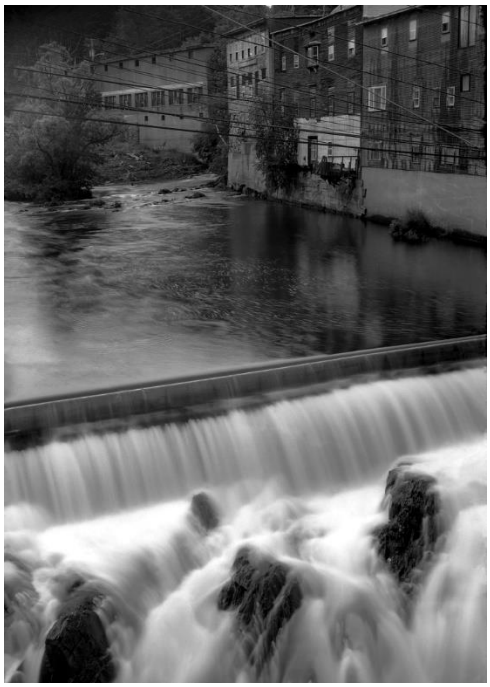
Downtown Master Plan
Town of Springfield, Vermont



December 4, 2015

This report was developed in 2014 and 2015 for the Town of Springfield with assistance from the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, Ascutney, VT.

Financial support for undertaking this revision was provided, in part, by a Municipal Planning Grant from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

Contents

1 Introduction 4
1.1 Purpose 4
1.2 Background 4
1.3 Public Participation 4
1.4 Project Study Area 5
2 Springfield's Downtown Revitalization Program 6
2.1 History of Springfield's Downtown Program 6
2.2 Mission Statement 6
2.3 The Four-Point Approach 6
2.4 Recommendations from 1995 Springfield Downtown Redevelopment Plan 7
2.5 Past and Ongoing SOM Projects 7
2.5 Recent Public Infrastructure Investments 9
3 Existing Conditions 10
3.1 Summary of the Downtown Springfield Area 10
3.2 Traffic Circulation 12
3.4 Parking 15
A. Main Street Corridor Parking Inventory (2011) 16
B. Parking Study Conclusions (2011) 16
C. Parking Study Recommendations (2011) 16
3.5 Building Façades 17
3.6 Retail Market Analysis 19
A. General Retail Market Study Findings (2010) 19
B. Market Analysis Recommendations (2010) 19
3.7 Springfield Branding Report 20
4 Downtown Master Plan 22
4.1 Overall Strategy for Downtown Revitalization 22
4.2 Improvements to Infrastructure / Public Facilities 23
4.3 Investment in Buildings/Property 27
4.4 Organizational Efforts 29
5 Implementation Plan 33
5.1 Strategies to Implement the Master Plan 33
5.2 Implementations Priorities 36
A. Implementation Matrix 36
6 Evaluation Plan 38

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this master planning project is convene all relevant stakeholders together to identify desired initiatives that further revitalization of Downtown Springfield. Downtown revitalization relies upon a variety of partners – including the Town of Springfield, Springfield on the Move (SOM), Springfield Regional Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber), Springfield Regional Development Corporation (SRDC), downtown businesses and property owners – working together toward a common vision and related implementation strategies. It is the intent of this document to articulate that common vision and implementation strategies.

1.2 Background

In December 1995, the Cavendish Partnership and Douglas J. Kennedy & Associates prepared the *Springfield Downtown Redevelopment Plan* for SOM, the Town of Springfield and Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission (SWCRPC). The resulting 1995 master plan has been used to guide SOM's revitalization efforts for the last 20 years. Appendix A includes an evaluation of how many original recommendations have been implemented to date.

The Town and Springfield on the Move have been working over the last five years to update sections of the *1995 Springfield Downtown Redevelopment Plan*. The recent efforts that inform this *2015 Downtown Master Plan* include:

- *A Retail Market Analysis for Springfield, Vermont* (December 2010) prepared by Arnett Muldrow & Associates for SOM;
- *Main Street Corridor Parking Evaluation* (December 2011) prepared by the Dufresne Group and b.green Landscape Architecture for the Town of Springfield and SOM;
- *Façade Study* (2012) prepared by Community Design Solutions for SOM; and,
- *Springfield Branding Report* (August 2010) prepared by Arnett Muldrow & Associates for the Town of Springfield, SOM, Springfield Regional Chamber of Commerce and Springfield Medical Care Systems.

In coordination with SOM, the Town of Springfield obtained funding through the FY 2014 Municipal Planning Grant program to pay for the preparation of this *Downtown Master Plan*. The Town hired the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission (SWCRPC) to facilitate this planning process and prepare this document.

1.3 Public Participation

Public involvement is a critically important aspect of this downtown revitalization master plan. The process to develop this type of planning document is more important than the final document itself. In order to encourage the involvement of the public and stakeholders, the following outreach efforts were conducted either as part of this effort or incorporated from similar ongoing efforts by key organizations:

- A project steering committee met monthly during much of this process in order to provide guidance and feedback as the project developed. Steering committee members included Carol Lighthall

(SOM), Mark Blanchard (SOM/Hospital), Jen Johnson (Chamber), Wendi Germain (Chamber), Bob Forguites (Town), Tom Yennerell (Town) and Chuck Gregory (Town Planning Commission).

- Numerous meetings and ongoing coordination with the Planning & Zoning Office and Public Works Department personnel.
- SOM's 2014 Downtown Business Survey
- SOM website survey
- Presentations to the Town Planning Commission
- Survey of key professionals/leaders
- Public Meeting: an evening with "Coffee and a Plan"
- Review draft master plan with the SOM Board
- Post draft and final reports on the project website

1.4 Project Study Area

The study area for this master plan is consistent with the Designated Downtown boundary as shown in the Figures 1 and 2. It encompasses the downtown commercial core area along Main Street from the Community Center Bridge to the One Hundred River Street pedestrian bridge and the surrounding areas.

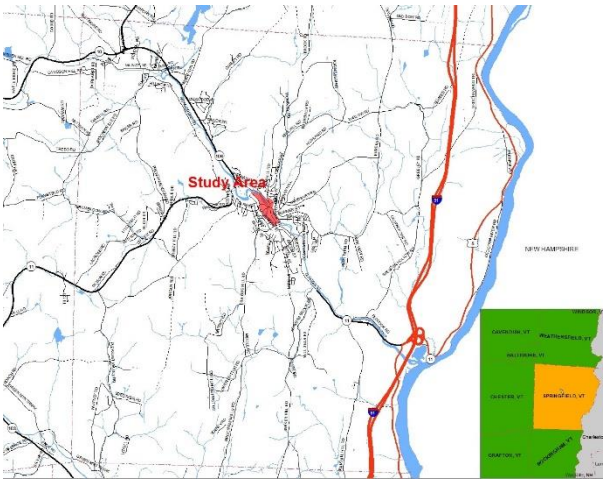


Figure 2 Vicinity Map

Figure 1 Project Study Area

2 SPRINGFIELD'S DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

2.1 History of Springfield's Downtown Program

Springfield on the Move (SOM) was established to focus upon downtown revitalization efforts. Initially SOM was started as a committee of the Chamber, called Springfield Special. In 1996, SOM was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization. The Town has provided annual operational funding since SOM's inception in 1996.

In 2000, Springfield received an official Downtown Designation from the State of Vermont in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Chapter 76A. This designation was most recently renewed in December 2014. The *2014 Springfield Town Plan* articulates the importance of maintaining this designation in order to support local downtown revitalization efforts (see Appendix B).

2.2 Mission Statement

Springfield on the Move (SOM) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to work with property owners, businesses, citizens and the town government to enhance Springfield's downtown as an attractive, desirable and economically viable destination for residents and visitors. Its members include local business owners, community leaders, local government officials, and residents who want to help revitalize Springfield's downtown and the surrounding areas.

2.3 The Four-Point Approach

The Vermont Downtown Program and SOM follow the Four Point Approach® developed for the National Main Street Program. The Four Point Approach "is a consensus building program that fosters community pride and encourages the growth of small businesses, employment and income opportunities, tax revenues, property values and general quality of life", and it includes the following elements[1]:

1) **Organization** – Establishing and maintaining a non-profit organization that works in partnership with the public and private sectors to plan and implement a comprehensive downtown revitalization strategy. SOM was created for this purpose.
2) **Economic Restructuring** – Strengthening and improving a downtown's economic assets and fulfilling its broadest market potential. A Downtown Economic Development Committee was established by SOM for this purpose.
3) **Design** – Enhancing and improving the physical appearance of a downtown by addressing all design elements to create an appealing environment. SOM's Design Committee works to improve the physical appearance of downtown. In addition, the Town established a Downtown Design Control Overlay District to maintain the economic and historical integrity of the downtown and to improve structures in the downtown.
4) **Promotion** – Creating and marketing a positive image of the downtown district and attracting people to socialize, shop at local businesses and restaurants, and enjoy local history and culture. The Promotions Committee strives to address this element for SOM.

[1] Modified from the Department of Housing and Community Development's website http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/revitalization/downtown

2.4 Recommendations from 1995 Springfield Downtown Redevelopment Plan

The 1995 Plan included recommendations to further downtown revitalization efforts. The Town of Springfield, SOM and other partners have implemented a number of these recommendations. A summary of those recommendations and implementation efforts are summarized in Appendix A. The document served as a basis for SOM revitalization efforts for years. The following sections highlight some of these efforts.

2.5 Past and Ongoing SOM Projects

Between 2000 and 2009, SOM has completed the following projects:

- Created three parks: Comtu Pocket Park, Town Hall Park and Alley Park with Public Art Display;

- Removed a decrepit building from Main Street;
- Implemented Main Street Light Poles; and,
- Helped with grant funding and planning for new sidewalks.

