutilized, with some storefronts and upstairs areas even vacant. However, if there were more active storefronts and successful businesses and a stronger downtown population, then the negative trend would reverse, and the market forces would once again recognize the downtown as a preferred location for more and more investment.

An economic assessment of the downtown suggests a two-stepped solution to this issue. First, the public and private sectors need to actively recruit and support new businesses that enhance the activity and fill the vacant and underused business spaces within the downtown. This effort should be concentrated, first, within the core areas along North Main Street and the properties surrounding its intersections with Union Street and Wakefield Street. It should focus on restaurants and cafes, arts and entertainment uses, and any other destination retail or special service that could attract residents and visitors. These are called “destination uses”, where the goods and services offered do not compete directly with either “big box” retail outlets or convenience stores for everyday items. Wherever possible, financial incentives or special approaches to meeting regulatory standards should be used to encourage appropriate investment. The business community and the City should jointly sponsor an active recruitment process to identify users, work with property owners and market the opportunities within the downtown.

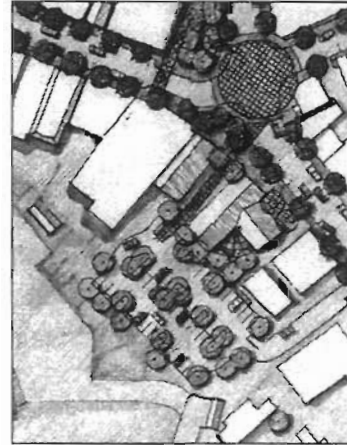
At the same time and in the same way, residential use of the downtown should be expanded. This should include encouraging the conversion of the upper floors of traditional commercial buildings into residential units, bed and breakfast units, or live/work opportunities that may be in demand.

Through the success of the public/private initiatives, the “pioneering” uses that will reoccupy and revitalize the downtown will help change its image and intensify activity. New uses will wish to locate here, taking advantage of the foot traffic and the image that has been created. During this second step, property values will rise, and market forces will take over the investment process. The downtown will have regained its economic health.

The public facilities in the downtown are also important anchors of activity and a vital part of a mixed use district. The local, state and federal facilities in the downtown need to be retained and improved over time. The location of new facilities, parking lots, pedestrian access, maintenance and enhancements must be all undertaken with an eye towards their positive contribution to the surrounding area.

To summarize, the key recommendations to enhance the mixed-use center include:

- *Revise zoning and regulations to promote addition of new uses that can revitalize the downtown.*
- *Adopt and sponsor a "Main Street" program to support renovation and revitalization of storefront and other downtown improvements.*
- *Create an active business and development recruitment program.*
- *Sponsor or support lot improvement and development initiatives for key underused parcels such as the McDuffee Block.*



Civic Amenities and Civic Life

Rochester's downtown has many outstanding picturesque features and civic activities that help it fulfill its role as the center of the community. The City has built an outstanding municipal campus, which it is expanding through new investment in its public safety buildings. The triangle park at the corner of Main Street and Wakefield includes mature trees shading a statue of the famous Parson Main. A veterans memorial, seasonal plantings, street trees and benches can be found along the sidewalks. Along the banks of the Cocheco, a riverwalk park provides a high quality vantage point for strollers along this downtown feature. The spring time Lilac festival is an annual community event, while the unique Opera House provides a civic-supported theater program that contributes to the identity and importance of the City center.

The civic quality of a downtown is directly linked to its economic success as well. An attractive, festive place becomes a more desirable place for shopping or for locating a business. A downtown with safe, interesting parks and pedestrian links enhances the district as a residential neighborhood. For these reasons, the Downtown Plan encourages a steady investment program in civic amenities, activities and special events to accompany private sector redevelopment, and support rising values.

The Downtown Plan recommends a phased program of streetscape and open space improvements in strategic locations that will expand the quality and support redevelopment. This includes decorative paving, lighting, street trees and benches along the Main Street core, within the major intersections, and along the blocks that lead to the core. Sidewalks can also be more than a passageway – they can and should become locations for café seating, artwork or other amenities that make a downtown special. The Plan proposes a combination of public/private landscaping programs at key locations to create attractive gateways. It suggests a rearrangement of land and parking to create a park and plaza along Bridge Street within the Foster's Block – a place for a small farmer's market, a stroll to the river, or for an impromptu musical performance. Over time, this area might be expanded to become a large public square and gathering place.

The riverfront walkways and park corridor should be expanded over time. A walkway and viewpoint might be constructed to view the falls and the canal-like stretch along the historic mill edge. Perhaps a pedestrian bridge can eventually be created, reaching across the river and connecting to trails and bikeways that lead to adjacent neighborhoods and along the green corridor that flanks the Cocheco as it flows southward.

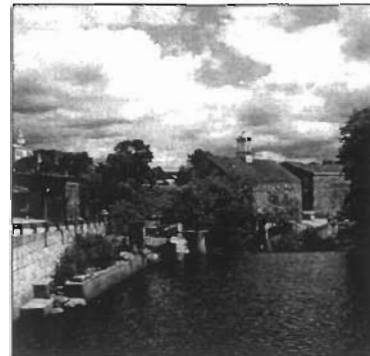
Landscape and signage improvements should welcome visitors to the downtown at gateway locations. Key opportunities for improvements on both public and private land exist at the corners of the downtown triangle formed by Wakefield, Union and North Main Streets. In these and other selected locations along the expanded plazas and park connections, flowering lilacs should be featured, underlining this seasonal link to a symbol of the City.

In terms of civic uses, the Plan supports the retention and future addition of municipal uses in the downtown that serve the public needs; uses such as the library, for example, are vital to a successful downtown.

Finally, the Plan recommends the sponsorship of new events to bring residents and visitors to the downtown. These can start as small events, and then can grow to become annual events and traditions. In addition to their contribution to the civic quality of life, such events are extremely important in introducing newcomers to the downtown, expanding the number of people who will make it a destination in the future.

Specific recommendations for civic amenities and life addressed in the Plan include:

- *Create a master streetscape plan for the downtown, and then construct attractive enhancements in strategic locations.*
- *Create landscape enhancements at gateway locations.*
- *Expand public access along the Cocheco River edge, and extend bikeways and trails into surrounding areas.*
- *Expand existing civic events and sponsor new ones.*



Core, Connections and Edges

The revitalization of the downtown is critically linked to the refilling of the buildings and spaces within the densely developed historic core that lines North Main Street from the bridge over the Cocheco to the edges of the intersection with Wakefield Street. This core area extends along Hanson Street, which once led to the rail depot and retains the architectural character of a well-traveled downtown street.

This recommendation is founded upon the importance of providing a continuously interesting and improved area that can generate the kinds of activity that are vital to a healthy downtown. If the continuity of uses is lost, or if decaying properties influence the values of nearby buildings, a cycle of disinvestments can be started that becomes increasingly difficult to reverse.

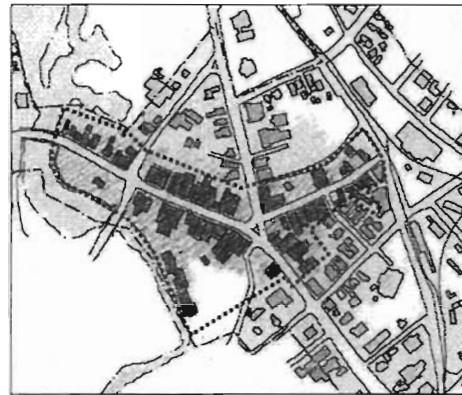
This will require prioritizing public and private initiatives over the next few years to ensure that reinvestment opportunities are supported, and new storefront uses put in place that can benefit the entire district. Streetscape, public space, parking and circulation improvements should be concentrated in this area, to add more support for the reinvestment process.

As the core is stabilized and the reinvestment accelerates, the community should expand its focus and provide similar assistance and investments along the streets and connections that lead to adjacent areas. By enhancing pedestrian connections, providing shared parking opportunities, and expanding attractive streetscape improvements, the value of the initial investments can leverage expanding benefits for property owners, tenants, citizens and the City.

Complementing the initiatives within the core area, the Plan recommends that the City implements new site planning and design guidelines to ensure that future investment in the edges of the downtown is compatible with adjacent uses and contributes to the overall value of the area. Design principles should include the provision of buffering of commercial uses from single-family neighborhoods. These standards should emphasize attractive and practical approaches to siting buildings and parking lots, and provide for landscaping that will steadily enhance the visual quality of the entire district, to everyone's benefit.

In summary, key recommendations for the core and its surroundings include:

- *A core area along North Main Street and immediately adjacent areas should be the priority focus for public space improvements and reinvestment incentives.*
- *The City should subsequently promote expanded improvements in areas that are connected to the core.*
- *In surrounding areas, land use regulations and design standards should be established to support high value reinvestment.*



Preserving the Past

Rochester has a genuinely interesting history as a community and its downtown retains the memory of its evolution in the architecture, industrial infrastructure and monuments that are concentrated here. It is a rich resource for amateur and professional historians, including the members of the Rochester Historical Society which occupies a prominent location on Hanson Street.

But there is also a significant economic value in the historic links to the past; historic preservation is a key economic revitalization strategy as a result. Part of this is due to the attachments that many people form to traditional architecture as a place to live or work. Although there may be drawbacks to the size of the floors or the cost of reconstruction, it is normally impossible to recreate the quality of construction or special details that were part of historic structures.

The physical organization of the historic downtown is also a key to its success. Mixed-use centers that can sustain retail, restaurant and entertainment activities rely on a tight, continuous frontage that provides the pedestrian with a varied, interesting experience. When this pattern is disrupted (some say by as little as a sixty-foot gap), the pedestrian experience declines, sales drop, and leases are hard to sustain. The side-by-side arrangement of high quality buildings could not be replicated within the economics of today's real estate conditions. Furthermore, the loss of buildings can have major negative impacts on the success of surrounding properties.

As a result, the Downtown Plan includes recommendations to institute a local downtown historic district to help provide long-term stewardship of its historic assets. Such a district should be carefully tailored to meet the needs and interests of Rochester. By redirecting potential demolition towards renovation, the best long-term value for individual properties and of the entire downtown can be achieved. By thoughtfully applying design guidance to new projects and renovations, and by organizing assistance in the renovation of older buildings, the district concept can contribute directly to the economic success and property values for many downtown assets.

In addition, the Plan emphasizes opportunities to provide historic interpretation along the paths and within the parks that will be part of the downtown fabric. The more everyone understands and appreciates the past, the more it will contribute to the future.

In brief, the Plan supports historic preservation, including recommendations to:

- *Create a downtown historic district.*
- *Sponsor a "Main Street" program to help with historic preservation of storefronts and commercial buildings.*
- *Support financial incentives, technical assistance and pursue grants to aid in historic preservation.*
- *Create imaginative interpretive elements in the public spaces of the downtown.*



Circulation and Parking

The circulation patterns, traffic flows and parking supply must be managed to support the City's downtown revitalization goals. The ability to conveniently move to and from the City center and find reasonably convenient parking is fundamentally linked to its future commercial viability.

Because of the geographic circumstances of the downtown, several major arterials support through-traffic that does not have the city center as a destination. The volume of this traffic had reached such a high level that a one-way loop system has been instituted to facilitate faster, smoother movements for through traffic. In essence, the portions of the downtown function as a kind of triangular "rotary", with one way traffic circulating northbound along Wakefield Street, southwest along Union Street, and south east along North Main Street. Turning lanes have been instituted to facilitate easy, nearly continuous turning at the corners of this triangle, and traffic moves along at a brisk pace. In essence, the downtown streets have been retrofitted to make them work better as regional arterial.

Unfortunately, the current circulation and intersection system has definite drawbacks for the downtown. The relatively high traffic speeds and concentrated turning movements contradict the goal of providing a pedestrian-friendly environment. At key intersections where pedestrian crossings should be encouraged, for example, traffic flows have virtually no interruption. For many businesses, one way traffic patterns reduce storefront visibility, as motorists pass by more rapidly and less frequently than would occur along traditional two-way streets. For visitors, the circulation patterns can be disorienting, and makes it more difficult to find destinations. Parking can be scarce, and the path to public parking is not well marked today.

The Plan recommends a comprehensive approach to circulation and intersection improvements that would provide traffic calming. Restoration of a simpler pattern would be highly beneficial to the

business environment and property values if it could be accomplished, and should be considered as a very important investment. Studies undertaken during the preparation of the Plan indicate that a return to a two-way (or partial two-way) circulation pattern may be feasible. Extensive traffic planning alternatives and associated recommendations for intersections are contained in the balance of this report. As the next step, detailed technical studies should be undertaken to confirm the feasibility, funding and the benefits associated with recommended circulation changes and enhancements. The Plan also endorses the concept of a future Connector Bridge project for the City, which will route a portion of the traffic around the downtown and relieve congestion.

Reorganization of intersections should be undertaken to provide broader, safer sidewalks and crosswalks at busy intersections. These intersections should also provide for slower, safer traffic movements. New mid-block crosswalks should be created, as well. Investment in improved signal systems should be undertaken, as the intersection improvements occur. Appropriate traffic flows for both vehicles and pedestrians will be aided by the synchronization of traffic signals in the downtown.

As the downtown uses expand in number and are increasingly successful, the demand for parking will grow as well. Eventually, a serious shortage could occur that would block further growth. The center of the "triangle" formed by Union, North Main and Wakefield should eventually be reorganized to provide an efficient parking facility, expandable into a structure deck, if needed.

The key transportation recommendation include:

- *Provide traffic calming to create a better pedestrian environment.*
- *Simplify circulation patterns to make them more convenient, to the extent practical.*
- *Provide for eventual expansion of parking through shared facilities, as the downtown grows.*



Image and Identity

All of the proposed improvements, taken together, are aimed at the steady improvement in the overall image and identity of the downtown. It is important to consider how each future action contributes – or detracts – from the overall image of the downtown as part of the review and approval process.

The City and its citizens can help contribute to the growing positive image of the downtown through directed activities and improvements, as well. One of the simpler suggestions is the creation of a clear and unambiguous signage system that identifies the best routes to and from the downtown for visitors. Such a "wayfinding" system can be graphically attractive, building upon the positive graphic programs already in place. Signage guidelines for businesses and public signage can promote an interesting and attractive image that benefits everyone. Finally, pro-active marketing and public relations efforts should consistently bring the downtown's assets to the public's attention.

So the Plan recommends initiatives for improving the image and identity of the downtown that would:

- *Establish an excellent “wayfinding” sign system.*
- *Promote attractive signage.*
- *Promote the downtown uses and activities to citizens and potential visitors.*



Stewardship

One of the fundamental elements needed to ensure a successful downtown is the creation of a clear stewardship group with a clear mission to coordinate and promote this broad program of improvements. This group could take many forms, but it must have adequate resources and official support from the City to get the job done.

Putting it All Together: An Illustration of the Potential

The following illustration indicates one vision of how many of the recommendations contained in the Master Plan could be translated into “bricks and mortar” and landscaping improvements. It shows how future parking might be expanded to serve a successful downtown, and how new parks and pedestrian connections would link the district together. It imagines new infill development in locations that would contribute to the future vitality of the entire area.

*Figure I-2
Illustration of the Master Plan Recommendations (next page)*

Rochester Downtown Master Plan

Master Plan



Getting There from Here: Implementing the Plan

This Downtown Plan has been created as an action plan that can be implemented through steady steps, over a ten-year period. The principal stages for action are as follows:

Vision for Year 1

The downtown will have several visible improvements- to open space, streetscape, signage, parking – that make it immediately more inviting and interesting. Simultaneously, a new downtown organization will be up and running to serve as the stewards of the future. Working together with the City, citizens and businesses, this group will help spearhead pro-active funding, financing, staffing and regulatory changes that will set the stage for further revitalization.

Actions

Year 1: Early Steps and Organizing for The Future
<i>Key Organizational and Programmatic Action Steps:</i>
Establish the downtown stewardship group
Develop a downtown business identification and recruitment plan
Develop a public relations and marketing strategy to help implement the business plan for downtown
Begin the application to become a “Main Street” community, or create a locally-sponsored equivalent
Create public information program on downtown enhancements
Develop web site on downtown revitalization initiatives and festivals to improve community’s access to information
Initiate a semi-annual “state of the downtown” report from the downtown revitalization committee to the City.
<i>Key Landscape and Streetscape Action Steps</i>
Construct a “bricks and mortar” project to create positive momentum
Undertake immediate signage and parking management changes to make the downtown more successful
Prepare a detailed landscape and streetscape improvement plan
Identify opportunities to expand participation in the Adopt-A-Spot program
<i>Key Downtown Restoration Action Steps</i>
Perform an assessment of code enforcement activities and needs
Plan for a new downtown-oriented special event/festival to reinforce downtown identity as center of community activity
Implement zoning and design guideline recommendations to support downtown redevelopment
Reach consensus on best way to implement a downtown historic district
Initiate redevelopment and improvement concepts for key areas: Foster’s block, McDuffee Block, Brooks lot and others
Undertake short-term, low cost traffic and signal improvements to ease traffic flows.
Assess need to expand existing downtown parking supply to meet future demands
Support and help implement private sector initiatives that are consistent with the Downtown Plan (small restaurants, art studios, residential reuse projects, etc.)

Vision for the Mid-Term

Years 2 and 3: Improvements will be concentrated in the core of the downtown, which will show noticeable filling of underutilized spaces with a mix of restaurants, cafés, and small shops on the ground floor and reuse of upper floor spaces for live/work, loft space, and other uses. The stewardship organization, with the City, citizens and businesses will be implementing improvement plans for key parcels, and steady enhancements in landscape, streetscape and parking areas will be underway. Now a historic district, the downtown will be benefiting from the new Main Street program that will be actively assisting in private sector improvement projects. Having concluded what the best circulation scheme should be for the future, steps are underway to enhance access and parking.

Actions

Years 2 and 3: Concentrating on The Core
<i>Key Organizational and Programmatic Steps:</i>
Provide funding and staffing resources for the ongoing operations of the downtown organization; undertake pro-active recruitment of developers and tenants
Initiate business plan
Begin marketing and public relations efforts for downtown businesses, space, and initiatives
Establish a "Main Street" program or its local equivalent, and undertake "Main Street" enhancements
Provide for a regular newsletter, promotional campaigns, and other marketing support
Establish downtown revitalization link to City's web site
Continue the "state of the downtown reports" on a semi-annual basis
<i>Key Landscape and Streetscape Action Steps</i>
Redevelop the Foster's Block to feature a major public open space/park that joins the downtown to the riverfront, provides parking, and is a venue for civic events
Implement a complete "wayfinding" signage system to and from the downtown
Undertake substantial streetscape and landscape improvements fitting the overall plan developed the previous year
Select additional locations and sign up new participants to program
<i>Key Downtown Restoration Action Steps</i>
Fund and implement regular program of code enforcement
Initiate a new downtown-oriented special event
Apply enhanced zoning and design guidelines to guide the reinvestment process
Create the Downtown Historic District
Undertake focused redevelopment and improvement initiatives on large, key projects and areas: Foster's block, McDuffee Block, others
Finalize major decisions about traffic circulation and intersections
Identify and submit applications for State and Federal funding sources to implement parking improvements.
Undertake all parking improvements as resources allow
Provide loan and grant incentives for qualifying private sector redevelopment projects, and accelerated project review and approvals

Vision for the Long-Term: Years 4-10

The downtown core is now acknowledged as a regional destination for special restaurants, arts and crafts, specialty stores and special events. Imaginative improvements to the Foster's Block create a beautiful new connection to the river that is actively used for art shows, a farmer's market, and other special events. Through special financing, grants and other means, the stewardship organization and the City have unlocked the redevelopment and landscape potential of the McDuffee Block and the Brooks lot. Easier to get to, the downtown has well-organized and expanded parking in several major lots that combine the resources of public and private land to support the downtown enhancements. Increasing property values are bringing more high quality investment in the areas outside of the core, and public sector investment and the role of the downtown organization has declined as the downtown, now successful, begins to form its own future through market forces.

Actions

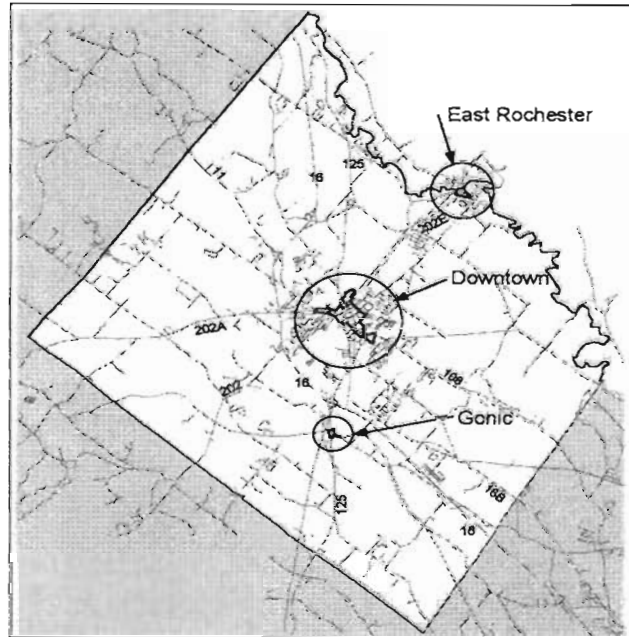
Years 4 – 10: Building and Success
<i>Key Organizational and Programmatic Steps:</i>
Activities of the downtown organization should peak with financing, funding, redevelopment and promotional programs underway
Update business plan as necessary and continue implementation
Update public relations and marketing plan to reflect current needs and strategies and continue implementation
Complete the Main Street program, but continue special revolving loan or grant programs to provide enhancements and expand the benefits to the periphery of the core area
Have a merchant-supported promotion program operating on a regular basis
Update and maintain web site information on downtown revitalization efforts
Continue annual reports on the "state of downtown", and prepare a master plan update at Year 10
<i>Key Landscape and Streetscape Action Steps</i>
Complete an open space network that connects the downtown to the river and open spaces, creating a downtown/neighborhood amenity
Improve the business signage to make the downtown increasingly interesting and more attractive
Expand the scope of streetscape and landscape improvements to the periphery of the core area
Implement beautification program at additional downtown locations
<i>Key Downtown Restoration Action Steps</i>
Maintain on-going downtown code enforcement program
Conduct annual and special events downtown
Revise zoning and design guidelines to take into account lessons learned and changing circumstances to help complete the Plan
Realize the benefits of the Historic District through special grant programs for renovation, design assistance, publicity and attraction of tenants
Complete all large redevelopment projects
Implement agreed-upon traffic and intersection improvements
Undertake all parking improvements as resources allow to provide adequate parking to match downtown reinvestment, including a simple parking structure if required over the long term
Provide loan and grant incentives for qualifying private sector redevelopment projects, and accelerated project review and approvals

Recommendations for Gonic and East Rochester

The village centers in Gonic and East Rochester have many similar characteristics that can be enhanced through a planned approach to the future. In earlier times, both areas were distinct clusters of housing, retail and commercial uses that benefited from the close proximity to one another. They remain identifiable places, but their vitality has faded over time.

In the future, these two centers could be enhanced as historic clusters by ensuring that the zoning provides for an appropriate mix and density of uses, particularly by permitting the development of low-scale multi-family housing, live-work housing, and mixed use commercial and housing uses. This zoning approach should also recognize the value of retaining lower density, lower scale uses in the vicinity and minimizing locations for competing, "sprawling" commercial uses nearby.

The townscape of these village centers should be retained and enhanced. This should be accomplished through site planning controls for private sector uses, and reinvestment in the public portions of the centers.



The use of site planning standards and site plan review processes will serve to enhance the value of the area and, over time, benefit all of the property owners and businesses found there. Site planning controls should be specific to the village centers, and could be accomplished through overlay zoning or special site plan review districts. They could also be subject to special new zoning designations linked to site plan standards. These standards should describe how new or renovated buildings should have setbacks that are consistent with the neighboring buildings, should limit or prohibit surface parking in front of buildings, and should provide for the continuation of the pleasant landscaping that is a feature of Gonic and East Rochester. Architecture that is consistent with the character and materials of the historic areas should be encouraged through the same provisions.

Both areas would benefit substantially from modest improvements in the retail storefronts and signage. Enhanced signage guidelines that limit generic and rear-lit signs, if combined with an incentive program to create better signs, storefronts and awnings, would enhance businesses and values for the areas. In this regard, the mission of the downtown "Main Street" program should also include East Rochester and Gonic as special target areas for inclusion in technical assistance, grants or loan initiatives that will emerge.

The streetscape and landscape within the two areas can be substantially improved to recapture the qualities of a small, historic village center. This should be a balance of streetscape and landscape improvements appropriate for a semi-rural center, rather than an intense downtown environment. Short stretches of sidewalk should be reconstructed and improved, perhaps with brick trim in some locations. Traditional light fixtures should be placed in a few strategic locations, and additional plantings and street trees should be provided to soften hard-edged areas. Crosswalks and simple paving, curbing and striping improvements should be undertaken to help slow traffic at the key intersections.

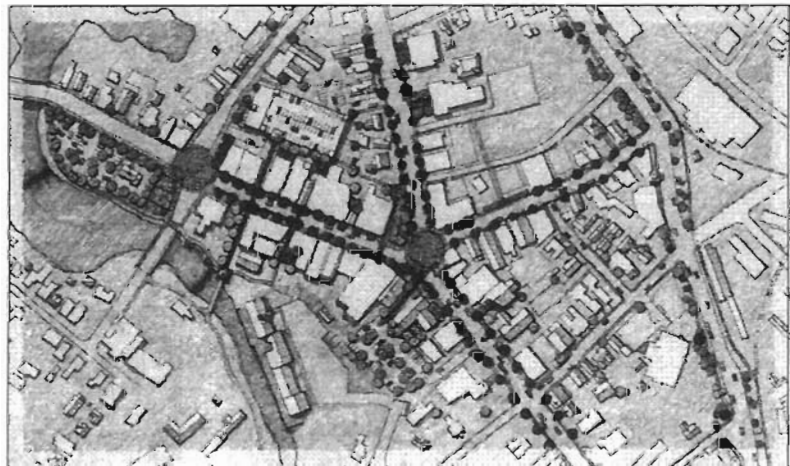
Figure I-3: Illustration of Potential Enhancements in Gonic Center



As a long-term goal, both areas would greatly benefit from redirecting the overhead utilities either underground or along corridors running behind the principle properties in the areas. The utility “crossroads” in each of the two areas dominate the views and images of the area.

Conclusion

The vision described in this planning report future of downtown Rochester will require persistent reinvestment by the City, its citizens, its businesses and institutions. No single project or program is sufficient, nor can it happen in a short period of time. But steady progress based on visible improvements can and will succeed, as it has in so many similar city centers throughout New England. Each small investment decision must be made in the context of other available choices – to spend city budgets, to pursue grants, to direct staff resources, to invest private and institutional resources. This is why shared vision and a coordinated program are needed, so that the choices to concentrate on revitalization are consistently clear and compelling. Through committed stewardship, the leaders of the community can best guide the choices that will lead to the enormous civic and business benefits of a vital, attractive and economically successful downtown and village centers.



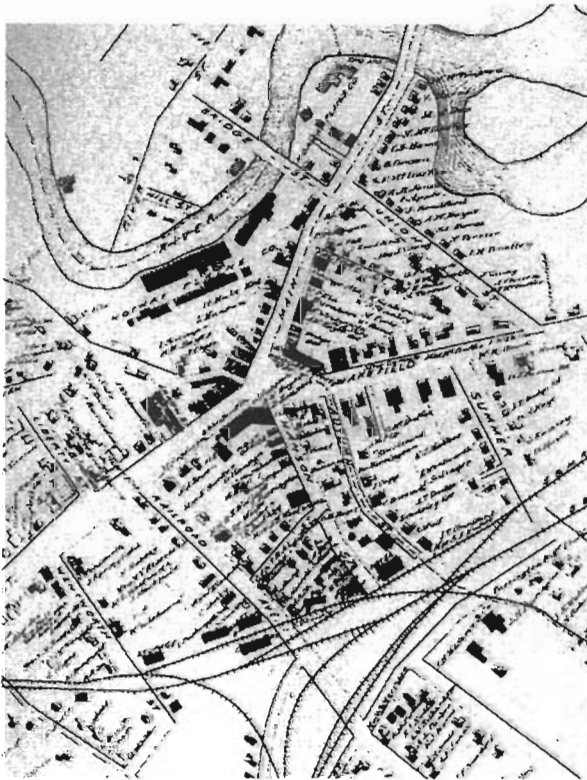
II. PLANNING CONTEXT

Historic Overview

Founded on the east bank of the Cocheco River, Rochester was originally a part of Dover. Although granted in 1623 and incorporated as Norway Plains in 1722, warring Pennacook and Mohawk Indians greatly impeded the Town's settlement by keeping prospective settlers away until 1746. By the end of the colonial era of New England, however, the future Rochester was gradually developing as a strategically located community.

Early settlers brought rich cultural traditions and craftsmanship from their homelands. Sixty families settled on and around Haven Hill, then the center of the settlement. For the next few decades, farming was the chief occupation of Rochester's residents with corn and potatoes being the important produce. Economic activity migrated to Rochester, due in part to its proximity to three rivers - the Cocheco, Salmon Falls and Isinglass. These rivers provided ideal opportunities for farming.

*Figure II-1
The 19th Century Downtown*



As the economy of New England was transformed by rapid development of new technologies, industrial growth fueled the expansion of Rochester as mills sprung up along the banks of the rivers to capitalize on the natural supply of power they afforded. The 1800's brought major industries to Rochester such as woolen mills and shoe factories.

The presence of the Strafford County Courthouse, which was located in Rochester in the middle of the century, drew members of the legal community to the City. The manufacturing demands of the Civil War were responsible for the founding of the Cocheco Manufacturing Company in East Rochester in 1863, and led to the development of the shoe industry, which had begun in 1843. Later industries in Rochester included machine and box-making and brick-making. By the late 1890's, Rochester was a bustling commercial center serviced by four railroads with its factories turning out goods for distribution across the country. The abundance of work attracted scores of immigrants to Rochester from around the world, especially Canada.

It was during this era that the predominant shape of the downtown took form. Densely packed commercial buildings lined busy streets, served by a train depot that brought passengers and freight. Manufacturing persisted along the Cocheco, with nearby housing provided to serve the workforce. Stores, banks, services and municipal facilities gathered in close proximity to one another, lining the triangular configuration of crossing pikes that led out to the remainder of the town and the

region. Single family houses were grouped along the approaches to the center, including prominent homes for prominent citizens.

Rochester was incorporated as a City in 1891, reflecting its economic success during the industrial boom of the previous decades. In 1892, Charles S. Whitehouse became the first Mayor of Rochester. Municipal buildings were constructed in Rochester in the early 1900's. The Rochester Opera House, located on the second and third floors of Rochester's City Hall, was the center of Rochester's culture for decades. It is believed to be the only one of its kind still surviving.

The economic depression of the late 1920's hit Rochester hard as it did many other communities whose economies were tied to manufacturing. But before long, Rochester enjoyed the development of a major highway system - the Spaulding Turnpike - which brought new industry and created urban growth which changed the character of many parts of the City.

During the intervening decades, Rochester experienced economic growth in the manufacturing and high-tech sectors of the economy. This trend continues today, as on-going residential and commercial growth continues to change the face of Rochester.

The Study Areas

Three areas are being studied as part of the Downtown Chapter: the downtown commercial center and the neighborhood commercial areas in Gonick and East Rochester.

Downtown

For the purposes of this study the boundaries of the downtown were established by consensus of the Downtown Master Plan Committee and the City of Rochester. The limits of the downtown study area coincided with the limits of the Special Downtown District previously established by the City of



*Figure II-2
Early Photographs of Rochester*

Rochester; that includes the areas along Columbus Avenue Extension, North and South Main Streets, Wakefield Street and the land within those boundaries. The section of the Cocheco River in close proximity to North Main Street was also included in the study area due to its importance as a downtown asset. Planning recommendations were focused on a somewhat smaller area, as has been noted in the Summary section of this report.

Gonic

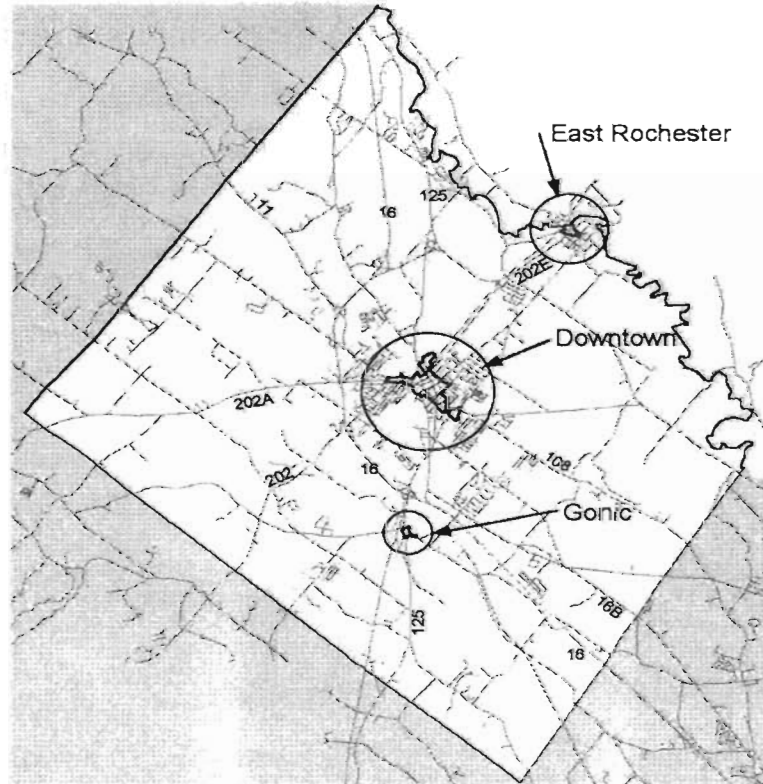
The Gonic commercial area is a small commercial enclave at the intersection of Main Street (Route 125) and Church Street in Rochester's Gonic neighborhood. A retail establishment, post office, assisted living facility and several mixed-use buildings housing residential and commercial establishments are clustered around the Main and Church Streets intersection. Single and multi-family dwellings abut the commercial area, as does the Cocheco River.

East Rochester

The East Rochester commercial area is another small commercial area serving an abutting residential neighborhood at the intersection of Main and Highland Streets (Routes 11/202) near the Maine border. The district includes several retail establishments, a gas station and several service businesses including a laundromat and automotive repair facility. The area is close to the Salmon Falls River that serves as the boundary line between New Hampshire and Maine.

The downtown, Gonic, and East Rochester study areas included in the downtown master planning effort are shown on Figure II-3.

Figure II-3. Study Areas



Land Use and Zoning

Downtown

The area of Rochester generally regarded as the downtown stretches along North and South Main Streets and Columbus Avenue Extension. There are three different zoning districts in the downtown: Business 1, Business 2, and Industry 3. Land uses in the downtown area include a broad spectrum, ranging from personal and consumer service establishments, retail stores, restaurants, and offices to manufacturing, automotive service establishments, and single- and multi-family residential uses. While there are many residential housing units within the downtown district, there is no distinct residential zoning district permitting them. Instead, residential uses are permitted by right in the Business 1 and Business 2 districts. They are not permitted in the Industry 3 zone.

Gonic

The commercial center of Gonic consists of twenty-four parcels of land that are zoned Business 1. Existing land uses in this commercial district include commercial retail, governmental, and single-family and multi-family residential uses.

East Rochester

East Rochester's commercial center is comprised of thirty-two properties zoned Business 2. Retail uses, an automotive service establishment and a consumer service establishment anchor this commercial district.

Figures II- 4 to 6 depict the zoning districts for each of the three commercial areas.

Figure II-4: Zoning Map of Downtown Rochester



Figure II-5: Zoning Map of Gonic's Commercial Center

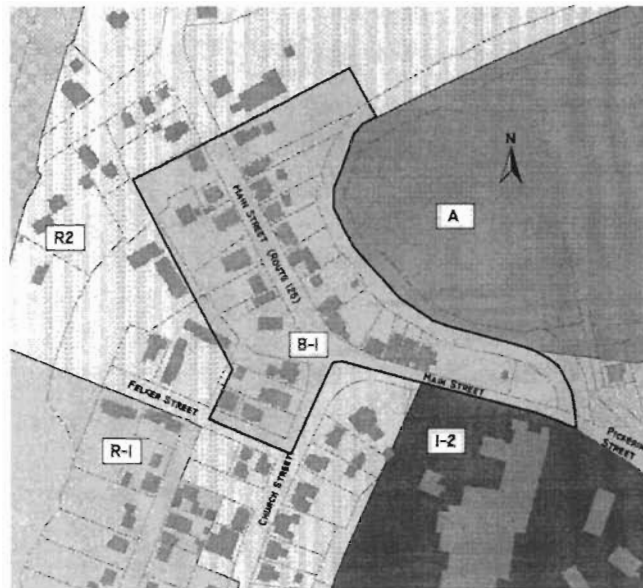


Figure II-6: Zoning Map of East Rochester's Commercial Center



Land Uses

The number and types of different land uses in the three commercial districts varies from district to district. Nearly a third of the downtown properties are used for more than one use and the vast majority of properties in Gonic and East Rochester are used for residences, according to State land use records (see the following figures).

Figure II-7: Land Uses in Downtown Rochester

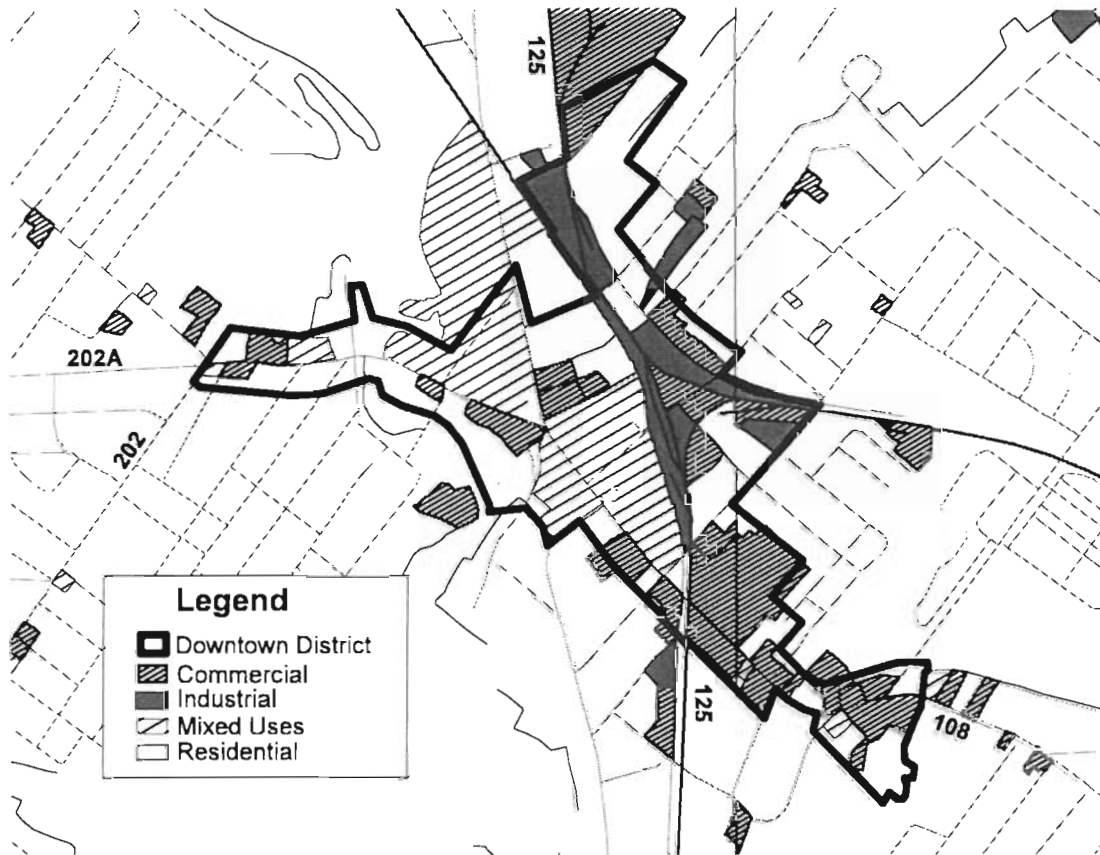


Figure II-8: Land Uses in Gonic's Center

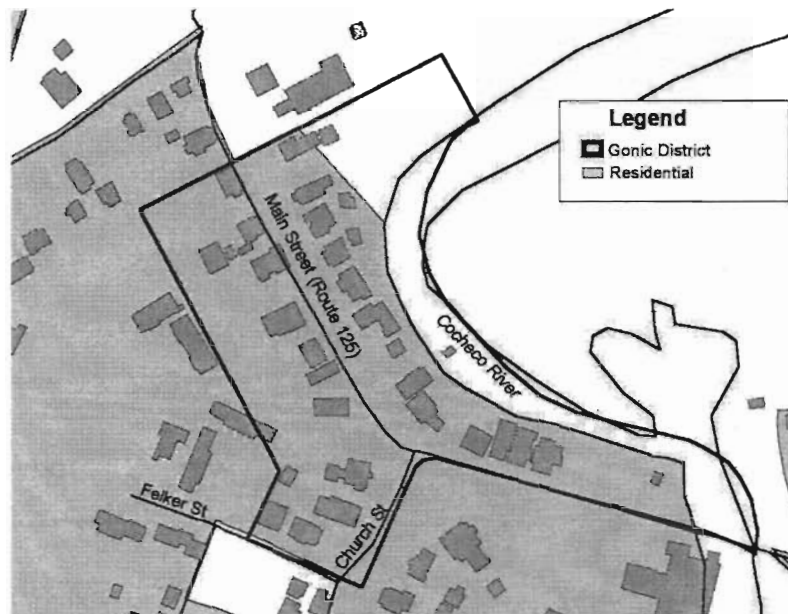
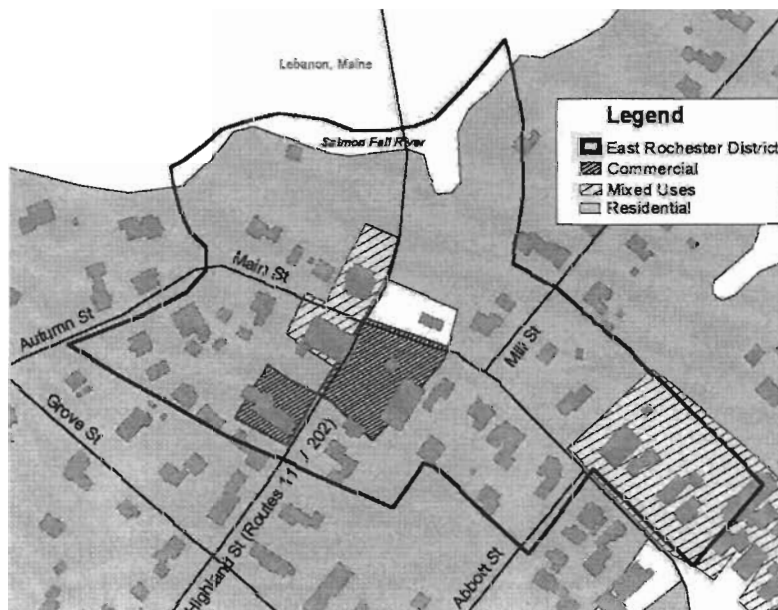


Figure II-9: Land Uses in East Rochester's Commercial Center



Tables II-1 through II-3 summarize various land uses in the three commercial districts and the percentage of land area occupied by each:

Table II-1: Land Uses in Downtown Rochester

Land Use	Land Area (in acres)	Percent of Total District
Mixed Use	37.5	32%
Commercial/Retail	20.5	18%
Governmental	10.0	9%
Residential	9.8	8%
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	7.4	6%
Transitional	6.5	5%
Commercial/Service	5.3	5%
Religious/Medical	5.2	4%
Indoor Cultural/Public Assembly	3.4	3%
Industrial	4.7	4%
Commercial/Wholesale	3.1	3%
Industrial/Commercial Complex	2.2	2%
Forested	.8	1%
TOTAL	116.4	100%

Table II-2: Land Uses in Gonic

Land Use	Land Area (in square feet)	Percent of Total District
Residential	198,865	83.5%
Governmental	17,334	7%
Mixed Use	11,294	5%
Commercial/Retail	10,676	4.5%
TOTAL	238,169	

Table II-3: Land Uses in East Rochester

Land Use	Land Area (in square feet)	Percent of Total District
Residential	333,838	70%
Mixed Use	90,946	19%
Commercial/Retail	40,892	8.5%
Governmental	11,655	2.5%
TOTAL	477,331	100%

Zoning

City of Rochester zoning generally mirrors existing land use patterns. Table 4 identifies the different land uses permitted in the downtown and in Gonic and East Rochester. In addition to the zoning requirements listed below, all three areas have been designated by the City as Special Downtown Districts. As such, they are regulated by an additional layer of zoning requirements that provides a more detailed level of City review of new developments and projects.

