a **20/20** *Vision for Concord, NH*

Concord: *City of Villages*

A millennium gift from one generation to another

"Make no little plans..."

September 2001

"Make no little plans, they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will not die."

-Daniel Burnham

Concord: City of Villages

This document tells a story…

...how the residents of the city developed a 20/20 Vision for Concord – a noble, logical diagram, inspiring in vision and clear in purpose, pointing the city toward the next 20 years and beyond. The 20/20 Vision for Concord has engaged the city's stakeholders – residents, businesspeople, City and State officials, and developers – in a community planning project that will enhance quality of life, manage growth, and provide a blueprint for lasting development as Concord enters the 21st Century.

Concord was, and, to a large extent remains, a city of villages set in an extraordinary natural landscape. Dialogue between the natural and built worlds continues to define the city as a unique community and sets the context for a 20/20 Vision. Concord's greatest physical assets are its Downtown and village centers, its older neighborhoods of frame houses served by schools and parks, and its natural landscape of river valleys, bluffs, lakes and woodlands. The middle landscape of suburban development and sprawling commercial growth has begun to blur the distinction between the built and the natural. At the core of the 20/20 Vision is a desire to manage growth, enhance the existing villages and Downtown, and maintain the high quality of life in Concord. Five Vision Principles have emerged from this planning process. These Principles will guide decision-making in the city for the coming years and provide a framework for change and growth in Concord:

1 **A vibrant, livable Downtown**
2 **Neighborhoods served by walkable villages**
3 **Preservation and access to the natural environment**
4 **Economic vitality**
5 **Transportation that serves the community**

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

JEANNE SHAHEEN
GOVERNOR

April, 2001

To the citizens of Concord:

I am pleased to have this opportunity to commend you for creating a comprehensive and community-based vision for Concord's future development. The Greater Concord community has a rich history of civic involvement and this effort is no exception.

Through an extensive public/private collaboration between the NH Department of Transportation, the Central NH Regional Planning Commission, the City of Concord and its residents and stakeholders, you now have a pro-active, planned approach for addressing "sprawl" and enhancing the quality of life in the City. The principles outlined in this report will serve as a foundation for identifying and evaluating the future of the natural and built environment, economic opportunity, and transportation. The consensus you have built around these principles is the essential first step in a process that yields a basic blueprint for implementing a long-term vision.

I hope this project will serve as a model for municipal planning throughout the state and across the county. Congratulations on a job well done.

Very truly yours,

Jeanne Shaheen

Jeanne Shaheen

STATE HOUSE, CONCORD, NH 03301 (603) 271-2121
TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964

THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

LEON S. KENISON
COMMISSIONER

April, 2001

To the Citizens of Concord:

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation was pleased to be a participant and sponsor of the Initiative for a 20/20 Vision for Concord. The Initiative was New Hampshire's first successful applicant for funds awarded through the USDOT under the Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Program (TCSP). The goal of the TCSP pilot program is to "increase the knowledge of the costs and benefits of different approaches to integrating transportation investments, community preservation, land development patterns, and environmental protection" and to "enable communities to investigate and address important relationships among these many factors." The 2020 effort has certainly met and even exceeded these goals.

The work accomplished in the 20/20 project has produced criteria for Concord's citizens to evaluate projects proposed for their city. In the near future, NHDOT will begin the planning for the I-93 project between I-89 and Exit 16 in Concord. The transportation model developed to assess transportation alternatives, and the discussions held to balance preservation of the natural environment, economic prosperity, and transportation have led to a better understanding of the relationship among these principles to benefit the quality of life of Concord citizens. The discussion has served to set the foundation for the I-93 transportation project as well as other intermodal opportunities. The planners and designers assigned to this project will be working hand in hand with a community with a vision for the future and a willingness to work to make it happen.

I am sure that your efforts will lead to excellent results reflective of the vision we have cooperatively developed.

Very Truly Yours,

Carol A. Murray

Carol A. Murray, P.E.
Assistant Commissioner

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City of Concord, New Hampshire
CITY HALL • 41 GREEN STREET
CONCORD, N. H. 03301

WILLIAM J. VERONEAU
MAYOR

May 14, 2001

THE INITIATIVE FOR A 20/20 VISION FOR CONCORD

The advent of The Initiative for a 20/20 Vision For Concord promises to be the pinnacle of the planning process for the Capital City. The City has long enjoyed a well-deserved reputation for planning in the State and in the Region. Master Plans, which take a 10-year look at municipal planning, have been the norm in Concord. Longer range plans, formally undertaken, that take a 20-25-year look at municipal planning, have not been the norm.

In November, 1998, I attended, by invitation, the Mayors Institute on City Design at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. It was a 2 ½ day symposium sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, the U. S. Conference of Mayors and the American Architectural Foundation. The symposium was dedicated to improving the design and livability of America's Cities. Seven other northeastern Mayors also participated in these urban planning sessions. A board of national planners determined that Concord's overall planning was above-average but went on to recommend that the City establish a "Grand Vision" by which the community project its intentions and priorities out 20-25 years.

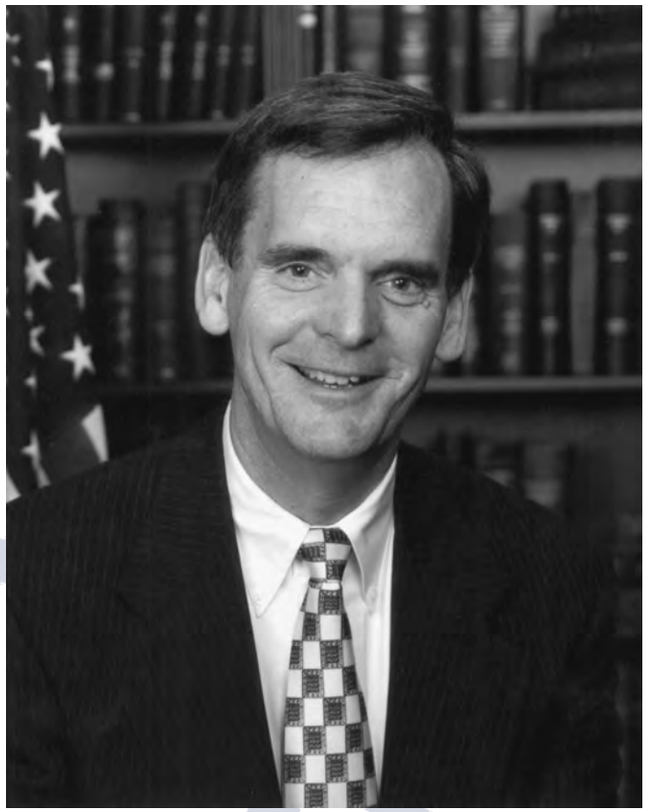
Upon my return, I received concurrence from a group of citizens who then formed a non-profit corporation with the purpose of promoting and funding this "Grand Vision". On March 8, 1999, the City Council endorsed the initiative to create a long-range plan of a "Grand Vision" entitled "A 20/20 Vision for Concord". Without accessing City funds, a budget for the initiative was established in the amount of $775,000 with the bulk of the funding obtained through the office of US Senator Judd Gregg and the State Department of Transportation. Thereafter, a Steering Committee, following an extensive selection process, chose Goody, Clancy & Associates to lead the 20/20 visioning process.

Commencing in May 2000, the consultants held a multitude of focus group discussions, neighborhood forums and open workshops to determine the consensus of the community. Gross attendance in these sessions has exceeded 2000 citizens, with over 1000 different citizens registered as participants. In September 2000, a Sounding Board of 70 people was created and empowered to be community representatives with the consultants.

A summary report of community consensus was presented to citizens by the consultants at local forums during February and March 2001. A draft Final Report was offered to the Sounding Board for ratification in April. Finally, an action Resolution is being presented to the City Council at its May 2001 meeting requesting endorsement of the five (5) basic Concord 20/20 Principles, reflecting citizen consensus and Sounding Board ratification.

U. S. Senator Bob Smith

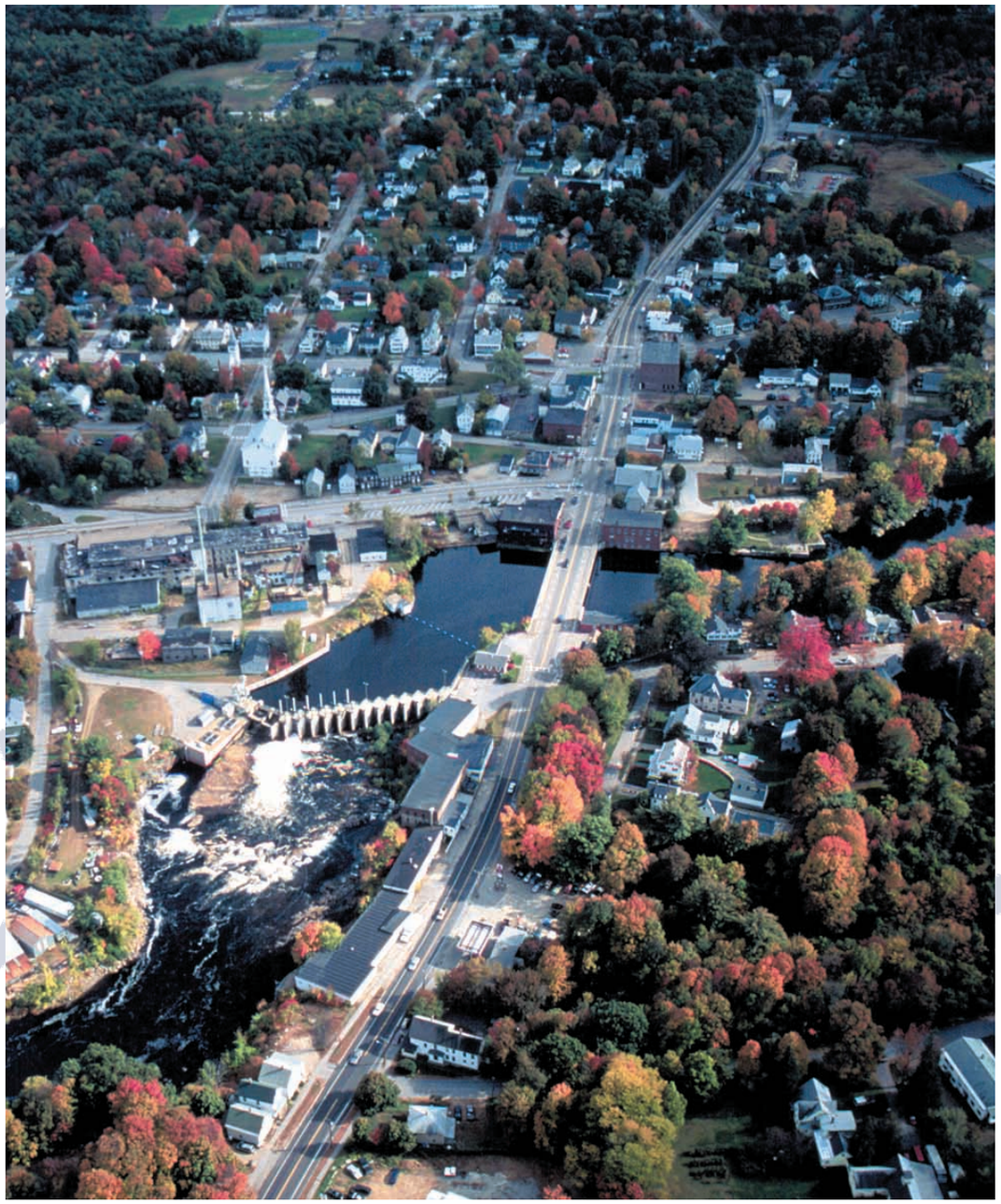
Senator Bob Smith, ranking member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, has worked on the Concord 20/20 Initiative and was instrumental in securing funding for the program. "It is an honor and a pleasure to have assisted with the Concord 20/20 Initiative," said Senator Smith. " I look forward to working with the city as they move forward in developing the vibrant community they envision for the future."



U. S. Senator Judd Gregg

All of us recognize that Concord is a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family. It is, however, confronting the difficult challenge of balancing the need for continued economic prosperity and a sound transportation system with preserving its natural environment and historic downtown. I believe the report that the Initiative for a 20/20 Vision for Concord has developed will meet this challenge and, most importantly, will enhance the city's distinctive character.

This initiative has been a very positive experience for the community. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have committed their talent and time to this undertaking. Although it has been my pleasure to secure the federal support needed to fund the project, the real secret to its success rests with the drive and energy of the diverse groups and individuals who have produced this vision. Please accept my best wishes.



Penacook Village

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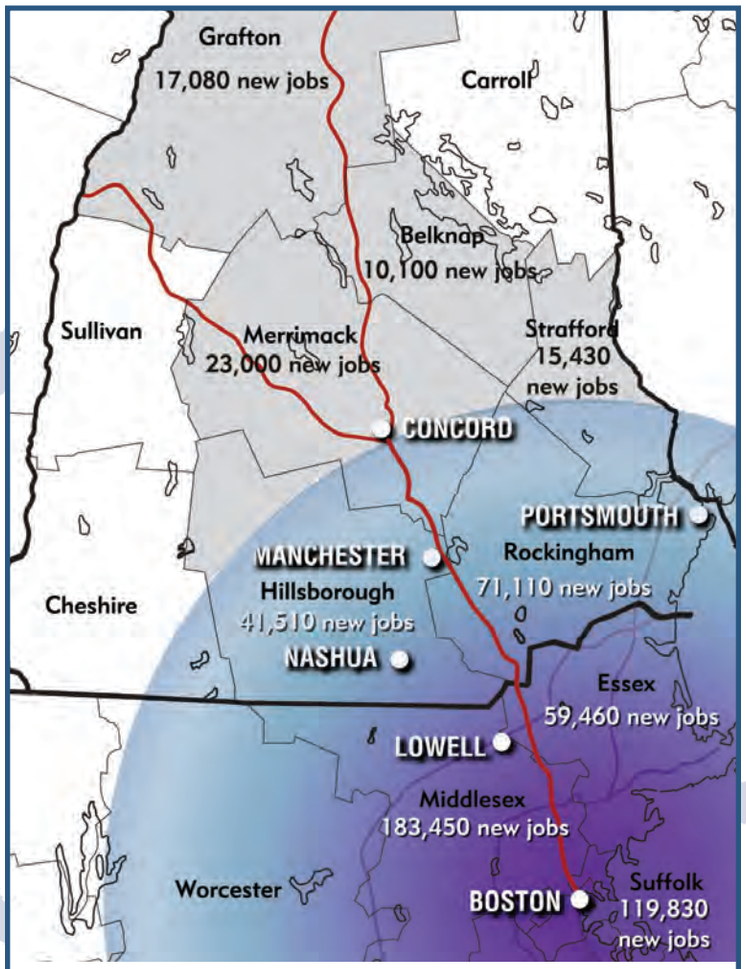
Executive Summary: *The 20/20 Vision for Concord*



Why Develop a Vision Now?

Concord is facing changes. Some of them are known.
For example, Concord is on the edge of the "Growth Bubble."

- Fastest growing city in N.H. in the last 10 years
- 23,000 new jobs in the next 20 years in Merrimack County
- Limited developable land left in Nashua, Manchester, Salem
- Manchester Airport Expansion

State officials predict the city will continue to show strong growth (nearly 8,000 new residents) over the next 20 years. In addition, there will be increasing demand for travel to and through Concord on existing roadways. If growth is inevitable, where will it go? How will residential and commercial development impact open space? What will be required of city infrastructure and resources? How can I-93 improvements enhance the city's relationship with the Merrimack River and open space connections?

Facing change, Concord could have chosen to be reactive, forever struggling to keep pace with new residential and commercial development, new demands on physical and social infrastructure, and increased traffic. Many cities, for lack of money, expertise and foresight, allow change and outside forces to take control. They face crisis after crisis with little time to react and few resources to make informed choices. With a 20/20 Vision for Concord, the city has chosen to shape the future through a proactive approach–putting time and resources toward taking control and shaping change.

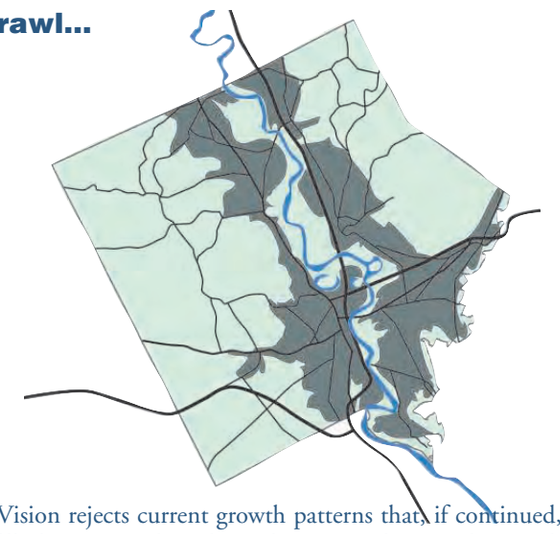
Why now? Two interrelated and unprecedented events present Concord with a compelling reason and unmatched opportunity to define a broad new vision to shape its economic, physical and cultural character. The prospect of close to one hundred million dollars invested in changes to Interstate 93, with the power to enhance or diminish significantly the city's quality of life, together with the community's success in securing a substantial grant from the Federal Highway Administration that has underwritten this planning process have provided both the incentive and the resources to create a new vision.

The Planning Process: How did the Vision Come to Be?

A 20/20 Vision for Concord is an effort undertaken by an extraordinary cast of stakeholders: state, regional, and local governments, the business community, environmental advocates, developers, and residents. These people were brought together by a group of public-minded citizens who believed that a grassroots effort to take charge of the city's future was necessary, and could be successful. Their belief led to Mayor William Veroneau participating in the Mayor's Institute on City Design in November of 1998. At this symposium, national experts were united in their belief that Concord needed a "grand vision," one that transcends the city's current efforts (tax-base expansion, zoning and master plan update, etc.).

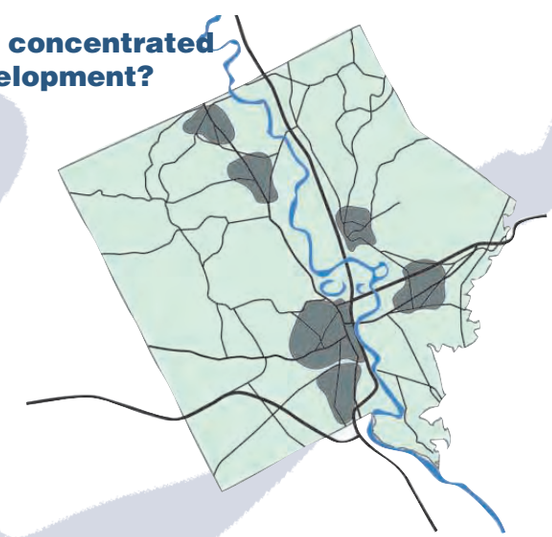
Citizens formed a Steering Committee in the early part of 1999, and with the encouragement of U.S. Senator Judd Gregg and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, applied for and received a $400,000 grant from the Transportation and Community and System Preservation (TCSP) Program administered by the Federal Highway Administration. Other funds came from EPA, with the support of U.S. Senator Bob Smith, and from the state, the city, and local businesses. With the necessary funds in hand, the Committee conducted a nationwide search for a planning consultant to direct the visioning process. The Goody, Clancy & Associates planning team was selected from a field of many applicants and began work on the project in May 2000.

Sprawl...

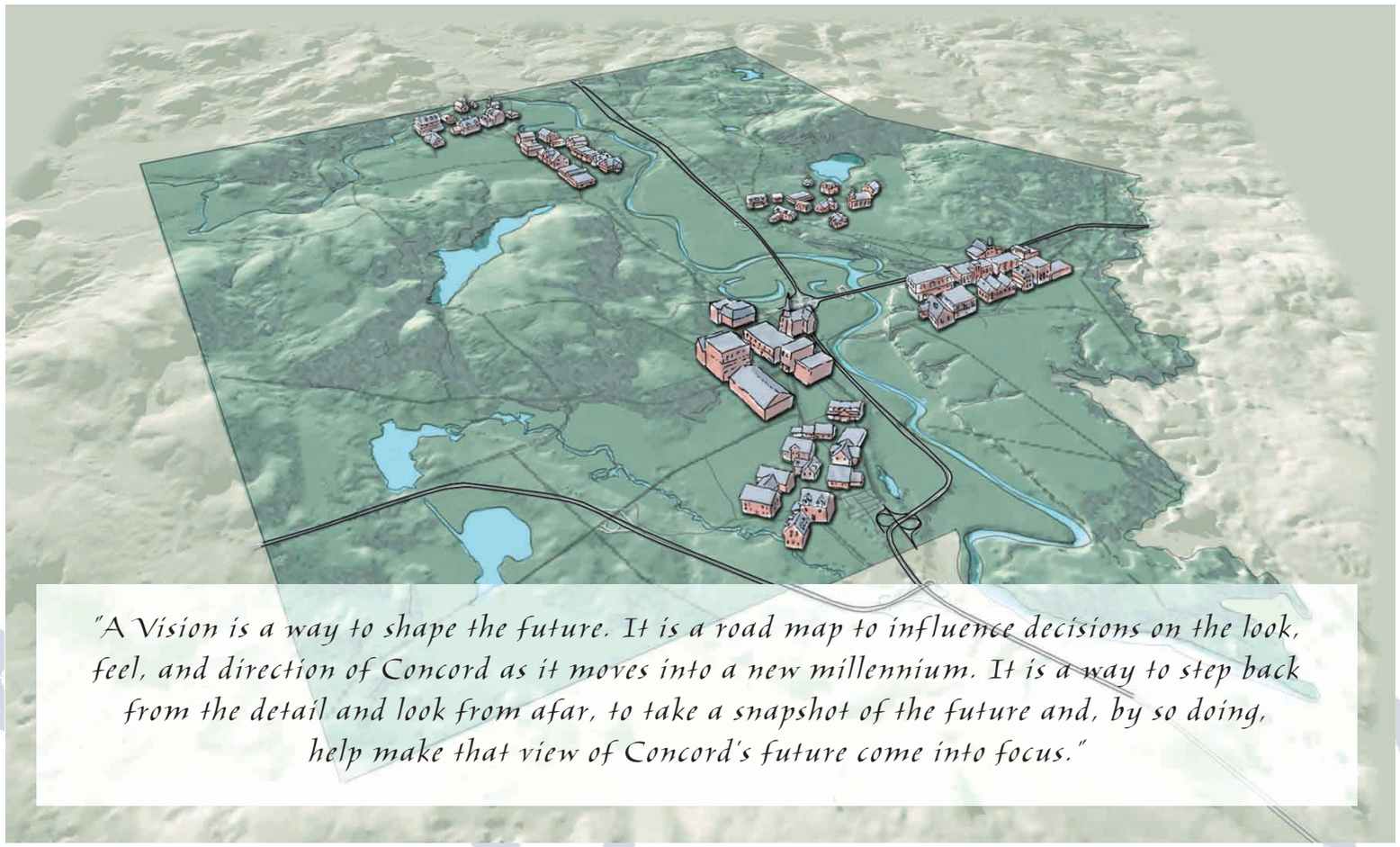


This Vision rejects current growth patterns that, if continued, will fill the area within the Urban Growth Boundary with sprawling development.

...or concentrated development?



Instead, guided by the Vision, "Concord: City of Villages", development will be concentrated in the Downtown/ Opportunity Corridor and the city's villages–preserving open space, conserving resources, and providing walkable communities throughout the city.



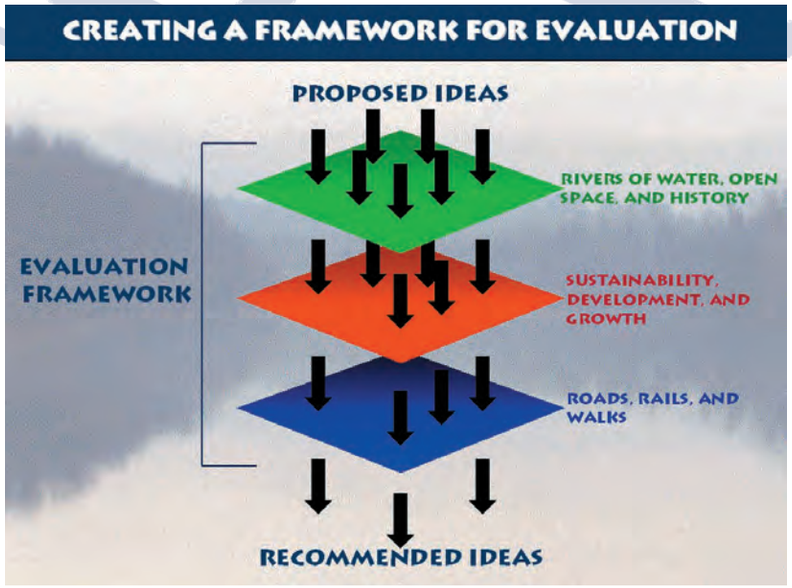
"A Vision is a way to shape the future. It is a road map to influence decisions on the look, feel, and direction of Concord as it moves into a new millennium. It is a way to step back from the detail and look from afar, to take a snapshot of the future and, by so doing, help make that view of Concord's future come into focus."

Concord: City of Villages - The Making of a Vision

The 20/20 Visioning process brought to light common themes in three areas:

- Natural Environment and Historic Preservation
- Economic Vitality
- Transportation

During public workshops, criteria were developed to form a filter system to evaluate proposals and alternatives.



Public participation occurred at every phase of the project:

- **Phase I: Setting the Stage** (inventory of existing conditions, interviews with community leaders, neighborhood residents and organization representatives)
- **Phase II: Building a Vision** (analysis of existing conditions, community feedback on Vision principles and alternatives, establishment of evaluation criteria)
- **Phase III: Developing the Vision** (articulation of the Vision "Concord: City of Villages", and goals and objectives for the Vision)
- **Phase IV: Creating the 20/20 Vision Plan for Concord** (creation of a Vision framework in which to evaluate future alternatives, preparation of implementation strategies and final report).

What Was Heard

During the planning process, participants in the workshops reached consensus on a number of issues that affect Concord's high quality of life now or may do so in the future. These include:

- Control and direct growth to benefit quality of life
- Protect open space and limit sprawl
- Support a vibrant Downtown
- Provide diverse housing choices
- Provide good pedestrian and bicycle connections
- Ensure transportation improvements serve the needs of residents and enhance quality of life
- Diversify the economy
- Create the political will to carry through with established Vision policies and difficult decisions

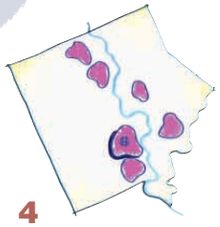
building the Vision

These common themes formed the Vision "Concord: City of Villages." The Five Vision Principles shape the future of the city:

1 **A vibrant, livable Downtown**

2 **Neighborhoods served by walkable villages**

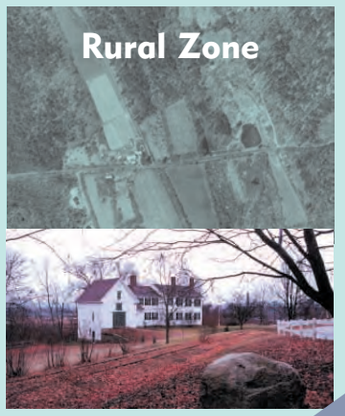
3 **Preservation and access to the natural environment**

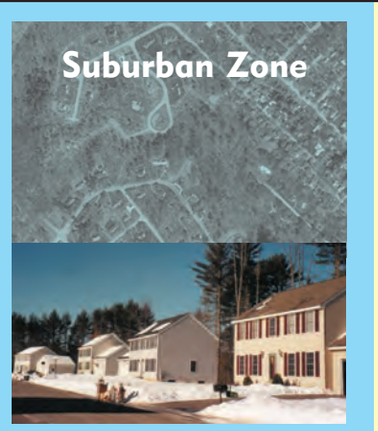


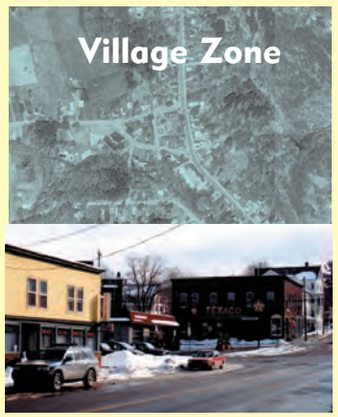
4 **Economic vitality**

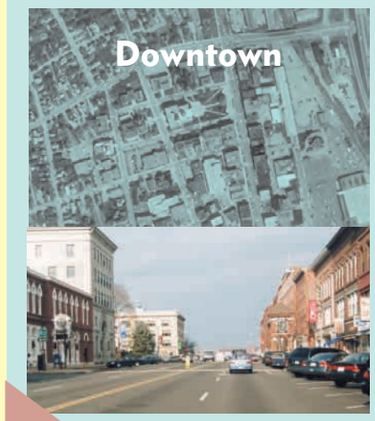
5 **Transportation that serves the community**

These principles will shape the city in distinct ways in the coming 20 years and beyond. What will the City of Villages be like?





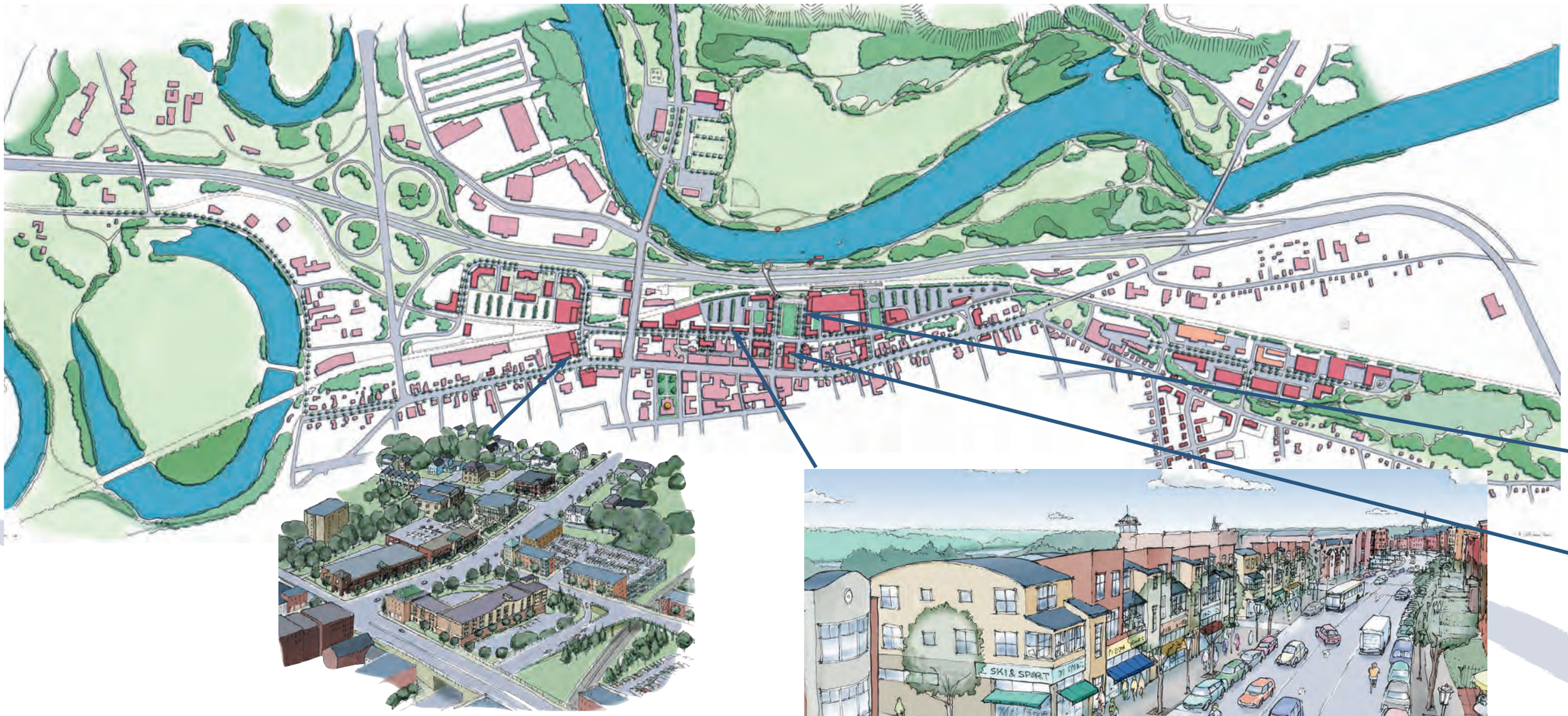




Less concentrated development	More concentrated development
Primarily residential uses	More mixed-uses
Most buildings detached	Most buildings attached
Rotated frontages	Aligned frontages
Deep setback	Shallow setback
Open lanes in the field	More enclosed street profile
Auto-dependent travel	Walkable destinations
Longer continuous stretch of road	More frequent intersections
Opportunistic parking	Dedicated parking
Large curb radius	Smaller curb radius
Fewer pedestrian separations	Pedestrian and bicycle streetscaping
Sporadic task lighting	Even street lighting
Natural landscaping	Tendered planting
Parks and meadows	Plazas and squares

With the five Vision principles in hand, the citizens of Concord can look optimistically toward the future... truly offering a millennium gift from one generation to another. And here are some details of that gift...

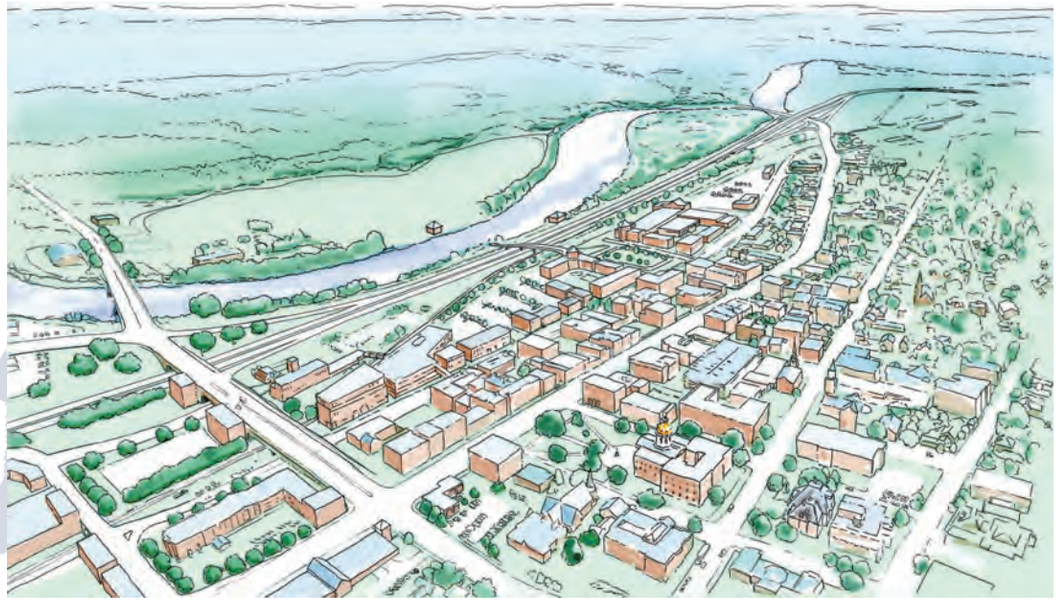
Downtown is adjacent to the North and Central Opportunity Corridor. This portion of the Corridor was once a center of commerce and the site of crowded rail yards. It is now home to low-density uses that include sprawling shopping centers and warehouses. Given the Corridor's proximity to Main Street and its excellent visibility from I-93 it is clear this area is undervalued and underutilized. To ensure the continued health of Downtown, a number of opportunities can be seized:



The North Opportunity Corridor is a rare find: a large area ripe for development, with relatively few owners, adjacent to Main Street and the Downtown core. This site, visible from I-93, should be planned in its entirety to take advantage of its unique assets. A Class "A" office campus here would offer a Downtown employment center that would support the retail and entertainment establishments in the district.

Zoning Storrs Street for mixed-use development, including residential on upper floors, will enhance Downtown vitality, provide nighttime activities, and support the core of businesses on Main Street. Streetscape improvements and traffic calming along the street will enhance the image of the street and will foster market-rate urban living in Concord.

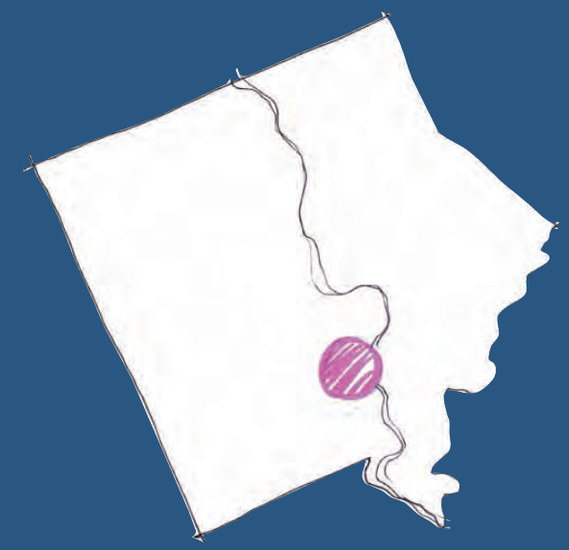
a vibrant, livable Downtown



The Downtown's proximity to the Merrimack River and the city's abundance of open space offer many opportunities to create a vibrant, livable district. Excellent visibility from Interstate 93 supports the commercial health of Downtown.

A new "Concord Green" in the Opportunity Corridor would create a visual link to the river, provide a central public gathering place, and increase land value–offering incentives for private development of mixed-use buildings along Storrs Street. Provision for a future commuter/high speed rail station nearby, as well as a 1200-car parking deck (shared between daytime commuters and evening residential and cultural district parkers) would support a vibrant, mixed-use Downtown.

A broad walkway along Pleasant Street Extension could link Main Street to a new Concord Green with open views to the river bluffs beyond. A pedestrian bridge across a depressed I-93 at the end of the Green could link Downtown directly to a new system of trails and river parks along the Merrimack River.



A vibrant, livable Downtown

- Establish a central public gathering place
- Connect Downtown with the river
- Expand housing and retail options
- Attract commercial & residential uses to vacant upper floors
- Preserve historic character
- Create an arts & entertainment district
- Improve parking availability & access
- Redevelop underutilized parcels
- Program events to attract people to Downtown

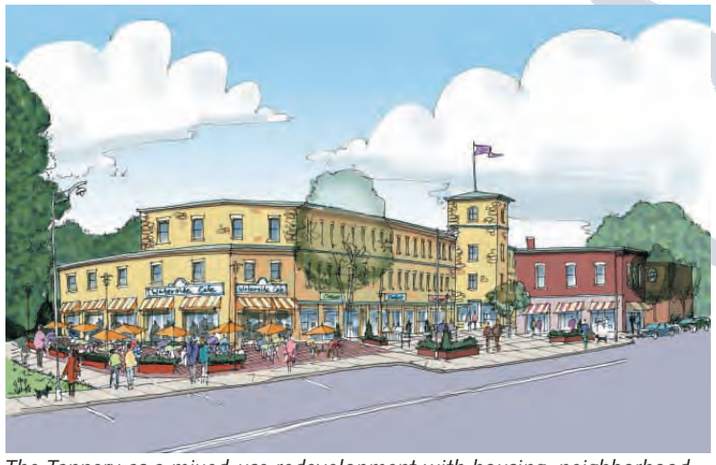
A City of Villages is a Vision that protects Concord's character by celebrating the uniqueness of its villages and neighborhoods. Each village can be strengthened by guidelines for future growth and by clear goals for improvements and protection of cherished resources.

The Villages

Penacook

- Redevelop the Tannery into a mixed-use complex of housing, office and retail
- Encourage housing that continues existing street patterns
- Encourage market rate and upper income housing
- Establish a new village center near West Concord on Fisherville Road
- Provide bike paths along Penacook Street and the river

The Tannery today.



The Tannery as a mixed-use redevelopment with housing, neighborhood commercial, and restaurant uses.

Current development on Fisherville Road puts parking in front and lacks sidewalks to connect various land uses.

New zoning regulations can require development to contribute to the village character of Fisherville Road.

West Concord

- Protect historic village of West Concord
- Create bluff protection zones
- Provide more travel choices with connecting streets in new developments
- Rezone area of Fisherville Road between Penacook and historic West Concord to provide new village center with:
  - Mixed uses
  - Concentrated development
  - Market rate housing
  - More intersections (more travel choices)
  - Designated bike lanes
- Create a pedestrian-friendly Fisherville Road by:
  - Consolidating and/or eliminating curb cuts
  - Providing traffic lights and pedestrian crossings
  - Possibly adding Exit 16-1/2 (NB off and SB on ramps) on I-93

neighborhoods served by walkable villages

The Heights

- Reduce capacity on Loudon Road
- Give Loudon Road a village identity
- Create a pedestrian-friendly Loudon Road with street trees and pedestrian crossings
- Redirect traffic to I-393 for mall and big box access
- Provide a new community center linked to the school
- Concentrate new development in the mall retail area to accommodate retail demand

As a major artery Loudon Road splits The Heights and makes creation of a village center impossible.

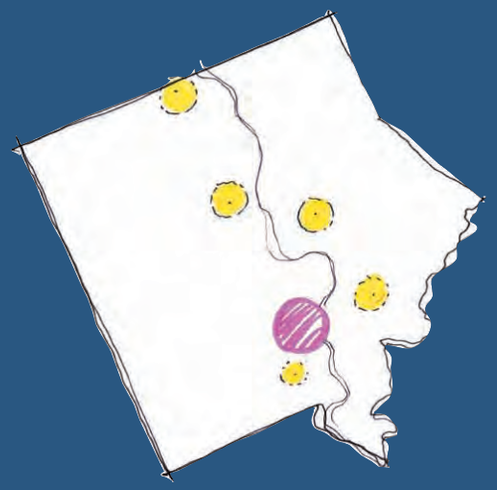
Reducing capacity on Loudon Road encourages drivers to use I-393 for mall access and allow The Heights to "reclaim" the road as a Village Road.

East Concord

- Make improvements to the village center including:
  - Sidewalks
  - Parking behind buildings
  - Connections to recreation
- Provide connections for pedestrians, bicycles and cars:
  - To Downtown
  - Between neighborhoods
  - To parks
- Ideally, land between I-93 and the Merrimack would remain as farmland
- Any river corridor development should consider:
  - Impact studies
  - Mixed use may be possible and is desirable
  - River paths and access
  - Clustered development near I-93 and away from river
  - Preserve large portion of site as open space
  - Development should provide new vehicular bridge to Downtown (Commercial Street)

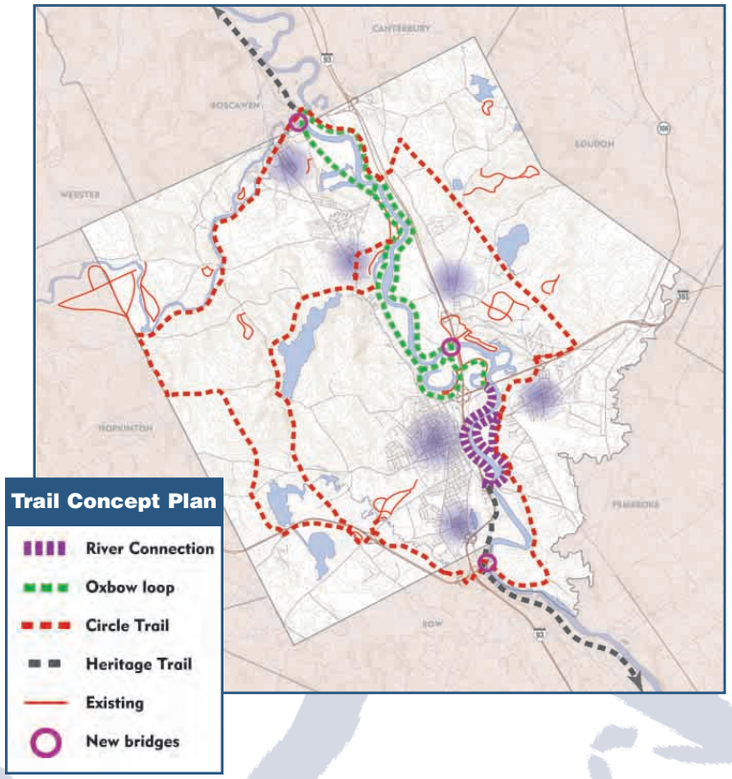
The South End

- Support redevelopment of The South End marsh area:
  - Flex tech office uses
  - Some retail
  - Provide space for startups
  - Preserve historic rail buildings, whenever possible
  - Transform the marsh into a visual and recreational asset
- Protect South Main Street to support residential character and to buffer it from South Opportunity Corridor
- Support more usable open space throughout the neighborhood
- Encourage reuse of the Blue Cross site for concentrated residential development
- Provide a network of bike paths connecting three parks
- Transform Broadway into a greenway that calms traffic



Neighborhoods served by walkable villages

- **Create pedestrian- friendly village centers**
- **Concentrate future growth in the village centers**
- **Connect the villages to each other, to open space, and to downtown with trails, paths and bicycle lanes**
- **Provide for mixed land uses in the village centers**



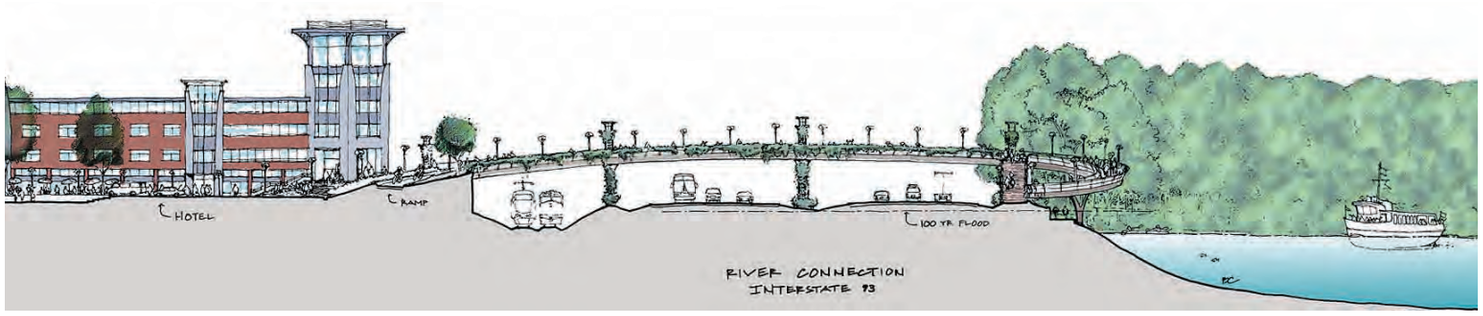
Concord is blessed with 64 square miles of varied and beautiful land. Rivers, oxbow lakes, marshes, ponds, valleys, bluffs, and forested hills are all within a short distance of each other and Downtown. Yet many citizens commented on a general lack of access to the natural areas of Concord. A system of nineteen official trails does exist and was flagged and mapped by the Conservation Commission in 1997. The 20/20 Vision for Concord seeks to enhance the existing trail system, create key river access connections, preserve open space in new development and increase walkability between villages.

Open Space and Trail System: Supporting the City of Villages

The 20/20 Trail Concept Plan encompasses five proposed trail systems that would serve and enhance the City of Villages.

- **River Connection Loop** - a 3 mile loop linking River Field (Tear Drop Park), Terrill & Arena Parks. Downtown, The South End, and The Heights are served.
- **Oxbow Loop** - a 14-mile trail (containing smaller loops) with some of the best river scenery in New Hampshire. A regional recreational destination, the trail would, in part, follow the alignment of the Boston and Maine rail corridor. The loop links Downtown, East Concord, West Concord, and Penacook.
- **Circle Trail** - embracing the entire city, the trail passes through varied landscapes and provides access to the hills, marshes, ponds, and streams west and east of the Merrimack River Valley. Some 70 miles in length, the trail serves Concord, Boscawen, Hopkinton, and Bow.
- **Water Trail** - this 11.5 mile trail follows the Merrimack River channel from Penacook to the Garvins Falls peninsula and is served by a series of boat launches. Connects with River Connection Loop and Oxbow Loop.
- **Trail Links** - connections between these trail loops are necessary to fully link the protected open spaces in Concord. In addition to links between trail loops, links from trails to the village centers are necessary to completely integrate the open space network with the villages of the city.

Traditional large-lot cul-de-sac development erradicates open space, requires more paving, and erects barriers to walkability.



A pedestrian bridge across I-93 can link Downtown to the Merrimack River and connecting paths and open spaces throughout the city.

Applying Vision Principles, a village-friendly plan concentrates housing, provides sidewalks, and supports a vibrant village community, all while preserving open space.

preservation & access to the natural environment

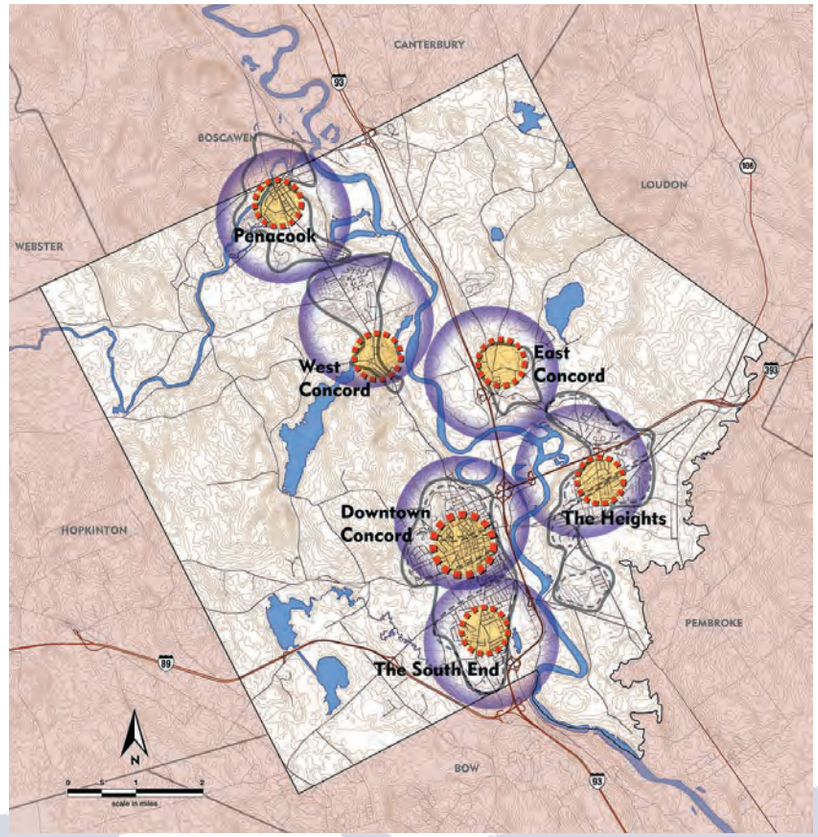
The Merrimack River Reservation

Downtown is a key access point to a proposed river park system. The opportunities for this open space/water system include:

- River walk
  - Expanded river access from Downtown if I-93 shifts slightly westward when improved by NHDOT
  - Boat house landing for small boats, possibly an excursion boat
  - Multi use path along the river with periodic over looks
  - River walk to link a series of parks to create a system of open spaces accessible from Downtown and beyond
- River parks: These parks form a system of open spaces that include Terrill Park, the Arena site, and River Field:
  - **River Field** (Tear Drop Park): a passive park close to Downtown and accessible by foot or bicycle
  - **Terrill Park**: a pastoral park emphasizing the natural river setting
  - **Arena Park**: an active athletic complex providing skating, a fitness center, access to trails, and a river access point for kayaks and canoes
  - **Farm Fields**: possibly public park lands (English model) with lease back to farmers. Fields would be edged by paths

Preserving Open Space in New Development

By using the "20/20 Vision Scorecard" illustrated on the last page of this Summary, the City can ensure that new development follows the Vision Principles and that open space is preserved.



Walking Distances - 20 minutes from center of circles to edge.

Through changes in zoning, development in the city can enhance the character of walkable city villages while preserving open space. Other tools such as the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) may be applied, where appropriate, to preserve open space and concentrate development around the Village centers.

Providing Direct Access by Foot to Nature from the Villages

Application of the Vision Principles supports the goal of walkable village centers. A forty minute walk will connect most adjacent Village Centers. Clearly, a walkable community is an achievable vision. Open space acquisition, the creation of trails, and the construction of bike lanes and pedestrian walks should contribute to the development of a cohesive, accessible network of connections between villages and Downtown.

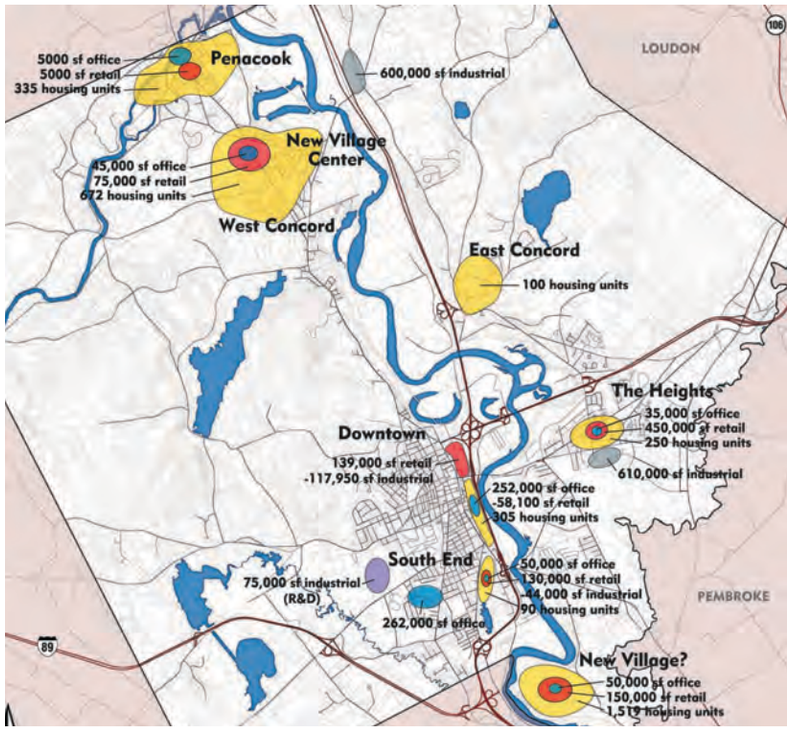
Preservation and access to the natural environment

- **Identify threatened open space resources**
- **Preserve critical open spaces**
- **Link the protected open spaces**
- **Preserve open space in new development, where appropriate**
- **Provide visual and physical access to the Merrimack from Downtown**
- **Create a system of riverside trails**
- **Create bluff protection areas where appropriate and preserve river views**
- **Identify and protect key scenic views**
- **Protect farmlands along the river and keep in active cultivation**
- **Provide direct access by foot to nature from neighborhoods and village centers**

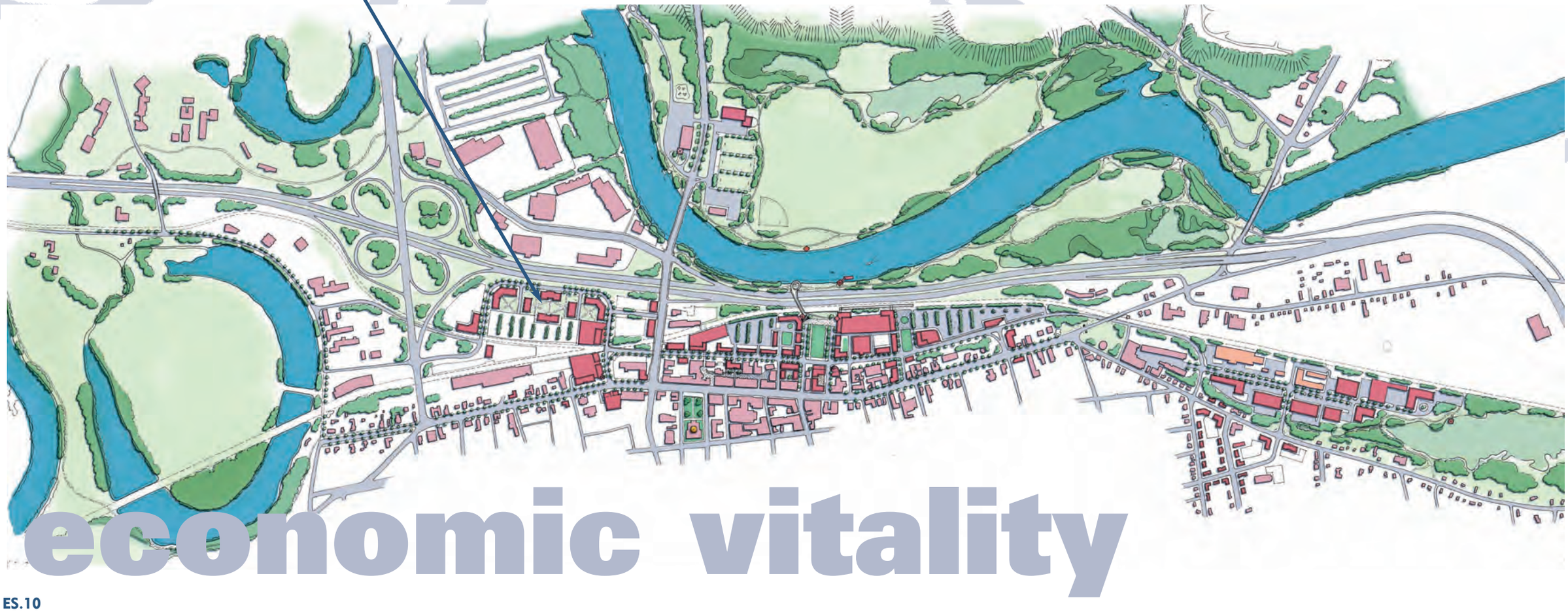
Create a redevelopment entity to achieve a 20/20 vision for economic vitality

From an economic development perspective, the North Opportunity Corridor is a prime location for a high quality ("Class A") office park: a large site under (mostly) public ownership that provides ready access to I-93 with excellent visibility from the highway. In fact, these characteristics are sufficiently strong that any economic development strategy should market this site to attract a "silver bullet." Creating a redevelopment entity to serve as the primary vehicle to implement specific components of the Vision (such as development of this site) is a critical goal of the 20/20 Vision. Without the authority to assemble property, issue bonds to ready the site for development, offer financial incentives to attract specific users, and aggressively market the project, this once-in-a-lifetime potential to develop a large area in Downtown will be lost. In its place, development can be expected to occur piecemeal (parcel by parcel), and Concord will have lost a significant opportunity.

From an economic perspective, Concord is at a crossroads today. It has a highly educated, stable labor force, positive locational attributes, adequate infrastructure and a sizable amount of land available to accommodate growth and development for a city of its size. The attractiveness of the community, the advantages of open space and proximity to significant recreational opportunities contribute to Concord's reputation as a special place to live, work and play. Concord, however, has several economic development and real estate challenges. Its heavy reliance on property taxes to fund municipal services discourages certain uses and users and may even limit the city's ability to "sell" the very attributes that make it such a special place. Moreover, requirements such as a lengthy public approval process create the perception that Concord is not welcoming to new development. The city has begun addressing these issues, at the same time it has realized it should be more discerning about the kind of development it welcomes. Lastly, there is not a clear economic development strategy to help guide how the city wants to grow.



Growth expected over the next 20 years is projected to occur mostly in the villages and downtown.



economic vitality

Concord is clearly growing. A critical objective of 20/20 is to balance economic vitality with tax base expansion while sustaining and reinforcing Concord's high quality of life. Therefore, a 20/20 Vision for Concord has been concerned with two fundamental questions:

- How much growth?
- What kind of growth?

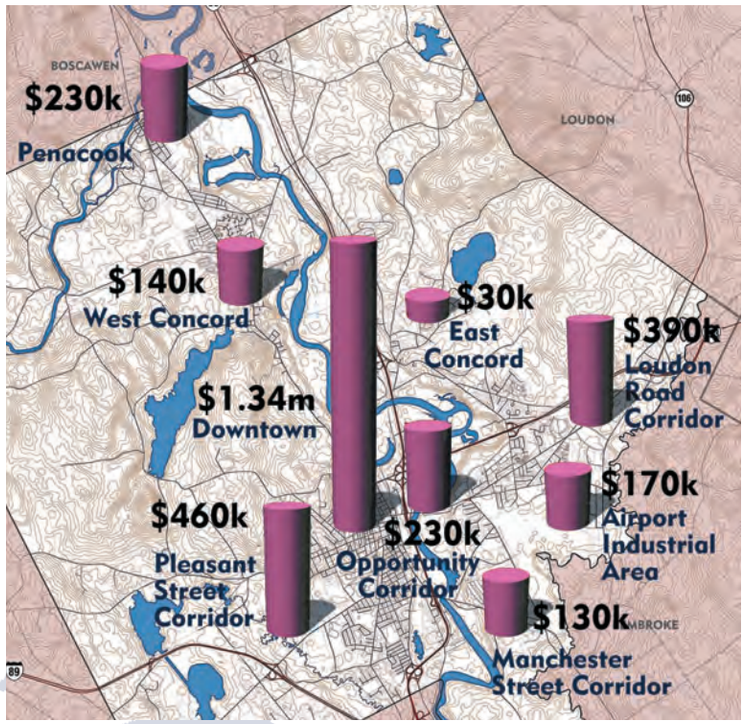
Another critical objective in visionary decision-making is to discourage Concord's over-reliance on "economic development on a parcel-by-parcel, project-by-project basis" and seek, instead, to create more significant opportunities that focus on catalyst projects in selected locations. Visionary economic development policy must build real value in the community, while contributing to the high quality of life that residents both enjoy and expect. The North Opportunity Corridor, for example, should be marketed to attract users that not only strengthen the city's tax base but also help diversify jobs for Concord residents.
Some key elements of the vision include:

- Concentrating development in existing village centers and away from greenfield sites

Economic vitality is just as concerned about sprawl as it is with tax base expansion. Sprawl chips away at the abundant open space in the city, uses excessive natural resources, increases traffic congestion and blurs the unique qualities of the villages and neighborhoods. Concentrating growth makes good sense for everyone. For example, focusing growth where infrastructure is already available may reduce the costs associated with development, resulting in savings to users such as homebuyers.

