

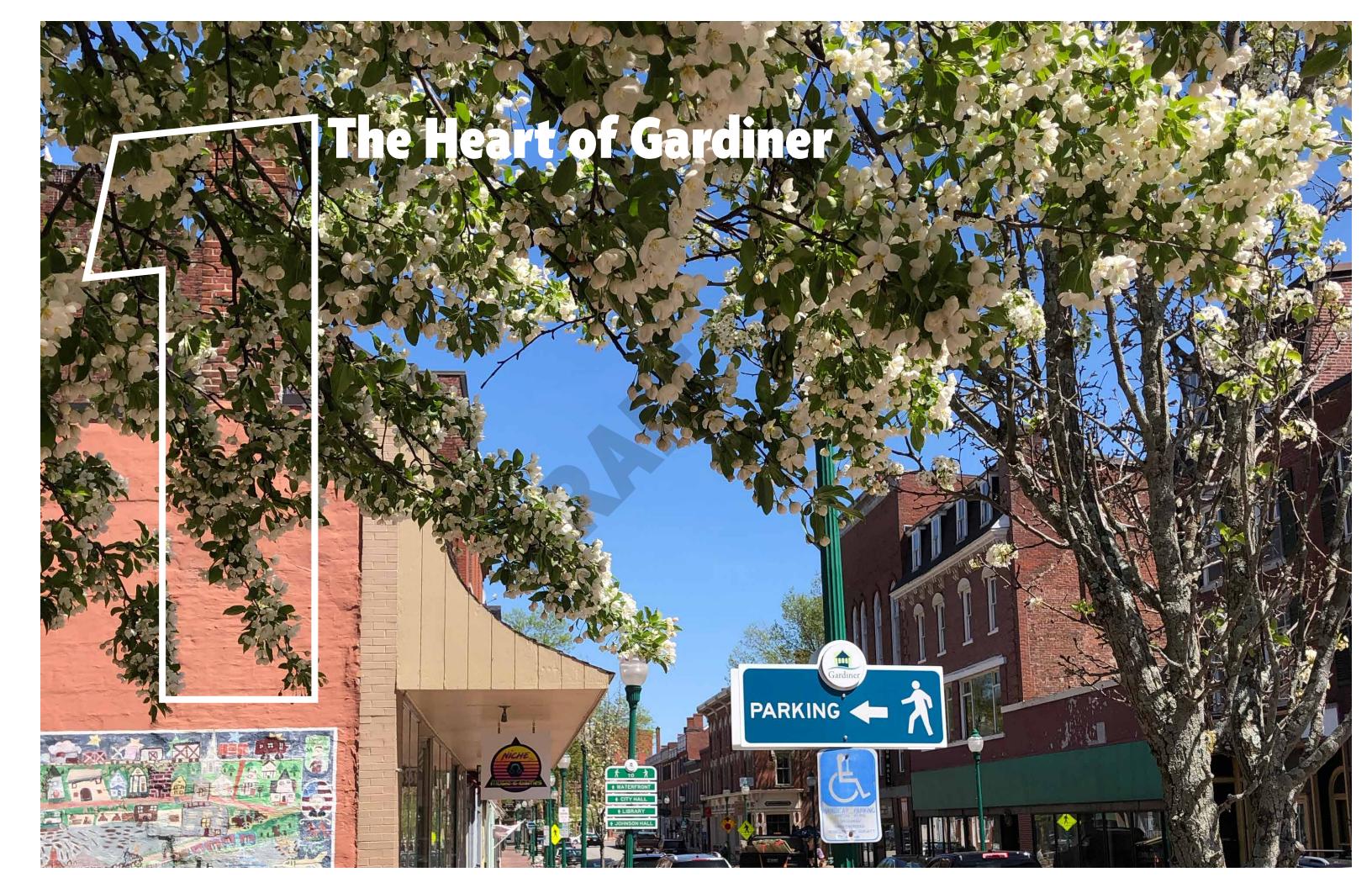




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The Heart of Gardiner

Executive Summary

Springing from the Heart and Soul Process, this Plan provides an guide to improve and revitalize Gardiner's historic Downtown, which is the geographic and cultural "The Heart of Gardiner".

This master plan effort, spearheaded by the City of Gardiner, Gardiner Main Street, and a host of community advocates, compiles community input, economic and landscape analysis to build a master plan that will guide Downtown Gardiner towards a more resilient and vibrant future.

This project was made possible by a generous grant from the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry's Coastal Communities Grant Program. This grant program is designed to ensure sustainable and vibrant coastal communities, improve coastal public access, address effects of land use activity on water quality, restore coastal habitats, and prepare for future storms, erosion, flooding, and other coastal hazards. The Downtown Master Plan will provide the road map to implement the community's vision for the future of the historic downtown while addressing the grant program's priority goals.

This plan represents a collaborative effort between the City of Gardiner, Gardiner main Street, Kennebec Valley Council of Governments and Maine Coastal Program.

Plan Goals



Support Downtown Placemaking This plan provides recommendations that are designed to further strengthen Downtown Gardiner's sense of place by building upon the existing downtown character.

Placemaking recommendations build upon the physical materials and natural characteristics that make it unique from other Maine and New England Downtowns.

Build Economic Vibrancy

This plan identifies key redevelopment opportunities



within the downtown, and reviews regional and local economic datasets to provide recommendations for future economic development and business attraction/ retention efforts that can strengthen Downtown Gardiner's economic vibrancy

and resiliency for years to come.

Develop Environmental Resilience

Downtown Gardiner is built on the confluence of the Cobbossee Stream and the Kennebec River. This natural



junction exposes the historic downtown core to significant flood hazards. This plan provides recommendations that can strengthen the Downtown's resilience in the face of future storm events and floods.



Plan Recommendations

This plan recommends projects that support downtown placemaking, build economic vibrancy and build environmental resilience. These projects are discussed in greater detail within chapter 3 - Gardiner Tomorrow. At a glance, these recommendations include:

A: Support Downtown Access for All Abilities

B: Redevelop the Arcade

C: Enhance Downtown Gateways

D: Strengthen Downtown's Identity

E: Leverage Downtown's Existing Parking Supply

F: Build a Network of Green Stormwater Infrastructure

G: Partner in Regional Flood Resilience Studies

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Kennebec River

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Gardiner

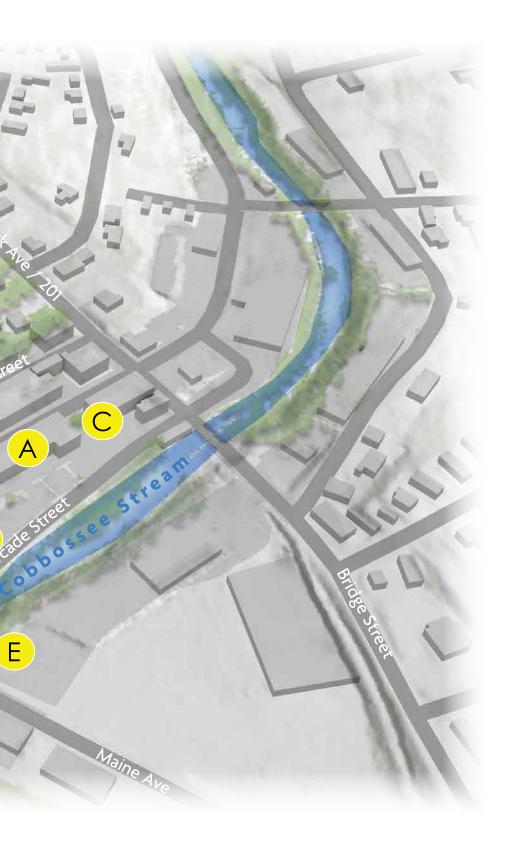
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Project History

Planning History Community Heart and Soul - 2012

Led by the City of Gardiner, Gardiner Main Street and the Gardiner Board of Trade, this process engaged the community to directly invest in and engage with their City. Renewed interest in civic involvement resulted in waterfront concerts, volunteer beautification efforts and more.

The Heart and Soul process also resulted in updates to the Comprehensive plan, and numerous economic development achievements.

Using the results of this intensive work, eleven (11) city values were developed and adopted by the city council by resolution on October 9, 2013 and help guide citywide improvement efforts to this day. They include:

Family Friendliness: We value spaces and organizations that are available to residents of all ages and income levels.

Education: We value an education system that prepares students for a global environment.

Connection to Nature: We value outdoor recreation opportunities and preservation of open space.

History, Arts and Culture: We value history while continuing to develop diverse cultural activities for residents of all ages.

Strong Local Economy - We value a strong economy that welcomes businesses and entrepreneurs while maintaining the character of community including the historic downtown.

Sense of Community: We value a community where residents are helpful, caring, and respectful of each other.

Community Involvement & Volunteerism: We place high value on volunteering and civic involvement.

Livability: We value preserving the character of the city while ensuring that residents of all ages and incomes have access to family support systems,. transportation, and arts and culture opportunities.

Infrastructure: We value safe., well maintained roads, sidewalks, schools and public spaces that are accessible and clean in all seasons.

Unique Physical Assets: We value the city's unique natural and built assets that are at the heart of the community's identity and believe they should be available to all residents.

Inclusive, Responsive Government: We value open, two way communication between residents and community decision makers.

City of Gardiner Comprehensive Plan - 2014

As part of the overall Heart and Soul Planning Process, a City Comprehensive Plan was developed and passed in 2014. One direct goal of this plan was: Enhance the desirability of Gardiner as a place to live, work, play and visit.

The plan includes downtown-specific objectives to achieve this goal:

- Increase the level of investment downtown.
- Enhance the pedestrian environment downtown.
- Facilitate potential redevelopment in the Cobbossee Corridor

Heart of Gardiner Downtown Plan

Springing from the community engagement tradition of Heart and Soul, the Heart of Gardiner seeks to plan and envision the future of Gardiner's unique downtown district. Led by The City of Gardiner and Gardiner Main Street, this process is a direct outcome of the community of Gardiner's prior efforts.



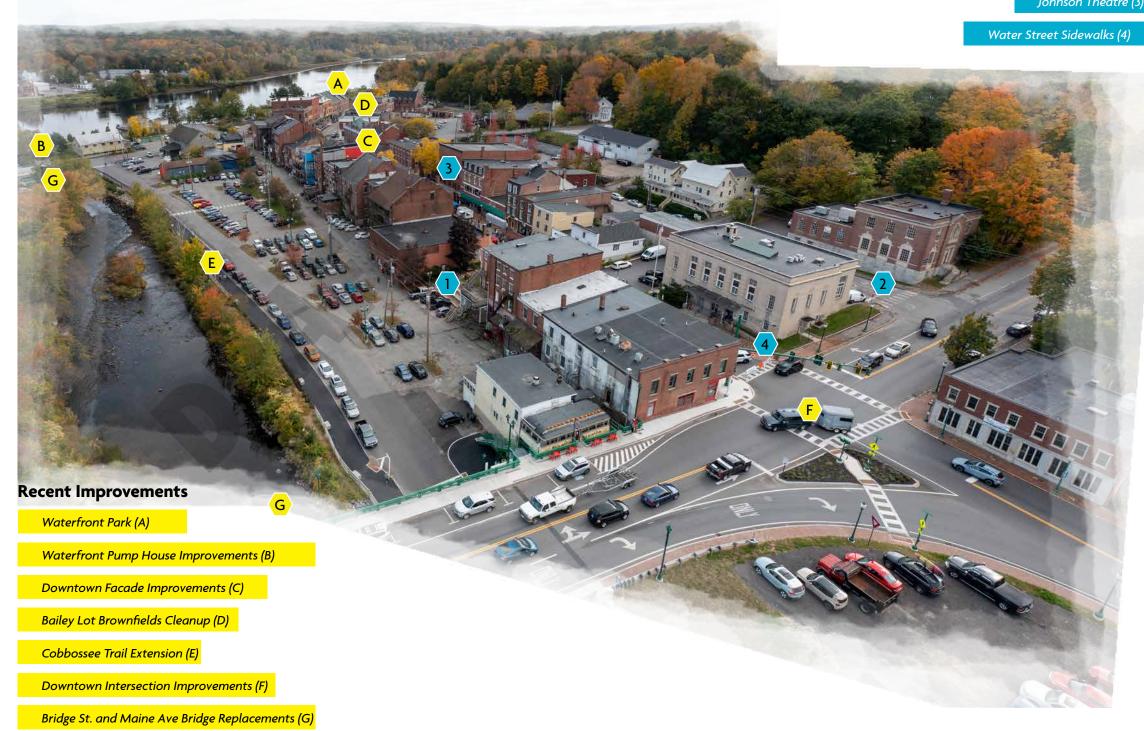
Project History

The City of Gardiner, Gardiner Main Street, and local businesses have a lot to be proud of within the last decade. Since 2012 numerous downtown improvement projects have been completed, including:

- Waterfront Park Project Completion (2012) ٠
- Gardiner Heart & Soul Planning Process (2012)
- Gardiner Comprehensive Plan (2014)
- Waterfront Pump House Improvements (2017)
- Downtown Facade Improvement Grants (2017)
- Gardiner Dog Park (2017)* .
- Bridge Street and Maine Ave Bridge • Replacements (2019/20)
- Cobbossee Trail Extension and Pedestrian Bridge (2020)
- Bailey Lot Brownfields Cleanup (2020) ٠
- **Downtown Water Street Intersection** ٠ Improvements (2021)

Along with these recent improvements, many more improvements are planned, funded, and awaiting implementation in coming years:

- McKay Park Redevelopment (schematic plans approved 2021)
- Mechanic Street Improvements (anticipated ٠ 2021)
- Johnson Theatre Phase 1 Renovation • (anticipated 2022)
- Cobbossee Trail Continuation (anticipated 2023)
- Water Street Brick Sidewalk Restoration • (anticipated 2023)



Planned Improvements

McKay Park (1)

Mechanic Street (2)

Johnson Theatre (3)



Downtown's Voice

This is Gardiner's Plan. If a plan is to represent Gardiner, it should be built upon community input. This planning effort began by asking questions to Downtown and City residents and businesses.

Due to the ongoing and ever evolving COVID-19 pandemic, various creative and socially distanced engagement measures were employed throughout this study.

At the study's onset (January 2021) Vaccines had just been rolled out to front-line workers, but were not available to the general public. As such, the first public engagement effort for this project relied on paper and electronic surveys combined with an engaging public facing website.

By July 2021, over 50% of Maine had received at least one dose of the vaccine, and in-person gatherings could resume. A Heart of Gardiner Downtown Visioning meeting was held at Johnson Hall and drew over 75 attendees to share their ideas to shape the future of Downtown.

The public review of this draft plan was held on November 4th, 2021.

Public Engagement

As this project kicked off, the project website (http://bit.ly/heartofgardiner) was created to provide a base location for project information. The project website was accessible for the life of the downtown planning process.

This website provided an easily accessible project information page for the public, as well as an interactive exhibit of the plan elements.

Through development of interactive map layers, this website illustrated existing walkability, parking access, impervious surface and natural area cover, as well as numerous other elements of the downtown character.

Many of these existing conditions elements were compared to Bath and Skowhegan Maine's relative characteristics to better understand how Gardiner compares to relevant Downtowns elsewhere along the Cobbossee River.

In addition to the project announcement and existing conditions analysis, this project website hosted a link to the public downtown survey.

The public survey was launched April 2021, and collected public feedback through the following June. During this 2 month window, the survey was accessible both in a paper format available at City Hall and the Library as well as digitally.