Table II-4: Permitted Land Uses by District

Use	Downtown	Gonic	East Rochester
Residential Uses			
<i>Single-, two-, or multi-family dwelling</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hotel, motel, or transient lodging	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rooming house or group home	Yes	Yes	Yes
Elderly housing	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*
Accessory building or use	Yes	Yes	Yes
Commercial Uses			
Retail store	Yes	Yes	Yes
Grocery and variety store < 1,000 sq. ft.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Second hand or antique shop	Yes	Yes	Yes
Manufacture of retail goods	Yes	Yes	Yes
Office	Yes	Yes	Yes
Service establishment	Yes	Yes	Yes
Restaurant	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bank	Yes	Yes	Yes
Funeral home	Yes	Yes	Yes
Home occupation	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bed and breakfast establishment	Yes	Yes	Yes
Laundry	Yes*	Yes*	Yes
Adult-oriented establishment	Yes	Yes	No
Monument sales	Yes*	No	Yes*
Drive-in business, service in car	Yes*	No	Yes
Carpentry, upholstery, painting shop	Yes*	Yes*	Yes
Filling station	Yes*	Yes*	Yes
Vehicle service station, sales, repair or storage	Yes*	No	Yes
Accessory building or use	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural/Recreation Uses			
Farm	Yes	Yes	Yes
Roadside stand, sale of farm products	Yes*	No	Yes*
Theater/place of public assembly	Yes*	Yes	Yes
Amusement enterprise	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*
Flower and plant nursery or greenhouse	Yes*	No	Yes
Recreation area or day camp	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*
Campground	Yes*	No	Yes*
Accessory building or use	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table II-4 (Continued): Permitted Land Uses by District

Public/Institutional Uses			
Philanthropic or charitable institution	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day care center or family day care home	Yes	Yes	Yes
Park or playground	Yes	Yes	Yes
Governmental building	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*
Fraternal club or lodge	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*
Public utility facility	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*
Public or private school	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cemetery	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*
Wireless communication facility	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*
Public airport	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*
Private airport	Yes*	No	Yes*
Accessory building or use	Yes	Yes	Yes
Industrial Uses			
Industry, research, testing	Yes**	No	No
Wholesale or storage warehouse	Yes**	No	No
Truck terminal, bus garage	Yes**	No	No
Contractors' storage yard	Yes**	No	No
Feed and fuel storage and sales	Yes**	No	No
Bottling works	Yes**	No	No
Ice cream manufacture	Yes**	No	No
Sawmill	Yes**	No	No
Earth excavation	Yes**	No	No
Accessory building or use	Yes**	No	No

* Permitted only by special exception from the Board of Adjustment

** Permitted only in the area of downtown zoned "Industry 3"

Land Ownership Patterns

An understanding of land ownership patterns is helpful to the efforts to improve and redevelop the downtown. Property ownership records of the City's Assessor's Office indicate that roughly one quarter of the property in each of the three commercial districts is owned by people who live outside of Rochester. Table 5 summarizes this information.

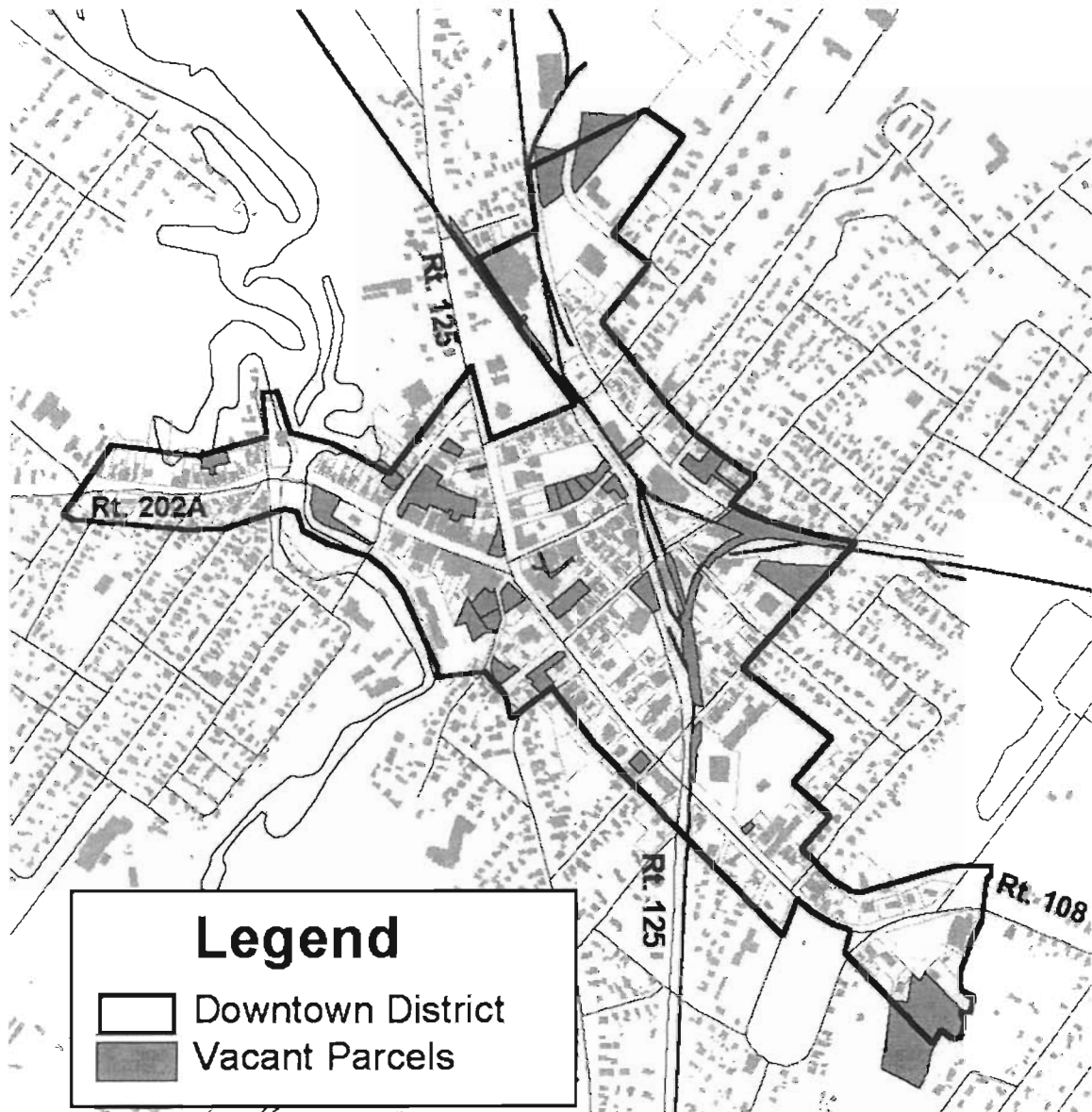
Table II-5: Resident and Non-Resident Property Ownership

District	Number of Parcels	Total Number of Parcels Owned by Non- Residents	Number of Parcels Owned by Out of State Residents	Percent Parcels Owned by Non-Residents
Downtown	282	79	25	28%
East Rochester	32	5	4	26%
Gonic	24	5	0	21%
TOTAL	338	89	29	26%

Vacant Parcels

There are thirty-two vacant parcels in the downtown including municipal parking lots, parks, and sections of railroad rights-of-way. None of the parcels in the Gonic or East Rochester commercial districts are vacant. A map of vacant parcels in downtown Rochester is shown as Figure II-10.

Figure II-10: Vacant Lots in Downtown Rochester



Utilities and Infrastructure

Overview

In general, the utilities and infrastructure serving the downtown, Gonic, and East Rochester commercial areas are in good condition. The City has an effective on-going program of investing in its infrastructure to correct deficiencies and conduct preventative maintenance. It accomplishes much of this by surveying all utilities for deficiencies prior to undertaking a road construction project.

This section of the Plan outlines the condition of utilities as reported through interviews with City personnel and a review of available information.

Downtown

The sewer system in the downtown area is in reasonably good shape. In fact, City personnel responsible for maintaining the system indicate that there are no known problems with that utility in any location in the downtown. Likewise, the drainage system works well in all areas of downtown, something largely attributed to sandy soil conditions that are conducive to drainage.

With respect to the water distribution system, the City considers any pipe with a diameter of 6" or smaller to be undersized, and replaces them with pipes of sufficient size to meet minimum delivery requirements as problems occur, or in conjunction with other construction projects that may be taking place. If the City expects to perform work in a street, it has a policy to test the water line in proximity to the project and upgrade the water line if test results suggest it is warranted. At present, the City has determined that the water line in Summer Street needs to be upgraded, and the mains in Hanson and Autumn Streets will be tested before the City begins other work on those roadways to see if upgrades are advised. Additionally, there is an unused and unneeded water line in Union Street that could be abandoned by the City in the near future.

A number of roadway construction projects are anticipated in the downtown area in the short- and long-term. The City recently approved funding for engineering studies to reconstruct Washington Street. Work will include the reconstruction of the roadway and construction of new sidewalks. Design of the project will begin this fiscal year. In addition, the City plans to make a number of modifications to the intersection of Columbus Avenue Extension and South Main Street. It is a reconstruction project that will add a center turn lane to the roadway and realign the intersection to improve safety. Concrete sidewalks and grass strips will be installed where the width of the right-of-way is sufficient to accommodate these improvements.

Nearly every street in the downtown has gas service, which is supplied by Northern Utilities, Inc. There are no known deficiencies in the electric distribution system downtown. Electricity is supplied by Public Service Company of New Hampshire, and most of the electric utility has been placed underground in the core of the downtown district along North Main, South Main, Union and Wakefield Street.

Several intersections in the downtown were identified as problem areas needing to be addressed. The following intersections were evaluated during the Master Plan process:

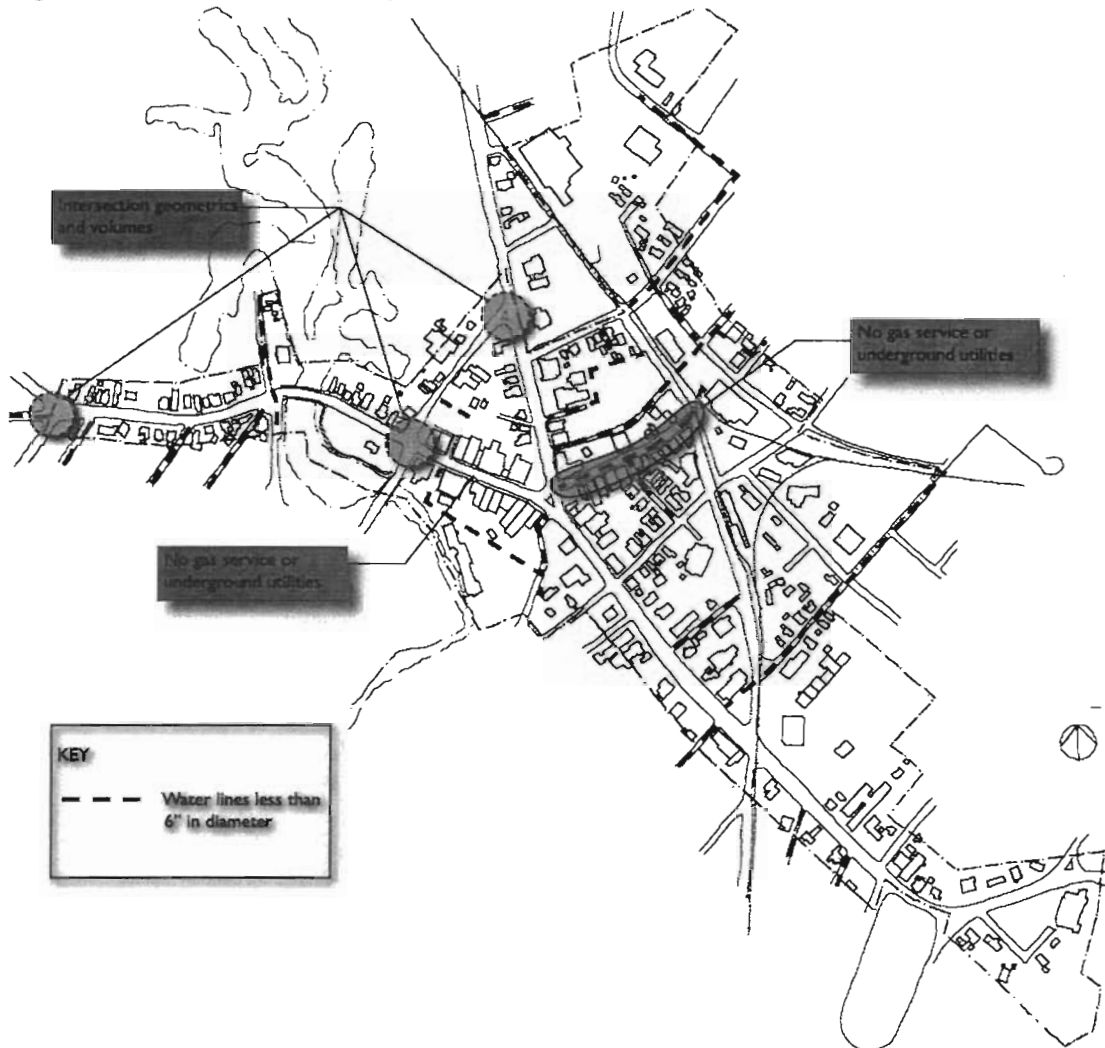
- North Main Street and Route 202A
- Route 125 (Columbus Avenue) and Wakefield Street
- Route 125 (Columbus Avenue) and South Main Street

- North Main Street/South Main Street/Wakefield Street
- Wakefield Street and Union Street
- North Main Street and Union Street
- The intersection of Highland Street and Main Street in East Rochester
- Church Street/Main Street/Pickering Road in Gonic

Additional information on circulation and parking is contained in Section II.F.

Utility-related issues and constraints are illustrated in Figure II-11.

Figure II-11: Downtown Utility and Infrastructure Issues



Gonic

The Gonic neighborhood is serviced by municipal water and sewer service, and electric and gas utilities. All electrical service is above ground in this district.

The City intends to undertake a significant improvement project affecting the Gonic commercial district this fiscal year. The project is an inflow and infiltration project which will eliminate the inappropriate inflow of storm and groundwater into the waste water (sanitary sewer) system. The inflow may be the result of such things as direct connections of roof drainage systems to the wastewater system or cracked seals in manhole covers and pipes. Church Street will be rebuilt under the project and work will include replacing the existing water main and installing curbing and sidewalks. The utility work will be done this year and the road will be repaved next year. The existing on-street parking will remain, but the width of the right-of-way and the proximity of buildings to the street will preclude the installation of any streetscape improvements. Electrical service is above-ground in this area.

East Rochester

There are no significant utility problems in the commercial section of East Rochester. The area is served by adequate water, sewer, electrical, and gas utilities. A number of sidewalks in the abutting residential neighborhoods adjacent to the commercial area are in need of repair. All electrical service is above ground. There are no pedestrian amenities on Walnut Avenue, Grove or Portland Streets. Truck traffic is reported to be an issue in this location, with Route 202 serving as a popular travel route for these vehicles.

Streetscape and Pedestrian Amenities

Downtown

Streetscape and pedestrian amenities make a significant contribution to the aesthetics of downtown Rochester. In general terms, streetscape and pedestrian amenities include such things as:

- Benches and trash receptacles
- Landscaping, street trees, and street plantings
- Sidewalks, crosswalks, and specialty pavement
- Pedestrian scale lighting
- Bicycle racks
- Information kiosks and signs

The sidewalk system in the downtown is good, although there are sections in need of improvement. Particularly hazardous pedestrian conditions can be found along certain sections of Columbus Avenue Extension, Signal Street, and South Main Street where sidewalks are indistinguishable from driveways in a number of cases. Curbing has been taken out and the parking lots in front of several businesses are paved and pitched to the traveled roadway, eliminating the sidewalk area for pedestrians entirely.

There are difficult pedestrian crossing situations at most of the major intersections, and the block at the North Main/South Main/Wakefield Street intersection is notably so. These difficulties are the result of a combination of traffic volumes, long distances between one side of the street and the other, and crosswalk design.

Pedestrian scale lighting is concentrated in the downtown and adds to the historic character of the area. Electrical service along North Main, Union, and Wakefield Streets and most of South Main Street has been buried underground. Occasional planters, street stenciling, and landscaping add aesthetically pleasing touches throughout the area.

The intersection of North and South Main Streets has been improved with a public plaza providing pedestrian seating, landscaping, and ornamental lighting and fencing. A public walkway leading from North Main Street to the back of properties fronting on the main road has been improved with benches for pedestrians. Streetscape and pedestrian amenities in the downtown were inventoried and mapped.

The features of the landscape and public streetscape in downtown Rochester are many and varied. The photographs below depict a sampling of those features.



Gonic

The Gonic commercial area is improved with sidewalks along Main and Church Streets, although the texture of pavement varies between concrete and asphalt. There are few street trees and streetscape amenities in the area, most likely due to the lack of right-of-way width needed to accommodate such features. The utilities are above-ground in this area.

East Rochester

Streetscape and pedestrian conditions in East Rochester are much like those in Gonic. Roads servicing the commercial area have sidewalks, although the sidewalks in the residential portions of those roads are in need of improvement. There are virtually no streetscape improvements, street trees, or pedestrian amenities in this commercial district.

Circulation and Parking

Overview

The transportation component of the Rochester Master Plan focuses on transportation conditions in and around a total of eight intersections. Six of these intersections are located in the downtown Rochester area, one is located in Gonic, and the last one is located in East Rochester. The following are the study intersections:

1. North Main Street (Route 202A) / Union Street / Bridge Street
2. Wakefield Street / Union Street
3. Wakefield Street / North Main Street (Route 202A) / South Main Street
4. Wakefield Street / Columbus Avenue (Route 125)
5. South Main Street / Columbus Avenue (Route 125)
6. Strafford Square: North Main Street / Walnut Street / Washington Street
7. Main Street / Church Street (in Gonic)
8. Highland Street (Route 202) / Main Street / Autumn Street (in East Rochester)

Figure II-12 shows the eight intersections studied during this planning process. Intersections 1 through 6 are located in downtown Rochester: the first three intersections form the corners of Rochester's central downtown one-way loop, while intersections 4 through 6 are located on the three major approach roadways to the downtown one-way loop. Intersection 7 is located in Gonic, and intersection 8 is located in East Rochester.

The key issues and needs at the study area intersections vary by location. Intersections 1 – 3, the intersections of the downtown one-way loop, work together to form a unified circulation system. As a result, these three intersections are considered together, though the issues specific to each intersection are also identified. The key issues at intersections 1 – 3 are the one-way circulation pattern, pedestrian and bicycle access, parking for the downtown business district, and revitalization of the downtown business district.

Intersections 4 and 5 are signalized intersections in downtown Rochester that currently operate at acceptable levels, but could potentially benefit from improvements to signal timings and lane assignments. Intersection 6, Strafford Square, is a complex unsignalized intersection with confusing circulation patterns and congestion. Intersections 7 and 8 are lower-volume neighborhood intersections in Gonic and East Rochester, respectively.

Figure II-12: Study Intersections



Existing Conditions

This section summarizes the existing transportation conditions in and around the study area intersections listed above. The existing conditions review includes descriptions of the study area intersections and their surrounding context, key transportation issues at these locations (including traffic, parking, pedestrian and bicycle access), existing traffic volumes, analyses of the traffic operations at these intersections, and recent traffic accident history at each of the study area intersections.

Figure II-13 shows the existing traffic controls (traffic signals, STOP signs, YIELD signs) at the study area intersections.

Figure II-13: Existing Traffic Controls



Downtown One-Way Loop

Traffic and Circulation

The first three intersections are located at the corners of the triangular one-way loop at the center of Rochester's downtown. This loop consists of North Main Street on the southern edge, Wakefield Street on the eastern edge, and Union Street on the northwestern edge. The downtown one-way loop carries high traffic volumes, and encompasses much of Rochester's downtown business district, as well as its civic buildings.

Each of the three sides of the downtown one-way loop (North Main Street, Wakefield Street, and Union Street) is one-way and carries two lanes of traffic in a counter-clockwise direction. The intersection at one corner of the downtown loop, North Main Street / Bridge Street / Union Street, is signalized, while the intersections at the other two corners of the downtown loop (North Main Street / South Main Street / Wakefield Street and Wakefield Street / Union Street) are unsignalized, with YIELD control and triangular traffic islands that channel traffic around the loop.

The following is a detailed description of the design and operation of each intersection in the downtown one-way loop:

North Main Street (Route 202A) / Bridge Street / Union Street

This intersection is located at the southwestern corner of the one-way loop. The entering one-way roadway is Union Street southbound, and North Main Street eastbound is the one-way exiting roadway. It is a signalized intersection with four legs:

- Union Street is one-way southbound. It approaches the intersection with three lanes: right turn, through, and left turn.
- North Main Street is two-way on the west side of the intersection, with one lane in each direction.
- North Main Street to the east of the intersection is one-way eastbound, forming the southern leg of the one-way loop.
- Bridge Street, to the south of the intersection, is a two-way street with one lane in each direction. Northbound traffic must turn right at the intersection onto North Main Street.

The signal provides exclusive pushbutton-actuated pedestrian crossings. The following are key issues at this intersection:

- The Union Street right-of-way is fairly narrow, with no on-street parking.
- The Union Street southbound right turn movement is fairly heavy because it satisfies the South Main Street – through to – North Main Street movement via the one-way loop. The signal has a separate right-arrow control for Union Street southbound right turns. This Union Street right turn has no vehicular conflicts, and has a green right-arrow during all signal phases except for the push-button actuated pedestrian phase. This enables one of the intersection's heaviest movements to flow continuously through the intersection.

Wakefield Street / Union Street

This intersection is at the northern corner of the downtown one-way loop. Wakefield Street is one-way northwestbound toward the intersection, and Union Street is one-way southbound away. The intersection is unsignalized and has a triangular island that channels the approaching traffic streams:

- Wakefield Street to the southeast of the intersection is one-way approaching the intersection. It has two lanes, and the right lane continues through on Wakefield Street northwestbound, while the left lane is channeled by the traffic island onto Union Street southbound.
- Wakefield Street to the northwest of the intersection is two-way, with one lane in each direction. Due to the one-way traffic pattern, all northbound traffic is through-traffic from Wakefield Street, and all southbound traffic must turn right onto Union Street southbound.
- Union Street is one-way away from the intersection, with two southbound lanes.

The following are key issues at this location:

- Union Street has two receiving lanes for the two entering lanes, so Wakefield southeastbound traffic and Wakefield Street northwestbound traffic does not have to yield as it enters Union Street. However, these traffic streams must weave across each other as they approach Bridge Street. The weave from the left lane (from Wakefield Street northwestbound) to the right lane is particularly heavy, since this weave satisfies the South Main Street – through to – North Main Street movement via the one-way loop.
- The one-way section of Wakefield Street approaching the intersection has a wide right-of-way, with two wide lanes and on-street parking on both sides of the street.
- Summer Street meets Wakefield Street at a signalized T-intersection approximately 100 feet southeast of the intersection of Wakefield Street / Union Street. This signal creates gaps that enable traffic entering from Summer Street to weave across Wakefield Street and turn onto Union Street southbound.

North Main Street / South Main Street / Wakefield Street

This intersection is at the southeastern corner of the downtown one-way loop. North Main Street eastbound is one-way entering the intersection, and Wakefield Street northwestbound is one-way away from the intersection. It is unsignalized, with a triangular island channeling the traffic. The intersection has three major approaches:

- North Main Street to the west of the intersection is one-way eastbound. It has two lanes: the right lane continues through on South Main Street southeastbound, while the left lane is channeled by the traffic island onto Wakefield Street northwestbound.
- South Main Street to the southeast of the intersection is two-way. It has two northwestbound lanes that are channeled onto Wakefield Street northwestbound. All southeastbound traffic comes from North Main Street eastbound.
- Wakefield Street is one-way away from the intersection, with two northwestbound lanes.

The following are key issues at this intersection:

- This intersection is located at the main downtown square, with a pedestrian-oriented plaza. Crosswalks are provided and signed for “Yield to Pedestrians,” but the traffic controls facilitate free flow of traffic.
- The two through lanes on South Main Street northwestbound to Wakefield Street have right of way over the North Main Street left turn, which operates under YIELD control.
- The North Main Street one-way approach to this intersection has the highest concentration of historic storefronts and commercial activity. It has parking on both sides of the street and relatively narrow lanes. There is some pedestrian traffic, and crosswalks with neckdowns are provided.

One-Way Loop Advantages and Disadvantages

The downtown one-way loop's configuration enables traffic to essentially flow continuously around the downtown loop. This continuous flow of traffic has both advantages and disadvantages.

The advantages include:

- Efficient processing of traffic. The current circulation pattern reduces turning conflicts and keeps the major traffic flows moving with minimal stopping. This reduces traffic delay associated with deceleration, stopped time, and acceleration. The only major traffic flows that have significant stopped time are the a) North Main Street traffic approaching Union Street and b) the Union Street southbound left turns and through movements.
- Low traffic accident rate. As the safety analysis below shows, the unsignalized intersections in the downtown one-way loop (North Main/South Main/Wakefield Street and Wakefield/Union Street) have low traffic accident rates. This is because there are fewer turning conflicts than there would be at the intersections of two-way roads, and there are no sudden stops or red-light running often associated with signalized intersections.

The disadvantages of the downtown one-way loop are:

- Efficient throughput of traffic. Although efficient traffic operations are an advantage, the efficiency can come with costs. In the case of the Rochester downtown one-way loop, the efficient throughput of traffic may be a disadvantage. Automobiles are able to pass through the downtown at relatively high speeds, with minimal stopping or slowing. The efficient traffic operations encourage drivers to treat downtown Rochester as a through-way rather than a destination. With the one-way circulating configuration of the loop, downtown Rochester functions like a large traffic rotary.
- Difficult access for pedestrians and bicycles. The downtown one-way loop enables automobiles to flow constantly, in high volumes and at relatively high speeds. As a result, crossing these heavy traffic flows is challenging for pedestrians and bicyclists, even where there are crosswalks present.
- Confusing circulation patterns for drivers. The one-way loop denies many drivers direct connections to their desired destinations. This can be disorienting and frustrating for drivers, especially those unfamiliar with the circulation pattern in the downtown.
- Transportation environment unsuitable for storefront retail. All these elements together combine to create a transportation environment that is unfriendly to casual visitors and pedestrians and bicyclists. This creates problems for downtown businesses, who rely on downtown visitors and on pedestrian traffic for economic success.

Parking

There is a good supply of parking in and near the downtown one-way loop. There is on-street parking in the downtown one-way loop on North Main Street and Wakefield Street, but no on-street parking on Union Street because it is too narrow. There is also on-street parking immediately adjacent to the downtown loop on North Main Street, South Main Street, and Hanson Street.

There are also public off-street lots in the center of the downtown loop, between Cocheco River and the North Main Street block of the loop, off Hanson Street, and behind City Hall. According to the *Rochester Downtown One-Way Loop Study*, there are a total of approximately 340 publicly-available

parking spaces, both on-street and off-street, in or immediately adjacent to the downtown one-way loop, and an additional 240 public parking spaces are available within 1 – 2 blocks of the loop.

Field observations indicate that public parking is commonly available in the downtown one-way loop. On a typical weekday afternoon, most of the parking spaces on North Main Street in the downtown loop are occupied, and so are most of the parking spaces on North Main Street, South Main Street, and Hanson Street. However, there are usually a significant number of parking spaces available on Wakefield Street, as well as in the off-street parking lots in and near the downtown loop. Most of the way-finding signs directing traffic to downtown off-street parking facilities are relatively small and difficult to follow.

Pedestrian Access

The downtown one-way loop is the center of Rochester's downtown, and has the greatest concentration of storefront retail and civic uses. The downtown loop also provides continuous sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian neckdowns in several locations. As a result, there is a concentration of pedestrian activity in the downtown loop, especially in and around the park at the intersection of North Main Street / South Main Street / Wakefield Street.

However, crossing the street as a pedestrian can be somewhat challenging in the downtown loop. At the intersection of North Main Street / Union Street / Bridge Street, pedestrians can actuate an exclusive WALK phase; at the intersection of North Main Street / South Main Street / Wakefield Street, crosswalks are painted and signs direct cars to "Yield to Pedestrians." However, heavy traffic volumes and continuous traffic movements through the downtown loop can still create difficulties for pedestrians.

Bicycle Access

There are currently no dedicated bicycle facilities in the downtown one-way loop. The major roadways approaching the downtown loop (North Main Street, South Main Street, and Wakefield Street) possess adequate width for bicycle travel. There is adequate width on Wakefield Street and North Main Street for bicycle travel as well.

The one-way circulation pattern presents challenges for bicycle circulation. As vehicles, bicycles must negotiate the circuitous path around the one-way loop just like automobiles. However, the continuous and heavy motor vehicle traffic flows through the downtown loop make the required bicycle merges difficult. For example, a bicyclist traveling northbound on South Main Street bound for North Main Street would be forced to merge across one lane of Wakefield Street traffic, bear left onto Union Street between the entering traffic flows from Wakefield Street northbound and southbound, and merge across another lane of Union Street traffic before turning right onto North Main Street.

Public Transit

Downtown Rochester is served by COAST (Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation) which provides public transit service for Strafford and Rockingham counties. COAST provides service to downtown Rochester via bus routes 2 and 6. Route 2 connects Rochester with Somersworth, Dover, Newington and Portsmouth. In Rochester, Route 2 serves the Frisbie Memorial Hospital and traverses Route 108 / South Main Street, through the downtown loop via Wakefield Street, stops at City Hall, and continues up Wakefield Street to the Lilac Mall. Route 6 connects Rochester with Farmington, entering Rochester via North Main Street. It traverses the downtown loop via North

Main Street to Wakefield Street, stops at City Hall, and continues via Wakefield Street to the Lilac Mall.

Other Downtown Intersections

The next three intersections are major intersections on the principal routes that lead to Rochester's one-way loop: Wakefield Street to the north, South Main Street to the southeast, and North Main Street to the west. Each of these intersections creates a gateway of sorts to downtown Rochester.

Wakefield Street / Columbus Avenue (Route 125)

Columbus Avenue intersects Wakefield Street at a signalized T-intersection.

- Columbus Avenue approaches Wakefield Street at an acute angle, but curves as it approaches Wakefield Street in order to intersect at a fairly right angle. The Columbus Avenue approach has two approach lanes, a left turn lane and a right-turn lane, and a wide receiving lane.
- The Wakefield Street southbound approach has two lanes, a left-turn lane and a through-lane, and a single receiving lane. The southbound left turn is relatively heavy, and operates with a left arrow on a protected phase.
- The Wakefield Street northbound approach has a single through / right-turn lane.

The following are issues at this intersection:

- Geometric Design. Although the Columbus Avenue provides approximately two 100 feet of fairly straight approach to Wakefield Street, this alignment still results in limited sight distance and a tight S-curve for turning vehicles. However, the inside of the curve is constrained by the presence of a building.
- Traffic Operations. Based on traffic analysis and field observations, traffic operates fairly well at this location. The intersection was reconstructed approximately 4 – 5 years ago, including new signal equipment.
- Parking. There is no on-street parking in the vicinity of this intersection.
- Pedestrian Access. There is a push-button actuated exclusive pedestrian phase. Pedestrian volumes at this location are fairly low.

South Main Street (Route 108) / Columbus Avenue (Route 125)

This is a four-way signalized intersection. The following is a summary of the intersection layout and roadway approaches.

- South Main Street to the east of the intersection has three westbound approach lanes: through-left, through, and right turn only, and two receiving lanes.
- South Main Street to the west of the intersection has two eastbound approach lanes: through-left and through-right, and two receiving lanes.

- Columbus Avenue has three southbound approach lanes: left turn only under left-arrow control, through-right, and a short right turn lane under YIELD control. Columbus Avenue has one northbound receiving lane.
- Columbus Avenue has two northbound approach lanes: left turn only under left-arrow control, and a through-right lane. Directly adjacent to the intersection, the northbound approach widens to allow a right turning vehicle to pass a through vehicle. Columbus Avenue has one northbound receiving lane.

This intersection has the following issues:

Traffic Operations

- Traffic is distributed fairly evenly on the four approaches.
- Left turn volumes are heavy on both Columbus Avenue approaches, and fairly light on both South Main Street approaches.
- The intersection appears to function fairly well. It has fairly wide approaches and appropriate lane assignment on the approaches.

Parking

- There is no on-street parking provided on Columbus Avenue in the vicinity of the intersection.
- There is on-street parking provided on both sides of South Main Street to the west of the intersection, toward the one-way loop. To the east of the intersection, there are three on-street parking spaces on the south side of South Main Street; otherwise, there is no on-street parking to the east on South Main Street. There are many commercial and retail establishments near the intersection with off-street parking.

Pedestrian

Pedestrian push-buttons at each corner actuate an exclusive pedestrian phase. There is some pedestrian activity in this location. However, many of the nearby businesses are more oriented toward automobile access relative to the storefront retail businesses in the center loop area of downtown.

Strafford Square: North Main Street / Washington Street (Route 202) / Walnut Street (Route 202A)

This is a complex unsignalized intersection. The intersection, known as Strafford Square, is formed by the intersection of North Main Street, Washington Street (Route 202), and Walnut Street (Route 202A). All roadways are two-way, two lane roads and all intersection approaches are single lane. These three roadways do not form a single intersection. Instead, they intersect at three points to create a central triangular island.

- North Main Street is the major street, passing from the northwest and rounding a curve to turn due east toward the Rochester center.

- Walnut Street connects to North Main Street at an oblique angle at the outside of the curve. The Walnut Street eastbound approach to North Main Street is YIELD-controlled.
- Washington Street intersects Walnut Street and North Main Street approximately 100 feet west of where Walnut Street intersects North Main Street.

This intersection has the following issues:

Intersection Geometry

The three roadways intersect at three points, essentially creating three separate unsignalized intersections:

- Walnut Street (under YIELD control) at North Main Street
- Washington Street at North Main Street – the Washington Street approach has no traffic regulation, but it functions as STOP controlled approach
- Washington Street / Walnut Street, with three approaches under STOP control and the fourth, Walnut Street westbound, a free movement

Other Issues

- Traffic Circulation - these intersections are closely spaced (approximately 50 – 100 feet apart), and they interact with each other. The result is a confusing circulation system, with multiple conflicts.
- Pedestrian - crosswalks are provided only at three locations: the northern end of Washington Street, the eastern end of Walnut Street, and at the North Main Street eastbound entry to the intersection. This creates circuitous crossing requirements for some pedestrian connections.
- Parking - there is no on-street parking on any of the major roadways in the vicinity of Strafford Square. There is on-street parking on both sides of North Main Street beginning about 300 feet to the east of Strafford Square.

Neighborhood Intersections

The two remaining intersections are located at small commercial centers in Rochester's neighborhoods of Gonic and East Rochester.

Main Street / Church Street

This intersection is located at the Gonic Center commercial district, with a post office and several small storefronts. It is unsignalized, and functions like a standard T-intersection. Main Street is the major street, with one wide lane in each direction. To the north of the intersection, Main Street has parking on both sides of the street, and parking on the east side only to the south of the intersection. Church Street is the STOP-controlled minor street

This intersection has the following issues:

- Intersection Geometry - The intersection is very open, with wide lanes, large turning radii, a raised median in the middle of Church Street, and painted medians. The result is a great deal of excess pavement, greater potential for high speeds, and wide crosswalks.
- Sight Lines - Main Street rounds a curve at the intersection with Church Street. Church Street is at the outside of the curve, so that the sight distance for the Church Street turning traffic is good.
- However, there is parking on the inside of the curve; this parking can diminish the sight distance for Main Street traffic, especially northbound Main Street traffic. This is a potential problem for pedestrians seeking to cross Main Street at the crosswalks.
- Traffic Demand - traffic volumes are highest on Church Street and the northern Main Street leg, and lower on the southeastern leg of Main Street.
- Parking - there is on-street parking on both sides of Main Street to the north of the intersection. There is on-street parking on the northeastern side of Main Street in the intersection (which contributes to the sight line issues above) and the south of the intersection.
- Pedestrian - due to the excess pavement at this location, pedestrian crossing distances are very wide (approximately 40 – 50 feet wide). These are very wide crossings for an intersection with fairly low traffic volumes. Parked cars on the inside of the Main Street curve also create sight line problems for pedestrians attempting to cross Main Street.

Highland Street (Route 202 / 11) / Main Street / Autumn Street

This intersection is located at a small commercial center in East Rochester, with a gas station, town library, and small storefronts. It is a four-legged intersection with all-way STOP control.

- Highland Street has two lanes in each direction and no parking on either side. Approximately 300 feet north of the intersection, Highland Street crosses the Salmon Falls River into South Lebanon, Maine.
- Autumn Street, to the west of the intersection, mostly serves residential traffic, and has very low volumes. It has well-utilized on-street parking on both sides of the street, and a fairly wide right-of-way.
- Main Street, to the east of the intersection, provides connections to several residential streets. It has a fairly wide right-of-way, and three parking spaces directly in front of the library at the northeastern corner of the intersection.

The following are the principal issues at this intersection.

- Traffic Demand - traffic on Highland Street is much heavier than traffic on Main Street or Autumn Street. Most of the Highland Street traffic is through-traffic.

- **Parking** - there is no on-street parking on Highland Street, due to the relatively narrow right-of-way and the relatively high volumes on Highland Street. There is on-street parking on Autumn Street to the west of the intersection, which provides parking for the shops clustered around the intersection. There are three parking spaces on the north side of Main Street to the east of the intersection, adjacent to the East Rochester branch public library.
- **Pedestrian** - there are crosswalks at all approaches to the intersection, and sidewalks in the immediate vicinity of the intersection (except on the east side of Highland Street north of the intersection). The all-way STOP control provides opportunities for pedestrians to cross the relatively busy traffic on Highland Street.

