



# What Has Emerged From Possible Dreams Since 2008?

Alice Mann, Moderator, Possible Dreams

1/31/14

Team Haverhill's "Possible Dreams" community visioning event involves only two hours in the course of a whole year, but this annual conversation has accomplished some important results.

**First, the Possible Dreams event has helped to the people of Haverhill to "know their own mind."** While Possible Dreams is neither a scientific survey nor an official strategic planning effort, some key community aspirations have been affirmed over and over again during the event's seven-year run. Such discussion does not automatically make things happen; but by helping residents to give voice to their aspirations, the event lays the groundwork for creative and fruitful efforts.

Mayor Fiorentini and many City Councilors have described Possible Dreams as a special opportunity for elected leaders to listen for the hopes and priorities of local residents—including many who have recently chosen Haverhill as their home.

**Second, the Possible Dreams event has launched or encouraged steps of creative action on the part of many different entities.** Some "next steps" from Possible Dreams have involved Team Haverhill directly, such as:

- 30 months of community-based research and advocacy that encouraged the Mayor and Council to launch their successful single-stream recycling program.
- Volunteer support and leadership that led to the dramatic revitalization—and ongoing success—of the Haverhill Farmers' Market.
- Launch of the River Ruckus festival—now preparing for its fourth edition—to draw people from across the Merrimack Valley to Haverhill's riverfront.
- Frequent installations of high-quality public art as a key feature of the emerging downtown landscape.

But many of the major advances toward community dreams have resulted from efforts of federal, state, and local government, guided by our Mayor, City Council, and School Committee. Still others are coming to fruition through the individual and combined efforts of:

- Greater Haverhill Foundation
- Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce
- Private investors
- Individual business owners and entrepreneurs
- Northern Essex Community College
- UMass Lowell
- Haverhill's "Cultural Treasures" organizations
- Local nonprofits of all kinds, and
- Creative individuals who step up and make something happen.

**Third, the Possible Dreams event—a very modest initiative—may lay the groundwork for more formal and extensive community-based planning efforts.** In at least a small way, Possible Dreams has helped to increase:

- The alignment of community efforts around some shared aspirations
- Respect for the complementary missions of different institutions, and
- Confidence in the creativity of our community members, if they are given an opportunity for meaningful participation.

So, Possible Dreams asks residents to think about what we can do to take our community to the “next level.” If you would like to get the flavor of some the shared hopes and creative ideas from past years’ Possible Dreams events, you may want to scan the attached reports on what happened at each year’s event.

# Possible Dreams 2014

About 110 community residents—including many who have moved here recently—gathered at café tables on January 27, to identify steps that could be taken in the coming year in order to move the community to the “next level.” Attendees were welcomed by Mayor James Fiorentini, a regular participant in Possible Dreams conversations, whose innovative zoning proposals and other development strategies have paved the way for much of the city’s recent progress.

As ideas emerged through the evening, table participants selected items they deemed both “important” and “doable,” to share with the total group. Leading off the report-out session was City Councilor William Ryan, who suggested a volunteer fair showcasing a wide range of local organizations and opportunities, promoted in mailings of tax and water bills. Next, Ronald Trombley of the Greater Haverhill Foundation spoke to the need for a “Harbor Plan” to connect Haverhill’s heritage as an inland port with the city’s emerging plans for riverfront revitalization.

Participants offered ideas for stimulating interest from private investors in riverfront and downtown development projects, and for promoting Haverhill attractions overall. Ideas included a public “call to developers”; maps or QR codes on downtown parking kiosks to highlight sites to visit; advertising on commuter rail and the Downeaster train service; a discount program for cultural attractions, like Worcester’s WOO Card; interpretive material placed alongside historical monuments and markers; and a digital billboard on route 495, displaying both commercial advertising images and information about Haverhill facilities, events, and attractions.

Residents also called for increased effort to recruit high-tech manufacturers to Haverhill, and for heightened focus in the schools on so-called STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). The presence of UMass Lowell in the city was seen as a major resource for such a STEM emphasis, and student internships were suggested as strategy for bridging the gap between school and employment. Further work is needed, participants said, on the condition and reputation of Haverhill public schools if the city is to retain young residents and attract high-tech companies to locate here.

Neighborhood conditions received considerable attention from participants, including the need for a Neighborhood Watch in Lafayette Square, ongoing attention to Portland Street Playground after this year’s renovation, and the possibility of a City “neighborhood services” officer to connect with residents and help to organize neighborhood associations.

## **Ideas that Tables Reported Out as “Important and Doable”**

VOLUNTEER FAIR with all the organizations exhibiting.

- Use tax/water bill mailings to publicize
- Possibly connect to a “volunteer clearing house”
- Possibly connect to a community service requirement at the high school(s)

“HARBOR PLAN” for the Merrimack River in Haverhill

- Build on Haverhill’s heritage as an inland harbor
  - Include a commercial dock
- Include strategies to “get the message out” and bring developers to come look at opportunities created by recent zoning
  - Issue a “Call to Developers”

- Look into group called New England Development, investors like those behind the “Common Man” developments in New Hampshire.
- Model after Lowell’s Hamilton Canal District
- Possible role for the Chamber in inviting developers
- Promoting the idea
  - Advertise on commuter rail and Downeaster
  - Digital billboard on 495 (eight scrolling panels, one always focused on Haverhill opportunities and activities)
  - Promotion of opportunities ties in with long-term discussions about our community’s overall capacity for marketing/promotion of a coherent identity.)

