

Hampden Town Center Plan

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Recommendations.....	1
Town Funding.....	1
Outside Funding	2
Short Term (1-2 Year) Recommendations	3
Long Term (3+ Year) Recommendations.....	5
Key Concepts.....	6
Activity Center Hierarchy.....	6
Maine Downtown Center’s 4-Point Approach.....	9
A Plan for Hampden’s Town Center	10
Purpose.....	10
Study Area.....	11
Vision for the Town Center	12
Planning Process and Public Outreach	12
Existing Conditions.....	13
Land Use	13
Land Use Character Areas.....	15
Zoning.....	18
Transportation.....	21
Street Network	21
Accidents.....	22
Pedestrian Network	23
Recommendations	25
Town Government’s Leadership Role in Town Center Improvements.....	25

Intersections as Anchors for Place	26
Land Use	27
Expand the boundaries of the two Town Center Zoning Districts.....	27
Change Town Center Zoning Standards	28
Transportation.....	33
Main Road North and Western – Priority Improvement Area.....	33
Install Sidewalk on both sides of Main Road and Western Avenue & Improve Crosswalks.....	34
Limit New Curb Cuts and Narrow Existing Entrances.....	35
Study alternative lane arrangements for Main Road and Western Avenue.....	36
Trails - Cottage Street to Summer Street and Reeds Brook Trail network	37
Plan for a new local street network within and through the 4-Mile Square.....	38
Placemaking.....	39
Town Center Signage and Branding.....	39
Streetscape improvements.....	41
Community Gathering Place	41
Community Connections.....	42
Relationship with the School District.....	42
Relationship with Old Hampden Academy	43
Encourage and support Town Center volunteers and advocates.....	44
Appendix	45
Public Meeting Summaries.....	45

Executive Summary

The Town Center Plan establishes a Vision for the Town Center based on its historic and unique role within the community, the concept of Neighborhood Activity Center and the social and placemaking elements of successful downtowns.

In addition to the Town's very important role as a builder of public improvements within this area, the Town should work to build connections among other important stakeholders like RSU 22 and Old Hampden Academy and encourage the development of additional capacity within the community to support the Town Center.

Recommendations

The tables on pages 3 - 5 organize recommendations for municipal action by for short term (1-2 years) and long term (3+ years) activities. Recommendations include the category for the type of recommendation and the party responsible for implementation.

The overall list of recommendations is based both on the impact of the work and community values and preferences. The community's long term vision should always be in the back of one's mind while thinking about the Town Center, while active work is focused on the short term work that will set the stage for future municipal budgeting cycles.

Once Hampden decides *what* the ultimate mix of improvements will be, the next questions for policy makers is *how* those improvements get carried out. Funding options should include consideration of the following opportunities.

Town Funding

-) Creation of a new TIF District for Town Center Improvements
 - o Tax Increment Funding (TIF) is allowed by state statute for funding economic development work and improvements. It works by capturing and setting aside revenue based on increases in value based on development. This increase is the "increment" in TIF. Those set aside funds are then channeled back into work that benefits the development of the area (district) from which the value was captured. This is a very effective way to make public improvements in areas that have seen or will see new development occur. Hampden has experience working with TIF districts and TIF revenues.
 - o TIF strategies can focus on broad districts for ease of administration, or on smaller areas to target specific properties or developments. Because a TIF district expires after 30 years, a couple small TIF districts tailored to target new development as it occurs can maximize TIF revenues, as opposed to including a property which might not be developed for several years.

- J Prioritization of Town Center investments in the capital planning process
 - o Hampden plans for and executes capital projects on a regular basis. Funding for such projects is not unlimited and strategic borrowing is often required. Prioritizing improvements within the Town Center that set the stage for future economic development, property value growth and high impact quality of place improvements may have bigger returns than projects in other parts of the community.

Outside Funding

- J Project funds at MaineDOT, grants through Project Canopy, others
 - o Most of the recommendations in this plan that cost money involve sidewalks, streetlights and street trees. There are funds set aside at MaineDOT in programs like Safe Routes to School dedicated for pedestrian and trail improvements. These programs should be tapped for eligible projects in Hampden.
 - o Grant funding is also available for quality of place work. For example, the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry runs Project Canopy which awards grants to plant street trees.
- J Developer contributions
 - o Some improvements can be completed through developer contributions as part of site plan or subdivision review process.
- J Fund raising and sponsorships
 - o An active Town Center stakeholder group could take on local fundraising work for specific improvements. Examples include programs like “buy a bench,” “buy a tree,” or “buy a flag” where local businesses and families contribute funds to specific improvements and receive public acknowledgement.
 - o Another successful program is Adopt a Space, modeled after the Adopt a Highway program. Local groups pay for the maintenance of greenspace and landscaped areas through contribution of funds, rather than actual maintenance work.
- J Coordinating projects with other agency projects for cost savings
 - o Though not a new funding source, cost savings can be realized through good planning and communication to combine work that the Town wants done with work that others are already planning to do. For example, Hampden can leverage upcoming MaineDOT repaving, road reconstruction, or intersection projects to make local contributions for sidewalks, new light poles, or other amenities not included in a basic MaineDOT project.

Short Term (1-2 Year) Recommendations

Category	Type	Recommendation	Responsible Party
Community Connections	Coordination	Encourage and support the creation of a volunteer group of local stakeholders focused on the improvement and maintenance of the Town Center	Town
Community Connections	Coordination	Initiate meetings with the RSU at elected leader and senior staff levels to set the stage for future cooperation, understanding areas of mutual interest, concern and focus and share plans for facilities, budgeting needs	Town
Community Connections	Coordination	Initiate meetings with the owner of Old Hampden Academy to set the stage for future cooperation, understand areas of mutual interest, concern and focus, share plans for future development goals and infrastructure needs	Town
Transportation/ Placemaking	Policy	Investigate the establishment a new Town Center TIF District to fund infrastructure improvements within the Town Center area.	Town
Land Use	Ordinance Change	Expand the boundaries of the Town Center Zoning District	Town
Land Use	Ordinance Change	Change Town Center Zoning Standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow more people/density • Allow smaller lots • Change dimensional requirements so parking is not between buildings and the street • Raise the bar on design requirements for new construction • Raise the bar on design requirements for new construction 	Town
Transportation	Public Works	Improve crosswalks across Main Road at Old Hampden Academy	Town

Category	Type	Recommendation	Responsible Party
Transportation	Public Works	Develop a standard detail for new sidewalk construction that includes concrete curbing, accessibility details	Town
Land Use/Transportation	Ordinance Change	Limit number of curb cuts for new development to 1 entrance on public streets	Town
Land Use/Transportation	Ordinance Change	Enforce existing limit on new curb cuts to maximum width of 24-feet	Town
Transportation	Coordination	Further develop the existing public trail system at Reeds Brook Trails	Town, RSU, Volunteer Group
Transportation	Public Works	Incorporate street trees, pedestrian lighting, sidewalks & crosswalks at all legs of a redesigned Main Road North/Western Avenue intersection project	Town
Placemaking	Public Works	Install district signage at the four locations noted in Figure 15.	Town, Volunteer Group
Placemaking	Coordination	Plan for the design and appropriate number of of coordinating wayfinding and point of interest signs to coordinate with district signage	Volunteer Group
Placemaking	Coordination	Locate, improve and program a community gathering place within the Town Center	Town, RSU, Old Hampden Academy, Volunteer Group
Transportation/Placemaking	Public Works/Planning	Survey the ROW within the Town Center and draft preliminary plans for pedestrian scale lighting, street trees, street furniture and landscaped areas for cost estimating and phasing considerations	Town

Long Term (3+ Year) Recommendations

Category	Type	Recommendation	Responsible Party
Transportation	Public Works	Install sidewalks, lighting and street furniture on both sides of Main Road and Western Avenue in Town Center Area	Town
Transportation	Coordination	Assess feasibility for a trail between the Cottage Street and Summer Street neighborhoods between Old Hampden Academy and the Penobscot River	Town, Old Hampden Academy, Volunteer Group
Transportation	Public Works	Work with private property owners to narrow existing entrances to a maximum of 24-feet in conjunction with sidewalk projects or other work within the right-of-way	Town
Transportation	Public Works/Planning	Study alternative lane arrangements for Main Road and Western Avenue to meet goals for slower traffic and greater pedestrian comfort	Town, Volunteer Group
Transportation	Public Works/Planning	Plan for a new local street network within the 4-Mile Square	Town, RSU
Placemaking	Public Works	Install wayfinding and point of interest signage that coordinates with district signage	Town, Volunteer Group
Placemaking	Coordination	Explore joining the Maine Downtown Center program through the Maine Development Foundation.	Volunteer Group

Key Concepts

Activity Center Hierarchy

As part of the work involved with the Sustain Southern Maine project coordinated by the Greater Portland Council of Government, a group of planners coordinated by the area's regional planning entity, created a set of typologies for commercial activity areas. This work essentially laid out a hierarchy of so-called Activity Centers, ranging from the rural cross-roads convenience store and gas station all the way to the large commercial areas that rely on a regional market area like the Maine Mall area in South Portland and Scarborough or the Bangor Mall area. Altogether, they identified seven types of Activity Centers, defined by the geographic area they draw from and the centers characteristics of form, function, and transportation options. From smallest to largest, the activity centers are:

-) **Convenience Center.** Small, dependent on drive-by customers and residents in immediate area.
-) **Neighborhood Center.** Characterized by full line grocery store shopping and other daily needs that draw from around a town or potentially a neighborhood in an urban setting.
-) **Community Center.** Places with comparison shopping and services beyond daily needs that draw people from a wide area.
-) **Downtowns.** A special kind of activity center, downtowns of different sizes have traditionally filled the role of Neighborhood and Community Centers. The role of downtowns have been evolving and currently they are attractive places for residential growth and specialty goods and services.
-) **Regional Centers.** The largest scale centers of activity that rely on very large trade areas. There are only a few in Maine, including the Maine Mall area in South Portland/Scarborough and the Bangor Mall area.
-) **Seasonal Center.** Another specialty center characterized by heavy tourist draws, like Bar Harbor, the beach areas along the southern Maine Coast, or the ski towns of Newry and Bethel and Carrabassett Valley.
-) **Employment Center.** This activity center could be characterized by office park developments or a cluster of medical campus and medical office uses.

These three are most relevant to Hampden:

1. Convenience Center. The most common type of center, every community has at least one and larger towns have several. These centers are based on convenience stores, gas stations and limited retail and often some type of take-out food. They provide routine items like gas, single grocery items, or pizza. Located in accessible areas they rely on nearby residents and pass-by traffic. The Main Road South/Kennebec Road area is a Convenience Center.



2. Neighborhood Center. These centers are anchored by full-line grocery stores, and have a good mix of goods and services needed on a daily basis, like banking, pharmacies, hardware stores, coffee shops and small restaurants. These places generate trips rather than rely on pass-by trips, and draw from a wide area, often from more than one community in rural and small towns. Homes are nearby and incorporated into these activity centers. These places can take the form of villages, small downtowns, or city neighborhoods in larger cities. As such, these places often host town halls, schools and other traditional civic infrastructure like the post office and places of worship. The Main Road North/Western Avenue area is a Neighborhood Center.



3. Community Center. These centers have a combination of daily goods and services as well as offerings for which people are willing to travel and do comparison shopping. These types of places offer shopping for clothing, furniture, appliances, more professional office spaces and larger more diverse options for eating. General merchandise stores and discount department stores characterize the retail options. Downtowns once were the primary types of Community Centers, but suburban centers with Big Box stores also fill this role. Regional examples could include downtown Bangor, Wilson Street in Brewer or High Street in Ellsworth.

There is good general agreement within Hampden that efforts should be made to improve the Town Center's ability to fill the existing Convenience and Neighborhood Center roles better, rather than try to incentivize growth and expand the trade area draw for the Town Center area to the point it transitions to a Community Center activity level.

In other words, rather than recommending changes or attracting large scale growth that would alter the essential character of the area, the recommendations in this plan are focused on making Hampden's Town Center an even better small downtown area for Hampden and its neighbors.

Maine Downtown Center's 4-Point Approach

The Maine Development Foundation houses the Maine Downtown Center. The MDC's core program is Maine Street Maine, which focuses on downtown revitalization and economic development through a Four-Point Approach®. The four elements of this approach are:

1. Organization of a volunteer driven board to coordinate human and financial resources, often with the support of a paid director,
2. Promotion of a positive image for the commercial area through marketing, promotion, and special events,
3. Design of the downtown and getting the area into "top physical shape" through the installation and maintenance of parking areas, buildings, street furniture, signage, landscaping and more, as well as capitalizing on unique and historic assets, and
4. Economic Restructuring to improve competitiveness, recruiting new businesses to the area and increasing the diversity of the economic base.

The Four Point website also notes that "the four points of the Main Street approach correspond with the four forces of real estate value, which are social, political, physical, and economic." More detail on this program can be found on the web site at http://www.mdf.org/mstm_fourpt.php.

These are very relevant concepts and good guiding principles as efforts to improve and strengthen the Town Center move forward. Importantly, these elements focus on the development of a group of people outside of the municipal offices to carry a share of the work. A large part of the work to be done is social, programming and promotion, not just the building and maintenance of public works, which the Town is very good at.

A Plan for Hampden's Town Center

Purpose

The Town Center is an important place within the community. There are existing neighborhoods on the streets between Main Road and the Penobscot River. The supermarket, post office, town office and Hampden Academy anchor the northern portion of the Town Center and many businesses and services that people in Hampden and the surrounding area need on a regular basis are located in the Town Center. Hardware stores, sit-down restaurants and take-out food establishments, the Skehan Center at Old Hampden Academy (Hampden's Recreation Department), the pool and trails and a number of shops, professional offices and more make this part of town a center of jobs, homes, traffic, civic and daily activity.

This energy and activity are a result of the built environment. Small lots, homes in well-established neighborhoods, a diversity of businesses, and a strong civic core including the regional school campus, give this part of Hampden a character distinct from any other part of town. The pattern is based on neighborhoods served by and built around the electric trolley that ran down Main Road out of Bangor. The pattern is fine-grained and walkable, with homes and businesses built relatively close together and close to the street.