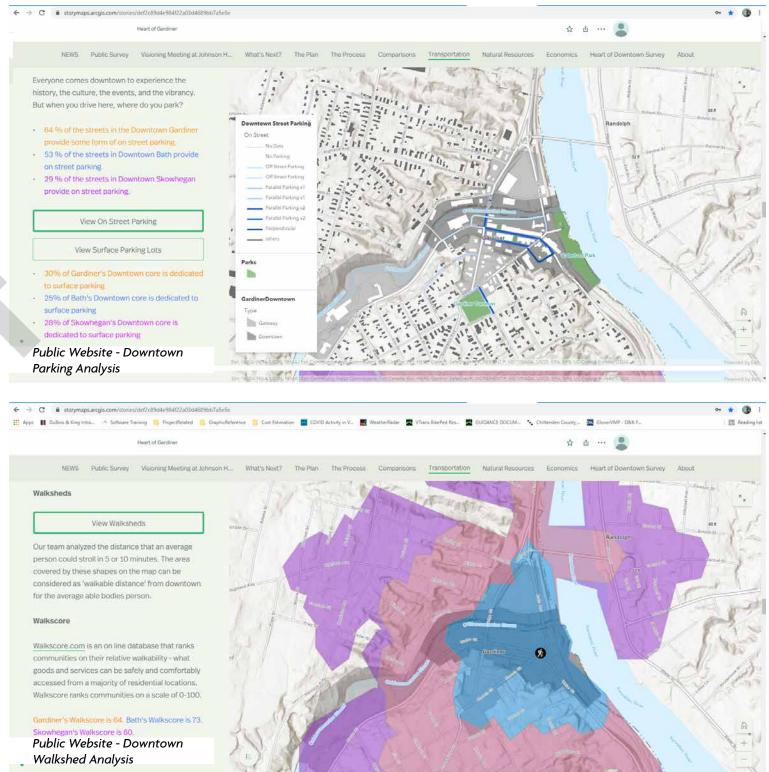
The survey was advertised through physical posting of flyers in downtown shop merchant windows, as well as on social media, email newsletters and the city's list-serve. Postcards were left at several locations downtown to share the survey and the visioning session information. In addition, the City of Gardiner and Gardiner Main Street organizations relied heavily on their combined social media and web presence to promote awareness of the planning process and the survey's opportunity to gather direct community input.

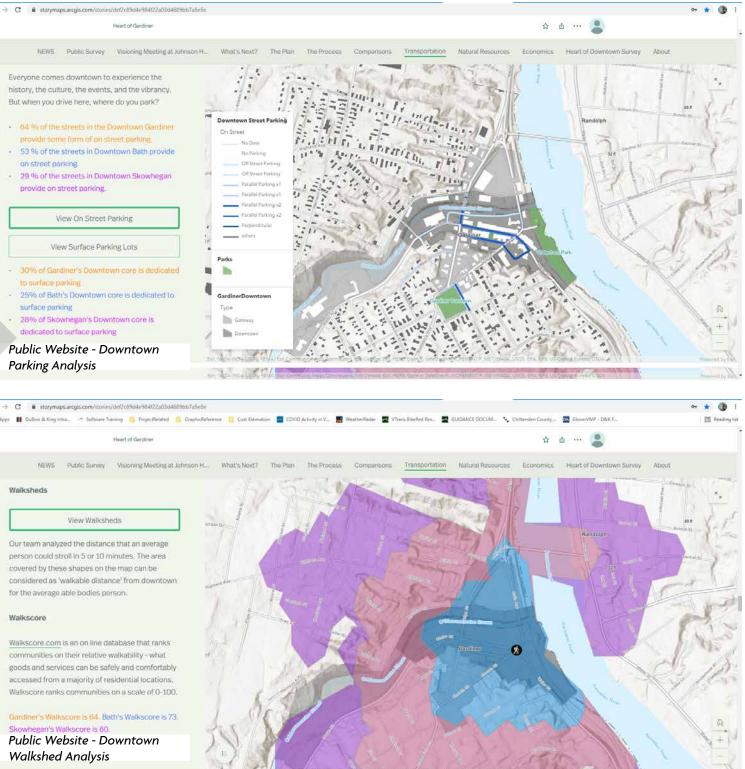
As an added incentive, survey takers were entered into a drawing to win \$20 in "Gift of Gardiner" gift cards which directly support downtown merchants.

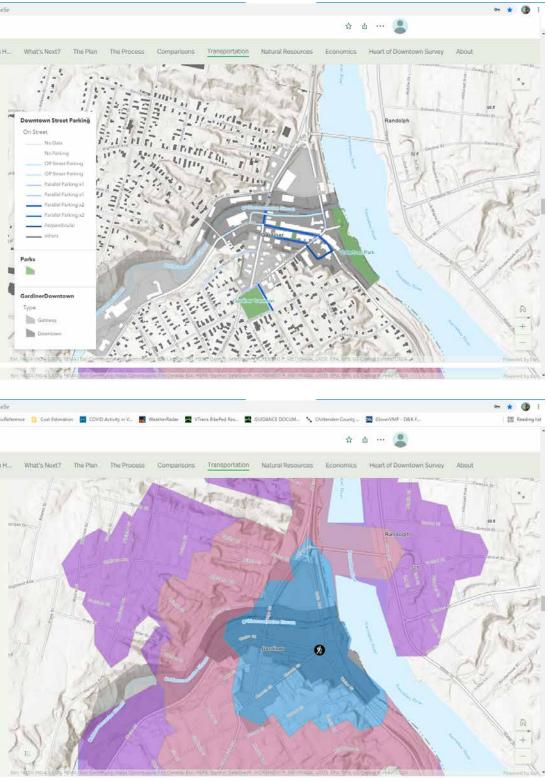
The survey was designed to gain a broad understanding of business owners, visitors, and residents perceptions of Downtown's physical, functional, and economic qualities.

Public Survey Results

240 individual responses were recorded on the online survey. Approximately 2/3rds of the responses came







What should be the focus of a strong IDENTITY for Downtown Gardiner?

from Gardiner residents. 28 respondents indicated that they either own a property or business in Downtown.

Key trends from the survey revealed a population that is both proud of their downtown's overall character while critical of specific elements.

Respondents were largely positive regarding Gardiner's Downtown waterfront, recreational access, and community character. Many cited Gardiner's family friendly nature as a valuable attribute. Gardiner's community, events, and local businesses were also seen as strengths throughout the survey.

There was significant critique of downtown's lack of a central identity, the number of marijuana dispensaries, and condition of 2nd floor spaces in the downtown buildings. There was critique of both the private and public maintenance of infrastructure overall.

Parking was frequently discussed with many respondents perceiving that parking was not as available as it could be, and the Arcade lot being inaccessible, poorly maintained, and underutilized for these reasons.

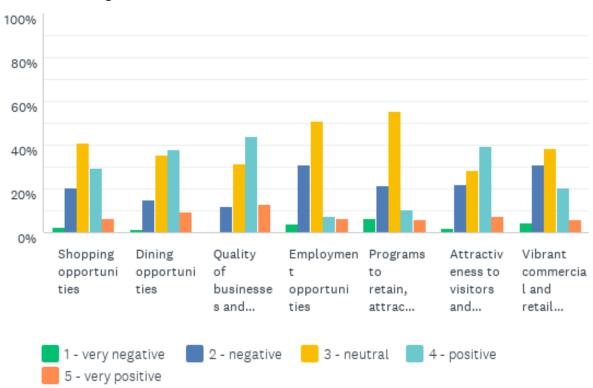
Many responses identified a desire to see increased efforts and programs directed towards economic growth and business development and retention.

In addition to these general themes, the survey sought feedback regarding the perceived and idealized 'identity' of Gardiner. Questions centered around the theme of identity revealed consistent celebration of Gardiner's historic character, impressive waterfront access and park, and other recreational assets like the Cobbossee Trail and stream.

Along with consistent recognition of the value of the Waterfront Park, there was also a regular



Rank the following downtown characteristics from 1 - 5.





What three words or phrases do you feel best describe the major issues and problems facing Gardiner today?

storefronts Empty Storefronts Spaces vacant many street sidewalks stores Empty trash Lack shopping parking accessibility businesses turnover traffic Vacancies buildings Limited people Foot traffic Empty store fronts

areas limited Empty storefronts shopping businesses many Lack stores Parking sidewalks need enough traffic space Empty Diversity

variety need Traffic street businesses Places Lack stores parking downtown spaces draw enough

Are there other broad goals that you believe this master plan should prioritize?

Better community events etc don t also empty encourage include SpaceS types live Quality

community public area Maine make place people environment Gardiner think downtown many businesses restaurants parking see needs Keep events outside street believe shops visit Family Water Street come school system Placemaking natural resources

What three words or phrases do you feel best describe the desirable characteristics and personality of Downtown Gardiner?



mention of the waterfront as underutilized. Survey responses suggested that more events, business retention efforts, and marketing campaigns could leverage this unique resource adjacent to the Downtown core along Water Street.

Charts and wordclouds on the prior page summarize important responses to this preliminary survey, and a full summary of survey responses can be found in this document's appendix.

Visioning Meeting

On July 14th, 2021, approximately 75 members of the Gardiner community attended a public

meeting at Johnson hall to contribute to the direction of this plan.

This meeting created a vibrant interactive atmosphere that encouraged discussion and idea generation from the community that could be recorded and further developed as part of this planning process.

Attendees were able to review informative posters illustrating

- Planning history and this downtown plan's goals.
- Quantifiable comparisons between Gardiner, Bath and Skowhegan
- Historic flood records
- "The Arcade" Parking Lot opportunities and constraints
- Gardiner's Downtown Identity

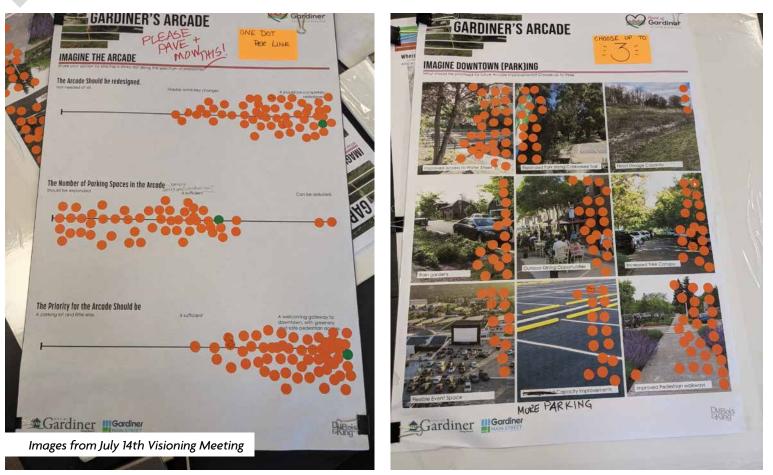
From these informative posters, members were then invited to watch a six minute video describing the plan process, and ways in which the planning team was looking for community feedback. Following the video review, community members were presented interactive exhibits such as dot voting exercises and storyboards to elicit feedback on downtown challenges such as identity, parking access, and gateways. These results shaped the direction and focus of final plan recommendations.

Plan Presentation

This plan's recommendations were presented to the public on the evening of November 4th, 2021. The meeting concluded with a link to the public website where this draft plan was provided for review along with a feedback form.









Downtown Today

Defining "Downtown"

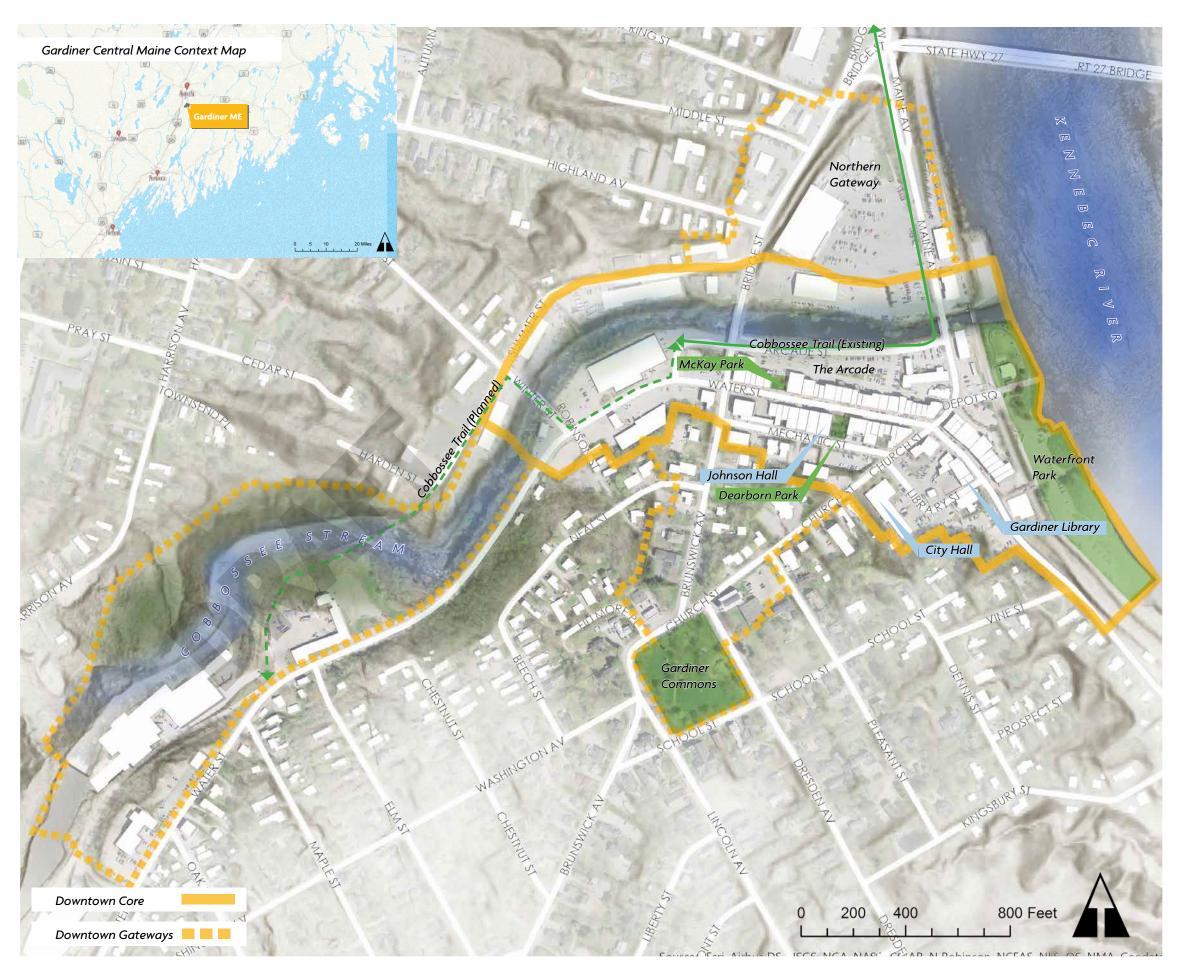
This plan is focused on the core downtown area, surrounding Water Street and the Cobbossee Stream, from approximately Winter Street to the west to the Kennebec waterfront to the east.

Downtown gateways are considered as part of this plan, as their form and function directly affects and influences downtown Gardiner. These gateways extend to the Bridge Street / Main Ave intersection to the north, just past the Oak Street / Water Street intersection to the west, and Gardiner Commons to the south.

Downtown's Context

Gardiner is located in Central Maine, nestled among the string of communities lining the coast and Kennebec River. Located less than an hour from the economic hub of Portland, and only minutes south of the State Capitol in Augusta, Gardiner is one of many distinct Maine cities accessible from the Interstate 95/295 corridors stretching across the state.

The city is part of the Augusta-Waterville ME Micropolitan Statistical area (comprised of all Kennebec County communities). Gardiner is one of several key economic engines within this micropolitan area, along with Hallowel, Augusta, and Waterville.



Downtown Comparables

Comparing Downtown Gardiner to other cities in Maine helps planners and community stakeholders gain a sense of where their Downtown falls above and below a multi-city average.

