

Norwalk



mid-harbor planning study

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Norwalk Mid-Harbor Planning Study

Prepared for:
The City of Norwalk

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Executive Summary



Norwalk's Challenge in the 21st Century

Norwalk's treasured location along Long Island Sound continues to be one of its foremost assets. The natural Harbor created by the Norwalk River forms a narrow tidal bay that provided a safe haven for ships, convenient locations for industry, and gentle hillsides for working class families and wealthy industrialists alike. The Mid-Harbor study area is host to individual buildings, both public and private, and neighborhoods, both protected and not, representing Norwalk's 300 years of historic development.

Today, the Mid-Harbor area of Norwalk is a dense tapestry of the many periods in Norwalk's history. Maritime industries and marinas sit side by side with residences and office buildings. In our era of cleaner industry, these adjacencies, once thought of as harmful, are increasingly viewed as desirable and even picturesque environments for urban residents and cutting edge corporations interested in attracting talented young professionals. Young urbanites gather nightly in SoNo to enjoy the dense 19th century streetscape that has been preserved and recycled into restaurants and bars. The City should encourage redevelopment of places within the Mid-Harbor area that are in need of reinvestment and well served by public transit.

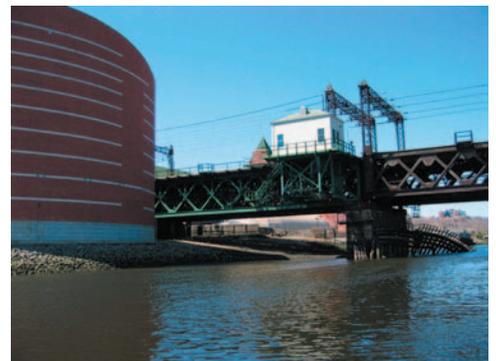
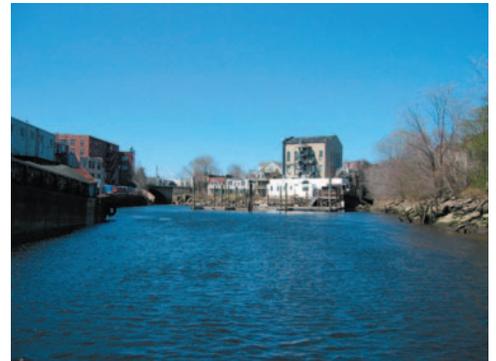
Opportunities

Residential and office projects currently under planning review promise to increase the number of "rooftops" and daytime residents within walking distance of the shores of the Mid-Harbor. These additional residents will require additional services. Given the demographic profile of these new residents, entertainment and "life-style" retail—restaurants and convenience retail—will likely be in as much demand as traditional retail uses. Expanding the successful but relatively narrow set of options in SoNo to include a wider range of retail offerings—in close proximity to the Maritime Aquarium and the Harbor—is viewed as the greatest growth opportunity in the Mid-Harbor area.

Recreational boating can also play a larger role in the future of the Mid-Harbor. Demand for slips, both permanent and transient, is increasing, and has not been met with new supply in the recent past. Developing a greater synergy between boaters and land-based attractions such as SoNo and the Maritime Aquarium is a key goal of the plan. Making the islands and beaches of Long Island Sound more accessible to Norwalk's day visitors is another strategy that builds on the Harbor's attractive qualities and suggests a need for overnight accommodations that appeal to a range of visitors.



MID-HARBOR STUDY AREA





Key recommendations

1. *Protect water-dependent uses and encourage additional uses that maximize enjoyment of the Harbor.* The plan encourages the retention of *water-dependent* uses and encourages *water-enhanced* uses in areas that do not have direct access to deep-water channels. A zone of required water-dependent public uses along the deep water Harbor is recommended for the Water Street corridor while hotels, recreational marinas, and restaurants are recommended at the former Neptune Marina. New facilities for transient boaters are recommended at Veterans Park within close walking distance of SoNo shops and the Maritime Aquarium.
2. *Protect harborside neighborhoods from inappropriate development and preserve views and Harbor access.* The plan supports protection for Mid-Harbor neighborhoods from inappropriate development that will overshadow existing scale of homes or block important views of the Harbor. Frequent access points to the Harbor are recommended for neighborhoods that are separated from each other by highways and railroad underpasses. Each neighborhood will have equal access to the harborwalk and a place to reach the water's edge. Sufficient setbacks will be required to protect the public spirit of the harborwalk so that it does not become privatized over time. Sufficient view corridors will be required that will protect both public awareness of the Harbor as a shared resource and locations for natural features and landscapes to be preserved.
3. *Maintain vehicular connections within neighborhoods surrounding the Harbor and protect those neighborhoods from regional and truck traffic.* The plan advocates for the preservation of the network of smaller neighborhood streets and connections that define a smaller-scale Mid-Harbor. Abandoning the smaller network of streets for large-scale development is counter to a fully accessible environment for everyone around the Harbor. Protecting residential neighborhoods from regional commuter traffic and trucks can, and must, be solved with proven traffic calming devices that maintain local, smaller-scale street networks for residents' use.
4. *Extend the Harbor trail and enhance pedestrian river crossings.* Not all shorelines around the Harbor will be accessible for pedestrians, as industrial and maritime uses are frequently incompatible with pedestrians. Where such uses do not exist, however, full public pedestrian access should be provided along the Harbor. The few Harbor crossings that do exist should be enhanced to improve cross-Harbor pedestrian access. For

example, the Strofollino Bridge and I-95 need enhancements to their approaches and crossings that will encourage, rather than intimidate, residents and visitors from accessing the east and west sides of the Harbor.

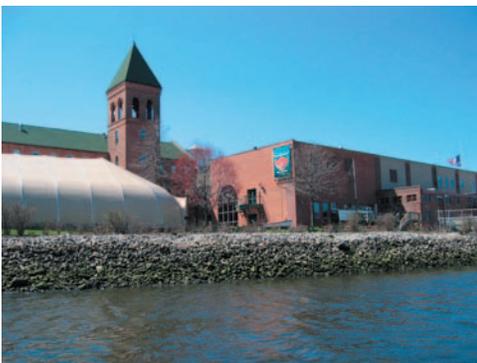
5. *Encourage Harbor-oriented retail/visitor development within walking distance of the Maritime Aquarium and SoNo.* A modest amount of new waterfront development should be encouraged in areas near the Maritime Aquarium and Washington Street. Waterfront development will complement existing retailers in SoNo with more family-oriented restaurants, retail and overnight accommodations that will appeal to families and business travelers. Recreational boaters will be able to use transient docking facilities in close proximity to lodging and entertainment. Water Street should develop into a two-sided retail street. On the shore-side of the Water Street corridor, waterfront setbacks equal to 1.5 times the height of the building should be required for non-water-dependent uses. Upon official review, exemptions may be granted for buildings oriented perpendicular to the shore to ensure public views. Such massing will help maintain a publicly oriented environment that encourages year-round waterfront activity as far south as SoNo Seafood.



6. *Focus investments in Oyster Shell Park on the southwestern side, nearest existing destinations including the Aquarium.* Successful cultural and tourism destinations for families with children are often clustered within a small area; Norwalk should capitalize on the high volume of visitors coming to the Aquarium and to SoNo, by introducing new elements in proximity to these.

7. *Enhance existing publicly owned shorelines by removing invasive weeds, replanting with native plants, and reconstructing wetland areas where possible.* Waterfront development that does not have water-dependent uses should be required to incorporate sloped shorelines that maximize intertidal habitat and reduce waves within the Harbor. In areas that have review controls, such as Village Zoning, preservation of view corridors can also protect areas of significant or mature natural habitat. New public paths along the water should incorporate natural vegetation and planted buffers between public paths and residence and office uses. As per the Connecticut General Statutes Section 22a-92, the Mid-Harbor Planning Study acknowledges the need to “protect and enhance” tidal wetlands and other coastal resources. These policies should take precedence in the Commission’s review of applications to ensure that the provision of public access shall not adversely impact such resources.

Executive Summary



Early implementation should focus on:

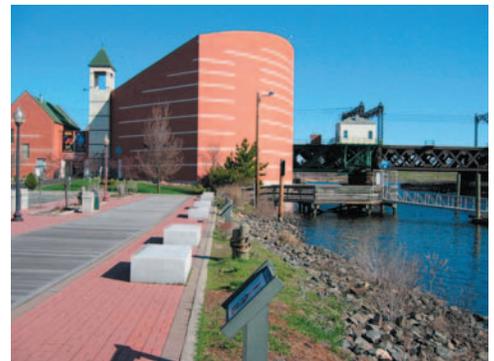
- 1. Link public improvements to private development actions.* Public funds for parks and pedestrian connections should be tied to adjacent private investments to maximize the benefits of both and schedule the actions to maximize public benefits. Example 1: Make public improvements to small craft boat landing at Maritime Aquarium to support seasonal vendors and other commercial uses in the Maritime Yard project. Example 2: Replace portions of public parking with green space at “Steamboat Landing Park” when the Norwalk Company Building site is redeveloped with additional parking supplies. Allow for expansion of seasonal vending in the park that can be franchised with year-round retailers in the Norwalk Company Building. Example 3: Allow for reconfiguration of Constitution Park to enhance use of the park and encourage the best possible public realm in support of redevelopment at Neptune Marina (but do not allow development to encroach on wetlands areas).
- 2. Concentrate scarce public funds on areas that will create synergy with existing investments at the Maritime Aquarium and SoNo.* Public improvement dollars should be spent on pedestrian improvements that will encourage visitors to the Maritime Aquarium and SoNo to travel to nearby attractions. Enhancements to Oyster Shell Park, segments of harborwalk behind the Maritime Aquarium and improvements to the Stroffolino Bridge, roadway crossings, and parking would all qualify. All of these projects will generate additional foot traffic in the vicinity of SoNo, increase the length of visits, stimulate and facilitate private investment in commercial areas, and enhance the quality of life for area residents.
- 3. Revisit design guidelines for waterfront areas to ensure conformance with goals of Mid-Harbor planning.* Changes to zoning and design guidelines in the Maritime Commercial District can strengthen protection of public views to the Harbor and ensure water-dependent uses along the deep-water channel. New design guidelines or other regulatory changes should ensure that these desirable Harbor qualities are preserved (see number 5 on page 7).
- 4. Develop public parking resources to encourage appropriate retail and water-dependent uses along Water Street.* Constructing fee public parking resources in nearby non-waterfront areas would provide alternative parking for patrons and employees. While on-site parking would still be required for office or

housing uses, reduction of parking requirements for retail uses would encourage the generation of ground-level retail uses, within height and bulk requirements, by land owners who may not otherwise consider a mixed-use development. Retail and water-dependent uses on Water Street and the Harbor are desired uses that will create a public presence in the district and discourage privatization of the waterfront.

5. *Modify zoning to support the preservation of low-rise family housing in neighborhoods where it now exists, and to ensure Harbor access and views.* Waterfront neighborhoods with views to the Harbor should be protected from inappropriately scaled development. Industrially zoned parcels on the water side of Harbor Avenue should retain current height restrictions to ensure views over industrial development. A Harbor overlay district could ensure higher level of scrutiny to all areas around the Mid-Harbor that would be equivalent to the Village Zoning procedures that protect portions of the east side. Parcels currently zoned industrial and with frontage on Harbor Avenue should be rezoned for residential uses, to improve the quality of these neighborhoods and remove incompatible and marginal uses in close proximity to residential areas.

Large parcels can be designed in an integrated manner to achieve the goals of this study. In recognition of this, any modification of zoning proposed by this study should permit the establishment of a “Waterfront Development Park,” provided the parcel (or parcels) of land comprising the park has a minimum of ten (10) acres in area, proposes more than one building, is designed in a unified manner, and has common facilities, such as interior motor vehicle ways and open space for use by occupants and invitees of the Park as well as the public. Design and layout of a Waterfront Development Park should reflect the goals of the Mid-Harbor Planning Study.

6. *Conduct a parking study for SoNo and the Water Street corridor.* Formally evaluate the supply in the greater SoNo area and determine the impacts of reducing parking requirements in zoning for retail uses.
7. *Conduct a hotel feasibility study that focuses on the potential for a waterfront hotel in SoNo.* Verify the hypothesis from preliminary research that a small- to medium-sized hotel or inn, possibly combined with a transient marina and containing other uses such as a restaurant, would be viable at a waterfront site. Determine in more detail the particular size range (number of rooms), mix of uses, pricing, and target markets that would be successful in the Mid-Harbor.



A. Introduction



Planning in Norwalk

“The Planning Commission of the City of Norwalk is preparing to update the City’s *Master Plan of Conservation and Development*. The Planning Commission intends to undertake this process by incorporating plans of development already in existence or presently being completed for certain areas of the city and evaluating the conservation and development needs of additional areas of Norwalk. It is anticipated that the Mid-Harbor Development Plan will be incorporated into the Master Plan to guide future development in those areas that relate to and benefit from their proximity to the Norwalk River and the Mid-Harbor Area of the City and identify the need for zone changes or amendments to zoning regulations.”

- From the *Mid-Harbor RFP*

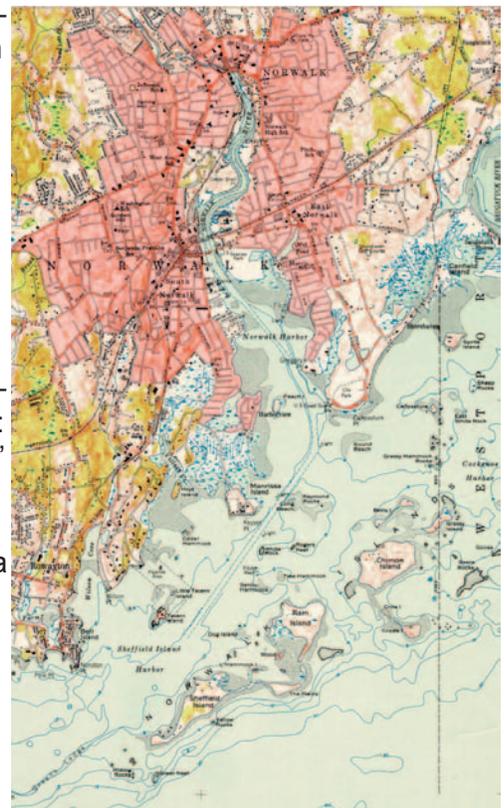
Purpose of the Study

The Mid-Harbor is a special resource for the people, the economy, and the natural environment of Norwalk. This planning study was conducted to both ensure the future of this waterway balances these sometimes competing demands, and to create a place for all to enjoy and utilize.

The study examined the health of the Harbor in physical, environmental, social, economic, aesthetic and overall “quality of life” terms, and makes recommendations regarding how coming changes should be shaped in order to maximize the many kinds of benefits the Mid-Harbor offers the city and region.

The study has included an inventory and review of existing land uses, as well as an examination of future waterfront development potential, including recreational, commercial, and residential opportunities. Special attention has been paid to the existing “working Harbor” uses, including maritime industry and other water-dependent activities, so that these and all other interests will be able to continue coexisting along the Harbor in the future. The team examined opportunities for habitat restoration, ways to prioritize public investments in open space to maximize early success, and ways to link existing attractions in the Mid-Harbor. The team also investigated methods for improving aesthetics in certain locations, and addressed quality of life issues in Harbor neighborhoods. Access and view issues were considered for improving connections to the Harbor from elsewhere in Norwalk.

The 1991 *Plan of Development for Norwalk*, particularly the section “Coastal Area: Norwalk Harbor/Waterfront,” includes important policies regarding the protection of coastal resources, forming a primary basis for this study. Similarly, the *Norwalk Harbor Management Plan* includes important information and recommendations which undergird this report, and that plan is included as part of this planning study as well.





MID-HARBOR STUDY AREA



Oyster Bend Marina and Condominiums

Challenges + Opportunities

Situated on the Long Island Sound in southwestern Connecticut, Norwalk is home to more than 83,000 residents, in many attractive residential neighborhoods within a short drive or train ride to New York City. The I-95 corridor and Metro North rail line traverse Norwalk, and the city has become one of the hottest office markets in Fairfield County.

In addition to its traditional town center, the popular revitalized restaurant and retail district known as SoNo is now a significant regional draw. With its protected Harbor and collection of natural islands, the city is an increasingly popular destination for recreational boaters. In peak months, space on the water is at a premium. The Mid-Harbor area is home to some of the region's most popular festivals, and is fortunate to have large public open spaces abutting the water to accommodate them. These same spaces, however, do not yet have all the characteristics to satisfy a large array of park users throughout a greater portion of the year.

Although Norwalk is located on two sides of a major river and Harbor, it is possible for newcomers to the city to drive along roads near to the water and come and go from the city without realizing they have visited a community with such a significant waterfront. Views to the water and points of access are few and far between, and it is not possible to make a "loop" while driving—or walking—around the Mid-Harbor.

Working industry still lines sections of the Harbor, as Norwalk is part of the Federal Navigation Project, receiving assistance from the United States government in maintaining a navigable channel that enables commercial transport to and from certain water-dependent industries. The channel also makes other significant commercial and recreational activities possible. It is likely that if water-dependent industries have trouble continuing to operate successfully in these locations, nonindustrial or non-water-based uses may be the most prepared to redevelop these valuable sites abutting the water. The City favors water-dependent uses: highest priority and preference should be given to water-dependent uses and facilities in shorefront areas and new uses should not adversely impact existing water dependent uses and facilities. (Public uses (i.e. waterfront restaurants) should be treated as water-dependent uses.)

While much waterside industry lends surroundings a coveted “working waterfront” character, certain types are considered more unsightly, such as the municipal water treatment facility. Visual screening remedies are sought for ameliorating the effect of these in Norwalk. Certain industries may be unable to allow public access paths along the water adjacent to their operations due to safety concerns.

Norwalk is also well-known for its popular family tourism destinations; the Maritime Aquarium, Stepping Stones Museum for children, Oyster Shell Park and the Lockwood Mathews Mansion are all drawing children and their teachers and parents from around the region. However, most visitor groups attend just one destination before leaving the Mid-Harbor, extending their stay neither for a meal nor an overnight stay.

As in other attractive waterfront locations in urban areas around the nation, the lands along the Norwalk Harbor are becoming increasingly attractive for residential living. The simultaneous desire to maintain as much public access along the water as possible requires that compatible housing be built adjacent to the water’s edge.

Four major public/private projects are currently under consideration in the vicinity: Wall Street, West Avenue/Norwalk Center, Maritime Yard and Riverwalk, and the Webster Block. Mid-Harbor planning, particularly regarding issues of use and scale, has recognized the change imminent upon realization of one or all of these proposals.

The Norwalk River watershed is also home to plant and animal life that depends upon access to both water and riparian environments, and the zones in which these systems meet and overlap. Such ecosystems are sometimes threatened as human pressures on the land and water intensify.

Norwalk’s tidal wetlands should be protected and enhanced under the strong resource protection policies of the state. Historically, Norwalk’s Mid-Harbor contained a greater amount of wetland area and other riparian habitats. Recently, some new habitat areas have been reintroduced, adding crucial mud flats and grasses that are frequented by many species.

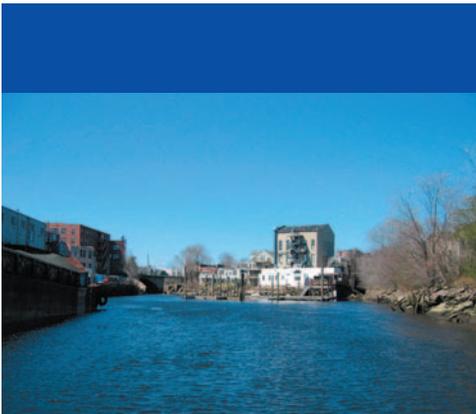
The Planning Process

- **Gathered information:** past plans and current proposals, historical information, GIS mapping and demographic data.
- **Conducted interviews with:** environmental advocates, commercial and retail brokers, housing and office developers, Harbor Management Commission and Harbormaster, cultural institutions, some members of City planning and zoning (staff and commissioners), City parks staff, Chamber of Commerce, SoNo Business Association, neighborhood associations, historic preservation advocates, and land owners.
- **Site reconnaissance:** visited the site and documented land use, vehicular circulation, pedestrian circulation and access, open space.
- **Identification of opportunity areas:** where changes are possible and desirable.
- **Refinement of proposals for opportunity areas:**

Review by some members of the Planning Commission, Mid-Harbor Planning Committee, Harbor Management Commission, Recreation and Parks, Norwalk Redevelopment Agency and Advisory Committee occurred at every stage of reporting.

