

Downtown  
Turners Falls

# LIVABILITY PLAN



## FINAL REPORT

Prepared by:

Dodson & Flinker, Landscape Architects and Planners

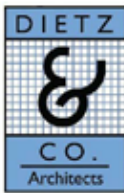
Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates

Prepared For:

The Town of Montague

June 11th, 2013

DODSON & FLINKER  
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Acknowledgements

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DONATION AND HOSTING

Great Falls Discovery Center | Meeting Host  
Food City | Meeting Provisions  
Center for New Americans | Focus Group Host  
TF High School Rise Up Class - Focus Group Host

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REFLECTIONS & DIRECTIONS: AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How Did We Get Here?

Like hundreds of mill villages throughout New England, Turners Falls has spent the last fifty years or so caught up in a wrenching tide of change brought about by the decline of traditional industries. Compounded by a long-term national experiment in suburban sprawl fueled by cheap oil, many of these towns also lost their downtown shops, services and centers of civic life. The good news is that unlike many such villages, Turners Falls came through this process with many of these historic resources intact along Avenue A, and many new ones created by people who understood what a special place this is. Eventually, the economic realities of rising energy prices will bring more and more people back to places like Turners Falls, and they will discover that dense, walkable villages are great places to live and work sustainably.

Challenges remain in the meantime:

- A legacy of wonderful historic structures, but also the economic reality of rental rates that don’t cover the cost of renovations.
- Inexpensive housing choices, but a lack of jobs that drives many young people away.
- Many local businesses, but local customers limited by a lack of income diversity.
- An extraordinary setting, but somewhat off the “beaten track”.
- An emerging arts, entertainment and creative economic base, but lingering uncertainties in the regional economy.

Our Mission

The Turners Falls Downtown Livability Plan has been prepared through a collaborative process between the Town of Montague in partnership with local residents, property owners and business proprietors, as well as local and regional planning and service agencies. This collaborative process has led to the preparation of the following elements:

- An analysis of opportunities to increase livability and mobility in Downtown Turners Falls as well as an evaluation of obstacles to achieving a more livable downtown.
- Identification of practical and economically feasible recommendations for streetscape improvements that will attract tourists and visitors, increase pedestrian activity in the downtown, and address parking issues.
- The identification and prioritization of projects and policy changes to improve downtown livability and foster a unique sense of place. These include both short and long-term recommendations that also identify potential funding sources and incentive programs that can be used for implementation.
- Recommendations and strategies for reducing vacancies and underutilization of ground floor storefronts.
- Inventory and prioritization of key redevelopment properties in accordance with the goals and vision.

Based on the evaluation of existing conditions

and trends, and through extensive citizen involvement, a vision statement has been prepared that creates the foundation for enhancements of the “Public Realm” as well as the prioritization of key redevelopment sites in Turners Falls that will collectively redefine the village.

The report is illustrated with maps, photographs, diagrams and sketches that are coordinated with an annotated Downtown Turners Falls Concept Plan. The overall plan illustrates the community’s vision for recommended physical improvements, target revitalization areas and reuse options for key properties.

The Downtown Turners Falls Livability Plan is designed to be a dynamic tool for revitalization. It concludes with a detailed and prioritized action plan that builds upon recent and on-going planning by the Town and meets the top goals of the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development.

What Citizens Think

To address downtown’s challenges and opportunities, the Turners Falls Partnership (TFP) was organized to support and empower local residents, business owners and other stakeholders in cooperation with the Town of Montague to create a shared vision for the future and a clear and achievable implementation strategy. This is our collective vision.

From the beginning of this planning



initiative, the focus was on creating a successful public engagement and partnership plan. To generate effective participation from landowners, businesses, homeowners and tenants, as well as underserved populations, two levels of project oversight were carried out. The first level established the Turners Falls Advisory Committee made up of town staff and eight key stakeholders from the community. The Advisory Committee worked closely with Town officials and the consulting team of Dodson & Flinker and Howard/Stein-Hudson to design and implement the public participation plan, to refine the scope of services, and review elements of the plan.

The second level of participation and oversight took the form of a Working Group of 30 citizens representing each of the stakeholders and interest groups in the downtown area. This

included residents and business owners, as well as community groups, clubs, service organizations, resident leaders, business owners, social service providers, clergy, and other local and regional entities that have a stake in the future of Turners Falls. This broad approach ensured that the interests of local residents and businesses were adequately represented at each phase of the project, as well as providing a built-in conduit for public outreach. To supplement the Working Group, public engagement extended to the use of the town's website and other social media, as well as outreach meetings with youth, members of the Spanish-speaking population, business owners and town employees.

As the project moved forward, a key role of the Turners Falls Working Group was to plan, publicize and facilitate the Public Design

workshop. The workshop was the centerpiece of the planning process, and included a variety of engaging activities designed to help lay people explore alternatives for the future of Turners Falls. Using a scenario-planning approach, the Turners Falls Partnership led a conversation among stakeholders designed to establish an overall vision for the downtown, supported by a clear statement of goals and objectives to guide future growth and sustainable development. At each stage of the process, the architects, landscape architects and planners of the consulting team working to create plans, sketches and digital visualizations to help participants visualize each alternative.

Following the charrette the Working Group continued to meet and refine the collective vision for the future of Turners Falls

and flesh out the goals and objectives with a practical implementation strategy. This plan is the product of the Turners Falls Partnership.

### Key Strategies

An overall vision statement and map guide the Turners Falls Livability Plan. Their intent is to paint a broad, sweeping picture of who the community is, what the community values and what the community desires for the future of Turners Falls. This broad vision serves as the foundation of more specific recommendations, goals and actions. Design recommendations address overall open space and recreation, streetscape improvements along Avenue A, a conceptual masterplan and block-by-block strategies for re-energizing the downtown. Socio-economic recommendations include detailed goals to promote business development, marketing and branding, illustrated by numerous case studies and examples from communities similar to Turners Falls.

The Livability Plan concludes by distilling its comprehensive vision and detailed recommendations for the future of Turners Falls into a practical implementation strategy. The action plan is divided into the following goals:

- Enhanced connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Improved Appearance and Functionality of Avenue A and Third St Streetscape
- Enhanced Recreational Opportunities for Residents & Visitors of All Ages & Backgrounds
- Expand Community Events and Activities in Downtown Turners Falls
- Improved Services and Quality of Life for All

Downtown Residents

- Get Organized for Business Development
- Retain existing businesses and support business development
- Refine Marketing and Communications Programs
- Improve Gateway Treatments and Wayfinding Signage
- Expand Economic Development Policies, Incentive and Regulatory Programs

Each of these action plan goals is supported by discrete projects and programs which are further subdivided into achievable actions. For each action, the Turners Falls Partnership has identified a task leader and a time frame, as well as additional resources where appropriate.

### Applicability of the Plan

Turners Falls Downtown Livability Plan will serve as a blueprint for the next generation of sustainable growth and preservation. It will encourage private development efforts and support public investment in facilities to enhance the downtown in the future. The Plan:

- Is a concise, yet comprehensive, document designed to provide a basis for decision-making about Downtown Turners Falls future sustainable development.
- Articulates an easily understood vision of the Downtown's future, which is crafted from a wide and varied range of community perspectives.
- Contains a specific, realistic and cost-effective implementation plan to achieve the goals of the plan.

The Turners Falls Livability Plan has been

endorsed by the Montague Planning Board and the Montague Board of Selectmen.

### PLAN OBJECTIVES

- Prepare Livability Plan for the village of Turners Falls to serve as the community's vision and strategy for Downtown revitalization.
- Create a blueprint for the next generation of sustainable growth, vitality and preservation.
- Create citizen ownership of the plan by incorporating a wide and varied range of community perspectives.
- Provide specific, realistic and cost-effective implementation plan to achieve the goals of the plan.
- Increase livability and mobility in Downtown Turners Falls and overcome obstacles to achieving a more livable downtown.
- Identify practical and economically feasible recommendations for streetscape improvements that will attract tourists and visitors, increase pedestrian activity in the downtown, and address parking issues.
- Prioritize projects and policy changes to improve downtown livability and foster a unique sense of place.
- Identify potential funding sources and incentive programs that can be used for implementation.
- Create strategies for reducing vacancies and underutilization of ground floor storefronts
- Inventory and prioritization of key redevelopment properties in accordance with the goals and vision. The key redevelopment sites in Turners Falls will collectively redefine the village. The public process should evaluate and prioritize the following properties for their reuse potential, among other key properties.





# INTRODUCTION TO THE LIVABILITY PLAN

By many definitions downtown Turners Falls, Massachusetts is already a phenomenally livable place. As the largest of five villages within the town of Montague, Turners Falls not only houses the majority of town residents but also serves as a significant center of employment and government in greater Franklin County and the North Pioneer Valley region. Its history as a planned industrial community endures in a well-defined blocks of streets and alleys, in beautiful turn-of-the-century brick architecture and in a historic mill district along a still-operational power canal. Small businesses line a wide Avenue A, with residential streets branching off in a layout and proximity that exemplifies walkability. Cultural and recreational amenities such as the Shea Theatre, the Carnegie Library, the Great Falls Discovery Center, Town Hall, Unity and Peskeomskut Parks and the Canalside Bike Path are easily accessible to residents and draw visitors from afar.

In addition to significant community resources, Turners Falls is rich in creative, passionate and devoted citizens. A growing creative economy of artists and entrepreneurs thrives in Turners Falls. Community leaders are active on a number of fronts, and the RiverCulture Project has leveraged social capital from the Turners Falls arts, business and cultural communities for over 7 years to strengthen local creative industries and engender a sense of place.

At the same time, Turners Falls, like hundreds of mill villages throughout new

England, has spent the last five decades caught up in a wrenching tide of change brought about by the decline of traditional manufacturing and the rise of automobile-focused development. Once affectionately called ‘PowerTown’ because of the influence of the dam, power canal and numerous factories on the local economy, Turners Falls now has only one paper mill left in operation. Montague residents and town officials have worked together diligently over the last 30 years to shift the village’s identity from big industry to small business, arts, tourism, culture and recreation. In addition, the town has invested in numerous revitalization efforts, including renovations of the Colle Opera House, the Shea Theatre, the Crocker Bank and the Cutlery Buildings, creation of the Great Falls Discovery Center, streetscape improvements and the Canalside Bike Path.

The Town of Montague leveraged a HUD 2010 Sustainable Regional Planning Grant to commission the Livability Plan. Turners Falls is identified in the Franklin County Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (FCRPSD) as a key employment center where efforts to increase livability and economic vitality will support sustainability in the region. The goals of the Downtown Turners Falls Livability Plan dovetail with the goals of the FCRPSD.

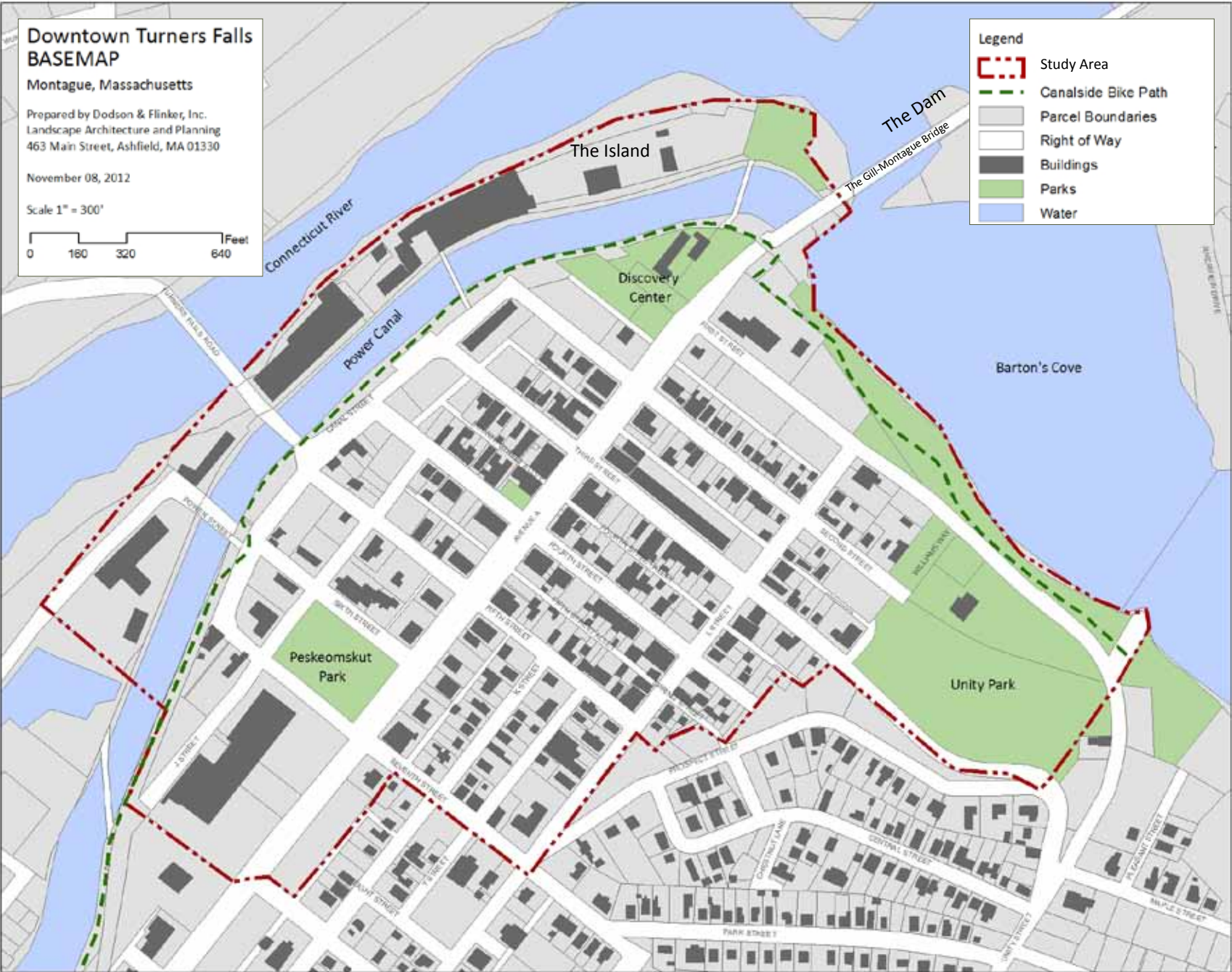
The study area, defined by the town of Montague, is approximately 100 acres contained by the Connecticut River, 7th Street and ‘the hill’. The study ‘boundaries’ are drawn with the understanding that livability



Above: Context map for Turners Falls within Montague and surrounding towns in Franklin County.

in downtown Turners Falls has deep impacts on residents of nearby neighborhoods, as well as others throughout Montague and greater Franklin County. Within the study area, there are 319 parcels that make up about 88 acres, with an additional 12 acres in in public streets and ways. There are an estimated 222 buildings in the study area and the average year built is 1901 (buildings are 112 years old on average). The study area is bisected by Avenue A, the “Main Street” of Turners Falls and the Town of Montague. From the Connecticut River Bridge to 9th Street, Avenue A is approximately 2,260 linear feet, slightly less than ½ mile, making a highly walkable downtown district.

At Right: Basemap for the village of Turners Falls. The Livability Plan Focus Area is outlined in red.





## Livability Plan Goals

The Town's overall goal is to develop a plan that:

- is a concise, yet comprehensive document designed to provide a basis for decision-making about future sustainable development in Turners Falls.
- articulates an easily understood vision for the downtown's future, which is crafted from a wide and varied range of community perspectives.
- contains a specific, realistic and cost-effective implementation plan to achieve the goals of the plan.

## Community Process

The Turners Falls Livability Plan is a community effort. The goal of the consultant team is to support and empower local residents, business owners and other stakeholders as they create a shared vision for the future as well as a clear and achievable implementation strategy. This is your collective vision, simply facilitated by us. As such, the public process to create this plan included over 110 stakeholders from a broad representation of the population: residents, business owners, developers, bankers, town department heads, social service providers all with diverse ages, financial backgrounds and ethnicities. Stakeholders engaged in the planning process through three key avenues:

1. The *Advisory Committee* consists of town staff and eight key stakeholders from the community.



Participants engage in discussion and activities at three of the six topical stations at the public workshop.

This committee has worked closely with the consultant team to design and implement the public participation plan, to refine the scope of services and to review products of the study. The Advisory Committee met approximately every two weeks throughout the planning process. A list of the advisory team appears on the opposite page.

2. The *Working Group* is made up of twenty-five people representing each of the stakeholders



and interest groups in the village, including residents, business owners, community groups, clubs, service organizations, social service providers, clergy and specific racial, ethnic and language populations. The goal is to ensure that the interests of all local residents and businesses are represented at each phase of the project and to provide a built-in conduit for public outreach. The Working Group had four meetings - in October, November, March and April. In October, the group reviewed existing



Public workshop participants hear summaries of each focus group's discussions at the end of the evening.

conditions information and discussed the key challenges and opportunities facing the village. In November, the group reviewed additional existing conditions information and explored challenges and opportunities in more depth related to key theme areas. In March, the consultants presented draft recommendations and heard detailed feedback from the working group on both general ideas and specific implementation. In April, the working group finalized the recommendation package and

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE TEAM:

Although many stakeholders participated in the creation of the TF Livability Plan, this work would not have been possible without the hard work and excellent advice of the Advisory Committee. A warm thank you for the commitment of the following individuals:

**Frank Abbondanzio**- Town Administrator

**Pat Allen**- Selectman

**Fred Bowman**- Planning Board

**Lisa Davol**- Turners Falls RiverCulture

**Erin Maclean**- Resident/business-owner

**John McNamara**- Resident/business-owner

**Janel Nockelby**- Resident

**Ami Podlenski**- Resident

**Walter Ramsey, AICP** - Town Planner

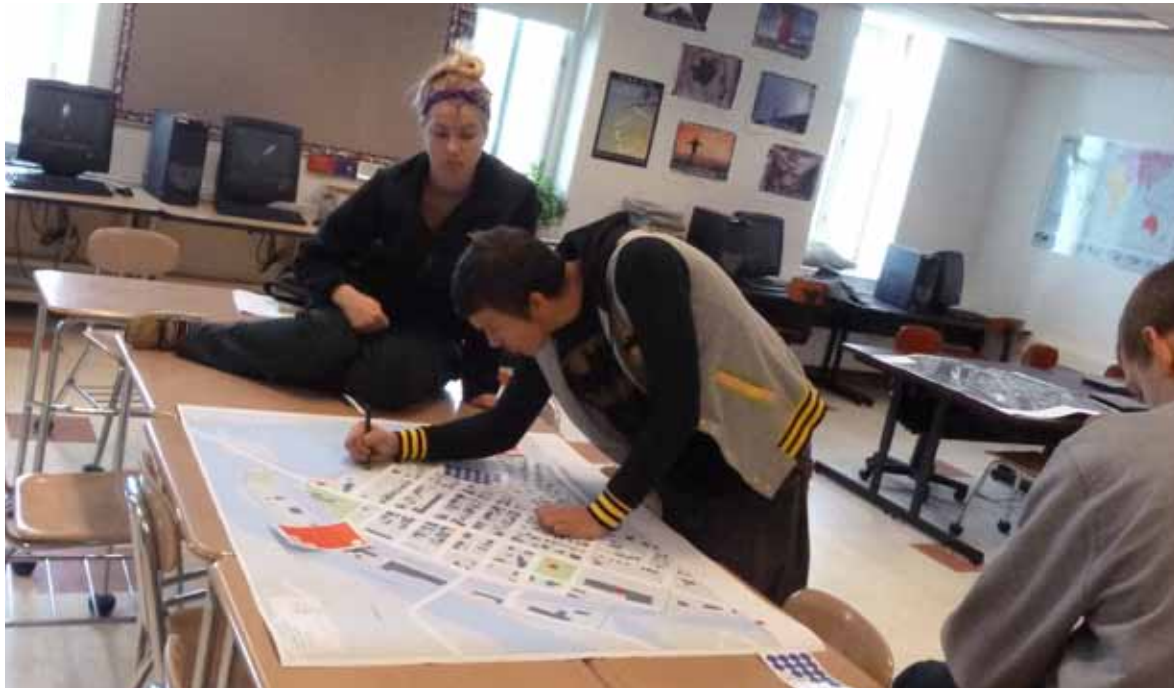
**Rachel Stoler**- Resident/ Gill-Montague Community School Partnership liaison

**Franklin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority**

team and an open public meeting on Tuesday evening February 5th.

Over fifty local residents, business-owners and community leaders attended the evening public meeting. Participants first heard a general presentation on existing conditions in downtown and then rotated between six focus groups: Avenue A Facades and Uses, Avenue A Streetscape, Parks and Open Space, Priority Development Sites, Destination Turners Falls (Business Development, Marketing and





Key feedback from youth and the spanish-speaking population.

#### YOUTH VOICE:

- Build the Skate Park!
- Need improved basketball court, volleyball net, soccer and softball fields.
- Need to extend bike path to neighboring communities.
- Need to connect pedestrian paths and short cuts, and make paths safer.
- Need teen club/coffee house/recreation center
- Need YMCA-type swimming pool, gym, boxing, etc.
- Use mills for: shopping center, art studios, ymca/gym, movie theater, 18 and under club, batting cages, mini-golf, school, and storage.

#### HISPANIC VOICE:

- Mobility challenges for those without cars
- Community spaces like parks, libraries, Brick House and Montague Catholic Social Ministries are valuable assets
- Desire more public gathering spaces, activities for children, variety of clothing stores
- Walkable grocery store is critical for family food security
- Need to upgrade and modernize housing

Branding) and Community. Activities at each station engaged participants in discussion and generated phenomenal feedback and ideas that appear in this report. Other significant events during the two-day public workshop included a session engaging youth voice at the Turners Falls High School, a session with a local ESL class, a luncheon with local business leaders and a meeting with town staff and administrators.

The planning process recognizes that certain populations are difficult to engage, so the planning team made a special effort to conduct participatory workshops at the high school and with the Spanish-speaking community as part of the public workshop event. Ten students attended the high school workshop as part of a class focused on civic engagement taught by Faith Kaemmerlen. Students had the opportunity to identify places they liked and places that didn't work in downtown through an interactive map activity. A discussion following this activity led students to choose key areas for improvement and students then brainstormed what improvements should be made. In general the need for quality places for youth to hang out emerged as the hottest topic. These teenagers felt that resources like Unity Park, Peskeomskut Park, the Discovery Center and the Library were good for younger kids, but didn't meet the needs of young adults. They wanted comfortable places to gather in groups and hang out but felt unwelcome at places like Spinner Park or the convenience store and in front of stores along Avenue A. They focused on the need for a skate park (which was also widely discussed among adults involved in the planning process), a YMCA-type facility and a teen club or coffeehouse. A bulleted list of the key feedback

from youth appears opposite.

With assistance from the Center for New Americans, the Town Planner facilitated a planning workshop with eight residents whose first language is Spanish in an effort to engage the growing Hispanic population in the Livability Plan process. The workshop was held in conjunction with an ESL class and included discussion in both Spanish and English with help from two translators. Most of the attendees were parents with children in the local school system and most were undocumented. Among many hot topics emerged the need for walkable resources: many in the Hispanic population do not own cars and/or cannot drive legally because they do not have a valid driver's license. Family food security depends on a walkable grocery store (Food City) and there is a deep desire for

more walkable amenities including more parks, more clothing stores, more convenience stores and more public resources. Critical feedback from this workshop is summarized opposite.

#### Looking Forward

Just as this plan has been generated out of a community effort, the planning team recognizes that its implementation will be a community effort. The action plan at the end of this document includes the names of dozens of town agencies, non-profits, business organizations and individuals tasked with bringing the goals of this plan to fruition. It is their leadership and collaboration that will move Turners Falls forward.

#### PRIORITIES EMERGING FROM THE COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AT THE PUBLIC WORKSHOP:

**Livability means: safety, affordable housing, cultural energy, good schools, outdoor recreation, employment opportunities and necessities within walking distance.**

**We need to increase employment, improve public transportation, extend downtown hours, clean up back streets & alleys, provide gathering spaces for youth & elderly, enhance public safety by adding beat cops, and provide for under-served populations.**



## PART I: TURNERS FALLS TODAY

### Physical Dimension

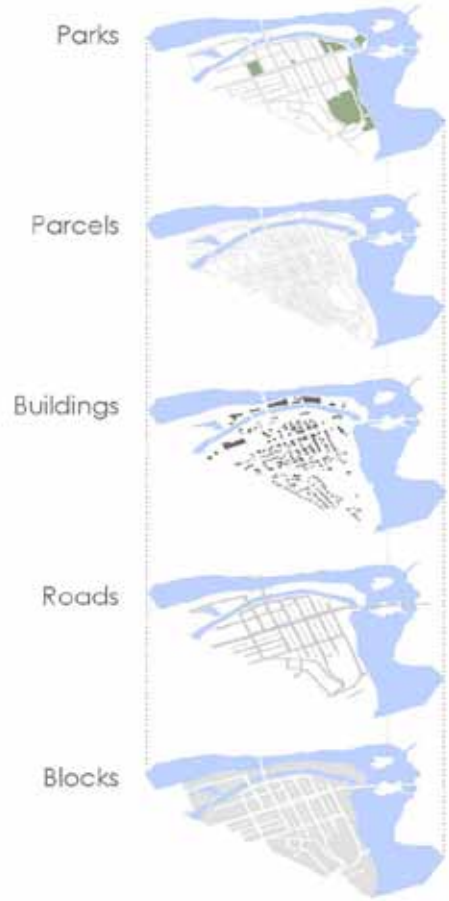
- Historic Patterns Leading to Present Built Environment
- Zoning, Building Use & Underutilized Space
- Open Space, Recreation & Connectivity
- Streetscape Aesthetics & Function

### Socioeconomic Dimension:

- Demographics - Population & Housing
- Market Analysis & Business Opportunities

Turners Falls is rich in community. Throughout the planning process participants have reiterated again and again how important people are to the plan for downtown Turners Falls and how much committed, passionate and creative individuals define the village. At the same time, understanding the physical patterns that make up the village helps clarify the underlying structures that ultimately support community by fostering interactions between individuals. This section explores how history has shaped the key building blocks of the community as well as how current policies and populations continue to shape these physical patterns.

Building Blocks



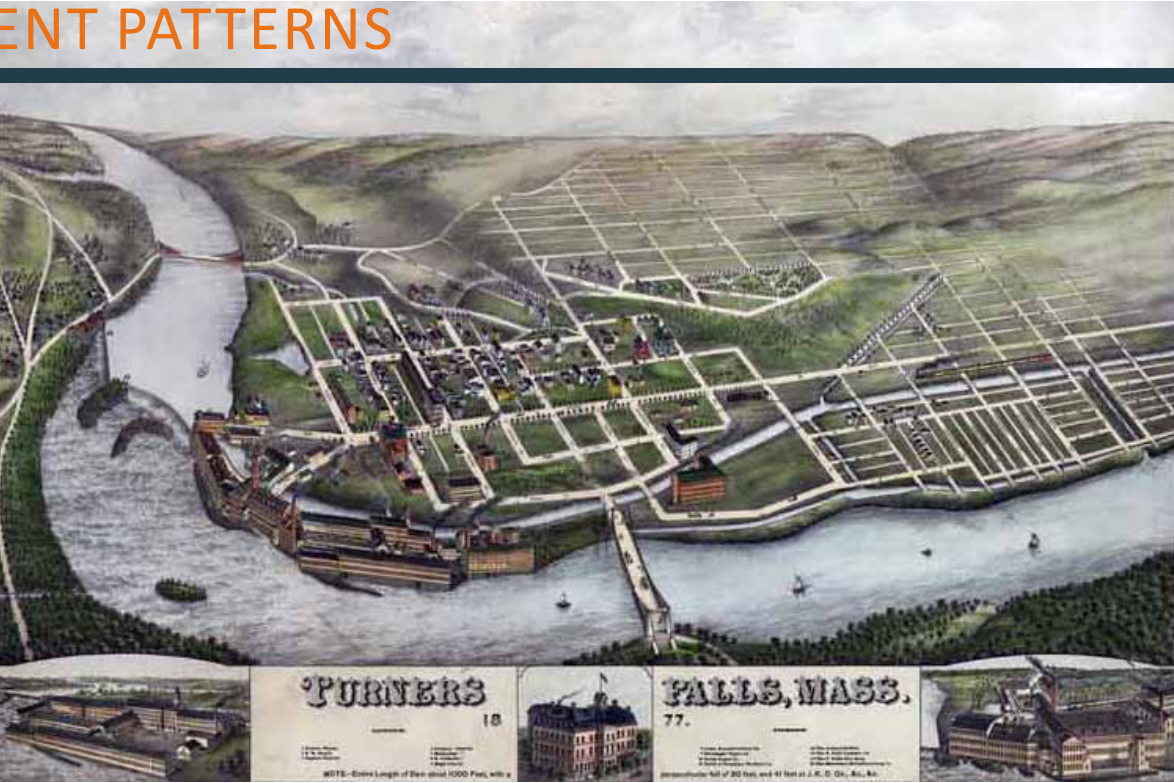
Analysis



HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Although the Turners Falls area has been inhabited continuously for more than 10,000 years by native American tribes, the village as we know it today takes its shape primarily from an 1868 plan by Alvah Crocker, an industrial entrepreneur from Fitchburg. Crocker envisioned a thriving industrial community powered by the waterfalls and planned the construction of a dam and canal in order to sell mill sites. The abundant hydropower available at Turners Falls attracted several early mills: the John Russell Cutlery Company (1868), the Montague Paper Company (1871), the Keith Paper Company (1871) and the Turners Falls Cotton Mill (1874). A flood of immigrant workers accompanied the construction of the mills, fueling business development along Avenue A and dense residential development along the adjacent grid of streets. At the turn of the century, the village was a vibrant place, supporting four hotels, numerous taverns, the Colle Opera House (a Vaudeville theatre), direct rail service from New York City and a trolley line connecting the village to Greenfield and Millers Falls.

Most of the patterns established in this turn-of the century boom are evident in the village today. In particular, Avenue A is still a grand commercial street lined with elegant two to four story buildings. The typical block width along Avenue A is 240 feet and the typical block length to the southeast (between Ave. A and L Street) is about 620 feet while the average block length to the northwest ranges from 350 feet (to J Street) and about 560 (to Canal Street). The Avenue A blocks are divided into 2 sub-blocks



1877 Bird's Eye Rendering of Planned Downtown Turners Falls

by a 20-foot service alley creating 110-foot frontages on either side. These frontages are typically subdivided into 2 to 3 parcels providing for 40 to 60 feet of building storefronts along the Avenue. Most blocks have a depth of 110 feet as originally laid out in the Crocker Plan.

The vast majority of buildings in downtown date between 1870 and 1950. These buildings are all built right up to their front lot lines at the sidewalk edge, supporting the planned grid of streets and alleys. Most buildings have a high first floor with tall windows making ideal shopfronts. Of notable divergence from this pattern is the Food City plaza, built in the latter

half of the 20th century. Its significant setback from the street with parking lot at the front of the building are typical of automobile-oriented development and starkly different from the pre-automobile, pedestrian-oriented patterns of the rest of the village.

The construction of the Gill-Montague bridge in 1938 substantially changed the structure of the northeast corner of downtown. Prior to its construction Avenue A terminated at First Street, with several more mill buildings between the street and the river.

A timeline of Turners Falls development patterns appears in the following pages.



Pre-Colonial

1798

The Turners Falls area was originally known as Peskeomskut, and served as home to the Pocomtuc confederacy of native American tribes for more than 10,000 years.

## Montague Canal

The purpose of the original Montague canal was to provide boats with a way around the Great Falls on their way north along the Connecticut River. The construction included a dam and a 2.5 mile long, 20 foot wide canal with 10 locks rejoining the Connecticut River at Montague City across from the Deerfield River. It operated profitably until 1856, when it was closed because the railroad had become a more cost-effective way to move freight. Below: an 1830 Map of the canal.



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1858

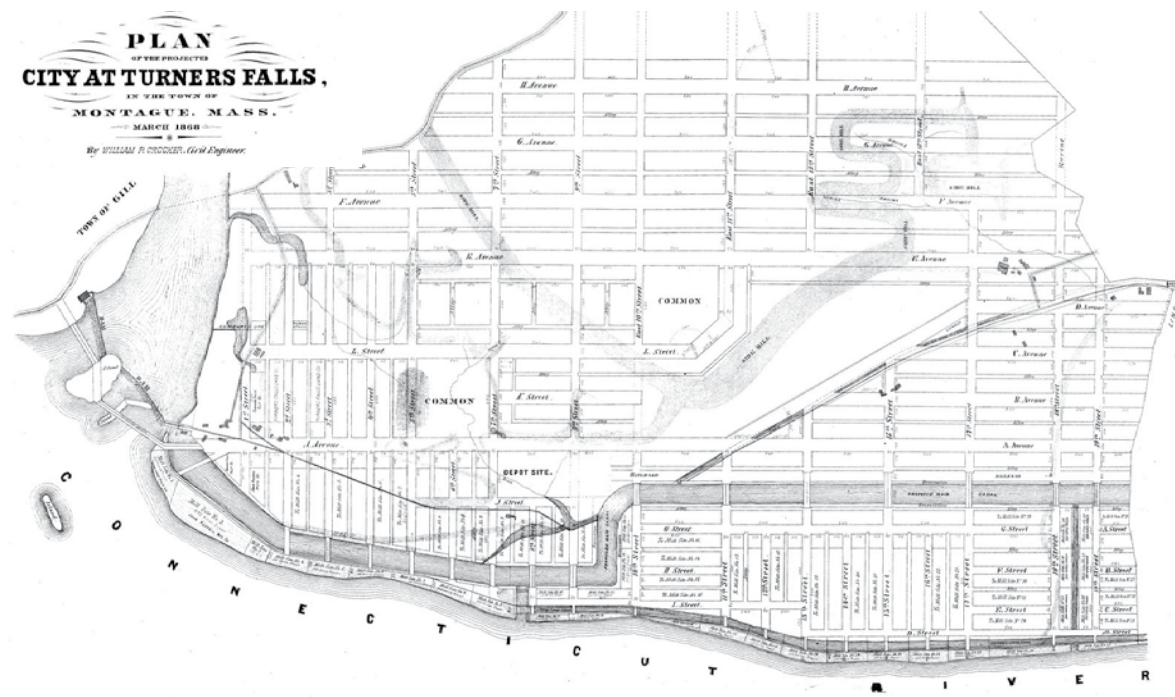
The 1858 Walling Map of Franklin County (detail below) shows the original canal. Most settlement was still concentrated around Montague City, at the southern terminus.



1868

## Alvah Crocker's Plan of Turners Falls

Alvah Crocker, an industrial entrepreneur from Fitchburg, Massachusetts, saw great potential for a thriving water-powered industrial community at the "Great Falls". Crocker planned and founded the village of Turners Falls by reconstructing the original dam and rebuilding the navigation canal as a power canal. He then sold development sites along the canal. Crocker's original plan is below - it includes two right angle turns in the power canal and two large town commons.

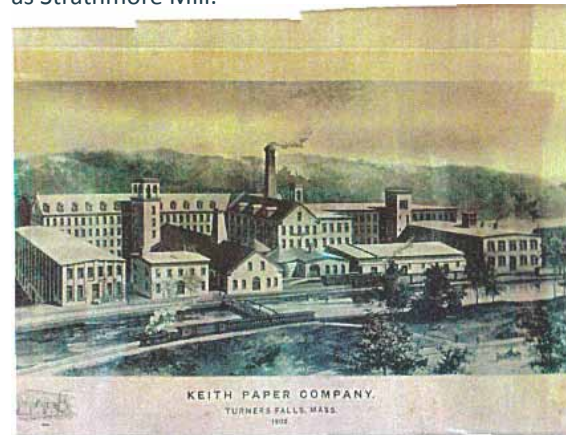


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1868 - 1874

## Mill Development

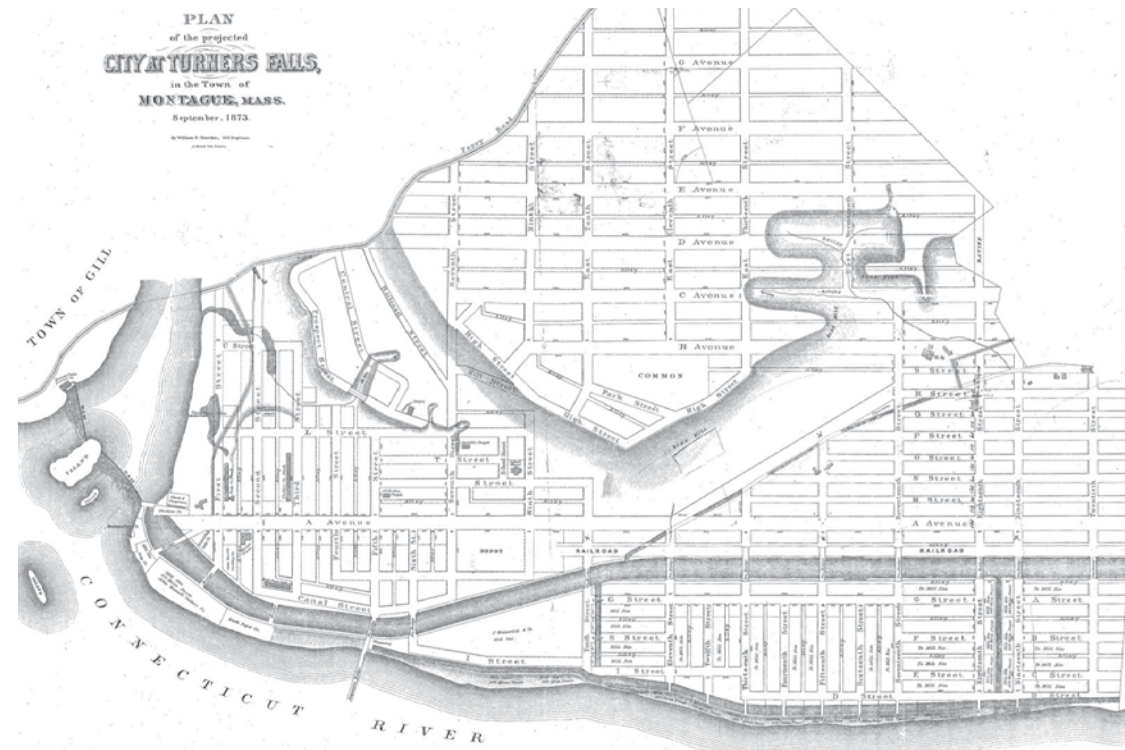
The cheap hydropower available at Turners Falls attracted several early mills: the John Russell Cutlery Company (1868), the Montague Paper Company (1871), the Keith Paper Company (1871) and the Turners Falls Cotton Mill (1874). Below: the original Keith Paper Mill, built in 1874, now known as Strathmore Mill.



Dodson & Flinker, Howard/Stein-Hudson | June 2013

1873

A revised plan of the city was issued in 1873 (below right). The new plan removed the right angles formerly designed into the power canal and adjusted the grid of streets to accommodate the steep hill to the south of downtown. Although Turners Falls was never built out quite to the extent that Alvah Crocker imagined in his plans, the layout of today's downtown core, with streets and alleys radiating off the wide spine of Avenue A, is nearly identical to this 1873 plan.



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1880s

Timeline continued on next page...





