

# Main Street Master Plan Update GORHAM VILLAGE

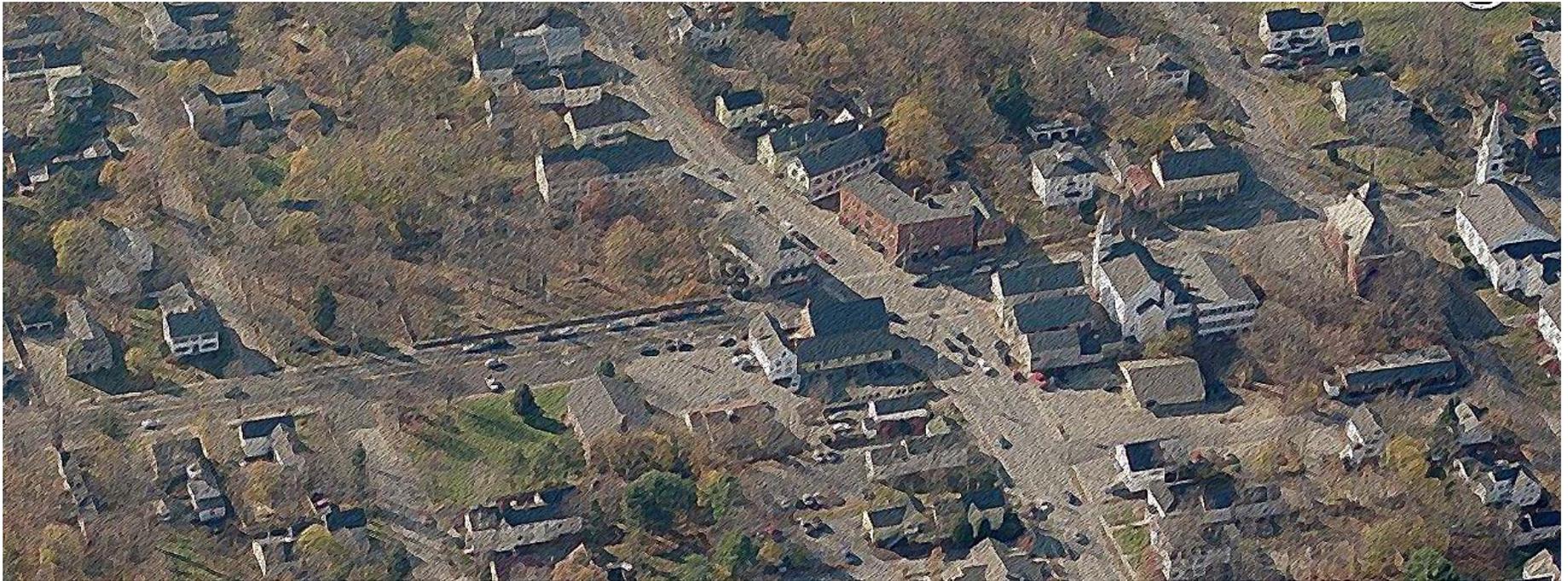
Town of Gorham, Maine

July 2015

Prepared by



Land Use  
Planning &  
Design





# Gorham Main Street Master Plan Update

July 2015

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### Primary Planning Resources

This Plan was developed in coordination with the following initiatives and their lead agencies:

Gorham Main Street Master Plan, 1998 by Wilbur Smith Associates,  
Town of Gorham Comprehensive Plan Update, 2015 DRAFT  
Gorham Village Parking Study, April 2014,  
Gorham East-West Corridor Feasibility Study, February 2010.

### Credits

Photographs by Wright-Pierce, Malcolm Collins, Google Streetview Images and Bing Aerials.

### Special Thank You

Sarah Cushman, Southern Maine Planner for Maine Safe Routes to School for conducting a parent survey at the Village Elementary School and student survey at the Middle School and guidance on recommendations and program funding.



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- Summary of results from Workshop
- Safe Route to School survey results

## Plan Abbreviations:

- MSMP – Main Street Master Plan
- MaineDOT – Maine Department of Transportation
- GPCOG – Greater Portland Council of Governments
- MeDEP – Maine Department of Environmental Protection
- PACTS – Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System
- GEDC – Gorham Economic Development Corporation
- GHPC – Gorham Historic Preservation Commission

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Summary of results from Workshop (including surveys)

Safe Routes to School Survey Results



# I. Executive Summary

Gorham Village has a history and character that distinguishes it from other villages in Greater Portland. Its rich tradition of commerce at several major crossroads laid the foundation for a close-knit village that now prides itself on its character and sense of community.

The Main Street Master Plan Update outlines the Gorham residents' and the Town's vision and strategies for the Village, which represents both an eye to the future and a commitment to its heritage. This executive summary includes the plan goals, and plan recommendations from the Main Street Master Plan Update. The goals for the Main Street Master Plan Update were similar to the original goals set forth in the 1998 Main Street Plan, including:

- Improve the aesthetic appeal of the Village Center to improve the livability and enhance the economic vitality of the community.
- Develop a consistent, unified streetscape on Main Street within the village commercial districts;
- Improve pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicular circulation and safety;
- Provide for efficient and adequate parking without compromising the aesthetics of the Village Center;
- Maintain and protect historic and residential areas;

- Develop implementable, cost-conscious recommendations; and
- Develop regulatory and zoning measures and policies that encourage (or require as appropriate) the desired pattern, mix and quality of buildings and uses in the village commercial district;

## **The 2014 RFP for the MSMP Update added two new goals:**

- Evaluate the use and density of large historic homes; and
- Develop specific recommendations to better connect and unify USM and the Town;

The public meetings and the planning workshop were well attended and helped to develop the plan components and steer the recommendations of the plan. The plan components built off the topics within the 1998 report but added new topics raised at the public meetings and by Town Staff. The plan components include:

- Transportation (Automobile, Bicycle, Pedestrian, Transit)
- Main Street
- Sidewalks and Pedestrian Amenities
- Safe Routes to School Assessment
- USM Coordination and Connectivity
- Bicycle Facilities
- Trails and Connectivity
- Parking
- Stormwater

- Parks and Greenspace
- Buildings and Architecture

The report provides additional recommendations gleaned from the 1998 plan and the 2015 Draft Comprehensive plan and also provides background information on how the recommendations were developed. The following summary of recommendations are given for each component:

#### **Transportation (Automobile, Bicycle, Pedestrian, Transit)**

- (1998) Reconfigure Main Street and New Portland Road intersection to reduce crossing distances and provide a crosswalk on Main Street on west side of intersection. See page 53 of 1998 report.
- (2015) This may be an opportune time to reconfigure the Main Street and New Portland Road intersection as part of the upcoming Main Street reconstruction project.
- (1998) Retain Mechanic Street entrance to and from Main Street (short term, reevaluate in conjunction with development proposals on Mechanic Street and Railroad Avenue).
- (1998) Encourage extension of Railroad Avenue to New Portland Road in conjunction with redevelopment of Mechanic Street and Railroad Avenue area. (2015) This may be possible as an extension within the old RR ROW, in conjunction with a pathway design and funding.
- (1998) Reconfigure intersection of State Street and Narragansett Street to better channelize intersection. (2015) Study round-about design in this location.
- (1998) Assess limiting driveways along Main Street to be entrances only with exits via side streets (Water, Elm and Cross Streets).
- (2015 DRAFT Comp Plan) Expand the range of non-automotive transportation alternatives available to the Town's residents, workforce, and visitors.

#### **Main Street**

- Adopted a Complete Streets policy for Main Street and other streets within town.
- Redesign Main Street prior to the water main reconstruction effort to be compatible with Complete Street principals, including public transit and wider sidewalks.
- Redesign Main Street with 10.5' max. travel lanes, 11' max. turn lanes, on-street parking or 5' min. bicycle lanes and bus stop locations.
- Apply to become a Main Street Maine Community (as a full or "Network" member), to receive support and assistance from the Maine Downtown Center.

#### **Sidewalks and Pedestrian Amenities**

- Prioritize new sidewalk construction to the "missing links" in the Village, especially on Elm Street and Robie Street (both sides).
- Prioritize new sidewalk reconstruction and streetscape needs on Main Street, School Street, South Street and Elm Street, with a clear connection to USM campus along College Avenue. The majority of this recommendation may be possible as part of the Main Street reconstruction and would include the following design elements:
  - a) Remove esplanade and existing sidewalks on both sides of Main Street, from the Village Square east to New Portland Road and replace with a new 10-foot wide concrete sidewalk, where feasible.

- b) Install pedestrian scale sidewalk lights (type and location to be determined) on both sides of Main Street, from approximately 43 State Street east to New Portland Road.
- c) Install pedestrian scale sidewalk lights (type and location to be determined) on both sides of South Street, from approximately Preble Street north onto School Street to College Avenue.
- d) Install pedestrian scale sidewalk lights (type and location to be determined) on north side on College Avenue, from School Street to USM campus walkway.
- e) Install street trees within sidewalk with tree pits (type and location to be determined) on both sides of Main Street, from approximately 43 State Street east to New Portland Road.
- f) Install mid-block crosswalk at The Village Mall and Hannaford entrances, with Rapid Flashing Beacon crosswalk signs. To be designed and approved by MaineDOT.
- g) Incorporate benches and trash receptacles (type and location to be determined) into Main Street redesign.

#### **Safe Routes to School Assessment**

- Proposed Sidewalk Links for Construction
- Proposed Programming

#### **USM Coordination and Connectivity**

- Conduct a student and professor survey for the entire USM Gorham Campus population to determine what the Town could do to improve coordination and connections to and from USM and the Village.

- Establish a Town and USM Liaison in order to openly share proposed ideas, common issues, and proposed improvements as a way to facilitate proposed improvements that are mutually shared.
- Develop Town programs that would complement USM programs, e.g., student exhibitions at local coffee shops, temporary or permanent sculpture displays in the Village in coordination with the USM Arts Department, a self-guided architectural museum walking tour.
- Establish a Committee to review the options for public transit, as mentioned above, to determine which is most feasible from a Town-wide perspective.

#### **Bicycle Facilities**

- Install "Share the Road" signs in the Village with priority at the village edges on Main Street, South Street, School Street and State Street where the wide paved shoulders become narrow or when on-street parking occurs.
- Pursue off-street connections such as the proposed Cross-Town bike path along the old railroad corridor, into Westbrook. This path should be paved at a minimum of 12 feet wide to allow for commuting. Commuting use could provide alternative state and federal funding sources.
- Improve bicycle connections between the Village and community destinations including directional signage, designated bike lanes, shared lanes (sharrows), along major bicycle routes.
- Provide bicycle racks along side streets and at key destinations, e.g. the schools, public buildings and parks within the Village.

### Trails and Connectivity

- Integrate the Conservation Committee with site plan reviews to encourage trail connections to existing or planned trails and open space, wherever feasible.
- Continue to build the Cross-Town Trail along the old RR corridor from the Frazier Trail east through the Village, with an eventual link into Westbrook.
- Work with the City of Westbrook and Portland Trails on connections to the Cross-Town Trail in order to continue to link pedestrian and bicycle facilities to the regional system.
- The Gorham Conservation Commission should consider establishing an annual maintenance fund either through fundraising or a foundation for the ongoing control of invasive plant species.

### Parking

- Continue to incorporate recommendations in 2013 Village Parking Study.
- Strongly pursue interconnect parking areas in the rear of three Main Street parcels between Cross Street and the Gorham Saving Bank lot. The Study found that this could add up to 28 additional parking spaces in that area, which is an area where parking is mostly needed.
- Develop signage at key locations to alert and direct motorist to municipal parking areas.

### Stormwater

- Address recommendations from the 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan.

- Develop a municipal pilot or demonstration projects for LID or green infrastructure retrofits.
- Require via the Planning Board Site Plan Review and Approval Process that applicants of new or retrofit development within the village submit LID options as part of the application.

### Parks and Greenspace

- Require via the Planning Board Site Plan Review and Approval Process that applicants of new or retrofit development within the village submit enhanced green space designs.
- Continue to work with groups on trails expansion along old RR corridor to create linear park system in the village, connecting the schools, the municipal buildings and local businesses.
- Enhance existing parks with new consistent signage.
- Improve pedestrian connections from the Village to Tannery Brook Park and enhance trails within Tannery Brook Park.
- Coordinate with USM on potential walking tours of campus and as part of the Architectural Museum.
- Upgrade open space adjacent to Robie Community Center.
- Provide amenities in open spaces to include playground with water features at Robie Community Center and benches and trash receptacles in all parks.

### Buildings and Architecture

- Empower the Town's Historic Preservation Committee
- Identify Gorham's Historic Resources
- Establish a Framework for Protecting Historic Resources
- Promote the Preservation of Historic Resources with Incentives

- Encourage the Creation of a Vital, Attractive Historic Village Center
- Bring the USM Gorham Campus into the Downtown Preservation Realm
- The Historic Preservation Committee and Planning Board Should Address Historic Preservation Issues in the Existing Zoning Code in the Short Term.

# Action Plan

**MSMPU ACTION AGENDA:** The following lists prioritize several key initiatives that should be considered for immediate and longer term implementation. This list is followed by a group of general consensus action items identified through the community input process.

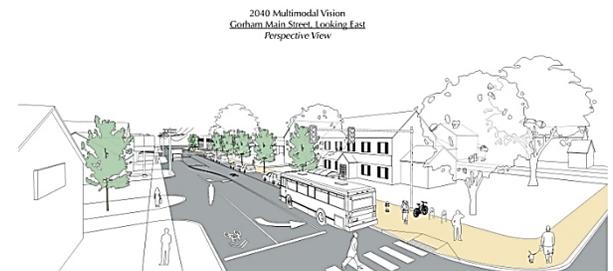
## IMMEDIATE ACTION ITEMS:

### 1. Utilize the "Main Street Approach"

This plan is only a tool for revitalization; the revitalization of Gorham's Main Street and Village will require persistence, leadership, communication and partnerships. Many communities in Maine and other states have employed the "Main Street Approach" as a model for organization which has proven successful for downtown revitalization.

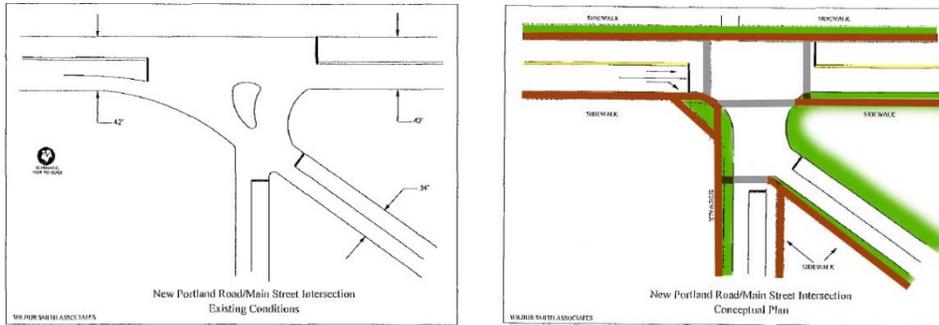
In Maine, communities may formally apply to become a Main Street Maine community (as a full or "Network" member), to receive support and assistance from the Maine Downtown Center, and increase their scoring on many of Maine's downtown grants. Gorham's Economic Development Corporation is getting organized to start the public outreach portion of the application, the first step toward becoming a Network Member. (See Chapter III, Main Street for more information on the Main Street Approach).

2. Determine the scope of work and available funds for the anticipated Main Street water main replacement project by the Portland Water District, in order to prepare a Request for Proposals (RFP) for conceptual design and preliminary engineering documents for a complete street and streetscape project. Potential items to include in the RFP, as recommended in the MSMPU are as follows:
  - a. Redesign of Main Street:
    - a.1. 10.5' travel lanes, 10.5' turn lanes where necessary, 5' bike lanes, 10' wide sidewalks, sidewalk material, street tree location and species selection, sidewalk light location and type selection including banner and hanging planter options on poles, benches and trash receptacles.



*Picture examples of Main Street design features.*

- b. Redesign of the intersection of Main Street, New Portland Road and Mechanic Street to include:
  - b.1. 10.5' travel lanes, 10.5' turn lanes where necessary, 5' bike lanes, 10' wide sidewalks, street tree location and species selection, sidewalk light location and type selection and consider flag pole and hanging planter options.

