

APPENDIX D

RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES DOWNTOWN SANFORD MARKET STUDY SANFORD CDBG QUALITY MAIN STREET PROJECT

Prepared for:

**The Downtown Sanford Task Force
and
The Town of Sanford**

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SECTION VII. THE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLAN

Downtown Sanford, as with many older downtown districts, has both strengths and weaknesses. This downtown revitalization strategy establishes a coordinated program for reinvigorating the economy of downtown Sanford. The strategy includes four interrelated components:

- Organizational Strategies
- Strategies Relating to Design and the Physical Environment of Downtown
- Marketing and Promotional Strategies
- Economic Revitalization Strategies

The underlying precept of the overall strategy is that the community, working together and incrementally over time, must address all four of these components if the downtown revitalization program is to be successful in the long run. There is great temptation to focus on just one or two areas, but attention to all four components is vital to the effort.

The overall strategy is based upon a long-term commitment to working to improve downtown Sanford. The program envisions that a large number of separate but interrelated activities will occur over a number of years, each building on the others to fundamentally change the way the downtown functions. This is not an easy mission, but it is one that Sanford can achieve.

A. *Downtown's Economic Role*

At one point, downtown Sanford was the retail and service center for the region. Over the past decades, personal mobility and the growth of outlying shopping centers have significantly eroded this role. Today, the downtown functions both as a "convenience commercial center" meeting some of the day-to-day needs of residents of the Sanford area and as a "limited specialty retail and service center" for a larger trade area.

This downtown revitalization strategy is built on three future economic roles for downtown:

- ! Maintaining and even expanding downtown's role as a "convenience commercial center" that meets the day-to-day needs of local residents and downtown workers.
- ! Expanding downtown's role as a "specialty retail and service center" by capturing a larger percentage of spending generated by the year-round population, especially middle and upper income households, of the Sanford Trade Area.
- ! Expanding downtown Sanford's role as an office and service center.

None of these roles by itself creates the necessary market supports for a revitalized downtown. But in combination, these roles offer opportunities to support an economically viable downtown business district. The strategies set forth in this section establish a program to capitalize on these opportunities.

B. Organizational Strategies

Successful downtown revitalization requires that a wide range of activities occur over a sustained period. While Town staff can play some role in this, the overall revitalization strategy is built on the recognition that there is a need for a downtown organization that can champion downtown and coordinate the revitalization program. *Discover Downtown Sanford* has already begun to play this role and this program proposes that the ability of the organization to serve this function be strengthened and expanded.

1. Organizational Objectives

To this end, the following organizational objectives are established:

OBJECTIVE #1 - Expand the number of business people and downtown property owners actively involved in the Discover Downtown Sanford organization.

OBJECTIVE #2 - Develop an ongoing source of funding to support the administrative activities of Discover Downtown Sanford to allow its role and functions to expand.

2. Organizational Work Plan

To accomplish these organizational objectives, *Discover Downtown Sanford*, with assistance from the Town, will need to undertake the following short-term activities:

- ! ***Organizational Development Program*** - By January 1, 1996, the Executive Committee of *Discover Downtown Sanford* should develop a mission statement explaining the purpose of the organization, formally establish membership types and fees, and develop a program for soliciting membership in the organization. Immediately after the holiday season, the group should undertake an aggressive campaign to recruit additional members with a focus on downtown businesses, downtown property owners, and key people with an interest in downtown Sanford.
- ! ***Committee Operations*** - By January 1, 1996, each Committee should be operational with a full complement of active members and a clearly defined work program for the coming year using the activities identified in this strategy as the basis of those work plans. The Executive Committee should establish a clear statement of purpose for each of these standing committees based upon this overall strategy.
- ! ***Contacts with New Businesses*** - The Membership and Development Committee should establish a program for contacting new businesses in the downtown, property owners, and other downtown interests. Consideration should be given to a joint activity with the Town such as a business visitation program in which a representative of *Discover Downtown Sanford* and a representative of the Town formally call on new downtown interests to make them welcome, let them know they are important to the community and downtown, and solicit their involvement in *Discover Downtown Sanford* and the revitalization program.

- ! ***Administrative Funding*** - By January 1, 1996, the Executive Committee should develop a budget for supporting core administrative functions of the organization and a program for raising the necessary funds. In early 1996 the Executive Committee, in conjunction with the Membership and Development Committee, should undertake a program to raise the funds called for in the budget.

- ! ***Liaison with Other Organizations*** - During 1996, the Executive Committee should establish working relationships with organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and develop a program for maintaining and enhancing these relationships.

Over the long term, the organizational component will focus on maintaining and expanding the organizational capacity of ***Discover Downtown Sanford***. As downtown revitalization moves forward, it is highly likely that the level of administrative support will need to grow.

C. ***Design Strategies***

1. **Design Objectives**

The second component of the downtown revitalization program involves creating an environment in the district that is attractive and in which the customer feels comfortable and safe. The design component will require close coordination between ***Discover Downtown Sanford*** and the Town of Sanford. The Design/Economic Restructuring Committee should be responsible for coordinating the activities of this component.

