

BRIDGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN



Prepared for the Bridgton Economic Development Committee and the Town of Bridgton
By Kent Associates Planning & Design, Gardiner, ME
In association with Planning Decisions of Hallowell, Maine, and Wright-Pierce of Topsham, Maine
Spring 2004

BRIDGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This plan was prepared by Kent Associates Planning & Design Consultants of Gardiner, Maine, in association with Planning Decisions of Hallowell, Maine, and Wright-Pierce of Topsham, Maine.

Brian Kent, president of Kent Associates, was project manager and principal design consultant; assisting him was Amanda Walker, design associate, and Anne Doiron, administrator. Frank O'Hara, Vice President of Planning Decisions, Inc., provided marketing analysis for the downtown (including economic development and housing); assisting him was Tabitha Plaisted, associate planner. Jon Edgerton, Vice President at Wright-Pierce provided floodplain, sewer and water engineering and expertise, as well as base mapping materials.

The Bridgton Economic Development Committee, which provided guidance to the consultant team and overall project administration, included:

Peter Lowell (co-chair)
Nelle Ely (co-chair)
Jim Durrell
Earl Cash
Mike Tarantino
Dee Miller
John Carlson
Kathleen Brown, Lake Region Development Council
Woody Woodward, town selectman
Allen Hayes

Town staff assistance came from:

Ronny K. Belanger, town manager
Bill Foye, code enforcement officer

Many Bridgton residents and landowners also provided assistance and cooperation in the development of this plan, as did:

Colin Holme of the Lakes Environmental Association (LEA),
Lori Allen & Brett Doney of Enterprise Maine, and
Nancy Smoak, Lake Region Television

The consultants wish to acknowledge the guidance, assistance and cooperation of all these participants.

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BRIDGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN
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Introduction

The plan presented in this document brings economic development, community development, land use planning, and design together in an overall vision and strategy for the economic revitalization of Bridgton's center. Through research, analysis, public participation, and committee work, the consultant team has developed a specialized, conceptual master plan that builds upon the town's continuing economic development efforts, and provides an organized set of strategies to support successful future initiatives and planning.

This "bricks and mortar" plan identifies market opportunities and economic development strategies that make economic and market sense for Bridgton. The plan includes ideas for expanding some existing, successful businesses as well as opening doors to new businesses and development. It also illustrates how Bridgton can incorporate innovative planning and good design into its economic development strategies, and what funding sources the Town can utilize to achieve the plan.

This Bridgton Economic Development & Downtown Revitalization Plan addresses both the downtown, the heart of the community, and the major highway arterials that serve as gateways to the village center and as future growth areas. Including both of these components in the plan ensures that strategies and initiatives for one area does not hurt the other – appropriate and well-planned development can benefit both the downtown and its gateway arterials, and can help reduce municipal costs. *See Study Area Map, next page.*

Background

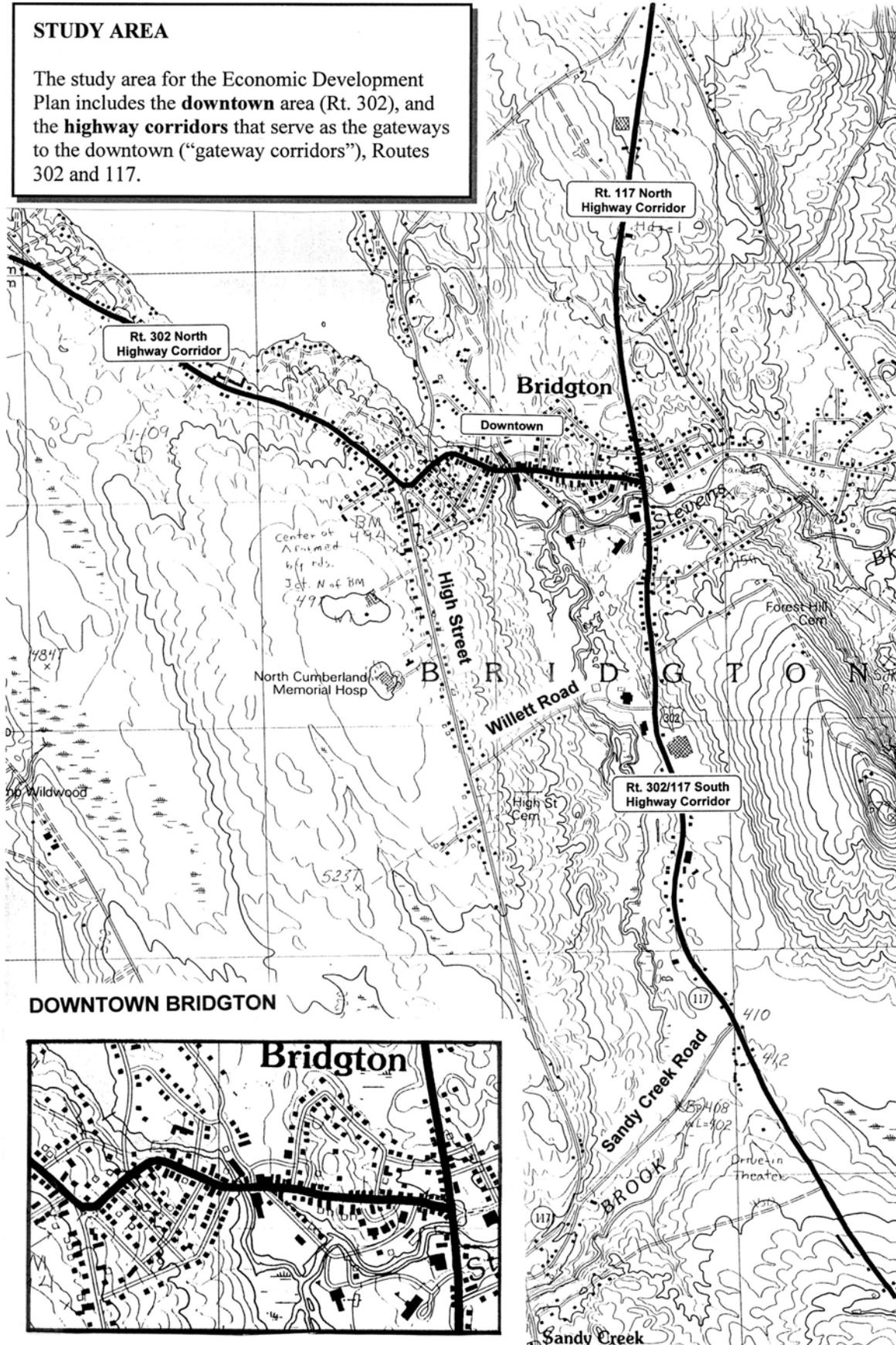
“Over the past [three] years, several local initiatives have begun to address the economic challenges and opportunities facing the Town of Bridgton, Maine. In one way or another, the Comprehensive Planning Committee, the Downtown Bridgton Initiative, Healthy Communities Program, Lake Region Development Council, the Lakes Environmental Association, the Bridgton Community Center and the Greater Bridgton Lakes Region Chamber of Commerce have been involved in or sponsors of community discussions about the lagging local economy. The discussions have produced a number of actions designed to develop a community economic development program and several of those actions have been implemented.

The purpose of the Economic Development Plan is to recognize and integrate the emerging planning and economic development strategies developed by the local working groups over the past two years. The Town of Bridgton has tasked the Bridgton Economic Development Committee with overall review and supervision authority for the project.”

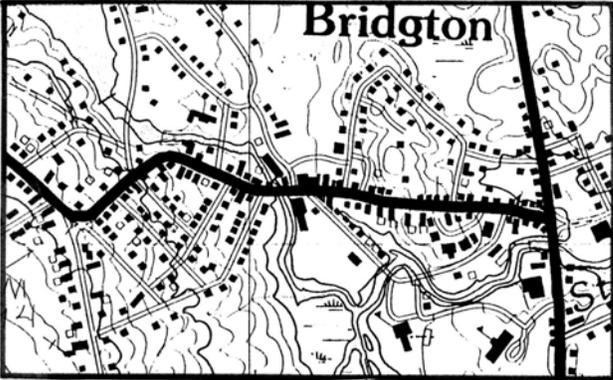
In early 2003, the Bridgton Economic Development Committee (BEDC) selected the Kent Associates team to prepare a “bricks and mortar” plan. This document presents the results of the consultants' work. It spells out a series of recommendations and shows how they can be implemented.

STUDY AREA

The study area for the Economic Development Plan includes the **downtown** area (Rt. 302), and the **highway corridors** that serve as the gateways to the downtown ("gateway corridors"), Routes 302 and 117.



DOWNTOWN BRIDGTON



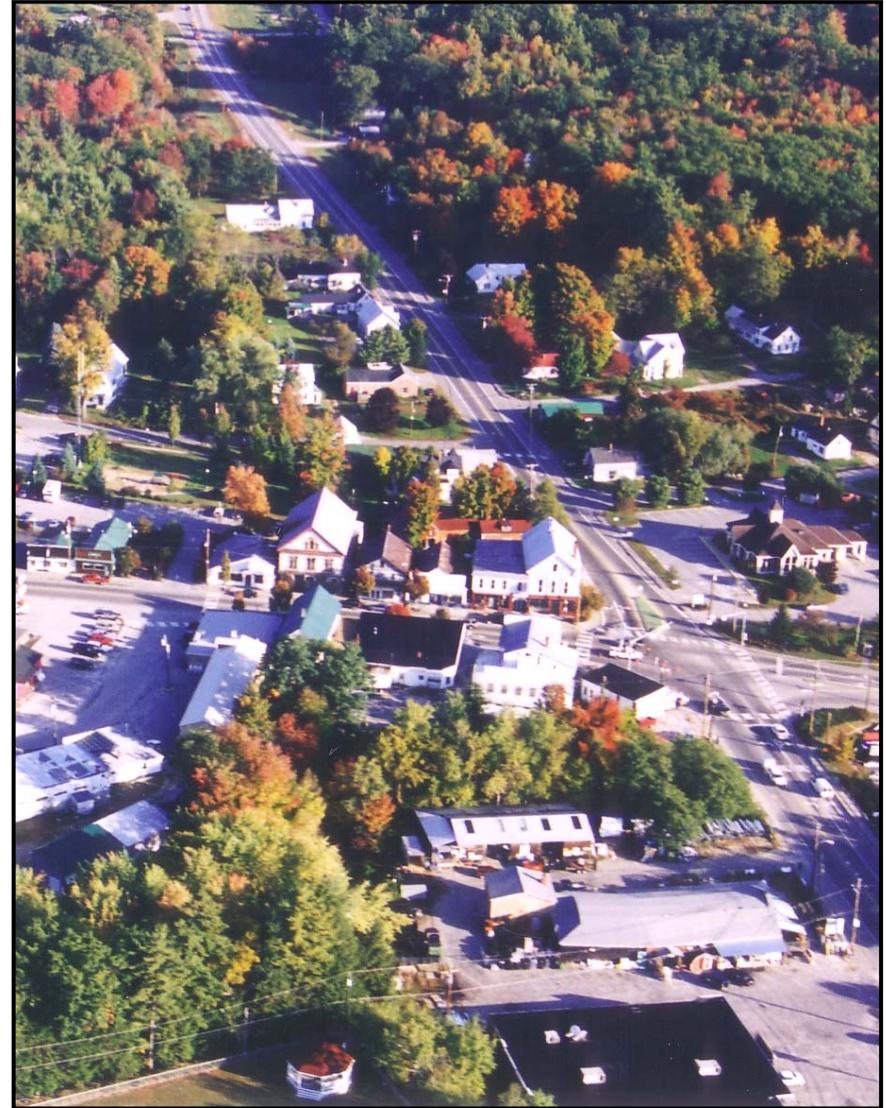
BRIDGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN
PLAN GOALS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REVITALIZATION GOALS

The main goals for Bridgton's downtown and gateway corridors are:

- 1) Identify **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS** that have good potential, based on market research
- 2) **REVITALIZE** and **EXPAND** the village center
- 3) Seek out public and private opportunities for **NEW VILLAGE HOUSING**
- 4) Maintain **MOBILITY AND SAFETY ON ROUTES 302 & 117** and make attractive gateways to the village and town
- 5) Emphasize Bridgton's **CONNECTIONS TO NATURE** and opportunities for residents and tourists to enjoy the natural world

These goals guide the plan components and economic development strategies.



BRIDGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Three central initiatives are listed here which provide an essential focus to the plan. These further the plan goals without invalidating other initiatives, such as trail and open space development.

A. Economic Development in Downtown should focus on Main Street and Depot Street. Keys to making the revitalization and expansion of this area a success are:

1. the establishment of a Development Corporation, supported by business owners, the Town, and private investors;
2. designation of a downtown Tax Increment Finance District;
3. designation of a “blighted” area (to qualify for Community Development Block Grant funds); and
4. implementation of commercial development projects on both sides of Main (with highest priority given to the north side, in and around the Foster parcels).

B. Housing in and around the Village is needed. The Town should identify specific needs and sites and approach experienced housing developers. CDBG and Maine State Housing funding sources should be tapped.

C. Economic Development on Route 302 should be concentrated in key locations and not be allowed to sprawl. Most commercial development should occur between the village and Sandy Creek Road, and the Sandy Creek area should be targeted as a TIF District (and possible Pine Tree Zone). TIF and other funds should be used to improve this area, provide infrastructure, and reward developers for locating there. Some of the TIF funds generated on Rt. 302 should also be committed to the downtown.



I. THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

A. THE PROBLEM

Unlike many Maine towns, Bridgton has already made substantial improvements to the village center. Main Street between the Food Center and the Highland Lake Park has superb sidewalks and lighting and generous well-landscaped mini-parks. Yet behind the Main Street facades there are vacant stores, and behind the buildings there are signs of blight and a lack of parking. Off Main Street, on Depot Street, and on the southern approaches to the village on Route 302, buildings stand in poor repair, access needs to be managed for traffic safety, signage is poor, and the New England village character of the downtown's Main Street is not reflected.

Specific issues the consultant team was charged with addressing include village center housing, tourism and recreation opportunities, retail and other markets, parking and infrastructure, streetscape and open space, and a close examination of the Depot Street area.



Downtown Bridgton

B. THE VISION

The broad goal of Bridgton's village revitalization efforts is to make the town center a destination that attracts more residents, visitors, and tourists. Instead of a "drive-through" Main Street, Bridgton's citizens have a vision of a dynamic, thriving, year-round town center on both sides of Main Street. Located in the heart of the village the center will attract people, development, and economic activity because it's attractive and because it's a community center, shopping center, business center, health center, and a center for the arts.

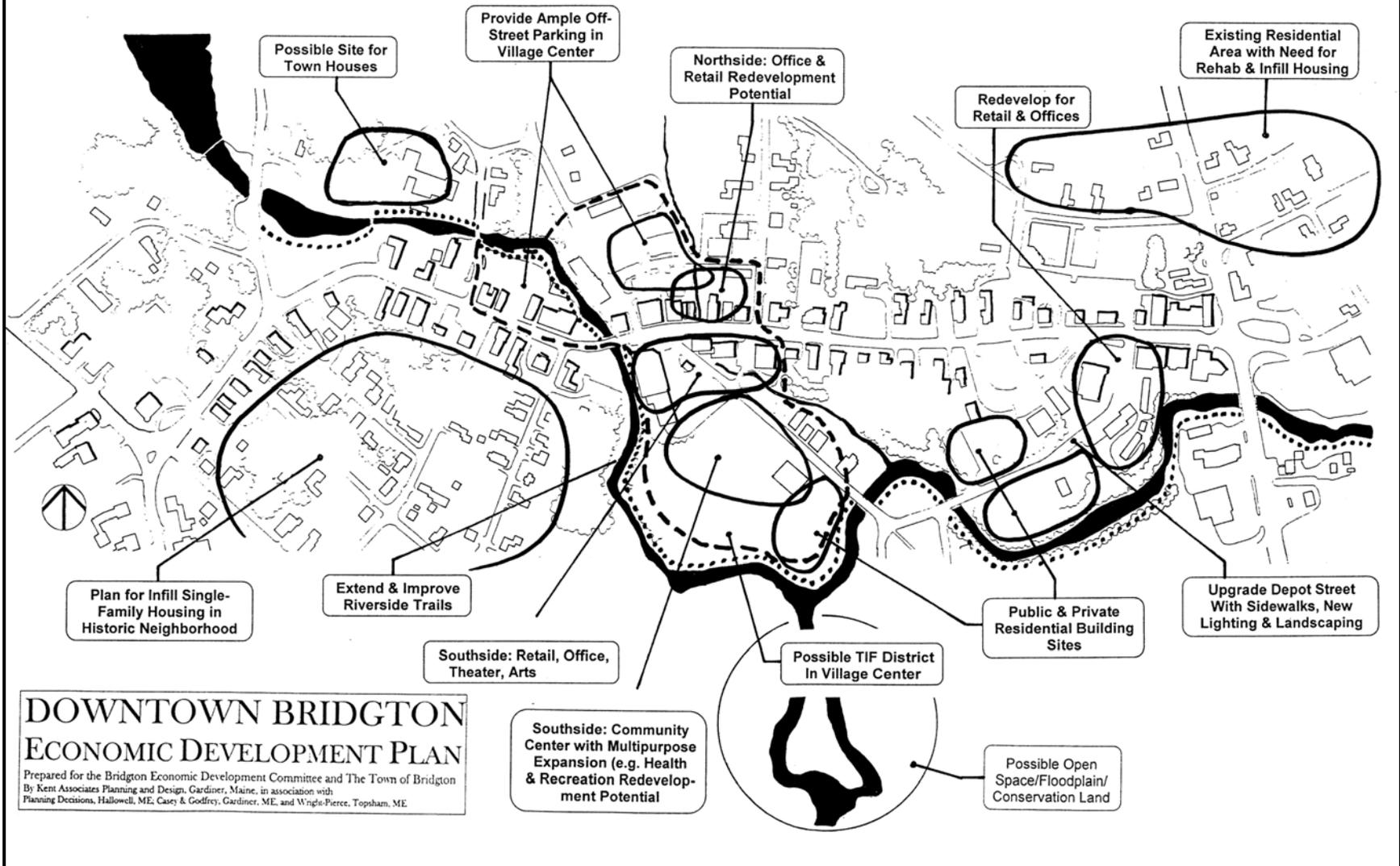
To function effectively the center will provide plenty of parking. It will also expose visitors to the natural world. Nature trails and a kayaking course are proposed along Stevens Brook, near an expanded Bridgton Community Center, on Depot Street.

Supporting and strengthening this core effort in the town center are complimentary initiatives to develop new housing along Stevens Brook and near the elementary school, to upgrade the east end of Depot Street, at Main, and to conserve the natural landscape and floodplain next to downtown.

The map titled "Village Development Opportunities" on the next page locates these initiatives. The town center improvements are focused on and anchored by: the post office and the core buildings north of Main Street, near Stevens Stream and Corn Shop Brook; and on the south side of Main Street, by: Renys Department Store, the Magic Lantern, and the Community Center on Depot Street.

"...the village the center will attract people, development, and economic activity because it's attractive and because it's a community center, shopping center, business center, health center, and a center for the arts."

Village Development Opportunities



C. THE DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

To achieve this vision and create the mechanisms needed to successfully achieve the vision, the Bridgton Economic Development Committee proposes to:

1. Have the Board of Selectmen officially adopt the downtown plan, described here, and incorporate the plan as part of Bridgton's Comprehensive Plan
2. Establish a public/private Development Corporation, supported by citizens, businesses, and the Town, and charge the Corporation with the job of consolidating land, seeking grants, and finding investors, partners, and developers to bring the plan to fruition.
3. Designate the core area of downtown a TIF (Tax Increment Financing) District so that there are incentives to private investors, and there is money available to make public improvements. (See Proposed Downtown TIF District map.)
4. Have the Town apply for CDBG grant funds, in the amount of \$400,000 for the purpose of making streetscape and parking lot improvements, providing micro-loans to businesses, making façade grants, and/or loans to Main Street enterprises.

The table on the next page describes these and other proposed initiatives and suggests funding options; the material that follows describes the downtown plan redevelopment strategy in more detail, with maps, sketches and photographs.



While Bridgton's downtown already has many positive amenities such as sidewalks and lighting, this redevelopment plan addresses economic development as well as additional physical improvements. The Magic Lantern on Main Street (below) lies in the core of the downtown redevelopment area.



DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES
Proposed Initiatives & Funding Sources

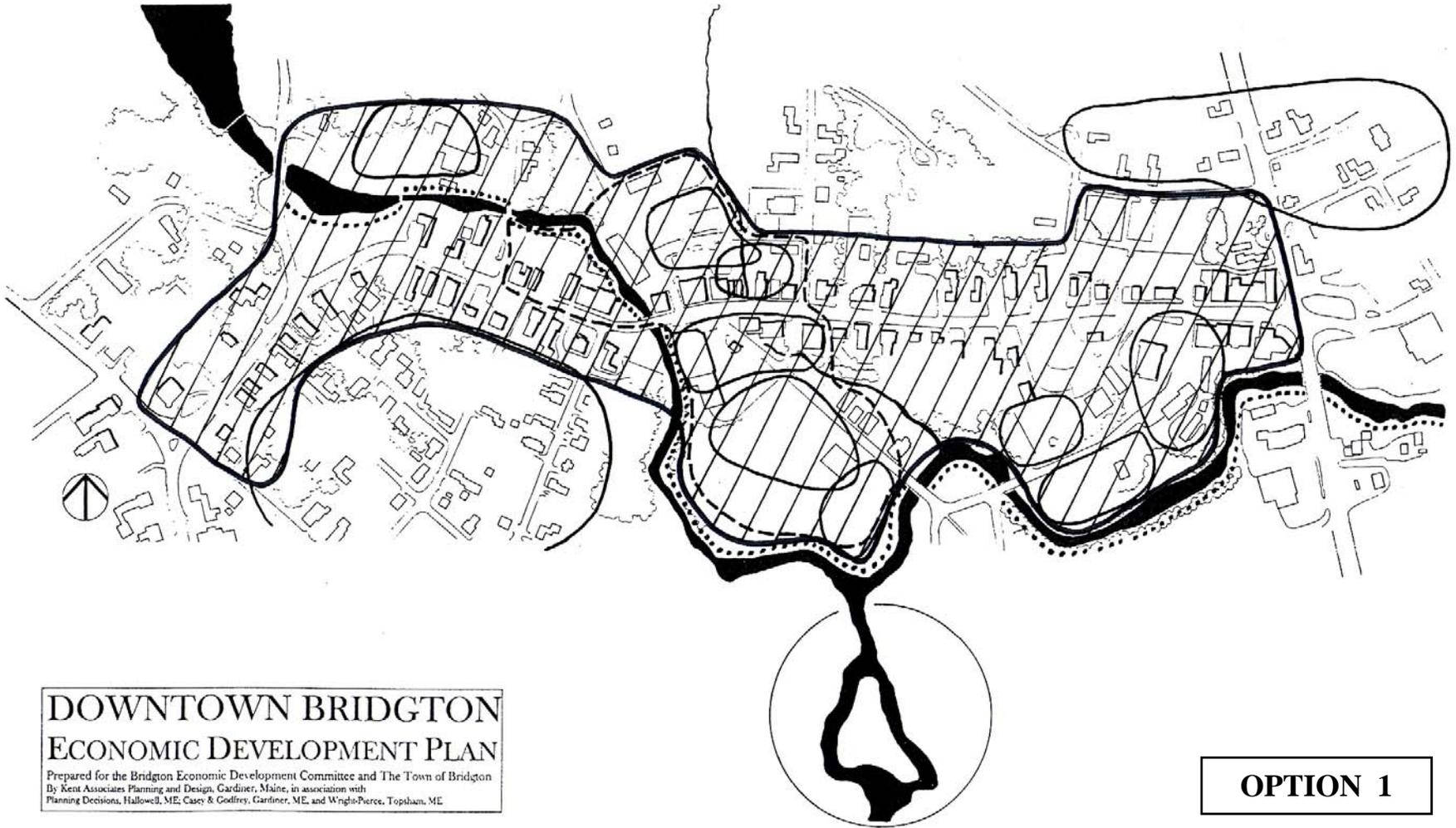
INITIATIVE	OBJECTIVES	SOLUTIONS/FUNDING
Economic Development Investment	Increase investment in the village core	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a TIF district and incentives to attract development and developers • Town (or private) acquisition of key parcels (from willing sellers) to initiate/promote economic development projects • CDBG Micro Loans (low-interest) • Develop a marketing plan to attract private investors and/or developers for new businesses or expansion
	Form/expand Main Street business organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a public/private redevelopment entity (Community Development Corporation) for North and South Main Street sites and for all downtown • Join the Main Street Maine organization • Hire a Main Street manager and/or an economic development director
	Strengthen ties to regional economic development groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western Maine Finance • Western Maine Development group • Lake Region Development Council
	Strengthen tourism in the downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relocate the Chamber of Commerce Tourist Information Office to the downtown core • Hold additional attractions/events in downtown • Cooperate on joint advertising
Enhance the image/character of the downtown	Address “blight” conditions in the village core	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for CDBG funds to spur and leverage private investment • Initiate façade and business improvements (CDBG low-interest loans and/or grants)

