

VI. NRZ PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Guiding Principles

1. **EFFORTS SHOULD BE CONCENTRATED TO BUILD A STRONG INVESTMENT CLIMATE.** The revitalization of the East Side neighborhood will not be an easy task. The issues facing the neighborhood are significant, and those who have been working here to stabilize and revitalize the neighborhood over the years are well aware that change often occurs slowly. As noted, there are already examples of reinvestment occurring in the neighborhood. Many projects have been completed in past years, and there are a number of projects currently underway. While these projects have been individually successful, they have often been scattered through various parts of the neighborhood and don't always build on the success of each other. The NRZ Strategic Plan should focus investments to maximize impact. The level of redevelopment needed will require significant investments of private sector funds to help achieve a healthy market condition. Public funds should therefore be applied strategically to leverage private investment. Public sector investments should be used to: a. support private sector projects and activities (e.g. streetscape improvements, public improvements, subsidies) and b. leverage investments. Local public/private partnerships should be developed wherever possible.
2. **LEADERSHIP MUST BE FOCUSED ON IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN.** The Strategic Plan should build on past successes and rely on the continued involvement of the people and the organizations that are already committed to the East Side's revitalization with enough representation of the Community's residents (e.g. 66.% were Hispanic, as of the last Census). Ideally, this Strategic Plan should be viewed as a Management Plan by the NRZ Committee. The Plan should be used to maintain a "bird's eye" perspective of the neighborhood - and provide a blueprint for fostering projects and programs that will most significantly influence the further revitalization of the neighborhood as a whole. To be successful, the NRZ Committee must enlist the help of additional people and groups in the neighborhood to join in the revitalization effort and to increase the impact of leadership efforts here. Success will only be possible if stakeholders continually manage the revitalization strategy.
3. **NEIGHBORHOOD ADVOCACY IS IMPORTANT.** NRZ leaders recognized the need to strengthen and enhance communication within the neighborhood. The NRZ Committee could play a strong role in being a "voice" for the East Side. Many participants felt that there was currently a perceived lack of power within the East Side and the need for stronger involvement of community organizations. The NRZ should work to connect the leadership of existing community organizations and solicit greater involvement by other residents and businesspeople by means of radio, newspaper, schools, churches, etc.

4. **SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES SHOULD BE ACHIEVABLE.** While there was some interest in supporting larger projects that could have long-term economic impact for the East Side (such as the creation of a new East Bridgeport train station and new Transit-Oriented Development related to it), most participants favored short-term projects they considered to be more feasible given current conditions and trends, and available resources. This input influenced the suggested phasing of projects included within this Strategic Plan. East Side NRZ leaders wanted to emphasize the basic elements of neighborhood revitalization in this strategy such as rehabilitation of housing stock, construction of infill housing, and implementation of streetscape improvements. Meanwhile, certain issues that were seen as beyond immediate control by the neighborhood are nonetheless viewed as critical to a sound revitalization strategy. The restoration of the Congress Street Bridge was identified as the most significant example. Many see the bridge stuck in an open position as being a visible sign that the neighborhood is not connected to other parts of the City, in particular the downtown - and a symbol of a neighborhood weakness.

5. **USE OF TARGET AREAS**

“Building from a position of strength...”

The NRZ Planning Committee sees the revitalization of the East Side as a building- block-strategy. This Plan recommends the use of an implementation strategy within specific target areas to achieve this revitalization. By targeting projects within key target areas, the NRZ will have the opportunity to encourage change and revitalization that will have broader impact. Following the completion of the East Side NRZ workshop in early 2009, the East Side Side NRZ consultants presented the neighborhood’ priority projects at a meeting of key City staff members who provide policy direction for development of the City and its neighborhoods. At that meeting, City staff reinforced the importance of targeting activities and resources to maximize impact. Recent revisions to regulations for Community Development Block Grant funding, for example, stress the importance of looking at the renovation of entire blocks to assure that strong neighborhoods are being created. It will be important to consider housing, streetscape, mixed use where applicable and commercial services.

6. **ECONOMIC FACTORS.** While the nation is currently suffering from an economic recession that has had an impact on the current real estate market, those conditions have already started to improve as this Plan is being completed. The NRZ strategy is designed to build on the existing physical strengths of the neighborhood and to create a climate that supports growing investment within the neighborhood, at a rate commensurate with general improvements to the economy as a whole.

Activities included in Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan involves various types of Activities that strengthen the neighborhood at multiple levels. For each activity, this Plan identifies: a. potential partners and b. resource opportunities available to help carry out these activities.

Level One - Build the sense of community (Communication in English, Spanish and other languages as needed, and Community Organization)
Level Two -Stabilize the Neighborhood - Core Revitalization Programs
Level Three -Improve the Appearance and Viability of the Neighborhood
Level Four -Enhance the Business Climate of the East Side/ Economic Revitalization

Level One - Build the sense of community (Communication and Community Organization).

The social problems within the East Side need to be addressed in a direct way. Neighborhoods function best when the people who live in them have a sense of belonging, confidence that neighborhood problems are being addressed, and a sense of security. The first level of activities in the East Side Revitalization Strategy, therefore, is to strengthen the neighborhood's sense of community by supporting the continuation of existing community organizations, creation and maintenance of block watches, and scheduling regular neighborhood cleanups and beautification efforts. Activities at this level are fundamental to the neighborhood's long-term success and, therefore, need to be ongoing throughout the revitalization strategy. These efforts will have direct impact on the livability and sustainability of the East Side.

1. Form NRZ Steering Committee to Facilitate revitalization process

Once the NRZ Plan is adopted, the community should form an NRZ Steering Committee, responsible for implementation of the NRZ Strategic Plan.

Neighborhood Outreach/Dialogue. The NRZ Steering Committee should reach out to the community and foster an ongoing dialogue, especially within the resident community. The Committee should include representation of specific community organizations and stakeholder groups, including:

- a. The East Side Community Council
- b. Lower East Side Development Corporation
- c. East Main Street Revitalization Association
- d. Washington Park Association
- e. Trash Busters
- f. Residents
- g. Churches, Faith-based organizations
- h. Business community (especially property owners within designated target areas, such as the Knowlton Street corridor, sections of the Lower East Side waterfront including the Shoreline Star property, the Crescent Avenue/Congress Street area, East Main Street, etc.)
- i. Non-profit organizations (Habitat for Humanity, Mutual Housing, Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust, McGivney Community Center, etc.)
- j. Spanish/English media (e.g. Radio Cumbre, LaVoz, Radio Amore)

It is critically important that each project be approached through collaboration. At the beginning of each year, the NRZ should develop an ANNUAL WORK PLAN through joint meetings with its partners, most of whom are hopefully represented around the table. There should be an emphasis on residents. Together, the NRZ and its partners should assess previous progress, identify localized needs, determine available resources and develop a plan of implementation for the coming year, by identifying the role of each group and the resources they can bring to bear or jointly secure. In this way, all organizations can work towards achieving common goals.

Neighborhood Topics. While the NRZ Steering Committee should focus on advocating for projects and resources to complete physical improvements in the neighborhood, other areas of concern should include:

1. **Social Services** to support the needs of neighborhood residents. The 20+ Human Service Agencies operating on the East Side (such as Hall Neighborhood House, Helping Hand Center, Alpha Home, McGivney Center, etc.) should be directly involved in these efforts.
2. **Security** (expansion and maintenance of viable block watch groups, in close coordination with City Police Department and other public safety officials). This could include expansion of block watches, community service, etc.
3. **Cleanup and Beautification:** East Side neighborhood groups should continue to work closely with established groups like the Trash Busters to organize cleanup drives on a regular basis. Special efforts should be focused on anti-graffiti efforts, perhaps in conjunction with the neighborhood's block watch efforts and community service (Police). The East Side NRZ should make a special effort to work closely with Mayor Bill Finch's recent "Be Green" Beautification initiative and connect with youth conservation teams and groups such as Groundwork Bridgeport.
4. **Youth Activities** - During the revitalization planning process, it was noted that there is a need for increased youth activities within the East Side. Without meaningful recreational or employment opportunities, it will be difficult to keep the neighborhood's youth engaged in constructive activities. The alternative will be increased loitering, graffiti and crime within the neighborhood. It was recommended that opportunities for recreation and employment be pursued as part of the revitalization strategy. It will be important to promote the use of youth programs offered through the Orcutt Boys Club, the McGivney Community Center and the Hall Neighborhood House. Boys & Girls Clubs offer programs and services to promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging and influence. Summer camps and youth summer employment programs should be continued and expanded if possible. The McGivney Community Center is a non-profit organization founded in 1992 by a group of concerned businessmen and community

leaders. It was founded to provide youth with an educational "safe haven" from the dangers of the streets. The Center also provides young people with After-School and Evening Programs, as well as a Summer Camp. Examples of the Center's past programs includes homework assistance, supplemental education, computer literacy, music programs, arts and crafts and recreation programs. As funds are available, scholarships are available to help defray tuition costs.

Hall Neighborhood House offers a variety of programs as well, including youth services, counseling and college prep; after school recreation; and performing arts, music and dance.

There are also several after school programs currently offered in the East Side, mostly located at the Luis Muñoz Marin School. Examples include the Lighthouse Program (ASPIRA); Bridgeport Parks and Recreation programs for basketball, dance and volleyball), etc. Other locations should be identified as well, including the private sector.

5. **Senior Services** - Some of the elderly residents of the East Side lack sufficient resources to maintain their homes and their properties. Additional services for meals, medical services and recreation should be explored. A number of local organizations, such as the Hall Neighborhood House, offer senior citizen support services.
6. **Social gathering and interaction** -- The East Side NRZ should support social efforts in the neighborhood and encourage close coordination with schools, churches, similar Faith-Based organizations, business groups and other community groups.

The importance of community organization needs to be fully understood and cannot be overstressed: the East Side neighborhood will not be successful without continued efforts to clean up, to make the neighborhood a safe place to live, and to maintain an open dialogue among stakeholders. A strong, unified community voice is also the best way to effectively communicate neighborhood concerns and needs to City leaders and officials who are operating with fewer resources.

Level Two - Stabilize the Neighborhood - Core Revitalization Programs

Several areas of concern must be addressed at this level: high levels of vacancy (land and buildings); high number of blighted properties; and the high number of properties lacking code compliance. Underlying these areas of concern are the generally low household income levels within the neighborhood and the low levels of owner occupancy. Efforts must be focused on creating new housing, renovating housing that is below standard and creating strong neighborhoods. The NRZ must work with other partners and tap as many resources as possible to assure sufficient stabilization.

SUGGESTED PARTNERS:

- a. Non-profit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Mutual Housing of Southwestern Connecticut, Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust, East Main Street Revitalization Association, Lower East Side Development Corporation (LESDCO) and Groundwork Bridgeport.
- b. City agencies such as the Office of Neighborhood Revitalization (Blight enforcement, NRZ), Bridgeport Redevelopment Agency, Building Department, Health Department, Bridgeport Housing Authority, etc.
- c. Since much of the East Side is in a historic district, the NRZ might consider partnering with someone to provide training on how property owners could access historic tax credits.