1891

1898

1914

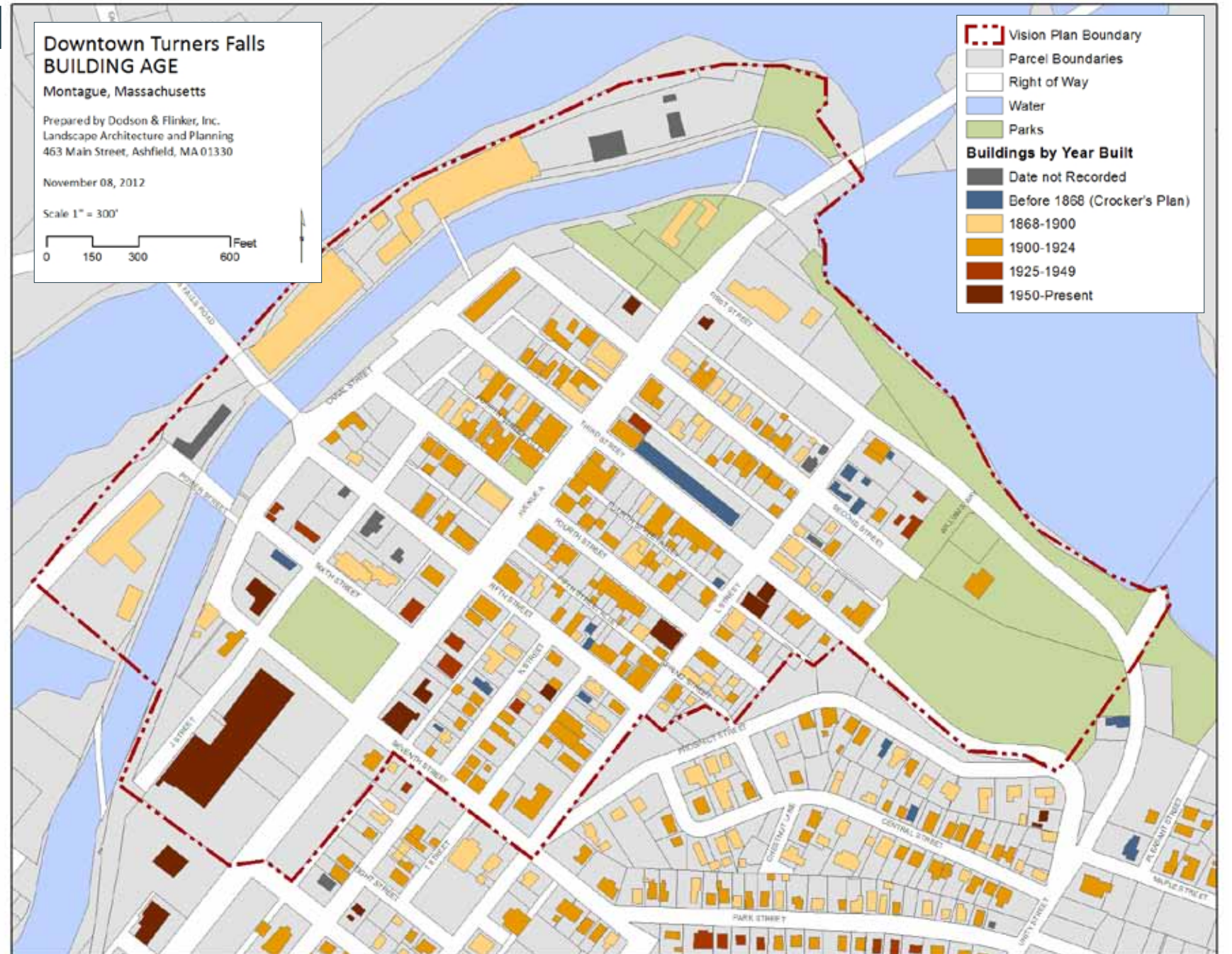
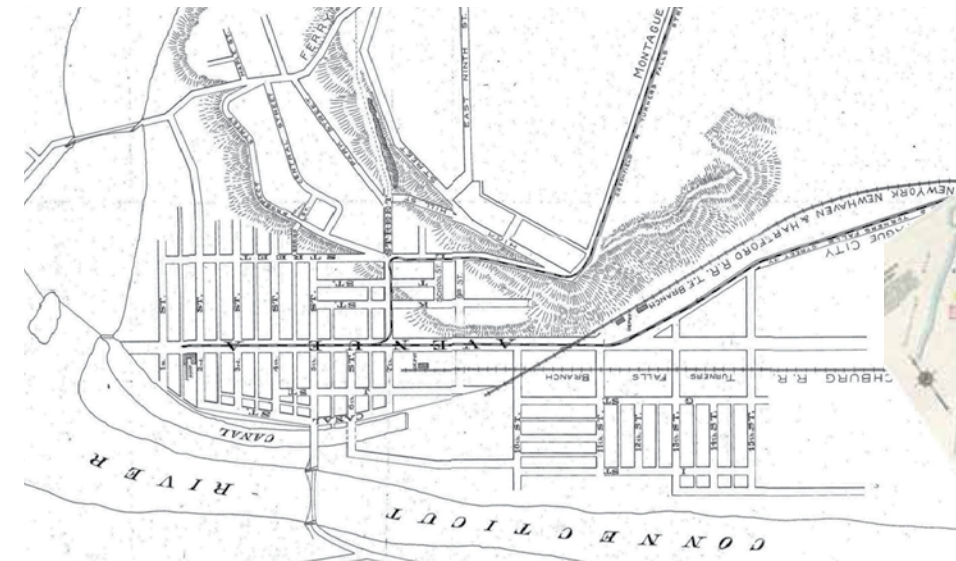
2013

Excerpt from Walker Atlas



Turners Falls was booming in 1898. The 1898 map below left shows the majority of downtown laid out as well as the Patch neighborhood on the island. Two Railroads came directly into downtown to a depot at the site of the present Food City plaza. In addition, a trolley travelled along Avenue A with service to Montague City and Montague Center.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1914. The Gill-Montague Bridge was not built until 1938 so Avenue A terminated at First Street.





# ZONING, LAND USE & UNDERUSED SPACE

The village of Turners Falls predates the advent of zoning. Unlike most of the development that occurred under standard zoning regulations in the middle and latter part of the 20th century, Turners Falls is a dense, mixed use community created with pedestrians, rather than vehicles, in mind. The town of Montague first adopted a zoning bylaw in 1970 and has amended it over two dozen times in the intervening years. Because the downtown was mostly built-out by the time zoning was adopted it has had relatively little effect on the built environment, and somewhat more effect regulating land and building use patterns.

## Existing Zoning Code

The vast majority of the downtown falls into one of three zoning categories: Central Business District, Neighborhood Business District and Historic Industrial. A detailed description of permitted uses in these zones appears at right. Some additional accessory uses are permitted through special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Both the Central Business District and the Neighborhood Business District are essentially mixed use zones, allowing a diversity of residential, retail and office space. A recent change in the Central Business District actually mandates commercial use of the street level units. Key redevelopment sites on the island, like the Strathmore Mill, are all zoned Historic Industrial, allowing business and light industrial

activity as well as residential and hotel use by special permit.

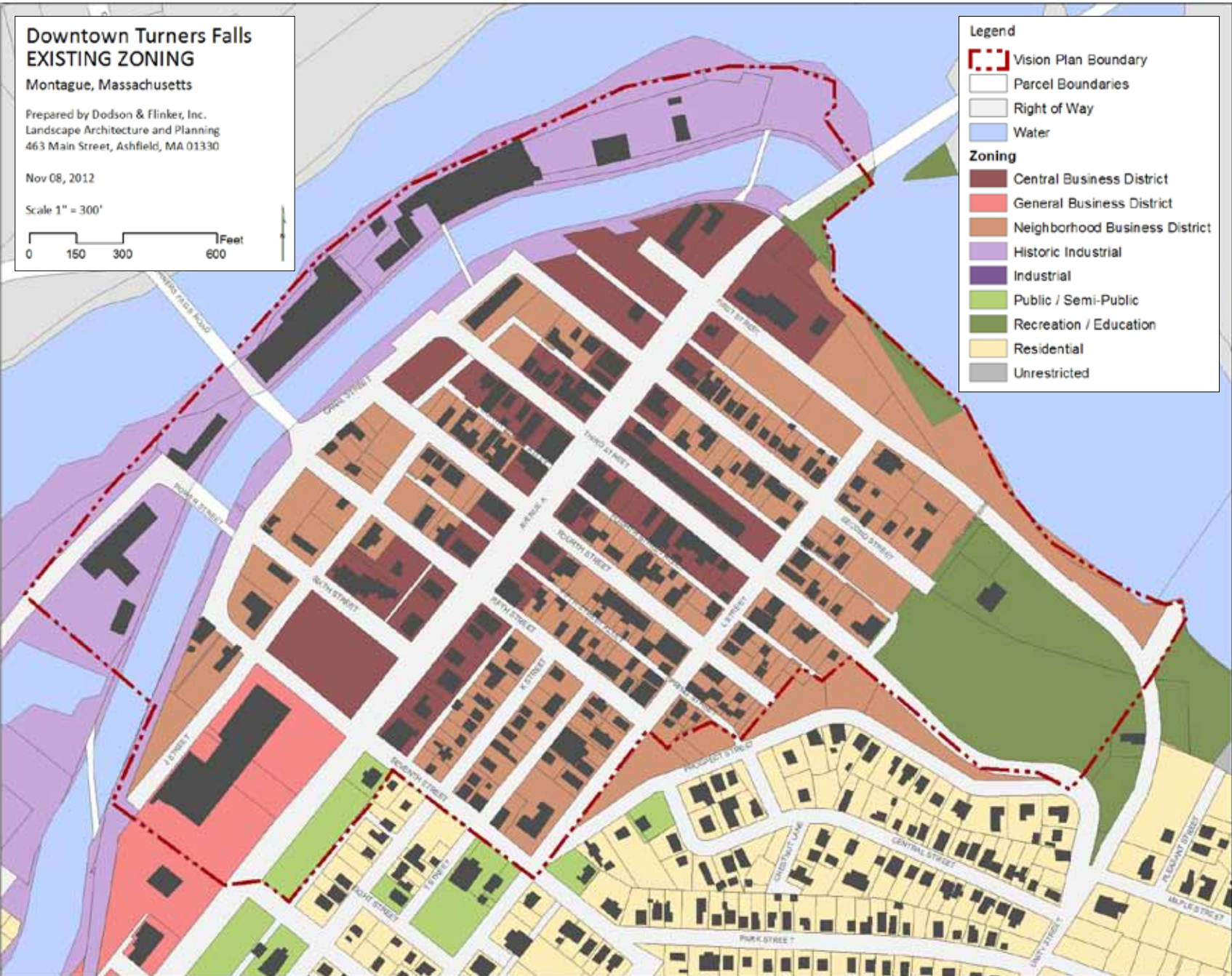
Just a few parcels within the Vision Plan focus area do not fall within one of these three zoning districts. The largest of these is the site of the Food City shopping plaza, classified as General Business. This district allows business, retail and horticulture use with a space restriction (added May 2000) of 5,000 ft<sup>2</sup> or 3 acres of land. Across from the Food City plaza, two parcels are designated Public/Semi-Public use, upon which only cemeteries are permitted uses and public utilities are allowed by special permit. Finally Unity Park and portions of the dam and fish ladder are zoned Recreation/Education. Peskeomskut and Spinner Parks, however, are both currently zoned as Central Business District. The town owns both parcels, which confers some level of protection to the parks; however, nothing in the zoning code protects them from development if the town decided to sell.

In terms of parking, the town of Montague requires one and a half parking spaces per dwelling unit, plus one space per employee, plus one space per 175 square feet of retail or office floor space, plus one space per motel, hotel or lodging house unit, plus one space per four seats in a restaurant, theater or such. An exception exists in the Central Business District that retail, office, restaurant, theater and such uses are not required to provide off-street customer parking. Residential units however, must still have off-street parking spaces at 1.5

- Central Business District**  
**PERMITTED USES**
  - Mixed use, with one- and two-family dwelling as an accessory use, with the street level devoted to commercial use.
  - Retail sales and services of 10,000 square feet or less of floor area.
  - Business office or professional office
  - Non-profit club or lodge
- Neighborhood Business District**  
**PERMITTED USES**
  - One and two family dwelling
  - Retail sales and service
  - Business office or professional office
  - Craft workshop or light assembly shop
- Historic Industrial**  
**PERMITTED USES**
  - Business office or professional office
  - Retail sales and service
  - Manufacturing, processing or research
  - Craft workshop or light assembly shop
  - Bulk storage, warehousing or distribution



Avenue A between 1st and 2nd Streets. Mixed use: retail on bottom floor, residential and offices above.





Zoning Analysis within Livability Plan Area

District	Properties		Acres		On Ave A		Buildings		
	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	GFA	% of Total
Central Business District (CBD)	88	28%	17.84	20%	50	57%	61	371,802	28%
General Business District (GB)	10	3%	5.39	6%	4	5%	9	75,927	6%
Neighborhood Business District (NB)	196	62%	32.67	37%	0	0%	146	468,001	36%
Historic Industrial	10	3%	15.36	17%	0	0%	3	384,550	29%
Industrial	6	2%	7.32	8%	0	0%	2	6,225	0%
Public/Semi-Public	2	1%	1.38	2%	2	2%	1	6,069	0%
Recreation/Education	3	1%	8.25	9%	0	0%	1	3,040	0%
Undetermined	3	1%		0%		0%			0%
Total	318		88.21		56		223	1,315,614	

Property Ownership

Of the 319 properties in the Downtown Turners Falls Study Area, 286 (about 90%) are owned by residents or corporations of Massachusetts, followed by 11 properties owned by Connecticut residents (3%) and 4 by California residence (1%).

Downtown properties are most commonly owned by residents or corporations of Turners Falls (170 properties or 53% of the total). Greenfield is the next most common with 24 properties (7.5%), followed by residents of Norwood MA (15 properties or 4.7%) and Hartford CT (11 properties or 3.4%). Most of the Norwood properties are owned by Power Town Limited Partnership which are typically subsidized apartment buildings.

Some of the larger property owners in

the Downtown Turners Falls Study Area include the following:

**Inhabitants of Montague** - 24 properties on about 18 acres with 7 buildings totaling about 236,000 square feet including 177,000 in the Strathmore Mill property.

**Montague Economic Development**-6 properties on 4.3 acres with 1 building of 2,200 square feet (the former Cumberland Falls convenience store).

**Power Town Limited Partnership** (of Norwood MA) - 15 properties on 1.8 acres with 10 buildings totaling 89,245 square feet. Six of these properties are on Ave. A which are mostly

older historic block buildings that are now being used for subsidized apartments.

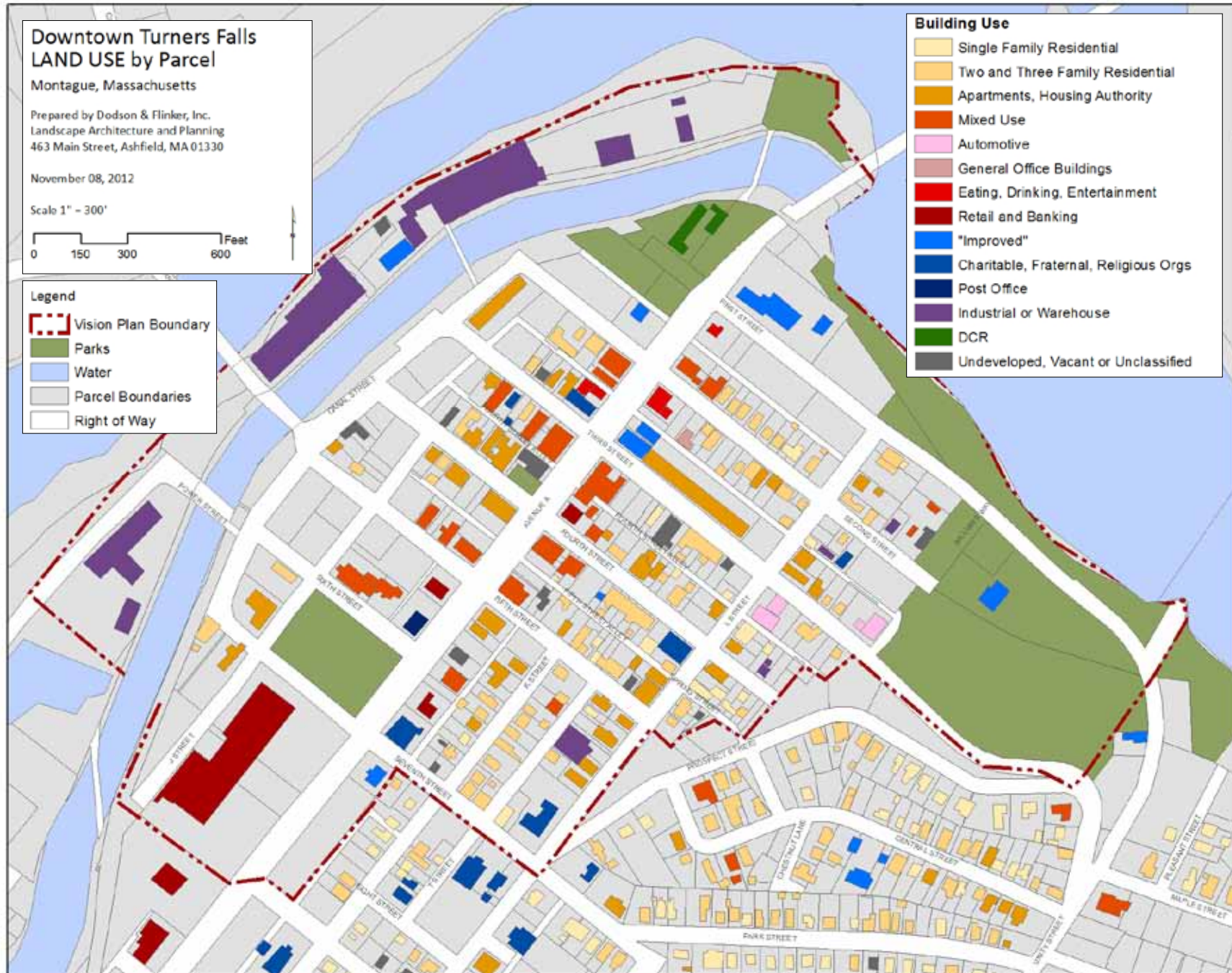
**Firstlight Hydro Generating Co.** (of Hartford CT) - No buildings but over 17 acres of land, mostly on the Power Island.

**Southworth Company** - 7 properties on 2.7 acres with 3 buildings totaling 148,292 square feet.

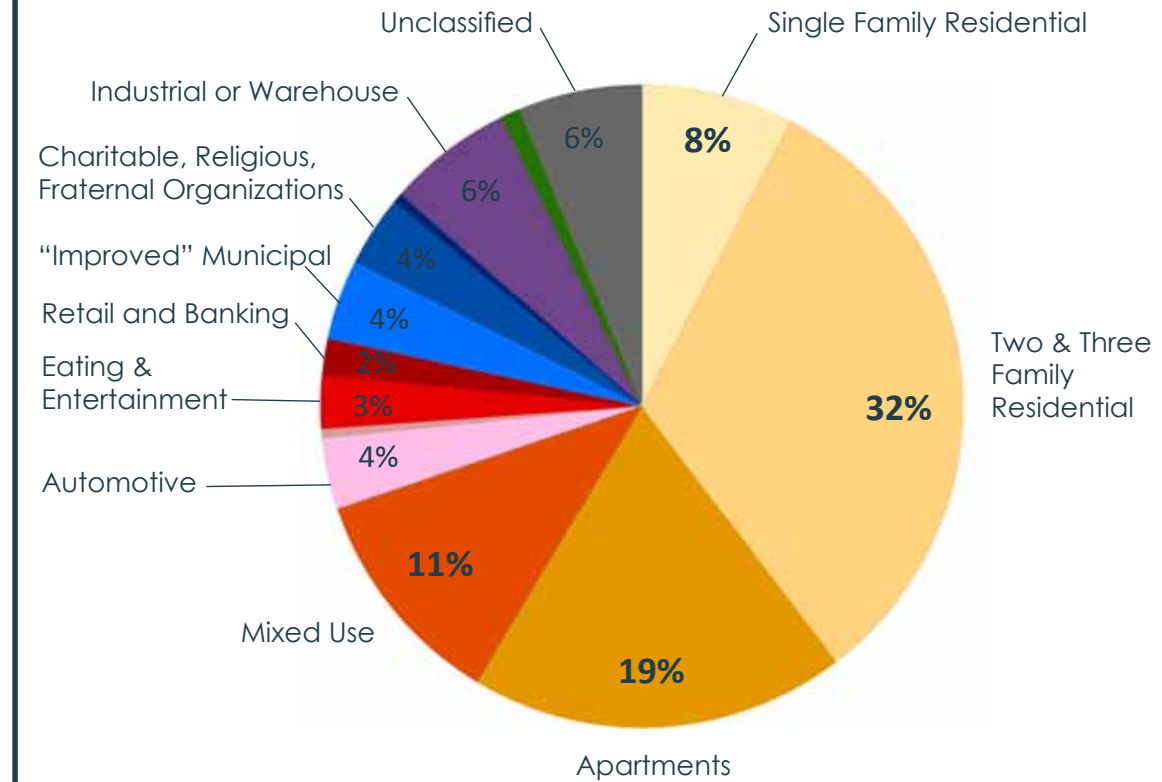
**Crocker Cutlery Limited** - 2 buildings totaling 55,420 square feet







## Building Use in Downtown Turners Falls (Within Livability Plan Area)



## Existing Land and Building Use

Downtown Turners Falls is characterized by a dense mosaic of mixed uses. More than one tenth of buildings within the Livability Plan focus area are classified as mixed use, with the majority of these buildings lining Avenue A. Just a few buildings along Avenue A are devoted to a single use: most notably the Powertown apartment buildings (residential), St. Kazimierz Society (fraternal organization) and government/municipal buildings such as the Post Office, the library, the Shea Theatre and Town Hall. Fifty-nine percent of all buildings within the Livability Plan area are residential, mostly two and three family units, multi-family housing units and apartment buildings on the side streets surrounding Avenue A. Most of the industrial or warehousing buildings in downtown are located across the power canal on the island. Although industrial and warehousing buildings make up only 6% of the total buildings downtown, they account for a much more significant portion of the available square footage in the village.

The mosaic of land use patterns in downtown Turners Falls speak volumes to its history as a late 19th century planned industrial community. Constructed in an era before automobiles, this community defines walkability. Residences, businesses and workplaces were meant to be accessible on a pedestrian scale, and the architecture supported both density and mixed use.

Below & Right: Mixed use buildings along Avenue A





Vacant, Under-utilized and Priority-Redevelopment Parcels

Because of its history as a booming mill village, downtown Turners Falls is densely developed with elegant turn-of-the-century building stock. The existing buildings are closely spaced along the grid of streets and alleys, and there are very few vacant parcels that are actually developable. Shown in pale yellow on the map opposite are parcels that are considered un-developable due to steep slopes or ledge rock. These un-developable parcels make up the vast majority of parcels without structures. A significant number of vacant parcels are used for surface parking lots (in pale pink opposite). Shown in dark red are parcels that the town assessor’s office considers developable. These lots include two sites across First Street from the town hall and a large parcel along Canal Street which is currently the site of the Youth Sculpture Park.

The town’s energies are focused on the redevelopment of five key sites: Strathmore Mill, RR Salvage, the former Cumberland Farms, Saint Anne’s Church and Rectory, and the Town Hall. A formal request for development proposals for Strathmore Mill was issued in December 2012 and yielded two responses. The town has selected a group of investors from Brooklyn to pursue a year of study into the viability of developing mixed use space within the Mill complex. The RR Salvage building is in very poor condition and will likely need to be torn down and replaced entirely with new construction. The annex building at the rear of the main building has recently been purchased separately to be refurbished.

The former Cumberland Farms building is also in poor condition, but reportedly structurally sound. Built in the second half of the last century, it is one of the few buildings along Avenue A that doesn’t come right up to the sidewalk, and, as such, presents a significant break in the Avenue A streetscape experience. When the Discovery Center was redeveloped a deed restriction was placed on the Cumberland Farms site that it must be used for cultural or community use.

The main part of the Town Hall facing Avenue A is a beautiful historic brick building. However, a 1960s addition at the rear of the building is currently vacant and in need of redevelopment. The addition housed the Montague police department until a new headquarters outside of downtown was built recently. Strong support emerged at the public workshop for collocating a new library and senior center behind the Town Hall.

Finally, Saint Anne’s Church and Rectory are a beautiful set of historic brick buildings in good repair along Sixth Street, fronting on Peskeomskut Park. Among the proposals for this space is a bed & breakfast or hotel and a conference center or function hall that could host weddings and banquets.

Town-Identified PRIORITIES FOR REDEVELOPMENT

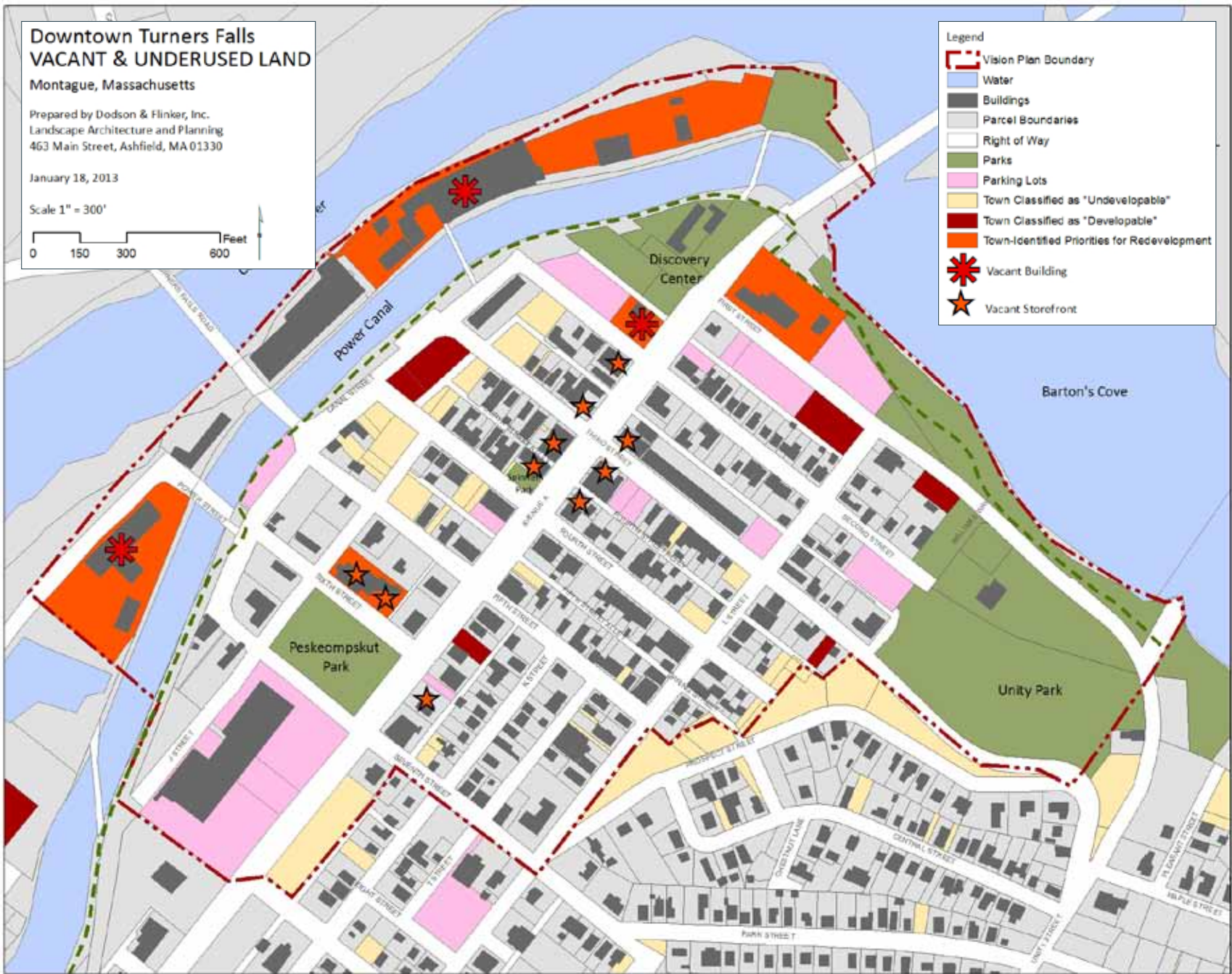
Identified in Orange on Map Opposite

- Strathmore Mill Complex
- R.R. Salvage
- 38 Avenue A (former Cumberland Farms)
- Saint Anne’s Church (26 Sixth Street)
- Town Hall

VACANT STOREFRONTS Along Avenue A

Identified with Orange Star on Map Opposite

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 50      | Crocker Bank Building; Former Crocker Bank, Former Mechanics Lodge of Masons         |
| 74      | Commercial Block - Multiple Use  |
| 85      | Former Hallmark Photography School and Gallery relocated to location near TF Airport |
| 112     | Multi-Use Commercial Block: Cute Nails, Vacant Storefront                            |
| 118     | Multi-Use Commercial Block: Rojo Burritos, Vacant Storefronts                        |
| 101     | Multi-Use Commercial Block: Pipione’s, Vacant Storefronts                            |
| 105-107 | Multi-Use Commercial Block: All Vacant Storefronts                                   |
| 123     | Former Toganelli Heating and Cooling   |
| 191     | Former Greenfield Savings Bank   |







**Above:** Strathmore Mill. Building 11 is in the best condition of all the buildings in the complex. A public art installation on the exterior of the mill creates interest from across the power canal. The town cleared a substantial amount of debris from the site in 2010. **Below left:** The Carnegie Public Library is a beautiful historic building at the southwestern gateway into downtown. The sidewalks around it are not ADA accessible and the library has insufficient space for both storage and programming. Some suggest moving the library to a new location combined with a senior center behind town hall, and transitioning the Carnegie building into a historic museum. **Below Right:** The former Cumberland Farms building occupies a prime site at the gateway from Gill and Route 2. The site is subject to a deed restriction requiring cultural or community use.



**Above:** Vacant storefronts at Avenue A and 3rd Street. Three out of the four storefronts pictured are currently empty due to maintenance issues and an absentee landlord, although the residential apartments above are reportedly occupied. **Below:** Vacant Storefronts at 107 Avenue A and 123 Avenue A.



## PUBLIC WORKSHOP FEEDBACK SUMMARY:

### DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION

- Cumberland Site is key: Incorporate retail, farmers market, services for residents: but avoid gentrification!
- Cultural venue compatible with Discovery Center.
- Strathmore Mill: plans in the works – housing, live-work, light industrial, arts and culture all welcome.
- Pursue Library and Senior Center behind Town Hall.



# OPEN SPACE, RECREATION & CONNECTIVITY

Prior to its incarnation as a mill village, Turners Falls was a gathering space and important fishing destination for local native American tribes. This tradition has continued through the present day, with the village and the surrounding river serving as a valuable cultural and recreational destination both for residents of the town of Montague and visitors from further afield in Franklin County.

This section explores open space and recreation resources, access to and connectivity between those resources, and connections with the surrounding region.

## Open Space & Recreation

Downtown Turners Falls is surrounded by a perfect triangle of open space: Peskeomskut Park to the west, the Discovery Center to the north and Unity Park to the east. A person can walk to a major park less than three blocks from any point in the downtown. In addition to these three major parks, the central part of downtown has several pocket parks - **Spinner Park** at the corner of Ave A and 4th Street and two **community gardens** along L Street - as well as a large swath of open space including the **war memorial** across from the Food City shopping plaza. The bike path surrounds downtown on the east, north and west and provides recreational connectivity to the south end of Greenfield. Although not officially considered open space, the steep terrain of the hill that encloses

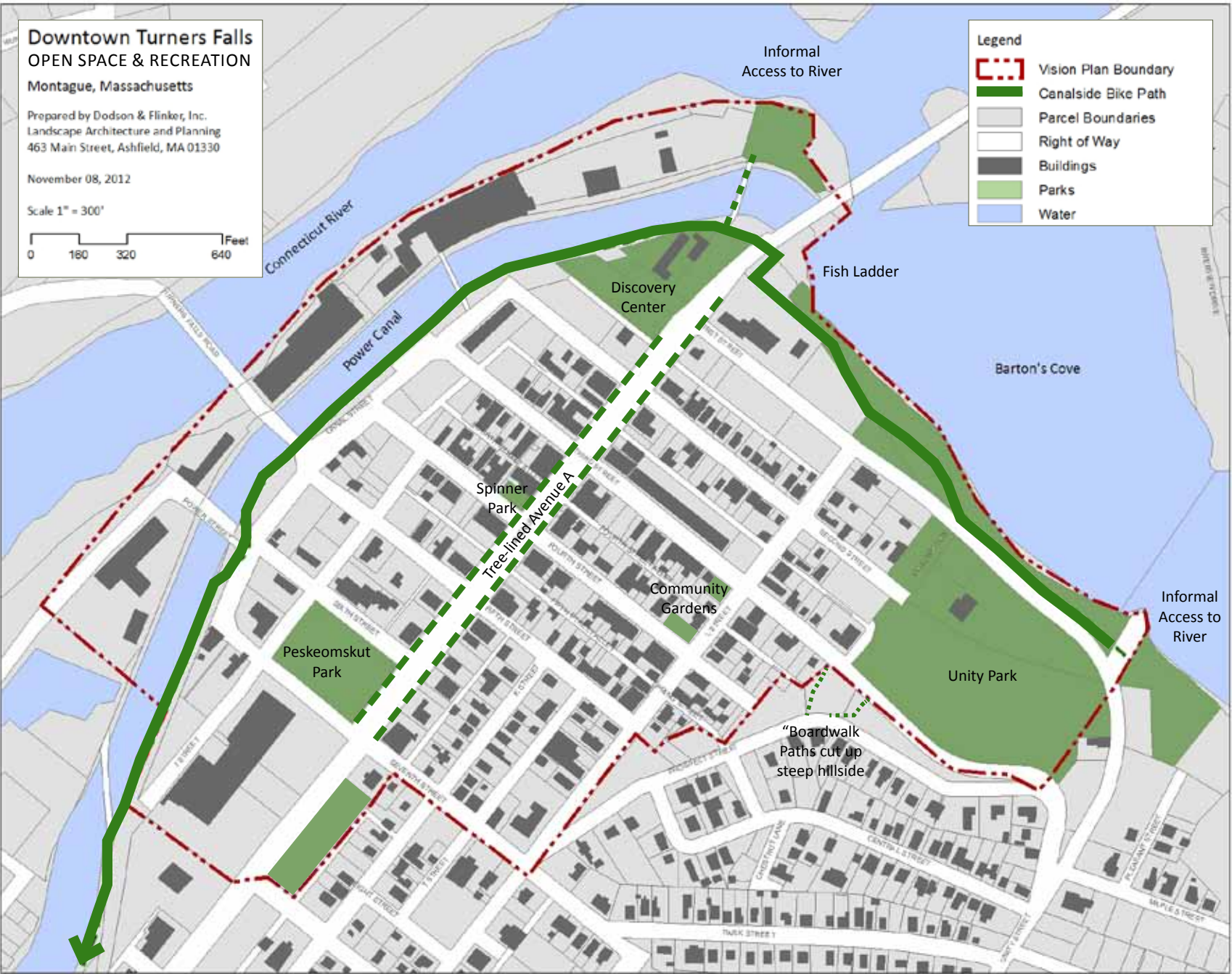
downtown Turners Falls on the south side adds a significant sense of green space.

**Unity Park** is the largest recreational resource in the community. It contains a loop walking path, several ball fields, a recently updated playground with splash area, updated parking and a community building including restroom facilities. Plans for Phase II of renovations include adding a formalized community garden, re-surfacing the ball fields and removing invasive species and overgrowth from the park perimeters. Across First street from Unity Park, land owned by the power company along Barton Cove is maintained as a picnic area with tables, benches and cookout grills.

**Peskeomskut Park** occupies an entire block of Avenue A between Sixth Street and Seventh Streets. Its amenities include a recently added band stand for outdoor performances and a small playground for young children. Both Unity and Peskeomskut Parks are significant dog-walking destinations within the community.

**The Discovery Center** is surrounded by a significant block of open space that is infrequently used. When the building was renovated and the current gallery and education space installed, the vision for the landscape included demonstration gardens of native plants and ecosystems. A courtyard connecting the parking lot to the main entrance was realized,

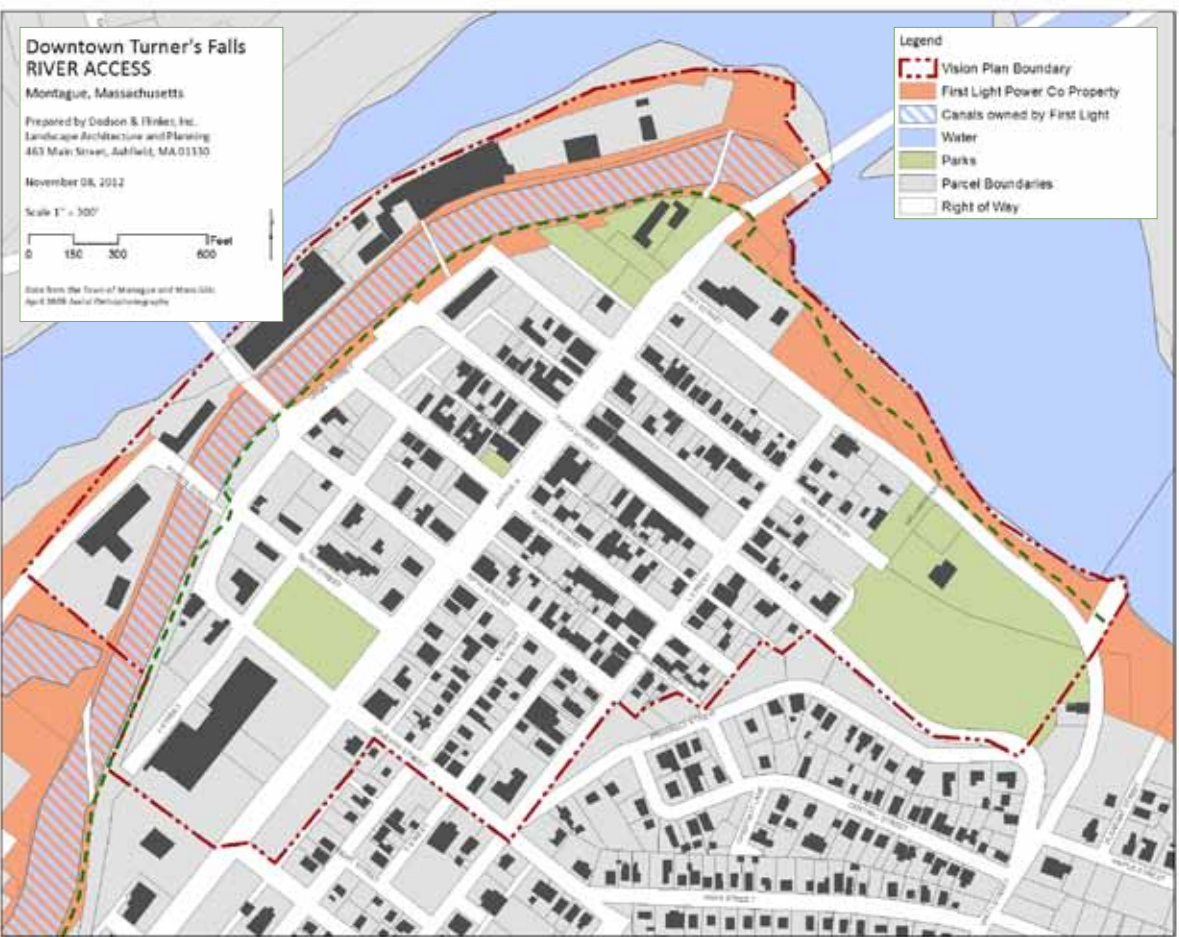
*Top right: Canalside Bike Path. Middle right: new play equipment at Unity Park. Bottom right: picnic area on Barton Cove adjacent to bike path.*





but few people stop in this space and the vast lawn running down towards the power canal is not used. Many workshop participants commented on the need to activate this public space with programming and festivals. Behind the Discovery Center, a pedestrian bridge lead across the Power Canal to the power island. An informal recreational area exists here, with views of the fish ladder and informal access to the river for fishing.

