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Watchemoket/Waterfront Gateway Placemaking and Multi-modal Access Improvements

East Providence, Rhode Island



November-2020

Prepared for:
City of East Providence



2020 DRAFT REPORT

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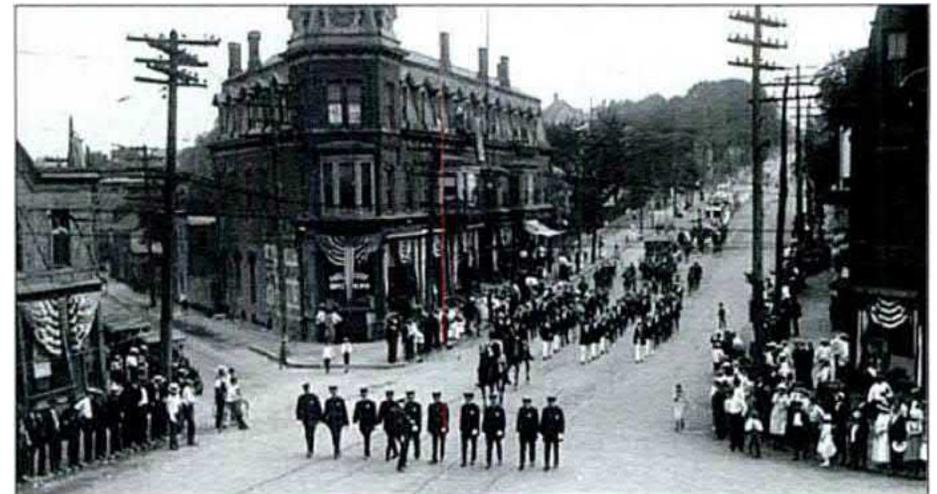
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Acknowledgments

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This study, comprised of data collection, research, design concepts, placemaking ideas, intermodal transportation solutions and economic strategies for Watchemoket Square study was authorized by the City of East Providence, Roberto DaSilva, Mayor.

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Project Guidance

Roberto DaSilva, Mayor
James Moran, Principal Economic Planner
William Fazioli, Director of Planning
Chris Martin, Exc. Director East Providence Waterfront Commission
Johanna Walzack, City Planner
Erik Skadburg, City Engineer
Steve Coutu, Director, Department of Public Works
Elmer Pina, Affirmative Action EEO Officer

Planning Team

Arek W Galle RLA, AICP Lead Planner, BETA Group Inc.
Paul Bannon Transportation Planner, BETA Group Inc.
Jeffery Maxtutis, Transportation Planner, BETA Group Inc.
Daniel Stevens AICP, Camoin 310

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Pamela Sherrill (Former) Dir. East Providence Waterfront Commission
David S Weed Coordinator Sowams Heritage Area
Melissa Martin, RI Waterfront Enterprises
Cory Brailsford, RI Comedy Connection
Laura McNamara East Providence Chamber of Commerce
Kevin McKay Tockwotton on the Waterfront
East Providence, Historical Society
Pokanoket Tribal Members
Jaques R. Afonso, National Grid
Joseph Guidebeck, National Grid
Ernest Germani, DPW/Survey

East Providence City Council Members
Council President Robert Britto - Ward 1
Council Vice President Robert P. Rodericks - At-Large
Council Woman Ann M. Sousa - Ward 2
Councilman Nathan W. Cahoon - Ward 3
Councilman Ricardo D. Mourato - Ward 4

Project Purpose

The City of East Providence has been making well-planned steps toward advancing the development of the City's waterfront and planning for district enhancements, in the form of branding and placemaking of the district, with way finding, public art, street scape enhancements and related multi-modal improvements to serve to enhance, unify and support the overall viability of the waterfront district.

Historically recognized as defined district, and gateway to the East Providence Waterfront, the study area is now characterized by diverse, and in some cases discordant, land uses, confusing street circulation patterns, little signage, limited parking, and few sidewalks. Visitors often have little sense of where they are, what the area offers and how close they are to the waterfront.

The purpose of this project is to help the City re-discover this area of the waterfront, and coalesce and formalize an approach to unifying and enhance what was historically known as Watchemoket Square. This study provides a set of recommendations which will help the City, developers, businesses, and residents alike adopt strategies and implement improvements to make the area safer, more attractive, and interesting to visit with the overarching goal of re-establishing the area as a recognized destination and gateway to great waterfront attractions.

