Maine Mall

Transit-Oriented Development Concept Plan

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Aerial image of the Maine Mall courtesy of GPCOG.

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Introduction

Transit-oriented development, commonly known as TOD, is a type of development that includes a mix of residential, retail, office, open space, and public uses in a compact, walkable neighborhood centered around high-quality public transit.

When employed effectively, TOD can increase transit ridership, reduce reliance on personal vehicles, and promote sustainable urban growth by maximizing the use of space and reducing sprawl. Key to the success of TODs is a central transit stop surrounded by a compact mixed-use area.

The Maine Mall has been identified by the City of South Portland, and the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS), as a site for incorporating TOD techniques. While the Maine Mall is a highly successful regional shopping center, it does not currently support housing or other uses beyond retail and food. The extensive parking lots, often at less than capacity, also create long walking distances and contribute to an auto-dependent atmosphere.

TOD principles, when employed at the Maine Mall, could bring many benefits to the immediate area, the City, and the Greater Portland region, chief among them including:

- **A LARGER SUPPLY OF ADDITIONAL HOUSING OPTIONS** to help the City meet its residential housing demand and affordable housing goals.
- **MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO LIVE AND WORK IN CLOSE PROXIMITY**. With many jobs in the immediate area, it would be possible for many residents to live and work within walking distance or use public transit. (Particularly beneficial for low-income residents who may not have reliable access to a vehicle).
- **ECONOMIC RETURNS** to property owners and local businesses. Additional housing and mixed uses, such as office, recreation, and entertainment, will bring more people to the area at different times, for different purposes, thereby boosting business.
- **AN ATTRACTIVE AND VIBRANT PLACE** that is safe, walkable, and interesting. This could serve as a transferable model for additional place-based improvements in other developed areas nearby.
- **AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PLACE** that reduces reliance on vehicle travel, decreases runoff into the watershed, and preserves rural/agricultural lands by targeting growth in a focused area.
- **INCREASED TRANSIT RIDERSHIP**. The above benefits help to increase transit ridership and revenue as well as encourage people to drive their cars less.

BUS TRANSIT AT THE MAINE MALL
The Mall is one of the region's most popular transit destinations and is currently served by three fixed-route bus providers: the South Portland Bus Service (SPBS), METRO, and Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach (BSOOB) Transit. Between these providers, five individual bus routes make stops at the Mall. From these routes, riders can access the Mall from a wide range of places throughout the region. The primary bus stop at the Mall is in front of the north entrance of the JC Penney building.

This plan presents a vision for what the Maine Mall could look like in 10-20 years if redevelopment is guided by TOD principles. This effort is not meant to be a prescriptive development plan, but rather a conversation starter. An attempt to reimagine the area and show what is possible. Some ideas may gain traction, and become reality, while others may fall by the wayside.

If history is any guide, the Maine Mall will continue to evolve and change. It is the intent of this plan to guide these changes in a manner that improves the area's overall quality of place and builds upon its success as a prosperous regional center.

Background

Unlike other areas in Maine, Geater Portland continues to gain population and the City of South Portland is one of its fastest growing communities. Where this growth occurs — in the region and in South Portland — has major implications for our quality of life and the environment.

In the last several decades, much of our region's growth has occurred in suburban and rural areas, away from job centers and services. This sprawling development pattern, which is difficult to serve by public transit, has contributed to a reliance on vehicle travel, worsening congestion, longer commutes, increased air/water pollution, the degradation of rural landscapes, and the weakening of town/city centers.

To counteract this trend and encourage growth in more appropriate areas — where jobs, housing, and services are in close proximity — the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS) has identified over 50 "Priority Centers" in Greater Portland that provide the most promising opportunities for future population and job growth. The Maine Mall is one of six Priority Centers identified in South Portland.

In 2018, PACTS issued a "call for nominations" for pilot sites to develop transit-oriented development concept plans. The City of South Portland submitted a proposal for the Maine Mall, which was ultimately selected by PACTS.

For many reasons there is strong potential for transit-oriented development at the Maine Mall. First and foremost, while the Mall is one of the region's largest, and most thriving, commercial and employment centers, it is not yet a livable center. There is no housing at the Mall, or other elements that make up a neighborhood. However, the Mall's extensive parking lots, which are often at less than capacity, are prime locations for infill development. A diverse array of uses, such as office, medical, and educational facilities, could complement parks, open spaces, and housing to create an attractive and livable center.

The purpose of this concept plan is to create a shared vision for the future of the Maine Mall that identifies opportunities for compact, mixed-use development that supports and encourages transit use.

In recent years, the City has begun to expand residential uses in the area in keeping with the Comprehensive Plan's policy to transition the district to mixed-use. To date, this has occurred around the periphery of the Mall, in Redbank/ Brick Hill, Clark's Pond, and Sable Oaks. It makes sense to encourage housing and other uses onto the Mall property and adjoining lots.

In addition to opportunities for infill development, the Mall is a natural focal point for transit. The Mall is served by five bus routes from three transit providers — South Portland Bus Service, Greater Portland METRO, and Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit. With a transfer or two, residents can take public transit to get to or from the Mall from almost any urban area of the region.

The Mall has also been identified by the City as a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District Transit Hub. This TIF District returns 25% of new tax dollars from 15 properties across the City to a TOD TIF fund. The fund can be used for operating and capital costs associated with transit or improvements to sidewalks and other facilities that provide access to transit.

Lastly, recent planned large-scale developments, such as Scarborough Downs and Rock Row in Westbrook, show the feasibility and market demand for compact, mixed-use centers in southern Maine. Building walkable, transit-rich centers can reduce sprawl, create a unique sense of community, and limit the overall impact of development on the environment.

Purpose

The purpose of this concept plan is to create a shared vision for the future of the Maine Mall that identifies opportunities for compact, mixed-use development that supports and encourages transit use.

Planning Process

This TOD concept plan was primarily informed by a project stakeholder team consisting of representatives from the City of South Portland, the Maine Mall, the Long Creek Watershed Management District, MaineDOT, and PACTS.

After kicking off the project in November 2018, the project stakeholder team met regularly over the course of a year. The team provided local input on issues and opportunities, and weighed in on draft versions of the plan.

In addition to the stakeholder team meetings, PACTS staff met individually with other key stakeholders, including all three bus transit providers (South Portland Bus Service, METRO, and BSOOB Transit), the South Portland West End Trails Committee, the Maine Turnpike Authority, and Portland Trails.

MAINE MALL STUDY AREA

The focus for this concept plan is the area enclosed by Maine Mall Rd., Gorham Rd., and Philbrook Ave. The site is approximately 90 acres, with roughly 63 acres devoted to internal streets and surface parking, 24 acres to buildings, and 3 acres to forest or landscaping.

JORDAN MARSH STORE TAKING SHAPE — The 200 000-square-foot Jordan Marsh Co. building in the Maine Mall Shopping Center near the South Portland interchange on the Maine Turnpike is proceeding well toward its scheduled Aug. 1 opening. There will be two floors of retail space with a restaurant on the second floor. The structure atop the second floor is for mechanical equipment. Expected at a press conference Monday is the reported signing of Sears, Roebuck and Co. as the second major store in the center. (By Staff Photographer Roberts)

Maine Sunday Telegram, 16 March 1969

HISTORICAL PHOTOS OF THE MAINE MALL

Above: A picture of the original Jordan Marsh store "taking shape" featured in the Maine Sunday Telegram in 1969.
Below: A picture of the Maine Mall entrance and parking lot circa 1980. Courtesy of the South Portland Historical Society.

History of the Maine Mall

The site of the Maine Mall has always been an important part of the local economy, but over the past 50 years this former farmland has gone through a dramatic transformation to become the largest complex of retail, commercial, and office venues north of the greater Boston area.

Early History

The development of the area was influenced by public policy as much as it was by the landscape itself. A mill builder named Samuel Webber was granted the rights to use Long Creek for waterpower in 1685. By the late eighteenth century, the neighborhood surrounding this mill came to be known as "Crockett's Corner," named for a particularly well-known family in the area.

South Portland did not become its own city until 1895 when it broke away from Cape Elizabeth. As late as 1920 it did not have its own bank or library. Ship building became the City's backbone industry during World War II, but the economy had slowed by the time Bernal Allen became City Manager in 1957. Allen made it his mission to reverse this trend, and the City began growing again by the early 1960s. Between 1960 and 1965 more than 1,500 new jobs had been created in South Portland.

Before the land that is now home to the Maine Mall was purchased by the City, it was home to a pig farm owned by the Dwyer family. The City already owned a 40-acre parcel of land adjacent to the Dwyer pig farm, and Allen knew the planned I-295 spur would link with I-95 just south of the

farm. Allen was able to persuade the City to spend $10,000 for the 132-acre lot to be used for future commercial development.

Development of the Maine Mall

The first store of what would eventually become the Maine Mall was Jordan Marsh (now Macy's), which opened in August 1968. It did not take long for the area to take off as a shopping center and by the 1970s 20 additional stores opened their doors to shoppers.

AERIAL IMAGES OF THE MAINE MALL
Comparison aerial images of the Maine Mall in 1969 and 2015. Images courtesy of the Portland Press Herald.

By 1972, the total taxable sales per month were roughly $7.5 million, the Mall had 2,000 employees, and a $10 million annual payroll. In 1973, 45 out of 50 storefronts were occupied and it was declared "one of the most successful retail ventures in Maine" in a local paper. The land surrounding the Mall began to be developed in late 1973, including a Sheraton Tara Hotel (where Elvis later stayed in 1977).

In 1979, a 400,000 square foot expansion was announced, which included additional large anchor department stores. The expansion was not approved by the MaineDEP or the South Portland Planning Board until 1983, when they were able to ceremoniously break the ground on the site of the expansion.

Origins of Mall Design

Victor Gruen, who the City of Portland hired to design the Franklin Arterial, conceived and popularized the idea of the modern mall. Nearly every regional shopping center in the United States is based off Gruen's model. While he did not design the Maine Mall, it was certainly built with his design principles in mind — mainly, a cluster of stores protected from the elements all under one roof. Blank exterior walls contrasted the indoors of his shopping centers, which consisted of corridors filled with vibrant plants and atriums letting in natural light. Placing everything under one roof in this way allowed retailers and developers total control over the shopping environment.

Gruen believed that one's quality of life was strongly correlated to the quality of their environment. He was a critic of suburban post-war America, horrified by the sprawl of miscellaneous commercial venues and billboards that could go on for miles. He sought to fix this through an improvement in design and planning. His plans often included large housing developments within walking distance of his malls, as well as schools, medical centers, parks, and other amenities. These grand plans, however, were rarely fully realized. Instead, many malls slowly morphed into a mixture of big box stores and large swaths of parking lots.

While malls were innovative at the time of their creation, changes in consumer preferences, and the brick-and-mortar industry itself, have led many mall owners across the country to redesign their exterior spaces and parking lots to allow more uses that come closer to resembling Gruen's original vision of the malls surrounded by neighborhoods or urban villages.

Trends in Mall Redevelopment

Over the last half century, malls have sprung up in every large metropolitan area in every state of the country. Today there are roughly 1,200 shopping malls in America. Regardless of their location, malls share a host of commonalities that have led to their widespread success: most malls are enclosed, anchored by iconic department stores, and feature plentiful parking; they are sited at the most accessible and visible locations along major highways; they typically offer the largest concentration of brand-name stores in the area; and they provide a controlled shopping environment that is clean, safe, and predictable. Despite the mall's ubiquity on the landscape, and in American culture, the conditions that led to the creation of the mall are changing rapidly.

In the last decade, the rise of online shopping, and the impact of the Great Recession, have led to a drop in sales and foot traffic at many malls. Some analysts now predict that 25% of malls are in danger of going out of business by 2022[1]. Shopping preferences have also changed. Customers are now seeking authenticity, and a deeper sense of connection to their community. Among many shoppers there is an emerging preference for outdoor, streetfront shopping that is better integrated with other daily activities.

Unfortunately, few of today's malls provide such environments. As a result, developers have largely shifted from building new malls to redeveloping existing malls. The trend is clear; the era of the traditional mall is becoming dated.

SOLAR POWER AT THE MAINE MALL
Brookfield Properties recently installed a 2,340-panel solar array on the roof of the Maine Mall to save on energy costs and reduce the Mall's environmental impact.

