



SUNAPEE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Sunapee Community Design Charrette

April 12-13, 2024

Sunapee Community Design Charrette Acknowledgements

Thank you to the individuals who donated their time, energy, and expertise for this charrette. Extra thanks to all the community members who shared their insights about Sunapee.

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Sunapee Heritage Alliance

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Sunapee Harbor Riverway

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Lake Sunapee Protective
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Sunapee Historical Society

Abbott Library

Sunapee Schools

Additional Thank You's!

The Lodge

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Applesed Restaurant

Northcape

**THANK YOU
SUNAPEE!**



Who is Plan NH?

Plan New Hampshire (Plan NH), is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization formed in 1989. Plan NH has a vision of a New Hampshire that is vibrant and healthy for its people, its economies, and the environment. To achieve that vision, Plan NH's mission is to foster excellence in planning, design and development of New Hampshire's built environment, because we believe that what we build, where we build, and how we build anything has a significant impact on that vibrancy and health.

Plan NH champions principles and ideas that balance the built environment - including buildings, roads, bridges, memorials, public sculpture - with:

- the needs of people, including where they live, how they get about, what services are necessary, what they value;
- maintaining a “sense of place” of our towns, cities, and villages that make them unique, including preserving historic assets, open spaces, agriculture, and farming;
- and protecting our air, water, flora, and fauna.

Among our signature programs is the Community Design Charrette Program, a participatory exercise that brings professionals from our membership together with New Hampshire communities to explore design ideas, usually around a village center or other significant neighborhood or community asset. Through recommendations made, Plan NH can demonstrate the role and importance of the principles and ideas noted above in concrete, real examples.



What is a Charrette?

Simply stated, a charrette is a brief, intense, brainstorming session in which ideas are brought together for the purpose of defining potential planning recommendations and possible design solutions for an identified need. For Plan NH, this is usually related to a town center or other significant neighborhood in a community.

Plan NH's community design charrettes take place over the course of two days: eight hours on a Friday for listening and then another eight hours the next day for brainstorming, crafting recommended solutions, and presenting thoughts to the community.

The process engages planning and design professionals in direct dialog and conversation with each other and with local residents to collect information needed in order to develop good and relevant recommendations about how to address a particular challenge. Plan NH sees this part of the process as a period of discovery: discovering who the community is, what they value, what they really want. This community input is essential and critical to the value of the outcomes.

The results of a Plan NH charrette are general and overarching planning and design recommendations, rather than specific directions. Plan NH does not dictate but suggests. Most often, the outcome of a Plan NH charrette is described as a "vision": an expression of how things might be, based on what the team saw and heard and learned.



Campton, NH - Oct. 2023



Manchester, NH - July 2023



Brentwood, NH - May 2023



Temple, NH - Oct. 2022

Charrettes blend the broad experience of planning and design professionals with local citizens' detailed knowledge of their own community to develop recommendations that address challenges and opportunities in the project at hand. These recommendations provide a framework within which more detailed solutions and plans of action can be developed.

Why Did Plan NH Come to Sunapee?

The Sunapee Heritage Alliance, with the support of the Town of Sunapee, the Sunapee Harbor Riverway Corporation, and others, submitted an application to Plan NH in September 2023 to identify issues in and around the Sunapee Harbor area related to economic development, traffic, and more. The Sunapee Heritage Alliance was seeking assistance to address the following areas of concern:

- 1 Stimulate year-round economic development in the Sunapee Harbor area** with options for dining, shopping, and recreation that are economically sustainable and enjoyable for both residents and tourists.
- 2 Address underutilized buildings and spaces** by repairing and restoring abandoned or dilapidated buildings while preserving the historic significance of the buildings in and around Sunapee Harbor.
- 3 Improve navigation to and around Sunapee Harbor** to attract visitors and improve navigation for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- 4 Reconfigure Route 11** to improve safety and connectivity to important town resources.



Overview of project area, including Sunapee Harbor, the Sunapee Harbor Riverwalk and Route 11 from Main Street to Sargent Road.



4 Zoom in of Sunapee Harbor and the adjacent recreation land.

Site Tour Observations



What the Plan NH team saw during our project area tour of Sunapee:

- On Friday morning, we made several stops around the Sunapee community and the Sunapee Harbor area.
- **Our first three stops focused on the area around NH Route 11.** We examined the hill heading into the community, the intersection with Sargent Road, and the intersection with Upper and Lower Main Street.
 - We noted the wide design of Route 11, the lack of continuous sidewalks and pedestrian crossings, and the location of important town amenities along this route such as the library and safety services building.
- **From there, our charrette team headed to the Sunapee Welcome Center and walked the Sunapee Harbor Riverwalk.** We passed the Town Offices, and walked up the hill alongside the Sugar River, passing the Sunapee Water Dept. Pumping Station and the Sugar River Bridge.
 - We noted the historical significance of this location in the community and the lack of definition and clear signage for the Riverwalk.
- **Finally, we toured the Sunapee Harbor area,** focusing on the gazebo and surrounding properties.
 - We noted the beautiful and serene setting of the Harbor, the small-town feel, and the dilapidated condition of some of the buildings.

Plan NH would like to thank our wonderful driver and tour guides for our engaging and insightful tour of Sunapee!

What Sunapee Told Plan NH

What Plan NH Heard from Community Leaders

After the tour of the Sunapee Harbor area and surrounding areas, the team met with key community leaders, including Town staff, Board and Commission members, local business owners, and key property owners. We learned about the challenges and opportunities from their perspectives as those that work in, and serve, the Town of Sunapee on a daily basis. Many of these challenges and findings are intertwined in terms of their causes and potential solutions.

Harbor Area

- Desire for a year-round place of commerce.
- Development should not over-commercialize the Harbor.
- Regulations may be preventing development.
- Traffic and safety issues in the Harbor area.
- One-way loop option to reduce traffic was considered in the past.
- Issues with parking and navigation in the Harbor area.
- More utilization of Harbor and Riverwalk areas is needed.
- Lack of visibility and identity from Route 11.
- Route 11 disconnects the Harbor from the rest of the community and Town assets.
- Stormwater and runoff management are important to protect water quality for Lake Sunapee.

Town Amenities

- The school is a valuable asset and the students have implemented great projects for the community.
- Development could result in increased cost of emergency services.
- Other public spaces, such as Veterans Field, could be utilized.
- Farmers markets, etc., could be leveraged to attract visitors and invigorate the Harbor area

Housing

- Strong need for affordable housing as well as a need for community consensus around a definition.
- Increases in zoning density have often been rejected when voted on.
- Apartments not usually ideal for families, but may attract young workers.
- Charrette project area is dense, would be more conducive to apartments.
- Recent regulations restricting short-term rentals were passed in Sunapee.



