



PLAN NH

Visioning for Sustainable Communities



Exeter Charrette

October, 2010

P R E F A C E

In early 2010, Exeter submitted an application to Plan New Hampshire for a design charrette, and was one of six towns selected by the organization as a charrette town for the 2010-2011 year.

The request was for Plan NH to recommend improvements in the neighborhood of the Train Station.

On October 22 and 23, the Plan New Hampshire (Plan NH) Design Charrette Team came to Exeter, meeting first in the Town Hall and then at the Lincoln Street School.

Plan NH's charrette team set out to understand how Exeter's residents saw the neighborhood and how they felt streetscape could be improved to serve pedestrians and vehicles, train riders, residents, shoppers, and school personnel, students and parents. In addition, the Team needed to understand the importance of the neighborhood itself, its role and place in the greater community.

Issues addressed included, but were not limited to vehicular and pedestrian safety, community open space, way-finding, infrastructure improvements and aesthetic appearances of the streetscape and buildings. All this was against the backdrop of the importance of the neighborhood as a vital, vibrant resource for groceries, dry cleaning, hardware and more – as well as a settled residential area.

Additional discussions regarding pathways and trails connecting downtown amenities to features and recreational venues in outlying portions of the town and region were also considered.

Plan New Hampshire arrived on Friday noon – a team of volunteer professionals from within the building industry, each with an interest in the logistical aspects of making recommendations, and also a deep commitment to contributing to the community itself. On Friday, the Team listened to townspeople, explored the target area, learned the history of the neighborhood, heard about its economic, social and environmental structures, and listened to expressions of hope and pride. On Saturday, the team talked about what they heard, what they concluded, and what recommendations they would make. They then made many of these recommendations visual, and in the afternoon, made a presentation to the town.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincerest thanks go to the individuals and groups who donated their professional expertise and personal time to make the Exeter Charrette a success. Also, many thanks to the citizens, businesses and town officials who shared their time, energy, services, thought and knowledge with us.

Plan NH Team

Robin H. LeBlanc
Rebecca Brown

Emily Clancy
Scott Collard
Gordon Cormack
Tim Golde

Roger Hawk, Planner
Lisa Henderson

Thomas House
Kenneth Knowles
Tim Nichols

Rip Patten
Zachary Smith

North Sturtevant
Wes Tator
Rick Vandenberg
Robbi Woodburn

Team Photo:



Exeter Team

Without the support and participation of the following, this charrette would not have been possible:

Don Briselden, Exeter Train Station Committee
Bob Hall, Exeter Train Station Committee
Julie Gilman, Chairwoman, Exeter Board of Selectmen
Russ Dean, Exeter Town Manager
Kelly Geis, Administrative Assistant
Sylvia vonAulock, Exeter Town Planner
Laura Frangione

Rockingham Regional Planning Commission:

Theresa Walker
Scott Bogle
Cliff Sinnott

Rockingham Regional Planning Commission's Brownfields consultants:

Rick Vandenberg, Credere Associates
Rip Patten, Credere Associates

We also want to thank:

Richard Keays, Principal, Lincoln Street School
Helen Burnham, Lincoln Street School

Special thanks goes to the Town of Exeter, Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce, Rockingham Planning Commission, Lincoln Street School, and WestEx Committee.

PlanNH is Grateful for the Special Support of Members:



**Public Service
of New Hampshire**

The Northeast Utilities System



Engineering a Sustainable Future

Charette Book Production Team:

For Scanning of Documents:



For design and Layout:



For Printing and Production:

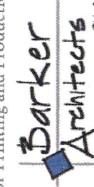


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	3
Acknowledgements	4
The Plan NH Design Charrette in Exeter	6
What We Heard	10
Recommendations	12
Rejuvenating the Exeter Train Station	14
Circulation and Traffic Safety	17
Funding mechanisms	21
Addressing Drainage Issues	22
Economic Development Opportunities	23



THE PLAN NH DESIGN CHARETTE IN EXETER

On Friday, October 22nd, the Team arrived one by one at the Lincoln Street School to leave cars, and were shuttled over to the Town Hall to gather, meet each other, and start the process. It was a blustery day, with snow in the air.

Around noon, the team was assembled. Introductions all around were made, and Team Leader Robin LeBlanc talked about the charges to the Team - to consider recommendations for the revitalization of the neighborhood around the Train Station.

The train stops once again in Exeter, on its way from Boston to Portland and back. The original train station is still there, but used as a grocery store. Tickets may be purchased there, and riders may get cup of coffee while waiting. Getting on and off the train takes place on a covered platform a few feet from the original station, and some parking is available there.

Riders include commuters, PEA students, and many who simply go to Boston (or Portland) for an afternoon and/or evening. Some visitors also take the train. Ridership from the Exeter stop includes Exeter residents and also many from the surrounding towns.

Using the train is a "basic" experience. Finding the station is not easy and the final approach (from Main Street) to the parking lot is visually unappealing and borders on hazardous for pedestrians, vehicles, and bicyclists alike. Aside from the platform, there is no formal place to wait for the train, and it is not immediately evident that tickets may be purchased in Gerry's store.

Layered over this is the neighborhood itself, which includes established retail businesses, schools (Lincoln Street School is right there, Main Street School and the Academy are on the periphery of the neighborhood but are key presences). Gerry's Store, the dry cleaners, the hardware store and other establishments between the Train Station and Main Street are heavily used on a daily basis - these are businesses that provide needs for residents, a difference from the area around the bandstand with nice shops that are great but are not necessarily basics.

The target area also includes a moving company, a feed store, an old shoe factory (the space is still minimally used by a mix of businesses), a couple of car repair places, the Exeter Handkerchief Factory and some small eateries. For the most part, the neighborhood is zoned mixed-use, and for the most part, it is working.

The train track itself is seen by some as a divider between the neighborhoods on either side of the tall fence that lines it to keep people from crossing at the platform. One resident, however, called it the "spine".



Plan NH was asked to consider ways to make the area more visually appealing, so that train riders would have a more pleasant before and after train experience, so that residents using the area for other than the train would be more inclined to walk around the neighborhood, and also to attract, perhaps, visitors and investors to bring the entire neighborhood into a new way of vibrancy.

The Team met first with key community stakeholders to learn some background information.

The area is zoned for multi-use on the north side (where retail is) and residential and commercial to the south. The town has been thinking about the possibility of the retail buildings on Lincoln Street (between Train Station and Main Street) being allowed to expand up a story or two to provide residential opportunities and perhaps office space. The town is interested in other recommendations the Plan NH may have for zoning.

Logistically, storm water is an issue in the area and at times there is serious flooding. The sidewalks are much too narrow, and cars overhang so that walking is sometimes impossible. Wider sidewalks could be plowed more easily, as well as allow for easier (and safer) walking opportunities.

Some brownfields studies have been done and there is money to do more.



The Train Station details can still be seen from the tracks here whereas out front all one sees is the grocery store. There is a long-range plan to take over the former baggage building to use for tickets and a waiting room. There is also interest in restoring the train station visually (it has the qualifications to be on the

national historic register) while keeping the retail portion intact. Parking for the station is an issue – the 78 spaces fill up regularly. There is a piece of property adjacent to the lot that could be used for additional space – it is for sale but the price tag is above the assessed market value and an agreement cannot be reached (as of October 2010).

The track and platform can only be accessed from Lincoln Street, and there is a fence along the south side. Guilford Rail (the Owner) has no interest at this time in providing a crossing at the platform for those on the other side of the fence.

There is a long history of industry here, and a healthy mix of residential and economic uses. The general feeling is that the town would like to keep it that way – and encourage more vibrancy as people bustle in and out from the station, from Gerry's, from the hardware store, or one of the other establishments.

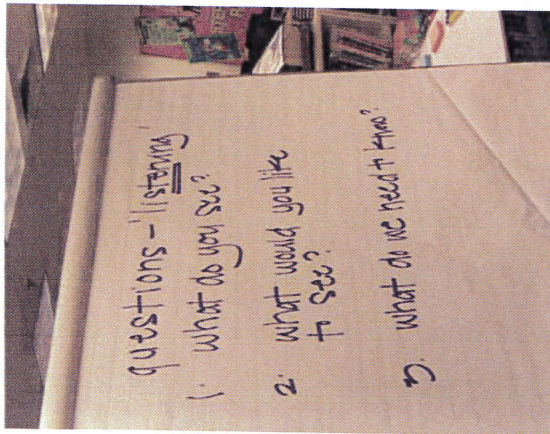
How can the area be enhanced for safety and visual appeal while maintaining its unique, funky feel?

