



# Draft Downtown Transformational Plan: Implementation



# Chapter Eleven:

Downtown Transformational Plan – (Re)Positioning Plymouth  
for Improvement



# Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

### Introduction

The form and function of Plymouth's settlement patterns are shifting and changing around technological innovations, modes of transportation, economics, and our social-cultural ways of living in our built environment. In addition, Plymouth's demographics and consumer behaviors are shifting and changing, resulting in new ways of working, shopping, socializing, and recreating. Together, this means Plymouth must embrace, nurture, and manage *change*. To accomplish this, Plymouth should embrace the framework of sustainability and resilience presented earlier.

To be sustainable, as discussed earlier, Plymouth must adopt the three core elements of sustainable development—Economic, Environmental, and Social—and work at striking a *balance* between the three. For example, Plymouth must work to balance environmental issues with the economic well-being of the community (property values and Grand List value) and the social need to provide affordable housing to attract and maintain an adequate workforce. This means the community's economic, environmental, and social challenges cannot be viewed and planned for in isolation. These must be viewed as interrelated with symbiotic relationships.

The same is true of the real estate market, which is dynamic and interconnected. Housing and households drive demand for commercial real estate. *Homes are where jobs go at night*. Homeowners and renters are the consumers of local goods and services. The local contractor needs workers, and those workers need clean, safe, and affordable housing.

As discussed earlier, a resiliency approach requires that Plymouth embrace *change, diversity, and the unexpected*. It requires that planning does not seek to *predict or preordain the future* but *to devise systems that can absorb and accommodate future events in whatever unexpected form they may take*. That means creating adaptable governance structures to manage change and not shut down novelty and opportunities.

No one could have predicted, in the past, the impacts of de-industrialization and changes in the location of retail on the Downtown. The same is true of the impacts of the pandemic. No one could have predicted the pandemic and the long-term impacts of lockdowns and shifts to remote and hybrid work on commercial office space, shopping behaviors, or even home improvements. While Plymouth's local real estate market is unique and dynamic, it is not immune to the large market trends discussed in the previous chapters. This chapter provides a macro-scale framework of strategies that (re) position Downtown Plymouth to become competitive and compete for investment and improvement in an ever-changing world.

# Downtown's Problems to Solve

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

### Downtown's Problems to Solve

When planning for the future of place, specifically when seeking to (re)position a place or market (a commercial district) to compete for investment and to create vibrancy and prosperity, it is important to ask the right questions and understand what it is that the community is trying to accomplish. For Plymouth's Downtown, the question asked and answered is: *What problems are Plymouth's Downtown trying to solve* through the creation and implementation of this transformational plan? Based on what has been learned through this planning process, there are three primary problems to solve: Physical Conditions, Market, and Image. To solve these problems, this strategy seeks to:

1. **Physical Conditions:** Arrest deteriorating conditions and decline by improving the quality of the product (development/building/public spaces) on display to enhance the aesthetics and experience of Plymouth's Downtown.
2. **Market:** Grow market demand through strategic interventions aimed at increasing the critical mass of population and households within and proximate to the Downtown (i.e., multi-family housing and mixed-use development) by allowing greater diversity in use and higher density.
3. **Image:** Improve the image of Downtown by focusing on aesthetics, design, brand, public spaces, and activating spaces to be inviting and vibrant. Create higher standards of property maintenance and aesthetic appeal

While each of these problems to solve is unique, they are also interconnected as integral components of Downtown. Therefore, the strategies that follow are aimed at improving the physical conditions, market, and image of Plymouth's Downtown.

### Deteriorating Conditions



# Repositioning Downtown to Compete for Investment

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

### Repositioning Downtown to Compete

The recommended strategies in the following pages are designed as a strategic intervention into the Downtown and the market. Throughout this planning processes, we have been reading the market for what is working and what is not working, exploring outcomes, and considering strategies for improvement. The approach to repositioning the Downtown to compete for investment is, therefore, framed around the 8-step method described below. It builds upon the Levers of Change—image, market, conditions, connections, and capacity—and *intentionally targets strategies and investments* to arrest marginal conditions, build from strengths, leverage assets, and move the market toward the desired outcomes.

#### Reposition Downtown Plymouth to Compete – A Strategic 8–Step Approach

Steps	The Process
Step 1. Read Market	Analyze the market to determine <i>what’s working</i> and <i>what’s not working</i> in terms of decisions to invest.
Step 2. Set Outcomes	Set <i>outcomes</i> for improvement—improving market. What will Downtown be when its is improved?
Step 3. Strategy and Tactics	Identify <i>strategies and tactics</i> that will best achieve the desired outcomes—create improvement.
Step 4. Establish Measures	Establish <i>measures</i> for improvement. How will we measure movement toward outcomes?
Step 5. Capacity Building	Assess and <i>strengthen capacity</i> to deliver revitalization strategies (i.e., governance, budgets, programs, etc.).
Step 6. Implement Strategy	Strategy <i>implementation</i> .
Step 7. Measurement	<i>Measure</i> progress toward outcomes. Is the Downtown improving? Is downtown more vibrant, more prosperous?
Step 8. Adjustment	<i>Adjust</i> strategies and tactics as needed. Develop new approaches to adapt to market improvement.

# Economic Development

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

### The Work of Economic Development

The work of economic development, as defined by the International Economic Development Council is *the process of creating wealth and attracting investment through the mobilization of human, financial, social, physical, and natural resources to generate marketable goods and services*. While this definition provides good context, it narrowly defines the work of economic development as *marketable goods and services*. While this is understandable—that economic development regarding jobs (retention, attraction, and expansion) and commerce (commercial and industrial development and activity) is about marketable goods and services—the work of economic development in the context of Plymouth’s Downtown needs to be defined more broadly.

Therefore, for the purpose of this Downtown Transformational Plan, the definition of the work of economic development is simplified to *the practice and process of creating wealth and attracting investment*. Wealth can be created, and investment can be attracted in many ways and forms. For example, wealth can be created through property improvement, infrastructure investment, and new development. Therefore, to be successful in the work of economic development and (re)positioning Plymouth’s Downtown, this broader understanding of economic development is to include all forms of wealth creation and the attraction of all investment is required.

### The Practice of Economic Development

The practice of economic development recognizes the *work of economic development* as a system, a complex adaptive system. Therefore, the practice of economic development focuses on tools and activities that Plymouth can develop and employ to engage in the *practice and process of creating wealth and attracting investment* in Downtown. The aim of this section of the Downtown Transformational Plan is to offer a summary of macro-scale economic development tools and activities that can be utilized to (re)position Plymouth’s Downtown and create improvement.



# Downtown Economic Development

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

### Plymouth Downtown Economic Development

Plymouth has a robust and proactive economic development program that serves the community well and is already utilizing many tools and activities aimed at engaging businesses, creating wealth, and attracting investment. Therefore, the recommendations in this Downtown Transformational Plan are intended to augment the existing economic development activities by providing more tactical, strategic, and targeted strategies aimed at (re)positioning Downtown for (re)development, investment, and improvement—to *cultivate an environment or economic-ecosystem where investment can and will occur*.

(Re)positioning Downtown to compete for investment is more challenging than attracting investment to new development areas (Greenfields). (Re)positioning Downtown districts involves renovations, infill development, and the redevelopment of existing sites. This often means incompatible regulations—regulations designed for existing development, not redevelopment—and increased development costs (i.e., demolition, environmental, or infrastructure). Therefore, it is imperative for Plymouth to confront these challenges and to have a toolbox tailored to address the challenges of redevelopment.

