

Questions & Answers

In July of 2023, the City Council adopted the ["Multilane Hybrid" conceptual design](#) for the Downtown Infrastructure Improvement Project. The current Preliminary Design Phase will use this Multilane Hybrid concept to develop the detailed plans and specifications required for construction.

BUDGET

1. What is the estimated cost of the project?

The current total estimated project cost is \$16.9M, as described in the FY 2025-2031 [Capital Improvement Program](#) (CIP) (page 86). The cost estimate assumes construction in three phases between 2025 and 2027 and includes 3% annual inflation. This estimate was prepared in the fall of 2023.

2. How much of the total cost will be spent on utility replacements vs. surface treatments?

Approximately \$12.1M is budgeted for underground utilities and \$4.8M is budgeted for traffic signal replacement, sidewalks, bike lanes, landscaping, etc.

3. What is the cost of the proposed covered parking / solar canopy on Gilbo Ave.?

The estimated cost of the covered parking / solar canopy on Gilbo Ave. is \$1.15M.

4. How will the cost of the project affect my tax rate?

The CIP details how the various project components will be funded using a combination of Capital Reserves, current tax revenue, utility rate payments, and debt if the full project cost is funded with City funds (i.e., assuming no grants). The Downtown Infrastructure Project, along with all of the projects identified within the CIP, comply with the City Council's Fiscal Policy which limits any property tax revenue increase using a calculation based upon recent changes in the Consumer Price Index (Boston-Cambridge-Newton). ([The Fiscal Policy is available in full detail online at KeeneNH.gov/budget.](#))

5. Is there a detailed cost estimate available?

[A detailed cost estimate](#) was submitted with the City's RAISE Grant application in February. It should be noted that the RAISE Grant application included a slightly larger scope of work than what is proposed in the CIP. As a result, the budget estimate is approximately \$4M more than the CIP budget.

6. Why is the cost listed in the RAISE Grant application different that the cost listed in the CIP?

To make the City’s application as competitive as possible with the RAISE grant criteria, we included several elements that are not required to address the initial project purpose of utility replacement. For example, the RAISE grant application proposes to extend the scope of the project down Main St. to the Winchester St./ Marlboro St. roundabout. This would allow connecting the proposed bike lanes with the existing bike lanes on Main St. and the planned bike lanes on Marlboro St. Also, the grant application proposes to extend streetscape improvements and utility infrastructure down Gilbo Ave. between St. James and School St. This allows us to better address the grant criteria related to economic development. Both additions are needed and would likely occur at some point in the future but are not critical to the Downtown Infrastructure Project.

7. In the project cost estimate what is “Mobilization”?

“Mobilization”, is a line item in construction contracts that pays a contractor for physically moving heavy construction equipment to the project and establishing the job site. This is paid as a lump sum cost in installments throughout the construction contract. Contractors will often carry costs such as a job trailer, portable toilets, insurance, and other costs that do not have a specific payment item in their “Mobilization” cost.

GRANTS

1. What grants has the City applied for to offset the project cost? What is the status of those applications?

Grant	Requested Funds	Status
FY18 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) (design only)	\$600,000	Not Selected
FY19 BUILD (design only)	\$600,000	Not Selected
FY22 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) / Clean Water State Revolving Fund (Stormwater)	\$285,330	Awarded
2022 State Revolving Loan Fund (Sewer & Stormwater)	\$137,627	Awarded
FY23 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) (design only)	\$1,140,000	Not Selected
NH Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Program – Loan Forgiveness	<i>Up to</i> \$2,010,570	Eligible
FY25 Shaheen CDS Request – Downtown Stormwater Infrastructure	\$3,615,000	Requested
FY24 RAISE	\$13,729,600	Not Selected

TREES

8. How many trees will be removed from the Common in Central Square?

One unhealthy Sugar Maple on the east side of the Common will be removed due to its poor condition. Depending on the final landscaping alternative selected, one additional Pin Oak on the west side of the Common may be removed.

9. How many Trees will be removed to accommodate the raised crosswalk at Railroad Square / Gilbo Ave.?

One Callery Pear on the west side of Main Street is proposed for removal to create a clear connection between the rail trail on the west and Railroad Square.

10. How many trees are going to be removed within the entire project limits?

Within the project limits, an estimated 63 trees will be removed. An additional 18 trees are currently small enough that they can be transplanted to other locations in the City (i.e., City-owned property or within the Right-of-Way). The current design plans call for approximately 145 new trees to be planted as part of the project. ***The total number of trees downtown after construction will increase by over 40%.***

A tree assessment was completed based on the general project concept approved by the City Council in July of 2023. Some trees will be removed due to changes in the surface treatments (i.e., widening sidewalks, adding bike lanes, relocating outdoor dining spaces, etc.). 14 trees will also be removed due to poor health (based on a recent arborist study). Trees to be removed can be seen in pages 4-8 of the March 13TH [workshop graphics](#).

11. What will happen to trees that are removed?

Most of the trees are too small to be harvested for use of the lumber and will be chipped. Trees that are small enough to be successfully transplanted will be planted elsewhere in the city as street trees.

12. Can you transplant trees that need to be removed to use elsewhere in the city?

Some small, healthy trees may be good candidates for transplanting. We will evaluate them on a tree-by-tree basis and replant the ones with a good chance for success.

13. How many trees will be planted to replace what is removed?

The current design plans call for approximately 145 new trees to be planted as part of the project which will increase the total number of trees downtown.

14. What type of new trees will be planted?

Page 10 of the March 13TH [workshop graphics](#) shows a selection of new trees that may be included in the project. New tree species are selected for several criteria including growth habit and shape, foliar and bloom color, salt and drought tolerance, as well as insect and disease resistance.

15. What size trees will be planted?

Replacement trees will typically be 2-3” in diameter at breast height (dbh). This size generally has the best success in transplanting and is readily available at a reasonable cost.

PARKING

1. How many parking spaces will be lost or gained by the project?

The current design provides for one additional parking space overall within the project limits after the project is completed. Some of the parking spaces will be in a different location. The table below shows the total number of standard and accessible parking spaces before and after the project is completed. (Minor changes are possible as the final design details are determined.)

Location	Existing			Proposed		
	Standard	Accessible	Total	Standard	Accessible	Total
Main Street	115	9	124	122	8	130
Central Square	41	2	43	36	3	39
Gilbo Avenue	49	1	50	47	1	48
Railroad Street	20	2	22	21	2	23
Total	225	14	239	226	14	240

DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

1. Of the various alternatives considered over the last two years, which options are still under consideration?

Based on comments received through three 2024 public workshops and MSFI project update meetings, the conceptual design has been advanced considerably since the City Council adopted the Multi-Lane Hybrid plan in July 2023. The most current iteration can be seen on the overall project “Roll Plan” displayed on May 1st project workshop. This plan will continue to be adjusted and refined based on feedback from the MSFI Committee and the full City Council Workshop scheduled for June 11TH.

BIKE LANES

1. How will the use of bike lanes in the downtown be regulated?

The City Manager has convened a working group to develop recommendations for the regulation of Bike Lanes within the Downtown. While most rules are already addressed under state law and City ordinances, additional rules may be proposed that are unique to the downtown area. We expect the recommendations will be reviewed by the MSFI Committee in June or July.