

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

2.1 Location



Regional Map

Located in the south-central portion of the state, the City of Manchester is New Hampshire's largest city. Its central location allows convenient travel to and from many other regional destinations. Not only do Manchester's residents enjoy close proximity to other New England cities, they are also located in the midst of a wealth of natural resources, including the Merrimack River, which passes through the center of the city.

Destination	Driving Time	Destination	Driving Time
Boston, MA	1 hour	Portland, ME	2 hours
Concord, NH	30 minutes	Portsmouth, NH	1 hour
Hartford, CT	2 ½ hours	Providence, RI	2 hours
Nashua, NH	30 minutes	White Mountain Region	1 hour

2.2 Demographic Profile

InTown Manchester has recently published a study "Benchmarking Downtown Manchester's Economic Development" that characterizes residential, office, retail, visitor, and labor markets in downtown Manchester and compares Manchester to a number of its peer cities. This study documents downtown Manchester's strengths in the visitor market, its dense employment base, its low tax burden, and significant educational institutions. The report also notes the relatively modest number of people who live in downtown Manchester, as well as the fact that most residents of downtown Manchester have relatively modest incomes. The contextual analysis presented below seeks to complement rather than repeat the analysis provided by InTown Manchester.

2.2.1 Comparison Cities: 2000

- Manchester is the largest and densest of its nearby peer cities.
- Population growth in Manchester is nearly as strong as in Nashua and slightly slower than in Concord.
- Employment growth exceeds that of Nashua but lags behind stronger growth in Concord.
- Income has been strong in all peer cities except Portsmouth.
- The housing market has been weak for all cities in the 1990s.
- Positive amenities will lead to increased house values and rising local rents.
- As the city of Manchester grows in size, it is crucial to assess the characteristics of downtown, encouraging positive growth and challenging any downward trends.

Comparison Cities: 2000 (in 2004 dollars)				
	Manchester	Nashua	Concord	Portsmouth
Total Population	107,006	86,605	40,687	20,785
Population Density (per square mile)	3,243	2,812	633	1,324
Population Growth	8%	9%	13%	-20%
Total Employment	55,825	45,738	20,337	11,877
Employment Growth from 1990	8%	5%	14%	-4%
Median Household Income	\$44,420	\$56,617	\$46,243	\$49,237
Median Income Growth from 1990	-3%	-3%	-2%	12%
Median House Value	\$124,522	\$149,797	\$122,343	\$183,678
Median House Value Growth from 1990	-27%	-25%	-24%	-7%
Median Gross Rent	\$707	\$825	\$705	\$792

2.2.2 Population, Employment & Housing Trends: 1990-2000

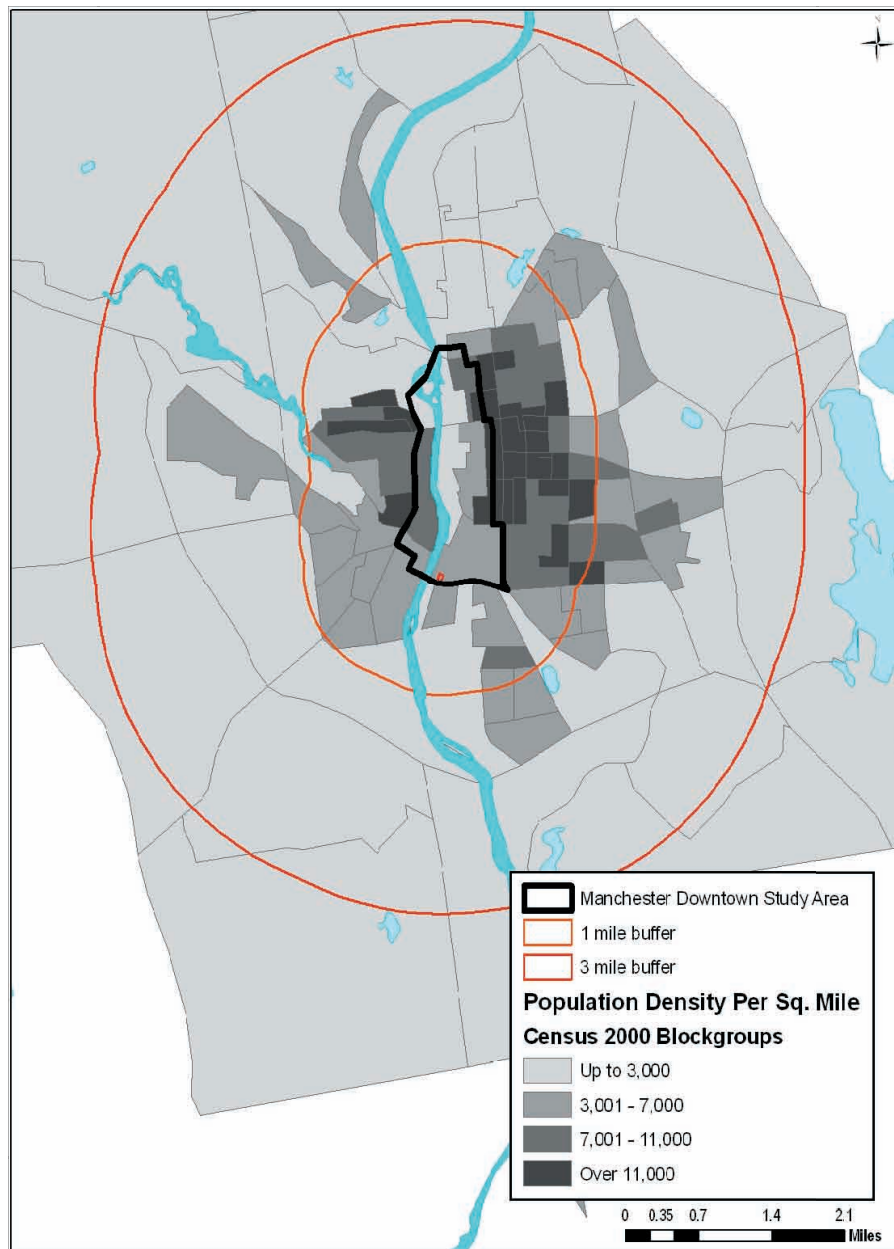
- The City of Manchester has experienced positive population growth from 1990-2000.
- Population, a characteristic that is essential for downtown revitalization, continues to rise into 2004.
- Total employment also shows increases in line with population growth.
- Real median household incomes have shown a slight decline, indicating that new residents may be of modest income levels.
- Real median house values and rents have shown a significant drop over the years.
- Manchester has a relatively low median house value at only \$124,522.
- As in most of the nation and the majority of cities, housing prices have strengthened in recent years.
- Recent housing sale prices in Manchester have shown significant growth (21%) over the last few years.

Population, Employment & Housing Trends: 1990-2000 (in 2004 dollars)				
Manchester City	1990	2000	Estimate	% Change
Total Population	99,567	107,006	109,310*	8 %
Employment	51,828	55,825	57,795**	8 %
Median Household Income	\$45,803	\$44,420		-3 %
Median House Value	\$170,089	\$124,522		-27 %
Median Gross Rent	\$771	\$707		-8 %

Source: US Census Bureau and Census County Business Patterns (2004). *2004 Estimate **2003 Estimate

Comparison Cities: Average Housing Sale Prices (in nominal dollars)				
	Manchester	Nashua	Concord	Portsmouth
2002 Average	\$177,194	\$204,042	\$180,447	\$256,874
2005 Average	\$214,345	\$255,405	\$444,017	\$330,148

Source: Northern New England Real Estate Network (2006). Note: 2005 average is based on the first two quarters of the year.



Population Density Map

2.2.3 Population Density

- The majority of people in and around downtown Manchester do not live in the core of the City.
- Population density increases as we move further from the downtown core, remaining within a 1 mile radius.
- Significant increases in population density occur east of downtown Manchester.
- Population density decreases as one moves out within a 3 mile radius of the downtown core creating a doughnut effect of people per square mile.
- Low population density in the downtown core reduces the ability to sustain a vibrant atmosphere downtown outside of normal business hours.

