



Fort Kent, Maine

Downtown Revitalization Plan

Date: February, 2015

WP # 12924A

WRIGHT-PIERCE 
Engineering a Better Environment

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION		Page
	Acknowledgements	1
Section 1	Project Goals	2
Section 2	Executive Summary	4
DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN		Page
Section 3	Downtown Area	6
Section 4	Zoning and Ordinances / Consistency with Comprehensive Plan	8
Section 5	Buildings Inventory and Conditions Assessment	10
Section 6	Inventory of Retail / Commercial Space	13
Section 7	Employment Opportunities	14
Section 8	Inventory of Residential Units	18
Section 9	Pedestrian / Bicycle Infrastructure and Accessibility	19
Section 10	Infrastructure – Streetscape and Utilities	21
Section 11	Signage	24
Section 12	Parking	26
Section 13	Recreation	28
Section 14	Capital Improvements Program	30
Section 15	Action Plan / Funding Opportunities	31
MAPS		
	Downtown Study Area	
	Building Inventory	
	Transportation / Parking	
	Recreation	
	Utility Infrastructure	

APPENDICES

Parking Inventory and Survey Summary

Public Input

- Downtown Committee Meeting – 04/22/14
- Public Workshop – 06/24/14
- Town Council Draft Plan Presentation – 10/27/14

TIF District Maps

Town Zoning Map

Fort Kent Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan

Slum and Blight Declaration

MaineDOT Traffic Counts

The following documents have not been included as appendices within this report as these documents are readily available to the public from the Town of Fort Kent's website:

- *Town Ordinances and Comprehensive Plan*
http://www.fortkent.org/residents/index.php#revize_document_center_rz144
- *Acadian Heritage Sites and Fort Kent's Trails and Greenways information*
http://www.fortkent.org/departments/recreation_and_parks_department/outdoor_recreation_opportunities_and_acadian_heritage_sites.php#revize_document_center_rz403

Acknowledgements



The Fort Kent Downtown Revitalization Plan was developed for the Town of Fort Kent by Wright-Pierce. The plan was financially supported through local capital funding.

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America's First Mile Committee
Northern Maine Development Commission
Fort Kent Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
Pierce-Atwood (TIF Document Legal Counsel)

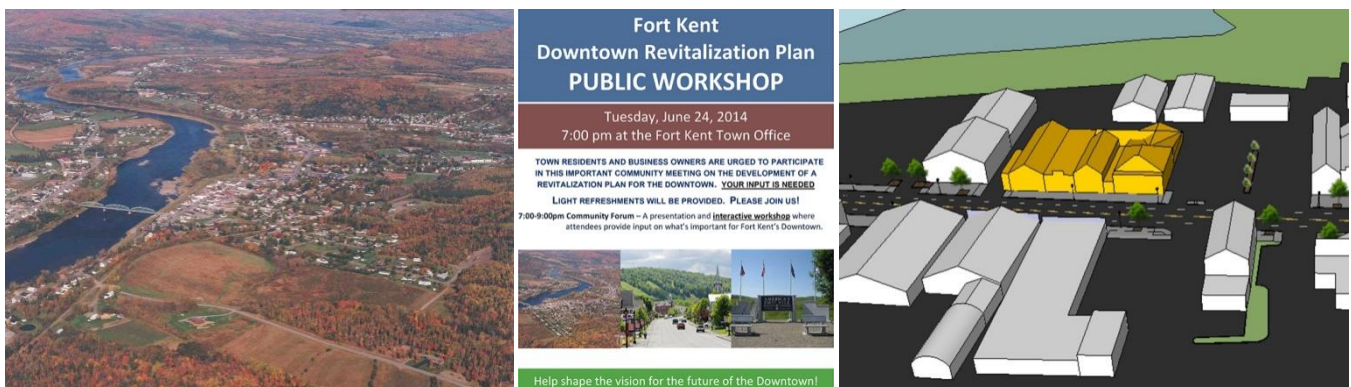
Special thanks goes to the general public and local business owners who provided input during the plan development process, along with all those who assisted in past recent development of the *Comprehensive Land Use Plan – 2012 – Town Fort Kent*, the *Town of Fort Kent, Maine – Downtown Tax Increment Financing District and Development Program* and the *Fort Kent Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*.

1 Project Goals

Early on in the planning process several “fact finding” steps were taken that established consensus goals to guide development of the Downtown Revitalization Plan. Relevant similar planning efforts within the community such as the recently adopted Downtown Tax Increment Financing District and Development Program (TIF) were examined by Wright-Pierce. Public input was gathered from a kick-off meeting with Town Staff and the Downtown Committee (Reorganized as the America’s First Mile Committee), an interactive workshop meeting with the general public, and at an initial draft plan presentation to the Town Council. Additional stakeholder input was also sought from specific groups such as the Fort Kent Chamber of Commerce. Based on this input, the following consensus goals were established.

PROJECT GOALS

- Develop a Downtown Revitalization Plan that is consistent and supportive of other relevant past, current and ongoing town-led planning initiatives.
- Take advantage of the wealth of community historical interests and the strong sense of community pride in the Downtown.
- Establish a theme for the Downtown that can be clearly branded in support of the local economy.
- Continue to support existing businesses, and identify and recruit “missing” commercial entities to meet a wider range of local residential needs.
- Main Street is the key component of the Downtown.
- Create a greater diversity of housing with a focus on attracting young families to live, work and play in the Downtown.
- Concentrate on in-fill of vacant parcels within the heart of the Downtown.
- Develop a prioritized Downtown Revitalization Plan that creates an actionable “roadmap” for strategic community investment.



SNAPSHOT OF FORT KENT'S DOWNTOWN

A list of the Downtown's assets, weaknesses and opportunities (a "snapshot", below) was generated to understand the needs and issues that the community felt most impacted the Downtown.

Assets: What's working for the Downtown

- Strong sense of community pride
- New international bridge
- Marketing opportunities of America's First Mile
- Recent Comp. Plan update and Downtown TIF in place
- University of Maine – Fort Kent
- Nearby hospital
- Diversity of year-round outdoor recreational opportunities
- Businesses that can reach markets beyond the immediate service area to New England and beyond (Car dealerships, outdoor sporting equipment...)
- State certification as a "Business Friendly Community"

Weaknesses: Where things are falling short

- Key business types are missing from the downtown (retail clothing / furniture, mid-level restaurants...)
- Lack of diversity of housing types
- While there are some night life opportunities in the downtown (movies, pizza and pubs) a greater diversity is needed
- Limited employment opportunities (most are tied to trucking and forestry)
- Lack of parking
- Lack of lodging (especially for large gathering events)
- Lack of informational / directional signage
- Recent fires and floods have created gaps in the historic Main Street character

Opportunities: Ideas to build from

- Establish a consistent theme for the downtown
- Infill of key vacant parcels within the heart of the downtown
- Promote reasons for visitors to park and experience the downtown
- Attract young families who can stay and raise kids in the area
- Downtown is a service center, not only for Fort Kent, but also regionally for Northern Maine and Canada (multiple car dealerships, outdoor sporting goods...)

See Appendix A-1 for full documentation of public input as recorded by Wright-Pierce

2 Executive Summary

The purpose of developing the Downtown Revitalization Plan is to serve the community as an instrument for prioritizing revitalization goals in a defined downtown area. Such an area within a community is defined by State law as:

“a cohesive core of commercial and mixed-use buildings, often interspersed with civic, religious, and residential buildings and public spaces, often arranged along a main street and intersecting side streets, walkable and served by public infrastructure.”

Once an area has been designated and a set of publicly supported Downtown Revitalization Plan goals are identified, the Downtown Revitalization Plan outlines prioritized and actionable recommendations for implementing the community’s vision. There are two primary means of implementing the Downtown Revitalization Plan. One is by capital investment to support physical improvements (utilities, parking lots, streetscape elements, etc...). The other is promotion of the vision for the Downtown through volunteerism, establishment of a committee to advocate implementation of the plan after adoption of the Plan, continued public outreach, and adoption of new and/or revised local policy measures in terms of regulatory ordinances.

