



2020
MIDDLEBURY
DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

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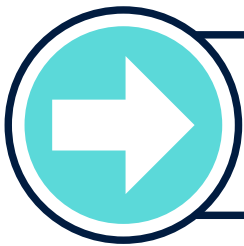
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Introduction

This Plan arose out of a desire for a unified and well-informed vision for the future of Downtown Middlebury. It is the product of a robust public process that invited the entire community to share their input. Everyone can take part in making the Plan a reality.



08

Why Plan?

10

User's Guide

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The Process

Why Plan?

The Town of Middlebury has an international reputation as a desirable place to live and play. Its historic charm, community spirit, cultural institutions, locally-produced food and beverages, recreation opportunities, and Middlebury College attract new residents from all over the United States. Downtown Middlebury boasts assets such as historic architecture, Otter Creek Falls, highly regarded restaurants, excellent walkability, and a remarkable year-round offering of local and international events.

A comprehensive planning process focused on Downtown has not taken place in 20 years, and much has changed in that time. Downtown has seen construction of the Cross Street bridge, demolition of the old high school and gymnasium, construction of a new municipal office building and police station, renovation of the fire station, construction of a new addition to the Congregational Church, demolition of the Lazarus building, and currently the replacement of the railroad tunnel and bridge in the heart of Downtown. Downtown Middlebury has welcomed new businesses and other beloved businesses have been lost.

With the completion of this Master Plan, we are poised to emerge from the disruption and uncertainty of a major construction project and the COVID-19 pandemic ready for action and with a new sense of appreciation for our relationship to this special place we hold dear.

Over the years, Downtown has undergone changing market, demographic, and economic conditions. With these changes, new challenges include an unmet demand for different housing types and price points. Downtown businesses report being unable to find employees. Residents have noted changes in the character of Downtown businesses and their target customers and have expressed a need for more gathering places that feel welcoming to all. They have hopes for Middlebury to become a more aware and inclusive community, and recognize that conventional economic growth is not sufficient to solve persistent racial, class, or ethnic inequality. They have also voiced a desire for a greater manifestation of the community's strong interest in sustainability and climate change resilience. In order to make the best use of Middlebury's extraordinary level of community initiative and engagement, the Town needs a unified vision for Downtown's future.

The Downtown planning process established the community's desires for new development, determined feasibility through expert analysis, and gathered new ideas and best practices from around the world. This Plan provides a playbook for meeting community needs while protecting and enhancing what people love about Middlebury.



User's Guide



We heard you.

This Plan is the culmination of an extensive and transparent community planning process that reflects many differing points of view. Hundreds of Middlebury residents, businesses, visitors, and stakeholders participated in the process and contributed to the creation of this plan. Middlebury is a place that embraces different opinions and perspectives, where residents are the true experts when it comes to their community. Not everyone will love everything in the Plan, but there is something in the Plan for everyone!



Understand the element of time.

At first glance, the Plan may seem ambitious and daunting. It is important to understand that not everything in the Plan will be implemented at once, and some things may not happen at all. Included are some big ideas that, if implemented, would bring about transformative change, taking years or even decades to come to fruition. In many cases, additional studies will be required to develop and advance projects. Other ideas are smaller and can happen right away.



Support both public and private investment.

The role of this Plan is to offer a vision for the future and set a course of action. Implementing the recommendations outlined in the plan will require some non-municipal sources of funding and people-power. Much of what will be needed to bring the vision to life will be private investment in individual properties, and public investment by other State and Federal agencies. The Town will have to play a role in setting the stage through supportive regulations and investments in infrastructure, but most of the cost and development responsibility will fall to individual private and non-profit property owners, often in partnership with public entities.



Be a part of the action and implementation team.

Great ideas, like those presented in this Plan, take time, money, and capacity. For the vision described here to become a reality, residents, staff, and stakeholders must decide they care enough to stay involved and help execute the Plan. Residents are encouraged to join a committee, participate in a citizen task force, or turn out to support new projects that are in concert with the Downtown Master Plan as they move forward. For the Plan to be a success, it must be supported by the active engagement of citizens. Communities that work together succeed.

The Process

The Town of Middlebury and its consultant team, led by Town Planning and Urban Design Collaborative (TPUDC), conducted an open public engagement process to reach a broad cross-section of Middlebury residents and stakeholders.

The process began in June 2019, when two Middlebury College interns in collaboration with the Town Planner collected housing data for the Downtown area and conducted over 100 business and visitor surveys and in-person interviews. They promoted the Master Plan process and collected input at events like the summer Block Party. They also made inventories of commercial and residential space, business data, vacancies, and other current conditions.

The Town also got the word out about the public input process using the Town email list, Front Porch Forum, Facebook, posters, and word of mouth. They reached out directly to Town officials, organization leaders, and major employers.

In September 2019, the Downtown Master Plan team held a Community Kick-Off at the Municipal Offices. The team presented the project process as well as initial demographic and economic data to over 50 attendees. Participants then gathered in groups to identify their top concerns for Downtown Middlebury. The ensuing conversation revealed shared priorities for the future of Downtown.

TIME	Thursday, November 7 DAY ONE	Friday, November 8 DAY TWO	Saturday, November 9 DAY THREE	Sunday, November 10 DAY FOUR	Monday, November 11 DAY FIVE
8:00 AM					
9:00 AM		MEETING #1 - 9AM STORMWATER		OPEN STUDIO	OPEN STUDIO
10:00 AM		MEETING #2 - 1030AM MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION	MEETING #3 - 10AM SUSTAINABILITY/ RESILENCY		
11:00 AM		OPEN STUDIO	OPEN STUDIO	OPEN STUDIO	STUDIO CLOSED FOR PRODUCTION
12:00 PM					
1:00 PM					
2:00 PM					
3:00 PM					
4:00 PM					
5:00 PM					
6:00 PM	OPENING PRESENTATION - 6PM Municipal Offices		PIN-UP & REVIEW - 530PM 51 Main		CLOSING PRESENTATION - 6PM Town Hall Theater
7:00 PM					

The Planapalooza™ schedule

Residents, business owners, and the multidisciplinary consultant team convened November 7th to 11th for Planapalooza™ – an intense, fun, participatory design and public input process.

Over the long weekend, the project team ran focus meetings on transportation, sustainability, and stormwater and presented their ideas for immediate public feedback during three evening presentations. They maintained open studio hours at 51 Main Street so passers-by could see the work in progress and provide their own input. Specialists in urban design, economic development, stormwater engineering, and transportation made site visits and spoke directly with local experts and advocates. Over 30 local leaders and business owners participated in focus groups on different economic areas: real estate and enterprise, the Bakery Lane site, hospitality and tourism, institutions, office and innovation, and arts and the creative economy.

In both the Kick-Off meeting and the Planapalooza™ open studio, attendees participated in a collective mapping exercise that revealed widespread agreement on which parts of Downtown represented strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.

The word clouds on the following page were created from the responses to 75 in-person surveys collected at the August 2019 Downtown Block Party. The size of the word corresponds to the frequency with which it was used.



Collecting public input at the Downtown Block Party



Design conversations in the Planapalooza™ Open Studio

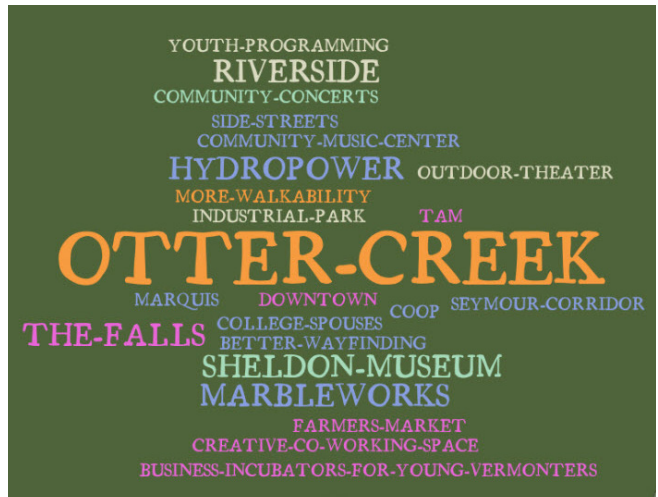
“What is it about Middlebury that makes us stand out above other small towns?”



“What is one new thing you would like to see in Downtown Middlebury?”



“What’s Middlebury’s biggest hidden gem or greatest area of untapped potential?”





01



04



02

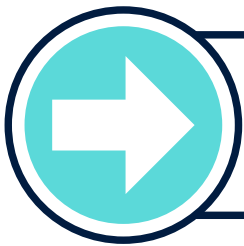


05



03

(1) Community Kick-Off Presentation (2) Planapalooza™ Focus Group Meeting
(3) Planapalooza™ Opening Presentation (4) Kick-Off Map Dot Exercise (5) Planapalooza™ Open Studio



Downtown Profile

Understanding the characteristics of Downtown's population serves as a starting point for planning. Statistics show that Downtown demographics are very similar to Middlebury as a whole, but the population is relatively small.



18

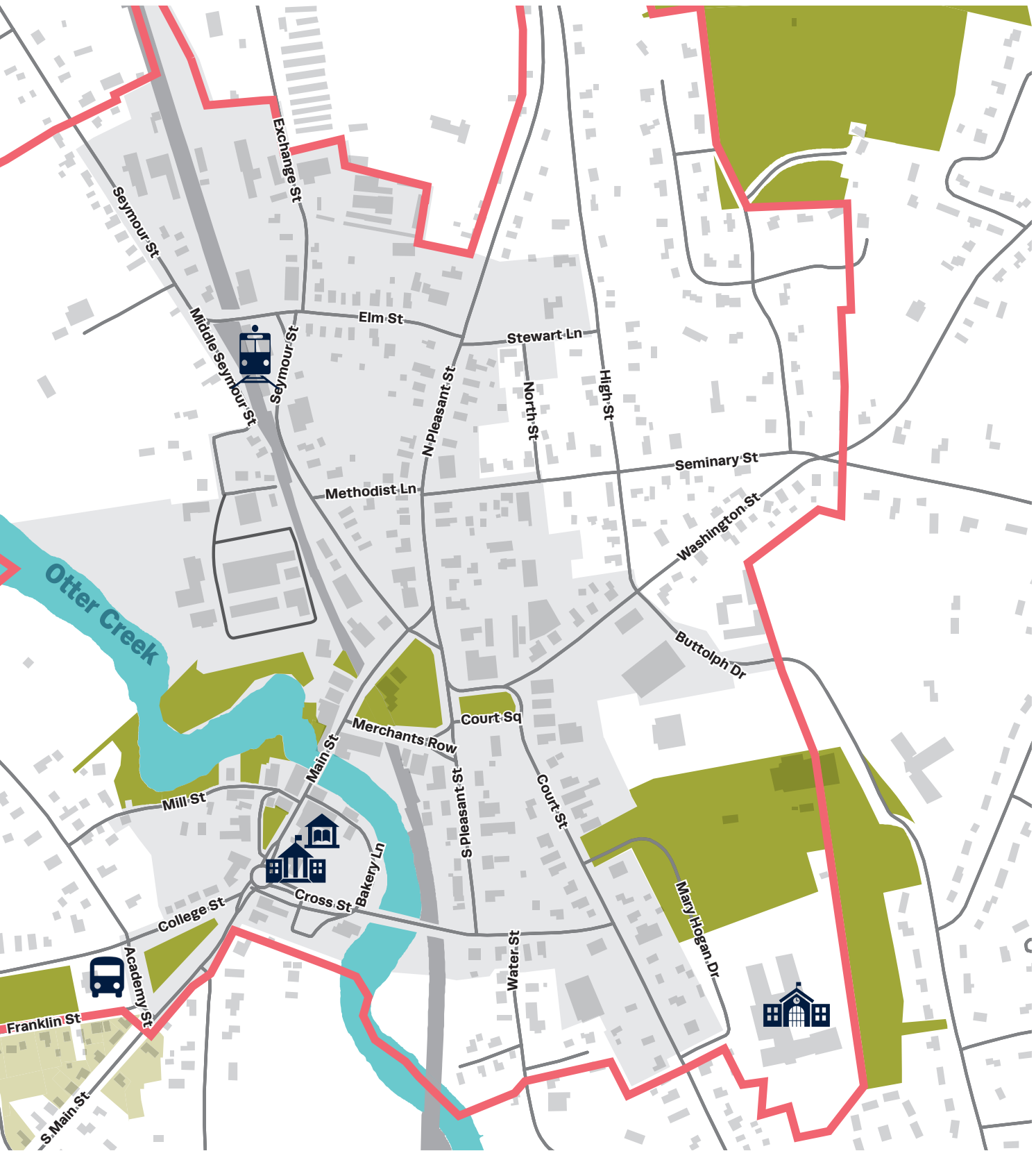
20

Downtown Area Map Data

Downtown Area Map

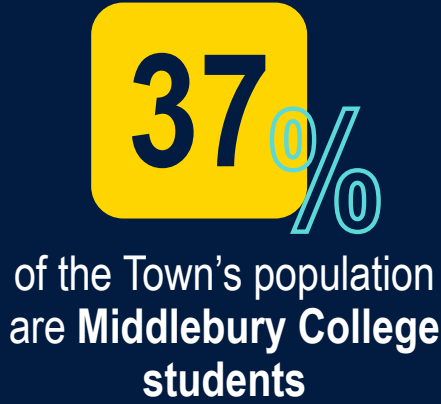
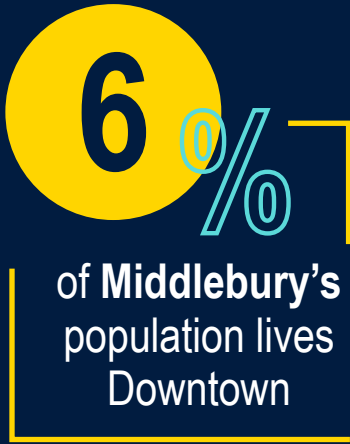
-  Study area
-  Designated Downtown
-  Parks and green space
-  Rail right of way
-  Future rail platform
-  Library
-  School
-  Town Offices
-  Bus transit hub





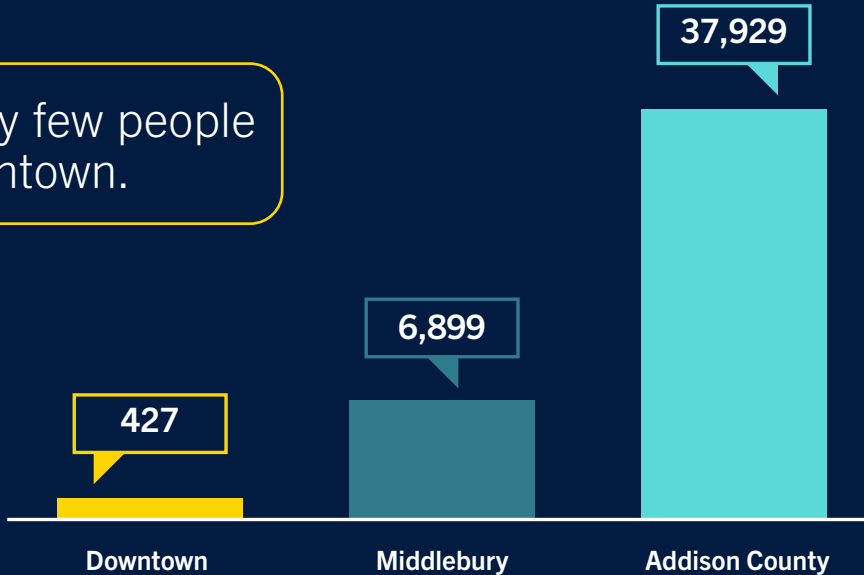
Data

A demographic snapshot of Downtown Middlebury (using the Designated Downtown area as a boundary and Census data compiled through ESRI Data Analyst) informs potential recommendations for the future.



Population

Relatively few people live Downtown.



Source: ESRI Community Analyst

	Downtown	Middlebury	Addison County
Households	174	2,207	14,716
Avg. Age	38	25	43
Median Household Income	\$51,454	\$51,461	\$59,193



Population growth per year in Middlebury

Over the last ten years, Middlebury gained about 300 residents (4% growth) and Downtown gained approximately 14 people (3% growth). This population stagnancy aligns with regional trends across the state and the New England region.



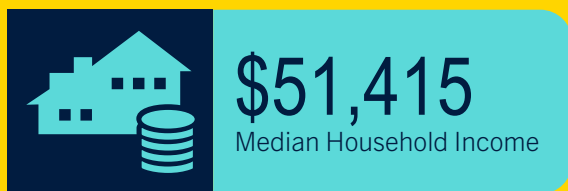
of Middlebury's population is age 65+.



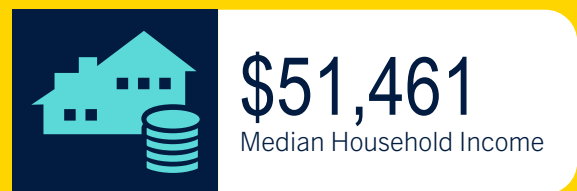
of Middlebury's population is disabled.

Demographics for Downtown are very similar to Town-wide averages. The population has high educational attainment and a high employment rate relative to the rest of the country.

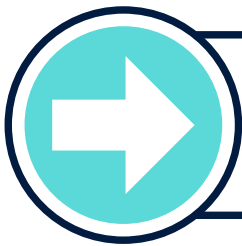
Downtown Middlebury



Town of Middlebury



Source: ES&S Community Analysis



Guiding Principles

The Downtown Master Plan public engagement process resulted in a set of principles that inform the ideas and recommendations in this Plan. The Middlebury community can use these to guide ongoing decision making throughout Downtown, even for new issues that may come up years after the publication of this Plan.



Guiding Principles



Inclusivity / Gathering Places and Destinations For All

Provide shopping, gathering places, jobs, housing, amenities, and services to make Downtown a welcoming and enjoyable destination for all, regardless of age, income level, family status, disability, gender, sexuality, religion, race, ethnicity, mental health, and cultural background.



Housing Choice

Increase housing choices for residents of all ages, incomes, and abilities within walking distance of Downtown.



Economic Vibrancy

Encourage business development and entrepreneurship with the objective of increasing prosperity and quality of life in Middlebury. Increase foot traffic in the Downtown area and continue to promote and strengthen the unique appeal of Downtown to both local users and visitors.



Cultural Vibrancy

Make Downtown a place that actively encourages diversity. Nurture community spirit, arts and culture, and innovation.



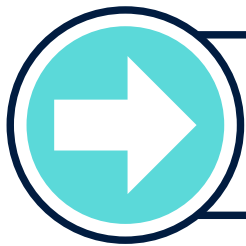
Transportation Choice

Prioritize safe and comfortable access to and within Downtown by means other than the automobile.



Sustainability & Resiliency

Steward Downtown's natural and historic beauty; in all decisions, consider climate change resiliency factors such as decreasing dependence on fossil fuels and increasing regional self-sufficiency. Take advantage of opportunities to add green stormwater designs as enhancements to Town infrastructure that are both beautiful and functional.



Arts & Culture

Middlebury enjoys a remarkable wealth of arts and cultural resources. The community has expressed a strong desire to expand the offering of Downtown events, programs, and gathering places even more.



Photography by Heather Seeley

Arts & Culture

Downtown Middlebury is the cultural hub of the Town and the natural gathering place for the community. It should have destinations and programming for all ages, cultural backgrounds, incomes, and abilities.

Middlebury enjoys arts and cultural resources that rival those of much bigger cities. Downtown's venues and festivals draw attendees from the county and beyond. The New Filmmakers' Festival and Festival on the Green are among the top festivals in New England. Middlebury College's Mahaney Arts Center and Town Hall Theater have an impressive year-round calendar of first-class entertainers and performers. In addition to the Middlebury College Art Museum, Middlebury boasts two museums of statewide significance, the Henry Sheldon Museum of Vermont History and the Vermont Folklife Center, located in the heart of its Downtown. These established museums possess significant collections and have ever-changing exhibits. The vitality of Downtown has also been enhanced in recent years by smaller events and gatherings occurring throughout the year, such as Chili Fest, the Downtown Block Party, and Foodaroo.

There are opportunities to develop the impressive arts scene even more, particularly by enhancing coordination and partnership between existing organizations. Downtown Master Plan participants shared an abundance of creative ideas for new events and programs that will continue to bring the community together.

WHAT WE HEARD

“Families need more to do Downtown”

“Music and fun events make people's differences disappear. Everybody loves Music on the Green, the chili fest, cheap burger night, and the library”

“We need a place to hang out in the evenings that is not a bar – you could read, drink tea or coffee, meet friends”

During the Planapalooza™, the Arts & Culture focus group expressed a desire to continue meeting after the plan process to discuss and collaborate on issues affecting the arts community.

The Arts & Culture economic sector would greatly benefit from branding and marketing that promotes Middlebury as an Arts & Culture destination. Possibly no other small Vermont town has such robust assets, yet this is still not something people from outside the area readily associate with Middlebury.

Master Plan participants concluded that more needs to be done to establish a consistent nightlife in Middlebury. If people in remote surrounding towns can begin to rely on the fact that they can travel to bustling Middlebury in the evening and find something going on, restaurants and retail will also thrive. Participants expressed interest in performances that started earlier in the evening and not necessarily in a bar setting.



Photography by Jason Duquette-Hoffman



Goals

01

Provide destinations and programming for all ages, incomes, abilities, and cultural backgrounds.

02

Leverage existing world-class events and enhance arts and culture within the Town's identity and brand (locally and regionally) to benefit the local economy.

03

Increase collaboration and economies of scale in the arts scene to raise awareness, market events, and develop shared events.



Recommendations

01

Create a new Middlebury Arts organization whose representatives draw upon the experience of established local institutions (Sheldon Museum, Town Hall Theater, Middlebury Art Museum, VT Folklife Center) to guide new arts initiatives, provide opportunities for collaboration, and focus efforts on promoting Middlebury as a premier Arts & Culture destination.

02

Establish a mural and public art program with a formal selection process, juried and administered by the proposed new Middlebury Arts organization in partnership with the Town.

03

Consider using areas of the Marble Works as a potential location to add small shops and artisan maker spaces or live-work units that people are drawn to visit. See Illustrative Plans for locations where liner buildings with small leasable spaces can be added to break up the existing parking lot. The Marble Works Maker District could function as the place where Exchange Street/Industrial District innovators and the Downtown Core mix.

04

Activate the Town Green in winter with events and activities. A specific idea from a resident included "a food truck for warm drinks and snacks, perhaps in combination with a warming hut in which volunteer knitters teach others to knit."

05

Encourage community growing projects Downtown such as community gardens, edible landscape planting, urban orchards, or a town farm.



Recommendations (cont.)

06

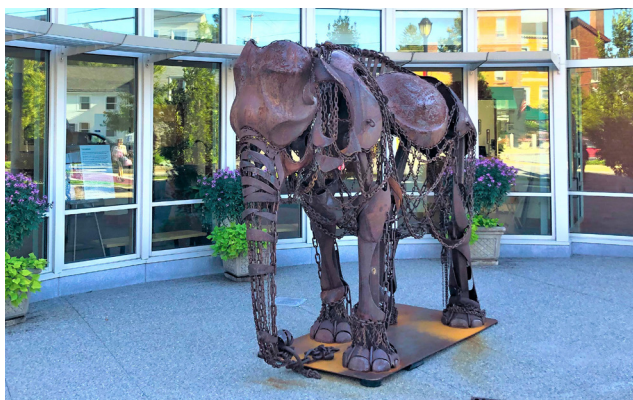
Encourage College organizations to partner with local restaurants and venues to bring events Downtown that are popular with students. Examples may include trivia, poetry, storytelling, and jazz nights.

07

Expand Addison Independent's weekly event summary to include College events as well. Coordinate closely with Better Middlebury Partnership to make sure their calendar is regularly updated with all the same events. Partner with the College to promote these two sources and ensure they can be accessed using social media.