The following is a macro-scale framework to confront the repositioning and redevelopment of a commercial district:

**Target investment in Downtown.** Implement a program of continuous targeted investment in Downtown with the objective of creating improvement. Utilize an incremental approach of intentional investment in well-defined and targeted locations over many years.

**Improve the aesthetics of Downtown.** Implement a beautification program focused on beautification, flowers, landscape, and aesthetics of public and private property.

**Improve the standards of property maintenance of Downtown.** Encourage property owners to improve their standards of property maintenance.

**Remediate conditions of blight.** Utilizing code enforcement, tax foreclosure, and property acquisition, confront blighted properties, including demolition, when no alternative exists.

**Remove barriers to investment.** Update and modernize the Zoning Regulations with the goal of repositioning commercial properties to encourage investment and (re)development by removing impediments and creating greater flexibility for redeployment (See Chapter 13: Zoning District Analysis).

**Encourage and allow greater density and diversity in land uses.** Allow greater density and diversity of commercial uses—including mixed-use and standalone multi-family development.

**Provide incentives to overcome the higher cost of redevelopment and infill development.** Allowing greater (or more flexible) density in areas suitable for redevelopment is a start but often not enough to attract the investment required to reposition properties. Therefore, create incentives that assist with the financial feasibility of redevelopment. Such incentives include a tax abatement policy aimed at adaptive reuse and redevelopment of commercial and industrial sites and the creation of a Tax Increment Financing District.



# Downtown Economic Development

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

**Create a Downtown brand and image.** The brand should elevate the image of Downtown, build on unique strengths, and be incorporated into commercial districts, where appropriate.

**Focus on the aesthetics and design of (re)development.** The focus should be to improve the quality of commercial products as to both the aesthetics of buildings and landscaping.

**Create informal and formal governance structures.** Such a governance structure should seek to nurture and enhance community engagement and involvement.

**Remediate Conditions of Blight.** Plymouth must confront deteriorated and blighted conditions, especially those that rise to the level of threats to public health, safety, and welfare—code violations. Addressing blight is not easy, and often it may feel that it is not productive—meaning it feels like little or no progress is being made. However, a lack of trying undermines confidence and pride in place. Therefore, all efforts must be made to confront and address blight. Plymouth should implement the following:

- Increase code enforcement in Downtown.
- Utilize tax foreclosures, when available, to acquire properties with blighted conditions.
- Demolish Town-owned properties—the old Fire House—and any foreclosed property that cannot be remediated or detracts from the Downtown.

- Fund code enforcement—increasing staff hours or staffing numbers to consistently address enforcement issues in Downtown.

**Improve the Aesthetics of Downtown.** The greatest problem confronting Downtown is its poor image. Most importantly, the poor image of Downtown is being driven by deteriorated conditions and low standards of property maintenance. To begin overcoming this negative image, Plymouth must begin by working to elevate the expectations and standards of property maintenance—improve the aesthetics of Downtown to create pride and build confidence. Improving the aesthetics of Downtown is one of the lowest-cost efforts Plymouth can implement, which will provide some of the greatest returns. To accomplish this, Plymouth should implement a Downtown Beautification program that includes the following:

- Establish a yearly line-item budget for Downtown aesthetic improvements.
- Invest in flowers/plantings in the public realm—sidewalk planters, light post hanging plants, and flowerbeds at gateways and on public lands.
- Lead by example and ensure that public properties maintain the highest quality of landscaping, lawn care, and building maintenance.
- Engage property owners to plant and display flowers, elevate their standards of lawncare, and invest in building maintenance, and exterior improvements.



# Downtown Economic Development

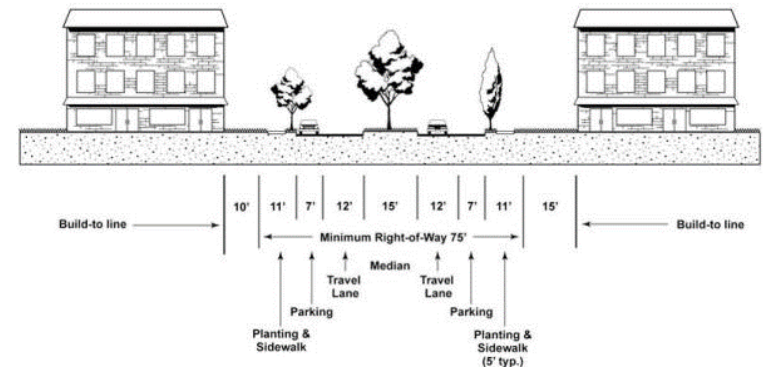
## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

- Establish or work with a garden club to help with implementation and maintenance.
- Fund part-time summer jobs for high school students to assist with maintenance.
- Create a public-private partnership with the Baldwin Park Foundation to improve the appearance of the park by investing in park maintenance.
- Plymouth should provide funding—a Baldwin Park line item in the budget—or in-kind services to assist the Foundation with park maintenance. Baldwin Park is the Crown Jewel of Downtown, invest in it.
- The creation and inclusion of a master plan process.
- Enhanced site design standards to elevate aesthetics.
- Reducing required parking requirements.
- Creating “swift, simple, and certain” permitting processes.
- Updated and modernized parking requirements.
- Elimination of separation distances for alcohol sales and service.
- Modernizing the sign regulations for compliance with constitutional requirements of content neutrality.
- Providing access management and consolidated parcel provisions.
- Establishing a master plan approach, preferably an overlay zone, for the Downtown.
- Encourage mixed-use and standalone multi-family housing.

**Remove Barriers to Investment – Zoning.** To confront and remove barriers to investment, Plymouth should perform a comprehensive review and update of the Zoning Regulations. This is not to say Plymouth's Zoning Regulations are bad or wrong, they are not. However, just as patterns of development have shifted and changed, so has the role of zoning and expectation of zoning. Therefore, Plymouth's Zoning Regulations have become antiquated and need to be modernized. The Zoning Regulations would benefit from a comprehensive update focused on:

- Eliminating duplication.
- Updating and better naming and defining of uses.
- Modernizing the uses allowed in commercial districts.
- Review and update of dimensional requirements.

COMMERCIAL STREET WITH MEDIAN



# Public Private Partnerships and The Incentives Universe

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

### Public Private Partnerships and The Incentives Universe

In real estate development, especially redevelopment, public participation (or what is often called public-private partnerships) is often needed to assist the financial feasibility of the redevelopment. Redevelopment, as noted above, is often complex and costly. Therefore, when the desired outcomes of redevelopment projects align with the public interest—Plymouth’s desire and need to attract investment and create improvement—the local government can partner with property owners and developers to ensure the investments and improvements happen. There are many tools or strategic levers that local government can deploy to contribute to and optimize the financial feasibility of redevelopment projects.

The following is a summary list of incentives that can aid Plymouth in attracting financially feasible development in Downtown:

**Density Bonuses:** involves allowing or granting extra building (development) capacity aimed at creating greater financial opportunity for the property—in exchange for aligning private development with desired outcomes.

**Land Donation:** the act of donating land (publicly owned land) to assist the financial feasibility of development. Typically, a government or public entity will donate land to a development project as an incentive strategy to align private development with public goals (i.e., attracting investment)

**Direct Grant/Subsidy:** Direct grants or subsidies to provide financial support directly to developers, property owners, or occupants. The aim

is to lower costs, encourage specific types of development, and/or achieve desired outcomes. These are often federal and state programs and funds. Local government can create and administer local grant programs.

**Permit Fee Reductions or Waivers:** entails reducing or exempting fees associated with obtaining land use approvals and/or building permits—a means of reducing development soft costs when aligned with desired public outcomes.