(continued next page)

(continued)

INITIATIVE	IDEAS & ISSUES	SOLUTIONS/FUNDING
Public/physical infrastructure	Address floodplain constraints within village core	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town ordinance provisions that assure private businesses have flood insurance • Look for “Project Impact” (FEMA) funding
	Provide adequate, convenient, safe, off-street, public parking (at 3 locations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town acquisition (or trades) from willing owners, plus CDBG infrastructure funds, and Town CIP funds
	Sidewalks/streetscape on Depot and Park Streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDBG Downtown Program • Town CIP funds
	Utility (overhead wires) improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with CMP
Housing	Provide affordable housing for “urban” retirees (e.g., new townhouses, infill new housing, and rehab of historic structures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) program funds to help reduce private development costs • Maine and National Historic Preservation tax incentive programs • Attract private developers/investors • Investigate MSHA’s new housing TIF program
Recreation/trails	Improve streamside trails with benches, boardwalks, and signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Conservation Trails Funding program, volunteers, and private donations • MDOT Enhancement Program & Gateway Program
	Create active, public/ community outdoor “green”/open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town acquisition (or trades) from willing owners, plus CDBG infrastructure funds, and Town CIP funds.
	Expanded open space/parkland within the flood plain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tap into future LMF programs • Seek landowner donation (or private purchase) of conservation easement • Work with the local Land Trust

Village Development Opportunities
Proposed Downtown TIF District

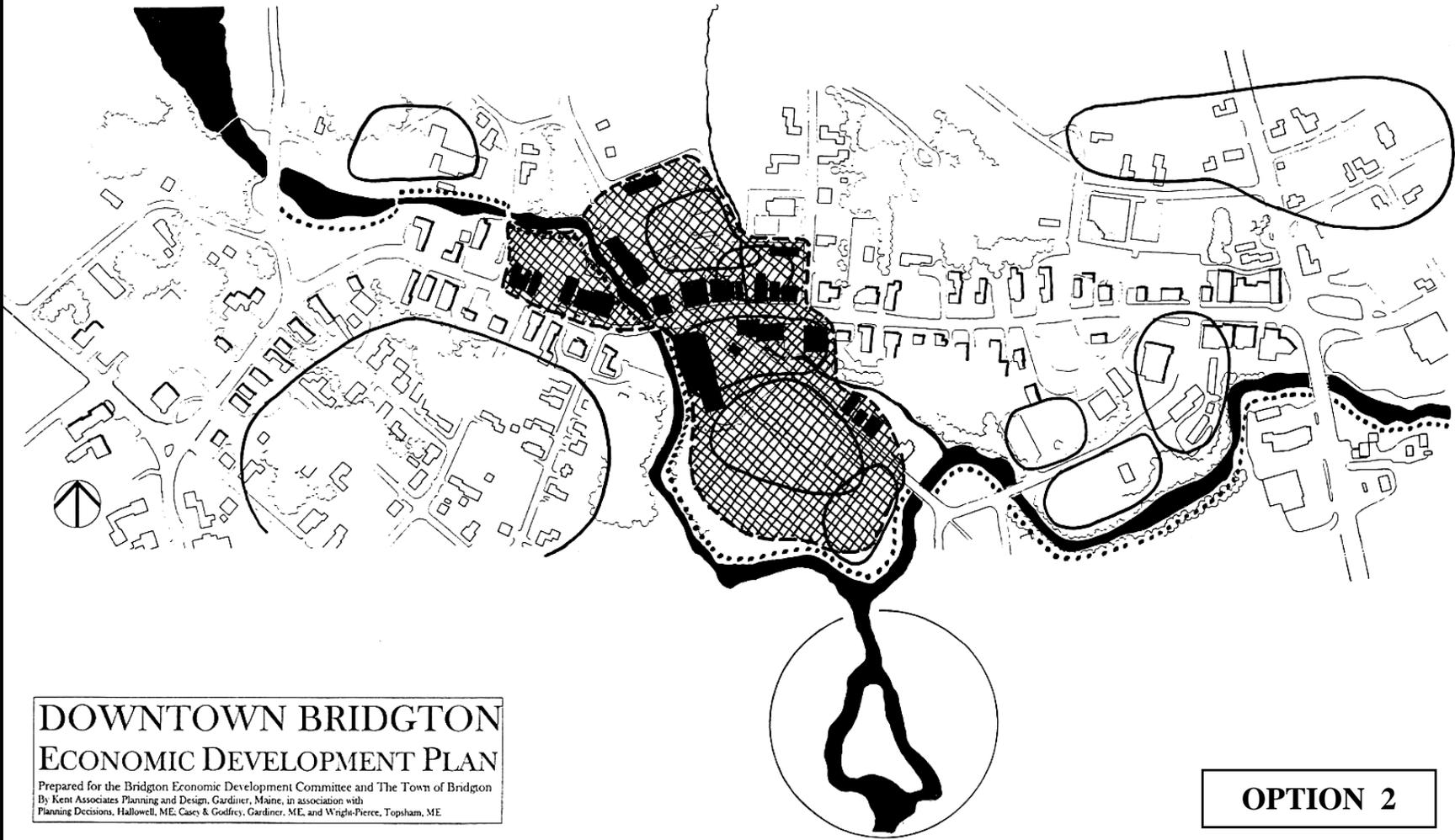


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OPTION 1

Village Development Opportunities
Proposed Downtown TIF District



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OPTION 2

D. PLAN DETAILS

1) Projects Proposed on Town-Owned Land

The Town owns a considerable amount of land in and around the village center. Some is developed, some is not, and some, because of flooding issues, should never be developed. The developable land, however, offers a number of opportunities to fulfill the Town's economic development goals.

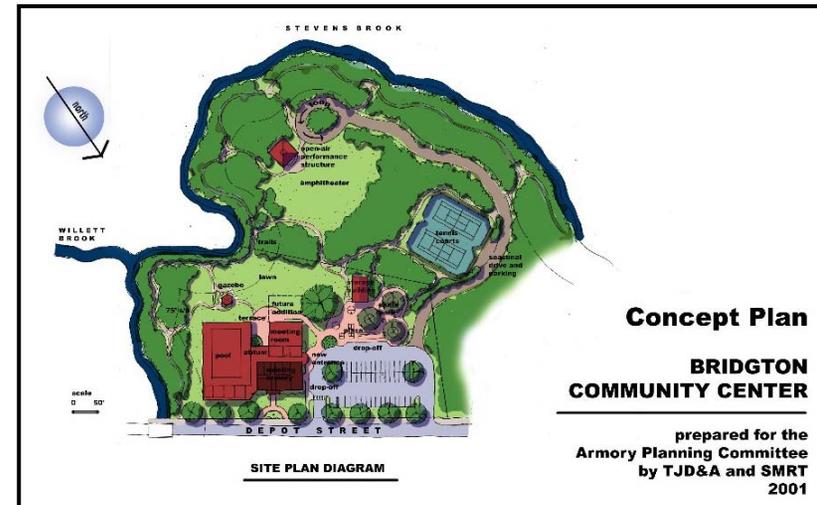
Careful, well-considered development for parking, housing and private business makes sense if it contributes to the betterment of downtown and results in the implementation of the plan for the village and beyond.

The "Town Resources Map" on the next page shows all town-owned property in the village and surrounding area. Note, too, that the Town owns all road rights-of-way. The two Village Development Opportunities Maps show seven sites where improvements can be made; some are owned entirely by the Town, others involve public transactions and cooperation with private owners to make them successful and important components of the downtown plan. An eighth site, near the Elementary School and Public Works Department land, should also be included in this list. (It's not shown on the "Town Owned Land Opportunities" maps but is highlighted on the "Town Resources Map".)

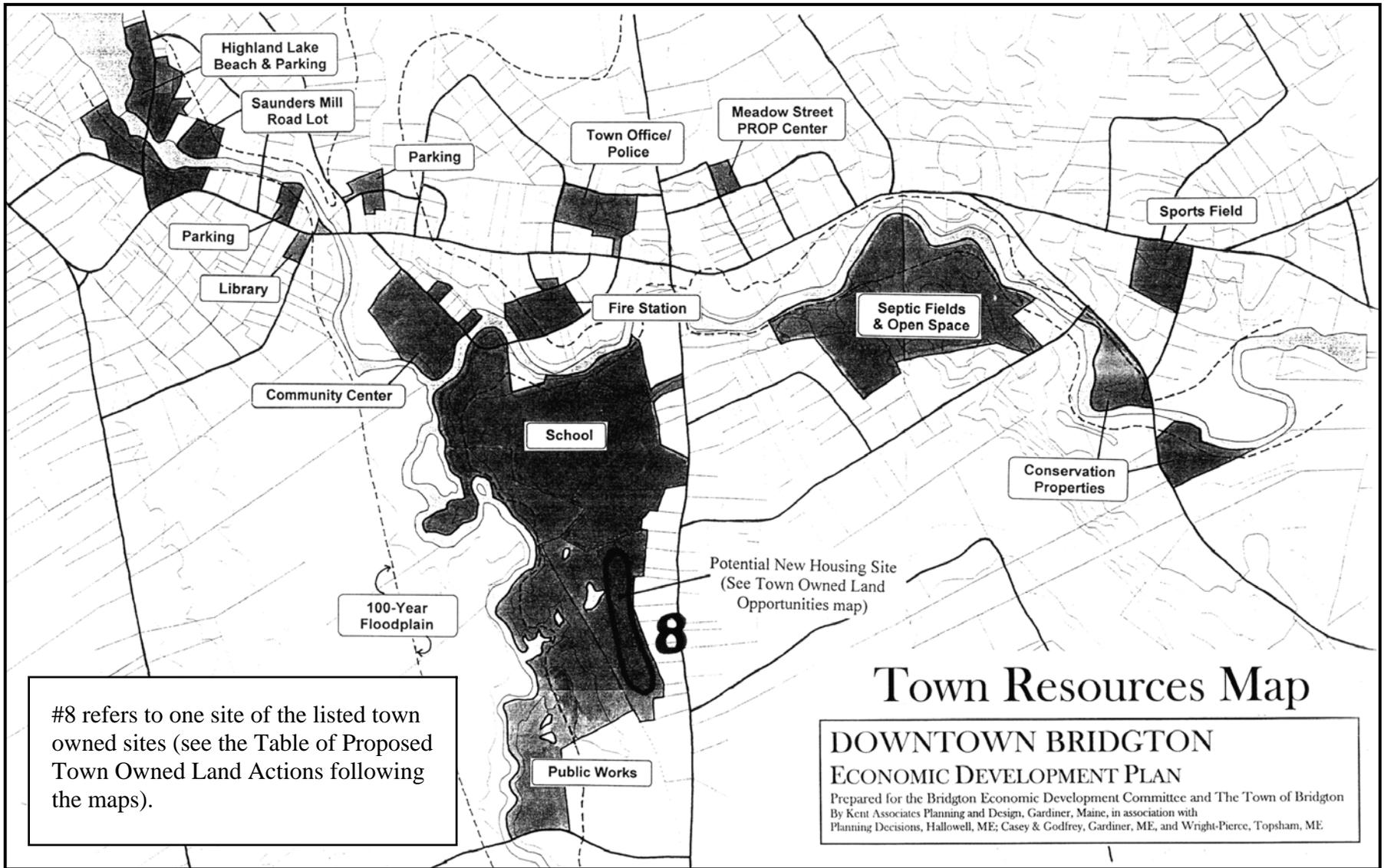
The eight town-owned sites and possible actions associated with them are listed in the Table of Proposed Town Owned Land Actions that follows the maps.