Newer development in this area does not match the scale or design of the well established patterns here. This is in part due to changes in the transportation network, as Hampden residents shifted to a reliance on personal automobiles from other modes such as walking, horse-powered transportation and the trolley. It is also in part due to the later change in land use regulation with the establishment of zoning rules that have generally focused more on spacing buildings out and separating uses than preserving the patterns of existing lot sizes and building types that make this part of town unique in Hampden.

This unique character and role in the community can be sustained and supported through zoning changes, targeted investments in streets, placemaking initiatives and building organizational capacity and connections within the community.

Study Area

The Town Center study area was defined with Hampden town staff, based on land use characteristics, the existing road network, property boundaries and existing zoning districts. In general, the study area incorporates the properties along Main Road from the areas around the Kennebec Road intersection north to the area around the Western Avenue intersection. The study area extends westerly from the intersection with Main Road past Route 202 to the 43.5 acre town owned property where the Lura Hoit Pool and Town Office/Public Safety Building are located. The study area contains the properties that comprise the RSU 22 school campus and the properties of the Old Hampden Academy.

The nearby residential areas of East and West Elm Streets, Cottage Street, Summer Street and the associated streets of Cross, Ferry and Pleasant Streets, and the Constitution Avenue subdivision were not part of the direct study area. However, residents in these areas were notified of all meetings the same way property owners within the official study area were. These residential areas provide some boundaries for the Town Center area and context for the discussions around potential changes and recommendations.

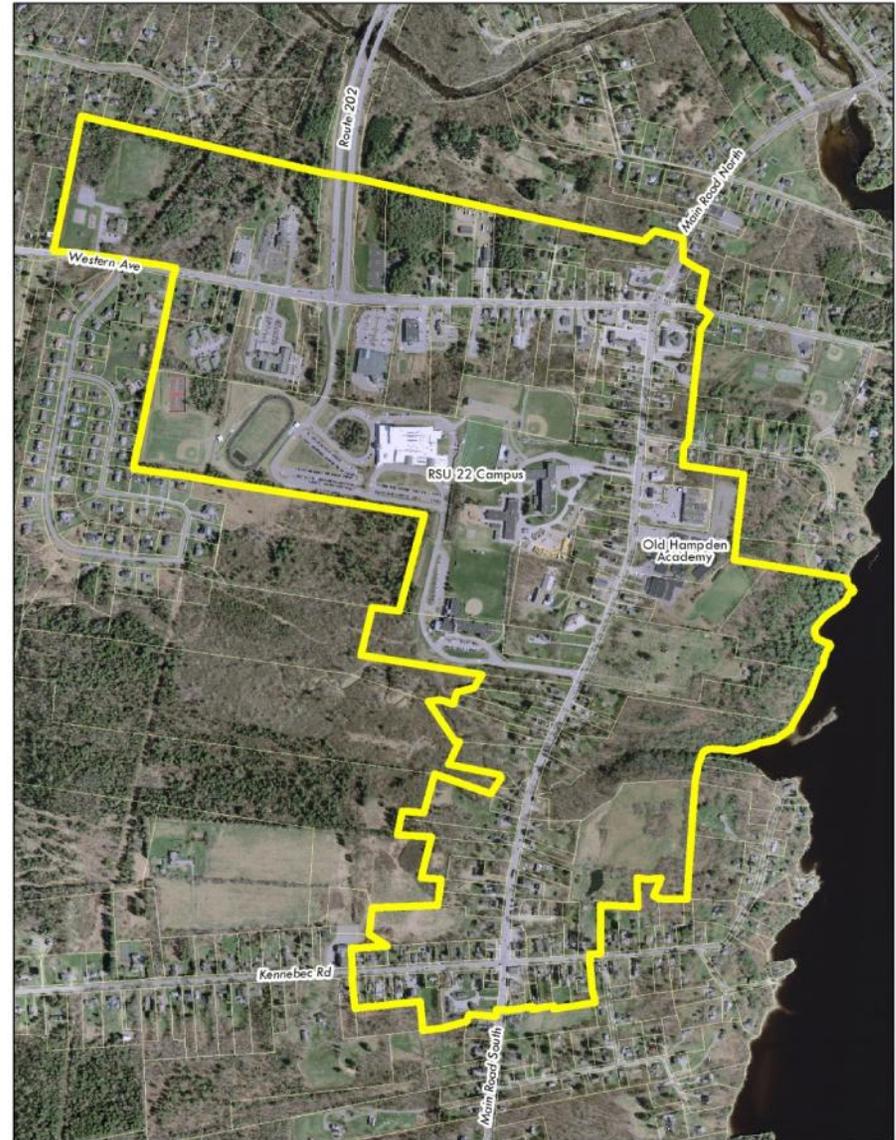


Figure 1 - Study Area

Vision for the Town Center

Hampden's Town Center will be a center of local activity for Hampden focused on maintaining its small town feel. It will be an attractive, active and welcoming place to shop, eat and do business. The town, school district and the business community will work together to make targeted improvements to enhance existing public spaces and to create new ones. Streetscape improvements will make the Town Center a safe, comfortable place to walk for daily errands, health, and enjoyment, with a complete sidewalk network connected to a network of off-road trails. The Town Center will host a public area to serve as a gathering place that hosts formal events and programs as well as serves as a place to relax, have fun and meet friends and neighbors.

Planning Process and Public Outreach

The recommendations in this Plan are built on an analysis of data and existing conditions, community conversations, an online community survey, and a series of three public meetings from July through December 2018. Information, ideas and suggestions received from Hampden residents, the schools and business owners provided valuable context and history to tailor the recommendations in this plan.

The purpose of the first public meeting on July 31 and the follow-up online survey promoted on Hampden's Facebook page was to help establish the common points of the community's vision for the Town Center. The second meeting used what was learned to suggest topic areas for potential recommendations, and the third meeting presented a series of recommendations for prioritization that would advance community goals in each of these areas.

Early in the process, the team reached out to the two largest land owners in the Town Center, the RSU and the owner of the Old Hampden Academy properties, Mr. Daniel Lafayette. This proactive contact was made because they are significant stakeholders in the decisions and investments the Town of Hampden will make regarding the Town Center, but also because of the opportunity to engage with them as partners in the implementation of many of the Plan's recommendations.

Summaries of the three public meetings are attached as an appendix to this document.

Existing Conditions

Land Use

The land use patterns that define the area of the Town Center today were established early in Hampden's history. Hampden's Comprehensive Plan provides a very good overview of the town's history. Main Road has long served as an important regional connection through Hampden parallel to the Penobscot River. Upper Corner and Lower Corner, as they were known, were the original village areas around the Augusta Stage Road (known today as Western Avenue) and Kennebec Road intersections, respectively.

These village areas were self-sufficient settlements. Each had a mix of local service jobs and housing, though the larger employment centers of the mills were concentrated at Upper Corner and dependent on Souadabscook Stream. Each village area had wharves and depended on the Penobscot River as much as Main Road to move goods and people.

From 1889 through the early 1900s, the electric streetcar from Bangor to Winterport ran through Hampden along Main Road. This mode of transportation reinforced the role of Hampden as a commuter suburb to Bangor. Hampden's Town Center became a trolley suburb, with many new homes built within walking distance to the trolley stops. The mills in Hampden gave way to industry centered in Bangor and Old Town.

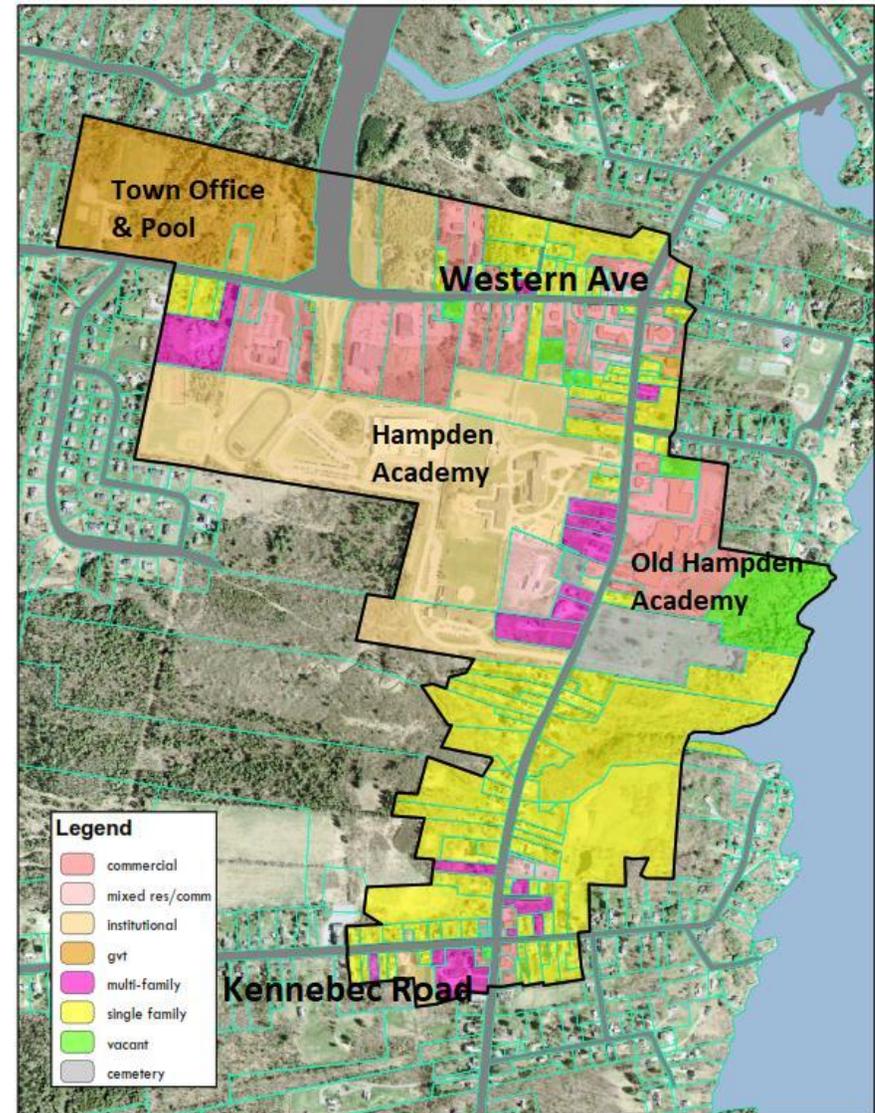


Figure 2 – Current Land Use

The built environment of the Town Center area continues to be defined by the major roadways of Main Road, Western Avenue and Kennebec Road. Figure 3 shows how most of the buildings within the study area are oriented to these roadways and illustrates why Main Road serves the role as Hampden’s “Main Street”. Old Hampden Academy, an historic and important building complex that served as home to Hampden’s schools, is also oriented toward Main Road and includes a small green on that road. Old Hampden Academy played such a central role in the community that the street numbering system for Main Road starts there. It is the place that defines the start of Main Road North and Main Road South.



Figure 3 - Building Footprints show built environment (source: Microsoft open source database)

There are two notable exceptions to this orientation toward the major roads. The first exception is the residential neighborhoods built between Main Road and the Penobscot River, like the Cottage Street or Summer Street areas. These areas are more inward focusing on their own residential streets. The second exception is the RSU school campus. There are entrances to the campus from Western Avenue and Main Road, but there are no internal streets on campus that could be used as an organizing framework for future development on campus. Note that the building footprint for the High School building does not show in Figure 3.

Land Use Character Areas

The Town Center area does not have a single undifferentiated character from one end to the other. There are several character areas, each of which has its own “feel” when walking or driving through based on the type and location of buildings, parking areas and yards as well as the size, design and traffic volumes on the roadways.

These different character areas also reflect the Town Center’s history of development. As noted above, the Corners were among the earlier settled places in Hampden, centered on crossroads. As such, they were important places for commerce and neighborhoods grew up around them when walking, horse and buggy and later the trolley were how people got around. There were no regulations to set property sizes, setbacks, or use restrictions; people built what made sense for local demand and accessibility. The newer development along Western Avenue and even some along Main Road appeared later, were designed around access from automobiles, and drew from a wider regional market area. As a result, that area has a different character than the Main Road Corridor.