08

Form a diverse cross-sector committee of stakeholders to bring the Farmer's Market back to Downtown year-round and to identify an enclosed physical space Downtown suitable for the winter market. Merchants Row (closed to traffic during the market) could host the market in warm weather. Another outdoor option with ample parking is Storrs Park behind Twilight Hall.



Photography by Don Shall

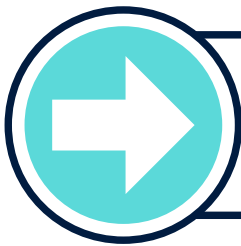


Clockwise from top left: (1) Festival on the Green, (2) Unidentified festivities (Jason Duquette-Hoffman), (3) Town Hall Theater (Don Shall), (4) WaterFire Festival on the Providence River (Jennifer Bedford), (5) Public art in Middlebury



Recommendations (cont.)

- 09 Support Ilsley Library in expanding their programming, services, and physical space in Downtown Middlebury by 2030. Consider library expansion as a priority use on redevelopment sites such as Bakery Lane or St. Mary's School due to its role as a gathering and cultural space.
-
- 10 Activate Otter Creek with events and art. Look to WaterFire in Providence, RI as a source of inspiration (bottom right photo, facing page). This could temporarily activate the space behind Battell Block. If a few logs may be removed from the Creek under environmental regulations, they could be incorporated into public art as a distinctive Middlebury element.
-
- 11 Look into attracting a business on or near Main Street that serves the community desire for a multi-generational anchor community space that stays open past 5pm. Uses could include one or a combination of the following: tea house, bowling lanes (see Pinewood Social in Nashville), arcade, and/or coffee shop with room to work. Potential spaces include 51 Main, the Ben Franklin building, and the Town Hall Theater Annex.
-
- 12 Explore a College/business partnership to create a Downtown Base Camp – a place to study and do homework when students need a change of scenery, since there is no room to study in current coffee shops.
-
- 13 Consider a customer loyalty or discount program aimed at local residents, for any businesses interested in participating.
-
- 14 Bring back the Chili Festival as an autumn event.
-
- 15 Support initiatives that encourage teens and young adults to spend more time in Downtown.
-
- 16 Enhance collaboration between arts destinations, for example an Arts Pass for common entry.
-
- 17 Explore opportunities for developing artist live/work space that includes affordable units and shared amenities such as performing space and studio equipment. One example of such a place is include the Albany Barn, a partnership between the City of Albany, New York and the Albany Housing Authority to develop 22 low-cost live/work residences alongside a multi-tenant creative arts incubator. Another example is AS220, a community arts organization in Providence, Rhode Island that provides gallery and arts facilities along with 47 affordable live/work studios for artists.
-



Sustainability & Resiliency

The Middlebury community aims for sustainability and resiliency as it looks towards a future full of changes – in climate, energy sources, food supply chains, and resource management. Downtown can play a part in making the Town as sustainable as it can be.



Photography by Jason Duquette-Hoffman

Sustainability & Resiliency

Sustainability is of the utmost importance to Middlebury. The community's environmental achievements include having the first net zero energy municipal offices building in Vermont. Middlebury's gas pipeline now carries renewable natural gas. The active Town Energy Committee focuses on holding the Town to exemplary energy efficient practices and trying to work toward carbon reduction goals for the Town as a whole. Two climate items were passed in a local vote by heavy margins in 2019. Climate activism is strong, including local demonstrations and the work of the Climate Economy Action Center of Addison County. Middlebury College has extensive programs on sustainability and climate change.

Middlebury can do its part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Worldwide, however, climate change has already begun to disrupt weather, economy, food systems, and other aspects of life, and communities must also aim to increase their resiliency in the face of these changing conditions. Many measures will serve both goals: for example, better-weatherized homes will use less energy and occupants will also be less vulnerable to changing fuel prices. Increasing local and regional self-sufficiency in energy, the economy, and food production will help Middlebury withstand the challenges of a changing world. Great "green" ideas are already coming from within Middlebury as well as from other innovative places.

Resiliency also arises from strong community bonds. Studies show drastically better outcomes after crises in places where people help each other and work together. These networks are supported by an "infrastructure of community," as one Planapalooza participant put it – gathering spaces, local ways of sharing information, and civic institutions like libraries that all can depend on.

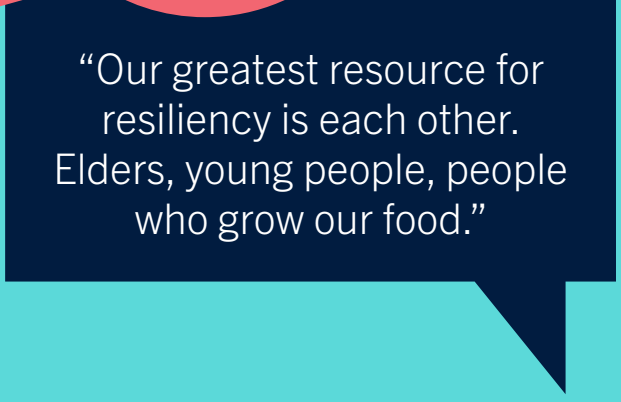
While the recommendations in this section focus mainly on energy, sustainability informs every part of this Plan. Separate chapters highlight sustainable transportation, stormwater engineering and green spaces, the Downtown economy, and community-building.



"We can become a model community for resiliency."



**WHAT
WE
HEARD**



"Our greatest resource for resiliency is each other. Elders, young people, people who grow our food."



Goals

- 01 Generate and use a larger proportion of alternative energy Downtown.

- 02 Increase green building techniques in old and new buildings Downtown.

- 03 Increase partnerships between the Town, the College, and organizations such as the Climate Economy Action Center, ACORN (Addison County Relocation Network), and Hannaford Career Center.

- 04 Adopt innovative methods to become a world class model for sustainability and a destination for the demonstration of sustainable practices and green infrastructure.

- 05 Make Downtown a place where people are inspired, engaged, and educated on sustainability and resilience.



Recommendations

- 01 Partner with the College to pursue grants and endowments to demonstrate innovative green practices that provide an example to other towns.

 - 02 Explore creation of a community microgrid to support Downtown energy generation/storage and decrease reliance on larger scale power grids.

 - 03 Revisit “small hydro” energy production at Otter Creek Falls.

 - 04 Expand solar energy production Downtown. Take advantage of existing mapping of roof suitability for solar by College students. Require that new construction be built to accommodate rooftop solar generation.

 - 05 Use solar canopies in conjunction with surface parking and charging stations.

 - 06 Develop Town-wide goals for reducing carbon emissions using a community engagement process that helps residents and businesses understand the economic and lifestyle impacts of meeting these proposed targets. Monitor energy use and track improvements. The state may mandate energy goals.

 - 07 Require new buildings to utilize best practices for green construction. Explore traditional and low-tech as well as cutting-edge options, considering that simple and traditional building methods are often the most resource- and energy-efficient in the long term. In a related vein, seek out and prioritize green technology that is also attractive to look at. “Lovability” is essential to inspire dedicated stewardship of a place.¹
-

¹ <http://www.originalgreen.org/>



A solar awning



Solar roof panels



Middlebury's hydropower ruins (Don Shall)



Øvre Forsland hydroelectric station in Norway, serving around 1,600 households (Pedro Alvarez/The Observer)



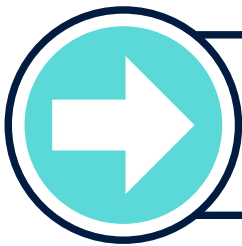
Recommendations (cont.)

- 08 Create “Town & Gown” tours highlighting sustainability/resiliency projects such as the College biomass furnace, municipal office building, solar demo house, and a solar farm with pollinator field to inspire and educate others to replicate.
-
- 09 Explore ways to engage more community members, including youth, on climate change and local resilience, using physical spaces Downtown including the schools and library. Consider “green” activities like beekeeping, bicycle repair, urban orchard planting, composting, etc.
-
- 10 Explore ways of keeping unwanted or broken items out of the waste stream. Possibilities include expanding repair café events and locating them Downtown. “Refashioning” events or businesses would fit in well with the existing used clothing shops on Main Street. A recycled goods “shopping center” like the innovative ReTuna Återbruksgalleria in Sweden could combine drop-off, repairs, and resales.¹
-
- 11 Bring the Farmer’s Market back Downtown year-round to enhance local interdependence as well as community-building.
-
- 12 Provide user-friendly waste/recycling/compost receptacles Downtown.
-
- 13 Provide public water fountains to help discourage single-use plastic.
-
- 14 Create a guide to living sustainability in Middlebury, including budget-friendly tips.
-

¹ <https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/sweden-opens-worlds-first-mall-repaired-recycled-goods/>



Image credits clockwise from top: <https://www.facebook.com/MiddleburyFarmersMarket>, [beekeepclub.com](https://www.facebook.com/beekeepclub), US EPA



Green Network

Downtown Middlebury's parks, trails, and plantings are valuable community amenities. There are special opportunities to add beautiful Green Infrastructure for stormwater management, to enhance connectivity in the network, and to add even more "green."



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Open Space Network Plan

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Stormwater Infrastructure

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Green Alleys

Photography by Jason Duquette-Hoffman

Green Network

Middlebury's parks and open spaces are a source of great community enjoyment. They also provide functional benefits such as stormwater management and wildlife habitat. There are opportunities to add to Downtown's "Green Necklace" of open spaces and to enhance the connections between them.

This Downtown Master Plan's innovative approach toward stormwater management looked at how green infrastructure could be incorporated into the ecosystem of Downtown, which includes people as much as water quality. These proposed stormwater projects function as part of a comprehensive "Green Network" of parks, trails, green alleys, and streets.

During the Planapalooza™, Horsley Witten Group engineers and landscape architects listened carefully to community concerns, assessed site conditions, and worked closely with the designers working on illustrative master plans for infill development areas, to design green stormwater infrastructure that will make a strategic contribution to the overall vision being created for Downtown Middlebury.

Our objective was to search out opportunities for improvements that would not only deliver gains in phosphorous and sediment reduction, but also beautify Downtown and enrich people's experience of the built environment.

This Master Plan presents a long-term vision for green infrastructure practices in the core of Downtown. With this vision in place, individual concepts can be designed in more detail to be ready as funding becomes available. The proposals center on the "Mill Street and Bakery Lane Green Alley Connection," a concept unifying multiple green infrastructure practices with an enhanced waterfront experience. The vision can be expanded to include other green stormwater designs and practices over time.

To implement many of these recommendations, new mechanisms for funding municipal stormwater projects will be needed, as well as a cultural shift away from conventional engineering. Although current infrastructure maintenance budgets are stretched thin, green infrastructure can be cheaper in the long run and also support economic development. Implementation of green infrastructure designs may also help developers comply with Vermont's "three acre" rule currently being updated to discourage impervious surface. Exemplary stormwater designs from the Town, the College, and private developers will help Middlebury remain a model for sustainability in the region.

WHAT WE HEARD

“Need more trees and plantings Downtown!”

“Take advantage of opportunities to connect to Otter Creek”

“Green can be good economically”



Goals

- 01 Enhance Downtown’s network of parks, trails, and green stormwater infrastructure. Invest in an appearance that reflects our green sustainability goals, by investing in tree-lined streets, parks, and urban access to rivers and forests.
- 02 Improve Otter Creek edges and add public access and views.
- 03 Improve Bakery Lane and Mill Street as green alleys.
- 04 Integrate stormwater improvements with the community’s placemaking and economic development vision.
- 05 Continue to integrate the long-term vision for a green network into long range capital planning and standard maintenance activities.
- 06 Create stormwater infrastructure that is attractive, sustainable, and cost-effective.

What is Green Infrastructure?

Green infrastructure preserves or recreates natural landscape features such as rain gardens and wetlands to manage stormwater and provide environmental and community benefits. It emphasizes simple site design techniques that mimic nature to infiltrate, evaporate, or harvest and use water runoff as close to its source as possible. It treats stormwater as a resource rather than a waste product.

Green infrastructure is very often more cost-effective than more highly engineered structural stormwater management practices, and in addition, provides community benefits ranging from traffic calming to increased aesthetics and property values. Like any infrastructure, it needs a robust maintenance program to ensure it continues to perform its valuable stormwater management and ecological functions and remains an aesthetic amenity.



Photography by Sustainable Rogare Valley



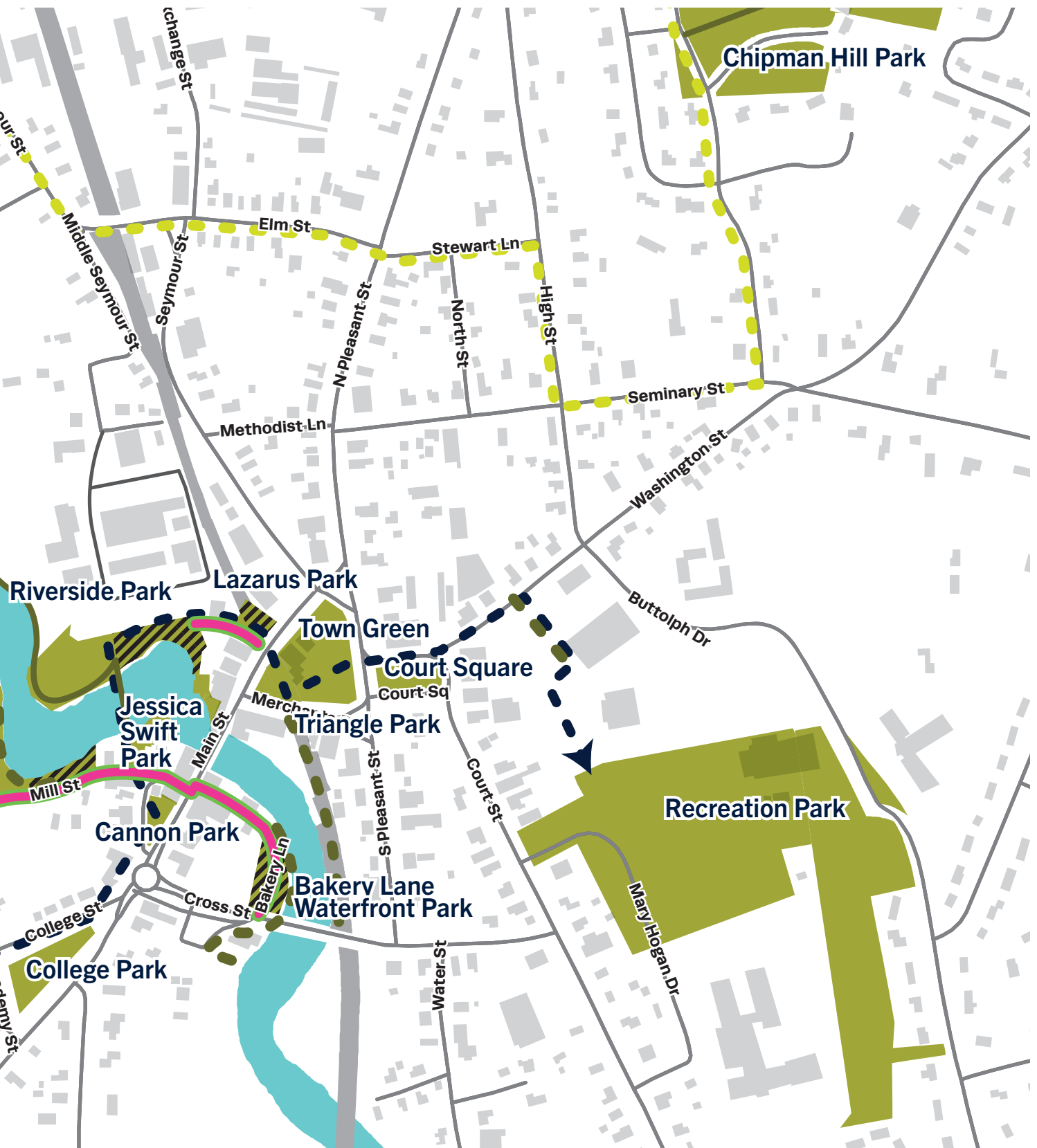


Open Space Network Plan

Each of Middlebury's existing and proposed parks has a different character and function within Downtown. Those in the core of Downtown form an interconnected Green Necklace. Proposed new river trail connections will connect Downtown with Otter View Park in Weybridge.







-  **Proposed Green Alley**
(pavement reduction and multiple other green features)
-  **Green Necklace route**
-  **Existing paths**
-  **Proposed paths**
-  **On-road Trail Around Middlebury**
-  **Parks and green space**
-  **New or enhanced parks**

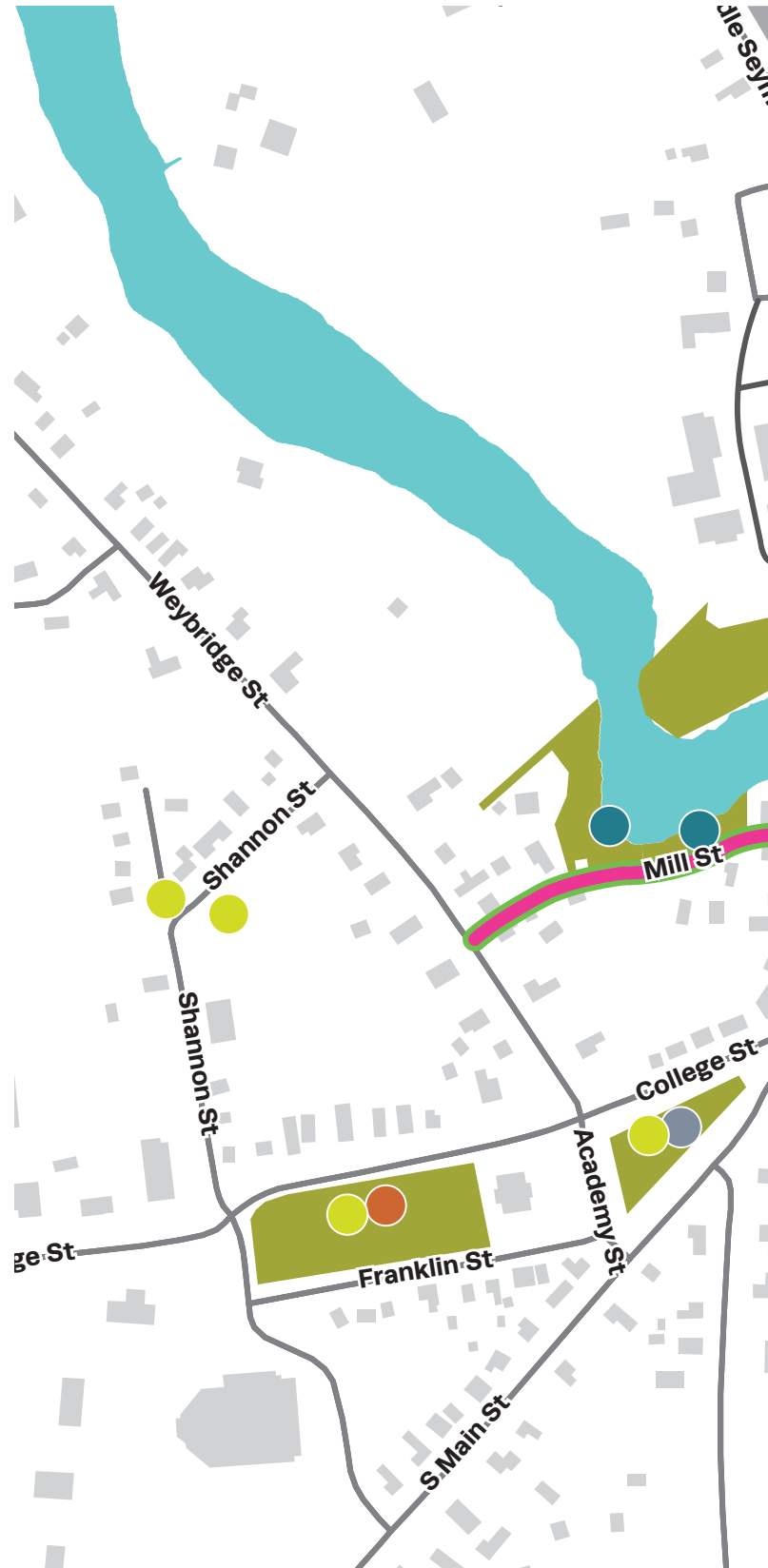




Stormwater Infrastructure Plan

This plan sets out a long-term vision for Green Infrastructure practices in the core of Downtown in addition to the park space. It also shows priority projects proposed for the east side of Downtown in the 2016 Downtown Stormwater Master Plan.

-  **Proposed Green Alley**
(pavement reduction and multiple other green features)
 -  **Bioswale / bioretention**
 -  **Sand filter**
 -  **Riverbank restoration / wet practice**
 -  **Existing green infrastructure**
 -  **2016 Downtown Stormwater Master Plan projects**
- 1** Seminary St. / High St. Bioretention
 - 2** High St. Buried Perforated Pipes
 - 3** Shaw's and Co-op Roof Cisterns
 - 4** Credit Union Grass Filter and Bioretention
 - 5** Washington St. Curb Extensions
 - 6** Outfall Conserved Area
 - 7** Seminary St./ Springfield St. Bioretention
 - 8** Buttolph Dr. Gravel Wetland



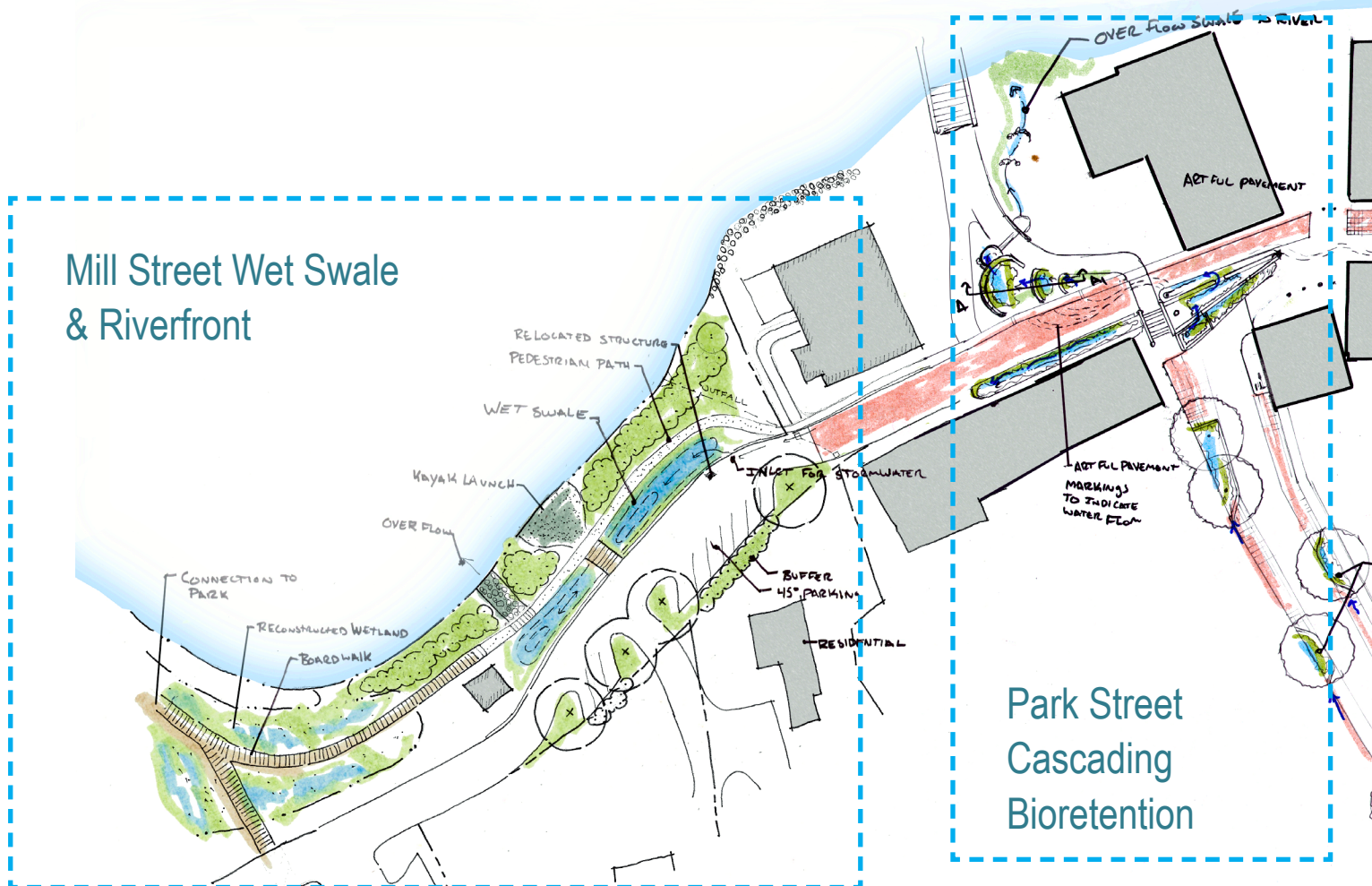


Green Alleys

The centerpiece of the Green Infrastructure plan for Downtown is the “Mill Street and Bakery Lane Green Alley Connection.” The concept includes multiple green alley pavement retrofits, bioretention/bioswale systems, riverbank restoration, and placemaking improvements. It greatly enhances waterfront access, landscape features, and views. From an urban design perspective, tying Mill Street and Bakery Lane improvements together as a single cohesive “green alley” unifies the pedestrian/waterfront experience on both sides of Main Street, knitting together Otter Creek access points, the pedestrian bridge, Frog Hollow Alley, Main Street, and Park Street.