Traffic Volumes

Traffic volumes were collected for all the study area intersections during May, June, August, and September 2002. These counts included both automatic traffic recorders (ATRs) and turning movement counts (TMCs) to collect these volumes. The ATR counts produced hourly volumes past several points in the study area for week-long periods, while the TMCs provided information on the number of cars making each specific turning movement (e.g. eastbound left turn, westbound through-movement) at a given intersection.

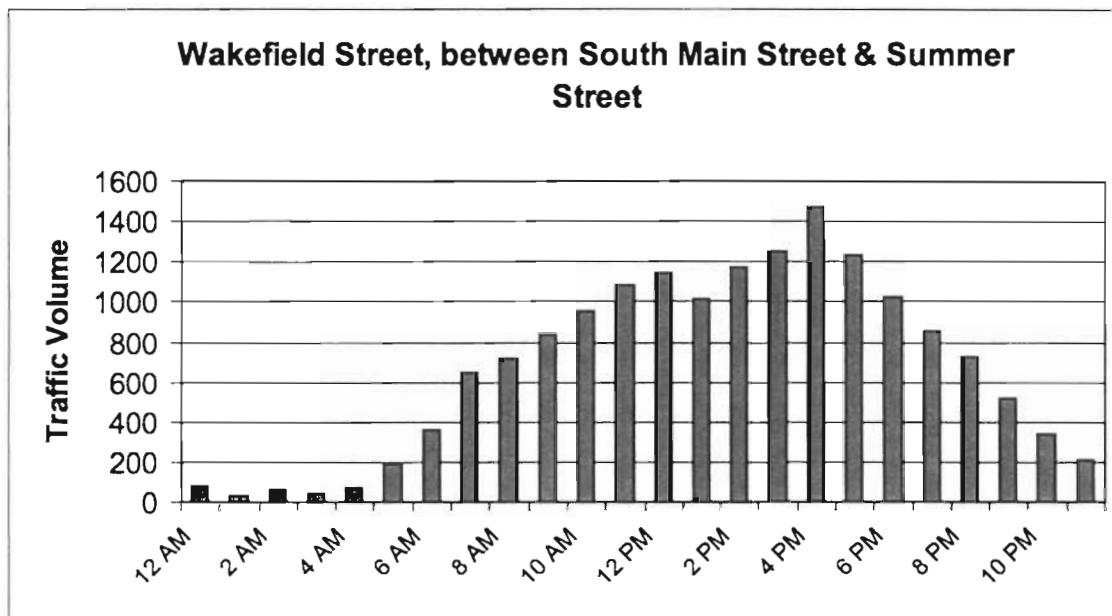
The ATR counts were originally conducted in May and June 2002 on the streets in and around Rochester's downtown one-way loop for the Rochester One-Way Study. The volumes from the ATR counts were studied and balanced to produce a consistent downtown traffic volume network. TMCs were conducted at the Rochester Downtown Master Plan's five remaining study area intersections in August 2002.

Supplemental PM peak period TMCs were conducted in September 2002 at the intersections at the corners of the downtown one-way loop. These TMCs were executed in order to confirm the traffic distribution patterns included in the Downtown One-Way Study. The supplemental TMCs were fairly consistent with the volumes from the Downtown One-Way Study, with two significant exceptions:

At the intersection of Wakefield Street / Union Street, the northbound Wakefield Street left turn onto Union Street is much heavier than the Wakefield Street through-movement (almost twice as much). This reflects a heavy South Main Street – Wakefield Street – Union Street – North Main Street movement via the one-way loop. The manually counted Wakefield Street volumes are also much more consistent with the volumes at the nearby Wakefield Street / Columbus Avenue intersection. At the intersection of South Main Street / North Main Street / Wakefield Street, the North Main Street volumes from the September 2002 TMC were very consistent with the volumes from the Downtown One-Way Study. However, the South Main Street to Wakefield Street volume was significantly higher. This higher volume represents a more conservative, "worst-case" scenario, so this higher volume has been reflected in the existing conditions traffic volumes.

The ATR counts show that Rochester downtown traffic demand on weekdays does not exhibit two demand "peaks," like the peaks associated with commuter rush hours. Instead, the weekday traffic demand on most roadways in the study area builds steadily through the morning and peaks during the afternoon. On most roads in the study area, this afternoon traffic demand peak occurs between 4 PM and 5 PM. Figure 13 shows the hourly traffic distribution over the 24-hour length of a weekday on Wakefield Street between South Main Street and Summer Street. This distribution is based on ATR data collected in May 2002, and shows the strong PM peak that is characteristic of all the intersections in the study area.

Figure II-14: Daily Traffic Profile



These findings from the ATR volumes are supported by the TMC data. The TMC data can be used to identify each intersection's morning (AM) and afternoon (PM) "peak hours," or the single hour with the highest traffic volumes at each study area intersection. Figures 15 and 16 show the weekday morning peak hour traffic volumes and the weekday afternoon peak hour traffic volumes, respectively, for each of the eight study area intersections.

Figure II-15: Weekday AM Peak Hour Traffic Volumes

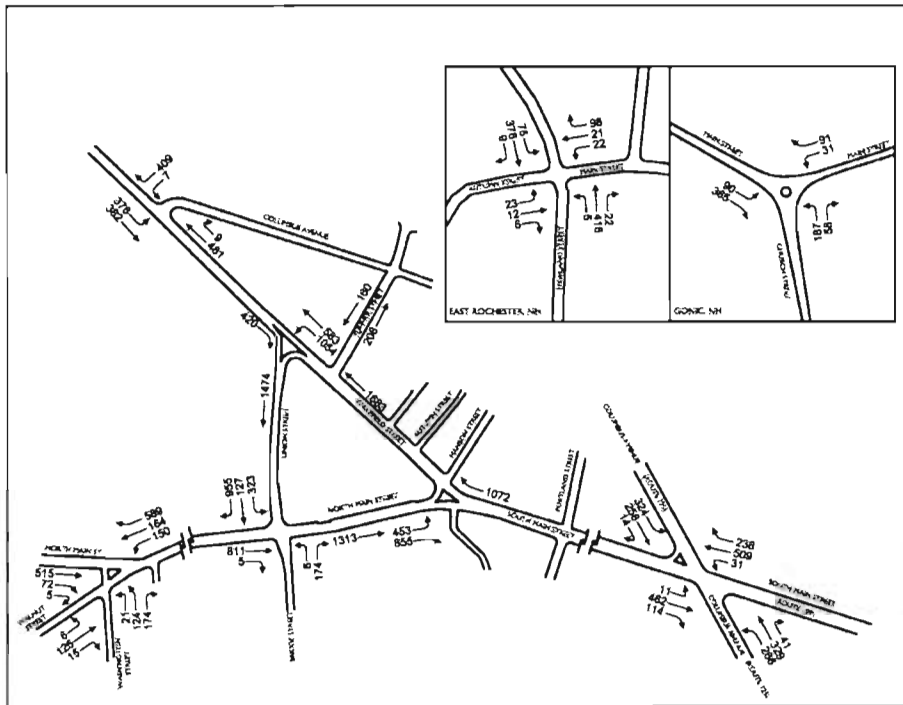
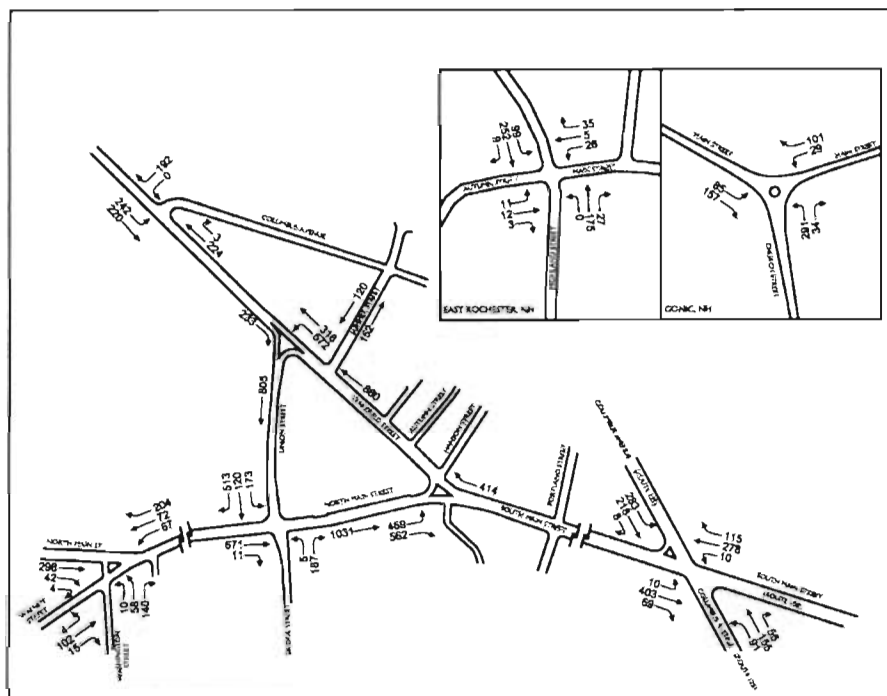


Figure II-16: Weekday PM Peak Hour Traffic Volumes



The traffic volumes at every study area intersection are significantly higher during the PM peak hour than during the AM peak hour, by an average of 63%. In fact, the traffic volumes are higher during the PM peak hour than during the AM peak hour on every individual intersection approach, at all eight study intersections, except for three approaches (out of a total of 25 intersection approaches). Table II-6 summarizes the traffic volumes at each intersection approach during both the AM and PM peak hours. This indicates that the PM peak hour is the “worst case scenario” at all study intersections. This strong PM peak trend is also supported by the results of the traffic operations analysis included in the next section.

Table II-6: Intersection Traffic Volumes

Intersection		Approach Direction	2002 AM Peak	2002 PM Peak	PM Increment vs. AM
1	North Main St/Bridge St/Union St	EB	682	816	20%
		NB	192	180	-6%
		SB	806	1,405	74%
		Total	1,680	2,401	43%
2	Wakefield St / Union St	NB	888	1,637	84%
		SB	233	420	80%
		Total	1,121	2,057	83%
3	North Main St / South Main St	EB	1,031	1,308	27%
		NB	414	1,072	159%
		Total	1,445	2,380	65%
4	Columbus Avenue / Wakefield St	WB	192	416	117%
		NB	227	490	116%
		SB	462	758	64%
		Total	881	1,664	89%
5	Columbus Avenue / South Main St	EB	482	587	22%
		WB	403	778	93%
		NB	301	636	111%
		SB	509	596	17%
		Total	1,695	2,597	53%
6	North Main St / Walnut St / Washington St	EB	121	146	21%
		WB	343	903	163%
		NB	208	319	53%
		SB	344	592	72%
		Total	1,016	1,960	93%
7	Main St / Church St (Gonic)	WB	130	122	-6%
		NB	325	245	-25%
		SB	242	455	88%
		Total	697	822	18%
8	Highland St / Main St / Autumn St	EB	26	41	58%
		WB	66	141	114%
		NB	202	443	119%
		SB	360	460	28%
		Total	654	1,085	66%
Total			9,189	14,966	63%

Traffic Operations

Existing peak hour traffic operations in the project study area were quantified by calculating intersection operating levels of service. The methodology and results of the capacity analysis are presented below.

Level of Service (LOS) is a term used to describe the quality of the traffic flow on a roadway facility at a particular point in time. It is an aggregate measure of travel delay, travel speed, congestion, driver discomfort, convenience, and safety based on a comparison of roadway system capacity to roadway system travel demand. Operating levels of service are reported on a scale of A to F, with A representing the best operating conditions and F representing the worst operating conditions. Level of Service A represents free-flow or uncongested conditions with little or no delay to motorists, while Level of Service F represents a forced-flow condition with long delays and traffic demands exceeding roadway capacity.

Roadway operating levels of service are calculated following procedures defined in the *2000 Highway Capacity Manual (HCM)*, published by the Transportation Research Board. For signalized and unsignalized intersections, the operating level of service is based on travel delays. Delays can be measured in the field but generally are calculated as a function of traffic volume; peaking characteristic of traffic flow; percentage of heavy vehicles in the traffic stream; type of traffic control; number of travel lanes and lane use; intersection approach grades; pedestrian activity; and signal timing, phasing, and progression where applicable. The specific criteria applied per the *2000 Highway Capacity Manual* are summarized in Table II-7.

Table II-7: Intersection Level of Service Criteria

Level of Service	Average Delay per Vehicle (Seconds)	
	Signalized Intersections	Unsignalized Intersections
A	≤ 10.0	≤ 10.0
B	> 10.0 and ≤ 20.0	> 10.0 and ≤ 15.0
C	> 20.0 and ≤ 35.0	> 15.0 and ≤ 25.0
D	> 35.0 and ≤ 55.0	> 25.0 and ≤ 35.0
E	> 55.0 and ≤ 80.0	> 35.0 and ≤ 50.0
F	> 80.0	> 50.0

Source: Transportation Research Board, *Highway Capacity Manual*, Special Report 209, Third Edition, National Research Council, Washington, DC, 2000.

While levels of service for both signalized and unsignalized intersections are based on delay, care should be used when comparing results for the two different intersection types. The calculated average delay per vehicle for signalized intersections applies to all vehicles entering the intersection and under control of the traffic signal. For unsignalized intersections, it is assumed that through movements on the major street have the right of way and are not delayed by side street traffic. Consequently, the total delay values in Table 7 for unsignalized intersections apply only to the minor street intersection approaches or to left turns from the major street into the minor street which must yield to oncoming traffic.

3. North Main St / South Main St / Wakefield St		AM	A	2.5	--
North Main St EB Yield		PM	A	5.5	--
6. North Main Street / Walnut Street / Washington Street					
Walnut St EB @ Washington St	AM	A	8.6	0.17	
	PM	B	14.6	0.54	
Walnut St EB @ North Main St	AM	A	4.6	0.37	
	PM	A	5.6	0.62	
Washington St NB @ Walnut St	AM	A	8.8	0.27	
	PM	B	13.3	0.50	
Washington St SB @ Walnut St	AM	A	8.1	0.07	
	PM	A	9.8	0.14	
Washington St NB @ North Main St	AM	B	13.6	0.13	
	PM	F	62.3	0.73	
7. Main Street @ Church Street NB	AM	B	13.8	0.46	
	PM	B	11.5	0.29	
8. Highland Street / Autumn Street / Main Street					
Highland Street NB	AM	A	9.4	0.28	
	PM	C	21.3	0.73	
Highland Street SB	AM	B	11.9	0.50	
	PM	C	23.2	0.76	
Autumn Street EB	AM	A	8.8	0.04	
	PM	B	10.7	0.09	
Main Street WB	AM	A	8.8	0.10	
	PM	B	11.5	0.27	

Level of service

Average delay in seconds per vehicle

Volume to capacity ratio

NA Not applicable (no conflicts)

Table II-9 shows that the unsignalized intersections in the study area operate well under existing conditions. Most minor street approaches operate at LOS A or B, with only a few at LOS C. One approach, the northbound Washington Street approach to North Main Street during the PM peak hour, currently operates at LOS F.

The intersection of Wakefield Street / Union Street has no designated level of service or delay, since the triangular island channelizes the entering traffic in such a way that there are no conflicts at this location.

As with the signalized intersections, Table 9 shows that the unsignalized intersections experience higher delay during the PM peak hour, with one exception. The intersection of Main Street / Church

Street in Gonic experiences LOS B during both the AM and PM peak hour, but the AM peak hour average vehicular delay is 2.3 seconds higher than the PM peak hour delay. This is due principally to a higher volume of northbound STOP-controlled left turns on the Church Street approach to Main Street.

Safety Analysis

Traffic accident records for the years 1999, 2000, and 2001 were obtained from the Rochester Police Department in order to identify the accident history at each of the study intersections and to determine whether any of the study intersections experience a particularly high rate of traffic accidents. The accident history at each of the study intersections is summarized below in Table II-10.

Table II-10: Traffic Accident History

Intersection	Total Accidents			Annual Average	Crash Rate (per million entering vehicles)	% During Peak Period	% During Daylight Hours
	2001	2000	1999				
1 North Main Street / Union Street / Bridge Street	6	5	6	6	0.58	41%	82%
2 Wakefield Street / Union Street	1	1	2	1	0.16	0%	100%
3 Wakefield Street / North Main Street / South Main Street	0	4	1	2	0.17	20%	60%
4 Wakefield Street / Columbus Avenue	7	7	1	5	0.74	33%	87%
5 South Main Street / Columbus Avenue	7	8	4	6	0.60	32%	89%
6 North Main Street / Walnut Street / Washington Street	4	4	12	7	0.84	50%	90%
7 Main Street / Church Street (Gonic)	1	1	2	1	0.40	25%	75%
8 Highland Street / Main Street / Autumn Street (East Rochester)	3	1	3	2	0.53	43%	71%

The traffic accident summary in Table 10 shows that none of the study area intersections experiences an extremely high rate of traffic accidents, either in terms of crashes per year or crashes per million entering vehicles (MEV), a standard way of correcting for higher or lower volumes at certain intersections.

The signalized intersections (North Main Street / Union Street / Bridge Street, Wakefield Street / Columbus Avenue, South Main Street / Columbus Avenue) tend to have higher accident totals and higher crash rates per MEV than most of the unsignalized intersections. This is consistent with general traffic accident patterns, in which signalized intersections experience crashes associated with sudden stops, red-light running, and generally higher volumes than unsignalized intersections.

Future Conditions

The study year for the future conditions traffic analysis is 2012. A ten-year planning horizon was selected to be consistent with the *Rochester Downtown One-Way Study* and with a reasonable time

frame for implementing the type of roadway and intersection improvements that will be considered as alternatives.

Two scenarios for the future study year were analyzed: the No-Build condition (without any changes to the study area intersections) and the Build condition (with improvement alternatives assumed in place at the study area intersections). The No-Build condition shows the traffic volumes for the study intersections in year 2012 assuming the proposed project is not constructed. The no-build traffic volumes are estimated based on existing traffic volumes; these existing volumes are then increased to account for traffic growth in the study area.

The build condition analysis shows the effects of the proposed project on traffic volumes at the study intersections. The build condition traffic volumes include the no-build condition volumes plus traffic generated by the proposed project.

Future No-Build Conditions

Future No-Build background traffic volumes are determined from growth in existing traffic (background growth) and traffic generated by anticipated development that will impact the study intersections by 2012.

General traffic growth generally occurs as a result of population increases, new commercial development, and increases in per capita trip-making. Based on the *Rochester Downtown One-Way Loop Study*, the Seacoast Metropolitan Planning Organization's 1997 *UNH / Durham Traffic Study* states that "traffic volume increases in the Seacoast region have averaged 1 to 2% per year." The *Rochester Downtown One-Way Loop Study* assumes a general background traffic increase of 1% per year as being appropriate to a relatively built-out, congested urban area such as Rochester. Therefore, 1% per year for 10 years, or an overall growth factor of 1.1046, has been assumed for all traffic volumes at study area intersections.

In order to incorporate the effect of new development in downtown Rochester, the *Rochester Downtown One-Way Study* assumes that there is retail infill development in the downtown center that will decrease the vacancy rate from 23% to 5%. This would entail the development of approximately 17,400 square feet of mixed storefront retail uses. Table II-11 shows the total trips resulting from this new retail development, both entering and exiting Rochester's downtown center.

Table II-11: New Trips from Downtown Development in the 2012 No-Build Condition

	AM Peak Hour	PM Peak Hour
Entering Trips	27	114
Exiting Trips	23	94
Total Trips	50	208

This analysis has incorporated these added trips in the 2012 No-Build traffic volumes for all the downtown Rochester study area intersections (intersections 1 – 6, not just the intersections in the downtown one-way loop). The trips were distributed based on the weighted volume of the major traffic volumes entering and exiting the downtown one-way loop. Those volumes were then applied to the volumes at the upstream and downstream intersections: study area intersections 4, 5 and 6. For the sake of a more conservative analysis, it was assumed that all the development-related traffic passed through not only the downtown one-way loop, but also through one of the other major downtown intersections (4, 5 or 6).

The resulting 2012 No-Build AM peak hour and PM peak hour traffic volumes are shown in Figures II-17 and II-18, respectively.

Figure II-17: 2012 No-Build AM Peak Hour Traffic Volumes

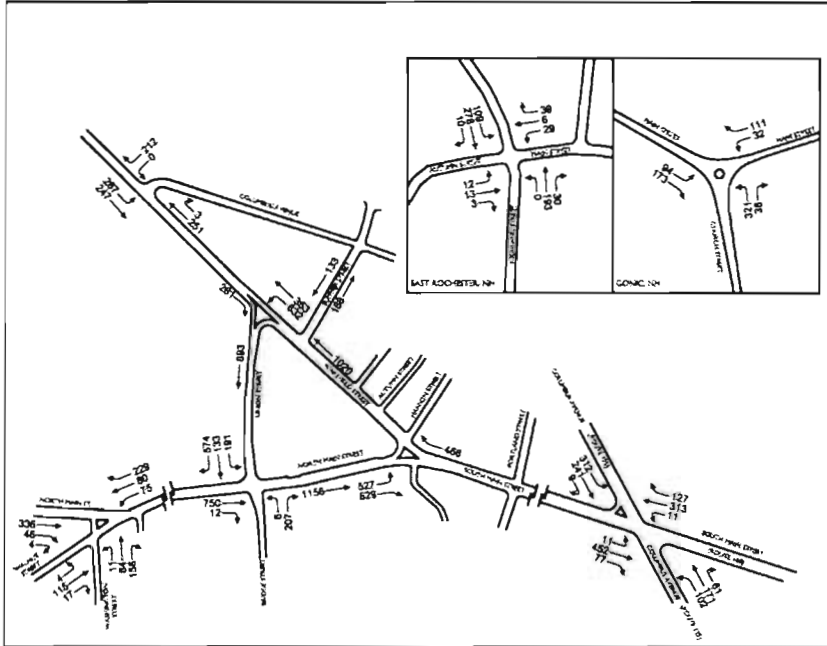
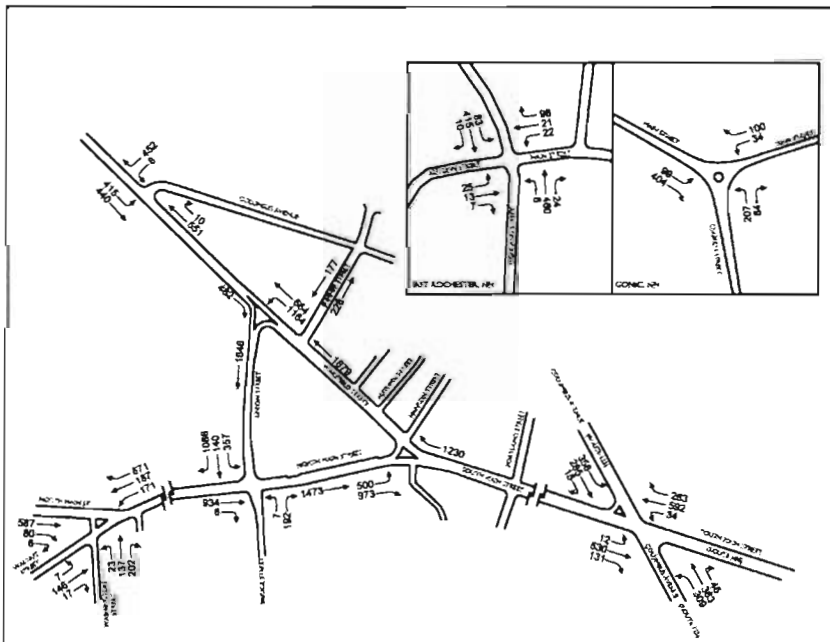


Figure II-18: 2012 No-Build PM Peak Hour Traffic Volumes



Potential Improvement Alternatives

This review of the study area intersections has included the geometric design of the intersections, the traffic regulation and signalization regime at each intersection, the traffic volumes, the traffic patterns, the traffic operations, and the traffic accident history. Based on this review, we have investigated potential changes to the study area intersections to determine which improvements are feasible or advantageous. The proposed improvement alternatives have been tested using the projected traffic volumes for the 2012 PM peak hour. As the analysis above demonstrates, traffic volumes at virtually all study area intersections are much higher during the PM peak hour than during the AM peak hour. Therefore, the 2012 PM peak hour provides a conservative “worst case” for testing the improvement alternatives.

The following is a discussion of potential improvements at the various study area intersections.

Potential Improvements for the Downtown One-Way Loop

Study area intersections 1, 2 and 3 are considered together here, as comprising the downtown one-way loop system. The above discussion of existing conditions establishes the context for reviewing potential improvements in the downtown one-way loop by describing the advantages, disadvantages, and current transportation-related issues that are present in the downtown one-way loop. Based on these issues, it is desirable to consider alternatives to the downtown one-way circulation pattern. The following is a brief summary of the advantages and disadvantages of converting each of the legs of the downtown loop (North Main Street, Wakefield Street, and Union Street) to two-way circulation. These circulation changes can be considered in isolation or in combination when formulating improvement alternatives.

North Main Street, between Union Street and Wakefield Street. From a land use and commercial perspective, North Main Street is the most desirable street for two-way circulation. It has the highest concentration of downtown businesses, and is the most attractive “storefront” district. However, demand for the North Main Street-to-South Main Street and the South Main Street-to-North Main Street connections are very high. It would be very difficult to accommodate approximately 1,000 vehicles in each direction during the PM peak period, let alone accommodating turns at the intersections of Union Street and Wakefield Street.

Union Street, between North Main Street and Wakefield Street. Union Street could potentially be converted to two-way circulation. Left turns from North Main Street could most likely be accommodated, both in terms of geometry and signal timing. This could potentially eliminate approximately 250 vehicles per hour from the North Main Street and Wakefield Street legs of the one-way loop. However, accommodating the heavy Wakefield Street-to-Union Street left turns would be problematic if Union Street were two-way.

Wakefield Street, between Union Street and North Main Street. Wakefield Street is very wide, with wide lanes and on-street parking on both sides. It could accommodate two-way traffic with turning lanes at intersections. However, the need for a direct Wakefield Street-to-South Main Street connection is may not be as critical, since Columbus Avenue provides a bypass for the downtown one-way loop. The heavy left turns at Union Street and North Main Street may also create operational problems.

Aside from changes to the one-way circulation, the following are other potential improvements in the downtown one-way loop.

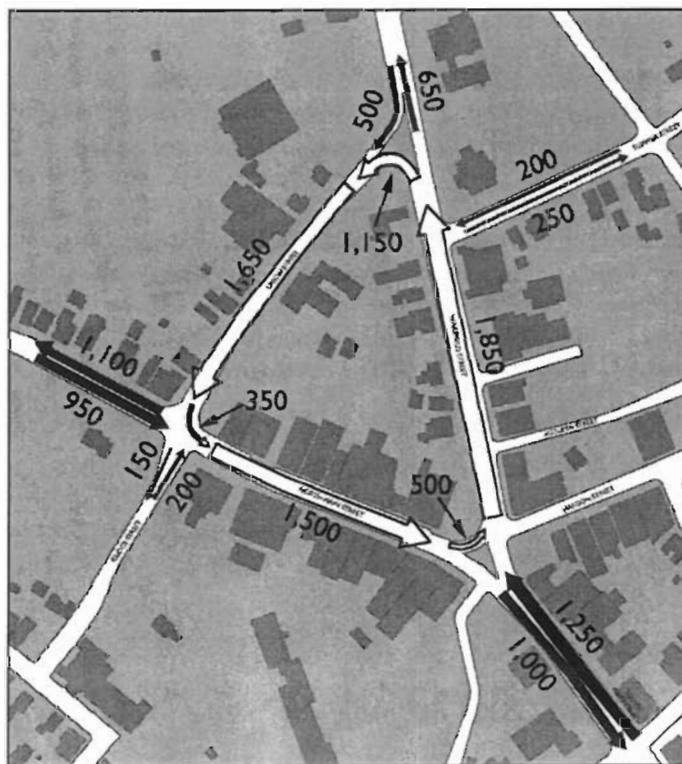
- North Main Street / Union Street / Bridge Street - The *Rochester Downtown One-Way Study* recommends that parking be eliminated so that the North Main Street eastbound approach can be widened from one lane to two lanes. Preliminary review indicates that this can help operations significantly by effectively doubling the capacity of the very congested eastbound North Main Street movement.
- North Main Street / South Main Street / Wakefield Street - The *Rochester Downtown One-Way Study* also recommends that the South Main Street approach to Wakefield Street be narrowed from two lanes to one, in order to provide the North Main Street traffic with free-flow operations onto Wakefield Street. Based on field observations, the North Main Street yield at Wakefield Street operates fairly well, while a merge on South Main Street approaching Wakefield Street could create some conflicts.

However, before generating and describing potential improvement alternatives, it is also necessary to identify the prevailing traffic patterns and the desired connections.

Downtown One-Way Loop Traffic Flows

The one-way circulation system in the downtown loop results in a fairly heavy concentration of traffic volumes on the three legs of the triangle. This is due to the fact that any traffic desiring to go straight through the loop in a direction opposite to the counter-clockwise circulating flow must instead traverse two legs of the loop. This compounds the volume of traffic that must use each leg of the one-way loop. Figure II-19 shows the 2012 No-Build entering, exiting, and circulating traffic flows in the downtown one-way loop.

Figure II-19: Downtown Loop Traffic Patterns, 2012 No-Build PM Peak Hour



Before proposing any alternative circulation patterns, it is necessary to identify the origins and destinations of the traffic as it flow through the downtown one-way loop. In order to describe the origin – destination traffic flow patterns, this analysis has relied upon the turning movement volumes at the downtown loop intersections as well as upon the origin – destination license plate survey conducted for the *Rochester Downtown One-Way Loop Study*.

This analysis yields the following origin – destination traffic flows projected for the 2012 PM peak hour. Note that traffic flows have been essentially balanced with each other, and balanced to the projected entering and exiting traffic flows. Minor corrections have been introduced to account for traffic entering and exiting from side streets and downtown parking lots and spaces. The resulting traffic flows are summarized in Table 12 and Figure 19.

Table II-12: Downtown Loop Traffic Origin – Destination Summary, 2012 PM Peak Hour

Destination Origin	North Main Street WB	Wakefield Street NB	South Main Street SB	Summer Street NB	Bridge Street SB	Total Entering Volume
North Main St EB		241	558	135	6	940
Wakefield St SB	227		211	8	36	482
South Main St NB	758	323		58	91	1,230
Summer St SB	94	15	55		13	177
Bridge St NB	7	43	114	28		192
						3,021
Total Exiting Volume	1,086	664	973	229	146	3,098

Figure II-20: Downtown Loop Major Traffic Flows, 2012 No-Build PM Peak Hour

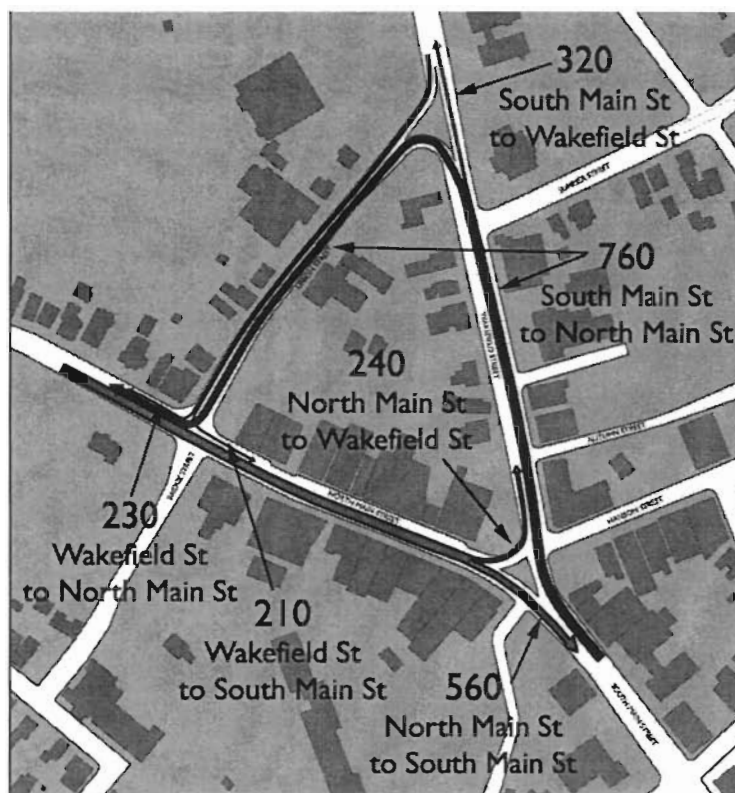
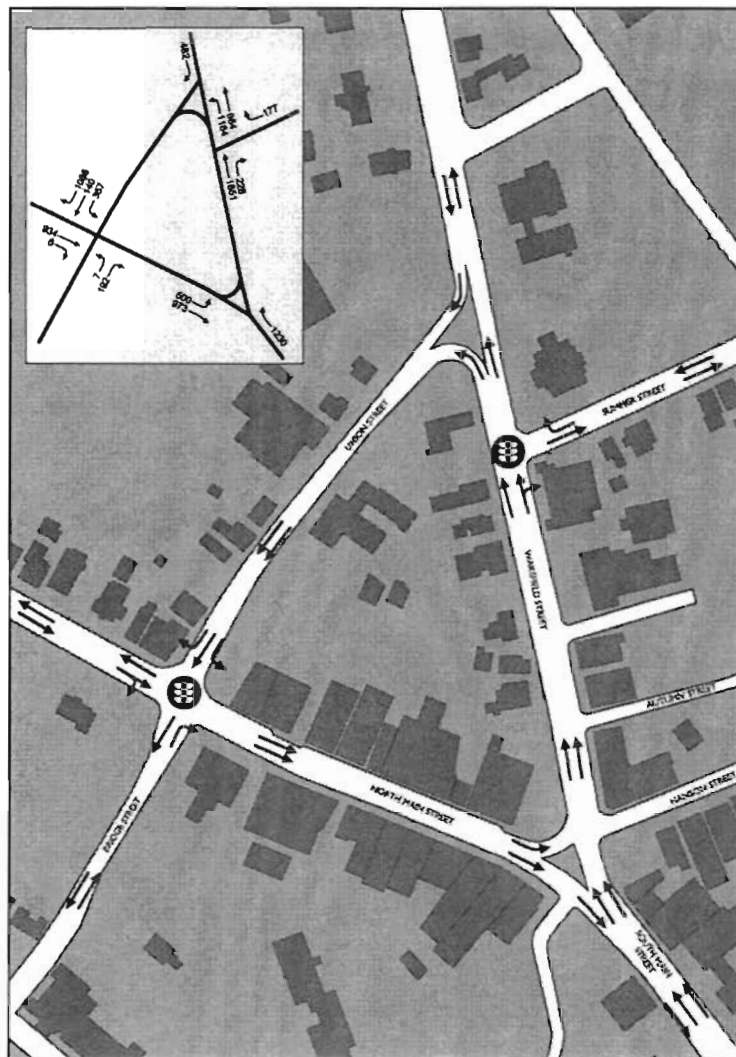


Table II-12 and Figure II-19 show that the highest volume traffic movements by far are the South Main Street to North Main Street and North Main Street to South Main Street flows. Currently, the highest volume traffic flow in the downtown one-way loop, the South Main Street to North Main Street flow, must take the circuitous path around the loop via Wakefield Street and Union Street.

Based on the existing issues and these findings regarding traffic flows, the following are proposed improvement alternatives for the downtown one-way loop. The first two alternatives are relatively straightforward changes that could be implemented in the short-term, with only minor changes in signal timings and lane assignments. Alternative 3 and its variations (3A, 3B and 3C) propose converting all three legs of the downtown one-way loop to two-way circulation. Alternatives 4 and 5 propose changing one or two of the three legs of the loop to two-way circulation. Figure II-20 shows the existing circulation patterns and lane assignments in the one-way loop.

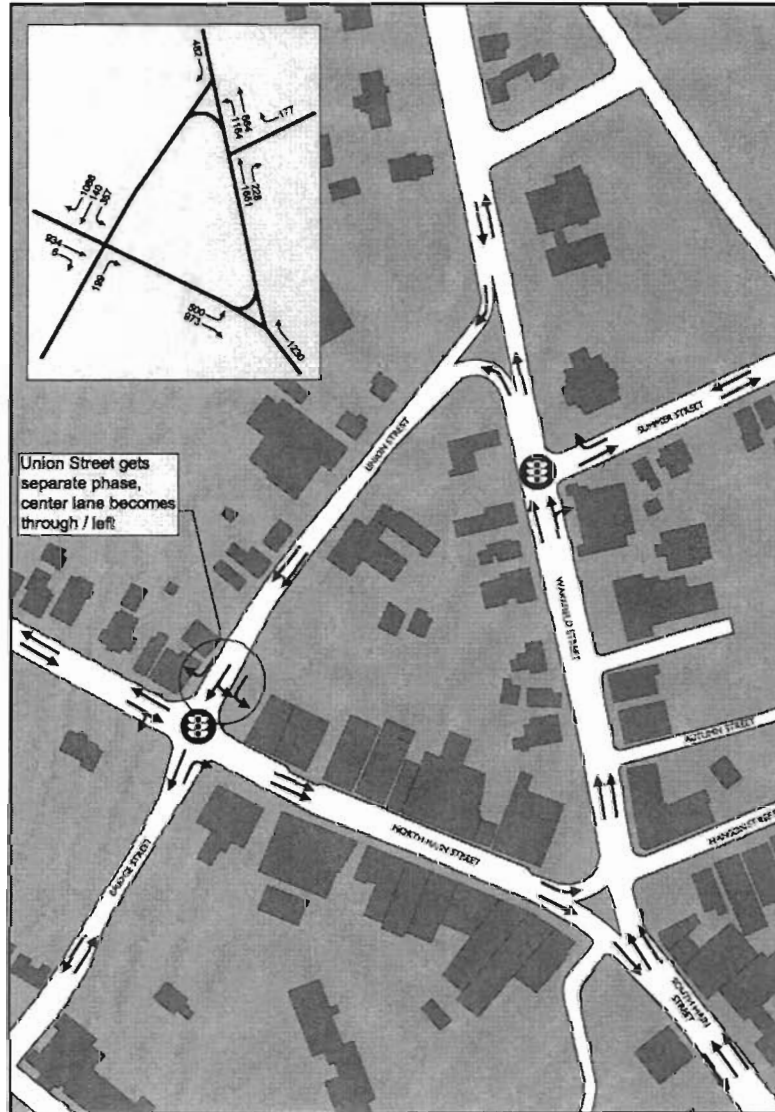
Figure II-21. Existing Circulation and Lane Assignments



Downtown Loop Alternative 1

At the intersection of North Main Street / Union Street / Bridge Street, the Union Street southbound left turns and through-movements currently flow during the same signal phase as the Bridge Street northbound right turns (the Bridge Street approach is regulated as "Right Turn Only"). This alternative is designed to reduce conflicts between the Union Street left turn and Bridge Street right turn by separating these phases. It would address the relatively heavy Union Street left turn demand by converting the center lane from through-movements to a through-left lane. Figure II-21 shows the proposed Alternative 1 circulation pattern and traffic volumes.

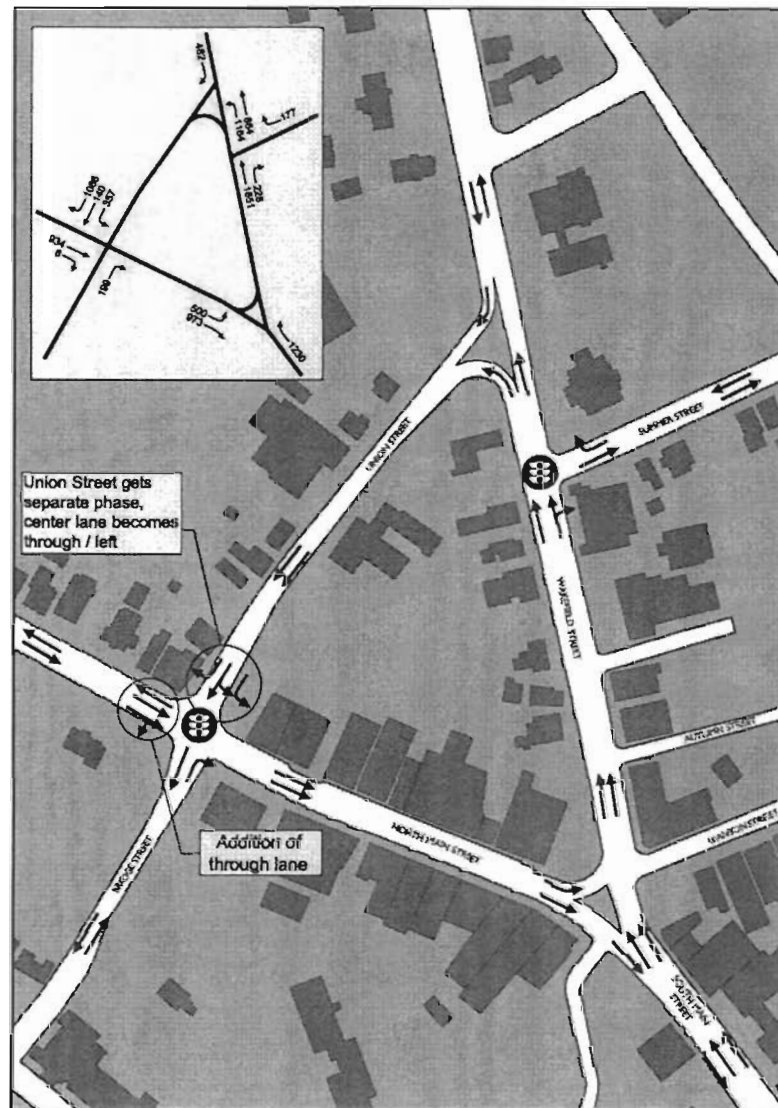
Figure II-22: Proposed Downtown Loop Alternative 1



Downtown Loop Alternative 2

This alternative also focuses on the intersection of North Main Street / Union Street / Bridge Street. It preserves the recommendation from Alternative 1 (separate the Bridge Street and Union Street phases, provide Union Street with a through-left lane). It also addresses the excessive congestion and queuing on the eastbound North Main Street approach by eliminating parking on the south side of North Main Street and providing a two-lane approach. Because of the clear benefits of this widening, Alternatives 3 – 5 incorporate a two-lanes on eastbound North Main Street approaching Union Street / Bridge Street. Figure II-22 shows the proposed Alternative 2 circulation pattern and traffic volumes.