The design objectives for revitalizing downtown Sanford are:

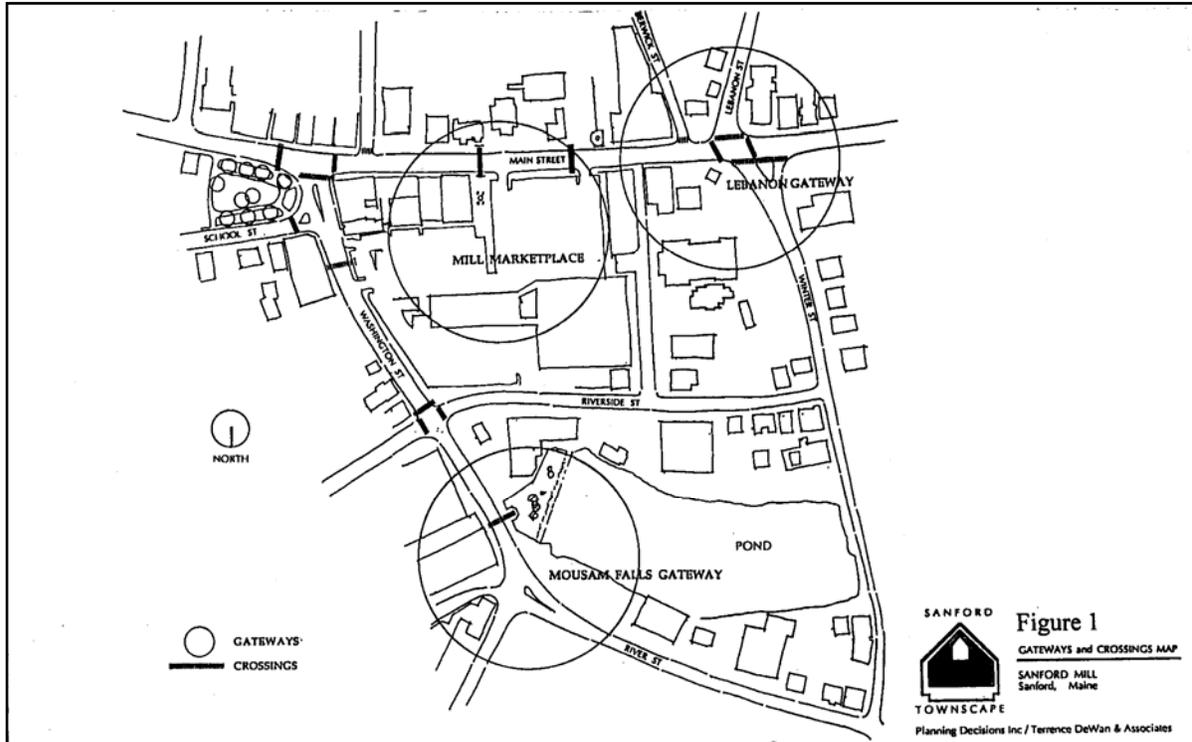
OBJECTIVE #3 - Create a distinctive visual environment in the downtown which identifies it as a unique high-quality commercial district.

OBJECTIVE #4 - Improve the public's perception of pedestrian safety and convenience in the downtown.

OBJECTIVE #5 - Improve the management of on- and off-street parking.

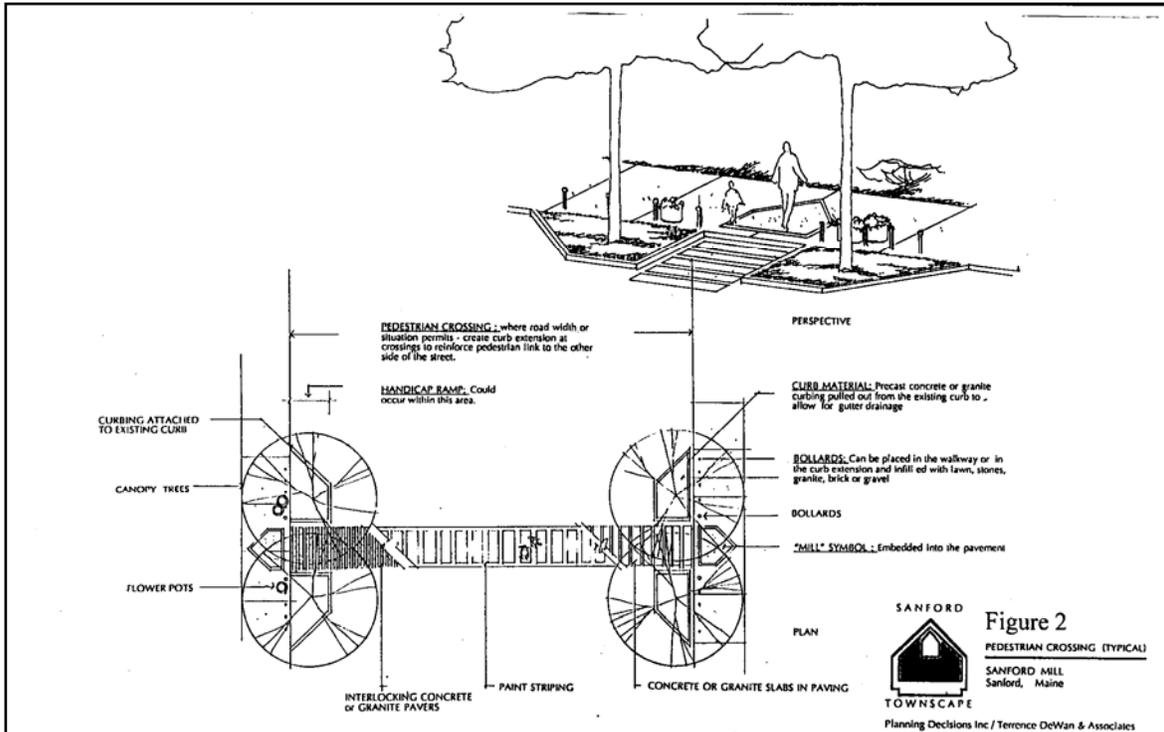
2. Work Plan

To accomplish these objectives, *Discover Downtown Sanford* and the Town will need to undertake the following short-term activities (see Figure 1) within the next year:



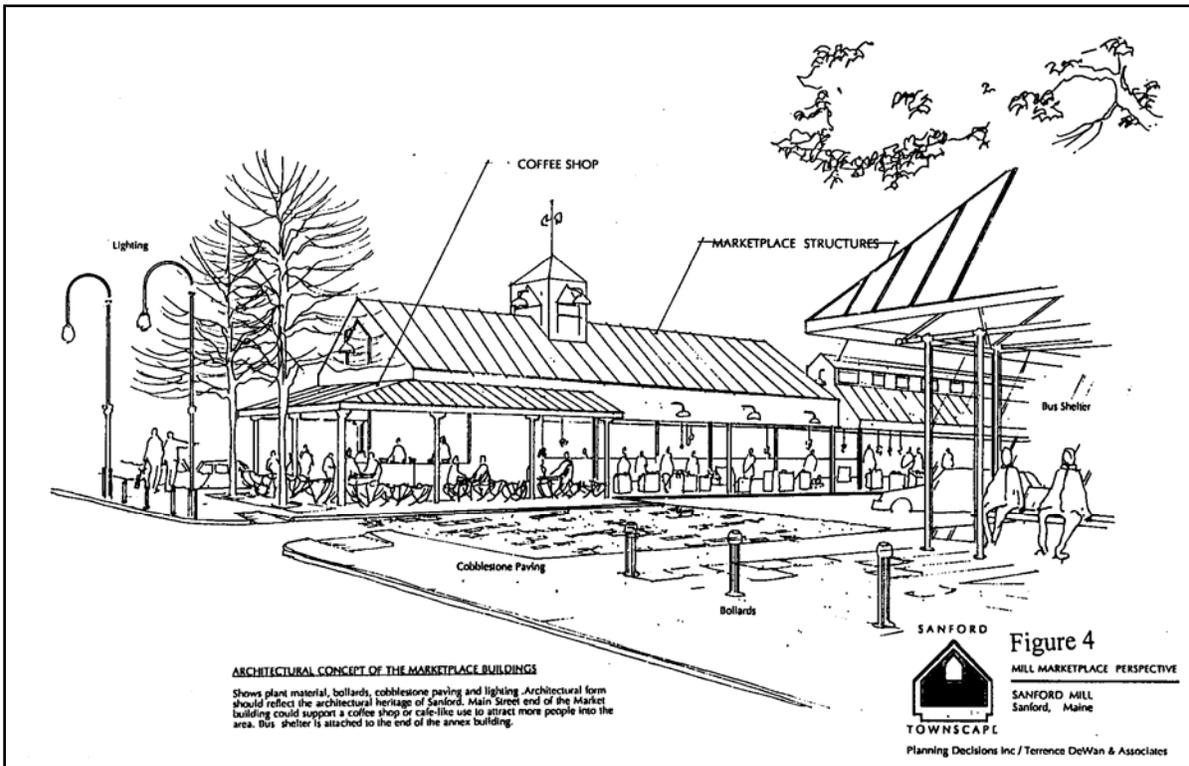
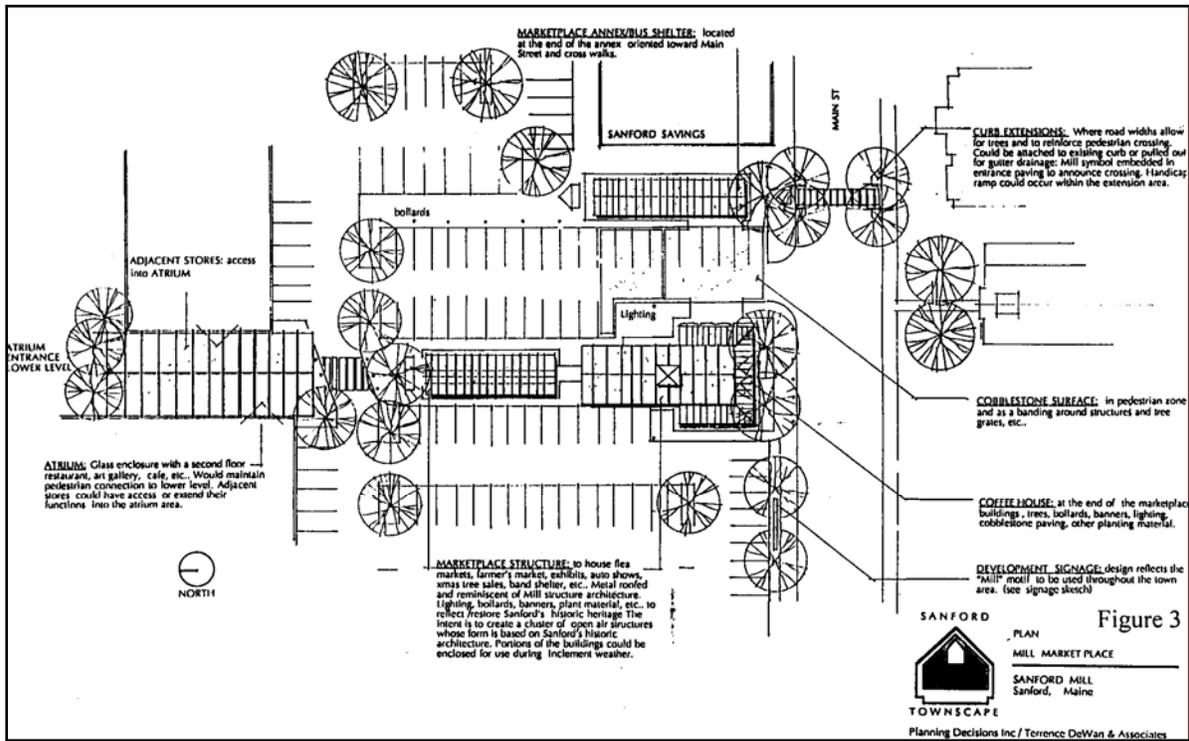
- ! **Parking Management** - The Design/Economic Restructuring Committee should work with the Town and Police Department to develop an improved program of parking management in the downtown area. This program should address the following areas:
1. Improved enforcement of on-street parking regulations to assure that these spaces are available for customer parking.
 2. Improved management of the off-street parking at the Mid Town lot to assure that the best “customer parking” is available for use by customers.