Key SOM accomplishments since 2009 include:

- 2009/2010 SOM Strategic Planning with key partners.
- 2010 SOM pursues grant for strategic focus. Grant Awarded!
- 2010 Community Branding Project is completed in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce.
- 2010 Downtown Farmer's Market established, the farmer's market just completed its 5th season.
- 2011 Market Study completed to support business retention-expansion and recruitment efforts.
- 2011 Children's sticker map for the holiday program helped to connect 150+ children and their families with 20+ participating businesses.
- 2011 Downtown Economic Development Committee re-established – Downtown Open House event established, recruitment mailing complete, available space added to website. Downtown business survey and brochure recently completed. Ongoing technical assistance to downtown businesses and property owners.
- 2011 SOM launches brand "Springfield Reinvented" via a new website, Facebook presence, downtown banners, newsletter, mural and as moniker for Downtown/SOM projects.
- 2011 Façade Improvement Program developed – 24 designs completed, 11 designs implemented to date in partnership with several successful fundraisers. The Odd Fellows building our biggest project to date. Two fundraisers netted $10K each to cover the project cost. Department of Corrections work program provided the labor.

- 2012 – Market Madness Street Fair becomes Downtown's signature event on Labor Day Weekend. August 30th of this year made our 3rd Annual – 40 + vendors, lots of music, tagged as "Local – Fresh – Artsy – Fun".
- 2012-2014 Parking Management Plan – Led by SOM and in partnership with the Springfield Chamber and the Town, parking was inventoried and short and medium term steps taken to optimize parking resources.
- 2014 Mural on Furman's Buildings – SOM raised funds through Kickstarter to make permanent the branded "Springfield" design done by volunteers in chalk. This mural is located at a very central and visible spot on Main Street.

Recent downtown investments includes the following:

- Seven downtown Springfield projects have been awarded tax credits since 2000, including the Springfield Cinema and One Hundred River Street redevelopment projects.
- Tax Credits equaled $850,000 leveraging $14.5M in private investment.

What is a tax credit?

Federal and state rehabilitation tax credits are available to stimulate private investment and restore historic buildings in Vermont's Designated Downtowns and Village Centers. Tax credits are not cash or a grant. Rather, it in essence redirects income taxes owed to help pay the construction bills. For example, if your tax bill is $10,000, a $4,000 credit will reduce your tax bill to $6,000 (Source: Dept. of Housing & Community Development). The program includes:

- 10% Historic Tax Credits;
- 25% Facade Improvement Tax Credits;
- 50% Code Improvement Tax Credits;
- 50% Technology Tax Credits.

Click here for more information about the Vermont tax credits.

Ongoing SOM projects and initiatives:

- Electric Vehicle Charging Station to be implemented downtown in the spring!
- Odd Fellows Building Redevelopment.
- Bakery moving in at One Main this Month!
- Woolson Block redevelopment being explored with partner Springfield Housing Authority.
- Façade Project planned for the SEVCA/Good Buy Store in the spring of 2015.

2.5 Recent Public Infrastructure Investments

Downtown infrastructure projects that have been completed in the last five years include:

- Nearly $1 million spent on downtown sidewalk, crosswalk and traffic signal improvements along Main Street.
- The Community Center Bridge was rehabilitated for about $2.7 million.
- The Town paved Main Street (1 inch overlay) in 2014 to smooth out the surface temporarily until the State paving job can be constructed.

In addition to the tax credits noted in the previous section, about $800,000 from the SWCRPC's brownfields program assisted with the One Hundred River Street redevelopment project.

Projects that are programmed to be completed in 1-2 years include:

- The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) plans to repave the Class 1 town highway section of VT Route 11 (Main Street) as part of Project # STP 2952(1).
- The Town will begin construction of Valley Street water and sewer improvements in the spring of 2015.

The Town is planning and designing multi-use path projects outside of but with potential connections to downtown. A scoping and feasibility study was completed in 2015 for a multi-use path starting at the Riverside Middle School and connecting to North Springfield and beyond. The design for an extension of the Toonerville Trail to connect to Bridge Street is also being worked on during 2015.

3 EXISTING CONDITIONS

A brief history of Springfield and its downtown – excerpted from the *2014 Springfield Town Plan* – is provided here for historical background:

> *The majority of Springfield's historic sites and structures are located in areas where settlers established homes, farms, and industries. In pre-colonial times, the Black River corridor was known as the "Indian Road" since it provided a connection between the Connecticut River valley and the Lake Champlain area to the northwest. The lowlands along the Connecticut River were used by Native Americans as temporary villages while they fished at the nearby falls.*
>
> *The early Springfield settlements were focused along the Crown Point Road, the first village was established in what is known as the Eureka area. Settlements soon followed in the Parker Hill area, the Dutton District, and the Spencer Hollow area. Today these upland hilltop areas with their open fields and numerous historic sites offer some spectacular scenic vistas of Mt. Ascutney to the north and Okemo Mountain to the northwest in the Green Mountain range.*
>
> *With the coming of the industrial revolution, settlements in the Black River valley began taking advantage of the power provided by the waterfalls on the river. The historical Gould's Mills area and downtown Springfield blossomed during this period. The precision machine tool industry, which reached its peak during World War II, caused Springfield's economy to flourish and brought with it the development of many stately homes as well as worker housing and cultural centers. Today many of these historic buildings and sites remain intact, providing current and future residents and visitors with a flavor for Springfield's cultural heritage.*
>
> *A Historic Sites and Structures Survey, completed for the Town in 1997, led to the placement of most sites onto the State Register of Historic Places. A listing of these sites (74 sites and the Springfield Downtown Historic District) is combined with sites listed in the "Tour of Historic Places in Springfield" by Frederick Richardson (1992) [...]. Several sites, including the Lewis Morris House, Hartness House, Stellafane, and the Springfield Downtown Historic District are also included on the National Register of Historic Places.*
>
> *In 2000, Springfield received an official Downtown Designation from the State of Vermont. This designation enables the Town to receive grants for improvements within the downtown, and allows owners of historic buildings to receive tax credits for building renovations. As part of the designation process, the Town was required to adopt either a design control district or local historic district. The Town chose to adopt a Design Control District covering the same area as the downtown district. The purpose of the Design Control District is to maintain the historic character and scale of the structures within this district.*

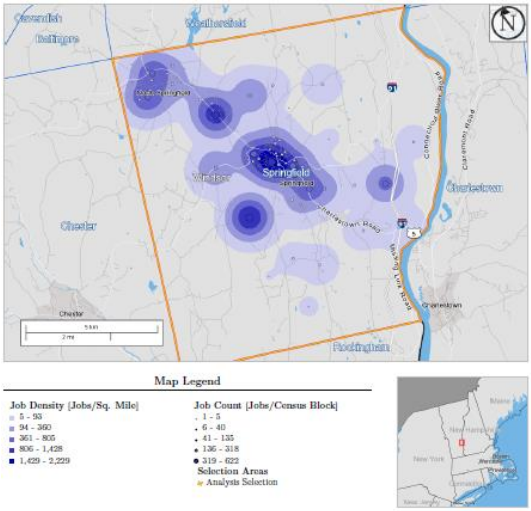


Figure 3 - Job Density Map (LEHD On the Map, U.S. Census Bureau)

3.1 Summary of the Downtown Springfield Area

Springfield is a full-service community of 9,373 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). According to data from the U.S.

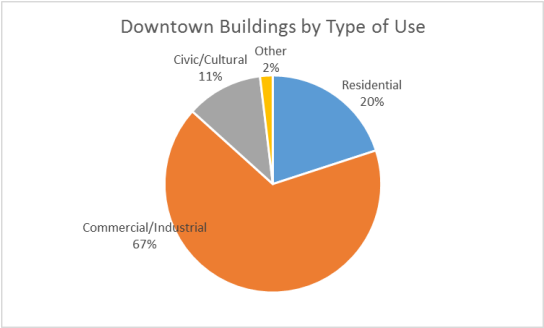
Census Bureau[2], Springfield had a total of 4,141 jobs in 2011 with a distinct density of jobs located within and immediately surrounding the Designated Downtown area as shown in Figure 3. Primary employment sectors[2] in Springfield, based on the percentage of the total number of local jobs, include:

1. Health Care and Social Assistance (26.2%);
2. Educational Services (13.5%);
3. Manufacturing (12.7%);
4. Retail Trade (10.3%);
5. Accommodation and Food Services (6.4%);
6. Public Administration (5.8%).

While the downtown is a relatively small portion of the Town, its cultural and economic importance is significant. The Downtown District is comprised of just over 62 acres of land, which is only about 0.2% of the total land area in the Town. About 67% of the buildings in the downtown are commercial or industrial properties (including apartments), compared to about 6% of the buildings townwide[3] . Downtown has 2.5% of the buildings in Springfield, yet the downtown property valuation is nearly 9% (see Figure 4).

Local attractions in and around downtown Springfield include:

- The Great Hall at One Hundred River Street
- The Gallery at the VAULT
- Toonerville Trail
- Hoyt's Landing
- Edgar May Recreation Center
- North Springfield Bog
- Springweather Nature Area
- Hartness Park
- Crown Point Country Club
- Hartness House, including the inn as well as the museum, astronomy observatory and antique telescope
- Stellafane – Home of the Springfield Telescope Makers (not open to the public)
- Springfield Cinemas
- Springfield Bowling Alley
- Comtu Falls Park
- Miller Art Center
- Springfield Community Players Studio
- Crown Point Historical Military Road
- Eureka Schoolhouse
- Baltimore Covered Bridge
- Community Center recreational facilities
- Hiking trail systems (formal and informal)
- Dance Factory (recitals and community events)



Downtown Property Valuation

Value of Land	$2,607,000
Value of Improvements	$51,759,000
Total Value	**$54,366,000**

(2013 Grand List)

Figure 4: Summary of Downtown Properties

Major local events include:

- February: Winter Carnival
- March: Taste of Winter Market (Springfield Area Parent Child Center)

[2] Source: OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics
[3] According to 2013 Grand List data obtained from the Department of Taxes

- May: Green Up Day, Dam Run, Herrick's Cove Festival
- May: Apple Blossom Cotillion
- Seasonal: Downtown Farmers Market
- June: Alumni Weekend
- June: Windsor County Relay for Life
- July: Green Mountain Aerobatic Competition (Hartness Airport)
- Summer: Stellafane Convention
- September: River Sweep
- September: Market Madness Street Fair
- September: Springfield Steampunk Festival (planned for 2015)
- October: Vermont Apple Festival and Wet Paint Live, Light the Lawn (Springfield Family Center)
- October: Rotary Penny Sale
- November: Festival of Trees
- November: Thanksgiving Day 5k
- December: Beyond The Unicorn Craft Fair
- December: Holiday Program (Santa comes to town)

Downtown Springfield functions as the heart of the community. It is a daily stop for many residents going to the Post Office, Library or Town Hall. It is also the central business district with many important retail and service businesses. People come downtown to go to the movies, get dinner, walk around, stop to view Comtu Falls, or visit with friends. For Springfield to be successful, the downtown needs to be a priority for infrastructure investments and economic development efforts.

