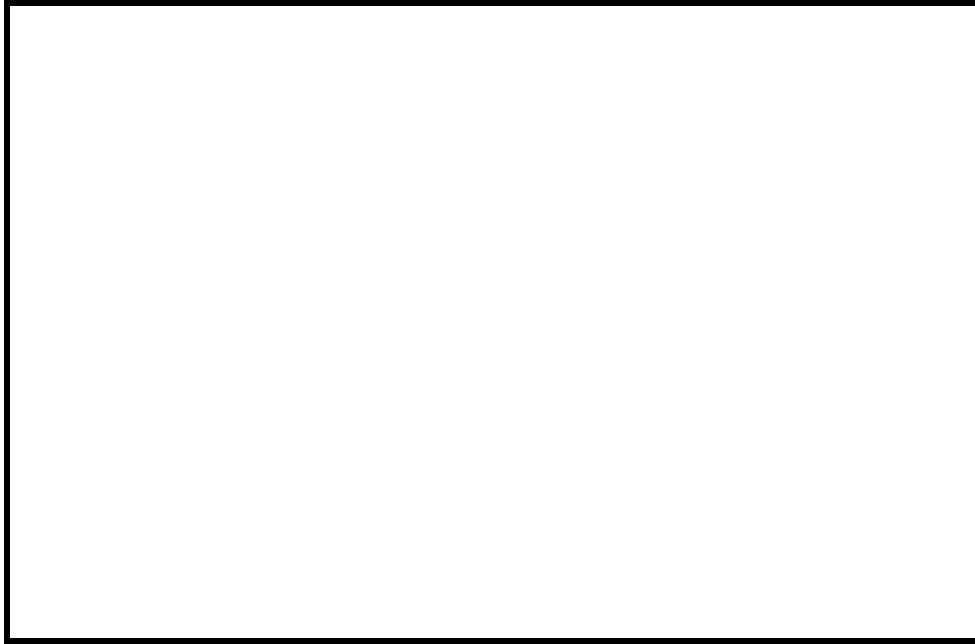


*An Action Plan for the  
Bath Waterfront and Downtown*  
FINAL REPORT



**February 1999**

*Prepared for:*

**The City of Bath  
and the  
Waterfront Action Committee**

*Prepared by:*



**Wilbur Smith Associates**

in association with

**TAMS Consultants, Inc.**

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## *I. INTRODUCTION: BATH AT THE CROSSROADS*

Profound changes are underway locally and regionally as the City of Bath prepares to enter the twenty-first century. Most profound, possibly, is the newfound attitude that the City itself *can and must* be an active participant to shape positive change, not just react to it. The development of this Action Plan is one piece in that effort to proactively shape and guide change.

Current and near term events in Bath give increased momentum to revitalization efforts downtown. Most notable are:

- the \$218 million modernization of the Bath Iron Works;
- construction of the new Sagadahoc Bridge, slated for completion in the summer of 2000;
- increased private and public investment in the downtown; and,
- planning and design for a replacement of the Leeman's Highway viaduct and Route 1 corridor.

These provide the opportunity to galvanize broad support for several key initiatives recommended by this Plan. In it, targeted public investment is seen as important to stimulating private investment.

This *Waterfront and Downtown Action Plan* is not the end of a process but truly a beginning. Any master planning effort of this type merely sets the stage for revitalization efforts. The concentrated public and private sector actions required for implementation begins. The principles are intended to serve as both development goals and a litmus test against which to measure the progress and direction of the downtown and waterfront action plan through its implementation phases. These five themes are:

1. **Make Bath a 'Must Do' Destination;**
2. **Improve Access and Connectivity;**
3. **Enhance Gateways and the Public Realm;**
4. **Spur Sustainable Economic Growth; and,**
5. **Establish Effective Public-Private Partnerships and Investment Incentives.**

These were themes which emerged during the public forums and meetings. None of these items can 'stand alone' but require actions to occur in a coordinated fashion. This plan addresses two types of actions: 1. Organizational, programmatic and planning recommendations, and 2. Physical change recommendations. The physical planning element is intended to establish the framework for redevelopment, allowing lots of room for innovation and imagination. It is not intended to be a rigid blueprint for change but set some flexible 'ground rules' for change.

An important objective of the *Action Plan* is to integrate the physical planning and programmatic recommendations. The implementation principles were translated into a set of physical plan 'districts' or theme areas to help translate the program intentions into specific development projects. The compact size and organization of the downtown and waterfront area did not lend itself to a plan of discrete activity areas, but rather a series of overlapping theme 'districts' within a unified whole.

These districts described in the *Action Plan* include the following areas.

- A. The Waterfront/Commercial Street Parade
- B. Downtown Commercial Core
- C. The Route 1 Gateway
- D. The Intermodal Transportation Center
- E. The Heritage and Culture District.

These districts are intended to be flexible, thematic areas around which to organize improvement efforts and implementation strategies with different groups of stakeholders.

Six projects are recommended for immediate action for the years 1999 and 2000. These six projects are:

1. **Commercial Street ‘Parade’, Phase I** – This project will significantly upgrade the development context along Commercial street by installing streetscape improvements similar to those along much of Front Street. These include continuous sidewalks, lighting, parking and a street mural. Phase I extends from Summer Street to Lambard Street.
2. **Route 1 Gateway Improvements** – This will provide for improved landscaping along Route 1, screening of parking, improved/replaced directional signage for motorists on Route 1, improved landscaping of Vine Street and adjacent to the viaduct.
3. **Cultural/Heritage/Education Project** – This is a follow-up action to the Bath Cultural Assessment and Inventory. This will be a focused collaboration between existing arts/cultural and historic/heritage organizations and schools. It will combine research, marketing and educational initiatives with a target date for completion for the year 2000 Heritage Days celebration.
4. **Intermodal Gateway Planning** – This project combines passenger transportation and parking facilities into a new framework at the foot of the south side of the Sagadahoc Bridge. This facility can meet the need for parking for ferry, rail and inter-city bus passengers, new BIW office space, long term visitor parking and visitor information.
5. **BIW Transition Plan** – There are many immediate issues relative to the reorientation of the BIW uses at the northern part of their site that are of importance to the City. It is anticipated that significant new office space may be created. It is essential that planning for this new development be compatible with this Master Plan and better integrated with the rest of the downtown, not as standalone development. Key elements to be considered include parking management, building location, design/scale and orientation, and site access.
6. **Praver Site/Coal Pocket Master Plan** – A number of questions regarding the development of these two sites remain. It would be advantageous to the City to convene a master planning process for these two sites. The visioning process in concert with streetscape improvements may help to spur creative re-use of these underutilized downtown sites.

An action plan of this type is one type of plan that guides a community. After establishing a vision, much implementation is done by many day-to-day decisions made by City government and private citizens alike. These range from Planning Board decisions on site plan review to the upkeep of storefronts. All such actions cumulatively impact one another. City government plans and actions must set a strong positive framework and consistently send clear messages to those interested in the downtown. These include the Comprehensive Plan (recently updated in August 1997), the zoning ordinance and the sign ordinance. The success of this Plan will rely on

how clearly it states a community-supported vision for the downtown, how soon efforts are begun for implementation and how much enthusiasm it is able to generate over the long term.

### **A. The Purpose of the *Waterfront and Downtown Action Plan***

The purpose of this Plan is to reassess the development context along the waterfront and within the downtown. Major emphasis is placed on enhancing Bath as a year-round destination and laying the groundwork for public and private investment to strengthen and diversify Bath's economy.

As part of a strategy to address regional dependency on the defense industry in the Bath-Brunswick-Topsham area, the City of Bath received a planning grant to study ways to diversify its employment and tax base. Through this planning process the City seeks to:

- identify the opportunities and constraints to development and redevelopment, addressing the development context downtown;
- propose a 'preferred' mix, location, scale and intensity of development;
- identify immediate (0 to 2 years), intermediate-term (3 to 10 years) and long term (11 to 20 years) actions by the private and public sectors.

The recommended actions include a mix of physical and programmatic elements. While physical changes through public investments can play a key role in redevelopment efforts, they are most often not the most important. A key focus of the plan is to recognize, amplify and build upon the many existing strengths and successes in Bath. This includes the strong orientation toward civic pride, preservation of architecture, history and culture, and collaboration for creative problem solving. A major emphasis in this plan is renewed collaboration between groups and between programs and organizations.

This plan shows and discusses many recommendations, many that affect private property. The intent is not to mandate site-specific recommendations, but to explore general patterns and options for strengthening the urban fabric of the downtown.

### **B. What's Included**

The scope of work has been designed to treat issues in an integrated fashion. Many of the items are inter-related and should be addressed in tandem. This Plan addresses the areas of *urban design, transportation access and parking, downtown marketing and promotion, and economic diversification.*

The success of this Plan will depend on the extent that its recommendations complement and reinforce each other, balancing practicality with vision. Revitalizing a downtown requires a comprehensive approach both in planning and implementation. The physical and program recommendations must lead to a well thought out implementation plan that is broadly supported within the community. Emphasis is placed on the synergy between the physical and programmatic recommendations.

Keys to success are long-term commitment on the part of public and private partners and attention to details. The cumulative effect of many small changes is as important as large changes. A series of projects to 'jumpstart' the implementation process is included, focused on their implementation by the end of 2000, for the start of the new millennium.

The study area for the project is depicted in Figure 1.1 and is bounded by North Street, the westerly side of Washington Street, the Kennebec River to the east and to approximately Richardson Street to the south of Route 1. Improvements impacting the image and access to the downtown are also recommended in a more general fashion.

This *Action Plan* provides:

- background material supporting the development of the Action Plan;
- a brief existing conditions analysis of downtown Bath;
- a series of conceptual alternatives to reveal preferences for differing approaches to redevelopment;
- a description of the proposed conceptual master plan; and,
- implementation actions outlining distinct tasks and projects, a timeline and responsible parties for each task.

### **C. Planning Process**

A series of three interactive planning forums was held to shape the *Action Plan*. These forums were held in April, June and September. At each session, a presentation was made with ample time left for public comment.

- April 1998: Presentation and Analysis of Existing Conditions.
- June 1998: Presentation and Analysis of Three Alternative Master Plan Concepts.
- September 1998: Presentation and Critique of Recommended Draft Master Plan Concept.
- February 1999: Draft Action Plan Issued/City Council Presentation.

Three public workshops to date have principally guided the development of the plan. The first workshop analyzed the strengths and weaknesses in downtown Bath. The second workshop revealed preferences -- likes and dislikes -- for three alternative development concepts that were presented. At the third workshop, the draft *Action Plan* was presented and comments and questions were elicited.

City staff and the Waterfront Action Committee have also provided invaluable input. The Waterfront Action Committee is serving as the steering committee for the study and is composed of members of the business community, residents and a representative from the City Council. The consultant team of Wilbur Smith Associates and TAMS Consultants have facilitated the workshops, provided technical expertise and developed the Draft Action Plan.

### **D. Plan Context**

This planning process is occurring during an unprecedented period of major public and private activity and investment in Bath. Recent significant activities include the following:

- Bath Iron Works' \$218 million expansion that will shift the center of its activities toward the south end of the yard;
- building of the new Sagadahoc Bridge with an anticipated opening in the summer 2000 at a cost of over \$40 million;
- State commitments to replace or reconfigure the Leeman's Highway elevated viaduct by 2010;

- adoption by the City of a revised Comprehensive Plan in August 1997 that re-emphasizes the importance of downtown vitality;
- stable tax rates with no property tax rate increases for four years;
- removal of the Edwards Dam in Augusta that will help restore Atlantic Salmon runs in the Kennebec River when removed beginning in July 1999;
- Heritage Trail plans by the State Office of Tourism – Bath is the designated terminus for the *Kennebec Chaudiere* International Corridor stretching from Bath to Quebec City;
- the Cultural Resource Inventory spearheaded by the City of Bath;
- plans for restoration of passenger rail and fast ferry coastal services during the next decade;
- dedication of the enlarged Patten Free Library in September 1998;
- development of the Wing Farm Business Park in western Bath which will provide space for new and expanding businesses in Bath;
- completion of the South End Boat Launch on the old Burgess Marina site in October 1998;
- construction of an expanded YMCA to a new facility in Bath outside the immediate downtown;
- private investment in new buildings in the downtown;
- Stinson Seafood’s plans for employment expansion in the North End;
- expansion and rehabilitation of two major recreational facility projects with a new all-weather track and six new acres of open space/ball fields;
- extensive restoration of the historic Winter Street Church by Sagadahoc Preservation; and,
- passage of bond issues in November 1998 with \$3 million for upgrade of streets, curbs, and sidewalks and \$1.5 million for drainage/stormwater improvements.

The number and diversity of changes underway attest to the strong interest in Bath in general and in the downtown and waterfront area in particular. Several planning exercises over the past twenty years have developed similar plans, at least in scope. Market forces appear to be in Bath’s favor now which differentiate the present from past planning efforts. These positive market forces are a critical piece that has been missing. Another key ingredient is the active role that City staff, elected officials and citizens are taking to shape Bath’s future. Our task is to assist in defining the context for shaping positive, long term change within the downtown that builds on existing success.

## *II. DOWNTOWN BATH TODAY: APPROACHING THE MILLENNIUM*

### **A. The Public Realm and Urban Design**

Urban design concerns itself with the physical organization of urban space through buildings, streets, sidewalks and other items in the public realm. The aesthetics of these design elements is also of great importance. The public realm is the public and semi-public spaces experienced along the street. Downtown streets are our “public living rooms” and require careful attention to detail in pedestrian amenities, building design, scale and orientation, and the location and design of parking lots.

Several items dominate the image of downtown Bath from an urban design perspective. These are:

- Bath Iron Works – Visually, the skyline created by the BIW cranes and ships is an unmistakable gateway image upon approach to Bath from the east or west. Market pressure for more BIW employee parking has resulted in encroachment of surface parking lots north of Leeman’s Highway;
- Leeman’s Highway/Carlton Bridge – The barrier-separated and elevated portions of Leeman’s Highway bisect the City, creating physical and visual barriers to good connectivity for people and vehicles between the north and south ends of the City;
- Waterfront – The downtown waterfront area is without a doubt one of the City’s most valuable assets but currently lacks a clearly defined role in the City, has seen limited public and private investment, and has fragmented public access; and
- Front Street/Centre Street Retail District – This area has retained vitality and attractiveness as a shopping/office area due in part from strong property management, but excessive curb cuts and unscreened parking lots have degraded portions at its edges.

