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COBBOSSEE STREAM CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I: PLAN SUMMARY

Purpose & Goals

Vision

The Cobbossee Corridor in Context

Summary of Economic Development Findings

Cobbossee Corridor's Rich History

Summary of the Master Plan

Plan Description

1. *Cultural/Historic Context*

2. *Environmental Context*

Corridor-wide Infrastructure

3. *Utilities*

4. *Traffic & Access*

5. *Pedestrian/Bicycle Network: Sidewalks & Trails*

6. *Gateway/Streetscape Enhancements*

Land Use Plan

7. *Housing Development*

8. *Commercial Redevelopment*

9. *Open Space*

Recommended Next Steps

Summary of Actions

Corridor-wide Actions

Parcel-specific Actions

Funding Sources & Financing Options

Corridor Plans & Diagrams

II: MASTER PLAN DESCRIPTION

Redevelopment Sites: Descriptions & Recommendations

III: PLAN REPORTS

Reports & Findings

- Economic Development Analysis – Gore Flynn, Enterprise Resources Corporation
- Housing Opportunities – Frank O'Hara, Planning Decisions, Inc.
- Utilities Analysis – Jon Edgerton, Wright-Pierce
- Traffic Analysis – Diane Morabito, Casey & Godfrey Engineers
- Route 126/9 MDOT Improvements – Kent Associates
- Cobbossee Trails: MDOT Enhancement Funds Application Materials
- Council Resolution for Route 126 sidewalk/bikeway
- No.5 Dam Removal (Gardiner Paperboard) – Matt Bernier, Kleinschmidt Associates

IV: PARCEL DATA SHEETS

Key Redevelopment Parcels

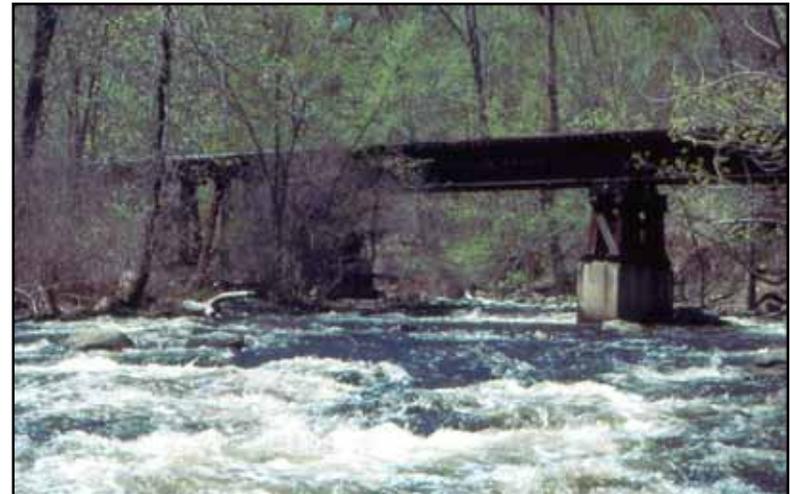
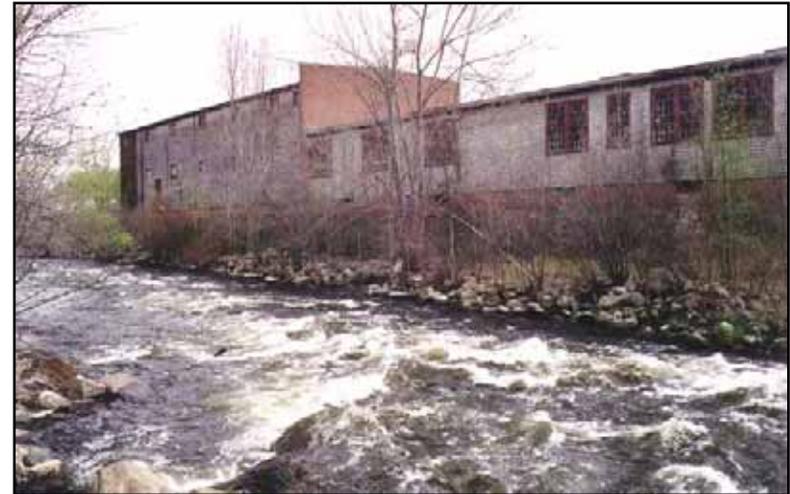
I: PLAN SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