SAMPLE RESOURCE OPPORTUNITIES:

- Community Development Block Grant funds; annual entitlement approximately \$3 Million
- Bridgeport Lead Elimination Action Plan (LEAP) Program (Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust) - \$ 3 Million to eliminate lead poison hazards
- Neighborhood Stabilization Funds -- \$6 Million (City of Bridgeport ARRA Stimulus Funds) - to be used to leverage \$26.2 Million of Housing Development Funds (HDF) to buy, restore and sell foreclosed properties in the City
- Steelpoint Redevelopment Project - Since Steelpointe Harbor has the responsibility of creating up to 300 income restricted housing units, the East Side NRZ should work to negotiate the placement of as many of these units as possible into the NRZ strategy, particularly for infill housing, housing rehabilitation and mixed-use projects.
- Department of Economic and Community Development Funds
- Congressional Earmark Funds
- Lower East Side Development Corporation (LESDCO) -- \$1.8 Million in Section 108 funding for projects including streetscape improvements, job development, affordable housing, etc.
- Historic Tax Credits
- Federal Home Loan Bank - AHP (although very competitive lately)
- CHFA Housing Tax Credit Contribution Program (HTCC) - \$10M made available annually. Applications typically due July 1; and
- Flexible financing could be secured through community loan funds (Community Capital Fund and Housing Development Fund).
- City bonds
- Bridgeport Housing Authority, Section 8 Certificates
- Low Income Housing Tax Credits
- Private Foundations

1. Housing Rehabilitation, Code compliance

Properties in disrepair or lacking code compliance must be repaired and upgraded so that the neighborhood is stabilized and its housing stock can provide for future

generations. It is recommended that housing rehabilitation programs seek to achieve the following goals to the extent possible:

1. Funds should be targeted in a block-by-block strategy, beginning with initial target area between Washington Park and Knowlton Street.
2. Funds should be available to fund a variety of housing improvements, ranging from system replacement and repair to property enhancements such as painting and window replacement. Properties, at a minimum, must be brought into compliance with existing health and safety codes.
3. There should be a stringent code enforcement program especially within targeted areas.
4. There should be a specific focus on absentee-owned and derelict properties, tailoring programs to the zoning of specific properties (e.g. brownfields, industrial properties).

Continued support should be provided to programs like the Healthy Homes initiative of the Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust (BNT). In partnership with the City, BNT promotes access to healthy homes, providing dollars and services to prevent lead poisoning, promote wellness, and improve the quality of life for the City's neediest population. Over the next two years, BNT intends to create another 160 lead safe units using almost \$2,000,000 of HUD funding through the City of Bridgeport Lead Free Families Program and BNT's Lead Elimination Action Program (LEAP), a 3 year grant to address the critical need of lead prevention, education, and abatement of 100 units. The past data shows that the need for these types of programs is even greater in the East side. From 2004 thru 2007, there were 420 incidents of lead reported in the East side. 30% of the incidents reported have children with elevated blood lead levels above 20 micrograms per deciliter. The following census tracts lists the percentage of housing stock built before 1950 and the number of lead incidents reported.

2. Adaptive Reuse of larger buildings where appropriate, including adaptive reuse of Holy Rosary, Waltersville, and St. Charles Schools

Buildings sometimes outlive their economic use. This is particularly the case for some of the older industrial buildings and public buildings that remain on the East Side. Building standards for modern industry are generally different than those of the late 1800s or early 1900s when much of the East Side was first developed. It is more important today to have space that is energy-efficient, flexible and functional. With the advent of newer schools, such as the Barnum Waltersville School, the City has no need to operate schools like the Waltersville School. When large buildings become vacant for long periods of time, they become blights on the neighborhood, safety risks, and targets for attractive nuisance. These properties need to be guided into a productive use, which will often be an adaptive reuse (e.g. conversion of a school into multi-family housing units or a factory into a mixed-use complex for new housing, office and retail uses). Other examples include Holy Rosary School (previously occupied by Achievement First) and St. Charles School.

3. Blight enforcement

Strict enforcement of the City’s Blight and Housing Codes is essential to the continued revitalization of the East Side. The Office of Neighborhood Revitalization has proven that certain deteriorated properties can be turned around and made productive elements of the neighborhood through consistent enforcement of local blight laws. Enforcement assures that absentee property owners are held accountable for the condition of their properties. It will also help the City and the NRZ to identify individuals who have an interest in maintaining their properties but lack the financial capability or technical ability to keep up with ongoing repairs or upgrades, such as the elderly.

Additional recommendation: Revisit the Definition of Blight. The Housing Subcommittee believed that a uniform definition should be established for classifying sites as blighted (Although CityScan inventoried all East Side properties, a number of properties viewed locally as blighted did not show up in the CityScan inventory. Examples included: 197-207 Harriet Street; 64-72 Maple Street and 291 Harriet Street)

4. Halfway Houses, Social Programs

The East Side NRZ is supportive of the purposes for which Halfway Houses have been created in Bridgeport, so that programs can be offered to assist individuals who are seeking to overcome alcohol and/or drug abuse problems. Meanwhile, there is a local concern that the number of such homes in the East Side is disproportionate to those contained in other Bridgeport neighborhoods, which could affect the overall revitalization strategy. Based on a recent review by the Office of Neighborhood Revitalization of the list of all the licenses group homes and rooming houses in Bridgeport: The East Side has nineteen (19) such licenses. In comparison, the West Side has twenty-two (22); the Hollow has eleven (11); the South End has six (6); the East End has five (5) and Black Rock has two (2).

The NRZ Committee wishes to encourage the overall upgrade and improvement of existing halfway houses before new ones are created in the East Side... and to encourage balanced placement of halfway houses throughout the City.

5. Home Ownership Promotion - Homeownership Counseling, Financial Assistance.

Low owner occupancy rates in the East Side are directly proportional to the high levels of renter occupancy/absentee ownership in the neighborhood. This is in part due also to the neighborhood housing stock which is made up largely of four to six unit multi-family structures that are conducive to a rental housing market. In general, the NRZ leadership needs to recognize that increases in homeownership will directly result in a community of longer-term residents that are invested and committed to the future of the East Side.

Efforts need to be concentrated on the promotion of home ownership in the East Side. The Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust (BNT) has established a number of successful programs for promoting affordable home ownership opportunities. One of the key elements of these programs is their Comprehensive Homeownership Counseling Program: BNT is a HUD approved and CHFA certified housing counseling agency. BNT's one on one counseling services provides support to first time homebuyers to obtain the goal of homeownership. Each client starts with an orientation to determine mortgage readiness and finishes equipped with the information to purchase in today's market. BNT's program has three components; individualized one on one counseling, monthly 8 Hour Pre Purchase Homeownership Class, and monthly post closing workshops including Foreclosure Prevention, Financial Literacy, and Landlord Tenant Training. To complement its program the City has selected BNT to be the administrator of its Down Payment and Closing Cost Assistance Program which will make available up to \$25,000 for down payment and closing cost assistance, per applicant.

The Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust should be invited to assume a leadership role with the NRZ since the goal of increasing home ownership must be at the forefront of the East Side NRZ process.

In addition to home ownership programs, the NRZ process should recognize all opportunities for creating various levels of home ownership within the East Side. For example, as multi-family dwellings (duplexes and three-to-six family dwellings) become available, consideration should be given to shared ownership models, e.g. condos, cooperatives, etc.). The Mutual Housing Association has an excellent track record in developing housing with various ownership models.

6. Infill Housing

Where there are vacant lots within the neighborhood, the NRZ Strategy suggests the construction of infill housing where there is sufficient room to create onsite parking and where no other neighborhood needs exist (e.g. open space, neighborhood parking lots, community gardens, etc.). Construction of new housing units will be the key to redeveloping large tracts of vacant land. This should be a primary strategy on the lower East Side and an appropriate location to encourage the development of income-restricted units by Steelpointe Harbor.

The Housing Subcommittee made further recommendations for the NRZ strategy:

- Shared Neighborhood Parking Lots. Parking is a major problem on the side streets of the East Side. CityScan identified 40 unregistered and

abandoned cars on East Side streets. Some registered vehicles are also being parked on City streets and left for days at a time. The Committee recommends that certain vacant lots should be considered for parking or other housing-related uses rather than being built upon, which would increase overall neighborhood density. Some vacant lots should be used as parking lots to support neighboring housing. In concept, these parking lots could be owned, secured and managed by neighborhood associations to provide parking for adjacent residential uses (consider use of easements and common driveways to access residential property to the rear). Proceeds from rentals could be used to support neighborhood programs.

- Encourage Home Ownership. To the extent feasible, emphasize conversion of rental units to owner-occupied dwellings. Meanwhile, the Housing Subcommittee also recognized the need to utilize available funding sources and resources that provide for the ongoing maintenance of housing units and the retention of those units as affordable. In particular, it was recommended that Section 8 certificates and related subsidies be incorporated into the housing strategy.

To be successful, efforts to stabilize the neighborhood must be designed to include mixed-income housing options and will require some levels of public and private subsidy. Mixed-income housing options should not be limited to low income or subsidized housing models, however. To achieve neighborhood sustainability, the East Side must attract a certain level of market rate housing that occurs within a healthy, livable neighborhood.

Programs such as the Habitat for Humanity and the Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust can help increase the availability of quality Affordable Housing Development : BNT has completed over 75 units of affordable housing units leveraging over \$10,000,000 of public and private resources. Currently, the BNT has 28 units in the pipeline, of which 24 units are in construction. This represents more than five million dollars of investment in the community. Of the units completed, 4 were in the East Side. Of the 24 units currently in construction, 6 are located in the East Side.

Level Three - Improve the Appearance and Viability of the Neighborhood: Neighborhood Improvement Projects

After developing a strong sense of community and making improvements to the conditions of the neighborhood's housing and building stock, existing residents and businesspeople will be more likely to stay for longer periods of time and continue to invest in their properties as a place to live, raise their families, and make a living. The next phase of the revitalization strategy needs to focus on specific improvements to upgrade the overall appearance and viability of the neighborhood so that other residents and businesses will also be drawn to the East Side. The following list of neighborhood improvement projects are discussed in further detail in the next Section, Action Plan.

SUGGESTED PARTNERS:

- a. Non-profit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Mutual Housing of Southwestern Connecticut, Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust, East Main Street Revitalization Association and Groundworks.
- b. City agencies such as the Office of Neighborhood Revitalization (Blight enforcement, NRZ), Bridgeport Redevelopment Agency; Building Department, Bridgeport Housing Authority, Board of Education and the City Parks Department, etc.

SAMPLE RESOURCE OPPORTUNITIES:

- Community Development Block Grant funds; annual entitlement approximately \$3 Million
- Department of Economic and Community Development Funds
- State and Local Tax Incentives and Credits (Neighborhood Assistance Act)
- CT DEP Long Island Sound License Plate Program
- Congressional Earmark Funds
- City bonds
- Public/Private Partnerships

Improve Public Access to the Waterfront.

Waterfront access is very limited at this time. As part of the Revitalization Strategy, there will be an emphasis on creating quality points of access to the waterfront to enable neighborhood residents to access and enjoy the waterfront and to enhance the neighborhood's appeal. The emphasis will be on identifying and developing three specific points of public access:

- Barnum Avenue Right of Way at Knowlton Street and Pequonnock River
- Arctic Street Right of Way at Knowlton Street and Pequonnock River
- Redevelopment of James Brown Park (formerly Waterview Park, at Waterview Avenue, Crescent Street and Yellow Mill Pond)

Improve Streetscapes throughout the East Side

While some streetscapes, like East Main Street, have been upgraded over the last five to ten years, there are still a significant number of streets and sidewalks that are in various levels of disrepair throughout the neighborhood (CityScan results). There is also a strong need for streetscape improvements, including street trees, street lights, benches, and improved pedestrian/bicycle crossings.

