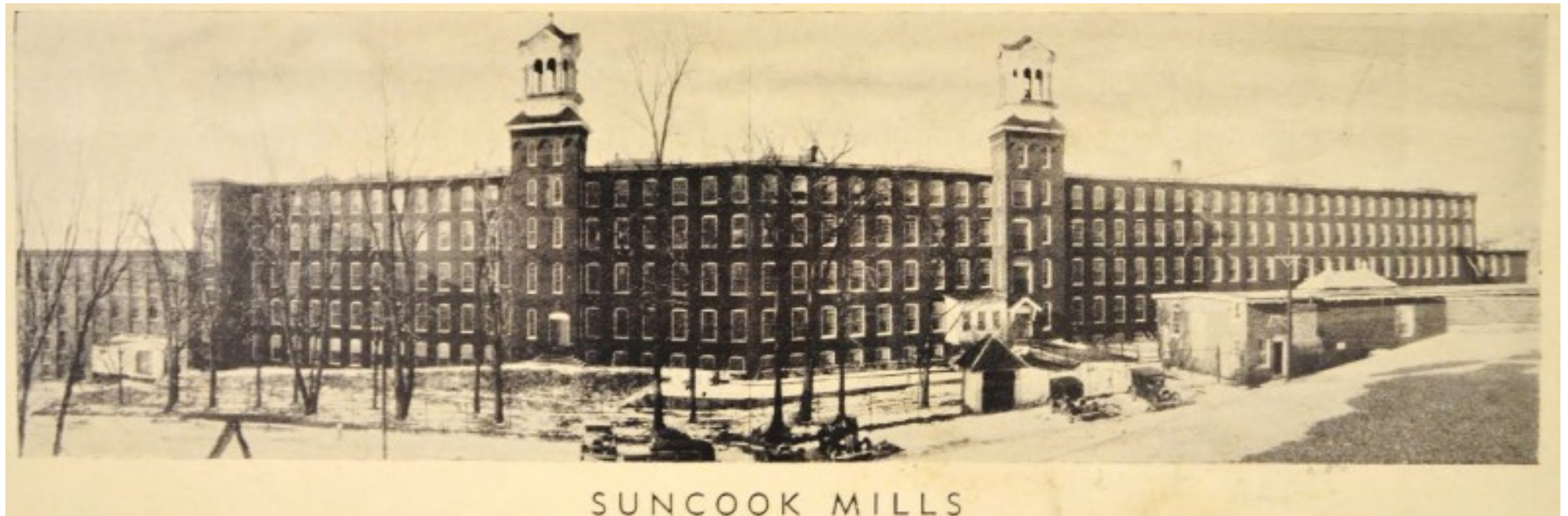


# *Allenstown Community Design Charrette*

*Allenstown, New Hampshire  
September 30 & October 1, 2016*



***“Where Rivers & Neighbors Meet”***



# CONTENTS

## **Introductions & Community Input**

- Introduction & Thank You ..... Page 3
- Feedback from the Community..... Page 6

## **Recommendations**

- Historical Assets..... Page 7
- Connectivity..... Page 10
- Canal Street Improvements..... Page 12
- Transect Strategy..... Page 19
- Marketing & Financing..... Page 22
- Zoning..... Page 23

## **Summary**

- Recommendation Summary..... Page 25

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A: Community Feedback..... Page 26
- Appendix B: Strata App 2015 Allenstown Bicycle Data..... Page 28

# Allenstown Community Design Charrette Acknowledgements

*Sincere thanks* go to those individuals who donated professional and personal time to make this charrette a success.

Also, many thanks go to the citizens, businesses, and Allenstown officials and volunteers who shared their time, services, thoughts, and knowledge with Plan NH.

## The Plan NH Charrette Team

### Charrette Leader:

North Sturtevant, JSA Architects

### The Team:

Robin LeBlanc, Plan NH Executive Director

Michelle McDonald, Plan NH

Stuart Arnett- ADG

Jamie Simchick- Fort Hill Places

Alice Carey- LBPA Architects

Ivy Vann- Peterborough Planning Board

Chris Kennedy- UK Architects

Gerald Coogan- AICP, Planning & Development

Peter Michaud- NH Division of Historical Resources

Kyle Barker- Warrenstreet Architects

Steve Hebsch- JSA Architects and the BAC

Caite Foley- CATCH Neighborhood Housing

Laura Getts- M.S. Candidate, Plymouth State University

Matt Routhier- Bedford Design



## The Allenstown Team

*Without the support and participation of all of the following organizations and businesses, and the individuals within them, this charrette would not have been possible:*

***Thank you!***

A special **Thank You** to:

Shaun Mulholland- Allenstown Town Administrator

Matt Monahan- CNHRPC

Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary

Town of Allenstown Officials & Citizens



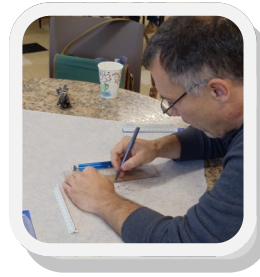
ARCHITECTS  
INTERIORS  
PLANNERS

# Plan NH Comes to Allenstown, NH

## Who is Plan NH?

Plan New Hampshire, The Foundation for Shaping the Built Environment (Plan NH), is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization formed in 1989.

The **Mission** of Plan NH is to foster excellence in the planning, design and development of New Hampshire's built environment. Plan NH has a **Vision** of healthy and vibrant communities in the Granite State.



Plan NH *champions principles and ideas* that balance building projects- this includes anything built in the public realm, such as buildings roads, bridges, memorials, public sculpture, etc- with:

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

Among signature Plan NH programs is the *Design Charrette*, an exercise that brings professionals from Plan NH membership together with communities to explore design ideas, usually around a town center or significant neighborhood. 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 Design Charrette?

Simply stated, a charrette is a brief, intense brainstorming session. The process engages planning and design professionals in direct dialog and conversation with local residents and each other to collect information needed in order to develop good and relevant recommendations about how to address a particular challenge.



### The Charrette Process:

- Identify the need or opportunity
- Collect information from community members to understand more deeply and broadly the situation
- Analyze and evaluate what is seen and heard
- Develop recommendations for meeting the need or addressing the challenge

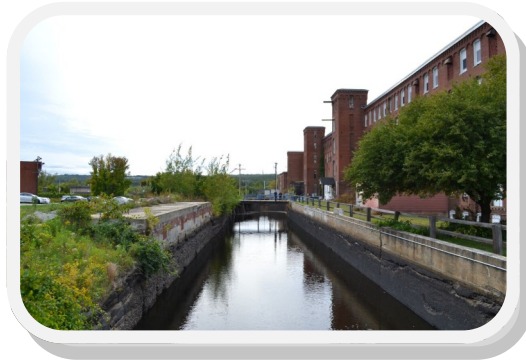
Plan NH sees this part of the process as a period of discovery: discovering who the community is, what is important to the citizens, what they really want. This community input is essential and critical to the value of the outcomes.

The results of the 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, heard, and learned.

# Why Did Plan NH Come to Allenstown?

## Executive Summary

In February 2016, the Town of Allenstown, New Hampshire submitted an application for a Plan NH Community Design Charrette. With the charrette Allenstown sought “to identify strategies for revitalization and economic growth that [would] support and enhance the community character” of the Allenstown portion of Suncook Village. Suncook Village straddles the Suncook River and uniquely incorporates portions of both Allenstown and Pembroke. Although the Village across the bridge is presently governed by Pembroke, a rich history of shared community assets and urban character highlights the interconnectedness of both riverside communities that grew as result of the river-powered Suncook Mills.



One mill, known as the “China Mill,” has remained in operation since the 1860’s on Allenstown’s shore. It is likely the only mill in New Hampshire to have continuously produced textiles since its inception. However, mill activity has reduced in recent years. Five years ago the mill employed three shifts as part of 24 hour operations. Now it operates a single shift and employs approximately 20 - 25 people, most of whom commute from Manchester. The mill building is owned by an out-of-state entity, the tenant being a Chinese holding company, that has not been investing in the building as many community members have hoped. Despite the building’s appearance, all floors remain active. There is significant uncertainty about the long term viability of the China Mill in Allenstown, thus it was a focus in the charrette but not *the* focus.

The Allenstown portion of Suncook Village contains the much of the Town’s infrastructure (sewer, water, natural gas, and hydropower) and municipal services. Services shared with Pembroke include Allenstown’s waste water treatment plant, natural gas line, bridge transportation, and Pembroke Academy. The existing infrastructure and connections between communities as well as assets like the RSA 79E, mixed-use residential and in-fill zoning, and the character of a walking community are advantageous to find economic growth and revitalization.



During the Charrette, Plan NH held a series of community listening sessions after engaging on a bus and walking tour of the study area with the Town Administrator.

As the Team considered the application and community input, certain themes emerged:

- **Growth Versus Change - *Plan for Change***
- **Sense of Place**
- **Sense of Community**
- **The Suncook River is Not a Border, It is a Spine.**
- **Allenstown *is* Where Rivers and Neighbors Meet**

Traditional planning has focused on growth and community development; ***planning for change*** is more relevant to communities such as Allenstown. The aging population, possibility of the historic China Mill closing down, and unique location constraints being between a river and Bear Brook State Park all require a different approach. The Plan NH team encourages Allenstown to take advantage of the significant natural and urban assets of its setting on the Suncook and Merrimack Rivers. Additionally, Allenstown needs to address its identity crisis. Celebrate the significance of being traditional mill village with French Canadian roots. Provide opportunities and places for citizens of Allenstown to gather and interact. In the proposed vision of the Plan NH team, the Town motto “Where Rivers and Neighbors Meet” rings true - build community and a sense of place through connections, activities, and assets.

# What Allenstown Told Plan NH

Two public listening sessions were held during the afternoon and evening of September 30th. The purpose of the sessions was for the public to share their ideas with the charrette Team about what they see and what they would like to see in the study area.

Residents were also asked to let Plan NH know about additional information in the study area and community that would be helpful while developing recommendations.

Below comments and highlights from both sessions are summarized. *For full inventory of comments see Appendix A.*

## What Do You See?

- A sense of pride in the Community Center
- A family-oriented community
- A walking community
- A Community Identity crisis—Two separate communities  
Share zip code & post office “Suncook, NH”
- Allenstown’s location as an Asset (to other communities, resources, highways)
- A fully working textile mill (operating since 1860s)
- Underutilized assets—Mill area and access to water

## What Do You Want to See?

- Culture (art & history)
- Access to public beach, places to gather
- An improved look & streetscape, walking/hiking paths
- Community involvement & activities (e.g. Skating rink, bowling alley, outside activities for kids, dog park)
- Businesses, (e.g. restaurants & local business)
- Community identity & uniqueness (e.g. recognize French-Canadian Heritage)
- A welcome sign in Town

## What Else Does Plan NH Need to Know?

- Allenstown is a bit unknown or poorly perceived
- The sewer treatment plan has an aroma, but better than the past
- The treatment facility has more capacity, which is good for community development/growth
- There are no tax incentives for businesses to settle in Town
- There is a High tax rate
- There is little to attract people to Allenstown
- The same people are present at meetings
- Allenstown is an Aging Community



## Summary

The residents of Allenstown enjoy their community and its walkability. While the Community Center is celebrated by residents of all ages, many residents wish for other places to gather. They reminisce about the seasonal skating rink and bowling alley. Natural resources are also important to the residents who enjoy being close to the water. Although Allenstown is a tightly knit community, many residents agree they don’t know people in the neighborhood like they had in years past.

Many residents express the desire for small businesses and economic development that could lower the tax rate, but fear there is no incentive for businesses to locate in Allenstown. The China Mill’s disrepair has engaged peoples’ imaginations for reuse, although, the Mill operates fully and will likely remain in operation in the near future. The waste water treatment facility also causes concern for some residents as it has an odor, although the odor is much better than the past.

Overall the residents at the charrette shared their love of Allenstown for its natural resources, proximity to surrounding towns, and family-oriented nature; but many feel the Allenstown is not identifiable from Suncook Village.

# Historical Assets

## History That Makes Allenstown Unique

The area of today's Suncook Village was settled in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the waterfalls along the Suncook River were used for a variety of small mills including saw and grist mills. In the 1850s the Portsmouth and Concord Railroad, followed by the Suncook Railroad in 1862, passed through the town near the confluence of the Merrimack and Suncook rivers. Rail transportation encouraged settlement around and the development of an industry that harnessed the power of Suncook River waterfalls.

By 1870, a substantial village with three textile mills was developing along the Suncook River in both Pembroke and Allenstown. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the mills were collectively producing 665,000 yards of cloth per year, using 119,000 pounds of cotton. Almost half of the town's textile production was manufactured by the China Mill in Allenstown.

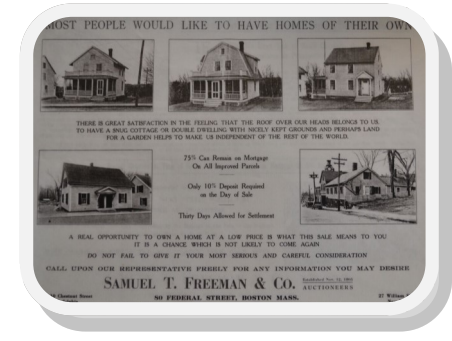
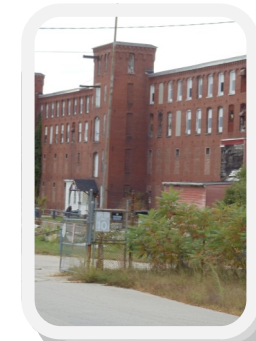
As the majority of Suncook Village's industrial production in the 19<sup>th</sup> century located in Allenstown side of the river, the majority of the community's residential and commercial development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century occurred on the Pembroke side. However in the years following World War I, Suncook Mills expanded their housing stock.

