



Extension



2018

First Impressions: Pittsfield



New Hampshire
First Impressions

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	4
Key Findings	7
Before the Visit	9
Pre-Visit Training	9
Pre-Visit Survey.....	9
About the Visit: Team Visit of Pittsfield	11
The Assessment Area.....	11
Findings.....	11
Businesses.....	12
Community Art	14
Displays & Signage.....	15
Downtown Entrances	16
Landscaping	17
Lighting	18
Parks	19
Points of Interest	21
Public Facilities	23
Seating	24
Sidewalks, Crosswalks, & Trails	25
Streets & Transportation	26
Waste & Recycling.....	27
After the Visit	28
Post Visit Survey	28
First Impressions: Pittsfield Assessment Map.....	33

Acknowledgements

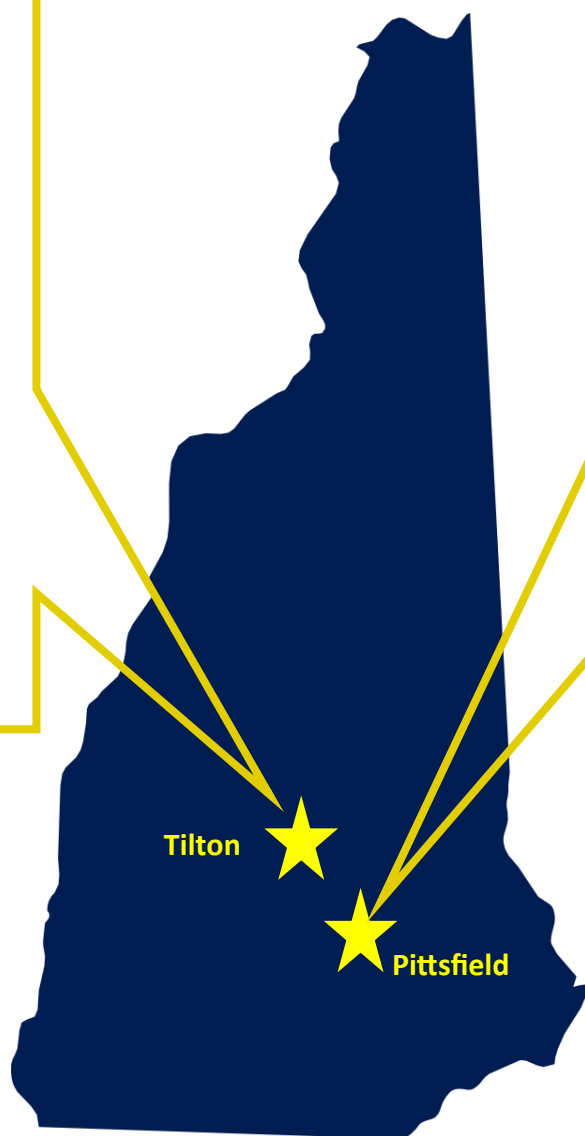
Thank you to the community volunteers who are passionate about improving their communities and provided their time and effort to implement the First Impressions program.

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First Impressions was developed in 1991 by Andy Lewis, University of Wisconsin Extension Associate Professor, and James Schneider, Grant County, Wisconsin Economic Development Director. Since then, the program has been adapted by states across the US, as well as in Canada. The First Impressions program has been adapted by University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension to meet the current and future needs of New Hampshire communities.

Introduction

The look and feel of a downtown can influence the decisions of potential residents, visitors, and businesses. A vibrant downtown serves as a gathering place, a place for people to dine, shop, and conduct business. New Hampshire First Impressions is designed to help a community learn about their downtown's existing assets and opportunities for improvement as seen through the eyes of first time visitors.

Possible outcomes include:

- Improving the visual appearance of a downtown
- Strengthening the marketing and promotion of a downtown
- Enriching the climate of a downtown for new businesses, residents, and visitors

The First Impressions assessment consists of a Pre-Visit Training, a Pre-Visit Survey, a visit to the community to conduct the assessment, and a Post-Visit Survey, and Post-Visit Debrief. During the visit, team members use the following characteristics to conduct the assessment:



Throughout the report, these characteristics are identified as assets and opportunities. Assets are the strengths in the downtown—where characteristics exist and are excellent and well-maintained. For example, a well-maintained trail or a bench in a nice location would be considered assets. Opportunities are those characteristics that exist or do not exist, where there is room for improvement. An example of an opportunity for improvement might be lack of bike lanes, or a broken sidewalk.

New Hampshire First Impressions & Pittsfield's Process

First Impressions Process:

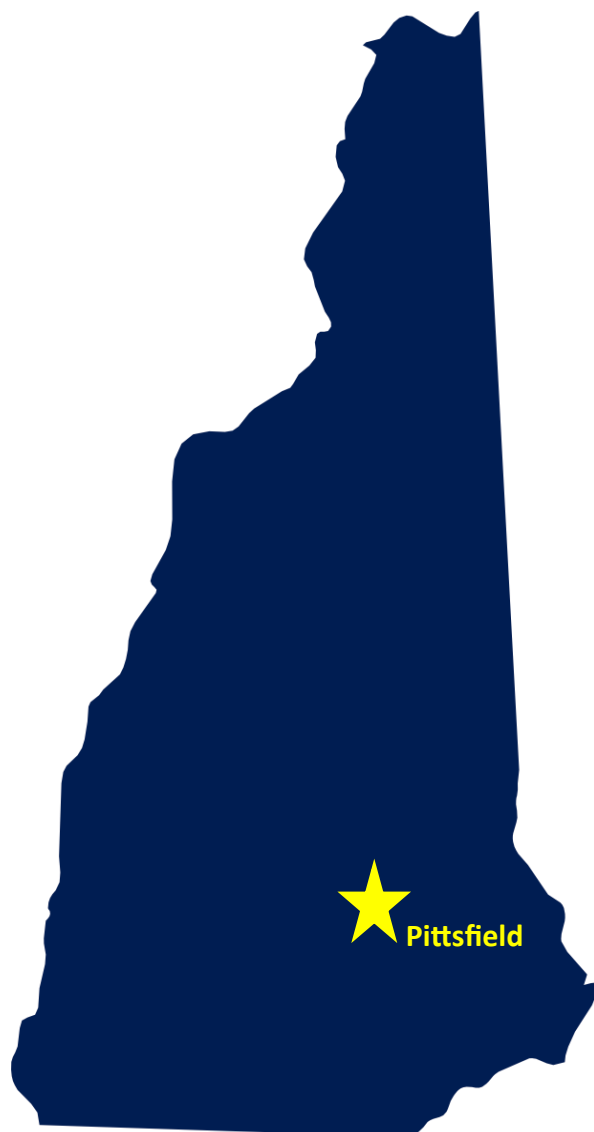
The New Hampshire First Impressions program matches two NH communities who compile a team of community volunteers to visit and assess each others community and then report their findings—a “community exchange”.