2.2.4 Population Diversity

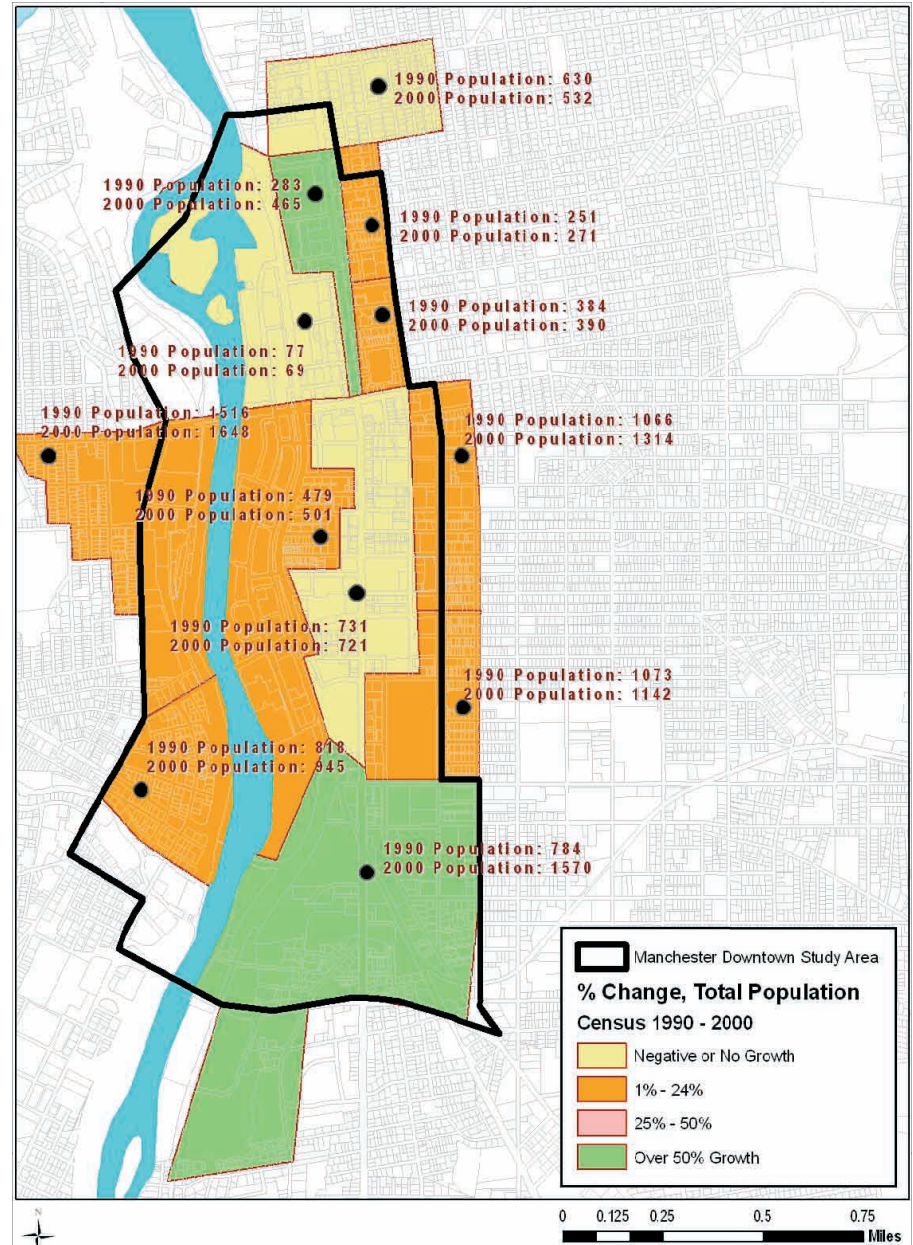
- The vibrancy of the downtown core is enhanced by the density and diversity of the local community.
- Manchester is an immigration center, which is increasing the ethnic and racial composition. This creates an opportunity for developing and promoting downtown Manchester as a modern, diverse place to live and visit.
- However, as density and diversity rise, it is important that the downtown offers the right mix of amenities to attract higher-income households that are necessary for sustaining a more vibrant downtown.
- Diversity has increased over the years; however, opportunities exist for a thriving cultural community.
- With increases in the density and diversity of downtown areas, many urban communities have been able to prosper from significant economic growth and enhanced potential for its continued long-term success.

2.2.5 Population Change

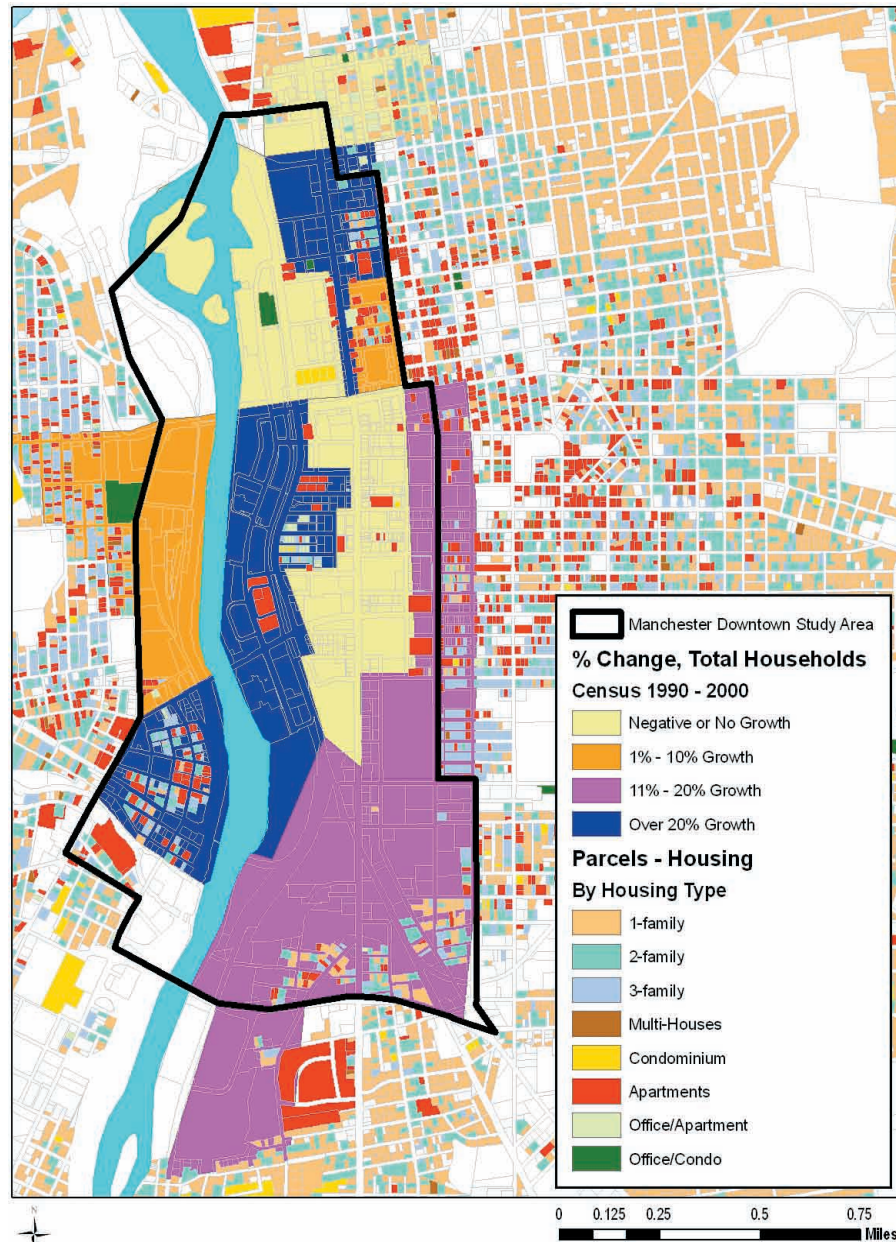
- Downtown Manchester has experienced limited population growth between 1990 and 2000.
- The downtown core shows negative or no growth between 1990 and 2000.
- Neighborhoods on the edges of downtown experienced much higher levels of growth, indicating that the attraction of Manchester rests outside of the study area.
- The area traditionally seen as the downtown core is just beginning to be seen as a potentially attractive residential area.
- The strategy outlined for increasing the density and diversity of the residential population targets young professionals, students, immigrants, and people ages 50 and older.

2.2.6 Households

- Manchester's downtown core has shown modest growth in the total number of housing units.
- Apartments are the primary parcels available for downtown living.
- Family homes exist outside the boundaries of downtown.
- Average household earnings, although modest, can support much higher house values than the median value of \$124,522.
- With annual incomes of \$44,420, an average household could support a house valued at approximately \$185,083.



