

COBBOSSEE CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN



For larger image, see end of Section I.

REDEVELOPMENT PARCELS



For larger image, see end of Section I.

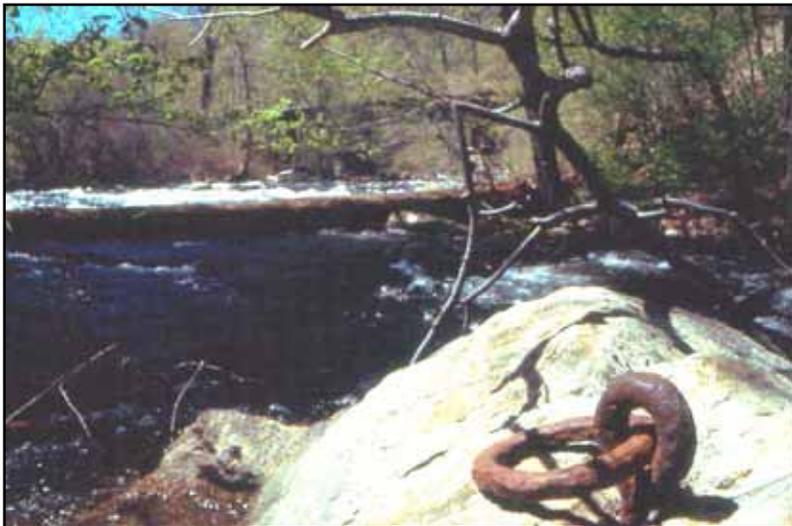
COBBOSSEE CORRIDOR'S RICH HISTORY

A COBBOSSEE CORRIDOR HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Provided by Robbins Historical Research, Inc.

The City of Gardiner owes her modern existence to the ancient Cabbossa. For centuries the local Native Americans camped and fished for sturgeon here. They also used the stream as a corridor of passage between the mighty Kennebec and the Chain of Ponds extending north and west almost to modern day Norridgewock and Farmington.

It was here on the Cobbossee that Robert Hallowell Gardiner chose to locate the earliest lumber and grist mills from which the settlements of the entire upper Kennebec river valley grew. The first settlers of Gardinerston arrived in the fall of 1760. Included in their small company were a builder of Grist-mills, a saw-mill wright, a house carpenter, and a wheelwright. Landing their craft



on the bank of the wide creek then marking the mouth of the Cobbiseconte, the first log huts were here erected, followed immediately by the first lumber and grist mills.

Dr Gardiner had “ in a few years completed at Gardinerston, now Gardiner, two saw mills, a grist-mill, fulling mill, pot-ash, wharf, stores, and many houses,...and was at great expense in introducing settlers and furnishing them with supplies...His exertions gave great stimulus to the settlements; for many years his grist-mill was the only one in the country, and settlers came thirty miles with their meal bags upon their backs, from the interior, or in canoes by the river, to get their grists ground.” (Hanson, History of Gardiner, 1852)

By 1764, 200 settlers had arrived in Cabbassa and Cushnoc (Hallowell/Augusta). In 1771 Hallowell, Vassalboro, Winslow and

Winthrop were all incorporated thanks to the settlement brought about by the mills on the Cobbossee at Gardinerston.