Existing Bridgton Community Center site on Depot Street.



Concept plan for the Bridgton Community Center – see Site # 4 on the "Town-Owned Land Opportunities" maps for how the Community Center site fits into the Downtown Plan. (Note: the above plan is oriented upside-down from other plans in this report.)

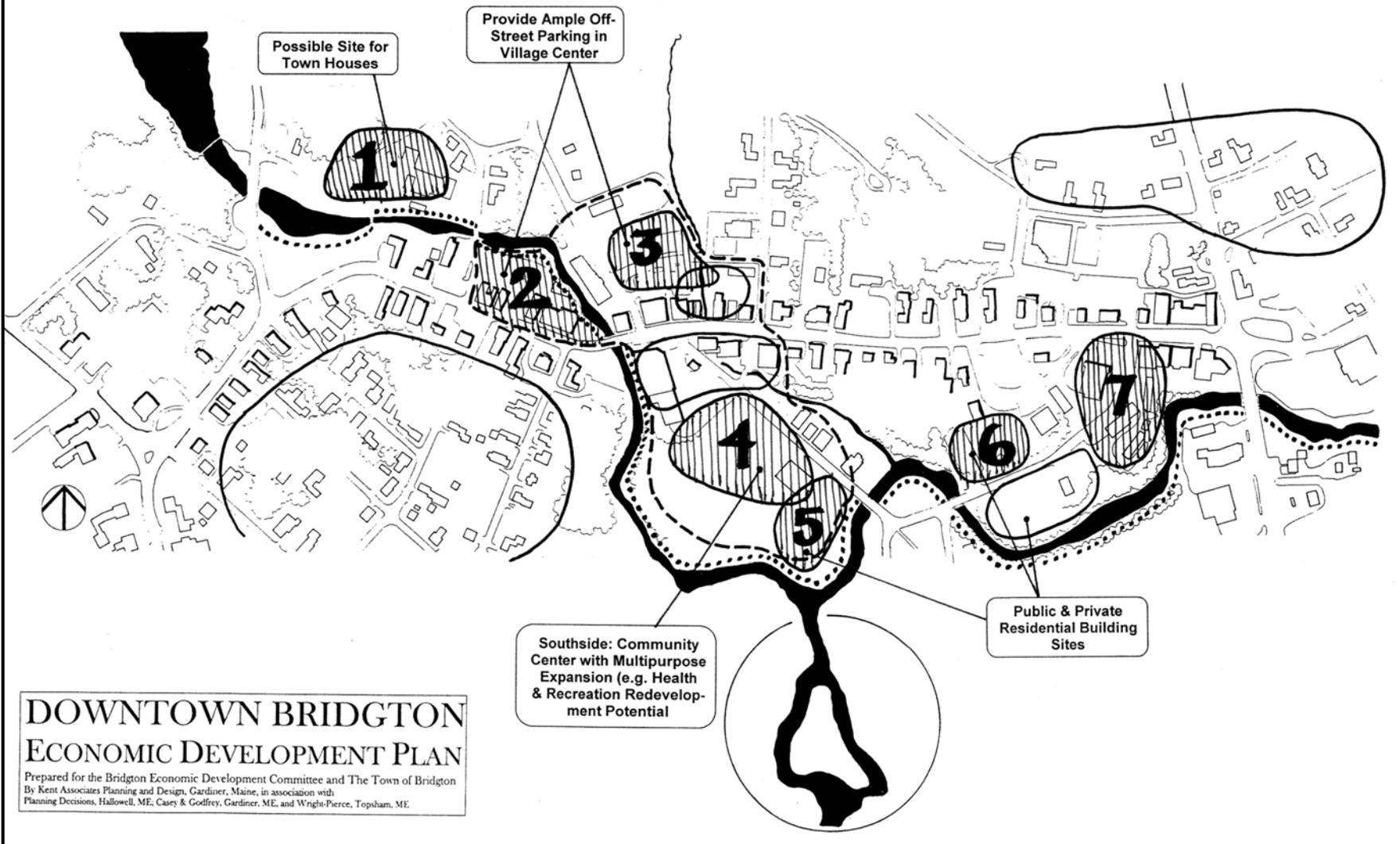


#8 refers to one site of the listed town owned sites (see the Table of Proposed Town Owned Land Actions following the maps).

Town Resources Map

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Village Development Opportunities
Town Owned Land Opportunities

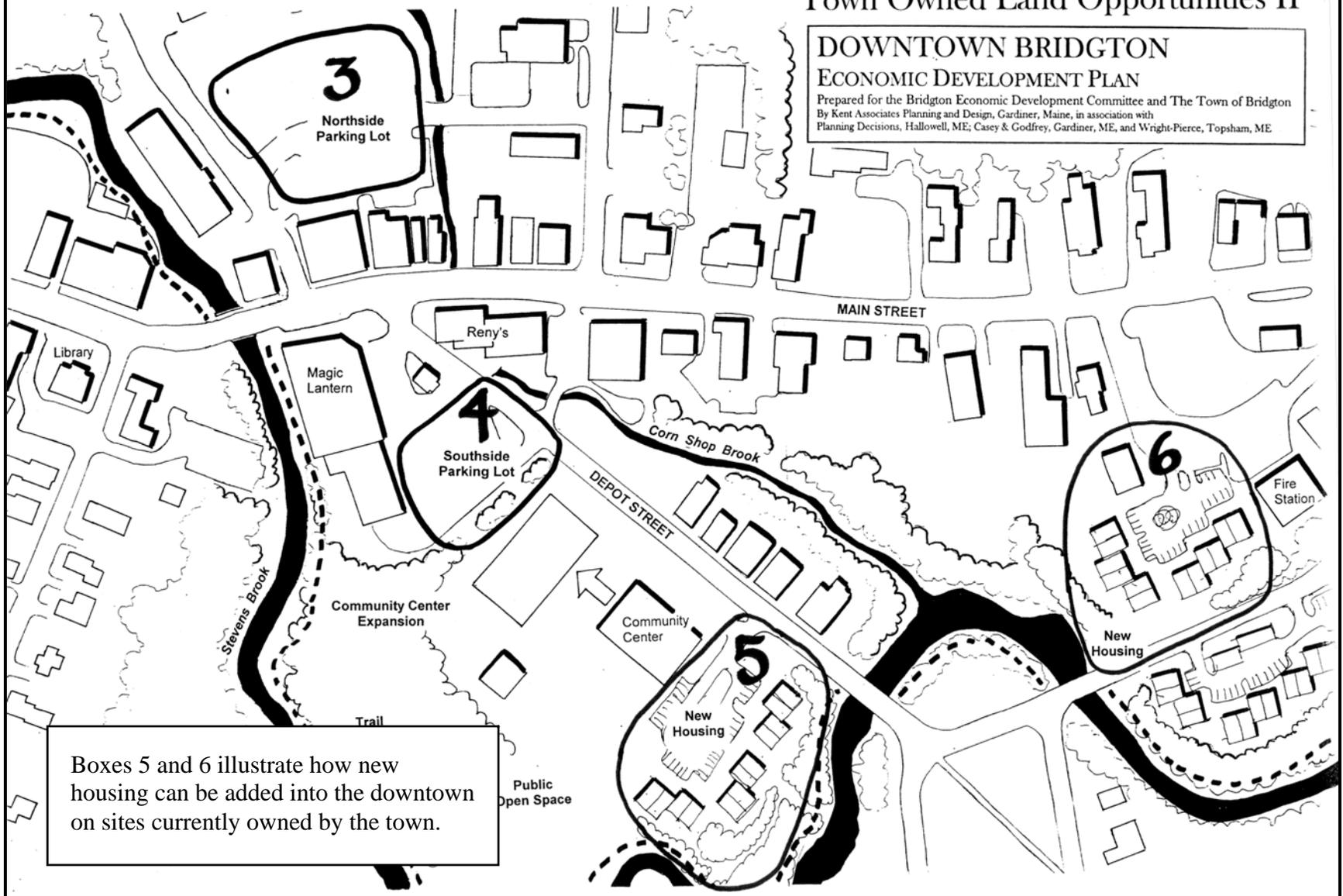


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Village Development Opportunities
Town Owned Land Opportunities II

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Boxes 5 and 6 illustrate how new housing can be added into the downtown on sites currently owned by the town.

TABLE OF PROPOSED TOWN OWNED LAND ACTIONS (Summary – more details follow)

SITE # & TAX MAP	SIZE	USES	ACTIONS NEEDED
1 Map 22, Lot 85	1.4 acres	Possible town-house building site, especially if expanded onto adjacent Mill Site on Kennard Street and Stevens Brook	Conduct feasibility study for one or both sites
2 Map 23, Lot 11	0.5 acres	Make improvements to this existing Town lot in cooperation with adjacent owners	Make part of CDBG application; consider curbing, lighting, landscaping and signage improvements and build streamside trail
3 Map 23, Lots 25 &26	0.6 acres	Consolidate these existing parking lots and expand them in cooperation with adjacent land owners	Make part of CDBG application; develop and overall parking lot plan that benefits public and private interests; design and build an attractive parking area with easy access to Main Street
4 Map 23 & 27, Lots 137 & 5	(unknown)	Uses for this area include retail, arts, parking and a possible community center, all developed as a public/private venture with the Town contributing Depot St. ROW and Community Center land to make the deal work.	A Bridgton Development Corporation is the key to making this venture work and bringing together the key players
5 Map 27, Lot 5	(unknown)	Possible site for about 12 townhouses built on the Community Center land	Approach reputable housing developers to ascertain their interest in this and other in-town housing opportunities
6 Map 23, Lot 111	1.2 acres	Another possible housing site, adjacent to the fire station	See above
7 --	--	This intersection at Depot Street & Main Street detracts from the downtown's appearance; by making street, curb and sidewalk improvements and working with adjacent owners to reduce curb-cuts and plant trees, this area could be improved.	Use Town capital funds for improvements, and approach surrounding owners to assist them with building upgrades (micro-loans and/or façade grants)
8 Map 9, Lot 79	part of 12-acre site	Consider for possible housing in back of the Portland Road houses, with access via the Chamber of Commerce lot	See #5

The town also owns a 14-acre parcel on the southside of Stevens Brook (Map 24, Lot 93) that lies east of Route 302 and has access on to Smith Avenue. This property has limited potential for development because about two-thirds is in the 100-year floodplain, another ± 2 acres contains a leach field, and some half of the remainder is wetland. The remaining 2 to 3 acres could accommodate 8 to 12 townhouse units, in a linear pattern, with access off Smith Avenue. The floodplain creates an attractive natural, park-like area that can be enhanced with trails. The site should be planned for as a whole, as a community park with the possibility of some housing. The stream is a valuable, beautiful natural asset.

