The Third Place

Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan

February 2009

Downtown
Neighborhood
Task Force

Lewiston
All-America City
2007

Preface

Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan

Developed by the Downtown Neighborhood Task Force (DNTF),
Residents and Stakeholders of Lewiston's Downtown Neighborhood

THE THIRD PLACE

The third place is a term used in the concept of community building to refer to social surroundings separate from the two usual social environments of home and the workplace. In his influential book "The Great Good Place", Ray Oldenburg argues that third places are important for civil society, democracy, civic engagement, and establishing feelings of a sense of place. Oldenburg calls one's "first place" the home and those that one lives with. The "second place" is the workplace - where people may actually spend most of their time. Third places, then, are "anchors" of community life and facilitate and foster broader, more creative interaction. All societies have informal meeting places; what is new in modern times is the intentionality of seeking them out as vital to current societal needs.

The Downtown Lewiston Neighborhood Action Plan is intended to facilitate and foster broader, more creative interaction and discussion surrounding Lewiston's downtown neighborhood. It is hoped that this plan will serve as a foundation for ongoing dialogue, efforts and commitment for the betterment of the community.

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Note: A supplemental report entitled "Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan (2009) – Addendum" includes additional information and documentation of the DNTF process and study.

Section I: Participation and Appreciation

Participation

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." – Anne Frank

Downtown Neighborhood Task Force Members:

Adilah Muhammed, Chair
Craig Saddlemire, Vice Chair (*The Visible Community representative*)
Mike Lecompte
Zam Zam Mohammed
Barbara Rankins
Rachel Rodrigue
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Staff:

Mark McComas, Deputy Director
(Department of Economic and Community Development - City of Lewiston)

Consultant Team:

Sebago Technics
Engineering Expertise You Can Build On

PolicyOne
RESEARCH, INC.

Appreciation

> ***"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."*** - John F. Kennedy

Throughout the work of the Downtown Neighborhood Task Force (DNTF) there were numerous individuals and groups who have been supportive and provided assistance. The members of the DNTF sincerely appreciate the interest, advice and help of everyone who participated in the development of this action plan. While not everyone can be recognized, the DNTF would like to thank the following individuals and groups:

Lewiston City Council (2007 and 2008)
Mayor Laurent F. Gilbert, Sr.
City Administrator Jim Bennett
City Departments and Staff who provided input to the Plan
The Visible Community
Empower Lewiston
The Citizens of Lewiston

And thanks are extended to all those groups and individuals who helped us to understand what the downtown residential community means to them:

Residents

- Downtown Community Action Group
- Knox St. Harvest Supper Attendees
- Latino Community
- Lewiston Adult Ed New Mainers
- Little Canada
- United Somali Women of Maine

Young People

- Lewiston Youth Advisory Council
- YPLAA –Young People of Lewiston-Auburn Association

College Community

- Andover College Students
- Bates College Students
- Central Maine Community College
- Downtown Education Collaborative
- USM-LA Social Policy session

On-line Survey Participants

Community Forum Participants

- Community At-Large Forum
- Landlord Forum

City Departments

- Fire
- Parks and Recreation
- Planning/Code
- Police
- Public Works/Services
- Social Services

Business Community

- Chamber of Commerce Brown Bag Forum
- Neighborhood Businesses Survey in Study Area

Non-Profit Community

- United Way Non-Profit Leadership Group

Section II: Opening Conversations and Aspirations

> ***"When you look at a City, it's like reading the hopes, aspirations, and pride of everyone who built it."*** - Hugh Newell Jacobson

"When you think of Lewiston's downtown neighborhood, what do you think of?"

"If you could add or remove any feature to/from the downtown neighborhood, what would it be?"

"In 10 years, Lewiston's ideal downtown residential community would be…"

In April of 2007, the Lewiston Downtown Neighborhood Task Force (DNTF) began a conversation by posing these three questions to various stakeholder groups, City staff, and individuals across Lewiston. At first reading, they appear to be rather simplistic. However, the depth and breadth of the responses received uncovered a spectacular diversity of perceptions and realities—and the gaps between them—in this small but important corner of our City. The answers presented here have formed the cornerstone of the DNTF's mission and goals, and framed its work towards a new action plan for the downtown residential neighborhood.

For several decades, planning and development efforts have focused on the non-residential area of the downtown largely to the exclusion of the residential sector. Meanwhile, those proposals brought forward for the neighborhood itself were often undertaken without a formal planning process. With this historical context in mind, the City Council appointed residents and non-residents alike to the DNTF to ensure that what happens in this neighborhood would happen "with" them and not "to" them.

The DNTF was created to engage citizens in the process of community and economic development as it looked at the needs, desires and challenges for Lewiston's downtown residential community. The plan that resulted from this engagement is designed to address overall residential quality of life in downtown Lewiston, including both the physical issues (housing, streets, parks, transportation, etc.) and the underlying socio-economic issues that are integral to the experience of downtown living. While soliciting input from key stakeholder groups, the DNTF simultaneously surveyed the physical landscape of the downtown residential neighborhood and inventoried what actually exists within its boundaries. Both the interactive and survey facets of this work were essential in order to better understand where Lewiston's downtown neighborhood stands today and where it might go from here.

The DNTF developed a series of goals early on in its work. These goals helped to guide the DNTF on its mission and provide the overall framework for the plan's recommendations. Each of the recommendations is defined by the following guiding goals and premises:

- **Comprehensiveness**: For solutions designed to improve the downtown residential neighborhood to be successful, they must be holistic in nature. All aspects of factors affecting quality of life must be addressed. One-dimensional changes that apply to only the physical, socio-economic, life/safety or other individual elements are destined to make only minor, insignificant improvements—if any at all. The DNTF's action plan will propose only integrated, coordinated and strategic solutions.
- **Respect:** The DNTF is committed to making the downtown a better place to live, but not to do so by displacing those who live there now. Its goal is to recommend improvements to the physical and socio-economic well-being of the area in ways that respect the lives and needs of those who are already there while encouraging new investment and new residents.
- **Reasonability:** The DNTF seeks to reconcile the "hopes and dreams" for the downtown residential neighborhood with the "realities" of what exists there. In order to propose relevant and reasonable recommendations to improve the neighborhood, it is crucial to address the relationships between what is there and what is not, as well as what people *think* is there or *think* isn't there.
- **Openness:** The downtown residential neighborhood envisioned by the DNTF is not an island unto itself, but is an inviting place for both residents and non-residents alike to interact and spend time. Its physical structures and spaces, as well as its arts, cultural, and recreational offerings should instill a sense of pride in those who live there as well as attract others from outside its borders.
- **Pride:** The DNTF seeks to combat the myth that Lewiston's downtown is *not* a neighborhood of choice. Many of its residents recognize it as a vibrant, diverse location with much quality of life to offer. Its mission is to accentuate and publicize its many positive aspects, while working to mitigate the negative and often inaccurate perceptions about its inhabitants and lifestyles.

What Makes a Great Process?

The hallmark of this planning effort has been its inclusiveness. At every turn, the DNTF actively asked the questions, "Who else should we talk to?" and "What else should we be asking?" The Task Force and its members never stopped seeking better, clearer, and more comprehensive information to improve the recommendations presented here. With that in mind, there are several aspects of the Task Force's work that helped to define how it arrived to this Plan.

Who we are

Though the study area itself comprises a narrowly defined section of our city, the City Council recognized in shaping the Task Force that simply asking downtown residents what is needed downtown would generate passionate, but ultimately incomplete, answers. This area represented not only a residential quarter for those who live there but a critical segment of the history and cultural heritage of the City as a whole. For this reason, the study area's cultural and strategic significance required that the membership of the Task Force be selected from a diversity of geographic, cultural, and professional corners of Lewiston. The nine Task Force members, all citizens of the City of Lewiston, were charged to consider and incorporate a wide variety of opinions and viewpoints throughout this planning effort.

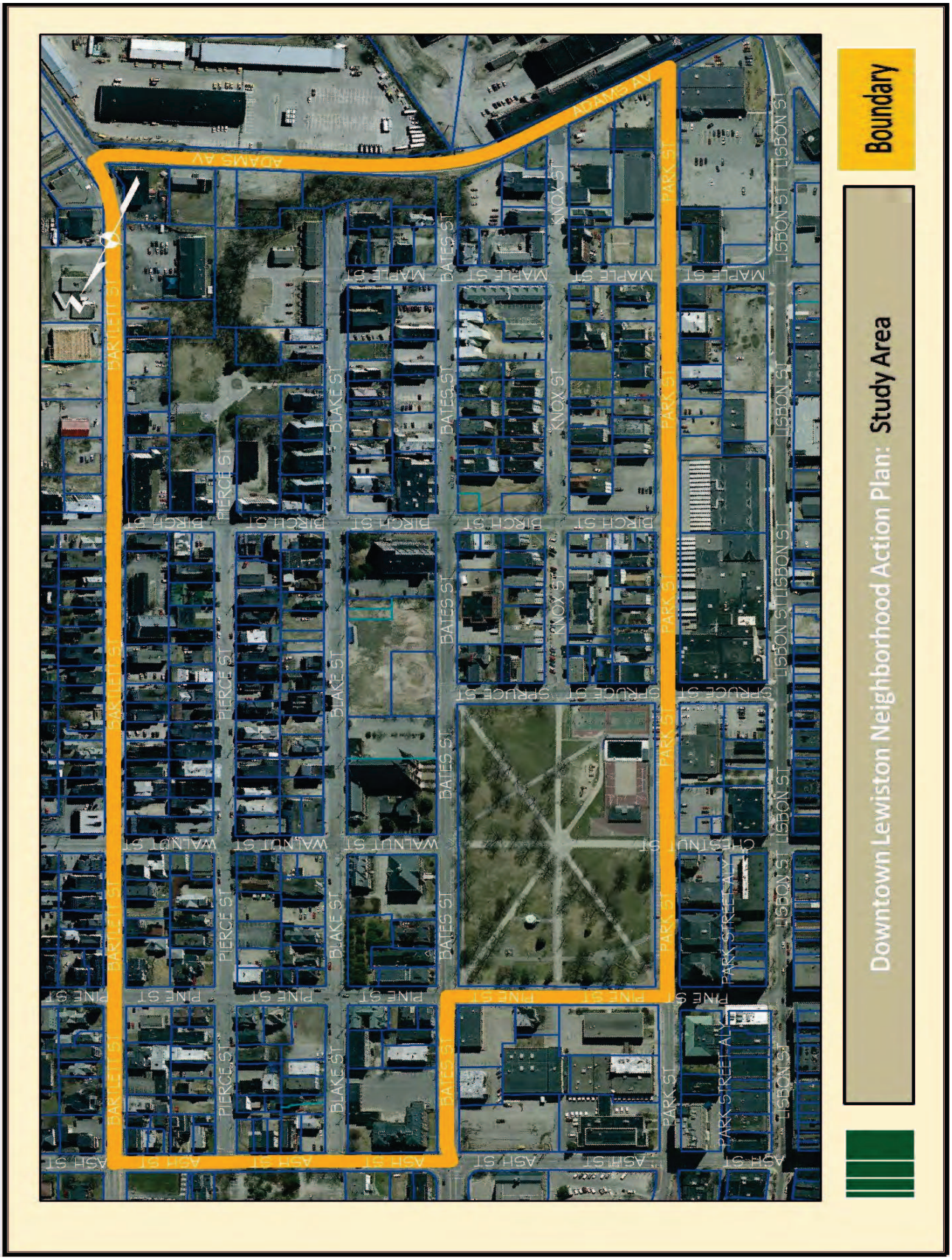
Where we are

The study area for the Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan (***Map 1: Downtown Neighborhood Study Area – pg. 9***) mirrors the area identified in the 1999 Lewiston Downtown Master Plan as the "Residential" area. This somewhat arbitrarily designated area is defined by traveling (clockwise from the southwest) from the intersection of Park Street and Adams Avenue to the north along Park Street to Pine Street, then east along Pine to Bates Street, then north along Bates to Ash Street, then east along Ash to Bartlett Street, then west along Bartlett to Adams, and south to Park. There is no specific rationale provided in the 1999 Master Plan for the selection of this district. Many people familiar with Lewiston would draw different lines to define the downtown neighborhood—or perhaps define more than one. However, as delineated in this plan, it represented a manageable space and population for the Task Force, its time frame and the purposes of this plan.

Who is involved

Stakeholders, both internal and external, were involved throughout the data collection process. Residents, both within and outside the study area, local business owners, landlords, nonprofits, etc. were all contributors to the recommendations in the plan. Data was collected from stakeholders in various ways. Most notably, DNTF members sought to reach out, in person, through a number of key constituent focus groups, in-depth interviews, in-person and online surveys. This strategy served to provide a healthy mix of responses and ample opportunities for those who wished to be a part of the planning process to get involved. Throughout the process, ***more than 200 stakeholders*** were engaged and lent their voice to the plan.

Map 1: Downtown Neighborhood Study Area



What is there

DNTF members also provided a significant amount of key data through direct observation. Members volunteered to walk every step of the neighborhood to physically inventory its features: Every sidewalk was "graded", every tree counted, every vacant lot identified and every item mapped. The relevance of this asset mapping process cannot be overstated; far too often planning documents either ignore or make assumptions about the actual physical state of the area being focused on. It is natural to say, "We want to make "Area X" better", but do we really know what we are aiming to improve? Suggestions about how to improve the downtown neighborhood can only be truly realized when shaped from the existing landscape that exists.

What we already know

Lastly, the Task Force gathered additional information through the analysis of existing statistics, other master plans, downtown studies, and other data. While the scale and target area for this plan are different from many others that came before it, it was readily acknowledged that excellent and relevant work already performed could be used to provide background to this plan. Likewise, it is hoped that the information and process outlined in this plan might serve as a model for other areas—both in Lewiston and beyond—to utilize in their quest to improve the quality of life in their own neighborhood.

What we can pass on

As mentioned above, the study area for this Plan comprises a small—and somewhat arbitrarily defined—corner of Lewiston. While this area maintains certain unique characteristics by virtue of its history and socio-demographic make-up, the Task Force concluded that the downtown neighborhood shares many similar challenges and needs with other residential neighborhoods, both in Lewiston and beyond. In defining the methodology used to create this Action Plan, the Task Force was consistently mindful of how it might be replicated, in whole or in part, in other areas.

What Makes a Great Neighborhood?

> ***"Lewiston's ideal downtown residential community would be a thriving community for children and adults…ever learning and growing."***
>
> - *Knox Street Harvest Supper Attendee*

In concert with its stated goals and aspirations and in light of the methods it undertook, the DNTF envisions a downtown neighborhood that is recognized as an asset to the community, an area of engagement and diversity, a place of pride - a great neighborhood.

In a recent article from *Planning* magazine[1] the following 7 characteristics were used to define what makes a great neighborhood:

1. Has a variety of functional attributes that contribute to a resident's day-to-day living (residential, commercial, or mixed use).
2. Accommodates multimodal transportation (pedestrian, bicyclists, and drivers).
3. Has design and architectural features that are visually interesting.
4. Encourages human contact and social activities.
5. Promotes community involvement and maintains a secure environment.
6. Promotes sustainability and responds to climatic demands.
7. Has memorable character.

Surely, downtown Lewiston boasts many of the features to be such a neighborhood, but to what extent? The downtown residential neighborhood has been the heart and soul of the working people in the City of Lewiston since the mid 1800s. Times have changed, both locally and globally, but the neighborhood's underlying foundation remains firm. The time has come for rejuvenation of this neighborhood to ensure that it can continue to be the social and economic engine of the downtown. The downtown neighborhood holds a key to the success of the City's downtown commercial district with a large number of residents who live within an easy walk for the work, shopping, and arts and culture it provides. Yet, the neighborhood craves to maintain an identity of its own. It is a diverse mix of people, places, and ideas that, if properly nurtured, can help it re-capture its rightful position as a focal point of our City. The plan that follows will provide an opportunity for this conversation to begin…

[1] ***Great Neighborhoods by Mark Hinshaw, FAICP January 2008 Planning Magazine***

Section III: Ideas for Improving the Neighborhood

The following is a summary of the Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan recommendations developed by the Downtown Neighborhood Task Force. More detailed recommendations and background exists for each area and specific recommendation in Section V of this Plan.

SOCIAL CAPITAL:

"Those intangible substances that count most in the daily lives of people."

S1 **Develop a centralized information point, utilizing existing mediums and collaborating with existing entities, for social service programming, neighborhood, recreational, arts and entertainment offerings**. A great deal of information is available, but there is no easily accessible, comprehensive method to access it, especially for those with limited access to the internet.

S2 **Establish an oversight committee or expand the scope of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Review Committee to work with City staff on continued implementation, improvements and programming from the Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan**. In the same way as the 1999 Downtown Master Plan was successfully steered towards implementation by the Downtown Advisory Board, the Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan and its recommendations can be most effectively and successfully put in place with citizen oversight.

S3 **Take aggressive steps to increase education, workforce training, and employment for downtown residents.** Many of the challenges facing downtown residents are born out of a lack of opportunity, not a lack of willingness to improve.

a. **Gain a more thorough understanding of the recent immigration population.** Specifically, information gathering should be focused on areas of improvement that will contribute to more successful employment experiences. This will be increasingly important for Lewiston to become more competitive in the global economy where multicultural diversity is viewed as an asset.
b. **Increase the number of service providers (human services, schools, service related business, etc.) with multiple language skills.**
c. **Provide additional schooling, General Equivalency Diploma (GED), and/or English language proficiency classes for persons receiving workforce training.**
d. **Identify and reach out to Lewiston industries and businesses that would make a good fit for entry-level positions for under-skilled residents.**

S4 **Job Preparedness:**

a. **Offer services of the Maine Department of Labor's Career Center and Work Ready program in the downtown on a regular basis.** Transportation to and from the Career Center office remains an obstacle for many downtown residents who don't have access to private vehicles.
b. **Increase and promote access and availability to existing computer labs in the downtown for use in career development and training.** Computers for public use are available in a surprising number of places nearby to downtown; but residents are either unaware of these facilities, or they are not available at times they can access them.
c. **Increase efforts to support the creation and retention of small businesses and entrepreneurs that fit with neighborhood oriented development including small retail, services, and arts**. Downtown Lewiston's residential area retains a healthy core of neighborhood-type businesses but they are often underappreciated and underutilized. Efforts should include training, financial incentives and technical assistance.

S5 Collaborate with the 'Thrive Initiative' in the use of the time dollar program to help encourage and value's people's skills equally. The City should adopt the time dollar program to encourage civic engagement and neighborhood stewardship.

HOUSING :

"Residences, collectively. The activity of providing a residence for someone."

H1 The City should develop and use design guidelines to review future development proposed in the study area. Building styles in the study area are diverse and interesting; but as existing buildings continue to deteriorate, efforts should be made to maintain its architectural tradition.

H2 Rezone the area fronting on the west side of Bartlett Street, from Birch to Adams, and the North side of Adams Street, from Bartlett to Bates, from Highway Business to Downtown Residential. This rezoning would better reflect the primarily residential character of the study area.

H3 The City should consider developing a Registration/Business Licensing program for rental property owners. This would provide information about the state of the rental market, enhance the ongoing relationship between property owners and the City and provide a forum to publicize property owner activities.

H4 The City should require housing voucher issuing entities to submit a written action plan for organizational and tenant accountability to landlords in conjunction with rental licensing requirements. There is too much variation within and between these entities for landlords and tenants alike to have reasonable expectations about what conditions, behaviors, and standards are considered "acceptable".

H5 Provide a forum and maintain collaboration with downtown residential landlords to exchange ideas and information. While there are organizations for property owners covering a wider area, there is no formal grouping for downtown Lewiston landlords who face certain challenges unique to this specific area of the City.

H6 City Community Development Programs:

a. **The City should consider the development of a new loan program using CDBG funds that encourages mixed-use developments in the downtown area.** Such a program would support the (re)development of housing and shops or offices to co-exist on the same property.

b. **The City should consider the development of additional incentives through grant/loan programs and zoning that would encourage a percentage of affordable units in buildings that are being rehabilitated or reconstructed.** The need for improvements in the quality of the housing stock in the study area is widely acknowledged, but care should be taken to ensure that this improvement does not force the widespread elimination of affordable housing in the area.

c. **The City should enhance its focus on housing cooperatives under its homebuyer/homeowner rehab loan programs and develop a formal policy on development of cooperative housing.** Co-ops offer an affordable way to bridge the renter/owner divide. It also provides opportunities to introduce an ownership-level of stewardship into traditional rental properties.

d. **Condominium conversion should be promoted as a housing recovery effort in the context of establishing mixed-income housing and creating choices in home ownership options.** Condominium conversions serve the needs of residents and investors by minimizing the debt risk as unsold units can be rented as apartments.

H7 Facilitate the replacement of unsafe housing with safe housing:

a. **Conduct or commission an inventory of housing conditions in the downtown.** Too much of the data regarding conditions is based on assumptions and haphazard inspection reports—a more scientific detailed study is needed.

b. **Increase the integration of information on occupancy, conditions and safety between departments and agencies involved with housing.** A significant amount of information is available, but there is no reliable method for sharing and mutually updating the information.

c. **Increase the number of Code Enforcement officers.** While the need for increased enforcement activity is most acute in the downtown, staffing levels for code enforcement, in general, City-wide are highly inadequate.

H8 **Encourage development along the boundary of the study area that enhances the residential character of the neighborhood and creates smooth transitions between large-scale commercial facilities and the downtown residential neighborhood.** Buffer zones on the periphery of the study area will maintain the integrity of the residential area and minimize conflicts between residents and their commercial/industrial neighbors.

NEIGHBORHOOD STEWARDSHIP:

"Taking responsibility for the survival and well-being of something that is valued."

N1 **Community Policing Efforts**:

a. **Create a positive working relationship between officers and residents through more frequent walking and/or bicycle community policing activities.** Improving these relationships will have a significant impact on the neighborhood and specifically on at-risk youth.

b. **Create passive and active recreation-based opportunities for law enforcement officers to interact with youth downtown.** This will create opportunities for youth to view law enforcement personnel as friends and neighbors, not simply as "cops".

c. **Strengthen the usage and visibility of the B Street community policing substation.** This facility is ideally located in a place of community pride and could serve as a focal point for showing the police as neighborhood partners.