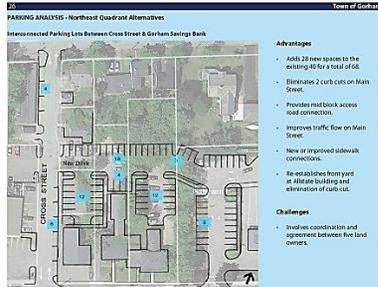


*Example from the 1998 Main Street Master Plan of proposed intersection alignment.*

- c. Coordinate with the MaineDOT and install mid-block crosswalk at The Village Mall and Hannaford intersection with pedestrian actuated Rapid Flashing Beacon.



- d. Assess reducing the number of driveways along Main Street or redesign to entrance only with exits on side streets and pursue interconnected lots.



Example from the 2014 Parking Study where this could be designed.

3. Construct the missing sidewalk connections within the village, specifically on Elm Street and Robie Street.



Location map of missing links, existing photos along Elm and Robie Streets and new sidewalk on Lincoln Street.

In the long-term, Gorham should consider the following recommendations, which are explained in more detail within the MSMP Update report:

- Maintain and grow the Main Street Program to stay active with current trends and available funding,
- Update the Main Street Master Plan every five to seven years,
- Update the Comprehensive Plan every 10 years,

- Continue to replace unsafe and poor condition sidewalks in the village,
- Continue to work with PACTS and USM on bus transit.

**COMMUNITY CONSENSUS ACTION ITEMS:**

Besides the priorities that would be included in the Immediate Action Items above, the following are items that the community reached consensus on during the public input component of the planning effort.

1. Improve bicycle accommodations, e.g. share the road signs on Main Street, more bicycle parking at key destinations, e.g., Hannaford, coffee shops, the schools, public buildings and parks, and continue expansion of Cross-Town trail.



*Potential alignment of Cross-Town Trail through the village via Lincoln Street.*

2. Empower the Town's Historic Preservation Committee so that historic properties can be cataloged, a framework can be established for protecting historic resources, and programs and incentives can be put into place for building improvements.



3. Establish a Town liaison to coordinate planning efforts with the USM. Some examples include:

3.1 Parking, bike lanes, sidewalk and lighting improvements on College Avenue,



Example from the 2014 Parking Study and the 2015 MSMPU showing sidewalk and lighting focus areas.

3.2 Discussions with the Arts Department on student art and sculpture displays within the village or within local businesses.



Picture example of temporary art installations that could be displayed in the village via collaboration with USM.

## II. Introduction

### BACKGROUND

In 2013 the Town received a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) (community-planning funds) to update the original Gorham Main Street Master Plan. Following the award of the grant, the Town issued a Request for Proposals on October 23, 2013 to update the Main Street Master Plan of 1998. The original plan focused on Gorham Village, which is the Town's Center, located at the intersection of Route 25 (Main Street State Street) and Route 114 (School Street / South Street). Gorham Village has a diverse mix of commercial and office uses and is surrounded by a variety of residential uses, including multi-family homes apartments, fraternity and sorority houses, senior housing, and single-family neighborhoods. The Village also incorporates the Municipal Center, two elementary schools, a high school, and is home to the University of Southern Maine (USM) Gorham.

### GOALS

The Master Plan Goals from the 1998 MSMP were to:

- Improve the aesthetic appeal of the Village Center to improve the livability and enhance the economic vitality of the community.
- Develop a consistent, unified streetscape on Main Street within the village commercial districts;

- Improve pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicular circulation and safety;
- Provide for efficient and adequate parking without compromising the aesthetics of the Village Center;
- Maintain and protect historic and residential areas;
- Develop implementable, cost-conscious recommendations; and
- Develop regulatory and zoning measures and policies that encourage (or require as appropriate) the desired pattern, mix and quality of buildings and uses in the village commercial district;

The 2014 RFP for the MSMP Update added new items to these goals:

- Evaluate the use and density of large historic homes; and
- Develop specific recommendations to better connect and unify USM and the Town;

In the 15 years since the original Gorham Main Street Master Plan was adopted, the Town has implemented a number of the recommendations of the Plan and has developed additional public and private projects within the area that have complied with the recommendations of the 1998 MSMP. The Town is also working on an update to the town-wide Comprehensive Plan. The DRAFT Comprehensive Plan has taken into consideration the 1998 goals and reinforced and restated the following recommendations:

- Undertaking streetscape improvements including sidewalk and curbing, establishing an esplanade with street trees, buffering parking areas adjacent to the street, installing crosswalks, and providing street furniture and lighting;
- Providing pedestrian connections including extending sidewalks on Mechanic Street and Railroad Avenue, developing a path from School Street to the Village Mall, and upgrading pedestrian ways within parking lots;
- Creating more green space;
- Reconfiguring the streets and parking areas;
- Exploring improved parking opportunities;
- Creating a Gorham Village organization to market and promote the area;
- Implementing new transit service in conjunction with the USM;
- Establishing a façade grant program;
- Revising the sign ordinance;
- Combining the Village Center and Urban Commercial Zones and modifying their standards;
- Creating an Office-Residential Zone on both sides of Preble Street; and
- Encouraging the adaptive reuse of existing buildings;

While some of the above recommendations of the Master Plan were implemented, many were not. While the overall policy direction of the original Plan is generally still very valid, the recommendations have been updated to reflect current conditions in Gorham Village.

The Gorham Village is truly a mixed-use village that is primarily a commercial center but with numerous residential homes, schools, the USM campus, and businesses within walking distance to stores and commercial enterprises. This mixed-use quality should be encouraged and enhanced through streetscape improvements and improved bicycle and pedestrian improvements to make the Village a safer and more attractive environment for pedestrians and bicyclists, with less emphasis on vehicle and truck traffic. Vehicle and truck traffic will continue to move through the Village, and there are on-going studies to alleviate or make it more efficient; however, the Village intends to remain a place where people live and work, children walk to schools, people come to visit and socialize, and college students walk and bike to get their daily needs.

#### **STUDY AREA DESCRIPTION**

The study area generally extends east-west from Pine Street to New Portland Road and north-south from Church Street to Lincoln Street, with a special emphasis around the intersection of Main Street / State Street (Route 25) and South Street / School Street (Route 114).



*Project Study Area*

## RELEVANT PREVIOUS STUDIES

A significant amount of thought and effort have gone into planning for long term improvements to the Gorham Village. Since the 1998 Main Street Master Plan was prepared and adopted, the Town, the MaineDOT and PACTS have conducted numerous studies that have affected the current Main Street Master Plan Update. These previous reports were used to evaluate and compare against the updated plan components:

- 1998 Gorham Main Street Master Plan
- 2014 Gorham Capital Improvements Plan
- 2014 Village Parking Study Gorham
- 2015 DRAFT Town of Gorham Comprehensive Plan Update
- 2005 Tannery Brook Watershed Management Plan
- 2009 PACTS Bike-Ped Plan Update
- 2011 PACTS East-West Corridor Study
- Current East West Corridor Study, Route 25 through Gorham.



## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION & INPUT

In this phase, the community ideas were gathered at open community meetings and surveys. Identified vision and goals were used to guide the direction and emphasis of the remainder of the MSMP Update planning process.

The community vision and goals were combined with the assessment of existing conditions to identify opportunities, problem areas, and issues that need to be addressed in the master plan update. Once the ideas were presented, discussed and vetted the draft master plan was prepared for review and presentation at a final meeting. In addition to several meetings with Town Staff and subconsultants, the following public meetings were and will be held:

- Initial Public meeting was held on June 9, 2014

- Public Workshop was held on November 13, 2014
- Presentation of Draft Master Plan Update June 4, 2015





## III. Plan Components and Recommendations

- Transportation (Automobile, Bicycle, Pedestrian, Transit)
- Main Street
- Sidewalks and Pedestrian Amenities
- Safe Routes to School Assessment
- USM Coordination and Connectivity
- Bicycle Facilities
- Trails and Connectivity
- Parking
- Stormwater
- Parks and Greenspace
- Buildings and Architecture

# TRANSPORTATION

## (AUTOMOBILE, BICYCLE, PEDESTRIAN, TRANSIT)

### 1998 MSMP Recommendations:

- Define new street and curb lines on Cross Street, Main Street at Christy's (now 7-Eleven) and 36 Main Street, in front of Robie Community Center, in front of Amato's on Main Street (to enforce no parking zone) and at Gorham Savings Bank employee parking driveway entrance on Main Street.
- Reconfigure Main Street and New Portland Road intersection to reduce crossing distances and provide crosswalk across Main Street on west side of intersection.
- Retain Mechanic Street entrance to and from Main Street (short term, reevaluate in conjunction with development proposals on Mechanic Street and Railroad Avenue).
- Provide protected left turn phases at Main and South Street intersection on School Street and South Street approaches.
- Install speed limit sign and low-level traffic calming measures (street trees and other landscaping to visually reduce width of street) on Preble Street to reduce speeds - evaluate need for further action.
- Encourage extension of Railroad Avenue to New Portland Road in conjunction with redevelopment of Mechanic Street and Railroad Avenue area.

- Evaluate sight distance problem at intersection of Church Street and School Street.
- Reconfigure intersection of State Street and Narragansett Street to better channelize intersection.
- Establish commercial district gateways to include permanent crosswalks, signage and distinctive landscaping treatments.
- Continue practice of requesting set-side of rights-of-way for a potential relief route north of Gorham Village (this was done in conjunction with Gorham Savings Bank processing center approval process).
- Assess limiting driveways along Main Street to be entrances only with exits via side streets (Water, Elm and Cross Streets).

### 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan Recommendations:

- The Town should undertake a program to manage curb cuts along the arterial corridors and designated collector roads. This should include reviewing and revising the development standards to limit new curb cuts while working with property owners to close-up areas where there are undefined or poorly defined points of access.

- The Town should continue to improve traffic flow and safety on the arterial network through the upgrading of intersections.
- The Town should use impact fees to help finance improvements to the arterial network in order to accommodate increased traffic resulting from new development when there is a clear connection between development and the need for improvements. This approach should be used as an alternative to requiring a developer to make traffic improvements as part of a development approval.
- The Town should create a transportation system that meets the needs of all users not just one that relies entirely on the automobile.
- The town should expand the range of non-automotive transportation alternatives available to the Town's residents, workforce, and visitors.

#### **Recommendations from the 2012 Gorham East-West Feasibility Study:**

- Route 114/25 Intersection: add a 75' eastbound left turn lane
- Route 25 and New Portland Road: add channelized right turn lane from Mechanic St. Add a 75' westbound left turn lane

This study also looked at creating a new roadway corridor beginning at a point near or at Exit 44/45 of the Maine Turnpike and extending west to a location near or at the southern end of the Gorham Bypass, with direct connections to the Maine Turnpike, Running Hill Road, Route 22, and Route 114.

#### **2015 MSMP Update Recommendations:**

Although many of the 1998 traffic related improvements have been completed, some still remain. The 1998 and 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan recommendations as well as new recommendations that we feel are still relevant and important to the betterment of Main Street and the Village are outlined below. Many recommendations the 2015 consultant team have for transportation related improvements are also covered in other chapters of this MSMP Update.

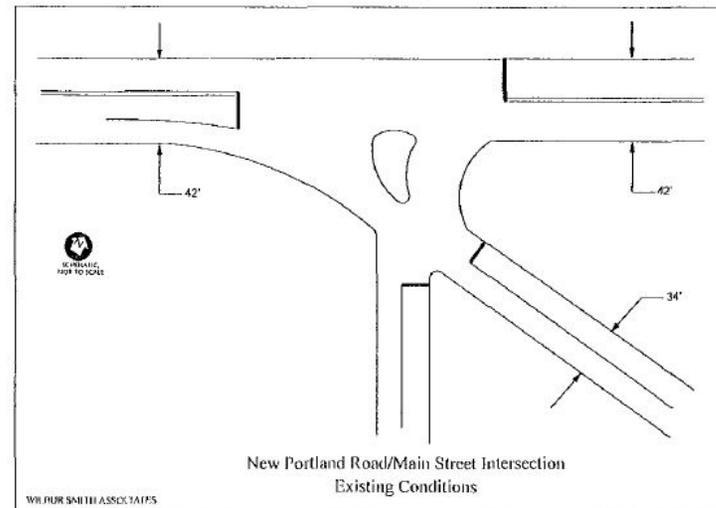
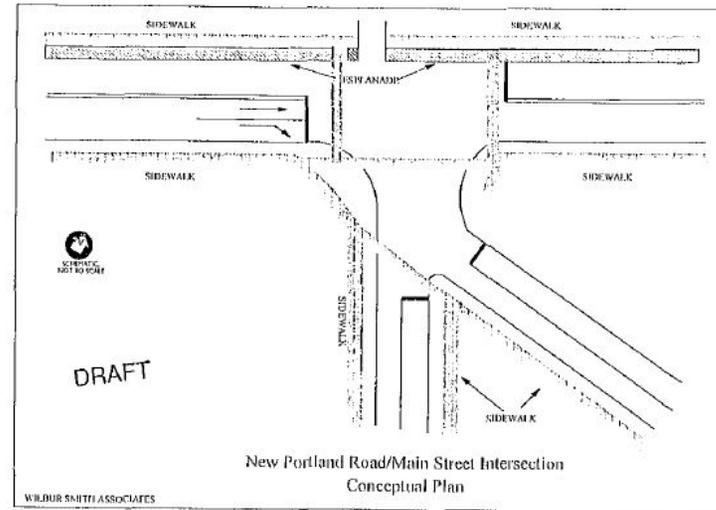
- (1998) Reconfigure Main Street and New Portland Road intersection to reduce crossing distances and provide a crosswalk on Main Street on west side of intersection. See page 53 of 1998 report.
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- (1998) Retain Mechanic Street entrance to and from Main Street (short term, reevaluate in conjunction with development proposals on Mechanic Street and Railroad Avenue).
- (1998) Install speed limit sign and low level traffic calming measures (street trees and other landscaping to visually reduce width of street) on Preble Street to reduce speeds - evaluate need for further action.
- (1998) Encourage extension of Railroad Avenue to New Portland Road in conjunction with redevelopment of Mechanic Street and Railroad Avenue area. (2015) This may be possible as an extension within the old RR ROW, in conjunction with a pathway design and funding.

- (1998) Reconfigure intersection of State Street and Narragansett Street to better channelize intersection.
- (2015) Study round-about design in this location.
- (1998) Assess limiting driveways along Main Street to be entrances only with exits via side streets (Water, Elm and Cross Streets).
- (2015 DRAFT Comp Plan) Expand the range of non-automotive transportation alternatives available to the Town's residents, workforce, and visitors.

2040 Multimodal Vision  
Gorham Main Street, Looking East  
Perspective View



Continue to work with USM or Portland METRO to provide a bus route to and from Gorham Village.



Reconfigure intersection of Main Street and New Portland Street. (1998 Main Street Master Plan Report).



*Intersection of State Street and Narragansett Street. Study a round-about design to improve traffic flow.*

## BACKGROUND

For the past fifty years, the Town of Gorham has undertaken numerous planning studies concerning Gorham Village. Several of these studies have been highway relief studies that would allow through-traffic to bypass the Village. One of the major challenges within the Village, the intersection of Route 202 and Route 4, is trying to strike a balance between moving a large volume of traffic through the area while providing a safe and attractive environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. From January 2001 to December 2008 there were 14 pedestrian accidents and one bicycle accident with a vehicle. In 2008, the Route 112 Bernard Rines Highway by-pass opened and relieved some traffic congestion in the Village. Despite the by-pass, there have been 8 pedestrian and 2 bicycle accidents at the intersection. In 2010, the Town was awarded CDBG funding for sidewalks

and intersection improvements, which included ADA compliant concrete crosswalks with bollards. Despite the intersection improvements, pedestrian safety remains a concern.