The majority of this building campaign occurred on company-owned land in Allenstown along Webster, Whitten, and Ferry Streets as well as Reynolds Avenue. These single family homes are an impressive assortment of Bungalows, Four Squares, and other early 20<sup>th</sup> century house styles popular during the Colonial Revival and Arts and Crafts movements. The 20<sup>th</sup> century factory housing in Allenstown is reflective of changing trends in factory housing and residential development. The topography of the land steeply rising from the river also adds individuality and character to many houses and neighborhood streetscapes which have sculpted earthen terraces and are defined by landscape features.

While there are a few examples of New Hampshire manufacturers building 20<sup>th</sup> century house style worker housing, the collection of buildings in Allenstown is extraordinary. The number of houses built, their relationship with landscape and neighborhoods, and the variety of housing forms and styles used sets Allenstown apart as a factory village from other New Hampshire communities and the greater Suncook Village.

**Suncook Village in Allenstown and Pembroke is eligible as a historic district for the National Register of Historic Places.** The historical assets that help eligibility include:

- The China Mill, the largest of the three factories within the village and likely the oldest mill in New Hampshire to continually be used for textile production. The China Mill, associated warehouses, the stone-lined canal, gatehouse, and the dam are all prospectively eligible as a smaller Historic District.
- A variety of 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> century factory worker housing and single family homes. These homes and buildings are exceptional examples of Victorian and Post-WWI styles and likely candidates for individual listing.
- Allenstown's Municipal Buildings.



*Allenstown has many historical assets eligible, individually or as a district, for the National Register of Historic Places.*

Although the National Register of Historic Places listing is often perceived as restrictive, ***the program does not overlay any new constraints on a property or its owner.*** The program can provide benefits with leniency and flexibility on building code interpretation and allow for

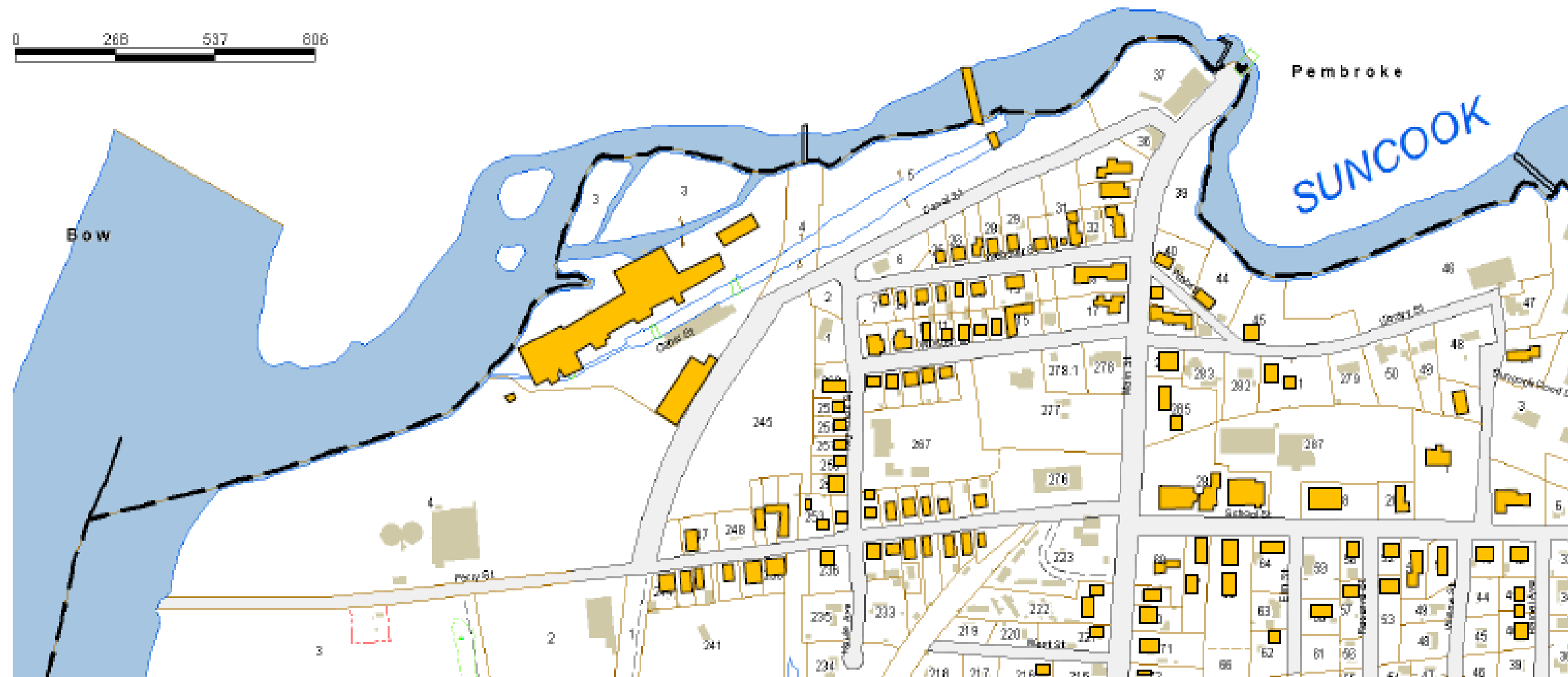
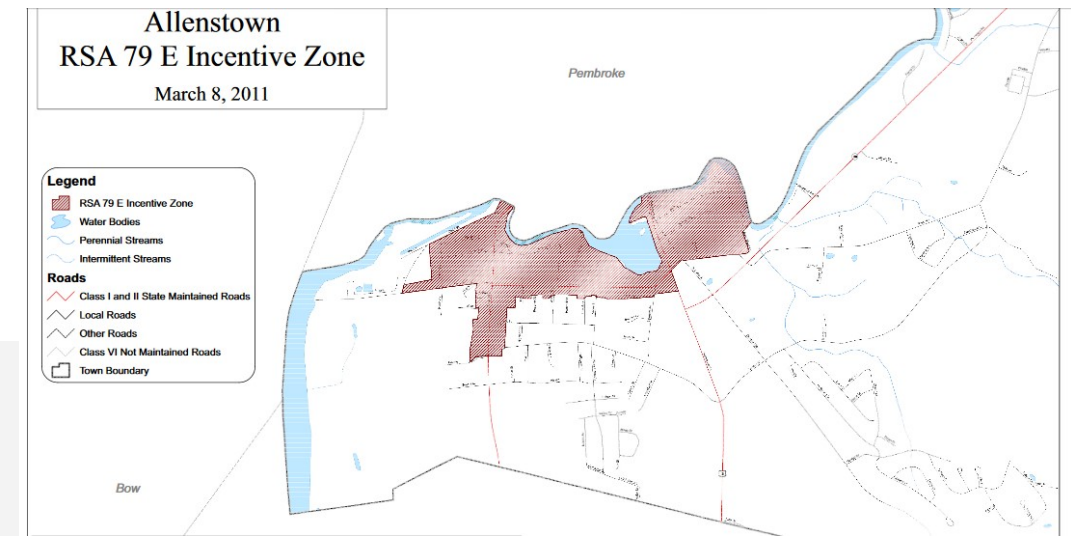
- grants for municipal and non-profit owned buildings,
- eligibility for private developers for the 20% tax credit program for substantial commercial rehabilitations of historic buildings.

# Mapping Historical Assets

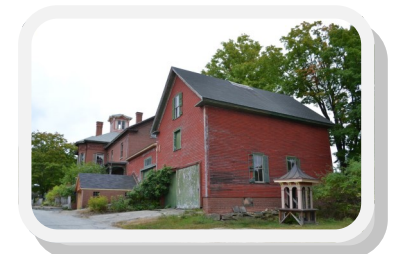
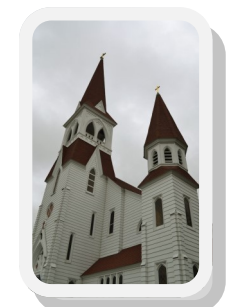
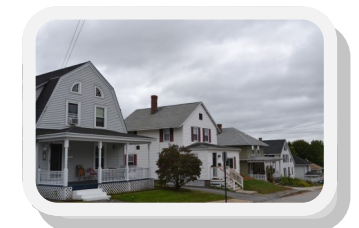
The 20% tax credit, along with other incentives like RSA 79E could be used to encourage the current or future owner of the China Mill to rehabilitate the property for continued or new use and make it feasible.

The RSA 79E has already been adopted in the town of Allenstown and shares a portion of the area in which historical assets have been identified. Although the China Mill district is currently not in the RSA 79E, the incentive zone could be expanded to include it.

The Historical Assets map represents the Allenstown portion of National Register of Historic Places eligible properties. The entire Suncook Village was included in a NHDOT Planning study of historical assets (for the Route 3 Bridge Project) and is Historic District Eligible.



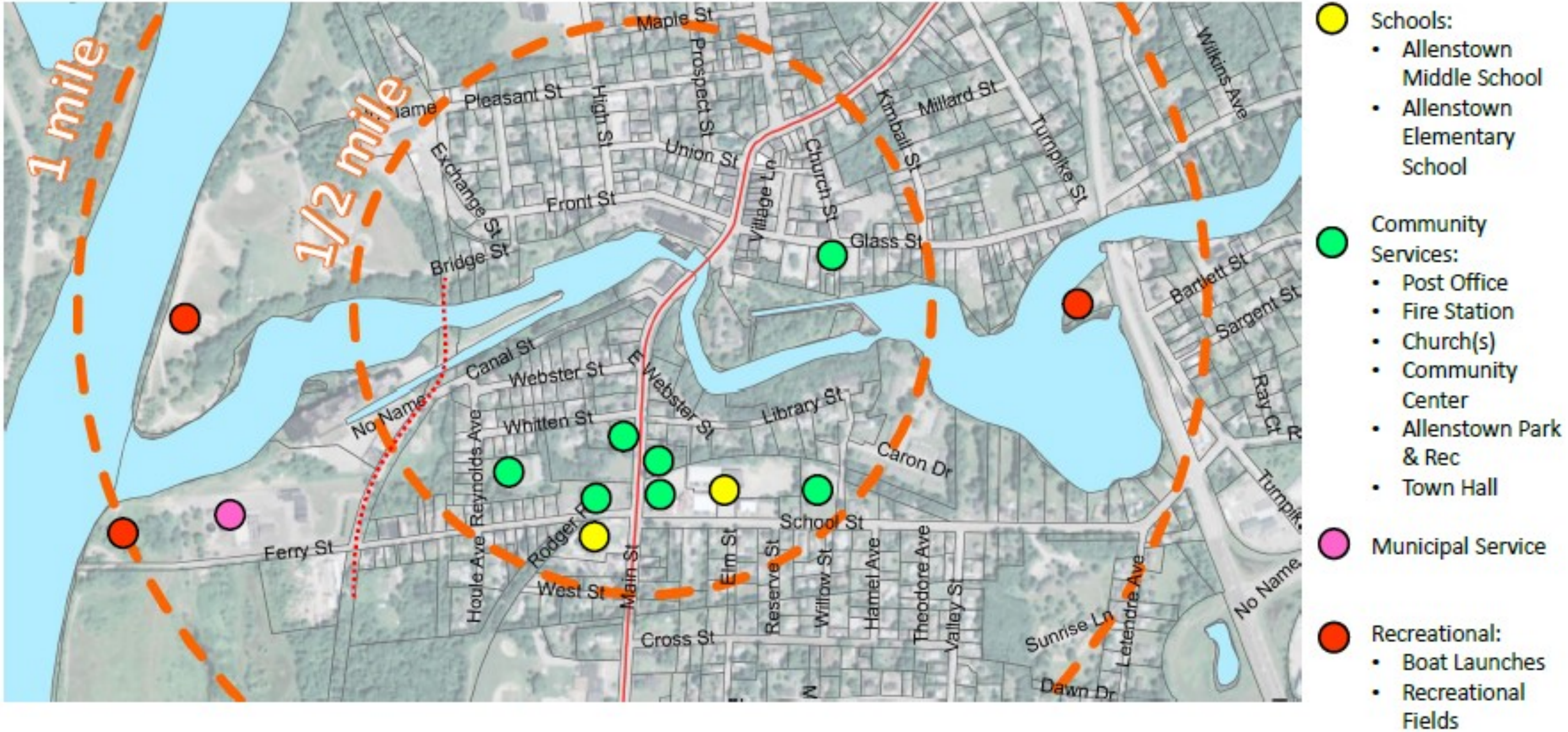
Examples of Eligible Properties:





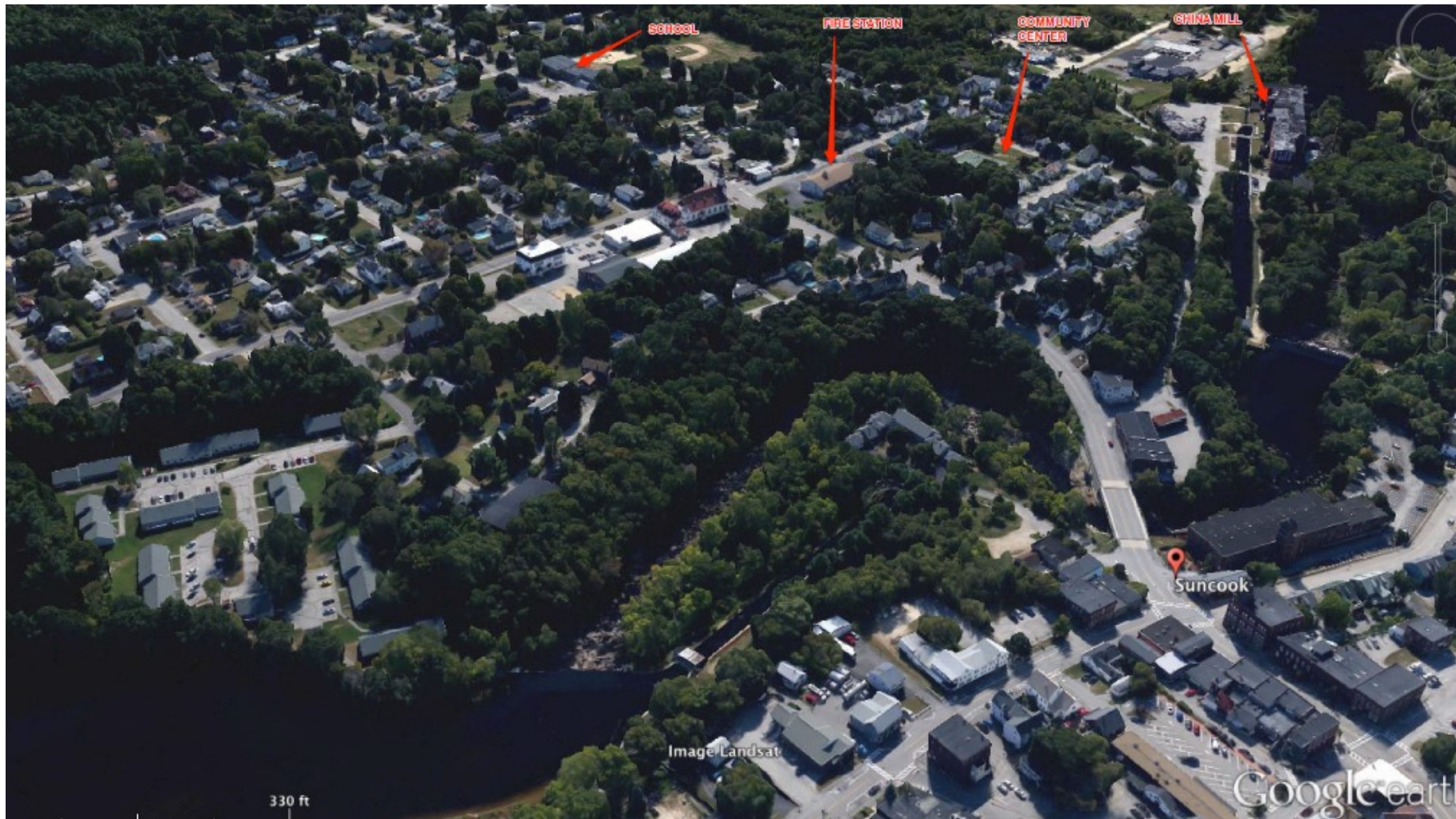
# Mapping Community Assets

Allenstown has a variety of historical assets located within the study area. Allenstown additionally has numerous community assets located within 1/2 mile, or 1 mile diameter, which is favorable for development, walkability, and more. The small dotted line crossing the canal and river represents a potential, although not presently existing, route to connect Allenstown and Pembroke.



# Connectivity: The River is Not a Border, It is a Spine

The Charrette Team was struck by the numerous opportunities for connectivity along Canal Street, Main Street, and School Street. Additional connection opportunities come from the former rail beds that could provide connection to a future bike trail and the former railroad crossing that could provide a structural base for a pedestrian bridge across the Suncook River. Connections such as these could truly let the river be a "spine" of a larger community and could enhance Allenstown's sense of connectivity to Suncook and Pembroke and local community assets. There are a variety of low-cost implementation strategies to enhance connectivity. For a full list of funding ideas for long-term projects see page 22.



## Connectivity Implementation Strategies

### Put Your Money Where Your House Is

Residents could collaborate to raise funds for or to purchase underutilized or abandoned commercial space for rehab/reuse.

### Try Tactical Urbanism

On streets like Main Street, traffic is too fast coming from Hooksett towards Suncook Village. Employing some temporary bollards to mark off bicycle paths or pedestrian walkways, could help citizens try traffic calming techniques without committing to a project and its expense.

### Install Traffic Calming Devices

Add raised crosswalks, bulb-outs, or bike paths to visually narrow a roadway and make it more of a street than a road. At the "Hinge" (Main and Canal Streets) try adding colored and textured asphalt to call out the area, drawing people down Canal Street toward the China Mill.

### Insert Pocket Parks

Adding more greenery could improve the look and feel of Allenstown and increase the amount of gathering places for citizens. Main Street, particularly at the Fire House, and Canal Street could benefit.

# Assets and Connectivity

- GREEN SPACE – PROPOSED
- OVERLOOK/VIEW POINT
- VIEWS
- STREETScape IMPROVEMENT AREAS
- LANDMARK BUILDINGS
- REPURPOSED/NEW BUILDING
- BIKE ROUTE – DEDICATED LANE
- PEDESTRIAN PATH

The Connectivity diagram illustrates opportunities for picturesque views on the river, pedestrian and bicycle trail opportunities, and streetscape enhancements. Such improvements could add a “sense of place” to Allenstown's center. This illustration also captures potential green spaces/public spaces and adaptive reuse projects. Note: the shaded buildings represent historic assets identified on page 8.



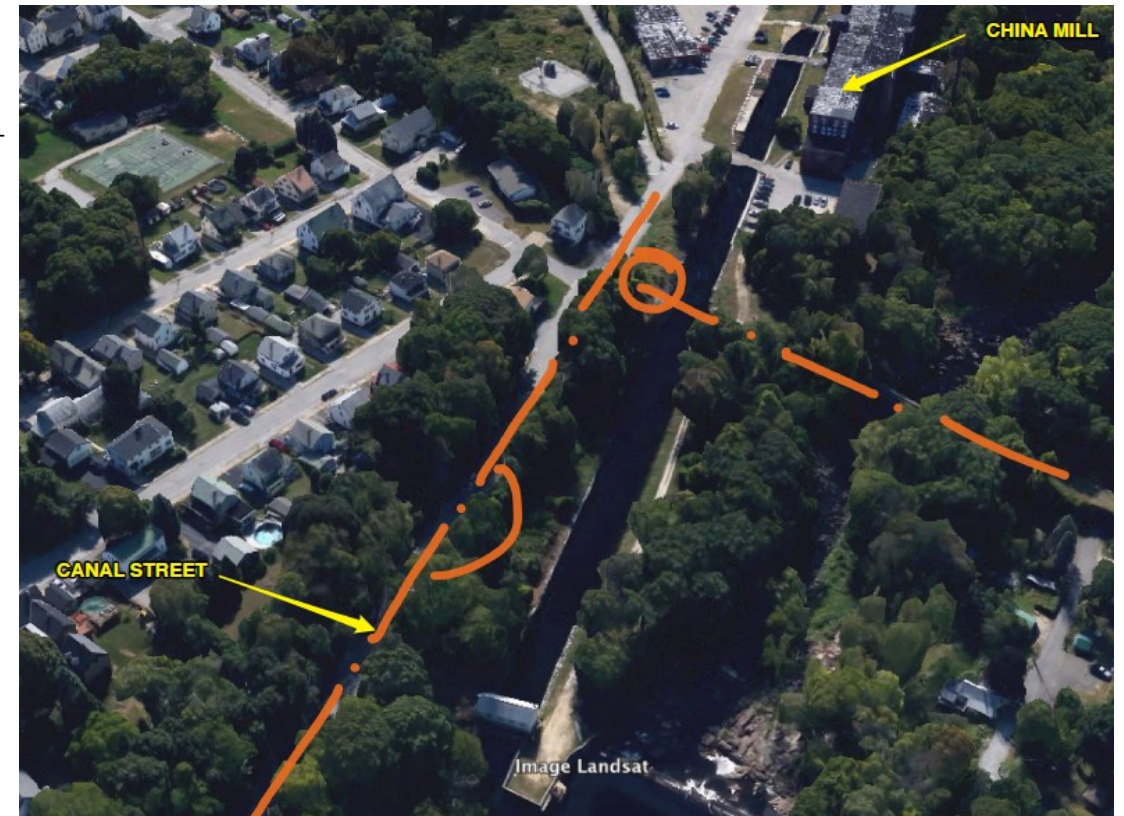
Implementation Strategies:

- Put your money where your house is
- Insert pocket parks
- Traffic calming (or try tactical urbanism)

# Canal Street and Connectivity

The Plan NH team sees Canal Street improvements as low-hanging fruit. Brush clearing along the river and improvements on underutilized Tax Map parcel 37 (low right photo) are examples of basic improvements. Infill development and landscaping along Canal Street is also suggested. Currently vegetation along the river obstructs water views and public interaction with the canal and Suncook River. Overlook spaces complemented, with a walk way like the one illustrated, could create spaces for the public to mingle and walk safely along Canal Street. A sidewalk of stamped asphalt or brick would be sufficient, and would create more nonvehicle travel on the street, which would hopefully calm outgoing traffic from the mill.

The overlook points could also provide opportunities to install informational kiosks. The kiosks could highlight Allenstown's history and provide an opportunity for the historical society to showcase photos and information to the public. A pilot program, used to determine response from the public, could be done first to explore the idea.



**Above:** One view of circulation enhancement from Canal Street to Pembroke on a former railroad crossing. The bump out represents a river overlook.

**Below:** Canal Street today has heavy vegetation and effectively hides the Suncook River from view. The Plan NH team feels that parcel 37, to the right of Canal Street, is being underutilized and could be used for housing,



**The illustration above represents one idea of how to enhance connectivity with the river.**

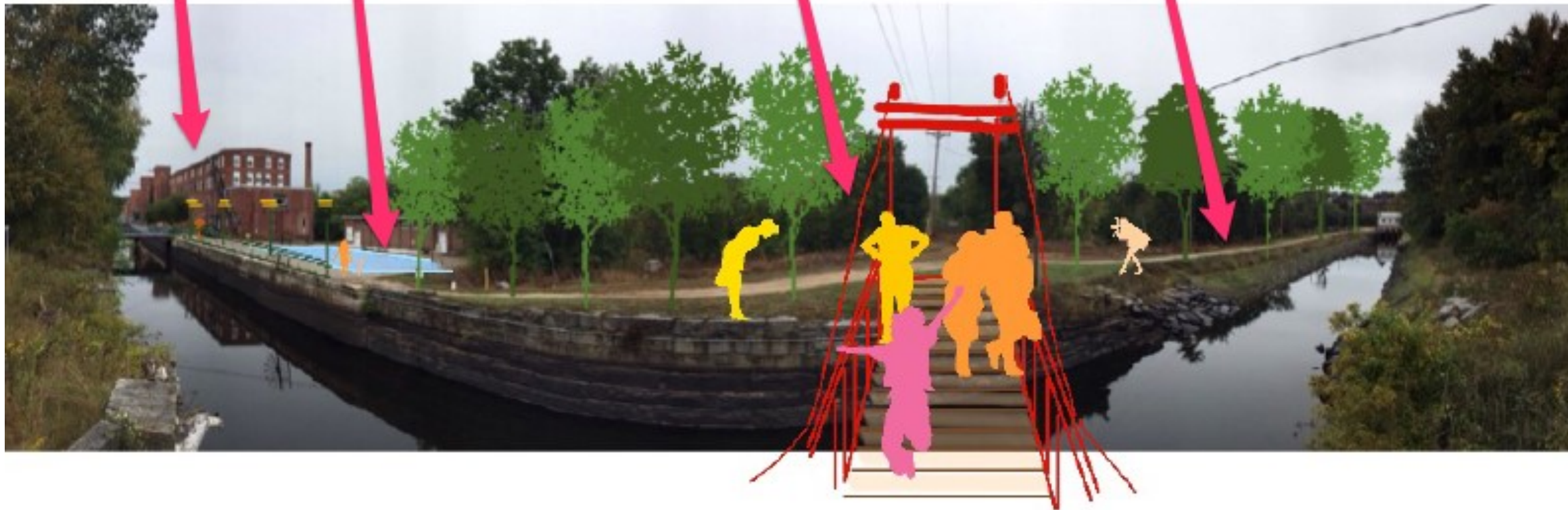
Canal Street could have an enhanced sidewalk and a riverside overlook, which could provide a stopping point along what could be a circular route through both sides of Suncook and provides a greater connection of Allenstown to Pembroke.

CHINA MILL

ICE RINK

PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

WALKING PATH



### PANORAMA IMAGE OF CANAL

(Canal is actually straight, Panorama effect is creating curved image)

A pedestrian bridge over the China Mill Canal and Suncook River could connect circulation pathways from both sides of Suncook Village. The proposed pedestrian bridge, which could also accommodate bicycle travel, is sketched over the former rail crossing location.

During the listening sessions community members mentioned the desire to have walking trails as well as gathering spaces like a seasonal ice rink. This image shows a potential location of an ice rink on the grounds of the historic China Mill with a walking path.

