

**The Lower Village Visioning Process:  
Final Report**

***May 4, 2015***

***Lower Village Committee***

## **The Lower Village Visioning Process: Final Report**

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## **The Lower Village Visioning Process: Final Report**

*May4, 2015*

*Lower Village Committee*

**Introduction.** In January of this year, the Lower Village Committee embarked on a strategic planning process modeled after the one used by the Economic Development Committee the previous year. The goal of the process was to update the previous plan and address ways to protect the interests of all village occupants, businesses, residents and visitors alike. The process had four components:

*Phase 1: An Introduction to the Lower Village. The history of the Lower Village was reviewed and an exercise was conducted to help participants understand the boundaries of the Lower Village. The history presentation, done by Wayne Berry, can be found on the Committee's web site. The boundary discussion report can be found in Attachment 1 of this report.*

*Phase 2: A SWOT analysis for the Lower village. Judy Bernstein placed the Lower Village in the context of the Kennebunk Comprehensive Plan. Mathew Eddy conducted a SWOT analysis with those in attendance to better understand the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to the Lower Village in the future (see Attachment 2 of this report).*

*Phase 3: Community Session-Emergent Themes and Actions for the Lower Village, which were drawn from the SWOT analysis, were then reviewed and discussed by those in attendance (see attachment 3 of this report).*

*Phase 4: A Presentation of the initial Lower Village Action Plan was presented for community reaction, input, and further refinement.*

The final Report will be presented to the Lower Village Committee on May 4 for their review, comment, refinement, and action. Ultimately, the plan will be presented to the Kennebunk Board of Selectmen.

**The Action Plan.** The emerging themes and their subcomponents, which were drawn from the SWOT analysis, were reviewed on March 26<sup>th</sup>. The primary themes and subcomponents, all identified during the process, were then sorted out into a series of goals and policies that provide an action plan for the Lower Village Committee and the village itself.

The Goals and Policies provide a blueprint for direction and also recommend a new format in which the Lower Village Committee is organized. Each action is organized as follows:

Goals Statements: guidance, designed to organize our vision statement around specific measurable areas of direction.

- a) Policies: specific targeted statements designed to achieve each of the 6 goals of this plan. Each will be converted to an action described by:
- Who (Responsibility)
  - When (Timelines, Years 1-5)
  - Priority (High, Medium, Low)
  - Cost (General Cost Assessments)

As you review the various goal and policy statements, keep in mind that each and every one is important. The priority ranking represented the collective thought of the group, but each action is one that we want to try to achieve over the next five years. Sometimes opportunities present themselves in which the community could move more quickly on a low ranked priority

## **The Action Plan**

### **1) Organization. Refine and expand the role of the Lower Village Committee (LVC).**

- a) Utilize the “Main Street 4 Point approach” as an organizational model (organization, promotion, design, and communication/training) reorganizing the committee into three subcommittees: promotion, design, and communication/training. The committee of the whole shall serve as the organizational pillar.
- Who LVC
  - When 1
  - Priority High
  - Cost none
- b) Address the issues of apathy and misinformation through improved communication.
- i) Identify key technologies and methods of personal communication to get the word out to residents and businesses in the lower village (e.g. web, social media, block captains, etc.)
- Who Communication/Training
  - When 1
  - Priority High
  - Cost none, with assistance of staff
- ii) Populate each of the other subcommittees with other members from the community that have interest in furthering the sub-committee work
- Who LVC/Communication/Training; Staff; chamber

- When 1
  - Priority High
  - Cost none
- c) Maintain good relationships with some key decision makers and committees, including the Festival Committee, Chamber, the Board of Selectmen, the Land Trust, and the Economic Development Committee
- Who Communication/Promotion
  - When 1-5
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost none
- d) Monitor and address the costs of living and doing business in the village, represent issues critical to lower village constituents
- Who LVC; Staff
  - When 1-5
  - Priority Low
  - Cost none
- e) Identify funding sources, where necessary, to carry out options in this plan (e.g. Bartley's should be added to the TIF to increase the TIF pool; grants)
- Who LVC; Staff
  - When 1
  - Priority High
  - Cost None
- f) Work with the town to insure cleanup of problem properties
- Who Design; Staff
  - When 1-5
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost None
- g) Develop better relationships among property and business owners, both business to business and business to residential
- Who Communication; Staff; Chamber
  - When 1
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost None

**2) The Built Environment. The community would like to protect the present integrity and sense of place of the built environment in the lower village while maintaining a diverse mixture of sustainable uses.**

- a) Establish a plan to create a more seamless experience, between public and private space. Convene various property owners to discuss how to better meld private and public space, as well as address the parking and pedestrian connectivity goals below.