Research work undertaken included an inventory and assessment of visual, cultural, and economic assets of the Study Area as well as a review of the streetscapes, infrastructure, and transportation network. Additionally, multiple personal interviews were conducted over the course of several months to gain additional insight and perspective on Watchemoket Square.

The planning team was also tasked with addressing several specific activities defined by Scope of Work outlined below developed with the EDA:

1. To study present and projected transportation congestion issues in the roadway network in the vicinity of the I-195 Waterfront interchange including congestion associated with the Veteran's Memorial Parkway and to develop measures that will seek to mitigate these congestion impacts through the redesign of the roadway network that feeds into the I-195 Interchange and the waterfront, notably Waterfront Drive and Watchemoket Square (Warren Avenue);
2. To develop a work plan to create a safer, more accessible multi-modal environment in the vicinity of the I-195 Taunton Avenue / Warren Avenue Interchange Project including measures to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and to enhance transit options to the area surrounding the interchange and important commercial corridors including downtown Watchemoket and Taunton Avenue;
3. To consider roadway improvements in consideration of site distances, roadway surface conditions, and merge conditions of the road network to and from the waterfront and I-195.
4. To compliment ongoing RIDOT design of missing movements such as the I-195 westbound off ramp and the eastbound on ramp through the I-195 Taunton Avenue / Warren Avenue Interchange Project.

1. Executive Summary

The year 2020 will stand in the record books as one without compare, a year which left many Americans feeling lost in the midst of a global pan-demic that claimed many lives and left those that escaped illness wondering when it would be safe to return to normal.

The truth is a 'New Normal' will be upon us, and as different as that may look in many ways, people will once again resume having coffee, sharing a meal together, eating out, shopping in person, going to bars and restaurants and taking in live entertainment. They will because those types of activities are intrinsic parts of our social fabric. The basic elements that formed early society on the eastern bank of the Seekonk River more than 10,000 years ago remain compelling and relevant in the years ahead.

This report is in part a Placemaking Study, conducted to look at Watchemoket Square as a distinct and special place, one with inherited limitations, new challenges and emerging opportunities. One has to look no further than the Residences at Bold Point which has in the past year transformed a defunct car dealership into the first housing development in Watchemoket Square in over 50 years.

The true origins of the square can in fact be linked back to early American Indian tribes and encampments on the riverbanks, in part as this location was a fjord across the river to the peninsula that became Providence.

In the eighteenth century the river crossing became formalized with bridges and a road network which gave rise to the square, really more like a triangle: a hub of transportation networks, water, railroads and streets. As the transportation infrastructure

grew, there was little consideration given to pedestrians or modes of travel other than car, truck, or rail. The geometries of the rail and roadway network evolved over time and now physically frame what remains of the original square. The adjacent I-195 highway, Veterans Memorial Parkway and relatively new Waterfront Drive all move people through the area, bring people into the Waterfront area, and somewhat paradoxically, simultaneously create barriers and limit access to the Waterfront.

Only one street exists within the study area that has sidewalks that connect from the neighborhoods to the east to the Waterfront. This is Warren Avenue, a state route that once led to a bridge crossing to Providence. It now dead ends into Waterfront Drive where there are no sidewalks. There are no sidewalks connecting to Bold Point Park, one of the City's most loved and noted and highly valued parks. There is currently no safe way for pedestrians to cross Veterans Memorial Parkway where vehicle speeds and volume increased on the state scenic roadway to levels that required removal of crossing points. Bicyclists seeking to make a connection between Providence to the East Bay Bike path face similar challenges as they cross busy Warren Avenue and ride in two-way traffic for nearly 1,000 feet before returning to the off-street bike system.

In-part, the revitalization of Watchemoket Square is a process of rediscovery, one that takes steps to welcome visitors, accommodate all modes of transportation, create convenient access to businesses, housing and recreational resources, and embrace the waterfront setting with both enhanced terrestrial improvements and access as well as water based improvements. One of the biggest concepts to emerge is the re-discovery of Watchemoket Square should that it is a place until itself, but also clearly a gateway. A gateway to the waterfront, gateway to

Arts and Entertainment, a gateway to the region's heritage and history. Each of these themes has tourism, recreation and business opportunities within. Implementing specific improvements to enhance walkability, bicycling and waterfront access serves to further position the core of Watchemoket as a hub of activity where people want to go.