The team then went on a tour of the target area – a driven tour for some, and for others a walking tour.



The group convened at the Lincoln Street School for two listening sessions – one at 4 and the other at 6:30. Citizens were encouraged to talk about:

- What did they see in this neighborhood?
- What would they like to see?
- What should the Plan NH team know when developing its recommendations?



Summary of Citizen Input:

This is a neighborhood—distinct from downtown. It features a mix of uses – housing, businesses, schools, and transportation – and people like that. It's an historic, funky and social part of town. The Burnham Block area is a utilitarian hub for residents with valued small businesses where you can get what you need and bump into your neighbors and chat on the fly. There are two beloved anchors – Arjay's Hardware and Gerry's Variety.

It's the place to get your errands done, but there could be more opportunities to just hang out and meet up with friends – if there was, say, a coffee shop or a restaurant, perhaps with outdoor seating.

Folks acknowledged that the look of the Burnham Block is tired and in need of façade improvements. As one resident said, "It's not pretty, but it works."

Residents aren't all regular train users and are wary of ceding the neighborhood to the train and its riders. In fact, several businesses said they don't feel the train improved the area. There are problems with parking, people trespassing and relieving themselves outside, and it hasn't necessarily translated to increased business.

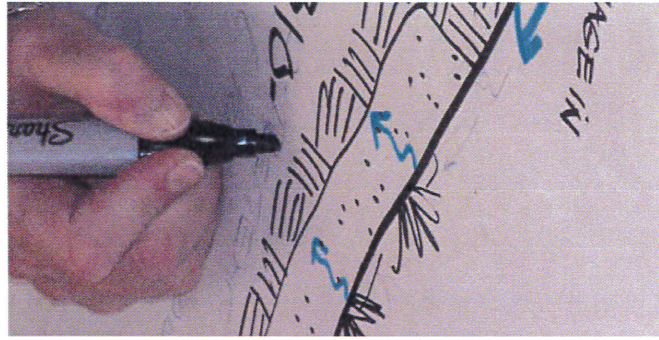
There is recognition of day visitors and the benefits they could bring. But right now they get off the train and may wonder where am I? It's their first view of Exeter and it's not that attractive or organized. Day visitors would likely appreciate some essentials and possibly some boutiques. However, the residents are guarded about the area becoming too "shi shi."

The aesthetic of Water Street is appreciated and residents felt it would be nice to extend the look to this area, but again, they want to keep the area's functionality and practicality.

People like that this area is not gentrified – it offers smaller homes on smaller lots that are more affordable than in other parts of town. They are guarded against future gentrification. There is a desire to preserve and create affordable housing, especially to keep families.

The neighborhoods around the Burnham Block area feel disconnected. It's difficult to get in and out of the area – by car, bike or on foot.

There are definite concerns about pedestrian safety – the crosswalks are long, sidewalks are narrow. There is a lack of street lighting. Signage is poor, need more way finding cues. In a car, it's hard to get through, hard to find a parking space. You often find yourself in a game of "chicken" with other people backing out of parking spaces. There's a surge of traffic when school lets out.



The train: Residents would like to see the station facade resorted, while keeping the businesses there. Residents are in favor of an enclosed waiting area (baggage building) for shelter, warmth, facilities, and services. Housing over the second floor interested some.

There is real potential for this to become a true multi-modal center – access the train, local and regional buses, shuttles, trolleys, taxis.

Residents also expressed environmental concerns:

Don't want to pander too much to cars. Keep pedestrians and bikers in mind.

The area is prone to flooding. Need to reduce/manage the amount of impervious (paved) surfaces.

There is an opportunity to "green up" the area through trees and landscaping. There is a desire to avoid light pollution.

On Saturday morning, the Team gathered early to talk about what they had heard and what they might develop for recommendations. They worked feverishly until it was time to present their findings at 3:00.



WHAT WE HEARD

The train station and commercial area of Lincoln Street play a two-sided function for the Town of Exeter. On the one hand the commercial area is a social hub for the neighborhood and the town, offering everyday commercial options such as Gerry's, the hardware store, small food establishments and a dry cleaner. On the other hand the train station and bus connections create a growing multi-modal transit hub connecting Exeter to Maine, Massachusetts and beyond.

It is important in considering what this area might look like to remember that this area is a neighborhood center first and a transit hub second.

The West Exeter/Lincoln Street neighborhood is a convergence of local and regional activities.

- Local activities include:
 - Single family residences
 - Community-based retail shops and services
 - Neighborhood schools and associated recreational amenities
 - Buildings and features of significant historical importance to Exeter

In addition, the area contributes to a community-wide concern about drainage capacity, storm water management and water quality protection.

The neighborhood possesses several unique traits that can be recognized as opportunities for the creation of a distinctive identity and development advantage. These include:

- A unique and diverse historical ethnic neighborhood heritage
- Vibrant commercial activity composed of a distinctive variety of viable shops and services
- An identity of having been an industrial center of Exeter's earliest days
- The presence of the rail road and the center of commuter activity in the region
- The presence of an historical rail road building with an operating commercial function
- The opportunity for mixed use development in the district as permitted under Exeter's Zoning Ordinance

As a consequence of these numerous and significant traits, Plan NH recognized that the neighborhood, specifically, and Lincoln Street, in general, represents a "spine of opportunity" by virtue of the combination of the linear character of the indigenous rail and Lincoln Street corridors.

Regional activities include:

- Rail service connections to Boston MA and Portland ME.
- Bus transportation connections to Boston MA
- Shuttle transit to regional commercial and business centers
- Commercial businesses providing unique materials and services to the area (Exeter Handkerchief and Agway stores)
- Commuter parking
- Access to Exeter tourism
- Access to Phillips Exeter Academy

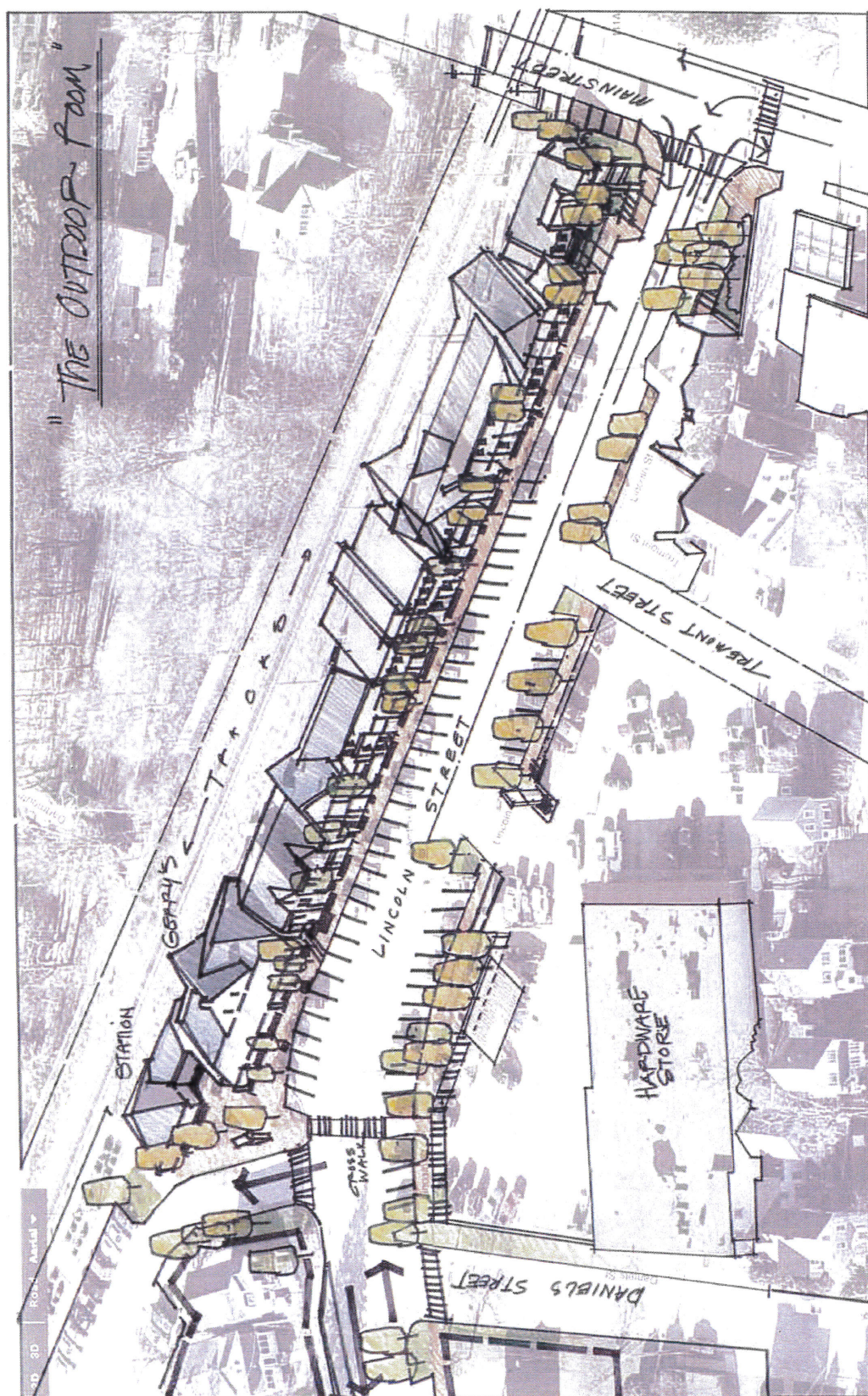
Key concerns of residents include:

- Pedestrian safety (including lighting)
- Safe traffic circulation
- Providing available parking for commuters and local residents
- Preservation of local commercial/retail shops and services
- Maintaining a variety of affordable housing options
- Preserving the quality and character of the single family residential neighborhoods
- Accommodating a growing need for commuter parking
- Establishing an appropriate identity for the neighborhood
- Protecting the rights of local property owners
- Improving the character and quality of Lincoln Street's streetscape
- Providing for the preservation of open space in the neighborhood
- Accommodating a variety of commuter needs (sanitation, ticket buying, pick up and drop off of riders, shelter, comfort, accessibility, way-finding)
- Minimization of impervious surfaces and reduction of runoff to community drainage infrastructure
- Improved pedestrian connection with downtown Exeter

Conclusions:

In response to the above input as well as the team's on-site observations and assessment of the project area, the Plan NH charrette team's conclusion included the need for the:

- Protection and Enhancement of Neighborhood Identity
- Preservation of Neighborhood Shops and Services
- Protection and Enhancement of Pedestrian Safety
- Improvements to Traffic Circulation
- Recognition and Treatment of the Lincoln Street Station as a "gateway" and "welcome center" for the Exeter Community
- Treatment of Drainage and Stormwater Management Issues



RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the Plan NH team were presented as the treatment of Lincoln Street and its environs as a "big room" featuring:

- Improved pedestrian safety movement
- Improved safety and efficiency of vehicular circulation
- Calm Traffic
- Enhance pedestrian amenities within streetscape
- Strengthen identified points of access and destinations/activity centers
- Preserve and enhance neighborhood's economic viability
- Improved capacity of neighborhood area to address local storm water management needs

The features of the "big room" planning concept for the Lincoln Street neighborhood as presented by the Plan NH team included:

1. Pedestrian Circulation and Amenities

- Widen sidewalks along the west side of Lincoln Street to
 - a. improve pedestrian circulation along the fronts of parking spaces; and
 - b. improve the visual character of the shops and streetscape.
- Widen sidewalks along the east side of Lincoln Street to
 - a. improve pedestrian circulation along the fronts of on-street parking spaces; and
 - b. improve the ability to remove snow. (Subject to negotiation with the hardware store owners.)
- Improve way-finding signage to expand pedestrian and vehicular connections to downtown Exeter.
- Study opportunities for pedestrian circulation between Lincoln Street and downtown Exeter via open space to east of Lincoln Street School.
- Expand pedestrian walkway along east side of rail corridor with intention of providing direct pedestrian linkage to station and Lincoln Street from Front Street and neighborhood(s) to the west of rail corridor.
- Improve at-grade rail road crossings at both Front and Main Streets to improve pedestrian circulation, safety and neighborhood connection.
- Improve connections between existing commercial/retail shops and services on Front Street with those on Lincoln Street.

2. Vehicular Circulation and Parking

- Create new entry to Lincoln Street at its intersection with Main Street in order to:
 - improve sight distances,
 - traffic queuing and movement patterns,
 - way-finding and advertising signage treatments,
 - pedestrian circulation,
 - parking and streetscape amenities, including trees, lighting and benches.
- Study opportunities for expanded public parking and open space on land to east side of Exeter Handkerchief Property (Subject to discussions with property owner/operator.)

- Create one-way traffic movement in existing parking area into parking facility.
- Create new point of egress onto Lincoln Street from the parking facility to simplify traffic movements.
- Create drop-off and pick up point away from the bus pick up/drop off and parking areas - reduce confusion and congestion in the entrance to the parking area.
- Expand existing commuter parking area to include the properties currently occupied by either/or and the storage buildings and/or the moving company. (Subject to discussion with respective owners/operators.)
- Provide traffic movement/egress from expanded parking facility onto Garfield Street and beyond to Front Street. (Subject to discussions with Agway owners/operators and Town of Exeter officials.)

3. Traffic Calming

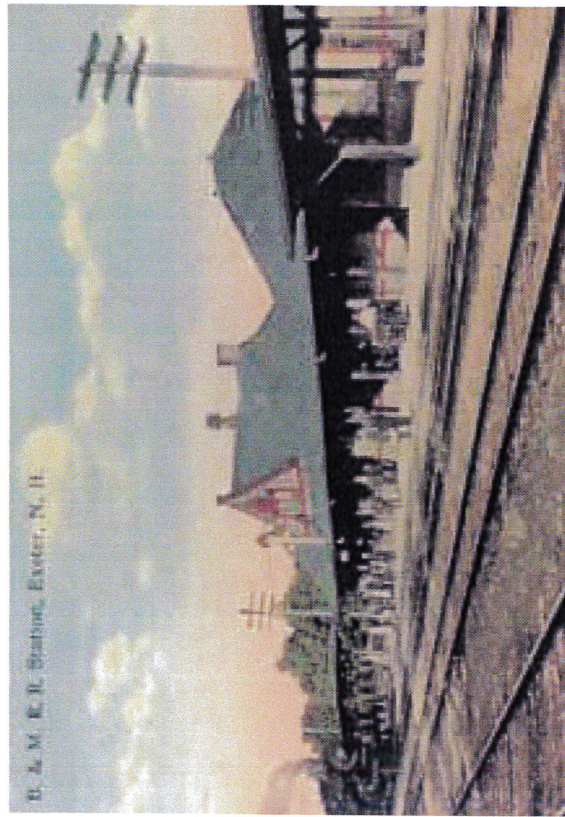
- Narrow curb cuts at road intersection at Main Street.
- Narrow overly generous travel lanes in Lincoln Street to slow cars.
- Clearly mark pedestrian crossings.
- Plant street trees.



4. Accessibility
 - Reconfigure parking spaces and pedestrian crossings in the area immediately in front of Gerry's (Rail Building) to improve safety.
 - Separate bus drop-off and pick-up area from main focus of vehicular traffic.
5. Economic Vitality
 - Preserve and restore the Rail Station Building to improve its ability to serve commuters and neighborhood residents. (As described by Plan NH Team focusing on Rail Station Improvements)
 - Preserve the presence of Gerry's as the primary occupant and neighborhood commercial anchor for Lincoln Street.
 - Study potentials and feasibility of adding second and third story (mixed use) housing above the existing shops along the west side of Lincoln Street to diversify neighborhood activity.
 - Study opportunities for mixed-use development on land to east and north side of Exeter Handkerchief Property. (Subject to discussions with property owners/operators.)
 - Evaluate potential and feasibility of existing Oceans Bank property as an opportunity for mixed-use building: reinforcing Lincoln Street's commercial strength and providing a suitable transition to the residential neighborhood to the east.
 - Preserve and enhance single-family residential use of southern end of Lincoln Street (opposite and adjacent to Lincoln Street School).
 - Evaluate potential and feasibility of open parking/storage area of the hardware store for additional mixed-use development. (Subject to discussions with hardware store owner/operator.)
 - Evaluate potential and feasibility of mixed-use development opportunity as represented by the property on which the empty old shoe factory now stands (and for which an affordable housing development study has been prepared).
 - Evaluate potential and feasibility of potential mixed-use development opportunity as represented by the property on which the pump company now operates. (Subject to discussions and negotiations with property owners.)
6. Infrastructure Improvements
 - Evaluate potential and feasibility of area within neighborhood properties for on-site stormwater detention/retention facility as part of an effort to reduce or minimize stormwater runoff into existing (overburdened) drainage infrastructure.
 - Study potential uses of porous pavements in streetscape improvements.
 - Study potential uses of bio-retention basins/rain gardens in neighborhood public open space areas.
 - Study potential uses of tree wells as part of streetscape improvements.