Mall Design & Redevelopment Trends

Not all malls are failing, of course, and the ones that are thriving tend to share certain characteristics. To adapt to changing consumer preferences, mall owners are employing many of the following design principles, such as:

- **CREATING A UNIQUE AND AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE:** Malls are incorporating local vendors, unique exhibits, local art shows, farmers markets, food trucks, outdoor concerts and other events to reflect an authentic, neighborhood feel.
- **FOCUSING ON WALKABILITY AND TRANSIT:** To help create the human-scale environment shoppers prefer, mall owners are breaking up large parcels and redesigning roads for better interconnectivity; they are extending local sidewalk and trail networks through the site, and enhancing connections to public transit so people do not have to drive.
- **GOING BEYOND TRADITIONAL RETAIL:** To increase their draw, malls are now complementing traditional retail with entertainment opportunities, such as movie theaters, restaurants, breweries, and bowling alleys. In fact, one of the Maine Mall's main anchors, Round 1, is a "bowling and amusement" company. Other examples include live theater and comedy clubs, indoor ropes courses, go-kart tracks, and trampoline parks.
- **CREATING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY**: Malls are increasingly becoming integrated with other community anchors, such as cultural facilities, civic buildings, municipal parks, and office and residential development. These "lifestyle centers" are evolving into neighborhoods where people can live, work, and shop in close proximity.
- **PROVIDING INDOOR/OUTDOOR SPACES:** Responding to a preference by some for outdoor shopping, malls are creating open-air markets that provide interesting outdoor spaces for vendors and shoppers to interact.
- **BECOMING MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE:** To reduce their environmental impact, malls are installing solar panels, rooftop gardens, green roofs, rainwater harvesting systems, pervious pavement, and other types of green infrastructure. Recently the Maine Mall installed a large solar array on the roof of the building, and has worked with the Long Creek Watershed Management District on several projects to reduce stormwater runoff.

While market forces and supply and demand may dictate the types of changes the Mall can support, there is a tremendous opportunity to think big, and evolve away from traditional mall uses. Shifting demographics and changing consumer tastes are transforming the retail market, and, like other malls, the Maine Mall will continue to adapt over time.

1. According to the widely cited 2017 Credit Suisse "Apparel Retail & Brands" report.

MALL REDEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY
NORTHLAND NEWTON DEVELOPMENT, NEWTON, MA

The Northland Newton Development Project in Newton, MA, will replace an existing strip mall with mixed-use commercial and retail space and over 800 housing units. This high density new construction will surround a large green space in the former parking lot. Parking will be built to support the first phase of the project, but developers are taking a wait-and-see approach to additional parking. (As increasing numbers of self-parking and shared autonomous vehicles appear on the roads there may be less need for parking in the future). The developers also plan to narrow the site's streets to be able to add protected bike lanes and wider sidewalks. The City is hopeful the improved planning and design of this space will create a brighter economic future for Newton and provide residents with a more walkable and livable place to call home.

MALL REDEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY
NORTH POINT MALL, ALPHARETTA, GA

The North Point Mall in Alpharetta, GA, is also owned by Brookfield Properties (the current owner of the Maine Mall). In early 2019, the City Council of Alpharetta, a suburb of Atlanta, approved a 24,000 square foot mixed-use redevelopment plan for the site. Previously the site of Sears, the redevelopment will include over 300 new apartments, a bike friendly system similar to Atlanta's Beltline, a fountain inspired by Centennial Olympic Park, and added greenspace. The North Point Mall is a prime example of a retail center moving away from sprawling parking lots in favor of walkable areas that can offer a unique "live, work, and play" experience.

Key TOD Concepts

Transit-oriented development is a type of development that maximizes the amount of residential, business, and leisure space within walking distance of a public transit hub. The goal is to promote sustainable growth by increasing walkability and usage of public transit, while reducing dependence on private vehicles.

The ideal scenario is that residents can walk to stores, restaurants, and cultural amenities within the neighborhood and use public transit for longer trips. This is good for the environment because it reduces dependency on private vehicles and fossil fuels, and especially beneficial for young workers, older adults, and low-income residents who may not have reliable transportation or choose not to own a car.

The primary elements that contribute to successful TODs are widely recognized in urban planning as the "5 Ds." Described below, these are: Density, Diversity (Mix of Land Uses), Distance (to Transit), Demand Management (Parking), and Design. The successful application of these principles can go a long way towards addressing current challenges associated with suburban sprawl and auto-oriented development.

Density

Density is the measure of the intensity of the use of land and is typically measured in people, households, or jobs per acre. Increasing residential and employment density near transit is the most effective way to reduce levels of automobile dependence and increase transit ridership. Higher densities support greater levels of transit service, as there are more potential riders in the same amount of space.

"The alternative to sprawl is simple and timely: neighborhoods of housing, parks, and schools placed within walking distance of shops, civic services, jobs, and transit — a modern version of the traditional town. The convenience of the car and the opportunity to walk or use transit can be blended in an environment with local access for all the daily needs of a diverse community. It is a strategy which could preserve open space, support transit, reduce auto traffic, and create affordable neighborhoods."

- Peter Calthorpe
The Next American Metropolis

Diversity (Mix of Land Uses)

The availability of a wide range of amenities and activities within a given area is one of the main aspects that underpin successful TODs. Mixed land use means having a complementary and context-appropriate combination of shops, services, housing types, offices, and employment opportunities within the same area that allow people to meet most of their daily needs nearby. Locating a mix of land uses and housing near transit facilities fosters increased transit ridership and supports walking and biking.

Distance to Transit

Proximity of origins and destinations to transit is also associated with increased transit use. While every individual has different walking speeds and distances they may feel comfortable walking, the generally held principle is that the average person is willing to walk five minutes to use transit. At an average walking speed this equates to roughly 1/4 to 1/2 mile distance. Beyond 1/2 mile, it can be reasonably expected that most people would elect to use a vehicle rather than walk. Design elements such as short blocks and well-connected streets and sidewalks can also help by providing direct connections and reducing walking distances.

Demand Management (Parking)

Transit-oriented development is intended to reduce the need for vehicle use and promote walking, biking, and transit as viable means of transportation. Large expanses of surface parking lots tend to erode an area's overall sense of place and contribute to a pedestrian environment that is less safe, convenient, or attractive.

Successful TODs can accommodate vehicles while minimizing their impact on the landscape. Often, this involves reducing the amount of parking spaces available (many places have an oversupply of parking), consolidating surface parking lots into parking structures, or making more efficient use of existing parking lots by carefully locating and designing them. Other management strategies, such as shared parking, can cut down on the number of chronically empty parking spaces. The overall goal is to reduce the amount of land devoted to parking in order to unlock the potential for higher development density.

Design

Design is the most nuanced of the 5-Ds and means different things to different people. In the context of TOD, design primarily refers to the elements that make for an attractive, interesting, and pedestrian-friendly place. This includes the appropriate provision of sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, parks, street trees, and green space. Other examples of TOD-specific design strategies include short blocks with street network connectivity (to reduce walking distances), appropriately scaled and continuous sidewalks, sidewalks buffered from traffic, street-oriented buildings, and comfortable and safe places to wait. A well-designed pedestrian environment entices people to get out of their car to explore and experience the character of the neighborhood. People are more likely to walk to transit in areas that are comfortable, safe, and interesting.

Beyond the Ds

The 5 Ds are a useful framework for considering the key factors of a successful TOD, but they do not encompass everything. Larger scale forces such as demographic changes, shifts in the national economy, or changes in consumer preferences can all influence the viability of a TOD. It is also worth noting these concepts are mutually supportive and interdependent. For example, design improvements such as adding sidewalks, crosswalks, and lighting add to the streetscape while also reducing the distance to transit. Likewise, redeveloping parking lots can add more density, enhance the overall design of an area, and reduce distance to transit. Lastly, it is critical to acknowledge the Mall does not exist in a bubble. Much of the developed area adjacent to the 90-acre Mall site is designed in a similar fashion. The connections and transitions from these areas to the Mall should always be considered.

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY
BOSTON, MA

The Silver Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was the first addition to Boston's rapid transit system in 50 years. The first two phases of building the Silver Line BRT are now complete, with the Silver Line Washington Street and Silver Line Waterfront routes fully functional. The Waterfront Line is the first rapid transit line in the Seaport District, providing a catalyst for high-density development that is dramatically transforming the area. Rapid growth at the Seaport District has increased the number of residential, commercial, and institutional destinations. The City is currently developing a South Boston Seaport Strategic Transit Plan to accommodate this new demand (and future development) using TOD-principles.

Above: Seaport Square Master Plan
Below: The Silver Line BRT

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY
MANCHESTER, NH

In the next five years, Manchester will be home to a commuter rail station that links Manchester and Nashua to Boston. The station is projected to generate more than 3,600 residential units, 2 million sq. ft. of commercial space, and 5,600 new jobs. The train will stop at both the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport and the Manchester millyard, which already hosts a rich mix of uses, including a minor league baseball stadium, converted mill buildings, major office and institutional employers, housing, parking, and others. The proposed transportation center will be located near a bus station for travel within Manchester and is just across a bridge from a major highway exit.

Above: The designated study area surrounding the future location for the proposed commuter rail station.
Below: The area where the proposed commuter rail station would be located.

TOD Readiness

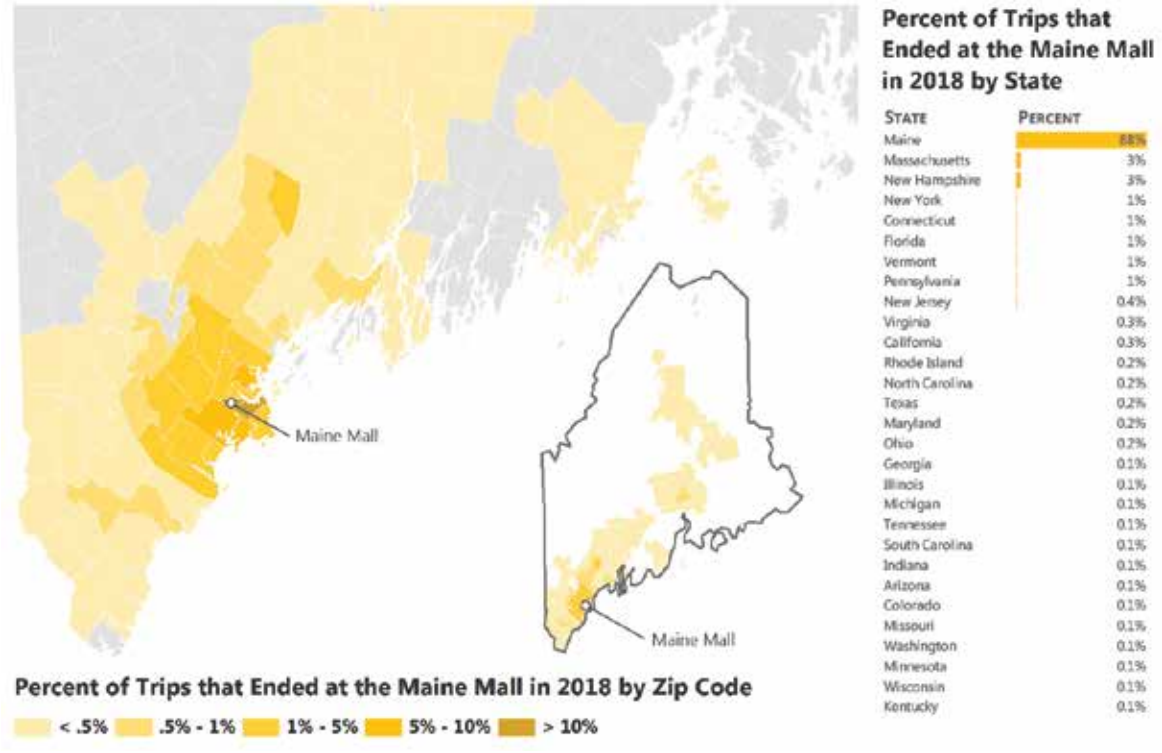
Before creating a vision for the future of the Maine Mall, it is important to evaluate how the Mall is working today from a transit-oriented development perspective — to identify its strengths, as well as opportunities for improvement — in order to improve upon what is already available.

This section explores several key TOD elements, including travel patterns, existing public transit service, how the physical layout and mix of land uses at the Mall compare to the previously described "5 Ds" framework (Density, Diversity, Distance, Demand Management, and Design), and the Mall's impact on the environment.

Travel Patterns

The Maine Mall is the primary shopping area for all Greater Portland, and the state's largest retail center. The Mall itself is the heart of a much larger commercial area comprised of strip malls, restaurants, hotels, office parks, big box stores, and auto dealerships. Over the years, the area has evolved into its own distinct urban form — it has all the elements of a city (shopping, offices, manufacturing, hotels, and restaurants), but relies on a transient, non-residential population.