3.2 Traffic Circulation

An evaluation of traffic volumes and circulation was completed as part of this project. The following is intended as a summary of key findings.

The Town of Springfield maintains a large transportation network, including about 123 miles of roadway, 54 bridges, 712 culverts (not including driveway culverts), and 22 miles of sidewalk. Main Street (VT Route 11) is the primary roadway through downtown. (The portions of VT Route 11 south of Downtown is Clinton Street, and north of downtown is River Street.) Other important roads in the downtown area include Summer Street, Park Street, Mineral Street, Factory Street and Pearl Street.

Traffic volumes on Main Street are currently about 10,000 trips per day (i.e. Annual Average Daily Traffic[4]).

[4] Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) is the term used to show the average traffic volume in both directions on a section of road, adjusted for seasonal variation.

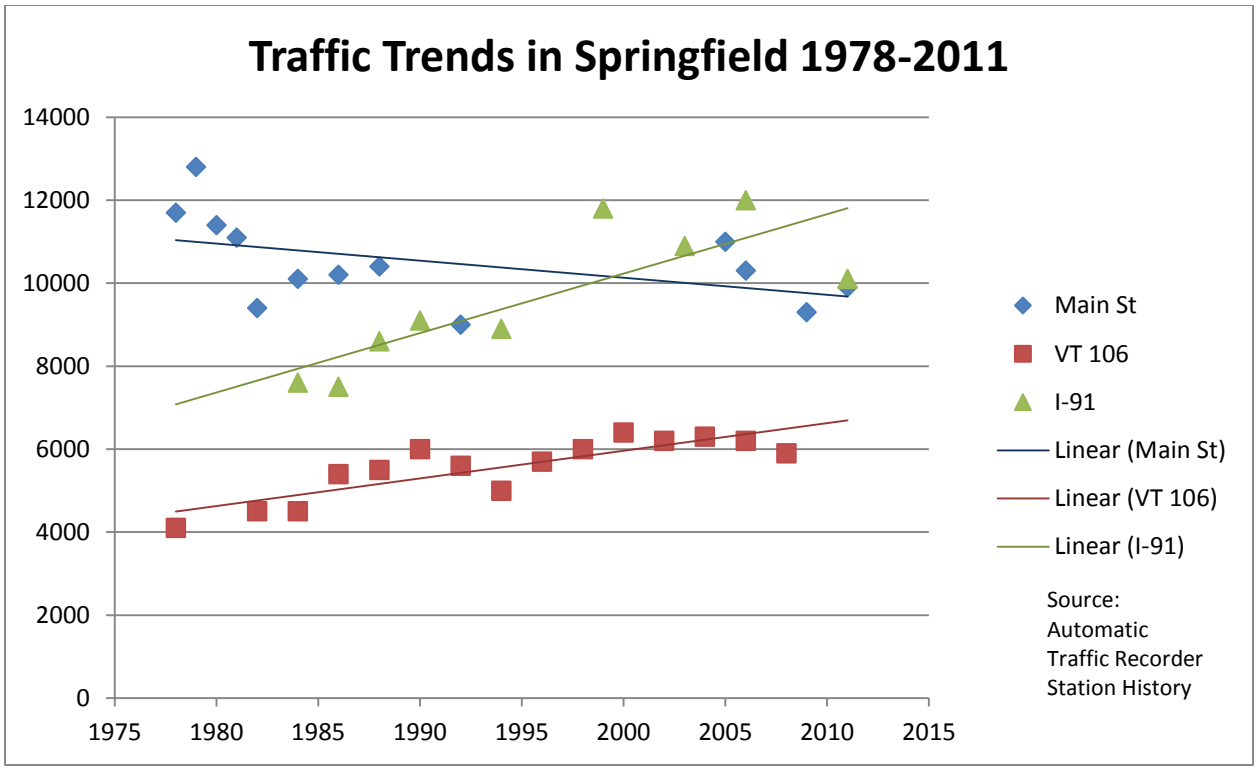


Figure 5: Trends in traffic volumes at select locations in Springfield

Traffic volume data from VTrans show that traffic has generally been increasing on VT Route 106 and I-91 in Springfield since the mid-1970s. According to this data, traffic volumes were higher on Main Street around 1980, but volumes have been fairly level since the mid-1980s. (See Figure 5.)

Table 1 shows traffic volumes along other roads in and around downtown Springfield.

Table 1: Traffic Counts at Locations in and around Downtown Springfield

COUNT ID	ROUTE	LOCATION	MM	AADT	
				2005	2009
SY6216	VALLEY ST (TH 5)	0.06 MILES NORTH OF VT 11	0.1	1,900	2,300
SY6410	SUMMER ST	0.05 MILES EAST OF VT 11	0.1	2,800	2,900
SY6222	PARK ST	JUST WEST OF FOSTER AVE		5,300	4,900
S6Y297	MINERAL ST (TH 369)	JUST SOUTH OF GULF ST		700	1,000
S6Y436	VT 106 (RIVER ST)	0.3 MILES NORTH OF VT 11	0.3	10,400	9,500
S6Y042/ S6Y296	VT 11 (MAIN ST)	0.1 MILES SOUTH OF PARK ST	4.8	11,000	9,300

Source: Automatic Traffic Recorder Station History (2004-2013, VTrans)

Truck traffic varies by location. Table 2 on the next page depicts truck traffic volumes based on available data from VTrans. Truck volumes are proportionally highest along VT Route 11, comprising nearly 10% of the total volume on Clinton Street.

Table 2: Vehicle Classification Counts at Select Locations

COUNT ID	ROUTE	LOCATION	YEAR	AADT			
				PERSONAL VEHICLES	MEDIUM TRUCKS	HEAVY TRUCKS	TOTAL VOLUME
S6Y015	VT 11	0.13 MILES WEST OF FAIRGROUND RD	2011	95.15%	3.75%	1.10%	8,000
S6Y132	VT 11	EAST OF SEAVER BROOK RD	2010	91.68%	6.15%	2.17%	9,200
S6Y133	VT 11	BETWEEN PADDOCK / US RTE 5	2010	90.57%	7.16%	2.27%	9,100
S6Y702	VT 106	JUST SOUTH OF VT RTE 10	2011	91.76%	6.58%	1.66%	6,100
S6Y013	SUMMER ST	0.03 MILES EAST OF BRIDGE ST	2011	95.46%	4.32%	0.22%	1,700
S6Y399	VT 143	0.2 MILES EAST OF I-91 BRIDGE	2011	94.19%	5.36%	0.45%	520
S6Y411	VT 143	JUST WEST OF REED	2011	96.79%	3.10%	0.11%	1,800

Source: 2013 Automatic Vehicle Classification Report - Day Averages (VTrans)

Main Street experiences some delays during certain peak hours during the weekday. Figure 6 shows the fluctuation in traffic volumes during an average weekday.

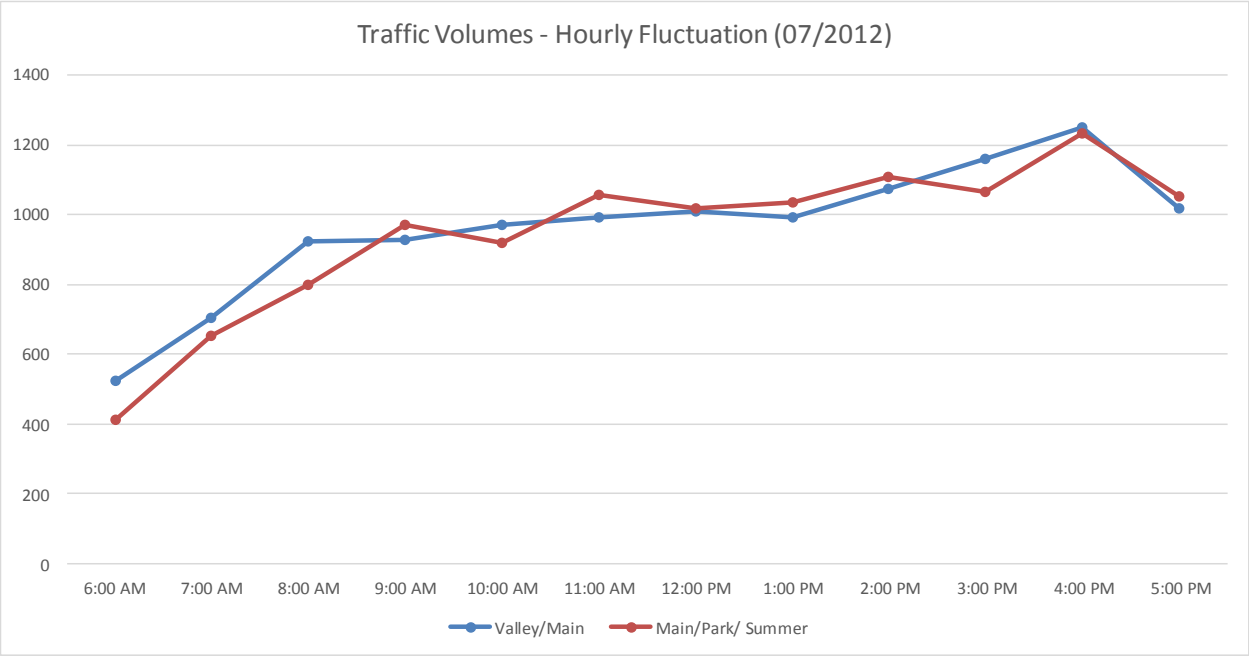


Figure 6: Hourly fluctuation of traffic volumes

The recent traffic signal upgrade at the intersection of Main Street, Summer Street and Park Street has improved the performance of that intersection. Vehicles still experience some delays during peak times, but generally the delays are as expected in a downtown of this size.

