

**JOINT LEWISTON CITY COUNCIL & PLANNING BOARD
WORKSHOP AGENDA**

Tuesday, May 29, 2012

City Council Chambers

6:00 p.m. Workshop

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Moment of Silence.

WORK SESSION

Presentation of Final Riverfront Island Master Plan



CITY OF LEWISTON

Department of Planning & Code Enforcement



TO: City Council, Mayor, Planning Board
FROM: David Hediger, City Planner
DATE: May 23, 2012
RE: Riverfront Master Plan

The City received funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the spring of 2010 for Lewiston's ongoing efforts to revitalize its riverfront. Of that, \$180,000 was dedicated to developing a plan and \$720,000 for implementing it.

After eight months of meetings and public workshops, a master plan has been drafted for Planning Board and City Council review. We would like to review the final plan with you as the first step toward its formal adoption and seek guidance and input regarding its implementation and how to effectively use the remaining federal funds dedicated to this effort. At a future meeting staff will be requesting the Board and Council to make a formal recommendation to adopt the plan as part of City's current and future Comprehensive Plan and to move forward with its implementation.

Attached is a summary the final master plan. Copies of the plan will be made available at the meeting for those interested. The plan and supporting documents may also be viewed at www.RiverfrontIslandMasterPlan.com and <http://www.lewistonmaine.gov/riverfront>

Planning Process

In the spring of 2011, a team of consultants from Goody Clancy were chosen through an RFP process to develop a riverfront master plan. Between September 2011 and April 2012, members of the Lewiston-Auburn community participated in creating a vision and plan for continued revitalization of the Riverfront Island area. Several hundred Lewiston and Auburn residents contributed to shaping this plan.

Key components of the Master Plan process included meetings with the Riverfront Island Master Plan Advisory Committee – a 20-person Advisory Committee that reviewed preliminary findings and plan elements, provided insights and feedback, and guided the planning effort -- a public "walk and talk" tour of the riverfront area, and three well attended public meetings.

Implementation

The planning process has resulted in an overall framework for guiding change within the riverfront area going forward. As noted above, \$720,000 is available for implementation of the plan. There are some limitations as to how the funding may be used. However, the Planning Board and City Council should review the various elements of the plan in order to provide staff

with guidance as to which possibilities identified in the planning process should be a priority. The following summarizes the plan's major recommendations of the plan:

- Transform Simard-Payne (Railroad) Park into a true riverfront destination
 - Add an amphitheater, steps to the water, and a small-boat dock where the River meets the Cross Canal.
 - Continue and expand the program of park events/festivals. Explore the potential for seasonal canoe/kayak rental.
 - Explore the potential of the park to accommodate seasonal concessions.
 - Create a new “gateway” entrance to Simard-Payne Park on Lincoln Street.
 - Add a new pedestrian access point to the Park via a new bridge over the canal at the intersection of Oxford and Cross Streets.
 - Improve the Oxford Street edge of the Park along the Lower Canal.
 - Improve bridges, vehicular access, and utilities serving the park to support expanded programming.
 - Selectively trim and manage riverfront vegetation to open up river views.
 - Incorporate a bank-fishing location as proposed by the Androscoggin River Greenway initiative.
 - Add a destination playground within the Park
- Support Museum L-A's plans for redeveloping the recently purchased Camden Yarns Mill
- Connect new and existing parks throughout the downtown Riverfront
 - Add a new Canal Park at the intersection of the Upper Canal and the Cross Canal.
 - Create a Canal Walk network with new pedestrian and bicycle connections along the canals.
 - Establish a continuous public Riverwalk between Island Point and Cedar Street.
- Attract a Mix of Uses
 - Add a critical mass of housing.
 - Lincoln Street—focus the area for new retail and commercial uses; move forward with new hotel.
 - Oxford Street—new housing mixed with arts/cultural and open space amenities.
 - Canal Street—reestablish trees and create a gracious green corridor
- Get Creative with Parking
 - To ensure that parking is not overbuilt—at a cost of valuable land and dollars—or under-built, which could threaten the area's ability to attract new businesses, residents and activity, consider:
 - Using models developed by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and Institute for Transportation Engineers (ITE), which can calculate parking needs for proposed uses based on the precise use and time of day.