Population Change Map



Household Map

2.2.7 Household Income

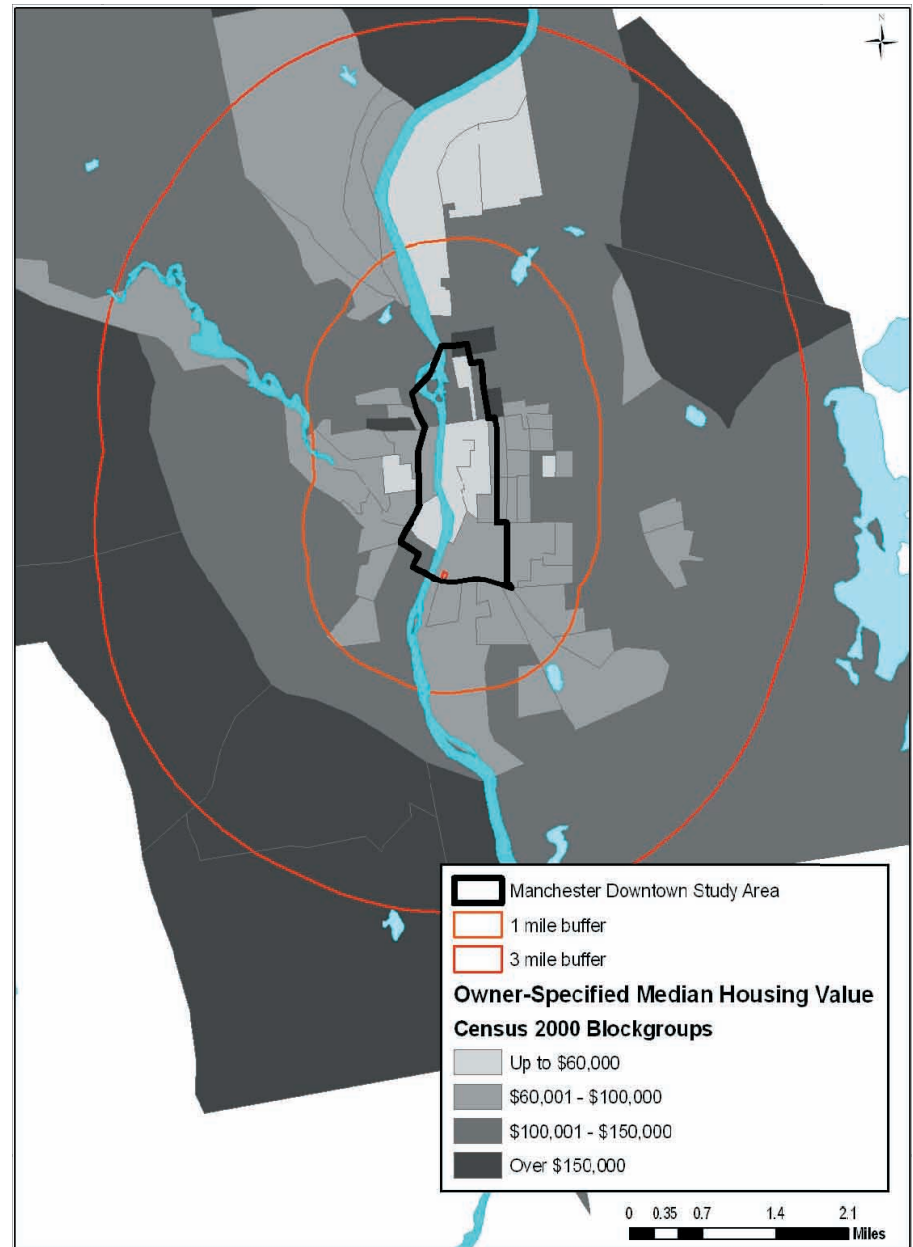
- Currently, downtown Manchester suffers from relatively low median income levels.
- Median income increases moving away from the study area.
- Much of the study area has median income density levels well below the levels surrounding the core. (Median income density is found by taking the median household income in an area, multiplying it by the number of households in that area, and then dividing by the area of the whole neighborhood.)
- Attracting new residents to the area will require an increase in total housing units, particularly of higher-valued properties.
- Attracting higher-income residents is a crucial component of the downtown revitalization.
- In all directions but east, incomes increase toward the edges of the study area.
- Modest aggregate income levels (total income in the area) will also make it difficult to sustain the retail growth that will follow the residential growth.
- Many cities have been successful in attracting high-income residents to their downtown. Manchester may be at a turning point with respect to attracting higher income residents to the downtown.
- Increasingly, younger professionals and empty nest baby boomers have shown a proclivity to live in urban areas offering quality amenities (transit, open space, shopping, dining, etc.).

2.2.8 Housing Density

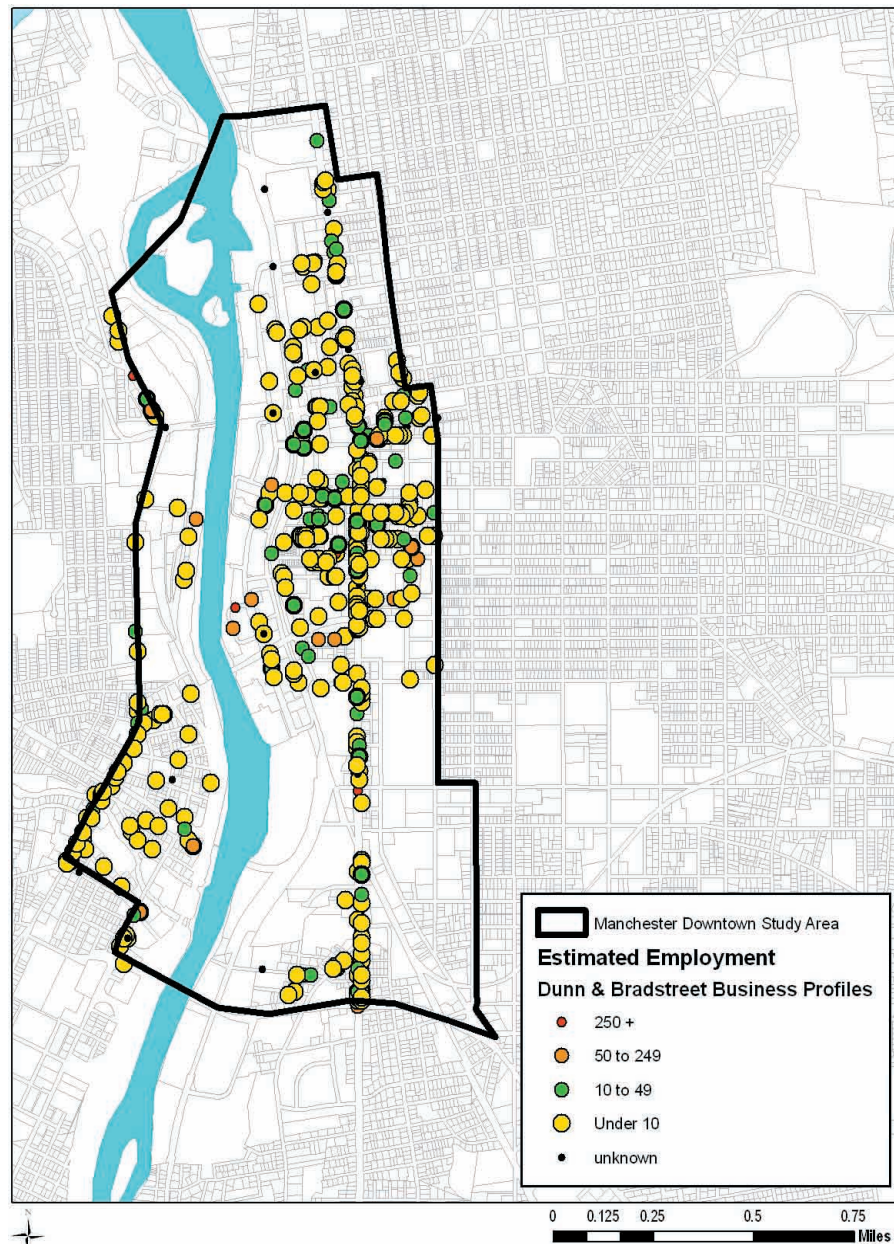
- Similar to population density, housing density is low in most of the study area.
- Housing unit density levels increase as one moves away from the study area, up to a 1 mile radius.
- The higher levels of housing density are found east of the study area, creating a large residential community just outside of the downtown.
- The low housing density within downtown Manchester presents an opportunity to create a new, expanded downtown residential community.