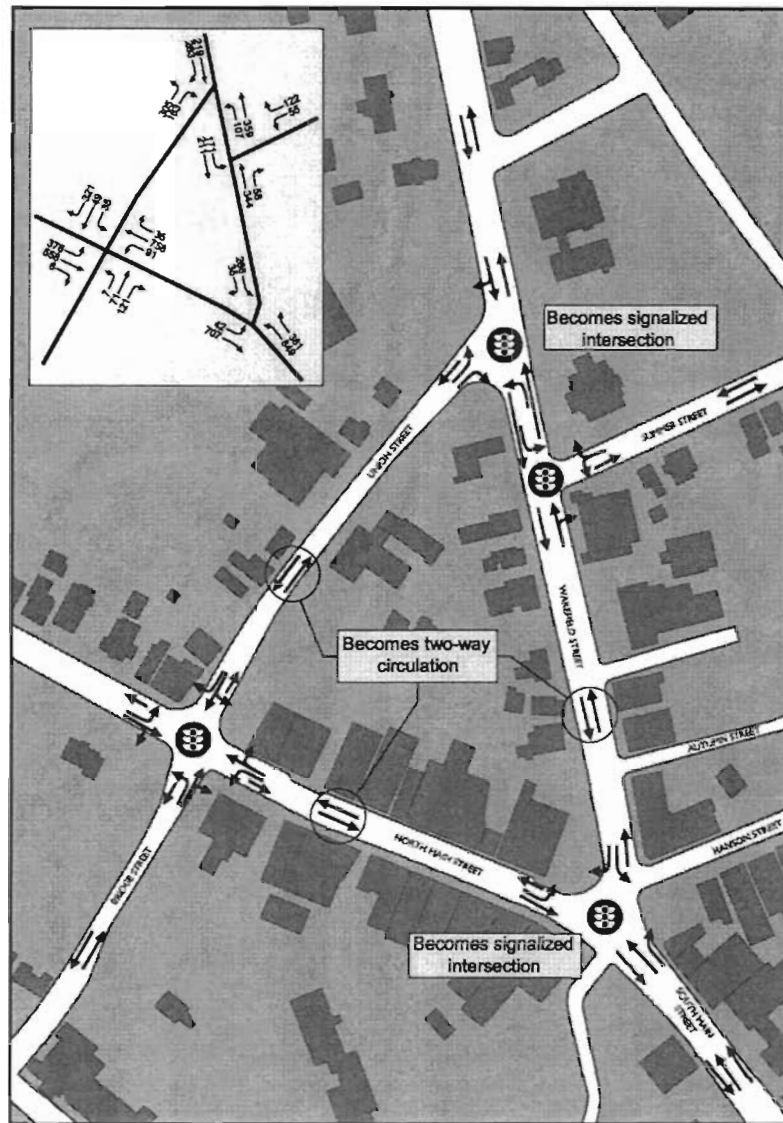
Figure II-23: Proposed Downtown Loop Alternative 2



Downtown Loop Alternative 3

This alternative is designed to address the disadvantages of the one-way circulation system by replacing it with a two-way circulation system on all legs of the downtown triangular loop. It also accommodates all desired turning movements by providing left turn lanes for all connections in the downtown loop. Like Alternative 2, it assumes that parking is eliminated from the south side of North Main Street on the eastbound approach to Union Street and Bridge Street, and that two eastbound approach lanes are provided. This alternative, and all the variations on Alternative 3, require new traffic signals at the intersections of Wakefield Street / Union Street and North Main Street / South Main Street / Wakefield Street. Figure II-23 shows the proposed Alternative 3 circulation pattern and traffic volumes.

Figure II-24: Proposed Downtown Loop Alternative 3

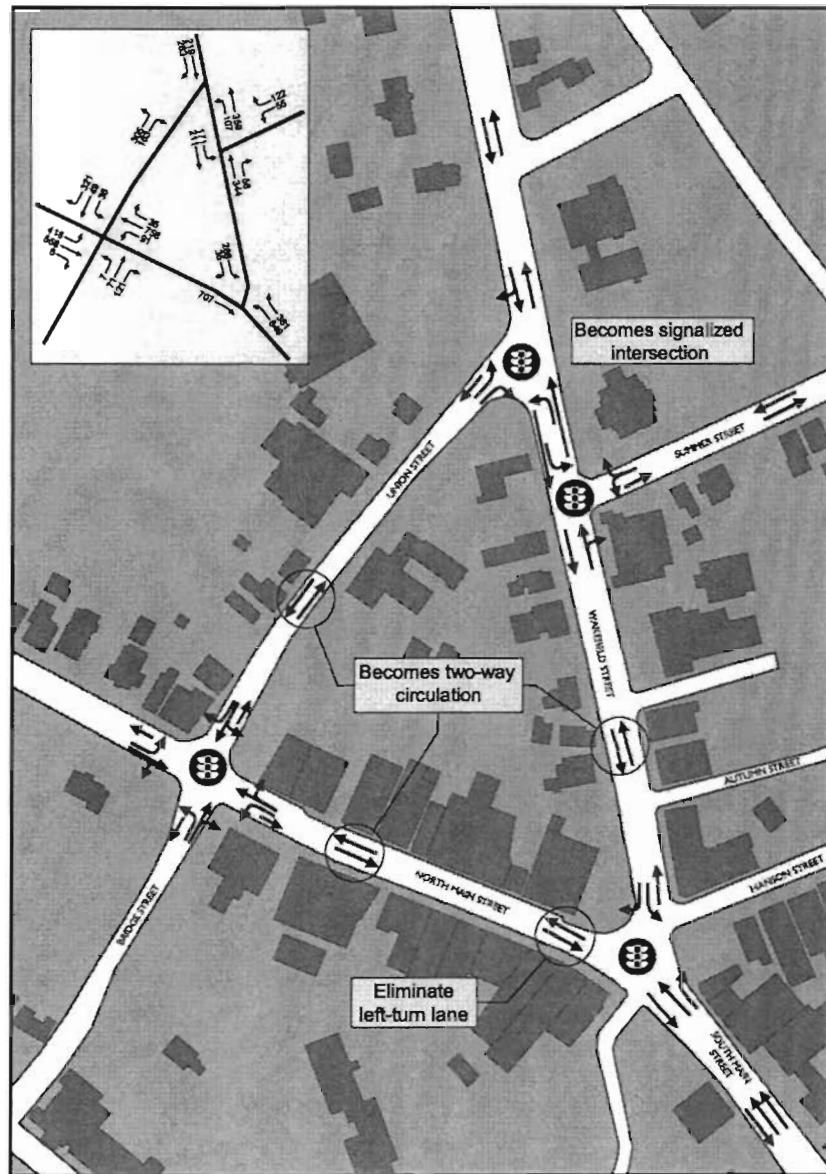


Downtown Loop Alternative 3A

The eastbound North Main Street left turn at Wakefield Street presents significant geometric challenges under Alternative 3A. The North Main Street approach has only two travel lanes and two parking lanes; adding a left turn lane would require eliminating parking. In addition, the point where North Main Street meets South Main Street is located on a curve. A left turn lane from North Main Street onto Wakefield Street would push the South Main Street traffic out of alignment with the North Main Street receiving lane. Trying to provide left turns and through movements from a single approach lane on North Main Street would create unacceptable delays for through movements. Therefore, Alternative 3A proposes eliminating the North Main Street eastbound left turn onto Wakefield Street. Traffic desiring to make connections to Wakefield Street, Summer Street, or any

other points would be able to turn left onto Union Street, at the previous block. Like Alternative 2, it assumes that parking is eliminated from the south side of North Main Street on the eastbound approach to Union Street and Bridge Street, and that two eastbound approach lanes are provided. Figure II-24 shows the proposed Alternative 3A circulation pattern and traffic volumes.

Figure II-25: Proposed Downtown Loop Alternative 3A

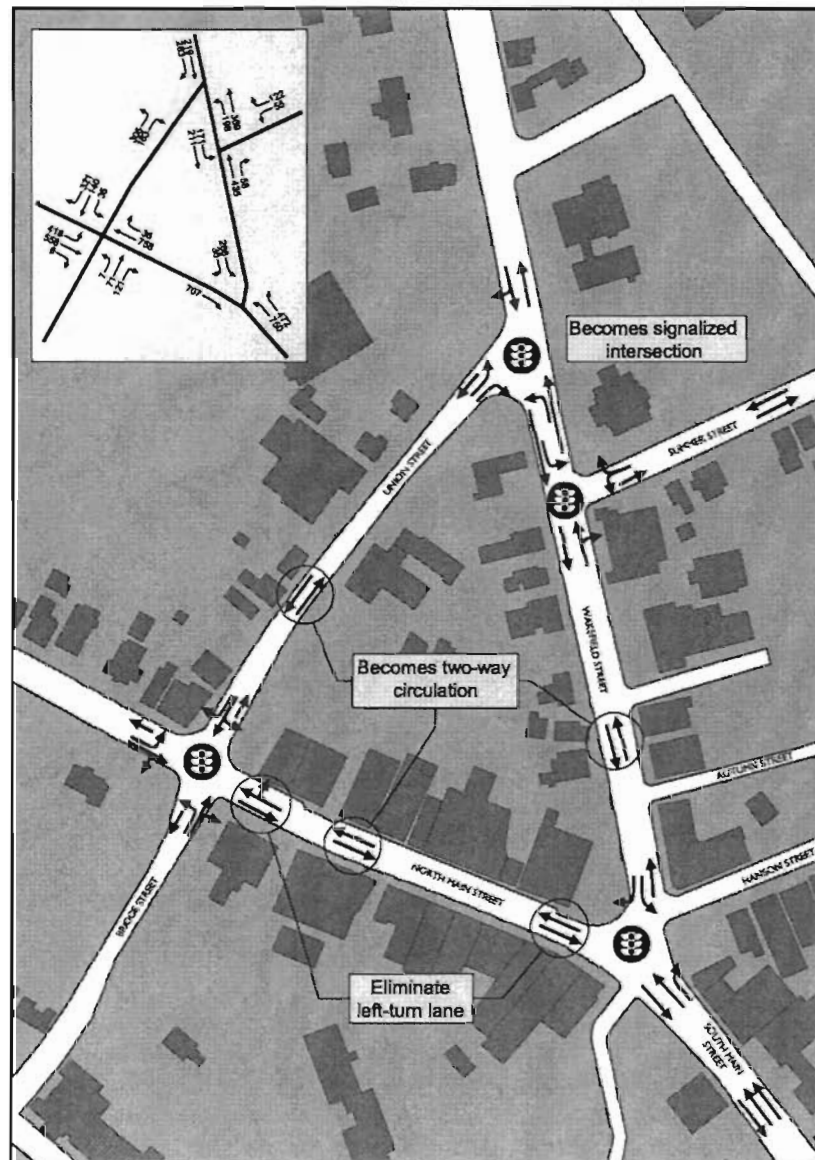


Downtown Loop Alternative 3B

The westbound North Main Street left turn onto Bridge Street also presents geometric challenges. Due to the limited pavement width on North Main Street, providing a left turn lane onto Bridge Street would require eliminating parking on North Main Street. Alternative 3B proposes to preserve as much parking as possible on North Main Street by prohibiting left turns from North Main Street

onto Bridge Street. This traffic (approximately 90 cars during the 2012 PM peak hour) could reach Bridge Street taking the current path that it would take: South Main Street to Wakefield Street to Union Street to Bridge Street. This change would have the added benefit of removing these 90 cars from the congested block of North Main Street between Union Street and Wakefield Street. Like Alternative 2, it assumes that parking is eliminated from the south side of North Main Street on the eastbound approach to Union Street and Bridge Street, and that two eastbound approach lanes are provided. Figure II-25 shows the proposed Alternative 3B circulation pattern and traffic volumes.

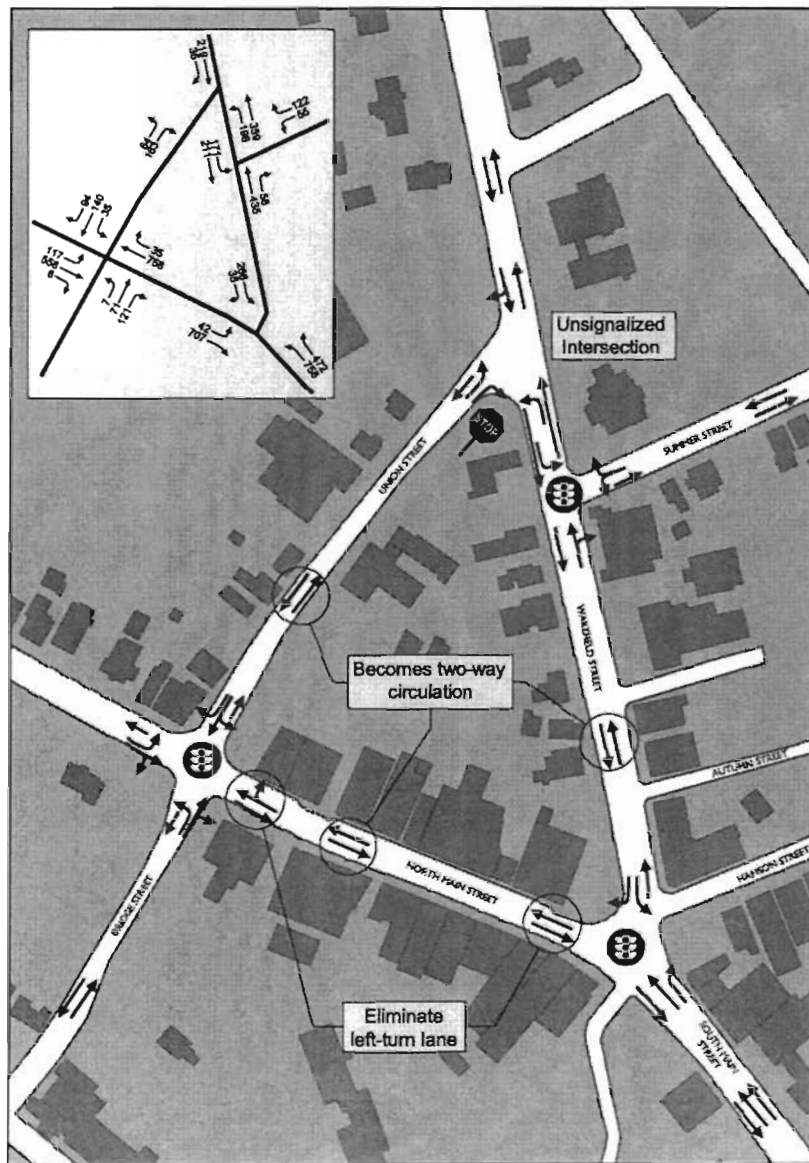
Figure II-26: Downtown Loop Alternative 3B



Downtown Loop Alternative 3C

This alternative is designed to test the potential benefit of a new Cocheco River crossing that could be built to the northwest of the downtown one-way loop. Alternative 3C preserves the circulation pattern of Alternative 3B, but it assumes that this new river crossing is in place. The presence of this new river crossing would enable the traffic that goes from Wakefield Street to North Main Street, and vice-versa, to use the new crossing. Therefore, these traffic volumes (approximately 230 – 240 vehicles in each direction during the 2012 PM peak hour) have been eliminated from the downtown loop. Like Alternative 2, it assumes that parking is eliminated from the south side of North Main Street on the eastbound approach to Union Street and Bridge Street, and that two eastbound approach lanes are provided. Figure II-26 shows the proposed Alternative 3C circulation pattern and traffic volumes.

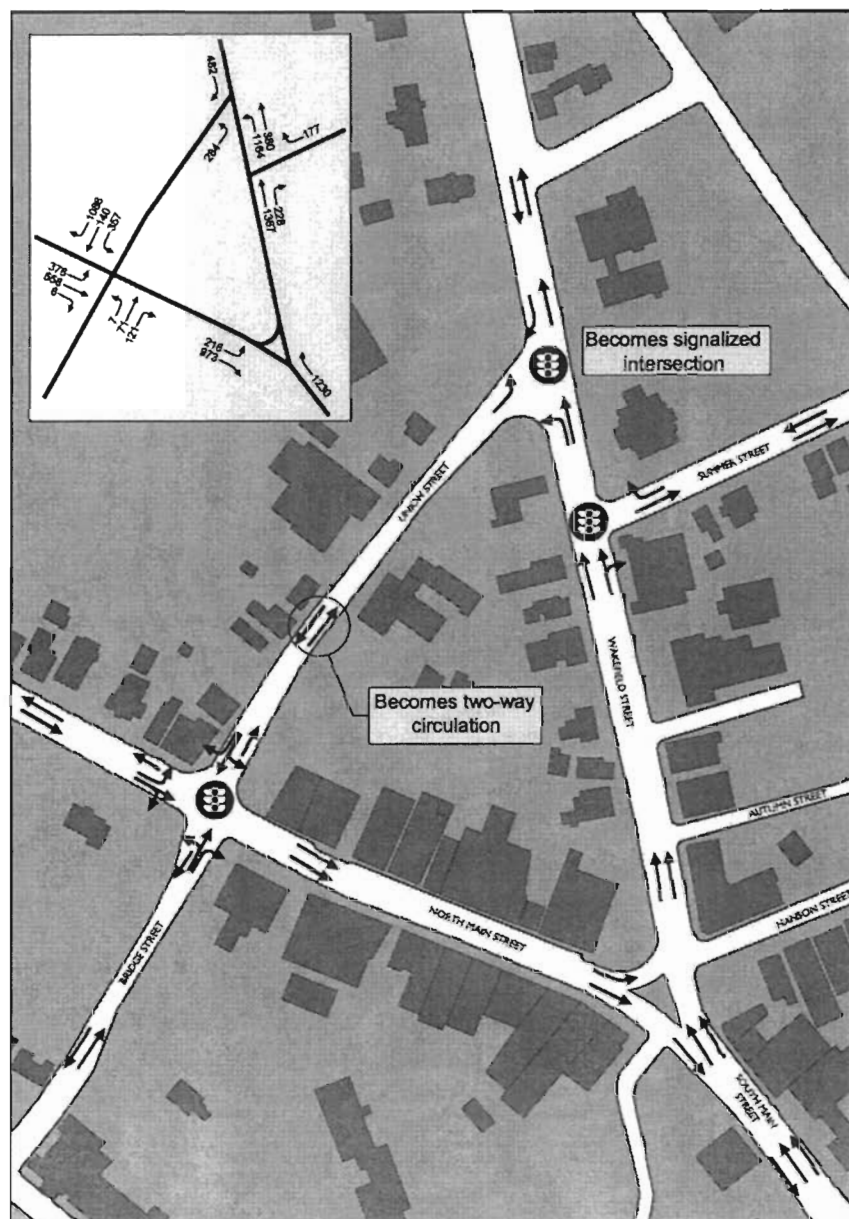
Figure II-27: Proposed Downtown Loop Alternative 3C



Downtown Loop Alternative 4

This alternative is designed to test the benefits of a partial circulation change: only changing Union Street to two-way traffic. This alternative requires new traffic signals at the intersections of Wakefield Street / Union Street and North Main Street / South Main Street / Wakefield Street. Like Alternative 2, it assumes that parking is eliminated from the south side of North Main Street on the eastbound approach to Union Street and Bridge Street, and that two eastbound approach lanes are provided. Figure II-27 shows the proposed Alternative 4 circulation pattern and traffic volumes.

Figure II-28: Downtown Loop Alternative 4



Downtown Loop Alternative 5

This alternative is also designed to test a partial circulation change. This alternative changes both North Main Street and Wakefield Street to two-way circulation. Union Street continues to be one-way, but is reversed to be one-way northbound in order to reduce the volume of traffic on the congested downtown block of North Main Street. This alternative requires new traffic signals at the intersections of Wakefield Street / Union Street and North Main Street / South Main Street / Wakefield Street. Like Alternative 2, it assumes that parking is eliminated from the south side of North Main Street on the eastbound approach to Union Street and Bridge Street, and that two eastbound approach lanes are provided. Figure II-28 shows the proposed Alternative 5 circulation pattern and traffic volumes.

Figure II-29: Proposed Downtown Loop Alternative 5

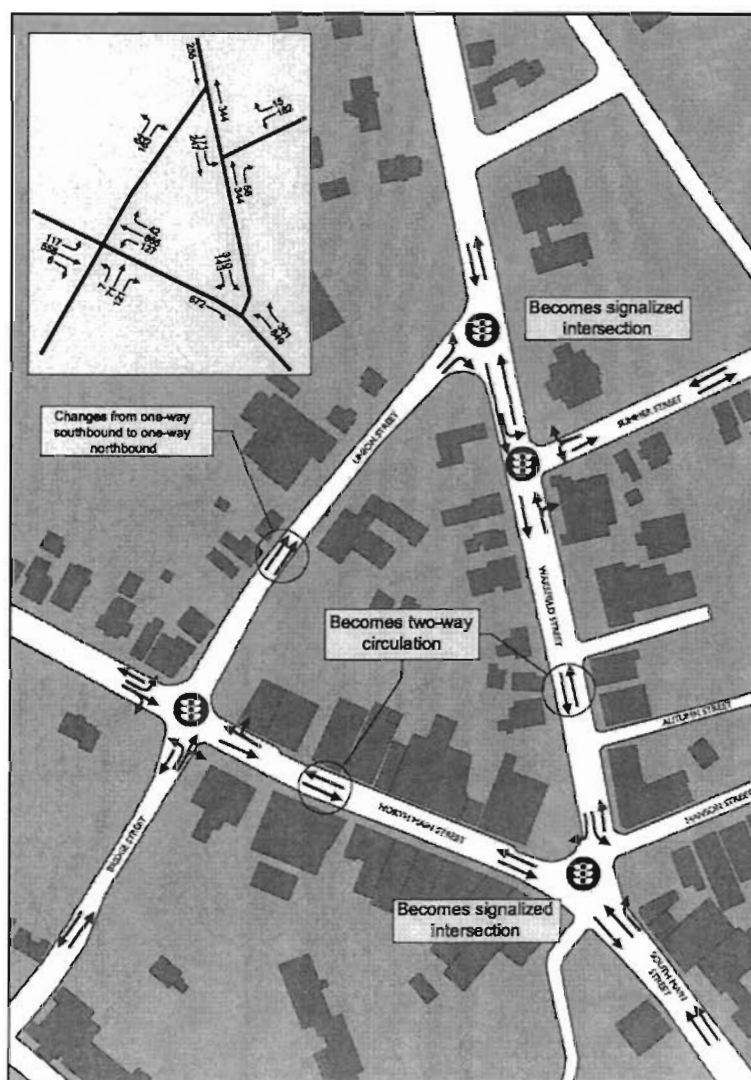


Table II-13 summarizes the features of the proposed improvement alternatives for the downtown one-way loop.

Table II-13: Downtown Loop Alternatives

	North Main Street	Wakefield Street	Union Street
Alt 1			Change through lane to left-through lane Separate Union St / Bridge St phases
Alt 2	Two lane EB approach to Union St		Change through lane to left-through lane Separate Union St / Bridge St phases
Alt 3	2-Way Two lane EB approach to Union St	2-Way	2-Way
Alt 3A	2-Way No EB LT at Wakefield St Two lane EB approach to Union St	2-Way	2-Way
Alt 3B	2-Way No EB LT at Wakefield St No WB LT at Bridge St Two lane EB approach to Union St	2-Way	2-Way
Alt 3C	2-Way No EB LT at Wakefield St No WB LT at Bridge St Two lane EB approach to Union St	2-Way	2-Way Remove traffic that could use proposed Cocheco River crossing
Alt 4	Two lane EB approach to Union St		2-Way
Alt 5	2-Way Two lane EB approach to Union St	2-Way	1-Way NB

Table II-14 summarizes the traffic operations for intersections 1 – 3 of the downtown one-way loop, for Existing Conditions, 2012 No-Build Conditions, and for the above 2012 Build Alternatives.

Table II-14: Downtown Loop Traffic Operations, 2012 PM Peak Hour

Location	Peak Hour	1. North Main Street / Union Street / Bridge St			2. Wakefield Street / Union Street			3. North Main St / South Main St / Wakefield St		
		LOS ¹	Delay ²	V/C ³	LOS	Delay	V/C	LOS	Delay	V/C
2002 Existing Conditions	AM	C	26.0	0.88	NA	NA	NA	A	2.5	--
	PM	C	32.1	1.03	NA	NA	NA	A	5.5	--
2012 No-Build Conditions	AM	D	44.1	0.98	NA	NA	NA	A	3.3	--
	PM	E	58.5	1.18	NA	NA	NA	A	6.0	--
2012 Build Alt 1	AM	F	153.3	1.38	NA	NA	NA	A	6.0	--
	PM	F	153.3	1.38	NA	NA	NA	A	6.0	--
2012 Build Alt 2	AM	C	33.9	0.91	NA	NA	NA	A	6.0	--
	PM	C	33.9	0.91	NA	NA	NA	A	6.0	--
2012 Build Alt 3	AM	C	31.0	0.96	B	13.0	0.57	C	25.0	0.89
	PM	C	31.0	0.96	B	13.0	0.57	C	25.0	0.89
2012 Build Alt 3A	AM	D	43.3	1.01	B	12.7	0.57	B	18.0	0.82
	PM	D	43.3	1.01	B	12.7	0.57	B	18.0	0.82
2012 Build Alt 3B	AM	D	48.0	1.02	B	12.6	0.57	B	17.8	0.82
	PM	D	48.0	1.02	B	12.6	0.57	B	17.8	0.82
2012 Build Alt 3C	AM	B	18.9	0.80	B	10.0	0.37	B	17.8	0.82
	PM	B	18.9	0.80	B	10.0	0.37	B	17.8	0.82
2012 Build Alt 4	AM	C	29.2	1.02	E	76.5	1.14	A	4.0	--
	PM	C	29.2	1.02	E	76.5	1.14	A	4.0	--
2012 Build Alt 5	AM	F	116.8	1.25	B	15.1	0.52	D	36.1	0.90
	PM	F	116.8	1.25	B	15.1	0.52	D	36.1	0.90

1 Level of service

2 Average delay in seconds per vehicle

3 Volume to capacity ratio

NA Not applicable (no conflicts)

Bold – Signalized

The traffic operations summary in Table II-14 demonstrates several points:

The intersection of North Main Street / Union Street / Bridge Street typically experiences the most problematic traffic operations of all the intersections in the downtown one-way loop. This makes sense: it is a four-way intersection with more movements than the other loop intersections, and under all the alternatives, including Existing and No-Build, it must accommodate the heaviest traffic connections: from South Main Street to North Main Street and vice-versa. Therefore, getting this intersection to function acceptably is essential.

In the 2012 No-Build PM peak hour, the intersection of North Main Street / Union Street / Bridge Street operates at LOS E. The North Main Street eastbound approach operates at LOS F, with heavy congestion and long queues.

Alternative 2 demonstrates that eliminating on-street parking and widening the eastbound North Main Street approach to two lanes is critical for improving the operations of this congested intersection. This improvement could be implemented in the short-term, although the alignment of the two North Main Street approach lanes with the two eastbound receiving lanes should be reviewed.

Alternative 3 has the best operational characteristics of all the 2012 alternatives, including the 2012 No-Build condition. However, due to the geometric constraints on the block of North Main Street between Union Street and Wakefield Street and the desirability of retaining on-street parking on this block, Alternative 3 is not acceptable. Alternative 3B preserves the North Main Street on-street parking, provides the best alignment for North Main Street and South Main Street, and still has acceptable traffic operations (LOS D) during the 2012 PM peak hour.

Alternative 4 only has a significant effect at the intersection of Union Street / Wakefield Street. By making Union Street two-way, but still making all the South Main Street to North Main Street traffic turn left from Wakefield Street onto Union Street, it concentrates heavy volumes at this intersection, and degrades its operations to LOS E.

Alternative 5 significantly worsens operations at North Main Street / Union Street / Bridge Street. By eliminating the southbound connection on Union Street, it forces all traffic bound from Wakefield Street to North Main Street to traverse the block of North Main Street from Wakefield Street to Union Street. This concentrates more traffic on a critical movement of this intersection, and diminishes traffic operations to LOS F. It also concentrates more traffic at the intersection of North Main Street / South Main Street / Wakefield Street, and diminishes that location to LOS D.

Potential Improvements to Other Study Area Intersections

The following are improvements that have been investigated at the other study area intersections.

Wakefield Street / Columbus Avenue

Capacity analysis and field observations suggest that this location is currently operating fairly well. In the 2012 No-Build PM peak hour, however, it degrades from LOS C to LOS E. The operations at this intersection could be improved to LOS B in the 2012 PM peak hour by changing the signal phasing to enable Columbus Avenue right turns onto Wakefield Street during the same phase as southbound Wakefield Street left turns onto Columbus Avenue.

South Main Street / Columbus Avenue

Although it has fairly high traffic volumes, this intersection also has wide approaches capable of processing high volumes. Capacity analysis and field observations suggest that this location is operating fairly well. However, South Main Street to the west of Columbus Avenue has two westbound lanes; given the presence of many minor streets and businesses on both sides of that section of South Main Street, it may be desirable to have a center turn lane. In order to have a single through lane on South Main Street westbound, it is desirable to have only one lane of traffic entering from the intersection with Columbus Avenue. Therefore, the improvement alternative reviewed in this case entailed changing the westbound South Main Street approach from through-left / through / right turn only to left turn only / through / right turn only so that there is only one lane of traffic entering South Main Street westbound. With this change, the intersection degrades slightly, from LOS C with a delay of 28.6 seconds per vehicle to LOS D with a delay of 37.2 seconds per vehicle. Therefore, eliminating one westbound through-lane on South Main Street is feasible in terms of the traffic flow

and operations at the South Main Street / Columbus Avenue intersection. Based on the data and analysis for the Rochester Master Plan, it is not clear whether eliminating the westbound lane is feasible with respect to the demand and operations at downstream intersections, especially with respect to queuing requirements for the South Main Street / Portland Street intersection.

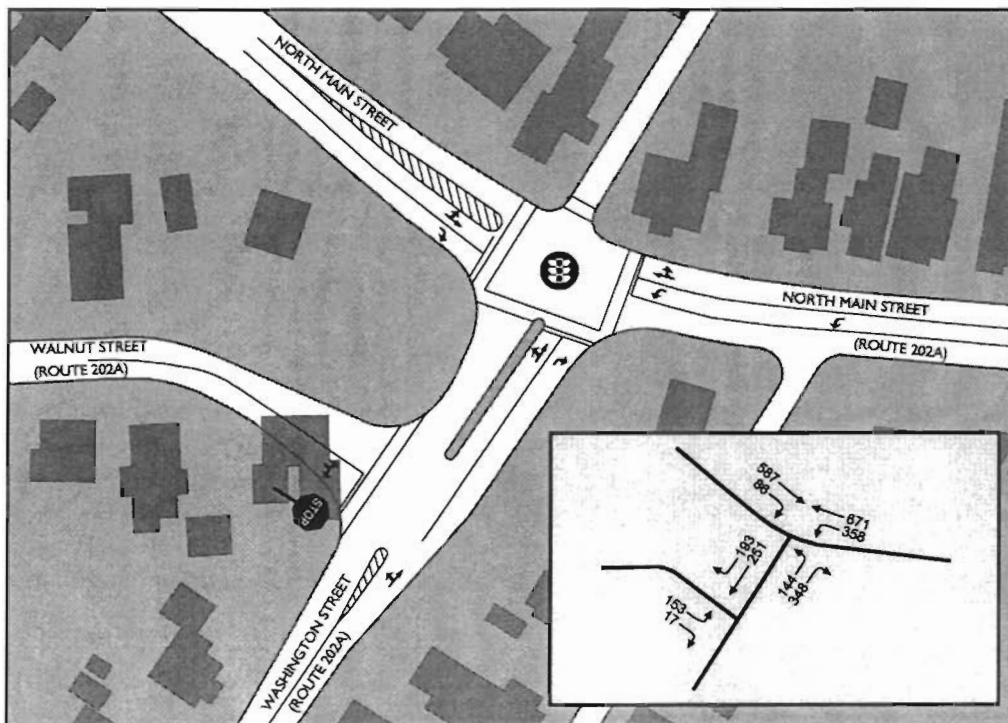
Strafford Square: North Main Street / Walnut Street / Washington Street

Based on capacity analysis and field observations, this intersection performs moderately from a capacity and operations perspective. Most of the operations are in a LOS A / B / C range, although the northbound left turn from Washington Street to North Main Street is LOS F with high levels of delay in the 2012 No-Build PM peak hour. Furthermore, it is a confusing intersection with multiple conflict points, a problem that is borne out by a relatively high traffic accident rate. This intersection could potentially be improved by consolidating the approaches to North Main Street, and reducing the number of conflict points. This analysis has reviewed three alternatives for redesigning Strafford Square; the first two were proposed by the City of Rochester in a Transportation Enhancements application in 1997 – 1998.

Alternative 1

Close off the eastern segment of Walnut Street, between Washington Street and North Main Street. This reduces the number of conflict points from three to two. The intersection of Washington Street / North Main Street would be signalized. The intersection of Walnut Street / Washington Street would be unsignalized, with Walnut Street as the STOP-controlled minor street approach. In order to provide acceptable spacing between the two intersections, the Walnut Street approach must be curved to the south, requiring property takings, including the taking of a house at the corner of Walnut Street / Washington Street. Alternative 1 is shown in Figure II-29.

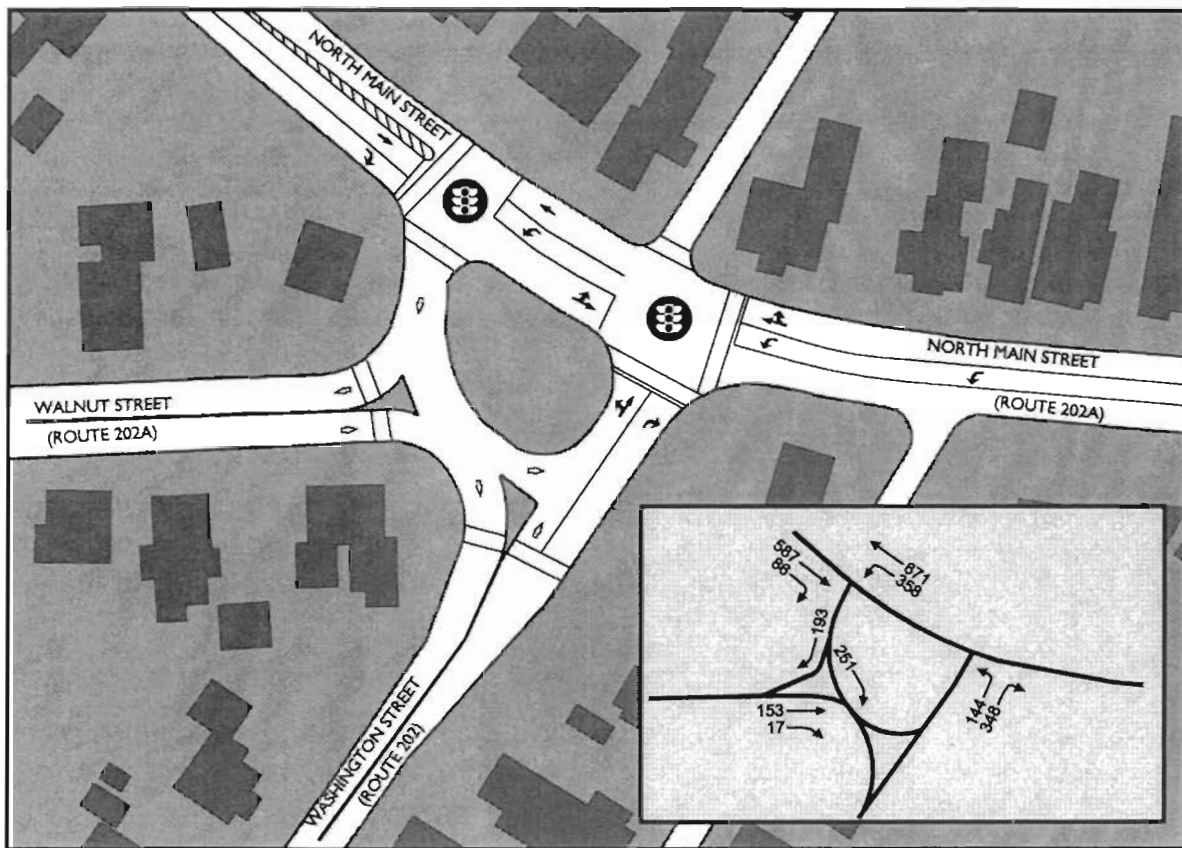
Figure II-28: Proposed Strafford Square Alternative 1



Alternative 2

This alternative would also create a signalized intersection at Strafford Square. In this alternative, the signalized intersection is combined with a “half-roundabout” in the southwestern quadrant of the intersection. The signalized intersection would have two control points on North Main Street, and all traffic bound to or from Washington Street or Walnut Street would have to circulate in a counter-clockwise direction around the half-roundabout. This alternative has the advantage of lesser property takings than Alternative 1, but it creates some potentially confusing weaves around the half-roundabout, especially the short weave between Walnut Street and Washington Street. Alternative 2 is shown in Figure II-30.

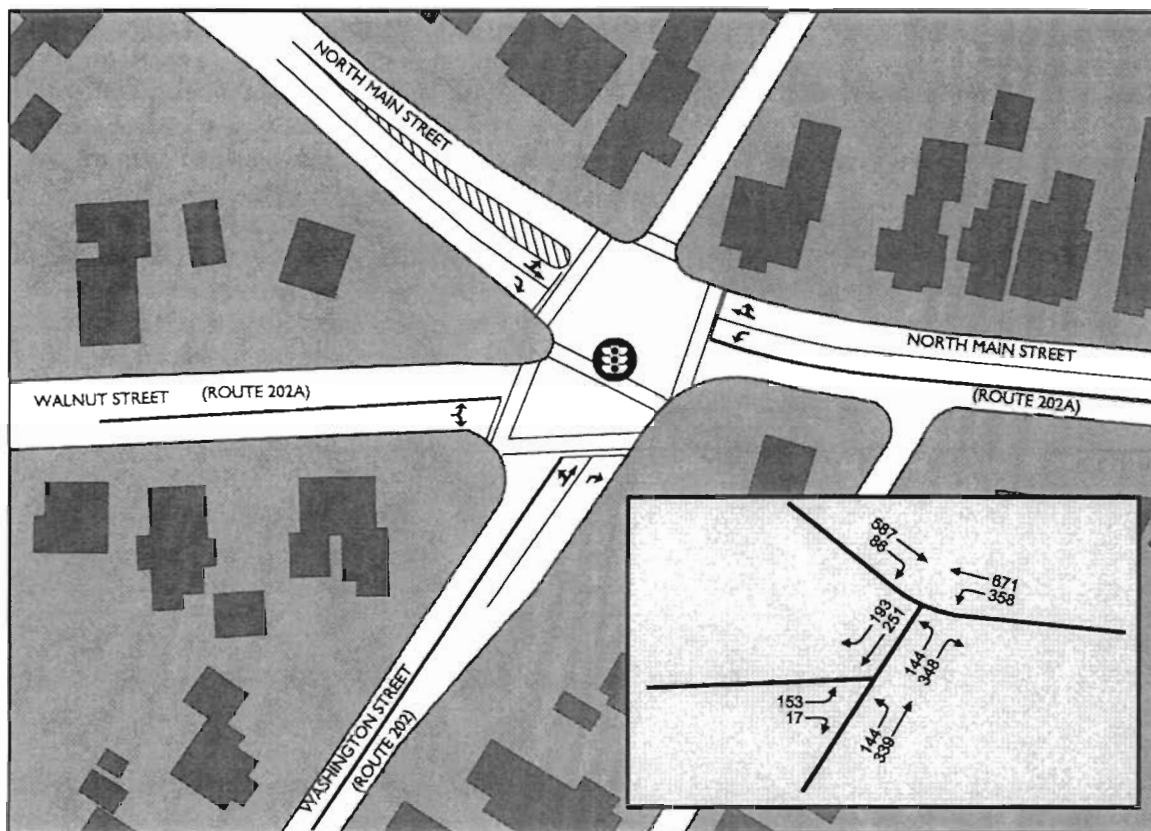
Figure II-30: Proposed Strafford Square Alternative 2



Alternative 3

This alternative also proposes a signalized intersection at Strafford Square. However, it essentially retains the existing roadway layout, while eliminating the triangular island and eliminating some excessive pavement. Instead of separating Walnut Street as an unsignalized approach to Washington Street, Alternative 3 proposes that Walnut Street be incorporated into the signalized Strafford Square intersection, with its own separate signal phase. Alternative 3 is shown in Figure II-31.