N2 **Promote the empowerment and leadership of residents, landlords and business owners to resolve and manage neighborhood issues**. Many of these downtown stakeholders would appreciate the opportunity to address their shared issues with little or no City/police involvement. Opportunities to facilitate problem-solving at this level should be encouraged.

N3 **Support and promote the efforts of downtown neighborhood organizations**. A neighborhood organization can be a primary means of identifying problems before they become too large to address, developing and implementing solutions, and sharing information on activities, programs, and events.

N4 **Mediation Resources need to be available and supported at a family and neighborhood based scale**. In addition to being a community resource, mediation will serve as a tool for stakeholders supporting the development of their communication, negotiation, and problem solving skills.

N5 **Implement a neighborhood beautification program, similar to the Chamber of Commerce Adopt-A-Spot Program, in the downtown neighborhood**. Such a program would foster a sense of ownership in the area and beautification efforts in general would enhance the overall appeal of the area.

INFRASTRUCTURE, STREETSCAPE and TRANSPORTATION:

"The physical and organizational structures and systems needed for the operation (living) of a neighborhood."

I1 Signage:

a. **Develop physical methods (colors, streetscapes, signage, etc.) to provide an identity/sense of place for the neighborhood(s) in the study area.** A sense of place shapes our perceptions of an area. A sense of place serves as a collective identity and residential differentiation.

b. **Enhance the existing Way Finding Signage program to direct people to a wider selection of downtown landmarks:** (Colisée, Multi-Purpose Center, Kennedy Park, Knox Street Park, Pierce Street Park, City Hall, Public Library, Lisbon Street, etc). There are many amenities in and near the downtown that attract visitors; however, there is no organized system of signage helping these visitors find their way.

c. **Improve the safety of pedestrian crosswalks in the downtown through yearly striping at every intersection in and around the study area.** There are numerous locations, most noticeably around the Kennedy Park entrances, where the right of way between pedestrians and vehicles is unclear and/or not prominently displayed. Special attention should be given to enhanced signage and traffic calming at the intersection of Knox and Spruce Streets.

d. **Replace the "Yield" sign at the intersection of Spruce Street and Bates Street with a "Stop" sign.** Visibility at this high traffic corner is problematic due both to the slope of the hill leading up Spruce and the proximity of on-street parking to the intersection.

I2 Trash and Litter:

a. **The Solid Waste pick-up program for the Downtown Residential area needs to be revised and better coordinated.** The Solid Waste Committee should review the current program policies and consider changes that would make trash pick-up more consistent in the inner City area.

b. **The City should select several locations within the downtown where additional public trash cans can be located to minimize litter.** Efforts to encourage a sense of pride by reducing litter will benefit by making it easier for residents to dispose of what they find.

c. **Encourage and facilitate wider use of the City's Recycling program.** Many downtown residents who could participate are not aware of the program or have no method of obtaining a recycling bin.

I3 Streetscape Improvements:

a. **Improve the streetscape and safety in the downtown by narrowing certain streets (particularly one-way streets) to create esplanades, wider sidewalks, bike lanes, and slower vehicular speeds.** This will encourage more pedestrian and non-vehicular modes of travel. Streets that are supporting only local traffic should be narrowed to include, at a minimum, a 16-foot wide travel lane, two 7-foot parking lanes and 10 feet remaining on either side to accommodate sidewalks and street trees.

b. **Develop improvements to the three intersections identified as high crash locations: Park Street @ Pine Street, Bates Street @ Ash Street, and Pine Street @ Bartlett Street.** Narrow the current two lane configuration to one lane and add esplanades with landscaping and street trees. Such modifications will "soften" the look of the area and will help to improve current crash patterns.

I4 Sidewalk Improvements:

a. **Improve the condition of the sidewalks in the downtown and review sidewalk snow removal procedures.** At a minimum, the City should evaluate the idea of major walk routes for designated sidewalk snow removal in the downtown.

b. **The City should remove existing sign bases and other infrastructure stubs that protrude from the sidewalks in the study area.** These unsightly objects present a significant safety and maintenance hazard for pedestrians, bicyclists and maintenance personnel.

I5 Parking:

a. **Eliminate the no on-street parking regulation, between November and April, to allow on-street winter parking and work with the neighborhood to establish winter relief parking locations during snow storms and clean up.** There is a need for a revised winter parking program that accommodates people who have no access to off-street parking for themselves or their guests where they live.

b. **Amend the City's current Vehicle Parking Space Requirements for new development and redevelopment of residential and commercial properties.**

c. **Lower the required number of parking spaces to a reasonable space-per-unit ratio that fits the character of the mixed-use neighborhood.**

d. **Provide property owners the option of using their required surface parking area for another purpose** (such as green space), so long as that use does not unreasonably preclude the use of that space for surface parking in the future.

I6 Modifications to citylink:

a. **Work with the Lewiston/Auburn Transit Committee (LATC) on establishing revised bus routes, specifically: Revise Route #2 (Sabattus Street) and Route #3 (Lisbon Street) to provide more options and encourage additional use by residents for access to major shopping areas.**

b. **Work with the LATC to expand the Downtown Shuttle routing to bring people who live or work in the study area to and from the Oak Street bus station and along Lisbon and Main Streets in the central business district.** Expanding the downtown shuttle route(s) will allow for easy access to the station and for more convenient transfers.

c. **Work with area businesses and the LATC to establish a yearly bus pass program.** This type of program is readily available on other public transit systems and should require minimal modification to the current monthly pass that already exists.

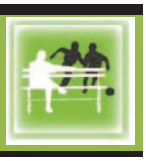
d. **Work with the LATC to extend bus hours in both the morning and evening during the week and to develop some weekend service.** Bus service for workers and residents outside of a 9-5 time slot is unavailable, and it is also nonexistent outside of these hours for access to shopping, cultural amenities, etc.

I7 Encourage and facilitate the placement of bike racks and benches in strategic locations throughout the neighborhood. These improvements will enhance the neighborhood feel of the area and encourage non-vehicular modes of transportation.

I8 Work with area colleges to inventory/asset map transportation resources within non-profit organizations and develop strategies for maximizing these resources to meet more community needs. There are many and often competing, private and public transportation options serving the area, but there is no comprehensive understanding of how they interconnect.

PARKS and COMMUNITY SPACES:

"Gathering places are essential community facilities that are venues for activities and events that create community cohesion."



P1 Kennedy Park:

a. **Implement the improvements recommended in the Kennedy Park Master Plan.**

b. **Enhance the use of Kennedy Park for structured recreational activities by evaluating program opportunities offered through the Lewiston Recreation Department and other community-based organizations.**

c. **Improve access to and safety around Kennedy Park (@Spruce Street, @ Knox Street, @ Walnut Street, @ Chestnut Street).**

P2 Pierce Street Park:

a. **Build on previous master planning/design efforts to identify park improvements that will support the Neighborhood's goals for the park.**
b. **Formalize access for public safety vehicles and personnel from Bartlett Street to the park via the existing City easement.**
c. **Re-establish pedestrian access to the park via Pierce Street along with new signage at all entrances to increase visitor orientation and access to this neighborhood space.**
d. **Consider re-naming the park.**

P3 Urban Trail System:

a. **Develop an urban trail system for pedestrians, depending on property owner's consent, from vicinity of Knox Street and Adams Avenue to Pierce Street Park along the existing undeveloped wooded slope.**
b. **Increase access to and utilization of Franklin Pasture from the downtown neighborhood.**

P4 Community Gardening:

a. **Increase the opportunity for community gardening in partnership with the existing Lots to Gardens program.**
b. **Strengthen collaboration between City resources and Lots to Gardens through more formal and continuous support.**
c. **Identify ways to expand City assistance for garden site infrastructure and necessary improvements.**

P5 Vacant lots, both City and privately owned, should be maintained as attractive and clean parcels. Eliminating blight in vacant lots serves to make the area more attractive to visitors and facilitates pride among residents.

P6 The City should find an underutilized green space and convert it to a dog park. Dog waste is a significant nuisance in many parts of the neighborhood, and specifically within park areas. A dedicated dog park would provide recreational opportunities for dog owners while minimizing their impact on other traditional recreation areas that residents use.

P7 Existing recreational, cultural and arts programs should be re-structured to include more opportunities for weekend, evening, and year round activities. Too many activities are scheduled at times that make it difficult for people to attend. Efforts should be made to make Kennedy Park an "all day, every day" attraction.

P8 Encourage ongoing work by local groups to establish a youth center. A center for youth sponsored and programmed by youth would be a welcome alternative to the sports-centric and adult-driven programs offered at existing recreation venues.

MARKETING:

"Creating recognition for residents and non-residents of what is good."

M1 Place historic markers on the properties that meet the National Register of Historic Places guidelines. There are numerous buildings on the National Register within the study area, but few are widely recognized as historically significant, even by life-long downtown residents. Highlighting these structures would help to draw attention to the downtown's rich heritage.

M2 **Work with the Historic Preservation Review Board to identify other properties of local historic significance in the study area and encourage the property owners to protect and upgrade the status of those properties, utilizing CDBG funds when appropriate.** Lewiston is fortunate to have an active group of citizens promoting the historic preservation of historic buildings. The City and local developers should work with them to preserve as many as possible in the downtown.

M3 **Continue to build energy and ideas around Lewiston's recent designation as a Preserve America Community.** This select designation – Lewiston is one of only eight communities in the state – provides access to a wide array of grant opportunities to use with our historic assets for economic development and community revitalization and to protect and celebrate our heritage.

M4 **Actively market the use of the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program to owners of qualified properties to encourage preservation of the neighborhood's historic properties.** Recent program changes to this program at the State level have made this program a more viable option for local developers. The concentration of historic properties in the downtown should be highlighted to attract those interested in utilizing the program.

M5 **Develop a strong marketing plan advertising regular events such as providing information on ongoing programming at B Street Community Center, Kennedy Park, City Hall, etc.** There are routine efforts made to market certain events and certain venues, but there is no comprehensive, coordinated strategy or outlet for those looking to find out about all of these activities.

M6 **Establish a direct marketing campaign to building owners in the study area educating them about City and other grant/loan programs available to them**. Existing City (and many other federally and state funded) rehabilitation programs are targeted to poorer, more blighted areas of the City, including the downtown study area. However, efforts to attract building owners have been limited in recent years and should be expanded.

M7 **Develop and publicize a downtown Lewiston neighborhood website and blogs to record the history, people and stories of the neighborhood. Encourage current and former residents to share their stories and engage in conversations about its present and future.** Similar recent efforts to document the industrial and manufacturing history of Lewiston have been highly successful and well received. Expanding these efforts to capture the residential experience in Lewiston's downtown would tell another part of the story.

M8 **Engage stakeholders on the development of a marketing program for the downtown neighborhood.** The Task Force's work has uncovered a wide ranging and complex network of organizations, interest groups and individuals that are deeply involved in the welfare of the downtown. But often these groups are not working in concert towards a common goal. By identifying downtown revitalization as a common theme, these important efforts could be more focused and more successful.

Section IV: Influences of the Past and Future

"The future influences the present just as much as the past."
-Friedrich Nietzsche

The history of Lewiston is one of strength, pride, diversity, character, hard work and success. The City's downtown has played an important and influential role in the City's history from the very beginning. The history of the downtown neighborhood dates back to the mid 1800s where the growth and development of the community first began. The downtown helped create the architecture and culture of the City. It was the downtown where residents of many nationalities first settled. They began to form the figurative and literal fabric of the community. They looked at Lewiston as a place of opportunity. They came with the same goals in mind; to work hard and raise a family. The influences of the City's past helped form a strong, vibrant, community.

Today, Lewiston maintains the same foundation of opportunity and community. Lewiston remains a place that welcomes new residents and embraces the diversity that they bring to the community. Residents, new or existing, all seek the very same goals; to work hard and raise a family.

Past.

While long recognized as a French-Canadian community, Lewiston's past, and in particular the downtown, is influenced by many peoples and cultures. In the mid 1800s the construction of the canal system and the mills provided a foundation for the City's economic and cultural history. These places of industry and opportunity attracted new residents from Ireland, Poland, and Canada. As new residents came, the downtown began to be established as the City's center for employment, business, government and culture. The downtown neighborhood was developed as the City's residential center providing housing, recreation, social interaction and civic pride. These influences of industrial, residential, commercial and cultural growth all helped form the community and the downtown neighborhood.

By the 1950s and 1960s, Lewiston's downtown was a well established neighborhood with a long and proud history. However, the prosperity of the period also yielded new neighborhoods outside of the downtown. Then in the 1970s, the economic opportunities that once attracted residents to the downtown began to decline. Employment in the mills decreased dramatically. Lewiston's once robust downtown retail center also began a movement out of the downtown. The proximity of the downtown residential neighborhood to its economic connections eroded. By the early 1980s, downtown Lewiston was populated with fewer businesses, less

employment, fewer people, and more vacant buildings. Whereas in previous years the abundance of downtown housing was an advantage for meeting the demand of the workforce, the decline of economic activity created an oversupply of housing and a corresponding disincentive for investment.

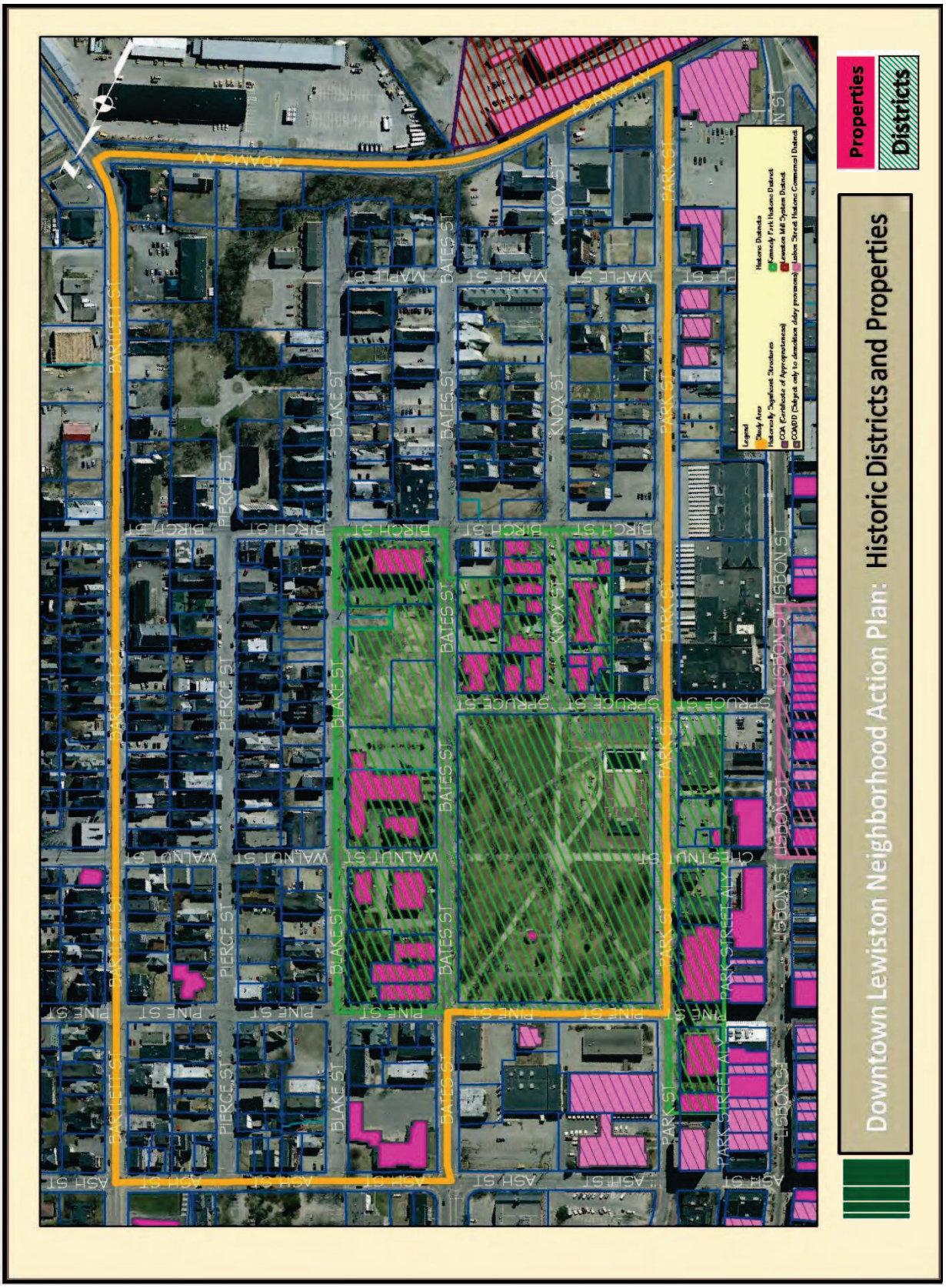
In the late 1990s and early part of this century, interest, effort and investment once again came to downtown Lewiston. The downtown neighborhood was once again the address of many new residents of the City. This renewed focus faced both need and opportunity. The downtown neighborhood had many vacant and/or substandard residential buildings. Investment in the downtown neighborhood had been absent. Yet, the opportunity for growth and renewed investment provided the potential for a rebirth of the downtown and its important downtown neighborhood.

Downtown Lewiston is rich in history both in terms of its cultural background and physical features. Lewiston's deep manufacturing heritage is reflected in its downtown neighborhood through its tight-knit personal relationships and densely packed building design. This heritage is seen clearly in the neighborhood's wealth of historical properties. The cultural backgrounds of the people who settled here in years past have been greatly reflected in the local architecture of neighborhood. Its houses of worship, residences and places of employment all carry elements of the numerous cultures that have called Lewiston home over its more than 200 year history.

Table 1: Historic Downtown Neighborhood Properties

Building	Address	Historic District	National Register	Date
Centreville Commons	26 Knox Street	Y	N	
Trinity Episcopal Church	247 Bates Street	Y	Y	3/30/1978
Coburn School	255 Bates Street	Y	N	
Dominican Convent	56 Birch Street	Y	N	
Drouin Building	250 Bates Street	Y	N	
St. Patrick's Church	220 Bates Street	Y	N	
Albert Kelsey House	1 Walnut Street	Y	N	
Wallace Parochial School	208 Bates Street	Y	N	
Milton Wedgewood House	101 Pine Street	N	Y	1/10/1986
Dr. Edward Russell House	73 Pine Street	Y	N	
H.C. Little House	190 Bates Street	Y	N	
Smith House	194 Bates Street	Y	N	
Kennedy Park	Park Street	Y	N	
Kennedy Park Bandstand	Kennedy Park	Y	N	
Healey Asylum	81 Ash Street	Y	Y	9/6/1979
Androscoggin Mill Block	269-270 Park Street	N	Y	4/12/2001

Map 2: Historic Districts and Properties



The downtown study area has 17 properties[2] identified as historic in nature; all are identified as being on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (**Table 1 - page 20 and Map 2 – page 21**). Kennedy Park is not listed in the National Register of Historic Places; however, it is *certified* as a historic district by the National Park Service (NPS), which means that it meets the same qualifications.

Restoring and preserving the heritage of Lewiston has always been an important part of the local fabric and a valuable element in providing context for economic revitalization. The success of the Franco American Heritage Center, Museum L-A and other similar endeavors speaks to the importance this history has to its citizens. Based on this rich heritage, it is important not to lose sight of these important properties. These should not only be preserved, but recognized and celebrated as a central theme in the neighborhood's revitalization.

Future Influence.

Today, the downtown Lewiston neighborhood is at the center of the City's impressive growth. Recent attention and investment has occurred in new housing, community centers, and recreation in the downtown neighborhood. The downtown neighborhood is again populated by a mix of people from different cultures, nationalities, incomes and points of view. Combined with increases in downtown employment, commercial development and overall commitment to the downtown, the residents of the downtown neighborhood (and the City) are presented with new opportunities. The opportunity to weave a new fabric and a new sense of community bolstered by renewed pride will yield a new neighborhood and asset for the City. In doing so, downtown neighborhood residents can realize the same goals of prosperity, family and success as those who came before them. Together they will add to the story and the conversation.

> ***"If we work together and communicate to get along, we will understand each other."***
> - *New Mainer Focus Group attendee*

[2] ***Source: 'Historic Lewiston' prepared by The Historic Preservation Review Board – August 2001***

Section V: Neighborhoods of Thought

Introduction. Throughout the work of the Downtown Neighborhood Task Force (DNTF) its members, stakeholders, staff and consultants sought to identify the principal concerns and thoughts about the neighborhood. As the dialogue continued, the DNTF formed primary topics of the conversation, subject areas that encompassed the ideas, thoughts and recommendations for improvements to the quality of residential life in the downtown neighborhood. Each of these topics impact everyday life in the downtown. Each area addresses expressed concerns and ideas (supported by research, inventory, best practice or design) of residents, stakeholders, City staff and consultants for the betterment of the neighborhood. While each topic area stands on its own, they are intended to work in concert to elevate the experience, condition and perception of the downtown neighborhood. In unison and with an ongoing commitment and dialogue, these topic areas will lead to a new downtown neighborhood that recognizes the assets of the community, the value of its residents, the importance of place and the prospect of a bright future.

Each topic of conversation is presented by defining the subject, describing its importance and role in the neighborhood and recommending specific actions. Supporting information, research and/or existing conditions are noted to provide context. The following needs and ideas are discussed in the context of public comments received and the input and goals identified by the DNTF. The DNTF chose to develop specific recommendations rather than large concepts. This follows the task force's thought that the plan be action oriented. In Section VI, the task force suggests the next step, implementation through engagement, by assigning specific parties to continue the conversation and take an active role in transforming the community.

Social Capital

"Social capital is not only a resource, but it is also a lens for evaluating institutions, programs, and individual behavior. Looking through a social capital lens, for example, we see front porches not as an architectural frill, but as an effective strategy for building strong, safe, friendly neighborhoods"

-Source: Saguaro Seminar on Civic Engagement in America report, "Better Together"

Definition

Social Capital[3] is defined as "…those intangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit....The individual is helpless socially, if left to himself....If he comes into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community."