Since no one lives in the immediate vicinity, the Mall draws traffic (mainly people commuting to work or shopping) from a much larger area. The graphic to the right shows the approximate trade area of the Maine Mall. GPCOG prepared this analysis using the Streetlight Insights platform, which contains anonymized location records derived from smart phones and navigation devices.

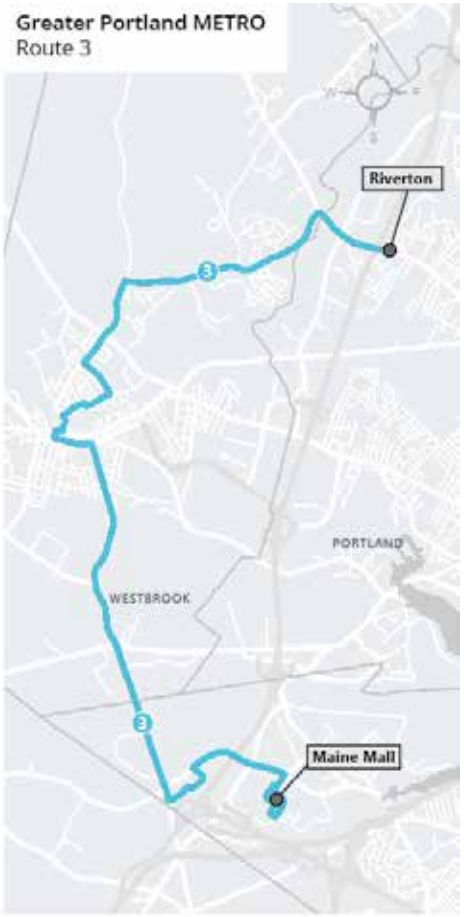


TRAVEL PATTERNS TO THE MAINE MALL

GPCOG prepared this analysis using the Streetlight Insights platform, which contains anonymized location records derived from smart phones and navigation devices. The analysis visualizes the percent of trips that ended in the Maine Mall study area in 2018 by the person's home zip code (a person's home location is defined as where the device spends the majority of its nighttime hours between 7pm and 8am).

The analysis visualizes the percent of trips that ended in the Maine Mall study area in 2018 by the person's home zip code (a person's home location is defined as where the device spends the majority of nighttime hours between 7pm to 8am).

The Mall's primary trade area is the Greater Portland region, but its secondary reach extends far beyond to most of Southern Maine and points north (primarily along the I-95 corridor). When broken down by state, roughly 88% of visitors to the Mall are from Maine, 3% are from Massachusetts, and 3% are from New Hampshire. The remaining 6% of visitors are spread throughout the U.S. These are likely long-distance commuters or visitors passing through.



TRANSIT ROUTES SERVING THE MALL
The Mall is already one of the region's most popular transit destinations and is currently served by three fixed-route bus providers — South Portland Bus Service (SPBS), METRO, and Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach (BSOOB) Transit. Between these providers, five individual bus routes make stops at the Mall.

Public Transit

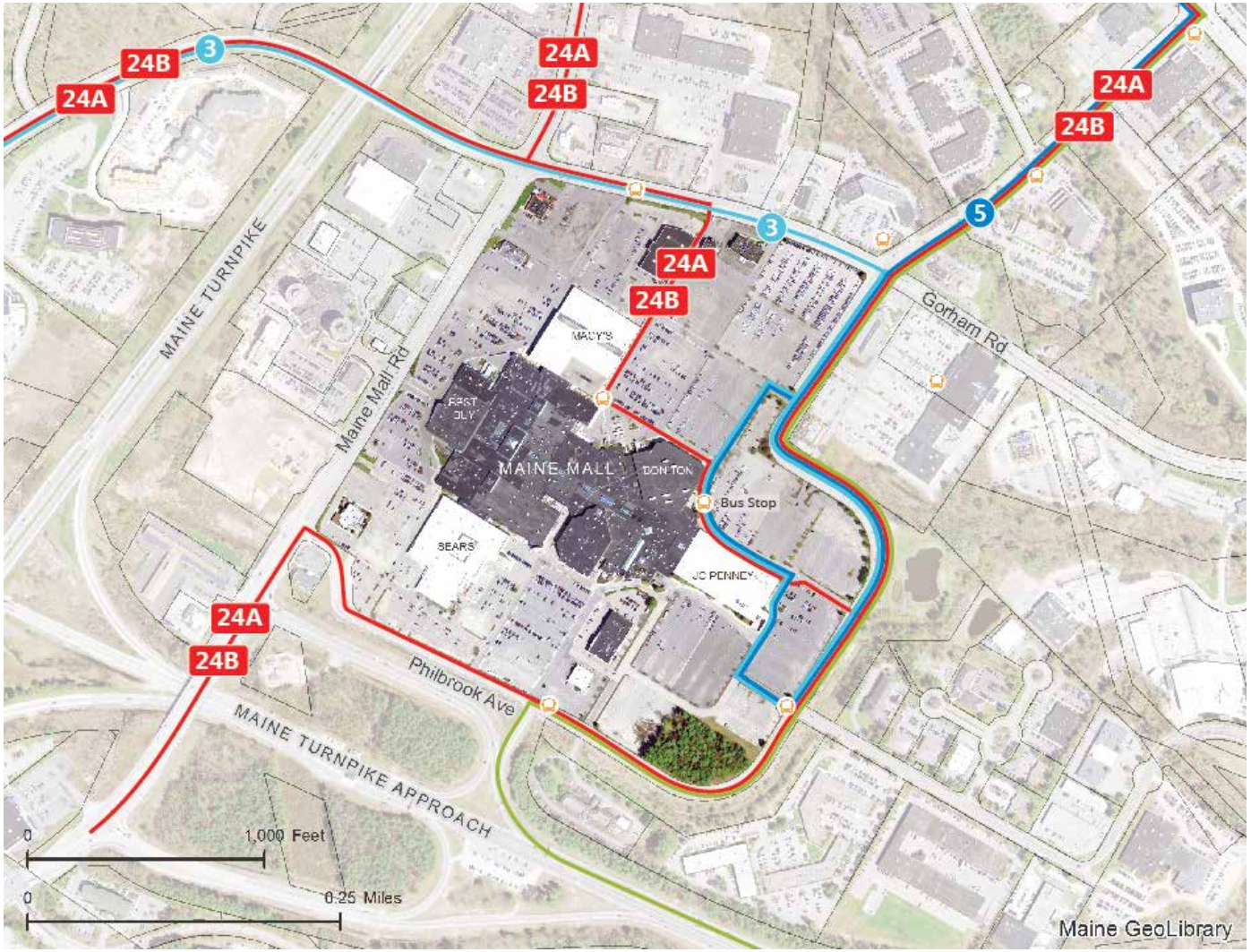
The Mall is already one of the region's most popular transit destinations and is currently served by three fixed-route bus providers — South Portland Bus Service (SPBS), METRO, and BSOOB Transit. Between these providers, five individual bus routes make stops at the Mall. From these routes, riders can access the Mall from a wide range of places throughout the region.

The Mall is not currently served by passenger rail nor are there any nearby connections. (The Amtrak Downeaster track is about three miles away to the east and does not stop in South Portland). That is not to say there may never be some form of passenger rail in the future. (In the early 1900's there were few places in the region that could not be reached by electric streetcar). However, this concept plan focuses primarily on a mixed-use development centered around high-quality bus transit connections.

SPBS Routes 24A & 24B

The South Portland Bus Service (SPBS) currently operates two routes, the 24A (Maine Mall via Main St.) and the 24B (Maine Mall), that provide regular service to the Mall. As shown in the map to the right, both routes run in an east-west direction across South Portland, accessing the Mall and surrounding developed areas to the west, and Downtown South Portland and the Portland Peninsula to the east. The main difference between the routes is the 24A uses Lincoln St., Main St., and Westbrook St. to cut east-west across the City, whereas the 24B uses Highland Ave., Evans St., and Broadway. Route 24B also includes service to the Redbank/Brick Hill neighborhoods, while the 24A does not. Both routes have headways of approximately 1.5-2

TRANSIT ROUTES SERVING THE MALL
The primary transit stop at the Mall is located in front of JC Penney.



hours. The 24A has limited weekend service, but there is no weekend service on the 24B.

Metro Route 3

Route 3 is a new route that METRO launched in 2018 as part of its "Transit West" initiative. Route 3 runs mainly north-south, connecting the Maine Mall to Downtown Westbrook and the Riverton neighborhood and Hannaford supermarket off Forest Avenue in Portland. In Downtown Westbrook riders can transfer to METRO's Husky Line or Route 4 to get to Gorham or Downtown Portland; at the Hannaford in Riverton riders can transfer to METRO's Route 2 to get to Downtown Portland. Route 3 has half-an-hour headways for most of the day Monday through Friday, with more limited service on the weekend.

Metro Route 5

Route 5 is a well-established METRO route that runs primarily on Congress Street and provides service from the Elm Street Pulse (METRO's central station in Downtown Portland) to the Jetport and the Maine Mall. Once in Portland, riders can transfer to numerous bus routes if so desired. The route has half-an-hour headways for most of the day with more limited service on the weekend.

BSOOB Transit Green Line

Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach (BSOOB) Transit recently redesigned their bus routes in favor of a hub-and-spoke model centered around the Saco Transportation Center. Formerly known as the Intercity, the newly redesigned Green Line begins at the Saco Transportation Center and runs north along Route 1 through Saco, Scarborough, and South Portland, before turning around in Portland near City Hall. In South Portland, the Green Line stops in front of JC Penneys at the Maine Mall. In the northbound direction, the Green Line stops at the Mall four times a day (three in the morning and one late evening run), while in the southbound direction the bus makes six stops a day at the Mall spaced between two and three hours apart.

Density

Density is arguably the most important factor for encouraging transit use. Higher densities of people, jobs, or building units per acre support greater levels of transit since there are more potential riders in the same amount of space.

Employment Density

From an employment perspective, the Maine Mall has extraordinarily high job density with over 100 stores at the Mall site alone. According to U.S. Census estimates the Mall supports just over 1,000 jobs. Considering the site is about 90 acres, this equates to roughly 11 jobs per acre.

Residential Density

From a population standpoint, the Maine Mall has no density, since there is currently no residential development at the site. Except for Redbank and Brick Hill, most land west of I-295 in South Portland is devoted to commercial or industrial uses. While new residential development is pending at Sable Oaks and near Clarks Pond, in keeping with existing zoning, the predominant land use remains commercial and industrial.

High density residential development is beneficial for transit since it adds built-in demand for the service. Multiple TOD case studies have found that residential development near transit produces an appreciable increase in ridership. Additionally, TOD-style residential development can attract people who prefer to live near transit (a phenomenon known as resident self-selection). Residents who live in these developments may have a lifestyle preference for transit-oriented living or may rely on transit due to a disability or for other reasons.

BUILDING UNIT DENSITY

Building unit density at the Maine Mall is a case of extremes. On the one hand, at 21.5 acres the Mall is the largest building in the City. However, when the Mall (and its associated outbuildings which account for about 2.1 acres) are considered in the context of the 90-acre site, only 23.6 acres, or 26% of the land area, is taken up by buildings; most of the remaining area is devoted to internal roads and parking lots. As the amount of white space in the map illustrates, there are many opportunities to increase the overall building unit density at the site. This can be accomplished through the continued development of smaller outbuildings, ideally incorporating a mix of uses and residential development.

Residents are also more likely to use transit during non-traditional commute hours. For example, senior citizens who no longer work may take transit in the middle of the day to run errands or get to appointments. This supports transit service overall by helping transit providers fill seats in the non-peak hours of the day.

