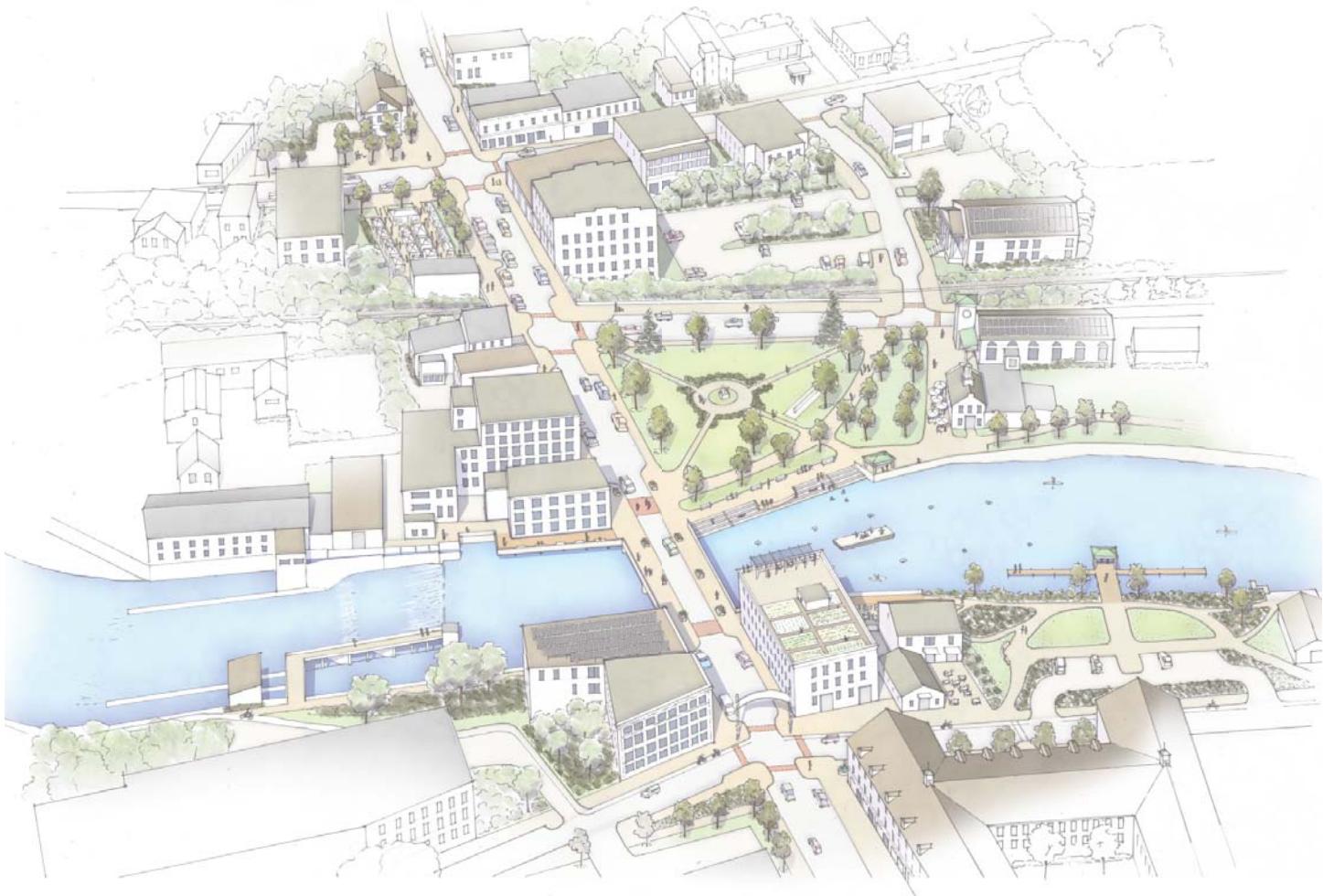


DOWNTOWN ORANGE RIVERFRONT REVITALIZATION STUDY

FINAL REPORT - DRAFT

SEPTEMBER 23, 2015



rustpoint advisory, llc

UNION STUDIO
ARCHITECTURE & COMMUNITY DESIGN



Franklin Regional
Council of Governments



MASSDEVELOPMENT

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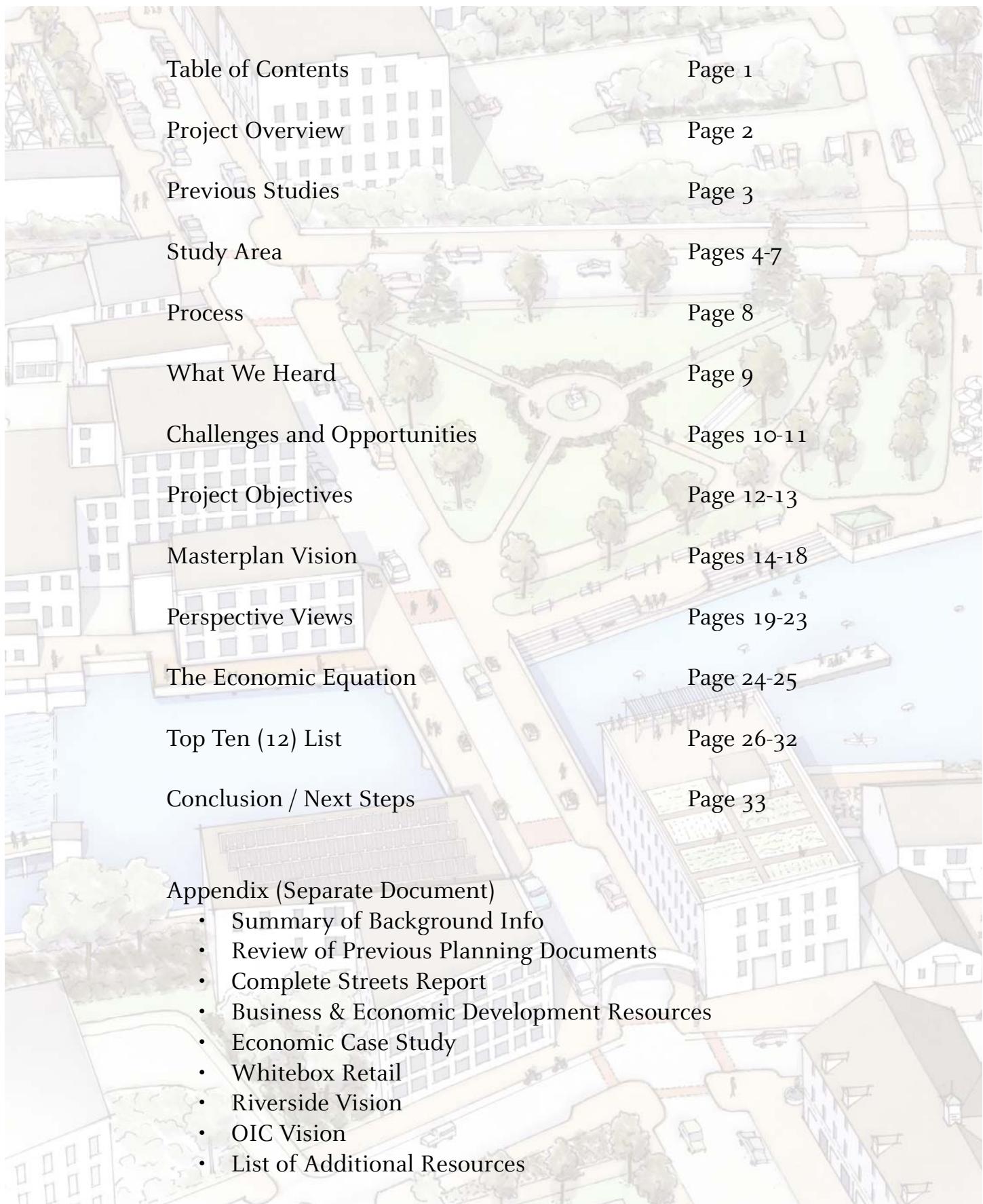


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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Since March of this year, the Town of Orange, in collaboration with MassDevelopment and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), has been working on a Masterplan Vision for the core area of Downtown Orange with Union Studio Architecture and Community Design and Rustpoint Advisory, LLC.

Over the last many years, a number of previous studies and proposals have been done, but each has had a limited focus or hasn't led to tangible results. The goal was to generate a consolidated plan for Downtown Orange that built upon the applicable suggestions of these previous proposals, including both a comprehensive vision as well as a series of action steps based around a number of areas of focus.

The plan proposed here was developed and refined through a series of meetings with both public and private stakeholders in which the team was able to garner feedback through presentation and discussion. The plan includes both short and long term approaches towards revitalization.

Union Studio has been primarily responsible for facilitating the process and generating the overall vision. Rustpoint Advisory has assisted relative to understanding the economic feasibility of the approach and helping identify precedent studies and alternative sources of funding.



BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF PROPOSED PLAN

At the initial stage of information gathering, the Town and FRCOG provided the team with a summary of previous efforts and studies that sought to help with the revitalization of Orange from a variety of vantage points. Some elements of these plans have come to fruition, but there were also a great number of ideas that needed to be consolidated and seen through the lens of the current economic potential for the Town. While the full summary of previous studies is included in the Appendix of this document, below are a number of key suggestions the team tried to address in the proposed plan.