Figure II-31: Proposed Stafford Square Alternative 3



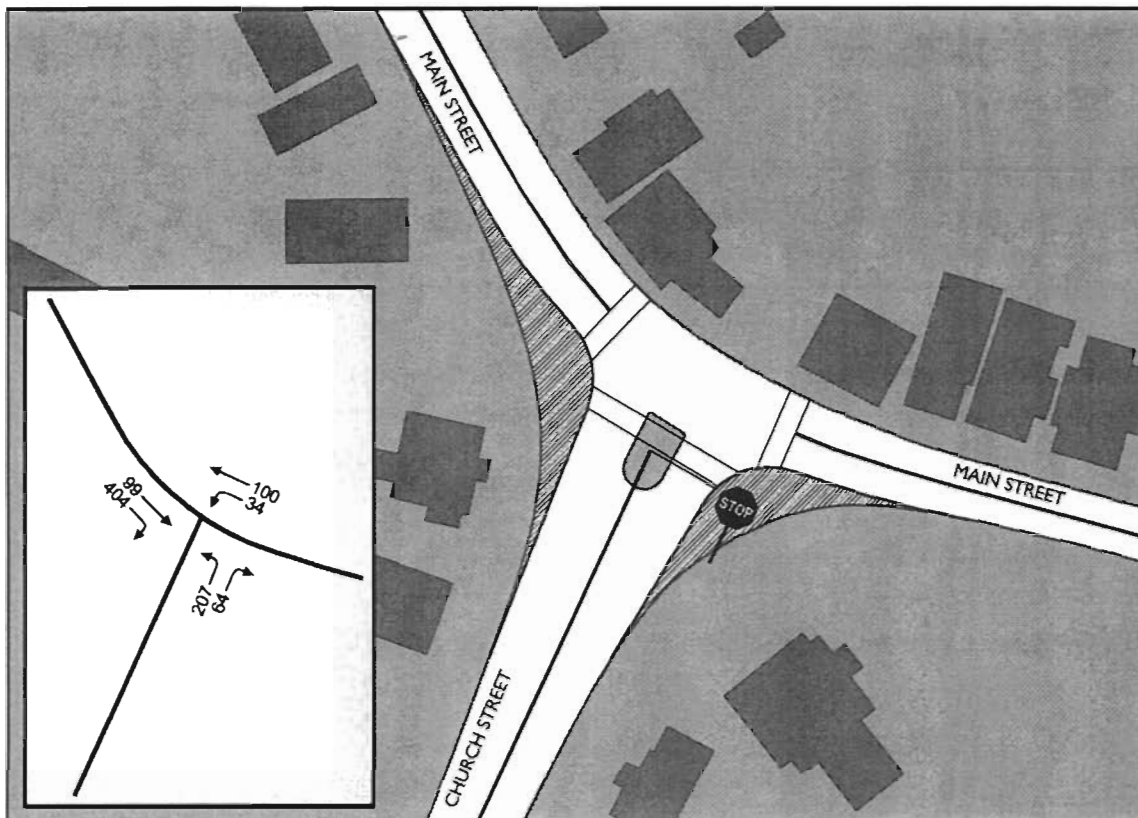
Main Street / Church Street

This intersection is very open, with a large amount of pavement and wide crosswalks. It could be improved by narrowing the intersection, especially on the Church Street approach. Two northbound approach lanes could still be provided on Church Street (left turn and right turn), along with one southbound receiving lane. The center median could be eliminated, and a plaza created with the disused pavement area. There are two potential alternatives for redesigning this intersection.

Alternative 1

Retain the current configuration, with Church Street as the STOP-controlled minor street, and Main Street as the major through-street. In this alternative, consideration should be given to removing parking on the north side of Main Street in order to improve sight distance. See Figure II-32.

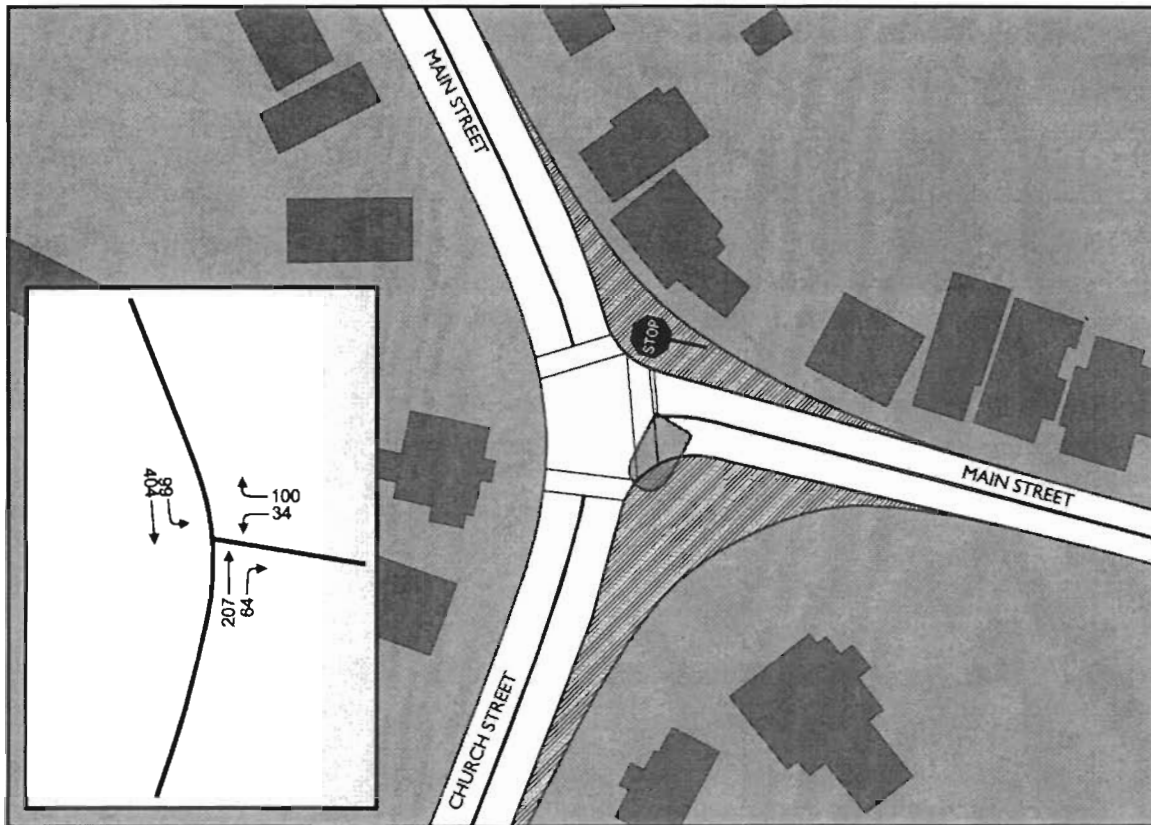
Figure II-32: Proposed Main Street/Church Street Alternative 1



Alternative 2

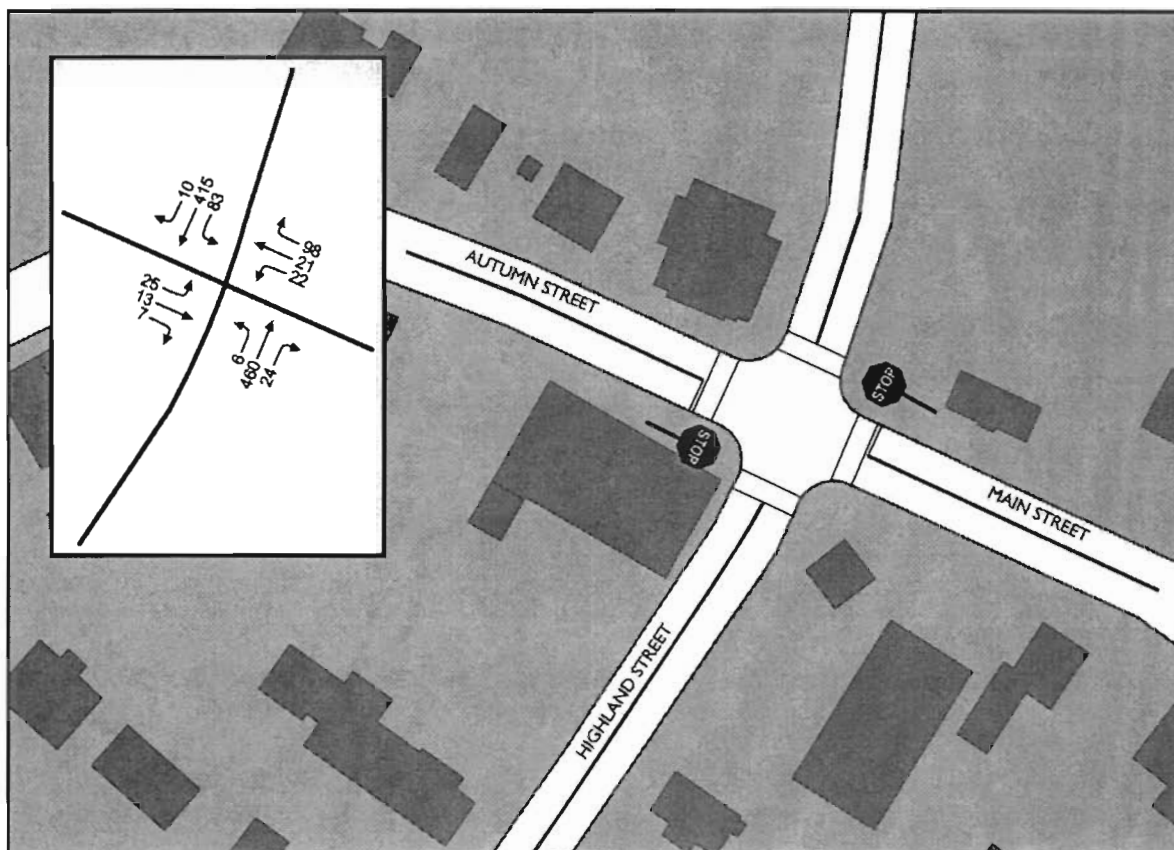
Re-orient the intersection, with the southeastern leg of Main Street as the STOP-controlled minor approach, and Main Street – Church Street as the major through-street. This would make the major traffic movements between Main Street to the north and Church Street uncontrolled, which would improve traffic operations. See Figure II-33.

Figure II-33: Proposed Main Street/Church Street Alternative 2



Highland Street / Main Street / Autumn Street. This intersection currently operates acceptably as an all-way stop controlled intersection, with LOS A at all approaches in the AM peak hour, LOS B on the east – west approaches during the PM peak hour, and LOS C on the higher volume Highland Street approaches during the PM peak hour. This intersection could be left as all-way stop controlled, or the Highland Street operations could be improved by changing it to a two-way stop controlled intersection with Highland Street as the major street with the right of way. Figure II-34 depicts this alternative.

Figure II-34: Proposed Highland Street/Main Street/Autumn Street Alternative 1



The traffic operations performance of these proposed improvements are shown in Table II-15.

Table II-15: Other Intersections – Traffic Operations, 2012 PM Peak Hour

Location	Peak Hour	2002 Existing Conditions			2012 No-Build Conditions			2012 Build Alt 1			2012 Build Alt 2			2012 Build Alt 3		
		L O S	Delay ²	V/C ³	L O S	Delay	V/C	L O S	Delay	V/C	L O S	Delay	V/C	L O S	Delay	V/C
4. Wakefield Street / Columbus Avenue	AM PM	C C	26.7 49.0	0.46 0.86	C E	27.9 68.0	0.50 0.96	C C	24.3 0.79							
5. South Main Street / Columbus Avenue	AM PM	B C	16.8 24.9	0.50 0.68	B C	18.4 28.6	0.59 0.78	D D	37.2 0.89							
6. N. Main St /Walnut St/Washington St																
- Walnut St EB @ Washington St	AM PM	A B	8.6 10.4	0.17 0.25	A B	8.9 11.7	0.20 0.31	C C	24.5 0.59		B B	10.6 0.49				
- Walnut St EB @ North Main St	AM PM	A A	4.6 5.6	0.37 0.62	A A	4.8 6.4	0.40 0.68									
- Washington St NB @ Walnut St	AM PM	A B	8.8 13.3	0.27 0.50	A B	9.3 13.3	0.31 0.50									
- Washington St SB @ Walnut St	AM PM	A A	8.1 9.8	0.07 0.14	A B	8.3 10.7	0.07 0.17									
- Washington St NB @ North Main St	AM PM	B F	13.6 62.3	0.13 0.73	B F	14.0 141.2	0.17 1.03	B B	18.6 0.78		C C	24.4 0.80		B B	13.9 0.69	
7. Main Street @ Church Street NB	AM PM	B B	13.8 11.5	0.46 0.29	C B	15.3 12.1	0.53 0.34	C C	19.7 0.56		B B	14.4 0.28				
8. Highland Street / Autumn St / Main St																
- Highland Street NB	AM PM	A C	9.4 21.3	0.28 0.73	A D	9.9 31.7	0.50 0.86									
- Highland Street SB	AM PM	B C	11.9 23.2	0.50 0.76	B E	13.3 36.1	0.64 0.89									
- Autumn Street EB	AM PM	A B	8.8 10.7	0.04 0.09	A B	9.0 11.4	0.11 0.16	F F	51.3 0.39							
- Main Street WB	AM PM	A B	8.8 11.5	0.10 0.27	A B	9.1 12.6	0.24 0.41	D D	30.5 0.56							

- 1 Level of service
2 Average delay in seconds per vehicle
3 Volume to capacity ratio
Bold – Signalized

The next section of the report details the research and analyses of demographic and market information and conditions affecting the three commercial areas included in the Downtown Master Plan.

Economics, Demographics and Retail Market Conditions

Overview

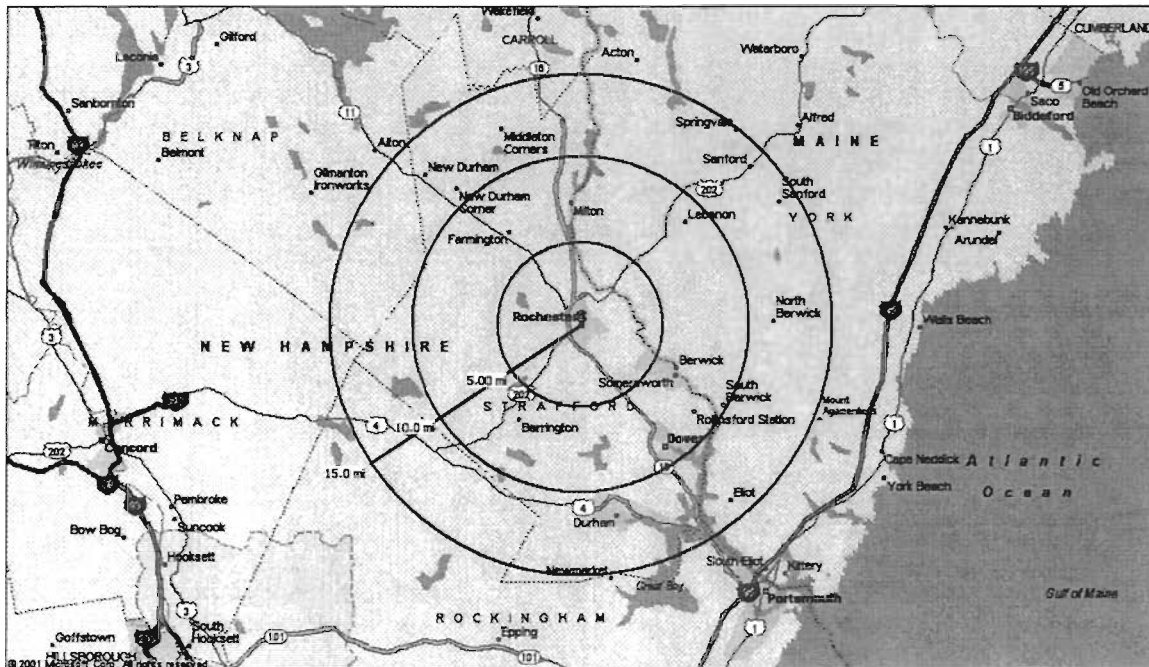
Successful economic development rests upon an ability to attract retailers, consumers, and investment to a particular area. Understanding market conditions and trends and customer demographics and needs is the key to finding successful ways to improve the economic vitality and future of a commercial area. Therefore, the analysis of market prospects examined the sources of potential demand, which include:

- Local population and household growth
- Household income growth
- Employment growth
- The potential to draw upon an expanded market trade area or non-local sources of spending
- Pent up demand for specific goods and services

Prevailing Conditions

Before examining potential growth factors that might support new retail development, it is first necessary to define prevailing demographic and economic conditions in Rochester and surrounding market areas. Future projections are then analyzed to see how these trends are expected to impact the markets. For the purposes of this analysis, trade areas that were 5-, 10-, and 15-miles from downtown Rochester were examined as shown on Figure 35.

Figure II-35: Map of Rochester and 5-, 10-, and 15-mile Market Areas



Population and Households

Rochester's current population is 28,597 (2001) as measured by Claritas, a provider of national demographic, consumer and business data. This figure represents a 7.4% increase over the 1990 population of 26,630. During the 1990's, population increased at an annualized rate of 0.65%. Households experienced slightly higher increases, averaging an annualized growth rate of 1.0% while increasing from 10,221 to 11,427.

Table II-16: Historic Population and Household Growth 1990 - 2001

	1990	2001	Total Growth	Percent Growth	Average Annual Growth
Population	26,630	28,597	1,967	7.39%	0.65%
Households	10,221	11,427	1,206	11.80%	1.02%

Source: US Census Bureau, Claritas Inc.

Comparing these figures to the surrounding market areas within 5-, 10-, and 15-miles from downtown, Rochester's population grew at similar or slower rates than these areas. The annualized rates of growth for the 5-, 10-, and 15-mile trade areas were 0.70%, 0.66% and 0.83%, respectively. Comparing these figures to the population growth of New Hampshire, it is clear that the region's growth lagged behind the growth of the State.

Table II-17:

1990-2001 Population Growth in Rochester, and 5-, 10-, and 15-mile Market Areas

	1990	2001	Total Growth	Percent Growth	1990-2001 Growth Projection Average Annual Growth
Rochester	26,630	28,597	1,967	7.39%	0.65%
5-mile Radius	31,815	34,357	2,542	7.99%	0.70%
10-mile Radius	86,116	92,591	6,475	7.52%	0.66%
15-mile Radius	156,370	171,172	14,802	9.47%	0.83%
New Hampshire	1,112,384	1,259,181	146,797	13.20%	1.13%

Source: US Census Bureau, Claritas, Inc.

Household formations in Rochester also grew at similar or slightly slower rates than surrounding market areas, as shown in the following table. The annualized rates of growth for the 5-, 10-, and 15-mile trade areas were 1.05%, 0.99% and 1.15%, respectively.

Table II-18: 1990-2001 Historic Household Growth in Rochester, and 5-, 10-, and 15-mile Market Areas

	1990	2001	1990-2001 Growth Projection		
			Total Growth	Percent Growth	Average Annual Growth
Rochester	10,221	11,427	1,206	11.80%	1.02%
5-mile Radius	12,048	13,512	1,464	12.15%	1.05%
10-mile Radius	32,607	36,333	3,726	11.43%	0.99%
15-mile Radius	56,520	64,081	7,561	13.38%	1.15%

Source: US Census Bureau; Claritas, Inc.

Household and population growth are two important factors that demonstrate the growth of a community. Oftentimes, businesses and investors rely upon such indicators to make relocation and investment decisions. Rochester's below average growth rate may discourage certain investors from pursuing development activities in this region.

Population and Household Growth Projections

Looking forward, from 2001 to 2006, population growth rates for the City of Rochester and surrounding market areas are projected to slow in comparison to their rates of growth from 1990 to 2001.

Table II-19 indicates that Rochester is projected to grow at an annualized average rate of 0.47%, compared to the surrounding market areas that are projected grow 0.48% to 0.6% annually.

Table II-19: Historic and Projected Population Growth, Rochester, 5-, 10-, and 15-mile Market Areas, and New Hampshire: 1990, 2001, and 2006

	1990	2001	2006	1990-2001 Growth Projection			2001-2006 Growth Projection		
				Total Growth	Percent Growth	Average Annual Growth	Total Growth	Percent Growth	Average Annual Growth
Rochester	26,630	28,597	29,278	1,967	7.39%	0.65%	681	2.33%	0.47%
5-mile Radius	31,815	34,357	35,220	2,542	7.99%	0.70%	863	2.45%	0.50%
10-mile Radius	86,116	92,591	94,854	6,475	7.52%	0.66%	2,263	2.39%	0.48%
15-mile Radius	156,370	171,172	176,404	14,802	9.47%	0.83%	5,232	2.97%	0.60%
New Hampshire	1,112,384	1,259,181	1,317,526	146,797	13.20%	1.13%	58,345	4.43%	0.91%

Source: US Census Bureau; Claritas, Inc.; Bonz/REA, Inc.

Currently, Rochester is the fifth largest City in the State of New Hampshire. Looking forward to 2020, the New Hampshire Office of State Planning expects Rochester to drop to sixth position, due to its projected moderate growth rate of 1.02% annually. As can be seen in the chart below, the five largest cities in New Hampshire will have annual growth rates ranging from 0.26% to 1.44%. Meanwhile, many of the smaller cities with populations between 20,000 and 30,000 are projected to experience faster growth, ranging from 0.68% to 2.61% annually.

Table II-20: Historic and Projected Population Growth Rates for New Hampshire Cities > 20,000: 1990, 2000, 2020

Municipality	County	Census Population 1990	Census Population 2000	Numeric Change 1990 to 2000	Percent Change 1990 to 2000	Population Projection 2020	Numeric Change 2000 to 2020	Percent Change 2000 to 2020	Average Annual Rate of Growth 2000 to 2020
Manchester	Hillsborough	99,332	107,006	7,674	7.73%	116,020	9,014	8.42%	0.41%
Nashua	Hillsborough	79,662	86,605	6,943	8.72%	91,145	4,540	5.24%	0.26%
Concord	Merrimack	36,006	40,687	4,681	13.00%	46,382	5,695	14.00%	0.66%
Derry	Rockingham	29,603	34,021	4,418	14.92%	45,299	11,278	33.15%	1.44%
Rochester	Strafford	26,630	28,461	1,831	6.88%	34,847	6,386	22.44%	1.02%
Salem	Rockingham	25,746	28,112	2,366	9.19%	40,159	12,047	42.85%	1.80%
Dover	Strafford	25,042	26,884	1,842	7.36%	31,704	4,820	17.93%	0.83%
Merrimack	Hillsborough	22,430	25,119	2,689	11.99%	32,886	7,767	30.92%	1.36%
Keene	Cheshire	22,430	22,563	133	0.59%	25,835	3,272	14.50%	0.68%
Londonderry	Rockingham	19,781	23,236	3,455	17.47%	34,717	11,481	49.41%	2.03%
Hudson	Hillsborough	19,530	22,928	3,398	17.40%	31,656	8,728	38.07%	1.63%
Portsmouth	Rockingham	25,925	20,784	-5,141	-19.83%	34,817	14,033	67.52%	2.61%

Source: US Census, NH Office of State Planning

Similar to population projections, household growth projections show slower growth from 2001 to 2006 than the period 1990-2001. Rochester's average annual growth rate is projected to be 0.72%, while the rates for the 5-, 10, and 15-mile market areas are 0.73%, 0.70%, and 0.81%, respectively. The number of households in Rochester will grow consistent with the surrounding market areas.

Table II-21: Historic and Projected Household Growth, Rochester, 5-, 10-, and 15-mile Market Areas: 1990, 2001, and 2006

	1990	2001	2006	1990-2001 Growth Projection		2001-2006 Growth Projection			
				Total Growth	Percent Growth	Average Annual Growth	Numeric Growth	% Growth	Average Annual Growth
Rochester	10,221	11,427	11,844	1,206	11.80%	1.02%	417	3.52%	0.72%
5-mile Radius	12,048	13,512	14,015	1,464	12.15%	1.05%	503	3.59%	0.73%
10-mile Radius	32,607	36,333	37,624	3,726	11.43%	0.99%	1,291	3.43%	0.70%
15-mile Radius	56,520	64,081	66,732	7,561	13.38%	1.15%	2,651	3.97%	0.81%

Source: US Census Bureau; Caritas, Inc.

Population by Age Cohorts

An analysis of the area's population by age cohorts shows that slightly higher percentages of Rochester's population are aged 0-14 years and 65+ years than in surrounding trade areas. This means a relatively insignificantly higher percentage of Rochester's population is not in their prime wage earning years. While this finding taken alone isn't significant, combined with other findings from this analysis it reinforces Rochester's position vis-à-vis the local competitive market areas.

Table II-22: Age Distribution of Population, Rochester, 5-mile, 10-mile, and 15-mile Market Areas: 2001

Age Cohort	Rochester	5-miles	10-miles	15-miles
0-14	22.6%	22.5%	22.2%	21.1%
15-24	13.0%	13.0%	13.6%	16.3%
25-34	12.9%	12.9%	13.3%	13.1%
35-44	16.4%	16.6%	16.8%	16.0%
45-54	13.7%	14.0%	14.1%	14.0%
55-64	8.4%	8.6%	8.3%	8.3%
65-74	6.6%	6.4%	6.2%	6.0%
75-84	4.6%	4.4%	4.1%	3.9%
85+	1.7%	1.6%	1.5%	1.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Claritas, Inc.*

Income and Education Characteristics

Rochester's socio-economic profile features a moderately lower median income than the surrounding market areas. Rochester's median household income of \$41,679 falls below corresponding levels in the 5-, 10, and 15-mile market areas and also grew at a slower rate from 1990 to the present.

Table II-23: Historic Median Household Income Growth, Rochester, 5-, 10-, and 15-mile Market Areas: 1990-2001

	1989	2001	Percent Growth	Average Annual Growth
Rochester	\$30,820	\$41,679	35.2%	2.8%
5-Mile Radius	\$31,706	\$43,420	36.9%	2.9%
10-Mile Radius	\$32,178	\$45,216	40.5%	3.1%
15-Mile Radius	\$32,922	\$45,827	39.2%	3.1%

Source: Claritas, Inc.*

Median household income is one measure that many retailers and developers use to evaluate the strength of a local market. Lower median incomes discourage certain retailers from choosing to locate in a particular community.

In addition, a relatively low percentage of the local population (age 25 and older) has earned a college degree (16.9%), which lower than the state average (29.9%) and similar or lower than surrounding market areas:

Table II-24: Educational Attainment, Rochester, 5-, 10-, and 15-mile Market Areas: 2001

	Bachelor's Degree or Higher (2001)
Rochester	16.9%
5-Mile	17.0%
10-Mile	19.7%
15-Mile	23.6%
New Hampshire	29.9%

Source: AGS, Inc.; US Census Bureau

Employment by Industry Sector

Rochester benefited from the strong economic growth that expanded the New Hampshire economy during the mid-1990s to early 2001. Statewide, retail trade and services represented both the largest employment sectors and recorded the largest percentage growth in the state. Within the services sector, the business and health care services categories represented the areas of largest growth. Meanwhile, manufacturing continued a steady decline begun in the early 1990s, despite isolated increases in electronics and high-tech manufacturing in some parts of the state.

Rochester's employment picture somewhat mirrors changes in the State's economy described above, aside from Rochester's strong growth in manufacturing. During the period from 1991 to 1995, the three sectors that represented the largest net increase in employment included manufacturing, wholesale trade, and services, registering increases of over 400 jobs in each category. From 1995 to 2000, these same sectors again represented the largest growth areas for the City's economy. The strength of Rochester's manufacturing sector can be somewhat attributed to the growth of Cabletron/Enterasys Networks, and the city's diverse economic base and workforce.

Table II-25: Changes in Employment by Industry Sector, Rochester: 1991-2000

Industry Sector	total employment			1991-1995		1995-2000	
	1991	1995	2000	Total Change	% Change	Total Change	% Change
Construction	202	151	342	-51	-25%	191	126%
Manufacturing	611	1,234	1,945	623	102%	711	58%
TCPU (1)	167	14	325	-153	-92%	311	2221%
Wholesale Trade	236	664	1,224	428	181%	560	84%
Retail Trade	2,229	2,432	2,815	203	9%	383	16%
FIRE (2)	400	382	398	-18	-5%	16	4%
Services	1,833	2,238	3,185	405	22%	947	42%
Government	891	854	1,023	-37	-4%	169	20%
Total	6,569	7,969	11,257	1,400	21%	3,288	41%

Notes:

1) Transportation, Communications, and Public Utilities

2) Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate

Source: NH Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau

Despite the growth of employment in wholesale trade and retail sectors, retail activity in downtown Rochester declined during this period. These employment gains represent the growth of "big-box"

retailers, general merchandise, and wholesale businesses, such as Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Kmart, in the highway-oriented shopping centers outside of the downtown.

Table II-26 shows the employment by industry figures for the Portsmouth – Rochester Labor Market Area. From 1991 to 1995, significant gains were made in the Manufacturing, Services, Retail, Wholesale Trade, and TCPU sectors. The FIRE and Government sectors showed net losses in employment. Overall, job growth increased 50% from the 1990 low. From 1995 to 2000, sectors that showed strong net growth included Services, Retail Trade, Wholesale Trade, and Government. Manufacturing and FIRE industries suffered significant losses during this period. Total job growth for the five-year period, 8%, was significantly lower than the previous period

Table II-26: Changes in Employment by Industry Sector, Portsmouth – Rochester Labor Market Area: 1991-2000

Industry Sector	total employment			1991-1995		1995-2000	
	1991	1995	2000	Total Change	% Change	Total Change	% Change
Construction	2,417	2,759	3,376	342	14%	617	22%
Manufacturing	12,925	17,280	14,886	4,355	34%	-2,394	-14%
TCPU (1)	2,178	3,451	3,850	1,273	58%	399	12%
Wholesale Trade	2,579	4,061	5,755	1,482	57%	1,694	42%
Retail Trade	18,274	20,690	23,108	2,416	13%	2,418	12%
FIRE (2)	6,673	5,541	2,326	-1,132	-17%	-3,215	-58%
Services	18,601	24,055	30,120	5,454	29%	6,065	25%
Government	13,707	13,211	14,866	-496	-4%	1,655	13%
Total	61,230	91,819	99,314	30,589	50%	7,495	8%

Notes:

1) Transportation, Communications, and Public Utilities

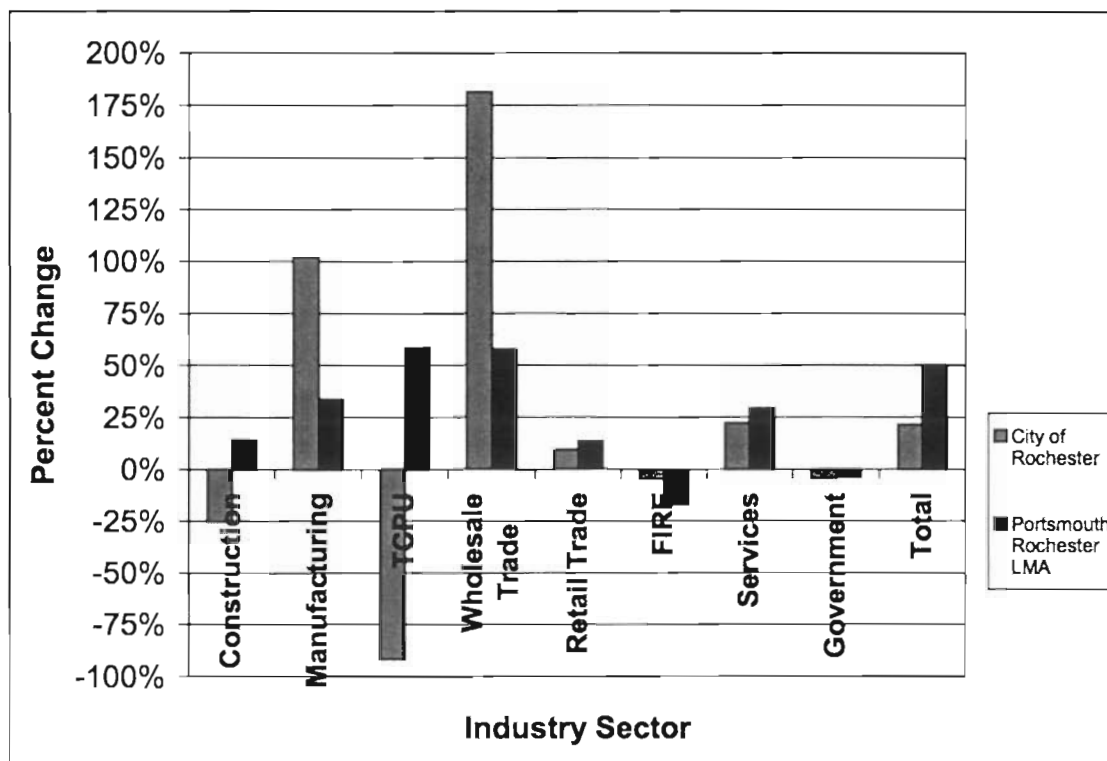
2) Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate

Source: NH Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau

Comparing the figures for the Portsmouth-Rochester LMA to the figures for Rochester in II-26, some clear similarities and differences emerge. These comparisons have been presented in graphic form in II-36 and II-37.

From 1991 to 1995, the rate of growth in employment in the Portsmouth-Rochester LMA was more than double the rate of employment growth in Rochester. Employment growth rates in Rochester exceeded that of the Portsmouth-Rochester LMA in the manufacturing and wholesale trade sectors, and the rate of decline in the FIRE and government sectors was slower or equal to that in the LMA. The rate of growth in the LMA exceeded that of Rochester in the TCPU, retail trade, and services sectors.

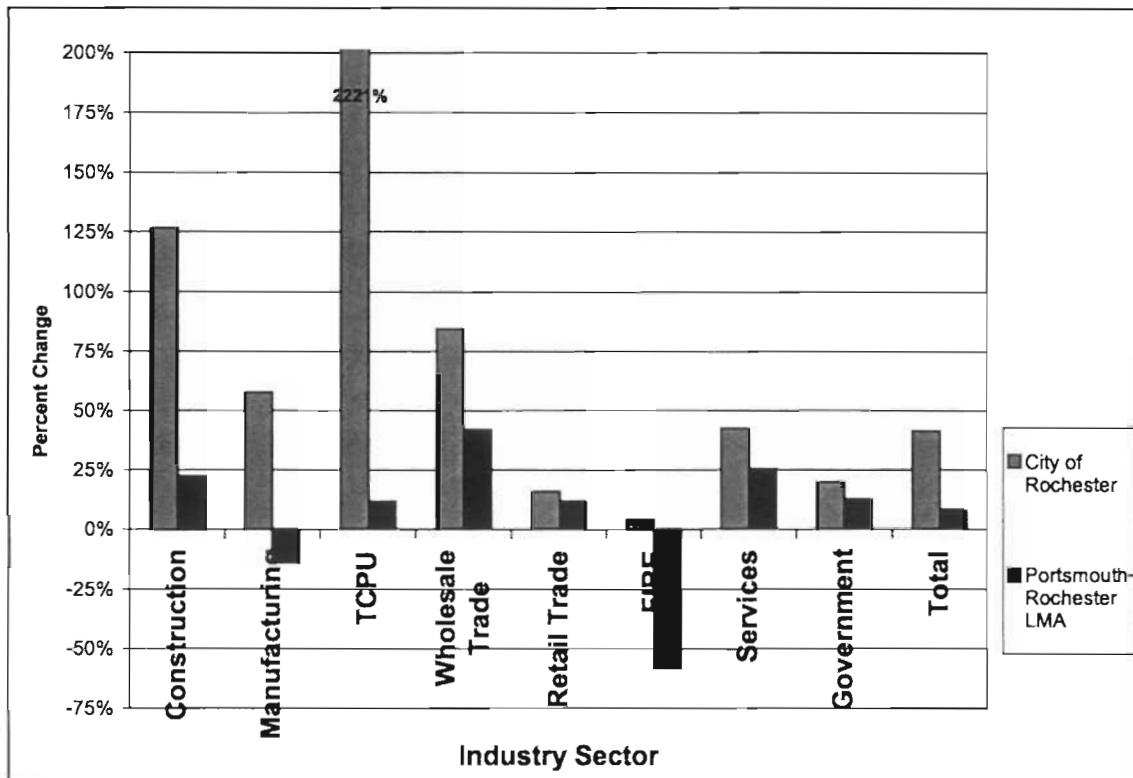
Figure II-36: Comparison of Change in Employment By Industry, Rochester and Portsmouth-Rochester Labor Market Area: 1991 to 1995



Source: NH Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau

From 1995 to 2000, an interesting change occurs. The rate of growth in employment in Rochester (41%) strongly eclipses that of the Portsmouth-Rochester LMA (8%). Employment growth rates in Rochester exceeded that of the Portsmouth-Rochester LMA in all sectors, but FIRE. While the LMA suffered net job losses in the Manufacturing and FIRE industry sectors, Rochester gained jobs in all sectors.

Figure II-37: Comparison of Change in Employment By Industry, Rochester and Portsmouth-Rochester Labor Market Area: 1995 to 2000

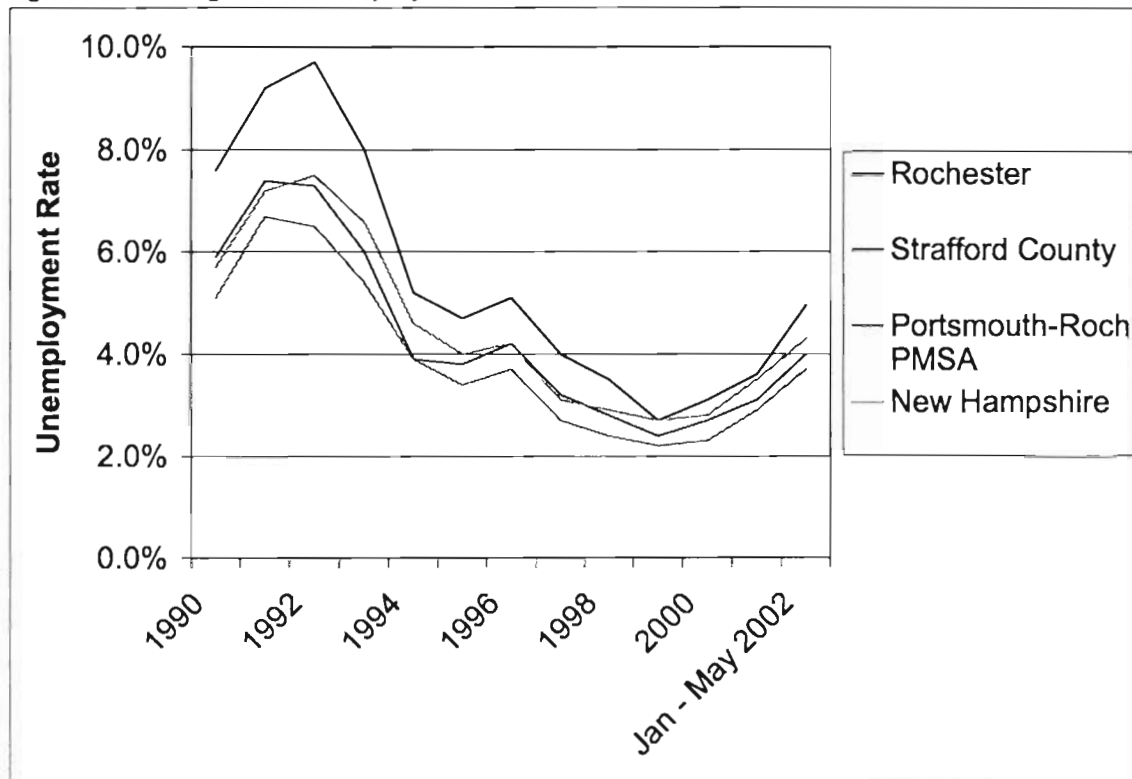


Source: NH Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau

Unemployment

Rates of unemployment in Rochester have consistently exceeded the rates for Stafford County, the Rochester-Portsmouth Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA), and the State of New Hampshire since 1990. Today, Rochester's unemployment rate stands at 5.0%, with rates of 4.0% in Stafford County, 3.7% in Portsmouth-Rochester PMSA, and 4.3% in the entire State. One interesting note is the fact that the rise and fall of these historic rates have mirrored each other quite closely. Also, more recently the increment between Rochester and these other markets has gotten significantly smaller, as can be seen in the chart below:

Figure II-38: Regional Unemployment Trends: 1990-2002



Source: NH Department of Employment

Retail Market Analysis

Inflow/Outflow Analysis

The following presents an analysis of the relationship between household retail spending and retail store sales. This “inflow/outflow” analysis measures the spending potential of resident households against the retail sales achieved in the area’s stores.

In this analysis, a market capture equal to 100% indicates that the community’s retail spending is equivalent to the sales achieved at the community’s retail stores. Where the capture rate exceeds 100%, retail sales exceed spending potential, thereby indicating that sales to non-residents – or inflow – exceeds the outflow, or local resident expenditures occurring outside the area. In other words, the community’s stores capture retail sales in excess of the demand generated by the community’s resident population. Conversely, where net capture falls below 100%, the community suffers a net “outflow”, indicating that local residents’ outside spending – the outflow – exceeds the “inflow” from non-resident shoppers.

