

### III. ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS

Based on the Existing Conditions analysis, a series of Alternative Concepts were developed and presented for each element that addresses physical changes within the village. Brief descriptions of the alternative concepts and the selected concept are presented below.

The process was an iterative one, where comments from succeeding discussions were incorporated back into prior ones. More often than not, a hybrid was 'the selected concept', combining the best elements from each alternative presented.

#### Pattern of Commercial Land Use

Concepts were presented to identify a desired pattern of commercial uses in the village center. *Alternative 1* concentrated mixed uses in the linear pattern that currently exists along Main Street. This would maintain the sharp distinction between Main Street use and adjacent neighborhood uses. *Alternative 2* integrates mixed use commercial with surrounding neighborhoods to expand perceived edges of the village center. *Alternative 3* concentrates the primary mix of commercial uses similar to *Alternative 1*, but encourages a less abrupt distinction between use and character of commercial center and adjacent neighborhoods.

- \* *Selected Concept:* Maintain the distinction between commercial and residential areas. Development should occur in the areas currently zoned for commercial uses in the Village Center and Urban Commercial zones. Boundaries for these zones should not be expanded. Compatible redevelopment should be encouraged and directed along Mechanic Street and Railroad Avenue. Complementary uses should be encouraged in the commercial district. (In addition to more retail uses, office and service uses can add a critical mass of employees to frequent shops and restaurants. Apartment dwellers in upper stories of buildings would add an evening presence to the downtown.) A new zone for parcels fronting Preble Street should be created to allow Professional/Home Office uses while maintaining residential/commercial mix within buildings and the architectural integrity of the buildings.

#### Definition of Streetscape

This was actually a series of alternative concepts presenting various combinations of design elements to provide the desired definition and unity to the streetscape. The alternatives were a set of design elements that can be prescribed by a number of regulatory tools and incentives, as well as achieved directly by Town investment. *Alternative 1* looked at different ways buildings can relate

to the streetscape in terms of their front and side setbacks and building height and massing. *Alternative 2* looked at various configurations of street tree plantings (inside and outside of public right-of-way) and landscape treatments. *Alternative 3* looked at configurations of sidewalk placement (with and without esplanades) and surface material. *Alternative 4* looked at the use of infill development to define the streetscape.

- \* *Selected Concept:* The selected combination of elements included buildings setback similar to the Post Office and Key Bank (the Quasi-Village Center 'model'), five foot esplanade with street trees, sidewalks of brushed concrete with some brick decorative treatment (this endorses recent practice -- Cumberland Farms, Key Bank and Rite Aid have recently installed concrete sidewalks), pitched roof, pedestrian scale lighting fixtures and encourage two story buildings. It would also be desirable, should the opportunity arise to do so cost-effectively in conjunction with other work, to relocate the overhead utilities underground along Main Street.

#### Pedestrian Network

Pedestrian network concepts looked at various connectivity alternatives. *Alternative 1* looked at maintaining current pedestrian connections primarily along streets. *Alternative 2* sought to expand options to include off-road connections. *Alternative 3* looked at various combinations of locations for crosswalks and their design.

- \* *Selected Concept:* Improve pathways and sidewalks adjacent to roadways. Identify and pursue limited opportunities to make off-street connections. Locate crosswalks at all intersections and at selected mid-block locations. Shorten crossing distances by reconfiguring intersections and installing neckdowns where feasible. Neckdowns will allow bicyclists to pass adjacent to them.

#### Network of Bicycle Travel

*Alternative 1* consists of providing designated on-road bicycle lanes (5 foot minimum). This would require eliminating some on-street parking. Pursue off-road alternatives as well. *Alternative 2* consists of maintaining current shared lane conditions with cyclists mixing with traffic in travel lanes. Pursue off-road alternatives as well.

- \* *Selected Concept:* Maintain existing configuration along Main Street, with cyclists mixing with traffic and using parking lane and shoulder where available. Cyclists should be accommodated as safely as possible within the context of primary concerns of traffic and

maintaining on-street parking. Consider “Share the Road” signs and educational programs aimed at drivers and cyclists. Pursue limited off-street connection such as the proposed bike path along the old railroad corridor.