Public gatherings, open to all interested parties, were convened in the evenings in large indoor meeting spaces. These occurred at three different times: the 50%, 75%, and 90% levels of completion.

B. Analysis



Maintaining a Navigable Channel in Norwalk

The Norwalk Harbor Federal Navigation Project (FNP), including Congressionally designated Federal navigation channels and anchorage basins, has served the City's working harbor since the late 1800s, and requires dredging in order to remain navigable. The Norwalk Harbor was last dredged in 1981. At present, shoaling has decreased the depth of the channel to a level that restricts certain vessel traffic. The FNP is used by barges carrying sand, gravel, and fuel oil; commercial fishing boats; excursion vessels; and thousands of recreational boats.

The Norwalk Harbor Management Commission is studying the economic effects of the decreasing navigability of Norwalk's Harbor and is charged with serving as the City's advocate for maintenance dredging of the FNP and working with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection to achieve dredging projects. Periodic maintenance is required to ensure the harbor's status as a vital center of water-dependent activities and the viability of the many water-dependent businesses that depend on safe and reliable navigation. However, in order to receive financial assistance from the USACE budget, Norwalk must demonstrate that its Harbor has significant shoaling and that the "value of the Harbor" meets USACE requirements.

The Harbor Management Commission petitioned the USACE in 1997 to conduct maintenance dredging of the FNP and to secure the necessary approvals and funding. The City is pursuing funds through a Congressional "earmark" to the Federal Appropriations Act that provides funds for USACE dredging projects. It is anticipated that the planned maintenance dredging will be initiated by the USACE in the fall of 2005.

Land Use:

Water-Dependent and Water Enhanced Uses

Only a small number of operations remaining on the Harbor help Norwalk qualify for federal dredging assistance (see side-bar at left). Most qualifying uses are in the upper portion of the Harbor, and utilize barges for transporting materials. A greater number of existing uses depend on access to the water—and contribute to its working-Harbor/maritime character—yet are not included in the federal formula for dredging assistance. These are dispersed throughout the length of the Mid-Harbor, with the greatest concentration lining the southwestern side, along Water Street.

Based on a survey of existing waterfront industrial uses, most of the current operations are financially healthy, however there are significant barriers for prospective new industrial users, including the size of waterfront parcels, land-side and waterside access issues, and the cost of land. As per the Connecticut General Statutes Section 22a-92, the Mid-Harbor Planning Study acknowledges that when planning future land uses in shorefront areas, highest priority and preference shall be given to siting water-dependent uses and facilities. These policies shall take precedence in the Commission's review of applications to ensure that the new uses along the waterfront do not adversely impact existing water-dependent uses and facilities.

Recognizing the critical importance of maintaining the federal support that enables dredging, this study examined the possibility of directing new water-dependent uses to the edges of the Harbor abutting the navigation channel, and whether portions of the Harbor not on the channel might accommodate desired new uses that do not require immediate access to deeper water.

Slips and moorings are in high demand for recreational boating, although the need to stay clear of the channel will continue to determine amount and locations (see Open Space later in this section). New projects along the northeast side of the Mid-Harbor are making waterside views and experiences more common and attracting housing and office markets in Norwalk.

The use of best management practices to manage, reduce, and control stormwater runoff in Norwalk Harbor should be encouraged and supported. All new development generating significant stormwater discharges should employ appropriate stormwater treatment systems and technology to reduce the potential for nonpoint source pollution to enter the Harbor. In addition, the repair of existing bulkheads and other shore protection structures on waterfront sites should be encouraged in coordination with the redevelopment of those sites.

Academy Street and Harbor Avenue

The neighborhood defined by Harbor Avenue and Academy Street lies within the study area and is directly adjacent to the proposed Norwalk Center development along West Avenue. Future impacts of this project include the construction of proposed parking garages and housing along both sides of Academy Street. The existing neighborhood is without historic protection although the predominant housing was built in the early part of the last century. It is important to preserve the residential character of the neighborhood—including having housing on both sides of the street—and protect it from over-scaled development. The neighborhood is currently the site of nearly 120 units of affordable housing and additional supplies could be developed in this centrally located district.

Tourism Cluster Around the Aquarium

The locus of family tourism is the Aquarium with over 500,000 visitors per year. Stepping Stones and Lockwood-Mathews are bisected from the Aquarium by I-95, and further separated by a walking route that is long for small children and currently lacks pedestrian amenities. Enhancing these connections and providing additional access for weekend trolleys would further the goal of extending visits and encouraging multiple destination trips within Norwalk by families. There are no hotels in the immediate Mid-Harbor area to support multi-day trips for families although there are business-oriented hotels in the Merritt 7 area and along I-95.

Water Street

An eclectic mix of restaurants and retail defines SoNo to the immediate west of the Mid-Harbor study area, along Washington Street. There is a slight trend of retail establishments appearing south along Water Street, but these are somewhat isolated. There is still a great deal of commercial vacancy along Water Street, with great distances separating existing establishments and few clear signals of it being an environment intended for pedestrian exploration.

Retail at Liberty Square

The line of shops fronting on Liberty Square and Veterans Park are currently a separate cluster removed from the activity and customers in SoNo. As a result the buildings have not been recently upgraded and the facades are in need of repair and historically sensitive restoration and renovation. Connecting Liberty Square to the tourist and visitor market could help to increase sales and support improvements to these attractive and historic structures. Improvements could include landscape enhancements to the street, public park, and parking area that are in need of upgrading.



Water-dependent uses

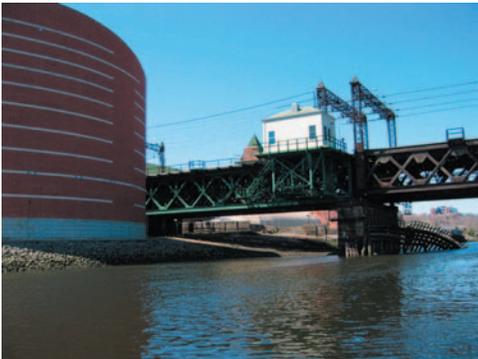
- Devine Brothers
- O&G Industries
- Norwalk Marine Contractors
- SoNo Seafood
- Tallmadge Brothers Oyster Company
- Recreational marinas



The appearance and performance of Liberty Square retail could be enhanced by capitalizing on its proximity to the water, public open space, tourist attractions, and SoNo.



The newly constructed public promenade between the Maritime Aquarium and Oyster Shell Park



A missing segment of trail behind the Maritime Aquarium would better connect Oyster Shell Park with SoNo.



Maritime uses along Water Street preclude continuous public Harbor access in this area for security and public safety reasons.

Pedestrian Circulation Along the Harbor

Existing Trails

The City has succeeded in securing public rights of way along the water sides of many projects thereby adding to the growing accessibility of the water's edge. It is expected that there will ultimately be full public access to the eastern shore of the Harbor once construction of multifamily residential projects is completed. There are still barriers, however to connecting across missing segments and concerns that setbacks for residential uses are not sufficient to encourage public use.

In addition, not all of the existing publicly accessible spaces are welcoming at all times of the day or year. Insufficient lighting and low activity levels cause a perception of decreased public safety at some parks at certain times of day. Many of the sections of the Harbor walk on private property may have restrictions on usages after dark.

Anticipated Areas for New Trails

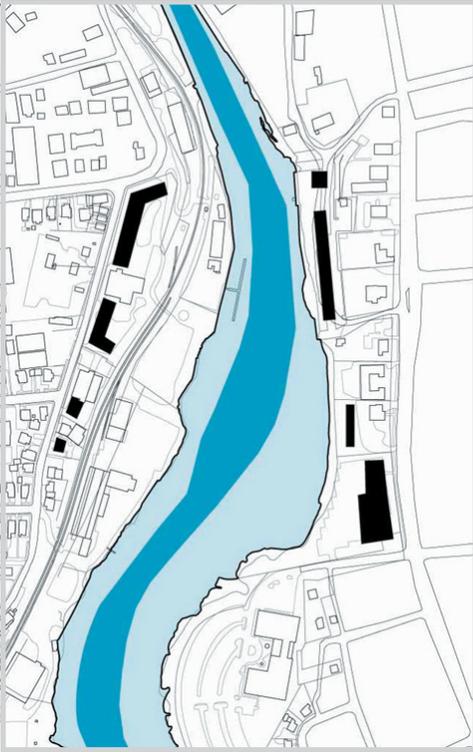
Several important segments are missing from the trail system but should be anticipated in the near future. Filling in the missing segment of the waterfront trail behind the Maritime Aquarium could link the entrance of that facility and Oyster Shell Park with SoNo in an attractive waterside promenade and provide additional mooring space for excursion or display vessels. This alternative route would mitigate the limitations of North Water Street, which has narrow sidewalks that do not currently accommodate families in a safe or welcoming way.

A connection beneath the abutments of the railroad bridge on the east side of the Harbor would connect the existing trail along the Sewage Treatment Plant to the Neptune Marina area and Veterans Park. This critical link would help establish a continuous trail from Wall Street to Veterans Park along the east side of the Harbor.

Alternative Routes

Certain parts of the Harbor are likely to remain off-limits to the public open space and trail users, due to safety restrictions in certain industrial environments. Alternative pedestrian routes behind industry should be enhanced in these areas to serve as connections between trail segments. Harbor Avenue is one such roadway that will, for the foreseeable future, provide a vital pedestrian connection between Wall Street and SoNo on the west side of the Harbor. Maritime uses along southern portions of Water Street will also preclude pedestrian access. Water Street should be enhanced to provide a pedestrian connection between SoNo and waterfront neighborhoods to the south.

Analysis



Build-out analysis

Under current zoning, development along the Harbor could block visual access and discourage pedestrian use of the Harbor.

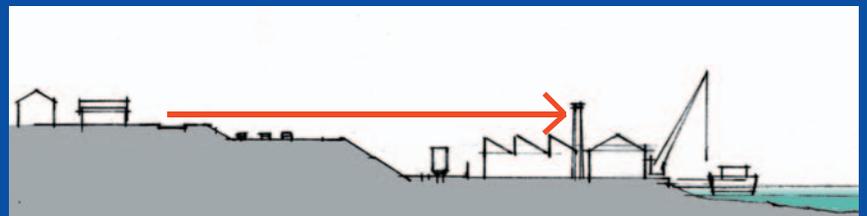
Pedestrian Circulation To the Harbor

Physical Access

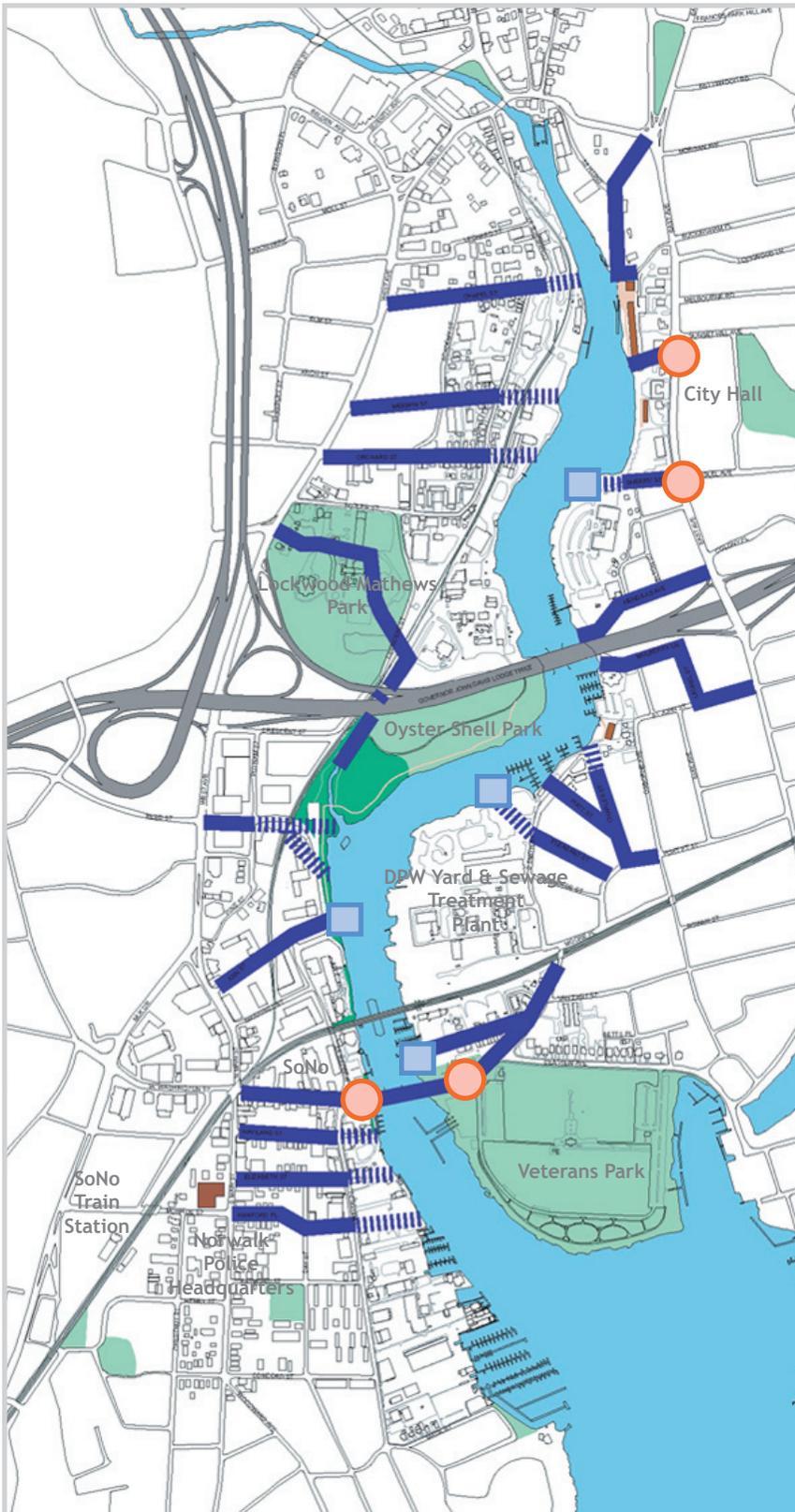
There are no shoreline roadways along the Mid-Harbor, therefore visual and physical access points are especially critical to ensuring that the Harbor is seen and used more frequently. Beyond the two major parks, there are relatively few places where neighborhood residents can access the Mid-Harbor. On the east side, improved access points are located only at Daskams Lane, beneath the I-95 Bridge, and at the DPW yard and Sewage Treatment Plant. Physical improvements do not include water access for those in the neighborhood with a desire to fish or launch a small craft. On the west side of the Harbor whole lengths adjacent to residential neighborhoods, such as at Harbor Avenue, will be devoted to maritime and industrial uses for the foreseeable future with little or no public access.

Views to the Harbor

There are opportunities in numerous places in the Mid-Harbor where roads oriented perpendicular as well as parallel to the water's edge are well-situated to enable views. Future proposals for critical sites at the water's edge within these view corridors should be reviewed with specific massing and height guidelines to ensure sight lines to the water. In many areas topography allows for views over industrial uses but in others, such as along Water Street, specific guidelines should be required to preserve view corridors from being lost during future redevelopment. Publicly owned or controlled sites should encourage physical access and enhanced views.



The topography along the western side of the Harbor enables views from Harbor Avenue. New development should preserve view corridors, and existing height limits (35 feet) on waterfront industrial uses should be maintained.



Key:

- Existing public access ■
- Anticipated/planned public access or views ▤
- Needed intersection improvements ○
- Possible Harbor access points □



Katherine Gibbs Site

Perhaps the greatest single site on the east side, the former Gibbs College parcel offers panoramic views of the Harbor, with Sherry Street a logical access point for neighborhoods around City Hall. The pedestrian crossing at East Avenue and Sherry could be enhanced to make this a safe access point for neighborhood families and would connect to existing recreational facilities at City Hall.

PUBLIC ACCESS TO HARBOR

Analysis



Family-oriented retail: SoNo Seafood



Steamboat Landing Park is used to stage Harbor excursions to the Islands.



This public access walkway is not activated with public or commercial uses.

Public Open Spaces Along the Harbor

Norwalk Harbor contains a significant amount of public park space along its edges. However, these are not yet clearly connected for pedestrians travelling between them. Enjoyment of the water via both motorized and non-motorized vessels is already popular in Norwalk; there is a continuing demand for moorings and docking, and a growing demand for launches as well as showering facilities, and other support services to this important piece of Harbor life.

To experience the perimeter of Norwalk Harbor is to traverse a variety of waterfront settings. The most prevalent kind of public area along the water is expansive green space, which is used often in warm or mild times of year rather than throughout the calendar. Comparatively limited areas offer a more active, urban kind of experience. Bringing the life of the city—which has “foot traffic” at all times of the year—directly to the edge of the water, in select locations, would allow Norwalkers to enjoy the Harbor on a more year-round basis.

Oyster Shell Park

Oyster Shell is large enough to accommodate large events, but currently lacks programming. A terraced area on the northern end is too steep for many users, is too close to the noise from traffic on I-95, and too far from the activity generated from visitors to the Aquarium.

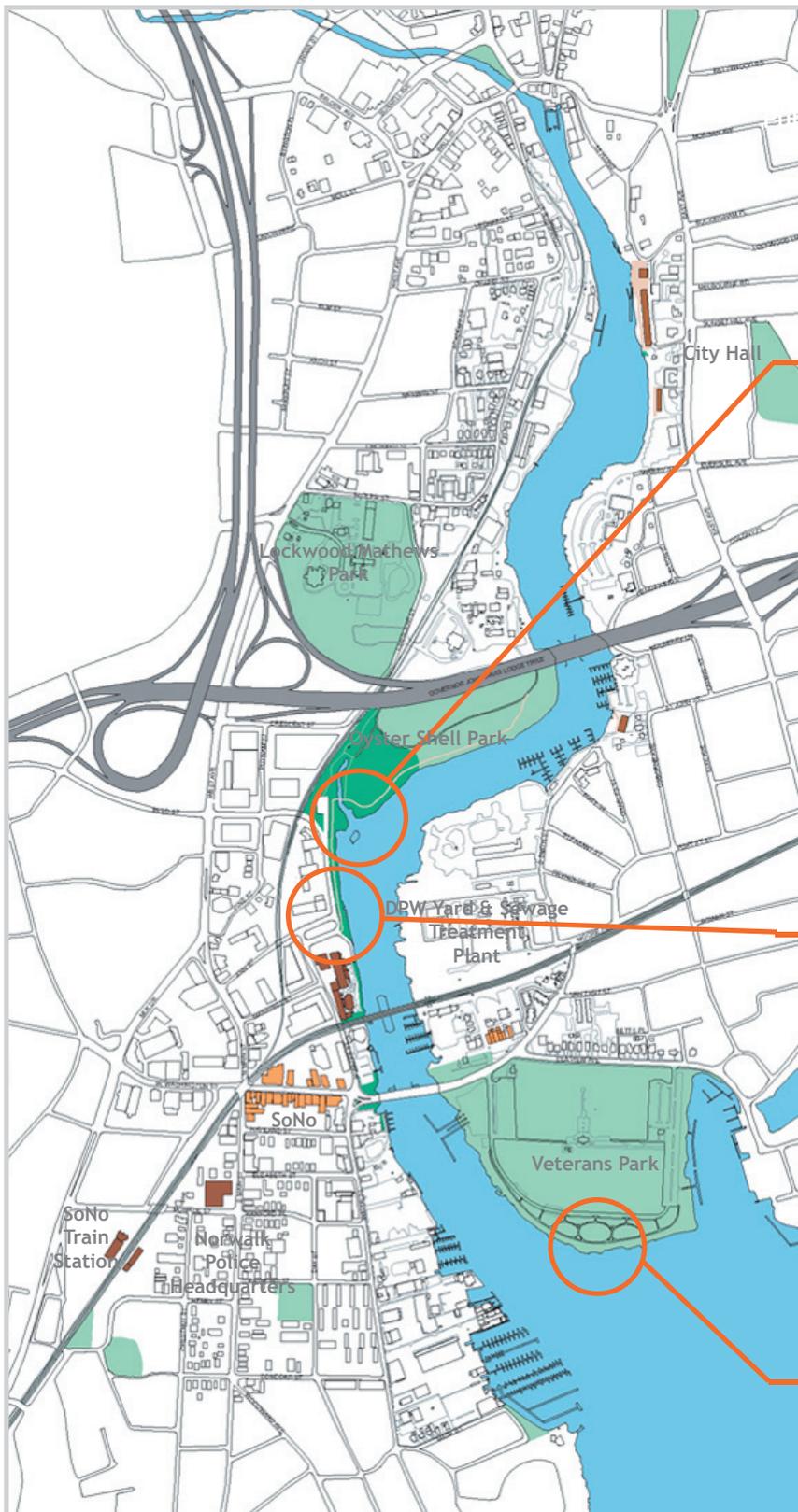
A new boat launch would be introduced along the trail between Oyster Shell and the Aquarium as part of the Maritime Yard project. Such an amenity would be activated by the new worker and resident populations, and open to the public in general.

