

## **NEXT STEPS**

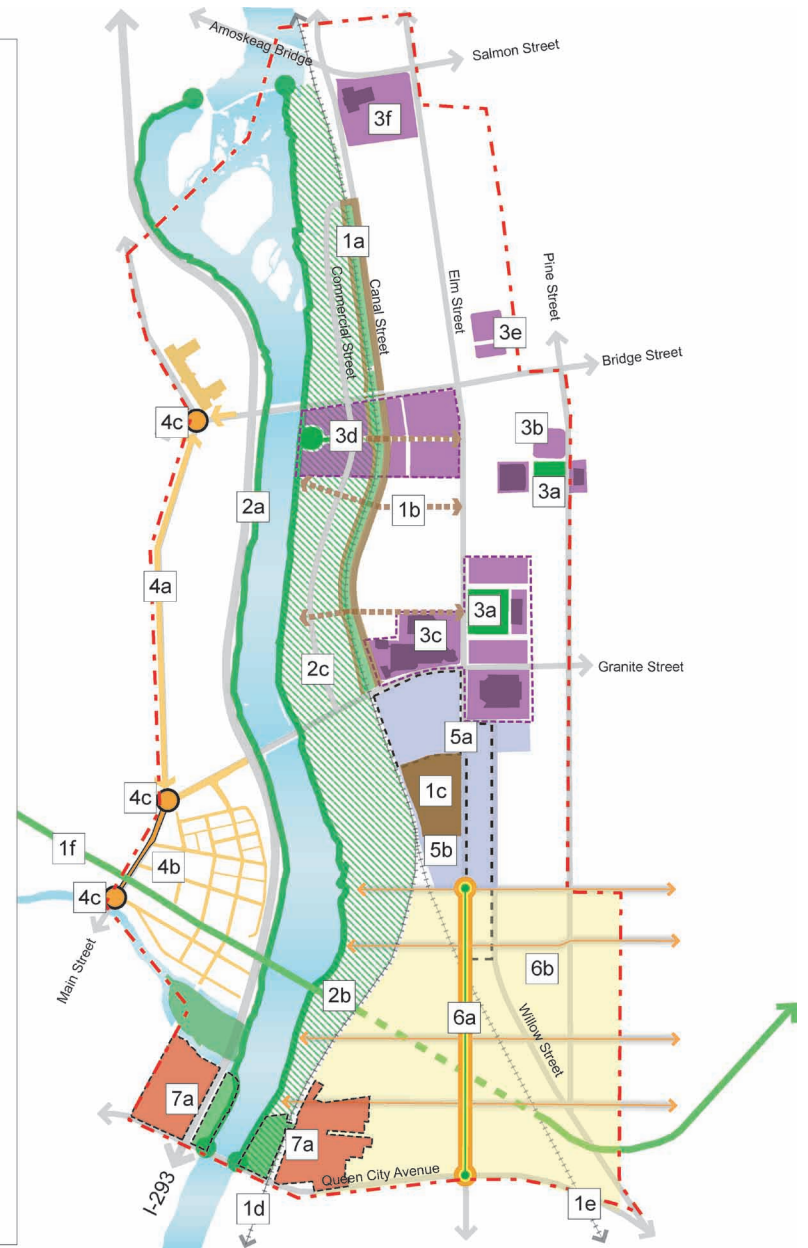
The goal of the projects and initiatives recommended in this plan is to make downtown Manchester a vibrant destination for the citizens of the city and the region beyond. To accomplish this goal, this plan recommends increasing the density and scale of downtown Manchester. Because of favorable demographics, which include large numbers of empty-nest baby boomers and singles in their twenties that have increasingly delayed marriage and family formation, downtowns have been enjoying a significant rebirth. Based on these current market and demographic realities, the plan seeks to significantly increase the downtown residential population and attract residents that have significantly higher incomes than do current downtown residents. To accomplish this goal, actions are suggested that: improve access to the downtown while enhancing its pedestrian friendly atmosphere; improve downtown amenities and attractions; and create entirely new downtown residential areas.

Although the plan has a significant residential focus, it also clearly builds on earlier strategies aimed at increasing the number of visitors and employment in the downtown. The continued effort to solidify downtown Manchester's position as a regional destination is evident in the proposed conference center expansion and the proposed performing arts center. The plan also creates a new commercial center that takes advantage of highway accessibility and seeks to improve the attractiveness of the west side as an employment location. Finally, as the scale, residential density, and average income of Manchester's downtown improves, and as the visitor strategy continues to succeed, improvement in Manchester's downtown retail and restaurant environment will follow.

The projects and initiatives that have been recommended in this Downtown Strategic Plan will require further study and design, identification of funding sources, and a schedule for public capital improvement projects to be completed over an extended period of time. The recommendations are intended to help identify key public realm projects that will interact comprehensively to change the quality of life and aesthetic character of Manchester. Such improvements through investments from the public sector will invite complimentary private investment by developers, residents, manufacturing, retail, institutions, corporations and other businesses. Investing in the public realm environment is investing in the future of downtown Manchester.