#### Parks and Open Spaces

Parks and open space alternatives looked at various configurations of enhancing existing and creating new open spaces within and adjacent to the commercial district. This included the desired size and location of spaces, both public and privately owned. *Alternative 1* consisted of improving the limited existing parks and open spaces (next to Robie Community Center, cemetery/Phinney Park, and in front of Shop n Save). *Alternative 2* considered developing several smaller ‘pocket parks’ or pausing places along Main Street. *Alternative 3* examined developing larger green spaces for people to gather.

- \* *Selected Concept:* Improve and enhance the existing parks and spaces. Focus on creating more green spaces in conjunction with sidewalk and access management improvements. Consider street trees and landscaped areas as primary contributors to improved streetscape. Integrate other public holdings (library, schools, and museum) into existing parks and open spaces. Identify opportunities for ‘pocket parks’.

#### Parking

Parking concepts considered both on and off-street parking. On street parking alternatives were considered in relation to roadway cross-sections, parking demand and bicycle networks. *Alternative 1* considered relocating off-street parking that is in front of buildings where feasible and buffering parking. *Alternative 2* examined interconnecting parking lots and shared parking where uses are compatible. (Shared parking allows for the reduction in the overall amount of parking required when uses within developments have different peak period parking demands. For instance, movie theaters have heavy evening and weekend use while banks have weekday parking peaks. These two uses could share parking to reduce the total that might otherwise be required if considered individually. Rite Aid and the Village Mall is an example of shared parking.) *Alternative 3* looked at more small lots rather than larger parking lots. *Alternative 4* considered developing one or more municipal lots.

- \* *Selected Concept:* Continue to require parking in rear and side of buildings, well buffered from the street. Encourage shared parking when feasible to reduce required amounts. Identify opportunities for interconnected parking areas to reduce traffic movements along

Main Street. Maintain existing layout of continuous parking lanes along village streets where possible. Increase amount of on-street parking in conjunction with access management recommendations.

#### Gateways

Gateways provide an announcement to those passing through an area that a transition has occurred. Here, alternatives were presented for the type and location of gateways to the Village Center. *Alternative 1* looked at gateways for the commercial area. *Alternative 2* looked at gateways for the broader village center.

- \* *Selected Concept:* Establish two tier set of gateways. Village Gateways (4) announce arrival in/out of village and are to be located on State Street, School Street, South Street and Main Street, generally at areas where speed limits become 25 mph. Commercial gateways are to be located at the two major intersections, Main/State/South/School Streets and Main/Mechanic Streets/New Portland Road. Commercial gateway treatments will include permanent crosswalks and landscaping. Within commercial gateway areas, a more pronounced set of unifying streetscape elements will be used.

#### Traffic Circulation

Traffic circulation alternatives were concerned with the level of accessibility provided to drivers. The alternatives considered in the PACTS New Portland Rd./Mechanic St./Main St. intersection study were reviewed in light of current development interest and the 1995 Gorham Village Traffic Study. Various combinations of alternatives were considered to limit or continue access in conjunction with a connector from Railroad Ave. to New Portland Rd. Other alternatives looked at making some streets such as Railroad Ave. one way away from Mechanic Street.

- \* *Selected Concept:* Maintain existing capability for traffic to get around turning vehicles on Main Street. Maintain maximum accessibility in to and out of Mechanic Street in the short term. Evaluate circulation and intersection delay in conjunction with development on Mechanic Street and Railroad Avenue. Mitigate negative effects of cut through traffic on side streets such as Preble Street. As development occurs, the connection from Railroad Avenue to New Portland Road should be evaluated for inclusion in proposed site plans or not precluded as a future connection.

#### Roadway Cross-sections

Cross-section concepts looked at the desirability of reconfiguring road striping and curb lines to better manage traffic. This includes providing turn lanes for side streets and major driveways.

- \* *Selected Concept:* Generally maintain existing curb lines, keeping on street parking to the extent possible. Restripe/reconfigure South Street to reduce use of parking lanes as additional travel lanes.

#### Access Management

Access management concepts looked at driveway configurations. *Alternative 1* looked at making changes to existing deficiencies (narrowing excessively wide driveways). *Alternative 2* considered closing most/all driveways along Main Street and relocating access to side streets.

- \* *Selected Concept:* Generally maintain individual drives to Main Street businesses, consolidating drives where feasible. Modify deficient driveways. Close driveways when more than one driveway exists where feasible. Relocate several driveways to side streets. Long term, limit most drives to “In”; “Out” movements should occur at side streets.