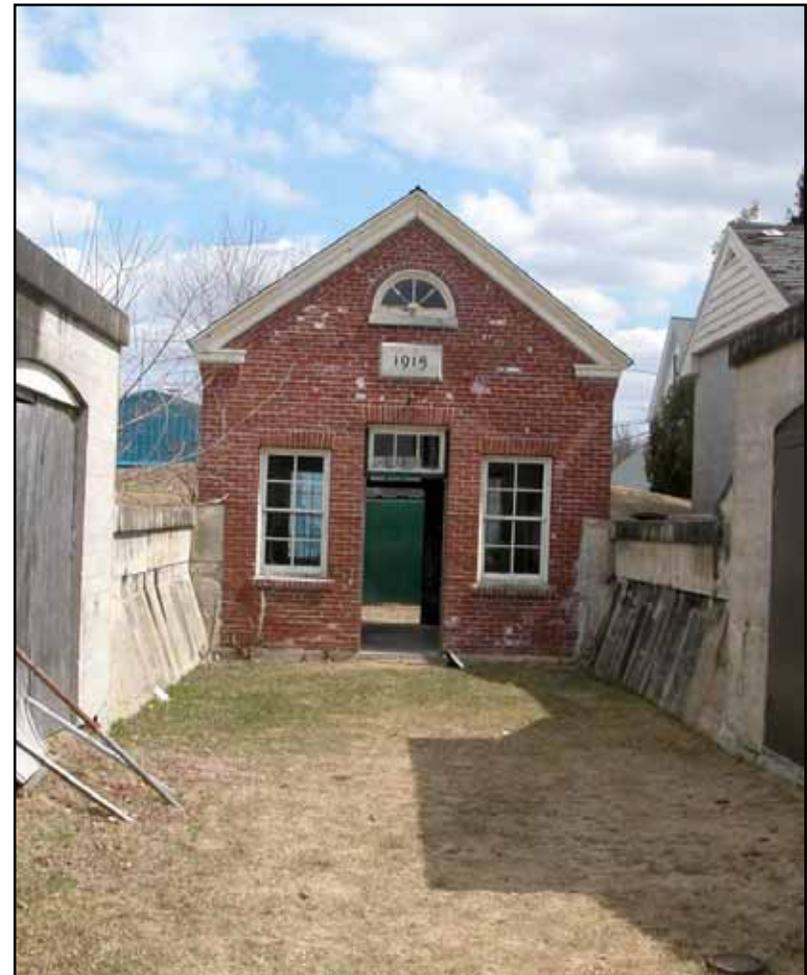
"The valley of the Cabbassa-contiag must have presented a picturesque appearance before the hand of civilization had marred its natural beauty; and especially the deep gorge commencing near the New Mills, and continuing almost to the mouth. The wild, shaggy glen, filled with a rich growth of forest, the ever sonorous waterfalls, and the general beauty of the stream are not often equaled. Even as late as 1820 the young people of the town found beautiful places of resort among the tangled shrubbery that fringed its silver marge." (Hanson's History of Gardiner, 1852).

"Even as late as 1820 the young people of the town found beautiful places of resort among the tangled shrubbery that fringed its silver marge."

This stream extends for approximately one and one-third miles and drops 127 feet in elevation. There are seven recognized mill sites, each of which has seen many changes of use and construction. Along the Cobbossee the foundry where John Stone made the first cast iron plows in this area of Maine; lead pipe works; carriage shops; shingle and match factories were all destroyed by the fire of 1849. There soon followed a string of paper, textile and shoe factories all nestled along the stream corridor taking their energy from the strength of the stream. Here the entire industrial mill/factory story of this City, State and Nation can be told.

The Cobbossee presents wonderful opportunities today for physical and temporal passage. It is appropriate that Gardiner should now

develop a plan to reharness this strength of the stream as the City moves ahead (with a head over its shoulder learning from the past). The Cobbossee will always run through the heart of the city. History and Progress meet again in Gardiner.



SUMMARY OF THE MASTER PLAN

PLAN DESCRIPTION

This Cobbossee Corridor Master Plan describes the Corridor's redevelopment and open space potential. It is a guide to the revitalization of the Corridor as an economic engine, as an extension of Gardiner's vital downtown, and as a key natural and recreational resource.

1. Historic/Cultural Context

Throughout the plan, the rich cultural heritage of the Corridor is emphasized – calling for trails, the restoration of the old railroad trestle, and informative signage that interprets cultural artifacts and tell the story of the Cobbossee Stream's past. These features can and will attract residents, visitors, and tourists. They also highlight the Corridor's uniqueness, thereby attracting residential and commercial investment.