Both of these means are best achieved in a collaborative effort between the citizens of Fort Kent, local municipal government, and private / non-profit stakeholders.

Fort Kent has made great strides ahead of development of the Downtown Revitalization Plan to put some of these tools in place so that the community can begin implementing the plan in a timely fashion. As noted above, the Comprehensive Plan has been recently updated and a TIF program has been set in place, defining the downtown area and creating a potential funding mechanism for revitalization improvements. The Town has also recently created a Bicycle / Pedestrian plan in consideration of a variety of local and regional transportation. On the promotional side, the Town has recently been recognized by the State of Maine as a certified “Business Friendly Community”.

The next strategic step to utilize potential TIF funds and capitalize on the other recent supportive initiatives is to develop a downtown plan in conformance with the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development’s specific plan component criteria which serve as the organizational format of this planning initiative and include:

- Definition of the downtown area
- Information regarding zoning ordinance effects on the downtown area, and consistency of the Downtown Revitalization Plan with the Comprehensive Plan
- Building inventory conditions assessment
- Inventory of retail / commercial space

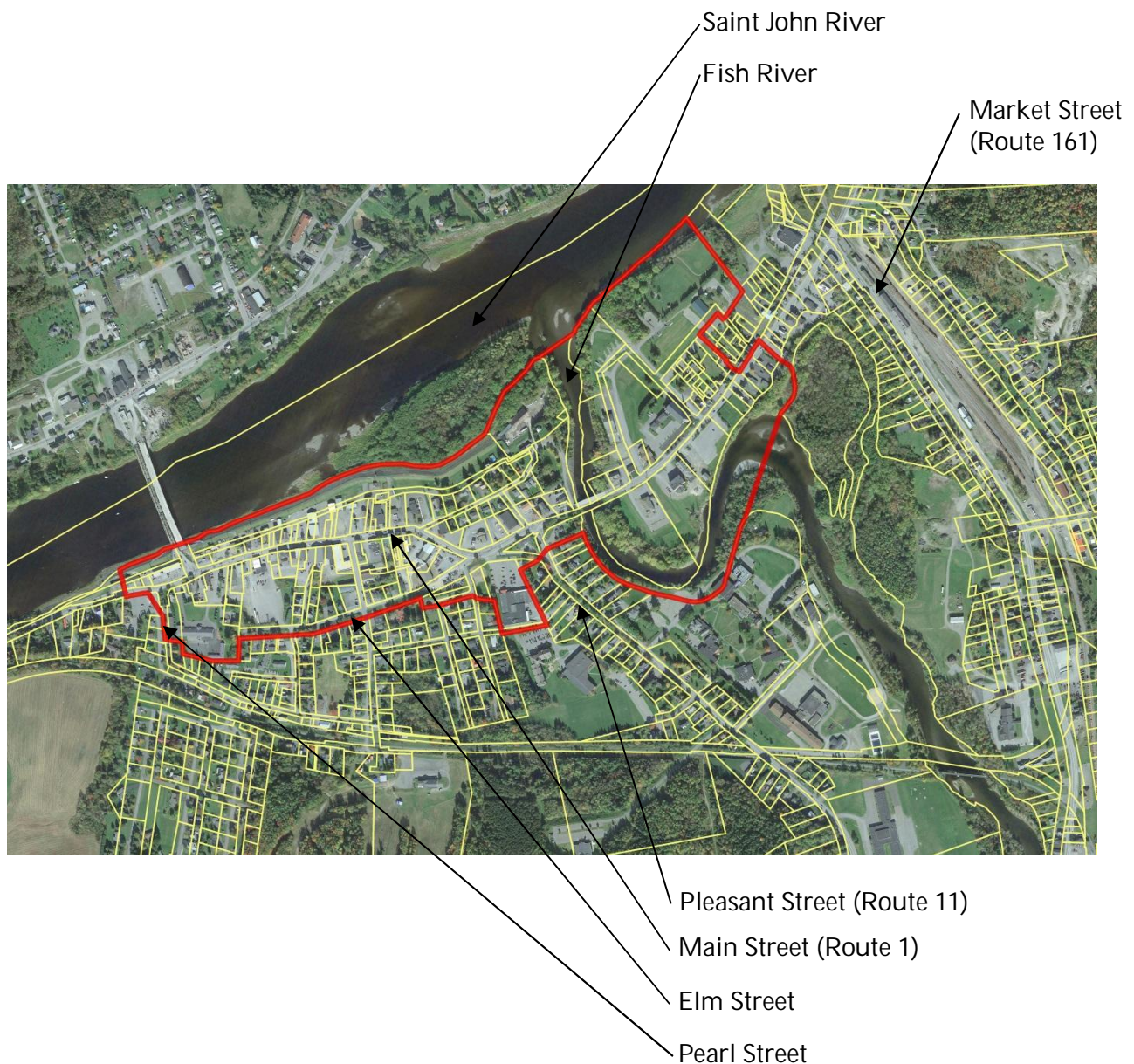
- Employment opportunities
- Inventory of residential units
- Pedestrian / Bicycle infrastructure and accessibility
- Infrastructure – Streetscape and Utilities
- Signage
- Parking Management
- Recreation
- Capital Improvement Program
- Action Plan – Findings and Recommendations that support public involvement in development of the plan and implementation going forward



Assessment of the current condition of each of these plan components is expanded upon further in the following respective sections of the Downtown Revitalization Plan, culminating in specific findings and recommendations for implementing each component of the plan, and overall downtown revitalization implementation strategies for future phased improvements.

3 Downtown Area

Fort Kent's Downtown area has been recently defined and is hereto referenced as the Downtown TIF District (*Depicted in RED below*). The Downtown's geographic region generally lies between the Saint John River to the north, and Elm Street and the Fish River to the south, following Main Street (U.S. Route 1) from the intersection at Pearl Street to the west and Alfred Street to the east. The Downtown TIF District is further depicted in terms of designated parcels on Maps 15, 17, 18 and 20 of the Town of Fort Kent Tax Maps. (*See Appendices*)



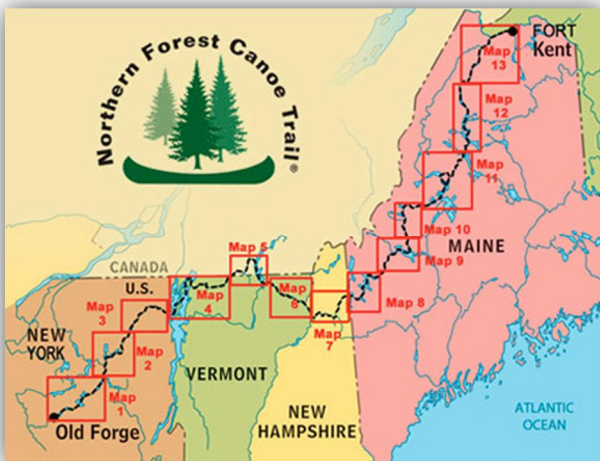
DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE CONSUMER SURVEY

As part of the past recent planning studies focused on the Downtown area, Fort Kent conducted a public input survey focused on shopping and parking interests within the downtown shortly before developing the Downtown Revitalization Plan. This survey was supported by volunteer efforts from UMFK students and included participation from the general public during the Annual Fort Kent International Muskie Derby. The findings of this survey are as follows and it should be noted that the results are aligned with subsequent public input and Downtown Revitalization Goals as described in this plan (*See Appendices*):

- Out of 140 total participants, the majority identified a need for retail clothing stores (92)
- New businesses desired were in support of general department stores (52) and clothing (43)
- Parking availability was split 50/50 in terms of perception of adequacy recognizing the shortage of convenient parking close to certain downtown businesses was limited at such a large gathering event.

FORT KENT'S REGIONAL CONTEXT

As one of only 9 service center communities in Aroostook County, downtown Fort Kent serves as a regional hub where it is a job center, it serves as a retail center with sales exceeding the needs of the local population, and it offers an array of social, cultural, health and financial services to the surrounding region. The University of Maine at Fort Kent, Northern Maine Medical Center, and the 10th Mountain Biathlon Training Center are but a few examples of the diversity of its economy. Outdoor recreation and UMFK draw regional interests from throughout New England and across the U.S. Service center businesses, active forestry industry trucking and rail operations, scenic byways, eco-tourism and the international bridge draw interests from northern Aroostook County and neighboring Canada.