- Who Design
  - When 1
  - Priority High
  - Cost none
- b) Develop a proactive program for developer and business owner attraction that is consistent with the interests of Lower Village
- Who Promotion; Staff
  - When 1-5
  - Priority Low
  - Cost none
- c) Develop an incentive program that could assist in attracting desirable development.
- Who Promotion, Staff
  - When 1-5
  - Priority Low
  - Cost none
- d) Develop a Lower Village Design Master Plan that further defines the Lower Village's physical and personal sense of place.
- Who Design; Staff; Planning Board
  - When 1
  - Priority High
  - Cost \$25,000
- e) Identify and protect key properties that are either of historic or of high aesthetic value.
- Who Design; Staff; Historic Commission; Brick Store Museum
  - When 3
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost \$25,000
- f) Utilizing the findings of the design master plan, develop and adopt a set of design standards.
- Who Design; Staff; Planning Board
  - When 2
  - Priority High
  - Cost None
- g) Develop better relationships among property owners and businesses, both business to business and business to residential.
- Who Communication; Staff; Chamber
  - When 1
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost None
- h) Develop and implement a plan to maintain business diversity, discourage national chains, and incorporate the Town's buy local campaign in the Lower Village.
- Who Promotion; Staff; Chamber

- When 1
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost None
- i) Understand and support the supply side of village businesses, support the secondary economy's growth and create stronger business to business relationships as part of the buy local campaign.
- Who Promotion; Staff; Chamber
  - When 1-5
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost None
- j) Monitor and stay involved in the Bridge design and construction process
- Who Design (LVC); Staff
  - When 1-2
  - Priority High
  - Cost None
- k) Reconsider zoning west of Cooper's Corner on Western Avenue up to Lake Brook the properties immediate adjacent to the south side of Western Avenue to be consistent with the north side.
- Who Design; Staff
  - When 1
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost None
- l) Coordinate design and services development that will permit those of the lower village to age in place; coordinate with the community's No Place Like Home effort.
- Who Design; Staff; No Place Like Home board; Senior Center
  - When 1-5
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost None directly

**3) The Natural Environment. Recognizing the intrinsic value of the natural environment to the sustained success of the Lower Village, develop programs that maintain that quality.**

- a) Maintain or improve water quality in the River, Lake Brook, and at the Beach; inventory possible impact areas and establish corrective actions (including impact areas outside the village) while establish a base understanding of the existing environment and its natural inhabitants.
- Who Design; Staff; Conservation Commission
  - When 1-2
  - Priority High
  - Cost \$5,000

- b) Examine changes in the zoning ordinance, site plan review standards, or subdivision standards that could result in maintaining or improving the natural environment.
  - Who Design; Staff; Conservation Commission, Planning Board
  - When 3
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost None
  
- c) Work with the Harbor Committee to understand Harbor Management Plans and economy of the harbor (both sides, since it is combined), and its future direction.
  - Who Promotion; Staff; Harbor Committee
  - When 1
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost None
  
- d) Connect trails through conservation lands, easements, pedestrian walks, and bikeways, developing a plan that can be integrated with the rest of the community and promoted.
  - Who Promotion; Staff; Conservation Commission; Kennebunk Land Trust; Monastery
  - When 1
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost None
  
- e) Identify, map and maintain important Viewsheds through the Lower Village
  - Who Design; Staff; Conservation Commission; Kennebunk Land Trust
  - When 4
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost None
  
- f) Improve access to the river for boating, fishing, and viewing
  - Who Design; Staff; Harbor Committee; Conservation Commission
  - When 5
  - Priority High
  - Cost None

**4) Marketing. Working with the overall marketing strategies of the Town and Chamber of Commerce, take a series of actions to specifically address marketing issues in the Lower Village.**

- a) Change the name of the Lower Village to Harbor Village and encourage those using Kennebunkport as an address to consider the Kenenbunks or Harbor Village so as to better establish the identify of Lower Village. Make this part of a localized branding project.
  - Who LVC, Communication, Promotion