Improve Parks and Open Space facilities in Neighborhood

- Support the development of the Barnum/Waltersville fields
- Marin-Garfield Park
- Support the enhancement of the waterfront and especially the Barnum Avenue and Arctic Street rights-of-way and the James Brown Park.
- Consider support for additional recreational facilities for the neighborhood, such as tennis courts.
- Continue to use community gardens, where in existence, as a way of stabilizing sections of the neighborhood while revitalization occurs.

Congress Street Bridge Replacement

The NRZ believes strongly that the Congress Street Bridge needs to be replaced. The Committee has included the replacement of this bridge as one of its priority projects for improving the viability of the neighborhood. Cost estimates for the replacement of the bridge are upwards of \$50 to \$60 Million, and the City has been actively working on the funding to replace the bridge and it is believed that more than \$40 Million has been raised so far for this purpose. In the meantime, recent funding allocations through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA, also called “Economic Stimulus” funding) have been specifically earmarked by the City towards the immediate demolition of the existing bridge structure in an effort to remove the stigma associated with the visual impact of the existing bridge stuck in an open position.

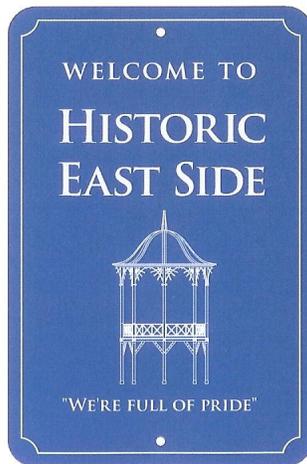
Pedestrian Bridge Crossing. During the East Side NRZ Planning Committee meetings, there was some discussion of the feasibility of funding the initial construction of a pedestrian bridge at this location with existing funds. A pedestrian bridge could cost as little as \$10 to 15 Million and would provide a connection across the Pequonnock River. A pedestrian bridge could also be designed so that it would abut a full bridge with vehicular crossing in the future. While the concept interested some of the Planning Committee members, the majority opinion of the Committee was that the construction of a full bridge should continue to be a high priority goal of the neighborhood revitalization strategy. Others talked about the potential for a pedestrian bridge at an alternative location such as Arctic Street.

Level Four - Economic Development Projects

Waterfront Redevelopment

The waterfront is the East Side's most significant physical asset. The current conditions of the East Side's waterfront are not conducive to promoting new economic development that relates to the water. There are factories, in some cases brownfields, and many barriers to access and use of the water. There needs to be a concentrated effort towards redeveloping the waterfront to support water dependent uses and increased public access along the neighborhood's waterfront. There is a need for changes to the City's zoning, expanded use of the Coastal Site Plan Review Procedure, and efforts to encourage waterfront redevelopment, especially along Knowlton Street and the Pequonock River.

Gateway/Commercial Corridor Enhancements and Streetscape Improvements



The East Side's commercial corridors and primary entrances./gateways are the community's calling card. It is important to establish a clean, welcoming appearance to he neighborhood. Beautification efforts are already beginning here. The Office of Neighborhood Revitalization is in the process of implementing a program to install 75 banners along East Main Street and two welcome signs, one at the Old Mill Green Park, Boston Avenue and the other one at Housatonic Avenue before the East Washington Bridge. There should also be some smaller welcome signs and some additional trash cans, although the specific number has yet to be determined.



Graphics: Above is a copy of the sign developed by the Office of Neighborhood Revitalization (ONR) to welcome visitors to the East Side at key gateway locations. Initially, two will be installed but this is a program that can hopefully be expanded. At right is a picture of one of the new 32 gallon trash cans (approx. 30) that ONR has purchased for use along East Main Street. An additional ONR project is the introduction of Highland Company banners that will help to create a sense of community and enhance the attractiveness of the overall business climate.

East Main Street Revitalization

Efforts to revitalize East Main Street have made significant progress over the last 25 years or so, with the help of the East Main Street Revitalization Association. These efforts to foster the commercial strip need to continue and be strengthened to assure reasonable commercial services to support the neighborhood. The East Main Street

corridor has provided for mixed use developments in the past and should continue to be viewed for that purpose. Additionally, the commercial corridor should be seen as an important retail link with the Steelpointe Harbor development, and a primary gateway.

Efforts should be focused on:

- Promotion of mixed use developments along corridor (retail, service uses on first floor, residential above.
- Infill housing in proximity to commercial corridor to increase market support for retail and service establishments
- Continued efforts to enhancing the historic character of the buildings located along East Main Street
- Promotion of streetscape improvement program
- Strengthening communication among business leaders
- Active support of the East Main Street Revitalization Association

Job Training

Neighborhood leaders want to see increased training for East Side residents to assist them in finding gainful employment. In particular, the neighborhood wants to position itself to be able to access and be part of growing industries within the City and the Region. The City's recent Master Plan emphasizes the health industry as being one of the most significant opportunities for future growth in Bridgeport. The East Side wishes to support that direction and to support job training and job opportunities in the health industry for East Side residents.

Partnerships should be established with existing health providers: Bridgeport Hospital, St. Vincent's Medical Center, Optimus and the Bridgeport Health Care Center were four of the top employers in the City of Bridgeport as of 2006. Additional partners should include the Greater Bridgeport O.I.C. and area universities and colleges (e.g. Housatonic Community College, Sacred Heart University) that provide employment training in the medical field and related support services. The Bridgeport Trade and Technology Center is also strategically located in the neighborhood, and some of their building space (e.g. Building #3) could be used for educational programs and job training.

Efforts should also be placed on involving the Board of Education in this goal of expanded job training for East Side residents and supporting the expansion of school curricula in a manner that would help guide and encourage East Side students to pursue appropriate job training, higher levels of education and job experiences that could help qualify them for employment opportunities in various aspects of the health field.

Longer-Term Projects

In general, the East Side NRZ strategy supports the completion of projects and the creation of programs that will strengthen the neighborhood. The Planning Committee was interested in pursuing a number of more aggressive long-range plans for the neighborhood, but they felt these should be done after other priority goals have been

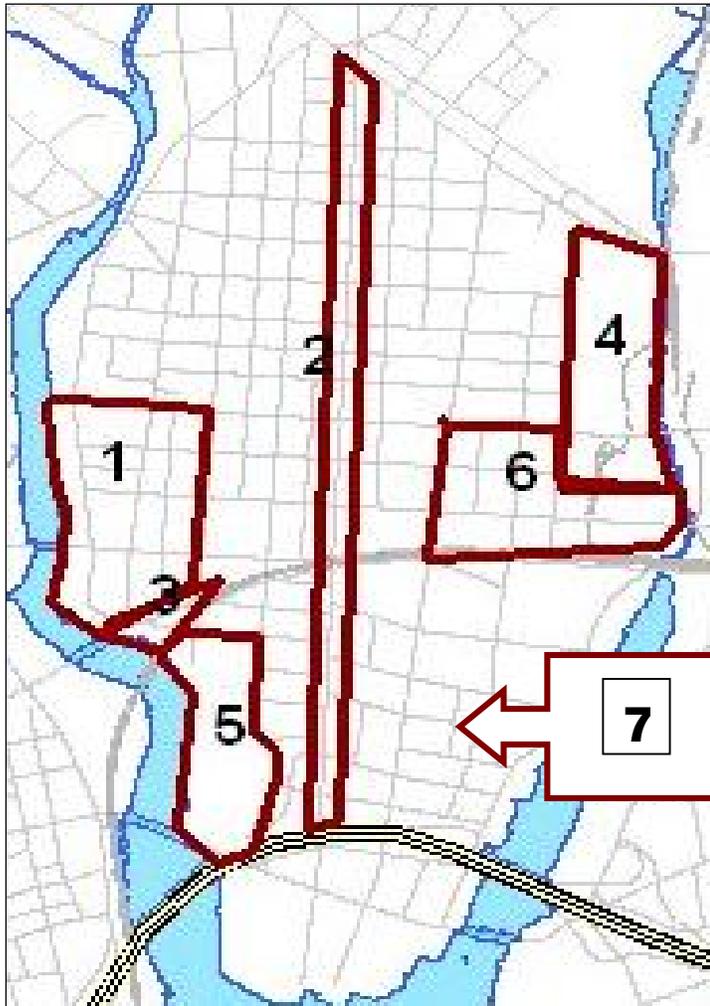
achieved. The projects that were seen as being appropriate in the long term are as follows:

- Adaptive Reuse of Industrial Buildings (it was noted that many of the industrial buildings located in the East Side will require some form of remediation due to the number of “brownfield” properties located there). It will be necessary to coordinate these strategies with the City Economic Development Office and to access redevelopment programs offered through the State Office of Economic and Community Development.
- Lower East Side Waterfront Redevelopment. This section of the East Side includes prime waterfront property that holds very good potential for redevelopment, especially due to the fact that some key properties have only a few buildings on them and are already assembled under single ownership, such as the Shoreline Star property. This area has the potential for supporting higher densities of mixed-use development involving commercial (retail and service) uses on the lower levels and residential development in the upper levels and, possibly, some office development. The proximity of the lower East Side to the Bridgeport train station adds the additional opportunity to promote Transit Oriented Development (TOD) within a ¼ to ½ mile walking distance of the station.
- Congress Street Village. The mix of buildings along Crescent Avenue leading to the Congress Street Bridge and Knowlton Street holds potential for the development of a unique village area, which could support restaurants and shops as well as the opportunity to support a farmers market, Mercado, tag sales and community programs. This Plan includes one concept in which the City could introduce a new street layout by eliminating the center islands and utilizing traffic calming and streetscape improvements to support a more pedestrian environment.
- East Bridgeport Train Station - There is potential for creating a new train station to support the East Side and East End neighborhoods. A new station could provide enhanced access to Metro North for neighborhood residents and, ultimately, better opportunity to access jobs throughout the region. The creation of a new station would provide increased access to employees of existing East Side businesses such as Bridgeport Hospital and would also support the redevelopment of industrial areas, especially along the northeast corridor (Remington Arms, etc.). During this study, participants identified areas along Barnum Avenue near Helen Street and the Yellow Mill Pond as having great potential for the placement of a new Train Station to serve the two neighborhoods.

VII. ACTION PLAN: EAST SIDE NRZ STRATEGIC PLAN

1. TARGET AREAS

The East Side NRZ Strategic Plan recognizes the need to create several distinct target areas for the long-range revitalization strategy, with each target area having their own redevelopment goals.



- 1 - Knowlton Street/Washington Park
- 2 - East Main Street Commercial Corridor
- 3 - Congress Street Village
- 4 - Industrial Redevelopment Area
- 5 - Waterfront Redevelopment Area
- 6 - Transit Station/ Transit Oriented Development
- 7 - Lower East Side

2. Overview of Target Areas (Short Term Revitalization Strategy - ST, Mid Term Revitalization Strategy - MT, and Long Term Revitalization Strategy - LT)

To promote effective revitalization, the NRZ Strategy recommends that the neighborhood concentrate physical redevelopment efforts, available resources and programs within specific target areas. The initial target areas are generally located as follows:

1) KNOWLTON STREET/WASHINGTON PARK (WESTERN SHORE OF EAST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD) -- ST

The redevelopment of the western shore of the neighborhood is one of the first areas the NRZ should focus on in the East Side's revitalization, for a number of reasons:

- a) The close proximity to the downtown area, the transportation hub and business center of the City, which also holds job opportunities for East Side residents.
- b) There is a significant waterfront exposure along the Pequonnock River, with several distinct opportunities for waterfront development and public access that could benefit the revitalization of the East Side neighborhood.
- c) Close proximity to the downtown train station and major transportation routes (e.g. I-95, Route 25) enables excellent connections to other parts of the City and the region.
- d) Buildings in this area have significant historic character, and the presence of Historic Districts in this area further helps to foster strong design in chosen revitalization projects.
- e) The residential areas around Washington Park are strong and have responded well to the revitalization process. There have been significant investments made by nonprofit groups like Habitat for Humanity, Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust, and Mutual Housing of Southwestern Connecticut.
- f) Redevelopment of the lower East Side and the waterfront area adjacent to it will enable excellent coordination and linkage with the redevelopment of the nearby Steel Point Redevelopment project.