- ! **Pedestrian Crosswalks** - The Town should reconstruct the major crosswalks in the downtown to increase the perception of safety and convenience. A possible design for the revised crosswalks is shown in Figure 2. In conjunction with this effort, the Town and *Discover Downtown Sanford* should undertake an educational and enforcement program dealing with motorists yielding to pedestrians within crosswalks.



- ! **Image Enhancement** - The Design/Economic Restructuring Committee should work with the Town to develop a comprehensive program to enhance the image of downtown Sanford as a quality shopping district that appeals to middle and upper income consumers. This program should focus on three areas:

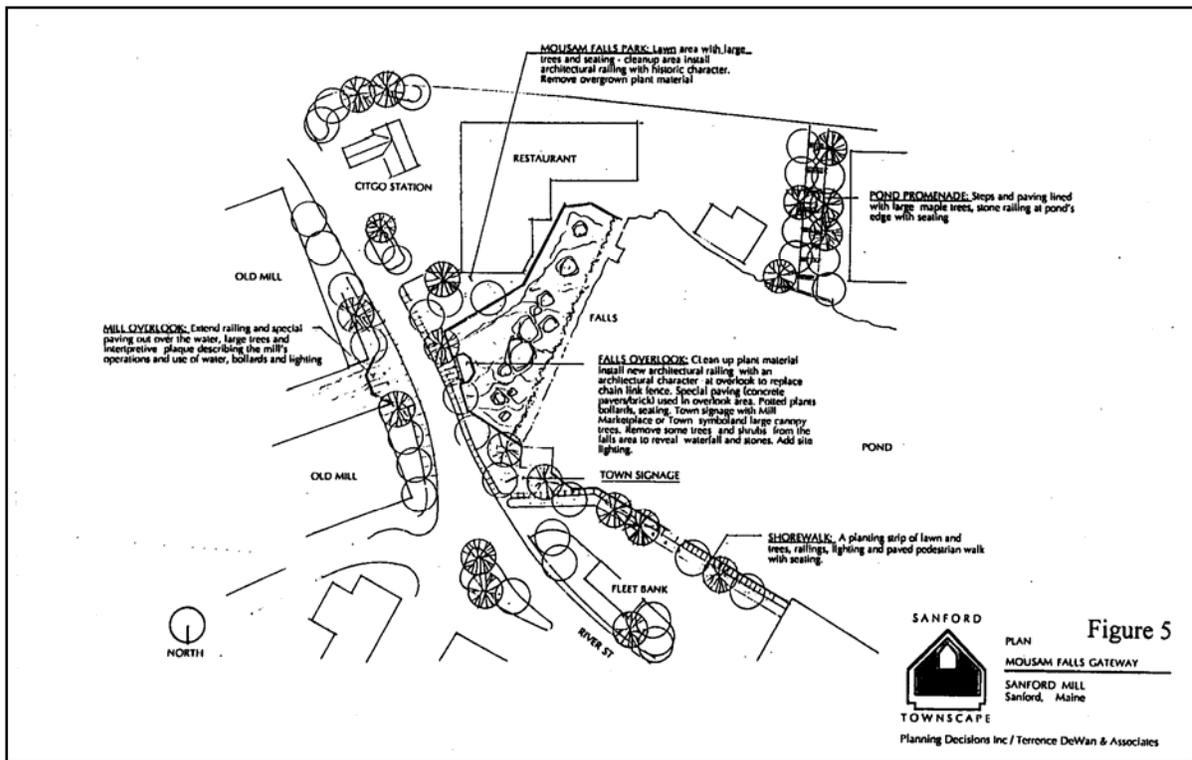
1. Creation of a downtown focal point - Downtown currently lacks a strong sense of place or identity. The geographic center of downtown is the parking lot of the Mid Town Mall. The Design/Economic Restructuring Committee should work with the Town and downtown property owners to develop a “market” building on the east side of Main Street between the Sanford Institution for Savings and Home Vision Video to serve as a center for downtown activities. This facility should provide information about downtown and downtown activities, be a permanent home for the farmers’ market and other similar activities, and serve as a center for other downtown activities and promotions. Figures 3 and 4 provide a conceptual idea of what such a “market” might look like.



2. Downtown gateways - The Town and *Discover Downtown Sanford* should work together to create attractive gateways to the downtown at the following locations:

- Winter/Lebanon/Main Intersection
- Main between Roberts and Washington
- Washington at the Mousam River

These gateways should be visually distinctive and allow customers and visitors to recognize that they are entering a distinctive place. The gateways should include appropriate signage and visual elements that are consistent with the other downtown improvements. A conceptual design for the Mousam Falls Gateway is shown in Figures 5 and 6, while Figure 7 shows possible signage that should be incorporated into both of the areas. Figures 8, 9, and 10 show a possible treatment for the Main/Lebanon Streets Gateway.



