

Downtown Committee Discusses Green Spaces, Traffic Plan, & More for The Downs

By Jon Anderson, Town Council Representative on Downtown Committee

The Downtown Development Committee, first formed in January with a focus on creating a vision for The Downs and a more established downtown district in Scarborough, held its first in-person, on-site workshop on June 22. They met with Crossroads Holdings, General Contractor team for The Downs, in the Grandstand at Scarborough Downs. Crossroads Holdings presented a conceptual layout of the downtown area based on the committee's weeks of work, research, and visioning sessions.

Crossroads Holdings hired Goody Clancy, an architecture, planning, and preservation firm serving educational, governmental, and private sector clients and communities nationwide, to take the committee's work to date and propose an initial layout of the downtown area. Some notable recommendations included placing a grocery store that will not only serve the local community, but will also be an anchor to attract other businesses. Space is still being planned for a large sports complex and fields, with a similar intention of serving as an anchor for the space to attract residents and those in the region to visit the downtown area.

In addition to the anchor spaces, recommendations were made to have a one-acre area of open green space to serve as gathering space for the community and host programming year-round. Future visions for this space are for it to support rotating outdoor events, such as farmers markets. With smart and intentional design, the roads surrounding the area could be closed off without impacting traffic flow to expand the gathering space for bigger events. It would essentially be the heart of the downtown area that would connect shops and housing on all sides of the green space and be a spot for community gathering. Lastly, Goody Clancy made recommendations for the Grandstand. They suggested keeping the structure, with alterations such as removing parts of the building and adding an extended roof that could provide indoor/outdoor space that could be leveraged facing the green space.

The Committee was supportive of the recommendations from Goody Clancy, and plan to continue working with Crossroads Holdings to identify what partnership is required with the Town in order to bring these recommendations to life. This could come in the form of financial partnership or recommended amendments to our ordinances in order to enable the design and ensure that the downtown area truly becomes a vibrant and successful community space. I look forward to working with the rest of the Town Council to carefully evaluate these recommendations as they come forward.

The Downtown Committee is also charged with offering financial and policy recommendations to better connect the greater downtown district with the downtown area, which includes the Municipal Campus, Oak Hill and Haigis Parkway. In addition to envisioning the design of downtown uses, there will need to be significant improvements to roads, trails and infrastructure in the surrounding area to support the anticipated growth and make it easy to get to and enjoy the downtown area. This has been a current topic being discussed within the Town Council.

The Crossroads Holdings team recently held a workshop with the Town Council based on a Maine Department of Transportation Traffic Movement Permit (TMP) that has been in development over the past two years in collaboration with the developer, Town, and MDOT. It includes a wide range of transportation improvements that address the traffic, pedestrian and transit impacts and needs of the

development project, as well as a number of longstanding transportation deficiencies that have been identified by the Town through their traffic impact fee ordinances.

Crossroads Holdings is looking to the Town to provide financial partnership using traffic impact fee reserves that have been collected to help fund some of these projects, many of which have been identified by the town as critical investments that could not be done financially without a collaboration between the town, state, and the developers. The town's traffic impact reserve funds have been collected from payments by prior developments and do not include any municipal tax dollars.

In order to create a downtown that is easy to get to that doesn't put an additional strain on traffic, the projects proposed as part of the TMP workshop may be critical to enable a connected and vibrant downtown with the rest of the community where everyone can gather. I look forward to getting the Downtown Committee's assessment on the TMP proposal and on the criticality of this work to enable the downtown concept brought forward by Goody Clancy.

Public input is welcome and encouraged. If you would like to share your thoughts on the work as it advances, please attend a committee meeting, scheduled for every other Tuesday at 6:30pm, or email downtowncommittee@scarboroughmaine.org. Please also feel free to email myself or Councilor Cloutier (council representatives on the committee) to share your feedback and we will provide it to the committee for consideration (janderson@scarboroughmaine.org / jcloutier@scarboroughmaine.org).

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Scarborough Town Council.