2) Village Core Development Opportunities

VILLAGE CENTER PLANS

The map titled “Village Core Development Opportunities” (next page) serves to introduce various aspects of the village center (downtown) plan. It shows:

- the core redevelopment area on the northside of Main Street;
- the core redevelopment area on the southside of Main Street;
- the locations of possible new housing sites; and
- the general locations of proposed, enlarged, public parking areas.

The map titled “Proposed Downtown TIF District” shows:

- the extent of the proposed TIF District (covering ± 20 acres and 27 properties on the north side of Main St. and 14 properties on the south side, along Depot Street Six of these are Town-owned (see the map illustration)); and
- all buildings judged to be in blighted condition and in need of demolition or substantial rehabilitation.

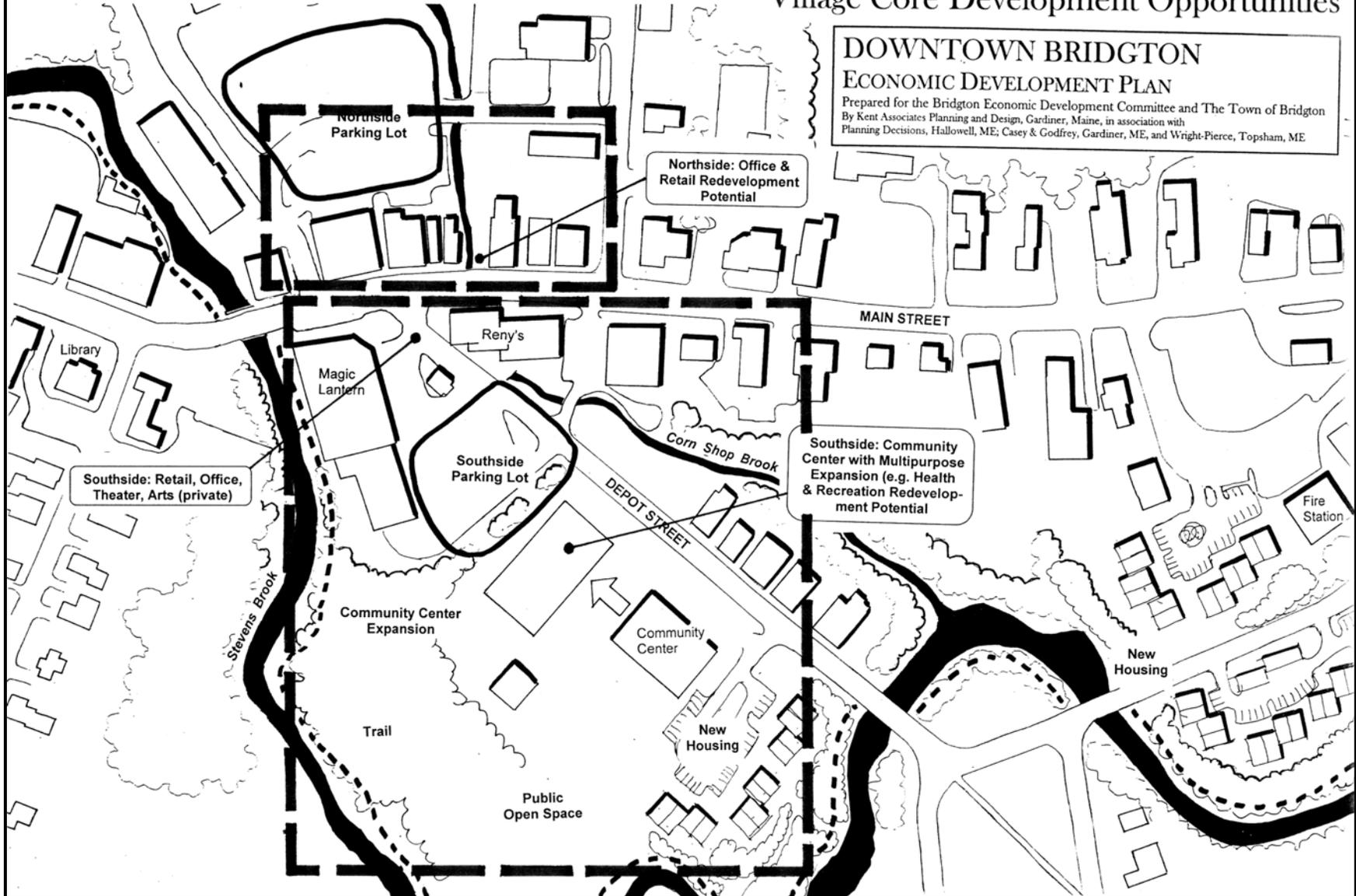
Note: Two possible TIF Districts could be created downtown, as shown on page 1-6. Option 1 covers 20 acres; it is analyzed in the TIF discussion in Section V. The larger, preferred TIF District, Option 2, covers most of the historic village and is about 70 acres in size.



Two views of Main Street, looking east.

Village Core Development Opportunities

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THE VILLAGE CENTER: NORTHSIDE

(See “Northside Sketch Plan”, “Northside Parcel Layout”, and “Northside Sketch Plan Concept Illustration”)

Recommended, major, improvements focus on two areas:

1. Improvements to Town-owned land north of Park Street, just west of Corn Shop Brook; and
 2. Improvements to Corn Shop Brook area, and public/private spaces that adjoin it, between Park Street and Main Street, west of Elm Street.
1. The Town-owned vacant land north of Park Street (Map 23, Lot 25; see the “Northside Parcel Layout” illustration) should be improved as public parking that is paved, striped, and landscaped with lighting, street-trees, and grass verges. These upgrades would add about 30 public parking spaces in this north-central part of the village. The cost of making these improvements is estimated to range between \$107,000 and \$122,000 (see Appendix for details).
 2. Plans for the area around Corn Shop Brook, between Park and Main Streets, are shown on the Sketch Plan Concept Illustration that follows. Comprising 8 lots (Lot 26 through Lot 35) held by 6 owners, with one of the lots being town-owned, the area offers exceptional redevelopment potential, provided a coordinated, cooperative course of action is followed – possibly steered by the proposed Bridgton Development Corporation.

The revitalization strategy in this area calls for the owners of four buildings (all marked “existing” on the Sketch Plan) to cooperate in providing shared public/private off-street parking.



The plan also calls for cooperation between the Town (the owner of Lots 25 and 26) and the owner of Lots 31, 32, and 33; as the Sketch Plan and aerial sketches show, Bridgton village center could be substantially enhanced with the following concepts:

a. A New Town Green

A Town “green” could be created on Main Street (the front of Lots 31/32/33), and in exchange the Town could give the owner private parking on Lot 26; the cost of making improvements to this parking lot are estimated to be between \$86,000 and \$96,000 (see Appendix for details).

b. New Retail/Office Development

New 1- and 2-story buildings could be constructed (see buildings marked “new store” on the Sketch Plan), set back from Main Street to overlook the “green” and set back from the brook for floodplain reasons; one of these new buildings



is shown located partially on town-owned property (Lot 26). Served by a covered walkway, the building complex on Lots 31, 32, and 33 could accommodate about 11,000 square feet of new retail and office space and could be expanded west, onto Lots 26, 29, and 30. Ground floor space here could also accommodate a new Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center. This redevelopment, west of the Brook, would mean the demolition of two substandard buildings, an expansion of a small, private green, and clean-up/restoration for the Brook itself. The creation of both the green and the new set of buildings should be overseen by the Bridgton Development Corporation.

Funding for this northside development initiative must involve a combination of public and private funds:

- Private investment should be encouraged by creating TIF benefits and incentives, which could include some reduction in taxes or public expenditures that directly benefit the

private investors (see “Economic Development” later in this report).

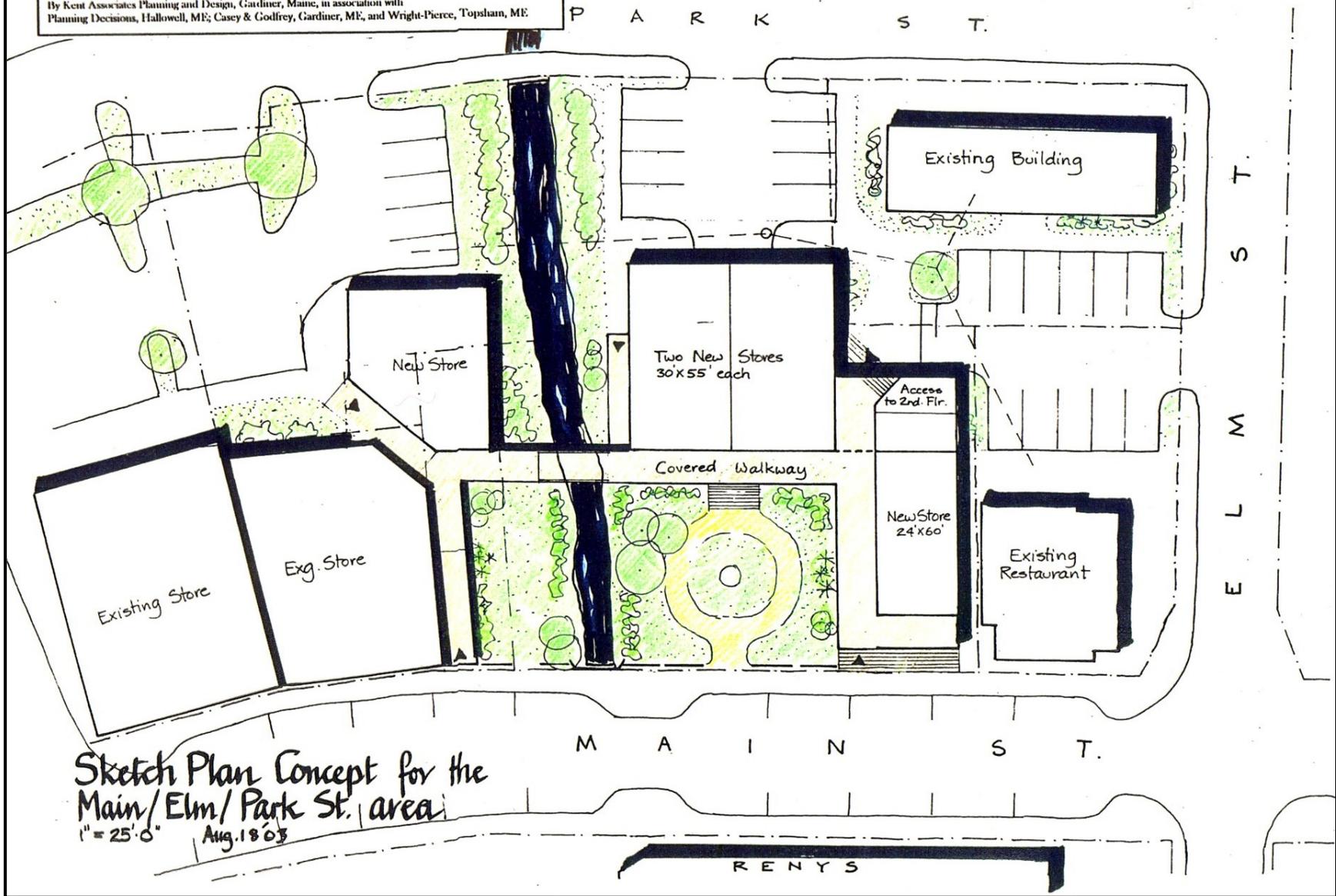
- Clearly, CDBG funds should also be part of the mix, as should Town CIP funds; these could be used for parking and sidewalk improvements, landscaping and lighting and the like.
- FEMA funds should also be explored for making improvements along the Brook.
- Micro-loans or grants could also be funded through the CDBG program.