**Tax Incentives:** often in the form of tax abatements, tax fixing agreements, tax increment financing, and credit enhancement agreements aimed at improving the financial feasibility of development.

**Reimagine the land use application and permitting process:** investment flows to demand and the location of least resistance. Creating a predictable land use application and permitting process—a process that is “*swift, simple, and certain*”—can go a long way to attracting investment. This requires a shift in culture from regulations and approvals that focus on yes and no answers, to regulations and approvals that ask, ‘*How can we make this work?*’.

# Public Private Partnerships and The Incentives Universe

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

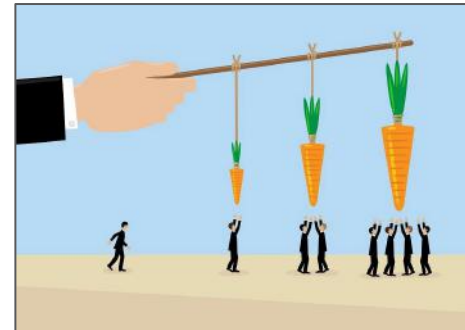
### Property Tax Abatement

Plymouth should consider the creation and adoption of a Tax Abatement Policy and Program in accordance with Section 12-65b (Agreements between municipality and owner...of real property...fixing the assessment of such property...) of the Connecticut General Statutes to provide tax fixing agreements (or tax abatements) for the redevelopment of commercial properties in the Downtown. Such a tax abatement program should include and encourage multi-family and mixed-use developments as qualified projects.

The following is a framework for thinking about the tax abatement policy and how to structure tax abatement incentives:

- The policy should be flexible in its structure and utilization to avoid binding the Town or applicants to abatements that may not work.
- Abatements should be structured to fix the current tax value for tax paid so that Plymouth does not lose the existing taxes paid by the property.
- Consider a flexible sliding scale abatement structure that utilizes the number of years the abatement is available, and the percent value of abatements offered considered in the context of financial need (financial feasibility) of the proposed redevelopment and the desired public/community outcome of the proposed development.

- Consider using the tax abatement authority to fix taxes on commercial properties that perform renovations. For example, when an existing business or property performs substantial improvements—especially exterior renovations that improve the physical appearance of the property, provide a tax fixing agreement that abates the value of the new improvements for 5 years.



# Public Private Partnerships and The Incentives Universe

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

### Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts

Plymouth should explore the creation of Tax Increment Financing Districts to encourage redevelopment in Downtown. TIF utilizes the anticipated future increases in property taxes from (re)development of a property to pay for current and needed improvements (typically infrastructure and building improvements) or to repay debt issued for such improvements. TIF is also a powerful tool for improvements to the public realm aimed at placemaking. Connecticut state law (CGS Section 7-339cc – Section 7-339kk) authorized local municipalities to create Tax Increment Districts for the utilization of TIF in a manner that is geographically targeted.

- Create a Tax Increment Financing District in the Downtown where redevelopment of existing properties and infill development are needed. The TIF could be used for infrastructure improvements and public spaces, or to assist with financing of developments that need capital. The Credit Enhancement Agreement provision authorized in the TIF legislation is also an effective tool to assist with financing a development.
- The following is a framework for thinking about the Tax Increment Financing Districts and policies and how to structure a TIF program to incentivize affordable housing development:
  - The TIF policy should be flexible in its structure and utilization to avoid binding the Town or applicants to requirements that may not work.

- State law provides great latitude in what TIF funds can be utilized to accomplish. This includes public infrastructure, technical assistance, predevelopment planning and design, property acquisition, financing costs, and much more. Structure the TIF policies to be flexible and allow any of the TIF statutory authorized costs to be considered, while emphasizing the aim of TIF to promote and support housing and affordable housing.
- Allow TIF incentives for mixed-use and multi-family housing developments.
- Establish a TIF Advisory Board (CGS Sec. 7-339kk).
- Consider the utilization of TIF to fund renovations through a loan program aimed at façade improvements and other forms of maintenance and upgrades that improve property appearance and add value.

TIF Districts can be a powerful tool for overcoming market impediments to real estate development and financing. TIF Districts are also a powerful policy tool for targeting investment in specific areas of the community (i.e., commercial districts) while utilizing tax value from those areas to fund the investments.



# Targeting Investment

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

### Targeting Investment

No community has the resources required to implement a comprehensive strategy that addresses all issues at once. Therefore, it is important to strategically invest limited resources in an intentional and targeted approach to maximize the return on investment. To accomplish this, the Downtown Transformational Plan seeks to target investment within the Downtown.

First, while the Downtown study area stretches from Harwinton Avenue to Riverside Avenue, the Plan shrinks the area of attention and investment from the Water Wheel to Allen Steet. Shrinking the area of focus does not exclude or dismiss the areas outside of this core but recognizes that once meaningful improvement is created in the Downtown core, strategies will be expanded in periphery areas. To define this core area of Downtown, the Plan recommends the creation of an East Gateway at the Pequabuck River near Maple Street and a West Gateway at the Water Wheel.

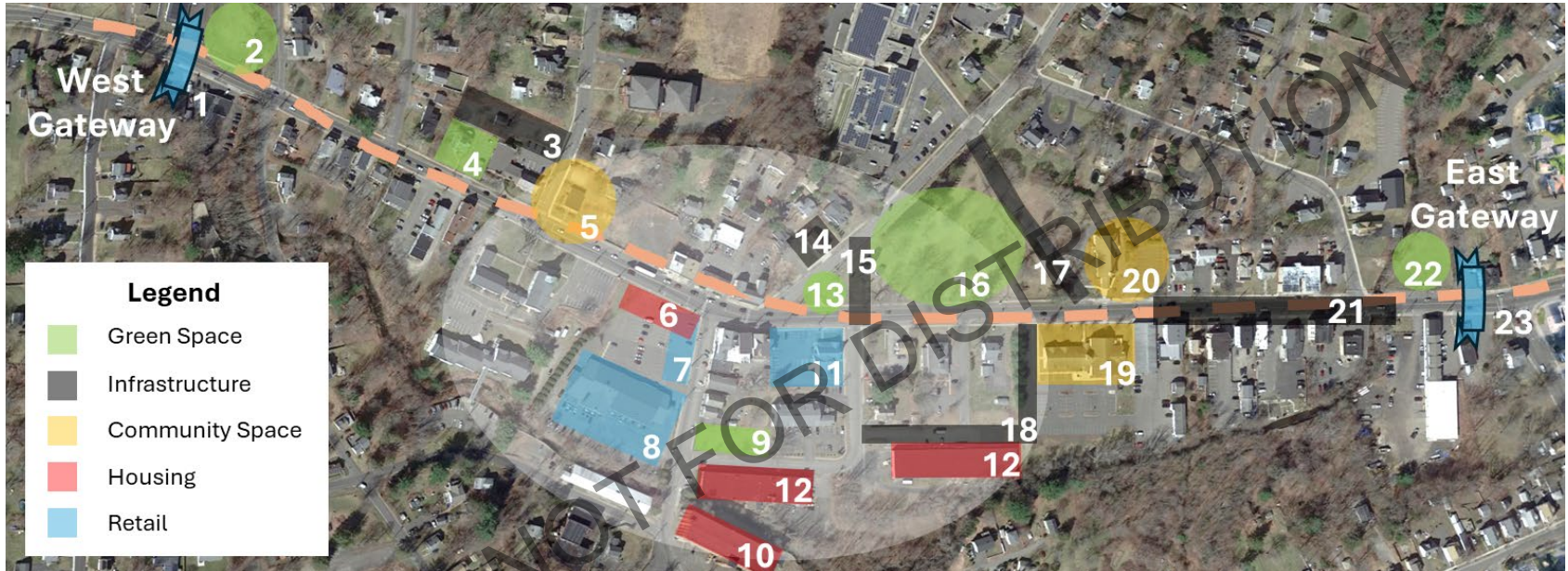
Within this area, the Programming Plan provides 23 specific recommendations for improvements in the Downtown—all of which are conceptualized as pieces of the repositioning and redevelopment puzzle to transform Downtown. Second, the Downtown Transformational Plan also recommends the further targeting of resources within the core of Downtown in the area with the light oval shading on the Programming Plan. This shaded area is bookended to the northeast by Baldwin Park and to the southwest by what is being called The Center. This area is the first and highest priority, for intervention and investment.