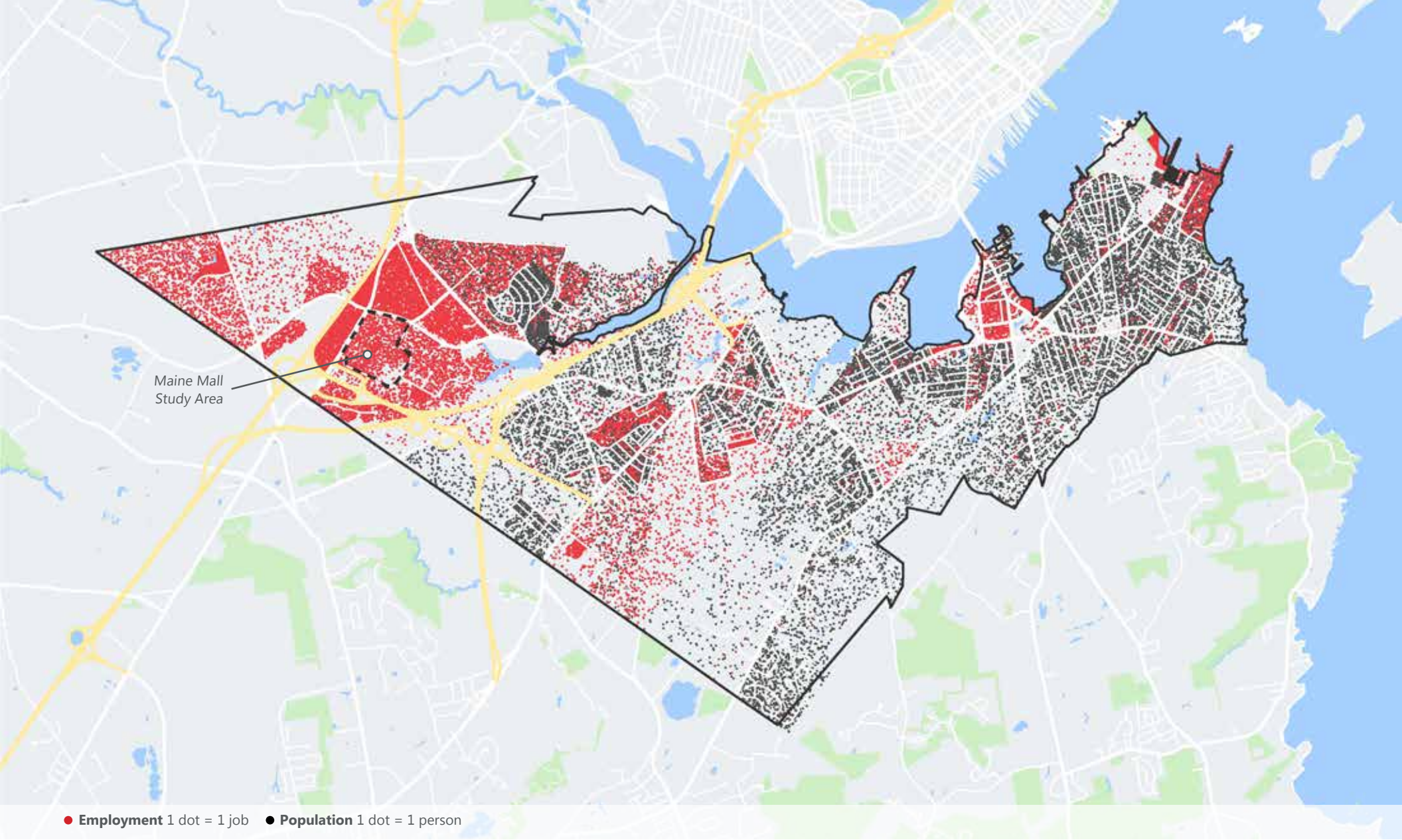
From an economic standpoint, residential development brings a built-in market for stores, as well as new demand for resident oriented small businesses. Residents can also act as "eyes on the street" for security purposes.

Building Unit Density

Originally conceived to resemble indoor town centers, by their very design Malls are intended to be large mega-structures. The building footprint for the Mall alone is roughly 21.5 acres (the largest building footprint in the City). When the Mall is considered within the context of the 90-acre site, however, the overall study area is not that dense. While several smaller out-buildings have emerged in the last few decades (Books-A-Million, Longhorn Steakhouse, On The Border, to name a few), most of the site is comprised of parking lots, many of which are often empty. In this regard there are many opportunities for increasing building unit density, for any number of uses, through infill development.

Zoning

The Mall currently resides in the Central and Regional Commercial District (CCR), which does not allow for residential or mixed-use development. Thus, to add these uses the zoning ordinance would need to be amended. To encourage more compact, mixed-use development, the City could permit density bonuses for projects located within a certain distance of transit, or other similar types of incentives.



EMPLOYMENT AND POPULATION DENSITY IN SOUTH PORTLAND

The dot density map above provides a rough depiction of employment and population density in South Portland. In this map, one red dot represents one job, while one black dot represents one South Portland resident. Most of the land west of I-295 in South Portland is devoted exclusively to commercial or industrial use. Employment data is circa 2014 derived from the Census On The Map application; population data is from the 2010 decennial census. Both datasets are mapped at the census block level, the smallest census geographic unit.

Diversity (Mix of Uses)

The availability of a wide range of amenities and activities within a given area is one of the main aspects that underpin successful TODs. Mixed land use means having a complementary combination of shops, services, housing types, and employment opportunities within the same area that allow people to meet most of their daily needs nearby.

Mixed uses can include vertical mixing within a building (such as commercial on the ground floor and residential above), horizontal mixing (such as commercial buildings adjacent to residential buildings), or a mix of uses within a wider area. A diverse housing stock with a variety of housing types, tenures, and price points, is also important so a community can attract a broader cross section of people and better support transit.

Existing Uses

According to its website, the Maine Mall currently supports 119 stores and restaurants with a major emphasis on retail shopping and food services. Recent openings, such as Round 1 (a "bowling and amusement" company), have introduced more entertainment uses at the Mall, which help attract new customers particularly in the evening hours. Despite the diverse mix of stores and businesses at the Mall, there is currently no land devoted to residential development, industrial use, office space, parks/open space, or civic uses.

Land Use Comparison

The two aerial maps on the next page compare the diversity of land uses at the Maine Mall to a similarly sized 90-acre site in the Knightville neighborhood of Downtown South Portland. While certain sections of Knightville (mainly Mill Creek Plaza) are also dominated by business uses, overall Knightville has a much stronger balance of business, residential, mixed use, and open space. By contrast, the Maine Mall is almost exclusively devoted to business use.

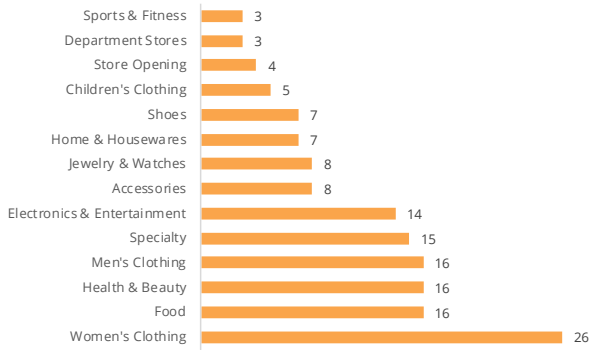
The Knightville area has parks and open space interspersed throughout, and features both vertical and horizontal density. The general layout of businesses and mixed uses fronting the street with residential uses behind is a functional, time-tested New England town center design. Overall, the area features a mix of commercial and residential uses, a variety of housing types, and public places where people can socialize and engage in civic life.

Future Land Use Examples

Since the Mall is singularly focused on retail and food service there are many opportunities to diversify, and intensify, this mix. Specific examples might include a convention center, office buildings, residential development (of all shapes and sizes), and parks, recreation areas, and open spaces. The Mall might be a good fit for hosting a health care facility, educational buildings, or even civic and cultural institutions like a recreation center, library, or museum. Indoor/outdoor spaces could be built around the perimeter of the Mall to create an open-air market that provides seasonal space for local vendors, food trucks, or even farmers markets. Some mall redevelopments have even introduced urban agriculture into their sites in the form of greenhouses and rooftop gardens. While market forces and supply and demand may dictate what types of uses the Mall can support, there is a tremendous opportunity to think big, and expand the field of vision away from traditional mall uses.

STORES AND RESTAURANTS AT THE MAINE MALL

Information courtesy of www.mainemall.com, which provides a list of all 119 stores and restaurants at the Mall.



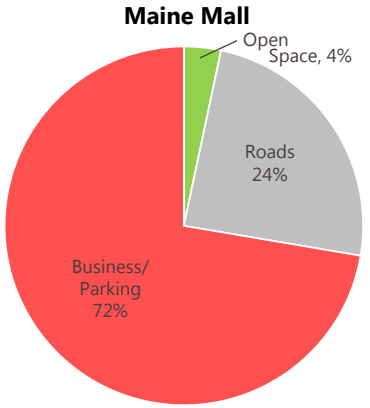
LAND USE DIVERSITY

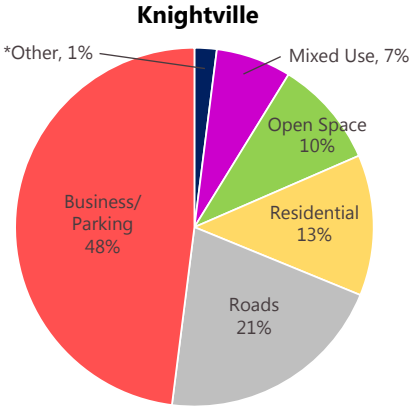
The pie charts to the right show the general breakdown in land use at the Maine Mall compared to a similarly sized 90-acre site in Knightville.

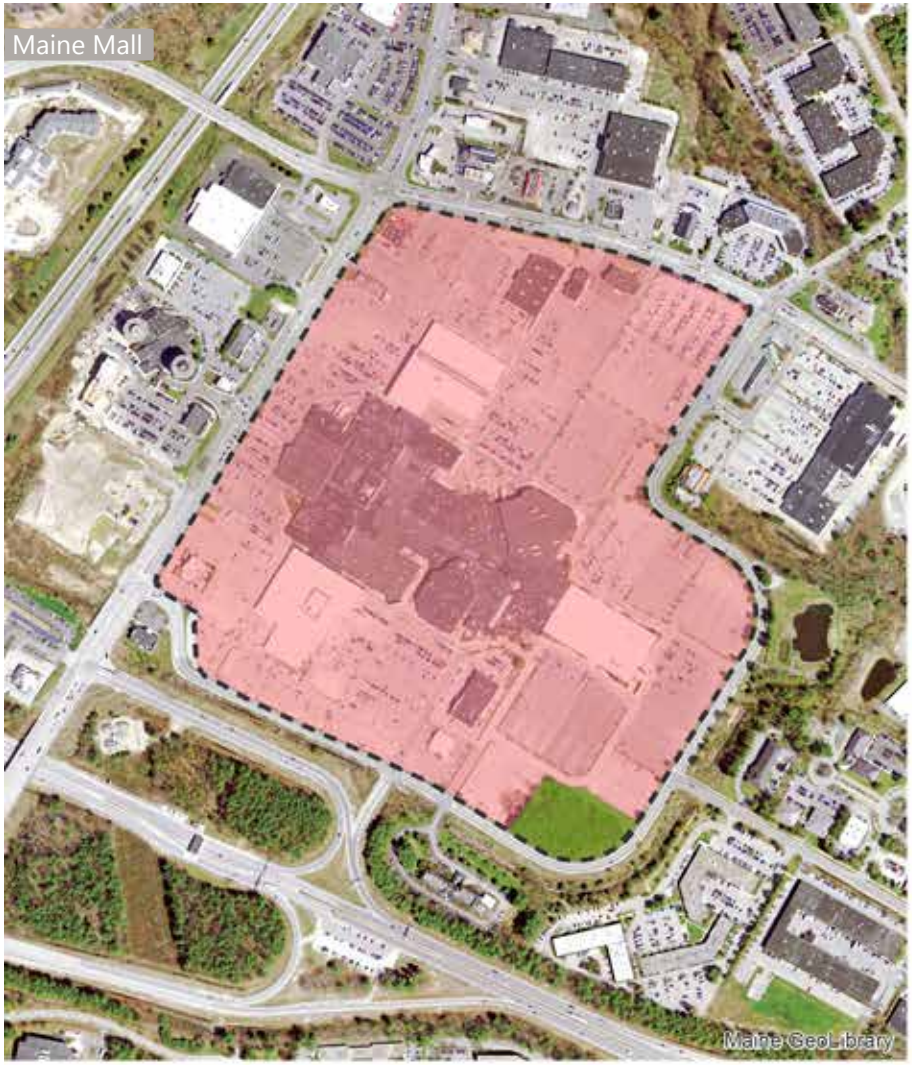
Apart from a 3-acre tree stand in the southeast corner of the site, the Maine Mall is devoted almost exclusively to business uses (72% including parking lots) and roads (24%).

By contrast, Knightville has considerably more land dedicated to mixed use, open space, and residential development.

*The 1% of other uses include non-profit, utility, industrial, municipal, and U.S. government uses.