Veterans Park

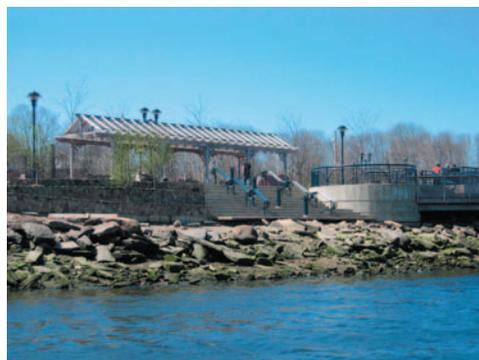
While large seasonal events are easily accommodated within Veterans Park, these spaces lack sufficient furniture, lighting, and public amenities that will encourage new types of activities and welcome new users on a more regular basis.

Steamboat Landing and Vicinity

While some short-term parking will remain necessary for drop-offs at the boat tour docks here, significant surface parking is not a desirable use for valuable waterfront property. Also, if activated, this parcel could serve as a link between the Aquarium and family-friendly establishments (existing or future) along Water Street, to the south. The segment of North Water Street adjacent to Steamboat Landing lacks sufficient lighting and sidewalk amenities for pedestrians.



Oyster Shell Park is primarily passive open space with many steep slopes that are impacted by noise from I-95 traffic. The western portion of the park—farthest from the highway, and least steeply graded—are most suitable for providing equipment and other investments that will invite more active types of open space usage.



At the promenade between the Maritime Aquarium and Oyster Shell Park, the landing facility could provide access to the water.



Veterans Park is comprised principally of active recreational areas. The edges are in need of landscape enhancements.

PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

Crescent Street Link



Crescent Street should continue—and be strengthened—as a critical link between Wall Street and SoNo. This may require widening and reconnecting to North Water Street.



The pedestrian path from Stepping Stones Museum to Oyster Shell Park was iced over for many weeks last year; commuters were unable to pass through and needed alternative north-south routes safer than West Avenue.

Vehicular Circulation

Unclear connections along roadways deter drivers from using them. In the case of water-adjacent roads in the Mid-Harbor area, a disconnected collection of streets and roads means that many residents, commuters, shoppers, and visitors do not drive along their waterfront amenities on a regular basis. At present, vehicular traffic has no direct route around the edge of the Harbor, and relatively few clear views to the water for such a lengthy waterfront.

West Side Street Network

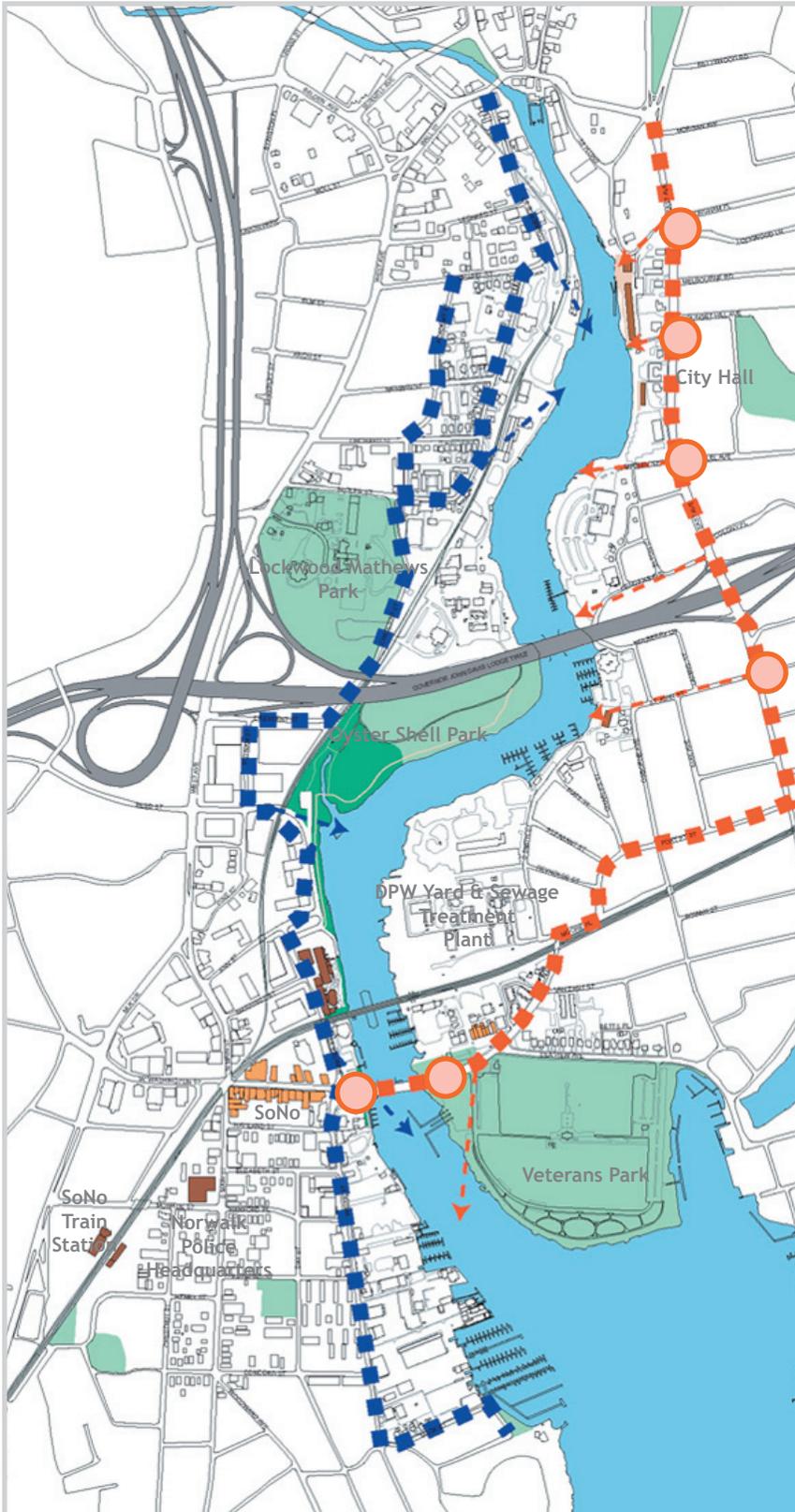
Networks of streets are crucial to maintaining safe and accessible neighborhoods, viable commercial districts, and active waterfronts. On the west side, a network of smaller residential streets provides a useful secondary system parallel to West Avenue. Harbor, Academy, Crescent, Putnam, Reed and North Water streets provide a continuous and safe alternative to West Avenue for local residents, pedestrians and cyclists. Proven traffic calming devices should be employed to reduce speeds and discourage trucks.

East Avenue

On the east side, East Avenue is the primary route for driving along the water. Views and access to the Harbor trail system should be preserved and can be expanded upon as sites are redeveloped. East Avenue is designed to accommodate auto traffic efficiently, and the few pedestrian crossings are discouraging to residents from east side neighborhoods trying to approach the Harbor.

Public Transit Service

Wheels, the Norwalk Transit service, runs thirteen regular bus routes throughout the city, with several special routes and links to surrounding towns and cities. Four routes service the Mid-Harbor area: 8, 9, 10, and 11. There is little coverage on the east side of the river south of I-95 and Van Zant Street, and a lack of service on Sunday is also prohibitive to the transit rider. A seasonal shuttle system oriented to visitors could help to connect attractions such as the Lockwood Mathews Mansion and SoNo with a fun and educational theme. The SoNo Train Station brings visitors and commuters to Norwalk from around the region, and is likely to become increasingly important as an intermodal center as new projects are realized throughout the city. The vicinity of the station will see increases in activity, potentially spreading to destinations



Key:

- West side network
- East Avenue and secondary access roads
- Needed intersection improvements

East Avenue



East Avenue is dominated by heavy, high speed traffic. Crossings are infrequent and hostile environments for pedestrians.

Stroffolino Bridge



Intersections at either end of the Stroffolino Bridge discourage the most intrepid of pedestrians.

VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

Economic Generators & Opportunities

Four important public/private development proposals in and around the Mid-Harbor study area will significantly contribute to the liveliness of Norwalk's waterfront with new residents and office workers: the Reed/Putnam, Wall Street, West Avenue, and Webster Block redevelopment areas. Each of these plans includes office, residential, and retail components. While the final square footage of each use for each plan will most likely differ from what has been proposed, these developments can be expected to bring many more residents and workers into the Mid-Harbor area. These populations will generate economic growth by creating a demand for retail, cultural uses, and entertainment, some of which can and should be captured in the Mid-Harbor area. According to data provided by the Bureau of Labor and Statistics' 2002 Consumer Expenditure Survey, these new employees and residents could potentially generate over \$20 million in additional annual revenue for this study area.

Office

The City of Norwalk has succeeded in attracting office tenants, and since 2003 has been the fastest growing office market in Fairfield County. Companies such as Diageo, Factset, and GE Commercial Finance have relocated from their traditional Connecticut office headquarters in Greenwich and Stamford eastward along I-95 to Norwalk.

While the Merritt 7 buildings receiving new tenants are marketed as corporate campuses complete with their own eating and shopping establishments, the proposed projects in and around the study area will create demand primarily for retail and dining located nearby. Our analysis revealed that the current redevelopment plans will supply enough office space to meet future demands, and thus we do not recommend additional office space within the study area. However, better connections between future office buildings and waterfront retail areas will be necessary to capture the spending demands these new workers will generate.

Residential

Norwalk is primarily a single-family owner-occupied community (62% according to the 2000 Census). A mix of families, married couples, and seniors reside in the existing neighborhoods surrounding the study area. In contrast, most of the residential proposed in the redevelopment plans and within the study area will be multifamily condominiums and apartments (primarily one- and two-bedroom) that attract a different demographic, including



Public Private Partnerships in Planning

Wall Street

- New dwelling units
- Revitalized community retail

West Avenue (Norwalk Center)

- Destination Retail
- Multifamily housing

Maritime Yard

- New dwelling units (ownership/rental)
- Retail

River Walk

- Office and support retail

Webster Block (Phase I & II)

- New parking garages
- New dwelling units
- Retail/restaurant
- Office

Other Housing Projects Within Study Area

- Norwalk River Housing and Row Club (River Way)
- 134 East Avenue
- Boardwalk Place
- River Watch

PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

singles, young professional couples without children, and older empty nesters. These “urban villagers,” as they are called, tend to have different retail habits than the single-family dwellers such as more dining, entertainment, and convenience retail use. In general, these projects will increase housing density near to attractions along the Harbor.

Regional Destination

The city’s cultural resources are important economic generators. However, we found that most visitors come to the city to attend one venue and then leave. What would encourage the visitor to stay longer and spend more money in Norwalk? Cultural assets such as the Maritime Aquarium and Stepping Stones are very family-oriented venues; they could be better cross-marketed with neighboring commercial uses to leverage additional economic growth in the Mid-Harbor Area. The Aquarium in particular is a premier area attraction. A study by that institution found that the average visitor only stayed in Norwalk three hours. Creating more family dining options (currently unavailable in SoNo and along the waterfront), improving the connections between the Aquarium and the SoNo waterfront, and creating additional entertainment along the waterfront would encourage visitors to lengthen their stay. These longer visits could eventually translate into demand for a waterfront hotel, a prospect explored more fully in Section C of this document.

Dining/Retail

Given demand generators anticipated in the redevelopment areas, we believe there are significant new retail and restaurant opportunities. The new residents could potentially contribute up to \$9 million of additional annual revenue in dining, and \$7 million in apparel and services into Norwalk’s economy. This \$16 million per year increase in total sales generated by new retail and restaurant opportunities is based on typical consumption patterns of this demographic group for New England. These figures assume that new households have pre-tax incomes of \$100,000 per year—higher than existing household incomes in the area.

In addition, the office components of the redevelopment plans will generate substantial retail demands. We conservatively assumed that approximately 5,000 new workers employed in the study area will spend an average of \$5 per workday on items such as gasoline, meals, and other convenience services. This volume translates to more than \$6 million per year of sales for local retailers within the study area.

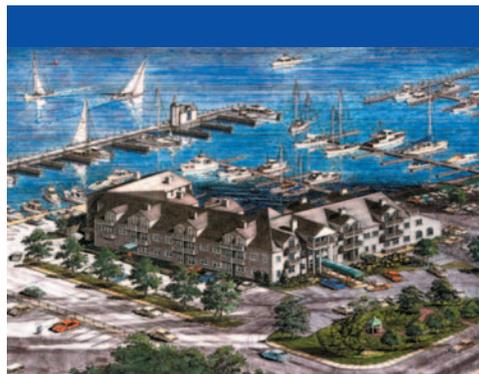
Hotel and Marina

The City of Norwalk recently hired the Pinnacle Group to perform a feasibility study for a 250-room hotel with 20,000 square feet of conference facilities and meeting space. The study concluded that this type of hotel was not financially feasible at this time in Norwalk. During the Mid-Harbor planning process public participants expressed strong support for the idea of a waterfront hotel. This prompted the planning team to continue examining the possibility of developing an upscale, independently owned and operated, midsize hotel (50-65 rooms) that might also include a marina and restaurant. Several applicable waterfront hotel models located throughout New England were identified. Phone interviews with these hotel operators were conducted and information was gathered in an attempt to determine the feasibility of this type of hotel catering to couples and corporate clientele at the Norwalk Harbor.

Many of the hotel operators we spoke with were familiar with Norwalk, and stated their opinion that a midsize waterfront hotel would do very well in Norwalk. However, they cautioned that finding an institution to finance an independently owned and operated, midsize hotel would be a challenge. Because these types of hotels are considered more of a credit risk, lenders may require larger amounts of upfront capital and a mix of uses to ensure multiple sources of revenue.

However, the examples we identified of successful midsize waterfront hotels across the region overcame these challenges (see Appendix A). There appears to be market demand and sufficient economic potential to warrant a new hotel study analyzing this type of hotel in Norwalk Harbor.

Waterfront Hotels and Inns



Old Saybrook Point Inn (Connecticut)



Salem Best Western (Massachusetts); opens 2004



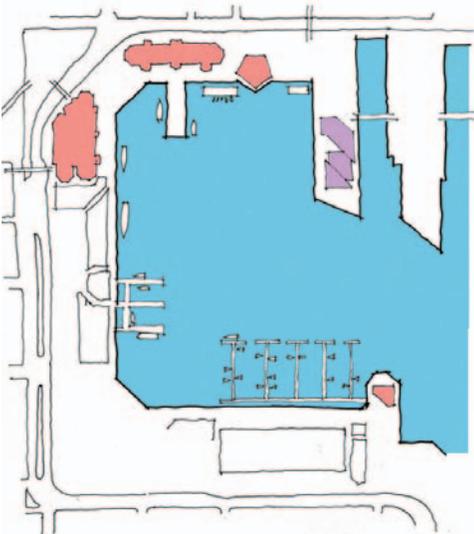
Bristol Harbor Inn Bristol (Rhode Island)

Analysis

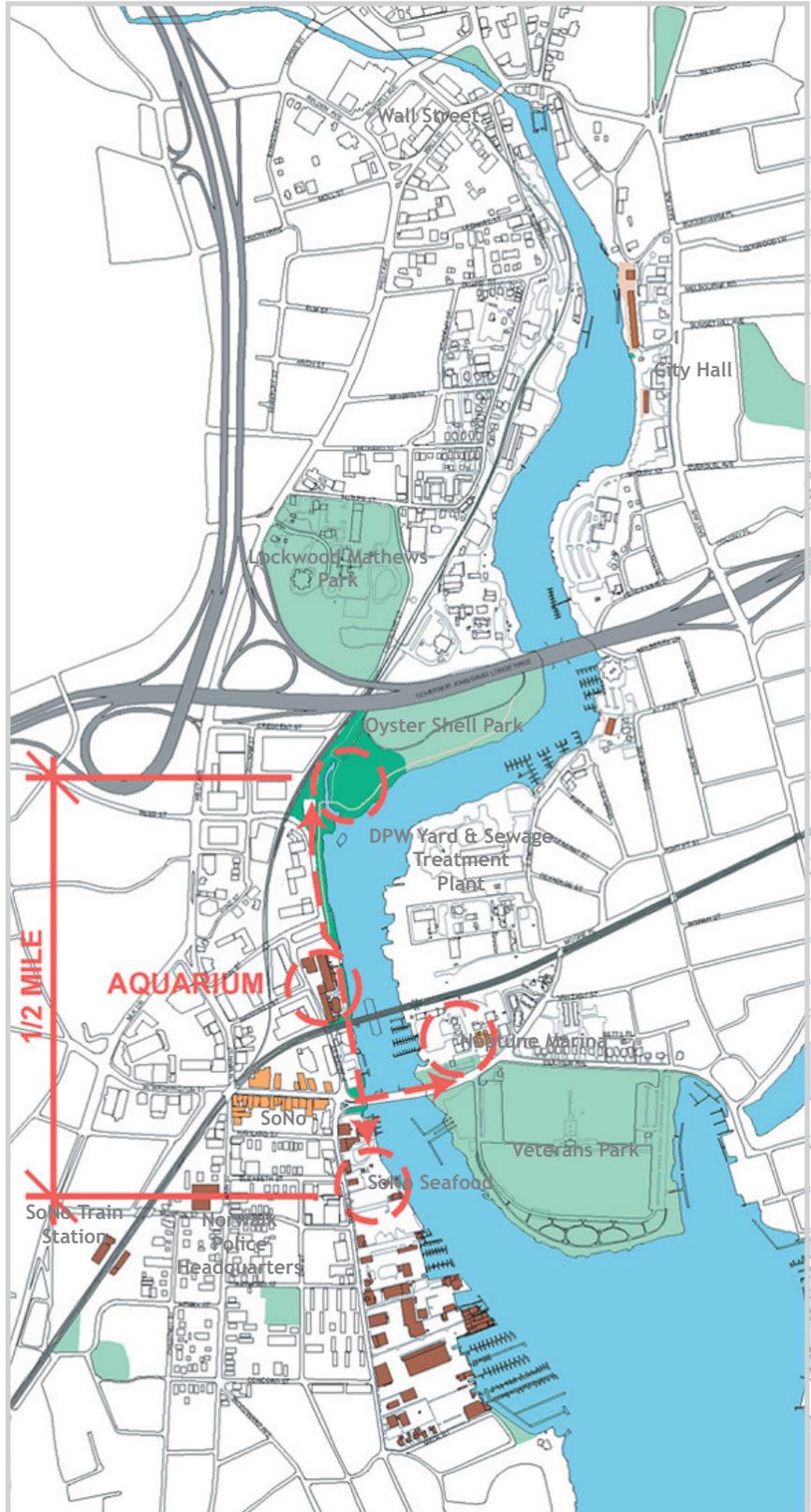
A Scale Comparison



The distance spanned by the cultural/family tourism anchors along **Baltimore's Inner Harbor** is approximately 1/3 mile. The distance from SoNo to the southern end of Oyster Shell Park is about the same distance. As Norwalk administers scarce resources, this comparison supports investing in destinations within a short radius of existing attractions. This will ensure more visitors see multiple venues, and that families enjoying the waterfront on foot will be comfortable doing so.