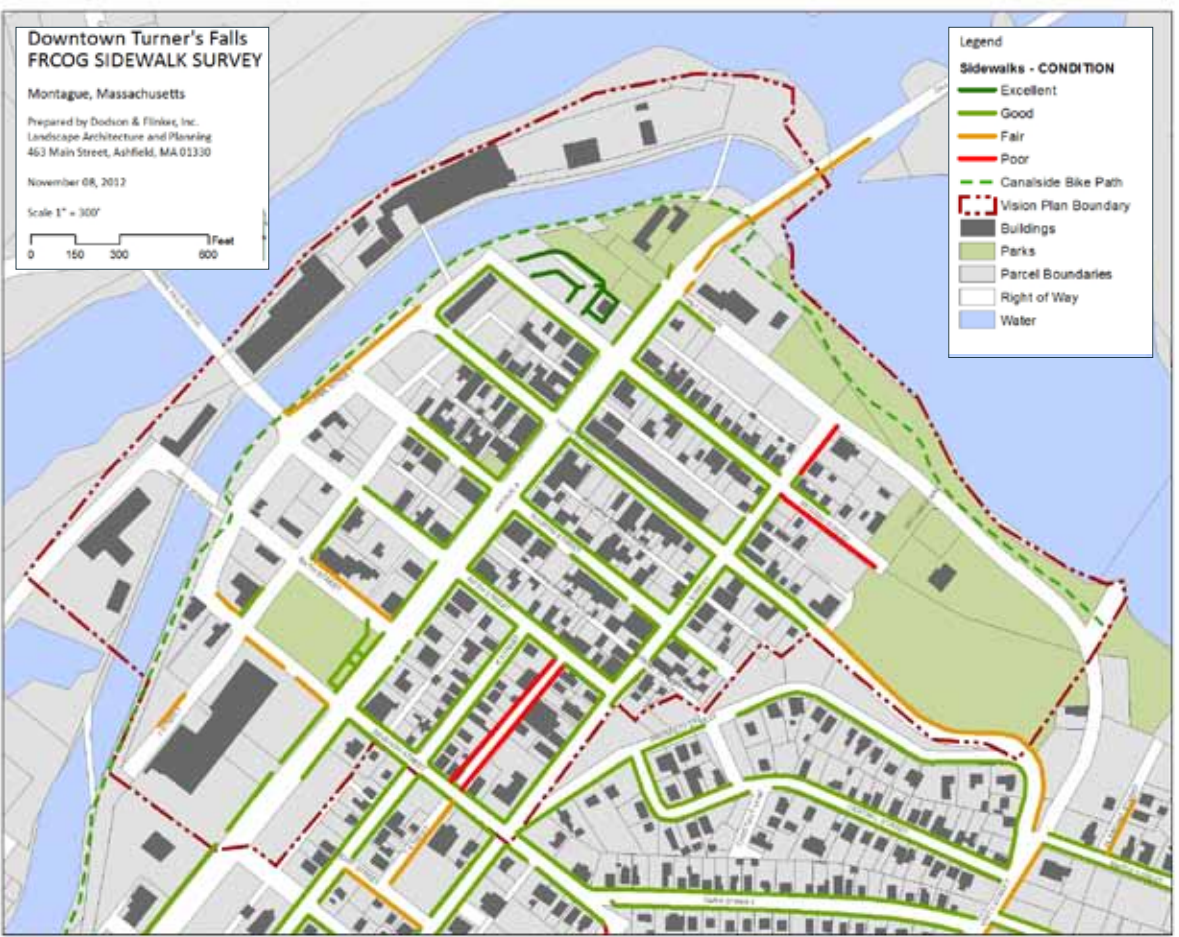
The **Canalside Bike Path** is an almost universally beloved community resource and a strong point of civic pride. In 2010 Yankee Magazine named it the “Best Urban Bike Path in New England”. It begins adjacent to Unity Park and hugs the shoreline along Barton Cove before ducking under the Gill-Montague Bridge abutment and following the edge of the power canal southwest towards Montague City and Greenfield. Views across Barton Cove to Gill and across the Power Canal to historic mill buildings are stunning. The bike path is a significant draw of visitors into the community and generally filled with recreational bikers and joggers on warm days. In the winter it is not plowed, and some use it for snowshoeing or cross-country skiing. During discussions with the working group and at the public meeting the need for a few small improvements arose. First, the crossings at both 5th and 6th streets are unsafe and need clarification between vehicular, pedestrian and bike traffic. Second, there should be some way to access downtown from the bikepath between the Discovery Center and 5th Street. And finally, there is a need for a crosswalk between the bike path and Unity Park across First Street.



## River Access

Turners Falls is surrounded on three sides by the Connecticut River and the Power Canal. Water has long been a defining feature of the community. Native American tribes first gathered at the falls more than 10,000 years ago to fish and the power of those same falls drew industrialist Alvah Crocker to invest in the area. Senior citizens who grew up in Turners

Falls describe adventures recreating in the Connecticut River - jumping into the Power Canal to ride the current down to the next bridge, playing in the water beneath the falls and swimming above the dam. Unfortunately a number of accidents occurred, and none of these activities are currently considered safe. What this means is that although Turners Falls is surrounded by water, there is currently no safe and sanctioned recreational access to the



river: people can see the river, but cannot touch, splash or swim in it.

First Light, the power company that operates the dam, owns the entire waterfront in Turners Falls, including the actual power canal. As part of their licensing agreement they are required to maintain a fish ladder which is open to the public adjacent to the town hall during spawning time. They are also required to maintain a boating access ramp, which is located

across Barton Cove in Gill. Experienced boaters can launch at an unofficial access point adjacent to Unity Park. First Light does help maintain the bike path and picnic area at Barton Cove, but does not allow swimming or condone boat launching from anywhere in Turners Falls. First Light will go through a re-licensing process again in 2018, and numerous residents mentioned that they would like to see recreational access addressed as part of this process.

## Intra-Village Connectivity

Turners Falls is a phenomenally walkable community. Nearly all parts of the downtown fall within a 1/4 mile walking radius of the main intersection at 3rd Street and Avenue A. A 2010 Franklin Regional Council of Governments sidewalk survey found that the village is well-supported by a network of sidewalks in good condition. In particular Avenue A with its wide sidewalks and tree-lined character provides for a pleasant pedestrian experience connecting Peskeomskut Park to the Discovery Center and Town Hall. Not included in the sidewalk survey are the alleys, which residents attest are a significant part of the pedestrian experience.

At one time up to seven pedestrian bridges connected from the village center across the Power Canal to the mills on the island. Mill workers walked back and forth in the morning, at lunch and again in the evening. Currently only two pedestrian bridges remain open: one crossing from the Discovery Center to the head of the island, and one on the side of the 5th Street vehicle bridge crossing to the Southworth Paper Company building. A third pedestrian bridge crossing to the Strathmore Mill complex is closed pending restoration. Currently owned by the power company, it needs new decking and upgrading to meet ADA code. Upgrading and re-opening this bridge is seen as a priority project for the town because of its proximity to the Strathmore Mill.



# Regional Connectivity

Four key gateways lead into Turners Falls: the Gill-Montague Bridge from Route 2, the 5th Street bridge from Greenfield, Avenue A from Montague City, and 3rd Street from Millers Falls and Montague Center. The Gill-Montague Bridge has been closed to two-way traffic for the past two years and is expected to open again in the fall of 2014. The closure of this bridge has had a significant impact on the community.

Although Turners Falls recently invested in a wayfinding system which includes signage on Route 2 and at key locations downtown, none of the four major gateways into town is marked by a welcome or wayfinding sign, and comments at several working group meetings focused on the need to alert visitors to the unique village community they are entering.

Downtown Turners Falls is served by the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) bus system. Buses stop downtown approximately

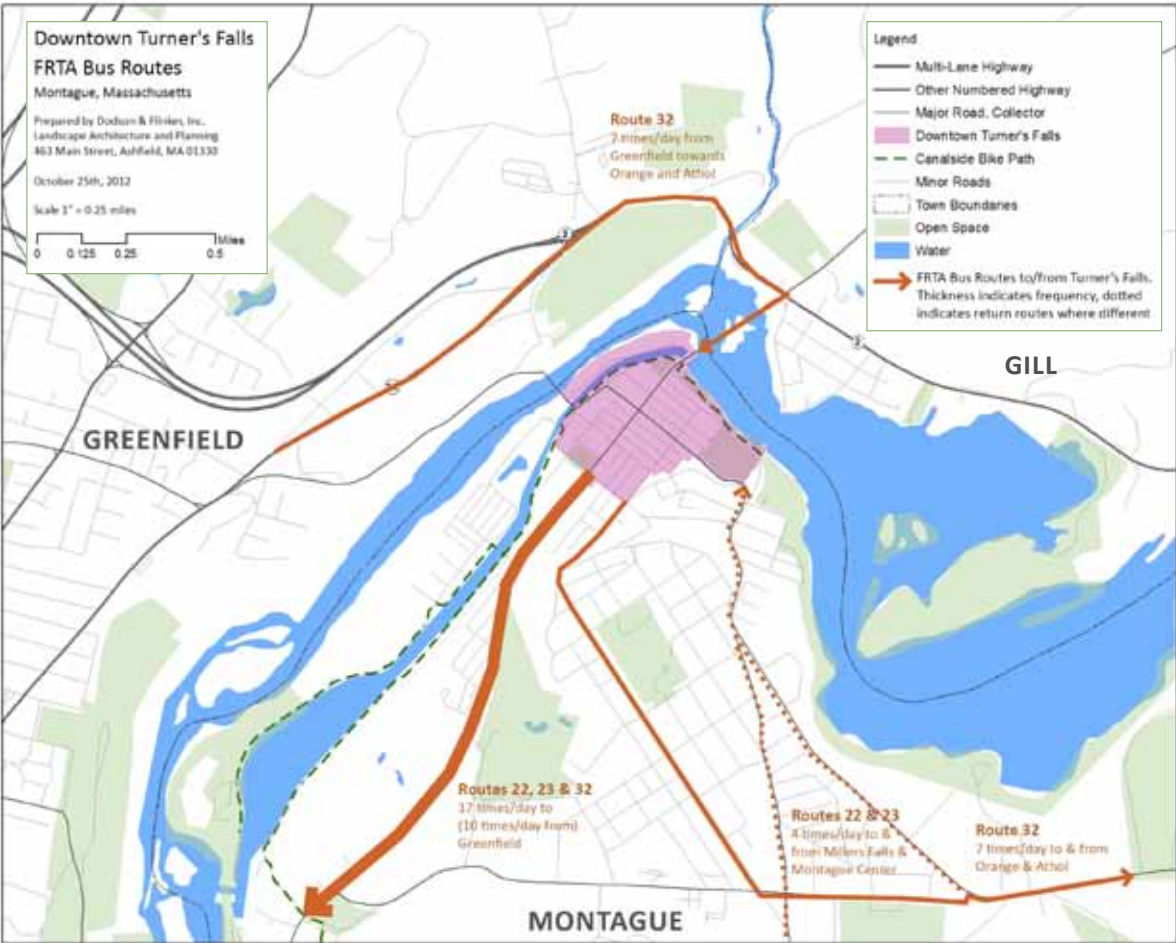
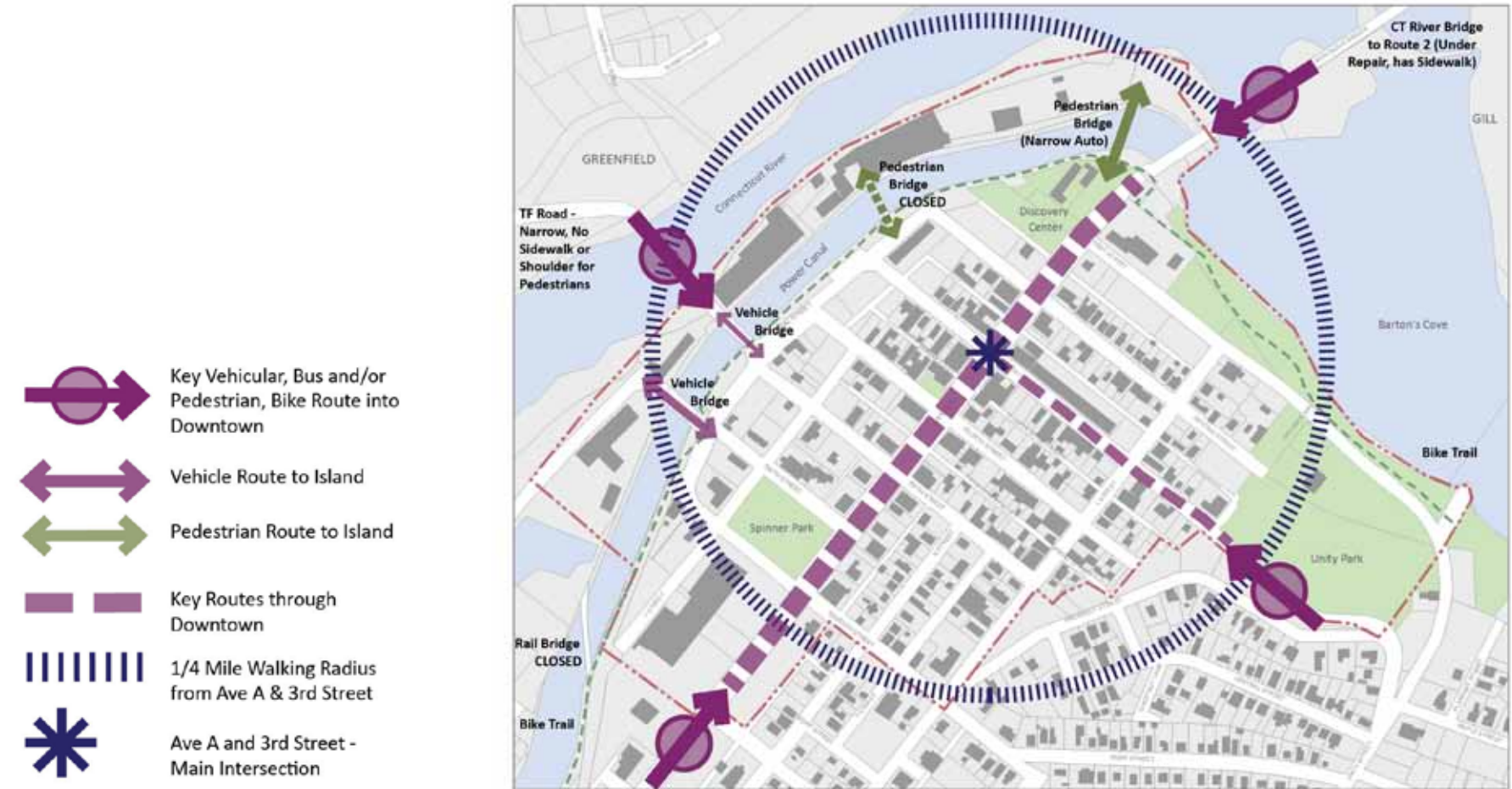
30 times per day on their way to and from Greenfield, Orange, Athol, Millers Falls, Montague Center and Amherst. Connections in Greenfield and Amherst can take travelers to destinations further afield.

The general feeling expressed at working group meetings was that people were glad for the service, but that buses need to run much more frequently and include evening and weekend hours in order to sufficiently serve the community. Residents describe being “stranded”

away from home or having visitors unable to leave Turners Falls if they miss the last bus in the evening. In addition, several seniors commented many critical services are in Greenfield, but that riding the bus is inconvenient because of how long you have to wait for return trips.

Finally, although Turners Falls is an excellent place to be a pedestrian or bicyclist, getting to the village on foot or on a bike is significantly more difficult. Coming from Montague City, the bike path is an excellent

option; however, adequate sidewalks or bike lanes are lacking on routes approaching from most other directions. Accessing Greenfield by bike or foot was seen as particularly problematic because the shortest route across the 5th street bridge and up the hill to Greenfield has no sidewalk or shoulder and cars speed around the curve.



# PUBLIC WORKSHOP FEEDBACK SUMMARY:

## PARKS & OPEN SPACE DISCUSSION

- Existing parks are great: need to focus on programming and activities.
- Good paths and sidewalks generally; need to make key connections and provide safe cross walks.
- Need community access to the river, including boat launch.
- Need to pursue Native American Cultural Park.
- Need more community garden spaces.
- Need place for families to swim.
- Need dog park (and dog shelter).



# AVENUE A STREETSCAPE

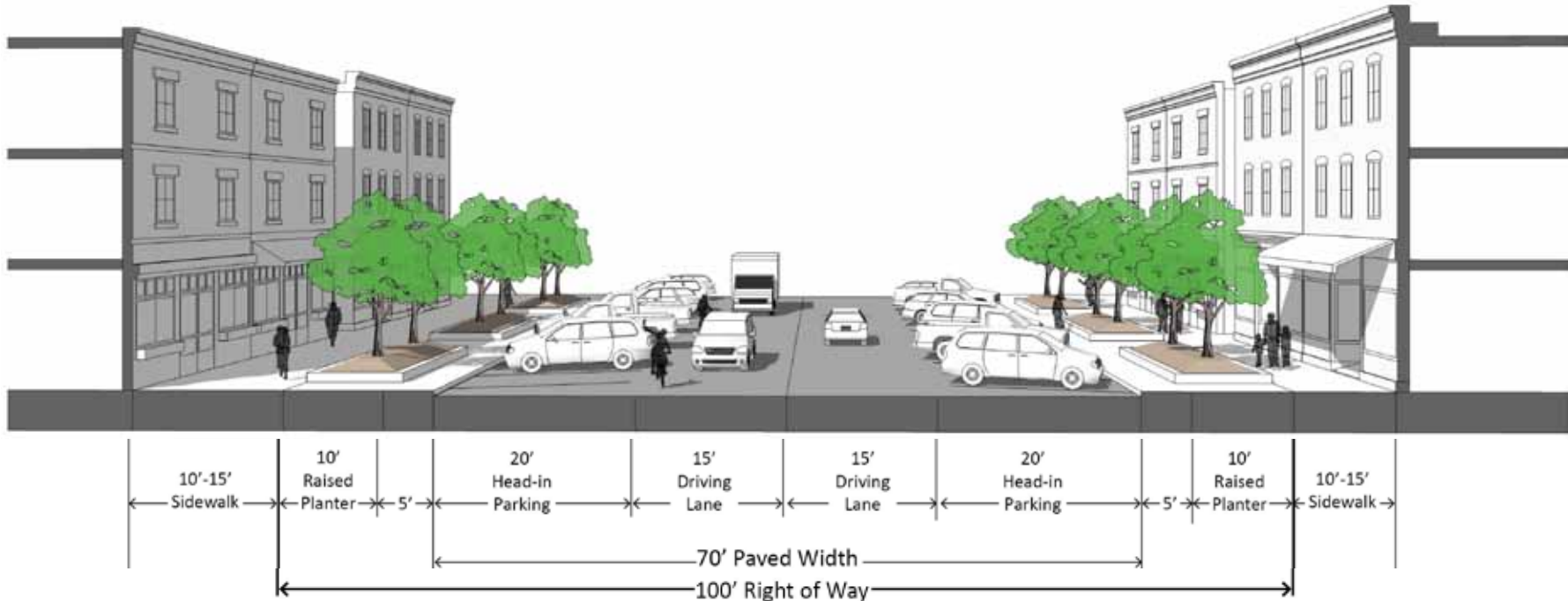
Avenue A was laid out in Alvah Crocker’s original 1869 plan of Turners Falls as a wide commercial street that would serve as the main axis of the community. More than a century later it has retained both the form and the function of that original intent. Although the brick buildings date to the late 19th century, the current streetscape emerged during revitalization efforts in the 1980s. The town reconstructed sidewalks, planters, parking and driving lanes from First Street through Seventh Street. The result is a coherent and uniform streetscape experience consisting generally of 10-15 foot wide brick and concrete sidewalks, 10 foot wide bermed tree

planters, a 5 foot sidewalk extension, angled parking and a wide driving lane. Overall the town maintains a 100 foot right of way along the length of Avenue A with sidewalks generally falling on private property.

The paved width is approximately 70 feet. Several participants at working group meetings raised concerns about long crosswalks feeling dangerous to pedestrians. The town has recently installed bump-outs at the corner of Avenue A and Second Streets to help with visibility and pedestrian safety.

The bermed planters are a hot topic among residents. Some people are fond of them

and enjoy the way that they create a buffer between the sidewalk and cars. Others are frustrated with their uniformity, the steep dirt that is difficult to plant, the awkward height that doesn’t support seating and the choice of trees with low branches that obscure shop signage, display windows and doors. The town originally elected to raise the planters as berms in order to keep roots from disrupting utility lines running beneath the sidewalks and street. The trees selected reflect the desire to have shorter trees that would not grow into the power lines above the sidewalk on the south side of Avenue A. The bermed planters are officially maintained by the town, although many have been adopted by adjacent businesses and planted with an assortment of annual and perennial flowers in



addition to the trees.

Although the Avenue A paving is very wide it does not currently have a dedicated bike lane. Bicyclists participating in the public workshop noted that biking along the Avenue is a dangerous endeavor because of the angled parking. Many choose alternate routes or bike along the sidewalks, creating conflict with pedestrians.

***Below:** Public Workshop participants engage with a 22 foot long replica of Avenue A Elevations, noting places they like and places that need improvements. A synopsis of their comments appears with the elevation images block-by-block on the following pages.*



***Above:** Typical Avenue A Streetscape, between 3rd Street and 4th Street. **Below:** Public Art is a defining feature of the downtown Turners Falls streetscape. The majority of installations have been donated by local artists or created by local youth in collaboration with local artists, and most were made possible by RiverCulture.*







### GATEWAY BLOCK - THROUGH 7TH STREET

The shopping plaza generated a very large number of comments. In general people felt that the services provided within the plaza were essential to the community but that it made an “ugly” gateway to the downtown. People especially valued Food City, which is “improving all the time” and the Aubuchon Hardware which “always has what you need”. A vast number of notes suggested landscaping

improvements to the parking lot (especially trees) and altering the facades to fit more with the historic buildings elsewhere along Avenue A. One person suggested that perhaps more variety of the same uses would draw more traffic.

Across the street, opinions about the Carnegie Public Library were mixed. Some people felt that the “building no longer meets the needs of the community as a library” because it is “too small” and not accessible.

These notes suggested that the library be moved to the Town Hall or Saint Anne’s Church/ Rectory and that the building be re-purposed as a cultural center. Other people felt that this was a critical location for the library - anchoring Avenue A in an historic building - and that it should be expanded in place or have an annex nearby (such as the former Greenfield Savings Bank building). In general people like the War Memorial but wish it were more centrally located. Finally, people felt that the hillside and



ledges across from Food City were “ugly” and “filled with dog poop”. These notes suggested formalizing landscaping and paths that cut across the area toward the library. The pathway up the hillside across from Food City is beloved, but the crosswalk here was noted as being particularly dangerous because it is so wide and people are speeding on their way into town. Significant concern was raised about the lack of sidewalk between the war memorial and the pathway up the hillside.

“How could it be possible to move the strip mall businesses into the downtown vacancies? Could we have multi-level stores? Could we provide historic incentives? We could make beautiful occupied buildings with a lot of foot traffic.”





7TH STREET



6TH STREET

#### 7TH STREET TO 6TH STREET

People consider Peskeomskut Park a “beautiful” downtown amenity and a “great quick stop for small children” with its swings and climbing structure. At the same time there was considerable feeling that the park needs to be enlivened with more events. Suggestions included increasing the number of concerts and movies at the bandstand as well as adding more

“cultural flair” to attract people at times other than programmed events.

On the other side of the street, St Kazimierz was honored for its community-oriented programming, such as free family dinners and Polish history focus. People generally liked its well-maintained facade, but a few criticized the smoking porch right along Avenue A. A significant amount of concern and optimism focuses around the former Greenfield

Savings Bank building. People see continued vacancy as a serious blight on the block. At the same time a note suggesting that the building be the future home of a TF cooperative grocery store (or a branch of the Greenfields Coop) received a number of enthusiastic and supportive secondary notes.

7TH STREET



6TH STREET



5TH STREET

#### 6TH STREET TO 5TH STREET

The civic buildings on the north side of this block (above) are beloved by the community. The Post Office is seen as a “handsome building” that is a critical component of TF’s “good bones”, although some worry that we need to plan for a future in which this post office branch will close. In general people were thrilled that Greenfield Cooperative Bank will

take over the former Bank of America building.

On the south side (below) people thought that both brick buildings adjacent to 5th Street were “beautiful” and “well maintained”. A significant amount of concern focused around the Verizon utility building and the vacant lot next to it. A few people commented that the facade, setback and large curb-cut of Couture Brothers was “unappealing” and needed more landscaping

to make the sidewalk consistently pleasant for pedestrians, but they liked the services provided.



5TH STREET



5TH STREET



4TH STREET

#### 5TH STREET TO 4TH STREET

In general people commended the high level of maintenance along this block. DiPaolo's Restaurant, Bouksa's Flooring/Avenue A Dental, Dolan and Dolan Law Offices and Sokolosky Realty were all acknowledged as businesses that look good and contribute positively to the Avenue A community. DiPaolo's Restaurant in particular is seen as a destination that draws

regional visitors into downtown on a regular basis. Many people wrote about the beauty of the Powertown Apartments building and how it provides critical affordable housing downtown. At the same time many comments criticized the loss of street-level storefronts to housing.

Several comments recommended facade improvements for the About Face Computer Solutions building. One comment wondered whether the lot adjacent to the Bouksa's Flooring could be improved with landscaping.

5TH STREET



4TH STREET

4TH STREET



3RD STREET

#### 4TH STREET TO 3RD STREET

Strong support emerged for the Pizza House, Black Cow Burger Bar and Gary's Coins and Antiques. People felt that these storefronts were doing well, providing good services and for the most part looked good. Nina's Nook was also called out as a positive example for doing a lot with a small space. At the same time a large number of vacant storefronts

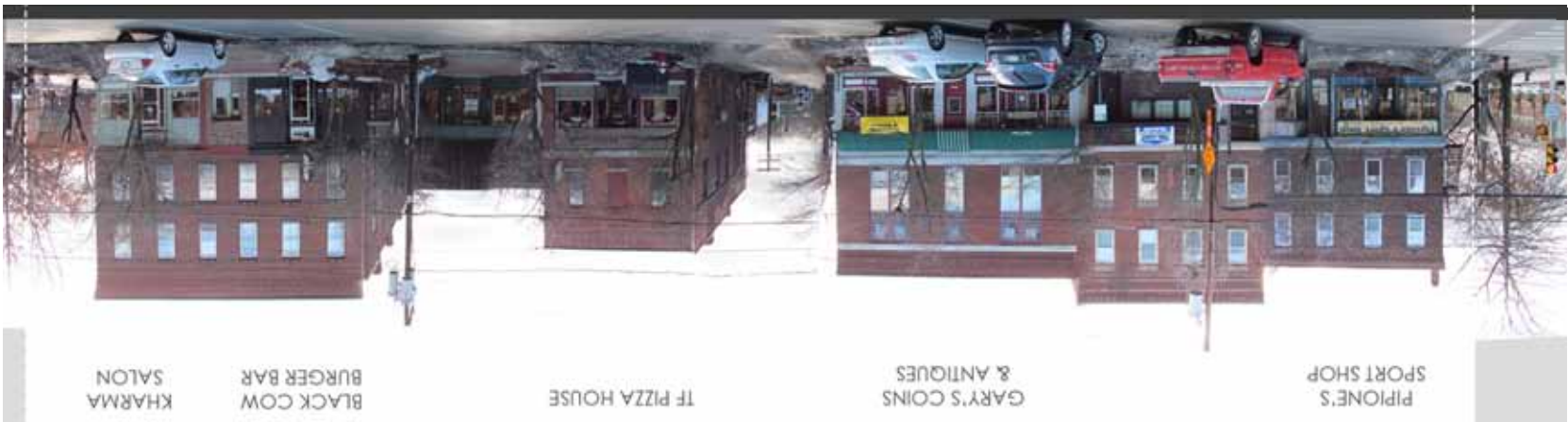
were called out along this block, particularly the one between Pipione's and Gary's and the three next to Absolutely Fabulous Hair on the opposite side of the street. Several comments blamed absentee landlords and disrepair of the units for the vacancies. In addition, several comments focused on reclaiming the residential use of storefronts adjacent to Spinner Park.

In general people like Spinner Park, and loved the Christmas programming there

this past season, but felt that there needed to be more regular programming in order to give it life. Similarly the alleys on both sides of the street were noted as "sketchy" and in need of improvements to paving and lighting.

Finally, one comment noted that the bus stop on Third Street needs more definition.

4TH STREET



3RD STREET





### 3RD STREET TO 2ND STREET

Overall this block received a lot of positive commentary. People particularly love Loot, Jake's Tavern and the Shea Theatre - all three of these entities are seen as positive forces in the village and destinations for visitors from outside downtown.

The Crocker Building got the most mixed reviews: people generally liked how it

looks and the housing it provides, but felt that the storefronts had "no life" and that this is a critical corner for the downtown shopping district. Similarly the Subway/Jay K's/Cece's Building was contentious. One comment "looks bad, works good" sums up the general feeling that these are essential services provided in an unsightly building. At the Shea theatre, many people liked the new alley gateway but also noted the need for a marquee to

advertise performances. A significant amount of discussion and commentary focused around the use of the former Hallmark gallery as a pop-up shop and its current transition into office space for the Northeast Foundation for Children. Some saw this as a devastating loss of a crucial storefront, while others viewed it as a worthwhile trade-off in order to keep a significant organization in town.



### GENERAL COMMENTS APPLYING TO ALL BLOCKS

#### Safety & Maintenance:

Many residents do not walk downtown at night because they are worried about their personal safety, and others commented on the "rash" of break-ins that have recently targeted local shops. In general these participants focused on two particular remedies: a beat cop presence in downtown, and improving the lights along Avenue A.

People also discussed the need for more trash cans along the Avenue to keep litter under control and also the need for more benches and seating. Some comments raised concern that more seating could lead to more undesirable loitering.

#### Side Streets & Alleys:

More adequate lighting and continuous sidewalks along the side streets would encourage people to walk downtown in loops on nice summer evenings. A lively discussion at the public meeting also centered around applying this facade commentary activity to the side streets, especially 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th.

In general the community agreed that alleys are a critical part of the downtown experience, both visually and functionally, but there was also a general feeling that the alley gateways needed attention. It is simultaneously difficult to drive into/out of them and to be a pedestrian crossing them. The alleys need lighting and designated pedestrian routes to promote safe circulation patterns.

#### Ideas for Future Storefronts:

Many people focused comments on providing a vision for vacant storefronts. Top contenders were an ice cream shop, a coffee shop, a flowers and plant shop and upscale consignment shops.

## PUBLIC WORKSHOP SUMMARY:

### AVENUE A FACADE DISCUSSION

- Infill buildings and empty lots.
- Improve facades, signage and landscaping.
- Better maintenance –work with absentee landlords.
- Clean up trash, waste – fix quality of life issues.
- Enhance cultural programming and street life.

### AVENUE A STREETScape DISCUSSION

- Wide sidewalks, trees, planters and buildings are great, but need to be spruced up.
- Need more outdoor dining and gathering spaces.
- Alleys are critical part of the experience, visually and functionally.
- Need to upgrade lighting and extend down side streets and alleys.
- Enhance transportation alternatives: bus, bike and walking.
- Keep bricks but fix accessibility issues.
- Address key focus areas: shopping plaza, cumberland farms site, Shea Theater marquee



FORMER CUMBERLAND FARMS



### 2ND STREET TO 1ST STREET

Along the first to second street block of Avenue A, Shady Glen was the most popular spot.

In general people felt that this was a critical “Welcome to Turners Falls” block and that it was currently underutilized and/or not sending the right message. Regarding the former Cumberland Farms site, commentary focused around potential re-use as a pop-up

store, TV station or Native American cultural history center as well as the possibility of tearing the building down to erect a new mixed use building. Many people liked the open space, the farmer’s market and views of the Discovery Center and a few dreamed of resurrecting the former Fallon Hotel at this site.

Between the Uprights received mixed reviews. A few comments commended the establishment for bringing visitors to town

with the sidewalk parties, but others felt that serving alcohol outdoors doesn’t project a healthy image of Turners Falls. Many expressed frustration about the signs that are in violation of the village’s signage ordinance. One comment recommended engaging owners and proprietors to make adjustments so that the venue continues to draw visitors while also supporting the quality image of downtown.



DISCOVERY CENTER



### 1ST STREET TO GILL-MONTAGUE BRIDGE

Both the Discovery Center and the Town Hall are beloved anchors of Avenue A. People commented that the Discovery Center was “awesome”, “gorgeous” and a “great resource” with “exciting” and “cool” exhibits. At the same time many people cited the need for more programming throughout the year, both for locals and to draw visitors from outside

downtown. Some people suggested better lighting and signage, more native landscaping and more regular public use of the great hall room for receptions and parties. Town Hall received lots of blue (positive) dots, but very little specific commentary other than a note about wishing it could be open on Fridays. Some discussion focused on the possible transition of the old police station at the backside of Town Hall into a senior community

center and/or library.

The crosswalk between the Discovery Center and Town Hall was seen as a particularly dangerous one because cars speed off the bridge without stopping for pedestrians.



“The cost of renovating storefronts should not be a barrier to opening a shop...what about a Habitat for Humanity-type program in which people donate sweat equity and others volunteer to help?”



# ECONOMIC ELEMENTS

This section contains general information on downtown population and housing demographics as well as a market analysis.

## Population Demographics

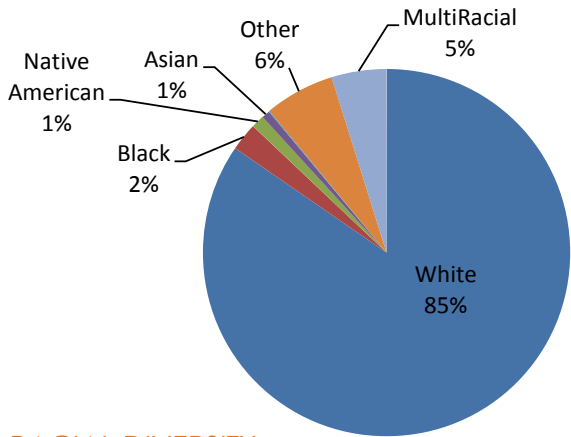
The 2010 US Census found that downtown Turners Falls has 4,470 residents, of which 53% are male and 47% are female. Thirty percent of total households are families and the average household size is 2.21 people. The median age of residents is 40.6 years with 19.7% of the population under the age of 18 and 16.3% over age 65. The population is racially 85% White,

and 15% identify as ethnically Hispanic.

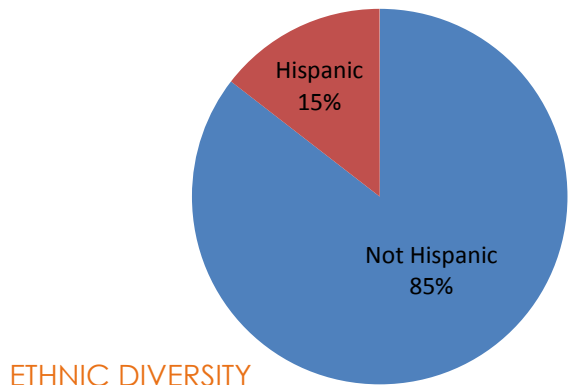
The median household income among downtown residents is \$33,985. Twenty-three percent of the population overall lives in poverty, and more than 42% of children in downtown Turners Falls are living below the Federal Poverty line.

The 2012 American Community Survey reports a wider range of employment and population statistics. Residents are employed across a variety of industries with education, healthcare and social services as the largest industries. Manufacturing, retail, information and entertainment also employ many residents. Ninety-three percent of residents who are

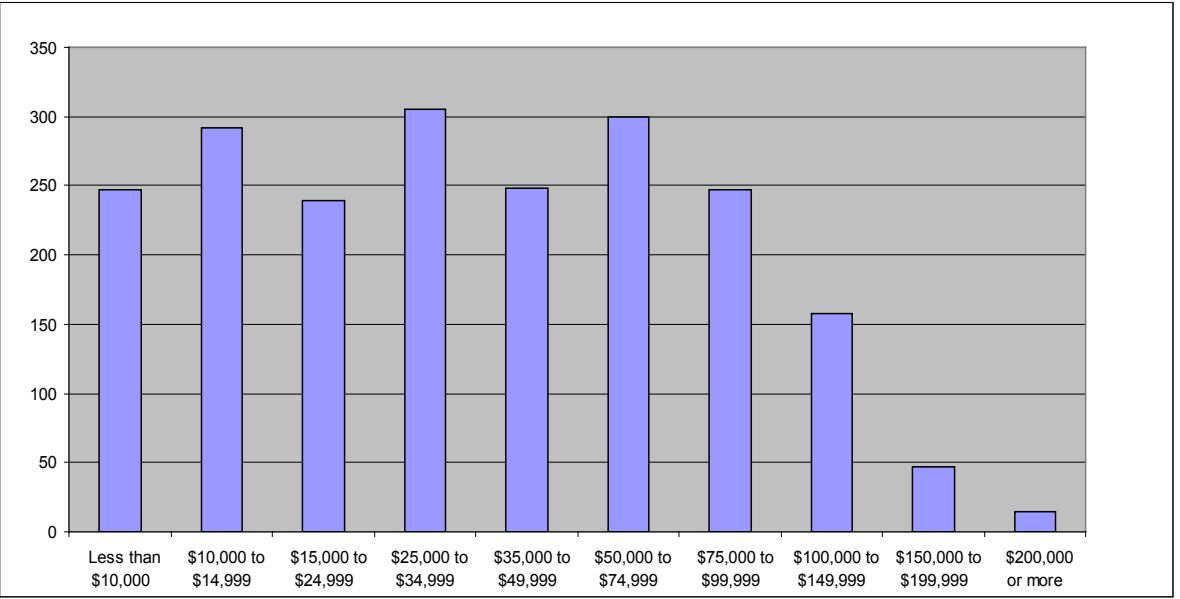
working drive to work, implying that they commute outside of downtown Turners Falls. Four percent use public transit or walk/bike to work. The unemployment rate stands at 10.8%.



RACIAL DIVERSITY



ETHNIC DIVERSITY



HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION

## Housing Characteristics

Turners Falls is historically a live-work village. Alvah Crocker's original business plan was to sell development sites along the power canal to industries, sites along Avenue A to businesses and parcels along side streets and up the hill to mill-workers for development as residences. As the town boomed at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, this development pattern unfolded almost exactly as planned. The result was an incredibly walkable downtown core: mill workers walked from their homes to amenities along Avenue A and then crossed the canal on pedestrian bridges to their jobs on the island.

Although the mills are no longer the major employers in town, Turners Falls has retained its dense residential character. Side streets off of Avenue A are filled with duplexes, multi-family houses and townhouses. In addition, many buildings along Avenue A are entirely or partially used as apartments. As previously noted, the 2010 US Census counted 4,471 people living in downtown Turners Falls.

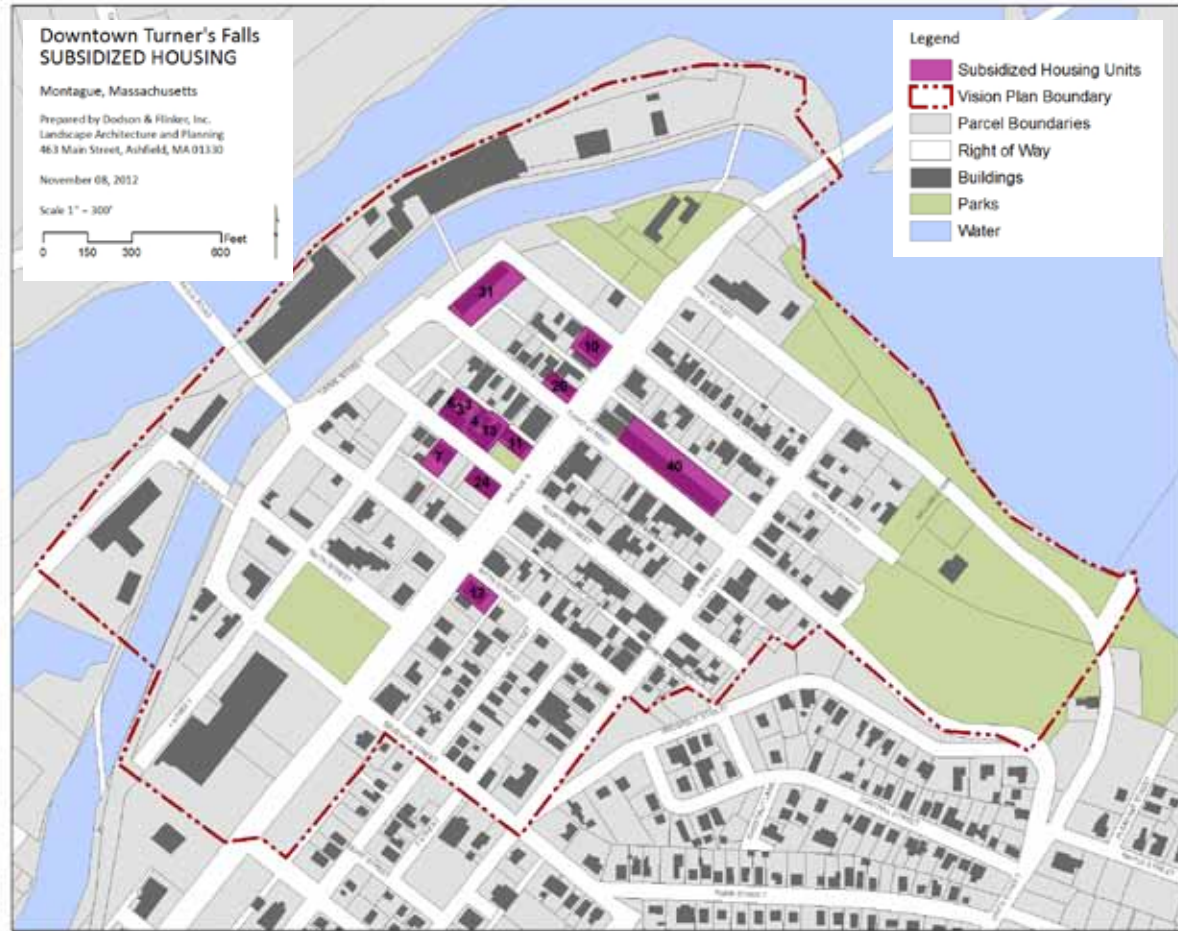
The housing stock in Turners Falls is overwhelmingly made up of rental units. Overall, just 13% of buildings in downtown Turners Falls (within the vision plan area) are owner-occupied. The map on the following page uses town assessors office data to identify which parcels are owner-occupied. In the dense residential neighborhoods alongside Avenue A, less than one quarter of lots are owner-occupied. The pattern changes significantly on the hill just outside downtown: along Prospect, Central and Park streets the balance is closer to 50-50 rental to owner-occupied.