Importance

Social capital is an important community asset. However, social capital based on trust, reciprocity, networks and collective action takes time to develop and needs particular and concrete attention. Social capital is fragile and easily damaged by focusing development efforts only on other aspects of capital. For example, urban renewal can more quickly revitalize a dilapidated neighborhood without consulting the people who live there and by not working with residents in planning; but ignoring social capital can make the neighborhood's viability difficult to sustain. The new buildings intended to "restore" the community may soon deteriorate because social capital has been destroyed. Some communities seek THE answer, while other communities consider many ways to getting things done. It is legitimate to look at alternatives. In such communities, there are shared goals with an understanding that there are alternative ways of meeting those goals. Where alternatives are considered, different points of view within the community are both accepted and valued by others in the community.

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[3] *Building Social Capital: The Importance of Entrepreneurial Social Infrastructure, Cornelia Flora North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, Iowa State University*

Networks in communities with high social capital are diverse and inclusive. While there is room for subgroups with high levels of social capital (communities of interest within communities), successful communities of "place" require diversity. If a community development project is designed to create more jobs, local people who will take those jobs need to be part of the process so there can be a better link between the human capital of the employees and the manufactured capital offering the jobs.

> ***"I think that if everyone in my neighborhood would work together it would be a very nice place."***
> - *Downtown Community Action Group member*

An inclusive process that values diversity requires asking who is not involved and why they are not involved, and talking directly to those who are not involved to find the answers. Is it the time? Is it the location? For instance, meeting at lunch is impossible for people who work in factories or in other types of employment. In addition, people who are poor or have mobility problems may find it difficult to access because of lack of transportation.

Additional characteristics of strong social capital networks include:

1. **Horizontal**: Lateral learning is critical in networks. Communities learn best from each other. Social capital is built through that lateral learning, both among communities and within communities.
2. **Vertical**: It is critical that communities be linked to regional, state and national resources and organizations. However, it is also critical that there is not just one gatekeeper who makes that linkage. Elected officials and members of organizations both need to foster those regional, state and national relationships.
3. **Flexible**: Being part of a network should not be a lifetime commitment. People are willing to participate where they can make a difference. Participation goes up and burnout goes down when people are asked to participate in a network that has a finite life span. People are asked to participate primarily in things in which they have real interest, although care must be taken that the larger vision is shared. Flexibility means that more people have the opportunity to become leaders.
4. **Expandable Boundaries**: The community of interest must be flexible geographically so the community of place can grow larger as new partnerships and collaborations are formed. On the other hand, when something very local is required, the boundaries can become temporarily narrowed. Movable and flexible networks are critical for community sustainability.

Assessment

Upon examination of various data about the Lewiston downtown residential neighborhood, a picture emerges of a diverse, interesting, yet challenged neighborhood. It features a wide variety of nationalities, family types, and age groups, but lags behind in important socio-economic factors such as income, employment and educational attainment. The two census tracts that encompass the downtown neighborhood, tracts #201 and #204, are generally considered to be among the poorest in the state and have been since the general decline of the City's manufacturing base. It is best characterized as a neighborhood of great unrealized potential—the challenge for residents and the community is to bring this potential to bear for the long-term good of the neighborhood and the City as a whole.

As discussed in Section IV, Lewiston, and its downtown neighborhood with it, fell on hard times during the 1970s. Most of the mills that had provided several generations of downtown residents with steady jobs were closed, and no significant industries remained to offset these losses. This decline continued throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, when efforts began to revive and diversify Lewiston's economy. Even as Lewiston's fortunes began to turn as a whole, revival was slower in coming to the downtown neighborhood. As the focus of Lewiston's economic development matured from the manufacturing/industrial base of its founding to a more diverse and varied employment structure, the downtown's worker-citizens—highly skilled in the trades prevalent in the historic mills, but generally lacking formal education—struggled to share in Lewiston's resurgence. Thus, socio-economic trends shown in Census data during this period reflect that the downtown residential core was reaching a crossroads: it was in jeopardy of becoming functionally and socio-economically obsolete as the rest of the city began to recover. However, as Lewiston entered into the new millennium, an unexpected turn of events again altered the social and economic landscape of the downtown.

Plans and reports like this one typically utilize current U.S. Census data to evaluate and compare the social, demographic and economic makeup of a given area. However, it is generally agreed that using such data yields less and less reliable results the further removed it is from the collection date. Data available for analysis was published 8 years ago and collected approximately 10 years ago—quite a long time for key characteristics to change within a given neighborhood. Downtown Lewiston presents a prime example of how changes over just a short number of years can significantly alter a neighborhood. In Lewiston's case, the arrival of many new residents, many of them secondary immigrants from Eastern Africa, combined with a major shift in employment sectors since 2000, have rendered current Census data highly suspect for evaluating the socio-demographic make-up of the neighborhood.

Reliable and comprehensive information from other sources regarding these demographic and economic shifts are difficult to come by, but some useful data has been compiled by various agencies in recent years. Maine Department of Labor's Center for Workforce Research and Information conducted surveys to assess the impact of the recent immigrant arrivals. Between 2001 and 2006, nearly 2,500 immigrants were reported to have settled in Lewiston—approximately 7% of the City's total population of 35,000—with this number continuing to increase until today. While there is no direct data available on where these new residents live, it is expected that perhaps 75% or more live within the downtown residential neighborhood. Between 80-90% of these immigrants have a high school diploma or less educational attainment, and those who are employed earn less than 80% of the median annual salary for Lewiston as a whole. These are significant challenges indeed. The arrival of these new residents is only part of the story—educational attainment and employment among downtown residents had been declining for many years before--nonetheless, the face of downtown Lewiston has changed dramatically over the past 10 years. It is essential to address its challenges and those of its residents against this new backdrop.

So what can be said to paint a vivid, accurate picture of what the downtown neighborhood is? First of all, it is an exceptionally dense population center with a population density of 5,403 persons per square mile against 1,047 for Lewiston as a whole according to the 2000 Census (***Figure 1 below***). It should be expected that this density has increased given the preponderance of large families among new immigrant residents.

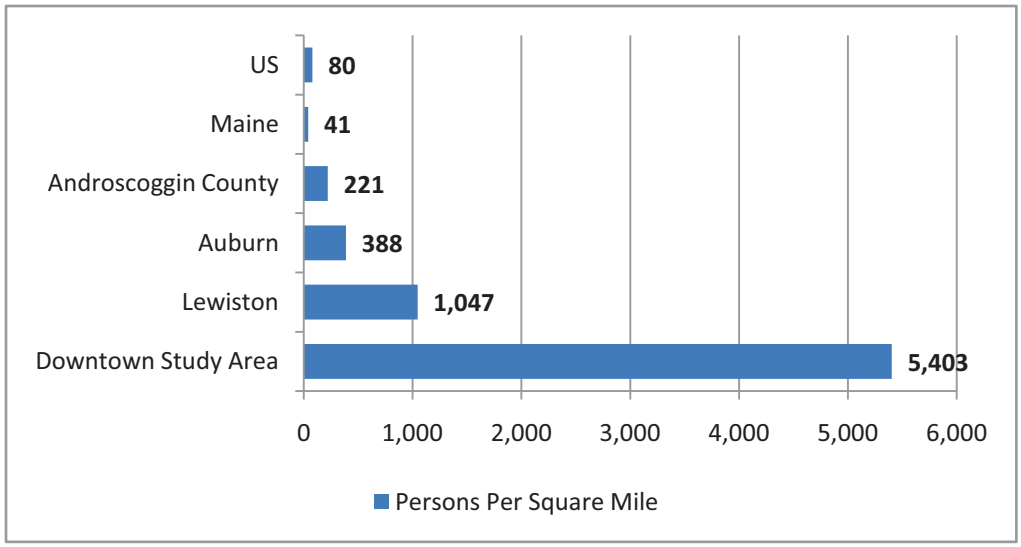


Figure 1: Population Density (U.S. Census – 2000)

Another demographic trend, average household size, is also likely affected by the arrival of new residents. In 2000, the average household size of the study area was quite low at only 2 persons per household. Again, with the predominance of larger families in the new immigrant population, it is expected that this trend has been reversed to some extent.

Despite changes in demographics observed over the past 10 years, areas of need and concern continue to include household income, poverty and employment. In many cases, new immigrant residents arrive with little or no income, and few employment prospects. As time passes and those families that were first to arrive begin to integrate into their new culture, their economic status improves; but overall, the economic situation in the downtown remains challenging and likely unimproved statistically from the latest Census figures. In 2000, the average household income for the two census tracts averaged just over $21,000, barely half of Lewiston's overall average (***Figure 2 – below***). The poverty rate in the study area was 39.8%, nearly 4 times that of the rest of the state and more than double Lewiston's poverty rate as a whole (***Figure 3 – page 29***). The child poverty rate stood at 55.3%. The unemployment rate in the study area was 15.7%, 2-3 times that of the other geographies. Once again, given that the average time between arrival and first employment for new immigrants in Lewiston is almost two years, and that 80% of immigrants between 2003 and 2006 have had at least one period of unemployment after their first job, it is expected that the study area's unemployment figure has increased over the past 10 years.

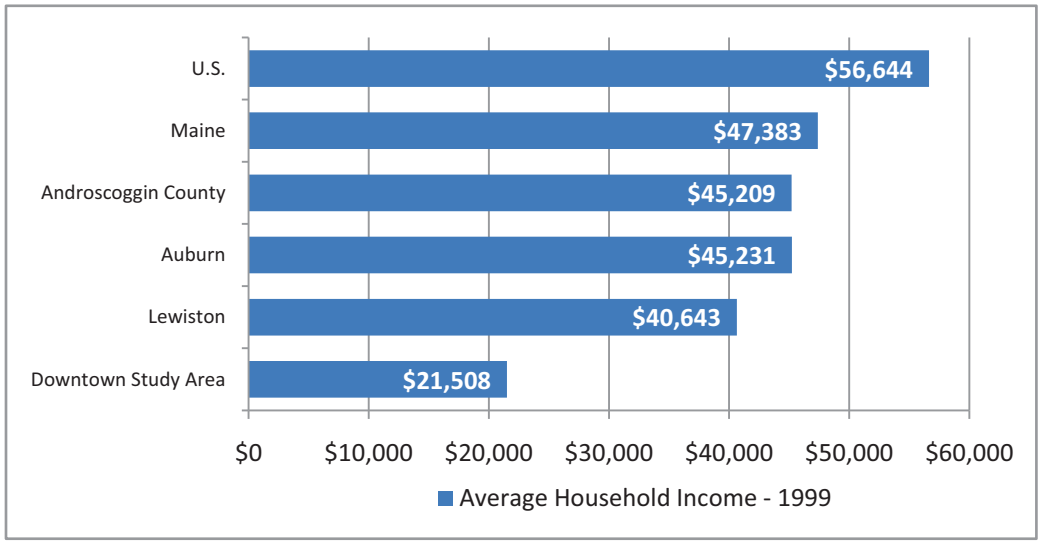


Figure 2: Household Income (U.S. Census – 2000)

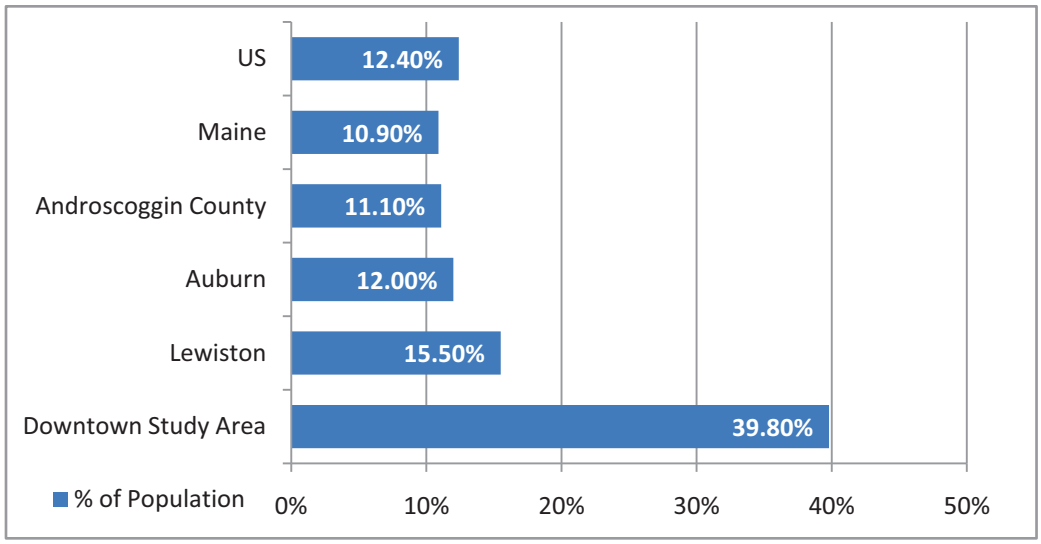


Figure 3: Poverty (U.S. Census - 2000)

While the lack of formal education noted above is a primary challenge for new immigrants coming to Lewiston seeking employment, it is far from an isolated problem within the immigrant community. The percent of persons 25 years of age and older with no high school diploma or GED in the study area was 39.5% in 2000. This is more than 2 ½ times the state average and 50% higher than Lewiston's. On the other end of this spectrum, the percent of persons 25 years of age and older with a bachelors or graduate/professional degree was only 7.3%, again, significantly below similar averages in Lewiston and across Maine. These figures present a clear picture of an undereducated population in the downtown, regardless of nationality or ethnic background. As a result, there is significant unemployment and under-employment among its residents. Those who do find work often are in underpaying jobs, and as average family sizes increase, this is likely to cause more poverty on the whole. This under education underemployment cycle must be broken in order to make a significant positive impact on the overall vitality of the neighborhood and the community.

Though focus is often targeted on its limitations and challenges when discussing the state of Lewiston's downtown neighborhood, there are clear positive outcomes to its recent transformation. Most significantly, it should be noted that the arrival of several thousand new residents, most of them renters, provided a welcome boost to a flagging real estate economy. Investors that had previously disregarded the downtown housing market took a renewed interest and buildings that might have otherwise been left vacant and in disrepair were revitalized. As more and more of these new residents took occupied neighborhood residences, the downtown core began to exhibit once again that characteristic density that had long been its hallmark.

As a dense urban center, the downtown creates natural interaction points and opportunities for neighbors to help each other. These are places where the positive elements of social capital can be found in abundance. Density, in the simplest sense of the word, is what makes a city, a city--a center of population, commerce, and culture. Indeed, downtown Lewiston's density makes it a unique place in Maine. Very few locations in Maine can offer the amenities of a compact, urban community with expansive rural landscape so close by. Of course, when this unique density is combined with an equally dense concentration of poverty, under-education and unemployment, the challenges they present are multiplied. Crime, poverty and similar ills are not a direct consequence of Lewiston's density, but their grip on downtown is more difficult to loosen because of it. Successful efforts to revitalize downtown Lewiston must take care to keep that which makes it a special and unique place in Maine while rooting out and correcting those elements which threaten to undermine its character. Fortunately, Lewiston's downtown neighborhood has a great advantage that other areas of Maine do not share; It is growing its social and cultural capital through diversity—a diversity that increases every day.

> ***"Various groups are doing things to help the community. How well connected are they to each other?"***
> - *YPLAA Focus Group participant*

The downtown's continuing process of cultural diversification feeds off its density. Large numbers of people with different backgrounds, experiences, and values in close proximity to each other generate countless opportunities for sharing and learning. In our increasingly global and changing society, social capital grows most readily at a time when segments of a community first come to learn about each other. A conversation on a new neighbor's porch may cause one to re-consider an age-old problem in a new light. An invitation to a picnic with a new neighbor can provide an entirely new set of experiences. Such social and cultural learning is inevitable—it surrounds us and provides many new daily opportunities to change the community around us for the better.

How can these inevitable connections be formalized? Perhaps the most effective method is to simply make it easier for residents and other stakeholders to learn about what goes on in the community. Services are provided, arts and cultural opportunities are offered and neighborhood organizations meet on a regular and ongoing basis. While the informal, organic

interactions described above are highly valuable, they are often ineffective at instigating wholesale change. In its most basic role a city brings people together geographically; however its true purpose is as a place where people come together socially and culturally to better themselves and their neighbors.

Needs Summary

The Downtown Neighborhood has demographic and economic trends that present challenges. However, the Downtown and the City as a whole have many local/neighborhood social capital assets from which to build on and improve conditions. Social Capital needs in the downtown neighborhood include:

- Increased employment opportunities for residents both within and outside the downtown
- Additional workforce training and education opportunities
- Increased trust, ownership of actions and personal investment
- Increased information, networking and communications for residents

Recommendations

S1 Develop a centralized information point, utilizing existing mediums and collaborating with existing entities, for social service programming, neighborhood, recreational, arts and entertainment offerings. This effort should support marketing and service delivery efforts of existing programs, including "211" and "LAItsHappeningHere.com", but not duplicate or replace them. Activities should include:

a. Fostering greater interaction between the commercial and residential sectors of the downtown by developing inclusive coordination and cooperation among all downtown activities.
b. Improving coordination of events, activities and programs among non-profits, neighborhood groups and City departments.

S2 Establish an oversight committee or expand the scope of the CDBG Review Committee to work with City staff on continued implementation, improvements and programming from the Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan to support the Residential area of the downtown. The overriding value of this "committee" should be to continue to build community trust and to foster the growth of intra-neighborhood and City-neighborhood communication networks. This "committee" should be established prior to the development of the CDBG City budgets.

S3 Take more aggressive steps to increase education, workforce training, and employment for downtown residents. Efforts should include:

a. **Gain a more thorough understanding of the recent immigrant population**. Specifically, information gathering should be focused on areas of improvement that will contribute to more successful employment experiences. There are well-documented correlations between the economic growth of a given area and the growth of its multi-cultural population.
b. **Increase the number of service providers (human services, schools, service-related business, etc.) with multiple language skills and cultural competencies**.
c. **Provide additional schooling, General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and/or English language proficiency classes for persons receiving workforce training**.
d. **Identify and reach out to Lewiston industries and businesses that would make a good fit for entry-level positions for under-skilled residents**.

S4 Job Preparedness:

a. **Offer services of the Maine Department of Labor's Career Center and Work Ready program in the downtown on a regular basis**. Currently the Career Center is not located downtown and while it might not be economical to create a full-scale second Career Center, having first-level information and screening for services would benefit the residents of the downtown for whom transportation is an issue.
b. **Increase and promote access and availability to existing computer labs in the downtown for use in career development and training**.
c. **Increase efforts to support the creation and retention of small businesses and entrepreneurs that fit with neighborhood style development** including small retail, services, and arts. Efforts should include training, financial incentives, and technical assistance.

S5 Collaborate with 'The Thrive Initiative' in the use of the Time Dollar program to help encourage and value people's skills equally. The City should adopt the Time Dollar program (or a similar concept) to encourage civic engagement and neighborhood stewardship and should consider acceptance of Time Dollars in exchange for payments for a limited range of City-related costs (library fines, certain licensing fees, etc.).

Housing

"A house is a home when it shelters the body and comforts the soul."

- Phillip Moffitt

Definition

Housing can be both an act and a place. It can be defined as residences, singular or collective and as the activity of providing a residence for someone.

Importance

As one of the basic pillars of the hierarchy of needs, the importance of decent, safe and sanitary housing cannot be overstated. It is the most prevalent form of land use within the study area, and yet the housing situation presents the largest number of challenges. Far too many housing units in the downtown are in a state of disrepair and many have outlived their intended lifespan; however, they continue to serve as homes for many residents. Creative policy-making and significant energy will be required to ensure that downtown residents have safe housing while avoiding displacement of residents by simply removing it.

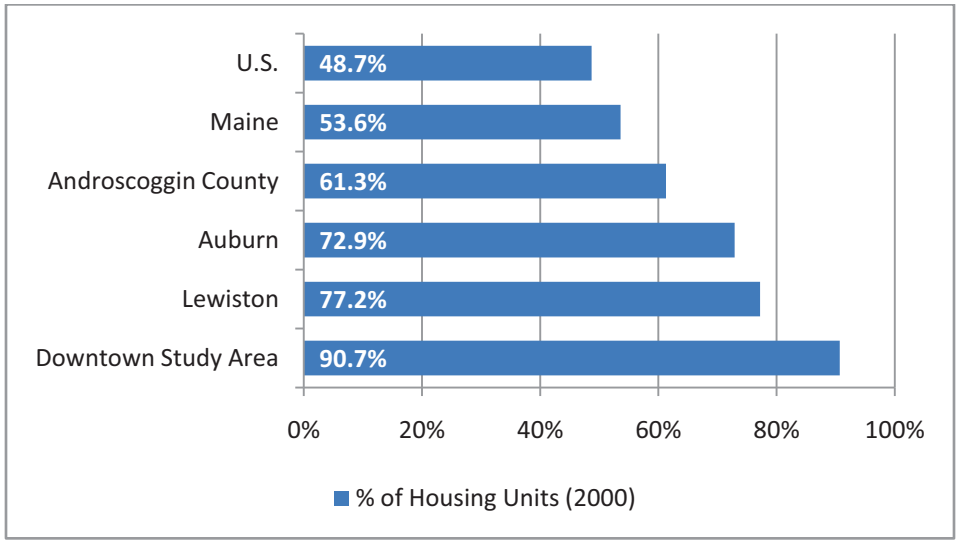
> ***"Downtown is a diamond in the rough, right now it is capable of going either way."***
>
> - *Downtown Landlord Forum attendee*

It is widely acknowledged that one of the most effective tools for spurring a property improvement is the sight of one's neighbor making one. Accordingly, it should be noted that there are many responsible, conscientious downtown property owners, both owner occupants and investor owners, who maintain excellent properties. These owners must be encouraged and assisted to continue their efforts and held up as positive examples to others.