The aerial Sketch Concept Illustrations that follow illustrate how these improvements would enhance the character and economy of downtown.

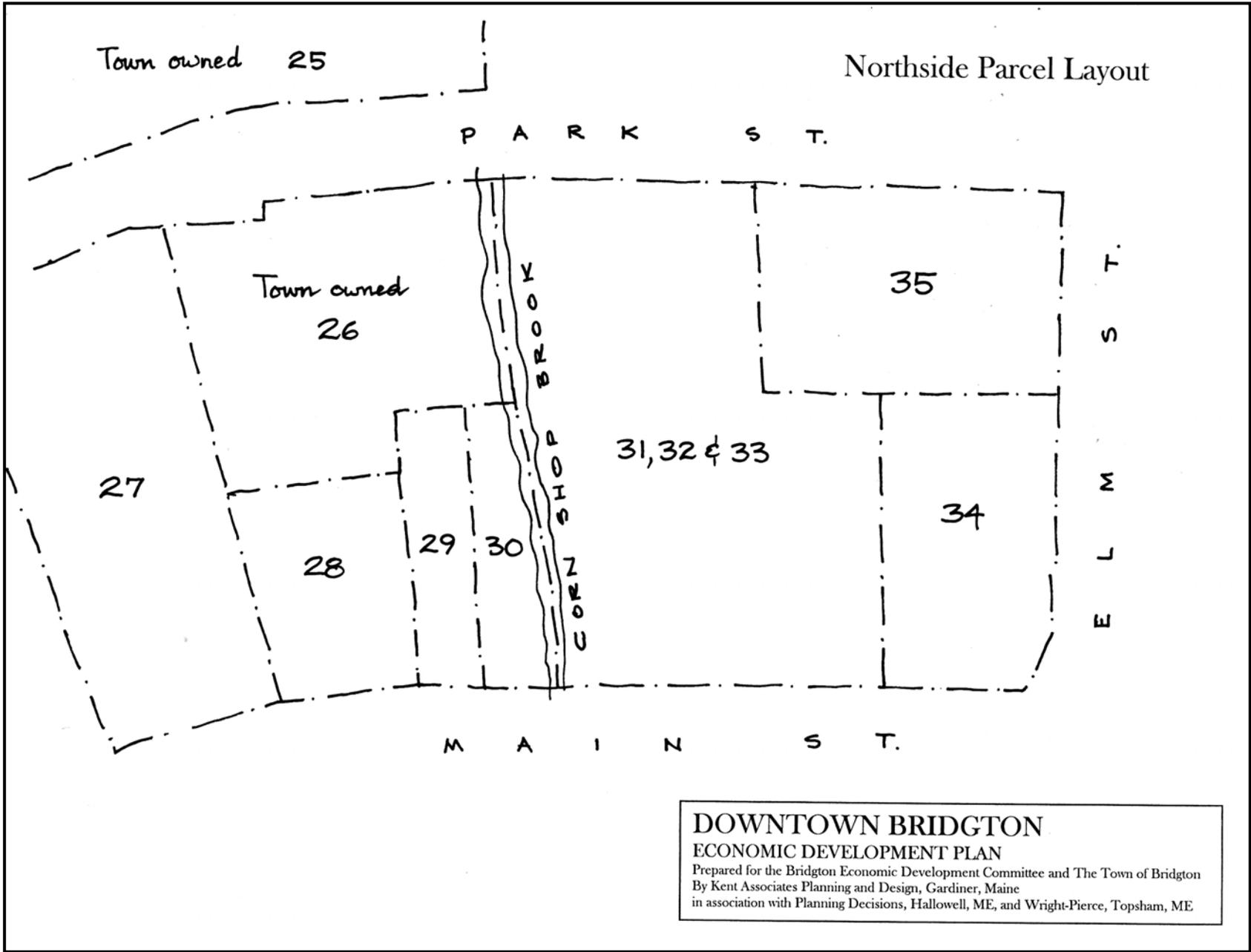
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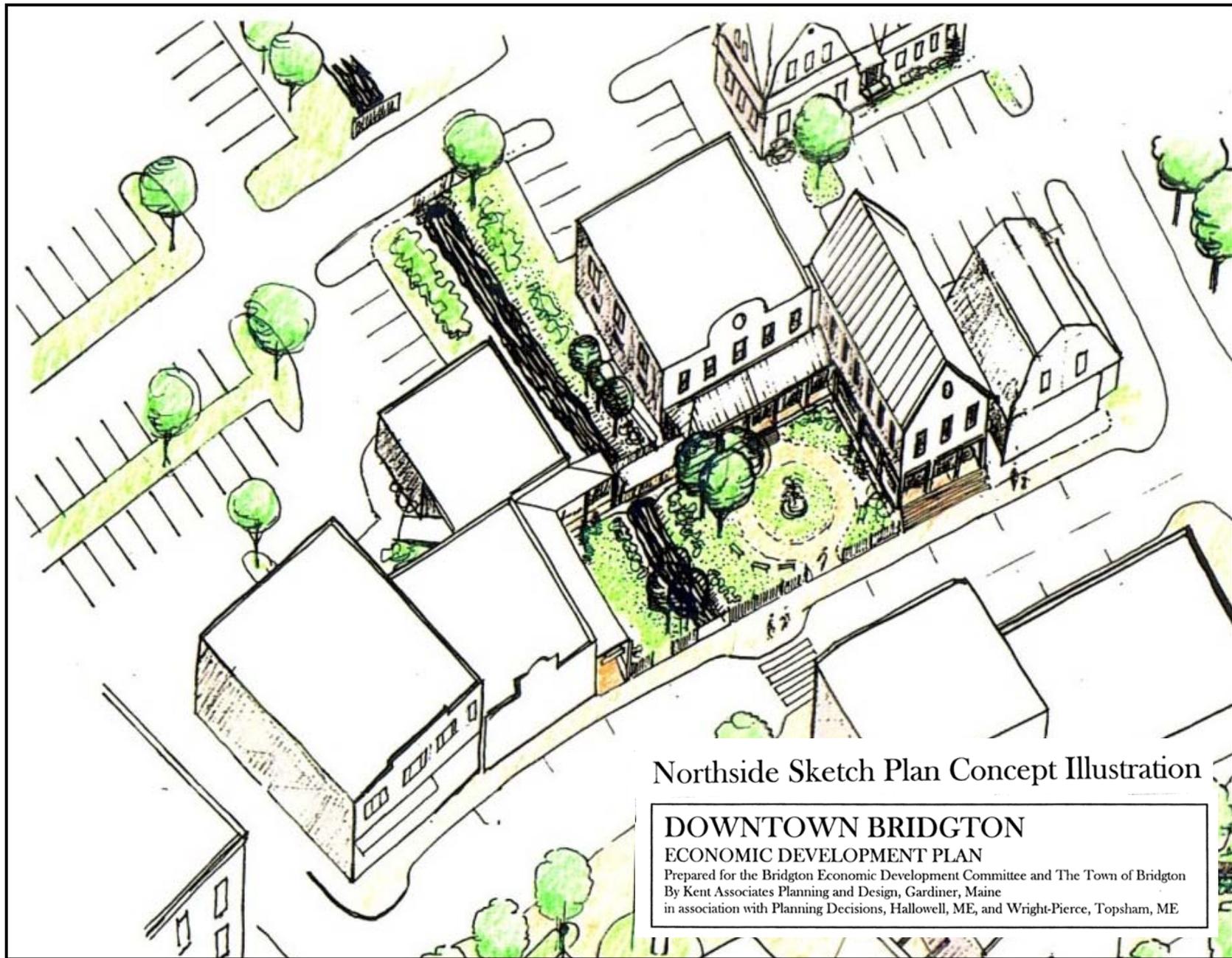
Northside Sketch Plan



*Sketch Plan Concept for the
Main/Elm/Park St. area
1" = 25' 0" Aug. 18 03*



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Northside Sketch Plan Concept Illustration

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in association with Planning Decisions, Hallowell, ME, and Wright-Pierce, Topsham, ME

THE VILLAGE CENTER: SOUTHSIDE

(See “*Southside Sketch Plan Option A*”, “*Southside Sketch Plan Option B*”, “*Southside Sketch Concept Illustration Option A*”, and “*Southside Sketch Concept Illustration Option B*”).)

The major recommendations for improvements on the southside of Main Street, east of Stevens Brook, focus on three privately-owned parcels and the Community Center parcel on Depot Street. Here, two approaches to development are proposed: “Option A” and “Option B”. Both approaches will require public/private cooperation and coordination, however, the benefits of cooperation should include lower costs and significant gains for *all* participants.

The approach selected will depend on the participants’ preferences; both offer opportunities to expand existing businesses and both can take advantage of being within the TIF district. Whichever plan approach is adopted, the process should be guided by the proposed Bridgton Development Corporation, since the Corporation would be best positioned to facilitate the discussions and help guide new business to this southside center.

The Development Concept

The plans and sketches that follow illustrate both approaches. In one approach, Depot Street is closed at Main Street and redirected to the east of Renys, so as to form a new 4-way intersection with Main and Elm; in the other approach Depot Street is not realigned.

Despite these differences, both approaches feature the same elements because they’re both based on the concept of a multi-use, retail/office/health and community center served by a central, public, parking area.

The critical components that underpin the concept include the following:

1. A New Public Square

The square is a community space facing Main Street; it acts as a “front room,” an outdoor gathering place with memorial, flagpoles, benches, garden, stream overlook, and arbor; it also serves as a front door to Renys, Elegance, a new Magic Lantern, and new retail/office uses associated with the Magic Lantern ownership. Together with the new Town green, across the street on the northside, this square will draw people in, and add interest and market appeal to downtown.

2. A New Magic Lantern Complex

Architectural design work to develop a new building complex on the site of the Magic Lantern is underway. The complex may include: a new cinema/theater, retail rental space, office/research space, and possibly apartments. The structure behind the old Magic Lantern would be expanded (upward) and renovated. Improvements would qualify for TIF benefits.

3. Elegance Beauty Shop

Under both plan approaches this small but important business and structure would be retained and would be a focal point within this revitalized area. It is sited for optimum exposure. The current parking space owned by the business would be repositioned within the larger parking area and could be reserved spaces.

4. Renys Retail Center

Renys currently plans to expand, and the two plans presented here show two ways to achieve an expansion – one option is to expand to the rear (south) of the older structure in the old Depot Street right-of-way, and the other option is to expand to the east, so as to adjoin the existing single-story Renys building facing



Main Street. In either proposal, Renys would gain and be able to use new parking space, funded in-part with grant money. Renys would also be able to take advantage of the TIF district incentives.

5. Southside Parking

Through land trades, cooperative agreements, and/or outright purchases, every effort should be made to consolidate and increase parking on the southside. Public and private interests stand to benefit, especially as the mix of uses surrounding the parking area will put different time-of-day demands on the lot. The lot improvement costs can be covered with CDBG funds, TIF dollars, and some private contributions, if appropriate. The cost of making these improvements is estimated to range between \$226,000 and \$251,000 (see Appendix for details).

6. Multi-purpose Community Center

Under both plan proposals, expansion of the existing Community Center into a multi-purpose community asset is recommended.