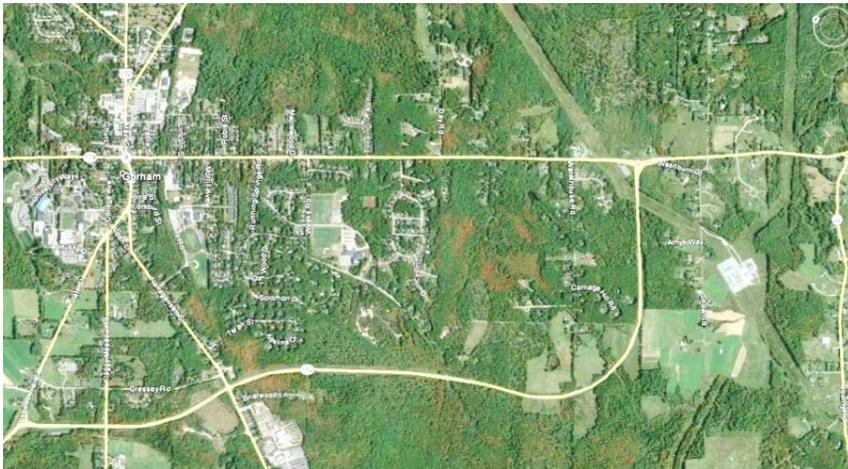


## Regional Transportation Context

Gorham's Main Street is located at the junction of numerous State routes, including a principal arterial and several minor arterials. Route 25, one of the primary routes linking the Portland metro area to New Hampshire, converges on Main Street with Routes 202/4, which connects Gorham northward to Lewiston and southward to Sanford. Route 114 connects the Sebago Lake Region and greater Portland, which generates significant traffic in the summer months. When the 1998 MSMP was written, average daily traffic on Main Street exceeded 20,000 cars per day. Since that time, a North-South bypass, Route 112, was constructed to route New Hampshire-bound traffic away from the Village Center. However, recent metrics indicate a remaining need to alleviate congestion from traffic heading east-west along Main Street. One of these measures, MaineDOT's relatively new metric Customer Service Level (CSL), translates technical data relating to factors such as safety, condition, and congestion into a letter rating. Under this system, Gorham's Main Street is rated as

a C (fair) or a D (poor), and Route 114 is rated B (good) and C (fair) as it approaches the Square. Traffic data from 2010 indicate that the AADT along Main Street is still in the range of 20,000 cars per day. Traffic data from 2013 indicate that the AADT along Main Street is still in the range 20,500 cars per day.

According to the 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan Update, the intersection of Gray Road and Main Street is considered by MaineDOT to be a high crash location, with 10 recorded crashes between 2009 and 2011. Furthermore, the Gorham East-West Feasibility Study in 2009 identified High Rate Crash Nodes at the intersection of Lombard and State Streets and at the intersection of Elm and Main Streets, and High Rate Crash Links on Main Street between Cross Street and New Portland Road, and on South Street between Main Street and Preble Street.



*Location map of Bernard Rines Highway by-pass.*

The Gorham East-West Feasibility Study Final Report completed in September 2012 for the Maine Turnpike Authority and

MaineDOT examined alternatives for moving traffic east-west through Cumberland County from Portland to Gorham, looking at scenarios that would include measures such as increasing the availability of transit, constructing a bypass road, increasing the capacity of existing roadways, and implementing new land use management strategies. In Gorham's Village center, roadways under consideration included State Routes 4, 202, 25, and 114 within the MSMP Update study area. Building on the 2012 study, in 2014, PACTS began a more in-depth investigation of land use approaches, known as the Land Use and Transit Supportive Development Implementation Technical Assistance Study.

The 2012 East West Study and 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan Update summarize existing conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers near Gorham's Main Street. With regard to transit, the USM shuttle is currently the only transit route serving the Village from the south, but it is privately operated. The Regional Transportation Program (RTP), run by the United Way, provides low cost as-needed transportation for disadvantaged individuals, but is not available to the public. Gorham Village has no designated shared lanes or bicycle lanes. Sidewalks are located throughout the Village area, but are not complete along both sides of every road within the MSMP Update study area. On the major routes, sidewalks are located on both sides of Route 25 and along both sides of South Street to Weeks Road. They extend along one side of School Street to the USM entrance driveway. A proposed shared use path, the Gorham Village Trail, would provide an off-road route between the Gorham Industrial Park and Gorham Village. The Town has recently improved the square for ADA access and has applied to PACTS for ADA improvements at existing crosswalks and ADA/timing

improvements at signals in two locations: the intersection of New Portland Road, Mechanic Street, and Main Street; and the intersection of Elm Street, Water Street, and Main Street.

Several ideas have been proposed to improve traffic conditions within Gorham Village. The September 2012 East-West Final Report suggested adding future bus routes along Route 25 to Standish and Westbrook, along New Portland Road to Westbrook, and along Gray Road (Routes 4/202) to Windham, with the addition of an express bus or commuter rail from Westbrook to Gorham.

## MAIN STREET

### 1998 MSMP Recommendations:

- Not recognized in 1998.

### 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan Recommendations:

- The Town should apply the Complete Streets concept to the construction of new streets and to the reconstruction or substantial improvement of existing streets, especially in the village areas.
- The Town should continue to discourage the use of local, residential streets as short cuts for commuter and similar through traffic.

### 2015 MSMP Update Recommendations:

- Adopted a Complete Streets policy for Main Street and other streets within town.
- Redesign Main Street prior to the water main reconstruction effort to be compatible with Complete Street principals, including public transit and wider sidewalks.
- Redesign Main Street with 10.5' max. travel lanes, 11' max. turn lanes, on-street parking or 5' min. bicycle lanes and bus stop locations.
- Apply to become a Main Street Maine Community (as a full or "Network" member), to receive support and assistance from the Maine Downtown Center.

### BACKGROUND:

The Town of Gorham was scheduled for a maintenance-paving project through Gorham Village as part of the State DOT paving program. Main Street has a concrete slab base that was disturbed in the late 1980s when the Town installed sewer. The current plan includes involvement with Power Water District to replace 2,500 feet of 8-inch cast-iron pipe on Main Street between School Street and Johnson Road and 2,500 feet of 6- and 8-inch cast-iron pipes along State Street between School Street and Husky Drive which leads into the University of Southern Maine (USM) campus. New ductile pipe would be installed in both projects. Existing water mains in both areas date back to 1895.

In addition, some of the storm drainage system should be replaced or upgraded. As a result, this project is now being considered for major reconstruction with shared participation from the State, Portland Water District and the Town. If the State DOT has funding available, this project could go forward in the

next few years. Gorham's share of the costs are not yet known nor is it known whether there will be funding from the State DOT for this project. However, if funding from the State becomes available, it will be in Gorham's best interest to consider a more robust improvement to Main Street, including intersection improvements, a Complete Streets design and the possibility of buried power lines.

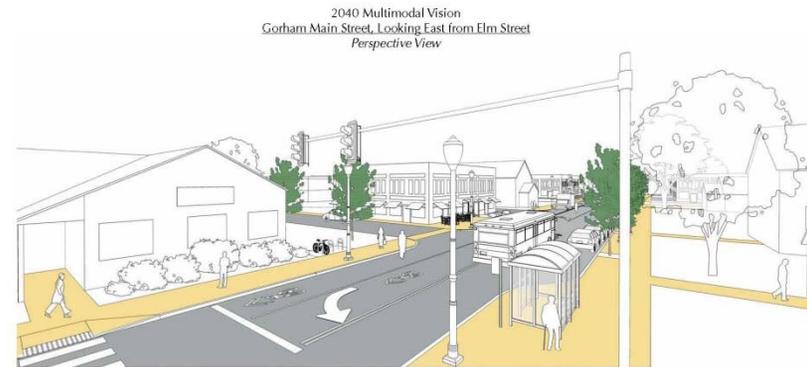
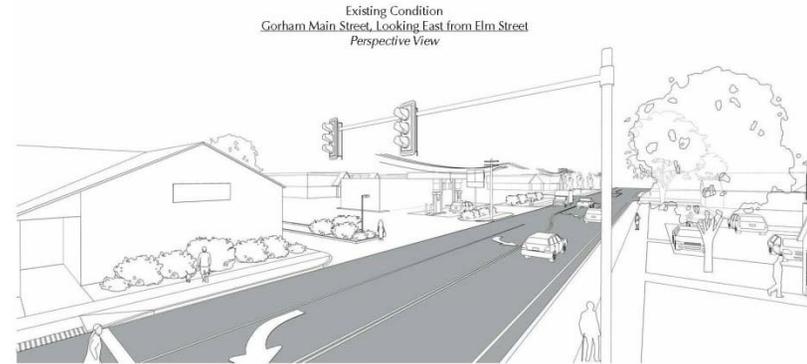
## COMPLETE STREETS

Complete Streets is a transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation. Complete Streets allow for safe travel by those walking, bicycling, driving automobiles, riding public transportation, or delivering goods. A number of municipalities across Maine have adopted local Complete Streets Policies. These documents guide the city or town's actions when planning, programming, designing, constructing, reconstructing, paving, retrofitting, or performing operations and maintenance activities on roads within local jurisdiction. Under a Complete Streets approach, equitable access and safety for all people, not just car drivers are considered.

**GrowSmart Maine** is a statewide, non-partisan, non-profit organization that works on behalf of Maine's economy, environment its communities. GrowSmart Maine actively brings together Maine citizens, government, businesses, and nonprofit organizations to work for a more sustainable prosperity that supports both an improving standard of living and the protection of this state's unique character, our quality of place. GrowSmart

Maine was instrumental in the development and support of Portland's award-winning adoption of Complete Streets policies in 2012 and has recognized broader regional projects such as the efforts on the **Gorham East-West Corridor**.

**The MaineDOT** adopted a Complete Streets Policy in June of 2014, which incorporates all modes of travel in the planning, programming, design, rehabilitation, maintenance, and construction of the state's transportation system. For more information, visit the MaineDOT website: <http://www.maine.gov/MDOT/completestreets/>. Additionally, the MaineDOT adopted Practical Design Standards that allow for narrower travel and turning lanes in order to allow for safer modes of travel for bicyclists and pedestrians. Gorham's Main Street is a perfect candidate for a complete street redesign, especially in light of the upcoming water main replacement construction. The following cross section illustrates how Main Street could be redesigned, within the current curb-to-curb configuration, to allow for safer modes of travel by those walking, bicycling, driving automobiles or riding public transportation.



## UTILIZING THE "MAIN STREET APPROACH"

It would also be desirable, as many have stated at the public meetings, to place overhead utilities underground along Main Street. Although the cost for such an undertaking is extremely expensive, estimated at approximately 6 million per mile, it should be reviewed again in light of the planned reconstruction of Main Street.

Many communities in Maine and other states have employed the "Main Street Approach" as a model for organization which has proven successful for downtown and village revitalization. In Maine, communities may formally apply to become a Main Street Maine community (as a full or "Network" member), to receive support and assistance from the Maine Downtown Center, and increase their scoring on many of Maine's downtown grants. However, it is not a requirement to be a Main Street community to utilize the Main Street Approach, and many downtowns can

benefit from applying this model on their own. For the Gorham Village, there are a few key considerations under each of the Four Points that the community should keep in mind as it works to build and support a sustainable downtown village.

### **The Main Street Four-Point Approach®**

#### *From Main Street Maine*

The four points of the Main Street approach work together to build a sustainable and complete community revitalization effort.

**Organization** involves getting everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources to implement a Main Street revitalization program. A governing board and standing committees make up the fundamental organizational structure of the volunteer-driven program. Volunteers are coordinated and supported by a paid program director as well. This structure not only divides the workload and clearly delineates responsibilities, but also builds consensus and cooperation among the various stakeholders.

**Promotion** sells a positive image of the commercial district and encourages consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play and invest in the Main Street district. By marketing a district's unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners, and visitors, an effective promotional strategy forges a positive image through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers. These activities improve consumer and investor confidence in the district and encourage commercial activity and investment in the area.

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

**Economic Restructuring** strengthens a community's existing economic assets while expanding and diversifying its economic base. The Main Street program helps sharpen the competitiveness of existing business owners and recruits compatible new businesses and new economic uses to build a commercial district that responds to today's consumers' needs. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the district.

#### **Organization**

- With the upcoming Main Street reconstruction, now is the opportune time to bring on a coordinated effort from a newly formed committee to help guide and push for implementation. The Committee may wish to establish subcommittees or designate existing entities to address each of the four points, Economic Restructuring, Promotions, Design, and Organization.

- Part of the role of a committee or entity responsible for Organization is to facilitate good communication between town committees, staff, Town Council, downtown businesses and stakeholders, and the community at large to ensure that all are supportive of activities and actions, and that no one is working at cross-purposes. Coordination with the USM will be important organizational task.
- Another aspect of Organization is the need for volunteers to help carry out the many downtown activities. The Maine Downtown Center can offer guidance on managing volunteers effectively.

### Promotion

- Gorham Main Street promotional materials should help "sell" the Village and its assets, and increase awareness of Gorham Village as a destination and resource for visitors; materials such as maps, brochures, business directories, etc. should be available at a designated Visitors Center (both physically and via the internet).
- Focus collaboration efforts with USM as a niche for downtown growth.

### Design

- The committee or entity responsible for Design must consider the impacts of the Village plans and activities on its character and image. The design and style of streetscape elements, activities such as an annual Gorham Village clean up, or the installation of public art are all design considerations.

- The committee or entity responsible for Design should invite residents or businesses with design backgrounds such as artists, gardeners, architects, landscape architects, or others to participate in Design considerations for the downtown.

### Economic Restructuring

- The Gorham Planning, Code & Economic Development Staff should be closely aligned with, or directly involved with any future Committees including the Gorham Preservation Committee.
- Continue to invite residents or businesses with economic or business development backgrounds to participate in Economic Restructuring considerations for the Village.



# SIDEWALKS AND PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES

## 1998 MSMP Recommendations:

- Replace or upgrade sidewalks along State Street from Main to Narragansett Street
- Replace or upgrade sidewalks along School Street
- Replace or upgrade sidewalks along South Street
- Create pedestrian paths from interconnected parking areas to streets
- Install sidewalks on Elm, Water and Preble Streets

## Recommendations from the 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan

- The Town should develop and implement a long-range plan for pedestrian improvements in the remainder of the Town. This plan should focus on improving pedestrian access and safety in the three villages, improving facilities in established residential neighborhoods, linking these neighborhoods to adjacent village centers, upgrading pedestrian facilities in the village centers to enhance the desirability and safety of these areas, and improving pedestrian access to public facilities, schools, recreational areas, and other activity centers.

## 2015 MSMP Update Recommendations:

- Prioritize new sidewalk construction to the “missing links” in the Village, especially on Elm Street and Robie Street (both sides).

- Prioritize new sidewalk reconstruction and streetscape needs on Main Street, School Street, South Street and Elm Street, with a clear connection to USM campus along College Avenue. The majority of this recommendation may be possible as part of the Main Street reconstruction and would include the following design elements:
  - h) Remove esplanade and existing sidewalks on both sides of Main Street, from the Village Square east to New Portland Road and replace with a new 10-foot wide concrete sidewalk, where feasible.
  - i) Install pedestrian scale sidewalk lights (type and location to be determined) on both sides of Main Street, from approximately 43 State Street east to New Portland Road.
  - j) Install pedestrian scale sidewalk lights (type and location to be determined) on both sides of South Street, from approximately Preble Street north onto School Street to College Avenue.
  - k) Install pedestrian scale sidewalk lights (type and location to be determined) on north side on College Avenue, from School Street to USM campus walkway.
  - l) Install street trees within sidewalk with tree pits (type and location to be determined) on both sides of Main Street, from approximately 43 State Street east to New Portland Road.
  - m) Install mid-block crosswalk at The Village Mall and Hannaford entrances, with Rapid Flashing Beacon

crosswalk signs. To be designed and approved by MaineDOT.

- n) Incorporate benches and trash receptacles (type and location to be determined) into Main Street redesign.

New sidewalk construction as well as the reconstruction of damaged and unsafe sidewalks needs to be a high priority based on our existing conditions evaluation and comments received at both the public meeting and the public workshop. Particular attention was raised regarding the missing sidewalk connection on Robie Street near the s-curve at Sebago Brewing Company, especially considering this is an area in close proximity to The Village Elementary School. This sidewalk connection is a high priority. The Town should also strongly consider a new sidewalk on the opposite (east) side of Robie Street from Railroad Avenue to the Elementary School. Some of this connection could be required and funded by the redevelopment of the lot at the corner of Railroad Ave and Robie Street. Additionally, sections of the sidewalk on the east side of Elm Street from Main Street to Carter’s Auto Service is either missing or in need of complete reconstruction.



*A Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon (RRFB) used in combination with pedestrian warning signs, to provide a high-visibility strobe-like warning to drivers when pedestrians use a crosswalk.*



*Recommended locations for priority sidewalk construction.*

**BACKGROUND:**

A major item that was identified in the 1998 plan was the need for beautification planning of the Village to attract usage and to help increase vibrancy. Some of the identified improvements included placing utilities underground, creating public open space, installing decorative pedestrian scale lighting and street furniture such as benches, waste receptacles, and bike racks. The need for additional landscaping and unifying the landscaping within the Village was also recognized as a high priority. A unified landscape means that all properties within the Main Street zone are treated with appropriate and equal levels of landscaping. Some examples are: similar sizes and types of street trees, parking lot screening, buffering, shading, exterior seating with traffic sheltering, and entrance drive improvements. A unified landscape along Main Street will also act as a traffic-calming feature. Due to the greater concern for improving pedestrian safety and traffic congestion projects taking up a greater amount of local resources, only minor beautification projects were completed since 1998.