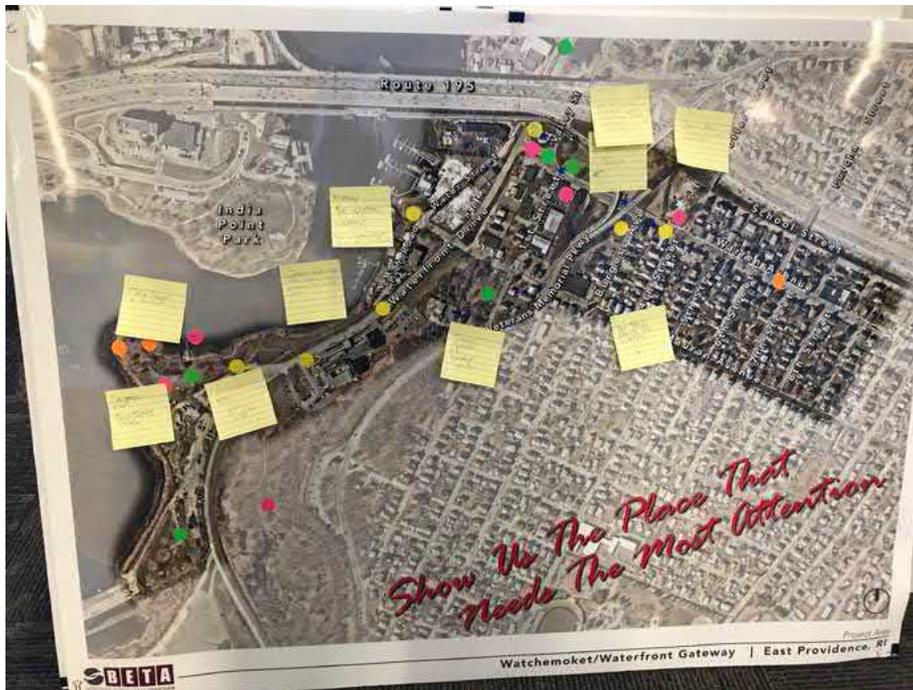
The process to get there is to a degree already underway. This year marked the 10th anniversary of Watchemoket Square Day, an event that celebrates the significance of the area, keeping alive the history and relevance of the district. But there are planning, and action steps needed on short, medium and long term horizons to re-invigorate the area. Ideas developed as part of this study include:

- **Prioritize Pedestrians.** People outside of cars are potential patrons of the arts and restaurants, business customers and no-longer passers-by. Build upon the compact scale of the buildings and streets. Create a network of connected, well-lit, nicely detailed sidewalks, with improved on and off-street parking options within the core of the district, 1st Street. Create enhanced and well-positioned crosswalks to help people make the desired connections to and from the area safely.
- **Embrace Bicyclists.** The network 'gap' that exists between the East Bay Bikepath and the George Redman Bridge is overdue to be addressed and enhanced to be made safer for all users. Investment in this small length of the regional bike/ped network will serve to a greater range and diversity of people through Watchemoket Square and will foster the activation of other businesses within the square. Few communities have such an asset as an established bicycle path within a well-scaled urban setting and the potential and synergy here should not be lost.

- **Celebrate Art.** Envisioned as a tangible center for the arts community within the greater City, Watchemoket Square should visibly present and showcase art, in the form of outdoor public art installations as well as create indoor and outdoor artist performance areas, and gallery spaces. Establish live-work spaces to encourage concentrating artists in the square. Incorporate artistic influences in to the district signage, site amenities paving and lighting. If to truly be seen as the artistic center of the City the sculpture park should be the starting point on which to build a much more diverse, visible and well distributed artistic 'footprint'.
- **Honor the Past.** The immigrant history of the City, and more broadly the region is a story that perhaps has not been told completely and can be interpreted here. The underlying American Indian and colonization history of the region which extends to Boston and Plymouth MA. is one of not only national but international interest, and the interpretive starting point should be off exit 5 from Interstate I-195, in Watchemoket Square. The Sowams Heritage Area, currently seeking federal recognition, includes Providence, East Providence, Barrington, Warren, Bristol RI and well as Seekonk, Rehoboth and Swansea MA. Watchemoket represents an opportunity for gateway that welcomes visitors in an area that has easy highway access to points of interest throughout the region. The square is an ideal setting to access the regional bike networks as well as water-based recreation.
- **Showcase the Waterfront.** Build and Brand Watchemoket Square back into a recognized Waterfront Gateway. There are expansive re-development opportunities and plans for lands to the north and the south of I-195, most access to all those locations will require passage along the edges or through the square, which makes Watchemoket all that more relevant. There are opportunities that exist today to enhance