Typical housing units in downtown. Above: Powertown Apartments on Avenue A, Multi-Family Units on Third Street. Below: Cutlery Apartments on Third Street







Significant concern emerged in both Working Group meetings about the balance of rental versus owner-occupied properties in downtown. Although some landlords are present and active in the community, many more are absent. A number of residents voiced concern about how the lack of maintenance of these rental properties affects the overall look and feel of the neighborhood.

A large number of the rental units in downtown Turners Falls are actually part of the town's subsidized housing stock. More than half of Montague's subsidized housing units are located within Turners Falls (locations mapped at left). A number of the buildings occupy prime real-estate along Avenue A and use street-level units as housing.

Availability of affordable housing was one of the things that Working Group participants noted as attractive about Turners Falls. Many participants were vocal in their concern about gentrification and wanting to maintain the village as an affordable home for current residents. At the same time, some business owners pointed out that attracting a more diverse balance of income levels within the downtown would help businesses thrive.

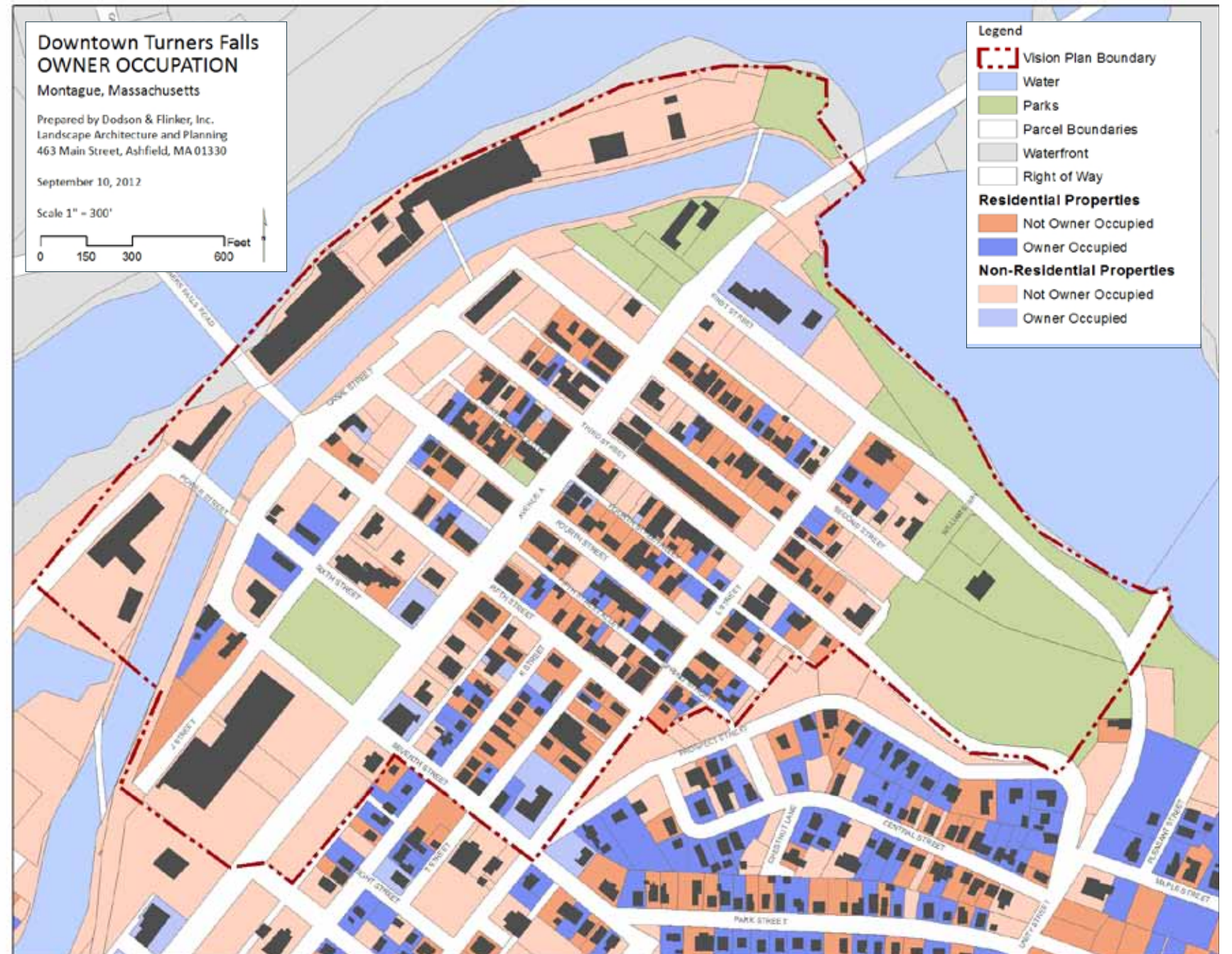
#### SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

**204** Units in Downtown Turners Falls  
**186** Units Outside Downtown  
**390** TOTAL Units in Montague



Owner-Occupancy Percentages from:

2010 U.S. Census  
 Block Data in Vision  
 Plan Area





Downtown Block Analysis

The Downtown Turners Falls Study Area is approximately 100 acres bounded at the north and west by the Connecticut River, to the South by 9th Street and to the east by “the hill” parallel in Prospect Street. In total, there are 319 parcels that make up about 88 acres (about an additional 12 acres in public streets and ways). There are an estimated 222 buildings in the Study Area and the average year built is 1901 (buildings are 112 years old on average). The Study Area is bisected by Avenue A, the “Main Street” of Turners Falls and the Town of Montague. From the Connecticut River Bridge to 9th Street, Avenue A is approximately 2,260 linear feet, slightly less than ½ mile.

For the purposes of this plan and evaluation, the study area has been divided into 24 blocks and defined in the table and diagram.

TURNERS FALLS DOWNTOWN PROJECT AREA PROPERTY BY BLOCK										
BLOCK		NO. OF LOTS	NO. OF BLDGS	NO. OF BUS.	PROPERTY VALUE	LOT SIZE (SF)	LOT SIZE	YEAR BUILT	RES. UNITS	STORIES
BLOCK 1	Total	6	2	3	\$1,126,600	143,748	3.30		2.0	
	Average				\$187,767	23,958	0.55	1934	0.3	1.0
BLOCK 2	Total	3	1	2	\$1,113,618	86,249	1.98		1.0	
	Average				\$371,206	28,750	0.66	1880	0.3	2.0
BLOCK 3	Total	3	0	0	\$8,746	253,955	5.83			0.0
	Average				\$2,915	84,652	1.94			
BLOCK 4	Total	3	1	1	\$388,400	359,370	8.25		0.0	
	Average				\$129,467	119,790	2.75	1900	0.0	1.0
BLOCK 5	Total	17	12	3	\$2,300,900	129,809	2.98		33.0	
	Average				\$143,806	8,113	0.19	1898	1.9	2.0
BLOCK 6	Total	9	6	1	\$946,200	79,279	1.82		13.0	
	Average				\$105,133	8,809	0.20	1882	1.4	1.5
BLOCK 7	Total	14	11	9	\$3,261,700	109,771	2.52		92.0	
	Average				\$232,979	7,841	0.18	1901	6.6	2.5
BLOCK 8	Total	21	13	6	\$5,657,000	136,778	3.14		83.0	
	Average				\$269,381	6,513	0.15	1898	4.0	2.2
BLOCK 9	Total	14	14	0	\$1,808,500	84,071	1.93		25.0	
	Average				\$129,179	6,005	0.14	1907	1.8	2.1
BLOCK 10	Total	24	16	6	\$4,074,400	119,354	2.74		78.0	
	Average				\$169,767	4,973	0.11	1892	3.3	2.7
BLOCK 11	Total	35	28	11	\$4,547,700	159,430	3.66		89.0	
	Average				\$129,934	4,555	0.10	1896	2.5	2.3
BLOCK 12	Total	13	9	1	\$1,579,100	65,776	1.51		16.0	
	Average				\$121,469	5,060	0.12	1909	1.2	1.6
BLOCK 13	Total	14	8	4	\$2,953,500	79,715	1.83		68.0	
	Average				\$210,964	5,694	0.13	1898	4.9	2.6
BLOCK 14	Total	37	31	10	\$5,127,400	138,085	3.17		98.0	
	Average				\$138,578	3,732	0.09	1901	2.6	2.1
BLOCK 15	Total	14	10	0	\$1,256,000	39,640	0.91		19.0	
	Average				\$89,714	2,831	0.07	1897	1.4	1.7
BLOCK 16	Total	23	17	4	\$3,489,500	152,460	3.50		52.0	
	Average				\$151,717	6,629	0.15	1903	2.3	1.8
BLOCK 17	Total	21	20	7	\$3,713,600	118,919	2.73		42.0	
	Average				\$176,838	5,663	0.13	1908	2.0	2.0
BLOCK 18	Total	6	4	2	\$1,742,000	67,954	1.56		4.0	
	Average				\$348,400	13,591	0.26	1913	0.7	1.5
BLOCK 19	Total	21	10	4	\$2,017,100	270,508	6.21		40.0	
	Average				\$100,855	13,525	0.30	1896	1.9	1.5
BLOCK 20	Total/Ave	1	0	0	\$278,900	82,764	1.90		0.0	
BLOCK 21	Total	4	4	5	\$2,750,600	212,137	4.87		6.0	
	Average				\$687,650	53,034	1.22	1974	1.5	1.0
BLOCK 22	Total	2		1	\$765,200	60,113	1.38		1.0	
	Average				\$382,600	30,056	0.69	1912	0.5	2.0
BLOCK 23	Total	5	1	3	\$348,204	419,483	9.63		2.0	
	Average				\$87,051	104,871	1.93	1880	0.4	4.0
BLOCK 24	Total	9	3	5	\$2,377,434	481,774	11.06		4.0	
	Average				\$264,159	53,530	1.23	1917	0.4	3.8





Market Analysis

This section of the Livability Plan examines the trends, conditions, and the potential to support additional business types in the Downtown Turners Falls Study Area, considering factors such as nearby land uses that draw people to the business district, population and household demographics in primary and secondary trade areas, visitor trips and pass-by traffic, commuting patterns, or other factors deemed relevant by Town officials, stakeholders, the Steering Committee and Working Group. This analysis is synthesized to determine the following:

- Strategic advantages of the Downtown Study Area;
- Available land and building vacancies for strategic placement of new uses;

- Effectiveness of existing and on-going marketing initiatives carried out by existing public, quasi-public and private entities; and
- Existing and potential demand for a variety of possible uses in the Downtown Study Area;
- The feasibility of attracting cultural organizations, programs and events which in turn may increase market potential for existing and new businesses.

To check the reasonableness of the market assessment and to uncover potential niche market opportunities, several interviews were conducted with local real estate brokers, business and property owners, cultural and civic organizations, town officials, residents, and other key stakeholders to obtain sufficient data

to describe Downtown Turners Falls retail, office, residential and mixed use potential.

From the assessment and feedback from stakeholders, a Market Profile has been prepared that summarizes existing and potential new businesses and other entities which could operate successfully within the Downtown Turners Falls Study Area. The Market Profile is geared to provide perspective businesses and investors with basic information necessary to select the district and create a business plan.

Defining the Downtown Market Area

The Downtown Turners Falls Market Area consists of several geographic areas. The Downtown Turners Falls Study Area incorporates the core

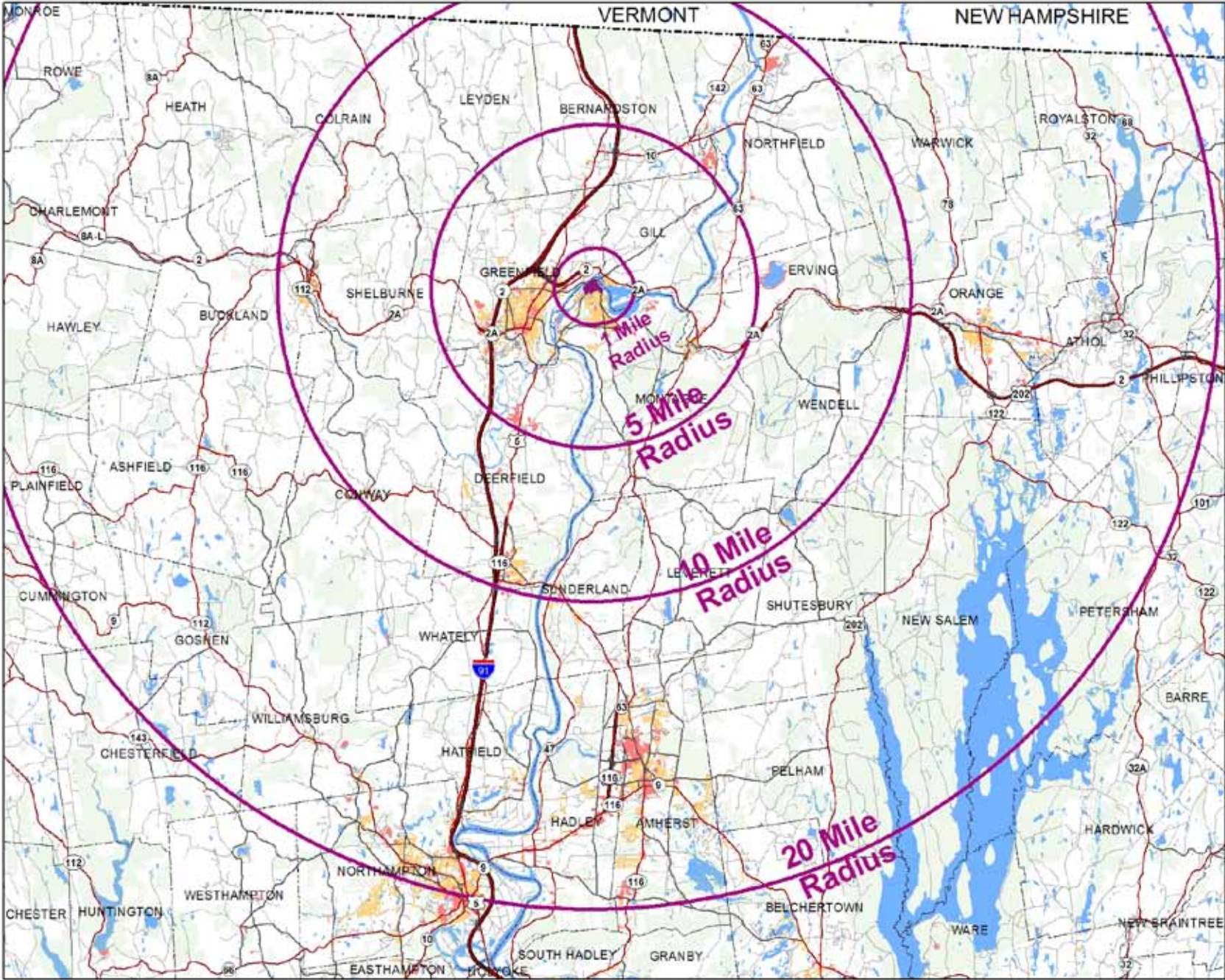
**DOWNTOWN TURNERS FALLS TRADE AREAS** (See Map Opposite)

The **PRIMARY TRADE AREA** (1-mile radius) includes all of Turners Falls, most of the Town of Montague as well as portions of Gill and Greenfield.

The **SECONDARY TRADE AREA** (5-mile radius) includes most of Montague, Gill and Greenfield as well as portions of Northfield, Bernardston, Leyden, Shelburne, and Deerfield.

The **TERTIARY TRADE AREA** (10-mile radius) includes all of Montague, Gill, Greenfield, Shelburne, Erving, Northfield, Bernardston, Deerfield, and portions of Warwick, Wendell, Leverett, Shutesbury, Sunderland, Conway, Buckland, Claremont, Colrain and Leyden.

TURNERS FALLS DOWNTOWN BUSINESS INVENTORY SUMMARY					
SELECTED SIC CODE	NO.	EMPLOY- MENT SIZE	TOTAL SALES VOLUME	AVERAGE SALES VOLUME	AVE. CREDIT SCORE
CONSTRUCTION (15-17)	1	12	\$3,459,000	\$3,459,000	93
MANUFACTURING (20-39)	5	90	\$33,533,000	\$6,706,600	75
TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATIONS, ELECTRIC, GAS, AND SANITARY SERVICES (40-49)	4	13	\$4,616,000	\$1,154,000	84
WHOLESALE TRADE (50 -51)	2	5	\$11,231,000	\$5,615,500	76
RETAIL TRADE (52-59)	26	152	\$26,947,000	\$1,036,423	87
FINANCE, INSURANCE AND REAL ESTATE (60-67)	8	50	\$6,711,000	\$838,875	80
SERVICES (70-89)	28	107	\$5,923,000	\$211,536	74
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (91-99)	15	78	\$3,315,000		68
TOTAL	87	502	\$84,504,000	\$971,310.3	70





business area and immediate neighborhoods in which residents and visitors can live, work, shop, and recreate within a comfortable walking distance. The Turners Falls Census Designated Place (CDP) includes the additional neighborhoods that make up Turners Falls and constitute the immediate area of influence on the central business district.

The estimated **Primary Trade Area** for Downtown Turners Falls is within 1-mile of the core area (measured at the intersection of Avenue A and Fifth Street). This area represents approximately 70-80% of Downtown's customer base and households that would gravitate to Turners Falls for necessary daily work, goods and services. The **Secondary Trade Area** is estimated to be 5 miles from the center of Turners Falls. This area includes local and regional residents that would travel to Turners Falls on a regular basis for goods, services, entertainment and recreation. The **Tertiary Trade Area** is estimated to be 10 miles from the center of Turners Falls. This area includes local and regional residents that would visit Turners Falls on an occasional basis for goods, services, entertainment and recreation.

## Market Access

In addition to local and regional trade areas, Turners Falls draws visitors from a larger regional market that reach downtown as a destination, by observation as passing by, or by observation as pass-through. While many local residents walk to the downtown area, most Montague residents and visitors arrive by car.

The most common visitor trip types are the

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following:

- Destination Visits - such as the Great Falls Discovery Center, Canalside Trail, Town Parks, Shea Theater, Fish Ladder, Community Events, and particular shops and restaurants.
- Pass-By Travelers - on Interstate 91, Route 2, Route 2A, and Route 5 and 10 that are in the vicinity or passing by downtown and take notice of signs and other indicators.
- Pass-Thru Travelers- on Ave A, Montague City Road, Millers Falls Road, Turners Falls Road, or other local roads passing through downtown and take notice of signs and other indicators.
- Other Travelers - by boat on the Connecticut River and by plane at the Turners Falls Airport.

## Consumer Spending Patterns

The Consumer Buying Power database for the Turners Falls Downtown Trade Areas (summarized in the Table opposite) incorporates geography-based estimates of potential annual consumer expenditures for more than 350 household expenditure items. From this data we can determine the potential demand of consumers for products and services by geographic area regardless of where the consumers make their purchase. The database uses the Consumer Expenditure (CE) Surveys conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Current-year (2012) estimates and five-year (2017) projections of potential consumer expenditures provided for the primary, secondary, and tertiary trade areas. The table also compares the buying power and spending patterns in the primary trade area

(which includes all Turners Falls residents) to those in the secondary (5-mile radius) and tertiary (10-mile radius) trade areas.

Based on the data, average household expenditures in Turners Falls tend to be higher (as a percentage) than the secondary and tertiary trade areas in the following categories:

- Food at Home – Including all categories such a bakery and dairy products, fish and seafood, fruits and vegetables, meats, prepared foods, and others.
- Food Away From Home and Alcohol – Including alcoholic beverages, (at home and away), and lunch, dinner and breakfast away from home.
- Day Care.
- Housing Expenses – Including fuels, utilities and telephone.
- Housekeeping supplies and personal expenses and services.
- Personal care services.
- Smoking products.
- Gasoline and motor oil.
- Used cars.
- Clothing and Apparel

Based on the data, average household expenditures in Turners Falls tend to be lower (as a percentage) than the secondary and tertiary trade areas but are expected to grow over the 5 years by a rate of over 1% per year in the following categories:

- Day Care, Education and Contributions.
- Health Care
- Household Furnishing and Appliances
- Personal Care and Smoking Products
- Pet Expenses

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TURNERS FALLS DOWNTOWN RETAIL MARKET POTENTIAL - OPPORTUNITY GAPS 2012 - 1, 5, AND 10 MILES RADIUS FROM AVE A/5TH STREET INTERSECTION															
					Radius 1: 0.00 - 1.00 Miles				Radius 2: 0.00 - 5.00 Miles				Radius 3: 0.00 - 10.00 Miles		
NAICS CODE AND DESCRIPTION					2012 Demand	2012 Supply	Opportunity		2012 Demand	2012 Supply	Opportunity		2012 Demand	2012 Supply	Opportunity
					(Consumer Expenditures)	(Retail Sales)	Gap/Surplus		(Consumer Expenditures)	(Retail Sales)	Gap/Surplus		(Consumer Expenditures)	(Retail Sales)	Gap/Surplus
Total Retail Sales, Eating and Drinking Places					46,935,764	37,168,834	9,766,930		425,733,395	642,918,192	(217,184,797)		762,382,720	804,061,763	(41,679,043)
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers-441					6,974,774	1,650,920	5,323,854		67,831,025	144,680,331	(76,849,306)		125,745,238	162,901,853	(37,156,615)
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores-442					812,123	281,105	531,018		8,008,416	4,497,779	3,510,637		14,882,214	5,897,313	8,984,901
Electronics and Appliance Stores-443					926,747	64,104	862,643		8,759,464	4,535,461	4,224,003		16,018,818	5,183,150	10,835,668
Building Material, Garden Equip Stores -444					3,868,820	3,547,490	321,330		37,970,355	91,650,005	(53,679,650)		70,627,068	124,235,765	(53,608,697)
Food and Beverage Stores-445					7,376,827	16,210,319	(8,833,492)		62,171,793	110,912,251	(48,740,458)		107,169,148	125,401,385	(18,232,237)
Health and Personal Care Stores-446					2,609,663	8,273,554	(5,663,891)		24,205,447	78,600,055	(54,394,608)		42,623,806	92,624,765	(50,000,959)
Gasoline Stations-447					5,036,180	1,738,808	3,297,372		43,709,615	26,484,953	17,224,662		77,049,706	51,170,366	25,879,340
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores-448					2,117,401	0	2,117,401		19,453,650	8,176,632	11,277,018		35,185,650	15,704,942	19,480,708
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music Stores-451					850,786	175,934	674,852		7,849,381	3,411,227	4,438,154		14,398,642	4,519,504	9,879,138
General Merchandise Stores-452					6,504,221	1,177,139	5,327,082		57,380,961	53,582,080	3,798,881		101,489,124	53,727,620	47,761,504
Miscellaneous Store Retailers-453					1,321,987	1,900,002	(578,015)		11,952,498	14,794,225	(2,841,727)		21,514,188	27,262,793	(5,748,605)
Non-Store Retailers-454					3,458,681	0	3,458,681		31,680,645	60,713,476	(29,032,831)		56,705,065	78,142,856	(21,437,791)
Foodservice and Drinking Places-722					5,077,553	2,149,458	2,928,095		44,760,145	40,879,717	3,880,428		78,974,053	57,289,450	21,684,603
GAFO *					11,689,811	2,472,573	9,217,238		105,895,808	83,935,852	21,959,956		190,011,365	96,745,731	93,265,634
General Merchandise Stores-452					6,504,221	1,177,139	5,327,082		57,380,961	53,582,080	3,798,881		101,489,124	53,727,620	47,761,504
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Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music Stores-451					850,786	175,934	674,852		7,849,381	3,411,227	4,438,154		14,398,642	4,519,504	9,879,138
Office Supplies, Stationery, Gift Stores-4532					478,532	774,290	(295,758)		4,443,935	9,732,672	(5,288,737)		8,036,917	11,713,203	(3,676,286)

\* GAFO (General Merchandise, Apparel, Furniture and Other) represents sales at stores that sell merchandise normally sold in department stores. This category is not included in Total Retail Sales, including Eating and Drinking Places.

*Data provided by Nielson Solution Center: 1-800-866-6511. Copyright 2012 The Nielson Company. All Rights Reserved.*

- Sports & Entertainment (high growth projected).
- Clothing and Apparel (high growth projected).

tertiary trade areas tend to have higher average household expenditures than the national average in dairy products, sugars and sweets, alcoholic beverages, housing fuel and utilities, and pet expenses.

## Retail Market Opportunities and Constraints

The table above shows selected potential retail opportunities for Downtown Turners Falls based on the analysis of market area spending potential.

Dodson &amp; Flinker, Howard/Stein-Hudson | June 2013

and actual store sales. The analytic technique is called a “retail gap analysis” and is the standard methodology used by retailers to assess market potential against established competitor already in the market. The difference between market area spending potential and actual store sales is called the “retail opportunity” or “retail surplus” and suggests to prospective new entrants to that market whether and to what extent existing stores have captured expenditures expected to be made by residents within a defined trade area. An “opportunity” means that existing stores are

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not now capturing expenditures expected to be made by residents within the defined trade areas, while a “surplus” means that retailers (including restaurants) are selling more goods and services than would be expected to be supported by the resident market within the defined trade area.

Retailers typically categorize markets by drive-times – with convenience stores, small household items, periodicals, gifts, novelties, personal and repair services, some pharmacies and clothing stores, and limited service eating establishments typically relying upon a trade area no larger than a 5-minute drive-time. Supermarkets, department stores, full service restaurants, and specialty retailers look to support within 10 and 15-minute drive-time markets. The theory behind the retail “opportunity” is that consumers will buy items they want and need as close to home as there are stores and restaurants available offering the desired goods and services.

Retail opportunity gaps and surpluses were considered for each of the primary, secondary and tertiary trade areas. For example, if a certain retail sector indicated a large opportunity gap in all three trade areas, it was considered as having the best potential in Downtown Turners Falls. If it showed as having only good potential in the primary trade area, then it was considered a moderate opportunity.

Based on the data, the retail analysis for the Downtown Turners Falls Study Area, there is approximately \$47 million in consumer expenditure (demand) and retail sales of \$37.1 in retail sales (supply) indicated an overall opportunity (gap) of \$9.7 million in the primary trade area. However, this is limited to the area

within 1 mile of Ave A, and the secondary and tertiary trade areas indicate a large surplus of sales indicating that retail supply exceeds demands beyond Turners Falls. Nonetheless, the following retail sectors present opportunities:

BEST RETAIL POTENTIAL

- Gas/Convenience Store (44711) – Good potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Clothing Stores (4481) – Good potential across all 3 trade areas particularly in women’s and family clothing.
- General Merchandise Stores (452) – Very good potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Food Service and Drinking Places (722) – while full service restaurants and drinking places have limited potential, limited service and specialty restaurants have good potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Furniture and Home Furnishings (442) – Have limited potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Electronics and Appliance Stores (443) - Have limited potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores (45322) - Have limited potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Sporting Goods, Hobbies, Books and Music Stores (451) – All have very limited potential across all 3 trade areas.

LEAST RETAIL POTENTIAL

- Food and Beverage Stores (445) – This sector shows a significant surplus in sales across all 3 trade areas including grocery stores,

convenience stores, and liquor stores.

- Health and Personal Care Stores (446) – This sector shows a significant surplus in sales across all 3 trade areas.
- Office Supply, Stationary and Gift Stores (4532) – This sector shows a moderate surplus in sales across all 3 trade areas.
- Auto Parks and Tire Stores (4413) – This sector shows a moderate surplus in sales across all 3 trade areas.
- Lawn, Garden Equipment and Supply (4442) – This sector shows a moderate surplus in sales across all 3 trade areas.
- Miscellaneous Retail Stores (453) – Such as florists and used merchandise shows a moderate surplus in sales across all 3 trade areas.

As evidenced by the data (table on previous page), there are a number of retail store types that could find Downtown Turners Falls attractive from the standpoint of capturing consumer expenditures that are now made outside of Downtown (and outside the 5-, 10- and 15-mile trade areas). These data are useful in efforts to recruit prospective retail stores to locate in Downtown because they show that, even with competitive establishments in the local area, there is additional spending potential by residents within the respective trade area markets to support new entrants. Each prospective retailer will need to consider the magnitude of the retail gap based on sales needed to support that specific store type, and whether their sales orientation is to a local (1-mile) or secondary (5-mile) trade area.

Rental Market Rates

As indicated in the Strathmore Mill Feasibility Study and on-site observations, the Downtown Turners Falls Study Area has relatively low rents and fairly high vacancies (commercial and industrial). The ULI Panel on the Strathmore Mill project in 2011 conducted interviews with local stakeholders and determined that rents for industrial space run about \$3-\$3.50 per square foot triple net; for office \$6-8, and retail \$8-\$10. Rents in this range support total development costs around \$80-\$100 per square foot. Furthermore, the Town is home to only 8,600 residents, which makes it difficult to attract certain types of retail or offices. While the site is in close proximity to I-91 as well as State Routes 5, 10, 2 and 63, Greenfield is better served by the transportation network and creates significant competition for visiting customers.

The Development Market

The ULI Panel in 2011 recognized that investor funding for development has been difficult to obtain for almost all markets since the downturn in the economy in 2008. Large and potentially risky projects such as the Strathmore Mill are likely to have a particularly difficult time getting conventional or investor financing.



## PART II: TURNERS FALLS TOMORROW

### Overall Vision Plan and Vision Map

#### Design Recommendations:

- Open Space & Recreation
- Schematic Streetscape Improvements
- Avenue A & Gateway Masterplan

#### Socioeconomic Recommendations:

- Organizing for Business Development
- Business Retention and Development
- Marketing and Communications Programs
- Expand Community Events and Activities
- Improve Gateway Treatments and Wayfinding Signage
- Expand Economic Development Policies, Incentives and Regulatory Programs
- Consider and Seek Appropriate Public Funding Resources



The Downtown Turners Falls Vision Statement and Conceptual Vision Map serve as an overall guide for the Turners Falls Livability Plan. Their intent is to paint a broad, sweeping picture of who the community is, what the community values and what the community desires for the future of Turners Falls.

This broad vision is the foundation of the more specific recommendations that appear in this section. Recommendations for the future of Turners Falls are divided into design solutions and socioeconomic solutions. Design solutions include discussions of open space and recreation, streetscape improvements along Avenue A and a masterplan for Avenue A. Specific recommendation for each block of downtown expand upon the design solutions. Socioeconomic solutions include goals for activating the potential of Turners Falls economy through targeted business and cultural initiatives.

Downtown Turners Falls is a vibrant, diverse and livable community. We value the beauty of the Connecticut River surrounding our village and honor her long history of providing us with food, power, transportation and recreational opportunity. We are proud of the industrial foundations that have given rise to both our distinctive architecture and the hard-working, creative ethic of our community. Our residents all have access to quality affordable housing and the ability to walk safely to work, school, shops, entertainment, services and recreational opportunities. A variety of centrally-located community centers support all our citizens - including youth, seniors, English-language learners and disadvantaged populations - through creative programming and accessible resources. A mix of locally-owned businesses thrive in storefronts along a beautiful, active and pedestrian-friendly Avenue A. Key vacant properties are re-energized with new uses that bring more people and businesses into downtown. Our unique character and lively street culture draws visitors from around the region, both on a daily basis and for special festivals and events. Turners Falls has been a gathering spot for more than 10,000 years and today is recognized both as a welcoming live/work community as well as a recreational and cultural destination.





# CONNECTIVITY AND OPEN SPACE

As discussed in Part I, Turners Falls already has a very green image, anchored by the three parks - Peskeomskut, Unity and the Discovery Center, surrounded by the canal-side bike path and the river, and crisscrossed with tree-lined streets. A host of recreational, scenic and cultural opportunities are collocated and well-connected in the downtown. Ongoing improvements to Unity Park are adding significant value to recreational resources.

This plan recommends strengthening existing patterns with specific attention to a few key links and nodes. First, a hierarchy of green streets should be created with Avenue A as well as parts of 5th street and 3rd street serving as primary green connector streets. High quality sidewalks on both sides of the street, shade trees and buffers from vehicles should be maintained on these routes. Secondary green streets (traced

with dashed lines opposite) should have at least one quality sidewalk with plantings.

Formalizing recreational access to the river from downtown was a high priority of many in the working group and at the public workshop. This plan recommends further study and collaboration with First Light power company to create a boat launch east of Unity Park near the old bridge abutments. Adding a boat launch on the Turners Fall side of the river would enable residents to get on the water without needing to travel to Gill. It would also bring paddlers and fishermen into downtown to eat and shop after their time on the river.

Three key links in the open space system need further study and improvements in order to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety. Two connect Unity park with its surroundings - across First Street to the Bike Path and across Third

Street to the “boardwalk” paths up hill. A third key link addresses a vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle conflict point where 5th street crosses the bike path and enters downtown. Suggestions for each of these key links appear in diagram format in the following pages.

Finally, this plan recommends strengthening the connection between the Discovery Center park and the power island by creating a new Power Island Park at the tip of the island facing the falls. This site is already used informally for recreation, including teenage hangouts and fishing, but also includes some derelict industrial structures. Previous planning studies have suggested that this area be used as a Native American cultural interpretive park, and this idea should be further explored. In addition, simple revitalization of the coal silo structure could provide valuable scenic interest drawing visitors across the bridge from route 2 as well as unique outdoor performance space. This idea is further explored in the following pages.







## 5th Street Gateway

### EXISTING

Conflicts between pedestrians, bikes and cars.

Unclear route connecting bikepath to downtown.

No welcome sign or directional information at key gateway from Greenfield.



### POTENTIAL

Clarified bikepath and pedestrian crosswalks.

Bumpout to connect bikepath to new 5th street sidewalk and to clarify parking lot entrance.

New sidewalk along southwestern side of 5th street connects to Avenue A.

Revitalize hillside across from bridge with plantings and welcome signage providing directional information.

## Links to Unity Park: 1st Street between Bikepath and Playground

### EXISTING

No crosswalk linking Bikepath to Playground.

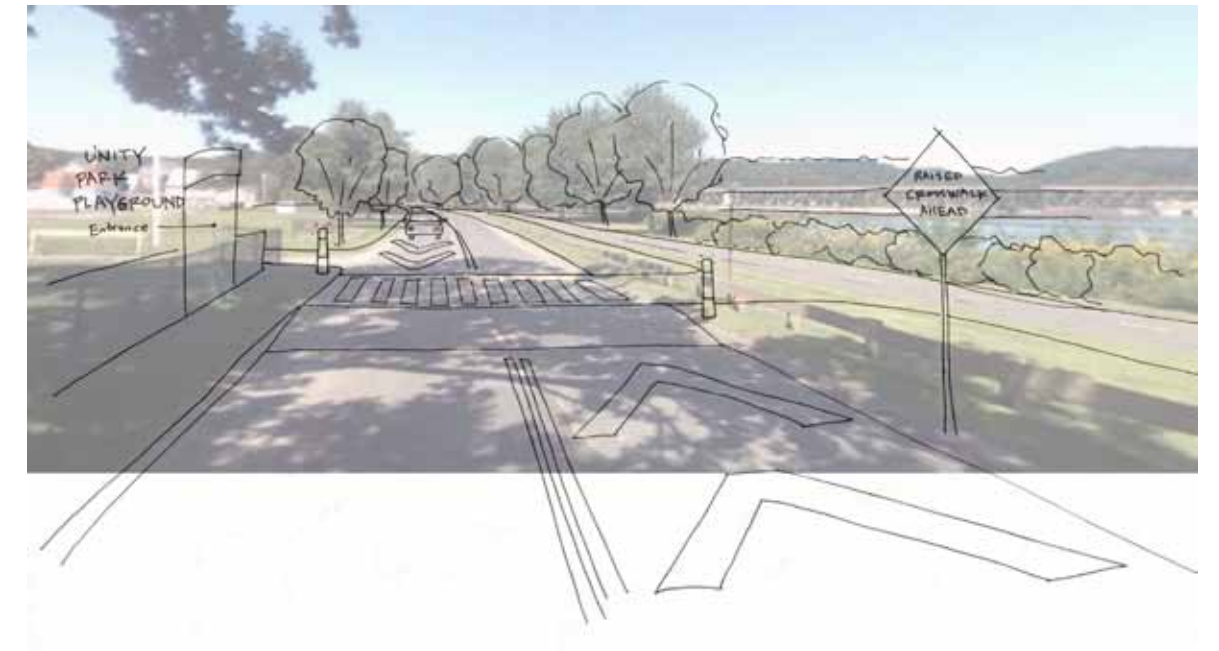
Cars speed along first street into town.



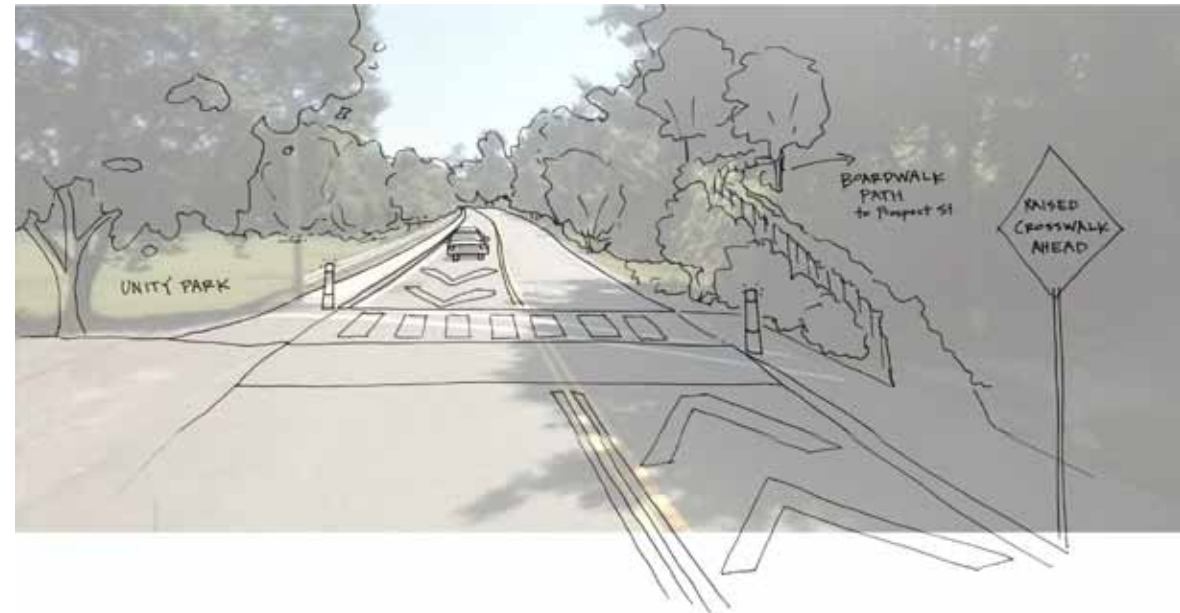
### POTENTIAL

Raised speed-hump, signage and blinker bollards slow traffic.

Crosswalk provides a safe route for pedestrians and bicyclists to connect from the Bikepath to the Playground and back again.







## Links to Unity Park: 3rd Street between Unity Park and Boardwalks to Uptown

### EXISTING

Cars speed along 3rd street into downtown.

Existing crosswalk at an angle, doesn't feel safe to residents and visitors.

Feels difficult to arrive at key gateway to Unity Park.

### POTENTIAL

Raised speed-hump, signage and blinker bollards slow traffic.

Crosswalk provides a safe route for pedestrians and bicyclists to connect from downtown along 3rd street and from Uptown into Unity Park.

## The Strathmore Mill Coal Silo: Reimagined.



### EXISTING

The former Strathmore Mill Coal Silo sits abandoned and fenced in a prime location on the power island. The concrete structure of the silo and the surrounding building walls is sound and much debris cleanup has already been completed. The tower is visible from Route 2 as well as prominent in views entering on the Gill-Montague bridge.



### POTENTIAL: DAYTIME SCENARIO

Naturalist in the Park - extension programs of the Discovery Center. Connecticut River Learning Laboratory for school groups.

Climb the tower for views of the Connecticut River and surrounding area.



### POTENTIAL: NIGHTTIME SCENARIO 1

Nighttime Art Galleries, Parties, Movies.

Lights on the Tower can be seen from Route 2, drawing people into the Downtown to explore.



### POTENTIAL: NIGHTTIME SCENARIO 2

Shakespeare in the Park and other performances - possible collaboration with the Shea Theatre or Double-Edge Theatre Company



# AVENUE A STREETSCAPE - SCHEMATIC IMPROVEMENTS

Streetscape improvements conducted in the 1980s endowed Avenue A with uniform brick sidewalks, raised tree planters, distinctive streetlamps and angled parking. While these features are strong and consistent, their uniformity detracts from the Avenue's street culture. The sidewalks are linear, with few places to rest or gather, few opportunities for sidewalk cafes and no place for street performers, sidewalk sales, food carts or playful public art. Finally, the

wide expanse of Avenue A is difficult to cross as a pedestrian, while the alley gateways are places of dangerous conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. This section explores improvements to the Avenue A streetscape, with the idea that these general improvements could be implemented in a variety of configurations along a re-energized Avenue A. A schematic diagram of a typical block and intersection along Avenue A appears below.