The Stream has historically been a center for hydro-powered industry. With as many as 10 dams built between New Mills and the Kennebec River, in the 19th century the Corridor was a powerhouse for numerous businesses. This fascinating history needs to be retold, perhaps in the form of an outdoor museum along the stream. Furthermore, the Corridor provides educational opportunities for history programs in the local schools. A museum-on-the-stream, a trail with informational, historic points of interest, would serve both as an outdoor classroom for local schools and as a cultural tourism feature.

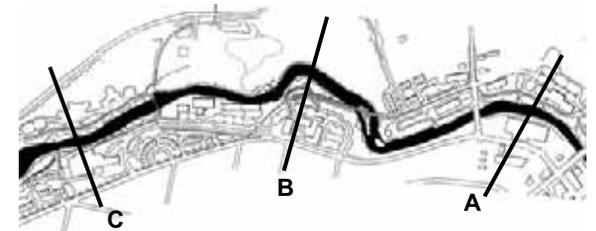
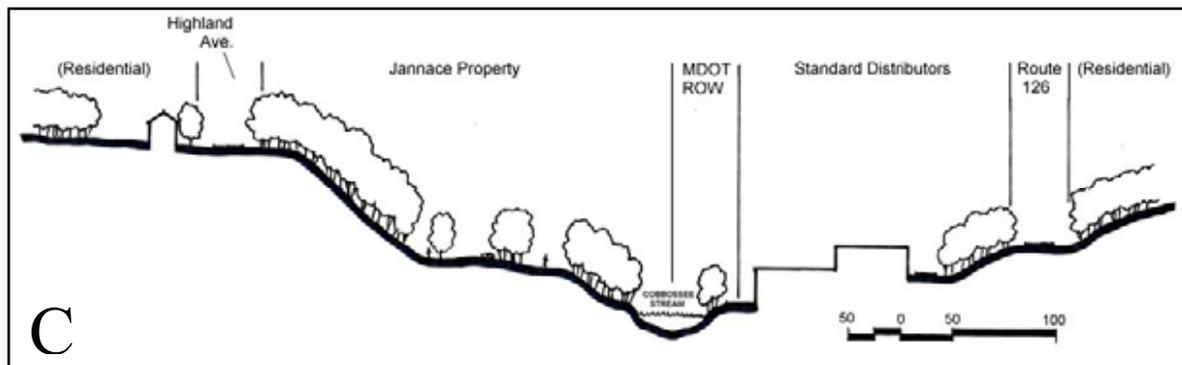
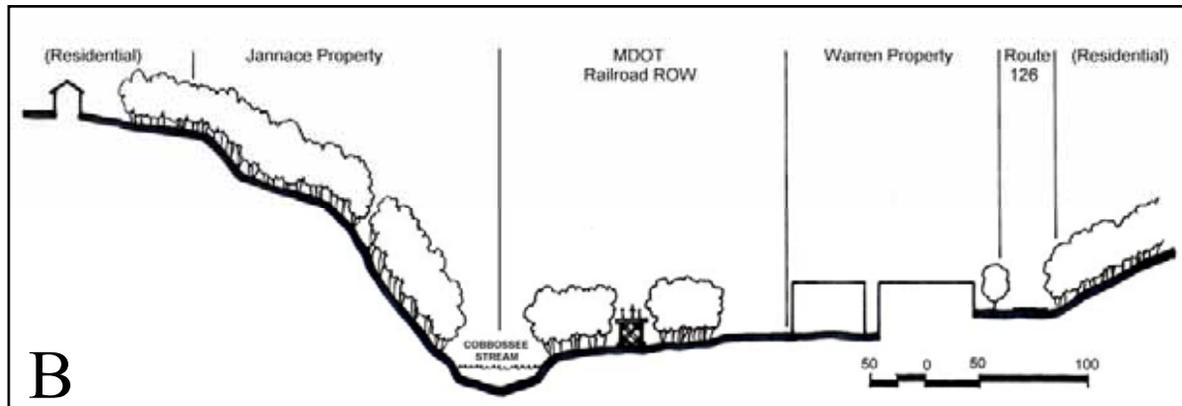
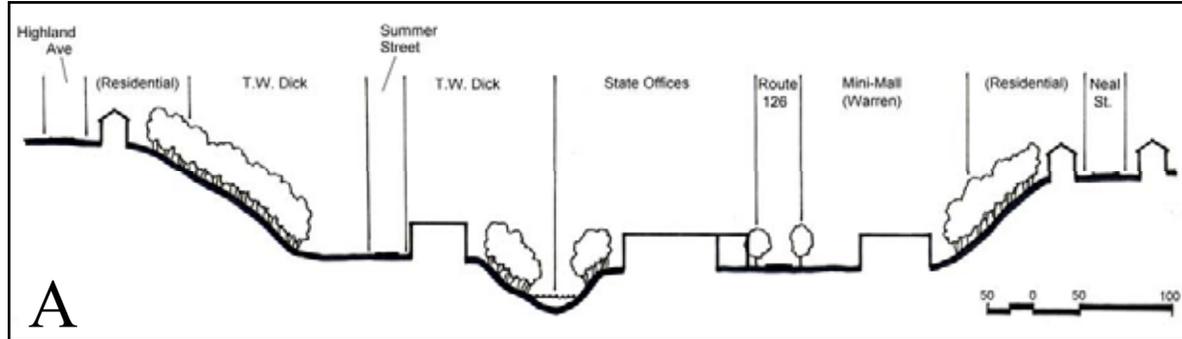
2. Environmental Context