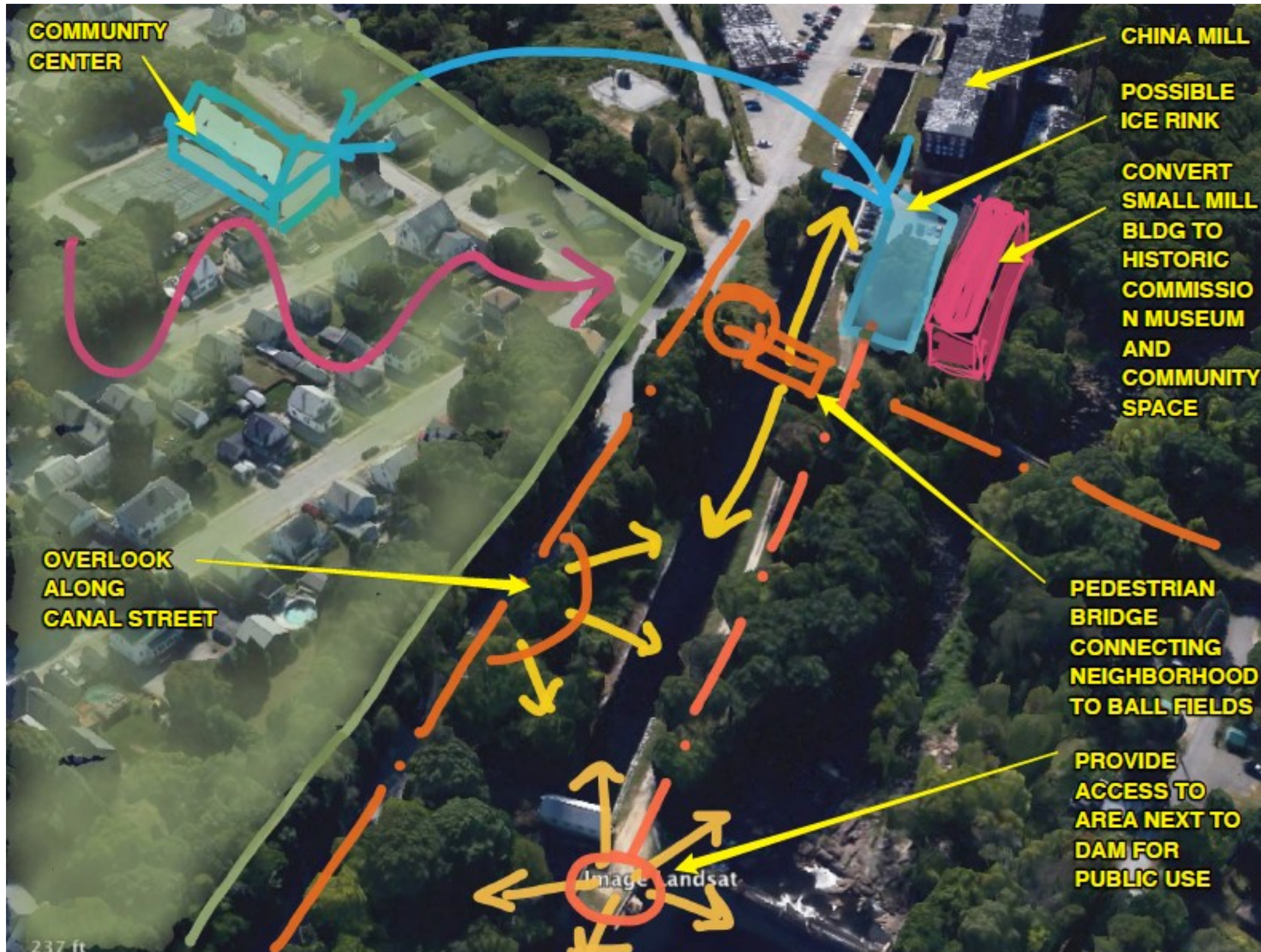
A bridge connecting the Village could capture the view sheds of both sides of the canal and Suncook River.



**Above:** Canal Street is lined with vegetation and provides no protected walkway.

**Below:** A view of the dam in the China Mill Canal near site location of proposed pedestrian bridge.





This detailed drawing captures the connectivity points on Canal Street. The green highlight shows the proximity between a large amount of residents and community assets like the community center as well as possible ice rink, historic museum, and overlook pocket parks.

The image below is a representation of how the potential bridge could look. The bridge could be designed to look like a historic railroad and further solidify Allenstown's unique identity as a mill town.



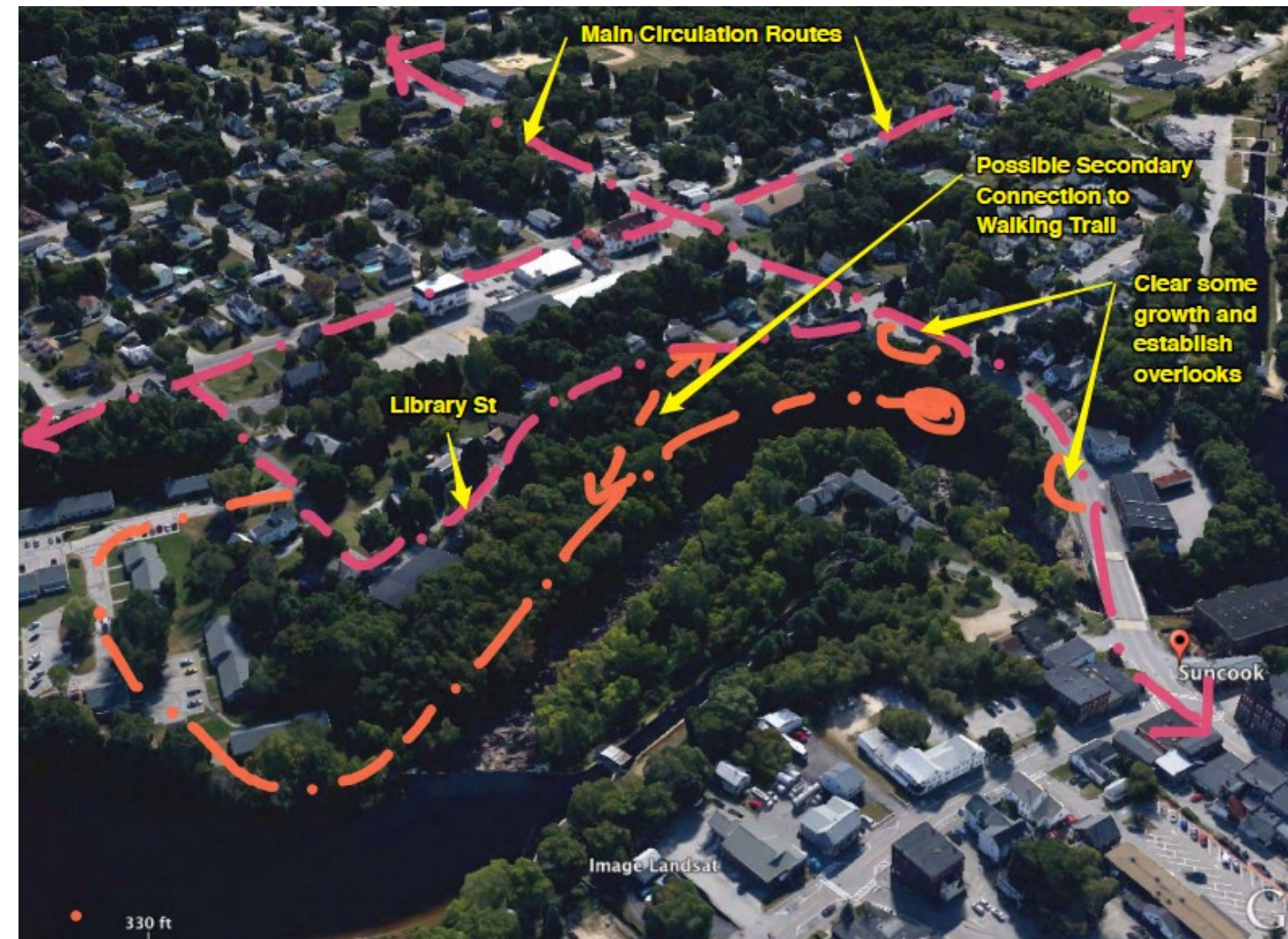
## Connectivity in Other Locations

Allenstown could continue to enhance connectivity between communities by expanding a walking trail along the Suncook River from Canal Street and across to Main Street. The walking trail could be a loop and be used as a recreational trail or commuter trail for residents of both Pembroke and Allenstown. Like on Canal Street, overlook points to the river are suggested to connect residents to the water.

A walking trail could provide a protected path for pedestrians and bicyclists from the main circulation routes that are often used as a “thru-way” for vehicle commuters to get to neighboring towns. Please see Appendix B for some (from the Stava app) data regarding bicycle trips in Allenstown.



The charrette Team noticed during the town walk through that Parcel 39 (the wooded parcel that borders the river and Main Street just before meeting the bridge) could be another opportunity to utilize an implementation strategy. This portion of Main Street experiences high speed traffic, which could be mitigated by using traffic calming techniques.

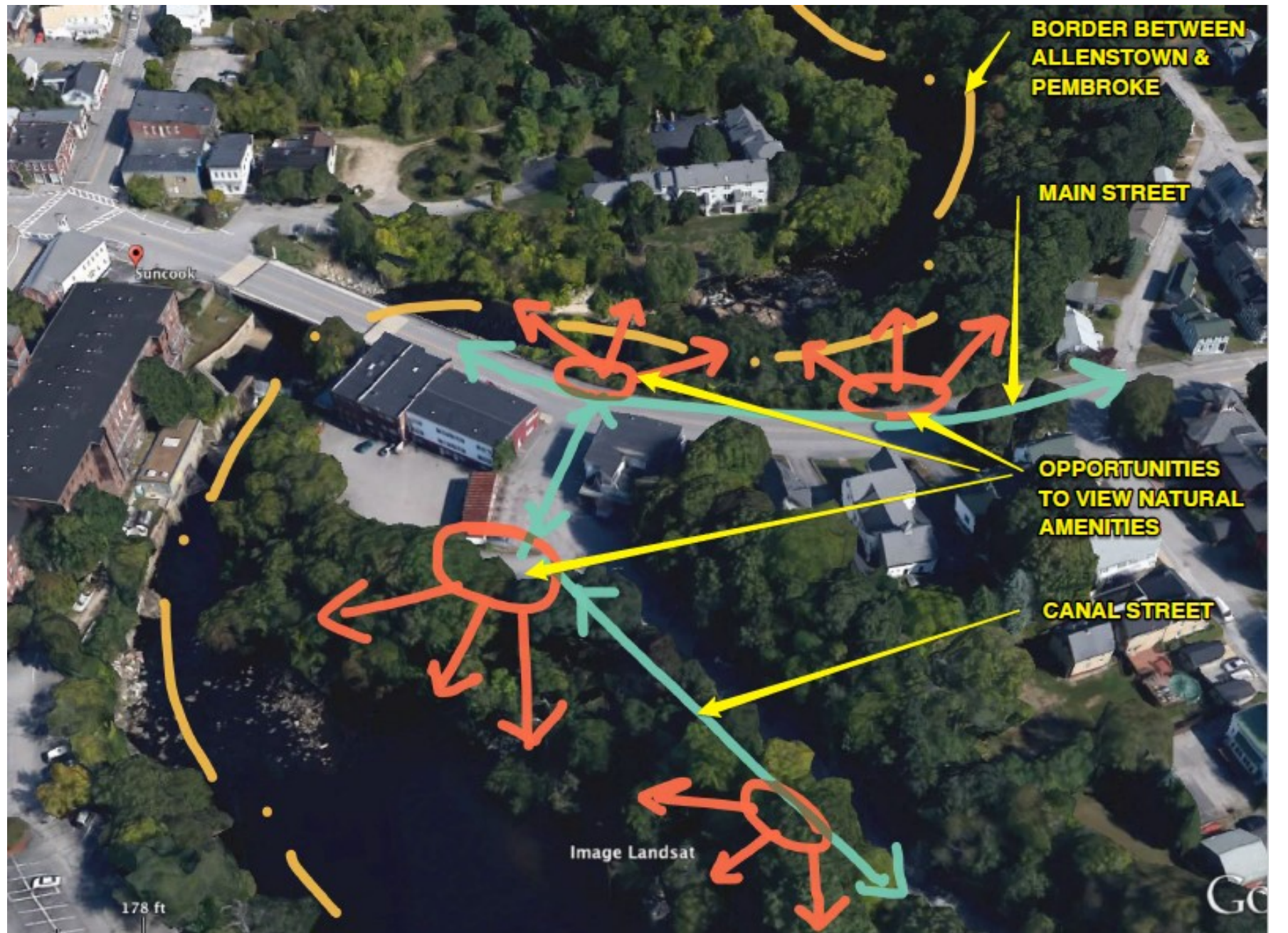




**Above:** Suggested urban housing overlooking the river. This area could be considered to be in the “High-Density Village District” (see page 21).



The junction of Main and Canal Streets is located at a high bluff overlooking the river. The river view is currently concealed by vegetation, but this site could be developed into affordable "urban" type housing. Additional townhouse development could be explored on the south side of Canal Street to add more activity at that important junction. The China Mill Canal intake, also concealed by vegetation could be celebrated as the gateway. The Main Street and Canal Street junction “The Hinge,” is a dangerous location and could benefit from curb bump outs, a median, or other traffic calming measures to reduce lane width on Main Street. Bicycle lanes and sidewalks would also be beneficial in this junction.





# Traffic Calming & Tactical Urbanism



## What is “Traffic Calming?”

Traffic Calming is defined by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) as the combination of mainly physical measures that reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle use, alter driver behavior and improve conditions for non-motorized streets users. These are intended to be self-enforcing measures that lead to more effective compliance as opposed to changing a speed limit which is more dependent on police enforcement. Traffic calming creates a safer environment for pedestrians and bicyclists which is a desired element to any Village Center.