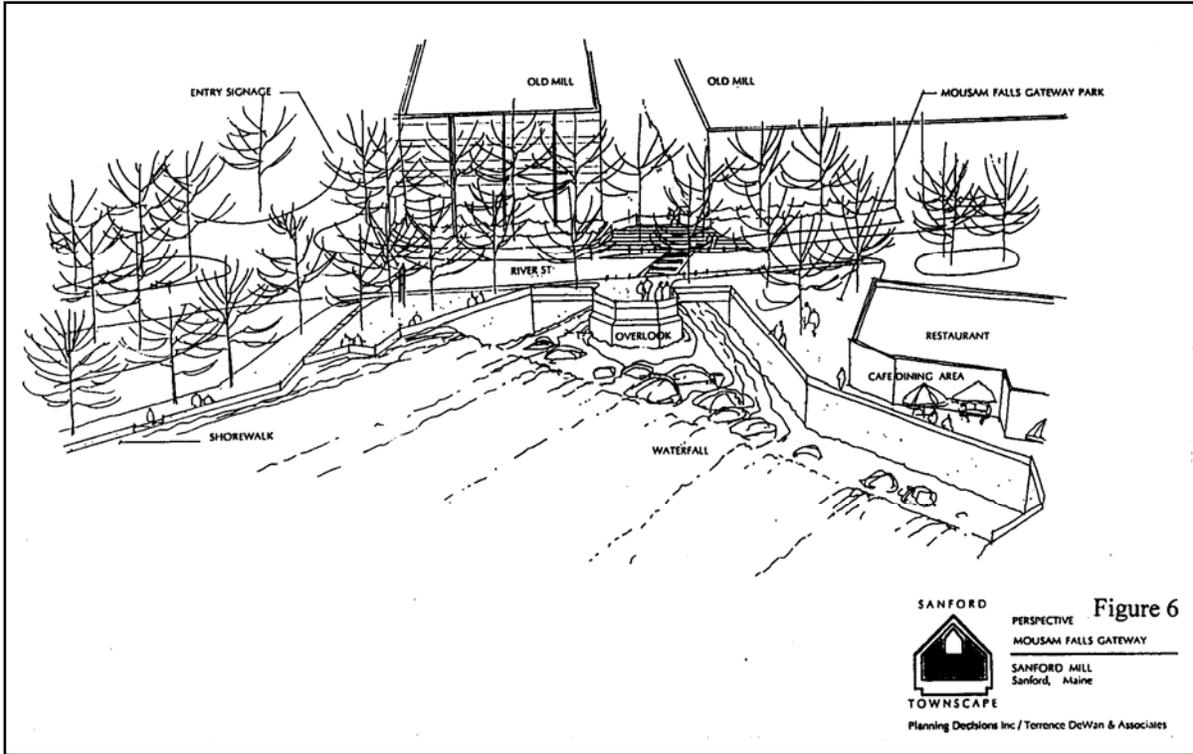


Figure 6
 PERSPECTIVE
 MOUSAM FALLS GATEWAY
 SANFORD MILL
 Sanford, Maine
 TOWNSCAPE
 Planning Decisions Inc / Terrence DeWan & Associates