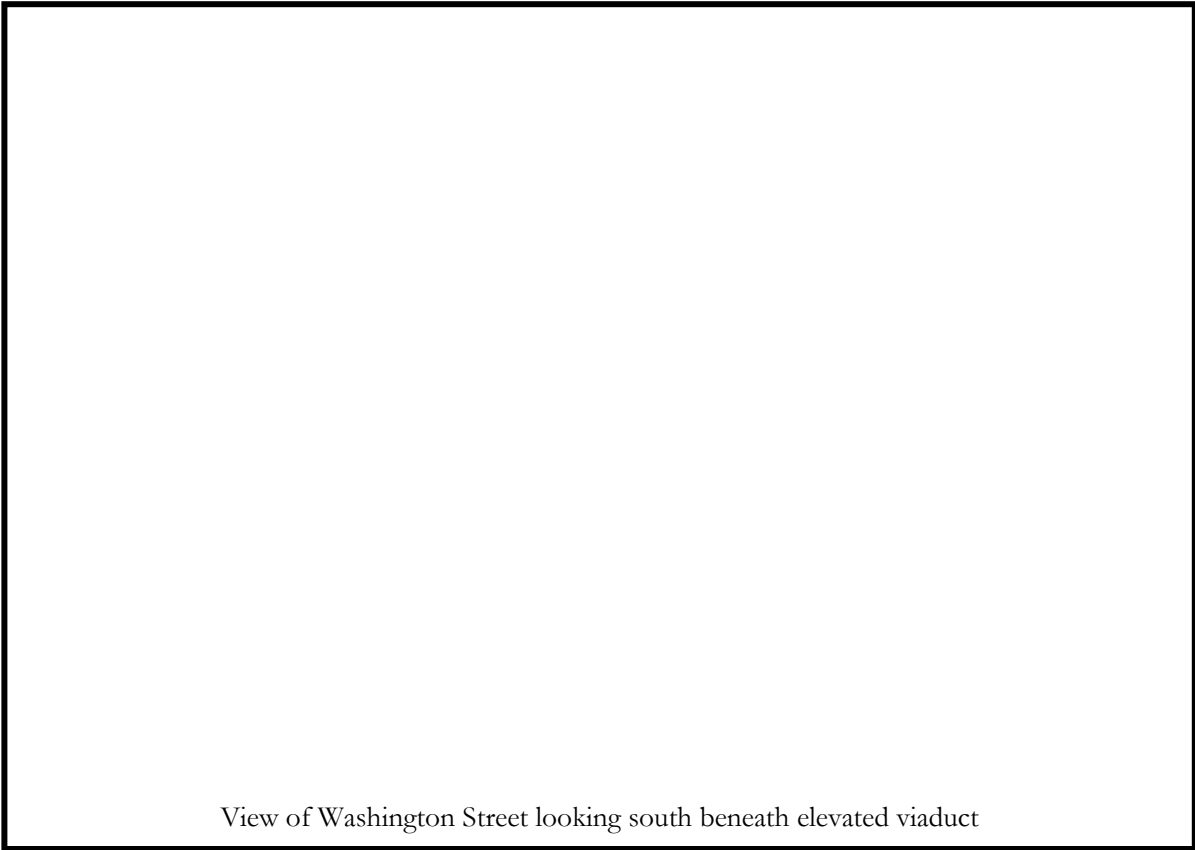
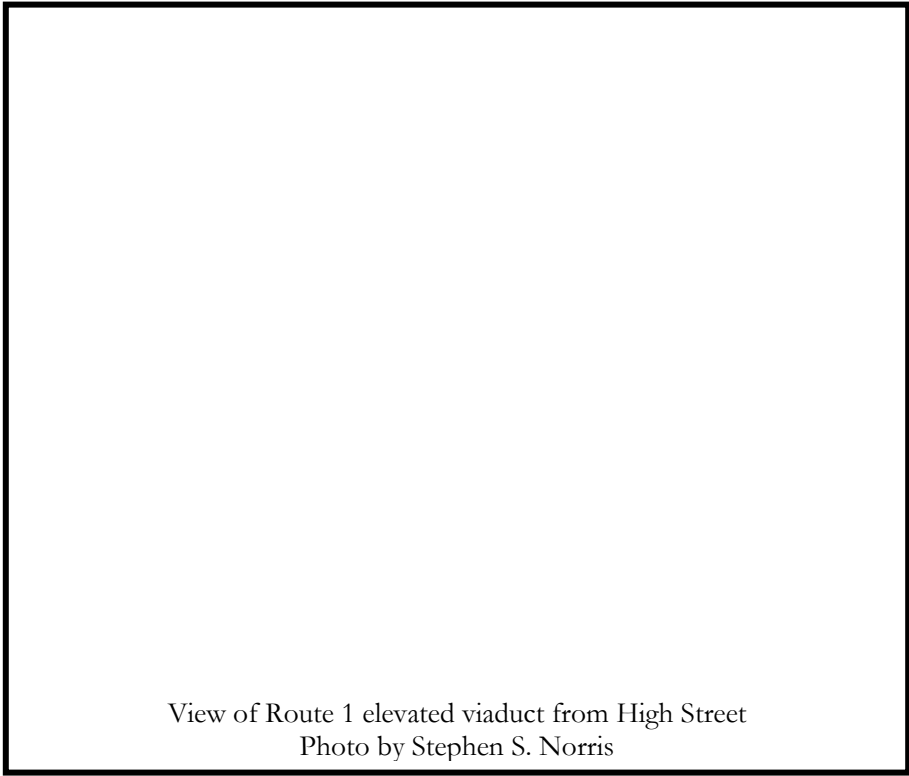
#### 1. Character Zones.

Character zones are areas which have many urban design and land use features in common. Character zones were identified during the initial public workshops as distinctive subareas of the downtown. In general, they exhibit a common ‘feel’. These are similar groupings of building styles and uses and common streetscape features (both positive and negative). The purpose of defining these zones is to better understand how the downtown is perceived to the user and the attributes that contribute positively or negatively to these perceptions.

Figure 2.1 identifies these zones and their major defining characteristics. These character zones identify what currently exists, not necessarily what is desired or what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’. One outcome may be to recommend that two or more zones be combined or harmonized, making one more (or less) like another. A result of the first public workshop was a critique of each of these character zones. The critiques are summarized below and graphically in Figure 2.2.

a. Route 1 Gateway. The passing motorist is strongly influenced by the image of Bath from the Route 1 Gateway corridor. It begins outside the study area by the character of the barrier and cyclone fencing of the separated highway west of the downtown. Within the study area it includes the elevated viaduct and its immediate surroundings. Upon approach to the downtown from the west or east on Route 1, the BIW skyline is very dominant. When on the viaduct, it is





**Route 1 Gateway Character Zone**

difficult to sense that there is a vibrant, traditional downtown present. The aesthetics both upon the viaduct and traveling alongside the viaduct at the street level are very poor. The viaduct creates a lot of hard edges which are accentuated by lack of landscaping.

Negatives cited:

- The viaduct creates a physical, visual and psychological barrier between the north and south ends of the City;
- The current configuration facilitated sprawl (location of businesses outside the downtown);
- Limits access between the two sides of Route 1 through its current design (elevated portion and barrier separated design to the west of downtown); and,
- Creates congested intersections by forcing traffic into the limited number of crossing points.

Positives cited:

- Relieves surface congestion by separating through-traffic from local traffic;
- Provides views of the downtown and river; and,
- Separates industry from retail by providing a physical edge.

#### b. Water Street

The Water Street character zone is dominated by the poor aesthetics of the large expanse of its parking areas. Sidewalk conditions are poor and discontinuous. The backsides of many Front Street buildings are unattractive when viewed from Water Street. Possible treatments to the Water Street area are to minimize its negatives through landscaping and screening of parking or to attempt to combine it with the Business Core character zone by extending the same streetscape treatments and improving facades.

Negatives cited:

- Poor circulation for vehicles and pedestrians along Water Street and to Front Street;
- Poor signage and directions to parking;
- Parking is perceived as inconvenient; and,
- The aesthetics of the parking areas and sidewalks are poor.

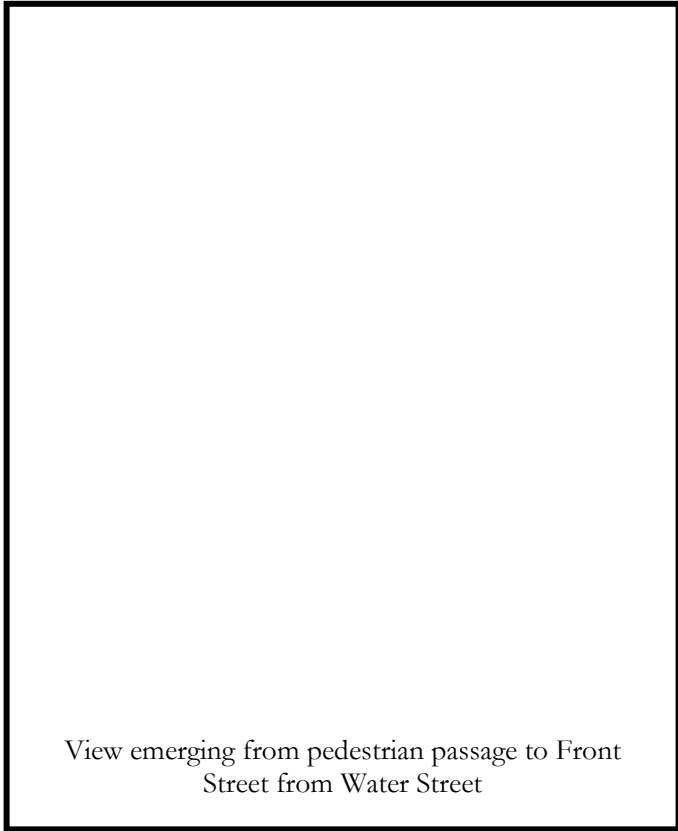
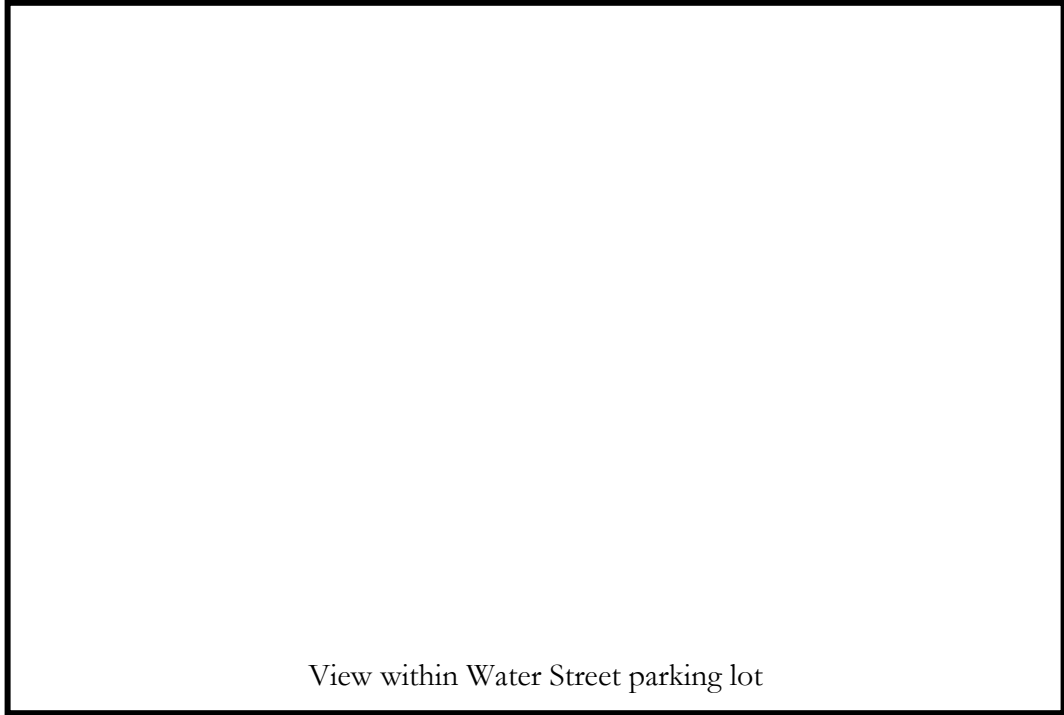
Positives cited:

- Provides needed parking for employees and customers.
- Central location relative to the business district.

#### c. Business Core

The center of the Business Core character zone contains a cluster of traditional downtown retail and mixed use buildings. Identifying characteristics include buildings generally over two stories in height, the common rhythm of building widths, common architectural style and detailing, buildings located at the sidewalk (zero setbacks) and the higher level of streetscape treatments.

At the edges of the zone, though, these attributes decline. There has been a decay in the street treatments, with wide curb cuts, sidewalks in poor condition, single-story/single-use buildings set back from the street and lower quality façade treatments.



**Water Street Character Zone**

Negatives cited:

- Poor parking management;
- Some buildings have poor maintenance/upkeep (small portion of overall);
- Poor aesthetics at edges of zone – curb cuts and parking; and,
- Blocked views of the river from Front Street.

Positives cited:

- Most buildings maintained well;
- Lots of character in buildings and streetscape elements;
- Compact size; and,
- Business vitality.

#### d. Waterfront

The Waterfront character zone includes both sides of Commercial Street from Route 1 to the Coal Pocket. Key features are the river, the town landing and park, the many marine-related uses (fuel, docks, fishing supplies) and the few street amenities provided. Workshop participants throughout the process felt very strongly and positively about the waterfront park – its location, size and design.

Negatives cited:

- Fragmented public access;
- Lack of signage and visitor facilities;
- Poor aesthetics along Commercial Street; and,
- Blocked views.

Positives cited:

- Town landing and park;
- Proximity to business district; and,
- Established marine businesses.

#### e. Residential/Historic Zone

The Residential/Historic character zone abuts the downtown. It is characterized by the stately homes and civic buildings such as churches. Many of the streets are wide, providing on-street parking on one or both sides.

Negatives cited:

- ‘Hard to own’ buildings due to size and maintenance;
- Telephone poles in street along Washington Street; and,
- ‘Commercial creep’ into the residential neighborhood.

Positives cited:

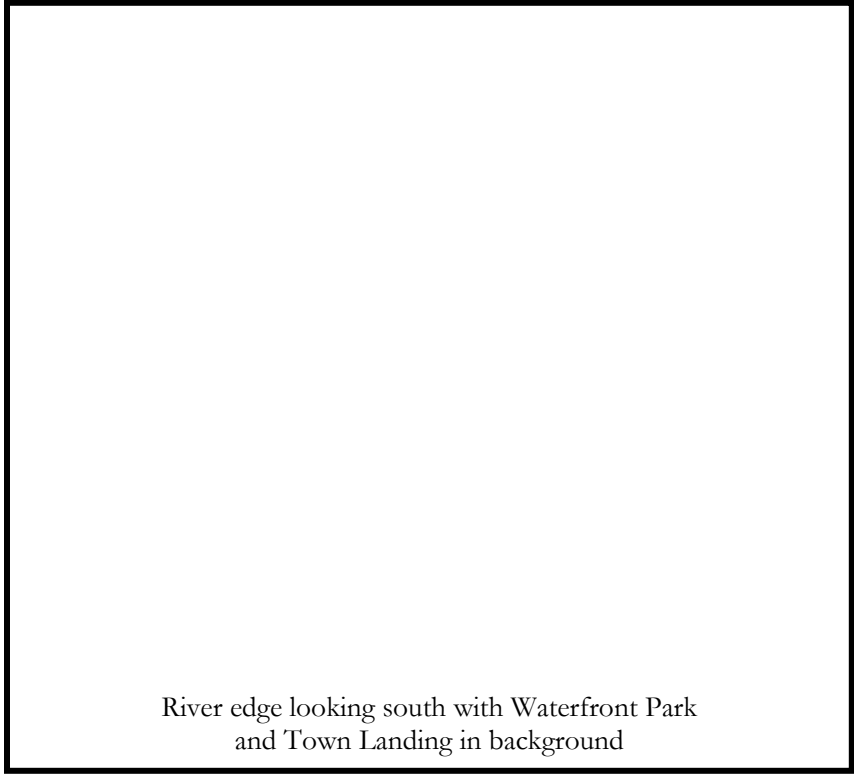
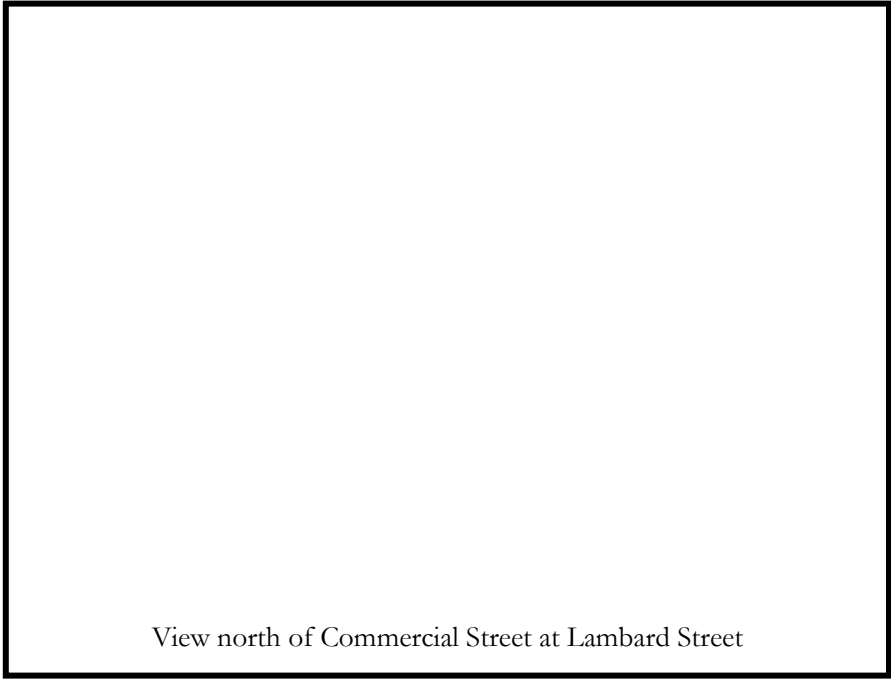
- Unified architecture and scale; and,
- Wide streets with ample parking



Excellent streetscape scale and elements along Front Street

Blocked views of Kennebec River from Front Street at Arch Street

## **Business Core Character Zone**

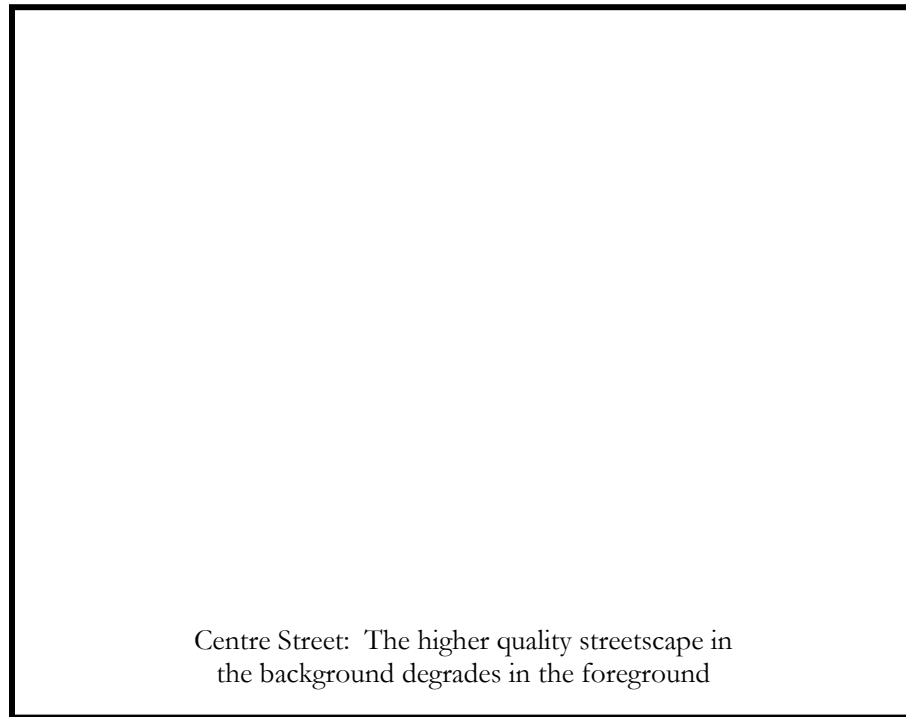


**Waterfront Character Zone**

## 2. Streetscape

Downtown Bath retains much of the character that defines a traditional downtown. Brick sidewalks, pedestrian-scaled lighting, street trees, and buildings that provide a sense of enclosure are the defining characteristics of the streetscape. Buildings are generally two or more stories. Pedestrian-oriented uses are located at the ground level with other uses above.