In the past, a recommendation to improve downtown traffic circulation was to evaluate a one-way traffic pattern in downtown via Main Street and Mineral Street. However, during the construction of Community Center Bridge, a one-way traffic pattern through downtown was used, which resulted in significant traffic delays. As a result, there is very little interest to pursue a permanent one-way traffic circulation pattern. Although, a one-way traffic pattern would allow for more on-street parking to be established (i.e. angular parking) and possibly better facilitate bicycle lanes.

The intersection of Clinton Street, Main Street, South Street and Mineral Street has an irregular configuration. The traffic signal at this location is no longer functioning and much of the equipment has been removed. Traffic patterns at this intersection are confusing for visitors that are not used to the area. Congestion is especially prevalent during the afternoons when school lets out. It is a high crash location that VTrans has analyzed in the past under the Highway Safety Improvement Program. A traffic signal warrant analysis was conducted for this location with assistance from VTrans. The initial evaluation showed that a traffic signal was not needed – just barely not meeting the warrants. A second evaluation showed that a traffic signal is needed – this time just barely meeting the warrants. The master plan also calls for improving the appearance of this intersection (i.e. creating an attractive gateway into Downtown). Ideas for reconfiguring the intersection have been discussed – possibly involving a roundabout or creating a clearer, more simplified intersection layout. Any intersection improvements should also address the gateway treatments, both of which will need a more detailed engineering/design analysis as a next step.

A sidewalk inventory was conducted in 2012 for the entire Town of Springfield sidewalk network. The results of that inventory are summarized in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Summary of town-wide sidewalk inventory results (2012)

The sidewalks along Main Street were reconstructed recently, including lighting and other streetscape improvements. Crosswalks along Main Street are in poor condition, but the VTrans paving project scheduled for 2015 will make some needed improvements.

Valley Street is in desperate need of sidewalk improvements, which ideally would be constructed during or after the Valley Street water and sewer line project in 2015. A feasibility study is needed to evaluate sidewalk improvements along Mineral Street in order to connect existing sidewalk sections and make a safe, continuous pedestrian circulation pattern.

In general, traffic circulation is working reasonably well in the downtown. The master plan incorporates the identified needs – such as way finding signs, pedestrian crossings, and engineering projects – in order to improve traffic circulation, safety and convenience.

3.4 Parking

A lack of parking is often a primary concern for all downtowns, including here in Springfield. In order to evaluate the local parking situation, the Town and SOM hired the Dufresne Group and b.green Landscape Architecture to develop the *Main Street Corridor Parking Evaluation* that was completed in December 2011. The study inventoried parking spaces and evaluated occupancy of those parking spaces. The following summarizes the resulting key findings.

A. Main Street Corridor Parking Inventory (2011)

Along the Main Street corridor in downtown Springfield, there are 164 public parking spaces, 40 leased spaces and 354 private parking spaces (see Figure 8a).

Public outreach was conducted as part of the 2011 parking study. The results indicate that more than two-thirds of downtown businesses believe that there is insufficient parking (see Figure 8b).

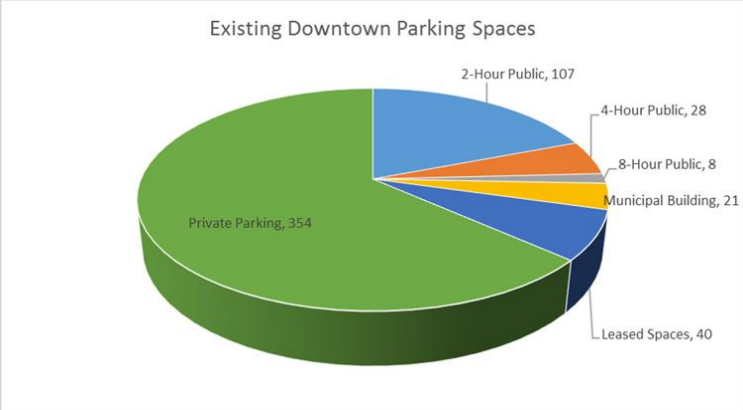


Figure 8a: Main Street Corridor Parking Inventory

B. Parking Study Conclusions (2011)

Overall, with the building occupancy and utilization in 2011, there appeared to be adequate parking to serve the demand as evaluated in the parking study. However, there are a few buildings without on-site parking that rely upon on-street parking and off-site public parking or leased spaces to meet their needs. Parking is a problem for those buildings. At full build-out, with lots developed to their full potential and all buildings at full occupancy, parking would be a problem for downtown Springfield.

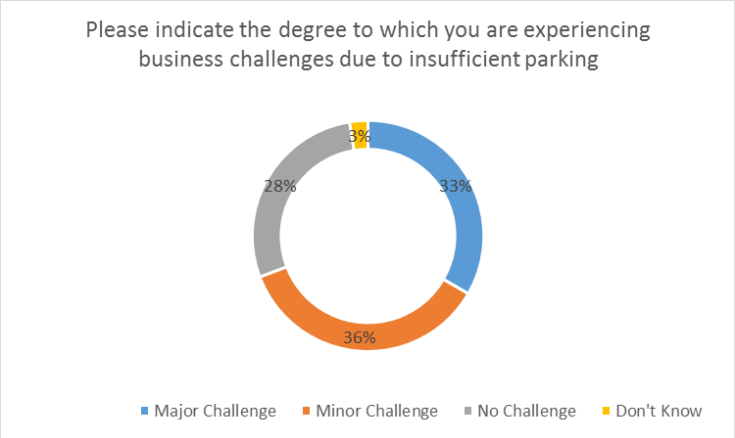


Figure 8b: Business challenges due to insufficient parking

The study draws the following conclusions:

1) There was 44% parking utilization during peak periods and 42% in off-peak periods;
2) Inadequate or confusing markings and signage appear to be a cause of under-utilization;
3) There is a significant need for long-term off-street downtown employee parking;
4) Inadequate lighting and crosswalk visibility is an issue in a number of locations;
5) Safety is a concern with parking along Mineral Street, Valley Street and Bank Block;
6) There are poorly marked and located handicapped parking spaces.

However, looking more closely at the data reveals a different situation, one that is more in line with the survey results expressing a lack of ample parking for certain buildings within the Downtown's core area. The data indicate a 78% occupancy rate for the on-street parking spaces along the central section of Main Street, located roughly between Claremont Savings Bank and Valley Street.

C. Parking Study Recommendations (2011)

A number of recommendations to improve parking in the downtown are included in the study and are listed below.

1) Develop and implement employee permit parking program
2) Incorporate businesses who lease into employee permit parking program / redefine leased spaces
3) Redesignate 2-hour spaces at Mineral St to 4-hour; Redesignate 8-hour spaces at Valley St to 4-hour
4) Replace and install signage with branding signage
5) Add reflective paint to crosswalks

6) Remove old paint indicating HC spaces where they have been removed/relocated
7) Replace signage at Bank Block
8) Notify Springfield Police of study findings
9) Initiate conversations with owner regarding shared parking possibilities
10) Initiate and complete sidewalk improvement project along Valley St
11) Evaluate and increase lighting levels on Valley St
12) Evaluate and increase lighting levels on Mineral St
13) Develop and adopt local parking standards that address study recommendations; distribute and educate business and public entities

The Parking Committee involved in this effort coordinated with the Selectboard after completion of the study in order to address some of the recommendations. A few of the recommendations have already been addressed, including new signage and changing the designation of hourly parking spaces. Figure 9 shows an updated parking inventory that includes these changes.

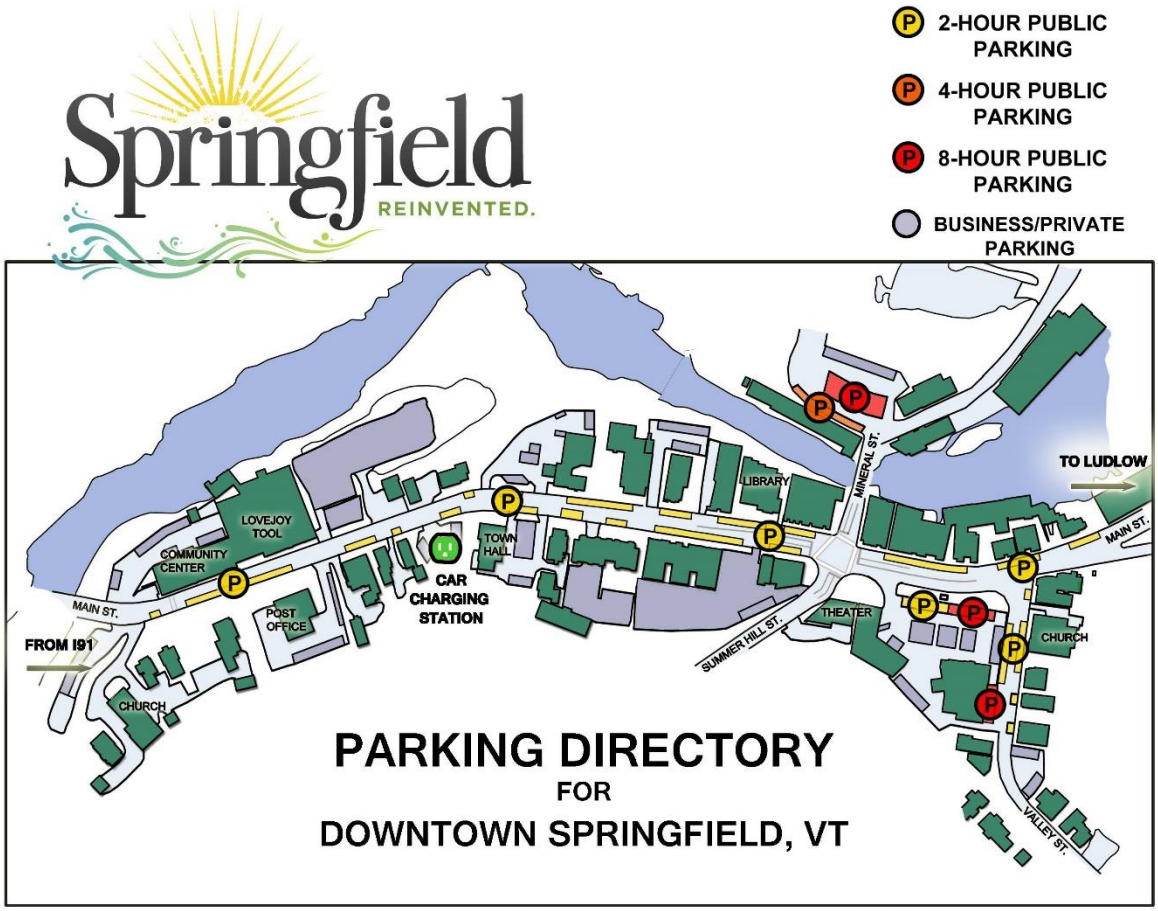


Figure 9 - Downtown parking inventory as modified in 2014

Additional parking improvements are identified in the master plan (see Section 4).

