

## Acknowledgements

The development of this Waterfront Access Study was guided by the numerous past community planning efforts for the Lower Village area, a wealth of publicly solicited input from key stakeholders and assistance from Town Staff.

### Past plans include:

1992 Comprehensive Plan  
1996 Main Street Vision Plan  
2005 Comprehensive Plan  
2005 Topsham Transportation Plan  
2008 Main Street Village Plan

### Key Stakeholders include:

Fore River Company (*Bowdoin Mill*) - Owner  
Pure Warm, Inc. (*Finest Hearth and Home*) - Art Bannister, Property Owner  
Topsham Sewer District  
Green Street residents  
Lower Village business owners  
Contributors to prior planning efforts / general interested parties  
Brunswick-Topsham Androscoggin Riverwalk  
Numerous members of the public at-large who also participated in the public input process.

### Town Staff include:

Cornell Knight - Town Manager  
Rich Roedner - Planning Director  
John Shattuck - Director, Economic & Community Development  
Pam LeDuc - Director, Parks & Recreation  
Rod Melanson - Natural Resources / Assistant Planner

Photographs and illustration in this Plan were provided by Wright-Pierce.

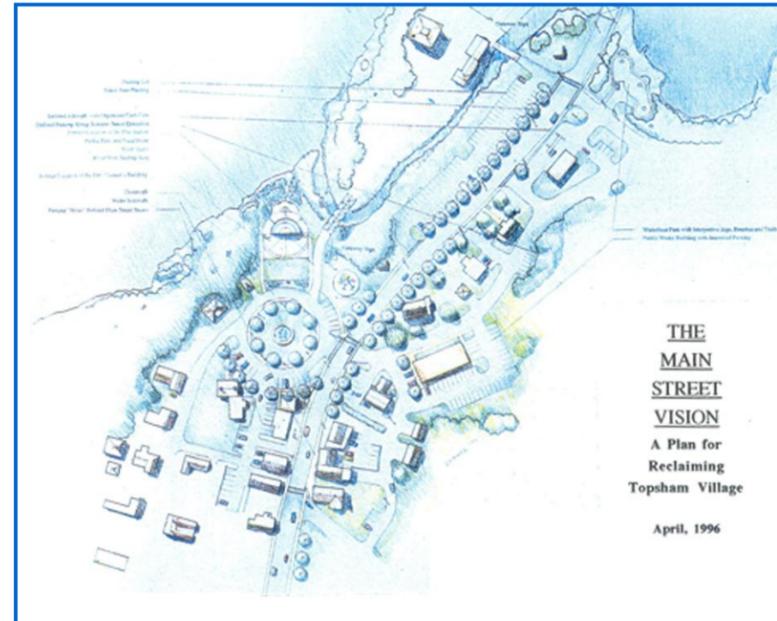
Digital mapping data, Tax Maps and 2011 Assessed Property Valuations were provided by the Town of Topsham

A boundary survey plan entitled "Plan of Boundary Survey of: Lower Green Street" was provided by Paul H. Ruopp Jr., PLS - Land Surveying & Mapping

Aerial photography courtesy of the Maine Office of GIS.

The Lower Village Waterfront Access Study was prepared by Wright-Pierce of Topsham, Maine. Jonathan Edgerton served as Principal-in-charge, Travis Pryor served as Project Manager, Amanda Bunker served as Land Use Planner and Kevin Obery served as lead engineer for the project.

The input from such a wide range of community sources was instrumental to the development of this Plan. **Many thanks to all in the community who participated in this process and made this plan possible.**



# PART I: PROJECT OVERVIEW

## INTRODUCTION

Since adoption of the 1992 Comprehensive Plan, the Town of Topsham has seen significant revitalization of the Lower Village area along Main Street. Revitalization efforts have been most notably realized through the renovation and expansion of commercial businesses in this area, along with accompanying vehicular and pedestrian infrastructure improvements (Roadway and Streetscape).

In addition to these implementation initiatives, the Town has further developed several "master plans" focused on Main Street and the Lower Village, including a new Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2005. These ongoing planning efforts have identified the community's desire to create a public gathering space in the Lower Village area, focusing on access to the Androscoggin River. Concept plans and illustrations showing site-specific park development options have been presented to, and supported by the public. These visions all show specifics of what the community generally wants in a public park space, but the site plans have not been fully grounded in the various opportunities and constraints connected to the area.

Seeking to confirm the public's desire to continue exploring opportunities to develop a public gathering space with access to the Waterfront, The Town retained Wright-Pierce to study the feasibility of such a goal. The study efforts have focused on:

- Gathering additional public input;
- Identifying land use patterns;
- Evaluating physical site composition of the area;
- Evaluating environmental resources;
- Consideration of historical waterfront development context;
- Examining land ownership; and
- Review of utility, transportation, storm water and pedestrian infrastructure. (Both within the Lower Village area itself and in connection to immediately adjacent and regional systems)

Based on this review process, the purpose of the study effort is to clearly identify the constraints and opportunities that can serve as the "ground rules" for guiding the community in any future decision making process regarding site specific design plans for development of this area of the community. There are several specific recommended goals by the public referenced in this report that the Town needs to consider carefully with respect to the opportunities and constraints that have been identified, as the purpose of this initial planning stage is not to presume a site specific waterfront access design efforts.

## COMMUNITY WATERFRONT ACCESS GOALS

Public outreach efforts focused on reaching consensus with respect to community waterfront access goals through discussions with key public stakeholders including:

- Lower Village land owners with access to the waterfront and lands adjacent to the town-owned parcel at Green Street;
- Lower Village residents along Green Street;
- Lower Village business owners;
- Local citizens with past interest and planning involvement within the Lower Village; and
- The general public at-large.

## General Consensus

While it has been widely endorsed to add a civic gathering space with waterfront access to the fabric of the Lower Village area, by the community as a whole, this study aims to identify the common interests of common user groups (*as listed above*), providing the Town with a range of perspectives from those who reside in, or have particular interest in the Lower Village. As a result of these outreach efforts, some key consensus goals regarding waterfront access in the Lower Village were identified (*See Appendix for documentation of the public process*). In general, most people identified the need for hand carry boat access to the river, while providing some public gathering space or area for a park. It was generally desired by most that a project of this nature consider:

- Hand carry boat access;
- Public space with visual access to the river (There are varying opinions as to the scope and scale of a park, from local neighborhood pocket park to a larger scale town common.);
- Improvements to bicycle and pedestrian access throughout the Lower Village;

- Improvements to vehicular traffic flow throughout the Lower Village and minimization of negative impacts to neighboring residents;
- Provision of adequate parking for park users and local businesses;
- Improved way finding signage and information center; and
- Continue redevelopment of the Lower Village in a timely manner to complete the last pieces of the prior planning goals.