2.2.9 Housing Values

- Similar to rent paid, owner-specified housing values tend to increase as one moves further away from the study area.
- Housing values remain at lower levels within a 1-mile radius of the downtown and increase as one moves further away within a 3-mile radius.
- Increased positive amenities often lead to increased property values, creating an opportunity for enhanced downtown activities and experiences coupled with positive economic growth.
- The opportunities that exist for downtown Manchester suggest a further analysis into the demographics and positive assets of the existing community.



Median Housing Value Map



Employment Map

2.2.10 Rental Values

- Median rents remain relatively low east of the downtown core, but increase as one moves further away from the study area within the 1- and 3- mile radius.
- Housing rents tend to rise as distance from the study area increases.
- Higher-value residential development in the downtown core has not yet been established.

2.2.11 Employment

- Currently, most of the businesses located in the study area have fewer than 10 employees.
- With the exception of a few businesses with sales over \$25 million, most businesses in the study area have annual sales below \$1 million.

2.2.12 Educational Attainment

- A large portion of downtown Manchester has shown strong improvements in educational attainment.
- This increased education level can promote regional growth and provides an enhanced local workforce.

2.3 Zoning

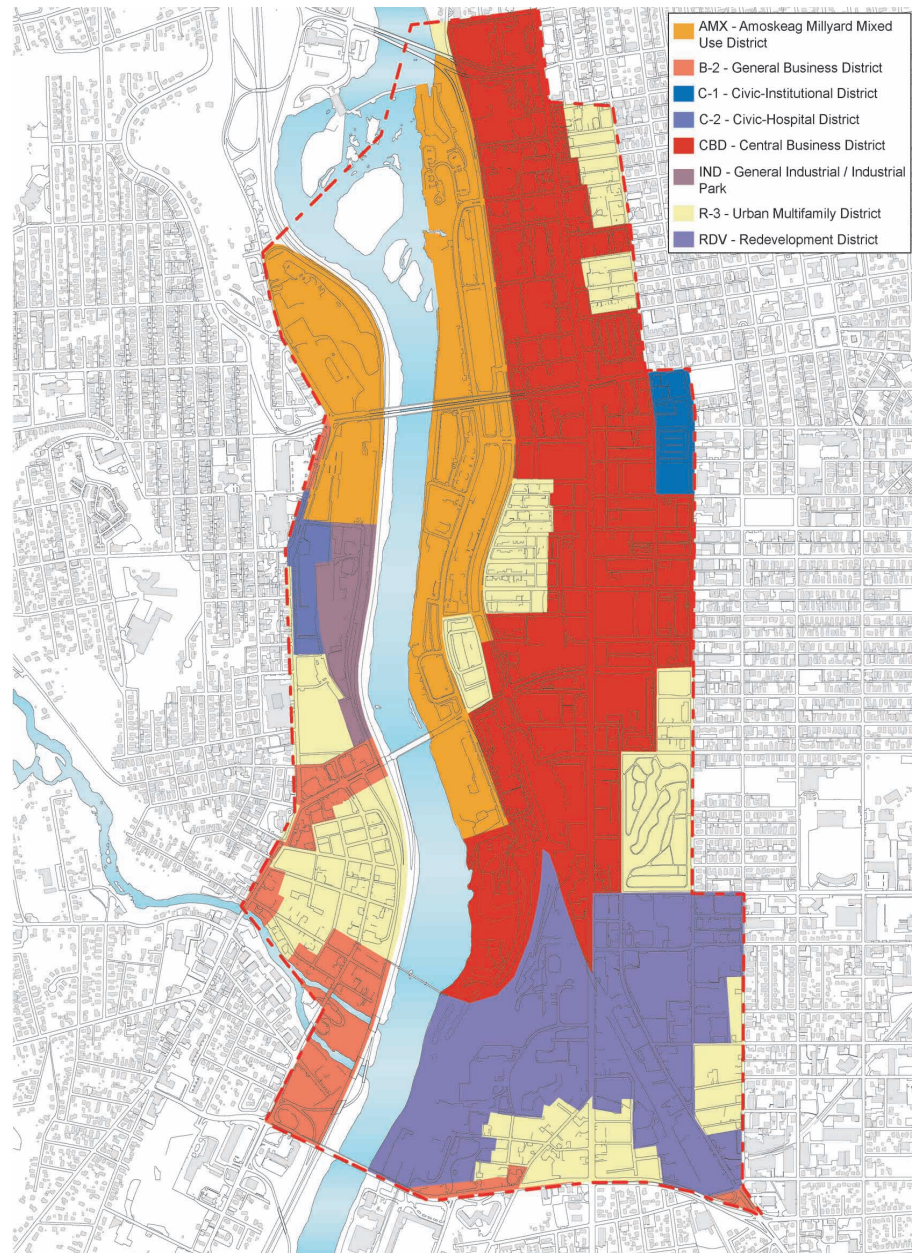
Manchester's current zoning ordinance was adopted in 2001 to facilitate development visualized in the Master Plan while promoting the general public welfare and preserving the area's natural resources. Eight zoning districts are represented in the Study Area: the Amoskeag Millyard Mixed Use District (AMX), the General Business District (B-2), the Civic-Institutional District (C-1), the Civic-Hospital District (C-2), the Central Business District (CBD), the General Industrial / Industrial Park (IND), the Urban Multifamily District (R-3), and the Redevelopment District (RDV).

The Amoskeag Millyard Mixed Use District (AMX) applies to areas on both sides of the Merrimack River that contain historic mill buildings. The purpose of this district is to preserve the uniqueness of the mill buildings and their history while allowing a profitable mix of modern uses. To further promote these goals, two historic district overlays, the Amoskeag Millyard Historic District Overlay and the Amoskeag Corporation Housing Historic District Overlay, have been adopted by the ordinance.

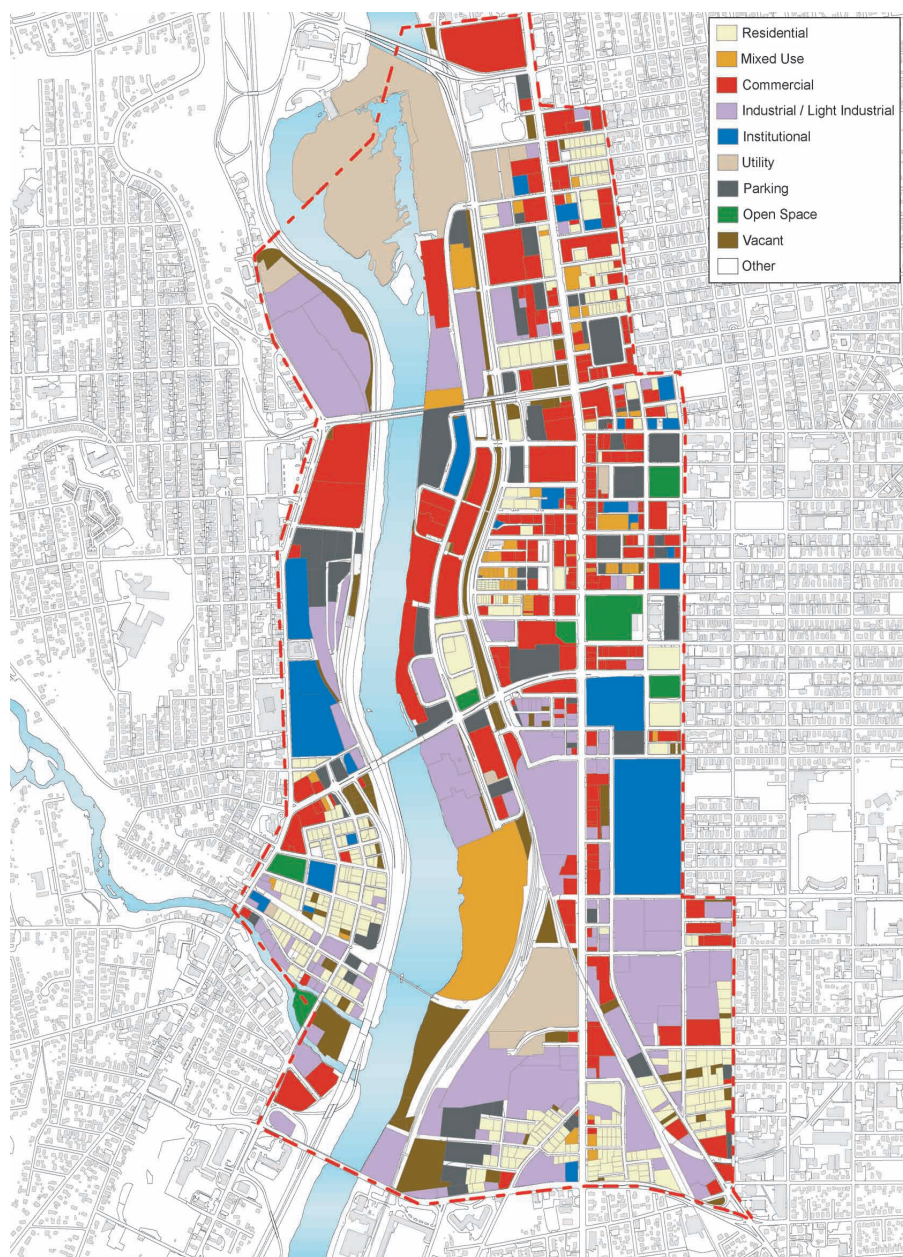
The General Business District (B-2) applies to several areas along the south and west of the study area. Permitted uses in this district include a mix of commercial and business services, including large scale retail and automobile-oriented uses.