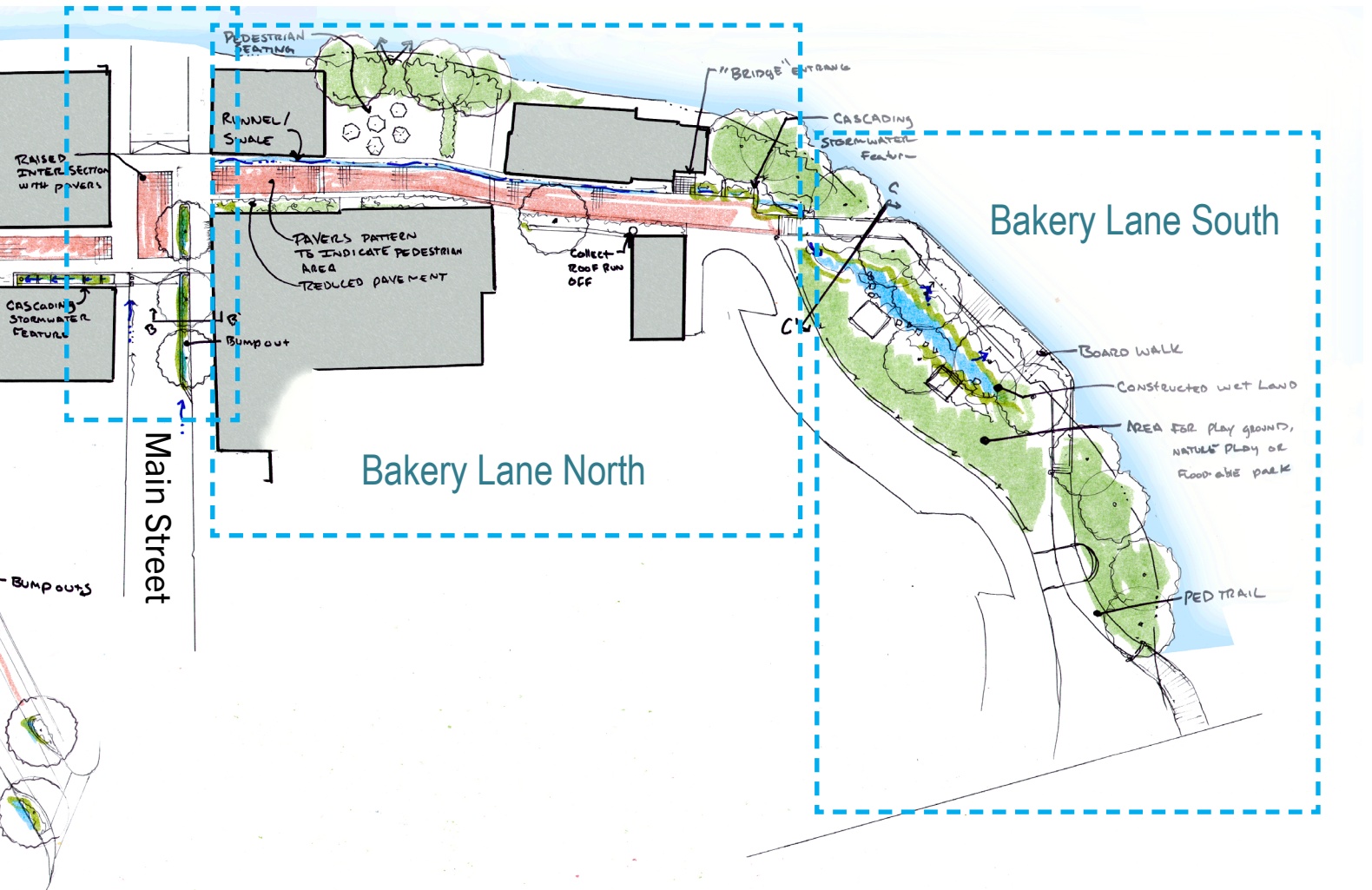
It will link into existing and proposed trails along Otter Creek and important walking routes Downtown.

The concept is comprised of multiple smaller pieces that could be phased over time, implementing each piece as funds become available or as part of municipal capital projects such as repaving or utility work. Street/alley improvements in this location can be tied together with bank access and restoration improvements, thus providing some cost efficiency and maximizing co-benefits and potential funding opportunities from multiple sources (i.e. stormwater, traffic/safety, public art).





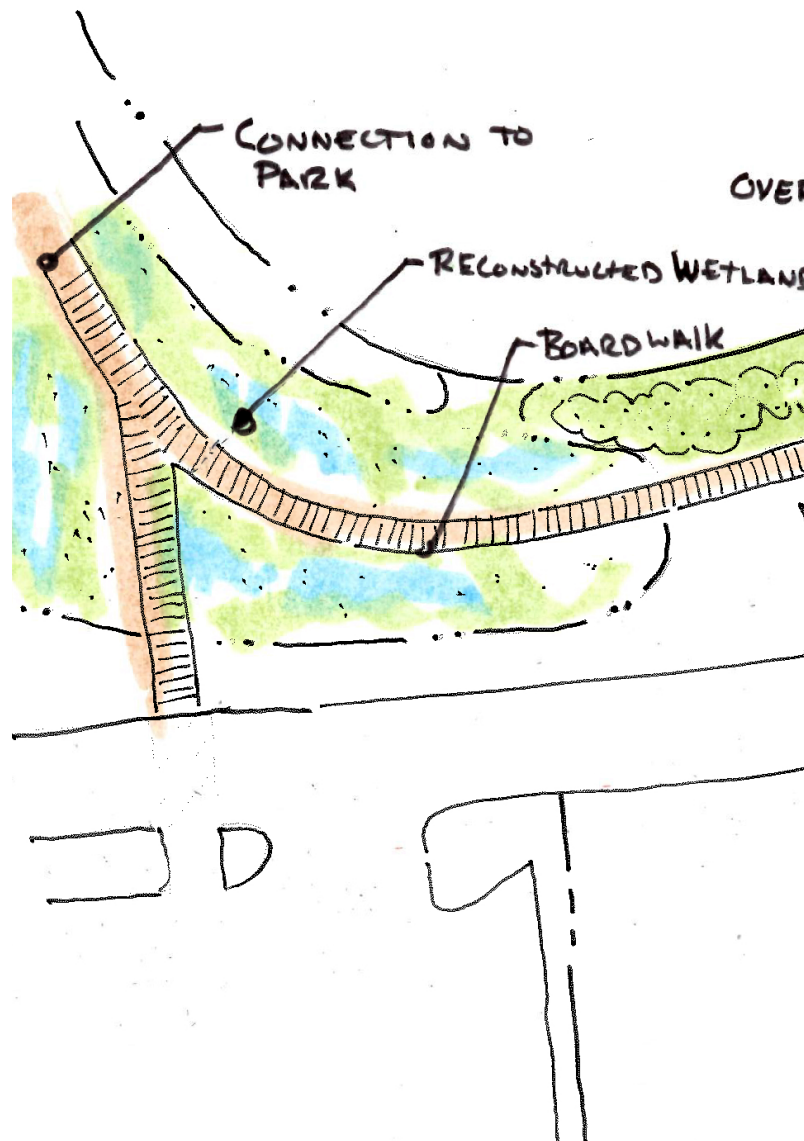
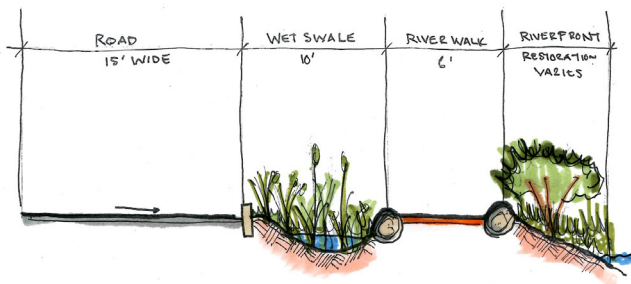
Main Street Crossing



Mill Street Wet Swale & Riverfront

This concept proposes reconfiguration of the existing angled parking on Mill Street to allow for improved visual and physical access to Otter Creek while improving water quality and stream bank health. The concept proposes a wet swale for stormwater treatment that can either tie into the existing outfall for small storm events or capture run off from the adjacent paved surfaces. A new waterfront path connection with a future kayak launch and bank restoration provides public water access. A future boardwalk extension to the west could expand the area's trail network by connecting to Middlebury College, Otter View Park, and Wright Park.

This project is of high value due to its topographically advantageous location at a low point, providing ability to capture and filter runoff from Mill Street. The Mill Street Wet Swale concept was chosen to receive Clean Water grant funding to advance to a 30% design level. The 30% design will be published separately.





Park Street Cascading Bioretention

The cascading bioretention concept envisions an artistically designed green stormwater practice that adds to the pedestrian experience at the end of the Otter Creek Pedestrian bridge. This artful cascade would convey stormwater runoff from Park Street down across Mill Street, through the entry experience to the Otter Creek pedestrian bridge, and into Otter Creek. The location's potential is derived from the coordination of green and artistic elements across Mill Street. The concept has potential to incorporate plantings to manage stormwater runoff; however, coordination with underground utilities will be required to determine feasibility. All elements should be coordinated with the crosswalk location.



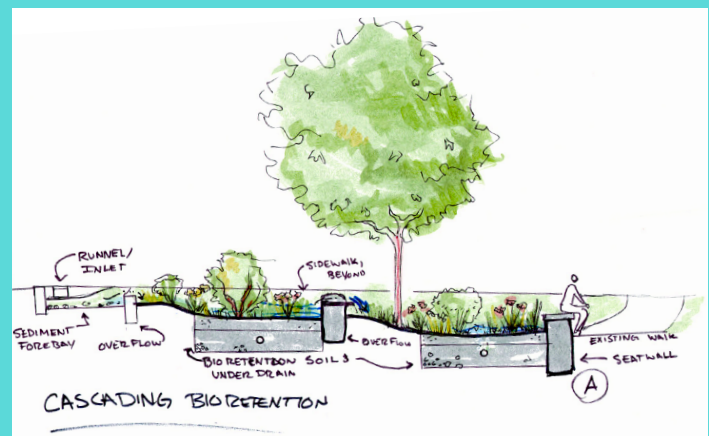
NOTE: This is an illustration of one possible scenario created to help the community visualize possibilities and create a platform for dialogue.

pedestrian alley experience and creates a focal point at the intersection. The new design, which runs through the existing retaining wall at Mill Street, adds visual prominence and uniqueness would benefit greatly from the new design. The new design would accept, filter, and convey stormwater in a way coordinated with improved pavement treatments at the intersection.



Legend

- 1 Bioswales enhance the street and capture stormwater as it comes down the hill.
- 2 Pervious pavers in parking areas help to capture stormwater.
- 3 Bioretention area enhances the street and holds stormwater.
- 4 Stormwater feature enhances the retaining wall and captures water as it transitions from the bioretention area to the stormwater features along the street.
- 5 Stormwater features along the street address water management needs and enhance the streetscape to the bottom of Mill Street.
- 6 Rain barrels provide additional options to reuse stormwater on-site.
- 7 Existing staircase extended and enhanced to increase the pedestrian experience.
- 8 Bike shop activates the shared street.
- 9 A “shared street” design allows everyone to use the street safely and enjoyably.
- 10 Utility pole relocation.

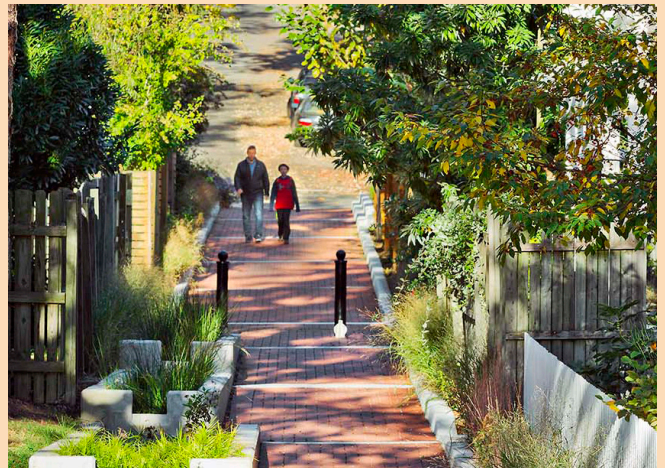


The Upland/Lowland Concept

Downtown Middlebury has unique topography that lends itself to two contrasting experiences of Downtown. Main Street and other commercial areas around the Town Green exemplify a picturesque New England village. However, there is another side of Middlebury – the low-lying area along Otter Creek, typified currently by parking lots and alleys around Bakery Lane and Frog Hollow. This Plan anticipates a unique strategy to emphasize these two differing experiences: Upland Middlebury and Lowland Middlebury. Upland Middlebury focuses on enhancing the traditional bustling, mixed-use New England village character. The Lowland concept would transform the somewhat neglected riverside spaces into a unique experience featuring Otter Creek as the star of the show.

In order to highlight the river and increase access to it, the plain asphalt streets and large parking areas currently found in the Lowlands can be transformed into a mixed use realm with a character and design language of its own – quirky, inviting alleys; connection to nature and water; cozy spaces reminiscent of historic fishing villages; gritty elements harkening to Middlebury’s industrial past; and expressions of the community’s creativity.

Due to the Lowlands’ proximity to the river, it will be crucial to deal with runoff and stormwater in a sustainable way. The Lowland areas will incorporate the high quality stormwater techniques presented in this chapter. This combination of placemaking and sustainability will add to the desirability of Middlebury as a place to live, visit, or run a business.

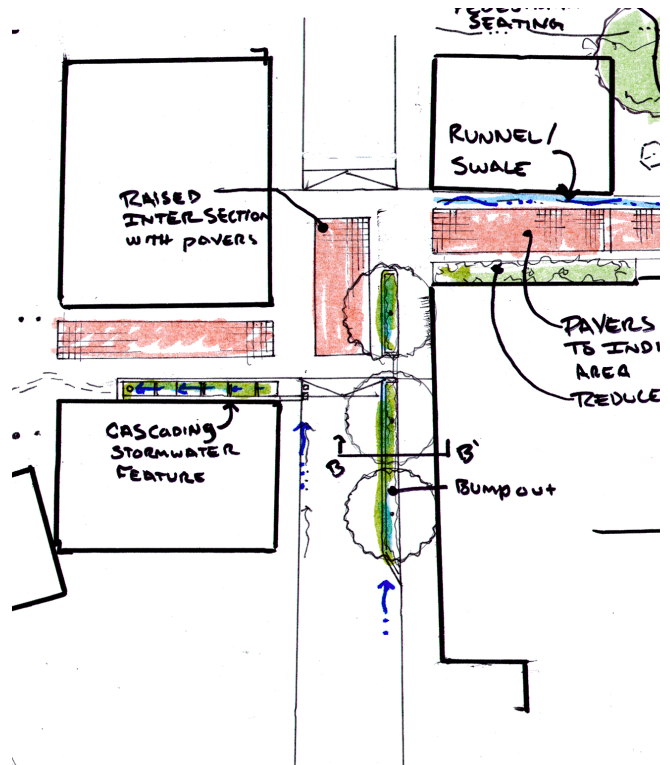


Human-scale green alleys evoking “Lowland Middlebury.” Center image: Q Street (Rhodeside Harwell)

Mill Street/Bakery Lane Crossing at Main Street

The hinge point of the Green Alley occurs at Main Street, where a raised intersection and special pavement will link the two streets and indicate increased pedestrian activity. Decorative archways would invite people to walk down these alleys from the “upland” of Main Street to explore alluring little destinations in the “lowland” areas by Otter Creek.

A bumpout of the Main Street curb will help signify this location and should include new street trees (pending investigation of potential utility conflicts). The bumpout could also be designed as a bioretention system or tree trench, to accept, filter, and infiltrate stormwater runoff. As described in the Transportation Choice section, the community may wish to extend the special raised paving down Main Street all the way across the Battell Bridge to create a pedestrian-priority area.



A raised crossing with planted bioretention bumpouts



A decorative archway in Littleton, NH

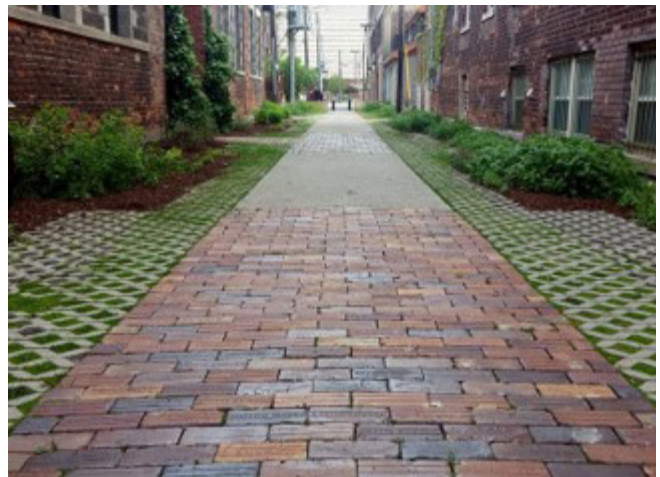
Bakery Lane North

The design for Bakery Lane North includes special pavers to enhance aesthetics and indicate the pedestrian area. Impervious surfaces are reduced, while stormwater runnels and swales creatively convey stormwater runoff towards the more expansive green infrastructure elements where Bakery Lane turns to the south.

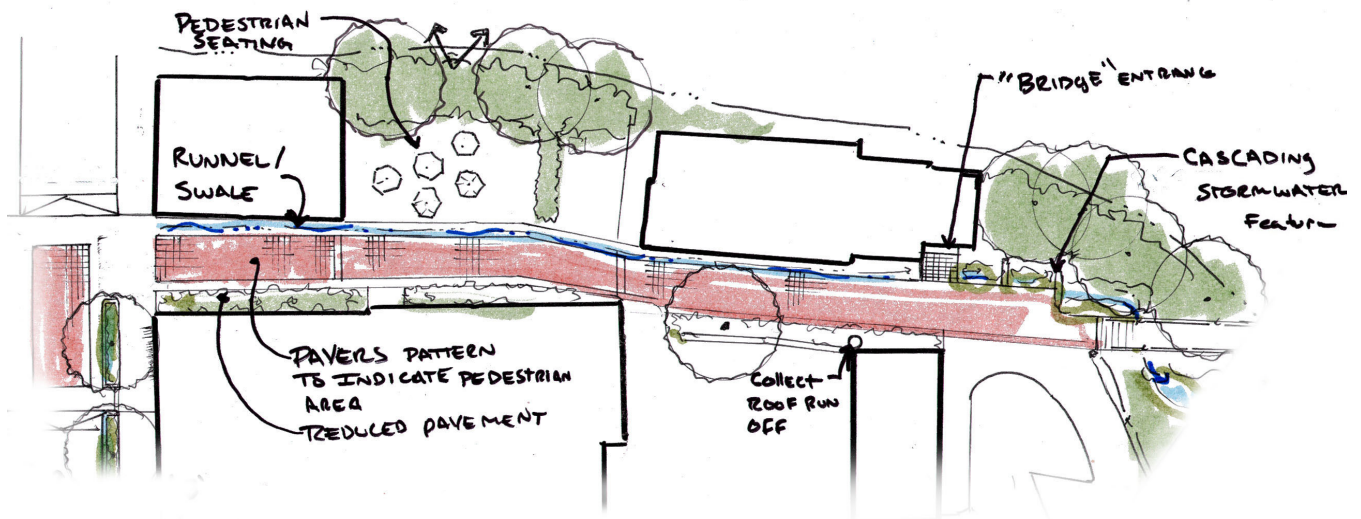
Public input supported the vision of a charming pedestrian alley enlivened by murals and other public art, ground-level retail in the Ben Franklin building, market stalls, and human-scale lighting fixtures.



An inviting retail alley in Portsmouth, NH



A green alley with permeable pavers



Street Trees and Permeable Pavers

Within the Green Alley concept and throughout Downtown, reduction of impervious area and addition of planted elements, especially shade trees, is encouraged. Shade trees will help cool the area, provide traffic calming, increase absorption of stormwater through transpiration, interception and increased infiltration, and beautify the Downtown streetscape. These benefits will continue to expand as the trees mature. To ensure trees have the best chance to reach their full potential of site and stormwater benefits, careful planning and engineering must ensure there is adequate volume provided for the tree root systems.



