

C. The Pedestrian Environment and Regional Commercial Centers

Regional commercial centers are areas with a concentration and mix of retail uses as well as office uses. These centers may also have residences in close proximity to or, ideally, well integrated with the commercial uses.

Commercial centers that are more pedestrian-oriented are more compact in character and are more transportation efficient. In compact, mixed use centers, a higher proportion of trips can be made within the center by walking and has the potential for lower rates of automobile trip generation.

An important consideration for the region's transportation system is the relationship of these centers to each other along the region's principal transportation corridors. A corridor with numerous compact, pedestrian-oriented commercial centers along it has the potential to be served effectively by bus transit service. Higher intensity mixed use corridors have the potential to be served by passenger rail. Conversely, a proliferation of low density, auto-oriented centers along a corridor makes transit service inefficient and not cost-effective.

The Pedestrian Environment: Rating the Commercial Centers

The Pedestrian Environment map (Map C-1) identifies and rates Regional Commercial Centers for their relative level of pedestrian orientation. These centers vary in scale by community to be representative of commercial areas across the region. The ratings are based upon the degree to which a center in its entirety addresses these functional and design characteristics.

Three groups of characteristics are used to derive the composite rating:

- General pedestrian safety and functional needs
- Pedestrian orientation characteristics
- Urban design characteristics.

Safety and functional needs describe many of the most basic requirements for pedestrian accessibility along and across public streets. These attributes include:

- Curb ramps at intersections, street crossings and driveways that meet Americans with Disability Act standards
- Direct, adequately wide and continuous sidewalks along streets
- Well-marked and designed pedestrian crossings at intersections and at appropriate intervals between intersections where longer block lengths exist
- Compact signalized intersections or mid-block crossings with appropriate pedestrian signal equipment and signal phasing.

Pedestrian-oriented characteristics, primarily within the public right of way, make the streetscape a more inviting place to walk, but more importantly also serves a functional role of defining a place. These attributes may include:

- Street trees
- Esplanades/planting strips
- Pedestrian-scaled lighting
- Landscaping
- Access from streets to building entrances
- Pedestrian-scaled signs
- Defined pedestrian circulation in parking lots.

Urban design characteristics outside the public right of way can further enhance the pedestrian environment. These considerations may include:

- Buildings and entrances oriented to the street
- Building design and architecture that relates to surrounding buildings
- Off-street parking oriented to the side and/or rear of buildings
- Buildings organized with block lengths of 200 feet to 400 feet (with a desirable maximum of block length of 600 feet)
- Active building frontages and street activity
- Visual interest and attractiveness
- Good mix of retail, office and residential housing in close proximity to each other.

A Center is rated as **Poor** if it provides little to none of the basic Safety and Functional Needs attributes. Centers rate as **Fair** that meet the minimum Safety and Functional Needs. Centers rate as **Good** that meet Safety and Functional Needs but also consistently incorporate a number of the pedestrian oriented and urban design characteristics. Centers that more fully integrate all three groups of characteristics rate as **Very Good**.

In many centers, deriving the rating is not clear-cut. A plus (+) or minus (-) is added to the rating for some centers to further distinguish between characteristics that may further positively contribute (+) to or negatively contribute (-) to the center's general rating. For instance, an area that is 'Fair' overall but as it redevelops is adding quality urban design and streetscape characteristics (such as new buildings oriented to the street) merits a 'Fair (+)' rating. A center that is a traditional village center but its contemporary development has primarily suburban style single-story, single-use buildings may merit a 'Good (-)' to reflect this recent erosion of its urban fabric.

Map C-1 illustrates the location and general geographic extent of the identified regional commercial centers and their ratings.

The following pages provide brief descriptions of each commercial center, its rating related to the quality of the pedestrian environment (**Poor**, **Fair**, **Good**, **Very Good**), and a 'birds eye' aerial photograph that is representative of the entire center. Known recent planning initiatives for each center are referenced as well.

The source for the birds eye view images is Bing Maps.