### Examples of Traffic Calming Techniques:

- Curb Extensions
- Pedestrian Refuge Islands/Raised Medians
- Road Diets– Narrowing Pavement
- Painted Edge Lines
- On-Street Parking
- Roundabouts
- Raised Crosswalks
- Speed Cushion/Humps
- Narrowed Travel Lanes

Traffic calming along Main Street could be tested with temporary techniques to gauge community needs and response without pursuing a formal project. Placing hay bails, cones, and painted patterns on the road ways are methods of tactical urbanism that could help Allentown test an idea and engage the community. Vegetative buffers or planters used for traffic calming on Main Street could make the corridor overall more attractive by reducing the amount of asphalt.

## What is “Tactical Urbanism?”– *Testing Ideas*

*The Tactical Urbanist's Guide to Materials and Design* refers to Tactical Urbanism as “an approach to neighborhood building that uses short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions and policies to catalyze long term change.” Although there are many ways to incorporate tactical urbanism, the concept promotes the involvement of citizens. This process provides the opportunity to build community and social capital.

Tactical Urbanism offers an opportunity to:

- Inspire Action
- Draw Attention to Community Design Challenges
- Engage the Public
- Educate
- Collect Data
- Create Collaboration Between Residents
- Test Ideas

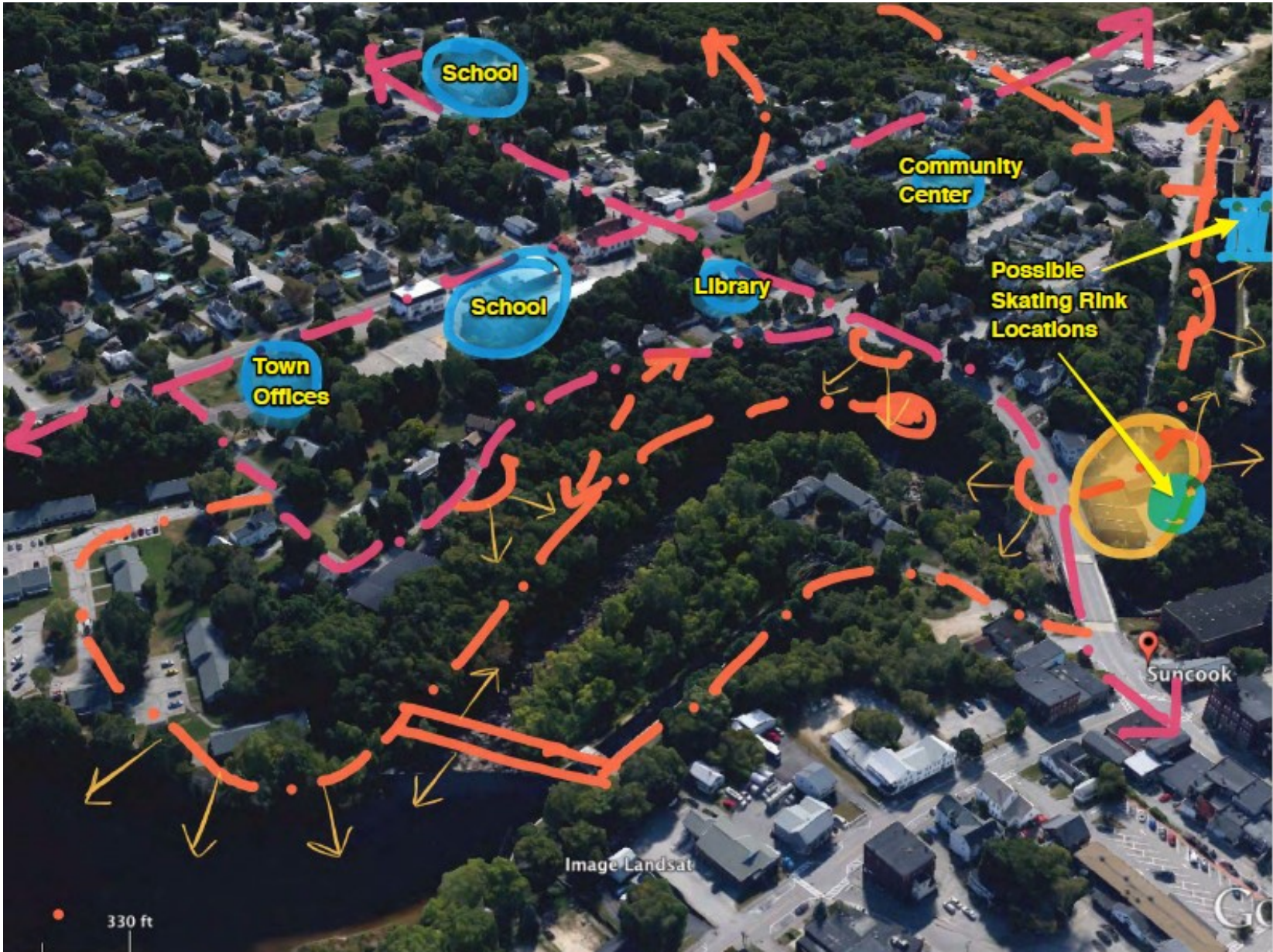


Tactical Urbanism offers an opportunity to temporarily put cones, painted lines, etc. up in an area to test traffic calming ideas. *Photo: Brokesidewalk.com*



Above is another example of styles of Tactical Urbanism where painted dots extend pedestrian walkways or curbs. Test ideas like these to see how the community responds. *Photo: Naplesnews.com*

# Assets and Connectivity



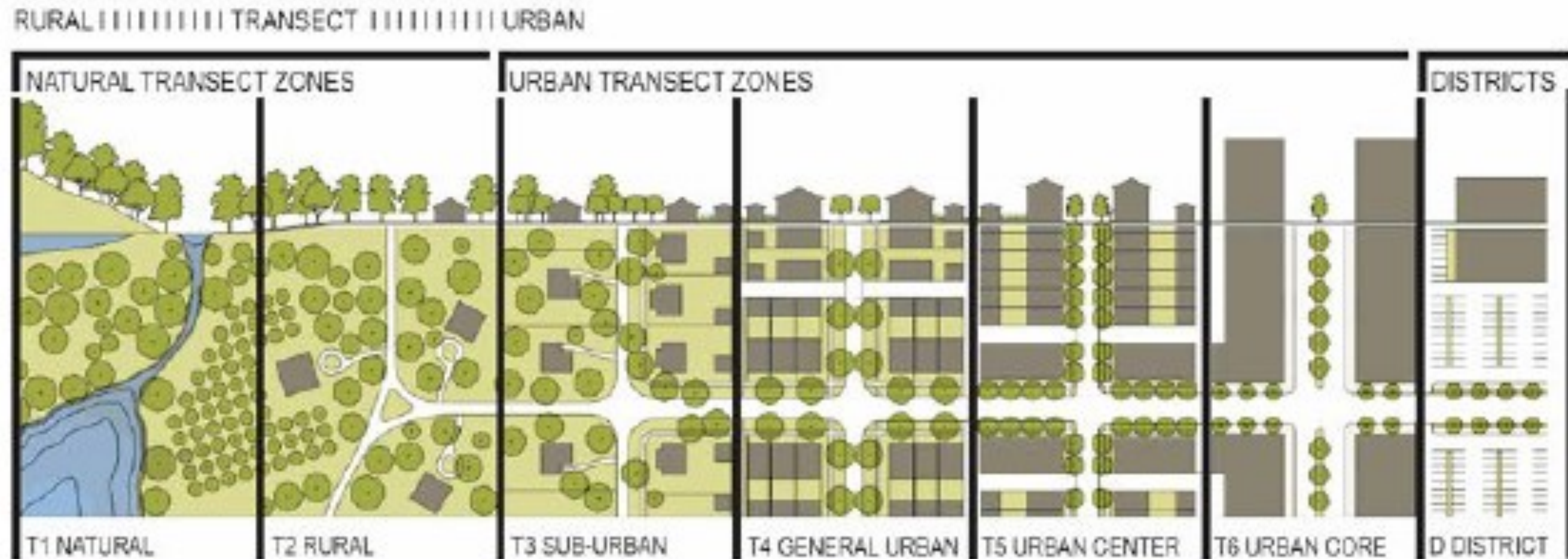
Allenstown is full of connectivity potential. Although funds may need to be in place to make large scale improvements, Allenstown could identify locations on Canal Street and begin clean up or basic vegetation clearing projects. In addition to Canal Street the Town should identify specific locations in town that could benefit from tactical urbanism. These low-cost, short-term solutions could engage the public and make improvements without too many conflicts.

The green sections in the drawing below represent the residential areas. Notice the strong connections between these places, existing natural resources, and potential sites for walking trails and new buildings.



# Allenstown Transect Strategy

Allenstown is currently the densest along the Suncook River and gradually becomes less dense as one moves further away. This arrangement makes perfect sense given that the industrial mills were the initial focus of the town and residents settled in houses within walking distance. This historic and natural occurrence can be formalized today by adopting a zoning policy that encourages an **urban to rural transect**. An urban to rural transect proposes the transition of density as a gradient, from more intensive uses (such as multifamily housing or office buildings) to those that are less intense (such as single-family residential on large plots to agriculture). This can be seen in the following illustration.



# Allenstown Transect Strategy

Based on an urban to rural transect, three different types of housing districts are proposed.

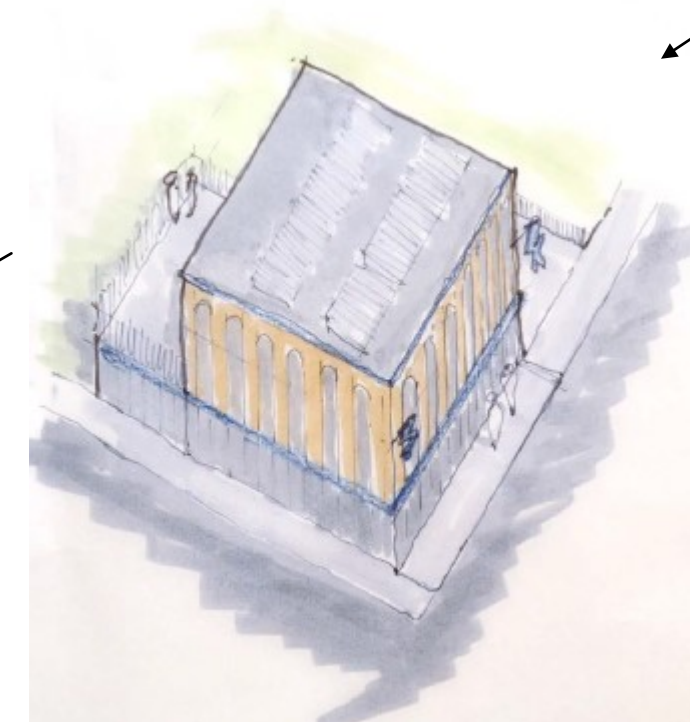


**Housing District Considerations:**  
High Density District- more dense housing in areas with utilities and walking services is an asset and is not a tax burden.  
Medium-Density (mixed use)- development can create amenities for outside communities.  
Low-Density District- unique sustainable agriculture district bringing farm-to-table produce to the community. *Please note the red dot in this district is located on the school owned land, which could be a benefit for the Town in negotiations with developers.*

Attract local investment by creating new districts, enticing new/diverse partners.

### High-Density Village District

Urban Core



The High-Density Village District is suggested to begin where Main Street crosses the Suncook River. This area has the potential to solidify the Suncook Village as the heart of the town, with a mix of commercial activity and new, more urban, residential choices.

*Suggested 36 units per 1 acre*

### Medium-Density Mixed-Use Mill District



The Medium-Density Mixed-Use Mill District can create a nice transition from the Village center to the more rural portions of Allentown. Harnessing the activity at the China Mill and creating a ring around the Village District, this area could embrace the view of the Suncook River and the town's industrial history. Municipal services such as schools, the Town Hall, and public safety buildings are already located in this area and would provide a nice complement to new types of residential structures.

*Suggested 24 units per 1 acre*

### Low-Density Sustainable Agriculture District



The Low-Density Sustainable Agriculture District will include the areas for farming and recreation, such as the State Park. This district is suggested to have minimal commercial activity, but residential options would have an agrarian focus with a village-like setting.

*Suggested 16 units per 1 acre*

The Plan NH Team learned that Allentown is in need of housing. With a 1% vacancy rate, affordable homes according to residents “fly of the market” once they hit the \$200,000 range. The transect strategy incorporates different markets. **The High-Density Village District** buildings should mimic the buildings next door—3 story brick structures—and be mixed-use. Many single, young professionals and empty-nesters are attracted to this style of housing and its proximity to the Village core. The density of this District would increase the tax base, to lower the overall tax burden.

**Medium-Density Mill District** includes 3 units per building, on a slope, and medium-sized to mimic the former mill building and factory housing. This housing style is close to the street and contains a yard in back. Multiple demographics prefer this style.

**The Low-Density Sustainable Agriculture District** is sized for use and acts as a pocket neighborhood. Shared structures, working buildings, farm activities, and yard space are all located away from street. The Low-Density District connects housing to fertile farmland and would attract people seeking a different lifestyle. Individuals choosing to live in this District would buy because they want to participate in a farm community. This location would also offer access to the school property, making a connection to Main Street, and could be an outlet for locally grown produce.

