

21st Century Downtown Master Plan North Windham, Maine

Adopted January 22nd, 2013



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The North Windham 21st Century Downtown Master Plan (Master Plan) is both a practical and bold vision for the future of North Windham. The results are a series of guiding principles leading to conceptual growth scenarios. These scenarios are not to be taken literally. As time has shown, growth and change will happen over time. This master plan is intended to help the community embrace and promote growth and change in a way that improves the quality of place in North Windham.

This optimistic Master Plan prescribes a future where transportation options, land uses, streets and architecture create a new type of suburban “downtown.” Rather than approaching North Windham as just another “corridor study” that only promotes vehicular movement, this Master Plan addresses a wide range of issues reflecting the desire of the community to reveal and strengthen the opportunities found in North Windham. In summary, the goals of this Master Plan are to:

- Develop a comprehensive vision for transportation improvements in North Windham;
- Improve the capacity of Roosevelt Trail;
- Introduce street networks in an incremental manner that respond to the existing built context and allow for the growth of new neighborhoods surrounding the commercial core;
- Incubate a range of economic development and housing opportunities;
- Establish a renewed “sense of place” in Windham’s commercial center through Complete Streets, infill development, increased residential densities, vibrant public realms, mobility options and access to open space, and
- Focus on implementation by identifying short-term and long-term improvements and policies

CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS, COMPLETE STREETS AND LOCATION EFFICIENCY

Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS):

The Master Plan is based on the Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) planning process. CSS is a response to the frustration that communities experience with transportation planning. In particular, this frustration is with the long-term impacts and types of places that result when the movement of vehicles is favored to the exclusion of other modes of travel (such as pedestrians and bicycles). The CSS approach to planning provides an opportunity to mobilize a community partnership around place and working with benchmarks and goals establish an attainable future. As part of the CSS based master planning process, a Mission and Values Statement is drafted that identifies the issues of today, a vision for the future and the basic steps to get there.

Master Plan Mission and Values Statement

Current zoning and transportation patterns in North Windham – in addition to being a centralized regional commercial area – have created a place that is auto-oriented, lacks pedestrian amenities and a specific sense of place. There is an inherent conflict between the need for Roosevelt Trail to serve thru traffic and to serve the local community. The arterials are stressed and the intersections are near or close to failing in terms of capacity.

The built form and pattern of development is poorly defined by shopping malls and big box retail set in expansive areas of parking. A lack of a traditional street network accommodating both vehicles and pedestrians and informing the scale and use of adjacent development is absent. Numerous property owners cannot afford to invest in their buildings and site improvements creating graying and aging properties. Overall there is a lack of vibrancy and integration between mobility and land use.

In the future, Roosevelt Trail will be a safe and attractive transportation corridor serving an emerging 21st Century Downtown comprised of the greater North Windham region. Roosevelt Trail will balance the needs of “to”, “thru” and “local” modes of travel, including cars, public transit, pedestrians and bicyclists in order for existing and future development to thrive. It will be a gateway to the Lakes Region as well as the heart to a vibrant town center.

The area will evolve into a place where people choose to live, work and play due to improved access management, pedestrian and bicycle networks, quality architecture and streetscapes, passive and active open space and better connectivity to existing and new residential neighborhoods adjacent to Roosevelt Trail.

The north / south linear and auto-oriented pattern of development will be integrated with a historic style grid creating a fabric of mixed-uses and street types in the lands to the east and the west of the transportation corridor – as well as the adaptive reuse of existing development and the infill of undeveloped parcels and areas of excess parking – promoting economic development at a variety of scales, increased residential densities, pedestrian-friendly Complete Streets and the health of ecological systems.

Both practical short-term and long-term strategies such as revised zoning codes, new efficient and context sensitive street networks, a diversity of mobility options, responsible development patterns, specificity regarding building form and location, vibrant public realms and infrastructure policies will enable a realistic transformation of North Windham of today to a place of distinction tomorrow.

Complete Streets:

The Master Plan is also based on the Complete Streets philosophy. Complete Streets are designed to provide safe, comfortable, and convenient environments for all modes of travel, regardless of age or ability. This includes motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation riders. For more information on Complete Streets, see Appendix D.

Location Efficient Design:

Location efficient design incorporates complete streets into new or “retrofitted” development, resulting in responsible street networks that maximize connectivity, walkability and a diversity of neighborhood types. In other words, location efficient design promotes a land development pattern that makes traveling between homes, businesses or civic amenities possible via all modes of travel. This development pattern requires that buildings are close enough together to make travel between sites possible by motorized transportation or human power transportation.