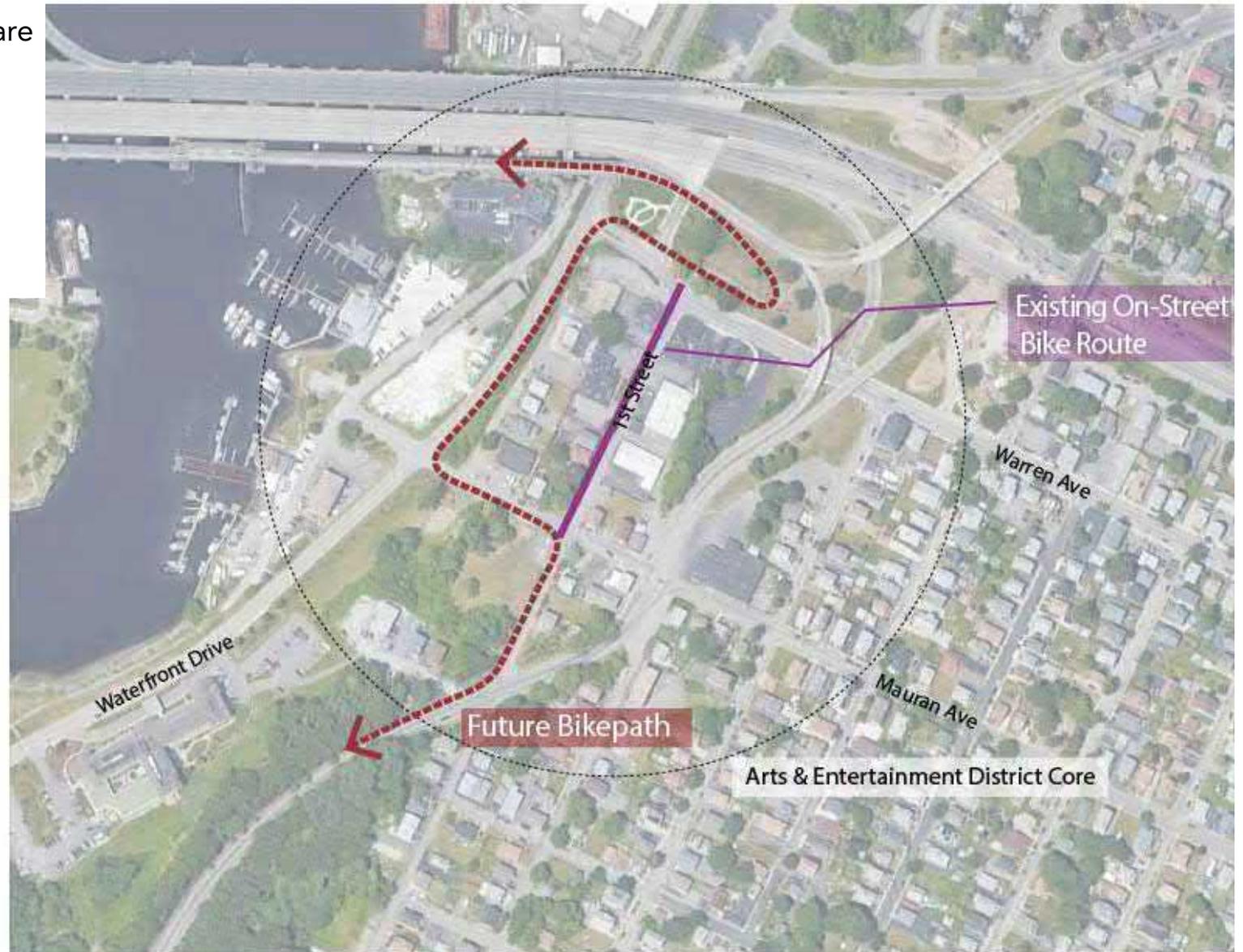
connections to the water now and restore the importance of the square as a vibrant hub. Invest in establishing transient boater facilities, where people can dock and walk to dining and entertainment venues. Upgrade and enhance the two waterfront parks, including establishing safe pedestrian and bicycle access. Expand awareness and access to the waterfront for fishermen and recreational boaters, establishing the square as a desirable port from which to embark and return, with offerings for residents and visitors alike.