While not representing any particular block or actual buildings, the diagram is drawn to scale and contains all the typical features found along Avenue A. At right is a diagram outlining a range of potential improvements. These are explored in further detail from both an aerial perspective and a street perspective in the pages that follow.



Full Sidewalk Cafe

Cafe Tables Tucked on Sidewalk

Alley Gateway Treatment

Bumpout Sidewalk into Plaza  
with Seating, Statues, Plantings

Bumpout Sidewalk at Crosswalks

Raise Planters to Seatwall Height, Typical



BLOCK 1 - Existing Conditions



EXISTING Block 1 - Aerial

Uniform Planters and sidewalk treatment.

Long crosswalk for pedestrians.



EXISTING Block 1 - Streetview

Uniform sidewalk experience with long, unbroken views.

Planter mounds make planting difficult and walls are too low for seating.

No place to “rest”.

BLOCK 1 - Potential

POTENTIAL Block 1 - Aerial

Partial sidewalk cafe tucked into space next to storefront (at left) and full sidewalk cafe taking over planter space (at right). Full sidewalk cafe raised for ADA access, sidewalk travels through center on ramps or around the end.

One planter removed, others raised to meet top of mound and provide seatwall.

Crosswalk bumpout shortens length of crossing for pedestrians, possible trees or paving details.



POTENTIAL Block 1 - Streetview

View along sidewalk now is varied, providing a sense of something different happening beyond.

Cafes enliven street culture.

Seatwalls provide plenty of places to rest and people-watch.





## BLOCK 2 - Existing Conditions



### EXISTING Block 2 - Aerial

Uniform Planters and sidewalk treatment.

Long crosswalk for pedestrians.



### EXISTING Block 2 - Streetview

Uniform sidewalk experience with long, unbroken views.

Planter mounds make planting difficult and walls are too low for seating.

No place to “rest”.

## BLOCK 2 - Potential

### POTENTIAL Block 2 - Aerial

Sidewalk extends into parking places to provide place for seating, plantings and public art. This provides a plaza-like gathering space to people-watch, eat, perform, have pushcarts, etc.

Increased bike parking.

Planters altered to accommodate seatwall.



### POTENTIAL Block 2 - Streetview

View along sidewalk now is varied, providing a sense of something different and exciting happening as you continue walking.

Public art enlivens street culture.

Seatwalls provide plenty of places to rest, as well as watch, eat, etc.

A large, centrally-located bike parking area sends a message about how alternative transit is valued in Turners Falls.





## ALLEY GATEWAY - Existing



### EXISTING Alley Gateway- Aerial

Uniform Planters and sidewalk treatment.

No definition of pedestrian and vehicular space.

### EXISTING Alley Gateway - Streetview

Dangerous crossings, not clearly visible for pedestrians.

Pedestrians step off curb into vehicular space.

No buffer from street.



## ALLEY GATEWAY - Potential

### POTENTIAL Alley Gateway - Aerial

Bumpout sidewalk to provide buffer from street and increased places for planting. Doing so sacrifices no parking spaces.

Raise paving at alley to meet sidewalk - provides clarity for vehicles that they are crossing pedestrian space.

Remove a planter to create space for benches, food carts, street performances, sidewalk sales, or other street culture events.



### POTENTIAL Alley Gateway - Streetview

Raised paving at alley sends message that alley is still pedestrian space, different texture tells pedestrians that the space is shared with cars.

Removed planter makes room for benches, food carts or other sidewalk events.





# AVENUE A MASTERPLAN

Scale 1" = 160'



- Existing Buildings
- Potential Infill Buildings

Detail A - Pages 76-77

Detail B - Pages 78-79

Detail C - Pages 80-81

Detail D - Pages 84-85

The goal of the Avenue A masterplan is to illustrate how each of the improvements explored as schematic diagrams in the preceding section could come together in a re-energized Avenue A. The town of Montague should not feel constrained by this exact layout, but rather consider it as a framework for making decisions about where and how to make improvements on each block.





### Critical Improvements:

Clarify shopping plaza parking and add islands with shade trees to break up the expanse of pavement. Marking additional parallel parking spots along the street ensures no net parking loss due to adding shade trees.

Widen buffer between Avenue A and plaza parking to allow trees and plantings on either side of the sidewalk. With the addition of angled parking, this becomes another possible location for a farmer's market or flea market.

Add bump-outs at key crosswalks to shorten the expanse of pavement that pedestrians must navigate and to provide visibility beyond parked cars.

Create at least one pedestrian pathway through the parking lot.

Consider an overhead gateway arch announcing entrance to downtown Turners Falls at the intersection with 7th Street.

Re-purpose Carnegie Library as a local history museum. (Library to move to new location at town Hall coupled with new senior center).







### Critical Improvements:

Add bump-outs at key crosswalks to shorten the expanse of pavement that pedestrians must navigate and to provide visibility beyond parked cars.

Reduce or eliminate curb cuts by combining access points and making use of side streets and public alleyways.

Consider infill buildings at key locations to support the street and add to the pedestrian experience. One possible location is where the Verizon building and a parking lot currently sit next to Couture Brothers. Another possible location is the empty lot and parking area beside Bouska's Flooring. In either case the building should meet the sidewalk and the facade should match traditional building typologies, with street-level commercial space and offices or residential uses above. Parking is in the rear, accessed through alleys.







### Critical Improvements:

Add bump-outs at key crosswalks to shorten the expanse of pavement that pedestrians must navigate and to provide visibility beyond parked cars. No loss of parking results from adding bumpouts. Bump-outs modified at intersection of Avenue A and 3rd Street to accommodate large turning radii of truck traffic.

Improve alley gateways by bringing the pavement up to sidewalk level, and bumping out to the street. Reclaim greenspace or usable gathering space at alley bumpouts. No loss of parking.

Balance gathering spaces, places of interest, outdoor cafes and other attractions throughout each block. Possible additions:

- Outdoor cafe across from Powertown Apartments.
- Outdoor seating integrated with existing sidewalk in front of Black Cow Burger/TF Pizza
- Planter removed for seating area in front of Joes
- Planter removed and outdoor cafe seating provided in front of vacant block.
- Create plaza by allocating parking in front of Shea theatre. Add seating, playful sculpture, plantings, Shea Theatre bulletin board and marquee.
- Create space for a sidewalk sale or outdoor event by taking one parking spot in front of Jake's and Loot.
- Facade modifications on Subway Building and at Pipione's (see illustration, following).





**Facade Improvements:**  
(Illustrations by Deitz & Co Architects)

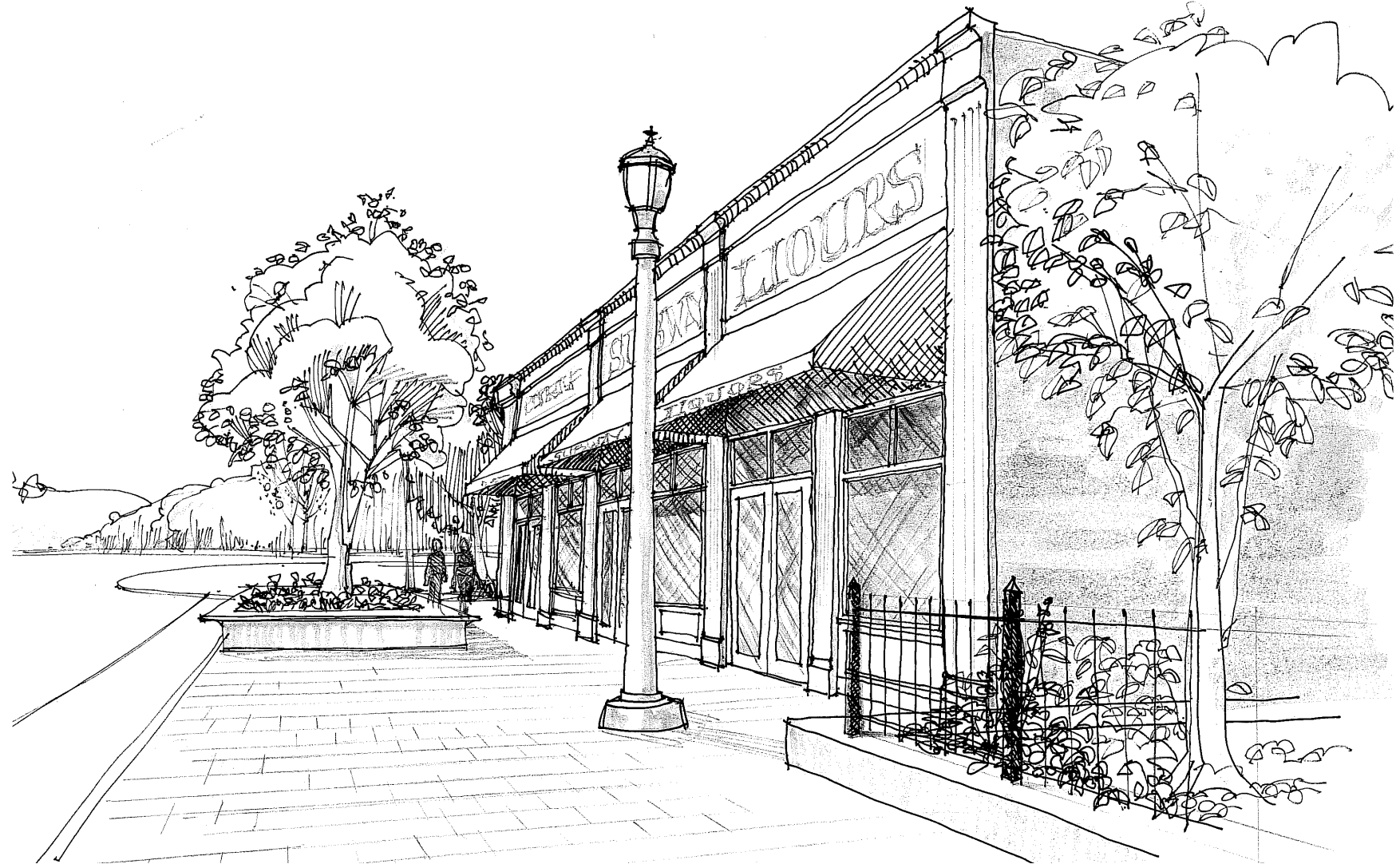
**At Pipione's Block (left image)**

- Consistent awnings
- Restore traditional facade design and detailing
- Permanent (rather than banner) signage, both flat against facade for viewing from the street and hanging at a right angle to the facade for viewing from the sidewalk.
- Banners at second floor add interest.

**At Subway Block (right image)**

A few simple things could help this more modern single-story construction blend with the historic buildings along Avenue A. The same modern, functional uses could remain within the new facade.

- Consistent awnings
- Consistent signage
- Decorative cornice and column details







### Critical Improvements:

Add bump-outs at key crosswalks to shorten the expanse of pavement that pedestrians must navigate and to provide visibility beyond parked cars. The town has already installed bump-outs at 2nd Street.

Reduce or eliminate curb cuts by combining access points and making use of side streets and public alleyways. Particularly critical at Shady Glen restaurant.

Consider infill buildings at key locations to support the street and add to the pedestrian experience. In all cases the buildings should meet the sidewalk and the facade should match traditional building typologies, with street-level commercial space and offices or residential uses above. Parking is in the rear, accessed through side streets and alleys.

- Infill to compliment Crocker Building at former Cumberland Farms site. See illustration following. Sidewalk cafe space facing Discovery center.
- Infill at parking lot next to sports bar
- New library and senior center behind town hall, replaces former police station. See illustrations following.
- Residential infill along 1st street facing new library and senior center.





Former Cumberland Farms Site:  
(Illustrations by Deitz & Co Architects)

Replace former Cumberland Farms building with new infill building. Building to match Crocker building in architectural style. Building meets sidewalk with shops and cafes on the street level and residential or office uses above.

Permanent shaded farmer’s market canopies extend out from building around the Discovery Center Park.



EXISTING CROCKER BUILDING

PROPOSED INFILL BUILDING with retail at street level, offices and residential use above

FARMERS MARKET Permanent Canopies

New Library and Senior Center:  
(Illustrations by Deitz & Co Architects)

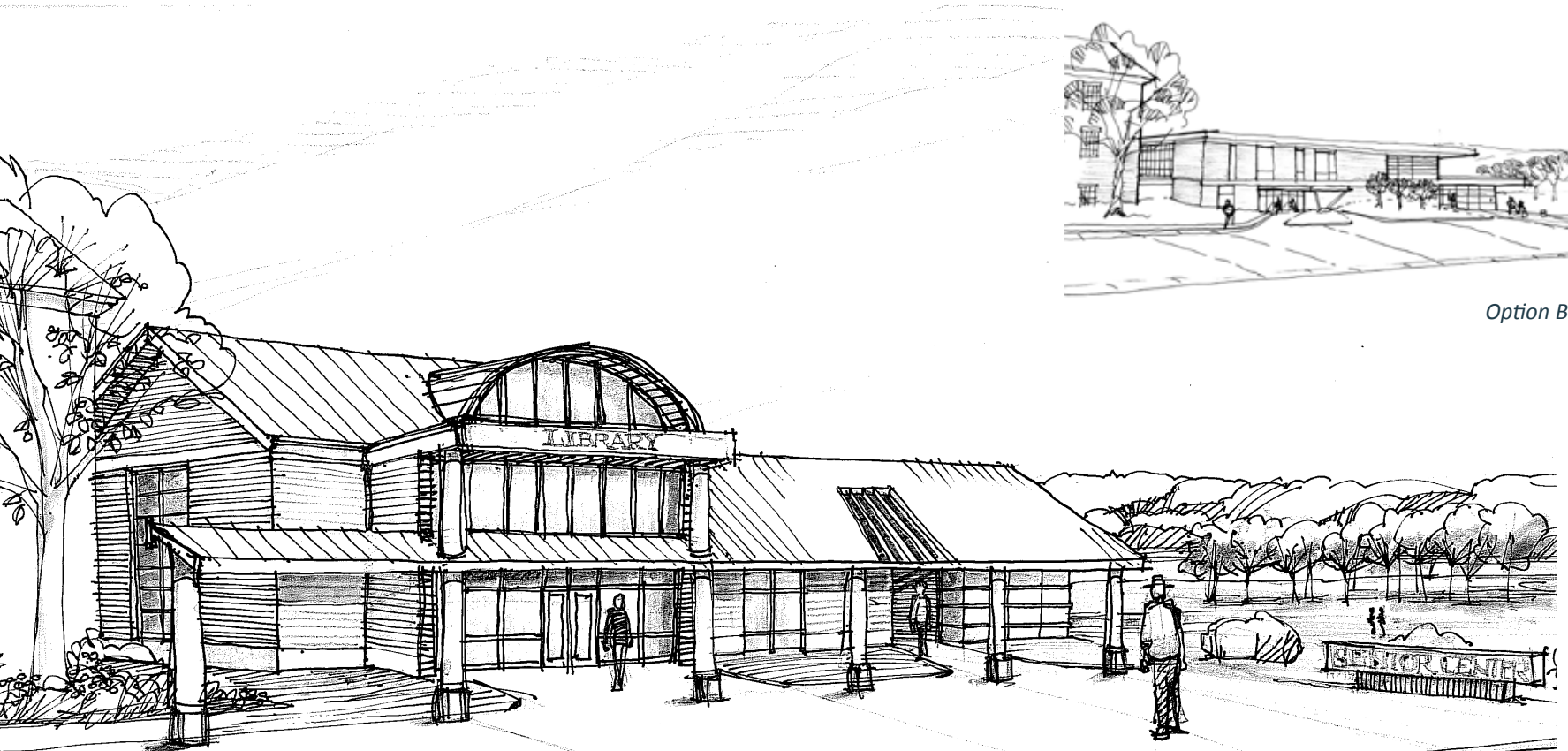
Remove the former police station addition at the back of the Town Hall. Replace with a new two-story combined Library and Senior Center. Three different architectural styles for the addition illustrated. In polling at the third working group meeting, stakeholders identified Option C as most desirable because it is most in keeping with the existing architectural style of Turners Falls.



Option A



Option B



Option C



# BUILDING AND SITE REVITALIZATION STRATEGY BY BLOCK

## BLOCK 1 – Ave A W between Canal and 2nd Street (Discovery Center and Park)

Block 1 is the primary gateway and first impression that visitors have of Downtown Turners Falls. There are several key civic attributes as well as other buildings and sites that provide opportunities to serve local residents and attract more visitors.

**Great Falls Discovery Center** – This state-owned facility is located on Avenue A at the foot of the Montague-Gill Connecticut River bridge, dam, and Power Canal. The Discovery Center is an interpretive center featuring the ecology of the Connecticut River from its source at the Canadian border to Long Island Sound, as well as the watershed's rich cultural and industrial history. The Center is a former mill building that has been respectfully renovated. It includes an outdoor seating area, courtyard and information kiosk. Direct access to the Canalside Bike Path is provided along the east side of the building via an old access road.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- While the Discovery Center is located along the Canalside Bike Path and Power Canal there is no direct access from the building. The State should consider building a terrace or cantilevered deck on the north side of the building to provide spectacular views of the bikeway, dam, Island, Connecticut River gorge, and Power Canal.
- Upgrade the information kiosk and improve

wayfinding signage to direct visitors to and from the bikepath, bridge to the island, Bartons Cove Park and other points of interest.

- Install a seasonal bike rental facility and small concession stand at the junction of the bike path and access road to expand visitor interest, services, and extend time spent in Turners Falls.

**Great Hall** - This historic brickbuilding is adjacent to the Discover Center and across an attractive internal courtyard. The Great Hall is a former machine shop of the Montague Paper Company which was started in 1868 by Alvah Crocker. It is the only surviving building of mill complex, which ceased operation in the 1920s. The facility is a popular public gathering space for community events as well a variety of exhibits and art shows.

### RECOMMENDATION:

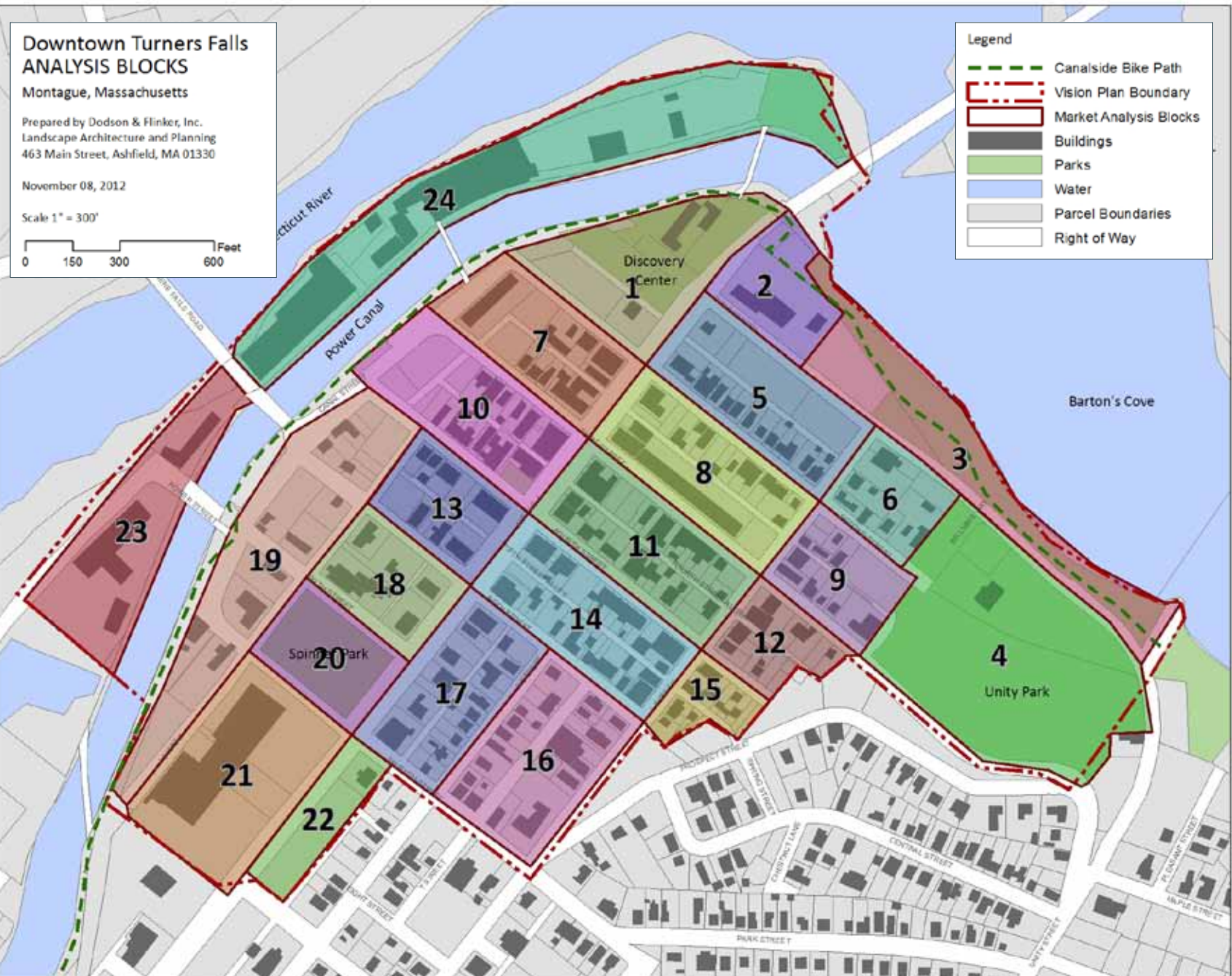
- Provide outdoor access on the north end of the building to provide views of the bikepath, dam, bridge and power canal.

**“Discovery Park”** - The grounds of the Discovery Center include the grassed open spaces, seating areas and a sustainable garden. It provides spectacular views of the Power Canal, the Island, and Connecticut River dam and bridge. This open space has significant potential for expanded activities such as a regional farmers market, live entertainment, arts and crafts shows, flea markets, movie nights and much more.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Rename, brand, and refer to the open space as “Discovery Park”
- Relocate and expand the Downtown Farmers Market to the center portion of the park. Complement farm products with live music, arts and crafts, and food venders. Seasonal tents should be set up along the end of the parking lot for venders to provide easy access to farm vehicles.
- Attract a flea market as an addition to the farmers market.
- Utilize the shaped landscape on the southwest side of the Discovery Center as a natural amphitheater using the Power Canal and Island as a backdrop.
- In addition to the Farmers Market, program the park with various civic activities throughout the year including the possibility of field sports (i.e. youth soccer) and ice skating rink.
- Create a direct trail or stairway connection between the park and the Bike Path on the west edge of the parking.
- Upgrade the existing interpretive signage.

**Former Grand Trunk Hotel Site/Former Cumberland Farms** – This building is located at the corner of Avenue A and 2nd Street adjacent and connected to Discovery Park at the main gateway into Turners Falls. It is the site of the former Grand Trunk Hotel which was built around 1872 by Bernard Farren. (It was originally called the Farren Hotel but he had it renamed when a bar was added because he didn't drink). Unlike,





many of the brick buildings on Avenue A, the hotel was built in the Second Empire style with a mansard roof. The 4-story building contained 40 rooms on the top three floors, and the first floor held a bank, bar, and barbershop. The hotel was torn down in the 1960s because it needed new wiring and replaced with Cumberland Farms convenience store. Eventually the building was acquired by the Town, which replaced the front parking lot with grass. It is currently used for community events including the farmers market. A variety of prehistoric Native American artifacts have been found near the site of the old hotel site. The site has significant opportunity for expanded development and civic use.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Consider the long-term redevelopment of this site for public and civic purposes. Initial ideas include a new library, senior center and senior living facility, museum, civic center and small conference space, new Town Hall, public auditorium, or a combination of these uses.

**Open Lot at Bridge** – The open lot at the base of the Connecticut River bridge and adjacent to the Great Hall and Canalside Bike Path is currently being used as a staging area for the bridge reconstruction. However it has significant potential for future utilization for community and cultural events. It is framed by an attractive stone foundation and has spectacular views of the Power Canal, the Island, and Connecticut River dam and bridge. It could also serve as a site to celebrate the coming together of Native Americans and the Town which started with Reconciliation Day in 2004.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Identify seasonal or permanent use of this site that takes advantage of its high visibility, position in the heart of the Downtown gateway, and proximity to the Discover Center, bridge, dam, and bike path. Some initial suggestions include a memorial to Native Americans that originally inhabited and gathered at Great Falls, arts & crafts shows, community center with observation deck, seasonal concessions and food court, and other civic programming.

**Public Parking** - Public parking for Block 1 is provided on-street (both angled and parallel) on Avenue A and 2nd Street. An off-street public parking lot with 60 spaces is provided at the lot off 2nd Street. Within the parking lot and along the north side of 2nd Street is a vacant lot that is owned by the Town.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Consider the long-term redevelopment options for the vacant site on 2nd Street for public or commercial purposes such as senior housing, auxiliary town offices, commercial leasing, or mixed uses. The lot could also be used for expanded parking as activity grows within the block.
- As activity growths in Block 1, additional on-street parking could be added to the north side of 2nd Street.

**Bridge Over Power Canal**—This bridge directly connects Avenue A, Great Hall and the Discovery Center, the Bike Path, and the Island. It is an underutilized attribute with spectacular view of the Power Canal, dam, Connecticut River Bridge and gorge.

RECOMMENDATION:

- The Town should work with First Light to improve utilization of the bridge as an observation area for the canal and dam, as well as a pedestrian connection to the Island and future park at the north end.

**Other Potential Revitalization Actions**—Other recommended actions in Block 1 include the following:

- Draw attention and improve visibility and appeal of Downtown Turners Falls from the Route 2 intersection across the river in Gill. This may include a gateway arch at the foot of the bridge on the Montague side, banners on the light poles along the bridge, special exterior lighting and signage on the Discovery Center, Great Hall and Town Hall.

***BLOCK 2 – Ave A E between Dam and 1st Street (Town Hall)***

The block is located at the foot of the Connecticut River Bridge on the northeast side. It is in the primary gateway area of Turners Falls and adjacent to the Canal Side Bike Path and Bartons Cove Park.

**Montague Town Hall (1 Avenue A)** - The Montague Town Hall is located on the east side of Avenue A at the corner of 1st Street across from the Discovery Center and at the foot of Connecticut River Bridge. The building contained the original offices of the Turners Falls Company, a utility company founded in 1866 by Alvah Crocker which rebuilt the dam and power canal and leased the water rights to the early industries. In 1942, the Turners Falls Company

merged with the Western Massachusetts Electric Company and in 1964 the Town bought the building for use as Town Hall.

Currently the Town Hall houses administrative offices and the garages in the rear (formerly the Police Department) are now used for storage. The DPW shed is located behind the building along Barton’s Cove with access of 1st Street. There is limited parking along 1st Street and a larger lot behind Town Hall along Barton’s Cove. While the Town Hall and site is at the gateway to Turners Falls and adjacent to the Canalside Bike Path, Barton’s Cove Park, the dam, and Fish Ladder, it is not well integrated into these recreational spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Relocate the DPW shed. This is an underutilized equipment storage area on the bike path with incredible views of the Connecticut River and opportunities for various recreational and civic activities.
- Explore opportunities to reorganize and reuse the site and building with an addition on the rear for a new Turners Falls public library and Montague Senior Center.
- As an alternative, consider reusing the Town Hall property for mixed commercial and residential uses to take advantage of its location along Barton’s Cove, the dam, and the Canalside bike Path. In addition to rehabilitating and reusing the Town Hall, additional development could be added in the parking lot along Barton’s Cove. Commercial uses might include restaurants and shops that take advantage of the views as well as the park and bike path. This site would also be desirable for market rate

apartments and condominiums. Under this scenario, the Town Hall could be relocated to the former Cumberland Farms site. Other ideas include a senior living facility and possibly reusing the former garage and police department as a permanent location for a public market and farmers market.

***BLOCK 3 – Barton’s Cove Park***

Barton’s Cove is located above the Turners Falls Dam and falls where the river opens out into a large water body. The park is located between the Cove and 1st Street adjacent to Town Hall and Unity Park. The beauty and recreational opportunities of Barton Cover occur in all seasons. During the winter months much of the Cove freezes over and is used by ice fishermen. Fishing is also popular in the other 3 months as is picnicking, bicycling and walking, bird watching, canoeing and sailing along the riverfront. The property is owned by FirstLight Energy, which also provides a portage service for canoeists wishing to circumvent the dam and to enter the Connecticut River below the falls.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Explore adding facilities in Barton’s Cove Park such as more picnic benches and a shelter, a dog park, playground, fitness course, community garden, concession stand, a performance stage and other furnishing to attract residents and visitors.

***BLOCK 4 – Unity Park***

Unity Park is Turners Falls largest recreation facility with two ballfields, picnic area, basketball

court, and a very large playground area with numerous play units. The Town has received Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding and has been implementing facility-wide improvements to the park including upgrades to the playground area, ballfields, picnic area and other facilities.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Seek funding for the construction of a skate park either here or on adjacent properties (block 6 or 7).
- Install community garden plots on site or on adjacent properties to provide an opportunity to combine farming with recreation for local families and residents.

***BLOCK 5 – Ave A E between 1st Street and 2nd Street***

**Vacant and Open Lots** – There are 2 large vacant parcels fronting on 1st Street and located across from Town Hall and Barton’s Cove Park. This was the site of some of the original rowhouses in Turners Falls similar to the Cutlery Block that still remains on 3rd Avenue today. (See 1877 Bird’s Eye Rendering on page 13 and 1914 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map on page 16). Today, a portion of these lots are used for parking to support Town Hall and Barton’s Cover Park. Given their proximity to the park and Canalside Bike Path, these lots have redevelopment potential.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Redevelop these lots for market rate or age restricted residential units with views of Barton’s Cove and the bike path across 1st Street. Rowhouse (single family dwelling



units attached horizontally by a common wall) would provide frontage along 1st Street and best views for all units. Condominiums, townhouses and apartments are also a possibility. All development should be placed close to the street. Parking should be behind with access from the mid-block alley.

- Parking on these parcels could be used to support both development onsite as well as across 1st Street on the Town hall property.

**BLOCK 6 – L Street, 1st Street and 2nd Street**

**GENERAL RECOMMENDATION**  
Potential redevelopment on selected vacant or blighted properties to provide market rate housing development opportunities and expanded recreational facilities in association with the adjacent Unity Park and Barton’s Cove Park.

**BLOCK 7 – Ave A W between 2nd Street and 3rd Street**

**Crocker Bank Building (50 Avenue A)** - The historic CrockerBank Building was built by Alvah Crocker around 1869 and housed both the Crocker Savings Bank and the Crocker NationalBank. The 3-story brick building housed the Mechanics Lodge of Masons for many years as well as offices, stores, and boarding rooms until it was gutted by fire in 1998 and restored several years later. Today, it continues to house apartments on the upper floors and some office uses on the ground floor including Montague Community Television and The Third Place, a social service that administers after school youth programs. However, the corner storefront is

vacant and used to be Holy Smokes BBQ which was a popular restaurant hurt by the partial closure of the Connecticut River Bridge.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The Crocker building storefronts are at the gateway to the village and in a highly visible location. After the bridge is reopened, these storefronts including the vacant former Holy Smokes BBQ and the Third Place should be a primary focus for reuse as retail or restaurant space since they are adjacent to the Discovery Center and a key to drawing visitors up Avenue A.
- The Town and the new Downtown Partnership should work closely. The Cutlery Management Group which may have limited leasing options until the bridge is reopened.

**LOOT Block** – The historic and attractive 3-story building serves as a model for Live/Work space. The current property owners operate LOOT on the ground floor and reside in the residential space above. There are several other small blocks on Avenue A that would be well-suited for this combined use.

**BLOCK 8 – Ave A E between 2nd Street and 3rd Street**

**Former Colle Opera House (85 Avenue A)** - Located on the east side of Avenue A and the corner of 3rd Street, this building was originally the Colle Opera House, built by Fred and Marie Colle and opened in 1874. Like most buildings on Avenue A, it was designed for multiple uses. The first floor housed shops and Montague’s first library while the second floor theater seated

1,000 people and was lit by five giant chandeliers. The Colle was the center of entertainment in Turners Falls and showcased vaudeville, melodramas, animal and minstrel shows, and movies - first shown there in 1914. After 1927 it served mostly recreational purposes, including bowling and miniature golf. In the late 1960s the Renaissance Community commune bought the building, along with the Shea Theater, and gutted it. The building was completely renovated around 2004 and became the home of the Hallmark Institute of Photography as well as their museum and gallery space. Hallmark relocated their facilities in 2012 to a location near the Turners Falls Airport and the building is now fully occupied by Northeast Foundation for Children, a regional social service.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- The Colle Opera House Building is owned by the Town of Montague. It is one of the most important buildings in Downtown Turners Falls not only for its unique history but because it sits at the 100% corner on Avenue A and 3rd Street. As such, it is critical that the ground floor space be used for retail or restaurant purposes. When Hallmark fully vacated the building in 2012, RiverCulture was able to create a temporary “pop-up” store during the holiday season which sold various arts, crafts and gifts. While this was temporary, it created a buzz around Turners Falls and potential for this highly visible storefront to be used as a retail incubator, start-up restaurant, or cooperative art gallery. Because the Town owns the building, they can provide the space inexpensively to fledgling businesses

and entrepreneurs that would contribute to the current mix of retail and restaurant businesses and help attract more visitors to downtown. The Town should work with the new Downtown Partnership and Northeast Foundation to reclaim the storefront space as a retail and restaurant incubator.

**Shea Theater (71 Avenue A)** - The Shea Theater is located on Avenue A next door to the Colle Opera House building. It was built by Dennis Shea and opened in 1927. The Shea played different movies every night along with vaudeville acts, live stage shows, and local plays. The theater ran on and off until the 1960s, when it was bought by the Renaissance Community Commune and was used as a concert space and recording studio. The Shea Theatre was acquired by the Town and underwent major renovations as a local community development project in the mid-1980s. It reopened in 1989 and continues to be operated by a private non-profit group which works with regional artists and professional touring companies.

The Shea provides a venue for year-round theater, featuring Shakespearian and modern plays, Broadway musicals, and musical performances by a variety of popular and traditional groups. Performances at the Shea Theater, which occur on most weekends, feature both local performing artists, from the Franklin County area, as well as regional and national talent. The Shea has also held “movie nights” including the showing of It’s a Wonderful Life during the holiday season which is a big hit with the local community and could potentially be expanded.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The Town and new Downtown Partnership should work with the Shea management group to raise funds for a marquee sign on the front of the building. This would be an attractive addition to the façade and help draw the attention of visitors.
- The Town and new Downtown Partnership should work with the Shea management group to expand movie nights in the theater to a regular weekly schedule. Other venues such as live music should also be expanded. These additional shows could be supported by expanded concessions.

**EXAMPLE:** The Colonial Theater in Keene NH, Latchis Theater in Brattleboro VT, and Strand Theater & Grille in Clinton MA are good examples of a renovated historic theater that has refurbished their marquees, expanded concessions, and have a variety of live events and movies.

**Cutlery Block (61 3rd Street)** – This historic brick rowhouse block was built in the 1860s and contains 40 apartment units. It is known as the Cutlery Block and housed workers from the John Russell Cutlery Company on the Island. The tenements originally provided only cold-water plumbing and outhouses, and several tenants kept pigs behind the building. The building is 2 ½ stories and each unit has 20 feet of frontage with an overhang and short stoop facing 3rd Street. The apartment units were refurbished about 10 years ago. The site includes a large parking lot behind the building and at the end of the block at the corner of L Street. Parking is accessed by the 3rd Street Alley that runs between the Colle Opera House building and the Shea Theater on

Avenue A over to L Street. The Cutlery Block is unique as the only remaining example of rowhouses in Turners Falls and could serve as a model for future residential development in the downtown area such as along 1st Street where similar rowhouses once stood.

**BLOCK 9 – L Street between 2nd and 3rd**

**GENERAL RECOMMENDATION**  
Potential redevelopment on selected vacant or blighted properties to provide market rate housing development opportunities and expanded recreational facilities in association with the adjacent Unity Park and Barton’s Cove Park.

**BLOCK 10 – Ave A W between 3rd Street and 4th Street**

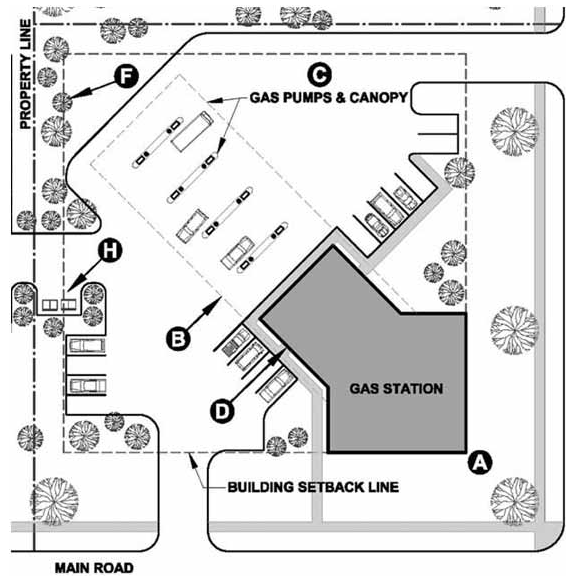
**Spinner Park (corner of Avenue A and 4th Street)** - Spinner Park is a pocket park created in 1985 as part of the downtown streetscape revitalization. The park features a bronze sculpture of a female textile worker, honoring the contribution women made to the town’s industrial past.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- The park is currently in poor condition and should be upgraded including new street trees and pruning of existing trees, repair of planters and furnishings, and new signage, including an information kiosk with a list of civic activities and downtown businesses.

**BLOCK 11- Ave A E between 3rd Street and 4th Street**





Example of “gas backwards” convenience store and gas pumps site layout more consistent with traditional village development patterns.

**GENERAL RECOMMENDATION**

Selected streetscape enhancements, building renovations, and façade improvements where necessary.

**BLOCK 12 – L Street between 3rd and 4th Street**

**GENERAL RECOMMENDATION**

Selected streetscape enhancements, building renovations, and façade improvements where necessary. If F.L Roberts Convenience Store and Gas Station is redeveloped or rehabilitated in the future, consider reversing the development patterns so that the convenience store is located up front and encloses the corner of 3rd Street and L Street with the gas pumps located behind with access from both streets. This alternative pattern (sometimes referred to as “gas backwards”) is more consistent with

the traditional village development patterns of placing the building at the front property line.

**BLOCK 13- Ave A W between 4rd Street and 5th Street**

**Powertown Apartment Building (152 Avenue A)**

— This attractive and historic 3-story brick building is located on the southwest corner of Avenue A and 4th Street. It was built in the late 1800s and is the former Hibernian Hallas indicated by the initials “AOH” in the cornice near the top of the building, which stand for the Ancient Order of Hibernians, an Irish social organization. Like many similar downtown buildings of its era, the uppermost story was used for civic gatherings and social events. With the AOH, the third floor was a popular dance hall in the early 1900s. Later it was a sports

arena and gymnasium with boxing matches and basketball games.

In the 1980s, the building was renovated and became part of the Powertown Apartment Building and owned by Power Town Limited Partnership. While it has one of the most attractive storefront facades on Avenue A, the ground floor contains residential apartments and a small management office. This is a common occurrence on Avenue A and the Town’s zoning laws have been revised over the years to require commercial uses on the ground floors. However, a number of storefronts remain vacant while the upper floors are fully occupied with residential apartments.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The Town and new Downtown Partnership should work with the Powertown property



owners to encourage reuse of the Avenue A storefronts for retail or restaurant purposes coupled with an outdoor dining terrace in the space between the building and sidewalk.

**Former American House (25 4th Street)**

- The apartment building was once the American House Hotel. Built in 1896, its wide front porch was a popular gathering spot in the late 1800s for working men who would eat and drink here after driving logs on the Connecticut River. It was also site of some notorious brawls. The building was reconfigured in the 1970s to its current use as an apartment house which is owned by Power Town Limited Partnership

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- A plaque should be placed on the building indicating its historic significance.
- The Town should explore the possibility of restoring the building to its original purpose and using it as a bed & breakfast.

**Former Police Station and Town Hall (19 4th Street)**

- Next door to the former American House is the old police station, which was originally built as the Montague Town Hall. The town jail and highway department were on the first floor of the building and the 2nd floor served as the district court. For a period of time, the Jewish community held their services here. The old station is now an apartment building owned by the Power Town Limited Partnership.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- A plaque should be placed on the building indicating its historic significance.

**BLOCK 14- Ave A E between 4rd Street and 5th Street**

**GENERAL RECOMMENDATION**

Selected streetscape enhancements, building renovations, and façade improvements where necessary.

**BLOCK 15 – L Street between 4th and 5th Street**

**GENERAL RECOMMENDATION**

Selected streetscape enhancements, building renovations, and façade improvements where necessary.