Baltimore's Inner Harbor, shown here at the same scale as the map of Norwalk's Mid-Harbor, at right.



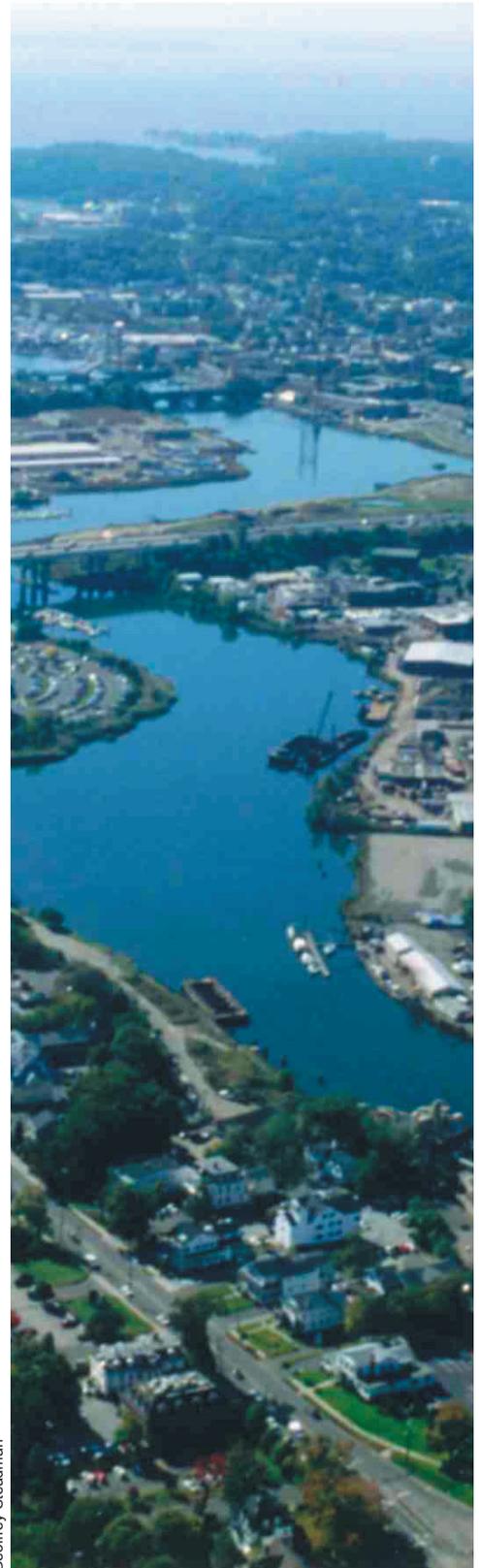
DISTANCES BETWEEN DESTINATIONS

CITY OF NORWALK CONNECTICUT

Mid-Harbor Planning Principles

Based on initial site analysis, interviews, and review of existing data and policy, the team developed the following Principles for guiding planning in the Mid-Harbor:

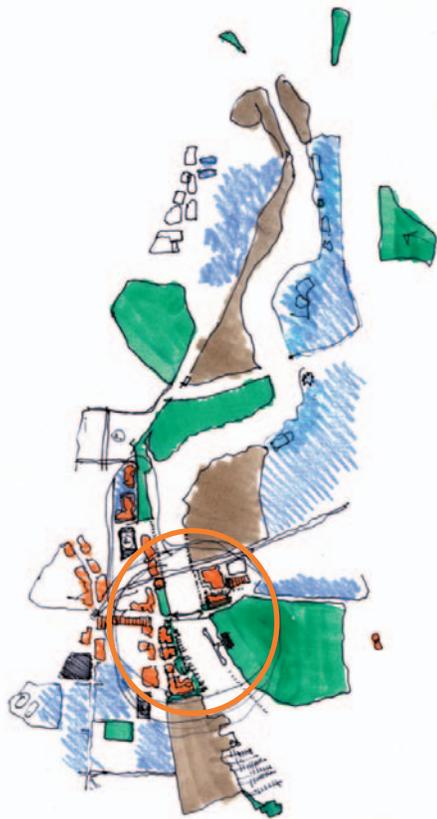
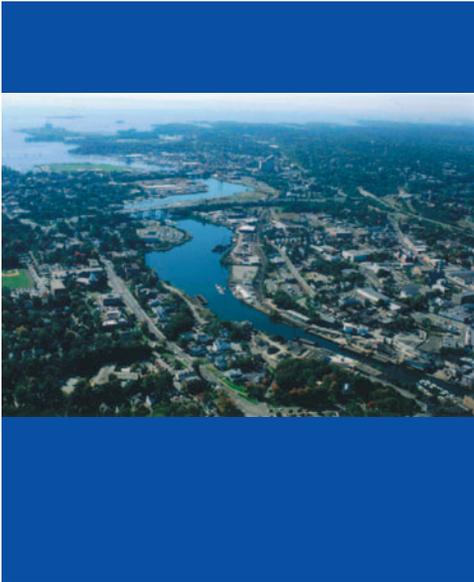
- 1 Maintain a working Harbor; the presence of maritime/commercial and maritime/industrial uses at the water's edge adds to the character of the area and makes the river eligible for federal dredging programs. Give priority and preference to the siting of water-dependent uses and facilities.
- 2 Strive for a continuous, clear system of pedestrian access along—and to—the Harbor, even connecting across the Harbor to form a loop system to the extent possible.
- 3 Enhance and expand opportunities for Norwalk residents and visitors to experience views of the water, direct access to the water's edge, and use of the water itself.
- 4 Incorporate the values of urban ecology and environmental sustainability in all planning along the river, and strive to protect and enhance coastal resources to ensure that public access does not adversely impact such resources.
- 5 Create a year-round, active, public, Harbor and water's edge that fully leverages the unique resources of Norwalk and the greater region.



Geoffrey Steadman

C. The Plan

Geoffrey Steadman



Additional activity around the Aquarium and SoNo can capitalize on the significant visitorship to these destinations, and begin to create the perception of an active district in this area.

Introduction

Distinct Segments of the Mid-Harbor

The Mid-Harbor extends for about a mile, through several distinct neighborhoods and districts comprising the city of Norwalk. As such, different sections of the Harbor exhibit different qualities and character, which are somewhat reinforced by large bifurcating elements such as the I-95, railroad, and Stroffolino bridges.

For the purposes of this study, three segments of the waterway are identified as Upper, Middle, and Outer Harbors, and discussed in individual sections of this report. These are shown in the diagram to the right.

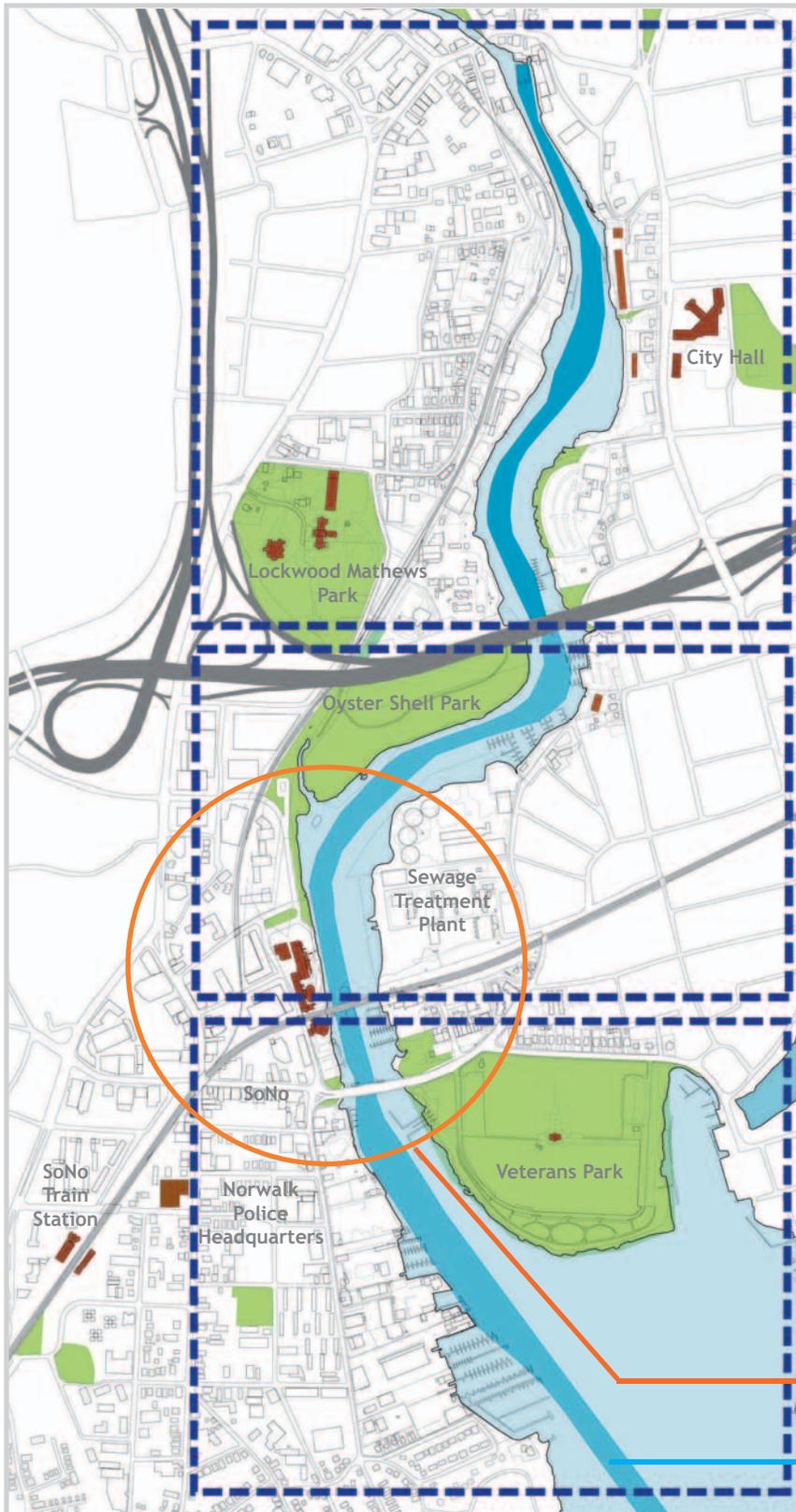
Finding Opportunity Areas

The Plan makes specific recommendations for the future of “soft spot” areas—places where change is likely to occur in the near future and where Harbor-abutting land is underutilized. These are places that, if reused under the right conditions, can help reinforce the qualities we would like to preserve as well as to introduce new elements that are likely to improve the overall area.

Aquarium/SoNo Concentration

One of the key components of this Plan, influencing recommendations for the entire Harbor, is the proposal to concentrate public activities around the Aquarium. With 500,000 annual visitors, the facility is already a widely known destination. It is in close proximity to SoNo, also a well-visited district, although perceptually the two areas do not yet seem as accessible to each other (by walking) as the actual distance between them suggests.

As the Maritime Aquarium and the public realm improvements around it are primarily attractive to families, and because our studies suggest walking distances between visitors’ destinations of about 1/3 mile, we recommend that the immediate vicinity of the Aquarium become a concentrated center of activity.



Segments of the Harbor:

Upper Harbor:

Wall Street to I-95
 Most remaining water-dependent industries that qualify Norwalk for Harbor dredging subsidies are here. Small-scale office and residential developments are appearing, with public walkways provided along the water side.

Middle Harbor:

I-95 to Railroad Bridge
 This is the most naturalistic segment, although the edge of the water treatment plant does not screen the facility from view. New development is likely on the western edge of the water here. The Aquarium is a major draw but requires additional accessibility along the water.

Outer Harbor:

Railroad Bridge south to the end of Water Street
 This could be a dramatic entrance to the Mid-Harbor. On opposite sides one finds a very large public open space and water-dependent commercial uses, respectively. Some sites are currently underutilized.

Concentrate efforts here

Federal Navigation Channel

SEGMENTS OF THE MID-HARBOR

The Plan

Geoffrey Steadman



Upper Harbor

Harbor Avenue

Immediately north of I-95, the presence of industry and water-dependent uses will prevent direct public access along the western edge of the water. Therefore Harbor Avenue will become an important waterfront connection between Wall Street and SoNo. Regulations should be structured in a way that ensures views to the water and that the pedestrian experiences along it (including connections to the public ways at the water's edge) are safe and comfortable. Harbor Avenue also forms an edge to a residential community. Harbor Avenue's role—in terms of connectivity for both cars and pedestrians in and around this neighborhood—should be carefully examined as development pressures increase around the waterfront. In the future, railroad crossings should be consolidated into a single improved crossing. (Consolidation decisions are ultimately the purview of state entities.) Large parcels should be designed in an intergrated manner to achieve consistency with the goals of this plan (See Implementation section).



Harbor Avenue will become an important pedestrian connection between Wall Street and SoNo.



Orchard Street has a collection of single and two family homes worthy of historic designation and protection.

Views to Harbor

Existing mechanisms for controlling development along Harbor Avenue will not protect against slab buildings that block views from that street to the water. Height limits must be enforced, and the review of proposed building massing and design should be encouraged so that setbacks, sideyards, and other massing issues can be discussed among stakeholders when these important waterfront parcels are being redeveloped. On the east side of the water, Village Zoning provisions protect views and facilitate the public review of new projects; pocket parks on publicly owned parcels or purchase of view easements could ensure views to the water from Harbor Avenue.

Stabilize Residential Neighborhood

Academy Street and Harbor Avenue help define the residential character of the neighborhood, and new development along these streets should be compatible with that character. The presence of many architecturally significant homes calls for additional regulations that ensure compatibly scaled housing on both sides of the street, which will help strengthen and stabilize the neighborhood. The area is currently zoned for multifamily housing, although sev-

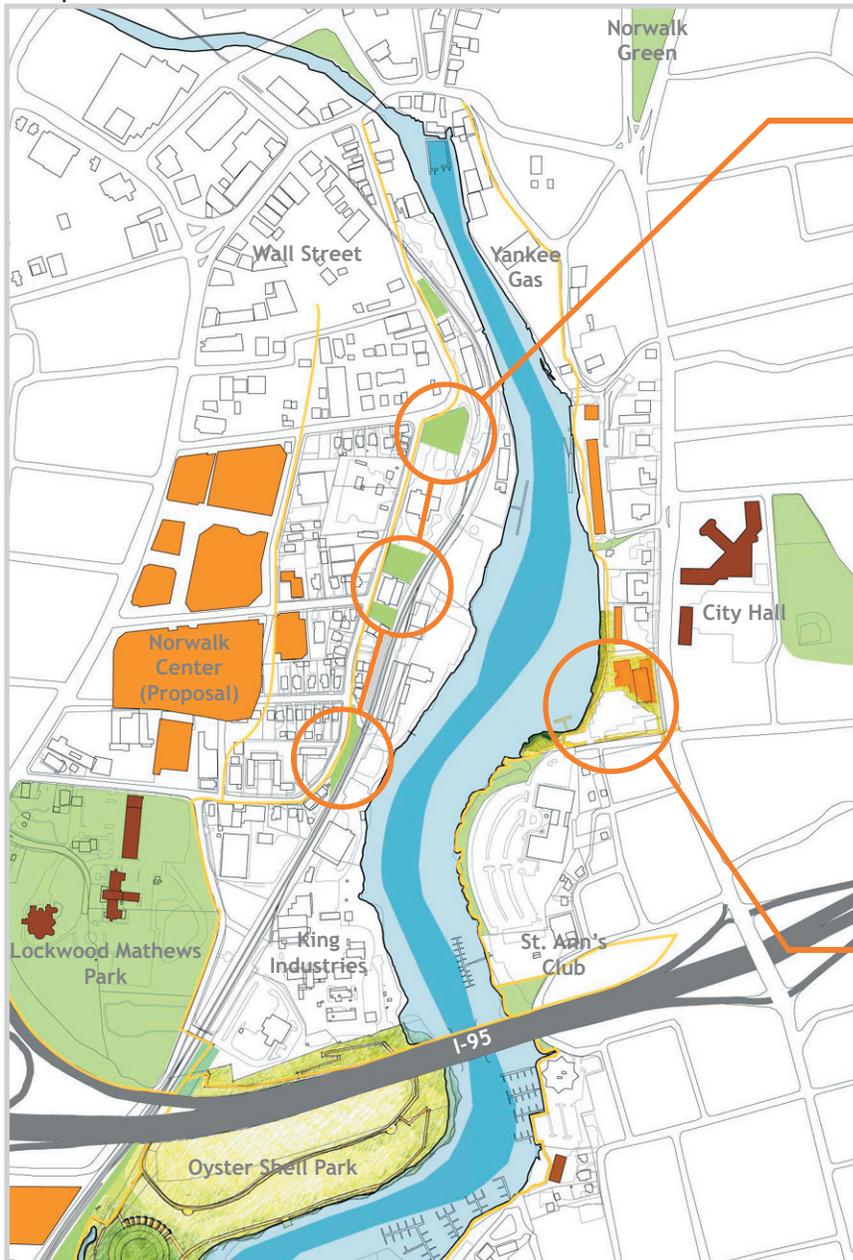


Academy Street and Harbor Avenue contribute to the residential character of the district and should be protected from inappropriately scaled new development.

eral industrially zoned parcels allow inappropriate uses close to residential areas.

East Side

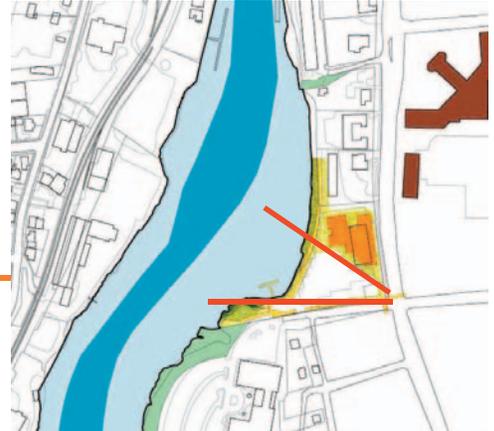
On the eastern side of the Upper Harbor, the former Katherine Gibbs site is a prime redevelopment parcel. From East Avenue at this location, views to the water could provide a magnificent visual and physical connection between east side communities and the water. Guidelines for any redevelopment at the Gibbs site should consider views to be a prime consideration in building massing and placement.



Views to the Harbor



Pocket parks or view easements along Harbor Avenue would ensure views of the Harbor and east side landmarks for pedestrians and residents of the neighborhood.



Harbor views and riparian habitat at the Katherine Gibbs site should be protected from development while still allowing for new built uses on portions of the site.