Village Character Area

There are two Village Character Areas in the Study area. The first is centered along Main Road North, anchored at the northern end by the Main Road/Western Avenue intersection, and at the southern end by Old Hampden Academy. The second is centered at the Main Road South/Kennebec Road intersection. These areas are both characterized by residential structures and local businesses that are close to the road. Buildings are close

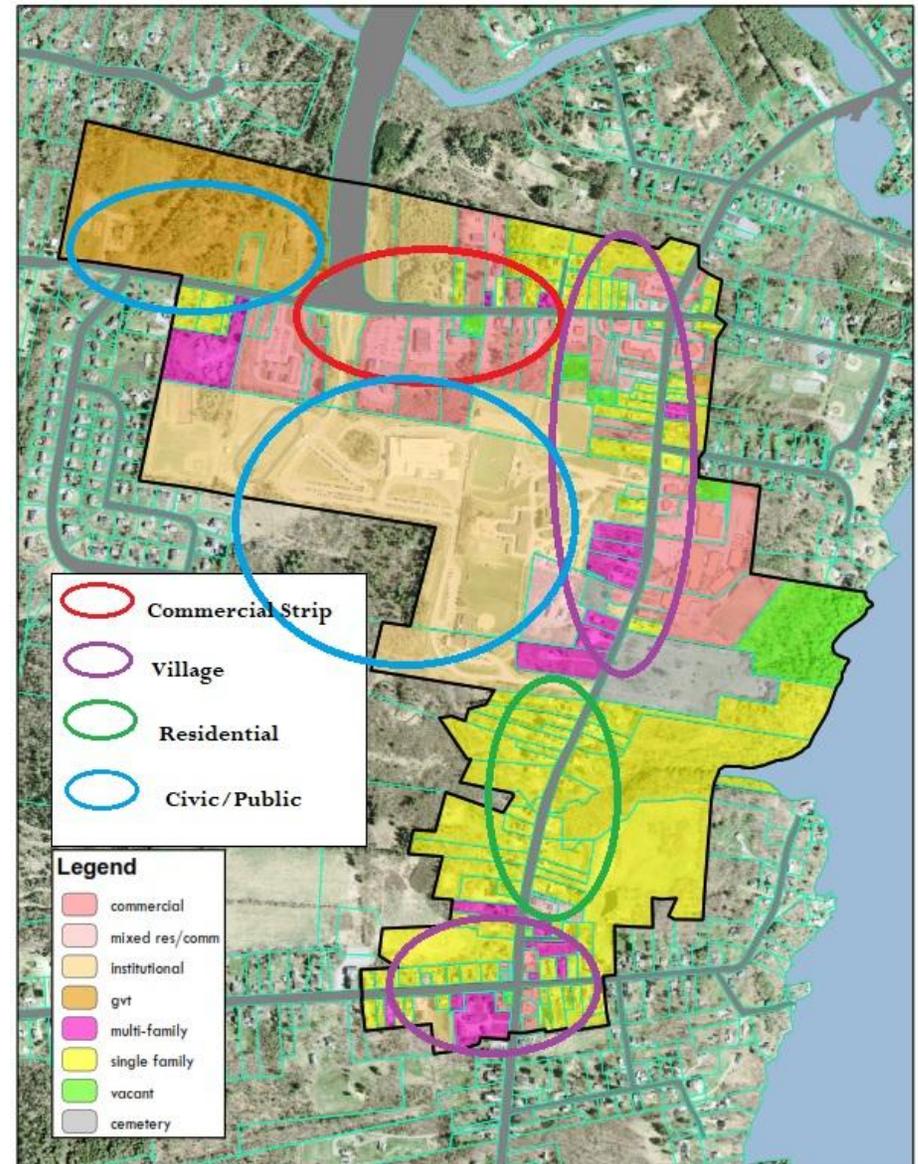


Figure 4 - Character Areas

enough together and within easy walking distance of surrounding neighborhood areas that allow for residents to run errands or patronize local shops and restaurants without a car or by parking a car once and making several stops on foot from there.

Noticeable breaks in this character have resulted from newer commercial development with large parking areas between the buildings and road and with the suburban style strip mall that is now home to EMMC offices near Old Hampden Academy.

Commercial Strip

This area is centered on Western Avenue, generally between the intersections with Main Road and Route 202. There is a transition of building types moving out Western Avenue from the intersection at Main Road North. The buildings closer to the intersection are part of the Village Character Area, typified by Hampden Hardware, the converted residential structure occupied by Subway on the first floor, and the handful of single family and multifamily buildings just out from there. From this point the road widens to include a two-way center turn lane and the predominant building form becomes newer, single story office and retail buildings, with the Rite Aid and Hannaford located close to the intersection with Route 202. This commercial development grew up around the automobile to serve a regional customer base. Buildings are set back from the road and parking areas are located between the road and buildings.

Residential

The area between the two traditional corners is still primarily single family homes. This area includes both sides of Main Road South from Locust Grove Cemetery and the Reeds Brook School entrance south to the businesses at the intersection of Main Road South and Kennebec Road. These homes vary in age, condition and setback from Main Road, but generally are single family residential. There are several home based occupational uses within this area which fit harmoniously within the area.

Civic

There are two primary areas within the study area that comprise the center of Hampden's civic life. The first is the municipal property on Western Avenue where the municipal building, Lura Hoit Pool and the Post Office are located. The second is the RSU 22 school campus, located on several separate parcels with frontage on both Western Avenue and Main Road. Along with the shopping, services and jobs in the area, these uses draw activity to the Town Center area from around Hampden and around the region in the form of people and vehicular traffic. They also provide the connections between people that define civic life, as people run into friends and neighbors while at the Post Office,

go to family swim time at the pool, or connect with other community members at the Skehan Center or at school events.

Surrounding the Town Center Area: Residential, Civic and Natural Areas

While not within the boundary of the Town Center area as defined by this planning effort, the surrounding neighborhoods and lands must be considered as part of this effort, as they provide important context for what is observed within and recommended for the Town Center itself.

The residents in established residential neighborhoods built between Main Road and the Penobscot River all depend on Main Road just as the Constitution Avenue neighborhood relies on Western Avenue for every trip, anywhere they go. These residents are certainly among the most frequent users of the road system and likely most impacted by the daily fluctuations in traffic levels. These neighborhoods also provide the most essential ingredient in a healthy, well-functioning downtown area – people to support local businesses. These residents also represent the best chance to increase the number of people walking or using bikes within the Town Center.

The Kiwanis Building (owned by the Town) is in the Town Center area, and the nearby VFW building on Canoe Club Road and the associated playing fields and courts are important civic assets just on the edge of the Town Center area. These areas provide important opportunities for people of all ages to recreate, as well as for organized social, service, veterans, and scouting groups to meet. All three public meetings associated with the Town Center planning effort were held at the Kiwanis Building.

The natural areas around the edges of the study area add to the quality of life in Hampden. The formal and informal trail networks including the Reeds Brook Trail system are used year round by residents, along with the snowmobile trail that utilizes utility corridors within the 4-Mile Square. There is no public point of access to the Penobscot River in the vicinity of the Town Center area, but there are views of the river accessible from trails behind Old Hampden Academy.

Zoning

Through zoning, a community establishes the rules for how new development and redevelopment occur. These rules are different in different parts of a community, based on the desired types and forms of development. As noted earlier, much of this area saw development prior to the adoption of a zoning ordinance in 1964. However, there has been significant development in the area since that time as well. How well that newer development adds to the community, a sense of place, and compliments the traditional forms valued by residents and visitors are all relevant considerations.

In the Town Center area, there are currently four zoning districts. Each has its own set of allowed uses which are clearly listed in the Hampden Zoning Ordinance and will not be listed again here. However, it is worth including the zoning descriptions included in the Zoning Ordinance, along with the dimensional standards that create the physical form and character of the built environment.

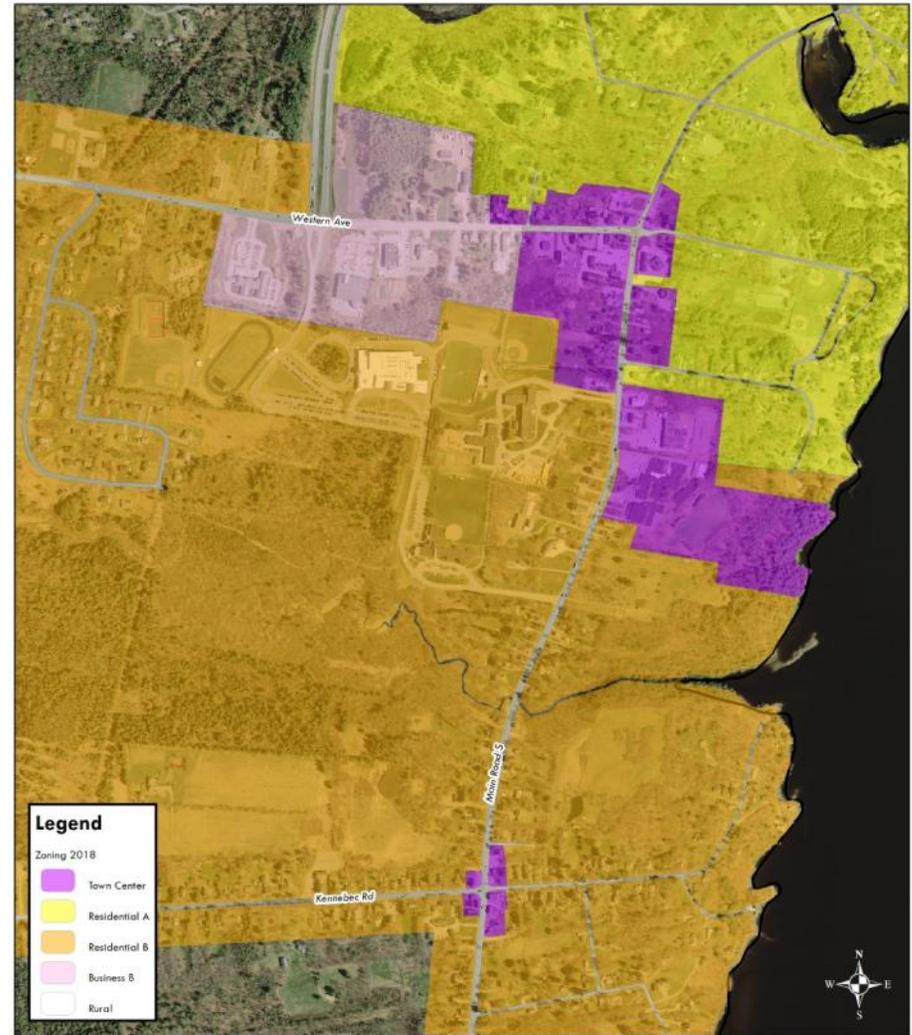


Figure 5 - Existing Zoning

Town Center (TC) Zoning District

The Town Center District is established to accommodate the daily or frequent shopping needs of the Hampden consumer. The style, appearance, and placement of buildings, parking and landscaping will be regulated to promote consistency with existing buildings and residential uses. The Town Center District shall encourage pedestrian circulation and face to face retail sales. – Hampden Zoning Ordinance

Zoning District	Min Lot Area	Max Gross Density	Min Road Frontage	Min Setback
Town Center	10,000 sf	4 units/acre	50 feet	0 feet

Examples of development that meets the rules:

-) Dunkin Donuts
-) Irving/Circle K
-) NAPA Auto Parts
-) Bangor Savings Bank

Business B (BB) Zoning District

This district is intended to provide a location for larger commercial developments (in excess of 10,000 sq. ft. of floor area) in central locations of Hampden. – Hampden Zoning Ordinance

Zoning District	Min Lot Area	Max Gross Density	Min Road Frontage	Min Setback
Business B	1 acre	N/A	100 feet	30 feet

Examples of development that meets the rules:

-) Rite Aid
-) Hannaford
-) Katahdin Trust Company
-) CUSO Mortgage Corporation

Residential A (RA) Zoning District

This district is intended for the development of low density single family housing types. While this district is predominately intended for detached housing the district may allow certain low impact civic and institutional uses. – Hampden Zoning Ordinance

Zoning District	Min Lot Area	Max Gross Density	Min Road Frontage	Min Setback
Residential A	18,000 sf	2.42 units/acre	125 feet	25 feet

Example of development that meets the rules:

-) Sunrise Lane Subdivision (off Main Road North, just north of Souadabscook Stream)

Residential B (RB) Zoning District

These areas are designated for a mixture of residential uses: single family, multi-family, and mobile home parks, developed either as individual lots, conventional subdivisions, or cluster subdivisions. In addition, the RB District shall allow certain low impact nonresidential uses. – Hampden Zoning Ordinance

Zoning District	Min Lot Area	Max Gross Density	Min Road Frontage	Min Setback
Residential B	16,500 sf	2.64 units/acre	100 feet	25 feet

Example of development that meets the rules:

-) Colonial Heights Subdivision on Constitution Avenue, just outside Town Center area off Western Avenue
-) Mathew Terrace s multi-family development just south of the Kennebec intersection

Transportation Street Network

The street network within the Town Center Area is defined by the large, moderately high volume roads of Main Road, Western Avenue, Kennebec Road and the intersection of US Route 202 and Western Avenue, and the smaller dead end residential streets serving neighborhoods between Main Road and the Penobscot River. Traffic volumes for the major roads in the area are shown in Figure 6.

In addition to the role that Main Road serves as an important commuter route between Bangor and residential areas, Main Road and Western Avenue have long been and will continue to be well traveled truck routes. Local destinations include the transfer facility and regional landfill off Old Emerson Mill Road, the H.O. Bouchard trucking terminal on Coldbrook Road, and the Fiberright facility on Coldbrook Road scheduled to begin operations later this year. Fiberright will accept recycling, organic and solid waste from 180 communities in eastern and northern Maine. It is also notable Main Road (Route 1A), Western Avenue and US Route 202 are part of the road network used by the Bureau of Motor Vehicles for routing overlimit vehicles that exceed legal dimensional or weight limits. These wide loads and over-height trucks travel by permits issued by BMV. Perhaps the most notable overlimit vehicles to travel through Hampden in recent years have been those carrying wind turbine blades and tower sections on their way from the port in Searsport to points north and west for siting and assembly.