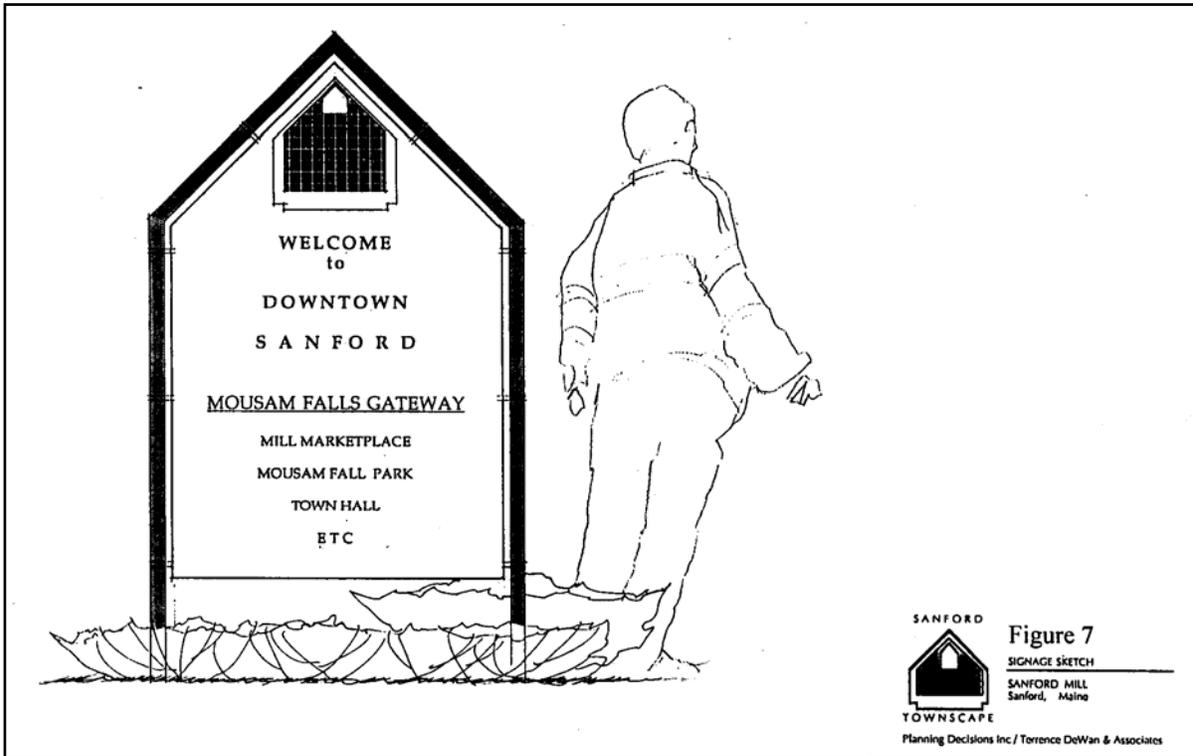
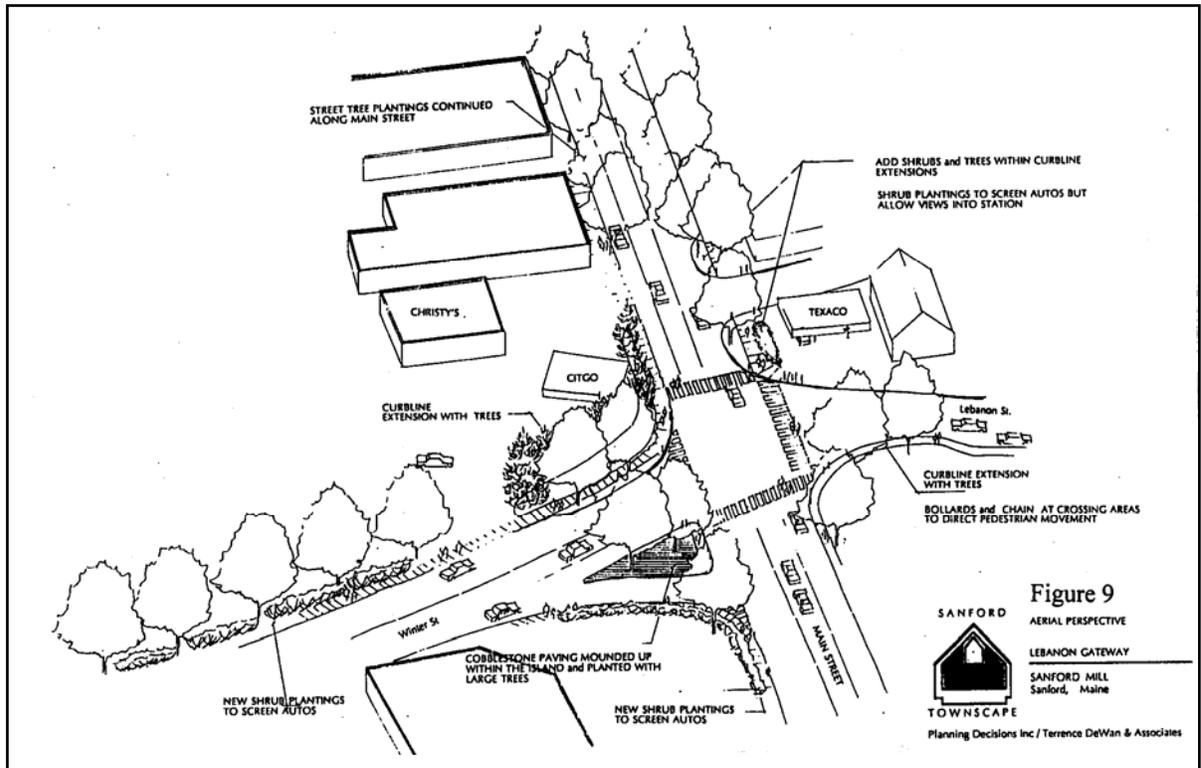
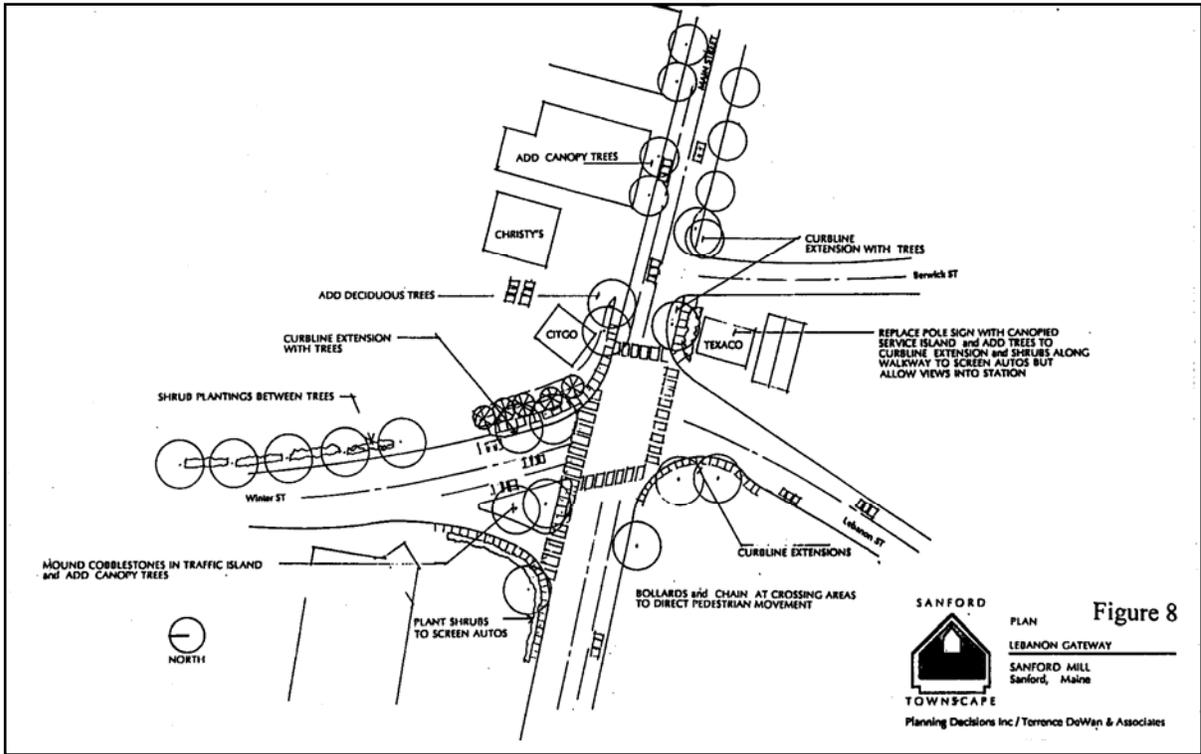
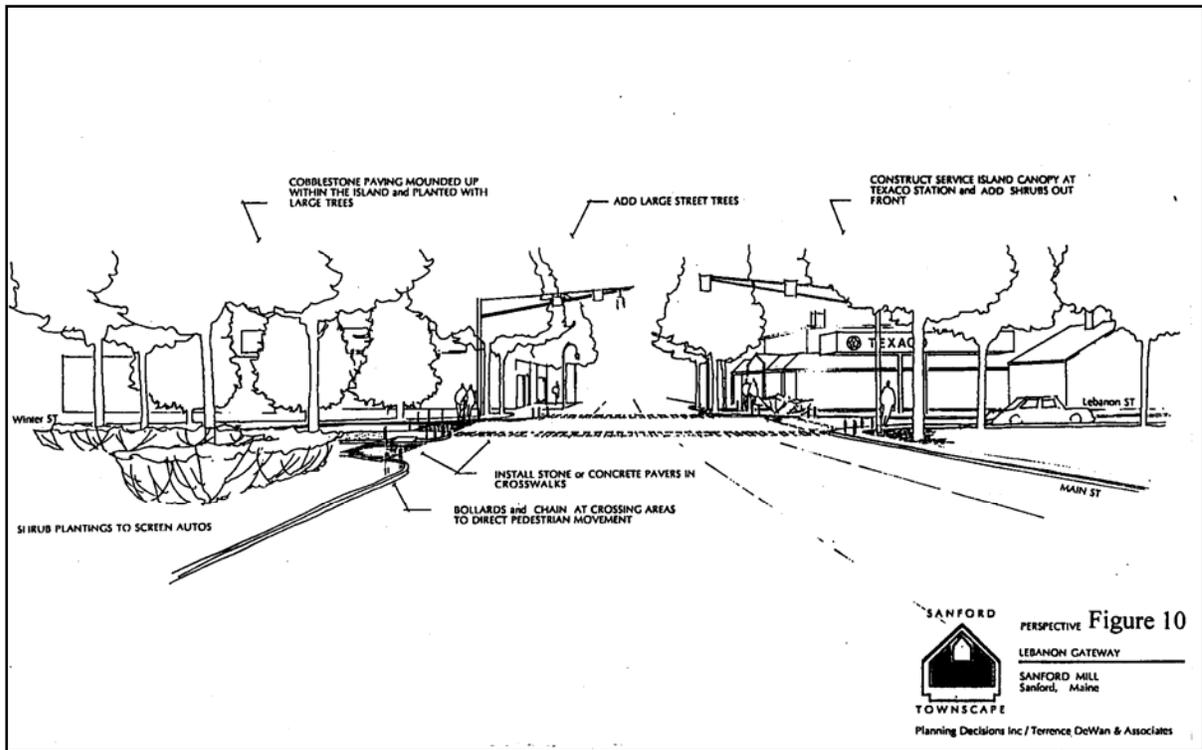