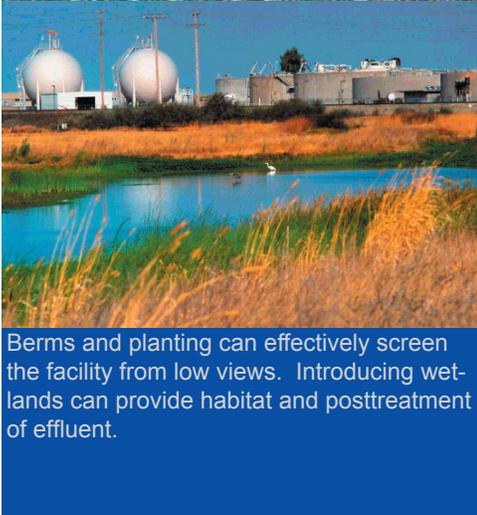
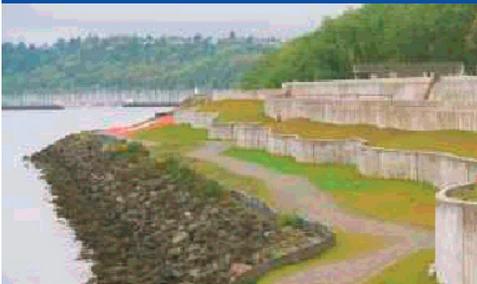
ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN of the Upper Harbor

The Plan

Geoffrey Steadman



West Point Wastewater Treatment Facility (Seattle)



Berms and planting can effectively screen the facility from low views. Introducing wetlands can provide habitat and posttreatment of effluent.

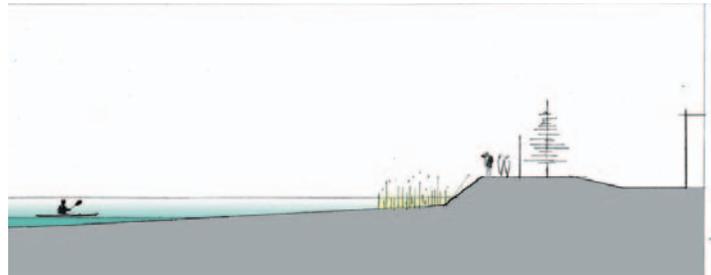
Middle Harbor

In general, the Harbor between the railroad and I-95 bridges has a more natural character than any other place in the study area. The DPW water treatment facility is the only remaining industrial use here. A predominantly naturalistic visual experience could come to characterize this part of the Harbor.

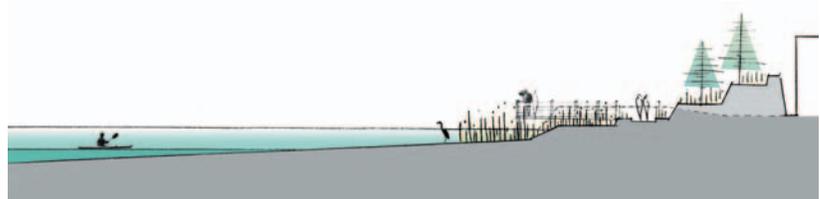
Wastewater Treatment Facility

Screening the edge of the treatment plant would reinforce the natural character of the Middle Harbor area. The recommended technique is introducing stepped, landscaped berms in front of tanks, along the waterside of the property. To improve the public walkway that exists against the fence near the waterside of the facility, the path could be pulled out away from the fence, with vegetation between the pedestrian and this barrier providing a more comfortable experience. Lookout points would also encourage people to use the walkway to enjoy the views of the water, the Aquarium, the railroad bridge, and Oyster Shell Park.

Historically, this site contained wetland areas. It might be desirable as part of a screening concept to reintroduce fresh or salt water wetland habitat, as other treatment facilities have done in cities such as Seattle. This would better screen the barren riprap seawall—which is too steep to support vegetation—that dominates the foreground of the treatment plant. Invasive weeds such as phragmites could also be replaced with native vegetation. Technical and financial assistance may be available from the state Department of Environmental Protection or Army Corps of Engineers for this.



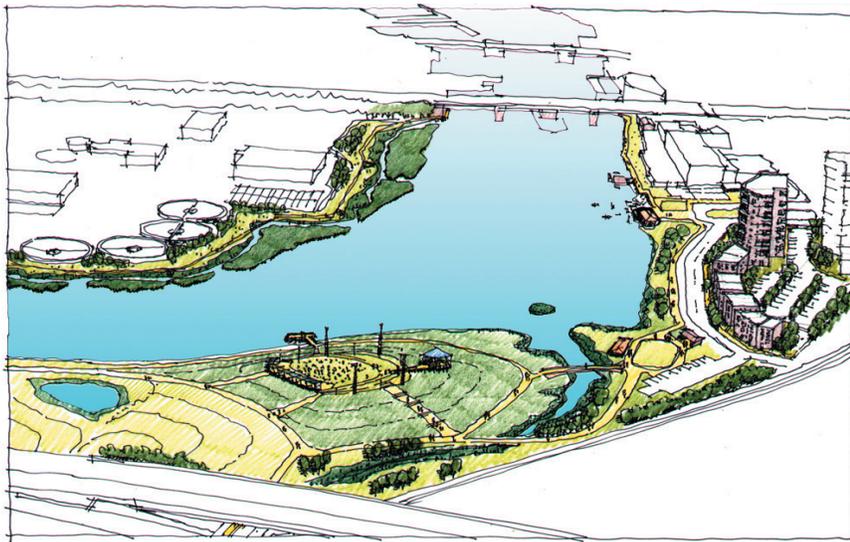
Existing condition



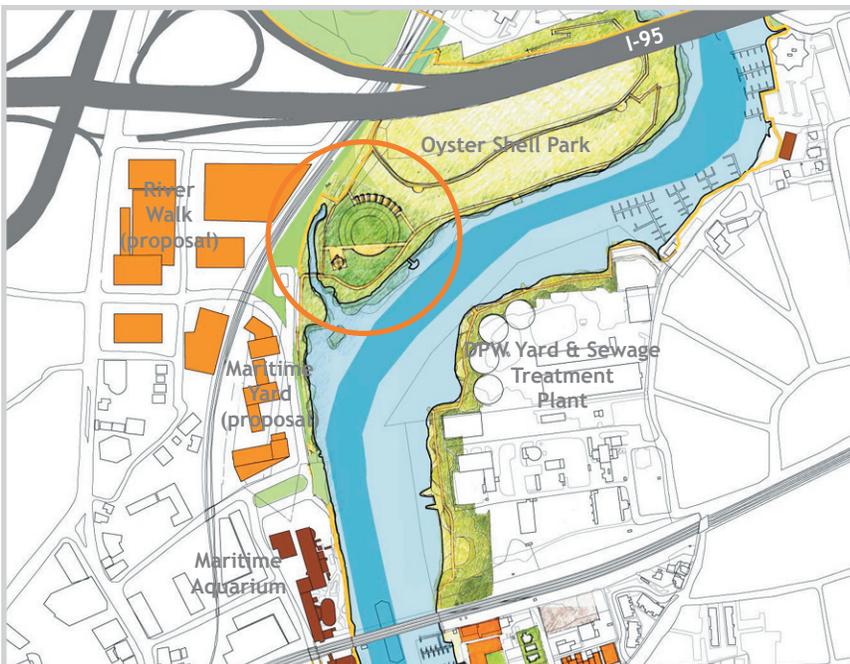
Proposed screening and public walkway, with lookouts

Oyster Shell Park

Investments at Oyster Shell Park should focus at present on the portion of the space nearest the existing amenities at the Maritime Aquarium, as part of the overall effort to concentrate activity within a comfortable walking distance for families and the other users and visitors to SoNo. Nature programming and family events—requiring spaces for picnics, events, and performances—in conjunction with the educational programs at the Aquarium may be desirable uses for this location.



Improvements at Oyster Shell Park should be focussed at the southwestern end.



ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN of the Middle Harbor

Oyster Shell Park

Physical improvements at Oyster Shell Park could include rest rooms, picnic areas, fountains and gathering and performance spaces for educational and cultural events.



The Plan



Ramps to the I-95 bridge would help create a better river crossing, and bring more activity to Oyster Shell Park. West side ramps (shown below in plan) could be located north of the I-95 embankment and connect to Harbor Avenue and Crescent Street for access to Stepping Stones.

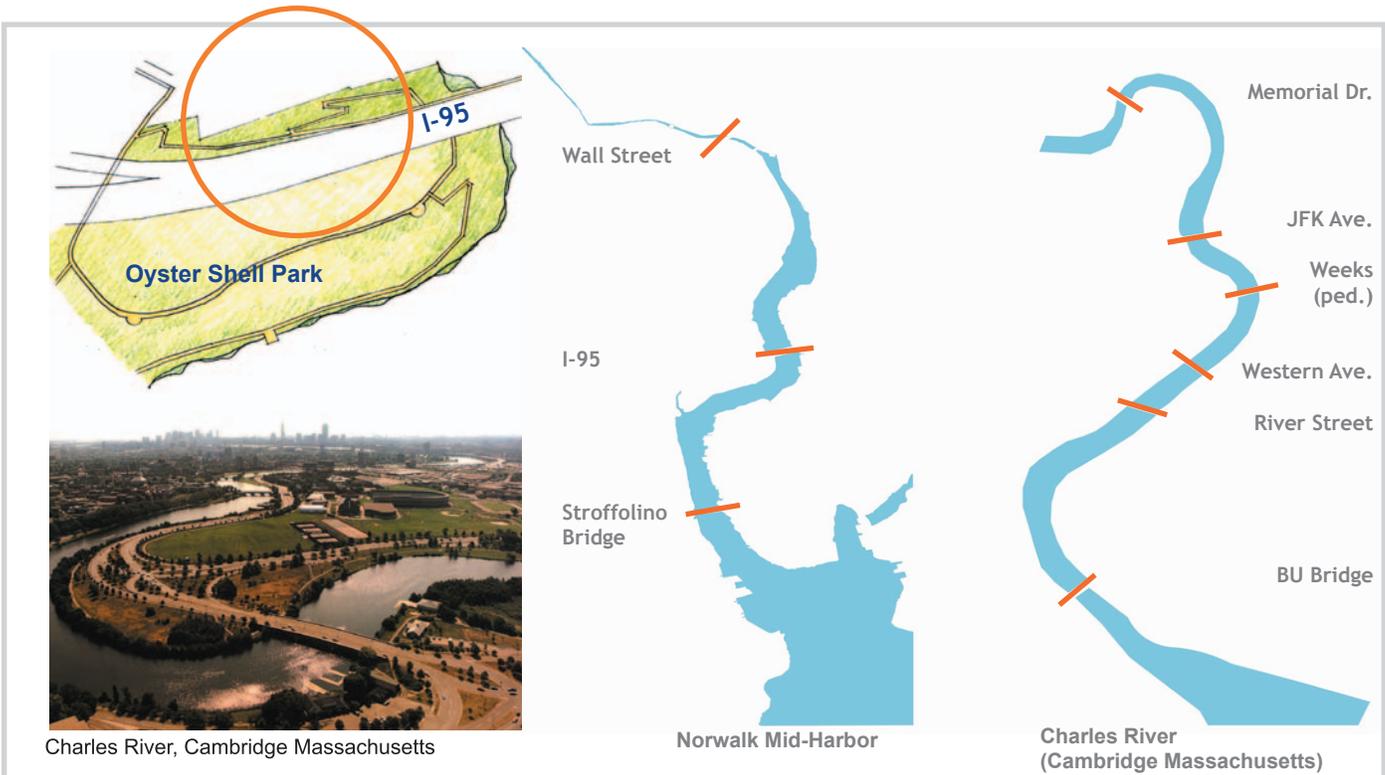
Harbor Trail Connections to the I-95 Bridge

Successful riverfronts have multiple, frequent connections over the water, for people on foot as well as in their cars. However, in the one-mile distance between the Stroffolino and Wall Street bridges over the Norwalk River, only one crossing is possible: the walkway at the side of the I-95 overpass.

Vertical paths and ramps that connect it more directly to the public path system along the edge of the Harbor would make it a more viable and attractive option—for visitors, residents and commuters who seek to jog, bike, or rollerblade a “loop” around the Harbor or simply get to work. Ramps on the west side could begin to accomplish this, and prevent the dead end at Oyster Shell Park that currently requires users to make a loop through the park and return to the same entrance point. Connections on the east side could better connect the bridge to the St. Ann’s Club and the river trail there.

Preserving Crescent Street Connection

On the western side, the overall system of roads and walkways that allow people to move along and access the Harbor must be considered as new developments move forward. Continuous driving along the Harbor is not possible and Crescent Street is essential to connect Reed/Putnam to areas north off the I-95 bridge, as

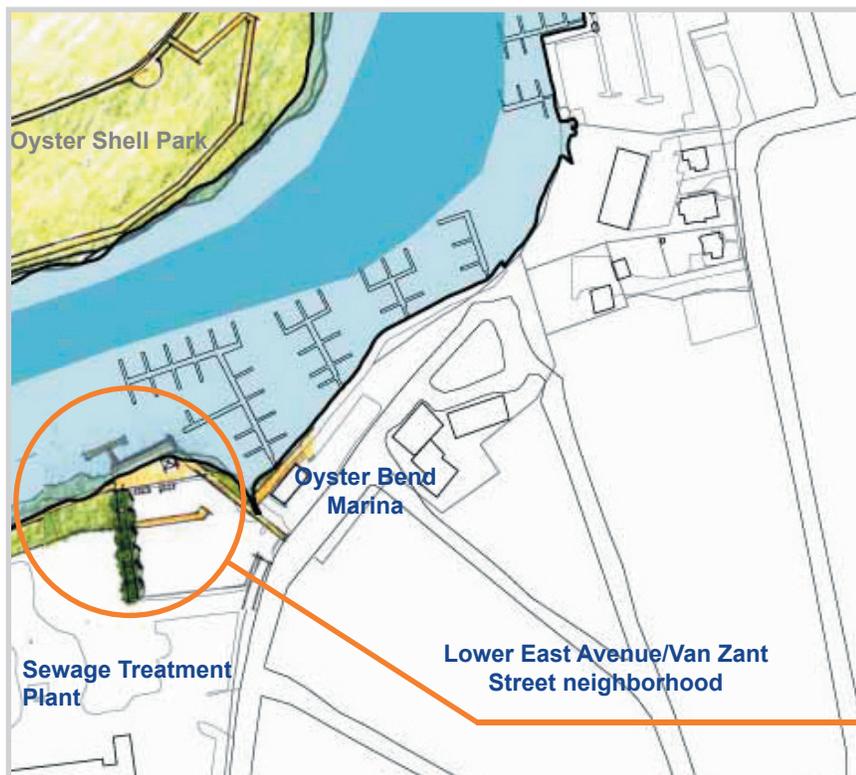


SCALE COMPARISON Between Mid-Harbor and the Charles River

an alternative to West Avenue and the highway interchange. The success not just of the Harbor but of these developments depends in part on the access afforded them for users of various kinds. Overall connectivity of the street network is crucial in creating a successful district. Secondary roads would allow for a future trolley system between cultural destinations. Maintaining vehicular networks also provides an added margin of safety for pedestrians and alternatives for commuters during hours when parks and trails may seem unsafe.

Oyster Bend Harbor Access

I-95 and the railway viaduct through the Mid-Harbor area tend to form pedestrian barriers between neighborhoods. Crossing or walking under underpasses is often undesirable, difficult, and at times even impossible for some members of the community. It would be desirable for individual neighborhoods between these barriers to *each* have connections to the water. An access point for the Lower East Avenue/Van Zant Street neighborhood could be located on public land between the Sewage Treatment Plant and Oyster Bend Marina. Parking could be shared with the Treatment Plant as usage times would rarely conflict.



ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN of Van Zant Street River Access

Neighborhood Access Points

I-95 and the railway viaduct through the Mid-Harbor area tend to form pedestrian barriers between neighborhoods.



Docks provide cool resting spots for local residents—even those without boats!

The Plan



Geoffrey Steadman

Outer Harbor

This area serves as the entrance to the Mid-Harbor. With a very large public open space along one side (Veterans Park) and water-dependent commercial uses and underutilized sites on the other, there is both the opportunity and the need to bring more public activity into this part of Norwalk.

Neptune Marina

The Neptune Marina site is a major redevelopment opportunity, particularly because it is located within the “walkable radius” around the Aquarium and SoNo. New, active, water-dependent uses combined with a fully public harbor’s edge would begin to better connect this side of the Harbor—including Veterans Park and its transient docks and moorings—with the activity of SoNo. It will also further anchor the surrounding retail at Liberty Square. A reconfiguration of the Third Taxing District Park would balance open and built spaces in the area, and help better define the edge of Washington Street on this side of the Stroffolino Bridge.



The short stretch of water between the railroad bridge and the Stroffolino Bridge is the most active stretch of the entire Harbor.

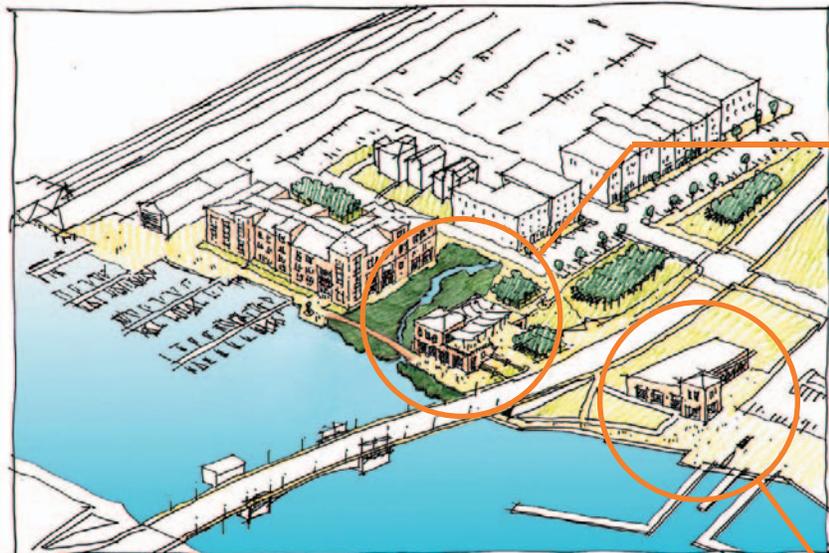
Many participants have responded positively to the idea of a small hotel (45-60 rooms) in the vicinity of SoNo, and preliminary market research has indicated that such a use would be successful in Norwalk. A hotel/marina combination is an attractive option, as the unmet demand for facilities for transient boating is very high in Norwalk Harbor. A destination restaurant, a transient mooring, and a rowing club would further enhance the mix of uses in this area by bringing foot traffic and active water-based attractions. Any development at this site should provide a public walkway along the water’s edge, ideally connecting through to Veterans Park by extending under the Stroffolino Bridge, but should not encroach on wetland areas on site.

Improvements at Veterans Park

This northwest corner of Veterans Park (near the bridge) also provides an opportunity for additional public amenities. Enhanced transient boating facilities, such as showers and changing rooms, would help attract visitors and encourage people to spend more time in the area. Such facilities should be housed in a small but prominent, well-designed structure. An attractive public building in this location—the mouth of the Mid-Harbor area, near to major attractions—would serve as a new Norwalk icon and a beacon for attracting and welcoming visitors to the area, from land and sea. A destination there would also encourage better pedestrian connections to future improvements north of the bridge on that side of the Harbor, potentially taking the form of a public walkway *under* the



Enhancements to the path and street furniture elements (benches, lights, etc.) around the edge of Veterans Park near the water might help make this key harborwalk segment more like a promenade, like the one pictured above (in Charleston, South Carolina).



The Third Taxing District's Constitution Park could be used for more active, water enhanced uses within walking distance of SoNo. Development must not encroach on wetland areas on the site.

During this planning process, informal meetings with the Third Taxing District included discussions about the park and its role in Mid-Harbor planning.



The visitors dock at Veterans Park should be enhanced with a facility for visitors that would be a new beacon on the Harbor. Shown here is the Harbormaster's building in Suisun City, California.

ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN of the Outer Harbor

The Plan

Geoffrey Steadman



bridge, and connecting to an improved perimeter walkway all the way around the park. Additional transient slips on the eastern side of the park may also be desirable.

SoNo Gateway at the Harbor

As more parking is sited to serve SoNo and other districts near the water, existing surface parking directly at the water's edge should be gradually phased out, and the land used for more people-oriented, public purposes. For example, over time, the Steamboat Landing parking lot should contain more park space and less parking. Additional kiosks and services—such as an informal restaurant or snack bar—could be located at the bridge landing there, similar to the historic condition on the original Washington Street bridge, where shops lined the span.