Cobbossee Stream is an important natural resource that provides both wildlife & plant habitat, and recreational opportunities (kayaking, fishing). It is the defining feature of the Corridor, with remarkable physical characteristics that today make it a unique scenic and recreational resource. The Corridor's dramatic topography is part of its natural beauty; while these steep slopes (and the stream below) provide scenic views, they are also constraints to development within the Corridor.

While past industry along the stream contributed to its pollution, the exodus of industry and today's environmental standards mean a cleaner stream environment. Only three dams remain today, one of which, the dam at Gardiner Paperboard (dam #5), is to be removed in the immediate future. While the removal of this dam marks the loss of an historic artifact, the benefits of removal (including fish passage, stream restoration, and removal of a safety hazard) have been determined to outweigh its preservation.



COBBOSSEE STREAM CORRIDOR CROSS-SECTIONS



For larger image, see end of Section I.

CORRIDOR-WIDE INFRASTRUCTURE

3. Utilities

In order to promote high-quality development in the Corridor, essential utilities must be available and must have the capacity and quality (of service) to support such development. Since the Corridor has long accommodated the demands of commercial and industrial development, its present utility infrastructure – water, sewer, and electric – generally has more than adequate capacity and is of reasonable quality to serve future commercial and residential development. Future upgrades of individual utility systems may be required in the long run. *(See the Utilities Analysis in Section III of this report.)*



Since one of the remaining dams on the Stream is currently an active power generator and supplier (Consolidated Hydro), an opportunity exists to supply power directly to new development within the Corridor. Further research and coordination with the Consolidated Hydro should be pursued – not only for its potential economic and marketing advantages, but for its environmental benefits.

However, one service need that is not well met is communications services. Telephone and cable TV service is available, but the availability of wireless communications/cellular phone service, and other telecommunications/fiber-optic services must be updated if future development within the Corridor is to include professional office, home office, or conference center development.

4. Traffic & Access

While Route 126 between New Mills and downtown serves the southern side of the Corridor well, the capacity of the intersection of Routes 126 and 201, and along Bridge Street to the Randolph bridge intersection, is limited due to very high traffic volumes. There are also some high crash locations within this Bridge Street corridor, and hence major safety concerns. The number of intersections (Highland Ave., Summer Street) and entrance drives (Hannaford/Subway in particular) along Bridge Street, all place constraints on new development along this corridor.