Table II-27 presents an inflow/outflow analysis measuring all non-automotive expenditures versus sales in Rochester and the surrounding 5-, 10-, and 15-mile trade areas. This provides a useful benchmark, reflecting the extent to which the trade area serves as a net inflow area for more distant shoppers for all non-auto retail categories. The exhibit shows that in Rochester, retail stores capture a net inflow of 75%, a larger net inflow than surrounding market areas.

Table II-27 - Non-Automotive Retail Sales vs. Spending (\$ millions) in Rochester Market Areas: 2001

	<u>Rochester</u>	<u>5 Mile</u>	<u>10 Mile</u>	<u>15 Mile</u>
Local Resident Retail Spending	\$203	\$245	\$670	\$1,221
Local Retail Sales	\$356	\$388	\$891	\$1,317
Net Inflow (Outflow)	\$152	\$143	\$221	\$95
Market Capture	174.8%	158.4%	133.0%	107.8%

Source: Claritas, Inc; AGS; Bonz/REA, Inc.

It is useful to examine more specific detail about retail expenditures and sales by retail category, to generate a more accurate picture of areas of strength and where opportunities exist to increase a community's capture of local spending.

Net Inflow Categories

Rochester merchants capture net inflows of retail spending from non-residents in the Household/Electronics, general merchandise, grocery, and miscellaneous/specialty retail sectors. These areas contribute to Rochester's overall net inflow of retail spending, and represent areas of existing strength in the local retail market.

II-28 shows that in Rochester, household and electronics stores capture a net inflow of 285%. This represents a very large net inflow, and shows that Rochester's ability to draw consumers from outside its borders is strong for certain retail categories.

Table II-28 – Household/Electronics Expenditures vs. Sales (\$ millions) in Rochester Market Areas: 2001

	<u>Rochester</u>	<u>5 Mile</u>	<u>10 Mile</u>	<u>15 Mile</u>
Local Spending at Electronics Stores	\$14.4	\$17.7	\$49.9	\$95.5
Sales at Household/Electronics Stores	\$55.6	\$58.5	\$109.2	\$156.3
Net Inflow (Outflow)	\$41	\$41	\$59	\$61
Market Capture	385.1%	329.6%	218.9%	163.7%

Source: Claritas, Inc; AGS; Bonz/REA, Inc.

Table II-29 shows that in Rochester, general merchandise stores capture a net inflow of 122%, a significantly larger net inflow than surrounding market areas. The presence of general merchandise stores like Wal-Mart and Kmart contribute to the City's ability to attract a large net inflow of spending.

Table II-29 - General Merchandise Expenditures vs. Sales (\$ millions) in Rochester Market Areas: 2001

	Rochester	5 Mile	10 Mile	15 Mile
Local Spending at General Merchandise Stores	\$25.6	\$31.3	\$87.2	\$165.8
Sales at General Merchandise Stores	\$56.7	\$62.8	\$114.6	\$158.6
Net Inflow (Outflow)	\$31	\$32	\$27	(\$7)
Market Capture	221.8%	200.8%	131.5%	95.7%

Source: Caritas, Inc; AGS; Bonz/REA, Inc.

Table II-30 shows that in Rochester, grocery stores capture a net inflow of 86%, a larger net inflow than surrounding market areas. All local trade areas experienced net inflows in spending on groceries.

Table II-30: Grocery Expenditures vs. Sales (\$ millions) in Rochester Market Areas: 2001

	Rochester	5 Mile	10 Mile	15 Mile
Local Spending at Food/Grocery Stores	\$58.8	\$70.5	\$190.3	\$340.0
Sales at Food/Grocery Stores	\$109.6	\$116.5	\$259.6	\$381.9
Net Inflow (Outflow)	\$51	\$46	\$69	\$42
Market Capture	186.3%	165.2%	136.4%	112.3%

Source: Caritas, Inc; AGS; Bonz/REA, Inc.

Table II-31 shows that in Rochester, miscellaneous and specialty retailers capture a net inflow of 47%. Within this category, all markets but the 15-mile trade area experienced net inflows of spending.

Table II-31: Miscellaneous/Specialty Expenditures vs. Sales (\$ millions) in Rochester Market Areas: 2001

	Rochester	5 Mile	10 Mile	15 Mile
Local Spending at Miscellaneous/Specialty Stores	\$43.1	\$51.1	\$137.6	\$242.8
Sales at Misc/Specialty Stores	\$63.4	\$66.9	\$147.1	\$199.4
Net Inflow (Outflow)	\$20	\$16	\$9	(\$43)
Market Capture	147.0%	130.8%	106.9%	82.1%

Source: Caritas, Inc; AGS; Bonz/REA, Inc.

Net Outflow Categories

In contrast to the categories listed above, Rochester retailers show substantial net outflows of retail spending in the apparel category and, to a lesser degree, eating and drinking establishments.

The magnitude of the net outflow for apparel spending is notable, and independently operated apparel shops offering unique or specialty clothing items may be able to identify opportunities in a downtown, main street, setting. Table II-32 shows the net spending outflows for apparel items in the local trade areas.

Table II-32: Apparel Expenditures vs. Sales (\$ millions) in Rochester Market Areas: 2001

	Rochester	5 Mile	10 Mile	15 Mile
Local Spending at Apparel Stores	\$15.2	\$18.7	\$52.6	\$101.5
Sales at Apparel Stores	\$3.8	\$4.0	\$14.1	\$17.2
Net Inflow (Outflow)	(\$11)	(\$15)	(\$39)	(\$84)
Market Capture	25.0%	21.4%	26.8%	16.9%

Source: Claritas, Inc; AGS; Bonz/REA, Inc.

As can be seen in Table II-33, eating and drinking establishments in Rochester capture 99.6% of local spending. This indicates that many households that shop for basic groceries in Rochester will choose restaurants and taverns in other locations. Comparable downtown districts feature a greater diversity of cuisines and restaurant themes. This may indicate a potential opportunity for downtown Rochester to capture more resident and non-resident spending through the attraction of additional restaurants and taverns. These will most likely be independently operated businesses, since major restaurant chains typically seek more high-traffic locations. Many downtown areas have sought to attract restaurant clusters of unique and unusual restaurants and taverns to stimulate revitalization efforts.

Table II-33: Eating and Drinking Expenditures vs. Sales (\$ millions) in Rochester Market Areas: 2001

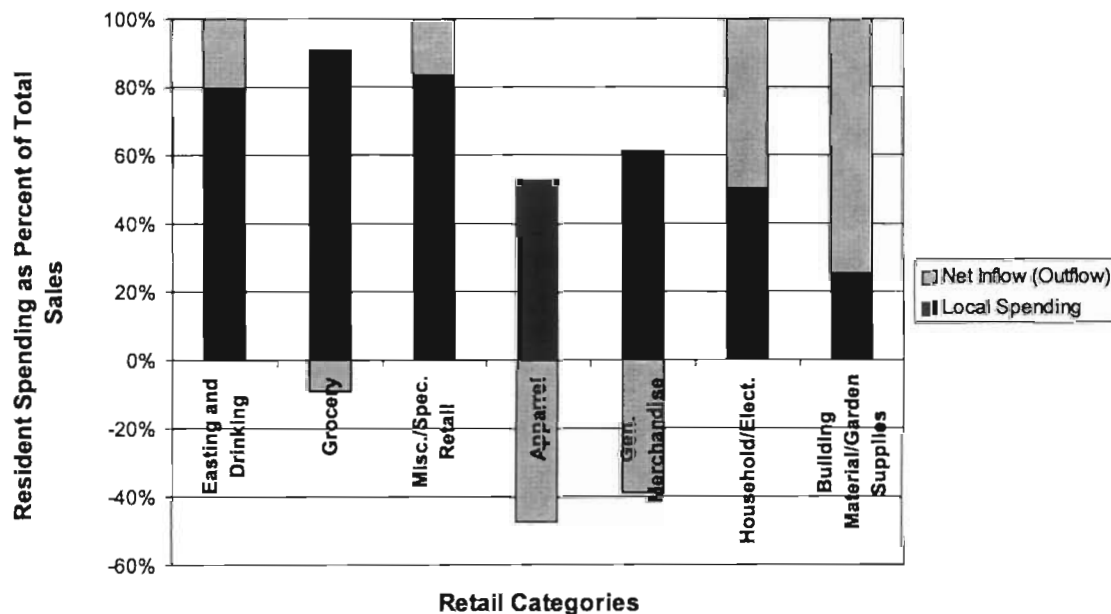
	Rochester	5 Mile	10 Mile	15 Mile
Local Spending at Eating/Drinking Establishments	\$35.9	\$43.0	\$117.5	\$208.8
Sales at Eating/Drinking Establishments	\$35.8	\$38.5	\$113.0	\$191.0
Net Inflow (Outflow)	(\$0)	(\$4)	(\$4)	(\$18)
Market Capture	99.6%	89.6%	96.2%	91.5%

Source: Claritas, Inc; AGS; Bonz/REA, Inc.

building materials. This shows a net inflow of retail dollars into the Northern Market Area expended at stores that sell these products. Therefore, it appears that Northern Market Area retailers are meeting most of the retail needs of their residents.

Based upon the existing retail mix in Rochester, it is likely that inflow from the Northern Market Area is primarily directed towards box retailers and shopping centers. To the extent that new, specialty apparel, select categories of general merchandise, and even specialty grocery retailers could be attracted to a rejuvenated downtown, such retailers could attract a share of the Northern Market Area's expenditures; however in absolute dollars the expenditures are not large.

Table II-35: Resident Spending as a Percentage of Total Sales, By Store Type, Northern Market Area, 2002



Within the category of grocery expenditures, there is an estimated \$8 million of outflow from the Northern Market Area. A portion of these expenditures are likely captured by existing supermarkets in Rochester, which capture sales in excess of local resident spending by \$51 million. As grocery shoppers are already traveling to Rochester, it would be reasonable to expect that a specialty grocery store located in downtown, offering items not available at standard supermarkets, might be able attract shoppers during these same shopping trips.

With \$20 million in apparel expenditures leaking from the Northern Market Area and an additional \$11 million leaking from Rochester, specialty apparel retailers attracted to a revitalized downtown may be able to attract a reasonable portion of these expenditures which would help support the downtown revitalization efforts.

For purchases at general merchandise stores, Northern Market Area residents expend \$25 million more than retailers in the Northern Market Area capture in sales. Existing general merchandise stores in Rochester currently capture sales in excess of local spending by \$31 million. Therefore, it is likely that existing general merchandise stores in Rochester capture a portion of the expenditures leaking from the Northern Market Area. However, retailers focused on select, niche categories within the

Table II-36: Change in Retail Expenditures in Rochester, 10-mile and Northern Market Areas, 2002 and 2007

	Retail Expenditures (\$000s)		
	<u>2002</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>Change</u>
Rochester	\$210,600	\$252,720	\$42,120
Balance of 10 Miles	<u>\$439,600</u>	<u>\$527,520</u>	<u>\$87,920</u>
Subtotal	\$650,200	\$780,240	\$130,040
Northern Market Area	<u>\$262,732</u>	<u>\$325,787</u>	<u>\$63,056</u>
Total	\$912,932	\$1,106,027	\$193,096

Source: Claritas, Inc.

The growth of these expenditures results from natural population growth, in-migration of residents, real income growth and inflation, and other demographic changes.

One challenge facing downtown Rochester is the established shopping patterns that currently, for the most part, focus on shopping center and box retailers not the downtown. As shoppers' incomes increase, they tend to maintain their established shopping patterns. Therefore, getting an existing area resident to start shopping in the revitalized downtown area will be difficult, unless the redevelopment is focused and significant.

Competitive Retail Supply

In order to assess the extent of downtown Rochester's ability to capture area retail expenditures, it is necessary to determine the supply of existing competitive retail space. Compiling data from market research, local area brokers, the Directory of Shopping Centers, and Claritas an estimate of the existing retail supply is shown below in Table II-37.

Table II-37: Existing Supply of Retail Space (SF), Rochester, 10-mile and 20-mile Market Areas, 2002

	Major Centers (Boxes, Malls)	Local (Downtown, Misc)	Total SF
Rochester	640,000	700,000	1,340,000
Balance of 10 Miles	<u>650,000</u>	<u>750,000</u>	<u>1,400,000</u>
Subtotal	1,290,000	1,450,000	2,740,000
Balance of 20 Miles	<u>2,350,000</u>		<u>2,350,000</u>
Total Square Feet	3,640,000	1,450,000	5,090,000

Retail Capture

Table II-38 shows the estimated capture of retail expenditures among the existing supply of retail space within the 10-mile trade area. More than 50% of the existing expenditures in this market flow to major shopping centers and box retailers. Approximately 22% of these expenditures are captured by local retail, which includes the downtown areas of Rochester and Dover, and other dispersed, non-shopping center oriented retail establishments. Another 23% currently leaks outside the market area, through catalogue and Internet purchases and shopping in other established retail areas including Southern New Hampshire, Maine, and other locations.

Table II-38: Capture of 10-mile Retail Expenditures

Existing Major & Box Retail	55%
Local Retail	22%
Outflow - Catalogue/Internet/Elsewhere	<u>23%</u>
Total	100%

Future Market Outlook

The primary future market conditions are summarized below.

- Growth of retail expenditures in the 10-mile market area is projected at \$130 million.
- Rochester must try and capture more than its fair share of the projected growth in order to improve its position vis-à-vis other competitive retail areas.
- Likely growth in Major Retail Supply of 150,000 + sf will increase the imbalance between the capture rate of downtown and outlying retail areas.
- Increasing capture of retail expenditures by catalogue and Internet retailers will reduce the overall capture rates of both major box and local retail establishments.

Existing Retail Conditions

Downtown

Downtown Rochester is difficult to find from Spaulding Turnpike for the visitor that is unfamiliar with its location. Highway signs indicate that any one of five exits provides access to downtown Rochester. Yet once off the highway there are no signs directing the visitor to downtown. Moreover, many of these routes require multiple turns to reach downtown, yet there are no way finding signs directing the visitor to downtown. Given that most of the routes into downtown are lined with strip and freestanding retail stores, one has many alternative shopping options to choose, and may not be persistent enough to ever reach downtown. Clear and consistent directional way finding signage leading a visitor from the highway and other high traffic areas to the downtown could significantly improve downtown's ability to draw shoppers and visitors.

Once the visitor arrives in downtown, navigating around downtown is somewhat awkward and confusing. Consistent and well-designed signage should be installed to point out major attractions and amenities. These directional signs should also clearly indicate how to exit the downtown and return to Spaulding Turnpike in order to make the entire downtown experience pleasant and convenient.

Based on the information provided by the City of Rochester and additional research by the planning team, there is an estimated 560,000 square feet of ground floor retail space in the downtown study area. An estimated 80,000 square feet, or roughly 14% of that space is currently vacant. Within downtown the greatest pockets of vacancy are along the following streets:

- North Main Street 27%
- South Main Street 18%
- Hanson Street 12%

Appreciably more space is currently underutilized, since it is occupied by non-retail tenants, such as office and service businesses, that could otherwise be located in upper floor space. At 560,000 square

feet, the downtown study area is a large geographic area and may prove to be difficult to revitalize if efforts are dispersed throughout the entire area. Fragmented property ownership compounds this problem, since a small-scale project is not likely to significantly impact the downtown. Therefore, the redevelopment of individual buildings needs to be coordinated with a campaign to upgrade the surrounding storefronts. This may be difficult; unmotivated or absentee owners may hamper the good efforts of individual downtown property owners.

Downtown is negatively impacted by the presence of large box retail and outlying shopping centers that have better locational characteristics than downtown. These centers and freestanding stores are sited in intercept locations that are easier to access than downtown. The strength of these major retail locations limits what types of stores could be successful in a revitalized downtown. Roads like Route 11 are fast becoming attractive to national box retailers, such as Wal-Mart and Home Depot. Other highway-oriented shopping areas are become destinations, such as the "Miracle Mile" along Route 9 in Dover and Somersworth.

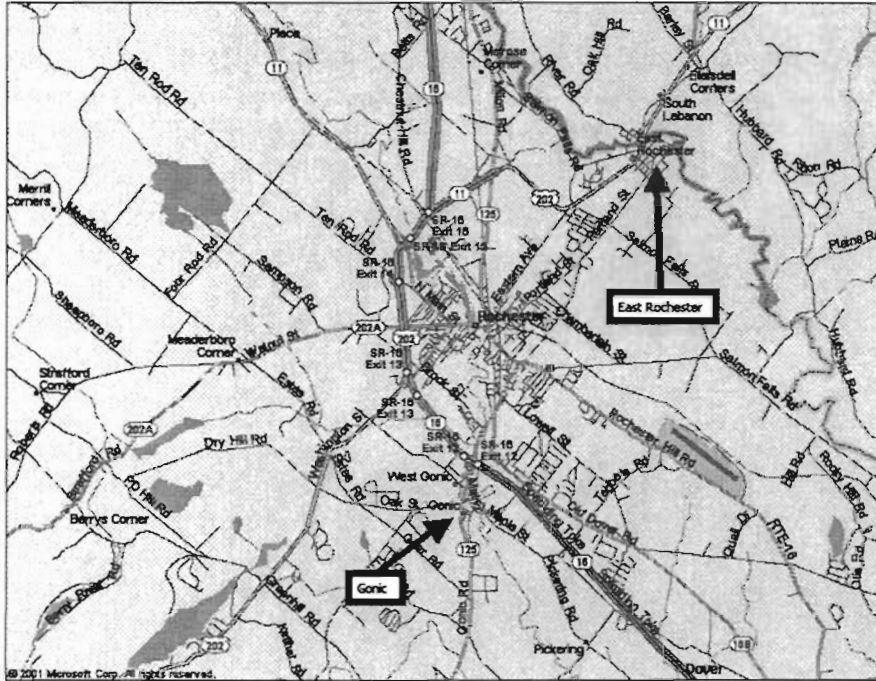
At 560,00 square feet, downtown Rochester represents approximately 20% of the inventory of retail space within the ten mile market area. However, downtown Rochester does not capture 20% of retail sales in this area. It is estimated that retail businesses in downtown Rochester produce aggregate annual sales of approximately \$50 million, or approximately \$90 per square foot. By comparison, box retailers and discount general merchandise stores generally produce sales of \$250 - \$400 per square foot annually. By this measure, the drawing power of these major retailers is approximately 2.5 to 4 times stronger than downtown Rochester.

With these sales figures, downtown Rochester captures approximately 8% of these expenditures, despite having 20% of the retail floor space in the 10-mile market area. Therefore, Rochester is not capturing its fair share of retail expenditures within its market area.

Gonic and East Rochester

Gonic and East Rochester are two neighborhood shopping districts located to the south and east of downtown Rochester. Their locations are shown on Figure II-41

Figure II-41: Gonic and East Rochester Commercial Districts



Both districts revolve around a single intersection and contain convenience retailers and service businesses that meet the general needs of the immediately adjacent residents. The types of uses typical of these districts include convenience grocery stores, pizzerias and other prepared foods, post offices, automotive service stations, hairdressers, and laundry/dry cleaners. Neither district is plagued by vacancies, given the limited amount of retail and office space in each district.

Gonic is comprised of approximately 5,000 to 10,000 square feet of retail and service businesses, with an adjacent fully occupied rehabilitated mill containing an additional 137,000 square feet of office and industrial uses.

East Rochester is slightly larger than Gonic, containing between 10,000 to 15,000 square feet of retail and service businesses. East Rochester draws from a larger market area since it lies along a heavily trafficked highway, US 202/Route 11.

Neither district has the size or diversity of businesses to meet the needs of a larger customer base. Nor is it likely that either district can or should be repositioned significantly to address a larger market area.

To maintain the health of these districts, certain strategies that will be promoted to improve downtown may be appropriate for Gonic and East Rochester. Other strategies will not be appropriate, due to the small village character of Gonic and East Rochester. In addition, specific efforts should be

made to position the districts to serve the needs of the markets they serve, which are comprised of those that live and work in the immediately surrounding areas.

Rochester's major retail focus should be the downtown. Efforts can be made to improve the aesthetics and health of Gonic and East Rochester, however, most revitalization dollars and energies should be directed toward turning-around Rochester's primary business district.

Commercial Revitalization Potential

As previously mentioned, the Downtown Study Area is too fragmented an area to focus the initial revitalization efforts. In order to maximize the impact of this effort, it is strongly recommended that initially the revitalization strategies focus on the core downtown area. Specifically, the intersection of North Main and South Main Streets, including parts of Wakefield Street around City Hall and Hanson Street offer the greatest concentration of intact historic commercial fabric, while also having the largest blocks of vacant space.

Based upon the analysis of existing retail supply, existing store sales and local expenditures, it is suggested that downtown Rochester could initially support 75,000 square feet of revitalized retail space. These revitalized stores could capture approximately \$13.7 million in retail sales, \$11.7 from the Market Area within 10 miles, and an additional \$2.0 million inflow from outside the trade area.

Table II-38: Potential Aggregate Retail Sales of Revitalized Retail Stores (\$ millions)

Market Area	\$11.7
Inflow	<u>\$2.0</u>
Total	\$13.7

The market area capture of \$11.7 million represents the capture of 9% of the anticipated \$130 million increase in expenditures in the Market Area. It also represents a capture of 1.5% of the entire projected market area expenditures.

These figures represent sales of approximately \$183 per square foot, an increase of approximately \$94 per square foot from the estimated existing sales levels. Roughly 30% of the 75,000 square feet will likely be comprised of new businesses filling a portion of the existing vacant retail space in the core downtown area. The balance of the core revitalization area represents reconfigured space that is currently occupied and generating sales, but is underutilized. With 75,00 square feet of revitalized retail space capturing a total of \$13.7 million in sales, downtown will capture sales of almost \$9 million over existing levels, increasing total downtown sales by 18% over their estimated current levels. The successful revitalization of a core area of approximately 75,000 square feet of ground floor retail space should have a spillover effect that will serve as a catalyst for the revitalization of more sections of downtown Rochester. This incremental approach is reasonable and realistic to achieve, given the forces and challenges impacting downtown Rochester.

Potential Options for Reuse

Since downtown has fragmented ownership it will be difficult to coordinate and impact a large area by any single project. There must be sufficient participation by multiple property owners for this revitalization effort to be effective. Just simply renovating and re-tenanting the existing vacant ground floor retail space is not likely to generate the estimated increase in sales and the revitalization desired by the community. A coordinated, targeted effort must be made to attract an appropriate mix of

stores and businesses that will create the desired character that will make downtown Rochester a destination for shoppers and visitors.

Ground Floor

- Potential ground floor uses that can contribute to this effort include:
- Eating and drinking establishments
- Specialty shops
- Art galleries and craft shops
- Antiques and collectables
- Arts/Theater activities, even if seasonal, that enhance the image of downtown Rochester and complement the offerings of the historic Rochester Opera House.
- Limit the amount of service/office uses in ground floor retail space

These types of businesses will not compete with the box retail and major shopping centers, but rather carve out a distinct niche that focuses on the types of products and services not found in large retail establishments.

Upper Floors

While a critical mass of revitalized retail space is needed to initiate this revitalization effort, another crucial component of the revitalization of downtown Rochester is to fill the vacant upper floor spaces in downtown with a mix of business and residential uses. This should be done in concert with the efforts to attract new businesses that fit the uses described above.

Potential upper floor uses include:

- Office/service businesses
- Loft/artist housing
- Bed and breakfast establishments

By filling the vacant and underutilized upper floor areas, additional value is created that will both enable property owners to reinvest and better maintain their properties, prevent the urge to demolish and build new single story structures, attract more businesses to the area, and add more people and potential shoppers in the downtown area.

The next section contains the strategies and action items recommended by the master plan as well as a ten-year plan for implementation.

III. Planning Strategies and Actions

Introduction

This section of the Plan describes the recommendations of the Downtown Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. The action items focus on creating economically healthy downtown and village centers by laying out a series of strategies and improvements addressing a variety of land use, economic, design and transportation issues. They are designed to achieve the vision and goals established by Rochester residents and property owners for the downtown and the neighborhood commercial centers in Gonic and East Rochester. The recommendations have evolved in response to existing economic conditions and the community's desire to enhance these commercial and civic areas that are so important to the livability of the community.

The recommendations are grouped to facilitate review and reference, as follows:

- Urban design and land use in the downtown
- Economic development recommendations for the downtown
- Downtown traffic, parking and circulation enhancements
- Recommendations for Gonic and East Rochester

In some cases, the discussion expands to include a specific parcel or activity and is illustrated with graphics. Prioritizing these recommendations and planning for their implementation over the next decade are discussed in the following section of this report.

Urban Design and Land Use: Strategies and Actions

Concentrate Early Revitalization Efforts within the Downtown Core

Strategy

Downtown Rochester, as defined in this planning effort, encompasses a very large area of diverse uses and characteristics. In order for revitalization of the downtown to be successful, the next series of public and private reinvestments must be largely concentrated within a core area of the downtown. It is the traditional center of commercial activity and it retains a scale and character that can be readily adapted to new uses.

If the reinvestment resources are spread too thin in other areas of the downtown, then the opportunity to transform the economics and character of the entire area may be lost, with significant negative consequences for City. The core of the downtown is at great risk, with noticeable vacancies and deteriorating properties that detract from the surrounding uses. Without concentrated efforts, it is likely to continue to deteriorate, eventually fading into a persistently low-rent district. Buildings may be demolished, only to be replaced by surface parking lots and businesses that largely rely on the pass-through automobile traffic, but which cannot truly compete with the outlying commercial districts of Rochester.

However, a very different outcome can be reached, by retaining the interesting and increasingly rare “fabric” of closely knit buildings, linked by pleasant sidewalks, connected to the Cocheco River and served by convenient parking areas. This can be a mixed-use district that provides places to live, work, visit, be entertained, shop and dine – and enjoy special civic events and festivals.

One of the fundamental planning and economic development lessons of the last fifty years has been that historic downtown districts, in order to be successful, must be oriented to pedestrians and provide continuously interesting and intact buildings and uses. This type of environment can be enormously attractive as an alternative to the strip-type commercial development and more isolated housing uses that are best served by automobiles.

The core area that should be the focus of reinvestment is composed of the densely-developed portions of North Main Street and Hanson Street, stretching to the edge of the Cocheco River. Taken together, these portions of North Main Street and Hanson Street offer the greatest concentration of intact commercial fabric in the City and have the largest blocks of vacant space available for re-occupancy. It is a tightly-concentrated mix of buildings that are a lasting reminder of the City’s past. With its historic buildings, storefronts and uses, the area has the pedestrian character and scale essential to a vibrant downtown. The architecture, scale, and context of the buildings in this part of the downtown combine to create an attractive environment for the creation of a mixed use district.

The two blocks of North Main Street within the core are highly visible components of the downtown. They line one of the most frequented thoroughfares of the city. The eastern blocks stretch from Main Street to the Cocheco River, which should be a significant component in the downtown’s future. There are few gaps in the “street wall” of shops and buildings, creating the potential for an environment that is attractive to pedestrians.

The character of Hanson Street retains a similar historic quality; it was once a key connector street to the train depot that has since disappeared. The core area abuts historic City Hall and the cultural attraction of the Rochester Opera House. The collection of buildings can be adapted to a range of uses and complement the improvements intended for North Main Street. Successful downtowns are pedestrian friendly and offer a range of goods and services meeting the demands of its consumer base. In a successful downtown, the first floors of buildings are consistently occupied by uses that offer the goods and services that meet significant market needs. Ground floor space is used by businesses that depend on sidewalk pedestrian activity and the convenience that comes with being on street level. Uses such that do not rely on passing traffic to generate business - like offices and residential units - are located on the upper floors of buildings instead of street level. This keeps the ground floor storefronts of buildings available for uses that need those locations. Commercial/retail businesses bring people to the downtown and create the positive force needed to generate economic success.

Preserving ground floor space for retail uses contributes to a pedestrian friendly environment, a key ingredient to economic success in a downtown setting. It is also important to have as much of the ground floor space fully occupied as possible. The *average* first floor vacancy rate in the downtown core today is roughly 14%, eclipsing the 5% vacancy rate generally accepted as “healthy”. On North Main Street, the vacancy rate is 27%.

If the ground floors of buildings in Rochester’s downtown core were fully occupied, an additional 75,000 square feet of revitalized retail space would be created which could generate an additional \$14 million in sales in the downtown annually. This would be a 27% increase in sales over today’s estimated downtown sales levels, bolstering the likelihood of reinvestment in the buildings and infrastructure of the downtown and expansion of business opportunities in the future. In the longer term, reinvestment in the core will have a spillover effect, stimulating revitalization in other areas of the downtown.

The economic assessment and market evaluation identified a number of ground floor uses that could contribute positively to the effort to successfully revitalize downtown. These uses include eating and drinking establishments, specialty shops, art galleries and craft shops, antiques and collectibles, and arts/theater activities (even if seasonal) that enhance the image of downtown Rochester as a place for entertainment and culture and complement the offerings of the historic Rochester Opera House.

A range of other uses should be both permitted and encouraged for location within the core area. This includes a particular emphasis on housing and live/work housing and office space on the upper floors of existing or new buildings. At the same time, uses that do not contribute to the image or economic success of the area should be discouraged. The core area is not an appropriate location for storage, auto-oriented businesses, or businesses that use the available buildings primarily as inventory storage.

The revitalization of the downtown core with all of the private uses must be accompanied by substantial improvements in public open space, streetscape, parking supply and management, signage, façade enhancements and expanded access to the Cocheco River. Each of these topics is discussed as part of the related strategies of the master plan.

By focusing efforts on the core area of the downtown in the shorter term, the impact of early public and private revitalization initiatives can have the greatest effect. Quicker and more tangible results will be generated by concentrating improvements in a small but visible area. Focusing early initiatives on the downtown core also heightens the chance of successfully revitalizing the entire downtown in the longer term by creating spillover effects into other parts of the downtown. As the center of the downtown is improved and businesses there experience economic success, property and business owners around the core will have the incentives needed to participate in the revitalization effort.



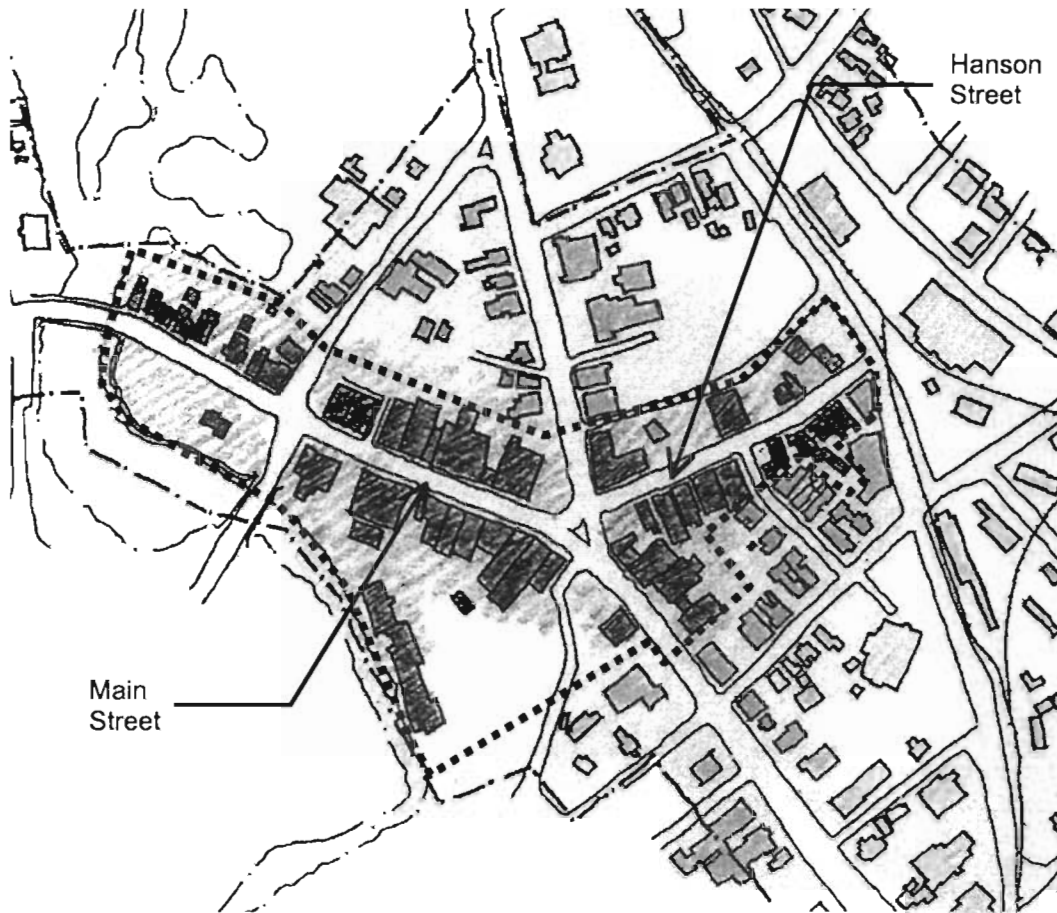


Figure III-1: Proposed Downtown Core District

Actions to Strengthen the Downtown Core District

The City and other participants in the downtown revitalization process should focus reinvestment in the core of the downtown through a series of coordinated actions over the next ten years, with the goals of creating a healthy and fully-utilized area that contributes substantially to the tax base and to the quality of life within Rochester. Specific actions that should be taken include

- Focus for downtown public expenditures - Prioritizing street, traffic, streetscape open space and signage improvements so that they occur within the core area either first or at the same time as surrounding areas will be necessary until it has been successfully revitalized.
- Focus for “Main Street” façade and business improvements – The City should sponsor or create a revitalization assistance program, and direct the program to support the downtown core as its first priority, including stabilization and restoration of historic properties.
- Support for ground floor uses - Evaluate existing land use policies in the City and encourage public support for developments and uses that devote ground floor space to appropriate commercial and retail uses.

- Initiation of redevelopment of the McDuffee Block - Use public land resources near the McDuffee Block to spur appropriate development and enhance this key corner of the downtown core.
- Public land and buildings to support redevelopment - Use the public ownership in riverside assets to provide new locations for investment and open space improvements.
- Connections to the Cochemo River – As part of the focus on the downtown core, public and private investments should be coordinated to create stronger connections to the adjacent river. The related strategy to capitalize on this feature is discussed in more detail, below.

Provide City Support for a Mix of Uses

Strategy

Rochester's downtown serves as the location for an extremely diverse set of uses. This is appropriate, and should be encouraged for the future. However, a coordinated strategy is to ensure that the relationships among the uses are mutually beneficial. In addition, the City should promote policies that encourage reinvestment in particular uses that promote expanded use of the downtown as an attraction for residents and visitors alike. In this context, the future mixed use district can best be imagined as having several overlapping use patterns that converge within the downtown, and make it an interesting place for different users and visitors.

One of the use clusters within the downtown should be arts and entertainment. Together, these streets have been identified as the key to repositioning the downtown so it can compete successfully with commercial centers in other parts of Rochester and the region. Creating an area of the downtown that offers a concentration of businesses such as dance studios, cafes, galleries, shops and performance venues creates a vibrancy and level of activity that leads to economic success and reinvestment. In fact, a number of buildings on Hanson Street already house art-related businesses and uses. Establishing an arts and entertainment district will create a unique "sense of place" for the downtown that reinforces and supports it as an alternative to box retail shopping locations.

The downtown should have an expanded role as a special residential district. It is already home for many people, and has the potential to house many more. The redeveloped mill buildings along the Cochemo River already serve as a residential anchor, and other units are scattered within or adjacent to the downtown. Opportunities exist to convert all or part of other commercial buildings in the downtown to residential use, including the upper floors of buildings that have commercial frontage. In this regard, zoning should permit live/work housing units. Often considered ideal for artist housing, these types of uses are increasingly popular for many individuals who maintain small professional, crafts or service businesses. New development that includes residential uses should also be encouraged, with a mix of rental and ownership units being preferred.

A third theme for the downtown should be as a special destination for restaurants and shops that should be clustered there. Special stores that draw from a large area or devoted patrons can benefit from being located in downtown locations. Many downtown revitalization success stories have been built around the enlistment of special food establishments – cafes, restaurants, bakeries, coffee shops and ethnic food items. There are already several such attractions, and several more would be welcome additions. In particular, the City should consider offering the small industrial structure near the Cochemo River that is currently used as a meeting space, and allow it to be sold or leased to an appropriate restaurateur. Other property owners may also find it advantageous to reorient the lower

levels of their buildings towards the Cocheco, gradually creating a pleasant new public accessway behind Main Street.

The final theme for the downtown should be the retention of office space within the area. The downtown provides a central location for the courthouse functions, newspaper offices, banking and service uses that serve the entire region. As the amenities and vitality of the downtown core expand, the downtown should become an increasingly attractive location for existing and future office space needs, and this should be encouraged through public policies and actions.

The need to provide parking for new or expanded uses often conflicts with the goal of supporting a vital mixed use environment. The typical zoning regulations in most communities require the provision of substantial amounts of parking on the same lot as each new use that is permitted. When this practice is expanded to encompass an entire downtown, the total number of spaces will substantially exceed actual demand because of the number of multiple visits that can be made by walking between several places. It is much more preferable to use shared parking standards, that promote the ability of new or expanded uses to take advantage of off-site parking supplies. Special permit programs can be established to allow more flexible and successful support of the mixture of uses in the downtown. However, in no case should this flexibility be allowed to diminish the supply of parking below the actual demand or convenience needs of downtown uses.

Actions: Actively Support Appropriate Uses

- Zoning review and amendments – Review the zoning provisions within the downtown and undertake appropriate revisions to promote the mix of uses addressed within the master plan.
- Shared parking provisions for new and expanded uses – Rochester already allows a reduction in on-site parking for existing buildings in the downtown. This approach should be expanded to allow new or expanded uses to take advantage of off-site parking, as long as it can clearly be demonstrated that an adequate amount of parking in a reasonably convenient location will be normally available to fully support the use intended.
- Support for the Opera House and other cultural and entertainment uses – Rochester's Opera House has the potential to serve as a catalyst for positive change in the downtown area. Expanded support through public and private funding should be pursued to create a venue for more frequent and high quality performances.
- Streamlined review and approval of projects that fully conform with the downtown master plan recommendations - Review and amend the provisions of existing zoning ordinances in the downtown to streamline the permitting process for new establishments that further the goals and objectives of the downtown Master Plan; and
- Proactive support for appropriate new uses - Take a proactive role in encouraging the types of uses that contribute to the downtown's identity and economic health. Through a stewardship organization as discussed below, the City may consider establishing a partnership with the owners of downtown buildings to develop and maintain an inventory of available space and to market it to potential tenants.

Create an Attractive Streetscape

Strategy

The “streetscape” is a term used to describe the physical environment of a downtown from the perspective of motorists or pedestrians that move through the area. It is composed of the facades of buildings, public and private signage, sidewalks, open space and the landscaping that is found there. The attractiveness of the downtown as a shopping destination is directly linked to the physical qualities and context of the public and private spaces and buildings that comprise it. Having a pedestrian friendly and inviting atmosphere is crucial to the economic success of downtown businesses. Downtown Rochester is fortunate to have a number of valuable qualities and attributes. Appropriate-scaled buildings with architecturally intact facades, underground utilities, good lighting and sidewalks are the foundation on which the City can build an even more attractive downtown neighborhood. The historic buildings that are concentrated within the downtown are among its greatest assets; restored, they will add substantial economic value to the entire district. Storefront and signage improvement programs for downtown buildings will help the revitalization effort as a marketing enhancement, as will augmenting the landscaping of visible downtown locations.

As part of these efforts, the City should work with private property owners and jointly sponsor landscape enhancements at the three gateway locations into the downtown core – where Union, Wakefield and North Main Streets meet. This should include pavement and sidewalk changes to slow traffic and create more safe crosswalks, added landscaping enhancements, decorative paving, directional signage to public parking areas, and the like. Lilacs should be used where they can be practical and attractive elements in the landscape. Abutting private parking areas and lots should be enhanced with tree plantings, low berms, fences or other plantings that diminish the visual impact of large, asphalt areas and contribute to the nearby gateways.