**BLOCK 16 – K Street and L Street**

**GENERAL RECOMMENDATION**

Selected streetscape enhancements, building renovations, and façade improvements where necessary. Possibly relocate the Montague Senior Center to a more central location downtown. Re-establish pedestrian and bicycle path along the 6th Street easement connecting the Power Street bridge, Canalside Bike, 6th Street and Avenue A.

**BLOCK 17 – Ave A E between 5th Street and 7th Street**

Block 17 incorporates 21 parcels and approximately 2.73 acres of land between Avenue A, 7th Street to the south, K Street to the east, and Fifth Street to the north. There is approximately 545 feet of frontage along Ave A and the block supports a mix of commercial, residential, and civic uses. This block south of

6th Street represents a change in the prevailing development pattern along Avenue A. Most buildings on the blocks between 1st Street and 6th Street are 2 to 3 stories, placed at the frontage line along the sidewalk, and at-grade entrances. Buildings on the blocks south of 6th Street tend to be 1 to 2 stories and set back from the front property line. The ground floors of some institutional and residential buildings are also raised above grade 1 to 3 feet as is typical with traditional design. Six buildings are oriented toward Avenue A.

**St. Kaziemerz Society (197 Ave A)**

— St. Kaziemerz Society is a historic Polish social club which has been located in Turners Falls for many years. The building is located at the northeast corner of Ave A and 7th Street. It was constructed in 1954 and includes just over 9,000 square feet of gross floor area. The 3-story brick building is fairly plain with limited fenestration and architectural detail. The front elevation is set back approximately 15 feet from the sidewalk except for an enclosed front porch located within 5 feet of the sidewalk. The building entrance is elevated above the street as is typical with civic and institutional building. Parking is located on-site to the side and rear and 3 public on-street parallel parking spaces are located in front of the building. There is no significant landscaping on site.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- There are 2 mature street trees located on the north end of the side and planted approximately 20 feet apart in the planting strip. These trees screen the building from Ave A and should be pruned up.

**Former Greenfield Savings Bank Building (191**



**Ave A)** – The bank moved to a newly constructed building at 282 Avenue A in 2009. This vacant bank building was constructed in 1975 and includes just over 2,000 square feet of gross floor area. The building is set back approximately 40 feet from the sidewalk with grass and landscaping in the front yard. The site has 2 curbcuts and circulates vehicles around the building to the drive-thru facility located in the north side of the building. On-site parking is located behind and on the north side of the building, and 3 public angled on-street parking spaces are located on Ave A in front of the building. The 1-story building is approximately 14 feet tall and constructed of cinder block with a brick and barn board front façade. A ground sign is located in the front yard and is approximately 15 feet tall and internally illuminated. There are 3 street trees approximately 10 feet apart in the planting strip directly in front of the building.

RECOMMENDATION:

- The trees in front are so densely planted that they significantly screen the building and should be thinned out and pruned up. The building is fairly attractive and may be well suited for another bank, drive-thru coffee shop, or small restaurant. The front and sideyard (current drive-thru canopy) would make attractive outdoor dining areas. The ground sign should be replaced with a smaller and higher quality sign, and one of the curb-cuts should be removed if the drive-thru is no longer used.
- The Town and new Downtown Partnership should work with property owners (also owners of the neighboring Couture Brothers building) on a reuse plan. Our understanding

is the property is still under lease to GSB from for the next two years. Until then there may be little incentive for the owners to release the property. The drive-through is not permitted under the current CBD zoning regulations but is a grandfathered use. Adams Doughnuts, a well know regional business from Greenfield got approval from the ZBA to use the building but ultimately could not reach an agreement with the property owners.

**Couture Brothers Painting (187 Ave A)** – This 2-story brick building was constructed in 1932 and has approximately 6,400 square feet of gross floor area. The ground floor is used for retail sales of paint supplies and home decoration, as well as a contracting service. There are 4 residential units on the upper floor. The building is fairly plain with limited architectural features. It is also set back approximately 40 feet from the sidewalk with 6 on-site parking spaces located in front of the buildings. There are another 7 angled spaces along the north side of the building which must be accessed by K Street. An additional 2 angled public on-street parking spaces are located in front of the building. The entire front yard is paved over creating a disconnect from the walking environment. However, the property is located across from 6th Ave and two pedestrian crosswalks are located at both ends (adjacent to 2 curbcuts) of the property extending across Ave A. The building has several signs including an internally illuminated wall sign and well as other window and wall signs. There is also a ground sign mounted in the planting strip with a blade type sign hanging over the sidewalk. There is a narrow landscape strip in between the building

and parking lot with shrubs and flowers. There are no street trees located in the planting strip in front of the building.

RECOMMENDED CHANGES INCLUDE:

- Façade treatments including new wall signage, awnings, and window displays; potential consolidation of curbcuts and reorganization parking on north side to increase spaces both on-site and on-street; plant street trees and relocate/install new ground sign; and create new display area in front of the building.

**Verizon Co-Location Facility (187 Ave A)** – This one-story brick building is used as a co-locator station and is not accessible to the public. The site has no curbcut onto Ave A and access is made by the alley between Ave A and K Street behind the building.

RECOMMENDATION:

- This is an attractive location across from the Post Office and Peskeomskut Park and should be considered a potential redevelopment site along with the vacant adjoining parcel which is owned by Equity Trust Apartment Building (177 Ave A, Parcel 03-0-018), an attractive 3-story brick building. This could be an attractive location for new market rate rowhouses.

**Power Town Limited Partnership Apartment Building (175 Ave A)** – This historic and attractive 3-story brick building sets the edge at the corner of Avenue A and 5th Street. One of its apartments was once rented by two men who used it to case the bank across Avenue A

before robbing it.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Replace the small crabapple trees in front of the two apartment buildings (175 and 177 Avenue A) and replace them with a more appropriate street trees that will eventually provide a better enclosure and canopy along Avenue A.

***BLOCK 18 – Ave A W between 5th Street and 6th Street***

**Former St. Anne’s Church and Rectory (47 J Street)** - Located at the corner of 6th Street and J Street, St. Anne’s Church and rectory was built in 1885 and was the first Roman Catholic Parish in Turners Falls serving primarily French-Canadian immigrants. In 2005, St. Anne’s was merged with several other area Catholic churches and the church no longer uses this building. The church building is now privately owned and there have been tentative plans to renovate the space as a high capacity performing arts center possibly in combination with a banquet/functional that could hold both weddings and functions. A cell phone tower has been installed in the church steeple that carries an undetermined portion of the carrying cost of the building and may be a deterrent to expediting rehabilitation plans. The Town owns the rectory building and a small cottage which have been discussed as a possible bed & breakfast, newlywed suite and function space in association with the church reuse. The rectory is in poor condition and would require substantial rehabilitation. The Town is considering issuing a developer RFP but coordination with renovation plans for the

church would be more advantages for both properties. Both properties are eligible and would benefit from utilizing historic tax credits.

RECOMMENDATION:

- The church and rectory buildings are key rehabilitation sites for Turners Falls. The Town and new Downtown Partnership should work closely with the owner of the church to progress rehabilitation plans for commercial, civic and possibly residential uses. The property is in a prominent location across from Peskeomskut Park and important to the future vitality of the downtown area. While there is limited parking on site, there is an opportunity to greatly expand on-street parking along J Street.

EXAMPLE: There are several examples of old churches that have been renovated from new uses. In Sandwich village, MA there are two - an old church on Main Street across from the public library has been converted into a single family home and another on Jarvis Street was converted into the Belfry Inne and Bistro; on Elliot Street in Brattleboro, a former church was converted into a pharmacy upstairs and a bar downstairs; the Grace Restaurant in Portland, ME is another example.

**Bank Building (176 Avenue A)** – This attractive historic building is on the corner of Avenue A and 5th Street. It has housed many banks, most recently the Bank of America, and was the site of a notorious bank robbery in 1940. The thieves staked out the bank by renting a room in the apartment building across the street and watching out the front windows. The building

is currently vacant but will soon be occupied by Greenfield Cooperative Bank. The property has limited parking and a drive-thru window on the north side of the building. Parallel parking along the 5th Street frontage compensates for the limited on-site parking.

**Residential Condominiums** - The old school building on J Street next to former St Anne Church was renovated a number of years ago as residential condominiums.

***BLOCK 19 – Area between J Street and Canal Street***

GENERAL RECOMMENDATION

Selected streetscape enhancements, building renovations, and façade improvements where necessary. Evaluate the properties behind the Food City Plaza and along the Canalside Bike path for potential redevelopment such as for restaurants, retail or small accommodations. It is closer to grade with the Canal and Bike Path than other area of downtown and could have direct access to the path and excellent view of the Power Canal.

***BLOCK 20 – Ave A W between 6th Street and 7th Street***

The block is fully occupied by Peskeomskut Park. Peskeomskut translates roughly from the Narragansett language as “place of the split rock.” The park was created in the 1960s and completely redone in 2006, when the band shell was added. It also contains one of four Turners Falls public art commissions. Peskeomskut Park provides an important open space in the core



of the downtown and is popular place for civic gathering.

**BLOCK 21 – Ave A W between 7th Street and 9th Street (Food City Plaza)**

Block 21 incorporates the shopping plaza along Ave A between 7th Street to the north, J Street to the west, and the new Greenfield Saving Bank site to the south. The block includes 4 attached 1-story buildings on 4 parcels which are entirely in commercial retail use.

**Food City Plaza** – This is a typical 1960s strip commercial plaza. The building is one story in height with a long and continuous front elevation and deep setbacks from Avenue A. The combination of parking and deep setback creates a disconnection from the street and the sidewalk pedestrian route. Currently, there are 5 businesses operating within the plaza including Food City, Rite Aid Pharmacy, Salvation Army Thrift Shop, Family Dollar Store, and Aubuchon Hardware.

**Access and Parking** – The primary access point is a 50-foot wide curb cut of Avenue A. Additional curb cuts are located on the south end onto Ave A, 7th Ave and J Street but there are no internal connections between the plaza and the new Greenfield Savings Bank site directly abutting to the south. There are approximately 185 parking spaces located in a series of rows in front of the building and another 20 public on-street parking spaces along Ave A in front of the plaza. There is a 4-foot sidewalk that is located on the property (not within the public r-o-w) that runs along the entire frontage of Ave A. However, there is no internal sidewalk

connection to the storefronts through the parking lot. Of the 10 rows of parking in front of the plaza, 6 have landscaped planters in the Ave A end with shrubs and flowers. The 4 rows without planters or curbing are located in the center of the plaza.

There are 4 pedestrian crosswalks connecting to surrounding areas:

- Ave A at north end of plaza across from Carnegie Public Library
- Ave A at south end of plaza aligning with walkway up the hill to 9th Street, K Street, and Our Lady CzestochowasChurch
- 7th Street at north end connecting to Peskeomskut Park
- J Street at the NW corner toward Street

**Façade and Signage Conditions** - There are 3 segments of the building creating variation in the height and facades of the storefronts. There is no consistency in the façade treatments between the 5 stores resulting in an overall appearance that is unattractive and appears to be somewhat deteriorated. There are 2 ground signs on site - for Rite Aid and Family Dollar. Both are located at the end of the parking aisles in front of their stores and near the street. Both are about 15 feet tall, plastic, internally lit and generally unattractive.

**Streetscape Conditions** – There is a planting strip along Ave A in front of the plaza (apparently on private land) that is approximately 8 feet wide. There are 12 street trees located along Ave A, nine of which are mature hardwood trees (including 3 elms just north of the primary access). Three small hardwood trees were recently planted to the south of the primary access.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Install an internal sidewalk connection from the Ave A sidewalk to the storefronts.
- Install planters at the end of each aisle and at mid aisle to break up the pavement, improve circulation and safety, and provide shade. Include trees in the planters.
- Provide internal connection to Greenfield Savings Bank to the south.
- Construct a consistent façade treatment on the front elevation to improve aesthetics and visibility.
- Remove existing ground signs and install one ground or monument sign that includes all of the plaza tenants using high quality materials and appropriate size.
- Consider infill pad developments along the Ave A frontage to provide additional business development opportunity as well as to create a more pedestrian oriented block with new buildings oriented toward the sidewalk.

**BLOCK 22 – Ave A W between 7th Street and 9th Street**

Block 22 incorporates the area along Ave A between 7th Street to the north, K Street Alley to the east, and the 9th Street r-o-w to the south. The block includes 2 parcels owned by the Town and entirely in civic use with the library and war memorial.

**Carnegie Public Library(121 Ave A)** – The Carnegie Library was built from 1905 to 1906 and is named after Andrew Carnegie, who donated \$13,500 to pay for its construction. It

is one of the most attractive and important civic buildings in Turners Falls. This elegant 1-story brick building is elevated above the ground (as most civic buildings are) with a stairway leading up to a front landing and covered porch.

**Access and Parking** – There are no parking spaces located on site and the Public Library relies on street parking of which there are 9 parallel public parking spaces in front of the building and additional spaces around the corner on 7th Street. Access includes an 8-foot public sidewalk along Ave A from 7th Street to an area south of the war memorial where there is an ADA accessible ramp down to street level. There are also stairways connecting the street to the library and war memorial. The 9th Street r-o-w is an open grass slope which rises up the hill from Ave A to K Street. A pathway is included in the r-o-w which climbs the hill connecting the neighborhood and Our Lady of Czestochwa Church on 9th street.

**Façade and Signage Conditions** - The Library façade is very attractive and well preserved. A small blade ground sign is located in front of the library along the walkway which is oriented parallel to the sidewalk and Ave A. It should probably be moved closed to the sidewalk and oriented perpendicular to Ave A to improve visibility.

**War Memorial** – This monument is located directly south of the Public Library and includes a ADA accessible walkway from Ave A. It includes several monuments and a landscaped sitting area but is not particularly visible. An effort should be made to make physical and visual connections to the library through extended landscaping and furnishing so that it serves multiple purposes

such as outdoor learning space and garden as well as meditation and spiritual space.

**Streetscape Conditions** – The planting strip between the Ave A curb and the sidewalk is very steep and contains no trees. There are several large trees located around the library and war memorial and a mature wooded area rising up the hillside creating a thick screen along the 9th Street Alley.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- This block serves as the southern gateway into Turners Falls and treatments should be made south of the intersection of Avenue A and 7th Street such as ornamental street lighting, banners and welcome and wayfinding signage.
- To support the library, war memorial and other potential uses on this block, additional on-street parking should be added along the entire length of Avenue A by converting parallel parking to angled parking and possibly eliminating the right-turn lane onto 7th Street.
- If the library is relocated to another site, this building should be reused for a suitable civic purpose.
- The library, war memorial and open land to the south should be better integrated and programmed so that this civic block becomes a more prominent attraction to local residents as well as visitors.
- Install a high quality Carnegie Public Library monument sign at the Ave A and 7th Street to improve visibility of the library. The sign should be arched and include a landscaped bed.

- Install high quality monument signage for the War Memorial.
- Install pocket park and healing garden with trellis or pergola and seating area.

**BLOCK 23 – The Island South of Turners Falls Road**

This block includes the properties on the Island south of Turners Falls Road and north of the Patch Neighborhood.

**Former Turners Falls Paper Building** - The company was founded in 1897 and produced newsprint. International Paper later purchased Turners Falls Paper and most of the buildings were demolished. The surviving buildings now contain a warehouse and the Franklin County Regional Housing Authority (FCRHA). The 1-story brick building is just south of the Turners Falls Road. FCRHA is currently looking for another location, preferably in Turners Falls if a suitable office space can be found.

**Former Griswold Cotton Mill Complex (11-15 Power Street)** – This complex of buildings located on the Island south of the Power Street Bridge was originally constructed in 1874. Griswold Cotton produced bandages, cheesecloth and bunting. The mill was sold in the 1940s and has changed hands and use several times since. Notable past uses include the Rockdale Department Store and most recently a Railroad Salvage store. The roof has collapsed on the main building and the structural integrity of the remaining walls has been compromised. While this building will have to be demolished and removed, a smaller building on site is currently



being renovated as an artist live work space. However, in the process of upgrading it some complications have been discovered, including the location of ductile easements and demands for new underground utilities from FirstLight Hydro. This entire 2.9 acre site is identified as targeted redevelopment site. As with several other former industrial properties on the Island, significant investment will be needed for site improvement, building renovations or removal, and utility and access upgrades. It will take a cooperative effort of the property owners, the Town, and FirstLight Hydro Generating Company for any redevelopment to occur on the Island in this challenged area.

RECOMMENDATION:

- The Town should work closely with FirstLight Hydro and potential investors in the live/work rehabilitation project to resolve any complications resulting from old ductile easements or unnecessary or unreasonable requests for substantial underground infrastructure investment. This could be a significant deterrent to redevelopment on the Island for both economic and civic purposes.
- The Town should demolish the former cotton mill and clear the property in preparation for redevelopment. Future redevelopment may include light industrial, commercial, residential, recreational or a combination of these uses.

**BLOCK 24– The Island North of Turners Falls Road**

There are several properties on the Island

including the active Southworth Papermill, Swift River Hydro facilities (located in building 9 of the Strathmore Mill complex) and abandoned properties to the east of the Strathmore site. The Island is in the Historic-Industrial zoning district.

The Island is in reasonable proximity to major highways – about ½ mile to Route 2 and about a 10-minute drive to Interstate 91. However, vehicular access to the Island and between properties is fairly constrained. A narrow shared driveway serves as the primary access north of Turners Falls Road which is owned in part by FirstLight Energy and in part by the property owners. The utility owns ten feet of the right-of-way from the inside of the canal wall toward the mill buildings, each of the property owners the remainder of the right of way from FirstLight’s property to the building wall. The total width varies and is 22 feet at its widest.

Truck access to the Island is challenging. The Southworth trucks stop traffic on Turners Falls Road when backing into their loading docks. The Strathmore complex is also served by a tunnel through the basement of the Southworth mill adjacent to its loading dock. According to previous studies, when the Strathmore mill was in operation trucks backed onto the access way because the 55 foot trucks could not make the turn from 5th Street onto the access way cab first without making several turns .

**Southworth Paper Company** – This factory building is located adjacent to the bridge and Turners Falls Road. It was originally the Marshall Paper Company built in 1895. The company failed and was bought by the Esleek Manufacturing Company around 1900 (the origin of the “EMCO”

letters on the smoke stack). Esleek produced high quality typing paper and was acquired in 2005 by the Southworth Company, a subsidiary of International Paper. The building has limited access, loading and parking, but it is the last remaining operating industry and occupied building on the Island in the downtown area.

**Strathmore Paper Company (20 Canal Road)**- The Strathmore Mill Complex is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was on the 2007 list of the ten more endangered historic resources by Preservation Massachusetts. This series of mill buildings was originally built in 1871 as the Keith Paper Company (the origin of the letters “KPC” on a smoke stack) and later became the Strathmore Paper Company. The mill was damaged in a fire in 1877, but was quickly rebuilt and continued production until 1994. Since then, the mill has had several owners and has been used for a variety of purposes. In 2007, an arson fire destroyed building 10 of the mill complex and damaged two other buildings. Later that year, the Mill was purchased by the SwiftRiver Group which planned to develop the site into a film school with several studios, restaurants and other ancillary uses. The developer had planned to take advantage of many historic tax credits and film industry credits. The town took ownership of the mill in February 2010 for nonpayment of taxes, and the complex has been vacant since 2007.

The former mill complex consists of 10 buildings which range in height from two to four stories, on a 1.93 acre site. The structure has a total floor area of approximately 224,000 square feet with an overall footprint of 55,000 square feet. The Town is hoping the property will be

renovated for mixed-use or institutional use and is seeking a developer for a full or phased redevelopment through a recent request for proposal (RFP). Through the M.G.L Chapter 43D program, the Town of Montague completed a site feasibility study and development assessment in 2005. They have since cleaned of the debris field from the previous demolition of a portion of the property. In addition to the challenging market and financing conditions, there are considerable access and infrastructure issues to be addressed.

An Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) was convened in 2011 on the Strathmore Mill project with experts in design development, real estate, and engineering. The panel conducted interviews with local stakeholders and determined that rents for industrial space were running about \$3-\$3.50 per square foot triple net; for office \$6-8, and retail \$8-\$10. Rents in this range support total development costs around \$80-\$100 per square foot. However the ULI Panel estimated redevelopment costs of the Strathmore site (assuming the land and structure are transferred at no cost) to be \$230 - \$280 per square foot. Therefore, they concluded that the low rents would not support the costs of redevelopment for traditional uses without heavy subsidy. Furthermore, the panel pointed out in the report that Montague only has 8,600 residents, which makes it difficult to attract certain uses such as retail or office. While the site is in close proximity to I-91 and State Routes 2 and 63, Greenfield is better served by the transportation network and already has existing retail.

**Former Indeck Power Plant (1989)** - This site

and building provided electricity and thermal energy for the Strathmore Mill adjacent and to the south. When the Strathmore Mill closed, the power plant was no longer needed and, in 2006, its energy producing machinery was sold and sent abroad. The Indeck building is privately owned and sits near the former site of the John Russell Cutlery building. The exterior walls of the building and coal tower remain on site and have potential for civic and recreational uses.

**Former John Russell Cutlery Company (1868-1870)** - In the late 1800s this was the largest cutlery company in the world and employed 1,200 people at its height. The company was best known for the production of the Jim Bowie Knife. It produced fine knives until the end of nineteenth century and the building stood until 1958 when it was torn down. The site, the northern tip of the Island, remains vacant and has spectacular views of the Connecticut River gorge, Power Canal, dam, fish ladder, and Gill-Montague bridge. It is also connected to the Great Falls Discovery Center and Canalside Bike path via the old auto bridge. It has significant potential for civic and recreational uses.

**The Island Redevelopment Vision** - The Town seeks broadest range of redevelopment and reuse concepts for the Island. The overall goal is to achieve the following public purposes:

- Provide a significant number of permanent skilled jobs;
- Complement and stimulate other economic activity in the region in general and in downtown Turners Falls in particular;
- Generate revenue for the Town;
- Maintain the historic integrity of the

- Strathmore Mill property; and
- Enhance connections between downtown and the river.

Specific to the Strathmore complex, the Town issued a developer RFP in the winter of 2013 and welcomed proposals that would utilize either the entire site or a portion of it, as well as neighboring parcels for desirable reuse including:

- Light manufacturing (technology, emerging industry, green industry, are particularly encouraged);
- Offices and professional use (business incubators are particularly encouraged);
- Performance, cultural, or educational space (classrooms, exhibits, events, conferences, institution);
- Artist studios/working space (with possible accessory low-density residential use); and/or
- Data center.

The Town views the following as problematic reuse scenarios: medium to high density residential use; heavy manufacturing that produces or uses noxious fumes, loud noise, or toxic materials; and uses that require high amounts of vehicular traffic.

RECOMMENDATION:

In addition to these desirable uses, the Town should consider extensive civic and recreational uses, particularly on the properties northeast of the Strathmore complex. This area has spectacular views and an existing connection to Avenue via the old auto bridge, Canalside Bike path, and Great Falls Discovery Center. Given



the limited market and vehicle access currently, this may be the best first step for the Town as it would reclaim deteriorated properties and create a major recreational attribute which in turn may draw more developer interest in reuse of the Strathmore complex. Using the former Indeck Power Plant and John Russell Cutlery Company properties, this area could become “Power Park” or “Peninsula Park” with music venues, ball fields, playground and other amenities that would draw residents and visitors alike.

Other Redevelopment and Revitalization Strategies

Historic Structures and Infrastructure

**Power Canal** - The original canal in Turners Falls was first used in 1798 and had nine locks which allowed boats to bypass Great Falls. Riverboats traveled through the canal and locks along the Connecticut River from the Long Island Sound all the way into Vermont. Prior to the railroad, the Connecticut River served as a primary means of transportation for both commerce and pleasure. By the 1840s, the railroads had taken over most of the transportation needs and the canal and locks fell into disuse. In the 1860s, with the development of Turners Falls, the canal and dam were reconstructed to provide power to the new industry located on the Island.

**The Fish Ladder and Dam-** The fish ladder is located adjacent to the dam and is open for public viewing from mid-May to mid-June, the height of spawning season. From the viewing

station at the Barton’s Cover Park one can see shad, lampreys, and Atlantic salmon bypass the dam and return upstream to spawn in the spring. The area just beyond it also provides a view of the Great Falls dam.

- RECOMMENDATION:
- The fishladder could be a larger visitor attraction, particularly for children, and should be heavily promoted.

**Gill-Montague Bridge** – This 2–lane bridge spans the Connecticut River and creates a dramatic gateway into Turners Falls. As one drives or walks over the bridge there are spectacular views of the river gorge, the Power Canal, the Island and Downtown Turners Falls. The bridge has been under repair for the last few years and is scheduled to fully reopen by the end of 2013 with sidewalks on both sides, new lighting and other aesthetic enhancements. It has been difficult over the past couple of years for downtown businesses as the bridge has been partially closed limiting access from Route 2 only.

- RECOMMENDATION:
- The Town and business community should work with the state to make improvements at the Route 2 intersection to improve visibility of Turners Falls and draw more visitors into the village. This may include architectural treatments in the bridge abutments, new gateway and wayfinding signage (on I-91 as well), and thinning out the trees to open up the views of the village.

**Turners Falls Road Bridge** – This is a major

gateway and access point to Downtown Turners Falls as it connects Greenfield to Montague over the Connecticut River, Island and Power Canal and lands on Canal Street in Turners Falls across from 5th Street. There are no sidewalks on this narrow bridge and the road on the Greenfield side resulting in an unfriendly walking and biking environment. The intersection at Canal Street is off-set from 5th Street resulting in a wide paved area without pedestrian amenities.

- RECOMMENDATION:
- This is one of the few direct access points from the Canalside Bike Path to Avenue A yet the pedestrian and biking environment at the intersection are not friendly and should be significantly improved.

**Power Street Bridge** – This metal bridge connects the Island at a point between the former Turners Falls Paper Building (FRHA) and former Railroad salvage building to Canal Street. The bridge is one-way toward the Island making the only access back to Turners Falls through the Patch Neighborhood and bridge to the south. The bridge landing in downtown is adjacent to the 6th Street right-of-way which is not open.

- RECOMMENDATION:
- Convert the bridge to two-way traffic to improve access between the Island and Downtown. While drivers may have to yield to each other on either side of the bridge due to the narrow alternate, the volumes are low enough that capacity constraints are not anticipated. If the bridge was 2-way and a trail connection was made between Canal Street and J Street within the 6th Street r-o-w

it would provide a vastly improved access point between Avenue A and the Island for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists.

**Discovery Center Bridge** – The vehicle bridge over the power canal at the Discovery Center is a one lane bridge with 2-way traffic and only used for service and maintenance on the Island by FirstLight Energy as needed. While the bridge does not appear to be a viable future option for vehicle traffic to the Island it is a critical for a future pedestrian and bicycle connection especially if northern portions of the Island near the dam are used for recreational purposes in the future. (See recommendation under Block 1)

**Former Rail Bridge** - This rail bridge crosses the Power Canal and connects the Canalside Bike Path near the southern end of J Street to the former Railroad Salvage site. The bridge is not accessible and has been closed for several years as the rail spur on the Island was removed. However, it could be another potential bike and pedestrian connection to the Island and a site targeted for redevelopment.

**Strathmore Pedestrian Bridge** – When the village was originally laid out, several pedestrian bridges connected downtown to the Island as the vast majority of people walked to work. This bridge connects Downtown Turners Falls from Canal Street between 2nd and 3rd Street to the Island and Strathmore Mill over the Power Canal. The bridge has a span of 153 feet and is constructed of riveted steel trusses, steel angle cross bracing and a 3-inch wood plank walking surface. A 60 foot long steel framed walkway begins at the Canal Street side of the footbridge

and connects to a steel and wood framed staircase that leads down to the pedestrian bridge. On the Island side, a similar steel and wood framed staircase leads from the end of the bridge down to the entrance to the mill on the fourth floor of Building No. 1.

The bridge is owned by FirstLight Power and has been closed for several years. The bridge was inspected in 2004 and results indicate that the lower chord framing has suffered corrosion and will require a combination of repair and replacement. In addition, angle cross bracing and gusset connections that brace the lower chords of the truss are corroded and will have to be replaced. The stairs, located at each end of the bridge are severely corroded and will need to be replaced. The severe corrosion was most likely caused by de-icing salts used on the pedestrian bridge. It is likely that the wood planking would also have to be replaced. The estimated to cost is more than \$275,000. Additional considerations are that the Town also has a sewer line on the bridge which feeds into the Strathmore Mill. In addition, preliminary plans for the Strathmore redevelopment indicate that the bridge could be extended through Building No. 1, where it will provide an outlook to the river. According to more recent assessment by Tighe & Bond engineering the costs to repair and upgrade the existing pedestrian bridge for the proposed development will most likely approach the cost for a new bridge.

- RECOMMENDATION:
- The bridge provides a critical connection to the Island as vehicle access and parking are significantly limited. If redevelopment of the Island is going to be successful (regardless of

the type of conservation or development) improved public access is critical and the bridge is a key. The Town should work closely with FirstLight Energy to ensure that the bridge is properly repaired and returned to service.



# BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, MARKETING AND BRANDING

Business development programs for Turners Falls focus on business retention and expansion directed toward targeted buildings and redevelopment sites within the Downtown Study Area. A particular focus of this plan is to strengthen the downtown core by working with existing and prospective property owners, business owners, and developers on building renovation and property redevelopment that expands businesses, fills market niches, and broadens the mix of uses. The goal is to create profitable opportunities for entrepreneurs and small business operators, as well as creating high-quality job opportunities for local residents.

Various business development programs

and case studies from similar communities that have reported good results have been considered in putting together this action plan.

## Organizing for Business Development

*GOAL: Establish a Joint Downtown Partnership Organization to Lead the Downtown Marketing and Economic Development Effort*

The Downtown Partnership should be organized to serve as an umbrella organization and pull together constituents from both the private and public sectors for coordinated marketing,

branding, economic development and business recruitment programs. The Downtown Partnership should build on RiverCulture’s excellent work and expand their mission into economic development, marketing and business development. The Downtown Partnership should also consider merging with the Montague Business Association. The Town, EDIC, FCCC and local business leaders should be actively involved.

### I. Expand the Role of the Organization

Once the joint partnership is assembled, it should fill the following roles:

- Become the centralized and authoritative voice for business development, capital projects and marketing in Downtown Turners Falls.
- Position the downtown as a major asset within the North Pioneer Valley region.
- Provide the leadership necessary to implement economic development programs.
- Promote downtown businesses, locally and regionally.
- Assist businesses in understanding town regulations and policies, and utilizing economic incentives and resources.
- Represent the downtown business community at the town level and maintain strong communication between municipal officials and businesses operators.
- Create a cooperative forum for sharing ideas and resources.
- Create opportunities for mentoring and

training youth, including linking schools and business.

- Identify (and possibly acquire) key properties for targeted development or redevelopment.
- Recruit successful regional businesses.
- Support entrepreneurship, cottage industries and home-based businesses in the downtown area.
- Create and administer business development incentive programs such as a low-interest business loan pool, a Façade and Sign Improvement Program, and others (see below).
- The Downtown Partnership should be responsible for managing the future Cultural District Designation.

### II. Hire or Appoint a Downtown Manager

If possible, a full or part-time employee should be hired to lead the downtown joint partnership. This person should have a background in marketing, business development, or community organizations. There are several models for hiring full or part time downtown managers such as a partnership arrangement between the Town and downtown business community. The Franklin County Chamber of Commerce may also be interested in being involved and should be consulted. Funding should be from a variety of sources including local businesses, major employers, citizen contributions and the Town.

## EXAMPLE MISSION STATEMENT FOR A JOINT PARTNERSHIP IN DOWNTOWN TURNERS FALLS

THE JOINT PARTNERSHIP is committed to enhancing the economic climate of Downtown Turners Falls and will serve as a partner to all public and private groups working for positive change by promoting business development for the benefit of local and regional residents.

### ACTIONS

- Develop partnerships with local businesses, the Town of Montague, RiverCulture, Montague Business Association, The Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations for the retention and recruitment of businesses that will sustain a positive economic climate.
- Promote and support efforts of existing and new businesses in downtown through marketing assistance.
- Identify and offer financial incentives needed to encourage current and prospective businesses to expand/locate in Downtown Turners Falls.
- Develop assistance programs for small businesses in the areas of finance, marketing, and other related activities.
- Communicate regularly with the business community, redevelopment partners and the general public.

## GOALS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Focus on *improving the quality of the Downtown experience* for visitors and residents alike.
- Explore ways that the Town can *attract new businesses to Turners Falls* by providing incentives for entrepreneurs and start-up companies that demonstrate market potential in attracting visitors as well as serving local customers.
- Take proactive steps to *retain and attract more artistic and culturally-oriented entrepreneurs* to fill empty storefronts and build a “critical mass” that will position Turners Falls to take advantage of the economy as it improves.
- Explore options to *motivate property owners* particularly along Avenue A who have not been active or supportive of small business development.
- Recruit and *entice successful retailers from within the region* and entrepreneurs to open stores that will bring energy and interest to their block and enliven the downtown area.
- Use the internet and social media to *get the word out* about Turners Falls on all of the cultural, artistic, and recreational opportunities, shops and restaurants, civic events, and other reasons to visit downtown.

## EXAMPLES AND CASE STUDIES

There are 15 general downtown organizations around Massachusetts and 22 neighborhood Main Street organizations sponsored by the City of Boston. The Dedham Square Circle (DSC) is a good model for Downtown Turners Falls. DSC is a designated 501c3 and serves as an umbrella organization for business and property owners in Dedham (MA) Square. DSC has town-wide support and has a winter fundraiser that brings in about \$70,000 to carry our various events, marketing and promotional programs. “Friends of DCS” serves as the fundraising arm for the organization. DSC is staffed by a part-time director who works with the board of directors each year to develop a specific project list and timeline to effectively raise funds. Example projects include a website, street banners, streetscape and wayfinding design, façade and sign project, farmers market and working with prospective developers on new building projects. Additional examples of small downtown organizations in the region include Building a Better Brattleboro, Bellows Falls Downtown Development Alliance, Development North Adams and some of the smaller business improvement districts in Massachusetts such as Hyannis, Westfield, and Amherst (See BID recommendation below).



## Business Retention and Development

Business retention and development strategies focus on current and projected unmet demand that would be likely to locate in Downtown Turners Falls based on the market assessment as well as travelers in the Pioneer Valley along Route 2, Route 5 and Interstate 91. The Town should encourage business development (including retail, food and drink, entertainment, office, light manufacturing, and civic organizations) that would complement and bolster the existing business mix and enhance the character of Downtown Turners Falls.

### GOAL: Undertake a Business Retention Program

Downtown Turners Falls should be a “place of necessity” for local residents. For example, shops and services that are utilized on a regular basis such as groceries, a pharmacy, clothing, restaurants, banks, the post office, and personal services should be strongly supported. The Downtown Partnership should undertake a local business retention, support and enhancement program that services local needs. This program should aggressively support pedestrian access and safety improvements to the grocery store, pharmacy, post office and banks, and all other necessary services that are within walking distance of downtown neighborhoods.

### GOAL: Work with Existing Business Operators and Property Owners to Consistently Maintain Curb Appeal

According to several stakeholders and residents in the community engagement process, there are a number of storefronts that are not consistently maintained or are in disrepair. It is critical for business operators and property owners to properly maintain storefronts to make a good impression on local customers, visitors, and perspective new business tenants.

Maintaining curb appeal may include washing store windows, sweeping trash, removing poor quality or garish window signs, painting facades, and replacing or installing new high quality awnings. The following additional actions are recommended:

- **Prepare a Brochure** – Identify methods of improving storefront “curb appeal” and window displays; distribute to businesses; sponsor workshops and webinars by store merchandising consultants; inform shop owners of blogs, websites, LinkedIn and Facebook pages, YouTube channels, and other on-line tutorials and educational materials on the subject.
- **Discourage Negative Congregations** - Store owners should be aware of possible behavior issues of certain individuals or groups that may congregate in front of certain shops and create an uncomfortable street environment for some customers.
- **Develop a Merchandising Program for Shop Owners** - The Town and new Downtown Partnership should create a technical assistance program for local merchants on merchandising, window display, promotion, and marketing.
- **Temporary Window Displays** – Vacant storefronts should be kept clean, attractive and interesting to pedestrians. Temporary

displays can be very effective such as a walking gallery featuring artwork from local children, professional artists, merchandise from other downtown stores, or community events and project displays. Vacant storefront windows can also be decorated with temporary paints and decoration to celebrate a seasonal or specific holidays.

### GOAL: Undertake a Targeted Business Recruitment Program

The market assessment (summarized in Part 1) identified specific gaps in the sales within a 1, 5, and 10-mile radius of Avenue A at 4th Street in Downtown Turners Falls. Based on this assessment, there appears to be an opportunity for certain types of businesses including the following:

#### Best Market Potential

- Gas/Convenience Store (44711) - Good potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Clothing Stores (4481) - Good potential across all 3 trade areas particularly in women’s and family clothing.
- General Merchandise Stores (452) - Very good potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Food Service and Drinking Places (722)
- Full service restaurants/drinking places limited potential
- Limited service and specialty restaurants have good potential across all 3 trade areas.

#### Limited Market Potential

- Furniture and Home Furnishings (442) - Limited potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Electronics and Appliance Stores (443) -

Limited potential across all 3 trade areas.

- Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores (45322) - Limited potential across all 3 trade areas.
- Sporting Goods, Hobbies, Books and Music Stores (451) - Very limited potential across all 3 trade areas.

This assessment of market potential is based on a gap of at least \$2 million within the 1-mile radius (primary trade area) as well as a growing gap within the 5-mile radius. A “Gap” indicates that the market demand and expenditure exceeds the sales recorded in the trade area which means that a new or existing business may have an opportunity to increase sales and fill the gap. In addition to these trade area market statistics for local and regional residents, there is a significant market to be captured from the travels to and through the Pioneer Valley along Route 2, Route 5 and Interstate 91. While the market assessment focused on retail and related services, professional services are fairly limited in downtown and may provide good opportunities for growth as well.

The Town and downtown business community should work together in carrying out a business recruitment strategy focusing on the following:

- Accentuate the advantages of operating a business or investing in Downtown Turners Falls to prospective businesses owners and property investors.
- Seek out entrepreneurs in the region who may be seeking new business opportunities in a small downtown setting with lower operating costs and a high quality of life.
- Target business sectors which have a strong constituency locally and regionally.

- Develop a list of appropriate regionally-based companies, contact them, and encourage personal visits.

The proposed Downtown Partnership should work closely with the Town and Franklin County Chamber of Commerce to identify successful regional businesses under these categories (as well as other desired business categories). A “Downtown Contingent” should then be established to go out and meet with these business operators and shop owners to discuss the opportunities they may have in opening another store in Downtown Turners Falls. In addition to information on the market opportunities, the contingent could discuss other incentives in Turners Falls for downtown revitalization including the Commercial Homestead Program, RiverCulture’s programs, and economic tools that may be utilized to enhance success of their business.

## Marketing and Communications Programs

Marketing and communications have become increasingly important to small to mid-sized downtowns as they compete for quality jobs, a sustainable tax base, and a vibrant civic life. Business recruitment initiatives and advertising has grown rapidly as prospects are bombarded with messages and materials. This trend has made it much more difficult for business prospects to differentiate between the products, services, and places offered by a municipality. If Turners Falls is to grow existing businesses and, at the same time, attract desirable new businesses to downtown, it must develop a

simple and compelling story that differentiates it from its competitors.

An effective downtown marketing and communications program requires a combination of cost-effective advertising, targeted and “hands-on” business recruitment, and a public relations campaign that will create a “buzz” and give downtown an opportunity to tell its story. Recommended actions are further described below.

### GOAL: Define Downtown’s Competitive Advantages and Develop Strategic Marketing Materials Accordingly

The key to an effective marketing strategy for Downtown Turners Falls is to identify and described the Competitive Advantages of opening a business to perspective investors. Some of the clear advantages identified in the market analysis and existing conditions assessment are the following:

- A strong foundation and network of artists and cultural organizations to support growth in small arts, crafts, and technical start-ups;
- A relatively young community with lower costs than nearby downtowns providing attractive advantages to young entrepreneurs;
- An expansive regional network of higher education, historic and natural resources, cultural institutions and organizations to support small business and attract visitors;
- Institutional resources in downtown such as Town offices, Montague Senior Center, Carnegie Public Library, Post Office, the Great Falls Discovery Center, RiverCulture, and schools;
- Very attractive buildings, streets, civic spaces



- and recreational amenities;
- The re-opening of the newly refurbished Montague-Gill Bridge will vastly improve access to Turners Falls and business exposure;
- There are a number of vacant commercial spaces at ground level in highly visible locations; and
- Commercial rental rates appear to be very competitive.

The marketing program for Downtown Turners Falls should build off these competitive advantages and focus on the following objectives:

- Local residents are the targeted primary market;
- Change local and regional perceptions of downtown; and
- Promote highly visible storefront openings in strategic locations along Avenue A. (It is particularly important that these spaces are occupied by high quality retail or restaurant spaces that improve the impression that visitors have of downtown and support other similar businesses).