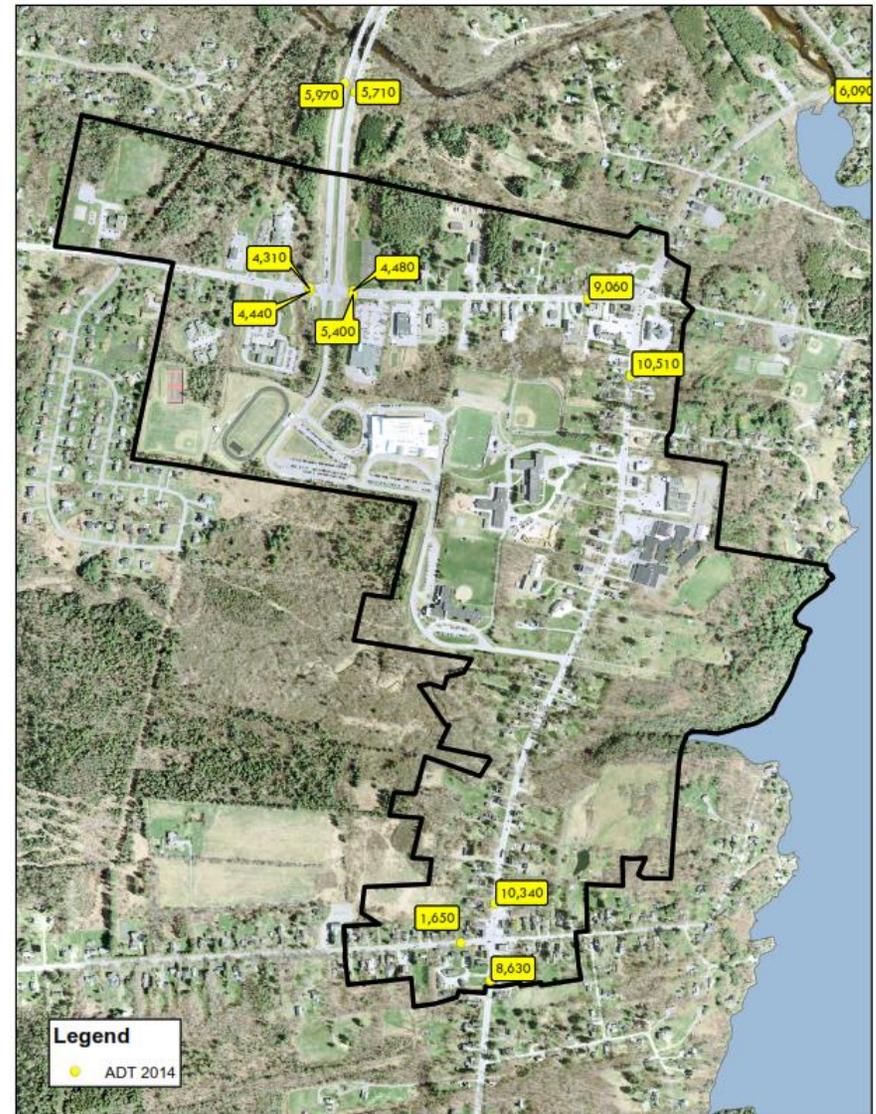


Figure 6 - 2014 Traffic Volumes

Accidents

Figure 7 shows the number and location of accidents reported in the study area between 2015 and 2018. Altogether there were 85 accidents reported. To put this raw number in some perspective, a majority of the reported accidents occurred at the intersections of Main Road North/Western Avenue and Route 202/Western Avenue and were not serious. Most of these were classified as “Rear End/Sideswipe” or “Intersection Movement.” There were no fatal accidents or accidents involving cars hitting pedestrians or cyclists during this period. Thirty-two percent (32%) of the total number of accidents in this three year period involved some level of personal injuries.

The MaineDOT analyzes crash frequency and severity to identify High Crash Locations (HCLs) for intersections and road segments around the state. HCLs are designated annually on a rolling basis, based on the preceding 3 years of information so they can change over time, even year to year.

There was only one HCL identified within the study area for the most recent reporting period and it was not at the intersections where most of the crashes occurred. It is the stretch of Main Road North between the Cottage Street and Western Avenue Intersections.

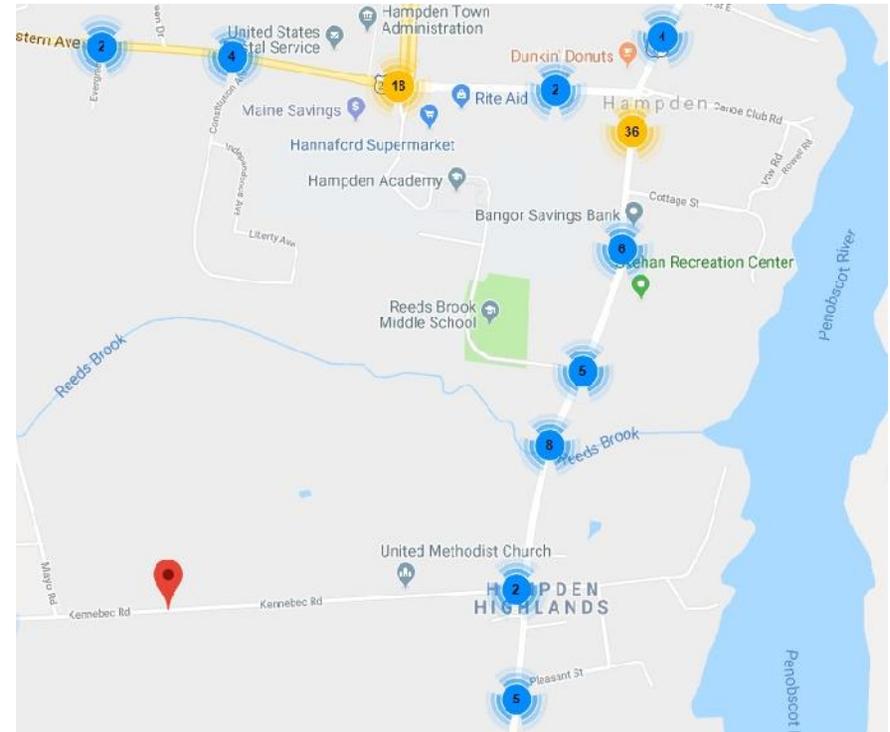


Figure 7 - Total Reported Accidents, 2015-2018 (Source: MaineDOT)

Pedestrian Network

The Town Center is a popular walking destination within the community. Western Avenue and Main Road are two of the roads that bound the 4-Mile Square area, along with Kennebec Road and Mayo Road. There is sidewalk on one side of Western Avenue and Main Road throughout the Town Center area. The sidewalk runs on the western side of Main Road all the way from West Elm Street to Dorthea Dix Park, more than a half mile south of the Main Road South/Kennebec Road intersection. Along Western Avenue, the sidewalk is on the southern side of Western Avenue leaving the Main Road North intersection and switches to the north side of Western Avenue after US Route 202 intersection. These sidewalks are shown in yellow in Figure 8.

Crosswalks are an essential part of the walking network, especially with the proximity of so many neighborhoods to the school campus. Additionally, the Skehan Center hosts afterschool activities, and most of those students walk across Main Road to the Center. There are six crosswalks across Main Road, five of which are between the Old Hampden Academy and the intersection with Western Avenue.

Crosswalks are shown in red in Figure 8.



Figure 8 - Existing Sidewalk/Crosswalk Network

Outside of a short section on Western Avenue, sidewalks are generally constructed with asphalt curbing and an asphalt surface. Though the surface is in generally good condition, sections of curbing are gouged and some are completely broken up from plowing operations, which is expected over time with asphalt curbing. Additionally, there are sections that are partially obstructed by utility poles, mailboxes, and vegetation. Newer sections of sidewalk include detectible warning plates for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Older sections need improvements to meet the ADA standards and to be more usable for all members of the community.



Recommendations

The recommendations for the Town Center fall into four categories:

-) Land Use – zoning and building standards
-) Transportation – roads, sidewalks and trails
-) Placemaking – design of the public realm, including streets and lands
-) Community Connections – local partnerships to add energy and capacity

Town Government's Leadership Role in Town Center Improvements

The Town of Hampden plays a central role in all of these categories, but in truth has complete control over none of them. Even within the Land Use category, where the town government has control over local zoning decisions, almost all of the details that will shape the future character of the Town Center are up to agencies like the MaineDOT, local, regional and national companies and individual residents. It will take the coordination and cooperation of many different organizations, both public and private, to implement most of the recommendations detailed below.

Because of this truth, the Town of Hampden will play many roles throughout the implementation process. First and foremost, the Town of Hampden must be a leader in the Town Center, by setting the tone for good design and making investments in this area as a valued Place in the community.

Town staff and elected leaders should not only be thinking of the Town government organization as a provider of funding and project management for public projects in the Town Center, but as a partner, convener, and catalyst that can coordinate among local, regional and state level stakeholders, private investors and property owners. Through a commitment to the Town Center as a place where many parties will play a role, smart use of local funds, leveraging outside funding opportunities, and setting an example of high-quality design and construction of public improvements, the impact of public investments can be multiplied.

In other words, it is not all up to "Town Hall" to make the Town Center the place the public says they want. It is up to local government to make essential, initial local public investments in this Place and to bring together other partners, organizations and volunteers to share in the continuing process of making the Town Center an even greater asset for the community..

Intersections as Anchors for Place

As noted earlier, the Corners have always been centers of activity, for commercial and residential life. The recommendations that follow continue the importance of these two important places as activity centers. Just as gravity makes water runs downhill to a lake, river or ocean in a watershed, people are attracted to interesting places that have their own gravity. The distance people are willing to walk is called a pedestrian shed.

In general, people are comfortable walking 10 minutes (about ½ mile) for errands, work, entertainment or access to transit when the walk is safe, interesting and well maintained. A quality built environment and a compelling mix of uses can expand the distance people are willing to walk.

Each of the three large circles at the top of Figure 10 are ½ mile across. The important Main Road North/Western Avenue intersection is the focal point of the Neighborhood Activity Center described earlier. The red circle in the upper right of Figure 10 is centered on that intersection. This primary circle is bolstered by additional circles centered on Main Road at Old Hampden Academy and at the intersection of Western Avenue and Route 202. These circles overlap, and comprise the pedestrian shed for the Neighborhood Activity Center.

The smaller circle centered on the Main Road South/Kennebec Road intersection is ¼ mile across. Though there is a sidewalk on Kennebec Road, options and walking destinations at this Convenience Activity Center are more limited and more dependent on pass-by traffic. Long term, improvements within that area and connections to the north can expand the gravity of this place.

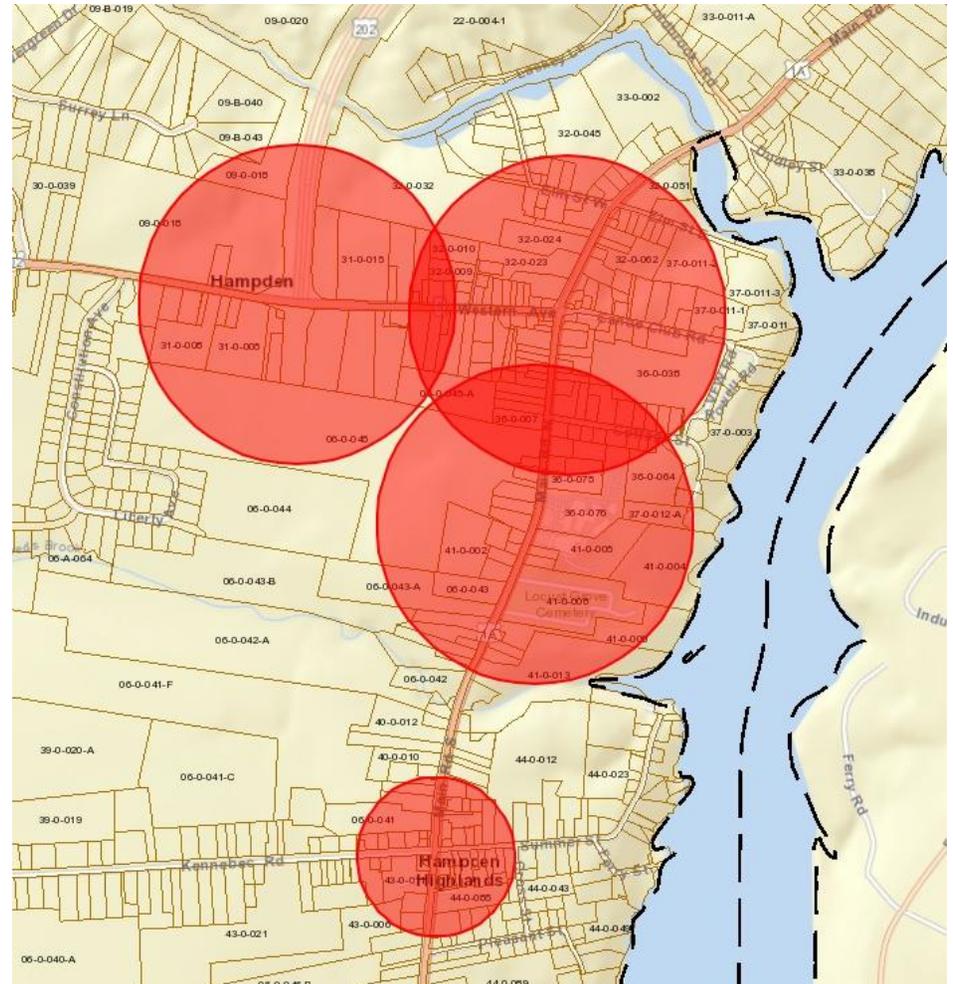


Figure 9 - Walkability Circle or "Pedestrian-Shed" Mapping

Land Use

Expand the boundaries of the two Town Center Zoning Districts

Based on the circle mapping in Figure 10, the boundaries of the Town Center Zoning District (TC) should be expanded to allow more area for the type of development that will perpetuate the existing village characteristics in Figure 4. The existing Town Center zoning shown in Figure 5 does not include enough land area to allow walkable development patterns within a walkable distance.

Such an expansion of the Town Center zoning district as show in Figure 10 would:

-) Fill in the TC “gaps” on Main Road,
-) Include the current Business B Zoning District to start changing the character along Western Avenue from just an automobile oriented commercial strip development to become a more walkable, human scale neighborhood,
-) Expand north of Western Avenue to include properties at the end of Dewey Street, as they relate more to Western Avenue than the Residential A district to the north.
-) Include the RSU 22 properties so that the school campus might become more integrated with the Town Center, and
-) Add more properties in the vicinity of the Kennebec and Main Road South intersection than those just at the intersection.