Street trees



A street tree in a Green Street design



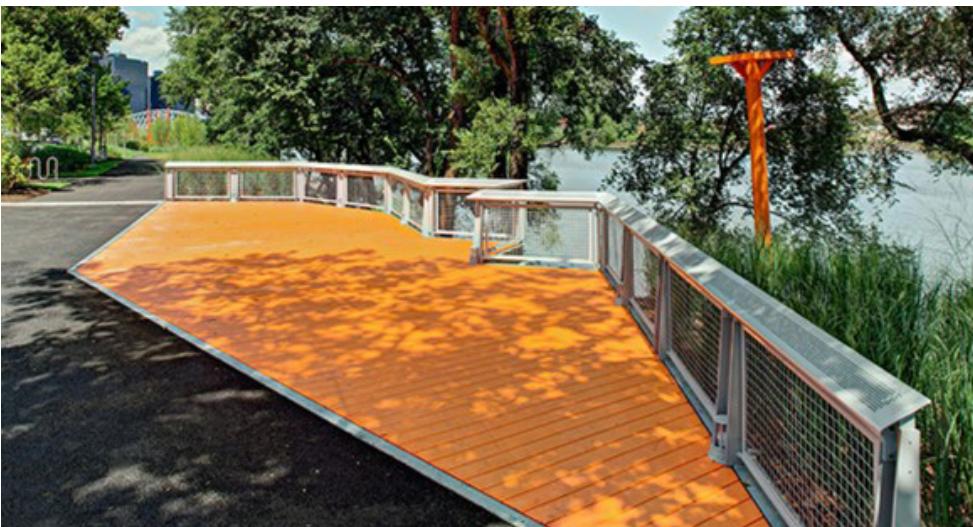
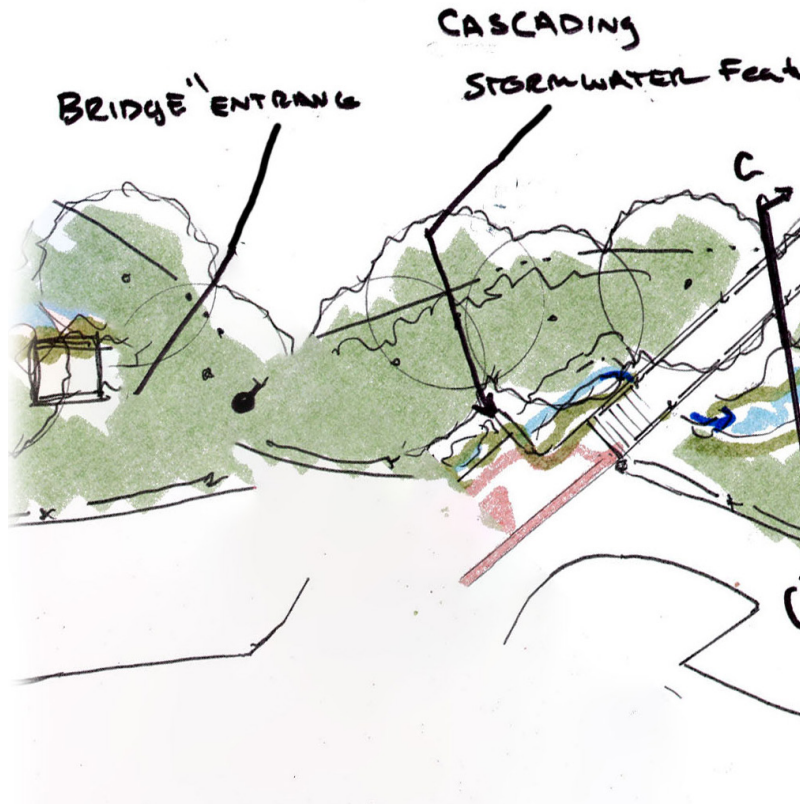
A permeable parking area

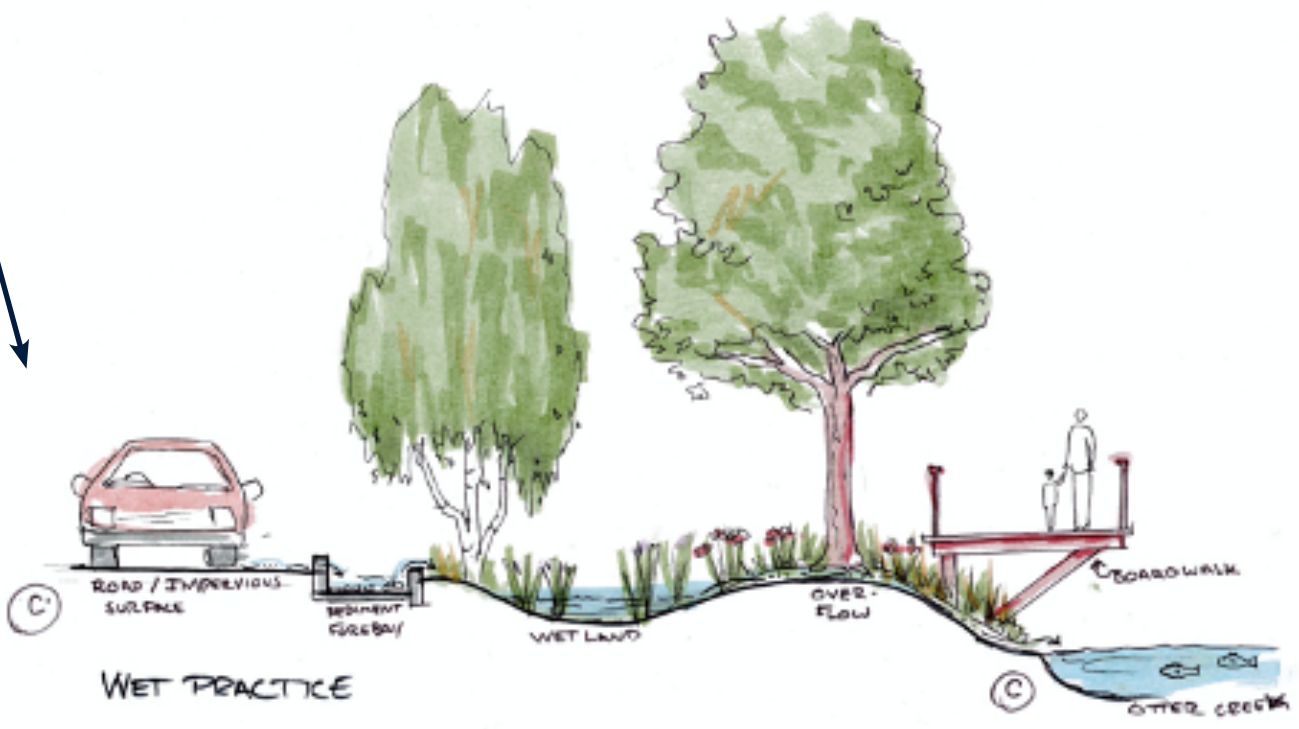
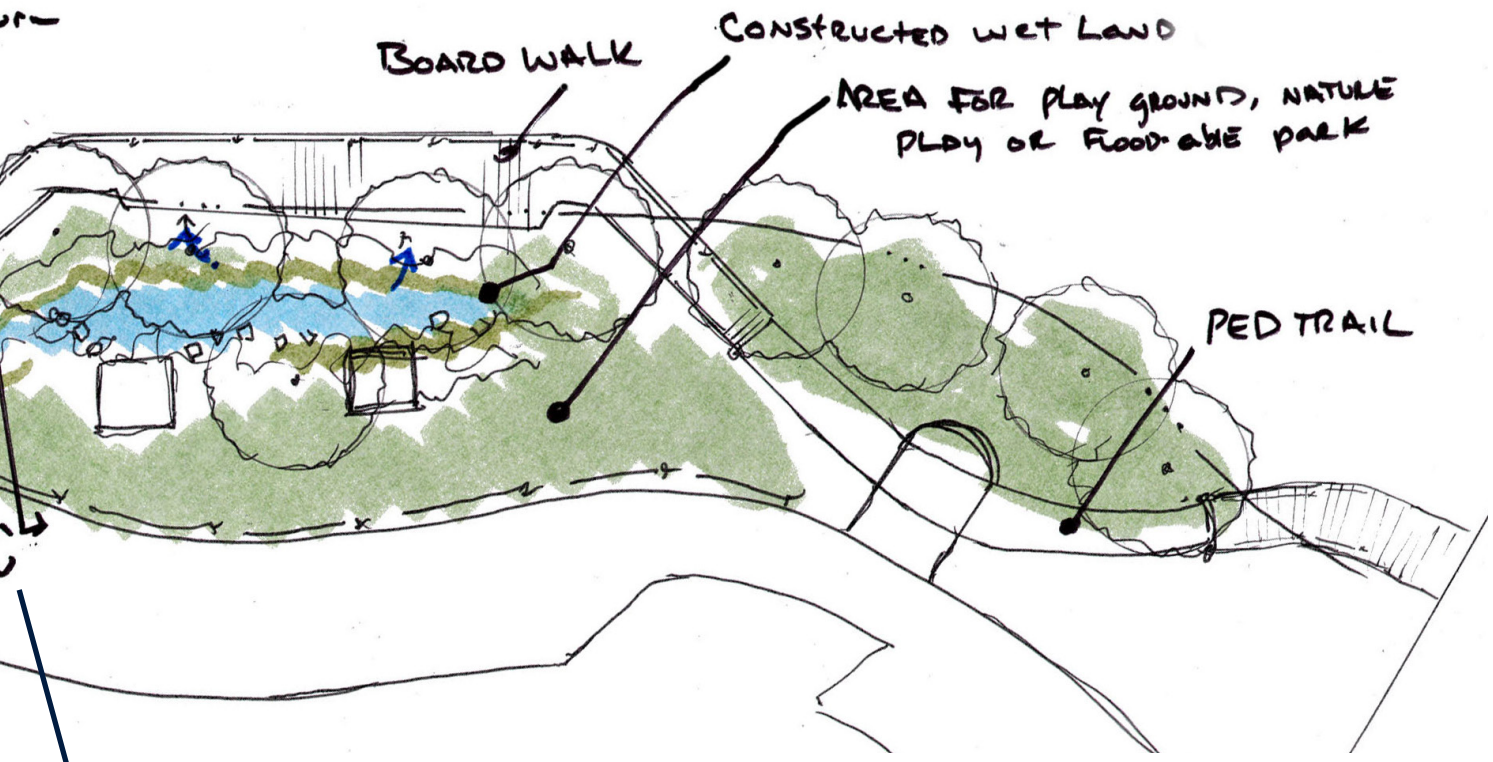


Permeable pavers

Bakery Lane South

The design for Bakery Lane South combines constructed wetland elements, creative stormwater conveyances, and a trail to create a waterfront park that connects the public to the river and improves bank health and habitat. Views from the tight Bakery Lane North alley section terminate on an attractive public boardwalk element and stormwater practice, where pedestrian views open up to vegetated bank elements and Otter Creek beyond.







Recommendations

- 01 Coordinate among Town departments and committees to wrap green infrastructure into transportation and utility projects whenever possible. Include the Planning Department in the process of planning for infrastructure upgrades.

 - 02 The Town Planner should work with the Parks & Recreation Committee and Planning Commission to update the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. Define the vision and purpose of the various parks throughout town and describe their connectivity to the green network. Plan for the use of trees and green stormwater infrastructure within these spaces.

 - 03 Add River Trail connections according to the Green Network Plan: along the west side of Otter Creek to Otter View Park in Weybridge; along Bakery Lane; and on the rail access road.

 - 04 Create new public open spaces according to the Green Network Plan: a new park within the proposed St. Mary's Pocket Neighborhood; a river park at Bakery Lane; the Mill Street park/bioswale; and Park Street improvements.

 - 05 Create a capital program for trails and public gathering spaces in Downtown as an economic driver and means of encouraging a diversity of visitors.

 - 06 Increase visibility in parks by adding lighting and removing vegetation where appropriate.

 - 07 Explore green infrastructure funding opportunities such as W.I.S.P.R 2.0 and Block Grants. Investigate creation of a separate stormwater infrastructure fund and municipal utility. Dedicate stormwater infrastructure funds for implementation and maintenance of Downtown impervious area reduction and tree planting projects within the public realm.

 - 08 Require development projects of a certain scale to utilize green infrastructure for stormwater management if technically feasible. Use the design review process to urge designers for new private development to incorporate new and innovative stormwater practices.

 - 09 Continue to nurture the Mill Street / Bakery Lane Green Alley vision and add more detail on design/materials so that implementation of each phase is consistent with the larger vision.

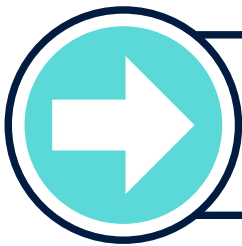
 - 10 Identify an entity to take the lead on green infrastructure advocacy and education. Do the math in advance so that the Town can consider the long-term economics of GI installation compared to immediate needs for deferred infrastructure maintenance.

 - 11 Consider public engagement methods like an "Adopt a Rain Garden" program and interpretive signage for green infrastructure to show Middlebury's commitment to being green.

 - 12 Engage the sustainability program at Middlebury College to assist with ongoing maintenance of stormwater treatments as well as other projects supporting the overall stormwater vision.
-



Photography by Jason Duquette-Hoffman



Housing Choice

Adding a variety of well-designed housing types Downtown will increase housing choices for residents of all ages, incomes, and abilities.



Housing Choice

The Middlebury community has expressed a desire to add housing Downtown, recognizing that additional residents will add vibrancy and that new housing can be beautifully and contextually designed. Public input supported adding a variety of housing types, from cottage courts to multi-story buildings, at a variety of price points.

Only six percent of Middlebury's population currently lives Downtown – 427 people in 174 households. There are roughly an equal number of rental and owner-occupied units. The average age of 38 shows that college students do not dominate Downtown.

Middlebury residents as a whole spend a smaller share of their incomes on housing than most Americans. Average housing costs are lower than the national average. The median income Downtown is about the same as in the Town as a whole and home values are lower. That said, the demand for affordable housing units in the Downtown area exceeds the inventory of available units. According to the Addison County Housing Coalition, this is particularly true for voucher-eligible one-bedroom units less than \$1,300/month. Anecdotally, there is a shortage of housing throughout the Town across a variety of price points and housing types meeting the needs of different income levels. There is not a balanced variety of housing available – there is more subsidized low-income housing and luxury housing than middle-income and family housing, and a lack of small square footage units.

There have been a few renovations and additions to the Downtown housing stock in recent years, but resulting in a net loss of affordable rental units and a very small increase in units overall.

Many rental units in the affordable range are in need of upgrading. There are several potential opportunities in Downtown for renovating and/or creating new upper story apartment units on Main Street.

Investors converting single family homes into commercial uses, vacation homes, student housing, long-term rentals, and apartments serving college faculty and visiting nurses have contributed to declining housing stock and increasing prices in recent years. However, there is also significant potential for creating accessory dwelling units on existing owner-occupied parcels.

The College owns several apartments and single family homes in the Downtown area, which are occupied by students and faculty. The College limits the number of students allowed to live off-campus, but values retaining the off-campus option for some of their more independent students.

Middlebury College and Porter Hospital are the two largest employers in Middlebury, and potential institutional partners for constructing middle-income housing in Downtown. Both desire more local housing opportunities for attracting faculty and staff. The demand for quality middle-income housing in Downtown is confirmed by local Realtors. Increasing the quantity and variety of housing options proximate to Downtown would also assist retail and restaurant business owners, who cite the lack of affordable housing convenient to Downtown Middlebury as a significant barrier to finding employees.



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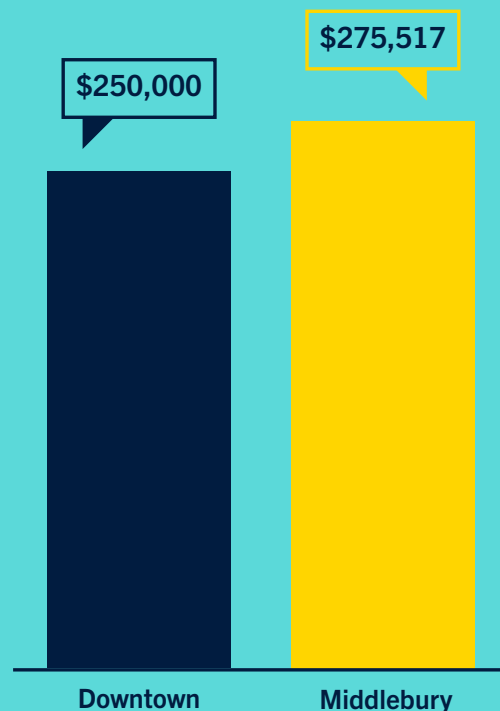
Housing units Downtown

WHAT WE HEARD

“Try to keep infrastructure service area as small as possible around Downtown.”

“Empty-nesters who used to walk with their kids to the schools, library, and pool would love to downsize and stay near Downtown”

Median Home Value for Owner-Occupied Units



Data Source: ESRI Community Analyst



Image credits clockwise from top: Jonathan Sloane, Opticos Design, Unknown, Douglas Lorber, Ariel Celeste Photography

A variety of housing types ranked favorably by Planapalooza™ participants

There is an affordable housing crisis in every county across Vermont, and Middlebury is not unique. As the shire town of Addison County, Downtown Middlebury is the logical location for adding affordable housing close to existing infrastructure and services. The Housing Wage represents the hourly wage a full-time worker must earn in order to afford a modest rental home while spending no more than 30% of their income toward housing costs. The Addison County Housing Coalition reports that the housing wage in Addison County is around \$26/hr. \$20,000 is the average income on the ACCT wait list, and the waiting time is currently three years. They report a chronic surplus of one-bedroom housing vouchers, which they attribute to a shortage of available one-bedroom units in Downtown Middlebury falling below the state limit (\$888/month plus utilities). Given the demand, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Downtown Middlebury is around \$1,000.

Local housing advocates have appeared at several public meetings stating the need for “tiny-house” or “cottage court” development, which they believe will help a population that is currently renting or homeless to complete a transition to home ownership. Several participants in our public input process reported demand for housing that would allow empty-nesters to downsize and move to small, high-quality units within walking distance of Downtown.

While there is unquestionably a need for more housing Downtown, it has not been established to housing developers whether demand is high enough to lease up a full new building at the lease-up pace and rent per square foot required to cover currently high construction costs. The “healthy”/normal vacancy rate of 7% does not indicate to developers a significant under-supply vs. demand.

Given these factors along with relatively low sales and rent prices and a stable housing supply in the region, any new unsubsidized housing would come in towards the top of the market. The market/demographic analysis showed that housing developers would likely target retirees as a key demographic who would be willing to pay a premium to live Downtown.

To help add housing targeted to more of the demographics identified in this section, the Town may wish to identify resources it could provide to incentivize housing development. Grants, tax abatements, land, or shared parking could help the financials work better for housing developers. The Town can also amend zoning and permitting requirements to encourage additional housing density and a variety of housing types.



Goals

-
- 01 Give more people of all ages, incomes, and household sizes the choice to live Downtown.

 - 02 Build more housing units Downtown to address the shortage of both ownership and rental units, including one-bedroom units eligible for housing vouchers.

 - 03 Encourage interesting, flexible, or creative residential product types that the community supports (e.g. live/work, fourplexes, cottage courts).

 - 04 Focus on creating new housing development as infill or in existing commercial and mixed-use areas to decrease the pressure to convert historic houses in established residential neighborhoods to offices and student housing.
-

Housing types ranked favorably by Planapalooza™ participants



Image credit: Kronberg Wall

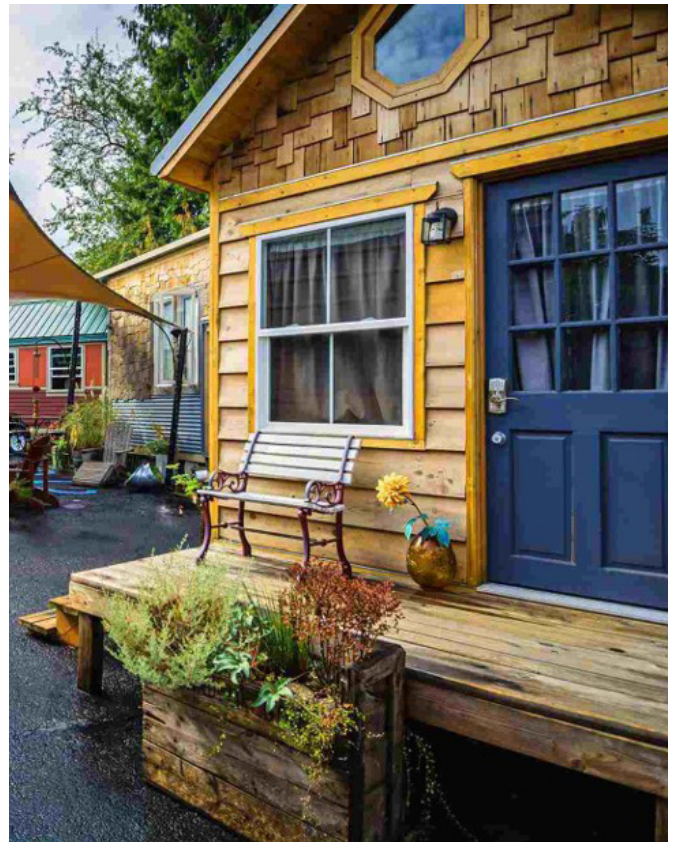


Image credit: Jeffrey Freeman



Recommendations

- 01 Amend zoning or permitting requirements in commercial and mixed-use areas as necessary to encourage a variety of dwelling types, for example to allow shorter setbacks in some areas.

- 02 Using existing Municipal Planning Grant, hire a planning consultant to assist in updating zoning regulations to encourage vibrant, walkable neighborhoods surrounding Downtown and allow the variety and density of housing types contemplated in this plan.

- 03 After updating zoning, the Planning Department should complete an application for Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) designation, creating new incentives for attracting housing developers to Downtown.

- 04 Identify resources the Town is willing to provide to incentivize housing development such as grants, tax abatements, land, or shared parking.

- 05 Modify zoning to allow small-scale affordable housing projects with shared facilities to be sited in more areas of Town.

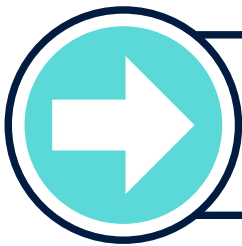
- 06 Create a visual resource as an appendix to the zoning regulations, to encourage interesting, flexible, representative residential product types.

- 07 Consider incentives for property owners, such as a revolving loan fund for upgrading existing rental housing and encouraging conversion of upper-story spaces on Main Street into apartments. Encourage building owners to have more conversations with Town planning staff about future aspirations for their property, and assist them in accessing funding assistance and tax incentives available within our designated Downtown.

- 08 Building on past efforts to ease regulations on accessory apartments, modify zoning to make accessory apartments easier to permit and provide guidance for complementing the historic architecture of existing neighborhoods.

- 09 Develop an accessory apartment how-to guide modeled after a similar initiative in Waitsfield, to assist homeowners in creating accessory apartment units. Provide visual examples of attractive carriage barn conversions, etc. to guide design efforts. Consider creating a flyer to distribute to property owners encouraging accessory apartments.

- 10 Given the impacts of COVID on the market for short-term rentals, develop resources to help AirBnB owners convert their rentals into for-sale products.



Transportation Choice

Targeted infrastructure improvements can make Downtown more walkable, bikeable, and sustainable.



80

Connectivity Improvements

Transportation Choice

Downtown Middlebury is an inviting place to visit on foot, with a multitude of destinations (schools, workplaces, restaurants, etc.) in close proximity, the most important criteria for walkability. The Downtown street network also connects directly into the paths of Chipman Hill Park, the Trail Around Middlebury (TAM), and beyond – an enviable accessibility to natural and rural areas. ACTR provides Downtown with bus and shuttle service to local and regional destinations. Rail service will be restored to Middlebury in 2021; comfortable and inviting walking routes to the new platform on the northern side of Downtown will be essential.

Middlebury has a “hub and spoke” pattern of roads leading into its Downtown area, which formed in response to early industry along the Otter Creek in association with the Falls. While most streets have sidewalks, there are a few gaps. There are no dedicated bicycle facilities Downtown, but there are some paved shoulders used by bicyclists. Generally, more experienced riders use the travel lanes and “low-stress” riders use the sidewalks, trails, and side streets. Available data on the following pages shows crashes, recreational routes, and traffic congestion.

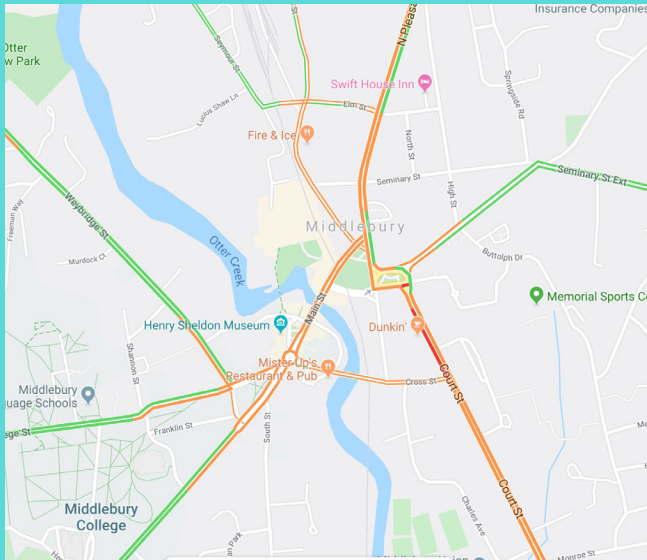
Middlebury residents clearly expressed that they want Downtown to become even better for walking and bicycling. As part of their dedication to sustainability, they understand that reducing reliance on cars benefits the environment and improves health and equability.