- Concentrating development in the Opportunity Corridor

As this graphic shows, Concord's highest land values are downtown. This suggests that strategic public investment–such as in new parking garages–would reap benefits by leveraging private development. In addition, sound economic development policy should encourage new development near Main Street by marketing Opportunity Corridor sites and using public incentives, where appropriate, to attract companies that will help meet the objectives of strengthening the city's tax base and providing good jobs. A unified vision for the Opportunity Corridor consistently supports and reinforces downtown Concord as a cultural district, a regional employment and retail center, a viable residential neighborhood, and of course, as New Hampshire's downtown.



The economic analysis offers clear evidence that Concord is at a crossroads today. Up to 8,000 new residents in Concord and 23,000 proposed new jobs to Merrimack County over the next 20 years, an adequate supply of developable land, and its position at the edge of the growth bubble would seem to indicate that the city is poised to capture future economic growth. At its core, Concord residents and the city's leaders have an opportunity to help guide how and where Concord wants to grow, to ensure that economic prosperity means opportunities for all of Concord's residents, including well-paying jobs, a diversified and affordable housing stock, a broad tax base that provides excellent municipal services such as recreational opportunities and the ability to acquire open space, and a viable downtown that supports retailers and other businesses. In short, keeping Concord vital for generations to come.

Economic vitality

- **Concentrate development in the villages and downtown**
- **Create a redevelopment entity to guide growth in selected locations**
- **Redevelop the Opportunity Corridor**
- **Clearly communicate goals for economic vitality to the development community**
- **Provide a streamlined and clear project review process**
- **Provide public incentives, where appropriate, to achieve economic vitality**
- **Diversify and expand the tax base and job base**
- **Make decisions for long-term vitality, not short-term gain**

The efficiency of the transportation system in Concord is a key concern of residents. However, the city's roadways must do more than move vehicles efficiently and rapidly from one point to another. Concord's transportation network must be true to the 20/20 Vision Principles; the ideal network would strengthen connections (vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, transit) between villages, open space and Downtown while at the same time preserving residential neighborhoods, easing congestion, and addressing life safety concerns.

Two factors guided the creation of transportation alternatives for Concord in 20/20:

- The 20/20 Vision Principles should guide transportation decisions
- Transportation should be viewed as a "system," not piecemeal

The term transportation "system" can not be stressed enough; the strength of the 20/20 Vision for Concord comes from the interrelatedness of its parts…how each Principle contributes to the effectiveness of other Principles in enhancing quality of life in the city. It must also be stressed that these recommendations are only the beginning step in making transportation decisions in the coming years. Just as NHDOT will use the Vision as a starting point for its study of I-93, each of the opportunities described here must be studied in greater depth to understand the full impacts and to make fully informed decisions. As changes are proposed and alternatives assessed, the city must continually revisit the "big picture"- reinforcing the importance of looking at transportation as a system.

Protect Existing Neighborhoods from Pass-Through Traffic

All transportation improvements in Concord should be reviewed based on their success in protecting existing residential areas from pass-through traffic. A capacity reduction on Loudon Road, the completion of the Langley Parkway, and traffic calming in each village are all measures designed to make the city's neighborhoods safe for pedestrians and to enhance quality of life.

A Reduce Loudon Road capacity to 3 Lanes, redesign Exits 14 and 15

Congestion on Loudon Road negatively impacts quality of life for The Heights residents. While I-393 was designed to accommodate mall traffic, many shoppers use Loudon Road as a "short-cut." **Reducing capacity on Loudon Road to three lanes** would better serve residents of The Heights. Widening of sidewalks, the provision of a bike lane and center turn lane, and on-street parking would all serve to make this road more pedestrian-friendly by calming traffic. Improving the road's appearance with street trees, signage controls, and sidewalk improvements would help The Heights "reclaim" this road as a village road.

Two other changes were modeled. The northbound on and southbound off ramps were removed from Exit 14 to eliminate the hazardous short weave between Exits 14 and 15, and Exit 2-1/2 on I-393 was added to encourage drivers to avoid Loudon Road and to take I-393 to the mall. But these additional improvements would only eliminate approximately 40 additional vehicles from Loudon Road between Hazen and D'Amante Drives during peak times–a small impact on Loudon Road congestion, and not enough to justify the expense of Exit 2-1/2. In addition, the removal of the two Exit 14 ramps would result in through-traffic of approximately 250 more vehicles on North State Street between Loudon Road and I-393–more than this intersection can handle. An alternative would be to remove only the southbound off ramp and to redesign the northbound on ramp in conjunction with I-93 capacity improvements. This option must be modeled to confirm its effect on North State Street. Any ramp redesign should carefully balance both esthetic and safety concerns.

transportation that serves the community

B Route 106/Hall St. Connector/ Manchester Street Improvements

A Route 106/Hall Street connector would reduce the demand on Manchester Street south of Old Turn Pike Road by approximately 430 vehicles in the peak hour to around 1,330 vehicles. In addition, if the City decides to develop a portion of Garvins Falls in the future (possibly as another village), the connector would provide access to the area. It is also recommended that Manchester Street be improved as a three-lane roadway (similar to Loudon and Fisherville Roads) within a five-lane right-of-way, to be acquired by the City. Modeling results show that in 2020, with these improvements, the section of Manchester Street between Old Turn Pike Road and I-93 would experience 590 fewer vehicles in the peak hour and the remaining portion would experience around 430 fewer vehicles. The new connector would carry about 945 vehicles during this same period.

While many people have believed that a Route 106 bypass would relieve pressure on I-93 and eliminate the need for capacity improvements on the interstate, this would only occur if 106 is a true bypass with collector/distributor roads and limited access. Because of its high cost, this option is at least 20-30 years in the future. However, it would be wise to consider an upgraded connection from I-89 to NH 106 when improvements are made to I-93. An I-89/106 connector would further reduce peak hour demand on Manchester Street by about 1,000 vehicles and would leave a future bypass option available to the city.

C North State/Fisherville Rd at 3 Lanes, Exit 16-1/2 SB on/NB off ramps on I-93

Significant development in and around West Concord in the past twenty years has resulted in increased traffic congestion along **Fisherville Road/North State Street**. Changes to the transportation system in this area will affect local roads and will need further study and discussion. Two ramps at a **new Exit 16-1/2 (southbound on, northbound off)** would reduce demand on Fisherville Road/N. State Street by 8,000 cars per day. These new ramps would also reduce demand on Mountain Road and provide benefits to East Concord. Improvements to a three-lane Fisherville Road would include sidewalks, a bike lane, and pedestrian crosswalks and traffic signals at major intersections. The improvements would not come without a price, however. There would be increased traffic impacts to Sewalls Falls, Manor, and Abbott Roads that will need further study and discussion. In addition, proper development controls (zoning) are necessary around Exit 16-1/2 to ensure adherence to the 20/20 Vision Principles; development is not recommended in this area, which is outside an existing Concord village.

D Aggressive Public Transportation Policies and Support of Walkable Village Centers

The 20/20 Vision for Concord encourages walkable communities that may be served by public transit. With concentrated development in the villages of Concord, Concord Area Transit (CAT) can begin to assess the feasibility of running transit service between Downtown and the village centers. As the Downtown culture/entertainment core grows, there is greater likelihood that a trackless trolley serving the entire Opportunity Corridor, including the Horseshoe Pond Convention Center area, will benefit residents and visitors alike. In addition, the Vision supports commuter rail in Concord and has allowed for a rail station in Downtown.

E I-93 at 6 Lanes

The traffic model illustrates clearly what many in Concord already know; I-93 is a local road as well as an interstate highway. For example, 81% of Exit 12 on-ramp northbound traffic gets off between Exits 13 and 16. Using I-93 as a short cut is not necessarily a bad thing - it eases congestion on Main Street. Within this proposed transportation system for Concord, I-93 works at 6 lanes in the year 2020. But the width of the roadway is only one of several design issues to be addressed. With capacity improvements should come a careful study of the ramps at Exits 14 and 15 to eliminate the dangerous weaves now present. Alignment of the interstate is also a consideration. It is recommended that I-93 be shifted slightly west between Exits 13 and 14 to accommodate more open space along the Merrimack River in Downtown. Coupled with this, depressing the roadway as much as possible consistent with safety (flood) considerations, and constructing earth berms on the western edge of the interstate, will lessen the road's visual and auditory impacts and help create a more pleasant river connection via a pedestrian bridge or deck.

F Construct Northerly Leg of the Langley Parkway

The Langley Parkway or Northwest Bypass was originally planned to facilitate faster emergency medical service to Concord Hospital and to protect local streets from cut-through traffic. The transportation model shows that indeed, the completion of the northerly leg of the Parkway would provide a roadway that does just that. Through-traffic on local residential streets would be significantly reduced and the congestion problems at the Fruit/ Pleasant/Warren intersection would be eliminated. There are concerns however. The land purchased for the Parkway right-of-way has come to be appreciated as open space by the city's nature enthusiasts and residents abutting the ROW. Those groups are rightly concerned that development will follow roadway construction. In keeping with the Vision Principles, strict development controls must be instituted here (and at a new Exit 16-1/2) to ensure that development is concentrated in the villages and does not sprawl through the greenfields of the city.

Transportation that serves the community

- **Expand I-93 to 6 lanes**
- **Make arterials (Loudon Rd, Fisherville Rd, Manchester St, etc.) more attractive and safer for cars, pedestrians, and cyclists**
- **Provide long-term solutions to traffic issues northwest and southeast of Downtown**
- **Expand and regionalize local transit**
- **Provide for future commuter rail to Boston, and high speed rail to Canada**
- **Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle considerations into all transportation improvements**
- **Protect existing neighborhoods from pass-through traffic**

The Concord 20/20 Vision is a strategic plan. As the precursor and Vision component to a future city master plan, the 20/20 Vision provides a set of visualized futures to which the community aspires, combined with a policy framework to help Concord achieve those aspirations.

What happens next?

The city master planning process will begin in 2002. What happens in the meantime? Can the 20/20 Vision Principles be applied now? Or must the citizens of Concord wait three or four years, possibly enduring changes and growth that do not adhere to the Principles?

Clearly, the next steps required to achieve the Vision can and should be taken now. The 20/20 Vision for Concord provides a framework that will guide the city, region and state in making decisions that affect the lives of Concord residents, and serves a number of other functions:

- **A call to action:** First and foremost this Vision serves to guide Concord citizens in their expectations of city and state officials.
- **A guide for developing the Concord Master Plan update:** The five Vision Principles will guide decision making during the Master Plan update.
- **A guide for I-93 improvements:** As a major supporter of this Vision Plan, NHDOT will use the Vision Principles and recommendations as a starting point for its study of I-93 capacity improvements.
- **"Scorecard" for development proposals:** City officials, residents, and potential developers can use the scorecard to rank adherence to the Vision Principles.
- **A guide for continuing the public-private partnership:** The Concord 20/20 Vision Compact will be a non-profit organization that continues the work started in this planning process.

While some of these functions require long-term action, immediate steps can be taken now to achieve the Vision. These steps fall into three categories:

- Continue to build public understanding and acceptance of the Vision
- Implement "bricks and mortar" projects and activities by various organizations and government agencies
- Make regulatory changes to support the Vision

A key strategy in moving forward with implementation in these three areas is the organization of a public-private alliance of government and many organizations and individuals from throughout the city. This organization will be the Concord 20/20 Vision Compact.

The Concord 20/20 Vision Compact is a nonprofit partnership and membership organization that will oversee, guide, coordinate and manage aspects of the implementation of the 20/20 Vision Plan. The Compact will be the steward of the Vision and goals, which it will communicate to Concord residents and businesses and to potential newcomers. The Compact's mission is to:

- Promote and publicize the 20/20 Vision
- Coordinate public and private partnerships to implement the 20/20 Vision
- Provide assistance to Compact Partners in implementing the Vision

20/20 Vision Project Evaluation Criteria	0 – 5
Downtown/History/Open Space and Recreation	
• Reinforce historic character	1
• Improve streetscaping and pedestrian environment	2
• Keep buildings at the sidewalk edge	0
Transportation	
• Encourage traffic calming on local streets	0
• Enhance the character of Storrs Street	1
• Enhance Storrs Street's image from I-93	1
Economic Vitality	
• In downtown:	
• Balance mix of commercial uses	1
• Add market rate for-sale and rental housing	0
• Increase downtown employment	3
Total Score	9

20/20 Vision Project Evaluation Criteria	0 – 5
Downtown/History/Open Space and Recreation	
• Reinforce historic character	4
• Improve streetscaping and pedestrian environment	5
• Keep buildings at the sidewalk edge	4
Transportation	
• Encourage traffic calming on local streets	5
• Enhance the character of Storrs Street	5
• Enhance Storrs Street's image from I-93	4
Economic Vitality	
• In downtown:	
• Balance mix of commercial uses	4
• Add market rate for-sale and rental housing	5
• Increase downtown employment	4
Total Score	40

A sample of some criteria on the 20/20 scorecard.

Achievement of the Vision will also require the creation of a redevelopment entity to concentrate on redevelopment of the North, Central, and South Opportunity Corridor. As noted in the discussion of the North Opportunity Corridor on page ES.10, the ability to plan for the long term and make visionary policy decisions will be greatly enhanced by a redevelopment entity.

One of the most powerful tools emerging from this Vision Plan is the "20/20 Vision Scorecard." The Scorecard outlines a set of development guidelines based on the five Vision Principles. In a clear and concise format, it provides guidance for **everyone**. The city can use the scorecard to evaluate development proposals, rank public improvement projects, and assess the market for new economic development. Developers and businesses can use the scorecard to shape proposed projects, eliminating the uncertainty surrounding the regulatory process. Residents can use the scorecard to check on Vision 20/20 progress and hold public officials and developers accountable.

A public-private compact to steward the Concord 20/20 Vision

- **Continue long-term leadership to achieve the 20/20 Vision**
- **Use the Vision to guide public and private decision-making**
- **Coordinate public, private, and non-profit actions to achieve the Vision**
- **Foster widespread public understanding and acceptance of the Vision**
- **Form partnerships with diverse community and grassroots organizations**

Growth and change are inevitable. What is not inevitable is loss of control over the future. Concord has taken the first step in an extraordinary process that has put the future in the hands of the city. The 20/20 Vision for Concord is truly…

…A Millennium Gift from One Generation to Another

I. Overview

Alternatives for a river connection from Downtown have been discussed for years in Concord. This is one of the alternatives developed during the Merrimack River Charrette in 1993.

About The Initiative for a 20/20 Vision for Concord

The Initiative for a 20/20 Vision for Concord is a citizen-based effort to build consensus on the issues that will shape the future of Concord. People from every part of the city worked together in a series of public meetings and workshops to identify values, choices, and impacts in open, inclusive, educational and often passionate discussions. The project focused on developing broad community consensus on a range of opportunities that will shape the city in the next twenty years and beyond. These opportunities were grouped into three categories or themes for examination during public workshops: Roads, Rails and Walks; Rivers of Water, Open Space and History; and Sustainability, Development, and Growth. The exploration of these areas led to community adoption of five guiding Principles for a 20/20 Vision for Concord:

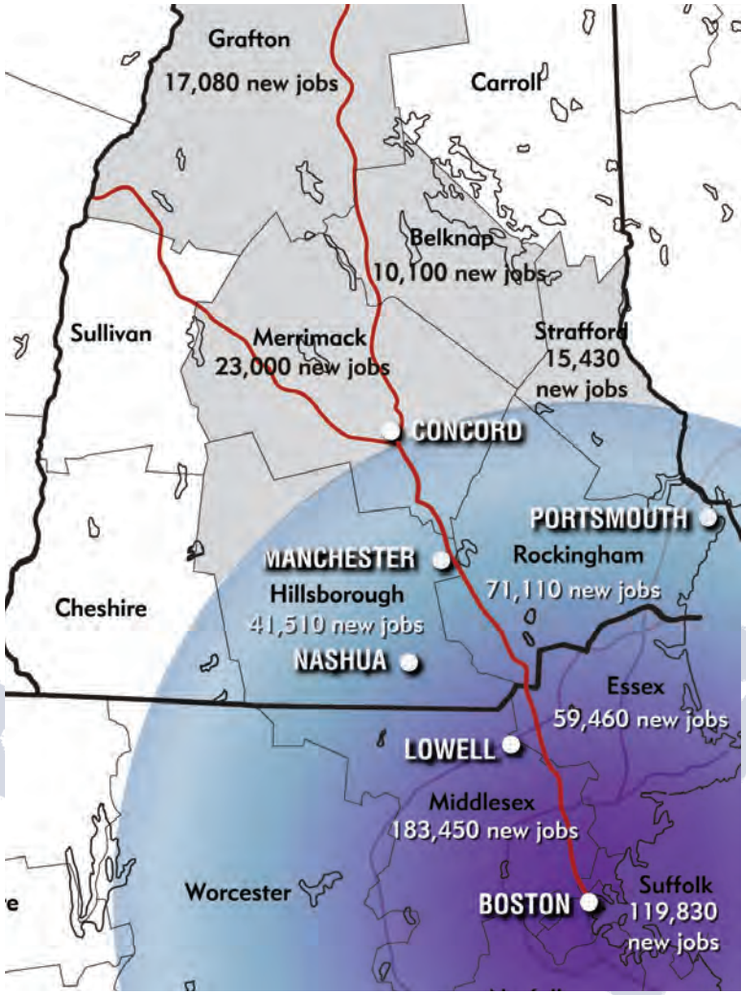
- A vibrant, livable Downtown
- Neighborhoods served by walkable villages
- Preservation and access to the natural environment
- Economic vitality
- Transportation that serves the community

These principles form a framework for the city to plan open space, trails, access to the rivers, downtown character, growth and sustainability, economic development, and transportation. At the core of a 20/20 Vision for Concord is the commitment to maintaining and improving quality of life in Concord. Through an intensive and inclusive community process, these guiding principles, general concepts and ideas were refined into a consensus vision, "Concord: A City of Villages." A City of Villages is a commitment to revitalize the core of Downtown and embrace a more diverse mix of housing, while encouraging concentrations of development in some places to limit sprawl and reinforce and invigorate the villages. This is the 20/20 Vision for Concord.

Why Develop a Vision Now?

The people of Concord have a history of successfully planning for and taking control of their future. Among these many planning efforts are the adoption of the Urban Growth Boundary, proposals for new connections to the river from downtown, and a two-year effort to rewrite the city's zoning to correspond to the Master Plan Update of 1993. Additionally that year, the City initiated the Open Space Master Plan to protect its critical open space resources. Today, two interrelated and unprecedented developments present Concord with an unmatched opportunity to define a broad new vision of its economic, physical, and cultural character. The prospect of close to one hundred million dollars of investment in Interstate 93, with the power to enhance or diminish significantly the city's quality of life, together with the community's success in securing a substantial planning grant from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have provided both the incentive and the resources to create a new vision.

Plans for improvements to I-93 offer a unique opportunity for the city to participate in visionary planning for the relationship among the owntown, Merrimack River, and the Interstate.



Concord is facing the growth bubble. In the last 10 years, the city has been the fastest growing city in New Hampshire. In the next 20 years, 23,000 new jobs are projected for Merrimack County. With limited developable land left in Nashua, Manchester and Salem–developers' eyes are focused on Concord.

These resources, however, would have been meaningless without the will and passion of a dedicated group of citizens committed to turning an idea into reality. And this passion was contagious. Through a year-long series of twelve public meetings and workshops, participants of all ages and interests embraced the visioning process and made a commitment to support the Vision Principles in the coming years. Concord is continuing its history of active public involvement and civic pride.

"A Vision is a way to shape the future. It is a road map to influence decisions on the look, feel, and direction of Concord as it moves into a new millennium. It is a way to step back from the detail and look from afar, to take a snapshot of the future and, by so doing, help make that view of Concord's future come into focus."

Drawings created by participants at the Concord YMCA Summer Camp, August 2000. The drawing on the left depicts the "Concord of the Future" while the drawing on the right represents a camper's neighborhood.

There are other reasons why the City is developing a vision now. State demographers predict the city will continue to show strong growth (nearly 8,000 residents over the next 20 years). Census data show Concord was the fastest growing city in New Hampshire between 1990-2000. This confirms what we already knew…Concord is on the edge of the growth bubble. In addition, there will be increasing demand for travel to and through Concord. How to accommodate these changes and opportunities has not been so clear. If growth is inevitable, where will it go? How will residential and commercial development impact open space? What will be required of city infrastructure and resources? How can I-93 improvements enhance the city's relationship with the Merrimack River and open space connections?

The city is poised either to succumb to the whims of development and growth, or to grab hold of the future and shape it. Rather than react to changing circumstances, the people of Concord are taking a proactive approach by anticipating change and crafting a city vision that utilizes change to enhance the quality of life citizens have come to know and love. And there is no better time to be proactive than now. Current circumstances offer opportunities to move quickly and effectively toward active implementation:

- New Hampshire Department of Transportation's(NHDOT) intention to spend approximately $72 million to improve safety and capacity on I-93 within the next 10-15 years can create a powerful engine for positive change all along the highway's corridor.
- There is a real need for transportation projects in the city to meet future demand, both in terms of regional and local growth in the next twenty years.
- High-speed rail planning has begun, with New England states signing a cooperative agreement to study the potential and demand for high-speed rail service from Boston to Montreal. This rail corridor passes through Downtown Concord, providing opportunities for positive impact on the life of Concord residents.
- New development in the North Opportunity Corridor, adjacent to I-93, is closer to reality with state-owned land on Stickney Avenue slated for redevelopment.
- The two-year rezoning effort by the Citizens' Zoning Advisory Committee (CZAC) represents an important resource for thoroughly understanding land use issues and creates a climate for zoning scrutiny and change that will continue as the 20/20 Vision for Concord is implemented. Just as the efforts of CZAC focused on updating zoning to correlate with the 1993 Master Plan, so too will the recommendations of this 20/20 Vision inform a New Master Plan and subsequent zoning amendments in the years to come.
- A New Master Planning process will be initiated in Concord in 2002. The City will be guided by the 20/20 Vision Plan when preparing the Master Plan.
- The union of new leadership at the City and State represents a unique opportunity to identify new common ground in setting policies and action agendas with a strong commitment for implementation. This is coupled with support from the federal government (a major source of funding for the 20/20 Vision project) to form a potential powerhouse of cooperation and implementation. The joint participation from leadership in New Hampshire's Congressional delegation, NHDOT, the City of Concord, and the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) is testament to the power of coordinated policies and actions.

This confluence of opportunities for planning and subsequent implementation underscores the immense promise of this effort. At the same time, none of these windows of opportunity is guaranteed to remain open indefinitely. NHDOT is scheduled to proceed with its planning, while the City will continue to encourage economic development and make day-to-day policy decisions. Economic cycles will go up and down. Changing city or state administrations are likely to set new agendas in time. A 20/20 Vision

for Concord sets a framework for decision-making through these planning periods and times of active change. With the five Vision Principles in hand, the citizens of Concord can look optimistically toward the future…truly offering a millennium gift from one generation to another.

How the Visioning Process Got Started

The planning resulting in this 20/20 Vision for Concord was the endeavor of an extraordinary cast of stakeholders: federal, state, regional, and local governments, the business community, environmental advocates, and residents all working together. These stakeholders initially were brought together by a group of public-minded citizens who believed that a grassroots effort to take charge of the city's future was necessary and could be successful. From its inception, the Initiative has been a highly public process, with an unparalleled depth and breadth of community involvement, reflecting people's firm commitment to Concord and their desire to shape its growth for a better future. The Initiative also stands as testimony to the success of public-private partnerships that enable the achievement of complex, broad-ranging goals and objectives by leveraging the expertise and resources of all involved. The product is the result of a truly unique planning process that defies convention: a community-based vision supported by innovative public-private partnerships.

Believing the city needed to aspire to a common vision, a group of Concord residents and business people urged Mayor William Veroneau to participate in the Mayor's Institute on City Design in November of 1998. At this symposium sponsored by the National Endowment of the Arts, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and the American Architectural Foundation, national experts were united in their belief that Concord needed a "grand vision," one that coordinates the City's current efforts (tax-base expansion, zoning and master plan update, etc.) and unifies City actions. In the attempt to create a new framework for community-based planning, residents and business people formed a fourteen-member Steering Committee in the early part of 1999 for the purpose of raising funds. After establishing dialogue with the Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the New Hampshire DOT, the group put together a request for $400,000 from the Transportation and Community and System Preservation (TCSP) Program administered by the FHWA. Concord was awarded the TCSP grant in July 2000, and the committee then raised more than $350,000 in matching funds. An additional $200,000 was supplied by NHDOT for transportation planning (including the development of a transportation model and the revision of the agency's guide to public participation). In addition, the Environmental Protection Agency provided $50,000 in matching funds to support the visioning process.

In the winter of 1999, the Steering Committee undertook a national search to find a consultant team with transportation, economic development and environmental expertise to lead the visioning process. The Goody, Clancy & Associates (GC&A) planning team was selected from a field of seven teams and began work on the project in May 2000. The first public meeting, on May 10th, began an extraordinary public participation and visioning process that has led to the development of a 20/20 Vision for Concord, "Concord: City of Villages."

Definition of Study Area

City of Concord

The City of Concord encompasses 64 square miles in Merrimack County in southern New Hampshire. Located 79 miles north of Boston, Massachusetts, and 18 miles northeast of Manchester (the largest city in the state), Concord is the capital of New Hampshire. 2000 Census data show Concord has 40,700 residents and is the third most populous city in the state.

Opportunity Corridor

The 20/20 Vision for Concord describes a future that encompasses the entire city boundary. Within this boundary, special scrutiny is given to the Opportunity Corridor, a three-mile strip of land stretching from Horseshoe Pond to the South End Marsh, located between Main Street and I-93. Known locally as the "crud" corridor because of its former industrial uses, vacated rail yards which were the source of Concord's wealth, vacant land, and unappealing aesthetics, the Corridor is critically important to the future health of the city because of its close proximity to Downtown, the heart of the city. In addition, because of its visibility from I-93, the Corridor has a major impact on the the image of the city.

The Opportunity Corridor is comprised of three distinct sections:

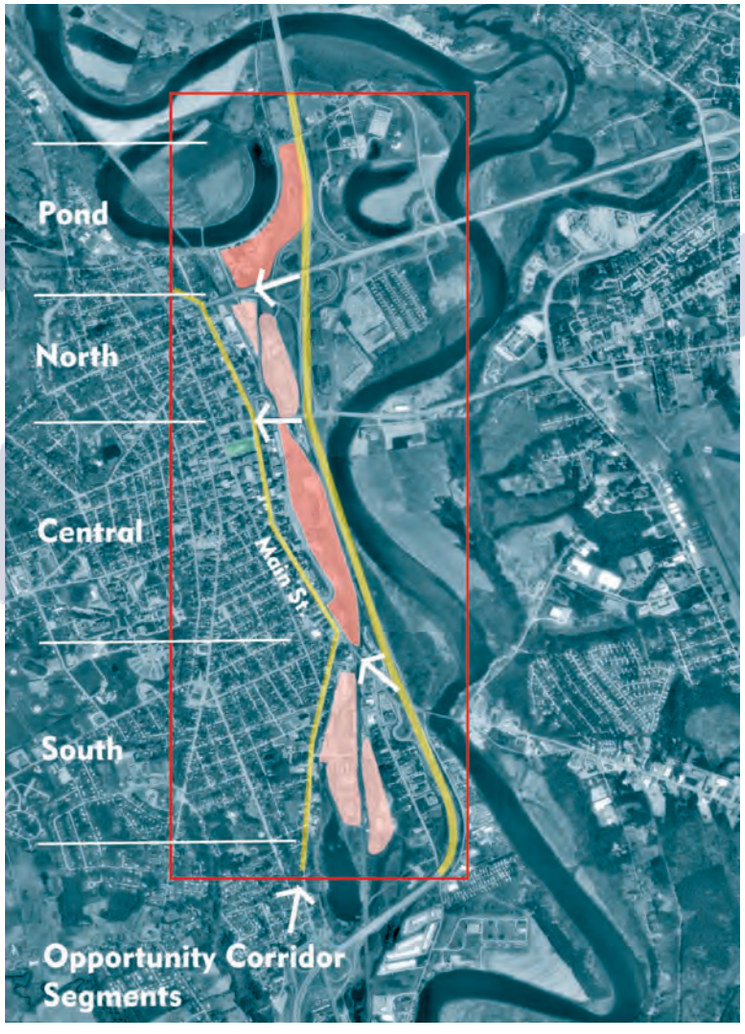
North Opportunity Corridor: From Horseshoe Pond to Loudon Road (formerly Bridge Street), this section of the Opportunity Corridor has seen recent residential and office development along the Pond and is the site of the city's new Convention Center. South of this new development is a large area of land fronting on Stickney Avenue and, adjacent to the downtown, that has excellent visibility from I-93.

Central Opportunity Corridor: Adjacent to the core of downtown and separated from the river by the highway and rail corridor, the Central portion of the Opportunity Corridor runs between Storrs Street and Interstate 93. With its direct links to Main Street, this district of low-density retail and warehouses has the potential to become an extension of the downtown.

South Opportunity Corridor: This portion of the opportunity corridor is unique in that it clearly is part of The South End and sits apart from the Downtown. This area contains large historic railway buildings and is divided by the rail corridor. The South End Marsh is at the southern edge of the Corridor.

The Opportunity Corridor is part of the Merrimack River Valley, which is bounded by bluffs. Two hundred years ago, the Corridor was covered with farm fields stretching from the base of the Main Street bluff to the riverbank. The coming of the railroad in the middle of the 19th century connected Concord to New England but severed the downtown from the river and from its agricultural roots. The Opportunity Corridor became a major

The Opportunity Corridor has three distinct sections: north, central and south. The Horseshoe Pond area is part of the North Opportunity Corridor but has been developed in the last few years with the city's Convention Center, a hotel, housing, and new office space.



transportation hub in New England with passenger stations and freight offices in the central section and major repair facilities in the south section near the marsh. All that remains of this railroad legacy today are the tracks, a few freight buildings downtown, and the repair shops in the South Opportunity Corridor. A century after the introduction of rail, Concord saw the construction of the Interstate along the same railroad corridor. Today, the city seeks to once again redefine the Corridor's role.

Links to the Region

While the emphasis of the 20/20 Vision project is the future of the City of Concord, understanding the relationship of the city to other communities in the region is essential to developing a successful plan. In fact, much of this planning initiative is based on the knowledge that Concord is on the edge of the growth bubble and is impacted by external influences. Highways, roadways, rivers, trails and landscape all tie Concord to its region, which is under the jurisdiction of the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC).

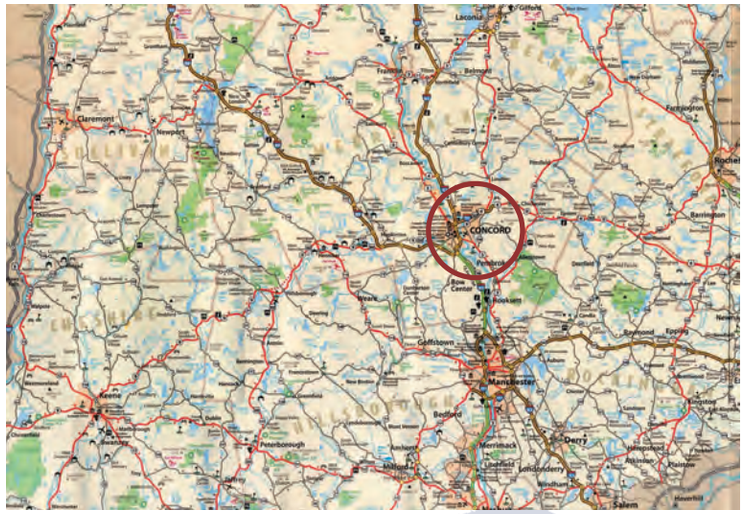
Concord residents understand that regional perspective is critical for the health of the city and the surrounding towns. As the state capital, Concord's Downtown is New Hampshire's downtown. Regional relationships reinforce Concord's competitive position as an employment center, cultural center, and medical center for the area. The city is also a regional retail center and must understand its regional market to maintain a competitive edge. The presence of I-93 underscores the importance of a regional approach. The interstate serves a wide area and also provides significant benefits to the city.

There are other regional considerations. Concord Area Transit (CAT) links adjacent communities to the city through a series of bus routes. Surrounding communities supply Concord with ready employees, offering a labor force that is critical to continued economic vitality. Lastly, trends reflecting growth, employment, and housing starts in the region affect Concord; if a neighboring town is aggressively recruiting businesses and encouraging new housing starts, for example, Concord's future growth may be impacted.

Issues

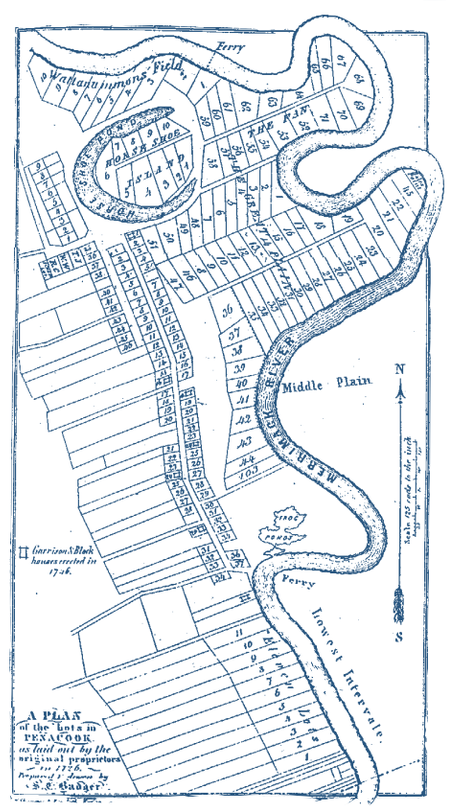
This planning study is multi-disciplinary. While the physical boundaries of the city define the geographic area of study, the following disciplines make up the professional realm of the study and set the context for discussing opportunities and challenges facing Concord:

- **Transportation:** How can Concord create a 21st century transportation system while supporting the full spectrum of other goals?
- **Economic Opportunity:** How can Concord support schools, parks, services, and provide increased individual economic opportunity?



The interstate is the north-south "spinal cord" of New Hampshire, serving Salem, Manchester, Concord, the Lakes region and the mountains to the North. I-93's impact arises from statewide travel demand, as well as from Concord's citywide transportation and economic development policies.

1726



This map of plots along the Merrimack River in 1726 illustrates the urban nature of the settlement; five acre plots along the river were designated for agricultural use. Houses were built on the smaller plots outside of the flood plain along what became Main Street.

courtesy of the Concord Public Library

- **Natural Environment:** How can Concord enhance conservation and enjoyment of its natural environment?
- **Built Environment:** How can Concord enhance the character and quality of its defining urban design elements including Main Street, neighborhoods, gateways, and development sites within the Opportunity Corridor?

Some Concord History

In addition to the physical characteristics of the city, it is important to understand the cultural, social and economic forces that have shaped Concord's growth. The city known today as Concord has its roots in a Native American settlement chosen for its location along the fertile riverbed and Indian trail that led from Western Canada to the Massachusetts coast. Settled by Europeans and chartered as the Town of Penacook in the 1720s, the town was later renamed Rumford for a short period before its establishment as Concord.

The topography of Concord has been instrumental in its development. From its time as a Native American settlement along the banks of the Merrimack River which was home to an abundance of wildlife and fish, to the development of its granite industry at the base of Rattlesnake Hill and the water-powered mills along the river, the natural resources of this area have always provided for and supported its growth and development. The fertile plains and great stands of trees led to the prosperity of Concord as an agrarian community important to the surrounding region.

Concord's early settlement patterns supported the concept of concentrated development that is at the core of "Concord: City of Villages." In 1725, early colonists were faced with a problem when trying to take advantage of the Merrimack River's broad interval of rock-free soil. Specifically, the wide floodplain made the standard settlement patterns of the time impossible; isolated farmhouses surrounded by tillable land could not withstand yearly flooding of the river. The solution led to a uniquely urban settlement along the Merrimack. As stated in the City's "Neighborhood Analyses" of 1963:

> In order to overcome this seeming impasse to settlement, a plan was devised whereby each settler in the central section of the new community was given a house lot on a broad main street which paralleled the river valley on its westerly side on a terrace above the floodplain. These house lots were, in reality, uniform one and one-half acre farmhouse lots, each of which was supported by a six-acre lot of tillage land situated on the fertile floodplain.
>
> Concord's urban origin is to be found in this unusual situation of a concentration of farmhouses, almost city-house-lot fashion, divorced from supporting agricultural lands, often as much as two miles removed from the farm home. Without this unique city plan, devised and implemented out of necessity by the original settlers more than two centuries ago, it is extremely doubtful that Concord would have developed into anything other than a rural community of scattered farms.

The building of the first New Hampshire Turnpike between Concord and Portsmouth in 1796 gave its central location in the region further prominence making it a hub for trade and industry. Shortly thereafter, Concord was chosen as the State Capital further bolstering its position as the nucleus of the region. The construction of the Middlesex Canal, which made the connection between the Merrimack River and Boston Harbor, along with the introduction of railroad in 1842, changed the face of local trade and industrial development and transportation. Today I-93 brings people to Concord from all over New Hampshire and New England, as traditional water and rail transportation has declined across the country.

Each of these developments advanced and encouraged the economics of the city, creating a uniquely high quality of life and making it an ideal place to live, work and visit. The result has been the formation of several cohesive and thriving villages within Concord that are characterized by a concentration of residential developments with schools, parks, and associated commerce. Concord was originally comprised of four villages: Main Village (downtown), Penacook, East Concord, and West Concord. Two additional villages have emerged in the later part of the 20th century – The South End and The Heights.

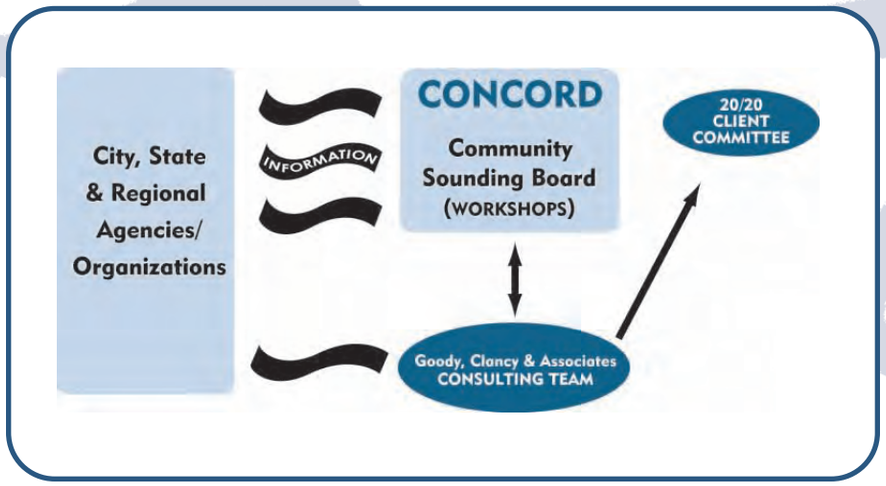
The city has had a history of linear development started along the river, reinforced by the rail, and paralleled by the highway. All of the villages originally were accessed from the river and were connected by it. It is the intention of the community to reconnect the villages.

The Planning Process

A 20/20 Vision for Concord represents a national model for city planning. This planning process embodied a truly multi-disciplinary approach, incorporating land use, transportation and economic planning. The process is unique in terms of its breadth (the entire city) and the collaborative nature of the partnerships. Federal, state, regional and local jurisdictions were all on board as stakeholders and supportive of the consensus-building process. From the start, there was a concerted effort to ensure that this project was an all-inclusive, public process because only that process could bring about tangible, implementable results. The project included extensive community outreach and the involvement of governmental agencies that have the ability and resources to bring the ideas to fruition. The planning involved a proactive process that engaged the community in a constructive dialogue with extensive input and feedback, making the process truly reflective of community aspirations.

Extensive public outreach was undertaken from May 2000 through April 2001. Through focus groups, interviews, and 10 public workshops, the GC&A team met with hundreds of people including: residents, employees, business owners, educators, politicians, community leaders, and environmental advocates. This outreach occurred during all four phases of the project as listed below:

The Rail Station, now gone, was a symbol of the importance of Concord as a transportation hub in the region.



The planning process was broadly inclusive. Input from the community–through workshops, focus groups, and sounding board meetings–and collaboration with City, Regional and State agencies have truly made this 20/20 Vision for Concord representative of many stakeholders.

Phase I: Setting the Stage

Inventory and analysis began in May 2000 with interviews of an extensive list of community leaders and representatives from a wide range of local organizations. Focus groups were also conducted in the areas of education, planning/government, culture/heritage/downtown, neighborhoods, economic development/real estate, and environment/open space (see Appendix B). In YMCA summer camps, children illustrated their neighborhoods. During the 2000-2001 school year, school children depicted their visions for the city. The end product was a quilt assembled from a collage of scenes of Concord seen through the eyes of its youngest residents (see Appendix G for information on these school activities).

To ensure that the end product reflected the views of the whole community, a wide variety of outreach methods and media were used. Newsletters were mailed out regularly. Later, an information insert was distributed in The Concord Monitor to inform the community of progress. Several Coffee Chat sessions on local radio station WKXL were dedicated to the discussion of issues relating to the visioning effort. A 20/20 Vision cable talk show was produced for Concord Cable Television and featured members of the GC&A team, City officials, business people, and residents. For the technologically savvy, the Initiative maintained a website that served as a clearinghouse of all presented materials (slide presentations, newsletters, meeting notes and schedules). At the suggestion of a participant at the very first public meeting, a community forum discussion spot was placed on the Web site to allow people to share comments and suggestions throughout the process. A series of presentations to local organizations and neighborhood meetings was also hosted for smaller group discussions on special topics relevant to a subset of the community. Finally, the Initiative kept a storefront on Main Street for people to drop by, pick-up or drop-off materials, and to ask questions of Initiative staff.

Phase II: Building a Vision

By far the most involved part of the process was a series of ten public workshops (see Appendix A for workshop notes). Hosted in various neighborhoods across the city, the workshops provided an opportunity for the community to receive the analysis and alternatives provided by the GC&A team and to respond in a variety of ways: breakout group discussions, question and answer sessions, polls, and open discussion sessions. Each workshop began with fact-finding reports and the identification of community values, opportunities and challenges. By incorporating a series of consistent themes and encouraging different perspectives to highlight regional and local concerns, a set of criteria began to emerge, forming a framework for evaluating development scenario alternatives. As consensus items emerged at the workshops, these were arranged according to category. The items pointed clearly toward a Vision that protects open space and the agricultural history of the community while celebrating and strengthening the villages and Downtown. Using these themes in subsequent workshops, a consensus vision emerged, "Concord: City of Villages," that was well informed by real facts and captured the strongest hopes of the community. With a consistent workshop format, it was easy for new or returning residents to join in the process.

In fact, in the spirit of engaging a bigger part of the community in the visioning process, the Steering Committee established a Sounding Board with membership open to anyone who participated in workshops. The role of the Sounding Board was to ensure broad public involvement in the planning process. Sounding Board members committed to supporting the planning process (even when disagreements over alternatives were evident) and assisted in public outreach. The creation of the Sounding Board early in the project sent a clear message that this was an open and transparent process.

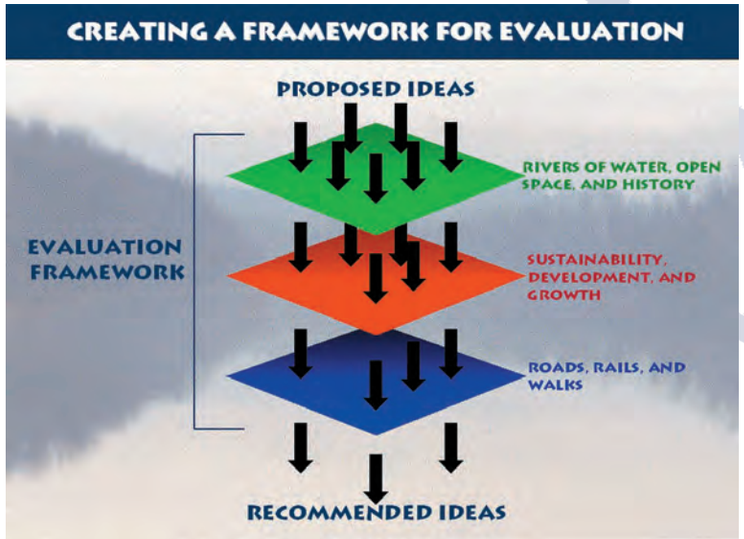
Phase III: Developing the Vision

Parallel to the public participation process, the GC&A team worked with representatives of the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission, New Hampshire Department of Transportation, and Concord City Planning Department to foster inter-agency relationships that would be essential to viable and successful implementation of the vision plan. The ongoing dialogue provided invaluable information, which shaped the analysis and alternatives presented at the workshops. At public meetings, the GC&A team presented alternatives to achieve the 20/20 Vision for Concord, "Concord: City of Villages" and conducted a special workshop focused on the villages of the city.

Phase IV: Creating the 20/20 Vision Plan for Concord

As the Vision was explored, five Principles emerged. Participants at the workshops evaluated alternatives and opportunities for the city using the Vision Principles. With these Principles as a guide, a "scorecard" was developed from criteria lists (see Section IV Implementation). The 20/20 Vision for Concord Scorecard was used to generate a vision framework that can guide the city's growth in the coming years. Implementation strategies were also explored by collaborating with city and regional planning personnel and incorporating input from a wide array of public advocates. The culmination of this phase was this Vision document. More than a roadmap to guide growth, it is an inspirational vision to propel Concord towards a future worthy of its past.

Commonalities between the three "theme songs" of the planning process produced a clear Vision for the City of Concord.



Criteria or goals for each of the theme songs contributed to an evaluation framework. Proposed alternatives and projects can "filter" through the criteria, assisting the City of Concord in making future decisions.

How the Vision emerged

Consistent with its multi-disciplinary focus, three themes were explored during these four phases of the Visioning process:

- Rivers of water, open space and history (natural and built environments)
- Sustainability, development and growth (economic vitality)
- Roads, rails, and walks (transportation)

As participants considered these themes, they discovered that the issues surrounding economic vitality were not unlike the issues regarding transportation and that in fact, all of the goals within these three areas were closely linked. "Concord: City of Villages" reflects the goals common to all three areas of study.

The Forces that Shaped the Vision: What was Heard

The GC&A consultant team spent almost a year working closely with a wide array of Concord residents, business people, City officials, and advocates to understand in depth the key issues that face the city and shape the Vision. During this time, the discussions pointed to a series of issues that affect Concord's high quality of life now or which may do so in the future. Participants in the workshops reached consensus on a number of issues (see Appendix F for a complete list of stakeholder issues), including the desire to:

- Control and direct growth to benefit quality of life
- Protect open space and limit sprawl
- Support a vibrant downtown
- Provide diverse housing choices
- Provide good pedestrian and bicycle connections
- Ensure transportation improvements serve the needs of residents and enhance quality of life
- Diversify the economy
- Create the political will to carry through with established policies and difficult decisions

These areas of agreement form the core of the 20/20 Vision for Concord and are represented in the five Vision Principles.

The Future

A vision for the next twenty years and beyond requires foresight – 20/20 foresight. Knowledge of the world around us and how and why that world is changing is crucial in developing an enduring, credible plan for the future of the city. What do we know about the changing ways we live and how they are likely to affect our cities 20 years from now? We can extract quite a bit of information from current trends:

- **Graying of the Population:** In America, our population is growing older. People are living longer and leading more active lives. Housing requirements, health care, and issues of mobility will continue to affect the way our communities change over time.
- **More Single-Person Households:** Younger people are delaying marriage and living alone longer.
- **More Alternative-Lifestyle Households:** There are more single-parent households than ever before. Households inhabited by roommates, co-housing arrangements, and others are becoming a larger percentage of all households in this country.
- **Digital/Wired Housing:** This country is becoming technologically savvy—bringing entertainment and the Internet into the home.
- **More Jobs via Telecommuting:** Our increasing comfort with technology allows more and more people to work at home full or part time.
- **Increased Emphasis on Energy Efficiency:** With a national concern for the reduction of greenhouse gases (slow global warming), there is a growing interest in sustainable development and public transportation initiatives.

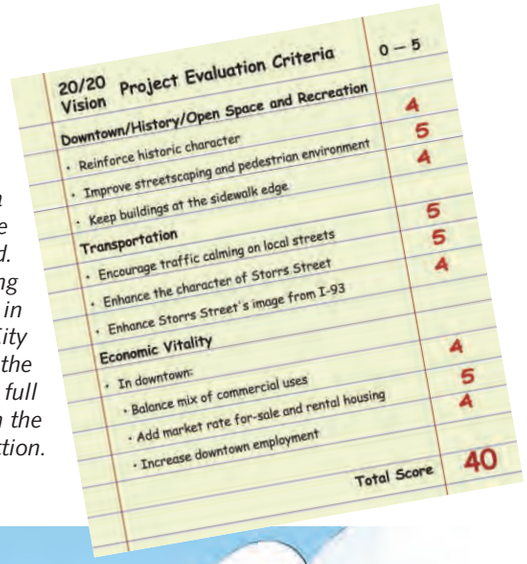
Public workshops were "hands-on" events; residents drew their ideal futures and discussed options for growth.

How should this 20/20 Vision for Concord be used?

This comprehensive vision for Concord is an acknowledgement that prosperity must balance economic development with quality of life. These two are often in conflict; the recent economic boom has shown that the price of prosperity most often equals sprawl. As a result of growth, Concord, like so many other cities and towns in the northeast, is faced with losing its traditional character of compact historic cities and villages set within the New England landscape. And this is happening despite the best efforts of civic advocates, environmental activists, and progressive leadership on skilled planning staffs.

This 20/20 Vision for Concord is a collaborative effort among many partners – public and private. The City of Concord, the Regional Planning Commission, NHDOT, and others have made a commitment to developing a broadly supported Vision for the City. This Vision will guide the city, region and state in making decisions that affect the lives of Concord residents and serves a number of functions:

- **A call to action:** A large number of Concord residents have spoken. Their concerns, dreams, and aspirations are contained in the spirit of this Vision for Concord. First and foremost, this Vision serves as a compilation of the expectations of Concord citizens for their city and state officials.
- **A guide for developing the Concord Master Plan update:** The City is set to begin its Master Plan update in 2002. The Vision put forth in this document will serve to guide decision making during that process. Zoning amendments, economic development decisions, the creation of village enhancement districts, and other aspects, will be guided by the five Vision Principles outlined here.
- **A guide for I-93 improvements:** In the near future, NHDOT will begin its own study process of capacity improvements to I-93 in Concord. As a major supporter of this Vision Plan, NHDOT will use the Vision Principles and recommendations as a starting point for its own study.
- **The application of a "scorecard" to development proposals:** This Vision contains a "scorecard" that presents key development criteria under the framework of the five Vision Principles. City officials, residents, and potential developers can use the scorecard to evaluate adherence of potential development projects to the Vision Principles.
- **A guide for continuing the public-private partnership:** The Concord 20/20 Compact, the immediate physical outcome of this process, will be a non-profit organization that continues the work started in this planning initiative. This organization will use the Vision Principles to guide implementation strategies in the coming years.



20/20 Vision Project Evaluation Criteria	0 – 5
Downtown/History/Open Space and Recreation	
• Reinforce historic character	4
• Improve streetscaping and pedestrian environment	5
• Keep buildings at the sidewalk edge	4
Transportation	
• Encourage traffic calming on local streets	5
• Enhance the character of Storrs Street	5
• Enhance Storrs Street's image from I-93	4
Economic Vitality	
• In downtown:	
• Balance mix of commercial uses	4
• Add market rate for-sale and rental housing	5
• Increase downtown employment	4
Total Score	**40**

A sample of some criteria that is contained on the 20/20 Vision Scorecard. This guide for evaluating proposed projects in Concord can assist the City in decision-making in the coming years. The full Scorecard can be found in the Implementation Section.

II. *Existing Conditions*

As we look ahead with 20/20 vision, there are many opportunities available to Concord, the fastest growing city in New Hampshire. The City's abundance of open space, excellent location along I-93, position at the edge of the growth bubble, and the community's passion for planning its future, offer vast potential given recent growth trends. At the same time, the 20/20 Vision for Concord planning process recognizes the associated challenges that require thoughtful foresight and careful planning to ensure that Concord's high quality of life is enhanced, not impaired. This high quality of life is no accident; a 20/20 Vision for Concord is based on the years of careful planning that have created the thriving city we know today. Building off this foundation, a 20/20 Vision for Concord began with an inventory and analysis of existing conditions in the city presented in this section.

History and its Lessons: Building on the Past

A 20/20 Vision for Concord builds upon a large and competent body of planning work in the City of Concord. Unlike many other cities, Concord boasts a long list of planning initiatives, some government-led, others resident-initiated, but all providing a springboard for a 20/20 Vision for Concord. Rather than ignore previous efforts, this Vision incorporates the best of Concord planning and uses lessons learned as a starting point for an inventory and analysis of existing conditions.

What have Concord citizens planned for themselves in the recent past? Work ranges from the visionary ideas of the Merrimack River Charrette conducted in November 1992, to the citywide rezoning effort to be completed in 2001.

In December 2000, the Office of State Planning and the Growth Management Advisory Committee, published a report entitled **Managing Growth in New Hampshire: Changes and Challenges.** The intent of the report was to illustrate how growth trends affect land development patterns in New Hampshire and to examine the effects of sprawl development in order to advise the Legislature on managing growth. A primary objective of the study was to identify contributing factors to sprawl at the local level. Many of the findings of this report–the need to address sprawl incrementally, the importance of using a master plan to guide land use decisions, the need to focus new development on historic villages and town centers–are exemplified in a 20/20 Vision for Concord. As such, this Vision Plan is at the forefront of the effort to manage growth and enhance quality of life in New Hampshire.

This 20/20 Vision for Concord is at the forefront of the effort to manage growth and enhance quality of life in New Hampshire.

In 1993, the City of Concord updated its Master Plan for the year 2010. **The Year 2010 Master Plan Update** was heavily influenced by the strong economy of the 1980s, which saw the city's highest rate and volume of growth in population, housing and employment in over 100 years. When the dust settled on the housing construction boom of that time, 30% of the city's housing stock was less than 15 years old. Build-out scenarios in this update indicated that enough buildable land exists to nearly double the population and more than double the employment base. To encourage economic and physical development while maintaining the unique

character of Concord, the Master Plan Update made some key recommendations. Perhaps most important was the following recommendation:

"It is desired that Concord grows from the inside out - compactly and economically, avoiding wasteful and destructive sprawl. Outside of the Urban Growth Boundary, low intensity development can and should be allowed to occur only if it is consistent with the rural character. Urban Growth Boundaries have been established as a policy guide for land use, open space, and infrastructure planning, distinguishing those areas intended for urban/suburban development from those where development should remain rural in character. It is critical that the City focus its growth and development maintaining and expanding vital Downtowns for Concord and Penacook, utilizing present investment in building and infrastructure before breaking new ground, urging brownfield development and infill before greenfield conversion."

In 1997, **A Master Plan for the Downtown - City of Concord, NH** was completed. The report concludes that Downtown possesses a relatively healthy specialty retail base, a historic core that retains attractiveness and appeal, an exemplary collection of architecture, and a growing reputation as a vibrant center for the visual and performing arts. The report also highlights the following concerns:

- A perceived lack of sufficient parking;
- Rent levels and/or parking insufficient, in most instances, to support major conversions of downtown buildings from Class C to Class A or B office space;
- Lack of evening retail and restaurant activity to support the increasing performing arts activities; and
- A presence on I-93 that fails to take adequate advantage of highway travelers by enabling them to view the city rather than the back of a shopping center.

The report urges a connection to the river and the rest of the city's greenway system, and the creation of a major Downtown public gathering place. In addition, it recommends more residential uses, design controls, and support for historic preservation efforts. Also cited as important are the creation of a cultural district, the rebirth of Storrs Street as a boulevard, and the creation of a North Opportunity Corridor parcelization plan and strategy for development.

The Downtown Master Plan came to some of the same conclusions as the **Merrimack River Charrette**, conducted in November 1992 and documented in a report the following year. The purpose of the charrette was to explore design alternatives for reconciling the city with the river running through it before I-93 expansion and other events foreclose on these opportunities. While the methods to celebrate and connect to the Merrimack River were varied, all of the design outcomes proposed a unification of the Downtown with the river via open vistas, the creation of parkland in the floodplain, and high quality commercial development outside the floodplain and along Storrs Street. Additionally, proposals are made for the creation of a new "front door" to the city with a streetscape that faces rather than ignores the river and the highway.

The South Concord Redevelopment Area Study: A Small Area Master Plan, was prepared for the City Planning Board in October 1997. Prepared in response to a directive in the 1993 City Master Plan, the study assesses potential for redevelopment in the South Opportunity Corridor and the southern section of the North Opportunity Corridor while addressing such issues as the area's role as "gateway" to the city, the existence of historic buildings on the site, the impact of development-generated traffic on residential areas, and the existence of the South End Marsh. Recommendations of the study include the protection of 32 acres of wetlands for conservation and visual benefits and the preservation of some existing vegetation on the site to enhance this area's character as a gateway. Additionally, the report suggests that the City implement its plan to extend Storrs Street south from Chandler Street to Langdon Avenue and that Langdon Avenue be extended to Hall Street. Adaptive reuse is suggested for the buildings that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Future land use for the area includes residential/office/institutional along South Main Street, including the Blue Cross site; entryway commercial along the Water Street corridor, the north end of Hall Street, and South Main Street between South State Street and Sexton Avenue; industrial/service in the old rail yards south of Gas Street between South Main and Hall Street; and office/service on both sides of Hall street south of the new intersection with Langdon Avenue.

The Garvins Falls area has been identified in various planning studies as an "urban reserve." Looking toward the future, the City is interested in reserving this land for future opportunities and commissioned a feasibility study in 1996 in order to determine how this area should be developed and the appropriate timing under which this development should occur. **The Garvins Falls Urban Reserve Area Development Feasibility Study** considered a study area of approximately 1,000 acres–not including currently developed properties. At the time of the study, about 600 acres in the study area were owned by the Public Service Company of New Hampshire for the potential siting of a generating facility, a plan that was abandoned. Additionally, EnergyNorth Natural Gas owns 50 acres. The intent of this study was to assess whether this site was appropriate for development of a first-class (Class A) office park. The study found that 485 acres of the 1,000 are developable and recommended that the remaining 515 acres be set aside for environmental protection.

The study reveals that current zoning would result in 12,000 to 15,000 jobs in the developable portion of the study area. It concludes that development of this magnitude would require a new bridge across the Merrimack River from Hall Street, a two-lane road connecting Garvins Falls to the Route 106/Rte 3 intersection, four to five lanes on Manchester Street and four lanes on Hall Street, Airport Rd and Route 106. The transportation modeling that is a part of the 20/20 Vision for Concord study tests some of these recommendations. In addition to the direct impacts, the off-site land use impacts are estimated to be 6,091 jobs and 4,806 new housing units elsewhere in Concord. The study acknowledges that the market for a Class A office park in Concord is at least ten years off from the 1996 study date.

State statute (RSA 228:99) requires the NHDOT to propose a statewide program for intermodal transportation improvements in order to develop and implement a long-range program allowing for New Hampshire's full participation in federally supported programs for transportation improvements. In fulfillment of this requirement, and to plan its long-range work program, **The State of NH - Ten Year Statewide Transportation Improvement Program 2001-2010** was prepared by the NHDOT, in coordination with the state's nine metropolitan planning organizations/rural planning commissions, in January 2000. In this Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), are a wide range of proposed transportation projects, which include not only highway projects, but also projects with goals for air quality improvements, highway beautification, intermodal facility development and transit assistance. To move from the proposal to implementation stage, a project must fulfill four tests- it must be technically feasible, environmentally permittable, affordable, and have public acceptance. A number of projects are included that affect Concord and the immediate region:

- I-93 expansion
- Replace the Sewalls Falls Road bridge over the Merrimack River
- On Clinton Street, acquire land and construct a 400-space Park-n-Ride/Transit stop facility to integrate with the bikeways and trail system
- On Eastside Drive, construct sidewalks/bike shoulders to fill in gaps from Exit 2 (I-393) to Loudon Road.
- On NH 106, design safety improvements from I-393 and acquire ROW northerly to the Laconia Bypass
- On I-393, provide pavement improvements from N. Main Street to the Easterly End (5 miles)
- On NH3A (Bow to Manchester) undertake safety improvements, including shoulder widenings and intersection improvements

Concord Demographics

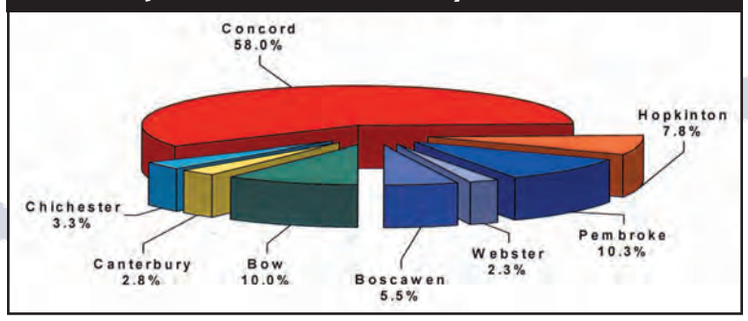
The GC&A consultant team researched demographic trends and forecasts for Concord, surrounding towns and Merrimack County as the basis for estimating the potential for new housing and services such as retail to support a growing population.

Preliminary results from the 2000 Census reveal that New Hampshire's population increased by more than 11% since 1990-to more than 1.23 million residents, making it the fastest-growing Northeastern state. Some of the state's highest rates of population growth occurred in small towns in the southern part of the state and along the Seacoast. Transplants attracted by well-paid high tech jobs, more affordable real estate (as compared to neighboring Massachusetts) and a semi-rural lifestyle fueled this growth. These trends are highlighted below.