Example of Regional Eco-Tourism Connections



1 of 4 Car Dealerships in the Downtown Serving the Greater Region

4 Zoning and Ordinances / Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

Findings

The following excerpts from the Town's Comprehensive Plan and local zoning ordinances illustrate how these documents effect the Downtown. In general, Fort Kent's local ordinance regulations and overarching Comprehensive Plan are well aligned with the community's goals for downtown revitalization.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan – 2012 – Town of Fort Kent was recently adopted by the residents of Fort Kent on November 13, 2012. The Comprehensive Plan is in support of the community's Downtown Redevelopment Strategy, certifying that:

"this Comprehensive Plan was prepared with the intent of complying with the Growth Management Act (30 M.S.R.A. §§ 4312-4350), that it includes all of the applicable required elements of the Maine Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07-105 CMR208) and it is true and accurate"

ZONING AND ORDINANCES

The Downtown includes Commercial and Residential zoning areas and is surrounded by Fort Kent's Overall Growth Area. The following zoning ordinance districts are located within or immediately adjacent to the downtown area.

R – Residential District

The Residential District is established as a zoning District in which the principal use of the land will be for detached family dwellings at low density with educational, recreational and religious, fraternal and nonprofit organization of club facilities. The development of attractive neighborhood living will be encouraged. Areas where similar residential future growth appears possible are included in the Residential District.

C - Commercial District

The Commercial District is established as a general business and commercial District to which the public requires frequent and convenient access. It is intended to promote concentration of commercial development for the mutual advantage of the public and the merchant.

- a. *On West Main Street between the western boundary line of Tax Map 15, Lots 87, 86, and 1 and Tax Map 18 the western boundary line of Lot 21 and the eastern property line of Lot 34, (Town Office up to railroad tracks on East Main Street) residential uses are permitted only in*

levels above the ground floor, provided that all federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and ordinances are met.

- b. Plans for proposed construction shall be reviewed by the Town Council and Planning Board, and when appropriate by the municipal department heads.

(See Appendices for Urban Areas Zoning Map)

The full Comprehensive Plan, Zoning and Ordinance documents have not been included within this report. These documents are readily available to the public from the Town of Fort Kent's website:

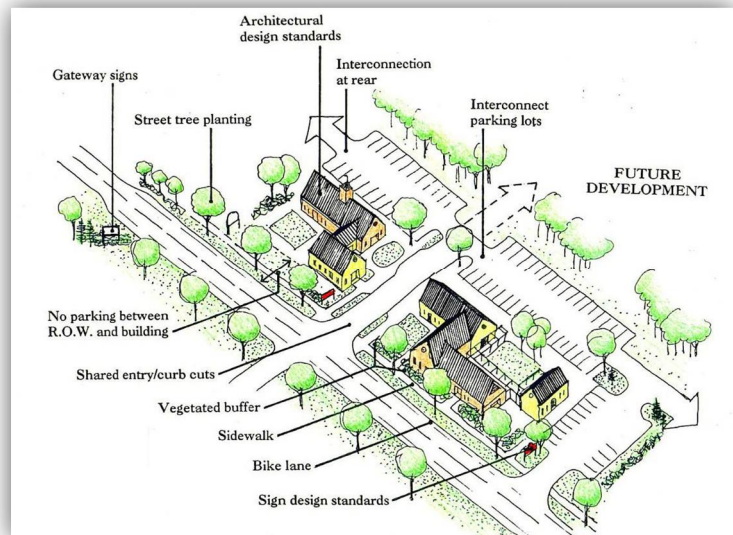
- Town Ordinances and Comprehensive Plan
http://www.fortkent.org/residents/index.php#revize_document_center_rz144

Priorities

- Maintain historic village character promoting a New England Village theme.

Recommendations

- ♦ Consider adopting design guidelines, an historic district or other protection to maintain Downtown character and historic architecture.
- Consider use of Form Based Codes to address architectural character for new, non-residential development and conversion from residential to non-residential uses within the downtown.
- Consider adopting parking standards / shared use parking for new development within the downtown.
- The Comprehensive Plan as a whole is currently aligned and supportive of the Downtown Revitalization Plan's goals and does not need any immediate changes as a result of the Downtown Revitalization Plan findings. As a long term priority in support of the community's Downtown Revitalization goals and in compliance with State Law, the Town should continue to update the Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Plan every 5 to 10 years at a minimum, in support of future community planning goals and to be responsive to changing economic and social climates.



Fort Kent Could Develop Similar Illustrations as Supporting Guidelines for Local Ordinances Affecting the Downtown

5 Buildings Inventory & Conditions Assessment

Findings

The downtown itself is currently composed of a variety of building types and uses that is consistent with a healthy, diversified downtown environment. All of the buildings are predominantly 1 to 2 stories in height and are accessible to both floors. The Town has recently completed a thorough inventory and assessment of the buildings within the downtown area during development of the Downtown TIF program, successfully leading to a declaration of slum and blight area. (See *Downtown Area Map*) This designation, as accepted by the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development positions the Town to apply for federal Community Development Block Grant program funds to make physical improvements to buildings themselves, and for the properties surrounding, including public right-of-ways.



U.S. Post Office Building Located on Main Street



Single Family Residential Neighborhood

While recent floods and fires have been a detriment to the fabric of the downtown building environment, the Town has been supportive of new growth opportunities, either encouraging new developers to come to Fort Kent, or through planned municipal infrastructure projects such as acquisition of vacant area(s) for expansion of parking facilities in the heart of the downtown. As a result of such efforts, the majority of the vacant and blighted parcels, which resulted from the recent environmentally destructive events, have been remediated and are anticipated to be redeveloped in the near future.

The Downtown historic building registry includes the Fort Kent Block House - a facility that is managed by the State of Maine. Several structures have survived fire and flood which provide architectural significant to the downtown area even though they are not included on the national registry including the U.S. Post Office and the Catholic Church.

There are 41 commercial /retail buildings and supporting parcels, 21 vacant parcels (the majority of which are serving as parking areas), 20 mixed use buildings which predominantly include retail /commercial use on the 1st floor with housing on the second floor, and 39 standalone residential structures. (Approximately 155 are rental units and 19 are single family homes).



Historic Fort Kent Block House



Mixed Use First Floor Businesses with Second Story Residential Units on Main Street

Priorities

- Establish a façade program.
- Adopt ordinance guidelines or standards to promote a quality of architectural character within the downtown that supports a New England village theme.
- Provide quality, affordable housing for families.
- Fill in voids in the Downtown created by recent flooding and fire events.

Recommendations

- Bring in professional design assistance to offer recommendations on building façade improvements
- Establish a façade program and fund (either revolving loan or grant) for downtown buildings (may include street front landscaping if desired)

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN



A "Before and After" Example of Design Recommendations for Façade Improvements.

- Develop design guidelines or standards to be applied to exterior building renovations and new construction, to encourage appropriate architectural character for the downtown.
- Continue to reach out to owners of downtown buildings and properties that negatively impact the Downtown image, and identify their needs and concerns.
- Reach out to owners of vacant Downtown storefronts to encourage or assist with maintaining window displays.
- Explore the development of a property maintenance ordinance for the Downtown to address properties that negatively impact the Downtown image.
- Establish a program for housing rehabilitation for residential buildings on Main Street.
- Continue to document / promote available buildings for redevelopment, occupancy.
- Work with Maine State Housing Authority and private / non-profit housing agencies such as Coastal Enterprises Incorporated to develop a diversity of housing stock other than higher end single family homes or lower end, single family housing units.



Vacant Downtown Lot



Concept of Vacant Lot Restoration to Fill Main St Void

(See Building Inventory map for parcel by parcel breakdown of development within Fort Kent's Downtown)

6 Inventory of Retail / Commercial Space

Findings

The Town has completed a recent shopping consumer survey (See Appendices) and an inventory and assessment of all buildings within the downtown area during development of the Downtown TIF program and the Comprehensive Plan, and maintains annually updated records of available retail / commercial space within the Downtown area. The Town continues to record current vacant retail / commercial space within the Downtown for local accounting purposes and to assist in the attraction of new development to the Downtown. (See *Building Inventory Map and Downtown TIF document*.)