IMPLEMENTATION

The recommendations in the Master Plan are based on the conditions and analysis in the existing conditions chapter, input from the public and the Advisory Committee. Each recommendation is intended to work together to create a North Windham mixed-use district that integrates transportation issues, economic development and the built environment. The implementation of this Master Plan through capital improvements, ordinance amendments, and development review applications has the potential to create a 21st Century Downtown. This “downtown” is one that will remain suburban in nature, but becomes more than a collection of independent commercial properties. The vision embodied in these recommendations strives to achieve a welcoming, human scaled, mixed-use commercial center through the built environment and the accommodation of all modes of travel.

The Implementation Plan is divided into the following three categories:

1. Transportation
2. Land Use and Standards
3. Conceptual Character Areas / Future Growth Patterns

Each of the recommendation summaries contained in the table that follows correspond to a more detailed explanation in Chapter 3 of the plan. The brief overview contained in this executive summary provides a gateway to the in-depth discussion of the ideas that will implement the vision developed in this plan.

1. Transportation

a. *Context Sensitive Solutions/Complete Streets*

Recommendation	How	Responsible Party	Time*	Implementation
Adopt a Complete Streets Policy	Revise Town Ordinances	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term	As development / redevelopment occurs or as part of prioritized pedestrian improvements plan (grants, impact fees, TIF, CIP, bond)
Retrofit existing parking lots with pedestrian friendly Complete Streets, liner buildings, pad development, infill development and adaptive reuses;	Revise ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Long-term	As development occurs

b. *Access Management and Vehicular Improvements*

Recommendation	How	Responsible Party	Time	Implementation
Install raised medians on Roosevelt Trail where feasible to improve access and roadway capacity.	In conjunction with Roadway Construction / Development Projects	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term to Long-Term	As developments occurs, CIP, and MaineDOT
No changes should be made to the lane configurations on Roosevelt Trail between River Road and Boody's Corner.				

Recommendation	How	Responsible Party	Time	Implementation
Modify the existing traffic signal phasing so that southbound Roosevelt Trail vehicle left-turn movements onto Turning Leaf Drive have a protected phase (providing a green arrow phase so traffic can turn easily). This change will improve safety and reduce delay to vehicles turning left.	Town Project	Staff	Short-Term	CIP/Other Local Funding Mechanism Cost Estimate: \$15,000
Work with local business and property owners to modify driveway locations that are unsafe or unnecessarily contribute vehicle turning movements in the corridor.	In conjunction Development Projects or through Town Improvements	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term to Long-Term	As developments occurs and Town Projects. Cost Estimate: Driveway closing - \$110 per LF.

c. Pedestrian / Bicycles

Recommendation	How	Responsible Party	Time	Implementation
Install sidewalks on both sides of Roosevelt Trail.	In conjunction with Roadway Construction / Development Projects	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term to Long-Term	As developments occurs, CIP, and PACTS. Cost Estimate: Bituminous sidewalk (No Curbing) - \$20/LF

Recommendation	How	Responsible Party	Time	Implementation
Install sidewalks on both sides of Tandberg Trail (Rte. 35) between Roosevelt Trail and Manchester Drive	In conjunction with Roadway Construction / Development Projects / Town Implementation	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term to Long-Term	As developments occurs, CIP, and MaineDOT Cost Estimate: Bituminous sidewalk (No Curbing) is \$20 per LF. Project cost: \$30,000
Install sidewalks on the South side of Tandberg Trail (Rte. 115) between Roosevelt Trail and Emerson Drive	In conjunction with Roadway Construction/Development Projects/Town Implementation	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term to Long-Term	As development occurs, CIP, and MaineDOT Cost Estimate: Bituminous sidewalk (no Curbing) is \$20 per LF. Project cost: \$58,900
The channelization island at the Roosevelt Trail/Landing Rd. intersection should be eliminated and a standard radius constructed to minimize high-speed free flow entry movements;	Town Implementation	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term to Mid-Term	CIP or PACTS Cost Estimate: \$5,000
Install count-down pedestrian signals at all locations	In conjunction with Roadway Construction / Development Projects / Town Implementation	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term: On-Going	As developments occurs, CIP, and PACTS Cost Estimate: \$4,000 per intersection.