A variety of street furniture is provided including benches, trash receptacles and bollards. While much of what is present is in good condition, there is much that is in fair condition. Negative characteristics which require attention include missing sidewalk segments, the proliferation of too wide curb cuts, and inconsistency from block to block of streetscape treatments. Many of the crosswalks do not provide curb ramps for handicapped accessibility. At several locations, street trees or other items obstruct or constrict the sidewalk. A minimum of 3 feet must be provided according to Americans with Disability Act requirements. If 3 feet is provided, additional width must be provided every 200 feet.



### **B. Downtown Business Climate and Employment**

Downtown Bath retains a strong, healthy core of mixed commercial uses including shops, restaurants, offices and banking. Bath Iron Works' importance to the City of Bath cannot be overstated. Its employees live and shop in Bath and businesses supply the Iron Works with goods and services. Their current expansion plans bode well for the health of Bath's economy and presents new opportunities for collaboration. A comprehensive overview of the economy of the Bath-Brunswick-Topsham region and recommended regional strategies are provided by the Mid-Coast Council for Business Development's "Forging New Relationships: An Economic Adjustment Strategy for the Bath-Brunswick-Topsham Region" (Mt. Auburn Associates, 1995).

Attendees at a 1997 'Business Barometer' workshop hosted by the Bath City Council identified their most important issues. These were (in descending order of importance): parking, waterfront development and access; leadership and communicating common goals; business promotion, recruitment, and retention; and high taxes.

'Positives' ranked by workshop respondents included:

- the Downtown village atmosphere;
- the safe, clean, quality of life; and,
- its friendly, community pride and spirit; and the river.

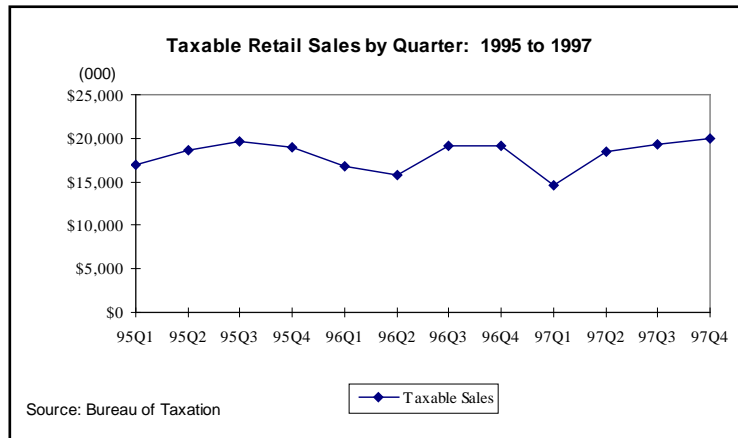
'Negatives' cited by workshop respondents included:

- the shortage of parking;
- citizens, government and businesses not working together; and,
- the over-reliance on a single, large employer.

Downtown Bath currently 'shuts down' at 5 PM. There is a mass exodus of shipyard workers around 3:30 PM on weekdays. The Chocolate Church and restaurants do produce a level of evening activity downtown, but shops and services do not match the hours of competing perimeter malls and strip commercial centers. In most instances it is not financially feasible or necessary to do so. Hours of operation by merchants needs to be addressed in a collaborative fashion, with a clear understanding of marketing opportunities and niches. Participants in the planning forums discussed the need to increase evening activity in the downtown. Several businesses that were mentioned that should be attracted to downtown included a movie theater, book store, children's clothing store and additional restaurants.

## 1. Retail Sales

Retail sales are one indicator of the health and diversity of a local economy. Bath's retail sales history indicates that it has a year-round economy, not subject to wide seasonal variations similar to many other coastal communities. These data show the moderate seasonal fluctuation of sales activity for three recent years. This relatively small variation is important given the expressed desire for Bath's diversification efforts to be focused on year-round activity. This strategy implies trying to raise the level of sales across all quarters, not simply increasing the spikes during the summer and fall tourist seasons. While there are season swings, they are not overly dramatic. The data also indicate that in many retail categories, Bath is a regional retail center though its overall position in this role has been eroding slowly.



## 2. Employment Mix



BIW remains a regional employment anchor, located immediately south of the downtown and Route 1. At the end of 1996, BIW had below 8,000 employees, down from 12,000 in 1990 (Bath Comprehensive Plan, 1997). Other major employers include Stinson Canning and the cluster retail stores and business services located along Front and Centre Streets in the downtown.

### 3. Downtown Population and Housing

Bath-wide Population. The resident population of Bath overall has remained relatively flat (near 10,000) for nearly 100 years with the remainder of the surrounding region experiencing moderate growth. Projections show population to remain relatively flat for the foreseeable future (Bath Comprehensive Plan, 1997). This is mainly in part to the relatively little land available for residential development compared to the remainder of the region.

Daytime population increases substantially due to Bath's role as a regional employment center, anchored by the BIW. Estimated employment in Bath is currently around 10,500 and is also projected to remain near the current levels (Bath Comprehensive Plan). Decreased employment at the BIW is expected to be offset by increases in service sector employment in Bath. Counting employment, the daytime population is estimated to double to over 20,000.

Downtown Population and Housing. Downtown population, both resident and daytime, is important as a primary market for downtown businesses. There is a synergistic effect between population and employment: a critical mass of population can support businesses; a critical mass of businesses attracts shoppers and those in need of services being offered. 1990 Census data show that the Block Group that principally makes up the downtown core area had a population in 1990 of 772. The total number of housing units in this area was 374 (1990 Census, STF 3A.)

### **C. Wayfinding, Access and Circulation**

The success of a downtown is in many ways directly related to the ease it can be accessed. Access needs to be addressed at several layers and by several modes. The layers of accessibility range from regional accessibility (from surrounding towns) to local accessibility (from surrounding neighborhoods). The modes of access are primarily the automobile and walking, but access via vanpool/carpool, bus and bicycling also need to be considered.

Both regional and local access to and within the downtown is hampered by the configuration of Route 1, both the barrier separated highway west of downtown and the Leeman's Highway's elevated viaduct. Regarding regional access from Route 1, the number and location of highway exits and entrances presents a limited number of options for accessing the downtown. There are currently two northbound downtown exits (High Street and 'Historic Bath'/Vine Street) from Route 1 and one southbound (Front Street). Access can also be gained via the Congress Street exit which continues downtown via North Street. Access is further hindered by the placement and content of highway signs at important decision points on Route 1 and on signs within the downtown.

#### 1. Wayfinding & Signage

A Wayfinding System is a unified system of readily identifiable graphics that conveys important information to arriving visitors and creates a unique and common identity for the downtown. This is especially critical in Bath given the access and circulation limitations downtown discussed below. Key information to be provided to motorists includes direction to key destinations and the location of parking.

Wayfinding signage is based on a hierarchical system of presenting information. Critical to this is the scale that the information is provided. The appropriate scale is determined by the area and the characteristics of the user. Automobiles travel at higher speeds and require more advanced warning, therefore, generally larger graphics. The speed of travel also dictates the amount of information that can be processed by a driver. Pedestrians travel at much slower speeds and are able to pause and linger to process information.

Highway Signage. The northbound Route 1 signage does not provide early enough or good enough information for unfamiliar motorists to make an informed choice of exits. For instance, a new signboard just before the Western Avenue/Congress Street Extension exit on Route 1 directs motorists to this exit to access the waterfront. There are no supplementary signs once off the exit to direct the motorist. Continuing north on Route 1, the 'Historic Bath' exit sign provides little clue that there is a vibrant downtown or waterfront just ahead. In summer traffic conditions, it is easy to be swept across the bridge to Woolwich before you realize the High Street and Historic Bath exits (and a desirable downtown) are there.

Downtown Signage. Current signage downtown is of mixed quality. Signs defining on-street parking areas and restrictions have higher quality due to their distinctive shape, text style and non-regulatory look. The several directional signs (green rectangular signs with white lettering) provided to get motorists from downtown back onto the highway are old and poorly maintained.



A signboard is provided at the corner of Washington Street and Leeman's Highway. The amount and type of information provided is inappropriate for vehicular-oriented signage. There is too much information to process, the text size is too small, contrast between the text and background is poor and visibility is poor for all but the first car or two in the queue at the intersection. A similar signboard/ kiosk located near City Hall does work for the intended audience, pedestrians. This location includes a map and legend key for locating businesses.

## 2. Downtown Access

### Route 1 Corridor

Route 1 is the primary regional roadway in mid-coast area. It provides for higher level of through traffic due to its design. West of the downtown, a raised median and fencing prevents vehicular and pedestrian crossings of the highway. No at-grade intersections are provided. These elements contribute to the poor aesthetics and accessibility of the highway. West of the City line, the speed limit is 55 mph. While there is a change in speed limit to 35 mph, there is little change in roadway cross-section to signal to the driver that a change in speed is warranted. It continues to be a four lane, semi-access controlled roadway. There is very little landscaping or

other gateway treatment to signal a change in character from high speed travel corridor to City entrance.

Traffic volumes on Route 1 vary by time of year. Average daily traffic in 1997 west of the High Street ramps was approximately 31,000. Traffic on the Carleton Bridge averaged just over 25,500 (MDOT, 1997 Traffic Volume Counts, 1998). The US Route 1 Mid-Coast Transportation Study indicates an increase of 28 percent during the peak traffic over average daily traffic volumes (Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, 1993). This increase translates into peak daily volumes of over 39,000 west of High Street and over 32,000 on the Carleton Bridge.

Level of Service (LOS) is a qualitative measure of how much delay a motorist experiences along a roadway or at an intersection. LOS ratings range from A (operating well) to F (failing conditions). Currently, the LOS during the afternoon peak hour is F on the Carlton Bridge and D west of the High Street exits. The High Street southbound on-ramp has a LOS C; the northbound downtown on-ramp has a LOS F.

When completed in the summer of 2000, the new Bath-Woolwich Bridge and downtown northbound on-ramp will relieve to a degree the congestion currently at this on-ramp when the day shift at the BIW ends. Currently, police officers direct traffic during the summer months to provide gaps to entering traffic. With the new bridge, the on-ramp will have its own lane on the bridge. The bridge itself will have four travel lanes. In the southbound direction, the right lane will be an exit only lane to Front Street.

### 3. Downtown Circulation

The circulation pattern for a downtown must meet often conflicting goals. Ideally, the street network provides a high degree of accessibility for vehicles to destinations and parking areas, provides on-street parking, and provides a comfortable environment for pedestrians. In most communities, trade-offs are involved.

Downtown circulation in Bath is similar to many smaller New England business districts. Characteristics include narrow streets with one way roadway segments adding complexity to the understanding of the circulation pattern.

Figure 2.3 displays the circulation pattern within the downtown, with numerous one-way streets. This circulation pattern allows on-street parking to remain generally on both sides of the street but can create confusion for those unfamiliar with it. These limitations can be overcome by various strategies including strategically returning streets to two-way and/or improved signage. Turning streets back to two-way would in most cases result in loss of on-street parking (e.g., Front Street) or allow more cut through traffic where not desired (e.g., Elm Street). Creating or eliminating one-way streets must be done after significant analysis of intended and unintended consequences. One-way street systems are often less legible to those unfamiliar with the street system.

#### a. Downtown Traffic

Traffic volumes away from the Route 1 Corridor are generally moderate to light throughout the downtown. Significant spikes in volumes occur on weekdays when the afternoon shift at the BIW lets out at 3:00 PM. Daily traffic volumes are shown in Figure 2.4 and are generally much less than 10,000 vehicles per day on downtown streets.

Currently, downtown intersections operate from very well to poor. Intersections are also given a Level of Service (LOS) rating of A to F based on the amount of delay a motorist encounters at the intersection. The elevated Route 1 viaduct and the railroad tracks makes operations at several intersections adjacent to the viaduct problematic. The Washington Street intersections at Centre Street and Route 1 operate at LOS D and F, respectively during the afternoon peak hour. These two signals operate in tandem, trying to coordinate movement through the intersections. An overall snapshot of existing LOS is provided in Figure 2.5.

#### b. Pedestrian Connectivity

The quality of the pedestrian experience within a downtown is a critical ingredient to its success. The quality of the pedestrian environment is determined by a complex combination of numerous attributes. These attributes include:

- continuity of the pedestrian network;
- the quality of materials used and maintenance;
- provision of amenities such as benches,
- safety and convenience of street crossings;
- urban design characteristics such as street trees, adjacent buildings and visual interest.

Pedestrian connectivity is essential to the promotion and widespread use of walking within the downtown. With its compact size and historic and natural setting, Bath is well suited to being ‘a walker’s town’. Man-made barriers currently detract from this being realized to its fullest. Critical gaps exist in the connections between the north and south ends of the city and to, from and within the downtown. Another critical element beyond physical connectivity is visual connectivity. Due to the way development has occurred in several locations, important views of the river from the Front Street area are blocked by buildings and landscaping treatments. Three critical pedestrian issues are:

1. poor north-south connections through the barrier created by Leeman’s Highway;
2. degradation of pedestrian facilities along Centre and Front Streets; and
3. lack of facilities along Commercial Street and riverfront public access.

Improved pedestrian connectivity can play a role in downtown parking management through improved access from neighborhoods and through perimeter employee and shopper parking. Good connections can increase the likelihood of success of a perimeter employee parking program used for downtown employee parking.

#### c. Transit

The Bath Shuttle Bus provides bus service that is unique to cities of Bath’s size in Maine. Two bus loops provide comprehensive service every half hour. Most important sites in the City are connected to the downtown by this service. The hub or origination point for this service is located next to City Hall on Front Street. A separate planning effort is evaluating potential changes to make the service more efficient and increase ridership.

## D. Planning and Regulatory Context

It is crucial that the zoning and other regulations in Bath directly support the planning and design goals for downtown. Critical elements including those addressing: *parking* -- its location, minimum requirements and buffering; *buildings* -- their height and footprint, orientation, and facades; and *uses* -- the location and types of desired and permitted/conditional uses. Many communities are moving away from standard zoning and implementing “Performance Zoning”. This type of zoning eliminates specific lists of permitted and not permitted uses but instead specifies how a development must ‘perform’, usually specifying maximum allowable impacts (traffic, etc.) and design-type guidelines to ensure compatibility. In theory, this provides more flexibility and creativity on the part of developers.

State and federal regulations also provide another overlay of regulations that will impact how the waterfront, in particular, will proceed. Riverfront parcels are covered by environmental regulations such as flood plain zoning.

### 1. Zoning

Zoning is the most direct way in which a community expresses its desires on how it wishes to physically develop. How a community develops over time is generally based on the cumulative effects of its day-to-day implementation of its zoning provisions. It is in effect the design specifications for a community, establishing how the blueprints (or site plans) for development are done.

#### a. Existing Zoning

Current zoning in the study area is comprised of two distinct districts: Waterfront and General Business District (CI). Adjacent districts include Residential I (neighborhoods to the north and west of downtown), Industrial (BIW south of Route 1 from Washington Street to the Kennebec River) and Commercial II (a thin wedge west of Washington Street to the south of Route 1). The Route 1 corridor west of Middle Street is in the Highway Business District (CIV).

#### Waterfront District

The current *Waterfront* zoning district extends north from Route 1 on the east side of Commercial Street to North Street, including the Coal Pocket. This district’s purpose is to

*“foster the reuse and redevelopment of this area into a mixed marine-commercial neighborhood; encourage the development of recreational, marine, historical or tourist-related uses along the waterfront, and provide for increased public access to, and open space on, the waterfront in conjunction with private development activities”.*

Important aspects of the current zoning are the public access provisions, small setback requirements (zero setback from the river) and maximum height (35’), lot coverage (60%) and floor area ratio (1).