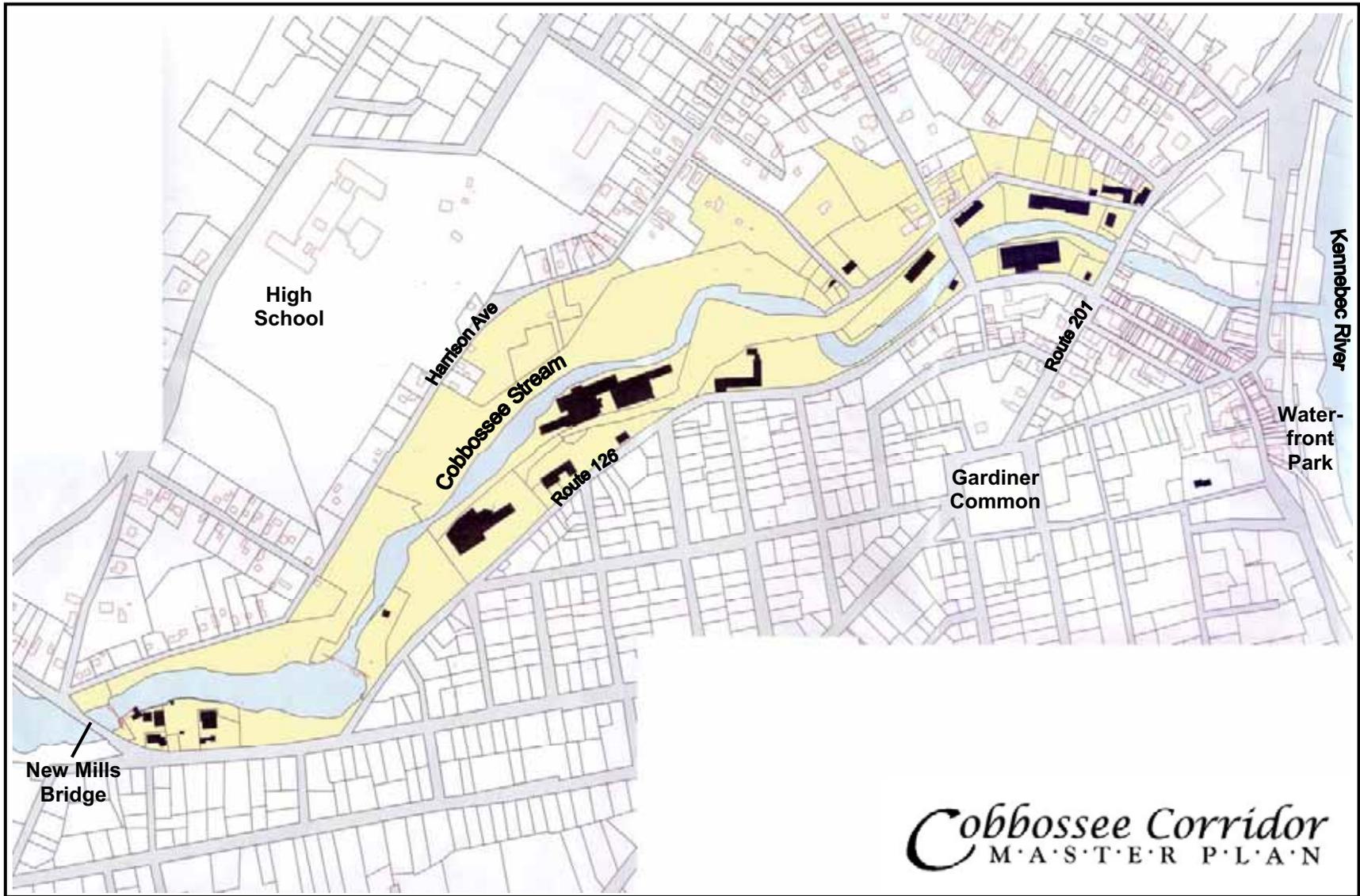
This plan for Gardiner's Cobbossee Corridor was prepared by Kent Associates Planning & Design, and associated subcontractors, for the City of Gardiner. It is the product of extensive study by professionals in the fields of urban design, planning, landscape architecture, civil engineering, traffic engineering, economic development and historical research. It has been shaped in consultation with an advisory committee of Gardiner citizens and business owners dedicated to improving the quality of life in their community (*see Acknowledgements*).