Regional Commercial Centers: North Sub-region

Freeport Village Center

*Rating: **Very Good***

Freeport Village has a good sidewalk network and well-marked crosswalks. It also has a high degree of pedestrian-oriented design with good quality streetscapes and higher quality urban design considerations such as buildings fronting streets and quality architecture.

Recent initiatives: Village Planning Committee Report (2003) which recommends new mixed use village commercial and high density residential zones.



South Freeport, Route 1

*Rating: **Poor***

South Freeport/Route 1 is a strip highway commercial zone that is highly automobile-oriented characterized by large building setbacks and lot frontages dominated by parking lots. It has little to no accommodation for pedestrians.

Recent initiatives: Vision Plan for Route One South.



Yarmouth, Route 1 North

*Rating: **Poor***

Yarmouth, Route 1 North of the village center is a strip highway commercial zone that is highly automobile-oriented characterized by intermittent pedestrian accommodations with large building setbacks and parking lots dominating the road frontage. The Beth Condon Pathway terminates at the southern end of this center.

Recent initiatives: Route 1 Phase I (2005) & II (2009) Studies have been completed to improve access management, improve traffic flow and safety using multiple roundabouts, and improve pedestrian access along Route 1, including the extension of the pathway. Phase III is funded for 2009. A plan for future extension of the Beth Condon Pathway to Freeport has also been completed.



Yarmouth Village Center

Rating: **Good (-)**

Yarmouth Village has good, continuous pedestrian facilities and generally good urban design characteristics. Recent strip-style commercial development in a portion of the village center negatively impacts the generally positive pedestrian environment.

Recent initiatives: Beginning the exploration of form-based codes for the village (2009).



Yarmouth, Route 1 South

Rating: **Poor (+)**

Yarmouth, Route 1 South, like the North, is a strip highway commercial zone that is highly automobile-oriented with large building setbacks and parking lots dominating road frontage. The Beth Condon Pathway provides a quality, continuous pedestrian and bicycle connection along Route 1 in this section.

Recent initiatives:



No. Falmouth/So. Cumberland, Route 1

Rating: **Poor**

The northern portion of Falmouth Route 1 and southern Route 1 in Cumberland is an evolving regional commercial center with primarily office and retail uses that is developing in a strip, highway commercial fashion.

Recent initiatives: Adoption of *Route 1 Design Guidelines* in Cumberland.



Falmouth Village Center, Route 1

Rating: Fair (+)

Falmouth, Route 1 is a much more visually attractive strip, highway commercial center than is typical. It has a much higher quality of pedestrian connections along portions of Route 1 and within parking lots. The overall orientation of the development within the center, though, still makes it highly automobile-oriented.

Recent initiatives: The town is currently reassessing redevelopment options at the Shaw's Plaza.



Cumberland Center

Rating: Good (-)

Cumberland Center is a small, primarily residential village center that is slowly adding commercial uses and has the opportunity to continue as a pedestrian oriented center. Some recent commercial uses have developed in an auto-oriented fashion.

Recent initiatives: Completion of a *Pedestrian Access Study* (2006).



West Cumberland, Route 26/100

Rating: **Poor (+)**

West Cumberland is evolving in a strip highway commercial/automobile oriented fashion that will include pedestrian facilities and landscaping along Route 26/100. Buildings have large setbacks oriented to parking lots.

Recent initiatives: Route 100 Design Guidelines seek to improve the visual quality of development and provide some level of pedestrian facilities.



West Falmouth, Route 26/100

Rating: **Poor (+)**

West Falmouth is a strip, highway commercial center located at Maine Turnpike Exit 53 at Route 100/26. The center has a large shopping center, major banking back office operations center as well as smaller medical and child care services. It is highly automobile access oriented.

Recent initiatives: Exit 10 Design Guidelines.



Regional Commercial Centers: West Sub-region

North Windham, Route 302

Rating: Poor (+)

North Windham is a large, sprawling highway commercial regional center along Route 302 at the gateway to the Lakes Region of Cumberland County. It has a number of large shopping centers and many single-story, single-use buildings abutting the roadway. The center is highly auto-access oriented. Portions of Route 302 have sidewalks along it.