Year	Document	Synopsis	Key Suggestions
2002	Ecotourism Marketing Report	Report by New England Forestry Foundation to develop Ecotourism marketing plan for 9 towns in North Quabbin area	Not much current activity, but potential with natural resources Hunt, fish, hike, bike, canoe/kayak, rock climb, mountain bike Minimal hospitality/retail to support tourism Orange known for antique stores and old mills
2005	Town of Orange Master Plan		Goals Promote more diverse mix of businesses/housing for stable tax base Support downtown revitalization, create new jobs Encourage desired development through planning and zoning Balance development with preservation Fund riverfront park design underway Priorities Change Zoning for desired resid. growth (clusters, accessory units) Promote appropriate types of business dev. (perf. stds, farming) Protect rural areas/natural resources from future dev. (protect water) Implement Pavement Mgmt Study (road maint. priority report)
2009	Sustainable Design Assessment Team Study	Outlined a number of sustainable revitalization goals	Ped friendly, park once, mixed use, downtown as "trailhead" Preserve historic resources, create self guided walking tour Wayfinding, Form based zoning, add B&B Bike share, transit Farmers market
2010	Community Needs Survey	Comments from broad based survey	Improve condition of buildings and infrastructure Need more business/employment/entertainment opportunities Need supermarket
2013	Indoor BMX Track Diagram	Quick diagram showing BMX half-pipe in salt shed	Repurpose town-owned salt shed on river by Butterfield Park
	Investment Diagram	\$7 million in approved/requested improvements	Most funds directed towards downtown roads and parks
	Market Assessment Survey	Survey by FRCOG and Town to determine what types of businesses and activities are desired by residents, workers and visitor	Business - Restaurants, Theater, Grocery/Food Co-op Rest. - Bakery/Coffee (\$), Seafood/Steak (\$\$\$), Brew/Ital/Mex (\$\$) Come Downtown - Local shops, PO/Town Hall, Events Change - #/Variety Rest/Shops, Improve bldgs, Improve streetscape Business Obstacles - Empty storefronts, current econ. conditions Improve look of bldgs, redevelop vacant/under-utilized parcels Increase # and mix of restaurants and shops
			Enhance gov't services - esp. public safety and downtown maint. Strengthen community with downtown events/facilities Prioritize manufacturing (existing and new) - stable employment
			Tuck adventure tourism around that (not in place of) Innovation Center great asset - incubate businesses that can fill town
	Mill Vision/Riverfront Reconsidered	Proposed vision for mill buildings	Focus on outdoor activities, local cafes, galleries
	Redevelopment Financing Case Study	Ted Carmen Case Study from Greenfield, MA	Renovation costs difficult without tax credits to bridge gap
	Visioning Sessions	Two surveys w/ business vs property owners	Business owner focus on shops and housing Property owner focus on beautification
			Both focus on sports and recreation
	Wendell Depot Trail Extension Map	Proposed trail from Wendell to Orange	Comes in at OIC, crosses bridge to Paper Mill to N/S Main
2014	MassWorks Application Map	Shows possible open spaces/trails in downtown	Trail along both sides of river above hydro dam, cross at trestle bridge
	Recreation Trails Program Map	Shows portage trail to bypass hydro dam	Landing at trestle, pass Paper Mill, up to River St, dock at boathouse
	UMASS LARP Education Study	Study econ. benefit of school(s) in or near town	Three options: Green School, Adventure School, Brewing School
2015	Cultural District/Vision Diagrams	Millers River Sports & Culture District branding	Give identity to new district based on outdoor activity and arts
	Welcome Package	Pamphlet for new business owners	List of parades/festivals, redevelopment goals

STUDY AREA

Early in the process, the team worked together to identify the primary study area to be considered. The decision was made to focus specifically on the core area of Downtown Orange as this zone includes a variety of uses and serves as the identifiable center of the community.

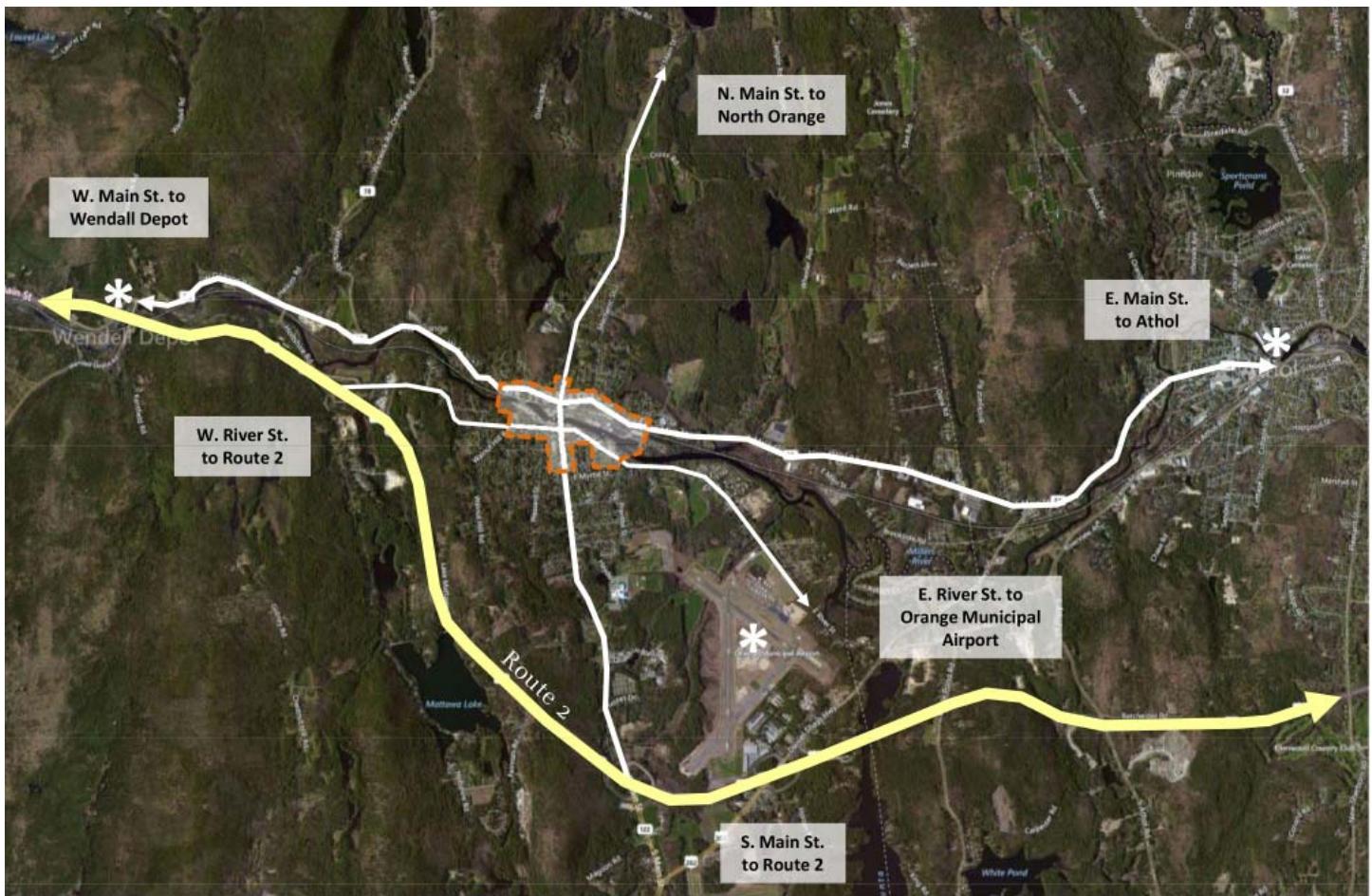
Running through the center of the core area is Miller's River. While the river doesn't serve as active a role in the commercial activity of the town as it once did, it still serves as a natural asset that can help bring people to town, both for its natural beauty and potential for active recreation. On both sides of the river are a number of historic mills that help contribute towards the character of Orange and which provide building stock for possible future revitalization.

On either side of the river runs East/West Main Street and East/West River Street. The study area includes both sides of East/West Main Street from the Orange Innovation Center to the Rodney Hunt Mills, capturing a lot of the commercial properties in town. It also includes both sides of East/West River Street from Roche Ave (access to Erving Paper Mill) to Butterfield Park.

Crossing all three of these corridors is North/South Main Street and the study area includes both sides of this corridor from King Street to the south up to School Street to the north. This corridor hosts a number of important civic structures such as Town Hall, the Post Office and Butterfield School.



STUDY AREA



REGIONAL CONTEXT

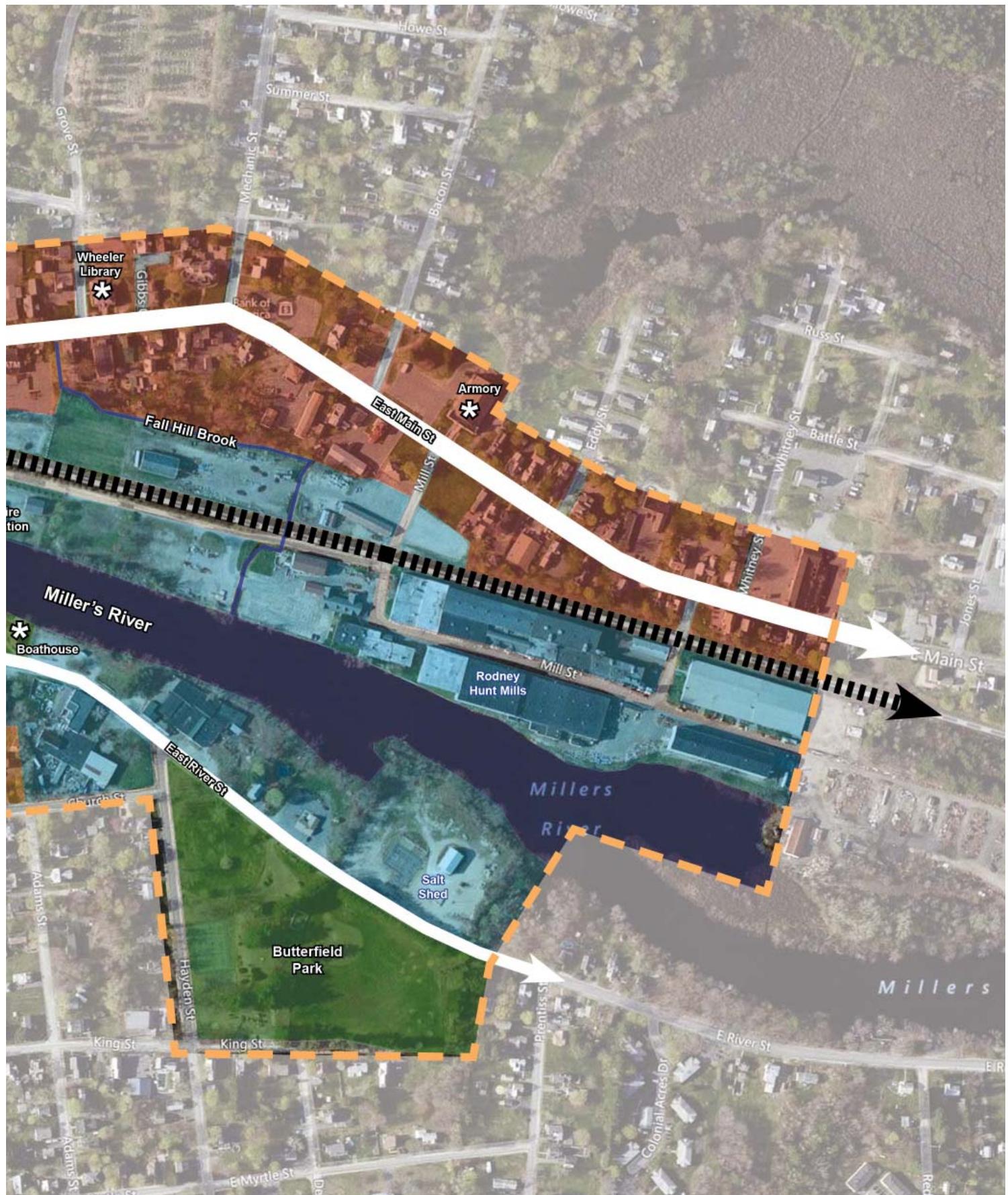
These same corridors ultimately connect out to other important regional assets including the rest of the Orange community to the north, the neighboring towns of Athol and Wendall Depot, the Orange Municipal Airport as well as access to Route 2.