**Development Projects Key Map**

- 1. Core Transportation Project**
  - 1a. Reconfigure Canal Street.
  - 1b. Streetscape enhancements along Stark, Spring, Pleasant, and Commercial Streets.
  - 1c. Construct a multi-modal, mixed-use transit center.
  - 1d. Explore implementing commuter service.
  - 1e. Establish a direct airport link to downtown.
  - 1f. Create a bike trail system.
- 2. Merrimack River Park System Project**
  - 2a. Create a riverfront walkway along I-293.
  - 2b. Create a riverfront park in the South End.
  - 2c. Incorporate river-oriented signage, programming, and landscaping of the area between Canal Street and the Merrimack River.
- 3. Arts / Culture / Education Project**
  - 3a. Upgrade critical parks and squares.
  - 3b. Create a performing arts center.
  - 3c. Create an expanded conference / meeting facility.
  - 3d. Expand the UNH campus and connect it with the downtown core.
  - 3e. Develop the Pearl Street lot.
  - 3f. Encourage adaptive reuse of the Armory building.
- 4. West Side Project**
  - 4a. Develop the Main Street Corridor into a high-quality employment center.
  - 4b. Create a new downtown residential neighborhood.
  - 4c. Create gateways at major nodes along Main Street to highlight entrances and transition points.
- 5. Gaslight / Warehouse District Project**
  - 5a. Expand the Gaslight District boundary.
  - 5b. Locate an urban grocery store in this District, preferably within the mixed-use transit center.
- 6. South End Project**
  - 6a. Transform South Elm Street into an urban residential boulevard with open space gateways.
  - 6b. Re-knit the neighborhood fabric and increase residential density.
- 7. Queen City Commercial Center Project**
  - 7a. Create employment centers on both sides of the Merrimack River including the JAC PAC site.



*Development Projects Key Map*

## 6.1 Implementation Recommendations

### Core Transportation Project

#### Summary of Recommendations:

- Reconfigure Canal Street to create an urban boulevard with signalized pedestrian crossings.
- Implement streetscape enhancements along Stark, Spring, Pleasant, and Commercial Streets.
- Construct a multi-modal, mixed-use transit center and encourage nearby transit-oriented development.
- Explore the possibility of implementing commuter service to regional destinations.
- Establish a direct airport link to downtown, either by bus or light rail.
- Create a bike trail system.

#### Implementation Actions:

- 1) Commission a traffic study to initiate design of the road and pedestrian components of the Core Transportation Project.
- 2) Undertake a market analysis for the airport.
  - a) Determine the extent of travel from downtown to the airport and intermediate destinations.
  - b) Determine potential market shares of bus and light rail modes.
  - c) Develop pro forma construction and operating budgets.
- 3) Undertake a market analysis for the commuter rail.
  - a) Determine commuter rail demand, both into and out of Manchester.
  - b) Develop pro forma construction and operating budgets.
- 4) Identify potential funding sources
  - a) Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts (both elements)
  - b) Potential state and local funding sources
- 5) Evaluate transit-oriented development potential and its impacts on use of the service.
  - a) Increase residential and commercial density at transit nodes.
  - b) Integrate highway and transit components into the Manchester Transportation Improvement Plan.
- 6) Initiate discussions with:
  - a) Funding agencies
  - b) Railroad owners
  - c) Airport
  - d) State Department of Transportation
- 7) Apply to the FTA for a major investment study of the transit components.

## **Merrimack River Park System Project**

### Summary of Recommendations:

- Create a riverfront walkway along I-293.
- Create a riverfront park in the South End.
- Incorporate river-oriented signage, programming, and landscaping of the area between Canal Street and the Merrimack River.

### Implementation Actions:

- 1) Create entity to manage Riverfront Park and Walkway.
- 2) Identify dedicated funding sources for park facilities and maintenance.
  - a) Property tax surcharge on properties within park area
  - b) Privately supported "Friends of Riverfront Park"
  - c) Leasing of publicly owned facilities?
- 3) Evaluate the potential to increase green space through new structured parking facilities. (This should be coordinated with the Core Transportation Project above).

## **Arts / Culture / Education Project**

### Summary of Recommendations:

- Upgrade critical parks and squares.
- Create a new mid-size public-private performing arts center adjacent to Victory Park.
- Create an expanded conference / meeting facility and target parcels surrounding Veterans Park for a more intensive mix of uses.
- Expand the UNH campus and connect it with the downtown core.
- Develop the Pearl Street lot.
- Encourage adaptive reuse of the Armory building.