#### ATTRACT YOUNG-PEOPLE (twenty-somethings) to downtown and harbor developments

- Some “hot gondola guys” (reference to WaterFire installation and events in Providence)
- We’d need a different name for the installation/event, like Fire on the Water
- Noted Mayor Fiorentini’s longtime interest in bringing something like this to Haverhill
- Contact artist Barnaby Evans (<http://waterfire.org/about/barnaby-evans-artist/>)

#### S.T.E.M. INITIATIVES

- Science, technology, engineering, math
- Incentives for high-tech manufacturers to come here
- Incorporate schools at all levels, superintendents
- Link kids with tech and tech companies, internships
  - Access 21 currently has a grant-funded internship program—could it be included in school budget?
- Build on new connection with UMass Lowell
- Will bring economic development/creativity
- Needs a Steering Committee

#### BATHROOMS

- For homeless at GAR Park—“They are citizens, too.”
- Bathroom facilities needed at Winnekenni

#### HISTORIC PRESERVATION and promotion of Haverhill’s historical assets

- Two 17<sup>th</sup>-century burial grounds—haven’t documented who’s buried there—Dustins, Sam Adams’ grandfather (and his slave)
- Comment about road race and the 12 historical plaques/monuments along the way—add explanatory information at those sites—possibly with QR codes for smart phone access
- Create program to produce historic signs for houses—goal of 100 per year
- Haverhill Historical Commission—meets first Wednesdays—knowledgeable people, good place to take ideas
  - Working now on a next stage in shoe-worker memorial (beyond new plaque at parking garage)

- Essex Heritage has a grant program going right now—proposals due February 17—with \$1500 grants. ([www.essexheritage.org](http://www.essexheritage.org)) Rocks Village leaders won one of these grants a previous year.
  - Idea of giving task to a grant-writing class as a project

IMPROVE SCHOOLS (AND THEIR IMAGE) so we can retain younger people when they have families

- Promote our positive graduates and positive programs
- Improve the appearance of older schools
- Relates to S.T.E.M. conversation (above)—build strength there

COMMUNITY GARDENS DOWNTOWN

- Downtown kids have never gardened
- Already one garden on Water Street
- Tattersall Farm has current initiative to connect urban neighborhoods to gardening at their site

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH IN LAFAYETTE SQUARE

- Just started on in Mt. Washington—could learn from them
- Police Department and Haverhill Anti-Violence Coalition can be helpful

PROMOTE PRIDE IN LOCAL EVENTS

- Request that city's digital (rolling) billboards be used for more events

DOG PARK

- Perhaps in the area behind Building 19

SANTA PARADE

- Turn left onto Merrimack Street
- End at Washington Square to light up the tree

UNUSED CITY ASSETS LIKE OLD SCHOOLS

- Current exploration of Arts Center at Cogswell (on South Main Street)

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES OFFICER

- Created by Mayor and Council to help neighborhoods access programs/services, help create neighborhood associations

COMMUNITY DISCOUNT CARD

- Museums and cultural attractions
- Look at Worcester's WOO Card  
<http://www.worcestermass.org/arts-culture-entertainment/woo-card>

MORE DOWNTOWN SIGNAGE

- At railroad station, maps around town that show people where things are
- Put maps and/or QR codes on parking kiosks

## CONTINUED INVOLVEMENT IN PORTLAND STREET

- After the build, keeping it a positive place
- Team Haverhill will remain involved to encourage relevant groups/agencies to offer programs or services on that site

## “HAVERHILL MATTERS”—journalism initiative

- Ties in to need for local stories and information

## MORE PERFORMANCES AT GAR PARK

- Make it user-friendly

## TEACHER RESIDENCY PROGRAM

- Attract young teachers to make a (3 year) commitment to live and teach in Haverhill
- Help struggling schools to bring up performance level, and bring young people to live and work in Haverhill.

## **General Impressions from 2014 Possible Dreams Tabletop Notes:**

**Promote and Improve the City/Downtown** - Just about every table specified the need for promotion and improvement of the city in general or the downtown in particular. Specific areas of focus were:

- Better promotion of city and events (via website, electronic signs, email newsletter, Downeaster ads, local celebrities, and events like Stroll, Santa Parade, Restaurant week or city-wide flea market) – Most of these ideas were considered doable in 2014
- Beautify and improve downtown (via cleanups, planting, murals, signage and creation of pedestrian area) – A number of people specifically mentioned GAR park, including several mentions of restrooms
- Stimulate new business and retail (via economic assistance, investors, call to developers, promotion)

**Increase and Promote Arts, Culture and History in the City** – Over half the tables mentioned this. Primary ideas include:

- Promote arts, culture and history (via discount cards, historical signs and trail, and film/arts events)
- Create spaces to support the arts (such as screening room, artist studios/lofts, community art center, and a cultural district) – Half a dozen tables mentioned the need for a performing arts center, though this was considered challenging to achieve

**Natural Resource Preservation and Promotion** – Over half the tables mentioned this. Primary ideas include:

- Promote natural resources (via local meals, farm-to-table, pond-to-pond concert, school programs, maps)
- More community gardens (including one in a downtown location such as GAR or Columbus park)
- Expand and improve parks and recreational facilities (via space preservation efforts, fix bathrooms, possible exercise stations, fields)

**Increase/Improve Access and Use of the River** – Close to half the tables mentioned this.

Primary ideas include:

- Access for recreation (fishing, boating, offer gondola rides, walking on new/improved boardwalks) and creation of boating house/program

**Support/Unite Neighborhoods and Organizations throughout the City** – Close to half the tables mentioned this. Primary ideas include:

- Find ways to bring together various/diverse neighborhoods (forums, neighborhood services department at City hall) – Half a dozen tables mentioned the need to bring neighborhoods together
- Connect volunteers and community/non-profit groups (via central list and/or council, volunteer events, encouraging HS students to volunteer)

**Improve Schools** – At least a third of the tables mentioned the need for improvement of the schools. Ideas mentioned most included:

- Teacher residency program
- Have Haverhill High internships to teach job skills

**Increase Public Safety** – At least a third of the tables mentioned the need to decrease crime or improve safety. Many tables didn't give specific strategies but a few ideas were:

- Neighborhood watches and investment (especially Portland Street and Mount Washington areas)
- Improve police/foot patrols

**Make City Friendly to Diverse Constituents (families, kids, teens)** – About a quarter of the tables mentioned the need for making the city friendly to families and youth. Ideas mentioned the most included:

- More teen activities (including jobs) and spaces (such as a teen center) – This was biggest focus in this area
- More family and youth events (concerts, picnics or movies in the park, etc.)