What Sunapee Residents Told Plan NH

Two public listening sessions were held during the afternoon and evening of Friday, April 12. The sessions served as an opportunity for the public to share their comments and ideas about the various challenges and opportunities throughout the project area. Plan NH's process encouraged participation and input from everyone in the room. The residents in attendance shared their opinions about how to preserve Sunapee's charm while looking to explore ways to continually improve. It was obvious to the charrette team that the community is invested in Sunapee and passionate about its future, and we were excited to explore the possibilities with them.

Throughout these input sessions, community members discussed (1)community strengths, (2)concerns/challenges, and (3)desired improvements. From the common themes, we distilled an overall vision.

Overall Vision:

- Balance commercial development with preserving the small-town atmosphere of Sunapee.
- Enhance connectivity and accessibility within the community.
- Create a vibrant, year-round, and economically sustainable Harbor area that can act as a town center.



What Sunapee Residents Told Plan NH

(Continued)



Strengths

Community and Natural Assets:

- Beautiful lake and waterfront
- Historic buildings and character

Community Engagement:

- People who live in Sunapee love it
- Strong sense of community among year-round residents
- Young people regularly contribute and volunteer

Tourism and Events:

- Farmer's markets, music events, and movies bring people to the Sunapee Harbor
- Tour boats are a significant draw
- Summer is the busiest time of year, with many seasonal residents and visitors coming to the Harbor
- The Livery helps bring visitors year-round

Environmental Consciousness:

- Emphasis on protecting Lake Sunapee and the water quality
- The Sugar River and beautiful environment are valued

What Sunapee Residents Told Plan NH

(Continued)

Concerns/Challenges

Infrastructure and Safety:

- Lack of sidewalks, disconnected walkways
- Unsafe intersections, crosswalks, streets, and roadways
- Seasonal traffic congestion, especially in the summer

Economic and Community Development:

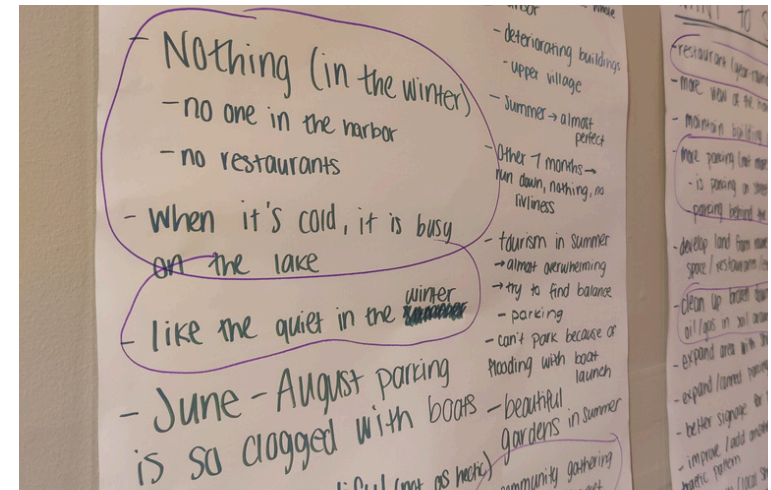
- Lack of downtown or town center
- Services are spread out and there are unused buildings
- Seasonal nature of current businesses in the Harbor
- Limited affordable/family housing
- Some visitors utilize the boat launch but do not spend time in Sunapee

Environmental and Aesthetic Issues:

- Concerns about water quality and runoff
- Aging infrastructure and dated buildings
- Hodgepodge of developments lacking cohesion

Community Division and Participation:

- Disconnect between lakefront and other property owners
- Disconnect between year-round and seasonal residents



What Sunapee Residents Told Plan NH

(Continued)

Desired Improvements:

Infrastructure Enhancements:

- More and better sidewalks, walkways, and bike paths
- Improved pedestrian and bicycle safety
- Better traffic management, including possible one-way segments, offsite parking with shuttles, and traffic calming along Route 11

Community and Economic Development:

- A cohesive downtown or town center
- Affordable housing to attract families/young workers
- Efficient property usage, development of vacant lots
- Year-round community spaces, activities, and businesses, particularly food and beverage establishments
- Better signage and marketing to draw people into the Harbor

Environmental and Historical Preservation:

- Protection and beautification of the lake, river, riverwalk area, and historic sites
- Maintenance and restoration of historic buildings



Recommendations

Based on what the Plan NH Charrette Team learned from our walking tour and the stakeholder and community listening sessions, we developed a series of custom recommendations meant to address the concerns we heard about the project area. These recommendations were presented in-person to the community on Saturday, April 13, and are included in more detail in this report.

The following is a list of the recommendations developed by the Charrette Team for potential ways to address the community's vision. More detail regarding each recommendation is provided on the following pages.