Recent initiatives: No. Windham/Route 302 Traffic Study (underway, 2009).



Little Falls, Gorham / South Windham, Windham

Rating: Good (-)

Little Falls/South Windham is a small village center on the Presumpscot River between Sebago Lake and downtown Westbrook. The center abuts the Mountain Division rail line and rail-trail. Most buildings are oriented to the street. Some pedestrian facilities rate closer to Fair than Good.

Recent initiatives:



Moshers Corner, Gorham

Rating: **Poor**

Moshers Corner is a highway strip, automobile-oriented center along Route 25 between Gorham Village and downtown Westbrook at Route 237. There are little to no pedestrian facilities along Route 25. Buildings have large setbacks and are oriented to parking lots.

Recent initiatives:



Gorham Village, Gorham

Rating: **Good (-)**

Gorham Village is centered upon Routes 25 and 114. A good portion of the historic structures remain which help create a quality streetscape. Quality sidewalks along Route 25 have been built in conjunction with recent road improvements. Several contemporary automobile-oriented shopping center developments near the intersection with New Portland Road have degraded the village center's pedestrian quality and orientation.

Recent initiatives: The Route 112 bypass was completed in 2009 and has reduced automobile and truck traffic from the 25/114 intersection. Several Village Master Plans have been completed and portions implemented.



Regional Commercial Centers: Central Sub-region

Allen's Corner/Northgate, Portland

Rating: Fair (-)

Allen's Corner/Northgate is located around the intersections of Routes 26 and 100. It is highly auto-access oriented with strip commercial style development. Buildings have large setbacks and are oriented to parking lots. There are gaps in the sidewalk network along streets. Allen's Corner is a very large intersection that has audible pedestrian signals to assist the blind/visually impaired. Few recent buildings are oriented to the street; most others are not.

Recent initiatives:



Morrill's Corner, Portland

Rating: Fair (-)

Morrill's Corner, centered on Route 302, is one of the most heavily traveled crossroads in the state with multiple intersections in close proximity to each other. Several historic buildings remain that establish a strong relationship to the street but the vast majority of contemporary development has strongly degraded the pedestrian environment, having poor urban design characteristics. The streetscape quality is generally poor.

Recent initiatives: Striping and signing of on-road bike facilities through Morrill's Corner in the Fall 2009. This will connect the existing bike lanes on outer Forest Ave to the downtown. PACTS funding for a corridor redevelopment/transportation study along Forest Avenue has been secured for fiscal year 2010.



Woodfords Corner/Forest Avenue, Portland

Rating: **Good (-)**

Woodfords Corner is a busy crossroads on Route 302 midway between Morrill's Corner and the downtown. Smaller scale businesses are in buildings primarily oriented to street. Contemporary development has degraded the urban design quality of the center with single-story, single use design and building orientation to parking lots, not streets.

Recent initiatives: PACTS funding for a corridor redevelopment/ transportation study along Forest Avenue has been secured for fiscal year 2010.



Back Cove Shopping Plaza, Portland

Rating: **Fair (-)**

Back Cove center is dominated by a large suburban style shopping center bounded by the Preble Street Extension, Baxter Boulevard, I-295 and Forest Avenue. Sidewalks are provided along street frontages. Buildings are oriented to parking lots. The proximity to USM and the Back Cove Trail provides an opportunity for more pedestrian activity.

Recent initiatives: PACTS funding for a corridor redevelopment/ transportation study along Forest Avenue has been secured for fiscal year 2010.



Bayside, Portland

Rating: Fair (+)

Bayside is a redeveloping, up and coming mixed use area on the Portland peninsula bounded by the Franklin Arterial, Forest Avenue and Cumberland Avenue. The commercial portion of Bayside is centered on Marginal Way. The most recent infill buildings are multiple stories, oriented to the street, and create a very high quality streetscape. Numerous sidewalk gaps remain and street crossings are difficult in many areas.