The Civic-Institutional District (C-1) contains four blocks (bounded by Chestnut, Pine, Amherst, and Bridge Streets) within the Study Area. This district is intended to cluster similar institutional uses (educational, cultural, religious, etc.) and those that complement them, thereby improving the public's access to civic resources. Two of the four blocks in this district are undeveloped; one is home to Victory Park across from the public library, the other a surface parking lot. There is also a Civic Center Arena Overlay District.

The Civic-Hospital District (C-2) is located on the western edge of the study area along Main Street. The Catholic Medical Center, a full-service health care facility, and its related services are contained within this district. This district recognizes the need for hospitals to maintain and promote the public health.



Zoning Map



Land Use Category Map

The Central Business District (CBD) applies to most of the land along Elm Street and adjacent areas. The purpose of this district is to sustain the urban activity center of Manchester. To do so, the district permits a wide variety of uses and encourages design to be sensitive to pedestrian needs and supportive of the transit environment. The CBD is the largest zoning district represented in the Study Area.

The General Industrial / Industrial Park (IND) applies to a small portion of the Study Area adjacent to I-293. Recognizing that production is important to the overall health of its economy, the City has designated certain areas appropriate for industrial uses.

The Urban Multifamily District (R-3) applies to several areas within the Study Area. The designation seeks to encourage residential and mixed-use neighborhood development at appropriate urban densities and locations.

The Redevelopment District (RDV) applies to the southeastern portion of the Study Area. This area contains an abandoned rail line and properties formerly used for industrial purposes that the City would like to see developed as a mixed-use district buffering the Central Business District from the surrounding residential districts.

2.4 Land Use

There are a wide variety of land uses found within the Study Area, ranging from downtown office towers to educational campuses to industrial uses. In the core area, between Bridge and Granite Streets, there are primarily commercial uses along Elm Street, the major street in downtown Manchester. Development density is at its highest in this area. Development between Elm Street and the Merrimack River is primarily mixed use and higher density while east of Elm Street development density decreases sharply due to the primarily residential nature of that area. The northern portion of Elm Street is also primarily residential, but there, like in the area east of Elm Street, are scattered small professional offices.

The character of Elm Street is much different south of the core area. Along Elm Street, the land uses are mainly commercial and industrial. Auto intensive uses are located here and many of the commercial parcels have surface parking lots fronting on Elm Street. Higher density housing is located west of Elm Street near Queen City Avenue and lower density housing and more industrial land uses located east of Elm Street near the River. There are numerous underutilized or vacant parcels in this area.

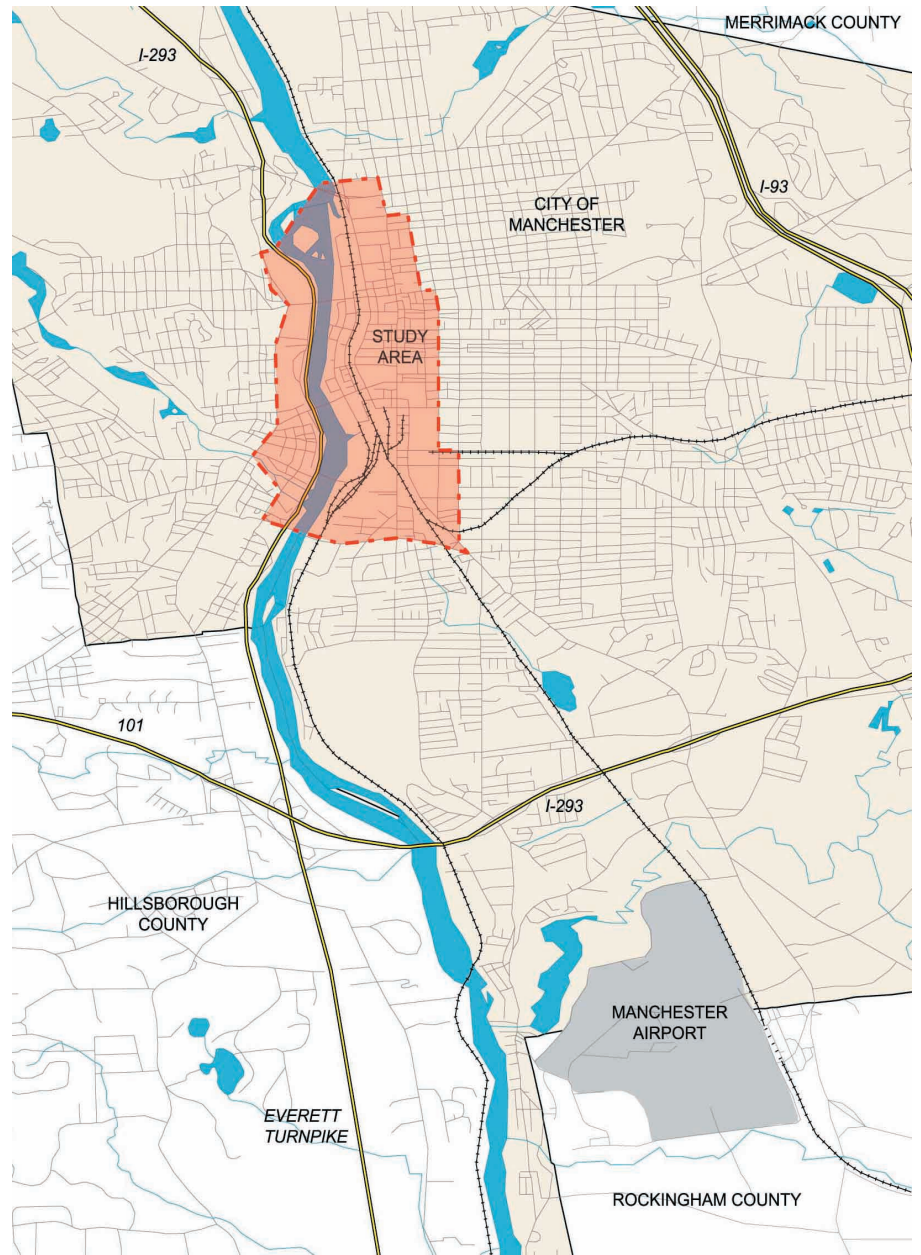
The portion of the Study Area located west of the Merrimack River is also home to a wide variety of land uses. Along Main Street, land uses are primarily commercial, office, and industrial and include both a hospital and a school. Industrial uses predominate north of Granite Street while housing is located south of Granite Street to Queen City Avenue.

2.5 Transportation Infrastructure

Manchester is well served by major roadways; I-293, I-93, the F. E. Everett Turnpike, and New Hampshire State Routes 101, 3 and 3A are all nearby. Several rail lines, part of the Boston and Maine Railroad, also pass through Manchester.