Baldwin Park is the Crown Jewel of Downtown and must remain as such, therefore requiring a public-private partnership between the Town of Plymouth and Baldwin Park Foundation. The area labeled as Town Center is ground zero for a strategy to create a human-scale Main Street and Center to the Downtown. It centers around South Main Street between Route 6 and Agney Avenue and is conceptualized to expand to the north and west on Route 6 to the Lock Museum and to the east along Agney Avenue, behind the Volunteer Ambulance and to the Lyceum.

The initial focus is for both streetscape improvements along South Main Street and the redevelopment of 8 South Main Street and properties fronting on the east side of South Main Street. This one-block area provides the greatest opportunity to create a local ‘Main Street’ that is walkable and programable for community events—a space off Route 6, away from the Route 6 traffic and noise (see South Main Street Conceptuals). The site at 8 South Main Street provides an opportunity for mixed-use development, including commercial fronting South Main Street and the rear/south of the site, with multi-family residential fronting on Route 6 (see South Main Street Conceptuals). The block surrounded by South Main Street, Agney Avenue, and Route 6 provides redevelopment opportunities. Renovations to the buildings fronting South Main Street are key. The Thomaston Saving Bank site is underutilized and could be redevelopment to house more commercial businesses. The commercial building and mill site south of Agney Avenue are prime locations for residential apartments, while the Pequabuck River is a natural asset that needs to be exposed. Targeted investment and redevelopment in this area can create a meaningful Town Center that can be expanded over time.

# Programming Plan

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement



1. Establish a gateway at the western entrance to Downtown
2. Create a garden and labyrinth at the Eli Terry Jr Water Wheel
3. Relocate western side parking to the rear of the Library
4. Convert 244 Main St and Library's existing western side parking into a parklet
5. Refine and augment Lock Museum grounds
6. Reinforce Main St frontage with multi-family housing above retail
7. Develop new restaurant and retail space along South Main St
8. Remodel existing plaza at 8 South Main St
9. Reinforce and clean up the cemetery as a point of interest
10. Convert mill building to multi-family housing
11. Repurpose the bank building and site
12. Convert 13 & 99 Agney Ave buildings into live-work-play communities
13. Add placemaking in Baldwin Park, PPP opportunity
14. Demolish the firehouse at 7 Main St N to create parking
15. Reroute North Main St into Main St (underway)
16. Establish a PPP between Town and Baldwin Park trust
17. Add parking along Baldwin Park Ln
18. Construct a connecting road from Agney Ave to Main St
19. Repurpose the Lyceum
20. Consider church mergers
21. Continuation of street improvements
22. Mirror garden and labyrinth at the water wheel
23. Establish a gateway at the eastern entrance to Downtown



# Western Gateway

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement



While the Eli Terry Jr Water Wheel monument is an attractive and well-appointed landmark, the open space around it (while well-defined and maintained) offers little to attract visitors to utilize the parking spaces offered and stay a while. If this space were to be enhanced with interactive amenities and ornamental plantings, it could not only provide an enhanced experience for the visitors but reinforce the gateway to a newly improved Village Center.

### In Accordance with the Programming Plan:

1. Create a pronounced “gateway” on either side of the road balancing the Water Wheel with some other form of “anchor” to mark the threshold into the improved Village Center
2. Enhance the park with an interactive space such as a labyrinth and an enhanced garden including seasonal and ornamental plantings



# Western Gateway

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement



### In Accordance with the Image to the Left:

1. Additional park amenities such as a key-themed labyrinth
2. Additional seasonal plantings and accent trees
3. New seating area as part of the accessible area around the Water Wheel
4. Consider the gateway element along Main Street and possibly on the other side
5. Connection to the walkway over the watercourse



# Terryville Public Library

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement



The existing Main Street library parking lot, in its current configuration with access/egress on Main Street (Rte. 6), is challenging for people to navigate safely and offers a less-than-attractive view alongside the façade of the library. Relocating all parking to the rear of the building and eliminating the curb cut on Rte. 6 is safer and frees up the space in front, when combined with the house next to it that is slated for demolition, to be utilized as an attractive amenity. A parklet/garden amenity would contribute to the Main Street visual upgrades and extend the look of the well-kept library grounds.

### In Accordance with the Programming Plan:

3. Relocate the parking field from the side of the library to the rear of the building, providing safer access/egress for vehicles
4. Use space of the existing lot to provide for a parklet amenity along Main Street
5. Carry this approach across the street to the Museum grounds, both in layout and appearance

# Lock Museum of America

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement



The Lock Museum is a key attraction to Downtown and needs to be polished to attract attention. The strategic upgrades to the aesthetics of the property should mirror the Library on the opposite corner.



### In Accordance with the Image to the Left:

1. Match design details to the library; fencing, flagpole, etc.
2. Clean up and repoint sidewalk and median planting
3. Shape and maintain shrubs and foundation plantings, augment with seasonal and accent plantings
4. Repair and enhance steps, consider accessibility enhancements
5. Upgrade and repaint millwork on building façade, repaint door to match shutter and trim



# South Main Street

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement



While Main Street (Rte. 6) is a vital lifeline to the Town's vitality, the ongoing flow, speed, and resulting noise, of its traffic is not conducive to a high-quality pedestrian experience. Improving the appearance along Main Street is critical to the upgraded impression to which we aspire; however, the al fresco experience and community events are better managed on side streets. The current project revisions to North Main Street and the park are a good start that would be complimented well by the following improvements along South Main Street.

### In Accordance with the Programming Plan:

6. Reinforce street front with mixed-use construction; multi-family, retail, and restaurant on Main Street
7. Add new restaurants and retail along South Main Street
8. Upgrade and/or replace the existing retail center
9. Relocate parking to the opposite side of South Main Street and upgrade building facades to create more of a streetscape
10. Upgrade cemetery grounds to create a point of interest

# South Main Street

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement



### In Accordance with the Image to the Left:

1. Upgrade and/or replace existing retail center
2. New construction mixed-use, multi-family above retail and restaurant on Main Street and along South Main Street
3. Relocate parking to the other side of the street and create an al fresco sidewalk experience along South Main Street
4. Upgrade facades and enhance the streetscape to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment



## 13 Agney Avenue

### Positioning Plymouth for Improvement



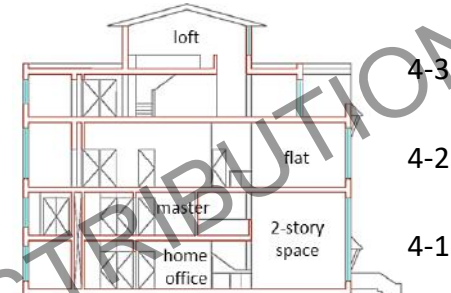
One of the critical elements needed to make a renovated Downtown viable and sustainable is for the population to live there. Along with that, they should want to work, shop, and dine there to make the streets come alive. Between this site and Main Street is a prime opportunity to redevelop retail, service, office, and/or restaurant services to complement the new population of Downtown residents.