**Support S.T.E.M. Initiatives (capability for kids and adults)** – Two or three tables mentioned S.T.E.M., and one or two others mentioned the related theme of high tech job creation.

## Possible Dreams 2013

Overall, the evening's discussion conveyed a strong sense of community pride, affirmation for steady progress, and positive expectations for the future.

Participants applauded new additions to Haverhill's community landscape, including a satellite campus of UMass Lowell, a new boutique hotel, new firms that may be recruited to join an "open innovation" cluster, and a co-operative online news source called "Haverhill Matters." recruiting new industry and bringing good jobs to Haverhill. Participants noted the new level of co-operation they observe among the various entities promoting the city's cultural revitalization and economic development."

Alongside these important new themes, this year's Possible Dreams assembly voiced strong community support for key components of Haverhill's ongoing revitalization strategy. A mandate to **forge ahead with downtown revitalization** was the most common message from the thirty different table-conversations that took place through the evening. Participants called for:

- An upgrade of the Merrimack Street section of the downtown corridor.
- Continued work on a "bridge-to-bridge loop" of downtown commerce, art, and recreation.
- More river-oriented facilities, such as a kayak or canoe rental dock, and more river-oriented activities, such as River Ruckus.
- Constant attention to aesthetics and cleanliness.
- Further work to establish a new downtown cultural facility.
- Effective messaging that presents Haverhill's downtown as the center of a whole "universe" of cultural sites, farms, parks, trails, and recreation areas.

### Community Hopes and Aspirations Mentioned in Table Discussions

- Keep improving esthetics/curb appeal downtown
  - Cleaner, better lighting, safer
  - Improve buildings, storefronts and windows
  - Improve Merrimack Street to quality of Washington
  - Fill vacant store fronts
  - Improved esthetics of the back of buildings on Merrimack Street to enhance view from Bradford side and rail trail
  - More beautiful Wall on Wall Street
- Make the river a real draw for people to come to Haverhill, for resident to enjoy
  - New public river access, river activities
- Keep pushing toward all the downtown could be/include
  - Sophisticated, interesting, prosperous-looking, creative, more cultural opportunities
  - Bookstore
  - Performing arts center, "center for the arts," or "community theater," or other cultural facility
  - Local goods marketplace like Chelsea Pier
  - Rooftop gardens



- More “real” (substantial) businesses in the main corridor
- “Washington Square Park” idea
- UMass Lowell
- Build out the “bridge-to-bridge trail” on both sides of river
- Retain Haverhill’s diversity of landscapes—working farms, open land, green spaces, parks, and recreation—makes city uniquely attractive
  - Expand community gardens – neighborhoods and local farms
  - Way to row your boat from lake to lake
  - Composting bathrooms at Winnekenni
  - Share the wealth—to upgrade facilities more evenly around the city
  - Smart Growth principles
  - Community Preservation Act
  - Ways for residents to “own” the safety and quality of outdoor spaces
- Focus on meeting children’s needs – health, happiness, safety
  - All the schools in Haverhill get a reputation for excellence—do whatever it takes to improve school system and perception of it
  - Haverhill a safe and positive place to raise a family
  - Create a place for teens to skate outside
  - Renovate Portland St. Playground
  - Arts in the schools – music and art back in full force from elementary to high school
  - More: activities for families and youth, social integration
  - Youth soccer—better field
- Attract new businesses—employment opportunities will lead to an improved economy
  - Provide training/mentoring resources for business owners, early entrepreneurs
  - Better information networks
- City-wide attention to preservation, history
  - Historical info/plaques on buildings downtown
  - Highlight cultural history of city neighborhoods
  - Leverage history of Rocks Village, Whittier, Buttonwood--connected
- Branding/marketing – better promotion of what we have here
  - Increased attention to all the positives happening around town
  - Unified websites, promotional efforts
  - Get over past mistakes (like urban renewal) and focus on moving forward
  - Identity – truthful expression to the outside of what Haverhill really is!
  - Changing outsiders’ perspective of Haverhill
  - Increasing participation in current programs, such a library
- Further social integration, celebration of diversity Preservation
  - Community café – no cost, healthy, dignity
  - Use art initiatives as a way to further social integration
  - Recognize the “uncounted”

- Continued consistency in local government
- Strengthen Santa Parade
- Want to see a more vibrant city

# Possible Dreams 2012: “Bridge to Bridge and Beyond”

Key “Messages” we heard in the “Town Meeting” conversation - (last portion of the meeting)

## Message #1: Link up two big Haverhill assets—“culture” and “agriculture”

Participants at Possible Dreams 2012 offered a fresh take on what makes Haverhill distinctive. They called for a stronger link between “farming” and “culture, recreation and tourism.”