Assessment

Downtown Lewiston features some of the oldest existing housing in Maine and the nation. The median year of construction for structures in the two census tracts is 1939. Over 90% of the housing units were built before 1970 (***Figure 4 – below***) and fewer than 5% of the housing units were built since 1995. While there are many high quality, well maintained properties in the study area, many others have deteriorated from years of deferred maintenance. This situation is compounded by the fact that the vast majority of downtown housing is rental housing, which is generally exposed to more "wear and tear" than owner-occupied housing. The homeownership rate for the study area is an extremely low 10.7% as reported in the 2000 Census. Likewise, 14% of housing structures in the study area contain more than 20 units. These large multi-unit buildings are generally subject to high rates of turnover and are more likely to be energy inefficient, thus increasing operational costs and limiting investment.

Figure 4: Housing Units Built Before 1970 (U.S. Census - 2000)



The average rent for units in the study area fluctuates significantly based on the size, quality and location of the unit, but they are generally acknowledged to be significantly lower than other parts of the region. While this is beneficial in some cases for tenants, many of whom earn below-average incomes, it presents a serious challenge for landlords who are struggling with record-high operational costs and aging buildings. With rental rates that are below the regional average, rental units in downtown study area are very popular choices for publically-assisted tenants. A significant proportion of Section 8 voucher holders, City General Assistance recipients, and other subsidy program participants succeed in finding affordable units downtown that are not available elsewhere. While it is invalid to suggest that subsidized

housing, and by extension, its tenants, is 'bad' housing, the high concentration of poverty that it creates contributes to a dangerous cycle; lower rents attract lower income tenants and lower rents make it more difficult for owners to maintain high quality properties. Furthermore, the amount and quality of oversight and accountability provided by subsidy-issuing entities varies widely. Property owners are too often left to their own devices when faced with uncooperative or non-paying tenants. Standard practices for tenant counseling and mediation established across these various agencies would be helpful to assist property owners in making sound tenant selections.

A key component of any effort to improve housing must include enforcement of safe housing standards and codes. Tenants, property owners, businesses and the City all have interest in ensuring that buildings are kept clean, safe and up to date. Enforcement of these standards and protection of these interests is a shared responsibility of the City and neighborhood stakeholders. The City's role is code enforcement. Currently, the City has two Code Enforcement Officers to monitor approximately 17,000 housing units in the city. This level of staffing permits only reactive code enforcement and mitigation of only the most egregious situations. Proactive enforcement is needed and will require additional staffing and resources. Stakeholders have a responsibility to hold one another accountable. Tenants should hold landlords accountable (and vice versa), businesses should hold the City accountable, etc. Without increased code enforcement any gains made in improving housing will be at risk.

Vacancy rates are also difficult to pin down, but are considered to range from 10-15% and vary both by location and seasonally. The combination of many property owners purchasing property at the top of the real estate market in the mid-2000s and the recent rise in heating costs has forced some landlords to close their least efficient and/or least occupied buildings rather than continue to lose money renting them. If this trend continues and more buildings are shut down, the vacancy rate is likely to increase.

Zoning Analysis: Zoning can have a significant influence on the socio-economic composition of an area; the downtown residential neighborhood is no exception. The area was originally developed with a traditional grid pattern designed to foster primarily residential development. A majority of the lots laid out in this area are based on 50'x 100' lot sizes. It is apparent that as the community grew and development occurred in this neighborhood that it would continue to be primarily residential in nature.

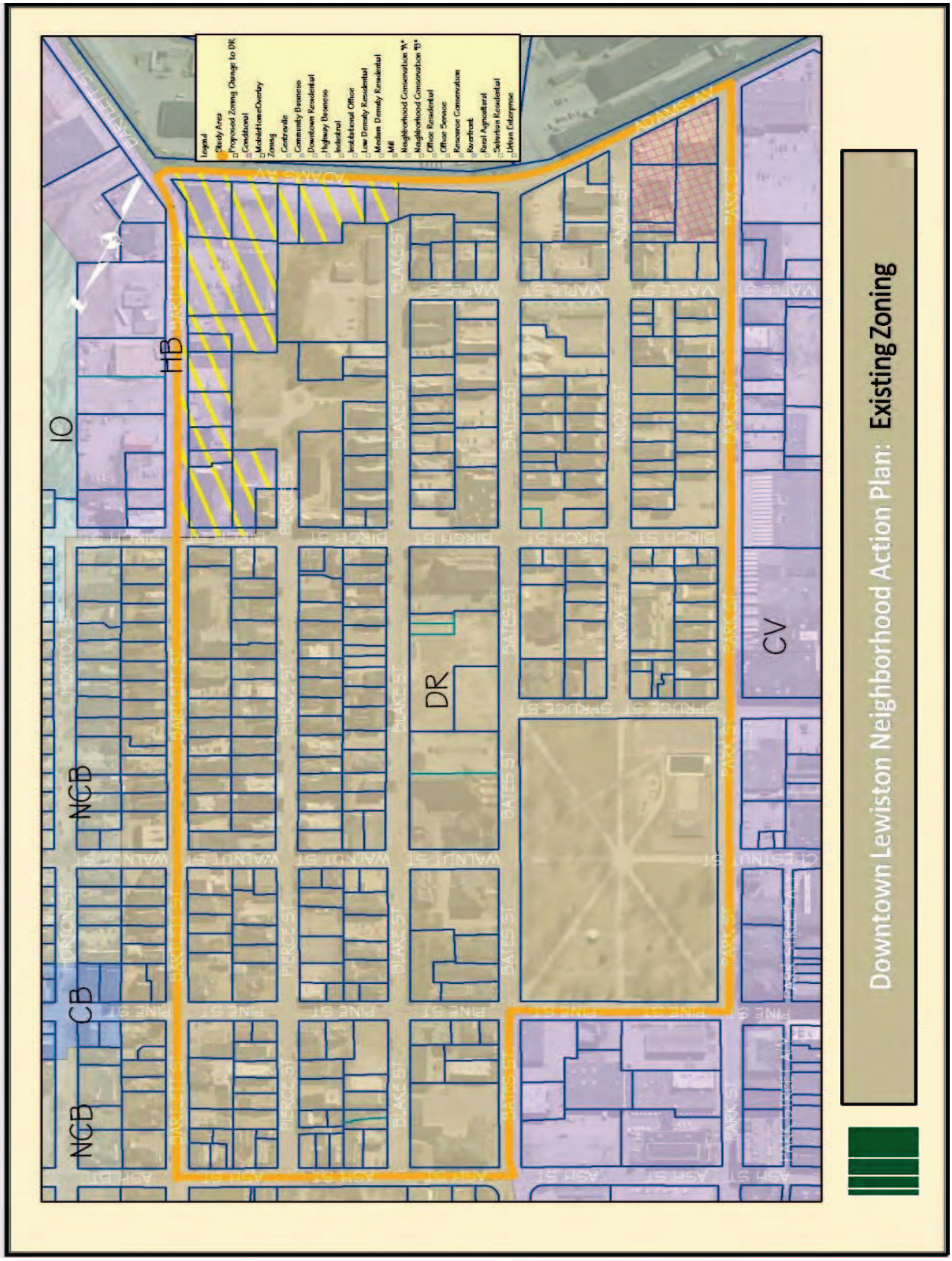
The bulk of the neighborhood is zoned as Downtown Residential (DR) ***(Map 3: Downtown Neighborhood Study Area Zoning – page 37),*** while a small portion of the district in the Bartlett Street and Adams Street area has Highway Business (HB) zoning. The DR zone is very supportive of the type of development currently existing in the area. Currently the zone allows for a residential density of up to 29 units per acre for multi-family residential uses. However, the current Lewiston Zoning Ordinance allows for a greater density of 43 units per acre, n the DR zone, if *"25% or more of the units are reserved for low to moderate-income housing as defined by H.U.D., or if the housing development is owner occupied."* This is a very aggressive zoning allowance and one that has incentives built in for owner occupancy as well as low to moderate-income units.

Somewhat paradoxically, DR zoning does not allow for any relaxation of parking standards. This discourages the pursuit of development or redevelopment of any scale in this neighborhood because vacant land is not readily available to provide the required amount of parking. Parking issues are discussed in more detail in the Infrastructure, Streetscape and Transportation section of this Action Plan.

In order to provide for affordable housing, it is necessary to create development incentives that encourage multiple units on small lots as well as mixed-use development with office and/or retail on the ground floor levels. Densities should be at a "human scale", while allowing for balanced development (mixed-uses) in the downtown neighborhood. Lewiston's current Downtown Residential zone accomplishes this fairly well, though the current parking requirements constrain its ability to do so.

Preserving Boundaries: It is essential to encourage development along the boundaries of the target area that protects the primarily residential nature of the neighborhood. Such development would enhance the area's residential character and create smooth transitions between large-scale commercial facilities and the downtown residential neighborhood. When new development is being planned along these boundaries, the City's efforts must be guided by what the net benefit to the affected neighborhood will be and how it follows the vision described in this plan. Essential assets that benefit the neighborhood include safe and mixed-income housing units, community space, social/health services, education and job opportunities, neighborhood-scale retail options, and historically sensitive and pedestrian-scale architecture and design.

Map 3: Existing Zoning



Examples of study area commercial/residential boundaries:

- Bakery loading docks and the neighboring Park Street residences
- Lisbon Street Office Buildings and The Androscoggin Mill Blocks
- Storage warehouse and Knox/Maple Street residences
- The Lewiston Bleachery and Knox/Maple Street residences
- Mailhot Sausage/Hudson Bus Lines and Bartlett Street residences
- Sun Journal and Bates Street residences

Needs Summary

- Downtown Lewiston has some of the oldest housing stock in Maine. It is therefore important to encourage rehabilitation and redevelopment of existing housing to support the vitality of the downtown neighborhood.
- Current economic conditions combined with the effects of the recent real estate "bubble" have left many property owners with little equity to invest in their property. The City should consider methods and means of assisting property owners to invest.
- Promotion of the DR zone for this neighborhood should continue to be encouraged and marketed as an incentive for redevelopment in this area, with attention paid to revising the current parking standards.
- There is an undersupply of 3-5 bedroom units in the downtown that are needed to accommodate growing family sizes.
- The boundaries of the neighborhood should be preserved and promoted for primarily residential uses.
- More current information on the state of housing and its residences in the downtown neighborhood is needed.
- Much of the City's effort to revitalize the neighborhood in recent years has lacked coordination and communication. Truly effective improvements need a comprehensive approach that brings the City, property owners, tenants, and business owners together.

Recommendations

H1 **The City should develop and use design guidelines to review future development proposed in this study area**. These guidelines should serve to encourage consistency with existing scale, massing and density in this neighborhood.

H2 **Rezone the area fronting on the west side of Bartlett Street from Birch to Adams and the North side of Adams Avenue from Bartlett to Bates from Highway Business to Downtown Residential to better reflect the primarily residential character of the study area**. This will not affect current uses but will allow for more neighborhood appropriate development should current uses change.

H3 **The City should consider developing a Registration/Business Licensing program for rental property owners**. This would provide the City with valuable information about the state of the rental market, including an inventory of housing available for rent. This effort could serve to enhance the ongoing relationship between property owners and the City by facilitating communication, and aid in a more coordinated approach to supporting property owners in the neighborhood. The program can also serve to support to ongoing Code Enforcement efforts.

H4 **The City should require voucher issuing entities to submit a written action plan for organizational and tenant accountability measures to be submitted to landlords in conjunction with rental licensing requirements**.

H5 **Provide a forum and maintain collaboration with downtown residential landlords to exchange ideas and information**. The Lewiston/Auburn Landlord Association provides some level of this effort, but it serves a much wider area of membership and does not have any formal relationship with the City.

H6 **City Community Development Programs**:

a. **The City should consider the development of a new loan program using CDBG funds that encourages mixed-use developments in the downtown area where housing and shops or offices can co-exist on the same property**. The downtown neighborhood currently features a healthy mix of "community friendly" (small groceries, shops, etc.) businesses, but there is no formal effort to foster similar development. Making the downtown more self-sufficient can be a driving force to generate stronger community identity.

b. **The City should consider the development of additional incentives through grant/loan programs and zoning that would encourage a percentage of affordable units in buildings that are being rehabbed or reconstructed**.

c. **The City should enhance its focus on housing cooperatives under its homebuyer/homeowner rehab loan programs and develop a formal policy on development of cooperative housing**. These actions will act as an encouragement for people wishing to invest in homeownership in the downtown neighborhood and support rehabilitation of smaller, more desirable multi-family properties.

d. **The City should develop loan incentives for condominium conversion as a housing recovery effort. Condominium conversion can be useful in establishing mixed-income housing and creating choices in home ownership options.** One contributing factor to the downtown vacancy rate is the over abundance of 1-2 bedroom units versus 3-4 bedroom units. The City should consider offering loan incentives for the rehab of smaller units into larger condominium units. Condominium conversions

serve the needs of residents and investors by minimizing the debt risk as unsold units can be rented as apartments.

H7 Facilitate the replacement of unsafe housing with safe housing:

a. **Conduct or commission an inventory of housing conditions in the downtown**.
b. **Increase the integration of information on occupancy, conditions and safety between departments and agencies involved with housing through a central electronic format**.
c. **Increase the number of Code Enforcement officers**. While the need for increased enforcement activity is most acute in the downtown, staffing levels for code enforcement in general City-wide are highly inadequate.

H8 Encourage development that enhances the residential character of the neighborhood along the boundary of the target area and creates smooth transitions between large-scale commercial facilities and the downtown residential neighborhood.

Neighborhood Stewardship

"Love thy neighbor as yourself, but choose your neighborhood."

- Louise Beal

Definition

Stewardship is broadly defined as "taking responsibility for the survival and well-being of something that is valued, such as a natural resource". When discussed in the context of a neighborhood, it embodies the concept of responsible caretaking based on the premise that we do not "own" the neighborhood, but are its managers and are responsible to future generations for its condition.

Importance

Neighborhood stewardship falls into that subtle space that exists between public and private responsibility. Property owners and residents acknowledge their responsibility to keep their buildings and property in safe and decent condition. Similarly, the City acknowledges its responsibility to maintain public facilities (streets, sidewalks, parks, etc.) and provide law enforcement. But what of the joint role public and private parties each play in creating vibrant neighborhoods? No amount of public works employees or police officers can effectively ensure that there is no trash or crime on a city's streets without the cooperation of its citizens. Likewise, no single private property owner can instill a sense of pride in one's neighborhood, nor can any city official. Creating a truly successful neighborhood requires that all those who interact with it assume a sense of 'ownership' in its success, which means occasionally stepping outside of their traditional role to help its 'partners'.

Assessment

Is downtown Lewiston a 'neighborhood'? It is often remarked that the study area for this plan does not have a 'name'. However, when speaking of 'downtown Lewiston', people, residents and non-residents alike, know exactly where you mean. Thus, even without a name, it has an identity. It can be argued that an identity is more important than a name for defining a

neighborhood. It is clear that many residents of the area consider it to be a neighborhood, and even that there are several smaller neighborhoods within the larger one. But how can this sense of neighborhood as 'the place where I live/work/play' be transformed into 'my neighborhood—the place I call my own'?

Efforts to instill a shared sense of pride in the downtown residential neighborhood amongst the City, property owners and residents have been hampered by a heavy focus on defining each group's specific role. To be sure, there are parts of the stewardship process that fall more neatly within the realm of one group (law enforcement by the City; property maintenance by the owners, etc.) versus another. However, any success in truly transforming the neighborhood will rely on finding ways to convince members of each responsible group to step outside of traditional roles and responsibilities. Likewise, the process for improving the neighborhood can be greatly enhanced if each person regards their individual action as part of a team effort. Any time someone thinks actively about how doing their part of a job might make it easier for someone else to do their part of the job; the concept of stewardship begins to build momentum.

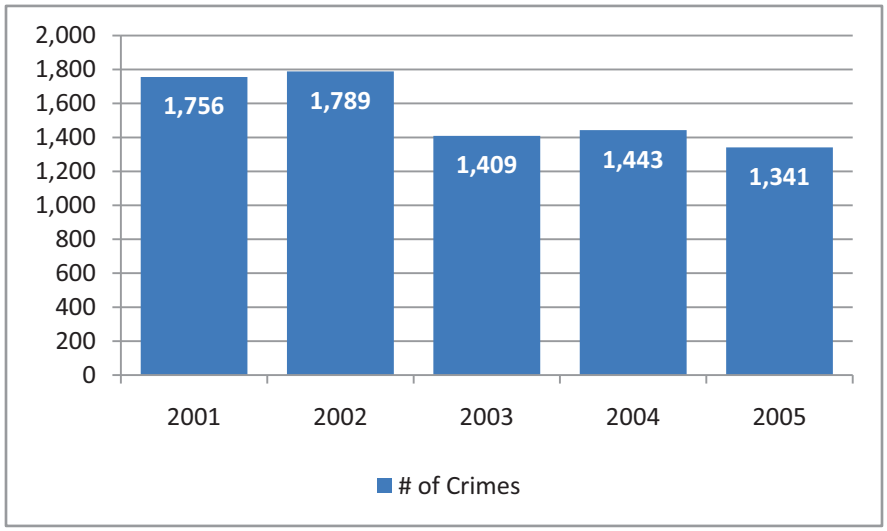
One major challenge of fostering neighborhood stewardship in the downtown community is self-perception. When a member of the neighborhood observes deterioration of their building or sidewalk from abuse or neglect, they will be less motivated to become stewards of these places because they expect the deterioration will occur again anyway. Furthermore, even if the condition of a neighborhood asset is quite good, the lingering perception that "downtown is a bad place" will continue to discourage stewardship. When a negative perception of the neighborhood is continually re-affirmed by people from inside and outside of the community, it inhibits people from acknowledging and becoming responsible stewards of truly positive neighborhood features. Crime rates in the downtown neighborhood, like many low-income urban places in the United States, are higher than other areas of Lewiston. But this observation must not be exaggerated nor should it be allowed to overshadow the positive elements of downtown.

Lewiston, as a community, has experienced decreases in criminal activity, particularly as compared to other cities in Maine (***Figure 5 – page 43***). Property related crimes have seen the greatest decrease (2001-2005), experiencing a 25% decline over the period. Even when combined with increases in violent crimes, the City has enjoyed a 24% decrease in total number of crimes from 2001-2005 (***Figure 6 – page 43***). The decrease in crime has not been by happenstance. The City, the

> ***"Give us safety, give us all peace."***
> - *United Somali Women of Maine member*

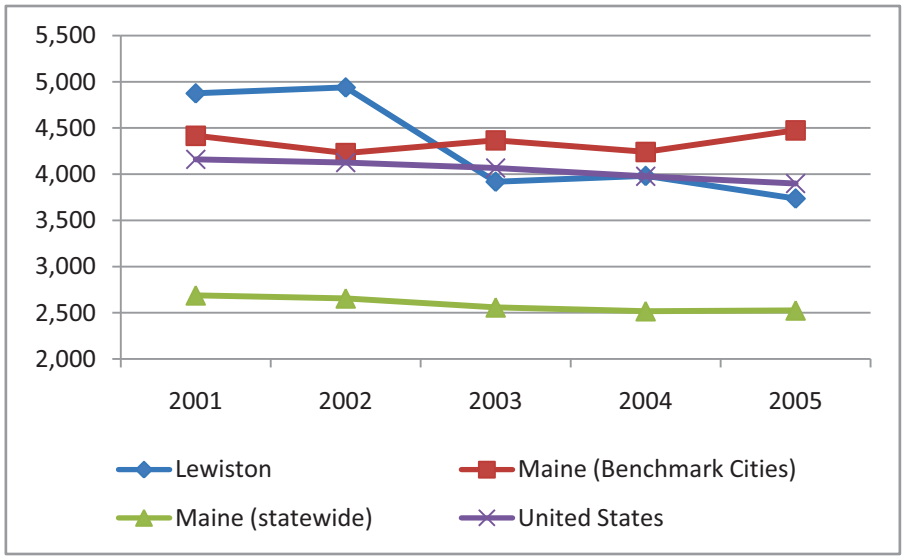
Lewiston Police Department and residents have worked together to undertake specific efforts to decrease criminal activity. The Police Department's Community Policing activities have anecdotally produced their intended results.

Figure 5: Violent and Property Crimes (Source: Maine Dept. of Public Safety/US Dept. of Justice)



The issue of crime in the downtown can also be related through the eyes and voices of its residents. Many long term residents of the downtown neighborhood are the best indicators of the level of community activity and what measures may be most effective in combating crime, its causes and associated issues. The community has a right to be proud of its crime prevention and reduction efforts. The challenge remains in updating the perception of the community both inside and outside of the City. In this regard, the community, the City, local law enforcement, property owners and residents should continue and expand their combined efforts to reduce criminal activity with a focus on some of its root causes.

Figure 6: Crimes per 100,000 persons (Source: Maine Dept. of Public Safety/US Dept. of Justice)



Needs Summary

- Efforts to spur investment downtown have been limited by its perception as an unsafe place. Some of these perceptions are valid, some are not. The Lewiston Police Department should continue to strive for a balance between community interaction and enforcement to reduce crime and conflict in the neighborhood.
- Continued emphasis should be placed on improving community perception, morale and neighborhood stewardship, including supporting the ongoing efforts of several groups (The Visible Community, Downtown Community Action Group, Lots to Gardens, etc.).
- The City, residents and property owners should continue to work hand in hand with local law enforcement to combat both perception and reality of crime in the downtown neighborhood.

Recommendations

N1 Community Policing Efforts:

a. **Create a positive working relationship between officers and residents through more frequent walking and/or bicycle community policing activities**. Improving these relationships will have a significant impact on the neighborhood and specifically on at-risk youth. Officers in cars getting out and talking with residents about the neighborhood (aside from simply investigating criminal activity) would strengthen those relationships when walking and/or bicycling beats are not possible.

b. **Create passive and active recreation based opportunities for law enforcement officers to interact with youth downtown**. Officers have the potential to be a stronger force for supporting youth aspirations, reinforcing and developing individual strengths, and introducing them to new activities that they can carry with them into adulthood. Strengthening the relationships between officers and youth will strengthen the entire neighborhood fabric.

c. **Strengthen the usage and the visibility of the B Street community policing substation**. Opening the substation for some limited consistent hours (to the extent possible) for informal conversations and interaction will assist in developing closer, more positive interaction between law enforcement personnel and neighborhood residents.