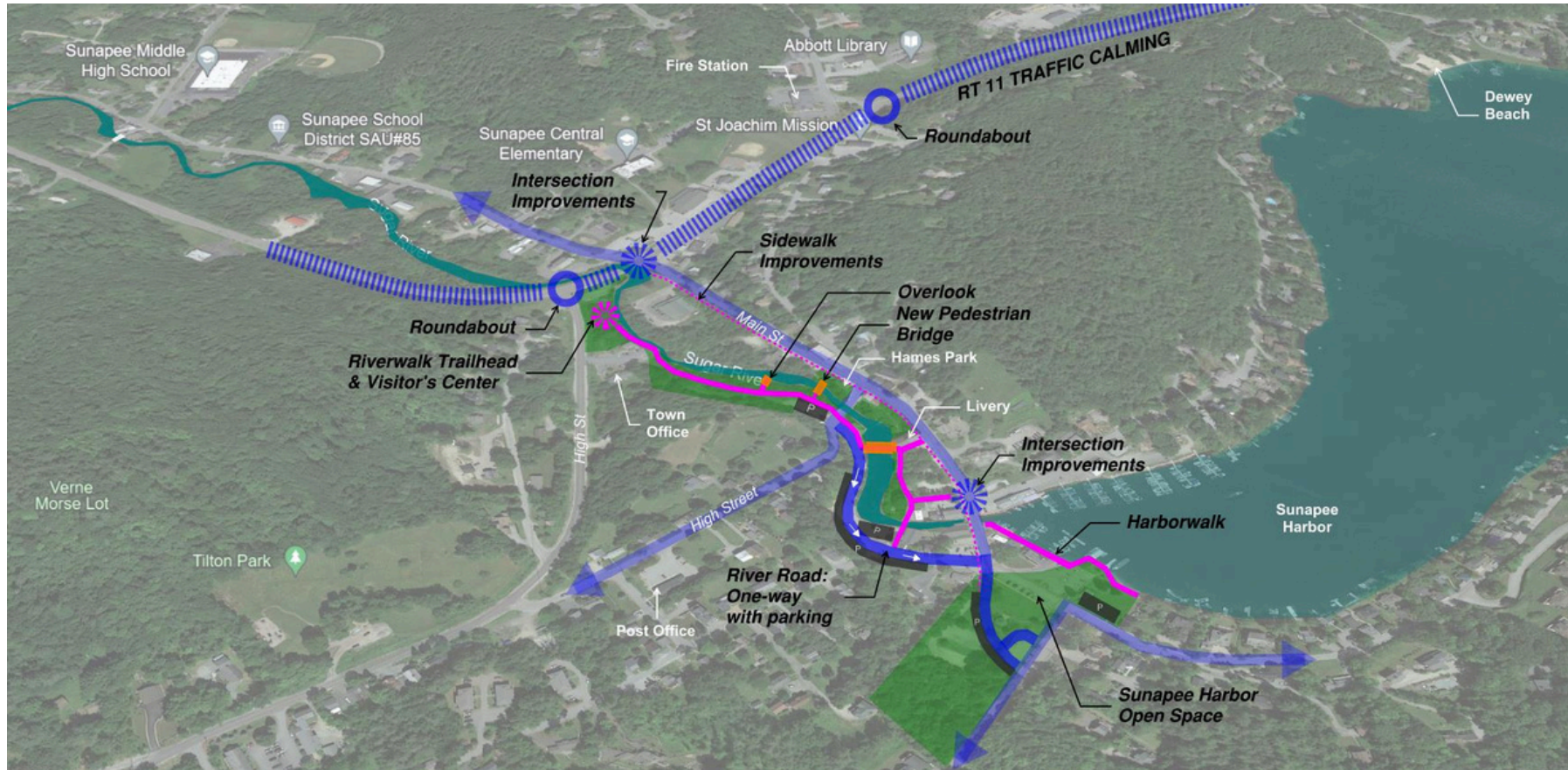
- 1. Overall Connectivity**
- 2. Route 11 Design**
- 3. Riverwalk Improvements**
- 4. Housing**
- 5. Planning & Zoning**
- 6. Economic Development**
- 7. Harbor Reconfiguration**



Overall Connectivity

Our first set of recommendations focuses on the connections to, and around, the Sunapee Harbor area. These connections, or lack thereof, play an important role in the economic development of the area. The two main corridors considered from the project area are:

1. Route 11 through Sunapee as an important corridor to bring traffic from outside while not acting as a barrier for travel inside the community.
2. The Sunapee Harbor Riverwalk trail, which serves as a pedestrian connection with historic significance and natural beauty.

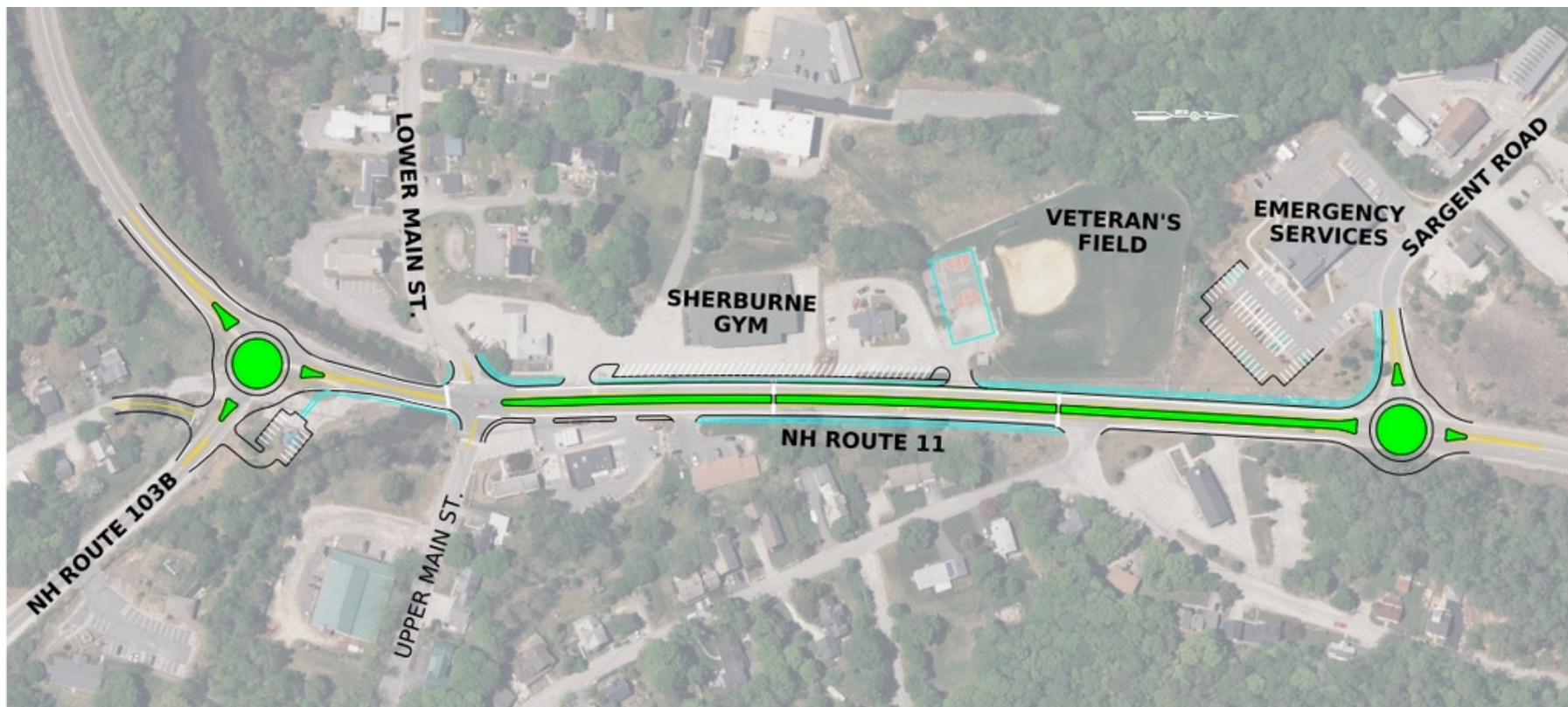


An overview of overall circulation in the project area, including recommended improvements.

Route 11 Design Overview

In the existing condition, the speed limit along Route 11 decreases from 50mph to 30mph from just south of Jobs Creek Road to just south of Winn Hill Road. This speed limit decrease seems to be ineffective at slowing down traffic. There is also a high volume of traffic on the road (7,400 vehicles per day) and the road separates the Harbor area from important facilities such as the library, school, and safety services building. The only sidewalks along Route 11 in this area are a short segment on the east side located adjacent to Upper and Lower Main Street.