Participants in the Downtown Master Plan process identified intersections that felt unsafe to cross on foot or bicycle and routes that were commonly used by schoolchildren. They also drew on a map where they thought there should be improved walking, biking, and driving routes. Mōd Transportation Consulting used these insights as well as analysis of transportation data to produce targeted recommendations.

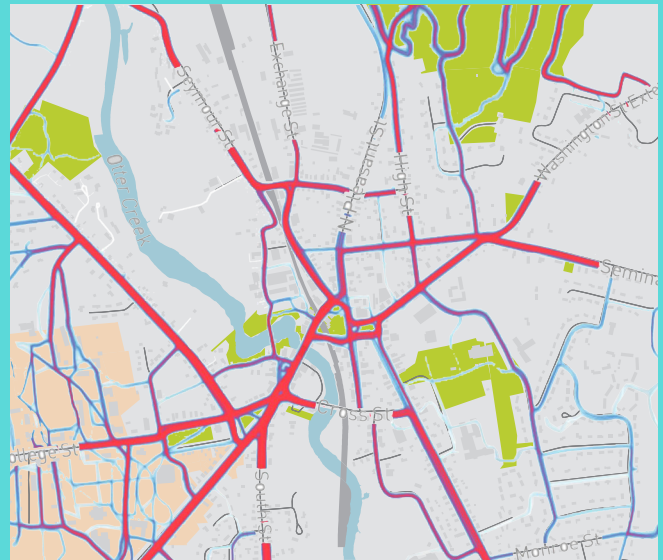
WHAT WE HEARD

“Make it easier for bikes, cars, pedestrians”

“People drive just a few blocks because it’s uncomfortable biking in the lane with cars”



The typical afternoon traffic graphic is taken from smartphone tracking data collected by Google, averaged over a few months in autumn 2019. The weekday mid-afternoon hour (3:00-4:00) typically had the highest traffic flow. The green indicates free flow, orange a slight slow-down, and red more drastic slowing or stopping. Slow-downs (orange) are not a bad sign in walkable Downtown areas as it indicates vehicles are traveling at or lower than the speed limit.



The Strava heat map is derived from Strava users logging their running, walking, and biking trips, usually for exercise, not commuting. It gives a good picture of the places where people feel comfortable moving about on foot or bike. While side streets and trails are seeing good use, most of the exercise routes are on the major streets in town, which highlights the importance of making sure they are all bicycle and pedestrian friendly.



On-street parking can help buffer the sidewalk from traffic. Current research on parking management reveals that charging just the right amount so that about one space per block of on-street parking is always open leads to less traffic circling for parking, discourages shop employees from taking prime storefront spots all day, and benefits business revenues (the "right amount" may be zero for many blocks). Parking revenue can be used in turn to beautify and improve the streetscape and shopping environment.

Crash Data and Traffic Counts

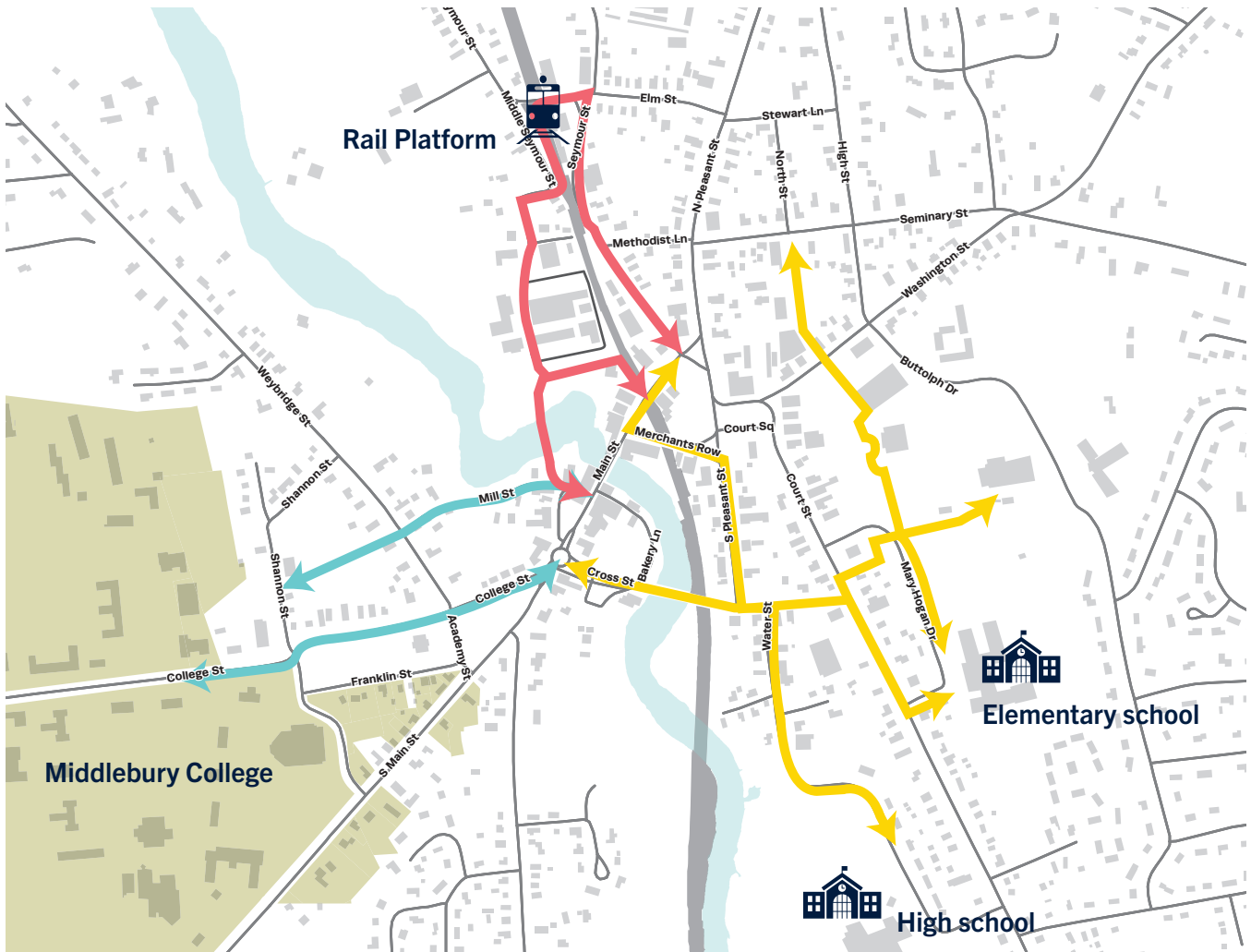
The following map of crash locations in the past decade reveals “hotspots” that should be addressed in the street network. The map also includes average daily vehicle counts for most Downtown streets. Main Street carries the most vehicles per day, followed by Route 7.

- Traffic counts (higher, mid-range, lower)
- Crash with injury
- Crash with property damage only



Data Source: VTrans

Key routes taken by three significant populations of (potential) walkers and bicyclists: schoolchildren, Middlebury College students, and rail travelers.



Goals

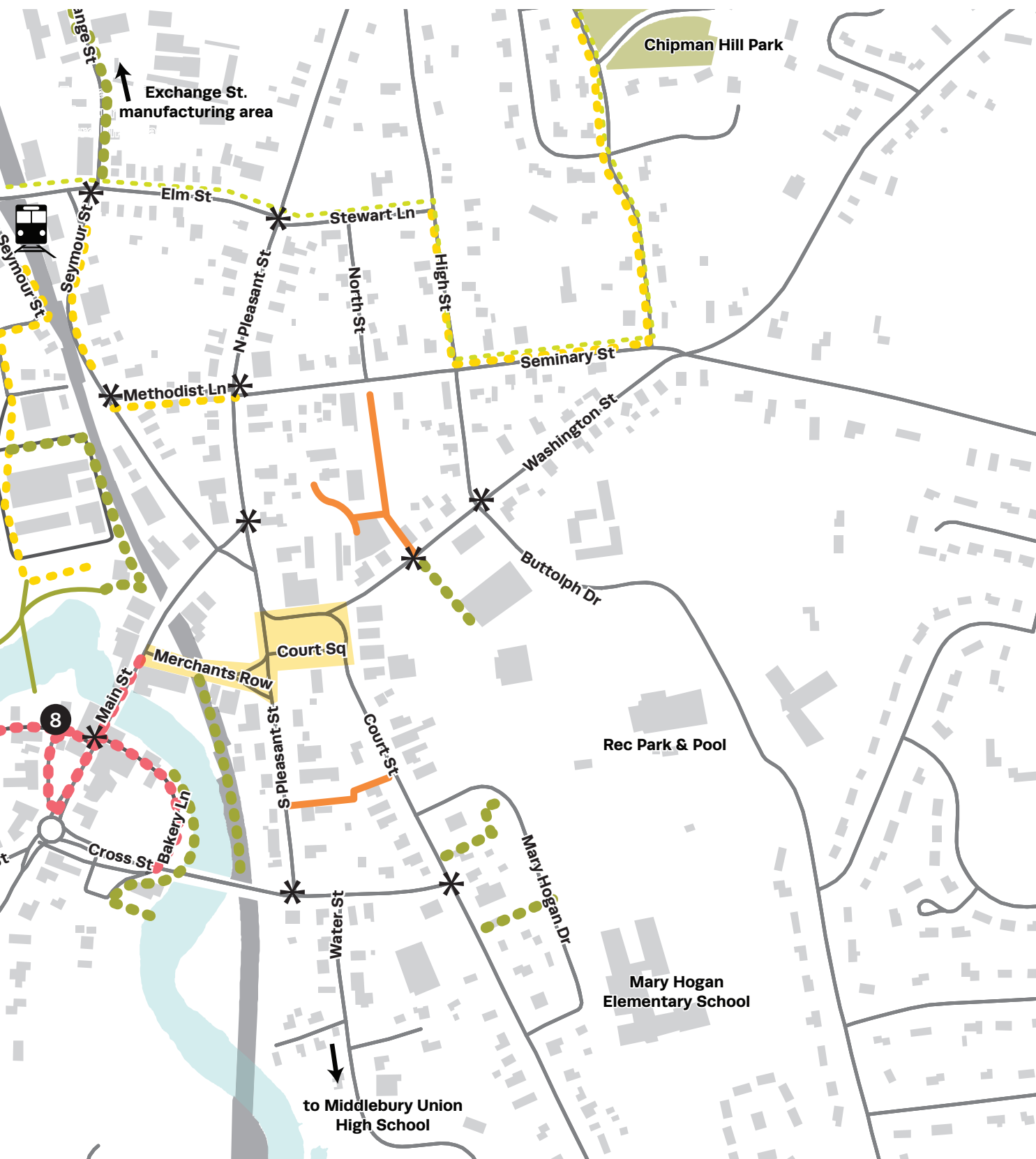
- 01 Implement a complete and successful walking, biking, and transit network that is safe, comfortable, and accessible for all ages and abilities.
- 02 Focus on the connections between meaningful destinations and provide residents with the ability to travel to amenities, businesses, schools, civic spaces, libraries, and more.
- 03 Support the vibrancy and economy of the Downtown core by improving routes between it and the new rail platform, Middlebury College, and all Downtown schools – high or potentially high populations of walkers and bicyclists to draw visitors from.

Connectivity Improvements

The proposed improvements shown on the map will address gaps in connectivity for all modes of travel Downtown. They are described in detail on the following pages.

-  Sidewalks to connect gaps ①
-  Proposed shared street designs ②
-  New through streets ③
-  Existing marked on-road TAM
-  Existing multimodal paths / trails
-  Proposed multimodal paths ④
-  Improve intersections for safety and placemaking ⑤
-  Court Square proposed lane redesign ⑥
-  Future rail platform and amenities ⑦
-  Bus transit hub





Connectivity Improvements

1 Sidewalks to connect gaps

The map on the prior page shows gaps in the sidewalk network that should be reconnected.



Photography by Michael Flynn

2 Proposed shared street designs

Shared streets, also known as pedestrian-priority streets, allow vehicles but are designed for people walking. Replacing asphalt with attractive pavers, having the street level with the sidewalks, and adding other streetscape elements dramatically slows the car speeds down, creating a much more inviting pedestrian and retail environment (<https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/streets/commercial-shared-street/>). East Fourth Street, Cleveland, has a popular shared street design pictured at top left.



3 New through streets

Add or redesign human-scale through-streets for vehicles as well as other users to increase connectivity and disperse congestion in the Downtown street network. Many of these routes are through existing parking lots and should be designed in a way that prioritizes walking, with slow speeds.

4 Proposed multimodal paths

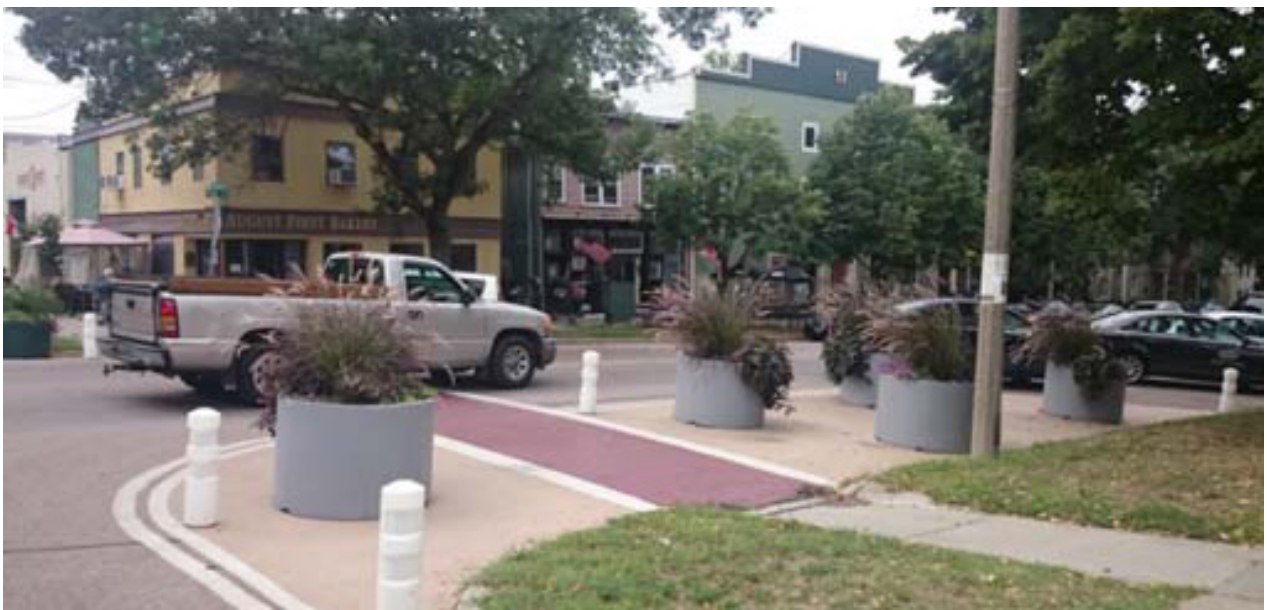
Build a multimodal greenway connecting the proposed boardwalk on Mill Street to the northwest along Otter Creek to Otter View Park. By Bakery Lane, add boardwalks, river access, and canoe/kayak launches as described in the Green Network recommendations as well as a comfortable biking/walking access to the proposed put-in under the Court Street bridge. Extend/formalize trails along the Creek from Riverside Park to Otterside Court. Build a multimodal greenway along the east side of Otter Creek from Cross Street to Merchants Row.

Multimodal paths should also be added in a few mid-block locations, mainly to formalize walking routes that are now parking lots. Curbing or other physical separation from motorized vehicles will add safety. Locations include the commonly traveled route through the Shaw's parking lot to the elementary school; through the Marble Works to the pedestrian bridge and to Printers Alley; and between Court Street and Mary Hogan School.

5 Improve intersections for safety and placemaking

Study, design, and implement improvements at priority intersections that were identified to be assessed for safer design interventions based on crash rates and community input. The study could be part of the recommended Middlebury Bike/Ped Plan. The existing redesign for Seymour/Methodist based on the Local Motion popup project would include painting a crosswalk, emphasizing crosswalk entrances with planters,

and squaring off the northeast corner of the intersection to secure the crosswalk, as in this example from Burlington. The Downtown Master Plan Illustrative Plan renderings include aligning the Shaw's and Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op entrances on Washington Street and improving the pedestrian realm in a way that ties into both the liner building design and the formalized pathway to the elementary school.

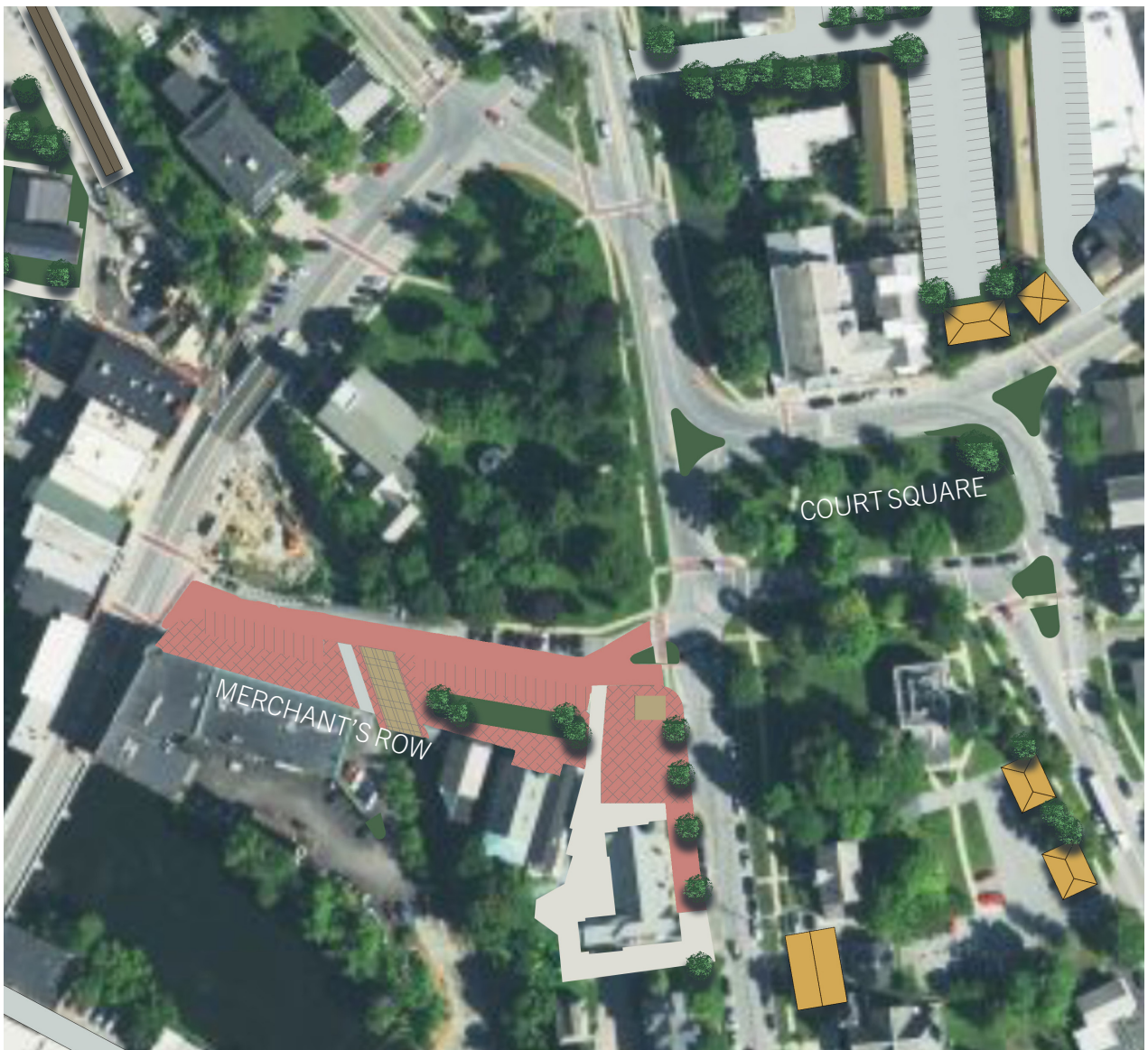


6 Court Square/Merchant's Row proposed redesign

The Downtown Master Plan process yielded a progressive pedestrian-friendly transportation redesign for Court Square. The number of lanes remains the same, but the corner radii and lane widths are tightened for traffic calming (target speed of 20mph). This also adds more room for green space, on-street parking, and sidewalks or sidepaths. The lane configuration is the same, so there would be no volume reductions, only reduced speeding. The design frees up space for wider sidewalks, new on-street parking, and for tree strips between the sidewalk and the street. A reverse of direction on Mahady Court to be

eastbound (coming out from the district court building) enables removal of the traffic light at Court Square and Court Street.

Merchant's Row has been reconceived as a "Shared Street" designed such that pedestrians have the priority while cars can still move through at low speeds. This will make Merchant's Row even more of a destination, allowing for flexibility in the location of outdoor dining and social distancing as well as making it conducive to temporary closures for events.



7 Future rail platform and amenities

A wayfinding kiosk should be added at the platform, especially since arriving passengers aiming to walk to the center of Downtown via Seymour Street will have to first walk away from Downtown in order to cross the tracks. A public restroom could be added near the platform as part of a new Downtown-area Chamber of Commerce office.

Routes between the rail platform and Main Street should be as comfortable and accessible to walkers and bicyclists as possible. In addition to addressing sidewalk gaps on Seymour and Maple, the underpass sidewalk on Elm should be made more welcoming. Street trees should be considered on Seymour to define the street and enhance the walking environment. Rerouting heavy trucks coming from the north to Route 7 rather than Lower Seymour will also improve the walking and biking environment.

8 Staircase improvements

Improve the staircases from the Mill Street parking lot up to the Academy Street Transit Hub and from Park Street to Mill Street. Stairs can be an opportunity for art, such as these examples from Costa Mesa, CA (right) and Valparaiso, Chile (below).





Recommendations

-
- 01 Develop a Town-wide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan proposing more detailed interventions for priority intersections and corridors as well as new linkages and easement acquisition.

 - 02 Seek grant funding to hire a consultant to prepare a Downtown Parking Inventory and Management Plan, including recommendations about charging for parking and funding future parking infrastructure improvements. The plan should calculate and compare costs to build structured parking (typically \$25,000-\$40,000 per space) and to maintain existing public parking in lots such as Frog Hollow.

 - 03 Coordinate with stormwater infrastructure improvements to create trails and green buffers, improve river access and connect green spaces in Downtown.

 - 04 Amend public works specifications to include Complete Streets principles and example drawings.

 - 05 Amend zoning to require developers to incorporate neighborhood-friendly streetscape amenities along with new construction.

 - 06 Engage the Town, VTrans, and ACRPC in a planning process for re-routing large truck traffic away from the Downtown section of Main Street (Merchant's Row to the traffic circle).

 - 07 Put on Open Streets events to provide a car-free experience of Downtown (see photo at right). Use future events as demonstration projects for reducing/eliminating traffic on certain streets.

 - 08 Bury utilities when possible to enhance the appearance of the public right-of-way. Plan road upgrades well in advance in order to anticipate opportunities to apply for funding for complementary streetscape improvements.

 - 09 Incrementally replace fixtures in Downtown with Dark Sky compliant lighting for a more rural experience of the night sky.

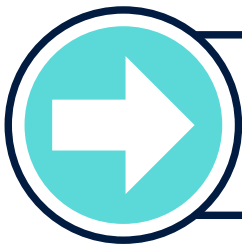
 - 10 Expand the role of Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) in fostering cooperation between ACTR, College shuttles, CarShare Vermont, Amtrak, Go!Vermont and other organizations to maximize mode options at the rail platform and throughout the Town. ACRPC should take a leadership role in working with the Vermont Rail Action Network to bring other forms of passenger rail to Addison County.