LOCATION: The Pequonnock waterfront and the Knowlton Street Corridor from Arctic Street to Congress Street is seen as an important area for promoting waterfront redevelopment. It is recommended that this target area also include the residential neighborhood between Washington Park and the Pequonnock River, including residential areas along Arctic Street, Maple Street, Barnum Avenue, Washington Avenue, Knowlton Street, William Street, Harriet Street, and Noble Avenue. Important residential restoration projects have been completed in this area in recent years, making it easier to have impact within this area.

There have been numerous studies and reports prepared for the City over the years that recommend waterfront development of the East Side, and this

recommendation is reinforced in the City's recent Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). In general, the POCD encourages the City to move industrial uses away from its waterfront to inland locations and to reclaim its waterfront for public access and appropriate waterfront and water dependent uses. A few private sector efforts in recent years further support the concept of revitalizing the Knowlton Street/Pequonnock River area for waterfront redevelopment purposes. Examples have included:

288 Knowlton Street - The opening of Bridgeport Lobster and Shellfish in 2007. Fresh seafood market retail and wholesale

305 Knowlton Street - Owners of the historic 1896 Armstrong Factory Building have expressed an interest in developing this property for waterfront development purposes. Between 2007 and 2008, the owners were close to securing commitments and approvals for the development of a new home for the Fairfield University Men and Women Varsity Rowing Teams. While the University ultimately backed out of the deal, it suggests an appropriate water dependent adaptive reuse of this industrial.

459-562 Knowlton Street - The Acme Shear United Development Site. The 3 acre property was cleared in 2007 of the former manufacturing building, which had become blight to the neighborhood. The site is now available as a vacant parcel of land possessing 300 feet of direct water frontage, and it is being marketed that way

2) EAST MAIN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR AND GATEWAY AREAS (ST)

The main entrances to the neighborhood are also the most visible and noticed sections of the East Side. These are the areas through which the majority of residents, workers, businesspeople and passersby experience the neighborhood and make their assessments of the neighborhood and its relative health. These areas are included within the initial target areas so that programs and projects can be seen by the broader community. Included within these target areas are the following:

- East Main Street Commercial Corridor
- Entrances from Stratford Avenue (East Main Street, Kossuth Street, Waterview Avenue)
- Barnum Avenue, Eastern and western edge
- East Washington Avenue
- Noble Avenue, near Boston Avenue
- Boston Avenue and Entrances into the neighborhood, especially East Main Street.

**3) CONGRESS STREET BRIDGE (ST)
AND CONGRESS STREET VILLAGE (MT)**

Since the western shore of the East Side is seen as the most critical component of the revitalization strategy, the restoration of the Congress Street Bridge is also viewed as vital to the neighborhood's revitalization, since it provides the most direct connection with the downtown. The Bridge is also viewed as critical for supporting public safety in the East Side by providing access to emergency response vehicles. The bridge has been identified as a short term goal.

The Congress Street Village concept is a development opportunity that is seen as being more of a mid term goal for the East Side. Given the unique characteristics of the historic buildings and the layout of streets and adjacent public space, there is the potential for the creation of a mixed use village area that could provide an attractive setting for restaurants, shops, cafes and even space for farmers markets or other community events.

4) INDUSTRIAL REDEVELOPMENT AREA (LT)

During the development of this Strategic Plan, Committee members underscored the importance of redeveloping the industrial area located along the eastern border of the Upper East Side, including the RemGrit properties. While identified here as a long term goal, the redevelopment of this area is vital to the success of the NRZ Strategic Plan. In general, it is believed that the potential for revitalization of the Industrial Redevelopment Area will be further enhanced by the redevelopment of the neighborhoods' waterfront, stabilization of its residential neighborhoods and the future development of an East Bridgeport Train Station serving the East Side and the East End.

5) WATERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT AREAS (MT)

The NRZ should seek to support any opportunities for the quality redevelopment of the neighborhood's waterfront for purposes of promoting public access and/or suitable waterfront and water dependent uses along the shore. While the initial focus should be on public rights-of-way already owned by the City, there should be a concerted effort to encourage the proper redevelopment of private property along the waterfront for these purposes. Waterfront redevelopment and public access along the shore will tie in well with development objectives of the Steel Point Redevelopment Area as well as the City's efforts to revitalize the downtown waterfront. Redevelopment of parts of the waterfront should be pursued as soon as possible. This target area is identified as a mid term goal mainly because market support will most likely be harder to attract until some of the other NRZ objectives are sufficiently underway.

6) TRANSIT STATION/TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (LT)

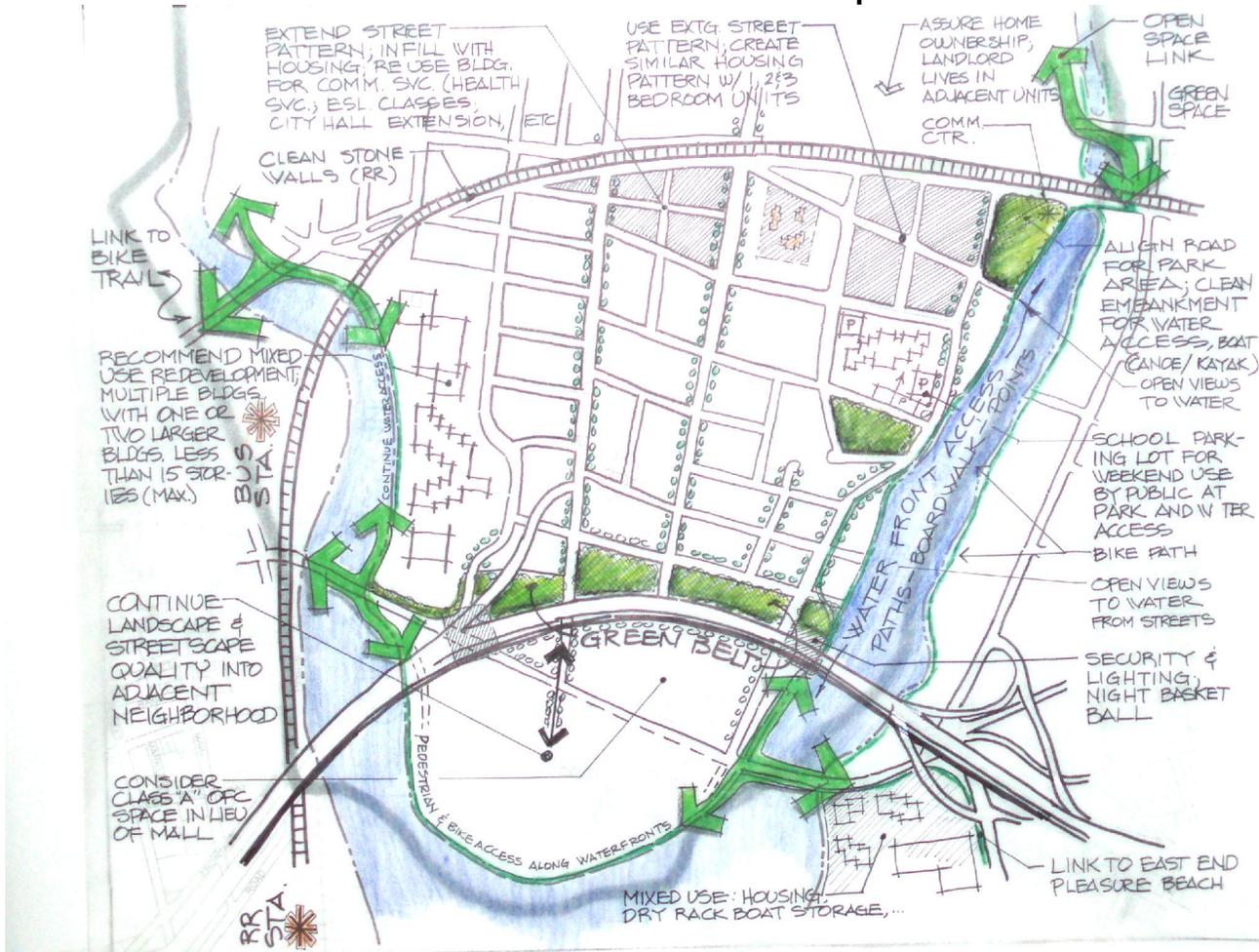
During the charrette and again at a number of the East Side NRZ Planning Committee meetings, there was considerable discussion of developing a new train station on the East Side. If located right between the East Side and the East End neighborhoods (suitable locations can be found along Barnum Avenue), a train station could significantly increase access to labor markets throughout the region. Such an improvement could also be beneficial in connecting the Industrial Redevelopment Area and the Bridgeport Trade and Technology Center to employees located throughout Connecticut and parts of New York. It could also be advantageous to Bridgeport Hospital and its employees, located within walking distance of this location. Further, the introduction of a train station at this location would make it feasible to promote the creation of Transit Oriented Development (T.O.D.). The TOD concept promotes the creation of mixed use villages composed of mixed housing types, blended with commercial retail and service uses. Generally, these developments are attractive to a segment of the population that welcomes the opportunity to live adjacent to a fixed-rail train stop and have access to employment opportunities, in this case in other parts of Fairfield County or in New York. These developments tend to be higher density and include some higher priced market rate housing. However, they can also provide opportunities for creating affordable housing depending on the density levels and land costs. Parking spaces are generally more limited, especially if residents find suitable transit access to jobs and necessary conveniences/support services.

7) LOWER EAST SIDE (MT)

The Lower East Side area possesses unique opportunities as well as substantial challenges from a revitalization standpoint. An extensive amount of land has been cleared in the Lower East Side -- in the past, from the demolition of the Father Panik Village Housing Complex and in recent years, from the assemblage of land to support the Steel Point Redevelopment Project. It will be necessary to stabilize this section of the East Side in order to support a full revitalization of the area. It would be important to continue the revitalization of the East Main Street commercial corridor and some of the gateway areas in order to create a positive reinvestment climate. The NRZ strategy also recommends close coordination of the Lower East Side's revitalization with the redevelopment of the Steel Point Area, development of new infill housing and the redevelopment of the waterfront (including the new marina recently approved along Waterview Avenue and, as a long range strategy, the possible redevelopment of waterfront property extending from the Congress Street area to Stratford Avenue, including the existing Shoreline Star property).

During the Charrette process in 2006, one of the discussion groups expanded on their visions for the lower East Side, with Landscape Architect Stuart Sachs. While it was early in the process, many of the recommendations that came from that discussion group remained pertinent throughout the NRZ planning process. The overall concept they developed is provided below and should be utilized during the implementation phase of this project.