The oversized intersection of Washington and Water streets is a difficult and dangerous environment for pedestrians. The transformation of this intersection will be necessary to encourage pedestrians from the Maritime Aquarium and SoNo to venture south of Washington Street. Crosswalks should be added to the intersection, and the turning radii of some corners should be tightened to slow traffic and reduce pedestrian crossing lengths. The sight lines should be improved and pedestrian-activated crossing phases should be introduced for safer crossings for families and first-time visitors.

In the future, any redevelopment at the Norwalk Company Building site should contribute to achieving Mid-Harbor goals, including that of making Steamboat Landing increasingly desirable as park space rather than strictly parking. Proposals for this site should include pedestrian improvements along North Water Street.



Needed pedestrian improvements at the Water and Washington Street intersection



Aerial view of SoNo Harbor Gateway at Steamboat Landing and vicinity

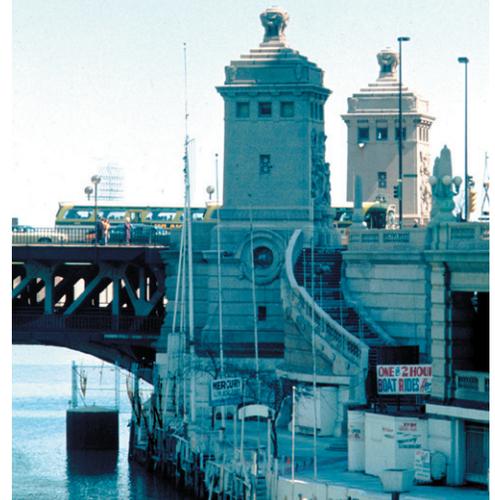
In the not distant future, the railroad bridge over the harbor will need to be refurbished. The equipment and staging areas required for this operation could affect the implementation of ideas in this plan. It is important that the City initiate dialogue with the state in planning for this project, so that interruptions and alterations to the City's plans are minimized.

Enhancements to the Stroffolino Bridge Crossing

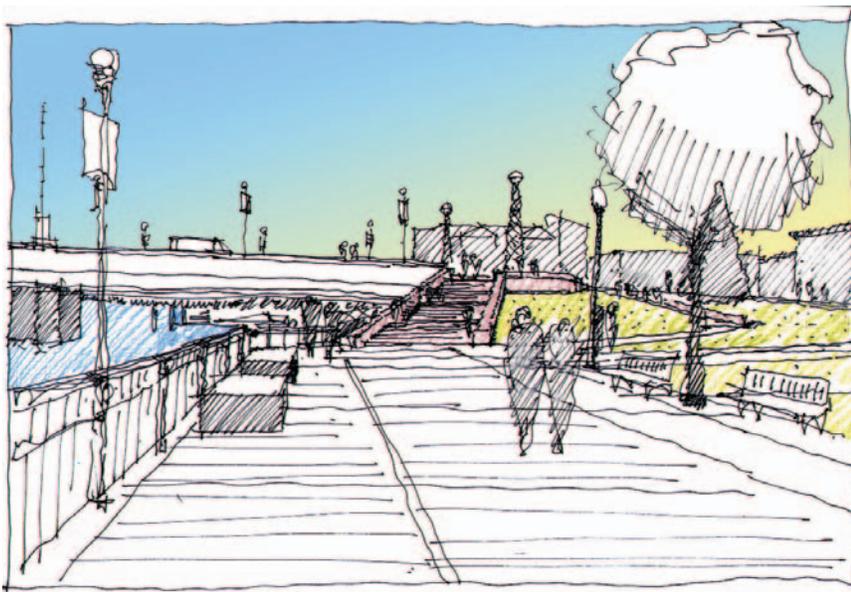
The Stroffolino Bridge must also be transformed into a friendlier pedestrian environment. In order for the Neptune Marina site to be attractive for redevelopment, a better link for pedestrians between opposite sides will be required. The bridge must be a more welcoming connection between walkways along opposite sides of the water. Significant pedestrian landings, reached from ramps and stairs, could provide excellent views and a prominent, almost ceremonial place to pause and have a different perspective of the Harbor. Great bridges also have places to pause at points along the way, to watch activity on the water from a higher vantage point.

Throughout the area around Steamboat Landing at North Water Street, pedestrian-scaled lighting fixtures, wider sidewalks, and other amenities would encourage walkers to use the area over a greater amount of time.

On the eastern side of the Stroffolino Bridge, new development at the Neptune Marina site and Veterans Park could provide convenient access to the Harbor and reduce the perceived length of the bridge.



Bridge landings offer views and connect pedestrians to the river. Examples above show Paris (top) and Chicago (above).



Steamboat Landing with improved access to the Stroffolino Bridge



Steamboat Landing today

The Plan



Build on the maritime heritage of SoNo



A comfortable pedestrian realm along a retail street

Setbacks

The setback from MHW for non-water-dependent uses in the MC zone should be modified to correspond to the height of the building. This would permit 1-story buildings with non-water-dependent uses to be located 30 feet from MHW and require buildings in excess of 1 story to be setback 1.5 times their height (i.e., a building 52 feet in height would require a 78-foot setback from MHW). In addition, where buildings are designed to have their longer side located perpendicular to the shoreline so as to increase public views of the water, zoning regulations should provide an exemption of the setback imposed on non-water-dependent uses, subject to Zoning Commission review. (See attached Setback Diagram in the Appendix.)



Waterfront buildings built perpendicular to the water increase public views to the Harbor.

Water Street

Preserve Water-Dependent Uses Along the Harbor

Water Street parcels need to be better utilized economically while providing a public realm with a character appropriate to this harborfront setting. The provision of docking facilities for commercial fishing as well as service, access, and related storage facilities should be encouraged. Such facilities should be incorporated with an outdoor seasonal fish market, services for transient boaters, and additional restaurants that could bring foot traffic and build a concentration of activity thereby attracting visitors of SoNo and the Maritime Aquarium. (As stated earlier in this report, highest priority should be given to water-dependent uses. Public uses (i.e., restaurants) should be treated as water-dependent, exempt from setback requirements for non-water-dependent uses.) Requiring water-dependent uses within the first 100 feet from the Harbor would encourage land owners to find appropriate uses for this zone while still allowing other profitable uses on the remainder of their property.

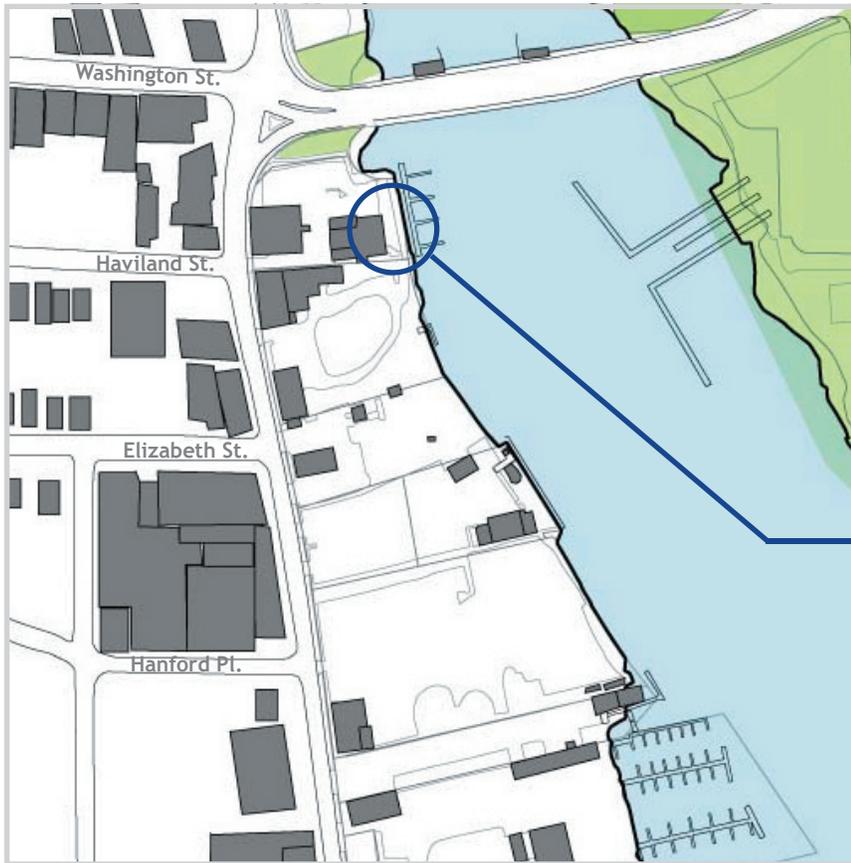
Activating Water Street with Two Sides of Retail

There is market opportunity to extend and strengthen the retail uses in SoNo along Water Street. The west side has many thriving retail uses that attract visitors. Adding to the retail fronting directly onto the west side would bolster this corridor and improve it as an active, pedestrian place. Enhancements to the intersection with Washington Street would increase the level of foot traffic in the area. Extending sidewalk enhancements, street furniture, a more continuous streetwall, and screened or structured parking tucked away from the street would also improve the experience there.

Reducing the parking requirement for retail establishments, and finding sites on the landward side of Water Street for new shared parking would incentivize the construction of retail space along this corridor. Although the design guidelines in place for Water Street aim to encourage street frontage, they may not be specific or authoritative enough to achieve the desired results. Changes to regulatory mechanisms are necessary. Development of shared parking could reduce on-site parking requirements and increase the likelihood of landowners providing retail frontage. A City-owned lot on Day Street may be a site for this.

Preserve Views to the Harbor

There should be many opportunities along Water Street to see the Harbor. Most harbors have historically been built perpendicular to the shoreline along slips and jetties. Non-water-dependent uses tend to be built parallel to the water to maximize views for tenants. However, the resulting buildings block the Harbor from public views. Corridors can be preserved through massing provisions, such as encouraging building masses be placed perpendicular to the water, in zoning and other guidelines.



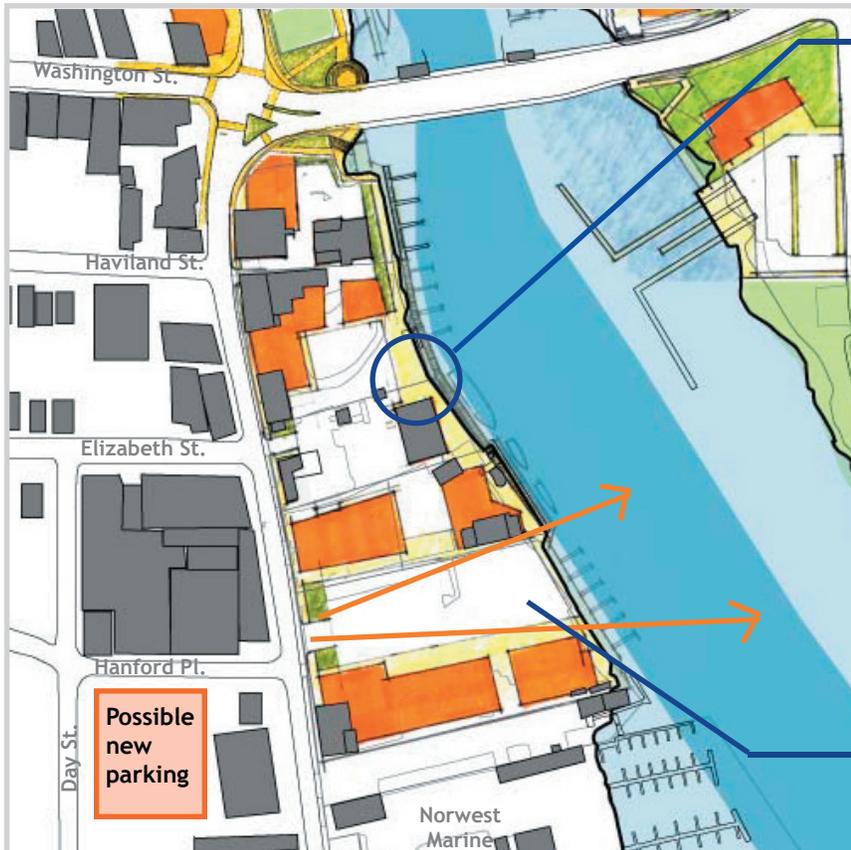
ABOVE: Existing conditions, Water St. south of Washington St.



Boardwalks extend south of Washington Street but are not activated with uses that encourage visitors.



Outdoor fish markets are a public use that activates waterfronts around the world; Bergen (Norway) is pictured here. Such a market, accompanied by docking facilities for commercial fisherman, could be located near SoNo Seafood, and become part of a City marketing effort.



ABOVE: ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN of Water Street Development



View corridors from Water Street should offer glimpses of boats and activity on the Harbor (as in San Francisco pictured above).

D. Implementation

Short Term Actions

1 Link public improvements to private development actions.

Public funds for parks and pedestrian connections should be tied to adjacent private investments to maximize the benefits of both and schedule the actions to maximize public benefits. Example 1: Make public improvements to small craft boat landing at Maritime Aquarium to support seasonal vendors and other commercial uses in the Maritime Yard project. Example 2: replace portions of public parking with green space at “Steamboat Landing Park” when the Norwalk Company Building site is redevelop the site with additional parking supplies. Allow for seasonal vendors in the park that can be franchised with year round retailers in the Norwalk Company Building.

2 Concentrate scarce public funds on areas that will create synergy with existing investments at the Maritime Aquarium and SoNo.

Public improvement dollars should be spent on pedestrian improvements that will encourage visitors to the Maritime Aquarium and SoNo to travel to nearby attractions. Enhancements to Oyster Shell Park, segments of harborwalk behind the Maritime Aquarium and improvements to the Stroffolino Bridge and roadway crossings would all qualify. All of these projects will generate additional foot traffic in the vicinity of SoNo, increase the length of visits and stimulate and facilitate private investment in commercial areas.

3 Invest in new infrastructure that will attract activity to Oyster Shell Park.

The portion of Oyster Shell nearest the Maritime Aquarium should draw a significant portion of that institution’s visitors for an outdoor extension of their Norwalk experience. Introducing outdoor Maritime Aquarium and Stepping Stones Museum activities in the park will activate it and attract more overall users, yet significant improvements must be made in order to accommodate new non-passive activities.

The City of Norwalk, under the auspices of the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency, has been allocated \$818,000 from State of Connecticut bond funds for improvements to Oyster Shell Park. The Oyster Shell Park plan (known as the Heritage Park Plan)

envisioned both passive and active recreational uses on this site. To date, paths have been constructed to initiate some passive recreation. In order to continue implementing the vision of both that earlier plan and the recommendations in this document for the Mid-Harbor, spaces for both recreating and meeting should be introduced in the western portion of the park.

The Oyster Shell Park budget allocates funds to A/E design, site work, electrical, plumbing, and furniture/improvements. As such, funds should be prioritized for items in these categories, which will assist in activating the park such as:

- Opening up the area between the Maritime Aquarium and the waterfront to public access and establish a public walkway to connect Oyster Shell Park with Steamboat Landing at North Water Street and South Norwalk,
- Stabilizing and lighting the embankment under I-95,
- Lighting around public activity/Aquarium and Stepping Stones outdoor meeting space as shown in concept plan on page 35 of this report,
- Landscaping (including grading) of areas of public activity to ensure accessibility for the public,
- Installing benches, trash receptacles, and way-finding signage,
- Installing small boat launch pavilion with ramp and dock, and
- Restoring wetlands in estuary area.

Implementation steps include:

- Appoint Oyster Shell Park Advisory Committee
- Issue RFP for Design Consultant for public space

4 Revisit design guidelines for waterfront areas to ensure conformance with goals of Mid-Harbor planning.

Changes to zoning and design guidelines in the Marine Commercial District can strengthen protection of public views to the Harbor, ensure water-dependent uses along the deep-water channel, and encourage the kind of significant retail presence on Water Street that would support a two-sided retail corridor.

The setback from MHW for non-water-dependent uses in the MC zone should be modified to correspond to the height of the building. This would permit 1-story buildings with non-water-dependent

uses to be located 30 feet from MHW and require buildings in excess of 1 story to be setback 1.5 times their height (i.e., a building 52 feet in height would require a 78-foot setback from MHW). In addition, where buildings are designed to have their longer side located perpendicular to the shorefront so as to increase public views of the water, zoning regulations should provide an exemption of the setback imposed on non-water-dependent uses, subject to Zoning Commission review. (See attached Setback Diagram in the Appendix.)

5 Develop public parking resources to encourage appropriate retail and water-dependent uses along Water Street.

Constructing fee public parking resources in nearby non-waterfront areas would provide alternative parking for patrons and employees. While on-site parking would still be required for office or housing uses, reduction of parking requirements for retail uses would encourage the generation of ground level retail uses, within height and bulk requirements, by land owners who may not otherwise consider a mixed use development. Retail and water-dependent uses on Water Street and the Harbor are desired uses that will create a public presence in the district and discourage privatization of the waterfront.

6 Modify zoning to support strong neighborhoods and ensure Harbor access and views.

Waterfront neighborhoods with views to the Harbor should be protected from inappropriately scaled development. Industrially zoned parcels on the water side of Harbor Avenue should retain current height restrictions to ensure views over industrial development. A Harbor overlay district could ensure higher level of scrutiny to all areas around the Mid-Harbor that would be equivalent to the Village Zoning procedures that protect portions of the east side. Parcels fronting on Harbor Avenue that are currently zoned industrial should be rezoned for residential uses to improve the quality of these neighborhoods and remove incompatible and marginal uses in close proximity to residential areas.

Large parcels can be designed in an integrated manner to achieve the goals of this study. In recognition of this, any modification of zoning proposed by this study should permit the establishment of a "Waterfront Development Park," provided the parcel (or parcels) of land comprising the park has a minimum of ten (10) acres in

area, proposes more than one building, is designed in a unified manner, and has common facilities, such as interior motor vehicle ways and open space for use by occupants and invitees of the Park as well as the public. Design and layout of a Waterfront Development Park should reflect the goals of the Mid-Harbor Planning Study.

7 Conduct a hotel feasibility study that focuses on the potential for a waterfront hotel in SoNo.

Verify the hypothesis from preliminary research that a small to medium sized hotel or inn, possibly combined with a transient marina and containing other uses such as a restaurant, would be viable at a waterfront site. Determine in more detail the particular size range (number of rooms), mix of uses, pricing, and target markets that would be successful in the Mid-Harbor.

8 Conduct a parking study for SoNo and the Water Street corridor.

Formally evaluate the supply in the greater SoNo area and determine the impacts of reducing parking requirements in zoning for retail uses.