Recommendation	How	Responsible Party	Time	Implementation
For all new roads constructed or reconstructed, sidewalks should be provided on both sides and crosswalks should be installed at all intersection locations.	In conjunction with Roadway Construction / Development Projects / Town Implementation	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term to Long-Term	As developments occurs, CIP, and PACTS Cost Estimate: Bituminous sidewalk (No Curbing) - \$20/LF Painted crosswalk - \$1/LF. Parallel Line Crosswalk - \$60 Block Design crosswalk - \$120 (per 30-ft-wide crossing)
Upgrade signalized intersections so that pedestrians can cross all approaches. This will require the installation of crosswalks, ADA ramps, and pedestrian signal equipment.	In conjunction with Roadway Construction / Development Projects / Town Implementation	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term On-Going	As developments occurs, CIP, and PACTS. Cost Estimate: Sidewalk Ramp -- \$2,000/ramp Crosswalk – See above. Pedestrian Head, Push Button, and Post -\$4,000/post
Provide a landscaped esplanade (Where right-of-way will allow), so the pedestrian experience will be enhanced by a buffer and space.	In conjunction with Roadway Construction / Development Projects / Town Implementation	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term to Long-Term	As developments occurs, CIP, and MaineDOT Cost Estimate: \$45 LF for a 5-foot wide esplanade

d. *Conceptual Street Network and Location Efficiency*

Recommendation	How	Responsible Party	Time	Implementation
Enable residential neighborhood development that will support the commercial core. This includes neighborhoods on the periphery of the commercial district and mixed-use developments within the commercial core;	Revise ordinance Standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term	As development occurs
Retrofit existing parking lots with Complete Streets, liner buildings, pad development, infill development and adaptive reuse;	Revise ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term	As development occurs
The street networks and development should maximize connectivity and respond to an overall development pattern versus a typical disconnected lot-by-lot pattern with redundancies such as parking, stormwater facilities, curb cuts and driveways;	Revise ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term	As development occurs
Buildings should act as “urban architecture”, framing the public realm and reinforcing the new and retrofitted Complete Streets;	Revise ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term	As development occurs

Recommendation	How	Responsible Party	Time	Implementation
The installation of streetscape amenities, the placement of utilities underground, and a reduction in the amount of, or elimination of, overhead traffic signs should be added to the Town's capital improvement program/planning.	Revise capital improvement plan/planning	Town Council Staff	Short-Term (CIP) Long-Term (Implement)	Town Cost Estimate: See Section 3.0 of this Plan
Explore funding options such as the existing tax increment financing (TIF) district or the creation of a development/business improvement district.	Revise Capital Improvement Plan	Town Council Staff	Short-Term	Town
Street blocks should be approximately 300 - 600 linear feet, creating three or four way intersections to maximize connectivity and create walkable, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods;	Revise ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term	As development occurs
The Town should continue to identify locations for a lateral road between River Road and Route 35 that should not impact existing residential neighborhoods.	Continue analysis of lateral road network	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Long-Term	Town CIP, MDOT, FHWA

Recommendation	How	Responsible Party	Time	Implementation
Develop traffic calming standards to mitigate the effects of through traffic if connections are made to existing streets	Revise ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short Term	Town

2. Land Use and Standards

Recommendation	How	Responsible Party	Time	Implementation
Revise the Town's parking standards to promote shared parking and Complete Streets.	Revise ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term	Town
The installation of a public sewer system can help to achieve the goals of the Master Plan.	Bond, CIP, impact fees, TIF and grants	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Long-term	Town
Revise the Land Use Ordinance through the adoption of a Conceptual Master Plan for North Windham.	Revise ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term	Town
Revise the street standards in the Land Use Ordinance	Revised ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term	Town
Adopt standards for green infrastructure and energy efficient development	Revised ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term	As development occurs
Adopt a Complete Streets policy	Revised ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term	As development occurs

Recommendation	How	Responsible Party	Time	Implementation
Incorporate the Master Plan into the Windham Comprehensive Plan	Revised ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term	Town
Conduct economic modeling for the North Windham commercial district to determine the most sustainable balance of land uses and development patterns.	Feasibility Analysis	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term	Town to cross-reference findings with recommendations in this Master Plan
Enable increased residential development in the study area.	Revise ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Long-term: in relation to sewer extension	Town
Make housing of different types an allowable use throughout the area.	Revise ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term	As development occurs
Provide incentives for residential development surrounding the commercial core	Revised lending practices, increased densities, grants for compact development	Town State	Long-term	Lending agencies (for-profit and non-profit) and Town

a. *Conceptual Character Areas / Future Growth Patterns*

Recommendation	How	Responsible Party	Time	Implementation
Establish Character Areas prescribing built form and patterns of development based on “street frontage types”	Revise ordinance standards	Town Council Planning Board Staff	Short-Term/ Ongoing	As development occurs

Notes:

* Time Frame

- Short-Term – 1 to 5 Years
- Mid-Term – 5 to 15 Years
- Long-Term – 15 or More Years

CIP = Capital Improvement Program