In the course of preparing this plan, the consultants and committee quickly realized that the Corridor had a rich history, great scenic beauty, and the potential to become a vibrant and important part of the City's future.

For the last 50 years, the Corridor has been in decline. Its central place in the economy and lives of those who worked in its many industries through the early 20th century has been lost. But clearly, as this plan shows, the Cobbossee Corridor can be revitalized and become a vital, mixed-use district where history, nature, and progress meet.



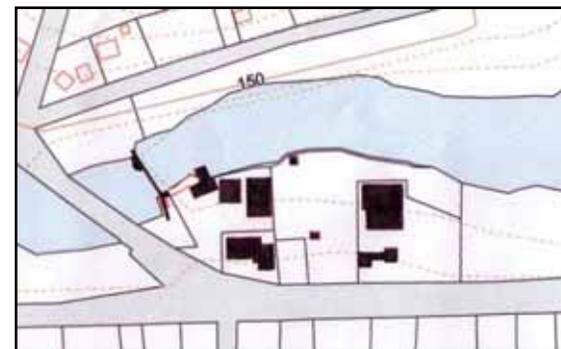
COBBOSSEE CORRIDOR STUDY AREA



PURPOSE & GOALS

PROJECT GOALS

1. Conserve and highlight the natural beauty and cultural history of the corridor and stream.
2. Establish trails and public open space that are easily accessible to all.
3. Work with existing property owners to help them add value to their properties, within the context of the master plan.
4. Enrich the fabric of the community, surrounding neighborhoods, and downtown with new, high-quality development, trails, and open space.
5. Identify opportunities for redevelopment that generates tax revenue for the City.
6. Identify funding sources and develop a strategy to tap into all possible funds at the local, state, and federal level.
7. Develop a marketing strategy to promote the plan and new economic development throughout the Corridor
8. Identify ordinance changes that support the master plan and ensure quality development within the Corridor.
9. Provide the infrastructure needed to support the plan.



VISION

Overall

- Bring people back into corridor through the development of trails & open space, housing, and new commercial activity.
- Maximize the corridor's development potential by promoting and investing in high-quality recreational, residential, and commercial development.
- Protect & celebrate the Cobbossee Stream, a vital natural resource and revitalization asset.

Commercial Redevelopment

Encourage high-quality development that supplements and complements the downtown; maximize the economic development potential of the Corridor.

Housing

Encourage new residential development that fits Gardiner's housing needs (and market) and brings people and activity into the Corridor.

Infrastructure & Traffic

Provide high-quality infrastructure that supports innovative and progressive redevelopment; ensure future development is served by safe and efficient traffic flow through well-planned traffic/access management throughout the Corridor.

Develop a vehicle access and egress plan that safely and conveniently connects parcels to the City/State road system.

Open Space & Recreation

Develop an open space/recreation plan for the corridor that serves Gardiner's recreational needs, supports economic development, and helps protect the stream as a natural resource.

Pedestrian Linkages/Connections & Trails

Create the best possible pedestrian linkages within the Corridor and to the areas surrounding the Corridor so as to encourage reduced traffic and increased recreational and tourism opportunities.

Cultural/Historic Context

Incorporate historical themes within the Corridor wherever possible; highlight the rich heritage of Corridor through the establishment of historic points-of-interest or possible future outdoor/indoor museum.

Environmental Context & Green Themes

Promote a "green" standard for site development/redevelopment within the Corridor, in terms of site planning, energy use, and architecture.