The following design recommendations have been proposed to increase safety and connectivity for pedestrians, bikes, and vehicles:



An overview of the Route 11 focus area with proposed changes.

Route 11 Design Intersection Improvements

Goals:

1. Implement traffic calming elements along Route 11 between Jobs Creek Road and Route 103B. This will alleviate safety concerns by slowing down traffic and providing safe facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
2. Create a gateway/entrance feel approaching the town center and Harbor area. This will contribute to the economic development of the Harbor area by encouraging travelers to stop and explore Sunapee.

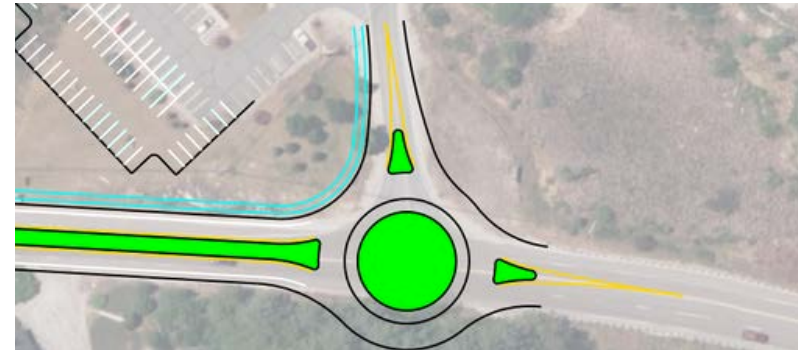
Intersection Improvements:

Sargent Road/NH 11 and NH 103B/NH 11

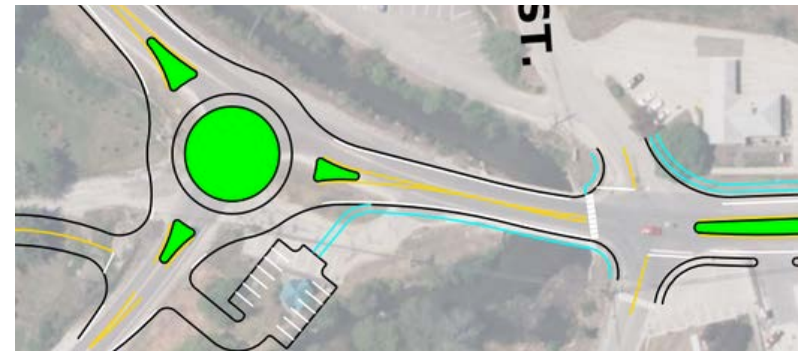
- Reconfigure intersections to include roundabouts for increased safety and traffic calming.
- Lengthen splitter islands on approaches to signal changing conditions.
- Utilize center islands to narrow the roadway and introduce landscaping features.
- Reconfigure Town's Visitor Center parking and realign Chase Street with Route 103B.

Lower Main Street/Main Street/NH 11

- Due to the tight constraints at this location, adjacent NH 11 bridge and Sunapee Archives building, a roundabout design at this location would result in a high level of impact and cost.
- Realign intersection for better through movements.
- Add a crosswalk on the south side to connect Lower Main Street to the Harbor area.



Sargent Road/NH 11 Proposed Design



NH-103B/NH 11 Proposed Design



Splitter Islands in Keene NH; Entry Signage in Warner NH

Route 11 Design Roadway Modifications

Roadway Design Changes:

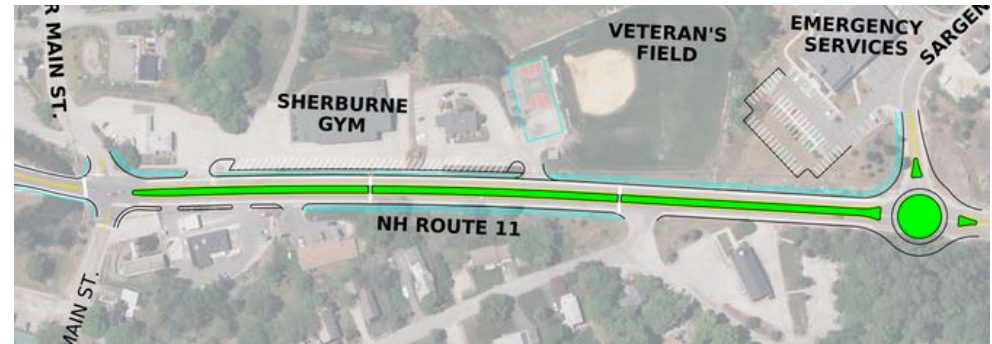
- Taper 12-ft travel way and 8-ft paved shoulder to a narrower width between Jobs Creek Road and Route 103B.
- Ensure shoulder width remains adequate for bicyclists.
- Provide sidewalks on both sides of the road and crosswalks at meaningful locations.

Raised Median:

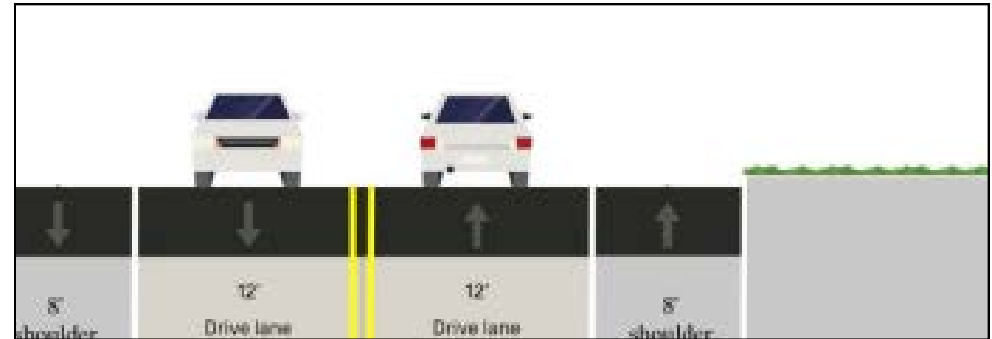
- Consider concrete, grass, or landscaped raised median.
- Provide pedestrian refuge areas in the median at crosswalks, and possibly signalize crosswalks to alert drivers of crossing pedestrians.
- Use double roundabout design to accommodate raised median and restrict left turn movements.