The Manchester Airport, located in the south end of the City, is served by nine airlines and provides non-stop service to and from 19 different United States cities. Total traffic at the airport showed significant increases over the last ten years, reaching a high of over four million passengers in 2004. With increased tourism and airport traffic on the rise, Manchester needs to boost its public transportation market, specifically addressing commuters with easily accessible and convenient airport connections.

The Manchester Transit Authority operates a bus system with 14 routes, although it does not provide Sunday service, and Manchester has shown significant growth in the percentage of the total population who use public transportation. As the downtown experiences revitalization, Manchester will need to offer transit service that is convenient to both residents and visitors.



Transportation Map



Encompassing Manchester's downtown core, the existing road network is well-established. Elm Street is approximately 70 feet wide and allows for two-way traffic flow, with one lane in each direction and parking on both sides of the street. The adjacent side streets are primarily one-way and typically run in pairs, each street having two travel lanes and one parking lane, although street width can vary here from about 30 feet to 50 feet.

To the west of the Merrimack River, the streets are primarily two-way. Main Street ranges from 40 to 50 feet wide and accommodates between two and four travel lanes, while the side streets are about 30 feet wide and provide two travel lanes and a parallel parking lane.

2.6 Amenities

Institutes of higher learning, arts and culture venues, historic monuments, sports teams, and parks are among the many assets enjoyed by Manchester's residents and visitors. The most unique aspect of the city is its mill district, which stretches along the Merrimack River for over a mile. Adaptively re-used, the mill buildings house the University of New Hampshire's Manchester campus, the SEE Science Center, and numerous commercial businesses. Visitors can learn about the history of the mills at the Manchester Historic Association's Millyard Museum.

The following schools also have campuses in Manchester:

- Southern New Hampshire University
- New Hampshire Community Technical College
- Hesser College
- Saint Anselm College
- Springfield College School of Human Services
- Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Services
- New Hampshire Institute of Art
- Franklin Pierce College

In addition to its rich history, Manchester boasts arts and culture venues – the new Verizon Wireless Arena, the Palace Theater, home to the New Hampshire Symphony and the Opera League of New Hampshire, and the Currier Museum of Art – and an arts educational establishment, the New Hampshire Institute of Art. The City also hosts several professional sports teams - Manchester Wolves (arena football), New Hampshire Fisher Cats – (minor league baseball), Manchester Monarchs (ice hockey).

Nature lovers enjoy the Merrimack River and Amoskeag Falls and the Amoskeag Fishways Learning and Visitors Center. Trails abound – the Heritage Trail System and the Piscataquog Trailway pass through downtown Manchester in addition to the Amoskeag Heritage Walk and Riverwalk.



Riverwalk along the Merrimack River



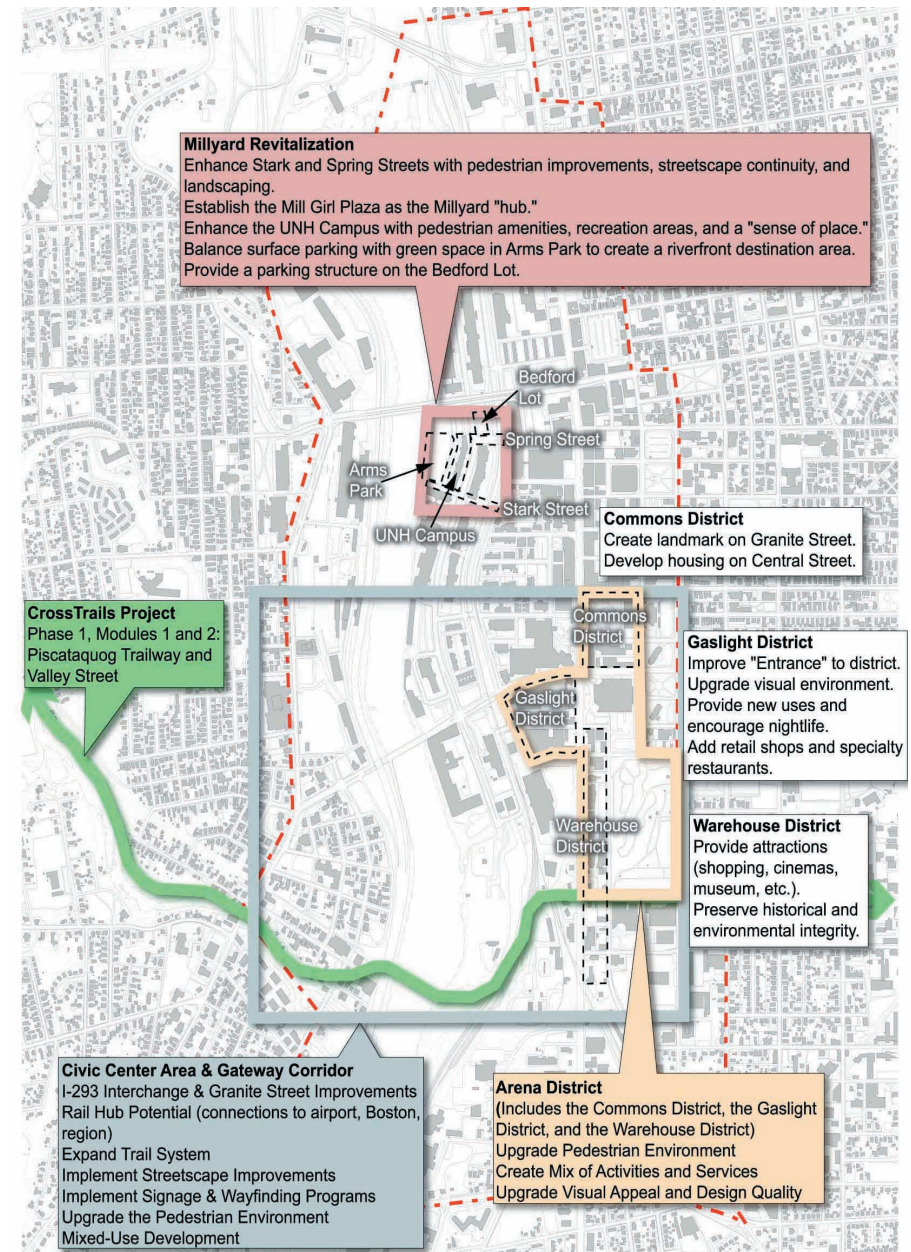
Riverfront Stadium, home to the NH Fisher Cats

2.7 Current/Ongoing Development Activities

Several large public improvement projects resulting from prior planning efforts are underway including the Granite Street Widening Project, which will improve traffic flow through the downtown, and the I-293 Highway Expansion Project. The Manchester Airport Access Road will provide direct access to the airport from the F.E. Everett Turnpike and the Manchester Place Apartments will provide high-end housing downtown. The McQuade's Building, located downtown on Elm Street, has been renovated and now houses several businesses as well as the offices of the Manchester Wolves arena football team. A major new construction project, the Riverfront Stadium, was recently finished providing the New Hampshire Fisher Cats baseball team with a 7,500 seat state-of-the-art stadium facility.