Recent initiatives: *A New Vision for Bayside (2000)* and subsequent implementation call for Bayside to emerge as a Transit Oriented

Development area. Forest Avenue and the Franklin Arterial are undergoing roadway redesign and redevelopment planning. The Bayside Trail (Phase 1 under construction in 2009) will provide a high quality pedestrian and bicycle connection through the redevelopment area linking Deering Oaks Park with the Eastern Promenade Trail.



Downtown Portland, Portland, Maine

Rating: Very Good

Downtown Portland is Maine's largest urban downtown center. Overall, it is characterized by its highly developed sidewalk network and streetscapes, pedestrian-scaled development, and buildings predominantly oriented to streets. Some items detract from the quality of the pedestrian environment and include: numerous large surface parking lots devoid of landscaping along their street frontage that also create large gaps

in the building 'street wall'; several arterial roadways that have poor pedestrian design and orientation; and, spot locations with poor ADA accessibility. New pedestrian wayfinding signage has been recently installed (2009).

Recent initiatives: Peninsula Transit Study (2008), Franklin Street Arterial Redesign Study (2009), Eastern Waterfront Design Guidelines (2002), Portland Peninsula ADA Access Gaps (2008) and Wayfinding System Study (2008).



Libbytown, Portland

Rating: **Fair**

Libbytown is a neighborhood on the western edge of the Portland peninsula centered on Congress Streets and Park Avenue, including St. John Street/Union Station Plaza area, the Portland Sports Complex to Deering Oaks Park and extending to Sewall Street. It includes the Portland Transportation Center where the *Downeaster* Amtrak service and Concord Trailways bus service share an auto-access oriented facility. The Greyhound bus station is located at St. John Street and Congress Street. Roadway expansions and neglect of the streetscape over recent decades have resulted in a generally fair to poor pedestrian environment.



Recent initiatives: Connecting Libbytown: Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements for a Dynamic Neighborhood (2009) prescribes a short and long term strategy for pedestrian and bicycle improvements to re-knit together much of this currently fragmented neighborhood and commercial center.

Westgate, Portland

Rating: **Fair**

Westgate is a neighborhood commercial center along Congress Street at Stevens Avenue. The Westgate Shopping Center, a strip commercial shopping plaza set back far from the street, dominates the area. Residential structures converted to commercial uses on the north side maintain the future opportunity for a quality streetscape. Additional 'Pad' buildings within the shopping center along Congress could re-create a stronger street edge on the south side.



Recent initiatives: Outer Congress Street Traffic Study (2007).

Route 25 'Gateway'/'Pine Tree Shopping Center, Portland and Westbrook

Rating: Poor (+)

This large, sprawling regional commercial center is oriented around Route 25, Riverside Street and Larrabee Road in Portland and Westbrook. It contains several large suburban-style shopping centers and many single-story, single-use commercial buildings. Most all the buildings are oriented to parking lots and have large setbacks from the public street. Most streets have sidewalks on at least one side of the road, but streetscape quality is fair to poor and street crossings are difficult. Some recent buildings have begun to infill parking lots to establish better streetscape conditions.

Recent initiatives: The *Brighton Avenue Corridor Study* (late 1990s) sought to improve streetscape quality in conjunction with traffic improvements.



Spring/Cummings Road & County Road/Route 22, Westbrook

Rating: Poor

This commercial center contains an office/industrial park and numerous strip-highway style developments. Recent development, including a large cinema complex and roadway changes, have greatly increased the area's automobile orientation.

Recent initiatives:



Cape Elizabeth Town Center, Cape Elizabeth

Rating: Fair (+)

Cape Elizabeth Town Center is a small commercial center with a good mix of civic, commercial and residential uses in close proximity. Until recently, contemporary development, including a strip shopping center, had eroded the pedestrian environment over time. The most recent development, as well as investment in pedestrian infrastructure including crosswalks and pedestrian signals, has begun to knit the town center together.

Recent initiatives: Town Center Pedestrian Safety Working Group (2009), Town Center Signalization Project (2008).



Knightsville, South Portland

Rating: **Good**

Knightsville is a small scale commercial center well integrated with a tightly knit residential neighborhood at the end of the peninsula extending into Portland Harbor. Until recently, development, while oriented to the street, was often single-story uses of lower architectural quality. Recent zoning changes to promote mixed use development allowed increased density, introduced minimum height requirements (24') and require higher quality design to enhance the pedestrian orientation and vitality of the area.