3.5 Building Façades

SOM created a Façade Program with the goal to create a fresh look for the face of Springfield's Main Street Corridor, and to develop building designs to be authentic and complimentary to the downtown's character and to each affected building. This program consists of two primary components:

1. The creation of building façade design renderings or design notes for twenty-four properties. This was completed for SOM in 2012 by Community Design Solutions. (See sample images in Figures 10-15.) Design work is provided to property owners at no cost. These design renderings also help to show what is possible to improve the outside appearance of these downtown buildings.

Figure 10 Before

Figure 11 After

Figure 12 Before

Figure 13 After

Figure 14 Before

Figure 15 After

2. SOM's Design Committee assists downtown businesses and property owners in bringing the design work to life. In 2014, façade improvements were made to the Odd Fellows Building and the First Congregationalist Church under this program. (See Section 2.5 depicting the before and after images of the Odd Fellows project.) The Design Committee is planning to make façade

improvements to the Good Buy Store, Community Center and Springfield Post Office in 2015 as timing and funding allow. SOM is working with property owners to carry out these projects.

3.6 Retail Market Analysis

As noted in Section 1.2, SOM hired Arnett Muldrow & Associates to develop *A Retail Market Analysis for Springfield, Vermont*, which was completed in December 2010. The purpose of this effort was to identify the current market situation for the community, including trade patterns, potential recruitment targets and marketing strategies. See the report for more detailed analysis and information. The following section is intended to summarize key findings of the market analysis for the purposes of this master plan.

A. General Retail Market Study Findings (2010)

1) Primary trade area: Springfield, North Springfield, Perkinsville
2) Secondary trade area: Chester, Cavendish
3) Retail leakage ($43 million/year) – impact of the Claremont factor
4) "Best potential" market opportunities:
    a. Food (specialty food retailers, farmer's market, coop)
    b. Specialty clothing shops (small, independent merchants)
    c. Sporting goods (a mix of team sports, outdoor outfitting, hunting, fishing)
    d. Independent restaurants
    e. Specialty retail (e.g. arts and crafts, combined studio & gallery space)
5) Key observations: recruit young professionals & families, pursue visitor traffic

B. Market Analysis Recommendations (2010)

1) Improve marketing to promote Springfield as a shopping & dining destination
    a. Way-finding signs & banners using the Springfield Reinvented brand
    b. Revise marketing materials for shopping & dining (brochure, web page, search engine improvements)
    c. Cooperative marketing
    d. Continue farmer's market
2) Recruit ground-floor retail, upper-floor office space
    a. Consider "Lone Wolf" office catalyst or artist studio space
    b. Establish volunteer recruitment team
    c. Consider young professionals group
3) Implement façade plan
4) 1995 Downtown Master Plan:
    a. Make strategic updates to the master plan
    b. Implement remaining recommendations

3.7 Springfield Branding Report

As noted in Section 1.2, Arnett Muldrow & Associates prepared the *Springfield Branding Report* in August 2010 for the Town of Springfield, SOM, Springfield Regional Chamber of Commerce and Springfield Medical Care Systems. This collaborative effort helped to establish a new community brand to assist in promotional and marketing efforts. A community branding effort was launched at the end of August 2010 based upon the results of this project.

For more information on the launch of this effort see http://springfieldvt.blogspot.com/2010/08/community-brand-launch.html.

Recommendations in this Report include, but are not limited to:

1) Developing a new community brand, based upon the concept of "Springfield: A Vermont Small Town, Reinvented".
2) Place-based marketing and promotional guidance;
3) Wayfinding signage designs;
4) Street banner templates;
5) Assistance in marketing empty storefronts;
6) Maintaining brand identity in outreach materials, such as brochures, website design, newsletters and advertising;
7) Guidance for promoting shopping local.

We are Springfield, Vermont.

Started as Eureka in the 1700's, we soon moved to the banks of the Black River where we used ingenuity to capture energy from the rushing waters of Comtu Falls to power our early mills. Our town grew around these spectacular cascades that remain a stunning part of downtown to this day.

We cultivated our discoveries to become the heart of Precision Valley. It is Springfield where inventiveness created the machines that led our nation through the perils of war and the instruments that let us explore the splendor of the nighttime sky.

Today, we are poised at a crossroads of history. Although our traditional economy is part of our past, we remain a full-service community with all the amenities of a larger city packaged in a Vermont small town.

We are reinventing the way we think about a healthy community with a remarkable renovation of the Gearshaper Plant into a state-of-the-art medical services facility, an innovative recreation center that uses solar power to heat our indoor pools, and a bike and recreation trail along the banks of the Black River.

We are reinventing the way we think about education with two new schools to teach our youngest children, creative programs to engage at-risk youth, and a collection of New England teaching institutions under one roof at the dynamic Howard Dean Education Center.

We are reinventing the way we think about our downtown with a renovated theatre representing a unique collaboration among partners, a weekly market bringing together farmers and producers from across southern Windsor County, and an artisan's gallery that is one of three State Craft Centers in Vermont.

We are even reinventing the way we think about the river on which we settled. We have exciting plans for a new recreation trail through downtown that will open spectacular vistas to Comtu Falls alongside creative reuse of our mills and historic buildings to bring new life to our historic waterfront.

This is only the beginning. We invite you to be a part of this reinvention, to discover Vermont life in a place that is transforming, to engage in the excitement as we unlock our potential.

We are Springfield: the Vermont Small Town, Reinvented

The above language was excerpted from the Branding Report.

4 DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

The intent of this section is to articulate a strategy for downtown revitalization, as well as to identify specific priority master plan elements for the community to implement in order to further this overall strategy.

4.1 Overall Strategy for Downtown Revitalization

The following master plan was developed based on extensive public outreach efforts, which formulates the following overarching strategy for the community's downtown revitalization efforts. Under the designation by the Vermont Downtown Development Board, downtown Springfield is the traditional central business district of the community as defined under 24 V.S.A. §2791. Continued revitalization efforts are needed in order to more fully achieve the intent of the State Downtown Designation Program. In order to do that, Springfield strives to base its revitalization efforts on the community assets and desired attributes as identified during the public outreach conducted as part of this project and summarized in this section.

- Downtown is an interesting place with lots of things to do, such as arts, food and music.
- Celebrate our history as a center of innovation, historic buildings and architecture.
- Downtown is business friendly, where specialty retail, restaurants, professional offices, entrepreneurs, and creative economy-based jobs are desired.
- Work toward a River Renaissance that involves:
  - Investing in recreational infrastructure;
  - Improving the ecological health of the Black River;
  - Reorient the community toward the river; improve access to and visibility of the river;
  - Transform the river into a community and economic asset.
- Promote our high quality infrastructure/community facilities, such as VTel's gigabit-per-second fiber Internet connection, award-winning high school, regional technical education center, and downtown gathering places (e.g. library, community center, senior center, Comtu Falls).
- Create a family-friendly environment downtown:
  - Youth population is an asset, including existing facilities (e.g. recreation center, library, Dance Factory);
  - Provide more youth opportunities/teen center;
  - Focus on family-friendly facilities and businesses.
- Continue heightened community policing and Project ACTION initiatives to enhance safety and security.
- Expand existing downtown community events and organize additional events.
- Promote mixed housing in the downtown. Work with partners to rehabilitate existing buildings for a mix of uses:
  - Retail on the street levels;
  - A mix of uses on the second floors (i.e. professional offices, technology businesses, educational/conference space, co-working space, studio);
  - Apartments on upper levels.
- Existing dams/hydro-power facilities produce renewable energy.
- Advertise and expand existing programs and services that support downtown economic development, such as cooperative marketing, building façade program, town revolving loan funds, small business development center, tax credits, downtown business recruitment program, regional

brownfields program, and other services available through Springfield on the Move, Springfield Regional Chamber of Commerce, Springfield Regional Development Corporation and other organizations.

- Focus infrastructure improvements on strategic priority enhancements, including more parking, additional street trees, improved pedestrian safety and enhanced streetscapes (e.g. riverwalk, scenic river overlooks, gateway enhancements).

4.2 Improvements to Infrastructure / Public Facilities

The appearance of the public space in the downtown – which includes the streets, sidewalks, parks and the river – is a critically important component of local revitalization efforts. In general, this plan seeks to make strategic improvements to public infrastructure in order to create a safe and pleasant pedestrian atmosphere in the downtown. Providing attractive plantings, street trees, improving access to the Black River and other enhancements to the public space can make a big difference in making the downtown more successful. These improvements are to be accomplished in coordination with other ongoing community efforts, such as Project ACTION, street tree inventory, and Steampunk initiatives.

A variety of recommended improvements to municipal infrastructure and public facilities were identified through outreach conducted as part of this planning process. The outreach efforts are described in more detail in Appendix D. These improvements are listed in two categories: scheduled capital projects and planned capital projects, as described and summarized below. Appendix C depicts the approximate location and extent of these proposed infrastructure improvements.

Scheduled Capital Projects

The following improvement projects are to be under construction or substantially complete in 2015:

A. Repave Main Street and River Street (VT Route 11)

The existing condition of the roadway along VT Route 11 through downtown Springfield is poor and the condition and visibility of the pedestrian crosswalks are currently very poor. A VTrans pavement management project will repave the Class 1 Town Highway sections of VT Route 11 – including Main Street – in 2015 [Project Number STP 2952(1)].

B. Water and Sewer System Upgrades on Valley Street

This project involves replacing the water line on Valley Street and installing a new sewer line on lower Valley Street, increasing fire flow and connecting three sewer services that presently discharge into the Valley Street Brook. Construction is anticipated to begin in spring of 2015 (Water & Wastewater Dept. Capital Plan, $900,000). Phase 1 of Valley Street sidewalk improvements may be able to be completed as part of this water and sewer system project, as funding levels allow.