 - 11 Consider typical walking/biking routes to schools (elementary, high school, preschools, and Middlebury College) in all future transportation investments. Collaborate with the Safe Routes to Schools committee.

 - 12 Add a public water station and restroom near Recreation Park.
-



Photography by [unreadable]



Economic Vibrancy

Downtown Middlebury should be a robust center for business, shopping, and employment. This chapter looks at opportunities in three key areas of economic development: retail, tourism, and entrepreneurship.



- 94 **Retail & Restaurants**
- 98 **Tourism & Hospitality**
- 102 **Innovation & Entrepreneurship**

Photo credit: Middlebury Food Co-op

Economic Vibrancy

The Downtown Master Plan process combined public input with a robust review of market conditions to identify strengths and weaknesses and craft strategic approaches for increased economic vibrancy.

Middlebury attracts residents and visitors for many reasons: a remarkable community spirit and sense of togetherness; work and study opportunities at Middlebury College; regional industry based on forests, food, and beverages; recreational and scenic assets; and the wealth of arts and culture in a small-town package. As the Addison County shire town, Middlebury attracts people from around the region for goods and services. Middlebury's two largest employers are Middlebury College and Porter Hospital, both located walking distance from Downtown.

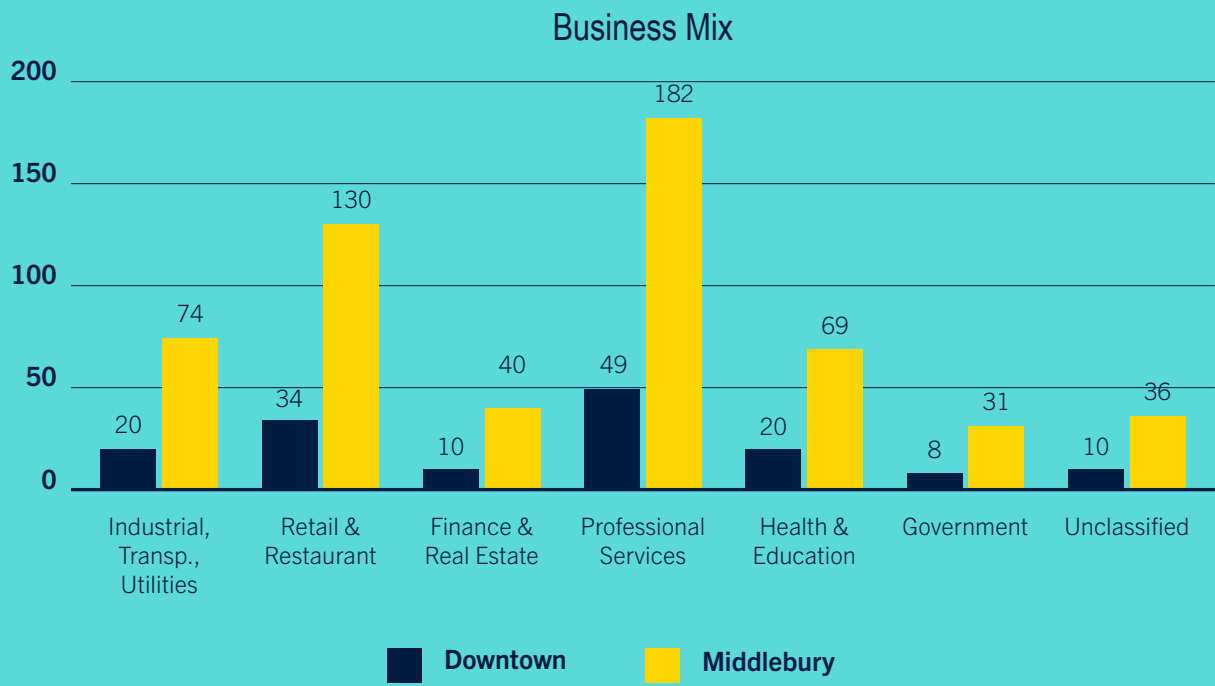
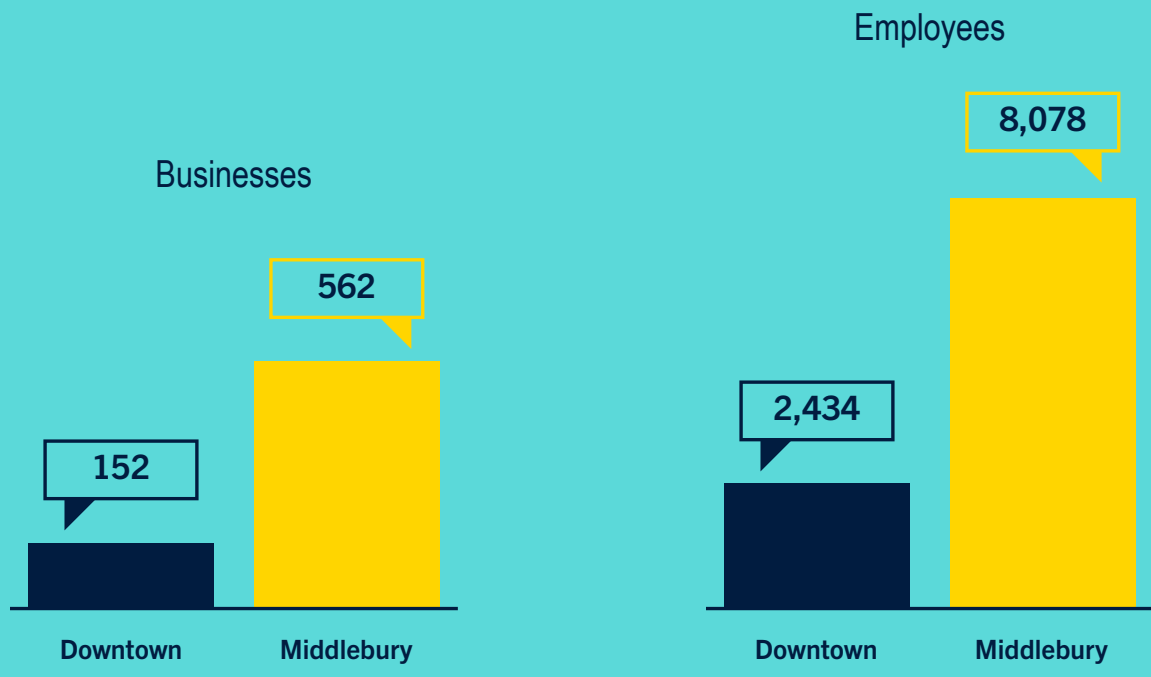
While these assets are conducive to a strong local economy, Middlebury businesspeople report some limitations, particularly a lack of retail employees. Restaurants Downtown have trouble finding staff and when they do, say they can't find affordable apartments nearby. Highly skilled workers hired by the College and Hospital have trouble relocating to Middlebury because of a lack of childcare (some have multi-year waiting lists), available housing, and employment opportunities for spouses.

Demographic data shows that Middlebury's economic advantages include a well-educated but

aging workforce. There is limited population growth and limited commercial growth Downtown. There is limited retention of young adults with local roots and Middlebury College graduates, and therefore unsurprisingly, a noticeable lack of 23- to 30-year olds. This age group has found difficulty finding jobs that match their skill sets.

Economic strategies should build on Middlebury's existing assets like the vibrant arts scene, active and involved community, local food and beverage industry, and rural charm. The Town should take steps to attract everyone to spend time Downtown – all generations, locals and tourists, families and students. Because Middlebury is remote, creating an experiential retail destination is crucial. The Town should aim to become an innovation center for the region – a place for people and businesses who want to enjoy small town living and nature while being in a highly creative environment.

27% of businesses and 30% of jobs in Middlebury are located in the Downtown area. The vitality of Downtown is critical to the economic success of the Town as a whole.



Source for all data on this page: CSB Business Analyst

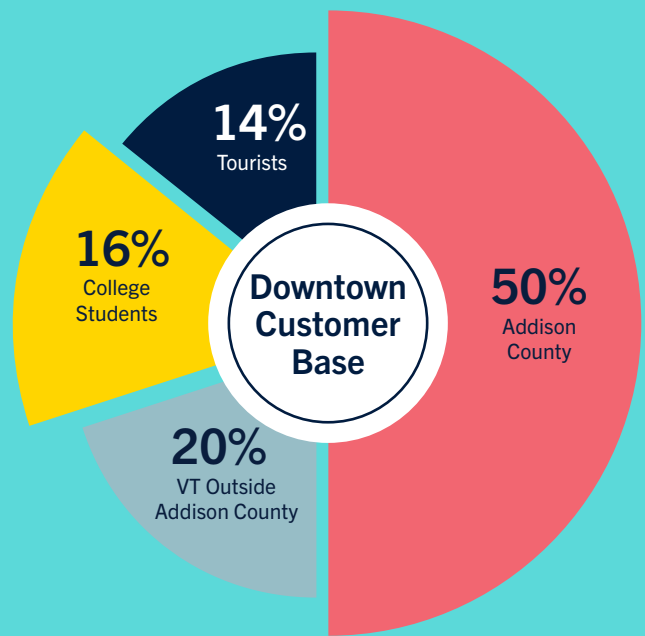
111

Total Retail Spaces in Downtown

8

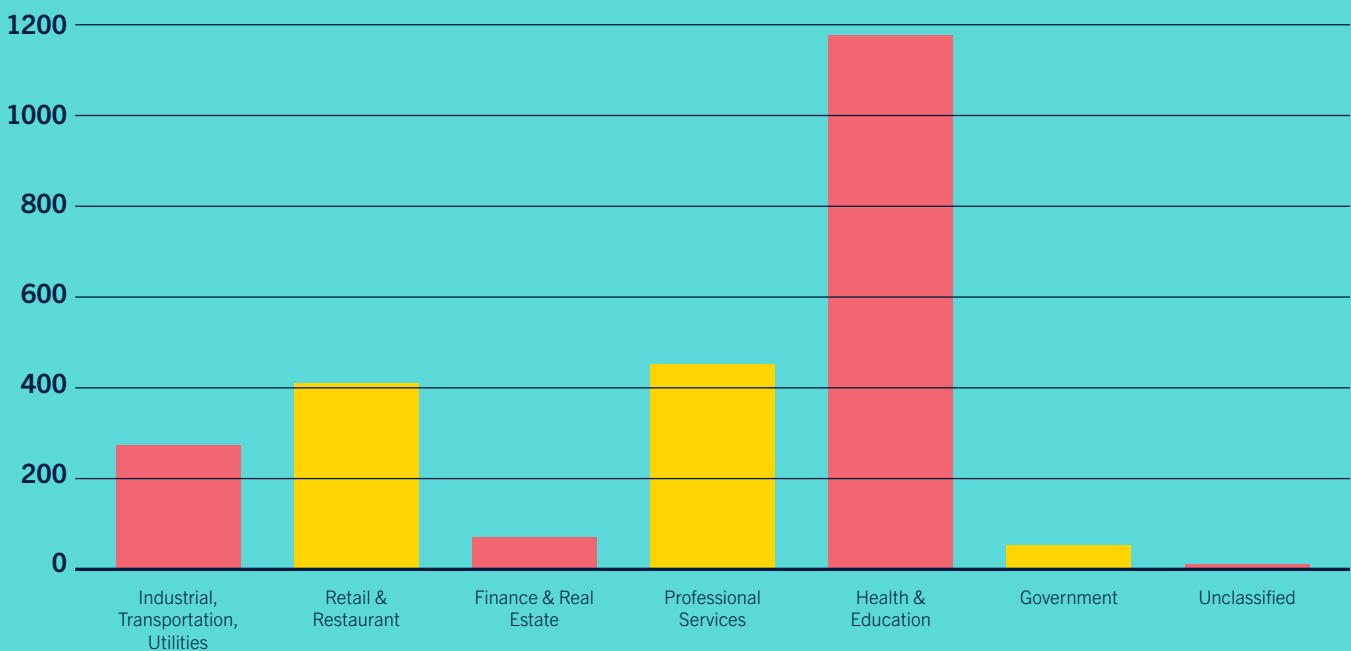
Storefront Vacancy

0%

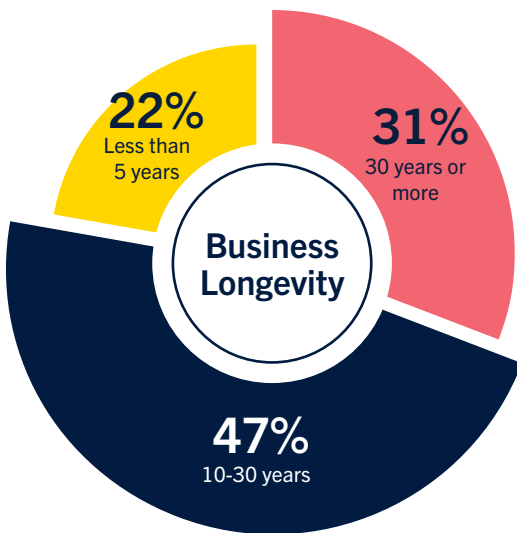


		Avg. Size	Avg. Rent/SF	% Owner Occupied
46	Merchandise Retail	1,460 sf	\$16/sf/year	24%
36	Office or Service	1,500 sf	\$15/sf/year	20%
20	Restaurant or Drinking Space	2,000 sf	\$14/sf/year	23%

Number of Downtown Jobs per Sector



Source: Business Owner and Customer Surveys, Summer 2019



0% 5-10 Years

WHAT WE HEARD

“People want to live here”

“College students don’t mix much with locals or spend time Downtown”

“Beautiful, historic, and a real Downtown feel”

“People try to shop local”

Retail & Restaurants

Over the years, the Middlebury community has noted changes in Downtown businesses such as losses of traditional practical goods shops (a trend seen around the country) and increased targeting of outside visitors as customers. Data shows that sales are increasing for most businesses, although the rail construction project is taking a toll. Commercial rents in Downtown are widely variable. Several established businesses are benefited by owning their own buildings.

Shoppers report dissatisfaction with limited opening hours and a lack of easy parking. They would like to see “another Ben Franklin,” a music venue, a general store, and an electronics store Downtown. The data analytics service ArcGIS Business Analyst shows opportunity gaps in home furnishings, lawn and garden supplies, specialty foods, and jewelry. Survey respondents expressed a desire for more nightlife and entertainment in Downtown, as well as events held in alcohol-free spaces where the under-21 crowd and others would feel welcome.

Downtown retail and food businesses rely on Addison County patrons for over 50% of their sales, especially during the off-season. Most Downtown businesses have not embraced trends such as experiential retail, online shopping and marketing, and delivery. Retail businesses that provided unique items, those that filled a specialized niche, and those providing an experience or special service to customers reported growth in recent years, and are demonstrating a competitive advantage over online retailers. There are several unique local manufacturers on Exchange Street who could complement Downtown with a retail presence on Main Street (Danforth Pewter is a model).

Downtown Middlebury lacks a clear branding and marketing strategy. Retail and restaurant business owners reported in a survey that they appreciate Downtown’s historic charm, but have difficulty finding employees and attracting students as patrons. They reported a lack of new business orientation and support services, and a desire for an entity to serve as a point of contact and advocate for the concerns of Main Street businesses. In many places, these functions are performed by a Downtown organization.

Retail businesses will benefit from things that generate additional pedestrian foot traffic in Downtown. It should be noted that increased foot traffic and abundant parking do not necessarily go hand in hand.

Middlebury College students are an important resource to continue to tap as employees, customers, and fresh faces Downtown.



Goals

- 01 Draw more Addison County residents to shop and spend time Downtown.
- 02 Increase and enhance marketing of Downtown.
- 03 Embrace “experiential retail” with Downtown as a place to see and be seen. Enhance the shopping experience while also increasing retail shopping activity.
- 04 Embrace place-based economic development – building on local natural and cultural assets to grow jobs that can’t be outsourced.
- 05 Build a sense of “ritual” and loyalty in Downtown shoppers through enjoyable events that bring them Downtown on a regular basis.

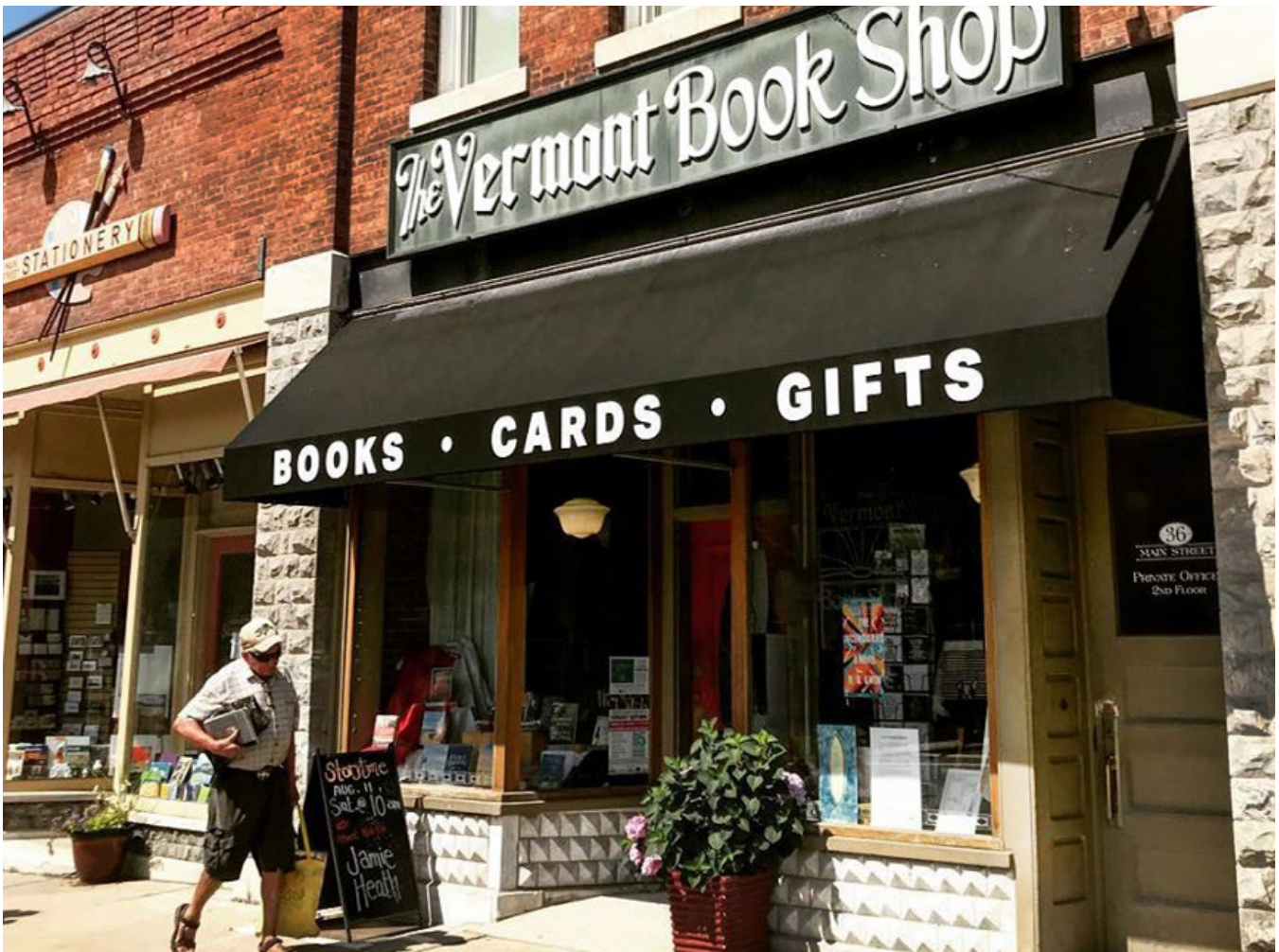


Photo credit: Vermont Book Shop



Recommendations

- 01 Create or expand a local or regional Downtown organization to provide greater direct support to Downtown businesses by maintaining consistent relationships with business owners and serving as a liaison to the Town. Assist with recruitment and marketing, work with stakeholders to develop a marketing and branding strategy, provide new businesses support services, and help Downtown businesses find ways to collaborate and support each other.

 - 02 Expand and support Downtown's niche market in vintage clothing, used books, and used outdoor gear, which fits with the community's environmental ethos. A supportive event could be a gear swap including kayaks and canoes to test in Otter Creek, display tents, and a portable rock climbing wall to test out gear.

 - 03 Bring the Farmer's Market back Downtown year-round. Identify an indoor space that could be used in any season.

 - 04 Use prime ground-level commercial space for shops or gathering places that generate broad interest and foot traffic.

 - 05 Consider incentivizing a shop with practical goods to move Downtown, perhaps the locally-owned One Dollar Market, Martin's Hardware, or Homeport (BTV). Merchandise it to feel like a "cool" Downtown general store. Consider conducting a trial at free or reduced rent using a retail pop-up space like Bundle, to demonstrate what will make the venture successful.

 - 06 Work with the College to allow their meal plans to include some access to local restaurants.

 - 07 Implement a parking management program so that easily accessed spaces are usually available to customers (see the Parking Management Strategy recommended in Transportation Choice).

 - 08 Downtown retail stores can remain competitive by increasing the variety of products they have available. Many small-town stores use their brick and mortar location as a showroom, but store additional inventory off-site. Investigate the feasibility of using the Standard Register Building (or similar space) as a warehouse and distribution facility in support of Downtown retail storefronts.

 - 09 Look into bringing an online shopping delivery location Downtown to draw foot traffic.

 - 10 Advertise Downtown jobs to Middlebury College students via the Student Employment Office.
-



Recommendations (cont.)

- 11 Work with local restaurants and stores to be open on Sundays, evenings, and when events are happening Downtown (e.g. open for lunch during Peasant Market).

 - 12 Consider moving campus mail pickup Downtown to encourage students to walk into Downtown on a regular basis. This could be combined with a fitness and carbon footprint reduction program with walking and carbon reduction goals for students. The program could include an app to track their steps and subsequent carbon reduction with meal card rewards for meeting their goals that they would use in Downtown shops and restaurants.

 - 13 Explore the possibility of designated language-only dinners at select restaurants on select nights as a partnership between restaurants and the Middlebury Language Schools summer programs (which restrict students from hearing languages they are not studying). Advertise these and other food-based cultural events to the community at-large.

 - 14 Explore the concept of local artisan maker spaces and retail spaces in areas of the Marble Works as a new experiential shopping hub for wares made on-site and on Exchange Street.

 - 15 Study ways in which Downtown may present barriers to enjoyment by users who are marginalized because of race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, sexuality, disability, or income. Act on these findings to make Downtown more welcoming for a wider variety of area residents and students. A portion of marketing and promotion should be focused on these users.

 - 16 Town zoning should continue to work with private property owners to accommodate outdoor dining options at food and drink establishments when possible.

 - 17 The Town should work with a variety of private property owners (including Town Hall Theater, Middlebury College, and the Marble Works) to establish one or more permanent locations to permit food carts. Survey respondents expressed an interest in cheap, easy, late-night food options as well as a greater variety of ethnic options. The Town recognizes that food carts are a way to encourage entrepreneurial ventures and social connectivity for new Americans.

 - 18 Keep community gathering spaces like Bundle and the Town Hall Theater Annex in use as places for community members of all ages and backgrounds to be able to connect Downtown.

 - 19 Downtown restaurants and retail businesses should run specials and promotions targeted at building a clientele among local residents.

 - 20 Work with Downtown merchants to offer goods and services for the 27.6% BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and 10.6% international college student population.
-

Tourism & Hospitality

Middlebury's wealth of landscape, food, and arts assets already attract many visitors to support the tourism sector. Local products known internationally include dairy, apples and cider, beer, and spirits.