- When 1
  - Priority High
  - Cost None
- b) Using the Waterhouse Center Model, identify by place and calendar, things to do in the Lower Village and link to activities in Kennebunkport as well. Work with the web, social media, and mobile application to publish.
- Who Promotion; chamber of Commerce; Staff
  - When 1
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost None
- c) Market and manage some key events that would serve both the Kennebunk population and visitors.
- Who Promotion; Staff; Chamber
  - When 1-5
  - Priority High
  - Cost \$3,000
- d) Develop a new program around the creative economy, arts, art walks and joint advertising (already underway).
- Who Promotion; Staff; Chamber
  - When 1-5
  - Priority High
  - Cost \$2,000
- e) Take advantage of our location on a Macro level (exit 25, the new train station) and micro level (Dock Square, Beach, Monastery, historic areas) and incorporate it into our message and advertising.
- Who Promotion; Staff; Chamber
  - When 1-5
  - Priority Medium
  - Cost \$5,000
- f) Insure as part of any branding or marketing strategy that in addition to the diverse businesses of the Lower Village, we also identify key natural resources, walkability, connections to trails and connections to the beach.
- Who Promotion; Staff; Chamber
  - When 1-5
  - Priority Low
  - Cost None
- g) Develop a mentoring program to assist new business owners to assure their short and long term success in the lower village. Include educational programs that would be helpful in successful business development.
- Who Communication, Kennebunk Economic Development Committee
  - When 1-5
  - Priority Medium

- Cost None

**5) Pedestrian Circulation. There is a need to improve pedestrian connectivity throughout the Lower Village, across both public and private properties, make these improvements consistent with earlier Lower Village work, and make it easier for the visitor and town resident to understand.**

a) Complete the infrastructure improvement program for the west side of Cooper's Corner.

- Who LVC; Staff
- When 1-2
- Priority High
- Cost Focus Area 2 (Portland Road): \$470,000  
Focus area 3 (Western Ave.): \$556,000  
Funding Sources: MDOT, TIF, CDBG, private

b) Establish a Lower Village Wayfinding/signage program at both a vehicle and pedestrian level and wrap that into the Chamber Kiosk program (under way).

- Who Design; Staff; Chamber
- When 1
- Priority Medium
- Cost \$7,500

c) In conjunction with wayfinding, develop a pedestrian safety awareness program.

- Who Communication
- When 1-5
- Priority Low
- Cost None

d) Improve pedestrian connections throughout the lower village, including through adjacent privately owned commercial properties, where access to other businesses is made easier and the visitor experience enhanced.

- Who Design; Communication
- When 2
- Priority medium
- Cost None

e) As part of the physical design program, establish places for amenities on public and private space, e.g. Bike racks, benches, picnic tables, a better located public restroom, and overlooks with access to harbor views (include in master plan process).

- Who Design; Staff
- When 1
- Priority medium
- Cost \$3,000

- f) Provide increased police presence in the Lower Village during the summer season to insure safe and fluid pedestrian and vehicle movement.
  - Who Communication, Staff
  - When 1-5
  - Priority High
  - Cost None

**6) Parking and Traffic Circulation. Similar to pedestrian circulation issues, the circulation of vehicles, especially through private parking areas, is confusing and must be improved to insure visitor and resident experience.**

- a) Cease the parking wars and coordinate all parking and circulation where possible, whether it is public and privately owned and link to pedestrian circulation.
  - Who Design; Communication; Staff
  - When 1-2
  - Priority High
  - Cost None
- b) Build a new public parking area that can serve visitors, employees (thus freeing up private parking), and possibly buses.
  - Who LVC, Staff
  - When 1-2
  - Priority Low
  - Cost \$525,000
- c) Further analyze traffic movement (two previous studies, some done, some not), especially around Coopers Corner and focused on summer deadlock issues (note: there exist two previous studies, some of it completed, some not). Coordinate these efforts with Kennebunkport, especially as it relates to bus drop offs.
  - Who Design; Staff; Chamber
  - When 3
  - Priority Low
  - Cost Unknown
- d) Beware of the Bridge reconstruction!
  - Who LVC
  - When 1-2
  - Priority High

## Attachment 1: Lower village Boundary Discussion

### The Boundaries of the Lower Village

January 29, 2015

**Introduction.** The town of Kennebunk held a special visioning session for the Lower Village to look into the future of the Lower Village. The session was begun with a power point session conducted by Wayne Berry on the history of the Lower Village, focused mostly on the last fifty years. His presentation, whose images can be found on the town web site, reviewed the age old/mixed use nature of the village and the support and development of residential and commercial properties around it. The photographs revealed a history of mixed development, with community, village, and commerce being key components.