**Improvements performed as recommended in 1998 MSMP, include:**

- Brick sidewalk replace in Village Square. Completed in 2010.
- New sidewalk construction associated with Site Plan approvals (ongoing).
- Benches and landscaping improvements associated with Site Plan approvals, e.g., TD Bank and Norway Savings Bank (ongoing).

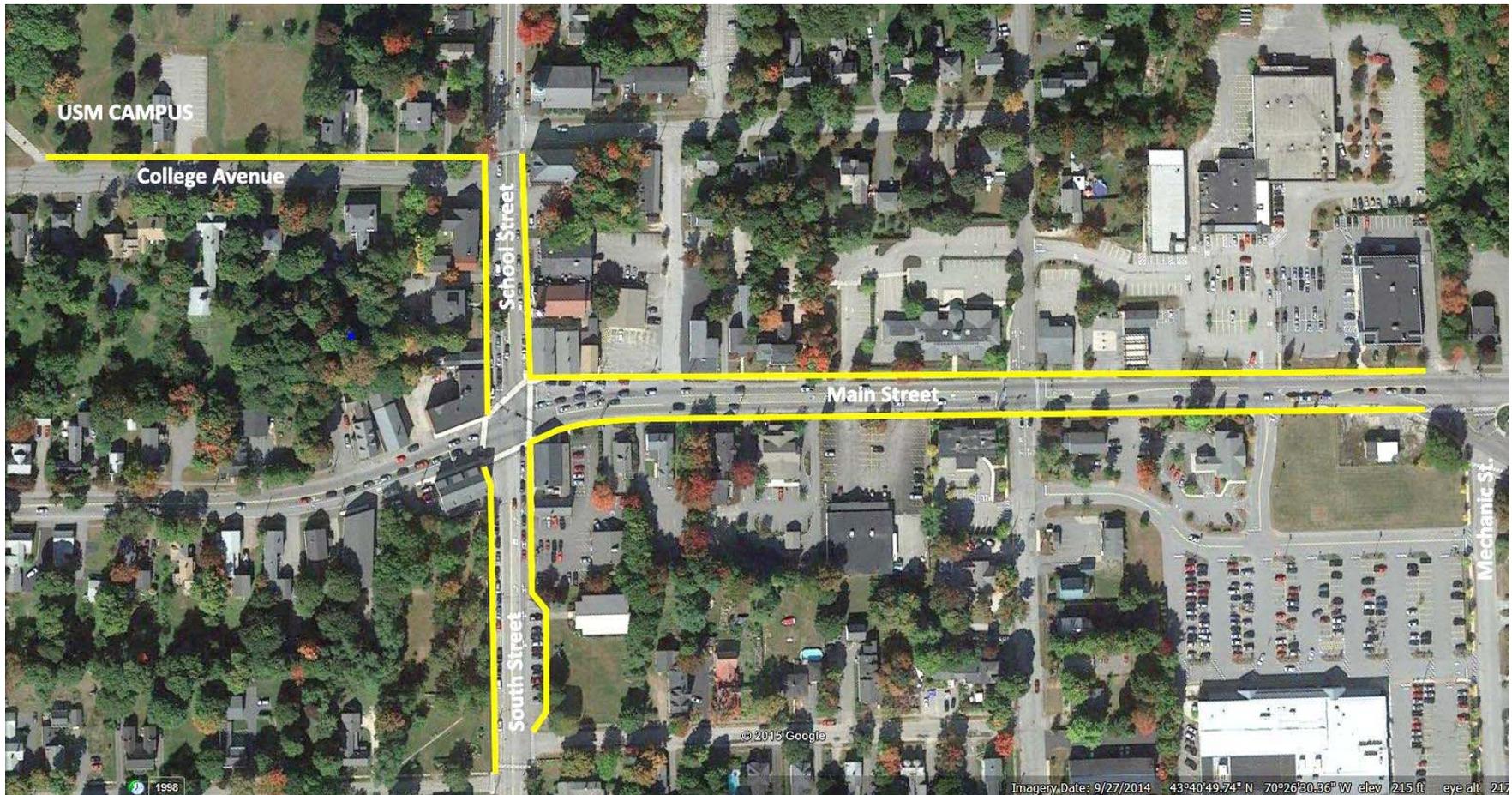
- Replaced and upgrade sidewalks along School Street.
- Construction of sections of the Cross-Town Trail.

In the spring of 2013, the Town Council tasked the Gorham Economic Development Corporation (GEDC) and Staff to solicit input from the residential and commercial communities about parking needs and issues within the Village. The Town solicited feedback utilizing a survey at a number of public hearings. Despite the recent intersection improvements in the Village Square, over 65% of people surveyed (over 100 surveys returned) felt that the intersection was still dangerous for pedestrians. It was further concluded by the GEDC that "Gorham Village is not pedestrian friendly and that pedestrians are hindered by the inability to cross the major intersection in the Village."

The **Five-Minute Walk** is a standard that is best described as the average distance that a pedestrian is willing to walk before opting to drive. The unit of measurement is commonplace in the planning profession and is often represented by a radius measuring  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile. The average walking speed of a human is approximately 3 miles per hour, which translates to  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile in five minutes. This walking distance is often represented on a proposed plan drawing or an aerial as a circle drawn with the center of the circle on the destination with the circle at a 1320-foot radius. The problem with this basic diagram is that it does not consider enough information. The  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile radius circle shows the distance 'as the crow flies' or as a linear route. Pedestrians utilize sidewalks, parking lots and paths, whereas a drawing with a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile circle cannot represent this. Major arterials, fences and walls are also commonplace in suburban locations limiting the walkability even further.

This measurement also depends on where a person starts. For purposes of this study, we used the Village Square intersection as a starting point. Ideally, this point would be a centralized municipal parking lot. We found that, the entire village (Study Area) is within a five-minute walk of the Square, including the

high school, all of Water Street, and portions of the USM campus. A walk from the dormitories at the USM campus to Hannaford Supermarket is more accurately a 15-minute walk. A walk from the Green Street neighborhood to the Village Elementary School might take 8 to 9 minutes.



*Recommended locations for wider sidewalks where feasible (loss of grass esplanade) and installation of pedestrian scale lights and street trees.*

The sidewalk connection that received the most attention and discussion during the public forums was the connection to USM. Many people suggested that a route be established that is well lit, clearly delineated, safer, and wider than other sidewalks in the Village. The highest priority focus for the future sidewalk should be lighting. This would increase the use of pedestrian activity to and from the USM Campus.

As part of the November 13, 2014 Public Workshop, the design team asked each group a series of questions aimed at prioritizing improvements within the study area. The six topics below were defined with additional items or subtopics and the groups were asked to rate the subtopics in order of priority. The bulleted subtopics shown below received the most support, in order of priority, and have been considered in the MSMP Update recommendations:

1. Develop a Unified Streetscape
  - Street trees
  - Benches
  - Trash receptacles
  - Wider sidewalks
  - Main Street, South Street, and School Street only
2. Provide more Pedestrian Lighting
  - Main Street, South Street, and School Street were identified as priority streets
3. Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation and Safety
  - Consider new crosswalk design, materials, or crossing warning lights

- Add additional crosswalks on Main Street (this was a strongly favored item in the safe routes to school surveys from both students and parents)
- Add pedestrian bump-outs or center islands for crosswalks, where feasible
- Construct missing links in sidewalk system
- Develop more off-street trail connections

#### 4. Protect Historic Buildings

- Via Design Guidelines and Regulation Standards
- Encourage funding assistance through Façade Program

#### 5. Allow More Density in Large Village Homes

- Allow more “mixed use” in residential homes
- Increase residential dwelling capacity
- Decrease on-site parking requirements per dwelling unit

#### 6. Other Ideas

- Provide a town focal point
- Provide more public art
- Improve lighting and seating in the Village parks
- Walking Museum of village architecture

The consultant team also asked the people to prioritize each planning objective. Without question, the highest planning objectives were to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and lighting.

# SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

This chapter speaks specifically to the assessment and resultant recommendations for the Maine Safe Routes to School Program and may have reoccurring recommendations with other chapters such as sidewalk, crosswalk and bike path priorities and improvements. The recommendations outlined in this chapter may be eligible for funding through the Maine Safe Routes to School Program, depending on Program budget and other eligible priority projects.

In addition to providing an inventory of the existing pedestrian infrastructure, an essential element of this process is to increase pedestrian safety, create a more “walkable” and bicycle-friendly community and connect major destinations within the village area. Using the data acquired from these surveys, an assessment of barriers and potential solutions was developed. Suggested solutions and strategies to overcome these barriers are outlined in the recommendations section below.

## 2015 MSMP Update Recommendations:

### *Proposed Sidewalk Links for Construction:*

- Lombard Street
- New Portland Road
- Preble Street
- Robie Street

*Proposed Formalizing of Off-Road Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections* (allows middle school students a safe back way to

meet the bus at high school; also used by elementary and high school students):

- Lombard Street to Gorham High School Campus
- Village Woods Circle to Gorham High School Campus
- Formalize and sign the paths in the woods behind Village Elementary that students use to reach friends’ houses

### *Proposed Crosswalks and Pedestrian Crossing Amenities*

- Higher visibility crosswalks:
  - Maintain re-painting of crosswalks for visibility
  - Paint piano block style crosswalks in lieu of traditional two line crosswalks
  - Install pedestrian crossing signage before the Main Street and South Street intersection
  - Install Rapid Flashing Beacons in mid-block or high use crossings
- Crosswalk at the Gorham High School intersection with Morrill Avenue.
- Better pedestrian crossing options (e.g., lighting, signage, crosswalk, crossing guard, refuge island) from iSpoon and Burger King area to Hannaford’s
- Crossing Guard Placements for:
  - Gorham High School intersection (Morrill Ave)
  - South and Main Street intersection

### *Other Proposed Improvements*

- Bike lanes on South Street into the village area
- Speed limit reduced further in the heart of village area (Main & South Streets)

- Additional bicycle parking in the village area near businesses
- Additional bicycle parking at Village Elementary
- More consistent clearing of sidewalks after winter storms

### *Proposed Programming*

In addition to infrastructure improvement recommendations based on the Village and Middle School Survey results, there are a number of programs the community and schools can implement to improve safety and encourage more walking and biking by local students. The Maine Safe Routes to School Program can offer technical and other assistance to the community, Village Elementary, and the Middle School for the following:

**Work with Law Enforcement:** Speed was also noted as one of the major obstacles affecting whether parents allow their children to walk or bike to school; it was also noted as a factor by middle school students. In addition to traffic calming infrastructure improvements, using speed trailers near the schools every few months, putting up student-made signs along the routes to school, placing additional crossing guards, and progressive ticketing by police are effective ways to reduce traffic speed if used regularly. For more information, see [www.saferoutesinfo.org/lawenforcement/](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/lawenforcement/)

**Annual Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety Education:** Available at no cost to all schools and community groups in Maine – see [www.mainebpse.org](http://www.mainebpse.org) Services include:

- **Youth Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education** - Target Grades: 3-8 - trained instructors come to your school to conduct dynamic presentations
- **Youth Bicycle Riding Clubs** - Target Grades: 3-12 - fun multi-week hands-on curriculum led by certified instructors
- **Bicycle Safety Rodeos** - Target Grades: K-4 - get technical assistance and information on how to run a "continuous flow" Bike Safety Rodeo.
- **Maine Bicycle Helmet Program** - This program - a partnership of the MaineDOT and the Bicycle Coalition of Maine - can provide bicycle helmets to youth through schools, police departments, community groups, etc. Applicants must commit to arranging bicycle and pedestrian safety education presentations for helmet recipients before or within three months of submitting their order.

**Walking School Bus for Village Elementary students/Peer Walkpools for Middle School students:** Suggested by some parents in the Parent Survey, children can meet at specific locations on one or more routes to the school campus and walk the remaining distance to school together. This can be done with community and parent volunteers to accompany younger students, with rotating volunteer responsibilities. Village Elementary can also apply to the Maine Walking School Bus Program for Technical assistance, program equipment, and a stipend to hire a school-based Walking School Bus Coordinator. For more information, see [www.walkingschoolbus.me](http://www.walkingschoolbus.me)

**Walk and Bike to School Days:** Schools can encourage more students to walk or bike by holding weekly, monthly or seasonal walk and bike encouragement days. For more information, see [www.mainesaferoutes.org](http://www.mainesaferoutes.org)

## BACKGROUND

During the process for updating the Village Master Plan, planning staff coordinated with the Maine Safe Routes to School Program to assess student safety needs and their walking and bicycling activities in the Gorham Village area. Walking and biking to school and around town has been shown to improve safety and ease traffic congestion, improve academic performance and classroom behavior, help address childhood obesity concerns, decrease air pollution and carbon emissions, and reduce school districts & municipalities' busing costs.

As part of the update process of the Gorham Village Master Plan, the Maine Safe Routes to School Program spoke with Gorham Schools' district transportation staff and administrators at the Village Elementary and Gorham Middle Schools. Both schools draw walking and bicycling students from the village area and about half of Middle School students walk into the Village on the school's early release days.

### District Policies and Implications

The school district policy offers busing to elementary students who live beyond 1/3 of a mile from school. This results in only 17 students at Village Elementary who are within the official walk zone, even though up to one mile is considered a walkable distance for elementary students. Quite a number of other Village students live well within that distance in the village area.

Middle and high school students are bused if they live beyond 1 mile from school and they are required to walk up to one mile to the nearest bus stop. For many middle school students in the village area, this means catching the school bus at the Gorham High School. District transportation staff noted there are two much-needed bicycle and pedestrian off-road connections for those students to reach the high school campus in a safe and accessible manner. Those are noted in the recommendations below.

Crossing guards are made available by the district to cross students at School and South Streets (at the library) and at Robie and Lincoln Streets.

### Parent and Student Surveys

The program also conducted surveys at each school and received similar responses. Village Elementary completed the *Parent Survey on Walking and Bicycling* from the National Center for Safe Routes to School with a 16% response rate and Gorham Middle students participated in a *Student Survey on Walking and Bicycling* with a 55% response rate.

According to both surveys, many students live more than one mile from school and because there are no sidewalks along many roads outside the village area, they are bused or driven to school. However, as stated above, 45% of middle school students walk or bike in the village area recreationally or after school on early release days. For those students living within walking distance of Village Elementary or the Gorham Middle School, the amount

and speed of traffic along the route, the need for sidewalks or off- and the desire for younger children to be accompanied (either by other students or adults) were cited as obstacles to students walking or biking. Although the number of respondents participating in the Parent Survey was small in comparison to the total number of students attending Village Elementary, the concerns were consistent. Many parents expressed an interest in their children being able to walk and bike and between 40 and 70% of students, living within a mile of school, had also expressed the same interest. In addition, a number of their children already do walk and bike, except during the winter months - primarily due to snow obstructing the sidewalks. middle school students reported that they walk or bike in the village area to visit friends and public sites like the library and retail locations

road connection paths, the safety of intersections and crossings,

# USM COORDINATION and CONNECTIVITY

## Recommendations from the 1998 MSMP

- Work to implement new transit services by 2001 in conjunction with USM.
- Institute a Town and USM committee to address issues. Sub-committees should be formed to address specific topics such as transportation and cultural programming.
- Develop a pathway from School Street to the Village Mall Shopping Center to strengthen linkage from USM to downtown.

## 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan Recommendations:

- Continue to explore ways to provide scheduled bus service between Gorham Village and in-town Portland possibly in conjunction with the USM and/or the Metro system.
- Work with other transit providers in Greater Portland and PACTS to develop a more regional and integrated transit system.
- Work with the USM to better integrate the campus into Gorham Village and to encourage more of a “college-town” atmosphere in the Village.

## 2015 MSMP Update Recommendations:

- Conduct a student and professor survey for the entire USM Gorham Campus population to determine what the Town could do to improve coordination and connections to and from USM and the Village.
- Establish a town and USM liaison in order to openly share proposed ideas, common issues, and proposed improvements as a way to facilitate proposed improvements that are mutually shared.
- Develop Town programs that would complement USM programs, e.g., student exhibitions at local coffee shops, temporary or permanent sculpture displays in the Village in coordination with the USM Arts Department, a self-guided architectural walking tour.
- Establish a Committee to review the options for public transit, as mentioned above, to determine which is most feasible from a Town-wide perspective.