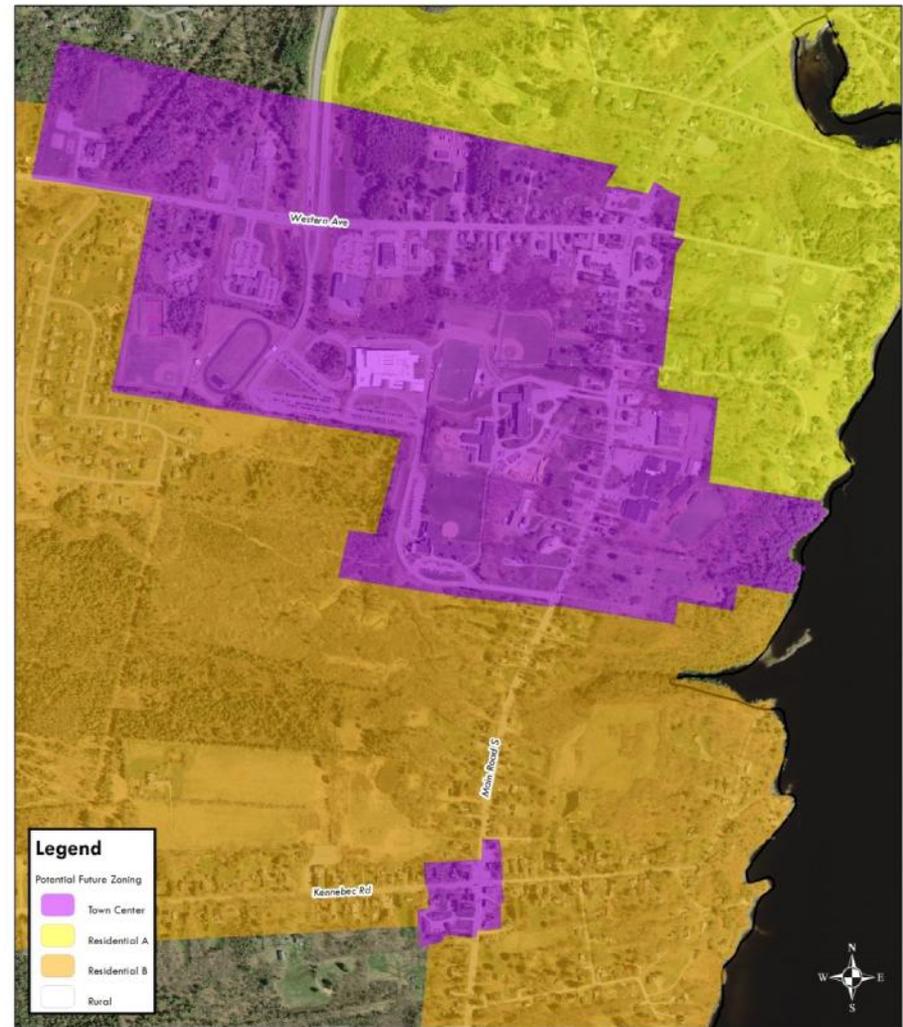


Figure 10 - Proposed Zoning

Change Town Center Zoning Standards

Allow more people

The secret ingredient for injecting activity, energy and gravity into a downtown is people. New Town Center residents will immediately become customers and patrons for local businesses. Equally important, people care about the places they live, meaning that new residents in the Town Center will create a built-in constituency group to care and advocate for the Town Center (see Placemaking and Community Connections, below). Increasing the number of dwelling units allowed per acre will allow for infill development and new investment on existing lots within the Town Center.

Studies have shown that densities of 7-8 dwelling units per acre can support fixed route bus service with one bus every 30-60 minutes. Currently, the BAT Community Connector serves Hampden on a loop around the 4-Mile Square on an hourly schedule Monday-Friday. Increasing densities from the current 4 dwelling units per acre in the Town Center district could better support the existing service and lead to more frequent bus service.

Allow smaller Lots

Many of the existing lots in the Town Center area were created prior to zoning which went into effect in 1964. Here in Hampden, just as in many places around the state, new zoning ordinances made it impossible to legally build the places people value and choose as destinations for shopping and to spend free time. The dimensional standards were changed last year to reduce minimum lot sizes, which reduced the number of properties that were “legally non-conforming” meaning the rules were created or changed after the lots were created.

The town should go further by conducting analysis of existing lot sizes with the recommended expanded Town Center district boundary and then reducing the minimum lot size to match the existing pattern. Another possibility is to eliminate minimum lot size requirements altogether and leave lot size to owners and other standards like parking and buffering requirements. This will allow future development to better complement existing patterns and for the existing fine-grained pattern to be extended to larger lots in the existing Business B District and even on existing school properties and promote infill development within the Town Center.

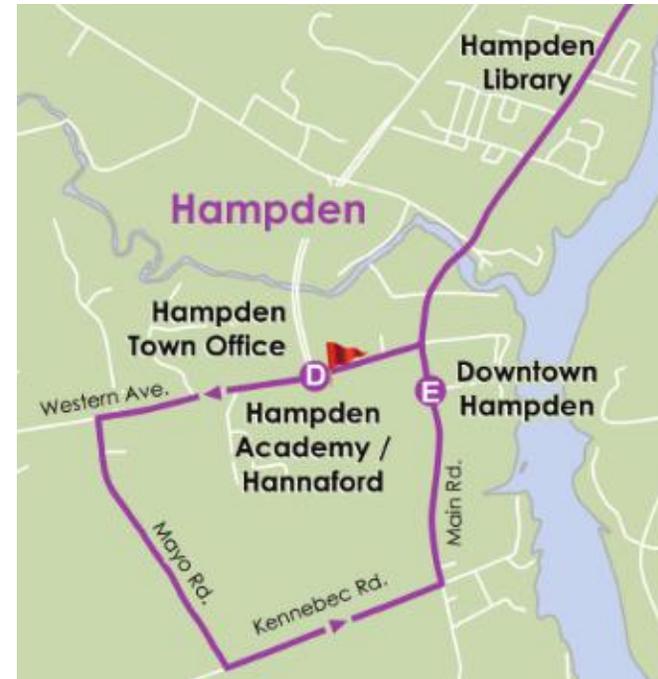


Figure 11 - BATS bus route map (excerpt)

Keep Buildings in the Front, Parking to the Side or Back

An important element in the overall sense of how walkable a place is relates to how close the buildings are to the sidewalk. If it's easy to walk to the front door or to see into windows from the street at retail locations, foot traffic into the business is likely to be higher than at a building that is set back from the street, especially if there is a parking lot between the sidewalk and the building.

There are several examples of relatively new development in the Town Center and the Business B zoning districts that do not make the area more walkable. The Dunkin Donuts in the top picture at right does not have parking between the front door and street, but it certainly isn't as inviting a place to pop in for coffee as the Coffee Break Café across Main Road North because it is about 80 feet from the road. The NAPA and Bangor Savings Bank buildings are between 60-65 feet from the apparent edge of Main Road North.



These development patterns are not conducive to creating a walkable environment

The residential and commercial buildings in Google street view picture on this page are all within 20-35 feet of the apparent edge of Main Road North. This smaller setback from the street creates a more comfortable space for people to walk and shop. Combined with a sidewalk on both sides of the road and some additional street trees, this road can become a comfortable public space.



The ordinances should be changed to require a maximum building setback, rather than a minimum setback. Based on the existing pattern, this setback should be in the range of 20-35 feet. Additionally, all new parking spaces should be to the side of buildings or in the back, with no parking between new or redeveloped buildings and the street.

Raise the bar on design requirements for new construction

The Design Standards in Section 4.7 of the Hampden Zoning Ordinance cover a lot of the most important design considerations, including parking design and buffering, drive-through facility location, landscaping, lighting, architectural design, and signs.

Suggested items to add or amend are:

-) Landscaped buffer requirements will need to be revisited when building setbacks are amended.
-) Trees and other plantings should be required as part of a landscaping plan submission; lawn areas should not be considered landscaped or sufficient for buffering.
-) Parking areas with 20 or more spaces should be required to have landscaped areas within the parking area, landscaped islands or grade changes and low walls to break up the area's mass and scale. Plantings or fencing should continue to be used to soften the visual impact of parking visible from streets.
-) Architectural design standards should apply to all sides of new or redeveloped buildings, not just the side facing streets.
-) Screening of waste and recycling receptacles, HVAC and other utilities should be required for new multifamily and commercial projects.
-) New buildings should be oriented to face the street.
-) Internal walkways or sidewalks should be provided from the street to the front door.
-) Bicycle parking should be supplied at all buildings large enough to require site plan review.
-) Connections to abutting sites should be required in the form of walkways or easements for vehicular or pedestrian traffic.

Help improve existing buildings

There were recurring comments at public meetings about the state of a few residential and commercial buildings within the Town Center. A lack of building maintenance in very visible locations can have a big impact on the perception of the whole area. There are some things a town can do in situations like this when taxes are current:

-) Purchase the properties and sell to new owners to rehabilitate existing buildings or demo and redevelop the property,
-) Adopt a property maintenance code for the Town Center, where failing to comply with standards will result in penalties,
-) Apply for funding to assist willing property owners with façade improvements,
-) Coordinate with a service organization to do some basic yard care or painting. and
-) Work with the property owners so that they understand their property's impact on community goals. Such a conversation could lead to improvements or a willingness to allow a service organization to do some basic yard care or painting.

Transportation

Main Road North and Western – Priority Improvement Area

This intersection is the key to a functional and attractive Town Center. In the near term, the Town is planning for sewer upgrades in Western Avenue from the Town Office to the Main Road North intersection. Additionally, the regional transportation funding group is planning on signal upgrades at this intersection with construction penciled in for 2024. These projects represent an opportunity for Hampden to build in additional improvements that include new sidewalks, street lighting and other pedestrian-scale infrastructure to dramatically increase the value of this work. Such improvements will also set the tone and standard details for further improvements in the Town Center. The new intersection should prioritize safe pedestrian crossings with push button activated crossing signals at all four legs of this intersection, sidewalks on both sides of the Main Road and Western Avenue, and new curbing and access management within proximity to a new intersection. It should also include streetscaping improvements like those suggested below, including pedestrian scale lighting coordinated with new signal mast arms to replace the existing utility pole/span wire system, street trees, landscaping within the right-of-way, and the potential for a small public space or pocket park if that space can be built into the plan.



Figure 12 - Conceptual Main Road/Western Avenue Improvements

The conceptual sketch in Figure 12 shows recommended improvements for this intersection. New curb lines are shown in black. The intersection work should square up the Canoe Club Road leg of this intersection and the entrance from the Irving/Circle K onto Canoe Club Road. Additionally, this project could close up the wide curb cuts on Main Road north of the Coffee Break Café, across Main Road from Irving, and in front of the Hampden Hardware store. The sketch also shows 22 new pedestrian scale lights on new 12-16 foot light poles as small yellow dots, spaced about 50 feet apart. It also shows 14 trees placed between the lighting. The final placement of light poles and underground conduit, trees, and mast arm foundations will depend on the existing underground utilities and engineering design.

Install Sidewalk on both sides of Main Road and Western Avenue & Improve Crosswalks

The Town Center area is generally regarded as the highest pedestrian activity area in Hampden. With the schools on one side of Main Road and well established neighborhoods on the other, there should be sidewalks on both sides of Main Road. Based on the proximity to schools, the Lura Hoit pool, town offices, post office, and businesses on Western Avenue to the existing neighborhoods north of the study area on Main Road North and west of the study area out Western Avenue, there should be sidewalks on both sides of Western Avenue. This is also consistent with the Land Use recommendations for higher densities and a finer grain of commercial uses.

Based on the total length of new sidewalk to be built, it is likely that new sidewalk construction will need to be phased in over a period of years. This work can be integrated into the planned sewer work in Western Avenue and Main Road North over the coming years.

In 2018 the town installed two new crosswalks with button activated rapid flashing beacons (see photo on cover), one at Cottage Street and the other at the Kiwanis building. A crossing with the same design should be prioritized between the RSU 22 school campus and Old Hampden Academy. There are currently two striped crosswalks in this area, about 400 feet apart. The northerly crosswalk is shown in the top picture here, and the southerly crossing is shown in the bottom picture. Both have overhead flashing signals on span wire and do not match each other. The northerly crossing connects to the school campus via a pedestrian pathway, while the southerly crossing lands in front of the Masonic Lodge building. A determination should be made whether or not both crossings should be kept based on desired pedestrian routes.



Limit New Curb Cuts and Narrow Existing Entrances

There are many examples of commercial development within the Town Center area that have multiple curb cuts. In general, new development should be limited to a single entrance onto Main Road, Western Avenue or Kennebec Road, and should be no wider than the 24 feet currently allowed by ordinance. This is an adequate width to have a single lane in and out. The Planning Board should hold the line for one entrance on these roads, and consider waivers for only the highest traffic projects, where a maximum 40-foot entrance is adequate (one lane in, two out for left and right turns). The Rite Aid on Western Avenue has a 40-foot entrance.

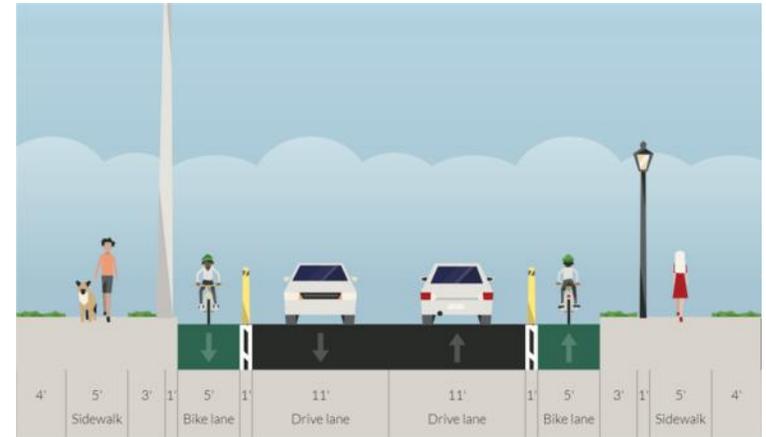
In conjunction with sidewalk projects in support of this plan, existing entrances wider than 40 feet should be narrowed. There are many examples of wide, undefined entrances in the Town Center that can cause traffic conflicts within parking lots and in public streets. What's more, these wide entrances are not safe for pedestrians. Even in striped crosswalks like the one shown here at the school entrance on Weatherbee School Drive, able bodied adults would not feel comfortable crossing such long distances, let alone parents with strollers, young children, the elderly or those needing mobility aids. This entrance is over sixty feet wide at its narrowest point. On top of that, the drive includes massive turning radii for school busses and the sidewalk ends on both sides well short of the actual intersection. All told, this striped crosswalk at a busy school entrance is about 200 feet long!