# Marketing

## Consider Suncook Village One Market

Allenstown can attract wealth by offering new products and residential opportunities. In order to do so, Allenstown should consider **Suncook Village one market**, development friendly and open to the public/private partnerships. **Make it known** that Allenstown is a town open for business and is open to public and private partnerships. There is already existing and interesting infrastructure in the village. The village is already a destination. Attract local investment by considering this area **a district**.

Plan NH proposes that Allenstown create new products and residential opportunities through the transect strategy and offer three stages of development and lifestyles that are unique.

*Attract local investment by creating new districts, enticing new/diverse partners.*

## Create Three Distinct Sub-Markets

**Village District:** enhance Village District and core with better services and more awareness about services available. District attracts young professionals and downsizers.

**Mill District:** design for and anticipate mixed-used development. District attracts multi-demographics.

**Sustainable Agriculture District:** create a unique destination off of the future rails-to-rails or create a niche for farm-to-table produce and farm stands. Millennials and baby-boomers could pay a premium to live in this unique area.

## Recommendations for Marketing and Financing:

- Be Historic Tax Credit ready
- Enlarge RSA 79E (economic revitalization zone) to include the Mill District
- Evaluate possibility of tax increment finance district (TIF) to benefit public infrastructure improvements (water, sewer, sidewalks, etc.)
- Work with existing owner and operator China Mills business to help finance improvements.

## Keep in Mind:

- Being historic tax credit ready takes a lot of research, time, and work. Be prepared (10% and 20% tax credits)
- The historic federal tax credit for 10% cannot be used on residential developments
- 79E provides tax relief for pre-habilitation for a finite period
- Town owned properties could be used as incentives to get investment at no cost to the Town (e.g. the school owned property for residential agriculture development).

## Project Financing - Source & Uses *(based on interests of community)*

USES	SOURCES
Significant historic upgrade to factory	Federal tax credit @10%
Re-use of factory – mill site for historic-OK mixed use including market-rate housing	Federal tax credit @ 20%
Boat launch with ADA access	State tax credits
Community gardens	CDBG – Community Development Block Grants
Bike trail to Hooksett	US EDA Infrastructure grants
Regatta Pavilion, park and Fitness-walking trail	Town owned property as incentive for private sector investment
Upgrade pool property	Town owned land for agi-residential development
Brownfield clean-up and reuse with possible recreation areas	Public-private co-development

## Financing Methods:

- Historic tax credits
- New market tax credits
- CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funding
- CDFA tax credits
- Low income housing tax credits
- Brownfield funding (not while the Mill is operating)
- TAP (Transportation Alternative Plan) Grant funding to improve pedestrian and bicycle access
- NH Park Recreational Funds
- Neighborhood Improvement Funding- Neighborhood improvement: if at least 60% of a block commits to exterior improvements 50/50 matching funds from participating charitable organization.

## Helpful organizations for grants or information:

- NH Preservation Alliance
- NH Division of Historical Resources
- NH Housing Finance Authority
- USDA Rural Development
- Land & Community Heritage and Investment Program

# Zoning Recommendations

## Zoning Strategies

**Create a Cross-Border Zoning District**, which is more substantial than an overlay district

**Provide Zoning as a Catalyst for Joint Municipal Efforts**

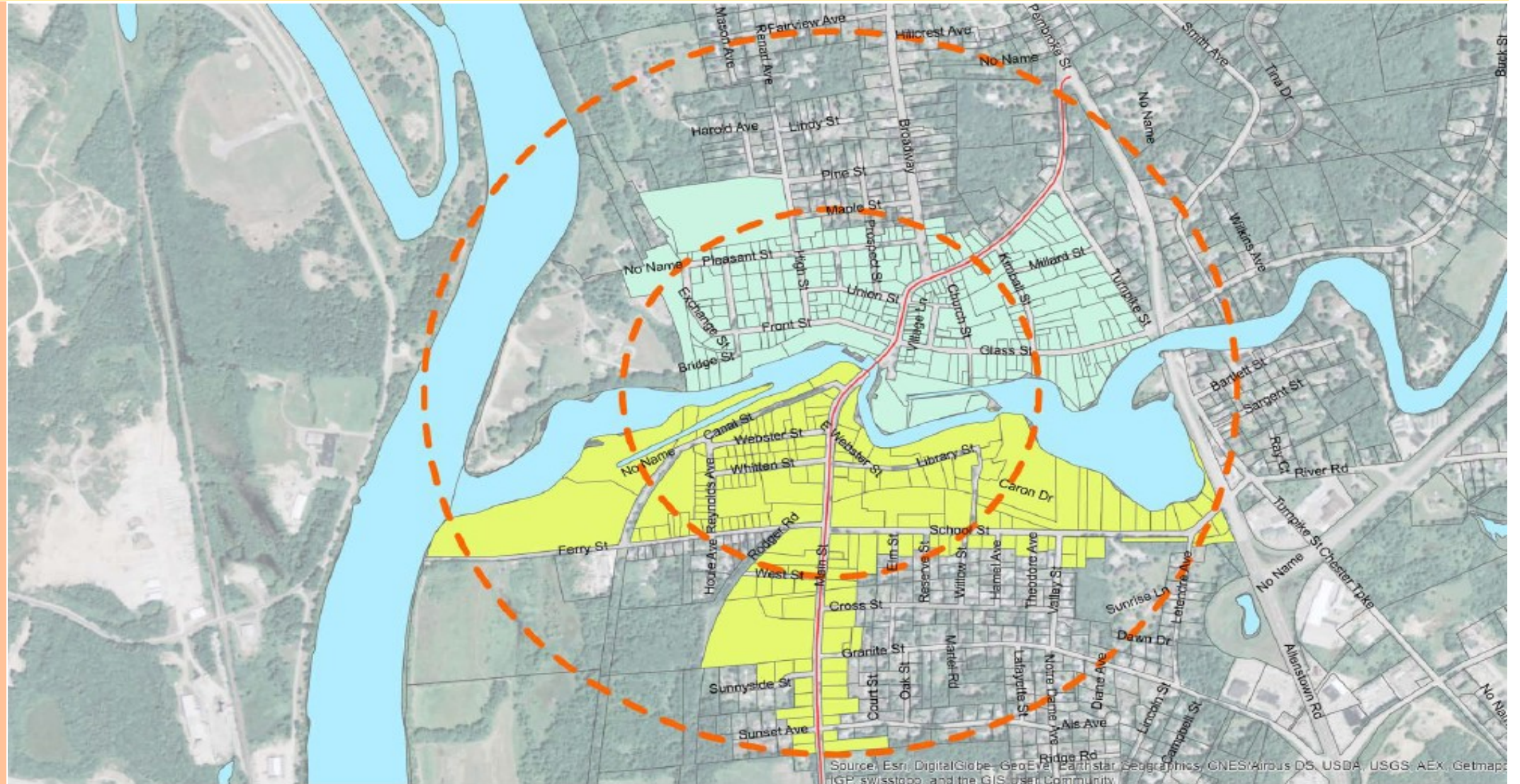
**Follow Form-Based, Not Use-Based Zoning**

**Ensure Development on Either of the Suncook River**

For example, create a chamber of commerce that includes Allentown and Pembroke in Suncook Village.

**Solidify the identity of Suncook Village**

The diagram shows the borders of Allentown and Pembroke using the transect strategy as a concentric guide.



To formalize the urban to rural transect, new comprehensive zoning policies can be implemented to control the density of development throughout the town.

The first step is to review current zoning and investigate the potential of consistent zoning throughout the entirety of Suncook Village. Doing so would require collaboration with the Town of Pembroke. Furthermore, to be as effective as possible, these policy changes should result in changes to the zoning ordinances themselves, rather than just implementing a zoning overlay district to encourage greater density and more commercial activity. Fortunately, zoning-enabling legislation passed by the State of New Hampshire allows each municipality to craft its respective zoning to meet its unique needs and requirements.

With complementary Suncook Village zoning in both Allentown and Pembroke, the next step is to solidify the edges and identify of Suncook Village. It is at this point that residents and other stakeholders can help craft the message of how Suncook Village is different and what distinct offerings it will provide. This could be a combination of uses and taking advantage of the opportunity to jointly and uniquely brand this area.

# Zoning Recommendations

Based on the public commentary received during the charrette, it is very clear that Allenstown and Pembroke have a symbiotic relationship that has remained strong since the early days of the Suncook Mills. Leaders on both sides of the Suncook River should take this opportunity to holistically investigate the use of shared municipal services for mutual benefit. This can include refining the school district, utility districts, public safety districts, etc. While typically these conversations do not stem from the discussion of zoning, they can be used as a catalyst to enhance neighbor relations and benefits.

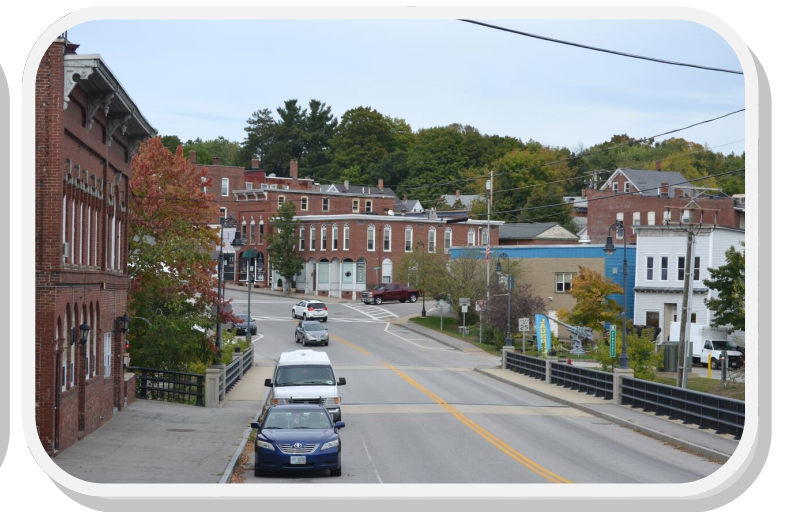
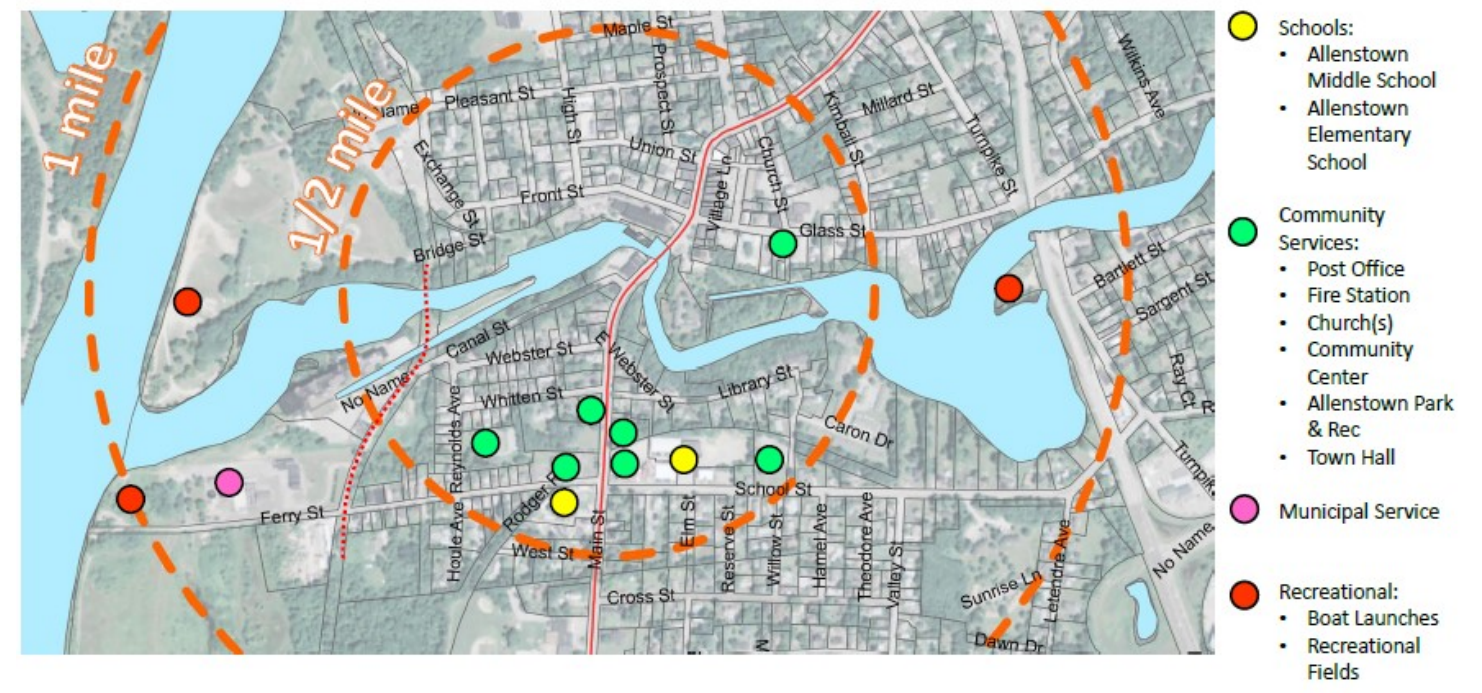
To be most successful, the redevelopment as well as uses on either side of the Suncook River should echo each other. This will ensure that Suncook Village becomes the official, not simply de facto, downtown of Allenstown and Pembroke. Therefore, this will make the Suncook River a focal point, i.e. "the spine" not a boundary, of both municipalities with a mix of compatible and flexible uses radiating 360 degrees from the old industrial heart of the area.

When considering how to revise the zoning ordinances, any changes should allow for or facilitate what the market wants to develop or redevelop. Leaders should consult with members of the real estate development community when considering placing restrictions on development in certain locations to ensure a maximization of assessed land value and property tax revenue.