Manchester has engaged in numerous planning and development efforts in addition to this current Downtown Strategic Development Plan. Many of these plans have resulted in current or ongoing development projects in the Study Area. Hillier reviewed the following plans and reports to coordinate this current study with planning efforts already in place:

- Intown Manchester Development Plan, LDR International and Hunter Interests, October 1993
- Master Plan for the City of Manchester New Hampshire, Manchester City Planning Board, November 1993
- Cross Trails (TE Enhancement Program Application), Department of Planning & Community Development, October 1995
- Riverfront Development Plan: Manchester New Hampshire, CLD Consulting Engineers, LDR International, Basile Baumann Prost & Associates, Berard Martel Architecture, August 1999
- New Hampshire State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, NH Dept. of Transportation and Bureau of Transportation Planning, May 2000
- City of Manchester Zoning Ordinance, City of Manchester, February 2001
- Cultural Plan for Manchester, New Hampshire: Weaving the Cultural Fabric of our Future, Art Builds Community, April 2001.
- I-93 Salem to Concord Bikeway Feasibility Study: Corridor Towns, NH Dept. of Transportation, 2002



Downtown Area Plan Recommendations Map

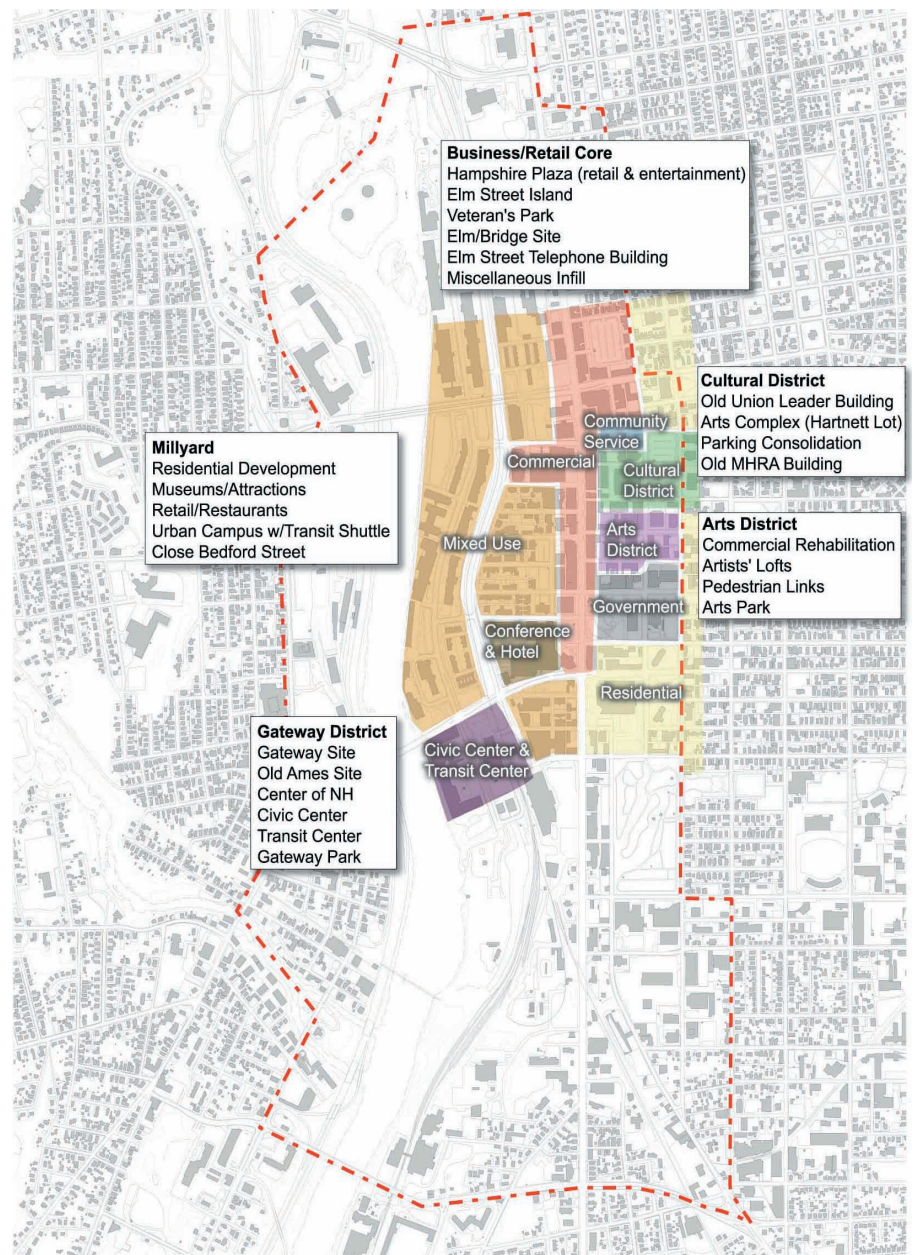
- Action Strategy for Housing, Manchester Task Force on Housing, 2002
- Civic Center Area & Gateway Corridor: Opportunities & Strategies, Department of Planning & Community Development, September 2002
- Manchester Millyard Landscape Revitalization: Conceptual Master Plan, Manchester Millyard Revitalization Committee and CLD Consulting Engineers, December 2002
- Arena District Urban Design Guidelines, Department of Planning & Community Development, May 2004

Summaries of the above plans are located in Appendix B as a reference guide to previous material.

Manchester's downtown core (between Bridge and Granite Streets) has been well served by numerous plans and investments over the past ten years. Perhaps one of the most important contributors has been its Business Improvement District. Intown Manchester runs the programs vital to the health of the central core and has established committees of existing tenants to help guide future downtown programming and to identify unmet needs. They have encouraged a healthy mix of businesses, streetscape beautification, and events programming, all of which contribute greatly to the attractiveness of Manchester as one of the nation's most livable cities. However, momentum must be maintained behind unfinished projects (such as the Riverwalk) and development activities recommended in different plans integrated into a strategic implementation plan that will build upon the City's successes.

2.8 Economic Conditions

Since its initial success as a manufacturing center, Manchester has been forced to adapt to the dramatic forces that have affected most American cities in the last 80 years—rapid changes in the role of manufacturing, growth in the service sector, the increasing importance of knowledge-based industries, and the suburbanization of population. These national trends posed serious challenges to cities like Manchester.



Intown Manchester Development Plan Recommendations Map

The downtown core in Manchester began its rebirth approximately 15 years ago, with the growth of high tech industries in the revitalized Mill District, an increased student base, and a coordinated effort to make Manchester an important visitor and business center. This transition was achieved through public planning, improvements in infrastructure, and most importantly, a positive business climate that encouraged private investors to reinvest in the older mill properties. This commercial growth has been augmented by significant growth in visitors—spurred by a greatly improved airport, the new arena, and a healthy conference facility. However, the current tourism based approach to revitalization needs to be augmented with a strategy designed to attract not only visitors and temporary residents, but to retain permanent residents essential to the success of downtown Manchester.

Residential growth in downtown Manchester is just beginning to show signs of improvement. Currently, the majority of people in downtown Manchester do not live in the core of the city, and the downtown also suffers from relatively low median income levels. Creating an expanded, denser, higher income residential community downtown is the next required step to continue Manchester's renaissance. A vital, livable downtown community will enable the city to support the types of retail and entertainment activities that will further enhance Manchester's position as a regional destination for businesses and visitors.

Current economic conditions present a great opportunity for a larger, denser residential community. Demographic trends, including increases in the number of people who are likely to choose downtown residences, such as aging baby boomers and people in their twenties, have enabled many cities to transform their downtowns into highly desirable residential locations. To attract new residents to downtown, it is very important to create a regulatory environment that encourages residential development, provide public amenities that are valued by residents, and expand the geographic area available for residential development.

In ten years, with the integration of new transportation links to other major Northeast cities, including Boston, a downtown link to the airport and a dense, lively downtown supporting the residential and business sectors, Manchester is positioning itself to be the gateway to the North.

2.9 Market Analysis

Manchester's downtown is a prime area for expansion and revitalization led by an enhanced housing market and is continuing its role as both a regional business center and a destination for Manchester residents and visitors from outside the City. Improvements in the retail sector will follow increases in local disposable income associated with higher-income households located downtown and the continued growth in business and visitor activity. The strategies outlined for Manchester's downtown growth enhance the existing positive economic conditions and build upon the efforts that began with the prior ten-year plan. It is important to note that in recent years, market conditions for urban residential development have been more favorable than for commercial development. It is expected that these market conditions favoring residential development will continue for the medium term. Recent increases in gasoline prices should provide further impetus for downtown living.

Increasing the number of people living downtown, both by expanding the boundaries of the downtown community and by increasing its overall density, has been the foundation of improving the vitality of downtowns in recent years. Target groups for this residential strategy include the aging population of baby-boomers, young professionals in their 20s and 30s, students, and recent immigrants. These population groups have increasingly chosen to live in urban areas that provide the types of amenities that downtown Manchester is capable of providing. This Plan proposes that the City continue to create the basic infrastructure needed to increase the attractiveness of the downtown such as the Riverfront Park District, revitalization and expansion of the Gaslight District, and the creation of significant residential redevelopment areas in the South End and the West Side. Given the City's predisposition to avoid tax-related incentives for economic development, the City needs to aggressively provide the public infrastructure and amenities that will sufficiently enhance the value of downtown living and make the development of residential properties profitable for the private sector. In addition to providing infrastructure and amenities, the City could also spur development through assistance in land acquisition and a streamlined regulatory process.