N2 Promote the empowerment and leadership of residents, landlords and business owners to resolve and manage neighborhood issues. The City should seek opportunities to include community members and leaders in the process of facilitating public meetings and workshops on issues that affect their neighborhoods. By developing meeting formats and agendas together, residents will feel more welcome to participate and take ownership of the issues facing their neighborhoods.

N3 Support and promote the efforts of downtown neighborhood organizations. A neighborhood organization can be a primary means of identifying problems before they become too large to address, developing and implementing solutions, and sharing information on activities, programs, and events. Efforts should be made to institutionalize the Mayor's recent initiative around beautification issues.

N4 Mediation Resources need to be available and supported at a family and neighborhood based scale. Mediation has the potential to impact the neighborhood in a number of positive ways—to resolve conflicts between landlord and tenants, between neighbors, decrease cultural tensions, and to serve as a resource for police receiving repeated calls for service for chronic issues. In addition to being a community resource, mediation will serve as a tool for participants supporting the development of their communication skills, negotiation skills, and problem solving skills. Training and delivery of mediation services should be supported and fostered by the City and community funders.

N5 Implement a neighborhood beautification program similar to the Chamber of Commerce Adopt-A-Spot Program in the downtown neighborhood. Working with the City Arborist, identify neighborhood spots for plot gardens and coordinate with landowners for use of appropriate spaces. Various community organizations can sign up to plant and maintain plants and flowers throughout the growing season.

Infrastructure, Streetscape and Transportation

"…Streets are places of social and commercial encounter and exchange. They are where you meet a person – which is a basic reason to have cities in any case."

- Allan Jacobs

Definition

Infrastructure comes in many different forms. Some you can see and assess others you cannot because they are found underground. Infrastructure includes public systems, services and facilities that are necessary for economic activity, including power and water supplies, public transportation, telecommunications, roads, and schools.

Streetscape refers to the area that lies along the street between adjacent building facades and properties. Its goal is to define the distinguishing character of the particular street through the design and composition of street amenities such as lights, signs, sidewalks, trees and plantings.

Transportation, for the purposes of this plan, is defined as the neighborhood's transportation modes and operations. Most simply, it is focused on how people get around in the downtown.

Importance

Infrastructure plays a critical role in the life of every neighborhood. The experience and perception of residents and non-residents are often impacted by the condition and operation of the infrastructure. The availability, efficiency and safety of infrastructure provides a foundation for opportunity and investment. A national example of this is the *Streets as Places* movement.

> ***"The Streets as Places movement is a far reaching campaign that will inspire communities, designers, and planners to build and invest in transportation systems, stations, and streets that not only serve the narrow needs of cars, buses, and trains but also infuse health, sustainability, and community building into the 21st century planning and design process."***[4]

[4] ***Project for Public Places Website***

To date, most transportation engineering, design and planning has focused mainly on the efficient and safe movement of motor vehicles. While these are important concerns, this narrow focus has had crippling social, community, and environmental impacts, especially in residential areas, without adequately addressing congestion and cost. Past planning practices nationally have encouraged sprawling development and adverse health conditions. By failing to take into consideration the character of communities or the needs of the entire spectrum of users (including bicyclists, pedestrians, and neighbors, such as residents and local businesses) this capital-intensive approach has missed the opportunity to use transportation design to support communities beyond simply access for motor vehicles.

Assessment

Streets & Sidewalks

Perhaps the most visible and desirable physical improvements that citizens can relate to are streets and sidewalks. These neighborhood assets receive more attention than any other piece of infrastructure. Their condition and maintenance are important to residents and property owners. Equally important to their condition is how well and safely they function for both vehicles and pedestrians.

In an urban setting, there is often a high, though sometimes subjective, correlation between the condition of the streets and sidewalks in a given community and its socio-economic status. Rightly or wrongly, people often consider areas with poor streets and sidewalks to be "poor" neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the results of this plan demonstrate that this correlation exists in Lewiston. It is widely agreed that many of the study area's streets and sidewalks are in a state of disrepair. In recognition of the need, the City's Public Works Department has placed a major focus on improvements in this area. The following streets have seen or will see improvements soon:

Bates Street – Reconstructed in 2007
Pine Street – projected for reconstruction in 2009
Maple Street – portion of sidewalks reconstructed in 2008; balance of work projected for 2009
Park Street – Spruce to Adams Street- projected for reconstruction in 2009
Knox Street – Birch to Adams Street- projected for reconstruction in 2009
Bartlett Street- Full reconstruction including curbing, sidewalks and ADA accessibility, work is scheduled to begin in 2009.

These are some of the most significant corridors in the study area and their improvement will provide a significant boost in the appeal of the area. Specifically, improvements to "gateway" streets such as Park, Maple and Bartlett, that carry travelers into the neighborhood from outside its boundaries, will make travelling into and through the neighborhood more welcoming. It is of the upmost importance for the City to consider the DNTF recommendations regarding streetscape design prior to executing scheduled street reconstruction projects. Project redesign may be needed to accommodate the applicable recommendations and included either in the construction or as a provision for the future. Consolidating project funding may be pertinent to accomplish recommended improvements. Such coordination efforts by the City should ensure that the opportunities to upgrade the neighborhood's infrastructure in accordance with the vision indentified by the community are not lost.

Transportation Safety

Safety of the neighborhood's transportation corridors is vital to the neighborhood's quality of life. There are several High Crash Location (HCL) intersections (**Table 2 below and Map 4 page 49**) located on the outer edges of the study area. These locations are identified by having a critical rate factor of over one (1.00), which represents the number and type of accidents that occur in a three (3) year period of time. Those intersections include:

Table 2: High Crash Intersections

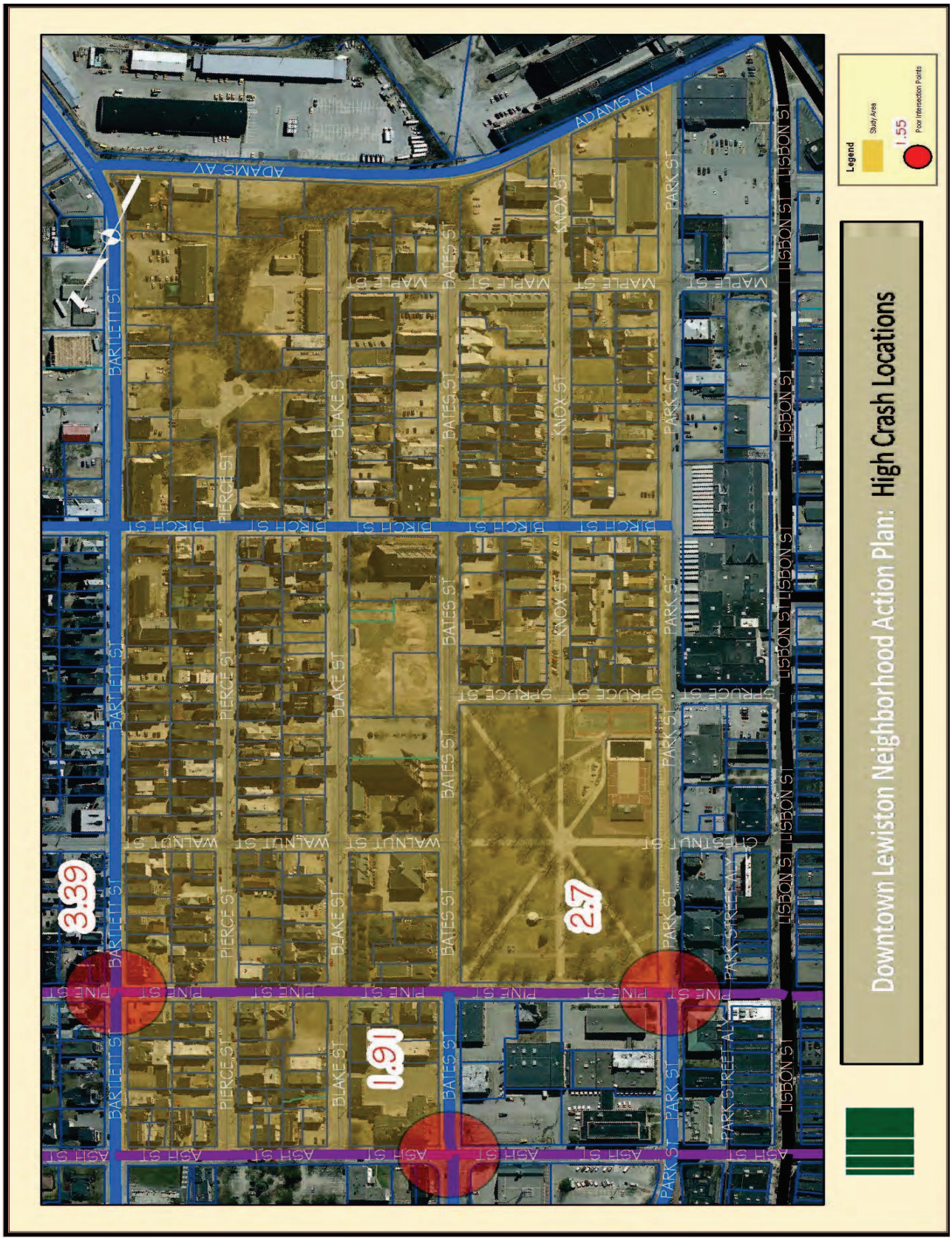
Intersection	Critical Rate Factor[5]
Park Street @ Pine Street	**2.70**
Bates Street @ Ash Street	**1.91**
Pine Street @ Bartlett Street	**3.39**

Accident data for the last 3 years has been analyzed, and recommended improvements are based on trends occurring at those intersections. There are several specific aspects to each intersection that are believed to contribute to the increased accident rates. In some cases, these intersections are easily improved by modifying signage or traffic control devices. Others will require physical modifications to the area to effectively reduce accidents.

Of course, in this primarily residential neighborhood, it is essential to address more than just vehicular safety. Bike and pedestrian safety is equally important with a significant number of children and adults on bikes and on foot in the neighborhood. Design enhancements that include more bike lanes on heavily traveled corridors and major improvements to numerous downtown neighborhood streets and sidewalks should be considered to address these needs.

[5] ***Source: Maine Department of Transportation***

Map 4: High Crash Locations



Wayfinding and Signage

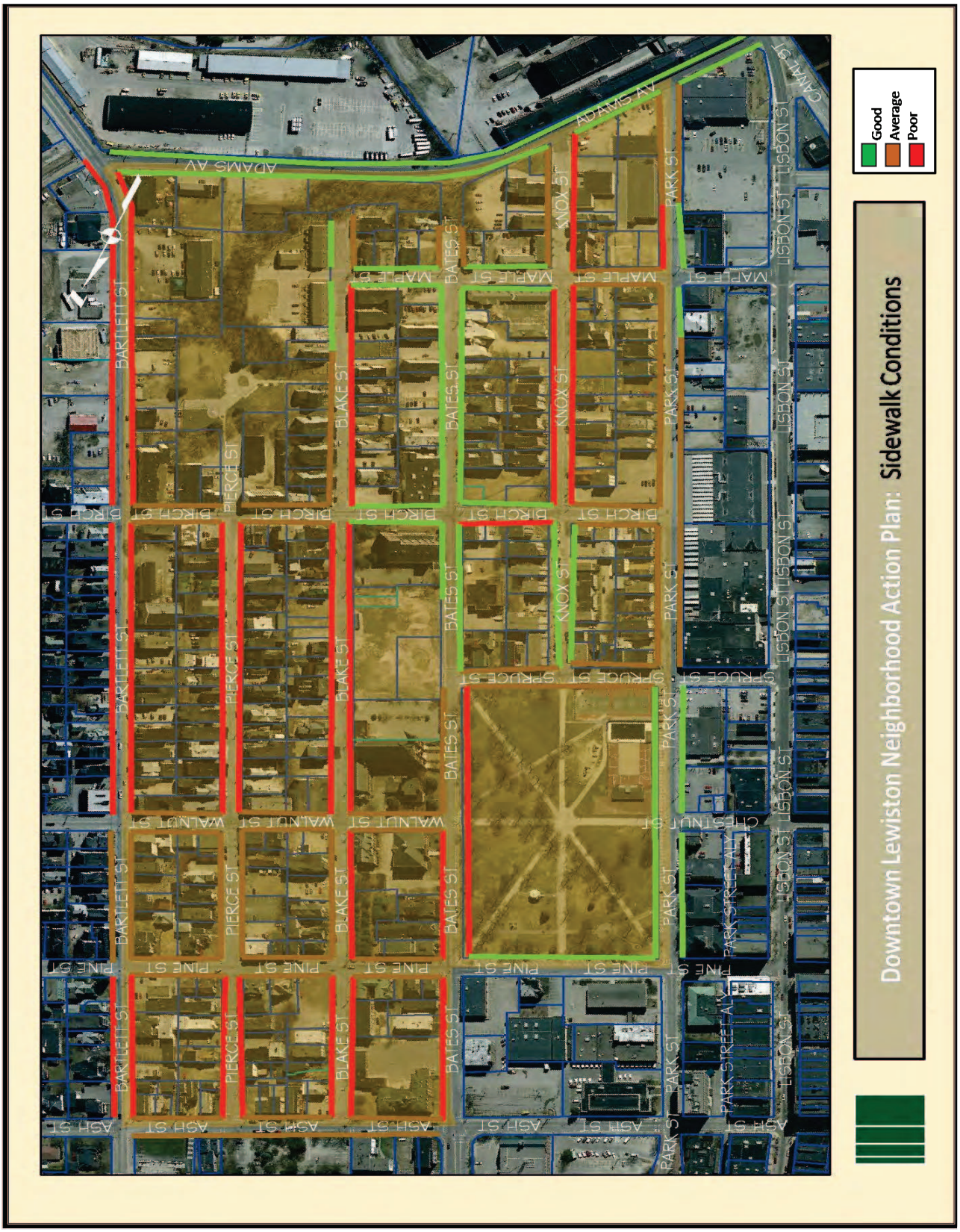
Proper street and way-finding signage on the streets are important features for both the safety and appeal of the neighborhood. Well-maintained attractive street signs are important aesthetically and serve the well being of people living in and visiting the area in need of direction and emergency response. Street name signage should be clearly posted and legible. The neighborhood currently lacks any coordinated, comprehensive way-finding signage. Several of the City's most prominent destinations (Kennedy Park, Colisée, etc.) are located in, or adjacent to, the downtown, but there is little or no effort given to directing people to them—the visitor is left largely on their own to find these locations. Street and way-finding signage that has a consistent and attractive design is important to making the neighborhood accessible and visible to the travelling/visiting public while contributing to the neighborhood's unique identity. Appropriate street and way-finding signage is designed to have an appearance that is attractive and compatible to each other as well as to other street furnishings such as street lighting. With such coordinated amenities in place, a unique identity can be perceived within the neighborhood. Meanwhile such signage serves its intended purpose to identify major assets of the neighborhood including parks, public buildings, historic features, businesses, etc.

Maintained, visible traffic control signage, such as stop signs and crosswalks, is also vital to safe and efficient traffic control. Considering the number of 4-way stops located in this neighborhood, signs should be checked and replaced, if necessary, on a yearly basis. City Public Works Department crews could also take this opportunity to inventory traffic control needs on the ground, such as lane striping and stop bars. This type of seasonal maintenance and programming can be built into the City's existing seasonal painting schedule.

The DNTF inventoried the physical condition of every sidewalk in the neighborhood, walking each one and noting its condition from a pedestrian perspective. **Map 5 – Sidewalk Conditions (page 51)** shows the inventory of those sidewalks. Sidewalk conditions vary in the study area from Good to Poor. Those sections identified as "poor" should be upgraded as priority areas for the Public Works Department reconstruction and pavement overlay programs. The following list indicates those sidewalks identified to be in poor condition:

Street	Location
Bartlett	*both sides; the full length except between Pine and Walnut*
Bates	*west side from Pine to Spruce; east side from Ash to Walnut*
Birch	*north side from Knox to Bates*
Blake	*west side from Ash to Maple; east side from Ash to Pine and Walnut to Birch*
Knox	*west side from Birch to Adams; east side from Birch to Maple*
Park	*east side; first section from Maple to Adams*
Pierce	*both sides between Pine and Ash and Walnut and Birch*

Map 5: Sidewalk Conditions



As part of sidewalk rehabilitation and improvements, special attention should be given to removing existing sign bases and other infrastructure stubs that protrude from the sidewalks in the study area. These unsightly objects present a significant tripping hazard for pedestrians and are a crash hazard for bicyclists as well. This problem is especially pronounced at night and in the winter when these objects are very difficult to see.

Water & Sewer

Water and sewer systems are among those "invisible" components of the infrastructure, yet they can significantly affect the quality of life and the visible streetscape. These systems are vitally important, since without satisfactory water or sewer lines, public health can be in jeopardy and without adequate capacity, no new development can occur.

At this time, there are no modifications or additions anticipated to the water system in the study area. It is projected that the existing system has many years of life remaining and enough capacity to provide added service if new facilities are constructed in the near future.

With respect to the sewer system, the City has recently undertaken a very large and successful Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) project on Lincoln Street that directly impacts this area in a positive manner. The CSO project eliminated over one million gallons of stormwater from flowing through the sewer system that is not actual sewage. As a result of the completion of this project, there is now additional capacity in the sewer system to handle added development within the study area.

Natural Gas Lines

In 2004, the Public Utilities Commission of Maine ordered Northern Utilities to replace all of the gas transmission lines throughout both Lewiston and Auburn. That order required that the replacement occur within a 4 year period. The project was successfully completed in the summer of 2008. In a time when energy costs are volatile, new high quality, natural gas lines present possibilities for an alternate heating and hot water source to traditional oil-based systems that may be more economical in some current and /or future applications.

Solid Waste Service

Solid Waste services in this area are a concern for tenants, landlords and the City. Litter and trash are considered to be a significant problem in this part of the City. There is often confusion between tenants and landlords regarding trash pickup rules and arrangements, as well as a lack

of communication between landlords and the City regarding current trash pickup rules. The lack of communication is compounded by a wide range of pickup options (City pickup, private hauling, tenant-based disposal options, etc.) that further confuse the situation. Lack of clarity about when, where and how to set out trash for pick-up contributes to the litter problem. Trash set out for several days can be blown down the street and attracts animals that spread it around as well. The existence of trash and litter on the streets and properties in the neighborhood present issues of health and safety. The appearance of trash also contributes to a poor perception of the neighborhood and a lack of pride for its residents.

After a wide range of discussions with landlords, tenants, and City staff, the DNTF believes that current Solid Waste regulations in the community are confusing at best and should be reviewed by the City's Solid Waste Committee. The following is an excerpt from the municipal regulation which illustrates the fragmented nature of the service as currently provided (*emphasis added*):

"The City will provide service to these limited multiple unit apartment buildings on a fee-for-service basis….Failure to pay the fee and any outstanding violations/penalties, imposed by the City, on time will result in the ***permanent*** *termination of the service to that property. Multiple unit apartment buildings, which are sold to new* ***owners, shall only be eligible to go on the program if:***

(1) The property is new to the program, yet is an existing building with a new owner, or

(2) The property is already on the program and there is no break in service, or

(3) The new owner already has other properties in the program and has met all obligations of the program for all these other properties including but not limited to paying on time and addressing solid waste issues with those properties in a timely manner, or

(4) The new owner has previously owned, operated, or managed, or been the primary ownership interest in any company, corporation or other legal entity that has previously been part of the program, then such information may be used as a basis for determination for entering the program.

The new owner shall submit a one-time application fee and complete an application to go on the program within 90 days of purchasing the property.

Service will not be reinstated once it is terminated*, except as noted above."*[6]

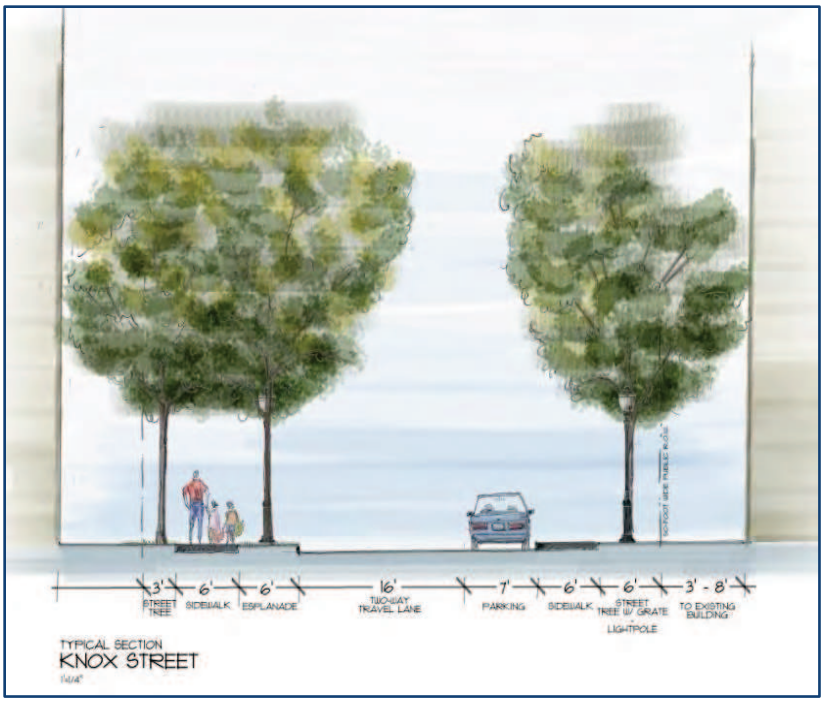
Such complexity naturally breeds confusion. There is no expectation that the City either broadens or restricts who is eligible for the program necessarily. However, it is recommended that the program be simplified in some way and that more effort be placed on educating landlords and residents about how the program works and who is eligible to participate in it. At a minimum, it should be required that owners who contract for private trash pickup schedule it to occur on the same day that the City conducts pickup in that area.