TOWARDS A VISION OF A 21ST CENTURY COBBOSSEE CORRIDOR

- We envision the Cobbossee Corridor as a place that:
 - is a gateway to downtown Gardiner
 - has beautiful, well-used walking and bicycle trails throughout
 - features interesting, diverse open space for picnicking, nature walks, outdoor entertainment, and eating, etc.
 - displays and builds upon its remarkable history with historic themes, outdoor exhibits, informational signs, and the preservation of historic artifacts (*themes: Geography, the Workers, the Fires, Lumbering, Metal Working, the Paper Industry, Leather and Shoes, Brickyards and Potters*)
 - has links to the schools nearby so that students can use it as an outdoor classroom
 - retains and features its natural assets – the stream, huge trees, steep slopes, and its fishery
 - is well-connected to the downtown and the waterfront
- We envision the Cobbossee Corridor as an active, high quality, urban district that:
 - features a range of residential homes – from single family to townhouses, apartments, and studio apartments
 - includes and adds value to existing, viable, businesses
 - contains a mix of professional offices, work spaces, service space, and other commercial space
 - seeks to build on the “creative economy”
 - provides entrepreneurial space for restaurants, health clubs, flea markets, craft studios
 - includes niche retail
 - includes a small inn or hotel, meeting rooms, and/or space for a research lab or set of corporate offices
- We envision a Cobbossee Corridor with a unique “green,” sustainable energy theme, that harkens back to the days when every business was powered by the Stream; under this scenario:
 - new residences and businesses obtain their power from the existing hydro-plant on the Stream
 - new buildings and grounds are built to meet or exceed the national LEED standards
 - Gardiner seeks funds to help fund innovation projects and create a model of sustainability
- We envision the Cobbossee Corridor that:
 - has its own, unique “flavor,” so it stands out as a special place that residents and businesses will seek out and identify with
 - has flexible zoning requirements that invite innovation, quality, and respect for Gardiner’s historic architecture
 - has build-in incentives (grants, loans, permits, etc.) that encourage investors to invest.

COBBOSSEE CORRIDOR CONTEXT

THE CORRIDOR IS VITAL TO GARDINER'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

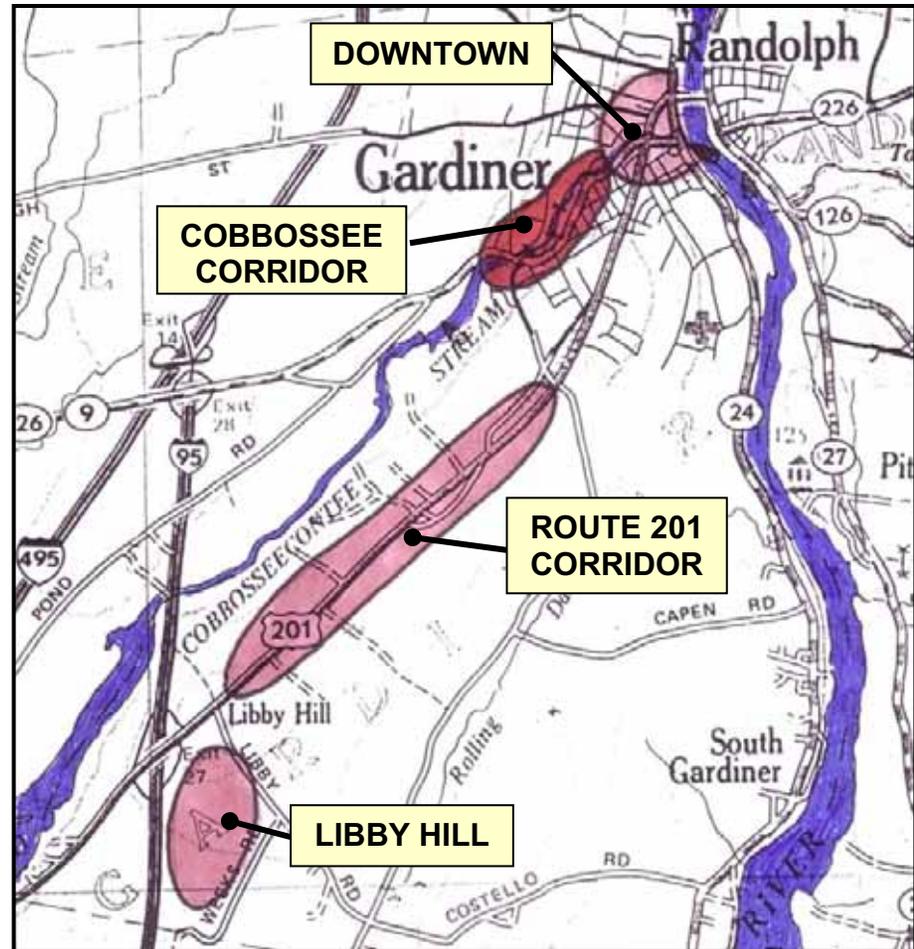
Perhaps the most important message of this Plan is to stress the value and significance of the Cobbossee Corridor as a vital component of Gardiner's economic development. The Corridor lies within the downtown TIF district (see TIF map, next page), yet is undervalued as an extension of the downtown. With the successes of Libby Hill and the revitalization of the downtown, the City must look to invest in other locations for economic development – Cobbossee Corridor has perhaps the greatest potential of any area in the City to become a high-quality, economic success.