**The Boundary Exercise.** The same night, as part of a community exercise, those who were attending were asked to help define what the boundaries of the Lower Village truly are. Over 45 people participated in the exercise, breaking down into five groups. They had tools that included aerial photos and markers and were guided by team leaders.

The discussions were wide ranging and focused on personal beliefs, history, zoning issues, and where folks thought they lived and worked. The participants were equally business owners and resident.

Throwing out zoning definitions, the sense of most of the discussion was that the Lower Village is defined by:

- The annual tourism
- The residential rim around the Village, which was debated and argued
- Year round business needs to survive
- How a village lives and breathes
- The relationship to Kennebunkport
- Local businesses out of the center and their importance to the sense of the Village

**Discussion.** There are key components to the five group individual discussions. As they defined the Lower Village, they included the following key components:

1. Tourism is important; but there is a need to grow the year round residential support for the area businesses,
2. There are key rim businesses or locations that are not necessarily part of the Lower Village, but are considered part and may redefine the edges:
  - a. Snug Harbor Farm
  - b. Bennett's
  - c. Hillcrest Driving Range

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- d. Mousam River as a key fishing location on route 9 (bridge, kayak, and shore)
  - e. Bridle Path
3. There are the reality checks of locations:
- a. Kennebunk Beach is a key supporter of the village, whether in or out of season, although out of season is very slow.
  - b. There are important locations on the edge that locals identify:
    - i. Morning way
    - ii. Cemetery
    - iii. The Landing Store
  - c. The White Barn offers an interesting year round offering that could be built on, but it is also on the perceived edge of the business district, but outside the zoning district. The Franciscan Guest House (<http://www.franciscanguesthouse.com/>) also offers an interesting edge, with some of the most natural walks and scenery on the Kennebunk River.
4. The Lower Village is actually a very tight location, identified to the west by Snug Harbor, the south by the White barn, the north by Morning walk and the bridge to the Port.
5. Local residents have a strong identity to the Lower Village and want to enjoy their Village interactions. This is a key part of the balance as we move forward. Identifying the boundaries of that residential influence, whatever it is, may be a little harder.
6. Traffic and busses are key issues.

**Next Steps:** SWOT Analysis.

**Attachment 2: SWOT Analysis organized by priority vote taken on**

<b>Score</b>	<b>Strengths</b>
8	River, natural resource
8	Quality of Life
8	Size scale is just right
7	Sense of community, mix, many care
6	Location—the macro nature of Kennebunk’s location
5	Historical quality of the village
4	Walkability
2	Owner occupied, locally owned businesses
2	Beauty/charming
1	Diversity of Businesses
1	Scale, height of building just right
1	Proximity to dock square
1	Proximity to beaches
	Viewsheds
	Not Massachusetts, not overcrowded
	Tourism
	Waterfront Docks
	Private dead end streets
	Proximity to Monastery
<b>Score</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
12	Name
10	Developers
9	Lack of control/design standards
7	Signage and wayfinding, public and private, signage to wrong place
5	Parking, parking wars, competing public and private, employees
4	Bike trails and amenities
3	Police presence during peak
3	Pedestrian crosswalks, pedestrian disconnection/disjointed, awareness
3	Recent buildings not to scale
2	Summer deadlock
2	Accessibility to public restroom (Grand seen as difficult)
1	Identity (as compared to the Port)
1	Coopers corner
<b>Score</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
14	Greater Development controls. Design standards, stay unique
6	Marketing
5	Art focus/business dev/art walk
4	Coordinated public and private parking

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4	Acknowledge and work I identity as the Kennebunks
4	Mixed use zoning south side of Western from coopers corner to Lake brook
3	Professional design plan for lower village
2	Bridge work opportunity for overlooks
2	Open network/wifi
1	Play up historical aspect
1	Focus and identify good development partners
1	Clean up of buildings/yards
	Identify key resources and incentives to steer development
	Condition of Lake brook bridge
	New space availability
<b>Score</b>	<b>Threats</b>
13	Unwanted development
9	Lack of design standards
6	Water Quality
4	Confusing web site notice
4	Pavement, rt. 35, western
3	Increasing traffic
3	National chains/inconsistent with our local owners
3	Taxes/cost of doing business, infrastructure
3	Apathy
1	Loss of bridge
1	Misinformed voters on zoning, implementation, infrastructure
	Lack of allure/physical amenities/visual

## Attachment 3

### Emerging Themes: The Lower Village Visioning Process

*March 26, 2014*

*Lower Village Committee*

**Introduction.** The following themes and their subcomponents were drawn from the SWOT analysis conducted for the Lower Village on February 26<sup>th</sup>. The primary themes are drawn from priority issues identified by those in attendance at the session. The subcomponents, all identified during the process, were then sorted out using combinations from the SWOT analysis and fitting them under the appropriate theme. For example, the river, natural resources and water quality were variously identified as both a strength and a threat, thus the emergence of a program to manage the natural environment with various subcomponents related to protecting those natural resources.