Possible activities that could be accommodated in such a facility include:

- an indoor pool
- a gym/spa
- a health center
- an arts center
- a community restaurant/cafeteria
- an Adult Ed center, etc.

The purpose of the multi-purpose center is to expand the range of services offered the community in the center of the village. Funding for such a center would need to draw on: TIF funds, private donations, rental fees, and Town Capital Improvement funds. An expansion of hospital/health services within the center should be considered; further, it could be designed to offer a variety of meeting rooms and hall suitable for conferences and Town functions.

7. Depot Street Historic Structures

The small two-story buildings on the northeast side of Depot Street are architecturally significant and were once associated with the old narrow-gauge railroad here. One has been restored as a gift and craft store. The remaining structures have similar potential and could be upgraded using TIF incentives. (See photo below.)



8. Other Features

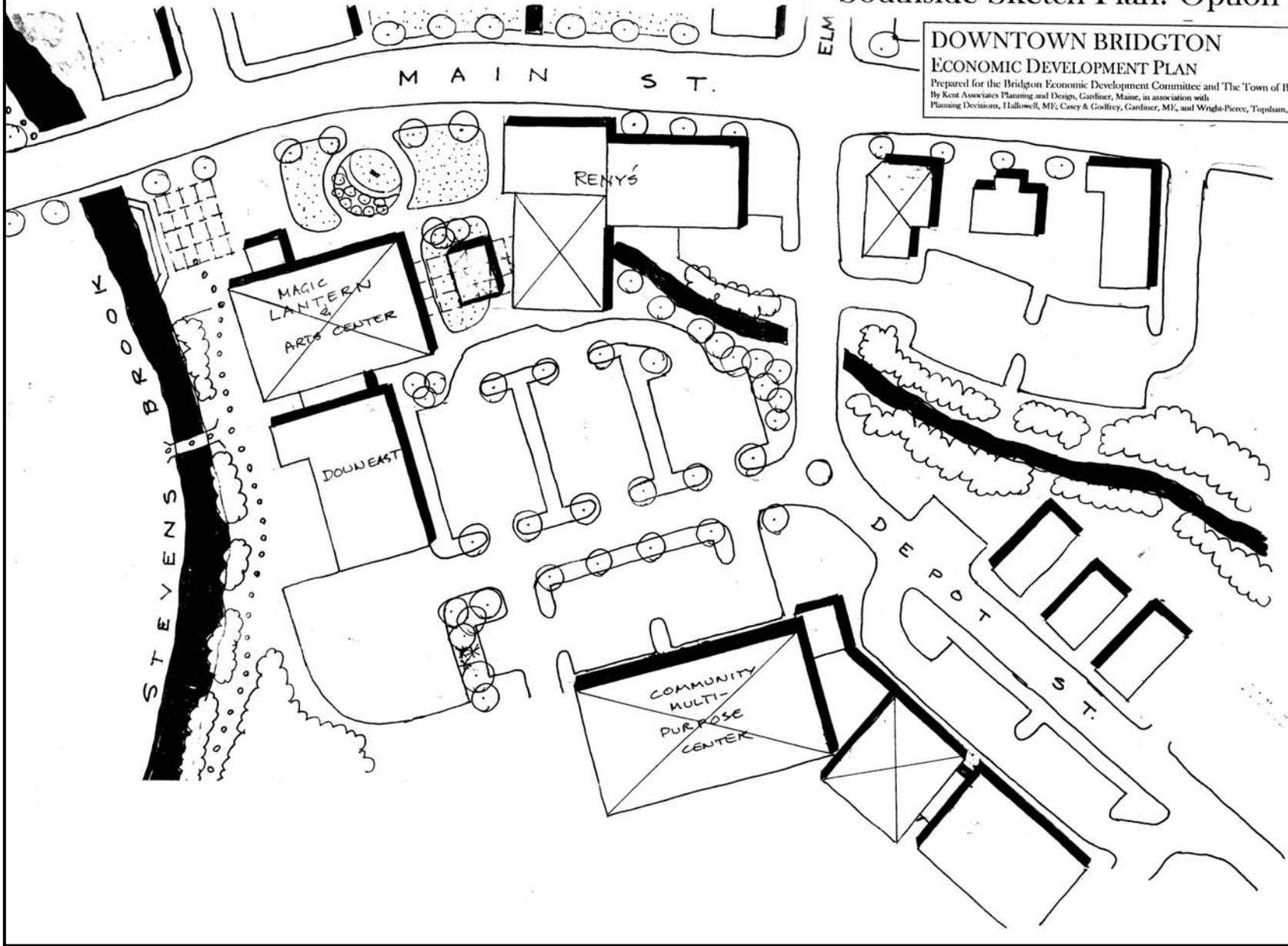
This entire area can be further enhanced with public improvements:

- amenities such as signage, benches, and a boardwalk, to the Stevens Brook trail;
- streetscape improvements to Depot Street that extend the Main Street streetlights, sidewalks, and street-tree planting into this area (and the new parking lot); and
- construction of a children's play area as envisioned in earlier plans for the community center.

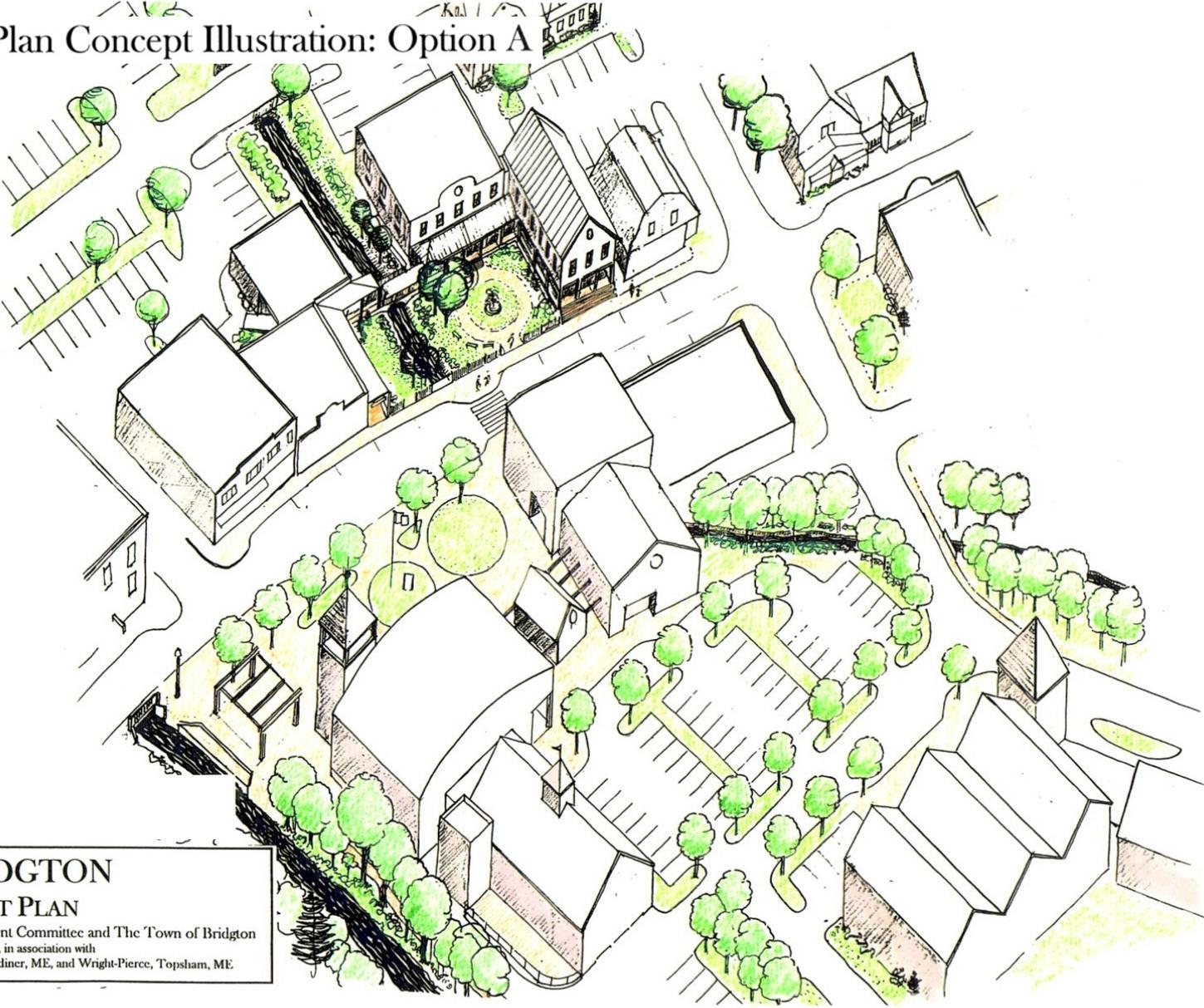
Again, TIF funds can be directed towards these endeavors.

Southside Sketch Plan: Option A

**DOWNTOWN BRIDGTON
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN**
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Southside Sketch Plan Concept Illustration: Option A