Downtown Bath and Downtown Skowhegan were selected as similar scale downtowns in similar contexts to Gardiner - all three comparison cities were built in a similar era along the shores of the Kennebec River.

Downtown Gardiner, ME

The Downtown area identified for Gardiner is bounded by the Kennebec River to the east, the northern banks of the Cobbossee to the North, and the plateau of residential homes to the south southwest, above Mechanic Street. This downtown area encompasses 36 acres

Downtown Bath, ME

The Downtown area for Bath was developed through reference to multiple downtown promotional brochures, and is bounded by the Cobbossee River to the East, Washington and Water Street to the West, Summer Street to the north, and Route 1 to the South. This downtown area encompasses 26.4 acres.

Downtown Skowhegan, ME

This Downtown area was developed through reference to multiple downtown parking and promotional brochures available online. It is Bounded by the Cobbossee River to the South, Pleasant and High Street to the North, North Ave to the east and Bennett Ave to the West. This downtown area encompasses 28 acres.









Walkability

Measuring the amount of dedicated pedestrian infrastructure in a compact town is one way to quantify any area's walkability.

73% of Gardiner's downtown streets have sidewalk along one side or another. This coverage places the Downtown in the middle of the pack for overall downtown sidewalk coverage. Linking the walkable downtown core of Water Street with the 'gateways' to downtown would be one way to improve upon these existing conditions

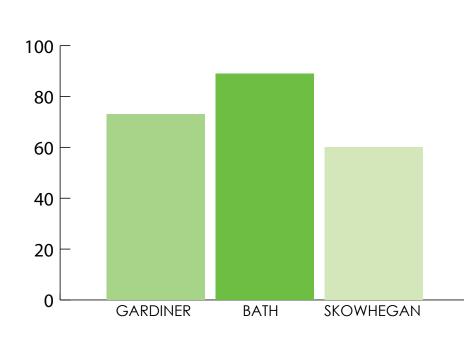
Another metric to consider when comparing walkability between communities is walkscore. Walkscore.com is an online database that ranks communities on their relative walkability. These figures are developed based on what goods and services can be safely and comfortably accessed from a majority of residential locations. Walkscore ranks communities on a scale of 0-100.

Gardiner's Walkscore is 64. Bath's Walkscore is 73. Skowhegan's Walkscore is 60.

Outside of metrics, the steep grades and brick walkways of Gardiner pose some challenges for accessibility.

Parking Potential

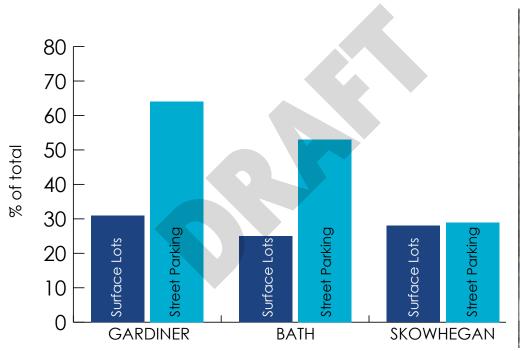
Gardiner's downtown has ample parking supply when compared with Bath or Skowhegan. Nearly a third (31%) of Gardiner's downtown area is dedicated to surface parking. This is slightly more than Bath or Skowhegan's allotments. Another significant resource for downtown parking in Gardiner is the amount of on-street parking available. 64 percent of Gardiner's public streets have parking available, which is much more than Bath (53 percent) and Skowhegan (28 percent).



Percent of Downtown Streets with Sidewalk



Gardiner Downtown Sidewalk Coverage



Downtown surface parking percentages & on street parking percentages



Gardiner Downtown Surface Parking Opportunities



Open Space

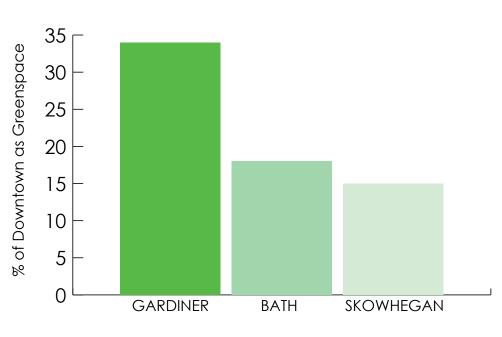
Gardiner is green. This simple statement rings true when comparing Gardiner to nearly any other small downtown in Maine or New England. With the waterfront Park and Cobbossee Stream anchoring the services of downtown, Gardiner is surrounded by beautiful, usable park space and waterfront.

Gardiner's downtown is 34% green space, which is far more than Bath's or Skowhegan's 16% and 15% values.

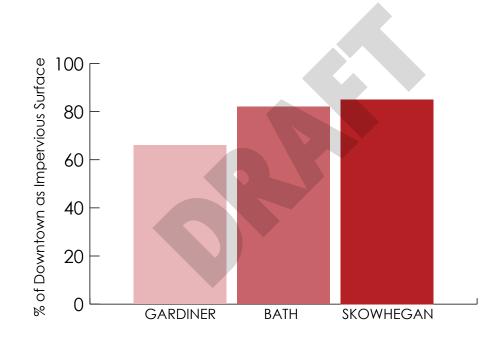
Impervious (Paved) Areas

Streets, sidewalks, parking lots, buildings. What all of these downtown elements have in common is their ability to keep water running, rather than percolate into the ground. These surfaces increase stormwater runoff volumes, contributing to flood hazards during severe storm events.

Approximately 66% of Gardiner is covered in impervious surfaces. That's less than Bath (84%) or Skowhegan(85%). Thanks to the Cobbossee Corridor and Waterfront Green, Gardiner has less impervious coverage downtown than her Bath or Skowhegan, but still a significant amount.



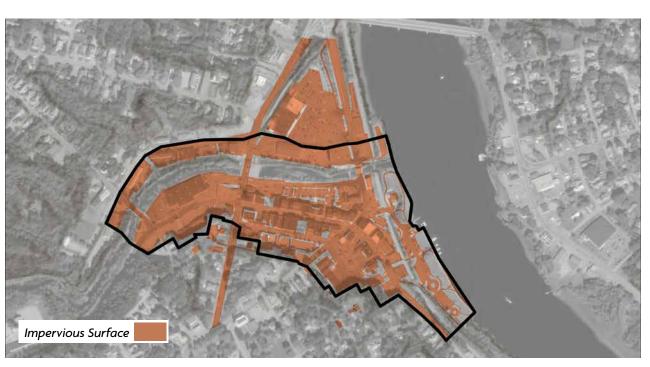
Downtown Green space Percentages



Relative Percent of downtown core covered by impervious surfaces.



Gardiner Downtown Green and Open Spaces



Gardiner's Impervious Surface Coverage



Road Volumes

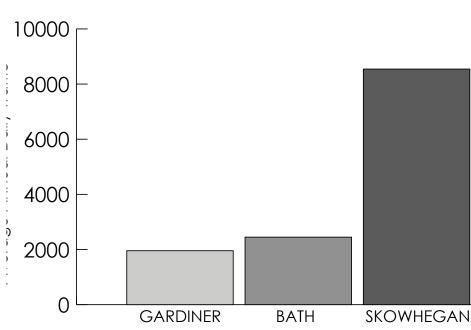
Gardiner's Downtown Street is a great place to walk. Unlike the State Highway running through Skowhegan, Gardiner's downtown is low traffic and family friendly, creating an ideal walking and shopping environment. But how do we make sure more people see this ideal environment if they aren't driving through?

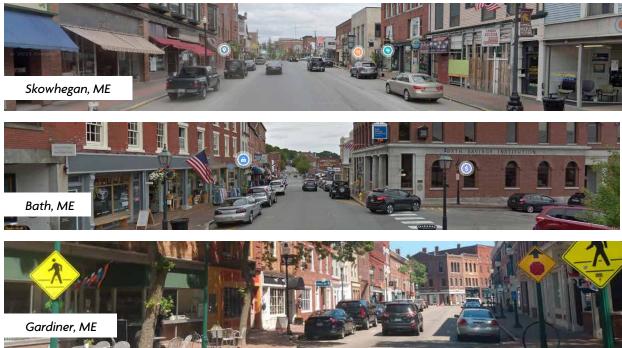
Bath's downtown roadway structure is similar to Gardiner's in many respects, with an only marginally higher downtown road volume, also relying on a one-way street to convey visitors through the downtown core.

Flood Risk Zones

According to national FEMA datasets, 58% of Gardiner's downtown is located within the 100 year floodplain. Only 14% of Bath's downtown is at risk for flooding. FIRM Panel Data for and Skowhegan was unavailable at the time of this printing.

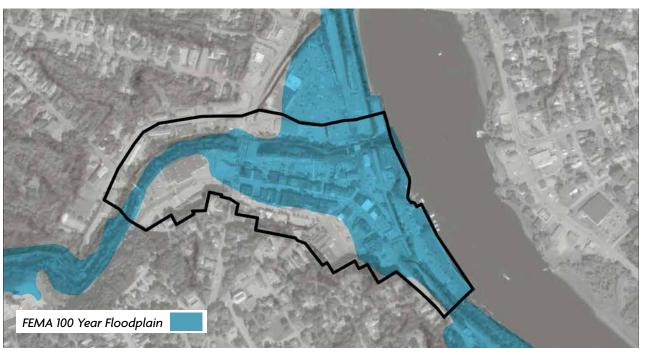
All communities built alongside significant bodies of water are at risk for flood, and the current era of climate change only exacerbates that concern.





Downtown Roadway Volumes





Downtown Gardiner's Flood Risk Zones



Major Downtown Road Volumes (AADT)

Downtown Resiliency

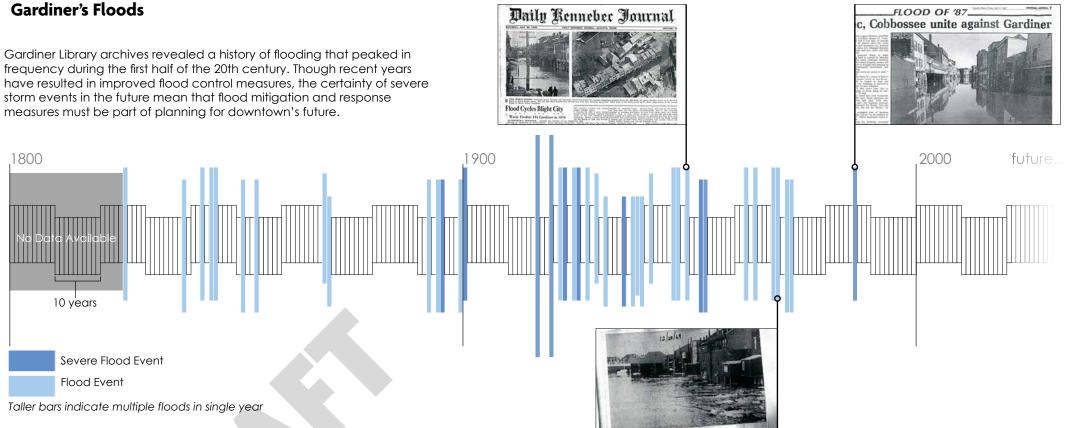
As environmental conditions change, significant weather events are becoming more common and more severe nationwide. Downtown Gardiner has been impacted by repeated and significant flooding over the past 200 years. While there has not been a significant flood of the Downtown since April of 2005, it is important to recognize that as the potential for severe weather increases, so too, does the risk of flooding in Downtown Gardiner.

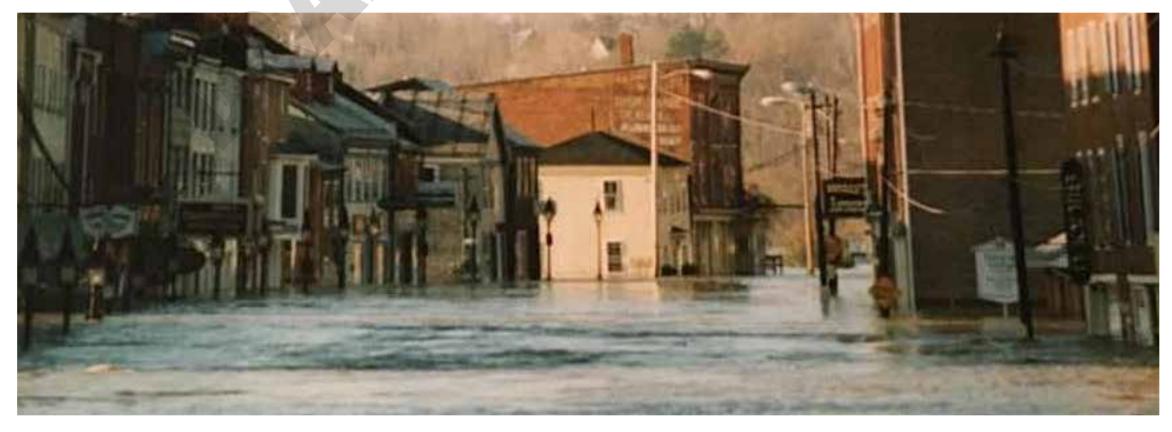
For Gardiner, the risk of disruption to its local economy due to severe flooding is substantial. In a 2021 report from the First Street Foundation 3rd National Risk Assessment: Infrastructure on the Brink), Gardiner was identified as having the greatest proportion of risk to commercial properties and infrastructure in the state of Maine. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of Gardiner's historic downtown is located within the mapped FEMA floodplain. This puts the businesses at the heart of this Downtown Master Plan at risk.

Why Does it Flood Downtown?

Gardiner's location and relative elevation create the opportunity for flooding. Located at the confluence of the Cobbosseecontee and Kennebec Rivers, the sheer volume of water that flows from upstream watersheds is significant. The Cobbosseecontee river watershed alone covers more than 200 square miles of land area. During a significant weather event, rain and snowmelt in the watershed will ultimately find their way to the river and flow downstream to the Kennebec and to Gardiner.

Gardiner's downtown is relatively low in elevation, and slopes gently downhill towards the Kennebec and Cobbosseecontee rivers. While this creates a beautiful and inviting connection between the downtown and rivers, the low elevation provides floodwater the ability to reach downtown when rivers rise. The Base Flood Elevation (the estimated height of flooding) identified by FEMA





within the Downtown is 24ft between northern side of Water St and the Cobbosseeconte River. Much of this area is roughly 20ft in elevation, which means that during a 100-year flooding event, water could be as high as 4 feet within the floodplain north of Water Street. On the northern side of the Cobbosseeconte, elevation is similar. Within the mapped FEMA Flood Hazard Area in Gardiner's Downtown, there are more than 71 unique addresses, mostly businesses, that are at risk of significant flooding.

Flood Mitigation Approaches

Approaches to flood mitigation vary significantly depending on location, geography, geology, hydrology and community vision.

Developing a Flood Mitigation Approach

While the Downtown has not significantly flooded in a number of years, the significant percentage of downtown commercial properties that are at risk of flooding is concerning. There are a wide range of approaches to mitigating flood risk, but the first step to identifying the best approaches is understanding exactly how and why the flooding occurs.

A Hydraulic and Hydrological (H&H) study should be performed to quantify the volume flow rate of water draining from a watershed (i.e., drainage area), and determine the depth and velocity of flow and forces from flowing water on a surface or at hydraulic structures. H&H studies are essential to develop an approach to mitigate against flood loss in the future.

With a completed H&H analysis, Gardiner can better identify what approaches may be most effective at reducing the potential for flooding. Implementation of an H&H study is described further in the implementation chapter of this document. Such studies may recommend some of the following mitigation measures.