REJUVENATING THE EXETER TRAIN STATION

The original Richardsonsque Exeter Train Station was constructed in 1912 to replace an earlier wooden structure. Some years later, a baggage building was added, which is connected to the station by an open breezeway structure.



It is presumed that shortly after passenger rail service was abandoned in the 1960's the station building was bought and converted to a neighborhood grocery store, now known as Gerry's Variety. A concrete block extension was added to the front of the old station (on the Lincoln Street side) and the center portion of the first floor façade was removed to provide space for a central checkout. The portion of the façade that was not removed was left alone, effectively preserving a large part of the historic building. Presently, the rear of the building houses the "Trackside Café", which is accessed through the store. Both spaces are organized in a manner that parallels the tracks. The current set up appears to be somewhat inefficient and seems to rely very heavily upon locals for business.

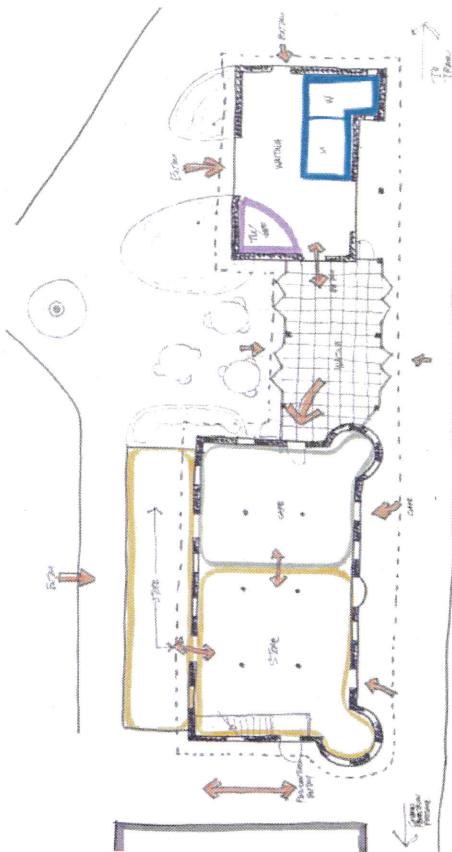
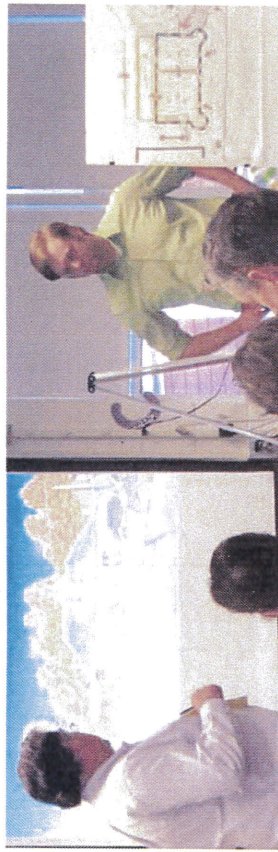


The station building is highly visible from either end of Lincoln Street and is well suited to serve as a central organizing component of the revitalized corridor.

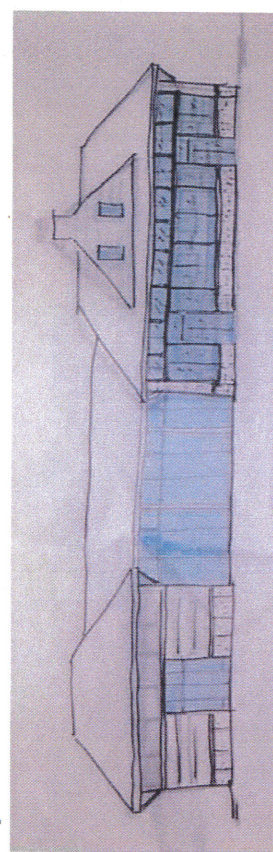
A first time-visitor to the neighborhood would likely be put off by a blank concrete façade and be unaware that there is a café next to the train station. The less than welcome feeling is exacerbated by the stark streetscape along Lincoln Street.

During the listening sessions, it became obvious that, from the neighborhood perspective, Gerry's and the Trackside are important parts of the community. Preservation of those businesses was deemed critical to any plan for improvement of the Lincoln Street corridor.

Clearly, the balance between creating a neighborhood center and a gateway to Exeter is paramount. The traditional railroad station may naturally be viewed as a candidate for restoration to its original purpose. However, following that path runs counter to the objective of providing a strong and vibrant neighborhood center.



Proposed New Floor Plan for the Train Station



Proposed New Elevation for the Train Station

Owing to its critical symbolic and functional value, a team was assembled to consider the train station as a specific design project. The design objective was to create a Gateway to the Town of Exeter, providing a welcome mat to first time visitors and a warm, dry, and functional ticketing and waiting area with bathroom facilities.

1. A building that would be seen as the heart of the neighborhood, where neighbors would want to go and linger.
2. A structure that would embrace and celebrate the "hidden history" of the area.
3. An area where the railroad, as a point of pride for Exeter residents, could be celebrated.

The goals of the suggested design would:

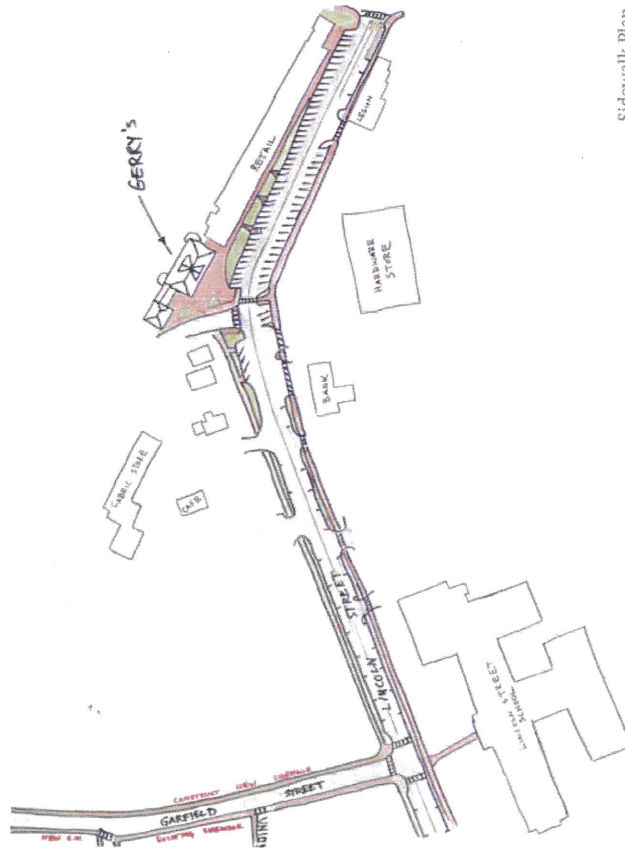
1. Keep Gerry's and the Trackside in the old station building.
2. Celebrate the station and the event of arrival and departure.
3. Provide greater transparency of the structure and its businesses, so that both neighborhood and railroad customers would have visible and welcoming access to those businesses.
4. Rejuvenate the historic buildings through greater access by both neighbors and travelers.
5. Address the functional requirements of a transportation and welcome center, relating to ticketing, waiting, and restrooms.
6. Celebrate the uniqueness of the diverse setting.

The design solution addresses these goals and objectives by:

1. Removing the concrete block projection on Jerry's and replacing it with a glass structure that evokes a marquee feel.
2. Restoring the original facade and highlighting its original elements through lighting.
3. Reconfiguring the layout of Gerry's and the café to provide easy access and visual connection to both the station and the neighborhood.
4. Utilizing the track side of the building as an extension of the café, to reinforce and celebrate connection to the train from Lincoln Street, Main Street and Front Street.
5. Converting the existing Baggage building to serve as a small ticketing, waiting and welcome center with restrooms.
6. Converting the existing breezeway into a glass-enclosed seating area, which can serve the dual function of waiting and gathering. Ideally, the area could be open air in good weather.
7. Constructing an information kiosk at the front of the station to announce the station entrance, provide a community bulletin board and area map and serve as a starting point for a way finding system.
8. Provide a landscape area with benches, shrubs and trees for social gathering.
9. Construct a covered walkway extending from the Baggage House to the existing train drop-off and pick-up area to provide protection from the harsh elements of New England weather.