Several other notable wide or uncontrolled entrances include the Angelo's Pizza lot and the service center lot across Main Road South, the southerly school entrance on Main Road South across from the cemetery, the Masonic Lodge and old Fire Station across from Old Hampden Academy, and at Hannibal Hamlin Place.

Study alternative lane arrangements for Main Road and Western Avenue

There is a lot of real estate between the curbs on both Main Road and Western Avenue. It would be a valuable exercise to do a detailed traffic study in the future to see if there might be ways to use that space for on-street parking, dedicated bicycle lanes, or to incorporate other street features that would slow traffic traveling through the Town Center. These features are not envisioned as speed tables, which can be difficult to maintain and are more appropriate for lower volume residential settings, but as curb extensions at intersections or mid-block bump outs. These treatments are effective at slowing traffic as they approach a narrow point in the road but are also effective at shortening a pedestrian's crossing distance when combined with crosswalk facilities.



The two-way center turn lane on Main Road that runs generally from the Cottage Street intersection south past Old Hampden Academy to the southerly school campus entrance for the Reeds Brook School is not a typical feature of downtown streets. It is more often seen in suburban commercial strips that are characterized by high traffic volumes, lots of curb cuts, and speeds under 40-45 miles per hour. Based on conversations with school officials and the Public Safety Director, this feature seems to have been warranted by the high volumes of bus and parent traffic entering and exiting Weatherbee School Drive in the busy morning and after school times. Based on these conversations, the issue with school traffic seems to be primarily caused by the inadequate amount of vehicle storage area on the school site which is needed due to the growing trend of increasing parent traffic as more parents drive their kids to school as opposed to having them take the school bus. Limiting the amount of parent traffic or finding other places for parent vehicles to line up or park during pick up and drop off times would help to mitigate the RSU's impact on traffic on Main Road.



Trails - Cottage Street to Summer Street and Reeds Brook Trail network

There was a lot of interest from the public to further develop off-street trails in the area between the Cottage Street and Summer Street neighborhoods behind Old Hampden Academy and the Penobscot River. There are private trails on private property associated with Old Hampden Academy in this area, but there is no public trail network connecting these existing neighborhoods. During public meetings, residents noted that the Penobscot River is very close to Main Road but very cut off and inaccessible. There are no public places within the study area to even view the river, let alone access it. Working with private property owners, it may be possible to expand public access for walking, biking, skiing and snowshoeing.

There is a very well maintained public trail system on the other side of Main Road. The Reeds Brook trails are accessible from the school property for year round use. Expanding this trail system through the cooperation of willing landowners and the snowmobile club would make this an even more valuable community asset.

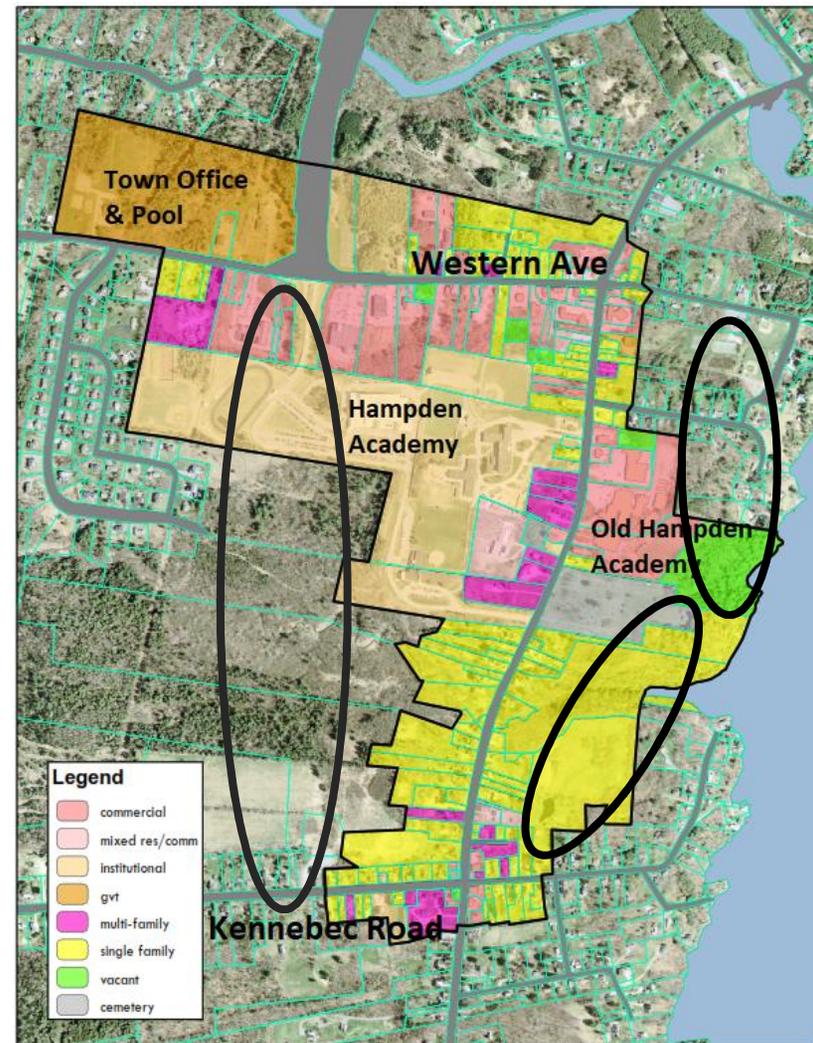


Figure 13 - Areas of Interest for off-street trails

Plan for a new local street network within and through the 4-Mile Square

As recently as 2008, the MaineDOT had sketched out an extension of Route 202 through the RSU property (before the RSU campus was there) through the 4-Mile Square to connect with Main Road South on the other side of Reeds Brook. As a 4-lane divided highway like the section of Route 202 immediately north of the Town Center area, that road doesn't fit within the concept of a Town Center or within the context of an existing school campus. However, a smaller limited access roadway that could serve to keep the majority of truck traffic and a good amount of through traffic out of the Main Road North/Western Avenue intersection is an interesting concept, as is another alternative of the eventual build out of an interconnected local street network that would provide local alternatives to Main Road (not a bypass) and additional road frontage to serve new mixed use development. Any future street plan would need to account for where connections to Kennebec Road or Main Road South could be made, the environmental and topographical challenges of crossing Reeds Brook, and how to integrate with the school access points and driveway system. Any introduction of new traffic through school property would have to be well thought out.

Placemaking

There are many improvements that can be made in the right-of-way that go beyond streets, sidewalks and streetlights. There are certain details that people see in fun, interesting, vibrant places that let them know they have arrived at a Place. These visual cues and physical amenities vary from place to place, but together they tell people that this is a place that is cared for, looked after and worth spending time in.

Town Center Signage and Branding

The most obvious way people know they have arrived in a place is that there is signage to tell them and welcome them. A system of coordinated district and wayfinding signage can communicate information about a place and how that place is valued. It can establish a consistent identity and help establish boundaries for the Town Center area.

The large stars in Figure 14 represent potential locations for Town Center or Downtown Hampden signage, welcoming people as they drive into the Town Center area. These could be relatively simple welcome signs or signs that include directions and distances to important places or businesses within the Town Center.



Figure 14 - Potential Signage Locations

The smaller stars represent points of interest that should be marked onsite with a coordinating pedestrian scale design or called out in a directory sign placed at a prominent location like the green at Old Hampden Academy or the Main Road North/Western Avenue Intersection. There are undoubtedly more locally important or historic buildings and locations that could be integrated into a signage and wayfinding program.



Example of coordinated pedestrian-scale signage

Streetscape improvements

Other physical improvements communicate a visual message about a Place. Well maintained, well lighted sidewalks tell people a place is safe and comfortable to walk. Places to sit and rest and places to dispose of trash and recycling tell people that a place is relaxed and social; people are expected to spend time on the streets and public places. Flowers and landscaping along sidewalks, in traffic islands or medians and pedestrian refuges tell people that a place is cared for and worth caring about. All of these elements are part of the streetscape and add to the experience of being somewhere.

Community Gathering Place

There is a need expressed in Hampden for an outdoor place to gather and hold community events. A place to watch the town's fireworks, light the town Christmas tree or listen to a band on the 4th of July. This place could be created through improvements at an existing municipal property at the Town Office or the athletic fields behind the Kiwanis and VFW buildings, it could be on other publicly owned property like on the school campus, or it might be arranged through partnership with private property owners, such as on the Old Hampden Academy property. No matter the exact location, the site must be large enough to accommodate a few hundred people and should be located within the Town Center.



Community Connections

Relationship with the School District

Hampden's elected leaders and municipal staff should cultivate strong working relationships with the RSU 22 School Board and administrative leadership. There are many opportunities and advantages for both entities to take advantage of through a closer coordination on planning and investments.

The school campus itself is in the heart of the Town Center, but it is so set apart and unconnected from the surrounding community it is almost an island unto itself. There are three main entrances onto campus from Western Avenue and Main Road, but because the buildings and facilities are set so far back from these roads there is very little visual access to the campus. It feels very isolated from the greater community it is a part of. A centralized school campus for a regional school system undoubtedly has efficiencies, and school security and safety needs place demands on how school facilities are located and integrated into neighborhoods, but the degree of physical disconnect is striking in Hampden.

Potential common interests include future use of RSU property, whether for development as school facilities or for disposition for other development opportunities, natural areas and trails on school property for both educational and community use, and joint facility planning in regard to school campus planning. Campus planning topics could include coordination on administrative space and facility needs, the potential for use of the campus for occasional community gatherings with built in parking and open spaces, or new buildings or traffic changes to help minimize congestion within the school campus and impacts on abutting public roads.

Relationship with Old Hampden Academy

Old Hampden Academy has been part of Hampden's civic life since the early 1800s. According to the RSU 22 website, the Battle of Hampden was fought on school grounds during the War of 1812. The current brick building that serves as the centerpiece of the campus was built in 1842-1843. When it closed as a school, the Old Hampden Academy campus was purchased by local businessman and hotelier Daniel Lafayette and converted into business spaces. Mr. Lafayette has a long history of philanthropy and service to both the community and the surrounding area.

There are currently a number of examples of civic cooperation centered around Old Hampden Academy. High school teams use an older playing field on the Old Hampden Academy site as a practice field, there is a small trail system behind the campus used by tenants of the campus and others with permission, and the Hampden Recreation department operates programming at the Skehan Center, the old school gym.

The RSU 22, municipal staff and others should look for ways to partner with Old Hampden Academy for win-win scenarios. At about 21 acres, the Old Hampden Academy properties are the largest privately owned block of land within the Town Center area. The future use and development of these properties should be of great interest to the Town.

Building this relationship starts with understanding the private owner's plans, opportunities and challenges with owning, operating and future development of the site. Finding areas of mutual interest and continuing to cooperate on programming and access could be important as future opportunities and needs present themselves.



Encourage and support Town Center volunteers and advocates

The first element of the 4-Point approach described in the Maine Downtown Foundations approach to economic development is Organization. A group of residents, business and property owners and other Town Center stakeholders should be formed to advocate for, maintain, and program activities for the Town Center area. An organization like this adds the people and activities to build on the physical place, public amenities and transportation assets to make a place come alive.

As noted earlier, there are certain things that municipal governments can do very well, but there are also limits on what the Town can do. An independent organization working for the advancement of economic development and quality of residential life of the Town Center can do such things as organize community events to bring people to the Town Center, administer and carry out a program for façade and landscaping improvements with willing landowners, and maintain infrastructure and landscaping on their own or recruit sponsors for an Adopt a Space program.

Appendix

Public Meeting Summaries

Hampden Town Center Plan Public Meeting #1 – Envisioning the Town Center of the Future July 31, 2018

The Town of Hampden is undertaking a planning effort for the area generally located along Main Road from Western Avenue to Kennebec Road. It includes Western Avenue to about the Route 202 and school entrance intersection. The purpose of this planning effort is to review zoning and infrastructure changes that will enable the development of a Town Center, the vision and goals for which will be defined through this process.

Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of the first meeting held on July 31, 2018, was to get a sense from the community about what is valued in this area today and what this area could ideally be in the future.

After a brief introduction to the project and an overview of the tasks for the evening by Ben Smith, AICP, of North Star Planning, about 24 participants broke into groups to discuss worksheet questions and review area maps. This work was meant to solicit responses that would:

1. Identify what people value about the area today,
2. Help establish a Vision for the Town Center in the future,
3. Identify the valued places and buildings that are assets to build a future on, and
4. Set some boundaries on what people consider to be either “in” or “out” of the study area.

The Town Center Today

Participants value the hometown feel of the Town Center and the walkability, family friendliness and convenience of this area today. Those characteristics exist in large part because of location of the RSU 22 school campus within the Town Center, the diversity of businesses, including restaurants, the grocery store, hardware and drug stores, places to get coffee and ice cream, and local services including places to get your hair cut, bank, or see a doctor. People like that it is not too big and has a small town feel, but is close both the more rural areas of Hampden and the services and conveniences of Bangor.

People like to walk here and appreciate that there are places to walk to, including the schools and places listed above. People also recreate here, at the pool on Western Avenue, the recreation center at old Hampden Academy, and the town fields off Cottage Road. The schools and old Hampden Academy were called out as some of the area's most special places.

People are happy that there are no fast food restaurants or big box stores in this part of Hampden, but wish there were more choices for restaurants and retail shopping, along with a community gathering place, like a small park or open area.

The Town Center in the Future

Feedback received at the meeting seems to indicate that residents want the Town Center of the future to continue serving the role it serves today, while building on the specific assets of walkability and good local destinations.