### Stakeholder / Focus Group Specific Issues

While there was clear consensus on a number of issues raised by the variety of stakeholder groups, there were some key differences as well that the Town should consider. The following is a more detailed breakdown of the range of development issues raised by individual stakeholders and focus groups that may not have had unanimous consensus but were still general areas of agreement among many of the individuals attending these meetings.

#### Fore River Company - Owner

Wright-Pierce met one-on-one with the Owner/Developer of the Bowdoin Mill who also maintains ownership of the waterfront area abutting the town-owned parcel on Green Street including the Granny Hole area, the land currently leased to the Town which houses the former fire station and the neighboring residence immediately to the north along Green Street (Tax Map U-06 / Lot 24). Wright-Pierce presented the town-initiated study process and solicited input as follows:

- Believes that there is room for at least one more commercial entity within the Lower Village area on lands that they own which are currently undeveloped as such.
- Interested in following what may happen with town-initiated efforts.

#### Pure Warm, Inc. - Owner

Wright-Pierce met one-on-one with the Owner of the building housing "Finest Hearth and Home" located between the town-owned parcel on Green Street and Main Street. Wright-Pierce presented the town-initiated study process and solicited input as follows:

- Generally interested in following what may happen with town-initiated efforts.
- Recognizing inter-relationships between public space and abutting businesses will be key to the success of the waterfront access project.
- Concerned that certain types of development could be heavy vehicular traffic generators which probably wouldn't be a "good fit" for the area.

#### Topsham Sewer District

Wright-Pierce met with the Topsham Sewer District at one of their Trustee's meetings. The Topsham Sewer District maintains a Sewer Pump Station located within the town-owned parcel on Green Street. Wright-Pierce presented the town-initiated study process and solicited input as follows:

- The District is generally in support of a waterfront access project of any nature and scale so long as the plan allows for access to the pump station for routine maintenance and future upgrades as necessary.
- The District plans to install a permanent generator and would be interested in collaborating with the town to build a structure that encloses their above ground controls for the pump station.
- They are willing to relocate their pump station if the waterfront access project necessitates such a measure but would expect the cost to do so to be paid for by others.

#### Green Street Residents

Wright-Pierce and Town Staff met with the residents of Green Street at a Focus Group meeting to discuss their issues as members of an abutting neighborhood to the town-owned parcel on Green Street. Wright-Pierce presented the town-initiated study process and solicited input as follows:

- Vehicular traffic on Green Street is currently an issue and they do not want any additional redevelopment efforts to increase vehicular traffic volumes. Suggested most of the current vehicular traffic comes from Winter Street, turning right on to Main Street then up Green Street to Elm Street.
- Vehicular traffic improvements at Elm Street and Main Street intersection could be improved to alleviate traffic issues elsewhere in the Lower Village.
- Would prefer that Green Street become a dead-end street instead of maintaining two-way traffic or changing the traffic pattern to one-way.
- General concern with pedestrian and bicycle safety along Green Street for neighborhood children.
- Do not think additional parking along Green Street is needed.
- Waterfront access with hand carry boat access is desirable.

- Park development should be at a scale that fits the neighborhood and not a regional attraction.
- Park development could accommodate some additional small-scale commercial business meeting needs of neighborhood services.
- Redevelopment efforts associated with waterfront access should be a "Jewel" for the community, keeping with the historic context of the Lower Village, and deliberately thought out (20 year design horizon).
- Concerned that waterfront access be clearly defined along the shoreline so that abutting owners of shore frontage are not adversely impacted.
- Desire pedestrian connectivity improvements from Lower Village area to Brunswick, to Williams Cone School and to trails at the Highlands.
- Would like to see pedestrian bridge connection to the Bowdoin Mill "Island" over Granny Hole.
- Maintain existing mature vegetation along Green Street.
- Examine water access at other parts of Lower Village area and at nearby Town Landing Road.

### Lower Village Businesses

Wright-Pierce and Town Staff met with business owners within the Lower Village at a Focus Group meeting to discuss their issues as commercial members of the Lower Village area. Wright-Pierce presented the town-initiated study process and solicited input as follows:

- General concern for maintaining adequate parking for businesses and park users.
- Wayfinding signage would help with parking usage.
- Consider docking access along waterfront in addition to hand carry access for services such as a water taxi.
- Generally support a park as the best option for redevelopment of the town-owner parcel and abutting commercial properties if available for sale.
- Vehicular traffic entering Main Street from "Island" and businesses on western side of Main Street needs improvement.
- Explore creative options for pedestrian crossing near Frank Wood Bridge. Consider going under the bridge.
- Explore ways to highlight historic significance of the Lower Village.
- Provide a pedestrian bridge connection from the park to the Bowdoin Mill "Island".
- General timetable concerns for implementation of a waterfront access / park project. Want to see progress made in next couple of years.
- Vehicular traffic improvements at Elm Street and Main Street intersection could be improved to alleviate traffic issues elsewhere in the Lower Village.

### Contributors to Prior Planning Efforts / General Interested Parties

Wright-Pierce and Town Staff met with contributors to prior planning efforts in the Lower Village and interested parties such as the Brunswick-Topsham Androscoggin Riverwalk who have a vest interested in waterfront access within the Lower Village area, at a Focus Group meeting to discuss their issues. Wright-Pierce presented the town-initiated study process and solicited input as follows:

- Generally interested in hand carry boat access to the Androscoggin River but recognize that it may not have to be in the Lower Village.
- Would like to see formal rowing facilities (Interest from Bowdoin College etc...)
- Would like to see safe bicycle and pedestrian systems across the Lower Village and connecting to neighboring communities (from the Heights to Foreside Fields for example).
- A park should be at a neighborhood "pocket park" scale.
- Vehicular egress onto Main Street should be improved in general.
- Parking to support any further redevelopment in the Lower Village should be addressed.
- Would like to see storm water quality improved prior to entering Androscoggin River.
- Egress over Granny Hole could improve vehicular traffic flow off the "Island".
- Provide a pedestrian bridge connection from the park to the Bowdoin Mill "Island".
- Vehicular traffic improvements at Elm Street and Main Street intersection could be improved to alleviate traffic issues elsewhere in the Lower Village.
- Better enforcement of parking regulations would help with current parking issues.
- Would support additional commercial redevelopment around former fire station area if done tastefully like recent redevelopment efforts.
- Would like to see diversity of redevelopment and increased housing opportunities.
- Granny Hole area has some scenic value. Generally the best use of the area is for urban infill, alleviate development pressure and environmental impacts to other parts of the Town.
- Consider one-way traffic along Green Street from Elm Street towards Main Street.
- Improved vehicular way finding signage would be helpful.
- General timetable concerns for implementation of a waterfront access / park project. Want to see progress made in next couple of years.