#### In Accordance with the Programming Plan:

17. Renovate or redevelop 13 & 99 Agney Ave into a vertical live, work, play opportunity for work-from-home and satellite employment facilities. The lower level could be flex light industrial, office, and/or studio space with upper-level flats, lofts and/or townhouses. If it is not possible to renovate the current structure, then redevelopment should be considered.

# 13 Agney Avenue

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement



Front Elevation of New Building



### In Accordance with the Image to the Left:

1. Site improvements to create a new streetscape, access, and parking
2. Front entries opening onto the sidewalks and providing access for home office, studio, and workspace
3. Building up with residential and loft space above
4. Sample building scenario:
  - 1st floor is a 2-story space with public office access
  - 2nd floor is a flat for studio and/or apartment living
  - 3rd floor is a garden terrace loft with views of Main Street



# Eastern Gateway

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement



### In Accordance with the Image to the Left:

1. Incorporate flag and banner program when and wherever possible
2. Gateway signage to mirror improvements made at the Water Wheel
3. Remove or relocate utility signage
4. Enhance fence and provide for pedestrian accessibility
5. Create a parklet offering similar to the Gateway on the other end of Main Street

# American Legion

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement



### In Accordance with the Image to the Left:

1. Enhance or finish any incomplete projects
2. Intentionally add character or architectural definition to improve the hall's contribution to the quality of Main Street
3. Create a transition from parking to building
4. Connect the landscaping to the entrance
5. Landscape the signage and flagpole into a focal point



# Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

### Creating a Plymouth Brand

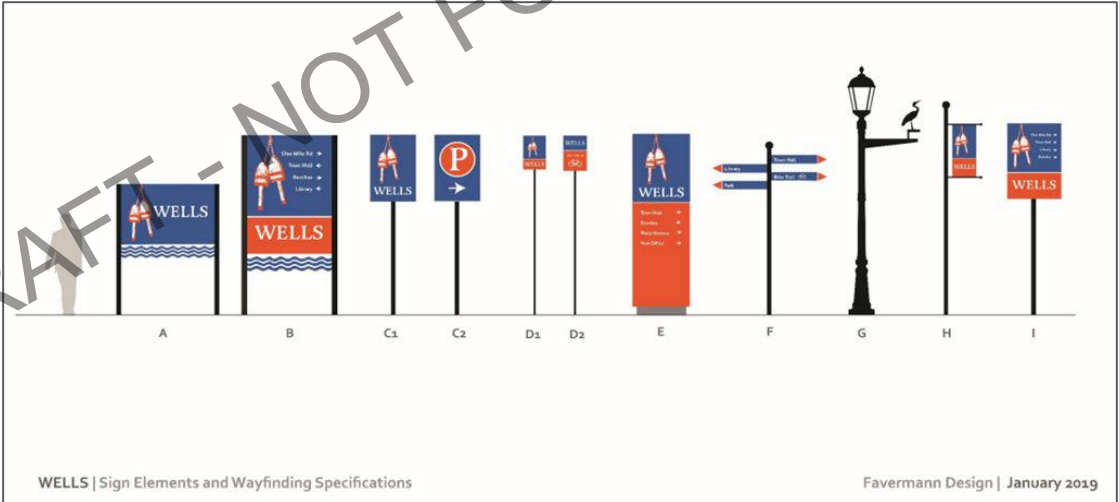
Recognizing that image, especially aesthetics, is a problem for Downtown to solve, the development of a Downtown and Plymouth brand would go a long way to improve the community image, cultivate name recognition, and market the community, specifically the commercial districts. Such a community branding program could include a unified signage program, street banners, and wayfinding.

#### The Process:

- 1. Select a Brand and Marketing Team** – The team should be comprised of key stakeholders from the downtown - officials, volunteers, and business owners. This team should work with the staff or consultant to determine the “Look” of Downtown and consider the various uses of the brand.
- 2. Develop a Marketing and Communications Plan** – The plan includes the budget and funding for this program. Consider if this is done in-house (town staff) or hiring a marketing consultant. Consider that funding this program is to market Downtown, and its businesses, and to foster economic development. This plan will be the roadmap to enhance the downtown brand year-round and should:
  - Focus on the brand development, theme, and identity, developing the marketing strategies, creating guidelines, and begin implementation in Year 1.
  - The plan should be developed as an ongoing and phased-in effort that will expand the efforts – it is recommended that a 5-year plan and budget be developed and that the efforts be evaluated and adjusted yearly as new opportunities arise.
- 3. Engage a Graphic Designer** – Consider using a local designer who knows the area and can reflect in the design that Downtown is a special and unique area. The designer should also be able to apply this new look to your marketing efforts – for various applications as well as for use within the town, on the website, and by the businesses.
- 4. Utilize the Brand to Create a Welcoming Atmosphere** – A banner program is one way to visually launch the new brand and market districts. This can be done strategically throughout the districts – intersections, public spaces, and in shopping plazas. The new brand should be able to be incorporated into signage or wayfinding improvements for future project phases. Keep in mind that the brand should be able to be replicated for other uses throughout the community as future needs arise – i.e., gateway signage on Rte. 72.

# Directional, Wayfinding, and Welcome Signage

Positioning Plymouth for Improvement





# Signage

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement



### In Accordance with the Images to the Right:

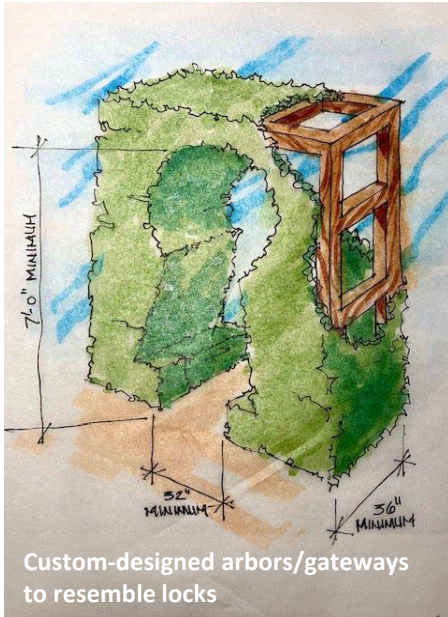
1. Signage needs to be updated, and throughout the corridor sign regulations need to be put in place, regulated, and enforced
2. Custom design and incorporating the character of the past into new signage will refresh a business' brand awareness
3. Use branding and signage to create and convey a new look
4. Enhancing the al-fresco dining terrace, updated landscaping, and a new sign could be further improved by adding a signature focal piece of artwork for passersby to elevate the business' recognition





# Creating a Downtown Brand

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement – Unlocking Plymouth’s Potential



Custom-designed arbors/gateways to resemble locks

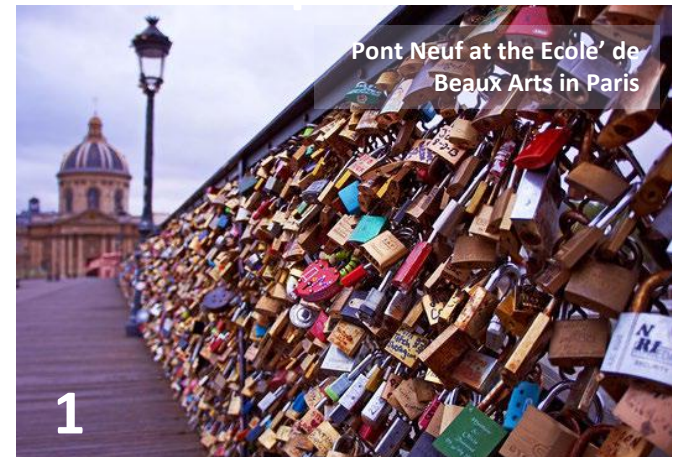
Get cliché with it!