Priorities

- Focus on filling in the “gaps” in the downtown where recent floods and fires have left key lots along Main Street vacant.
- Attract key “missing” retail store types to meet community shopping needs.

Recommendations

- The Town should continue to update available retail data on an annual basis and work with the Chamber of Commerce to advertise availability of retail / commercial space for targeted recruitment purposes.
- The Town should consider adopting zoning guidelines / standards to ensure that new development is in keeping with a unified “New England Village” theme for the downtown.
- The Town should make infrastructure investments in terms of parking, streetscape and utility improvements in collaboration with new development proposals in the downtown on a case-by-case basis.
- Utilize TIF funding to assist business development in the downtown by providing an opportunity for business development through various avenues, such as a TIF revolving loan / grant program, and marketing and branding, for the recruitment of additional private investment, which will also add to the municipal tax base.
- Utilize branding tools, such as America’s First Mile, and marketing tools, such as demographic and retail data, brochures, and consultants to provide the best opportunities for new private investment.
- Use TIF funds / revolving loan fund and grant monies to help flood-proof existing downtown buildings.



7 Employment Opportunities

Findings

The Town has completed an assessment of employment data within the downtown area during development of the Downtown TIF program. One of the largest employers in the region is the forest industry. Northern Maine Medical Center and the University of Maine at Fort Kent are also large employers within close proximity to the downtown. The downtown itself provided a variety of employment opportunities, primarily in the banking, car sales, retail and restaurant service industries. Opportunities for increased employment within the downtown include additional tourism related work and support of businesses that market goods and services not only to meet the needs of the community and surrounding regional service area, but also throughout New England and the Canadian Provinces, largely via internet commerce. Fort Kent's economy continues to diversify and has adapted to the demographic changes in the last 30 years. The Town has become a community that is centered on NMMC, UMFk, and the many professional and service locations. The following chart displays the breakdown of occupations within the community, in comparison with the rest of the state (*Source – 2012 Comprehensive Land Use Plan):

Fort Kent Employment	Occupations			
Employment Sectors	Fort Kent		Maine	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Management & Professional	738	35.6	224966	34.2
Service occupations	346	17	115271	17.5
Sales & office occupations	443	21	160970	24.5
Farming, fishing, forestry	78	3.8	10367	1.6
Construction & maintenance	150	7.2	66058	10.0
Production & transportation	308	14.8	79924	12.1
Totals	2075		357556	

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

The highest number of occupations falls into the management and professional category, which is reflected in Fort Kent's median household income of \$39,345 in 2010, compared to the state average of \$46,541. One of Fort Kent's greatest economic strengths is its geographically well-defined downtown or central business district. This includes West and East Main Streets and Market Street. The downtown is the retail center for goods and services that serves several surrounding communities. The following chart displays the Town's Retail Sales:

Fort Kent Taxable Retail Sales: (\$1,000s)

Taxable Retail Sales	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total Retail Sales	72516	70243	73706	77184
Consumer Retail Sales	55437	53099	56258	57220
Business Operation	17080	17144	17448	19964
Building Supplies	10776	9352	9182	9036
Food Stores	6506	7060	7114	6785
General Merchandise	5374	5268	5728	5596
Other	5674	4656	4548	5356
Auto & Transportation	18097	18041	20833	21036
Restaurant	7621	7426	7500	8120
Lodging	1389	1296	1351	1290

(*Source – 2012 Comprehensive Land Use Plan)

The trend for the past three years clearly shows that sales are increasing. Consumer retail sales made up the largest part of total retail sales. These represent sales directly to consumers not, businesses, contractors or wholesalers. Business Operation sales showed the greatest increase of all sale types. (CLUP)

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

Major Employers	Employees	Other Businesses	# of Locations
Northern Maine Medical Center	514	Financial Institutions	5
Crosswinds Residential Care	65	Restaurants	8
University of Maine at Fort Kent	115	Clothing/Footwear	2
No. 95 SJVAOS - (SAD 27)	221	Auto Dealers	4
TNT Road Co.	40	Snowmobile/ATV Dealers	4
Irving Woodlands	57	Service Stations	6
Northern Timber Trucking	30	Grocery Stores	2
Frank Martin & Sons	24	Pharmacies/Wellness	3
Paradis Shop & Save	100	Truck/Logging Equipment	2
John's Shurfine	27	Accounting/Financial	2
Daigle Oil Co.	39	Salons/Tanning	8
Valley Auto	20	Outdoor Retail	4
State of Maine DHHS	23	Building Supplies	2
Acadia Federal Credit Union	20	Manufacturing	2
Pelletier Ford	15	Florist	1
Daigle and Houghton	20	Gift Shops	4
Other Regional Employers		Kitchen/Home/Appliances	2
Twin Rivers Paper Co. (Madawaska)	635	Lawn and Garden	4
RF Chamberland (St. Agatha)	91	Realtors	2
Maine Woods Company (Portage)	60	Department/Discount Stores	2
		Insurance Agencies	2
		Convenience Stores	4

Northern Maine Medical Center is the largest employer followed by the school department and UMFK. The remaining employers and business locations are a comprehensive mix of retailers and services that make up the uniqueness of the Fort Kent business community. According to the CLUP, 84% of residents that are employed work in Fort Kent. The remainder of employed persons works outside the community and within an hour and a half travel time from Fort Kent.

Priorities

- Expand employment opportunities for young families in particular, in support of overall revitalization goals to promote a vibrant downtown where residents can raise live/raise families, work and play.

Recommendations

- Provide an opportunity for business development through various avenues, such as a TIF revolving loan / grant program, and marketing and branding, for the recruitment of additional private investment, which will also add to the municipal tax base.
- Utilization of branding tools, such as America's First Mile, and marketing tools, such as demographic and retail data, brochures, and consultants to provide the best opportunities for new private investment.
- Assist business development in the downtown by providing gap funding to private developers through a TIF revolving loan / grant program for the development of 2nd floor residential units in newly developed and existing businesses.
- Expand on opportunities to promote diversity of professional career development at the high school level and at UMFK for traditional industries such as forestry, and for emerging expanding business opportunities such as Maine Winter Sports center and other outdoor recreational opportunities.
- The Fort Kent Downtown Tax Increment Finance Program will provide an opportunity for business development through various avenues, such as a TIF revolving loan / grant program, and marketing and branding, for the recruitment of additional private investment, which will also add to the municipal tax base. The creation of the TIF District will make possible the utilization of branding tools, such as America's First Mile, and marketing tools, such as demographic and retail data, brochures, and consultants to provide the best opportunities for new private investment.

8 Inventory of Residential Units

Findings

The Town has completed an inventory of the residential units within the downtown area during development of the Downtown TIF program and the Comprehensive Plan and maintains records of available retail / commercial space within the Downtown area. In addition to single family residential neighborhoods, both within and immediately surrounding the Downtown, there are currently 155 housing units. The majority of the units are one bedroom (99) followed by (51) two bedroom units and (5) 3 bedroom units. Most of the housing units available within the downtown area and immediately surrounding the downtown are for low income families and elderly housing. Also within the downtown are 20 single family residential houses supporting middle-to upper class families. (See *Building Inventory Map*)



Single Family Residence



Second Story Housing Units Above Main Street Business

Priorities

- Support diversity of residential types within the downtown that are affordable and attractive to young families who can live, work and play within the center of the community.