STUDY AREA



ANALYSIS OF STUDY AREA

STUDY AREA



PROCESS

The project kicked off in March of 2015 with a pre-design phase during which time the design team met with the larger project team, familiarized itself with the site, and reviewed background documents including previous studies that had been done. In April, the team began meeting with local stakeholders in order to talk about the previous efforts and to get their thoughts about the current state of affairs in Orange including what, if any, plans they had for their own individual parcels.

Pre-Design	March 2015
Stakeholder Input	April 2015
Preliminary Discussions	May 2015
Initial Public Presentation	June 24, 2015
Draft Plan/Market Analysis	June/July 2015
Final Public Presentation	August 12, 2015
Final Plan/Market Analysis	September 2015

After gathering all of this preliminary information, the project team had a series of preliminary discussions in May to review the information that had been gathered to date and to talk about options for the plan moving forward. These preliminary findings and thoughts were then shared with the larger public at a presentation that was held on the evening of June 24, 2015 in the Auditorium at Town Hall.

Based on the resulting discussion, the design team spent June and July generating a draft vision plan for Downtown Orange, including a list of likely areas of focus and potential strategies towards achieving the vision. These ideas were discussed with the project team and refined into the final vision plan that was shared with the larger public at a follow up presentation held the evening of August 12th, 2015 at the Fire Station.

The process has culminated with this Final Report that seeks to summarize the efforts to date, describe the final vision plan and outline the steps required to make it a reality.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

On April 22, 2015, the team held a series of meetings with local business owners and town officials:

Meeting #1: Gary Moise, Antique's Mill

Meeting #2: Sean Ashcroft, Peak Expeditions, Community Boathouse

Meeting #3: Paul Anderson, Trailhead Retail and Cafe

Meeting #4: Brianna Drohen, Orange Innovation Center

Meeting #5: Bill Goodwin, Slencil Company, Rivetto Building

Meeting #6: Town Representatives, Town Hall

Diana Schindler (Town Administrator)

Joshua Knechtel (Superintendent, Highway Dept)

Michael Heidorn (Superintendent, Water Dept)

Edward Billiel (Chief Operator, Wastewater)



Following the review of the background materials and previous studies, a few major themes became apparent:

- **Beautification** - Downtown Orange needs to be an attractive destination for residents and visitors.
- **Revitalization** - underutilized buildings need to be activated to help support an active community.
- **Diversification** - the Town needs a greater variety of uses as it is currently dominated by consignment stores and social services

There were also a number of assets in Downtown Orange that were frequently mentioned as opportunities to build upon:

- **Adventure Recreation**
- **Business Incubation**
- **Annual Festivals/Local Events**
- **Orange Municipal Airport**
- **Antiques District**
- **Local Artists**



In sessions held with stakeholders and the public, a few additional themes surfaced that residents suggested needed to be addressed:

- Need to **understand funding sources** and process for attaining them
- Find ways to **build upon/improve waterfront** resources
- Need to **find additional volunteers** to help maintain and improve existing resources
- **Build on momentum** of recent efforts
- Find ways/**incentives to attract new business**, both large and small
- Find ways/**incentives to get current owners to reinvest**

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

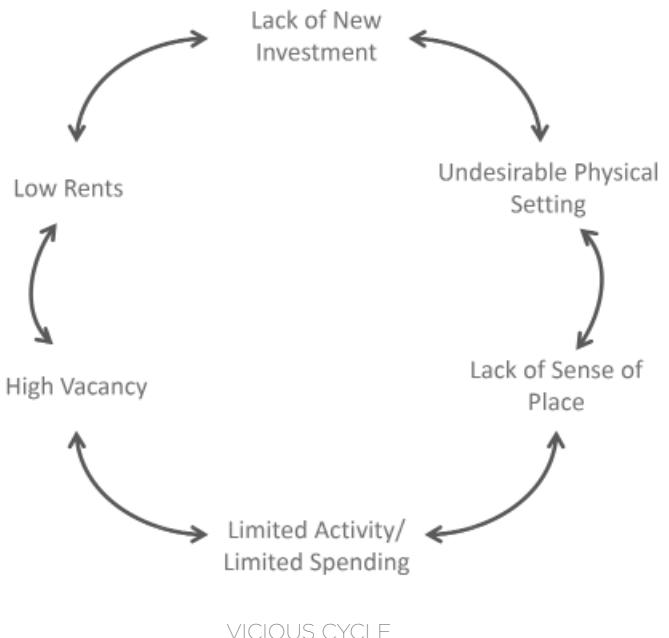
Challenges

Downtown Orange is an “ecosystem”. All factors are interrelated but the current stagnation boils down to a lack of market conditions to encourage investment in downtown as well as a physical setting that is in need of improvement.

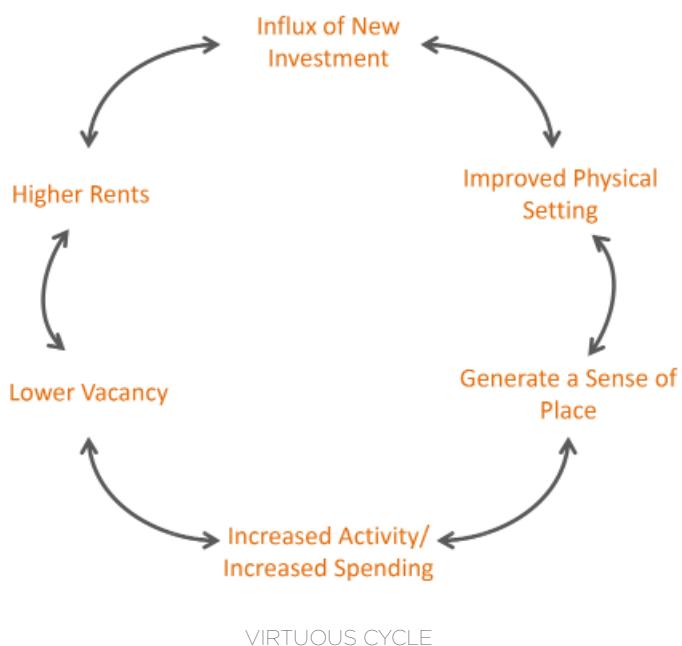
From an economic and financial standpoint, the current rent levels in Downtown Orange do not support nor justify the costs necessary to rehabilitate existing buildings or to build new construction. Utilizing a highly visible building within Downtown Orange and current market data, a simple financial analysis is included in the Appendix. In 2013, a similar study was presented by Concord Square Planning & Development, Inc. to key landowners and stakeholders in Orange. The underlying factor is one of supply and demand, as the low levels of demand for space lead to vacancy. To avoid vacancy, landlords compete for potential tenants by offering ever-decreasing rents.

One of the major factors contributing to this vicious cycle is the undesirable nature of the current physical setting and the lack of a strong sense of place needed to attract higher levels of activity.

In particular, Downtown Orange suffers from an unclear sense of arrival due to the lack of a readily identifiable center or focus. While the downtown historically provided this, the current condition that includes empty lots, so called “missing teeth”, as well as wide streets and narrow sidewalks contributes to an overall unpleasant pedestrian experience.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Opportunities

The good news is the town benefits from having both historic fabric (streets and buildings) that can support a pedestrian friendly environment, as well as the presence of Miller's River, which provides both a scenic setting and opportunity for focused redevelopment and active recreation.

While in need of reinvestment, the existing building fabric does give Orange a sense of place and local character. The historic structures also provide an opportunity to leverage state and federal financial incentives for redevelopment.

Downtown Orange also benefits from the close proximity of lots of historic housing. This suggests increased pedestrian activity is possible since residents have the option of walking to shopping and employment given increased opportunities.

The river's potential can be seen in recent investments by the community including the new Riverfront Park and Community Boathouse. Although currently separated from the river, Memorial Park is also a great communal asset that could further support the use of this core area.

The existing mill buildings that flank the river give both a sense of the town's history as well as the potential for future redevelopment. These buildings also serve to frame the river, creating an outdoor room of sorts, which is crucial in trying to establish a sense of place.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Over the course of the project's development, a number of key objectives were identified under which a variety of short and long term efforts fall. Many of these items came out of the suggestions in previous studies or as the result of discussions with the Orange community.