Concord

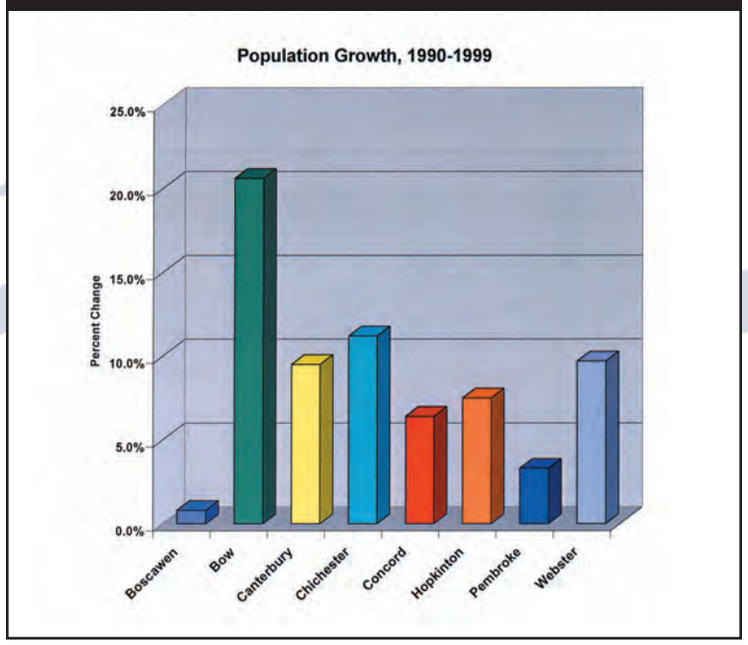
- Population growth in Concord is characterized by periods of both fairly rapid and limited growth. In the 1970s, for example, the city's population was flat. Between 1980 and 1990 however, its population increased by more than 5,600, to **36,006**-an average annual growth rate of 1.8% (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission).

Population Distribution by Town, 1999



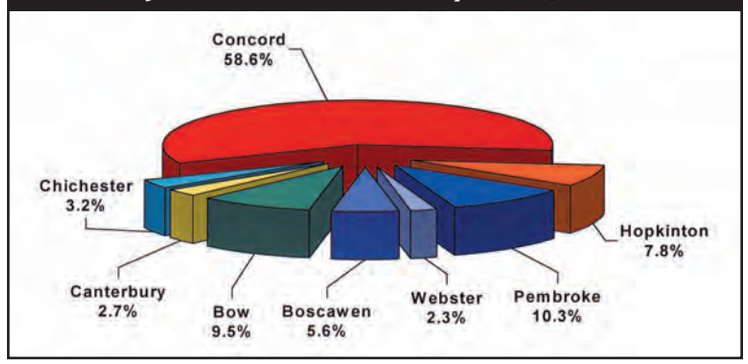
- Preliminary 2000 data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census indicate that Concord added another 4,600 residents over the last 10 years–to **40,700**–an average annual growth rate of 1.3%.
- Concord was the fastest growing city in New Hampshire during the 1990s; in fact, the city grew by 13% between 1990 and 2000. By comparison, New Hampshire experienced an 11% growth rate during this same period and the rate of population growth across the United States was 14.2% during this period.
- Concord is the third largest city in New Hampshire, after Manchester (107,006) and Nashua (86,605).
- Today, Concord remains the center of the region that includes the city and eight nearby towns, with approximately 59% of the population.

Population Increase By Town 1990-2000



- The Office of State Planning previously estimated that Concord's population in 2000 would be 39,095, with a forecasted increase of approximately 8,000 in 2020, to **46,382** residents. This growth is expected to result in Concord increasing its proportionate share of the region's population slightly. (In fact, the city's population from the 2000 Census–40,700–is higher than the Office of State Planning estimate for 2000 of 39,095).

Population Distribution by Town, 2020



More specific data on household and income trends are not yet available from the 2000 Census; therefore, 1990 figures are highlighted below.

- According to the 1990 Census, roughly 17,000 households lived in the City between 1980 and 1990. The average size of a Concord household was 2.35 persons. The largest proportion of residents (37%) were between 25-45 years of age; however, individuals under 18 also constituted a significant portion of the population (22%).
- Concord's median household income in 1990 was $32,733, slightly below that of the Merrimack County's median of $35,801.
- The City also contained a higher concentration of non-family households (38% versus 28% countywide and 29% statewide).
- Over 60% of Concord's households were families, and females headed 10% of these households. Of all families, 4.2% were below the poverty level in comparison to 3.6% countywide.
- The 1990 Census figures illustrated Concord residents' high level of educational attainment: 84.5% were high school graduates and 28.1% were holders of a bachelor's degree or higher.

A Regional Perspective

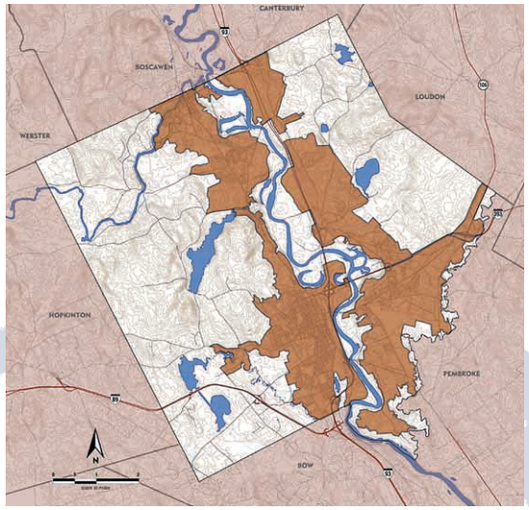
To understand the forces that have shaped and will continue to shape Concord, it is critical to examine the city within a larger context. In 1990, Merrimack County was the state's third largest after Hillsborough County (Manchester and Nashua) and Rockingham County (Salem and the Seacoast), with 120,000 residents. According to preliminary 2000 Census counts, Merrimack County's population increased by more than 13%, to **136,225** (Concord and eight adjacent or nearby communities (Webster, Boscawen, Canterbury, Loudon, Chichester, Pembroke, Bow and Hopkinton) are in the jurisdiction of the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC)). Aside from being the largest municipality in the group, and the state capital, Concord stands out in a number of other ways:

- In size and population, the city is twice the area of half of the towns and contains more residents than the rest of the towns combined. Notably, Concord has more than five times the population of the next most populated town, Bow (followed closely by Pembroke). While growth in the years to come is forecast at a slower pace than the 1990s, it is expected that the population distribution in the region will remain relatively similar.

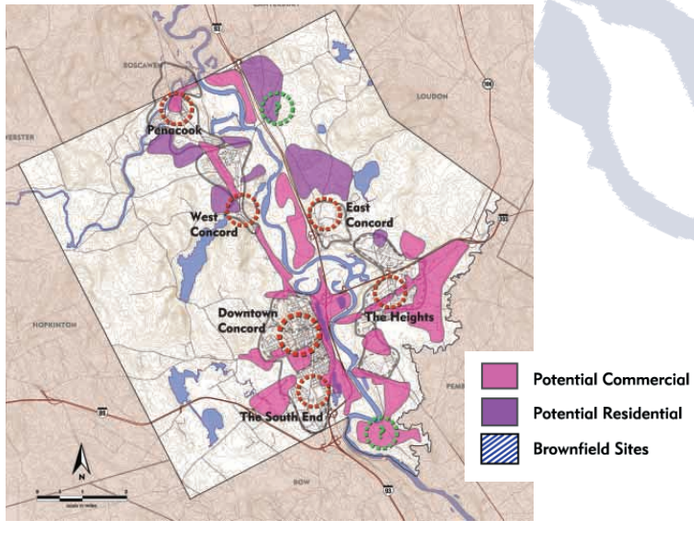
- As the State Capital, **Concord's Downtown is New Hampshire's Downtown**. In addition, the city is the core of the region because it exhibits attributes that set it apart from the surrounding bedroom suburbs. For example, Concord is the only city with a critical mass of residents (598 persons/square mile compared to the next closest, Bow, at 235/square mile). Moreover, Concord contains the lion's share of regional employment (37,962 jobs in 1998 according to the New Hampshire Department of Employment Security), as well as multi-family housing (51%) and mobile homes (8%) (source: City of Concord Planning Department). By comparison, only 15% of the housing stock in neighboring towns is multi-family.

Growth in the City

The strength of Concord lies not only in its neighborhoods and villages but also in those undeveloped areas outside the village boundaries.



The Urban Growth Boundary in Concord.



Where is growth likely to occur under present policies? While much of it will occur within the Urban Growth Boundary, without a change in city policy, most of this growth will be located outside the Village centers.

Most of the development that has occurred within the last thirty years has been in the Urban Growth Boundary, an area of the city that for the most part, designates the limits of city services such as water and sewer. While the creation of an Urban Growth Boundary was revolutionary in its time - in fact, at the time of its adoption, the Planning Board received intense criticism from those who felt the boundary was an excessive regulatory measure - time has shown that limiting growth to this designated area is still not protecting the unique characteristics of the city and that further measures are needed.

The patterns of growth experienced by Concord in the past fifty years are not unlike patterns exhibited throughout New Hampshire and New England. Incremental development decisions, each of which, when viewed individually have only a small impact on natural resources, infrastructure development, and school capacity, taken together eventually lead to sprawl and a significant erosion to quality of life. All over New England, and the entire country, disjointed public policy decisions have resulted in fragmented open space, the destruction of wildlife habitat, and a loss of the unique qualities that create a sense of place. Concord has been better than many cities in that it has embraced planning and has a series of good efforts behind it. However, a re-examination of zoning and land use policies will be necessary if Concord wants to stop incremental sprawl from destroying the unique features of its village settlements.

Strip Development

Concord serves a regional market. Shoppers have easy access to the city via three interstate highways (I-93, I-89, and I-393) and eleven interchanges. As a result, in addition to shopping malls and big box development, strip commercial development has increasingly dominated the approach roads into Concord. Some of these strips are fully formed - Loudon Road, for example - and serve as concentrated centers of retail activity. Others are transitional and could be redeveloped in the future depending on market forces and city policy.

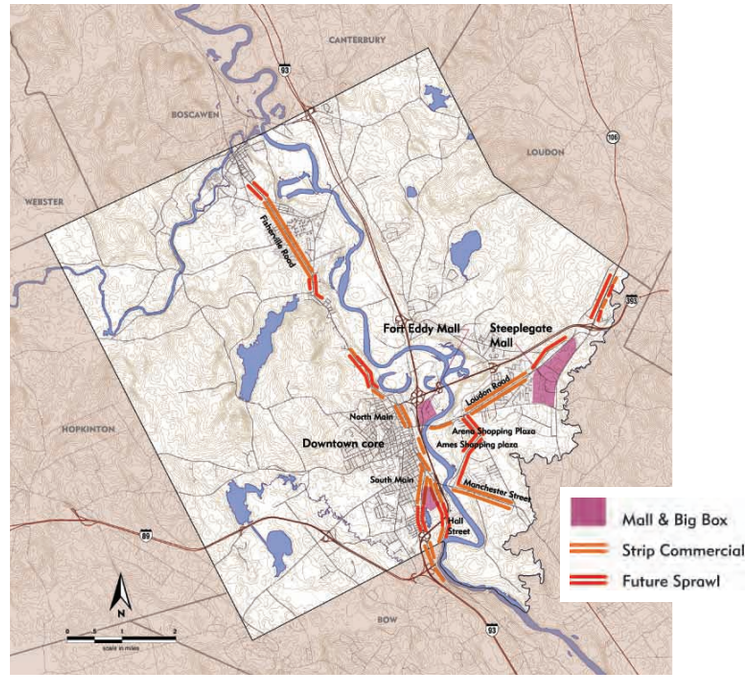
"Development is happening, but unfortunately not where it can create the most benefits for the city and the existing villages and Downtown."

Recently, there has been major new development occurring in the southeast quadrant of the city due partly to easy access and developable land in this area. Development is happening, but unfortunately not where it can create the most benefits for the city and the existing villages and Downtown. If strip development is allowed to continue unplanned and unguided it will negatively impact Routes 3, 3A, 9 and 202. Combined with auto-oriented development at I-93 exits 11,12,13, these will threaten Concord's quality of life and its image as the hub of the state and region.

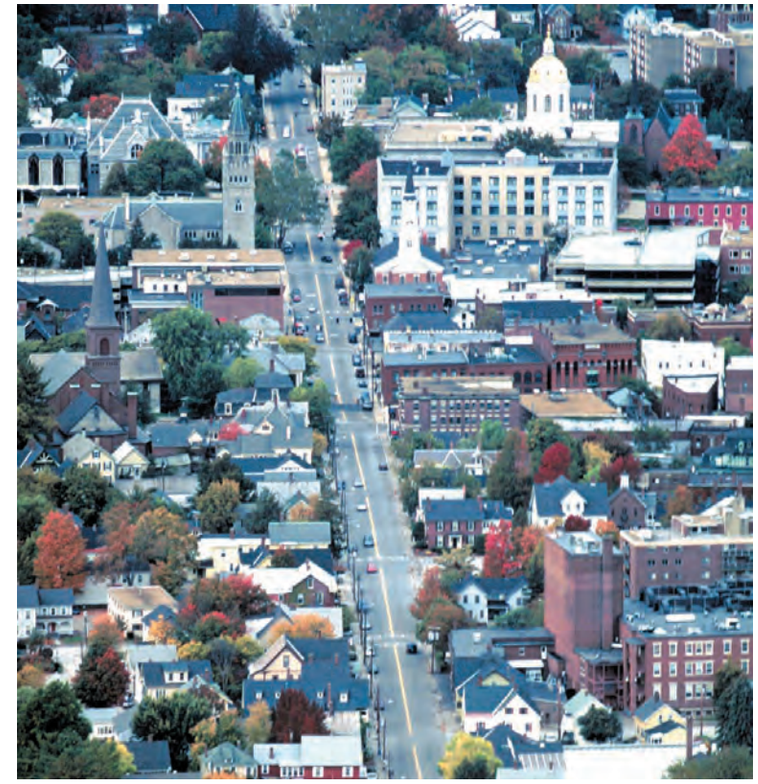
The discordant visual character of strips - their large signs, set backs, and parking lots - is wholly inconsistent with the unified appearance of older commercial and residential neighborhoods. The citizens of Concord are rightfully proud of their historic Main Street and neighborhood centers yet the approaches to these places have been degraded in recent decades. Auto-oriented strip development with its wide curb cuts, parking lots, and deep set backs discourages pedestrian activity. Some strip developments have blocked access to important open spaces - the Kings Shopping center site on south Loudon Road for example. Here the view across the cornfields to the bluffs is blocked by strip development.

Experience across the United States shows that only sustained community concern matched with effective enforcement of public policies - zoning controls, historic districts, design guidelines - can protect and reinforce the historic fabric of cities.

The quality and quantity of development outside the villages can also affect the vitality of existing retail and commercial uses Downtown. One corridor outside of existing village development is Manchester Street, the western end of which serves as a gateway to Downtown. This corridor is the "auto mile" - the place to buy a new car or service an old one. For long stretches there are no curbs or walkways along the public road and development is haphazard. If Manchester Street is indeed Concord's "automobile corridor," this image should be reinforced for the many residents and out-of-towners who patronize the businesses along this strip. The proliferation of curb cubs and lack of strong street edge with curbs and walks detracts from the image of the corridor.



Future sprawl along existing strips will further deteriorate the villages by pulling commercial activity away from the traditional village centers.



Economic Vitality

As part of the Initiative for a 20/20 Vision for Concord, market and economic conditions were evaluated in Concord and the surrounding region to identify those factors that are expected to create growth and development over the next 20 years. The market analysis is a critical component of the 20/20 Vision for Concord. It was used to identify demand for different land uses and to inform the direction of the vision by identifying specific uses that are considered market supportable. In addition, the market analysis was used to:

- Understand overall patterns of growth in the region by analyzing demographic trends such as population change in Concord, nearby towns and Merrimack County;
- Identify economic drivers such as employment growth that affect demand for real estate (i.e., how much market is available to support various uses);
- Understand how Concord is developing and where;
- Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages to building in Concord–what developers and "outside eyes" (e.g., investors, tenants) look for–to understand implications for real estate;
- Estimate how much real estate–such as office space or new housing-will be required to accommodate that growth in order to help citizens in choosing from among various uses; and
- Outline a realistic capture of specific uses to various locations in Concord–such as the Opportunity Corridor.

How Do Outside Eyes See Concord?

In a series of interviews conducted as part of the market analysis, this question was posed to developers, real estate brokers, tenants, and other specialists with an understanding of the regional economy and of Concord's role in the region. These observations and perceptions are presented below.

Concord receives consistently high points for its strong quality of life. The city has a highly educated, stable labor force and positive locational attributes (i.e., "Concord is an hour from…"), sufficient infrastructure capacity and available land for development. Moreover, it is an attractive community that has the advantage of open space and proximity to significant recreational opportunities. It is unanimous that Concord is a special place to live, work and play.

The real estate community however, views Concord less favorably. Owing to such issues as a lengthy public approval process, developers generally perceive Concord as being not as welcoming of new development as other communities. While this perception still persists, the City has taken steps in recent years to improve its reputation. The City is streamlining its approval processes while understanding it must be discerning about the quantity and quality of growth that is encouraged in Concord. The 20/20 Vision for Concord balances economic development and growth management-an absolute necessity to preserve the high quality of life in the city.

In addition, some observe that Concord does not do all it can to attract and retain business. One example is the Blue Cross/Blue Shield (BC/BS) move to Manchester because Concord did not offer sufficient incentives to keep this important corporate tenant. Not surprisingly, from the fiscal side, the lack of a personal income tax in New Hampshire puts significant pressure on property taxes as a primary revenue source.

"In order to meet the challenges of managing growth, it is important to understand what motivates investors and developers."

The city also needs to ask:

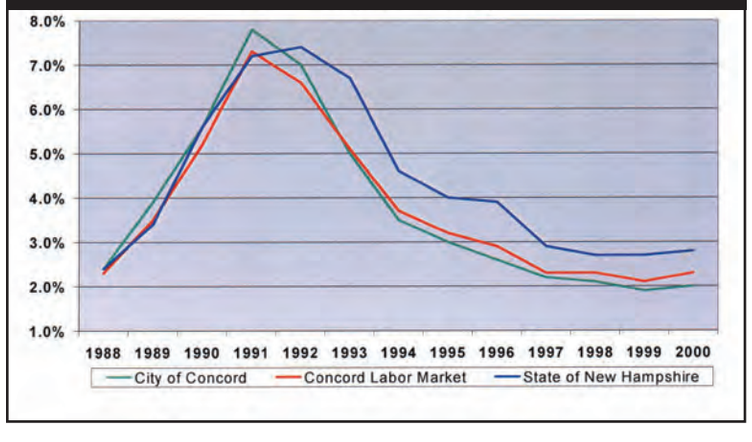
- How do outside eyes see Concord for what types of development?
- Does the city have sufficient developable land?
- What are the engines (e.g., population growth, new jobs) driving demand for space?
- How easy or difficult is it to develop in the community?
- What is the available capacity of infrastructure?
- Absent demand, what types of economic incentives does the public sector provide to induce development where it might not otherwise go (e.g., Opportunity Corridor)?
- How fiscally sound is the community?

What engines will drive demand to redevelop the Opportunity Corridor?

Different uses will require different "lenses." Retail uses, for example, require high visibility locations with strong traffic counts. Office and industrial uses look for strong employment growth to generate demand for space; compatible, neighboring land uses; easy highway access; good visibility and a ready pool of labor. Housing, on the other hand, requires easily developable land to minimize infrastructure costs, product that sells and a strong labor pool with disposable incomes for rental apartments.

In short, the outside eyes are looking for opportunities. And Concord has them. Details follow.

Average Annual Unemployment Rate, 1988 - 2000 (Year-to-Date)



Economic Profile

Employment Opportunities

An important engine of economic vitality in any locality is employment growth. Job growth and diversification reflect a community's ability to adapt to changing economic conditions and to sustain itself. The primary economic drivers in Concord are state government, medical services and retail shopping–which draw from a larger regional market or trade area far beyond the borders of the city and its adjacent towns.

Employment growth creates demand for certain types of real estate such as office and industrial space. Employment trends and forecasts in Merrimack County and Concord were examined as the basis for creating 20-year demand models. These findings are highlighted below:

Merrimack County

- According to Woods & Poole, Inc., a forecasting firm, and the New Hampshire Department of Employment Security, between 1990-2000, the number of jobs in Merrimack County increased by 16,200, to a total job base of 87,900. This reflects a healthy growth rate of more than 2% per year.
- Not surprisingly, the strongest growth occurred in the Services and Retail Trade sectors, which accounted for 12,600 (78%) of all new jobs created in the County since 1990. Service jobs range from professional services such as legal and accounting to hotel housekeeping staff; Retail Trade jobs include retail store clerks, sales, and retail management.

"23,000 New Jobs Are Expected in Merrimack County by 2020"

- Employment forecasts are prepared only at the County level. According to Woods & Poole, Merrimack County is forecast to gain 23,000 new jobs between 2000-2020. The largest gains are expected in categories that have experienced strong job growth already-Trade and Services. In addition, 6,500 new jobs are expected in Finance/Insurance/Real Estate. This is expected to result in increasing demand for office and flex-tech space over the next 20 years. As noted below, it is expected that Concord will capture much of that employment growth.

Concord

- Concord contains approximately 44% of Merrimack County's jobs base. According to the New Hampshire Department of Employment Security, in 1998 (latest data available), there were almost 38,000 public and private jobs in the city. These include 7,500 state government jobs, or 20% of the city's total. In fact, government employment (city and state combined) accounts for almost 30% of all jobs in Concord.
- Concord's role as regional employer causes the daytime population to double.
- The recession of the early 1990s resulted in significant private-sector job losses. Since 1988 the number of public-sector jobs (which actually increased during the 1990s recession) has increased faster (32%) than private jobs (11%).

Concord Hospital, along with New Hampshire State Government, is a major economic engine in the city.

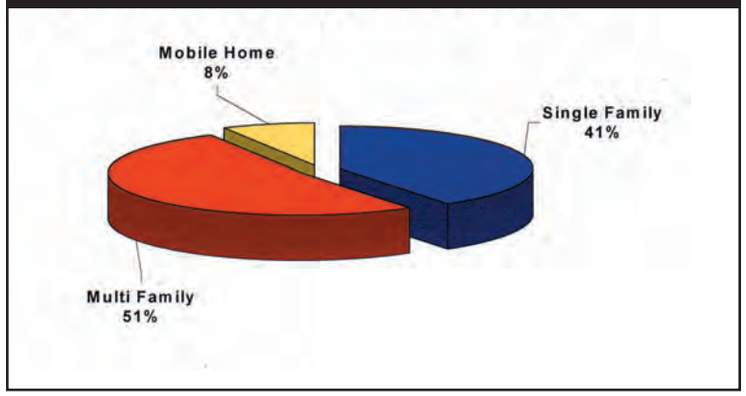
Real Estate Conditions

The next step in the market analysis examined development trends in Concord across a variety of land uses–housing, commercial (office and retail), hotel and industrial. This served as the basis for preparing three demand models–low, moderate and high-growth–that were created to test various growth scenarios in each of these uses. These were presented to the citizens of Concord at the workshop on Economic Development in November 2000.

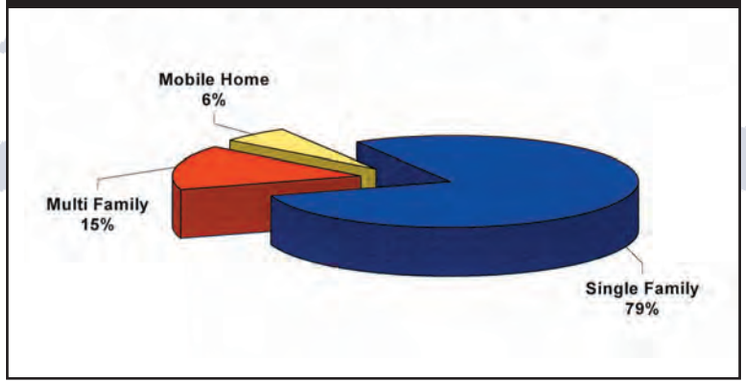
In order to understand the environment for development in Concord, the consultant team:

- Analyzed market conditions for residential, commercial office and retail, hotel and industrial uses; and
- Evaluated current market performance across these uses (e.g., rental rates, sale prices, occupancy trends, absorption and leasing patterns) to inform the models.

Concord Households by Structure Type,1998



Households by Structure Type: All Other Towns, 1998



These findings are summarized, by use, below.

Housing

The following are patterns of residential development in Concord, including trends in housing starts, annual sales activity and pricing trends, and patterns in both single- and multi-family development.

- Based on data from the City of Concord Planning Department, during the 1970s, more than 2,600 new housing units were built in the city, or **260** units per year. Fully 45% (1,200 units) were multi-family, including the many garden apartments constructed on Fisherville Road at that time. Another 540+ mobile homes were added to the housing stock at this time. Interestingly, the city's population growth in the 1970s was essentially flat and new housing built during that decade simply responded to an increasing number of households (such as elderly and singles) created during that period–consistent with national trends.
- The economic boom of the 1980s hit Concord full force: more than 6,000 new residents over this 10-year period created demand for 4,600 new housing units, or **460** units per year. This included almost 2,500 multi-family units and more than 1,000 single-family detached units. By 1989, there were 15,700 housing units in the city.
- During the 1990s, the pace of residential development in Concord slowed substantially from the preceding decade. In fact, less than 100 new housing units were added on an annual basis (after demolitions). The majority of new housing constructed in the 1990s–619 units–was single-family detached.
- As illustrated in the two charts at left, Concord contains the majority of the region's multi-family housing. As noted previously, **51%** of the city's stock is multi-family versus only **15%** in surrounding towns.

"Only 15% of the Housing Stock in Surrounding Towns is Multi-family"

- As is true with most housing markets nationwide during the 1990s, the average sales price in Concord has increased as well. While the average sales price remains below the peak years of the late 1980s, prices have re-bounded approximately 18% since 1992, to $119,042 in 1999 (latest data available at the time of study) based on a review of information provided by the New Hampshire Board of Realtors.

Retail

Concord serves as a retail destination for all of Central New Hampshire. In fact, Concord is the state's fourth largest retail market after Nashua, Manchester and Salem, with more than 2 million sq. ft. of retail space (source: Shopping Center Directory, 2000). This equates to **52 sq. ft. of retail space per capita**–far above the national average of 25 sq. ft. per person. According to surveys compiled by the Shopping Center Directory, current vacancy levels in the city's retail centers are less than 5%, meaning that retail in Concord is "at stabilization." The average anchor store in a retail center in Concord occupies between 65,000 and 70,000 sq. ft. of space. As reported by managers or owners of shopping centers in Concord to the Shopping Center Directory survey, shopping centers in Concord consume anywhere from 16 acres of land at Fort Eddy Plaza to 49 acres of land at Steeplegate Mall.

As described below, retail space is categorized according to size and the number of anchor stores.

- *Steeplegate Mall* is the only **regional mall** in Concord. A regional mall provides shopping goods, general merchandise, apparel, and furniture and home furnishings in full depth and variety. It is built around a full-line department store (with a minimum of 100,000 sq. ft.) as the major draw. Greater comparative shopping is provided with multiple anchors. Regional centers may range from 400,000 sq. ft. to 1 million sq. ft. (A mall larger than 1 million sq. ft. is considered a super-regional center). Steeplegate contains 463,180 sq. ft. of space (including the recent expansion of 1999-2000); it is reportedly 83% occupied.

"Concord Serves as a Retail Destination for All of Central New Hampshire"

- **Community centers** have a wider range of facilities for the sale of soft lines (apparel) and hard lines (hardware, appliances, etc.) than the neighborhood center. It is anchored by either a junior department store, variety store or discount department store. The typical size of a community center is 150,000 sq. ft., but it may range as high as 300,000 sq. ft., or in a case of a cluster of "Big Box" anchors, as much as 400,000 sq. ft. It is an intermediate-sized center; its trade area and drawing power will vary depending on the type and number of anchors, proximity to population base, highway visibility and other locational considerations.

There are four community centers in Concord containing a total of approximately 960,000 sq. ft. of space. These include DeMoulas and Fort Eddy Plaza on Fort Eddy Road and the Capitol Shopping Center (Ames) on Storrs Street. An example of a "Big Box", or power center, includes "D'Amante Place" on Loudon Road, with Home Depot, Target as the anchors and Linens 'N Things and Best Buy as "category killer" retailers. These centers operate at nearly full occupancy.

Big Box retailers can also be located on stand-alone "pads." In Concord, examples include Wal-Mart, Sam's Club and Toys 'R Us, which collectively contain almost 400,000 sq. ft. of retail space.

- **Neighborhood centers** provide for the sale of convenience goods (food, drugs, etc.) and personal services (laundry, dry cleaning, etc.) for day-to-day living needs of the immediate neighborhood. In many cases, a supermarket is the principal (anchor) tenant. The gross leasable area (GLA) of a neighborhood retail center may range from 30,000 to 100,000 sq. ft. of retail space.

In Concord, there are several neighborhood centers, including Thirty Pines, and City Plaza on Fort Eddy Road with a total of 200,000+ sq. ft. of retail space.

- In addition, the City estimates that downtown Concord contains 300,000 sq. ft. of retail space today.

- According to CACI, Inc., a demographic data source, consumer retail expenditures among all of the city's households totaled more than $156 billion in 1999, or **$9,900+** per household. Expenditures were highest in food ($4,800), apparel ($1,300) and home furnishings ($1,000). Compared to other locations in the U.S., this is on par with average expenditures of households located at the "edge" of major metropolitan areas.

Horseshoe Pond - site of a new Corporate Center.

Office

Limited information is available on the Concord area office market. Unlike other similarly sized or larger cities, where quarterly and/or annual statistics on inventory, vacancy rates, net absorption, quoted and effective rental rates and other market indices are compiled, available data on the regional office market in Concord are insufficient.

Engines of demand for office space in Concord include federal, state, and local government (9,000 employees) in scattered public and privately owned office buildings and the supporting Services sector (e.g., legal, accounting, other professional services). In fact, between 1988 and 1998, the New Hampshire Department of Employment Security reports that employment growth in Concord generated more than **5,400 new jobs**, which were generally evenly split between private employment and public (government) jobs.

As available, supply and demand characteristics for office space in Concord are highlighted below:

- Concord's office inventory includes both public and privately owned properties in **26 buildings** clustered in downtown Concord (State, Main, Park and Eagle Square) and outlying locations (Loudon Road, Pembroke Road, Regional Drive and Industrial Park Drive.

- The City contains an estimated office inventory of **2.7 million sq. ft.** (1998 estimate by City staff) and an estimated vacancy rate of 2%. This excludes the empty BC/BS building on South Main Street because of physical and functional obsolescence. This estimate also excludes state or other public buildings such as the state and district courts, and the statehouse.

Based on data contained in a Real Property Summary report provided by the State of New Hampshire (June 1995), the state occupies approximately **3.04 million sq. ft.** of space in Concord. This includes almost 300,000 sq. ft. space occupied by public agencies in privately owned buildings throughout the City, of which 68,000 sq. ft. are located in downtown Concord.

- Recent additions to supply include the *Horseshoe Pond Corporate Center* in build-to-suit space (e.g., Aavid Thermalloy at 33,000 sq. ft. and Delta Dental at 32,000 sq. ft.) and speculative construction (e.g., 51,000 sq. ft. occupied by Primavera, the Social Security Administration and others). The developers of Horseshoe Pond have proposed another 80,000 sq. ft. in two buildings. Construction is expected once pre-leasing commitments have been obtained for 50% of the space.

A barometer/indicator of strength of any office market is **net absorption**. As noted above, this is defined as the net change in occupied space for a given period of time. Net absorption excludes sublet space, pre-leasing activity and renewals of existing tenants (unless their renewal includes an expansion). While net absorption of office space is not tracked in Concord, the City estimates that it has been in the range of **100,000 sq. ft. per year** during 1998 and 1999.

Industrial Market Conditions, Concord Industrial Parks - Inventory

	Acres	Developed	Available	Jobs
Whitney Industrial Park	120	40	80	150
Concord Monitor Business Park	100	20	80	100
Concord Bus. & Industry Park	200	50	150	200
South End Industrial Park	50	50	0	100
124-130 Hall Street	50	50	0	250
Legend Industrial Park	45	50	0	150
Terrill Drive Industrial Park	100	80	20	350
Concord Airport Tech Park	100	100	0	250
Airport Business Park	100	75	25	500
Sheep Davis Industrial Park	200	180	20	350
Miscellaneous Locations	80	80	0	350
Total:	**1,150**	**775 (67%)**	**375 (33%)**	**2,750**

Industrial

As illustrated below, the City's Office of Economic Development reports that Concord contains 10 public and private industrial parks with an estimated inventory of **1.6 million sq. ft.** (1998) and an estimated vacancy rate of 2%. Again, this reflects a market that is at "stabilization" (i.e., fully occupied) as well as the preponderance of "build-to-suits"–or the construction of industrial buildings for specific owners or users such as Summit Packaging.

- One of the key questions to pose in thinking about the future of industrial development in Concord is the amount of net developable acreage remaining in these parks (i.e., land that can actually be used to accommodate future development). The City estimates 375 acres remain available for industrial development. This is important because industrial parks typically contain one-story buildings with large (horizontal) floor plates. When combined with surface parking and areas required for truck-turning radii, a considerable amount of land is typically consumed.

- Under certain conditions, industrial (or other) development may have to be induced with a range of initiatives. An excellent example is the public/private partnership created to develop the Horseshoe Pond area. According to a bond rating presentation made by the City in January 2000, $3.5 million in public investment in infrastructure and land acquisition has leveraged the following in private investment:

$3 million Delta Dental (state headquarters) office building
$3 million Aavid Thermalloy (world headquarters) office building
$3 million speculative (50,000 sq. ft.) office building
$6.5 million Marriott Courtyard and conference center
$8 million restoration and conversion of the historic Page Belting Mill to elderly housing, senior services, and office uses

- While net absorption of industrial space is not tracked in Concord, the City estimates that it has been in the range of 50,000 sq. ft. per year during 1998 and 1999. At this rate, this consumes (or absorbs) approximately 4 to 5 acres of land for industrial use per year. As noted in the chart, the City reports that 375 acres of land remain available for industrial development in these 10 parks, which would take approximately 65 to 75 years to achieve build out based on these current patterns.

Hotel

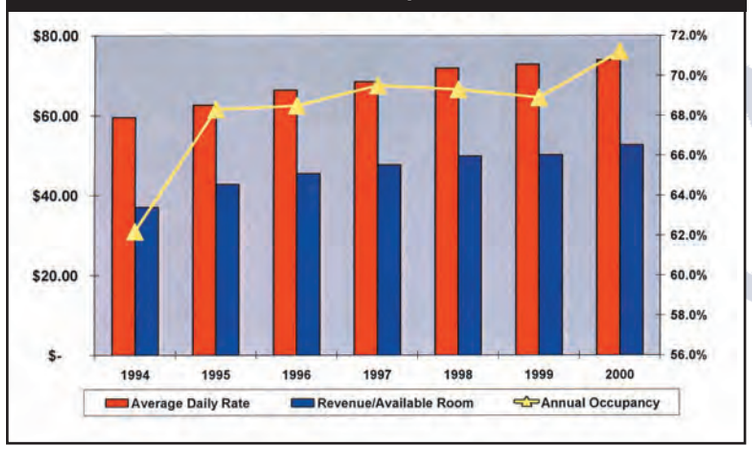
Conditions in Concord's hotel market were also examined. This included trends in supply and demand, annual occupancy and average daily rates in order to understand opportunities for future hotel expansion as part of the 20/20 Vision. Trends are noted below:

- Market conditions were researched in six of the city's eight lodging properties. It includes only those properties reporting their occupancy and rate activity to Smith Travel Research for every month since January 1994. Non-reporting (Best Western, Centennial Inn) or new (Marriott Courtyard) properties in Concord are excluded from this analysis. These six facilities contain a total of 563 hotel rooms (75% of the City's estimated total supply of 755 rooms), and include limited service properties (e.g., Comfort Inn) and full-service hotels (e.g., Holiday Inn).

Concord Hotel Market Total Room Inventory

FACILITY	ROOMS
Holiday Inn-Concord	122
Fairfield Inn-Concord	105
Brick Tower Motor Inn	51
Days Inn-Concord	40
Comfort Inn-Concord	100
Hampton Inn-Bow	145
TOTAL ROOM INVENTORY	**563**

Annual Market Performance of Selected Hotels in Concord, 1994-2000



"The market analysis offers clear evidence that Concord is a place of opportunity. Growth is inevitable. The 20/20 Vision challenge is to direct this growth in ways that enhance, not detract, from Concord's quality of life."

- Based on this sample, the region's lodging market has experienced some growth in supply since 1994, with the addition of the Comfort Inn, the Fairfield Inn and (most recently), the Marriott Courtyard & Conference Center. Despite these additions to supply, occupancy rates have continued to increase, by 2% per year since 1994. In mid-2000, annual hotel occupancies in Concord were in the range of **69% to 71%**. In the lodging industry, this occupancy rate is within the breakeven range.

- Concurrently, average daily room rates (ADR) have increased since 1994 by 3.7% per year, from $59 to $74 in 1999.

- A more accurate measure of the strength of a region's hotel market is measured in revenue per available room, which considers simultaneous changes in both room rate and annual occupancy levels. Notably, in this sample, revenue per available room increased by a strong 6% per year between 1994 and 1999, from $37.07 to $52.62.

Demand

The demographic and economic profile indicates that Concord is poised to capture future economic growth. The primary objective of the market analysis is to translate these indicators of potential future growth into supportable land uses. The following summarizes the results of these models, by use.

Housing

- As forecast by the Office of State Planning, Concord is projected to grow by approximately 8,000 residents over the next 20 years (using OSP's 1999 base year population of 38,450). Assuming that the number of persons per household remains constant at 2.30, this translates into demand for another 3,450 housing units over the next 20 years. We note that diversifying economies typically result in a reduction in household size (e.g., if more "20-something" single professionals move to Concord for high-tech jobs). In turn, this would increase demand for housing units above this threshold.

Cul-de sac development is typical in Concord. Single family homes on 1/2 to 1 acre lots are found throughout areas developed in the last 30 years. West Concord is shown developed at 2 dwelling units per acre.

Estimated Distribution of New Housing by Product Type, 2020

PRODUCT	%DIST.	2020
Single-family	28.4%	978
Duplex	3.3%	114
Attached	18.1%	624
Multi-family	46.3%	1,597
Mobile Home	1.3%	44
Conversions	2.7%	92
TOTAL:		**3,448**

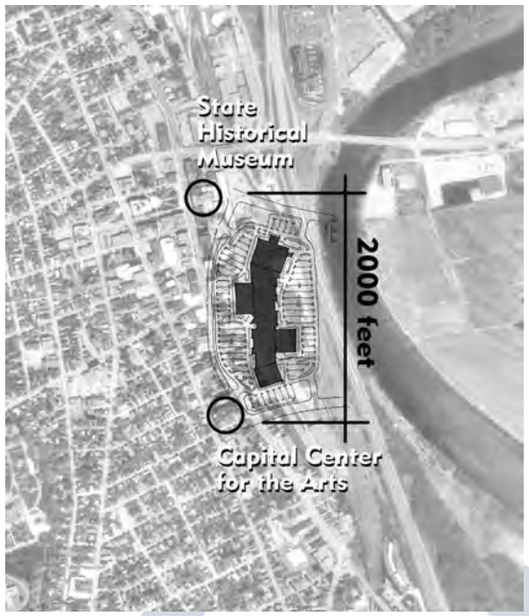
Retail

The retail demand model converts the number of households, new household growth and average household incomes into an estimate of retail expenditure potentials. In turn, these sales potentials are converted into supportable retail space using a minimum annual productivity factor of sales per sq. ft. That is, this sales level is what a retail store would have to achieve each year in order to pay for the cost of goods sold, rent, expenses, and salaries for employees and other costs associated with running a retail business in Concord.

- The model uses industry standards to estimate the amount of "disposable" household income (i.e., available after all income taxes are paid), reflected as a disposability factor of 88% and a factor of 21.7% to reflect the amount spent on soft goods retail. This would include department store merchandise, apparel, home furnishings and drug store sales.

- Under the moderate growth scenario, this analysis results in approximately $1.047 billion in expenditure potential in 2020 from all of Concord's households, as well as households in the remainder of Merrimack County.

- Next, a capture rate is applied to estimate what Concord could reasonably expect to capture from these expenditure potentials. Based on current patterns, it is reasonable to assume a capture of 75% of Concord household expenditures and 50% of those from the remainder of Merrimack County. This would result in approximately $683.6 million in potential retail sales being captured within the City of Concord in 2020.

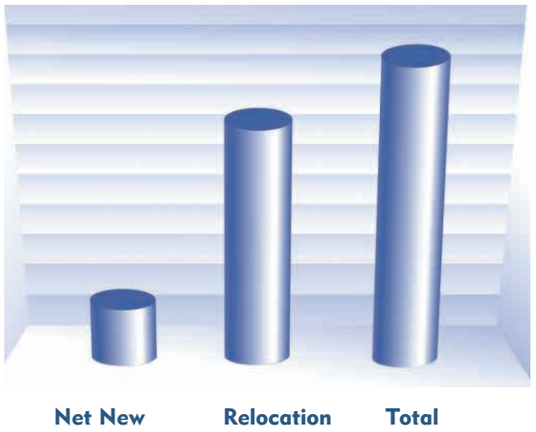


The Steeplegate Mall is about the same length as Downtown's core along Main Street. Will new retail growth be in the form of another mall, or will growth infill Downtown sites to support existing businesses and activities?

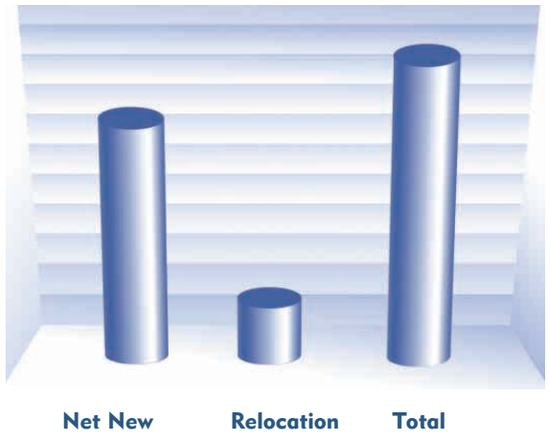
- Assuming required annual productivity of $225 per sq. ft. in sales (slightly above what retailers do on an average annual basis in Concord today), results in demand for slightly more than one million sq. ft. of retail space.

"Under the Moderate Growth Scenario, Plan For an Additional One Million Sq. Ft. of Retail Space Over 20 Years"

By comparison, between 1990 and 2000, Concord witnessed the development of approximately one million sq. ft. of retail space over ten years with Steeplegate Mall and the Big Box retailers on D'Amante Drive. This begs the question, "If Concord is to see another one million sq. ft. of retail space in the City in the next 20 years, what should be the quality of this retail?" Projected demand could support another regional mall and/or additional "Big Box" development. The demand could also be absorbed, in part, by concentrating retail development in the Opportunity Corridor and Downtown, and to a lesser degree, in the village centers. Clearly, Concord is challenged not only by the question, "How much retail?" but also "What kind of retail and what location?" As explained in Section III: The 20/20 Vision, the Vision Principles set guidelines for decision-making.



Concord's recent office expansion has left little net new office space Downtown.



New office space should "grow the pie," not draw tenants away from Downtown.

Office

Demand projections were prepared using forecasted employment growth across office- and industrial-using sectors based on projections supplied by Woods & Poole, a demographic forecasting firm, through 2020.

- Employment growth in Merrimack County over the next 20 years is expected to add 23,000 new jobs. Of course, some increment of these jobs will occupy office or industrial space.

- Based on this analysis, it is estimated there will be demand for approximately one million sq. ft. of office space over the next 20 years across Merrimack County. This averages approximately 50,000 sq. ft. per year (approximately two office buildings per year similar to those built for Delta Dental and Aavid Thermalloy at Horseshoe Pond Corporate Center) across the entire county.

- Presuming that public policy reinforces Concord's role as the employment center of central New Hampshire, the city should position itself to capture approximately 75% of future demand for office space in Merrimack County over the next 10 years. Between 2010 and 2020, it is reasonable to assume that outlying towns such as Bow and Pembroke will encourage commercial development as a means of funding municipal services to support a growing population. As a result, it is fair to assume that Concord's share of future office-using employment would be reduced in the 2010-2020 period for purposes of this analysis to 50%.

- Therefore, this produces demand for office space in Concord totaling almost 600,000 sq. ft., resulting in an annual average of 30,000 sq. ft., equivalent to one building approximating the size of Delta Dental or Aavid Thermalloy. Notably, total space demanded for office use may be a combination of both rehabilitation and/or new construction.

It is understood that State policy could ultimately consolidate many state agencies and offices currently located in private office buildings in scattered locations in Concord to the state office campus on Pleasant Street. According to data provided by the State, this totals approximately 300,000 sq. ft. of leased space in nine "submarkets" across the city. Regional Drive and Industrial Park Drive contain the largest amount of state offices in private office space (102,000 sq. ft.). Downtown Concord contains approximately 68,000 sq. ft. of state offices in private buildings. The potential impacts of this decision may be far-reaching:

- Clustering state agencies will result in cost savings to the state and (possible) environmental benefits by reducing trips to scattered locations. However, it is unknown how quickly vacated office space will be leased by other office tenants. This may have the unintended consequence of pitting one office location in Concord against another, such that more marketable locations lease more quickly at the expense of weaker locations.

- Relocating 68,000 sq. ft. of state agencies from Downtown Concord (approximately 400 employees) also removes a high amount of disposable income available for spending among Downtown's retailers and businesses.

- The lack of convenience retail and support services on the Pleasant Street campus may, in turn, force state employees to use their automobiles to run errands or buy lunch, thus negating any of the original positive environmental benefits of clustering.

There are numerous industrial sites in Concord. The Concord Monitor Business and Industrial Park is one site that could be expanded. In addition, existing sites such as this Vishay Sprague building in The Heights could be re-used for industrial or mixed-uses. The industrial sites should have adequate buffers to adjacent uses.

Industrial

A similar analysis was prepared to estimate demand for industrial space. Since employees of industrial space (e.g., warehouse/distribution/assembly) typically occupy more space on a per capita basis, the amount of space demanded is likely to be greater.

- Based on projected new jobs in companies likely to use industrial space, the consultant team estimates that employment growth in Merrimack County through 2020 will generate demand for more than 1.9 million sq. ft. of industrial space countywide.

- This analysis presumes that some portion of the remaining 375 acres of land as estimated by the City in its existing industrial parks remains available for industrial development. If only 50% were considered net developable (187 acres), using a standard floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.20x (that is, the proportion of land a building occupies) would be capable of accommodating up to 1.6 million sq. ft. of industrial space.

- Some industrial development is likely to occur in outlying jurisdictions–particularly those with easy access to I-93. This reduces Concord's competitive position over time. Therefore, the consultant team assumes a blended capture of approximately 55%, which results in a 20-year planning target of almost 1.1 million sq. ft. of industrial space.

- The State of New Hampshire will likely need to expand its industrial space use in the Concord area, over the next 20 years. It has been estimated that the state will require 15,000 sq. ft. in new non-office industrial space per year over that time period.

"Under the Moderate Growth Scenario, Plan For an Additional 1.1 Million Sq. Ft. of Industrial Space Over 20 Years"

New hotel construction, such as the Marriot at this Horseshoe Pond site, adequately serves the lodging market in Concord today.

Hotel

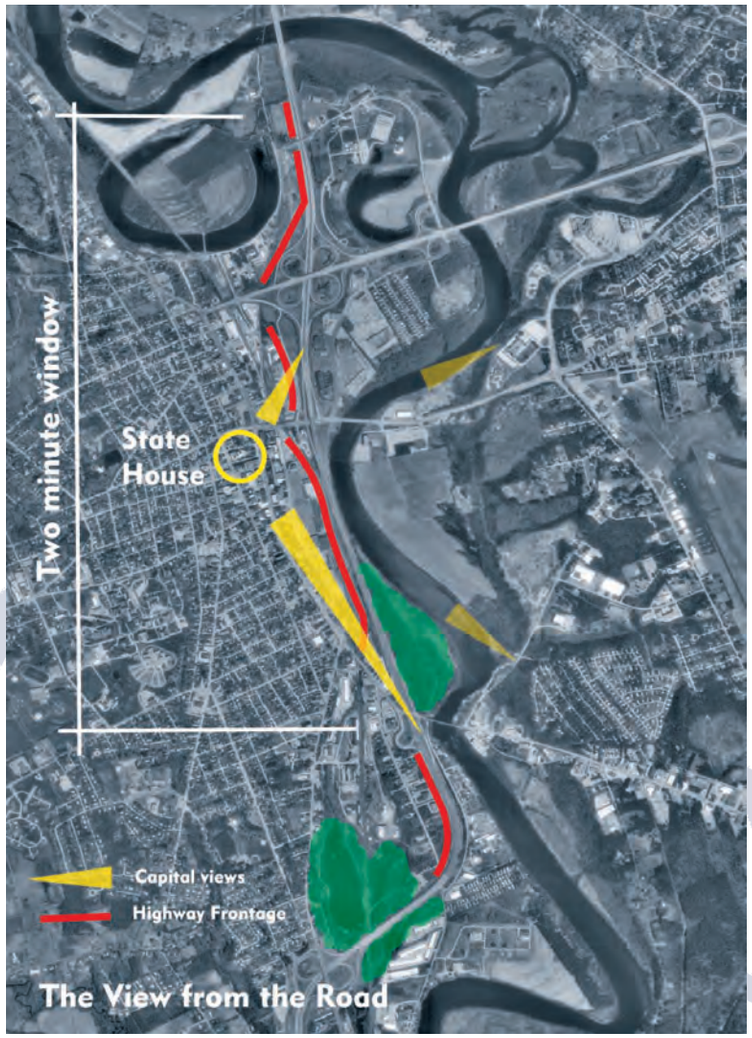
Market findings suggest that the lodging market in Concord is effectively at equilibrium today. Additional demand is likely to be generated by new office (and to a lesser extent) industrial uses. Given the difficulties in financing new hotels today as well as the recent completion of the 90-room Marriott Courtyard, hotel development is not likely to be a short-term opportunity. However, concentrating future office, retail and residential development in the Central and North Opportunity Corridors are likely to create the demand, over time, for a new hotel in the Main Street area. In any event, detailed market and feasibility studies will be required.

Downtown

The Downtown core is the heart of the city. While residents identify with their individual neighborhoods and the villages of Concord, they speak with civic pride and a sense of collective ownership of Main Street. For the purposes of this study, there are three components of Downtown: Main Street, the Opportunity Corridor, and the Downtown residential neighborhood. In this section, Main Street and the Opportunity Corridor are addressed in terms of image, urban form, land use, access and parking, and connections to the river. The Downtown residential neighborhood is mentioned briefly below but is covered fully in "Concord's Villages."

Image of the City

I-93 is a major visual gateway to the city. After passing through the wooded landscape of New Hampshire, motorists approaching from the south are offered views of the gas house, statehouse dome and brick buildings of Downtown as they pass over the Exit 13 interchange. Because of the red brick commercial structures that line Main Street Concord became known as the "Red City" in the nineteenth century. The view of the red city is quickly lost as one drops down from the Exit 13 overpass, replaced by views of the back of the Capital Shopping Center, the rail right-of-way and the jumble of overhead power lines that stretch its length, and large stretches of asphalt parking lots. At 55 mph, this glimpse of Concord is an unattractive one that does not entice a traveler to slow down and turn off for a closer look at a remarkable city. By turning its back on the highway and the river the Downtown loses a golden opportunity.



The view of Downtown from I-93 reveals none of the charm of Concord.

For those who choose to turn off the highway to pay a visit to Downtown, Exits 13 and 14 welcomes them with strip development and confusion. Exit 13 improvements were completed by NHDOT in 2000 and have greatly enhanced the image of city from this I-93 gateway to Downtown. However, the south end of Main Street is still characterized by car-oriented businesses that have eroded the historic fabric of Main Street. The Gas House could be a powerful part of the gateway experience but it is hidden behind commercial development. The entrance from Exit 14 to Downtown is more direct but dominated by highway infrastructure and a visually weak intersection at Main Street. Reinforcing these primary approaches to Downtown to shape a more positive impression for visitors and residents alike is essential to improving the image of Concord.

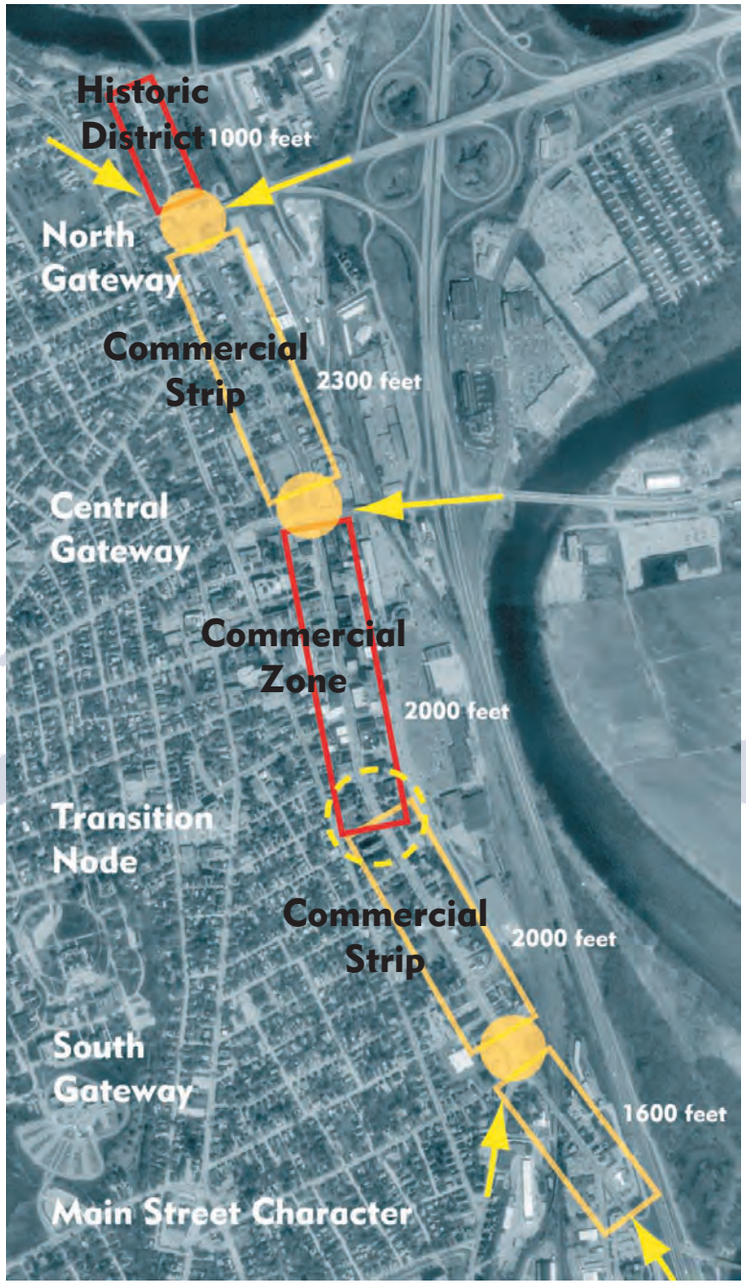
Main Street

Main Street, at 100 feet wide, is of a grand scale appropriate for the commercial street of a capital city. On either side of Main Street, the pedestrian-scaled side streets and alleyways are critical resources for building a stronger retail district. While all vibrant commercial districts depend on a network of side streets to reinforce the "main" street, this is especially true in Concord where the broad width of Main Street can deter potential customers from crossing back and forth to shops on either side of the street.

As described above, Main Street has three distinct characters along its length:

- **The commercial core**, which extends from Centre Street to Fayette Street (approx.). In this area, there are continuous brick facades 2-5 stories in height, concrete sidewalks with decorative brick borders at the curb, and diagonal parking with neck downs at the cross walks. This portion of the street is supported by commercial uses on side streets and some pleasant pedestrian spaces with fountains in back alleys.
- **The commercial strips extend south of the core between Fayette and Water/S. Main Streets and north of the core between Centre and Bouton Streets.** This area is characterized by freestanding commercial structures, including gas stations and fast food restaurants, with parking lots in front or on the side. In this area, some historic residences have been converted to commercial use and lawns remain but have been stripped of trees. Sidewalks are asphalt paved in some areas and stonewalls are present on the uphill side south of Thompson Street.
- **The historic residential district is at the northern edge of Main Street**, running from Bouton to Penacook Streets near Horseshoe Pond. Here, wood frame and some brick homes are spaced evenly apart and the residential character of the district has been maintained. Sidewalks are set back from the curb and houses boast lawns with mature trees overhanging the street.

The 19th century commercial core of Main Street between Centre Street and Pleasant Street is remarkably well preserved. The two, three, and four story brick facades create continuous yet varied street walls that enclose the most important public space in the city, the street. North and south of this downtown core Main Street has not faired so well. The line of residential structures has been broken by such modern encroachments as gas stations and fast food shops. The handsome residential district at the northern-most end of Main Street–the only local historic district in the city–indicates what much of Main Street must have looked like a century ago.



The transition from the core to the commercial strip is fairly abrupt at the northern edge. An inordinate number of canopied gas stations have been built on North Main Street due to the location of interstate off ramps nearby. Historic single-family houses facing Main Street have been easily converted to commercial use with parking lots where side yards used to be. In addition, the loss of a retail edge where the State House stands begins to dampen commercial activity. The excessive width of Centre Street coupled with commercial ventures (i.e. The Holiday Inn) that fail to engage the street edge for a full block effectively eliminates pedestrian activity. The lack of street-level retail on this stretch of Main Street deadens the street; the Downtown feels like it ends here.

The Commercial Core.

South Main Street gateway to Downtown.

To the south, the transition from core to commercial strip development is much more gradual. The core commercial character skips across Pleasant Street and continues for a block or two before the street wall breaks down. At this point, on the west side of the street, a 1950 façade on an older state office complex deadens the street and parking lots fragment the street edge. The vacant Sears Block provides another gap in activity along the street. The Capital Center for the Arts (CCA) is located outside the perceived core and appears to be "lost" to the point that a billboard has been erected to mark the entrance for pedestrians and drivers. It may be appropriate to mark the transition from the core of Downtown beyond the CCA.

Pedestrian Alleys and Cross Streets

As with most healthy main streets, the network of alleys and cross streets adjacent to and leading off the main shopping street support the Downtown's vitality and offer a necessary array of places with varied character for shoppers and pedestrians.

Pedestrian Alleys

Some of the pedestrian alleys on the west side of Main Street appear to be thriving with daytime clientele. Bicentennial Square is an example of back alley space being reclaimed for retail and entertainment uses. The Square is moderately successful because of the density of supporting uses and presence of the Durgin Street parking garage. The alleys on the east side of Main Street are not faring as well; retail ventures relying mostly on visibility and walk-in traffic would have a difficult time without a destination in the Central Opportunity Corridor that encourages through-pedestrian traffic from Main Street to Storrs Street and beyond.

Eagle Square is a pleasant pedestrian square and can offer a link between Main and Storrs Streets.

The health of Downtown depends on the existence of cross streets such as Warren Street that support businesses and provide vibrant links to surrounding neighborhoods.

Cross Streets

Many feel that Warren Street with its mix of lively uses is a good example of a successful side street. Both Bicentennial Square and Warren Street have an intimate scale in contrast to the wide Main Street. Lessons from the symbiotic relationship between Bicentennial Square and Warren Street can be applied to future development in the Opportunity Corridor. Denser development along Storrs Street would support the eventual transformation of Low Avenue, which would become a critical pedestrian link between Eagle Square and future development where the Capital Shopping Plaza is located today.

Theater Street is a cross street that connects Main and Storrs Streets and could be a vibrant link between Downtown and views of the Merrimack.

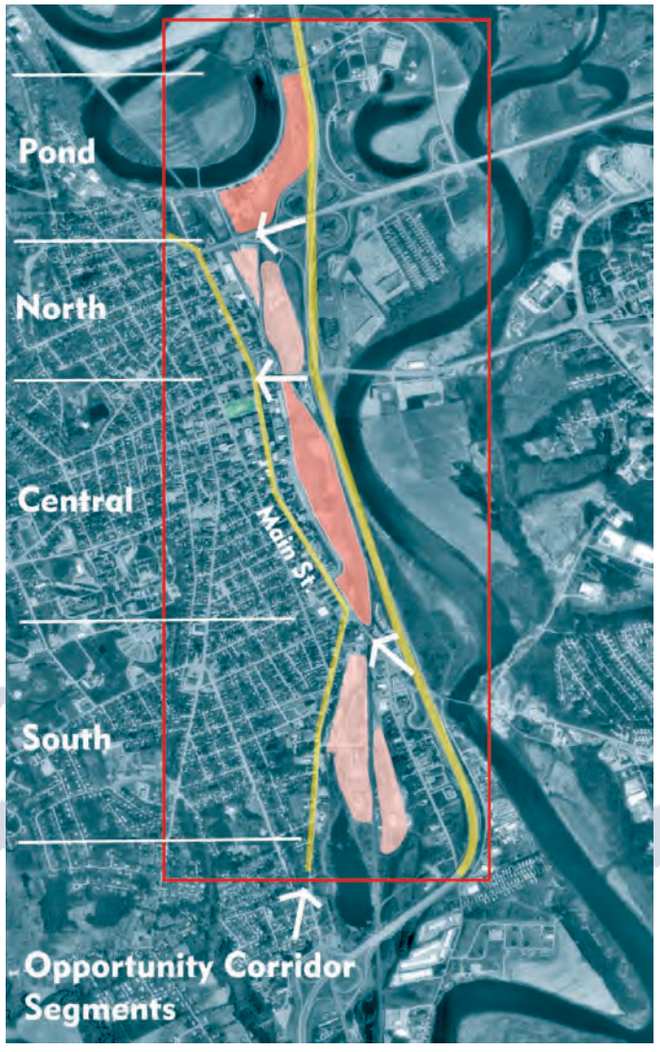
The Opportunity Corridor

The opportunity corridor represents the last large underutilized land area within the Downtown, directly abuts Main Street, and presents the public face of the city to the world-at-large. The Opportunity Corridor is the relatively level swath of land between I-93 and the downtown bluff (Main Street) that was once entirely occupied by the railroad. It stretches from Horseshoe Pond to the South End marsh and is divided by roadways and bridges into three distinct zones. These three zones are the North Opportunity Corridor from I-393 to Loudon Road, the Central Opportunity Corridor from Loudon Road to Water Street, and the South Opportunity Corridor from Water Street to the marsh. These areas share the common condition of being low in elevation–below the downtown bluff and cut off from the river by I-93. Their similarity ends there, however.