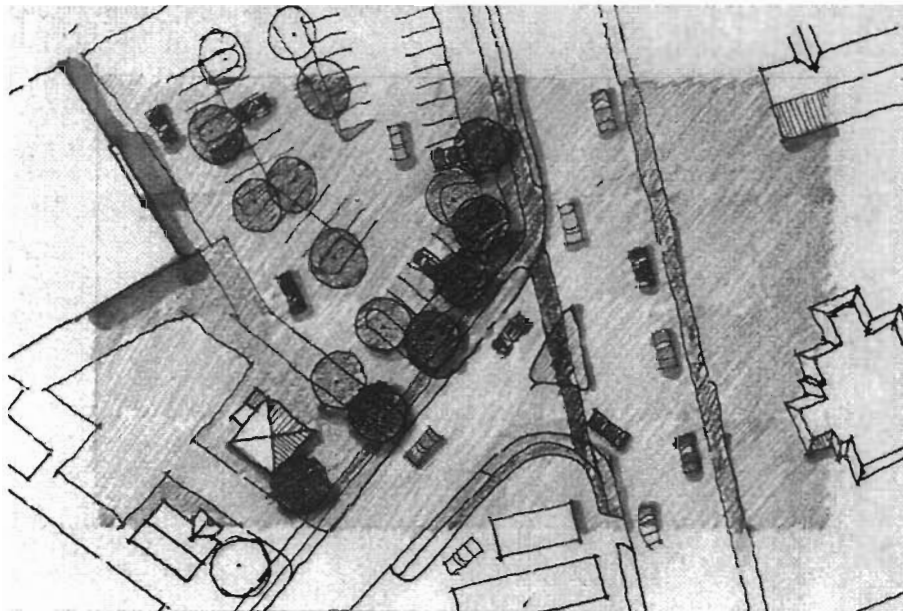
Actions: Design, Fund and Construct Streetscape Enhancements

- Façade and signage improvements - Establish loan and grant programs to encourage the renovation of commercial storefronts and commercial signs on downtown buildings. The New Hampshire Main Street program or a similar program created within Rochester, private lenders, and grants could provide the professional resources and funding needed to implement these programs.
- Streetscape improvement plan - Create a comprehensive streetscape improvement plan for the downtown and identify appropriate locations for new street trees, ornamental lighting, new walkways and amenities such as benches and bike racks. The inventory of downtown pedestrian and streetscape accommodations completed during the master plan process can serve as a basis for a more comprehensive streetscape improvement plan.
- Connections to the surrounding neighborhoods – Extend the streetscape improvements into the surrounding neighborhoods along the bridges and streets that connect the downtown to the adjacent districts. Bicycle and pedestrian access to and from these areas can contribute to the vitality of the downtown and provide a positive public amenity.
- Funding and construction of streetscape improvements - Construct streetscape improvements at key locations to improve the downtown’s image and overall attractiveness to visitors and new businesses. A number of potential improvement projects were identified during the master planning process and are discussed in greater detail in other sections of this Chapter. Potential locations for streetscape improvements include the intersection of North

Main, Union, and Bridge Streets, a location mid-block on North Main Street between Union Street and south Main Street, and the existing public park at the intersection of North Main, South Main, and Wakefield Streets.

- Programs and ordinances to preserve historic architecture - Preserve the integrity of the architecture of historic downtown buildings by investigating the feasibility of creating a new historic zoning district for the downtown. In preserving the physical characteristics of important structures, an historic zoning district can safeguard the overall character of the downtown so vital to its ultimate economic success. This is accomplished by drafting an ordinance that provides public review for new projects in the downtown and contains guidelines for building renovation or new construction. Similarly, ordinances and guidelines should be studies and established to discourage demolition of buildings that are in the public interest to preserve because of their contribution to the civic and economic integrity of their surroundings.
- Enhanced gateways to the core district - Work with the private sector to re-landscape key gateway parcels at the northern and eastern ends of the downtown. Key gateway parcels marking the edges of the downtown district are located at the corner of Union and Wakefield Streets and at the intersection of South Main Street and Columbus Avenue Extension. The landscaping and design of the privately owned parcels at these locations could be modified through discussion and successful negotiation between the City and private property owners. Figure III-2 illustrates a conceptual gateway plan of the Wakefield/Union Streets intersection to enhance the visual appearance of this high-profile property and establish a new quality to the downtown streetscape.

Figure III-2: Conceptual Gateway Plan / Wakefield and Union Streets



- Plan review and zoning - Evaluate the City's site plan review and zoning provisions effective for the downtown area to ensure current requirements are effective at regulating site design and aesthetics, building appearance, and the extent of public input.

Capitalize on the Cocheco River as a Downtown Resource

Strategy

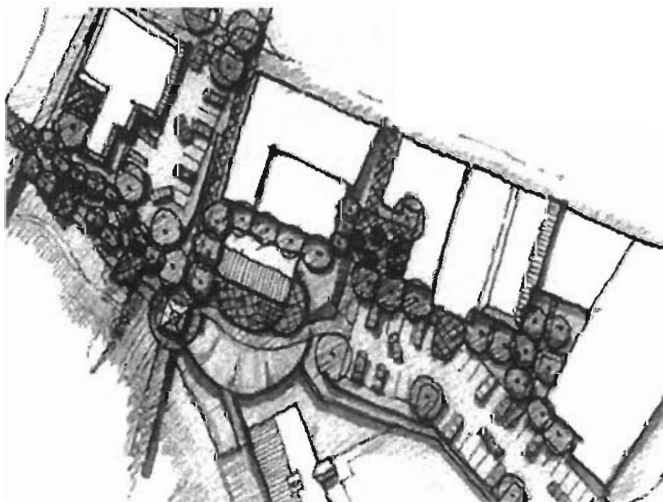
The Cocheco River is a striking presence in downtown Rochester. It provides downtown visitors with valuable open space and recreational opportunities in an urban environment. The first phase of a riverfront walkway near the North Main Street/Union Street/Bridge Street intersection passes by the river's dam structures that are a lasting, tangible piece of the City's history and attractive as public structures in their own right. By further capitalizing on these attributes, the Cocheco River can become an even greater amenity and enhance the downtown.

There are three locations where enhanced connections should be created.

To maximize public use and enjoyment of the riverfront, the Master Plan recommends that the City acquire a portion of the lot at the corner of Bridge Street adjacent to the existing City parking lot on North Main Street. This might be achieved through a simple exchange of landholdings, and provide for the relocation of the parking associated with the Foster's building to the north. By expanding its landholdings at this location, the City can create a space for civic events and activities and create a strong tie between the downtown and the Cocheco River. It would also enhance the appearance of the site for the private sector use within it. In the long term - if it would prove to be in the interest of both the City and the property owner - the entire block might be considered for its potential to expand public open space and an outdoor event venue.

A second pedestrian connection should be sought between the existing courthouse building and the adjacent historic structure. This connection should reach from the public parking areas within the "triangle" and extend down to the river edge. Eventually, this pathway could be extended across a dedicated pedestrian bridge, affording a spectacular view of the river's falls. Additional pathways and open space connections could on the south side of the Cocheco River then be added, over time.

Figure III-3: New Pedestrian Connections to the River



A third potential connection between the downtown and the Cocheco River could be created as part of the redevelopment of the former McDuffee Block site on North Main Street represents a future opportunity to connect the downtown to the river. The Master Plan recommends that this site be redeveloped as part of a comprehensive redevelopment plan that includes two City-owned parcels on Congress Street. Plans for this site could incorporate a public walkway from North Street to the edge of the river through City-owned land.

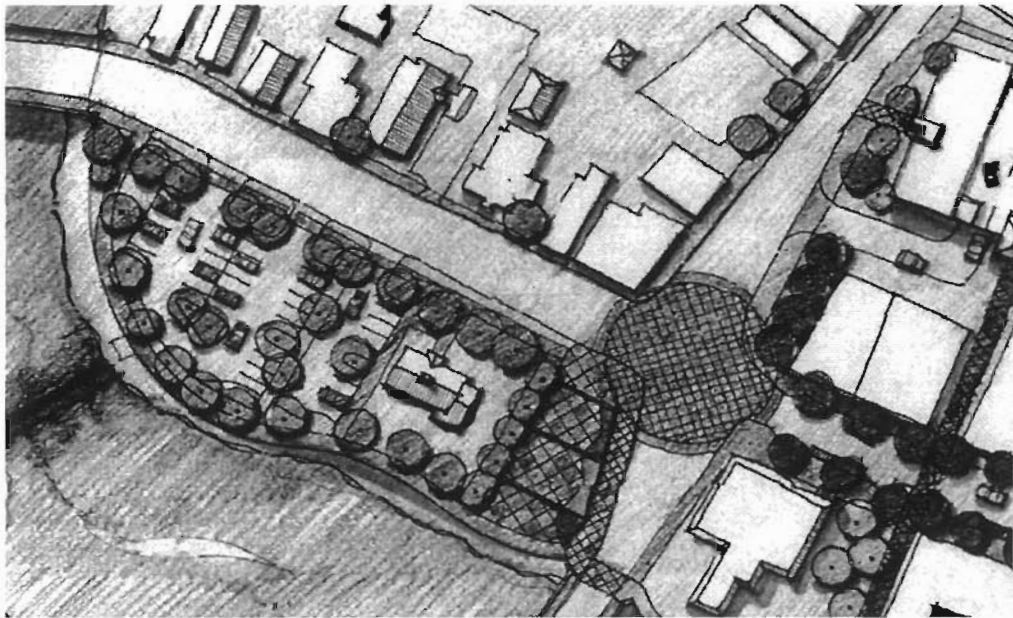
The land between the Cocheco River and buildings that line North Main Street offer an intriguing opportunity to create a special pedestrian-oriented enclave of businesses and open space improvements. The City (through its Housing Authority) could reconsider the current use of a small historic structure that is adjacent to the River, and offer it for appropriate redevelopment for restaurant and café uses. Extended pedestrian pathways and terraced landscaping improvements might be created behind and along the edge of the courthouse. A walkway might be created to connect adjacent parcels, and a shared parking strategy could be used to consolidate and organize the rear of the existing parcels. Lower levels of the existing North Main Street buildings could eventually be redesigned to open out towards the River and the new pedestrian links created there, taking advantage of the views and the historic vistas.

A large parcel of land zoned for business uses exists on the southern side of the river. This parcel contains several service businesses and abuts a residential neighborhood. Although it is outside of the scope of this Master Plan, the City should consider zoning or other actions to encourage both open space and appropriate redevelopment improvements in this area to accompany the evolution of the downtown.

Actions: Expand Public Access and Encourage Redevelopment along the River Edge

- Create a new plaza, park and activity space along Union Street at the Foster's Block. Acquire a portion of the lot at the corner of Bridge and North Main Streets for public use as a park, plaza and community space. There are few active public parks and open spaces in downtown Rochester, and this lot could serve as a highly visible and attractive location for a multitude of civic uses and purposes such as farmers' markets, outdoor concerts, and street fairs. These uses could generate activity in the downtown, and coupled with streetscape and landscape improvements this property could become an impressive new gateway to the downtown Rochester commercial district. As part of this action, the City should work with the current landowner to create an effective alternative location for the parking needs for the business that is located here by reallocating public land that is on the northwest side of the block.

Figure III-4: New Civic Gateway at Foster's Block



- New connections - Incorporate physical and physical connections to the river into redevelopment plans for the McDuffee Block property and the City-owned land nearby. The potential to create physical and visual links to the Cocheco River from North Main Street in this area should be explored when plans for redevelopment of this site emerge in the future. The connection could serve as a future extension of the riverfront walkway or as an historic trail along the banks of the river that celebrates the City's industrial heritage.
- Redevelopment along the river edge - Sponsor the redevelopment of the area between the river and the rear of the buildings that line Main Street to provide restaurant or café uses, shops, walkways and extension of the riverwalk. Through public/private joint development agreements, private investment and public improvements, this redevelopment of the "back" of North Main Street offers significant promise. In particular, the City should work with the Housing Authority to establish the feasibility and mechanisms required for the redevelopment of the publicly-owned historic building in this area.
- Riverfront redevelopment - Evaluate the potential for regulations and/or acquisition to provide for appropriate public and private redevelopment of the adjacent riverfront land south of the Cocheco River.

Redevelop the McDuffee Block Area

Strategy

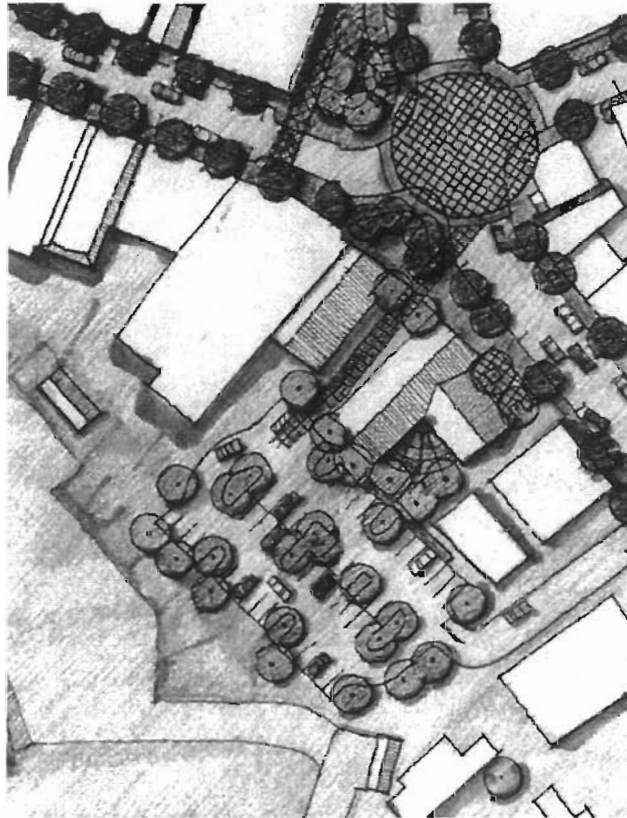
An important redevelopment opportunity exists at this location, consisting of the McDuffee Block and several parcels of vacant land owned by the City. In total, the parcels cover about an acre of land in a key and highly visible location on North Main Street. This parcel has the potential to be redeveloped for a mix of commercial and residential uses and to provide additional off-street parking

facilities in the center of the downtown. The vacant site is currently not contributing productively to the vitality and streetscape of the downtown, nor is it contributing in a meaningful way to the City's commercial tax base.

Action: Organize a Joint Redevelopment Initiative for the McDuffee Block Area

The City should consider offering some of its adjacent land holding in combination with the land the former McDuffee Block to help sponsor appropriate redevelopment of this site for mixed uses contributing to the vitality and economic health of the downtown. The effort to redevelop this site will require a public/private partnership between the City, the property owner, and potential investors to transform this important and visually prominent location. Redevelopment of this site should include discussion on the creation of a greenbelt through the downtown, linking it to the river's falls and the new arts/entertainment district along Hanson Street. The downtown stewardship group could spearhead this multi-year redevelopment effort, working with the City and the private property owner to begin discussions on the future use of this critical downtown parcel. Figure III-5 shows a view of North Main Street as it might look when this parcel is redeveloped.

Figure III-5: Conceptual Plan of McDuffee Block Redevelopment



Create Better Relationships Among Residential, Industrial and Downtown Uses

Strategy

A portion of the downtown study area along Columbus Avenue Extension is zoned for industrial types of uses. The area along Columbus Avenue Extension and Signal Street consists of relatively small sized lots in diverse ownership that are used for various commercial and business purposes. Very few are actually used for industrial-related uses today. Most of the lots are instead used by commercial and service-related businesses such as automotive repair and retail uses. On a per-square-foot basis, this land generates less tax revenue than the rest of the downtown.

The impacts industrial and commercial uses have on nearby residential properties can be lessened by creating a buffer zone between them. Providing an effective buffer between conflicting land uses will protect and improve the character and livability of nearby residential neighborhoods and create a more inviting landscape.

Actions: Undertake Zoning Changes to Create Better Use Relationships

- More appropriate lot sizes - Increase the minimum lot size requirements of the Industry 3 zoning district to encourage the consolidation of smaller lots into larger parcels over time. This strategy will discourage marginal reinvestment in these properties in the short term that would serve to extend the life of existing uses. Increasing lot sizes will encourage the consolidation of lots over time, making them more valuable and productive from an economic perspective.
- Buffers between certain uses - Amend existing zoning provisions for the Industry 3 and Business 2 zoning districts by requiring the installation of effective visual buffers on lots on the edges of the commercial and industrial districts that abut residential neighborhoods. Requirements should specify the height and extent of buffering required as well as acceptable screening methods such as solid fences, earthen berms, and plantings. These changes can be incorporated into the language of the Special Downtown District and the City's existing site plan review provisions to provide an effective method of review.

Economic Development Strategies and Actions

Use a Stewardship Group to Orchestrate the Revitalization Efforts

Strategy

Repositioning downtown Rochester as an attractive and successful commercial district will require substantial effort on many fronts over a number of years. Downtown activities and events will need to be organized and the funding needed to implement the Master Plan's recommendations will have to be identified and secured. Public support must be built for the Plan's recommendations, and for the zoning changes and public expenditures required to implement the Plan.

Establishing a permanent organization with specific responsibility for seeing that the community's vision for the downtown is realized will increase the likelihood that revitalization efforts will succeed. A public/private group can coordinate downtown activities and improvements, build the necessary public support for investments and new initiatives and advocate for existing businesses, property owners and the downtown in general. The partnership organization can also develop and administer storefront and signage improvement programs and provide small business training and loan and other

financing programs. Ultimately, this organization would be the entity to ensure that the goals and objectives developed during the downtown planning process are met in the future.

One responsibility of this stewardship group should be to guide the implementation of a "Main Street" improvement program for facades, signage and business enhancements. This might take the form of a service agreement with the New Hampshire Main Street program, or could alternatively be accomplished through a locally-created initiative serving the same purposes.

Action: Identify and Fund the Necessary Stewardship of the Downtown

The City, its institutions, businesses and citizens should work together to designate and fund a stewardship entity charged with advocating and orchestrating the revitalization of the downtown, including implementation of the master plan's recommendations. The organization should have the responsibilities and authorities outlined below in order to effectively advance the recommendations contained in the Master Plan:

- Sponsor of funding and financing - Apply for and channel funding from public and private sources into downtown initiatives ranging from streetscape improvements to marketing campaigns to building renovations.
- Direct assistance in redevelopment - Acquire and redevelop properties that are considered key to revitalization efforts.
- Coordination - Coordinate public and private investments, programs and projects in the downtown.
- Reporting - Provide periodic updates to the city on progress in implementing the master plan.

There are several potential ways to organize a downtown partnership, but all share a need for professional staff support to assist them in their efforts. Three options are discussed in more detail below.

One alternative for establishing an organization is to assign responsibility for the Master Plan's implementation to the City's Economic Development Commission and to create a special sub-committee or program as part of their mission. This 10-person committee already exists and works on economic development issues on a City-wide and regional basis. The Rochester Planning and Development Department provides staff support to this committee.

A redevelopment authority is one option for organization that would give the group the authority outlined above and additional responsibilities as the City may decide to give it. Other responsibilities might include periodic progress reports to the City on activities and initiatives related to the revitalization effort.

The New Hampshire Main Street program or a similar, locally structured program offers another way to structure a partnership organization. The program requires that an oversight committee be appointed to coordinate activities and projects organized or funded by the State's program. If the City is accepted into the Main Street program when it applies for designation as a Main Street community, the committee that is formed to run that program could also serve as the permanent downtown revitalization committee. Main Street program staff could provide the necessary technical assistance and support.

Provide Public Support for Redevelopment of the Upper Floors of Existing Buildings

Strategy

Many of downtown Rochester's buildings have more than a single story and to a great extent, the upper floors of these buildings are either underutilized or vacant. As such, they generate little economic activity or benefits for the owner or the downtown as a whole. However, the upper floors represent a real opportunity to revitalize the downtown while preserving its character. Economic trends and conditions in the Rochester area support reusing the upper floors of downtown buildings for housing and mixed uses.

Downtown residents add vibrancy to the commercial center and provide the demand needed to support a wider range of activities and businesses in the core commercial area. Residents in a downtown generate pedestrian activity for up to twelve hours a day, improving the vitality of the business district and contributing to its establishment as a true City neighborhood. By introducing a new population of residents into the downtown, a new community of people who are committed to the downtown's growth and success will be created. Adding residential uses to the mix of potential reuse options can improve the value of the real estate and provide the financial incentive needed to encourage reinvestment in the downtown's building stock.

Mixed uses are also appropriate for floor space above the first floor. Uses such as office and service businesses, loft/artist housing and bed and breakfast establishments can contribute to the downtown economy by increasing the number of people in the downtown during the day and improving building values. This strategy also creates an inventory sufficient to accommodate the demand for mixed-use space while reserving the first floors for occupancy by commercial/retail uses that depend on pedestrian activity and the visibility that comes with being on street level.

Filling vacant and underutilized upper floors has a number of benefits. It creates additional property value that will enable property owners to reinvest and better maintain their properties and will reduce the possibility of older buildings being demolished in favor of new construction. Utilization of upper stories will bring more business and activity to the downtown, introducing more people as potential shoppers to the downtown area.

Actions: Use Zoning, Include City Land Resources and Seek Financial Incentives to Encourage Redevelopment Initiatives

Encourage adaptive reuse of upper floors in the downtown for residential and mixed uses by:

- Direct incentives for redevelopment - Developing and funding a program that provides financial incentives to property owners for renovating and rehabilitating the upper floors of downtown buildings for residential uses or mixed use development;
- Zoning amendments - Amending the zoning requirements for the Special Downtown District to provide incentives to encourage reuse of upper stories; incentives may include relief from typical parking requirements for residential uses and relaxed minimum lot size provisions; and

- Coordination - Coordinating and targeting public and private sector efforts to attract the appropriate mix of establishments needed to make the downtown a successful shopping destination.

Strengthen Existing Enterprises and Attract New Businesses

Strategy

It will take time and effort to convince other retailers and shoppers that the City's revitalization efforts will bear fruit and attract new enterprises. Existing business establishments have already made an investment in the downtown and should be supported and expanded if possible. To achieve this objective, the Master Plan recommends that the City and the downtown stewardship group establish and manage financial and technical assistance programs for new and existing businesses seeking to expand or relocate in downtown Rochester. Such programs help project a pro-business attitude in the community that encourages the efforts and initiatives of downtown business and property owners that comply with the goals and objectives of the master plan. As another part of this strategy, the stewardship team should create and implement an active business and development recruitment program.

Actions: Expand Business Support and Recruiting Efforts

- Business support - Investigate options for funding and managing financial and technical assistance programs. Market analyses conducted during the Master Plan process identified a number of commercial/retail uses that would contribute positively to the effort to revitalize downtown. These uses include eating and drinking establishments, specialty shops, art galleries and craft shops, antiques and collectibles, and arts/theater activities, even if seasonal. These uses on the ground floors of downtown buildings will enhance the image and consumer base of the downtown and complement the offerings of the Rochester Opera House and the historic architecture of the commercial district's buildings. The degree to which service businesses and office uses occupy ground floor retail space should be limited in the core area.
- Business recruitment- Organize, fund and implement a business recruitment effort should be undertaken through collaborative and coordinated efforts of the stewardship group, the City, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Explore the Potential of Tax Incentives for Redevelopment

Strategy

At present, there are few ways for New Hampshire cities and towns to provide effective incentives to stimulate economic development in locations that a community has decided are places where new development and investment should be encouraged. In Rochester's case, providing tax incentives to property owners to improve their buildings would greatly enhance the chance of creating a revitalized downtown. Tax incentives would also encourage property owners to improve their properties or facilitate the expansion of existing businesses that lead to new job creation.

Action: Actively Pursue Creative Incentive Programs

- Advocacy for new incentive tools - The City can initiate a roundtable discussion with other communities, regional and state agencies, and elected officials at all levels of government to explore options for changing State laws and regulations to create tax incentives to stimulate economic development. Examples of existing legislation from other states are included in Appendix A. In addition to grants or low interest loans, tax abatements are one way to stimulate reinvestment in properties that creates jobs, upgrades space, and contributes to the community's revitalization efforts. The incoming governor of New Hampshire has proposed the creation of "opportunity regions" in less developed parts of the State to encourage businesses to locate in those areas. While the idea is a conceptual one and presently geared toward attracting businesses in the biotechnology, pharmaceutical, high-technology and financial services fields, the concept could be expanded to encourage a broader range of uses. Expansion of qualifying "opportunities" to include housing or commercial uses and designation of Rochester as an "opportunities region" could create the vehicle by which the City provides tax incentives for new downtown investments.

Strategies and Actions for Parking and Circulation

Create and Implement a Comprehensive Parking Strategy

Strategy

An adequate supply of convenient and accessible parking is essential to the overall success of the downtown revitalization effort. The parking analysis conducted during the Master Plan indicated that downtown Rochester has an adequate supply of on- and off-street parking to meet the needs of business activity in the commercial district today. However, the need for additional downtown parking will emerge as redevelopment initiatives take hold, businesses fill in empty storefronts, and buildings' upper stories are converted to residential and mixed uses. Combined with the redevelopment of key vacant downtown parcels, additional parking facilities will eventually be needed to meet future parking demand in the downtown.

A common solution to parking shortages is to demolish a building to build a surface parking lot. This can lead to the loss of historically important buildings and physical gaps between buildings that severely impact the attractiveness of the streetscape. To proactively address the possibility of buildings being demolished to create more surface parking, the Master Plan has identified two potential locations to create more parking in the center of the downtown.

One location is the existing off-street municipal parking lot in the center of the downtown "Triangle". It is conveniently located near a concentration of retail and business establishments and could accommodate more vehicles with the eventual construction of a parking deck or garage over the existing surface lot. The need for such a parking deck may be difficult to envision within the current economic circumstances of the downtown. But, if the downtown is to be successful in the long term, there must be significantly expanded parking opportunities relative to today's supply. The City must avoid the destruction of large segments of its downtown to create surface parking lots – such a pattern can lock the downtown in a cycle of disinvestments, as the appearance and function of the core areas is steadily disassembled. As a result, there is only one practical location for the future expansion of significant parking supplies – vertically, within the center of the triangle.

back yards, improvements to rear building facades, and pedestrian related amenities such as landscaped courtyards and second accesses.

- Regular assessment of parking needs - Monitor parking needs on an on-going basis as redevelopment and revitalization occur. It is important that the City identify any shortfalls in the parking supply downtown in a timely fashion so that it can plan for additional parking facilities adequately. The City must assess any growing demand for additional parking well before the demand for new parking capacity begins to affect convenience. To ensure the continued progress of the revitalization effort, the supply of available parking must keep pace with the demand.
- Retention of the ability to expand public parking - Retain the ability to expand parking supply through future improvements within the "triangle" and at the McDuffee Block.
- Preparation for funding and financing of parking expansion - Track the costs and financing required to additional parking at either the existing municipal parking lot in the downtown "Triangle" or at the former McDuffee block site adjacent to several parcels of City-owned land.
- Parking expansion - Implement parking expansion to keep pace with the successful revitalization of the downtown.

Improve Traffic Circulation to Reduce Congestion and Enhance Safety

Strategy

The Master Plan recommends a number of actions to would improve the efficiency of downtown roadways and increase the safety of pedestrians and motorists at the same time.

One of the most persistent issues in the downtown has been the best way to handle the volumes of through traffic. The current one-way system was instituted to solve congestion problems. However, in terms of the economic and civic health of the downtown, it would be very beneficial to simplify downtown traffic patterns and improve traffic flow by reintroducing two-way traffic circulation on North Main Street, South Main Street, and Union Street.

Based on the studies accomplished as part of this master planning process, it appears that two-way traffic can be reintroduced into the center of the downtown. With appropriate mitigation, such a system would improve travel convenience and improve the ease of access to commercial establishments in the downtown.

The current circulation pattern carries heavy traffic volumes, relatively high vehicle speeds, and confusing vehicular connections between streets. In effect, the current system operates like an enormous rotary that largely benefits through-traffic at the expense of downtown as a destination. It allows for virtual non-stop operations, and isolates many business locations in the middle of this traffic circle.

Implementing a two-way traffic pattern will require that traffic signals be added to the intersections of North Main/South Main/Wakefield Streets and to the intersection of Wakefield and Union Streets. While the cost of signaling these intersections is significant, there are several major advantages to a two-way traffic pattern. Stopping traffic at all three corners of the downtown core will provide better access and conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists. It will also improve visibility

and accessibility for downtown businesses, especially along North Main Street. With a two-way traffic pattern, traffic will have more direct and convenient routes through the downtown.

Such a significant change will require substantial study and discussion to be accomplished. It will require simultaneous improvements at three intersections that must be designed and funded simultaneously. The plan recommends that the City pursue the steps needed to provide more detailed technical evaluation and pursue state and federal funding for the improvements.

Other signalization and traffic improvements should be pursued at several intersections, where traffic studies indicate that there are significant improvements in safety and convenience that can be achieved.

Actions: Improve Signalization and Signal Timing and Pursue Reintroduction of Two-Way Traffic

- Two-way circulation – The City should fund the technical studies and community participation required to finalize the concepts for returning to a two-way circulation pattern to confirm its benefits and achieve associated approvals. Subsequently, the City should pursue funding and provide for eventual implementation of the revised circulation system.
- Improvements at Wakefield Street and Columbus Avenue - Change the phasing of traffic light signals at the Wakefield Street/Columbus Avenue intersection to facilitate the flow of Columbus Avenue traffic onto Wakefield Street. Traffic projections show that this change would improve the level of traffic operations in the future from a level of service “E” to a level of service “B” in this location.
- Strafford Square improvements - Signalize the Strafford Square intersection (North Main/Walnut/Washington Streets) to reduce vehicle conflicts and driver confusion and to create improved pedestrian access. The existing triangular island should be eliminated when the signals were installed and the extent of paved area reduced.

Improve Safety for Pedestrians and Bicyclists

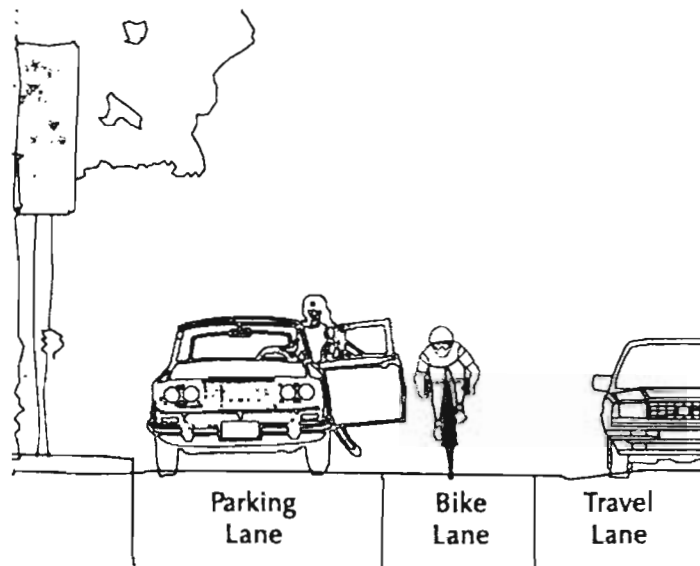
Strategy

It is important to provide facilities for a variety of transportation modes. Just as cars and buses are accommodated, the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists should be incorporated into the streetscape of the downtown. There are few if any such accommodations in downtown Rochester today. The Master Plan recommends several suggestions for improving the following aspects of the downtown transportation system and streetscape:

Actions: Add Crosswalks and Bike Lanes

- Bike land potential - Consider the feasibility of establishing a bicycle lane through and around the downtown. For a relatively low cost, bicycle lanes can be built adjacent to curbside parking areas by striping a lane dedicated to bicycle travel. If the City envisions a demand for bike access to the downtown, the first stretch of bike lane could be constructed along Wakefield and North Main Streets where the width of the street rights-of-way are sufficiently wide to accommodate one.

Figure III-7: Bicycle Lane on Wakefield and North Main Street



Five-foot bicycle lane next to parking

- Mid-block crosswalk - Construct a safe and attractive mid-block crosswalk on North Main Street halfway between Union and South Main Street. This block of storefronts represents the most active pedestrian section of the downtown and has an existing crosswalk that links one side of the street to the other. It can be improved to provide safer street crossing conditions for pedestrians and to enhance the visual character of the streetscape through the use of ornamental paving treatments, landscaping, and street furniture. Figure 44 illustrates a potential design for a new pedestrian crosswalk at this location. While the illustration is a conceptual one, it incorporates a number of important design elements that improve visibility and safety, create a focal point for this section of the block and add to the pedestrian amenities available in the downtown.

Create a Signage Program to Give Directions and Identity

Strategy

The Master Plan identified a two-fold need for improvements to signage in and to downtown Rochester. A variety of signs of different styles and varying effectiveness provide direction and information throughout the downtown currently. As signs are added to the streetscape continually in response to new needs, they begin to conflict with or obscure one another. To improve their effectiveness and the appearance of the downtown as a whole, the number of signs should be minimized. Improving directional wayfinding signage within and to the downtown with an effective design and optimal placement will help traffic move efficiently and improve the experience of visiting downtown Rochester. Similarly, the current signage system along the Spaulding Turnpike could be revised to provide motorists with a clear route to the downtown commercial area. A new signage program could be funded with financial assistance from state and federal transportation and tourism sources.

Early efforts would focus on securing funding and developing a design for the signage program. An inventory of sign locations and needs would then be developed, with installation of the signs to follow.

Actions: Sponsor the Design and Installation of New Signs

- Wayfinding signage - Establish a downtown wayfinding system noting the locations of major downtown attractions and features such as City Hall, the Opera House, and public parking lots. A uniform and effective downtown signage system would serve not only those traveling into downtown Rochester now, but also people from outside Rochester after revitalization efforts begin to pay off and people unfamiliar with the City begin frequenting the downtown. Placed in strategic locations, the new signage can help create a unique identity for the downtown and provide better direction and more convenient access to destinations in the commercial district.
- Signage and landscaping – Associate new signage with improved landscaping nearby, including additional planting of lilacs wherever this symbol of the City can be advantageously planted.
- Expanded directions - Provide clearer and more direct routes to the downtown from the Spaulding Turnpike. In the longer term, the downtown signage program should be expanded to include improvements to the signage that directs traffic into downtown Rochester from Route 16. The current system offers too many options for getting to downtown Rochester for the casual visitor, and will be a weakness in the future when revitalization efforts depend on attracting people from outside the City. The City should select a preferred route to downtown and provide clear directional signage continuously from the highway into the center of the downtown.

Recommendations for Gonic and East Rochester

Gonic and East Rochester are both traditional centers of outlying villages that composed historic Rochester. A tight cluster of homes, businesses and stores served practical needs of the surrounding districts. They did not compete with the major civic and cultural institutions and the region's business center that were concentrated in the downtown.

However, as with the downtown, the emergence of the automobile as the predominant means of transportation dramatically reduced the practical functions of the traditional village centers. No longer constrained to easy walking distances, homes, businesses and stores scattered across the countryside, following the routes of the roadways that extended throughout Rochester. The consequent relative decline in the property values in the village centers marked a lack of demand for space within the particular array of older buildings that remained.

In many New England communities, such outlying village centers have completely evaporated, and are marked only by an unusual crossroad or a single remaining building. But in both Gonic and East Rochester, the character still remains in the concentration of buildings, uses, and open space. As Rochester addresses itself to the 21st century, the village centers can take on a new importance, fulfilling contemporary needs and retaining the image of the past.

The results of the economic analysis conducted during the Master Plan concluded that neither the Gonic nor East Rochester commercial district has the size or diversity of businesses that would be

provide for appropriately-scaled development, assuming that the site planning and design is consistent with the village center area.

Retail and commercial areas should be permitted as a principle use within the areas. Mixed uses that combine retail or commercial and housing should also be permitted as principal uses. Finally, live-work housing should be permitted as a similarly favored use. However, all of these uses should be subject to a site plan review that ensures that the parking is appropriately located in the rear or side areas of buildings, to retain the coherent street-side character of a traditional center.

The upper floors of multi-story properties may well be suitable for conversion to residential use. This type of use conversion introduces a new population into the commercial area, creating a new community of people committed to the growth and success of the area and a consumer base for the businesses located there. This strategy is a viable one for the Gonic and East Rochester's business districts, where the upper stories of existing buildings are at best underutilized and at worst vacant.

Some uses should be prohibited or strongly discouraged within these village center areas. Large, strip-type retail development, for example, should be prohibited. Semi-industrial uses such as auto body repair, storage and the like should also be discouraged.

Reinforce the Centers: Site Planning and Design

Strategy

As part of the future zoning for the village centers, special site planning standards and a site planning review process should be created. These site planning and design standards could be applied through a range of mechanisms, but should accomplish the following:

Actions: Create Special Site Planning and Design Standards for the Villages

- Building setbacks – New buildings and additions should have front yard and sideyard setbacks that are similar to those that have historically occurred within the area. In some cases, the existing buildings line the sidewalk and are adjacent to each other. In other cases, there is a consistent, landscaped setback from the street. Through site plan review, future building patterns should mirror the character that has already been established by considering the setbacks of existing, adjacent development.
- Landscaping – Informal landscaping with lawns, a variety of trees and shrubs helps make the village centers pleasant places. Similarly, simple walls and fences serve as appropriate enhancements. Site plans should be encouraged that reinforce these traditional patterns.
- Parking location – It is very important that the parking areas within the village areas be setback from the street and be located behind or alongside buildings. Large parking lots along the street quickly create a “strip” appearance, and detract from the pedestrian character and landscape quality that distinguishes the two village centers.
- Sidewalks – Sidewalks that connect adjacent sites is desirable, and should be required of new development within these areas where practical. The configuration of the sidewalks and their location relative to the street edge might vary considerably, according to the character of the uses. In most areas, the sidewalk should be setback from the street edge and be separated

by broad landscaped strips. Where buildings approach the street, or near intersections, the sidewalk might be located along a curbed edge.

- Architectural character – Traditional building styles that are simple in form have marked the evolution of the village centers of Rochester.

Preserve the Past of the Village Centers

Strategy

Although not nearly as numerous as the architectural resources that are found within Downtown Rochester, both Gonic and East Rochester contain historic structures that link the past to the present and contribute to the identity of the areas that surround them. These resources should be recognized through public policies and incentives to retain and restore them. Among the actions that should be taken are the following:

Actions: Provide Information and Historic Preservation Tools

- Research and designation of historic resources – The City should help sponsor continued research and local designation of historic resources for the purposes of planning and potential incentives.
- Potential historic districts – The City should work with local property owners and explore the potential for creating distinct historic districts within each of the two village centers, with the goal of achieving advantages in terms of potential protection of historic resources, grants or other incentive programs that might be structured in the future.
- Participation in incentive and technical assistance programs – Gonic and East Rochester should both be considered eligible for full participation in incentive and technical assistance programs that are offered within the City as an extension of the downtown revitalization initiative. In this regard, the scope of effort (and support) for a future Main Street program should include these as complementary areas for façade improvement initiatives, for example.

Improve the Intersections, Streets and Parking in the Village Centers

Strategy

The village centers serve as crossroads serving major arterial routes as well as local needs. Both Gonic and Rochester can be significantly enhanced if the intersections are improved along with the connecting streets so that traffic is calmed and directed. Allocating parking in safe and attractive locations will similarly provide a value-enhancing environment for both areas.

Actions: Design, Fund and Construct Improvements

- Intersection improvements – The major intersections should be improved to ensure that the roadway markings are in the proper location and that the shoulders are the minimum required for the classification of the roadway facility. At the intersections, curbing should be installed to help maintain a clean and clear distinction between the roadway and the bordering landscape or paving.

- Crosswalks – Crosswalks should be marked on the pavement in locations where the most frequent pedestrian crossings are expected to occur.
- On-street parking – On street parking spaces should be provided and marked along the border of the roadways in proximity to stores or other uses.

Image and Identity

- Landscape Features – In keeping with the theme of the Lilac City, locations should be identified and enhanced with several dense clusters of lilac plantings. These could be within the public right-of-way, or could be located on private land through a cooperative agreement. Street trees should be added where additional deciduous trees could serve to enhance the appearance of the area and create seasonal color. For the greatest impact, groupings of similar species should be created, rather than broadly spaced plantings.
- Streetscape enhancements – Streetscape enhancements in the two areas should consist of improved sidewalks, street trees, and a limited amount of historic lighting fixtures. In the most visible and heavily used areas, concrete sidewalks with brick trim might be employed. Further away, asphalt sidewalks could be used, set back from the street with an intervening landscaped strip.
- Signage – Signage identifying Gonic and East Rochester should be created and placed in prominent locations. The graphics for the signs should be similar to those used for the “wayfinding” signage system. Small areas of seasonal plantings should be added next to the signs, as well as the thematic lilacs.

Provide for Long-term Stewardship of the Village Centers

Strategy

In the same way that the Downtown will benefit from consistent stewardship, the village centers of Gonic and Rochester will need to have a group of individuals who are responsible for long-term coordination of improvements. It could be as simple as a three-person committee made up of local property owners, merchants or residents with overlapping two-year terms and a schedule of quarterly meetings, with a once-a-year report to the Planning Board and City Council on issues and progress towards local improvement goals.

Actions: Create Local Improvement Committees

- Establish village center stewardship committees – the City should create a simple structure of local committees to serve as stewards for the public and private enhancement programs for Gonic and for East Rochester. The committee structure and requirements should be simple and straightforward, and should be provided staff support through appropriate City agencies.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

Overview of Implementation Strategies

The Downtown Chapter of the City's comprehensive plan provides the City with a vision for creating an economically successful downtown commercial center. This section of the Plan identifies specific action items and conceptual estimates of cost where appropriate to help the City determine the timing and extent of resources that will be needed to implement all of the Plan's recommendations. This section of the report is included as a guide to practical implementation of the Master Plan's strategies and recommendations over the next decade. Recommendations are outlined in the general sequence in which they should be undertaken.

This section also contains a series of graphics illustrating the physical transformation of the downtown landscape as various action items are implemented during the next ten years.

Community Priorities

The key action items outlined in the previous section were derived from a combination of research, analyses, and input from the Downtown Master Plan Committee that oversaw the process of creating a Master Plan for the downtown. Preliminary recommendations were proposed at a public meeting of the Committee, and members provided feedback on shaping and prioritizing the Plan's recommendations.

Table IV-1 presents an overview of the Master Plan's implementation over a ten year period. It lists the major recommendations of the Master Plan sequentially by the timing of implementation and is illustrated in graphic form to help convey the concepts embodied by the Plan.