Lower East Side Redevelopment



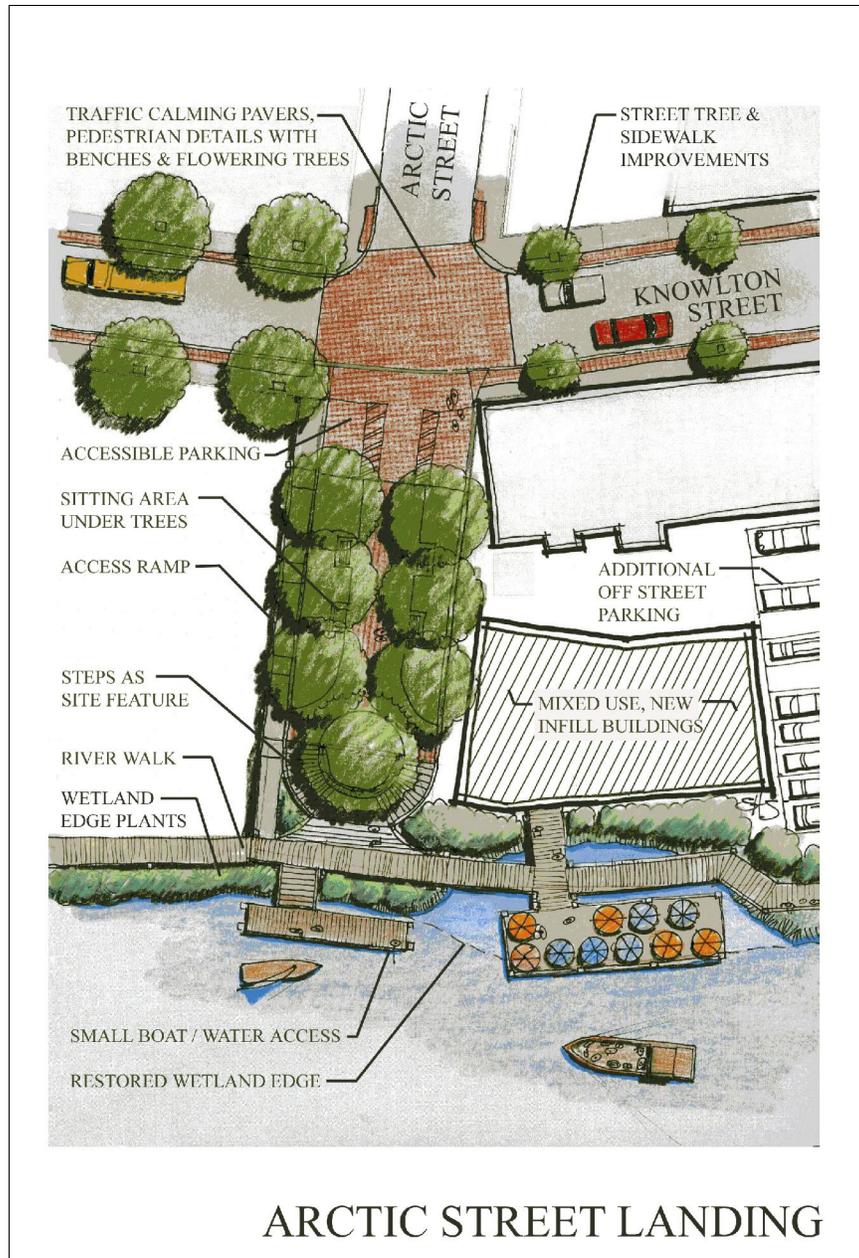
Concept Plan for Lower East Side redevelopment, showing connections with adjacent redevelopment, waterfront access, infill housing, open space enhancements, etc. Graphic courtesy of PRE/view Landscape Architects

3. Neighborhood Improvement Projects and Economic Development Projects

A series of Neighborhood Improvement Projects were identified by the East Side NRZ stakeholders as a way of improving the overall appearance - and appeal - of the East Side. For the NRZ Strategic Plan, these projects will include:

1. Improve Public Access to the Waterfront. East Side leaders recognize the importance of the neighborhood's extensive waterfront and want that waterfront to be an accessible resource for residents. As in other parts of Bridgeport, the vast majority of the waterfront is dominated by industrial and commercial buildings and uses that stifle access to the water. During the NRZ Planning Process, it was further recognized that there are already a number of existing public access points to the waterfront in the form of existing street rights-of-way to the waters edge. Some of these rights-of-way became access ways for bridges that now connect the East Side with other parts of the City. In other cases, these rights-of-way were not improved. It made no sense to construct a street that went no where other than the edge of the river. However, over time, adjacent commercial and industrial uses began to informally take over these mapped (but unmarked) rights-of-way by expanding parking lots or walkways over the rights-of-way and incorporating these areas into their operation.

While it will be beneficial to create more expansive public access and use of the waterfront in the future, these rights-of-way are a good starting point for creating waterfront access for the public in the short term. As part of this Strategy, two rights-of-way along the Knowlton Street corridor were identified for development of public access: Barnum Avenue and Arctic Street rights-of-way to the Pequonnock River. During this NRZ strategic planning process, the City's Office of Neighborhood Revitalization developed a conceptual plan for the Barnum Avenue waterfront public access and is in the process of implementing that plan. To complement that effort and to further increase public access to the water, the consultant team for this NRZ Strategic Plan looked at the Arctic Street public right-of-way and came up with the following conceptual plan for its development.



Site plan concept, above, for the Arctic Street Landing Project, prepared by PRE/View Landscape Architects.

This Plan recommends a series of modifications to enhance public access to the edge of the Pequonnock River at Arctic Street and Knowlton Street and to further support the redevelopment of this area to enhance this waterfront location and to encourage a proper mix of land uses here to support the neighborhood's revitalization. Among the key components of this proposal:

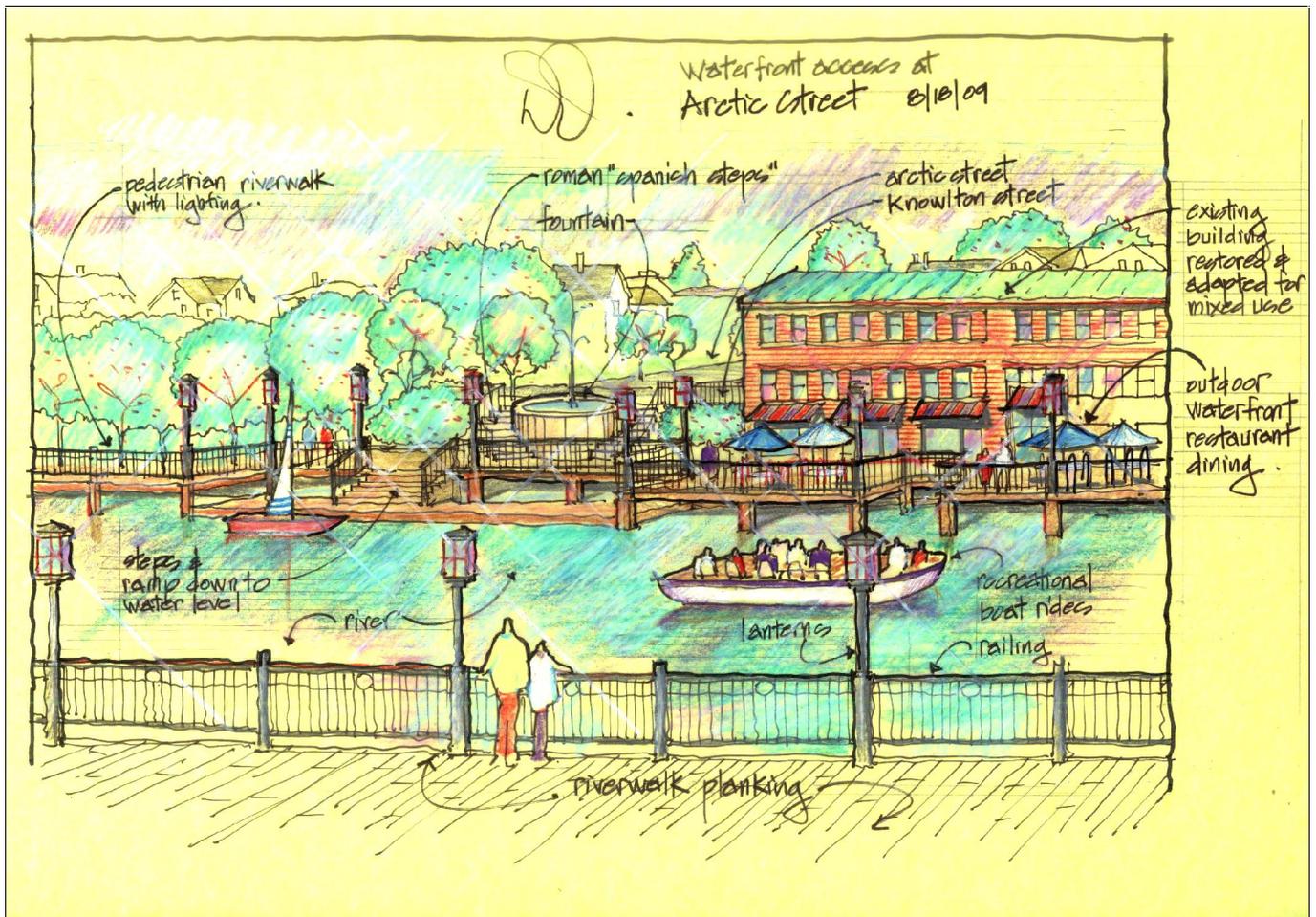
- Use of pavers to create a pedestrian environment and to establish “traffic calming” measures to slow vehicles down as they travel along Knowlton Street.
- The planting of street trees and flowering trees to make the public access inviting and user friendly. This treatment will also reinforce the beautification message stressed in the revitalization strategy.
- Creation of sitting areas with benches to enable residents to sit and enjoy views of the water.
- The creation of limited parking near Knowlton Street, including handicap accessible parking spaces.
- Due to a significant elevation drop from Knowlton Street to the waters edge (approximately 15 feet), this conceptual plan recommends the use of an access ramp and the use of steps to accommodate the change in grade.

Installation of the public access at Arctic Street will help to support future waterfront development of this segment of the River as well. The site plan above and the perspective sketch on the next page, illustrate how such an improvement can easily support the creation of a river walk/boardwalk, the introduction of docks or slips to provide for small boat access and the construction of infill buildings (preferably mixed-use) designed to enhance the public use of the waterfront (restaurants, shops, etc.). As pilot projects, the East Side NRZ should also seek to improve environmental conditions along the River and support positive treatment, e.g. installation of wetland edge plants near the waters edge to enhance the natural landscape. Current cost estimates for the Arctic Street Waterfont Access are approximately \$500,000. (See Appendices).

On the next page, a rendering shows the transformation that could occur to the existing conditions at this location. Notice the use of decorative street lighting, vibrant uses like outdoor waterfront restaurant dining, recreational boating and the pedestrian river walk, which could also be echoed on the opposite shore of this site. The use of a fountain to decorate the area where steps would take the pedestrian to the waters edge enhances the appeal and use of the site (the use of the Roman “Spanish Steps” also suggests a design theme for the area).



Photo at left shows existing conditions at the end of the Arctic Street right-of-way at the edge of the Pequonnock River. Illustration below, by David Barbour Architects, provides a perspective sketch of the Arctic Street Landing project which could provide important public access to the waterfront and assist in the neighborhood's revitalization efforts.