The Cobbossee Corridor lies in the core of the community, and has high value in terms of location, redevelopment opportunities, open space, recreational opportunities, and scenic and natural resources. It serves as a major gateway to the downtown, and a link between the Interstate and the downtown.

Cobbossee Corridor Facts

- 1.14 miles, New Mills to Bridge Street (1.3 miles New Mills to River)
- 70 acres
- 3 dams (soon to be 2)
- 12 key redevelopment sites
- Just 2 miles from the Interstate

GARDINER'S MAJOR ECONOMIC ENGINES



SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINDINGS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINDINGS

The economic analysis undertaken as part of this master plan study shows that development in the Corridor can support and significantly enhance the City's tax base (see Section III for the full report).

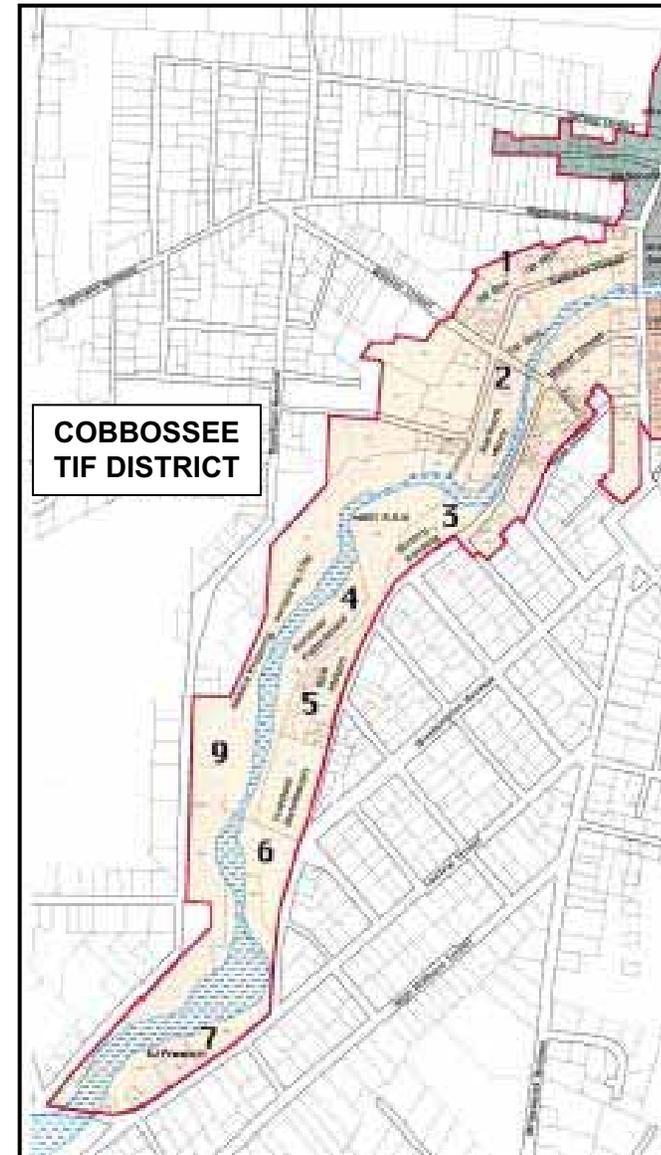
Success Factors

Area-wide economic trends show that the Corridor is well placed to play an important role in Gardiner's continuing renaissance. A number of factors lead to these conclusions.

First, and most important, is the City's commitment to redevelopment and its willingness to help owners and developers achieve their goals within a master planning and permitting framework.

Second, while the region's manufacturing base is declining and Augusta's "big-box" retail and large scale office market is thriving, Gardiner's success with Libby Hill and downtown revitalization has raised the City's profile. This, along with the City's highway connections to Brunswick and Portland growth centers bodes well for the successful redevelopment of the Corridor.