CIRCULATION AND TRAFFIC SAFETY



CIRCULATION AND DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE:

When one arrives by train at Exeter Station today the sense of arrival and understanding of where one is in Exeter is unclear. There is no station building, no signage and no way to figure out which way to go to get to the Academy, Downtown or the Riverfront. In addition, train users from outside Exeter looking for parking, ticketing and departure have no spatial clues to navigate their way to their destination.

On the neighborhood level, the tracks create a separation between the neighborhood to the west and the stores on Lincoln Street. Key streets connecting this neighborhood to Lincoln Street have no sidewalks.

Establishing clear understandable circulation and signage for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles is essential for the success of this area.

Sidewalk Plan

As part of this visioning effort Plan NH recommends the following:

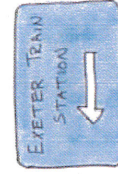
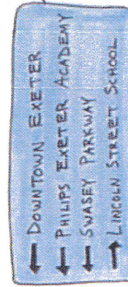
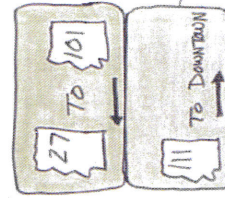
- The addition of a shuttle providing transport in a circuit from the station, south on Lincoln, east and north on Front, west on Main Street and south again on Lincoln back to the station.
- Potentially formalize existing pedestrian paths over the Lincoln Street School property connecting to the Main Street School, Tan Lane and Front Street.
- New sidewalks on Railroad Avenue to promote easy pedestrian connection between the neighborhood to the west and the station and Lincoln Street Commercial area.
- Clear and effective directional signage for arriving and departing passengers illustrating -the station and neighborhood in the context of Exeter and -designated pedestrian and bicycle routes from the station to PEA and Downtown.

Two types of signage may be helpful in directing people through the area:

- Green signage that directs drivers toward the major highways in the area, which would be helpful for those leaving the train station.
- Blue signs directing visitors toward major attractions such as the train station, downtown, local parks, etc. These signs can be modified to be any color or style that is consistent with the character of the surrounding area, but the signs should be consistent with one another to be easily recognizable and understandable to visitors.

Key places to locate wayfinding signage include:

- Intersection of Lincoln Street and Main Street
- Intersection of Lincoln Street and the Exeter Train Station driveway (Linda Street)
- Intersection of Front Street with the proposed access to the Exeter Train Station
- Intersection of Front Street with Lincoln Street
- Intersection of Garfield Street with the proposed access to the Exeter Train Station



Sample Signage

SAFETY

Lincoln Street:

Residents of the area viewed Lincoln Street as a division of the neighborhood if traveling on foot.

One comment that was heard from many residents and business owners during the listening sessions was that Lincoln Street is too wide and not safe for walking. The sidewalks along both sides of Lincoln Street are perceived as being too small, which is partly due to angled on-street parking resulting in vehicles overhanging the sidewalk.

Although there is a crosswalk near Gerry's Variety, the crosswalk is extremely long and is located just beyond a curve, making it difficult for drivers to see pedestrians in the crosswalk.

On-street parking further reduces visibility of pedestrians in the crosswalk and pedestrians are forced to lean out between parked vehicles to see if there are any vehicles approaching the crosswalk.

Another common complaint from residents and business owners is that sight distances are extremely limited looking to the left when trying to exit Lincoln Street onto Main Street due to signage on the corner.

Several residents expressed a desire to see Lincoln Street become a "Complete Street", which would take into account the needs of all roadway users including vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.



The laundromat at the end of the retail building on Lincoln Street is set back slightly from the other retail uses, as is the on-street parking in front of the laundromat. This set back results in a short 27-foot receiving lane turning from Main Street onto Lincoln Street. The parking lane shifts approximately 65 feet south of Main Street, immediately narrowing the travel lane to 14 feet. Because Lincoln Street is so wide at the intersection with Main Street, drivers may make wide turns from Main Street onto Lincoln Street and then be surprised to see parked vehicles immediately in front of them and have to shift quickly to avoid the parked vehicles.

In order to address this issue, it is recommended that

- The curb line on the southwest corner of the intersection of Main Street and Lincoln Street be extended to narrow the receiving width to a constant 14 feet and force vehicles into the correct travel path while making the turn onto Lincoln Street.
- The on-street parking spaces along the front of the Laundromat be shifted to the east to align better with the parking spaces along the rest of Lincoln Street.

Constructing this curb extension would allow for relocation of the existing signs that currently block sight distances, as well as provide some green space and the opportunity for gateway or way-finding signage for the neighborhood and train station.

- The curb line on the southeast corner of the intersection be extended to provide protection for the parallel parking spaces along the easterly side of Lincoln Street and provide a safe refuge area for pedestrians to wait to cross the roadway.

By extending the curb lines and providing bump-outs on each corner, the crosswalk width will be reduced, making the intersection safer for pedestrians.

South of Tremont Street, Lincoln Street widens from approximately 65 feet at Tremont Street to approximately 95 feet near Gerry's Variety. The width of the roadway makes it difficult and unsafe for pedestrian travel.

It is therefore recommended that Lincoln Street be narrowed as a traffic calming measure to improve both vehicular and pedestrian safety.

For angled parking spaces with two drive aisles or travel lanes, a 19-foot wide parking lane and 14.5-foot wide travel lane are recommended by the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) Dimensions of Parking, 4th Edition. A minimum parking stall width of 16 feet with 12-foot travel lanes is allowed by ULI. Therefore, Lincoln Street should be narrowed to 67 feet between the former Ocean Bank entrance driveway and Tremont Street.

Additionally, narrowing Lincoln Street will allow for wider sidewalks along both sides of the roadway and provide the opportunity for green space and streetscape improvements such as benches or small street trees.

At the intersection with Tremont Street, the roadway is less than 67 feet wide. Therefore, the roadway should narrow to a 19-foot parking space and 13.5-foot travel lanes at the intersection with Tremont Street.

The angled parking spaces along Lincoln Street are currently head-in parking. These spaces could be changed to back-in or rear-in spaces in order to improve visibility when exiting the parking spaces. As part of this improvement, the sidewalks along Lincoln Street should be widened to 8-10 feet to provide better pedestrian access.



The intersection of Lincoln Street with the Exeter Train Station driveway (also known as Linda Street) is extremely wide and at a skewed angle, resulting in higher vehicular travel speeds and reducing pedestrian safety. It is therefore recommended that bump-outs be constructed on each corner of the intersection to narrow the roadway and reduce the turning radii, decreasing travel speeds. This will

- reduce the length of the crosswalks and provide a safe refuge area for pedestrians where they will be more visible to drivers.
- allow the existing crosswalk in front of Gerry's Variety to be shifted further to the south where sight distances to the crosswalk will be greater.

In addition, the provision of bump-outs at this intersection will allow for additional green space, outdoor seating, a monument, or some other feature in this area.

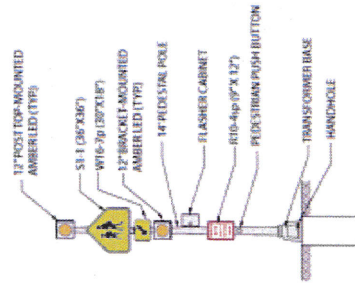
We also recommend:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant ramps be constructed at each crosswalk.
- Pedestrian crossing signage be posted at the intersection to further alert drivers to the presence of pedestrians in the roadway. Due to the proximity of the crosswalk to the Lincoln Street School, these signs should be fluorescent yellow-green school zone type signs (S1-1) similar to the one shown at the right.

The intersection of Lincoln Street and Garfield Street is congested during peak commuter hours and during school arrival and dismissal periods. Diagonal crosswalks are provided through the intersection, resulting in longer than necessary crosswalks. Additionally, there is no signage alerting drivers to the presence of the crosswalks or the school zone. A crossing guard assists pedestrians crossing the roadway during school arrival and dismissal periods, but there is limited space for pedestrians to wait on either side of the roadway to cross.