Recent initiatives: Relocation of Casco Bay Bridge (1990s), Knightsville Design District (1997, updated in 2001), Village Commercial Zone established (2004), Knightsville Millcreek Neighborhood Master Plan (2005).



Millcreek, South Portland

Rating: **Fair**

Millcreek is a suburban style commercial district within an urban area next to Knightsville and is bounded by the Casco Bay Bridge and Broadway. It is dominated by the Millcreek Shopping Center and surrounded by a large number of single-story, single-use buildings with large setbacks that are oriented to parking lots. The South Portland Greenbelt runs along Millcreek's edge by Broadway.

Recent initiatives: Relocation of Casco Bay Bridge (1990s), Knightsville Millcreek Neighborhood Master Plan (2005).



Maine Mall Area, South Portland

*Rating: **Poor (+)***

The Maine Mall area is one of the largest regional shopping areas in Northern New England. It is anchored by the Maine Mall but has numerous large strip shopping centers, big box retailers, and small to mid-size single-story, single-use buildings, as well as several large non-retail employers such as Fairchild Semiconductor, National Semiconductor and the Portland Newspapers. Most arterials have sidewalks along them but there are many gaps and street crossings are difficult in many locations. While some infill buildings have been built, most all buildings have large setbacks and are oriented to parking lots and driveways, not public streets. A trails group has planned an extensive trail network within the area to link this major retail and employment center to Portland and other portions of South Portland.



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Recent initiatives: Maine Mall Area Pedestrian Master Plan (2001), West End Trails Committee Trails Master Plan (2008).

Main Street/Route 1, South Portland

*Rating: **Fair***

Main Street in South Portland has eroded into a strip highway commercial district with an automobile orientation. Sidewalks are provided along the roadway but the streetscape and visual quality are low. Moderate density neighborhoods abut the commercial center creating opportunity to rejuvenate the area.



Recent initiatives:

Regional Commercial Centers: South Sub-region

Payne Road, Scarborough

Rating: Poor

The Payne Road area is an extension of the Maine Mall area to the south. It has multiple large strip shopping centers and big box retail stores. It is highly automobile oriented with buildings set back from the street and oriented to large parking lots along the street. Sidewalks are present along short sections of roadway but many gaps remain and street crossings are difficult with little or no pedestrian signals at intersections. Pedestrian access from streets to businesses is generally poor.



Recent initiatives: Design Standards for Scarborough's Commercial Districts (2009).

Haigis Parkway, Scarborough

Rating: Fair

Haigis Parkway is an emerging, planned low density commercial center with direct access to the Maine Turnpike. It is just beginning to build out with the first developments recently being completed. It is planned as an automobile-access oriented commercial center. Sidewalks and street crossings are being built along shopping center access roads.



Recent initiatives: Report of the Haigis Parkway Committee (2001), Design Standards for Scarborough's Commercial Districts (2009).

Dunstan Corner, Scarborough

Rating: Good (-)

Dunstan Corner is a small village center along the southerly portion of Route 1 near the Saco city line. The village has a small commercial center with abutting residential areas. The commercial center, which lines Route 1, has been eroded over time by strip style automobile oriented development. A recent project improved sidewalks and street crossings along much of Route 1 south of Pine Point



Road/Broadturn Road. North of Pine Point Road it remains Fair for pedestrians. The Dunstan Crossing mixed use project includes a compact mix of houses with a small retail/commercial center integrated with the development.

Recent initiatives: Dunstan Corner Sidewalk Improvements, Dunstan Crossing Neighborhood, Route 1/Payne Road Road Intersection Design, Comprehensive Plan Update (2006), Design Standards for Scarborough's Commercial Districts (2009).