Outdoor recreation is an important driver for tourism in our region. Hiking and kayaking opportunities abound within easy reach of Downtown. The Trail Around Middlebury (TAM) is an 18-mile walkable/bikeable loop surrounding Middlebury, with multiple access points close to Downtown. The Green Mountain national forest lies at Middlebury's eastern border, bringing us hikers from the Appalachian Trail. Green Mountain Outfitters, operating out of the Middlebury Mountaineer in Downtown, offers guided fly fishing tours as well as rock climbing, paddling and hiking tours. Frog Hollow Bikes on Park Street in Downtown offers local mountain and road bike tours in addition to bike repair and sales. Driving and cycling are a pleasure due to our incredibly scenic rural roads.

Agrotourism is popular in our region, with an annual bicycle Tour De Farms occurring each August. Hunting waterfowl using bird dogs and blinds is a popular sport in the open fields and wetlands of our portion of the Champlain Valley. Both Lake Dunmore and Lake Champlain are an easy drive from Middlebury for those interested in boating, sailing, fishing and ice fishing. In winter, the Rikert Nordic center, Snow Bowl downhill skiing, and dog sled rides are less than a thirty-minute drive away. The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) network of snowmobile trails draws riders to our scenic valleys from the tri-State area. Lake Dunmore, the Adirondacks and Lake Champlain are all nearby outdoor recreation destinations.

Amtrak will soon be providing service to Middlebury, creating a major economic opportunity. Amtrak service will include evening arrivals from New York City and morning returns; these visitors will need lodging to make weekend visits work. Downtown contains several iconic full-service hotels, which are at lower than optimal occupancy. Middlebury's many AirBnBs compete with hotels, but also address the cyclical nature of visitors (according to the academic calendar and seasons) that cannot be served exclusively by hotels.

Middlebury is unique in terms of the quantity of Arts and Culture events, which generate tourism and often bring visitors to Middlebury for the first time. These popular events include the week-long Festival On The Green, the Middlebury New Filmmakers' Festival, which takes place at multiple venues throughout Downtown, and an annual music festival at Woodchuck Cidery. Middlebury College events such as Parents Weekend, the Bread Loaf Writers Conference, and the Summer Intensive Language Program all bring new visitors to Middlebury each year.



SNOW BOWL WOODS SKIING POLICY
 SKIING OR SNOWBOARDING IN THE WOODS
 OFF DESIGNATED TRAILS WITHIN THE SKI AREA
 BOUNDARY IS ALLOWED. THESE AREAS
 AREN'T MAINTAINED OR CHECKED BY SKI AREA
 PERSONNEL. UNMARKED OBSTACLES AND
 OTHER HAZARDS EXIST. SKI/RIDE AT YOUR
 OWN RISK. DON'T RIDE OR SKI ALONE BUT
 PREFERABLY IN GROUPS OF THREE OR MORE.
 THE MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE SNOW BOWL HAS NO
 RESPONSIBILITY FOR DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT,
 OR FOR SKIER/RIDER SAFETY, INJURY OR DEATH.
 BE AWARE. USE GOOD JUDGMENT.
 SKI/RIDE ACCORDINGLY.

DON'T ENTER WOODS AFTER 3:00
BAILEY LIFT CLOSES AT 3:15



Image credit: Marth Mayner/EasternSlopes.com



Goals

-
- 01 Build on and promote Middlebury's natural and cultural assets to generate tourism.
 - 02 Balance formal and informal lodging options.
-



Recommendations

01

Develop a marketing campaign and materials promoting Outdoor Recreation in our region. Refer to the Middlebury Town Forest Recreation Plan for vision and goals related to this topic.

02

Stimulate tourism by marketing Middlebury as a convenient retreat (outdoor recreation, quaint Vermont town) for residents of New York City who can visit via Amtrak. Work to expand the availability of transit options for rail passengers to connect with local destinations..

03

Develop Local Discovery Guides and Maps focused on different topics such as: Outdoor Recreation, Retail and Dining, Downtown walking guides, Exchange Street Beverage Trail, Vintage Treasure Hunting, Mini-bury: Fun for Families, Middlebury Arts and Culture, Agro-tourism, etc.

04

Pursue a regional initiative: a “We are Vermont” campaign centered on Middlebury as an experiential summary of all that Vermont has to offer, including agriculture, outdoor recreation, small-town charm, locally grown food, and arts. Package the “Vermont Experience” all found in and around Middlebury.

05

Consider requiring registration of AirBnBs and charging a local options tax similar to hotel room and meal taxes to even the playing field for hotels.

06

Promote Middlebury as a suitable place for large conferences by creating a brochure describing the various meeting venues and amenities (food, lodging) located in Downtown. Consider a point of contact at the Chamber of Commerce to help organizers plan conferences in Middlebury in exchange for a small fee, allowing us to fill a statewide shortage of towns with suitable conference facilities. Market to Vermont organizations/associations that regularly hold conferences.

07

Promote Middlebury as a premier Arts & Culture destination via the proposed new Middlebury Arts organization (see Arts & Culture recommendations).

08

Reinforce Middlebury’s cultural identity as being part of the Vermont African American Heritage Trail, particularly with the presence of the VT Folklife Center and Sheldon Museum in Downtown and Middlebury’s geographic position between the Hildene and the Rokeby Museums. Pursue markers in Downtown recognizing the achievements of Middlebury College graduates Alexander Twilight (Class of 1823), the first American of African descent to graduate from an American college and Martin Henry Freeman (Class of 1849), the first African-American college president.

Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Middlebury has exciting momentum in innovation and entrepreneurship. Middlebury College's Innovation Hub has successful and expanding entrepreneurship programs. The vibrant Exchange Street manufacturing district has room for more businesses, and workers there will soon enjoy the new multimodal path connection to Downtown. In addition to classes, the Makery at the Hannaford Career Center offers engineering, building trades, and sewing labs open to anyone in the community. The Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies offers tailored support to entrepreneurs.

Local organizations are in the process of seeking a location for a food hub with a commercial incubator kitchen, storage, and perhaps co-packing. This would allow agricultural entrepreneurs to scale

up their business to \$10,000+ a year in sales per year and sales to distributors, which requires a commercial kitchen license from the state.

More Middlebury College alumni with startup ideas are beginning to stay in town or return from elsewhere. However, many of the active local entrepreneurs did not start at the College – they moved to Middlebury for other reasons and without having an idea of the Town as a place supportive of innovation. This represents a major opportunity to foster new local businesses by retaining more student entrepreneurs after they graduate and to market Middlebury as a hub of innovation to attract other entrepreneurs. The Town can also support new businesses by making sure there are adequate small office spaces that meet their needs.



Goals

-
- 01 Continue Town/College partnerships supporting innovation and small manufacturing.
 - 02 Market the exciting progress in local innovation to attract and retain entrepreneurs.
 - 03 Have zoning and permitting that allow for flexibility, adaptability, and industry change and growth.
 - 04 Find ways to encourage College alumni with promising business ideas and collaborative, can-do attitudes to stay in Middlebury and grow their ideas here.
 - 05 Enhance communication and networking among Middlebury innovators.
-



Photo: Middlebury Innovation Hub



01



02

(1-3) The Stone Mill redevelopment includes co-working space, a multi-vendor market with shared staffing and points of sale, a café, and other amenities. (Photography by Jason Duquette-Hoffman)



05



03



04

(4-5) Food and beverage industry entrepreneurs. Photography by Jason Duquette-Hoffman (4), Heather Seeley (5)



Recommendations

- 01 Form an innovators' "guild" at Hannaford Career Center Makery that meets on a regular basis to discuss the needs of this sector.

 - 02 Continue in-person mixers (when safe) and support virtual communications (e.g. social media groups, email lists) among entrepreneurs to encourage collaboration and idea sharing.

 - 03 Identify suitable projects and then partner with College and Town and locals to pursue innovation grants such as the i6 Challenge Grant from the US Economic Development Administration (EDA)'s Regional Innovation Strategies program.

 - 04 Include local innovation and entrepreneurship in marketing campaigns.

 - 05 Make use of regional resource organizations such as the Rural Economies: Center for Rural Innovation and the county Economic Development Corporation to develop local businesses.

 - 06 Work to improve broadband speed. Offering free Wi-Fi Downtown would also support entrepreneurs and tourism.

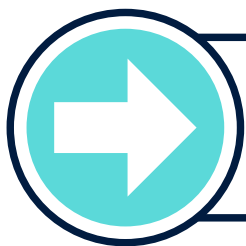
 - 07 Locate a food hub with a commercial incubator kitchen, storage, and perhaps co-packing in or near Downtown.

 - 08 Feature local products in Downtown retail spaces, for example a taproom with all local brews or a food hall with all local food entrepreneurs.

 - 09 Sell locally made products at MiddXpress on the Middlebury College campus.

 - 10 Continue to host popup businesses in commercial spaces during vacant periods.

 - 11 Improve the availability and affordability of high-speed broadband in Addison County to encourage remote working opportunities.
-



Land Use & Development



Image: Jason Duquette-Hoffman

110 | **Opportunity Areas**
112 | **Bakery Lane Redevelopment**

Land Use & Development

Downtown Middlebury enjoys a traditional mix of residential, commercial, civic, and institutional land uses. The Master Plan public input process showed that the community favors additional development and density Downtown, and they are open to new or creative land uses. Uses brought up as priorities Downtown included housing, childcare, and the Ilsley Library expansion.

The economic analysis for this Plan also yielded a strong recommendation to bring additional housing to Downtown Middlebury to keep it lively and help sustain and grow its mix of small businesses. Only about 427 people live Downtown and most of the customer base are regional residents who live outside of Middlebury or are visitors to the Town. An important part of a balanced downtown economy is the presence of nearby residents who provide customer traffic at off-peak hours and times of the year—and are less reliant on parking.

There is a notable amount of recent development investment Downtown such as the Old Stone Mill, Battell Block, Marble Works, and new Exchange Street businesses. The College has donated millions towards capital improvements – the Municipal Offices, Cross Street Bridge, and Town Hall Theatre renovation. There is a knowledgeable and well-intentioned local development, design, and brokerage community that has similar values to the community as a whole.

Downtown Middlebury has fairly flexible zoning and development review procedures that could be tailored to encourage desired development.

There are significant constraints to new building, however. To the eye of a typical housing developer, creating new housing in Middlebury (aside from individual single family homes) is a tough proposition given high construction costs, relatively low achievable rents and sales prices (compared to other regions in the country), stable amounts of housing supply, and low population growth.

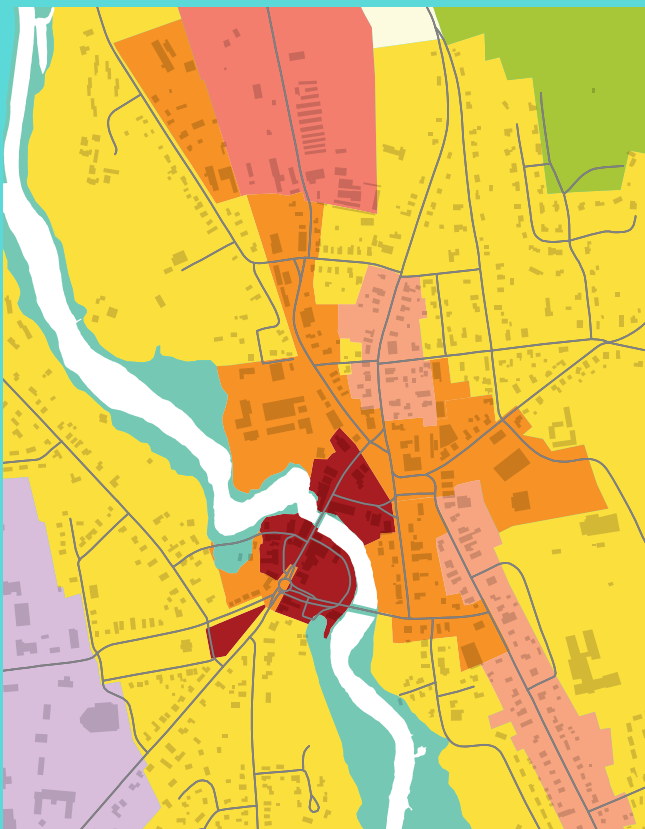
Subsidy or above-market rents would likely be required to enable significant new development. Structured parking would also require subsidy. Vermont's Act 250 presents a cost and risk impediment to larger-scale residential building. The community should bear in mind that further involvement from the College may be necessary to enable certain types of development.

The municipality has limited capacity to lead major development projects or public private partnerships, but could hire an experienced development advisor.

One purpose of this plan is to evidence to developers that Middlebury is open to options for increasing density, and that we have been proactive about identifying core values and developing concept plans for guiding future development in Downtown.

\$25K - \$40K

Typical cost per space of structured parking



This zoning map shows the different districts that apply to Downtown Middlebury.

- (CBD) Central Business District
- (GC) General Commercial District
- (VRC) Village Residential/Commercial District
- (OFA) Office Apartment District
- (HDR) High Density Residential
- (INS) Institutional District
- (FOR) Forest District
- (SFHA) Special Flood Hazard Area

Opportunity Areas

Certain locations in and adjacent to Downtown Middlebury are particularly suitable to add compatible new development and land uses. Many of these areas are noted on the Illustrative Plan.

Four historic neighborhoods border the Middlebury College campus (Weybridge Street, South Street, Shannon/College Street and Chipman Park). Many homes in these neighborhoods are occupied by college faculty and staff and owned by the College. Several of them occupy large lots that could accommodate additional density in the form of detached accessory apartments and carriage barn conversions. The vacant St. Mary's School property is a prime location for new construction of compact mixed-use development that integrates well with the surrounding neighborhood.

Downtown Middlebury also boasts thriving historic neighborhoods on High Street, Chipman Heights, and Seminary Street Extension. These historic homes are under pressure for conversion to offices due to a shortage of existing office space in Downtown, but are protected from conversion by zoning. These neighborhoods provide useful examples of a variety of house types and architectural styles on small lots and narrow, tree-lined streets.

Upper and Middle Seymour Streets run from the Pulp Mill Covered Bridge to the entrance to the Marble Works. Single-family homes on small lots give character to this section of Seymour. The area has significant potential for new residential development, as there are several large vacant parcels served by water and sewer and walkable to Downtown.

Together, the former wastewater treatment plant and parcels across from the rail platform have the potential to provide mixed-use affordable housing and overflow rail platform parking, while preserving contributing historic structures. Master Planning is recommended for parcels in this area in preparation for future development.

The southern portion of Exchange Street represents an important transitional zone between commercial/light manufacturing uses along Exchange Street and commercial/residential uses of Downtown. Amendments to zoning and master planning of the area between Elm Street and Catamount Park are needed to encourage compact mixed-use development throughout this gateway area.

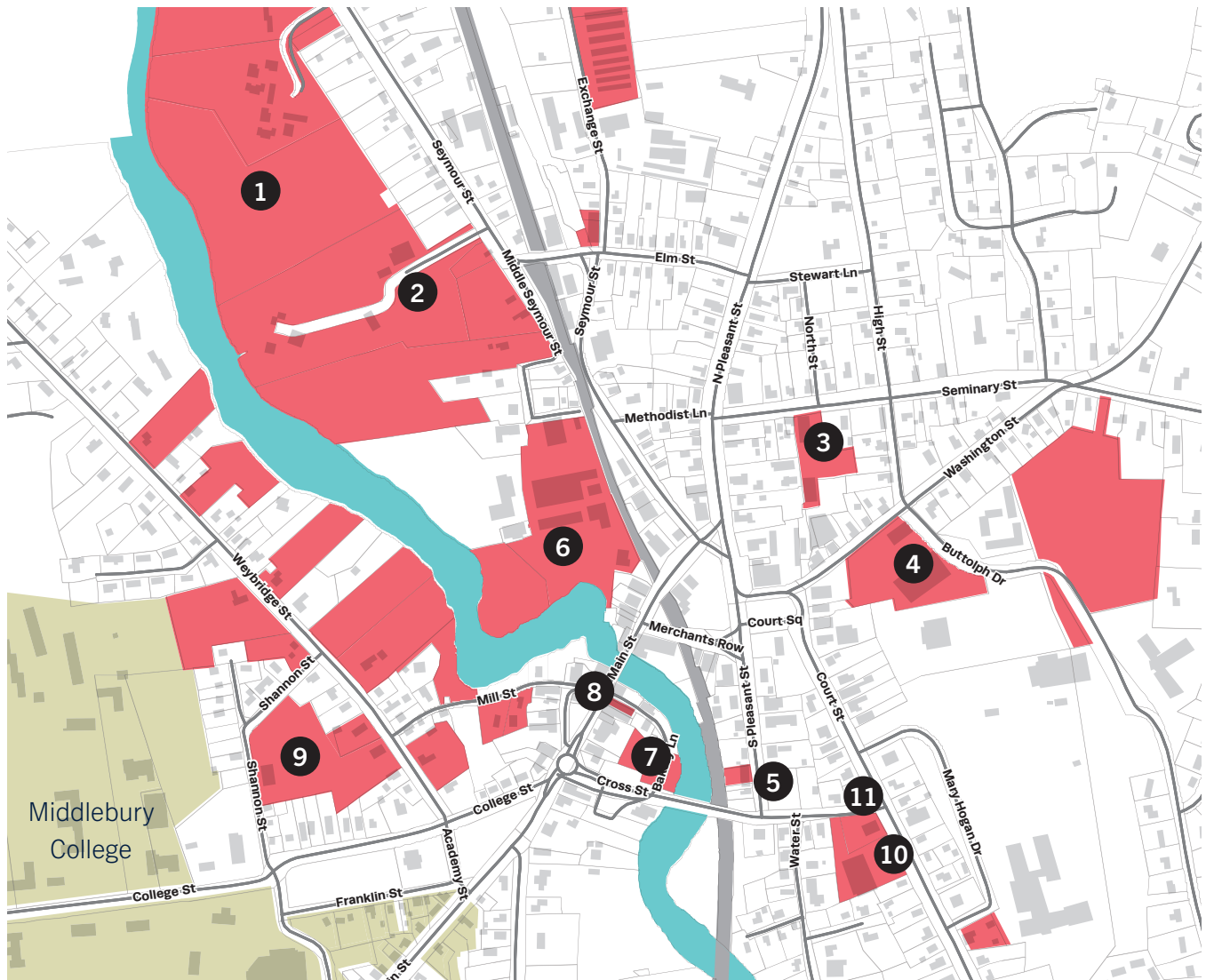
Downtown is separated into east and west sections by State Route 7 (Cross Street and North Pleasant Street). Historic register homes on the Route 7 corridor have largely been converted to commercial uses with second floor apartments, a trend fueled by pressure for office space in the Downtown area and the Office/Apartment District zoning district.

There are many historic-listed properties in Downtown Middlebury that contribute to its character. Tools to help preserve these treasured resources could include a historic district map and boundary as well as new procedures for reviewing development projects in the historic district.

The facing page identifies Downtown parcels with potential for redevelopment. The Illustrative Plans at the end of this document present development concepts for several of the most promising underutilized locations.

 Potential parcels with acreage or vacant/underutilized structures for redevelopment opportunities

- 1** Housing Master Plan was performed here
- 2** Former wastewater treatment plant site with potential for affordable housing as well as rail platform parking
- 3** Potential mixed use redevelopment
- 4** Shaw's liner buildings: See Illustrative Plans
- 5** Former Cole's flower shop
- 6** Marble Works / Riverside Park: See Illustrative Plans
- 7** Bakery Lane: See Illustrative Plans
- 8** Ben Franklin building: Mixed use renovation potential
- 9** St. Mary's Pocket Neighborhood: See Illustrative Plans
- 10** Opportunity for liner buildings across the front of Aubuchon Plaza
- 11** Consolidated Communications building holds this corner. Opportunity for enlargement and conversion to multifamily residential



Bakery Lane Redevelopment

The Downtown Master Plan process included an analysis of the Bakery Lane potential redevelopment site by real estate specialists Jon Stover & Associates. The following questions were explored in consultation with the public and stakeholders:

- Which on-site uses and users are acceptable?
- Which are likely to be financially viable?
- What kinds of site massing and design are acceptable?
- Who will own and operate the site?

The answers to these questions created the following framework for decision making by the community.



Photography Credit: <https://www.historichotels.org/us/hotels-resorts/river-street-inn/history.php>

These precedent images illustrate how a riverfront area like the Bakery Lane site could look with a commercial redevelopment. These images were ranked favorably by Planapalooza™ participants.



This precedent image for riverfront development was ranked favorably by Planapalooza™ participants.

Potential Land Uses and Users

The following uses emerged as potentially feasible and desirable to the community:

Public Spaces

- Riverwalk
- Riverfront public pocket park and gathering space
- Pedestrian cut-through with easy access to river

Potential Anchor Tenants

- IIsley Library expansion
- College Museum
- College faculty housing
- College administration space
- Hospital administration space
- Community College of Vermont office/classroom space
- Other office headquarters

Additional Uses

- Pocket retail and cafes
- Market-rate housing

Infrastructure

- Parking
- Riverwalk and public park, which allows some portion of stormwater to be treated on-site

Site Design Principles

Public input and sound urban design principles led to the following site design recommendations:

- Provide access from ground level and from the Cross Street bridge.
- Building massing should tier down to the river.
- Pedestrian access should connect through the site from Ilsley Library to Otter Creek.
- Pedestrian access along Otter Creek should extend under Cross Street to the area by Mr. Ups.
- Provide a Riverwalk and a public pocket park.
- Development should not be overly massive or physically imposing: no more than eight stories.
- The community is receptive to contemporary architectural design if it responds well to Downtown's existing architecture.
- Parking should be screened behind buildings or incorporated into structures.



Photography Credit: https://www.getyourguide.com/discovery/edam-12254/?utm_force=0

While the architecture in this precedent image is European, it depicts a charming character created by a number of individual buildings that have grassy areas and intimate spaces between them. A wide promenade along the water's edge becomes a community gathering place.

Redevelopment Scenarios

Scenario 1: Site Remains as Surface Parking

PROS

- Parking is retained as a Downtown amenity.
- No development cost and relatively low cost for maintenance and operations.

CONS

- Site does not generate revenue.
- Surface parking is not the site's "highest and best use" as it does not add significant economic, social, or aesthetic value.

Scenario 2: Multiple Small Buildings (See Illustrative Plans)

PROS

- Low-rise development could provide a quaint, small-town feel.
- Most community support for this massing scheme during Planapalooza™.

CONS

- Less square footage and less value creation than the site has potential for.
- This scenario may be financially unrealistic as sitework and development costs may outweigh annual revenue generation.

Scenario 3: Two or Three Larger 4- or 5-Story Buildings

PROS

- Adds a critical mass of amenities, vibrancy, and economic activity to significantly impact the community.
- Can generate moderate revenue from on-site commercial, institutional, and/or residential uses.

CONS

- Revenue generation may not cover site development costs and may require municipal subsidy.

Scenario 4: One or Two Larger 6- or 7-Story Buildings (Nexbridge proposal)

PROS

- Adds a critical mass of amenities, vibrancy, and economic activity to significantly impact the community.
- Maximizes on-site value creation from potential commercial, institutional, and/or residential tenants.

CONS

- Larger building massing and height may exceed some community members' comfort levels.
- While this scenario is likely to be the most realistic from a development feasibility perspective, it may still require Town monetary contribution to be financially viable.

Deal Structure and Site Control

The following guidelines will serve the Town's best interests:

- The Town should guide the design and development process.
- An outside development advisor should serve as project manager on behalf of the Town, not a volunteer or local expert.
- The Town should retain long-term site ownership via ground lease.
- A private developer or owner should manage and operate the site.
- The Town should acquire and assemble the adjacent parcels along Otter Creek south of the Arcadian to enable a more efficient development program and create more value on-site. A portion of unoccupied land that a viewer might assume is part of the Bakery Lane parcel is in fact currently under private ownership. Acquiring the adjacent site to the northeast of the Town-owned land and south of the Arcadian would allow a more comprehensive site plan, create more economies of scale, and enable a more feasible development program.