Third, projects in downtown and the Corridor can complement each other and reinforce each other. Further, the Corridor offers a different type of real estate development opportunity; unlike downtown it offers sizable undeveloped and under-developed sites that can support major new development projects - many within walking distance of downtown.



Fourth, Gardiner and especially the Corridor, can capitalize on two of the hottest trends in business and economic development nationwide – by catering to the “creative” sectors of the population. These include the “cultural creatives” – people who are willing to pay more for goods and services that are socially responsible – and creative entrepreneurs, i.e., typical Maine business people who capitalize on arts and crafts, software development, and the like. These people are both consumers and investors who should be attracted to Cobbossee Stream, trails, downtown, and the Kennebec River.

Development Opportunities

Enterprise Resources, the consultant who undertook the economic development assessment, identified both commercial and housing market opportunities in the Corridor. Commercial markets with the most promise include:

1. Single-tenant, primary offices for small organizations
2. Multi-tenant office buildings
3. Business, personal, and professional service businesses
4. Small distribution businesses (although these may serve as “land banks” until higher value development is attracted)
5. Small research and development facilities focusing on innovation
6. Craft and design products, food products, and information technology products

These are all small scale businesses that would benefit from ease of access to highways and downtown. The offices, in particular, should offer quality class A or B space in buildings up to 10,000 sq. ft. in size; these types of businesses would also benefit from stream-side water frontage, and an attractive trail system. Indeed, the Corridor’s natural assets and amenities are unique and should be marketed as such.

On the housing front there is a need for a variety of housing types in the City, and the Corridor offers a number of sites that would make excellent development sites. The housing assessment undertaken as part of this study (see Part III) suggests there is modest demand for intermediate range (not high-end) homes – either single-family detached or townhouses. There may also be markets for some lower cost houses and housing for seniors. Again, the amenity value of the Corridor serves any such housing well and is an added attraction to developers, tenants, and owners.

Quality Development and Timing

The redevelopment of the Cobbossee Corridor is a long-term project. It is important that the community give the private market time to discover, and begin to work with, the vision. Full redevelopment of the private parcels in the Corridor could take up to 20 years or more.

The City should “filter” development opportunities for conformity with the long-range plan and be discriminating in the development it encourages. The City should use its ability to provide deep incentives to stimulate a higher quality of development. Although Gardiner cannot control

private market forces that lead to underutilization of property, the City can refuse to reward low value utilization and use its public purpose incentive programs to achieve public value. The City should not settle for weak strip-type development that does not have long-range staying power.

Gardiner should be diligent about holding out for quality larger-scale development if the City is to participate in the projects. It would be a shame to waste the Corridor on a series of small, low-value projects that simply take advantage of a quick turnaround. Although the City cannot stop the open market from doing this, it can control the quality of the development it participates in, especially when the City is the landowner.

Further, the City could help jumpstart Corridor investment by developing the Usdan property and/or by working with the owner of the T.W. Dick site. Municipalities are becoming increasingly involved in initiating critical projects by gaining control of a site or working cooperatively with an owner, and then marketing the project.

**EMPHASIZE AND MARKET QUALITY:
DON'T UNDERVALUE THE CORRIDOR**

- Current uses (T.W. Dick, Uplift, Purbeck, Auto Sales) undervalue the potential of the Corridor.
- Given its proximity to the Interstate, its prime waterfront values, its natural setting, its recreational benefits, and its proximity to downtown Gardiner and the State Capital, the Corridor properties should draw (and should be marketed as) prime, first class business/ commercial uses, and as upscale residential development..
- However, these types of quality uses may be bypassed and lower quality development could result. This, in turn, could reduce the long-term potential of the Corridor to generate the top dollars (through a TIF procedure) that are needed to create and sustain the Corridor's infrastructure, especially the trails and open space.
- Mediocre development in the short run, could jeopardize highly successful, quality, development that might be waiting in the wings.
- The City should not prematurely endorse or support proposals that don't meet quality design standards or help achieve broad community support and enthusiasm.
- The City should aim high and "brand" the Corridor for quality! The City also needs to sell property owners on this concept.
- The City should encourage uses that generate active use and appreciation for the unique natural qualities of the Corridor - the stream, trails, and picnic areas; this means higher density development with high levels of employment, as well as housing. Warehousing, auto sales, and distribution centers (with low employment and increased truck traffic) are not the highest and best uses for the corridor.