## BACKGROUND

The presence of the University of Southern Maine (USM) is a relatively untapped resource with regard to the economic and cultural impact on the Village Center. Improved coordination and integration with the USM should occur at different levels, on formal and informal bases. Since the 1998 MSMP, the USM has undertaken a program to strengthen the Gorham campus as a residential campus by offering enhanced academic offerings at the Gorham campus and extracurricular activities.

In the past couple of years, the Town Council and Staff have had a number of discussions with representatives at the USM on how to better link the USM to the Village. The USM has also been discussing building a 500-seat multi-purpose facility to serve the needs of the music, fine and performing arts programs, as well as lectures. A facility of this size will certainly increase vehicle and pedestrian traffic within the Village.

The desire to make better pedestrian connections to the USM campus was discussed in the 1998 Plan. With the exception of crosswalk and signal improvements at the Main Street Square, little has been done to advance this goal. This desire became evident again during the public meetings held for the MSMP Update and several noteworthy ideas came from the November public workshop.

## Public Transit

Currently, there is no public bus transportation available to Gorham residents. The USM provides bus service open to students, faculty and staff between the Gorham and Portland campuses.

According to a study performed in 2012, by the Greater Portland Council of Governments, one significant opportunity for public transit would be to open the USM'S shuttle bus to the public or connect to a Metro bus route in Westbrook. Gorham, through its participation with PACTS, should aggressively pursue these two opportunities. Funding of the local share (likely 20%) would be through cost sharing between participating municipalities and the USM. This service is recommended in the Gorham-Portland Corridor Study. Another option would be to join the Greater Portland Transit District's Metro bus service, which now has several stops in Portland and loops to the Maine Mall, Falmouth and Westbrook. The Gorham line would connect downtown Gorham to the Westbrook loop, with two trips in the morning and two trips in the evening.

# BICYCLE FACILITIES

## 1998 MSMP Recommendations:

- Install "Share the Road" signs at village and commercial gateway locations.
- Review concept for conversion of Sanford and Eastern RR right-of-way to a multi-use pathway.
- Provide bicycle racks at activity centers (libraries, etc.) and designated locations.

## Recommendations from the 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan

- The Town should provide improved bicycle facilities in the community including designated bike lanes, shared lanes, and bike lock-up places at public facilities, schools, recreational areas, and other activity centers.
- The Town should revise its land use regulations to require that large commercial, industrial, multi-family residential or mixed-use developments incorporate provisions for bicycles into the development plan if appropriate.

## 2015 MSMP Update Recommendations:

- Install "Share the Road" signs in the Village with priority at the village edges on Main Street, South Street, School Street and State Street where the wide paved shoulders become narrow or when on-street parking occurs.
- Pursue off-street connections such as the proposed Cross-Town bike path along the old railroad corridor, into Westbrook. This path should be paved at a minimum of

- 12 feet wide to allow for commuting. Commuting use could provide alternative state and federal funding sources.
- Improve bicycle connections between the Village and community destinations including directional signage, designated bike lanes, shared lanes (sharrows), along major bicycle routes.
- Provide bicycle racks along side streets and at key destinations, e.g. the schools, public buildings and parks within the Village.

Include 5' wide Bike Lanes and bicycle friendly catch basin grate as part of Main Street reconstruction, if feasible.

## BACKGROUND

A Regional Bicycle Wayfinding Study conducted by PACTS in 2014 identified regional bicycle routes along Routes 25, 202/4 and 114 within the MSMP Update study area. Currently there no designated bike lanes or share the road markings or signs in the Village. Main Street (Route 25) has narrow shoulders that range from 2' to 4' wide and nonexistent in some areas. South Street and School Street (Route 114) have on-street parallel parking in the Village and no bike lanes.

During the public meetings, there was considerable discussion about the need for better, safer and clearly marked bike lanes in the Village. Flaggy Meadow Road and College Ave were discussed as being a favored route for cyclists as were New Portland Road and Main Street. Main Street and New Portland Road, east of Mechanic Street, have excellent shoulders for

cyclists. The bottleneck occurs on Main Street, west of Mechanic Street, through the Village and on State Street until you get to the intersection with Narragansett Street. Improved bicycle connections to and throughout the Village are needed to enhance access to the businesses as an alternative to automobile use and to promote a healthy community. Special attention should be given to a safe route to and from the USM campus.



# TRAILS AND CONNECTIVITY

## 1998 MSMP Recommendations:

- Not discussed.

## 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan Recommendations:

- The Town should continue to implement the trail plan for connecting the Gorham Industrial Park area with Gorham Village. This effort should include constructing links to existing developments along the route to create a continuous network of pedestrian facilities that includes both sidewalks and trails to link key buildings and activity centers on the east side of the community with each other.
- The Town should work with PACTS and surrounding communities to link the Town's pedestrian (and bicycle) facilities with those in adjoining communities and the larger regional system.

## 2015 MSMP Update Recommendations:

- Integrate the Conservation Committee with site plan reviews to encourage trail connections to existing or planned trails and open space, wherever feasible.
- Continue to build the Cross-Town Trail along the old RR corridor from the Frazier Trail east through the Village, with an eventual link into Westbrook.
- Work with the City of Westbrook and Portland Trails on connections to the Cross-Town Trail in order to continue to link pedestrian and bicycle facilities to the regional system.
- The Gorham Conservation Commission should consider establishing an annual maintenance fund either through fundraising or a foundation for the ongoing control of invasive plant species.



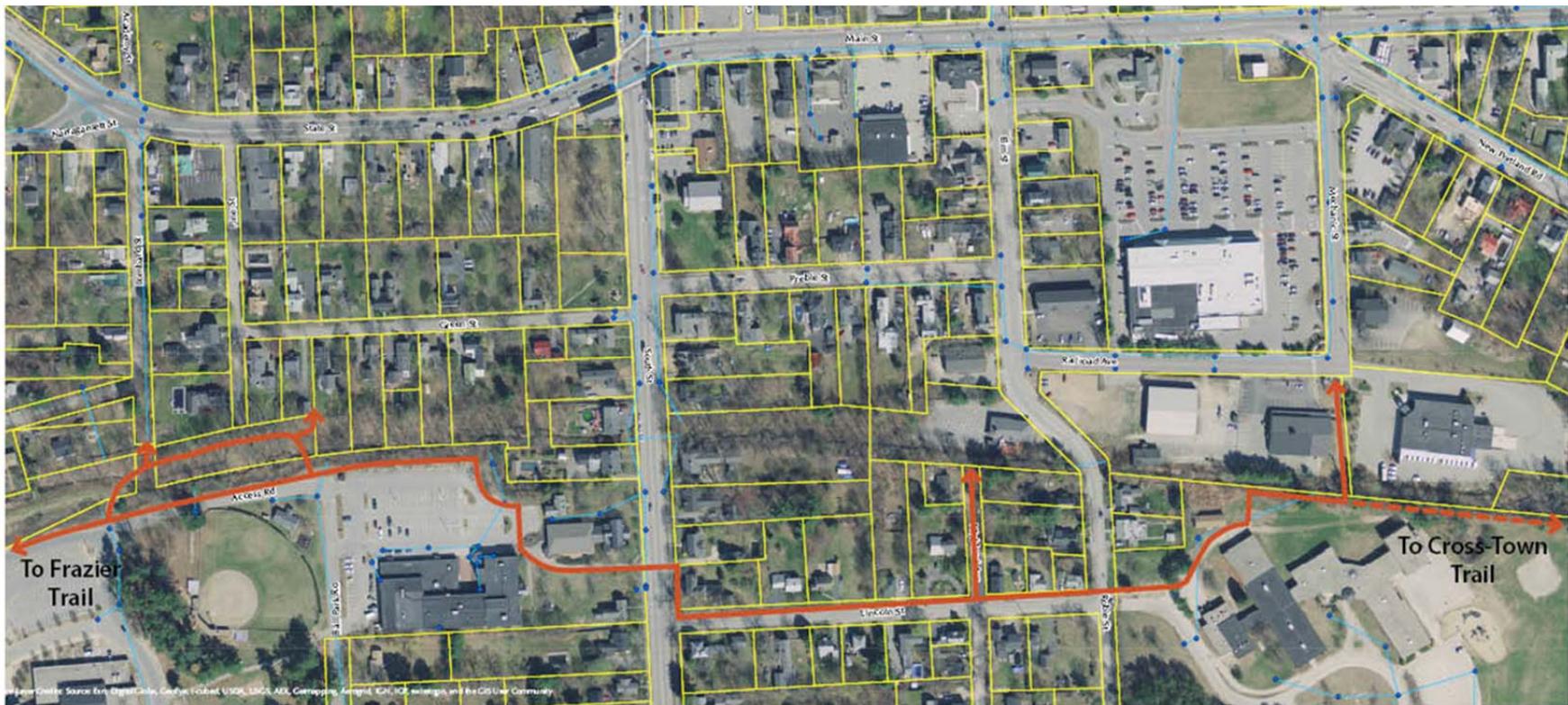
*Image from KeepMaineCurrent.com, April 21, 2011.*

## BACKGROUND

The Gorham Conservation Committee (GCC) maintains the trails in Gorham. The GCC has a Facebook page to help promote and create awareness of the open spaces and trails within town. One of the GCC's designated projects for 2015 is the continued maintenance and trail building at the Chick Property at Tannery Brook. Additionally, the Committee is active in the development of the Cross Town Trail with possible connection to Mosher corner, connection with North Gorham via Irish Crossing and the new development at Ichabod Lane. The first phase of the Cross-

Town Trail has been funded and designed and is scheduled to be constructed within the next few years.

At the first public meeting a possible extension of the Cross-Town Trail was presented. The trail study examined a connection from the Frazier Trail east through the Village with an eventual link into Westbrook. The portion of the trail that traverses through the Village may need to use a combination of school property, roadways and parking lot edges to avoid the low wet areas of the old abandoned railroad grade.



*Orange line shows potential Village trail system connecting Frazier Trail to Cross-Town Trail*

# PARKING

## 1998 MSMP Recommendations:

- Reconfigure or relocate perpendicular parking in front of Robie Community Center to parallel parking and to side yard creating the same number or more spaces
- Create interconnected parking for 36 and 42 Main Street shops and offices, Gorham Savings Bank employee parking and Village Mall, Shop N Save and new development on adjacent lot on Mechanic Street,
- Create parallel on-street parking on the side of 36 Main Street, in front of 36 Main Street and Christy's (now 7-Eleven).
- Implement interconnected parking concept on each side of Main Street within the Commercial district

## 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan Recommendations:

- The Town should work with property owners in the Village to explore ways to provide improved off-street parking that is available to the public or is shared by a group of businesses.
- The Town should review its on-street parking limitations in those areas that are village centers to maximize the availability of on-street parking and to manage its use to assure its availability for customers and visitors.
- Implement interconnected parking concept on each side of Main Street within the Commercial district

- Identify opportunities for municipal parking areas near Gorham Square.

## 2013 Village Parking Study Recommendations:

The Village Parking Study recommended keeping both of the structures on the recently town purchased properties of 21 Main Street and 10 Preble Street but also recommend that the Town work with abutting property owners to allow for shared lot parking and interconnected lots for those properties. The 10 Preble Street lot had a gain of 24 new spaces with the loss of the barn structure. With on-going debate and controversy with the Preble Street proposal, the Town Council has subsequently rejected the construction of a municipal parking lot on that parcel.

Other recommendations of the *Village Parking Study* included:

- Reorganize and add 8 new spaces at the Robie Community Building.
- Add a new crosswalk on South Street at Green Street. *This recommendation has been completed.*
- Add 8 new parking spaces on Cross Street.
- Reorganize and interconnect the rear parking lots of three Main Street parcels between Cross Street and the Gorham Saving Bank lot. The Study found that this could provide 28 additional parking spaces in that area.

- Develop signage at key locations to alert and direct motorist to Municipal Parking Lots.
- Enforce the 1 and 2 hour parking limits to allow for more turn-over, especially on Main Street.
- Make policy changes to allow for more flexible and increased parking in the Village by use of Form Based Codes examples.

**2015 MSMP Update Recommendations:**

- Continue to incorporate recommendations in 2013 Village Parking Study.
- Strongly pursue interconnect parking areas in the rear of three Main Street parcels between Cross Street and the Gorham Saving Bank lot. The Study found that this could add up to 28 additional parking spaces in that area, which is an area where parking is mostly needed.
- Develop signage at key locations to alert and direct motorist to municipal parking areas.



**BACKGROUND**

What is it about parking in small New England villages that helps support and maintain a healthy vibrant retail and commercial atmosphere? Freeport, Maine, for example features 300’ to 550’ continuous sidewalks between curb cuts, buildings that interface with sidewalks, parking and service areas in the rear, and most importantly, shared parking lots that are easily accessible and serviceable to the entire commercial. Many studies show that people are comfortable with walking one quarter to one half of a mile if public parking is easily identifiable, accessible, and convenient. Granted, Freeport has LL Bean, but it does not take a retail giant to start the process of connecting lots, easing private parking stipulations, and reducing curb cuts to allow for an enhanced and more continuous pedestrian experience.

Parking within the Gorham Village still remains a significant obstacle, particularly parking to service the existing and future businesses on the north side of Main and State Street at the Route 25 and Route 114 intersection. The majority of the buildings in the area are multi-story structures and has multiple commercial uses or a mix of commercial and residential uses. Most of the lots have little or no parking so businesses are forced to rely on on-street parking. A number of the buildings have vacancies and lack of parking is identified as a key factor.

The 1998 MSMP identified interconnecting parking lots as a way to provide additional parking that functions more efficiently. Unfortunately, the majority of private parking lots remain unconnected and utilized only by property owners and their tenants. As a result, when frequenting the Village, the majority of

patrons drive from one business to another despite the close proximity of the businesses. Not only does this discourage shoppers from walking, it also increases traffic on and off the roadways. In June of 2012, one residential and one mixed use property within Gorham Village came on the real-estate market. The Town Council purchased both properties with the vision that they could be utilized for a variety of uses such as public parking, commercial redevelopment, or community open space. One benefit would be that if the lots were developed for public parking, existing public and private parking lots could be more efficiently designed and better interconnected. Purchasing the properties sparked public debate surrounding the perceived lack of parking and pedestrian safety within the Village. As a result, in 2013 the Town conducted surveys of parking needs in Gorham Village and preliminary results indicated that additional parking is needed in the general location of the main intersection of South Street and Main Street (Routes 114 & 25). Additionally, the Town hired a consultant to perform a “Village Parking Study” That study can be found on the Planning Departments web site at:

[http://www.gorham-me.org/Public\\_Documents/GorhamME\\_Planning/Studies%20%26%20Land%20Use%20Plans/](http://www.gorham-me.org/Public_Documents/GorhamME_Planning/Studies%20%26%20Land%20Use%20Plans/)

### Parking Lot / Sidewalk interface

Ideally, parking lots in the Village core should not create significant gaps along the “street wall”. Where buildings cannot be placed at the sidewalk edge, or where significant store front gaps exist. There are alternatives that may be appropriate for the space. Similar to the street wall formed by buildings placed at the sidewalk, the street frontage of the parking lot could be

created through the use of fences, canopy trees, hedges, bollards, and/or structural screens. A shallow setback with over-story trees and a low fence made of stone, brick, and/or ornamental iron railings could effectively buffer unsightly views while maintaining the “street wall.” The buffer area could also provide a minimal area for sidewalk snow storage. (Taken from the *Village Parking Study*)



# STORMWATER

## 1998 MSMP Recommendations:

- Not recognized

## 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan Recommendations:

- The Town should develop and implement an enhanced Stormwater Management Plan to address stormwater issues in existing developed areas of the community as well as for new development.
- The Town should explore alternative funding mechanisms to pay for a portion of the cost of stormwater management.
- The Town should vigorously manage stormwater in the watersheds of streams that are not impaired but have water quality concerns to assure that the health of these waterbodies is maintained.

## 2015 MSMP Update Recommendations:

- Address recommendations from the 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan.
- Develop a municipal pilot or demonstration projects for LID or green infrastructure retrofits.
- Require via the Planning Board Site Plan Review and Approval Process that applicants of new or retrofit development within the village submit LID options as part of the application.