It is therefore recommended that

- bump-outs be constructed on each corner of the intersection to reduce the roadway width and turning radii, slowing vehicle travel speeds. The bump-outs will provide safe refuge areas for pedestrians to wait to cross the roadway where they are more visible to drivers.
- crosswalks be restriped perpendicular to the roadway to reduce the crossing width.
- Pedestrian crossing warning signs be posted at the crosswalks on Lincoln Street



Sample Pedestrian Flasher Assembly

- ADA-complaint ramps should be constructed at each crosswalk.
- flashing school-zone warning beacons should be installed on Lincoln Street to the north of the school driveway and within 200 feet of the southern edge of the school property to alert drivers to the school zone.

Garfield Street

Garfield Street provides an excellent source for pedestrian traffic with its connection to several residential streets, as well as its proximity to the Lincoln Street School and the retail establishments along Lincoln Street. However, the sidewalks along Garfield Street are narrow and are only located along some sections of the roadway.

It is therefore recommended that 5-foot sidewalks be constructed along both sides of Garfield Street for its entire length. Crosswalks with ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps should be provided at each intersection along Garfield Street.

Exeter Train Station Connection to Front Street

There is currently no direct vehicular or pedestrian access from Front Street to the Exeter Train Station and other retail along Lincoln Street. Although homes on the westerly side of the railroad tracks are close to the retail along Lincoln Street, the railroad tracks form a barrier preventing people from easily accessing locations on the opposite side of the tracks. People traveling from Winter Street and Railroad Avenue to the train station area must travel down Front Street for approximately 1,400 feet beyond the tracks to Lincoln Street, then pass through the narrow, residential section of Lincoln Street for approximately 1,600 feet to get to the train station driveway.

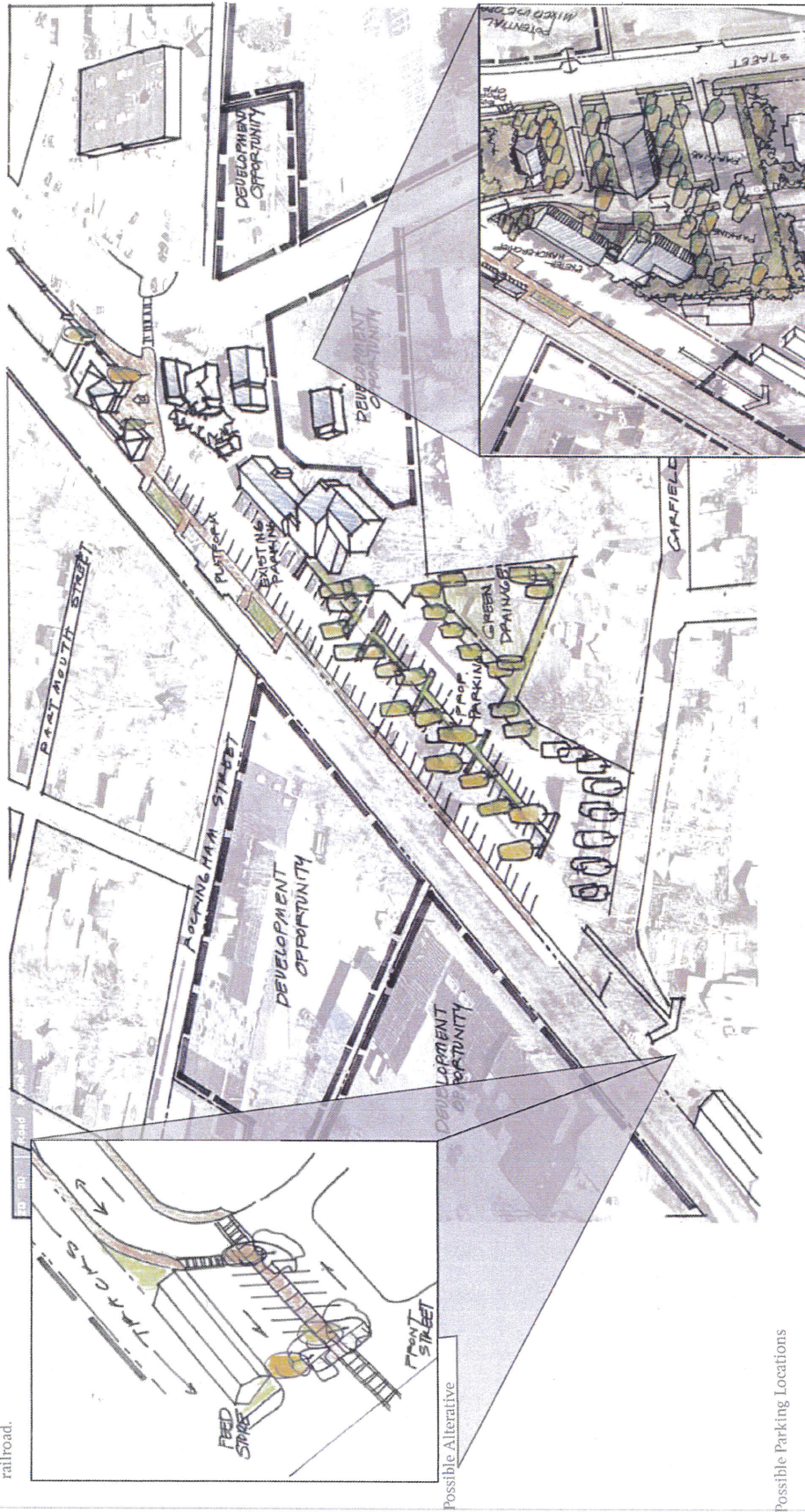
Providing a direct connection from Front Street at the existing municipal parking lot in front of the Feed & Grain Store to the Exeter Train Station would significantly improve accessibility in the area. This connection would extend through the municipal parking lot and the existing moving company property to the end of the train station parking lot. This connection would allow for additional parking spaces to be provided along the roadway between the train station and Garfield Street. The existing self storage facility property could also provide additional parking spaces for use by the train station and area businesses or residents.

As part of this connection, it is recommended that Garfield Street be slightly realigned at its connection to the proposed roadway (currently known as Kossuth Street) so that the proposed roadway between Front Street and the train station becomes the major movement. Bump-outs and crosswalks should be provided at the intersection of Garfield Street and the proposed roadway. These improvements will discourage drivers from using Garfield Street at a cut-through route to Lincoln Street.

Additionally, as part of this connection, the municipal parking lot should be reconfigured to provide one-way counter-clockwise travel with angled parking spaces in the middle. A pedestrian walkway will be provided in the center of the angled parking spaces, which should be 8-10 feet wide to accommodate for parked vehicles overhanging the walkway. This walkway would connect to a sidewalk that would run along the entire proposed roadway on the railroad side of the road and connect to the train station.

Sidewalks along Front Street in the vicinity of the municipal lot should be reconstructed to improve pedestrian safety.

This proposed connection between Front Street and the train station would provide improved access to not only the train station, but also between the neighborhoods and businesses along both sides of the railroad.



