

*Downtown Tomorrow  
Our Vision for Bath*

*The vision you are about to read has been crafted from the input of hundreds of people in and around Bath who care about the future of downtown Bath. It is a starting point for us to all be on the same page as we evolve as a community; it is a living document of our ideals and dreams, not a finite conclusion.*

*Working with Craig Freshly of Good Group Decisions, more than 160 people attended a community visioning meeting on a cold, Saturday morning in March. There were individual interviews, and small group interviews with businesses, nonprofit organizations, and residents of Bath, too. More than 350 people were actively engaged on the Downtown Tomorrow Facebook page.*

*This visioning effort is a collaboration between Main Street Bath and The City of Bath. Main Street Bath will use this vision of the future downtown Bath to create strategies to help these dreams come true. The City will use this vision to inform the downtown portion of the Comprehensive Plan, a guide that is used when considering the future direction of the whole city.*

*Thank you to everyone who has been involved in this process. We hope you can hear your own voice in the collective voice.*

*Main Street Bath, Board of Directors*

## Vision Statement for Downtown Bath

Imagine it's 10 years from now.

Downtown Bath retains much of its historic character and authentic charm, yet is even more vital and active than ever before. Not only are the street-level retail spaces filled but people live upstairs. The upper floors of the old downtown buildings are largely renovated, handicap accessible, and filled with both residents and service businesses. Downtown Bath has become known as not only a great place to spend time shopping, dining and recreating, but as a great place to live.

Many properties downtown have changed ownership and the new owners are community-minded, thoughtful and in it for the long run. Retail rents have increased to support investment, but higher foot traffic supports greater levels of commerce and, for the most part, merchants and other businesses stay and thrive.

Houses around downtown have been renovated, or are being restored and maintained by young families and retirees. These are people who value living close to the downtown and are willing to invest

in older, relatively affordable homes and fix them up. It's part of the "do-it-yourself" culture of Bath. There is also new housing in and near downtown Bath that invites people to retire to Bath and/or age in place. Although not necessarily subsidized, such new housing is relatively affordable, accessible, and low maintenance.

Bath has become known for its artisan or "maker" culture, which encompasses a variety of trades and crafts. From the industrial to the artistic, building things on the waterfront is nothing new for the City of Ships; yet it's now being done in new ways, called the creative economy. Throughout the city there are shared maker-spaces, studios, and galleries where artists and craftspeople of all types work and sell things locally, and through wholesale channels. This culture attracts 25-45 year-olds and young families; it also appeals to older adults not really ready to leave work life, but eager for a new activity or career. The expanded creative economy drives activity for both locals and visitors throughout the year.

People visit downtown Bath from away because it has a history you can touch and feel. There is public art on the streets and private art and craft in studios and galleries. There are friendly owners and staff in the stores. You don't just buy things or eat things or see things, you enjoy and share experiences that are unique to Bath.

People visit downtown Bath from nearby neighborhoods and from nearby towns because, in addition to providing a fun and warm experience, it has everything we need at affordable prices. You can find a place to park and easily find your way around. The sidewalks and cross walks are safe for pedestrians. It is extremely bike-friendly with bike lanes, bike racks and courteous drivers, and public transportation is readily available. Bath's infrastructure has evolved to encourage accessibility, safety, sustainability, and to create an attractive impression for visitors and residents.

Waterfront Park remains a key downtown feature yet it is more active with events and new playground elements; one of two new downtown playground areas, with the other possibly being at Library Park. The properties between Waterfront Park and the bridge are bustling with activity. People from neighboring towns visit Bath just to visit the waterfront. Waterfront Park food trucks have long lines on summer evenings; with live music in the air from a nearby stage.

Heritage Days remains among the largest and most successful events, and it continues to evolve each year to attract new visitors. It brings many people to the downtown; it endures and grows. There are also several new and smaller events for families such as movies in the park.

Bath values and nurtures opportunities for youth. Increased community engagement and continued investment in facilities, including new schools, have helped Bath achieve broad and positive recognition. The close proximity of good schools and recreational facilities to safe, walkable neighborhoods and to the downtown, has made Bath increasingly desirable to families and prospective home buyers. Bath is viewed as a great place to raise a family and Bath's youth feel included, supported, and encouraged by their community.

The people of Bath are connected to each other. Newcomers are not just welcomed, but adopted. Business owners don't just give money, they give heart. Large employers are invest-

ed in the community. Nonprofit and community organizations are far more than a safety net; they are the community fabric supported by eager and enthusiastic volunteers.

Downtown Bath continues to be well-known and cherished for how it looks; the historic buildings, the vibrant shops, the outdoor spaces and water views. And it continues to be well-known and cherished for how it feels; a community of authentic people who know each other, care for each other, and cultivate the downtown they love.