Another example of public access was considered on the other side of the neighborhood, along the shore of the Yellow Mill Pond. Here, there is an existing City-owned park located along the southern side of Waterview Avenue and Crescent Avenue, James Brown Park (formerly Waterview Park). Aside from Washington Park and Upchurch Park (Hallett and Goodwin Streets), this Park is one of the only public open space parks in the neighborhood. Unlike Washington Park, James Brown Park has not yet been improved for public use. While large areas around the Park have been vacant since the demolition of Father Panik Housing, there have been numerous residential developments completed in the general vicinity in recent years, and the park is located very close to the new Barnum-Waltersville School that was completed in 2008. Former residents of Father Panik Village reportedly still visit the park often and hold a large annual event there. Since there is such a limited amount of public open space within the East Side currently, this park should be improved to serve the growing resident population and to enhance the neighborhood's waterfront. As the lower East Side continues to revitalize, this park will provide over 500 linear feet of publicly owned waterfront. The sketch below, developed by PRE/View Landscape Architects, illustrates how this Park could be improved. Current cost estimates range from \$100,000 to \$175,000 (see Appendices).



Features of the Park could include an area for picnics and barbecues; areas for launching small boats, canoes and kayaks; a pier/dock for larger boats; use of access steps and ramps to provide for access to the waterfront; and ADA accessibility. On a long term basis, the City could consider realignment of Waterview Avenue to increase the overall size and functionality of the Park.

2. **Improve Streetscapes of the East Side.** Streetscape improvements are needed to soften some of the “harsh landscapes” that now exist in parts of the East Side (long sections of street that are characterized by rows of brick and frame buildings, sidewalks and streets, often in disrepair). Planting strips throughout the East Side are sometimes nonexistent and often ignored. There are not many street trees or landscaped areas to define public entrances to the community. These harsh landscapes typically offer no break in the urban appearance of the neighborhood. Streetscapes are generally dominated by imposing telephone poles with attached street lights and hanging wires, deteriorated and broken sidewalks, streets with potholes, and few or no street trees. In some cases, the wrong types of street trees were planted and their roots have grown and broken sections of sidewalk in the neighborhood. The presence of harsh landscapes sends the strong message that “no one cares about this area” or, worse, “no one lives here anymore”. The buildings tend to deteriorate and the overall appearance is one of a lackluster, uninteresting neighborhood that has been forgotten. As part of the NRZ Strategic Plan, the Consultant Team evaluated a section of Knowlton Street.

Sidewalk improvements. The Revitalization Strategy should encourage the use of pavers or alternate paved materials for sidewalk replacement projects, in order to bring color and texture to the pedestrian ways throughout the neighborhood. The costs of pavers and textured materials are generally higher than bituminous concrete. Since available public funding will be limited in coming years, the East Side NRZ should concentrate its efforts in the following way: Use of pavers and alternate colors and textures should be the preferred treatment for:

1. all visible public improvements in the gateway entrance areas
2. areas or projects of public gathering, such as commercial corridors, parks, schools and other public buildings and
3. where there is a significant private investment in rehabilitation or new construction.

Concrete should be used as a preferred material for repair or replacement of sidewalks in disrepair in more remote sections of the neighborhood. In general, concrete sidewalks should also be used primarily where there are immediate safety concerns.

Street Improvements. Efforts should be made to keep all streets in the neighborhood in safe, passable condition. Again, like with sidewalk improvements, the NRZ Revitalization Strategy should recognize the value

of street improvements to the overall appearance of the neighborhood. Since street improvements will also be done on a limited basis (due to limited funding), it is important that street improvements be performed strategically. The City should seek to work closely with the East Side NRZ to coordinate road improvement projects with the overall strategy: road overlay projects and intersection improvements should be completed in the following general order: 1. Highly visible traffic corridors (e.g. East Main Street, Barnum Avenue, Boston Avenue, Stratford Avenue, Noble Avenue, etc.), gateway entrances and areas of public gathering 2. In areas where substantial private and non-profit investment has or will occur (e.g. Washington Park/Knowlton Street Target Area). Other road improvements throughout the neighborhood should be completed as funding is available and focus primarily on safety concerns.

Street Trees and Landscaped Improvements - Street trees should be planted throughout the community to help soften the urban appearance of the East Side, as well as to enhance overall environmental quality. Care should be taken to select street trees that are ornamental or shade varieties that will not interfere with overhead wires and whose roots will not destroy the sidewalks (avoid trees with an expansive root system).



3. Improve Roadway Connections. Neighborhood leaders want to see traffic and circulation improvements to assure the neighborhood is connected to other parts of the City, a significant element of the neighborhood's economic viability; the most critical transportation connection is seen as the restoration or replacement of the Congress Street Bridge. Currently, the neighborhood is aware that the City has committed approximately \$40 Million to the replacement of the Congress Street Bridge. Some members of the City administration have suggested that the neighborhood may want to continue evaluating the potential for redirecting equivalent public resources to other parts of the revitalization strategy to maximize impact.

Economic Development Projects

In order for the East Side to grow in the future and to become a competitive neighborhood within the city, the NRZ needs to promote the completion of development projects that will become significant drivers to the economic revitalization of the neighborhood. These projects will: be of a scale that enables them to stand on their own merit, generate a renewed resurgence in reinvestment into the community, and promote the creation of new jobs and wealth within the neighborhood. These projects will be led by: 1. waterfront redevelopment projects. Building on efforts to create public access to the waterfront, the neighborhood should capitalize on its waterfront location as its most significant asset for promoting economic growth 2. Streetscape Improvements along the neighborhood's primary commercial corridors and gateway entrances 3. Promotion of efforts to help local residents to prepare and train for entry into jobs in industries viewed as having growth potential in the city and the region. The growth area initially targeted for this purpose is the health industry, which is anticipated to expand significantly in the city over the next decade or more. 4. Promote the revitalization of the neighborhood's commercial and industrial areas including: Continuation of efforts to revitalize the East Main Street commercial area, with the help of the East Main Street Revitalization Association and any other organizations that are qualified and show interest; Redevelopment of large vacant or underutilized commercial properties, especially along the waterfront (e.g. Shoreline Star property); Redevelopment of the Remington Industrial Park. Special areas with unique potential: the Congress Street "Village" area and an area along the neighborhood's eastern boundary where it is possible to develop an East Bridgeport Train Station.

1. Waterfront Redevelopment

- Redevelop the East Side waterfront to increase neighborhood public access to the water and to help the neighborhood become a waterfront destination.. To the extent possible, the East Side NRZ and the City should encourage a mix of uses and waterfront amenities that will create vitality and energy along the River, which will ultimately enhance the neighborhood's quality of life and increase its property values.
- Appropriate uses along the water should include

- Recreational boating and marinas
- Fishing (taking into account the need for proper maintenance, e.g. weekly cleaning of piers by Public Works, addition of a cleaning station, etc.)
- Waterfront recreation and pedestrian access
- Cartop boating access (kayaks, canoes, etc.)
- Selective commercial boating uses, such as day cruises
- Other suitable ***water dependent uses*** along the Pequonnock River and Yellow Mill Pond. There is a significant opportunity to also promote commercial uses that will enable public enjoyment of the waterfront (e.g. restaurants, pubs, and shops)

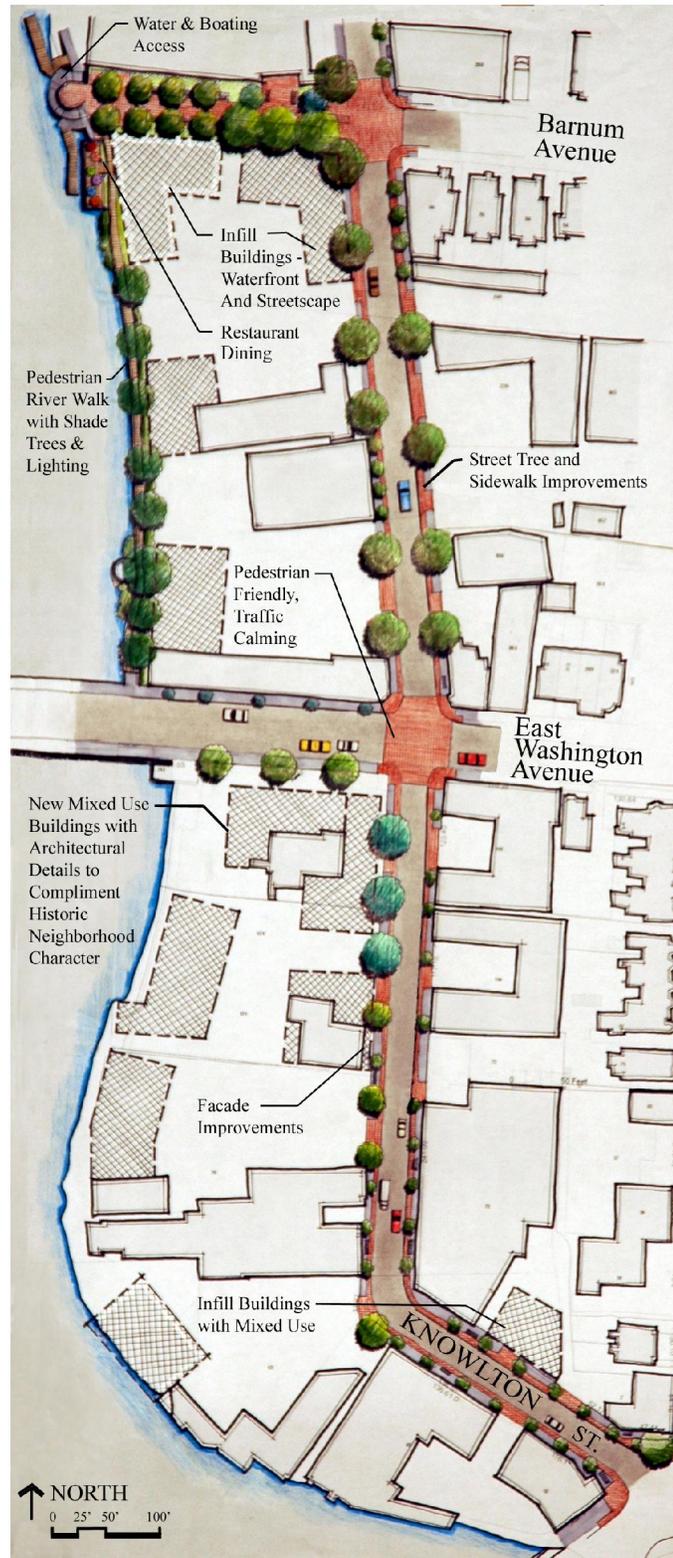
The effort should focus on developing public and private partnerships and encouraging redevelopment of waterfront for water-dependent uses, working with existing owners to the extent possible. The initial focus should be along Knowlton Street between Arctic Street and the Congress Street Bridge. The redevelopment of the Acme site would offer significant advantage to this effort, as long as the property could be cleaned to sufficient level.

Where a non-water dependent use is not possible, consider use of strengthened zoning regulations to require public access to be incorporated into the use of waterfront property when a change in use is being sought by an owner. The attached illustrations recommend the extension of a public riverwalk along the shore, as new uses are attracted to the area. The riverwalk could be constructed section-by-section by private owners as part of their redevelopment efforts. The City should be prepared to fill any gaps along the riverwalk, especially where public rights-of-way or public land exists.