North Opportunity Corridor

The North Opportunity Corridor lies between I-393 and Loudon Road and fronts directly onto I-93. Despite its excellent visibility from I-93 this district is isolated from the rest of the city. It is below the Main Street bluff, and cut off from the downtown by the rail line. Limited access to the area is provided from Loudon Road and from an I-93 on-ramp.

It is currently occupied by a diversity of uses including the NHDOT, and the Concord Trailways bus station on Stickney Avenue, and a number of now isolated houses on Higgins Place and Herbert Street.



Central Opportunity Corridor

The Central Opportunity Corridor, lying between Loudon Road and Water Street, is adjacent to the core downtown area and so holds great promise for future expansion of the central business district. Frontage on I-93 could provide incentives for businesses to locate here. The active rail line runs along the east side parallel with I-93 and so does not separate the corridor from Main Street. Adjacency to the Merrimack River on the east side provides opportunities for direct links to open space though the rail line together with I-93 pose a formidable barrier.

Storrs Street in the Central Opportunity Corridor.

The noise from I-93 is partly responsible for the lower land values in the Opportunity Corridor. The elevated approach to Exit 14 is particularly intrusive. Unless its appearance and noise is forcefully mitigated I-93 will continue to discourage high value uses from moving to the Opportunity Corridor. The future redesign I-93 could dramatically lessen its visual and noise impact on the corridor.

Land Use and Urban Design

A variety of uses occupy the central Opportunity Corridor including a bank, automotive shop, community shopping center, the state liquor store and warehouse, Capitol Plumbing, parking lots, and a rail yard. The complex landownership pattern will complicate redevelopment scenarios. The Capital Shopping Center was recently renovated and a new store built to the north. This part of the Opportunity Corridor may be one of the last to get redeveloped given this level of investment. The area just south of the shopping district is occupied by the State Liquor store and warehouse and by the Capitol Plumbing Supply warehouse, both uses that could easily be accommodated in other locations such as the Southern Opportunity Corridor. The narrow area behind the plumbing supply warehouse, south of Perley Street and bounded by South Main and the railroad tracks may prove to be very valuable as a development site due to frontage on Main Street and proximity to Exit 13. The slope could accommodate two to three levels of deck parking underneath. The New Hampshire Historical Society owns land at the opposite end of the Central Opportunity Corridor and is interested finding a better use than parking for that land. The adjacent state parking structure, which straddles Storrs Street, would thwart development of this land, however.

Buildings in the South Opportunity Corridor.

The City has in recent years dissipated the potential audience for cultural attractions by locating main new cultural facilities far a field–the convention center, the visitor center, and the planetarium are examples of this. Cities like Chicago and Cleveland have concentrated their cultural facilities to achieve critical mass and cross over. Fortunately the Capital Center for the Arts and the State Historic Museum remain Downtown bringing life to the streets and generating customers for shops and restaurants. The Opportunity Corridor is perfectly situated to draw new attractions to the Downtown such as a movie theatre, a comedy clubs, or other entertainment venues. It is easy to get to the corridor, it has ample room for parking, it is close to restaurants and shops, it is walking distance from Downtown neighborhoods, and it has excellent visibility from the highway.

Possible future commuter rail service to Boston and high-speed rail service between Boston and Montréal could lead to the location of railroad station within the Opportunity Corridor. This together with a new parking garage could support intense activity within the Opportunity Corridor and on Main Street.

Storrs Street

Storrs Street provides good access to the Central Opportunity Corridor from Main Street and is easily accessible from both Exits 13 and 14. Storrs Street falls short of making the connection to the North and South Opportunity Corridor, however. Storrs Street provides a convenient bypass for the central eleven blocks of Main Street when traffic is heavy. It has the feel and function of a service road supporting Main Street. It could easily be further developed to serve support functions –parking garages deliveries, etc. Alternatively it could be developed as an address for a new mixed-use district of stores, professional offices and residences. In any case, all new development needs to emphasize Storrs Street as a supporting and unifying element of Main Street, and not one that competes with it. New uses on Storrs Street should complement existing retail uses on Main Street and help build the customer base for the historic retail corridor.

South Opportunity Corridor

The South Opportunity Corridor is adjacent to the South End neighborhood but is largely hidden below the wooded bluff along East Main Street. Unlike the rest of the Opportunity Corridor it has little relationship to the river or to I-93. It is isolated from the rest of the Opportunity Corridor and bisected by an active railroad line. Access on the west side of the tracks is limited to a single point: Langdon Avenue. This long narrow site (2000'x600'+/-) is occupied by light industrial uses and a few remaining railroad structures from the heyday of rail in Concord. Heavy and light industrial uses include a scrap metal yard area just across the tracks to the east. The South End Marsh hidden behind the tree line could be a window to I-93.

The preservation and reuse of the historic railroad maintenance buildings would be important to the history of Concord and fully compatible with the redevelopment of this area.

Connections to the Merrimack and the City's Greenway System

Concord's Downtown is located in the Merrimack River Valley. Unlike other New England towns and cities along the river valleys, Concord did not begin as a mill town but rather as a farming community. Main Street with its farmhouses followed the crest of the bluff on the west side of the river. Agricultural fields, subdivided in five-acre plots, stretched to the river. This trend continued throughout the industrial revolution until the railroad arrived in the 1850s following the path of least resistance - the river valleys. The bird's eye view of 1875 shows Concord with its "back" turned to the river and the railroad cutting the city off from the Merrimack. The bird's eye view also illustrates a partially lost pattern of public open spaces: the statehouse lawn, the County Courthouse green, and the Railroad Station square were once an intricate part of the public life of Downtown.

The South Opportunity Corridor is home to a myriad of uses - including a scrap metal yard and light industry.

Bird's eye view of Concord from 1875. Reissued 1988 by Heritage Concord, Courtesy of New Hampshire Historical Society.

The railroad tracks, yards, and structures claimed much of the river valley on the west side and cut off visual and physical access to the Merrimack River from Downtown. Certain links to the river were maintained in the face of this massive infrastructure project. Ferry Street and Free Bridge Road (now Loudon Road), Chandler Street, and Thorndike Street all cross over or under the tracks to reach the river. A century later the construction of I-93 reinforced the separation of Downtown and the river leaving only the Loudon Road and Water Street links in place. Both of these "river connections" are important but dominated by the automobile.

Access and Parking

Downtown has excellent regional access from I-93 and sits in the middle of the city, accessible from east and west by a series of arterials. From the west, Pleasant and Clinton Streets connect to Main Street. From the north, Fisherville Road/N. State Street links Penacook and West Concord to the Downtown. From the east, The Heights is connected via Loudon Road, and from the south, Main Street is accessed by South Main and Manchester Streets. While access is good, parking can be in short supply at times. This is a positive problem however; high parking demand indicates a healthy Downtown. Combined demand from government employees, retail customers, business people, entertainment seekers, and residents makes parking difficult at certain times. The Downtown answers demand with a combination of private lots, public parking structures, and on-street metered parking.

The 1997 Downtown Master Plan found that, counting by the numbers, adequate parking does currently exist. However, more importantly, the public's perception is one of a parking shortage.

Concord's Villages

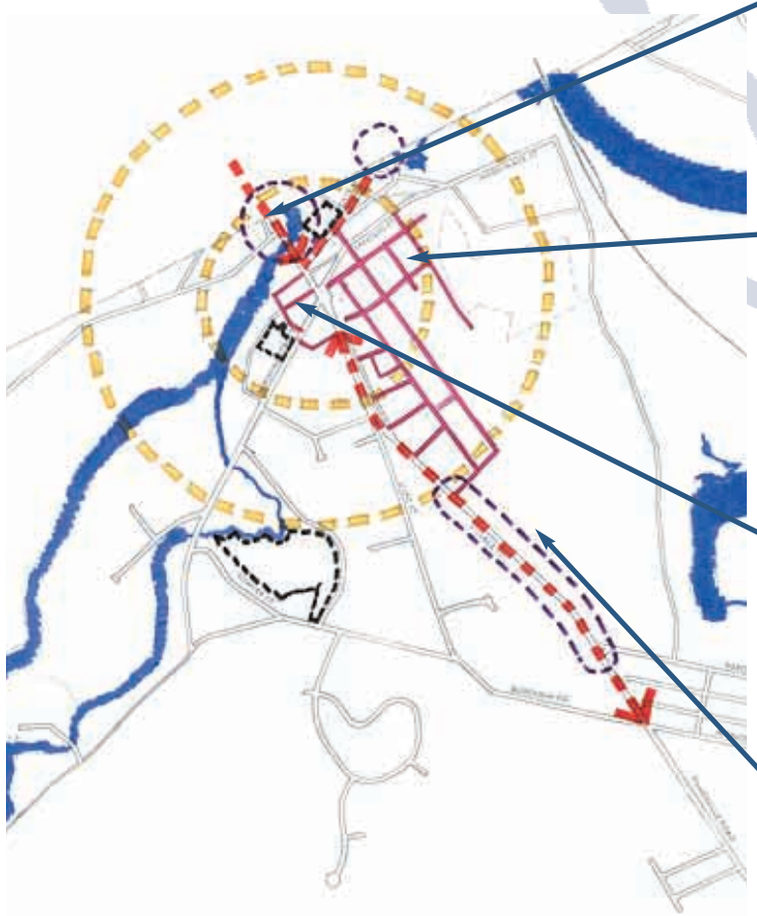
Over the years, as various industries established themselves along the Merrimack River, developments emerged around them and a pattern was clearly established. The river was the organizing point of life in what was to become known as the City of Concord. Today, those patterns of development tracing back to colonial days can still be read in the landscape of the city. Six villages lie within the Merrimack River Valley: Penacook, West Concord, East Concord, The Heights, Downtown, and the South End. While some of the villages are more proximate to the riverbank than others, each shares common characteristics while expressing its own distinct character. Each village has a critical mass of residential development, often served by its own school, and neighborhood parks. All combine residential, commercial and open space uses, although there are different proportions of these uses in each. While village boundaries are not always clearly distinct, the centers of the villages, however small, are indisputable.

Penacook

Located six miles north of Downtown Concord, Penacook is a well-defined village with a central commercial core serving the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Several industrial facilities and office buildings provide jobs within the village, and neighborhood schools and churches and a branch library round out the mixed-use character of the village.

Penacook has a strong identity as a distinct village in the city. Located at the northwest border of Concord abutting Boscawen, Penacook has largely been a discrete community since its founding. Reinforcing this distinction, Penacook is located in a different school district, the Merrimack Valley School District, and has a different zip code and telephone exchange than the rest of Concord.

Penacook developed on the banks of the Contoocook River, taking advantage of the waterpower provided by the river. As the mills grew, Penacook became a center of local textile manufacturing, and later, furniture manufacturing. Today, the Contoocook continues to contribute to the character of Penacook with new parks and housing located next to former and current industrial sites on the river.



Village Street is the main street in Penacook and connects the village with West Concord, Downtown and Boscawen. East Street and Hoit Road provide access to Exit 17 of I-93. These roadways lead to the center of Penacook where commercial uses are concentrated. While the small commercial core plays an important role in establishing the image of Penacook, the older buildings are not typically favored by many of today's businesses. Vacancies and some signs of disinvestment detract from the quality of the village.

Traditional residential blocks surround the commercial center. Older homes and institutional uses line the streets near the center. Newer residential developments located to the southwest of the core follow a loop and cul-de-sac pattern of development. Only small greenfield sites (virgin open space, undeveloped and free of environmental hazards) remain in Penacook for new development. Some opportunities for infill or redevelopment within the core exist as well. Reuse of the Tannery, which could accommodate between approximately 100,000 square feet of mixed-use space, would generate significant new activity in the village.

"Downtown Penacook" is an attractive traditional commercial center that has the potential to become a truly wonderful space. Today, the needs of the car dominate the core, impacting and minimizing the pedestrian accommodations. At the heart of the village, where Village Street, Washington Street, Sanders Street and Summer Street all come together, pavement is prolific. Only a small green with a gazebo punctuates one corner, appearing to be little used and somewhat out of the way instead of providing an active public space for Penacook. Opportunities to reclaim portions of pavement to create a new "village green" would enhance the commercial core, providing a sense of civic pride for the community.

While Penacook has traditionally maintained a distinct identity, recent development to the south along Village Street has begun to blur the boundary between West Concord and Penacook. The lack of a clear edge and defined gateway erodes the sense of identity and character of the village.

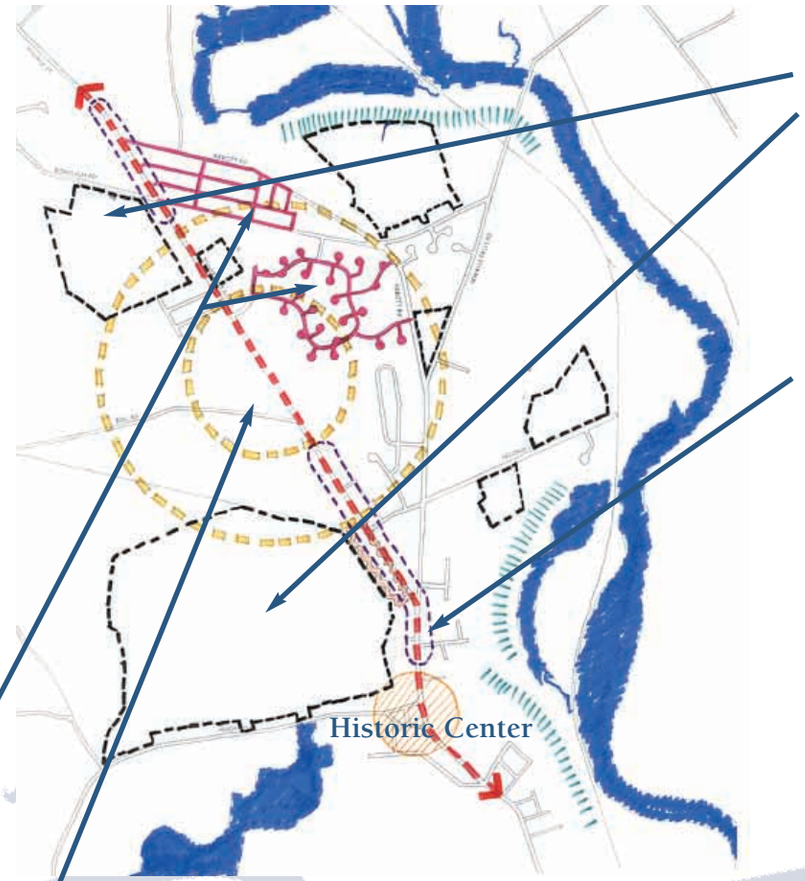
West Concord

The area known as West Concord was initially established in the late 1700s. Despite its location north of Downtown, the village became known as West Village or West Parish, primarily responding to the just previously settled East Concord. Located where North State Street crossed over Rattlesnake Brook, industries in West Concord took advantage of the power provided by the running water. Manufacturing saw mills and gristmills became common industries in West Concord. Additional businesses developed and eventually, local granite became a major product. Stone from the West Concord quarries was used in many famous buildings and monuments, including the Washington Monument, Library of Congress, First Church of Christ Scientist in Boston and the New Hampshire Historical Society building to name a few.

Until the mid-1900s West Concord remained a small village centered on North State and Hutchins Streets. As the influence and impacts of the automobile grew over the last 30 years, West Concord transformed from a historic village to a new automobile-oriented strip surrounded by residential subdivisions. Route 3 (Fisherville Road) was the major north-south roadway through Concord before the completion of I-93 in 1958. Businesses catering to travelers heading north to the White Mountains initially located along the roadway. Later, retail and multi-family housing developments replaced traveler services along Route 3 and the character of Fisherville Road changed.

While the historic core of the village remains largely intact, the concentration of new development to the north of this traditional core has led to a shift in energy and focus for West Concord. It seems appropriate that a new village center should exist in the heart of this modern development. While the quantity of development would lead one to expect to find this new village center, the quality of development has left the village placeless. The redesign of the area around existing retail on Fisherville Road could create a new village green and a true focus for the relocated village center. This would both help establish a civic identity for this new concentration of residential development, and preserve the historic village center of West Concord by restricting new development in that area.

Developed in the last several decades, the dominant pattern of growth north of the historic village center, is characterized by commercial strip development with numerous curb cuts along an automobile arterial surrounded by, but disconnected from, cul-de-sacs of residential development. As a result of this pattern of development, traffic on Fisherville Road has increased dramatically. Travel choices are minimal for those living or shopping in the area. Nearly every trip made requires travel on Fisherville Road. The street design also contributes to traffic congestion by inhibiting pedestrian accessibility; few, if any, pedestrian trails or sidewalks connect the residential areas to the retail and commercial services along Fisherville Road.



West Concord is characterized by significant residential development served by a strip of commercial development. In addition, significant open spaces exist in the area, many of which are protected. Several significant parcels remain that could accommodate the construction of large projects. Little office and industrial development has occurred in West Concord, resulting in a low level of jobs in the area. The Beaver Meadow School provides a focus for the village, but it is one of the few institutional uses in the area.

One of the outcomes of strip development is a general lack of identity. The sprawl that characterizes West Concord results in undefined gateways, further undermining the sense of place. Gateways from both the north side and south on Fisherville Road are unclear. Recent development to the north has led to a near unbroken strip, without a true edge for either Penacook or West Concord.

Many diverse housing types exist in West Concord, providing residents with a range of home opportunities. Single-family detached, single-family attached (townhouses), mobile homes, and apartments are common in the village. Several residential subdivisions were developed under PUD (Planned Unit Development) zoning, which requires this range in housing types. Despite the presence of multi-family and attached housing units, the overall residential densities remain quite low. The lower density form of development contributes to sprawl, engulfing undeveloped land at high rates and discouraging walkability by increasing distances to amenities and services.

As West Concord continues to grow, additional retail and services can be supported, providing opportunities to enhance the village with a real center of community. One of the most pressing needs for the village is a grocery store, allowing residents to shop nearby rather than traveling to one of Concord's other villages for their food needs.

Access to the river is provided at the New Hampshire Fish and Game site at Sewalls Falls, although other areas have been identified by residents as possible access points.

East Concord

East Concord has preserved its rural character despite development pressures and the construction of I-93; Exit 16 enters almost directly into the traditional village center. Very little recent growth has occurred in East Concord, with the majority that has occurred being located near the edges of the village. In particular, new development near the border of East Concord and The Heights has been typical, leading to new development southeast of the core.

Established as a trading post primarily of fur and rum in the mid-1600s, East Concord became more permanently settled in the 1700s. The area was home to numerous farms and the businesses that served them, including boarding houses, blacksmith and machine shops, tanneries, and silk and dye shops along Eastman Street. Starting in the mid-1850s, a number of village general stores sprung up along Mountain Road near present day Exit 16. Today, laundromats, bakeries, and other commerce are located in the area.

East Concord has clear boundaries on two sides: to the west, I-93 is a hard-edged barrier to lands fronting on the river. To the south, the bluffs, river and I-393 separate East Concord from Downtown and The Heights. These two barriers serve to isolate the village from the rest of the city. In particular, the construction of I-93 severed local access between East Concord and Downtown. As a result residents of East Concord refer to I-93 as their "Main Street."

East Concord is primarily a residential community. A small village center includes some convenience commercial and important institutional buildings, including an elementary school and community center. While the center is quite small and compact, it does not promote walkability. The major intersection at East Side Drive, Eastman, Shawmut Street and Exit 16 is dangerous to pedestrians with wide crossings and little protection; the village is effectively divided by roads.

East Concord is fortunate to have great amounts of open space. Some, but not all, of this is protected from development. One of East Concord's great assets is The Society for the Protection of New Hampshie Forests land along the Bluffs. However, although the river is close to the village center, access to the Merrimack from East Concord is not easily provided.

The Concord Business and Industrial Park, located on the west side of I-93, provides jobs in the village, but the barriers that exist between the residential areas and the business park make walking or biking to these jobs nearly impossible. A recently completed bicycle path, running alongside I-93, connects East Concord to the New Hampshire Technical Institute, the Horseshoe Pond area and to Fort Eddy Plaza.

A key development site is the Eastman Foundry site. Located immediately west of Exit 16, the site was previously used for industrial activities. Environmental remediation of the site is likely needed and any future use should fit the village character and be an appropriate component of the gateway into East Concord and the city as a whole. Other large development sites remain in East Concord. As a result, growth is likely in the coming years. Shaping and affecting this growth, both qualitatively and quantitatively will be important. A 200-acre site on the west side of I-93 is one of the larger sites that are potentially developable. Portions of the property are covered with wetlands, so it is difficult to determine the exact amount of developable land on this site.

The Heights

The Heights, like East Concord, is located on the east side of the Merrimack River. This village is relatively new in the city; it developed rapidly in the second half of the last century, with large residential developments and significant strip commercial development. The village suffers from having developed during the glory days of the automobile.

Loudon Road, the village's main street, functions primarily as a city arterial road, providing easy access between Downtown and the mall and big box areas to the west. As a result, rather than acting as a village street, uniting the residential communities on either side of the roadway, Loudon Road acts as a barrier between the neighborhoods to either side.

To the south, Concord Airport and the National Guard compound act as additional barriers for neighborhoods on Heights Road, Dover Street and Eagle's Bluff. Ironically, the very size of the village is a kind of barrier as it is spread over a large area. The remoteness of neighborhoods on Garvins Falls Road, and the Jensen's and Cherry Street areas, and Loudon Road's role as a divider in The Heights, create barriers to movement within the village.

The Heights has a great mix of uses, including residential, commercial/retail, and industrial. However, the uses are largely separated from each other in distinct zones, reducing the walkability of the village. In fact, The Heights suffers greatly from disconnectedness. The numerous cul-de-sac developments on either side of Loudon Road, and the lack of connectedness between these residential areas make Loudon Road the only transportation option for people traveling from neighborhood to neighborhood. Coupled with the road's function as city arterial, large amounts of traffic use the road each day.

This heavy use exacerbates the problem of pedestrian safety. In each city village, children and adults should be able to walk safely from homes to retail to playgrounds to schools. Throughout The Heights, there is a lack of bicycle and sidewalk networks that could create accessibility and walkability–and the heavy vehicular traffic on Loudon Road contributes to this situation.

While many of the components of a village exist in The Heights, there is no well-defined center. The commercial quality of Loudon Road, the presence of several churches, and Keach Park are the building blocks of the village, but the physical design of the area restricts the sense of village. The area around Dame School including the adjacent portion of Loudon Road, could, over time, become the focus of the village. There are a few developable parcels in this area but most opportunities would come from redevelopment and streetscape improvements, with the possible addition of a community destination in this area, such as a new community center.

A discussion of The Heights would be incomplete without including the development of Steeplegate Mall and the area around D'Amante Plaza at the western edge of the village. A decade ago, the City set a clear policy that large-scale retail would develop in this area. With approximately 1 million sq. ft. of retail space developed between 1990-2000, the City has been successful in its goal. However, this development is not without its impacts. Specifically, while I-393 was designed to provide access to the mall area, using the interstate is counterintuitive for many drivers because it requires driving past the mall to Exit 2 and then backtracking along NH 106. In addition, travel along Loudon Road appears to be relatively easy, even with the large amounts of traffic and safety issues present on the road. If Loudon Road is ever to serve the village and become the location of a village center in The Heights, traffic will have to be calmed and much of the cut-through traffic must be encouraged to take I-393.

Keach Park, located near the core of The Heights, is the only park space located within the neighborhood. Small remnants of open space remain, but the village is largely developed. The site of the Everett Arena provides riverfront access but is on the eastern edge of the village, separated from the residential neighborhoods by the State Office Campus and other commercial uses. The area could serve as a transition from The Heights to Downtown and could provide much needed recreational open space for the village and the entire city. In addition, the vacant Kings Shopping Center does not contribute to the character of village or Downtown and cuts off views of the bluffs to the east and the statehouse to the west. This land could be reclaimed as open space along the river. Coupled with these improvements should be expanded sidewalks along Loudon Road at the Merrimack River overpass to allow easier, safer access to Downtown from residential areas on The Heights.

Downtown

As with any healthy, vibrant downtown, residential uses support the commercial uses of Main Street. In Concord, Downtown serves not only as the seat of state government and a stable retail district, but also as a downtown of neighborhoods. The history of the Downtown goes back to the area's desirability for fertile farmland in the crook of the river. Five acre agricultural plots were laid out in the flood plain along the banks of the Merrimack and one acre residential plots were laid out along what is now Main Street, stretching between Horseshoe Pond and Water Street.

Industrial settlements sprung up along the Merrimack in areas that provided waterpower for mills. Because there was no sudden drop in elevation on the river at the location that would eventually become Downtown, this area never developed the characteristics of the early mill sites, complete with riverside industrial mills and worker tenements. Instead, the Downtown developed gradually as a seat of government and trade. The railroad was also an important influence on the Downtown and at the rail's height in popularity, Concord had more trackage than any other New Hampshire city or town; the area boasted a large rail station, many lines of track, warehouses and maintenance buildings.

Today, Downtown is comprised of a variety of uses: residential, commercial, institutional all share space in and around Main Street. Residential areas are generally located to the west of Main Street in neighborhoods known as the North End and West End. The neighborhood that is neither west nor north is simply called the Downtown neighborhood.

The North End is generally said to be north of White Park and Beacon Street although Franklin Street is sometimes referred to as the starting point. This neighborhood has older housing stock on denser lots. The West End generally begins at Liberty Street and includes many older residential units in the School Street and Auburn Street area. This neighborhood also includes a newer residential area with hilly topography. The rocky landscape, proximity to Concord Hospital, larger lots, and more expansive views has made development and housing in this area more expensive. Concord High School is in this neighborhood. In addition to Main Street commercial district, small neighborhood business districts are located on Washington Street, on North State Street in Fosterville, and at the intersection of Fruit, Pleasant and Warren Streets near the High School. The Downtown neighborhood is host to Franklin Pierce Law Center. With the Law Center's location in this residential area come the typical town-gown challenges. Traffic congestion, parking demand and the encroachment of institutional uses into the residential neighborhood are ongoing concerns for residents.

A number of parks serve the Downtown residential neighborhoods. White Park, a major city park, is situated in this area and provides a full range of recreational facilities including ball fields, a skating pond, the Monkey Around Playground, and a youth pool/water playground, as well as picnicking areas and walking paths. Memorial Field is also at the edge of Downtown on the west side of the N.H. State Hospital Grounds although this park is considered by many to be more a part of the South End (and serves South End little league). Open space and plazas Downtown include Eagle Square, Bicentennial Square. Playgrounds include the Thompson Play lot on North Spring Street and Fletcher Murphy on South Street adjacent to the Music School. Kimball Park is located at the northerly end of the North End and the American Little League plays at Grappone and Dillion Fields on City land off High Street. Arena Park is on the east bank of the Merrimack just across from Downtown. Pedestrian access to the Everett Arena is difficult because Loudon Road is not pedestrian-friendly. The residents of Downtown are cut off from the river by the I-93 and the rail right of way.

In the North End and the in-town residential areas, the housing stock is older and contains a mix of types settled in traditional block forms leading away from Main Street to the west. Commercial encroachment has had a negative affect on the cohesiveness of these residential areas; zoning variances granted over the years have allowed the conversion of single family houses to commercial use, mostly for professional office space. This erosion of the residential neighborhoods closest to Main Street has been incremental in the last forty years and continues today. As residential moves farther from Main Street, the core of Downtown has lost the critical mass of evening activity needed to support restaurants and late store hours. The upper floors of commercial buildings on side streets are mostly used for commercial activities, some retail, and some residential.

Interestingly, while the West End is composed of single families on large lots and the "in-town" neighborhoods are denser, there still is missing a wider choice in housing for people wishing a more urban lifestyle. Main Street and environs are missing market rate and luxury rentals and condominiums that might appeal to younger professionals or retired residents. The three high rises in the area, the Kennedy Apartments, the Firehouse Apartments on Warren Street, and Capital Plaza, offer housing for the elderly.

The Capital Shopping Center is an important shopping destination for Downtown residents. The Market Basket grocery store is a much-needed amenity for the neighborhood and concern has been repeatedly expressed that any redevelopment of the Central Opportunity Corridor allow for a grocery store to continue serving the neighborhood.

Downtown residential areas are faced with ongoing cut-through traffic on neighborhood streets. Major destinations in Downtown and vicinity (shown as stars on the map) include Concord Hospital, Jefferson Pilot, Franklin Pierce Law Center, and governmental and institutional uses, including State Offices at the N.H. State Hospital Grounds, the State Capitol, Concord High School, and Bishop Brady High School. In an effort to avoid congestion, drivers often take side streets through the Downtown residential neighborhoods to get to these destinations. In addition to traffic issues, pedestrian safety must also be addressed, particularly for elementary school students walking to Kimball, Dewey, and Walker Schools, and all local residents walking to White Park. Streets such as Franklin, Washington, School, Warren, Rumford, Liberty, and Centre have been subjected to excessive traffic given their residential character.

Development potential Downtown is primarily located in the North and Central Opportunity Corridor, the N.H. State Hospital Grounds, and Concord Hospital campus. The Hospital has an aggressive expansion program underway that will add a Cancer Care Center in the near future. At the N.H. State Hospital Grounds, AIA New Hampshire just conducted a design charrette to elicit input on possible uses for the nearly 800,000 sq. ft. of floor space on the site. There is also some potential for some smaller infill development projects in the neighborhoods.

The South End

The South End is a newer village in Concord that lies just southwest of Downtown. The municipal boundary with the Town of Bow defines the southern edge of the village and the Turkey River defines the western boundary. The South Opportunity Corridor dominates the eastern edge of the village. Thirty years ago, the Opportunity Corridor isolated the major portion of the South End from the sixty-home area around Hall Street. This area has since been converted to commercial uses and the South Opportunity Corridor, including the South End Marsh, now sits at the edge of the village.

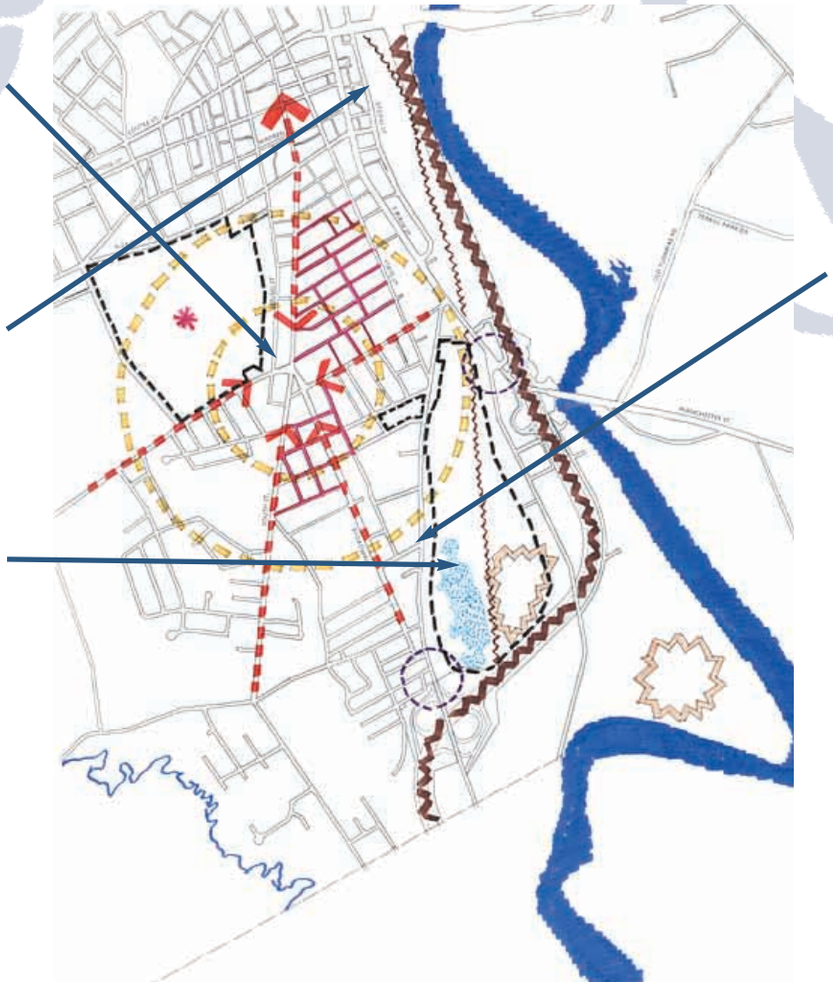
The northern edge of the village is somewhere between Pleasant and Clinton Streets where the predominance of owner-occupied homes gives way to rental housing. Near this area, at the northwest edge of the village, very close to McKee Square, sits the 125-acre walled site of the N.H. State Hospital Grounds. The grounds, approximately one-half mile square, encompass a park-like campus setting with Georgian structures. Despite its open feel, it is not open to public recreational use due to current state uses that include the housing of mentally ill patients. With the continuous wall around it, it is a significant barrier between villages and does nothing to contribute to the character of the South End. The State must continue to make long-range plans for this site and should consider the quality of the edge and its impact on surrounding neighborhoods. Some have expressed an interest in exploring ideas for open space, commercial development, even a State University campus at Concord, for the Hospital Grounds.

In the 1960s, this part of Concord was the fastest growing in-town neighborhood and most houses were relatively new. Now, this is a very homogenous, established residential area with a close-knit pattern of one family homes and smaller lots. And despite being a relatively new area of Concord, the South End has housing that is architecturally diverse, ranging from Victorian to bungalow style to capes and ranches. As can be seen from comparing densities, the South End has some of the highest single-family dwelling unit densities in the city. This density creates a very walkable, family-friendly area. The South End exhibits many "New Urbanism" principles including sidewalks, smaller lots with houses facing the street, front porches and neighborhood green space. However, its very homogeneity and limited commercial and industrial uses detract from the walkability of the village. For instance, the South End has no grocery store and a lack of office space lessens the possibility of walking to work for many (although the Downtown is close enough to provide some of these options). IGA closed in McKee Square because it could not compete with Fort Eddy Road.

The South End is not completely devoid of a mix of land uses; McKee Square is the main commercial area in the village and is considered to be the civic focus of the area. The Square is located at the intersection of Broadway, South Street, and Clinton Street. Traffic is heavy here and severs the Square from the surrounding residential areas. Missing are clear pedestrian connections from the Square to nearby parks, especially Memorial Field. Some redevelopment of McKee Square may be desirable and might include a much-needed grocery store.

The South End's location within the city accounts for some of its lack of commercial and industrial space. The village's adjacency to Downtown provides a level of convenience for residents that, in the past, has precluded the necessity for additional local services. However, as the village has grown, there has been a greater need for uses such as a grocery store.

While the South End is mostly built out, the presence of the South Opportunity Corridor provides a very large development site. Other sites include about 33 acres south of Rockingham Street on either side of South Street. The Blue Cross site on Pillsbury and South Main Streets is now vacant and could be redeveloped, perhaps for residential uses. Smaller, dispersed sites also exist south of Rollins Park.



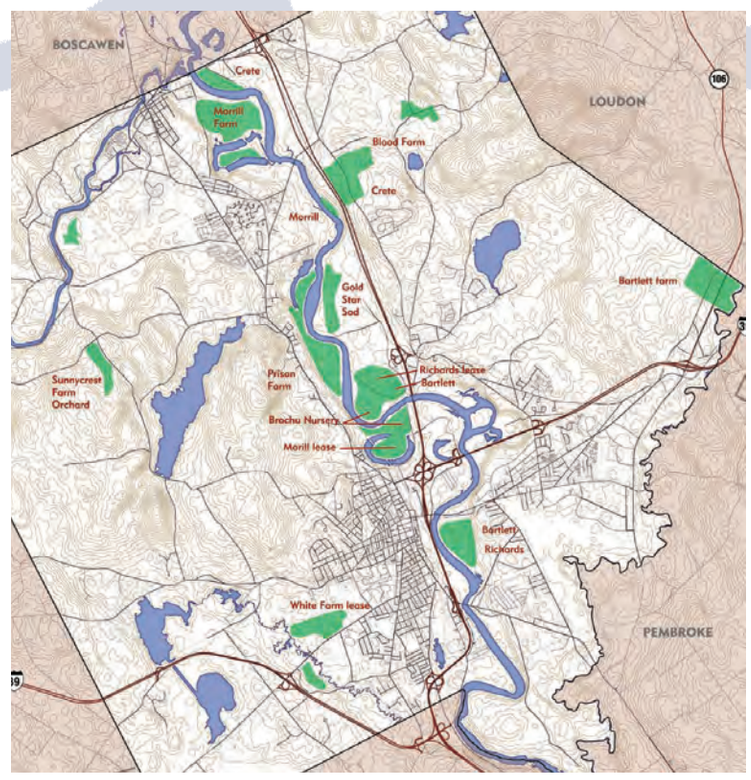
While the features of the South Opportunity Corridor have been described in the section on the Downtown above, it is important to discuss the relationship between this area and the rest of the South End. The area for redevelopment in this portion of the Opportunity Corridor could total up to 416,000 sq. ft. of building (existing and new). Unlike the other two segments of the Opportunity Corridor that are clearly part of the Downtown, the South segment is more closely connected to the South End and adjacent residential uses. Redevelopment on this site should support the South End as a walkable village and should enhance the character of the area. The South End Marsh, a potential asset to the community and the city, should be preserved and the access enhanced. Access to the entire South Opportunity Corridor is an issue that needs careful consideration. Currently, access to the western half of the site (the site is split into two by the rail corridor) is obtained from South Main Street. This street is part of the village and has undergone transition. Once predominantly residential, many buildings have had street-floor space converted to commercial uses. As a result, the once homogenous pattern of this street has been broken and is subject to further change depending on the redevelopment of the Opportunity Corridor. South Main Street acts as a buffer to the Corridor and should be considered with care. Ideally, more access choices for the western part of the South Opportunity Corridor should be explored.

Open space in the village includes Russ Martin Field, Rollins Park, and White Farm (the old fair grounds). Rollins is a well-maintained city park with tennis courts, ball fields, and a pool. The Rundlett Middle School and Conant Elementary School grounds are also used for recreational activities. Public open space in the village appears to be adequate but this space could be better connected to residential areas. Sidewalks, bike lanes and new signage would all help make the open spaces truly part of the village fabric.

The Natural Environment

Concord is blessed with ample land and a rich variety of landscapes including a major river valley bounded by bluffs, numerous lakes, winding streams, ponds, and granite hills. The city boasts four rivers (the Merrimack, Soucook, Contoocook, Turkey), more than nine ponds, five oxbow lakes, extensive marshes, and upland forests. East and north of Downtown, the use of the river valley for agriculture has helped maintain the open character of the landscape, and offers a reminder of earlier times when over 70% of New England was cleared for agriculture. Throughout the city, the juxtaposition between urban and rural areas is striking; even Downtown, the Merrimack retains its essential natural character.

Concord's open spaces merit protection for their natural resource values alone. The open valleys and wooded hills provide a variety of habitats for wildlife. It has been said that Concord is the only state capital in the country where one can hunt deer within sight of the statehouse dome. Open space along rivers, streams and ponds protects water quality. The Merrimack's water quality has improved to the point that the river can once again be used for swimming and boating. Penacook Lake which supplies good clean drinking water to Concord neighborhoods is a tremendous asset to the city. In addition Concord's river valleys, among the most fertile in New Hampshire, have sustained farming for over two hundred years. Concord's river farmlands are a productive resource as well as a cultural landscape that deserve protection. Some of the forestlands of Concord remain large enough to be economical as working wood lots. Carving these stands up with subdivisions would reduce their productive value as well as their ecologic value. All of these open spaces shape a powerful image of Concord as a city of villages set in a natural landscape. This is evident to visitors driving along I-93 who pass by field, forest, farmland and city in rapid succession. That residents can step out of their home and within minutes be driving along back roads in the Concord countryside is vital to people's well being. The value of open space to the image of Concord is incalculable.



Some of the farms of Concord.

While the city, region, and state have had a long-standing commitment to the preservation of open space and trails, there is much work to be done before residents can enjoy a well-connected series of open spaces that serve Downtown and the villages. The challenges presented here focus on linking the fragmented pattern of conservation lands and enhancing access to these lands. This section looks at existing patterns of open space, waterways, public trails, and city parks and at the challenges and opportunities of enhancing these resources.

Open Space

The City has actively sought to protect open space over the last 25 years. In 2000, roughly 20% of Concord's 64 square miles was protected open space through easements or fee simple ownership by the city, state, or institutions. This is an impressive amount of protected open space given Concord's population. By contrast, Nashua has only 5% of its land in protection. The state owns extensive tracts of land along the Merrimack River, on Rattlesnake Hill, and along Clinton Street. These constitute some of the most significant open spaces in Concord. The City owns a patchwork of parcels with larger holdings around Penacook Lake and the Mast Yard and The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests owns land or holds the easements along the river just north of Downtown. St. Paul's, a private school, owns extensive tracts of land to the west.

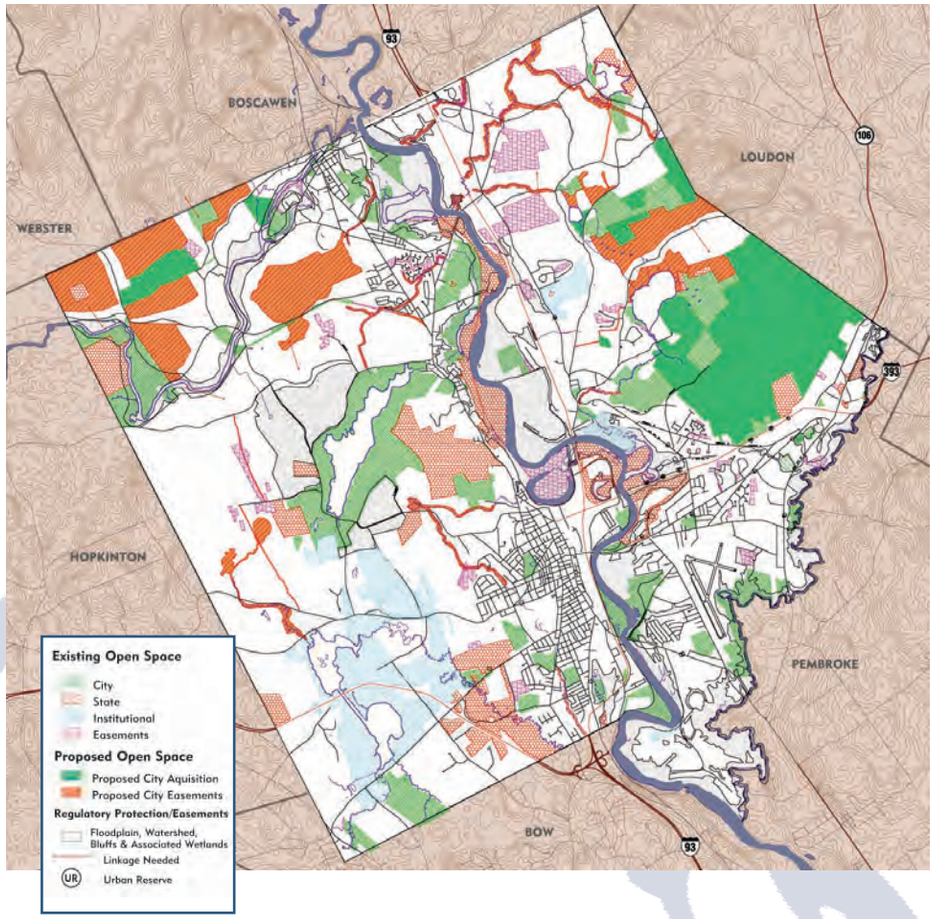
Bounded by bluffs, the Merrimack River Valley is Concord's most precious open space resource. Generations of farmers have maintained much of the valley as an open landscape for over 200 years. The steep bluffs that frame the valley, the large oxbow lakes along the river, the bordering wetlands, and the patchwork of open fields make for a rich and fascinating landscape. The valley is close to Downtown and the village centers, creating a welcome contrast between the built and natural landscapes. However, much of the Merrimack River Valley is inaccessible and invisible. The few points of contact with the river include Terrill Park, Arena Park, the Forest Society river frontage, several boat ramps, and the Sewalls Falls Park area–Concord's premier river park. These sites are disconnected and do not capture the tremendous recreational potential of the Merrimack River Valley.

According to the Endowment for the 21st Century - Conservation & Open Space Plan of 1993, much of the Merrimack River Valley appears to be well protected through a combination of owned conservation lands, easements, and regulatory protections. However, certain tracts of land within the river valley have been developed in the past. Furthermore, the Federal Emergency Management Agency recently redefined the boundary of lands subject to 100-year floods based on new data and a statistical analysis of risk. Additional areas of the river valley are now outside the 100-year food zone and therefore subject to development pressure. The top edge of the steep wooded bluffs that bound the river valley is particularly susceptible to development because of the splendid views found there.

The 1993 Master Plan recommends a conservation strategy that focuses on the sections of the city outside of the Urban Growth Boundary – Broken Ground and Turtle Town, the Mast Yard and Horse Hill, and an extensive area between Bog Road and River Road in Penacook. This emphasis should be reexamined given the shift in regulatory protection of the river valley and mounting development pressure within the Urban Growth Boundary.

The Turkey River reserve and the lands held by Saint Paul's constitute another major open space resource for the City of Concord. Extensive wetlands, connected ponds, meandering brooks and forested upland characterize this rich landscape. These conservation lands and the steep slopes of Rattlesnake Hill have effectively limited growth to the west. In addition there are numerous isolated parcels of protected open space and trails scattered across the city.

Important scenic views from Downtown, the villages, and roadways should be protected through scenic easements (as has been done at Horseshoe Pond), or through actual public purchase. A future river connection from Downtown to the Merrimack would be seriously diminished, for example, by the further encroachment of development onto the farm fields. The partly demolished Kings Shopping center on Loudon Road opposite the Everett Arena should be purchased and restored to recreational use and open space. This partly vacant site separates Arena Park from the farm fields and parklands to the south. Without an open space

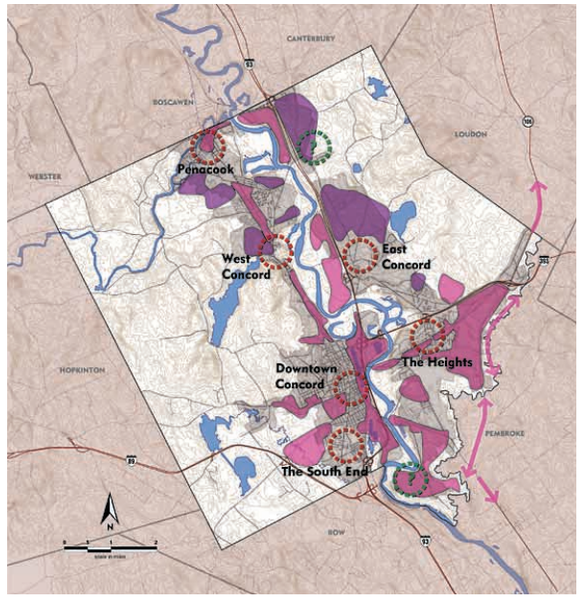


restoration strategy future development here will dominate the view from Downtown when a connection is finally established to the Merimack.

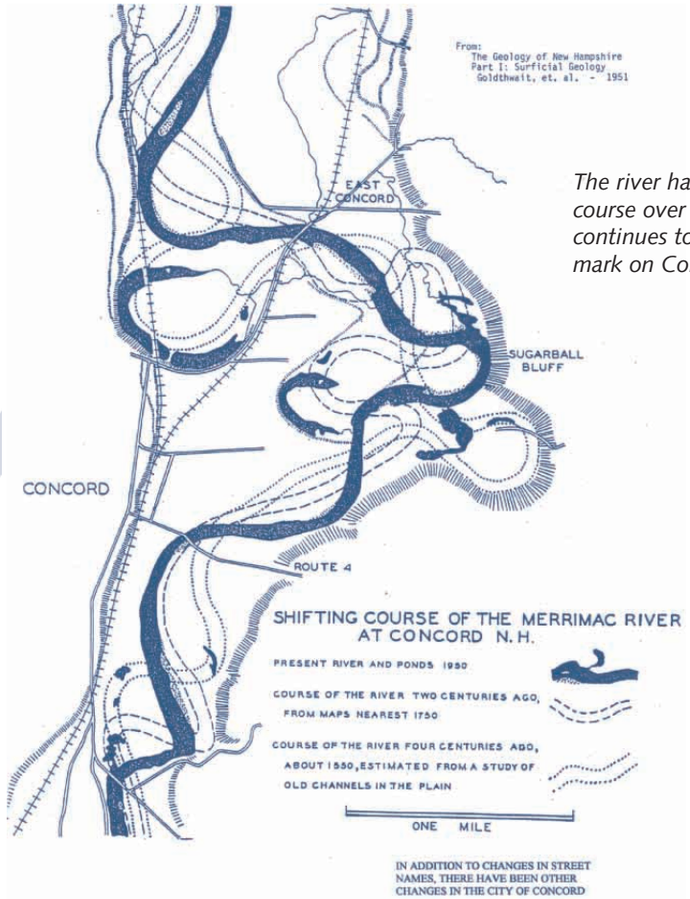
Additional parcels that should be considered for added protection include but are not limited to:

- The open fields between Penacook and the Merrimack River
- The extensive land area along the east bank off of West Portsmouth Street and Locke Road, as far north as Sewalls Falls
- The farm fields between Loudon Road and Terrill Park
- The slopes around the Garvin Falls peninsula (Urban Reserve)

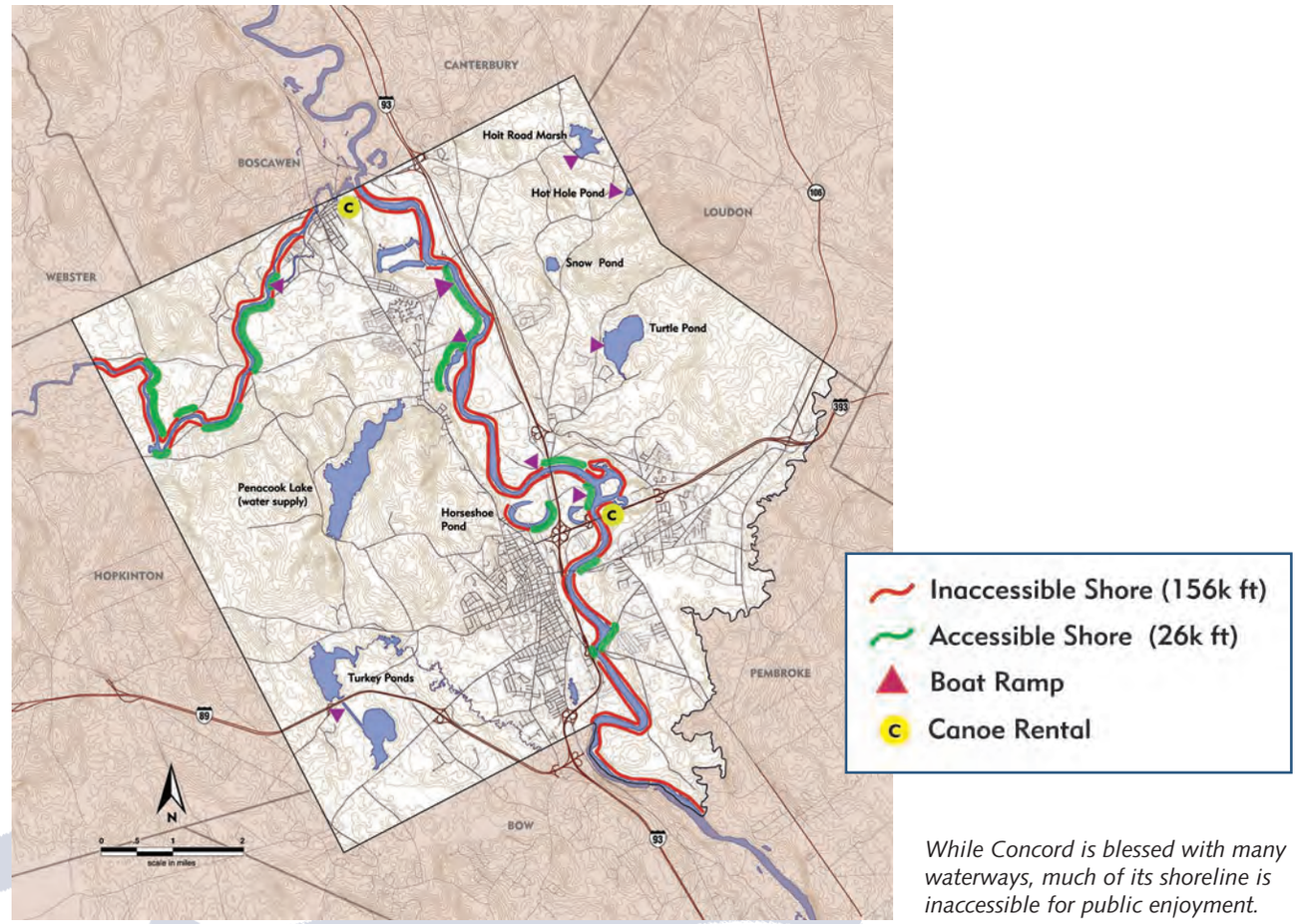
In the East Concord River Valley, some of the most attractive farm fields near the Merrimack are on West Portsmouth Street and West Locke Road. Here, nurseries, cornfields, and a turf farm exist side-by-side and the landscape is similar to the Horseshoe Island fields.



Concord's priorities for acquiring open space should more closely align with those sites under the most immediate development pressure. The 1999 Open Space Plan (left) indicates that much of the proposed open space is outside the Urban Growth Boundary, doing little to protect those areas (above) that residents are most in danger of losing to development.



The river has changed course over time and continues to leave its mark on Concord.



While Concord is blessed with many waterways, much of its shoreline is inaccessible for public enjoyment.

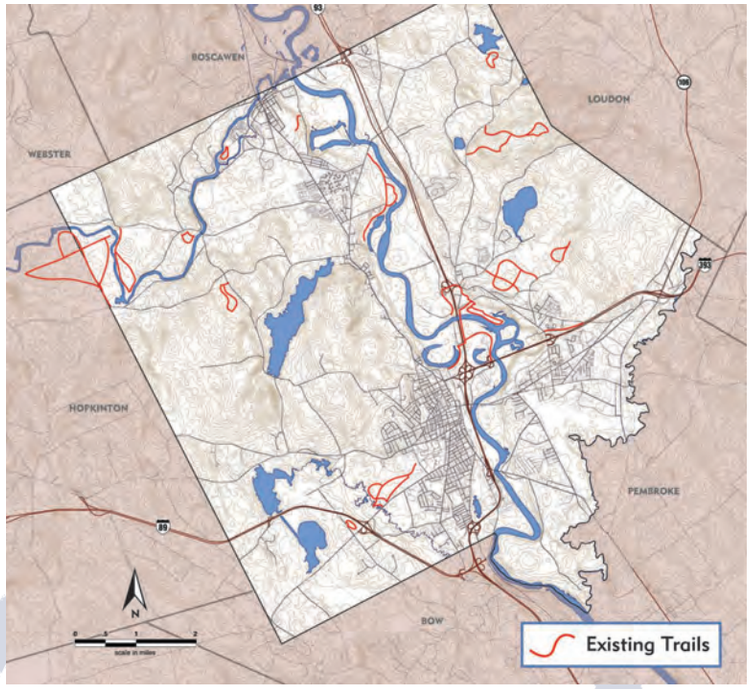
The Waterways of Concord

The rivers of Concord represent a still largely untapped resource. Though it courses through the heart of the city, the Merrimack River has a wild and scenic character. The river has had a profound influence on the settlement patterns in Concord. Its fertile floodplain and the long farming plots contributed greatly to the uniquely urban settlement that grew up around what is today Main Street.

Five boat ramps and two canoe rental sites provide access to the Merrimack River within Concord. Local children swim in the river in at least one location, a sandy beach along the river opposite the state prison lands. While these accessible points may appear to be inadequate along the 14 miles of the Merrimack that are in Concord (out of a total length of 115 miles), the current conditions are a significant improvement over the recent past. After essentially being off limits for decades due to contamination, and after having the dubious distinction of one of the ten most polluted rivers in the United States, the Merrimack River attained swimmable water ratings in recent years and is slowly being rediscovered to a new generation of Concord residents.

Other lakes and rivers should not be overlooked. Horseshoe Pond, like the four other oxbow lakes along the Merrimack, was once part of the river channel. These oxbow lakes are slowly filling in and the stagnant water and algae compromise recreational potential. There has been discussion of reconnecting Horseshoe Pond with the Merrimack River to use river currents to flush the ponds but no engineering study has ever been conducted.

The last seven miles of the Contoocook River join the Merrimack in Boscawen and Penacook. The Contoocook is navigable but is very different in character from the Merrimack. It drains a much smaller watershed, is narrower, and is lined with development in places. Numerous private docks dot the shore and private recreational pontoon boats are common. The Soucook, a 10-mile serpentine stream, defines the southeastern boundary of the city. Development along nearby Route 106 could have an adverse impact on this river. The Soucook is entirely hidden from view and unknown to most residents. Lastly, the Turkey River and the series of ponds it links are defining features of the Saint Paul campus. It is well protected by conservation land and a series of mapped and unmapped paths provide access.



While trails do exist in Concord, they are fragmented and do not yet provide a "system."

Concord Trails

Concord is blessed with 64 square miles of varied and beautiful land. Residents of Concord are known to be active and outdoor-oriented. Yet many citizens have commented on a general lack of access to the natural areas of the city. A system of nineteen official unpaved hiking trails flagged and mapped by the Conservation Commission in 1997, provide access to some outstanding scenic areas. In addition, a system of unofficial trails on private lands exists for those "in the know." However, these trails do not form interconnected loops and do little to connect the villages of the city with open space and scenic views. In most instances, one has to drive to reach a local trailhead.

Planning for a regional Heritage Trail linking Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Canada began in 1989. The Heritage Trail was supported by former Governor (now Senator) Gregg as a trail running along the Merrimack from the Massachusetts border north to the Pemigiwasett and on through Franconia Notch and up the Connecticut to the Canadian border. Each municipality along the trail, including Concord, is responsible for the Trail through their community and for linkage with its neighbors to the north and south. In Concord, the Conservation Commission and the Concord Conservation Trust are responsible for developing the Trail. Trail planners studied alternative alignments of the Heritage Trail through Concord and had preliminary discussions with farmers and landholders along the river. Though little of the Heritage Trail has been completed, this preliminary work provides a good starting point for local trail initiatives. While regional trails are powerful symbols and great challenges to long distance hikers each segment has to be useful to and claimed by local communities. For the Heritage Trail to eventually become a reality within Concord each leg of the trail will have to be part of a local system of loop trails that link neighborhoods to the river.

The trail along the Merrimack at the Everett Arena is a fragmented shoreline path that could become part of a spectacular scenic trails system.

There are no safe citywide bicycle routes that link neighborhoods. Four short off-road bicycle paths were built as mitigation measures for impacts of I-89, I-93, and I-393. The state has designated several roadways as bicycle routes into and through Concord. These roadways include Route 3 (Fisherville Road, North State Street, Main Street, Manchester Street), Route 132 (Mountain Road), Route 9 (Loudon Road, Pleasant Street), Route 106 (Sheep David Road), and Route 13 (Clinton Street). None of these roads has designated bicycle lanes associated with them and few have adequate shoulders for bicycle safety.

City Parks

There is a tradition of neighborhood parks in Concord that serves to reinforce a sense of village. Neighborhood parks serve a very different function from the natural preserves beyond the edge of the neighborhood. They are set at the center and help to focus the community. They are civic spaces where neighbors gather to recreate and socialize. Rollins Park in the South End, White Park in the West End, and Rolfe Park in Penacook are prime examples. Some neighborhoods appear to be underserved by city parks. The Heights, south of I-393, has Keach Park adjacent to Dame School but little else. The central Downtown neighborhood between Pleasant and West Street and the residents who live on upper floors on Main Street are without a neighborhood park they could call their own. The Fisherville Road area in West Concord/Penacook is also short on recreation space, especially given the amount of new development this area has seen in recent decades.

Concord is more than a collection of village centers and neighborhoods divided by a river. It is a city with a strong civic identity. Concord does not have what many successful cities have, however–a central park, where people from all neighborhoods can gather together to celebrate and recreate. It is a place of citywide events such as July 4th and harvest festivals. It has enough room for multiple activities, both passive and active, to occur at the same time. It is a place where citywide recreational facilities too big for neighborhood parks (e.g., indoor skating rinks, Olympic sized swimming pools) can be accommodated. Neither Memorial Field, devoted entirely to athletic fields nor White Park at the center of the West End qualifies.

There is another kind of open space that is missing from Concord: a town green. The classic town green is a civic space that belongs to everyone. Located at the very heart of the city it provides a small respite from the hustle and bustle of the market street. The best town greens are simple open greens unencumbered by structures or even too many trees. They are often fronted by civic buildings and provide a place for civic gatherings or farmers markets. Main Streets with their retail shops on both sides are always nearby but not necessarily fronting the green. The State House lawn is the right size and even the right location for a town green but so obviously belongs to the State House that it cannot function like a town green. One could not easily imagine a city fair or farmers market on the State House lawn.