## BACKGROUND

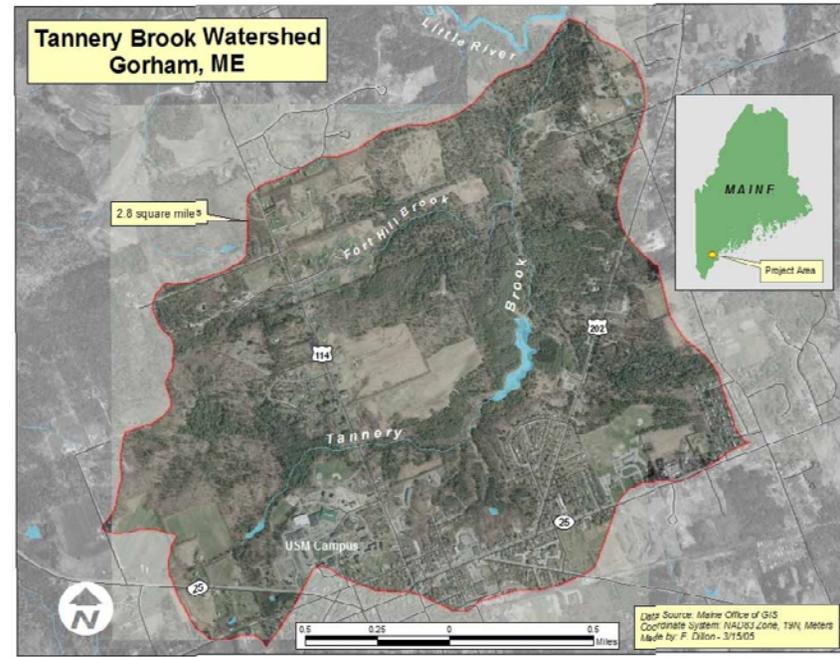
Much of the study for the Main Street Master Plan update lies in the Tannery Brook watershed. Development within the watershed consists of about 480 residential homes, most of which are located within close proximity to the downtown village area. The upper watershed is primarily forested, although there is rapid residential development taking place. The Gorham Conservation Committee is working on a trail network to connect Tannery Brook Park to the village. Commercial operations and retail business in the watershed include an auto repair shop, several gas stations, Hannaford Supermarket, local pizza shops and the University of Southern Maine (USM) Gorham campus lies almost entirely within the watershed.

The Town of Gorham holds a Maine Pollution Discharge Elimination System (MEPDES) Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) General Permit for the discharge of stormwater from its storm drain system to waters of the state. The Town's Stormwater Program Management Plan (SWPMP) that was prepared to comply with the MS4 General Permit identified Tannery Brook watershed as the Town's priority watershed.

The Tannery Brook watershed was chosen as the Town's priority watershed because of its location in the Gorham Village, which is the most built-out area of Town. In addition, Tannery Brook watershed has been a focus of concern in the past by the Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Tannery Brook is listed in Category 3 in Maine DEP's 2012 Integrated Water Quality Report, which includes rivers and streams with insufficient data or information to determine if the designated uses are attained. According to the 2012 Integrated Water Quality Report, there are potential sources of impairment; however, the data is variable and conflicting, and resampling is required. Therefore, Tannery Brook is not officially considered an impaired waterbody by the state. Although the sampling results for Tannery Brook are inclusive, it is imperative that efforts to reduce the potential for stormwater pollution are taken in the watershed to prevent Tannery Brook from becoming impaired.

A significant part of the Main Street Master Plan project area is located within the bounds of the Tannery Brook watershed as depicted in the following image.



There are two or three larger outfalls within close proximity that drain the majority of the Main Street area and are located within the Tannery Brook watershed. Efforts should be taken to incorporate stormwater treatment within these catchment areas when redeveloping or retrofitting parcels within the Main Street study area. The remainder of the Main Street study area (outside of the Tannery Brook watershed) drains to an old, abandoned railroad bed that overtime has become a prominent, stream-like conveyance. It serves as the collection channel for many of the parking areas in Gorham Village, including the Municipal Complex and High School as well as the Robie Street Elementary School. Although the railroad bed stream is not included as a priority in the Town's MS4 SWPMP, this stream would be a good candidate for stormwater treatment through retrofits,

particularly because of the municipal properties that discharge to it. Sites such as the Municipal Complex, the High School and Robie Street Elementary School could serve as pilot or demonstration projects for LID or green infrastructure retrofits. Additionally, the Town should require via the Planning Board Site Plan Review and Approval Process, applicants of new or retrofit development within the Village submit LID options as part of the application.

The following are various alternatives for LID treatment:

- Tree box filter
- Curb inlet infiltration swale
- Raingarden
- Pervious asphalt
- Pervious pavers
- Bio-swale
- Mass volume subsurface detention
- Roof drains and downspout treatment



# PARKS AND GREENSPACE

## 1998 MSMP Recommendations:

- Create more greenspace by establishing uniform sidewalks, landscaping, and esplanade along Main Street in commercial district
- Upgrade open space adjacent to Robie Community Center to encourage planned community activities
- Provide amenities in open spaces to include gazebo band stand at Robie Community Center and benches and trash receptacles at all open spaces.
- Transform greenspaces at entrance to Shop N Save and outside of current Post Office into pocket parks.
- Express desire for open space component in the development and redevelopment along Mechanic Street and Railroad Avenue.

## 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan Recommendations:

- Provide additional open space and parks

## 2015 MSMP Update Recommendations:

- Require via the Planning Board Site Plan Review and Approval Process that applicants of new or retrofit development within the village submit enhanced green space designs.
- Continue to work with groups on trails expansion along old RR corridor to create linear park system in the village,

- connecting the schools, the municipal buildings and local businesses.
- Enhance existing parks with new consistent signage.
- Improve pedestrian connections from the Village to Tannery Brook Park and enhance trails within Tannery Brook Park.
- Coordinate with USM on potential walking tours of campus and as part of the Architectural Museum walking tour.
- Upgrade open space adjacent to Robie Community Center.
- Consider a playground including water features at the Robie Community Center.
- Provide amenities , e.g. benches and trash receptacles in all town parks.

## BACKGROUND

Most of Gorham's parks and recreation facilities are in or near Gorham Village, with a few in the Little Falls Area and northern part of town. All parks and related facilities can be found on the Gorham Parks & Recreation Department website, which also has links to organized community recreation activities, including youth sports, fitness classes, dog training and after-school activities.

<http://www.gorhamrec.com/info/default.aspx>

Additionally, the Gorham Conservation Committee has information of trails throughout town.

[http://www.gorham-me.org/public\\_documents/gorhamme\\_bcomm/parkconserve](http://www.gorham-me.org/public_documents/gorhamme_bcomm/parkconserve)

The need for parks and green spaces in a village environment should not be overlooked, some of the most vibrant small town villages have active town greens, recreation fields, passive use parks and playgrounds where townspeople come together to socialize, recreate, find reprieve, and play. These spaces embody that sense of place and create community. Although Gorham Village contains two middle schools, and the High School complex, there are few opportunities to walk through, sit in, or play in a non-athletic park space. As parcels get redeveloped over time, the Town should consider park opportunities for existing and future residents looking for an active lifestyle.

During the public meeting a number of comments were expressed to make the existing parks more visible, attractive, and more pedestrian friendly by the addition of benches and trash receptacles. The existing parks and green spaces within the study area include:

- The park with the gazebo and sculpture in front of the Municipal Center
- The park at South Street and Green Street
- Robie Community building green space
- The pocket park at the corner of Railroad Avenue and Mechanic Street
- The Village Elementary school yard

These parks provide opportunities for active and passive recreation to downtown residents and visitors. Opportunities to expand the programming of these existing parks to accommodate

the needs of the village residents and businesses should also be explored such as utilizing these parks more for downtown activities and special events in order to draw visitors and local townspeople to the Village. Consistent well-designed signage would also help identify the space as a public park.

The Town has recently endorsed a plan for Tannery Brook Park, an 80 acre park located within walking distance of the Village. The park will provide for a variety of low impact recreation activities, including trails designed for walking and jogging, and sitting areas with benches for general nature appreciation. Currently, Gorham Conservation Commission and Gorham Snow-Goers maintain approximately three miles of recreational trails in the watershed that are utilized for walking, biking, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling.

The University of Southern Maine (USM) campus is another excellent opportunity to utilize the miles of walkways, the campus quadrangles, and the use of its open lawns as a village amenity. Perhaps a self-guided architectural and botanical walking tour could be developed by the Town in collaboration with the USM and promoted as a Gorham destination, drawing visitors and local townspeople to the Village and drawing awareness to the USM.

Another opportunity is the establishment of pocket parks. Pocket parks are small-scale urban open spaces that provide a safe and inviting environment for surrounding community members. They also meet a variety of needs and functions, including small event space, play areas for children, spaces for relaxing or meeting friends, taking lunch breaks, etc. [Successful “pocket parks” have four key qualities: they are accessible; allow people

to engage in activities; are comfortable spaces and have a good image; and finally, are sociable places: one where people meet each other and take people to when they come to visit.] (foot note- NRPA National Recreation and Park Association, news brief).

Pocket Parks can be designed and encouraged or even required by the Planning Board during a site plan review process, similar to how open space improvements are required in the subdivision process. Pocket Parks can be designed as part of the required pervious area, the stormwater treatment area, etc., and built for and maintained by the landowner.





# BUILDING AND ARCHITECTURE

## 2015 MSMP Update Recommendations:

### 1. Empower the Town's Historic Preservation Committee

- The Town administration should provide the GHPC with staff support (secretarial, technical, planning and zoning).
- The Town administration should provide the GHPC with funding according to a budget to be prepared by the Committee.

### 2. Identify Gorham's Historic Resources

- GHPC to undertake an inventory of Gorham's historic resources, according to procedures approved by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC).
- GHPC to evaluate and rank inventoried resources using MHPC and National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) criteria.
- GHPC to determine the degree of protection desired for Gorham's designated historic resources, through a transparent and participatory process.

### 3. Establish a Framework for Protecting Historic Resources

- Nominate and designate historic districts and individual historic buildings, using the adopted inventory and ranking process- to be recognized, protected, preserved, and qualified for any historic preservation incentives.
- Enact a local historic district ordinance, with demolition delay or prohibition provisions- to be administered by the GHPC, which would become the Gorham Historic Preservation Commission if mandatory compliance with standards and guidelines is included in the ordinance.

-or-

- Create a historic preservation overlay district with preservation standards, guidelines and a demolition delay or prohibition provision attached, within the Town's existing zoning ordinance, applying to existing, new historic districts and areas in between them.
- Adopt B or C through a transparent and participatory process involving extensive public input.

- Enacting a local historic district ordinance with mandatory compliance would involve a somewhat higher level of governmental authority but would result in eligibility for a larger array of incentives and funding sources for preservation work on designated properties.

### 4. Promote the Preservation of Historic Resources with Incentives

- Encourage property owners and local code officials to take advantage of flexibility in building codes as they relate to the rehabilitation of historic buildings.
- Take advantage of existing loan and grant programs, and encourage the creation of new programs, for the rehabilitation of designated properties according to adopted standards and guidelines.
  1. Facade rehab program for storefront and sign improvements
  2. Accessibility improvement grant/loan program
  3. Development of affordable housing
  4. Downtown commercial development

### 5. Encourage the Creation of a Vital, Attractive Historic Village Center

- Undertake a downtown streetscape improvement program for the village center to create a more walkable, pedestrian-friendly, livable downtown.
- Take advantage of the programs and resources of the Maine Downtown Center/Maine Development Foundation.
- Encourage affordable and market-rate housing downtown, to increase residential density and enhance opportunity for local businesses who support the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

### 6. Bring the USM Gorham Campus into the Downtown Preservation Realm

- Include representatives of USM on the GHPC.
- Encourage USM to prepare a Gorham campus master plan.
- With a completed master plan, encourage USM to create a Campus Planning Committee, to include a representative from the GHPC.
- Encourage USM to use GHPC as a resource with regard to historic preservation issues on the Gorham campus.

### 7. The Historic Preservation Committee and Planning Board Should Address Historic Preservation Issues in the Existing Zoning Code in the Short Term

- The GHPC should establish close relationships with other Town committees, boards and commissions that deal with planning and design issues.
- GHPC should become a resource for these bodies.

- The Town should move immediately to include a demolition delay or prohibition provision in the existing Land Use and Development Code to prevent the further loss of historic resources (*doing so will depend on completing the historic resource inventory and ranking the importance and significance of inventoried properties, as recommended under items 2 and 3 above*).

## BACKGROUND

Many of the older homes in the Village are very large and due to lot sizes are restricted to remain single-family homes, which is often not practical. Many of these homes could be converted to multi-family dwellings, which would increase density where the Town can provide services most cost effectively. The University of Southern Maine (USM) dormitories house 1,100 students and many of the older and larger homes, which could be converted to multi-family dwellings, are in very close proximity to the USM. Providing additional student housing in the Village would help tie the USM and downtown together which would increase vibrancy in the Village.

The Village has an assorted mix of commercial uses; however, there are a number of properties that are currently vacant and / or in various states of disrepair. This has fostered a great deal of public debate on how to eliminate blight and encourage public and private investment and economic development. Since the adoption of the 1998 Gorham Main Street Master Plan, the Town has implemented a number of ordinances to regulate design elements on new projects within the Village. The interest now is in advancing this goal to a higher level and improving the overall aesthetic appeal of the entire Village.

The Town of Gorham has a long and illustrious history, being one of the earliest-settled inland communities in the State of Maine. There remain several architectural and archeological reminders of several 18th and 19th century settlements that make up the Town, but many historic resources have been lost to development. This is especially true in Gorham Village and the

area included in the Main Street Master Plan projects, where modern structures and parking lots have replaced many historic buildings.

As a result of Main Street having been "ravaged by demolition in past decades" (Robert Lowell, [keepmecurrent.com](http://keepmecurrent.com), May 22, 2014), and the inclusion of a strong historic preservation component in the Gorham's comprehensive plan as updated, interest in protecting and preserving those historic resources is growing. The appointment of a Gorham Historic Preservation Committee (GHPC) to identify and study Gorham's historic resources and determine ways to make sure that the last vestiges of the downtown's village character and history remain intact is the most recent and strongest proof of that movement. Also, the Town has charged the consultant team per the Main Street Master Plan Update to include a review of historic preservation activities in general and to consider some important, recent issues and concerns specifically in its scope of work. The following topics address those issues and concerns and present recommendations relating to historic preservation.



## 1. Empower the Town's Historic Preservation Committee

A review of the minutes from the first few meetings of the Gorham Historic Preservation Committee (GHPC) proves that this recently created publicly appointed body is taking its charge seriously. It has set an ambitious agenda aimed at protecting and preserving Gorham's historic buildings and sites but doing so in a way that does not burden owners with unnecessary costs and/or regulations. Made up of appointed and elected town government officials and residents with an interest in history and/or architecture, the GHPC is working to identify historic properties, and then determine ways to protect them from pressures of change and preserve them for the education and enjoyment of future generations of Gorham residents and visitors.

The members expect that the application of carefully crafted standards and guidelines for the treatment of historic properties, balanced by public and private incentives to minimize the cost difference between renovation and preservation will make this possible.

## 2. Identify Gorham's Historic Resources

Many questions heard at the Public Input Meeting held in November 2014, pertained to the designation of historic buildings. What is a historic building? Who says it is or is not? Attendees agreed that a recognized set of criteria is needed in order that designation as "historic" would be as objective and consistently applied as possible.

The standard for historic designation in the United States is the



National Register of Historic Places (the National Register).

According to the National Park Service (NPS), which administers the National Register:

*The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.*

*The National Register includes individual buildings, structures and sites, as well as many historic districts, which are groups of historic resources that reflect one or more common themes. The Town of Gorham currently has six buildings and one historic site listed on the National Register, as well as three historic districts: the Gorham Campus Historic District (the original core of the USM campus), the South Street Historic District, and the Gorham Historic District. These individual properties and districts were determined to be eligible for listing on the Register because they met established criteria for historical or architectural significance. The criteria were set by the National Park Service and administered by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC).*

Since these properties were placed on the National Register, town residents and officials have expressed interest in determining whether there are other Gorham properties that should be designated as historic, for listing on the National Register or for a locally administered list. It should be noted that being included on the National Register does not impart any protection for listed properties unless they would be impacted by development projects (such as highway or community development work) that are funded in whole or in part with federal dollars). If the Town wishes to protect historic properties through designation, then local listing is necessary. In that case the Town would need to enact a local historic district ordinance and give enforcement powers to an appointed historic preservation board or commission (see Recommendation 3 below for more information on local designation).