[6] ***Source: City of Lewiston Zoning Ordinance***

It is vital to the future success of the downtown neighborhood that the City considers streetscape design as more than superficial treatment. Rather, the streetscape must be viewed as an integral part of the City's infrastructure and its qualiy of life. Changing the existing street section can provide for opportunities to support street trees, bicycle lanes, and slowed traffic contributing positively to the neighborhood's well being. In addition to appropriate street design, promoting alternatives to traveling by automobile (walking, bicycling, bus transit) is an important factor in developing communities where the pedestrian is on top of the transportation hierarchy. As evidenced in many cities across the country, when these issues are addressed head-on, they can create renewed vitality to traditional neighborhoods and encourage new investment. This type of opportunity supports the goals the City outlined in the Downtown Urban Center Master Plan.

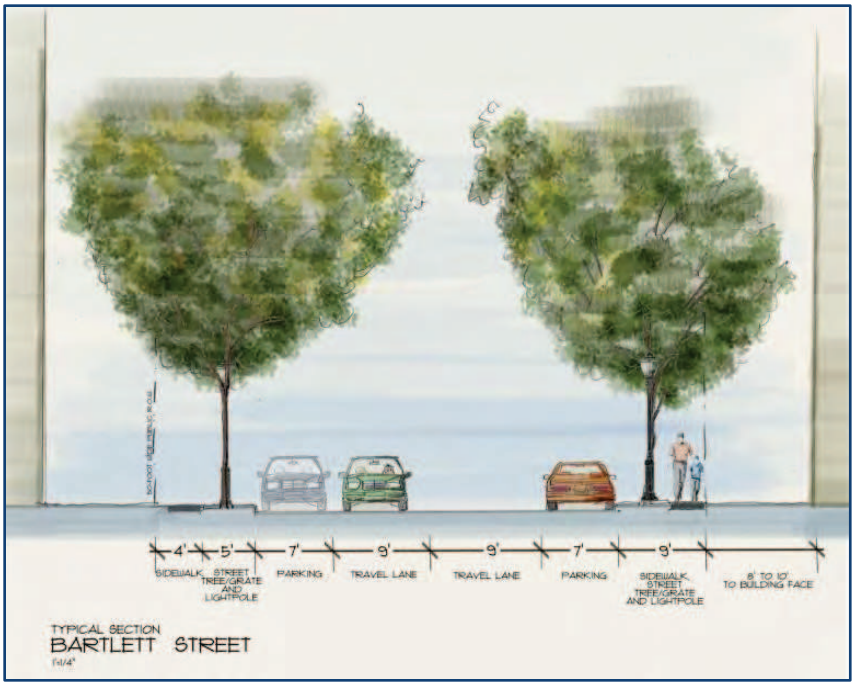
The intent of streetscape design is to promote an appealing and consistent urban character while not having an adverse impact on the inherent functions of the street, i.e. safe vehicluar passage. In determining if these changes will still allow vehicles to operate a satisfactory level of service, the DNTF reviewed a Downtown Circulation Study completed by Wilbur Smith Associates in 2007, evaluated new streetscape concepts (**see concept sketches on pp. 54-56**) against the data supplied in the report and concluded that these concepts can be successful.

Streetscape



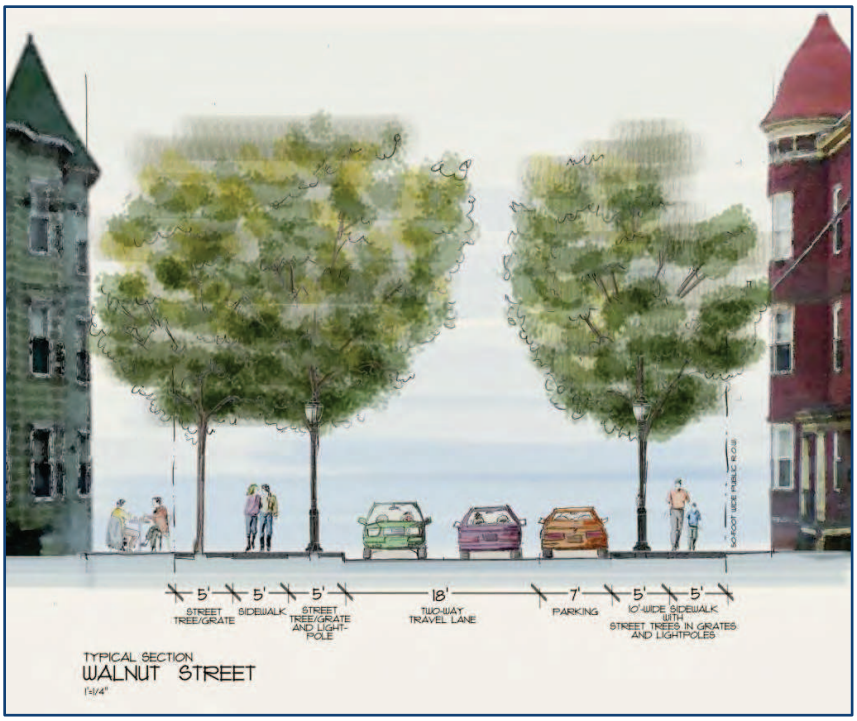
All the streets in the study area lack amenities that are found in many other comparable cities. These amenities, such as shade trees, well conditioned sidewalks, attractive pedestrian scaled lighting and other amenities, may have been part of the neighborhood long ago, but have given way to the demanding needs of the automobile. The existing streets are sized to accommodate 11-foot wide travel lanes with parking on both sides. This street section can technically support speeds of 50mph and is typical of a collector or arterial street. Such design is simply not necessary for a

residential street. Bartlett, Pierce, Blake and Maple streets are prime examples of this type of design, exhibiting no vegetation and expansive pavement.



Most motorists traveling on streets like Bartlett Street are probably very comfortable driving there. Studies have shown that with increased driver comfort comes excessive speeds. In spite of the posted 25mph speed limit, it is very easy to speed with a motor vehicle on the neighborhood streets since the extent of pavement is three to five times wider than the vehicle itself. Studies have shown that decreasing the "comfort level" to a degree for the motorist increases safety, especially for the pedestrian and other non-motorized vehicles. The reason is that when motorists are less comfortable with driving conditions, they slow down. This is very apparent on streets and highways during inclement weather. The best way to address excessive speed is not through enforcement of the posted speed limit, but to provide a narrower travel way for the motorist, making it less comfortable to drive and thereby slowing speed down to an appropriate rate for the neighborhood. Where these modifications are appropriate within the study area, this narrowing can be accomodated easily without risk of inhibiting safe passage for emergency vehicles.

Along with the narrower travel way, providing suitable space for tree-lined and well-lighted sidewalks allows pedestrians to feel more comfortable using the streets, which is critical for a healthy and vibrant downtown residential neighborhood. Trees frame the street and aid in slowing the motorists down while introducing a human scale to the neighborhood that softens the extensive array of bricks, concrete, and asphalt that is typical of any urban area. Adding



attractive, pedestrian-scaled light poles and fixtures that distribute the necessary light under the trees, provides appropriately scaled features in the street which contributes to an overall character that principally supports the pedestrian. These treatments should not be looked at as extravagant and superficial but as fundamental elements that will, in the long term, contribute towards tangible differences in the neighborhood's 'quality of life' as well as its property values. Grants for some of these improvements can be found within a number of programs. The City should coordinate these requests with the ATRC (Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center) as well as working with the Androscoggin Land Trust, who now oversees Bike/Pedestrian programs in the Lewiston/Auburn area.

Bike and Pedestrian Circulation

Given the recent volitility and long term uncertainty about the price of gasoline, biking becomes an inexpensive and environmentally friendly mode of transportation to utilize for trips around the community. This concept is especially relevant in the downtown residential neighborhood, which has the lowest car ownership and commuting rates in the state. Streetscape designs that incorporate the bicycle should be considered as the City continues to upgrade the streets in the neighborhood. Bike lanes should be built into the street striping programs for safety considerations and bike racks should also be considered in strategic locations throughout the downtown residential and commercial districts to accommodate the growing need.

There are specific streets in the study area that, with appropriate design changes, can and should accommodate higher levels of pedestrian and bicycle circulation. Walnut Street, which leads to Kennedy Park and eventually to the Centre Ville, Mill and Riverfront districts (via Chestnut Street), provides a unique opportunity for the neighborhood to develop a pedestrian spine. Ideally this corridor would look and feel different than other adjacent streets and would consist of mixed-use activities that are associated with lively urban streets where pedestrians dominate the scene. A pedestrian oriented Walnut Street, especially one that is extended past the current arbitrary lines of the study area, can provide the community with a "Main Street" that is shared with, but not dominated by, motor vehicles and provides an appropriate approach to the downtown's premier public landscape, Kennedy Park.

In the same way that Walnut Street should be emphasized as a special neighborhood corridor, Knox Street has a similar opportunity, though with a more residential focus. The portion of Knox Street between Spruce and Birch has been changed to one-way traffic and includes pull-in, angled parking within the public right-of-way exclusively for the adjacent apartment buildings. These changes provide immediate effects on the rate and speed of vehicular traffic. Narrow one-way travel lanes slow cars and angled rather than parallel parking makes the street appear narrower. Though arguably an improvement over the original layout of Knox Street, stacking parking in this manner is a situation typically found on commercial throughfares, not local residential streets. In addition, having the motor vehicle as the dominant feature in a residential street, especially a street that is a direct approach to Kennedy Park, does not support the idea that residential streets are foremost for the pedestrians.

Pine and Ash Streets can also serve as special corridors with emphasis on bicycle access through the study area and beyond. These one-way collectors should be narrowed and designed to accommodate a single one-way travel lane and a bicycle lane reserving space for suitable tree-lined walks and pedestrian scaled lighting while still maintaining parking on one side of the street. The design would also accommodate turning lanes that would make intersections safer by addressing the current vehicle conflicts.

Adams Avenue is proposed as a narrower street retaining two-way vehicle travel lanes and bike lanes, though without parking. This affords a wide tree-lined, multi-purpose path on the south side while maintaining a sidewalk on the north side. This would provide for a more attractive, safer, better delineated bicycle and pedestrian way and effectively extend the bike/pedestrian trail from Franklin Pasture to Knox Street (and then on to Kennedy Park) and to the Lisbon Street corridor. The latter opens up opportunities for future connections to the Mill and Waterfront districts; the Gas Light Park to the south and Potvin Park and Simard-Payne Memorial Park to the north.

Transit Fixed Route Service

citylink is the public, fixed route bus service, servicing both Lewiston and Auburn. This system works on a network hub where all of the buses run their designated routes and return to a central location to transfer riders from one route to another. In this system, the designated transfer station(s) are located in Lewiston at the parking garage on the corner of Bates and Oak streets while the Auburn facility is located in Great Falls Plaza--all transfers occur at the two designated centers. The **citylink** system offers free fare zones, bus passes, ADA compatible paratransit buses and buses with bike racks. Currently, looking at the fixed routes, the **citylink** does not run through the study area, but skirts the fringe of the area. As a result, inner City riders responsible for getting to the closest bus stop, which is at the corner of Park Street and Pine Street (City Hall). For some people living in this neighborhood, this represents a walk of 10-20 minutes, covering up to ¾ mile, often with impassable sidewalks during the winter months. Considering that the study area is the most densely populated section of the **citylink** system and the area with the lowest car ownership rates in the state, it seems logical that access to the bus should be improved in the neighborhood by adding stops within its boundaries.

> ***"There should be bus service on the weekend even if it doesn't run as much. People downtown have no way of getting anywhere."***
> - *Public Meeting attendee*

In addition to its routing limitations, the **citylink** schedule does not adequately meet the needs of downtown residents and employees. The system currently operates from 6:00 A.M. to 5:43 P.M. Monday through Friday with no weekend or evening service. Given the limited time window, this schedule fails to accommodate any group other than "9 to 5" employees. It leaves second shift workers and weekend needs entirely unserved. Many of the people living in this neighborhood are left with unreliable and/or expensive transportation during these periods. In addition, a limited bus schedule does not support increasing the number of visitors to the downtown and its associated amenities, such as Kennedy Park, without increasing vehicular congestion.

Parking

At first glance it is easy to determine that downtown Lewiston was designed with the pedestrian, not the motor vehicle, in mind. Indeed, at the time of its design, the downtown residential grid and its resulting property development reflect that it was, quite literally, a "walking neighborhood". The vast majority of those who lived there walked to and from the mills daily and rarely traveled outside of the downtown. However, now that the car is the dominant means of transportation and the fact that there is not a 'guaranteed' parking space

available for every resident of the downtown at any time of day, leads some to conclude that there is a parking 'problem'. It is true that adequate parking cannot be accommodated in off-street lots or directly in front of all dwellings on all streets at all times. However, the entire study area appears to have adequate parking capacity to serve the neighborhood at large, all within less than a ten-minute walk. Furthermore, there is considerable debate regarding the conflict between the built-in density of the urban core and the desire to create additional parking. This dichotomy is most clearly seen in the City's parking requirements within the downtown residential zone. The code requires that a given development actively seek to provide the maximum amount of parking concievable based upon its use type. This approach does not allow for any consideration of the market realities that the development may be faced with. Ultimately, current zoning regulations limit the feasibility of investment in new or substantially rehabilitated housing.

In order to address this contradiction, the DNTF recommends amending the City's current Vehicle Parking Space Requirements in the Downtown Residential zone for new development and redevelopment of residential and commercial properties. Specifically, the required number of parking spaces should be reduced to a more reasonable space-per-unit ratio that fits the character of the mixed-use neighborhood. There have been studies[7] conducted that support decreased parking ratios in the urban downtowns. Also, to provide maximum flexibility for different use types and changing market conditions, property owners should have the option of using the required surface parking area for another (non-parking related) purpose, such as green space, so long as that use does not unreasonably restrict the use of that space for surface parking in the future.

Lastly, the need for a revised downtown winter parking program has long been discussed in Lewiston. Several options and alternatives have been considered, but none have been selected to date. One outcome of the lack of change is certain—the existing situation will continue to create problems. The downtown grid and property development pattern does not allow for sufficient private, off-street parking for every car envisioned by the zoning code. In order to accommodate lesser, more realistic off-street parking requirements, on-street parking must be allowed in some capacity during the winter months or alternative parking locations (e.g. City parking garages and lots) must be made available to residents.

[7] ***Example: Parking at Mixed-Use Centers in Small Cities: Marshall and Garrick (2005)***

Needs Summary

- Many of the streets in the study area have been scheduled for repaving and or reconstruction in the near future.
- All of the water and sewer lines in this area seem to be in good shape.
- Natural gas is readily available due to new lines recently put in throughout the area.
- Solid waste collection is an issue that must be re-examined by the Solid Waste Committee.
- Current signage in the study area is lacking in directing people to and from major destinations that are located in and adjacent to the neighborhood.
- Streets are wider than they need to be to accommodate the appropriate vehicle speed for the neighborhood yielding expansive pavement and little to no street trees.
- The pedestrian experience is frustrated by the poor condition of many sidewalks and the overall character of the street that caters to the automobile.
- The one-way thoroughfares along Ash and Pine Streets are very wide and several intersections are considered high crash locations.
- With the exception of Adams Avenue, there are no bicycle lanes to accommodate this mode of transportation within the downtown area.
- The current **citylink** bus system does not accommodate the needs of people living and working in the study area.
- The winter parking program is a great burden on the residents, local businesses and visitors within the study area.

Recommendations

I1 Signage:

a. **Develop physical methods (colors, streetscapes, signage, etc.) to contribute to a unique identity and foster a sense of place for the downtown neighborhood(s).** Consideration should be made to provide a consistent design for new street furnishings such as street lighting and signage that would aid in announcing the arrival to the downtown residential district. Specialty pavement and banners along specific main corridors in the study area could also contribute to this effort as well.

b. **Enhance the existing Way Finding Signage program to direct people to a wider selection of downtown landmarks**: Colisée, Multi-Purpose Center, Kennedy Park, Knox Street Park, Pierce Street Park, City Hall, Public Library, Lisbon Street, etc.

c. **Improve the safety of pedestrian crosswalks in the downtown through yearly striping at every intersection in and around the study area**. There are numerous locations, most noticeably around the Kennedy Park entrances, where the right-of-way for pedestrians and vehicles is unclear and/or not prominently displayed. Special attention should be given to enhanced signage/traffic calming at the intersection of Knox and Spruce Streets. This can, in part, be accomplished with a change in pavement (either through raised table or specialty pavement) to call out the significance of the crossing. Each of the cross walks connected to Kennedy Park

should be considered for this manner of improvement. Better attention to these areas will minimize the risk of vehicle/pedestrian accidents.

d. **Replace the "Yield" sign at the intersection of Spruce Street and Bates Street with a "Stop" sign**. Visibility on this high traffic corner is problematic due both to the slope of the hill leading up Spruce and the proximity of on-street parking to the intersection. This situation will be compounded as development on the former St. Dominic's School site continues.

I2 Trash and Litter:

a. **The Solid Waste pick-up program for the Downtown Residential area needs to be revised and better coordinated**. The Solid Waste Committee should review the policies of the current program and consider changes that would make trash pick-up more consistent in the inner City area, including requiring same day private/City pick-up.

b. **The City should select several locations within the downtown where additional public trash cans can be located to minimize litter**. Several key locations for dumpsters should be considered as well.

c. **Encourage and facilitate wider use of the City's Recycling program**. Many downtown residents who could participate are not aware of the program or have no method of obtaining a recycling bin. The City should develop alternate/additional methods of bin distribution to increase participation. Steps should be taken to encourage responsible use to minimize litter concerns.

I3 Streetscape Improvements:

a. **Improve the streetscape and safety in the downtown by narrowing certain streets (particularly one-way streets such as Pine and Ash Streets) to create esplanades, wider sidewalks, bike lanes, and slower vehicular speeds**. This will encourage more pedestrian and non-motor vehicle modes of travel. Streets that are supporting only local traffic should be narrowed to include, at a minimum, a 16-foot wide travel lane, two 7-foot parking lanes and 10 feet remaining on either side to accommodate sidewalk, street lighting and street trees. There are specific streets, such as Walnut and Knox Street, given their alignment to Kennedy Park, where space currently used for parking could be converted to create opportunities for additional street trees and wider walks.

b. **Develop improvements to the three intersections identified as high crash locations: Park Street @ Pine Street, Bates Street @ Ash Street, and Pine Street @ Bartlett Street.** This should include proper striping of lane assignments, additional signage in conformance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and striping proper cross walks and stop bars at these intersections. Narrowing the two one-way lanes to a single vehicular travel lane, a bicycle lane, a wider esplanade with street trees, attractive pedestrian scaled lighting should all be added. These modifications will "soften" the look of the area and create functional one way streets that will help to resolve the current crash patterns.

I4 Sidewalk Improvements:

a. **Improve sidewalks in the downtown and review sidewalk snow removal procedures**. In inclement weather, the streets inevitably turn into makeshift sidewalks because they are not clear enough to walk on. Improved sidewalk clearance practices will keep these areas open and reduce risk for pedestrians and vehicles alike. At a minimum, the City should evaluate the idea of major walk routes for designated sidewalk snow removal in the downtown.

b. **The City should remove existing sign bases and other infrastructure stubs that protrude from the sidewalks in the study area**. These unsightly objects present a significant tripping hazard for pedestrians and are a crash hazard for bicyclists.

I5 Parking:

a. **Establish a revised winter parking program that accommodates people who have no access to off-street parking for themselves or their guests where they live**. Eliminate the no on-street parking arrangement between November and April, allow on-street winter parking, and work with the neighborhood to establish winter relief parking locations during snow storms and clean up.

b. **Amend the City's current Vehicle Parking Space Requirements for new development and redevelopment of residential and commercial properties so that**:

   i. **The required number of parking spaces is lowered to a reasonable space-per-unit ratio that fits the character of the mixed-use neighborhood**.

   ii. **Property owners have the option of using their required surface parking area for another purpose (such as green space), so long as that use does not unreasonably preclude the use of that space for surface parking in the future**.

I6 Modifications to citylink:

a. **Work with the Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center (ATRC) and the Lewiston-Auburn Transit Committee (LATC) on establishing revised bus routes, specifically; revise Route #2 (Sabattus Street) and Route #3 (Lisbon Street) to provide more bus access and options within the neighborhood**. These routes should go into the neighborhood via Bates Street to Birch Street and then to Bartlett Street, with a new bus stop location added at the intersection of Birch and Blake Streets.

b. **Work with area businesses and LATC to establish a yearly bus pass program**.

c. **Work with the LATC to extend bus hours in both the morning and evening during the week and to develop some weekend service**.

d. **Work with LATC to adjust the Downtown Shuttle to bring people who live or work in the study area to the Oak Street bus station, and from the bus station into the neighborhood and along Lisbon and Main Streets in the central business district**. This shuttle would allow residents and workers in the neighborhood to connect with all **citylink** buses and have easier access to the Auburn routes. LATC should work with local businesses to create sponsorships for the shuttle. In addition to helping

residents get to the local colleges and commercial centers, it will also help workers get to and from their jobs, both in and out of the study area.

I7 **Encourage and facilitate the placement of bike racks and benches in strategic locations throughout the neighborhood**. Some suggested locations are at B-Street Community Center, the Public Theater, Pierce Street Park, Knox Street Park, Dee's Variety, The Italian Bakery, Recycle Bike and Board, and Kennedy Park. If street esplanades are expanded, as recommended in the Plan, they would also offer good locations for bike racks and/or benches. Bicycle racks/benches should generally be located on public property or in the public right-of-way, but opportunities should be offered for private sponsorship of these amenities as well.

I8 **Work with area colleges to inventory/asset map transportation resources** within non-profit organizations, and develop strategies for maximizing these resources to meet more community needs (e.g. to transport more youth to recreational programming).

Parks and Community Spaces

"…people are profoundly affected by the spaces that surround them."