This list is by no means complete. At the March 26 meeting, we may add additional items as we go through each of the themes and subcomponents. Our ultimate goal is to create a series of Goals, Policies, and Strategies for the Lower Village Committee to pursue over the next 3-5 years. These could then be transferred to and adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan at a later date.

### Themes

1. Managing the built environment
  1. Merging of public and private space
  2. What is a good developer or business property owner? Have a proactive attraction program
  3. Incentivize uses and desirable development
  4. Develop a design plan
  5. Identify and protect “eye candy” properties
  6. Development of design standards
  7. Develop better relationships among property owners, both business to business and business to residential
  8. Maintain business diversity, avoid chains, buy local campaigns
  9. Build on the historical diversity of the Lower Village
  10. Understand and support the supply side of village businesses, support the secondary economy’s growth
  11. Monitor and stay involved in the Bridge design and construction process

12. Reconsider zoning west of Cooper's Corner on Western Avenue
13. Open network, free wifi
2. Managing the Natural Environment
  1. Maintain or improve water quality in the River, Lake Brook, and at the beach; inventory possible impact areas and work to correct. This could include work outside of the immediate lower village area
  2. Understand the base environment of the River i.e. did you know there are sturgeon runs in the River?
  3. Work with the Harbor Committee to understand Harbor Management Plans; the working part of the harbor (both sides, since it is combined)
  4. Connecting trails through conservation lands, easements, pedestrian walks, and bikeways (develop a plan that can be integrated with the rest of the community).
  5. Identify and maintain important Viewsheds
  6. Improve access to the river for boating, fishing, and viewing
3. Refine/expand the role of the Lower Village Committee
  1. Utilize the "Main Street 4 Point approach" as an organizational model (organization, promotion, design, economic structuring)
  2. Address the issues of apathy and misinformation through the use of technology, the web site and other identified communication methods; develop a communication plan
  3. Using the Committee as a starting, codify and maintain what a sense of community means
  4. Market and manage some key events
  5. Maintain good relationships with some key decision makers and committees, including the Festival Committee, the Board of Selectmen, the Land Trust, and the Economic Development Committee
  6. Modify the make-up of the committee to expand representation (ideas?)
  7. Monitor and address the costs of living and doing business in town, represent issues critical to lower village constituents
  8. Identify funding sources, where necessary, to carry out options in this plan (e.g. Bartley's should be added to the TIF to increase the TIF pool; grants)
  9. Work with town to insure cleanup of problem properties
4. Marketing the Lower Village
  1. Change the name and set the village with its' own clear identity (ideas? Can we make a recommendation now?)
  2. Following the Waterhouse Center Model, identify by place and calendar, things to do in the lower village and Kport. Work with the web and mobile application to publish.
  3. Develop a new program around the creative economy, arts, art walks and joint advertising.
  4. Take advantage of our location on a
    - Macro level (exit 25, the new train station)
    - Micro level (Dock Square, beach, monastery, historic areas)
  5. Fully meld the Village with Kport, Arundel, etc under the Kennebunks moniker

6. Market the walkability of the area
5. Pedestrian Connectivity
  1. Wayfinding/signage program at both a vehicle and pedestrian level
  2. Pedestrian awareness program
  3. Improve pedestrian connections throughout
  4. Complete infrastructure program for the west side of Cooper's Corner
  5. As part of the physical design program, establish places for amenities on public and private space, e.g. Bike racks, benches, a better located public restroom, (others?)
  6. Insure unique advantages of overlook benches on the bridge
6. Parking and Circulation
  1. Cease the parking wars, coordinate all parking, public and private
  2. Build a new public parking area specifically for employees (and busses?)
  3. Make safe pedestrian parking connections
  4. Further study summer deadlock issues; coordinate with Kport
  5. Analyze traffic movement (two previous studies, some done, some not), especially around Coopers Corner and between private properties

Beware of the Bridge recon