Embrace the semblance of the image



Perhaps the labyrinth(s) could consist of rail-height link panels for housing Love Locks.



Pont Neuf at the Ecole' de Beaux Arts in Paris

### In Accordance with the Images to the Right:

1. Create a Love Lock bridge or fence that would play on the Town's past. Keep in mind that it would need to be reinforced to endure the weight of the locks
2. Incorporating a custom-built lock piece of artwork or topiary gateway potentially at the library, gateway parklets, or Baldwin Park tells the unique story of Plymouth
3. The key to 'Unlocking Plymouth's Potential' could be in embracing clichés and the Town's history.



# Creating a Downtown Brand

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement – Unlocking Plymouth’s Potential



### In Accordance with the Images to the Right:

1. State and Federal grant programs sometimes require a percentage of the award to be dedicated to public artwork and mural installations. Competitions and “installation” of artwork can be promotional events that draw visitors to Plymouth.
2. There are “obvious” and literal interpretations of “locks” and more interpretive forms of expressing their history in the Town
3. Some of the installations could be hands-on, more “interactive”, involving users in more of a “sensory-event” experience such as involving the Historical Society, the Library, and the Lock Museum in a Lock or Story Walk
4. Take the “ESCAPE ROOM” to a different level by incorporating it into a street event along a revived South Main Street



# Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

**Governance Structures & Engagement:** Plymouth's Downtown would benefit from more formal structures of governance and community engagement to better cultivate relationships with stakeholders. Therefore, Plymouth should proactively work to further engage Downtown stakeholders by doing the following:

- A simple and time/cost-effective way to engage businesses would be to host quarterly (or bi-annually) meet & greets at the town hall for each of the commercial and industrial districts.
- Consider as similar meeting as above to target and engage property owners in discussions about investment and (re)development.
- Host property owner meetings annually to listen to their needs and ideas.
- Engage in more frequent meetings with owners who are looking to invest in the near term. Discuss incentives that Plymouth could provide to help facilitate investment.
- Evaluate and consider if it is worthwhile to create formal merchant/business and/or property owner associations or districts to provide formal governance structures within the commercial and industrial districts.

**Celebrate Downtown Businesses:** The Economic Development Commission, in association with the Mayor's Office, should consider celebrating Downtown businesses and their investment in Downtown. Some simple ways of doing this include the implementation of a 'ribbon

cutting' program for new businesses and existing business expansions. The implementation of a yearly 'Business Investment' award program. The award categories could be Business Expansion, New Business, and Property Enhancements/Maintenance. An award for high-quality property maintenance would go a long way in encouraging and promoting higher standards of aesthetic improvements and pride in ownership.



# Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

## Positioning Plymouth for Improvement

**Strategic Investment:** Conceptualize government budgets and project investment in terms of Downtown investment when creating budgets, especially the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). CIP investments aimed at place-making and quality of life, such as sidewalks, bike lanes, streetscapes, and public/community space (Baldwin Park and the River) will go a long way to cultivating the economic ecosystem that businesses and residents seek.

- Link the CIP to the Plan of Conservation and Development (implementing the Plan recommendations) and this Downtown Transformational Plan.
- By utilizing the CIP for investment in the Downtown, Plymouth can establish the process and culture of continuous investment—a means of moving toward continuous improvement in Downtown.

**Intentional Development:** Most communities are reactive to development—allowing the market to propose developments that are then reviewed, debated, and approved or denied by the community (the land use commissions). Plymouth should consider identifying properties Downtown that are prime for investment or redevelopment and engage the property owners in discussions around how the Town of Plymouth can encourage (and help) with redevelopment and investment. Being intentional about the development Plymouth wants, is about investing (time and effort) in planning for and encouraging development.

Plymouth should:

- Work between the Economic Development Commission and Planning and Zoning Commission to determine the kind of businesses and developments (uses) Plymouth wants most and allow them via an as-of-right site plan.
- Engage property owners in discussions about the most desired uses and encourage them to consider and invest in those uses—including what they need from the Town to make such investments.
- Consider creating (and funding) preliminary conceptual designs for redevelopment sites to inspire and demonstrate potential.







# Chapter Thirteen:

## Implementation

# Framework for Strategic Investment

## Implementation

### Introduction

Creating improvement and re-positioning Downtown Plymouth to compete for investment requires strategic interventions systematically aimed at mitigating threats and weaknesses while building on strengths and leveraging opportunities. To accomplish this, Plymouth must systematically intervene in the market. Therefore, the recommendations and strategies provided in Chapter 11 cannot be viewed as a list of tasks or projects to be completed and checked off a list. The recommendations and strategies must be understood as intentionally designed collective interventions aimed at achieving improvement, moving the weak Downtown market to become a healthy market that competes for investment. Plymouth must view the recommendations of Chapter 11 holistically as a systematic program of improvement.

### Framework for Strategic Investment

As explained in Chapter 11, the problems in Downtown are physical conditions, market, and image. To solve these problems, implementation must seek to:

- **Physical Conditions:** Arrest deteriorating conditions and decline by improving the quality of the product on display to enhance the aesthetics and experience of Plymouth's Downtown.
- **Market:** Grow demand through strategic interventions aimed at increasing the critical mass of population and households within and proximate to the Downtown by allowing greater diversity in use and higher density.

- **Image:** Improve the image of Downtown by focusing on aesthetics, design, brand, public spaces, and activating spaces to be inviting and vibrant. Create higher standards of property maintenance and aesthetic appeal.

To solve these problems and move Downtown toward improvement, Plymouth must simultaneously work at mitigating threats and weaknesses, while building on strengths and leveraging opportunities. Therefore, the macro-scale framework presented is used to guide implementation. In Chapter 11 each of the recommended strategies was presented and explained. Now this framework is further explained in the context of what is needed and required for implementation.

- **Target investment in Downtown.** Plymouth must commit to a 5- to 7-year plan of targeting investment into Downtown. Recognizing the limited resources of local government, Plymouth must make difficult decisions as to where and how it will invest. *Downtown, for the next seven years, must be privileged over other locations and other investment opportunities.* This does not mean Plymouth cannot invest in other locations or initiatives, but that it must commit to yearly investments in Downtown.