Transportation

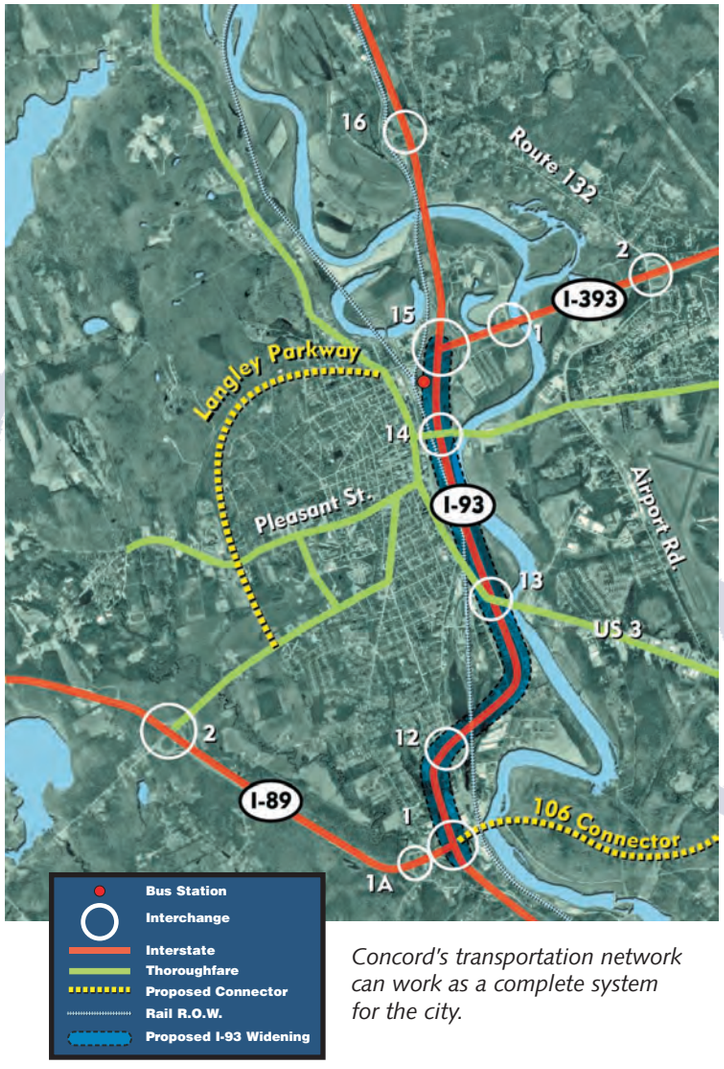
An assessment of the existing transportation facilities in Concord includes cars, bus, rail, pedestrian and bicycle accommodations.

The Transportation Model

A transportation model was used in order to better understand the existing traffic patterns in and around the study area. The information that was needed for the model included traffic counts on I-93 and the ramps at Exits 12 through 16, turning movement counts at selected intersections on both sides of I-93, and information on volumes for arterials and local roadways. The CNHRPC assisted in conducting new traffic counts where appropriate. CNHRPC's consistent involvement was a hallmark of this planning study; the close cooperation and collaboration among the regional planning commission, the City of Concord, the NHDOT, and the GC&A consultant team resulted in the most up-to-date and accurate transportation study and model possible.

The transportation model was one of many planning tools used to evaluate alternative futures for the city. Prior to this study, two transportation models were available: the statewide model shows traffic volumes on state roads but does not show local detail, and the city model which did not reach beyond the city's borders and which could not interface with the statewide model to show trips outside the city's borders.

To be useful as a tool to predict traffic volumes and movements in the year 2020, the existing City of Concord travel demand model was modified and updated. Both CNHRPC and the GC&A consultant team staff were responsible for developing these modifications, with substantial input from City of Concord staff.



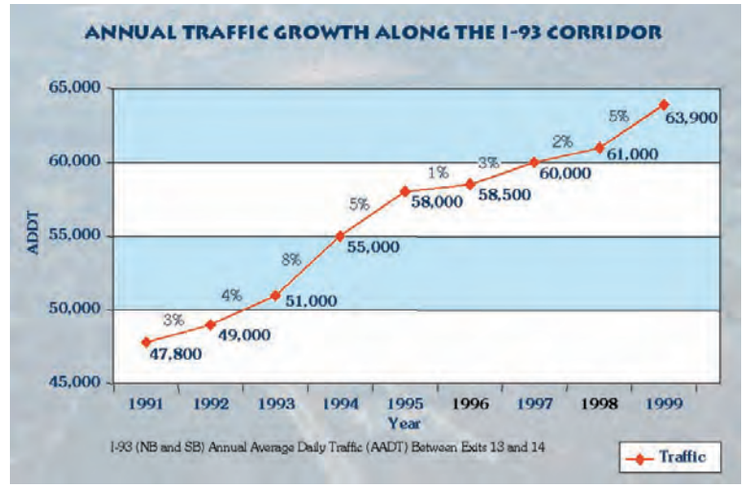
Concord's transportation network can work as a complete system for the city.

Briefly, the following modifications were made to develop the Concord 2020 model:

- **The study area was expanded to include parts of Boscawen, Canterbury, Pembroke, and Bow**
  The existing Concord travel demand model study area included all of the City of Concord but ignored the area surrounding the city. A total of 141 zones were included within the city of Concord. As part of the Concord 2020 Vision project the model's study area was expanded beyond the city limits to include parts of Boscawen, Canterbury, Pembroke, and Bow. No modifications were made to zone definitions within the city limits.
- **Zonal socioeconomic data was updated to reflect 1999 conditions**
  As part of the Concord 2020 model development CNHRPC staff undertook a comprehensive review of the household, employment, and income data for the model. Zonal estimates of the total number of households, retail employment and non-retail employment were updated for each zone.
- **An interface was developed between the Concord model and the statewide model for capturing external trips**
  As part of the Concord 2020 model development an active, one-way interface was developed to incorporate trip assignments from the New Hampshire Statewide Transportation Model System (NHSTMS) as the basis for developing through-trip tables for the Concord model and for developing internal-external trip ends at external stations.
- **Coding of roadways within Concord was revised after a comprehensive review**
  A comprehensive review of roadway coding within the City of Concord was undertaken by CNHRPC and City of Concord staff, which resulted in significant changes to the network to reflect updated roadway and signal conditions. These changes included revisions to the locations of signalized intersections and the approach codes entering these intersections, introduction of shape points on links, and revisions to centroid connections. Coded speeds were reviewed, and roadway capacities were redefined to defaults.
- **The model was recalibrated using traffic volumes from 1999**
  A new dataset of traffic volumes was developed for calibrating the model. The principal source for daily traffic volumes was the CNHRPC Traffic Volume Report for 1998/1999, which was available in draft form at the start of the project. The principal sources for peak hour traffic volumes were spreadsheets containing hourly traffic volumes for Concord and Bow. Supplemental counts for interstates, including the Hooksett toll plaza, were provided by NHDOT. Some additional counts were requested and conducted in the summer and autumn of 2000 by CNHRPC staff for external stations and to fill gaps in desired screenlines.

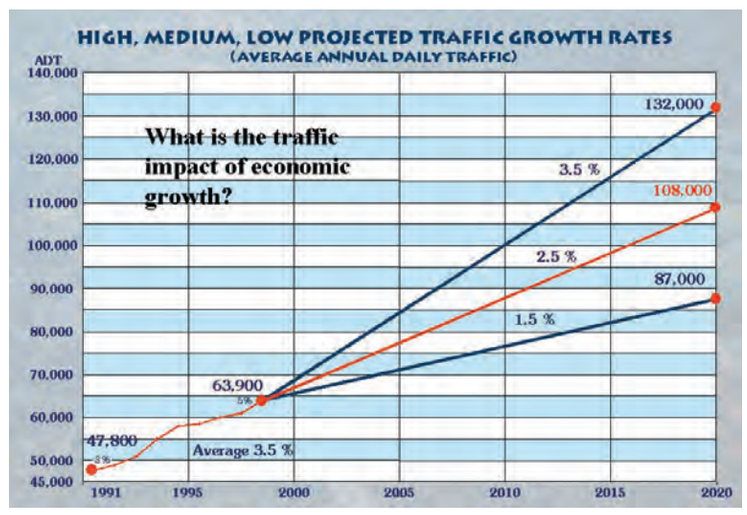
A number of roadway and signal improvements that have been approved/budgeted by the City and State were incorporated into the model runs. Because these improvements are very likely to be completed, it was important to include them in the 2020 future of Concord; in fact, these improvements appear to be quite successful in handling some of the growth the city expects to see in the next 20 years:

1. NW Bypass, southerly portion
2. Regional Drive Extension - eastbound portion
3. Regional Drive Extension - westbound portion
4. Landon Avenue Connector to Hall Street
5. Whitney Road Extension to Sewalls Falls Road
6. Airport Rd/Manchester St 4-way intersection
7. Manchester St/Old Suncook Rd 4-way intersection
8. N. Main St./McGuire/Prison 4-way intersection
9. Fisherville Rd/Manor Rd/Borough Rd 4-way intersection
10. I-93 Exit 16 signal and update configuration
11. I-393 Exit 1 Eastbound/Fort Eddy Rd 3-way intersection
12. North State/Washington signal
13. North State/Franklin signal
14. Broadway and West signal
15. Signal at Loudon Rd and Break'O'Day
16. Signal at I-393 Ext 2 westbound ramps at East Side Drive



I-93 TEN HIGHEST (SPECIAL EVENTS) DAILY VOLUMES 1999

EVENT	DAY/DATE	DAILY VOLUME NB	SB	TOTAL
Labor Day Weekend	Friday/September 3	**54,100**	34,600	88,700
Motorcycle Race Weekend	Friday/June 18	**53,800**	37,700	**91,500**
4th of July Weekend	Friday/July 2	**53,000**	33,400	86,400
None	Friday/August 6	**51,600**	38,100	89,700
Winston Cup Weekend	Sunday/July 11	35,600	**50,700**	86,300
Winston Cup Weekend	Friday/July 9	**51,400**	39,400	**90,800**
None	Friday/July 16	**51,000**	35,200	86,200
Truck Race Weekend	Friday/July 30	**50,700**	38,500	89,200
None	Friday/July 23	**50,000**	38,000	88,000
None	Friday/August 20	**49,700**	38,600	88,300

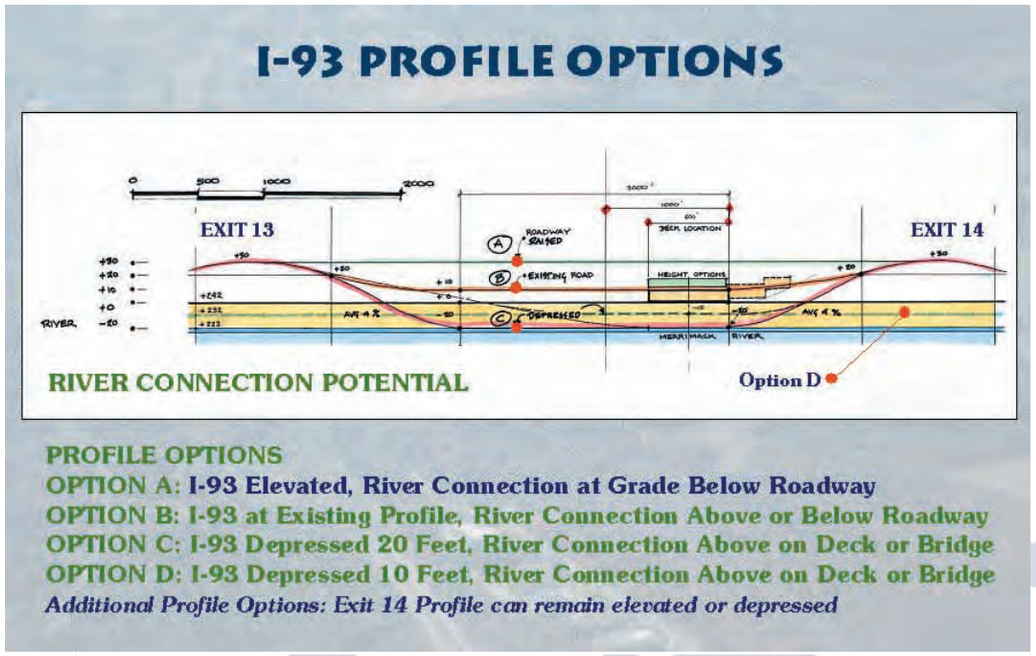


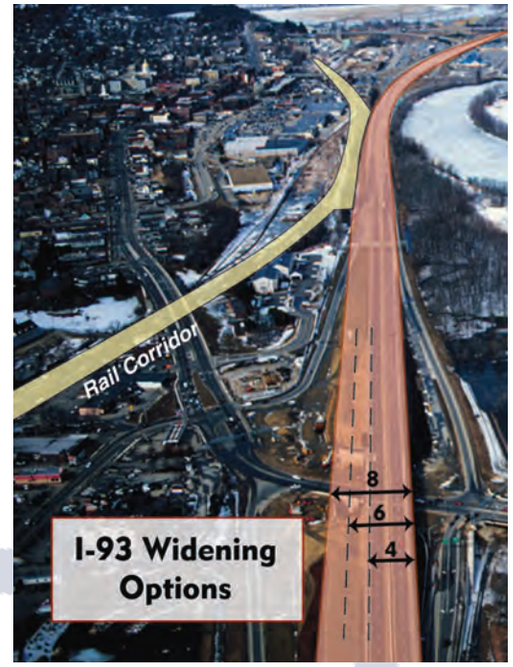
Interstate 93

With changes to I-93 imminent, there are great opportunities and definite challenges to harnessing the transportation and economic development potential associated with the interstate. The vertical alignment of I-93, its position within the Central Opportunity Corridor, its role in connecting or blocking access to the Merrimack River, and the design character of the roadway itself, are all important factors to be considered; I-93 plays a major role in presenting an image of the city for passing motorists. For these reasons, the assessment below includes issues of capacity, safety, interchange function, and aesthetics.

Capacity

I-93 was assessed from Exits 12 through 17. Currently, I-93 is two lanes in each direction with fairly generous shoulders. For some time now, NHDOT has seen the need to improve capacity on I-93. This need for capacity improvements has been spurred by the high rates of annual traffic growth along the corridor. This growth, averaging 2.5% per year, has far-exceeded regional roadway volume growth and reflects growth in both the surrounding region and within Concord. In addition, I-93 is greatly affected by holiday periods of travel and special events at N.H. International Speedway. During special events, Level of Service (LOS) on I-93 is at Level F, an LOS that indicates severe congestion (during most weekdays, I-93 is at LOS D during peak traffic periods). While the weekend traffic congestion on the interstate is a frustration to Concord residents and travelers alike, weekday travel conditions have perhaps the greatest day-to-day impact on local residents. Concord residents and workers greatly contribute to the volumes on I-93. The transportation model indicates that between Exits 13 and 15 on I-93, the interstate is often used as a local road–allowing residents to bypass Main Street to travel north/south and east/west throughout the city. This function of I-93 is an extremely important one as it protects many local roads from excessive through-traffic and congestion.



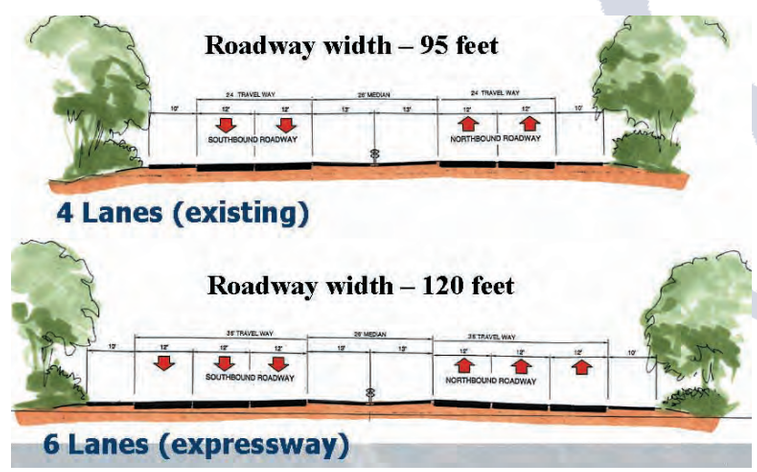


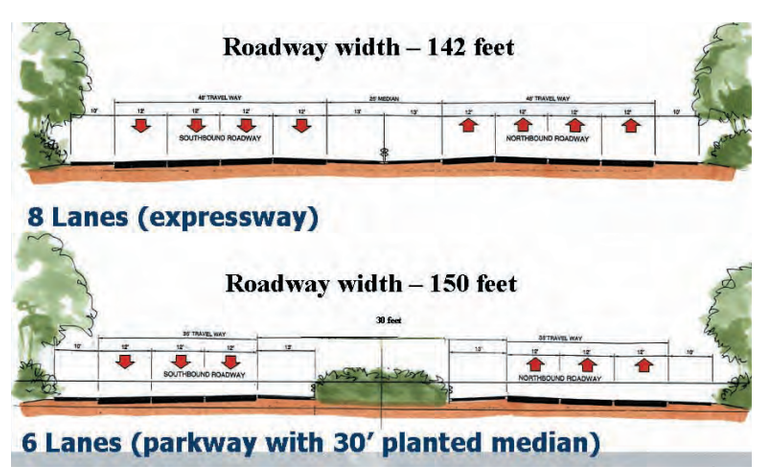
Little land and steep slopes provide no room between I-93 and the Merrimack for public access to the river.

Vertical alignment

While capacity and interchange safety are key concerns in assessing the interstate, I-93 is more than a work of traffic and civil engineering–it can be a contributor to the urban landscape that shapes the vision of the city. The interstate's vertical alignment and subsequent relationship with the Downtown play a key role in shaping the vision of the city. Currently, the interstate lies at grade, within the Central Opportunity Corridor. In this position, the roadway is a barrier between Main Street and the Merrimack River to the east.

Any discussion of I-93 must include mention of the rail corridor. Located just to the west of I-93, the rail right-of-way is also at grade and contributes to the barrier formed by the interstate.





Location within the Central Opportunity Corridor

I-93 and the access and visibility it provides Downtown Concord support the vitality of the city. The interstate is also a barrier, blocking access to the Merrimack River and creating a major obstacle for Village connections through the Downtown. In the heart of Downtown, I-93 is located along the western bank of the Merrimack River. On the eastern edge of the highway, there is currently only a steep drop to the water's edge. While the interstate is a barrier to river access from Downtown, there lacks ample riverbank between I-93 and the Merrimack to serve as an access point. In its present location, the interstate does not interfere with the buildings or operations of the Capital Shopping Center in the Central Opportunity Corridor and its location allows for maximum development of the Corridor.

Character of the Roadway

Through Downtown I-93 is approximately 95 feet wide. The roadway has a 25-foot median and 10 foot shoulders on either side. There is no landscaping along I-93 in the heart of the city and the backs of commercial buildings and parking lots frame the view of Downtown and the State House. Opportunities exist to enhance the visual qualities of the approaches to the State House along I-93 from the North and South. While keeping the roadway as narrow as possible limits its intrusion on Downtown, the lack of landscaping and space between the interstate right-of-way and surrounding areas creates a harsh interface between I-93, Downtown and the Merrimack.

The Interchanges

In addition to the capacity and character of the roadway, the interchanges are key components of the interstate system. Appearance and function are important considerations as the Exits on I-93 are entrances to the city–they are gateways to Concord.

Exit 12 is located near the Concord-Bow municipal line and provides access to Route 3A (South Main Street in Concord). South Main Street is at the western edge of the South Opportunity Corridor and serves the residential community of the South End. Because the rail lines segment the South Opportunity Corridor, redevelopment of the site will create significantly more traffic on South Main Street unless the site can be accessed from the east by Hall Street. The City has discussed a plan to extend Langdon Avenue as an at-grade crossing of the rail corridor. Implementation of this plan would allow Exit 13 to function as an access point to the site, easing traffic from Exit 12.

NHDOT improvements to Exit 13 were completed in 2000. The construction of a new overpass and new ramps was guided by a considerable amount of public input during the planning process. Careful design has conceived Exit 13 as a major gateway to Downtown and the Opportunity Corridor from the south. At the present though, Water Street at the exit is ill defined; fast food restaurants on isolated sites, commercial uses with parking between building and curb, and a general lack of density and cohesiveness all contribute to a weak gateway to Downtown.

Exits 14 and 15 present a bigger transportation planning challenge. The weave between these interchanges is dangerously close. The exits are less than 1/2 mile apart, much less than the recommended distance needed for safe entry and exit by motorists. The ramps at Exit 15 also present a safety problem and both exits were repeatedly discussed at 20/20 Vision workshops as a perceived safety hazard for motorists.

Exit 14 serves as a major gateway to the city and is also used by many motorists going to the Steeplegate Mall retail area east of the city along Loudon Road. The exit is poorly designed to serve as this gateway. Loudon Road at Exit 14 is heavily highway-oriented with little landscape, few pedestrian, and a highly complex series of intersections and signals that function poorly. All of this contributes to a highway image, not an historic image, of Concord.

Exit 15 accesses I-393, the mall retail area, upper Loudon Road, North Main Street, and the new Horseshoe Pond commercial development, including the Grappone Convention Center. The New Hampshire Technical Institute and the McAuliffe Planetarium are also reached by this exit. If the northerly leg of the NW Bypass (Langeley Parkway) were completed in the future, Exit 15 would be used as the northern terminus of the parkway. North Main Street retains a residential quality that distinguishes it from the rest of Main Street. Changes to the exit, the design of the NW Bypass terminus, or other transportation system changes should be carefully considered to control traffic through this area.

Exit 16 serves East Concord and connects to Mountain Road to the north. This exit provides an important link for East Concord residents and businesses; this area is cut off from Downtown by I-393 and the River, making I-93 an important "local" road for this area. There have been ongoing discussions of a new Exit "16-1/2" along I-93 because of the long distance between Exits 16 and 17. This new exit would serve the light industrial parks off Mountain Road. While this exit would alleviate the heavy truck traffic that travels south on Mountain Road to Exit 16 and may relieve the congestion on Fisherville Road to the west, it has the potential to open up an entire new area of the city for development if strong development controls are not in place.

Exit 17 primarily serves Penacook and Canterbury at the northern edge of the city. Connecting to Route 4 through Canterbury and then East Street into Penacook village center, the exit is not as convenient for Fisherville Road residents in the southern part of the Penacook and West Concord. Hence, it does little to help alleviate commuter congestion along Fisherville Road.

The Arterials

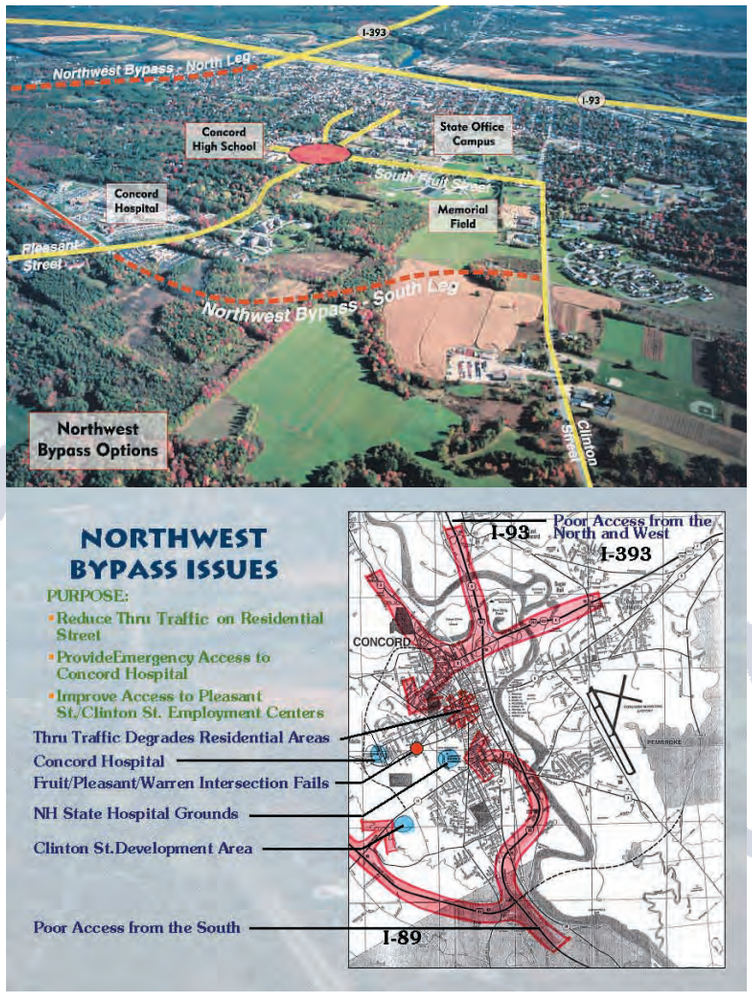
I-393/ Loudon Road

Loudon Road is a section of Route 9, one of the few east-west transportation corridors in New Hampshire. It also serves as an important east-west connector within the city; it is one of two routes connecting I-93 and Downtown to the Steeplegate Mall retail area to the east. This congested arterial presents a very poor image for Concord, and creates adverse land use impacts on the surrounding residential neighborhood of The Heights. At a 20/20 Vision workshop in November of 2000, Loudon Road won the dubious distinction of a top rating for "Roads Gone Bad in the Last 10 Years." The intersection of Loudon Road and Main Street/I-93 also won top honors for "Bad Lunchtime Intersections." Additional development or redevelopment along the road, or significant new development that relies on Loudon Road for access will add traffic to this already congested arterial. The importance of this road as the main access road to The Heights, its use for access to the mall retail area and as an entrance to the residential neighborhoods both north and south of the road make the need for improvements to the safety (for motorists and pedestrians) and attractiveness of this road extremely important.

Loudon Road functions as a divisive element in The Heights and has none of the village character associated with other roads throughout the city.

It is also important to note that there are three distinct sections to Loudon Road. The western end of the road is congested at I-93 but then opens up a bit before becoming increasingly congested in its central portion. Here, the character of the commercial strip has overtaken any sense of the village. Narrow rights of way exist and a lack of streetscaping, pedestrian crosswalks, and buildings at the front street line detract from any village character the road may have had. A corridor master plan is pending and will use the transportation model results as a tool, along with the Vision Principles.

At the same time Loudon Road is suffering from congestion, I-393 is underutilized for access to the malls. If more traffic was encouraged to forgo Loudon Road in favor of I-393, the road might function better for residents of The Heights. In addition, completion of Regional Drive will be a key to relieving some congestion on Loudon Road.



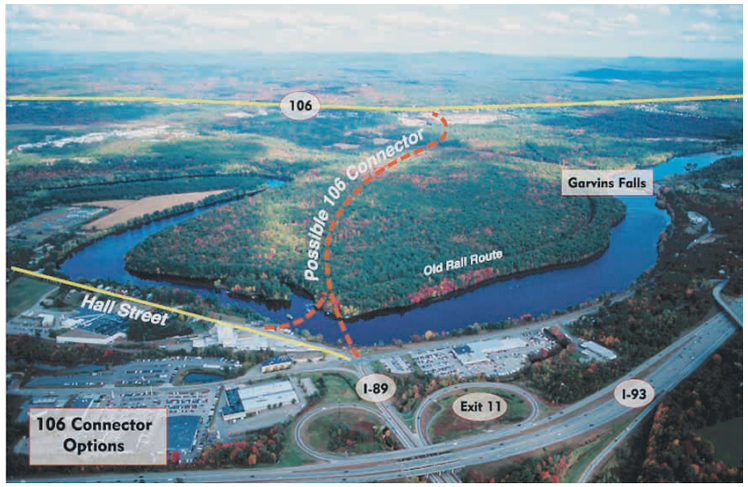
The NW Bypass (Langley Parkway) was conceived as a means to protect residential streets from cut-through traffic.

The Langley Parkway (NW Bypass)

The project known popularly as the NW Bypass (but officially called the Langley Parkway) was precipitated to a large degree, by strong growth among Concord's "economic engines." Both Concord Hospital and the State of New Hampshire offices at the N.H. State Hospital Grounds along Pleasant Street are major employers in the city. Both employment centers are "land bound" and suffer from increasing accessibility problems and Pleasant Street congestion. The Langeley Parkway has been the centerpiece of the City's strategy to reduce through traffic on residential streets, provide improved emergency access to Concord Hospital, and improve access to the Pleasant Street/Clinton Street employment centers.

The first phase of the project, alongside Concord Hospital, is built. The second phase, connecting Clinton and Pleasant Streets, is funded and designed but not yet completed. The third phase, has right of way acquired through the northwest area of the city and is planned but not funded. This third phase is the last link needed to complete the parkway. As planned by the City, the parkway will be two lanes with controlled access. Each side of the parkway will have 13-foot planting buffer. Development controls are proposed to ensure the parkway does not turn into a development road.

It is assumed that other streets and intersections in this area of the city will benefit from the completion of the parkway. Intersections such as that at Fruit/Pleasant/Warren have been the subject of many studies and face widening and capacity improvements without the parkway. The 20/20 Vision for Concord has tested these assumptions in the transportation model and the results of the modeling can be found in the Vision section of this report.



The Route 106 Connector could connect I-93/I-89 with Route 106 and possibly provide a convenient bypass to Downtown and I-93 for travelers going northeast. The connector would also provide access to Garvins Falls.

106 Connector/Manchester Street

The Route 106 connector has been discussed as a possible means to relieving some of the traffic congestion on I-93 and Manchester Street. The charts shown earlier illustrating the ten worst traffic days of the year on I-93 clearly illustrate the problem (p.2.33). At the heart of the congestion on I-93 is the interstate's many roles; I-93 mixes north/south traffic with east/west traffic and combines this with Concord circulation. Motorists approaching the city from the south use I-93 to connect to I-393 and/or Route 106. A Route 106 connector would link 106 and Hall street, providing a more convenient link from I-93 and I-89 from Exit 11 in Bow and eliminating some of the east/west bound traffic on the interstate.

In addition, the City's Garvins Falls Study discusses the need for an access road to the Garvins Falls area should that part of the city ever be developed. The Route 106 Connector would provide this access through Garvins Falls. Currently, 106 doesn't connect through Garvins Falls and the road has many curb cuts serving adjacent land uses.

The design of a Route 106 Connector would require careful consideration of the qualities of the roadway. Would the connector be a bypass or a development road? As a true bypass, the connector would function as a full expressway with collector/distributor roads. The land needed to construct this bypass would be considerable, but the limited access bypass that would result would ensure a convenient link between I-93/I-89 and Route 106. The remaining design options for this connector fall into the category of development road. As a development road, the connector would function less efficiently as a bypass; travel times would be slowed by on/off movements from development along the road.

A connector would also affect traffic on Manchester Street. Currently, the City is planning on widening the street. A 106 connector will affect traffic volumes on the street and may make a full-scale widening to five lanes unnecessary.

Fisherville Road is changing as development continues in Penacook and West Concord. The rural character of this road is gradually being usurped by commercial strip development.

Route 3/Fisherville Road

Route 3 north of Main Street presents a planning dilemma and opportunity. Today, this road functions as an important arterial to the north and is visually characterized by strip development, some attractive, some not. Despite the presence of strip development, handsome early residential architecture and in some locations, Concord's majestic pines, remain. Route 3 is a major access road to Downtown. Because of the remoteness of Exit 17 on I-93, residents of West Concord and parts of Penacook use Fisherville Road as the commuting route to employment centers to the south and east. With school bus traffic during morning rush hour, Route 3 becomes heavily congested. Housing development that has occurred in the last twenty years has contributed to additional congestion on this road. If substantial new development occurs on Route 3 (to Penacook and farther north) the impact on this road would be substantial; Route 3 is in danger of losing its Concord "image," becoming more congested, and acquiring some of the land use and capacity problems experienced on Loudon Road. A balance of image, function and development potential in the area will be needed to protect the road from further congestion and perhaps even relieve some of the traffic problems.

One possible solution to congestion on Route 3 is Exit 16-1/2 which has been discussed in Concord for some time. Supported by commercial interests along Mountain Road north of East Concord and by some residents, Exit 16-1/2 could provide easy access to Downtown, and retail and employment. Concerns have been raised regarding new development springing up around this new interchange, the additional traffic through adjacent neighborhoods, and erosion of the city's open space that this would bring. The traffic modeling and Vision Principles used during the 20/20 Vision for Concord have provided some answers to these questions and concerns and are outlined in the Vision section.

Public Transportation/ Rail Service

The transportation facilities in Concord are components of a system. As such, it is important to look at future public transportation as an integral part of this system. Components include high-speed rail connecting Boston to Montreal, commuter rail to Boston, intercity bus, Concord Area Transit (CAT) and shuttles/trolleys.

Commuter Rail and High-Speed Rail Service to Concord

Commuter rail service can be a key component of Concord's transportation system. Rail service between Boston and Nashua should be in place by 2006. It is likely that Concord will have commuter rail service by 2015. There is clearly a need for efficient transportation to the Boston area which is served today only by private bus service. As the reputation of Concord as a center for the arts grows, commuter rail and high speed rail service help support this by providing convenient transportation from the Boston area to Concord.

High-speed rail service, while a longer-term prospect, would support the concept of rail service along this corridor and increase Concord's visibility in the tourism market.

Station Location

The possibility of rail service opens another series of questions regarding station locations. The Concord Rail Station Downtown was demolished many years ago. While the public mourns this loss, there is an opportunity to locate a new station where it can give the most benefit to commuters and Concord businesses. A new station, while much smaller than the former Concord station, should be an intermodal facility serving both rail and bus passengers. Requirements for a location include:

- Access to the interstate
- Room for station, circulation, commuter parking, etc.
- Location reinforces the image of the city
- Accessible on foot to services for travelers: hotels, restaurants, shops, etc.
- Development catalyst

Concord is fortunate to be located around a major north-south rail corridor. As commuter rail service is instituted in Nashua and then Concord, the city can reap the benefits of increased transportation choices.

These criteria suggest a few potential locations for a future commuter and high-speed rail station in Concord:

- North Opportunity Corridor (between Exits 14 and 15)
- Central Opportunity Corridor - two sites (either north or south of Loudon Road)
- North Opportunity Corridor - three sites
- South Opportunity Corridor - with possible reuses of the former train repair buildings

The Vision section discusses the best location to meet these criteria and the 20/20 Vision Principles.

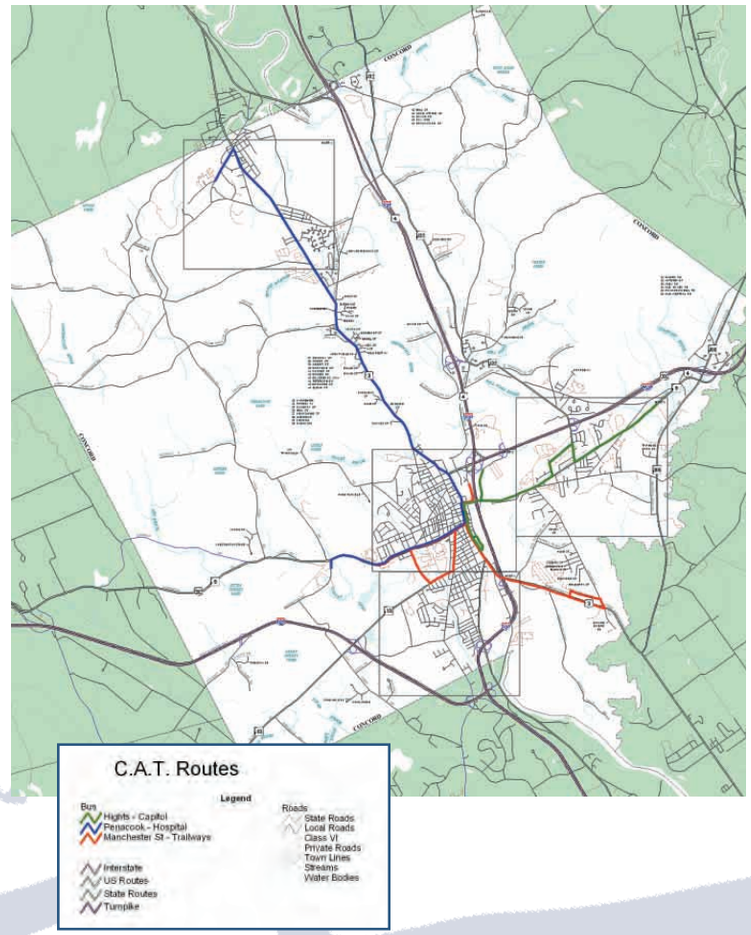
Intercity Bus

The intercity bus service within Concord is provided by Concord Trailways. Concord Trailways is based in Concord and has a bus terminal located at 30 Stickney Avenue in the North Opportunity Corridor. The company is northern New England's largest intercity bus carrier, providing daily service to Boston's South Station and Logan Airport. Approximately 19 buses daily go to Boston. For a round trip fare of $30 one can travel to Logan Airport, or for $23 to Boston's South Station. Fares for children under twelve are half the price of an adult fare. Future rail service will undoubtedly serve some passengers who now travel by bus. This would necessitate construction of a modern intermodal facility in the North Opportunity Corridor or force a relocation of the bus station when commuter rail is instituted.

City Bus System/Trolley Service

Concord Area Transit (CAT) provides bus service to and from Downtown Concord and surrounding points, including Penacook, Concord Hospital, Concord High School, Fisherville Mall, Concord Industrial Park, Steeplegate Mall, the New Hampshire Technical Institute and Wal-Mart, along three bus lines. These lines run from Downtown north to Penacook, east to The Heights, and to Manchester Street to the south. Buses operate Monday through Friday, with no weekend service. There is approximately a one-hour headway on all routes. Adult fare is 75 cents and there are senior and student discounts. Demand service is available for seniors and special needs passengers. At certain locations, there is a free transfer between routes. Comments during 20/20 public meetings included requests for more frequent service, links between the villages, and weekend service. At the current time, the density and development patterns of the city do not support extended bus service without significantly larger subsidies.

In addition to city bus service, many residents have expressed the desire to have a trolley or trackless trolley (trolley buses) serve the Opportunity Corridor. These trolleys would link the new Grappone Convention Center and commercial development in the Horseshoe Pond area with Downtown and the Capital Center for the Arts and any future development in the South Opportunity Corridor. Because of the length of the Opportunity Corridor, frequent trolley service, perhaps free-of-charge is a desire of many residents who attended public meetings.



New transportation planning efforts by NHDOT have resulted in several safe and pleasant pedestrian and bicycle paths in Concord. The challenge is to apply this level of sensitive planning and design to all new projects, whether public or private in an effort to connect the isolated fragments of the city's pedestrian and bicycle network.

Pedestrian and Bike Paths

The last component of the city's transportation system is its pedestrian and bicycle paths. Surprisingly, the walk from the center of one village to the next in Concord takes under one hour. As the villages are mostly situated close to the Merrimack River, pedestrian paths or sidewalks from one to another form their own type of transportation system in the city, no less important than the system of natural trails throughout Concord. Currently though, there are serious impediments to walking from village to village. The trip between Penacook to West Concord is along busy Fisherville Road. With sidewalks missing in many places, a lack of pedestrian crosswalks and traffic lights, the walk is not a pleasant one. The connection between West Concord and Downtown suffers from similar impediments. East Concord, while close in actual distance to West Concord and Downtown, lacks safe pedestrian connections because I-93 and the river form barriers. Residents of The Heights must traverse Loudon Road to get to the Everett Arena, the Merrimack and Downtown. The South End has its own busy network of streets, many with narrow sidewalks that are lacking safe pedestrian crossings.

Bicycle routes suffer from the same malaise and often follow pedestrian routes. The lack of marked bicycle lanes, proper signage, and complete and well-publicized route maps throw deterrents in the path of enthusiasts. The Granite State Wheelmen conduct well-attended rides in Concord each week, attesting to the popularity of cycling in Concord despite the drawbacks.

III. *The 20/20 Vision*

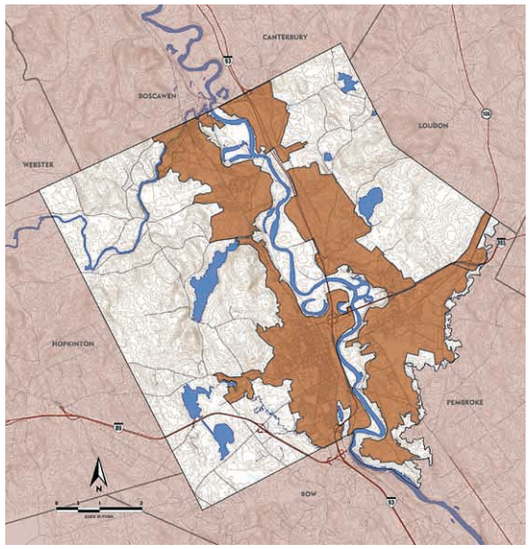
Concord: City of Villages

Concord has many strengths. The assessment of existing conditions paints a picture of a city with a high quality of life that has faced threats in recent years. The city's relatively low cost-of-living, large amounts of open space, cohesive and healthy Downtown, and role as a regional center all contribute to the Concord residents know and love. At the same time, incremental changes can cause quality of life to slowly erode. Concord was the fastest growing city in New Hampshire during the 1990s. This growth and resultant changes, have created uneasiness. Residents wish to take control of their future and direct the changes that impact the quality of life in their home: the neighborhoods and villages of the city.

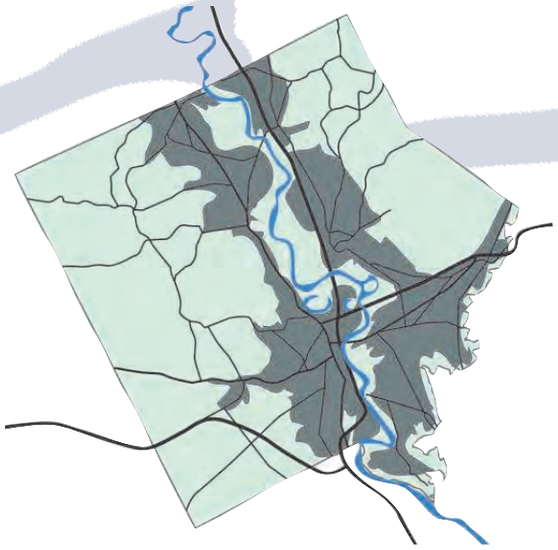
Concord's landscape remains unique. While Nashua, Salem, and Manchester face near-build out conditions, Concord still has much of its rural character. What will growth look like in the next twenty years? Clearly, residents wish to preserve the villages of the city, enhance quality of life in neighborhoods, protect open space, and support efficient and pedestrian-friendly transportation systems. All of this must be done while fostering economic vitality. The 20/20 Vision for Concord addresses the questions, "How much growth?" and "What kind of growth?"

When looking at how Concord has grown in the past, the answers to these questions become clear. While residential growth in Concord has consumed significant acreage in the city, most development has occurred within the Urban Growth Boundary, an area of the city that for the most part, designates the limits of City services such as water and sewer. It is important to note that while residents feel growth has sometimes been poorly managed, almost all of this growth has occurred within the Urban Growth Boundary and other designated growth areas such as the retail mall and big box area on Loudon Road.

City regulations allow the kind of growth that people fear most. Left unchecked, development blurs the lines between the villages and creates sprawl–a situation where one village cannot be differentiated from the next and where the unique characteristics of the village centers and neighborhoods disappear.

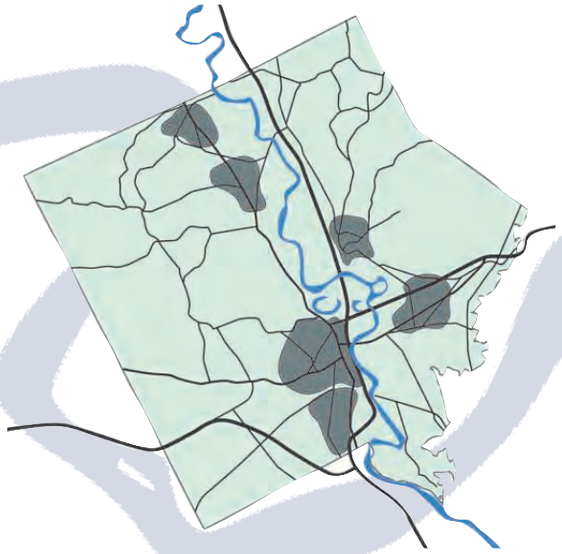


Concord's Urban Growth Boundary.



Sprawl…

This vision rejects current growth patterns. These patterns, if continued, will fill the area within the Urban Growth Boundary with sprawling development.



…or concentrated development?

Instead, guided by the vision, "Concord: City of Villages," development will concentrate in the Downtown /Opportunity Corridor and the villages, preserving open space, conserving resources, and providing walkable communities throughout the city. The Vision celebrates the uniqueness of the villages and Downtown, and preserves distinct village boundaries.

This Vision of concentrated development is the result of an extensive public outreach and participation process that engaged residents, businesspeople, city and state officials, and the development community in a meaningful dialogue to arrive at a Vision that can enhance quality of life, manage growth, and is feasible. Five Vision Principles have emerged from this planning process and these Principles will guide decision-making in the city for the coming years. In short, they are the new framework for change and growth in Concord:

- A vibrant, livable Downtown
- Neighborhoods served by walkable villages
- Preservation and access to the natural environment
- Economic vitality
- Transportation that serves the community

These Vision Principles are the backbone of a plan that encourages a regional and national understanding that Concord is a place of choice to live, work, and invest. In addition, it is intended to present Concord as a model for the evolution of a historic city into a 21st century community that retains its historic and natural character while embracing new opportunities. This plan is built on public consensus and supported by the political will to carry it forward.

What is a City of Villages?

What does it mean for Concord to be a "City of Villages?" Throughout the Vision planning process, the people of Concord have been remarkably consistent in articulating the precious qualities of the city. Concord was and remains to a large extent a city of villages set in a natural landscape. The shifting dialogue between the natural and built worlds continues to define Concord as a unique place. The people of Concord have expressed a strong desire to protect and enhance the city's abundant recreational open space, the Merrimack River and its undeveloped banks, Downtown vitality, the existence of historic structures and cultural landscapes, and walkability within the neighborhoods. There is consensus that these qualities that define Concord should not be forfeited for the sake of economic growth and regional transportation improvements.

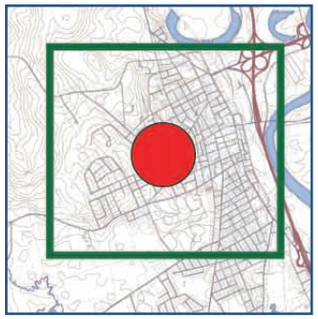
The development patterns of the past few decades reveal a clear shift away from the villages. Growth has ignored Concord's greatest physical assets: Downtown and the village centers; older neighborhoods of wood-frame houses centered around schools; and the natural landscape of river valleys and bluffs, lakes and woodlands. Suburban development has blurred the distinction between the built environment and the natural world. At the core of the vision of "Concord: City of Villages" is the desire to preserve the distinction between the built and natural and to link them together appropriately while managing growth.

And so, the alternatives available to city residents, be they alternatives for open space conservation, new trails, economic development sites and policies, or transportation, should be evaluated within the context of nurturing the City of Villages. This means protecting the elements that comprise a village:

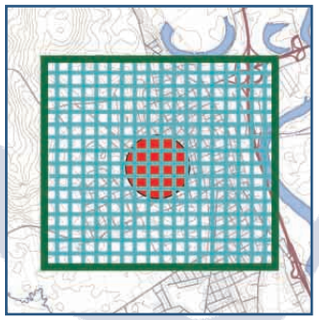
- **Defined cores** for commercial areas, whether the area under discussion is the size and scale of Downtown or the size of the commercial heart of West Concord.
- **Clear edges or boundaries** to the commercial development or growth areas. Traditional villages from colonial times often defined their edges with fences or walls. Today, zoning can define edges and limit sprawl. Clear boundaries protect the land between villages and differentiate one village from the next—celebrating the unique characteristics of the city's villages.
- **Walkable streets** that connect areas of the village, provide safe pedestrian ways for people of all ages, and increase social interaction by encouraging use of the public realm. Walkability reduces the need for automobile use and increases accessibility for all residents and workers in the city. Walkability also includes access to a network of open spaces outside the village centers.
- **A sense of community** that is supported by a mix of land uses, schools, and public spaces. Clear boundaries to the village and preservation of unique village characteristics foster a sense of community pride and identity.
- **A mix of uses** such as homes, civic buildings and spaces, retail, and workplace contribute to walkability and a sense of community. Walk-to-work options become available when village centers contain office, retail, and a variety of housing choices.

Elements of a Village

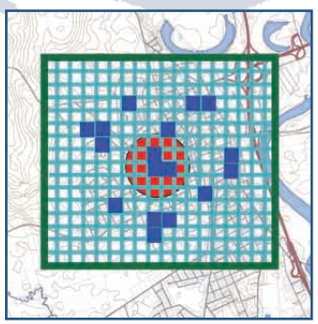
Defined Cores



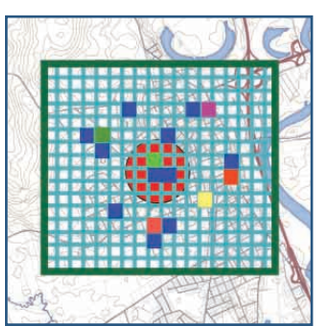
Clear Edges



Walkable Streets



A Sense of Community



A Mix of Uses

These qualities of a village that Concord loves and yearns to protect are not based on memories of a city that once was, but rather of the city of today. In this way, the residents of Concord are fortunate. While sprawl is occurring and unchecked growth is a danger, this planning process is proactive in its approach, seeking to protect and enhance the quality of life and the form of the physical environment now, before the character of the city and its villages are lost. This is a vision for 2020 and beyond that encompasses a memory of Concord as it was, an understanding of what it is, and a realistic dream of what it can and should be.

How will the city grow?

The market analysis offers clear evidence that Concord is a place of opportunity. Population growth, new jobs, developable land and its position at the edge of the growth bubble indicate that the city is poised to capture future economic growth.

The State's growth forecasts for Concord estimate that 8,000 new people will call Concord home over the next 20 years. This could result in as many as 3,448 new households. If current housing preferences and land consumption trends are any indication, this would result in :

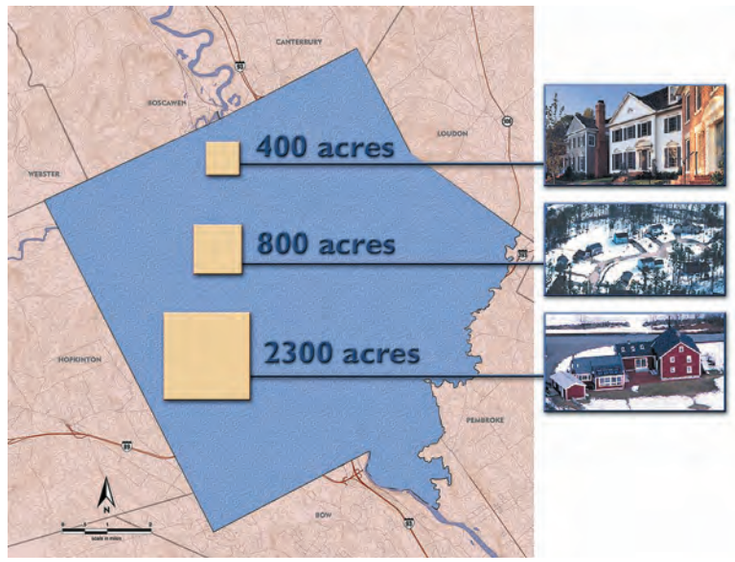
- 987 single-family homes (490 acres);
- 114 duplex residences (19 acres);
- 624 attached or row houses (78 acres);
- 1,597 multi-family units (160 acres);
- 44 mobile homes; and
- 92 conversions of existing structures.

The 8,000 new residents in 3,448 new households would consume a total of 750 acres of land over the next 20 years.

Forecast population growth would also have an impact on commercial growth, as additional people and jobs would fuel demand for new office space, retail centers and industrial development. This commercial growth will result in many more acres of land being consumed for commercial and industrial uses.

Housing and commercial development at this rate will have tremendous impacts on infrastructure and connections as well as on the existing landscape. While the projected growth over the next twenty years is no greater than the previous ten years' growth rate, it must be remembered that incremental growth, while slow, has a cumulative effect. Additionally, the recent growth boom was relatively unfelt as it was absorbed into vacant housing units, unleased office and retail space – leftover from the recession of the early 1990s. With previously vacant units now filled, new growth will have an even greater impact on the city landscape and its residents, making this growth management vision crucial to protecting quality of life.

Development and growth are regional, as well as local issues. Growth management efforts in one community can result in more development in a neighboring community. The recent growth management study (Managing Growth in New Hampshire: Changes and Challenges prepared by New Hampshire Office and State Planning and the Growth Management Advisory Committee, December 2000) indicates that development in New Hampshire is incremental. Oftentimes, growth results from multiple incremental development decisions, which are more difficult for communities to manage. This pattern leads to fragmentation of important forestlands, wildlife habitats, and other sensitive environmental areas. To avoid the resulting sprawl and fragmentation, it is important that a master plan is in place.



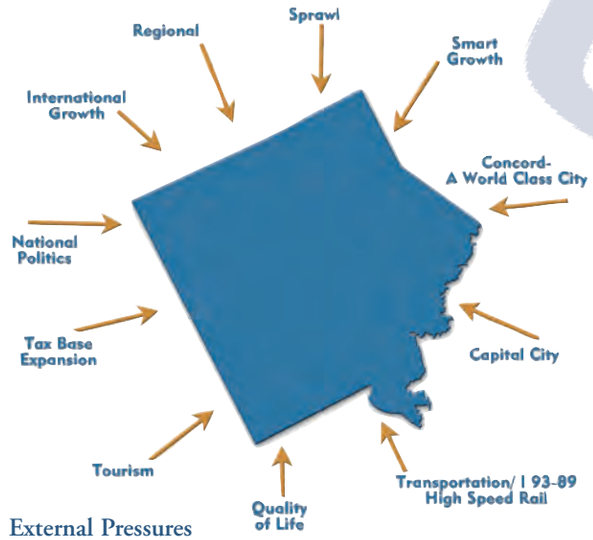
How will Concord grow? Will sprawl consume thousands of acres or can village-centered growth conserve land and support a walkable, community-based city?

Few communities examine the possible development impacts of their zoning ordinance or land use regulations. This results in the failure to anticipate potential problems from cumulative future development. Examples include commercially zoned districts, which tend to be configured as strips along state highways leading to yet more strip development patterns along major roadways. Fast-growing communities can also experience significant increases in municipal service costs, as new growth requires funding for education, fire, police and recreation services. People in New Hampshire are increasingly concerned about good community design for both commercial and residential development.

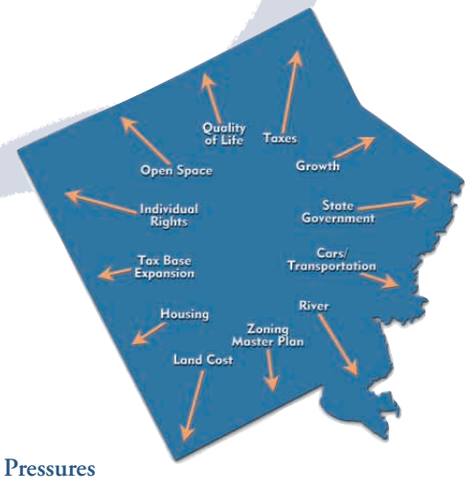
A Place of Opportunity: Concord at the Edge of the Bubble

While some in Concord may want to limit (or even stop) growth, the 20/20 Vision represents, in part, the vehicle by which the bubble can be looked at as an opportunity. How can one say no to the engines—such as Concord Hospital—that are driving the city's economy? Moreover, if we say no, the bubble is likely to bypass Concord, or it will consume the community without providing the opportunity to build consensus on how best to manage impending growth.

Other reasons make it difficult to discourage development. These include internal and external financial and social pressures on Concord and City and State governments.



External Pressures



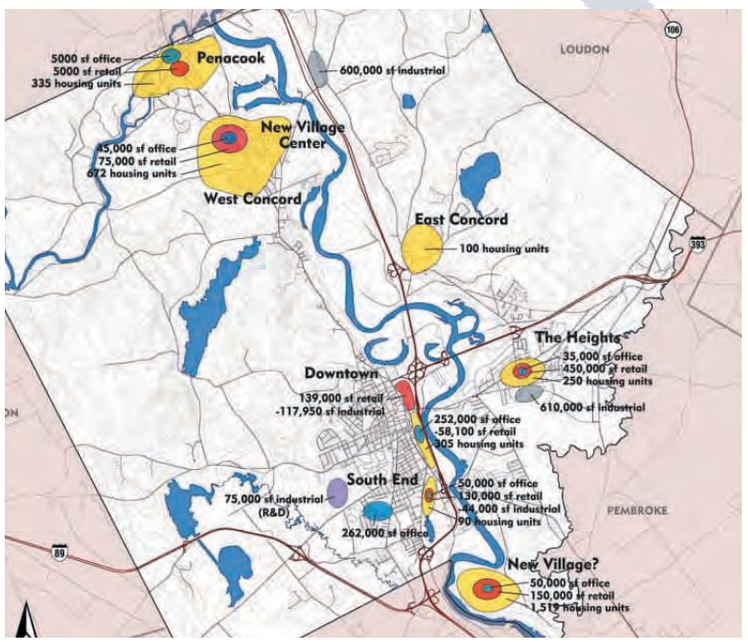
Internal Pressures

Significant changes in development patterns require that we think and act differently in how we address growth and development. As an example, the 1993 Concord Master Plan established Urban Growth Boundaries as a policy guide for land use, open space, and infrastructure planning, distinguishing those areas intended for urban/suburban development from those where development should remain rural in character. It remains critical that the city focus its growth and development in a way that maintains and expands vital Downtown and Penacook, and the other villages, utilizes existing investment in buildings and infrastructure before breaking new ground, and urges brownfields development and infill before greenfield conversion. This 20/20 Vision for Concord urges revisiting the Urban Growth Boundaries to more clearly define Village Development Boundaries and to encourage high quality in the built and natural environments within the villages and throughout the city.

The primary objective of the market analysis is to translate indicators of potential future growth into supportable land uses. However, different uses will require different lenses. Retail uses, for example, require high visibility locations with strong traffic counts. Office and industrial uses look for strong employment growth to generate demand for space, compatible, neighboring land uses, easy highway access, good visibility and a ready pool of labor. Housing, on the other hand, requires easily developable land to minimize infrastructure costs, product that sells and a strong labor pool with disposable incomes for rental apartments. In short, the outside eyes are looking for opportunities. And Concord has them.

Allocation of Growth Throughout the City

The map here illustrates recommended levels of growth in Downtown, the villages, and other areas of the city in the next twenty years. The allocation of growth throughout the city was determined by looking at available undeveloped land in the city and assigning development according to the Vision Principles.



Office, retail, industrial and residential growth was mostly allocated to the villages and Downtown. To support the Downtown, these numbers reflect a recommended shift in policy to attract new retail and office development within the Opportunity Corridor.

Penacook

Office 5,000 sq. ft.
Retail 5,000 sq. ft.
Housing Units 335

Sewalls Falls Road Near Monitor

Industrial 600,000 sq. ft.

East Concord

Housing Units 100

New Village Center between West Concord and Penacook

Office 45,000 sq. ft.
Retail 75,000 sq. ft.
Housing Units 672

The Heights

Office 35,000 sq. ft.
Retail 450,000 sq. ft.
Industrial 610,000 sq. ft.
Housing Units 250

Downtown/North Opportunity Corridor

Office (no office was allocated as part of the traffic modeling) but it is recommended that approximately 700,000 sq.ft. of office space be built here in the future (this is over and above the demand that has been forcasted for the city in the next twenty years).
Retail 139,000
Industrial -117,950

Downtown/Central Opportunity Corridor

Office 252,000
Retail -58,100 (this number reflects not a lack of retail but a switch from the large retail tenants in the Capital Shopping Center to small tenants in ground floor spaces along Storrs Street and the new Concord Green)
Housing Units 305

The South End/South Opportunity Corridor

Office 50,000
Retail 130,000
Industrial -44,000
Housing Units 90

Pleasant Street

(Hospital and State Offices)
Office 262,000
Industrial 75,000 (R&D)
Housing Units 10

A new Village in Concord

Office 50,000
Retail 150,000
Housing Units 1519

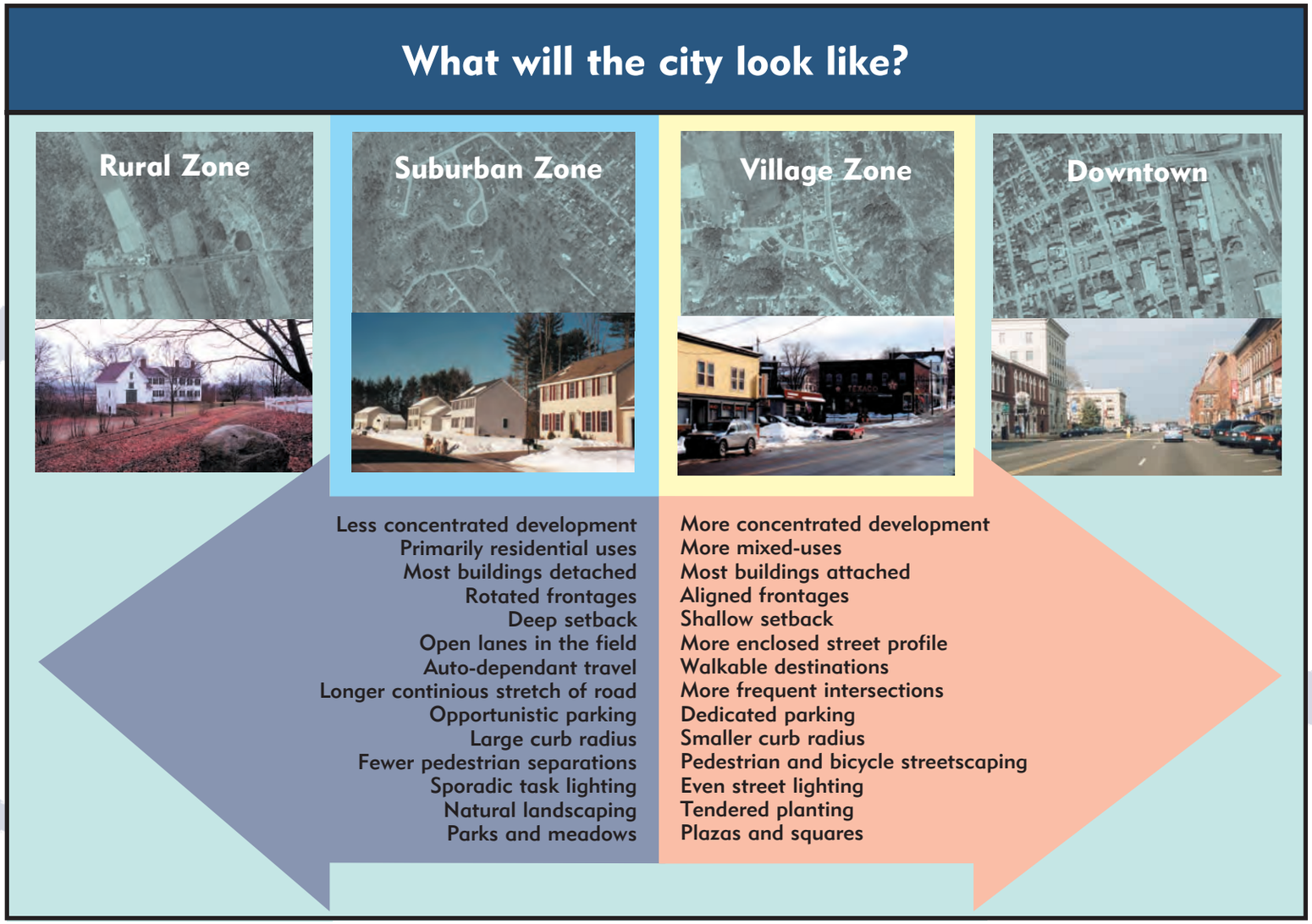
Scattered Sites throughout the city

Housing Units 150

These figures represent modest residential allocations to each village. Transportation modeling was executed assuming that a new village in Concord would absorb the remaining growth. The growth listed for that new village above was allocated to the Garvins Falls area for the purposes of the model but there are a number of alternative options available. Each option has drawbacks and benefits and must be studied more closely:

- Redistribute growth allocated to a new village in the city to the existing villages. Growth would be distributed proportionately throughout the villages and Downtown.
- Create a new village in the city in one of three locations (all are adjacent to the Merrimack River, in keeping with the traditional pattern of village settlements in the city):
  - **Garvins Falls:** as the city grows, create a concentrated village of mixed use and preserve a majority of the land for open space. Use development to create access to the natural environment here.
  - **East Concord:** develop the land between I-93 and the Merrimack River as a mixed-use extension of the village center. Cluster concentrated development close to I-93 and preserve a significant portion of the open space for public access and create links to existing trails in the city. Use village development in this area to create pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular connections to Downtown via Commercial Street.
  - **Exit 16-1/2 on I-93:** a new village could be developed east of the interstate. Over the years, there have been ongoing discussions regarding growth in this area. This is the least desirable of the village locations as it is removed from the river and doesn't contribute to the proposed links between villages and river paths.