Possible Alternative

Possible Parking Locations

FUNDING MECHANISMS

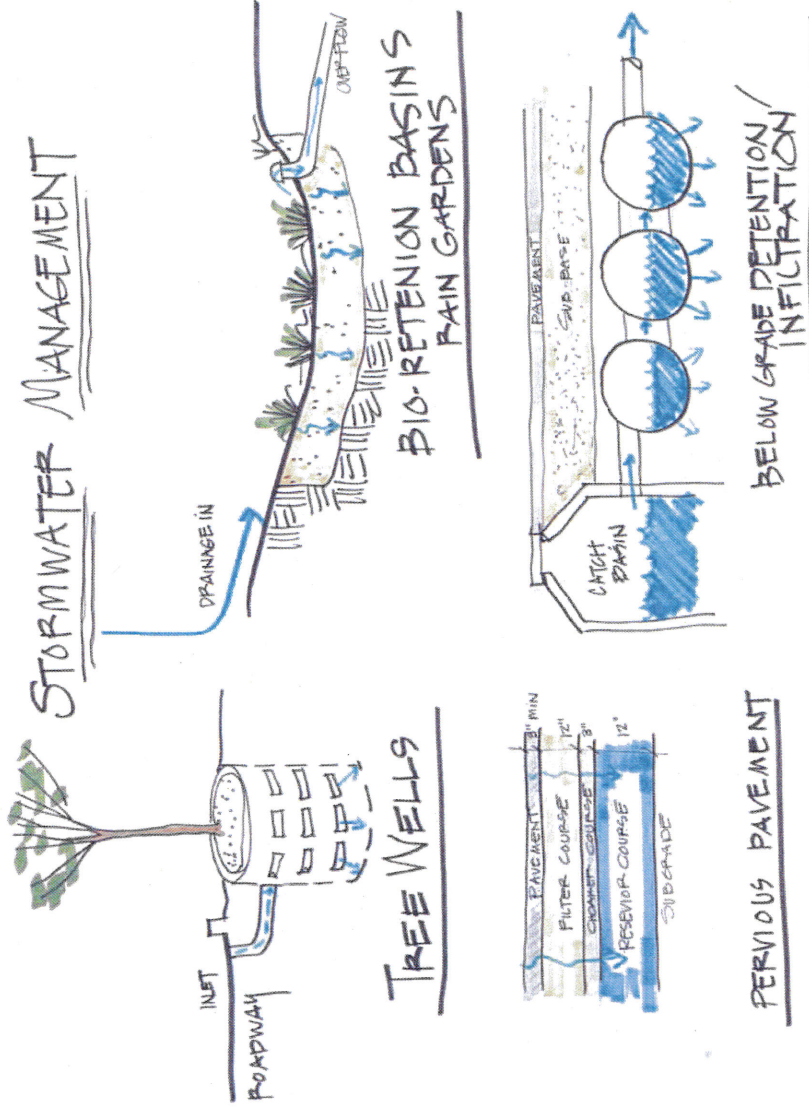
There are a number of funding mechanisms that could potentially be used to construct improvements along Lincoln Street, Garfield Street, and the proposed connection between Front Street and the Exeter Train Station. These funding sources are summarized briefly below:

- **Safe Routes to School** – The Safe Routes to School program is aimed at addressing the child obesity epidemic introducing exercise into a child's daily activities. The program provides 100 federally-funded grants to schools and municipalities to encourage students to walk and bike to school and to improve the safety for those students walking and biking. Funds can be used to construct infrastructure projects such as, but not limited to, sidewalks, crosswalks, signage, school zone flashers, bicycle lanes, and traffic calming measures within a 1-mile radius of an elementary school.
- **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)** – The purpose of the CMAQ program is to fund transportation projects and programs that will improve air quality by reducing traffic volumes and traffic congestion. Projects that encourage walking, biking, or use of public/mass transit are eligible for grants through the CMAQ program. Although parking lot projects are not typically eligible for CMAQ funding because they encourage single-occupant-vehicle travel, parking facilities servicing multi-modal transportation facilities are eligible for CMAQ funding.
- **Transportation Enhancement (TE)** – TE funded projects benefit the traveling public and help communities to increase transportation choices and access enhance the built and natural environment, and provide a sense of place. Projects that may be eligible for TE funding include streetscape improvements, landscaping, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, rehabilitation and enhancement of historic transportation structures and facilities, historic preservation, and environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff.



HOW TO ADDRESS THE DRAINAGE ISSUES

Civil Engineer Tim Nichols talked about best practices for drainage issues, which include Tree wells, bio retention basins, pervious pavement, below grade detention/infiltration. Actual practices and related costs for drainage issues facing this neighborhood would be specific to the actual, specific locations addressed.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The railroad tracks provide at once a logical dividing line between the commercial activity on the Lincoln Street side of the tracks and the predominantly residential character of the neighborhood along Railroad Avenue and Winter Street - and also a "spine of opportunity" for the overall neighborhood.

Main Street and Front Street also offer a mix of non-residential uses that need to be stabilized and enhanced to reinforce the recommended mixed-use character of the neighborhood commercial area along the northerly half of Lincoln Street.

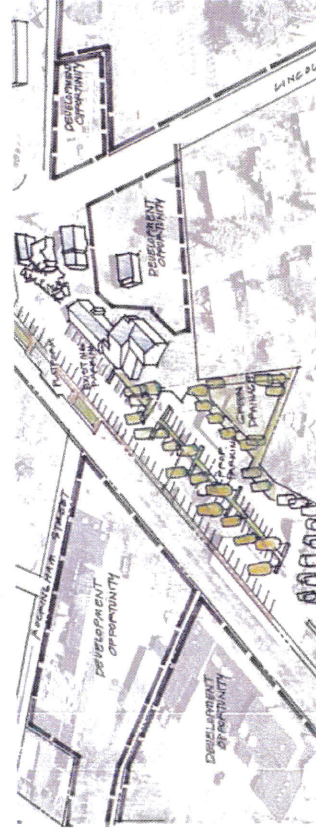
EXISTING ASSETS

Residential neighborhoods Established residential neighborhoods populate both sides of the tracks in the station area. Thus, there is a population of people who consider this area to be "home", providing stability to the area that is quite valuable from an economic development perspective.

The Railroad Station The station is a draw and landmark for an entire region of probably 30 miles around the center. It has continued to grow in its use to the point that it overflows its parking from time to time.

Active small retail Spreading out from the station, there is an active strip center with a community hardware/building supply store across the street. These, very local, businesses provide a continuing source of traffic and commerce into the district.

Older Commercial Properties There are a number of properties that are no longer in the best commercial location both because plant designs have improved and they are no longer easy to reach, located as they are away from the main highways in the area. These properties thus become inventory for redevelopment.



NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE GROWTH

Integrate the Station into the neighborhood Currently, railroad passengers come and go with little interaction with the neighborhood. This population is an under-utilized market for the entire neighborhood. Restoring the façade of the historic Railroad Station building, while keeping the existing Gerry's Variety Store, would jump-start that direction.

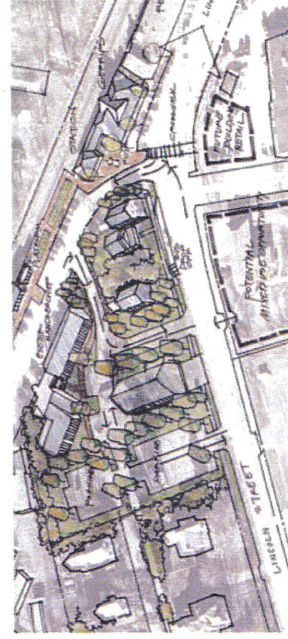
Improve the image of the store fronts To strengthen the neighborhood's commercial "node" on Lincoln Street, existing businesses need to be enhanced visually. The store fronts along Lincoln Street have substantial potential for upgrade at modest investment. Such investment would increase sales and allow for increase of rents and generally enhance the image of the neighborhood. This action most likely has the highest return on investment and could be accomplished quickly.

Development of underutilized properties

As this area of town has changed, there are several properties whose historic use has become obsolete. These sites, if appropriately designed to complement the existing small commercial and residential property uses are opportunities for infill development that would add significant value to the area.

Primary among these properties are two currently underutilized parcels right on Lincoln Street:

- The large parcel between the Exeter Handkerchief property and Lincoln Street should be promoted for redevelopment with an appropriately-scaled building. It must be designed to fit in with the residential architectural character of the southerly portion of Lincoln Street yet also provide a transitional mixed-use to the more intensive retail and business activity on the northerly half of the street.



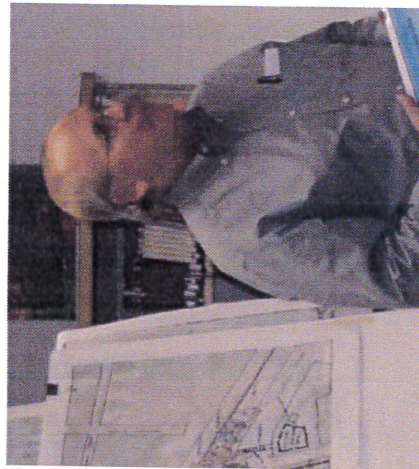
- The second redevelopment opportunity on Lincoln Street is the underused portion of the Ace Hardware store parking area on Lincoln Street at the corner of Daniels Street. A new, 1-2 story building at this location would provide opportunity for additional retail shops and create a much-needed sense of enclosure directly opposite the historic railroad station building. The new retail shops would add additional depth of products and services to this commercial area.