### Implementation Actions:

- 1) Conference Center
  - a) Undertake a detailed market study and business plan for an expanded center.
  - b) Create a public-private partnership to enable expansion of the current conference facility.
  - c) Convey currently owned city land into the partnership in exchange for the following:
    - i) Private investment in new construction
    - ii) Share of revenues used to promote conference business, including improved amenities in the vicinity of the center

- 2) Identify the potential need for additional public investment that might be required to leverage private investment of the center.
- 3) Performing Arts Center
  - a) Undertake a detailed market study and business plan for the proposed performing arts center. (Study should include potential patronage, types of acts, and impacts on existing venues.)
  - b) If warranted, develop estimates for construction of the facility, as well as a pro forma for operating revenues and costs.
  - c) Create an independent, non-profit entity dedicated to the construction and operation of the performing arts facility. (Entity should be regional in nature, including participants from outside of the City of Manchester.)
  - d) Since it is unlikely that the facility will generate revenues sufficient to cover the cost of construction, alternative funding sources must be identified.
    - i) City contributions, including land
    - ii) Potential philanthropic contributions, including those that might support users such as the orchestra.
  - e) Identify potential linkages with local schools/universities and cultural/arts organizations.
- 4) Initiate talks with the University of New Hampshire about expanding their Manchester campus.
- 5) Solicit proposals for the Pearl Street lot from developers.

### **West Side Project**

#### Summary of Recommendations:

- Develop the Main Street Corridor into a high-quality employment center.
  - Renovate the unimproved mill building just north of Bridge Street.
  - Upgrade the streetscape to create a corporate and institutional avenue.
- Re-create Main Street south of Granite Street as a neighborhood-oriented commercial “place.”
  - Upgrade the streetscape on residential streets.
  - Create a neighborhood commercial center with gateways near the intersection of Main and Granite Streets.
  - Screen the residential neighborhood from I-293.
- Create gateways at major nodes along Main Street to highlight entrances and transition points
  - Create a gateway at the intersection of McGregor and West Bridge Streets.
  - Create gateways at either end of the neighborhood-oriented commercial portion of Main Street to bookend retail corridor activity.

#### Implementation Actions:

- 1) Develop streetscape and land use plans consistent with creating an office employment center.
- 2) Create an integrated marketing plan for the area. The City might consider whether consolidating ownership of the property should be a preliminary goal.
- 3) Identify state and local funding sources to implement the streetscape plan for the envisioned office-oriented employment area.

### **Gaslight / Warehouse District Project**

#### Summary of Recommendations:

- Expand the Gaslight District boundary.
- Locate an urban grocery store in this District, preferably within the mixed-use transit center.

#### Implementation Actions:

- 1) Identify current ownership and status of all buildings in the area.
- 2) Undertake a feasibility assessment that examines potential returns to private investment in mixed-use development in the Gaslight District.
- 3) Use city resources to improve the infrastructure and amenities in the area to increase the likelihood of private investment.
- 4) Seek to attract an urban-oriented, full-service grocery store to the area.
- 5) Develop zoning and use codes consistent with higher density, mixed-use, transit-oriented development.
- 6) Create a streamlined regulatory process that lowers the regulatory cost of development within the designated area if the proposed developments are consistent with specified goals for the area.

### **South End Project**

#### Summary of Recommendations:

- Transform South Elm Street into an urban residential boulevard with open space gateways.
- Re-knit the neighborhood fabric and increase residential density.

#### Implementation Actions:

- 1) Create a funding source (such as a general obligation bond or a TIF) to fund the redesign and reconstruction of the pedestrian and street infrastructure in the South End.
- 2) Identify all publicly and privately owned parcels in the area.
- 3) Similar to the Gaslight District, develop planning pro formas to identify the likely level and type of public investment that will be required to attract significant private investment.
- 4) Create a “South End” development authority whose mission is to facilitate new residential and mixed-use development that is consistent with South End plans.

- 5) An asset of the development authority might have control over currently owned public lands or newly acquired public land that could be conveyed to developers.

### **Queen City Commercial Center Project**

#### Summary of Recommendations:

- Create employment centers on both sides of the Merrimack River, including the JAC PAC site.

#### Implementation Actions:

- 1) Assemble land to be used for new industrial and office development.
- 2) Improve highway access to the commercial center.
- 3) Provide public transit access to the commercial center.
- 4) Create a competitive process to identify a developer to develop and market the property (unless there is a pre-determined candidate that is well-suited to the entire site).

## **6.2 Conclusion**

The projects outlined above will facilitate a bold and exciting transformation of Downtown Manchester by dramatically increasing the size and vibrancy of downtown while maintaining its current human scale. They are designed to be consistent with current market realities. However, as is evident in the implementation discussion for each project, successful implementation of the plan will depend, in part, on the public sector creating the proper environment for significant private investment. Moreover, successfully implementing the plan will require significant public investments to improve the downtown's attractiveness for private investment. To this end, the City of Manchester should begin taking the necessary steps to seek funds from the federal and state governments, as well as plan for capital investments to be funded locally. As part of this effort, the city should closely evaluate the long-term fiscal return of elements of the proposed plan, and develop the ability to undertake local public investments in initiatives that have a positive, long-term fiscal pay off.

Downtown Manchester has made great strides over the last 15 years, successfully implementing an array of public projects and facilitating private investment. This plan builds on that success, creating a strategy for downtown Manchester to compete with other downtowns as well as with suburban locations over the next 15 years. Downtown Manchester is currently a very attractive center with great potential. Its continued success depends on continued pursuit of excellence. Manchester's competition will also continue to improve so that for Manchester to maintain its preeminent position, downtown Manchester must evolve as well.