Recommendations

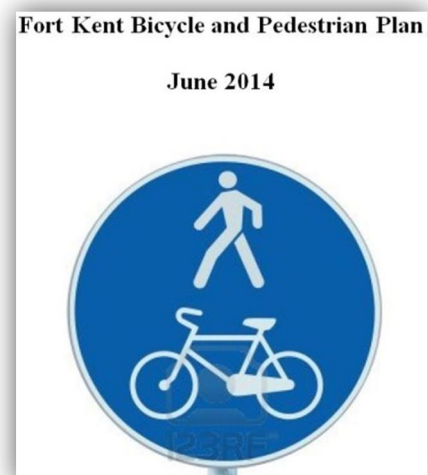
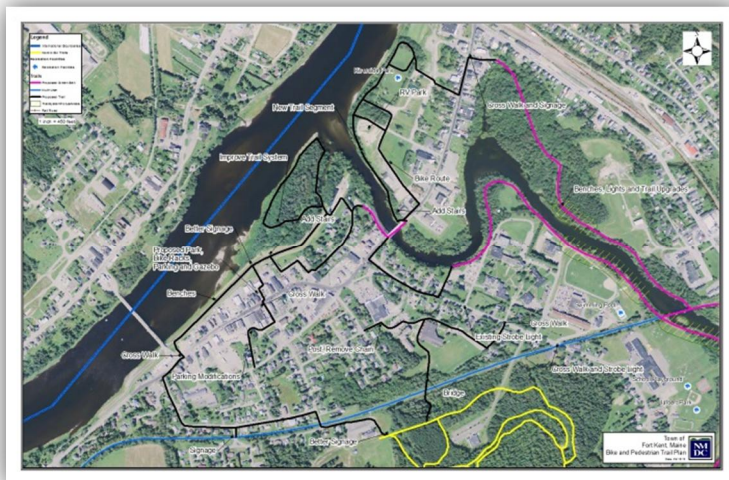
- Assist mixed-use developments by providing gap funding to private developers through a TIF revolving loan / grant program for the development of 2nd floor residential units in new and existing retail / commercial buildings.
- Involve Maine State Housing Authority and private housing developers that have access to New Market Tax Credits and other capital funding sources in support of workforce housing.

Pedestrian / Bicycle Infrastructure and Accessibility

Findings

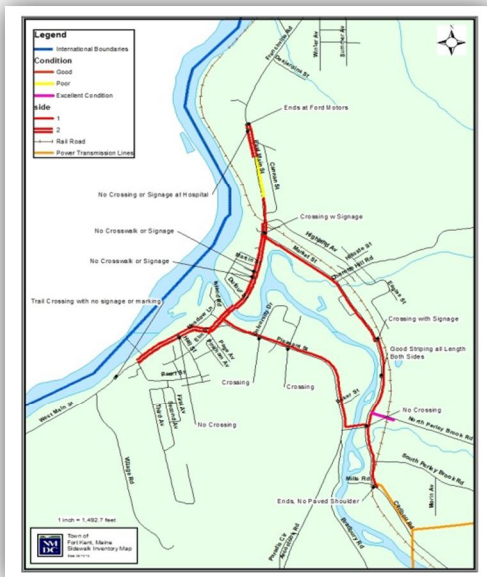
The Town of Fort Kent has completed a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in place that identifies existing bike/ped infrastructure within the downtown and surrounding community and sets prioritized improvements which are consistent with the goals of the Downtown revitalization plan. The Town of Fort Kent, Maine Department of Transportation, Power of Prevention, and the Northern Maine Development Commission began the planning exercise in December 2012 with the intention of defining projects and programs needed to make Fort Kent a bike and walk friendly community. The Committee, with the assistance of Town Officials and through the review of a resident survey identified no/low cost projects that the community can accomplish while seeking to create biking and walking opportunities during all four seasons. The Plan also contains projects that are more expensive and longer term.

The list of projects, ranging from simple signs and markings, to improved sidewalks and crosswalks, to major trail development, including surfaces, lighting and benches were prioritized. For example, identification of safe walking/bicycling routes between places where people live, work, go to school, and play, will be a first step. Safety improvements, sidewalks, signs, maps, and designated trails that connect existing facilities such as 10th Mountain ("Mills to Mountain") and the new Senior Center, may be suggested to encourage "active" (vs. motorized) transportation. The potential of a complete "Fish River Green Belt" trail along both sides of the river in town will be examined. The plan will offer action steps and suggest potential funding sources to enable the plan projects to become reality to improve the pedestrian and bicyclist environment in Fort Kent.



Priorities

- Improve bicycle and pedestrian safety.
- Promotion of outdoor bicycle and pedestrian related activities as economic tourism based attractions associated with the downtown revitalization efforts.
- Begin prioritized implementation of the Town's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- Improve existing sidewalks to comply with ADA guidelines
- Expanding sidewalks off Main Street



Recommendations

- Improve wayfinding signage within the downtown in support of outdoor recreational promotion and to link the downtown parking and businesses within each other.
- Begin implementation of bicycle and pedestrian improvements in a phased approach that is affordable within the Town's capital improvement budget
- Continue to update and evaluate the plan in coordination with other downtown revitalization improvements including roadway, streetscape and utility infrastructure improvements, as well as private development projects so that bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure does not have to be reconstructed "after the fact" when these other initiatives often involve an underground infrastructure component.
- Continue to coordinate with MaineDOT and Bicycle Coalition of Maine on joint project efforts improving bicycle and pedestrian conditions.

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

- Continue to coordinate with MaineDOT to ensure that bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvement projects are consistent with MaineDOT policies and regulations.
- Continue to monitor and plan for capital improvements to maintain existing sidewalk and trail infrastructure.
- Improvements to sidewalks, trails and additional signage within and interconnected with the TIF district, which are of benefit to the downtown, will coincide with the local “Bike and Pedestrian Trails” initiative whose purpose it is to create a more active and accessible Town Center.
- Repair of existing sidewalks and pedestrian and bike trails, and construct new trail interconnections within and adjacent to the TIF district, which are of benefit to the downtown. (For example, the Fish River Greenway. The list of projects, ranging from simple signs and markings, to improved sidewalks and crosswalks, to major trail development are expanded on in the latest Fort Kent Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.)
- Add sidewalks off Main Street to improve pedestrian access from adjacent neighborhoods, schools and recreational facilities.



Heritage Trail Adjacent to the Downtown TIF District



Main St Crosswalk Built Prior to Latest ADA Standards

10 Infrastructure – Streetscape and Utilities

Findings

All roadways are two-way and the condition of the travelways are in fair condition. The Town is located on the Saint John Valley Cultural Byway (Route 1) and on the Fish River Scenic Byway (Route 11). Senator Collins' office is exploring the possibility of opening up the national nomination process that would consider changing the designation of Maine Scenic Byways to National Scenic Byways status.

The downtown area is supported by public water, sewer, electric and CATV / DATA throughout the entire area. Where feasible, all overhead utilities have been located off Main Street. The Town's Water and Sewer Treatment Facilities are located outside the downtown area and all mains within the downtown are in good condition and at capacity to meet current and future expansion needs. The latest water distribution inventory mapping is up to date as of 2012 and the latest sewer main distribution inventory is up to date as of 1995 mapping. All necessary upgrades have been completed as of 2009 as required due to impacts from downtown flooding and fires.

The Town provides streetscape lighting, banners, street trees, benches and trash receptacles along Main Street throughout the downtown area. The street lights are in need of relocation out of existing sidewalk segments to facilitate ease of sidewalk clearing maintenance during winter seasons.

The levee along the Saint John River has been improved and the Fish River embankment has been targeted for additional improvements. The Town intends to purchase remaining flood prone areas for use as municipal parking facilities and outdoor recreation / green space.



Intersection of Elm St & Main St Discontinued



Existing Main Street Streetscape Amenities

Priorities

- Improvements to lighting infrastructure on Main Street.
- Redevelopment of Elm Street to improvement vehicular traffic flow off Main Street

Recommendations

- Utility improvements along Main Street include upgrades to LED street lighting for more cost efficiency and improved, safer lighting.
- Coordinate with MaineDOT for improvements at the intersection of Hall Street and Route 1 to improve vehicular and pedestrian safety.
- Coordinate the proposed use of Elm Street as a “bypass” with the MaineDOT.
- Incorporate a portion of Pinkham Avenue and reshape a section of road where Page Avenue intersects Main Street to improve vehicular traffic off Main Street
- Make levee improvements along the Fish River adjacent to the Block House.
- Purchase flood-prone lands for use as parking or greenspace.
- Explore opportunities to expand the reach of its Byways to potential visitors from more distant locations.
- Continue to explore opportunities to cost share on transportation related projects with MaineDOT.
- Continue to coordinate with MaineDOT to ensure that roadway infrastructure improvement projects are consistent with MaineDOT policies and regulations.



