

Report of the Task Force to Enhance Bangor's Future Architectural Character
Executive Summary
May 17, 2006

Task Force Mission: The Task Force was appointed by Mayor John Cashwell to develop architectural standards for downtown development on City-owned real estate located:

- in the waterfront area of downtown,
- within the downtown core area,
- within the Main Street downtown corridor,
- within Bass Park.

The standards will lead to the construction of buildings that are architecturally appropriate to their surroundings, by helping potential developers understand the community values which their designs must satisfy to be acceptable to the City. These standards also provide guidelines for developers renovating or constructing buildings on privately-owned land within the area described above. The standards apply to developers of large downtown projects, individual property owners wanting to build or renovate a downtown property, and all public sector institutions that are major downtown landowners.

Task Force Process: The eight member task force was chaired by Michael Crowley. Three city staffers assisted the task force.

The first two meetings provided members with background information and were observed by several councilors. Staff and several task force members also shared what they identified as "best practices" from their research of design guidelines used by other communities in Maine and throughout the U.S.

Task force members agreed that they would identify community values relevant to downtown development, and create design standards based on that set of values.

Core Values Relevant to Downtown Development:

- *Sense of History:* History is of the past and in the making. Downtown is culturally enriched by providing a sense of continuity throughout the past, the present and plans for the future.
- *Unique Character:* Downtown's character will not be diminished. Access and views to water, significant vistas, and ,in some cases, existing structures will be preserved.
- *Authenticity:* Bangor prefers to have a downtown whose buildings and public infrastructure clearly reference the time in which they were built and the activities and needs of people using them, to a place that relies on replication of the past or of buildings whose authenticity is based elsewhere.
- *Safety:* Every streetscape, open space, and building design should incorporate elements that create a safe environment. Designs should take into account four distinct seasons in which safety factors change.
- *Diversity:* Downtown should support and foster diverse uses by a diverse population. Diversity supports continued economic growth.

•*Humane Character*: Downtown Bangor is a place where design, density, complex function, and high-activity issues are addressed with full regard for human use, comfort and enjoyment.

•*Density*: Downtown land is a scarce commodity. Density facilitates commercial and social interaction, promotes vitality and diversity, and encourages a focused view in design.

•*Sustainability*: Downtown is a permanent place whose buildings should be constructed to exist and function for many generations. Downtown requires affordable commercial spaces. Buildings should share open space and resources, and should support alternative transportation modes that include walking, biking, and public transportation.

•*Economic Vitality*: Private projects should enhance downtown's economic vitality and must demonstrate sustained profitability. Buildings and public spaces that demonstrate design excellence can go farther and become "destinations" that draw people and greater economic activity to downtown.

•*Civic Art*: Civic art, including visual art and space created for public performances, helps the community both attain and keep its identity. It stimulates the economy and improves the community's quality of life.

Design Standards Supporting Core Values:

The full document notes the values supported by each standard, and provides guidelines to clarify the meaning and scope of each standard.

- Build to the Sidewalk
- Provide Multi-Tenant, Pedestrian-Oriented Development at the Street Level
- Accentuate Primary Entrances
- Encourage the Inclusion of Local Character
- Control On-Site Parking
- Utilize Quality Construction Methods and Materials
- Design Buildings with Human Scale
- Intensity of Site Use
- Integration with Overall Development Plan
- Appropriate Lighting & Signage

Task Force Conclusions: The Design Standards provide appropriate constraints to prevent the erosion of the community's core values. They are general enough to allow and encourage creativity and appropriate outcomes that have yet to be imagined.