Maine Mall Land Use

Business | Open Space

Knightville Land Use

Business | Mixed Use | Open Space | U.S. Gov't
Industrial | Municipal | Residential | Utility

LAND USE COMPARISON

The maps above show the general breakdown in land use at the Maine Mall compared to a similarly sized 90-acre site in the Knightville neighborhood of Downtown South Portland. While certain sections of Knightville (mainly Mill Creek Plaza) are also dominated by business uses, overall Knightville has a much stronger balance of business, residential, mixed use, and open space uses. By contrast, the Maine Mall is almost exclusively devoted to business use, specifically retail, food, and entertainment.

Distance to Transit

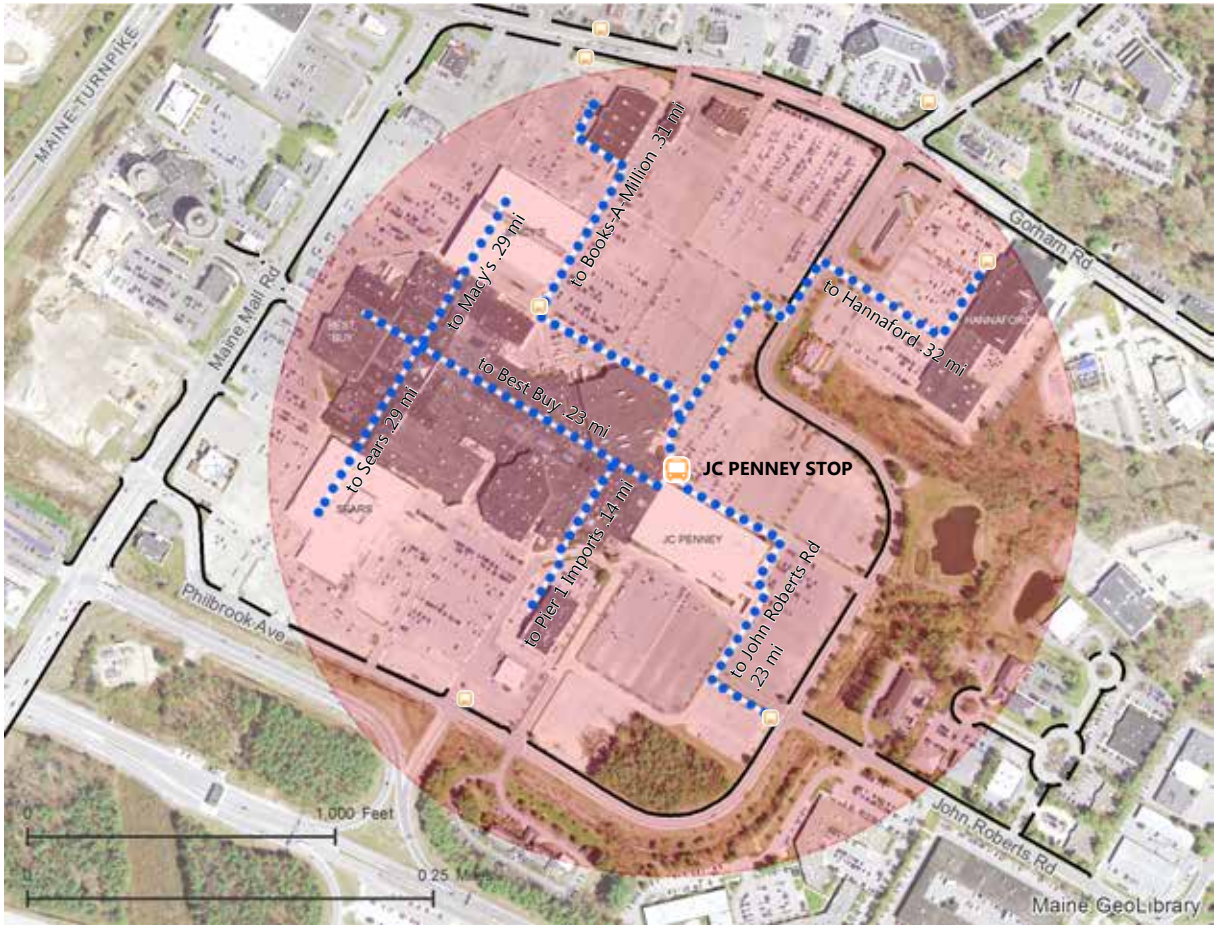
Proximity to transit is also associated with increased transit use. While every individual has different walking speeds and distances they may feel comfortable walking, the generally held principal is the average person is willing to walk five minutes to use transit. At an average walking speed this equates to roughly 1/4 to 1/2 mile. Beyond 1/2 mile, it can be reasonably expected that most people would elect to drive rather than walk. Design elements such as short blocks and well-connected streets and sidewalks can also play a role by providing direct connections and reducing walking distances.

Walking Distances

The map to the right shows a 1/4 mile buffered walkshed (in red) around the main bus stop in front of JC Penney. While other bus stops are shown for reference, the walking routes (in blue) are all measured beginning from the JC Penney stop. (Existing sidewalks are also shown in black). Most destinations at the Mall are close to a 1/4 mile walking distance (or approximate five minute walk), and well within a 1/2 mile.

Walking Conditions

While walking in the Mall building itself is pleasant and comfortable, walking the surrounding site can be challenging. The main impediment to walking outside the Mall is the lack of sidewalks, paths, and pedestrian amenities. There is a continuous sidewalk that runs the perimeter of the site (this is signed as the "Maine Mall Wellness Loop"), but very few sidewalks and crosswalks connect the parking lots and outbuildings to each other or to the Mall. For example, the most direct route to get from the JC Penney stop to Hannaford (.32 miles) requires walking through several large parking lots without a sidewalk and crossing Philbrook Avenue without a crosswalk.



WALKING DISTANCES AT THE MAINE MALL

The map above shows a 1/4 mile buffered walkshed (in red) from the main bus stop in front of JC Penney. While other bus stops are shown for reference, the walking routes (in blue) are all measured beginning from the JC Penney stop. (Existing sidewalks are shown in black). Most destinations at the Mall are close to 1/4 mile walking distance and under a 1/2 mile.

Transit Provider Feedback

As mentioned previously, the Mall is currently served by three bus transit providers (South Portland Bus Service, METRO, and BSOOB Transit) and five individual bus routes. In early 2019, PACTS staff held a focus group with the general managers of these agencies to discuss their

experiences serving the Mall. The managers all agreed the Mall is an important destination for many riders. Since the Mall site is so expansive, however, it takes time for the buses to navigate the traffic and parking lots to get in and out. To keep the buses on schedule, the transit providers try to limit the routes to just one or two stops at the Mall.

In this respect, the JC Penney stop has emerged as the Mall's primary bus stop, mainly because it is central to most locations and relatively easy for a bus to access. With that in mind, the managers all agreed the accommodations at the JC Penney stop are limited and could be improved.

Bus Stop Design

A well designed and properly outfitted bus stop can cut down on the disutility of waiting and signal to the broader public the importance of transit as a viable means of transportation. Most people are willing to put up with delays provided there is a comfortable and safe place to do so.

At the JC Penney stop there is little signage or information about the bus routes that serve the Mall and a handful of small benches outside for people to sit on. In this regard, the JC Penney stop is a prime candidate for more immediate, short-term improvements. In fact, the "Transit Stop Access Project" (a PACTS-funded project running concurrently to this initiative) recently identified the Mall as one of two sites from across the region to develop concept plans for transit mini-hubs. (The other site is also located in South Portland in the Redbank/Brick Hill neighborhood). Design plans for a transit mini-hub at the Mall (see page 39) include three climate-protected large-scale shelters, curb ramps, benches, covered bicycle parking for at least 12 bikes, and big belly receptacles for trash and recycling.

BUS STOP FACILITIES AND DESIGN

Above: The Mill Creek Transit Hub in Knightville is one of the region's best examples of a transit mini hub. It provides a comfortable, enclosed area for people to wait and features real-time bus arrival information.

Below: The JC Penney stop is the primary bus stop at the Maine Mall. Short term improvements to the stop might include more signage and information, heated bus shelters with real-time arrival displays, and a dedicated bus slip lane.

Demand Management (Parking)

Transit-oriented development is intended to reduce the need for vehicle use and promote walking, biking, and transit as a preferred means of transportation. Large expanses of surface parking lots tend to erode an area's overall sense of place and contribute to a pedestrian environment that is less safe, convenient, or attractive. Successful TODs are able to accommodate vehicles while minimizing their impact on the landscape. To a large extent, all techniques involved (adding density and diversity, reducing distance to transit, employing sound design principles), are heavily influenced by decisions around parking.

Existing Parking Supply

There are over 4,700 parking spaces at the Maine Mall, many of which sit vacant for most of the year. In this regard, the Mall is not unique. Parking ratios have dictated development form for decades, and due to these ratios conventional shopping centers often use three times as much land for streets and surface parking as for shopping. This ratio generally holds true for the Mall. Approximately 63-acres (roughly 2/3rds of the 90-acre site) are taken up by surface parking and internal roads.

Many of the Mall's parking lots, in particular the lots by JC Penney, are only lightly used for much of the year. This oversupply of parking is visually unappealing, has an excessive impact on storm drainage and runoff, and is expensive to maintain. On the other side of the Mall, however, the parking lots by Best Buy are often quite busy and near capacity.

Striking a Balance

Consumers expect parking to be convenient and close to their destination. If parking is too difficult, they are likely to go someplace else, or shop online. On the other hand, an empty parking lot could be used for development, or other beneficial uses, and in this respect is not likely the highest and best use of the land.

Getting parking right is also not as simple as having the right amount of parking in the right places. Ultimately, parking needs to be carefully designed to play a supporting role, rather than dominate the landscape. The place, not the parking, should be the destination.

Techniques For Parking Design

A well-thought out parking plan can accommodate parking within the context of a carefully designed landscape. From a user perspective, parking should be visible and easy to find, and once the vehicle is parked the walk to the destination should be enjoyable and safe. Some key ideas for accomplishing this are to:[2]

- Size prime parking lots for reasonable demand and provide peak parking in overflow areas.
- Use parking and building configurations that provide convenience and avoid visual blight.
- Use structured parking to make more land available for development.
- Make the pedestrian experience convenient and safe by providing sidewalks, crosswalks, and other pedestrian facilities.
- Make the pedestrian experience more interesting by providing activities and uses at ground level around parking garages and lots.
- Implement a shared parking plan that will serve different uses at different times.
- Disperse parking lots throughout the site to provide convenience and ease of access.
- Encourage shared vehicle fleets for residential developments or large businesses.
- Consider bicycle parking.

"Too much parking makes an environment less pedestrian-friendly, and wastes space that could be used for development. Too little parking, or the perception of too little parking, can undermine the economic viability of businesses and make leasing or sales difficult. As Goldilocks might say, 'Not too much, not too little, but just right.'"

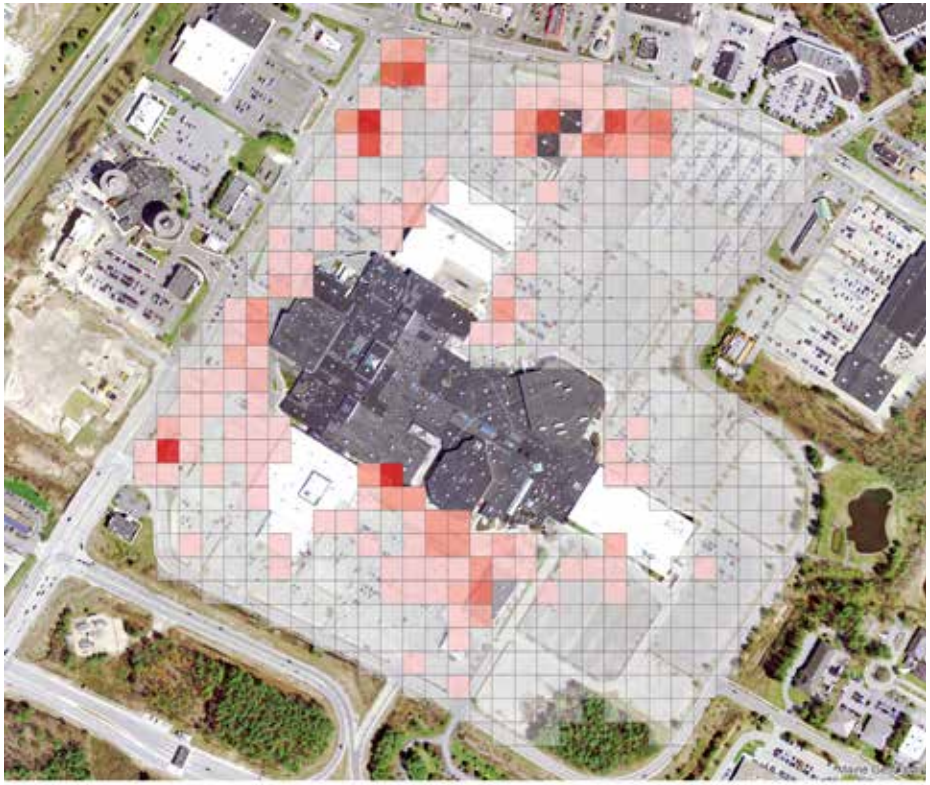
- The Urban Land Institute
Ten Principles for Rethinking the Mall

Parking Garages

There are currently no parking garages at the Maine Mall, but parking garages can be an effective way to improve the design and placement of parking. Parking garages reduce the land area devoted to parking and allow buildings

2. List adapted from *Ten Principles for Rethinking the Mall* by the Urban Land Institute.

3. Figures derived from *Financing Parking Garages* in Build a Better Burb.



PARKING AT THE MAINE MALL

Above: Many of the Mall's parking lots, in particular the lots shown above by JC Penney, sit empty for much of the year. An empty lot could be used for development, or other beneficial uses, and is likely not the highest and best use of the land. Possible projects include residential and mixed-use development, office space, civic and cultural facilities, green space, and public gathering places.