Physical Structure Development

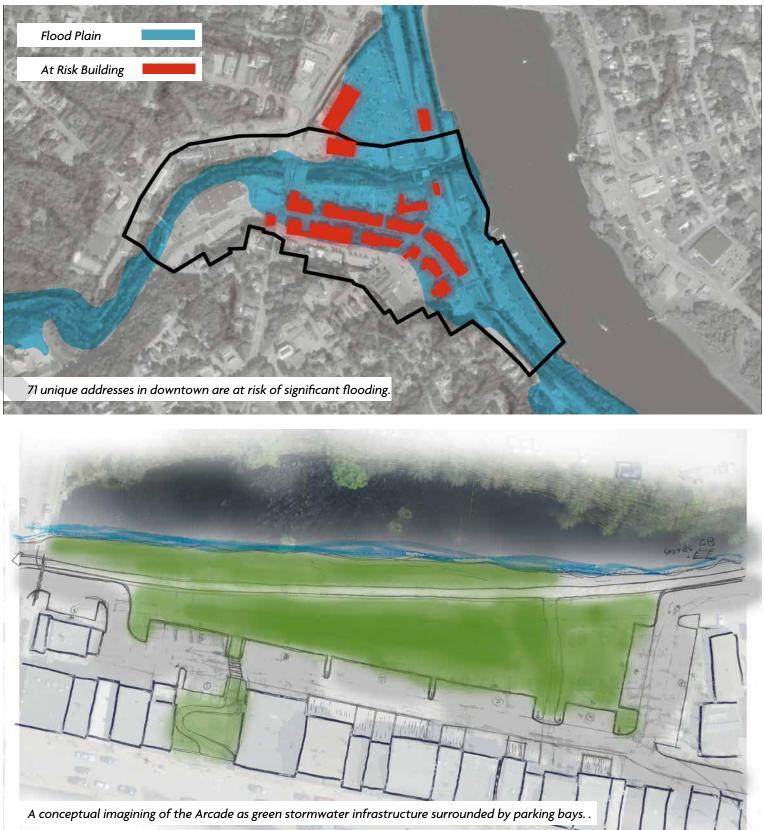
There are many examples where physical structures are used to reduce flooding. These approaches can include levees, dams, weirs and floodwalls that are designed to restrict or redirect the flow of flooding away from buildings and infrastructure.

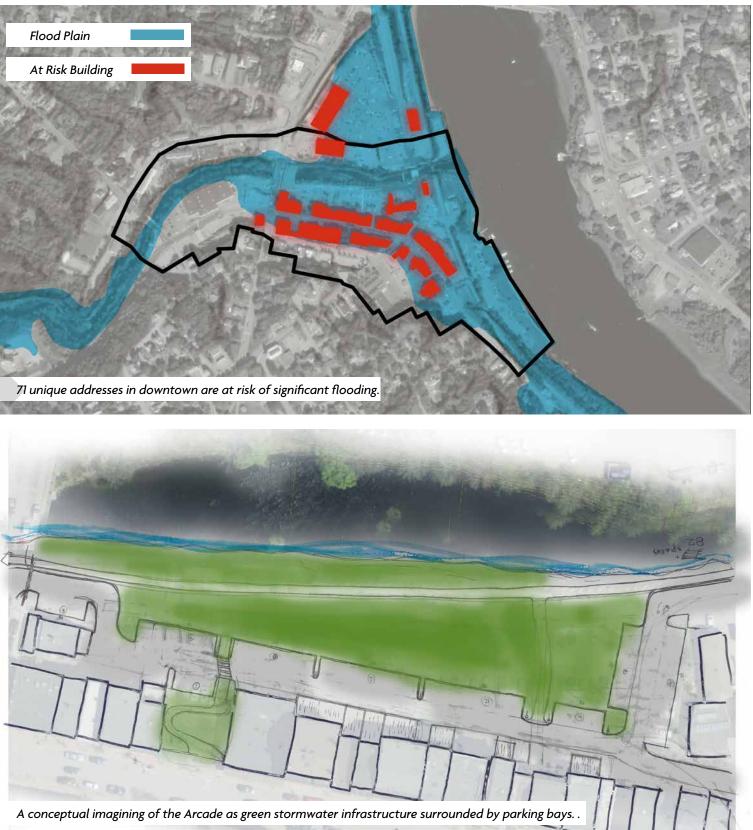
There are three dam structures on the Cobbosseeconte River just upstream of the Downtown, New Mills Dam, American Tissue Dam and the Gardiner Paperboard dam. While it is possible to improve an existing dam structure in order to increase flood storage, only the New Mills Dam, operated by the Gardiner Water District has flood storage capacity, and its age and construction do not make it suitable for improvement. Additionally, the impacts to adjacent homes on the lake would be significant if flood storage was raised.

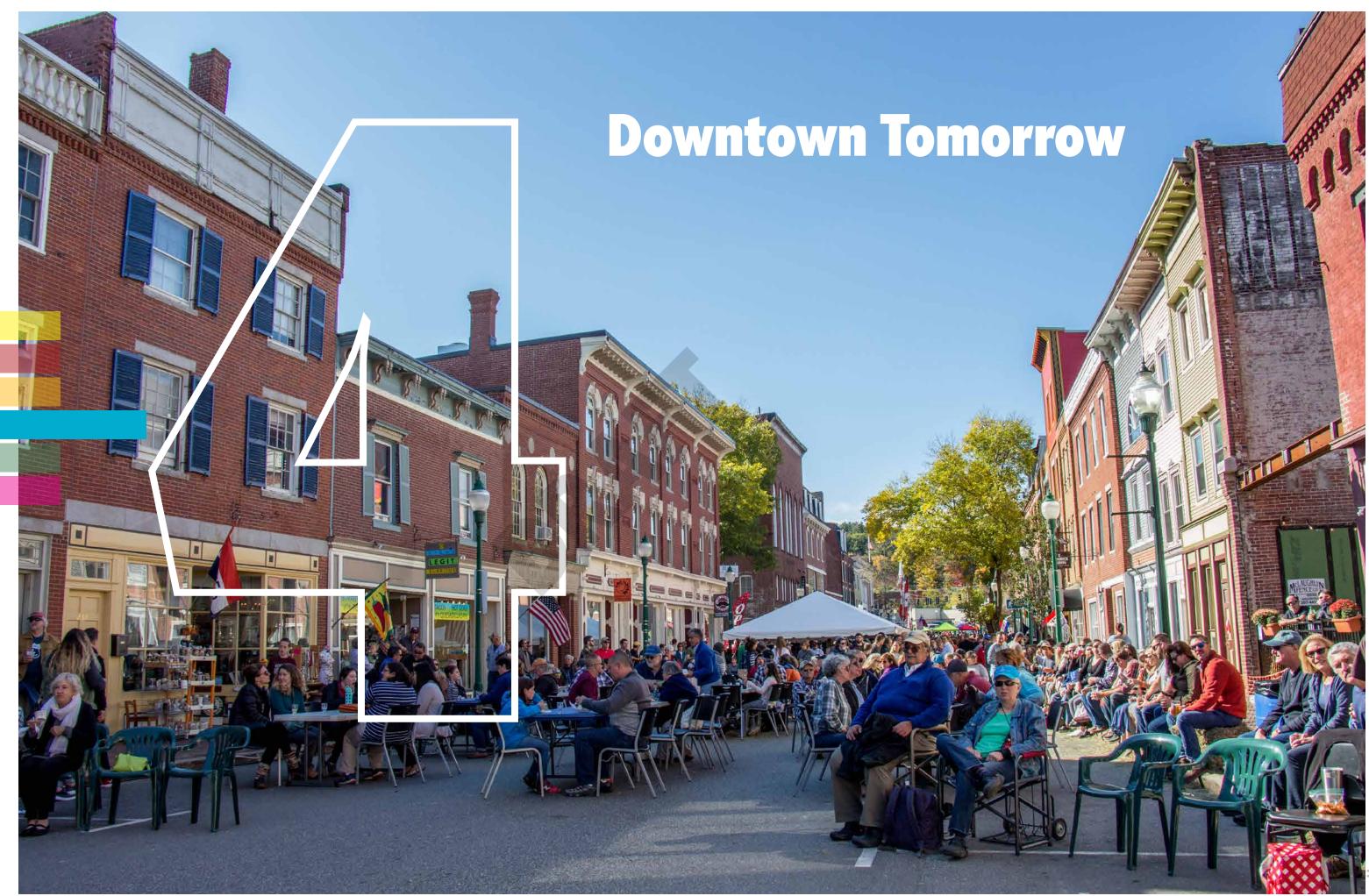
Floodwalls could, in theory, be designed so as to limit flooding within the Downtown, but given the area of the Cobbosseeconte watershed, floodwalls could be in the order of 15-20 feet in height, which would have a significant aesthetic impact on the Downtown.

Green Infrastructure

Water can be managed in urban environments through vegetation, soils and natural processes. Infiltration and storage of floodwater occurs in these areas and these landscapes can be engineered to provide significant flood reduction benefits while adding natural beauty to the area. An early concept that considered as part of this report recognized that the Arcade could be re-imagined park space and green infrastructure, potentially reducing flood impacts downtown.







This chapter explores the ways in which Gardiner's downtown can continue to grow, improve, and capitalize on its assets. This chapter compares elements of Downtown in 2021 with visions of improvements that can improve Gardiner's sense of place, transportation systems, and local economy.

Gardiner in Motion

This segment explores transportation improvements that can leverage recent investments in the Cobbossee Trail, improve parking access downtown, and enhance the gateways and universal access to Downtown Gardiner.

Gardiner is Green

This segment explores ways to make downtown an even more green space, through redesign of the Arcade to accommodate more parking access and less asphalt coverage, expansion of the Cobbossee trail to the northern side of the river, and the addition of green stormwater infrastructure throughout downtown.

Gardiner's Identity, Gardiner's Economy

Gardiner is a beautiful and historic Maine downtown, with incredible assets and character. Building an identity and story out of these elements should be a next step to grow Gardiner's Downtown Economy and promote the City center as a great place to live, work and invest.





Heart of Gardiner Downtown Plan :: 22

Downtown Districts

Water Street's historic buildings and streetscape are without a doubt, the Heart of Gardiner. This plan proposes that other districts surrounding the Water Street core should be looked to as assets that can be expanded, improved, and linked together to create a contiguous set of Downtown Districts which are instantly recognizable from any point of entrance, and which expands the Verdant and Historic Character of Gardiner's Cobbossee Stream and Waterfront Park throughout the Downtown area.





Northern Gateway

> Confluence District

The Heart of Gardiner

Civic District

Expanding the Heart of Gardiner

Downtown Gardiner has a unique character that is built from distinctive colors, materials, and objects. These elements work together to signify that you are in downtown Gardiner. It is important to note that not just one of these components can change the feel of a street; rather, the components interact to create Gardiner's sense of place. Identifying and incorporating these elements into gateway corridors that lead into downtown will make the surrounding areas feel like a more connected and cohesive place.

> Granite Blocks can act as seats, bollards, or decoration

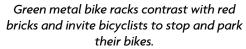


Street Trees provide shade and traffic calming.



Decorative lighting with green metal articulates the street and illuminate the sidewalk at night.

Brick pavers highlight Gardiner's New England charm and visually separate pedestrian areas from the road.



Brick and granite are key paver elements throughout downtown

Recent outdoor dining improvements leverage these elements and add vegetation and fencing

Gardiner in Motion

Traffic Volumes

The main routes for motor vehicles to access Gardiner include Water Street (Route 126), Brunswick Ave (Route 201) and Maine Ave (Route 201 and Route 24) and Bridge Street (Route 9, Route 126, and Route 27).

Bridge Street has some of the highest traffic volumes, between 10,000 and 18,000 vehicles per day. Water Street, Brunswick Ave, and Maine Ave all bring between 5,500-9,500 vehicles per day in and out of downtown Gardiner.

Local streets and neighborhood streets have lower traffic volumes since there is less through traffic. Most of the other streets in Gardiner have traffic volumes below 2,000 vehicles per day.

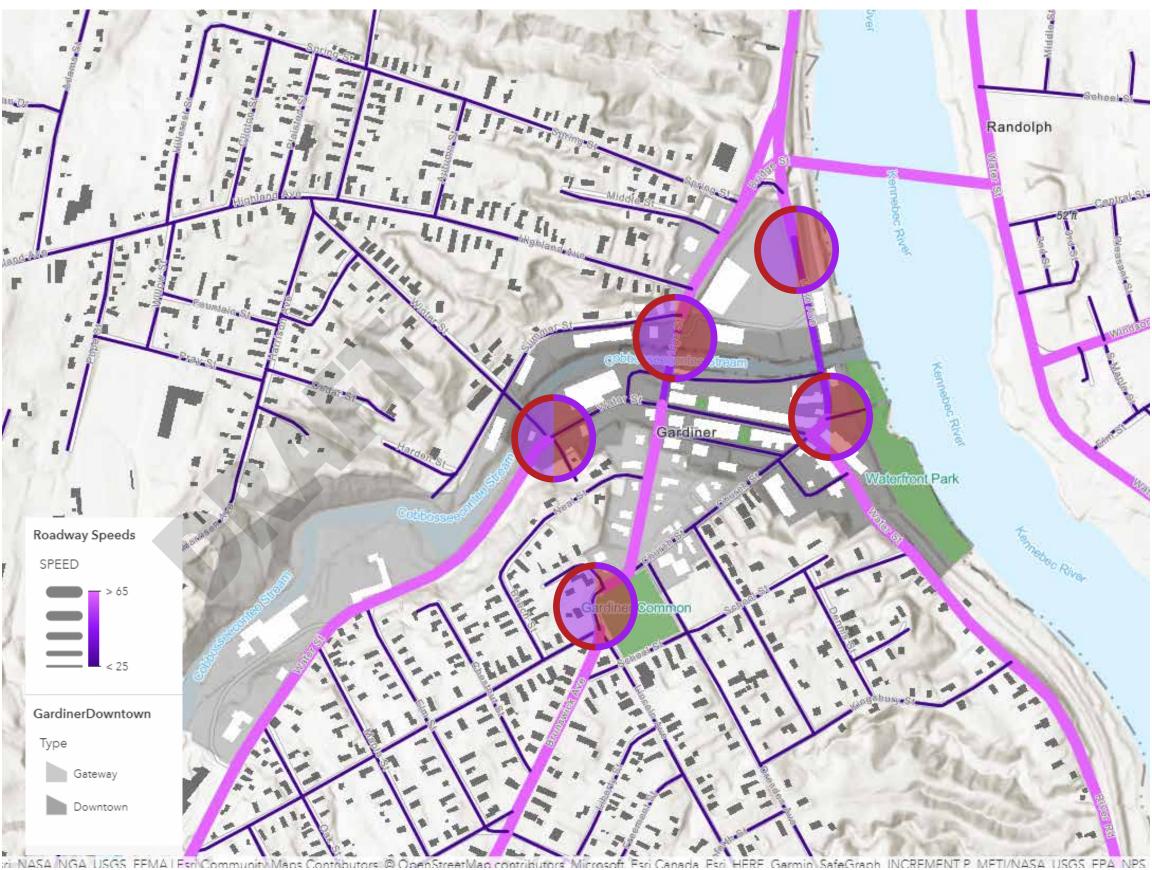


Speed Limits & Changes

In Gardiner, the speed limits tend to be highest on roads that also have the highest traffic volumes. These corridors have higher levels of vehicle mobility than other downtown or neighborhood streets. The interface of these high mobility corridors with downtown and neighborhood streets should provide safe transitions from a high speed to a low speed roadways. These transitions should also provide access to more businesses and be safe for people walking. The locations of these transition areas are identified at right.

These high-to-low speed transition areas highlight where redesign of streetscapes to create gateways into the City could be beneficial. Research has shown that simply reducing the speed limit is not nearly as effective at slowing down traffic as making changes to the built environment is, so changes to the streetscape to promote traffic calming and beautification in these areas is key to creating an environment that supports a walkable, vibrant downtown Gardiner.