Topsham Lower Village Zone

## PART II: SITE ASSESSMENT

The basis of this Waterfront Access Study is to confirm the public's desire to continue exploring opportunities to develop a public gathering space with access to the Waterfront. This report seeks to evaluate the range of opportunities and constraints that are anticipated to effect future town-lead efforts to design such facilities. The "ground rules" describe below are intended to provide a clear set of recommendations that address the community goals as reconfirmed through the public input portion of this study.

### Land Use Patterns

#### Opportunities

In general, there is a mix of development types within the Lower Village. As shown on the following Land Use Pattern illustration, development patterns are predominantly commercial, however, there are a variety of other developments including single family, mixed use residential, utility and municipal. There are currently a few vacant parcels within the Lower Village as well that provide an opportunity for additional redevelopment.

As far as existing waterfront access opportunities are concerned, there are two boat launch facilities, one above and one below the dam, located within a mile of the Lower Village area in neighboring Brunswick. These sites accommodate both hand carry and motorized put-ins for boat users. There are also four pocket park scale areas with visual waterfront access areas (two in the Lower Village, one above the dam on Summer Street on and one immediately across the Frank Wood Bridge in Brunswick. These areas are all currently maintained by private entities, requiring no maintenance by the Town. Since there are no known plans which may change the present use of these areas, the citizens of Topsham are afforded several means of waterfront access to the Androscoggin River while allowing time for the community to decide where best to locate and design a town-owned waterfront access site, and raise funds as needed.

#### Constraints

The Town currently owns land located along Summer Street within the Lower Village area with waterfront access to the north of the Frank Wood Bridge. While this provides the opportunity for visual waterfront access to the Androscoggin River, boat access is prohibited along this section of the Androscoggin River, between the bridge and the nearby NextEra dam.

The parcel that the Town owns along Green Street has been identified as most desirable for park development. This site does not have any water frontage. This parcel also contains a sewer pump station as maintained by the Topsham Sewer District (*See write-up on Infrastructure below*)

If the Town desires to provide waterfront access in the area of Green Street and Main Street, it will require the acquisition of additional lands or an easement from one or more of the abutting landowners who control waterfront access in this area. This is true not only for physical access to the shoreline by also for visual access to the waterfront in this area as considerable vegetative growth exists between the town-owned parcel and the Androscoggin River. The Town will likely need to develop preliminary design materials further regarding park and waterfront access improvements to better communicate with the private land-owners in this area and come to an agreement on the future redevelopment of this area. The scope of the preliminary design will inform the amount of land or easement acquisition needed to meet the community's waterfront access goals.



*View from Town-Owned Parcel on Summer Street*



*View from park across Frank Wood Bridge in Brunswick on NextEra land*



Topsham Land Use Patterns within Lower Village Zone: Blue = Commercial / Green = Town Owned / Red = Single Family Residential / Orange = Multi-Family Residential / Brown = Vacant / Gray = Utility



*View from Bowdoin Mill property*

*Green areas represent boat access sites nearest to Lower Village - Magenta areas represent visual access sites within or adjacent to Lower Village*



*View from Border Trust*



*View from NextEra parcel on Summer Street*



*View from Red Mill property*

## Physical Site Composition

### Opportunities

Almost all of the Lower Village has previously been developed in a manner that has supported a variety of historic waterfront uses. The site condition of these areas provides some open, relatively flat sites at the top of the river embankment. The terrain of this nature provides a land area that is relatively easy to conduct public park space improvements that meet the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility guideline. The rise in elevation from the river's edge to the top of the embankment also provides a means to take advantage of opportunities to create expansive views of the Androscoggin River.

Park facilities often require little subsurface disturbance. Working at waterfront sites that may have had significant deposit of fill material and potential industrial and manufacturing wastes can present unstable areas for construction and thus minimized site construction by a typical park project presents a potentially easy option for site redevelopment in this area

While the slope from the top of the embankment down to the river is generally quite steep (*described in greater detail in the constraints section below*), the slope is more gradual as you head north along the shoreline, away from the dam, providing greater potential for ADA access to the shoreline.