***GOAL: Create a Marketing Portfolio***

- After competitive advantages of Turners Falls are clearly defined, the new Downtown Partnership, Town, and FCCC should work together in preparing a Marketing Portfolio including the following elements:
- **Economic Resource Guide** - Specific to Downtown Turners Falls, this may include: a description of the market analysis; socioeconomic profile; existing businesses

**GENERAL MARKETING PARAMETERS FOR TURNERS FALLS**

- Accentuate the positive advantages of operating a business or investing in redevelopment sites in Downtown Turners Falls to prospective businesses and property owners.
- Wherever possible, quantify these advantages, especially in terms of accessibility to visitors via Route 2 and Interstate 91, built-in resident and employee market, quality of the labor force, property availability and costs, town-supported incentive programs, and other local advantages.
- Respond swiftly and effectively to companies and developers showing interest.
- Seek out business and higher education leaders in the Pioneer Valley who may seek new research incubator opportunities and branch locations.
- Target business and industry sectors which have a strong constituency locally and regionally.
- Mobilize a small task force of regionally successful businesses who can suggest similar types of business prospects.
- Develop a list of appropriate businesses regionally, contact them, and conduct a personal visit, and encourage them to take a trip to Downtown Turners Falls.
- Create an economic development timeline for Downtown Turners Falls that contrasts cost and quality of living advantages of downtown compared to other downtowns in the region.

and institutions; recreational, cultural, natural and historic attributes; and local business development and property investment programs and incentives.

- **Social Media Venues** - A Downtown Turners Falls web site, Facebook page, blogs, YouTube channel, and other social media access and outlet points for local residents, businesses, visitors, and prospective investors (see below).
- **SPACE Inventory** - A list of available commercial properties in the downtown area (Space Available for Commercial Enterprise)

is an important element of the Marketing Portfolio. It provides prospective business tenants with an opportunity to identify several possible locations within the downtown and match specific spaces to their own particular needs and objectives. The SPACE Inventory should be coordinated with local realtors and property owners and updated on a regular basis.

- **Distribute Marketing Materials** - These marketing materials should be distributed at local stores and points of interest such as the Discovery Center, Library, Town Hall.

**MARKETABLE ATTRIBUTES IN DOWNTOWN TURNERS FALLS**

Turners Falls has been attractive to art and cultural advocates for many years. The village’s industrial character, architectural integrity and its setting along one of the most scenic stretches of the Connecticut River have combined to create a visual quality that is appealing to photographers, sculptors, painters, craftsman, naturalists, writers and others who have in been drawn to Turners Falls from larger cities.

- **HISTORY** - Turners Falls is the largest of the five villages that comprise the Town of Montague. This historic downtown area is located on the scenic Connecticut River and Power Canal and one of the best preserved planned industrial villages in New England.
- **A BUILT IN MARKET** - Downtown Turners Falls is the center of the community and contains a majority of the Town’s 8,600 residents. It is one of the largest employment and government centers in Franklin County.
- **NATURAL AND MAN-MADE BEAUTY** - The Gill-Montague Bridge creates a dramatic gateway into Turners Falls and offers both natural and historic views of the downtown, the river, and the historic mill district along the power canal.
- **A TRADITIONAL VILLAGE CENTER** - Avenue A is a classic “Main Street” lined with street trees and small businesses in historic brick buildings with attractive architecture, all complimented by parks and civic gathering areas.
- **SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL AND CIVIC AMENITIES** - Within the village center area the historic Shea Theater, Carnegie Library, Great Falls Discovery Center, Unity Park, Peskeomskut Park, and Town Hall. Other cultural facilities including artist studios, restaurants, and the bike path are easily accessed from Avenue A.
- **CONVENIENT ACCESS** - Downtown Turners Falls is located along Route 2, less than three miles from Interstate 91, 90 miles from Boston, 25 miles from Northampton, 18 miles from Amherst, and 5 miles from Greenfield.
- **CANALSIDE BIKE PATH** – This multi-purpose trail parallels the historic Power Canal and was named the “Best Urban Bike Path in New England” in 2010 by Yankee Magazine.
- **PRESERVATION** - There has been an active downtown revitalization effort in Turners Falls since the early 1980 through successful use of state and historic tax credits, National Register of Historic Places designation, local renovation incentive programs, and securing state grants for rehabilitation and infrastructure improvements.
- **THE RIVERCULTURE PROJECT** – An award winning organization created in 2005 and supported by the Town has developed a series of cultural events designed to attract visitors and build the capacity of local artists and creative businesses in Turners Falls. Turners Falls has a full program of recreational, cultural and entertainment events throughout the year under “RiverCulture” for people of all ages and interests.
- **HIGHER EDUCATION** – In addition to hosting the highly acclaimed Hallmark Institute of Photography, Turners Falls is a short drive from Greenfield Community College, Conway School of Design, University of Massachusetts, Amherst College, Smith College, Mount Holyoke College, Keene State College, Holyoke Community College, Western New England College, Westfield State University, and Williams College
- **RESEARCH** – The Connecticut River and Power Canal are home to major research facilities including the Northeast Anadromous Fish Research Center and Northeast Generation Services where scientist and engineers are researching the most effective ways to restore anadromous fish (salmon and shad) to the Connecticut River, including constructing new fish ladders.
- **SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT** – Some key public investments include Ave A streetscape improvements, Great Falls Discovery Center, the Canalside Rail Trail, reconstruction of the Gill-Montague Bridge over the Connecticut River (underway), and Unity Park improvements. Some key private investment projects included the renovation of the Colle Opera House, Shea Theater, Crocker bank, and Cutlery Buildings.
- **REGIONAL PROMOTION OF ATTRIBUTES** - Turners Falls has joined North Adams, Shelburne Falls, and Williamstown in being designated a “New Creative Trail,” which makes them part of the Northern Tier Economic Development with a large concentration of artists, galleries, and creative businesses.
- **REGIONAL RECOGNITION AND ATTENTION** - A recent Boston Globe travel piece described Turners Falls as “historic, but not traditional; (where) fossils and a funky art scene share the spotlight in the tiny village of Turners Falls.”





The RiverCulture program has created a Downtown Walking Tour Brochure for Turners Falls (above). The walking tour information is also available on Riverculture's website along with other information about the village, local events and a list of local businesses (at right). These promotional materials are a strong foundation for future efforts.



They should also be distributed regionally at visitor centers along Route 2 and I-91, hotels, and other regional attractions such as Yankee Candle, Historic Deerfield, and other venues.

**GOAL: Create a Downtown Turners Falls Social Media Program**

Websites and other social media venues are the most cost effective way for small downtown organizations to promote business and development opportunities, civic events, and customer interest.

The Town and downtown business community should work together to create new social media venues that focus on assets, attractions, activities, competitive advantages and investment opportunities in Downtown Turners Falls.

**I. Create a Downtown Turners Falls Website**

A dedicated website for Downtown Turners Falls should provide the following elements:

- Summaries and links to relevant plans, policies, regulations, and incentives pertaining to Downtown Turners Falls.
- A current business listing and directory map including links to business homepages.
- A current list of downtown, town-wide and regional events.
- A listing of recreational, cultural and civic activities, facilities and organizations (and links).
- Socioeconomic profile and market assessment.
- SPACE Inventory including property owner and realtor contacts.

A downtown website should also be coordinated with the Marketing Portfolio above and emphasize the following Downtown Turners Falls attributes:

- Local and regional trade area market gaps and opportunities;
- Highlight existing assets (a “real” and historic New England Village with civic services and attributes, high quality restaurants and services);
- An excellent place for small business and entrepreneurship;
- An artistic and cultural community that embraces diversity and healthy business mix; and
- Relative affordability compared to many other downtowns in the region.

**II. Other Recommended Social Media Venues**

Coordinated with the new downtown website, it is recommended that a Downtown Turners Falls Facebook page, YouTube Channel, Twitter, and blogs be created to generate information and interest in downtown.

**III. Link Social Media Venues**

The downtown website and other social media venues should be linked to local businesses and organizations such as the Town of Montague, Montague Business Association, RiverCulture, Great Falls Discovery Center, FRCOG, Franklin County Chamber of Commerce (FCCC), and others.

**EXAMPLES AND CASE STUDIES - WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA PROGRAMS:**

**MASSACHUSETTS**

Massachusetts Downtown Initiative  
[www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi.html](http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi.html)

Beverly Main Streets - [www.beverlymainstreets.org](http://www.beverlymainstreets.org)  
Salem Main Streets - [www.salemmainstreets.org](http://www.salemmainstreets.org)

Downtown New Bedford Inc. - [www.downtownnb.org](http://www.downtownnb.org)

Pittsfield Downtown, Inc. - [www.downtownpittsfield.com](http://www.downtownpittsfield.com), [www.facebook.com/DowntownPittsfield](https://www.facebook.com/DowntownPittsfield)

Franklin Downtown Partnership - [www.franklindowntownpartnership.org](http://www.franklindowntownpartnership.org)

Kendall Square Association - [www.kendallsq.org](http://www.kendallsq.org)

Dedham Square Circle – [www.dedhamsquarecircle.com](http://www.dedhamsquarecircle.com)

Gardner Square Two - [www.gardnersquaretwo.com](http://www.gardnersquaretwo.com)

Natick Center Associates - [www.natickcenter.org](http://www.natickcenter.org)

Topsfield Main Street Foundation - [www.topsfieldmainstreet.org](http://www.topsfieldmainstreet.org)

Main Street Area Merchants Association (SSAMA) - [www.shrewsburystreet.org](http://www.shrewsburystreet.org)

Develop North Adams, Inc. - [www.developnorthadams.com/home.aspx](http://www.developnorthadams.com/home.aspx)

Ware Business & Civic Association - [www.revitalize-ware.wetpaint.com](http://www.revitalize-ware.wetpaint.com)

Framingham Downtown Renaissance – [www.downtownframingham.com](http://www.downtownframingham.com)

Friends of Norwood - [www.norwoodcenter.blogspot.com](http://www.norwoodcenter.blogspot.com)

Upham's Corner Main Street, Boston, MA - [www.uphamscorner.org](http://www.uphamscorner.org)

**VERMONT and NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Ossipee NH Main Street - [www.Ossipeemainstreet.org](http://www.Ossipeemainstreet.org)

Dover NH Main Street - [www.dovermainstreet.org](http://www.dovermainstreet.org)

Goffstown Main Street Program - [www.goffstownmainstreet.org](http://www.goffstownmainstreet.org)

Dover NH Main Street - [www.dovermainstreet.org](http://www.dovermainstreet.org)

Milford Do-It - [www.milfordmainstreet.org](http://www.milfordmainstreet.org)

Rochester NH Main Street - [www.rochestermainstreet.org](http://www.rochestermainstreet.org)

Barre VT Partnership - [www.thebarrepartnership.com](http://www.thebarrepartnership.com)

Bellows Falls VT Downtown Development Alliance - [www.bellowsfalls.com](http://www.bellowsfalls.com)

Better Bennington VT Corp. - [www.betterbennington.com](http://www.betterbennington.com)

Building a Better Brattleboro - [www.brattleborovt.com](http://www.brattleborovt.com)

Burlington VT Downtown Partnership - [www.churchstreetmarketplace.com](http://www.churchstreetmarketplace.com)

Middlebury VT Business Association - [www.bettermiddleburypartnership.org](http://www.bettermiddleburypartnership.org)

Montpelier VT Downtown Community Association - [www.montpelieralive.org](http://www.montpelieralive.org)

Downtown VT Rutland Partnership - [www.rutlanddowntown.com](http://www.rutlanddowntown.com)

Springfield VT on the Move - [www.springfieldonthemove.net](http://www.springfieldonthemove.net)

St. Albans for the Future - [www.stalbansvt.com](http://www.stalbansvt.com)

St. Johnsbury Works! - [www.stjchamber.com](http://www.stjchamber.com)

Revitalizing Waterbury VT - [www.revitalizingwaterbury.org](http://www.revitalizingwaterbury.org)

Downtown Winooski Inc. - [www.downtownwinooski.org](http://www.downtownwinooski.org)



**GOAL: Develop a Downtown Brand Including a Logo and Slogan**

A logo and slogan will establish an instantly recognizable symbol and brand for Downtown Turners Falls. It should be high quality and professional assistance should be considered. Once selected, the logo and slogan should be used on all marketing materials such as posters, leaflets, and the downtown website. It should also be used on all banners as well as gateway, welcome and directional signs in the downtown area.

**I. Adapt RiverCulture Branding to Downtown Turners Falls**

Currently, RiverCulture has an excellent logo and uses the slogan “Powertown”. These could be effectively adapted for Downtown Turners Falls and a new joint partnership organization such as “Powering Your Imagination” – Art, Culture, Recreation, and Civic Life.

**II. Apply Branding to Unnamed Downtown Attributes**

Branding strategies also apply to local attributes. For example, the open field adjacent to the Great Falls Discovery Center should be identified and referred to as “Discovery Park”. Likewise, the open space along Barton Cove should be identified and referred to as “Barton Cove Park”. These two examples couple two positive attributes (i.e. Barton Cove and Park) and can be advertised on the website and used to attract additional visitors to Turners Falls.



Above: Turners Falls Riverculture Logo. Could be adapted into a Powertown logo.

Below and Right: The town of Buena Vista, Virginia created a marketing brand around the “three grouches” who consistently pooh-poohed all ideas that came up during town meetings. The result is a coordinated marketing campaign that highlights what is special about Buena Vista in an edgy and funny way.



Above: Example Branding Logo and Slogan - West Concord Village, Concord, Massachusetts



Above: Example Branding Logos for Culpeper, Virginia and Englewood, Florida

Below: Example Logo picking up on historic context and local iconography, Clinton, Virginia



**GOAL: Create a Consistent Multimedia Joint Advertising Program**

Joint advertising should be geared toward promoting Downtown Turners Falls as a district rather than individual businesses using the following tools:

- Cooperative print advertisements and inserts at strategic times during the year.
- Cooperative radio advertisements.
- Cable television show such as “This Week in Turners Falls” providing the community with information about upcoming events, projects, interviews with existing businesses, and new businesses.

A new downtown website and Facebook page can also be a very effective joint advertising tool at minimal cost to individual businesses.

**GOAL: Cross Promote Turners Falls with Other Regional Points of Interest and Marketing Initiatives**

Turners Falls is part of a series of recognized and marketable geographies such as the Pioneer Valley and the Mohawk Trail (Route 2 corridor). Several regional points of interest are close enough to downtown that may also draw visitors to downtown such as the following:

- Connecticut River Greenway State Park (Northampton)
- Barton Cove Boat Launch and Campground (Gill)
- Northfield Mountain Recreation Center
- Downtown Greenfield
- Yankee Candle (South Deerfield)

- Historic Deerfield Village
- Kringle Candle (Bernardston)
- Downtown Amherst and the University Of Massachusetts
- Downtown Northampton and Smith College
- Mass MOCA (N. Adams)
- Shelburne Falls and the Bridge of Flowers
- Downtown Brattleboro
- Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge (Sunderland)

Montague has joined North Adams, Shelburne Falls, and Williamstown on the “New Creative Trail” of the Northern Tier Economic Development Initiative, being one of four Route 2 communities with a large concentration of artists, galleries, and creative businesses. These and other regional marketing initiatives should be sought by the new Downtown Partnership in Turners Falls.

**GOAL: Partners with Colleges and Universities in the Region for Economic Development**

Higher education institutions in the region are a positive influence on Turners Falls and other communities. There is significant opportunity and benefits to downtown in creating links with the many higher education institutions throughout the Connecticut River Valley. The table below contains a list of these institutions and basic characteristics.

Partnerships should be formed between the Town of Montague, the new Turners Falls Downtown Partnership and higher educational institutions in the region. The following action steps were recommended as part of the strategic economic development report for Turners Falls



conducted by the University of Massachusetts Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning :

- Work with business leaders and local higher educational institutions to provide technical and business assistance through evening courses or lectures.
- Disseminate information about apprenticeship and internship programs to individuals and businesses with little or no staff
- Convert downtown commercial space into a satellite campus or meeting space, particularly for the Hallmark Institute or Greenfield Community College.
- Work with the University of Massachusetts to develop a rotating exhibition at a site to be determined in Turners Falls.

In addition, Downtown Turners Falls should be actively marketed to regional colleges

and universities as an excellent incubator for professional staff that are considering starting a new business venture.

Expand Community Events and Activities in Downtown

The Town should work together with the new Downtown Partnership, RiverCulture, FRCOG, FCCC, MBA, local institutions, and business owners to assess ongoing and potential new events and activities. Existing and new community events should be geared to enhance local and regional residents’ image of Downtown Turners Falls, attract more visitors and customers, and demonstrate the viability of the center to prospective businesses. Currently, several formal and informal event activities

occur in Downtown Turners Falls. Some ideas to consider for expanded existing and new events that have worked well in downtowns similar in character to Turners Falls include the following:

GOAL: Expand the Farmers Market

In addition to its regular weekday market, the farmers market should consider expanding with the primary market event being held on Saturday or Sunday, and featuring local and regional produce, prepared foods, arts and crafts, and live music. There is significant potential to increase vendor revenues and exposure of Turners Falls by capturing weekend travelers along Route 2 and I-91 heading towards northern New England.

The current venue at “Discovery Park” (in front of the former Cumberland Farms) should be relocated to the grounds near the parking lot to provide a larger, flatter surface for

Below: Food truck set up at a widened part of the sidewalk.



customers as well as easier access for vendors and customers from the parking lot. Seasonal and colorful structural tents should be installed to draw customers and improve functionality for vendors.

GOAL: Create a Food Vendor Court as a Business Incubator

Coupled with the Farmers Market should be the “Taste of Turners” Vendors Court featuring food carts from existing downtown restaurants and other food vendors considering a permanent location in Turners Falls. Local chefs could provide samples off their menu and directions to their restaurants. This is a great opportunity to introduce existing and new restaurants to local customers and visitors.

Actions:

- Identify location(s) for vendors court;
- Price food carts that could be rented to proprietors;
- Coordinate with existing restaurants and give them the first opportunities;
- Recruit vendors including potential future restaurateurs; and
- Advertise on line.

GOAL: Create a Flea Market in Downtown Turners Falls

Also coupled with the Farmers Market should be a weekly flea market featuring a broad variety of goods, artwork, antiques, and other collectibles. Flea markets generally draw significant crowds and would create excellent exposure to Turners Falls. Downtown’s easy access to Route 2



Anon’s Thai Food Cart, Brattleboro Farmers Market. Photo Courtesy of the Brattleboro Farmers Market. The Brattleboro Farmers Market is held in downtown on Wednesday to primarily serve downtown workers and residents. An expanded version is held in West Brattleboro on Route 9 on Saturdays to capture weekend travelers and regional customers. On the weekend, the market is expanded to include several local and regional farmers, artists, food carts, and live music. <http://www.brattleborofarmersmarket.com/>

and Interstate 91 would provide an excellent opportunity. Some vendors may also consider downtown as a permanent location.

GOAL: Support and Expand Existing Downtown Events

For example, popular local events that could potentially be expanded include the Franklin County Pumpkin Fest, Soap Box Derby, Upper Valley Music Festival, and Suzee’s 3rd Street Laundry Annual Fashion Show, outdoor movies

and music at Peskeomskut Park (sponsored by the Shea Theatre), Crab Apple Festival, Turners Falls Block Party and Fashion Show, Arts + Bloom, Arts + Leaves, and Arts + Icicles, Christmas in July, and the Great Falls Coffee House. The new Downtown Partnership should work closely with the Town, FCCC and local businesses to determine which events have the best opportunity to expand.

GOAL: Consider Establishing New Downtown

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS NEAR TURNERS FALLS				
Institution	Location	District from Downtown TF	Full-Time Enrollment	Type
Greenfield Community College	Greenfield, MA	5 miles	2,236	2-YR Public
Hallmark Institute of Photography	Turners Falls, MA	1 mile	164	2-YR For-Profit
Conway School of Design	Conway, MA	12 miles	19	4-YR Private NP
University of Massachusetts	Amherst, MA	16 miles	21,515	4-YR Public
Amherst College	Amherst, MA	16 miles	1,817	4-YR Private
Smith College	Northampton, MA	20 miles	3,021	4-YR Private
Mount Holyoke College	South Hadley, MA	24 miles	2,232	4-YR Private
Keene State College	Keene, NH	27 miles	4,898	4-YR Public
Holyoke Community College	Holyoke, MA	29 miles	3,973	2-YR Public
Western New England College	Springfield, MA	34 miles	2,859	4-YR Private
Williams College	Williamstown, MA	34 miles	2,108	4-YR Private
Westfield State University	Westfield, MA	45 miles	5,500	4-YR Public





Two excellent local events that could be expanded and/or combined with other occurrences to draw larger crowds into town. Above: Suzie's 3rd Street Laundry Fashion Show. Below: The Franklin County Pumpkin Festival competes with Keene, NH for the greatest number of jack-o-lanterns lit in one place.



## Events

The new Downtown Partnership should work closely with the Town, FCCC and local businesses to assess the potential for new downtown events and activities to enhance local and regional residents' image of Turners Falls, attract more visitors and customers, and demonstrate the viability of the village center to prospective businesses. Some ideas to consider either as individual events or in combination are as follows:

### CLASSIC CAR SHOW

Car shows are very popular and a great way to bring residents and visitors to Downtown Turners Falls. Encourage local car clubs to participate and even organize the event. Avenue A provides an outstanding venue to display classic cars with the historic architecture. The angled parking coupled with the width of the street and sidewalks could accommodate a significant number of cars and large crowds providing enormous exposure for downtown businesses. This could even be a regular monthly event or a seasonal event coupled with a holiday such as Father's Day. This event should target travelers along Route 2 and I-91.

### MUSIC AND MOVIES IN THE PARK

In addition to ongoing concerts and movies at Peskeomskut Park, expand concerts at "Discovery Park" or "Barton Cove Park" on Thursday or Friday evenings to encourage families to come and workers to stay in downtown. Sponsorships should be sought from local restaurants and movies should begin early enough for children to attend.



The annual Father's Day Classic Car Show on Main Street in Hyannis, MA sells spaces for 350 cars and draws crowds of 50,000.



### CLOTHESLINE ART EXHIBITS

Create an artists' exhibit with booths, demonstrations, and activities for children and adults.

### SIDEWALK SALES

Hold sidewalk sales in traditionally slow retailing periods. These sales can also be linked to other events or have a particular theme to attract more customers.

### EARTH DAY FESTIVAL

Celebrate this event with a downtown clean-up, invited speakers, exhibits, music and food, tree plantings, and other environmentally oriented activities.

### ANNUAL RECONCILIATION EVENT

Create an event featuring the reconciliation between local residents and native Americans. This event could also interpret the days in the life of original Indian tribes that inhabited the area as well as the early settlers in Turners Falls with

Below: Kite Festival, Newport, RI



entertainment, historical tours and speakers, period dress, and exhibits.

### "ROLLING ON THE RIVER" MUSIC FESTIVAL

Downtown Turners Falls provides a great venue for music festivals with its close proximity to several colleges, large cities, and access to Route 2 and Interstate 91.

### TURKEY TROT ROAD RACE

Create a community road race and other activities over the Thanksgiving weekend to celebrate the holiday.

### "VILLAGE OF LIGHTS" FESTIVAL

Establish a downtown holiday lighting program and encourage local businesses and residents to participate. Raise funds and in-kind services from local businesses and utility companies. Expand the celebration of the holiday season with hay rides, craft fairs, ice sculpting, window displays, live music, open houses, and a tree lighting ceremony.

Below: Balloon Festival, Quechee, VT



Above: Taste of Amherst draws large crowds to the Amherst Common for music and samples from local restaurants.



Above: Spirit of Springfield, MA Pancake Breakfast. Below: The annual Strolling of the Heifers Parade in Brattleboro draws large crowds.







Gateway Monument, Batavia, NY



Welcome Sign, Keene, NH

Gateway Monument, Cedar Park



Turners Falls Livability Plan | Final Report

# Improve Gateway Treatments and Wayfinding Signage

Attractive entrances or “gateways” into Turners Falls are critical to making a good impression on residents, visitors, and potential customers. Gateway treatments also function as traffic-calming devices, providing a message to travelers to slow down as they approach the village center. Attractive planters and coordinated directional and welcome signs should be installed to enhance aesthetic value at key entrances to downtown. Gateway improvements, as well as a wayfinding system, should highlight Turners Falls as a genuine and authentic village. Potential locations, treatments, and examples are described and illustrated in the following section.

### GOAL: Install Gateway Treatment at Route 2 Entrance

The primary gateway into Turners Falls is from Route 2 at the intersection of Main Street on the north side of the Montague-Gill Connecticut River Bridge. This is the best opportunity to discover Turners Falls and first impression for travelers heading west along Route 2. Existing gateway treatments at this intersection are minimal and may not be clearly visible travelers along Route 2. It is critical that gateway and wayfinding treatments at this intersection are visible, high quality and attractive. More prominent and visible treatments are recommended and illustrated.

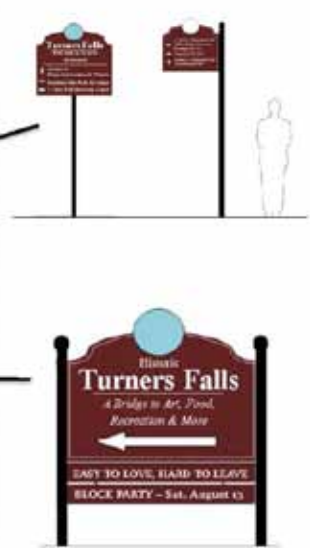
It is recommended to work with MassHighway to make the following gateway enhancements at the Route 2 intersection:

- Add banners to the new ornamental lights on the bridge.
- Add new wayfinding signage leading into the intersection from both the east and west indicating “Historic Turners Falls” – Turn at the intersection.
- Replace metal railing on both side of bridge abutment with a new monument wall and sign “Welcome to Turners Falls”
- Install a new monument sign and message board in the traffic island on the southeast corner of the intersection between Route 2 and Riverview Drive.
- Maintain the “Historic Turners Falls” ground sign at the northeast corner of the intersection at the Mobil Station.
- Thin trees on along the Connecticut River in the areas of the bridge to provide intermittent views of the village and island.
- Install an archway on the south end of the bridge near Town Hall to welcome people to downtown Turners Falls.

### GOAL: Upgrade Wayfinding and Directional Signage System

While there are some directional signs in the Downtown Study Area, it is not as visible and intuitive as it should be to effectively indicate to motorists where points of interest and public parking are available in Turners Falls. New directional signage should be considered that is coordinated with the new downtown logo and slogan, and uniform in design with gateway treatments, informational kiosks, and interpretive boards. It should be strategically located and visible at entry points to the Downtown Study Area and lead visitors to public

## Route 2 at the Intersection – Existing Treatments



## Route 2 at the Intersection – Future Treatments



parking lots as well as other points of interest. The wayfinding system should be implemented in concert with traffic-calming and crosswalk improvements at key intersections along Avenue A, 3rd Street, 7th Street, and other key cross streets. Suggested locations for wayfinding system components include the following:

### Gateway treatment - monument welcome sign:

- On Turners Falls Road at edge of Connecticut River
- South of intersection of Avenue A and 7th Street (at War Memorial)

### Pole mounted directional signage (see Amherst example below):

- Along Avenue A between Ct. River Bridge and 2nd Street
- Along Avenue A between 4th and 5th Street (both sides)
- Along Avenue A between 6th and 7th Street (both sides)
- On 3rd Street at intersection with Ave A (both sides)
- On 5th Street at intersection with Ave A (both sides)
- On Canal Street at Turners Falls Road Bridge

**Interpretive signage** at all public parks, along the bike path, significant historic buildings, Great Falls Discovery Center, Town Hall, and other points of interest.

**Install street banners** along Avenue A between the Bridge and 9th Street.





Top: A coordinated wayfinding system in Englewood, Florida. Above, left to right: Pole-mounted wayfinding banner in Amherst, Massachusetts. Ground-mounted wayfinding sign in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts. Business directory kiosk, Saratoga Springs, New York. Business directory kiosk, Bangor, Maine. Bottom: Informational kiosk and plaza, downtown Falmouth, Massachusetts.



### GOAL: Install Downtown Information Kiosks

Strategically located informational kiosks should be placed in the Downtown Study Area. The kiosks can be both stand-alone structures and wall-mounted units and should contain a business directory map, points of public interest, and information on upcoming events and activities in Turners Falls. The kiosk should also contain marketing materials explaining and illustrating Turners Falls history, architecture, and culture. The new slogan and logo should be incorporated into the kiosk design. Potential locations may include Town Hall, the Great Falls Discovery Center, all public parks and public parking lots, along the bike path, the Carnegie Library, and mid-block along Avenue A at strategic locations.

### GOAL: Create a Downtown Murals Program

Attractively designed murals can help create a positive symbol for downtown and serve as a reminder to residents and customers of significant cultural characteristics, historical events, and fun facts about Turners Falls. One example would be a “Did You Know” timeline (see example below from Lyons, NY) that highlights significant historical events and community activities in downtown using attractive photos and graphics. Murals should be placed in visible locations that are currently unattractive (such as blank building walls, abutments, alleys, or parking areas). Local artists and students could be recruited to participate in a mural program.

### GOAL: Install New Interpretive Sign Boards

Upgrade existing interpretive boards and coordinate these small ground- or wall-mounted signs with the overall wayfinding system. They should depict and describe important natural, historic and cultural attributes in Turners Falls. Some potential locations for interpretative signs include Great Falls Discovery Center, Town Hall, all public parks, along the bike path, significant historic buildings, and other points of interest. A future location might also include the north end of the Island and at the base of the Connecticut River Bridge on both sides of the river honoring the Native American history and heritage.

### Expand Economic Development Policies, Incentive and Regulatory Programs

Economic development incentive programs should facilitate business retention and enhancement as well as rehabilitation and redevelopment of targeted projects and sites within Downtown Study Area. Economic development initiatives in Turners Falls must focus on the support, enhancement, and preservation of independent **locally owned businesses**. Additionally, initiatives must recognize and provide protection and/or opportunity for start-up and studio-type small businesses, including artists’ space and, potentially, live/work space.

Various economic development programs have been used in small villages and



Top: Example mural highlighting the Village of Lyon's heritage along the Erie Canal in Upstate New York. Middle and Bottom: Example murals and street art, Clematis Street, West Palm Beach, Florida



downtowns in Massachusetts and around New England with good results. In Turners Falls, the following strategies should be considered:

**GOAL: Create an Avenue A Storefront Condominium Creation Incentive Program**

During the public involvement process, several downtown business operators and other stakeholders indicated that several property owners along Avenue A are not properly maintaining ground floor commercial spaces. While several buildings are highly occupied on the upper floors with residential apartments, a number of storefronts remain vacant. Some stakeholders suggest that certain property owners are only interested in the residential uses in the building many of which are subsidized and provide a sufficient revenue stream. While the Town has amended zoning in the CBD to require commercial uses in ground floor spaces, there may not be enough of an incentive to motivate certain building owners.

To address this critical issue, it was recommended that an incentive program be created for commercial utilization or sale of ground floor spaces by property owners on Avenue A. This can be accomplished by encouraging the creation of ground floor condominiums that can be sold separately from the upper floors of the building to prospective commercial buyers. It is recommended that the new Downtown Partnership work closely with the Town, local financial institutions, realtors, lawyers and property owners to identify targeted buildings and best methods of incentivizing the condo-izing of ground floor space and connecting these spaces with commercial ventures.

*Examples of Facade and Sign Improvement Programs*

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**GOAL: Re-Establish a Façade & Sign Improvement Program**

Downtown has a significant number of historic buildings which defines the heritage of Turners Falls. However, some have been inappropriately altered over the years and other newer buildings have incompatible site design, materials, scale, or architectural features. To enhance visual appeal, economic opportunity, and walkability of the Downtown Study Area, a number of existing buildings have been recommended for façade treatments, upgraded signage and lighting, awnings and other window treatments, storefront displays, and use of public spaces in front of the building. (See Part 1 and 2)

The Town of Montague had a façade and sign improvement program that was funded by the former Massachusetts Downtown Partnership Program about 15 years ago. At the time this matching grant program was very effective in renovating several storefronts along Avenue A and is a well-documented revitalization tool in several other downtowns around the state. These programs are used to incentivize large scale exterior restorations as well as smaller improvements such as minor façade repairs, painting, new signs, and awning.

The Town should re-establish the façade and sign improvement program which may be funded through matching grants or low-interest loan programs. There are many models for these programs, with a range of publicly and privately funded resources. Often relatively small amounts of program investment generate significant private investment. Façade and sign programs can be administered by the

town directly or through consultant assistance, but funding should be directly linked to design guidelines and a mandatory design review process to ensure that the historic integrity of the buildings and the district are maintained. The Town should apply for funding under the next round of Community Development Program Grant (CDBG) to fund the Façade & Sign Improvement Program. The Town may also use program income from prior CDBG funds (such as those awarded for housing rehabilitation) to supplement the program. If CDBG funds are not available, the Town should work with local financial institutions to secure low-interest loans for façade and sign improvements in Downtown Turners Falls.

**GOAL: Evaluate the Feasibility of Establishing a District Improvement Financing Program (M.G.L Chapter 40Q)**

District Improvement Financing is commonly and successfully used around the U.S. for revitalizing downtowns and urban renewal districts by making an upfront public investment in infrastructure, utilities, and civic facilities needed to generate private investment and development desired by the community. In Massachusetts, all municipalities are eligible for the DIF program and procedures are established in 402 CMR 3.01 through 3.18 and administered by the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC). As applicable to Downtown Turners Falls, a DIF program would enable the Town of Montague to finance public works and infrastructure projects identified in a development program for a designated area like Turners Falls by “capturing” the increase

in property tax revenues derived from new housing, commercial, or industrial activity in the area and applying such revenues towards the Town’s development program. This “tax increment” can be pledged entirely or partially as a revenue stream within a designated district to repay bonded debt that is providing key public infrastructure investments needed to support the targeted private investment and redevelopment.

The Town should evaluate the feasibility of creating a DIF district for Turners Falls. To start with, the Town could analyze assessors property records, trends and market potential for targeted redevelopment sites to determine if there is enough growth potential that would be incentivized through infrastructure improvements to support a DIF program.

**GOAL: Evaluate the Feasibility of Establishing a Business Improvement District (M.G.L. Chapter 40Q)**

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are designated contiguous geographic areas in which at least three-fourths of the area is zoned or used for commercial, industrial, retail, or mixed uses (such as a downtown or village center). Currently, there are seven BIDs in Massachusetts including Boston (Downtown Crossing), Taunton, Springfield, Hyannis, Westfield, Northampton, and Amherst.

The general advantages of a BID are as follows:

- Provides individual downtown property owners with a collective voice on issues that affect the physical and business environment;
- Can have a significant impact on public policy



- development and may enhance relationships with public officials;
- Can address common concerns such as cleanliness, safety, and image;
- Improves downtown position in the marketplace through unified programs (e.g., cooperative advertising program);
- Provides the ability to promote the district as a whole through unified management (similar to malls);
- Provides a sustainable and consistent funding source from the private sector to supplement or replace municipal and grant sources;
- Ensures consistency in services and programs and the ability to pursue projects over several years; and
- Often increases property values, tax base, occupancy rate, and customer visits.

Small BIDs (such as would be applicable to Downtown Turners Falls) generally provide services not provided by government or enhanced public services such as:

- Maintenance – Collecting trash, removing litter and graffiti, cleaning sidewalks, shoveling snow, cutting grass, trimming trees, and planting flowers and trees in public spaces.
- Marketing and Events Planning – Producing festivals and events, coordinating sales promotions, producing maps and newsletters, launching image enhancement and advertising campaigns, erecting directional signage, etc.
- Business Recruitment and Retention – Conducting market research, producing building data reports, providing financial incentives for new and expanding businesses, marketing to potential investors.

- Public Space Enhancements – Managing sidewalk uses, installing street furniture, coordinating vehicle loading and unloading.
- Parking and Transportation Management – Managing and maintaining the public parking system, maintaining transit shelters, operating ride-sharing programs.
- Design Assistance – Providing information on zoning and urban design guidelines or managing façade improvement programs.
- Planning – Working with the community in developing a vision and strategic plans.

While there are no real financial incentives offered by the state for establishing BIDs, they can still be very effective in enhancing public services and business development for small to mid-sized downtowns such as Turners Falls.

**GOAL: Evaluate the Feasibility of Establishing a Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District (M.G.L. Chapter 40R)**

Massachusetts state law enables towns to implement special Smart Growth Zoning Districts, commonly called “Chapter 40R” zones. This mechanism effectively promotes “as of right” development with certain densities and mixed uses geared to transit-oriented town and village center scales. The specific rules, standards, and procedures for the Smart Growth Zoning Overlay Program are established in 760 CMR 59.00. Any municipality may propose a “smart growth zoning district” as an overlay to its existing zoning in “eligible locations” which include the following:

- Areas near transit stations



Above: Sidewalk cafe on Main Street in Hyannis, MA.  
Below: Sidewalk cafe on Boylston Street in Boston - a raised platform incorporates an accessible ramp into the cafe. This approach could be useful in adapting many stepped entrances along Avenue A to ADA code.



Below: Sidewalk cafe, Winter Park, FL



## CHAPTER 40R EXAMPLES AND CASE STUDIES

Example Certified Chapter 40R Overlay Districts in Traditional Downtowns and Historic Industrial Areas: Amesbury Gateway Village 40R District; Brockton Downtown 40R District; Grafton Fisherville Mill 40R District; Haverhill Downtown 40R District; Kingston 1021 Kingston’s Place 40R District; Lynnfield Planned Village Development 40R District (MeadowWalk); Northampton Village 40R District at Hospital Hill; North Andover Osgood 40R District and Plymouth Cordage Park 40R District

Below: Sidewalk cafe, Sarasota, FL



- Areas of concentrated development (i.e., town/city centers, existing commercial/rural village districts)
- Areas “that by virtue of their infrastructure, transportation access, existing underutilized facilities, and/or location make highly suitable locations for residential or mixed-use... districts”

Chapter 40R zoning encourages a significant proportion of housing and affordable units within the housing mix and require “by right” a minimum density of housing units per acre:

- Single-family use: 8 units/acre (1 unit/5,445 s.f.)
- Two- and three-family use: 12 units/acre (1 unit/3,630 s.f.)
- Multi-family use: 20 units/acre (1 unit/2,178 s.f.)
- Developments of 12 units or more must provide at least 20% of units as affordable units
- Overlay district zoning must prove at least 20% of all units developed in the district as a whole will be affordable
- At least 25% of units in developments exclusively serving the elderly, disabled, or those needing assisted living must be affordable

The state provides financial incentives to defray costs associated with such development. Montague would need to decide whether the housing amounts, mix, density standards, and other requirements are consistent with its goals for Downtown Turners Falls, and the extent to which the prospect of state funding is an incentive. It should be noted that the

Town currently has the capacity to accomplish any of the zoning requirements associated with Chapter 40R. The primary differences would be an expedited development review process, the opportunity to incorporate detailed design standards, and access to the state funding incentives tied to the provision of new affordable housing units. Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District reviews by DHCD may also be coordinated with other financial mechanism such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and District Improvement Financing (DIF).

**GOAL: Promote and Facilitate Additional Outdoor Dining for Downtown Food and Drink Establishments through Enabling Regulations.**

Sidewalk activity such as seating and dining can add significant vitality to Downtown Turners Falls and should be further promoted and expanded along Avenue A. Design guidelines and standards should be prepared to ensure high quality outdoor furnishings, sufficient seating and pedestrian areas, and maintenance.

**GOAL: Adopt Design Guidelines for Downtown Turners Falls**

Design guidelines establish reasonable expectations regarding the character and quality of site and exterior building design in meeting clear public goals for Turners Falls. Design guidelines are often established for site planning and landscape design, urban design (composition of buildings and spaces), architectural design, or signage design. They



should encourage (or possibly require) building and site design characteristics desired for new construction and the adaptive reuse, alteration, expansion, or modification of existing buildings in the Downtown Study Area.

Design guidelines are typically adopted by the Planning Board to support the review process for development plans in sensitive areas such as historic districts. Certain components could be formally adopted as design standards and criteria for special permit procedures, or for incentive programs such as façade and sign improvement funding, sidewalk dining, or Smart Growth (Chapter 40R) districts. A recommended framework for Design Guidelines and Standards in Turners Falls is described below:

**PURPOSE**

The general purpose of design guidelines and standards is to preserve and enhance Downtown Turners Falls cultural, economic, and historical resources by providing for a detailed review of changes in land use, the appearance of structures, and the appearance of sites, which may affect these resources. The review process is intended to:

- Enhance the social and economic viability of the district by preserving property values and promoting the attractiveness of Turners Falls as a place to live, work, play, shop, and learn;
- Encourage the conservation of buildings and groups of buildings that have aesthetic or historic significance;
- Prevent alterations that are incompatible with the existing environment or that are of inferior quality or appearance; and
- Encourage flexibility and variety in compatible and complementary future development.