All of these options avoid single-use zoning and rely on concentrated development to preserve open space and create the critical mass necessary to avoid suburban-style developments (be they office or residential). A new village must be carefully regulated from conception to ensure walkability and compatibility with the existing villages of Concord.



What Will the City Look Like?

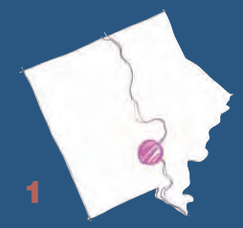
The Vision allows for four zones in the city that correspond to unique development patterns:

- Downtown
- Village
- Suburban
- Rural

The five Vision Principles discourage further development in the suburban and rural zones and emphasize allocating growth to Downtown and the villages. The chart on this page illustrates typical characteristics of these zones within the city.

A 20/20 Vision for Concord stresses the following physical characteristics in the City:

- **Concentrated development** uses less land and encourages walkable neighborhoods. Development on brownfield sites contributes to existing villages and Downtown and preserves greenfields while limiting the need for infrastructure extension and new roadway networks. Concentrated development also preserves the cultural and physical landscape of the city. Closely set buildings allow open space to be preserved and neighbor closeness fosters a community.
- **Mixed use** development continues the tradition of villages dating back to the first settlements in New England. Housing, retail and office within the villages contribute to a sense of community, allow residents to walk to work, and reduce the number of automobile trips, lessening congestion on roadways.
- **Defined street edges with aligned frontages and shallow building setbacks** give character to the local roads and arterials and enhance the visual quality of the city. Walkability becomes easier and more pleasant.
- **Walkable destinations** within the villages reduce vehicular congestion and allow opportunities for people to meet and interact.
- **More frequent intersections** create more travel choices and more meeting points. It is no accident that the two villages with the greatest concern over traffic congestion are The Heights and West Concord. Each village consists of cul-de-sac development off a main arterial and few travel choices. Numerous intersections diffuse traffic and slow vehicles.
- **More humanly scaled streets** with smaller curb radii slow traffic and create an environment better scaled for human use. Pedestrian crossing, bike lanes, and networks of sidewalks and paths contribute to a more pedestrian-friendly environment as do even street lighting, tendered planning and public squares, greens and plazas.



1

A vibrant, livable Downtown

2

Neighborhoods served by walkable villages

3

Preservation and access to the natural environment

4

Economic vitality

5

Transportation that serves the community

The 20/20 Vision Principles

A 20/20 Vision for Concord is exemplified in the five Vision Principles that get to the core of concerns for the future of the city. These principles will shape the city in distinct ways in the next 20 years and beyond.

1. **A vibrant, livable downtown**
2. **Neighborhoods served by walkable villages**
3. **Preservation and access to the natural environment**
4. **Economic vitality**
5. **Transportation that serves the community**

A vibrant, livable Downtown

Objectives:

- Establish a central public gathering place
- Connect Downtown with the Merrimack River
- Expand housing and retail options
- Attract commercial and residential uses to vacant upper floors
- Preserve historic character
- Create an arts and entertainment district
- Improve parking availability and access
- Redevelop underutilized parcels
- Program events to attract people to Downtown

The development and redevelopment of towns and cities should respect historical patterns, precedents, and boundaries, building upon existing neighborhood core areas when appropriate. The implications when development occurs outside the core areas must also be understood. Maintaining Concord as a place people want to come home to involves nurturing the social infrastructure, prioritizing education and culture, and striving for a neighborhood/market balance that is supported by the community. This Vision Principle focuses on using urban services, public buildings and squares to encourage interaction and concentrating civic, institutional and commercial activity within the Downtown and village cores to reinforce vitality and vibrancy. The Vision recommendations described here are also designed to respect civic buildings and public gathering places and emphasize them to reinforce community identity and image.

The Vision recommendations encompass a wide variety of actions that build a synergy for Downtown. These actions would focus on preserving the historic character of Downtown through enacting a demolition delay ordinance, establishing design guidelines for facade alterations and new construction, studying the feasibility of a Downtown historic district, conservation district, and/or arts district and further defining the boundaries and the identity of Downtown through appropriate signage. Redevelopment of underutilized parcels, such as the Sears Block, and areas along Storrs Street and Stickney Avenue would be achieved or facilitated with the preparation of feasibility and market studies, and coordinating the marketing and requests for proposals for these sites in partnership with the appropriate organizations or public agencies.

"Storrs Street which currently functions as a rear service road and collector in the downtown core has the potential based upon projected annual demand, to become over time a vibrant riverfront boulevard filled with pedestrian activity, shops, and restaurants. If extended to the north and south, it could serve as a spine that will open up new development opportunities within the Opportunity Corridor and link new development to the downtown core."

– Downtown Master Plan

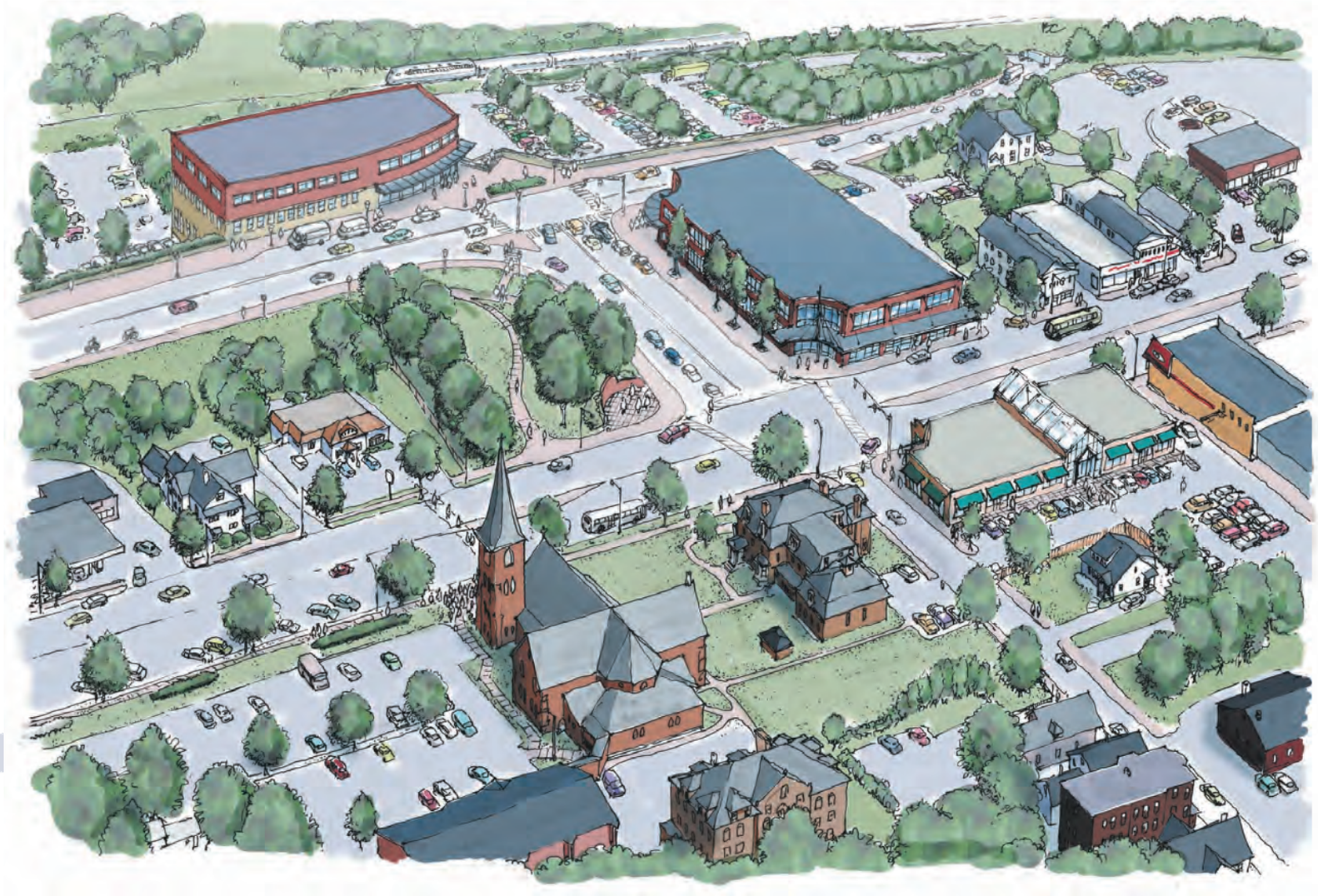
Making streetscape improvements or providing other physical evidence of public realm investment in areas adjacent to redevelopment sites will be necessary in order to signal to the private sector that this Vision can become a reality and that the City supports redevelopment efforts.

Expanding housing, retail and entertainment options would begin with inventories of appropriate buildings and sites, market analyses and methods for matching these sites with appropriate housing developers, retail tenants, or entertainment businesses. In the case of housing options, zoning may need to be adjusted to permit housing and mixed-use occupancy. For encouraging and managing retail or office expansion it would be beneficial to maintain a database of vacant space and to create a recruitment package with incentives such as signage and fit-out technical assistance or funding. In expanding entertainment options coordination with existing arts and cultural institutions will help ensure viability. The critical mass

necessary to sustain a vibrant Downtown has been threatened by the location of new cultural facilities far afield (e.g., the convention center, the visitor center, the planetarium) from Main Street. Cities like Chicago and Cleveland have successfully concentrated their cultural facilities to achieve critical mass.

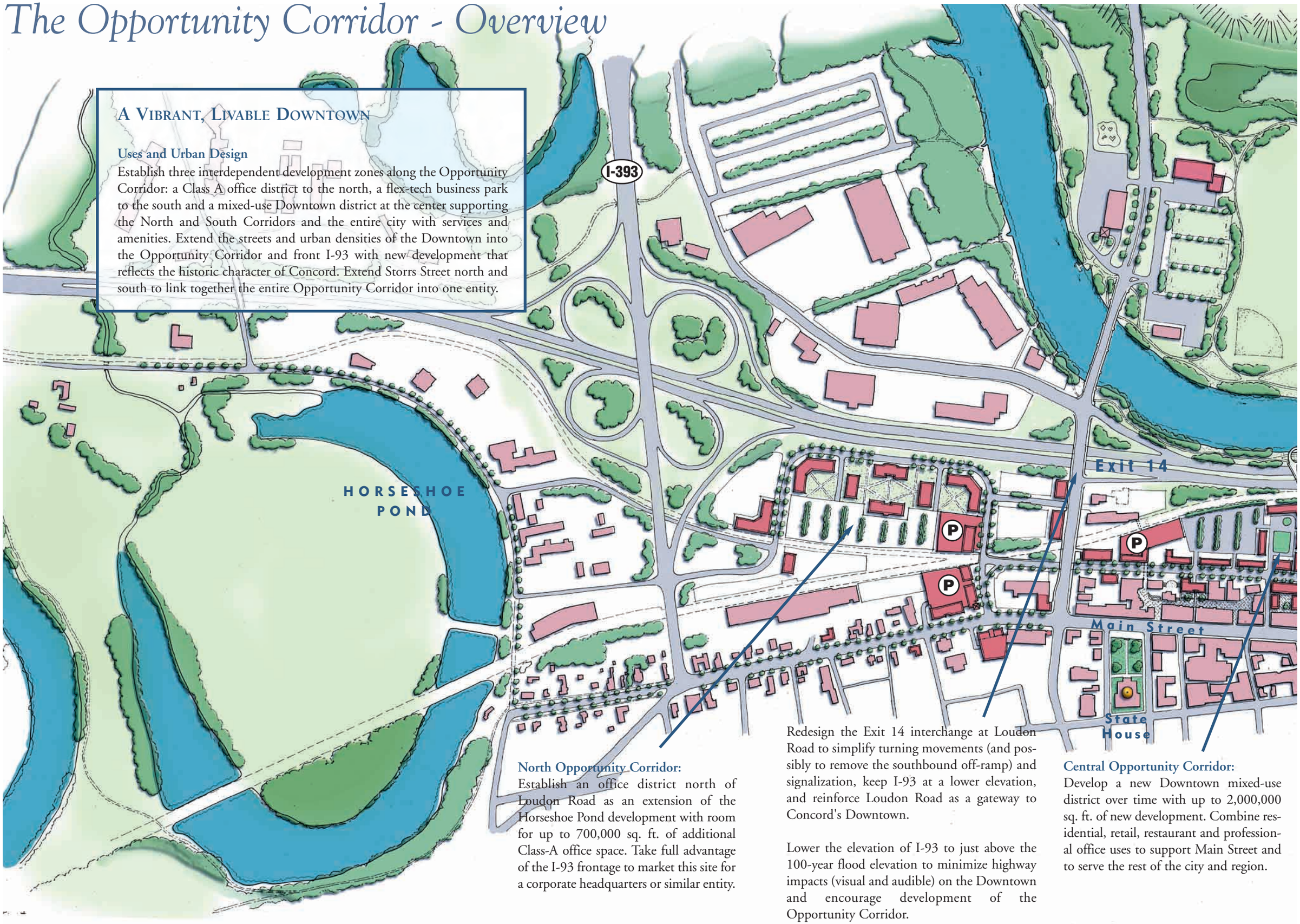
Many of the recommendations for Downtown will have an impact on parking; it is important to commission a parking study to inventory and manage traffic scenarios for increased housing, retail and entertainment uses Downtown. Strategies might include a mix of short-term and long-term parking, the creation of interim surface parking in available lots, and/or the design and construction of a new parking structure located to attract potential Downtown users. It is also recommended that streetscape improvements and signage regulations be used to connect Downtown with the river, while establishing a central public gathering place and organizing festivals, sidewalk sales, children's events, concerts and coordinated evening events will help to make Downtown the center of activity and vitality making it a livable city center.

The following sections apply the Principles to each of the Villages and critical areas of Concord.



A new character for Storrs and Main Streets can increase visibility for Storrs Street and open upviews to the Merrimack beyond.

The Opportunity Corridor - Overview



A Vibrant, Livable Downtown

Uses and Urban Design

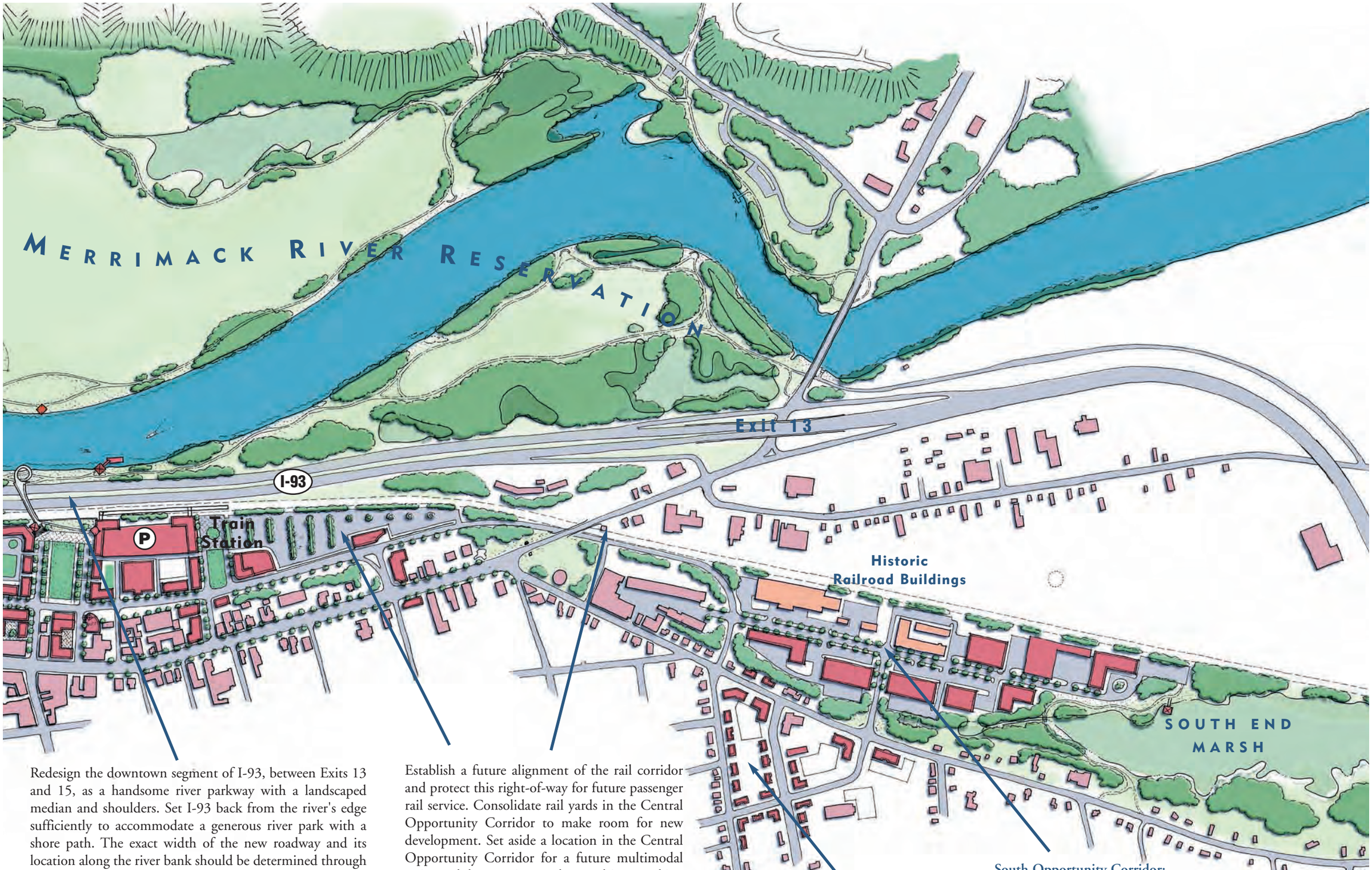
Establish three interdependent development zones along the Opportunity Corridor: a Class A office district to the north, a flex-tech business park to the south and a mixed-use Downtown district at the center supporting the North and South Corridors and the entire city with services and amenities. Extend the streets and urban densities of the Downtown into the Opportunity Corridor and front I-93 with new development that reflects the historic character of Concord. Extend Storrs Street north and south to link together the entire Opportunity Corridor into one entity.

North Opportunity Corridor:
Establish an office district north of Loudon Road as an extension of the Horseshoe Pond development with room for up to 700,000 sq. ft. of additional Class-A office space. Take full advantage of the I-93 frontage to market this site for a corporate headquarters or similar entity.

Redesign the Exit 14 interchange at Loudon Road to simplify turning movements (and possibly to remove the southbound off-ramp) and signalization, keep I-93 at a lower elevation, and reinforce Loudon Road as a gateway to Concord's Downtown.

Lower the elevation of I-93 to just above the 100-year flood elevation to minimize highway impacts (visual and audible) on the Downtown and encourage development of the Opportunity Corridor.

Central Opportunity Corridor:
Develop a new Downtown mixed-use district over time with up to 2,000,000 sq. ft. of new development. Combine residential, retail, restaurant and professional office uses to support Main Street and to serve the rest of the city and region.



Redesign the downtown segment of I-93, between Exits 13 and 15, as a handsome river parkway with a landscaped median and shoulders. Set I-93 back from the river's edge sufficiently to accommodate a generous river park with a shore path. The exact width of the new roadway and its location along the river bank should be determined through further study as part of the NHDOT I-93 planning process.

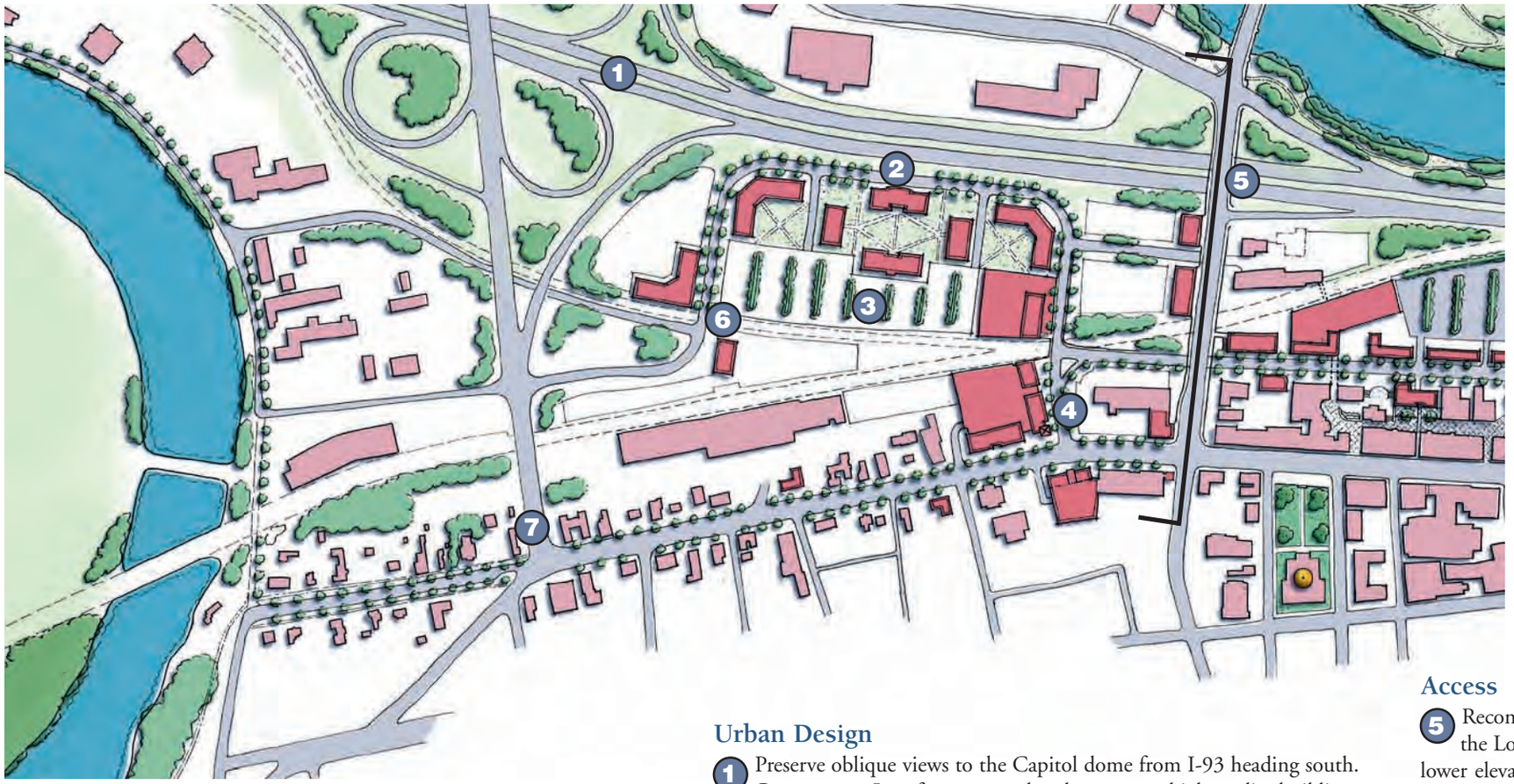
Establish a Concord Green and River Connection to reunite the Downtown with its river valley.

Establish a future alignment of the rail corridor and protect this right-of-way for future passenger rail service. Consolidate rail yards in the Central Opportunity Corridor to make room for new development. Set aside a location in the Central Opportunity Corridor for a future multimodal train and bus station and a multiuse parking garage. A station at the edge of I-93 and within walking distance of Main Street and the statehouse will be a major new Concord landmark.

Reestablish residential uses on the Blue Cross/Blue Shield site with some commercial uses fronting on South Main Street. Enhance the residential identity of South Main Street.

South Opportunity Corridor:
Establish a flex-tech business park with room for up to 400,000 sq. ft. of development. Take advantage of the South End Marsh and historic railroad buildings to help establish a positive image for the business park and to contribute to the South End village.

North Opportunity Corridor



Uses

Create a 700,000+ sq. ft. Class-A office park sited to maximize highway visibility. A single corporate user or several smaller "anchor" users could be accommodated on this site with a layout that can easily be phased. Uses should not compete with the Central Opportunity Corridor but rather supply new customers for Main Street and Storrs Street businesses. For this reason, zoning should be single use in an effort to support Downtown restaurants and retail establishments.

Urban Design

1 Preserve oblique views to the Capitol dome from I-93 heading south. Construct an I-93 frontage road and encourage high quality buildings that reflect the scale and character of Downtown Concord.

2 Develop an office campus that can be phased in over time by different users or built all at once by a single corporate owner. Avoid structures with large footprints and little architectural detailing that bear no relationship to the existing scale and texture of the city.

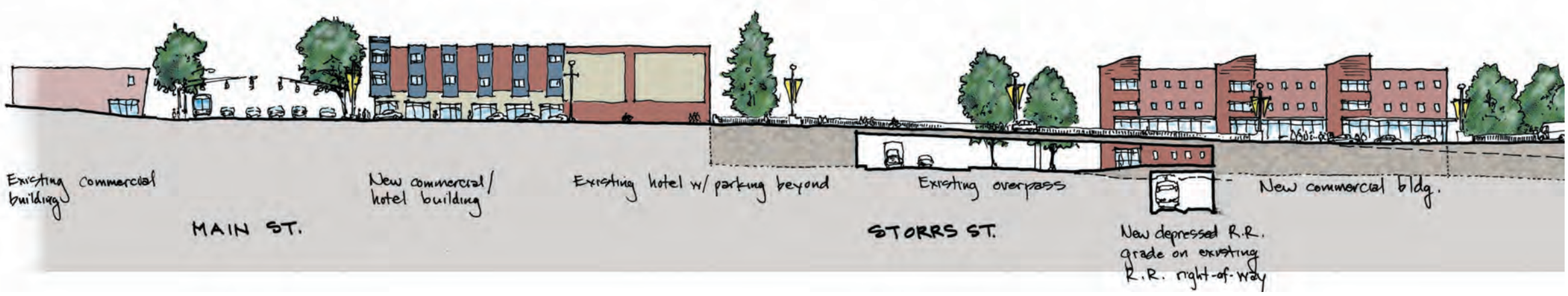
3 Screen the parking from view from I-93 by locating it between new development and the existing railroad tracks.

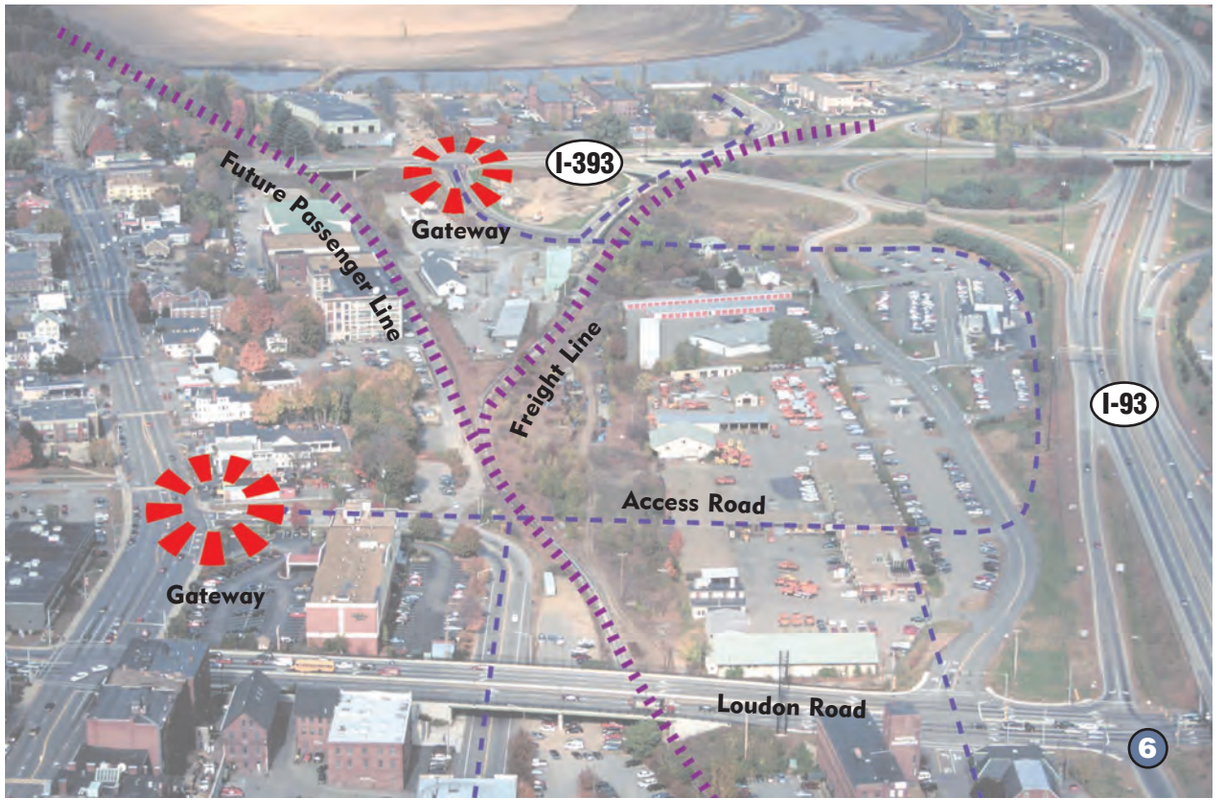
4 Establish a direct vehicular and pedestrian route to Main Street in order to link the office development to the activity and businesses of Downtown. New infill development with a tower element visible from Downtown should mark this gateway to the North Opportunity Corridor. Infill development across the street at the bank parking lot and on the Holiday Inn site will help knit together this portion of Main Street. Provide a direct roadway link from the Northern Opportunity Corridor to Main Street utilizing the Storrs Street and/or the Court Street alignment. This roadway should bridge over the future high-speed rail corridor, avoiding an at-grade crossing.

Access

5 Reconfigure the Loudon Road approach to Downtown by reversing the Loudon Road / I-93 relationship at Exit 14. Maintain I-93 at a lower elevation, starting at Exit 13 and continuing past Exit 14. Raise Loudon road to pass over I-93 rather than under it. At the same time, widen the pedestrian walkways along Loudon Road to improve access to the river from Downtown and to provide better pedestrian connections between The Heights and Downtown. Front new buildings onto the elevated Loudon Road with second floor entrances at street level.

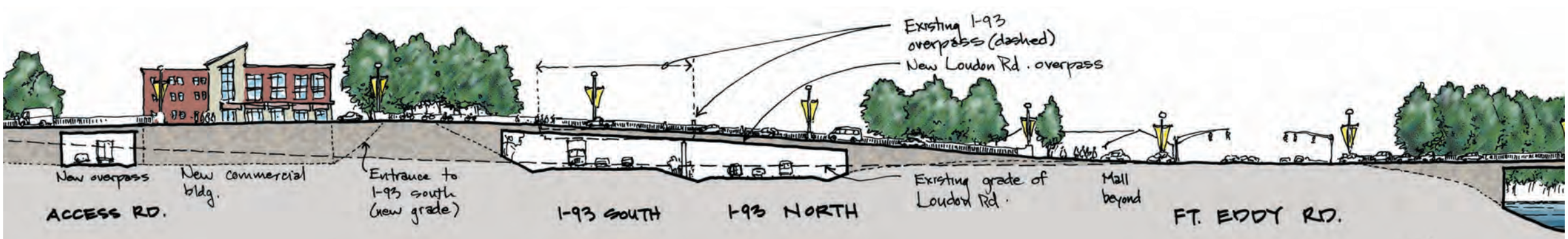
Provide direct access under Loudon Road to the Ralph Pill Market Place site from the North Opportunity Corridor.





6 Provide a direct link to the Horseshoe Pond development and Convention Center by means of an at-grade crossing of the freight rail line. Extend South Commercial Street across the freight line track to link with the frontage road and remove the Stickney Avenue off ramp from I-393. The Commercial Street/I-393 intersection should be signalized to provide access to and from the North Opportunity Corridor.

7 At the I-393 / Main Street gateway preserve the historic structures that bracket the road and ensure that new commercial structures conform to design guidelines respecting the historic character of North Main Street.



Main Street and the Central Opportunity Corridor

Main Street

Uses

Create a vibrant, livable Downtown where people choose to live, shop, socialize, and gather for important civic events.

Urban Design

The historic character of Downtown is a marketable asset. It is in the city's economic interest to preserve this character. Three components of such a strategy include 1) disincentives to demolition, 2) the establishment of rehabilitation guidelines for buildings in designated historic districts 3) guidelines for infill construction. Promote the adaptive reuse of upper floors of commercial buildings for residential as well as commercial use. Identify opportunities for abutting buildings to share infrastructure costs such as elevators and to share parking.

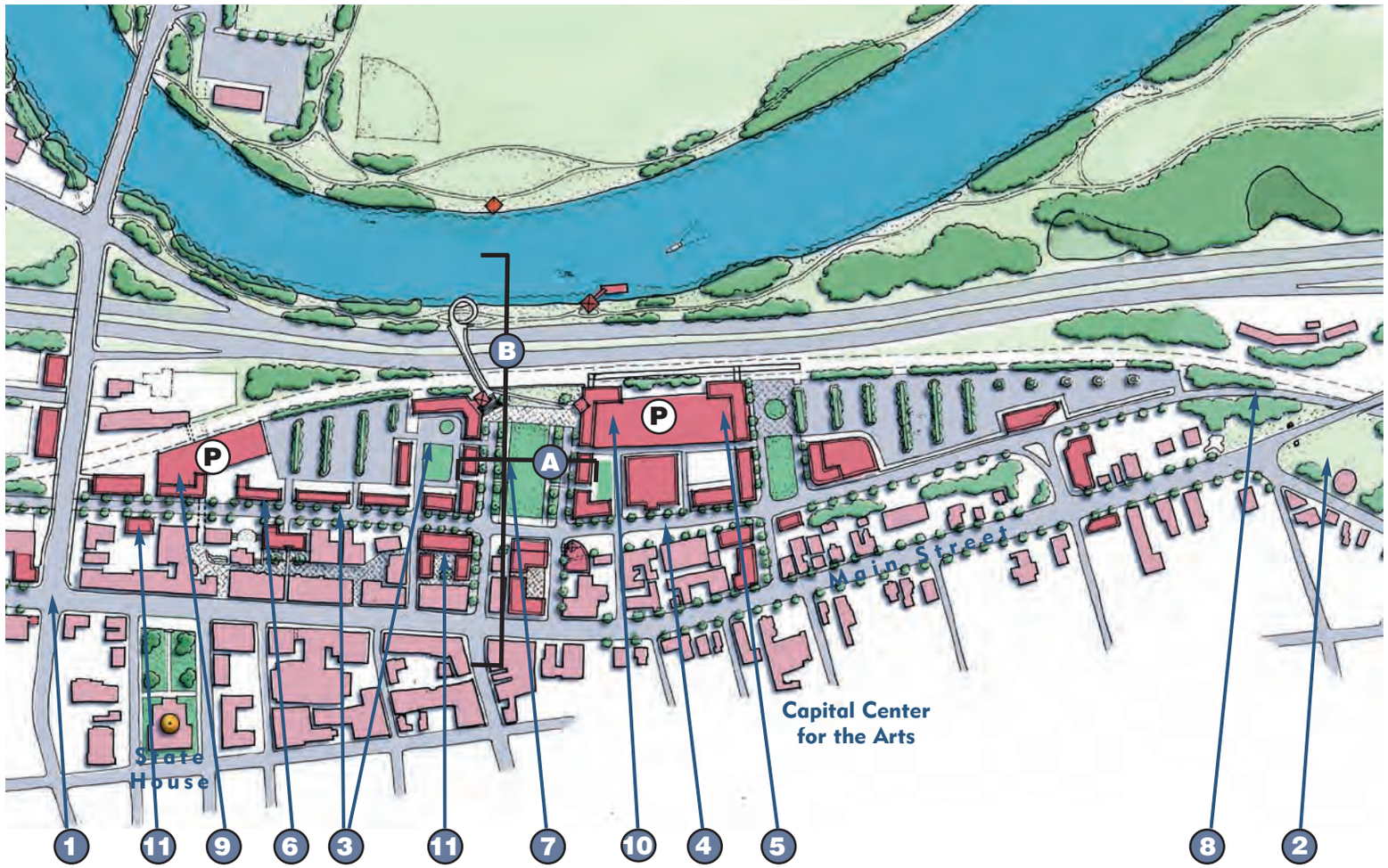
Develop design guidelines to support new infill development and ensure that it relates to historic Main Street.

Increase management and maintenance standards to compete more effectively with nearby regional malls. As land values increase explore mechanisms such as a Business Improvement District (BID) that will assist in providing a higher level of professional services on Main Street. Coordinate with and support a Main Streets Program for Downtown.

Widen sidewalks at one or two key locations in the core to support café activity. The Sears Block is one appropriate location.

Maintain the existing residential structures and encourage infill development with a similar scale and set back. Locate off-street parking behind structures, screened from the street.

1 2 Reinforce the gateways to the downtown where Loudon Road (Exit 14), and Water Street (Exit 13) connect with Main Street. At the Loudon Road / Main Street gateway encourage infill development to build up the open corners and relate to the historic fabric of Downtown. At the Water Street / Main Street intersection enhance views to the historic Gashouse through creation of a Gashouse park.



Encourage redesign (or relocation) of car-oriented uses such as gas stations and fast food restaurants to lessen their visual impact on Main Street and to maintain the cohesiveness of the retail district.

Develop an aggressive tree-planting program for the north and south segments of Main Street on either side of the Downtown core. This is the most affordable means of visually unifying the street. Trees will frame the approaches to the core of Main Street. Historically, street trees were never part of the commercial core and are not needed given the richness of architectural detail still existing today.

Side Streets and Back Alleys

Reinforce Pleasant Street as the major cross axis to Main Street and the major link to the Merrimack with wide sidewalks and special treatment.

Maintain the historic pattern of intimate vehicular and pedestrian connections between Main and Storrs Streets. Prohibit the closing of existing streets/alleys and promote new connections wherever possible. Multiple pedestrian connections between Storrs and Main Streets are vital to the expansion of the Downtown core.

Promote infill development on sloping cross streets and alleys to reinforce the link between Storrs and Main Streets. Front active uses onto the cross streets and step building ground floors with the slope to avoid blank walls and encourage multiple entrances.

The sloping condition provides an opportunity to tuck parking underneath infill development. Such parking should be located at the center of the blocks rather than front onto the cross streets or Storrs Street.

To build on the potential of Eagle Square support the redevelopment of Low Avenue as a mixed-use pedestrian-oriented alley. Low Avenue will benefit from and become a critical link between Eagle Square and a future residential district centered on the new Concord Green at the foot of Pleasant Street.

Central Opportunity Corridor

Uses

Create a mixed-use district fronting on Storrs Street and the new Concord Green. Uses should include ground floor retail, market rate housing, a grocery store, professional offices, a hotel, a cinema or other entertainment anchor, restaurants, and a multimodal transportation station.

3 Establish a viable market-rate residential district centered on the Green and the north end of Storrs Street near Eagle Square. Consider a hotel or other high-end public use fronting on the green to help support an active district.

4 Promote an arts and entertainment district on the south end of Storrs between Freight and Theatre Street. Restaurants and a cinema here would support the Capital Center for the Arts as a cultural/entertainment destination and build on Concord's reputation as a regional cultural destination.

5 Locate the future train and bus station south of the Concord Green with visibility from I-93; it should be possible to see the statehouse dome from the train as it arrives into the future station. Combine the train and bus station with commercial uses in a large civic building of landmark quality.

Urban Design

6 Transform Storrs Street into an intimate, tree-lined street with retail shops, restaurants, widened sidewalks, and better lighting to support pedestrian vitality. The street should be as narrow as possible–in marked contrast to Main Street–while preserving its function as a feeder street for the corridor. The key to Storrs Street's conversion will be to redevelop it as a two-sided mixed-use street (with retail on the ground floor) with traffic slowed to a reasonable speed.

Storrs Street looking south from Dubois Avenue.

Section view of a new Concord Green.

Looking east on Pleasant Street to a new River Connection.

7 Establish a central public gathering place for the city–a Concord Green. It should be elegant in design and uncluttered. The green should be open, flexible, and of sufficient size (2-3 acres) to accommodate citywide gatherings on special occasions. It should be suitable for a variety of uses ranging from passive enjoyment by individuals to farmers markets, outdoor concerts, and open-air skating in the winter. Line the green with handsome three and four-story buildings. Allow tower elements at the east end to frame a view of the river valley and bluffs beyond. A depressed I-93 should be completely out-of-sight of anyone standing on the Green. A raised grass berm at the end of the Green will create the illusion of a direct link to the opposite bank of the river - a device borrowed from English gardens.

Access and Parking

8 Extend Storrs Street north and south to link the Central Opportunity Corridor to the north and south sections. Extend the historic pattern of side streets from Main Street into the Central Opportunity Corridor. This new, expanded Downtown district should feel like a natural extension of the existing Downtown street grid.

9 Replace the State Parking Garage with a larger garage on the east side of Storrs street. A pedestrian bridge from the upper garage level to Eagle Square would strengthen the link to the statehouse. This garage will supply parking for legislators, for the History Museum, for Main Street shoppers, and for new mixed-use development nearby. A new parking garage here serves multiple users and does not impact existing residential neighborhoods close to the Capitol.

10 Establish a commuter-parking garage to support the future train station and the entertainment district including the Capital Center for the Arts. This future parking structure will efficiently serve daytime users (commuters) and evening users (theater goers and restaurant patrons).

11 Find opportunities to design small parking decks into the slope between Main Street and Storrs Street to serve infill development. Parking structures should not front onto Storrs Street but rather be located at the center of blocks. Where this cannot be avoided, parking structures should be lined with ground floor uses and incorporate architectural elements of the surrounding district.

River Connection Section from Main Street to the Merrimack.

South Opportunity Corridor

Uses

1 Develop a 400,000+ sq. ft. "flex-tech" business park to provide job opportunities and maintain a diverse economy in the downtown. Flex-tech is a step above light industrial with higher rents and more employees. Uses would include light clean industrial, assembly, warehousing, show room space for limited retail and some back office uses. Start-up incubator space should be part of the mix and will require an operator, perhaps a non-profit entity or the Department of Community and Economic Development, to market the concept aggressively.

The entire business park could take on a theme such as custom home improvement and become a regional resource. Under this scenario the existing historic brick railroad structures might support custom artisan shops and the Steenbeke building - the old locomotive repair building - would continue as a building supply outlet. Other wholesale and retail building supply uses such as plumbing supply could be recruited to the site.

Urban Design

2 Organize the entire flex-tech district along a central drive with it axis centered on the Gashouse to the north and the South End Marsh to the other end. Open up views to the marsh and I-93 to the south and provide pathways along the marsh for the benefit of South End residents and employees.

Preserve and reuse the handsome railroad maintenance buildings and use these structures to create a strong image for the business park. Relate all new construction to these long brick structures. Establish a high standard for site design and landscaping to allow for a future transition from a flex-tech business park to an office park as the market shifts and expands. Buffer the edges of the development to protect the South Main Street neighborhood and screen the heavy industrial uses across the tracks.

Access

Provide access from South Main Street in at least two places. Bring Storrs Street through from the Central Opportunity Corridor. Development should not rely solely on an at-grade crossing of railroad tracks that could become a commuter rail line within ten years and a high-speed rail corridor in the future.

South Main Street and the Blue Cross site

3 Reassert the residential character of South Main Street by controlling the amount and character of commercial use. Redevelop the Blue Cross site primarily for residential use with some commercial uses fronting on South Main. Enhance the South End Marsh as a visual and recreational asset for the neighborhood.

Neighborhoods Served by Walkable Villages

A "City of Villages" is a Vision that protects Concord's character while celebrating the uniqueness of the villages and the neighborhoods they serve. The villages can be strengthened by guidelines for future growth and by clear goals for improvements and protections for the things residents know and love. While each village has its separate set of recommendations and implementation actions, there are general recommendations that can be applied to all villages:

- Creation or emphasis on pedestrian-friendly village centers through the preparation of traffic and mobility studies for village centers, which include bike and pedestrian routes and the design and installation of traffic-calming elements and sidewalks.
- Concentration of future growth within the village centers. As part of the master planning process to begin in 2002, Village District boundaries should be set and guidelines written for each of the five villages and for Downtown. If necessary, rezoning efforts should occur in order to promote this concentrated growth and to discourage sprawling subdivisions and a dispersed retail and employment center. Concentrated development can also be facilitated through establishment and implementation of a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program.
- Connection of the villages to each other, to Downtown and to open space by trails and paths through the design and construction of an interconnected network building on existing trail fragments and systems.
- Street guidelines that limit cul-de-sac use and focus on traditional street grids that offer transportation choices, diffuse traffic, and create opportunities for public encounters.

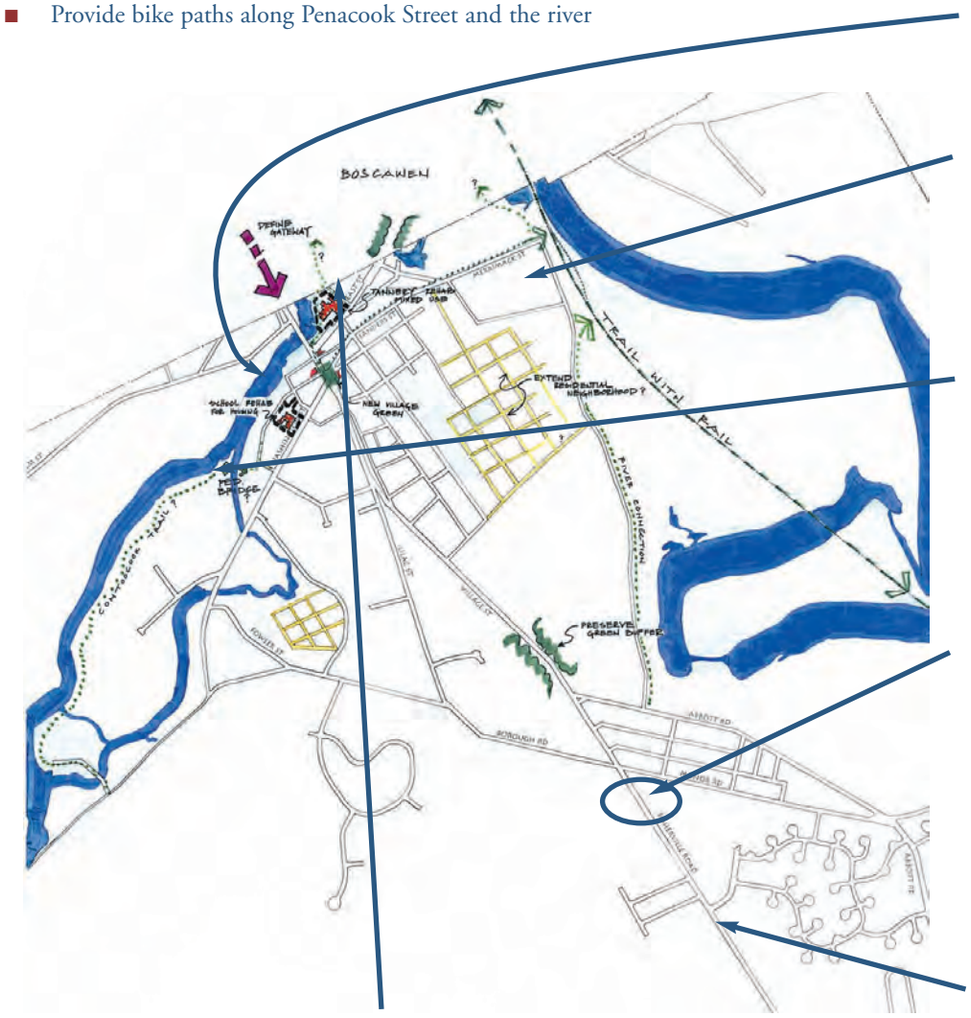
Objectives

- Create pedestrian-friendly village centers
- Concentrate future growth in the village centers
- Connect the villages to each other, to open space, and to Downtown with trails, paths and bike lanes
- Provide for mixed land uses in the village centers

Penacook

Objectives

- Redevelop the Tannery into a mixed-use complex of housing, office & retail
- Encourage housing that continues existing street patterns
- Encourage market rate and upper income housing
- Establish a new village center near West Concord on Fisherville Road
- Provide bike paths along Penacook Street and the river



Redevelopment of the Tannery into 100,000 sq. ft. of mixed-use, mixed-income housing, office, and retail will save one of the few mill buildings in Concord and support downtown Penacook. This development is a good example of a high-profile project that could be undertaken by a new redevelopment authority as part of a public-private partnership with the owners of the property. It is highly likely that some form of public incentives will be necessary to initiate this project.

Penacook is a historic village in Concord with a rich history; Route 3 was a major trade route from the beginning of settlement in this area. A new village green at the intersection of Sanders, Washington and Village Streets will give definition to the center of the village and support Penacook as a regional destination. Penacook's location at the Boscawen border enhances its significance as a regional service center. Encourage the location of a convenience store in this area to promote a walkable village.

Penacook Elementary School is slated to move to a new site south of the village center. This existing school site should be rehabilitated for mixed-income housing.

Residential growth allocated to Penacook by this Vision Plan should appeal to a mix of incomes, including high-end housing and should contribute to the extension of the traditional street grid around the village center. Cul-de-sacs, which are not part of the historic street pattern in the village, should be avoided.

A possible pedestrian bridge at the outlet canal along the Contoocook River can connect a river trail to the village center.The boundary between Penacook and West Concord is unclear. Preserve the existing green buffer south of the center on Village Street to protect the integrity of the village and to prevent strip development on Fisherville Road from eradicating village boundaries.

A new village center at recent development along Fisherville Road can help protect the integrity of Penacook and West Concord. This village center should have a new name and is an ideal location for a new grocery store. This commercial area is the primary service area for both Penacook and West Concord. Currently, there are approximately 4,000 residents between the two villages. With projected growth of another 1,000 households by 2020, this area could support a major supermarket, which requires approximately 4,800 "rooftops" in the surrounding trade area.

Fisherville Road can best serve residents by being a three-lane road with pedestrian crossings and a bike lane. The construction of two ramps at Exit 16-1/2 (southbound on and northbound off) would remove 8,000 vehicles each day from Fisherville Road. However, these new ramps would put an additional 9,000 cars on Sewalls Falls Road and 2,900 cars on Manor Road each day. The impacts of these transportation improvements must be studied more closely.

High-end housing could be an appropriate land use in this area.

Pedestrian pathways along existing roads should be clearly defined for access to the river and a future "rails to trails" path. Streetscape improvements to Penacook Street, a much-used connector between Merrimack Street and Abbott Road, can calm traffic and improve pedestrian safety.

West Concord

Objectives

- Protect historic village of West Concord
- Create bluff protection zones
- Provide more travel choices with connecting streets in new developments
- Rezone area of Fisherville Road between Penacook and historic West Concord to provide new village center with:
  - Mixed uses
  - Concentrated development
  - Market rate housing
  - More intersections (more travel choices)
  - Designated bike lanes
- Create a pedestrian-friendly Fisherville Road by:
  - Consolidating and/or eliminating curb cuts
  - Providing traffic lights and pedestrian crossings
  - Possibly adding Exit 2-1/2 (NB off and SB on ramps) on I-93

Protect historic village of West Concord by limiting new commercial and retail development.

Establish a new village center, with a new name, on Fisherville Road between historic West Concord and downtown Penacook. This village center would concentrate office, retail and housing around a new village green and would connect to existing residential development east and west of Fisherville Road with through-streets and pedestrian paths. This new center should contain a grocery store, which would have the necessary 4,800 households in the market area according to Vision growth projections. Design guidelines along Fisherville Road would require buildings to hug the street edge and put parking behind structures.

Two possible locations along Fisherville Road for a new village center with a green, include:

1 Between Manor Road and Mayflower Drive. A new center here would take advantage of a 30-acre site zoned for commercial use, and current plans for residential development west of Fisherville Road. New commercial development at this location should be required to provide a public green, with buildings surrounding the green and parking behind. Pedestrian links to existing elderly housing and the Post Office, north of Borough Road can support a walkable village center here. Housing to the west of the center should be concentrated and should provide a traditional street grid with access from Borough and Fisherville Roads.

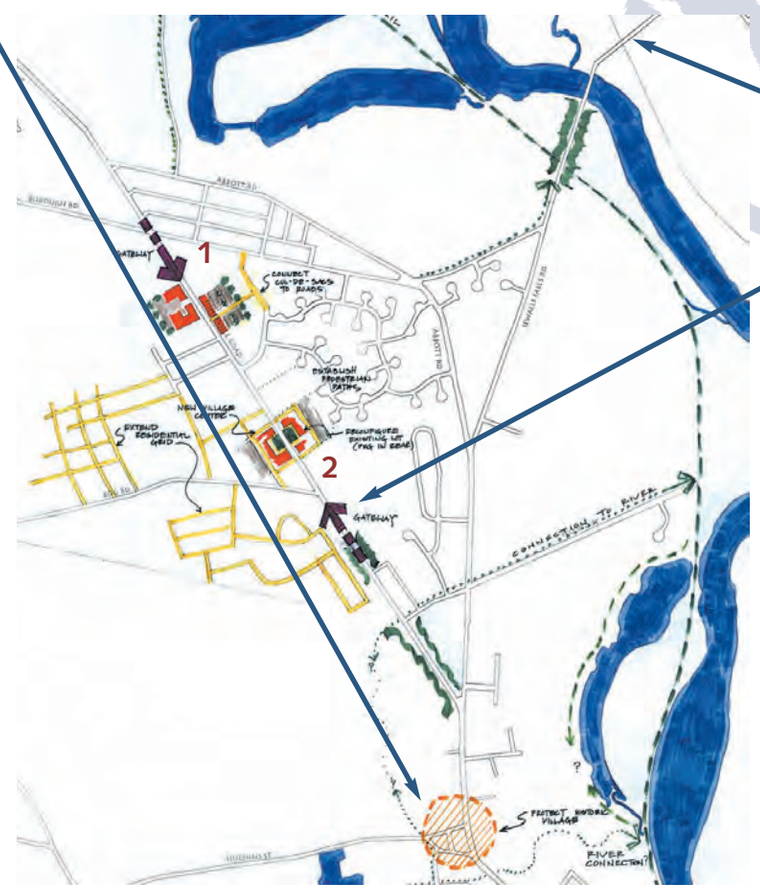
2 North of Bog Road, a new village center would be constructed at the existing shopping center. This drawing shows a reconfigured development, with a village green in front, along Fisherville Road, and parking moved to the rear of buildings. Pedestrian paths from Fisherville Road to existing cul-de-sac development to the east would support a walkable center.

West Concord/Penacook in 2020

(new village between the two existing villages on Fisherville Road)

It's sunrise, we're starting our day with a walk along the bluffs as the high-speed train glides silently by. We take our 5-minute walk to BEST village (we think a new village between Penacook and historic West Concord needs a new name), waving to neighbors as we go. We buy the paper, pick up some bagels and coffee at 30 Pines, and drop some letters off at the Post office. We meet our aunt and her friends living in senior housing at the village square and say hello to neighbors walking to work. The kids safely make their way to school using the crosswalks. We hop on I-93 Exit 16 1/2 (SB only) to do some errands downtown. On the way home we pass through the neighborhood at W. Concord. We stop at the Hutchins St. intersection to let children cross the street. Off to the Quarry Village to pick up friends and continue onto the Bog Park to the community Jazz concert held at the amphitheater.

The future of West Concord, as described by participants at a public workshop on The Villages in January 2001.



In conjunction with improvements to Fisherville Road, serious consideration should be given to the construction of two ramps (southbound on, northbound off) at a new Exit 16-1/2 on I-93. These new ramps would eliminate a significant number of cars per day from Fisherville Road but will shift traffic to Sewalls Falls and Abbott Roads (see notes on Penacook). If the exit is constructed, strict development controls must be instituted to prevent sprawl into greenfields.

Strict development controls must be applied to the existing open space to the northwest of the historic village center. These development controls should support concentrated housing development close to the Huchins Street/Fisherville Road intersection with much of the site remaining as open space. New roads for new housing areas should be through-roads, which offer more travel choices and follow the historic road patterns in West Concord.

Maintain a green buffer along Fisherville Road, between the new village center and historic West Concord to delineate village boundaries and control sprawling strip development.

Improvements to Fisherville Road should include the creation of a three-lane roadway with pedestrian crosswalks and traffic signals, especially at the new village center, and a possible bike lane. A widening to four lanes would devastate much of West Concord and is in contradiction with the Vision Principles. Crosswalks should be considered for the intersection of Bog Road and Fisherville Road. Along Fisherville Road, traffic signals should be considered at Manor Road, Bog Road, and Sewalls Falls Road.

Pedestrian pathways to the river should be implemented along Second Street and Sewalls Falls Road, leading to the Sewalls Falls Bridge.

A river view and bluff protection ordinance will preserve the views to and from the Merrimack River and protect the bluffs that line the Merrimack River Valley.

East Concord

Objectives

- Make improvements to the village center including:
  - Sidewalks
  - Parking behind buildings
  - Connections to recreation
- Provide connections for pedestrians, bicycles and cars:
  - To Downtown
  - Between neighborhoods
  - To parks
- Consider preserving land between I-93 and the Merrimack River as farmland
- Any riverfront development should consider:
  - Impact studies
  - Mixed use may be possible and is desirable
  - River paths and access
  - Clustered development near I-93 and away from river
  - Preserve large portion of site as open space
  - Development should provide new vehicular bridge to Downtown

New residential development should contain traditional street patterns and avoid cul-de-sacs. Higher density residential uses should be considered for the development site along Curtisville Road.

Consider the addition of stop signs along Portsmouth Street at East Side Drive and Curtisville Road.

Improved vehicular and pedestrian connections to Downtown can reduce East Concord's isolation from the rest of the city. At the location of the old Federal Bridge, an underpass and bridge for bikes and pedestrians will create a much-needed connection to Downtown.

The open space between I-93 and the Merrimack River should be studied as a whole. The preferred land use is the current land use of agriculture and open space. If development is considered here, it should contain mixed-uses of residential, office and retail to support the village center and should be clustered tight to I-93 to preserve open space along the Merrimack. Single use zoning does not support the concept of a walkable village center nor does it offer the vitality needed to create a pleasant gateway to a River trail. Any development in this area should provide a new vehicular bridge to Downtown via Commercial Street.

Streetscape improvements to the I-93 overpass can improve access from the village center to the Merrimack River. If development occurs west of I-93, this could be the catalyst for significant improvements including landscape buffers, street lighting, and well-marked pedestrian crosswalks at Mountain Road. These improvements would enhance village walkability.

The traditional village center is also a gateway from I-93. Improvements should include sidewalks and the relocation of parking behind buildings whenever possible. In the center, streetscape improvements will make the area walkable. On Mountain Road, a buffer between the pavement and a sidewalk would create a safe, pleasant pedestrian environment.

Pedestrian and possibly vehicular connections from existing housing between Shaker and Oak Hill Roads to Shaker Road provides more travel options and increases village walkability. Higher density housing development can occur in this area.

Provide trails connecting residential areas of the village to Turtle Pond and the village center.

The construction of two ramps (southbound on and northbound off) at Exit 16 1/2 on I-93 reduces traffic volumes on Mountain Road (but will need further study of impacts on Penacook Streets).

A Day in the Life of East Concord - 2020

This family of five starts their Saturday morning with activities in every direction. The teenage daughter hurries off to the bus stop in front of the store to get to work in time at the mall. The two boys take the bike path to the baseball game at the new playing field at Broken Ground. They are close enough to head back home for lunch. Mom meets a friend at the café for coffee and good conversation. She carries home a few items from the store to make the family lunch. Dad mows the lawn before lunch and looks around with pride at the new development they live in. Everyone except the teenager meet at home for a late lunch. After lunch, the boys ride their bikes over the river and through the woods to visit grandma at the Page Belting Building. Mom plants some flowers in the garden and enjoys the quiet afternoon, while Dad goes jogging down by the river on Heritage Trail. After dinner when everyone is home, they excitedly get ready to walk over to the community center for this evening's contra dance. What a great day!