- Kirsten Walter, Founder
Lots to Gardens, Lewiston

Definition

"Green spaces are essential community facilities that often form the venue for activities and events that create community cohesion. The potential multi-functionality of green space is its biggest strength as it can provide for the needs of a wide range of groups and users, thus ensuring it is valued by everyone"[8]

Importance

The idea of the direct relationship between our well-being and our surroundings was not necessarily the primary impetus behind the country's parks movement during the 1860s. However, it seems clear today that the idea is at the heart of the success of many cities that took advantage of the inherited large urban parks of the 19th century and more recent, less-formal public green spaces. Of course, these public spaces can be a 'double-edged sword', for without consistent attention, resources and support, parks and open spaces become a liability to a community rather than an asset. With recent park master planning initiatives for Kennedy Park and successful community programs such as Lots to Gardens, it seems that many citizens understand this relationship and are working to make these spaces benefit the neighborhood.

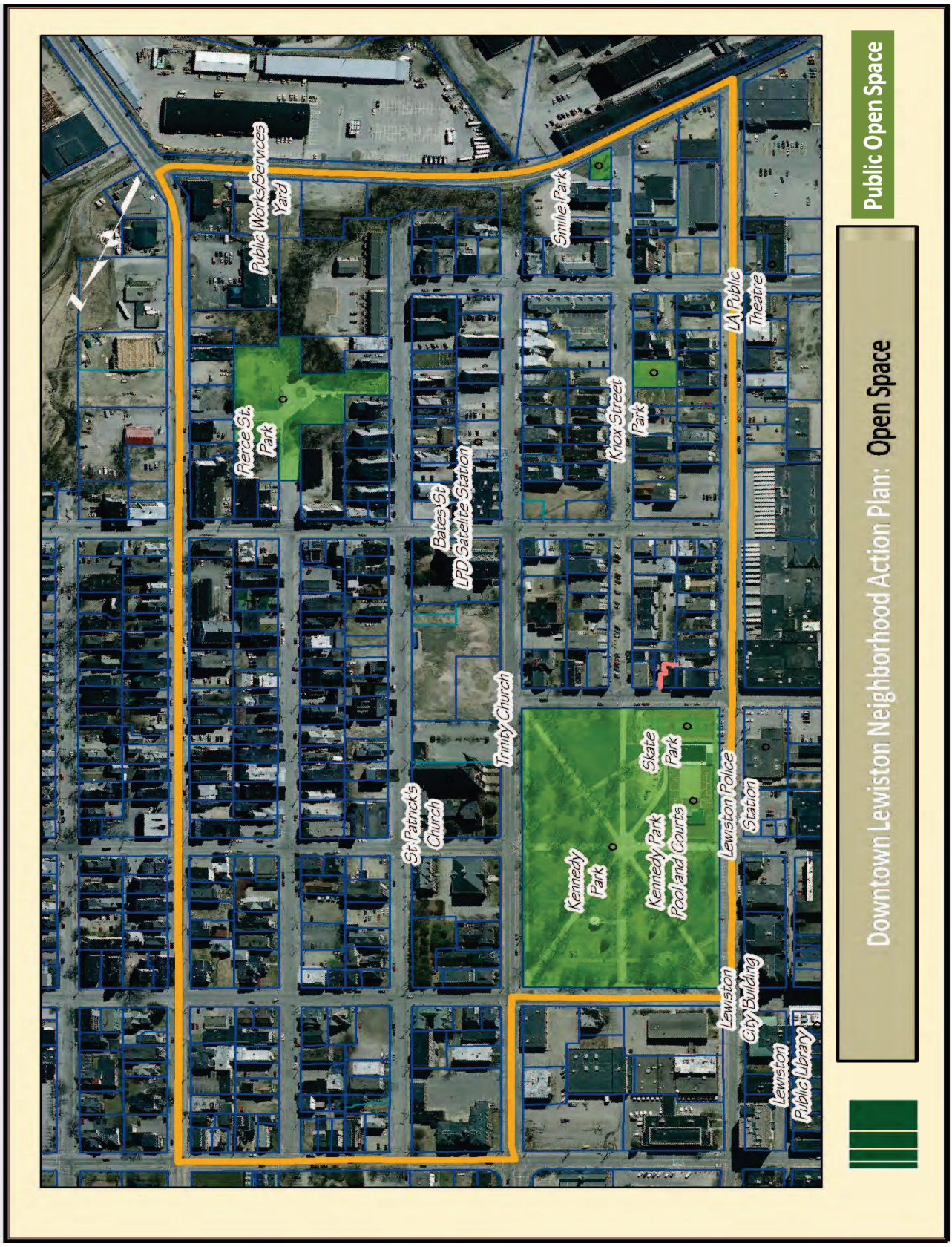
Assessment

Open Space

The Study Area includes four of the fifteen formal parks located in Lewiston and three out of the fourteen recreational facilities that the City maintains ***(Map 6: Open Space page 65).***

[8] ***"Come on over to 'My Space' ", Somer Community Housing Trust***

Map 6: Open Space



Parks in the downtown neighborhood total over nine (9) acres of public open space (Kennedy, Pierce Street, Knox Street, and Smilie parks) and recreational facilities that include the community pool, skate board park and playgrounds. When considering the neighborhood's proximity to other City parks and recreation facilities, the neighborhood is fairly close to the majority of them, especially Marcotte Park and Franklin Pasture which includes the Multi-Purpose Center on Birch Street. The majority of the City's park and recreation facilities are within 1-1/4 miles of the downtown riverfront, with none further than 3-3/4 miles. Given this proximity, downtown neighborhood residents are well located to take advantage of the majority of the passive and active recreation opportunities that lie outside the study area boundary. This benefit, however, cannot be realized unless access to these places exists and is fairly convenient. The connections to these amenities should be improved to further improve accessibility and use by neighborhood residents.

Parks

- Kennedy Park

In 1861, the Franklin Company donated land for the 8 acre Lewiston City Park, known today as Kennedy Park. This urban respite evolved extensively over the century, starting out primarily as passive space, but later to include active recreation with the introduction of the swimming pool, basketball courts and most recently the skate park.

In 2005, a master plan was prepared for the Park and includes improvements that focus on reorganizing park features along its northern side and relocating the Civil War Monument and Bandstand along a common axis. The goal was to arrange the walks and plantings to support larger gatherings. It also designates the north-south axis as 'The Promenade' consisting of special paving with walled seating niches. This north-south axis is aligned with Knox Street, which is currently configured as a one-way street (directed away from the Park). This configuration does not contribute to the Kennedy Park Master Plan's proposed emphasis for this portion of the Park.

Many of the improvements proposed in the 2005 Kennedy Park Master Plan would advance the park's current uses and expand the potential for new and future uses. One particular area that corresponds to the concerns raised in this study is the walkway along the east-west axis connecting Walnut Street and Chestnut Street. With an improved Walnut Street as a pedestrian spine, this portion of the park would better accommodate pedestrian oriented activities such as vending carts, farmer and craft markets, and festivals.

- Pierce Street Park

Pierce Street terminates to the south in a one and a half acre park that includes over 20 feet of grade change. Though the park is named for Pierce Street, it currently is only accessed from Blake Street via a long staircase or at street level off Bartlett Street, though not as prominent as along Blake Street. The boundary of the park is determined by abutting residential lots to the west along Blake Street and commercial lots towards the east along Bartlett Street. The south end of the park is bounded by a wooded slope that extends past the park to Adams Avenue. The boundary along the east includes a chain link fence (a series of bollards to the north) located along the rear of the commercial lots fronting Bartlett Street. The lack of access creates an isolated area that has the potential to encourage inappropriate activities and foster an unsafe/uninviting atmosphere. The park would benefit from a planning/design effort that identifies programmatic uses the community would support and associated site improvements. At a minimum, access from Bartlett Street should be provided adjacent to the recently developed ice cream shop at 201 Bartlett Street. The City has a 20-foot wide access easement on this parcel connecting Pierce Street Park to Bartlett Street. Establishing this connection merely for authorized vehicles will help in fostering a more inviting area by increasing access for pedestrians and allowing the opportunity for public safety personnel to visit the park. Lighting should also be considered in the short term to help elevate the level of public safety. The property, though varied in topography, seems to have the space to accommodate a variety of activities and innovative solutions for accessibility (i.e. ramps versus steps). Other than Kennedy Park, Pierce Street Park is the largest open space in the neighborhood and should be developed as an active neighborhood park.

- Knox Street Playground

The most recent addition to Knox Street is a 7,500 square foot playground that accommodates play equipment and swings installed with a mulched safety surface. The fenced playground is next to a community garden, also fenced, and there is water service accessible by both sites. The playground could benefit from some seating and shade, but otherwise is a great addition and well-used amenity for the neighborhood.

- Smilie Park

This small (approximately 3,500 square foot) park is located at the intersection of Knox Street and Adams Avenue. The parcel has about 10 feet in elevation change, yielding a slope of approximately 14 percent. The steep slope combined with the close proximity of the streets makes for a very challenging park space. It currently is maintained with turf and trees. The site might be successful as an interpretive/gateway space that, through signage, elaborates on the history and significance of the Downtown Neighborhood.

Community Gardens

There are currently six community gardens in and around the study area that exist primarily due to the efforts of St. Mary's Health System's Lots to Gardens program. The most recent garden is located at Franklin Pasture next to Lewiston High School. These gardens are an excellent way to develop community connections to the neighborhood, its residents, and its public spaces.

The City of Lewiston is fortunate to have such a program in existence since in many other locations community gardens are typically organized, constructed and maintained by city/town resources. The Lots to Gardens program should be strengthened by future policy decisions regarding the downtown and City resources should continue to be made available to help make the efforts more successful. The Lots to Gardens program excels at outreach, education and volunteer components, but could greatly benefit from donations, purchase of garden construction materials (earthwork, loam, compost, fencing, etc.) and improved access to water.

There are several funding resources that can and should be pursued to bolster the existing community garden program or a new one. Program models that are used in other cities include a Community Gardener that is a city employee who has the necessary resources to maintain the garden plots and associated organization of the gardeners. The City of Portland has such a program. City funds are used to establish the gardens, provide water service, fencing, shed and tools while the gardeners maintain the gardens, compost and clean-up. They are responsible for paying the $25 yearly fee. Some programs and organizations that support community gardening include: Master Gardner Volunteer Program through the University of Maine Cooperative Extension; The Community Food Project through Coastal Enterprises Inc.; New England Grass Roots Association; and the Small Grants Program through the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund. In addition, the American Community Gardening Association offers a number of resources in promoting and developing community gardens.

Other Opportunities

There are a number of strategies that can be followed to realize what many communities refer to as 'greening' the city. Philadelphia is one city which has fully embraced the notion that greener urban surroundings translates to higher property values and a better quality of life. The program, 'Green City Strategy' is administered by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and provides a great deal of information in advocating for and implementing efforts in 'greening' the cityscape. Some of the information can be viewed at their website **www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org/phlgreen/city_strategy.html.**

Additional park and community space

There are several City-owned lots in the downtown neighborhood that could provide the opportunity for a pocket park and/or a community garden, especially those parcels that lie in the northern portion of the Study Area further away from the existing park resources. In light of the City's recent decision to further restrict animals from using public parks, the City, and specifically the downtown area, could also benefit from the creation of a dedicated dog park. While there are compelling reasons to restrict dogs from park areas, having a public place to walk one's dog is an important amenity for many residents. If used and maintained responsibly, this park could also be an attractive feature that would bring families and their pets into the downtown area.

> ***"In 10 years, Lewiston's downtown residential community would be…Just the same – but a little cleaner with more flowers."***
> - *Potvin Park Block Party attendee*

Volunteer Corps

There seems to be no concerted effort in the City to recruit and manage volunteers to provide aide to specific areas. Kennedy along with the other parks can greatly benefit from this type of involvement. A volunteer framework should be identified to serve as a model for the City and neighborhood for use in establishing a volunteer corps to take on community-wide projects. The Mayor's beautification initiative should be highlighted as a collaborative starting point.

Youth Center

There is an overall lack of activities and space for youth and young adults across the City. Efforts are currently underway through the YADA (Youth+Adult+Dialogue=Action) study circle program to establish a dedicated space for youth-related activities. No space has been identified yet, but planning for the center is underway. The DNTF recognizes the gap that a youth center would fill in the community and supports these efforts. While there is no expectation that the center would be located in downtown Lewiston, it is hoped that it would be located somewhere that would be easily accessible to those underserved youth living in the study area.

Needs Summary

- Kennedy Park is and should continue to be a focal point in the downtown area; however, current programming seems generally insufficient and is non-existent in the evenings and on the weekends.
- Pierce Street Park and Smilie Park are underutilized; security, safety and access are issues for Pierce Street.
- The existing community garden and new playground along Knox Street offer a much-needed amenity to the Neighborhood.
- The community within the Study Area can benefit from additional recreational opportunities, especially for the youth, formal and in-formal programming.
- Community gardening opportunities, like those offered through Lots to Gardens, require assistance and support from the City, residents and other stakeholders.

Recommendations

P1 Kennedy Park:

a. **Implement the improvements recommended in the Kennedy Park Master Plan**.

b. **Enhance the use of Kennedy Park for structured recreational activities by evaluating program opportunities offered through the Lewiston Recreation Department and other community-based organizations**. For example, LA Arts could be recruited for attracting and promoting live entertainment, Boys and Girls Club (or similar organizations) to offer demonstration programs, etc.

c. **Improve access to and safety around Kennedy Park (Spruce Street, @ Knox St., @ Walnut St., @ Chestnut Street) through formalizing the crossings with specialty pavement or striping**.

P2 Pierce Street Park:

a. **Build on previous master planning/design efforts to identify park improvements that will support the Neighborhood's goals for the Park**.

b. **Formalize access for public safety vehicles and personnel from Bartlett Street to the Park via the existing City easement**. Currently this access does not appear as a formal entrance to the Park, which it needs to be in order to benefit the overall atmosphere of the space. With such an entrance, handicapped access along with increased pedestrian activity will be gained.

c. **Re-establish pedestrian access to the park via Pierce Street along with new signage to increase visitor orientation and access to this neighborhood space**.

d. **Consider re-naming the Park**.

P3 Urban Trail System:

a. **Develop an urban trail system for pedestrians to travel by foot, depending on property owner's consent, from vicinity of Knox Street and Adams Avenue to Pierce Street Park along the existing undeveloped wooded slope**. Pedestrian connections between the dead end streets of Bates and Blake Streets and Adams Avenue should be evaluated. Such connections can help foster pedestrian travel through the study area.

b. **Increase access to and utilization of Franklin Pasture from the downtown neighborhood**. At present, much of the development immediately surrounding the Pasture is commercial/light industrial in nature, and does not readily "invite" the residents to the area as a recreational feature.

P4 Community Gardening:

a. Increase the opportunity for community gardening in partnership with the existing Lots to Gardens program.

b. Strengthen collaboration between City resources and Lots to Gardens through more formal and continuous support.

c. Identify ways to expand City assistance for garden site infrastructure and necessary improvements.

P5 Vacant lots, both City and privately owned, should be maintained as attractive and clean parcels. Loam and wildflower seed should be applied, along with routine maintenance to keep the lots free of litter and well kept. Incentives, such as free wildflower seed mix, to willing property owners should be considered, perhaps through the Mayor's Beautification Initiative or other City resources.

P6 The City should find an underutilized green space and convert it to a dog park. Dog waste is a significant nuisance in many parts of the neighborhood, and specifically within park areas. A dedicated dog park would provide recreational opportunities for dog owners while minimizing their impact on other traditional recreation areas that residents use.

P7 In general, existing recreational, cultural and arts programs should be re-structured to include more opportunities for weekend, evening, and year round activities, especially in Kennedy Park where vending carts, concerts, markets and festivals can increase the variety of park usage and add vitality to the overall neighborhood. Multi-venue events with different activities occurring in Kennedy Park, Courthouse Plaza, Marsden Hartley Cultural Center and other nearby public spaces simultaneously might also be used to attract wider interest.

P8 Encourage ongoing work by local groups to establish a youth center. The YADA group has been working actively for some time to develop a plan for such a center. The center would not necessarily need to be in downtown Lewiston, but should be easily accessible for downtown youth.

Marketing

"You can have brilliant ideas, but if you cannot get them across, your ideas will not get you anywhere."

- Lee Iacocca

Definition

Many people believe that marketing is just about advertising or sales. However, marketing is everything an entity does to create awareness, attract consumers/visitors/users and maintain a relationship with them. The ultimate goal of marketing is to match products, services, and amenities to the people who need and want them. For a community or a neighborhood, marketing involves creating recognition for residents and non-residents of what is good. It is about working to generate pride and interest to stimulate interest, ownership and investment.

Importance

How does one go about 'selling' a neighborhood? To begin with, it is important to understand what makes a neighborhood attractive to both its residents and outsiders alike. What is unique about it? Why should someone want to live/visit there? Lewiston's downtown neighborhood has many outstanding assets: its varied and rich cultural background, its striking and historical architecture, its people and many others. In essence, marketing the neighborhood is about telling its story—explaining its identity to those who interact with it, both from outside and within. Thankfully, Lewiston's downtown neighborhood has a powerful and engaging story to tell. It is hoped that telling this story in a compelling way will convince stakeholders in its future as a community worthy of investing time, money and energy.

Assessment

Downtown Lewiston is rich in history in terms of both its cultural background and physical features. Lewiston's deep manufacturing heritage is reflected in its downtown neighborhood through its tight-knit personal relationships and densely packed building design. This heritage

is seen clearly in the neighborhood's wealth of historical properties. The cultural backgrounds of the people who settled here in years past have been greatly reflected in the local architecture of neighborhood. Its houses of worship, residences and places of employment all carry elements of the numerous cultures that have called Lewiston home over its more than 200 year history. The downtown neighborhood has a strength and advantage in its people. The residents, property owners and stakeholders in the neighborhood all represent a significant marketing benefit for the downtown. The goals, visions and efforts of downtown stakeholders should be viewed and marketed as an asset to benefit the neighborhood and the community.

The history of the downtown should be recognized and celebrated. Signage and/or walking tours of the downtown neighborhood identifying significant buildings (**see inventory of historic buildings – Table 1, page 20**), events and historic locations can be a source of interest and pride in the downtown. In developing this information, the community can reach out to the 'keepers and makers of history'. Residents, current and former, can be engaged to tell the story of the downtown thereby perpetuating the conversation. Low cost methods, such as websites and blogs, of archiving the histories and memories can be an effective means of spreading the story, engaging conversations and attracting interest from inside and outside the community.

In terms of cultural, recreational and arts-related activities, there is much happening: Kennedy Park is a hub of activity during summer months. The Public Theatre holds regular performances of critical and audience acclaim, the B Street Community Center offers numerous programs on a daily basis and the City's Recreation Department and L/A Arts also offer a number of programs and events throughout the summer, to name but a few. However, these happenings are not always well-known in the wider community. Efforts should be focused on a broad-based, aggressive marketing plan to help those in Lewiston and the surrounding communities know what activities are taking place downtown and encouraging them to take part in them whenever possible.

The City's Economic and Community Development Department has loan and grant programs that are of great value to downtown property owners; however, staff reductions have limited their capacity to actively market these programs. The City needs to step up efforts to let its customers know what it offers so that interested stakeholders can do the important work of revitalizing the downtown's buildings. Other City programs and resources available for

investment in and improvement of the downtown should be similarly publicized to create the benefit and positive impacts for which they are intended.

Marketing a neighborhood is really no different than marketing any product or service. It starts by understanding three important components. First, what is the goal of marketing the neighborhood? Second, what are the assets and attributes that should be marketed? And third, who are you marketing to? For the Downtown Lewiston neighborhood these questions are best answered by the residents and stakeholders of the neighborhood.

Recommendations

M1 Place historic markers on the properties that meet the National Register of Historic Places guidelines. There are numerous buildings on the National Register within the study area, but very few are widely recognized as historically significant, even by life-long downtown residents. Highlighting these structures would help to draw attention to the downtown's rich heritage.

M2 Work with the Historic Preservation Review Board to identify other properties of local historic significance in the study area and encourage the property owners to protect and upgrade the status of those properties, utilizing CDBG funds when appropriate. Lewiston is fortunate to have an active group of citizens promoting the preservation of historic buildings. The City and local developers should work with them to preserve as many as possible in the downtown.

M3 Continue to build energy and ideas around Lewiston's recent designation as a Preserve America Community. This select designation—Lewiston is one of only eight Preserve America communities in the state—provides access to a wide array of grant opportunities to use with our historic assets for economic development and community revitalization and to protect and celebrate our heritage.

M4 Actively market the use of the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program to owners of qualified properties to encourage preservation of the neighborhood's historic properties. Recent changes to this program at the State level have made this program a more viable option for local developers. The concentration of historic properties in the downtown should be highlighted to attract those who are interested in utilizing the program.

M5 Develop a strong marketing plan advertising regular events such as providing information on ongoing programming at B Street Community Center, Kennedy Park, City Hall, etc. There are routine efforts made to market certain events and certain venues, but there is no comprehensive, coordinated strategy or outlet for those looking to find out about all of these activities.

M6 Establish a direct marketing campaign to building owners in the study area educating them about City and other grant/loan programs available to them. Existing City (and many other federally and state-funded) rehabilitation programs are targeted to poorer, more blighted areas of the City, including the downtown study area. However, efforts to attract building owners have been limited in recent years, and should be expanded.

M7 Develop and publicize a downtown Lewiston neighborhood website and blogs to record the history, people and stories of the neighborhood. Encourage current and former residents to share their stories and engage in conversations about its present and future. Similar recent efforts to document the industrial and manufacturing history of Lewiston have been highly successful and well received. Expanding these efforts to capture the residential experience in Lewiston's downtown would tell another compelling side of this story.

M8 Engage stakeholders in the development of a marketing program for the downtown neighborhood. The Task's Force's work has uncovered a wide ranging and complex network of organizations, interest groups and individuals that are deeply involved in the welfare of the downtown, but often these groups are not working in concert towards this goal. By identifying downtown revitalization as a common theme, these important efforts could be more focused and more successful.