Tilton and Pittsfield began the process of forming diverse and representative First Impressions steering committees in late spring, 2018. Steering Committee members met with UNH Cooperative Extension staff to learn about the First Impressions process, what characteristics are important in a downtown, and how to conduct a downtown assessment. Over the summer they completed a pre-assessment survey, an assessment visit to their partner community, a post-assessment survey and debrief, and a joint community debrief. Data from these efforts were compiled and analyzed by UNH Cooperative Extension staff in order to identify overarching themes in both assets and opportunities and complete a final report. This report will be shared with the community of Pittsfield at a public forum on October 17th, 2018.

About Pittsfield

The Town of Pittsfield is located in Central New Hampshire, 20 minutes from Concord and 90 minutes from Boston. The town is strategically located with access to the seacoast, lakes region, and major New Hampshire cities like Concord and Manchester. As of the 2010 Census, Pittsfield's population was 4,106. Pittsfield is bordered by six towns, Barnstead, Strafford, Chichester, Epsom, Northwood, and Loudon. Pittsfield is part of SAU #51 and has its own elementary, middle, and high schools.

Pittsfield operates on the Select Board/Town Meeting form of government. The town has a historic downtown and a number of large businesses. The largest employers in Pittsfield are Globe Manufacturing, the Pittsfield School District, and Rustic Crust.

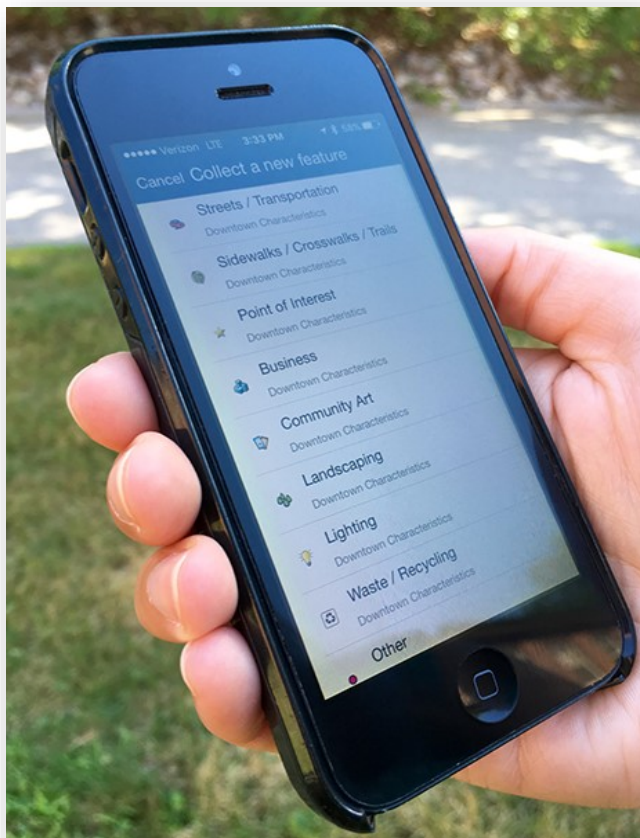


Pre-Visit Survey

The Pre-Visit Survey was completed online by the visit team prior to conducting the visit. The survey collects information about members' demographics, such as age, gender, and town of residence; and requires team members to conduct internet research on the community they will be visiting and reflect on the quality and availability of information on webpages as well as social media. Finally, the survey requires team members to reflect on any perceptions they may have about the community prior to their visit.

First Impressions Assessment Visit

During the First Impressions visit, members of the visit team had access to two tools to conduct their assessment; the use of a mobile application: Collector for ArcGIS, and paper booklets. Collector for ArcGIS is a free mobile application that allows for data collection in the field. When a team member uses Collector, they select a characteristic from a list, fill out a description, observation, choose whether the characteristic is an asset, asset/opportunity or opportunity for improvement from a drop down menu, and have the chance to upload a photo or video. Once submitted, the information is stored as a point on a map. In addition to the mobile app, team members are able to use a paper booklet to collect their data. The booklet replicates the data collection process of the app: Team members circle a characteristic from the list, and then write the location, description, observation, and select whether the characteristic is an asset, asset/opportunity, or opportunity for improvement.



Post-Visit Survey

Following the visit, the visit team members completed a Post-Visit online survey. This survey allows team members to reflect on their visit and rate the downtown overall. Team members also reflect on their initial perceptions and whether they would like to live, visit or open a business in the community.

Post-Visit Team Debrief

About two weeks after the visit to Pittsfield, the visit team held a debrief meeting in which visitors reflected on the experience, shared their thoughts. This feedback provided additional context and background information to the Assessment data and Pre- and Post-Visit Surveys.

Key Findings

Assets identify the strengths in the downtown. The list below provides a summary of the findings and feedback from the assessors.

- **River:** The river nearly surrounds downtown and offers numerous benefits to Pittsfield. The dam and bridge spanning the river are welcoming sites and important markers for both residents and visitors as they enter the downtown area. The ability for individuals to walk along a river located so close to downtown and the views that it provides are a significant asset.
- **Parks:** The downtown area has several parks that were all highlighted by visitors as tremendous assets to the community. Aside from the natural beauty, they provide space and facilities for multiple activities including swimming, basketball, tennis, boating, and playgrounds. Drake Field offers recreational amenities and the smaller parks located along Main St. offer places to relax.
- **Historic Buildings and Architecture:** The downtown area has numerous historic buildings and blocks with markers signage. The history of the downtown buildings was interesting and enjoyed by visitors. The buildings, churches, and public facilities are attractive to look at, but also offer space for businesses to open and other creative endeavors to occur.
- **Walkability:** The wide streets and sidewalks were noted for making Pittsfield feel like a safe, comfortable place to walk. They allow Pittsfield to host gatherings, provide ample parking, and allow the town to welcome people to the downtown area without feeling crowded.
- **Atmosphere and People:** Visitors felt welcomed to the downtown area by residents and businesses. When they went into local restaurants they were helped and felt like they were locals. Local residents provided directions and answered questions. The feeling that visitors are welcome and wanted in downtown is important as Pittsfield looks to appeal to new visitors and potential customers.

Key Findings

Opportunities identify areas of high potential for improvement. The list below provides a summary of the findings and feedback from the assessors.

- **Wayfinding:** While visitors identified many positive assets in the community, they often noted that they stumbled upon them by accident. There was also unclear signage around hours or use of various community assets. Two examples of this were lack of signage connecting downtown to Drake Park and information about the historic trail. Visitors did not realize historic markers were part of a trail until after they left the downtown area and they felt this was a missed opportunity. More consistent signage in the downtown would help visitors navigate points of interest.
- **Identify & Branding:** Visitors noted that they could not really identify a consistent sense of identity or branding for Pittsfield and felt there was opportunity to build its image and brand. In particular, the visit team felt that the abundant parks and natural spaces along with the historic feel of downtown could be highlighted in this effort.
- **Infrastructure/upkeep:** While the wide roads, sidewalks, and beautiful buildings were noted as assets, their overall condition was noted as a concern. Areas of cracked or damaged pavement, peeling paint and overgrown landscaping negatively impacted both the walkability and the feel of the downtown.
- **Activities & Events:** While there were numerous spaces for community events and activities noted by the team, there was a sense that they are currently under utilized. The team felt that the parks in particular could be a "hub" for activities and events for both local residents and to draw in visitors.
- **Business Diversity:** Members of the visit team noted opportunities for more variety in restaurants and business types in the downtown area. Capitalizing on some of the unique architecture might provide the potential for niche businesses such as art spaces or a brewery.
- **Web Presence:** Based on the pre-visit assessment, members of the visit team felt there was opportunity to build a more consistent and positive web presence. They reported limited information on activities with the exception of the balloon festival and felt the information online did not offer compelling reasons to visit.

Before the Visit

Pre-Visit Survey

The visit team completed the Pre-Visit Survey prior to visiting Tilton. The survey provided an opportunity to research Tilton on the internet and social media and describe their perceptions. The results of the survey are as follows:

Number of times team members have visited Pittsfield prior to First Impressions

Three members of the visiting team from Tilton indicated that they had been to Pittsfield prior to the assessment. One member visited one time, one member between two and four times, and one member between five and nine times.

General Impression

Team members were asked to record their impression of Pittsfield before completing any research. The following are their responses:

- It sounds like a town in need of improvements. May have some nice features as well as needy areas.
- I don't know much about Pittsfield. I do know based off looking at a the map, that the Suncook River flows through it, so maybe it's an old mill town.
- Some areas of Pittsfield are picturesque, but downtown has little to offer.
- I believe that Pittsfield is a struggling rural town with very little economic base.
- I don't know anything about Pittsfield. I don't like the name though.
- I visited Pittsfield years ago and it reminded me of my home area.
- I have heard of the town before, but I don't really know what to expect.
- Pittsfield is not near an interstate and has wide downtown roads. It has a small Chinese restaurant and a railroad. It may have been a mill town and I wonder how they got their name.

Internet Research

Team members were asked to use a search engine to search for "Pittsfield, NH" in order to record what websites commonly appear when searching for information about Pittsfield. Each team member recorded the first three websites. Most Tilton team members found that various town websites were their top results. This included links to the main town page, as well as directions to the town hall and contact information for town employees and committees.

Other search results included a general town Facebook group, a Wikipedia entry, and general directions to the town. Tilton team members found that the information was generally helpful but more targeted to residents than visitors. Tilton visitors did not find information at the top of their search about local restaurants or shops in Pittsfield or information on what someone would do if visiting the town for the day. Common visitor websites like Trip Advisor show up further down on search results and contain little information on Pittsfield.

Tilton team members were asked to comment on whether or not they had a desire to visit Pittsfield based on their initial impressions and online research and whether the town appeared to be welcoming to visitors. The general impression among visitors seemed to be that there wasn't enough information to make a decision. The town wasn't unwelcoming, but also wasn't making an effort to welcome and appeal to visitors. It was difficult for Tilton team members to determine what they would do in Pittsfield based on the information available in their research.

Desire to Visit

Team members were asked if they would want to visit Pittsfield with family or friends, and to share why or why not. Comments included:

Yes

- I like visiting new places. It would be interesting to learn how they got their name.
- The hot air balloons are intriguing, not something I would expect.

Maybe

- I would visit if I had a reason to.
- I might visit, but there aren't any details on the town that are readily available.
- If I wanted to stop for something, and it was on the way, then I would. I don't have much of an opinion of the town.
- It depends on the activities that are available in Pittsfield.

No

- I don't really care about hot air balloons and that looks like all they care about. I don't see information on any other attractions.
- I don't think I would have a reason to visit Pittsfield.

Welcoming

Team members were also asked if Pittsfield seemed welcoming to people to visit, live or open a business based on their online review. Comments included:

Yes

- It seems open and looks like good infrastructure to open a business.
- I didn't see anything indicating that me or others aren't welcome.
- The online publication seems welcoming but I can't find much about Pittsfield in the news.
- It looks like a nice spot to visit. The town page has a lot of events listed and the Wikipedia page has a decent amount of historical information.

Maybe

- I think that it's a pretty small town, but I don't see an obvious signs that Pittsfield is trying to attract visitors.

No

- I don't see a reason to visit, live, or open a business there based on the information they have available.
- Not really.

About the Visit: Team Visit of Pittsfield

The visit team consisted of eight volunteer assessors. The team visited Pittsfield on June 22nd, 2018. The weather was warm and sunny. The team arrived in the morning, spent time exploring downtown Pittsfield and had lunch at a local restaurant, and departed in the early afternoon.

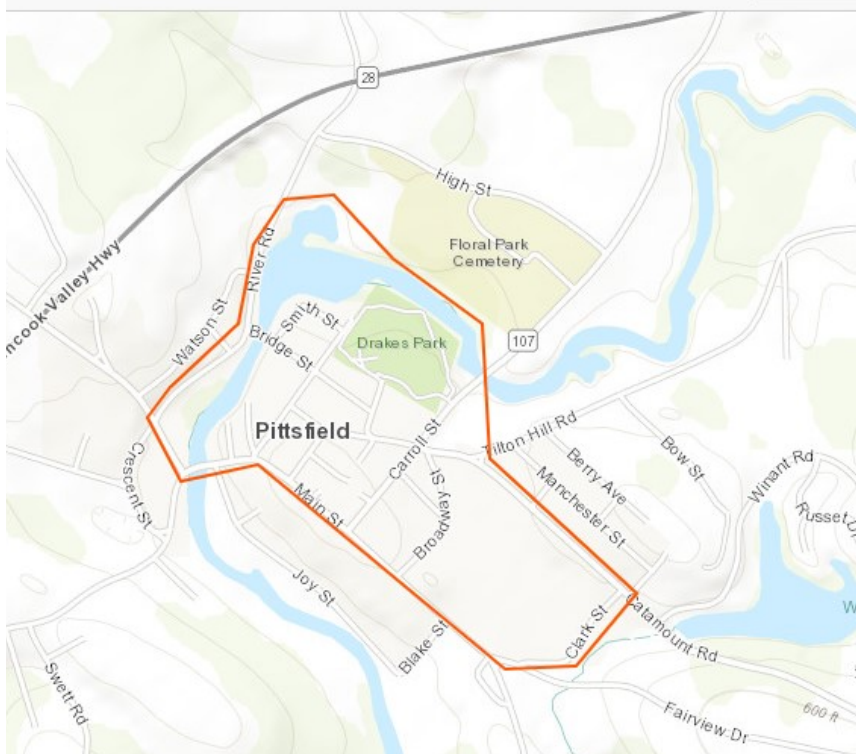
Pre-Visit Training

Prior to the assessment date, participating volunteers met with two UNH Cooperative Extension staff for training on conducting a First Impressions assessment. The volunteers learned about what makes a community vibrant, and reviewed the downtown characteristics that comprise a First Impressions assessment. The volunteers were also instructed on how to complete the assessment using the mobile application.

The Assessment Area

The Town of Pittsfield defined the First Impressions assessment area as shown on Map 1, below.

Map 1. Town of Pittsfield First Impressions Study Area



Findings

The following narrative is representative of data collected through Collector for ArcGIS during the visit, comments from the Post-Visit online survey, and comments during a debrief meeting with the visit team. All team members utilized the mobile application Collector for ArcGIS.

The data is organized by the downtown characteristics team members identified, and the comments have been coded as assets and opportunities. Assets are the strengths in the downtown—where characteristics exist and are excellent and well-maintained. For example, a well-maintained trail or a bench in a nice location would be considered assets. Opportunities are those characteristics that exist or do not exist, where there is room for improvement. An example of an opportunity for improvement might be lack of bike lanes, or a broken sidewalk.



Assets

Atmosphere and People:

Members of the visit team noted the welcoming atmosphere and friendly interactions in downtown businesses. Comments included:

- Super nice staff. Good homemade food.
- Made me feel like I'm a local. A good hometown diner.
- Really cute little place, friendly staff, homey atmosphere.
- Wide food selection and friendly people.
- Nice window boxes with flowers.

Architecture:

Many people noted the beautiful historical architecture of the downtown area.

Comments included:

- There are so many cute & friendly historic structures.
- The architecture has lots of potential.



Businesses

Opportunities

Visual Appeal and Upkeep:

There were several opportunities for improvement noted around the general visual appeal of downtown storefronts and buildings. Many of the comments related to empty storefronts needed upkeep and façade improvements, leveraging the historical architecture, and developing a common theme for downtown buildings. Comments included:

- Improving abandoned building next to church and incredible architecture would create more vibrant downtown.
- Some of the storefronts could use being cleaned up, painted, and some general improvements.
- This building has a lot of potential but needs some improvements to the outside.
- Could use some facade improvement and landscaping to keep the downtown's historic feel.

Vehicle and Pedestrian Activity:

Members of the visit team noted the lack of overall activity in the downtown area as well as the lack of diversity in businesses which could increase activity. Comments included:

- The downtown area needs more vehicle and pedestrian traffic to make businesses viable.
- This is an amazing building that would make a great art studio to act as a tipping point.
- The Depot Street area looks very abandoned. This area could really be better utilized.





There was not significant community art noted in the assessment, aside from the theatre. This may indicate an opportunity to add more artistic elements in the downtown area to make it a more enjoyable and creative place for visitors and residents to spend time.

Assets

Community Theatre:

The Community Theatre was noted as a significant asset. Comments included:

- Pittsfield players shows that there is a vibrant arts community here.
- The scenic theatre looks like an interesting place for community theatre
- Awesome community builder having a theater in town.

Opportunities

Wayfinding and signage:

While the theatre was noted as an asset, members of the team noted that it was difficult to find and unclear how much activity was happening there. Comments included:

- The theatre could use more visibility and signage. As well as parking to make it more accessible.
- The theatre needs more signage.
- Not enough signs posted. It's difficult to know what is going on at the theatre and when it's occurring.



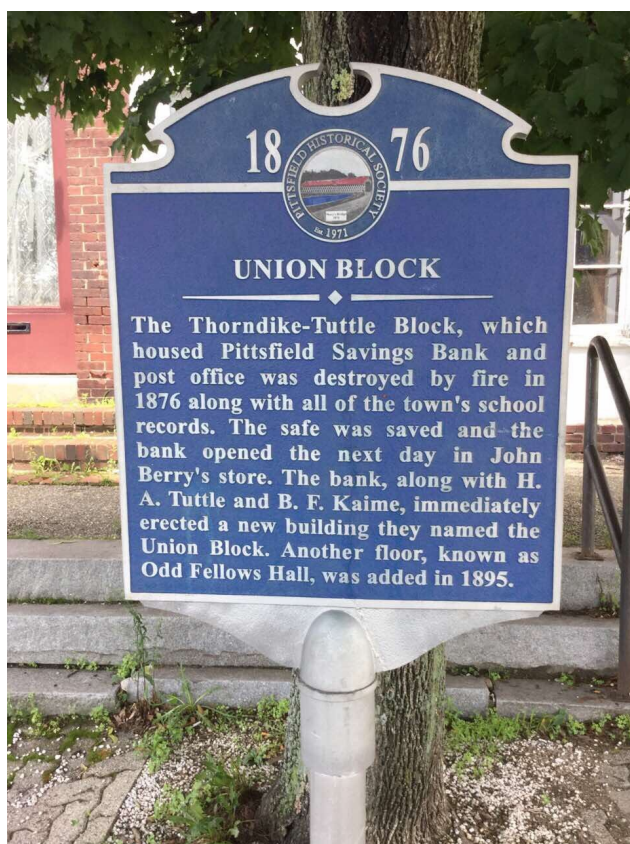


Assets

Historic/Visual Appeal:

Many members of the visit team identified the historical signs around town as an asset. Comments included:

- Love informational signage, especially the historic ones. The signs are in good condition.
- Another great example in town of historic signage in great condition.
- Neat historic trail sign. Sign is easy to navigate.
- So great that the town has all these good condition signs that really creates a sense of place.
- Large, very well kept signage, very informative and up to date. Good large lettering noting accessibility for handicap users.



Opportunities

Updating Signage:

The visit team saw an opportunity to update some signs, improve the general appearance, and better link the historic tour. Comments included:

- Good display and benches. Would be cool if there was a link to find more info or copy of map you could take with you to walk the trail.
- Many of the public town signs are in disrepair. This takes away from the great historic signs and downtown atmosphere.
- Only a small sign by the road.
- The building behind the park is really cool. It could use some signage because I'm not sure what happens there.



Downtown Entrances



The visitors from Tilton didn't find a clear downtown entrance to Pittsfield. An asset and opportunity to leverage is that Pittsfield has numerous entrances to the downtown from different directions. Pittsfield also has a main road with many potential visitors and consumers, but there is limited signage pointing vehicles to the downtown area. One visitor did comment that the Union Block building could serve as a great downtown marker that visitors would first encounter if it was updated and improved.

There's an opportunity for signage on Rt. 28 directing potential visitors into downtown Pittsfield and advertising the amenities and businesses located there. The bridge over the river from the northeast of town also provides a great entrance to the downtown area that could be better leveraged. Additionally, a number of downtown entrances do have banners welcoming visitors to historic Pittsfield.





Assets

Natural Spaces:

Many members of the team noted the natural beauty of the river and parks as significant assets that contribute to a positive feel for the downtown area. Comments included:

- Adorable landscaping and granite steps at some houses around the downtown really improve the atmosphere.
- The waterfall is an awesome part of town and a great way to welcome residents and visitors.
- The river provides beautiful landscaping along downtown.
- Flower baskets and signs on the Main St. are excellent.
- Awesome iron fence and historic structure.
- The Main St. park is beautiful and really wonderfully landscaped.



Opportunities

Visual Appeal/Upkeep:

A lack of consistent standard around maintenance and upkeep was noted. Some houses, buildings, and public spaces have incredible landscaping, but it's inconsistent throughout the downtown area.

Comments included:

- Landscape standard would make a difference in all scenic view spaces.
- Improve appearance of some alleys and vacant spaces to make them appealing places. Improve downtown environment and link nice architecture and housing.
- The town hall could use some improved landscaping given its central location.





Assets & Opportunities

Given the time of day of the assessment (10 a.m. to 2 p.m.), the visit team did not notice any lighting examples. Lighting is an important downtown characteristic that Pittsfield should consider. Lighting plays an important role in ensuring that individuals feel safe and comfortable in the downtown area and extends the time that the downtown is usable and available.





Assets

Natural Spaces:

There was a strong emphasis on the natural spaces identified by members of the visit team. Multiple parks as well as river access for boating and a pond for swimming, and athletic fields as well as space for community events. Comments included:

- Park is unbelievable!!!!!! Multi-use facility is an anchor to the community.
- Nice open park with landscaping. Children are actually using it!
- River access adjacent to park at Drake Field, next to playground.
- Beautiful, interesting, well maintained, and wonderfully landscaped.

Infrastructure:

The physical amenities of the parks with stadium seating, covered seating, tennis courts, basketball, bleachers, gazebo, benches were all identified as aspects of park infrastructure that improved overall appeal and usability of space.

Comments included:

- Well shaded park, monuments, gazebo, grass. Feels welcoming.
- Great playground, baseball field, lots of seats under a roof, great community place for events.
- Ballpark with stadium like seating is really incredible.
- Nice park. Bleachers could use some improvement.
- The tennis and basketball courts are really nice.





Opportunities

Wayfinding:

While the parks were noted as a huge asset, many visitors noted that they stumbled upon them by accident and were unclear what activities or events might be available. Comments included:

- I never would have known this part was so big and had so many amenities judging from the Main Street.
- This park is simply amazing, but we stumbled upon it by accident!! Nothing but opportunities with this amazing park.
- Ahhh, now I see. This is the head of all the historic markers. But what was the story behind the markers?

Activity:

They also noted that while there was activity in the playground and swimming area on the day of the visit, there was little other activity in the parks. Members identified these parks as having the potential to be a hub for community activities as well as large events to bring in those from outside the community. Comments included:

- Great park, but it looks like it just sits there unused.
- You guys are fortunate to have such a beautiful park connected to a beautiful waterbody so close to main street. Hopefully, it hosts many festivals, concerts, sports & other events.
- There are so many opportunities with this amazing park!



Points of Interest



Assets

Historic Buildings and Architecture:

The abundance of historic spaces and interesting architecture in town was a theme that was noted repeatedly as points of interest. Numerous historic structures along main street with signs were noted. Comments included:

- The First Congregational Church has beautiful architecture and is a well kept facility.
- The church clock downtown is beautiful. There is some great historic architecture.
- William A. Hodge on C. 1852 house— Nice house, landscaping, and welcome sign. Not sure if it is OK to go in as a museum or if it is a private residence.
- The red brick congregational church is a beautiful and historic structure.
- Beautiful and historic.
- Cotton mill bell— the bell and house portico are unusual and I want to learn more.
- The church bell sounds create an awesome feel in the community.
- There are so many cute and friendly historic structures.

Natural Spaces:

The waterfall and areas along the river were noted to be particularly beautiful points of interest for the downtown area that helped to create a sense of calm and space. Comments included:

- Bridge over river provides natural landscape.
- Waterfall nice and cool. Smells good. Probably could highlight the area more.
- Waterfall as you enter downtown. Has seating and peaceful falls but there's a lot of traffic.





Opportunity

Wayfinding:

While many noted the history and architecture, they were unclear what markers were for and what options they had for viewing and accessing historical spaces. Some later stumbled upon the historic trail designation and information but saw this as a missed opportunity to both draw in interested visitors and connect them with the community. Comments included:

- Nice house. Nice landscape. Welcome sign. Not sure if it is ok to go in as a museum or if it is a private residence.
- Historical markers. So many of them...they should be used more
- Gorgeous brick building in good repair. Not sure why the sign is here?
- Pittsfield Historic Society is almost a hidden building. No hours posted, litter, broken window.

Visual Appearance/ Upkeep:

There are many historic buildings and homes throughout the downtown area of Pittsfield. Some of the buildings just need a little bit of work to make them stand out and improve their attractiveness for residents and visitors. Comments included:

- Interesting architecture but needs a bit of maintenance.
- The yard of this historical building is a bit overgrown.
- There are so many incredible and historic buildings and houses. This approach should be reflected in new buildings as well.





Assets

Building/Architecture:

The library and youth workshop were noted in the downtown area as examples of positive public facility spaces, both for their physical architecture and appearance and the activities that appeared to be available there.

Comments included:

- Pittsfield youth workshop adjacent to downtown park.
- The library is a nice building with really great architecture.
- The library has a great downtown location.



Opportunities

Visual Appeal:

Some public buildings do not effectively complement the historic infrastructure of the rest of downtown. Comments included:

- There are so many historic structures, this should be reflected in public facilities as well.
- Public Facilities don't all reflect the character of downtown with historic architecture. They should complement downtown buildings and environment.

Activity:

While the library and youth workshop were noted as assets, limited hours at the library were viewed as a missed opportunity. Comments included:

- Well cared for library, but not open during the early afternoon. Could see myself coming here with my kids to read a book and get out of the sun.





Assets & Opportunities

Seating was specifically noted at all 3 main parks in town as well as near the waterfall.

While seating was present, some general maintenance and upkeep of the seating was identified as a need. There was no mention of seating outside of the parks by the visit team. It is unclear if this is a reflection that no additional seating was viewed as necessary or simply not noted.

Additionally, more seating in the Main St. area for visitors to stop, rest, and spend time making the Main St. area a more attractive place for residents and visitors to spend time.



Sidewalks, Crosswalks, & Trails



Assets

Natural Spaces:

Members of the visit team noted the waterfront along the river, as well as open park areas and walkways as positives which could be built upon. Comments included:

- Waterfront on River St. is a beautiful spot.

Infrastructure:

Visitors noted that the overall presence of sidewalks throughout town increased accessibility.



Opportunities

Infrastructure:

There were also a couple of specific areas of town that were not connected by sidewalks, including the park with swimming area and the riverfront walk that the team felt could be better connected to downtown.

Comments included:

- Defined sidewalks, crosswalks, and signals would be big asset at Depot and Carroll St. intersection.
- River St. has a beautiful spot along the river but is lacking a sidewalk.
- The park and swimming area is not connected by sidewalk.
- Accessibility great at library, but getting there utilizing the sidewalks abutting it could be a challenge.
- It's great to have sidewalks, especially ones as wide as these.

Visual appeal/Upkeep:

While the team noted the overall presence of sidewalks as a positive, they also noted numerous areas of disrepair which could impede their use and which also impacted the overall feel of the community. Comments included:

- Cracked sidewalks and faded rundown buildings.
- A number of sidewalks throughout town just need a little bit of upkeep and fix cracking.





Assets

Infrastructure:

Members noted assets related to the overall structure of the downtown area, including wide streets and access to ample parking. Comments included:

- The wide streets are incredible. Make for a spacious downtown and make it easy to navigate.
- There is plenty of parking on Main St. This makes the shops accessible and attractive to visit.



Opportunities

Maintenance:

While noting the positive aspects of the downtown area, members also noted that there was need for infrastructure maintenance and repair. Comments included:

- Main St. needs some repairs, as well as some other roads throughout town.
- Parking could use some regrading and repainting.
- Storm water management issue noted with sediment being transported across the road toward river.



Waste & Recycling



The Tilton visitors did not find many waste and recycling bins around the downtown area. Having waste baskets and recycling is important to ensure that the downtown area remains clean and free of litter. There is one waste basket next to the small park on Main St.



After the Visit

Post-Visit Survey

The visit team completed a Post-Visit Survey following the assessment in Pittsfield. This survey gave the team the chance to reflect on the visit and give the downtown an overall rating. Additional questions asked the visitors to comment on their interest in returning to Pittsfield, recommendations to friends, and whether or not they would live there. The responses of the survey follow:

Five-Minute Impression

The initial impression can greatly influence visitors' overarching opinions of a location. Below are the five-minute observations of the team:

- Individuals and businesses are doing some great things, but the public buildings and infrastructure are in poor condition.
- I wasn't entirely sure when we actually entered the downtown. Everything was so spread out.
- The area was somewhat depressed and in need of some building standards.
- They have some nice places but could use some work.
- My impression of Pittsfield was that the town had little going on (very few people on the street, but it was very hot). The town had wide streets, but not much in the way of commerce. The town had interesting features (historical sites, the dam, etc.) but not a well-defined "downtown." I feel the downtown should be better defined and condensed into a walkable area. In Pittsfield's defense, I could see from the streetlamp banners an attempt was made to define the downtown, but with only one or two open businesses, it wasn't convincing. Jitters Café, and its wait staff, was a delightful establishment. I would go back there.

Comments on Downtown Pittsfield Characteristics

Tilton visitors were asked to comment on aspects of downtown Pittsfield like transportation, housing, businesses, infrastructure, amenities, and infrastructure.

Recreation and Downtown Amenities:

Tilton visitors found downtown amenities and recreation to be a big asset for the community. They commented on how impressive the historic tour and markers were and that it could be further leveraged. The downtown recreation amenities provided through Drake Field were incredible. Citizens and visitors can walk along the river; play tennis, basketball, or baseball; go swimming at the recreation area; or just spend time relaxing at Drake Field. Recreation opportunities are immense and should be promoted.

Infrastructure and Businesses:

The general infrastructure and business diversity downtown was seen as an opportunity for improvement. Visitors saw an opportunity to improve the general look and appeal of downtown roads and sidewalks, public buildings, and façade improvements of private buildings to complement the historic architecture. Visitors commented that there needs to be an increase in business diversity, retail, dining, and entertainment options to bring both residents and visitors to the downtown area.

Community Brand:

Visitors saw a real opportunity to give downtown Tilton and Pittsfield as a whole a real community brand and identity that will give visitors and reason to visit and energize residents to promote their downtown as a place to spend time.

Using Your Senses

The survey asked team members to describe Pittsfield through their senses: taste (food and drink), smell (air in the downtown), and sounds (parks, roads, trains, construction, music, social gatherings).

Taste

- Jitters had wonderful baked goods, as well as coffee.
- Jitters Café had nice iced coffee. The food looked good.

Smell

- The parks were very nice and had fresh air. Some of the streets smelled of cigarettes and exhaust.
- There were musty smells coming from the main street where there were old buildings. The dam smelled great! Cool mist on a hot summer day. Jitters Café had a homey, welcoming smell.

Sounds

- It was a pretty quiet town. The sound of the dam was relaxing.
- I found it to be quiet with no overbearing noise levels.
- The parks were fairly quiet at the time we visited. On the streets the sound of traffic was present.
- Traffic sounds on Main St. Near the park, the lawn was being mowed. The rushing water of the dam. The chatter in the café.

Unique Attractions

Members of the visit team were asked to identify a restaurant, specialty shop, or attraction that would bring them back to Pittsfield.

- If I was going to stop on my way through there, Jitters would probably be where I would go. But, I wouldn't go out of my way to visit.
- It appears that there could be a use for a local brewery strategically located.
- Jitters!
- Nothing stands out, unless we had a reason or event to go there.

Missing Attractions

The Post-Visit survey also asked team members to consider what was missing from Pittsfield. Comments were:

- There wasn't a lot going on downtown.
- There was a serious lack of thriving businesses.
- The welcome center had a broken window and there were no hours posted. The theater looked interesting but there was no information about hours or what was showing.
- Pittsfield needs more businesses.

Living, Working & Visiting Pittsfield

The Post-Visit survey asked team members to consider whether or not they would consider living, opening a business, or visiting Pittsfield.

Would you consider living in Pittsfield?

The majority of the visit team said they would not consider living in downtown Pittsfield.

Those visitors that would live in downtown Pittsfield found it to be a quaint and quiet town and thought that it seemed safe. Visitors saw the parks and recreation amenities as a draw to live in the town and thought it seemed family friendly.

Those visitors that wouldn't consider living in the town thought that the activity in the downtown area was too limited and said that they preferred to live in areas with more activity occurring. They thought that Pittsfield needed more of a draw or identity to attract residents like themselves. Some visitors commented that it would be a more attractive place to live with some more upkeep of the downtown area.

Would you consider opening a business in Pittsfield?

The majority of the visit team said they would not consider opening a business in Pittsfield.

Visitors that would consider opening a business thought that there was an opportunity to be successful. They saw a number of gaps in the businesses that were available in Pittsfield and thought there were opportunities for new businesses to fill those retail and restaurant gaps.

Those visitors that would not consider opening a business in downtown Pittsfield thought they would face challenges due to the limited number of cars and pedestrians passing through or spending time in the downtown area. They didn't feel that there were enough potential consumers to support additional businesses and thought more needed to be done to bring people downtown to support new businesses opening up.

Would you consider visiting downtown Pittsfield with family or friends?

The majority of the visit team said Yes, they would visit downtown Pittsfield again.

Those that would consider visiting Pittsfield again said that they really enjoyed their time in the town. They really like the parks and recreation areas and thought they could bring their families and enjoy those amenities. Other visitors commented that they really enjoyed walking along the waterway and that they would enjoy returning to see the river.

Those visitors that wouldn't consider visiting Pittsfield again didn't think there were enough events or amenities to get them to return. They commented that they may consider returning if there was a specific event that was being promoted. They felt that the town really needs to provide them with a reason, event, or some new amenities to get them to visit again.

Change in Perception

The visit team was asked to reflect on whether their pre-visit impressions fit the impression they got during their visit to the Pittsfield downtown. The visit team was split on whether their perception of Pittsfield was accurate. Visitors did find the downtown to be larger than they were expecting. They got the sense before the visit that the downtown area had a number of good features but also needed some improvement, they found that perception to be largely accurate.

Outstanding Features

The survey asked about the most outstanding feature of Pittsfield. Visitors saw the dam, parks, library, and river as incredible downtown features. The dam served as a great feature as visitors entered the downtown area. The numerous parks and recreation areas were incredible assets to have so close to and within the downtown. The river provided a relaxing place for visitors and residents to spend time.

Obstacles and Challenges

The survey asked visitors what they saw as some of the obstacles and challenges Pittsfield would have to overcome to be successful.

- The lack of people and interest make it hard on businesses.
- There isn't much going on immediately around Pittsfield.
- The empty stores and buildings.
- There is a lack of traffic and the downtown is not near a highway.
- There needs to be a greater variety of stores.
- There is a general depressed feeling around downtown.
- There is a lack of engagement in the downtown.

Top Assets

The visit team was asked to list the top three assets visitors observed in Pittsfield, here are the assets they identified:

- It seems safe
- The dam
- Friendliness
- Parks
- Historical locations
- Jitters Café
- Wide streets and lots of parking
- Quiet
- The library and its convenient location

Opportunities for Improvement

The visit team was asked to identify opportunities for improvement in Pittsfield, here are the opportunities they identified:

- Repaving roads
- More public use of water
- A more defined downtown
- Need to attract businesses
- Some of the buildings were boarded up
- Expand and make the theater more visible
- Historical locations need better upkeep
- Clean up broken glass on street and on any windows that need it
- Use the parks to hold family events
- The dam could become more of a focal point

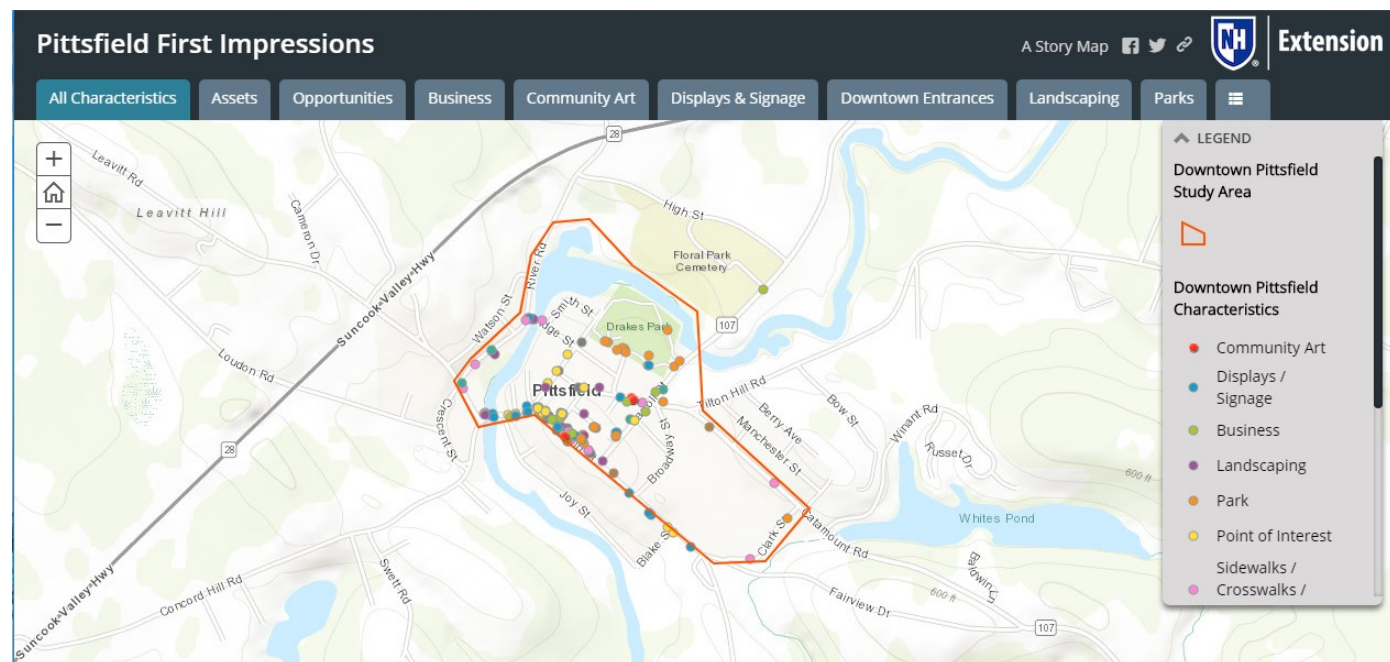
Lessons Learned for Pittsfield Committee Members

Following their visit to Tilton, Pittsfield steering committee members were asked what they learned and what opportunities they saw for their own downtown. Pittsfield members learned from Tilton's parks and the amenities that they provided and saw an opportunity to bring some of those amenities to Pittsfield's downtown and your parks. Here are some of their comments:

- We need a directory to various places in town so that visitors can find them.
- Picnic tables that provide a space for families to come together.
- We should clean up our parks to make them more inviting and usable.
- We need benches and picnic tables in our parks.
- Ideas to increase availability of our parks. Tilton had a birthday party and other activities at their riverfront park.
- We could have a public notice board at the town hall and the post office.
- A trail with walking distances and a bike path around downtown with racks for bikes.
- The front page of our website could be more informative and welcoming for visitors and new business prospects.

First Impressions: Pittsfield Assessment Map

The assessment data is stored on an online interactive map. To view that data, visit: bit.ly/pittsfieldfirstimpressions



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