Medium Term Actions

Environmental restoration and enhancements; from state legislature

TEA-21 funding for bridge connections

Roadway enhancements, pedestrian improvements

Lighting railroad bridge on North Water Street

E. Appendices

Appendix Contents:

1. Economic Analysis (unabridged)
2. Brownfields Research
3. Transit Data and Maps
4. Comments from Public Gatherings
5. Map of Significant Architecture in the Mid-Harbor Area: Academy Street and Harbor Avenue homes
6. Map: Location of the Federal Navigation Channel
7. Wetland Areas
8. Setback Diagram

1. Economic Analysis

New England Waterfront Hotels and Inns

Hotel Name	Location	Number of Rooms	Years in Operation	On-Site Amenities	Adjacent Amenities	Target Market	Notes
Best Western	Salem, MA	86	new	3000 sf meeting space, fitness center, indoor pool	restaurant/pub, retail (30 merchants), marina	Corporate, Couples, Bus Tours, Family	The only hotel in our study with less than 100 rooms linked to a national chain. Location is proximate to retail, dining and tourist attractions. Tourist season spring to late fall. Also touted as gateway to the region. www.bwsalem.com
Delamar	Greenwich, CT	83	1.5	Fitness Center, Board Room, 600' private dock, banquet facilities	High End Retail, Museums, Polo	Corporate, Couples	Luxury waterfront hotel and marina for transient boaters. High end waterfront dining is featured as is the amenities and quality of the rooms. www.thedelamar.com
Saybrook Point Inn	Saybrook, CT	80	20	Restaurant, Spa, Marina, fitness center, meeting space	antique shops, theatre, retail	Corporate, Couples	Luxury waterfront hotel and extensive transient marina services with high-end spa and meeting space. Location in tourist area, not a city or suburb or large community. www.saybrook.com
Whaler's Inn	Mystic, CT	49	100+	business center, shuttle service, bagel shop	marina, restaurants, retail, aquarium, access to off-site fitness center	Corporate, Couples, Families	Not on the waterfront but adjacent to water and historic center. Determined not to provide restaurant on site due to proximity to the expansive availability nearby. www.whalersinnmystic.com
Bristol Harbor Inn	Bristol, RI	40	2	meeting space, restaurant, dock	retail, restaurants	Corporate, Couples, Bus Tours	Touted as an owner-operated hotel on the water near Newport. Range of prices offered. Adjacent marina space available. www.bristolharborinn.com
Steamboat Inn	Mystic, CT	10	14	breakfast	marina, restaurants, retail, aquarium	Couples, Corporate	Target audience couples, sells packages. Only 10 rooms, reservations are by room with pictures on the website to choose from. Does not provide restaurant facilities or retail on site due to location in Mystic and proximity of restaurants. Has an old schooner docked in front of the inn that takes guests on day or over night cruises (sleeps 10) www.steamboatinmystic.com
The Inn at Harbor Hill	Niantic, CT	8	7	marina, beach passes, kayaks	restaurant, theater, retail	Corporate, Couples	B&B with only 8 rooms but many amenities. Multiple packages presented for friends, families and couples. Permanent and transient slips available. www.innharborhill.com

Future Projects and Impacts

Four important public/private development proposals in and around the Mid-Harbor study area will significantly contribute to the liveliness of Norwalk's waterfront with new residents and office workers: the Reed/Putnam Redevelopment Area, the Wall Street Redevelopment Area, the West Avenue Redevelopment Area, and the Webster Block Redevelopment Area. Each of these plans includes office, residential, and retail components. While the final square footage of each use for each plan will most likely differ from what has been proposed, these developments will bring more residents and workers into the Mid-Harbor area.

These populations will generate economic growth by creating a demand for retail, cultural uses, and entertainment, some of which can and should be captured in the Mid-Harbor study area. According to data provided by the *Bureau of Labor and Statistics's 2002 Consumer Expenditure Survey*, these new employees and residents could potentially generate over \$20 million in additional annual revenue for the study area.

Economic Generators

Office

The City of Norwalk has succeeded in attracting office tenants, and since 2003 has been the fastest growing office market in Fairfield County. Companies such as Diageo, Factset, and GE Commercial Finance have relocated from their traditional Connecticut office headquarters in Greenwich and Stamford eastward along I-95 to Norwalk. The City has become an attractive alternative for several reasons:

- The Norwalk office market can accommodate companies' facility requirements in quality spaces at reasonable rates;
- Firms' employees have moved west and north in search of more affordable communities; and
- Norwalk is centrally located and easily accessible by two regional train lines, the Danbury North and Metropolitan Transit Authority.

In addition to the existing Merritt 7 office space inventory, the four redevelopment plans adjacent to the Mid-Harbor will add to the City's office supply. While Merritt 7 buildings are marketed as corporate campuses, complete with their own eating and shopping establishments, the proposed projects in and around the study area will create demand primarily for retail and dining located adjacent to or nearby the developments. Our analysis revealed that the current redevelopment plans will supply enough office space to meet future demands and thus we do not recommend additional office space within the study area. However, better connections between future office buildings and waterfront retail areas will help capture the spending demands these new workers will generate.

Residential

Norwalk is primarily a single-family owner-occupied community (62% according to the 2000 Census). A mix of families, married couples and seniors reside in the existing neighborhoods surrounding the study area. In contrast, most of the residential development proposed in the redevelopment plans and within the study

area will be multifamily condominiums and apartments with higher incomes than those currently living in the area. The occupants of these units, which are primarily one- and two-bedroom, will most likely be singles, younger professional couples without children or older empty nesters. These “urban villagers,” as they are called, tend to have higher incomes, more discretionary spending, tend to eat out more and have different retail habits than the single-family dwellers. Rather than spending their discretionary income on high priced commodities, this demographic is more likely to spend their money on goods that include high level of service and convenience. They will pay a premium for services that complement their urban life-styles and value systems. This group also seeks unique environments, similar in character to SoNo, as opposed to the “big-box” type of retail found on Connecticut Avenue. For this demographic, the shopping or dining experience is as important as the quality of the goods and services themselves.

Regional Destination

The City’s cultural resources are important economic generators. However, we found that most visitors come to the city to attend one venue and then leave. We explored ways to encourage the visitor to stay longer and spend more money in Norwalk. These cultural assets, such as the Maritime Aquarium and Stepping Stones, which are very family-oriented venues, could be better cross-marketed with neighboring commercial uses to leverage additional economic growth in the Mid-Harbor Area. The Aquarium in particular is a premier area attraction that draws 500,000 visitors every year to Norwalk. A study by the institution found that the average visitor only stayed in Norwalk three hours. Creating more family dining options currently unavailable in SoNo and along the waterfront, improving the connections between the Aquarium and the SoNo waterfront, and creating additional entertainment along the waterfront would encourage visitors to lengthen their stay. These longer visits could eventually translate into demand for a waterfront hotel, a prospect explored more fully in Section C of this document.

Commercial Opportunities

Dining/Retail

Given the economic demand generators anticipated in the redevelopment areas, we believe there are significant new retail and restaurant opportunities. The new residents could potentially contribute up to \$9M of additional annual revenue in dining and \$7M in apparel and services to Norwalk’s economy. The estimated \$16M a year in total sales generated by new retail and restaurant development is based on typical consumption patterns of this demographic group for New England. Using the Bureau of Labor

Statistics 2002 Consumer Expenditure Survey, these figures assume that new households have pre-tax incomes of \$100,000 per year; higher than existing household incomes in the area.

In addition to the revenue generated by these new residents, the office components of the redevelopment plans will generate substantial retail demands. We conservatively assumed that approximately 5,000 new workers will work in the study area and will spend an average of \$5 per workday on items such as gasoline, meals, and other convenience services. This volume translates to more than \$6M per year of sales for local retailers within the study area.

We combined the new demand for retail and dining generated by new residential and new office developments and translated that revenue potential into square feet. To be viable, restaurants need to generate approximately \$225 per square foot in revenue, according to the *Dollars & Cents of Shopping Centers: 2002*, published by ULI. Therefore the \$9M of dining revenue equates to 40,000 SF of restaurant space. When we added the \$7M in retail generated by residents to the \$6M spent by office workers, we converted \$13M dollars into 43,500 SF. This figure assumes retail sales of \$300 per SF. These gross calculations are subject to the phasing of the additional office and residential development proposed in the redevelopment plans and in this Mid-Harbor Study.

Retail

Capitalizing and building upon the success of existing retail and the demands created by new development will help the City further its goal of attracting more people to its waterfront. Area retail brokers estimate that the demand for retail in Fairfield County, and Norwalk in particular, exceeds the supply of retail venues. Capturing a larger portion of this disposable income in Norwalk is a realistic goal and is being aggressively pursued with projects like Norwalk Center and the redevelopment of Wall Street. Retail brokers told us that SoNo is a commercial district with excellent retail growth potential. The creation of an appropriate type of retail in this district, accompanied by the necessary infrastructure that facilitates and encourages the shopping experience, would help to capture unmet and new retail demands. However, three significant obstacles impede retail growth in SoNo and along the waterfront: the lack of consistent pedestrian foot traffic, the limited size of existing floor plates, and the lack of parking.

The creation of foot-traffic is fundamental to building upon the success of the area. While the restaurant cluster creates a certain amount of foot traffic, that activity is concentrated primarily on weekends and in the evenings. Current daytime foot traffic

Appendices

Tenant Category	Minimum Required Net SF
Borders Bookstores/music/video	2,500-25,000
GAP Children's, men's, women's apparel	2,000-46,000
Ann Taylor Women's apparel	5,000-6,000
Bath & Body Works Cosmetics/body care/fragrance	2,000-4,500
Blockbuster Video rental/sales	2,500-4,800
Hallmark Cards/Stationary	4,500
Zale's Fine jewelry	2,500-5,000

Source: Trade Dimensions Retail Tenant Directory 2003

limits the ability to attract would-be retailers to the area. National credit tenants like the GAP or Borders act as mini-anchors and provide support for independent retailers. A full retail study for SoNo would identify an optimal mix of independent non-franchised tenants and those national franchised retailers that together would generate the necessary amount of foot-traffic, while allowing SoNo to maintain its own eclectic identity. These mini-anchors however, typically require minimum footprints of 2,500 to 5,000-10,000 square feet. These spaces, while larger than most retail venues currently in SoNo, would not accommodate the large 'big box' retail stores found on Connecticut Avenue. The following table lists some national retailers and the respective net square footage these mini-anchors require.

While vacancies exist in SoNo, the size of those vacancies and their respective floor plates hinders retail growth. Retail brokers indicated that demands for retail spaces in excess of 3,000 square feet exist but cannot be met in SoNo. Currently, of the forty-six retailers in SoNo along Washington Street, Water Street, and South Main Street, thirty-one have floor plates of less than 3,000 square feet, eight have floor plates between 3,000-5,000 square feet, and only seven have floor plates in excess of 5,000 square feet. Because the majority of floor plates are less than 3,000 square feet, SoNo is unable to capture this unmet demand. Therefore, to the extent possible, new retail footprints ranging from 3,000 to 10,000 square feet should be created in SoNo and along Water Street, in particular.

Footprint	Number of Spaces (sq. ft.)
31	< 3,000
8	3,000 - 5,000
7	> 5,000

Economic activity is further restricted by the lack of parking options. The Aquarium's garage is too far and too disconnected from the waterfront district for shoppers to comfortably walk. The two-level parking deck behind Washington Street only provides one public level of parking and is insufficient to meet the demands of a vibrant commercial district. A new garage or parking facility, with appropriate signage and proximity to SoNo and Water Street, coupled with a comprehensive marketing strategy for the district might provide property owners with the incentive to redevelop underutilized land into new retail spaces.

Hotel or hotel/marina

The City of Norwalk recently hired the Pinnacle Group to perform a feasibility study for a 250-room hotel with 20,000 square feet of conference facilities and meeting space. The study concluded that this type of hotel was not financially feasible at this time in Norwalk. During the Mid-Harbor planning process, public participants expressed strong support for the idea of a waterfront hotel. This prompted the planning team to continue to examine the possibility of developing an upscale, independently owned and operated, midsize hotel (50-65 rooms) that might also include a marina and/or restaurant. Several waterfront hotel models located throughout New England were identified. Phone interviews with these hotel operators were conducted and information was gathered in an attempt to determine the feasibility of this type of hotel catering to couples and corporate clientele at the Norwalk Harbor.

Many of the hotel operators we spoke with were familiar with Norwalk stated that a midsize waterfront hotel would do very well in Norwalk. However, they cautioned that finding an institution to finance an independently owned and operated, midsize hotel would be challenge. Because these types of hotels are considered more of a credit risk, lenders may require larger amounts of upfront capital and a mix of uses to ensure multiple sources of revenue.

In spite of the financing challenges, we identified several examples of successful midsize waterfront hotels that overcame these challenges (see table on page 48). There appears to be market demand and sufficient economic potential to warrant a new hotel study analyzing this type of hotel in Norwalk Harbor.

2. Brownfields Research

We began the process of evaluating potential “environmental risks,” to determine where future reuse might be restricted or involve premium site development costs. The team evaluated the historic uses of properties within five prescribed priority areas (see map on page 55) around the Mid-Harbor, where the plan proposes a change of use or an increase in activity levels. This is only the initial step in a more comprehensive “environmental due diligence” effort that must accompany future planning for these areas.

SUMMARY

The research assessed the likelihood of environmental contamination in a general way, and assigned each priority area a general probability rating (Low, Moderate, or High). This is based on whether historic land use and/or historic documentation suggests hazardous materials were stored or used there, and whether there is evidence of a leak incident at some point in the past.

Probability of Environmental Contamination

- Sewage Treatment Facility Area (Priority area 1): *Low*
- Liberty Square Park Area (Priority area 2): *Low to Moderate*
- Veterans Park Area (Priority area 3): *Low*
- Water Street Harbor Area (Priority area 4): *Moderate to High*
- Maritime Aquarium Area (Priority area 5): *Low to Moderate*

The following technical memorandum details this research, which included review of available Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (records indicating the activity on each parcel over time), Norwalk City Directories (an historic record of current and former site occupants/uses), and an environmental database search report available through Environmental Data Resources, Inc.



Sewage Treatment Facility Area

Liberty Square Park Area

Maritime Aquarium Area

Veterans Park Area

Water Street Harbor Area

MAP of the 5 areas studied in the Environmental Review

Appendices

Technical Memorandum: ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The purpose of this environmental records review was to evaluate site history, current site use, and the current and historic uses of surrounding properties to identify the potential presence of Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs) in connection with the subject site. RECs are defined as “the presence or likely presence of any hazardous substances or petroleum products on a property under conditions that indicate an existing release, a past release, or a material threat of a release of any hazardous substances or petroleum products into structures on a property or into the ground, groundwater, or surface water of the property. The term includes hazardous substances or petroleum products even under conditions in compliance with laws. The term is not intended to include de minimis conditions that generally do not present a material risk of harm to public health or the environment and that generally would not be the subject of an enforcement action if brought to the attention of appropriate governmental agencies. Conditions determined to be de minimis are not recognized environmental conditions.”

Our conclusions are intended to help the user evaluate the “business environmental risk” associated with the site, defined by ASTM as “a risk which can have a material environmental or environmentally-driven financial impact on the business associated with the current or planned use of a parcel of commercial real estate.

Detailed Scope of Services

We performed the following detailed services to complete our environmental evaluation:

- Review of federal and state environmental information within ASTM-specified radii from the prescribed priority areas, using a database service to access records. Use of 7.5-minute topographic maps to evaluate the physical setting of each area.
- Review of the following sources of historical use information: Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and City Directories.
- Interpretation of the information and data assembled as a result of the above work tasks, and formulation of conclusions regarding the potential presence and impact of (RECs).

ENVIRONMENTAL RECORDS REVIEWED

Priority Area Identification

For the purposes of this environmental evaluation, the term “priority area” refers to one of five specific locations where the plan proposes a change of use or an increase in activity level. Each of the priority areas listed below is located in the Mid-Harbor region of Norwalk, Connecticut (see map on page 55).

- Priority Area 1 – Sewage Treatment Facility Area
- Priority Area 2 – Liberty Square Park Area
- Priority Area 3 - Veterans Park Area
- Priority Area 4 - Water Street Harbor Area
- Priority Area 5 – Maritime Aquarium Area

The USGS topographic map for this project area is the Norwalk South Quadrangle, dated 1960 and photo-revised 1984. The USGS topographic map was used as the source for project area setting information.

Environmental Database Report

We utilized the electronic database service Environmental Data Resources to complete the environmental records review. The database search was used to identify properties that may be listed in the referenced Agency records, located within the ASTM-specified search radii indicated below:

- NPL sites: 1 mile
- CERCLIS sites: 0.5 mile
- CERCLIS NFRAP sites: Site and Adjoining
- Federal ERNS: Site only
- RCRA non-CORRACTS TSD facilities: 0.5 mile
- RCRA CORRACTS TSD facilities: 1 mile
- RCRA Generators: Site & Adjoining
- State Hazardous Waste Sites: 1 mile
- Registered Underground Storage Tanks: Site & Adjoining
- State Landfills and Solid Waste Disposal Sites: 0.5 mile
- State Leaking Underground Storage Tanks: 0.5 mile

Sanborn Maps

We reviewed Sanborn Maps for the prescribed priority areas dated 1884, 1889, 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1922, 1950, 1958, and 1973.

City Directories

We reviewed Norwalk East and Norwalk South City Directories, which include historic information for the project area for the following years: 1960, 1965, 1970, 1976, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2002.

FINDINGS

Priority Area 1 – Sewage Treatment Facility Area

This priority area is located along the eastern shoreline of the Norwalk River and adjacent to an active wastewater treatment facility located just southeast (refer to map on page 55). The following address was identified within this priority area:

<i>Parcel ID</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Current Owner(s)</i>
3-2-7-0	25 South Smith Street	Twenty Five South Smith Street

- Environmental Database Report

A review of the environmental database information revealed the following information for Priority Area 1 and properties adjoining and/or in close proximity: two CTDEP Leachate and Wastewater Discharge Source (LWDS) locations.

1. *Sewage Treatment Plant (Norwalk)*: This property is characterized as an active sewage

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treatment facility which adjoins Priority Area 1 along its southeastern boundary. According to the database report, the Sewage Treatment Plant is determined to be down-gradient from Priority Area 1.

2. *Donahue Property (Landfill)*: This property is characterized as an inactive landfill and is located at the corner of Platt St. & Charles St., approximately 500 feet east of Priority Area 1. According to the database report, the Donahue Property is determined to be down-gradient from Priority Area 1.

Properties within Priority Area 1 were not identified in any of the environmental databases searched.

- Sanborn Maps

Sanborn maps depicting properties within Priority Area 1 were not identified.

- City Directories

A review of available city directories has revealed that a sewage disposal/wastewater treatment facility, located just southeast of Priority Area 1 has operated in this area since as early as 1960. Properties/addresses within Priority Area 1 were not identified in the city directories. According to information obtained from the city directories, this area has primarily been utilized for commercial/industrial use since as early as 1960.

- Environmental Risk

Based on the available information reviewed during this evaluation, we believe the overall potential for current environmental impact at Priority Area 1 to be: *Low*.

Priority Area 2 – Liberty Square Park Area

This priority area is located along the eastern shoreline of the Norwalk River, just northwest of Veterans Park and south of Priority Area 1 (refer to map on page 55). The following addresses were identified within this priority area:

<i>Parcel ID</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Current Owner(s)</i>
3-1-32-0	Goldstein Place	City of Norwalk (Park–Liberty Square)
3-1-15-0	1 Goldstein Place	Sono Wharf, LLC
3-1-16-0	3 Goldstein Place	Morton, Thomas H.
3-1-24-0	5 Goldstein Place	Dixon, George, Sr. & Newman, Pamela
3-1-22-0	9 Goldstein Place	Sono Wharf, LLC
3-1-25-0	11 Goldstein Place	Sono Wharf, LLC
3-1-18-0	185 Liberty Square	Third Taxing District (Park–Liberty Square)
3-1-14-0	195-201 Liberty Square	Larose, Conrad J., Jr. & William
3-1-1-0	203 Liberty Square	203-205 Liberty Square Associates, LLC
3-1-2-0	205 Liberty Square	203-205 Liberty Square Associates, LLC
3-1-3-0	207 Liberty Square	Two Hundred Seven Liberty Square
3-1-4-0	209 Liberty Square	Dunne, Joseph G. & Rita J.

3-1-6-0	213 Liberty Square	Brescia, Richard M. & Patsy R.
3-1-7-0	215 Liberty Square	Blair, Liam & Mary D.
3-1-8-0	217 Liberty Square	D'Andrea, Anthony G. & Pavlik, William

- Environmental Database Report

A review of the environmental database information revealed the following information for Priority Area 2 and properties adjoining and/or in close proximity: two RCRA small-quantity hazardous waste generators.

1. *Casale Associates Auto Body*: This property is characterized as a small-quantity hazardous waste generator (EPA ID #CTD981072861) and is located at 9 Van Zant St., approximately 400 feet northeast of Priority Area 2. According to the database report, this site is determined to be down-gradient from Priority Area 2. No RCRA violations have been reported for this facility.
2. *Ryder & Wilkens Signs, Inc.*: This property is characterized as a small-quantity hazardous waste generator (EPA ID #CTD983866716) and is located at 10 Van Zant St., approximately 400 feet northeast of Priority Area 2. According to the database report, this site is determined to be down-gradient from Priority Area 2. No RCRA violations have been reported for this facility.