The future of East Concord, as described by participants at a public workshop on The Villages in January 2001.

A day in the life of The Heights in 2020

A local resident of The Heights village has close proximity to everything one would need. Without the need to use a car, one can walk or bicycle to their job, to the stores and the community center. There is a civic presence with the central and accessible location of the public library, the community center and schools. Kids and adults alike have several recreation choices within a short walk or bike ride, including baseball and soccer fields. When one wants to go downtown for the afternoon or in the evening for a show, the new Jitney service provides economical and efficient transit in a continuous loop between The Heights and Downtown. For visitors to The Heights and the many shops at the expanded regional retail center, they no longer encounter traffic congestion due to the new alignment of Hazen Drive and the I-93 on-ramp and the connection of Regional Drive, Old Turnpike and Rte. 106. The new intersection signals on Loudon Road make navigation for vehicles and pedestrians alike safe and easy. The new street trees along the narrowed, three-lane Loudon Road make this road appealing and comfortable for pedestrians, while the widened pedestrian bridge and the new park space adjacent to the river have created a successful link to Downtown.

The future of The Heights, as described by participants at a public workshop on The Villages in January 2001.

The Heights

Objectives

- Reduce number of lanes on Loudon Road
- Give Loudon Road a village identity
- Create a pedestrian-friendly Loudon Road with street trees and pedestrian crossings
- Redirect traffic to I-393 for mall and big box access
- Provide a new community center linked to the school
- Concentrate new retail development in the mall retail area to accommodate retail demand.

Transform Loudon Road into a three-lane road (two lanes and a center turn lane) with bike lanes, streetscape improvements, and signage controls.

Provide a pedestrian route to a "river connection" by making streetscape and sidewalk improvements along Old Turnpike Road to Terrill Park and a river trail. This pedestrian route would start at the intersection of Loudon and Canterbury Roads.

Support a new village center along Canterbury Drive between Loudon and Pembroke Roads. A new town green at the intersection of Canterbury and Pembroke Roads anchors uses in the area.

Provide a new community center adjacent to Dame School and Keach Park.

The Regional Drive extension, along with the removal of the connection between Canterbury Road and Regional Drive (both planned by the City) will alleviate cut-through traffic in residential areas.

Improve connections between The Heights and Downtown and open space along the Merrimack River. Provide sidewalks and bike lanes along Loudon Road from the new village center to open space at the Everett Arena site and former Kings shopping center (proposed open space in this Vision Plan).

Provide a landscape buffer between redevelopment at the industrial site abutting the airport on Pembroke and Canterbury Roads and residential neighbors.

Avoid cul-de-sacs in new residential development. Utilize traditional street grids to increase travel choices and foster community connectedness.

Downtown

Objectives

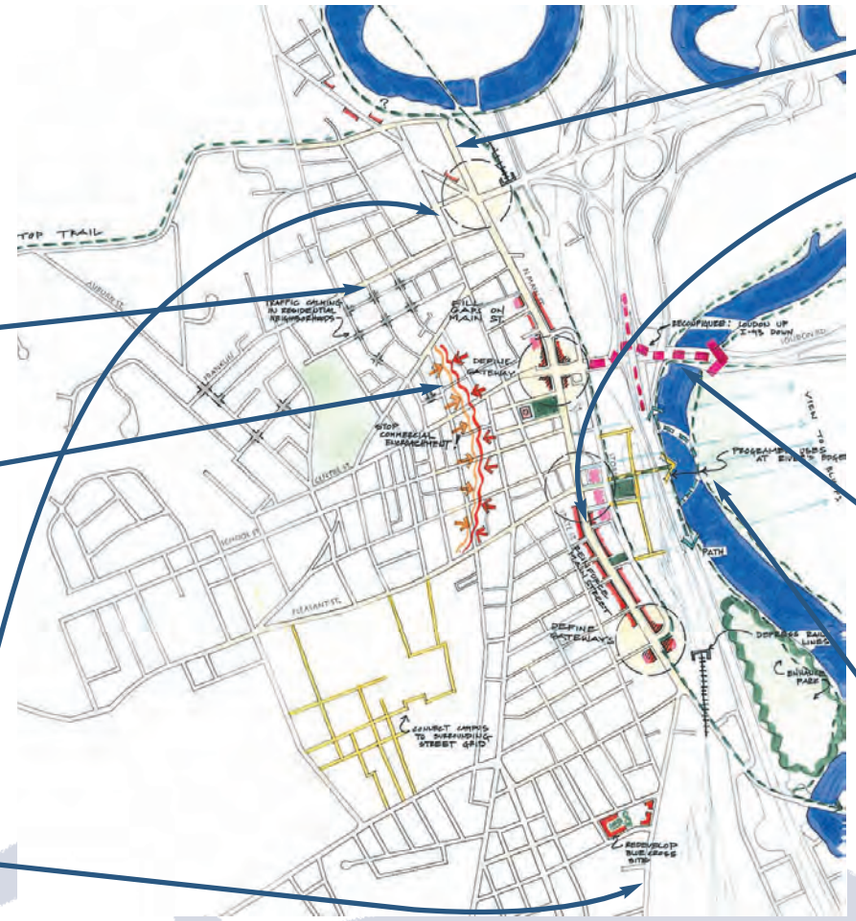
- Support residential uses
- Provide safe pedestrian connections to Main Street and the Merrimack
- Encourage night-time activity along Main and Storrs Streets

Make improvements to the Franklin Street pedestrian crossings and other crossings that are unpleasant to pedestrians. Improvements will make these residential access ways to Downtown more pedestrian-friendly.

Protect existing residential areas from encroachment by commercial uses. Restrict variances to convert residential to office uses. Discouraging encroachment also supports enhancing Main Street by promoting upper-floor use.

Encourage concentrated housing on infill sites. Redevelopment of existing parking lots can fill gaps in the street wall and create a more vibrant after-five atmosphere Downtown. More residents make the streets more interesting and safer in the evening hours.

Strip development on North and South Main Streets is eroding the residential quality of the street and encroaching on residential areas. Enact zoning legislation that restricts conversion of residential uses for commercial purposes. Restricting growth of the retail and service strip along Main Street also reinforces the core of Downtown.



Protect the northern edge of Downtown from pass-through traffic through sensitive design of the Langley Parkway terminus.

The creation of an arts and entertainment district will encourage nighttime activity and offer destinations for area residents. As destinations build in popularity, restaurants will be drawn to Downtown and there will be more evening shopping opportunities.

Through zoning and public incentives, encourage the development of a wide range of housing for different income levels. Create housing choices for retired persons, young professionals, and couples.

The dense housing in this area requires some open space. Look for opportunities to construct a neighborhood park.

Improve pedestrian connections to White Park and to Horseshoe Pond and the Everett Arena site.

Connecting the State Hospital campus to the surrounding street grid would integrate the site with the abutting residential neighborhoods and reduce its role as a barrier between villages.

Programmed uses at the Merrimack River, such as a boat launch, would create an open space destination for Downtown residents.

A Day in the Life of Downtown in 2020

A typical day starts with a walk along Main Street stopping at the coffee shop and picking up a paper. Along the way one rubs shoulders with neighbors, and stops in at the statehouse. Spending lunchtime downtown involves choices of cafes and outdoor dining with a saxophone player performing for money on the side of the café. Tree lined streets are found to the north and south of the central corridor. Joggers can set out for a 3-mile loop in 30 minutes and be back in the office for a shower. As evening comes, people don't necessarily leave to go home but rather stay to window shop, go to the movies or pick up some fresh fish to cook for dinner before seeing a movie at the theater. Ethnic restaurants, art, culture diversity -- life starts hopping at midnight. On Saturday, downtown comes alive as locals and visitors flock to the new covered farmer's market serving Main Street. Local residents have the choice to drop kids off at day care before going shopping. Downtown Concord is a great place for families to come and area kids to play during the day. There is something for everyone - to live, work and play.

The future of Downtown, as described by participants at a public workshop on The Villages in January 2001.

The South End

Objectives

- Support redevelopment of the South End Marsh area:
  - Flex-tech office uses
  - Some retail
  - Provide space for startups
  - Preserve historic rail buildings, whenever possible
  - Transform the South End Marsh into a visual and recreational asset
- Protect South Main Street to support residential character and to buffer it from South Opportunity Corridor development
- Support more usable open space throughout the neighborhood
- Encourage reuse of the Blue Cross site for concentrated residential development
- Provide a network of bike paths connecting the three village parks
- Transform Broadway into a greenway that calms traffic

A day in the life of the South End in 2020

Twenty years ago, the South End was a civic-minded community with pride in its schools and their neighborhood. Today, through planning residents have improved the sense of community by allowing children to safely play and adults to gather and interact. This was done with such improvements as a network of bike paths that link Rollins Park, the schools and Martin Field; the transformation of Broadway into a "greenway" that has successfully calmed traffic and beautified this once busy street, changes in traffic flow greatly improving pedestrian access around the village and the redevelopment of McKee Square into valuable retail and residential space on the second floor. In addition, the South End Marsh area was developed into a high-tech office park, administered by a non-profit development corporation, which has added jobs to the community while protecting the marshland for recreation.

The future of the South End, as described by participants at a public workshop on The Villages in January 2001.

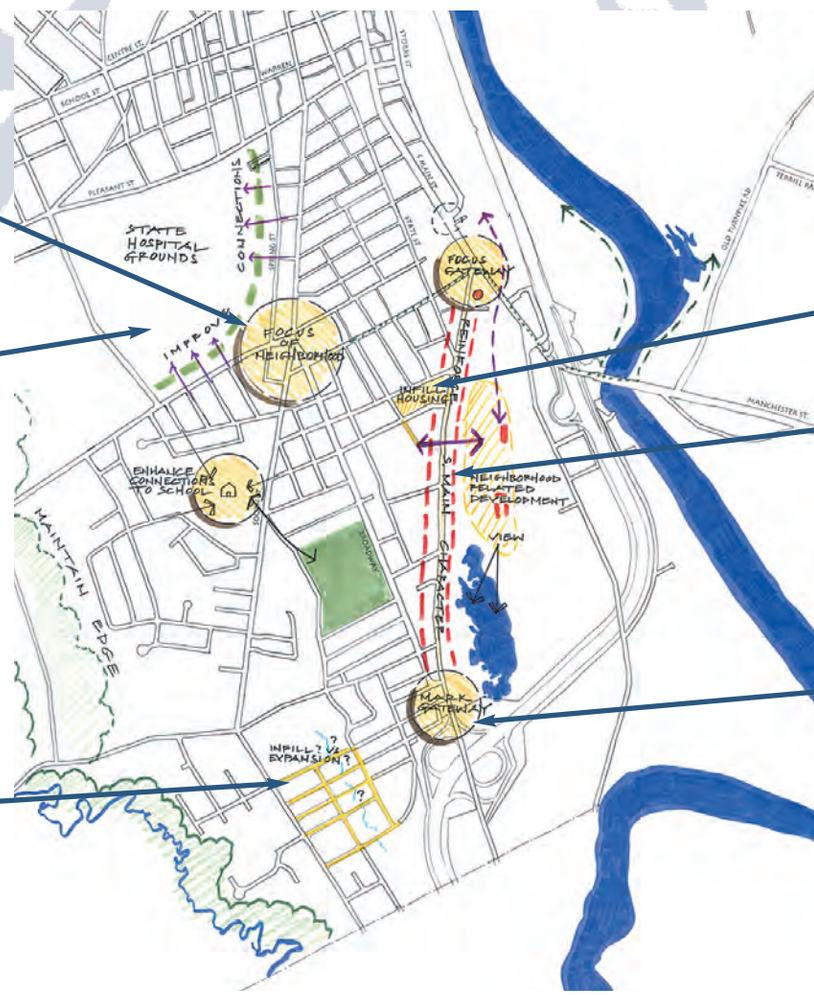
Enhance the village center at McKee Square by making streetscape improvements. These improvements will create better pedestrian connections between the Square and neighborhood parks, and improve the image of the Square as the center of the village. Commercial development should have parking behind the buildings wherever possible. Widened sidewalks will allow more public space for seating.

Consider extending the South End Street grid on Spring and Clinton Streets into the State Hospital grounds. Currently the State Hospital site is a barrier to access to the High School and Memorial Field. Work with the state to pursue re-use options that allow the site to contribute to the South End. Possibilities include a University of New Hampshire in Concord campus.

Encourage housing redevelopment north of McKee Square in the Rumford School area.

Provide strong pedestrian links between Rollins Park, the West Street Playground at McKee Square, and the Rundlett and Conant School fields. Memorial Field should also have enhanced pedestrian access for the South End.

On undeveloped lots, provide new housing that is consistent with the higher densities found in the South End. Continue the extension of the traditional street grid in new housing infill sites such as these 15 and 18-acre sites.



Redevelop the Blue Cross site with concentrated housing and possibly some office space.

Redevelop the South Opportunity Corridor in character with the South End. Protect the South End Marsh and provide enhanced access to the village. Preserve historic railroad structures and reuse.

Provide traffic calming with street trees, bike lanes, cross walks and neckdowns, where appropriate, along Broadway and South Street.

Mark the gateway to the South End from Exit 12 by protecting the character of South Main Street. Prevent further erosion of the residential quality of the street by buffering South Main Street from commercial uses in the South Opportunity Corridor; redevelopment of the site should allow for landscaping along the street and a visible access point to a South End Marsh path.

Preservation and Access to the Natural Environment

Concord is blessed with 64 square miles of varied and beautiful land. Rivers, oxbow lakes, marshes, ponds, valleys, bluffs and forested hills are all within a short distance of each village and downtown. Some 20% of this land area is protected as open space through fee simple ownership or easements held by the State, the City, private institutions such as St. Paul's School, and non-profit organizations. The pattern of protected open space is fragmented, however, and tracts of land critical to Concord's open space system remain vulnerable to development.

Many citizens have commented on a general lack of access to the natural areas of the city. A system of nineteen official trails does exist and was flagged and mapped by the Conservation Commission in 1997. These valuable trails do not interconnect or provide links between the villages and Downtown. Opportunities exist within the 20/20 Vision for Concord to protect the most valuable landscapes of the city and to extend the existing trail system to connect with nature and link village to village.

Protecting critical open space

The critical open space resources in the 64 square miles of land should be identified by inventorying public and private protected and critical unprotected open space. This inventory would include the development of criteria for identification, protection and acquisition of critical open space. Some recommended Vision criteria include:

- Identify and protect the most distinctive and characteristic landscapes of Concord for the enjoyment of future generations. These include river valleys, oxbow lakes, bluffs, upland forest, marshes, and open farm lands.
- Create an interconnected system of open spaces to link villages and the downtown
- Protect critical habitat areas to support rich wild life close to settlement areas
- Protect water resources for the City of Concord
- Protect farm lands and keep in active cultivation
- Protect productive forestlands and maintain sufficient lot sizes for sustainable forestry
- Protect greenways necessary to create connections between villages and the downtown
- Protect open space under immediate development threat within critical areas including the Merrimack River Valley
- Identify and protect key scenic views to and from bluffs and hill tops
- Develop protection strategies that are achievable and sustainable through a coalition of interests

To preserve critical open space resources, funding should be secured for acquisition and collaboration between environmental non-profits and government agencies should be facilitated for acquisition and protection. Zoning tools to assist in preservation of significant open space might include the creation of local agricultural zoning districts, agricultural use tax abatement programs, and community-supported agriculture programs as well as public education and encouragement of the use and donation of conservation easements. To protect and enhance the water quality and quantity, the best practices in storm water management and non-point source pollution mitigation should be incorporated with these strategies.

Preserving Open Space in New Development

By using the "20/20 Vision Scorecard" found in Section IV: Implementation, the City can ensure that the Vision Principles are followed for new development and that open space is preserved. The drawings here illustrate how this Vision Principle would apply toward enhancing the existing villages throughout the city and creating walkable communities.

Cluster subdivision zoning requirements for residential development and open space design and landscape guidelines for nonresidential development are additional tools that can be used for the preservation of open space in new developments.

Traditional large-lot cul-de-sac development eradicates open space, requires more paving, and erects barriers to walkability. In addition, cul-de-sacs opening solely onto arterials (as in the case with newer residential development off Fisherville and Loudon Roads) limit transportation choices and create congestion on these arterials.

A village-friendly development plan concentrates housing, provides sidewalks, and supports a vibrant village community, all while preserving open space. The cul-de-sac has been replaced with a continuous loop road, expanding travel choices and supporting community interaction between residential areas.

Connecting with Nature: Improving Access to Open Space

Given its extraordinary natural setting and active citizenry, Concord deserves to have an interconnected system of well-maintained trails that link villages to each other and neighborhoods to the natural world. The Heritage Trail following the Merrimack Valley will be at the heart of this system. To experience some of the best natural scenery in New Hampshire, people should not need a car or cross the city boundary. A trail system should achieve several overall goals, including:

- Providing access to the most scenic lands of Concord
- Providing direct walking and bicycling access from neighborhoods to open spaces
- Interconnecting to form a system of trail loops on land and water
- Providing a range of choices as to distance, route, and difficulty

As can be seen in the accompanying map diagram, a forty-minute walk will connect most adjacent village centers. A walkable community is an achievable vision and one supported by the Vision Principles.

The 20/20 Trail Concept Plan shows the general location of five trail systems that serve and enhance the City of Villages:

- River Connection Loop - a three-mile loop linking River Field, Terrill and Arena Parks. Downtown, The South End, and The Heights are abutting communities.
- Oxbow Loop - a 14-mile trail (containing smaller loops) with some of the best river scenery in New Hampshire. A regional recreational destination, the trail would, in part, follow the alignment of the Boston and Maine rail corridor. The loop links Downtown, East Concord, West Concord, and Penacook.
- Circle Trail - embracing the entire city, the trail passes through varied landscapes and provides access to the hills, marshes, ponds, and streams west and east of the Merrimack River Valley. Some 70 miles in length, the trail would serve Concord, Boscawen, Hopkinton, and Bow.
- Water Trail - this 11.5-mile trail follows the Merrimack River channel from Penacook to the Garvins Falls peninsula and is served by a series of boat launches.
- Trail Links - connections between these trail loops are necessary to fully link the protect open spaces in Concord. In addition to links between trail loops, links from rails to the village centers are necessary to completely integrate the open space network with the villages of the city.

Given the 64 square mile extent of Concord, proposed trail loops tend to be quite long - several miles. Because recreational users find loops far more attractive than linear dead-end paths, loops are recommended wherever possible. Longer loops are appropriate for bicycle and cross-country skiers, while tighter loops for joggers and pedestrians should be provided close to the village centers and Downtown.

Direct access should be provided to these trails from Downtown and village centers to encourage walking directly from the doorstep of one's home or work place. Small parking lots at the trailheads would accommodate visitors from further away. Kiosks at the trailheads would provide maps, interpretive information, and rules for the safe use of the trails. The trails should be clearly marked for use in all four seasons and should be multi-use with preference given to self-propelled modes of travel. Most of the trails will be unpaved or surfaced with soft materials such as stone dust. Tighter loops close to densely settled areas could be paved to increase their accessibility for a broader range of users including skaters.

Concord residents enjoy exploring the city, both on official trails and on informal, unmapped paths. The system of public paths in Concord should be formalized and mapped.

The River Connection Loop - 3 miles

A loop trail knitting together River Field (formerly Tear Drop Park), Terrill Park, the farm fields, and Arena Park into a unified Merrimack River Reservation would help create a sense of connection between the city and its river valley setting. This Merrimack River Reservation would become the "central park" of Concord. The Loudon Road and Manchester Street bridges would be primary links across the river. A pedestrian bridge crossing of I-93 close to the Pleasant Street axis midway between Exits 12 and 13 would provide the most direct link to this path system from the Downtown. Active recreational opportunities including skating, a skateboard park, field sports, and a swimming pool could be located in the Arena Park area. Terrill Park and River Field would be natural environments for passive enjoyment of the river. Key links include a river walk along Pleasant Street and new pedestrian bridge across I-93 and an improved Bridge Street pedestrian walk from Main Street to the river. The Downtown, South End, and West End are all within a short walk of this trail.

The Oxbow Loop - 14 miles

The "Oxbow" Loop would unlock some of the best river scenery in New Hampshire. If designed and managed well, it could become a regional recreational destination. The Oxbow Loop could start at the new visitor information center on Horseshoe Pond and following the alignment of the Boston and Maine (and/or the spur around the southwest side of Horseshoe Pond) the trail would cross over three oxbow lakes and past the historic Sewalls Falls–Concord's premier river park–on its way to Penacook. This rail corridor is inactive but could become the route of high-speed rail to Montreal in the future. The trail loop would cross the Merrimack River near the historic mills of Penacook and return along the edges of farm fields to Horseshoe Pond. Key Links include a new pedestrian bridge alongside the railroad bridge crossing the Merrimack from Horseshoe Pond and crossing the Contoocook where is joins the Merrimack. The Downtown, West End, East Concord, West Concord, and Penacook would benefit directly but this trail would become a regional resource give the extraordinary landscape of the river valley north of the Downtown.

The Circle Trail - 70+/- miles

The Circle Trail would embrace the entire city and give hikers and bicyclers a chance to experience every type of landscape Concord has to offer. The Circle Trail would provide access to the hills, marshes, ponds, and streams west and east of the downtown and Merrimack River Valley. This trail should tie into the extensive trails in abutting communities. All of Concord, Boscawen, Hopkinton, and Bow would benefit.

The sequence beginning at Penacook and heading in a counter clockwise direction could be:

- Roads along the edge of the Contoocook River to West Parish Road
- Class six roads heading south along western boundary
- West side of Little Turkey Pond
- Park and Ride Bike Path under I-93 at Grappone Junction and Silk Farm Bike Path to Clinton Road. (Note: Memorial Field would be a key stepping-off point for the circle trail at this point with a bridge over the Turkey River between White Farm and St. Paul's School)
- Iron Works road and west side of Turkey River to Looking Hill Road
- Existing bicycle path through I-89/I-93 interchange
- Cross river to Garvin's Fall peninsula and follow old rail road alignment; Garvins Falls Road to Manchester Street, Trailer Park and drive to Terrill park

Alternate route:

- Hall Street and Basin Street to Terrill Park
- Terrill park to Arena park via River connection loop
- Bluffs along State Office Park
- East Side Driver to Portsmouth Street vie existing bicycle path
- Utility right of way across much of east concord to Sanborn Road
- Sanborn Road to Sewalls Fall Road
- Oxbow loop trail back to Penacook

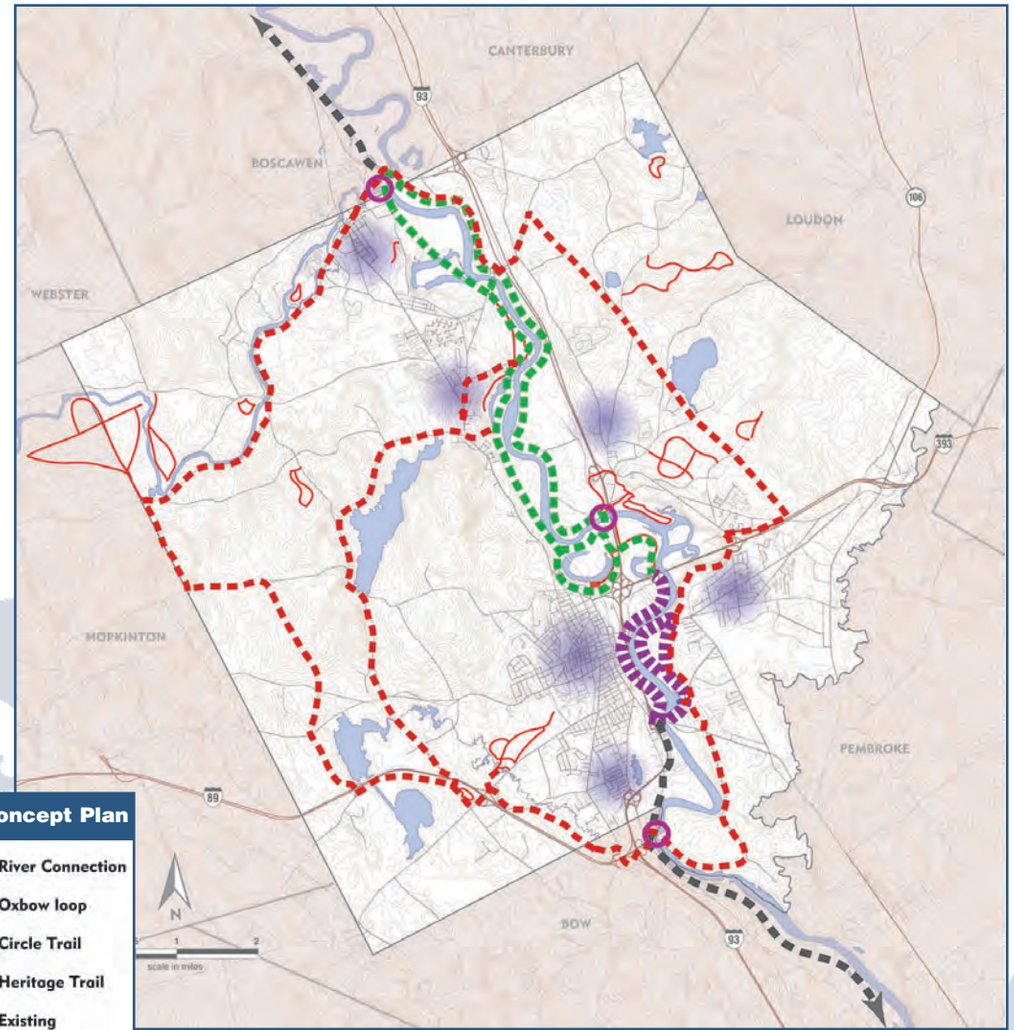
An alternate route on the west side would rely on existing roads for the most part:

- Silk farm
- Sawmill
- A connecting path to Hopkinton Road
- Long Pond
- Lakeview
- Hutchins Street

The Water Trail - 11+ miles

The Water Trail follows the Merrimack River channel from Penacook to the Garvins Falls peninsula (the urban reserve) and is served by a series of boat launches. One portage is required at the breached Sewalls fall for those not willing to run the rapids. Existing boat launches are available at Penacook, Sewalls Falls, near East Concord and I-93, The NH Tech Center, and the Everett Arena Park. Additional ones are recommended especially south of Everett Arena at Terrill Park and the Garvins Falls peninsula where a new road along the abandoned railroad corridor on the east bank could provide access. Two outfitters already provide canoe rentals - at Penacook and Everett Arena. An excursion boat service for those wishing to take a more leisurely approach to the river could be supported at the river connection boathouse near Downtown. The Downtown and village centers upriver to Boscawen would benefit directly.

Only portions of these routes described above have been field verified; they are intended as conceptual alignments only. Those implementing portions of this trail system will refine these suggested routes. The Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission maintains a more detailed trails map showing these and other routes.

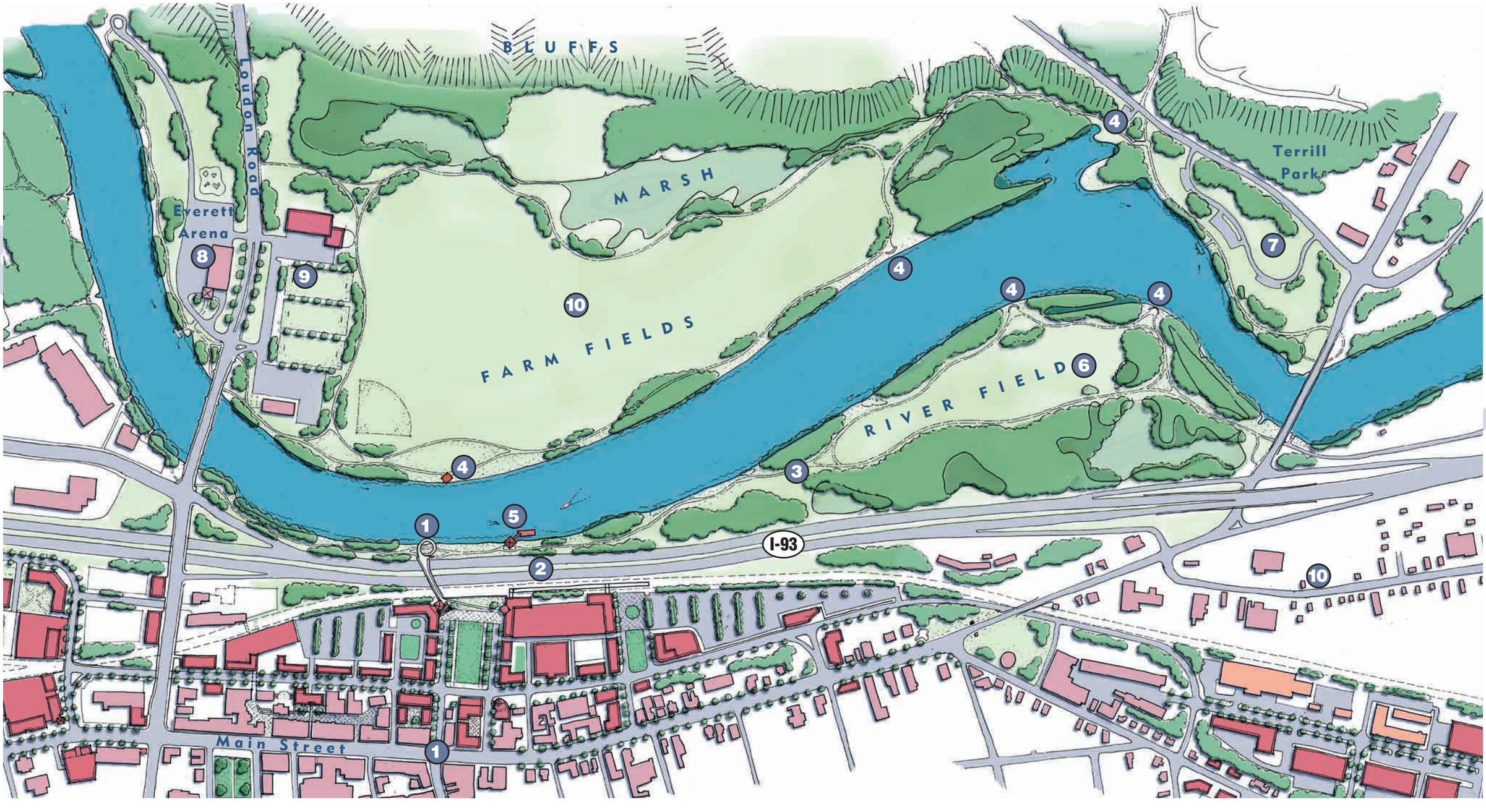


Trail Concept Plan

- River Connection
- Oxbow loop
- Circle Trail
- Heritage Trail
- Existing
- New bridges

The Merrimack River Reservation

The connection of the river from Downtown is a key access point to the proposed river park system. The recommendations for this open space/water trail system include creating both visual and physical access to the Merrimack from Downtown by influencing the I-93 improvement project to include the depression of the highway, raising of adjacent land and creation of an on-grade bridge connection to the riverside. Efforts must at the same time be made to preserve river views, bluffs and other upland open space by promoting conservation restrictions and selective acquisition of critical riverside lands and also preserving River Field (formerly known as Tear Drop Park). By designing, obtaining the land and constructing riverside trails such as the "River Connections," "Oxbow," and the "Heritage Trail Extension" citizens of Concord will be able to access by foot the nature that surrounds the neighborhoods and village centers.



Establish a new park system for Concord - the Merrimack River Reservation - at the heart of the city to unite Downtown with the river and to link adjacent villages and neighborhoods on either side of the river. Ring the reservation with a continuous multi-use pathway linking the discrete elements of the reservation - the River Connection, River Field, Terrill Park, the farm fields, and the Everett Arena site - into a unified whole. Accommodate a wide range of uses with active athletics at the north end of the reservation (the Arena and former Kings shopping center site) and passive enjoyment of nature at the southern end of the reservation (Terrill Park and River Field).

River Connection

1 Establish an 1,100-foot long "river connection" along the Pleasant Street extension starting at Main Street. Change the diagonal parking to parallel parking to capture width on the street. A widened sidewalk lined with benches, trees, decorative lights and special paving will lead directly to the "river connection" bridge across I-93. Locate a narrow outlook tower of no more than six stories at the end of the Green to mark the place of connection across the interstate. This tower could be part of a future hotel with commanding views up and down river. The pedestrian bridge will be fully accessible, and elegant in its engineering. Its design will be emblematic of both the red city and the curving green river and should be the focus of a national design competition. The depression of I-93 will result in a minimal grade change from the Concord Green to the bridge.

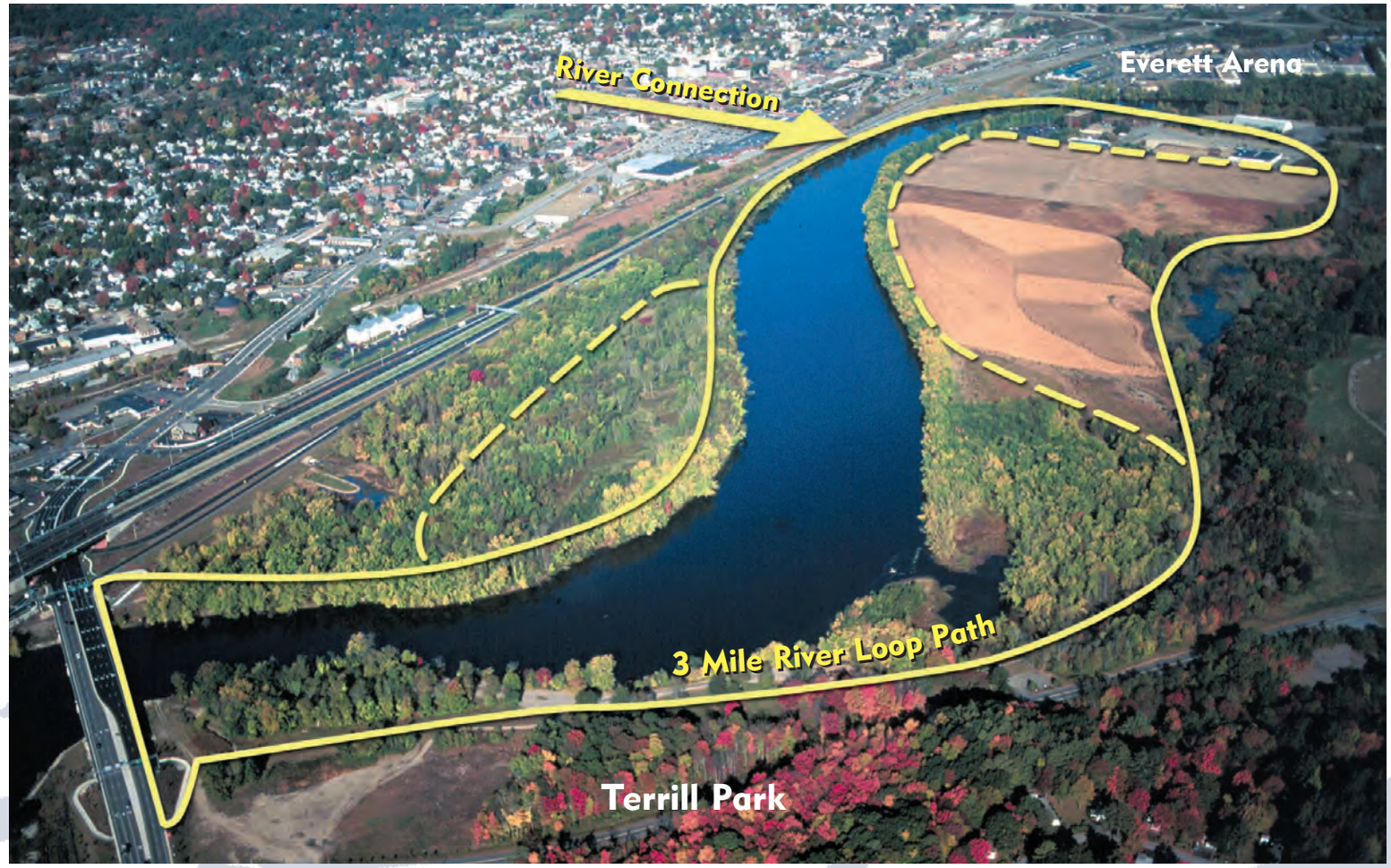
The approach to the bridge should be clearly visible but the super structure of the bridge should be offset from the Green so as not to compete with the view of the bluffs beyond the Merrimack. The bridge will be of sufficient width to buffer pedestrians from the noise and visual impact of I-93 and to accommodate multiple users. The bridge and tower element next to the Green will provide a symbolic gateway to Concord for all drivers arriving from the south on I-93 and should be designed with this in mind.

2 Move the alignment of I-93 west from the river's edge to accommodate a multi-use river path. Assuming a finished roadway elevation four feet above the 100 year flood elevation the minimum setback from water to pavement should be 75 feet. More room is preferred but the exact nature of the realignment and consequences for the existing Capital Shopping Center structures will be more closely examined during NHDOT's I-93 study.

3 Provide a generous (8-foot) paved multi-use path along the river between the Loudon Road and Manchester Street bridges - a distance of approximately 6,800 feet.

4 Establish scenic over looks along the river's edge at regular intervals. These should have benches and interpretive materials describing the Merrimack River Valley.

5 Provide a boathouse and public landing near the river connection bridge. The boathouse should have full utilities and public bathrooms. Water and food should be available to park users at this point. Support seasonal canoe and kayak rentals. Provide support for an excursion boat service from this point.



6 **River Field:** Preserve and enhance the open field and pastoral qualities of this site keeping in mind that it floods periodically in the spring. An open wild flower field mowed once a year would be an appropriate level of maintenance. Rename this park to better reflect the setting or to honor a special Concord citizen or event.

7 **Terrill Park**: Develop Terrill Park as a pastoral riverside park taking full advantage of water access and river views. Provide ample parking while eliminating all paving within 50' or more of the shore. Provide a canoe launch and take out facility.

8 **Everett Arena Park**: Concentrate active park uses at this site and the former Kings shopping center site across the street. Remove asphalt and restore the park-like setting. Provide a boat launch and support facilities for boating.

9 **Kings shopping center site**: Acquire and restore this site as an integral part of the Merrimack River Reservation. Pull paving back from river's edge. Convert to an active recreation site possibly including a visitor center, indoor pool complex, gym, restaurant, multi-use athletic fields, soft ball fields, and skate board park.

10 **Agricultural Fields**: Farming has preserved open space between the Arena and Terrill Park for generations. The fields should continue to be protected and integrated with the Merrimack River Park. Consider easements or the purchase of the land in fee simple with a lease-back arrangement for the continuation of farming. Produce from these fields could supply a farmers market on the Concord Green. Provide a 1-mile paved loop path around the entire field for speed skating, bicycling, and cross-country skiing as a part of the active recreation complex. Work carefully with the current owners to create a public access plan that works for all.

Economic Vitality

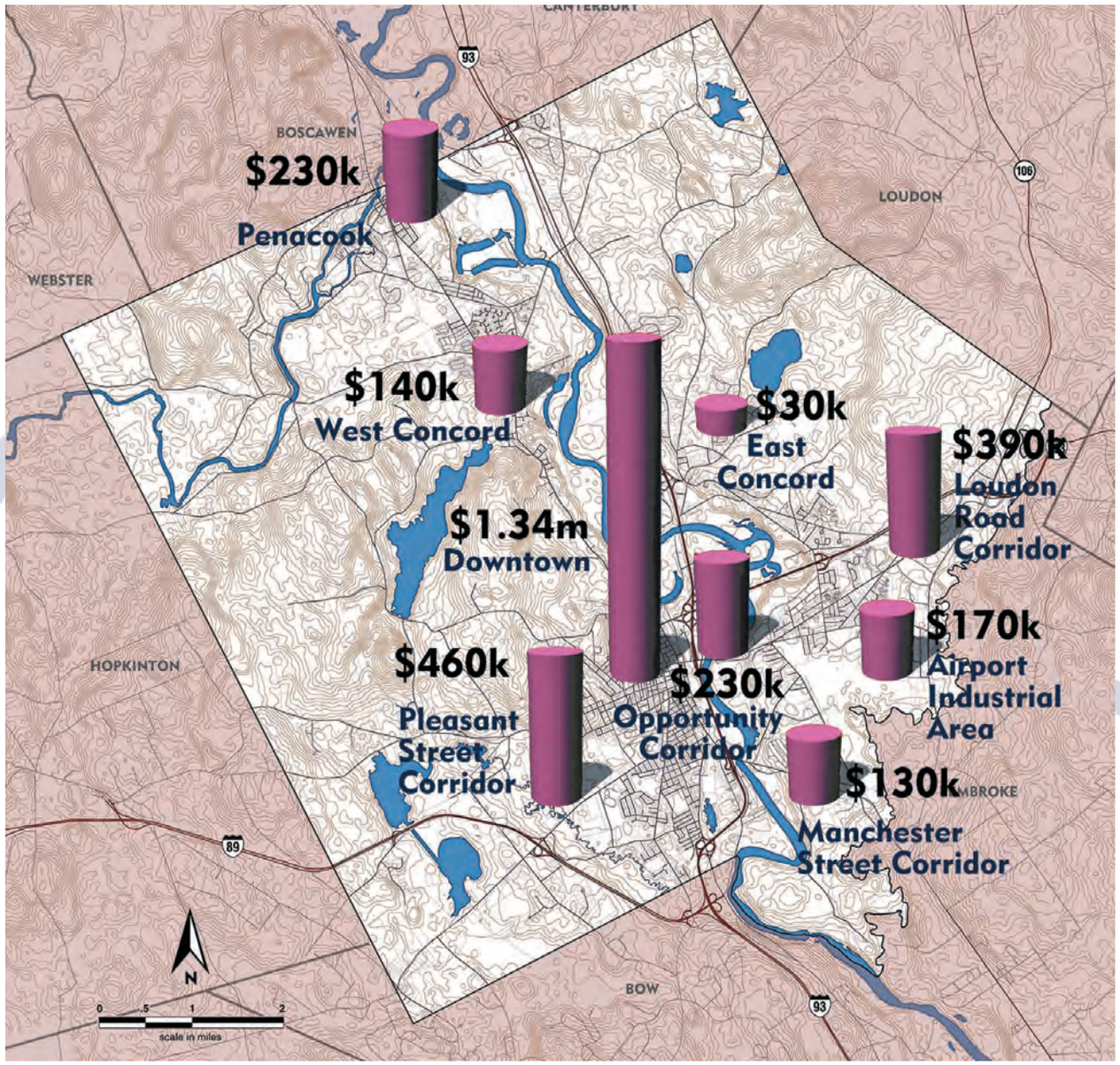
Objectives

- Concentrate development in the villages and Downtown
- Create a redevelopment entity to guide growth in selected locations
- Redevelop the Opportunity Corridor
- Clearly communicate goals for economic vitality to the development community
- Provide a streamlined and clear project review process
- Provide public incentives, where appropriate, to achieve economic vitality
- Diversify and expand the tax base and job base
- Make decisions for long-term vitality, not short-term gain

From an economic perspective, Concord is at a crossroads today. Its high quality of life factors include a highly educated, stable labor force, positive locational attributes, adequate infrastructure and a sizable amount of land available to accommodate growth and development for a city of its size. The economic analysis indicates that growth is coming to Concord. A critical objective of 20/20 is to balance economic vitality with tax base expansion while sustaining and reinforcing Concord's high quality of life. Visionary decision-making discourages economic development on a parcel-by-parcel, project-by-project basis and seeks instead to create larger opportunities that offer catalyst projects in selected locations. Visionary economic development policy must build real value in the community, while contributing to the high quality of life that residents both enjoy and expect.

"Visionary decision-making discourages economic development on a parcel-by-parcel, project-by-project basis and seeks instead to create larger opportunities that offer catalyst projects in selected locations."

Without proper zoning and, possibly, public incentives, new office development is likely to go to greenfield sites, consuming raw land and promulgating sprawl throughout the city. In addition to consuming open space, office development on isolated suburban sites does not contribute to the critical mass of activity and development needed to support a vibrant core. Public policies aimed at encouraging redevelopment of brownfield sites in the Opportunity Corridor can support Downtown businesses and assist in creating a vibrant, 18-hour mixed-use district centered on Main Street.



Land values are highest in the Opportunity Corridor. An economic development strategy that encourages redevelopment of this area will take advantage of the great potential along the Corridor.

Concentrate Development in Existing Village Centers

Key recommendations include concentrating development in existing village centers and away from greenfield sites. Economic vitality is just as concerned about sprawl as it is with tax base expansion. Sprawl chips away at the abundant open space in the city, uses excessive natural resources, increases traffic congestion and obliterates the unique qualities of the villages and neighborhoods. Concentrating growth makes good sense for everyone. For example, focusing growth where infrastructure is already available may reduce the costs associated with development, resulting in savings to users such as homebuyers.

Assembling the parcels needed for a major redevelopment of the North Opportunity Corridor will require a redevelopment authority or other type of redevelopment entity. The enormous potential of this highly visible site could be lost without such a development plan.

Concentrate development in the Opportunity Corridor

Concentrating development in the Opportunity Corridor is also key to encouraging economic vitality because Concord's land values are highest Downtown, as shown in the bar chart. This suggests that strategic public investment–such as in new parking garages–would reap benefits by leveraging private development. In addition, sound economic development policy should encourage new development near Main Street by marketing Opportunity Corridor sites and using public incentives, where appropriate, to attract companies that will help meet the objectives of strengthening the city's tax base and providing good jobs. A unified vision for the Opportunity Corridor consistently supports and reinforces downtown Concord as a cultural district, a regional employment and retail center, a viable residential neighborhood, and of course, as New Hampshire's downtown.

Keep Annual Inventory Statistics

Quarterly and/or annual statistics on inventory are critical to companies and others such as developers undertaking business expansions and/or relocations or considering development options, as it is used to help inform their real estate decision making. It is recommended that the City (possibly in association with private-sector real estate companies or business groups like the Chamber of Commerce or University of New Hampshire) conduct and publish semi-annual or annual surveys of public and privately owned office buildings in Concord. At a minimum, this should include data on inventory (in sq. ft.), vacancy rates, quoted (i.e., asking) and effective (i.e., achieved) rental rates, operating expenses and net absorption (i.e., the amount of net space leased by tenants during the period covered by the survey). It is also recommended that these surveys be made available to any interested party and distributed in marketing prospectuses to companies/businesses considering a Concord location.

Maintain Economic Diversification and Flexibility

As Concord seeks to diversify its economy to attract high-tech industries, consideration should be given to providing an array of industrial space to include warehousing, distribution, assembly and flex-tech. For purposes of this analysis, flex-tech space is suited for high-tech manufacturing, research & development and ancillary office or showroom space requiring flexibility for tenant use.

Create a Redevelopment Entity to Achieve a 20/20 Vision for Economic Vitality

Creating a redevelopment authority to serve as the primary vehicle to implement specific components of the vision for the opportunity corridor is a critical goal of the 20/20 Vision. Without an authority to assemble property, issue bonds to ready the site for development, offer financial incentives to attract specific users, and aggressively market the project, the once-in-a-lifetime potential to develop a large area in Downtown will be lost. In its place, development can be expected to occur piecemeal (parcel-by-parcel), and Concord will have lost a significant opportunity. With this same focus, it is recommended that a streamlined and clear project review process be provided to developers. Doing so will enhance the ability to make visionary policy decisions and to plan for long-term vitality rather than for short-term gain.

Redevelop the North Opportunity Corridor

From an economic development perspective, the North Opportunity Corridor is a prime location for a high quality ("Class A") office park: a large site under (mostly) public ownership that provides ready access to I-93 with excellent visibility from the highway. In fact, these characteristics are sufficiently strong that any economic development strategy should market this site to attract a "silver bullet."

Recommendations

- Use a 20/20 Vision to enhance Concord's position as a regional employment center.
- Identify opportunities to sustain and enhance the city's economic vitality by fostering job growth and diversification.
- Create a 20/20 Vision "scorecard" to let developers know what Concord wants. A scorecard can help the city position itself to capture the lion's share of the 23,000 new jobs forecasted for 2000-2020 in Merrimack County.
- Maintain and further strengthen Concord's identity and role as New Hampshire's Downtown.
- Look to the Opportunity Corridor and preferably within existing buildings to develop office space to accommodate future office development.
- Use the 20/20 Vision as a tool to institute implementation strategies and enact zoning and legislation to balance and manage growth and meet goals.
- Use the 20/20 Vision to grow smart–concentrating development in the Downtown and villages and protecting the rural character of greenfields.
- Capitalize on pending improvements to I-93 to enhance the image of Downtown Concord from the interstate and to increase tourism in the Downtown.
- Use transportation improvements to create a physical and visual connection from Main Street to the Merrimack River.
- Direct "inevitable growth" in ways that enhance, not detract, from Concord's quality of life.
- In planning for an additional 600,000 sq. ft of office space in the next twenty years, encourage use of existing concentration of office space and focus this growth Downtown. This is necessary to support existing businesses Downtown strengthening critical mass and adding vitality.
- Continue tax base expansion and manage growth and development without eroding quality of life.
- Provide innovative incentives to induce development that truly expands the city's tax base.
- Provide transportation that will serve the region without detracting from Concord.
- Maintain open space throughout the city in the face of impending growth.
- Provide housing that says "Concord" while maintaining open space and limiting infrastructure costs.
- Encourage appropriate and planned new development by creating/improving a more efficient and effective approval process.
- Develop ways to induce industrial or other development to efficiently use the estimated 375 net developable acres remaining for industrial development.
- In planning for an additional 1 million sq. ft. of retail space in the next 20 years, ensure that Downtown's specialty retailers are supported in terms of vitality and viability - as they are the keystones to Downtown's success and appeal.
- Find ways to keep Government offices Downtown to further support vitality and critical mass.

Transportation that serves the community

The efficiency of the transportation system in Concord is a key concern of residents. However, the city's roadways must do more than move vehicles efficiently and rapidly from one point to another. Concord's transportation network must be true to the 20/20 Vision Principles; the ideal network would strengthen connections (vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, transit) between villages, open space and Downtown while at the same time preserve residential neighborhoods, ease congestions, and address life safety concerns.

The term transportation "system" can not be stressed enough; the strength of the 20/20 Vision for Concord comes from the interrelatedness of its parts–how each Principle contributes to the effectiveness of other Principles in enhancing quality of life in the city. It must also be stressed that these recommendations are only the beginning step in making transportation decisions in the coming years. Just as NHDOT will use the Vision as a starting point for its study of I-93, each of the opportunities described here must be studied in greater depth to understand the full impacts and to make fully informed decisions. As changes are proposed and alternatives assessed, the city must continually revisit the "big picture" –reinforcing the importance of looking at transportation as a system.

Objectives

- Expand capacity of I-93
- Make arterials (Loudon Road, Fisherville Road, Manchester Street, etc.) more attractive and safer for cars, pedestrians, and cyclists
- Provide long-term solutions to traffic issues northwest and southeast of Downtown
- Expand and regionalize local transit
- Support future commuter rail to Boston and high speed rail to Canada
- Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle considerations into all transportation improvements
- Protect existing neighborhoods from pass-through traffic, where possible

An updated and expanded computer transportation model was used to model transportation scenarios in the city. This model accounted for moderate growth in the city by the year 2020 (see the section above on "How will the City Grow?" for the allocation of growth). The model also incorporated transportation improvements already planned/budgeted by the City and State. This updated and expanded model was used to analyze existing transportation networks and to evaluate various transportation system alternatives, taking into account moderate growth in the city over the next 20 years. The model predicts the traffic volumes and routes on the roadways of the city. With these data, the GC&A consultant team analyzed levels of service for selected roadways, including I-93 and assessed the proposed alternatives. The results of these model runs and alternative scenarios are provided in Appendix D.

Cul-de-sac development on either side of Fisherville Road limits travel choice and creates congestion–especially during morning rush hour.

The 20/20 Transportation Vision for Concord

The Vision recommendations include expanding the capacity of I-93 while shifting the roadway westward and depressing it below grade; making arterials such as Loudon Road and Fisherville Road more attractive and safer for cars, pedestrians and cyclists; providing long-term solutions to traffic issues northwest and southeast of downtown; and incorporating pedestrian and bicycle considerations into all transportation improvement. In addition, local transit should be expanded and regionalized, future commuter rail lines to Boston be supported and a trolley system created for downtown access.

These recommendations were shaped using criteria developed in public workshops. These criteria stressed growth management and the enhancement of quality of life in Concord. Workshop participants articulated that transportation facilities of the city should: enable connections with the river and communities within the city; enhance traffic handling capacity through more efficient, but not more or wider, road connections, served by strategically located parking facilities, making it convenient for vehicular access through and into Concord; and reflect an investment in alternative means such as shuttles, bus, rail, high-speed rail, commuter rail, and pedestrian and cycle paths to encourage/facilitate life in Concord without cars.

Specific components to the transportation vision for Concord include:

- Protect existing neighborhoods from pass-through traffic
- Redesign I-93 as 6 lanes, shifted westward, and slightly depressed
- Reverse Loudon Rd/I-93 relationship
- Redesign Loudon Road as 3 lanes
- Redesign Exits 14 and 15 on I-93
- North State Street/Fisherville Road at 3 lanes
- Exit 16-1/2, build southbound on and northbound off ramps
- Build a 106 connector to Hall Street when needed for Garvins Falls access, and leave provisions for an I-89 connector in the future
- Make streetscape improvements for a three-lane Manchester Street within a five-lane right-of-way
- Complete the northerly leg of the Langley Parkway (coupled with strict land use controls)
- Provide for future commuter and high-speed rail through Concord with a train station in the Central Opportunity Corridor
- Support aggressive public transportation policies and walkable village centers

Protect existing neighborhoods from pass-through traffic

All transportation improvements in Concord should be reviewed based on their success in protecting existing residential areas from pass-through traffic. A capacity reduction on Loudon Road, the completion of the Langley Parkway, and traffic calming in each village are all measures designed to make the city's neighborhoods safe for pedestrians and to enhance quality of life. As the city grows, a constant re-assessment will be needed of traffic impacts to residential neighborhoods.

Redesign I-93 as 6 lanes and Reverse the Loudon Road/I-93 relationship

At the center of this Vision Plan is the pending capacity improvements to I-93. For a long time, residents of Concord have seen I-93 as an obstacle, separating the east and west portions of the city and as a barrier between Downtown and the Merrimack River. I-93 has been viewed as a necessary evil for residents of the city and region. There is a danger, however, of becoming so focused on mitigating the negative aspects of the highway that we forget to grasp fully its potential benefits to the city. With its key location through the Opportunity Corridor and adjacent to the Merrimack River, pending improvements to the interstate provide new opportunities for the city to reforge the interstate's role in enhancing quality of life and connecting Main Street to the river. Clearly, the I-93 improvement project can be more than a work of traffic and civil engineering. As many other cities have realized, improvements and changes to an interstate can be a bold expression of design that shapes the way we see the city and countryside. The challenges inherent in this are how to control and direct traffic in a way that minimizes community impacts and optimizes accessibility and design advantages.

If possible growth in the region for the next 20 years is examined, these projected figures for vehicles per hour (VPH) on I-93 can be used to project capacity requirements on I-93 to retain the current Level of Service (LOS) D for the roadway. It is important to understand however, that these projections do not take into account other roadway improvements in the city and region and other mitigating factors. The purpose of a 20/20 Vision for Concord is to examine I-93 capacity and design scenarios within the context of all other transportation options within the city. These figures do indicate however, that it appears unlikely that, given I-93's regional function, even if Concord said "no" to additional growth (and the impossibility of this is discussed in Section I: Overview), growth in the surrounding region would make improvements a necessity. To maintain LOS D, a 3.5% growth rate would require 4.28 lanes in each direction by 2020. A 2.5% growth rate indicates a need for 3.24 lanes in each direction, and a lower growth rate of 1.5% would require 2.61 lanes in each direction. Clearly, I-93 must be examined within the context of all City transportation and development decisions if the city is to avoid an interstate of great width and presence in Concord.

Capacity

The transportation model illustrates clearly what many in Concord already know; I-93 is a local road. While many drivers use the interstate to travel between points south and the mountains and lakes to the north of the city, and commuters use the road every day, approximately 81% of Exit 12 on-ramp northbound traffic gets off between Exits 13 and 16. These data from the transportation model indicate that local drivers use I-93 as a short cut for travel around the city. This is not necessarily a bad thing; I-93 helps ease congestion on Main Street and also protects local roads from excessive congestion.

Traffic calming and reduced capacity on Loudon Road would provide a pedestrian-friendly village street for The Heights and encourage traffic destined for the mall to take I-393.

Considering the interstate's dual role as a local and regional road and considering the expected growth in the city and region, I-93 can maintain its current level of service through the year 2020 with a modest widening to 6 lanes. It is important to note that this widening is within the context of the 20/20 Vision Plan transportation system proposed here.

Horizontal Alignment

I-93 sits tightly within the Central Opportunity Corridor, adjacent to the bank of the Merrimack river on one side and the rail corridor on the other. In addition, just beyond the rail corridor lies the Capital Shopping Center, a complex of recently renovated stores including a much-needed grocery store that serves Downtown and surrounding residents. Within this context, alternative locations have been discussed over the years for a realignment of the interstate. Possibilities include shifting the interstate to the east side of the Merrimack and away from Downtown, and shifting the roadway west toward Storrs Street. Shifting the interstate to Storrs Street to the west greatly reduces the possibility of redeveloping Storrs Street by eliminated most of the development land in the Central Opportunity Corridor. Negative Impacts to Main Street would also be increased; noise from passing cars and the visual presence of the roadway would have a more immediate affect on Downtown and be more difficult to mitigate. Relocation of I-93 to the east side of the Merrimack River and away from Downtown is an idea that has been discussed for quite a while. While this option was explored at a Merrimack River Charrette in the 1990s, it was assessed and dismissed during the 20/20 Vision planning process because of the high cost of the relocation and its negative impacts to wetlands and existing farmland in the river valley. This option would also require a complete relocation and redesign of the exits along this stretch of interstate.

The consensus reached during the 20/20 Vision planning process was to shift the roadway slightly to the west from its present location. This recommendation provides additional open space along the banks of the Merrimack for a significant river destination and allows room for a path along the banks of the river. Both things are impossible now due to the close proximity of I-93 to the steep banks of the river. As important, a slight shift west of the interstate still leaves significant development land in the Central Opportunity Corridor and does not necessitate the purchase and demolition of the Capital Shopping Center. As the NHDOT I-93 study moves forward, the exact nature and location of this shift will be determined.

Vertical Alignment

Shifting the interstate west allows room for river paths and a river connection from Main Street along the banks of the Merrimack but does not address the issues of I-93's visual and audible impacts on Downtown. To mitigate the interstate's role as a barrier to the Merrimack and its negative impacts on Storrs and Main Streets, a number of vertical alignment options were assessed. An elevated roadway (with pedestrian access to the river underneath) was ruled out because of its negative visual impact on Downtown. An elevated interstate would also block views from

Downtown to the farm fields east of the Merrimack. Depressing I-93 in a tunnel would be extremely costly due to the expense of tunnel construction, especially given the location of the flood plain. In addition to the issues of cost, a tunneled I-93 would do nothing to enhance the image of the city from the interstate; the "Red City" would cease to exist for travelers passing through Downtown. The invisibility of the city from an interstate tunnel would do much to diminish I-93's positive role in providing significant exposure for Downtown. The negative impact of this diminished exposure to Downtown merchants and the arts and culture organizations would be deeply felt. In addition, the marketability of Central and North Opportunity Corridor sites for hotels, corporate headquarters, and even a commuter rail station would be reduced.

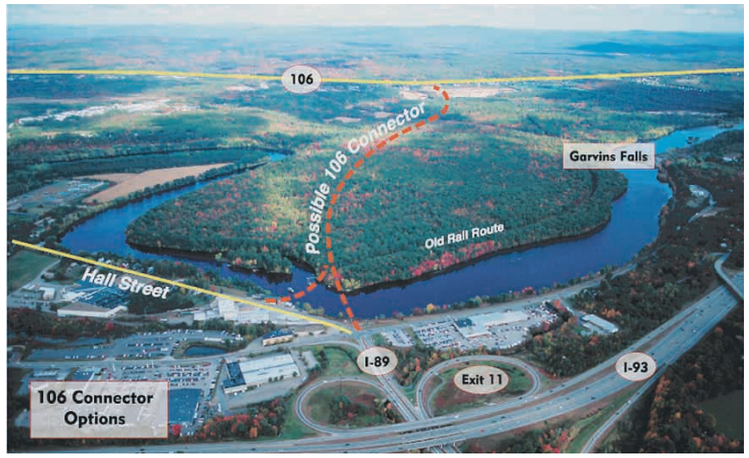
The recommendation for the vertical alignment of I-93 is to slightly depress the roadway and to construct earth berms on the western edge of the interstate to lessen the road's visual and audible impacts on Downtown. Lowering the roadway also facilitates the possibility of a pleasant river connection over the interstate via a pedestrian bridge or deck. The exact level of depression will be guided by the flood plain and by further examination during the I-93 improvement study to be undertaken by NHDOT beginning in 2002.

Relationship of I-93 and Loudon Road

Depressing the roadway facilitates another design change for I-93 that allows the reversal of relationship of I-93 and Loudon Road. Currently, the Interstate travels above Loudon Road at Exit 14. Reversing this relationship creates a more pleasant Main Street gateway and reduces the presence of the interstate along key parcels in the North Opportunity Corridor--making access to these sites just south of the new Horseshoe Pond development area more easily achievable. In addition, the connection from The Heights and the Arena can be redesigned to provide a more pedestrian-friendly link to Downtown.

Design Characteristics

Currently the interstate has an asphalt median and no landscaped edges as it cuts through the Opportunity Corridor. It is recommended that the character of the roadway be revisited to reconceive the interstate as a parkway as it travels through Concord. While the interstate travels within a fairly narrow right of way within the Central Opportunity Corridor, a widening of the roadway to 6 lanes should include design modifications to soften the edges and provide a small planted median. In addition to enhancing the image of Concord from the interstate, planted edges and a green median will soften the appearance of the roadway from Storrs Street and help I-93 blend into the proposed Merrimack River Reservation paths and open space directly to the east. Limited right-of-way available within the Opportunity Corridor will dictate that this parkway design will be modified but nonetheless, a greener interstate can give the driver a sense of traveling through the native New Hampshire landscape as one approaches the Capitol and provide a more pleasant view from the new pedestrian link over the interstate to the river.