Image: Bread Loaf Corporation

A rendering from the Nexbridge proposal representing Scenario 4.

Discussion

The initial analysis found that the Bakery Lane site could accommodate a number of different types of land uses and types of tenant. To accommodate high construction costs and sitework costs, rents for much of the on-site uses would likely need to be toward the top of the market. Sitework and development costs would include purchasing the adjacent parcels and may include addressing unsuitable structural fill and petroleum contamination from the former nearby gas station. The residential tenants best positioned to pay these rents may include staff or faculty housing for Middlebury College or Porter Hospital.

The predominant user – or “anchor tenant” – is likely to be one or more of Middlebury’s institutional

stakeholders that are looking to expand or relocate who would find added value of locating Downtown and playing a role in the revitalization of the Bakery Lane site. Potential tenants could include administrative or office workers from Middlebury College, Porter Hospital, Community College of Vermont, or Tata Harper cosmetics. There may be an opportunity for a cultural use such as College Museum or the expansion of the Ilsley Library.

A bond to fund a public parking garage that is shared with an adjacent residential, commercial, or institutional user such as the Library is a very likely public/private partnership tool that would subsidize and enable new construction on Bakery Lane. Town



Photography by Jason Duquette-Hoffman

help with site acquisition and site remediation (if needed) would also be a huge incentive to a private or nonprofit development partner.

The initial analysis made clear that Bakery Lane is a challenging redevelopment site. Development will be expensive and require concessions from all sides. Development partners and investors must have a willingness to invest in the long-term future of the Town. An institutional partner such as Middlebury College or Porter Hospital may prioritize placemaking and long-term growth and may provide the patient capital needed to fund a redevelopment of the site.

Next Steps

If the Town decides to pursue redevelopment given the costs to the Town, the next step would be to retain professional assistance to create a detailed **Bakery Lane Site Development Analysis and Strategy**. The Town should create a scope of work for the prospective consultant that includes the following elements:

1. For each of the four development scenarios:
 - Financial analysis: Costs, revenues, funding sources, and financial feasibility
 - Community benefits assessment: Community benefits and economic development impact
 - Suitability assessment: Design constraints, site massing, and concept site plan
2. Recommendation of a preferred scenario.
3. Creation of a development strategy and Town implementation plan.

Other possible elements of the scope could be:

4. Helping the Town reach out to the development community and gauge interest and capacity. Discussions with potential development partners are recommended. If there are one or more particularly interested or applicable developers, they should be heavily involved, but not leading the process at this point.
5. Helping write the ensuing RFP or development solicitation if that is approved as the next step.

Along with the scope, the Town should develop the available budget, time frame, and preferred hiring strategy. Then it can move forward in selecting a consultant, who can provide guidance from there.



Goals

- 01 Encourage denser residential and commercial growth Downtown.

- 02 Encourage developers to take interest in Middlebury by using incentives and creating community-driven plans.

- 03 Expand capacity for public/private partnerships to enable community-desired development.

- 04 Encourage institutional sector investment in Downtown, particularly to cover the funding gap for middle-income housing (see Housing Choices section).

- 05 Protect historic resources in the built environment.

- 06 Add housing to work towards a balance of land uses that support businesses and a vibrant Downtown environment.

- 07 Target underutilized sites Downtown as opportunities for additional density.



Littleton, NH new riverfront redevelopment



Recommendations

01

Pursue the Neighborhood Development Area designation to address Act 250 constraints to housing development.

02

Specialized expertise may need to be brought into the region when structuring complex community development projects. Retain the services of a Public/Private Partnership (P3) Development Advisor to provide guidance to Town staff as needed on matters related to infill development/redevelopment.

03

Create a Town fund to purchase prime redevelopment properties and hold them until the right investor comes along.

04

Amend zoning to create even more options for constructing and converting additions and accessory structures into dwelling units on existing large residential lots. Combine these with design guidelines to preserve the character of historic neighborhoods surrounding Downtown.

05

Incorporate specific language into zoning requiring that new infill development include supporting infrastructure such as trees, sidewalks, and buffers according to appropriate street typologies.

06

Create a historic district map and boundary, as well as clear procedures for reviewing development projects in the historic district.

07

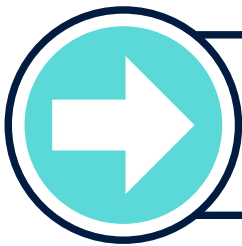
Consider purchase of the Ben Franklin building by the Town or a local entity. Solicit a developer to renovate the building. Pursue a development agreement requiring that the building retain ground-floor commercial space, but that the upper stories be retained as residential, ideally several affordable units. Work with the developer restoring this building to leverage Sales Tax Reallocation grant funding and/or DTF funding to complete streetscape improvements as contemplated in this Plan, as part of the overall project.

08

As the Town continues decommissioning of the former wastewater treatment plant, consider removal of digester tanks and grading and finishing of that site for use as an affordable housing project. Retain use of parking and a path to accommodate overflow from Amtrak rail platform.

09

Develop master site plans and design standards for large redevelopment sites to ensure that new construction and streets integrate with surrounding neighborhoods.



Illustrative Master Plans

The following illustrations are intended to inspire. They show key opportunity areas Downtown re-imagined with human-scale buildings framing inviting public spaces and walkable streets.



- 124 Overall Plan**
- 126 Bakery Lane Mixed Use Redevelopment**
- 130 Park Street**
- 132 St. Mary's Pocket Neighborhood**
- 136 Shaw's / Washington Street Infill**
- 140 Marble Works Riverside Park**

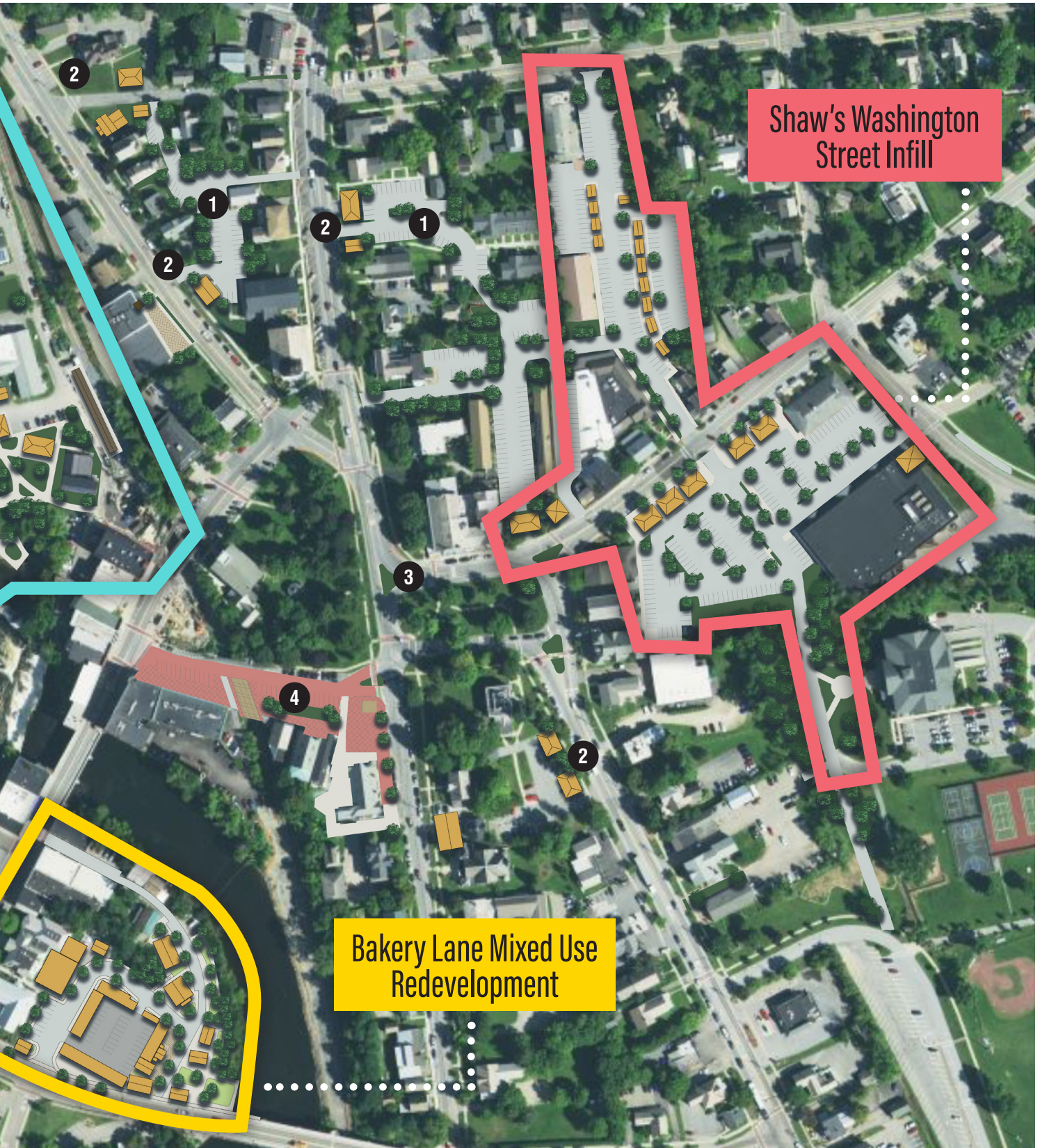
Overall Plan

The following pages provide site plans and renderings that illustrate ideas for five key locations: Downtown: Bakery Lane, Park Street, St. Mary's School, Shaw's / Washington Street, and the Marble Works. Additional interventions are annotated here.

Legend

- 1** Parking lots are tucked into the center of the block and combined for efficient circulation.
- 2** Infill buildings screen the parking and define the street edge.
- 3** Court Square lane tightening and redesign increases safety and reclaims space for sidewalks and plantings (see Transportation Choice).
- 4** Merchants Row pavers and lane tightening creates a more human-centered space (see Transportation Choice).





**Shaw's Washington
Street Infill**

**Bakery Lane Mixed Use
Redevelopment**

Bakery Lane Mixed Use



The municipally-owned Bakery Lane site is in a prominent location for activation of the “Lowland Middlebury” concept. This rendering shows the existing parking lot transformed into an intermediate-scaled mixed use development that features the river and activates the riverfront. Buildings of assorted sizes provide spatial definition for unique civic spaces – parks, plazas, and greenways. The buildings contain commercial space on the ground floor with housing, office, or institutional space above. New roads are narrow and slow-speed, prioritizing walking over vehicles to enhance the feeling of intimacy and safety in this unique Lowland concept.

Redevelopment



NOTE: This is an illustration of one possible scenario reflecting the input of Master Plan participants and created to inspire dialogue and help the community visualize possibilities.

Legend

- 1 Mid-scale buildings create an intimate feel along the river.
- 2 Parking is hidden behind buildings but convenient and well signed. It can be shared with the library extension and new residents and commercial uses.
- 3 Stormwater features, including rain barrels and rain gardens, enhance the community and address stormwater needs.
- 4 Small parks for everyone's enjoyment.
- 5 The cantilevered riverwalk activates and enhances the riverfront. It connects into the walking routes throughout the development.
- 6 Upper stories open onto the bridge, which also features a bike lane.



Site Plan

Park Street



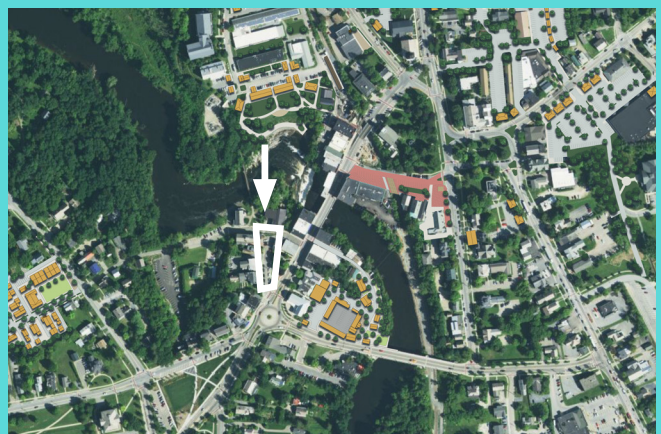
Park Street, one of the shortest streets in Middlebury, serves as the western boundary of Cannon Park and serves little function besides allowing access to businesses facing it. The rendering shows its transformation to a shared street design that prioritizes pedestrians while still allowing slow-speed vehicular traffic. Attractive paving patterns emphasize its pedestrian nature. At the end of the street where water currently gathers, the existing retaining walls and planters have been transformed into a stormwater cascade system consisting of rain gardens that fill up and overflow from level to level, making their way down to Mill Street – a model of sustainable and beautiful stormwater management practices.



NOTE: This is an illustration of one possible scenario reflecting the input of Master Plan participants and created to inspire dialogue and help the community visualize possibilities.

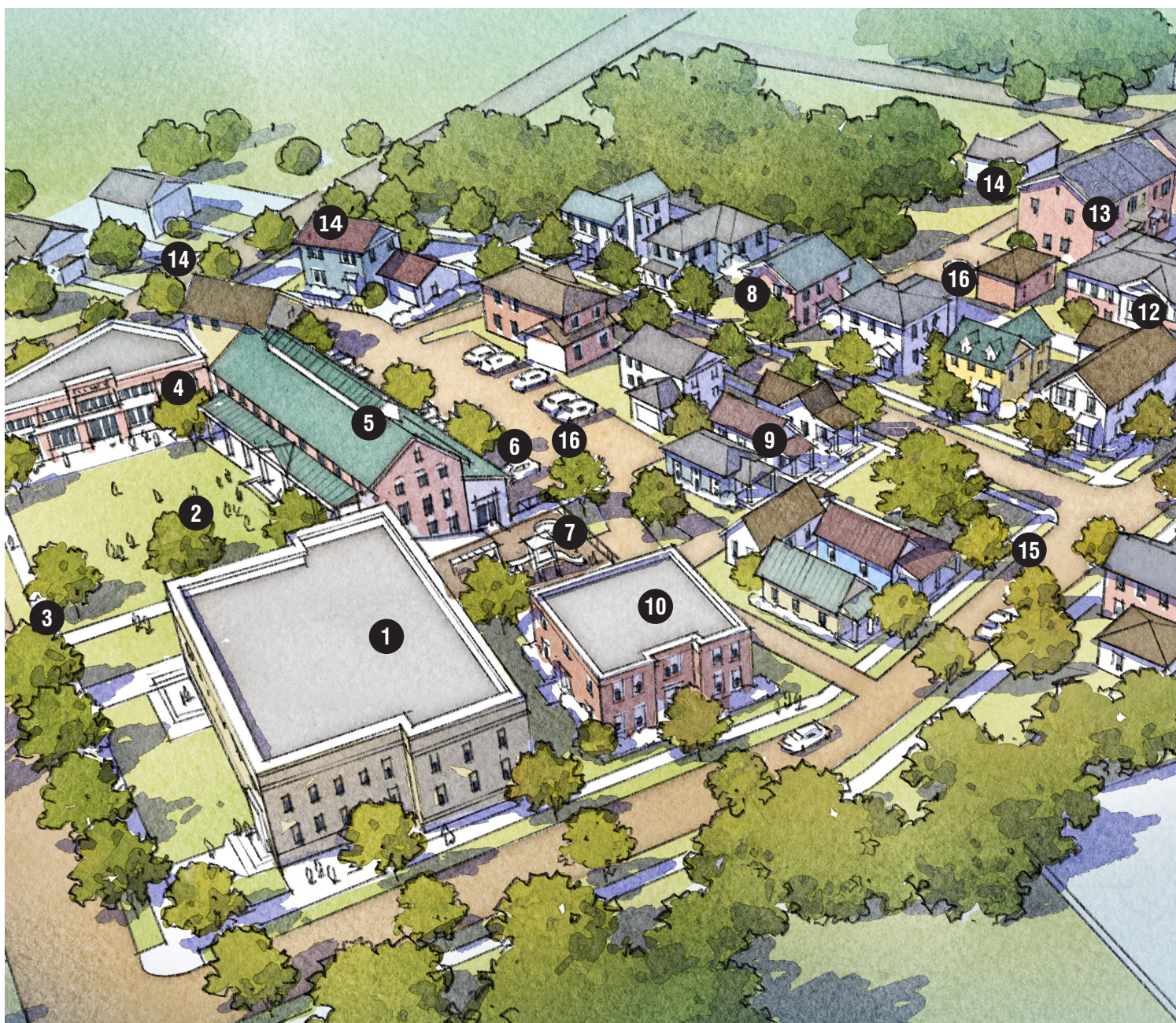
Legend

- 1 Bioswales enhance the street and capture stormwater coming down the hill.
- 2 Pervious pavers in parking areas help stormwater infiltrate.
- 3 A bioretention area captures and holds stormwater.
- 4 Stormwater feature enhances the retaining wall and captures water as it transitions from the bioretention area to the stormwater features along the street.
- 5 Stormwater features along the street enhance the streetscape to the bottom of Mill Street.
- 6 Rain barrels for on-site water reuse.
- 7 Existing staircase extended to improve the pedestrian experience.
- 8 Existing bike shop activates the shared street.
- 9 The “shared street” design allows for everyone to use the street safely and enjoyably.
- 10 Utility poles are relocated.



Location

St. Mary's Pocket Neigh



Vacant land around the existing St. Mary's school building is transformed to a pocket neighborhood: a small, self-contained development that incorporates a multitude of housing options, fits in well with the existing neighborhood, and provides space for businesses such as a corner store or daycare. Housing options include large homes, rowhouses, neighborhood-scale apartment buildings, and accessory dwelling units. The St. Mary's building could contain apartments or condos. A new road connects Mill St. and Shannon St., minimizing the traffic impact of additional residents on any particular street. Pocket parks and greens are connected by tree-lined streets with sidewalks. All of the buildings face a street or an open space. Existing trees are preserved wherever possible.

Neighborhood



NOTE: This is an illustration of one possible scenario reflecting the input of Master Plan participants and created to inspire dialogue and help the community visualize possibilities.

Legend

- 1 Existing St. Mary's School building maintained
- 2 Green space for everyone's enjoyment
- 3 Green street and stormwater features
- 4 Neighborhood market as community amenity
- 5 Childcare center or village style rowhouses adjacent to the park and school
- 6 Parking located behind the buildings
- 7 Playground for the school and neighborhood
- 8 Small and medium scale houses frame the new streets and provide housing choice
- 9 Tiny house cottage court
- 10 Four-unit multi-family building
- 11 Large houses
- 12 Six-unit multi-family building
- 13 Rowhouses frame the open space
- 14 Existing houses surround the site
- 15 Mill Street extension connects Shannon Street and Mill Street
- 16 Rear lanes to access parking



Site Plan

Shaw's / Washington Str



Shaw's currently anchors a conventional suburban-style shopping center with an overabundance of parking in front of the building. It is one of the most visible sites in Middlebury where historic building and development patterns were abandoned. This plan eliminates the "suburban intrusion" by adding small-scale liner buildings which obscure the view of the parking lot and create an active streetscape. The entry drive to Shaw's has also been realigned with the Co-Op entrance so that shoppers can walk between the two with safer and more comfortable crosswalks and streetscape features. The design transforms this area into a proper gateway into this side of Downtown.

Street Infill



NOTE: This is an illustration of one possible scenario reflecting the input of Master Plan participants and created to inspire dialogue and help the community visualize possibilities.

Legend

- 1 Small-scale buildings along the street screen large parking areas and create an inviting gateway into Downtown around the Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op and Shaw's
- 2 Stormwater features enhance the streetscape
- 3 Solar-powered car charging stations
- 4 Dark Sky compliant lighting
- 5 Narrowed road and aligned intersection to slow traffic and increase safety
- 6 Tower element added to Shaw's
- 7 Through street with small maker spaces
- 8 Enhanced walking route through parking lot and towards Recreation Park



Site Plan

Marble Works Riverside



The Marble Works site is an adaptive reuse of the old facility with a mix of uses. While the buildings are interesting and historic, the site design for the property tends to be dominated by surface parking lots and roads. The current layout does not fully capitalize on the adjacent Riverside Park and in some ways seems to back up to the park and Otter Creek. The design improvements contemplated for this area seek to minimize the visual impact of parking by strategically placing small buildings at the entrance to parking areas. Intimate civic spaces are located throughout. Facing the park and river, new mixed use buildings create spatial definition of the park while screening the parking from view. A new retaining wall along the front edge of the park allows the park to remain roughly the same size and includes a little plaza overlooking the river. Access down to the water's edge is provided via staircases and path to a small civic space where you can feel the mist from the Falls. A new Green Alley connects the park to Lazarus Park and Main Street.

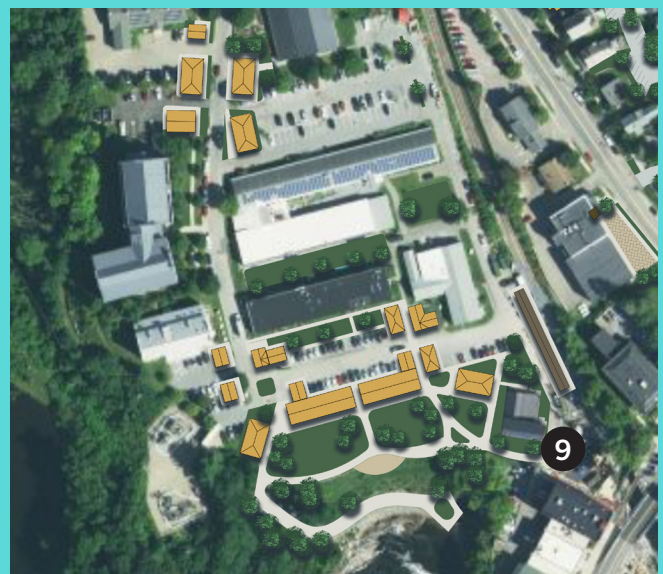
e Park



NOTE: This is an illustration of one possible scenario reflecting the input of Master Plan participants and created to inspire dialogue and help the community visualize possibilities.

Legend

- 1 New mixed-use buildings on a portion of the old parking lot define and activate the park
- 2 Existing parking lot screened by new buildings
- 3 Enhanced park space for community activities, gardens, and views of the Falls
- 4 River log retaining wall adds community-defining character to the park. Art installations could also use this unique local resource.
- 5 Small spaces for craftspeople, artisans, and “makers.” Roofs are shown with solar panels.
- 6 Micro-turbines generate local electricity
- 7 Green infrastructure, including a wetland area along the river, capture and treat water from the parking lots while integrating with the placemaking vision
- 8 Amphitheater area
- 9 Green Alley



Site Plan

Priority Goals & Strategies

Build 30 new units of affordable housing in the Downtown area by 2024.

Create a Riverwalk trail from Downtown to Weybridge.

Improve Bakery Lane and Mill Street as fun, pedestrian-oriented green alleys with new green stormwater infrastructure and riverfront access.

Create a constellation organization representing existing institutions that guides new arts initiatives and focuses effort on marketing Downtown Middlebury as an Arts & Culture destination.

Create a capital program for trails and public gathering spaces in Downtown, as an economic driver and means of encouraging a diversity of visitors.

Begin to explore opportunities related to the arrival of Amtrak service as soon as possible.

Support initiatives that encourage teens and young adults to spend more time in Downtown.

Commit to creating a system of comfortable bike infrastructure to connect Downtown with surrounding neighborhoods and schools.

Add a professional position somewhere within Addison County to provide targeted technical resources including small business support, recruitment, advocacy and marketing focused on Downtown Middlebury.

Redirect large truck traffic over Cross Street Bridge and out of the Downtown core.

Support Ilsley Library in expanding their programming, services, and physical space in Downtown Middlebury by 2030.

Form a diverse cross-sector committee of stakeholders to bring the Farmer's Market back to Downtown and coordinate various Downtown events.



Photography by Heather Stevens