### Constraints

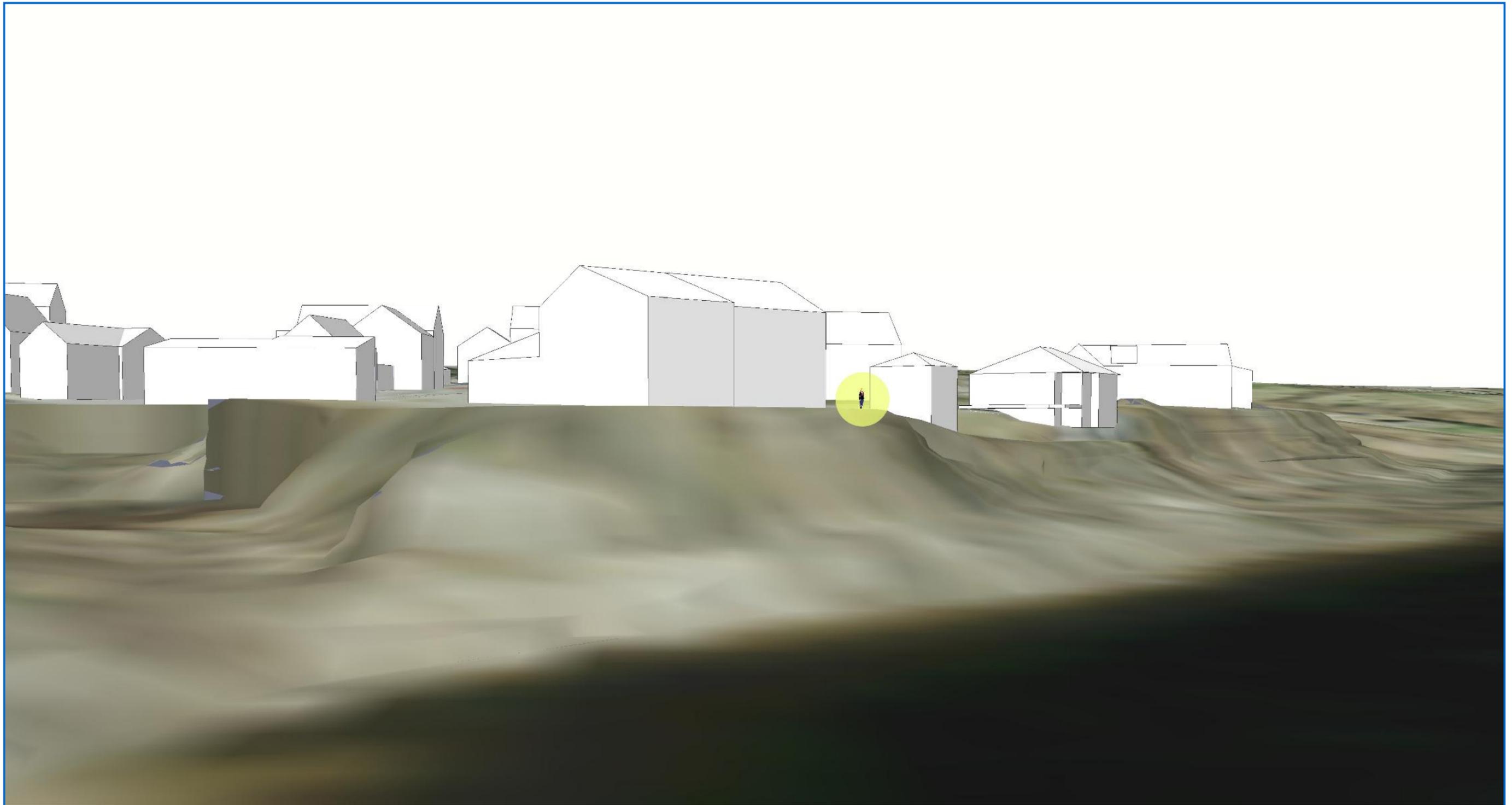
Hand carry boat access was one of the most common consensus goals supported by the community input process. While technically feasible, the steep topography of the waterfront within the Lower Village area presents a challenge to ADA accessibility. The average elevation change from Main Street down to the shoreline is approximately 24 feet. To accommodate ADA accessibility, maintaining a maximum running slope of 8%, not to exceed 30 foot length runs without a landing area along the access route, is required. Even though the slope is less steep as you head downstream from the dam, the elevation change from the top of the embankment to the shoreline is still approximately 24 feet. By means of constructing a built ramp structure or earthwork constructed trail with retaining walls and guardrails, the Town would need a route in excess of 300 linear feet to reach the shoreline from the top of the embankment. While the Town is not currently required to meet all ADA guidelines for outdoor recreational facilities of this nature, the community has strived to provide ADA access where feasible at all public facilities. Additionally, new ADA guidelines are expected to be released in early 2012 that may change these federal requirements. The new regulations could also be a requirement of potential state or federal funding sources.

As mentioned above, significant site disturbance can often be difficult along shorelines, especially where the embankment is so steep. This could present a challenge to development of any built structures within close proximity of the top of the embankment.

Also, existing mature vegetative growth on private property partially blocks view to the river from public lands, and would require coordination or land/easement acquisition from private waterfront land owners to maintain less obstructed views to the river.



*Clockwise from left: Steep slopes behind former fire station building over private property to shoreline.  
Terraced slopes over private property along Green Street  
Flat, developed site at intersection of Green Street and Main Street*



*Elevation showing typical change in grade (Approximately 24 feet) from top of the embankment and developed areas within the Lower Village to the shoreline of the Androscoggin River. (Person highlighted in Yellow)*

## Environmental Resources

### Opportunities

Since the federal Clean Water Act was enacted in 1972, Maine's rivers have made slow but steady improvement in terms of ecological recovery. This is evidenced today by the return to the Lower Village of federally protected species such as bald eagles, Atlantic sturgeon and Atlantic salmon.

Promotion of public park space and low impact recreational opportunities such as hand carry boat access and scenic vista's promote great opportunities for the public to experience and appreciate the diversity of the river's ecological system with minimal impact to those habitats.

Urban infill and redevelopment by it's nature is considered to be environmentally friendly. Given that the upland areas of the Lower Village have little to no environmentally sensitive systems, flora or fauna that have been identified to date, the promotion of density of development within a village area can assist the community in reducing environmental impacts from sprawling development and associated increased vehicular traffic volume and travel length.

### Constraints

There are some key environmental features in the Lower Village that will require various levels of environmental review. These include the Androscoggin River and associated shoreland zone; the delineated wetlands within and adjacent to the Granny Hole area, and federally endangered Atlantic sturgeon and Atlantic salmon.

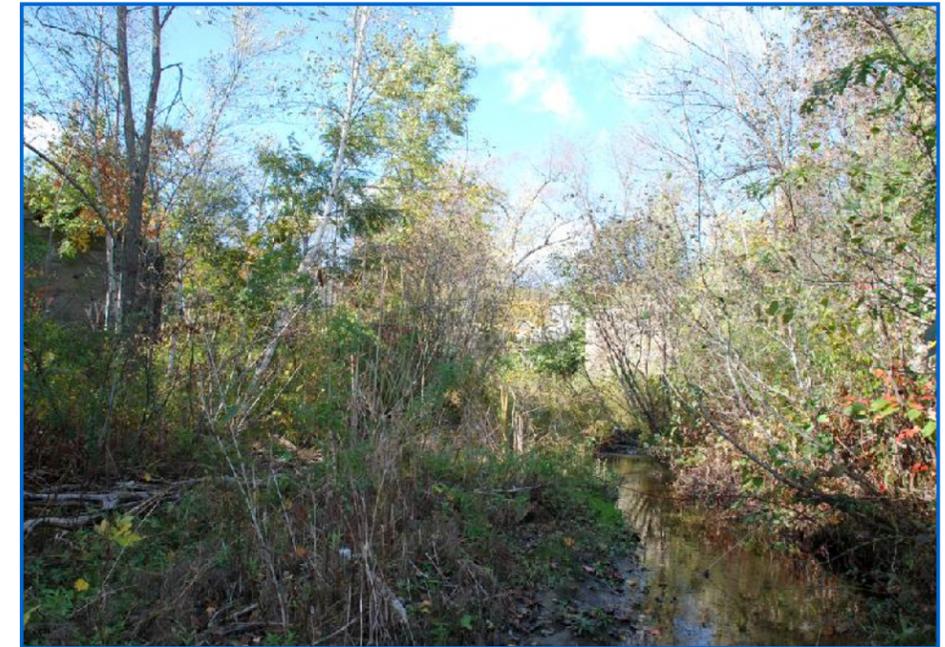
There are a variety of regulatory review processes associated with development impacting these natural resources either directly or within certain setback distances. Permitting requirements are expected to range from the Town's local shoreland zoning ordinance to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection's Natural Resource Protections act, to the federal U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's jurisdiction over work below the high water line of the Androscoggin River.

If the project is generally focused on visual waterfront access and park development that provides views of the river only, then the environmental permitting efforts can be expected to follow an expedited regulatory review process.

Should the project involve physical access to the waterfront and boating facilities located within the Androscoggin River, the review process will likely take a minimum of 120 days to review, typically limits when construction activities can be scheduled and may limit the scale of the project development.

This is often also true of projects involving federal funding that require standard environmental review so long as the project is within the watershed of the Androscoggin River which is recognized as a breeding habitat for the above mentioned endangered species.

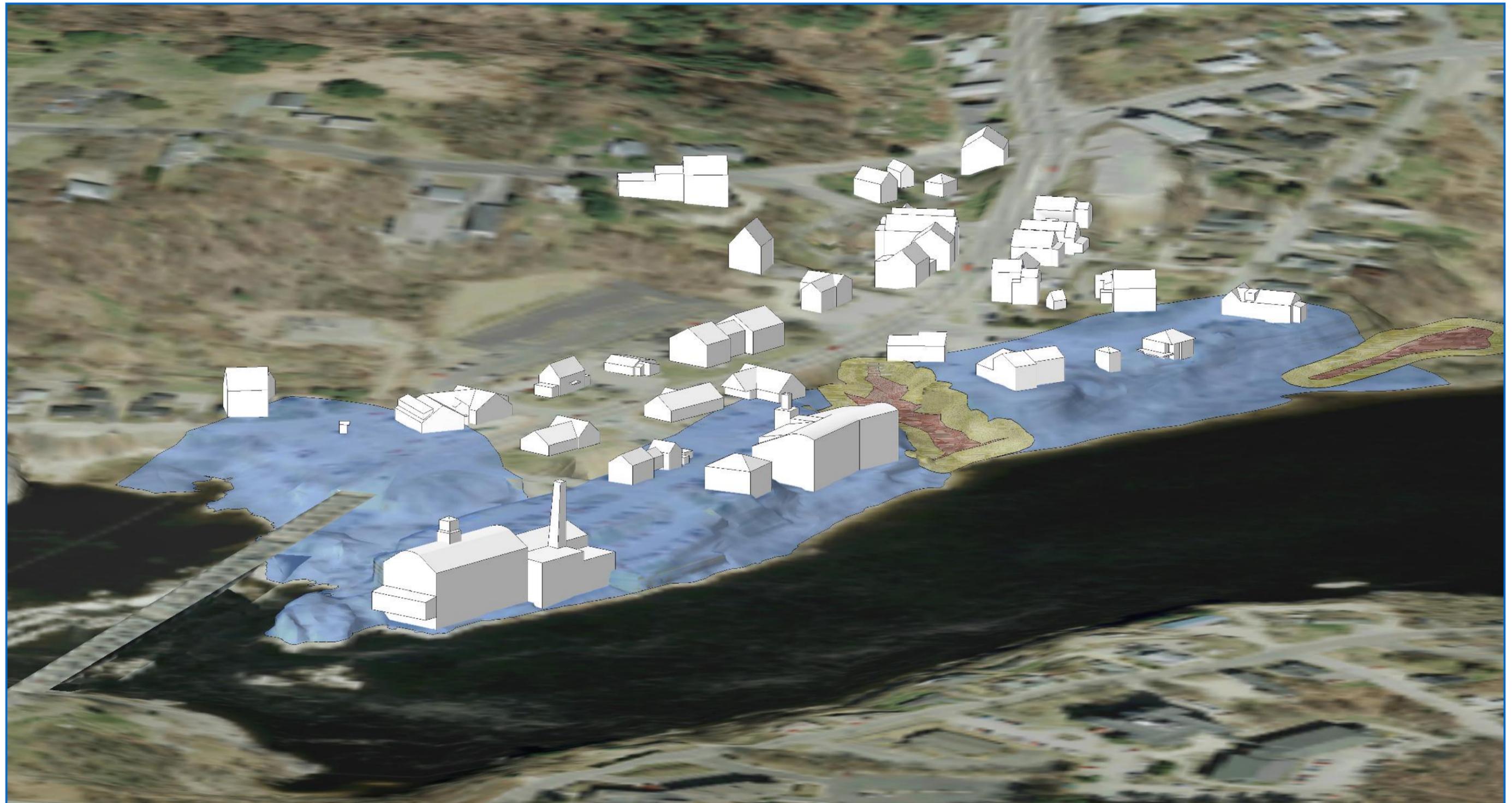
Another argument that will need to be made is the need for hand carry boat access, in particular given the existing nearby facilities in Brunswick. The Town can likely make the case that they cannot be assured that public access to these sites will continue to be readily available for the residents of Topsham but the question is likely to arise during MeDEP review.



*View of wetlands in Granny Hole area*



*View of the Lower Village waterfront from Brunswick*



*Environmentally Sensitive Area Boundaries: Blue = 250 Foot Shoreland Zone from Androscoggin River / Red = Delineated Wetlands / Yellow = 25 Foot Wetlands Setback*

## Historic Waterfront Context

### Opportunities

To-date, the redevelopment efforts in the Lower Village have done an excellent job of preserving existing historic buildings and retaining a certain historic character in the development of new structures. This process has been guided by the Town's local ordinances and historic overlay district zoning requirements. The Town has completed an "Historic Resources Survey, Report and Resource Inventory List" which serves as a valuable guide to understanding the rich history of Topshams' Lower Village area. Should future redevelopment efforts follow this standard, the Lower Village character of an historic waterfront with industrial and manufacturing mill sites would be further strengthened, creating an even stronger sense of place for the community and those visiting.

While the presence of historic artifacts often found along Maine's riverfront communities can present some challenges to development as described below, they can also present an opportunity for education and funding for site preservation.

Often these preservation efforts also lead to opportunities that promote an area to tourists and historians alike, bringing increased activity to an area that can provide support the local tourism economy.

Historic preservation is also a great source of educational information for students and adults alike.

### Constraints

While many may see this as an opportunity to preserve historic resources, the presence of historically significant archaeological sites could potentially limit the scale and nature of park and waterfront access development. No known features have been identified by the Maine State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to-date however, the State office has determined that the site, like many of Maine's riverfront areas, "has both prehistoric and historic archaeological resource potential...". Based on local reports by some who believe that a portion of the historic "Underground Railroad" exists within the Lower Village, SHPO has made several visits the Lower Village in response to these reports and has found no evidence of the "Underground" Railroad" to-date.

Should the Town pursue certain state and federal funding sources for implementation of a park and waterfront access project, an environmental review could identify archaeologically significant features that are commonly found along Maine's historic waterfront, potentially limiting the development of any given site in the Lower Village.



*Historic Building on Main Street in Lower Village - Now Maine Fiber Arts*



*Recently constructed Red Mill building in keeping with historic architecture*



Topsham Historic District within Lower Village Zone

## Land Ownership

### Opportunities

As mentioned in the Land Use Patterns section of this report, there are several available sites within or within close proximity of the Lower Village area that currently provide public access to the Androscoggin River. These include small scale picnic areas with view sheds of the river at the Bowdoin Mill, Red Mill and Border Trust within the Lower Village and the park provided by NextEra (formerly FPL) immediately across the Frank Wood Bridge in Brunswick, and an overlook area on NextEra property adjacent to Summer Street. Waterfront access for boaters is also available both above and below the dam in Brunswick. All of the pocket park areas with visual access and informal trails to the shoreline that primarily serve as access for shore fishermen are privately owned and maintained. The public boating facilities are owned and maintained by the Town of Brunswick.

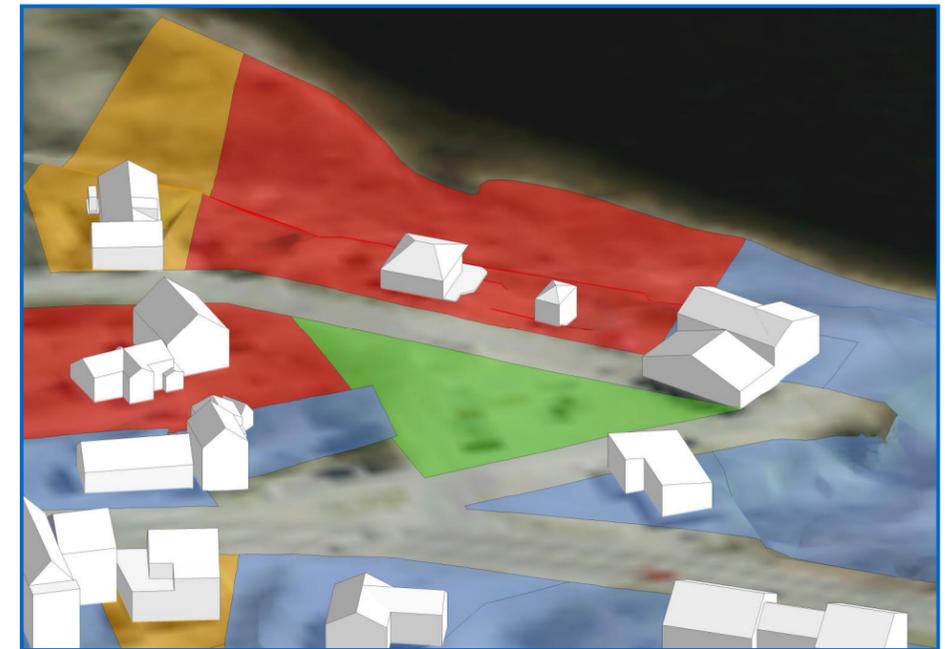
The Town also owns a parcel of land with waterfront access in the Lower Village along Summer Street which could provide a small scale park space with visual waterfront access only. Again, the current resources may not be controlled and maintained by the Town of Topsham, but they provide several readily available places to access the Androscoggin River for the Lower Village area.

The strongest public support for a public park space with waterfront access is at and adjacent to the town-owned parcel on Green Street. While this site currently does not provide opportunities for visual or physical access to the waterfront, it may offer an opportunity to collaborate with one or more of the abutting land owners to develop a mixed use site that is beneficial to a variety of Lower Village residents, businesses and visitors.

### Constraints

The fact that the Town does not own any land or easements in this area with access to the waterfront presents perhaps, the most significant constraint with respect to development of hand carry boat access in the Lower Village. Acquisition of waterfront lands could be quite costly and may not be an option that is available to the Town.

The Study did consider nearby access to the water from Town Landing Road. This was discussed with the public as an alternate site to Green Street should waterfront access in that area ultimately not be achievable. While it was recognized that such a location would not serve as a focal point for the Lower Village and would require significant improvements to the road while needing to provide new parking facilities, it does have potential as an alternate waterfront access site for both hand carry boat access and visual access, with the potential need to acquire additional right-of-way to the shoreline. Confirmation of the Town right-of-way extending all the way to the Androscoggin River has not been verified in this report.



*Town-owned Parcel at Green Street highlighted in Green*



*Town Landing Road Currently Terminating at Private Residence*

## Lower Village Site Infrastructure

### Vehicular Traffic

#### Opportunities

Perhaps one of the most talked about issues associated with park and waterfront access development, is the need to consider improvements to vehicular access. The most discussed opportunity to make improvements to the area is to address the traffic flow onto Main Street from either side of the surrounding Lower Village. Pending current permitting efforts by the Fore River Group, there is an opportunity to re-establish vehicular access to and from Green Street and the "Island".

There are also opportunities to improve Wayfinding signage and implement additional traffic calming measures such as an additional pedestrian crossing at the Frank Wood Bridge on Main Street that will further control vehicular flow.

The "Transportation Plan" for Topsham developed by Gorrill-Palmer identified opportunities to make improvements to the Elm Street intersection that could alleviate traffic flow issues at the Winter Street and Main Street intersection in particular. This recommendation in their report is still an opportunity for the Town to consider.

#### Constraints

Perhaps the greatest constraint to vehicular traffic entering Main Street near the Bowdoin Mill development is the availability of adequate width within the public right-of-way to make physical road way improvements such as turning lanes or a round-about. If such an approach is pursued it would leave little room for streetscape amenities, and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure between the widened vehicular travelways, the edge of the public right-of-ways and the building fronts of the abutting businesses.

The Town has considered a traffic light in this area but MeDOT has since installed one just across the Frank Wood Bridge in Brunswick and is not likely to consider adding another one in such close proximity.

Any changes to traffic patterns along Green Street such as one-way traffic or a dead-end street will ultimately need to be made to accommodate access to the area for life-safety vehicles including fire trucks, ambulances and police vehicles.

Improvements to the Elm Street area have been identified as feasible in prior traffic plans and discussions with the Town's public works department, however, they are likely to involve significant costs associated with grade adjustments, storm drainage improvements and potential access of additional right-of-way and or relocation/demolition of historic buildings that are close to the existing edge of the Main Street and Elm Street travelways in this area.



*Traffic entering and exiting Main Street at Winter Street*



*Traffic entering the "Island" via the access to the Red Mill*

**Pedestrian Infrastructure**

**Opportunities**

While a few pedestrian and bicycle improvements may be necessary to complete the network of systems within the Lower Village, there are several well functioning sidewalks and crosswalks in the area that allow for pedestrian access to most of the Lower Village. The addition of a crosswalk at the Frank Wood Bridge and connection to adjacent neighborhood systems and regional trail initiatives are relatively small in scale and cost and would provide a great opportunity to connect the surrounding community and support regional tourism in connection with the residents and businesses within the Lower Village. Such regional trail systems that are currently in the planning and or implementation state include the Brunswick-Topsham Androscoggin Riverwalk Trail, the Brunswick Androscoggin River Trail, the Merrymeeting Trail and the trails at the Highlands.

Pedestrian improvements along Green Street would also make significant improvements in connecting pedestrian activity in the Lower Village area with adjacent neighborhoods and regional trail systems, connecting Main Street to Elm Street.

Pending current permitting efforts by the Fore River Group, there is an opportunity to re-establish vehicular access to and from Green Street and the "Island" also may present an opportunity to provide pedestrian access to the island from Green Street.

**Constraints**

One of the areas identified as most in need of safer pedestrian and bicycle access was Green Street. The narrow public right-of-way and location of several residential structures within close proximity to the roadway presents a challenge to accommodating such pedestrian infrastructure.

Another option raised by the public was pedestrian connections along the shoreline. There are two basic constraints that such a trail would encounter. One is the seasonal flooding experienced most years along the shoreline of the Androscoggin River. The other is that the Town does not currently own any of the land along the shoreline below the Frank Wood Bridge, within the Lower Village area.

A pedestrian crossing at Main Street near the Frank Wood Bridge is a relatively straight forward process at the street level, however, it was recommended by the public that the report examine the idea of crossing under the bridge. This approach represents two challenges that may prove unfeasible. First, the town does not own land on either side of the bridge and would need to acquire additional land or easements to implement such a crossing. Second, the area experiences seasonal and historic flooding that is in close proximity to the bottom of the bridge structure, which creates a situation where pedestrian passage would be prohibited for extended periods of time.



*Area lacking pedestrian crossing to the Bowdoin Mill "Island"*



*Underpass at the Topsham side of the Frank Wood Bridge*



Green = Existing Sidewalks / Blue = Planned Androscoggin Riverwalk Trail / Orange = Existing crosswalks / Red = Public Identified Crosswalk and Pedestrian/Bicycle Access Improvement areas

**Parking**

**Opportunities**

There is a general perception that there is a lack of parking in the Lower Village area. This appears to be due in most part to minimal way finding signage directing traffic to the available parking on the west side of Main Street, and due to the lack of enforcement of regulated parking limits.

The Town currently owns 53 parking spaces in the Lower Village area. The majority of these spaces are located near Green Street and could provide adequate parking in support of a small scale park / public space area with small scale park amenities on the town-owned parcel, as a public recommended goal.

**Constraints**

The Town has carefully examined parking at the town-owned parcel on Green Street during past planning phases for park development in this area. The triangular layout of the site and presence of the sewer pump station are such that there is little room for improvements in efficiencies of parking layout over the present arrangement.

Further redevelopment in this area, whether it be a significant sized park with the need to accommodate boat trailers for hand carry waterfront access, or for mixed use development in collaboration with business or residential development, will likely require that a significant amount of the existing parking be retained and could facilitate the need for provision of additional parking, ultimately limiting the amount of park space.

Other than the few spaces that are designated to the public on the west side of Main Street within the "Island" overflow parking area, the town-owned parking area on Green Street is the only other site where public parking is controlled by the Town. Elimination of parking spaces in this area to accommodate other development could prove to be inadequate to serve the needs of the developed space



*Parking at Green Street on town-owned parcel*

*Overflow parking west of Main Street for "Island" businesses*

*Green areas represent town-owned parking areas*

**Utilities**

**Opportunities**

One of the more significant pieces of utility infrastructure within the Lower Village is the Topsham Sewer District's pump station located on the town-owned parcel along Green Street. This pump station facilitates the density of development in this area and the surrounding neighborhoods by pumping sewage from a low point within the Village, to the wastewater treatment facility, thus freeing up available land by eliminating the need for localized treatment of waste. Periodically the pump station needs maintenance and upgrades. At this point, Sewer District plans to make upgrades to some of their system controls and potentially to install a permanent generator at the site in the next 1 to 2 years. This could present an opportunity for the Town to share in the construction costs to develop a built structure that also serves the park and waterfront access goals of establishing an information center with other park amenities such as public restrooms. Such a structure would need to be located either on the town-owned land or at a nearby site if acquired by the Town.