#### Downtown Business Core (General Business District – CI)

The downtown business core is bound by the *General Business District* (CI) regulations. This district extends from the west side of Commercial Street to the Centre Street corridor to the

Court House. It also includes Front Street/Water Street from Route 1 to Oak Street/Linden Street (including the library and park property). This district's purpose is to:

*“provide an area in the community for the location of a wide range of business and service establishments servicing the greater Bath area. The focus of retail activity within the district should be on a small scale, specialty and comparison shopping, which is compatible with the existing scale and activity of downtown Bath”.*

Important aspects of the current zoning are the emphasis on smaller scale businesses, zero setback requirements, zero yard requirements and allows surface commercial parking lots as a conditional use.

#### b. Proposed Zoning

The 1997 Comprehensive Plan recommends several zoning changes. The relationship between these districts is very important to the health and vitality of the downtown. These districts must mutually reinforce each other's goals. The downtown needs residential uses within it and immediately adjacent to it. The Route 1 Corridor must provide a much more positive 'Welcome' to Bath.

Of specific significance to this Plan, the Comprehensive Plan recommends creating a *Downtown Commercial Area* zoning district extending from the waterfront to include the west side of Middle Street. Existing zoning has separate zones for the waterfront and business district. The intent of unifying these two districts is to provide opportunities for continuity of activity and mix of uses.

*Mixed Use/Light Commercial Districts* are recommended in two areas near the downtown. The purpose of this district is to serve as a transition area between residential neighborhoods and business districts. The first recommended district is centered around High Street north of Route 1. A second similar district is recommended adjacent to the Shipyard Area to include properties on the west side of Washington Street.

*High Density Residential* zoning extends from these commercial zones to the north. The Comprehensive Plan observes that many changes in the neighborhoods have resulted in a too dense residential pattern. This has occurred in many instances from the conversion of single or multi-unit building to more intensive uses.

A *Route 1 Corridor Contract Area* is recommended for the Route 1 corridor west of High Street. This contract zoning is intended to be flexible and attract higher quality, more attractive highway-oriented businesses to this corridor and minimize impacts on abutting neighborhoods.

South of Route 1 along the waterfront is the *Shipyard Area*. This district is designed to accommodate the heavy industrial uses that occur within the Bath Iron Works, compatible with the current expansion. It is desired to visually improve the area as well as provide for improved pedestrian and vehicle circulation.

## Overlay Districts

Overlay districts are an effective way to make finer scale distinctions within a single zoning district rather than creating two separate but mostly similar districts. Generally, overlay districts add more stringent requirements than an underlying zone.

An *Historic Residential Overlay* district is adjacent to the downtown extending generally from Front Street to include Middle Street (east-west) and from Beacon Street to Winter Street and (north-south). Major goals of this overlay district are to preserve the architectural integrity and lower intensity of uses of the properties. In addition to residential uses, professional uses and home-based offices would be permitted. The district is intended to discourage the conversion of buildings to higher intensity multi-unit apartment buildings.

### 2. Parking and Access

Parking and access regulations are covered as an “additional performance standard” within the Site Plan Review Provisions of the Land Use Code. The requirements provide a listing of land uses and a minimum off-street parking by use. For multiple uses within a development, it allows for a reduction due to shared parking. Parking for use may also be provided off-site (within 300’) and considered an accessory use if within the same zoning district. Public parking may also be substituted if it can be shown that available capacity exists. In the downtown commercial district, there is not a requirement that the parking be within a specified distance.

Islands and landscape medians are required in parking lots with 50 or more parking spaces. The checklist for Site Plan Review approval states that “the parking areas are [to be] visually attractive when viewed from public streets or abutting property”. All non-residential parking lots over 6 spaces were to be brought into compliance with the Land Use Code’s parking provisions by December 1994.

In the downtown commercial district, there are no ‘yard’ area requirements, allowing parking areas without setback requirements (the yard landscaping provisions therefore may not apply). These provisions do state:

*“Landscaping is designed to define, soften or screen off-street parking areas and to improve the visual appearance of the site from neighboring properties or public streets.” (12.10I1)*

### 3. Design Oversight

Design oversight is generally provided for in the checklist for Site Plan Review approval under the heading “Compatibility with Neighboring Buildings”. This section states:

*“(1) The bulk, location and height or proposed buildings, structures and paved areas are compatible with neighboring properties and are not detrimental to other private property.*

*(2) The materials, architectural treatment and design of the building are compatible with the architectural character of the neighborhood.” (12.10C1,2)*

One important aspect not addressed is how to reverse unwanted trends in development. For instance, many buildings built in the past 40 years do not conform to historical patterns for building placement and scale (large setbacks, parking in front, non-traditional materials and

single-story buildings). Proposed similar buildings could be argued to be ‘compatible’ with these neighboring properties.

## **E. Opportunities and Constraints**

In considering the downtown and waterfront revitalization and development options, a number of opportunities and constraints were identified. These factors were incorporated in the shaping of planning principles, and development concept options as well as the final action plan.

Opportunities identified for the central area included primarily factors within the study area as well as some citywide and within the region. Key factors included the following:

- BIW shipyard improvements, expansion and reorganization with a focus on the new south end pier and platform complex open up new choices along the Route 1 corridor at the north end of the yard. When completed the reorganization plan will allow for shifting parking away from the downtown, altering employee access patterns, and improvement of the shipyard appearance from Route 1. In addition, new BIW office space and support activities can in-fill the current grade parking area adjacent to Route 1.
- Current public infrastructure and capital investments such as the new Sagadahoc Bridge and ramp modifications promise improved Route 1 access as well as new options for downtown circulation and street connections. Projected future MDOT investments in restored rail services, a new coastal ferry connection, and extended Route 1/Leeman Highway alterations promise additional local and regional access improvements over the next ten years.
- The resurgence of many other Midcoast town centers similar to Bath, as vital year round community activity nodes, indicates that market opportunities for reinvestment are as strong as any time in the past 30 years.
- The acclaimed Nineteenth Century architectural character of Front Street and the surrounding historic district also provides a unique framework for downtown growth. as a visitor destination.
- The Bath maritime heritage provides another unique redevelopment theme, building on the living presence of an expanding BIW with its highly visible ships and cranes as gateway elements, as well as further opportunities to expand on the historic maritime history of Bath which is only partially presented at the Maine Maritime Museum.
- Property ownership of key parcels in a few hands is such that a number of parcels can be assembled for new development and in-fill, including such key sites as the former Praver's warehouse, the YMCA building, and the Coal Pocket.

Constraints which need to be considered include the following:

- The waterfront is characterized by several environmental and natural features which need to be respected in terms of new river edge and downtown development. Included would



be seasonal flooding from extreme tides and spring runoff, ice flows and river currents affecting marina and dock configurations, river edge habitats and navigational considerations, many of which are protected by state and federal regulatory laws which place limits on waterfront development.

- Various manmade conditions are also important in determining location and construction of new projects. Most of the waterfront as well as several downtown areas such as Water Street, are filled land with poor subsoil and footing conditions. Portions of the downtown bulkhead are also in need of repair.
- Access to and from Route 1 is limited and difficult for visitors and residents alike. While the new bridge will remedy some aspects of this critical access, additional efforts are needed such as short term signage and gateway designation, and longer term ramp improvements.
- Property ownership of much of the downtown is limited to a few entities which alternately can be viewed as a benefit or a constraint, depending on those owners interest in participating in the various potential revitalization projects.

## **F. Local, Regional & Statewide Initiatives Context**

### 1. Local Business Development

Local business development activities are conducted by numerous organizations in Bath. Principal entities include the Local Development Corporation (currently the City Council), the Bath Business Association and the Chamber of Commerce. These carry out downtown/business promotion, marketing, and business attraction activities. Another activity of importance is the Cultural Assessment and Inventory that is being spearheaded by the City of Bath. This project is compiling an inventory of arts-related agencies, artists and craftpersons. This project has documented the extensive impact that the arts community has on the region from both economic and quality of life perspectives.

### 2. Regional and State

#### a. Regional

A new era of regional cooperation among Bath-Brunswick-Topsham and surrounding communities is developing. Key organizations involved include the individual municipalities, the Mid-Coast Council for Business Development and the Merrymeeting Council of Governments.

The MCBBD is a business development agency with business attraction/retention programs offering help in the areas of business location, financing and technical assistance. It is spearheading efforts for creating a coherent identity and image for the Bath-Brunswick-Topsham area. These efforts are detailed in “New Directions for Maine’s MidCoast” (Pennisi & Co. and John Spritz, 1998). A central effort is an integrated marketing and advertising campaign for “Maine’s MidCoast” campaign. Other efforts are emphasis on arts and culture and the quality of life in the region.

The Merrymeeting Council of Governments is coordinating regional cooperation in the areas of environmental, land use and transportation planning. Municipalities included are Bath, Brunswick and Topsham. Recent planning efforts have produced a “Multi-Modal Transportation Plan” and a “Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan”.

The Brunswick-Topsham area is also marketing itself as a cultural and arts hub. Efforts in Bath should be well coordinated to avoid duplication of effort and conflicts in scheduling.

b. State

The State of Maine has several regional initiatives underway. These include a Strategic Passenger Transportation Plan and Scenic Byways program (Maine Department of Transportation) and Heritage Corridor Planning (Office of Tourism). The MDOT Strategic Passenger Transportation Plan (Wilbur Smith Associates, et. al., 1997) envisions revitalized passenger rail and ferry connections throughout the state. Early phases include fast ferry service to Bath with potential connections to Boothbay Harbor, Portland, Rockland and Bar Harbor. Rail connections from Brunswick (with Amtrak connections south to Boston) would extend to Rockland on state-owned rail lines. Regarding the heritage corridor planning, Bath is the designated southern terminus of the *Kennebec Chaudiere Heritage Trail*, stretching from Montreal to the Gulf of Maine. Development of the heritage trail is beginning in 1999 at the northern end along Route 201. This project highlights the cultural and historic sites along the combined roadway and river corridor that ties Maine and Canada together. Close coordination with this project is essential and presents an exciting opportunity for Bath.

### *III. CHOOSING A FUTURE FOR THE WATERFRONT AND DOWNTOWN*

#### **A. Alternative Development Concepts**

There is much that is currently “right” about downtown Bath. There are also numerous opportunities to improve the downtown by building on what is right. The purpose of the Alternative Development Concepts is to present a spectrum of development options to explore preferences for development and redevelopment. These alternatives all build on the positives. The outcome from the exercise is selection of a preferred future development pattern to pursue. Selection of an explicit direction is key to taking an active, rather than passive, role in the physical development of the downtown. Once a course is selected, other actions must follow, such as adopting complementary zoning and other regulations that strongly influence the aesthetics and character of the downtown.

*“If we do not change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed”.* CHINESE PROVERB

Key urban design principles to reach public consensus on include the scale, intensity, location and types of uses for new development and redevelopment. The concepts purposely provided a ‘mix and match’ of uses in different areas to provoke likes and dislikes through the workshop process. From the revealed preferences, a ‘preferred’ concept was refined and recommended actions were identified. The three alternative concepts (B, C, D) contained a common base of assumed improvements including streetscape improvements along Commercial Street, landscaping and buffering along the Leeman’s Highway viaduct, improved pedestrian connectivity and a local trolley service as shown in Figure 3.1.

At the public workshop where the concepts were presented, all participants had the opportunity to critique each of the three alternative concepts (alternatives to the Status Quo). After an overview of all the concepts, workshop participants were divided into three groups. Each concept was again briefly presented to each group and comments on likes and dislikes were recorded. These comments and guidance from the steering committee formed the basis for the selected, or preferred, alternative.

#### **B. The Alternative Concepts**

The alternative concepts present a range of physical development strategies for downtown Bath. Table 3.1 summarizes the key components of each concept.

##### 1. Status Quo

The Status Quo concept continues current trends and patterns in the downtown. Figure 3.2 shows a graphical representation of the ‘Status Quo’ alternative concept. This concept maintains limited public realm investment, assumes minor changes in zoning, leaves waterfront zoning as-is and assumes that limited in-fill development will occur.

##### 2. Balance New Riverfront Development and Park

This concept assumes moderate mixed use waterfront development on the east side of Commercial Street with more continuous mixed use commercial and retail on the west side. It also includes an open space component and mixed use in-fill development in the remainder of downtown. Figure 3.3 shows a graphical representation of the ‘Balanced’ alternative concept.

Table 3.2 summarizes its critique at the second public workshop. Overall, this concept was well received at the public workshop. There were mixed comments regarding the Waterfront Inn located at the Coal Pocket versus closer to the retail district. There was a general opinion that this concept focused on too much on seasonal uses instead of year-round oriented uses/activities. Favorable comments were given regarding the pattern and intensity of uses. The rail/sail facility on the south side of the bridge was judged infeasible.

### 3. Maximize Riverfront Park and Maritime Uses

This concept assumes a combination of open space and maritime related uses on the waterfront, with development focused on the west side of Commercial Street and in the remainder of the downtown. Figure 3.4 shows a graphical representation of the 'Maximize Riverfront Park' alternative concept. Table 3.3 presents a summary of the public critique of this concept. Overall, this concept also received generally favorable comments. Workshop participants were mostly positive about the prominent retention of openness on the waterfront.

### 4. Maximize Riverfront Mixed Use and New Development

This concept assumes fairly intensive mixed use development along the waterfront with moderate development in the remainder of the downtown. Figure 3.5 shows a graphical representation of the 'Maximize Riverfront Mixed Use' alternative concept. Table 3.4 presents a summary of the concept and the critique of this concept at the June 1998 public workshop.

Overall, this concept received less favorable comments from the public. Most felt that this concept over-developed the waterfront, would overly reduce openness along the waterfront, block views, and dilute development interest from other areas of the downtown.

## C. The Preferred Concept

The 'preferred' concept was derived from comments and recommendations received from the series of public and advisory committee workshops. Based on those reviews, this concept incorporates the key desired features identified from all of the alternatives presented as well as additional ideas contributed. The Preferred Concept Plan is shown in Figure 3.6, which represents a composite guideline plan. It is primarily a combination of elements from two of the concept plans described above; concept B whose goal was to 'Balance New Riverfront Development and Park', and concept C which was intended to 'Maximize Riverfront Park and Maritime Uses'. The preferred concept plan can be described in terms of specific development principles as shown in Figure 3.6, and the public infrastructure framework improvements summarized in Figure 3.7.

### 1. Preferred Concept Development Principles

The preferred concept development plan (Figure 3.6) is based on several principles of downtown land use and waterfront use principles. The more attractive development parcels are those which are on higher ground, have larger footprint size, and are closest to the existing year round activities. These include the Coal Pocket, the Prawers site, several through-block redevelopment sites between Commercial and Front Streets in the downtown core, and potential reuse of the north end parking and former rail yard site between Route 1 and BIW. Smaller

scale in-fill development opportunities exist on sites between Centre Street and Route 1, and a few sites along Water Street.

The waterfront zone between Commercial Street and the river, from Oak Street to BIW, is considered more suitable for maritime piers and support businesses, for park and recreational space, for heritage related activities and for specialized commercial, entertainment and retail uses. While limited scale commercial and retail development is appropriate along the river, it was generally felt that the waterfront was best suited for maritime-related businesses and activities, and be enhanced as an active park and open space resource. The park elements are organized to provide both physical and visual access to the river through pedestrian connections from Front and Commercial Streets to the water's edge which also preserve and open new view corridors. Continuous public access is provided by a double trail system at the river edge and along commercial Street. New or recycled development that does occur should provide public access to and along the river, and be sited and configured to provide designated river views.

Physical riverfront conditions and constraints will need to be considered for the waterfront zone. Because of the flood plane, most of the new in-fill will need to be elevated half a level above grade for insurance purposes, and set back from the waters edge. Maritime uses including marina floats, gangways, and docks will need to be resistant to ice flows along the bulkhead, with minimal active navigation during the winter and spring months. Filling at the waters edge would be possible only for maritime uses and is generally discouraged by state shoreline regulations. The riverfront trail would be provided in two locations; 1) at the waters edge in increments as parcels are redeveloped, and 2) along the east side of Commercial Street as a continuous wide sidewalk. All waters edge construction will need to be designed to withstand the annual tide, ice, and flood patterns.

The commercial and retail development focus should be placed on high quality in-fill of vacant parcels, as well as phased redevelopment of several larger vacant properties or currently underutilized, single story development parcels. This development should be targeted to several critical areas; 1) the Centre Street corridor from City Hall to the Courthouse, 2) the river side of Commercial Street as described above, 3) on selected parcels on the west side of Commercial Street, 4) the Route 1 corridor from Middle Street to the new bridge, and 5) on limited parcels on Front Street from Vine Street to North Street. Development should be mixed use with multiple story buildings and attractive facades in keeping with the surrounding architecture. In general parking is to be to the rear and side, with minimizing new curb cuts.. Building mass should be compatible with surrounding buildings, and should maintain or restore the traditional building setbacks.