Intersection of Hall St & Main St Needing Crosswalks and Vehicular Signal Improvements



Existing Main Street Streetscape Amenities with streetlights needing relocation

11 Signage

Findings

Signage in a downtown serves several purposes. Functionally, signage provides a source of information for visitors in terms of wayfinding, for businesses in terms of advertisement, for safety in terms of vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian directions, and for promotion of the community's sense of pride, historic character and civic interests.

While no current signage ordinance is in place in Fort Kent, the Town, civic entities and the local business community have developed a consistent village scale signage theme that is generally compatible with each entity's objectives within the downtown. The two areas that the Town and citizens recognized as needing improvement included wayfinding signage for vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle traffic and expansion of promotional signage in an organized and New England Village style. These panels can provide insight into the history of the French Acadian culture.



Gateway Signage at the Town Boundaries



Business promotion signs along the "Dike Trail"

Priorities

- Improve bicycle and pedestrian safety.
- Improve wayfinding signage for pedestrian and vehicular visitor's to downtown amenities, adjacent neighborhoods and cultural resources and downtown parking.
- Develop a consistent and coordinated signage system along the lines of a "New England Village" theme that is consistent for all of the Town's signage needs.

Recommendations

- In addition to the signs that promote the Town at the municipal boundaries, additional gateway signage at the entrances to the downtown district should be considered.
- Coordinate with MaineDOT and Bicycle Coalition of Maine to implement the pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements as recommended in the Town's recently adopted Fort Kent Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. This signage should meet the objectives of AASHTO and ADA federal safety objects and be consistently applied throughout the downtown.
- Consider historic signage programs such as the "The Museum in the Streets®" and coordinate with the Fort Kent Historical Society.
- With respect to signage (particularly the "The Museum in the Streets®" program), the Town should explore opportunities to build on existing interpretive panels funded through the Scenic Byways program and use the existing signs as a starting point for future interpretive signs, and in terms of maintaining consistency with the state-wide scenic byway signage palette style.
- The America's First Mile Committee, the Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Fort Kent should continue to periodically examine the Town's already successful promotional signage banners and signs to expand upon the current signage resources and adapt to new community events. Such initiatives could include a support of a unified linear pedestrian corridor through the downtown to improve vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connections between community cultural assets, public parking and downtown businesses that extend along the St. John River and Main Street.
- Consider design guidelines or standards for sign ordinance creation within the downtown.
- Consider creating private business directory signage for the downtown to be located at key focal gathering points such as municipal parking lots, the Town Office and the America's First Mile monument. This signage typically takes the form of a kiosk that can provide promotional handout materials and is in keeping with gateway signage aesthetics.



Example of Coordinate Signage Initiatives



Compatibility of Streetscape and Business Signs

Parking

Findings

As is the case in most downtown district's availability of parking in Fort Kent may be more of a perceived problem in terms of capacity, given a lack of directional signage and periodic large scale gathering events that exceed parking capacity within close proximity of the center of the downtown. The Town has zoning ordinances in place that regulate provision of off-street parking for both residential and commercial development within the downtown that appear to be adequate for new development going forward. These ordinances do not affect most of the current downtown establishments that have been in place since before the ordinances were enacted. While most of these businesses cannot meet parking levels as determined by state, regional and national level planning standards, the parking in the downtown seems to be adequate to meeting the majority of the community's day to day needs.

There is a lack of convenient, publicly available off-street parking within the downtown area from a pedestrian standpoint. An equal amount of town municipally controlled parking facilities are located along Main Street (144 spaces for off street parking and 144 spaces for on-street parking – See *Transportation and Parking map for location of public parking facilities*). Given the lack of public transit from parking areas outside of the downtown readily available municipally controlled parking in close proximity of the downtown, there is an opportunity for improved parking management to support such periodic, large scale public gathering events that tax the current parking capacity.

Priorities

- Improve directional wayfinding signage to parking areas within walking distance of the downtown area.
- Examine opportunities to improve parking management / partnerships during large scale public gathering events with entities adjacent to the downtown that have ample parking available during off peak and weekend hours including local and state school departments. This will likely include shuttle services between parking lots outside the downtown area and various downtown and adjacent public gathering locations like Riverside Park or 10th Mountain.
- Prioritize opportunities for Town acquisition of off-street parking in the downtown. Such facilities may be made publicly available and or leased to downtown interests.

Recommendations

- Develop a Downtown Parking Master Plan (building off the inventory work performed by UMFK students for the Town)

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

Provide clear, consistent directional signage on Main Street to guide visitors to off-street parking areas.

- Coordinate shared and/or satellite parking during large scale public gathering events with stakeholder organizations just outside the downtown such as the public schools and UMFK
- Utilize a portion of the TIF proceeds to purchase/lease and develop vacant lots as public parking areas.
- Examine town ordinances in terms of parking requirements
- Consider adjustments / new provisions for parking requirements within the downtown as part of local ordinance development standards, including provisions for purchase / lease of parking spaces within the downtown district.



Private, Off-Street Parking



Municipal Parking Adjacent to the Downtown



On-Street Municipal Parking



Limited Off-Street Municipal Parking

13 Recreation

Findings

There is a wealth of outdoor recreational opportunities both within the downtown and in terms of connection to regional outdoor recreational interests. These facilities meet the community's needs and draw regional interest from Canada and New England on a year round basis. The Fort Kent Recreation Department strives to compliment other public and private programs and facilities and is there to fill gaps in community recreation needs. Local recreation organizations include Fort Kent Recreation and Parks, No. 95 SJVAOS, UMFk, Maine Winter Sports-10th Mountain Ski club, Lonesome Pine Ski Club, Fort Kent Golf Club, local ATV, snowmobile and x-country ski clubs, Elder Social Action Council, County Physical Therapy, Power of Prevention, many Registered Maine Guides, Outfitters, and many others. The following table indicates recreational and other town attractions (**Source – 2012 Comprehensive Land Use Plan*):

Recreation/Leisure	# of Locations	Town Attractions
Golf Course	1	Fort Kent Block House
Parks	2	10th Mountain Ski Club
Library	2	Lonesome Pine Ski Club
Movie Theater	1	Fort Kent Golf Club
Ski Clubs/Lodges	2	Interna. CAN-AM Sled Dog Race
Snowmobile Clubs	2	Muskie/Ployes Festival
ATV Club	1	UMFK Homecoming
Public Swimming Pool	1	Scarecrow/Mardi Gras Festival
Heritage Multi-Use Trail	1	Riverside/Jalbert Park
Community Centers	2	Fort Kent Historical Society
Boat Landings	2	Fish River Falls
Ice Skating Rink	1	
Tennis Court	1	
Cross Country Ski Trails	18 miles	
RV Park/Tenting	1	


Priorities

- Promote existing wealth of recreational assets as a reason to stay in the downtown.
- Improve information and directional signage to and from recreational assets and the downtown.
- Explore opportunities shared use lodging and parking in support of large public gathering events focused on recreational activities including the Muskie Derby and the U.S. Olympic Biathlon trials within and adjacent to the downtown.

Recommendations

- Coordinate shuttle transit services and lodging to and from adjacent school facilities and the downtown.
- Promote resources beyond local means by internet marketing which has been demonstrated to be successful for local business expansion of car and retail sales ventures. This effort should be coordinated between the Town, recreational businesses and the Chamber of Commerce from a consistent source.





Discover Fort Kent's Trails & Greenways

The Fort Kent Fish River Greenway is your pathway to fitness and fun. We are known as the "Little Town That Could," and we know that YOU can too! Let any of our greenways lead you down the path to a long and healthy life. There may be many different ways in life, but we are confident our greenways are among the most scenic and tranquil you will encounter. It's the best way—Fort Kent's greenways!