Off-Street Parking:

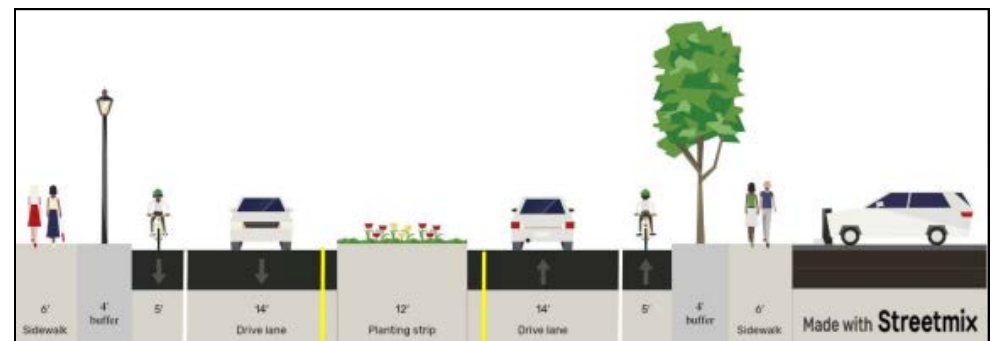
- Narrower shoulders will result in parking being disallowed along Route 11.
- Expand public parking at the Safety Services building, ensuring adequate spaces are reserved for Emergency Service vehicles.
- Widen parking lot at Sherburne Gymnasium to accommodate angled parking, possibly consider combining with bank parking lot for more spaces.



Overview of Roadway with Proposed Changes



Existing Roadway Cross-Section



Proposed Roadway Cross-Section

Riverwalk Improvements Overview

The Sunapee Harbor Riverwalk presents a unique and powerful hands-on opportunity to communicate the natural and human history of Sunapee to both residents and visitors. However, the Riverwalk does not currently live up to this potential, primarily due to a lack of clear definition and a cohesive sense of place. In order to realize the potential of the Riverwalk, there must be a consensus as to what the Riverwalk should be, what message it should communicate, and how to best tell this story as a visitor passes through. The map below highlights some ideas from the Charrette Team about how to accomplish this, including some potential rerouting of the trail.



The Sunapee Riverwalk, with proposed additions and changes, some of which are detailed on the following pages.

Riverwalk Improvements Placemaking & Signage

One of the best ways to communicate the story of a place to visitors is through signage. As visitors navigate through the Riverwalk, consider using interpretive signage to educate them on the history of Sunapee Harbor and the Sugar River. Signs should be able to be quickly read (according to the national park service, 45 seconds or less is ideal) and establish a narrative that visitors can follow.

Consider placing more signage at important points on the Riverwalk. The information on the sign depicted in the upper right photo could be broken up and placed on smaller signs throughout the Riverwalk at relevant locations. Additionally, for cohesiveness throughout the entire harbor area, consider using a similar universal design as the wayfinding signage for visitors to the central Harbor area. More on wayfinding is detailed on page 28 of this report.



Signage along the Sunapee Riverwalk.



Examples of Interpretive Signage that offers information when scanned.



Signage outside the Sunapee Welcome Center.

Are there other opportunities in Sunapee to use signage to enhance underutilized spaces?

Riverwalk Improvements

Trail Definition

To further enhance the Riverwalk, consider formalizing the trail through Coffin Park and across the Sugar River Bridge to the Harbor (see graphic on page 16) using a crushed granite walkway or similar pathway material. This would likely also involve crosswalks and appropriate road markings on River Road and through the parking area at the top of the hill. This will help to draw visitors from the Harbor area to the Riverwalk and park area. Additionally, consider constructing an outlook area on the south side of the Sugar River that will highlight the natural beauty of the river to visitors, as it is currently hidden behind foliage for much of the summer season.

Additionally, the graphic on page 16 has highlighted a development opportunity adjacent to The Livery that could take advantage of the Riverwalk and Sugar River Bridge as well as traffic on Main Street. Combined with other development opportunities mentioned later in the report, the Riverwalk has the potential to be an asset that can use the natural beauty and historic significance of the Harbor to attract visitors and catalyze economic development.



An opportunity for a formal lookout on the south side of the Sugar River



The charrette team walking along the Sunapee Riverwalk



Images from the Hames Park lookout, located on the north side of the Sugar River. Dedicated in 1999, Hames Park includes signage, landscaping, a partially accessible path, and seating.



Housing Concepts Overview

Sunapee residents and leaders expressed concerns related to housing and housing affordability during all three listening sessions.

- Residents want to age in place surrounded by their friends and family. Residents also want members of the workforce and young families to be able to afford to live in Sunapee. In both cases, there is a lack of right-sized and right-priced housing for different income-levels and life stages.
- Residents expressed concerns that available homes are increasingly being purchased as second homes or used as short-term rentals, further adding stress to the housing market for current and prospective full-time residents.
- Residents also have a strong desire for housing solutions to fit the historic character and “quaint New England” feel of the community.

Luckily, there are unobtrusive ways to increase housing options and diversity. Many of these options are already part of what makes Sunapee special, though they are not all applicable to the project area for this Charrette. The best path forward for Sunapee would be to set up a housing committee or task force that would be able to work on a broader study of housing needs in Sunapee.

While the Charrette Team recommends Sunapee embark on a separate and dedicated housing needs study, our housing experts wanted to highlight two main design concepts that maintain the “quaint New England” feel while also allowing for different housing types and price points. On the following pages are more details regarding (1) mixed use & compact design and (2) conversions.

What is a Housing Task Force?

A Housing Task Force is an organization set up by the Town with the objective of assessing the current supply of housing, regulatory barriers, and opportunities for the type of housing that is needed and desired by the community. A Housing Task Force also explores available grant opportunities and other resources that can support the community’s housing goals.



Images of current housing in Sunapee.

Housing Concepts

Mixed Use & Compact Design

Sunapee can create more attainable price points for housing utilizing mixed-use and compact designs. Cottage-style homes on small lots can balance the community's character with more affordable prices. This type of housing is challenging to develop, but possible if the appropriate density is allowed through local land-use regulations. Sunapee should assess available land as part of a public-private partnership or consider creating an overlay district where the appropriate density is allowed. Land donations, or land partnerships, may create more room for gentle and well-supported growth.

Beyond traditional zoning ordinances, Sunapee might consider inspiration from other towns that have created Municipal Partnerships to target housing solutions for specific demographics rather than the whole public. For example, Lebanon, NH has worked to create housing that is specifically aimed at supporting municipal employees. Sunapee residents may want consider the target populations they wish to support, and explore how updated zoning or housing can support that population.



Examples of Cottage-Style Housing and Gentle Density

Are there other opportunities in Sunapee to create mixed-use development or take advantage of underutilized spaces?

Housing Concepts Conversions

Allowing for the conversion of existing residential structures is the gentlest way to add density to any community. Conversions allow existing single-family homes to become duplexes, triplexes, or quads without making a noticeable difference from the street!