- Longer term strategies should include redevelopment of waterfront property as far north as Island View Drive. The Pequonnock River is reported to have sufficient channel depth to accommodate recreational boaters of most sizes up to Island View. The main impediment to boating traffic is the height of the Washington Avenue bridge during high tide, when clearance drops to approximately six feet.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY: Knowlton Street/Waterfront Redevelopment

The illustration on the next page shows a close up of the Knowlton Street Target area, illustrating streetscape improvements along Knowlton Street, the redevelopment of the Pequonnock waterfront and the introduction of waterfront accessways and a waterfront walkway. Streetscape improvements along Knowlton Street are currently estimated at approximately \$1.8 Million to \$2.9 Million (see Appendices).



KNOWLTON STREETSCAPE

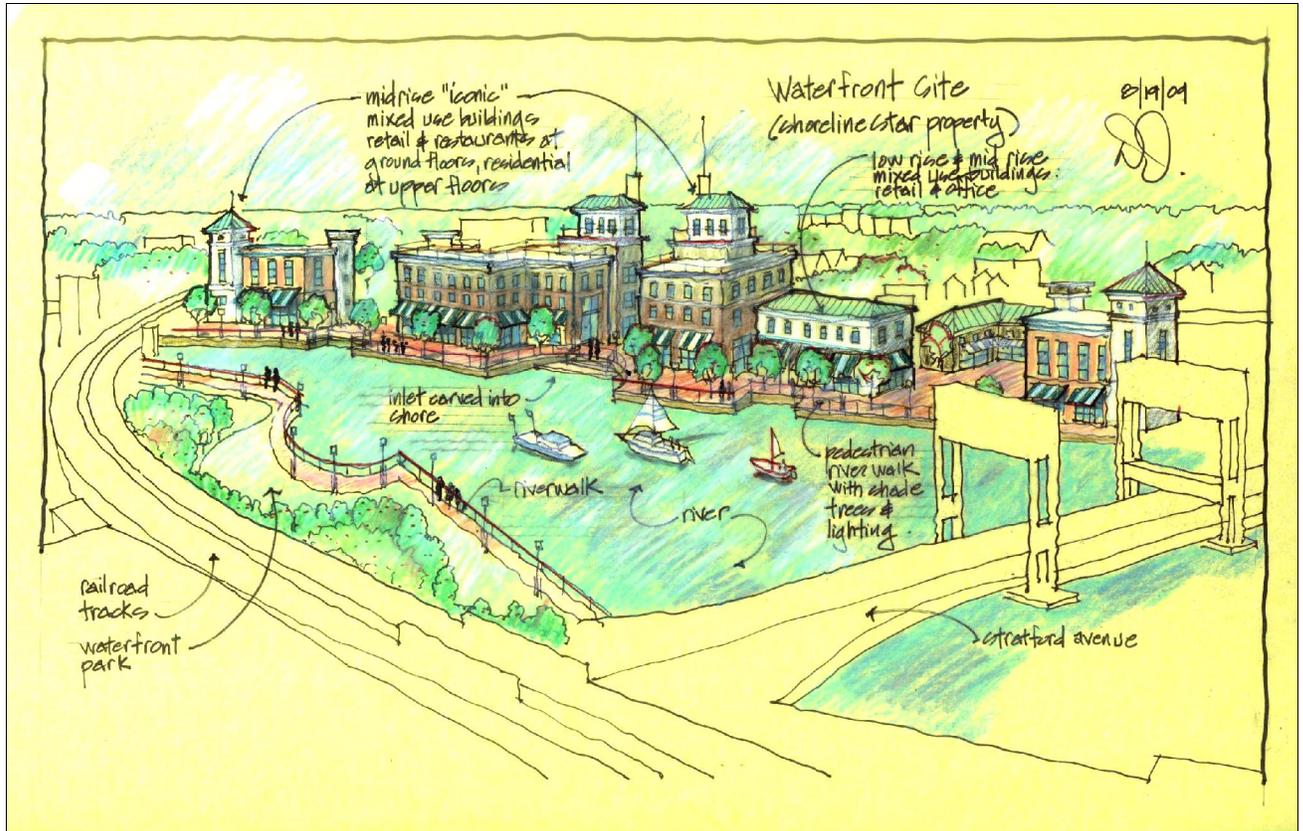
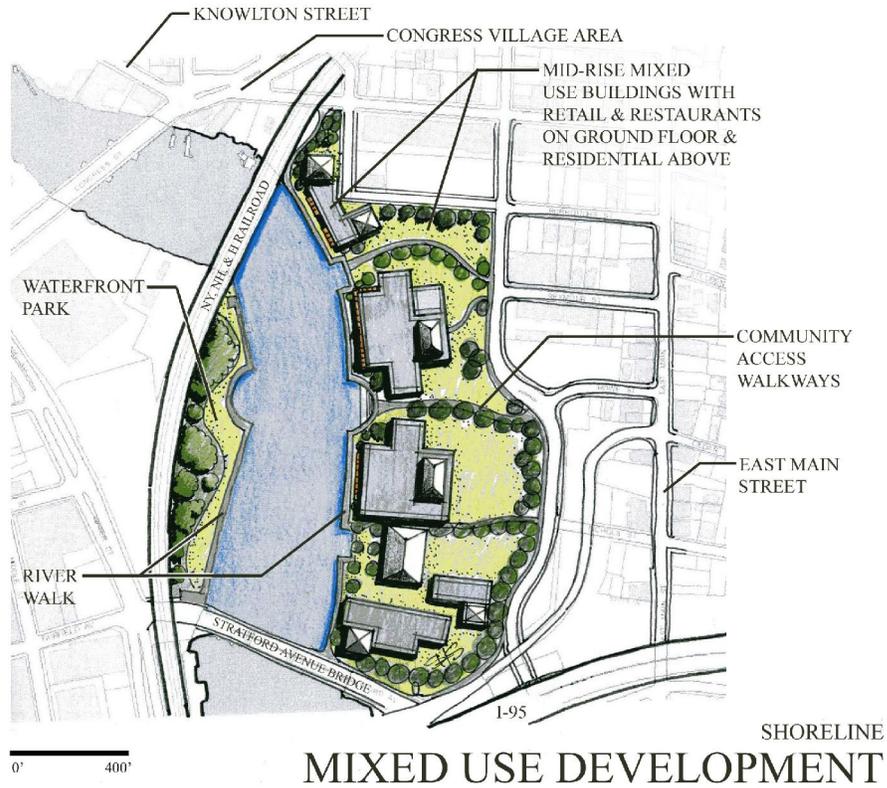
Public Access Rights-of-Way.

- When land was first subdivided and roads were laid out in the East Side, a number of road rights-of-way were shown on early maps as extending to the edge of the rivers. Along the west shore, there are a number of these locations. The first step in revitalizing the waterfront will be to create public access ways to the River. One had already been designed for the Barnum Avenue right-of-way
- **Riverwalk.** Create a continuous linear riverfront walkway for public access to the shore for pedestrians and bicyclers. The section of shorefront between Congress Street Bridge and the Shoreline Star is an additional redevelopment opportunity. In this area, there should be an emphasis on creating expanded public parking to support the redevelopment of the Congress Street Village Area and to support other public access facilities to be developed along the Pequonnock River. Current estimates for the Pequonnock Waterfront Walkway range from \$1.3 Million to \$2.0 Million (see appendices).

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY: Lower East Side Waterfront Redevelopment, e.g, Shoreline Star property.

The stretch of waterfront along the Pequonnock River on the Lower East Side is less developed than other sections of waterfront on the East Side. The Shoreline Star property is a specific example of a large property in single ownership with significant waterfront access and the potential for substantial redevelopment. This 16 acre property is extremely unique as to its location and size, both of which influence its development potential. The property is within 1/2 mile (walking distance) of the City's train station. This close proximity enables the development of significant residential development within short walking distance of public transportation, making the property a strong candidate for Transit Oriented Development (T.O.D.). (Transit Oriented Development generally consists of high density mixed uses within walking distance of a fixed route train facility.) This form of development is gaining increasingly greater market value in the United States and is a main feature of the City's Downtown Revitalization Plan. Of significance is the fact the property is in a prime waterfront location along the Pequonnock River near Bridgeport Harbor and possesses some of the most scenic views in this area.

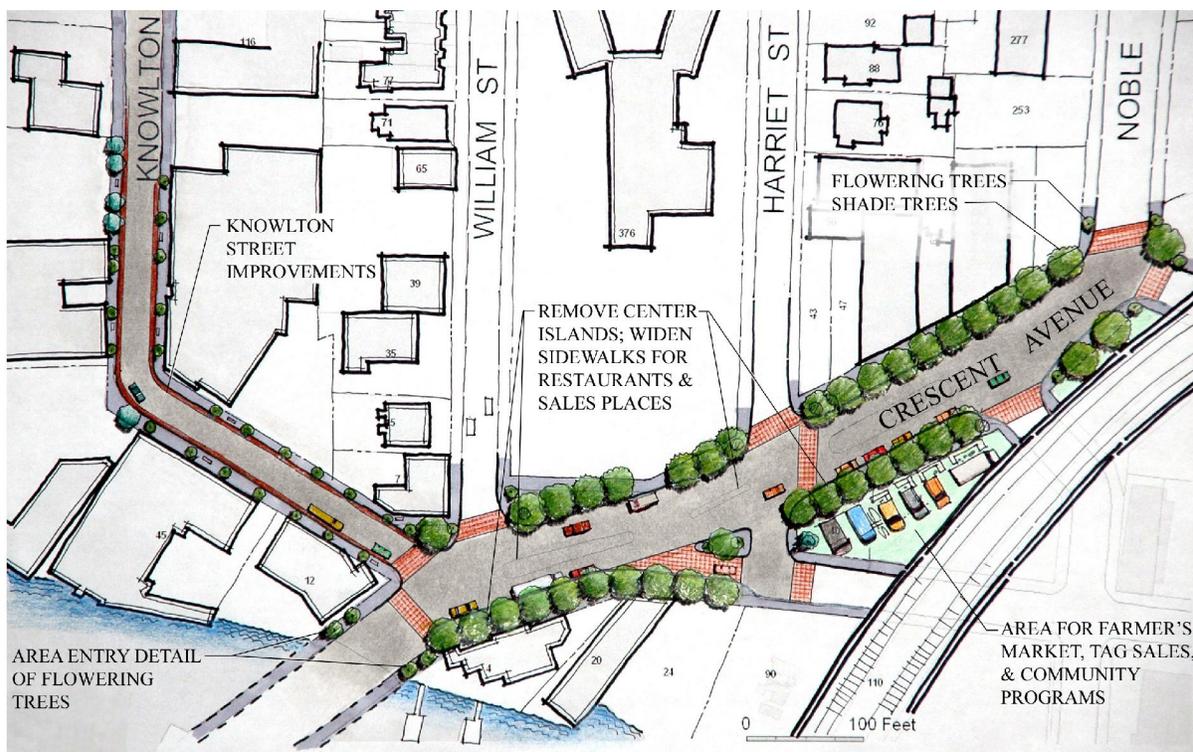
Because the property was initially developed as a dog racing track, there is only one large building and several accessory buildings currently on the property. A large percentage of the property is devoted to surface parking. Consequently, there are few existing barriers to new development and minimal requirements for building demolition to accommodate redevelopment. The City should move seek a series of incentives to support the redevelopment of the lower East Side waterfront (tax incentives, zoning amendments, public improvements, etc.).



DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY: Congress Street “Village Area”.