Speed Limit Transitions



ISGS FPA NPS Garmin SafeGraph

Downtown Gateways

Downtown Gardiner's sense of place should have well defined gateways which make clear the entrance to this historic Downtown District.

Currently, the most well defined downtown gateway is located at the intersection of Water Street and Church Street. Surrounded by historic buildings, brick sidewalks, and a four way stop, it makes clear to any traveler that they have arrived.

However, other gateways are less clearly defined. Development patterns, traffic volumes and speed limit changes point to several opportunities to establish additional gateways to the downtown area.

Western Gateway

The western edge of Water Street lacks a clearly defined transition, and though the intersection improvements at Water and Bridge Street provide a more polished aesthetic to this intersection, the use of the corner lot as parking lacks the sense of enclosure and potential for commercial development that a building site could bring.

Northern Gateway

This gateway is defined by the large Hannaford's lot and related commercial development and large parking areas. Despite being only 30 feet across the Cobbossee from the Historic Downtown, it lacks significant built environment characteristics that tie it to downtown.

Residential Gateway

Gardiner Commons welcomes travelers to Gardiner from its hilltop location. The intersections surrounding this park form a natural traffic calming element, and subtle improvements to this intersection could improve on this gateway further yet.



Northern Gateway

As you drive into downtown from the north, both Bridge Street and Maine Avenue have crosswalks prior to crossing the Cobbossee. Calling attention to these crosswalks with curb extensions both improves pedestrian safety and creates a gateway that signifies you are entering downtown.

Additional corridor improvements, like brick paver strips to narrow the road and provide separation for pedestrians, bicycle parking, street trees, and decorative lighting can be installed as part of future paving or roadway projects for the blocks that connect these gateway crosswalks to downtown.

These gateways should be designed to have 3 major impacts:

1. Placemaking:

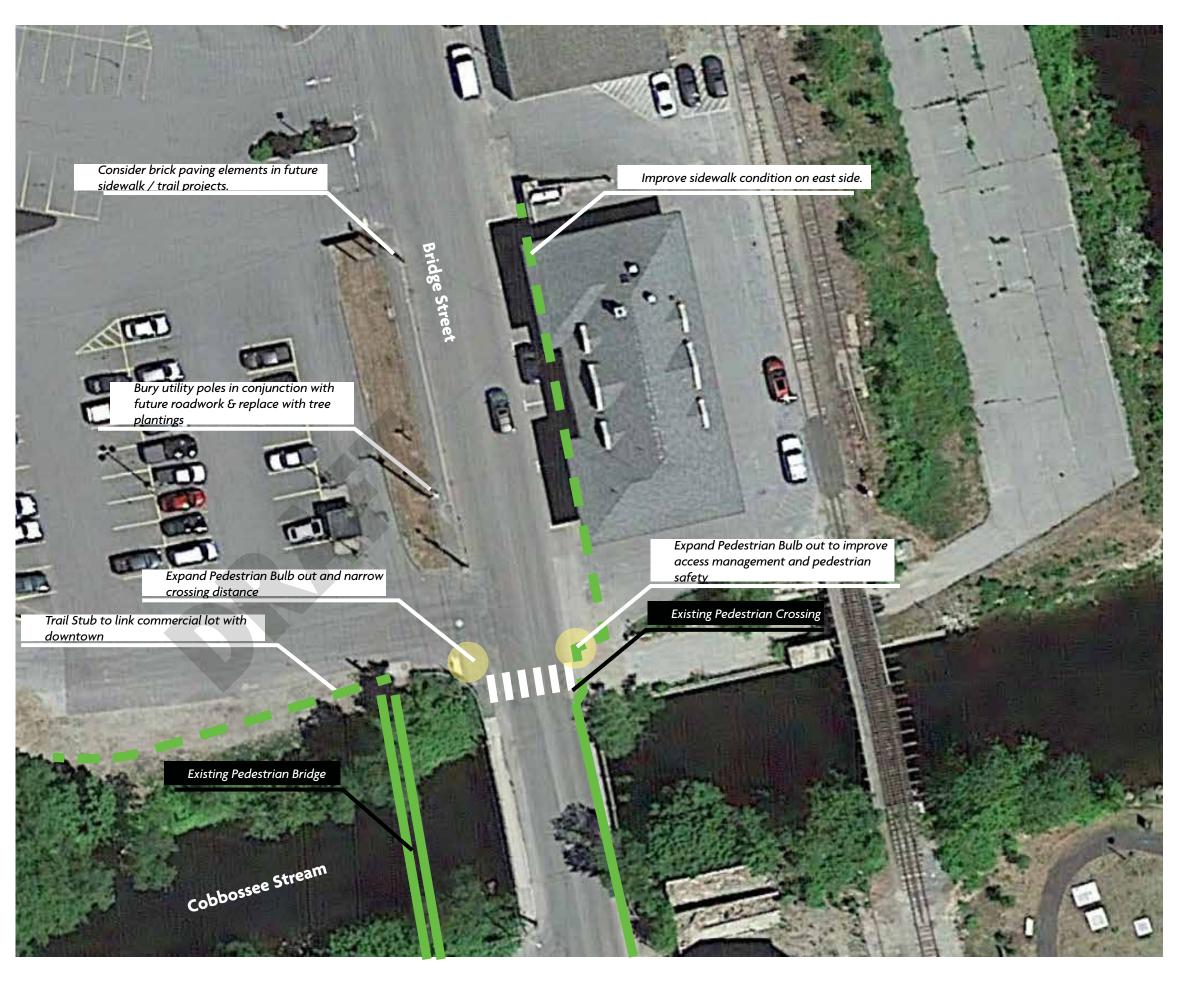
Build awareness of Downtown Gardiner as a unique space, beyond Water Street through the addition of street lighting, landscaping, and brick pavers

2. Traffic Calming:

Narrow the Roadway and improve adherence to the lower speed limits in Downtown

3. Walkability:

Improve direct connections from Downtown to adjacent commercial centers and vice versa.



Western Gateway & Infill Development

Recent improvements to the Bridge Street Corridor by Maine DOT have added a new parking lot to the Northeast corner of Water and Bridge streets.

This privately owned parcel at 2 Bridge street was a former gas station, and now is an open lot. Though access management requirements and environmental permitting will impact any development on site - a future development project on this parcel, built to compliment downtown character holds significant promise.

Future development on this site could establish physical boundaries and a sense of enclosure surrounding this important downtown intersection.

The .27 acre site is compact, accesses Water and Arcade Street, and is located outside of the historic overlay zone, but within the traditional downtown district. Built to compliment the existing character of the downtown, a future development here could be commercial, residential, governmental, or institutional in nature. However, uses such as a gas station are no longer permitted according to current zoning regulations.



Residential Gateway Area

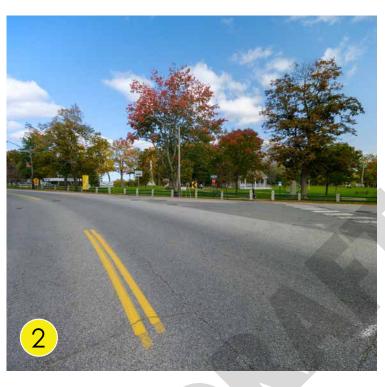
There are a handful of elements along Brunswick Avenue already beginning to contribute to a gateway corridor. These include:

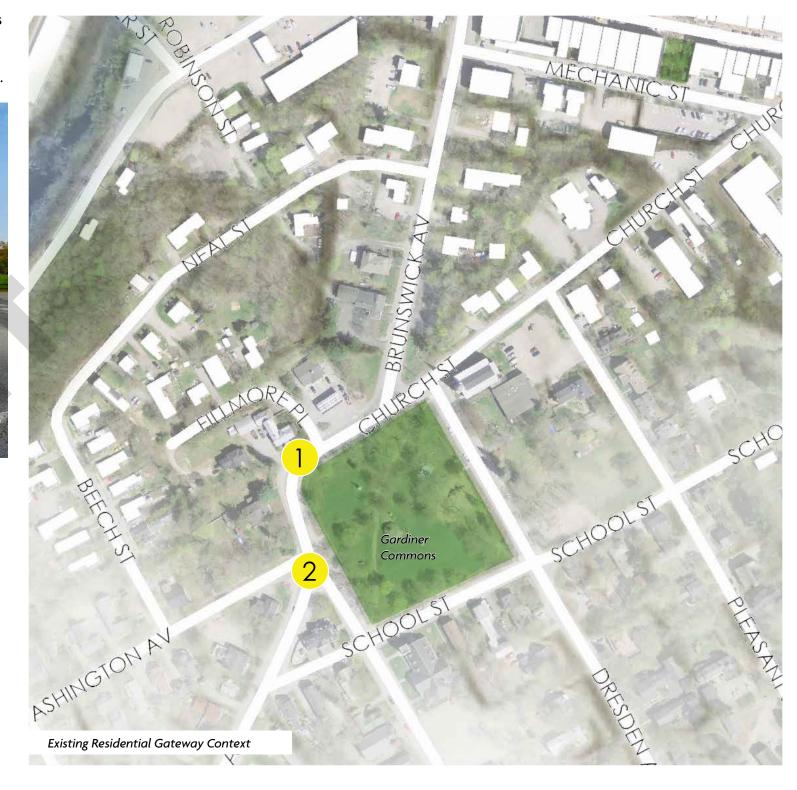
- All-way stop at Lincoln and Washington Ave intersection
- Trees lining Gardiner Commons
- Curve in the road at Gardiner Commons
- Sidewalk on side streets

These components help reduce vehicle speeds. Other changes and improvements to these already successful elements can have a compounding effect.

On Brunswick Avenue adjacent to Gardiner Commons, add streetscape elements that reflect downtown's character using components like granite curbing, green metal bike racks and benches. Next time there is maintenance on this road, sidewalk rebuilding should take place so it has a 6" curb and is separated from the road.

Lincoln Ave/Washington Ave intersection improvements that reduce the amount of pavement and shorten crosswalks. This also makes room for a wayfinding or gateway "Welcome to Gardiner" sign in front of the park.





Residential Gateway Design

The Gardiner Common is a community destination, as well as a often seen sight for travelers visiting downtown via Route 201 / Brunswick Avenue. Streetscape improvements at the Washington and Lincoln Avenue intersection could create a natural 'Gateway' to Downtown as well as improve community safety while crossing into the Park.

1. Gateway Signage

Facing traffic bound for Downtown, Gateway signage would announce arrival to Gardiner's Downtown District well in advance of Water Street, giving travelers more time to plan their arrival and parking Downtown.

2. Bulb Outs

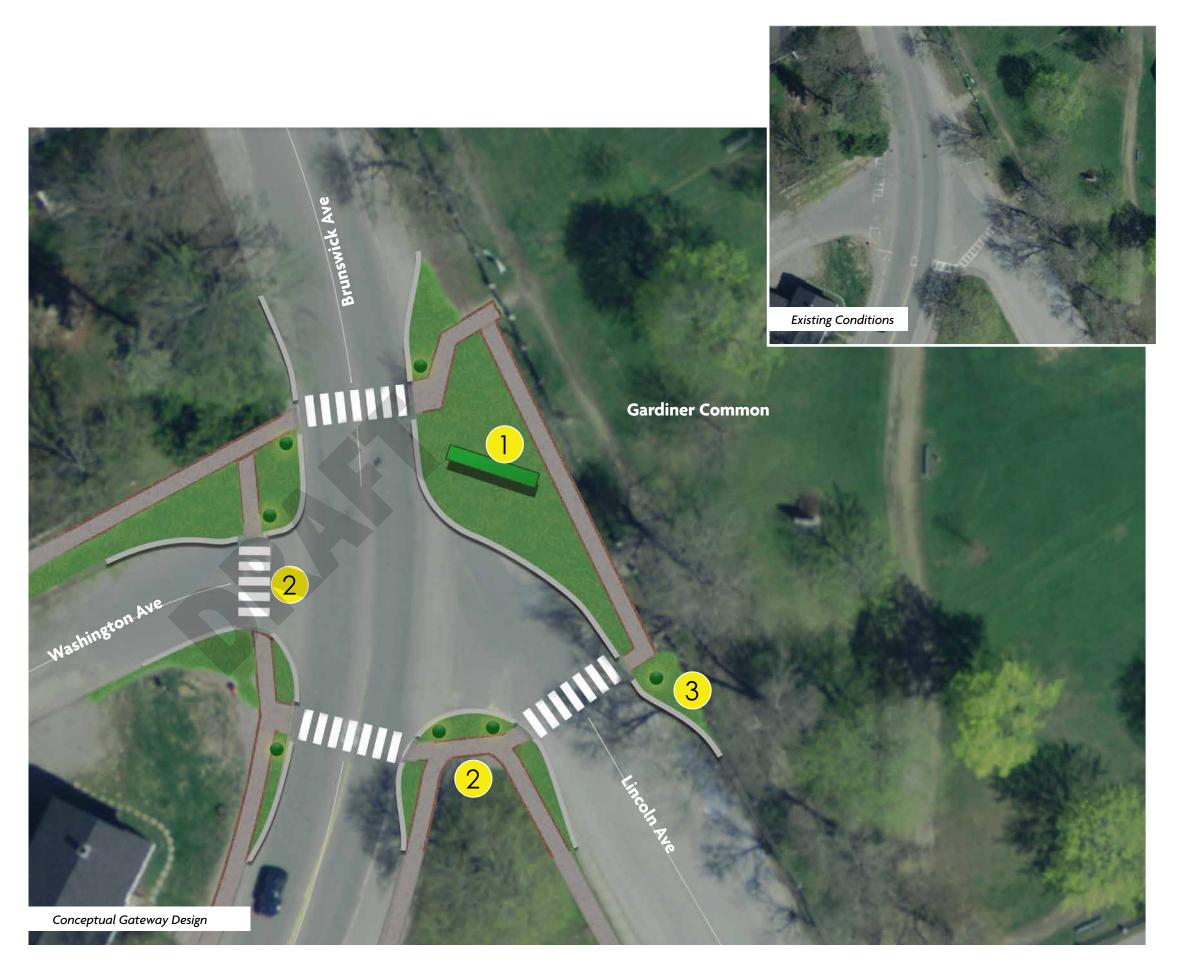
These curb lines create a traffic calming measure, physically narrowing the roadway to compliment the posted change in speed limit. Such physical changes have been shown to be more effective in controlling speeds than speed limit signs alone. The bulb outs are envisioned as smooth arcs that will not impede snow plowing operations. Sidewalk improvements could incorporate brick paver edging or similar to echo the Downtown character at this Gateway.

2a. Reduced Pedestrian Crossing Distance

The same bulb out construction will reduce pedestrian crossing distances into the park on average 50%. Less time for pedestrians crossing the roadway means a more fluid automotive traffic flow, but more importantly, improved public safety for the community members walking between residences and the park amenities found in the Gardiner Common.

3. Gateway Lighting

The same green ornamental lighting posts found throughout Downtown could be used to better illuminate these pedestrian crossings in low light hours and contribute to the Downtown Gateway effect at this location.



Parking Access

The 2019 Parking Study conducted by KVCOG concluded that "It appears as though Gardiner has sufficient parking to meet current demand." However, during the public engagement process, City stakeholders, staff, and business owners indicated that there is widespread concern that the findings of the 2019 study relied on artificially low parking times. Nonetheless, these findings which do not include Downtown private parking lots point towards an excess of parking in Downtown Gardiner. Excess parking areas can negatively impact the city. The unnecessary impervious area, plus maintenance cost to keep the spaces clean & clear of snow and paved all add costs, and do not generate taxable income like a commercial or residential site could in their place.