Figure 7
 SIGNAGE SKETCH
 SANFORD MILL
 Sanford, Maine
 TOWNSCAPE
 Planning Decisions Inc / Terrence DeWan & Associates





3. Public Safety

The Design/Economic Restructuring Committee should continue to work with the Sanford Police Department to improve the perception of safety in downtown.

4. Maintenance of Public Facilities

The Design/Economic Restructuring Committee should continue to work with the Town's Director of Public Property to assure that the public areas of downtown are well maintained, clean, and present a positive image of the community. This should include establishing a system for downtown businesses to notify the Town when they notice problems.

D. Promotion and Marketing Strategies

1. Promotion and Marketing Objectives

The third component of the downtown revitalization program is an active program to market the downtown as a **quality** commercial area and to promote the individual businesses within downtown. To this end, the following promotion and marketing objectives are established:

OBJECTIVE #6 - Develop an image of downtown as a distinctive shopping and service district that offers quality products and services.

OBJECTIVE #7 - Create awareness with consumers living in the Sanford Trade Area of the range of goods and services available in downtown.

OBJECTIVE #8 - Increase the number of events and activities that attract people into downtown Sanford.

2. Promotion and Marketing Work Plan

The task of promoting and marketing downtown Sanford as a commercial district should be delegated to the Promotion Committee. This group should undertake the following activities in addition to assuming responsibility for ongoing marketing and promotion activities. In the next year, the Committee should address the following:

- ! ***Downtown Image*** - The Committee should refine the downtown logo and develop a related marketing theme that will be used by ***Discover Downtown Sanford*** and its members in promoting the downtown district. Consideration should be given to graphically simplifying the existing logo. It is important that the logo be used to project a "quality" image for the downtown.
- ! ***Promotion of the Range of Goods and Services Available in Downtown*** - The Promotion Committee should develop a directory of categories of goods and services that are available in downtown and where they can be found. The emphasis in the directory should be on the types of goods rather than on specific businesses. This information should then be used in joint advertising programs that focus on downtown as a commercial district.
- ! ***Special Events*** - The Promotion Committee should develop at least two special events to bring consumers into downtown and truly "discover downtown Sanford." One event should focus on the Christmas holiday season, while the other should occur during the summer. The objective of each event should be to bring consumers into downtown and provide them with the opportunity to experience various aspects of the downtown. These events should include musical events, food, and an opportunity to visit stores. Individual businesses should be encouraged to conduct their own promotions in conjunction with the overall event.
- ! ***Target Marketing*** - The Promotion Committee should develop a program for targeting specific segments of the overall market. This should build on existing activities of individual businesses and target groups of consumers with similar characteristics or interests. This might include:
 - Worker appreciation days in which people who work in or around downtown get special discounts.
 - Hospital appreciation days to attract hospital employees to come downtown.
 - Special promotions targeted at women during major sporting events such as the Super Bowl, Kentucky Derby, or NBA playoffs.
- ! ***Expanded Market Activity*** - The Promotion Committee should work to expand the farmers' market and to explore other similar activities (crafts market, flea market) that can complement downtown businesses.