# Framework for Strategic Investment

## Implementation

- **Improve the aesthetics of Downtown.** In years 1 to 3 beautification must be the top priority. This means meticulous landscaping and care of the public and private realms. Planting of flowers (including hanging pots and large ground pots), installation of the gateway treatments, and improvements to Baldwin Park. This is also the time to demolish Town-owned structures that detract from the Downtown and to engage property and business owners, encouraging them to join the Town in these efforts and step up the maintenance of their properties, to strongly encourage them to display flowers and fly flags (American or seasonal banners).
- **Improve the standards of property maintenance:** Over the first five years, the Town of Plymouth must encourage property owners to improve their standards of property maintenance. In addition to discussing the importance of property maintenance with owners, and encouraging owners to improve their standards, the Town should implement a façade improvement program. Since the Downtown is relatively small, a matching grant program of up to \$10,000 per building façade should be implemented.
- **Remediate conditions of blight.** Code enforcement must be prioritized in years 1 to 3 to ensure meaningful improvement in property conditions. This will help to improve aesthetics and establish new norms. Code enforcement will send a strong message that the Town is committed to improvement, is a partner with property owners who are code-compliant, and that it is serious about mitigating threats to public health and safety. The community must be patient, and understand that code enforcement is challenging, and that compliance takes time. When possible, Plymouth must use its tax foreclosure authority, as well as any other available tools, to secure blighted and deteriorated properties. The Town must also be committed to demolishing blighted or deteriorated Town-owned properties that detract from the Downtown. The Town should also attempt to acquire 156 Main Street, renovate it, and resell it.
- **Remove barriers to investment.** By year two, Plymouth should begin work on a comprehensive update to the Zoning Regulations. The primary aim of the Zoning Regulations update should be to create regulations that remove barriers to investment in the Downtown. The goal here is to get the proper zoning in place as the market begins to improve, and new investment starts flowing into the Downtown.
- **Encourage and allow greater density and diversity in land uses.** Allowing greater density and diversity of commercial and residential uses, including mixed-use and standalone multi-family development, will create opportunities for new value to be created. The opportunity for new and greater value to be realized by property owners and investors will become an incentive for investment. Allowing greater density and diversity in uses can be achieved through the Zoning Regulations update. As part of this aim to create new density and diversity of uses, Plymouth should be cautious about allowing the conversion of first-floor storefronts into residential spaces; maintaining a critical mass of commercial space is important to the economic vitality of the Downtown. That said, allowing for residential uses as part of (re)development plans, including some first-floor apartments or townhouses, can and does have a place in the repositioning of the Downtown market.



# Framework for Strategic Investment

## Implementation

- **Provide incentives to overcome the higher cost of redevelopment and infill development.** The first two years of implementation is when the Town should build its economic development toolbox. Plymouth must review existing policies, ordinances, and practices and adopt new policies and practices that ensure the Town has the tools needed to incentivize new investment and development. Such policies and practices should include tax abatements, tax fixing agreements, and the establishment of a Tax Increment Financing District—which authorizes the use of Credit Enhancement Agreements.
- **Create a Downtown brand and image.** Creating a brand and image for Downtown should be thought about in a multiplicity of ways. For example, first, follow the recommendations for creating a brand and for designing and installing gateways and wayfinding signage. Plymouth must then think about how the brand can be used and drawn into the community to be used by businesses, events, and community programs. Last, and not until improvement is occurring, the Downtown brand can be used for marketing the Downtown. That said, be cautious and do not market the Downtown before it is ready and improvements can be seen. Make sure the Downtown is a product worthy of selling to a larger audience before you try to sell it.
- **Focus on the aesthetics and design of (re)development.** Improving the quality of aesthetics should be embedded in all things Downtown. Improving the appearance of buildings, signage, landscaping, streetscape, parks, the river, the gateways, etc. Everything must be clean, neat, and aesthetically pleasing. As shown in Chapter 11, specific sites such as the Library, Lock Museum, and the American

Legion Hall property can be used as demonstration sites to show how physical appearance should be improved. In addition, as shown with the Eagles Nest signage, a new standard can be set for signage in the Downtown.

- **Create informal and formal governance structures.** This strategy does not need to start immediately since maintaining the capacity to implement the other priorities discussed above is key. However, within the first few years, Plymouth should seek to engage Downtown stakeholders in an informal or formal Downtown organization. This will provide opportunities for communication, networking, and interaction with Town government, and managing everyday items, issues, and opportunities related to Downtown.



# Gateways & Baldwin Park

## Implementation

### Gateways

The Eastern and Western Gateways are near-term interventions and priorities, not simply because they are gateways to Downtown, but because they provide an opportunity to elevate the standards and expectations of design and property appearance. The Gateways will be the first contact for most people and visitors coming to or through the Downtown. The Eastern Gateway provides the opportunity to repurpose a vacant lot, which will improve the aesthetics, while the Western Gateway enhances and improves the aesthetics of the existing Water Wheel site. As part of the Eastern and Western Gateway improvements, the overgrowth along the river should be removed, daylighting the river for enhanced aesthetics.

### Baldwin Park

Baldwin Park is the crown jewel of Downtown and should be treated as such. The Town of Plymouth should engage the Baldwin Park Association in a public-private partnership aimed at improving the physical conditions of the park and providing regular programming in the park. This should include a budget line item providing a fiscal resource for maintaining the Park. In addition, creating an adopt-a-bench program (see Bushnell Park Conservancy) to provide park benches throughout the park. Other improvements, as determined by the Foundation and Town, should be implemented, and programming/events in the park should be increased. The more programming, the more visitors to Downtown.



Eastern Gateway



Western Gateway



# Lock Museum of America

## Implementation

### Lock Museum of America

The Lock Museum of America is a “key” asset for the Downtown. The Lock Museum is the embodiment of Downtown's history, a driver of visitors to the Downtown, and an opportunity for branding Downtown. The Lock Museum is an asset to leverage. As an asset, the Museum property needs to shine; this provides an opportunity to demonstrate the importance of aesthetics and improved standards of property maintenance. Based on location, opposite the Library, the Museum site offers an opportunity to extend the design elements of the Library site, to the Museum, while upgrading the aesthetics of the Museum. As part of the recommended landscape improvements in Chapter 11, a new and modern sign should be included in the improvement.



Library & Lock Museum



Lock Museum

# South Main Street Redevelopment

## Implementation

### Downtown – South Main Street Redevelopment

South Main Street, at the intersection of Route 6 and south to Agney Avenue has good bones and provides a great opportunity to leverage to create a focal point or a Center to the Downtown. The properties along the east side have character, while the functionally obsolete retail plaza along the west side provides an ample site for high-density redevelopment. This creates an opportunity to establish a two-sided commercial block along a local street that can be designed, configured, and activated to a pedestrian scale.

In addition, the commercial property on the south side of Agney Avenue and the former mill further south on South Main Street provide added potential for commercial, residential, and mixed-use development. The mill should be conceptualized at a much later phase after improvement has occurred on South Main Street. The commercial building fronting Agney Avenue provides opportunities for multiple commercial spaces; possible retail or office space, or for conversion into live-work space, with ground-floor commercial and upper-floor residential.

While the Town does not own the properties on either side of South Main Street, it can encourage improvement and movement toward the vision discussed in Chapter 11 by leading with investment in the public realm. Therefore, the streetscape improvements shown in Chapter 11 are the critical first step. The Town of Plymouth must invest in this redesign of South Main Street, creating a high-quality aesthetic. This should include installing sidewalks on Agney Avenue adjacent to the cemetery and the resurfacing of Agney Avenue.

The second step, while implementing the streetscape improvements is to engage the property owners in a discussion about the vision for South Main Street, the Town's commitment to improving South Main Street, and the Town's willingness and desire to partner with the property owners and provide incentives for private investments. As part of this step, the Town should start implementing plans to daylight the Pequabuck River behind the retail plaza and develop further plans to daylight the river downstream of South Main Street. The river can provide a valuable visual aesthetic, and public access where possible.