Section VI. Engagement

"By building governance and lasting capacity we will ensure that our investment will endure long beyond our engagement." - Pierre Pettigrew

The Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan is designed to stimulate conversation while encouraging and focusing on ongoing implementation and achievement. As such, the DNTF deemed it important to identify and suggest those parties and partners best suited to collaborate on recommendations offered in the plan. This list is not considered to be either exhaustive or authoritative—there are surely many additional, and in some cases, more appropriate, parties and partners to achieve these goals. It is hoped that these suggestions will help foster conversation and creative thinking from stakeholders for commitment to implementation and the betterment of the downtown residential neighborhood.

The following tables list each summary recommendation originally described in Section V along with the following suggested information:

Suggested Responsible Parties - *lead implementers*

Suggested Partners - *others to be engaged*

Estimated Cost - ***No Cost***
Low Cost (less than $5,000)
Moderate Cost (between 51,000 and $100,000)
Major Cost (More than $100,000)

Glossary of Acronyms and Programs:

City *– City of Lewiston*

City Departments:

CA *– City Administration*
CCO *– City Clerk's Office*
ECDD–*Economic and Community Development*
LED *– Lewiston Education Department*
LFD *– Lewiston Fire Department*
LPD *– Lewiston Police Department*
LPL *– Lewiston Public Library*
PCE *– Planning and Code Enforcement Department*
PS/PW *– Public Services/Public Works Departments*
RD *– Recreation Department*
SSD *– Social Services Department*

Agencies and Organizations:

ACCC *– Androscoggin County Chamber of Commerce*
ATRC *–Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center*
AVCOG *–Androscoggin Valley Council of Gov'ts.*
DEC—Downtown Education Collaborative
DHHS *– Dept. of Health and Human Services*
EL *– Empower Lewiston*
HPRB *– Historic Preservation Review Board*
LAEGC *– Lewiston Auburn Economic Growth Council*
LALA *– Lewiston/Auburn Landlord Association*
LATC *– Lewiston Auburn Transit Committee*
LHA *– Lewiston Housing Authority*
LYAC *– Lewiston Youth Advisory Council*
TVC *– Visible Community*
USW *– United Somali Women*
UW *– United Way*
YADA *– Youth+Adult+Dialogue=Action Program*

Table 3: Engagement and Implementation

Category/Recommendations	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Partners	Financing Estimate
SOCIAL CAPITAL			
S1 Develop a centralized clearinghouse of information, regarding social service programming, neighborhood, recreational, arts and entertainment offerings.	SSD ECDD RD LPL	DEC L/A Arts ACCC UW	No Cost
a. Foster greater interaction between the commercial and residential sectors of the downtown.	CA ACCC	EL, UW, TVC Community Action Groups	No Cost
b. Improve coordination of events, activities and programs among non-profits, neighborhood groups and City departments.	CA ECDD	UW EL	Low Cost
S2 Establish an oversight committee to work on continued implementation, improvements and programming from the Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan.	City Council CA ECDD	TVC, EL Neighborhood groups	No Cost
S3 Increase education, workforce training and employment of recent immigrants to the City. **a. Gain a more thorough understanding of the recent immigrant population.**	City Departments Catholic Charities USW	UW	Moderate Cost
b. Increase the number of service providers with multiple language skills.	USW, SSD Catholic Charities	UW	Moderate Cost
c. Provide additional schooling/GED and English language proficiency classes for persons receiving workforce training.	ECDD, LRTC Literacy Volunteers Career Center		Moderate Cost
d. Identify and reach out to Lewiston businesses that could offer appropriate, entry-level positions for immigrants.	ACCC Catholic Charities Career Center		No Cost
S4 Job Preparedness: **a. Offer services of the Maine Department of Labor's Career Center in the downtown.**	Career Center LPL	ACCC	Moderate Cost
b. Increase and promote access and availability to existing computer labs in the downtown for use in career development and training.	Career Center LPL EL		Low Cost
c. Increase efforts to support the creation and retention of small businesses and entrepreneurs in the downtown.	ACCC ECDD LAEGC, AVCOG		Low Cost

Category/Recommendations	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Partners	Financing Estimate
S5 Collaborate with the Thrive Initiative in the use of the Time Dollar program.	Thrive ECDD	EL	No Cost
HOUSING			
H1 Develop and adopt design guidelines for review of future development proposed in the study area.	City Council Planning Board	PCE Developers CA ECDD	No Cost
H2 Rezone the area fronting the west side of Bartlett Street from Highway Business to Downtown Residential.	City Planning Board	PCE	No Cost
H3 Develop a Registration/Licensing program for rental property owners in the City.	CCO ECDD PCE	LALA, LHA DT Property Owners	No Cost
H4 City should require voucher issuing entities to submit a written action plan for organizational and tenant accountability measures.	City Council LHA DHHS	ECDD PCE LALA	No Cost
H5 Provide a forum and maintain collaboration with downtown residential landlords to exchange ideas and information.	LALA DT Property Owners	LHA ECDD PCE	No Cost
H6 Community Development Programs: **a. Consider the development of a new loan program, using CDBG funds, which encourages mixed-use developments in the downtown.**	City Council ECDD	LAEGC AVCOG	Major Cost
b. Develop additional incentives through grant/loan programs and zoning to encourage percentage of affordable housing units being rehabbed or redeveloped.	City Council ECDD		Major Cost
c. Enhance the focus on housing cooperatives under the homebuyer/homeowner rehab loan program.	City Council ECDD	City of Auburn (HOME) HUD, LHA	No Cost
d. Promote condominium conversion to encourage mixed-income housing and create home ownership options.	City Council ECDD	LALA LHA	Low Cost

Category/Recommendations	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Partners	Financing Estimate
H7 Facilitate the replacement of unsafe housing with safe housing. **a. Conduct or commission an inventory of housing conditions in the downtown.**	ECDD PCE	Private Consultant, LALA, LHA	Major Cost
b. Increase the integration of information on occupancy, conditions and safety between departments and agencies involved with housing.	City Departments (incl. MIS)	LALA LHA	Moderate Cost
c. Increase the number of Code Enforcement officers.	City Council CA	PCE	Major Cost
H8 Encourage development that enhances the residential character of the neighborhood along the boundary of the study area.	City Council ECDD CA		No Cost
NEIGHBORHOOD STEWARDSHIP			
N1 Community Policing: **a. Create a positive working relationship between police officers and residents.**	LPD EL	TVC Community Action Groups	No Cost
b. Create passive and active recreation based opportunities for law enforcement officers to interact with youth.	LPD RD	YADA LYAC	Low Cost
c. Strengthen the usage and visibility of the B Street community policing substation.	LHA LPD	EL St. Mary's	No Cost
N2 Promote the empowerment and leadership of residents to resolve and manage neighborhood issues.	TVC EL Community Action Groups		Low Cost
N3 Support and promote the efforts of the downtown neighborhood associations.	CA ECDD EL	LHA RD	Moderate Cost
N4 Make available and support mediation resources at a family and neighborhood based scale.	Mediation Services	LPD UW	Moderate Cost
N5 Implement a neighborhood beautification program.	RD PS/PW	DT Property Owners Lots to Gardens	Moderate Cost

Category/Recommendations	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Partners	Financing Estimate
INFRASTRUCTURE, STREETSCAPE and TRANSPORTATION			
I1 Signage: **a. Develop physical methods to provide an identity/sense of place in the study area.**	PS/PW	ACCC HPRB	Major Cost
b. Enhance the existing Way-Finding signage program.	PS/PW	ACCC	Moderate Cost
c. Improve the safety of pedestrian crosswalks through yearly striping at every intersection in the downtown.	PS/PW		Moderate Cost
d. Replace the Yield sign at the intersection of Spruce and Bates Street with a Stop sign.	PS/PW City Council		Low Cost
I2 Trash and Litter: **a. Better coordinate the Solid Waste Pickup Program for the downtown residential area.**	PS/PW CA	DT Property Owners	Moderate Cost
b. Select several locations to locate additional trash cans in the study area.	PS/PW		Low Cost
c. Encourage/Facilitate wider use of the City's Recycling Program.	PS/PW	LALA DT Property Owners	Moderate Cost
I3 Streetscape Improvements: **a. Improve the streetscape and safety in the downtown by narrowing certain streets to create esplanades and wider sidewalks.**	City Council PS/PW ECDD	LPD LFD Consultant	Major Cost
b. Develop improvements to the 3 intersections identified as high crash locations (HCL).	PS/PW MDOT	Traffic Consultant	Major Cost
I4 Sidewalk Improvements: **a. Improve sidewalks in the downtown and review snow removal procedures.** **b.**	City Council PS/PW	Downtown Property Owners	Major Cost
c. Remove existing sign bases and other stubs that protrude from the sidewalks.	PS/PW		Moderate Cost
I5 Parking: **a. Establish a revised winter parking program.**	CA, LPD City Council	PCE PS/PW	Low Cost

Category/Recommendations	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Partners	Financing Estimate
b. Amend the current Vehicle Parking Space Requirements.	City Council Planning Board	PCE	No Cost
c. Lower the number of required parking spaces to fit the character of the mixed-use neighborhood.	City Council Planning Board	PCE	No Cost
d. Provide property owners option of using required surface parking for another purpose.	City Council Planning Board	PCE	No Cost
I6 Modifications to Citylink: **a. Work with the Lewiston-Auburn Transit Committee (LATC) to revise bus routes in the study area.**	City Council LATC CA		No Cost
b. Expand the Downtown Shuttle routing to better serve the neighborhood.	LATC		No Cost
c. Work with area businesses and LATC to establish an annual bus pass program.	LATC	ACCC	Low Cost
d. Work with LATC to extend bus hours in the mornings, evenings and to develop some weekend service.	LATC	City Councils	Major Cost
I7 Encourage and facilitate the placement of bike racks in strategic locations throughout the downtown.	CA City Council	ACCC PS/PW DT Property Owners	Moderate Cost
I8 Work with area colleges to inventory/asset map transportation resources.	ECDD ATRC LATC	Bates College, Andover College L/A College CMCC	Moderate Cost

PARKS and COMMUNITY SPACE

P1 Kennedy Park: **a. Implement the improvements recommended in the Kennedy Park Master Plan.**	City Council	PS/PW RD	Major Cost
b. Enhance the use of Kennedy Park for structured recreational activities.	RD		Low Cost
c. Improve access to and safety around Kennedy Park (@Spruce, Knox, Walnut & Chestnut Sts.).	LPD, PS/PW		Moderate Cost

Category/Recommendations	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Partners	Financing Estimate
P2 Pierce Street Park: **a. Build on previous efforts to identify park improvements that will support the neighborhood's goals.**	RD, PS/PW	EL, TVC Community Action Groups	Major Cost
b. Formalize access for public safety vehicles and personnel via the existing City easement.	CA City Council	LPD PS/PW	Moderate Cost
c. Re-establish pedestrian access via Pierce Street along with new signage.	RD PS/PW		Moderate Cost
d. Consider renaming the park.	City Council		No Cost
P3 Urban Trail System: **a. Develop and urban trail system, including preferred walk routes, in the study area.**	L/A Trails PS/PW		Major Cost
b. Increase access to and utilization of Franklin Pasture from the downtown neighborhood.	City Council PS/PW	Franklin Company	Major Cost
P4 Community Gardening: **a. Increase the opportunity for community gardening in partnership with the Lots to Gardens program.**	PS/PW PCE	DT Property Owners Beautification Committee Lots to Gardens	Moderate Cost
b. Strengthen the collaboration between the City and Lots to Gardens.	City Council Lots to Gardens		Moderate Cost
c. Identify ways to expand City assistance for garden site infrastructure and improvements.	RD PS/PW ECDD		Moderate Cost
P5 Vacant lots, both City and privately-owned, should be maintained as attractive, clean parcels.	City Council RD PS/PW	PS/PW DT Property Owners, PCE	Moderate Cost
P6 The City should find an underutilized green space and convert it to a dog park.	City Council RD	LPD	Moderate Cost
P7 Existing recreational, cultural and arts programs should be re-structured to include more opportunities for weekend, evening and year-round activities.	RD L/A Arts	EL, TVC Community Action Groups	Low Cost
P8 Encourage ongoing work by established groups to create a youth center.	City Council	YADA LYAC	No Cost

Category/Recommendations	Suggested Responsible Parties	Suggested Partners	Financing Estimate
MARKETING			
M1 Place historic markers on the properties that meet National Historic guidelines.	City Council	HPRB State HPO	Moderate Cost
M2 Identify other properties of historic significance in the study area and encourage owners to protect and preserve them.	City Council	HPRB	Low Cost
M3 Continue to build energy and ideas around Lewiston's designation as a Preserve America Community.	City Council	PCE, ECDD HPRB	No Cost
M4 Actively market the use of the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program.	CA ECDD	Developers	No Cost
M5 Develop a marketing plan to advertise regular events and ongoing events at downtown venues.	City	L/A Arts	Moderate Cost
M6 Establish a direct marketing campaign to building owners in the study area educating them about loan/grant programs.	ECDD	Local Banks Developers	Low Cost
M7 Develop and a downtown Lewiston neighborhood website and blogs to publicize events and record the history, people and stories of the downtown.	City MIS	LPL Museum L/A ECDD	Moderate Cost
M8 Engage stakeholders in the development of a marketing program for the downtown neighborhood.	City Council CA, ECDD	TVC, EL Community Action Groups	Major Cost

Financing/Funding

One of the primary charges given to the Downtown Neighborhood Task Force by the City Council at the time of its creation was to provide recommendations on how its recommendations could be funded. Of course, it is recognized that while the City will be called upon to enact many of the recommendations provided, it is not feasible to expect that City funds, either from federal CDBG allocations or the general fund, can pay for everything suggested in this plan. Therefore, the DNTF has outlined certain methods and alternate sources to pay for elements of this plan. They will require commitments from various stakeholders, elected officials, and benefactors, but it is hoped that these financing strategies will enable the key recommendations of the plan to be enacted and thereby bring transformative change to the downtown neighborhood.

Tax Increment Financing

Tax increment financing (TIF) is a financing tool that can be used to help finance downtown development, affordable housing projects and related activities. With a TIF, a municipality designates a geographic area with specific boundaries as a TIF district. Once established, a portion of property tax revenues resulting from increased valuations accrue to a TIF development fund. The TIF can be in place for up to 30 years. TIF development fund revenues must be used to fund specific items and activities designated by the municipality and approved by the state and cannot be used for general fund items and activities. In addition to creating a special fund to support approved items and activities, the municipality benefits from a TIF because property valuation increases within the district are "sheltered" or excluded from the municipality's state valuation and because of this are excluded from state fiscal formulas for aid to education, the county tax, and state/municipal revenue sharing. Through sheltering of valuation from state valuation the municipality avoids losses to state aid to education and revenue sharing, and avoids increases in its county tax assessment.

There are two special kinds of TIF districts in Maine which have applications as a funding mechanism for recommendations in the Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan. They are: a Downtown TIF District and an Affordable Housing TIF. Both have benefits beyond standard economic development TIFs in that they are excluded from some of the limitations contained in state statute on valuation and geographic size.

<u>Downtown TIFs</u>

A downtown TIF can be used to fund economic and community development items. The items to be funded must be part of a downtown plan and can include:

Costs within the District:

- Acquisition or construction of land, improvements, buildings, structures, fixtures and equipment.
- Demolition, alteration, remodeling, repair or reconstruction of existing buildings, structures and fixtures.
- Site preparation and finishing work.
- Fees and expenses that are eligible to be included in the capital cost of such improvements.
- All interest paid to holders of evidences of indebtedness (notes, bonds, etc.) issued to pay for project costs (either municipal or corporate).
- Any premiums paid for early redemption of obligations before maturity.
- Real property assembly costs.
- Professional services, such as licensing, architectural, planning, engineering and legal expenses.
- Reasonable administrative expenses, including those incurred by municipal employees in connection with implementation of a development program.
- Relocation costs, including relocation payments made following condemnation.
- Organizational costs relating to the establishment of the district, such as environmental impact and other studies, and costs to inform the public about the district.

Costs Outside the District, but directly related to, or are made necessary by, the establishment or operation of the district:

- Sewage treatment plants, water treatment plants or other environmental protection devices.
- Storm or sanitary sewer lines and water lines.
- Electrical lines.
- Improvements to fire stations.
- Amenities on streets.
- Public safety improvements made necessary by the establishment of the district.
- Costs incurred to mitigate any adverse impact of the district upon the municipality.

Costs for Economic Development, Environmental Improvements or Employment Training within the municipality:

- Economic development programs, or events developed by the municipality, or marketing of the municipality as a business location.
- Environmental improvement projects developed by the municipality for commercial use or related to commercial activities.
- Establish permanent economic development revolving loan funds or investment funds to support commercial and industrial activities.
- Employment training to provide skills development for residents of the municipality. These costs may not exceed 20% of the total project costs and must be designated as training funds in the development program.
- Quality child care costs, including finance costs and construction, staffing, training, certification and accreditation costs related to child care.

Affordable Housing TIFs

With an Affordable Housing TIF, municipalities can assist affordable housing projects and support related infrastructure and facilities, including:

Eligible project costs within the district include:

- Capital costs.
- Financing costs.
- Project operating costs.
- Professional service costs.
- Administrative and start-up expenses.
- Costs of recreational and child care facilities.

Eligible project costs outside the district include costs that are related to or made necessary by creation or operation of the district:

- Costs of infrastructure and public safety improvements.
- Costs to mitigate adverse impacts on the community (including costs to local schools).
- Costs to establish permanent housing development revolving loan or investment funds.

Affordable housing TIF's do have requirements regarding the affordability of housing to be created and maintained including:

- At least 25% of the district area must be suitable for residential use and development within the district must be primarily residential.
- The development program must address an identified community housing need and comply with Maine law regarding growth-related capital investments.
- At least 1/3 of the housing units must be for households earning no more than 120% of area median income.
- The affordability of rental units must be maintained for at least 30 years and the affordability of homeownership units must be maintained for at least 10 years.
- The size of the district must not exceed 2% of municipal acreage, and the total of all TIF districts in the municipality (including commercial) must not exceed 5% of municipal acreage.
- Original assessed value of all affordable housing development districts cannot exceed 5% of total municipal value.

Improvements financed with municipal bonds must be completed within 5 years from the Maine Housing approval date; additional restrictions on municipal debt financing also apply.

City of Lewiston Downtown Neighborhood TIF Projection

Designation of a tax increment financing district offers an opportunity for the City to partially fund public improvements in the downtown. To provide an example for this study, a 30-year TIF scenario was calculated for projected revenues based on the 2008 total valuation of property in the downtown district, or $55,188,810. Assumed annual growth rates in valuation of 2%, 4%, and 6% were used. The rates were chosen just to provide examples. The city's 2008 mill rate of 24.46 was then applied to increased valuation for each year for the 30-year period. For a TIF, a community can chose as a matter of policy what percent of the valuation is used for TIF related projects and what percent accrues to the general fund. For this analysis, an assumption of 100% of the increased valuation is used for downtown projects. The results are as follows:

Annual Growth Rate (assumed)	Total Revenue (30yrs. @ 100% capture)
2 %	$ 1,101,541
4%	$ 3,045,737
6%	$ 6,439,976

Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit

The State of Maine recently expanded its Historic Properties Rehabilitation Tax Credit program. A synopsis of the revised program is listed below:

- The credit is equal to 25% of certified rehabilitation expenses.
- The $100,000 per tax payer per year cap has been removed.
- The credit is fully refundable.
- The credit refund is intended to be fully transferable.
- Buildings must be certified historic structures in Maine that are income producing.
- The rehabilitation project must meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.*
- The rehabilitation project must meet the requirements of section 47 of the IRS code unless qualified rehabilitation expenditures are limited to no more than $50,000 and up to $250,000.
- Certified rehabilitation projects with qualified rehabilitation expenditures between $50,000 and $250,000 do not have to meet all of the requirements of Section 47 of the IRS code.

This modified program greatly enhances the amount of money available for historic rehabs, and makes such a project much more viable for developers to take on.

Other Funding Opportunities

Many sources of funds are also available for work in the downtown neighborhood area through local banks. All of the financial institutions in the Lewiston/Auburn area have grant opportunities and educational opportunities under the Community Reinvestment Act. The Community Reinvestment Act is intended to encourage financial institutions to help meet the credit needs of the communities in which they operate, including low and moderate-income neighborhoods, consistent with safe and sound banking operations. These banks are constantly in search of innovative ways to invest in their local economies for the betterment of its distressed neighborhoods. With proper planning and strategic thinking, it is likely that these local banks would find many of this plan's recommendations to be worthwhile investments.

Additionally, there are numerous Federal and State funding programs for which many of the recommendations and initiatives of this Action Plan may be eligible. Potential funding categories include;

- Economic Development
- Community Development
- Land and Water Conservation (Parks)
- Historic Preservation
- Federal and State Highway Improvements
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects
- Transportation Safety Projects
- Public Transit
- Small Business Development
- Education and Job Training

Agencies and entities administering potential funding programs include the Small Business Administration, Federal Highway Administration, Maine Department of Transportation, Maine Department of Conservation, Maine Department of Labor, Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, US Commerce Department, US Economic Development Administration, etc.

Each recommendation or initiative will need to be evaluated during its implementation to determine the scope of the initiative/program and then what funding opportunities and eligibilities may exist.

Finally, the most important and valuable investment in the neighborhood is by its residents, property owners and stakeholders. "Financing" by these groups and individuals will yield the greatest returns. Investment of this nature is best encouraged and supported through commitment to the others recommendations and actions contained in this plan.

Recommendation

The City should move forward with planning for the creation and designation of a downtown TIF district and/or affordable housing district. The Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan can be used by the City to serve as the basis for a "downtown development plan" which is required by the state as part of the Downtown TIF state approval process. The City can also use the Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan along with its existing housing plans as the basis for an affordable housing development program which is required by the state as part of the state approval process. The first step would be for the City to prioritize items included in the Downtown Neighborhood Action Plan into a 30 year development plan which includes estimated costs, the portion the City desires to be funded through a TIF program, and the portion derived from other sources of funding. In doing so the City should weigh its needs for future General Fund Revenues against the need to fund specific items in the downtown study area through a TIF.

Appendices

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