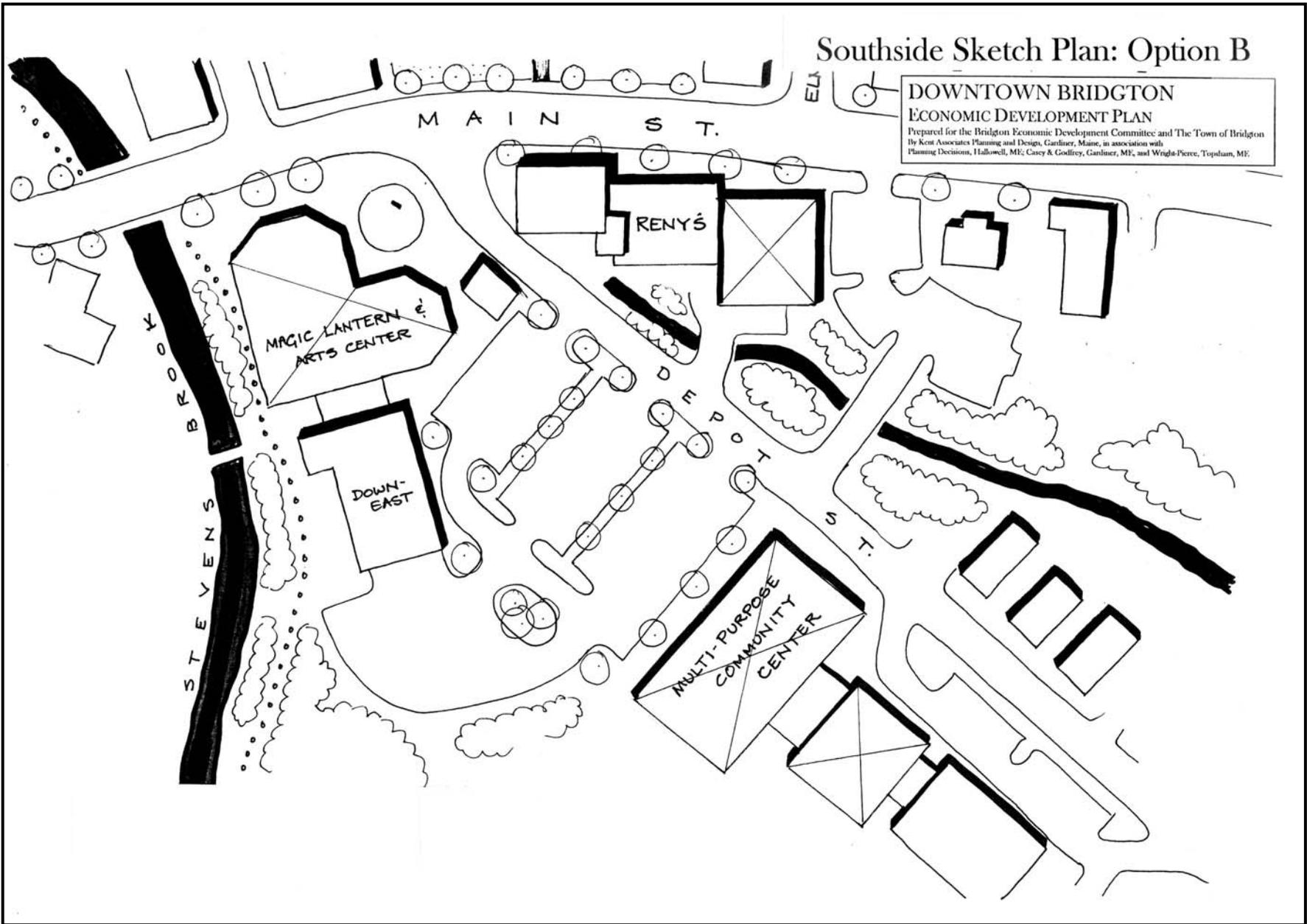
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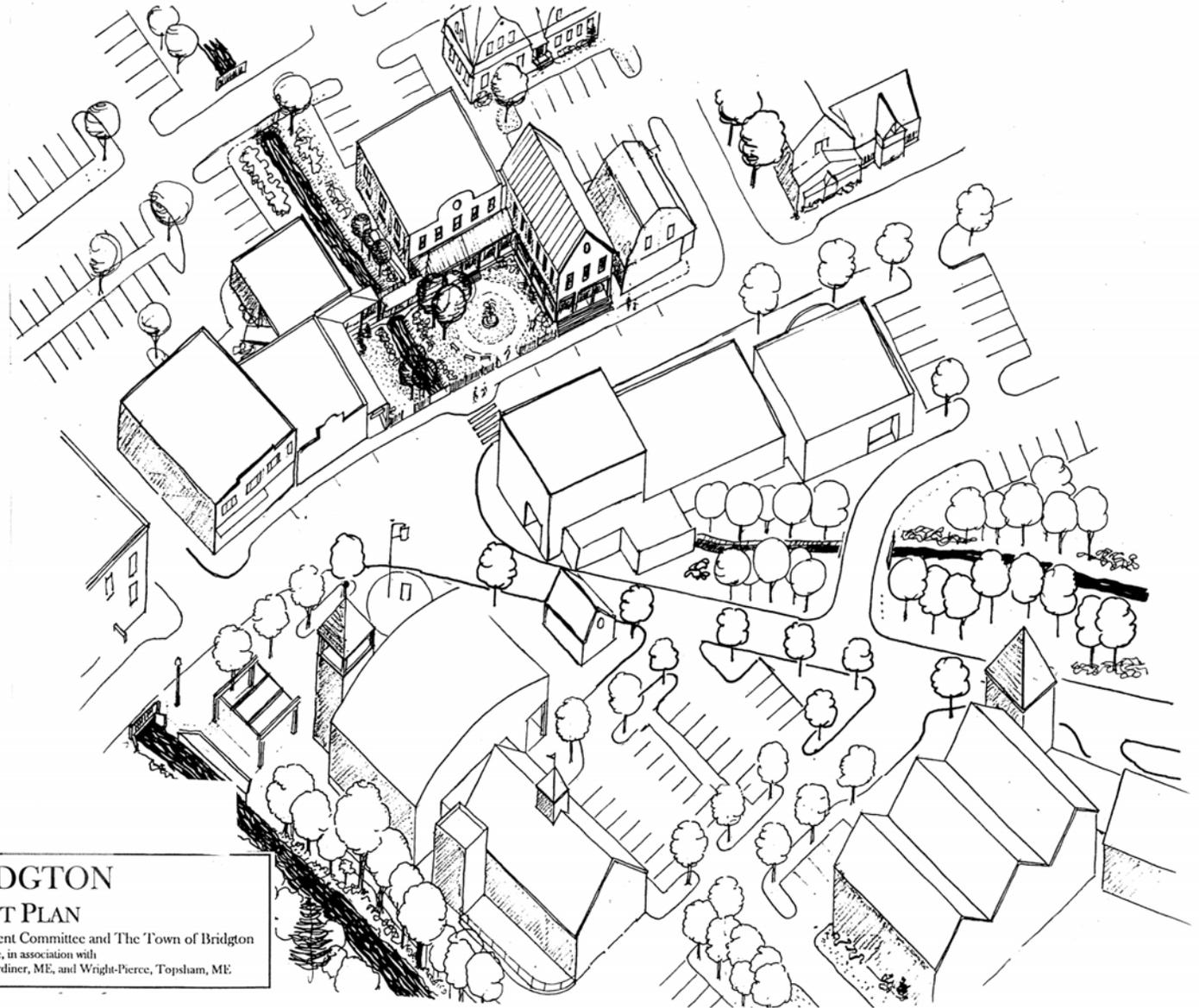
Southside Sketch Plan: Option B

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Southside Sketch Plan Concept Illustration: Option B



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3) CDBG Application Criteria

BLIGHT CONDITIONS IN THE DOWNTOWN CORE

Within Bridgton’s core downtown area – within the area to be designated as a TIF district – are a number of buildings and conditions that jeopardize future growth and investment. Despite good infrastructure, curbs, sidewalks, and lighting on Main Street the following buildings are in very poor condition. Further, redevelopment is constrained by floodplain restrictions, caused in part, by an inadequately sized culvert under Main Street.

Altogether 12 out of 23 buildings in the core area are in poor condition; most will most likely have to be demolished; some can be revitalized. All are in the heart of downtown; their condition thwarts opportunity for revitalization and many are within the 100-year flood plain.

The table at right documents conditions in this central area.

DOCUMENTATION OF BLIGHT CONDITIONS

Map/Lot No.	Business	Description/Condition
23/19 (Nulty St.)	Vacant	Old (1950s) single story warehouse proposed as bottle redemption center; single glazed windows, poor insulation, frame construction, doesn’t meet modern building standards
23/28 (Main St.)	Variety Store	Old, turn-of-century store, in Zone A floodplain; flat roof, no basement; in fair to poor condition; needs new roof(?)
23/29 (Main St.)		Small narrow, flat-roofed structure in very poor condition on wood pole/pile foundation; within 100-year Zone A floodplain. Owner would like to demolish.
23/30 (Main St.)		Same as above, but structure sits alongside and overhangs Corn Shop Brook; foundation subject to soil movement.
23/32 (Main St.)	Carpet sales	Two-story, wood frame structure in poor condition; rear shows signs of collapse; poor foundation; sits in 100-year Zone A floodplain. Owner wishes to demolish.
23/33 (Main St.)		Unfinished, concrete frost-wall foundation filled with gravel; no slab; sits within 100-year floodplain, below flood elevation.
23/137 (Main St.)	Magic Lantern Theater	1930’s concrete block, two-story structure on concrete slab foundation, over swampy fill; foundation is severely buckled and slab is broken; large cracks in the block show building is sinking; owner wishes to demolish as building is beyond saving.
23/125	Coffee and Wine shop	Single story (?) wood frame structure purchased by Reny’s for demolition so store or parking can be expanded.
23/133 /134 /135	Warehouses and House	Old buildings once associated with the narrow-gauge railroad. The warehouses are in fair condition but need preservation; the house is in poor condition.

4) TIF District Creation for the Downtown

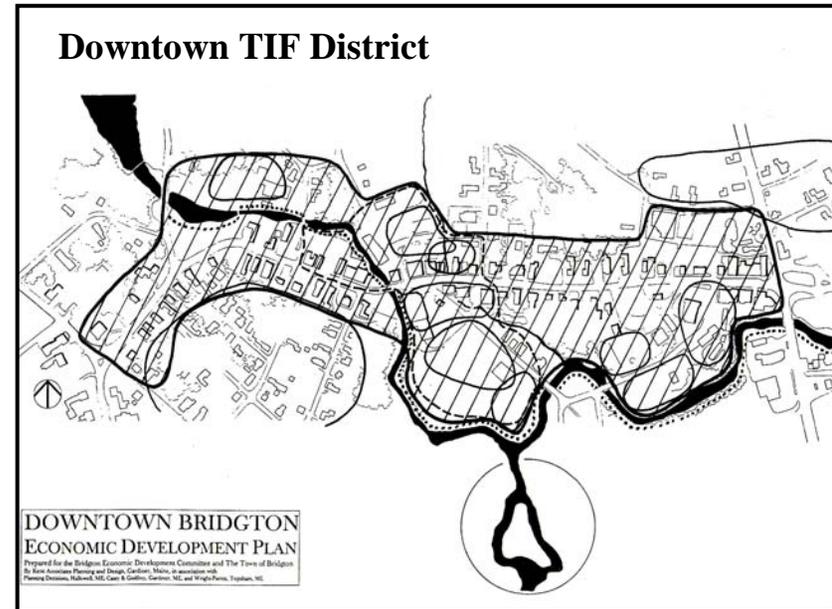
The proposed Downtown TIF district would include the area around Reny's and the Magic Lantern, on both sides of Main Street and some of Depot Street. The total acreage of proposed Downtown TIF is approximately 20 acres. The property tax valuation of the area and its infrastructure needs are not analyzed here.

Downtown TIF Scenario: Using a combination of Municipal Bond Financing and Credit Enhancement Agreements

- Bridgton designates a Downtown TIF district with approval from DECD
- 1/2 of TIF revenue is dedicated to the municipality to pay infrastructure expenses
- 1/2 of funds are dedicated to Credit Enhancement Agreements to write down the costs for developers that choose to develop or renovate within the downtown TIF district

Assuming a \$5 million increase in property tax valuation, a total of \$44,700 annually and a total of \$890,000 over 20 years would go to Town coffers for infrastructure and other expenses, and the same amount would be available for Credit Enhancement Agreements with developers. In this scenario the Town would actually gain in local revenues, even though a developer might be receiving \$45,000 a year. This, again, is due to the ins and outs of the school funding system and other revenue formulas.

For more on TIF Districts, see "Economic Development" later in this report.



(See pp. I-6 and I-7 for larger map.)

5) Main Street Maine Application

The Town would benefit from joining this statewide organization within the Maine Development Foundation. First, they serve as an important support group, ready to make materials available and provide help with downtown issues. They're also connected to the National Main Street program. Second, membership will help the town score well with its CDBG application. Third, and most important, the organization selects communities to receive financial and resource help for up to 3 years, on a competitive basis. Towns such as Gardiner, Bath, Saco and Norway have benefited from these services.

Main Street Maine website: www.mdf.org/downtown

6) Floodplain Report

Much of Bridgton's downtown lies within the 100-year floodplain of Stevens, Corn Shop and Willett Brooks. This poses a challenge to redevelopment because all new construction is subject to the town's floodplain ordinance regulations; however, this certainly does not prohibit development. Furthermore, there may be some limited engineering options to improve the situation.

A floodplain report was prepared by Wright-Pierce Engineers, providing a review of the situation in downtown Bridgton and some possible actions. Some of the main points, which have a bearing on redevelopment in the downtown, include:

- (a) Any projects which are wholly or partially funded with federal funds (e.g. CDBG) are subject to more stringent review and approval by the State Office of Floodplain Management (per a 1977 executive order).
- (b) The only area of downtown where engineering/mitigation would provide any relief to floodplain restrictions is the Corn Shop Brook area; enlarging the culvert under Main Street could reduce "hydraulic restriction", but would be expensive.
- (c) If the Corn Shop Brook Main Street culvert, which also underlies part of Renys Department Store, is replaced, it will also mean paying for new hydraulic modeling – with the new culvert and hydraulic modeling, the Town could probably submit a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) or a Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA). (This change would mean reducing flood hazard permitting restrictions in the Corn Shop Brook area.)

The complete floodplain report can be found in the Appendix.



Stevens Brook flowing under Main Street.