One newer resident of the city called our agricultural sector, which includes eight working farms, Haverhill’s undiscovered “gold mine” of resources for local recreation and regional tourism. With the “slow food” movement in full swing, Haverhill could link together and promote related assets, such as farms, wineries, brewery, and restaurants. Packages could be created that combine elements like farm tours, tastings, restaurant visits, and food-related programs or conferences. Haverhill could turn an old factory space into a “test kitchen” venue. As farmers in Haverhill begin to work together more closely, through vehicles like the revived Bradford Grange, the potential for promoting our agricultural sector is increased.

Haverhill has already developed a reputation for good restaurants. One next step might be a Restaurant Week. After the meeting, one participating farmer suggested that local produce could be featured as part of such an event—a distinctive Haverhill spin on the Restaurant Week model. Another young resident suggested special promotions to NECC students, who might use a long break between classes to come downtown and eat, perhaps hopping onto the public bus that many students are not aware of.

Good food combines naturally with arts and culture activities. In places people really like to go, the combination of these two elements strengthens the draw for both. One participant described Haverhill as being distinctive because it *combines* these two strengths. The agriculture-culture combination could be further developed, packaged and marketed.

## Message #2: Create new downtown venues for arts, culture and recreation

To strengthen the “culture” side of the equation, there was a call for new arts and culture venues in this “bridge to bridge” area—a theme that has emerged at Possible Dreams for the past five years and is still gaining momentum. Ideas included:

- Use the Woolworth property for something like the Firehouse Center in Newburyport—a combined performance and gallery venue on the riverfront.
- Survey the Merrimack Valley to discover what is not available now that would bring people in our direction. One idea was an aquarium. Another was either a science museum or a children’s museum—or both combined in the same venue.
- Develop a residential artist colony combined with an arts center. Offer pods or storefronts where people can see artists at work. Hold a sculpture symposium and place major sculptures along the river.
- Welcome visitors into the action with a boutique hotel or a hostel right downtown.
- Don’t ignore the asset we already have in City Hall Auditorium. Might be suitable for classic movies, music events, possibly live theater.

## Message #3: Work on “curb appeal”—make this area attractive, clean, unified and connected

Another cluster of comments focused on the overall appearance and usability of the “bridge to bridge” area. Ideas included:

- Improve the overall “curb appeal”—not only with new sidewalks and plantings, but also with new public investment in maintenance and cleanliness. Volunteer efforts are great, but not sufficient to create a consistently appealing downtown experience. Stay on top of graffiti, and take care of the trees.
- Make sure there are unifying architectural elements—either some stylistic features that are repeated in different buildings, or a big architectural feature (like a gateway) that pulls things together visually, or both.
- Make even more use of vacant storefront space. Art in the storefronts is a great start. Create “pop-up shops” featuring locally-based producers, like Southwick, Cedars, and Swix, so that residents can easily purchase items that are made here.
- Work on “filling the holes”—not just filling up empty buildings, but also filling gaps in the spectrum of retail establishments. With more people living downtown, there may be demand for all kinds of retail. Why force people to go to the mall?
- On the theme of “connections,” one participant expressed a hope that the rail trail wouldn’t stop at the bridge, but would extend all the way to Georgetown. Another participant suggested a “Whittier Trail,” with poems on plaques at sites mentioned in them—a trail people could bike as well as drive.
- Create a sign—visible as you come across the Basiliere Bridge into Haverhill—that tells you what activities are happening this week

#### **Message #4: Make it family-friendly**

Participant mentioned that the downtown festivals are the only occasions when it makes sense to bring their children—otherwise the activities and venues are all geared to adults. Participants said:

- Create specific places that are well-designed for children.
- Develop ongoing activities that can engage the whole family.
- Make better use of existing spaces, even the smaller ones.
- Consider a dog park, near the bridge and rail trail, and other uses of public space to draw people together for recreation.

#### **Message #5: Create a unified marketing plan, communicating a coherent identity for Haverhill’s “Bridge to Bridge” area.**

This is another theme that has surfaced before at Possible Dreams. Haverhill needs to tell its story in a more compelling way—weaving key assets into a coherent message about what we have to offer. And we need to tell this story, consistently and clearly, over time.

#### **Transcribed Notes from “Town Meeting” Portion of Possible Dreams 2012**

- Extend the Rail Trail to Georgetown
- More activities for families and children downtown, especially after hours
- Establish a consistent architectural theme—possibly repeated stylistic elements, possibly a “big” feature like a gateway
- Haverhill is sitting on a “gold mine”—potential for agricultural tourism. Slow food and related movements. [Represented \$5.3 million in 2010. Source not cited.] Link together assets like

farms, wineries, brewery. Connect to commuters. Tour the farms. Feature restaurants, tastings, conference, test kitchen.

- In all our planning, think about what would be unique to Haverhill (at least in this region) that would draw people from the outside, such as an aquarium? A science or children's museum. Both combined?
- Haverhill's arts as a "draw." Music hall and performance space. Artist colony and arts center. Pods or storefronts with artists at work. Combined with a boutique hotel or hostel downtown.
- Create pop-up shops featuring locally-based producers, like Southwick, Cedars, Swix. Use an empty storefront to make a place we could actually purchase what is made here.
- Be sure to connect the good ideas with each other.
- We need a cohesive marketing plan, brand and identity.
- Maintain buildings and landscapes downtown—and keep them clean—without relying so much on volunteers.
- Work on curb appeal for Merrimack Street.
- Build a sign for people coming across the [Basiliere] Bridge to let people know: "This week in Haverhill..."
- People are able and willing to spend money downtown. Good progress on Washington Street, but fill the "holes"—need more variety of retail.
- Develop a theme for the Washington, Wingate, Essex Street area
- Like the art in empty storefronts!
- Don't turn Woolworth into a parking garage. Something like the Firehouse Center in Newburyport—performance and gallery space.
- Hold a sculpture symposium—place sculpture along the river.
- Have a "Restaurant Week."
- Create a "Whittier Trail"—put poems on plaques at sites mentioned—a trail people could bike as well as drive.
- Connect with the student population—NECC—the bus from campus to downtown isn't well known. Publicize it and offer a deal for college students to eat during long breaks between classes.
- Bradford Grange is organizing farmers now. Form an Agricultural Commission. There are 5 farms that must remain agricultural in use because they sold development rights to the state.
- More park areas that bring people together around an activity. Improve existing lighted spaces (even smaller ones). Consider a dog park—perhaps near the bridges and rail trail. Consider community gardens.
- Take pride in our community's distinctive combination of assets
  - Agriculture—both history and present farming activity
  - Culture—both history and present talent—"community arts center"
- Curb appeal—stay on top of graffiti quickly. Take care of our trees (perhaps people adopt them)
- "I drive to the Merrimack Rep in Lowell and the Screening Room in Newburyport—why not here?"
  - Consider City Hall Auditorium as a venue for old movies, music, possibly theater productions.

