

Downeast Credit Union: *Implementing Town Character Standards*

by Randall Arendt

Location: 94 Main Street, Topsham, Maine

Development Period: 2010

Developer and Builder: James Howard, Priority Real Estate Group, Topsham, Maine

Architect: Steve Normand, Normand Associates, Topsham, Maine

This bank was one of the first projects to implement Topsham's design standards requiring new buildings to be located closer to the street and to have second stories and formal elevations facing the street. It is also adjacent to the town's offices and public safety building which were constructed three years prior to the credit union. All three structures create the more traditional look that the town had adopted through the implementation of their Main Street Planning efforts in 2008, a design approach that is evident in a number of new buildings in the Lower Village, 1.5 miles to the south, also along Main Street.

This project has reinforced the streetscape, as it was built on a mostly open lot occupied by a car dealership. The ground floor covers 2,700 square feet of floorspace, while its smaller second floor provides two offices, a large storage closet, a mezzanine, and a restroom. The building's interior design features an opening from the ground floor up to the cupola, which admits additional daylight to both floors.



Figure 1: The above aerial photo shows the credit union's very close relationship with Main Street, just enough for landscaping and a wooden sign. Because most of the parking is located in the back, the town allowed a side entrance, shown above. (Photos courtesy of Google Earth and the Priority Real Estate Group)

Other Examples of Banks with Rear Parking



Figure 2: The Sanford Institute for Savings Bank, at the corner of US Route 1 and Maine Rt. 91 in York, Maine, maintains a close relationship with the roadways and provides entrances from both front and back. Its second floor is occupied by a law firm. Its small tower-like roof turret is a special feature recalling a design practice more common in the 19th century to create a grander appearance, signifying the bank's pride in its new buildings. The siting and rear parking follow standards adopted by the town in the early 1980s, at the suggestion of the author.



Figure 3: The Northeast Bank Brunswick, Maine has entrances facing both Maine Street in front and the parking lot in the back, creating a doubly convenient situation for its customers.



Figure 4: The BB&T bank at the principal corner in the village center of Marshall, Fauquier County VA, combines a neo-traditional appearance with close proximity to both streets. Its side entrance is convenient to Rectortown Road and the rear parking lot.