**REVIEW PROCESS**

The Montague Planning Board is the designated Design Review Board and is given the authority to review applications and make recommendations concerning the conformance of a proposed development to the given set of design guidelines and standards. Review-able actions should include significant alteration, expansion, and new development and signage for all development within the Downtown District.

**DESIGN REVIEW PRINCIPLES**

Design review principles are intended to guide an applicant in the development of site and building design and the Design Review Board in its review of proposed actions. These principles and standards should not be inflexible requirements or intended to discourage creativity, invention, or innovation. The Design Review Board should specifically be precluded from mandating any official, aesthetic style for Turners Falls or for imposing the style of any particular historical period.

**DESIGN COMPONENTS**

The proposed Design Guidelines and Standards include the following key components, which should be considered in the course of design review of a proposed action:

- Scale— The scale of a structure or landscape alteration should be compatible with its architectural or landscape design style and character and that desired for the Downtown District. The scale of ground-level design elements such as building entryways,

windows, porches, plazas, parks, pedestrian furniture, plantings, and other street and site elements should be determined by and directed toward the use, comprehension, and enjoyment of pedestrians.

- Height – The height of proposed buildings and alterations of existing buildings should be compatible with the style and character of other existing building and structure in the Downtown District, particularly those adjacent to or nearby the proposed site.
- Proportions – The proportions and relationships of height to width between windows, doors, signs, and other architectural elements should be compatible with the architectural style and character of the building or structure and that desired for the Downtown District as demonstrated through model existing buildings.
- Shape – The shape of roofs, windows, doors, and other design elements should be compatible with the architectural style and character of a building or site and that desired for the Downtown District.
- Directional Expression – Building facades and other architectural and landscape design elements should be compatible with those desired for the Downtown District with regard to the dominant vertical or horizontal expression or direction related to use and historical or cultural character, as appropriate.
- Relation to Surrounding Structures and Public Spaces – The relation of a proposed structure to public streetscapes and open space and between it and adjoining structures should be compatible with that desired for the Downtown District.
- Architectural and Site Details – Architectural

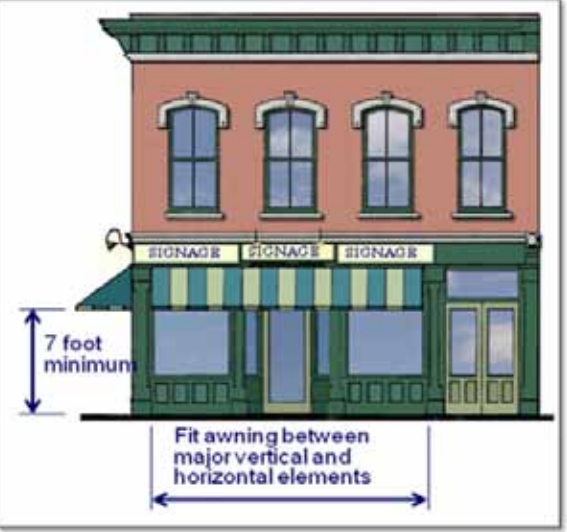
and site details including signs, lighting, pedestrian furniture, plantings, and paving, along with materials, colors, textures, and grade, should be treated so as to be compatible with the original architectural style of the existing structure to preserve and enhance the character desired for the Downtown District with new buildings.

- Streetscape and Landscape – Proposed perimeter streetscape treatments and interior landscape treatments or alterations should be compatible with the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Landscape and streetscape elements, including sidewalks, plantings, and paving patterns, should provide continuity and definition to the street, pedestrian areas, and the desired vision of the Downtown District.
- Signs – The design of signs should reflect the small village scale and character of Turners Falls. Signs should simply and clearly identify individual establishments, buildings, locations, and uses, while remaining subordinate to the architecture and larger streetscape. The choice of materials, color, size, method of illumination, and character of symbolic representation on signs should be compatible with the architectural or landscape design style of the structure or site and those of other model signs in the Downtown District.

The design guidelines and standards should be enhanced with character examples such as photos and other graphics that illustrate appropriate design under each of these components.



Above: Example historic building components diagram, part of a design guidelines document - Howard/Stein-Hudson. Right: Signage and awnings guiding diagram. Below: Signage and awnings are an important part of the streetscape, Pittsford, NH





**GOAL: Expand the Use of the Commercial Homesteading Program**

This is an innovative incentive program that is unique to Montague and has been used successfully in Turners Falls. The Commercial Homesteading Program is administered by the Town to encourage private investment and the creation of jobs by offering municipally owned properties for a nominal cost to the bidder(s) whose proposal includes the most significant economic development benefits to the town. Significance is defined in terms of the total dollars that will be invested in the rehabilitation of the structure, the number and types of business and employment opportunities that will be created as a result of the project and the compatibility of the development proposal with economic development, historic preservation and other values that the town is attempting to encourage. The town will convey the property subject to these improvements and other public purpose incentives.

This program has a record of demonstrated success in Montague. In Turners Falls, it was used to stimulate the redevelopment of two tax title properties, and resulted in close to \$1 million of private investment, the creation of two new businesses and numerous new jobs. It is currently being used as an incentive for the redevelopment/rehabilitation of the Strathmore Mill. It also has other potential applications in Turners Falls including the Former St. Anne’s Rectory and other downtown properties that may be acquired by the Town in the future for redevelopment purposes.

**GOAL: Continue to Issue Strategic Redevelopment and Land Disposition Request For Proposals for Targeted Reinvestment in Vacant or Underutilized Properties**

In some instances, the Town can promote (and control) desirable development as a participant in the development process through a Development Request for Proposals and associated land disposition. If the Town has property assets that are not needed for municipal purposes but that could contribute to desirable development solutions, it has typically offered that land through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, with conditions to guide where, what, and how development will occur. In cases where this land contributes to productively reorganized parcels, this tool can unlock many positive changes. There are several potential redevelopment parcels in Downtown Turners Falls some of which are owned by the Town of Montague. Each of these sites (whether owned by the town or not) should be evaluated for potential redevelopment to benefit both public and private needs.

**GOAL: Re-Apply for the Massachusetts Cultural Council’s Cultural District Designation**

The Massachusetts Cultural Council’s(MCC) Cultural District is a 5-year designation for a specific area of a city or town (such as downtown Turners Falls) that has a concentration of cultural facilities, activities, and assets. It is a walkable, compact area that is easily identifiable to visitors and residents and serves as a center of cultural, artistic and economic activity. The statute that created cultural districts has specific goals

including:

- Attract artists and cultural enterprises;
- Encourage business and job development;
- Establish the district as a tourist destination;
- Preserve and reuse historic buildings
- Enhance property values; and
- Foster local cultural development.

For municipalities that receive a cultural district designation, the MCC provides a framework of support for program development as well as several funding resources such as the following:

- Adams Arts Program (MCC)
- ArtistLinkfor Artist Live/Work Space (MCC)
- Cultural Facilities Fund (MCC)
- Local Cultural Council Program (MCC)
- Marketing and promotion (Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism)
- Historic designation (Mass Historic Commission)
- Community planning (Department of Housing and Community Development)
- Economic development (Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development)
- Open space and recreation (Department of Conservation and Recreation)
- Signage (Department of Transportation)

In 2012, the Town of Montague in partnership with RiverCulture applied for a Cultural District designation for Turners Falls. While the cultural district designation was not approved, the Town should reapply and review other successful applications for ideas in terms of integrating cultural activity with economic development that may be applicable to Turners Falls as well as ideas for strengthening next year’s application.

**GOAL: Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Program for Future Projects in Downtown Turners Falls**

A Tax Increment Finance Program is currently in place to finance the ongoing downtown improvement initiatives and other necessary improvements that would strengthen and expand the quality of working and living in downtown.Future TIF projects in Turners Falls should continue to include property tax concessions to attract desirable businesses not presently in downtown, assisting existing key businesses or major employers that would otherwise be forced to relocate from Montague, and leveraging significant benefits to the town from local business expansion which would not occur otherwise. These benefits may include property taxes, jobs, expansion of the downtown market, or other material advantages to the downtown area. Property tax concessions should also be focused on projects located in targeted redevelopment areas as identified in this Livability Plan. The Town together with the Economic Development Industrial Corporation and the new Downtown Partnership should evaluate the TIF program and specifically define the types of existing and new businesses as well as the strategic areas for targeted redevelopment where future TIF resources should be allocated.

**GOAL: Consider Establishing a Low-Interest Business Loan Pool**

The Town of Montague together with the new Downtown Partnership should approach local banks and financial institutions to determine the interest in establishing a low-interest loan

program for Downtown Turners Falls. This may be the best opportunity for Montague to support future economic development incentive programs in downtown Turners Falls if state funding is limited or unavailable. For example, a low-interest loan program could support the proposed Façade & Sign Improvement Program. The , is to work together with local banks, credit unions and other financial institutions to create a low-interest loan pool for business development.

There are several examples of low-interest loan pools across Massachusetts that are used for various business development programs. A low interest loan pool typically has interest rates of one point below prime and the size of loans can vary significantly. For example, a low-interest loan program in Quincy ranges from \$20,000 to \$200,000 and can be used for machinery and equipment, inventory, working capital, leasehold improvements and other start up or expansion expenses. Loaned on a term/ installment basis, the program fills the gap for businesses that do not qualify for adequate conventional financing.

**GOAL: Evaluate the Potential of Establishing a Capital Improvement Limited Partnership for Turners Falls.**

A limited partnership could be formed and shares could be sold (say, \$1,000 each) to local citizens, property owners, and businesses to carry out specific projects and programs in Downtown Turners Falls. The funds raised could possibly be used to leverage additional state and federal sources. With sufficient funding, a partnership could be used to fund small projects such as

**EXAMPLES AND CASE STUDIES**

Examples of MMC programs that were awarded in 2012 include: Commonwealth Award/Town of Barnstable; Art/Science Collaboration/The Ecotarium, Worcester; Community Access to the Arts/Great Barrington; Creative Community/Shelburne Falls; and Creative Learning/The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Amherst. The award to Barnstable is based mostly on the Town’s commitment to downtown Hyannis revitalization through arts and culture related improvements and its role as the regional transportation, jobs, service and commerce center for all of Cape Cod.

There are four well established programs including Lowell 2000, Quincy 2000, Beverly, and Adams that utilize a combination of grant and low/no-interest loans and may serve as models for Montague. The best example of the type of loan pool and organization administration may be the Quincy 2000 Collaborative which was established in 1992 as a private, non-profit economic development corporation. It works to unite Quincy’s public and private sectors in a common economic development mission bringing together business and government leaders promote Quincy’s economic vitality, attractnew business, and helping existing businesses grow through a variety of business development programs. They have a well-establishedLow Interest Loan Pool with over \$5 million funded by a coalition of 11 banks. These funds can be used by start-up or expanding businesses for façade and signage improvements, business improvements, and equipment purchases.



streetscape enhancements (i.e., information kiosk, street trees, etc.) or larger projects such as façade and sign programs, trails and parks, or acquisition and renovation of deteriorated buildings. This type of partnership has been used for several Main Street organizations around the U.S.

Consider and Seek Appropriate Public Funding Resources

The financial needs of the Downtown Livability Plan cannot be sole responsibility of the Town of Montague, property owners and business operators. While local investment is a key to success and the implementation program is structured to attract private capital and to leverage public investment to the optimum extent, other funding resources will be necessary. A combination of local, state, federal, and private funding sources should be sought to complete various projects and programs planned for Downtown Turners Falls. Some commonly used public funding resources for downtown revitalization and redevelopment in Massachusetts are listed below.

GOAL: Seek MassWorks Infrastructure Funding

The MassWorks Infrastructure Program is administered by the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, in cooperation with the Department of Transportation and Executive Office for Administration & Finance. MassWorks provides a one-stop shop for municipalities and other eligible public entities seeking public

infrastructure funding to support economic development and job creation. The Program represents an administrative consolidation of six former grant programs:

- Public Works Economic Development (PWED)
- Community Development Action Grant (CDAG)
- Growth Districts Initiative (GDI) Grant Program
- Massachusetts Opportunity Relocation and Expansion Program (MORE)
- Small Town Rural Assistance Program (STRAP)
- Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Program

MassWorks funding can be used for the public infrastructure in support of the following:

- Economic development and job creation and retention
- Housing development at density of at least 4 units to the acre (both market and affordable units)
- Transportation improvements to enhancing safety in small, rural communities

Several of the downtown programs and projects in the Implementation Matrix would qualify under the MassWorks program and the Town should apply for funding in the next round.

GOAL: Seek CDBG Small Cities Grant Funding to Leverage Private Investment

Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) is a federally funded, competitive grant program designed to help

small cities and towns meet a broad range of community development needs. Assistance is provided to qualifying cities and towns for housing, community, and economic development projects that assist low and moderate-income residents, or by revitalizing areas of slum or blight. Municipalities with a population of under 50,000 that do not receive CDBG funds directly from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are eligible for CDBG funding. Communities may also apply on behalf of a specific developer or property owner.

The Town of Montague, through the Housing Authority, has been very successful in obtaining CDBG funds for their affordable housing rehabilitation program. However, CDBG funds can also be used for housing development, micro-enterprise or other business assistance, infrastructure, community/public facilities, public social services, planning, removal of architectural barriers to allow access by persons with disabilities, and downtown or area revitalization. For example, this is a potential source of funding for the façade and sign improvement program as well as other downtown building rehabilitation programs.

In terms of competitiveness, Montague is ranked 31st highest of 314 municipalities rated for Community-Wide Need with a score of 30 in FY13. This is a high statistical indication of need. Currently, the Town is seeking a Slum and Blight Designation for the Historic Mill District which would expand access to state funding sources such as CDBG. The Town should also apply for economic development and infrastructure improvements for downtown Turners Falls as identified in the implementation matrix. The Town should also consider hiring a grant



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consultant with a proven track record for writing and administering success grants for economic development activities.

GOAL: Consider Applying for the Urban Renewal Program under M.G.L. Chapter 121B

The Urban Renewal Program allows municipalities - through their urban renewal agencies - to revitalize substandard, decadent or blighted open areas for residential, commercial, industrial, business, governmental, recreational, educational, hospital, or other purposes. Urban renewal projects help municipalities redevelop deteriorated areas by providing the economic environment needed to attract and support private investment.

In accordance with an urban renewal plan, which must be approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), an urban renewal agency may undertake urban renewal activities including:

- Planning
- Establishment of design and rehabilitation standards
- Acquisition of land, including taking of land by eminent domain
- Assembly of land into developable parcels and disposition for private redevelopment
- Relocation of businesses and residential occupants

- Demolition or rehabilitation of structures
- Improvements to infrastructure
- Issuance of bonds and borrowing of money
- Receipt of grants and loans

These actions facilitate the public and private redevelopment needed to revitalize communities and stimulate sound growth.

As a first step, the Town of Montague should consult DHCD's Division of Community Services which helps communities understand the program, establish urban renewal agencies, and provides technical assistance in the development and implementation of urban renewal plans.

GOAL: Tap Other Funding Sources for Targeted Economic Development Projects and Programs

Potential public funding resources for various types of projects and programs in Downtown Turners Falls are identified and explained below. Commonly used as well as new incentive programs that are geared for smart growth, business development, transportation and circulation, mixed-use development, downtown revitalization, and infrastructure projects are tied to the Implementation Matrix in Part 3 below.

Several funding resources can be targeted to local economic development efforts.

Examples of Communities that have participated in the Urban Renewal Program include Gardner, Fitchburg, Greenfield, Southbridge, Kendall Square (Cambridge), Lowell, Salem, Holyoke, Ashland, Worcester, Westfield and Springfield. At left from top: Riverfront Park in Fitchburg, Streetscape at Elm Street in Westfield, and Bank row in Greenfield, all renovated with Urban Renewal funds.



POTENTIAL FUNDING, FINANCING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES FOR MASS. DOWNTOWNS

Title	Description	Source
AFTF	Affordable Housing Trust Fund (DHCD)	State
APR	Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program (EOEA - DAR)	State
BF	Bridge Financing (DHCD)	State
BFI	Banks and Financial Institutions (CRA Credit Program)	Private
BID	Business Improvement District (Chapter 400)	Town-Private
BPP	Bike and Pedestrian Program (EOT)	State
CATN	Commercial Area Transit Node Program (DHCD)	State
CDF	Community Development Fund (DHCD)	State
CILP	Capital Improvement Limited Partnership	Town-Private
CP	Conservation Partnership (EOEA)	State
CPA	Community Preservation Act Funds (Local With State Match)	State
CPR	Coastal Pollutant Remediation Grant Program (EOEA - CZM)	State
DWS	Drinking Water Supply Protection Grant Program (EOEA)	State
DIF	District Improvement Financing (Chapter 40Q - DIF-EACC)	State
DRFP	Developer Request for Proposal	Town-Private
EDA	Economic Development Administration (Federal – Small Business Development)	Federal
EDF	Economic Development Fund/CDBG (formerly Ready Resource Fund, DHCD)	State
EOA	Economic Opportunity Areas (EOA) and ETA (DHCD)	State
FSIP	Façade and Sign Improvement Program (Town of Norwood/CDBG Funding)	Town-Private
GCP	Green Communities Program (EOEA)	State
GTDP	Greenways and Trails Demonstration Grant Program (State)	State
HDSP	Housing Development Support Program (DHCD)	State
HOME	HOME Program (DHCD)	State
HSF	Housing Stabilization Fund (DHCD)	State
LPP	Land Protection Programs (EOEA - DCR, DFG)	State
LHT	Local Housing Trusts (Local)	Town
LIHTC	Low Income Housing Tax Credit (DHCD)	State

POTENTIAL FUNDING, FINANCING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES FOR MASS. DOWNTOWNS

Title	Description	Source
LOLP	Low Interest Loan Program (Bank partnership or CDBG program interest)	Town-Private
LIP	Local Initiative Program (DHCD)	Town-State
LLP	Local Limited Partnerships (Public-Private)	Town-Private
LWCF	Land & Water Conservation Fund (Parks - EOEA - DCS)	State
MD	MassDevelopment Programs (Financing, Low Interest Loan, Tech. Assistance)	State
MDI	Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (DHCD)	State
MHC	Massachusetts Historic Commission Programs	State
MHPF	Massachusetts Housing Partnership Funds (MHP)	State
MOBD	Mass. Office of Business Development Programs (EOHED)	State
MRF	Massachusetts Revolving Fund (EOEA - DEP)	State
MTF	Massachusetts Transportation Funds (Chapter 90)	Town-State
OSPP	Off-Street Parking Program (EOAF)	State
PDF	Priority Development Fund (DHCD)	State
PF	Private Foundations	Private
PPTA	Pier to Pier Technical Assistance Program (DHCD)	State
RET	Renewable Energy Trust Sustainable Energy Programs	State
RTP	Recreational Trails Program (DCR)	State
SBA	Small Business Assistance Programs (SBA)	Federal
SGOD	Smart Growth Overlay District (Chapter 40R)	State
SGTA	Smart Growth Technical Assistance Program (EOEA)	State
SHP	Self-Help Program (EOEA - DCS)	State
TF	Town Funding	Town
TIF	Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	Town-State
UBA	Urban Brownfields Assessment Program (EOEA)	State
USH	Urban Self-Help Program (EOEA - DCS)	State
URV	Urban River Visions Implementation Program (EOEA)	State



## PART III: ACTION PLAN

### Overall Description

Goals:

- Enhanced connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Improved Appearance and Functionality of Avenue A and Third St Streetscape
- Enhanced Recreational Opportunities for Residents & Visitors of All Ages & Backgrounds
- Expand Community Events and Activities in Downtown Turners Falls
- Improved Services and Quality of Life for All Downtown Residents
- Get Organized for Business Development
- Retain existing businesses and support business development
- Refine Marketing and Communications Programs
- Improve Gateway Treatments and Wayfinding Signage
- Expand Economic Development Policies, Incentive and Regulatory Programs



Goal: Enhanced Connectivity for Pedestrians and Bicyclists

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
C-1	Install Downtown Gateway Improvements	Provide safe, welcoming gateways to downtown that balance the needs of vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.	Reconfigure sidewalks and crosswalks to provide safe access at 5th Street Gateway.	Town	medium	MassWorks, CDBG
			Design and install welcome sign and landscaping across from 5th Street bridge.	MBA, Town	medium	Business Community
			Improve crosswalks and sidewalk connections at 3rd Street Gateway and pedestrian footpaths on the hill.	Town	short	CDBG
			Design and install landscape improvements at frontage of Food City Plaza and current library at South end of Avenue A.	private, Planning Board or Zoning Board	long	Private Investment
C-2	Improve connectivity to Strathmore Mill and other Historic-Industrial Island properties	With limited parking on the island, maintaining and improving pedestrian access across the canal is a key part of any redevelopment strategy.	Work with Strathmore team to review previous studies and identify additional opportunities for improving pedestrian bridges.	Town, State, Private Strathmore Team, abutters	short	
C-3	Improve handicapped accessibility for downtown buildings.	While most of Avenue A, the Discovery Center and other public buildings are handicapped accessible, many private businesses are not. Access improvements must be balanced with the need to respect historic architecture.	Identify appropriate models for handicapped access to buildings and incorporate into design guidelines.	Buidling Inspector, ADA Coordinator	ongoing	Private Investment, CDBG
C-4	Enhance connections between CanalSide bike trail and downtown	The bike trail has become a popular amenity, but there are limited access points and/or conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists.	Design and install connecting links at key locations including 6th Street	Planning Department	long term	DOT, CDBG



## Goal: Improved Appearance and Functionality of Avenue A and Third St Streetscape

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
A-1	Enhance pedestrian safety and handicapped access.	Making the streetscape safe and accessible to people of all abilities will encourage pedestrian use by everyone and open up new business opportunities.	Design and install curb extensions to shorten crosswalks at key locations.	Housing + Redevelopment Authority	medium	CDBG
			Work with business owners to plan, design and install outdoor cafés and sidewalk gathering spaces.	Planning Department	medium	
A-2	Reduce curb cuts on Ave. A	Removal of unnecessary curb cuts will reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians and allow more space for sidewalk cafes and other uses.	Work with DPW, planning and zoning to consolidate access drives and remove unnecessary curb cuts.	Planning Board, Zoning Board	ongoing	
A-3	Renovate alley entrances to improve pedestrian experience	Alleys entrances provide important access to rear service and parking areas, but interrupt the sidewalk at the middle of the block.	Design and install new entrances to alleys.	Planning Department	long	Town MassWorks, CDBG
A-4	Improve maintenance	Maintaining planters, trees, sidewalks, benches, etc. becomes more of an issue as concrete and bricks weather and shift, trees grow, and utilities wear out. Even as elements of the streetscape are replaced, a combination of public and private resources will be required to keep up with maintenance needs.	Continue private maintenance of planters	Streetscape Committee	ongoing	
			Explore general improvements of planters and irrigation system.	Department of Public Works	medium	
			Work with licensed arborist to inventory, evaluate and prune trees to complement Tree Warden's efforts	Department of Public Works, Planning Department	medium	DCR urban Forestry program, UMASS

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
A-5	Update Lighting	Inadequate and/or unattractive lighting conditions were cited by many participants as an important issue in the perception of safety and general appearance of the the streetscape.	Evaluate and plan for updating or replacing light fixtures, preferably energy efficient.	Department of Public Works, Planning Department	short	Town, CDBG, Green
			Establish/update guidelines for building lighting.		medium	
			Plan for extending lighting down alleys and side streets	Department of Public Works	long	
A-6	Improve public and private signage	Consistent, well-designed signage is critical to allowing businesses to communicate while enhancing the overall aesthetic character of the downtown.	Revise sign regulations and provide guidance to business and building owners and enforce the regulations	Planning Board, Building Inspector	short	
			Design and Install Shea Theater Marquee	Shea Theater Board	medium	
A-7	Infill empty lots with new buildings that fit the historic context	Several key locations along Avenue A and adjacent streets provide opportunities for infill buildings that could shore up the eroded edges of the streetscape.	Pursue infill at former Cumberland Farms site	Montague EDIC	ongoing	Private Investment
A-8	Adopt Design Guidelines for Downtown Turners Falls	To protect the integrity of the historic development patterns and architectural characteristics. This could be coupled with the façade improvement program and could include such things as traditional neon signs.	Evaluate previous town design guidelines and identify gaps and areas that need to be updated; consider form-based code approach to zoning.	Planning Board, Business Community	medium	DHCD, Mass Downtown Initiative
A-9	Renovate and reuse historic structures		Continue support for Redevelopment of Strathmore Mill, St. Anne's Church, and other priority redevelopment sites in a manner that contributes to the culture and economy	Town	ongoing	public-private Partnerships, Historic Tax Credits, TIF



Goal: Enhanced Recreational Opportunities for Residents & Visitors of All Ages & Backgrounds

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
R-1	Increase recreational facilities for youth		Construct skate park at Unity Park	Skatepark Committee, Parks and Recreation	medium	PARC, CDBG, private foundation, Town
			Explore teen recreation center	Board of Selectmen		
			Support uses providing youth access to swimming, gym, etc.	Private Investment	long	
R-2	Enhance water-based recreation		Construct formal cartop boat launch near Unity Park/ Expand service of Quinnetuck between Northfieldand Turners Falls	Board of Selectmen	medium	FERC
R-3	Explore potential for a rental bike program	Making it easy for visitors to get out on the bike trail is an easy way to extend the typical tourist visit while providing access to the unique landscape along the Connecticut River and canal.	Work with discovery center and other venues to establish location for bike rental concession.			
			Identify potential vendors.			
			Enhance programming for parks and bike trail.			



Goal: Expand Community Events and Activities in Downtown Turners Falls

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
A-1	Support and expand the farmers market.	Consider expanding with the primary market event being held on Saturday or Sunday, and featuring local and regional produce, prepared foods, arts and crafts, and live music. Use the main field of "Discovery Park"	Improve farmers market space at 38 Avenue A.	EDIC	short	
			Recruit and support farmers and work to identify best times for markets to take place	Agricultural Commission	ongoing	
			Explore permanent market canopies and facilities that can be shared with flea markets and other events.	Planner	short	CDBG, Private Found-ation, Town
A-2	Expand outdoor museums and cultural venues		Explore reuse of coal silo and surrounding site.	Planning Department	medium	
			Plan for Great Falls Native Cultural Park	Selectmen, Tribes	ongoing	National Park Service, Private Found-ations
			Support programming and facility improvements at Shea Theater	Shea Theater Board, Town	ongoing	Shea Revenue, Cultural Facilities Fund
			Plan and install interpretive signs and murals celebrating local historic and culture consistent with the TF Public Art Strategy.	RiverCulture	Short	MCC, Private Contri-butions
A-3	Explore improvements to sitting and gathering spaces along Avenue A		Design and install sitting-height walls around selected existing planters.	Planning Department, DPW	medium	Town

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
			Evaluate locations where planters could be removed to create gathering spaces.	Planning Depatment, DPW	long	Town
A-4	Explore possibility for a Food Vendor Court as a Business Incubator	Couple with expanded farmers market and provide opportunity for fledging restaurateurs to test the market at low cost and create a following.	Identify location(s) for vendors court; price food carts that could be rented to proprietors; coordinate with existing restaurants and give them the first opportunities; recruit vendors; advertise on line.	Downtown Partneship	long	
A-5	Support and expand Existing Downtown Events	For example, the Franklin County Pumpkin Fest, Soap Box Derby, Upper Valley Music Festival, and Suzee's Fashion Show, movies and music at Peskeomskut Park, Great Falls Coffee House, Fish Ladder	Explore expanded hours for downtown businesses.	RiverCulture, Event Coordin-ators, local businesses	ongoing	MCC
A-6	Consider Establishing New Downtown Events	Examples include a night out series, a Flea Market, Classic Car Show on Avenue A, etc.		RiverCulture, Downtown Patnership	ongoing	MCC



## Goal: Improved Services and Quality of Life for All Downtown Residents

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
S-1	Improve security for residents and businesses.		Maintain downtown patrol officer	Police Department	ongoing	Town
S-2	Enhance removal of trash and unwanted items					
S-3	Relocate and expand community facilities		Relocate library and senior center to new building attached to Town Hall.	Selectmen	medium	CDBG, Town
			Repurpose existing library as a local history museum.		long	
			Pursue planning for dog park.	Parks and Recreation	medium	
			Pursue planning for community gardens.	Planning Department	ongoing	
			Pursue opportunities to develop small off street public parking areas.	Planning Department	medium	
S-4	Improve Public Transit Service		Work with FRTA to improve adequacy service for residents, particularly for efficient connection to Greenfield	Selectmen	short	State

## Goal: Get Organized for Business Development

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
B-1	Establish a Joint Downtown Partnership Organization to Lead the Downtown Marketing, Cultural and Economic Development Effort	The partnership should serve as an umbrella organization and pull together constituents from both the private and public sectors for coordinated marketing, branding, economic development and business recruitments programs .	Formalize partnership between RiverCulture, Montague Business Association, Town, FCCC and local business leaders. Partnership should be responsible for managing future Cultural District designation	MBA, Planning Department, RiverCulture	medium	
B-2	Hire or Appoint a Downtown Manager	If possible, a full or part-time employee should be hired to lead the downtown revitalization program. This person should have a background in marketing, business development, or community organizations.	Consider expanding role of RiverCulture director, or a position of similar capacity, to include management of downtown revitalization	Planning Department, RiverCulture, MBA	long	



Goal: Retain existing businesses and support business development

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
BD -1	Undertake a Targeted Business Recruitment Program	Focus the identified gaps in business sectors sales in primary trade area (local residents) gaps, entrepreneurs, and successful established businesses in the region that could benefit from another store in Turners Falls.	Appoint a TF contingency from the Downtown Partnership to contact and meet with identified prospects; Target regionally known and successful businesses that would benefit by having another store in downtown.	Downtown Partnership	medium	
BD -2	Develop a Merchandising Program for Downtown Shop Owners	Create a technical assistance program for local merchants on merchandising, window display, promotion, and marketing.	See below	Downtown Partnership	medium	Franklin County CDC
BD -3	Work with Business Operators to Consistently Maintain Curb Appeal	Provide guidance to business operators to pay more attention to maintaining their storefronts. This may include washing store windows, sweeping trash, removing poor quality or garish window signs, painting facades, and replacing or installing new high quality awnings.	Prepare a brochure on methods of improving storefront "curb appeal" and window displays; distribute to businesses; sponsor workshops and webinars by store merchandising consultants; inform shop owners of blogs, websites, LinkedIn and Facebook pages, YouTube channels, and other on-line tutorials and educational materials on the subject.	Downtown Partnership	medium	Franklin County CDC
BD -4	Undertake a Local Business Retention, Support and Enhancement Program that Services Local Needs (Move to first in this section?)	Downtown Turners Falls should be a "place of necessity" for local residents. For example, shops and services that are utilized on a regular basis such as groceries, a pharmacy, clothing, restaurants, banks, the post office, and personal services should be strongly supported.	Aggressively support pedestrian access and safety improvements to the grocery store, pharmacy, post office and banks, and all other necessary services that are within walking distance of downtown neighborhoods.	Downtown Partnership	ongoing	



## Goal: Refine Marketing and Communications Programs

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
M-1	Define Downtown Attributes and Develop Strategic Marketing Materials Accordingly	Identify and described the competitive advantages of opening a business to perspective investors. For example, cultural, civic and recreational amenities; relatively low rental costs; highly visible commercial spaces; a supportive climate for business development; reasonably size market within walking distance; large volume of travelers and potential visitors along Route 2 and I-91	Prepare written materials, brochures and other hard materials; distribute at local stores and points of interest such as the Discovery Center, Library, Town Hall; distribute regionally at visitor centers along Route 2 and I-91, hotels, and other regional attractions such as Yankee Candle and others.	Downtown Partnership	short	
M-2	Create a Marketing Portfolio	The Marketing Portfolio should be detailed and specific to Downtown Turners Falls including: the market analysis; existing businesses and institutions; recreational, cultural, natural and historic attributes; and local business development and property investment programs and incentives; SPACE Inventory; social media venues; and other pertinent information.	See above	Downtown Partnership, Planning Department	short	
M-3	Expand the Downtown Social Media Program	Create new Downtown Turners Falls website, Facebook page, YouTube Channel, Twitter, and blogs to generate information and interest in downtown.	Expand RiverCulture's Social Media to include an on-line version of the Marketing Portfolio identified above.	Downtown Partnership	medium	

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
M-4	Develop a Downtown Brand Including a Logo and Slogan	Currently, RiverCulture has an excellent logo. The general slogan "Powertown" could also be used as a starting point for a more formal downtown slogan . Consider a brand for the "historic-mill district"	Expand branding built by RiverCulture to reflect the new business partnership; Adapted the logo and slogan for Downtown Turners Falls with direction from the new joint partnership organization such as "Downtown Turners Falls: Powering Your Imagination Through Art, Culture, Recreation, and Civic Life". Once created, branding should be used on all marketing materials both hard and on-line; Branding should also be integrated into the wayfinding signage program.	Downtown Partnership	medium	
M-5	Expand Multimedia Joint Advertising Program	Joint advertising geared toward promoting Downtown Turners Falls as a district rather than individual businesses using the cooperative print and radio advertisement and weekly cable television program.	Expand RC's and MBA's Joint Advertising effort	Downtown Partnership	short	



Goal: Improve Gateway Treatments and Wayfinding Signage

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
W-1	Install Gateway Treatment at Route 2 Entrance	New monument signs, banners and bridge abutment treatments at the intersection; directional signage leading to the intersection; and possibly a small billboard at a strategic location further east.		Planning Department	medium	
W-2	Upgrade Wayfinding and Directional Signage System	Expand and enhance existing wayfinding signage system both within and leading to downtown Turners Falls		Department fo Public Works	medium	
W-3	Improve Downtown Information Kiosks	Strategically located informational kiosks should be placed in the downtown area. The kiosks can be both stand-alone structures and wall-mounted units and should contain a business directory map, points of public interest, and information on upcoming events and activities in Downtown Turners Falls.	Evaluate and supplement kiosks installed previously by RiverCulture.	RiverCulture	long	
W-4	Create a Downtown Murals Program	Attractively designed murals can help create a positive symbol for downtown and serve as a reminder to residents and customers of significant cultural characteristics, historical events, and fun facts about Turners Falls.		RiverCulture	short	
W-5	Install New Interpretive Sign Boards	Currently, there are a few interpretive boards in Turners Falls that that depict and describe local natural, historic and cultural attributes such as in Discovery Park. These can be interesting marketing tools that not only educate visitors but improve their experience and impression of downtown .	Upgrade existing interpretive boards and coordinate these small ground- or wall-mounted signs with the overall wayfinding system.	RiverCulture	ongoing	
W-6	Expand overnight accommodations	Currently, there are no accommodations in downtown and the nearest hotels on a number of miles away in Greenfield. This limits the visitors experience and full access to Turners Falls.	Plan for tourist accommodations as part of projects at Strathmore; explore potential at other town-owned sites.	Planning Department	medium	



## Goal: Expand Economic Development Policies, Incentive and Regulatory Programs

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
ED-1	Create an incentive for ground floor utilization or sale for downtown property owners	Many landlords derive there income off upper floor apartment rentals while round floor retail remain vacant.	Work with local financial institutions, realtors, lawyers and property owners to identify targeted buildings and best methods of maximizing use of ground floor space and connecting with commercial ventures.	RiverCulture, Town	short	
ED-2	Consider re-establishing a Façade & Sign Improvement Program	The Town has a façade and sign improvement program that was funded by the former Massachusetts Downtown Program about 10 or 15 years ago. At the time this matching grant program was very effective in renovating several storefronts along Avenue A and is a well documented revitalization tool in several other downtowns around the state.	Seek CDBG funds or work with local banks to enhance visual appeal, economic opportunity, and walkability of the Village Center, a number of existing buildings have been recommended for façade treatments, upgraded signage and lighting, awnings and other window treatments, storefront displays, and use of public spaces in front of the building.	Planning Department	medium	
ED-3	Consider Establishing a District Improvement Financing (M.G.L Chapter 40Q)	District Improvement Financing (DIF) is a form of tax increment financing enabled by the Massachusetts legislature in 2003 that provides for a variety of tools to promote desired development in targeted geographic areas.	Evaluate assessors records and market potential for targeted redevelopment sites to determine if there is enough growth potential that would be incentivized through infrastructure improvements to support a DIF program.	Planing Department	short	
ED-4	Consider establishing a Business Improvement Districts (M.G.L. Chapter 40O)	Small BIDs (such as would be applicable to Downtown Turners Falls) generally provide non-public services through a revenue source from participating property owners such as: maintenance; marketing and events planning; business development; public space enhancements, parking and transportation improvements; civic space improvements; security; design assistance; and promotion.	Evaluate assessors records, create a boundary map and conduct a survey of property owners to determine the level of support and potential revenues that could be generated by a BID as well as the potential uses of funding for downtown revitalization programs.	Planner, MBA	long	

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
ED-5	Evaluate the Feasibility of Establishing a Smart Growth Zoning Overlay Districts (M.G.L. Chapter 40R), coupled with Design Guidelines	This mechanism effectively promotes “as of right” development with certain densities and mixed uses geared to transit-oriented town and village center scales. The state provides financial incentives to defray costs associated with such development.	Evaluate assessors records, create a boundary map and conduct a survey of property owners to determine the level of support; Compare potential Overlay District to State funding to determine potential revenues that could be generated.	Planner	medium	
ED-6	Promote and Facilitate Additional Outdoor Dining for Downtown Food and Drink Establishments	A simple and effective way to expand business, improve the "outdoor room" and perception of downtown.		Select Board, Planning Board	short	



Goal: Expand Public/Private Development Partnerships and Financing Programs

ID	Projects & Programs	Description	Potential Actions	Task Leader	Time Frame	Resources
P-1	Expand the Use of the Commercial Homesteading Program	This is an innovative local incentive program that has been successfully used in Turners Falls and has potential for expanded applications.		Select Board	ongoing	
P-2	Continue to Issue Strategic Redevelopment and Land Disposition RFPs for Prospective Investors and Developments	Most recently used for the Strathmore Mill redevelopment project. Couple with the Commercial Homesteading Program.		Select Board	ongoing	
P-3	Seek Cultural Districts Designation from the Massachusetts Cultural Council	This designation is made under the Massachusetts Cultural Council's Creative Communities program. The Town submitted an application in 2012 but was not selected. It is an important recognition and can be used as an effective marketing tool to generate interest from artists and visitors.	Revise and resubmit the 2012 application once a downtown partnership is formed.	Planning Department	short	MCC
P-4	Seek CDBG Small Cities Grant Funding to Leverage Private Investment	The FCHRA has been very successful in obtaining CBDG funds for their affordable housing rehabilitation program. However, CDBG funds can also be used for community planning, economic development, infrastructure improvements, and rehabilitation of public parks. For example, this is a potential source of funding for the façade and sign improvement program as well as other downtown building rehabilitation programs. Target 1 street/block at a time to maximize visual impact.	Seek Slum and Blight Designation for Targeted Areas (Historic Mill District); Hire a grant consultant that can write and administer grants on behalf of the Town for economic development activities.	Planner, FCHRA	ongoing	CDBG

P-5	Seek MassWorks Infrastructure Funding	MassWorks provides public infrastructure funding to support economic development and job creation. This may include access and infrastructure improvements to the Strathmore Mill.		Selectboard	short	MassWorks
P-6	Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Program for Future Projects in Downtown Turners Falls	TIF projects in Downtown Turners Falls should include property tax concessions to attract desirable businesses not presently in town, assisting existing key businesses or major employers that would otherwise be forced to relocate from Montague, and leveraging significant benefits to the town from local business expansion which would not occur otherwise.		Town Adminstrator	medium	
P-7	Consider Establishing a Low-Interest Business Loan Pool targeted to Turners Falls	Work together with local and regional banks, credit unions and other financial institutions to create a low-interest loan pool for business development.		CDC		
P-8	Make full use of the Montague Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC) for reuse of Historic-Industrial Zoned sites and FC Housing and Redevelopment Authority		Update EDIC's Economic Development Plan	EDIC, FCHRA	short	
P-9	Consider developing and Urban Renewal District and Plan for Downtown and the Island.	The Urban Renewal Program (M.G.L. Chapter 121B) allows municipalities to revitalize substandard, decadent or blighted open areas for residential, commercial, industrial, business, governmental, recreational, educational, hospital, or other purposes. Urban renewal projects help municipalities redevelop deteriorated areas by providing the economic environment needed to attract and support private investment.	Evaluate potential benefits Urban Renewal Plan; Utilize DHCD's Division of Community Services technical assistance in evaluating the potential for urban renewal in Turners Falls.	FCHRA	short	DHCD
P-10	Diversity housing opportunities in Downtown Turners Falls	A broader diversity of housing would benefit the revitalization process. Many housing units are in need of upgrade or modernization.	Continue to support housing rehab programs; support and sustain existing affordable housing; increase the supply of market rate housing by creating incentives and working with property owners; sponsor senior housing project in downtown.	Town, FCHRA	ongoing	