14 Capital Improvements Program

Findings

The Town has two capital improvement plans in place which provide both near term and long terms guidance for prioritized investment of funds within the downtown. One is the recently adopted Downtown TIF program and the other is the municipal Fiscal Capacity and Capital Improvement Plan

Both of these plans are have been recently updated within the past 1-2 years and provide prioritized cost estimates for near term downtown revitalization projects. The latest TIF development plan project cost estimates in support of the Downtown Revitalization Plan goals are as follows:

Project Description	Project Subtotal Cost Estimate	TIF Payment
Elm Street Redevelopment	\$400,000	\$29,432
Infrastructure Improvements (amenities, sidewalks & utilities)	\$100,000	\$7,358
Public Parking Improvements	\$100,000	\$7,358
Rental Housing Rehabilitation	\$100,000	\$7,358
Levee Improvements	\$100,000	\$7,358
Business Development / Recruitment	\$100,000	\$7,358
Total:		\$900,000

Priorities

- Adopt the Downtown Revitalization Plan to allow for the Town to utilize the Downtown TIF Program funds in support of implementing the Downtown Revitalization Plan goals.

Recommendations

- Examine these capital plans on an annual basis and have the Town Council prioritize both short-term (1-3 years) and long term (5-10 years) goals for capital improvement expenditures.
- Look for opportunities to leverage local matching funds with private investment funds as well as state and federal grant programs.

15 Action Plan / Funding Opportunities

Findings

For downtown revitalization efforts, there are a number of proven approaches and funding mechanisms that many Maine communities have employed to see their plans through to implementation. Fort Kent has many active community stakeholder organizations, as well as responsive municipal staff and elected leaders who are well positioned to support the communities Downtown Revitalization goals. It has been noted through the public input process that these organizations are not always working together in a manner that might better promote the community as a whole (each is well focused on their own interests without seeing the “larger picture”)

Priorities

- Utilize Downtown TIF funds in support of physical downtown infrastructure and building improvements.

Recommendations

- After adoption of the downtown plan, the America’s First Mile committee should serve as the initial organization to promote the prioritized plan improvements.
- Consider adopting a unified organizational approach such as the “The Main Street Approach” described below to better unite all interests within the downtown.
- Continue to monitor and apply for additional state and federal funding sources as available (often on an annual basis), utilizing local matching funds such as the Downtown TIF. Some of the more typical downtown revitalization funding sources are described in further detail after “The Main Street Approach” section.

UTILIZING THE "MAIN STREET APPROACH"

This plan is only a tool for revitalization; the revitalization of Downtown Fort Kent will require persistence, leadership, communication and partnerships. Many communities in Maine and other states have employed the "Main Street Approach" as a model for organization which has proven successful for downtown revitalization. In Maine, communities may formally apply to become a Main Street Maine community (as a full or "Network" member), to receive support and assistance from the Maine Downtown Center, and increase their scoring on many of Maine's downtown grants. However, it is not a requirement to be a Main Street community to utilize the Main Street Approach, and many downtowns can benefit from applying this model on their own. For Downtown Fort Kent, there are a few key considerations under each of the Four Points that the community should keep in mind as it works to build and support a sustainable downtown.

The Main Street Four-Point Approach® *From Main Street Maine*

The four points of the Main Street approach work together to build a sustainable and complete community revitalization effort.

Organization involves getting everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources to implement a Main Street revitalization program. A governing board and standing committees make up the fundamental organizational structure of the volunteer-driven program. Volunteers are coordinated and supported by a paid program director as well. This structure not only divides the workload and clearly delineates responsibilities, but also builds consensus and cooperation among the various stakeholders.

Promotion sells a positive image of the commercial district and encourages consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play and invest in the Main Street district. By marketing a district's unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners, and visitors, an effective promotional strategy forges a positive image through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers. These activities improve consumer and investor confidence in the district and encourage commercial activity and investment in the area.

Design means getting Main Street into top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets — such as historic buildings and pedestrian-oriented streets — is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere, created through attractive window displays, parking areas, building improvements, street furniture, signs, sidewalks, street lights, and landscaping, conveys a positive visual message about the commercial district and what it has to offer. Design activities also include instilling good maintenance practices in the commercial district, enhancing the physical appearance of the commercial district by rehabilitating historic buildings, encouraging appropriate new construction, developing sensitive design management systems, and long-term planning.

Economic Restructuring strengthens a community's existing economic assets while expanding and diversifying its economic base. The Main Street program helps sharpen the competitiveness of existing business owners and recruits compatible new businesses and new economic uses to build a commercial district that responds to today's consumers' needs. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the district.

Organization

- The America's First Mile Committee should stay on after completing this planning process to champion the Plan and help guide and push for implementation; the Committee may wish to establish subcommittees or designate existing entities to address each of the four points, Economic Restructuring, Promotions, Design, and Organization.
- Part of the role of a committee or entity responsible for Organization is to facilitate good communication (between town committees, staff, Selectmen, downtown businesses/stakeholders, and the community at large) and ensure that all are supportive of activities and actions, and that no one is working at cross-purposes; coordination with the Fort Kent Chamber of Commerce, Northern Maine Development Corporation and the University of Maine at Fort Kent will be important organizational task.
- Another aspect of Organization is the need for volunteers to help carry out many downtown activities; the Maine Downtown Center can offer guidance on managing volunteers effectively.

Promotion

- Downtown Fort Kent promotional materials should help "sell" the Downtown and its assets, and increase awareness of Downtown Fort Kent as a destination and resource for visitors; materials such as maps, brochures, business directories, etc. should be available at a designated Visitors Center (both physically and via the internet).
- Focus efforts on building Outdoor Recreation as a niche for downtown growth.

Design

- The committee or entity responsible for Design must consider the impacts of downtown plans and activities on its character and image; the design/style of streetscape elements, an activity such as an annual downtown clean up, or the installation of public art are all design considerations.
- Invite residents or businesses with design backgrounds such as artists, gardeners, architects, landscape architects, or others to participate in Design considerations for the downtown.

Economic Restructuring

- The Fort Kent Chamber of Commerce should be closely aligned with, or directly involved with, the Downtown Revitalization Plan goals and continued work of the America's First Mile committee.
- Continue to invite residents or businesses with economic or business development backgrounds to participate in Economic Restructuring considerations for the downtown.

FUNDING

Most of the funding programs traditionally used as a significant portion of downtown revitalization capital support originate from federal sources and are administered by various state agencies. In recent years, these funding programs have been subject to similar to fluctuation and budget constraints as has been seen at the state and local levels in Maine. The information provided here on various programs is the most current available, but program details such as availability, deadlines, and requirements may change, and communities should contact the appropriate agencies to ensure they have the best information about a funding program. Development of the Downtown Revitalization Plan and a well-defined local capital improvement program are critical steps to position the community to apply for these increasingly competitive funding sources and to be well positioned for less traditional and/or less frequent funding opportunities such as state bonds and private philanthropic groups.

CDBG PROGRAMS

The CDBG program is a federally-funded program administered by the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). The purpose of the program is to provide grants to local communities to support economic and community development that primarily benefits low and moderate income persons. Federal funding to underwrite the program is provided through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The CDBG program consists of several grant programs for economic and community development. Applications and funds are available annually from the DECD.

To be eligible for additional CDBG funds, a community must have completed a comprehensive downtown strategic plan or update to an existing plan within in the past five years. Also to be eligible for CDBG funding, projects and activities must meet one of two national program objectives. The project must achieve one of the following:

- Benefit at least 51% low-moderate persons in an area, or
- Eliminate slum and blight

For more information: <http://www.meocd.org>

Two of the most commonly used grants for downtown revitalization are highlighted below. The Town may wish to explore the other CDBG programs for applicability such as: Public Facilities; Business Assistance, Micro-Enterprise Assistance and Housing Assistance.

Downtown Revitalization Grant

The Downtown Revitalization Grant (DR) Program provides funds to communities to implement comprehensive, integrated, and innovative solutions to the problems facing their downtown

districts. These community revitalization projects must be part of a strategy that targets downtown service and business districts and will lead to future public and private investment. Qualified applicant communities must have a downtown district meeting the definition. Communities applying for funds must provide a direct cash match of at least 25% of the total CDBG grant award. This match may consist of non-CDBG loans, grants, endowments, etc. contributed to the project. The proposed DR activities must be in a downtown plan (completed or updated within 5 years of the application) as recommended actions necessary for downtown revitalization. Applicants will receive three bonus points if they have been designated as a Main Street Maine Community by the Maine Downtown Center or one bonus point if they have been designated as a Maine Downtown Network Community.