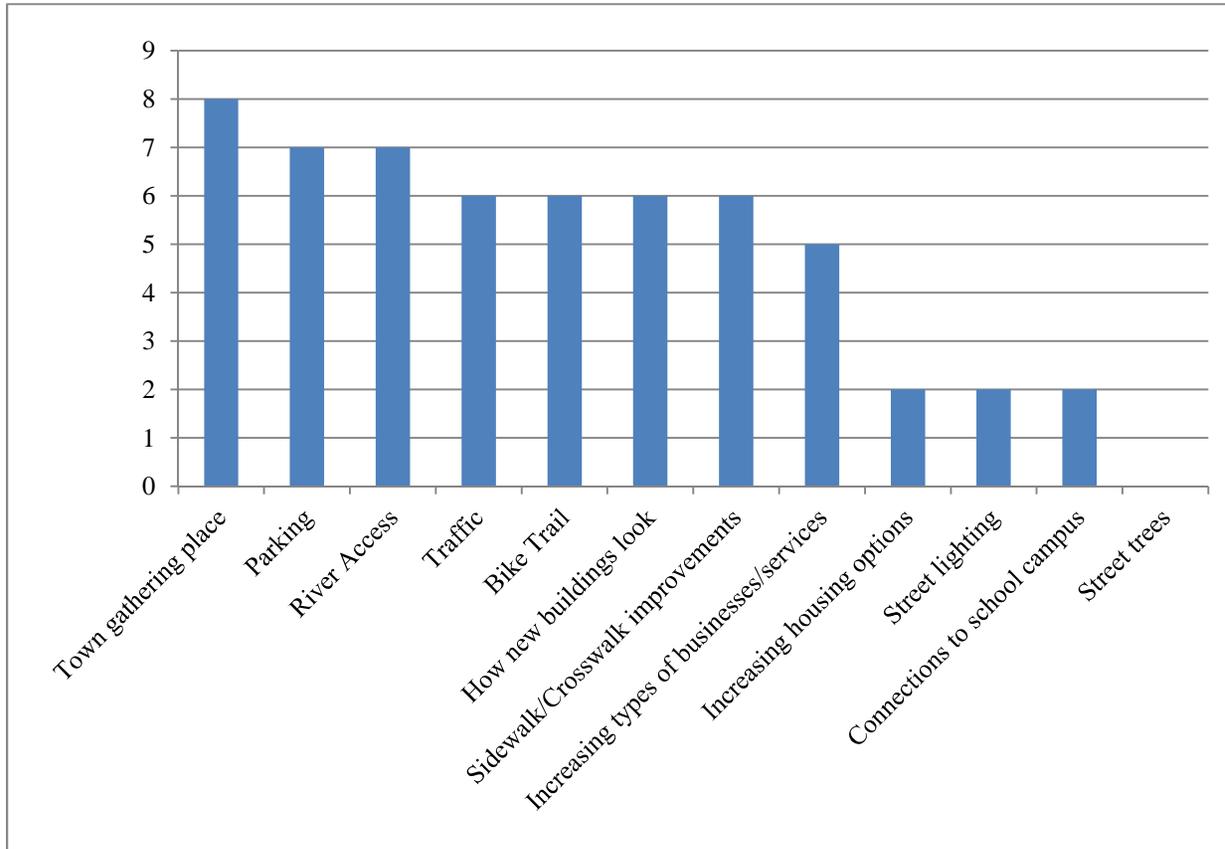
Pedestrian amenities were high on the list and included more sidewalks, street lighting improvements, Town Center signage, flowers, planters, and town owned green space that might contain a landmark or monument that could serve as a community gathering place. Participants expressed a desire for new off-site trails on the east side of Main Road that might provide water access or water views and trails on the west side of Main Road that might provide off-street connections from homes to the schools and businesses.

There was also good agreement on building the number and diversity of locally focused businesses, including more restaurants and places to shop, including the addition of a larger general retail store or a department store.

Finally, the Town Center of the future should encourage quality buildings and site development that emphasizes quality design and landscaping for new development. Participants expressed a strong desire to improving existing building conditions and do more with landscaping along the streets and public spaces.

Most important elements to include in the Town Center Plan

Looking forward to the final plan recommendations, participants were asked to think about the most important topic areas this planning effort should address. The chart below shows how various topics stack up, indicating the level of importance attached to how much emphasis each topic should be given in the final plan.



Complete list of Feedback received from meeting worksheets

Town Center Today

What do you like best about this place?

-) The homes and structures are essentially well-maintained and give the appearance that the owners care
-) close proximity of schools, groceries, churches, hardware and drug stores - although they are not close enough to each other
-) I live close by and enjoy being close to the businesses; home town feel; good schools
-) Easy going attitude about town
-) Convenience of many retail and professional businesses and sense of community, schools, hometown feel
-) Library/access to the river/ rural
-) Schools, library, pool, Hannafords
-) Home town feel
-) Schools, opportunities for kids
-) Location - close to Bangor; small-town feel
-) Lara H Pool, park & fields, schools; Erikson's hardware & coffee/ice cream
-) Grocery and drug store. Ericson's Hardware store. EMMC clinic.
-) Walkability to key businesses - restaurants, gas station, eye doctor, etc.
-) Schools/community/quiet
-) Family friendly; welcomeness; safety
-) Convenience
-) Quiet, essential services; access beyond

What is here that you like?

-) The attitude of the residents toward one another is commendable. We do not have any slums or random sections of town.
-) Basic businesses, banks, grocery, hardware, etc.
-) Mom & Pop Shops
-) Local business/ community support*

-) RSU22 and basic conveniences.
-) People, local businesses, schools
-) Feeling so rural but right in the middle of town. I like the space between houses on my street - lush vegetation, trees.
-) Post office and dental clinic
-) I'm glad it's small and still semi-small town
-) Traffic light
-) Family activities; recreational amenities
-) Grocery service business
-) Grocery, hardware, rec center, salon & spa
-) shopping, grocery, repair, personal needs - hair salon
-) many of the existing businesses (Erikson's, Pizza Gourmet, medical services, hair studios)

Are there things you're happy are not here?

-) Fast-food restaurants
-) Big box stores
-) I am happy really big business is absent from Town.
-) Eye sores and dilapidated businesses need to go; need better restaurants
-) Not much here for adults - music venues, restaurants; not much access to river, sidewalks lacking; inadequate PED crossings
-) I'm happy there are not a lot of fast-food places, big box stores, billboards, adult-only stores, rowdy bars.
-) Lobster pound, homeless shelter, garbage plant. Large box stores (Lowe's Walmart, Target). Bars.
-) Rundown buildings
-) Big box stores, fast food
-) messy building on corner; no restaurants or bars
-) Rundown building on corners of Western & Kennebec

What do you like to do here? What makes it special or convenient?

-) x-country skiing out my back door
-) easy walking area

-) Able to walk to everything you need.
-) walking, enjoying outdoors
-) Outdoor connectivity
-) Access to good schools and easy access to Bangor
-) Parks Papermill/Reeds Brook/Dorris Dix/VFW; School; Open spaces
-) Convenient to Bangor and Belfast
-) I like to walk - can walk to stores - around schools
-) Take my kids to activities; small-town feel (know business owners); close to other amenities but not here
-) Shopping
-) I live on Cottage Street. I walked to the Coffee Break for a meeting this morning.
-) Schools and recreation for kids
-) small-town feel; access to larger amenities nearby
-) small town feel
-) Nice community to raise children
-) natural setting within minutes, quick access to major links
-) Live and do business

Town Center in the Future

What do you wish there was more of?

-) Park like maintained open space distributed around Town
-) A general retail store (like Reny's); There are no close-to-each-other shops
-) A few more choices for restaurant fare. Some restaurants are just the same as others with just a different store front. Some are not very good to begin with.
-) Aesthetically pleasing buildings at the major intersection; lampights; hanging baskets
-) More walkable/less vehicle focus
-) Restaurants
-) Community space; restaurants
-) Greenspace (parks...)

-) Sidewalks in good repair; large containers for flowers like in Belfast; better lighting; nice restaurants/brewery
-) Public open space, recreational paths (biking and walking), good restaurants; local grocer with quality meats, local produce, etc.; river access; YMCA
-) Restaurants and small businesses.
-) Space, parking, safe walkways, and a small park
-) Restaurants/shops/
-) group gathering space; walking, connectivity
-) business & parking
-) open areas
-) more aesthetics at traffic intersection
-) Sit down restaurant/pub; apartments

What would you change or add if you could?

-) Find a way to eliminate the rundown house at the corner of Rt 9 + 1A
-) Town Council should develop an ordinance to better enforce appearance, safety and stability of homes, especially in the Main Rd
-) The building at the corner of 1A and Western Ave needs help or should be torn down. The building does not look safe.
-) Remove dilapidated building and change zoning laws to build a nicer structure or business
-) Centralized parking, community center, sidewalks, bike paths, uniform building appearance
-) No
-) Restaurants; bar/brewery
-) Develop a waterfront; public outdoor walking spaces; more walking than cars, what about parking?
-) River access, more public space and recreational trails
-) Condemn buildings located at Western Ave and 1A highway.
-) I would figure out the impossible and offer a town center route for traffic in addition to the state highways.
-) Walking path around school
-) pocket parks, monuments, maintained open space @ designated town center
-) maintenance ordinance in center of town; animal control

-) clean up Western/1A
-) Increase walkability

Do you have a favorite place in the Town Center?

-) Dorothy Dix Park (not in Town Center) High school auditorium + surroundings
-) Not really!
-) Schools
-) Non-existent
-) School property
-) Walking around Cottage St. and Canoe Club
-) No
-) If it's included, the land above the Souadabscook- on the bridge by waterworks
-) old Hampden Academy
-) Dunkin Donuts, my business, Hampden Academy
-) food, flowers

Pick the one word that best describes the Town Center to you.

-) Scattered by great
-) Heart
-) Inviting
-) Density/business center
-) Hometown
-) Dilapidated
-) Hard to recognize
-) Unknown
-) Rt 9 & 1A
-) access in/out

How do you know you're in the Town Center?

-) Not easily perceived or visually aware!
-) It should stay residential feel, not commercial or industrial.

-) A sign telling you.
-) If you require something, that is where you go!
-) Some historic building or item (bell tower, large planter)
-) Lights, sidewalks, flags, seasonal décor
-) Establish a village green area.
-) You'll be in an environment when others share a public space & everyone can see a couple "landmarks" (a fountain, a pocket park, etc.).
-) Don't
-) Light
-) well landscaped & well lit
-) area demarcated
-) "Downtown" feel

What will you be able to do?

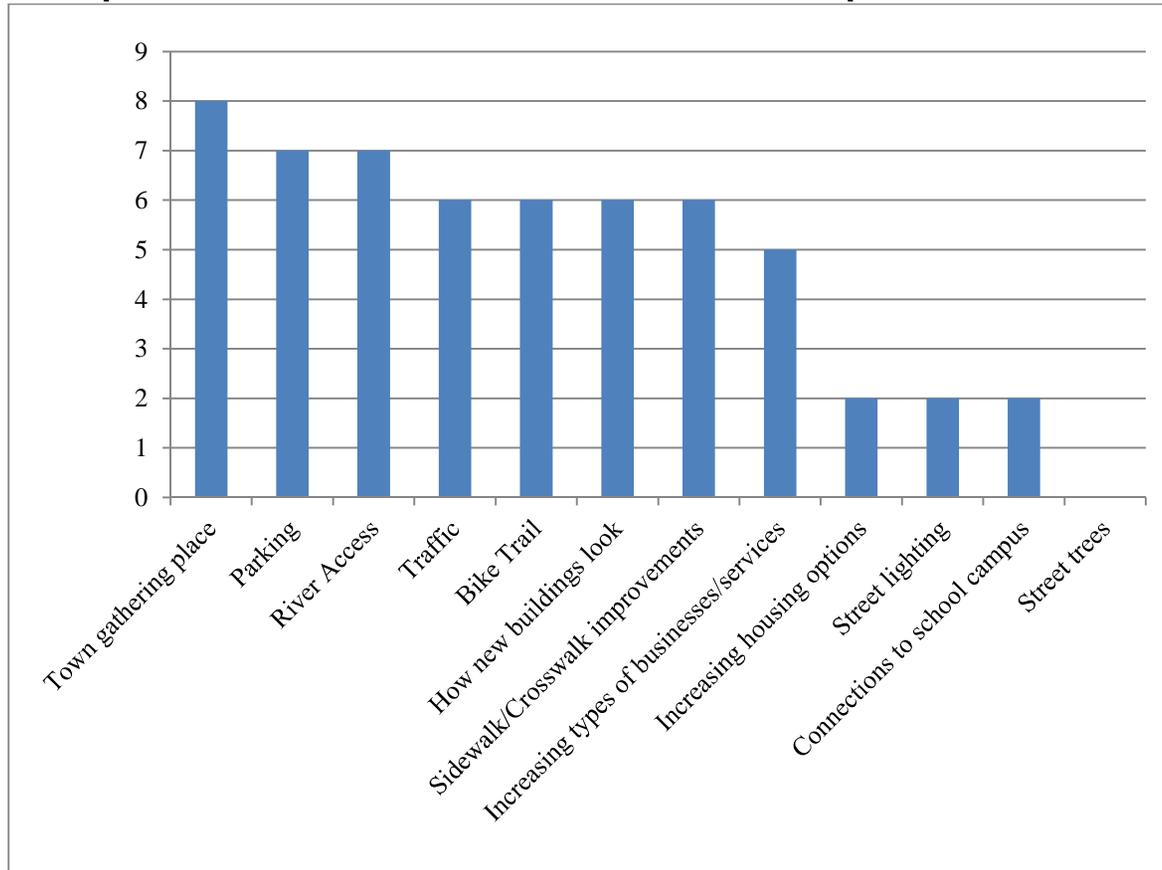
-) Continue to live here and contribute to the welfare of our neighbors
-) Basic amenities, large variety of eating establishments
-) Need better restaurants
-) Bike paths, good restaurants
-) walk, ride
-) Shop, grab a coffee and a loaf of bread, find out current events, etc.
-) Contribute
-) Build a bridge
-) participate in the exchanges
-) Find most needs as consumer

What will the Town Center look like?