Oak Hill, Scarborough

Rating: Poor (+)

The Oak Hill area is one of Scarborough's largest commercial centers, focused on smaller and mid-size businesses. It is also home to its civic/municipal center as well. It encompasses the Route 1-Route 114/Route 209 intersection and surrounding area. It is comprised of several strip shopping centers and a large number of single-story, single-use buildings with large setbacks and buildings oriented to parking lots. Many street segments lack sidewalks and many street crossings are difficult for pedestrians. Recent changes to design standards require new buildings to be more oriented to the street and development of a more pedestrian scale streetscape. An area located north of Oak Hill has large-scale, automobile-oriented office, research and institutional uses.



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Recent initiatives: Comprehensive Plan Update (2006), Design Standards for Scarborough's Commercial Districts (2009).

Downtown Old Orchard, Old Orchard Beach

Rating: Good (-)

Downtown Old Orchard Beach is traditional Maine summer beach destination that is reinventing itself as a year-round commercial and residential center. Most businesses and buildings are small to mid-size in scale and oriented to the street. Off-street parking lots have eroded the streetscape by creating expanses of parking between buildings and streets and numerous buildings have been replaced by surface parking lots.



Recent initiatives:

Halfway, Old Orchard Beach

Rating: Fair

The Half Way commercial center is a small gateway to the beach areas of Saco and Old Orchard Beach, located at the junction of Route 5/Ocean Park Road/Saco Avenue-Old Orchard Road-Temple Avenue. It is comprised of small retail businesses and lodging. While there are sidewalks located along major streets, the streetscape has been degraded by large curb cuts.



Recent initiatives: Halfway Roundabout Conceptual Design (2008).

Funtown/Route 1, Saco

*Rating: **Poor***

The Funtown/Route 1 commercial center is a highly automobile oriented strip commercial area. It has two large recreational sites (Funtown & Splashtown) that are large summer seasonal destinations. Automobile dealerships also dominate the area. Existing sidewalks are very limited but new sidewalks are planned north of this center as part of new residential development near the Scarborough town line.



Recent initiatives:

Route 1, Saco

*Rating: **Fair***

Route 1, just north of the downtown in Saco, is a highway strip commercial center. Most development is single-story, single use buildings set back from the street with parking or driving lanes between buildings and the street. Sidewalks and street crossings are located along Route 1. Access from Route 1 to building entrances is generally poor.



Recent initiatives: Route 1 Access Management Study.

Downtown Saco, Saco

*Rating: **Very Good***

Downtown Saco, centered on Main Street, has a very high quality, attractive streetscape as well as high quality urban design characteristics. Sidewalks are generous in width and street crossings are well marked. Buildings are typically multi-story, multi-use and are sited at the back of the sidewalk creating a well-defined streetscape. Parking is located on-street and to the side and rear of buildings. A good mix of residential uses is located in close proximity to the downtown.



Recent initiatives: Downtown Sidewalk Improvements (2009).

Downtown Biddeford, Biddeford

Rating: Good

Downtown Biddeford is an historic downtown that has good streetscape and urban design characteristics. Sidewalks are functional but in need of rehabilitation. Street crossings are well-spaced. Buildings are located well at the back of sidewalks but building facades have been degraded with contemporary retrofits over the last 30 years (a municipal program is available to restore these facades).

Recent initiatives: Mill District Master Plan (2008), Heart of Biddeford Main Street Program/Heart and Soul Project (On-going).



Five Corners, Biddeford

Rating: Fair

The Five Corners commercial center is located at the intersection of Routes 1 and 111. It has many single-story, single-use buildings primarily oriented to automobile access and parking lots. Sidewalks and street crossings along the arterials provide good connectivity.

Recent initiatives: Recent road and sidewalk project.



Biddeford Crossing/Route 111, Biddeford

Rating: Poor

Biddeford Crossing/Route 111 is a highly automobile oriented highway strip commercial area comprised of several large big box retail developments as well as smaller strip malls and single-story, single-use buildings stretching along Route 111 north and south of the Maine Turnpike Interchange. Pedestrian facilities along and across Route 111 are poor. Recent big box developments do provide for fair internal site pedestrian circulation.

Recent initiatives: The new Turnpike bridge did not include pedestrian facilities to access Biddeford Crossing.