Eligible projects include:

- Construction, acquisition, reconstruction, installation, rehabilitation, site clearance, historic preservation, and relocation assistance associated with parking, streets, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, recreational facilities, parks, removal of architectural barriers, or neighborhood revitalization.
- Site amenities (benches, lighting, trash receptacles), landscaping and pedestrian improvements.
- Eligible activities include all those eligible under the Public Facilities, Public Infrastructure, Housing Assistance or Community Enterprise programs as relevant to the revitalization of a Downtown district.

Letters of Intent are typically due in January, and applications typically due in March.

Public Infrastructure Grant

The Public Infrastructure Grant (PI) Program provides gap funding for local infrastructure activities, which are part of a community development strategy leading to future public and private investments. Eligible activities in the PI Program are construction, acquisition, reconstruction, installation, relocation assistance associated with public infrastructure. A cash match of at least 25% of the total grant award is required. This match may consist of non-CDBG loans, grants, endowments, etc. contributed to the project. Regional Service Centers and Contiguous Census Designated Places and Compact Urban Areas Designated as Regional Service Centers and activities supporting the revitalization of downtown areas will be given priority.

Eligible projects include:

- Water system installation/improvements, sewer system installation/ improvements, water/sewer system hookups, storm drainage, utility infrastructure (road or street reconstruction is not eligible)

- Streets and roads, parking, curbs, gutters and pedestrian safety improvements in association with roadway and stormdrainage infrastructure improvements.

Letters of Intent are typically due in between December and February, and applications are typically due in between February and April. Grant awards are typically between May and July.

TIF PROGRAM

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a state and local financing mechanism in which economic development and downtown improvements are funded through the dedication of increased local property tax revenues resulting from private investment within a designated district. TIFs are further supported by sheltering new property valuation within the district from a community's state valuation so that the community avoids losses in state aid to education and state municipal revenues sharing as well as increases in its county tax. Revenues captured within a designated TIF district can be used to fund both local costs for public infrastructure/improvements and economic development efforts, as well as private costs for building construction and improvements or site related costs. In addition, such tax moneys can be captured from one location and applied to another location (such as captured from a commercial strip and applied to a downtown). Special considerations and uses are available for TIF's when used in a designated downtown as part of a downtown development plan.

Fort Kent has already successfully instituted two TIF programs and has adopted a Downtown TIF in support of the communities Downtown Revitalization Goals.

For more information:

http://www.maine.gov/decd/mainebiz/business_assistance/tax_reimbursement/tax_increment_financing.shtml

MAINE DOT PROGRAMS

There are a number of ways that communities in Maine gain funding for road, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements through the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT). The most prominent pedestrian/bicycle funding, is the Quality Communities Program, described below.

Quality Communities Program

MaineDOT has established a Quality Community Program, which encompasses both Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School programs. The Department has consolidated the former individual applications into a "common" Quality Community Program application, typically given a July 1 deadline (preceded by a spring Letter of Intent).

This competitive program is intended to improve community transportation related facilities through bicycle and pedestrian improvements, safety improvements, environmental improvements, scenic, historic, and other quality community improvements. The program is intended to support new pedestrian and bicycle facilities, with an emphasis on the transportation value the proposed project has for the community.

Recent changes to the program require separate applications for design and construction phases. Projects now must have their design phase complete and approved by MaineDOT before applying for construction funds. The Town should contact the MaineDOT Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Quality Community Program Manager for questions or to coordinate a potential application.

For more information:

<http://www.maine.gov/mdot/pgq/qcp>

OTHER FUNDING PROGRAMS & STRATEGIES

Leveraging Private Funds

In many communities, partnerships with private entities such as landowners/developers, banks, non-profits or other institutions can result in important funding or implementation opportunities. Communities should be strategic in identifying specific ways in which such entities could participate in revitalizing the downtown.

Maine Arts Commission

The MAC has several competitive grant programs to help promote arts & culture, several of which have been successfully used in downtowns across the state. One program in particular that Fort Kent should investigate is the Creative Communities = Economic Development Grant (http://mainearts.maine.gov/grant_creativecommunities.aspx). The Town may want to check with the Farmington Downtown Association to see if there are collaborative opportunities or if they have used MAC grants.

For more information: <http://mainearts.maine.gov/grants.aspx>

Efficiency Maine / Maine Development Foundations Maine Downtown Center "Green Downtowns" Program

If there is a strong interest in promoting green and energy efficiency initiatives in the downtown, contact programs such as these to find out if they offer any appropriate opportunities.

Efficiency Maine has a number of Business Programs, Energy Audit programs, and tools and resources for Renewable Energy and improving energy efficiency.

<http://www.efficiencymaine.com/at-work/tools-resources>

The MDF Maine Downtown Center Green Downtowns program is geared towards supporting sustainable green initiatives for Maine's downtowns. Although their emphasis is on member communities, the Town can contact MDF to see if aspects of the program might apply to Fort Kent

http://www.mdf.org/mdc_green_downtowns.php

Project Canopy Grant

Project Canopy funds could be used for tree plantings in the Downtown or at Bass Park or the lakefront. Funding and administration is through the Maine Forest Service and Growsmart Maine; the funding limit for 2011 applications was \$8,000. This program has typically required attendance at a training workshop, contact program agencies for more information.

For more information: <http://www.maine.gov/doc/mfs/projectcanopy/pages/resource.htm>

Historic Tax Credit Programs

Maine has several tax credit programs which can aid in revitalization efforts such as historic preservation and housing. These programs are complex, but for the right project, may serve as an important financial component. Tax Credit projects are typically a private effort with support from a municipality (public-private partnership).

Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit:

There are both federal and state tax credits that may be used towards the rehabilitation of historic buildings, but only applies to buildings that are on the National Register or eligible for listing. Contact the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for more information.

For more information: http://www.maine.gov/mhpc/tax_incentives/index.html

Low Income Housing Tax Credit:

The federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) provides subsidy in the form of a federal tax credit to developers of affordable rental housing. Developers using funding must reserve a portion of the rental units for lower income renters. This can include Senior Housing.

For more information:

<http://www.mainehousing.org/HOUSINGDEVProgramsDetail.aspx?ProgramID=51>

New Markets Tax Credit:

The Maine New Markets Capital Investment Program provides refundable state tax credits of up to 39% to investors in qualified community development entities (CDEs) that reinvest in certain

businesses in eligible low-income communities in Maine. The program is modeled after the federal New Markets Tax Credit Program, and is administered by the Finance Authority of Maine, in cooperation with Maine Revenue Services and the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development.

For more information:

http://www.famemaine.com/files/Pages/business/businesses/equity_capital/Maine_New_Markets_Capital_Investment_Program.aspx

Also information is available at Coastal Enterprises, Inc: <http://www.ceimaine.org/NMTC>

State Bonds

Although unpredictable, special state bond programs such as Communities for Maine's Future or the Riverfront Communities are sometimes funded by the legislature. Communities may be able to take advantage of such funding if appropriate to the downtown revitalization effort.

Coastal Enterprises and Maine Community Foundation Partnership

The Maine Community Foundation has partnered with Wiscasset-based CEI (Coastal Enterprises Inc.) to boost downtown- and fisheries-related development in rural Maine.

This partnership results in provision of \$500,000 in new loan funds, which will be available for rehabilitation of downtown buildings and development of fisheries-related enterprises in the state's rural communities.

Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC)

The NBRC is an important regional coordination mechanism for the Northern Forest states as well as a potentially significant new source of investment for economic and community development in the region. The Center coordinates with NBRC stakeholders across the region, with the Commission members (a federal co-chair and the region's four governors), and with the regional congressional delegation to align the work of the Commission with regional priorities and to secure additional funding for its activities.

Maps

Downtown Study Area

Building Inventory

Transportation / Parking

Recreation

Utility Infrastructure