Another aspect of surface parking is the environmental cost that impervious surfaces have. Impervious surfaces for parking make up 31% of downtown Gardiner. When rain falls on these surfaces, it goes directly into the Kennebec River or Cobbossee Stream at a high velocity, and picks up oils leaked from parked cars, sediment from the road, and other debris on the way. This process erodes soil from streambanks, pollutes the water, and increases the flood risk of downtown Gardiner. However, with the future impact of the 500 seat renovated Johnson Theatre, there is real concern about future needs for parking in Downtown Gardiner. Addressing these concerns requires creative partnerships and reuse of existing private parking lots, so that the need for parking access is balanced with the monetary and environmental cost of parking lots. In addition, impervious surfaces can exacerbate flooding, which is a significant concern in the Downtown.





Shared Parking

Commercial properties highlighted here whose parking demands are highest during the workdays should be approached to develop an after hours shared parking arrangement.

In other communities, these arrangements have been facilitated by shared maintenance agreements where plowing and/or enforcement responsibilities are provided by the City in exchange for after hours public parking access to support downtown economic development efforts. These agreements could provide expanded access to downtown cultural events when it is needed most, on nights and weekends, at minimal cost to businesses who need parking for employees and visitors during the workweek.

Camden National Bank may be worth furthering dialog with as this Maine Business has in the past supported Gardiner Main Street through donation of building space downtown, and maintains control of several key parking areas in and adjacent to the historic district.

An example of a public private shared parking arrangement is illustrated through a sample lease agreement included in this document's appendix.

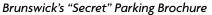
Downtown Parking Guide

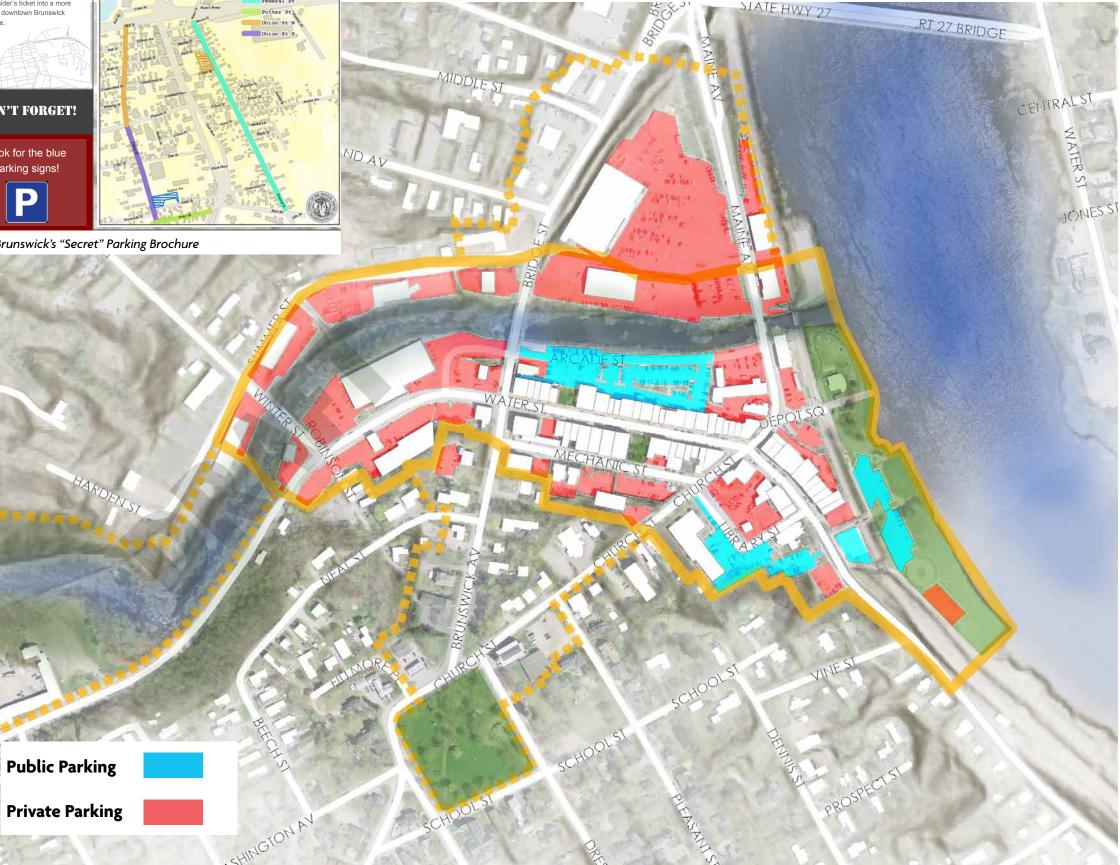
A complimentary effort to developing shared public private parking agreements would be to develop a widely publish guide to Parking in Gardiner. These documents could be published online and physically, and illustrate both available public parking resources as well as pathways to connect parking spaces with downtown destinations.

arking in downtown Bruns wick can be frustrating for businesses, employees, and visitors alike when everyone wants to park right on Maine Street where there are limited spaces. This guide is your insider's ticket into a more enjoyable downtown Brunswick



Legend





Universal Access

Gardiner's downtown boasts a beautiful, historic aesthetic. Unfortunately, elements of this historic aesthetic and the natural landscape make access for all ages and abilities difficult. The historic brick pavers in downtown create an uneven surfaces that create challenges for anyone who needs to move a wheelchair, stroller, or even high-heeled shoes across the Downtown streetscape.

In addition to the surfacing challenge, there is a challenge to link the Arcade Parking Lot with downtown in an accessible fashion. Due to natural grades separating these two areas, the southern sidewalk of Water Street is approximately 10 feet higher than the Arcade Parking lot. Current direct connections between the Arcade parking lot and Water street require users to navigate stairways through privately owned property or McKay Park.

Paving Solutions

As of the writing of this report, the City of Gardiner is working towards a grant-funded project to replace half of the historic downtown sidewalk along water street. Though the exact historic paver utilized on Water Street sidewalks may not be compatible with universal designs or American Disability Act (ADA) standards, there exist numerous interlocking paver designs that can be substituted to still provide Gardiner's historic brick sidewalk aesthetic while allowing universal access for all ages and abilities.

Another solution to maintain Gardiner's historic brick sidewalk aesthetic without impeding universal access may be the design of a downtown streetscape paving pattern that uses the same bricks to define the pedestrian zone without requiring that same brickwork in the pedestrian travel zone. A version of this has already been implemented on Water street in conjunction with associated Bridge Street Intersection improvements.

Arcade Route Improvements

Due to existing grades, the most accessible and most direct route between the Arcade and Water Street is to the east of Water Street, through the alley behind Water Street businesses, and south on Church Street / Main Ave.

This corridor should be prioritized as an accessible route, with universally accessible sidewalk and sidewalk ramps designed to create a universally accessible route between Downtown businesses and the majority of existing public parking supply.

This access route is discussed further on page 39.

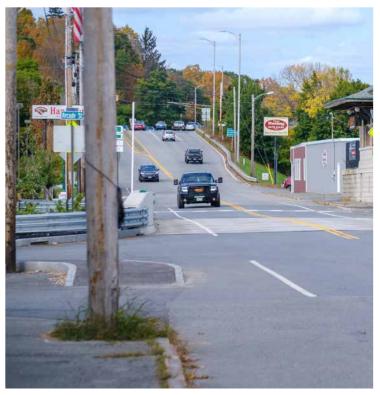


Historicpavers can pose access issues.



Recent Water Street Sidewalk Improvements

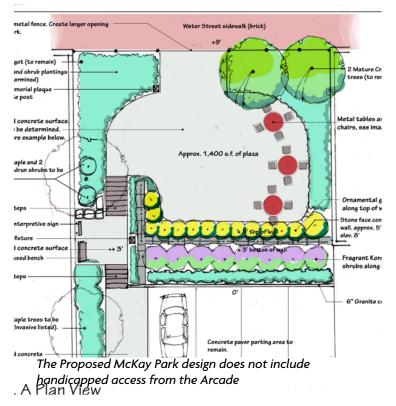




Utilities impede access between Water Street and the Arcade

Parking Space Priority

In designating accessible parking spaces, the City should take care to allot key handicapped access parking spaces along Water Street, as existing routes from the Arcade are not accessible for those with strollers, wheelchairs or physical impairments. Some spaces should be considered on Water Street in front of or nearby McKay park access, as the currently approved schematic designs for this plaza space only allow for universal access from Water street - stairs are currently maintained as the Arcade Connection due to cost and space constraints.



Gardiner is Green

Gardiner's Trails & Parks

Providing clear and inviting connections that link Gardiner's trails, parks, and riverfront can create a "Green Network" that can be enjoyed by locals and visitors alike.

1. Arcade Improvements

Redesigns to the arcade can add additional green space, reduce stormwater load on the Cobbossee and Kennebec Rivers, and add more parking spaces as well.

2. Waterfront Park to Cobbossee Trail

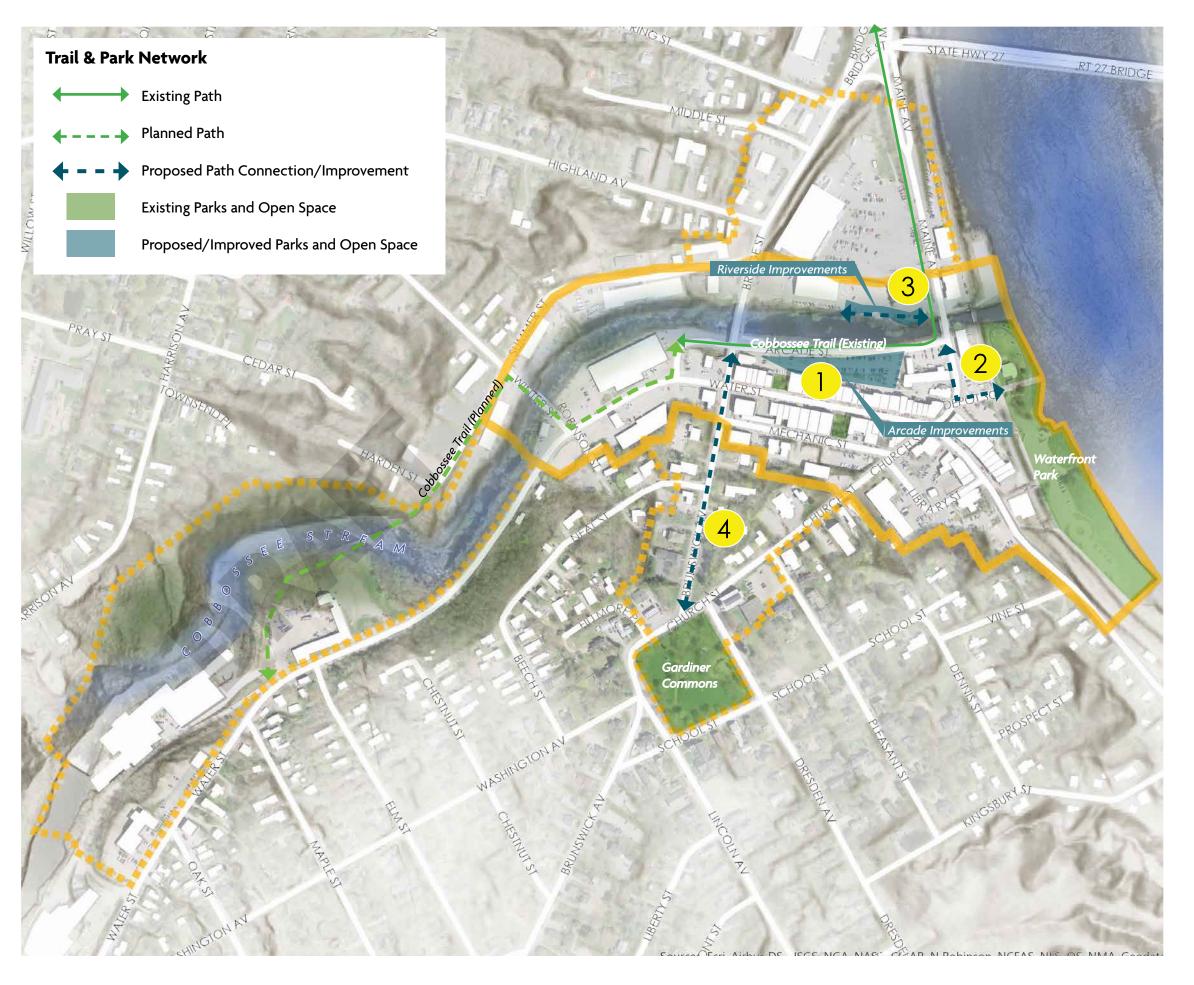
Building accessible connections between the Cobbossee Trail, Arcade Parking lot and Waterfront Park will tie the downtown pedestrian network together.

3. Riverside Improvements

Small improvements in a public private partnership can improve the value of these gateway properties and link them to the Downtown amenities on the far side of the stream.

4. Brunswick Avenue Access

Active transportation improvements along Brunswick avenue may involve only paint plans for the street and can link the City's park with the Downtown



Arcade Today

Currently, the municipally owned parking lot between the Cobbossee Trail and the Back end of the Water Street businesses must serve multiple uses. It offers convenient parking to Downtown, but does not offer any convenient pedestrian routes.

The Arcade must also function as a utility service for downtown businesses, providing fuel storage, trash receptacle pickup, and delivery services.

In addition, the current design suffers from poor drainage resulting in conditions that can be difficult to navigate by foot or wheel.

This resource currently offers 96 parking spaces (as measured in the 2019 Gardiner Downtown Parking Study) and could provide significantly more, due to all parking access provided via twoway stalls.





The Arcade parking faces irregular and industrial building access.



Existing planters are difficult to maintain and are deteriorating



The new Cobbossee Trail Addition has brought new energy to this side of Downtown



Pedestrian Access from this parking resource is limited and not ADA accessible.



Arcade Tomorrow

This proposal re-imagines the Arcade through four key redesigns:

1. Downtown through McKay Park

With McKay park's ongoing redevelopment, future arcade improvements could extend the park and plaza space into the Arcade, creating opportunities for an accessible and memorable entry into Downtown through trails and green space. In addition, secondary pedestrian circulation would be added through improved sidewalk access at the southern edge of the Arcade, north of the utility access drive.

2. One way parking circulation

Through conversion of the 2 way 90° parking stalls to a series of alternating one way 60° parking stalls, public parking access could be significantly expanded, with the addition of nearly 20 spaces from the current condition.

3. Rain Gardens

The green parking islands illustrated in this plan are envisioned to be designed as sunken rain gardens, storing and cleaning stormwater runoff from Water Street and surrounding buildings before it flows into the Cobbossee.

4. Snow Storage

Illustrated in lighter green, the edges of parking bays are intended to act as snow storage points to ease plowing. Envisioned as recessed green spaces surrounded by blade-mountable curbing, or even simply painted delineation, these spaces could serve as snow storage and expanded green space separate from the rain gardens.

5. Patio Zone.

Public private partnerships could convert the utilitarian backside of waterstreet into attractive patio spaces, with storage for utilities and covered parking below.