The existing zoning in Allenstown is commonly referred to as Euclidian zoning. This type of zoning has historically been adopted to separate uses, specifically noisy and polluting industry from residential uses. The downside of this type of zoning has resulted in prohibiting mixed-use areas, especially now that noisy and polluting industry is typically no longer located at the center of municipalities.

While Euclidean zoning has worked for Allenstown and many other municipalities over the years, a new type of zoning referred to as **form-based code should be considered**. This type of zoning places a stronger emphasis on the feel of a community, through building style and size rather than use. Put another way, form-based code allows for a greater diversity of uses while providing restrictions on building type.

Several communities can be used as examples to implementing form-based, one example of note would be Dover, which was the first municipality in New Hampshire to implement form-based code. Furthermore, municipal leaders should investigate opportunities that exist through the utilization of RSA 674:21 Innovative Land Use Controls. Contract zoning in Maine and market-based zoning can also be reviewed and explored.





# **Summary of Recommendations**

## **Historic Considerations & Recommendations:**

- Seek National Register of Historic Places status for Suncook Village and locations in Allenstown. Eligible locations include Allenstown's 19th & 20th century buildings and the China Mill district, which could be eligible as a smaller historic district.
- Expand existing RSA 79E incentive zone to include the China Mill district.

## **Connectivity Recommendations:**

- Enhance connection to the rivers and canal on Canal, Main, and School Streets. Explore constructing a pedestrian bridge over canal and river (on former rail line) and enhancing the Mill grounds.
- Improve streetscapes along Canal, Main, and School Streets, to include overlooks/viewpoints toward the water. Overlooks could include informational kiosks.
- Increase green space near water locations and Municipal buildings.
- Create walking trails within Allenstown to connect Allenstown and Pembroke.
- Create dedicated bike lanes on Main, Canal, School Streets and connect to developing "Rails to Trails."

## **Housing Recommendations:**

- Use a transect strategy to create three distinct Housing Districts, which could cater to diverse interests, extending outward from the Suncook Village core: High-Density Village District, Medium-Density Mixed-Use Mill District, Low-Density Sustainable Agriculture District.

## **Marketing Recommendations:**

- Consider the Suncook Village one market, development friendly and open to public/private partnerships.
- Be Historic Tax Credit ready, and consider increasing tax incentives for businesses by enlarging the RSA 79E zone or creating a TIF district.
- Work with the existing China Mill business to seek and finance improvements for historic preservation incentives.
- Offer new products and residential options with the distinct Housing Districts, which offers to many demographics and lifestyle choices.

## **Zoning Recommendations:**

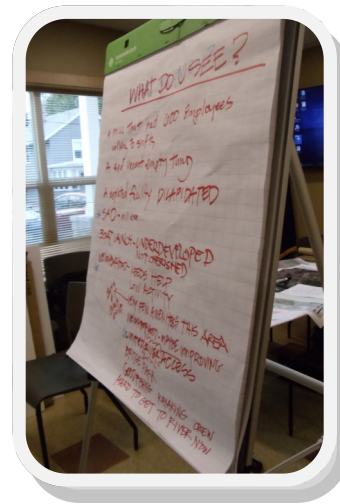
- Review current zoning and work with Pembroke to create a Cross-Border Zoning District to strengthen municipal efforts for both Suncook Village communities. Use Form-Based, not Use-Based Zoning.
- Solidify the identity of Suncook Village and consider methods to ensure development on both sides of the Suncook River (e.g. create a Suncook Village Chamber of Commerce).

***Thank You Allenstown!***

## Appendix A Community Input: What Do You See?

a sad vacant empty town  
 lack of business  
 low activity  
 not a need to come here  
 not much activity  
 nothing attracting people to downtown  
 traffic on route 3-- bypassing downtown  
 very few amenities in this area  
 lack of community  
 no place to meet up  
 potential  
 drugs/crime  
 cleaned up --ferry street  
 neighborhood- may be improving  
 neighborhood needs help  
 lack of room to expand  
 size constraint  
 old/rundown  
 family oriented  
 history of everyone knowing each other  
 older generations still know one another  
 a lot of new people  
 many who grew up here are gone  
 new families in town  
 aging population  
 history  
 history to be resurrected  
 sidewalks maintained  
 walking district  
 walkable  
 walking  
 lots of walking but little to walk to  
 dog walkers/bikes  
 street widths  
 truck traffic

don't see business  
 one business flips a lot (busy bee site)  
 housing variety/style  
 many houses in good shape  
 pride in homes  
 more renters/less pride & ownership  
 housing  
 more pride in ownership  
 more improvement of properties  
 neglect  
 infrastructure repair  
 empty buildings  
 homes mixed income  
 too many mobile homes, tax impact, school  
 impact  
 boat launch- underdeveloped, not cherished  
 limited river access  
 bridge park  
 good fishing  
 the water is not an asset, it once was (i.e. swim-  
 ming)  
 kayaking-crew



a mill that had 600 employees working 3  
 shifts  
 a depleted facility dilapidated  
 sad mill area  
 mill-- looks empty  
 mill-- wonderful building  
 mill-- magnet for workers/townspople  
 disrepair of mill  
 china mill  
 boys & girls club  
 church & library in town  
 library not used much, summer programs but  
 not compared to neighboring towns  
 historic buildings  
 across from church is an eyesore  
 former ballfield/now sewer plant  
 lack of services downtown  
 great sense of pride in community center as a  
 resource  
 library- small, lack of parking  
 community center  
 good schools  
 sewage treatment plant  
 treatment plant smell



## What Would You Like to See?

ice skating  
 across from church (toward Hooksett) a park or a place to  
 gather  
 bowling alley  
 restaurants  
 something on the waterfront  
 a more visible welcome sign in town to make you feel wel-  
 come  
 would like to see transportation network  
 Allenstown STAY a safe town  
 middle school vamped up  
 new middle school  
 a wedding venue (reception)  
 recreation fields  
 boat launch/fishing & family activity  
 more for young kids to do outside  
 not have to take kids somewhere to do something  
 mill redeveloped with more activity for community  
 like Manchester mills  
 museum to preserve history  
 capitalize on central location  
 capitalize on universities nearby  
 incubator  
 sewer plant be less of an issue  
 condos at mill  
 make use of riverfront  
 no more mobile homes  
 upscale apartments  
 Mt. St Mary college  
 quality, but affordable housing  
 walking/hiking paths  
 incentives for improvements  
 arts & business at mills  
 bring some culture  
 public beach/park by water  
 good water access  
 town historic museum- mill  
 highlight history

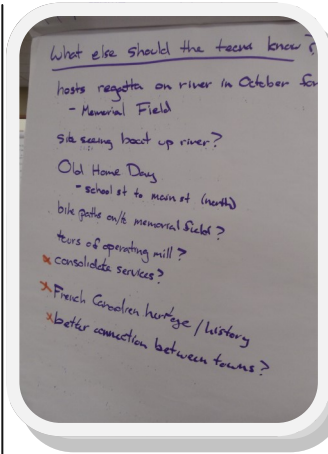
## What Would You Like to See?

Business, business, business!  
 technology jobs  
 small manufacturing  
 move Police Department & redevelopment for commercial  
 more business- commercial/industrial, restaurant  
 dog park  
 concerts in town  
 ball field in neighborhood  
 skating rink  
 park/boat launch  
 improve boat ramp  
 mill building repair  
 more mill visibility/access  
 more single family/less rentals  
 more single family/less rentals  
 new housing  
 upgrade visual character of multifamily  
 property management caring

walking paths  
 improved look- sidewalks, landscaping, benches  
 improved areas  
 college campus offset  
 combine town services/central location  
 medical



## What Else Does Plan NH Need to Know?



divided community-Suncook, E. Allenstown  
 more community involvement/activity  
 would like community to get "together"  
 inflexible residents for no change/little  
 some don't wish for the town to grow  
 French Canadian heritage/history

originally Pembroke & Allenstown share history  
 no real safety concerns

some drug issues (similar to other communities)  
 quiet(ish) area  
 still basically a bedroom community  
 identity crisis w/r/t Suncook  
 need identity  
 no apartments

hosts regatta of river in October for NH colleges  
 reach the beach (run through here)  
 regatta  
 old home day  
 old home day; school street to main street (north)  
 bear brook not being used  
 bear brook park  
 memorial field  
 site setting boat up river?  
 church has activities

have bus for seniors to take them to Concord  
 bike paths on/to memorial fields  
 lots of road paving to be done

sewage treatment facility- aromatic, has lots of excess capacity  
 decent water capacity  
 separate storm (water)  
 shared fire& police  
 consolidate services  
 doctors office in area/1 dentist

lack internet  
 post office "Suncook NH"

communication challenges- school to parents; town to townspeople



## **Appendix B Strava Records 2015: Allenstown, NH**

*This information has been generously donated by Plan NH volunteer Laura Getts M.S. Candidate Environmental Science and Policy, Plymouth State University Center for the Environment.*

### **Overview**

Strava is an app that allows bicyclists, runners, and pedestrians to record the timing and location of their rides, runs, and walks using a smartphone. In 2015, there were approximately 11,692 male cyclists and 2,473 female cyclists across the state of New Hampshire using Strava to record their bicycle rides. The majority of these bicyclists are male and fall within the 25-55 age range. The majority of recorded Strava trips represent recreational rides vs. commuter or primary mode of transportation rides.

The following data (pages 29-30) is only a reflection Strava app users, who may represent anywhere between 5-14% of the total bicycle rides occurring on a given stretch of road. On-the-ground bicycle counters are currently the most accurate way to ascertain true ridership numbers for a community.

### **Rider Origins**

Strava polygon data shows that certain rides ending in Allenstown begin in Concord, Pembroke, and Deerfield. This suggests that Allenstown may be a destination for cyclists from other townships. Unfortunately, it is difficult to determine the origins of riders that may drive to Allenstown or Bear Brook State Park specifically for the purpose of cycling or mountain biking as they do not begin recording their rides on Strava until they park in the village or at the trailhead.

### **Results**

Among Strava users, the most popular stretch of road for bicycling in Allenstown was NH Route 28, followed by Deerfield Road and River Road. Among Strava users, the trails in Bear Brook State Park generated the greatest number of unique riders in the area. According to Strava data, the greatest number of bicycle commutes were occurring along Allenstown Road, NH Route 28, Deerfield Road, and Main Street.