The impact of a new development on traffic capacity is based on whether or not the new use will increase traffic volume as compared to the previous use. As long as a new



This section of Route 201 (Water Street to the Randolph bridge) has high traffic volumes, and is at capacity already.

Due to these MDOT permitting requirements, access management standards, and reduced traffic capacities of downtown intersections, several redevelopment sites in the Cobbossee Corridor face constraints.

development does not increase current traffic volumes, it is usually permissible; if it is projected to increase traffic, then some type of mitigation is required (to bring traffic down to "pre-development" level). Under the Cobbossee Plan, this could mean installing traffic lights at the Highland Ave/Route 201 intersection. It is possible that some of the traffic constraints may be alleviated through increased alternative transportation opportunities and other creative solutions.

Due to these MDOT permitting requirements, access management standards, and reduced traffic capacities of downtown intersections, several redevelopment sites in the Cobbossee Corridor face constraints. High trip generating uses (such as retail or fast-food/drive-thru services) will be more difficult to mitigate, particularly in the T.W. Dick/Summer Street area. For more detail on traffic analysis and permitting issues, see Section III.

5. Pedestrian/Bicycle Network: Sidewalks & Trails

The Cobbossee pedestrian/bike network will provide new recreational opportunities, improve pedestrian and bike access and safety, expand upon alternative transportation routes, and also highlight the natural, scenic beauty of the Cobbossee Stream. The proposed trail network also features an outdoor "museum-on-the-stream", where interpretive and educational signage will be placed along trails and at historic points of interest. The pedestrian network will enhance existing and future businesses and residential development in the Corridor and downtown, by improving the overall walkability of Gardiner center and encouraging pedestrian activity.

Improving recreational and alternative transportation opportunities in the Cobbossee Corridor will add to the livability and quality of life in Gardiner. The Cobbossee Corridor lies within a 5000-foot radius of the downtown

(~1/9 mile at its furthest point) and is part of the Central Business District, so that trail and sidewalk improvements in this area contribute to the overall walkability of central Gardiner. The proposed new sidewalks and trails, and area trail connections (i.e. the Kennebec River Rail Trail, KRRT), create better and safer options for walking and bicycling, which in turn provide for a healthier community.

The current pedestrian/bicycle network in the Cobbossee area consists of an incomplete sidewalk system and informal/unmaintained off-street trails (*see the Existing Sidewalk Infrastructure diagram*). Pedestrian crossings, too, are in need of improvement. The goal of the pedestrian/bicycle plan for the Corridor is to improve access to the Stream and associated open space, and make connections between the Corridor, the KRRT, the downtown and waterfront park, and adjacent neighborhoods and three nearby schools.

In order to stimulate interest and investment in the Cobbossee Stream Corridor, as well as draw visitors to the area, the plan proposes the rehabilitation of the railroad trestle that crosses the Cobbossee Stream, to serve as an eye-catching, scenic centerpiece for the Cobbossee trail system.

The Cobbossee Corridor pedestrian network is already moving forward – the City has recently applied for MDOT Enhancement Funds (2006-2007) to develop a trail from the KRRT into the Cobbossee Corridor, and to rehabilitate the trestle (the “Cobbossee Stream Trail”) (*see Section III, Cobbossee Trails*). In addition, the City’s current Capital Improvement program will be replacing 3.73 miles (or 27%) of the total sidewalk inventory over the next 5 years.