Renovated upper story housing on Hanover Street



Existing residential development on the West Side



Verizon Wireless Arena, located on Elm Street



Elm Street south of the Verizon Wireless Arena

The increased focus on the downtown residential environment is very compatible with the previous ten-year plan that focused on downtown renewal using a tourism-based approach to attract outside visitors to the area. Many of the amenities that are valued by visitors are valued by residents as well. Given the success of the Verizon Wireless Arena and the Radisson Conference center, alternative projects to continue to enhance downtown Manchester as a regional center have been examined. Additional visitor-oriented development examined in this Plan includes an expansion of the current conference center and the creation of a performing arts center. These projects will not only serve the needs of visitors, but also help to support the amenities—such as restaurants and shops—that will not only increase visitors to downtown but also increase its attraction for potential residents. While this Plan does not suggest that the City embark on either project (expanded conference center or performing arts center) without further analysis, these projects and visitor-oriented strategies are entirely consistent with the residential growth strategy and are mutually reinforcing elements in the overall goal of revitalizing downtown. Great places to live are great places to visit and work as well.

While the proposed economic revitalization strategy does not focus directly on increasing employment downtown, we anticipate that enhancing the overall attractiveness of downtown will spur additional office, service, and knowledge-based employment. The Plan identifies sites to accommodate additional downtown employment growth. In addition, increasing the residential density will, over time, increase the viability of the neighborhood and visitor-oriented downtown retail businesses. In the retail sector, it is strongly recommended that the City seek an urban-oriented supermarket located downtown to improve its overall attractiveness as a residential location.

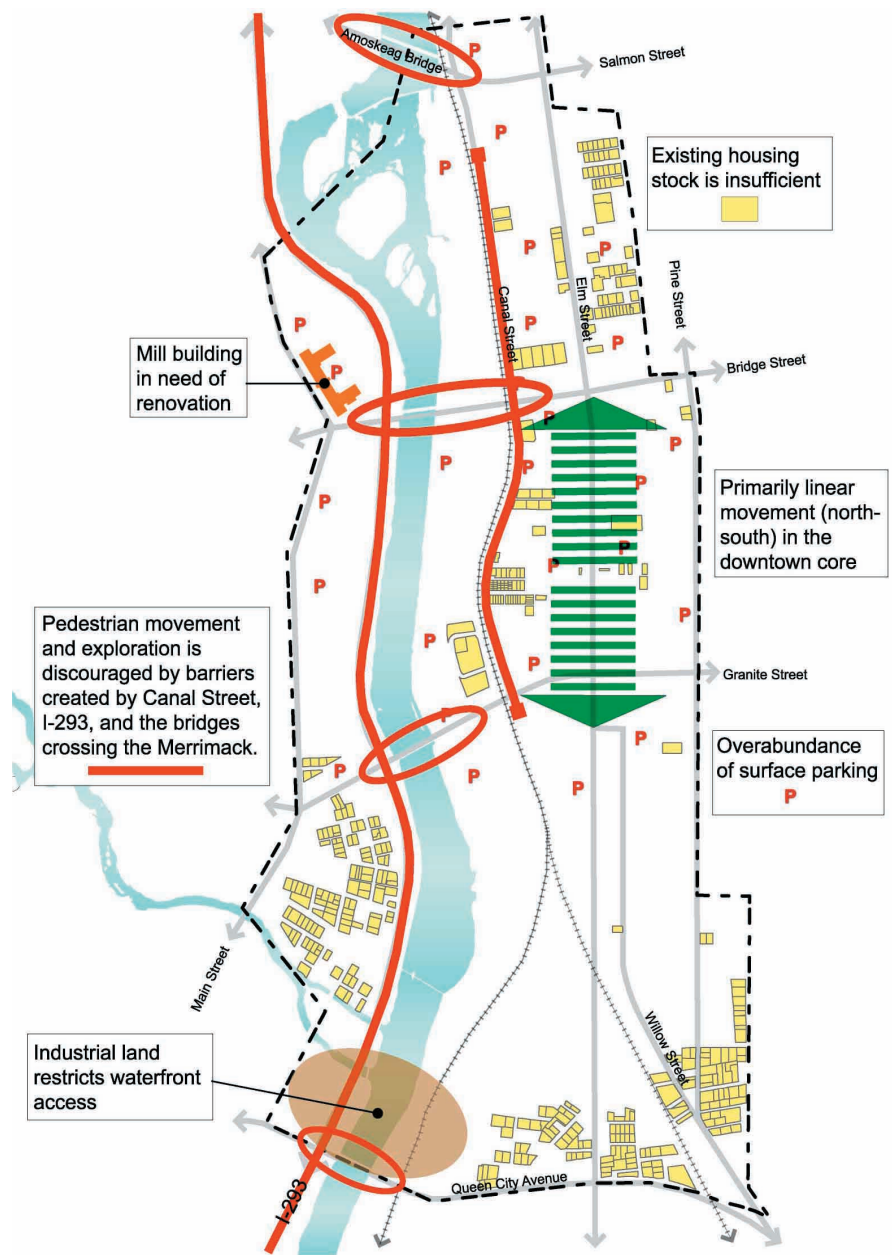
2.10 Issues & Constraints

Manchester's central core has seen much growth and development in recent years. As a result, there is a need to provide a cohesive plan for future development that takes full advantage of Manchester's assets within the constraints of the existing development framework.

Activity in downtown Manchester is clustered in primarily two places: along Elm Street and in the Mill District. However, movement throughout the area is linear, from north to south, leaving the side streets with untapped potential. While there is pedestrian traffic both in the downtown core and in the Mill District, there is little incentive for pedestrians to travel between the two areas on the side streets. Furthermore, Canal Street (running north-south) is a barrier between the growing downtown core along Elm Street and the activity nodes in the Mill District. Improving connectivity between these two areas is essential.

While Manchester residents have a variety of housing options ranging from apartments above storefronts to former mill workers' housing to detached single-family homes, there are not enough housing units to support substantial growth downtown (although there is room for some housing renovation among the existing housing stock, particularly along the northern part of Elm Street). In addition, existing zoning does not encourage housing infill development in the Central Business District since only two types of housing are permitted by right in the area. Increasing the housing stock downtown is critical.

As identified previously, Manchester has numerous amenities for both residents and visitors to enjoy. While activity has increased in recent years, the downtown is not densely populated and lacks certain amenities needed to support a larger downtown population. Until now, Manchester has employed a visitor-oriented strategy to spur economic development in its downtown. Now, the City is poised to begin adding amenities geared towards its residents. There is no regional transit system and therefore, no transit center downtown to provide quick and easy access to the center of the City. There is no supermarket downtown, so residents must either walk or drive across the Merrimack River to buy groceries, yet the bridges crossing the River are heavily traveled by vehicles and are not pedestrian friendly. An increase in public amenities will encourage more people to live downtown, increasing support for continued economic growth.



Issues Map



Underutilized land in the downtown core



Elm Street north of Queen City Avenue

The pedestrian environment throughout the area is inconsistent. Some parts of the City have well-maintained sidewalks and curbs with decorative light fixtures and street trees while other parts have so many curb cuts that the sidewalks are non-existent. The abundance of large surface parking lots creates gaps in the visual streetscape. This discourages residents and visitors alike from exploring the City.

The pedestrian environment in the Mill District is also undesirable. Parking dominates the landscape, surrounding the historic buildings and limiting pedestrian access to the waterfront. This is especially problematic because the Mill District serves as Manchester's downtown gateway to the Merrimack River. While parking certainly needs to be accommodated, it is important that it not take priority over the River as a public resource.

Waterfront access is also restricted south of Granite Street. Here, the primarily industrial nature of the land directly adjacent to the River, including the JAC PAC site, effectively prevents public access and enjoyment.

On the west side of the Merrimack River, one of the historic mill buildings remains unimproved. It provides employment (albeit low-wage), but is an eyesore at the intersection of Main and Bridge Streets, an intersection that has the potential to serve as a City gateway.

Another issue on the west side of the River is I-293, which is scheduled to be expanded. It runs along the Merrimack River, creating a physical barrier at the River's edge. The expansion provides an opportunity to reconnect the neighborhoods west of the River back to the waterfront because pedestrian access can be planned for and possibly even paid for through highway funding.

Despite the current challenges facing downtown Manchester, the City's regional composition and demographic profile point to significant opportunities for growth.