Properties within Priority Area 2 were not identified in any of the environmental databases searched.

- Sanborn Maps

1. The 1900-1912 maps depict the area as primarily commercial and industrial and containing the following occupants: a foundry and machine company, a wallpaper and paint manufacturer, several retail stores and residential dwellings.
2. The 1922 map depicts the area as primarily commercial and industrial and containing the following occupants: a waterproof battery manufacturer, numerous retail stores and several residential dwellings.
3. The 1950-1973 maps depict the area as primarily commercial and residential and containing several retail stores.

- City Directories

A review of available city directories has revealed that an auto body repair shop had operated at 4 Goldstein Place since as early as 1960 and a boat marina had operated at 11 Goldstein Place from as early as 1960 until approximately 1985. According to information obtained from the city directories, this area has primarily been utilized for residential and/or commercial use since as early as 1960.

- Environmental Risk

Based on the available information reviewed during this evaluation, we believe the overall potential for current environmental impact at Priority Area 5 to be: *Low to Moderate*.

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Priority Area 3 – Veterans Park Area

This priority area is located along the eastern shoreline of the Norwalk River and adjacent to Veterans Park, located immediately to the east (refer to map on page 55). The following addresses were identified within this priority area:

<i>Parcel ID</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Current Owner(s)</i>
3-37-1-0	10 Seaview Avenue	City of Norwalk (Park-Veterans)

- Environmental Database Report

Properties within and adjoining Priority Area 3 were not identified in any of the environmental databases searched.

- Sanborn Maps

Sanborn maps depicting properties within Priority Area 3 were not identified.

- City Directories

Properties/addresses within Priority Area 3 were not identified in the city directories. Additionally, no suspect uses/operations were identified for properties in close proximity to Priority Area 3. According to information obtained from the city directories, this area has remained primarily residential since as early as 1960.

- Environmental Risk

Based on the available information reviewed during this evaluation, we believe the overall potential for current environmental impact at Priority Area 3 to be: *Low*.

Priority Area 4 – Water Street Harbor Area

This priority area is located along the western shoreline of the Norwalk River and just south of Priority Area 5 (see map on page 55). The following addresses were identified within this priority area:

<i>Parcel ID</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Current Owner(s)</i>
2-84-20-0	50 Water Street	Sono Harbor Landing Associates
2-84-19-0	68 Water Street	Seventy Water Street Associates, LLC
2-84-33-0	90 Water Street	Norwalk Land Co., Inc.
2-84-47A-0	96 Water Street	Sono Square Associates, LLC
2-84-47-0	100 Water Street	Bloom, Hillard E. & Richichi, Joseph
2-84-18-0	108 Water Street	108 Water Street Norwalk, LLC
2-84-17-0	120 Water Street	Bloom, Steven, J. & Weiss, Robert

- Environmental Database Report

A review of the environmental database information revealed the following information for Priority Area 4 and its and properties adjoining and/or in close proximity: one Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) and one Registered Underground Storage Tank (UST).

1. *Harbor Watch Marina*: This facility was assigned LUST case ID No. 29690 on 22 September 1989, in response to a Spill Incident Report filed on the same date. According to the database report, a single 5000-gallon gasoline UST, originally installed in 1969, was removed from the property with minimal contamination. No further details were reported. Harbor Watch Marina is located at 130 Water St., approximately 500 feet south of Priority Area 4. According to the database report, this facility is determined to be down-gradient from Priority Area 4.
2. *Barrett-Non Pariel Roofing, Inc.*: A single, steel-walled 4,000-gallon gasoline UST has been registered for this facility, which is located at 19 Day St., approximately 500 feet west of Priority Area 4. According to the database report, this facility is determined to be down-gradient from Priority Area 4.

Properties within Priority Area 4 were not identified in any of the environmental databases searched.

- Sanborn Maps

1. The 1884-1922 maps depict the area as primarily commercial and industrial and containing the following occupants: a furnace manufacturing company, a carriage factory, a shoe factory and a coal/wood yard. A large coal storage shed is visible on the coal/wood yard property.
2. The 1950-1973 maps depict the area as containing all above-listed operations with the addition of the following: a large aboveground storage tank (AST), labeled "Oil Tank," located on the coal yard property. No further details regarding the size/volume of this AST are available.

- City Directories

A review of available city directories has revealed that properties within Priority Area 4 were occupied by the following operations since as early as 1960 until approximately 1995: a coal and fuel oil storage and sales facility, a bulk petroleum storage and distribution facility, a foam pillow storage warehouse, an auto repair shop and a boat yard. According to information obtained from the city directories, this area has primarily been utilized for commercial/industrial use since as early as 1960.

- Environmental Risk

Based on the available information reviewed during this evaluation, we believe the overall potential for current environmental impact at Priority Area 4 to be: *Moderate to High*.

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Priority Area 5 – Maritime Aquarium Area

This priority area is located along the western shoreline of the Norwalk River and just north of Priority Area 3 (see map on page 55). The following addresses were identified within this priority area:

<i>Parcel ID</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Current Owner(s)</i>
2-19-1-0	4 North Water Street	City of Norwalk (Parking)
2-19-2-0	10 North Water Street	Maritime Aquarium of Norwalk, LLC

- Environmental Database Report

A review of the environmental database information revealed the following information for Priority Area 5 and properties adjoining and/or in close proximity: one Registered Underground Storage Tank (UST) and two RCRA small-quantity hazardous waste generators.

1. *The Hatch & Bailey Co.*: A single, steel-walled gasoline UST has been registered for this facility, which is located at 29 Marshall St., approximately 600 feet northwest of Priority Area 5. According to the database report, this facility is determined to be down-gradient from Priority Area 5.
2. *Fertl, Inc.*: This property is characterized as a small-quantity hazardous waste generator (EPA ID #CTD064827074) and is located at 18 Marshall St., approximately 600 feet northwest of Priority Area 5. According to the database report, this site is determined to be down-gradient from Priority Area 5. No RCRA violations have been reported for this facility.
3. *The Sherwin Williams Co.*: This property is characterized as a small-quantity hazardous waste generator (EPA ID #CTD000842310) and is located at 21 North Main St., approximately 700 feet west of Priority Area 5. According to the database report, this site is determined to be down-gradient from Priority Area 5. No RCRA violations have been reported for this facility.

Properties within Priority Area 5 were not identified in any of the environmental databases searched.

- Sanborn Maps

A review of available Sanborn fire insurance maps revealed the following information regarding historic site uses within Priority Area 5:

1. The 1884, 1889 and 1895 maps depict the area as primarily industrial and containing the following occupants: a paper box manufacturer, a coal yard and a lumber yard. A large coal storage shed is visible on the coal yard property.
2. The 1900, 1906, 1912 and 1922 maps depict the area as primarily industrial and containing the following occupants: a paper box manufacturer, a coal yard, a lumber yard and an iron works company. A large coal storage shed is visible on the coal yard property and a machine shop area is visible on the iron works property.
3. The 1950-1973 Sanborn maps depict the area as primarily industrial and containing the following occupants: an iron works company and associated parking lot. All of the previously mentioned operations have been replaced by the addition of the parking lot.

- City Directories

A review of available city directories has revealed that an aquarium facility has operated within Priority Area 5 since approximately 1995. Properties/addresses within Priority Area 5 were not identified in the city directories prior to 1995.

- Environmental Risk

Based on the available information reviewed during this evaluation, we believe the overall potential for current environmental impact at Priority Area 5 to be: *Low to Moderate*.

CONCLUSIONS

Our conclusions are intended to help the user evaluate the “business environmental risk” associated with the site, defined as “a risk which can have a material environmental or environmentally-driven financial impact on the business associated with the current or planned use of a parcel of commercial real estate.”

During the environmental records review, we identified the following potential REC:

- High-risk historic industrial use and bulk petroleum use/storage associated with Priority Area 4. An environmental records review has revealed that a bulk petroleum storage and distribution facility has operated within Priority Area 4 since as early as 1960 until approximately 1995. We have determined that this high-risk historic and long-term use represents the potential that this area may have been contaminated.

REFERENCES

1. Topographic Map, Norwalk South, Connecticut, United States Geological Survey 7.5 minute series, dated 1960 and photo-revised 1984.
2. Environmental Data Resources, Inc., Database Report, dated 12 May 2004.
3. Haley & Aldrich, Inc. review of Norwalk City Directories at the Connecticut State Library, May 2004.

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Route 8 – This route travels from Burnell Street along Belden Street, Wall Street, East Avenue, Gregory Boulevard, and Calf Pasture Beach and back. Buses run several times an hour between 6:00 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. weekdays. On Saturday the buses run every 1/2 hour beginning at 7:20 a.m. through 6:20 p.m.

Route 9 – This route travels from Burnell Street along Belden Street, West Avenue, N. Main Street, Washington Street, Water Street, Burritt Avenue, Woodward Avenue, and the Dock and back. Buses run several times an hour between 6:00 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. weekdays. On Saturday the buses run every 1/2 hour beginning at 7:20 a.m. through 6:20 p.m.

Route 10 – This route travels from Burnell Street along Belden Street, West Avenue, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Monroe Street, the Railroad Station, Henry Street, Mulvoy Street, Ely Avenue, Lexington Avenue, Knapp Street, back to Ely Avenue then looping back north along Wilson Avenue, South Main Street, and North Main Street. Buses run several times an hour between 6:00 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. weekdays. On Saturday the buses run every 1/2 hour beginning at 7:20 a.m. through 6:20 p.m.

Route 11 – This route travels from Burnell Street along Belden Street, Wall Street, East Avenue, Van Zant Street, Fort Point, Washington Avenue, South Main Street, Monroe Street, the Railroad Station, Henry Street, Ely Avenue, Lowe Street, Flax Hill Road, Taylor Avenue, Morton Street, Senga Road, Scribner Avenue, Connecticut Avenue, Richards Avenue, the Norwalk Community College and back. Buses run several times an hour between 6:00 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. weekdays. This route does not run on Saturdays.

Route 12 – Burnell, Belden, Van Buren, Grandview, Prospect, Maple, Stuart, Connecticut, Cedar, Fairfield, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Monroe, Railroad Station, Henry, Mulvoy, Ely, Lowe, Flax Hill, Soundview, Highland, Roton Middle School and return.

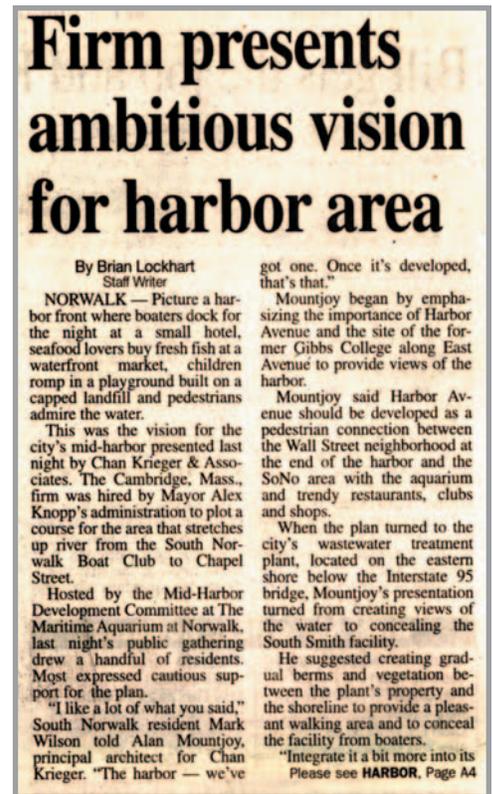
3. Transit Data and Maps



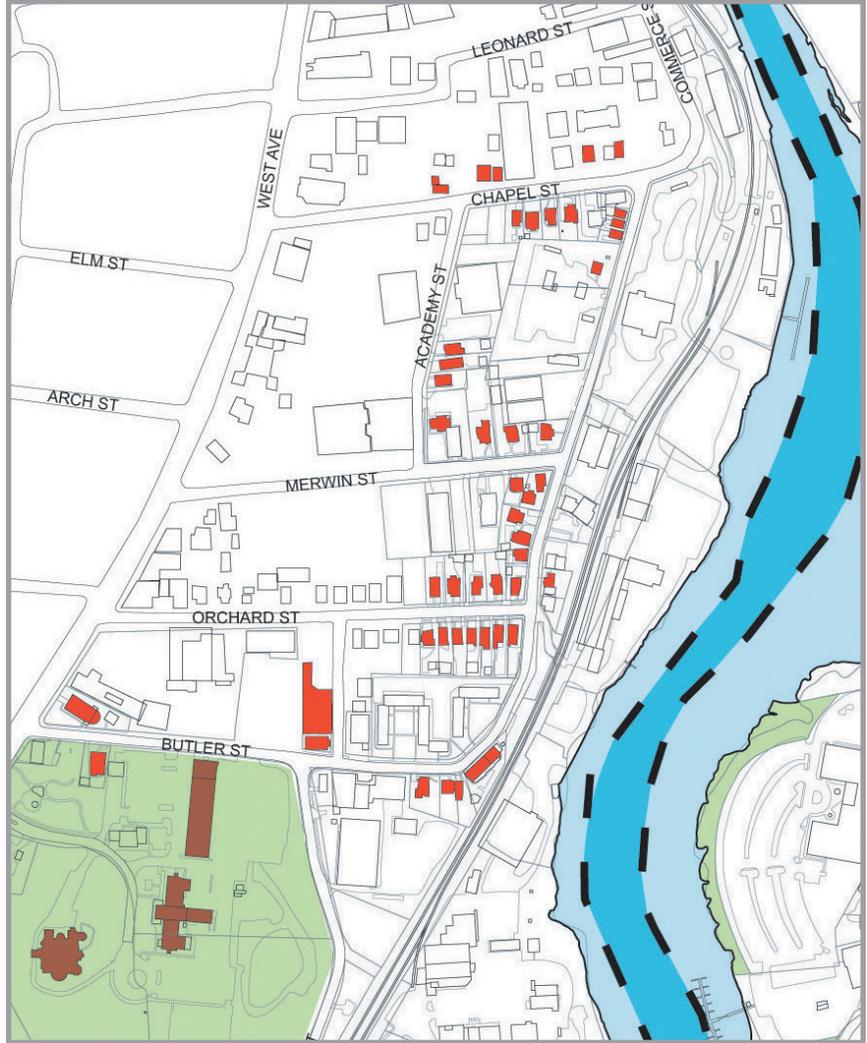
4. Comments from Public Gatherings

The following concerns and suggestions were raised by attendees at public gatherings for Mid-Harbor planning:

- Concerns about parking and congestion with new development in the Mid-Harbor area
- A desire for public access along water treatment facility
- Curiosity about western edge of Harbor outside of the boundary for this study
- Concern over congestion on the water at certain times of year
- Where does this fit into the City's master plan?
- Concern that new retail should be compatible with SoNo retail (not big box)
- Better connections from neighborhoods to the water; especially from east side
- Be consistent with state coastal management policies
- Support for certain ideas such as screening the water treatment facility, a new fish market on the Harbor, hotel/marina combination, bolstering synergy in the vicinity of SoNo up to Oyster Shell park
- Support for a unified lighting scheme over area of concentrated activity around the aquarium and SoNo. This will suggest/emphasize/encourage walking around a specific area at all times of day. Less expensive and short-term but effective.
- Emphasis on the importance of having truly public access, going beyond theory and legality to the design, atmosphere, and practice of the place
- Concern that new shopping around SoNo will affect the neighborhood
- Concern about the viability of a hotel near active train tracks.
- Parking will be a key issue; security will, too—people have to be comfortable. With police station and lighting, it all has to come together.
- The East Norwalk Train station is as close to Aquarium as SoNo station. A pedestrian link there would be good.
- Appreciation for the pedestrian-friendliness of the plan, and the importance placed on visual connections. Appreciation that the process has reflected responsiveness to public input.
- The East Norwalk Train Station is as close to Aquarium as SoNo station. A pedestrian link there would be good.



5. Significant Architecture in the Mid-Harbor Area: Academy Street and Harbor Avenue Homes

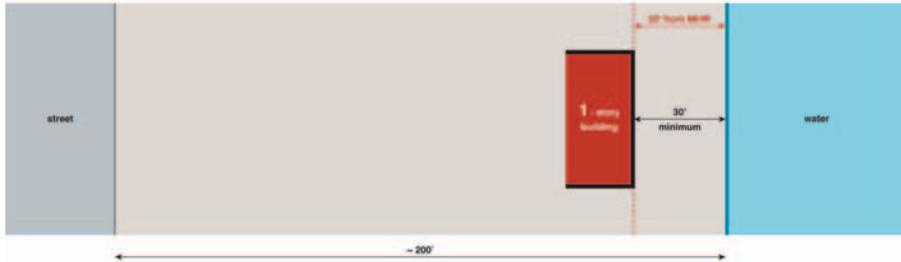


The Liberty Square buildings, referenced elsewhere in the plan, also have significant architecture.

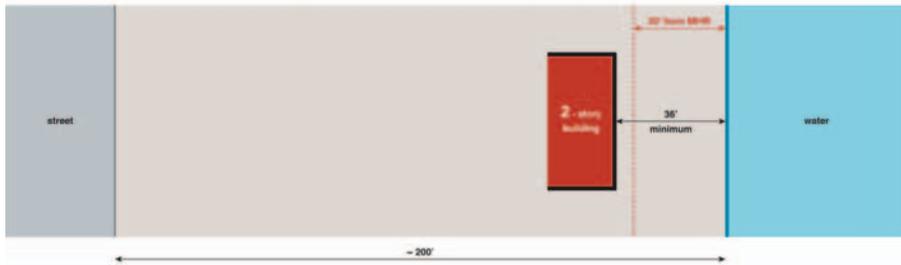
6. Location of the Federal Navigation Channel



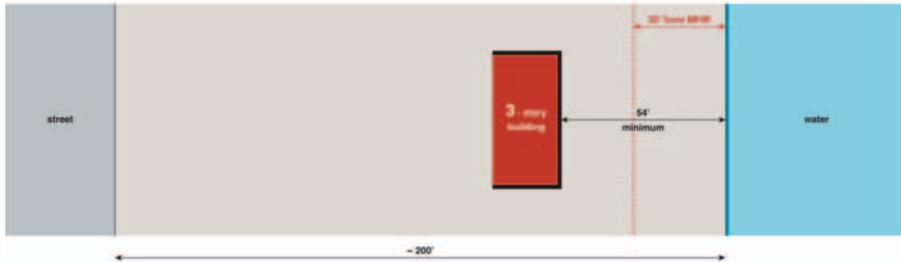
8. Setback Diagram



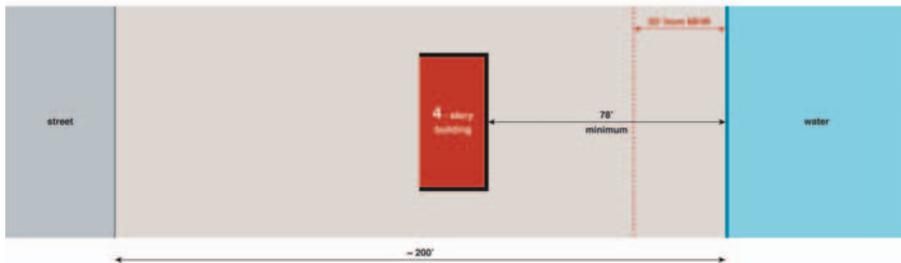
1-story BUILDING with 30' minimum SETBACK



2-story BUILDING with 36' minimum SETBACK



3-story BUILDING with 54' minimum SETBACK



4-story BUILDING with 78' minimum SETBACK



ALTERNATIVE SETBACKS FOR MARINE COMMERCIAL ZONE

Calculation

1 story: $12' \times 1.5 = 18'$
 2 story: $24' \times 1.5 = 36'$
 3 story: $36' \times 1.5 = 54'$
 4 story: $52' \times 1.5 = 78'$

Required Setback

30 feet minimum
 36 feet minimum
 54 feet minimum
 78 feet minimum