There are many advantages of conversions as a strategy for increasing housing supply and broadening the property rights of homeowners in Sunapee:

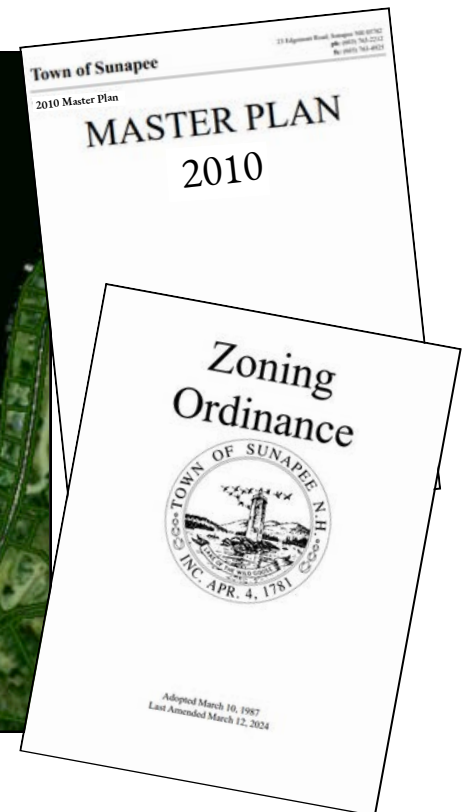
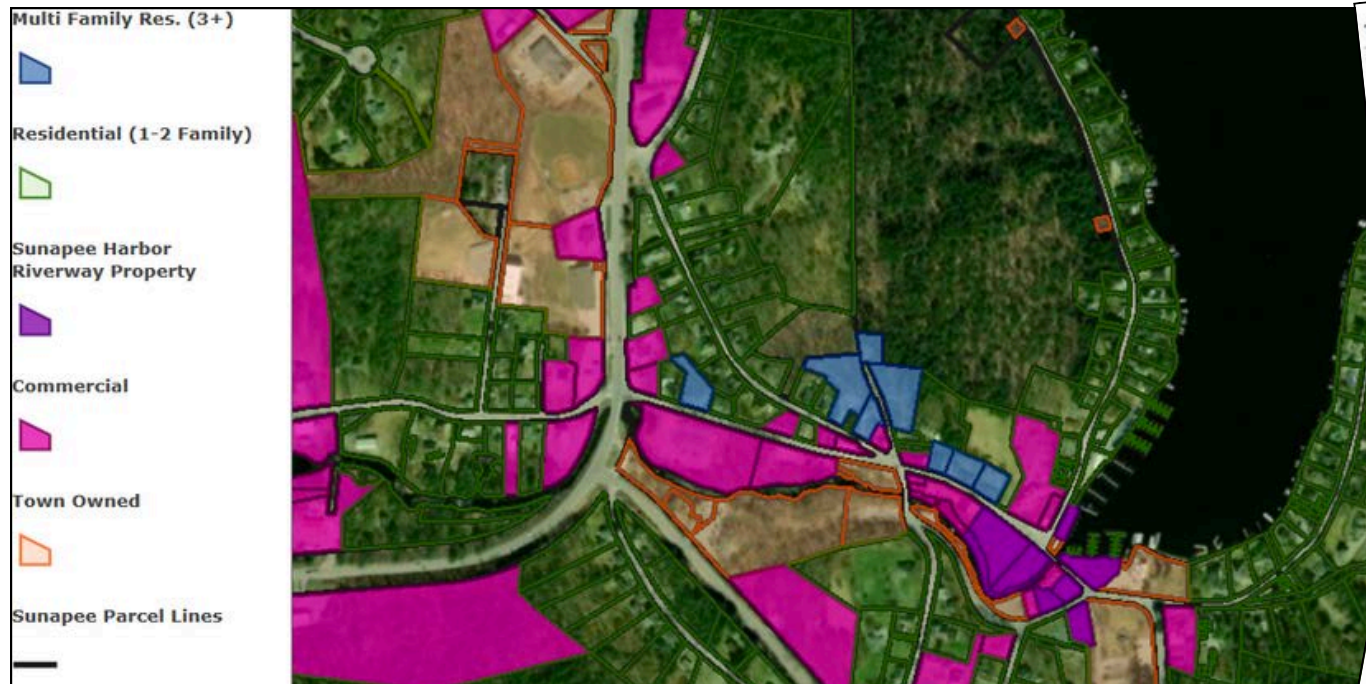
- Conversions are an excellent example of multifamily housing that is “hidden in plain sight.” Single-family homes that have been converted to duplexes, triplexes, and quads retain the look of single-family homes from the outside – this is key to maintaining the quaint, small-town look that Sunapee residents love.
- Conversions create opportunities for multi-generational living, which often allows older residents to stay in their homes and age-in-place.
- Allowing for conversions makes better use of oversized homes which is important as demographics in New Hampshire and beyond have shifted – there are significantly more one-person households than there were when much of New Hampshire’s current housing was built.
- Conversions allow homeowners to become home creators, and provides homeowners with a passive income stream. In addition to creating new units of housing, this makes housing more affordable for the homeowner as well.



Planning and Zoning Overview

Sunapee is moving in a great direction for sustainable and controlled growth and this is reflected in the 2010 Master Plan. As the Vision Statement in that document states, Sunapee residents do not necessarily mind regulation, but they want to see regulations administered fairly to all. Notably, the land use regulations do not always line up with Sunapee’s vision for itself. Regulations often use words and phrases like “adequate lighting” or “adequate for safety” rather than providing consistent standards to reach. In many areas, the regulations are also not consistent with what already exists in the Harbor area, such as the smaller subdivisions in the Harbor area which are not in line with current zoning regulations. This means that any time a change occurs for those units or parcels, it requires a special review process to receive an “exemption” from the regulations.

To continue to support the vision of Sunapee and begin to work on housing in the area, the Town might consider the recommendations listed on the following pages.



Map denoting parcel type and/or ownership in the project area.

Planning and Zoning

Dimensional Issues

- Amend the minimum lot size requirements to reflect the community's existing lot sizes, physical characteristics, and desired density.
- Change building setback requirements to be compatible with historic neighborhood characteristics while preserving environmental quality and natural settings.
- Consider establishing overlay districts in areas with unique characteristics to provide supplemental standards and guidance to preserve and enhance Sunapee's New England village character.
- Instead of minimum and maximum lot sizes and floor area, consider other metrics such as floor area ratios to manage density.
- Reduce minimum road frontage requirements to reflect what already exists.
- Consider applying to the state for an urban exemption from the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act (SWQPA).
- Ensure that all future shoreline development incorporates best management practices for stormwater to protect and improve water quality.