A 106 Connector from Hall Street would provide access to Garvins Falls and reduce demand on Manchester Street.

A lowered I-93 could lead to a pedestian connection to the Merrimack.

An example of the effectiveness of berming the edges of a roadway are illustrated here. Storrow Drive in Boston is a high-traffic roadway with public open space along its edges. This berm helps mitigate the noise of vehicles and creates more pleasant open space along the Charles River.

Redesign Loudon Road as 3 Lanes, Redesign Exits 14 and 15

Congestion on Loudon Road negatively impacts quality of life for The Heights residents. Although I-393 was designed to accommodate mall traffic, many shoppers use Loudon Road as a "short-cut." Pass-through traffic to the mall and big box retail areas at the western end of Loudon Road, coupled with local business and residential traffic, create a congested road that cannot serve as a village road for The Heights. Widening Loudon Road to four or five lanes would respond to traffic demand but would not address the quality-of-life concerns for residents. Specifically, as it exists today, Loudon Road is the main access point to much of The Heights from Downtown and I-93 (village to village connector) and is one of two major access points to regional retail and employment centers. The road is not pedestrian-friendly and does not accommodate cyclists well. Lastly, the character of the road is unattractive and offers a negative gateway image for The Heights and for Downtown.

Within the context of the Vision, "Concord: City of Villages," what is an alternative to the Loudon Road of today? Reduced capacity on Loudon Road from four lanes to three lanes (one lane being a turn lane) rejects the practice of reacting to traffic congestion in the usual way–widen roads to accommodate increased demand. The design changes to Loudon Road are intended to encourage the use of I-393 for mall and other retail traffic (help I-393 do what it was designed and constructed to do). Traffic calming measures such as more plantings along the right-of-way to visually reduce the width of the road (drivers slow down on narrow roads) and raised crosswalks would improve the character of the road and its image as a gateway to The Heights. Design guidelines (discussed in the section on The Heights above) would improve the image of the road and the village.

Coupled with Loudon Road capacity reduction, two other changes were modeled, but rejected. The short weave between Exits 14 and 15 on I-93 create a hazardous roadway condition. For years, talk of eliminating Exit 14 to solve the problem has brought out concerns over losing this gateway to Main Street and the mall retail area on The Heights. During the Vision planning process, removal of the northbound on and southbound off ramps was modeled and analyzed. The removal of these two ramps eliminates the hazardous short weave between Exits 14 and 15. At the same time, the addition of Exit 2-1/2 on I-393 was considered as an encouragement to drivers to avoid Loudon Road and take I-393 to the mall. These additional improvements do not eliminate a significant number of vehicles from Loudon Road between Hazen and D'Amante Drives during peak times–a small impact on Loudon Road congestion, and not enough to justify the expense of Exit 2-1/2. Other factors point away from the construction of Exit 2-1/2; as retail growth moves westward along Loudon Road from the mall to 106, more drivers are likely to use Exit 3 on I-393 to shop in that area. With big box retail lining Loudon Road, it will appear less counter-intuitive to travel "back" eastward toward the mall.

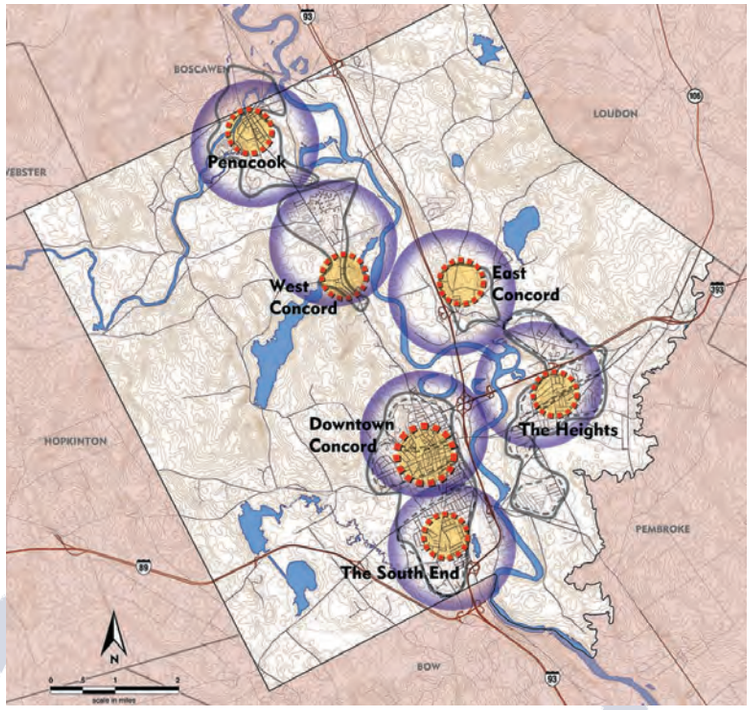
The removal of the two Exit 14 ramps results in through-traffic of approximately 245 more vehicles on North State Street between Loudon Road and I-393. The current intersection at I-393 and Bouton Road cannot handle this increase in volume and the existing residential character of North Main Street would be threatened by this increase in traffic. The model results indicate that the best solution to the unsafe weave between Exits 14 and 15 may be a partial redesign of the interchange. The removal of the southbound off ramp should be modeled for impacts. The majority of traffic volume using Exit 14 approaches from the south; impacts to North Main Street volumes at I-393 may be negligible with this ramp removal. The unsafe weave in the northbound lanes of I-93 could be solved through a redesign of the exit. Any consideration of a flyover would have to carefully balance both aesthetic and safety concerns.

North State/Fisherville Road at 3 Lanes, Exit 16-1/2 SB on/NB off ramps on I-393

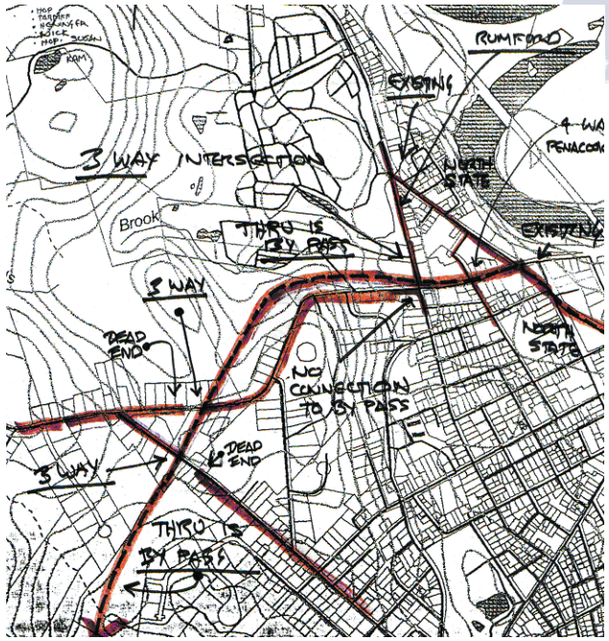
In the past twenty years, significant development in and around West Concord and Penacook has resulted in increased traffic congestion along Fisherville Road/North State Street. New residential developments use cul-de-sac road layouts, which tend to exacerbate traffic congestion. Because of existing street patterns, there are few travel choices in these new residential developments. All traffic must converge on Fisherville Road when leaving residential areas, creating significant traffic congestion, especially during the morning rush hour when school buses make frequent stops to pick up children.

While the City currently has plans to widen Fisherville Road to three and four lanes, this Vision Plan recommends a three-lane road width with significant pedestrian and bicycle improvements. Sidewalks, tree plantings, and a bike lane will slow traffic and lessen the road's function as an east-west divider. Pedestrian crosswalks at key development locations, and traffic signals at major intersections can contribute to pedestrian safety and help Fisherville Road function as a village road.

A three-lane Fisherville Road/North State Street presents significant impediments for the large volume of vehicles that use this road on a daily basis. In addition, there is enough undeveloped land in the two villages of Penacook and West Concord to support over 1,000 units of new housing. New residential development, concentrated near downtown Penacook and at a new village center between historic West Concord and Penacook can bring benefits to the villages. A critical mass of residents, coupled with some additional commercial development can help sustain walkable village centers and provide the market for a new supermarket, much needed in this area of the city. However, with rooftops come automobiles. A solution to the congestion on Fisherville Road can be found in the construction of two ramps at a new Exit 16-1/2 (southbound on, northbound off). These ramps would facilitate the use of I-93 for Downtown travel and points south. The new exit reduces demand on Fisherville Road by 8,000 cars per day. The improvement to congestion does not come without a price, however. There are increased traffic impacts to Sewalls Falls, Manor, and Abbott Roads that will need further study and discussion. Sewalls Falls will see an increase in 9,250 vehicles per day while Manor Road experiences a 3,000-vehicle increase.



Walking Distances - 20 minutes from center of circles to edge.



A proposed reconfiguration of local streets at the northern terminus of the Langley Parkway.

In addition, proper development controls (zoning) are necessary around Exit 16-1/2 to ensure adherence to the 20/20 Vision Principles. Without proper restrictions, new suburban greenfield development will spread from the new exit to the east. Development is not recommended in this area, which is outside an existing Concord village.

Route 106/Hall Street Connector/Manchester Street Improvements

I-93 is the route of choice for both north-south and east-west traffic in and through Concord. In addition, the interstate is used as a local access road by Concord drivers–facilitating easy movement between the northern and southern areas of the city. Because of the interstate's multiple roles, many people believe that a Route 106 bypass would relieve pressure on I-93 and eliminate the need for capacity improvements on the interstate. This would only occur if 106 were a true bypass with collector/distributor roads and limited access. Designed as a Concord City bypass, it would connect I-89 to Route 106 and offer a faster alternative for eastward travelers than driving through Concord on I-93 and then east on I-393 to Route 106. As a bypass, 106 is the only transportation option modeled during this planning process that would eliminate the need to expand capacity on I-93 beyond its current four lanes. Because of its high cost, this option is at least 20-30 years in the future and does not resolve the immediate pressures on the interstate.

However, a Route 106/Hall Street connector would reduce the demand on Manchester Street south of Old Turn Pike Road by 430 to around 1,330 vehicles in the peak hour. In addition, if the City decides to develop a portion of Garvins Falls in the future (possibly as another village), the connector would provide access to the area. The model results confirm that this solution does little to relieve pressure on I-93. A more expensive alternative would be a connection from I-89 to Route 106. This upgraded connection from I-89 to NH 106 could be constructed when capacity improvements are made to I-93. An I-89/106 connector would further reduce peak hour demand on Manchester Street by about 1,000 vehicles and would leave a future bypass option available to the city.

Manchester Street should be improved as a three-lane roadway (similar to Loudon and Fisherville Roads) within a five-lane right-of-way, to be acquired by the City. Modeling results show that in 2020, with these improvements, the section of Manchester Street between Old Turn Pike Road and I-93 will experience 590 fewer vehicles in the peak hour and the remaining portion will experience around 430 fewer vehicles. The new connector will carry about 945 vehicles during this same period.

Complete the northerly leg of the Langley Parkway

The Langley Parkway (also known as the NW Bypass) was originally planned to facilitate faster emergency medical service to Concord Hospital and to protect local streets from cut-through traffic. The major employment centers including the hospital and the state government offices at the State Hospital Grounds along Pleasant Street attract much regional and city-wide traffic that cuts through Downtown neighborhoods during peak hours. The Parkway as designed connects Clinton Street (and nearby Exit

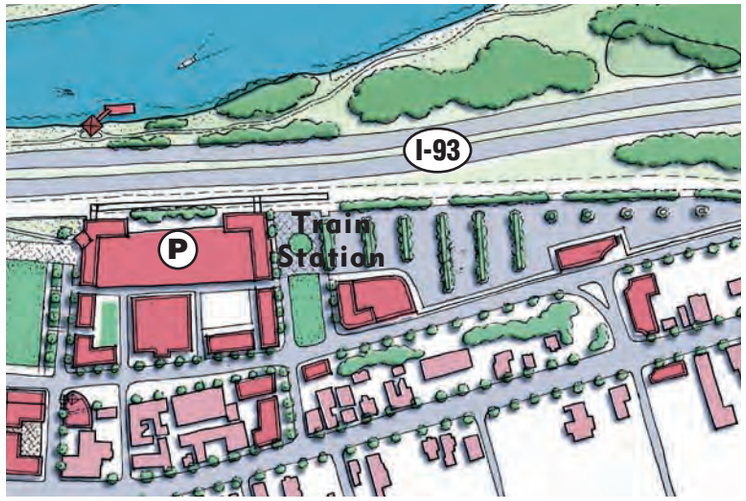
2 at I-89) in the south to North Main Street and I-393 to the north. When the Parkway was tested in the transportation model, the results show that indeed, the completion of the northerly leg redirects vehicles from local residential streets west of Downtown and north of Pleasant Street. The Parkway provides easier access to the major employment centers along the Pleasant Street corridor and protects residential neighborhoods from cut-through traffic. In addition, the transportation model shows a significant reduction in the number of vehicles which pass through the Fruit/Pleasant/Warren intersection. The subject of many improvement studies over the years, this intersection can avoid an expansion and reconstruction that is out of character with the residential quality of the streets surrounding it if the Parkway is constructed. It also appears that the completion of the Langley Parkway will eliminate the need to expand Pleasant Street to 4 lanes.

There are concerns however. The issue of the parkway's northern terminus had never been resolved. Residents in the vicinity of Penacook Street and North Main Street are concerned that the Parkway will bring many more additional vehicles to their streets. The Vision Plan proposes a reconfiguration of local streets and one-way streets in the area of North Main and Penacook Streets to protect residential streets from pass-through traffic at the northern terminus of the parkway.

Other concerns have to do with development pressures. The land purchased for the Parkway right-of-way (ROW) has served as a trail for nature enthusiasts and residents abutting the ROW are concerned that development will follow roadway construction. In keeping with the Vision Principles, strict development controls must be instituted here (as at a new Exit 16-1/2 on I-93) to ensure development concentrates in the villages and does not sprawl through the greenfields of the city.

Provide for future commuter and high-speed rail through Concord with a train station in the Central Opportunity Corridor

By 2010, Concord could be served by commuter rail from Boston. By 2020, high-speed rail to Montréal may be a reality. How fast these things happen will depend in part, on Concord's ability to express its desire to once again be well-connected to passenger rail service. While the beloved Concord Rail Station is long-gone, there are strong possibilities for a new era of rail service to arrive in Concord. Passenger rail service in Concord would increase travel choices for commuters, alleviate some demand on I-93, and support economic vitality through efficient access to the city. All of this is made much easier by the fact that Concord is already well-served by the rail lines. It is extremely important that Concord maintain the existing rail ROW through the city. The ROW's adjacency to I-93 through the Opportunity Corridor will have an impact on I-93 capacity expansion and the NHDOT I-93 study that is set to begin in 2002. Fortunately, NHDOT understands the importance of the rail right-of-way. This ROW must be preserved to ensure Concord can maintain its status as a city well-served by rail.



A proposed new train station in the Central Opportunity Corridor.

The location of a new train station can serve as a catalyst for economic development and public infrastructure projects in the city. By necessity, though small in size, a new passenger rail station should meet the following design requirements:

- Multimodal facility serving rail and bus passengers
- Easy access to the interstate
- Sufficient roadway infrastructure and site area to accommodate commuter traffic during peak hours and commuter parking
- Location that reinforces and celebrates the image of the city
- Location that can serve as a catalyst for economic development
- Location that is accessible on foot to services for travelers (hotels, restaurants, shops, etc.)

Using these criteria, this Vision Plan assessed a number of locations for a future multimodal rail/bus station. These locations include:

- North Opportunity Corridor (between Exits 14 and 15 on I-93)
- Central Opportunity Corridor (one site north of Loudon Road and the other south of Loudon Road)
- South Opportunity Corridor in the old rail repair yards

While any of these locations could work for a commuter/high-speed passenger rail facility, the Central Opportunity Corridor south of Loudon Road meets the most criteria. With Storrs Street extended throughout the Opportunity Corridor, access on and off the interstate is manageable. And while access from I-93 may not be as easy as at some other potential station locations, the increased visibility to the Central Opportunity Corridor is crucial to making the economic development strategy for this area work. With a new rail station just a block away from the core of Downtown, the increased visibility for the city will support its status as a cultural capital for New Hampshire and all of New England while also strengthening the Opportunity Corridor's market appeal as a corporate headquarters site.

A passenger rail station in the Central Opportunity Corridor will also ensure that a new commuter parking deck will give the most benefit to Downtown and the Vision 20/20 objectives of supporting the residential and cultural life of this area. The 1200 parking spaces that are estimated to be necessary for the commuter rail station can provide a needed increase in Downtown parking inventory. A 1200 car deck can have multiple uses - serving as commuter parking during weekdays while providing evening and overnight parking for residents. Additional evening and weekend spaces can be used for visitors attending the Capital Center for the Arts and frequenting Downtown restaurants and shops. The existence of a new parking supply, made possible by a new rail station, provides a crucial element to making redevelopment of the Central Opportunity Corridor possible.

Support Aggressive Public Transportation Policies and Walkable Village Centers

The 20/20 Vision for Concord is committed to acknowledging that transportation and land use are inextricably linked. This Vision Plan provides alternative transportation options to the automobile while encouraging development growth that supports walkable communities that may also be served by public transit. Alternative transportation options include walking, bicycling, and public transit. All roadway improvement projects should include a pedestrian and bicycle access component. A network of trail loops should be planned and constructed throughout the city that connects village-to-village and the villages-to-Downtown. These "trails" can encompass some of the natural trails along the Merrimack River but may also include upgraded pedestrian links with sidewalks and crosswalks.

In addition, while many cities have grown far beyond their condensed beginnings in town and village centers, Concord's villages and Downtown are still intact and can benefit from revised zoning that encourages development around existing village centers. With careful planning and disciplined decision-making, the City can make walkable access a reality for many Concord residents.

Along with smart land use decisions, an aggressive public transportation policy is mandatory to protect quality of life in Concord as the city grows. Currently, development patterns are not reinforcing concentrated village centers and do not provide enough ridership to support an expanded network for Concord Area Transit (CAT). With concentrated development in the villages of Concord, CAT can begin to assess the feasibility of running transit service between Downtown and the village centers. In addition, residents have expressed a strong desire for trolley service throughout the Opportunity Corridor. While there is a clear need to link the Horseshoe Pond Convention Center area with Main Street and the core of Downtown, and while a link to the South Opportunity Corridor will become increasingly necessary as that area is redeveloped, running a trolley along the rail right-of-way is not feasible. What is recommended, especially as the Downtown culture and entertainment core grows, is the institution of trackless trolley service along Main and Storrs Streets which will benefit residents and visitors alike.

IV. *Implementation*

The extensive public participation process of the 20/20 Vision project has helped ensure the longevity of the Vision for Concord.

How will this 20/20 Vision be used?

"Concord: City of Villages" is a strategic plan. This document offers a set of recommendations for the future of the city and will guide the actions of public and private leaders for the next twenty years and beyond. In the near term, the 20/20 Vision for Concord will form the core of the new City Master Plan. The Vision Principles will be incorporated into the master planning process to begin in 2002. However, master plan recommendations and subsequent revisions to zoning and public policy will take several years to come about.

Must citizens of Concord wait three or four years for the Vision to become a reality? There are very real concerns that, before the new master plan is adopted, the city will endure changes and growth that do not adhere to the Vision Principles. Because too much is at stake to wait, the implementation recommendations outlined in this section address both long and short-term action items and attempt to address the question of how the 20/20 Vision Principles can be applied to City policies now. Clearly, long-term implementation recommendations may take years to achieve. However, the next steps can, and must begin now to achieve the Vision. These steps fall into three categories:

- Implement "bricks and mortar" projects and activities by various organizations and government agencies
- Continue to build public understanding and acceptance of the Vision
- Make regulatory and public policy changes to support the Vision

This chapter describes these recommended next steps.

Implementation Recommendations

The 20/20 Vision for Concord provides a set of recommendations for each Vision Principle to help Concord achieve its vision and planning goals. These recommendations include short-term actions to be applied within the first 18 months, while also providing mid-term actions (18 months to 5 years) and long-term actions (5+ years). Implementation of any of these actions will require broad community support; successful implementation involves people, energy, and excitement. It is imperative that the process of public awareness and participation continue, as the Vision becomes reality. With the five Vision Principles in hand, the citizens of Concord can look optimistically toward the future.

Concord 20/20 Vision — **Implementation Plan**

Objective	Task	Implementers	Potential Funding Sources	PRINCIPLES: Vibrant Downtown	Walkable Villages	Natural Environment	Economic Vitality	Transportation
SHORT TERM ACTIONS (up to 18 months)								
Use of the 20/20 Vision to guide public and private planning and decision-making	Obtain acceptance of the 20/20 Vision plan as the policy document for Concord development by the City Council, State Planning Office, NHDOT and, if possible, major institutions such as Concord Hospital and St. Paul's	City; 2020 Initiative; Partners		X	X	X	X	X
	Begin City Master Plan process	City and community	City	X	X	X	X	X
Continuing long-term leadership to achieve the 20/20 Vision	Create a successor nonprofit organization to the Initiative, the Concord 20/20 Vision Compact, including participation from all levels of government, business, nonprofit organizations, and residents	City; State; Institutions; Business; Nonprofit organizations; residents	TCSP	X	X	X	X	X
Professional staffing of the new organization	Create job descriptions, advertise and hire an Executive Director	Compact Board of Directors	TCSP	X	X	X	X	X
Partnerships with diverse community and grass-roots organizations	Create partnership membership categories and provide technical assistance, coordination, media promotion, seed money or matching funds for projects and programs that advance 20/20 vision goals. Examples of partners would be a Main Streets organization, a land trust, a nonprofit housing developer, a school organization, etc.	Compact Board of Directors	TCSP	X	X	X	X	X
Widespread public understanding and acceptance of the 20/20 Vision	Promote the 20/20 Vision through publications, media coverage, and events, for example, an annual index monitoring progress; development scorecard on major land use proposals (whether growth or preservation) to alert the public to the consequences of various decisions	Compact	TCSP	X	X	X	X	X
	Develop school curricula on the 2020 Vision to include data gathering, data interpretation, visioning, relationship between land use, transportation, and water quality	School Districts; Compact	School Districts	X	X	X	X	X
Neighborhood and village benefits from the 2020 Vision	Hire new city staff person to focus on neighborhood planning and revitalization	City	City		X			
	Neighborhood and Village Visions Competition	Compact; City Neighborhood Planner	TCSP; CDBG	X	X			
	Targeted Neighborhood Improvement Program -- annual program of street and streetscape improvements and street tree planting in various neighborhoods	City	City		X			
	Vehicle and Pedestrian Safety Improvement Project - plans for Loudon Road and Fisherville Road	City	City		X			X
Expand housing options	Adjust zoning as needed to encourage housing and mixed-use occupancy	City	City	X	X		X	
	Inventory appropriate buildings and sites	City		X	X		X	
Preserve historic character	Implement recently enacted demolition delay ordinance	City		X			X	
Comprehensive trail system	Walkable Communities Workshop June 27-28, 2001	Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC); City; Compact	CNHRPC; NHDOT	X	X	X		
	Publication of Concord Regional Trails Guide	CNHRPC; City; Compact	City			X		
	Complete trail map with existing and proposed trails	CNHRPC; City; Compact	City; NHDOT			X		
	Identify a high priority trail segment for implementation, such as a Horseshoe Pond trail	CNHRPC, Compact			X	X		X
	Fund, design and build the trail segment	Compact, CNHRPC, NHNHDOT, Groundwork	NHDOT		X	X		X

Concord 20/20 Vision — **Implementation Plan**

Objective	Task	Implementers	Potential Funding Sources	PRINCIPLES: Vibrant Downtown	Walkable Villages	Natural Environment	Economic Vitality	Transportation
Identification of critical open space resources	Inventory public and private protected open space	CNHRPC, Compact, City	City; Compact			X		
	Develop criteria for identification, protection and acquisition of critical open space	CNHRPC, Compact, City	City; Compact			X		
	Inventory critical unprotected open space	CNHRPC, Compact, City	City; Compact			X		
Preservation of critical open space	Educate private landowners on conservation easements and promote donation of easements	Environmental Partners, e.g. Concord Conservation Trust	Environmental Partners			X		
Expand capacity of I-93 while providing quality of life benefits	Reserve a right of way corridor for two additional lanes on the west side of the river and provide room for a riverside pathway	NHDOT	NHDOT			X		X
	Include Concord in any I-93 smart growth corridor study	NHDOT	NHDOT	X	X	X	X	X
Long-term viability of the regional traffic model	Maintain and expand the model	CNHRPC; NHDOT; City	NHDOT					X
	Identify commuter patterns and make projections	CNHRPC	NHDOT					X
Multi-modal mobility	Walkable Communities Workshop to create excitement and interest in bike and pedestrian planning	CNHRPC; NHDOT; Environmental Partners	NHDOT	X	X	X		X
Commuter rail to Boston	Begin lobbying	City; State; Compact; Partners	Federal	X			X	X
Create an economic development strategy	Research and determine viailbity of a redevelopment authority or similar organization and implement if feasible	City	City	X			X	
	Create and maintain new data sets for analysis: real estate inventory, annual activity, absorption rates, labor force characteristics, commuter patterns	City	City				X	
New activity and investment on Main Street	Create a Concord Main Street Program for downtown	DCI	State and private partners	X			X	
	Vehicle and Pedestrian Safety Improvement Project - plan for Downtown	City	City	X	X			X
	Design and construct streetscape improvements in a prominent Main Street location, such as the Sears Block, to signal public action and commitment to downtown development	City	City	X	X		X	
	Create a façade and signage improvement program, initially through competition, thereafter in a revolving fund	Compact; DCI/Main Streets Program; City	TCSP; City	X				
	Organize a design competition for Concord Area Transit Downtown Bus Shelters for construction in FY 2004	Compact; City; AIA or Plan NH	Compact; private	X				X
Redevelopment of blighted sites	Begin redevelopment of Sears Block based on recently-completed feasibility and market study	City	City	X			X	
Expand housing options	Downtown housing market analysis	City; Compact	TCSP	X			X	
Improve parking availability and access	Concord Area Transit Park & Ride -- construct remoted parking lot at Memorial Field with shuttle service to dowtown and Pleasant Street	City	Federal	X				X
	Commission a new downtown parking study to include inventory, management, scenarios for increased housing, office and entertainment uses	Compact; City; State	City	X				X
Attract business to vacant upper floors	Inventory total downtown office space	City; Compact	City; TCSP	X			X	
	Maintain a database of vacant office space	Compact; Downtown Concord Inc. (DCI) or Main Streets Program	City; private	X			X	
Expand entertainment options	Program evening events downtown, such as summer concerts on the state house lawn	Compact; Downtown Concord Inc. (DCI) or Main Streets Program	City; private	X				

Concord 20/20 Vision — Implementation Plan

Objective	Task	Implementers	Potential Funding Sources	PRINCIPLES: Vibrant Downtown	Walkable Villages	Natural Environment	Economic Vitality	Transportation
Create an Arts District downtown	Create an Arts District Committee from appropriate arts organizations, e.g. Capital Center for the Arts	DCI/Main Streets Program and Arts Committee	NH State Council on the Arts	X			X	
Program events to attract people to downtown	Organize festivals, sidewalk sales, children's events, concerts, etc.	DCI/Main Streets Program	private	X				
	Create an annual River Connection Walk and Festival to measure progress towards the goal	Compact with partners such as River Connection, DCI/Main Streets Program, arts organizations	private	X		X		
Opportunity Corridor								
Flexible but specific planning	Hire a new City staff person to focus on redevelopment issues	City	City	X			X	
	Define the Opportunity Corridor as a Development District and create an official redevelopment and transportation/circulation plan	City	City; NH Economic Development Matching Grants	X			X	X
Clean up contaminated brownfields sites	Implement EPA $4 million clean up grant if awarded	City; Groundwork	EPA	X		X		
Create new housing options	Prepare feasibility studies of possible housing sites	Compact	TCSP	X	X			
Redevelopment of blighted sites	Prepare feasibility studies of brownfields and underutilized sites	City	EPA	X	X		X	
Improve parking availability and access	Obtain funding for two parking garages at the north and south ends of the Opportunity Corridor	City, Compact, Partners	Federal Funds	X				X
MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS (18 months - 5 years)								
Creation of a system of protected open spaces	Plan for linkages among open spaces to enhance habitat protection, scenic views, and public access appropriate to the sensitivity of the resource	City; CNHRPC;Compact; NHDOT; Environmental Partners				X		
Preservation of critical open space	Obtain funding for open space acquisition	City; Environmental Partners; Compact	City; NH Charitable Foundation; private funds			X		
	Collaborate with environmental nonprofits on open space acquisition	Environmental Partners	private			X		
	Consider support for local agriculture through agricultural zoning districts, agricultural use tax abatements, Community Supported Agriculture programs, etc.	Environmental Partners; City; State Dept of Agriculture	City			X		
Appropriate preservation of open space in new development	Improve and approve cluster subdivision zoning requirements for residential development	Ctiy	City		X	X		
	Create open space design and landscape standards for nonresidential development	City	City	X	X	X		
Protect and enhance water quality and quantity	Incorporate best practices in stormwater management and nonpoint source pollution mitigation in zoning and subdivision regulations	City	City			X		
Preserve river views and upland open space	Promote conservation restrictions and selective acquisition of critical riverside lands	Compact; Environmental Partners	Compact; private			X		
	Preserve Teardrop Park	City; Environmental Partners	City; Environmental Partners			X		
	Preserve the rural vista across the river from downtown	City; Environmental Partners	City; Environmental Partners			X		
Determine long-term needs and impacts of traffic trade-offs northwest of downtown and at the southeast entrance to Concord	Determine the possible long-term need for a Route 106 connector	City	City					X

Concord 20/20 Vision — Implementation Plan

Objective	Task	Implementers	Potential Funding Sources	PRINCIPLES: Vibrant Downtown	Walkable Villages	Natural Environment	Economic Vitality	Transportation
	Study the possible alternative solutions and no-build trade-offs to northwest area problems, as well as Northwest Bypass	City	City					X
Make Loudon Road more attractive and pedestrian-friendly	Redesign Loudon Road to be a village main street with traffic calming, a turning lane and other amenities	City	City		X			X
	Create a zoning overlay district on Loudon Road (and other commercial strips) for new and redeveloped building to reduce curb cuts, relocate parking fields, and create landscape standards	City	City		X			X
	Determine the need for a new exit to I-393 to serve mall traffic	NHDOT; City	NHDOT; City		X			X
Expand and regionalize local transit	Study local transit routes, usage, and determine potential ridership and expansion costs	CNHRPC	CNHRPC					X
	Consider non-traditional options such as TMA systems open to residents and contracts for private jitney services	CNHRPC	CHHRPC					X
Multi-modal mobility	Prepare a bicycle master plan for Concord	City; CNHRPC; NHDOT	City; CNHRPC; NHDOT		X			X
Create an economic development strategy	Develop a strategy in coordination with the comprehensive planning process	City	City				X	
	Coordinate with the state, major institutions and employers, and the Chamber of Commerce	Compact	TCSP				X	
Diversify economic activities and job opportunities	Identify and study potential economic clusters	City	City				X	
	Develop an economic marketing campaign for Concord	City	NH Economic Development Matching Grants; City; Compact				X	
Expand the tax base	Redevelop the Opportunity Corridor and the Penacook tannery site	City	Community Development Finance Authority; NH Eco. Dev. Matching Grants; Office of Economic Initiatives; NH Business Finance Authority	X			X	
Create a TIF district	Create TIF district in north opportunity area to transfer increments to central opportunity area	City	City	X			X	
Preserve historic character	Develop design guidelines for downtown	City; Compact	City; Compact	X				
	Study formation of a local downtown historic or conservation district	City	City	X				
Define downtown boundaries/identity	Create a signage program with design guidelines and assistance	City;DCI/Main Street Program	City;DCI/Main Street Program	X				
Expand housing options	RFQ to identify potential housing developers with appropriate experience	City	City	X	X			
	Establish a revolving loan fund to convert upper story Main Street spaces to residential	City; State; Compact	City; NH Eco. Dev. Grants; NH BFA	X				
Expand retail options	Inventory retail space and maintain database of vacant space	DCI/Main Streets Program	private	X				
	Retail market analysis and identify gaps for downtown and for neighborhood village centers	City; DCI/Main Streets Program	private	X				
	Create a recruitment package	DCI/Main Streets Program	private	X			X	
	If needed, offer incentives such as signage and fit-out technical assistance or funding	City; DCI/Main Streets Program	City and private	X			X	
Improve parking availability and access	Improve parking management to provide a mix of short term and long term parking	City; State	City; State	X				X

Concord 20/20 Vision — **Implementation Plan**

Objective	Task	Implementers	Potential Funding Sources	PRINCIPLES: Vibrant Downtown	Walkable Villages	Natural Environment	Economic Vitality	Transportation
	Create interim surface parking in available lots	City; State	City; State	X				X
Expand entertainment options	Prepare feasibility and market studies	City; Compact; DCI/Main Streets Program	City	X			X	
	Identify appropriate sites	City; Compact; DCI/Main Streets Program	City	X			X	
	Feasibility study to reopen Concord Theater as movie house	City; Compact; DCI/Main Streets Program	City; State	X			X	
	Recruit entertainment businesses	City; Compact; DCI/Main Streets Program	City; Compact; DCI/Main Streets Program	X			X	
	Coordinate with existing arts and cultural institutions	City; Compact; Arts Committee; DCI/Main Streets Program		X			X	
Create an arts district	Identify a site for public art, raise funds and hold a competition	DCI/Main Streets Program and Arts Committee	National Endowment for the Arts	X				
Create a trolley system focused on downtown access	Feasibility and market study to determine potential costs and ridership	Concord Area Transit; City; CNHRPC	Concord Area Transit	X				X
Opportunity Corridor								
Redevelop underutilized parcels: Storrs Street,	Create a Redevelopment Authority or other redevelopment vehicle.	City	City	X	X		X	
	Prepare feasibility and market studies	City	State Eco. Dev. Programs	X			X	
	Prepare an RFP or otherwise market sites in conjunction with owner	City	City	X				
	Make streetscape or other improvements adjacent to redevelopment sites	City	City	X				
Improve parking availability and access	Design and build a new parking structures located to attract downtown users at north and south ends of the Opportunity Corridor	City; State	Federal Funds	X				X
LONG TERM ACTIONS (5+ years)								
Riverside trails	Design, obtain site control and construct the "River Connection", "Oxbow.," and "Heritage Trail Extension" trail systems	City	City; State		X	X		X
Create a trolley system focused on downtown access	If deemed feasible, design and develop trolley system	Concord Area Transit	Federal Funds	X				X
Multi-modal mobility	Develop, map, design, fund and build a system of bike and pedestrian paths and trails, including on-road lanes and sidewalks	CNHRPC; NHDOT	City; NHDOT		X	X		X
Continuing relevance of the vision	Conduct a Five-Year Review of the 2020 Vision and its implementation to confirm and revise it as necessary	Compact	Compact;federal; private	X	X	X	X	X
Opportunity Corridor								
Visual and physical access to the Merrimack from downtown	Design and build the I-93 project to include the depression of the highway, raising of adjacent land and creation of an on-grade bridging experience to the riverside (possibly as a national competition)	NHDOT	NHDOT	X		X		X
Redevelop Central Opportunity Corridor	Coordinate land swap between the state liquor store, Capital Plumbing, and Demoulas	City	City	X			X	
	Create a downtown civic space and preserve open space behind the existing shopping center for recreation	City	City; State	X		X		
	Remove the state parking structure and rebuild it on the other side of Storrs Street with larger capacity to serve musuem and retail.	City	State	X			X	X

Early Action Opportunities

Some of the recommendations listed in the chart can be implemented as early action projects, which would be used to increase public awareness and acceptance for the Vision Principles and represent the first steps towards a much larger accomplishment. Early action projects are those tasks that are reflective of the 20/20 Vision in a broad way; are appealing and understandable; are high profile and have the potential for great publicity; that have the necessary support and leadership in place; provide an opportunity to build partnerships; are achievable within a short period of time; are easy to fund; and lastly, are politically feasible.

In implementing the 20/20 Vision for Concord, successes with early implementation actions will:

- Give confidence in the plan to citizens through visible results of vision planning
- Build on the strengths of existing organizations
- Provide participation opportunities to encourage citizen understanding of and identification with the 20/20 Vision
- Provide early successes that promote each of the three localized goals: a vibrant, livable Downtown, walkable villages, access to open space and rivers
- Provide early successes that speak to each important constituency
- Provide early successes that can be seen in different parts of the city–not only in Downtown

An example of an early action opportunity consists of a streetscape project at Pleasant and Main Streets, which would be combined with a trails initiative along the river. A small manageable project provides some physical evidence of political commitment and funding, while also offering a great opportunity for increased publicity for the Vision. Combining Downtown streetscape efforts with a trails initiative provides an opportunity to build public and private partnership and to address multiple constituencies. To keep the Vision alive and moving forward, this initiative could result in an annual event each spring in which the leadership of the city would join citizens at Pleasant and Main Streets for a walk to the river and a joint picnic or festival. This would provide an annual opportunity to take stock of accomplishments and make commitments for future implementation.

Other examples, taken from the implementation chart, that are clearly doable in the short term and that address multiple Vision Principles are listed below. Many of these tasks have already been initiated by the City, State, or private organizations and provide ideal opportunities to forge new partnerships to promote the 20/20 Vision for Concord. A complete chart of early action implementation recommendations can be found in Appendix I.

Early Action Opportunities

Spring/Summer 2001

- Organize the "Concord Compact" - successor entity to the 20/20 Initiative
- Walkable Communities workshop
- Begin implementation of Sears Block redevelopment

Summer 2001

- Hire new city staff person to focus on a redevelopment entity
- Hire new city staff person to focus on neighborhood revitalization
- Targeted Neighborhood Improvement Program - annual program of streetscape improvements and street tree planting in different neighborhoods
- Vehicle/Pedestrian Safety Improvement Project - Loudon Road Plan
- Concord Area Transit Park & Ride - construct remote parking lot at Memorial Field with shuttle service to Downtown and Pleasant Street businesses and institutions

Fall 2001

- Start an annual "Walk to the River" festival to call attention to the river connection project and progress towards same
  - Use the festival as a family-oriented celebration event for 20/20 Vision
  - Announce the trails program
  - Neighborhood and Village Visions Challenge:
    - Research and prepare competition guidelines and organization
    - Provide $20K total in matching funds
- Organize judging methods and jury
- Compact to provide funding for design assistance for neighborhood projects
- Design Horseshoe Pond Trail ("lunchtime loop")
- Downtown façade and signage improvement competition with winners to get funding for construction up to $15,000 total
- Design streetscape improvements for Main Street/Pleasant Street corner blocks
- Organize a design competition for Concord Area Transit Downtown Bus Shelters for construction in FY 2004
- Develop a 4th grade curriculum unit on the 20/20 Vision Plan that would include data gathering, data interpretation and visioning
- Develop a high school science curriculum, to complement existing water quality monitoring activities, on the relationship between land use and water quality
- Competition for Village Connection signature trail
- Concord Regional Trails Map (existing and proposed)
- Form Concord Main Streets Program
- Pursue funding for two parking garages for the north and south ends of the Opportunity Corridor

Spring 2002

- Begin City Master Plan (through FY 2003)
- Construct Horseshoe Pond Trail and celebrate opening with a run or other event
- Assess and create as appropriate a redevelopment authority or provide for similar initiative
- Targeted Neighborhood Improvement Program - annual program of streetscape improvements in different neighborhoods
- Vehicle/Pedestrian Safety Improvement Project - Plans for Fisherville Road and Downtown

Some Key Elements for Success

The implementation recommendations contain three components that are key for the success of the 20/20 Vision for Concord:

- The Concord 20/20 Compact
- The 20/20 Vision Scorecard
- A Redevelopment Entity

The Concord 20/20 Compact

A key strategy in moving forward with implementation of the Vision Plan is the establishment of a public-private alliance of government and many organizations and individuals from throughout the city. This organization will be the Concord 20/20 Vision Compact, a public-private leadership alliance to steward the Concord 20/20 Vision.

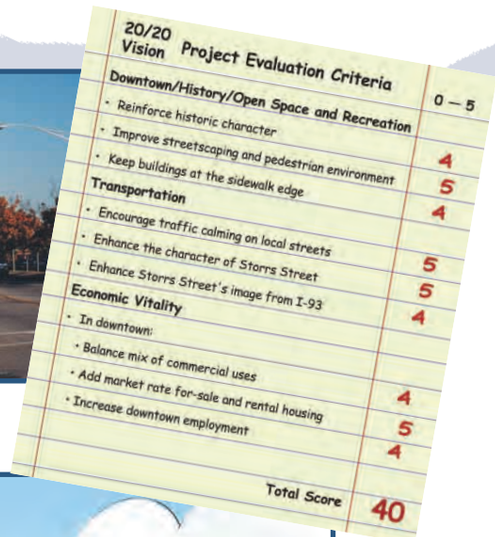
The Concord 20/20 Vision Compact will be a non-profit partnership and membership organization that will oversee, guide, coordinate and manage aspects of the implementation of the 20/20 Vision Plan. The Compact will be the steward of the vision and goals, which it will communicate both to Concord residents and businesses, local government official and agencies, and to potential newcomers. In some cases, the Compact may directly implement projects to achieve the Vision, but a major role will be as a partnership organization whose affiliates, both public and private, will implement projects. The Compact's mission will be to:

- Continue long-term leadership to achieve the 20/20 Vision
- Promote and publicize the 20/20 Vision
- Use the Vision to guide public and private decision-making
- Coordinate public, private, and non-profit actions to achieve the Vision
- Foster widespread public understanding and acceptance of the Vision
- Form partnerships with diverse community and grassroots organizations
- Provide assistance to Compact Partners in implementing the Vision

See Appendix E for a complete organizational description of the Concord 20/20 Vision Compact.

The 20/20 Vision Scorecard

As Concord moves into the twenty-first century, growth and change will affect transportation improvements, the expansion of housing, retail or business opportunities and redevelopment plans. For new development, public infrastructure projects, and other major policy decisions affecting the City, one of the most powerful tools emerging from this Vision Plan is the "20/20 Vision Scorecard." The Scorecard outlines a set of development guidelines based on the five Vision Principles. In a clear and concise format, it provides guidance for everyone. The City can use the scorecard to evaluate development proposals, rank public improvement projects, and market for new economic development. Developers and businesses can access the scorecard before proposing development, eliminating the uncertainty surrounding the regulatory process. Residents can use the scorecard to check on Vision 20/20 progress and hold public officials accountable.



20/20 Vision Project Evaluation Criteria	0 – 5
Downtown/History/Open Space and Recreation	
• Reinforce historic character	4
• Improve streetscaping and pedestrian environment	5
• Keep buildings at the sidewalk edge	4
Transportation	
• Encourage traffic calming on local streets	5
• Enhance the character of Storrs Street	5
• Enhance Storrs Street's image from I-93	4
Economic Vitality	
• In downtown:	
• Balance mix of commercial uses	4
• Add market rate for-sale and rental housing	5
• Increase downtown employment	4
Total Score	40

Three-story buildings at the sidewalk edge (parking behind), space for outdoor cafes, street trees, widened sidewalks, materials such as brick that work with the historic context of Downtown, on-street parking, and mixed uses (retail and offices on the ground floor, apartments or condos above) all contribute to goals for Concord in 2020.

VISION 20/20 SCORECARD: PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Project:

Date of Review:

PRINCIPLES	Themes	Elements	Guidelines	SCORE: Weight	Max. Points Available	Score	Comments
A City of Villages: General Vision Guidelines							
General Vision Guidelines	*Concentrated Development instead of Sprawl*	A) Development in brownfield sites					
		B) Infill development					
		C) Development within 1/2 mile radius of village centers					
		D) Development in areas of existing infrastructure (roads, water and sewer)					
		E) Sites served by planned CAT routes connecting villages and the downtown					
		F) Development that functions as a catalyst, encouraging economic or land use redevelopment					
		G) Use of civic improvements to attract and enhance redevelopment					
		H) Promotion of adaptive reuse of existing buildings					
			A City of Villages: General Vision Guidelines TOTAL		0	0	
PRINCIPLE 1: A Vibrant, Liveable Downtown							
PRINCIPLE 1: A Vibrant, Liveable Downtown	*General*	A) Preserves historic character of a district	1. New construction relates to scale, patterns, fenestration and materials of nearby historic structures.				
			2. Identifies key landmarks and preserves views to them.				
			3. Encourages adaptive reuse of historic structures.				
		B) Creates visual identity Downtown.	1. Creates a streetscape environment that reflects its importance as the primary open space in the Downtown.				
			2. Provides signage in scale with pedestrian environment, and related to historic patterns.				
		C) Promotes more concentrated & mixed land uses	1. Attracts regional draws				
			2. Develops attached buildings				
			3. Building facades address street				
			4. Expands housing options				
			5. Expands retail options				
			6. Expands entertainment options through creation of "Destination Districts."				
			7. Introduces grocery retail in a new market area				
			8. New uses reinforce land use plan				
			9. Incorporates green building technologies				
		D) Provides accessible public open space	1. Provides plazas or open space at appropriate places				
			2. Provides street furniture to encourage interactior				
			3. Provides adjacent food service establishments				
			4. Provides trees, shrubs, plantings, and irrigation				
			5. Provides pedestrian-scaled lighting to 3-foot candles				
			6. Links to/provides adjacent pathways, trails or streets				
			7. Provides public art and cultural activities				
		E) Creates strong connections to all of Concord	1. Extends strong block patterns and reinforces existing grids.				
			2. Provides regular, frequent intersections - safe, easy pedestrian crossing				
			3. Creates blocks of similar size to surrounding blocks				
			4. Incorporates on-street parking to buffer pedestrian				
			5. Makes frequent connections to pathways & trail systems				
			PRINCIPLE 1: A Vibrant, Liveable Downtown TOTAL		0	0	

VISION 20/20 SCORECARD: PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Project:

Date of Review:

PRINCIPLES	Themes	Elements	Guidelines	SCORE: Weight	Max. Points Available	Score	Comments
PRINCIPLE 2: Neighborhoods Served by Walkable Villages							
GOAL 2: Neighborhoods Served by Walkable Villages	*General*	**A) Strengthens Characteristics of Centers**	1. Siting considerations 2. Within identified boundary of Center				
		B) Connects the villages & center to each other & open space	1. Provides pedestrian and bicycle facilities 2. Establishes strong block patterns reinforcing street grids.				
		C) Preserves existing vegetation & speciman trees					
		D) Promotes compact & mixed land uses within	1. Encourages compact development 2. Encourages mixed-use development & walking between destinations 3. Expands housing options 4. Provides accessible public open space 5. Provides parking options				
		E) Creates visual identity	1. Signage is in scale with pedestrian environment 2. Complies with streetscape guidelines				
	Village Districts	**A) Penacook**	1. Encourages adaptive reuse of significant properties into mixed-use complexes of retail, offices and housing. 2. Extends existing street patterns in new housing developments with similar block sizes, regular connections and pedestrian safe intersections. 3. Creates or supports new "Village District" near West Concord on Fisherville Road. 4. Provides bicycle paths along Penacook Ave & River				
		B) West Concord	1. Establishes bluff protections 2. Creates or supports new "Village District" near Penacook on Fisherville Road. 3. Protects historic village of West Concord 4. Provides more connections and travel choices 5. Manages access along Fisherville Road to minimize traffic conflict and maximize pedestrian safety. 6. Calms traffic with increased & controlled intersections 7. Supports walkability thru pedestrian paths				
		C) The Heights	1. Creates an identity along Loudon Road 2. Promotes pedestrian safety through signalized pedestrian crossings and paving treatments 3. Contributes to continous street edge with parking behind building. 4. Uses civic investments to foster community activity 5. Expands mall retail area to accommodate new projects				
		D) East Concord	1. Improves streetscape within Village District 2. Creates shares parking facilities in rear of building, off-street 3. Creates additional connections to recreation with new pedestrian and bike path networks. 4. Establishes or supports riverfront land protections 5. Proposed riverfront developments take form of clustered developments including mixed uses, large areas of preserved open space, ample river connections, vehicular bridge connection to Downtown. 6. Improves pedestrian connections from village center to river, across I-93. 7. All areas linked by pedestrian and bicycle pathways				
		E) The South End	1. Preserves residential character of South Main Street 2. Buffers residences from area business & industrial 3. Encourages adaptive reuse at existing buildings, especially historic rail buildings & marsh industrial area 4. Expands residential neighborhoods through redevelopment of the Blue Cross site. 5. Expands park areas 6. Creates a network of bike paths to connect parks				
		PRINCIPLE 2: Neighborhoods Served by Walkable Villages TOTAL			0	0	

VISION 20/20 SCORECARD: PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Project:

Date of Review:

PRINCIPLES	Themes	Elements	Guidelines	SCORE: Weight	Max. Points Available	Score	Comments
PRINCIPLE 3: Preservation and Access to Natural Environment							
PRINCIPLE 3: Preservation & Access to the Natural Environment	*General*	**A) Reinforces a system of protected open space**	1. Preserves open space adajcent to the Merrimack River and on the bluffs 2. Preserves rural and farmland areas. 3. Proposed development is within a Village District 4. Established tools for promoting conservation in Rural Zones are used -- land trust, exchange of development rights, land acquistion, and conservation easements. 5. Creates public access to protected natural areas				
		B) Creates an open space system & connections within subdivision developments	1. New residential development includes pedestrian and bicycle pathway networks 2. Clusters residential development near village centers and protects natural areas.				
		C) Water resources are protected through stormwater management & non-point source pollution mitigation.					
	River Connections	**A) Develops a system of paths along river valley**	1. Creates or supports loops of the Oxbow Trails near Penacook Center, West & East Concord Centers 2. Creates or supports loops of the River Connections near East Concord, Visitors' Center, Downtown & the Heights 3. Creates or supports new trails extended south serving Bow and South End.				
		B) Creates or supports a system of shared paths serving pedestrians & off-road bikes.	1. Provides a minimum path width of 10 feet 2. Provides paths composed of stone dust or other natural percolating material. 3. Provides paved access to the Downtown River Connection (to meet accessibility guidelines).				
		C) Creates or supports a pattern of pedestrian & bicycle Access Corridors	1. Contributes to access corridors between village center and public trail system. 2. Creates or supports trailhead facilities located where each Access Corridor meets the paths				
		D) Creates or supports a pattern of watersheet access points -- the Water Trail	1. Augments the existing public access facilities 2. Connects the Water Trail to the path system 3. Provides parking and security facilities at Water Trail				
	View Preservation	**E) Creates or supports Trailhead facilities**	1. Supports outdoor central meeting space further anchoring new residences along boundary 2. Establishes free-standing kiosk at trailhead locations for info on path system, routes, distances and key features. 3. Provides modest amount of parking for improved access to larger open green space.				
		F) Creates new pedestrian or bicycle bridges as part of the path system.	1. Bridges are designed to blend into natural environment 2. Bridges are constructed with durable, natural materials.				
		G) Creates or supports the Circle Path linking outlying areas within the city to the rivers.					
	Tax Base	**A) Preserves long-range views of the City of Concord and surrounding countryside.**	1. Preserves views from river bluffs to the river 2. Preserves views from centers to surrounding countryside 3. Preserves views from hills surrounding city to the city and surrounding countryside				
		PRINCIPLE 3: Preservation and Access to Natural Environment TOTAL			0	0	

VISION 20/20 SCORECARD: PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Project:

Date of Review:

PRINCIPLES	Themes	Elements	Guidelines	SCORE: Weight	Max. Points Available	Score	Comments
PRINCIPLE 4: Economic Vitality							
PRINCIPLE 4: Economic Vitality	Downtown	A) Expands the City's tax base	1. Provides net new jobs for Concord residents				
			2. Provides new jobs for other area residents				
			3. Grows the labor pool to attract new residents to Concord				
			4. Provides opportunities to diversify the job base				
	Villages		5. Provides new jobs at or above the living wage				
			6. Reduces reliance on the property tax				
	Transportation		7. Ensures that municipal services are sufficiently funded				
		B) Strengthens the economic vitality of Downtown	1. Brings new retail and businesses to Main Street				
	Natural Environment		2. Strengthens role of Downtown as regional destination				
			3. Generates additional disposal income for Downtown bus.				
		C) Strengthens villages as support to surrounding n	1. Adds convenience and service businesses				
			2. Diversifies and expands mom and pop businesses				
		D) Transportation improvements that enhance	1. Improves Concord's competitive economic position				
			2. Opens development sites for economic diversification				
		E) Enhances land values	1. Provides public improvements such as infrastructure and amenities				
			PRINCIPLE 4: Economic Vitality TOTAL		0	0	

VISION 20/20 SCORECARD: PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Project:

Date of Review:

PRINCIPLES	Themes	Elements	Guidelines	SCORE: Weight	Max. Points Available	Score	Comments
PRINCIPLE 5: Transportation That Serves the Community							
PRINCIPLE 5: Transportation That Serves the Community	General	A) Preserves I-93 and rail right-of-way (ROW) corridor	1) Establishes two additional lanes on west side of the river while reserving space for riverfront park, and rail ROW..				
		B) Expands the street grid and transportation choices	1. Encourages creation of secondary road networks to facilitate short (one or two mile) trips				
		C) Supports Arterial Roadway Improvements	1. Introduces median to channelize traffic & introduce additional landscaping				
			2. Introduces center turn lane				
			3. Introduces landscaping, signage & sidewalk strip at				
			4. Reorganizes new development or additions to put buildings near sidewalks and parking in rear				
			5. Encourages new development on parcels set back from the road on side streets - establishing a node				
			6. Encourages vehicular circulation network on cross and side streets to relieve arterial congestion				
			7. Creates and encourages a signage & amenity program for district				
			8. Establishes bike lanes and pedestrian crosswalks				
		D) Parking and Access Management Programs	1. Promotes shared driveways, off-street interconnections between facilities.				
			2. Promotes shared parking in distributed, smaller lots				
			3. Promotes parking behind active land uses				
			4. Organizes parking around pedestrian connections and landscape features				
			5. Includes shade trees, pedestrian scale lighting and attractive signage				
		E) Reinforces existing or proposed transit by	1. Encourages Concord Area Transit (CAT) use.				
		F) Creates or participates in private jitney/shuttle/TMA program					
			PRINCIPLE 5: Transportation That Serves the Community TOTAL		0	0	
TOTALS		A City of Villages -- General Vision Guidelines					
		PRINCIPLE 1: A Vibrant, Livable Downtown					
		PRINCIPLE 2: Neighborhoods Served by Walkable Villages					
		PRINCIPLE 3: Preservation & Access to the Natural Environment					
		PRINCIPLE 4: Economic Vitality					
		PRINCIPLE 5: Transportation that Serves the Community					
			TOTAL =				0

A Redevelopment Entity

The Vision, "Concord: City of Villages," concentrates development where it can most contribute to the "critical mass" necessary to increase land values to help pay for infrastructure necessary to support them, and reinforce the vibrant, mixed-use villages and Downtown that residents desire. Without proper zoning and, possibly, public incentives, new office development is likely to go to greenfield sites, consuming undeveloped land and promulgating sprawl throughout the city. Commercial and industrial development in the Opportunity Corridor may have to be induced with a range of incentives.

"Plans take a back seat when development is proposed...plans must be backed by political will."
- 20/20 Workshop Participant

These incentives encouraging redevelopment of brownfield sites in the Opportunity Corridor can best be provided through the creation of a redevelopment entity within or associated with City government. The City has funded a position in the Community and Economic Development Department for a professional to research and make recommendations on a redevelopment authority or similar entity. The City plans to fill this position this summer and be ready to make a decision on an economic development entity next year.

The ability to plan for the long-term and make visionary policy decisions will be greatly enhanced by a redevelopment authority or similar entity. New Hampshire provides for redevelopment activities in several ways. The most likely choice for Concord is creation of a Municipal Economic Development and Revitalization District, for which a development plan and program would be required. The Vision Plan for the Downtown and Opportunity Corridor, described in Section III, would be the basis of this required development plan. In conformance with an approved development plan, Concord would have the ability to:

- Acquire, improve, etc. developments to improve physical facilities, quality of life and quality of transportation
- Acquire land or easements through negotiation or eminent domain
- Adopt parking and traffic regulations in the district
- Require that buildings support pedestrian systems
- Make streetscape improvements
- Acquire property for the district
- Lease air rights over public property

An advisory board would be created for each development district and would include a majority of owners or occupants of property within or adjacent to the district. This board would advise the City on implementation of the development program. The City would also have the power to issue 30-year bonds to finance development. There is flexibility as to the exact nature of the redevelopment entity; the City could create a department or designate an existing agency or municipal housing and redevelopment authority, or form a non-profit corporation to administer development districts.

See Appendix H for a complete description of organizational models for a redevelopment entity.

A MILLENNIUM GIFT FROM ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER

Concord, New Hampshire is a living city. Growth and change are inevitable. What is not inevitable is loss of control over the future. This 20/20 Vision for Concord is the first step in an extraordinary process that has put the future in the hands of the city. The Vision Principles and corresponding implementation recommendations described in this document will shape the city in distinct ways in the coming 20 years and beyond. With these Principles in hand, the citizens of Concord can look optimistically towards the future… truly offering a millennium gift from one generation to another.

Acknowledgements

The Initiative for a 20/20 Vision for Concord would like to thank the hundreds of members of the community who have devoted their time and effort to working with us and the Goody, Clancy & Associates consultant team in developing this 20/20 Vision for Concord. Many of your ideas have been incorporated into this Vision and will enhance the city for generations to come.

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New Hampshire Department of Transportation
Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission
The Citizens of Greater Concord

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Concord Hospital
Castle Springs Water
Central NH Regional Planning Commission
Citizens Bank of New Hamphire
City of Concord
Comi's Hallmark
Concord Area Transit
Concord Board of Realtors
Concord Community TV
Concord Monitor
Concord Recreation and Parks Department
Concord Public Library - Concord & Penacook Branches
Concord Union School District
Connie Rosemont
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First Colebrook Bank
Flood and Co.
Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce
Havenwood-Heritage Heights
Jon Greenberg
Eileen Keim
Laconia Savings Bank
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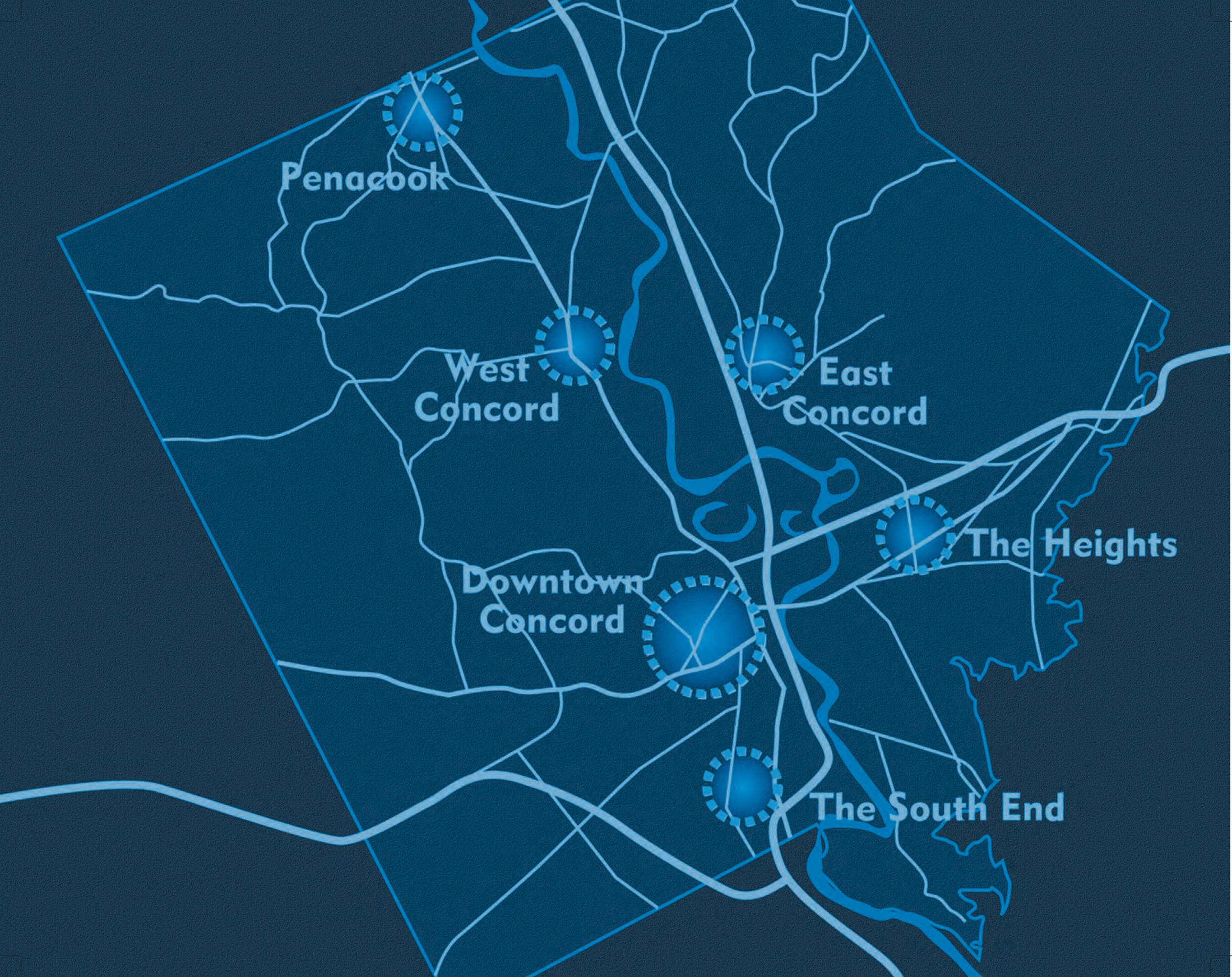
For further information about the 20/20 Vision and how the project is moving forward, please visit the project web site at

www.Concord2020vision.net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West Concord
East Concord
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Downtown Concord
The South End