Left: GPCOG prepared a parking study using the Streetlight Insights platform, which contains anonymized location records derived from smart phones and navigation devices. For this analysis, the Maine Mall parking lots were broken up into 480 grids of .15 acres each. The analysis shows the percent of trips that ended at each grid in 2018.

to be closer together and more tightly integrated. For example, an 800-car parking garage can be constructed on a piece of land that is just 120 feet wide by 270 feet long. Providing the same 800 spaces in a surface parking lot would require four and a half football fields.[3]

Increasingly, new parking garages are also designed to be wrapped with retail shops, eateries, residences, and services. This mixed-use approach can make the parking garage more attractive as an urban place, and the walk to and from parking more interesting.

The primary downside to parking garages, however, is they are expensive. In most cases, structured parking is up to ten times more expensive to build than surface parking, so it may not be an option until the development opportunity is valuable enough to justify the expense. While construction costs can vary tremendously, a ballpark estimate for the average five-story parking garage with approximately 145,000 square feet of parking would be anywhere from $8-$10 million.

Advances In Vehicle Technology

Another consideration with parking is the rapid advancements in vehicle technology. Self-parking cars, likely to be the norm in the coming decades, will require places to rethink parking requirements. Since autonomous vehicles can park in much tighter spaces, self-driving cars could dramatically increase the capacity of parking lots. This more efficient use of space could lead to smaller parking lots, and free up more land for other uses. Another anticipated scenario is the arrival of shared autonomous vehicles. These vehicles would operate like taxis (without the driver) and rarely park. If shared autonomous vehicles are widely adopted, the demand for surface parking lots and parking garages may be dramatically reduced.

Design

In the context of transit-oriented development, design primarily refers to the elements that make for an attractive, interesting, and pedestrian-friendly place. A well-designed pedestrian environment entices people to get out of their car to explore and experience the character of the area. People are more likely to walk to transit in places that are comfortable, safe, and interesting.

Building Layout & Design

The Maine Mall resembles the design of many malls built in America during the same era. The building has a massive footprint, is mostly single-story with a flat roof, and its exterior faces are generally bland and lacking architectural complexity. The Mall is surrounded by a sea of surface parking lots, which isolate the building from its surroundings and prioritize driving over anything else.

The sprawling site also lacks a distinct entrance, or gateway, that would indicate to visitors they are entering a unique place with its own identity. Likewise, many of the building's entrances are hard to find and tucked in alleyways between stores. These design features combine to create the overarching impression, outwardly at least, that the Mall could be any given shopping center in the U.S.

Pedestrian Conditions

Sidewalks, crosswalks, and other pedestrian facilities exist in many areas at the Mall, but the overall walking environment could be greatly improved. There are two primary sidewalk networks at the site. A nearly continuous sidewalk lines the outside edge of the Mall building, while another sidewalk runs alongside the Mall's perimeter roads. These sidewalk networks serve their function, but do not address the primary purpose for most pedestrian trips — getting from the parking lot to the Mall, or from the Mall to the various outbuildings at the site.

DESIGN AT THE MAINE MALL

Above: Sidewalks line the outside edge of the Mall building and the site's perimeter roads, but there are few pedestrian connections linking the parking lots, or various outbuildings, to the Mall. Below Left: Many entrances to the Mall are hard to find and tucked in alleyways between stores. Below Right: There are many landscaping features at the Maine Mall, but the site is so large they are often overshadowed by the parking lots.

Parks & Common Areas

Parks and common areas, such as fountains, plazas, playing fields, and playgrounds, can create a more compelling outdoor destination and enhance the mall's public function as a gathering place. Currently there are no parks or common areas at the Mall. Street trees are sprinkled throughout the site, and light landscaping lines

DESIGN AT THE MAINE MALL

Above Left: Many of the Mall's exterior faces are blank and lack any architectural complexity. The sidewalk in this picture ends abruptly where the truck is pulling out.

Above Right: The space inside the Mall is elaborately designed to cater to the pedestrian with interesting store fronts, atriums, mini playgrounds, and comfortable areas to lounge and wait. Many of the design principles used to enrich the user experience inside the Mall could be employed to the Mall's outdoor spaces to create a more compelling destination.

Below: A row of street trees is dwarfed by vast, empty parking lots. Excess parking isolates the Mall from its surroundings and makes accessibility by foot difficult.

the edges of many buildings and parking lots, but these natural features are often dwarfed by the vast expanse of concrete and asphalt.

Near the Mall there is a small, but growing, trail network maintained by the South Portland Land Trust (SPLT). The South Branch Trail is a short, 0.5 mile trail that explores the wooded area between the Mall and Clarks Pond Plaza to the east. The SPLT is currently adding another 0.5 mile loop to the trail that will connect to businesses on Gorham Road. Other trail connections are also being explored nearby at the Sable Oaks property, and in the wooded area between Darling Avenue and Maine Mall Road.

Interior Mall Design

Inside the Mall is an entirely different experience. The Mall's climate-controlled interior is elaborately designed to cater to the shopper-as-pedestrian with a diverse array of interesting storefronts and window displays. The long hallways are broken up by kiosks, large atriums, a food court, a playground, and an abundance of comfortable sitting areas to chat, lounge, or take a break. There are no blank walls or spaces inside the Mall and the resulting experience is often described as hypnotic or disorienting. This common feeling is known as the "Gruen Effect," named after Victor Gruen, the mall's original designer, who recognized that good design equals good profits. The more beautiful the displays and surroundings, the longer consumers will want to stay and shop.

Many of the design principles used to enrich the user experience inside the Mall could also be employed to the Mall's outdoor spaces to create a more attractive destination. In fact, many malls across the country are doing just that by enhancing their surrounding sites and transitioning some areas of the mall to indoor-outdoor spaces.

Environmental Impacts

While there are environmental impacts associated with any urban development, such as habitat fragmentation, energy use, and vehicle emissions, the most urgent concerns at the Mall are primarily to water quality.

The Long Creek Watershed

The Mall resides within the Long Creek Watershed (the 3.5 square mile area where water flows into Long Creek and its four main branches). Long Creek is considered an "urban impaired" stream by the MaineDEP and U.S. EPA and has been the subject of many studies and reports. As stated in the Long Creek Watershed Management Plan:

> "Years of urbanization have significantly impaired the stream's health, as well as its ability to support recreation and wildlife, such as brook trout. The cause of the stream's degradation is increasing volumes of stormwater runoff, and the various pollutants associated with it, flowing into its waters from impervious surfaces like parking lots, roadways, and rooftops."

Long Creek Restoration Efforts

In 2009, the U.S. EPA exercised a provision in the Clean Water Act, known as Residual Designation Authority (RDA), which required stricter stormwater permitting for designated discharges in the Long Creek watershed. Under these new rules, which are still in effect today, any landowner that owns 1-acre or more of impervious surfaces is required to get a stormwater permit and pay a fee.

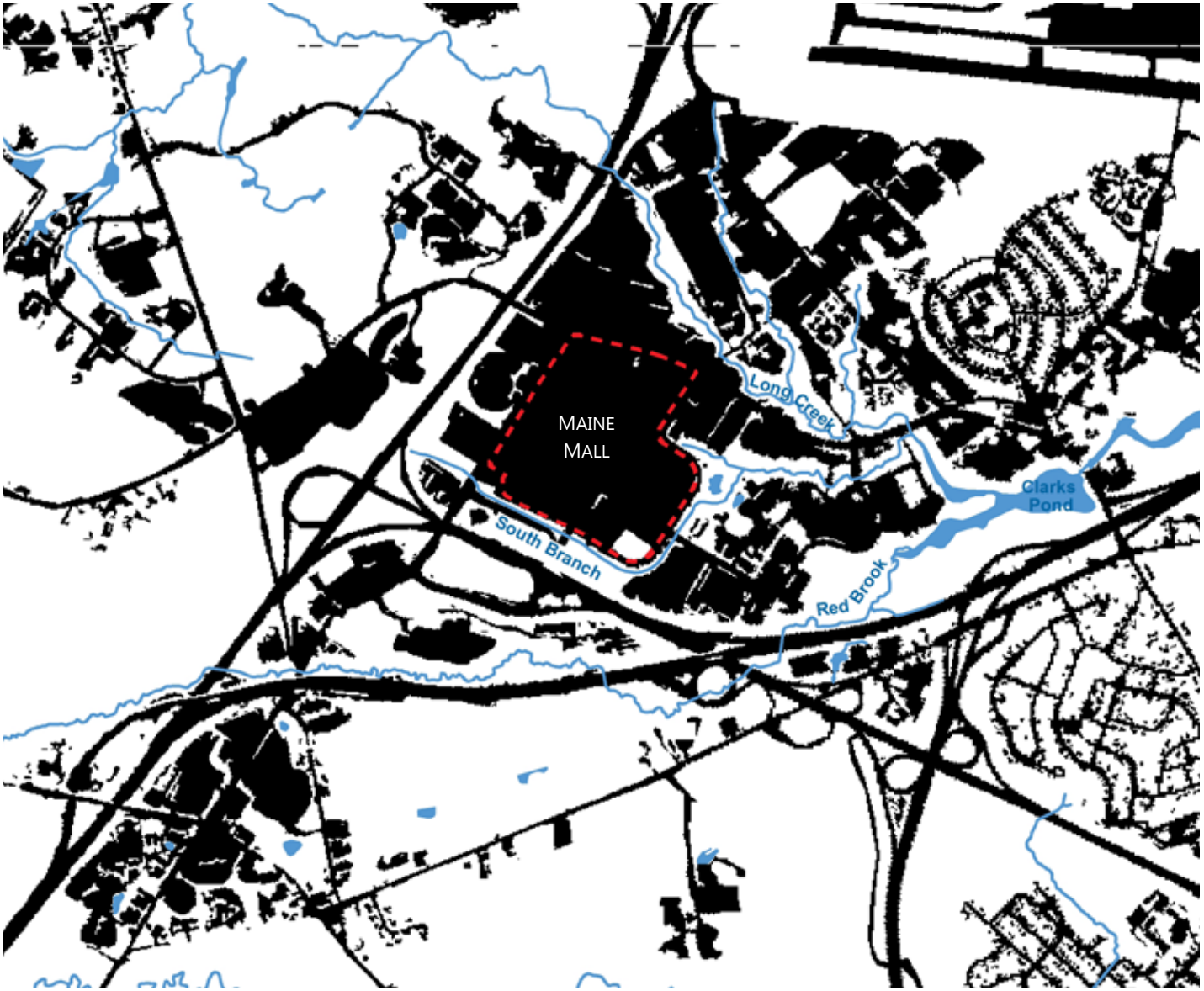
To comply with this higher standard, the four Long Creek watershed municipalities (South Portland, Portland, Westbrook, and Scarborough) worked collaboratively to develop a restoration plan and establish the Long Creek Watershed Management District (LCWMD). All fees associated with the stormwater permits (roughly $3,000 per impervious acre per year for a ten-year time frame) go to the LCWMD and are used towards the construction and maintenance of a wide variety of restoration projects as well as stakeholder education and outreach campaigns.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AT THE MAINE MALL

Top: In 2015, the LCWMD retrofitted an existing retention basin adjacent to the Maine Mall parking lot into a gravel wetland. Gravel wetlands remove pollutants much better than other conventional designs. Below Left: The South Branch of Long Creek flows along a man-made ditch adjacent to Philbrook Ave. The South Branch has some of the highest concentrations of chlorides from salt use observed anywhere in the watershed. Below Right: The undersized culvert underneath the I-295 off-ramp is a major constriction to stream flow and habitat.