Drawing of harbor area development from the 2010 Sunapee Master Plan

Planning and Zoning

Process Issues

- Increase clarity of planning and zoning regulations by setting standards that are measurable, understandable, and not open to wide interpretation in order to ensure that legislation is applied fairly and consistently.
- Streamline site plan application and approval process by allowing for more administrative review and approval for small or low impact applications, such as remodels, and changes of use where the new use will not result in a change of character or negatively impact existing adjacent uses.

Incentives

- Consider conducting a historic building inventory and establishing a local historic building registry and/or historic village district, along with historic design requirements that are reviewed by a newly formed historic design board.
- Establish a local historic building registry in conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's standards for historic preservation so that historic buildings can become eligible for grant funding and federal tax credits for preserving their historic features.
- Consider establishing a village improvement district or other business improvement entity to help plan and fund infrastructure improvements, streetscape and building façade improvements, pedestrian, boat and bicycle amenities, enhanced community gathering spaces, and other public assets that add to the quality of life for Sunapee residents.



Economic Development

Defining A Vision

Sunapee Harbor is an ideal place for robust economic activity. With thoughtful, coordinated planning, each season could see incremental, managed change that benefits both local residents and visitors.

We recommend that first, all businesses and interested residents connected to this part of the community come together with a purpose of cooperation, collaboration, and mutual support. Spend time discussing what each is thinking about a future for the Harbor area and their possible contributions to its success.

Think about questions like:

- How much growth do you really want?
- Do you want to focus on making the Harbor for locals, for visitors, or some balance between the two?
- What would the group's role be in these efforts?
- How could you measure success? What would success look like?

As a group, define a common vision for the Harbor, that could act as a goal or beacon to work towards.

Share your calendars and see opportunities for mutual support and leverage.

Meet regularly to stay connected and share ideas, challenges, and more.



Sunapee Residents coming together to work towards a shared goal at our second public listening session

Economic Development Planning

Often, people equate the notion of “economic development” with growth and attracting new businesses. There are myriad of ways to make that happen. When attracting new businesses, remember that it is people that are moving in, with shops or restaurants or services that may benefit the Harbor. What kind of people do you want to become part of your community?

Sunapee is extremely fortunate to be a community where people want to be: good schools, close to the highway yet rural, incredible natural assets, and more. Who else would love it here? Who do you want to say, “Yes! This is where I want to have my business!”

Before thinking about bringing new folks in, we recommend starting with who and what you already have in place. Make a list of all the organizations in the Harbor – shops, restaurants, nonprofits, the arts ... (most should already be around the table). What do each of these need? Are there unmet needs? What can your new group to do assist? Where are the gaps? These people are already here and should be supported so they can stay.

Bringing people to the Harbor is much more than offering an amenity (eg. place to eat, shop, or sit). The overall look and feel of the Harbor and its approach needs to be visually appealing, walkable, safe, interesting, convenient and comfortable. Are the roads and walking paths easy and safe to navigate? Are there places to sit? Is the area clean, well-lit, with art, greenery, flowers, restrooms, and other features to make people feel welcomed? This is all related to economic development.



Flyers for various events in and around the town outside of The Livery.



The charrette team learning about the Harbor Riverway Corporation and their efforts to preserve the harbor.

Economic Development

Existing Resources

With all this in mind, planning can begin. **Start small.** Allow room for trial and error. Start with looking at your own calendars and those of the region. Where are opportunities to bring people to the Harbor who might already be in the area?

- Arts fairs (Mt. Sunapee, local fairs)
- Skiing at Mt Sunapee
- Other?

What else is happening in and around Lake Sunapee that can be leveraged?

- Hiking trails? (including the Riverwalk)
- Bicyclists?
- Other?

Consider piloting a few concepts that both capitalize off of Sunapee's existing assets and help meet community goals.

- "Lighter, quicker, cheaper" placemaking ideas can be implemented in the project area, such as mural arts in high visibility locations like the machine shop which is visible from Route 11.
- Develop pop-up chef activity in the winter while building the market for a sustainable year-round restaurant.
- Build on the success of the farmers market and launch a winter market, possibly inside The Livery.
- Incrementally extend the summer season for businesses (and the public bathrooms!).
- Consider in-kind rent or other subsidies for businesses attempting to survive the winter months.



Examples of creative ways to capitalize off of Sunapee's existing assets and meet community goals.



Community leaders and stakeholders express their ideas and concerns about development in the harbor.

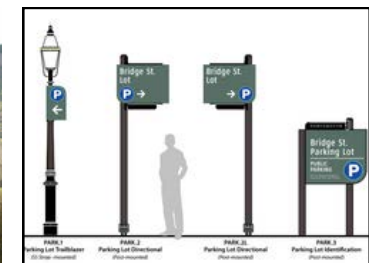
Economic Development Wayfinding

A major theme in listening sessions was that Sunapee needs a “sense of place” to draw in visitors off Route 11, and to support current visitors in exploring the community in cohesive way. The many summer visitors that Sunapee has over the summer would benefit from more signage that can easily tell them where they are allowed to park, where boats can be launched, and where trailers can be stored.

A way to do this is through what is known as “wayfinding”, or more simply put, using signage, colors, and other design elements to allow people to navigate an area. Creating a uniform signage system to let visitors know about points of interest, cultural and historical facts, and how to navigate Sunapee during its busiest times of the year may reduce the conflict felt between residents and visitors by ensuring everyone is on the same page.



Examples of how uniform signage can be used in a variety of ways for improved wayfinding and community branding.



Signage style or design can vary greatly to best match the character of a community.

Economic Development Gateway Enhancement

To draw people off of Route 11 and to the Harbor area, it is important that the buildings on this portion of the road communicate the existence of an appealing area to those passing by. Unfortunately, the existing uses do not accomplish this, with the first two buildings on the right of Main Street being an industrial machine shop and an abandoned gas station. The Charrette Team has identified these sites as prime locations for redevelopment, and this could be done with minimal disruption to the existing machine shop if the property owner is open to collaborating with the Town of Sunapee.

Below, we have highlighted a potential development opportunity that would place a structure in front of the existing machine shop, ensuring minimal disruption to the existing use while significantly improving the aesthetics of the entrance to the Harbor. The current sign could be restored and relocated to be more visible from the road.



Existing parcel condition; current machine shop and Lake Sunapee Harbor sign.



Redevelopment concept, repositioned sign and new structure in front of current machine shop.