- Maximizing the extent to which parking is available to all, rather than dedicated to particular uses or destinations.
- Improving signage to, within, and around downtown public parking areas.
- Make the District More Walkable
 - Create a Canal Walk network
 - Improve Oxford Street as a walkable place
 - Rehabilitate or replace the Lower Canal bridges serving the southern end of Simard-Payne Park
 - Add a new Lower Canal pedestrian bridge
 - Add trees, lighting, and improved sidewalks
 - Narrow Cedar Street to three lanes and incorporate bike lanes.
 - Continue development of an L-A Heritage Trail
 - Oxford Street
 - The initial phase of work might focus on Oxford Street along the edges of the Lower Canal and Simard-Payne Park extending to the Continental Mill
 - The second phase of work could focus on creating an attractive walkway along the Cross Canal beginning at Simard-Payne Park and extending to Canal Street and Lisbon Street via Ash Street. This pathway would connect through a new Canal Park at the Bates Mill #5 site, travel past the Lincoln Street Garage (opposite Fishbones), and meet the River near the proposed hotel
- Explore opportunities to light Riverfront Island destinations at night
 - Waterfronts and waterfront paths (e.g., the Riverwalk, the Great Falls, the Canal Walk); Bridges (e.g., the trestle bridge linking Simard-Payne Park to Bonney Park)
 - Key open spaces (e.g., the proposed Canal Park)
 - Historic buildings (e.g., the Continental Mill, the Dominican Block, the Grand Trunk Depot Building)
- Improve Main Street
 - Improve Main Street for pedestrians and cyclists
 - Make Main Street a better gateway
- Insist on Quality
 - Draft urban design guidelines and establish an overlay district
- Zoning Modifications
 - Modify parking regulations to provide specific standards for determining parking requirements when parking is shared by several uses with different peaking requirements.
 - Revise shoreland zoning for Island Point to reduce current setback requirements as long as public access is accommodated at the water's edge.
 - Relax side-yard setback requirements in the Riverfront district to enhance opportunities for townhouse development on Oxford Street.

- Consider Form Based Code

Next Steps

The Plan identifies the next steps in moving from planning to implementation:

- Seek formal City Council support for the plan. Ongoing Council support will be essential to advancing the plan.
- Seek Planning Board and City Council approval for adopting the Riverfront Island Master Plan as part of the City of Lewiston’s comprehensive plan.
- Continue to work closely with Auburn to establish a strategy for ongoing collaboration in implementing the plan.
- Take steps to resolve the future of Bates Mill #5 site.
 - The master plan explored several options for reusing the property and concluded that the most viable option involves its demolition and redevelopment of its site for a mix of open space, retail, and possibly civic uses. The master plan recommends the Council consider moving forward to authorize demolition and preparation of the site for future redevelopment. In the period immediately following demolition, the site should be used for open space on an interim basis. It is anticipated that the City will issue a Request for Development Proposals for redevelopment of portions of the property, potentially in conjunction with development of a new park and possible civic use.
- Advance the downtown hotel proposal—and pursue other public-private partnerships—to bring additional high-quality development to the district.
- Explore the potential for institutional participation within Riverfront Island.
 - The city’s major medical and educational institutions currently have no presence or visibility within Riverfront Island, which can become the region’s defining public space and a cornerstone for shaping Lewiston’s evolving identity. The City of Lewiston should initiate and continue discussions with potential institutional partners—e.g., Bates College, Central Maine Medical Center, Kaplan University, St. Mary’s Regional Medical Center, and USM’s Lewiston-Auburn College—to explore interest and ability to assist in moving the plan forward.
- Seek funding for key public improvements.
 - Use this plan as a tool for communicating the goals and vision for the downtown riverfront. Seek state, federal and other sources of funding.
- Move forward with a public-private partnership program to secure use of available private parking to meet district needs.
- Develop key zoning amendments for consideration by the Council.
- Continue to work to secure public control and ownership of canals.
- Support Museum L-A’s efforts to move forward with its waterfront site.
- Work cooperatively with waterfront property owners to incorporate a Riverwalk on private property in advance of property development.

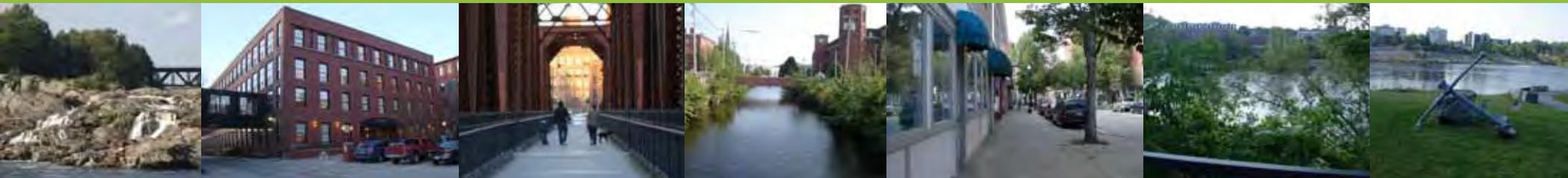
- Continue efforts to coordinate downtown planning with regional entities such as the Androscoggin Land Trust and the Androscoggin Valley Council of Government.
- Focus on advancing near-term catalyst projects.
 - Completion of quickly do-able, high-visibility projects will provide benefits that all can enjoy and bring momentum to advance longer-term projects.