Sense of Place

The first general objective for the revitalization of Downtown Orange is the need to create a strong sense of place. A strong sense of place is what draws people to places they love, and improving the sense of place in Orange will bring folks to the area and help support local business. The presence of Miller's River and the historic building fabric in town begin to do this, but the following other elements should be considered:

- Focus improvements in the core area/key corners
- Focus town activities and events in the core area
- Add gateway signage at Main and River – primary entry to town
- Add streetlight banners in downtown
- Strive for consistency of messaging/graphics

Beautification

In order to help with the sense of place and in order to instill a sense of community pride, steps should be taken to improve the overall appearance of the core area. Such efforts can be undertaken by all members of the community and whether big or small, will have a positive effect relative to the perception of Orange. These efforts should include:

- General improvements to the core area to add life, interest, and pride
- Tactical Urbanism/Short Term Improvements: Storefronts, street furniture and planters, parklets, art projects in underutilized spaces
- Infrastructure/Long Term Improvements: Sidewalk and streetscape improvements, signage/wayfinding, building renovations

Complete Streets and Improved Connections

Throughout the core area, improvements should be made to the streetscape in order to facilitate a pedestrian friendly setting and improve the overall appearance of the town. Efforts on this front can include:

- Align priorities of Town Departments with focus on core area
- Tactical Urbanism/Short Term Improvements: Paint crosswalks, bulb-outs, parking lanes, bike lanes, etc, opportunity for artistic expression and placemaking, quick fix while waiting for DOT funding
- Infrastructure/Long Term: New sidewalks, crosswalks, ramps, curbs, bulb-outs, etc., relocated utility obstructions, redirected truck traffic - commercial and emergency vehicles
- Tie general improvements to infrastructure improvements/funding
- Wayfinding to local amenities beyond core (Airport, Schools, OIC, etc.)
- Add network of waterfront trails and pedestrian crossings

Revitalization and Renovation

In addition to physical improvements to the public realm, investment is needed in the buildings in the core area including the possibility of new construction and/or new uses. This may include:

- Short term allow temporary uses on vacant/underutilized parcels: pop-up retail, food trucks, etc.
- Mid term emphasis on renovation/reuse of existing structures in core area
- Long term possibility for new construction on vacant parcels in core once property values improve
- To help close economic gaps, consider tax credits and/or tax stabilization programs for priority sites
- Create "roadmaps" for key sites that outline steps and streamline process
- Host in-depth meetings with key stakeholders to understand specific impediments

Creating and Incubating Diversity

A number of resident surveys identified the need for a better mix of uses in the core area. Efforts should be made to attract new uses including the potential for incubating new local businesses:

- Create incentives to attract new and different business to downtown
- Build on the success of the Orange Innovation Center (OIC)
- Outreach focused on businesses that relate to town identity and resources: recreation, manufacturing, airport, local artists, local food, etc.
- Downtown incubator space for culinary uses, retail space and art studios/galleries
- Work with existing owners to create code compliant “whitebox” spaces paired with low-rent, short-term, revenue-based leases

Funding Sources and Volunteer Efforts

While existing funding sources will be able to address some amount of the approaches suggested, it is likely that the vision will only be realized as the result of finding new sources and capitalizing on volunteer efforts from the larger Orange community:

- Identify point of contact for funding and grant writing for both town and local building/business owners
- Create ongoing database of applicable funding sources - reference previous successes and failures
- Establish dedicated revenue sources from community resources/events
- Establish annual development/fund-raising drive
- Identify point of contact for ongoing volunteer efforts
- Create identity and energy around local volunteering
- Actively recruit and partner from other local organizations like schools, churches, and clubs

Community Development and Marketing

To get the word out and build momentum, a number of outreach approaches will be needed. In some cases existing resources, like the Department of Community Development, can be built upon, but additional resources may also be needed:

- Emphasize the importance of the vision and ensure existing businesses and residents feel confident in the future
- Build on efforts of Community Development Director and local organizations
- Consider informal Downtown Improvement District that builds on efforts of Orange Business Association and regional Chamber of Commerce
- Focus identity on recreation, innovation, and local arts
- Set up town website as hub for events, volunteer efforts and community development opportunities
- Relocate Community Development to Main Street to serve as physical, visible hub of ongoing efforts

Programming and Event Planning

In addition to physical changes and new uses, regular activities will also be required to bring folks to the core area. A number of festivals, parades and local events are already in place whose success can be built upon. This should include the following efforts:

- Advertise and promote events on website, social media, local shops, etc.
- Continue to balance big, regional events with frequent, local events
- Focus activities at core and include emphasis on existing businesses and temporary uses to better support local economy
- Maximize use of existing resources: parks, riverfront, Auditorium, etc.

MASTERPLAN VISION

The masterplan proposed on the opposite and following pages seeks to pull together these various objectives into a cohesive vision for the core area of Downtown Orange.

At the center of this core area is Miller's River and Memorial Park. Water Street in its current configuration separates these two assets, and the vision plan proposes removing the stretch of Water street from South Main Street to Depot Street and replacing it with walkways and green spaces that help connect the two and allow residents to access the river's edge. Such a move would require relocating the existing truck access to the fire station. This plan shows the potential for a new station accessed from Depot Street and repurposing the existing historic station into a cafe/brewpub that takes advantage of its riverfront setting.

On the opposite bank, the plan proposes cantilevering a new riverwalk along the edge of the historic mills which connects back to Riverfront Park and the already proposed Phase 2 dock extension. The sidewalk areas on the bridge have also been extended into the shoulders of the roadway, helping facilitate movement back and forth while also allowing space for folks to linger and enjoy the view.

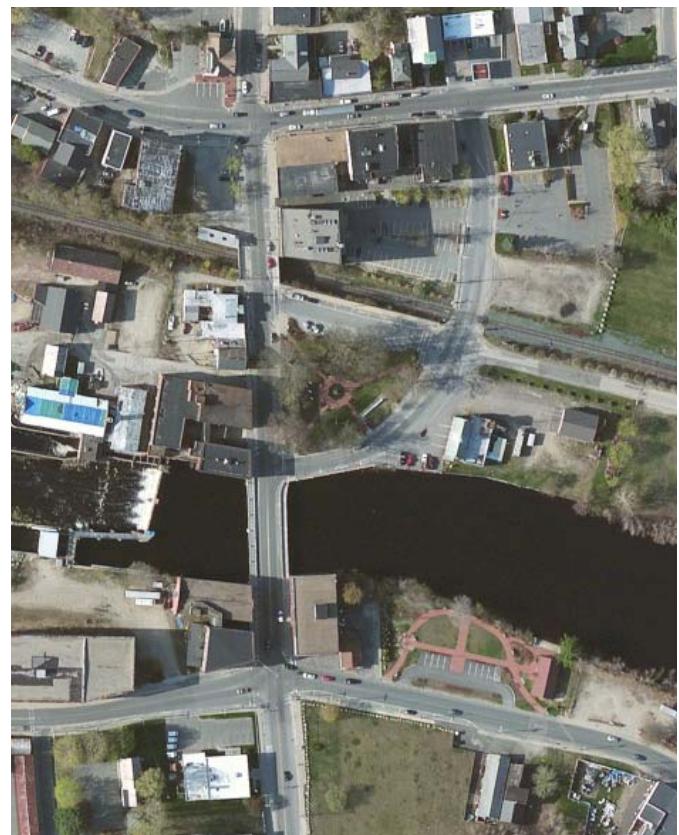
The culminating effect of these interventions would be the ability to fully take advantage of the river as an asset for the town, creating the sense of place the town so desperately needs.

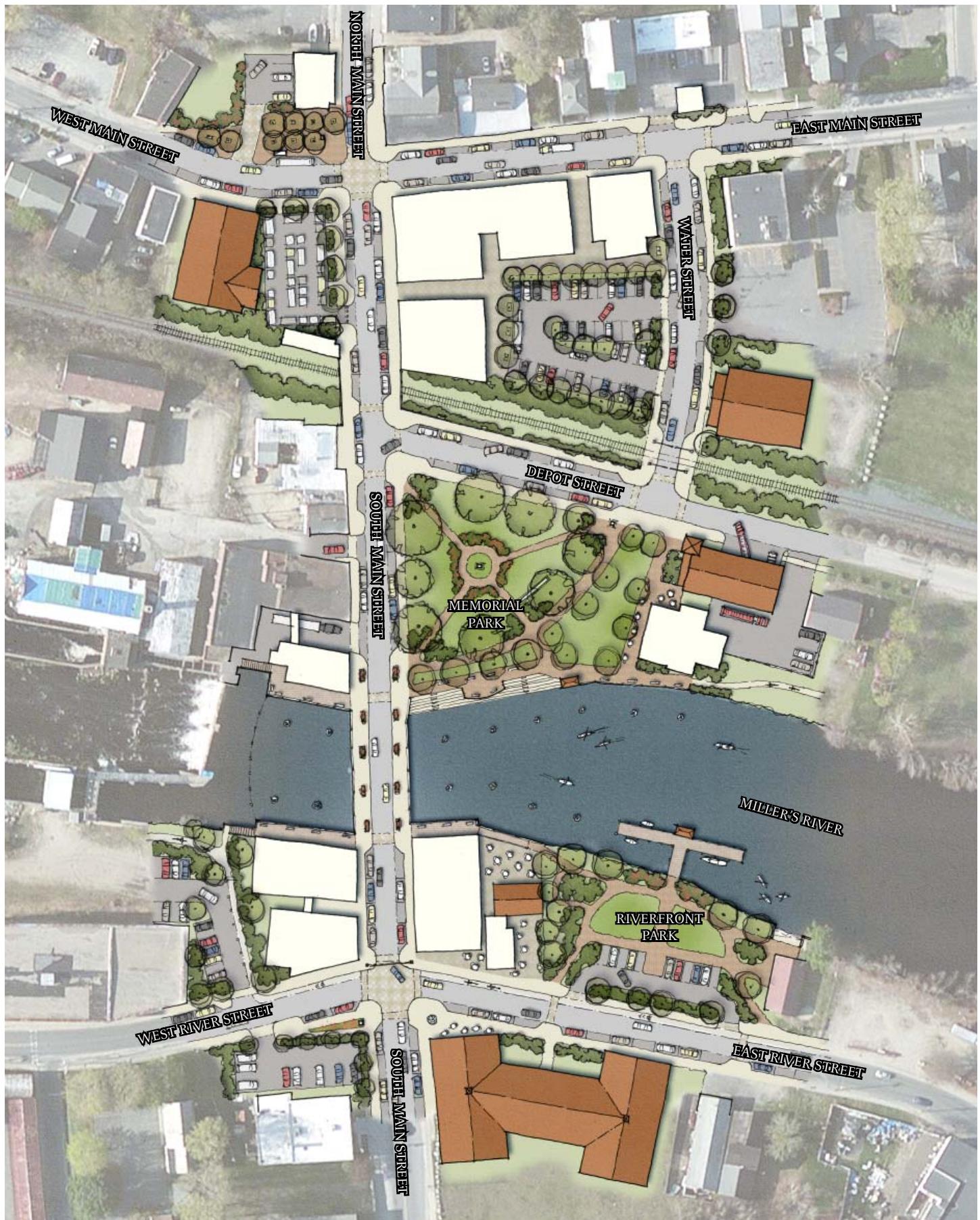
This core area is also bookended by two key intersections in town. To the south is the intersection of South Main Street with East and West River Streets. This intersection serves as a gateway of sorts to the core for folks coming to town from Route 2, flanked by the historic mill buildings on the north side. The vision suggests taking back the excess roadway areas to the south of the intersection, allowing the creation of small pedestrian plazas while increasing pedestrian safety. The plan also shows the potential for new mixed-use development on the now vacant Dexter Mill parcel.