OTHER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

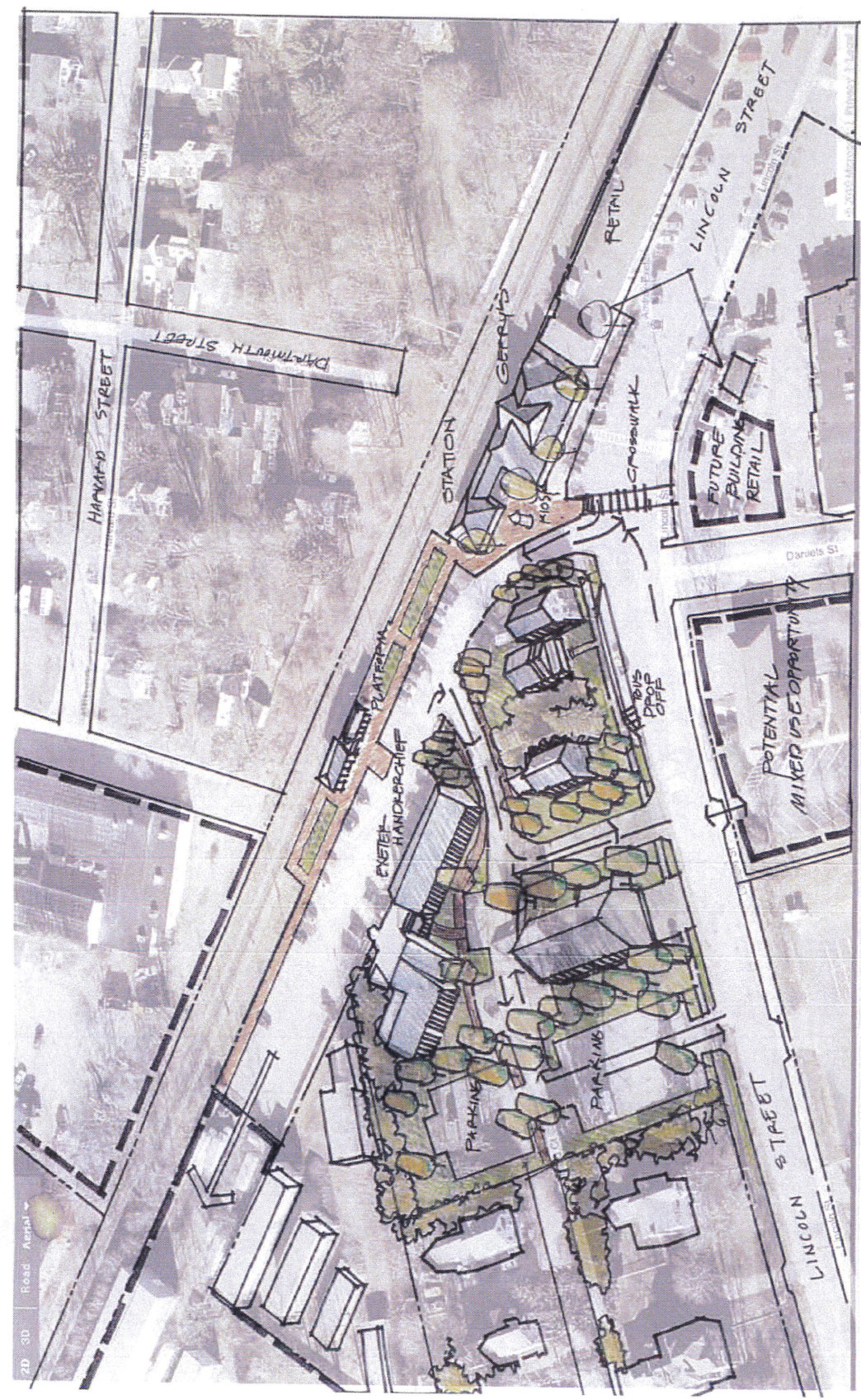
- Two redevelopment sites along Railroad Avenue and Rockingham Street could be reclaimed for residential development with possible re-use/revitalization of an historically significant structure on each property.
- The moving company site being in-town is an operational cost for the owner/operator. Finding an economically-feasible alternative site for the company with better highway access would potentially enhance the profitability of this business and allow for at least additional parking for the train station.

INITIAL STEPS TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT

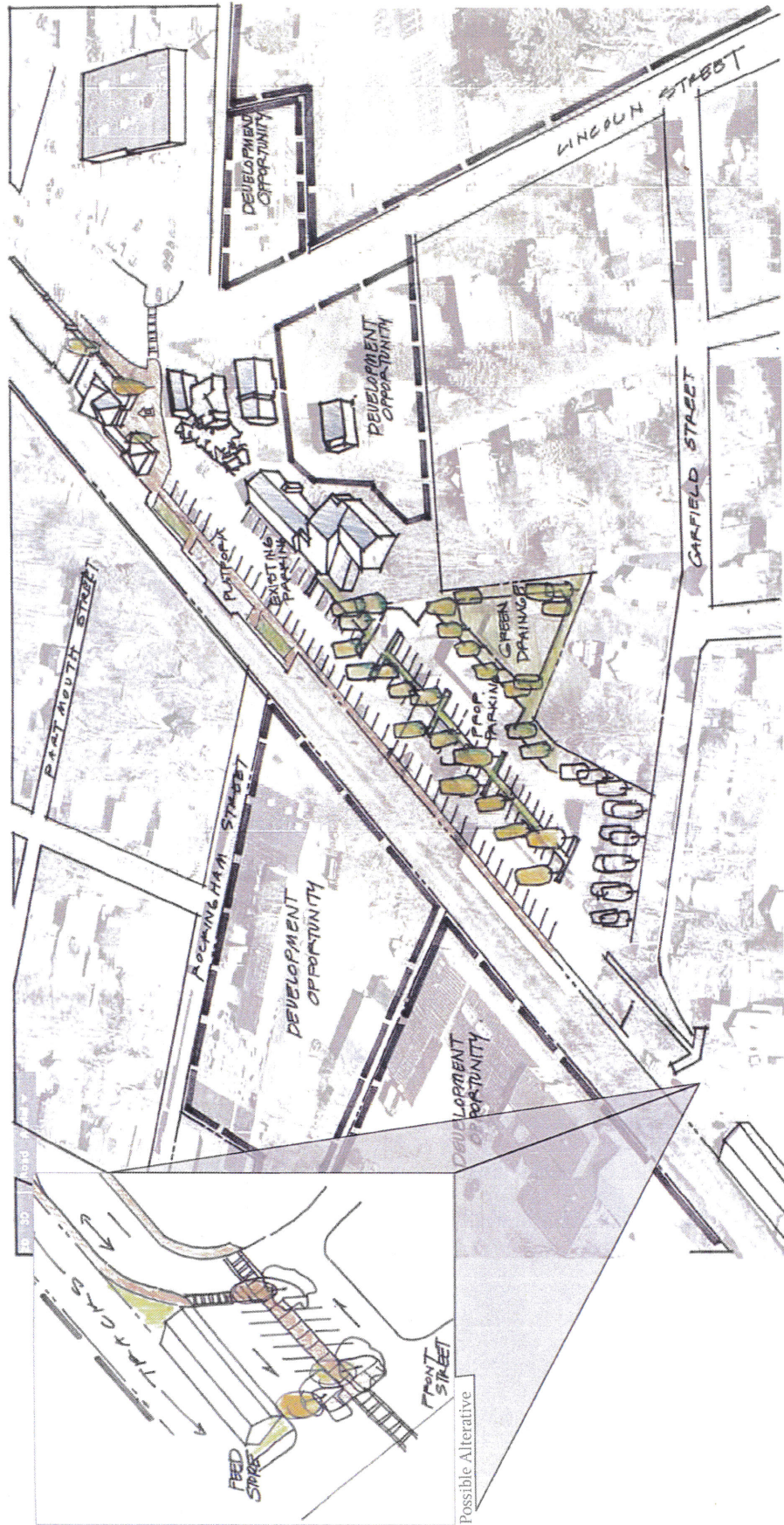
- Strengthening of the existing community organization provides a formal organization for the neighborhood. This organization can have both social and economic values. Potential short term projects may include
- Creation of an on-going dialogue with local business owners to instill a spirit of opportunity and a foundation for development of the area.
- Establishment of local "neighborhood activities" such as Spirit Days with neighborhood clean up and fun activities or celebrations of the historic significance of the neighborhood.







Circulation and traffic safety: Future Possibilities





PLAN NH

Visioning for Sustainable Communities

Plan NH
PO Box 1105
Portsmouth NH 03802
603-452-PLAN (452-7526)

Exeter Charrette
October, 2010