Staff looks forward to an engaging discussion at the workshop with recommendations from the Council and Board on what elements of the plan should be initially focused on.



riverfront island master plan

SUMMARY



City of Lewiston, ME
Riverfront Island Master Plan Committee
Goody Clancy
May 2012

OVERVIEW



A quiet renaissance is underway along Lewiston’s downtown riverfront. Over the last ten years, both Lewiston and Auburn’s central areas have begun to reorient themselves to face the Androscoggin River. A great river, once harnessed to produce the power that drew industry to the twin cities, can now again be the spark that defines the communities. The riverfront can become the region’s great urban destination, a place for recreation, cultural activities, work and urban living.

RECENT SUCCESSES

Despite severe economic headwinds, much has been accomplished in recent years. Collaborative partnerships involving public, private and non-profit entities—and a shared commitment to supporting reinvestment in the community—have drawn new businesses and destinations to Lewiston-Auburn.

Riverfront Island, a pivotal area within the city’s downtown riverfront, has come to host more than 1,000 jobs within the Bates Mill Complex, where high-quality restoration has attracted major office uses, destination restaurants, a brewery, a medical office, and new loft-style housing now under construction.

At the same time, new cultural destinations and outdoor spaces are also bringing activity to the

Riverfront Island area. A former church now houses the Franco-American Heritage Center, a performance venue that draws thousands to the area each year. Museum L-A, a dynamic non-profit devoted to telling the 200 year story of work and community in Lewiston-Auburn, has begun to design their new home—a modern museum space on the River’s edge that will incorporate portions of a former mill building. Once an abandoned rail yard, Simard-Payne (Railroad) Park is now a major public space along the River, and home to the annual Great Falls hot air Balloon Festival. A former rail bridge is now a pedestrian and bike bridge, linking Simard-Payne Park in Lewiston to Bonney Park in Auburn, and providing striking views of the River. A Lewiston-Auburn Riverwalk has begun to take shape on the Auburn side of the River, and paths have been established along portions of the Lewiston riverfront as well.



Waterfront access at Simard-Payne Park creates a new community destination.



The canal can become a true amenity along Oxford Street, attracting new people and residential development to the edges of the park.

A few blocks from the riverfront, new businesses and restaurants have begun to appear on Lisbon Street, Lewiston’s “Main Street.”

ONGOING CHALLENGES

The success of recent years has created a solid foundation for the area, but not yet a strong, vibrant urban riverfront destination. The downtown riverfront needs a critical mass of more housing, public amenities, and jobs—both to improve quality of life and to support economic development that extends beyond the riverfront and benefits the center cities of both communities.

Today, Riverfront Island’s largely untapped assets—scenic Great Falls, miles of waterfront land, a canal network, and roughly 1 million square feet of still-vacant mill buildings—hold the keys to the area’s continued resurgence. This plan identifies the next steps in Lewiston’s renaissance, and outlines a vision for the future of Riverfront Island as *the* urban

riverfront destination for the community and the region. The plan identifies both the key near- and longer-term steps that will advance this vision.

SHARED VISION

Through extensive analysis and public discussion **a common vision has emerged for Riverfront Island as an urban, recreation-oriented destination** that:

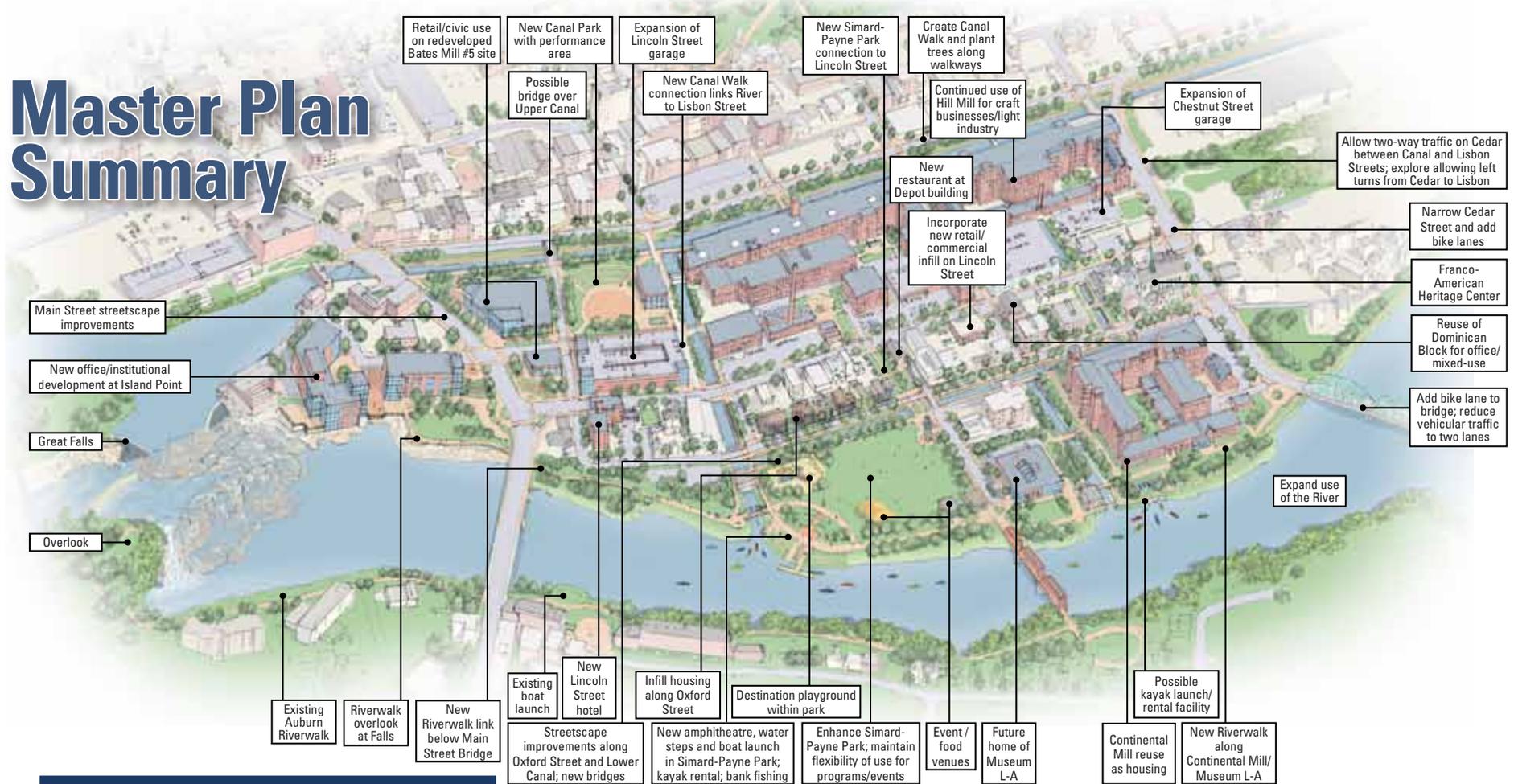
- Features **a mix of activities** and uses, including significant new housing, open space, stores, offices, restaurants, and a hotel—all with strong connections to the River and the Lisbon Street area.
- Serves as a **cultural center and destination** for the Lewiston-Auburn community and for the broader region.
- **Celebrates Lewiston’s many assets**, including the Androscoggin River, the canal network, and the historic architecture.

GOALS

Four closely related goals guide this master plan:

- 1) **Tap the power of the River** through development of a Riverwalk and improved water access to enhance quality of life and to support economic development.
- 2) **Attract a vital mix of uses**, including housing, through continued reuse of historic buildings and thoughtful new development that bring new life and activity to the area.
- 3) **Make the district more walkable** to ensure that Riverfront Island functions as a cohesive urban destination where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
- 4) **Insist on quality** in both public and private investment—to attract desired businesses, residents, and visitors, and so that the riverfront grows as a place the L-A community can take pride in.

Master Plan Summary



elements of the vision

<p>Tap the Power of the River</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a continuous Riverwalk. • Make Simard-Payne a true waterfront park—with improved amenities and stronger connections to the water and surrounding streets. • Advance development of Museum L-A as a waterfront anchor. 	<p>Attract a Mix of Uses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a critical mass of housing. • Lincoln Street—focus area for new retail and commercial uses; move forward with new hotel. • Oxford Street—new housing mixed with arts/cultural and open space amenities. • Canal Street—reestablish trees and create a gracious green corridor. 	<p>Make the District More Walkable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a Canal Walk network. • Improve Oxford Street as a walkable place. • Narrow Cedar Street to three lanes and incorporate bike lanes.
				<p>Insist on Quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use design guidelines to shape new development and rehabilitation.