At the other end of the core area is the intersection of North, South, East and West Main Streets. This intersection serves an important role as the symbolic center of town, and this vision plan proposes a number of improvements to help it live up to its potential. To the northwest, the plan proposes taking back the "no man's land" of paving adjacent to the Temperance Fountain and creating a new civic plaza. This plaza could host a new bus shelter and allee of trees. To the southwest, the plan retains the existing parking lot, but proposes using it for temporary events such as regular farmers markets. A new mixed-use building is also proposed on the now vacant Putnam Hall site.

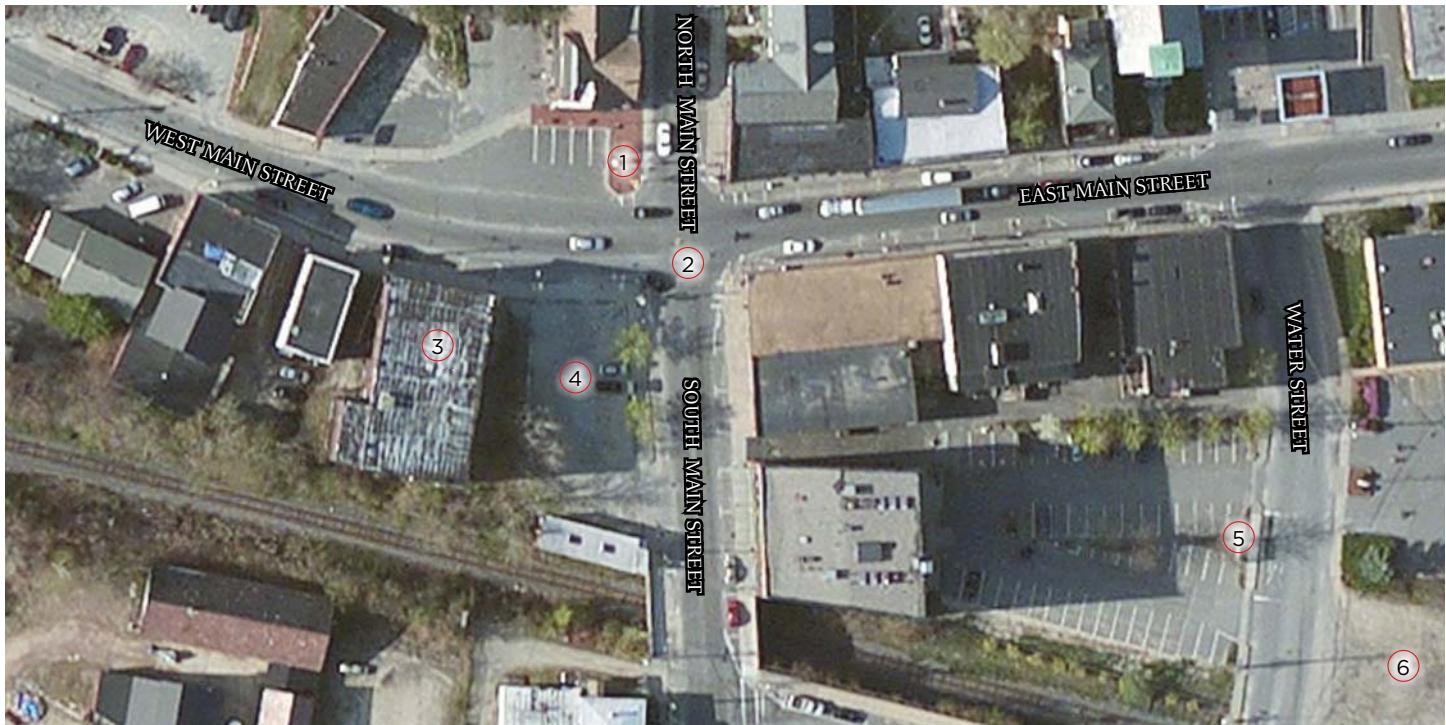
In addition to these specific improvements, the plan also proposes general improvements to the streetscape throughout like bulbouts at intersections, landscape screening, bike lanes and new trails, geared towards creating a public realm welcoming to a variety of users.

The following pages include a number of partial plans that call out the new features in more detail.





MASTERPLAN VISION



- 1. Temperance Fountain lost amidst parking
- 2. Overly-wide and poorly-defined intersection
- 3. Empty lot
- 4. Parking lot at intersection of Main and Main
- 5. Wide open parking lots lead to poorly-defined Water Street
- 6. Empty lot



- 1. New Plaza at corner of Main and Main/Temperance Fountain
- 2. Streetscape improvements including crosswalks, bulb-outs, ramps, etc.
- 3. Infill Site: New Mixed-Use

- 4. Temporary use of Parking Lot for activities like Farmer's Market
- 5. Landscape screening at exposed edges
- 6. Infill Site: New Courthouse or Library

SCALE: 1"=100'-0"



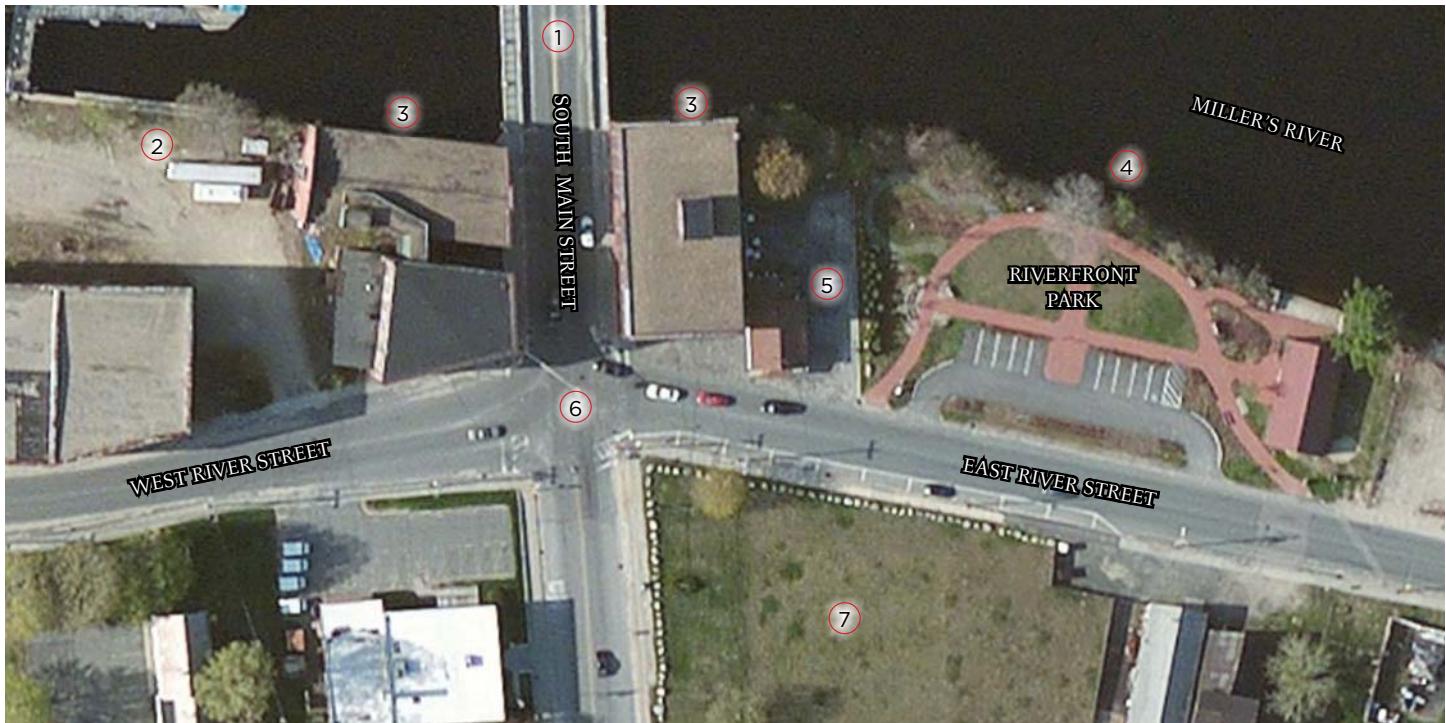
- 1. Empty lot
- 2. Overly-wide and poorly-defined intersections
- 3. Access lanes for Fire Station
- 4. Existing Fire Station
- 5. Water Street & parking lanes run between Memorial Park and river's edge
- 6. River runs up to the edge of mill buildings
- 7. Water Street, parking, and railing separating pedestrians from river's edge
- 8. Rear of Fire Station - not accessible to pedestrians/cyclists



- 1. Infill Site: New Courthouse or Library
- 2. Streetscape improvements including crosswalks, bulb-outs, ramps, etc.
- 3. Infill Site: New Fire Station
- 4. Old Fire Station repurposed as Cafe/Brewpub
- 5. Water Street closed to serve as park extension
- 6. Riverwalk added to existing mill buildings
- 7. Wall replaced by steps and pavilion along river's edge
- 8. Trails along river's edge

SCALE: 1"=100'-0"

MASTERPLAN VISION



- 1. Bridge
- 2. Parking lot
- 3. River runs up to the edge of mill buildings
- 4. Landscaped edge of Riverside Park
- 5. Parking lot
- 6. Wide intersection; no clearly-defined gateway into Downtown Orange
- 7. Empty lot



- 1. Shoulders on bridge converted to sidewalk
- 2. Trails along river's edge
- 3. Riverwalk added to existing mill buildings
- 4. Phase 2 of Riverfront Park: New dock and pavilion
- 5. Infill Site: Riverfront Cafe
- 6. Gateway Signage: Entry to Downtown Orange
- 7. Bike lane on River Street
- 8. Streetscape improvements including crosswalks, bulb-outs, ramps, etc.
- 9. Infill Site: New Mixed-Use / Senior Housing

SCALE: 1"=100'-0"

0 50' 100' 150' 200' 250' 300'