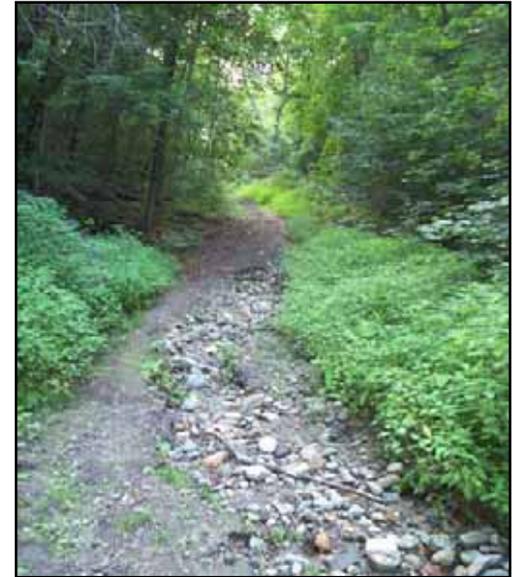
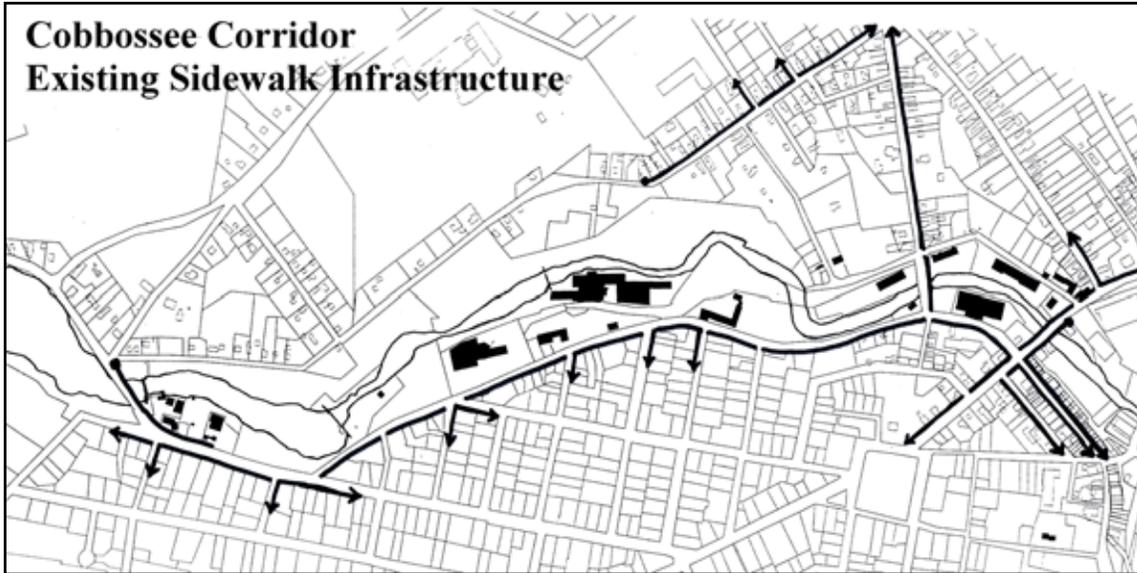
Finally, the stretch of Route 126 southwest of the Corridor, from the New Mills bridge to the Gardiner Middle School (West Gardiner town line) is scheduled for reconstruction by MDOT in the summer of 2005. The City has recently passed a Council Resolution urging MDOT to include a new sidewalk to the Middle School during its reconstruction.

6. Gateway/Streetscape Enhancements

Route 126 is the major transportation spine through the Corridor, connecting the downtown with West Gardiner and I-95. This entire Corridor is a major gateway to the downtown, and should welcome visitors to Gardiner. The streetscape design proposed in the plan features street trees, street lights, new sidewalks and other design elements that provide a visual link between the Corridor and the downtown.

The New Mills bridge marks the primary gateway entry into the Corridor. When it is replaced, it should be with a landmark/signature bridge. Further, under this plan the Water District yard next to the bridge is to be converted to an attractive Cobbossee trailhead, and Route 126 between the Middle School and the bridge is to be upgraded and sidewalk added. New landscaping is also proposed.

**Cobbossee Corridor
Existing Sidewalk Infrastructure**



Proposed Cobbossee Stream Trail

Trail segment shown as part of the Cobbossee Corridor Master Plan

*Trail segment that MDOT
funding would be applied to.*