Over the longer term (the next two to three years) the Committee should evaluate all promotional and marketing activities and determine which are effective and should be continued and which are not and should be discontinued. In addition, the Promotion Committee should continue to expand marketing activities including:

- ! ***Cross Shopping Promotions*** - The Committee should explore ways to encourage the customers of one downtown store to make additional purchases at other stores in the downtown district.
- ! ***Increased Special Events*** - The Promotion Committee should investigate expanding the number of specific events to approximately one per quarter (spring event, summer event, fall event, holiday celebration).
- ! ***Expanded Joint Promotion/Advertising Activities*** - The Promotion Committee should develop joint advertising activities that are designed to build customers' awareness of what can be found in downtown.

E. Economic Revitalization Strategies

1. Economic Revitalization Objectives

A key component of the downtown revitalization program is improving downtown's economic functioning through attracting more customers and spending into the district. To this end, the following economic revitalization objectives are established:

OBJECTIVE #9 - Maintain the existing core of stores in downtown and enhance their economic performance.

OBJECTIVE #10 - Expand the range of retail merchandise available in downtown Sanford with a focus on the gaps identified in the market analysis.

OBJECTIVE #11 - Enhance downtown's image as a place to do business.

OBJECTIVE #12 - Support the retention of existing non-retail uses and the establishment of new uses which bring potential customers into downtown Sanford.

2. Economic Revitalization Work Plan

To accomplish these objectives, the *Discover Downtown Sanford* should undertake the following short-term activities over the next year:

- ! ***Business Assistance Program*** - *Discover Downtown Sanford* should serve as a liaison between downtown businesses and sources of business assistance. To accomplish this, the Design/Economic Restructuring Committee should:
 - Survey downtown business owners to determine their business assistance needs (i.e., cash flow management, personnel administration, TQM programs, etc.).

- Work with the Town's Community Development Department to identify sources of business assistance and make members aware of these opportunities.
 - Publicize special business assistance programs that occur in the area.
 - Promote and sponsor training programs and similar activities of interest to downtown businesses.
 - Work with the Town of Sanford to establish a micro loan program to assist businesses that want to locate or expand in downtown.
- ! ***Business Environment*** - The Design/ Economic Restructuring Committee should work with the Town to enhance the business community's and the public's perception of the business environment in downtown. This should include regular meetings between the Executive Committee, the Town Administrator, and Selectmen to review downtown revitalization issues and the creation of a business visitation program in which a representative of the Town and a representative of ***Discover Downtown Sanford*** visit each downtown business on a regular basis to get firsthand information about business conditions and make businesses aware of their importance to the community. In addition, the Design/Economic Restructuring Committee should work with the Promotion Committee to create regular media coverage about the successes of ***Discover Downtown Sanford*** and individual downtown businesses. The goal of this effort should be to create a positive image of downtown Sanford as a place to do business. The information could focus on increased sales at a particular business, the level of activity surrounding certain periods (Christmas sales, etc.) or the success of promotional activities.
- ! ***Expansion of Existing Downtown Businesses*** - The Design/Economic Restructuring Committee should work with existing downtown businesses to explore expanding the range of goods they offer to fill identified gaps in the retail mix.
- ! ***Recruitment of Businesses into Downtown*** - Over the long run, successful downtown revitalization will require that additional business activities occur in downtown. To encourage this, the Design/Economic Restructuring Committee should:
- Develop information and materials that can be used in recruiting new businesses.
 - Identify businesses already in operation in the Sanford Trade Area that would be beneficial to be located in downtown.
 - Identify southern Maine businesses that have potential for establishing a branch location in Sanford.
 - Establish a program for personally contacting these prospects on a regular basis and encouraging them to locate in downtown Sanford.
- ! ***Establishment of New Businesses*** - A significant potential for business growth and retention in downtown is in the establishment of new start-up businesses in downtown or the purchase of existing businesses by new

owners. A major role of the Design/Economic Restructuring Committee should be to identify potential entrepreneurs, encourage them to consider starting/buying a business in downtown, and work with them to secure financing, space, etc. While this is truly a long-term activity, the Committee should start work in this area during 1996.

Over the longer term, *Discover Downtown Sanford* will need to maintain the expanded level of economic revitalization activity. The Design/Economic Restructuring Committee will need to provide for repeating the short-term activities on a regular, recurring basis. In addition, the Committee should undertake the following initiatives over the next two to three years:

- ! *Antiques Mall* - The Design/Economic Restructuring Committee should explore the feasibility of establishing an antiques mall/center within the downtown area to serve as a tool for attracting consumers from a wider geographic area into Sanford. The focus of this facility should be on high quality items.
- ! *Office Uses* - The Design/Economic Restructuring Committee should work with the Planning Board to review the Town's land use regulations to assure that small scale office uses are encouraged to locate in or adjacent to the downtown area.