Tables IV-2 through IV-4 list the Master Plan's recommendations and action items in order of priority in the short-, mid-, and long-term. The table includes conceptual costs, identifies the entities responsible for implementing each of the recommended actions, and lists potential funding sources. The conceptual cost estimates were based on conceptual drawings and plans and should be considered as "order of magnitude" guides only. They cannot account for unforeseen conditions or the effects of inflation on construction costs. The cost estimates could also vary as designs are refined and developed into final construction drawings.

The process of implementing the Master Plan should incorporate periodic reviews and public updates by the organization formed to oversee its implementation. The purpose of these reviews and updates is to determine the extent of progress in accomplishing the Plan's recommendations and to inform the community of on-going and planned initiatives. Where possible, the reviews should provide alternative recommendations if any of the action items proposed in the plan prove to be unattainable.

Implementation: Gonic and East Rochester

The implementation of the Plan's recommendations for both Gonic and East Rochester are summarized in the last table. This table indicates the relative priority of the actions by assigning a time frame for each step- short term (year 1), mid-term (years 2 and 3) and long-term (years 4 and beyond).

Phasing

Phasing and implementing the Plan's recommendations will depend on a number of variables, including public consensus on and support for the priorities, the availability of funding, and coordination with pending plans, projects, and construction schedules. Some projects may extend beyond the phases outlined in this section due to extended permitting or review and approval processes. Other projects are directly linked to each other and must be coordinated and phased for implementation in a certain sequence. A number of initiatives are not phase-sensitive and can be implemented according to their priority and availability of funding.

Funding

Many of the recommendations and action items included in the master plan will require funding to implement. There are a number of possible funding sources that may be available to implement the programs and construct the improvements listed in the Master Plan for the Downtown. A summary of potential funding sources is attached to this report as Appendix B.

Table IV - 2: Year One: Action Plan Steps and Responsibilities

<i>Action Step</i>	<i>Responsible Entity</i>	<i>Funding Source(s)</i>
<i>Organizational and Programmatic Action Steps</i>		
Establish downtown stewardship group	City Council, Master Plan Committee, Planning and Development Dept.	N/A
Develop downtown business identification and recruitment plan	Stewardship Group, Planning and Development Dept., Economic Development Commission, consultants	City in-kind, City funds
Develop public relations and marketing strategy to implement the business plan	Stewardship Group, Economic Development Commission, consultant	City funds, City in-kind
Begin the application to become a "Main Street" community, or create a locally-sponsored equivalent	Planning and Development Dept., Stewardship Group	N/A
Create public information program on downtown enhancements	Planning and Development Dept., Stewardship Group, Chamber of Commerce	N/A
Develop web site on downtown revitalization initiatives and festivals to improve community's access to information	Rochester MIS Dept., Chamber of Commerce, Planning and Development Dept.	City funds, City in-kind
Initiate a semi-annual "State of the Downtown" report from stewardship group to the City	Stewardship Group	N/A
<i>Landscape and Streetscape Action Steps</i>		
Construct a "bricks and mortar" project	Public Works Dept., Planning and Development Dept.	City funds, CDBG, private sources
Undertake immediate signage and parking management changes	Public Works Dept., Planning and Development Dept.	CDBG, City funds
Prepare a detailed landscape and streetscape improvement plan	Planning and Development Dept., consultant	City in-kind, City or CDBG funds
Identify opportunities to expand participation in the Adopt-A-Spot Program	Stewardship Group, Buildings and Grounds Dept.	N/A
<i>Revitalization Action Steps</i>		
Perform an assessment of code enforcement activities and needs	Code Enforcement Dept., City Manager's Office	N/A
Plan new downtown-oriented special event/festival to reinforce downtown's role as center of community	Stewardship Group	Private sources
Implement zoning and design guideline recommendations to support redevelopment activities	Planning and Development Dept., City Council	N/A
Reach consensus on best way to implement a downtown historic district	Planning and Development Dept., ad-hoc committee	N/A
Initiate redevelopment and improvement concepts for key areas: Foster's Block, McDuffee Block, others	Planning and Development Department, City Manager, Stewardship Group, private owners	N/A
Undertake short-term low cost traffic and signal improvements to ease traffic flows	Public Works Department, Police Department	City in-kind
Assess need to expand existing parking supply to meet future demands	Planning and Development Department, Stewardship Group, consultant	City in-kind, City funds
Support and help implement private sector initiatives that are consistent with the Downtown Plan	Stewardship Group, City Council, City Manager, City boards and commissions	N/A

Table IV - 3: Years Two and Three: Action Plan Steps and Responsibilities

<i>Action Step</i>	<i>Responsible Entity</i>	<i>Funding Source(s)</i>
<i>Organizational and Programmatic Action Steps</i>		
Provide funding and staff support to downtown organization; begin recruiting developers and tenants	Main St. Program staff, Planning and Development Department, Stewardship Group, merchants, Economic Development Commission	Main St. Program, City in-kind
Initiate business plan	Main St. Program staff, Stewardship Group	Main St., City in-kind
Begin marketing and public relations efforts for downtown businesses, space, and initiatives	Main St. Program staff, Stewardship Group, Economic Development Commission	CDBG, Section 108
Establish a "Main Street" program or its local equivalent, and undertake "Main Street" enhancements	Main St. Program staff, Department of Public Works	Main St. funds, City funds
Provide for a regular newsletter, promotional campaigns and other marketing support	Stewardship Group, Main St. Program	Main St. funds
Establish downtown revitalization link to City's web site	City MIS Department, Stewardship Group	City in-kind
Continue the "State of the Downtown" reports on a semi-annual basis	Stewardship Group	N/A
<i>Landscape and Streetscape Action Steps</i>		
Redevelop the Foster's Block as a major public open space and venue for civic events	City Manager, Planning and Development Department, private sector, Stewardship Group	City funds, Main St. funds, CDBG
Implement a complete "wayfinding" signage system to and from the downtown	Stewardship Group, consultant, Planning and Development Department, Buildings and Grounds Department	State/Federal transportation infrastructure funding
Undertake substantial streetscape and landscape improvements outlined in the new streetscape plan	Planning and Development Department, Stewardship Group, Public Works Department	State/Federal transportation infrastructure funding, City funds
Select additional locations and sign up new participants in the Adopt-A-Spot Program	Stewardship Group, Main St. Program staff, Buildings and Grounds Department	N/A
<i>Revitalization Action Steps</i>		
Fund and implement regular program of code enforcement	Code Enforcement Department, City Council	City in-kind
Initiate a new downtown-oriented special event	Stewardship Group, Chamber of Commerce, Main St. Program staff	Main St. funds, downtown merchants, City in-kind
Apply enhanced zoning and design guidelines to guide private reinvestment process	Planning and Development Department, City boards and commissions	N/A
Create the Downtown Historic District	City Council	N/A
Undertake focused redevelopment of large projects and areas: Foster's Block, McDuffee Block, Brooks lot, and others	Planning and Development Department, Stewardship Group, private sector	CDBG, private funding sources

Table IV – 3 (continued): Years Two and Three: Action Plan Steps and Responsibilities

Finalize major decisions about traffic circulation and intersections	Public Works Department, Police Department, Planning and Development Department, City Council	N/A
Identify and submit State and Federal funding applications for parking improvements and undertake parking improvements as resources allow	Planning and Development Department, Main St. Program staff, Department of Public Works	CDBG, City funds, City in-kind
Develop loan and grant incentive programs for qualifying private sector development projects and accelerated project review and approvals	Stewardship Group, Planning and Development Department, local lending institutions, economic development commission	CDBG, Section 108, local financial institutions

Table IV - 4: Years Four to Ten: Action Plan Steps and Responsibilities

Action Step	Responsible Entity	Funding Source(s)
Organizational and Programmatic Action Steps		
Continue operations of stewardship group and expand scope of activities and initiatives	Main St. Program staff, Stewardship Group, Planning and Development Department	Private funding sources, City in-kind
Update business plan as necessary and continue implementation	Stewardship Group, Planning and Development Department	Private funding sources, City in-kind
Update public relations and marketing plan to reflect current needs and strategies, continue implementation	Stewardship Group	N/A
Continue the Main Street program but continue special revolving loan/grant programs for future enhancements in core and on core's periphery	Stewardship Group, Planning and Development Department, local lending institutions	CDBG, Section 108
Have a merchant-supported promotion program operating on a regular basis	Downtown merchants, Stewardship Group	Private funding sources
Update and maintain web site information on downtown revitalization efforts	City MIS Department	City in-kind
Continue annual reports on "State of the Downtown" and prepare downtown master plan update at year ten	Stewardship Group, City Council, Planning and Development Department	N/A
Landscape and Streetscape Action Steps		
Complete an open space network connecting the downtown to the river and open spaces	Stewardship Group, Planning and Development Department	City funds, private funding sources, State and Federal environmental funding
Improve business signage to increase downtown's attractiveness and interest	Downtown merchants, Stewardship Group	CDBG, private funding sources
Expand scope of streetscape and landscape improvements to the periphery of the core area	Stewardship Group, Public Works Department, Buildings and Grounds Department, private sector	Private funding sources
Implement beautification program at additional downtown locations	Stewardship Group, private sector	Private funding sources, City funds
Revitalization Action Steps		
Maintain on-going downtown code enforcement program	Code Enforcement Department	N/A
Continue conducting annual and special events downtown	Stewardship Group, Planning and Development Department	City in-kind, private funding sources
Revise zoning and design guidelines as needed to address changing circumstances and experience	Planning and Development Department, City Council	N/A
Establish special grant programs for design assistance, renovation of buildings in the historic district publicity and attraction of tenants	Planning and Development Department, Stewardship Group	CDBG, City in-kind, City funding sources

Table IV – 4 (continued): Years Four to Ten: Action Plan Steps and Responsibilities

Complete all large redevelopment projects	Planning and Development Department, Stewardship Group, private sector	City funds, private funding sources
Implement agreed-upon traffic and intersection improvements	Planning and Development Department, Public Works Department	City funds, State/Federal transportation infrastructure funding
Undertake all parking improvements as resources allow, including a simple parking structure if needed	Planning and Development Department	City funds, State/Federal transportation infrastructure funding, private funds
Provide loan and grant incentives for qualifying private sector redevelopment and accelerated project review and approvals.	Stewardship Group, Planning and Development Department, City boards and commissions	CDBG, City funds, local financial institutions

N/A Not applicable

Table IV - 5: Implementation Guide for Gonic and East Rochester

Action Step	Priority	Responsible Entity	Funding Source(s)
Organizational and Programmatic Action Steps			
Establish and approve a local stewardship committee structure	Short-term	Planning and Development Department, City Council	N/A
Nominate and select membership of local committees	Mid-term	Planning and Development Department, City Council	N/A
Include both Gonic and East Rochester in "Main Street" program activities	Long-term	Main Street program leadership	Same sources as other Main Street program funding; may require local contribution
Prepare zoning and site plan review proposals	Short-term	Planning and Development Department, Planning Board, City Council	N/A
Approve and implement zoning and site plan review proposals	Mid-term	Planning and Development Department, Planning Board, City Council	N/A
Maintain a regular program of coordination and progress updates	Mid-term and Long-term	Village Center Committees, Planning and Development Department, City Council	N/A
Landscape and Streetscape Action Steps			
Prepare streetscape, intersection and landscape improvement concepts	Mid-term	Stewardship Group, Planning and Development Department	City funds, CDBG funds, private funding sources, State roadway improvement funding
Fund and construct streetscape, intersection and landscape improvements	Mid-term and Long-term	Downtown merchants, Stewardship Group	City funds, CDBG funds, private funding sources, State roadway improvement funding
Revitalization Action Steps			
Install identification signage	Mid-term	Code Enforcement Department	N/A
Participate in "Main Street" improvement programs for facades	Mid-term and Long-term	Stewardship Group, Planning and Development Department	City in-kind, private funding sources
N/A	Not applicable		

V. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Sample Tax Incentive Legislation

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 2147 Session of
2001

INTRODUCED BY MAITLAND, ARMSTRONG, BARRAR, BUNT, CAPPELLI,
CAWLEY, CREIGHTON, DALEY, FAIRCHILD, GABIG, GEIST, GRUITZA,
HARHAI, HARHART, HENNESSEY, HORSEY, HUTCHINSON, LAUGHLIN,
MCGILL, PIPPY, SATHER, SAYLOR, SEMMEL, SOLOBAY, STABACK,
STEIL, E. Z. TAYLOR, THOMAS, WILT, G. WRIGHT AND YUDICHAK,
NOVEMBER 15, 2001

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
NOVEMBER 15, 2001

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of December 1, 1977 (P.L.237, No.76), entitled,
2 as amended, "An act authorizing local taxing authorities to
3 provide for tax exemption for certain deteriorated
4 industrial, commercial and other business property and for
5 new construction in deteriorated areas of economically
6 depressed communities; providing for an exemption schedule
7 and establishing standards and qualifications," providing for
8 definitions and for development projects in currently
9 underutilized industrial parks or development projects in
10 critical economic areas within the county.

11 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
12 hereby enacts as follows:

13 Section 1. The title and section 2 of the act of December 1,
14 1977 (P.L.237, No.76), known as the Local Economic
15 Revitalization Tax Assistance Act, amended July 13, 1988
16 (P.L.518, No.90), are amended to read:

AN ACT

18 Authorizing local taxing authorities to provide for tax
19 exemption for certain deteriorated industrial, commercial and

1 other business property [and for], new construction in
2 deteriorated areas of economically depressed communities and
3 development projects in currently underutilized industrial
4 parks or development projects in critical economic areas
5 within the county; providing for an exemption schedule; and
6 establishing standards and qualifications.

7 Section 2. Construction.

8 This act shall be construed to authorize local taxing
9 authorities to exempt new construction in:

10 (1) deteriorated areas of economically depressed communities
11 and improvements to certain deteriorated industrial, commercial
12 and other business property thereby implementing Article VIII,
13 section 2(b)(iii) of the Constitution of Pennsylvania[.]; and

14 (2) currently underutilized industrial parks and critical
15 economic areas within the county.

16 Section 2. Section 3 of the act is amended to read:

17 Section 3. Definitions.

18 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
19 have, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, the
20 meanings given to them in this section:

21 "Advanced technology." New or advanced technologies which
22 hold promise for creating new job opportunities, including such
23 fields as robotics, biotechnology, specialized materials and
24 engineering and engineering-related programs.

25 "Critical economic area." Any geographic area of the county
26 in which a proposed development project is determined by the
27 municipal and county or regional planning commission to be
28 critical to the future growth and stability of the county's
29 economy and which results in the creation of new jobs and/or the
30 retention of existing jobs.

1 "Deteriorated property." Any industrial, commercial or other
2 business property owned by an individual, association or
3 corporation, and located in a deteriorating area, as hereinafter
4 provided, or any such property which has been the subject of an
5 order by a government agency requiring the unit to be vacated,
6 condemned or demolished by reason of noncompliance with laws,
7 ordinance or regulations.

8 "Development project." Any land, site, structure, facility
9 or undertaking comprising or being connected with or being a
10 part of:

- 11 (1) an industrial enterprise;
- 12 (2) a commercial enterprise;
- 13 (3) a manufacturing enterprise;
- 14 (4) a research and development enterprise; or
- 15 (5) an advanced technology in a critical economic area
16 within the county.

17 "Improvement." Repair, construction or reconstruction,
18 including alterations and additions, having the effect of
19 rehabilitating a deteriorated property so that it becomes
20 habitable or attains higher standards of safety, health,
21 economic use or amenity, or is brought into compliance with
22 laws, ordinances or regulations governing such standards.
23 Ordinary upkeep and maintenance shall not be deemed an
24 improvement.

25 "Industrial park." An approved and recorded industrial
26 and/or commercial subdivision or land development pursuant to
27 the definition of same contained in the act of July 31, 1968
28 (P.L.805, No.247), known as the "Pennsylvania Municipalities
29 Planning Code" in which is located or is to be located, a
30 development project or projects.

1 "Local taxing authority." A county, city, borough,
2 incorporated town, township, institution district or school
3 district having authority to levy real property taxes.

4 "Municipal governing body." A city, borough, incorporated
5 town or township.

6 "Underutilized industrial park." An approved and recorded
7 industrial and/or commercial subdivision or land development
8 pursuant to the definition of same contained in the act of July
9 31, 1968 (P.L.805, No.247), known as the "Pennsylvania
10 Municipalities Planning Code" in which is located, or is to be
11 located, a development project or projects in which currently
12 leased commercial and/or industrial space is less than that
13 originally projected for the industrial park to be economically
14 or financially feasible, and which proposed capital
15 improvements, including repairs, construction or reconstruction
16 involving alterations and additions, will have the effect of
17 rehabilitating the property so that it attains increased
18 economic use and viability. All development projects must be
19 necessary in order for the industrial park to be competitive in
20 the future as determined by the municipal and county or regional
21 planning commission. Ordinary upkeep and maintenance shall not
22 be deemed to be an improvement under section 4.1.

23 Section 3. The act is amended by adding sections to read:
24 Section 4.1. Nondeteriorated areas.

25 (a) Each local taxing authority may by ordinance or
26 resolution exempt from real property taxation under provisions
27 of this act, the assessed valuation of real property located in:

28 (1) an underutilized previously approved and recorded
29 industrial park, provided subdivision and land development
30 regulations are being administered by the municipality or

1 county, within the municipality in which the property to receive
2 tax benefits under this act is located; or

3 (2) a critical economic area as defined by this act.

4 Any development project approved for tax benefits under
5 provisions of this section shall result in the construction of
6 new facilities and/or the rehabilitation of existing facilities,
7 necessary to support new commercial and/or industrial
8 development which results in the creation of new employment
9 opportunities or the retention of existing employment
10 opportunities within the county, provided, however, that the
11 project is consistent with county growth management goals and
12 objectives, and does not have a detrimental effect on current or
13 planned economic development projects within any urban areas
14 within the county. Before being eligible for tax benefits under
15 this section, all development projects shall be reviewed by the
16 municipal and county or regional planning commission, with
17 jurisdiction for the municipality in which the project is to be
18 located. Additionally, to qualify for approval, the development
19 project shall conform with the goals and objectives of the
20 municipal, and county or regional comprehensive plan and growth
21 management goals and objectives, as determined by the county or
22 regional planning commission.

23 (b) The schedule and procedure for obtaining a property tax
24 exemption for property eligible for an exemption under the
25 provisions of this section shall be pursuant to sections 5 and
26 6.

27 (c) Prior to the final approval of a development project for
28 tax benefits under this section, the county or regional planning
29 commission shall hold at least one public hearing to:

30 (1) determine the merits of the proposed project; and

1 (2) assure that the project conforms with the goals and
2 objectives of the municipal, and county or regional
3 comprehensive plan and growth management goals and objectives.
4 Public and private agencies, knowledgeable and having an
5 interest in the proposed development project, as well as
6 individuals affected by same, shall present their positions and
7 any concerns and recommendations to members of the planning
8 commission at the public hearing. The county or regional
9 planning commission shall publish the time and place of the
10 public hearing at least three times in a newspaper of general
11 circulation in the municipality in which the development project
12 is to be located not more than 30 days nor less than 15 days
13 prior to the public hearing. The findings from the
14 aforementioned hearing shall be submitted to the local taxing
15 authorities and said local taxing authorities shall review same
16 and hold a joint public hearing prior to their voting on
17 granting any tax exemptions as provided by this act.

18 (d) The amount of property eligible for tax exemption under
19 this section in any county shall be limited to one-half the
20 acreage of all property officially designated or authorized by
21 the Department of Community and Economic Development pursuant to
22 the act of October 6, 1998 (P.L.705, No.92), known as the
23 "Keystone Opportunity Zone and Keystone Opportunity Expansion
24 Zone Act," located within the county, or 600 acres, whichever is
25 more.

26 (e) Where any proposed development project is located in
27 contiguous municipalities, one or more of which is located in
28 contiguous but different counties, or a proposed development
29 project is located in one municipality which is located in
30 contiguous but different counties; as much acreage as is

1 necessary from the maximum acreage allowable for individual
2 counties for projects under this act pursuant to this section,
3 may be transferable between those contiguous counties, in order
4 to facilitate the completion of any individual development
5 project or projects.

6 Section 4.2. Future nondeteriorated areas.

7 At such time as the time period for any property currently
8 eligible for tax exemption pursuant to the act of October 6,
9 1998 (P.L.705, No.92), known as the "Keystone Opportunity Zone
10 and Keystone Opportunity Expansion Zone Act," terminates, that
11 acreage may be added to the total acreage allowed within the
12 county at any time pursuant to section 4.1. In addition, at the
13 expiration of the time period for any tax exemption granted
14 under section 4.1, that same amount of acreage may also be added
15 to the total acreage allowed within the county for tax exemption
16 at any time pursuant to section 4.1.

17 Section 4. This act shall take effect in 60 days.

Neighborhood Revitalization Program

The Neighborhood Revitalization Program enables participating taxing entities (City of Topeka, Shawnee County, USD 501, Washburn Univ., Public Library, MITA, MTAA) to target areas within the city for property tax rebates. The purpose of the program is to stimulate investment in some of Topeka's harder to develop neighborhoods and Downtown. Up to a 95% rebate may be given on the incremental increase in property taxes resulting from improvements made to a property in those targeted areas.

Eligible uses for the rebate program include single-family residential or commercial properties. Industrial properties are eligible only in Special Districts. New construction multi-family properties are eligible only within the Multi-family Districts.

Q. How does the tax rebate work?

A. The tax rebate is a refund of the additional property taxes caused by a qualified improvement. The taxes relating to the assessed value on the property prior to the improvement will continue to be payable.

Q. What kind of improvements will increase the assessed value?

A. New construction, additions, and major rehabilitations will increase the assessed value. Maintenance generally will not increase the assessed value, unless there are several major repairs completed at the same time.

Q. What is a "qualified improvement?"

A. Qualified improvements include any construction, rehabilitation or additions that increases the appraised valuation of the property by more than 5% for residential and by more than 15% for commercial as determined by the Shawnee County Appraiser's Office. A qualified improvement must:

- Be in an eligible district (see chart at right)
- Conform with the City of Topeka's Land Use Plan and City's Zoning Ordinance.
- Conform with other applicable building codes, rules and regulations.
- Applicants will likely need to secure a building permit for most improvements that will increase their value. [Contact the City's Development Coordination Office at 785-368-3704 for building permit information.]

Q. What else should I know?

A. Improvements to the property must remain in good standing throughout the rebate time period. You are required by law to claim the rebate as income on your Federal and State income taxes.

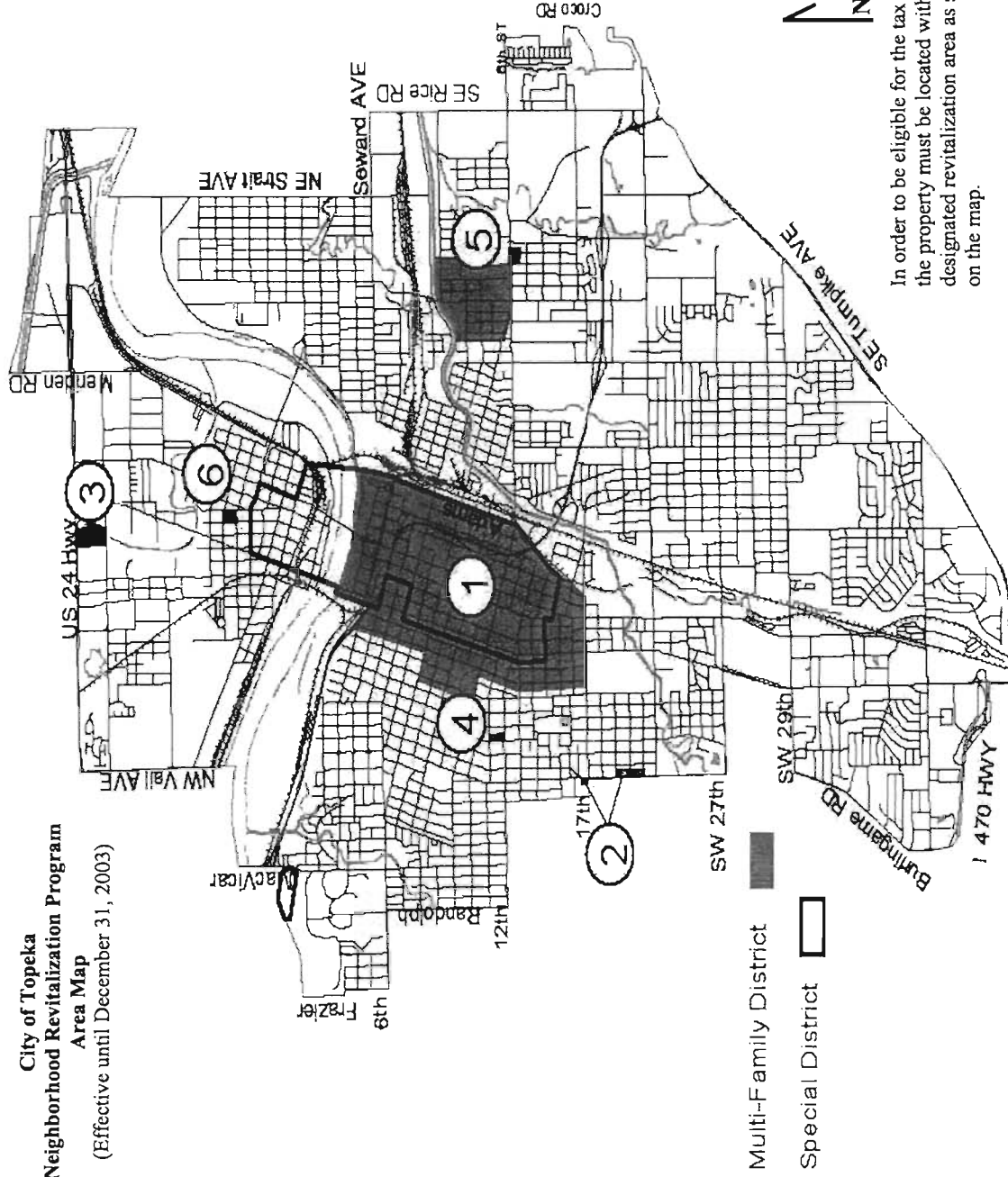
Q. How do I apply?

A. Obtain an application for rebate from the Metropolitan Planning Department, 515 S. Kansas Ave., Suite 404, Topeka, KS 66603, (785) 368-3728.

APPLICATION MUST BE MADE OF WITHIN 60 DAYS OF ISSUANCE OF A BUILDING PERMIT.

General Neighborhood Revitalization Area	Eligible Improvements	Rebate Period & Percent
Large map on opposite page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single Family Residential & Commercial - New construction (S.F. owner-occupied) or rehab. • Properties on State/National Historic Register/Local Landmarks 	10 Years 95% 15 Years 100%
Overlay Areas		
Multi-Family District No. 1 (Downtown) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kansas River • SE Adams Street • SW 17th Street • Alley (Polk and Taylor) 	Two or Multi Family new construction or rehabilitation.	10 Years 95%
Multi-Family District No. 2 (Washburn) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SW 19th Street • SW Hampton Street • SW Washburn • Alley (19th and Hampton) 	Two or Multi Family new construction or rehabilitation.	10 Years 95%
Multi-Family District No. 3 (Cottages of Topeka) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US Highway 24 • Soldier Creek • NW Lyman Road • West property line 	Two or Multi Family new construction or rehabilitation.	10 Years 62%
Multi-Family District No. 4 (Curtis Jr. High) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NE St. John Street • NE Central Avenue • NE Grant Avenue • NE Jackson Street 	Two or Multi Family new construction or rehabilitation.	10 Years 95%
Multi-Family District No. 5 (East Topeka) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shunga Creek • SE Woodland Avenue • SE 6th Street • SE Market 	Two or Multi Family new construction or rehabilitation.	10 Years 95%
Multi-Family District No. 6 (Tennessee Town) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SW Munson • SW 12th • SW Buchanan • Alley (Munson and 12th) 	Two or Multi Family new construction or rehabilitation.	10 Years 95%
Special District No. 1 (Downtown)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial new construction or rehab. • Newly constructed privately owned multi-level parking garages. 	10 Years 95% 25 Years 95%
Special District No. 2 (Kanza Business and Technology Park)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial new construction or rehab. 	10 Years 95%

**City of Topeka
Neighborhood Revitalization Program
Area Map**
(Effective until December 31, 2003)



In order to be eligible for the tax rebate, the property must be located within the designated revitalization area as shown on the map.

**Neighborhood
Revitalization
Program***



You may be eligible
to receive a

95%

**Property
tax rebate for
improvements
within the City
of Topeka**

* Effective until December 31, 2002

Table IV - 1: Overview of Implementation Plan

Year 1: Early Steps and Organizing for The Future	Years 2 and 3: Concentrating on The Core	Years 4 – 10: Building and Success
Key Organizational and Programmatic Action Steps:	Key Organizational and Programmatic Steps:	Key Organizational and Programmatic Steps:
Establish the downtown stewardship group	Provide funding and staffing support for the ongoing operations of the downtown organization; undertake pro-active recruitment of developers and tenants	Activities of the downtown organization should peak with financing, funding, redevelopment and promotional programs underway
Develop a downtown business identification and recruitment plan	Initiate business plan	Update business plan as necessary and continue implementation
Develop a public relations and marketing strategy to help implement the business plan for downtown	Begin marketing and public relations efforts for downtown businesses, space, and initiatives	Update public relations and marketing plan to reflect current needs and strategies and continue implementation
Begin the application to become a “Main Street” community, or create a locally-sponsored equivalent	Establish a “Main Street” program or its local equivalent, and undertake “Main Street” enhancements	Continue the Main Street program, but continue special revolving loan or grant programs to provide enhancements and expand the benefits to the periphery of the core area
Create public information program on downtown enhancements	Provide for a regular newsletter, promotional campaigns, and other marketing support	Have a merchant-supported promotion program operating on a regular basis
Develop web site on downtown revitalization initiatives and festivals to improve community’s access to information	Establish downtown revitalization link to City’s web site	Update and maintain web site information on downtown revitalization efforts
Initiate a semi-annual “state of the downtown” report from the downtown stewardship group to the City.	Continue the “state of the downtown reports” on a semi-annual basis	Continue annual reports on the “state of downtown”, and prepare a master plan update at Year 10
Key Landscape and Streetscape Action Steps	Key Landscape and Streetscape Action Steps	Key Landscape and Streetscape Action Steps
Construct a “bricks and mortar” project to create positive momentum	Redevelop the Foster’s Block to feature a major public open space/park that joins the downtown to the riverfront, provides parking, and is a venue for civic events	Complete an open space network that connects the downtown to the river and open spaces, creating a downtown/neighborhood amenity
Undertake immediate signage and parking management changes to make the downtown more successful	Implement a complete “wayfinding” signage system to and from the downtown	Improve the business signage to make the downtown increasingly interesting and more attractive
Prepare a detailed landscape and streetscape improvement plan	Undertake substantial streetscape and landscape improvements fitting the overall plan developed the previous year	Expand the scope of streetscape and landscape improvements to the periphery of the core area
Identify opportunities to expand participation in the Adopt-A-Spot program	Select additional locations and sign up new participants to program	Implement beautification program at additional downtown locations
Key Downtown Revitalization Action Steps	Key Downtown Revitalization Action Steps	Key Downtown Revitalization Action Steps
Perform an assessment of code enforcement activities and needs	Fund and implement regular program of code enforcement	Maintain on-going downtown code enforcement program
Plan for a new downtown-oriented special event/festival to reinforce downtown identity as center of community activity	Initiate a new downtown-oriented special event	Conduct annual and special events downtown
Implement zoning and design guideline recommendations to support downtown redevelopment	Apply enhanced zoning and design guidelines to guide the reinvestment process	Revise zoning and design guidelines to take into account lessons learned and changing circumstances to help complete the Plan
Reach consensus on best way to implement a downtown historic district	Create the Downtown Historic District	Realize the benefits of the Historic District through special grant programs for renovation, design assistance, publicity and attraction of tenants
Initiate redevelopment and improvement concepts for key areas: Foster’s block, McDuffee Block, others	Undertake focused redevelopment and improvement initiatives on large, key projects and areas: Foster’s block, McDuffee Block, Brooks Lot, and others	Complete all large redevelopment projects
Undertake short-term, low cost traffic and signal improvements to ease traffic flows.	Finalize major decisions about traffic circulation and intersections	Implement agreed-upon traffic and intersection improvements
Assess need to expand existing downtown parking supply to meet future demands	Identify and submit applications for State and Federal funding sources to implement parking improvements. Undertake all parking improvements as resources allow	Undertake all parking improvements as resources allow to provide adequate parking to match downtown reinvestment, including a simple parking structure if required over the long term
Support and help implement private sector initiatives that are consistent with the Downtown Plan (small restaurants, art studios, residential reuse projects, etc.)	Provide loan and grant incentives for qualifying private sector redevelopment projects, and accelerated project review and approvals	Provide loan and grant incentives for qualifying private sector redevelopment projects, and accelerated project review and approvals

Appendix B: Sources of Potential Funding

Revitalization Funding and Tools

Rehabilitation Loans and Grants

One program revitalization efforts usually focus on is the establishment of a façade and/or signage improvement program designed to provide small matching grants and/or below-market financing to business and property owners to upgrade the aesthetic appeal of downtown properties. Most programs match dollar-for-dollar up to \$1,000 for signs and \$2,500 for storefront improvements, depending on level of funding and funding source.

If funded through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, these grants help prevent and eliminate slums and blight. Additional funding can come from local lending institutions that sometimes offer below-market financing to qualified borrowers for improvement projects. Frequently a community will develop design guidelines to ensure projects comply with specific design criteria and goals.

These programs improve the appearance of downtown, enable small business owners to contribute to the overall revitalization effort, enhance the historic character of the downtown, and restore residents pride in their downtown.

Revolving Loan Fund

A revolving loan fund is a pool of limited funds that are awarded as loans that replenish the pool during their repayment; loan repayment ensures additional loans can be awarded.

Often these programs are capitalized by a significant grant from an organization like the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) or through HUD Section 108 Loan program. However, as is often the case recently, loan pools have been formed by a pool of contributing banks that share the risk of each loan by disbursing equal amounts that combined adds up to the total loan award. Revolving Loan Funds are often targeted to finance business start-ups or expansions of existing businesses, façade improvements, the acquisition of machinery and equipment, and other activities that stimulate the creation of employment opportunities. These loans are often targeted towards those borrowers that otherwise would not be able to obtain a loan due to their lacking sufficient collateral or borrowing history. Such a program helps hard-to-finance businesses like restaurants and microenterprises.

Tax Increment Financing

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) enables cities to create special districts and to make public improvements within those districts through revenue streams supported by private-sector developments. During the development period, the tax base is frozen at the predevelopment level. Property taxes continue to be paid, but taxes derived from increases in assessed values (the tax increment) resulting from new development go into a special fund created to retire bonds issues to finance the public infrastructure improvements. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a program that is most likely appropriate for later phases of Rochester's revitalization, due to the fact that it is most effective when it leverages a significant private investment. It is anticipated that during the first years of the revitalization effort there will not be a significant private sector redevelopment to make TIF worth pursuing. TIF is a very valuable program that helps facilitate significant development projects but is not an appropriate strategy for small-scale improvements.

Section 108 Loan Guarantees

Section 108, the Loan Guarantee provision of the Community Development Block Grant program, transforms small amounts of CDBG funds into large federally guaranteed loans to finance economic development projects. Local governments pledge current and future CDBG allocations as security for such loans. Some communities use Section 108 funds as credit enhancements to enable businesses to secure conventional financing, rather than act as primary lender. Other communities use the funds to acquire derelict properties or make public infrastructure improvements that support private development. Activities must support a CDBG-eligible activity, so funds should primarily go towards job creation activities for low- and moderate-income persons or the elimination and prevention of slums and blight.

Artist Overlay Districts

Artists are often the first community to discover an area that is ripe for revitalization. Their interest in affordable and flexible space makes artists perfect pioneers for many revitalization efforts. As Portsmouth has gotten pricey for both artists and artist galleries, the possibility exists to attract a small population of artists and craftspeople to Rochester's historic downtown. The majority of historic buildings have some of the characteristics that artists often look for in loft space: large floor space, big windows, high ceilings, and architectural details not found in newer structures.

One incentive program that has begun to be implemented in Lowell, Massachusetts is the Artist Grant Program. The City designated an Artist Overlay District in the downtown area to encourage the renovation of vacant upper floor spaces into artist's live/work lofts. This program awards \$5,000 grants to cover the costs of rehabilitating space for or by artists, under the auspices of the CDBG job creation program. Artists must meet HUD low- and moderate-income guidelines and must work a majority of their time in the live/work loft space to comply.

This innovative use of CDBG funds offers a creative and innovative example to see how communities are approaching the use of CDBG to encourage downtown revitalization.

Addendum

The following additional information has been provided to fulfill a request from the Downtown Committee, and will be incorporated into the final document upon completion of the review and approval process.

Stewardship Recommendations

This report has stressed the importance of an effective stewardship group to provide coordination and advocacy on a consistent basis over several years. There are many forms that this stewardship group could take, and several initial concepts have been included for discussion. The following section describes some specific recommendations to assist the City and the stakeholders in the Downtown's future as the stewardship group is assembled.

Organizational Framework

The stewardship group will be best able to help accomplish the goals of the Downtown Master Plan if it has a formally constituted organizational framework with a clear delineation of membership, responsibilities and relationships to other entities. Specific recommendations include the following:

- City relationship – The stewardship entity should either be directly appointed by the City, be organized as a related entity, or be officially endorsed in terms of its role in Downtown revitalization. At the same time, the group must have a reasonable degree of flexibility in terms of its own administration, funding, project management and other functions. Among the most successful models have been special commissions, authorities, or not-for-profit corporations with specific links to the City through the membership on the Board and the designation to receive City grants or contracts for appropriate activities.
- Duration – The stewardship group should be established for specific duration – at least five years, and possibly ten years.
- Mission or bylaws – The stewardship group should have a clearly written mission or bylaws that define its roles, powers, and responsibilities. Equally important, they must spell out those aspects of the downtown that are not part of its mission.

Membership

The stewardship group must be led by a small group of committed individuals with a background and experience in management, development and City affairs. The membership should be limited in size, as this is intended to be an active, operating group that must be able to make prompt decisions and achieve consensus relative to competing priorities and needs. Among the choice of three, five or seven members, a five-member committee seems the most appropriate, as it allows for vacations or absences and still permits a quorum. The membership should include representatives from the business community, area institutions or organizations. It should also include at least one or two elected officials from the City Council, Planning Board or other board or commission that will play important roles in the revitalization effort. The membership should include several individuals that do not have direct interests in the downtown, so that conflicts of interest can be avoided through recusing individual members from key votes or actions, and still function properly.

Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee should be created to support the efforts of the stewardship group. This group should serve as a sounding board through occasional meetings to report progress and discuss plans for the future, perhaps two or three times per year. The Advisory Committee should help lead special projects or subcommittees related to the overall planning initiative. Its membership could range from about 12 to 20 persons, and should be assembled to be representative of area citizens, residents, business and property owners, open space advocates, historic preservation interests and key public agencies, boards and commissions.

Responsibilities

The stewardship group should have the following core responsibilities:

- Advocacy, coordination and priority setting for public sector initiatives that will contribute to the revitalization effort
- Organization of public/private revitalization programs or initiatives
- Review and comment on public and private improvement proposals
- Management of marketing activities
- Sponsorship of special events or programs
- Overall coordination of a “Main Street” façade program and/or similar grant and loan initiatives
- Identification and pursuit of special grants or program funds
- Annual progress report to the Planning Board and City Council
- Ability to receive monies through grants, sales, proceeds
- Ability to dispense monies through contracts and for goods and services

The stewardship group, to be most effective, could also have the following responsibilities:

- Ability to hire and direct staff
- Ability to make loans or administer other financing tools
- Capacity to buy or attain property and lease or sell the property for the purposes of appropriate redevelopment or use

Getting Started

An organizational effort needs to be undertaken to establish the preferred form and prospective membership categories of the stewardship group. This effort should also include specific concepts for future resources and staffing that will be required, and sources of funds to accomplish this. The

organizational effort should take no longer than one year, and result in a formally constituted group with budget and staff support.

Funding

Short-term sources of funding for the entity may include any combination of City resources funded through a special allocation or through the annual budgeting process and through contributed private sector funds raised through collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce or other entities.

In addition to City and private sector contributions for operations and programs, longer term funding should include state or federal grants, to the extent that they can be secured through the efforts of the entity and through City-sponsored proposals. Depending upon the form of the entity, funding may also be achieved through income from projects and programs managed by the stewardship group.

Relationship to a Main Street Program

As noted elsewhere in this report, the Downtown revitalization may include a “Main Street” program for revitalization of facades, coordination of streetscape improvements and other planning elements. This might be accomplished through participation of the New Hampshire Main Street program, or through the creation of a similar initiative locally. However, the management of such initiatives should be viewed as a specific program of the overall revitalization effort, and should not be viewed as the stewardship entity or as its staffing. Rather, the stewardship entity should serve as the board or committee directing the main street program, in conjunction with dedicated staff that will directly support the overall revitalization mission of the stewardship group.

Staffing

Staffing in the initial one or two-year period might be accomplished through the dedication of at least 20 hours per week for an appropriately qualified City staff person, or through a similarly funded position. This could be accomplished through a consulting position, if consistent and dedicated time by a single qualified individual were provided. However, by the mid-term of the implementation of the Downtown Plan, stewardship will require virtual full-time dedication of at least one staff person; additional staffing may be required on a project basis or for clerical and support activities, depending upon the type of entity created, its scale of operations, and the like.