In order to answer the question, "What properties in Gorham are historic?" - those that might be considered, should be inventoried using best practices fostered by the MHPC, then evaluated using the criteria established by the NPS for the National Register. The GHPC has already begun this process, with the assistance of the Gorham Historical Society, the MHPC, and interns from USM. The result will be documentation of all properties that can be considered for designation (typically those that are 50 years old or older), then the ranking of each property using a rating system. The most common rating system is one that labels a property as a landmark, a contributing building, or a non-contributing building. A property identified as a landmark or a contributing building, structure, or site, is considered historic.

Completing the inventory and ranking of inventoried properties is the first step in establishing appropriate procedures and programs for protecting and preserving Gorham's historic resources. The Historic Preservation Committee is well on its way toward completing these tasks, and should be given the resources it needs to do so.



### 3. Establish a Framework for Protecting Historic Resources

Protecting and preserving historic buildings and sites has been an objective of citizens, interest groups and governments since the times of George Washington. Over two and a half centuries of historic preservation activities, the two methods that have evolved as tried and true are the application of design standards and guidelines, with demolition restraints, and secondly, incentives. Both are ways to control change, with the former necessarily involving governmental actions, the latter most often a combination of public and private sector activities. The most successful approach, particularly in locales like Maine towns where local control and independence are highly valued, is a combination of regulations and incentives. We recommend this approach in working to retain and enhance Gorham's New England village aesthetic and history.

The Town has already taken steps toward implementing both approaches. The Gorham Historic Preservation Committee (GHPC) is working to identify those properties that are historic, and then determine how to protect and preserve them. Discussions have already begun as to whether it would be possible to accomplish these goals without the need for new layers of government; and if additional regulations are needed, how these can be made acceptable to those in whose hands the village center rests - property and business owners.

There are two ways we suggest that town officials and citizens consider to put guidelines and standards in place for the treatment of historic resources. The first involves a new

ordinance section containing a set of voluntary and/or enforceable historic preservation guidelines and standards; a new locally-designated historic district; and a new governing body to administer and enforce the ordinance (this would be the GHPC but as a Commission rather than a Committee). Establishing a district, and writing and adopting an ordinance, can be a lengthy process, requiring complete transparency, with ample opportunity for public discussion and debate. This process has however, been followed in many Maine communities and has resulted in the establishment of successful downtown historic districts that promote both the cultural and economic benefits of downtown revitalization.

The second way is simpler in principle, involving the creation of a new Historic Preservation Overlay District within the Town's



existing zoning code, and including provisions and standards governing proposed changes to designated historic resources within the overlay. We suggest that an historic preservation overlay district be considered as an alternative to the traditional local historic district, particularly if the political will to adopt a new ordinance and create a new commission is lacking.

In this scenario, the GHPC, after completing the inventory and evaluation of the historic resources within it, would designate as an overlay district, an area that would encompass the three National Register historic districts already in place including historically-designated properties now located between the NR districts and/or around the boundaries of the districts. This area would then be subject to the requirements of existing zoning districts that are now in place within the Village Center, Urban Commercial and Urban Residential - and performance standards that would apply only to the overlay (not to areas of the three zoning districts not in the overlay); similar to design and demolition standards, and guidelines that would be in an historic preservation ordinance.

The boundaries of the overlay would be similar, if not identical, to a local historic district that would be designated under a historic preservation ordinance. Other standards already in the underlying zoning district regulations, such as those relating to signs, parking and buffers, would continue to apply in the overlay, but would need to be revised to reduce potential impacts on historic properties. The overlay district standards should include specific language to deal with unique aspects of the district, including signs, and the existing and future conversions of large, historic single family residences to student and low to moderate-income multi-unit housing.

Many towns with strong downtown commercial districts, such as Freeport, use the overlay approach for design review, with standards administered by a free-standing design review board or a design review function assigned to another board or commission (in Freeport, design review is a function of one of the Town's two planning boards, called the Project Review Board).

Establishing an overlay district would involve less bureaucratic process, but would be done through the Town's existing zoning ordinance revision process, thereby offering ample opportunity for public discussion. With either option, the end result for a property or business owner seeking to make changes to a designated property would be obtaining a certificate of appropriateness based on the application of the design and demo standards. The standards contained in either approach should have a demolition section to delay action on an application for demolition or moving of a historic building until alternatives to the loss of the structure can be explored (see item 7 of this section for more detail on a demolition standard).

In both cases, design and demolition standards are written to apply to designated historic buildings within the boundaries. Non-designated properties, which are typically those that are less than 50 years old or that have been significantly altered to the point they have lost their historic character, would be covered by more general and basic guidelines, if any. Guidelines and standards for new construction within the district should also be included to assure compatibility of new buildings with neighboring historic structures and with the character of the downtown as a whole.

It should be noted that while the overlay option would involve less bureaucratic work to establish and implement, federal and state tax credits for rehabilitation of historic income-producing properties would not be available to property owners or lessees. This significant incentive is only available if a local historic district, an ordinance, and a commission meeting federal requirements are in place. Other incentives may be available under either scenario. Some of these are described in the next section.

Compliance with the provisions of a historic preservation ordinance or a historic preservation overlay can be mandatory or voluntary. In the case of a historic district with a voluntary framework however, the preservation tax credits would not be available. A voluntary approach to compliance within a historic district framework would likewise disqualify the Town from participating in the Certified Local Government program (a federal and state program which provides funding for preservation planning and other activities aimed at furthering the preservation of buildings and sites) in Maine's historic districts.

#### **4. Promote the Preservation of Historic Resources with Incentives**

Incentives to help property and business owners meet historic preservation design standards are often used to make appropriate rehabilitation activities more affordable and to gain public support for protecting historic resources.

A specific preservation concern among downtown interests is the ongoing conversion of large historic single-family homes to multifamily housing targeted at students and, potentially, at

downtown employees and their families. Many such conversions are only made visible by the construction of code-required second means of egress stairways and exits, access ramps, and/or parking areas for a larger number of vehicles. Historic preservation standards, in whatever format, can address these issues. In the case of meeting building, life-safety, and accessibility code requirements, the standards can be used to make it easier for applicants to meet these requirements while assuring that the work necessary to do so takes the character-defining features of the subject building(s) into account.

For example, one historic preservation issue we observed during the master plan update was the impact of additions to house new second stairways, or of exterior balconies and stairways. In most cases, these code-required improvements were not designed to preserve the historic character of the original house. In some cases involving new interior stairways, the stairways themselves or the new exit (if the second stair was inserted within the original building) resulted in new construction that was attached to and in line with the original building facade, thus altering the single most important historical element of the house: the facade, or street front. In other cases, a new system of balconies and stairways was added to an ell or an end wall of the original house.

Examples of this approach in Gorham exhibit little concern for the appearance of the house, due to presumed additional cost to design exit and egress improvements that would complement the historic architecture. The use of traditional components and details to be painted are presumed by owners and contractors to have a first cost and life cost higher than the common pressure-treated big box home store railings, steps and decks with no

details. These structures can be quite large on two or three-story houses, obscuring historical details with lesser-quality contemporary materials that detract from the character of the building or the area. In this case, incentives can be used to pay for design services (provided by professionals familiar with the performance standards) and/or for sufficiently-skilled construction labor and appropriate materials. Incentive design services would typically be focused on solutions that would have little or no impact on the facade, would not be visible from public ways, or ideally on interior solutions.

Many conversions have been done to date, but the number of such projects has fallen in recent years. Even so, the inventory should be used to identify likely prospects for such changes. If it appears that this issue demands attention, then the GHPC should consider establishing an incentive program to address it.

Another specific project type that could benefit from an incentive program is the rehabilitation of commercial facades in the downtown area. Whether historic or not, commercial buildings are always subject to pressure when it comes to the design, location, lighting, and quantity of signs. The Gorham sign ordinance is detailed and thorough with regard to sign types, number, location, and size, but does little to address the character and quality of signs, or their impact on historic buildings. Sign standards addressing these issues should be included in the historic district or overlay standards. A relatively small fund, comprised of public and/or private dollars, can be established to help pay for high-quality sign designs that meet the needs of businesses while protecting the visual character of the Village.



Facade design goes well beyond signs, however. The design of commercial facades is based on several traditional storefront components and their relationships that have been developed and used over the past 175 years. The design standards in Gorham's district or overlay should be formulated to promote these precepts, with the GHPC again looking to incentives to make preservation-oriented facade rehabs affordable for business and building owners.

Incentives for income-producing projects, whether multi-family residential or retail/commercial, are available from time to time, often depending on available funds and grant cycles. Government programs such as Community Development Block Grants and HUD Home funds, administered by Cumberland

County and other agencies, can be used for some types of projects. The GHPC should be encouraged to approach local financial institutions to explore grant and/or low-interest loan programs, including revolving funds, to promote rehab projects within the project area. Again, the most significant incentives—federal and state rehabilitation tax credits totaling up to 45 percent of the rehab construction costs, can be available under certain circumstances as described previously.

Another meaningful incentive that the GHPC can offer is the possibility of flexibility in the application of life-safety, building and accessibility code requirements to the types of projects it wishes to encourage in the downtown area. These codes now have provisions that recognize the unique opportunities and constraints presented by historic buildings. Performance-based provisions with high degrees of flexibility are in place, but it is up to the local code officials to take advantage of them. The GHPC should take on the responsibility of seeing that local officials are trained to use these provisions. The availability of options for meeting code requirements, if applicable historic preservation standards are followed, can be a significant incentive to development-minded downtown business and property owners.

##### **5. Encourage the Creation of a Vital, Attractive Historic Village Center**

Historic preservation as a concept has been growing in importance as historic resources in the downtown area have been affected by the development pressures of a desirable, growing community. Downtown Gorham is literally at the crossroads of much of the development of the communities located between

Portland, western lakes and mountains, adding the pressures of high volumes of traffic, generated by residents, visitors, and those passing through.



This growing interest is manifested in concern for preserving and enhancing those remnants of Gorham Village that remain. Interest in improving the downtown area by adding traditional "Main Street" features was apparent during the public input meeting held as a part of this project in November. Adding high-quality traditional street details such as the following will contribute to the historic character of the village center:

- sidewalks made of decorative paving materials
- handsome and useful street furniture

- attractive, high-quality lighting oriented toward pedestrians rather than vehicles
- well-designed signs
- minimized overhead utility clutter
- pedestrian connections to trail networks and the USM campus street
- trees and landscaping, etc.

Related to making a revitalized streetscape and downtown environment a reality is the preservation and re-use of existing historic commercial structures, especially retail buildings. Creative adaptive re-use, as well as continued use, of historic buildings is a key element of any downtown revitalization effort. To that end, incentives such as a facade rehab design and/or brick and mortar program and a sign program are essential. Gorham retains a small core of significant historic buildings that can be the centerpieces of preservation activity and provide examples of the quality and design that should be expected of new downtown mixed use village-scale development.

The GHPC should include among its to-do items, establishing a relationship with the Maine Downtown Center, which administers the National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street program in Maine. Maine's Main Street communities and Downtown Network cities and towns have had great success with using the nationally-recognized preservation-oriented techniques promoted by the National Trust Main Street Center to create vital, attractive, and economically thriving downtowns. Commercial developers should be encouraged to rebuild the quality and density that once existed in the project area using the Main Street approach, which is focused on the traditional commercial architecture of historic downtowns.

Another key ingredient to downtown revitalization, one that should be relatively easy to use, given some of Gorham's unique attributes, is a high residential density. With the availability of USM student renters, and the desire of locals to stay in the community as they get older, there is a ready supply of potential downtown residents. There is also an inventory of substantially-sized historic residences that may become available for use as multi-family properties. Conversion to multiple units using historic preservation standards and guidelines is a proven way to assure the continued presence of these important components of historic downtowns.

Within the historic preservation framework we have described above, the Town should encourage residential development and increased residential density (on Preble Street, for example) to bring economic and social vitality to the village center. The GHPC should have a place at the table and contribute its knowledge and process to promoting increased density and historic preservation concurrently in downtown Gorham.

## **6. Bring the USM Gorham Campus into the Downtown Preservation Realm**

The buildings of the original core campus of the USM of Southern Maine are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as contributing buildings in a historic district, for about 50 years. The magnificent hillside setting facing the center of town, and the special significance of the Academy Building and the Meeting House to Gorham's history, not to mention the importance of the buildings of the Gorham Campus Historic District to the history of education in

southern Maine, provide a clear example of the reasons for preserving the Town's historic resources.



As the historic preservation movement has gained momentum in Maine, and in Gorham, while state's public university and college budgets have tightened, USM has faced problems in dealing with the maintenance and continued use of its physical plant. The USM has done reasonably well with its historic buildings given the resources it has had to work with; but not all the work that has been done has been in the long-term best interest of the structures under its care. Thus preservationists have been encouraging the USM to undertake a comprehensive campus master plan that includes a detailed historic preservation component. To date, such a planning effort has not been undertaken, leading to some unfortunate and costly attempts at renovating buildings in the USM's historic district.

We understand that the GHPC has already invited USM participation in the Committee's work, and that the USM administration has accepted that invitation. We applaud this first step, and hope that the USM will take steps to develop a plan for the short-term correction of deferred maintenance using best historic preservation practices, and prepare a long-term preservation master plan for its historic buildings. We suggest that the GHPC offer assistance with this effort whenever appropriate.

The GHPC can play an even stronger role in blending the historic buildings and grounds of USM into downtown Gorham by including the USM in the Town's historic preservation protection framework. Whether an overlay district or a local historic district is the chosen option, the district should include the Gorham Campus Historic District within its boundaries. The Town and the USM should work together to determine how the USM's resources would be addressed in the preservation component of town plans. There are excellent examples of strong town and gown ties in the planning realm in Maine that can inform Gorham's efforts. Given the close physical and cultural relationship between the Town of Gorham and USM, the need for close cooperation is great and the desire is strong.

#### **7. The Historic Preservation Committee and Planning Board should Address Historic Preservation Issues in the Existing Zoning Code in the Short Term**

Most of the recommendations made above involve mid- or long-term actions. In the short-term, it is the GHPC that can best support the concept of preserving and protecting Gorham's center village historic resources. The Committee's agenda

already looks substantial and comprehensive, with valid and important mission and goals. As an interim measure, we suggest that the GHPC work with the Town's Planning Board, and Town Council, to make revisions to relevant sections of the Land Use and Development Code. These sections would include parking, site development (especially buffering of parking areas and different uses), signage, and building demolition.

Perhaps of most imminent concern is the fact that there currently is no provision for delaying or prohibiting the demolition of historic buildings, or firmly defining a historic building. These are well-defined and well-established provisions in many of Maine's towns and cities. At the very least, there should be a provision that delays the demolition or moving of any building that is or can be determined to be historic, to allow the exploration of alternatives to the loss of the building or to it being moved from its original downtown location. The typical delay period is 90 days. There can be more detailed and strict standards to be applied to the most significant buildings in the community.

The importance of such a provision was demonstrated recently by the decision of the Town council to sell one of the downtown's historic early residential buildings to an abutting property owner, with the likelihood that the house will be demolished to make room for a small parking lot. The building was not officially designated historic because the process for determining if a building is historic is not yet in place. Thus the stage is set for another incremental step in the diminution of Gorham Village's character.



The continuing loss of older, character-defining center village buildings is why we make the recommendation that completing the inventory of Gorham's historic resources, especially in the master plan update project area; establishing criteria for determining which buildings are historic; and adopting a demolition delay or prevention provision in the Land Use and Development Code, should be at the top of the agenda for the Gorham Historic Preservation Committee. These activities should be supported by the Town's elected and appointed officials in light of the clear interest expressed by the Town's citizens in protecting, preserving, enhancing and revitalizing Gorham's Main Street and Village Center. By combining the preservation and re-use of historic buildings with the creative development of vacant and underutilized downtown parcels, we can contribute positively to the continuing history of one of Maine's most enduring and charming villages.



# IV. LAND USE AND ZONING

## BACKGROUND

Zoning in the Village Center is comprised of Village Center, Urban Commercial, Office Residential, and Urban Residential districts. The commercial district is covered by the first two categories. The districts adjacent to the commercial district include Office Residential along Main Street east of New Portland Road and Urban Residential in most all other areas in the Village.