The South Branch of Long Creek

The South Branch of Long Creek flows along the perimeter of the Mall via a man-made ditch adjacent to Philbrook Ave. According to LCWMD staff, it is the most impacted tributary of Long Creek and has the highest concentrations of chlorides from salt use observed anywhere in the watershed. This is mainly due to the salting of parking lots in the winter months, the vast amount of impervious surfaces at the Mall, and the relocation of the stream from its original corridor.



IMPERVIOUS SURFACES AT THE MAINE MALL

The map above shows impervious surfaces (in black) in the developed area around the Mall as well as streams and waterbodies (in blue). Aside from a three-acre tree stand in the southeast corner of the site, and a few natural landscaping elements, the Maine Mall site is almost entirely impervious surfaces. According to Long Creek Watershed Management staff, the South Branch of Long Creek, which runs along the perimeter of the Mall, is the most impacted tributary to Long Creek and has the highest concentrations of chlorides from salt use observed anywhere in the watershed. This is mainly due to the salting of sidewalks and parking lots in the winter months, and the relocation of the stream from its original corridor.

ONE CLIMATE FUTURE
Charting a Course for Portland and South Portland

ONE CLIMATE FUTURE

The City of South Portland is currently working with the City of Portland to craft a joint climate action and adaptation plan called "One Climate Future." The initiative has 4 major focus area:

1. Buildings & Energy Use
2. Transportation & Land Use
3. Waste Reduction
4. Climate Resilience

The goal of "Transportation & Land Use" is "designing and connecting our homes, businesses, and public spaces around an efficient transportation network."

The vision for TOD at the Maine Mall is well-aligned with this goal. Concentrating households and jobs near transit significantly reduces the number and length of trips made by motor vehicles, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions and the related effects of climate change.

Learn more about One Climate Future at www.oneclimatefuture.org

Reimagining The Maine Mall

The following pages present a vision for what the Maine Mall site could look like in 10-20 years if redevelopment is guided by transit-oriented development principles. This effort is not meant to be a prescriptive development plan, but rather a conversation starter. An attempt to reimagine the site and to show how the Mall could be transformed into a thriving, mixed-use, livable community for present and future generations.

Developing the Vision

The project stakeholder team met with the landscape-architecture firm Richardson & Associates on several occasions to develop a vision for the Maine Mall. Initial input from these workshop sessions informed three renderings which were presented to the project team. These early layouts elicited reactions and prompted thoughtful discussions about the various opportunities and challenges at the Mall.

At the heart of these discussions were fundamental questions like — What are the needs of the community? What would it be like to live or work in the area? What will parking requirements be like in a future with self-parking or shared autonomous vehicles? And, what is realistic versus too far reaching?

From these discussions the project team found consensus in a common desire to add more housing and mixed uses at the site, and to break up the large expanses of asphalt with more natural features (for example, "daylighting" the South Branch of Long Creek). The team also coalesced on a vision to recreate a downtown-like atmosphere at the Mall with a traditional Main Street, short blocks, and a well-connected street network. With these big-picture ideas in mind, Richardson & Associates went back to the drawing board to develop a final rendering.

READER TIP

The numbered topics in this section correspond to the number labels in the rendering.

DISCLAIMER

The rendering and visualizations in the "Reimagining the Maine Mall" section are for illustrative purposes only. They are included to demonstrate what the Mall could look like in 10-20 years if redevelopment is guided by transit-oriented development principles and best practices. The visuals are not part of any official site or development plan, nor are they intended to be.

Key Features

The following section highlights several of the key features associated with the project team's vision for the Maine Mall. (To help guide the reader, the numbered topics below correspond to the number labels found in the rendering on page 32).

① A New Main Street

A prominent feature of this vision is the new "Main Street" that runs through the site connecting to Philbrook Avenue on either side. The full realization of this street would require replacing the JC Penney site with a transportation and conference center (in this scenario JC Penney could be relocated to a new building somewhere else on the site).

The tree lined, highly walkable Main Street would serve several purposes: it would break up the mall's massive building footprint; it would create more connectivity through the site; it would provide a direct route and focal point for transit; and it would add an outdoor streetfront shopping experience. As envisioned, the buildings that front the street would be two-to-three story mixed-use, with business uses on the ground and residences above.

② A Modern Transportation Center

Essential to the success of any transit-oriented development is a centrally located, high-capacity transit center. To increase convenience and overall ridership, transit needs to be featured much more prominently than it is today. This plan envisions a modern transportation center with an attached parking garage as one of the Mall's major anchors. The center would be located on the new Main Street (near the existing JC Penney) and attached to the Mall via an elevated walkway.

The transportation center would feature a large lobby with comfortable places for people to sit and wait for their bus or ride. To minimize the inconvenience of waiting, the center would have a cafe-like atmosphere with free Wi-Fi, space for local vendors to sell snacks and coffee, public restrooms, and other similar amenities. To reduce travel stress there would be informational booths with system maps and brochures, kiosks to purchase tickets electronically, and displays showing real-time "next bus" information.

KEY FEATURES

1. NEW MAIN ST.
2. TRANSPORTATION CTR.
3. PARKING GARAGES
4. RESTORED SOUTH BRANCH
5. DIVERSE HOUSING SUPPLY
6. CONNECTED STREET GRID
7. YEAR-ROUND OPEN AIR MARKET
8. RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

A NEW MAIN STREET

A prominent feature of this vision is the new "Main Street" that runs through the site connecting to Philbrook Avenue on either side. The full realization of this street would require replacing the JC Penney site with a transportation and conference center. The visualization to the right imagines a street view of the new Main Street just south of the transportation center looking north.

The tree lined, highly walkable Main Street would serve several purposes: it would break up the mall's massive building footprint; it would create more connectivity through the site; it would provide a direct route and focal point for transit; and it would add an outdoor streetfront shopping experience. As envisioned, the buildings that front the street would be two-to-three story mixed-use, with business uses on the ground and residences above.

A MODERN TRANSPORTATION CENTER

This plan envisions a modern transportation center with an attached parking garage as one of the Mall's major anchors. The center would be located on the new Main Street (near the existing JC Penney) and attached to the Mall via an elevated walkway. The visualization to the right imagines a street view of the transportation center from the food court across the street.

The center would feature a large lobby with comfortable places for people to sit and wait for their bus or ride. To minimize the inconvenience of waiting, the center would have a cafe-like atmosphere with space for local vendors to sell snacks and coffee, public restrooms, and other similar amenities. To reduce travel stress there would be booths with maps and brochures, ticket-purchasing kiosks, and displays showing real-time "next bus" information.

While bus transit would be the core focus of the center, other transportation options would be supported to maximize mobility and connectivity. The site would feature a curbside pick-up and drop-off zone for taxis and ride hailing vehicles, and priority parking spots for car share vehicles and electric vehicle charging stations. First-last mile connectivity for people whose destination is out of the typical pedestrian range would also be enhanced with bicycle supportive facilities, such as secure indoor bike parking corrals, storage lockers, and a bike share station.

③ Parking Garages & Context Appropriate Parking

This plan envisions parking within the context of a carefully designed landscape. Rather than dominate the site, as the Mall's parking lots currently do, parking would play a supporting role. Through a combination of streetfront parking, surface parking, and parking garages, parking would be dispersed throughout the site and appropriately sized for reasonable demand.

A key feature of this vision is the use of strategically located parking garages. These garages (the yellow-green buildings in the rendering) would be placed adjacent to, or within easy walking distance of, the Mall. Parking garages, by their nature, are a more efficient use of space than surface parking and can preserve significant portions of land for additional development or open space.

Given the amount of people who will frequent the Mall's parking garages, the entrance/exit areas would be planned and designed as public spaces with adjacent retail and quality hardscape or landscaping elements. The garages would set the standard for sustainable design practices by featuring green roofs, on-site renewable energy, energy efficient lighting, and rainwater capture, among other innovative strategies. Parking garage operators could also offer bicycle storage, car-sharing options, preferred parking and charging for electric vehicles, and incentives to carpoolers to promote more environmentally friendly travel choices.

④ A Restored South Branch of Long Creek

Successful downtowns and city centers are often linked to, and built around, natural attractions. In Southern Maine, for example, many of the largest urban centers have developed around harbors or along major rivers (the Saco River in Saco/Biddeford, Portland Harbor in Portland, the Presumpscot River in Westbrook, to name a few). While these features serve an important economic function, they also add a strong sense of place and identity to an area, and are endless sources for leisure and recreation.

SUSTAINABLE PARKING GARAGE DESIGN
The nine-story, 1,825-space parking garage for the Blue Cross Blue Shield headquarters in Detroit, Michigan features a green roof with a 1/10 mile walking and jogging track made with recycled rubber paving. Built with recycled steel and concrete, the garage also recycles rainwater, which is piped into a 120,000 gallon holding tank underground.

In this regard, several new and emerging centers are also being developed with more careful attention paid to the ecology and character of the landscape. For example, the design for the Rock Row development in Westbrook is oriented around a former quarry soon-to-be transformed into a pond with walking trails throughout the site. Similarly, the Scarborough Downs development is designed around a large, traditional town green.

At the Mall, the most notable natural feature (though currently hidden) is the South Branch of Long Creek. Several decades ago, the South Branch was paved over by parking lots and relegated to a ditch at the perimeter of the site adjacent to Philbrook Avenue. In its current condition, the stream is an uninhabitable catch-all for trash and stormwater runoff from the Mall's parking lots. According to Long Creek Watershed Management staff, the South Branch is the most impacted tributary to Long Creek and has the highest concentrations of chlorides from salt use observed anywhere in the watershed.

The project team's vision would "daylight" the South Branch and restore the stream to approximate its original course. The South Branch would flow directly through the site and feature all the elements of a healthy stream, such as a tree canopy, stream banks, floodplains, and a natural stream bed. The stream would have lighted walking paths along its banks with benches, overlook areas, and attractive pedestrian bridge crossings in key places to preserve walkability and connectivity.

⑤ A Large & Diverse Housing Supply

A major emphasis of this plan is the addition of a large, and diverse supply of housing at the Maine Mall. The residential development envisioned in this plan would provide a broad range of housing types within easy walking distance of transit, a regional job center, and an area with a host of convenient services. This location would be particularly beneficial to lower income households, older adults, and people with disabilities who may not have reliable access to transportation. While these groups would be well served living in this location, housing would be developed at a range of price points and for a mix of life stages. Such a diversity of housing types would accommodate all needs, incomes, and preferences, and attract a unique and diverse community.

By design, the highest concentration of housing would be situated within a 1/4 mile (or less than a five minute walk) from the proposed transportation center. The area just east of the transportation center would feature seven residential buildings, each seven-to-eight stories in height. To provide a sense of seclusion and quiet, most of these buildings would be located on the opposite side of the restored South Branch of Long Creek, and the area would feature an ample amount of open space, passive recreation space, and forested areas.

Additional two-to-three story mixed-use housing would be available throughout most of the site. These mixed-use buildings (light pink in the rendering) would provide for more public uses on the lower floor, such as retail shops, restaurants, or commercial businesses, and more private uses on the upper floors such as residential units, hotel rooms, or office space.

⑥ A Connected Street Grid with Short Blocks

The project team's vision features a grid network of interconnected streets with smaller block sizes. This type of layout allows for short and direct routes, which is especially important for walking and transit station accessibility. In this plan, all streets would have direct and continuous sidewalk and crosswalk connections.

A tight network of streets and pedestrian paths offers multiple routes to many destinations and can make trips more varied and enjoyable. Connected streets also ensure that vehicular traffic is dispersed across the entire network and not funneled onto one or two main thoroughfares. Lastly, a connected street grid with direct access to all areas of the Mall would form efficient and convenient routing for an internal Mall circulator bus or shuttle.

⑦ A Year-Round Open Air Market

Responding to an emerging preference among many for outdoor shopping experiences, this plan features a year-round open air market attached to the south-facing side of the Mall. The market could be used for a variety of purposes: it could provide alfresco dining for restaurants and cafes; it could create low-risk/low-rent spaces for local vendors and small businesses to sell arts, crafts, food, produce, and other items; and lastly, it could serve as a venue space for food trucks, farmers markets, and even small neighborhood gatherings and concerts.