## **Ideas That Came in Shortly After the Meeting**

**Restaurant Week:** Launching a Restaurant Week program that would include connections with local agriculture, parallel arts and cultural activities, and a “benefit” component for a local cause.

**A Merrimack River Museum:** Create a Merrimack River Museum...making the Haverhill home to the only museum dedicated to the river. Many exhibits rooms, each dedicated to a different aspect, such as: river’s role in city’s history; poets, writers and artists; biodiversity including short-nosed sturgeon; how we are part of a whole watershed; activities for all ages. “With its positioning at the furthest navigable point upriver along the Merrimack, Haverhill is perfectly positioned for this...with structures large enough to house this museum and with nearby parking able to handle buses (school groups and tour groups). Connect to the bridge-to-bridge walking circuit, with informational displays along the way.

**Urban Land Institute Report:** The final report to the City from the November 29 design charrette (focused on the “bridge to bridge” area) is now available in PDF format. [Available on request from Team Haverhill.]

**Youth Involvement:** A Performing Arts Center—possibly on Merrimack Street – could have a theater and a performing center, and encourage people of all ages to participate at different levels. Concerned that besides the Boys/Girls Club and the Y’s, there are no opportunities for free after-school programs for the youth.

**Sustainability Ideas:** Look at "Plan B 4.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization". It gives valuable insights into many coming changes and how cities (section 6) like Haverhill can take steps to adapt to them. [http://www.earth-policy.org/books/pb4/pb4\\_table\\_of\\_contents](http://www.earth-policy.org/books/pb4/pb4_table_of_contents). We can embrace these ideas and thrive. Also look at Chris Martenson’s presentation on the “new abnormal”: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WBiTnBwSWc&list=FLph3oypJrsaZZ6PN3wYgOBw>.

**Blog the Ideas that are Emerging:** Keep the energy going...share what happened with each of our circle of friends, and on our social networks etc to increase awareness and input.

**Haverhill Promotional Video:** Downtown businesses could form a collaborative to produce a 30-minute video—15 minutes focusing on what’s coming in next 30 days, 15 minutes on overall Haverhill history, recreation and activities. Run it 6 or 7 times a day on HCTV, especially during unprogrammed hours; combine with a marketing campaign that refers people to the video; ongoing ad in the Trib for it.

**Citywide Outreach by Downtown Collaborative:** Show interest in the neighborhoods by adopting a park or offering packages of donated items for people burned out of a home.

**Multi-Museum:** One floor a children’s museum; one floor a comic museum; one a history of the Merrimack Valley; one about shoes. Promote access by train, school trips from schools up and down Merrimack Valley to provide daytime traffic.

**Store Window Display Contest:** On Merrimack Street, esthetically pleasing storefronts would be very beneficial. Have a contest for local artists or art students to produce displays for those businesses inclined to participate, relevant to the store/business. The prize is just the opportunity for an artist to very publicly display their work.

**Farm for Veterans, Alternative Bakery:** I want to create a Farm For Veterans and an Alternative Bakery. I am looking for interested people to be part of it.  
[www.thegreenteamsite.com](http://www.thegreenteamsite.com). I

# Possible Dreams 2011

## A Memorable Comment:

“Here’s my vision of a perfect day in downtown Haverhill”:

- Arrive on the river by boat, or perhaps pedaling on bike-friendly paths
- Enjoy sidewalk vendors, boutiques, sailing lessons, picnic in a river-front park
- Evening walk down Washington and Merrimack Streets, with light-strings across the street like the North End
- Visit a new Cultural/Arts Center
- Enjoy seeing the lighted tower on Basiliere Bridge

## Broad Community Aspirations Affirmed at this Event Included:

- **Complete recreation/culture/retail loop on both sides of river**
  - Develop the Woolworth corner and bring Merrimack Street up to standard of Washington Street—multiple amenities, not just restaurants
  - Keep developing Bradford Rail Trail
  - Create boating facilities/activities on the river between the bridges
  - Make better use of Washington Square, Columbus Park, Railroad Square
  - Connect the “parts” of downtown
  - Consider outlets for Merrimack Street?
- **Strong positive image of city and schools**
  - Keep working on unified message/marketing—multiple media, co-operating institutions, promoting the “whole of Haverhill”
  - Information kiosk near train station
  - Implement a graffiti-removal program
- **Downtown a major destination for all ages**
  - Develop a Cultural/Arts Center—visual arts, music, theater, history, “comic book hall of fame”?
  - Light the downtown alleys to create safety and comfort
  - Use empty storefronts for temporary artist galleries/studios
  - Family-friendly features—downtown play options for children
- **Haverhill is a leader in resource conservation, recycling, green technology**
  - [Keep implementing single-stream recycling]
  - Add city-wide composting
  - Expand the number of community gardens around the city
- **Build on Haverhill’s agricultural assets, diverse landscapes**
  - Advance the Farmers’ Market—add new kinds of vendors, make it a whole “cultural experience”
  - “Letter Boxing” to connect people to different landscapes, engage children
- **Recognize and nurture new co-operative relationships**



- Adams grant-funded initiatives
- New “Make Some Noise” summer performance series

### Transcribed Notes from “Town Meeting” Portion of Possible Dreams 2011

**QUESTION:** What did you hear emerging in the table conversations tonight? Where is our community’s energy for 2011?

- Snow removal! [Comment related to recent weather]
- City-wide composting
- Graffiti removal program (as in NYC); perhaps implemented by volunteers in a “City-Year” type program
- Capitalize on the murals—move ahead into music and theater!
- A Cultural Arts **Center**—even perhaps an amphitheater at former Friends Landing site; Something to gather kids like Sad Café in Plaistow
- Connect city and rural Haverhillites—diversity of our landscapes is a unique thing about Haverhill.
- Merrimack Street side of downtown—bring it up to Washington Street standard (clean-up, perhaps a theater, other activity—more than restaurants
- Ask our marketers in real estate and business to “sell” the whole of Haverhill
- Development of the Woolworth building
- Outlet businesses downtown—Merrimack Street?
- Connect the “sides” of downtown
- Make Woolworth building into “Comic Book Hall of Fame”—highlight our own Bob Montana (“Archie”)—there is a Hall of Fame listing but no physical building anywhere
- A vision of a perfect day in Haverhill:
  - Arrive on the river by boat, or perhaps pedaling on bike-friendly paths
  - Enjoy sidewalk vendors, boutiques, sailing lessons, picnic in a river-front park
  - Evening walk down Washington and Merrimack Streets, with light-strings across the street like the North End; visit the Cultural Center, enjoy seeing the lighted tower on Basiliere Bridge
- Farmers Market: Add other kinds of vendors, make it a whole “cultural afternoon”—already beginning
- Information available near the train station—get the word out better all around
- Single online resource about activities in the city—tied together
- Lighting in the alleys along Washington Street—creates safety/comfort—perhaps a tax incentive for owners to provide the lighting?
- Railroad Square, Columbus Park, Washington Square all underutilized—something happening every Saturday?
- Open empty storefronts to be artists’ galleries and studios—agreement that, as they are rented, artists will move on to another empty space
- Information for the group: The Adams Arts Program matching grant announced tonight will help implement some of the ideas discussed tonight—Marketing that cross-promotes different organizations and venues; centralized online place to discover what’s going on (piggybacking on Chamber site); street performances downtown for 16 weeks in July and August supported by a matching grant (still \$4800 to raise—“Taste of

Creative Haverhill” event February 12, 3-6 pm, at former Antiques Mart, 90 Washington Street

- Do “Letter Boxing”—family-type activity visiting interesting sites
- Bigger park with playground downtown—bus station site?—long-time proposal has been dormant—time to bring it back?
- Bradford Rail Trail
- Boat house on the river—offer all kinds of lessons—like Lawrence
- Community gardens at Tattersall Farm? Brightside announced that NECC is working with them to create community gardens on college grounds

## Possible Dreams 2010:

Where the energy seemed to concentrate in the table discussions and in the “town meeting”

TIER	TOPIC	BIG, LONGER-TERM HOPES	MEDIUM-SIZE, NEARER-TERM HOPES
A	RECYCLING		City-wide curbside single-stream
B	RIVER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Port of Haverhill</li> <li>• Full boardwalk on downtown side</li> <li>• Gateway—Woolworth corner utilized well</li> <li>• Cultural, arts, and/or performance center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a River Festival or series</li> <li>• Improve Bradford-side rail</li> <li>• trail</li> </ul>
B	REGIONAL DESTINATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong centralized promotion of multiple assets</li> <li>• Downtown revitalization</li> <li>• “takes off”</li> <li>• Revive Merrimack Street</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spruce up downtown</li> <li>• Coherent parking policy</li> <li>• Attract right businesses</li> <li>• Family-friendly amenities</li> <li>• Build integrated promotion agreements</li> </ul>
B	GREEN HAVERHILL		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take Farmers Market to next level</li> <li>• Trees, water conservation, green space, etc.</li> </ul>
B	YOUNG HAVERHILL		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping children succeed</li> <li>• Family-friendly venues</li> <li>• Connecting with young professionals</li> <li>• School sports and spirit</li> </ul>

### Notes from “Town Meeting” Portion of Possible Dreams 2010

**Questions:** What is emerging (in this conversation)?  
 What “possible dreams” for 2010 do we share?  
 What new relationships are emerging that could help Haverhill to Accomplish big things in 2010?

- Get single stream (citywide) accomplished this year.
- Beautifying, especially downtown riverwalk and rail trail
- Bigger, better, more organized Earth Day

- Safety and beauty have improved—city still has bad reputation in the region—need to promote our city, get new folks here for great bars and restaurants—tourism kiosk
- More entertainment downtown
  - Summer stroll—week-long event
  - Riverfest—from the boardwalk to the stadium
- Farmers Market was incredible! Could be even more a gathering place, more vendors, more children’s activities
- Create a cultural/arts center downtown—multiple activities—performance space—Spotlight Theater company—independent film venue
- Bookstore on Merrimack Street
- Getting more young professionals involved in activities
- Meet young people on the train going to chef school in Boston—have a community event with restaurants, Whittier students
  - Local produce
  - Involve Keon’s—widely recognized for excellence
- Reach out to young professionals on commuter rail—provide them with ways to give back to the community
- “This is the year to get rid of (do something about) the Woolworth building!”
  - “Port of Haverhill” concept
  - Make that parcel part of an overall development concept
  - Capitalize on Woolworth association with soda fountain and Archie connection—create a “Chocolate Shop” attraction
  - Put cinema there
  - Children’s opportunities, such as a Children’s Museum (street crossing problem would have to be addressed—build an overpass? (After the meeting someone suggested that a stoplight and walkway at the parking deck entrance would help a lot)
- Build relationship with Scott Brown
- Community participation in Haverhill HS athletics—new athletic director—involve more people as tutors, donors, mentors
  - Comedy night at Michael’s March 12 to raise money for sports fees
  - Event at Renaissance Golf Club May
- Conservation-oriented items that emerged:
  - More tree-planting—“grassroots” impetus
  - Rail trail
  - Rain barrels
  - Environment Summit last year—led to reinvigoration of Brightside—building partnership among Brightside, Team Haverhill, Winnekenni—perhaps a quarterly gathering needed to co-ordinate efforts
- New relationships visible in the city
  - City groups
  - Service groups
  - Citizen volunteers
- One important example happening right now

- City's 5 cultural entities joining together as the "Cultural Treasures"—advertising together
- Broader issue of unified promotion of city's assets, activities, opportunities
  - Hear frequently: "I didn't know that existed"
  - Would be great to have one site to consult
  - Chamber of Commerce Calendar already in place—not yet seen by all groups as the central place to post listings or by all residents as place to find an activity
  - "Welcome Wagon" function is missing
  - Would like to see a directly of all city services and activities—not only online—many don't have/use computers
  - Third grade curriculum in schools include a study of the city—this is one vehicle to inform families, especially about free events—multi-lingual resources would be needed
  - Shoe-city map was great—how about a map of businesses and attractions—kiosk where people get off the train—businesses could put coupons on maps as a way to pay for printing.
- Other wishes that surfaced
  - Dog park
  - Another skate park downtown so youngsters don't use parking deck
  - Neighborhood coalitions
  - We have imagined many new downtown businesses we'd like to see—how could we provide incentives to college students/young entrepreneurs to pioneer those businesses—provide start-up advice and other help
- Councilor Michael Young reminded people that he is committed to donate his salary—groups can apply to receive \$500 per month.

# Possible Dreams 2009

## Broad Community Aspirations Affirmed at this Event Included:

- **Complete recreation/culture/retail loop on both sides of river**
  - “Rails to Trails,” bridge-to-bridge development
  - Sculpture park along the river
  - Sailing program
- **Strong positive image of city and schools**
  - Work together to better market Haverhill (Buttonwoods, Whittier, etc.)
  - Update websites more frequently
  - Visitors’ Center that is more central (Woolworth building?)
  - Tighten community relationship with schools (community attend sports, plays, concerts)
- **Downtown a major destination for all ages**
  - Physical environment (cleanliness, beautification, public art)
  - Events through the year
  - Get rid of graffiti
  - Affordable lofts for artists
  - Downtown playground
  - Institute small independent film festival (linking Public Access TV, Zion theatre space, Tom Bergeron)
- **Vibrant neighborhoods build quality of life and positive image**
  - Implement linkage program whereas downtown developers pay for projects elsewhere in the city
- **Haverhill is a leader in resource conservation, recycling, green technology**
  - Expand community gardening more locations
  - Implement single-stream recycling [Intensive work on this goal began after Possible Dreams 2008]
  - Highlight issue of sustainability—bridge gaps between children and parents
- **Build on Haverhill’s agricultural assets**
  - Revamp the Farmers’ Market [Intensive work on Farmers’ Market began after this meeting]
- **Recognize and nurture new co-operative relationships**
  - Five cultural organizations coordinating marketing (“Treasures”)
  - More potential for everyone using shared sites (such as Chamber’s Community Calendar and [whatsuphaverhill.com](http://whatsuphaverhill.com))

- Haverhill Boys/Girls Club connecting with elderly in oral history project

### **Transcript of Table Notes (\*indicates mention at 2-4 tables, \*\* indicates 5+ tables)**

#### **Hopes for 2009 and Beyond**

Improve recycling (Top item, voiced by 100% of the tables)

*(5 or more tables mentioned...)*

Move ahead with development of rail trail/boardwalk \*\*

Promote natural resources and green spaces in Haverhill \*\*

Better and greater promotion of Haverhill as a great city – create buzz \*\*

Bring together Realtors, condo/apt developers, and business to create Welcome Package for new residents \*\*

Create Independent/Art Theatre and host film festival \*\*

Support mentoring and tutoring programs \*\*

Plan more events for young people \*\*

More inter-generational projects, oral histories \*\*

Better and coordinated marketing of the gems (Cultural Treasures) \*\*

Work Together \*\*

*(2 to 4 tables mentioned...)*

Create a Green City \*

Would like to see a toy store, bookstore, and more specialty shops \*

Make downtown more vibrant and cleaner \*

Better downtown parking (build the downtown parking garage) \*

Greater marketing of downtown businesses \*

Beautify downtown storefronts \*

Create a downtown playground (indoor and/or outdoor) \*

Greater efforts to bring professional and skilled jobs to Haverhill \*

Capitalize on Federal stimulus package and Green movement \*

Preserve open space \*

More public art \*

Expand historic preservation (especially of residential buildings) \*

Build upon the diversity of the city \*

*(One table mentioned...)*

Have a plan to revitalize parks and preserve green spaces

Promote Haverhill as a green city, respectful of sustainability

Capture old landfill site as recreation opportunity

Improve/expand Farmers Market

Facilitate creation and welcoming of start-up companies

Get condo/apt. developers more involved with the city  
Create a retail incubator in downtown area  
“Smart” and thoughtful development of real estate abutting river  
Use the river as an asset in improving downtown areas  
Bring more arts and culture to downtown area  
Get rid of or rehab existing parking garage on Merrimack Street  
Bring anchor store to downtown area  
5 am washing of streets (like Paris)  
Improved downtown lighting (esp. Essex Street)  
Tear down Woolworth’s building replace with city gateway or Community Center  
Develop Haverhill into a Market City  
Turn Washington Street into something like Faneuil Hall  
Have a Restaurant Week  
Downtown visitor’s center  
Create Frisbee golf course  
New leadership at City Council  
Improve/demand greater accountability from city and schools  
Go after more grants and help organizations to pursue grants  
Get bus routes to coordinate and stop at train station  
New street signs  
Energy audits at schools and city buildings  
Master plan for city’s use of development funds  
Couple development with environmental restoration  
Build open and clean bathrooms at Winnekenni  
Tear down and replace Hunking School  
Fix stadium properly  
Build skateboard park  
School Committee needs to push state to fund special ed mandates  
Need to improve the streetscape on Merrimack Street  
Institute sailing program on the Merrimack River  
Deal with vacant lots  
More facilities/activities for youth  
Better management of historical preservation (signage, architectural standards, etc.)  
Expanded mural project and greater involvement with schools  
Install shoe sculptures on the rail trail  
Development of a local artists association



Build a Concert/Convention Center or amphitheatre  
Replace bus station with citizens' center  
More cultural events that involve citizens  
Expand arts economy  
Host a Latin band/music event  
Improve and value early child education  
Host a "Bring a student to city government/work day"  
More adults speaking to schools and clubs  
Continue/Expand Parent Academy  
Build a museum, which shows how things are made (shoes, paper, furniture, etc.)  
Have a master plan for the historical resources in the city  
Make history LIVE.  
Better communication and coordination as to what is happening in the city  
Use grass roots efforts to accomplish objectives  
Develop neighborhood groups  
Make Haverhill a place in which younger generations will want to stay  
Bring Story Corps or something like that to Haverhill  
Tap into history of shoe production, using inter-generational committee to capture the information  
Eliminate graffiti

# Possible Dreams 2008

## Broad Community Aspirations Affirmed at this Event Included:

- Complete recreation/culture/retail loop on both sides of river
- Strong positive image of city and schools
- Downtown a major destination for all ages
- Vibrant neighborhoods build quality of life and positive image
- Haverhill is a leader in resource conservation, recycling, green technology

## Transcript of Chart Pad Notes from Large-Group Discussion

- Improve schools and image of schools
  - PR Person for the School
  - HCTV / Network
  - Elderly, students
- Downtown parking
- More pride in the City
  - Frequent clean-ups, better image
  - [We have] new DPW Director
- Rails to Trails
  - Real focus for the city
- More people know this is a great city
  - Ski, boat, golf, river
- Great transportation system
  - now focus on parking
- Marketing of city
  - Get it out there!
  - Co-ordinated effort to improve image
- Lights, flowers
- Brightside
- Safety
- Require civic projects of students
- Groups together
  - Forum of TH, HAD, Whittier, Winnekenni
- Whittier bi-centennial
- Involve new people in town
  - How to involve? block party
- Downtown master plan
  - Keep momentum
- Improve on castle and homestead
  - Playground
  - Horseback rides
- Unified vision
  - Parties throughout city in summertime
- Renovate stadium
  - Teams

- Senior housing needed
- Make downtown a village concept
  - Draw with fun activities
    - Italian fest , Kids' Fest
    - Draw families
    - Create children's' activities area
  - Weekly local food market downtown
- Multipurpose Theater
  - Open stage, look at Portsmouth
    - Old factories
    - NECC Theatre Arts Group
- Marketing both internal and external
- More organized activities for youth
- Campaign to spend \$600 rebate locally
  - Hire local plumber
- Litter education program in schools
  - Have kids pester their parents!
- Garden Club is 40!
  - Connect to other activities
- Whatsuphaverill website
  - info@whatsuphaverhill.com
- Could city have an events coordinator?
- Chamber website re-done
  - Community calendar, 14 communities
- City marketing
  - \$125K in TV
  - Make it bigger
  - Convene follow-up meeting
- High tech manufacturing
  - Emerging technologies
  - Green technology
  - '07 experts came here
  - Periodic conferences
  - Get branded as
    - Innovative
    - Eco-friendly
- Fragmentation
  - 2 Little Leagues
  - 2 Chambers
- Common cure goal
  - Raise \$ for city portion of HS renovation
- Promote investment in education as Haverhill strength
- Curbside for all recyclables
  - Make it easier
  - \$2 per bag for trash in VT
  - Marblehead swap shed

- Items weighed going in and coming out
  - Recycle trees
- State funding to move ahead with whole trail
  - City side
  - Even if no boardwalk
- Establish city redevelopment authority
- Accent the positive
  - Publicize
  - Affordable lighting
  - Light display at Basiliere bridge
  - [Have] new DPW Chief
  - Gateways
- Creative economy
- Uniqueness
- River
  - Not just access
  - Reason to go
  - Like waterfront in Providence
- Keep investing in office parks
  - Landscaping, etc.
- Do something with Woolworth building!
  - Hotel
  - Restaurant
  - Barge
- Neighborhood revitalization
  - Incentive to stay as owners
- Citywide crime surveillance
- Attractive lighting/activities
- Postcards of Haverhill