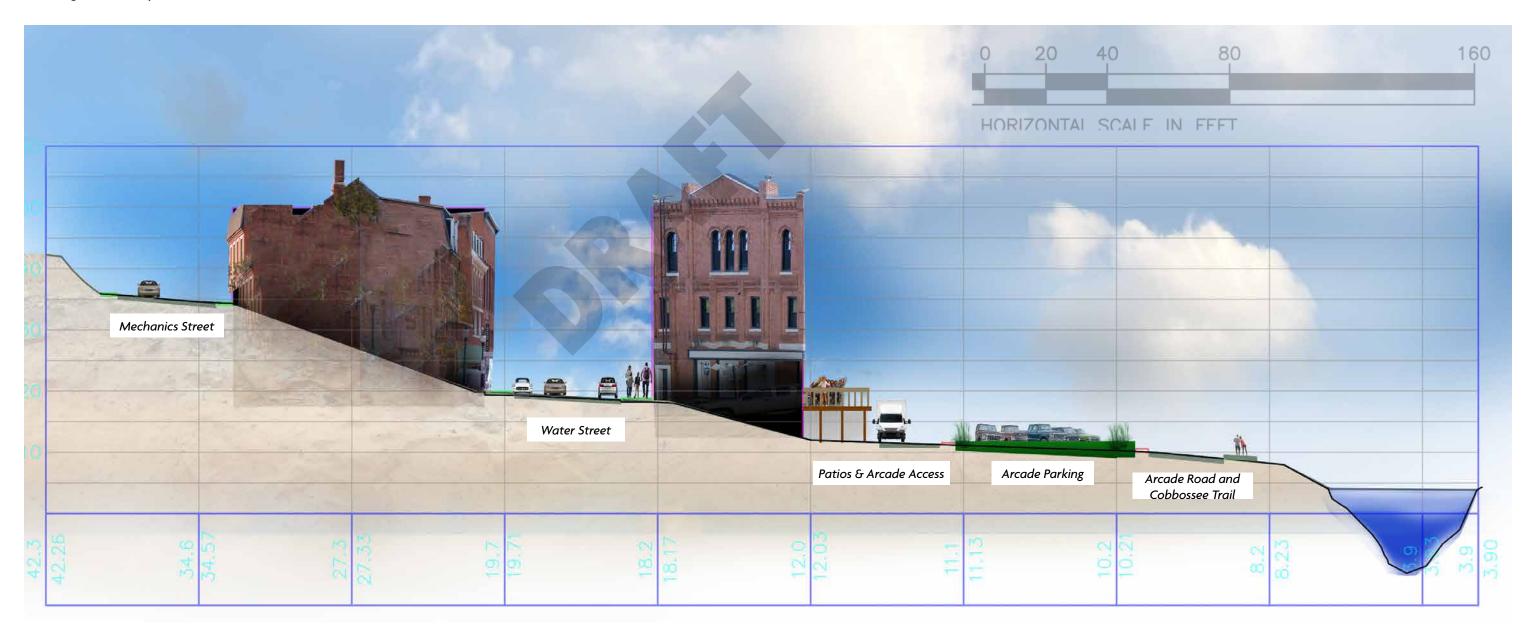


112 parking spaces

Arcade Access Improvements This section illustrates how improvements to the

This section illustrates how improvements to the Arcade could both create a more inviting entrance and access point to Downtown, as well as support expanded outdoor retail and dining opportunities on the Arcade adjacent water street buildings.

The vertical scale of this section is exaggerated 2x in order to illustrate the natural topography challenges that are present downtown. Because these natural grades will not change in Gardiner's future, all efforts should be made to prioritize the access routes to the east of the arcade as key pedestrian linkages, as well as at-grade access between Water Street and commerce spaces and Water Street public outdoor spaces.



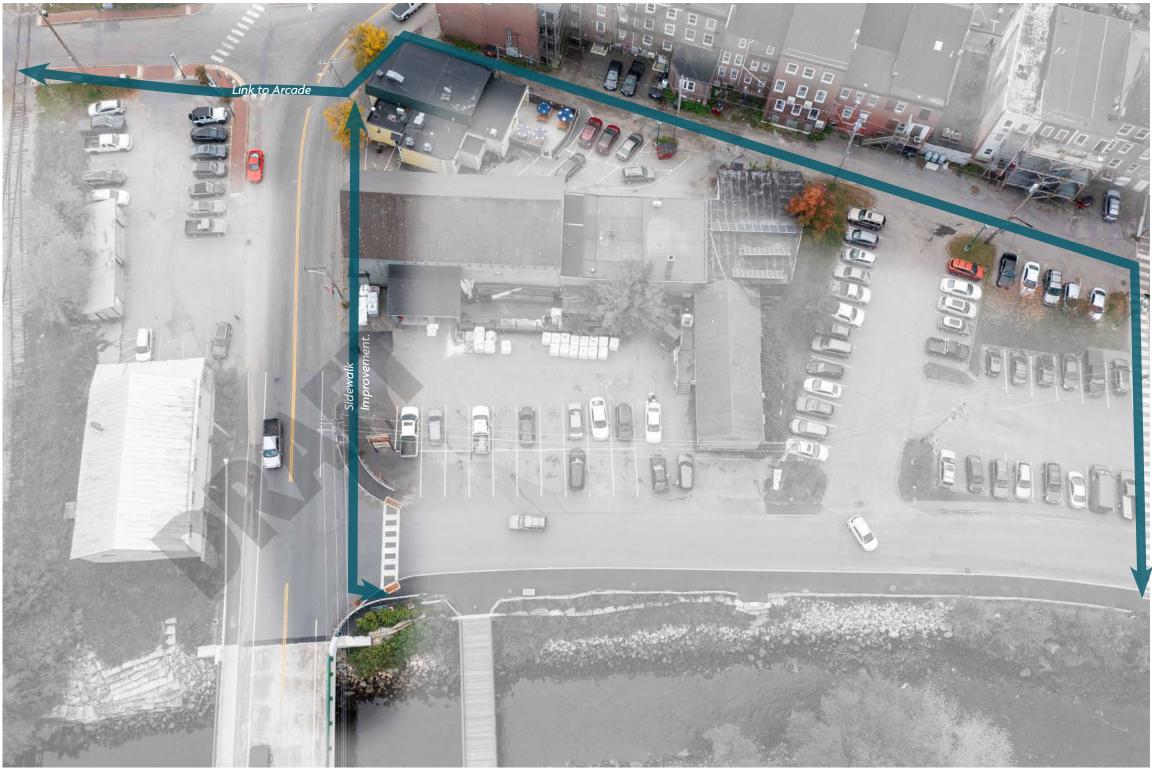
Waterfront Park to Cobbossee Trail

With or without any redesign of the Arcade, the two corridors at right should be prioritized for improvements that make them safe and accessible pedestrian routes for all ages and abilities.

Both of the corridors illustrated at right are the only two direct corridors whose grades can support access by wheelchair, stroller, or similar modes of access.



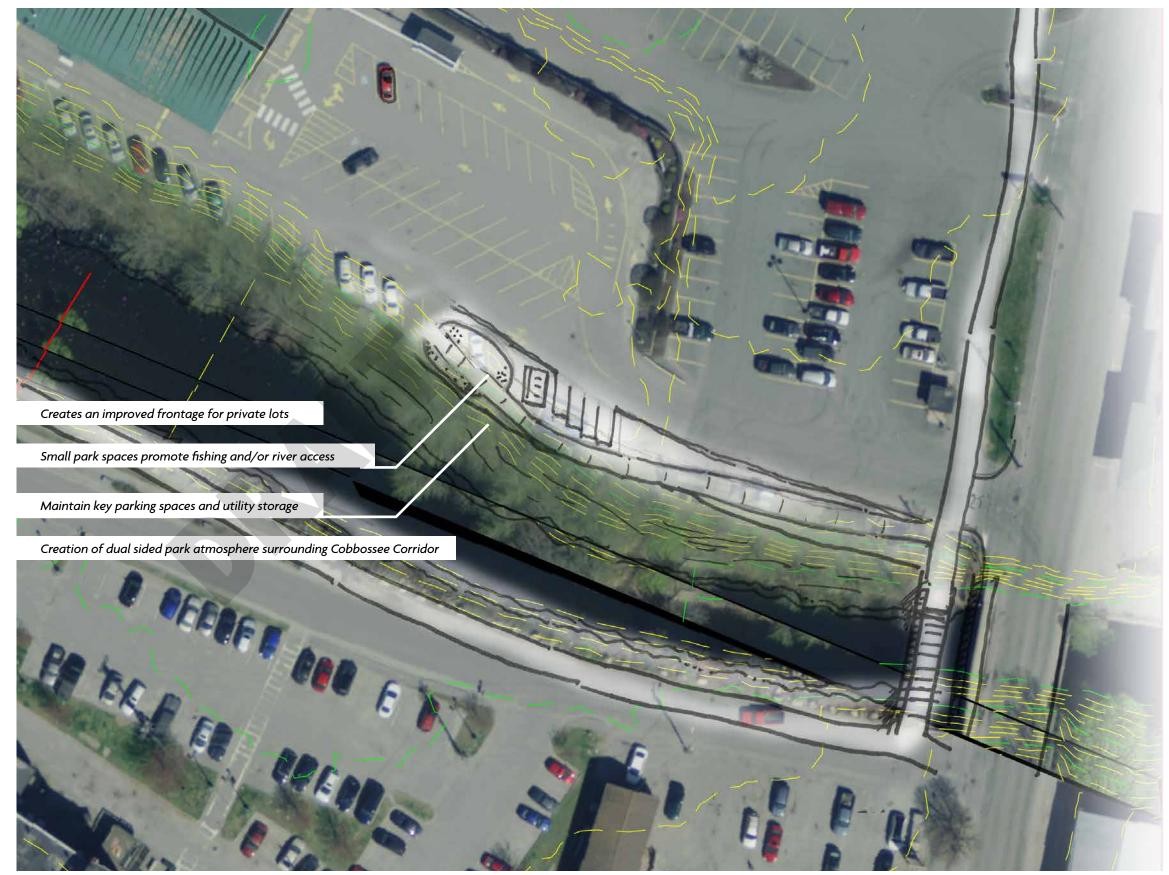
Recent improvements have begun to link these resources, but utilities and narrow sidewalks still pose a navigation challenge.



Riverside Parking Access Improvements

Another access improvement for downtown could be to leverage the nearby private parking on the far north side of the Cobbossee Stream. Although some businesses in this commercial development can be quite busy, parking in the lower southeastern corner, surrounding a KeyBank ATM teller could be utilized during after-hours as a shared public/private resource.

Additional public investment to link this commercial 'gateway' to the historic downtown could become a stub to the Cobbossee trail that would provide clear and direct pedestrian access from the parking area to Downtown resources. This trail stub could be designed to provide a clearly designated (and screened) location for dumpsters and other utilities with minimal disruption to the current parking supply.





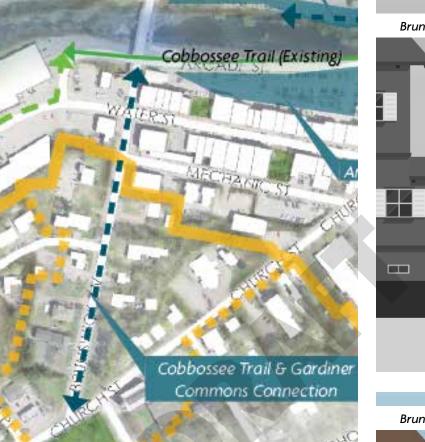
Cobbossee Trail Connection and Adjacent Parking

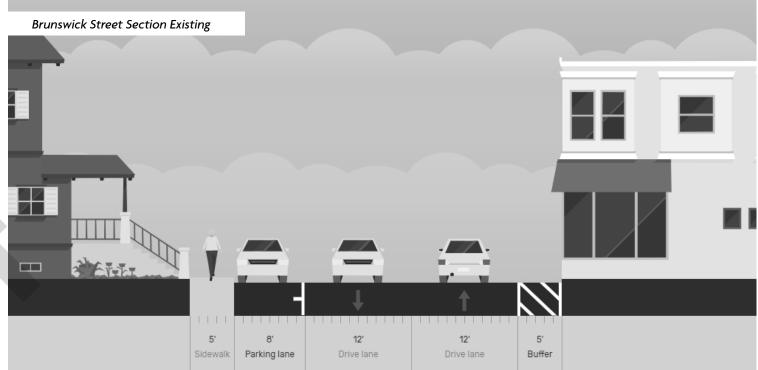
Brunswick Avenue

Bicycle and pedestrian access from Gardiner Commons to downtown is functional, but could be better. Despite the barrier that the steep hill creates for uphill cycling, or perhaps because of it, improved bicycling facilities could improve active transportation opportunities to downtown and reduce demands for parking.

Simple, paint-only improvements are envisioned to give the corridor between the Cobbossee Trail and Gardiner Green a more bicycle-friendly character. Current travel lanes could be reduced from 12 feet to 11 feet, and shoulder space reprogrammed to a dedicated on-street parking aisle adjacent to downhill (northbound) lanes, and a dedicated climbing bike lane could be installed adjacent to the existing sidewalk. This would provide a safe space for slower moving uphill bicycle traffic, and faster moving downhill bicycle traffic would share the motorized travel lane.

Although this recommendation is not the only reconfiguration of this roadway that could improve bike/ped connection downtown, the linkage between the Gardiner Commons and Downtown should be prioritized for improved bike/pedestrian facilities.





Brunswick Street Section (Proposed)



5 11 Sidewalk Bike lane Drive lane

Sections via streetmix.net

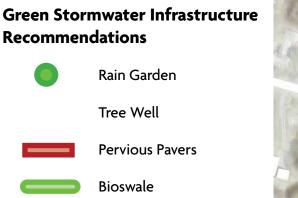


Green Streets and Stormwater Infrastructure

The Kennebec and Cobbossee are two of Gardiner's most treasured assets and a major aspect of Gardiner's identity. The water's importance cannot be overstated, and protecting these resources from human impacts will help make sure that these assets, along with Gardiner's human infrastructure, can withstand the challenges of severe storms, pollution, flooding, and more.

Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) is a way to clean water and mitigate flooding due to large impervious surfaces. Infrastructure elements that may be valuable to include in Gardiner's downtown include rain gardens, street trees and tree wells, pervious pavers, and bioswales. Certain areas of existing pavement or infrastructure can be retrofitted to utilize GSI without significant changes to the streetscape or traffic patterns. Others can be utilized to change the geometry of traffic along a street.

The following two pages include details and images of the above mentioned elements. Additional information can be found in the Vermont Green Streets Guide and the US EPA Green Streets Handbook.





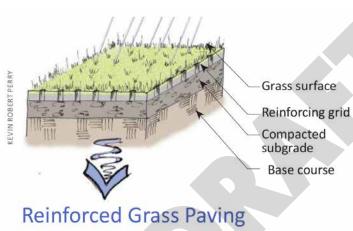
Green Stormwater Treatment Options

Pervious Pavers

Pervious pavers can be used in parking lots, parks, and residential driveways to reduce the amount of impervious surface while still providing a structural surface for parking or walking.

Note that pervious pavers in high traffic areas often require significant maintenance to remove debris and allow water to drain appropriately.





Bioswales

Pervious Pavers

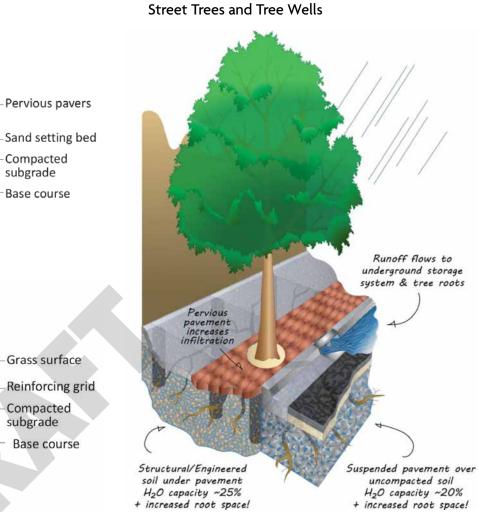




Image 1 & 3: Vermont Green Streets Manual Image 2: Unilock



Image 1 & 2: Vermont Green Streets Manual Image 3: EPA Green Streets Handbook



Image 1: EPA Stormwater to Street Trees Image 2: EPA Green Streets Handbook

Treewells



*Image courtesy of the 2014 Philadelphia Green Streets Design Manual

EXAMPLE URBAN STREET TREE



Image 1 & 2: Vermont Green Streets Manual

Green Stormwater Treatment Options

Bioswales, Rain Gardens, and Curb Extensions are all similar practices that may be selected and modified based on the location and site conditions. Not all locations may be appropriate for trees; trees are only used where size and space allow.