⑧ More Recreation & Open Space

As it exists today, with its vast parking lots and little else, few people, or families, would choose to live at the Mall if given the choice. To create a truly livable neighborhood with its own special character, the site would need to feature far more recreation and open space than it does today. Strong, vibrant neighborhoods require places where people of all ages can easily and safely get outside for a walk, take the dog out, play sports, have a picnic, or go to the playground, among the long list of daily activities.

In this plan, recreation and open space is dispersed throughout the site. The most active area for recreation would be the small park located between the Mall and Gorham Road. The park would feature a little league baseball field and playground buffered from surrounding uses by a stand of trees.

The largest tract of open space would surround the residential neighborhood (behind the transportation center) and act as a transition between the more intense uses at the Mall. For this neighborhood, the residential common building would also serve a significant recreation function and include a gym, pool, basketball court, or other such facilities to cater to the daily needs of more active residents.

Other opportunities for recreation and exercise would include the scenic multi-use paths along the restored South Branch of Long Creek, which would also connect to the local trail network offsite, and the parking garages with green roofs, which could feature a long list of potential amenities (walking paths, gardens, small playing fields or courts, outdoor pools, bike and skateboard parks, etc.).

Next Steps

The Maine Mall Transit-Oriented Development Concept Plan is the first in a series of steps that would be needed to redevelop the Mall site. The following pages provide possible actions, strategies, and considerations for how the City, property owners, and stakeholders might work together to bring about a redevelopment opportunity.

If redevelopment were to prove practical and realistic, in all likelihood it would need to happen in carefully thought-out phases. Since the Mall is such a large site, with so many active businesses, it would be too disruptive to redevelop the entire site at one time.

The project team believes the most suitable area for an initial phase of development would be the parking lots adjacent to the JC Penney building on the east side of the site. These lots sit empty, or near empty, for most of the year and would likely be the best area for locating housing. A logical place for a second phase would be the parking lots by the Sears building on the south side of the site, while a third phase could take place on the north side of the Mall, in the area between Macy's and Gorham Road.

Next Steps

The next steps that follow are primarily written with City staff and elected officials in mind. In this regard, they are intended to serve as a reference, outlining actions and strategies the City could take to coordinate with stakeholders, set priorities, and lay the groundwork for future transit-oriented development. The next steps are divided into five categories: City-Wide Planning & Policy, Site-Specific Planning, Transportation & Mobility, Environmental Planning, and Funding.

POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT PHASES
The most suitable place for initial development would likely be the parking lots adjacent to JC Penney on the east side of the site. A logical place for a second phase would be the parking lots by the Sears building on the south side of the site, while a third phase could take place on the north side of the Mall.

City-Wide TOD Planning & Policy

- **ADOPT A CITY-WIDE TOD VISION**
  Adopt a city-owned and city-wide vision for transit-oriented development to send a clear signal to developers and residents about future development priorities and to establish a mandate for other regulatory changes required. Since TOD relies on long-term investment in transit and urban development, it is important for the vision to be owned widely, and understood, by municipal officials, staff, and residents. Consider formally adopting a TOD vision statement and including language in support of TOD in all relevant planning efforts.

  Responsibility: City of South Portland

- **MEASURE ACCESS TO TRANSIT & SET CITY-WIDE TOD TARGETS**
  Evaluate existing access to transit and set quantifiable city-wide TOD targets. Example TOD targets could include: percent of population (or new development) within a certain distance of transit; and/or percent of population living in TOD zones.

  Responsibility: City of South Portland

- **ESTABLISH TOD OVERLAY DISTRICTS**
  Establish TOD (or "Smart Growth") overlay districts to provide incentives for appropriate development, or redevelopment, within areas identified for future growth by the City. In order to receive incentives (e.g., density/height increases, parking reductions), the proposed development would need to meet established requirements related to affordable housing, walkability, and transit accessibility. Example requirements might include bus pull outs, bus stops/shelters, multi-use paths, bike lanes, car share, public seating, and pedestrian lighting, among other improvements.

  Responsibility: City of South Portland

Site-Specific Planning

- **ENGAGE PROPERTY & BUSINESS OWNERS**
  Following the completion of the Maine Mall TOD Concept Plan, the City should continue to engage property and business owners at the Maine Mall site, and in the west side of the City, to understand their needs and future development desires.

  Responsibility: City of South Portland (lead) / Property Owners / Stakeholders

- **DEVELOP AN AREA-WIDE MASTER PLAN**
  Develop a master plan for the western side of the City in which the Maine Mall is the primary anchor. A master plan would provide a more detailed vision for the area that is carefully calibrated with market realities, physical and environmental constraints, transportation logistics, costs, and local support. A master plan could also include a market analysis to determine what types of mixed-uses the market can support. Any master planning effort should engage property and business owners, shoppers, and residents in the process to ensure broad buy-in and support.

  Responsibility: City of South Portland (lead) / Property Owners / Business Owners / Residents

- **AMEND ZONING AT THE MAINE MALL**
  The City should consider amending current zoning at the Maine Mall to align land use regulations with TOD strategies. Zoning should allow for higher density residential and mixed-use development that supports active pedestrian friendly streets and careful transit integration. The Mall currently resides in the Central and Regional Commercial District (CCR), which does not allow for residential or mixed-use development.

  Responsibility: City of South Portland

- **ACQUIRE MUNICIPALLY-OWNED PROPERTY**
  The City should seek to acquire land in and around the site as opportunities arise to use for public purposes (parks, open spaces, parking garages, public buildings, etc.) and to facilitate public/private partnerships. If property costs are prohibitive, the City should consider requiring future development to include trail access and/or open space contributions.

  Responsibility: City of South Portland

Transportation & Mobility

- **DEVELOP CORRIDOR STUDIES FOR ALL MAJOR ROADS IN THE MAINE MALL AREA**
  Improve mobility, safety, and accessibility in Maine Mall area for all users by developing detailed corridor studies for all major roads. Special attention should be paid to pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, buffering vulnerable users from the high volume of vehicle traffic, the location and design of bus stops and major crossings, road/intersection safety and design, and traffic signal improvements. The City's Complete Streets Policy and the PACTS Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Design Guidelines can serve as guiding documents for the types of improvements needed.

  Responsibility: City of South Portland (lead) / MaineDOT / Maine Turnpike Authority / PACTS / Property Owners / Stakeholders

- **IMPROVE EXISTING TRANSIT FACILITIES**
  Prior to any major redevelopment occurring, transit service could be improved in the short-term by providing more amenities at existing stops. At the main stop by JC Penney, for example, benches and shelters could be installed and a real-time display provided inside the lobby. At other stops in the Mall area, benches could be installed and accessibility issues reviewed to improve the user experience. The City could also work with transit agencies and Mall owners to pursue funding to build a transit-mini hub as designed in the PACTS Transit Stop Access Project Phase IIA report (more detail on next page).

  Responsibility: City of South Portland (lead) / Transit Agencies / Property Owners / Stakeholders

- **COORDINATE TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS WITH NEW DEVELOPMENT**
  As density increases, investment in transit must keep pace with increased demand. As the site evolves, conduct periodic transit level of service evaluations to explore the feasibility of increasing transit frequency, or, adding new routes (such as bus rapid transit or an internal Mall circulator) to ensure a high level of transit service is provided in the area.

  Responsibility: City of South Portland (lead) / Transit Agencies / PACTS / Property Owners / Stakeholders

- **REVIEW & REVISE PARKING REGULATIONS**
  Review, and consider revising, existing parking regulations so the available parking is appropriate to average demand. A common technique for appropriately scaling parking in TOD-communities is to develop parking maximums. Under the parking maximum approach, cities establish a maximum ratio for parking spaces for various development types. Developers then have the option to provide less parking than the maximum amount allowed. The overall intent is to ensure the parking needs of a transit-oriented community are met while still encouraging walking and transit use.

  Responsibility: City of South Portland

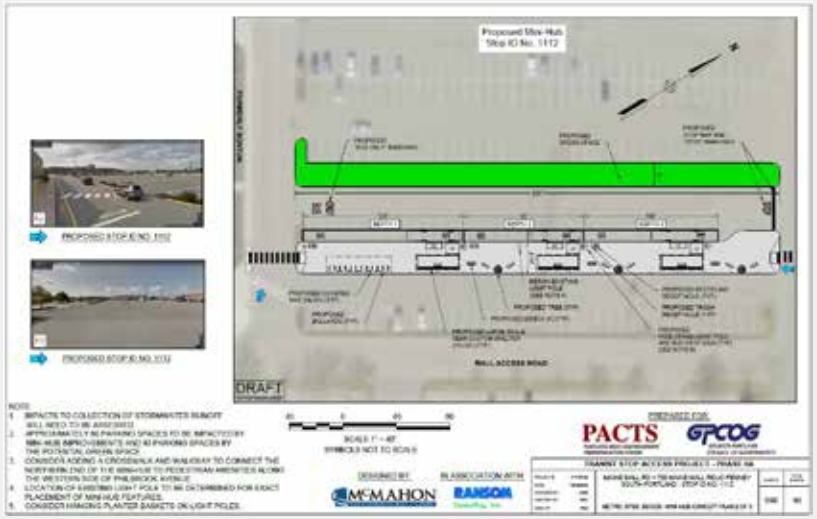
- **IMPROVE & EXPAND TRAIL NETWORK**
  Partner with the South Portland Land Trust, Portland Trails, and other relevant groups to improve and expand the local trail network. Possible projects include: heightening the visibility of local trails in the area with better wayfinding, signage, and trailheads; improving the condition of existing trails; selecting specific trails to be upgraded to an

TRANSIT MINI-HUB

These concept design plans for a transit mini-hub at the Mall are taken directly from the PACTS Transit Stop Access Project (TSAP) Phase II Part A report, prepared by McMahon Associates in association with Ransom Consulting, Inc.

The purpose of the TSAP initiative is to improve access to fixed route bus service throughout the region. In Phase II Part A, the project team developed conceptual design plans and cost estimates for 120 stops and two mini-hubs, as well as targeted bicycle and pedestrian improvements at these stops. The Maine Mall was selected as one of the two transit mini-hub sites.

While the Maine Mall TOD Concept Plan envisions a fully built out transportation center on the east side of the site, in the interim a scaled down transit mini-hub, like the one shown here, could be built within the existing site layout. The engineering-level plans show a transit mini-hub in front of the former Bon Ton. However, if this site is not feasible the plans could easily be reconfigured to other locations at the Mall. The TSAP report is available to view or download at www.gpcog.org/175/Transit-Stop-Access-Project.



Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standard of accessibility; establishing a connection to the new trail on the restored section of Long Creek; and, establishing a connection to a proposed regional trail through the Sable Oaks property.

Responsibility: City of South Portland (lead) / South Portland Land Trust / Portland Trails / Property Owners / Stakeholders

Environmental Planning

- **EXPLORE SOUTH BRANCH RESTORATION**
  Make initial inquiries to the Long Creek Watershed Management District, the MaineDEP, and other relevant agencies to explore the feasibility of restoring the South Branch of Long Creek to its original course.

  Responsibility: City of South Portland (lead) / Long Creek Watershed Management District / MaineDEP

- **REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**
  Continue to incorporate best management practices (BMPs) for reducing environmental impacts at the Mall and in the Long Creek watershed. Possible BMPs include piloting heated sidewalks and pervious pavement in select locations, stormwater recapture, green infrastructure, and green roofs, among other projects. Coordinate improvements with the goals and actions identified in the City's "One Climate Future" initiative and final plan.

  Responsibility: Long Creek Watershed Management District (lead) / City of South Portland

Funding

- **REVIEW & UPDATE THE TRANSIT TIF**
  Review and update (if appropriate) the City's existing Transit-Oriented Development Tax Increment Financing District (Transit TIF). The City's Transit TIF captures 25% of the increase in the value of real property located in the TIF District. Funds can be used to support increased frequency of buses on current bus routes as well as adding new transit facilities, such as transit hubs, bus stops, or shelters.

  Responsibility: City of South Portland

- **PROMOTE THE OPPORTUNITY ZONE INCENTIVE**
  Promote the Opportunity Zone incentive to prospective developers, as well as other state incentives and programmatic resources. The Opportunity Zone incentive is a community investment tool established by Congress to encourage long-term investments in low-income urban and rural communities nationwide. (South Portland's western census tract is currently an Opportunity Zone).

  Responsibility: City of South Portland

Maine Mall
TOD Concept Plan

City of South Portland

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PACTS
PORTLAND AREA COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM