



Extension



**2018**

**March 14th**

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# **First Impressions: Dover**

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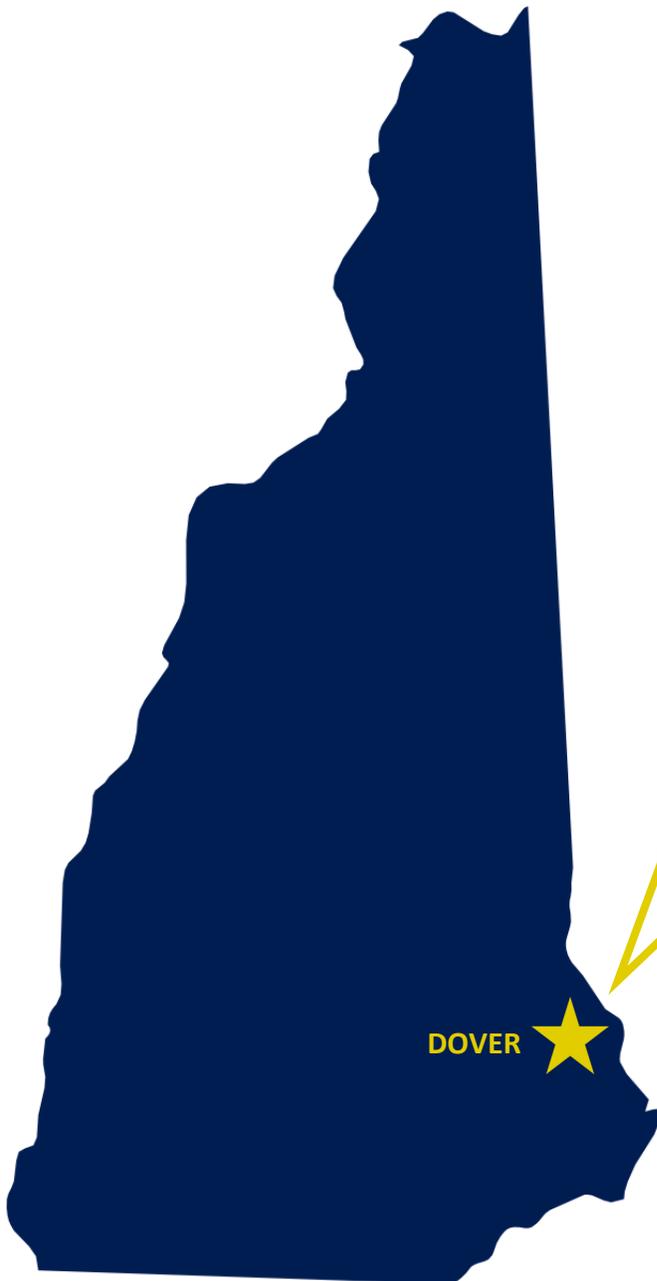
New Hampshire  
**First Impressions**

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# Acknowledgements

Thank you to the University of New Hampshire Planning Student Organization students who served as visit team and provided their time and effort to implement the First Impressions assessment in Dover, NH.



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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. In this case, members of the UNH Student Planning Organization comprised the visit team and served as the visitors that assessed the community and reported their findings.

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 training meetings, a Pre-Visit Survey, a visit to the community to conduct the assessment, and a Post-Visit Survey. During the visit, team members are using the following characteristics to conduct the assessment. These characteristics reflect important components of a vibrant downtown, and are adapted from the National Civic League and from First Impressions programs in other states.



Throughout the report, these characteristics are identified as assets and opportunities. Assets are the strengths in the downtown—where characteristics exist and are 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.

## A UNH Student Project

The First Impressions assessment of Dover is a student project. The program, New Hampshire First Impressions typically matches two different communities to compile a team of community volunteers to visit and assess another community and then report their findings. Many New Hampshire communities are interested in recruiting and retaining more young people in their communities, and the New Hampshire First Impressions program is one way to learn about how young people view and perceive a community's downtown. For this project, UNH Cooperative Extension partnered with the UNH Student Planning Organization to teach the students how to conduct a First Impressions assessment. The students not only participated in the assessment of Dover's downtown, but organized the resulting data by theme and wrote this report. The results of this First Impressions assessment will be presented at the UNH Undergraduate Research Conference in April 2018.

## About the UNH Student Planning Organization

The UNH Planning Student Organization (PSO) is a group of UNH students who study planning and who believe that planning provides the tools for economic, environmental, and social well-being of communities. These students volunteer several hours a week to projects that give them experience in planning and provide a service to a community effort. The UNH Planning Student Organization is an official UNH student organization and is committed to the value of sustainability in the built environment.

## About Dover

The City of Dover is in Strafford County, New Hampshire. Dover is situated on the Cochecho River and borders Durham, NH; Somersworth, NH; Rollinsford, NH; and Eliot, ME. The population was 29,987 at the 2010 Census and estimated at 30,750 in the 2016 American Community Survey, making it the largest city in the Seacoast Region. According to NH Employment Security, Dover's average annual unemployment rate in 2017 was 2.4%, compared to New Hampshire's overall rate of unemployment of 2.7%.

The City of Dover is a thriving New Hampshire mill town looking to support a downtown economy. Dover was interested in the First Impressions assessment to better understand the interests and perspectives of young people in order to recruit more young people to live, work, and visit.

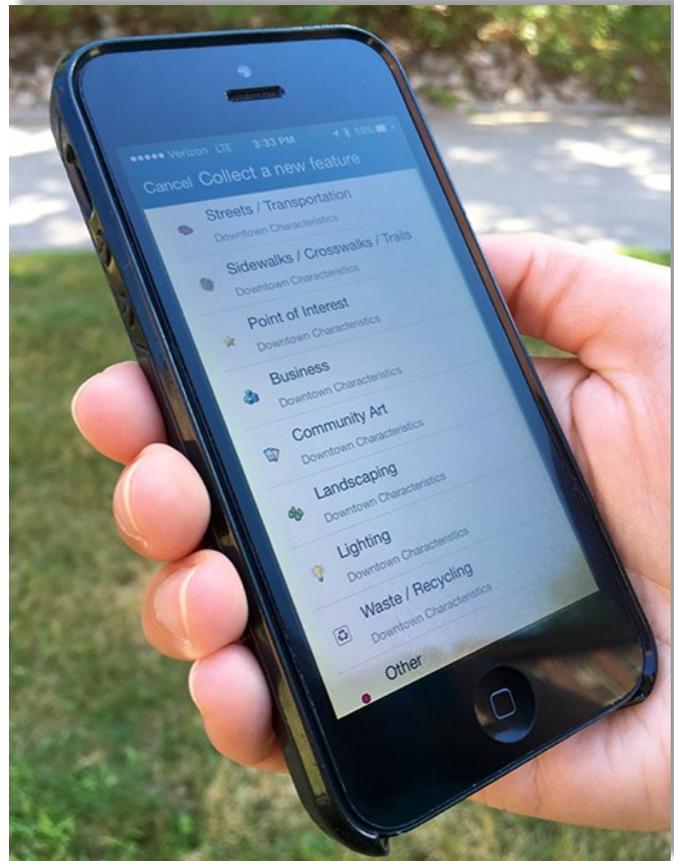


## Pre-Visit Survey

The Pre-Visit Survey was completed by the visit team online 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 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 Dover, the visit team held a debrief meeting in which students reflected on the experience, shared their thoughts, and brainstormed the top assets and opportunities for improvement.

# Key Findings

## Assets

**Assets** identify the strengths in the downtown. These are impressive characteristics that exist in Dover's downtown according to the First Impressions visit team.

- **Landscaping.** There were numerous comments about vibrant landscaping around Dover. Walkways, building fronts, parks, and parking lot fringes are now considerably more attractive to the eye.
- **Public Facilities.** Many comments reflected the historic character, good maintenance, and central location of public facilities in Dover.
- **Historic Character.** The public facilities, residential buildings, and streetscapes around Dover retain the quintessential New England historical architecture.
- **Public Art.** Colorful and bright artwork is found throughout the downtown. Everything from murals to sidewalk pianos creates a warm and welcoming sense of community.
- **Decorative Signage.** Many commented how most of the displays and signage in Dover were aesthetically pleasing and educational.
- **Seating.** Dover has a good supply of well-maintained seating throughout the downtown. The areas that surround benches are attractive and inviting.
- **Placemaking.** The walkways, storefronts, and small plazas are friendly and add to Dover's small-town atmosphere. These double as gathering spaces that help foster the sense of community.

## Opportunities

**Opportunities** identify areas of high potential for improvement. These are opportunities for improvement identified by the First Impressions visit team.

- **Shopping and Activities.** Dover has an imbalance of restaurants and retail shops. The downtown has little to offer aside from eating out.
- **Functional Signage.** Many comments addressed the lack of wayfinding signage such as parking signs and demarcations of where the downtown begins and ends.
- **Disconnectivity.** There is a lack of transition to the periphery of the downtown. These edges have underutilized space, are less welcoming, and not pedestrian friendly.
- **Waste/Recycling.** Trash and recycling bins were overflowing. This creates litter, less incentive to recycle, and is not aesthetically pleasing to visitors.
- **Safety.** Dover would feel safer with less speeding cars, more accessible crosswalks, and better street lighting.
- **Vacant buildings.** Many noted empty and run-down buildings around Dover. Some of these, such as the "Ye Olde" Courthouse have enormous potential to be repurposed.



# Before the Visit

## Training Meetings

UNH Cooperative Extension staff met with the UNH Planning Student Organization Club students three times prior to the students conducting the First Impressions assessment of Dover. The Planning Club students learned about what makes a community vibrant, and reviewed the downtown characteristics that comprise a First Impressions assessment. The students were also instructed on how to complete the assessment using the mobile application and the paper booklet.

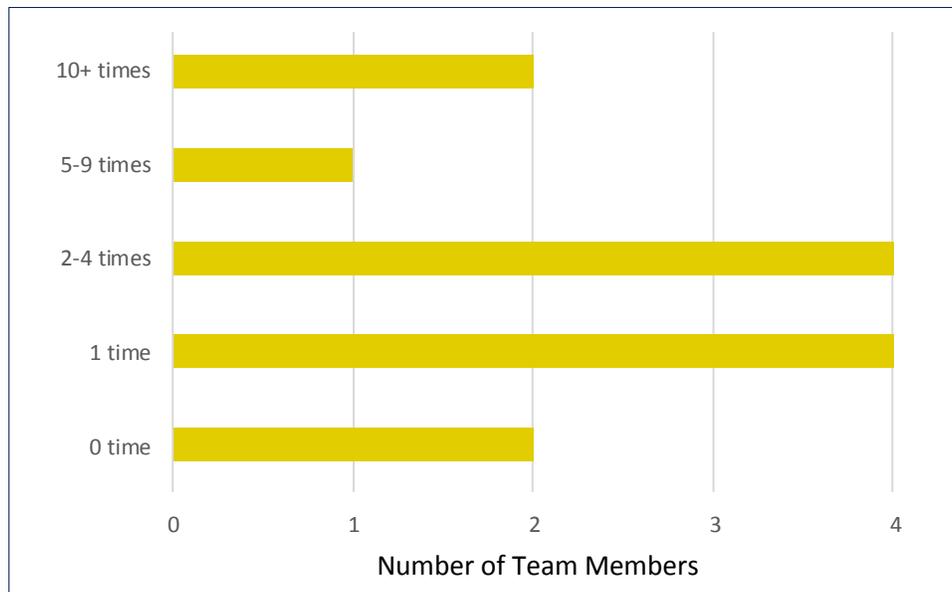
## Pre-Visit Survey

The visit team completed an online survey prior to visiting Dover. The survey provided opportunity to research Dover on the internet and social media and describe their perceptions. The results of the survey follow:

### Demographics

The visit team was comprised of seven females and six males. All members currently attend the University of New Hampshire in Durham and are between 18-24 years old.

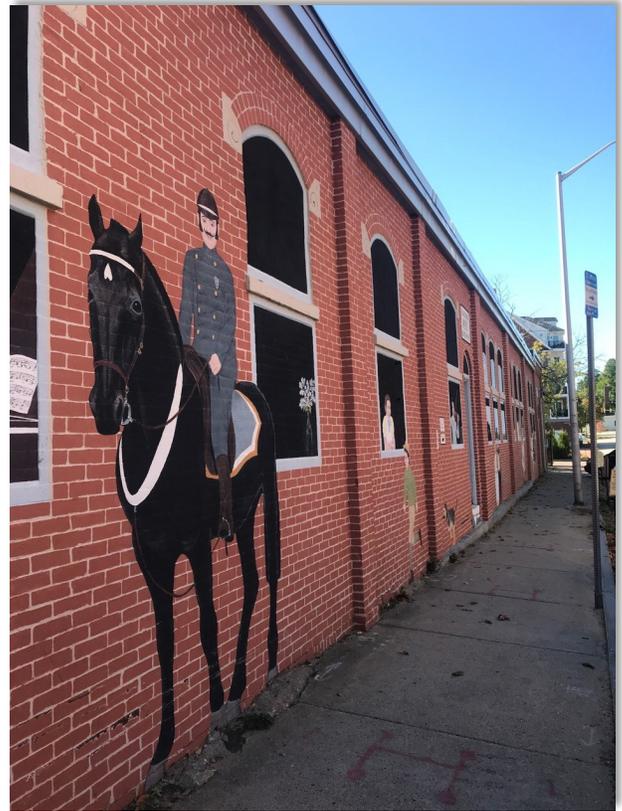
### Number of times team members have visited Dover prior to First Impressions



## General Impression

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

- I know that it is an old mill town on a river, and many young people like to live there because of the cost of living.
- It seems like a more urban version of Durham and Newmarket.
- It has its own distinct character but also is very connected to Durham because of UNH.
- Dover is a small city with quite a bit of street parking and plenty of sidewalk space for pedestrians.
- It can also be hard to navigate by car the first few times driving through.
- Very nice town with a lot of restaurants available for me and my friends to go out to eat.
- I know Dover has various different stores, restaurants, and bars. I usually go for the restaurants and haven't really been otherwise.
- I don't know much about it, but I'm expecting a small town that maybe has a large student population.



## Internet Research

Team members were asked to use a search engine (like Google.com) to search for "Dover, NH" in order to record what websites are at the top of each search. Each team member recorded the first three websites. The websites recorded were: City of Dover website, Wikipedia, and the Things to do in Dover Facebook Page. This review can provide Dover with a brief insight into the effectiveness of their online materials and marketing. Some of the comments by the team members were:

### City of Dover Website ([www.ci.dover.nh.us](http://www.ci.dover.nh.us))

- Very informative for residents of the town including events and information on businesses.
- The website was clear and provides information to the residents and to people who are interested in moving to Dover.
- Useful as far as knowing what's going on, but gives little to people from outside the community looking to visit.
- Easy to navigate, good quality, not outdated.
- Seems very up to date and easy to navigate to find what you are looking for, wealth of information.
- Very useful and easy to navigate
- Attractive and professional website with up to date information on news and events. This website is colorful, has photos, and is easy to navigate.
- Overview of the town, news, easy interface.
- Gives a variety of information to the town of Dover, including information of businesses, history, and more. It is very official.
- Lots of information regarding Dover's town government and their laws. Also includes facts and a history of Dover. Quality information, more useful if you will be living or working there, as there isn't an easily accessible list of businesses to go to or things to do in downtown.
- Presented latest news from 10/12/17 on homepage, along with pictures and schedule of meetings for the week, along with videos and other links. Seems very informative and easy to navigate.
- The Dover website is really well put together and has practical information on it.

### **Wikipedia Page ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dover, New Hampshire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dover,_New_Hampshire))**

- Wikipedia is good for basic information about the town.
- Interesting to get a background. A little taste of everything with the notable people and places as well as the history.
- Straight forward, fact based information and history.
- Standard Wikipedia article about the city, seems to be accurate information.
- Quick facts were provided, information can be useful if not done for research.
- This page had a lot of text on it but it was scattered and only touched upon some subjects.
- Plain information regarding the history, geography, and demographics of Dover. There are a few thumbnails of historical photos.
- Not as official as the first site, but does give a lot of information on the town and its location. As well as demographics on the town. Does not seem to have a lot of current information on the town.
- Mostly focuses on census facts and the history of the town, useful if you want to know census data, but not very useful if you're looking to plan a day there.
- Presented short overview, along with geography/pictures, history, and other facts that seem accurate, however, being wikipedia, you never know.
- History of Dover.
- The Wikipedia article on Dover gives some cool insight to Dover's history and culture.

### **Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/places/Things-to-do-in-Dover-New-Hampshire/107971235889802/>)**

- Very informative about the history of the town and give information on businesses and the government in the town.
- Great to see that people from the area care to update and tell others of their experiences. Very helpful!
- No cover photo, but easy to navigate and used enough to stay current.
- Very useful for ideas about how to enjoy Dover, a lot of resources all put together on one page.
- Information on businesses and local events; showed what my friends have been to and liked.
- This page was useful in the fact that it showed you things to do in the area unlike the other sites. It showed food in the area, upcoming events, jobs and more.
- This simple website outlines things to do in and around Dover: places to eat, drink, shop, etc. It compiles some of the upcoming events and indicates where my Facebook friends have gone in Dover in the past. Quite useful.
- Not really official at all, it is very useful when trying to find places to stay, eat, or gives a lot of entertainment options to those who may be visiting the town of Dover.
- Highlights places to eat, drink, sightsee, stay the night, and shop. Very useful because it lets you see where you could visit, and quality as well because it lets you go to the businesses' Facebook pages to learn more about them. Information straight from the businesses themselves.
- Presented at a glance attractions and lots of options to experience. From dinner, to coffee, to drinks, to stay/accommodations, and landmarks. Very helpful for planning trip and need ideas. Most helpful I'd say out of all 3 websites for first time trip and planning schedule.
- Showed mostly restaurants.
- The Facebook page is pretty cool - giving you an idea on what businesses and activities there are there.

## Social Media

Team members were also asked to use social media to search for information on about Dover, NH. There were mixed reviews about the Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts for Dover. The following are comments on the quality and usefulness of information obtained:

### Facebook:

- Facebook: This search came up with the third webpage from above along with some other useful pages like a community and yard sale page.
- I like the Facebook page for Dover. It shows businesses and the high-quality work they provide as well as people's personal experiences within the town displayed with pictures and posts. I feel that more local businesses could use this platform to advertise and get people into the downtown area more with promotions or local events.
- The Facebook page on Dover is very useful when searching for what to do in Dover. This also allows me to see pictures of my Facebook friends' trips to Dover.
- The Facebook page that I found with the google search is probably the most beneficial as it has a lot of information about a wide range of topics having to do with Dover.
- The information on Facebook was useful in describing different events, stores, restaurants and activities. It had pictures and recommendations by friends.
- There is a lot of information on the businesses located in Dover, including a lot on the Children's Museum. There are different schools and organizations, and a lot of generalized information about the town.
- There is a Facebook page intended for visitors, there is no Instagram or Snapchat.

### Twitter:

- I did not find any sort of specific Dover page.
- Found a tweet showing they are working on their master plan, Dover police updates, job opportunities in the area

### Instagram:

- Not much came up on this search except a The Farm Bar and Grill and photos of people who have tagged the location of Dover.
- Location and showed pictures of people downtown posing in front of bible stands, a few pictures of food, but mostly pictures with quotes from bible.
- I looked up Dover on Instagram and it showed pictures of businesses using social media to attract visitors and had very beautiful pictures of scenery.
- When going on Instagram and looking up Dover, NH, gives a lot of pictures of scenery of Dover and as well as businesses and food. Facebook is able to provide a lot of recommendations on where to go or what to do during your time at Dover.



## General Information

All of the team members reported that they were able to find general information about Dover, NH.

## Desire to Visit

Team members were asked if they would want to visit Dover with family or friends and for what reasons. This question was asked after participants did some online research. All of the team members said that they would want to visit after their initial research. Many team members were interested in the food and beverage options in town, in addition to retail options and the charm of the city. The following are some comments:

### Things to Do:

- It is a great way to spend the afternoon exploring the little shops.
- I would, it appears to be a small, walkable community in which we could spend the day exploring.
- I would like to visit because of the listings on the Facebook page mainly. It looks like there is a lot that happens on a weekly basis in Dover and with things to do for all age groups.
- I would like to visit Dover with friends and family because it appears to have an abundance of things to do.
- There is a variety of food and events happening in Dover that would be fun to attend with other people.
- I would want to visit Dover with friends and family, because it is local, but they seem to have a lot of activities and a variety of places to shop and eat at.
- Their official page is well put together and looks professional. Their Facebook page has lots of businesses to visit and places to eat and stay, all of which look inviting and welcoming.

### Restaurants:

- Dover appears to have destination restaurants and events.
- Seems to have a lot of different attractions, whether it is food, drinks, or landmarks. The websites above would help plan a trip.
- Seems like there are more stores and restaurants than Durham.
- It looks like a cool, quintessential New England town that is a nice place for lunch or dinner. It seems photogenic.



## Welcoming

Team members were also asked if Dover seemed welcoming to people to visit, live or open a business. The majority of members responded yes.

### Yes:

- Social media seemed very welcoming to visitors and customers.
- Judging from the positive reviews on the Facebook page, I would say it is a welcoming community.
- The official website and the Facebook website have content that is designed for visitors.
- It definitely welcomes people to visit by all the advertising and outreach I came across in my searches. I did not see anything about opening business there.
- All the descriptions for Dover in my internet searches described it as a great place to live, work, and/or play.
- The town seems to contain a lot of businesses and restaurants that I can relate to.
- Dover does seem to have a welcoming presence due to a lot of businesses having a website or types of social media that are putting their information out there for the public to view.
- Judging by the fact that they have a Facebook page titled "Things to do in Dover, New Hampshire", they definitely want visitors. Their official website has lots of information about the town, so they want people to be able to find statistics and make an informed choice about whether they want to live there. Under "Economic Development" on their official page, they talk about the opportunities that Dover affords to business owners, so it would appear that they want new businesses in Dover, NH.
- Being a student at UNH, while owning a car and living in the next town over, I am more inclined to go there for a change of scenery. The restaurants are different than the ones in Durham, and I am not surrounded by only college aged people. I would consider opening a business, however it would depend on what type and if it's appropriate for the town and surrounding communities. It seems welcoming; I got more of that feel from the FB website page.
- They seem to be open to visitors and hold events often trying to bring visitors to the town.

### Maybe:

- It would seem with the limited amount of information between the three websites that Dover is welcoming to people to visit. Of course, there would need to be more research done to live or open a business in Dover but it seems the city is welcoming of that as well.
- Dover seems to be welcoming to visitors; the websites that I saw were highlighting things to do. The official city website seems to want more people to move to the city. I'm not sure if I would like to open a business there because none of the websites mention a bustling downtown or initiative to operate a business there.
- Dover certainly is appealing to joining a small-town atmosphere. Dover seems to understand that it's not a major tourist destination, and therefore more appeals to locals.



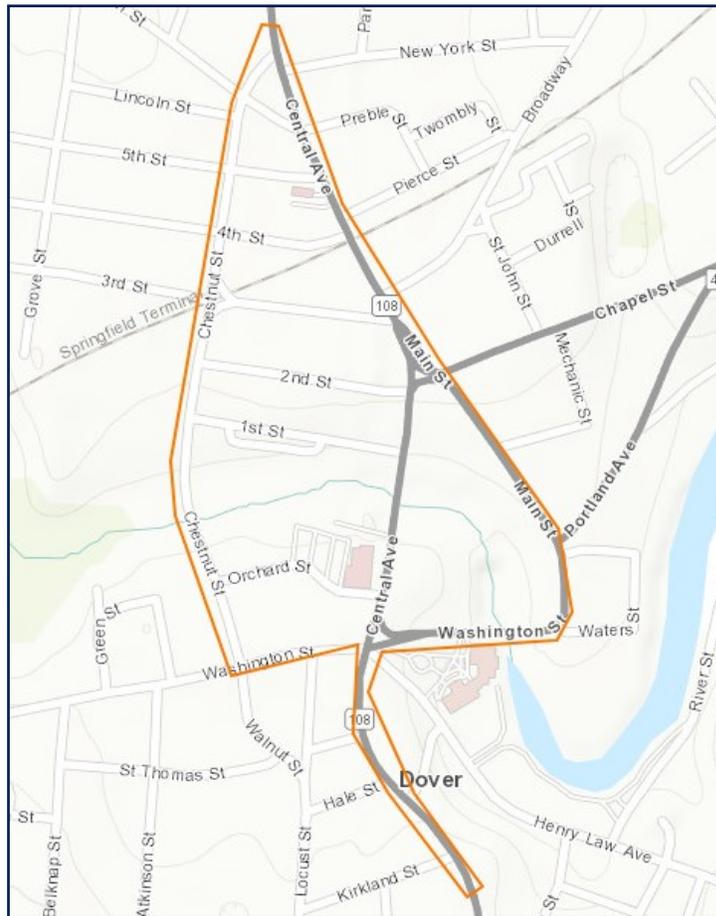
# About the Visit: UNH Students Visit Dover

The visit team consisted of thirteen students from the UNH Planning Student Organization. Seven students visited Dover on October 20th, four visited on October 21st, and two visited on October 22nd. The weather was cool and sunny all three days. Students arrived mid morning on the days of the visit; spent time exploring, shopping, and eating in downtown Dover, and departed early afternoon.

## The Assessment Area

The City of Dover defined the First Impressions assessment area as shown on Map 1 below.

**Map 1. City of Dover Downtown 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 thirteen team members utilized the mobile application Collector for ArcGIS.

The data are organized by the downtown characteristics team members identified, and the comments have been edited for redundancy and coded as assets and opportunities. Assets are the strengths in the downtown—where characteristics exist and are 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

### Appearance

The visit team noted many attractive storefronts that drew participants in. Store signage was unique and added to the small town feel. Comments included:

- Enjoyable coffee/book shop downtown in prime location, nice lighting and music with books and records.
- Signs all look inviting and would make me want to go into the various stores/studios. They promote the revitalized mill in a positive way to bring in business.
- Café was cozy and had a store front that drew you in.
- Businesses on Central Avenue were uniform and well maintained.
- Beautifully maintained buildings, adds historic charm to the city.
- Well-kept and attractive storefronts.
- This business looks well-groomed and inviting. They have advertisements on the window that would make you want to go in.

### Placemaking

The visit team found landscaping around businesses to be well-groomed. Business' use of space contributed to placemaking by fostering a sense of community for the surrounding area and providing a place to meet. Comments included:

- Ample landscaping around businesses near Cocheco Mill.
- Music shop offers a piano that can bring people together.
- Unique, small city atmosphere created by the signs, landscaping, and frontage.

### Eclectic

The visit team found the study area had many quaint businesses unique to Dover that reflected the local community identity. Comments included:

- Window sign shows this isn't a chain store, could be a town-wide slogan/sign project.
- Hand written sign out front makes business more inviting.
- Good unique small city feel created from the signs, landscaping, and frontage.
- It's nice to have a variety of stores in town with a mix of things to do.



# Businesses

## Opportunities

### Appearance

The visit team found some opportunities for improvement. One trend identified was that there was an inconsistency in businesses appearance toward the periphery of the downtown area. Comments included:

- These look slightly more run down as building infrastructure is chipping and broken.
- Some storefronts are outdated.
- Landscaping could be better maintained, fence could be more attractive.
- There is a collection of buildings that have been abandoned.
- Empty business with sign still up, paint is peeling everywhere, windows above it look vacant and dirty.
- Pretty run-down storefronts in what could be a good location.
- Closed and seemingly abandoned storefront with molded boarded windows.
- Storefront is not attractive, covered in advertisements, no landscaping.

### Accessibility/Visibility

The visit team found opportunities for better connections to some of the isolated plazas and businesses in the northern part of the study area. Parking lots created a disconnect between businesses for pedestrians on the periphery of the downtown. In addition, business plazas next to the Dover train station were not well connected to the rest of the downtown. Comments included:

- The strip mall has extra parking and could use some aesthetic improvements.
- Plaza is isolated and lacks connection to surrounding areas.



## Assets

### Vibrancy

The visit team observed many creative and vibrant pieces of art throughout the community. Comments included:

- Mural of historical people adds life to an otherwise empty street.
- Mural on First Street brings color and vibrancy to a wall and adds character.
- Mural is a creative and cool way to combine art and business signage. Bright, colorful, and inviting.

### Good Use of Space

The visit team noted that community art played a huge role in utilizing large and blank spaces in the town of Dover, making them more useful. Comments included:

- Large mural artwork brightens the side of a building that would be intimidating if it were empty.
- Made a brick wall inviting and creative with a mural.
- Spinning wheel is located in place where people would sit and look at it and at the water.
- A historical mural is a nice tribute to history and good use of space.



### Interactive

The visit team noted that community members and visitors were able to interact with the community art pieces in creative and fun ways. Comments included:

- The piano with business cards on it was very colorful; anyone could use it to play music.
- Interesting piece of art that also functions as a pair of bike racks.
- Spinning wheel powered by wind brings a lot of positive attention to the water using the creative piece of moving, metal art.

## Opportunities

The visit team saw some opportunities for Dover to include more community art projects to fill the blank and open spaces in the downtown.



## Assets

### Aesthetics

The visit team found that a lot of the displays and signage within Dover were aesthetically pleasing. Comments included:

- The Dover signs on the street lights are attractive, consistent, unique, and are easy to read.
- Business signage is well designed and adds to the aesthetics of the downtown.
- Park entrance signs are maintained and well-kept.
- New Hampshire flag, USA flag, and Dover flag outside police station and bus stop were visible and gives a sense of community and pride.

### Informative

The visit team found the signage within the downtown to be very informative and helpful for the public. Comments included:

- Nice historical signs that display Dover's history.
- Event signs make people stop and learn about the town and the activities within it.
- Parking signage clearly tells you where you can and cannot park, which are public or private lots, as well as payment options.
- Great signage informing the town on public transportation as well as public parking. They are very user friendly making it easier to get around town.

## Opportunities

### Maintenance

The visit team found that some of the signage within Dover's downtown was outdated and/or required maintenance. Comments included:

- Some business signage was old and run down.
- There is an old street sign post with no sign on it. The pole is bent and unnecessary.
- The signage of some stores was not inviting and was inconsistent with the rest of the street.





## Opportunities

The visit team found it difficult to determine where the downtown started and did not notice a definite entrance.





## Assets

### Inviting

The visit team found that the landscaping in Dover was inviting to the public. Comments included:

- Great way to bring color into an otherwise brick courtyard. Makes the setting very inviting.
- The park entrance with flowers makes the park look very inviting and well kept, convincing people to spend time there.
- Really nice green space along the water, felt inviting and well maintained, nice seating and landscaping.
- Fountain in the middle of the river in downtown area, nice sound added where far enough from the main street.



### Vibrant

The visit team found that the landscaping in Dover brings vibrancy to the downtown. Comments included:

- Great way of turning a dull space into something nice.
- The flowers on the dividers in the road look bright, colorful, and well kept.
- Flowers look well-groomed and fresh. Makes the downtown vibrant.
- This fountain brings a vibrancy and sense of character to the water, which brings people in.

### Aesthetically Pleasing

The visit team found that the landscaping in Dover was thought of as aesthetically pleasing to visitors. Comments included:

- Festive with the pumpkins, and hay tied to building posts.
- Good landscaping in a major walking area, aesthetically pleasing.
- Fountain on the river is pretty and draws your eyes to the nearby park.
- The bushes and trees were well taken care of, recently mulched.
- Landscaping in a major pedestrian area was very well maintained.
- Landscaping on edge of apartment complex next to river makes it feel like you are near the ocean with the plant choices.

## Opportunities

The visit team felt that greenspaces and landscaping should continue to be emphasized in the downtown and side streets. A few places that were lacking included storefronts and parking lots.



## Assets

### Attractiveness

The visit team was impressed with the lighting that they saw along the main shopping areas. It was especially charming by the different uses of light structures throughout the town. Comments included:

- Lighting was attractive along main shopping areas.
- Christmas lights along path strung around pole seems homey and festive.
- Light creates a historic feel and has an attractive sign for the community.



## Opportunities

### Quantity and Quality

Multiple visit team members noticed the need for maintenance of light structures around Dover. Others felt a decrease in safety associated with the lack of lighting in some areas. Comments included:

- There is no lighting, which at night may be unsafe for some to walk on some side streets next to downtown.
- An outdated and broken light post adds to the general abandoned feeling of this area.



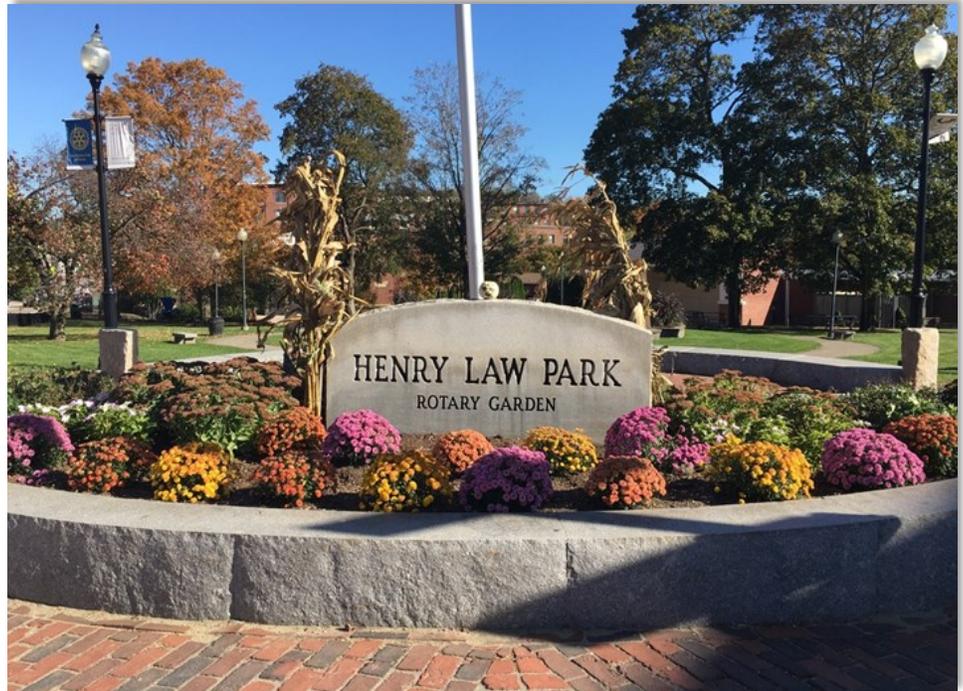


## Assets

### Welcoming

The visit team found that Dover had multiple parks and green spaces in the downtown area that were alluring. Comments included:

- Henry Law Park is very colorful and inviting to visitors. It has great places to sit and has a venue for performers.
- The park next to the canal is well maintained and definitely somewhere you would sit.
- There are open spaces for students to hang out as well as places to get shade during day.
- Neat and appealing courtyard area with seating and maintained landscaping.



### Placemaking

The visit team noticed that the parks were well distributed around the downtown area. Comments included:

- The park next to the jewelry store is attractive and has flowers, tables, and lights. It is somewhere you could definitely sit outside on nice day.
- The seating areas between businesses are charming with nice tables, chairs and maintained landscape.
- It is a great place to stop and relax that is a little more secluded from the Main Street traffic.

## Opportunities

### Seating

The visit team noticed that within the parks, some seating was inadequate or could use some updating. Comments included:

- Tables are needed where there is free Wi-Fi so people can use laptops.
- The park next to the canal could use more seating closer to the water.
- More updated seating is needed in the park overlooking the water and fountain.

# Points of Interest



## Assets

### Appearance

The visit team repeatedly reported on the appearance and usefulness of certain points of interest around town. These areas were noted to be educational and conducive to community gathering. Comments included:

- The Mill building is attractive and a unique town quality.
- The Mill entrance is a good way of using an iconic aspect of Dover with nice landscaping in the front.
- An inviting area with benches to sit at, has beautiful flowers to attract people. Also, it's located right next to the water for a very relaxing feel.
- There is a waterway that adds aesthetically pleasing nature elements to downtown.

### History

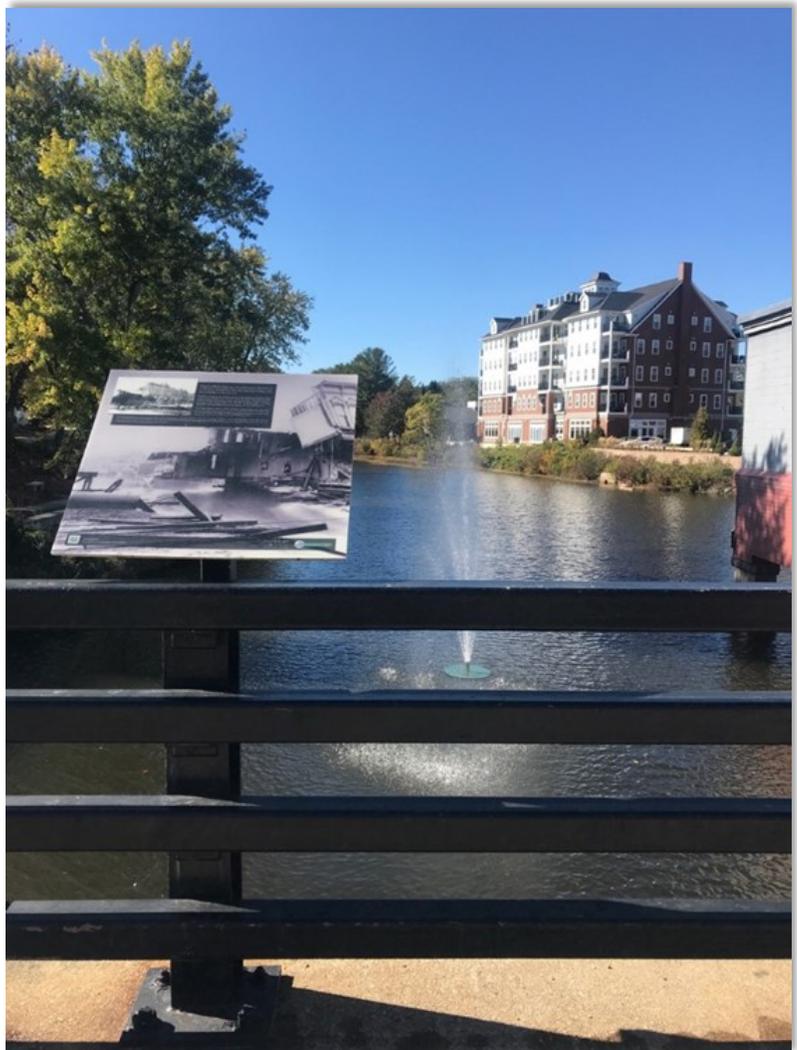
The visit team noted how the historical information was an educational and creative way to display Dover's history. Comments included:

- The information boards near the canal give the history of Dover with pictures. They are in a busy walking area and are helpful and easy to read.
- The history placard is a nice way to remember an iconic building in Dover.

### Community Gathering Space

The visit team noticed a few places that were great gathering spots for the town residents along with out-of-town visitors. Comments included:

- The Rotary Arts Pavillion is a good community space for music and entertainment.
- The Children's Museum is attractive, great location for kids with the park outside, fenced in to ensure safety.



# Points of Interest

## Opportunities

### Appearance and Maintenance

The visit team noticed several points of interest in Dover that appeared neglected. Comments included:

- Some efforts have been made to allow people to view the waterfall downtown, with a pedestrian bridge and a landscaped sidewalk, but there's still a good number of industrial eyesores.
- The river overpass railing is discolored. It could be improved to make it fit its surroundings of nature more. It has a pretty view that people didn't seem to be taking advantage of.
- This smoke stack is an eyesore, not sure if it is still being used at all but could be turned into something more pleasing to the eye.
- The blank wall over the river could be used for art to make area more scenic.
- On some back and side streets, surrounding businesses, the buildings are peeling and not well maintained, with objects such as dumpsters. Seems like high traffic areas.



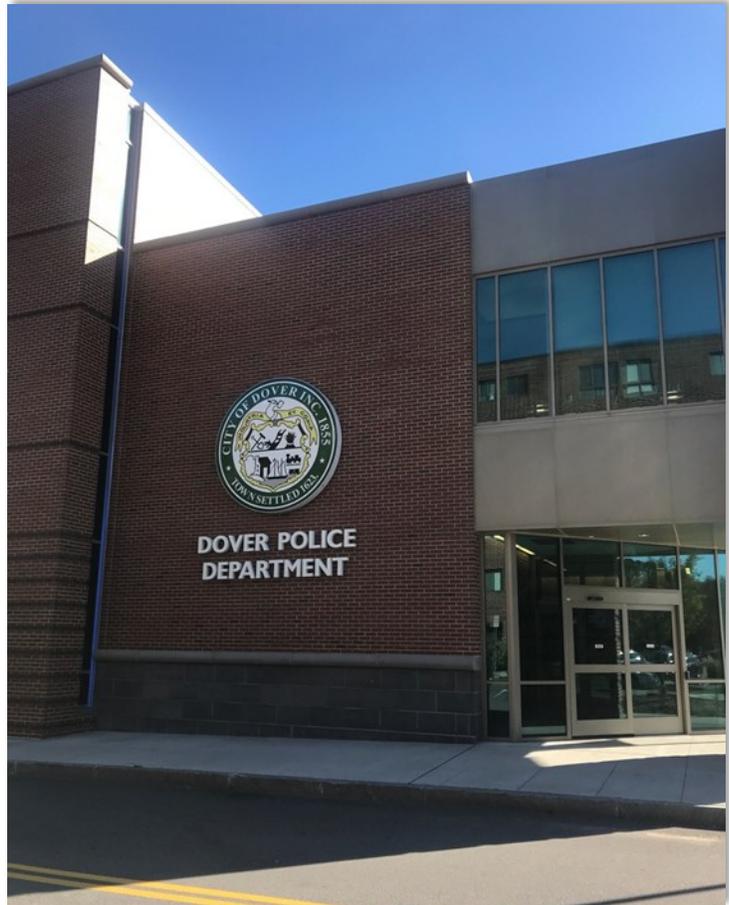


## Assets

### Appearance

The visit team observed that Dover had multiple attractive municipal buildings. Comments included:

- Dover City Hall is fancy with great brick work and paint. Looks to be in great condition and attracts positive attention from visitors; attractive and nicely landscaped.
- The Police Department signage is clear and well done, building is well maintained; this building is well kept and stands out as an important piece of Dover; gives a sense of security and safety.
- Dover Chamber of Commerce is unique and quaint.



## Opportunities

### Appearance

The visit team overwhelmingly found the courthouse needed to be renovated to match the very attractive, traditional Town Hall and more modern Police Department buildings. Comments included:

- “Ye Olde” court house looks old and uncared for.
- Front side of the old court house, a historic building, has a lot of potential for other uses.
- The blank sign in the front, as well as the building itself, need to be repainted in some areas. Is the court house still operational?

### Location

The visit team noticed that while many buildings were in great locations, some were farther out of town than expected. Comments included:

- Didn’t see a lot of wayfinding signs on streets around the Police Department to direct location.
- The Chamber of Commerce seems a little out of place with being further away from the general hub of downtown.



## Assets

### Landscaping

The visit team observed many positive comments made about landscaping around seating areas in addition to the seating itself. Comments included:

- The areas around bench was landscaped beautifully and would be partially shaded during the day by trees and buildings.
- Plenty of benches along the main street, with beautiful flowers.
- Bench is in a nice, shaded area and in ideal place downtown.
- Attractive bench and surrounding area.
- Nice seating area for bus stop.



## Opportunities

### Location & Maintenance

The visit team observed a lack of seating in some areas, some that did not belong, and some that seemed worn. Comments included:

- Bench is in ideal place but not used very well and could be updated.
- Attractive bench but in awkward location.
- There is an opportunity to install more seating downtown.
- Bench height low and in need of maintenance.
- Seating placed in an odd location, no view and difficult to have a conversation.
- Bench is worn and looks relatively old and unused.
- This bench is outside of a parking lot facing the road with cars parked directly in front of it. Not somewhere to spend much time.



## Assets

### Aesthetics

The visit team found that the appearance of Dover's sidewalks to be aesthetically pleasing. Comments included:

- Sidewalk is well-kept with attractive brick.
- Clean and newer-looking sidewalk with landscaping was welcoming.
- Pleasant sidewalk overlooking river and old mills.
- Use of well-kept brick is more attractive than concrete.

### Functionality

The visit team found the placement and design of sidewalks and crosswalks to be effective. Comments included:

- I like how different bricks can be used to distinguish parking spaces and crosswalks.
- Crosswalk is well-marked, making it feel safer in a busy area.
- Sidewalk is a good way to separate pedestrians from traffic and provides a shady area under the trees.
- Good location for pedestrian crossing button at a busy intersection.



# Sidewalks, Crosswalks, & Trails

## Opportunities

### Crosswalk Safety

The visit team found some streets hard or unsafe to cross, creating some disconnect between different areas. Comments included:

- Crosswalk is busy and feels unsafe with the continuous flow of traffic.
- Not a good place for a crosswalk, many cars would not stop while trying to cross the road.
- No crosswalk at three-way intersection with bisecting railroad which made it hard for people to cross.
- Sidewalk ends with no crosswalk to the other side of the street.
- Sign marking entrance to crosswalk is missing.
- No crosswalk in busy area near railroad.
- No crosswalk for people coming from the residential area to the downtown area.

### Maintenance

The visit team found some of Dover's sidewalks needed maintenance. Comments included:

- Sidewalk is narrow and uneven due to the brick work; some bricks are breaking down and cracking.
- There is a lot of asphalt and concrete that is cracked with no landscaping, only hardscaping.
- Sidewalk is beat up and cracked, making area look unkept compared to others.
- Roots growing up between cracks, creating a worn-out look.
- Sign for crosswalk has peeled off, making it only visible if standing right next to it.
- Path looks abandoned and unsure if it is meant for the public or not.
- Crosswalk is painted over a previous crosswalk making it look messy.





## Assets

### Parking

The visit team noticed an abundance of parking in downtown Dover. Comments included:

- Plenty of parking on the street.
- The parking meters are new, easy to use, and accept cards.

### Alternative Transportation

The visit team noted that bus stops were conveniently placed and the train station was well-defined. Comments included:

- Local bus stop is well placed near different shops and points of interest.
- There is a clear sign with all public transportation offered in Dover. The train station is also welcoming and in good condition.



# Streets & Transportation

## Opportunities

### Parking

The visit team found there to be an excess of parking that was poorly maintained in some cases. It was also difficult to determine what was private versus public. Comments included:

- Parking lot is crumbling and looks rundown and uncared for.
- There are bridge parking spots, but no parking is allowed.
- It is somewhat confusing that there is no signage about whether the lot on the corner of Washington and Main Street is open to the public.
- Parking lot needs some maintenance and looks outdated.
- Parking garage next to Aubuchon is unattractive and seems like a lot due to the amount of parking already around downtown.
- The parking lot with jersey barriers has no lighting and lots of impervious surface.

### Alternative Transportation

The visit team found opportunities to improve alternative transportation modes. Comments included:

- Lots of seating for commuters waiting for bus. Seating could be improved, as well as the landscaping around the trees between benches.
- Bus stop looks like the on-street parking. No designation on the ground to say that buses stop there.
- It is unclear what the thin strip of road between landscaping is. If it is a bike lane, labeling is needed.
- Bus stop is barely marked and could use a bench.
- There were no bike racks.
- The bus stop next to Williams Street is the first bus stop that has caught my eye. It has no lights for nighttime and is cluttered with trash. There is bus information that seems to have been taped down and is outdated.





## Assets

### Location

The visit team found the placement of the waste and recycling bins to be well distributed throughout Dover. Comments included:

- Well labeled and placed with proper signage.
- Good location of bins behind bushes off of Main Street where people would walk dogs.
- Helpful to have trash bins next to dog bags.
- On the side of a building was a good location to have bin where people would smoke.
- Nice to see recycling bins downtown.



## Opportunities

### Overflowing Containers

The visit team observed a large amount of trash and recycling bins to be overflowing or close to full, leaving nowhere to dispose waste. Comments included:

- Older bin full of trash is going to fall over. There were no dog bags in container.
- The overflow of trash creates an unappealing look.
- Nice to have recycling bin but can't use because it is full.
- Full and looks dirty
- Overflowing trash gets blown around, leaving garbage on the ground littering the area.
- Full recycling bin may be because it is the only one in sight.
- There is no recycling bin nearby resulting in recyclables in the trash.



# After the Visit

## Post-Visit Survey

The visit team completed an online survey following their visit to Dover. This survey gave the team the opportunity to reflect on the visit and give the downtown an overall rating. Additional questions asked the visit team to comment on their interest in returning to Dover, 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 Dover organized by theme:

#### Walkability

- The town appeared attractive and walkable. I wanted to get out of the car and make my way through the shops.
- It was the mill town that I was expecting, the walkability seemed pretty good, and it was lively.

#### Community Identity

- Seemed bustling and busy, some mixture of old and new development.
- Going from the perimeter of the study area to the middle, it was a great change in the feel, comfort, and looks of Dover. The outer area wasn't as welcoming and more deserted, where the center was more vibrant and felt safer.
- It looked like a typical New England downtown. There were mixed-use buildings surrounding a relatively small street, and the city does a great job of landscaping and providing green area.
- It has an older style with a lot of infrastructure opportunity.
- The downtown seemed nice. I could see several restaurants and small businesses in the downtown. The sidewalks were well maintained and left plenty of room for pedestrian traffic. There were trees mixed into the downtown as well, which was nice. It didn't seem to be very busy with pedestrian traffic, but there was quite a bit of vehicular traffic.
- Dover was well kept due to the clean landscaping and also that it was a busy downtown because I saw people walking as well as a lot of traffic

#### High Potential

- Dover was a nice small town with a lot of potential. It reminded me a lot of a "small Portsmouth". I think that the town should bring in more shopping in order to make people want to come for an afternoon and walk around.
- Filled with many small shops and had plenty of places to sit on the side of the road or in little sitting areas.
- I was surprised by the heavy traffic but how the sidewalks were empty. It seemed like a lot of the businesses were closed which was surprising given that it was the weekend. The overall appearance of the buildings seemed to reflect the care and dedication to the area.

## Housing

The visit team was asked to comment on the apparent quality and availability of several types of housing (rental housing, existing/older homes, new homes, senior housing, assisted housing, and vacant lots). Comments included:

### Mills

- The mills were a beautiful touch to the town that gives it a significant character.
- I noticed a bunch of signs for apartments in the mills, which seem nice, but I would assume they are pricey.
- I noticed a few large-scale housing buildings like the mill building and one along the river; even though they were historic, they seemed disconnected from the rest of the town.

### Availability

- Did not see any vacant lots for new housing, but the overall feel of the town is older with all the brickwork.
- Seemed to have a growing source of new apartments that are located above businesses. Did not see a lot of senior assisted living options or even group homes, when in downtown.
- There were a few examples of new housing available, but there were also quite a few run-down options. Same goes for houses. Some were really well-kept and cute, but others were seemingly abandoned. Other types of housing weren't present at all.
- There appears to be quite a few apartments available in the downtown area. The downtown is mixed commercial and residential, so we saw quite a few homes that seemed to be in good condition.
- I am not aware of any sort of assisted living, and there did not appear to be vacant lots for new homes, though I don't consider this to be a bad thing in a downtown area. I did not see any newer homes, but again, downtowns tend to be built up before outskirts, so it makes sense to me not to see newer homes in the downtown area.
- I noticed that there was an abundance of older homes in the area, many of which were multifamily rentals.
- I did not see any senior or assisted living. I think a lot of the building were historical looking and fit in nice with each other.

### Existing Homes

- From what I could see, all the housing looked like it was in good shape.
- The existing homes I noticed looked like they need work done to them, and I was unaware of any senior living places.
- A few properties that looked abandoned, which could be potential for new construction.
- In the downtown, it was more shops, not as much housing. On the side streets there were houses, some looked older than others and gave me a feel that keeping up with the homes wasn't a main priority.
- Some nicer new housing developments, some places that seemed dated and could be renovated.
- There were a few buildings that that looked like apartments that seemed to be run down. There were also a few abandoned buildings that looked like they could be revitalized or the property could be used for something different.



## Community Amenities

Comments were collected on the quality and availability of the following amenities: bike racks, benches, shade area, community gathering spaces, drinking fountains, community art, wayfinding signs, landscaping, historical sites, wireless internet access, public restrooms, public trash containers, public recycling containers:

### Waste/Recycling

- A huge distraction during my trip was the garbage on the sidewalks, which changed the tone of the trip entirely.
- More trash cans/ recycling bins are necessary, and if they are of high quality, it will even improve the aesthetic of the streetscape!
- Trash containers were all full and recycling containers were restricted to bottles and cans by size opening.
- One of the biggest issues I saw was over flowing trash cans, not well marked trash/recycling, and a lack of recycling next to trash cans.
- There was a good amount of trash containers available, but they were usually overflowing and there weren't many recycling containers available.
- I did see a good number of trash cans, and I was happy to see recycling cans too, I just felt that they should be bigger, as I did see some that were full. Not every trash can had a recycling container with it either.
- Some areas seemed to have trash on the ground, in need of more trash/recycling containers

### Landscaping

- I thought landscaping was one of the nicest parts of Dover, well-kept and bright.
- Landscaping in downtown was beautiful besides some overgrown parts.
- The trees throughout the downtown give plenty of shade opportunities. There was also a fountain in the river that created spray that misted pedestrians on the bridge, which is another way pedestrians could cool down.
- Landscaping was good, seasonal plants were a nice addition. Leaves disposal would make the streets appear neat.

### Public Art

- There were some great community art locations throughout the town that added a lot of appeal and character.
- I do not think there was enough art and saw perfect places that some murals could go.
- I only saw one example of community art, so I think that is something that could definitely be incorporated more.



## Seating

- Benches were weirdly placed throughout the town; they had no views and would make conversation difficult.
- There were some benches, though I felt that there could be more, spread out more in different areas. The benches that I did see were in good condition.
- Lots of places to sit with benches and seating, some seating was older than others.



## Other Amenities

- There were a few park spaces that I liked and that allowed people to gather. I did not notice any drinking fountains or public restrooms as I walked through downtown.
- There were plenty of historic sites with the mill buildings in the area. I don't know if any of the businesses offered wifi because I wasn't looking for it.
- I did not notice any public restrooms or check to see if there was public wifi (could be useful to get people to spend the day or come to do work). Other things such as wayfinding and landscaping could help bring visitors and make Dover more attractive.
- The town could use more bike racks.
- There was a wide variety of amenities, but again nothing outstanding among them. There could be more, or better advertised, restrooms, trash containers, and drinking fountains.
- There was one drinking fountain but it didn't work and wasn't maintained.
- There were no public wifi spots or public restrooms.
- Thinking back, I did not notice bike racks, but I wasn't looking for them as I don't ride a bike, so I may have missed them.
- There were signs about history throughout.
- Did not see public water fountains while in downtown.

## Recreation

The visit team noted that Dover had some opportunities for recreation. Some were slightly difficult to find from the downtown area. The comments are as follows:

### Parks

- I felt that the park near the children's museum was nice, but the town could use another north of there. I didn't notice many other opportunities for public recreation or trail walking.
- The parks could use greenery I think, while some had it there were a few that didn't. Some of the parks were in odd locations close to the road where people may not want to sit. Some were uninviting but some were grassy and well-kept and somewhere I would sit. Walking trails, and some parks were outside of the study area.
- There were a few parks, one of which was brick, not grass. Of the other two that I noticed, one was a garden, and one was a mowed park space with an amphitheater located near the children's museum.
- The parks were in beautiful condition and added a lot of beauty and great features to the town.
- There was one nice park for recreation, others were small or in a weird shape. I found a path that was nice, but it wasn't easy to find from the main streets.
- Every park or open space I noticed had beautiful landscaping and was well maintained.

### Facilities/Other Recreation

- Did not see any ATV trails, but did see some walking trails that seemed to be in great condition and were being used.
- Whether the facilities were irrelevant or unknown, the only recreation facilities I noticed in Dover were the parks.
- I thought good number of sidewalks, parks, public rec areas, and paths.
- I did not notice any public recreation facilities or walking trails other than the sidewalks, but that is what I expected coming into a downtown area.



## Identifiable Brand

Team members were not able to pick out a clear identifiable slogan or brand for Dover.

## Using Your Senses

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

### Taste

- Dover had a bunch of good and different places to eat.
- Very good, a lot of different food options and varieties. I would almost venture to say there are too many food options.
- There were locally owned places and sort of a "natural" theme throughout the area.
- It seemed to still have the small New England downtown feel and the food reflected that, there were not many big chains that I remember, which could be seen as a positive or a negative depending on perception.
- While I was in Dover I ate at a pizza place that had amazing quality pizza with a variety of different kinds. Also tried a cookie at a small bakery and it was very tasty and fresh.
- Mix of restaurants. Including La Festa, Wing - Itz, Thirsty Moose.
- They had really good coffee and baked goods, and the pizza at La Festa was delicious - it even had its own following. While other restaurants closed early, the few I got to sample was quite satisfactory.
- There were lots of coffee shops. There seemed to be a lot of specialty restaurants as well. Positives: lots of different options to choose from. From types of foods, but also from types of meals, like a quick bite to eat, or a sit down more formal restaurant.

Very good and large selection for kids and adults for food and drinks. Negatives: seemed mostly spaced on that main street. Nothing really was on the side streets or beyond. If I needed food I would only go to the main street.

- There were a lot of different options for food and drink in downtown. There were a variety of cuisines for a variety of budgets. For the size of the downtown I think there were too many restaurants, but the variety is good for people who go to Dover all the time.
- Good coffee place, cafes, excellent pizza place, seemed to be a pretty wide variety



## Smell

- No noticeable scent except when sitting in the park, better than something negative
- I think there was some trash smells throughout the town due to the overflowing trash bins but other than that I smelled food a lot and the parks with grass were nice and outdoorsy smelling.
- Walking by pizza places was pleasant but I did notice there were some large trucks passing through and the smell of exhaust was not pleasant.
- You could smell the food of the local restaurants that you were near in the main downtown area with hardly the smell of trash. When you got to the northern edges of the area of study however it has less of a pleasant smell probably because of the heavy construction in that area.
- There was a variety of smells, there was a so many restaurants and bakeries that smelled amazing. The air was nice, fresh, and clean, but when walking by certain parts of downtown where trash was on the side of the sidewalk, it smelled a little funky.
- Like wilderness in some places and like a city in others
- There wasn't much of a noticeable smell in Dover. No flowers or trees added scents to the area, but businesses emitted their own scents, both attractive and unsavory. There were a lot of smokers on the streets, adding a tobacco smoke background to the downtown area.
- The smells seemed to be seasonal flower, mixed with the smells from of local restaurants. Sometimes trash and pollution can dictate a spot.
- I don't remember there being a very bad smell, therefore I think Dover has a neutral smell. Passing some bakeries, I got a nice little whiff of pastries, but that didn't linger very far beyond the doors.
- The downtown didn't smell good or bad. I was pleased that it didn't just smell like car exhaust, and there were only a few places where cigarette smell was strong. The trash cans didn't smell too bad, though some did need to be emptied. I mostly could smell food from the restaurants, especially coffee from the coffee shops.
- Seemed relatively clean on the main street, some of the side roads could be better maintained

## Sounds

- The main sounds were the traffic, but the water if you were near the river and the dam at the mill.
- Unfortunately, didn't hear much music walking through Dover. I heard mostly traffic, but also people chatting, meaning there are people who are hanging out in Dover.
- I heard traffic, a train, a water fountain, and some sort of yoga class.
- There were a lot of areas in and around the downtown that might be right next to a main street but were very quiet and feeling secure which was impressive.
- While walking downtown you could hear the wind in the trees and the water that flowed through the middle of the town, but there was a lot of car noises (honking and tire screeching).
- I felt Dover was very quiet. Traffic was always busy through the center of town, adding a constant buzz of cars speeding through. No music wafted from cafes or restaurants.
- There was noise from overhead planes and a large freight train. A tranquil park had a gentle sound of a fountain.
- Positives: lots of different sounds. I walked along the main street and heard cars, I heard people chattering while walking down sidewalk. The water fountain spraying and hitting the water. When walking one side streets it was quieter and I heard and saw squirrels running around and a few birds chirping. Negatives: there were two cars honking at each other on our way out. Other than that, not too many "bad" sounds. I didn't hear the train or emergency vehicles.
- The train was loud when it came through. Traffic noise was constant and somewhat loud, but it tends to fade into the background. There was music playing from a few shops, but for the most part there wasn't a lot of other noise.
- The train could be annoying since it is right downtown, some nice seating areas near water.

## Unique Attractions

The visit team was asked to identify a restaurant, specialty shop, or attraction that would bring them back to Dover:

- La Festa, any of the coffee places to sit outside and people watch. Would have loved to see more shopping, but definitely interested in the two shops on Central Ave.
- La Festa! Also saw a few other restaurants I wanted to try.
- La Festa, and there was a toy store that I shopped in.
- The toy shop was definitely the most interesting shop that I wouldn't mind coming back for Christmas shopping perhaps, and trying out the local bakery that was next door.
- La Festa Pizza was very good, and the coffee shop across from the Municipal Building had its own unique character and some great coffee.
- I saw that there was a stage outside in a park, if there was a music series, concert, or theatrical performance, I would go back.
- La Festa, the bakeries for a weekend brunch, and mostly the different restaurants and food options that I don't have available near me.
- I like to visit artist galleries and local goods stores. I think having a greater variety of shops would bring me back. I like to be able to go to a boutique, then look at art, then go to a rock or mineral store, or something of that nature. I enjoyed visiting Just the Thing and looking at their furniture, and looking around in the music store as well. It would have been nice to see an independent book shop that had a wide variety of books, or an independent art supply store/fabric store/etc. I am a big proponent of shopping local and buying organic, fair trade, ethical goods, so getting a bigger variety of local, independent retailers would definitely bring me back.



## Live, Work, Play

The survey asked team members to consider whether or not they would consider living, opening a business, or visiting Dover.

### Would you consider living in Dover?

Of the 12 respondents, 7 said yes and 5 said no. Their comments:

#### Yes

- Small town feeling with accessibility.
- If an apartment was affordable, I would like to be near the restaurants and bars
- Because it is close to many food and retail stores and is very walkable and well kept.
- It is a great size with enough to keep you busy but not so much where I would feel like I was trapped.
- Has a great night life, restaurant life, and available housing units
- I would consider it; the town seemed to have a fair amount of assets, but I wouldn't stretch my budget to live there.
- Food options.

#### No

- It would be too busy for me to live there full time.
- Not while I am still in school. Even after graduation, I do not plan to live in Dover because I had plans to live in a more city-like feel town or even city.
- Although I love to visit downtowns like that it would personally be too busy for someone like me to live there full time.
- I don't think there is enough to do/not my community.
- There is a wealth of charm in certain parts of the city, but the line between hip and run-down is very thin, and downtown as a whole does not make an argument for living in a space where you're in a chic area or in a less desirable part of downtown.
- I don't want to leave the town my university is in while I am still attending it
- I say no only because I grew up in and still love more wild areas. I dislike falling asleep to the sound of traffic and would much rather be surrounded by woodland areas and wake up to the sound of birds. I don't like to be able to see my neighbor so close to my own house, so for personal reasons I would not live in downtown Dover. If I liked more urban environments, I think it would be a great place to live.



## Would you consider opening a business in downtown Dover?

Of the 12 respondents, 11 said yes and 1 said no. Their rationale:

### Yes

- I think the city has a lot of developing to do but it has potential to be a very walkable, lively place.
- It seemed like a nice town with a lot of activity.
- It seems to attract a decent amount of people and is a bustling downtown. I think Dover is doing well with bringing people in and would be good for business.
- It's a growing town and there is room for diversity in the downtown.
- It seems to be secure, welcoming, and have a decent amount of foot traffic
- Seems to have a lot of people walking by and is in an area with a lot of great marketing space.
- Has plenty of opportunity.
- There was a large saturation of beauty salons and restaurants, but not much else. If looking for either of these businesses, Dover would be at the top of my consideration.
- I got more of a feel that it was a restaurant and bars town. So, having something different would be useful and I do think some people would come in and I had the potential to do well.
- I would consider locating a business in downtown Dover if more small businesses went in at the same time. People like to be able to go to multiple shops that interest them, so if other businesses were going in as well, I would consider it.
- Good locations.

### No

- The town didn't seem to be too alive; the buildings and amenities were nice, but there were just no people around.



## Would you consider visiting downtown Dover with family or friends?

Of the 12 respondents, 10 said yes and 2 said no. Their rationale:

### Yes – Visitors would mainly return for restaurants, not shopping.

- It's a good area for a quaint outdoor afternoon.
- Yes, it was a nice place to walk around, eat, and spend the afternoon
- There are plenty of food places and shopping.
- There is great food and beverage in the area but retail wise I would rather go to downtown Portsmouth.
- Would like to take my friends and family out to a nice dinner and to small shops.
- For food.
- As the largest city in the general area, Dover has a good selection of restaurants that seem pretty nice. But, If I was looking for shopping or a day's worth of strolling around, I feel that I couldn't spend more than 3 hours there.
- I would if I was going to go to a specific place, not necessarily to walk around.
- I have visited with family before, as there is a jewelry store we really like. I would be even more likely to visit again if there were more businesses.
- For food options.



### Missing Attractions

The survey had asked team members what they felt was missing from Dover's downtown. Comments:

- The absence of art was really heavy. In such a beautiful and historic town, I was surprised to have noted that there was little "local flavor".
- Finding more ways to incorporate local and authentic artwork to the downtown.
- Downtown needs a bit more shopping and recreation opportunities.
- More recycling and green space!
- Bike lanes and bike racks.
- More pedestrian-designated alleys or avenues with more special or unique shops. Also, more tourist-designed attractions.
- I would have appreciated public restrooms, and I felt that the number of retail stores was lacking, but otherwise, the downtown was nice.
- More retail places.

## Change in Perception

The visit team was asked to reflect on whether their pre-visit perception fit the impression they got during their visit to the Dover downtown. Of the 12 respondents, there were 7 who said yes and 5 who said no. Their comments were:

### Yes

- Yes, I felt that it would be a nice place to eat and walk around.
- Yes, didn't think any less of Dover after I went than before. If anything, I felt more of it.
- The web search showed that the city management does a good job of capturing the feel and culture of the city with the events they advertise, the places to go, etc.
- I had been to Dover once or twice before hand, so I had a good idea of what the town is.
- I had been there lot of times.
- It seemed to fit the depiction pretty well.
- Had options for seating areas.

### No

- I did think the city would be more of a boutique and shopping town. I feel like little is done to promote small local businesses.
- I assumed that it was going to be smaller but there was more than I thought.
- While the Children's Museum did offer a nice, central attraction, the town was not as focused on small businesses as other cities with similar walkability.
- I had been to only one area of Dover prior to this visit and thought most of the town was like this one area. However, I found that on the outskirts of the zone we surveyed, it appeared to be much different than the main strip of the town. I did not know that before.
- I have been to Dover a few times, but always to visit a specific shop, and I guess I've never paid much attention because I always thought Dover's downtown was bigger with more businesses.

## Outstanding Features

The visit team was asked to reflect on what were the most outstanding features that they found in downtown Dover. Their comments organized by theme:

### River

- I love the river running through the downtown. It's a beautiful feature and reminds you a bit of where you are, not too far from the ocean.
- The mills and the river were a nice focal point.
- The mill buildings and the river, I think those things are important to the identity of the town.

### Businesses

- The businesses are the best feature of the town, the small business and the variety of restaurants add a lot to the town.
- I would say the feel of the downtown businesses and the subtle culture of being in Dover they create by the choices of businesses and the quality.

### Other

- I liked the outdoor courtyard in the middle of town that provided wifi and opportunity to be social. I see this as a great chance to play music, promote gathering, and encourage local involvement.
- The landscaping, very pretty and well kept.
- Restaurants.
- The grand Municipal Building or the expertly maintained park beside the Children's Museum.
- The preservation of the historic buildings and the quaint shops.

## Top Assets

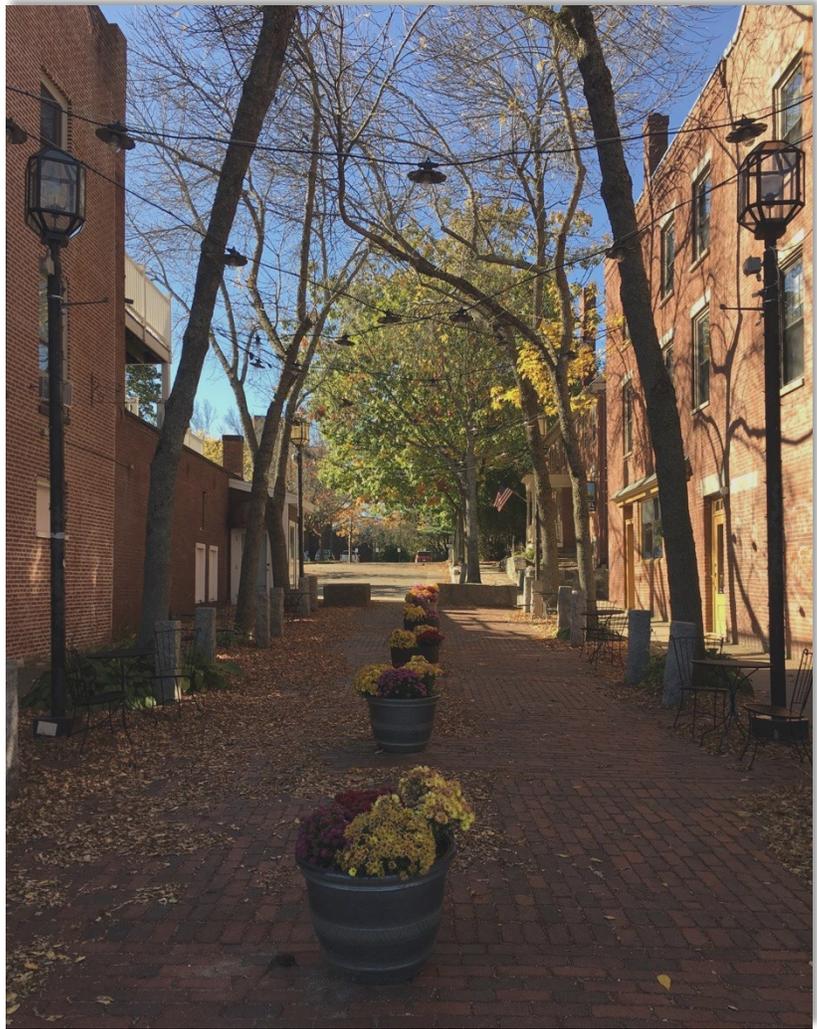
The visit team was asked to list the top three assets they saw in downtown Dover. Some of the most commented on assets included:

- Walkability
- Landscaping
- Retail space/variety
- Mills/river attractions
- Restaurants
- Uniqueness of the downtown
- Lighting
- Historic charm
- Seating
- Parks

## Top Opportunities for Improvement

The Team was asked to list the top three opportunities for improvement they saw in downtown Dover. Some of the most commented on opportunities are:

- Trash/recycling
- Wide streets
- Not many available/easily accessible bike racks
- Empty parking lots
- lighting
- Green-space
- Public restrooms
- Entranceways to downtown
- Allowing small businesses to spill out into sidewalks



## Top Obstacles/Challenges

The Team was asked to list the top three obstacles/challenges that they faced in visiting downtown Dover. Some of the most commented on challenges are:

- Waste management/litter
- Heavy traffic flow
- Wide roads
- Proximity of residential to commercial
- Few directional signage
- City entranceways
- Bike transportation/storage
- Continuity of businesses and residential areas

## **Altering Impressions of Hometowns**

The survey asked whether or not the visit to downtown Dover had changed/alterd the visit teams' impressions of their hometowns. Some of their comments were:

- I noticed Durham has a nice, walkable downtown, but may also have an odd contrast between what businesses are offered.
- Dover had more assets compared to my downtown; however, parts of Dover's downtown seemed to be more spread out and not as walkable.

## **New Ideas for Their Hometowns**

The survey asked the visit team if their visit to downtown Dover provided any new ideas for what to add in the visitor's own hometowns. Their comments were:

- ART!!
- I wish my downtown was more pedestrian focused, able to add shopping, walking, outdoor seating that's not overwhelmed by traffic
- The look on the outside makes a huge difference to people coming for the first time.
- Emphasizing pedestrian areas that open space up for more unique small businesses.
- My home downtown could use more restaurants and specialty shops.
- Expanding the feel of the main strip to other areas of the town. One side of the street has beautiful buildings, and across the street from it would have forgotten about buildings with boarded up windows.

## **Other Comments**

The survey asked if the visit team had any other comments to make about their experience in Dover. Their comments were:

- Dover is a great city, but there is a large contrast between new and desirable areas and old or run-down areas. There seems to be a lot of emphasis on certain areas to make them more presentable, but other areas feel neglected.

# First Impressions: Dover Assessment Map

All of the assessment data is stored on an online interactive map. To view the data, visit: <http://bit.ly/firstimpressionsdover>

## First Impressions: Dover

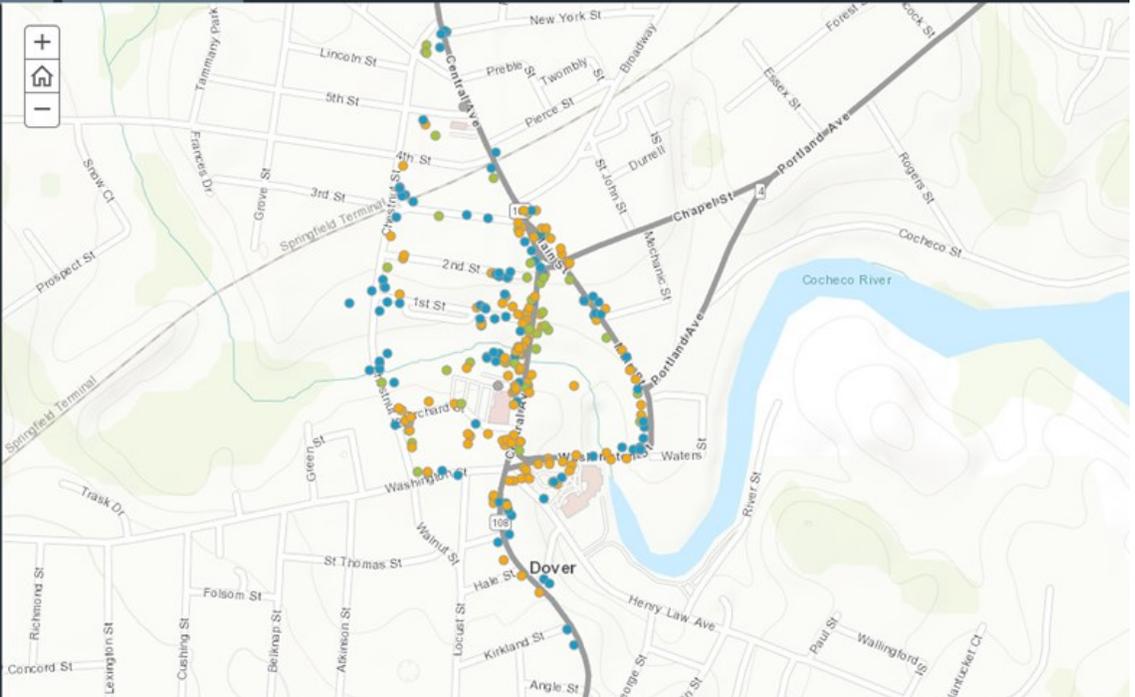
A story map     Extension

**All Points** | Assets | Opportunities | Assets/Opportunities

First Impressions is an assessment program conducted by UNH Cooperative Extension that examines a community's downtown through the eyes of potential residents, visitors, and businesses, helping communities learn about their opportunities and empowering them to take action to improve their downtown.

The visit team consisted of 13 students from the UNH Planning Student Organization. Seven students visited Dover on October 20th, four visited on October 21st, and two visited on October 22nd. The weather was cool and sunny all three days. Students arrived mid morning on the days of the visit; spent time exploring, shopping, and eating in downtown Dover, and departed early afternoon.

Team members were asked to assess downtown Dover based on the following characteristics: businesses, community art, displays & signage, downtown entrances, landscaping, lighting, parks, points of interest, public facilities, seating, sidewalks, crosswalks & trails, streets & transportation, and waste & recycling.



## For more information, contact:

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