C. Sidewalk Reconstruction at the Main Street/Summer Street Intersection

A small section of sidewalk was reconstructed in 2014 during the writing of this plan. This sidewalk project was located near the cinemas at the intersection of Main Street and Summer

Figure 16 Proposed Design for Wayfinding Signage

Street. It was completed as a component of a VTrans Project Number Springfield TCSE(006).

Planned Capital Projects

The following improvement projects are recommended, but may need additional planning or engineering efforts to develop or refine project scopes of work or to evaluate project feasibility. The following projects will likely require grants or other financial assistance and may take many years to implement:

Figure 17: Public park concept

1. **Install Wayfinding Signs**

   Install wayfinding signage to guide visitors to destinations in the downtown area as recommended in the 2010 *Springfield Branding Report* by Arnett, Muldrow & Associates. Figure 16 depicts the proposed design for wayfinding signs.

2. **Proposed Pedestrian Bridge**

   As proposed in the 1995 Master Plan, this project involves designing, permitting and building a new pedestrian bridge over the Black River that would connect the existing State Office Building parking lot to the proposed public park. A scoping and feasibility study may be needed, as pedestrian bridges can be very expensive and design would need to take flood hazard and river corridor issues into effect.

Figure 18: Extend the popular Toonerville Trail with connections to Downtown

3. **Proposed Public Park/Flood Retention Area**

   Develop a public park on property that is currently owned by Loyejoy. This project seeks to clean up this area and create a public park facility that would function as a public gathering space with access to the river, scenic vistas, picnics, and provide a venue for concerts and other public events. The proposed park would need to be carefully designed and constructed as portions of the site are within the flood hazard area (see Figure 17). It is recommended that the portion of this site within the floodway be maintained primarily as a flood retention area, but also allow for public access to the river. Depending upon what permitting would be required river corridor constraints may also pose an issue for the project. This project will only proceed based upon support from the property owner.

Figure 19: Simplifying traffic patterns and adding more green space/attractive landscaping would help to improve the gateway into downtown Springfield.

4. **Proposed Public Park Pedestrian Entrance**

   Develop a grand pedestrian entryway into the proposed public park along the Black River – described in #3 above – and make streetscape improvements along Main Street to highlight access into the park.

5. **Multi-Use Path Connection to Toonerville Trail**

   The Toonerville Trail currently ends at a trailhead located just northwest of the Nortrax building along Clinton Street. A trail extension that would connect to Bridge Street is being planned (see Figure 18). This project involves the investigating the feasibility of constructing a multi-use path that connects the Main Street corridor to Bridge Street and the planned Toonerville Trail extension. There is a sewer line that runs

to the north of the Black River that might serve this purpose, but it requires more investigation to determine possible impacts and project feasibility.

6. **Gateway Improvements and Clinton/Main/South/Mineral Street Intersection Improvements**

The purpose of this project is twofold: to create an attractive entry into downtown Springfield (i.e. gateway streetscape enhancements) and to improve intersection performance. This project will require professional consulting services in order to design a project appropriately. This would involve conducting an engineering analysis of intersection improvement options (i.e. installing a traffic signal, roundabout, or intersection reconfiguration) and design pedestrian and streetscape improvements to improve the appearance as a gateway into downtown Springfield. (See Figure 19.)

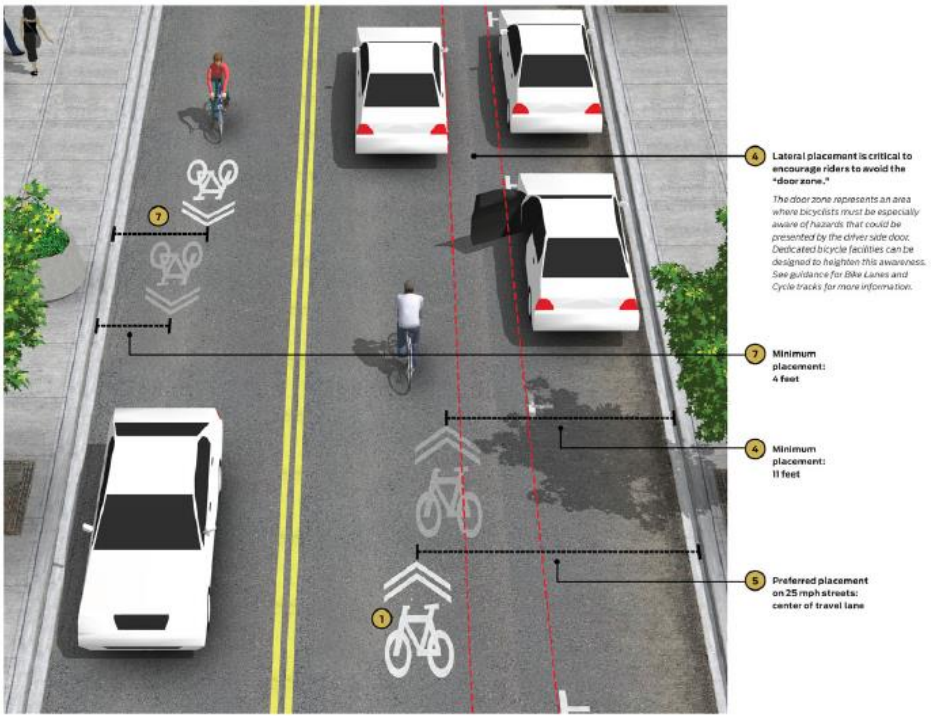


Figure 20: Excerpt from NACTO Design Guidelines for Shared Lane Markings

7. **Evaluate Bicyclist Facilities for Main Street**

Bicycle lanes are present on portions Clinton Street and River Street. This recommendation involves identifying bicyclist improvements to Main Street as it presents a gap in that network. In addition, the downtown also presents a gap in the planned multi-use path networks both to the north and south of downtown Springfield. This evaluation should also look into the provision of bicycle parking along the Main Street corridor. Since road width is very limited based on existing conditions as well as traffic circulation and on-street parking needs, options are very limited but may include Shared Lane or Modified Shared Lane Markings as described in more detail in design guidance from the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) – see Figure 20.

8. **Sidewalk Improvements / ADA Upgrades**

Reconstruct sidewalks in poor condition and make all necessary accessibility upgrades per the ADA Accessibility Guidelines. This includes a section of existing sidewalk along River Street by Comtu Falls Park and the Handley Building. This also includes a section of the Mineral Street sidewalk by the School Street intersection.

Figure 21: An example of how streetscape improvements can enhance a downtown (Hanover, NH)

9. **New Sidewalk Connection – Mineral Street**

   Develop a scoping and feasibility study to construct a new sidewalk to connect the existing sidewalk sections near School Street and the State Office Building. Coordinate construction of this new sidewalk with the reconstruction of Mineral Street sidewalk described in #8 above.

10. **Park Street Bridge Rehabilitation/Reconstruction**

    Park Street Bridge #79 over the Black River is currently in poor condition. The Town is coordinating with the SWCRPC and VTrans to get this structure added to the Town Highway Bridge Program for rehabilitation or reconstruction. It is currently rated the #2 priority Pre-Candidate need for the Region (i.e. a precursor to getting officially funded through VTrans' Town Highway bridge program).

11. **Site Improvements (Pocket Park/Parking Access)**

    This project involves demolition of the existing structures as discussed in item number 8 on page 30, and then making site improvements, which shall include better egress out of the bank parking lot and possibly a pocket park or streetscape improvements.

12. **Black River Retaining Wall Engineering Assessment**

    Evaluate the structural condition of the retaining wall at the edge of the One Hundred River Street parking lot off River Street and along the northeastern shoreline of the Black River. Make structural improvements to this retaining wall per the assessment at the same time as or before Riverwalk improvements are made.

13. **Proposed Riverwalk Improvements**

    Construct Riverwalk improvements that involve developing a new sidewalk along the Black River and reconfiguring the parking lot and making other streetscape improvements along River Street. It is important to note that One Hundred River Street cannot afford to lose parking spaces in the Riverwalk area. Site plans will need to be re-evaluated in order to maintain parking spaces while also improving pedestrian and streetscape facilities.

14. **Valley Street Sidewalk Improvements**

    Reconstruct the sidewalks along Valley Street to connect downtown with the municipal parking lot. This project will make all necessary ADA upgrades. A few sections of Valley Street (e.g. around the corner) are narrow and houses are very close to the road, which may limit the ability to widen the sidewalk to a full 5 feet by reducing the road width. As a result, the project may need to provide adequate passing space at least every 200 feet, if needed. The project should be engineered in order to determine these details. This project may also include lighting improvements.

15. **Parking Improvements**

    As identified in the 1995 Plan, there may be possibilities to link the parking lots located between Summer Street and the Town Hall in order to improve circulation and maximize parking spaces (see Figure 22). As this project would involve different property owners, investigation of whether this project is feasible is recommended.

Figure 22: Possibilities for parking improvements

16. **Proposed Parking Deck**

As discussed in Section 3.4, the parking study determined that overall downtown appears to have adequate parking. However, certain buildings along Main Street have no on-site off-street parking available, which limits their existing use or redevelopment opportunities. Therefore, the construction of a single level parking deck over the municipal parking lot on Factory Street needs to be evaluated. This additional parking is a priority as it facilitates the successful redevelopment of key buildings, such as the Woolson Block.

Figure 23: Example of a similar parking deck

17. **Island Natural Area**

Investigate the possibility of creating a natural area on the Black River island located behind the Springfield Regional Development Corporation building on Clinton Street.

4.3 Investment in Buildings/Property

A number of existing buildings have been identified that would benefit from some form of improvement, redevelopment, investment or enhanced marketing efforts. In order to facilitate the vision of this master plan, it is important to encourage reinvestment of these structures and to encourage uses and design elements that are in keeping with downtown revitalization efforts and Smart Growth Principles [24 V.S.A. §2791(13)]. A primary objective of this plan is to bring existing downtown buildings up to State building code standards, where needed. Identifying priority buildings may help to inform SOM's priorities for future Façade Program projects. Another key objective of this plan is to assist building owners with technical assistance and/or marketing efforts in order to seek full occupancy of downtown buildings. Implementation may be different for each building based upon property ownership, financing, grants and public/private partnerships.