Bioswales

Rain Gardens



Image 1: Vermont Green Streets Manual Image 2: DuBois & King

Image 1: Vermont Green Streets Manual Image 2: DuBois & King

Curb Extensions



Image 1: Vermont Green Streets Manual Image 2: DuBois & King

Gardiner's Identity, Gardiner's Economy

Market Definition and Introduction

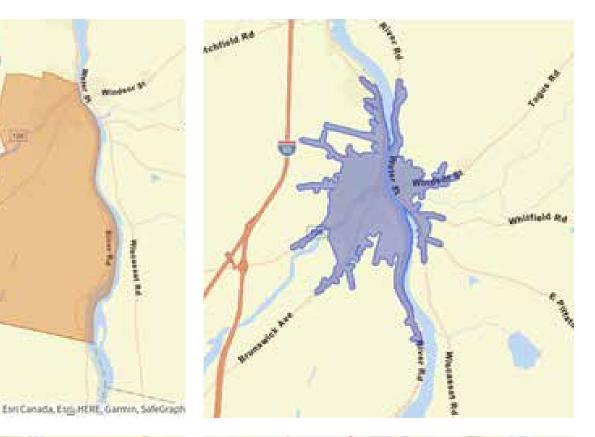
The existing market conditions for Gardiner is complex. The city is part of the Augusta-Waterville ME Micropolitan Statistical area (which is comprised of all Kennebec County communities). Each of these individual economies act upon one another to create a complex and dynamic system.

That system affects Gardiner most directly through its neighbors. Any examination of Gardiner's downtown that does not also reflect on its proximity to downtown Hollowell and Augusta and the suburban retail that exists within the area would not adequately portray the opportunities for downtown Gardiner.

This plan examines a drive time analysis from the intersection of Water Street and Maine Avenue in downtown Gardiner. Five, ten, and fifteen minute drive times are examined to explore the dynamics of the region. The maps on this page illustrate the areas surrounding Gardiner that can be reached in all directions when driving for the specified distances. Gardiner City Limits is mapped for reference scale.

The five-minute drive time is a bit smaller than the City limits, the ten-minute drive time incorporates all of the City and includes downtown Hallowell and the Route 126 / Lewiston Road intersection with the Main Turnpike (I-95) and Interstate 295, and the fifteen-minute drive time incorporates all of downtown Augusta and much of the commercial retail along Western Avenue in Augusta to its interchange with the Maine Turnpike (I-95).

These drive times give insight into local and more regional population trends, demographics, and shopping patterns. They do not account for the significant impact and potential impact of visitors to downtown Gardiner which makes the analysis a more conservative estimate of potential.





Esri Canada, Esri, HERE, Garmin, Safet

Furi Camada, Euri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, N

Demographics

Population

The new US Census population data released in September reveals a critical shift in trends for the population of Gardiner. 2019 American Community Survey data showed that Gardiner was continuing a trend of declining population going from a 2010 population of 5,790 to an estimated 2019 population of 5,653 (a 2.7% decline). Yet, the 2020 census data reveals that the population of Gardiner increased to 5,961 (a 2.9% increase).

This similar but less dramatic trend is shown in Kennebec County where the county population was anticipated to have increased by only .1% between 2010 and 2019 while the 2020 US Census data shows an increase of 1.32% to 123,624.

This new Census data comports to input from community members who indicated in interviews that Gardiner itself was indeed growing and that growth was accelerating as the Covid-19 Pandemic accelerated an influx of residents from urban areas in the region (Boston and New York primarily).

The fact that Gardiner is growing, and growing faster than Maine or Kennebec County changes the outlook for every other analytic in this report.

Prior projections were showing continued population decline in Gardiner through 2026, and the newly released Census Data should be monitored as additional elements become available - the full availability of 2020 Census data was still pending as of this report's writing. The fact that Gardiner is growing, and growing faster than Maine or Kennebec County changes the outlook for every other analytic in this report.

Income

Median household income levels in each of the geographies has not been released by the US Census for 2020. In lieu of this data, Claritas Inc. is used as the source of this data. According to this source, each of the geographies have similar income levels that lag the state and significantly lag the nation.

It is important to note that interviews with residents of the community note that many locate here because of the quality of life and relative affordability when compared with communities further south in Maine. It is worth noting that many residents in Gardiner are above retirement age which indicates that income levels may not relate directly to household wealth and spending capacity.

Income Data Comparison

| City of Gardiner | \$51,692 |
|-------------------|----------|
| 5-Min Drive Time | \$50,000 |
| 10-Min Drive Time | \$52,175 |
| 15-Min Drive Time | \$49,898 |
| Maine | \$57,918 |
| United States | \$68,703 |

Median Age

Median age makes Maine the oldest state in the country. Similar to the state, Gardiner and its surrounding geographies skew older. What is yet to be seen is whether this age will go down as new 2020 census data is released. It can be assumed that newcomers will be a combination of retirees from urban areas and families wishing to relocate from more urban centers.

Median Age Data Comparison

| City of Gardiner | 43.6 |
|-------------------|------|
| 5-Min Drive Time | 43.1 |
| 10-Min Drive Time | 44.8 |
| 15-Min Drive Time | 44.9 |
| Maine | 44.7 |
| United States | 38.1 |



Retail Market Analysis

The retail market analysis identifies potential opportunities for retail growth based on demand within the market areas defined above. "Retail Leakage" is a term that refers to the difference between the retail expenditures of residents living in a particular geography and the sales produced by stores located in the same geography. If residents are purchasing more than stores are selling, dollars are leaking outside the trade areas to other locations.

Retail leakage translates directly to existing demand.

The data presented in this section comes from Claritas, a national marketing service used for market research by town planners, retail & restaurant site planners, and retail companies. Claritas Analytics gets its data from a number of sources including: Census of Retail Trade; Annual Survey of Retail Trade; Census of Employment and Wages, Sales Tax Reports, and various trade associations.

This data is a broad look at the market and should not supplement for more detailed market research. It does, however, provide an overall view of what the Gardiner market potential.

It is important to note the following that makes findings presented here conservative in nature:

- The market study areas are growing in population rather than shrinking
- This accounts for local spending not spending from outside the region (tourism)
- Does not account for driving factors such as the Johnson Hall renovation

Trade Area Retail Leakage

Restaurants and retailers in the defined trade area combined all show a retail "gain" market meaning that the store/restaurant sales exceed demand. This "gain" market increases as the size of the geography increases. The table below illustrates this increasing gain. It is important to note several key points:

- This gain does not occur across all retail categories
- The dramatic increase at the 15-minute drive time acknowledges the strong retail pull of the chain and big box retail cluster along Western Avenue in Augusta that is a large regional destination for shopping.

| Geography | Retail Sales (M) | Consumer Spending (M) | Market Gain (M) |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| City of Gardiner | \$119.7 | \$ 84.3 | \$ 35.4 |
| 5-Min Drive Time | \$120.7 | \$ 73.2 | \$ 47.5 |
| 10-Min Drive Time | \$258.9 | \$183.4 | \$ 75.5 |
| 15-Min Drive Time | \$767.9 | \$442.2 | \$325.7 |

Trade Area Retail Opportunities

Selecting the appropriate trade area to analyze in a market of this nature is a bit more art than science.

In some cases a 10-minute drive time is most appropriate while in others a larger geography is more telling. For example, daily consumer goods like groceries are unlikely to have a catchment area outside of a 10-minute drive time unless it is a very rural area. Yet destination shopping and dining may attract from a 15-20 minute drive time if not available elsewhere.

This assessment attempts to evaluate the "best opportunities" for downtown Gardiner based on a combination of interviews, experience in market research and examination of the data, and potential sales growth.







Specialty Food

Represents a key opportunity for downtown Gardiner. This may be combined with dining. The Gardiner Food Co-op and the Hannaford supermarket create a dynamic where specialty food such as baked goods, meat, fruit and vegetables, cheese and wine could be successful. The 10-minute leakage in this category is \$450,000 and increases to \$3.2 million at the Kennebec County level.

Image of Dedalus Wine Shop, Market, & Wine Bar in Burlington, VT

Full-Service Restaurants

Represent a potential opportunity. While the 5, 10, and 15 minute drive times all show a net gain in restaurant sales, full service dining is an opportunity in Kennebec County with \$6.5 million in leakage. At only a 10% capture rate this could augment existing restaurant sales or support another one to two dining establishments.

Image credit: Wikipedia.org

Clothing, Gifts, and Art

Could all be highly curated growth opportunities within downtown. There is leakage in these categories at every geography examined. These stores would need to either complement existing retailers or provide expansion opportunities of existing products. Interviewees expressed a strong desire to continue to focus on the arts and independent retail to augment traffic generated by anchor stores such as Reny's and Hannaford.

Image Credit: Compass Rose in Olympia, WA from Compass Rose

Trade Area Creative Space Opportunities

Creative spaces have moved from what some might consider a fad into a full-blown national trend with astonishing growth over the last five years in coworking, accelerators, and makerspaces. While this growth was slowing in 2019 and upset by the Covid 19 pandemic, many workers are still looking at how these spaces may reignite the opportunity for people to work closer to home. The concept of these spaces locating within or near the Downtown is a key opportunity for Gardiner.

It is important to understand how each of these creative spaces works, as semantics can sometimes get in the way of truly grasping the purpose of these new models. It is also important to note that, although their definitions are provided below, the fluidity within which they can function in a space is as creative as the very ideas themselves.





COWORKING

CoWorking Spaces provide spaces for individuals or small companies to work in a shared environment. Companies can interact with one another in informal ways, form collaborations, or simply share in the creative atmosphere of the space. CoWorking spaces may host events and activities but rarely provide formal business coaching. In a post Covid environment these spaces can be tailor made to allow for social distancing and private spaces available on a flexible basis.

Image Credit: The Receptionist

ACCELERATOR SPACE

Accelerator/Entrepreneurial Spaces provide a structured way to graduate companies, often within a specified period of time. These spaces may have a higher education partner that is helping to cultivate and coach a business toward success. In other examples, accelerator spaces receive significant support from venture capital, educational institutions, economic development partners to provide a framework of support. The goals of an accelerator is to "spin out" successful ventures.

Image Credit: The Receptionist





MAKERSPACE

Makerspaces are physical locations where people gather to share resources and knowledge. Unlike the spaces described above, makerspaces focus on projects and fabrication. Consequently, makerspaces provide tools and facilities for the makers. While experts or university-affiliated advisors may be available, makers frequently get help from other users. These spaces are associated with fields such as engineering, fabrication, computer science, and graphic design. Many makerspaces have higher education partnerships that desire to create an informal combination of lab, shop, and conference room. Frequently, 3-D printers, manual tools, and classroom spaces are associated with makerspace. Even local libraries are offering makers spaces and camps for children.

Image Credit: Catalyst Makerspace

RETAIL POP UPS

Micro spaces for retailers are another key opportunity for downtown Gardiner. These spaces can take several forms including "pod" type spaces for small retailers, and "emporium" style spaces where local artisans can have a retail presence without a full commitment to a retail space.

Image Credit: Times Argus

Gardiner Housing Market Trends

Trade Area Housing Opportunities

The population growth represents a huge shift in the outlook for additional downtown housing in Gardiner. Rather than declining, an increase in population means more demand for housing. A quick look at market sources like Redfin and Zillow show that prices are increasing, supply is decreasing, and days on the market are at a five year low for the past several months. Downtown living is a growing trend and the supply in the region is nearly non-existent.

Given the lack of supply of downtown housing in the area, these findings illustrate the potential that refurbished historic second and third floor apartments may have for residential living and/or lodging.

Hospitality / Lodging Opportunities

Currently, there are few if any formal lodging opportunities in Gardiner. Augusta boasts the regional collection of hotels and motels, clustered at the Interstate 95 exit.

Despite impacts from COVID 19 on this industry, there appears ample opportunity for a lodging business to revitalize portions of the downtown or create a redevelopment opportunity which could offer a unique Gardiner Downtown or Downtown Adjacent experience to travelers.



How hot is the Gardiner housing market?

- Most homes get multiple offers, often with waived contingencies.
- The average homes sell for about 6% above list price and go pending in around 7
- Hot homes can sell for about 11% above list price and go pending in around 5 days.

90 Bath is most competitive

 Most homes get multiple offers, often with waived contingencies.

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- The average homes sell for about 5% above list price and go pending in around 6 days.
- Hot homes can sell for about 11% above list price and go pending in around 5 days.

Marketing & Identity

A community identity is a key component of how a community tells its story to itself and the outside world. Through the Community Heart & Soul process, Gardiner has cultivated a sense of self, identity and purpose. This has been developed through a rigorous process that involved the community, focused on what matters, and anticipated a long term process. This process has served Gardiner well since its inception in 2012.

Curating a community's sense of identity and place is a never-ending process. New residents move in, new amenities come to live, and new connections further knit a community together. This plan makes recommendations that will further the connections in downtown and between downtown and other communities.

Residents have identified the unique relationship of downtown with the water, open space, trails, and the built environment.

Gardiner's family friendly character was another unique and valuable asset identified throughout the public input process.

It is now time to examine how Gardiner continues to tell its story. Currently, the community portrays a series of varied identities and graphic communications that could better connect

the place with people. The City, Gardiner Main Street, existing signs, wayfinding, and banners each show a variety of messages, colors, and varying degrees of consistency. The community has demonstrated its capacity to tell its story, that story should be reflected in consistent messaging across all platforms.

This should occur with well - coordinated environmental graphics, messaging to consumers about what downtown is, and positioning of Gardiner in the region.

Interviews with stakeholders suggest that the connection with the arts and the natural environment represent unique positions for Gardiner as well as its commitment to the Heart & Soul Model.

Examples on this page include graphic branding developed for Troutdale, Oregon where the community has united around an identity that positions it in relation to its outdoor and artistic amenities. This identity runs through every facet of the community from City Government to events and activities.

Community Identity and Marketing Strategy.

Gardiner has numerous assets in place that make it an iconic and incredible destination for new businesses, residents, and tourists alike, significantly increasing local economic vibrancy.

This plan sees the key to unlocking that vibrancy as further development of a Community Identity and Marketing Strategy, which will work with varied community members to identify physical projects and coordinated messaging that can be developed in coming years to ensure that Gardiner's story is told to the outside world.



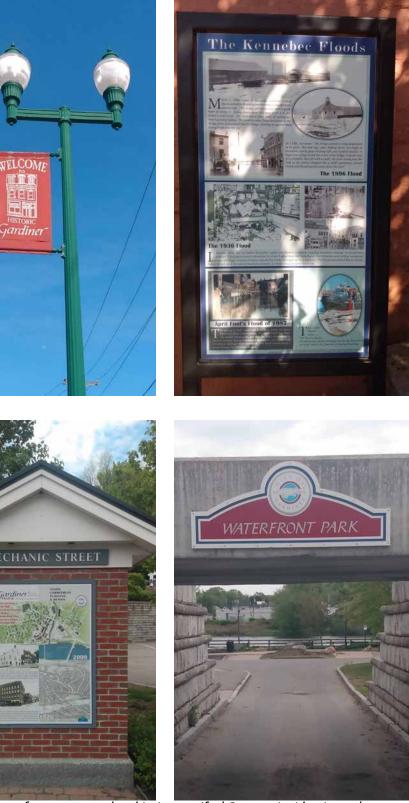


Arts in Action OUTDALI



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Coordinated wayfinding and placemaking signage could be a first step towards achieving a unified Community Identity and Marketing Strategy





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