Building uses should include combinations of retail/pedestrian oriented uses on the ground floors, with office and residential uses on upper floors. Focusing major new development emphasis on the waterfront has been discouraged in the preferred plan in part because it would likely undermine investment interest in in-fill and redevelopment in other critical downtown areas, particularly Centre Street and the west side of Commercial Street. Another important element is to create opportunities for more residential space in the downtown to increase the evening and year-round vitality of downtown. Retirees are one potential market to target for residential development, as well as rental units for singles or couples.

## 2. Public Infrastructure Improvements and Urban Design Principles

The public infrastructure improvements provide a framework for the concept plan and are shown in Figure 3.7. The public improvements fall in several categories; 1) circulation improvements, 2) streetscape and landscaping, 3) parking expansion, 4) public transit and intermodal center, 5) heritage trail system, 6) public buildings and cultural resources, and 7) view corridors. Some components of the public infrastructure already exist such as public and cultural institutions. The other improvements are needed to provide an attractive context for the new development and private investments described in the preferred plan. The public framework improvements may be summarized as follows:

1) Circulation Improvements: There are three important new circulation initiatives which greatly improve vehicular movement for residents and visitors alike. To begin with, the new bridge completion will reduce traffic congestion to and from Route 1 by improving the on and off ramps and adding through traffic lanes. Additional street network improvements are also needed in terms of the following;

- Intersection modifications are needed including safer pedestrian walks, reduction of turning movements and radii, and light sequence adjustments at the following locations; Washington Street and Centre Street, Washington Street and Vine Street, and Front Street and Vine Street.
- A Commercial Street extension at the south end to Washington Street will be possible after the new bridge is completed, and would create a new development context for the north end of BIW. The extension would allow a two-way bypass loop and improve access to the waterfront and downtown core. BIW cooperation and agreement would be essential for this new section of public street and right of way.
- New Route 1 gateways and signage would be helpful in directing residents and visitors to alternative existing approaches to the downtown in the short term including approaches from Congress/North Street at the north end, and High Street/Centre Street at the south end.

2) Streetscape and Landscape Improvements: Several critical areas of streetscape enhancement are needed to match the quality and attractiveness of the core Front Street and Centre Street area. Better information for visitors is needed in terms of maps and directional signage in the core area.

- Sidewalk enhancement programs are recommended for western Centre Street, Front Street north of Elm, Summer Street and Water Street, including brick paving, landscaping and elimination of curb cuts.
- Landscape buffers along both sides of Route 1 from Middle Street to the river would improve the image of Bath from the elevated highway. Facade treatments for the backs of existing buildings combined with new infill along School and Vine Streets is also encouraged.
- A special Commercial Street landscape and underground utility program is recommended to create an attractive riverfront 'parade', and encourage investment and alter the current industrial appearance as soon as the bridge construction nears completion.
- A new local directional signage system should be installed to describe the new bridge and street level circulation changes as well as help direct visitors in and out of the City's complex street network.

3) **Parking Expansion:** The existing shortage of parking for downtown commercial and retail can be helped through a combination of new parking resources and a new parking management program.

- A new combined public/BIW parking deck is encouraged for the area between the railroad station and the north end of the yard.
- A Commercial Street parking program would be included in the streetscape and in-fill development program including expansion of diagonal parking, and grade parking below new building construction.
- New development on-site parking requirements should be modified within existing zoning to reflect other public parking resources.
- A new parking management program will be possible with the reorientation of the BIW yard activity and gate to the south end. All BIW parking north of Route 1 should be phased out to allow for additional public parking and in-fill development.

4) **Public Transit and Intermodal Center:** New regional transit initiatives are proposed in terms of restoring passenger rail through Bath to Rockland and implementation of a coastal fast ferry service. Local transit improvements can be made to adapt existing services to the new development initiatives.

- A North/South trolley-bus loop can be implemented to connect with Commercial Street and other new downtown and waterfront sites.
- The preferred site for an intermodal rail/bus/park and ride center would be near the former rail station.
- The most practical site for the intermodal coastal ferry/cruise terminal would be at an improved and expanded town landing, with trolley loop and pedestrian links to the rail/bus center.

5) **Heritage Trail System:** The linear character of the city and location of historic resources lends itself to a north/south trail system with a river front loop.

- The spine of the trail system would be a Washington Street Historic District trail which allowed for walking, biking and jogging from Merrymeeting Bay to Winnegance. The trail would consist of sidewalk improvements, on-street bikeways, and improved intersection crossings.
- A Riverfront trail loop would combine sidewalk improvements along Commercial and upper Front Street, as well as segments of a river edge pathway, with street connections to the spine trail.
- A Heritage Trail interpretive sign system would be installed incrementally to provide information to residents and visitors about historic resources as well as flora and fauna.

6) **Public Buildings and Cultural Resources:** The existing institutional facilities need to be preserved and enhanced as anchors to the downtown waterfront district, such as the recently completed library expansion. New institutional facilities also need be added.

- Municipal building enhancement is needed to meet growth needs and keep key facilities and activities in the downtown core. The City Hall, the Courthouse, and Post Office are all essential to the mix of activity.

- Cultural institution enhancement should be supported to keep activities and historic resources intact, such as the Chocolate Church, Winter Street Church, and Patton Free Library.
- Sites for a new visitor and heritage center in the downtown area were identified including the Winter Street Church parish house and the soon to be vacated YMCA building. An annex to the Marine Museum on the Commercial Street waterfront is also recommended with ferry and trolley bus links to main facility down river.

7) View Corridors: Existing view corridors to the riverfront need to be preserved and enhanced, and new opportunities opened up. Through modifications to the zoning code, public and private view easements can be maintained and provide for incentives through new development.



## *IV. The Action Plan: Beginning the New Millennium*

### **A. ESTABLISHING A NEW DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT**

#### 1. Establishing a Vision

Part of establishing the vision is accomplished by this Plan, but only the beginning. Much public consensus building remains. The most important part of this consensus-building process is enthusiasm for implementation. The next few years will be defining for Bath. A number of critical public and private decisions will be made that will shape the face of Bath for a half century. Most of the ideas presented here originated at the forums and workshops.

#### 2. Public Investment: Energy and Money as the Seeds

A primary purpose of the study is the reassessment of the Bath downtown to develop an action plan to support the diversification of the City's economic base. As stated previously, it is desired that Bath's historical role as a year-round regional employment, retail and services center be the emphasis. It is not desired to become overly reliant on tourism, but rather a vital retail, recreational and cultural destination for Bath's residents and the larger surrounding communities.

*"Nothing great was ever achieved  
without enthusiasm."*  
R. W. EMERSON

The development context of an area is the combination of factors that influences how 'ripe' an area is for new development. These factors include the local and regional market and economy, the amount and cost of developing land, access, the existing infrastructure and supporting government policies including economic assistance, zoning regulations and the vision for an area.

A major question raised throughout the process was "if the waterfront is such a prime development location, why hasn't development occurred?". Several key weaknesses are present in the downtown and waterfront areas that need to be addressed and have likely hindered development. Along the waterfront this is most evident in the lack of public investment in supporting public infrastructure on much of Commercial Street. This includes lack of sidewalks, street trees, and pedestrian scaled lighting. This Plan will help address 'the vision' for the area but will need to be revisited periodically to reaffirm or change it. The market forces for downtown development have also not been strong in the recent past. This appears to be changing. Costs of development adjacent to the waterfront due to subsurface conditions and floodplain considerations may also be a limiting factor.

#### 3. Programmatic and Physical Improvement Recommendations

Two distinct types of recommendations are given: programmatic and physical improvement. Programmatic recommendations include municipal actions such as changes to zoning and parking regulations and public-private collaborations between groups to plan and develop courses of action. Physical improvement recommendations are projects that need to be built, 'bricks and mortar' type projects.

## B. UNIFYING DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES & THEMES

A series of development principles and program themes evolved through the sequence of workshops and selection of a preferred concept plan. Five categories of development theme were identified to collect and organize the recommendations and insights received from the many participants in the planning process. The principles are intended to serve as both development goals and a litmus test against which to measure the progress and direction of the downtown and waterfront action plan through its implementation phases.

The development principle statements represent recurring ideas and themes often repeated during meetings, workshops and forums. Stated as imperatives for the success of an action plan, the five organizing themes consist of the following:

1. **Make Bath a ‘Must Do’ Destination:** The heart of Bath must first become an active and vibrant year round destination for area residents, while also developing accommodations and attractions for seasonal visitors.
2. **Improve Access and Connectivity:** The downtown needs to recognize the wealth of resources within the core and the greater Bath area to become its true activity center. Then the necessary physical connections can be improved.
3. **Enhance City Gateways and the Public Realm:** New gateways are needed for residents and visitors alike, including information highway links and marketing as well as conventional entryways by land and by water. The attractive and homogeneous public realm of Front Street needs to be expanded to seamlessly reconnect the downtown and riverfront to the residential areas.
4. **Foster Sustainable Economic Growth:** Public and private energies need to focus on attracting investments for the long term economic health of the City, with the objective of keeping residents in Bath. By creating a more vibrant and diversified cultural, economic and social setting, the town can sustain its regeneration and growth.
5. **Forge New Public-Private Partnerships and Investment Incentives:** With the current high levels of public and private investment in the downtown area, the City is well situated to build new public-private initiatives to leverage these investments and attract new businesses and tourism.

An important objective of the Action Plan is the integration of the physical planning and programmatic recommendations. The implementation principles were translated into a set of physical plan ‘districts’ or theme areas to help translate the program intentions into specific development projects. The compact size and organization of the downtown and waterfront area did not lend itself to a plan of discrete activity areas, but rather a series of overlapping theme ‘districts’ within a unified whole.

These districts described in the Action Plan include the following areas.

- A. The Waterfront/Commercial Street Parade
- B. Downtown Commercial Core
- C. The Route 1 Gateway

- D. The Intermodal Transportation Center
- E. The Heritage and Culture District.

These districts are intended to be flexible, thematic areas around which to organize improvement efforts and implementation strategies with different groups of stakeholders. There are no specific zoning or other regulatory implications to these districts. Rather the zoning should allow for a mixture of uses, with some safeguards for residential edges. The individual districts are described in more detail in terms of phasing and specific project recommendations in Section 5. Figure 4.1 shows a composite plan of the overlapping districts and identifies these district components.

Each program component of the Action Plan is intended to be both compatible with and mutually reinforcing with other elements. All five principle themes are inter-related and many of the specific recommendations fall into more than one category. For instance, many items that will contribute to ‘Destination Bath’ also logically belong under the ‘Sustainable Economic Growth’ theme. Recommendations are described in more detail under their primary category and cross referenced when repeated in another category. Numbers in parentheses indicates the number of the theme or principle category in which that recommendation is more fully described.

The Implementation Plan in Section 5 lists each theme recommendation, its likely time frame for phased implementation, and those public and private entities responsible.

### C. DETAILS OF THE FIVE THEME ELEMENTS

#### 1. MAKE BATH A ‘MUST-DO’ DESTINATION

A key outcome from the public workshops is the desire to reinvigorate downtown Bath as a year-round shopping, recreational and cultural destination for the region’s residents and for visitors alike. This can be accomplished by building on the downtown’s many current assets. A vital downtown contains a ‘critical mass’ of people, businesses, attractions and activities.

Downtown’s assets include its retained architectural and traditional town center character, collection of local retail and service businesses, and its many Bed and Breakfasts, inns and restaurants. For many visitors, Bath is currently their gateway to other areas rather than their destination. The Maine Maritime Museum is the one year-round regional destination. The Bath Heritage Days is a perennial success. These existing resources and new ones to be created need to be well coordinated and promoted.

Key steps to enhance Bath as a year-round and seasonal destination include:

- Improved ‘Gateway’ image; Improved gateways assert Bath’s regional role but also signal that a vibrant community also exists.
- Enhanced restaurant, lodging and tourism package offerings (4);
- Diversified retail and service sectors (4);
- More ‘after hours’ activities, with coordinated entertainment and shopping offerings (5);

*“Emphasize what makes each city special through its history, geography, cultural, economic, and social profile. Don’t worry about tourists, they’ll come in numbers if you create something uniquely yours.”*  
 THE WATERFRONT CENTER

- Increased residential uses in downtown core (4);
- Improved small boating/fishing hub for Kennebec River/Merrymeeting Bay (4); and
- Enhancing Cultural and Heritage-based businesses and attractions, anchored by a Heritage Campus centered around the library and park (4).

### Improved Gateway Image

The image a new visitor gets when approaching Bath on Route 1 heading east is not the ‘real Bath’. It is too easy to choose to bypass Bath because of these first impressions. The strip development and roadway design in the west end of the city relate poorly to the remainder of the City. The City is pursuing ideas to reclaim this corridor to support the community rather than solely dividing it.

Accomplishing this will be difficult, requiring a complex balance between accommodating through-traffic but providing more accessibility within Bath. Much needs to be done to soften the effect of the traffic barriers and chain link fencing along this segment. An intensive gateway landscaping program can signal to motorists that they are entering an urban environment. Visual cues are missing that provide these signals to slow down from the highway speeds of 55 mph to 35 mph. West of downtown, one option is to introduce at-grade intersections controlled by intersections at strategic locations. This will allow vehicles and pedestrians access to shopping, restaurants and newly developing facilities in the northwest quadrant of the City. These include the industrial park, ball fields and the relocated YMCA.

### Coordinated ‘18 Hours’ Activities

Bath lacks an after hours vitality. This is due in part to the lack of consistent night time activities/entertainment and the hours of operation of downtown shops and stores. Important to increase the amount of activity is to attract compatible evening activities to the downtown. The Chocolate Church hosts many performances throughout the year. Shop and restaurant hours and packages should be developed as appropriate in conjunction with the marketing plan (described later). Several new businesses/uses that would increase evening vitality were mentioned during the visioning process. These include a movie theater, hotel, more residences downtown (upper story apartments), book store and children’s clothing store.

## **2. ENHANCED ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY**

Reversing the image of Bath as difficult to get into, out of and to circulate within is essential to bringing residents and visitors to the downtown. Better and earlier information on Route 1 must be provided to motorists as to what Bath offers. A “you can get there from here” initiative will include better signage on Route 1 and in the downtown.

Once in the downtown, better pedestrian connections are needed from parking areas to businesses and to the waterfront. This includes both physical and visual connections to the waterfront. Pathways under the Route 1 viaduct must be improved for better connections between the north and south ends. Continuity of sidewalk facilities and quality of the streetscape are critical.

Key components of the improved access and connectivity plan include:

- A “Walkable City” initiative with major streetscape improvements and improved visual connectivity to and along waterfront and to and from historic district and downtown;
- Improved downtown circulation by improving difficult intersections for motorists and pedestrians and creating new links;
- Vehicle wayfinding system;
- Pedestrian wayfinding system to provide information on downtown and city-wide attractions and businesses; and
- Parking reorganization and management plan;
- Enhanced bus routes and new trolley circulator service;
- Improved accessibility to the downtown via Route 1 through increased access points;
- Expanded visitor information.

#### “Walkable City” Initiative

A city-wide “Walkable City” initiative should be begun that will combine streetscape and program improvements. The initiative should begin with the downtown as a priority but extend (as opportunities) arise to the entire city. Bath has the distinct advantage of being a very compact community in size. Several factors detract from this advantage. The elevated Route 1 viaduct creates a physical, visual and psychological barrier between the north and south ends. In the short term, its effects need to be “softened” through design improvements including landscaping, traffic engineering and design, sidewalks and crosswalks.

Another key initiative is a waterfront pathway system. Currently, there is fragmented access to the riverfront. Primary access is in the town landing and park. Current zoning within the Waterfront Zoning district calls for public waterfront access with development. This provision should be continued in any upcoming rezoning effort. A recommendation described more fully below, is the extension of Commercial Street to Washington Street. This extension will have provide important pedestrian connectivity in addition to the vehicle benefits.

Another important element for this initiative is the incremental implementation of a historic marker/self guided tour program. The markers should link together the developing waterfront/Washington Street pathway system and the historic districts. This system should also coordinate closely with the pedestrian wayfinding system.

#### Improved Downtown Circulation

Downtown circulation improvements center on making intersections operate more efficiently and creating efficient pedestrian linkages downtown. Important changes involve reorganizing Vine Street to greatly improve its aesthetics and possibly change it to a one way street from Front Street to Water Street. This improves the important pedestrian crossing from the BIW and proposed Intermodal Gateway Facility.

The Centre Street/Washington Street intersection is recommended to have traffic lanes reassigned to improve flow. The Washington Street/Leeman’s Highway intersection should be redesigned to minimize pedestrian crossing distances and improve aesthetics while providing adequate capacity for traffic flow. This can be accomplished by combining traffic movements within lanes, mainly through travel and right turn lanes. This provides the opportunity for an enhanced gateway treatment at the corner near the BIW Credit Union. Figure 4. \_\_ identifies these improvements in vicinity of Leeman’s Highway.

Important pedestrian circulation improvements include:

- reorganize the Washington Street intersections with the Leeman’s Highway;
- create an additional connection from the Water Street area to Front Street opposite Arch Street (currently a one story ‘inset’ occupies this space);
- add sidewalk segments along Arch and Lambard Streets;
- reorganize curb cuts along Front Street (Fleet Bank/City Hall, Rite Aid), Vine Street and Centre Street;
- extend Commercial Street to Washington Street past the BIW; and,
- bringing sidewalks and curb ramps into ADA compliance.

### Wayfinding Systems

*Bath should undertake a Wayfinding System Feasibility and Design Study.* Informative and attractive wayfinding systems are essential to making Bath more legible to visitors. Integrated but distinct systems should be provided for both vehicles and pedestrians. Systems need to be scaled to their specific attributes, most notably that vehicles are traveling at higher speeds and reduced visibility. In developing a Bath-oriented wayfinding system, the recommendations from the “Maine’s MidCoast” report (*New Directions for Maine’s MidCoast*, Pennisi & Co. and John Spritz, 1998) should be incorporated as appropriate. These recommendations call for an improved regional wayfinding and tourist information system. Many benefits can be derived from coordinating this proposed regional program for tourist information with Bath’s local system. Promoting the region and Bath are not two mutually exclusive goals, but rather, can be mutually reinforcing.

#### *Vehicle Wayfinding System*

Figure 4.2 shows preliminary prototype for a vehicle wayfinding system. These systems’ important characteristics are their distinctiveness from regulatory or highway type signage, legibility and discipline in presenting only a few key pieces of information to the motorist. The system should identify preferred routings once off the highway to destinations within Bath, working in tandem with highway signage. From the exits, redundant signs should guide motorists to their destination.

The importance of this system is the potential to make the street network more understandable to those unfamiliar with Bath’s circulation system as they make their way to key destinations. In conjunction with highway signs, the wayfinding system can also serve to diffuse traffic entering and exiting Bath, making traffic movements more efficient. For instance, for motorists interested in the Heritage District’s offerings, highway signage might route vehicles to the High Street exit then to Winter Street. An alternative may be to Centre Street from High Street, then to Washington Street to expose the visitor more to the retail/commercial district. Another key function of a vehicle wayfinding system is to direct motorists to parking areas.

#### *Pedestrian Wayfinding System*

Similar to motorist-oriented signs, pedestrian signs need to be specifically developed with the audience and their characteristics in mind. Figure 4.3 shows a preliminary prototype for a pedestrian wayfinding system sign. Key aspects of this system are the scale, design and message.

These signs are of a much smaller scale and should direct pedestrians from parking areas to retail shops, parks and other attractions.

### Accessibility to Downtown

It is essential to change the perception of many visitors that “you can’t get there from here”. And, once in Bath, it can be frustrating to find your way out. Within the downtown, the ‘High Street’ and ‘Historic Bath’ exits serve traffic destined for downtown. With the sign information provided, it is easy to miss these exits entirely if you are in the wrong lane or unfamiliar with what Bath has to offer. Improved highway sign information should provide information about land assignments.

### *Highway Signage*

New highway signs are recommended to be developed and in place with the opening of the new Sagadahoc Bridge. Northbound on Route 1, a sign well in advance of the Western Avenue/Congress Street extension should outline the three current exit options for motorists. The sign should simply state key destinations, the appropriate exit to take for each and lane assignments. The sign should announce lane assignments accordingly. The signs proposed by the Maine Department of Transportation for the Sagadahoc Bridge should be re-thought. As proposed, they do not to provide a hierarchy of information needed by motorists to make a timely and informed decision.

Critical for this to work successfully is close integration with the development of the local vehicle wayfinding system. After guiding motorists to an exit, an appropriate level of feedback and guidance is needed to get motorists to their destination. The replacement of these signs should also coordinated with the recommended changes to the regional highway/tourist information system for Route 1.

### *Replacement of the Leeman’s Highway Viaduct*

The elevated viaduct is reaching the end of its design life. There are tentative plans that a replacement facility will be in place by 2010. There is an immediate need for formal planning to determine the best solution that best balances local and regional mobility needs. Potential options include replacement with 1) an elevated or depressed facility or 2) replacement with an at-grade/ground level roadway. A careful analysis will need to be conducted to see what type of facility can best meet multiple competing interests. It is also hopeful that in-fill and redevelopment will occur prior to the opening of a new facility. It is essential to help guide (and possibly spur) adjacent development which may precede the replacement facility.

Design principles for the replacement of the viaduct should include:

- Provide improved direct access to and egress from the downtown;
- reduce the physical, visual and psychological barrier effects of a new facility;
- provide for more attractive and safe pedestrian connections along and across it;
- provide safe and efficient north-south vehicle operations within Bath; and,
- provide efficient through-traffic movements on Route 1.

A critical decision will surround the railroad crossing: whether a grade-separated crossing will be required or an at-grade crossing of the railroad tracks will be allowed. The presence of the tracks and the height of the new Sagadahoc Bridge introduce planning and design constraints for the new facility.

#### Expanded Visitor Orientation and Information

*Establish a visitor information center for “One stop shopping” to provide a coordinated approach to and location for disseminating information about shopping, lodging, restaurants, transportation options and cultural and historic resources in Bath of interest to visitors.* This information should be available for expanded hours during the summer and fall including evening and weekends. A strategic location is required that has sufficient parking and can perform as a ‘gateway’ to Bath, providing a positive and welcoming image of Bath to visitors. The Chamber of Commerce will need to take the lead with collaboration from other groups such as the Bath Business Association, Sagadahoc Preservation and the Maine Maritime Museum. The Wayfinding System described above is a key element of this improved information base for visitors once in Bath.

One short-term option for establishing a Visitors Center would be the Winter Street Church parish hall. It has ample parking, attractive space and a site on Washington Street facing the park and library. It is an historic structure located in a gateway area to the historic district. It also sits adjacent to the business district, just a short walk away. Long term options for a visitors center include the proposed Intermodal Center at the base of the Carleton Bridge. Other potential sites include the waterfront in conjunction with any structure required for ticketing and other services associated with the ferry terminal at the town landing/waterfront park. This function should be coordinated/integrated with the Chamber of Commerce’s role in visitor information.

#### Enhanced Bus System

A separate study is making recommendations regarding the transit system. Key elements of this plan include increased promotion and marketing of the system to appeal to downtown workers and shoppers and revised routes to make them more efficient between key destinations. The bus system adds to the critical mass of services provided by the City. It makes the City more attractive to prospective retirees, provides transportation to youth, reduces demand for parking for workers and shoppers, and provides important access to shops, services and restaurants for Bath’s residents.

A circulator shuttle would add more frequent connections between the most important downtown locations. Important locations to connect include the proposed intermodal center, Maine Maritime Museum, town landing/waterfront park/ferry landing, downtown business district, historic district, and heritage center.

A critical element to this planned circulator shuttle is the need for longer term parking than is currently provided in Bath. It is desired that a visitor would leave their car in one spot and be able to circulate around the downtown and between key points on foot or via the shuttle. Currently, two hour parking is the longest parking accommodated except for the permit parking areas. It is also desired to attract visitors using inter-city bus, motor coach and eventually via fast ferry and passenger rail. The circulator shuttle will provide an important local layer of mobility to the critical mass of transportation options for visitors and residents. It is important to consider the timing for launching of this service. It should be started only when the other



'pieces to the puzzle' are in place (a marketing plan identifying its market, long term parking, e.g.) to ensure the most opportunity for success.

### **3. ENHANCED GATEWAYS AND PUBLIC REALM**

Gateways are prominent locations that pronounce the character and image of a City. Improving Bath's image from Route 1 and entrances to the downtown is one of the highest priorities. One key to capturing traffic from Route 1 is creating positive impressions for motorists from the east and west approaches to the City on Leeman's Highway and the new Bath-Woolwich bridge. This image is formed before entering the downtown.

As stated previously, the public realm is the public and semi-public spaces experienced along the street. Downtown streets are our "public living rooms" and require careful attention detail in pedestrian amenities, building design, scale and orientation, and the location and design of parking lots.

- a) Highlights for coordinated Gateways to the City include:
- Revised highway signage to provide earlier and more meaningful information (2);
  - Landscaping and screening to soften and enhance the image from the highway; and
  - Quality in-fill development and a building facade program to create an organized, attractive appearance; and,
  - Development of an Intermodal Gateway Facility.

#### Landscaping and Screening

Additional landscaping should be provided at strategic 'gateway' locations to present an improved image to visitors. This includes masses of vegetation, trees and signs welcoming visitors to Bath. The approaches to downtown should have additional landscaping including Vine Street (both sides of viaduct) and Centre Street/High Street. A redesign concept for the area centered on Vine Street is shown in Figure 4.4.

The westerly approach to the downtown on northbound Route 1 is especially problematic. In conjunction with or coincident with the planning for the replacement of the viaduct, short term plans should be developed for the reconfiguration/alteration of the Route 1 corridor west of the High Street off ramp/on ramp. New development is being proposed that may require the creation of at-grade intersections allowing cross-traffic. An intensive landscaping program is required to re-scale the entrance to the City. The Route 1 Corridor Planning should specifically address the aesthetics and function of the median barrier with cyclone fencing (as noted elsewhere).

#### Intermodal Transportation Facility

Several near term initiatives provide the opportunity to bring several intermodal transportation functions under one roof. The State of Maine has plans to reintroduce passenger rail and ferry systems in the next few years. Bath is identified as a hub in this system. Peak demands for the parking requirements will likely be on the weekends. Currently, inter-city buses stop outside the downtown area and lack good local connections.

BIW is exploring the options for creating substantial new office space to the north end of its yard. There is likely be significant parking requirements for this office space. Peak parking demand will be during the weekdays. One option is to leverage the complementary peak parking requirements of these uses and develop a joint use Intermodal Gateway Facility. This facility would satisfy a portion of the parking demand of the BIW office space, set aside dedicated weekday parking space for rail and ferry users, provide space for inter-city and local bus connections/operations and provide overflow parking for rail/ferry users and shoppers on weekends when BIW parking demand is low. *Planning for how such a facility could integrate with BIW's office needs should be initiated soon.*

b) Needed public realm improvements include:

- Quality in-fill development to repair the urban fabric;
- Minimizing the visual impact of parking areas and increased landscaping within parking lots; and,
- Building facade program;
- Major streetscape improvements in several areas including sidewalks, landscaping, lighting and access management;
- Continue and Augment Public Art and Beautification Projects;
- Adopt Revised Zoning and Development Guidelines.

#### Strategic In-fill Development

Quality in-fill and redevelopment should be encouraged for high priority sites within the downtown. These sites would fill in important gaps in the downtown fabric, particularly for sites visible from Route 1. In-fill that occurs should build upon the strength of the retained core of historic retail and office buildings downtown. They should contribute to the strong historical context of Bath including its role as a regional retail and service center, influenced by its ship-building and maritime traditions -- future, present and past. This means adherence to a set of adopted design guidelines. Important areas for in-fill and redevelopment include Centre Street, Vine Street, portions of Front Street and Commercial Street.

Buildings should be appropriately scaled, located close to the sidewalk (zero or little setback) with parking to the rear or side. Building materials and styles should be compatible with the historical style evident in downtown building materials. Buildings should also be multi-storied with pedestrian-oriented uses on first floors.

#### Mitigate Visual Impact of Parking

Mitigate the visual impact of parking through:

- landscaping – current buffering of many parking lots which front streets is non-existent or of poor quality;
- Reduced curb cuts -- large curb cuts on Centre Street, Vine Street and Front Street degrade pedestrian facilities and the aesthetics of the streetscape;
- In-fill development of key of targeted commercial parking lots.

*Develop a micro-loan/grant program for landscaping improvements developed by a registered landscape design professional. Upgrade the design/aesthetics of City-owned parking areas on Water Street through*

*landscaping/buffering of parking lots in conjunction with streetscape improvements.* This will set a positive tone for improvements by owners of private lots.

Landscaping is currently required in parking lots of 50 spaces or more. It is also not required that parking be located to the rear or side of buildings. *Strengthen landscaping requirements and location standards for all parking lots, based on size.*

### Building Facade Program

Building facades on several key blocks detract from the streetscape. These include: Water Street and Commercial Streets (back sides of Front Street buildings) and along each side of Leeman's Highway. Numerous recent buildings also use non-traditional styles of siding materials. Design guidelines for new or recycled development and technical assistance/micro-loan programs can help restore existing building sidings (described elsewhere).

### Public Art and Beautification Projects

The Bath Cultural Assessment Project is revealing a wealth of artistic and traditional crafts such as boat building. More fully tapping this creative wealth of local talent can have a profound economic and cultural impact within Bath and the larger area. A logical extension of Cultural Assessment is to develop and market a Public Art program. This would range from outdoor display of significant pieces of art to display of art in restaurants, public buildings and other accessible locations. This currently happens and is recommended to be integrated with Heritage/Cultural marketing and promotion programs for the City.

Within recommendations for streetscape improvements there is room to incorporate significant pieces of public art. These include the Vine Street reconstruction project and the Commercial Street 'Parade'. On Vine Street, the intersection of Route 1 and Washington Street is recommended to be reconfigured to eliminate the free right turn lane from Vine Street to Washington Street. This reconfiguration will create ample room for a gateway treatment, possibly including piece of public art and formal 'pocket park' in conjunction with the credit union parcel. This is a significant gateway to the historic/heritage district.

For Commercial Street, it is recommended that a street mural or series of street murals be created in paint for the year 2000 Bath Heritage Days festival. The 'winning' mural(s), selected through voting during the festival, could then be embedded in the pavement using permanent materials.

A successful existing program begun last Spring (1998) was the hanging flower basket program, a public-private venture. This program should continue and be expanded to include Centre Street and Commercial Street as improvements are made. This program is a highly visible and cost-effective method to add visual interest and demonstrate the vitality of the downtown. A second successful program is the display of local arts and crafts in vacant storefronts. This turns a generally definite negative (vacant storefront windows) to productive use.

Other public art and beautification measures that should be considered include:

- Adopt a “1% for Art” program for public and private development using the skills and talents of the cultural and artistic resources in the region to design and construct such projects;
- public art at the proposed Intermodal Facility.

### Design Guidelines

Design guidelines are intended to improve the visual quality for new development and redevelopment that occurs. Ideally they are flexible, not prescriptive. However, in such a small and compact downtown and waterfront area, such guidelines can dramatically change the future ambiance and continuity of central Bath.

Design review clearly identifies for proposed development the community expectations in terms of quality of design. Items that are generally included in design review include the types of materials allowed, building architecture (building size and massing, roof pitch, window placement and style), lighting, landscaping, signs and parking. A clear set of guidelines is produced which establish criteria for acceptance.

The guidelines should not promote rigid uniformity of design but should provide broad parameters that design should be compatible. It is essential that they reflect a common understanding within a community about what attributes of development matter. The guidelines document should contain numerous graphics to illustrate design considerations, often including “Do’s and Don’ts”. Developers have clearer understanding of the wishes of the town. It is critical that the design review guidelines adopted are related to appropriate concerns for public health, safety and welfare. Measures of this type have been widely upheld by courts when developed with clear stated purposes.

Adopted guidelines should achieve the following:

- Architectural compatibility;
- Human-scaled design;
- Integration of uses within and between sites;
- Encourage pedestrian activity;
- Buildings related to and oriented to the street.

Different options exist for implementing design guidelines. There are varying degrees of the mandatory versus voluntary nature of the guidelines themselves. Regarding the process, a separate Design Review Board can be established or design review can be incorporated within an existing development review process. Each of these options has implications for developers and the administrative costs for the City. The pros and cons for each option is provided below

*Option 1: Make design review part of the site plan review process.* The Planning Board is then responsible for implementation. Pros: Gives the Town more upfront and consistent control over the end result of development. This requires less administrative burdens on the town by weaving into an existing process. Cons: One part of entire process of design review. Planning Board can be less focused on aesthetics than other aspects of the project. Requirements are generally less stringent than if a separate process.

*Option 2: Establish a stand-alone design review ordinance overseen by a separate board.* The standards can apply to designated areas within the town by establishing special districts or overlay zones. The ordinance usually governs all aspects of the design of new construction and building alterations. They can be more stringent than guidelines (see above). Standards are often used in historic districts to ensure alterations to historic structures. Pros: Permits the Town strong control over the aesthetics and design of developments. Review Board members can be selected for their commitment to design and aesthetic considerations. Cons: New regulatory burden for developer and administrative burden for town. Can be perceived as more ‘unfriendly’ to business than if part of site plan review.

*It is recommended that a Design Guidelines Committee be appointed with broad representation from downtown property owners, businesses, Bath residents and representatives from historic preservation groups in Bath.* The Committee would be charged with developing design guidelines appropriate for Bath’s unique situation including political acceptability and administrative capacity. A key role for the committee would be to ‘make the case’ with key constituencies that design guidelines are important to ensure quality design downtown. Conducting such reviews in a “collaborative” spirit rather than a prescriptive manner can expedite the process and yield better results.

A first task for the Committee would be to develop a consensus on the elements that the design guidelines would cover. This is achieved by a careful examination of the existing downtown, noting positives and negatives, by the Committee and public. This will provide a list of the characteristics felt most important to govern. As part of the inventory these items should be noted for each block:

- Similarity in building height;
- Primary lot width;
- Setback pattern;
- Shape and space of openings;
- Common horizontal elements of buildings;
- Building materials used;
- Consistency of roof lines;
- Common overhang device; and,
- Number of buildings with multiple shop fronts. (*Developing Design Guidelines*, California Main Street Program, 1988)

For administration of the design guidelines, *it is recommended that the guidelines become a part of the site plan review process*, at least initially. This will provide a better opportunity to gauge their effectiveness and acceptance, creating fewer administrative burdens for the parties involved. *It is also recommended that a formal pre-application conference be required prior to submission of the site plan review application.* This will provide the City and developers an earlier opportunity to discuss development plans. This can reduce future misunderstandings and reduce costly redesign of projects later in the process to better comply with the guidelines. An advisory panel made up of design professionals and representatives of the historic preservation community would be an invaluable addition to the process as well. The panel would offer suggestions for improvements during the pre-application and site plan review phases.

#### 4. SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In its simplest terms, sustainable development is providing for present needs without compromising the future. In terms of an economic development strategy for the downtown, it means that not all development is equal. Some proposed uses may be incompatible or out of scale for the downtown or waterfront. Adherence to the development themes/principles and proposed design guideline concepts is key. The Comprehensive Plan stresses smaller scale retail and service operations as desirable for the downtown.

The diversification of Bath's economy should build upon the business, historical and cultural assets currently in the community. This will increase the likelihood of success. Sustainable economic growth in Bath will mean that development occurs in a planned fashion with Bath's infrastructure able to support it. Emphasis should be placed on development activities appealing to the year-round population but being able to respond to an increase in activity during peak tourist periods.

Key elements to spur Sustainable Economic Development area include:

- Retain and grow existing businesses;
- Diversify downtown offerings through new business attraction;
- Coordinate with and support regional economic development efforts;
- A Heritage & Cultural-based diversification of downtown businesses;
- Expansion of lodging opportunities, including an inn and meeting space;
- Increased residential uses in the core downtown through encouragement of the retirement community and apartments in upper stories of mixed use buildings;
- Promotion and expansion of a year-round farmers' market;
- Emphasis on Eco-tourism opportunities including fishing and birding;
- Coordinated downtown business and activity marketing and management;
- Embrace opportunities for fast coastal ferry and renewed passenger rail; and,
- Identify and expand on emerging/existing economic clusters.

##### Retain and Grow Existing Businesses

A basic priority for Bath's economy should be a commitment to stabilizing, retaining and growing existing businesses in downtown Bath. The Bath Comprehensive Plan states that downtown Bath should emphasize a smaller scale, highly diversified mixture of retail and service businesses. This is the current make-up of the downtown. It is generally understood that it is much easier to retain and expand existing businesses than to attract new businesses. Existing businesses have already exhibited a level of commitment to the downtown by locating there. Key initiatives include leadership by the City of Bath, the Bath Business Association, the Chamber of Commerce and the MidCoast Council for Business Development in the areas of marketing and promotion, technical assistance regarding joint promotion/advertising, marketing and financing, and building improvements including facades.

##### Diversify Downtown Offerings through New Business Attraction

This Action Plan recommends several strategies to further diversify and stabilize Bath's economy. A first step, in concert with other measures, should be the conduct of a marketing

study for the downtown. This is discussed further in the Public-Private Partnerships section. Following the conduct of the downtown marketing plan, a coordinated program should be instituted to attract the identified businesses. Businesses identified by the public at meetings as being desirable include a movie theater, book store, children's clothing store, additional restaurants and a hotel/small conference center.

### Heritage and Cultural-Based Economic Diversification

Bath and the greater Bath region have a rich and diversified history waiting to be told to a broader audience. This history is closely linked to the natural and cultural evolution of the Kennebec River and Sagadahoc County. The many layers of history can be interpreted for visitors and Bath area residents alike.

Bath currently serves as a gateway for tourists to the Mid-coast region but is largely by-passed as a destination by tourists. A 1997 survey estimated that 20% of visitors' "particular interests" when coming to Maine were for Historic Tourism, 16% for Eco-Tourism and 15% for Cultural Tourism. Twenty-four percent of tourists surveyed visited the Mid Coast area defined as Brunswick to north of Searsport. When asked what travelers were looking for the responses were:

1. "First and foremost, an exciting, must see destination;
2. then, a place that is good for the whole family, including children;
3. also, a place that is popular, but still offers a unique vacation experience".

(*Maine's 1996 Travel Year Survey*, Longwoods International, 1998). Bath is well suited to capture a much larger portion of the traveling market.

While there is currently not one "must see" destination, there are opportunities to package Bath as a whole to more closely match these criteria. The closest thing to a "must see" would be the operations at the Bath Iron Works. Due to the nature of the work there, there is limited opportunity for up close observation except during the launching of vessels. *In concert with a parking structure or other structure near the north end of the yard, it is recommended that a viewing platform be constructed to allow interpretive signs and displays to see how ships are built at the BIW.* Opportunities for larger scale permanent displays should be explored, including the new technology of shipbuilding and design. A model for this type of center/display would be the visitors center for the Maine Yankee Power Plant.

Currently, the Maine Maritime Museum is the one individual attraction in Bath of regional and statewide draw. The architectural, historic and cultural resources (in concert with the retail and service sectors) need to be packaged to create a critical mass of attractions. The visit of the tall ship during the Fall of 1998 demonstrated the interest in hands-on, interactive maritime history. *A greatly expanded cultural heritage and historic/discovery project is proposed as a Millennium Project for the City as a feature of the year 2000 Heritage Days and beyond.* The opening of the Sagadahoc Bridge and the excitement surrounding the year 2000 should act as galvanizing events.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation touts five principles to adhere to in developing a Heritage Tourism program.

1. Focus on authenticity and quality.
2. Preserve and protect resources.
3. Make sites 'come alive'.
4. Find the fit – between your community and tourism.
5. Collaborate

*Getting Started in Heritage Tourism, 1993.*

Focal points for the performing arts, visual arts and heritage/history within the community are essential. The Chocolate Church successfully serves this purpose for the performing and visual arts. Several galleries and displays also serve the visual arts. The Maine Maritime Museum preserves and promotes Maine's maritime heritage. The newly enlarged Patten Free Library currently serves a heritage/history/genealogy function along with its primary library function. *It is recommended that a more formal, dedicated space be developed as a Heritage Center.* The center would serve as an educational resource and be the initial point of contact or stepping stone for exploration of Bath's and the surrounding areas history and culture. The Center should be interactive in nature rather than static. The Winter Street Church is a potential location for this use. It has been mentioned previously as a 'starter' location as a visitor information center and could provide for this dual use at least initially. It is in an ideal location at the gateway to the historic district and adjacent to the Patten Free Library and business district.

Other recommendations include the following items.

- Create reciprocal information kiosks in downtown Bath and the Maine Maritime Museum touting each other's attractions. Many tourists downtown or at the Maine Maritime Museum should be informed about area attractions and can benefit from each other. The downtown kiosk for the MMA could also contain a retail component as an extension of its museum store.
- Apply for funding to establish an interpretive kiosk or larger display in Bath for the *Kennebec Chaudiere International Corridor* heritage trail. Given the higher number of coastal tourists, this kiosk/display can raise awareness of the project and capture additional visitors. This kiosk/display should be located at the Heritage Center.

Benefits of the Heritage Project will be:

- civic pride and an increased awareness of the settlement and development of the region for over a thousand years;
- a continuing experiential learning resource for Bath's schools and public;
- add to the critical mass of activities and regional attractions in Bath necessary to spur increased tourist traffic to support lodging, restaurant, and retail businesses;
- to serve as an organizing project to follow-up the Bath Cultural Assessment; and,
- supports efforts to attract retirees to Bath by offering high quality cultural and educational offerings and volunteer opportunities.

#### Coordinate with and Support Regional Economic Development Efforts

The MCBDD is spearheading efforts for creating a regional identity for the Bath-Brunswick-Topsham area. *Closely coordinate and support the "Maine's MidCoast" and "The Culture of the Coast" regional identity development, tourism promotion and business attraction/retention efforts.* The Brunswick-Topsham area is also marketing itself as a cultural hub. *Avoid duplication of effort or conflicting messages.*

#### Increase and Diversify Lodging Opportunities

Numerous bed and breakfasts have sprung up on the periphery of the downtown, stabilizing many larger residences in the historic district. These provide the only lodging opportunities near the downtown. The Holiday Inn on Route 1 is located over a mile away and has consistently high occupancy rates. *The City should work to attract a mid-sized hotel with accompanying meeting space to offer expanded lodging and meeting opportunities for visitors.* The expansion of office space by the BIW



may also present greater needs for lodging space. There are several desirable locations for a hotel/meeting space facility downtown. It is important that the siting, design and scale of a hotel complex be compatible and reinforce the goal of attracting high quality development into the downtown.

#### Increased Residential Uses Downtown

A critical mass of residents, shoppers, visitors and employees is critical for the vitality of a downtown. Increasing the number of residents downtown will increase its 24-hour activity level. Two strategies to do this include upper floor apartments and retirement/independent living facilities.

A main development strategy for downtown Bath is mixed use development within the same building or development. This will generally take the form of retail uses on the ground levels and other uses above. *Encourage apartments in addition to office space as an attractive upper story use. Discourage single-story, single use development.* Upper floor apartments above combined with a mix of retail and office can add to the occupancy stability of buildings and adds to the 24-hour vitality downtown. A slow period in demand for office or retail space can be offset by demand for residences, keeping cash flow for a property owner. Apartments and retail/office space have different peak parking periods (apartments in the evening when stores and offices are closed) so joint use of parking is possible, lessening overall parking requirements and costs for development.

The retirement industry is a growing industry in Maine. Important marketing themes that have been identified by a State task force align favorably for Bath: 1) Quality of Life – natural environment, bus service, ; 2) Livability – safety and affordable cost of living; and 3) Opportunities for Involvement – lifelong learning, volunteer opportunities and civic activities (“A Golden Opportunity: How Maine Can Enhance the Retirement Industry”, Maine State Planning Office, 1997).

An influx of retirees could provide an additional resident base to support downtown businesses and cultural activities, both as attendees and volunteers. Important considerations for Bath to enhance its attractiveness to retirees include the availability of health care (Mid-Coast Hospital is relocating nearby in the Cooks Corner area) and transportation systems (a convenient and safe pedestrian network and transit service). *It is recommended that current business attraction and marketing materials be reviewed for their appeal to attracting retirees and promoting Bath to developers of independent living facilities.* The physical planning aspect of this plan identifies the Coal Pocket as a potential site for multi-unit residential development. An independent living facility may be suited to this site given the generally lower parking requirements and traffic generation characteristics of this type of use.

#### Develop a Permanent, Expanded Farmers’ Market

Farmers’ Markets are having a resurgence nationwide. They have been successful at bringing needed vitality to downtowns and at supporting local agriculture. The Farmers’ Market has been very successful in its current configuration at the Waterfront Park on Thursdays and Saturdays. *It is recommended that the market be expanded with the designation of a year-round site and development of a market facility.*

#### Emphasis on Eco-tourism Opportunities

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### **Bath Waterfront and Downtown Action Plan**

*Final Report*

The Kennebec River provides vast opportunities for expanded eco-tourism business activities. Fishing and birding, interpretive environmental tours, wetlands trails and diversified river tours can originate at the downtown waterfront and connect to nearby resources such as Merrymeeting Bay, Popham Beach and the Phippsburg and the Georgetown peninsulas.

Expand support for maritime-related activities:

- Conduct a Watersheet Management Study in concert with MDOT plans for a fast ferry landing at the town landing to ensure dock and mooring facilities are adequate for near and long term needs; and,
- Enhance waterfront support facilities such as telephones, improved information at the waterfront, and shower and laundry facilities.

#### Coordinated Downtown Marketing, Management and Leadership

The strength of the downtown is its collection of small independently owned and operated businesses. This can also be its greatest weakness. A coordinated approach to downtown business marketing is required to retain and attract shoppers and visitors. Knowing current customers and having realistic expectations for new customers is essential. Marketing and promotional activities must be targeted to specific groups for specific outcomes. Efforts must be based on a firm understanding of downtown's assets and weaknesses. Assets become the focus of a 'positioning statement', the basis for promotional efforts; identified weaknesses become the focus of prioritized improvement efforts. This does not mean that the downtown tries to compete head-to-head with regional shopping malls and super stores but identifies its niche, and positions and markets itself aggressively. Important parts of this integrated marketing plan are actively developing promotional activities for the downtown including coordinated advertising for retail and service businesses and holiday and special event coordination.

*It is recommended that a comprehensive marketing study be done for the downtown.* Initial steps such as data collection of basic information and surveys could be performed by university students and interns as part of a class project to reduce costs. Analysis and marketing strategy development would be done by a consultant. The marketing study will serve as the basis for a business attraction/retention program and the downtown marketing/advertising program.

#### Identify and Expand on Emerging/Existing Economic Clusters

Economic clusters are concentrations of expertise or resources that exist in an area. These can form the basis for economic growth in an area by building on them. Potential clusters are contained in the development themes. These include the maritime/cultural/heritage areas. This potential cluster is being revealed partly through the Cultural Inventory.

Another potential cluster to explore is the potential for additional spin-off in the changing technologies that BIW will be employing and developing in its new ship design contracts. High technology will be the key to their continued competitiveness. Potential spin-off could occur in the educational sector (pure research and training), product development and consulting services. Important to this is ensuring that investment is made in technology infrastructure in Bath (Internet access, advanced telecommunications).

## **5. PUBLIC/PRIVATE INVESTMENT INCENTIVES AND PARTNERSHIPS**

The success of this Plan hinges on the strength of the partnerships forged during its implementation. It is critical that these partnerships form soon after adoption of the Action Plan. Many actions will be best implemented by either the public sector or the private sector. Most will rely heavily on close coordination, improved communication between groups and joint action. Participation in efforts will be required by downtown property owners, business owners, real estate agents, lenders, local officials and Bath residents.

Highlights of the investment incentives and partnerships include:

- Creation of a Heritage Consortium;
- Promotion of an enhanced development context with phased infrastructure improvements;
- Enhanced waterfront through public realm improvements and private investment;
- Landowner investments in improved landscaping, signage and facade improvements with public sector incentives;
- Embrace of Design Guidelines to ensure quality development downtown (3); and,
- Creation and implementation of a parking management plan for the downtown.

#### Establish a 'Heritage/Cultural Consortium'

This Heritage Discovery Project will bring together participants within a Heritage/Cultural Consortium to organize the effort and rally support. The project will bring together businesses, arts and cultural organizations, artists, craftspeople, city government, the schools and the retirement community.

*"Arts and Heritage travelers stay longer than other travelers, spend an average of \$62/day more, travel in larger parties and are more likely to travel in the off-season. A dollar invested in cultural heritage can return more than \$11 in local impact."*  
MAINE PRESERVATION, WINTER 1998.

The year 2000 Bath Heritage days would be an ideal official 'kick off' for this continuing project, developing a specific Millennium Project. It is not a project to replace or overshadow the Heritage Days celebration, but is envisioned as an ongoing project to bring sustained energy to promoting Bath's heritage and cultural resources. It will build on the momentum and work for the Bath Cultural Assessment. Projects undertaken should be initiated with year-round residents as the primary audience but developed with the potential to attract visitors and tourists.

A major focus of the consortium's work should be on integrating Bath and regional heritage/cultural topics into the curriculum. This can be an adjunct to the successful 'Kids as Planners' program. Equally important is the effort to engage the general citizenry in the project. The consortiums work can provide an excellent platform for increasing civic pride in Bath.

Key initial steps in this process include:

- Obtain 'buy in' from local organizations and agencies to establish the Cultural/Heritage Consortium;
- Obtain political and financial support for the effort from the City of Bath;
- Obtain financial support from local, state and federal resources and businesses;
- Define and set up the proper organizational structure; and,

- Define and implement a specific Millennium Project for the year 2000 Heritage Days.

### Create and Implement a Parking Management Plan

As this study process is winding down, a Downtown Traffic and Parking Study is getting underway. This study will more comprehensively assess the traffic and parking study than can be done in a master planning context. Developing a parking management plan can be one of the most sensitive issues in a downtown. Getting lots of early and ongoing input from the study planning phase through implementation is the key ingredient for success

The physical components of the parking management plan were mentioned above. Essential elements for the parking plan are continuing 'buy-in' to its implementation. Options for organizational structure include continuing the existing Parking Committee or establishing a Parking Authority. Organizational structures and their benefits will be more fully addressed in the Traffic and Parking Study currently be conducted.