1. **Community Center**

The Town Recreation Department and Springfield Senior Center are located within the Community Center building. The facilities within the building are outstanding, but a casual observer from the street would never know by the look of the building's exterior. It is a heavily used and very important facility for the community. Notably, it is the first Main Street building that drivers see as they enter downtown Springfield from I-91. The gateway impact of this building is an important consideration. The exterior of the building is in need of façade improvements. However, the structural condition of the building needs to be evaluated in order to develop a plan for the entire building, and the resulting needed improvements prioritized. The Town is planning to make some critical improvements to this building in 2015, while they are also evaluating funding opportunities to address the remaining needs.

2. **U.S. Post Office**

There were plans in the past to expand and redevelop this post office site, but the plans were not realized due to delays in property assessments and a subsequent loss of federal funding. The building could use some improvements, such as refinishing the floors, tree maintenance, and painting the lobby, windows and doors. It is important to keep civic buildings, including the post office, in the downtown. Therefore, SOM's design committee is working to assist in these efforts as time and funding allow.

3. **Woolson Block**

This building is currently in various states of disrepair. Currently there is a café operating on the first floor and a few occupied apartments on upper levels, but much of the building is under-utilized. The Springfield Housing Authority is considering options to redevelop the Woolson Block. This is a critically important building within the downtown, located at the intersection of Main and Park Streets. Any successful redevelopment of this site will include some form of retail on the street-level and residential units and/or professional offices in other parts of the buildings. There is no onsite parking for this building. Constructing a one-level parking deck above the municipal parking lot on Factory Street would help to facilitate the successful redevelopment of this building.

4. **H&R Block**

The Black River is an outstanding asset, but efforts are needed to improve the visibility of and access to the river. Improving the condition and attractiveness of the building façades along the river, will enhance the Black River from different vantage points and help with the overall downtown revitalization efforts. The H&R Block building is one example of several buildings on the river where improving the back and side façades is desired.

5. **SEVCA Good Buy Store**

SOM's Design Committee is currently working with Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) to make façade improvements to the Good Buy Store. These improvements are being pursued to continue implementing recommendations from the Façade Study.

6. **Odd Fellows**

This building is current unoccupied. The inside space is nice but the exterior was very worn out. SOM raised the necessary funds and contracted with Department of Corrections to paint the building in 2013. Altogether, the project cost if done commercially would have amounted to $30,000-50,000. The façade improvements are now complete and the building looks great. SOM's efforts to help market the property paid off; this building was recently purchased and is currently being improved. At this time, the building owner is considering business occupancy possibilities. SOM will continue to provide technical assistance to the property owner in filling vacancies.

Figure 24 - Bishop's Property on Valley Street

7. **9-11 Main Street**

These buildings have a somewhat limited use because of needed code and design improvements.

8. **Bishop's Property on Valley Street**

The desired outcome is to acquire this property, demolish it, improve egress from People's Bank, and make streetscape improvements along Valley Street. One building was demolished by the Town recently and the other building is being considered for removal. See the discussion for Planned Capital Project #11.

Figure 25 - the Great Hall, One Hundred River Street

9. **Handley Building**

This building, located along the Black River, has amazing potential as a museum, restaurant, brew pub or similar use that would take advantage of the potentially outstanding views of the River. A viable

use on the street-level would still allow for the hydro facility in the lower level to continue to function.

10. **One Hundred River Street**

    The former Fellows Gear Shaper factory building was recently renovated as part of a $13 million project. This mixed use building has a number of existing tenants (e.g. Springfield Health Center, pharmacy) and a few new prospects (e.g. brewery). As a Brownfield's site, approximately half of the building requires additional remediation. This building is a great downtown revitalization success story. However, there is a need to seek full occupancy of the renovated portion of the building and to remediate the remainder of the structure.

11. **Comtu Falls Building**

    This very attractive building is home to a hydro generation business, but the remainder of the building is mostly used for cold storage.

12. **Former Bowling Alley**

    This former bowling alley building has limited use for housing and storage.

13. **Parks and Woolson Building**

    The former Parks and Woolson building on the river has been closed and out of use for several years. A comprehensive approach to redevelopment will be needed for this building.

14. **Former Park Street School**

    In 2008, the community voted to close this school and consolidate elementary education into the Elm Hill and Union Street Schools. The Springfield School District administrative offices are currently using a portion of this building. However, the building a very large, needs work and has high operation costs. The community is evaluating the best future options for this building and property.

15. **Miller Arts Center**

    This facility was recently sold. A permanent home is needed to archive and display the collections from the Miller Arts Center.

4.4 Organizational Efforts

This section is intended to review existing and possible new organizational efforts that can best help to achieve the vision statement. An overall approach to downtown revitalization needs to keep in mind a certain focus of efforts:

- ✓ Springfield's economy is less tourist oriented, we need to focus our economic development efforts on the core market and then try to bring new people in.
- ✓ Maximize/improve access to the river; pursue a "river renaissance".
- ✓ People desire a walkable downtown.
- ✓ Above all, a downtown needs to be interesting, with things to do, such as the arts, culture and foods.
- ✓ Recognize that retail does not lead, retail follows.

> "A successful downtown has lots to do; arts, music and food are a large component of that."
>
> Comment from April 23, 2015 public meeting

1. **Coordination**

There are a variety of existing organizations, programs and funding sources that support downtown revitalization. However, the average property owner or prospective business owner may not know about them or who to contact to get more information. There is significant coordination already happening among the existing organizations, but efforts can always be improved upon. Creating a seamless, coordinated technical assistance for downtown revitalization efforts is an important strategy in order to streamline local economic development efforts and provide good, timely information to organizational clients to maximize these revitalization efforts.

2. **Promotion**

According to the Main Street Four Point Approach, promotion involves "creating and marketing a positive image of the downtown district and attracting people to socialize, shop at local businesses and restaurants, and enjoy local history and culture." The following promotional efforts have been identified in order to achieve the desired outcomes as stated in the vision statement:

a. Arts, music, culture and foods are key elements to make this a successful downtown.

b. Develop and execute a collaborative marketing and advertising plan.

c. State and regional marketing using a common community brand: Springfield Reinvented (e.g. website/frequent updates, "positive press" campaign, radio ads).

d. Local promotional efforts, such as storefront displays, events, street festivals, films. Focus on all of the good things that are going on in the community.

e. Promote the success of recent community policing efforts.

f. Celebrate recent successes with SOM business recruitment efforts.

g. Consider options for incentives for new business to assist in recruitment efforts (e.g. reduced rent, streamlined permitting process, tax breaks or tax stabilization contracts, remove parking requirements for new businesses in existing downtown buildings).

h. Leadership: we need to maintain a strong champion for downtown revitalization and provide the necessary help to achieve the vision.

i. Seek a keystone new business to serve as a catalyst for Springfield's Downtown Program.

j. Organize/promote more downtown events; keep promoting existing events.

k. Advertise our great high school and capitalize on our youth population as an asset.

3. **Economic Development**

Economic development – or economic restructuring as it is called in the Main Street Program – involves "strengthening and improving a downtown's economic assets and fulfilling its broadest market potential." The following strategies were identified to further economic restructuring of downtown Springfield:

a. Enhanced collaboration with local, regional and state economic development agencies/organizations.

b. Focus on the schools and preparing students for the workforce.

c. Parking improvements including parking deck, signage, maximize existing parking lots.

d. Work with VTel to build out its 1Gbps fiber network. Consider establishing wireless coverage throughout the downtown.

e. Explore what has worked well for other communities (e.g. Barre, Bellows Falls, Rutland).

f. Support Main Street entrepreneurship through business forums, loan programs, training opportunities, and seamless technical assistance.

4. Design

The following design elements or programs were identified for the community to focus on in order to improve the physical appearance of downtown Springfield:

a. Continue the program to improve building facades.

b. Remove dilapidated buildings and redevelop properties (e.g. parks, river access, etc.).

c. Wayfinding signage improvements.

d. Public art.

e. Improve the appearance of the public spaces with improvements to sidewalks and streetscapes and providing more green space and street trees. Coordinate with the Black River Action Team with their ongoing street tree project.

f. Traffic calming/slow traffic/lessen truck impacts.

g. Provide year-round trash, recycling and composting bins per Act 148 (Vermont Recycling Law) and integrate them into the streetscape design.

h. Include a public space for children/families (e.g. indoor play space, children's museum, public parks).

5. Other Efforts

The following other efforts include regulatory, programmatic or financial incentives that the Town of Springfield and other partners either have in place or may create or modify to better encourage the identified revitalization to occur in the downtown:

a. Revolving Loan Fund (RLF): the Town has a few RLFs that may be used to help fund building improvements and business startups.

b. Create a local incentive lending program to help encourage establishing new businesses or building improvements within the downtown, possibly using Community Capital of Vermont.

c. Evaluate the adequacy of the existing parking standards in the Zoning Bylaws for existing downtown buildings. The current requirements for the Central Business District require off-street parking to be provided by number of employees or dwelling units. The standards also allow for the DRB to waive the requirements. However, greater levels of flexibility may be desired for existing downtown buildings as well as more details on how the waiver process works, such as those provided in Burlington's parking standards.

d. Evaluate local application fee structures for opportunities to reduce fees for the desired types of downtown development/redevelopment.

e. Make the benefits of Downtown Designation better known.

f. Consider applying for Neighborhood Designation in the areas surrounding downtown Springfield.

g. Organize an educational session to learn about Form-Based Code or hybrid zoning code. Explore those and other alternative forms of local zoning bylaws as ways to clarify, simplify and/or expedite the local permitting process within the downtown.

h. Tax stabilization contracts in accordance with 32 V.S.A. §§ 4969, 4985.

i. Special assessment district pursuant to 24 V.S.A. Chapter 87 to help finance capital and operating costs of projects within the downtown.

j. Explore the pros and cons of assessing property taxes based on land value and not building value within the downtown.

k. Evaluate posting reduced speed limits (of less than 25 mph) in the downtown in order to help slow traffic and make the downtown a more pedestrian friendly environment.

l. Identify opportunities for the Town to take over maintenance of private parking lots in the downtown in order to facilitate better circulation and to maximize the total number of parking spaces. Explore parking facility financing options.

m. Take advantage of existing hydro-power facilities and potential micro-hydro opportunities for local renewable electricity generation.

n. Consider creating and promoting a historical walking tour of the Downtown/Historic District[5].

o. Investigate participation in the Certified Local Government (CLG) program in order to better integrate historic preservation concerns with local planning decisions. CLG communities are also eligible to apply for federal historic preservation grants.

p. Evaluate creating a makers space in the Downtown.