□ The architectural style of the existing buildings near the Congress Street entrance to the East Side has historic value and is rich in detail and design. This area could be easily redeveloped as a small, mixed-use enclave that could serve as a destination for restaurants, shops and apartments. The City might be looking at \$500,000 to \$1 million in streetscape improvements and the costs of road reconstruction. This Plan recommends:

- Elimination of the central esplanade
- Redesign of the road system to significantly expand the sidewalks and pedestrian ways and assembly areas near the buildings, in order to support a vibrant commercial area with cafes and outdoor dining as well as the opportunity to stage farmers markets, fairs, and festivals.



Scale
0' 150'

TRAFFIC CALMING PAVERS; PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY STREET IMPROVEMENTS

CONGRESS VILLAGE AREA



Photos of some of the interesting architectural styles and waterfront location that could support a Congress Street Village development concept..

VIII. PHASING PLAN (Short-Term & Long-Term Objectives & Strategies)

1. LEVEL ONE - Community Organization

Short-term Revitalization Projects 2010 to 2015 (1-5 years)

- a. Establish an NRZ Steering Committee, with residents of the area being in the majority. Consider bilingual and multilingual capability for staff that will support efforts of the Steering Committee. Work at building partnerships with various nonprofit organizations, City agencies, churches and community organizations that are actively working in the East Side. Encourage participation by Board of Education and by Parks Department.
- b. Publish and market recommendations of East Side NRZ Strategic Plan to City leaders (elected officials and administrators) and neighborhood leaders, to assure a clear understanding of the direction for the neighborhood and specific goals, objectives and projects the neighborhood seeks to achieve. Efforts should be made to assure the use of publications that are bilingual or multi-lingual and reflective of the resident population of the neighborhood, (e.g. Spanish, English, etc.). Consideration should be given to the hiring of staff and consultants that are also bilingual or multilingual (City Office of Neighborhood Revitalization (ONR), NRZ.)
- c. Block watch groups. Promote the creation of 5 block watch groups within the East Side and provide support to existing block watch groups. Involve the City Police Department in providing necessary training and maintaining communication. Reports should be provided to the NRZ Steering Committee on a regular basis (e.g. quarterly). (NRZ, community organizations, Police Department)
- d. Cleanup efforts. Work with local neighborhood groups to coordinate regular cleanup efforts within the neighborhood, with a special focus on the initial target areas (Knowlton Street corridor, Gateway entrances). Seek leadership, assistance from Trash Busters group. Schedule neighborhood cleanups on a regular basis (minimum two times a year: spring cleanup and the fall). (NRZ, ONR, Trash Busters, City "Be Green" Initiative, churches, and other community organizations).
- e. After hour youth athletic programs. After hour youth educational assistant programs, Big Brother and Big Sister Programs, McGivney Community Center, Orcutt Boys Club, Hall Neighborhood House, Board of Education, and other groups.

- f. Increase communication within Neighborhood. Consider newsletter, neighborhood programs, and flyers in English, Spanish and any other language that is prominently spoken within the neighborhood. (Consider neighborhood media, e.g. Radio Cumbre, LaVoz, Radio Amore). Utilize communication to reinforce goals of the Steering Committee (importance of cleanup/beautification effort, information on block watch formation, report of progress on NRZ projects, seek additional leadership, etc.) (NRZ)

Mid-Term Revitalization Projects - 2016 to 2020 (6 - 10 years)

- a. Continue short term community organization efforts
- b. Update NRZ Plan as deemed necessary
- c. Support Senior Rides Assistance programs
- d. Support Senior Medical Care and Screening
- e. Support creation of Senior Housing

Long-Term Revitalization Projects - 2020 to 2030 (11-20 years)

- f. Update NRZ Plan as deemed necessary
- g. Establish updated objectives

2. LEVEL TWO - Stabilize the Neighborhood

Short-term Revitalization Projects 2010 to 2015 (1-5 years)

Housing Rehabilitation Programs, Infill Housing Programs

- a. Negotiate housing investment strategy with Steel Point developers
- b. Seek active participation in City housing programs, especially Neighborhood Stabilization Program
- c. Reduce density in non commercial neighborhoods
- d. Increase density along corridors and transit lines
- e. Bolster protection of East Side Historic properties
- f. Develop incentives to encourage the preservation of historic and architecturally significant buildings and promote strong neighborhood design guidelines

Mid-Term Revitalization Projects - 2016 to 2020 (6 - 10 years)

- a. Update NRZ Plan as deemed necessary

Long-Term Revitalization Projects - 2020 to 2030 (11-20 years)

**3. LEVEL THREE -Neighborhood Improvement Projects
Short-term Revitalization Projects 2010 to 2015 (1-5 years)**

Congress Street Bridge

- a. Support City's efforts to use ARRA funding for the demolition of the existing Congress Street Bridge.
- b. Confirm availability of \$50 million to complete bridge
- c. Secure additional funds if needed (Consider City Council Capital Improvement Plan, State Delegation to secure earmark funding, future economic stimulus funding, etc.)

Waterfront Access:

- a. Make application for funding to construct public access along Barnum Avenue right-of-way (Community Development Block Grant, State of Connecticut Office of Long Island Sound License Plate Grant Program, City of Bridgeport CIP Funds. Design completed by Office of Neighborhood Revitalization)
- b. Develop design for Riverwalk along Pequonnock River
- c. Encourage inclusion of public access in private commercial and mixed-use developments (Coastal Site Plan Review, Zoning approvals)
- d. Consider changes to Zoning Regulations and Coastal Site Plan Review procedures to promote waterfront redevelopment
- e. Complete a study of Arctic Street Right-of-Way area to determine the feasibility of creating another bridge crossing or supporting a Public Access Improvement Project
- f. Seek funding for construction of the Arctic Street improvements

Streetscape Improvements

- a. Develop Knowlton Street Streetscape design

Mid-Term Revitalization Projects - 2016 to 2020 (6 - 10 years)

Waterfront Access:

- a. Complete design and development plan for Arctic Street crossing or public access project

Streetscape Improvements

- a. Secure funding to complete approx. 5 blocks of streetscape improvements in proximity to new redevelopment projects (Knowlton Street, Barnum Avenue, Washington Street, William Street, etc.).
- b. Utilize playgrounds at school sites
- c. Urban Garden Programs

4. Level Four - Economic Revitalization

Short-term Revitalization Projects 2010 to 2015 (1-5 years)

Waterfront Redevelopment

- a. Work with Economic Development Office to confirm support for redevelopment efforts
- b. Promote awareness of NRZ Strategy
- c. Work with existing waterfront property owners to change uses along Pequonnock River

East Main Street Revitalization

- a. Storefront Improvements
- b. Streetscape Improvements
- c. Mixed Use, Infill Housing
- d. Facades and design standards
- e. Sidewalk & Crosswalks Safety: Signage (school zones, historic districts etc)
- f. Road Repairs: State and Local contacts
- g. Bottlenecks
- h. Parking Public Transportation

a. Mid-Term Revitalization Projects - 2016 to 2020 (6 - 10 years)

Waterfront Access:

- 1. Arctic Street Right-of-Way
- 2. Develop design for Riverwalk along Yellow Mill River
- 3. Waterfront Park Redevelopment on Yellow Mill River

Economic Development

- 1. Shoreline Star/Lower East Side Redevelopment for Mixed-Use, waterfront destination and Transit Oriented Development
- 2. Design for development of new East Bridgeport Train Station on Barnum Avenue site, on edge of East Side and East End Neighborhood
- 3. Promote the development of Transit Oriented Development in vicinity of new train station, which

b. Long-Term Revitalization Projects - 2021 to 2030 (11-20 years)

- a. New East Bridgeport Train Station
- b. East Side Transit Oriented Development projects

IX. Performance and Review Standards

Earlier in this Plan, it was recommended that the East Side NRZ adopt an annual work plan. The adoption of that plan should be a collaborative exercise by a cross representation of the various neighborhood stakeholders.

The plan should include specific performance standards to enable a review and assessment of the degree to which the Committee is achieving the goals of this revitalization strategy. During the development of this plan, the following performance standards were envisioned as examples of statistics that could be monitored periodically to determine the success of the plan:

- Number and percent of properties that are vacant
- Number and percent of properties that are classified as blighted
- Number and percent of housing units that are owner-occupied
- Number and percent of housing units that are renter-occupied
- Percent of population below poverty levels
- Median household income
- Linear feet of waterfront accessible to the general public
- Number of new businesses operating on the East Side
- Education Levels and Skill Levels
- Crime Statistics
- Employment/Unemployment Levels

X. Regulatory Issues

The East Side NRZ Steering Committee should play an active role in communicating the goals of this Revitalization Strategy to elected officials, City agencies, and other City leaders. As part of this role, the NRZ should actively participate in public meetings that will affect the future decisions by the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals and other regulatory bodies affecting the future land use of the East Side. Efforts should be made to encourage or support changes to the City's current zoning regulations or changes to the City's Zoning Map that could enhance the implementation of this revitalization strategy. Among them:

Zoning Amendments

-Support the aggressive use of the zoning regulations and the Coastal Site Plan Review process to:

1. **Significantly expand the opportunities for public access to the waterfront.** Other communities in the Fairfield County region, including nearby Stratford, have incorporated

requirements in their zoning regulations that waterfront properties provide a walkway along the waterfront and meaningful forms of public access (access, fishing, docks, launching ramps, etc.). The Coastal Area Management process requires the use of property for a water dependent purpose (uses that cannot be located inland) and, where onsite characteristics are not conducive for that purpose, the provision of public access.

It is believed that much of the vision for waterfront redevelopment along the Pequonnock River and Yellow Mill Pond could be achieved in conjunction with approvals for development of private property. This could be one tool for promoting the development of a boardwalk along the Pequonnock for example, in conjunction with the Knowlton Street Redevelopment concept.

2. Increase the number of water dependent uses along the neighborhood's waterfront.

-Consider advocating for inclusionary zoning in Bridgeport's Zoning Regulations.

- Support Zoning Amendments that can support the creation of mixed-use developments as envisioned in the City's recent update to the Plan of Conservation and Development

Zoning District Changes

The East Side NRZ should advocate for a number of changes to the City Zoning Map. Among these changes:

1. Support changes to the Zoning Districts of the City's Zoning Map as contained in the City's recently adopted Plan of Conservation and Development.
2. Support the rezoning of waterfront property in the neighborhood to discourage the continuation of industrial and heavy commercial uses. Models to consider would include waterfront business districts and mixed-use districts that would permit waterfront development uses (marinas, docks, fishing piers, boardwalks, etc.)
3. Support the creation of Mixed-Use Zoning Districts that would promote the creation of Mixed-Uses along the lower East Side, properties like the Shoreline Star property, and

along Barnum Avenue and the area near the industrial redevelopment area (Remgrit properties).

4. Consider the creation of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Districts within walking distance (approx. ½ mile) of the existing train station in downtown Bridgeport; On a long-term basis, consider the creation of similar TOD Districts around the East Bridgeport Train Station if one is developed.

APPENDICES

- A Certification of City Council Adoption of City of Bridgeport Resolution #278-05 - East Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone

- B East Side NRZ ByLaws, adopted February 8, 2006

- C Outreach Efforts

- D Cost Estimates for East Side NRZ Projects

APPENDIX A

Certification of City Council Adoption of City of Bridgeport Resolution #278-05 - East Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone

APPENDIX B

East Side NRZ ByLaws, adopted February 8, 2006

APPENDIX C

Outreach Efforts

APPENDIX D

Cost Estimates for East Side NRZ Projects