Principles for establishing the Parking Plan:

- Provide areas for longer term parking for visitors greater than 2 hours;
- Discourage employees from using valuable on-street parking near storefronts;
- Transition reduced use of commercial parking lots north of Route 1 for BIW employee parking (potentially to structured parking);
- Maximize on-street parking along Commercial Street (more perpendicular parking and Washington Street (consider lifting parking restrictions along 'the shed' on South Washington Street);
- Improve the physical appearance of parking lots within the downtown; and,
- Add parking/open space on north side of foot of Sagadahoc Bridge (currently a staging area for bridge construction) as recommended by Parking Commission circa 1994.

### Create Incentives for Physical Improvements

Improvements for downtown businesses cannot take place in a vacuum. Improvements take place with an anticipation of both tangible and intangible rewards. A financial return on investment is expected when improvements are made to properties. The public sector can do numerous things to lower the cost of making improvements or reduce the risk for making improvements. For some property owners, intangible rewards, such as recognition for advancing the public good, can be a valuable incentive to make improvements.

Some low or no cost incentives can spur private action:

- Set up a local preservation/restoration awards program to provide recognition to business and property owners that make significant improvements to properties (Greater Portland Landmarks has such an annual recognition program); and,
- Provide a pool of technical assistance for property and business owner in the areas of landscaping, building restoration, business financing, business marketing through programs of the City of Bath, the MCB, and Coastal Enterprises. In addition, local professionals with expertise in these areas may be willing to donate their time to providing technical assistance. The City can facilitate this by putting out a call for volunteers, funding out of pocket expenses and coordinating efforts.

Loan Pools. Establishing loan pools can be an effective way to stimulate medium scale changes that cumulatively have a large impact. ‘Micro-loan’ programs for targeted improvement areas should be established based on detailed information gathered from local business people. At the onset of a program, small loan pools in the range of \$50,000 have proven more effective than larger ones -- they tend to spur more immediate action. High priority improvements that could be addressed by this program include:

- Facade improvements including painting, restoring lost architectural adornments, restoring windows that have been bricked in, removing paint from brick, replacing siding to historical materials, and new and recovered awnings;
- Landscaping improvements for site improvements; and,
- Signage improvements.

Important steps for establishing loan pools to stimulate improvements are as follows:

- Determine the need;
- Determine the size of the pool;
- Determine methods of capitalization (who contributes, revolving loan fund);
- Develop a marketing plan;
- Determine the management structure; and,
- Develop follow-up and evaluation procedures (National Main Street Program, National Trust for Historic Preservation).

## ***V. Implementation Actions***

### **A. Overview**

The key to implementation is consistent, long term leadership on many fronts, both public and private. This leadership will take many forms, from individual actions to coordinated actions by numerous organizations. Implementation is broken down into three phases: Phase I are actions recommended to be completed/begun by the end of the Year 2000; Phase II includes actions recommended prior to 2005; and Phase III includes actions recommended by 2010. The proposed phasing should be recognized as a planning tool not cast in stone. Situations will change and opportunities will arise that will require adjustments. Opportunities will arise where items in Phase III may become possible or desirable more immediately.

The Master Plan map (Figure 3.6) shows potential new development sites and redevelopment of existing sites. This graphic is expected to depict a general desired *pattern* and *intensity* of development over the long term, possibly twenty years or more. The key idea behind the proposal is to restore the urban fabric that has deteriorated over the past twenty years. Essential to this is attention to building orientation, location of parking, and building design. These items should be addressed in a set of design guidelines that should be adopted to be part of the Site Plan Review process of the City for new development, expansion of existing uses and redevelopment of downtown parcels.

### **B. Implementation Priorities**

The recommendations for Phase I are slated for now to the end of the year 2000. Many significant things will be happening in this time frame and many of the recommended actions are geared toward taking advantage of the synergy between these many happenings to spur more positive change. Two of the most important of these changes are the BIW expansion and the opening of the new Bath-Woolwich bridge.

Six projects are recommended for immediate action for the years 1999 and 2000. These six projects are:

1. **Commercial Street ‘Parade’, Phase I** – This project will significantly upgrade the development context along Commercial street by installing streetscape improvements similar to those along much of Front Street. These include continuous sidewalks, lighting, parking and a street mural. Phase I extends from Summer Street to Lambard Street.
2. **Route 1 Gateway Improvements** – This will provide for improved landscaping along Route 1, screening of parking, improved/replaced directional signage for motorists on Route 1, improved landscaping of Vine Street and adjacent to the viaduct.
3. **Cultural/Heritage/Education Project** – This is a follow-up action to the Bath Cultural Assessment and Inventory. This will be a focused collaboration between existing arts/cultural and historic/heritage organizations and schools. It will combine research, marketing and educational initiatives with a target date for completion for the year 2000 Heritage Days celebration.

4. **Intermodal Gateway Planning** – This project combines passenger transportation and parking facilities into a new framework at the foot of the south side of the Sagadahoc Bridge. This facility can meet the need for parking for ferry, rail and inter-city bus passengers, new BIW office space, long term visitor parking and visitor information.
5. **BIW Transition Plan** – There are many immediate issues relative to the reorientation of the BIW uses at the northern part of their site that are of importance to the City. It is anticipated that significant new office space may be created. It is essential that planning for this new development be compatible with this Master Plan and better integrated with the rest of the downtown, not as standalone development. Key elements to be considered include parking management, building location, design/scale and orientation, and site access.
6. **Praver Site/Coal Pocket Master Plan** – A number of questions regarding the development of these two sites remain. It would be advantageous to the City to convene a master planning process for these two sites. The visioning process in concert with streetscape improvements may help to spur creative re-use of these underutilized downtown sites.

### C. Phasing Plans

Phasing plans have been prepared for three defined time periods. A fourth time period, after 2010, lists items that will require longer terms to implement and longer term considerations in the Master Plan. Phase I lists projects that are recommended for the time period 1998 through the end of 2000. Phase II is for the time periods 2001 through 2005; Phase III for the period 2006 to 2010.

#### 1. Phase I: 1998 through 2000

Figure 5.1 displays the recommendations proposed for Phase I. Included in Phase I are many ‘jumpstart’ projects that should be initiated immediately. These higher priority projects involve both physical improvements and follow-up planning efforts to this plan. Items in Phase I are strategically designed to build upon the many actions and activities currently underway in Bath and throughout the greater Bath-Brunswick region. The most important of these current activities are:

- construction of the Bath-Woolwich bridge, scheduled for completion in the Summer 2000;
- expansion of the BIW;
- the Cultural Assessment underway for greater Bath;
- proposed plans for coastal fast ferry and passenger rail services in Bath.

The proposed projects are designed to continue the current positive momentum for change. Many recommendations are small; many will be much larger. The Phase I Plan is shown in Figure 5.2.

#### 2. Phase II: 2001 To 2005

Figure 5.2 displays the medium term recommendations proposed for Phase II for the years 2001 to 2005. These recommendations are itemized in Table 5.2, identifying parties responsible for implementation.

### **3. Phase III: 2006 To 2010**

Figure 5.3 displays the long term recommendations proposed for Phase III, from 2006 to 2010. These recommendations are itemized in Table 5.3 identifying parties responsible for implementation.



**Table 5.1**  
**Phase I: Present to 2000**

<b>AREA</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>WHO</b>
1. Waterfront/ Commercial Street	Commercial Street 'Parade': Phase I	Reconfigure Commercial Street to provide continuous sidewalks on both sides, angled and parallel on-street parking, lighting and street trees from Lambard Street to Summer Street, temporary "street mural".	City, MDOT, Private in conjunction with redevelopment, LDC
	Reconfigure Waterfront Park	Reconfigure to allow for ferry docking, upgraded pathways to the water and create/preserve views.	City, MDOT, LDC
	Phase I Riverwalk/Heritage Trail	Develop riverfront boardwalk within waterfront park.	City, MDOT, DECD
	Town Landing/Fast Ferry	Upgrade town landing and ferry landing capacity.	MDOT, City
	Watersheet Management Plan	Conduct Plan for expansion and regulation of watersheet, landside & riverside access.	City, Private
	Waterfront Parking Lot	Parking lot at foot of Sagadahoc Bridge to serve downtown & fast ferry parking demand.	MDOT, City
	Intermodal Gateway Terminal/Parking Facility: Planning	Feasibility/site planning for Intermodal Gateway Terminal integrating intercity bus terminal, rail, and parking facility.	City, MDOT, DECD
	Temporary Farmers' Market	Test seasonal locations at Rite Aid parking lot, south Coal Pocket, Waterfront Park.	Private, City
	Maritime Related Development	Encourage increase in maritime-related uses along waterfront with high quality design.	Private, City, MDOT
	2. Downtown Core	Centre Street streetscape upgrade	Implement curb cut management, landscaping/ buffering of parking areas and intersections, replacement of sidewalks.
Infill New Development		Encourage new in-fill development along Commercial Street, Front Street, and Centre Street.	Private, City
Landscaping 'Matching Grant' or Loan Program		Establish a matching grant or loan program (2:1 private to public) to facilitate long term improvements/investments in improved landscaping in high priority areas.	Private, City, Private
3. Route 1 Gateway	Route 1 Gateway Improvements: Phase I	Improved landscaping and screening; facade and signage program along Route 1 to downtown.	Private, City, MDOT, CDBG
	Route 1 signage improvements	Provide more meaningful and earlier information along Route 1 at the 3 NB and 1 SB exits/entrances.	MDOT, City
	Viaduct Replacement	Form Advisory Committee to guide development of viaduct replacement according to defined access principles.	City, MDOT

<b>AREA</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>WHO</b>
4. Access & Traffic	Trolley	Provide trolley service providing efficient linkages between key destinations including downtown, Maine Maritime Museum, ferry landing, parking areas.	City, MDOT, BBA
	Washington Street intersection improvements	Reconfigure intersections (Route 1 and Centre Street) to clarify turning movements and improve pedestrian crossings.	City, MDOT
	Traffic Circulation Changes	Eliminate Vine Street crossover to Front Street to reclaim streetscape.	City, MDOT, Private
	Update Parking Regulations	Revise parking regulations to better reflect parking demand and management, enhanced landscaping and screening requirements.	City, Planning Board
	Parking Management Plan	Develop Parking Management Plan to reorganize parking structure to include long term parking	City, Parking Commission, Bath businesses
	Establish new Transportation and Parking Commission	Establish new commission to advise City Council on transportation and parking issues in Bath	City Council, New Commission, Private
5. Cultural & Heritage Project	Heritage/Information Center	Create 'starter' Cultural/Heritage/Information Center with Winter Street Church as possible location.	Private, City, Office of Tourism, Chamber of Commerce
	Establish Heritage Consortium	Combine existing heritage, educational, cultural organizations for Heritage Project.	City, Maine Maritime Museum, library, schools, Chocolate Church
	Cultural/Heritage/Education Project	Conduct 'Heritage' inventory; prepare Millennium Celebration; plan permanent center; establish Kennebec Chaudiere Trail kiosk.	City, Office of Tourism, MCBBD, Non-profits, Maine Maritime Museum
	Marketing, Research & Promotion Campaign	Develop information for content, marketing and promotion for permanent heritage center and citywide activities.	Non-profits, City, Office of Tourism, MCBBD, Maine Maritime Museum
	Designate a Cultural/Heritage Zone downtown		City, Cultural Organizations
6. Core-wide Programs	'Walkable City' Initiative	Implement sidewalk, lighting, signage, streetscape improvements, crosswalks.	City, Private, MDOT (enhancements).
	Revise Zoning Map	Revise zoning districts to correspond to Comprehensive Plan with waterfront-maritime-open space overlay zone.	City, Planning Board, Private input.
	Bath Local Development Corporation	Expand current LDC to coordinate all public/private projects.	City Council, LDC
	Design Guidelines	Adopt Design Guidelines as part of Site Plan Review process to spur high quality development of compatible height, scale, materials, facade.	Planning Board, City Council, Public input.

**Table 5.2  
Phase II: 2001 To 2005**

<b>AREA</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>WHO</b>
1. Waterfront/ Commercial Street	Phase II Riverwalk/Heritage Trail	Extend riverwalk to Coal Pocket (extending to North End Boat Launch) and under Sagadahoc Bridge with strong connections to Commercial Street; Trail Marker Program.	City, MDOT, Private
	Commercial Street Extension	Extend Commercial Street under Sagadahoc Bridge to Washington Street creating new north-south access point.	City, BIW, MDOT
	Commercial Street 'Parade': Phase II	Extend streetscape improvements to Washington Street at the north and south ends.	City, MDOT, Private
	Marina Improvements/Expansion	Expand boat slips/moorings, improved visiting boat facilities including showers, laundry, phone, public bathrooms.	Private, City, MDOT, DECD
	Maritime Museum Exhibit/Shop	Locate possibly along Commercial Street.	Private, Maine Maritime Museum
	Children's Heritage/Waterfront Park	Locate near city park on lower Coal Pocket.	City, Parks Dept.
	Permanent Farmer's Market	New year-round farmer's market; locate in front of south Coal Pocket, Waterfront Park, Rite Aid, Custom House as shed/tent structure.	City, Private, RDA, EDA, DECD
	Commercial Street In-fill Development	In-fill on west side of Commercial Street for mixed use. In-fill on east side for maritime-related uses.	Private, City, DECD
2. Downtown Core	Streetscape Improvements	Streetscape improvements along Front Street, Water Street, Washington Street including curb cut management, landscaping, screening of/landscaping within parking areas, moving utility poles out of street.	Private, City, CMP, CDBG, MDOT (trail)
	Housing at north end of Coal Pocket	Create market rate housing, possibly targeting the retiree market.	Private, City (potential TIF)
	Hotel/Meeting Space	80 to 100 room hotel with meeting/small conference space.	Private, City
	Parking Garage: Phase I	Parking garage as part of BIW office expansion, intermodal center parking.	BIW, City, Private
	In-fill Development	In-fill commercial development along Vine Street, Front Street and Centre Street including upper story residential and office space and ground floor retail.	Private, City
	BIW/Univ. of Maine North End (of BIW Yard) Offices	New office space oriented to Commercial Street Extension housing BIW offices and technology training center.	BIW, City, Univ. of Maine, SMTC

<b>AREA</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>WHO</b>
3. Route 1 Gateway	Route 1 Gateway Improvements: Phase II	Improve landscaping/screening and curb cuts at High Street entrance/exit, extend off-ramp for better alignment and improved storage.	MDOT, City, Private, DECD, EDA, RDA
	Route 1 Gateway Improvements: III	Plan and implement new Route 1 corridor west of High Street, possibly eliminating barrier and introducing at-grade intersections.	City, MDOT, Private
4. Access & Traffic	Wayfinding System	Plan and implement improved wayfinding system including signage to/from Route 1, signage within downtown for circulation and parking.	City, MDOT, Private
	Passenger Rail Service & Station, Intermodal Center	Passenger rail service from Brunswick to Rockland, restored rail station, bus depot, Phase II parking facility.	MDOT, City, BIW, EDA, RDA
5. Cultural & Heritage Project	Create Cultural/Heritage Campus	Create Cultural Campus with YMCA/Library/Winter Street Church/Chocolate Church as anchors; possibly use current YMCA as major component, home of permanent center.	Non-profits, Private, City, Office of Tourism/DECD, RDA, EDA
	Heritage Project	Hold 5 year special exhibit, cultural celebration in 2005.	Non-profits, City, Private
6. Core-wide Programs	Facade Treatment Program	Initiate facade program to upgrade/restore building facades.	Private, City, DECD, RDA
	Heritage Trail Markers	Implement 'Heritage Trail' markers along Waterfront Trail, business district and historic district to create self-guiding tours.	City, Non-profits, Private

**Table 5.4**  
**Phase III: 2006 To 2010**

<b>AREA</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>WHO</b>
1. Waterfront/ Commercial Street	Waterfront In-fill Development	Continued in-fill and redevelopment; mixed use commercial development along west side of Commercial Street and maritime use on river side.	Private
	Heritage Trail	Implement Maine/Quebec trail link up Kennebec River.	Dept. of Conservation, City, Office of Tourism
2. Downtown Core	City Hall Expansion	Possible expansion of City Hall to rear of current site.	City
	Core In-fill Development	Continued in-fill commercial development along Vine Street, Front Street and Centre Street including retail uses on ground floor and residential and offices uses above.	Private
3. Route 1 Gateway	Route 1 Viaduct Replacement	Replacement of viaduct for improved access to downtown.	MDOT, City
4. Access & Traffic	Phase III Parking Structure	Parking structure/intermodal facility.	BIW, City, MDOT
5. Cultural & Heritage Project	Heritage Days	Expand annual Heritage Celebration to week long during the summer and initiate fall/winter weekend events.	Heritage Days Committee, City
6. Core-wide Programs		Continued in-fill and redevelopment program;	Private, City

Glossary

DECD: Dept. of Economic and Community Development

LDC: Local Development Corporation

MDOT: Maine Dept. of Transportation

MCBD: MidCoast Council for Business Development