South Main Street Aerial Conceptual

# South Main Street Redevelopment

## Implementation

### Downtown – South Main Street Redevelopment

The third step to the South Main Street redevelopment will be the redevelopment of the properties on either side of the street and the commercial property on Agney Avenue. While the redevelopment of private property will be dependent on the willingness of the property owners, the Town can encourage and entice the owners to redevelop their properties. The Town's commitment to improvement, vision, investment in the public realm, and incentives in the form of tax abatements should help to entice them. The commercial plaza is likely the most important piece of the puzzle, due to its size and the potential critical mass of mixed-uses it can provide. Mixed-use is key to creating a site design that engages the street front on South Main Street. Residential units will also be important to provide a critical mass of population to the site. It is also important to ensure adequate parking, including exchanging public incentives for the inclusion of some public parking on the site, possibly along the river at the rear of the parcel.

When investment and redevelopment occur on the commercial plaza site, market forces will bring the south side of South Main Street and the commercial property on Agney Avenue to the table. The key overall will be to leverage public incentives to get what the community desires in the vision. If the desire is to attract investment to the properties on the south side of South Main Street, then the Town should consider more robust façade improvement grants for these properties, up to \$25,000 per façade for matching investment by the owners.



South Main Street



South Main Street Conceptual



# Agney Avenue Redevelopment

## Implementation

### 13 & 99 Agney Avenue

The property at 13 Agney Avenue, behind the Volunteer Ambulance property, provides an opportunity to think creatively about redevelopment potentials of properties within the Downtown—these ideas could also be applied to 99 Agney Avenue, the commercial building at the corner of Agney Avenue and South Main Street. The self-storage site is a larger parcel with a 20,000 square foot footprint and ample area for parking and green space. If redeveloped into a live-work space, with a second story, and third-story loft, the property could likely yield between 40,000 and 60,000 square feet of gross floor area and provide approximately two-dozen units. Themed as an art or maker space, the ground floor could include a gallery and small retail space. The residential "live" space would add population density to the Downtown, while the commercial workspace would maintain the commercial and economic development focus. As part of any redevelopment on this site, the overgrowth along the river must be removed and the river daylighted for aesthetics, and if possible, public access provided. Daylighting the river and providing public access should be part of any redevelopment project that abuts the river.

### Agney Avenue Block

The Agney Avenue block, including properties fronting on Route 6 should be a mid-term priority, in 3 to 6 years. Landscaping improvements to Grandview Estates would improve aesthetics. The Thomaston Savings Bank property is a larger parcel with greater development potential than is being realized. Therefore, the relocation of the bank and the

redevelopment of this site should be considered. Any redevelopment plan for this site should encourage an L-shaped building with commercial space along Route 6 and fronting Agney Avenue. Upper-floor offices or residential units should also be considered. The properties fronting Route 6 at and near the corner of South Main Street must be a priority for improvement, especially façade improvements. Matching grants for up to \$25,000 should be implemented along with other incentives.



13 Agney Avenue Conceptual

# Design & Signs

## Implementation

### Design and Signs

The American Legion Hall is a focal point of the community and a place of pride. Recent renovations have been well-received, the building is one of the newest and well-maintained buildings in Downtown. That said, the building feels incomplete, and the landscaping is sparse. The recommendations in Chapter 11 offer an opportunity to do a demonstration project that further enhances the design of the building while elevating the aesthetics of a highly visible property in Downtown. A matching grant of up to \$25,000 should be offered to complete façade enhancements and landscaping.

Signage throughout the Downtown is dated, of a past era, and needs modernizing. In fact, updating signage throughout Downtown, as properties improve, will go a long way to improve the overall aesthetics of Downtown. The Lock Museum and the American Legion Hall, as semi-civic spaces, provide prime opportunities to demonstrate improved sign design. In addition, the Eagles Nest Restaurant provides an additional opportunity for a demonstration project with commercial business. For example, the Town could provide matching grants—up to \$10,000 per sign—to these three sign demonstration projects to have new signs designed and installed.



American Legion



# Implementation Conclusions

## Implementation

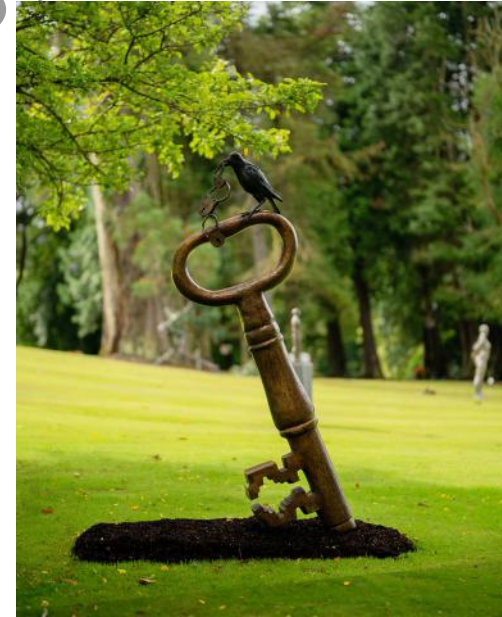
### Additional Improvements – Long Term

The recommended improvements in Chapter 11 totaled 22 items that span the entire Downtown area. Many of these improvements, those not specifically discussed in this Implementation Chapter, should be viewed as future opportunities and long-term objectives. The primary reason for this is that many of those recommendations will depend on the individual objectives of property owners. However, that does not mean that the Town of Plymouth should be passive. For example, Plymouth should engage in discussions with owners of the Immaculate Conception Church and The Lyceum about future plans and opportunities. These are both key sites and can offer great opportunities for future redevelopment or reuse. The Lyceum site is large and could be a good site for future multi-family or mixed-use. The Church site may provide an opportunity for a historic site, celebrating the historical significance of past Church leadership. Therefore, it is imperative the Town engage and remain engaged with property owners, discussing future opportunities and creating the capacity to seize those opportunities.

### Implementation Conclusions

The recommended improvements and sampling of projects provided in Chapter 11 and above in this Chapter, provide a framework for improvement. While each of the specific site recommendations stands on their own as redevelopment projects and improvements, they also provide contextual guidance that can be translated to any other site or property within the Downtown. The key is to create themes of improvements, design, and overall aesthetics, aimed at creating a more

cohesive and connected feel within the Downtown. For example, unified streetscaping details and designs, along with unified wayfinding sign design, and well-designed similar gateways will go a long way to improving the aesthetics of Downtown, while elevating the standards of property design and maintenance in the public realm. Another example, flooding the Downtown with flowers, in both the public and private realms will add color, life, and aesthetic appeal.





# Implementation Conclusions

## Implementation

For this Transformational Downtown Plan to be realized, the Town of Plymouth will have to lead by example. Town-owned properties and the public realm must be meticulously maintained, setting the standard for high-quality property maintenance. The Town must also be engaged in managing the issues and activities of Downtown. This means sweeping the sidewalks and streets, removing trash, and planting and maintaining flowers. The Town must also engage the community stakeholders, maintain an open dialog, and be a willing partner.

The Town, stakeholders, and community as a whole must embrace history and the history of locks. Leveraging history, especially locks, provides an outstanding opportunity to brand the Downtown, while creating a unique user experience. The Lock Museum's creativity in opening and operating an escape room is a great example of both drawing on the history of locks and leveraging that history in the present. The Escape Room not only celebrates history, it also provides a unique consumer experience. This history and the experience can and needs to be leveraged, embellished, and drawn into the community. Escape to Downtown could be a potential theme. More importantly, even though European cities popularized the lock as a symbol of lasting love, an emergent part of the tourist experience, Plymouth can lay claim to the lock, and the experience. Locks are Plymouth's history and can unlock Plymouth's future. Unchain the concept of the locks and their history from the displays within the Museum and open the gates of those locks to new opportunities and experiences in the community. Escape the Downtown era of decline and low self-esteem and unlock a future of pride, confidence, and prosperity. This is the "key" to *Unlocking Plymouth's Potential!*