[5] A historic district in downtown Springfield is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It covers essentially the same land area as the designated Downtown boundary.

5 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

5.1 Strategies to Implement the Master Plan

There are a variety of ways for this plan to be implemented. This section strives to describe the most likely or important implementation methods, including but not limited to potential funding programs.

1. **Incorporate into Town Plan**

   Incorporate the *Downtown Master Plan*, in whole or in part, into the *Springfield Town Plan*. The local *Town Plan* update process is beginning in the winter of 2015 as the *Downtown Master Plan* is being completed. There will be plenty of time for the Planning Commission to consider incorporating aspects of the *Downtown Master Plan* into the *Town Plan*, as appropriate. A town plan has a statutory basis and related implementation expectations. It is important for the *Town Plan* to at least include priority public infrastructure needs as well as to formulate the land use chapter in ways that leads to the successful implementation of the *Downtown Master Plan*. For example, it is really critical for the community to have clear direction on what uses are appropriate for downtown as opposed to Clinton Street, River Street, Chester Road and the plaza in order to have a cohesive idea for what goes where in ways that do not undermine downtown revitalization efforts. See the 2015 survey results for more information.

2. **Coordination**

   Relevant local and regional organizations and agencies were engaged as part of this planning process. They should remain engaged in a continuous coordination effort, as they all have similar interests in the goal of making downtown Springfield a success. Since the implementation of this *Downtown Master Plan* involves the coordinated efforts of multiple organizations and agencies, it may be a good idea to establish a committee that can periodically meet to coordinate the multi-faceted implementation plan in the most efficient manner. This may be a new role for the project steering committee or perhaps a different committee should be established for this purpose, whichever option is determined by the partners to be the best course of action.

3. **Funding Opportunities**

   Seek grants and other funding opportunities to implement expensive infrastructure or priority building improvement projects. Funding sources may change over time, but certain options include, but are not limited to, the following options.

   a. Town Annual Operating Funds is an option for smaller capital cost items and ongoing Downtown Program operational funding.

   b. Create a capital reserve fund to raise the needed funds for capital expenses or to provide the local match on grants for large projects. The purpose of this option is to raise funds in advance of an anticipated capital expense in order to reduce the amount that must be financed or funded by other means. By doing this properly, the Town can avoid major spikes in annual budget spending over the years.

c. Preparing a capital improvement plan, which is a valuable multi-year municipal capital planning process. This refers to a more informal capital planning effort, the end result of which is not adopted like a Capital Budget and Program (described below).

d. Prepare and adopt a Capital Budget and Program under 24 V.S.A. §4430 for bigger capital budget costs identified in this plan. By planning the future expenditures that are identified in this plan, priorities may be needed and project ideas further refined based upon available funds.

e. The Downtown Transportation Fund is a competitive funding opportunity for municipalities to help pay for transportation-related capital improvements within or serving a Designated Downtown. Typical projects include parking facilities, pedestrian and streetscape improvements, and utility relocation.

f. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Program is an annual competitive funding opportunity through VTrans that can fund a variety of bicycle and pedestrian projects, including sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian structures and bike paths. A 10 percent local match is usually required.

g. The Transportation Alternatives Program is another competitive reimbursement funding program from VTrans. Eligible projects include a range of things such as sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, traffic calming techniques, lighting and other safety-related infrastructure, and transportation projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. A maximum award of $300,000 is available, with a 20% local match.

h. The Town Highway Class 2 Roadway Program (see Section 5 of the Orange Book for more details), which is available through the VTrans Maintenance District Offices. A maximum grant of $175,000 is available for resurfacing or reconstruction of Class 2 town highways. A 30% local match is required, but the match is reduced to 20% for towns that have adopted 2013-compliant highway codes and standards and conducted a highway infrastructure study per VTrans requirements.

i. Low interest loans (1%) from the State Infrastructure Bank can be used for roadway, bridge, pedestrian and public transit facility projects.

j. Regional Brownfield Program funding may be available through the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission for the assessment and cleanup of contaminated sites.

k. Economic Impact Initiative Grants from USDA Rural Development provides funding to assist in the development of essential community facilities in rural communities with extreme unemployment and severe economic depression.

l. Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program from USDA Rural Development provides funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas.

m. Rural Community Development Initiative Grants from USDA Rural Development provides funding to help non-profit housing and community development organizations support housing, community facilities, and community and economic development projects in rural areas.

n. Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program from USDA Rural Development provides funding for clean and reliable drinking water systems, sanitary sewage disposal, sanitary solid waste disposal, and storm water drainage to households and businesses in eligible rural areas.

o. Rural Business Development Grants from USDA Rural Development combines the former Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) and Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG)

Programs. According to the website, a rule is currently being developed in order to implement this program.

p. Art Works Grant Program from the National Endowment for the Arts to provide funding for the creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence, public engagement with diverse and excellent art, lifelong learning in the arts, and the strengthening of communities through the arts.

q. Our Town, which includes two grant programs from the National Endowment for the Arts, provides funding for creative placemaking projects that contribute to the livability of communities and place the arts at their core.

r. There are a variety of grant or loan programs available through the Vermont DEC Facilities Engineering Division for municipal drinking water and wastewater systems.

5.2 Implementations Priorities

Implementation strategies are summarized in the table shown below, with indications of who is best suited to get each strategy completed. In many cases, the projects may take multiple parties in coordination to make implementation occur successfully. The matrix below lists the primary entity identified to implement or facilitate implementation. (See Appendix C for infrastructure project cost estimates.) In most cases, projects contained in this report will require further evaluation to determine project feasibility and clarify probable costs. Most of these projects will require grants of other funding in order to be implemented. It may take many years to accomplish, based upon the availability of funding and coordination with property owners.

A. Implementation Matrix

Project ID	Description	Responsible Party	Notes
Infrastructure - Scheduled Capital Projects			
A	Repave Main St and River St	VTrans	Scheduled for 2016
B	Valley Street - water/sewer system upgrades	Town	Scheduled for 2015
C	Sidewalk Reconstruction - Main St/Summer St	Town	Substantially complete
Infrastructure - Planning Capital Projects			
1	Install wayfinding signs	Town / SOM	
2	Proposed new pedestrian bridge	Town	In coordination with property owner(s)
3	Proposed public park/flood retention area	SOM & Partners	In coordination with property owner(s)
4	Proposed pedestrian entrance to proposed park	Town	Would need ROW acquisition
5	Multi-Use Path Connection (Main St-Bridge St)	STAG	Feasibility Study
6	Gateway enhancements / Intersection reconfiguration	Town	Engineering Study
7	Evaluate bicycle facilities on Main St	STAG	Feasibility Study
8	Sidewalk improvements / ADA Upgrades (River St, Mineral St)	Town	Feasibility Analysis
9	New Sidewalk Connection (Mineral St)	Town	Feasibility Study
10	Park Street Bridge Rehabilitation/Replacement	Town	Town Highway Bridge Program
11	Site improvements/parking egress improvements	Town	
12	Black River retaining wall condition assessment	Town	Engineering Assessment
13	Riverwalk Improvements	Town	Feasibility Study
14	Valley St Phase 2 Sidewalk Improvements	Town	Feasibility Study
15	Parking lot improvements - maximize spaces, improve circulation	Town / SOM	Develop concept layout to show possibilities
16	Construct parking deck on Factory St	Town / SOM	Seek grants
17	Investigate island natural area	Town	

Priority Buildings			
1	Community Center	Town	
2	US Post Office	Property Owner/SOM Design Cmte.	
3	Woolson Block	Spri. Housing Authority/ SOM	
4	H&R Block		In coordination with property owner(s)
5	SEVCA Good Buy Store	Property Owner/SOM Design Cmte.	Mostly complete
6	Odd Fellows	Property Owner / SOM	
7	9-11 Main St	Property Owner / SOM	
8	Bishop's Property	Town	
9	Handley Building	Property Owner / Town / SOM	
10	One Hundred River Street	Property Owner	Assistance from SRDC
11	Comtu Falls Building	Property Owner / SOM	
12	Former Bowling Alley	Property Owner / SOM	
13	Parks & Woolson Building	Property Owner / SOM / SRDC	
14	Former Park Street School Building	School/Town	
Organization Efforts			
1	Coordination	All Parties	With support and coordination from the Town, Chamber, SRDC
2	Promotion	SOM Promotion Cmte.	
3	Economic Development	SOM Econ. Dvlp. Cmte.	
4	Design	SOM Design Cmte.	
5a-5d	Other Efforts-various	Town	
5e	Other Efforts-Downtown Benefits	SOM	
5f	Other Efforts-Neighborhood Designation	SOM/Town	
5g-5m	Other Efforts-various	Town	
5n	Other Efforts-Hist. Walking Tour	Historical Society	
5o	Other Efforts-CLG	Town	

6 EVALUATION PLAN

The intent of this document is that it is used regularly to guide local downtown revitalization efforts and to inform how to formulate geographically broader economic development strategies that support, and do not detract from, these downtown initiatives. The implementation matrix is intended to guide this effort. Progress toward achieving these recommendations and strategies should be reviewed at least annually. An annual or bi-annual progress assessment is suggested.

Establishing a committee to assist with this evaluation process is recommended. The project steering committee or similar group of people could serve this function. (See Section 5.1 Subsection #2 for more discussion about this.)

This evaluation process should take the following into consideration:

1. Assess progress made in implementing each item listed in the implementation matrix.
2. Review the criteria used in Springfield on the Move's Downtown Program reporting form.

The *Downtown Master Plan* should be updated in five years or as needed as conditions in the community demand. However, more frequent updates or addendums may be desired in order to keep Springfield's downtown revitalization program fresh and effective.

As conditions or local priorities change, the implementation matrix should be modified and updated as needed.