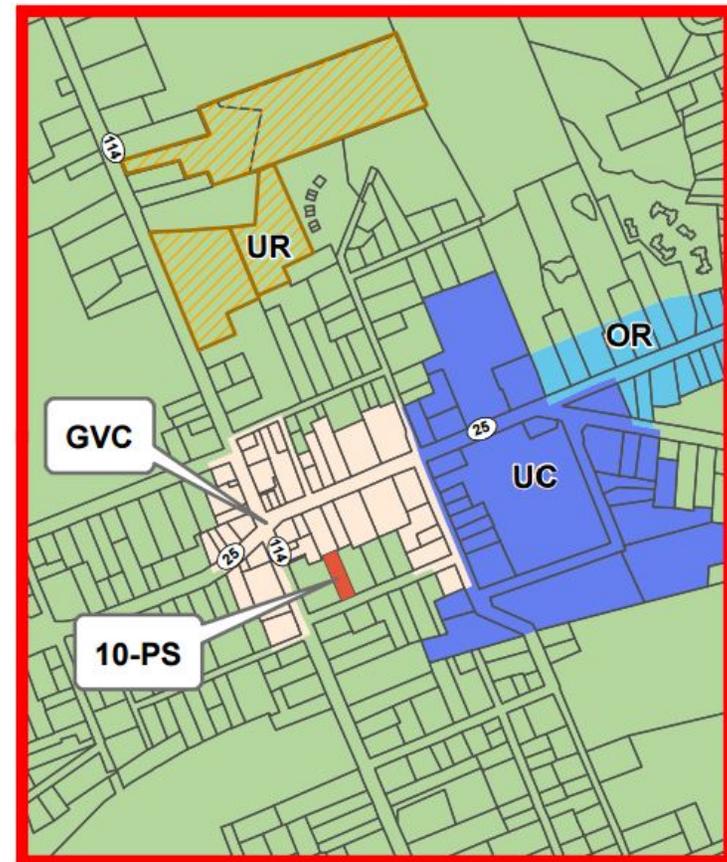
### Conditional Zoning

PS-10: 10 Preble Street

### Zoning

- CO: Commercial/Office
- GVC: Gorham Village Center
- I: Industrial
- LFVC: Little Falls Village Center
- ND: Narragansett Development
- OR: Office-Residential
- R: Rural
- R-MH: Rural-Manufactured Housing
- RC: Roadside Commercial
- SR: Suburban Residential
- SR-MH: Suburban Residential-Manufactured Housing
- UC: Urban Commercial
- UR: Urban Residential
- UR-MH: Urban Residential-Manufactured Housing

Gorham Village Center



The following information was taken from the 2015 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan and is consistent with recommendations for the MSMP Update:

**Growth Areas** - These are areas where the Town wants growth and development to occur. The anticipation is that most residential and non-residential development over the next ten years will occur in these growth areas. Growth Areas include the areas with undeveloped land that is appropriate for development as well as developed areas where redevelopment or significant intensification of use is desired. Public sewer and water is available in many of the growth areas or can be provided. For example, the designated Growth Area includes the **Gorham Village commercial core** as well as the Mosher's Corner area.

#### Gorham Village Center Area

- **Location** - The Gorham Village Center designation applies to the "Square" area of Gorham Village extending east to Elm Street (see Figure 6.3).
- **Allowed Uses** - The allowed uses in the Gorham Village Center Area should include a wide range of residential and non-residential uses that are similar to the current Village Center District. The scale of retail uses should continue to be limited in this area.
- **Development Standards** - The development standards for the Gorham Village Center Area should be similar to the current Village Center standards including the current design requirements. Residential development should conform to the density and development standards for

the Village Residential designation including the provisions for development transfer and variable density for small units. Existing buildings should be allowed usage, for residential uses including residential units in a mixed-use building without density considerations as long as the property meets requirements for parking, landscaping, and buffering.

#### Village Commercial Area

- **Location** - The Village Commercial Area designation includes the commercial core of Gorham Village from Elm Street east to the New Portland Road area as well as a small area adjacent to the roundabout in Little Falls (see Figures 6.3 and 6.4).
- **Allowed Uses** - The Village Commercial Area should include a wide range of residential and non-residential uses similar to those currently allowed in the Urban Commercial zone. Consideration should be given to allowing gasoline service stations in the Little Falls Village Commercial Area.
- **Development Standards** - The development standards in the Village Commercial Area should be similar to the current Urban Commercial standards including the current design requirements. Residential development should conform to the density and development standards for the Village Residential designation including the provisions for development transfer and variable density for small units. Existing buildings should allow residential uses, including residential units in a mixed-use building, without density considerations, as

long as the property meets requirements for parking, landscaping, and buffering.

### Village Residential Area

- **Location** - The Village Residential Area includes primarily the developed residential neighborhoods in Gorham Village and Little Falls Village (see Figures 6.3 and 6.4). This designation is similar to the current Urban Residential zone but has been expanded slightly to include areas that are now sewered.
- **Allowed Uses** - The Village Residential Area should include the same general types of uses currently allowed in the Urban Residential zone. This includes a range of residential uses (single-family, two-family, and multi-family), accessory apartments, retirement housing and elderly-care facilities, municipal and community uses, institutional uses, and bed and breakfast establishments.
- **Development Standards** - The development standards in the Village Residential Area should allow for medium-density residential development as well as higher-density development through the use of development transfer provisions. The base density for residential development should be set at 4 units per acre with public sewerage. Development with on-site sewage disposal should not be permitted. The standards should allow a density of up to 8 units per acre with development transfer. In addition, the variable density provisions for small units should apply. Within the Village Residential Area the reuse of existing buildings for residential purposes should be allowed without density considerations as long as the property meets requirements for parking, landscaping, and buffering.

- The base minimum lot size requirements should be 10,000 SF with public sewerage. The minimum lot size with development transfer can be reduced to 5,000 SF. The base minimum lot frontage requirement should be 80 feet. If development transfer is utilized, the minimum lot frontage should be reduced to 60 feet.
- In addition to the space and bulk standards, developments utilizing development transfer should be required to meet additional design standards to assure that the overall development and individual homes are designed with a “village character”.



*Restaurants and small service businesses are desired by residents, and a good fit with the village character and scale.*

### Village Office-Residential Area

- **Location** - The Village Office-Residential designation includes a portion of the Main Street corridor from the New Portland Road area easterly to the vicinity of the Public Safety Building and St. Anne's Church (see Figure 6.3).
- **Allowed Uses** - The allowed uses in the Village Office-Residential Area should be limited to residential and small-scale office uses similar to the current Office Residential zoning district.
- **Development Standards** - The development standards for this designation should be similar to the standards for the current Office Residential zoning district. The density standards for residential uses should be similar to the standards for the Village Expansion Area. The provisions regulating the front setback of buildings and the location of off-street parking should be revised to apply to both residential and non-residential buildings.

## V. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

In the end, a plan is only as good as its execution. This phase focuses upon identifying strategies for implementing plan recommendations. Areas of focus that are broadly applicable to community needs are identified. Design schematics and graphics are developed to illustrate desired outcomes, attract funding opportunities and inspire community investment. Recommended design guidelines and community standards are tested and reviewed for community approval before being incorporated into the final master plan.

### BACKGROUND

The Town of Gorham prepared an extensive CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN in the spring of 2014 with numerous town-wide projects on the priority list. One of those projects is the Gorham Village Main Street Construction. Estimated cost is unknown. The Town of Gorham was scheduled for a maintenance-paving project through Gorham Village as part of the State paving program. Main Street has a concrete slab base that was disturbed in the late 1980s when the Town installed sewer. In addition, there is retired and/or aging infrastructure (e.g. old water pipes) in Main Street and sections of the storm drainage system require replacing or upgrading. As a result, this project under consideration for major reconstruction with shared participation from the State, Portland Water District, and the Town. If the State has funding available, this project could go forward in 2015. Gorham's share of the costs are not yet known nor do we know whether there will be funding from the State for

this project. However, if funding from the State becomes available, it will be in Gorham's best interest to proceed with this project immediately and in cooperation with the other parties.

The Town has an evolving Capital Improvements Road & Sidewalk Maintenance. \$750,000 to \$1,000,000/yr.

### Policy / Ordinance / Regulatory Measures

At the onset of the project through discussions with Town Staff and review of previous studies, it was evident that the following Policy related strategies should be explored and be part of this plan Update:

- Consider the protection of historic façade in the historic district.
- Update the Village performance standards to require interconnecting parking lots.
- Change lot size requirements so that desired residential densities are achievable in the Village (and other areas where more density is desired – see 2015 DRAFT Comp Plan for desired densities).
- Strengthen Low Impact Development (LID) Stormwater strategies and policies.
- Address delinquent properties via maintenance code in the village area.
- Consider the protection of historic districts in the Zoning Ordinance.
- Integrate with USM better – Town and Gown partnerships. Draw USM students and visitors into the

Village to take advantage of services and restaurants. Consider a trail or promenade link.

- Consider College Avenue as part of the Gorham Village Center district to strengthen the pedestrian connection.

The following strategies were discussed in the 1998 Main Street Master Plan and are still relevant to the Update.

### Facade Grants

This program provides financial incentives to property owners to improve the facades and landscaping of buildings within the village centers. This should be targeted to commercial buildings. This may be in the form of grants or low interest loans. Require matching funds from the business or property owner. This is also a recommendation of the South Windham Little Falls Revitalization Plan. Make the program available to all village centers.

### Contract Zoning

- Revise the current contract zoning provisions to allow residential uses to be part of a contract zone within Village Center zoning districts. This use would be restricted to the upper floors of ground floor retail and office uses. This would further the goal of developing a critical mass of people to support village businesses.

### Access Management Bylaw

- Amend the access management related portions of the Parking, Loading and Traffic requirements (Chapter 11, Section II).
- Number of Entrances. Amend regulations to Village Center and Urban Commercial (or their successors) to permit only one access to each property. Allow the Planning Board to permit a second access, or a separate entrance and a separate exit, when such second access or

separate entrance and exit points, would facilitate traffic flow, accommodate an odd-shaped lot, or enhance shared driveways, shared parking or parking to the rear of buildings.

- Access Limits to Main Street. Amend the Village Center district (or its successor) by adding a performance standard that would permit the Planning Board to further restrict access to Main Street where alternative access is available. This standard currently applies to the Urban Commercial district.
- Parking, Loading and Traffic Standard. Amend these requirements (Chapter II, Section II) to include provisions for the following, in the Village Center and Urban Commercial districts (or their successors):
  - minimum corner clearances;
  - minimum and maximum driveway widths (by uses);
  - parking lot interconnections wherever possible during site development or redevelopment;
  - sufficient throat length to prevent traffic back-ups onto Main Street;
  - minimum curb radii;
  - maximum lighting pole height; and
  - parking lot landscaping requirements (may be part of design review as well).

### Encourage Infill Development

- Amend the Special Exceptions within the Village Center and Urban Commercial districts (or their successor) to allow accessory structures. These accessory structures may house non-automobile oriented uses (e.g., no drive through uses) such as small scale retail or mixed use where it can be demonstrated that any reduced parking will not have negative impacts on surrounding uses or

that displaced parking can be satisfactorily be offset by off-site parking or relocated. Adaptive reuse

- Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings that contribute positively to the streetscape, adding variety and visual interest to the street.

### Design Review Guidelines

- Implement design review as part of site plan review. The planning board should review as part of its site plan review process the oversight of design guidelines. It is not recommended that a separate design review board be established due to the added administrative burden and costs on the Town and developers. A key element of this is that architectural design shall be compatible with smaller scale commercial, village uses. Large buildings should be broken into smaller massing of connected buildings to reduce their appearance. Variation in detail, form and siting shall be used to provide visual interest and avoid monotony.

The developed design guidelines should cover the following areas: architecture style including facades, windows, roof lines, building height; building materials including siding, roof; building orientation and setbacks; landscaping including types of materials and their massing around buildings and within parking areas; and, signs, including placement, materials, illumination, height and size

- Develop a Design Guidelines Handbook for Gorham. The Handbook should include a clear statement of purpose, clear requirements for submissions as part of the site plan review process, clear definitions for each element covered, clear procedures for approval, disapproval and

appeal, and illustrate clearly the design elements covered by the guidelines.

### Site Plan Review standards

- The Town's Site Plan Review standards should be reviewed as to whether village character and other important qualities in Gorham will be protected during development review. In particular, the following issues will be of priority consideration:
  - Treatment of residential uses to non-residential or multi-tenant and multi-unit uses, including maintaining the architectural integrity and overall village character.
  - Defining village character to ensure new development fits with the existing village.

### FUNDING

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

positioned for less traditional and/or less frequent funding opportunities such as state bonds and private philanthropic groups.

## CDBG PROGRAMS

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

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

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

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

Two of the most commonly used grants for downtown revitalization are highlighted below. The Town may wish to explore the other CDBG programs for applicability such as:

Public Facilities; Business Assistance, Micro-Enterprise Assistance and Housing Assistance.

### Downtown Revitalization Grant

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

Eligible projects include:

- Construction, acquisition, reconstruction, installation, rehabilitation, site clearance, historic preservation, and relocation assistance associated with parking, streets, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, recreational facilities, parks, removal of architectural barriers, or neighborhood revitalization.

- Site amenities (benches, lighting, trash receptacles), landscaping and pedestrian improvements.
- Eligible activities include all those eligible under the Public Facilities, Public Infrastructure, Housing Assistance or Community Enterprise programs as relevant to the revitalization of a Downtown district.

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

### **Public Infrastructure Grant**

The Public Infrastructure Grant (PI) Program provides gap funding for local infrastructure activities, which are part of a community development strategy leading to future public and private investments. Eligible activities in the PI Program are construction, acquisition, reconstruction, installation, relocation assistance associated with public infrastructure. A cash match of at least 20% of the total grant award is required. This match may consist of non-CDBG loans, grants, endowments, etc. contributed to the project. Regional Service Centers and Contiguous Census Designated Places and Compact Urban Areas Designated as Regional Service Centers and activities supporting the revitalization of downtown areas will be given priority.

Eligible projects include:

- Water system installation and improvements, sewer system installation and improvements, water and sewer system hookups, storm drainage, utility infrastructure (road or street reconstruction is not eligible)

- Streets and roads, parking, curbs, gutters and pedestrian safety improvements in association with roadway and storm drainage infrastructure improvements.

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

### **TIF PROGRAM**

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

For more information:

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

## MAINEDOT PROGRAMS

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

### Quality Communities Program

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

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

Recent changes to the program require separate applications for design and construction phases. Projects now must have their design phase complete and approved by MaineDOT before

applying for construction funds. The Town should contact the MaineDOT Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Quality Community Program Manager for questions or to coordinate a potential application.

For more information:

<http://www.maine.gov/mMaineDOT/pgq/qcp>

## OTHER FUNDING PROGRAMS & STRATEGIES

### Leveraging Private Funds

In many communities, partnerships with private entities such as landowners and developers, banks, non-profits or other institutions can result in important funding or implementation opportunities. Communities should be strategic in identifying specific ways in which such entities could participate in revitalizing the downtown.

### Maine Arts Commission

The MAC has several competitive grant programs to help promote arts & culture, several of which have been successfully used in downtowns across the state. One program in particular that Gorham should investigate is the Creative Communities = Economic Development Grant ([http://mainearts.maine.gov/grant\\_creativecommunities.aspx](http://mainearts.maine.gov/grant_creativecommunities.aspx)). The Town may want to check with the Farmington Downtown Association to see if there are collaborative opportunities or if they have used MAC grants.

For more information:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Project Canopy Grant**

Project Canopy funds could be used for tree plantings in the Downtown or at Bass Park or the lakefront. Funding and administration is through the Maine Forest Service and GrowSmart Maine; the funding limit for 2011 applications was \$8,000. This program has typically required attendance at a

training workshop, contact program agencies for more information.

For more information:

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

### **Historic Tax Credit Programs**

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

#### **Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit:**

There are both federal and state tax credits that may be used towards the rehabilitation of historic buildings, but only applies to buildings that are on the National Register or eligible for listing. Contact the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for more information.

For more information:

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

#### **Low Income Housing Tax Credit:**

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

For more information:

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

### **New Markets Tax Credit:**

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

For more information:

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

### **State Bonds**

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

### **Coastal Enterprises and Maine Community Foundation Partnership**

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

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

More information is available at Coastal Enterprises, Inc: <http://www.ceimaine.org/NMTC>

### **Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC)**

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

## VI. APPENDICES

- **Presentations and Results from Workshops (including surveys)**
- **Safe Routes to School Survey Results**