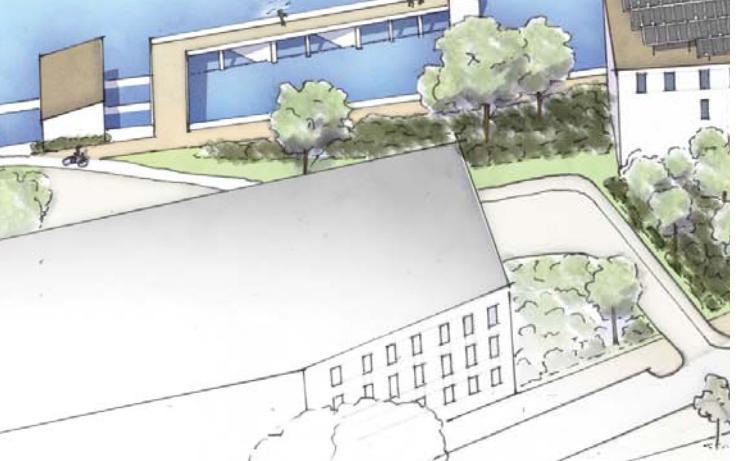
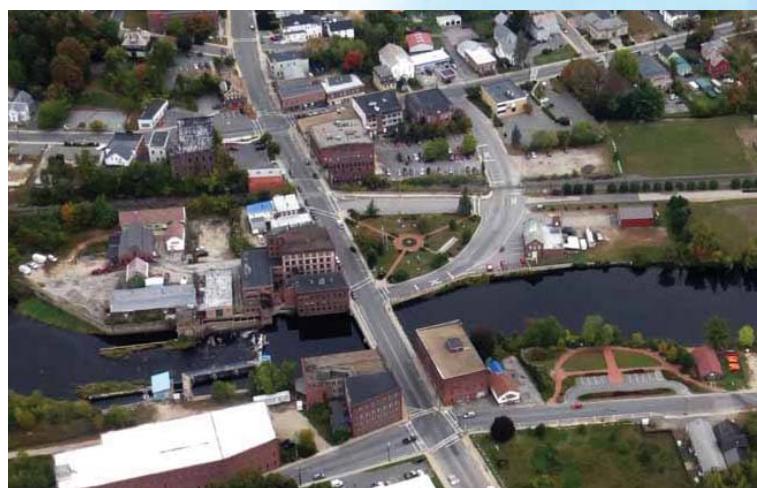
This view shows the potential for an extension of Memorial Park given the removal of the existing stretch of Water Street that passes by the historic Fire Station. The roadway could be replaced with a new walkway and green areas that connect the park to a series of terraced steps down to the river, providing seating for both formal events and informal enjoyment.



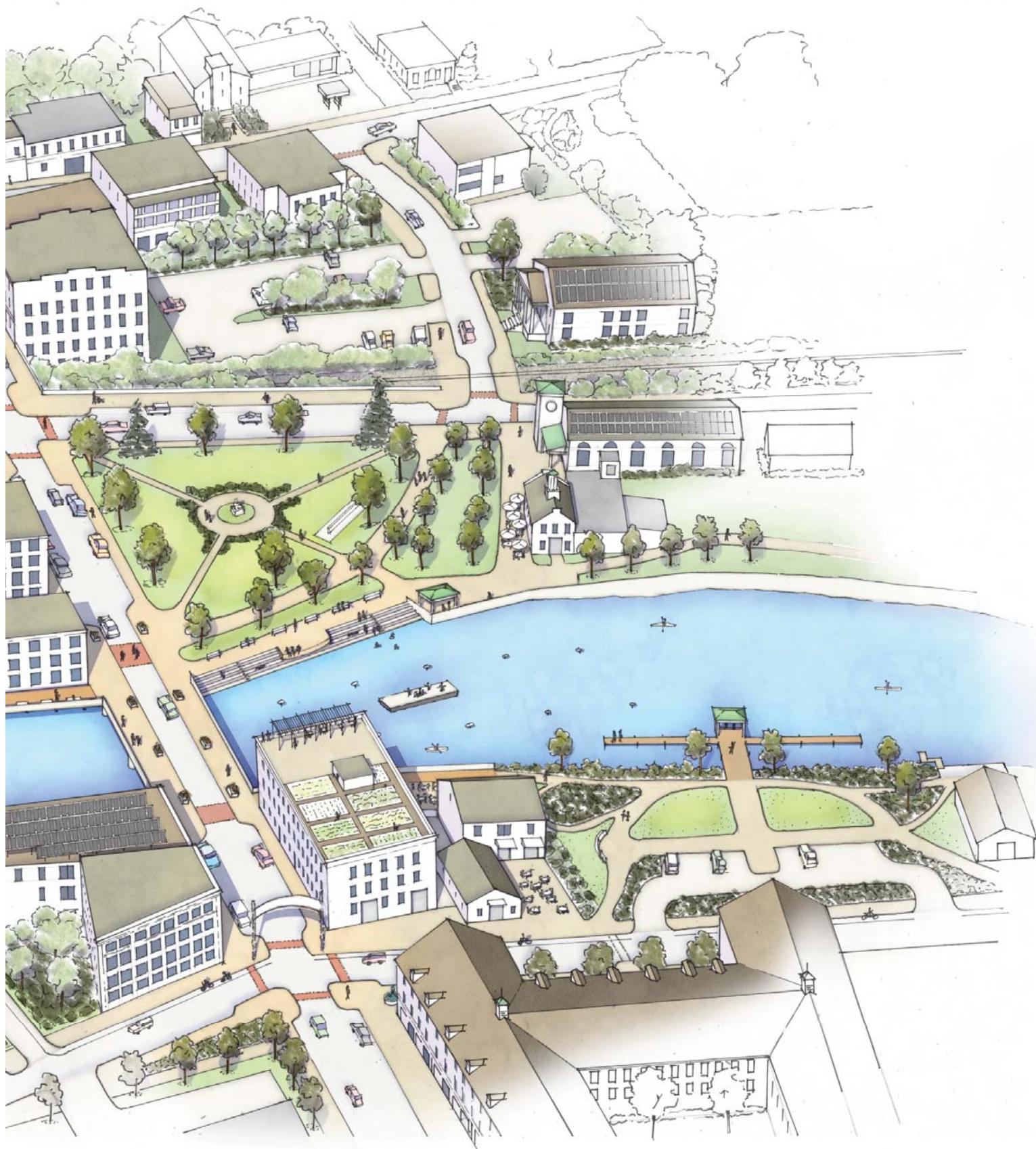
PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF MEMORIAL PARK EXTENSION

PERSPECTIVE VIEWS

This “bird’s eye” view of the core area shows the culmination of the various efforts proposed in the vision plan, including the expansion of public spaces, development of a mix of new uses and general improvements to the streetscape and connections beyond the core.



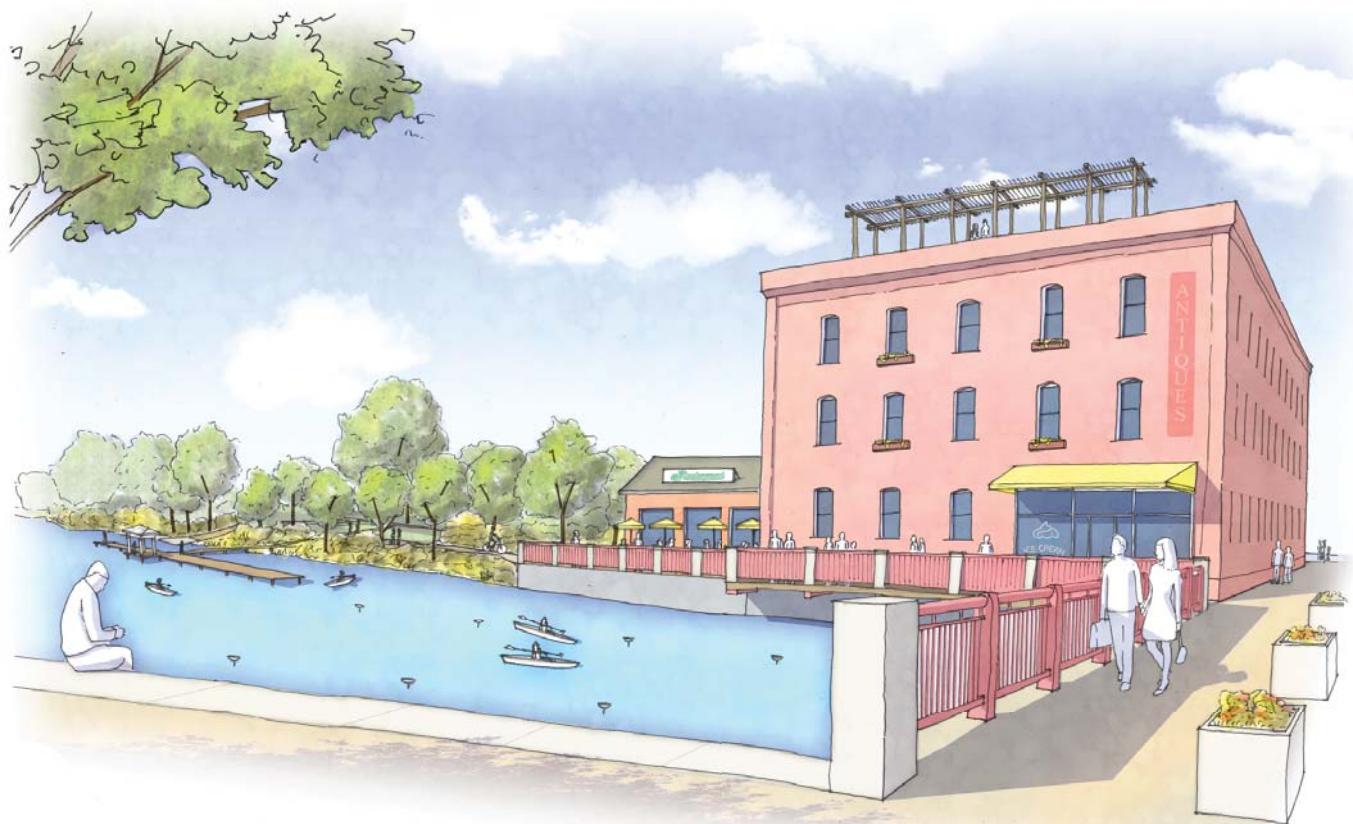
PERSPECTIVE VIEWS



BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF CORE AREA

PERSPECTIVE VIEWS

In order to further embrace the river as an asset, this view shows the potential for opening up the edge along Memorial Park, the addition of a riverwalk along the edge of the mills, the potential for new retail uses, the expansion of the sidewalk on the bridge and the planned phase 2 addition of a dock at Riverfront Park.



PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF RIVER'S EDGE



The intersection of North, South, East and West Main Streets serves an important role for the Town as a symbolic center. This view shows the potential for creating a new plaza by Temperance Fountain, the use of the parking lot for temporary events like farmer's markets, the need for general streetscape improvements and the long term infill potential of the Putnam Hall site.



PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF MAIN AND MAIN STREET

THE ECONOMIC EQUATION

As previously noted, from an economic and financial standpoint, the current rent levels in Downtown Orange do not support nor justify the costs necessary to rehabilitate existing buildings or to build new construction. Utilizing a building within the Downtown Orange and current market data, a simple financial analysis is included in the Appendix that illustrates how the market conditions, as current, do not generate incomes sufficient to offset the costs needed to reposition key buildings. The economic equation, as illustrated in the Vicious Cycle, is iterative, self reinforcing, and continues to de-stabilize a neighborhood - until the pattern can be reversed. For Orange, and for many other communities, the economic equation and pattern proves difficult to overcome or change.

In general, there are three fundamental methods to address the economic equation with the goal of incenting private investment:

A. Additional Funding Sources

- A series of potential grants and low interest loan products that exist that can help to provide landlords or developers an alternative source of capital is included in the Appendix.
- The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program provides a tax credit for up to 20% of costs directly related to the rehabilitation of historic structures. The process is overseen by the National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Office. The design and construction must adhere to a set of standards to ensure that the work is completed with respect to the historic integrity of the buildings and grounds. However, this funding source is a significant part of addressing the economic equation and has been commonly used for decades. By following the set process and guidelines, a landlord or developer can generate tax credits that can be sold to a third party for cash equity to invest into the redevelopment project. Secondary markets are in place in Massachusetts, and elsewhere to sell such credits.
- In parallel, and in addition to, the Federal Historic Tax Credit process, the State of Massachusetts offers an additional historic tax credit program. State tax credits can be obtained for up to 20% of direct rehab costs. The popular state program will be in place through 2022. The state program is capped each year, so projects must compete for credits with other projects across the state. The federal program is not competitive at this time, so credits are available for those projects that follow the designated process.
- The impact of historic tax credits is illustrated on the sample redevelopment budget in the Appendix.
- In addition to historic tax credits, New Market Tax Credits (NMTC) are available in Downtown Orange. NMTC can be leveraged for commercial or mixed use developments (residential income must be 20% or less of total annual income). Like the historic tax credits, investment in a project or business can generate tax credits that can be used to generate funds to offset the disconnect between project costs and rents. NMTC can also be leveraged to offer low interest rate loans. Securing NMTC is a competitive process and can be complex, but the tax credits are a powerful tool that can be used to incent investment and development in Orange. All three of the above tax credits can be combined, with the potential to offset 30% or more of total costs for a development project.

B. Reduce Capital Costs for Landlords and Developers

- Public infrastructure investments (including utilities, sidewalk improvements, storm water management, street lighting, etc.) can ease the project/private cost burden to help impact the economic equation. In 2014, \$1 million dollars was sought for the district through the MassWorks Infrastructure Program. The intent of this program is as follows:

"The MassWorks Infrastructure Program provides a one-stop shop for municipalities and other eligible entities seeking public infrastructure funding to support economic development and job creation. The MassWorks Infrastructure Program provides infrastructure grants for work including, but not limited to,

sewers, utility extensions, streets, roads, curb-cuts, parking facilities, site preparation and improvements on publicly owned land, demolition, pedestrian walkways, and water treatment systems to support four project types:

- *Multi-family housing development at a density of at least 4 units to the acre (both market and affordable units)*
- *Economic development in weak or distressed areas*
- *Community revitalization to promote mixed-use development*
- *Transportation improvements to enhance safety in small, rural communities"*
- Such public funding sources can have a profound impact on the economics of a single project, or a series of development projects along a corridor. Given the intent and competitive nature of this program, and others, a clear potential development project greatly improves the potential for success. As an example, a recent MassWorks grant was awarded to the Town of Mashpee. The grant was made in concert with a proposed private, mixed-use and mixed-income development project. The public component provides the street, sidewalks and utility extensions/infrastructure. But for the MassWorks award, that project of roughly \$15 million in private funds was economically infeasible.
- Often the process to understand infrastructure costs can be intimidating and unclear to a landlord or developer. The full scope of improvements and related cost for sewer connection upgrades and/or electrical upgrades to modernize a building can take several months and significant private engineering costs. Any assistance, guidance or streamlining of this process can offer a clear advantage. The relative small scale of the target area in Downtown Orange can help if such information is gathered or assistance is provided in brokering discussions with utility providers and/or Public Works.
- Providing efficiencies in permitting and regulations can have a profound impact on the time, uncertainty and cost for developers and landlords.
- Providing shared parking solutions can allow for lower project cost, as well as the potential to maximize density and/or building area. Common, shared public parking and inviting, safe street parking can be a significant asset to incent a project.

C. Increase Annual Cash Flow for Developers/Investors

- Provide decreased and predictable real estate taxes. The State of Massachusetts defines and allows for a series of property tax-based incentive programs that could be leveraged in Orange to help incent investment and redevelopment. These solutions target the economic fundamentals by increasing the amount of annual income that a developer/landlord can realize. By decreasing the annual operating expenses to the landlord or developer, they see higher returns, and are in a more favorable position to borrow money from banks. In essence, the temporary reduction of property taxes increases the value of the redevelopment for a period of time - typically with very low taxes during construction, lease-up and through early years of building stabilization and operations.
- The Tax Increment Financing (TIF), District Increment Financing (DIF), and/or Special Tax Assessment (STA) programs should be further explored. One of the significant impacts of these programs is the ability for developers and landlords to see a predictable part of their own equation as they evaluate potential investments.
- As an illustration of decreased real estate property taxes, please see the sample redevelopment budget in the Appendix.
- One clear path to improving the economic equation is to engender increased rents via placemaking and increasing critical mass, desirability and foot traffic.

These general principals and strategies are all part of creating the proper ecosystem for investment by existing landlords and to incent others to locate and invest in Orange

TOP TEN (12) LIST

The following twelve items are areas that the project team has identified as having a high priority and which are relatively feasible in the short term to help jump start the revitalization of Downtown Orange:

- **CORE:** Focus Town Activities and Events in the Core Area to Support Local Economy/Businesses
- **BEAUTIFY:** Tactical Urbanism: Storefronts, Street Furniture, Planters, Parklets, Art...
- **ALIGN:** Align Priorities of Town Departments with Focus on Core Area
- **STREETS:** Tactical Urbanism: Paint Crosswalks, Bulb-Outs, Parking Lanes, Bike Lanes...
- **STABILIZE:** Consider Tax Credits and/or Tax Stabilization Programs for Priority Sites
- **ROADMAPS:** Create “Roadmaps” for Key Sites that Outline Steps and Streamline Process
- **UNDERSTAND:** Host In-Depth Meetings with Key Stakeholders to Understand Specific Impediments
- **WHITEBOX:** Work with Existing Owners to Create Code Compliant “Whitebox” Spaces Paired with Low-Rent, Short-Term, Revenue-Based Leases
- **FUNDING:** Create Database of Applicable Funding Sources with Previous Successes and Failures
- **VOLUNTEERS:** Identify Point of Contact for Ongoing Volunteer Efforts
- **VISION:** Emphasize the Vision and Ensure Existing Businesses/Residents Feel Confident in the Future
- **HUB:** Set Up Website as Hub for Events, Volunteer Efforts and Community Development Opportunities

For each item, a brief description is included that also lays out action items that should be considered. Also included are suggested funding sources although other sources may also be found.

CORE: Focus Town Activities and Events in the Core Area to Support the Local Economy and Existing Businesses

Action Items

Orange is already the site of a number of regularly recurring and seasonal events including a farmer's market, the River Rat Race, the Garlic and Arts Festival and several other shows and parades throughout the year. While some of these events already take place in the core area, in the short term emphasis should be placed on relocating as many of the other events as possible right at the heart of downtown. Potential locations include the parking lot at the corner of Main and Main, Memorial Park, temporary street closures or the use of empty parcels. After clarifying the logistics needed for use of these various locations, event organizers should be approached to discuss the potential for relocating upcoming events and to understand what potential hurdles would need to be cleared.



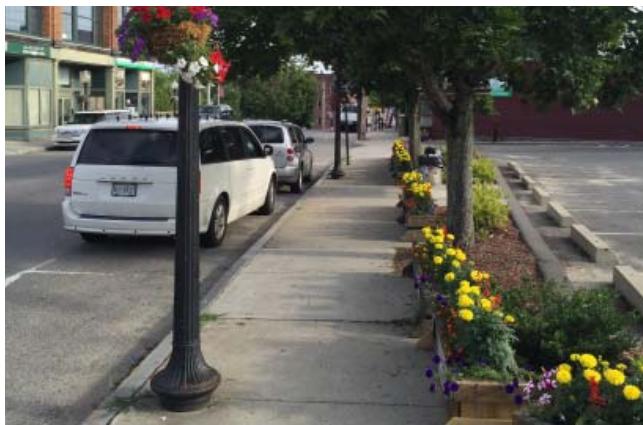
Funding Sources

The specific costs of hosting various events downtown will vary. If the incremental cost for any one event is more than the event itself can bear, consider finding additional sponsors (like local vendors whose business may benefit from increased exposure) or carrying a small budget in the town's yearly operating costs to help with the potential need for additional municipal personnel.

BEAUTIFY: Tactical Urbanism / Short-Term Improvements: Storefronts, Street Furniture, Planters, Parklets, Art...

Action Items

In the short term, while funds are being sought for more permanent streetscape improvements, a number of smaller, budget friendly interventions can be considered to help spruce up Downtown Orange. Empty storefronts can be filled with temporary installations like artwork from local students. Planters can be used to line empty lots or to help temporarily define underutilized areas for parklets or farmers markets. These “tactical” approaches can be done by anyone although initially the Office of Community Development should discuss such interventions with appropriate town officials. Once rough guidelines are determined, the Town should initiate a few samples to help get the word out.



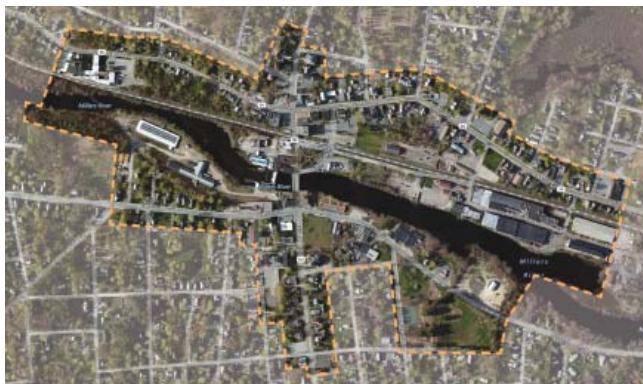
Funding Sources

Depending on the strategy considered, limited funds should be required assuming the efforts are largely done by volunteers. Local sponsors can be sought for material costs as was done for the planter boxes shown here already employed in Orange.