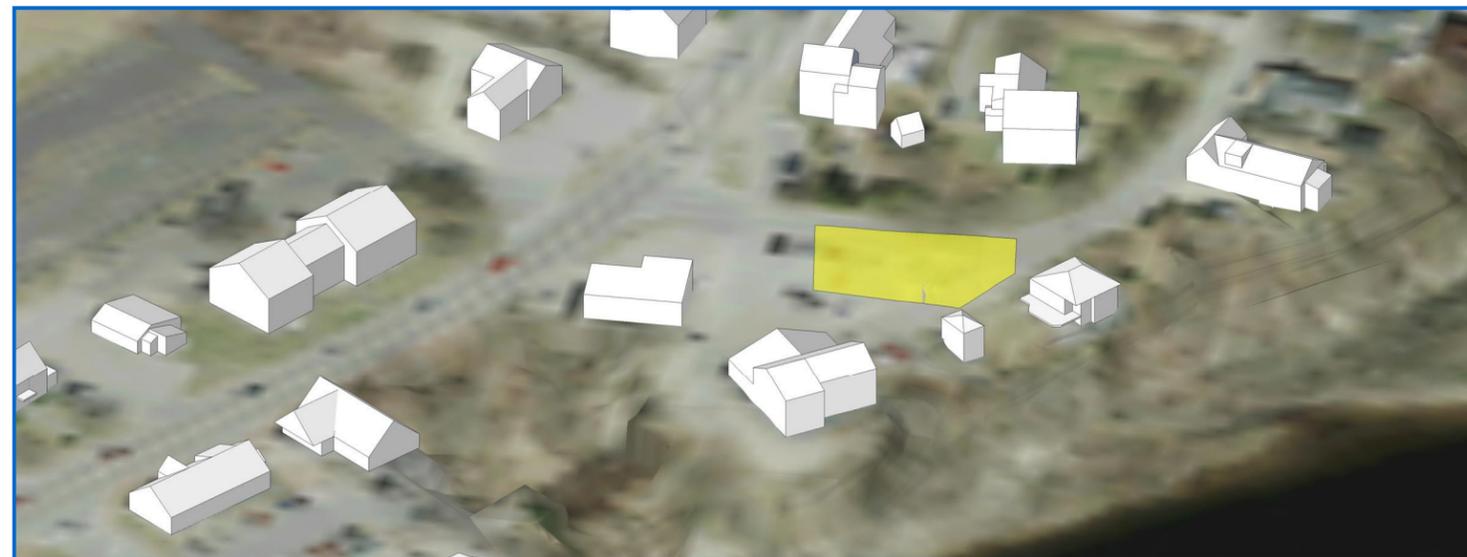
**Constraints**

While the footprint of this infrastructure may appear small at the surface, the subsurface and wet well pump station facilities below ground are at a significant depth (approximately 21 feet below grade) and need a substantial at-grade area for staging of construction equipment and materials. Reconstruction or relocation of this facility would also be expensive. At today's construction costs, it is estimated that relocation of the facility to a different location within the study area would range from \$800,000 to \$950,000.

The Topsham Sewer District does not have any immediate plans to make improvements of this magnitude to their facilities so any relocation costs would likely need to come from funds available for the park. Furthermore, unless the Town acquires more land nearby that could locate the pump station further away from the waterfront, relocation of the pump station within the current town-owned parcel does not provide a more optimal layout to accommodate park improvements and access by vehicles and pedestrians to the site.



*Sewer Pump Station Surface Infrastructure at Green Street*



*Area in Yellow represents a typical staging area required for sewer pump station construction*



*Example showing construction of similar scale pump station below grade*

## PART III: RECOMMENDATIONS

The Town has confirmed the community's goals for waterfront access in the Lower Village area and a feasibility study has examined the range of opportunities and constraints for park and waterfront access development in the Lower Village. These efforts are intended to lay the "ground rules" for any further public decisions regarding additional Town efforts to improve waterfront access in the Lower Village.

Again, the general consensus goals expressed through most of the public input are as follows:

- Hand carry boat access;
- Pocket park scale public space with visual access to the river;
- Improvements to bicycle and pedestrian access throughout the Lower Village;
- Improvements to vehicular traffic flow throughout the Lower Village and minimization of negative impacts to neighboring residents;
- Provision of adequate parking for park users and local businesses;

The following recommendations are made for the Town's consideration to guide the Town in any further decisions regarding Town-initiated waterfront access efforts in the Lower Village:

1. If the Town decides to proceed with a preliminary design process that outlines a couple of potential development scenarios to best meet the community's waterfront access goals. The planning scenarios should carefully consider:
  - The immediate and long term goals for waterfront access given the existing readily available resources and availability of Town funds to maintain such a facility;
  - The need for additional land acquisition or easements if necessary and provide any potential private land owners with a clear plan for the Town's development goals with the understanding that it may be unlikely that the Town will be able to acquire a significant portion of remaining undeveloped land in the Lower Village with waterfront access. *(If the Town continues to pursue options for physical waterfront access within the Lower Village then it is recommended that the initial planning effort define the general scale of such a project and consider issues like boat trailer parking, vehicular and pedestrian access to the facility, etc... and discuss these development goals with private landowners who control waterfront access before investing significant effort in a site specific design details.);* and
  - The scale of project construction costs and impacts to environmentally regulated resources should be carefully vetted through in order to provide a realistic estimate of funding needs and timeframe for implementation of the project.
2. The Town should continue to address vehicular traffic as recommended in the Transportation Plan as developed by Gorrill-Palmer consulting. In particular, the intersection at Elm Street may need further consideration in connection with additional pedestrian and vehicular improvements made along portions of Main Street, Green Street and Winter Street in particular;
3. Pedestrian improvements should be considered along Green Street and across Main Street at the Frank Wood Bridge to tie the Lower Village pedestrian systems with the surrounding neighborhoods and regional trail initiatives such as the Androscoggin Riverwalk Trail; and
4. Any park development in the Green Street area should maintain the location of the existing sewer pump station where it is, and make low maintenance park improvements immediately surrounding the pump station such as park lawn space with site amenities such as benches and picnic tables instead of locating a permanent built structure like a public restroom.

## ADDITIONAL TASKS REMAINING

This draft of the study is a working document and will continue to be developed through the end of 2011. In addition to additional site analysis, the plan will be presented to the general public for additional input at a meeting during November of 2011. The following tasks are anticipated to be completed as part of the final report.

- Obtaining additional detailed topographic survey along the waterfront (if private landowners agree) to provide great detail of implementation efforts associated with hand carry boat access.
- Provide greater detail related to existing public versus private parking capacity and any recommendations regarding changes to the existing infrastructure as required.
- Additional traffic study based on specific public input regarding vehicular traffic flow in the Lower Village, in connection to waterfront access, as an update to the Towns' prior "Traffic Plan".