-) The existing roads (1A & 9/202) will continue to exist, but there will also be modest, parallel roads with parking for businesses and a park.
-) Inviting/safe/kid-friendly
-) X-mas tree
-) not sure

) Need public parking

What are the most important elements of a Town Center that this plan should include?



Hampden Town Center Plan
Public Meeting #2 – Considering Options for the Town Center
September 25, 2018

The Town of Hampden is undertaking a planning effort for the area generally located along Main Road from Western Avenue to Kennebec Road. It includes Western Avenue to about the Route 202 and school entrance intersection. The purpose of this planning effort is to review zoning and infrastructure changes that will enable the development of a Town Center, the vision and goals for which will be defined through this process.

Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of the second meeting held on September 25, 2018, was to build on the visioning work from the first session by gauging preference for potential strategies to meet the goals of the planning project.

The meeting was split into two parts. The first part was based on a presentation by Ben Smith, AICP, of North Star Planning. The second was a review of poster stations in an open house-style format.

Presentation

The presentation included an introduction to the concept of an activity center hierarchy. This is a useful way to think of commercial and mixed use areas based on the number and types of businesses and from how far away does the area attract people to shop and spend time. The areas discussed include:

-) Convenience Center
 - o The Main Road/Kennebec Road intersection is a Convenience Center, centered on that key intersection. The mix of uses is highly dependent on being easy for customers to “grab and go,” whether they live in the immediate vicinity or are passing by on either of the major roads.
 - o Every town has one of these centers, some have more than one.
-) Neighborhood Center
 - o The Maine Road/Western Avenue intersection is part of a larger Neighborhood Center. That area includes a mix of more day-to-day services and shopping. It is built on a larger residential

base than a Convenience Center, serving residents in the immediate area and from around town.

- Can be found in most medium and large sized Maine towns. This type of center might be a neighborhood in a larger town or city.
- Often characterized by a full line grocery store. In Hampden, this is the Hannaford's in the Town Center study area.

) Community Center

- This type of activity center draws people from many surrounding communities and includes comparison shopping options.
- Examples include Wilson Street in Brewer, High Street in Ellsworth, or downtown Belfast.

The 4-Point Approach from the Maine Street Maine program of the Maine Downtown Center was described. The four elements of this program are on Organization, Promotion, Design and Economic Restructuring.

These two introductory topics set the stage for review of the priority areas that rose to the top at the first meeting and the online survey. These areas are:

) Place: Community Space & Streetscape

- Community gathering places and landmarks
- Signage, benches, bike racks, banners, flowers and other landscaping in the public spaces

) Place: Design Guidelines or Standards

- Ensuring quality design for new and redeveloped buildings

) Mobility: Traffic & Parking

- Mitigating traffic during the busiest times
- Encouraging shared parking or on-street parking to ensure adequate parking supply

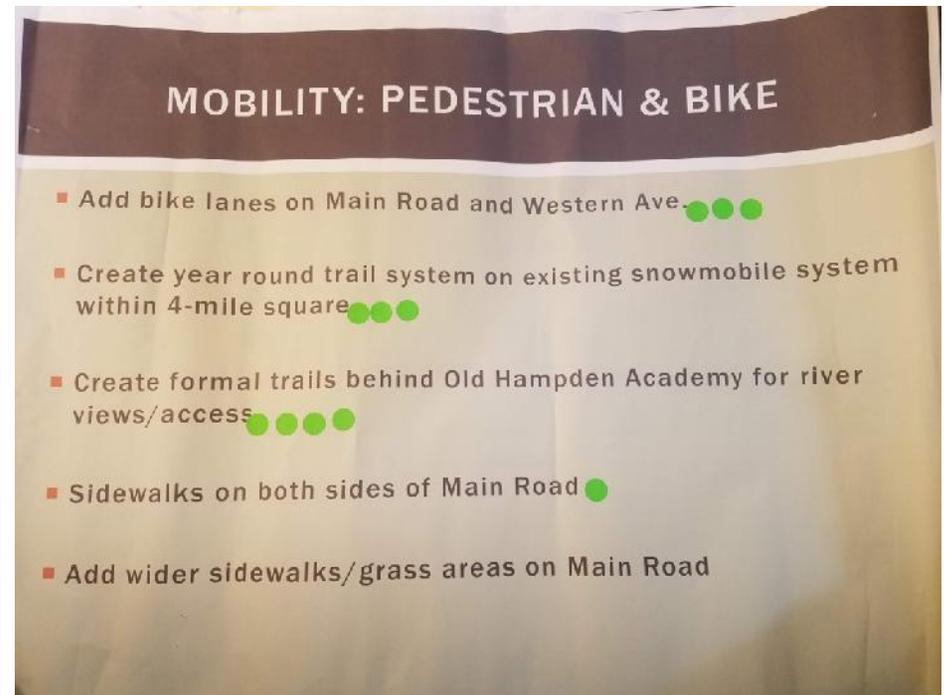
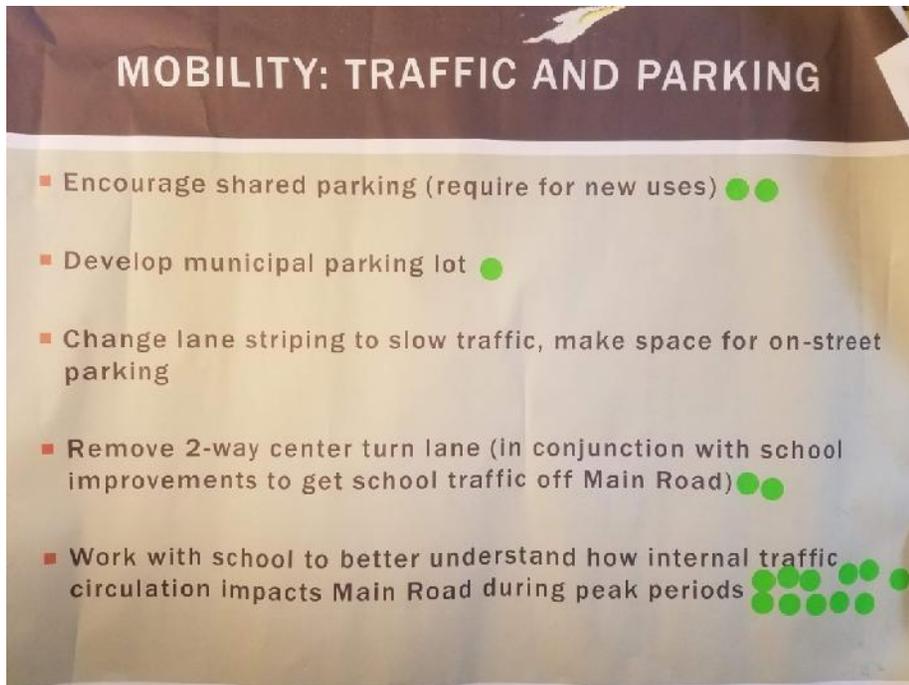
) Mobility: Pedestrian and Bike

- Improving and expanding the sidewalk network
- New off-road bike and walking trails
- Potential bike lanes on Main Road

Finally, how these areas and uses might tie into new zoning updates was discussed.

Open-house Workshop

The informal time at the open house made it possible for participants to discuss the ideas presented above with staff and each other. Each station included a poster with main ideas from the presentation so participants voted with green dots for the ideas that seem right for Hampden currently. Posters with votes from the workshop are included below.



PLACE: COMMUNITY SPACE

- Better use/redevelop existing town owned properties - town office, Kiwanis property, old fire station ●●●●●●●●
- Partner with RSU for more general access to school owned land ●●●●
- Partner with Old Hampden Academy for more access to privately owned property ●
- Purchase/acquire new town owned property in the vicinity ●
- Organize or support community street party or other events

PLACE: DESIGN

- Add signage, more banners, street furniture, planters & landscaping ●●●●●●●●
- Change lane striping to slow traffic, make space for bike lanes ●●
- Narrow and close existing entrances (driveway)
- Increase design requirements for new construction and redevelopment ●●●●●●●●
- Add public art/monument at key location ●

Hampden Town Center Plan
Public Meeting #3 – Considering Options for the Town Center
December 11, 2018

The Town of Hampden is undertaking a planning effort for the area generally located along Main Road from Western Avenue to Kennebec Road. It includes Western Avenue to about the Route 202 and school entrance intersection. The purpose of this planning effort is to review zoning and infrastructure changes that will enable the development of a Town Center, the vision and goals for which will be defined through this process.

Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of the third meeting held on December 11, 2018, was to prioritize the strategies that will be presented in the Town Center Plan. These strategies are a subset a wider range of strategies presented at the second public meeting on September 25. There were approximately 16 people at this third meeting.

The meeting was split into two parts. The first part was a presentation by Ben Smith, AICP, of North Star Planning, detailing the recommendations for the plan, combined with a question and answer session with Ben, Town Planner Karen Cullen, AICP, and Town Manager Jim Chandler. The second part consisted of a poster gallery of recommendations described in the presentation. Participants were asked to use green dots to vote for what they felt should be the highest priority recommendations in the planning document. These votes were relative indications of support to help inform the priority placed on each recommendation in the plan document.

Presentation

The presentation highlighted elements from the vision statement developed from input at prior meetings and the online survey. Those included:

-) Local activity center for Hampden
-) Small town feel
-) Place to shop, eat, do business
-) Targeted streetscape improvements

-) Complete sidewalk and crosswalk network and off-street trails
-) Enhance existing public spaces and create new ones
-) Public space capable of serving as gathering place
-) Town, school system and business community will work together

The presentation also highlighted recommendations that will be included in the final plan to be presented to the town in early 2019. These recommendations were broken into four main areas.

1. Land Use/Zoning

a. Change the Boundaries of the Town Center Zoning District

The Town Center Zone is recommended to expand up Western Avenue to include the town owned properties where the town office, post office and pool are located, as well as the school district properties down Main Road to the school's southern entrance. The Town Center zone would slightly expand up both sides of Kennebec Road from the Main Road intersection.

b. Adjust the Town Center dimensional standards and allowed uses

Focus on keeping new buildings close to the street, with parking on the side or rear and how to add flexibility or a wider range of allowed uses that could enhance a diverse, multiuse downtown area.

c. Raise the bar for design requirements for new development

New buildings and signage should contribute to the quality of place and pedestrian scale built environment that the community wants to continue building.

2. Transportation

a. Study alternative lane arrangements for Main Road and Western Ave.

There is potential to add on-street parking or designated bike lanes and as well as slow traffic by changing lane striping within the existing paved area. Removing the 2-way center turn lane on Main Road could contribute to the sense of being in a true town center.

- b. Install sidewalk on both sides of Main Road and Western Ave.
Completing a sidewalk and crosswalk network on both sides of the main roads in the study area that meet ADA standards will make it safer and more inviting to walk in the area.
- c. Build a year round trail network within the 4-mile square and between Main Road and the Penobscot.
Such a trail network would add to the recreational opportunities for walking/running/biking in the area, and could be built out around the existing formal trails using the seasonal trails along utility corridors and in conjunction with private property owners.

3. Placemaking

- a. Town Center Signage

Coordinated signage which includes Welcome to the Town Center and point of interest or wayfinding signage would reinforce the identity of the Town Center, establish more recognizable boundaries and tie civic, school and public places together.

- b. Streetscape improvements

Like signage, improvements and additions to the public rights-of-way can communicate place to residents and visitors. Streetscaping improvements including pedestrian scale lighting, landscaping and planters, and street furniture like benches, bike racks, trash receptacles would send the message that the Town Center is a place to walk and enjoy and a place to be, not just travel through.

4. Community Partnerships

- a. RSU 22/School Community

Building connections to the RSU will be valuable on future site planning/campus planning projects, for public space and trails, but certainly for vehicular circulation and parking issues.

b. Business and property owners

A formalized local business association or neighborhood group that can advocate for Town Center projects and issues and can take on some of the maintenance for Town Center improvements or program spaces and promotions will add vitality to the Town Center.

c. Old Hampden Academy

This historic and unique property has long played an important public role in Hampden, and it should continue to do so. Creating a public/private partnership regarding improvements to this property, programming events and activities could generate benefits to the community and owner.

Poster Gallery

Posters summarizing the recommendations detailed in the presentation were arranged around the room. Attendees were given dots and asked to indicate which of the recommendations should be given the highest priority to implement. Posters with votes from the workshop are included below.



LAND USE

2. Adjust TC Dimensional Standards & Uses

- a) New Buildings close to street - max setback
- b) Allow smaller lots to match existing
- c) Add more permitted uses

3. Raise the Bar for design of new buildings

- a) Building design and materials
- b) Front of building to street
- c) No parking between building and street
- d) Connections to abutting properties

TRANSPORTATION

1. Study Alternative lane layout for Main & Western

- a) Feasibility of narrowing lanes for bike lanes or on-street parking
- b) Feasibility of removing 2-way center turn in conjunction with school

2. Install sidewalk on both sides of road in study area

- a) Upgrade crosswalks for visibility & ADA
- b) Concrete or granite as more durable and attractive alternate to asphalt curb

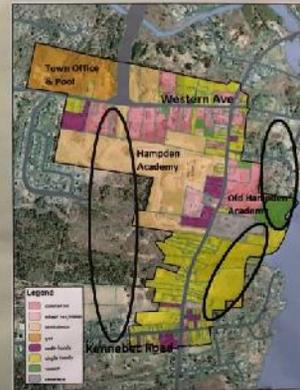
TRANSPORTATION

3. Build a year round off-street trail network

- a) Within the 4-mile square



- b) Between Main Road and Penobscot River



PLACEMAKING

1. Logo/Branding for TC

- a) Town Center signage



- b) Coordinated Wayfinding signage to important local places



2. Streetscape

- a) Pedestrian scale lighting



- b) Landscaping/planters

- c) Benches, bike racks, trash receptacles



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

1. Relationship with RSU <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Future site planning coordinationb) Open space, trails, parking	2. Relationship with business community <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Town Center advocacyb) Promotion & programming
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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

3. Relationship with Old Hampden Academy <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Open spaceb) Trailsc) Community gathering & activities	
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