ALIGN: Align Priorities of Town Departments with Focus on Core Area

Action Items

In order to achieve the greatest impact, resources of various Town Departments should be pooled and efforts coordinated to the highest extent possible. For instance, streetscape improvements may only need be an incremental additional cost when added onto existing projects like utility repairs. In addition, when the location of planned improvements are flexible, priority should be given to those which are being considered within the core area. In order to facilitate future coordinated improvements, representatives from various Town Departments should meet to review upcoming projects and determine appropriate levels of collaboration and priority. A centralized form of tracking efforts between varying departments should also be created to help facilitate ongoing work together.



Funding Sources

Such coordination should not require additional funding if made part of the varying departments standard operating procedure. Sources of funds for the improvements themselves will vary, although coordinated efforts may unlock additional funds or grants that seek to help projects that are contributing to a larger set of goals.

TOP TEN (12) LIST

STREETS: Tactical Urbanism / Short-Term Street Improvements: Paint Crosswalks, Bulb-Outs, Parking Lanes, Bike Lanes, etc.

Action Items

The vision plan ultimately proposes narrowing streets where possible, particularly at intersections where the majority of pedestrian crossings will occur. In general, narrower streets reduce traffic speeds which in turn increases pedestrian safety. While funds for more extensive infrastructure improvements are sought, the Town should instead use paint to help differentiate pedestrian crossings (crosswalks and bulbouts), travel lanes, parking lanes and bike lanes. In addition to being cost effective, paint also allows for the testing of various scenarios in advance of the expense of new curbs or alternate pavings. Consideration can also be given to allowing residents to give such interventions a more artistic flare, especially for crosswalks.



Funding Sources

As an incremental approach, the painting of the varying zones can be done over time as funds allow. It may be that costs can be absorbed within existing Town budgets. Another option is to promote the donation of unused paint by residents or businesses or to find local vendors willing to donate a few cans. The painting itself can either be done by Town personnel or by volunteers overseen by them.

STABILIZE: Consider Tax Credits and/or Tax Stabilization Programs for Priority Sites to Help Close Economic Gaps

Action Items

In addition to Federal/State Historic Tax Credits and New Market Tax Credits, other local policies can be put in place to help close the economic gap currently in place in Orange. The State of Massachusetts defines and allows for a series of property tax-based incentive programs that could be leveraged in Orange to help incent investment and redevelopment. In essence, the temporary reduction of property taxes increases the value of the redevelopment for a period of time. In addition, Tax Increment Financing (TIF), District Increment Financing (DIF), and/or Special Tax Assessment (STA) programs should be further explored. It is recommended that the Town of Orange evaluate and adopt the appropriate real estate property tax based program, and then to clearly define and map the process to realize that benefit. Marketing this advantage, in a clear and transparent manner, will help to incentivize landlords to re-invest and help developers evaluate local opportunities.



Funding Sources

The Town may need to enlist the services of a market analyst to further investigate appropriate options and determine a plan of attack. Funding sources to help cover such services include.....

ROADMAPS: Create “Roadmaps” for Key Sites that Outline Steps and Streamline Process

Action Items

For key, targeted parcels as identified by the office of Community Development, “Roadmaps” can be created that outline the path to economic incentives, and simplify environmental, zoning, fire code and other complex areas. As an early step, simple economic models, as illustrated in the Appendix should be created to both understand the funding gap and then to illustrate potential solutions. Action items.....



Funding Sources

The Town may need to enlist the services of a market analyst to further investigate appropriate options and determine a plan of attack. Funding sources to help cover such services include.....

UNDERSTAND: Host In-Depth Meetings with Key Stakeholders to Understand Specific Impediments

Action Items

As a general recommendation, key landowners should be engaged in additional discussions to better understand current impediments to redevelopment. Once these impediments have been identified, the Town can review existing policies that have a detrimental effect and consider restructuring them where possible. In a similar light, understanding the actual impediments to redevelopment would be useful as it relates to efforts geared towards streamlining incentives and finding ways to close economic gaps. The Department of Community Development should identify the appropriate landowners and facilitate such discussions. Results can then be shared with the appropriate town officials and/or individuals undertaking related efforts.



Funding Sources

Limited, if any, funds should be required.

TOP TEN (12) LIST

WHITEBOX: Work with Existing Owners to Create Code Compliant “Whitebox” Spaces Paired with Low-Rent, Short-Term, Revenue-Based Leases

Action Items

Whiteboxes are generic retail spaces available for rent by a variety of end users. The Town should take steps to incentivize existing building owners to create such spaces in key locations in Downtown Orange to provide opportunities for new, local businesses. For both whitebox spaces and existing, vacant retail locations, “participating rent” structures should also be considered whereby a landlord/building owner’s lease is based upon a percentage of sales or revenues from a tenant. More information on whitebox retail and participating rent structures can be found in the Appendix. Action items include.....



Funding Sources

Funding sources include.....

FUNDING: Create Ongoing Database of Applicable Funding Sources That References Previous Successes and Failures

Action Items

In order to help with the acquisition of funds for improvements in Orange, a centralized database of applicable funding sources should be created. An initial list of applicable sources can be found in the Appendix. In addition to available funds, this database should also include a list of previous projects that have sought such funds and whether or not they were successful in obtaining them. Such a database can be a great resource for future projects and can help retain institutional knowledge of such efforts even with the possibility of changing personnel. An individual point of contact should be established to upkeep the list, but all applicable Town personnel should be made aware of it in order to benefit from it and contribute to it over time.



Funding Sources

Limited, if any, funds should be required.

VOLUNTEERS: Identify Point of Contact for Ongoing Volunteer Efforts

Action Items

Several of the suggested items on this list can be done by volunteers, helping to minimize cost while boosting local involvement and pride in Orange. The first step should be to identify a volunteer coordinator who can organize their efforts and recruit as needed. Such a resource can help track efforts done to date as well as their relative effectiveness. They can also help direct efforts towards areas of highest priority. Over time, the volunteer coordinator can build relationships with local organizations like churches and schools that may be the source of ongoing help, or with whom larger volunteer events can be coordinated.



Funding Sources

Initially, the volunteer coordinator will likely need to be a volunteer in their own right. Another alternative is to identify someone already working for the Town who can add this to their current responsibilities. In the long run, such an individual could serve within the Department of Community Development.

VISION: Emphasize the Vision and Ensure Existing Businesses and Residents Feel Confident in the Future

Action Items

The implementation of this vision plan will take the efforts of many people over an extended period of time. The benefit of having the vision is that it can serve as the guiding light for these various efforts. It is important that over time existing residents and businesses are reminded of the plan, and that new residents and businesses are made aware of it. Only by having everyone's cooperation will the vision be realized. In order to keep up momentum, regular town meetings should be held during which time interested folks can come to hear about the latest progress of the plan, discuss its effectiveness, propose alternatives as needed and find ways of helping out. Bringing everyone along will both help the plan come to fruition and keep the community optimistic of its future.



Funding Sources

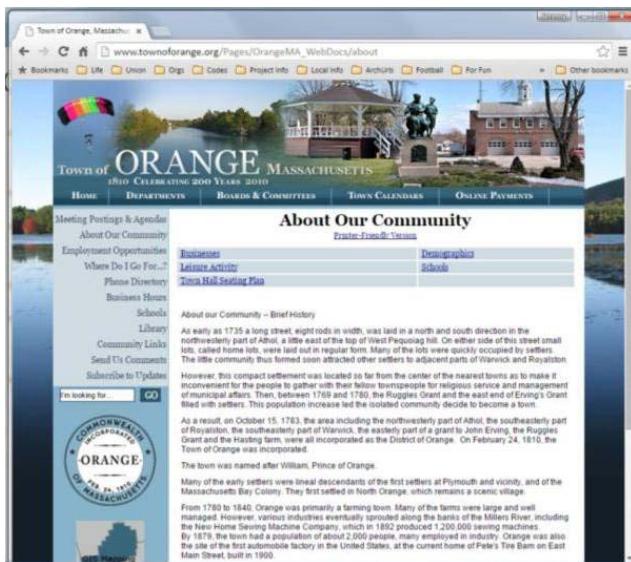
Limited, if any, funds should be required.

TOP TEN (12) LIST

HUB: Set Up Town Website as Hub for Events, Volunteer Efforts and Community Development Opportunities

Action Items

In addition to regular town meetings, the Town should also set up a website for the vision plan efforts that can serve as a centralized location for information. The website should include the vision plan itself, notifications of coming events, a summary of ongoing progress and appropriate folks to contact for more information or to get involved. This website can also serve to direct interested parties to development opportunities, with links to a number of the other efforts listed like funding sources, tax incentives and roadmaps for priority sites.



Funding Sources

The Town may need to enlist the services of a website designer to determine options for hosting such a website (for instance, whether it's a page on the Town's website or a stand alone site) and to ultimately implement and/or manage the site. Funding sources to help cover such services include.....

CONCLUSION / NEXT STEPS

The Town of Orange has been the subject of a number of previous studies over the last many years all of which have had the goal of improving the Town by taking advantage of its unique attributes and dedicated residents and officials. The challenge has been a lack of market conditions to encourage investment paired with a physical setting that is in need of improvement.

The good news is the town benefits from the presence of Miller's River as well as "good bones" in the form of the historic street and building fabric. These assets form the basis for the revitalization of the core area which will need to be formed around the following areas: sense of place, beautification, complete streets, revitalization/renovation, creating diversity, finding additional sources of funding/volunteers, community development and event planning/programming.

The proposed masterplan included in this report attempts to address all of these various areas in a cohesive vision that provides varying parties a shared focus, keeping everyone on track, spanning political cycles, serving as the basis for grants and ultimately creating a new market for growth. Efforts should be centered on the core as much as possible as a concentrated focus has the best chance of effecting noticeable change.

A series of twelve intial steps have been identified that the project team identified as having a high priority and which are relatively feasible in the short term to help jump start the revitalization of Downtown Orange. These initiatives run the gamet from physical improvements to financial policies/studies to increased marketing and outreach.

While the overall task at hand seems insurmountable, results can be achieved by chipping away at it one step at a time. The overall vision will ultimately rely on the involvement of the community as a whole, based around strong leadership and a continued dedication to the vision.