Economic Development Underutilized Spaces

Similarly, we have identified the building up the hill from the machine shop as another location for potential redevelopment. This is a unique structure, being an old gas station and repair shop. With significant and expeditious remodeling, this structure could be preserved and turned into a restaurant or similar use that could take advantage of the location next to the Sugar River. If left much longer, the building could become structurally unsound and much harder to save. Below we have envisioned this building redeveloped and turned into the **Sugar River Brew Pub**.



Existing parcel condition; old gas station and repair shop currently used for storage.



Redevelopment concept, the Sugar River Brew Pub, with outdoor seating along the Sugar River.

Harbor Reconfiguration



Reconfiguration concept of the Harbor area including removal of the existing boat launch; concept details provided on the following pages.

Harbor Reconfiguration

A Bold Vision for the Harbor

In the map on the previous page, we have detailed a potential plan to redevelop the Sunapee Harbor, reconfiguring the roads and parking areas to make more room for green space and opening up developable land.

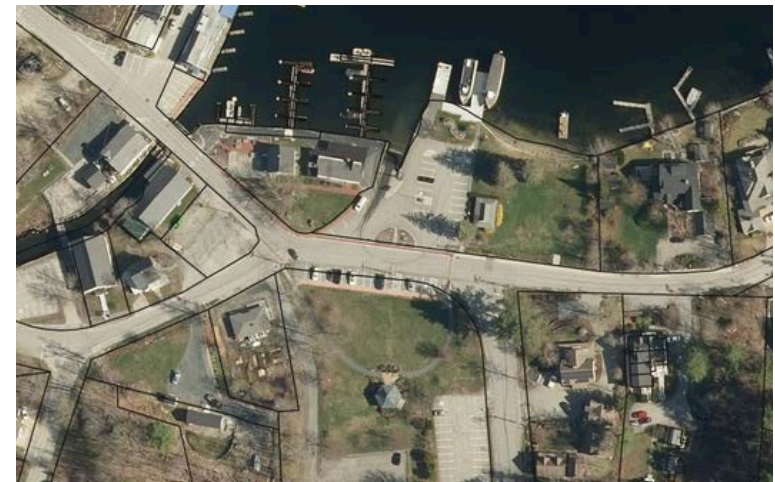
We recommend relocating the roadway into a loop farther up the hill to make more waterfront space available for pedestrians, greenspace, and development. This would also improve traffic flow, with cars being able to quickly drop off passengers and exit the Harbor area or find convenient short-term parking. Residents who live adjacent to this area would still easily be able to access their neighborhood via the new configuration.

Below the roadway, we have envisioned a tiered grassy hill **(6)** that could be used for seating during concerts or events in a relocated bandstand/gazebo **(2)**. Relocating the current gazebo would allow concert attendees to enjoy performances while facing Lake Sunapee. This layout also provides drainage improvements for runoff into the Harbor.

In this concept, as it remains sheltered from the road, but accessible to the rest of the Harbor, existing greenspace could be developed into a children’s playground or similar area for children and families **(1)**. Additional developable land **(7)** will be opened up by the relocation of the boat launch and road.



Closer look at harbor reconfiguration concept.



Existing conditions in Sunapee’s harbor area.

Harbor Reconfiguration

A Bold Vision for the Harbor

The land in which the Sunapee Harbor sits is potentially the most valuable land in the Town of Sunapee. In order to maximize the value inside the Harbor area, however, the community must closely examine that it is being used for its most beneficial and productive purpose.

Throughout our public listening sessions, we heard about the intense seasonal traffic and parking issues that the Harbor area experiences. It was thus perplexing to us that vehicles with boat trailers - that can take up the equivalent of three or more parking spaces - were allowed to drive, launch, and park in the Harbor area free of charge. Furthermore, many of these large vehicles do not meaningfully contribute to the businesses in the Harbor as the occupants are on the lake for most of the day. Add in the cost of paying emergency personnel to direct large amounts of trailer traffic, and it is clear that ceding the most valuable land in the community to such an inefficient use is detrimental to the success of the Harbor and very costly to taxpayers.

While eliminating the boat ramp entirely is a large and costly step, Sunapee should seriously consider more efficient ways of attracting visitors when planning for the future. The complete removal of the launch could be an option to consider when the Harbor area becomes more financially productive. In the interim, consider charging boats a fee to launch in the Harbor to recoup some of the financial losses and study the effects of reduced launch traffic on local businesses.



Current public boat launch in Sunapee.



A view of Sunapee Harbor from the Gazebo

Visioning for the Future: *It is Up to You!*

Sunapee is a charming town with residents that are passionate about finding ways to improve safety, economic development, housing opportunities, water quality, accessibility, and the overall quality of life in Sunapee without disrupting the charm and character of the community. How you choose to do that is up to you.

This report provides recommendations, not mandates, which are for you to explore, evaluate, and discuss. Ultimately, the choice of where to take Sunapee is up to its community members - **and that means all of you!**

We recommend that you circulate this report to all residents and community members of Sunapee, so that anyone interested can come together for a general review of the recommendations and a discussion about what's next.

Further, as recommendations from this charrette are further developed, we recommend that interested people be fully welcomed in for both the planning and implementation. Sunapee is full of enthusiastic energy; harnessing that energy will take you far.

Good luck!



What is next for Sunapee? Instead of focusing on challenges, think about possibilities!

Resources & Funding

Community Design & Placemaking:

- [Citizens Institute on Rural Design \(CIRD\)](#)
- [Creative Placemaking Public Resources Guide](#)
- [National Endowment for the Arts, Our Town](#)
- [New Hampshire State Council on the Arts Grants](#)
- [UNH Cooperative Extension, Characteristics of a Vibrant Downtown](#)
- [USDA Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge](#)
- [The Trust for Public Land: The Field Guide for Parks and Creative Placemaking](#)
- [New Hampshire Preservation Alliance Historic Preservation Grants](#)

Trails & Regional Connectivity:

- [Rails to Trails Conservancy](#)
- [NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources](#)
- [National Recreation and Parks Association: Safe Routes to Parks Action](#)

Traffic Calming & Parking:

- [NH Department of Transportation Transportation Alternatives Program](#)
- [Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission](#)
- [DOT Navigator](#)

Special Projects and/or Operations:

- [New Hampshire Charitable Foundation Community Grants Program](#)

Economic Development:

- [UNH Cooperative Extension](#)
- [Regional Economic Development Center](#)
- [New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority](#)

Housing, Planning, & Zoning:

- [Plan NH Community Design Charrette Program](#)
- [New Hampshire Housing Grant Program](#)
- [New Hampshire Housing Toolbox](#)
- [InvestNH Housing Opportunity Planning Grants](#)
- [Housing Champion Program](#)
- [New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority Planning Grants](#)
- [New Hampshire Preservation Alliance Planning Grants](#)





Sunapee Harbor, 2024.



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