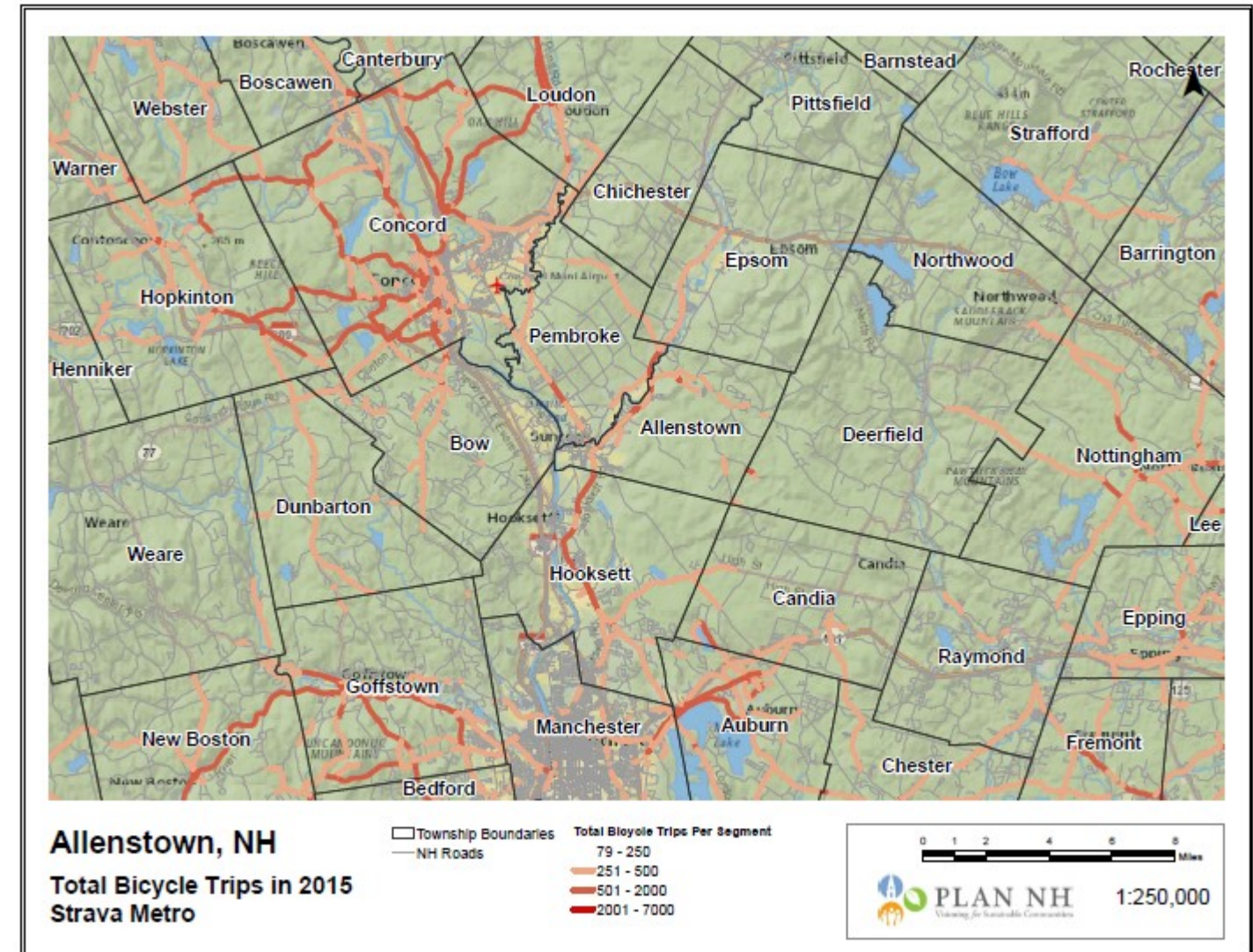
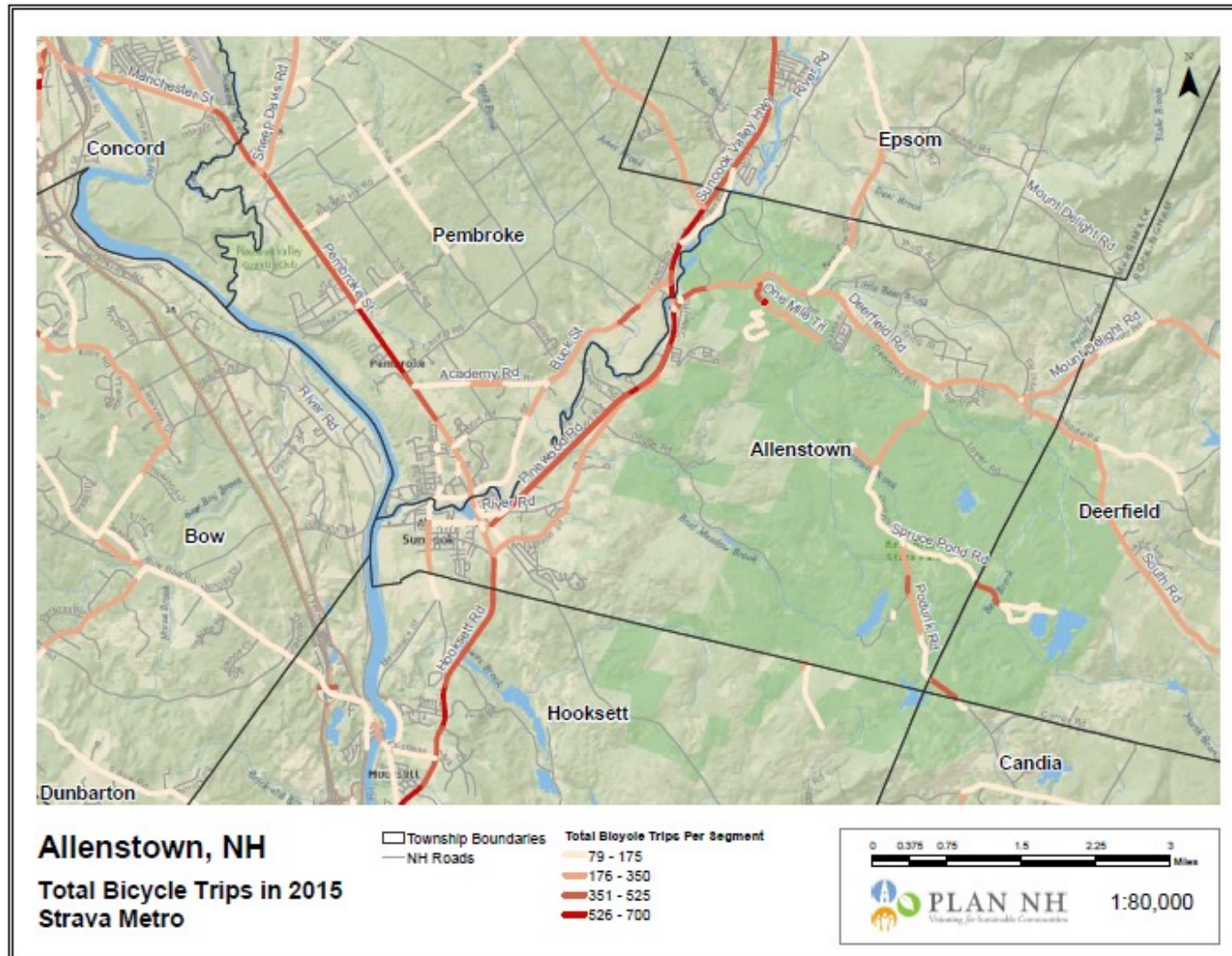
### **Recommendations**

Bicyclists may represent an important economic market for Allenstown. Route 3, Route 28, and Deerfield Road, represent important links between Allenstown, Pembroke, and Concord. Bear Brook State Park is a destination for recreational cyclists. Cyclists originating in surrounding townships that currently drive their bicycles to Bear Brook State Park may be encouraged to bicycle instead if road conditions became sufficiently bicycle-friendly. Bicycle-friendly road conditions can be anything from an increased road shoulder to a separated bicycle path. Electronic bicycle ground counters would provide a more accurate picture of bicyclist numbers throughout Allenstown.

# Appendix B Strava Records 2015: Allenstown, NH

The following maps illustrate the locations of Strava app users near Allenstown.

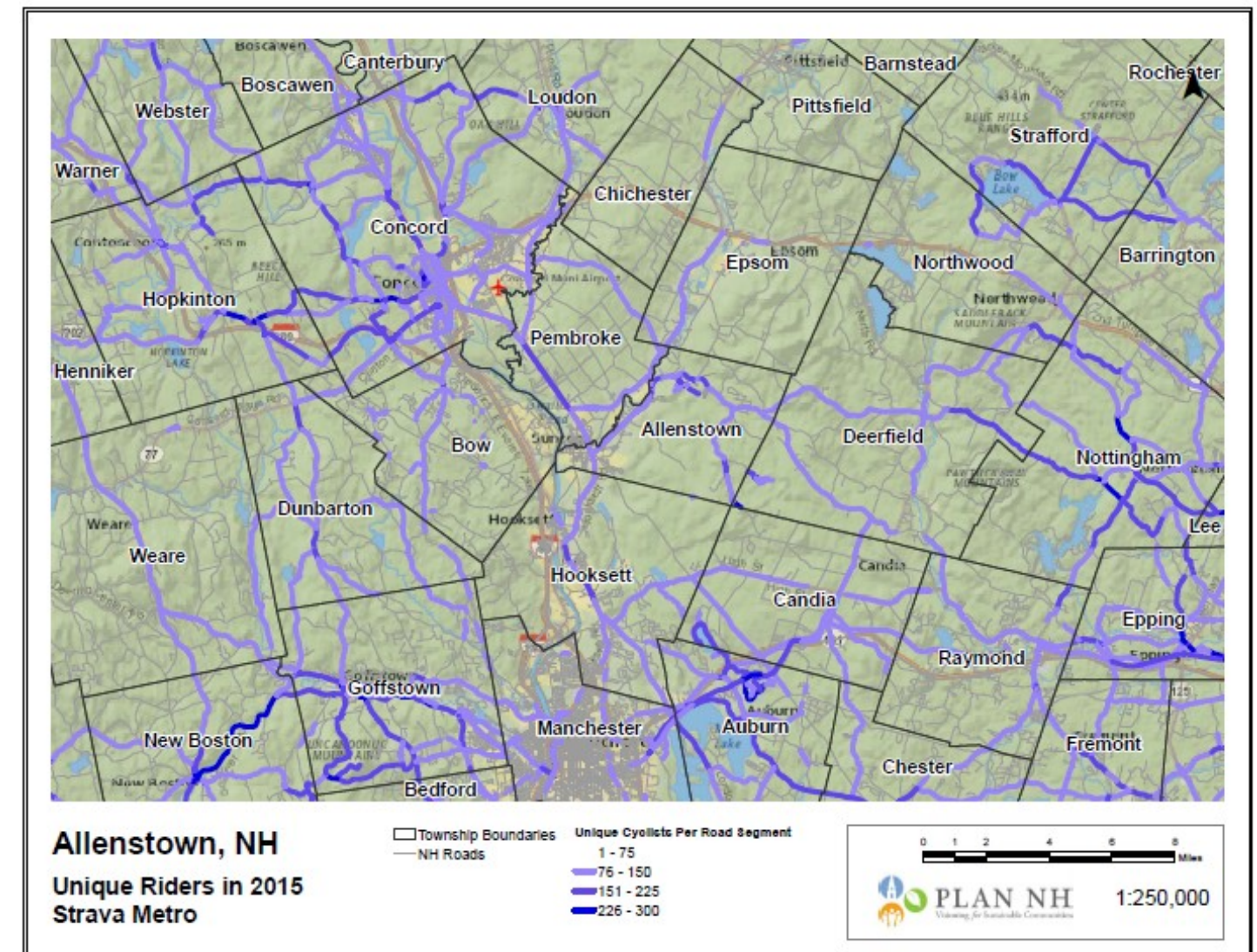
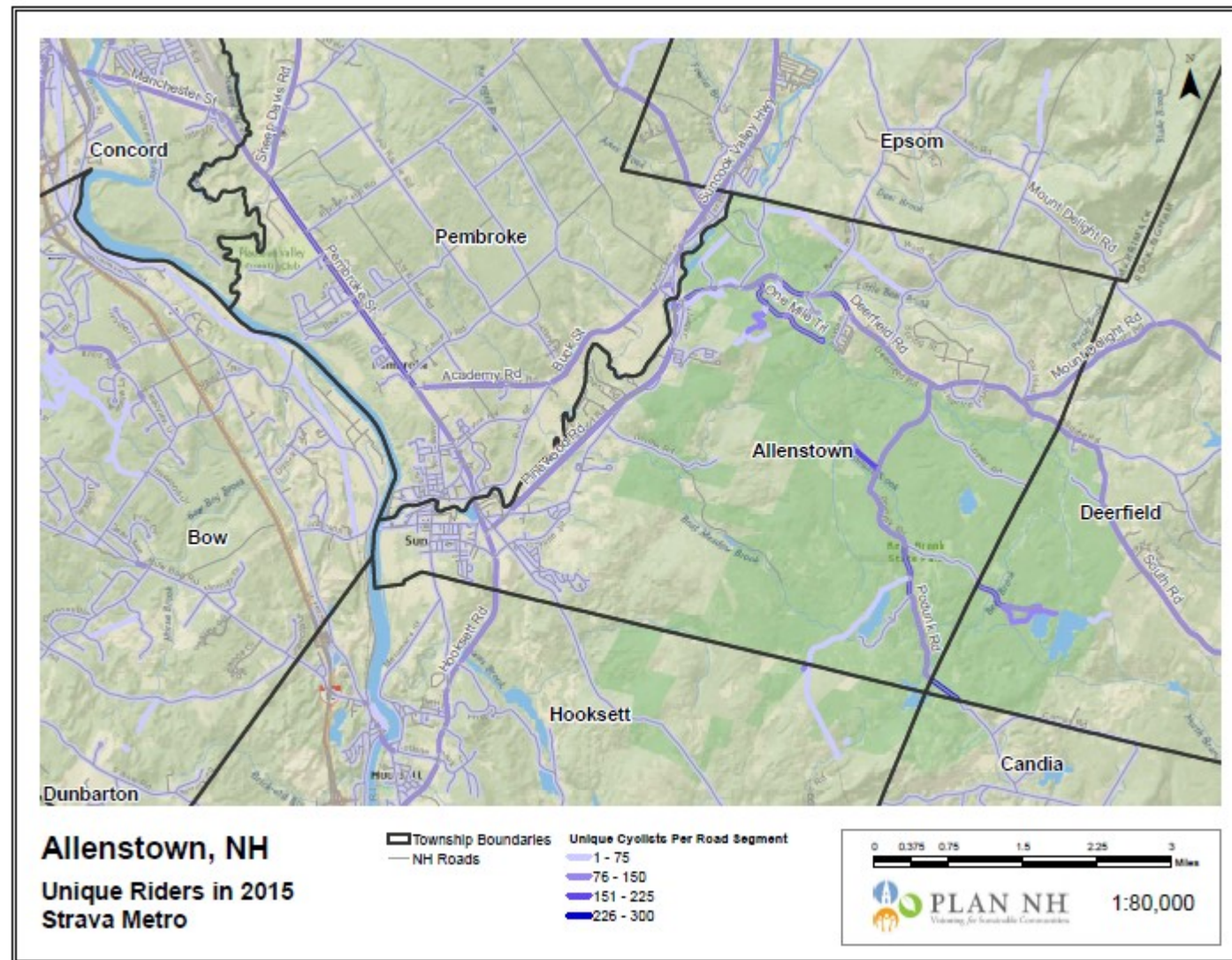
**Heatmap #1:** Indicates total bicycle rides recorded by Strava on the roads and trails of Allenstown throughout 2015. This number does not represent unique riders. Many of these rides are likely repeated by several individuals throughout the year. This number has the potential to indicate route choices and the overall popularity of certain roadways or trails for bicycling activity within a community.



**Heatmap #2:** The same as Heatmap #1 with the exception of scale. This scale provides perspective by illustrating the extent of bicycle use as recorded by Strava in the surrounding townships.

## Appendix B Strava Records 2015: Allenstown, NH

**Heatmap #3:** Indicates total unique riders using Strava along a segment of road throughout 2015. These numbers do not show how many rides occurred along a segment of road, but how many different individuals rode a bike along each segment of road over the course of one year. This number has the potential to indicate the extent of ridership occurring within a community.



**Heatmap #4:** The same as Heatmap #3 with the exception of scale. This scale provides perspective by illustrating the number of unique individuals using Strava in the surrounding townships.