These ideas represent the framework for revitalization. The key next step is to start with one small, attainable element and implement it. You will be building the future upon a great and inspirational past.



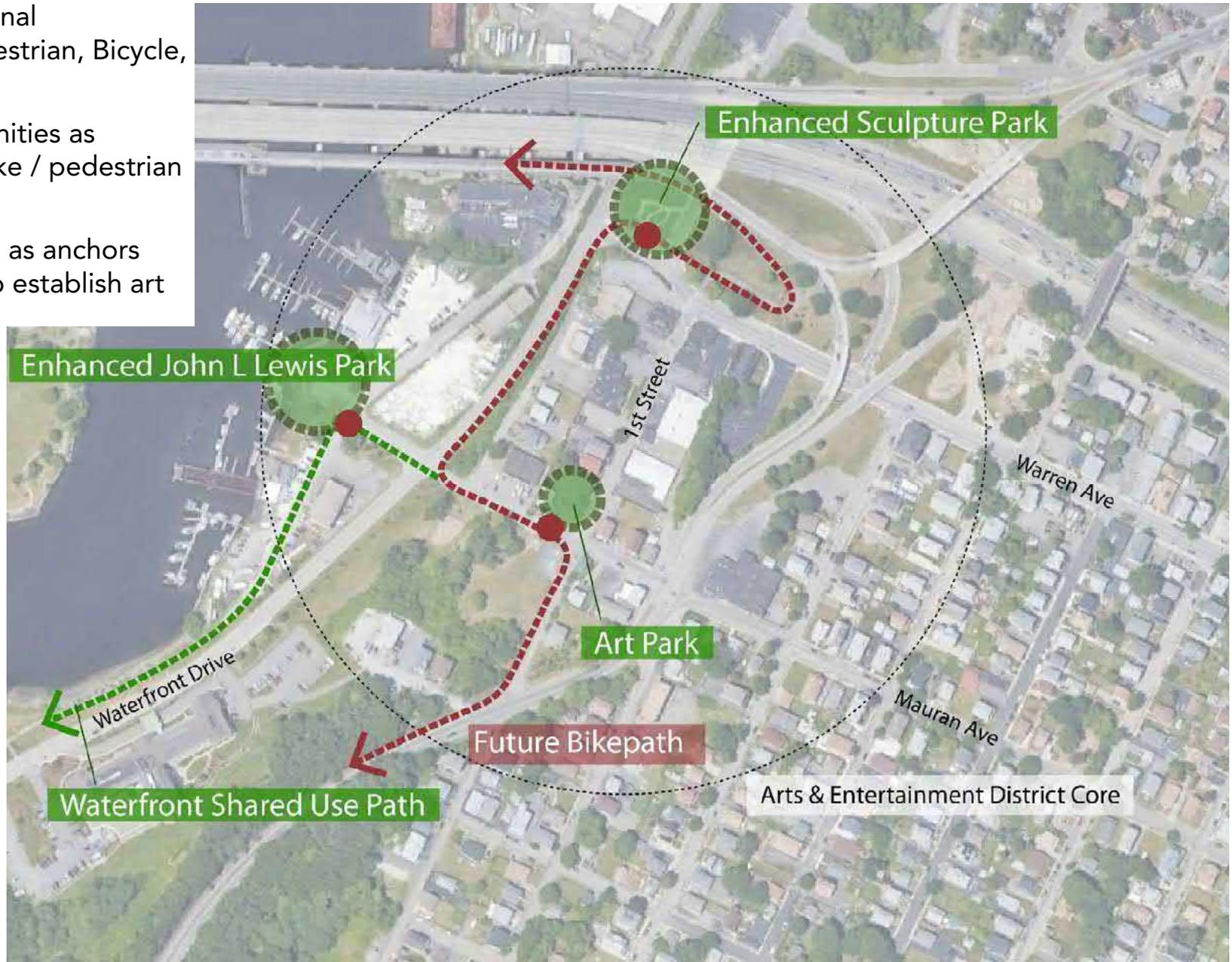
Economic Development Framework

- Large District = need to think about sub-areas
- Watchemoket Square as "Core"
- How can bike path / transportation improvements catalyze economic development?



Economic Development Framework

- Enhanced visitor experience:
Build on recreational connectivity: Pedestrian, Bicycle, Water-based
- Recreational amenities as “nodes” along bike / pedestrian connections
- Art-focused parks as anchors in key locations to establish art presence



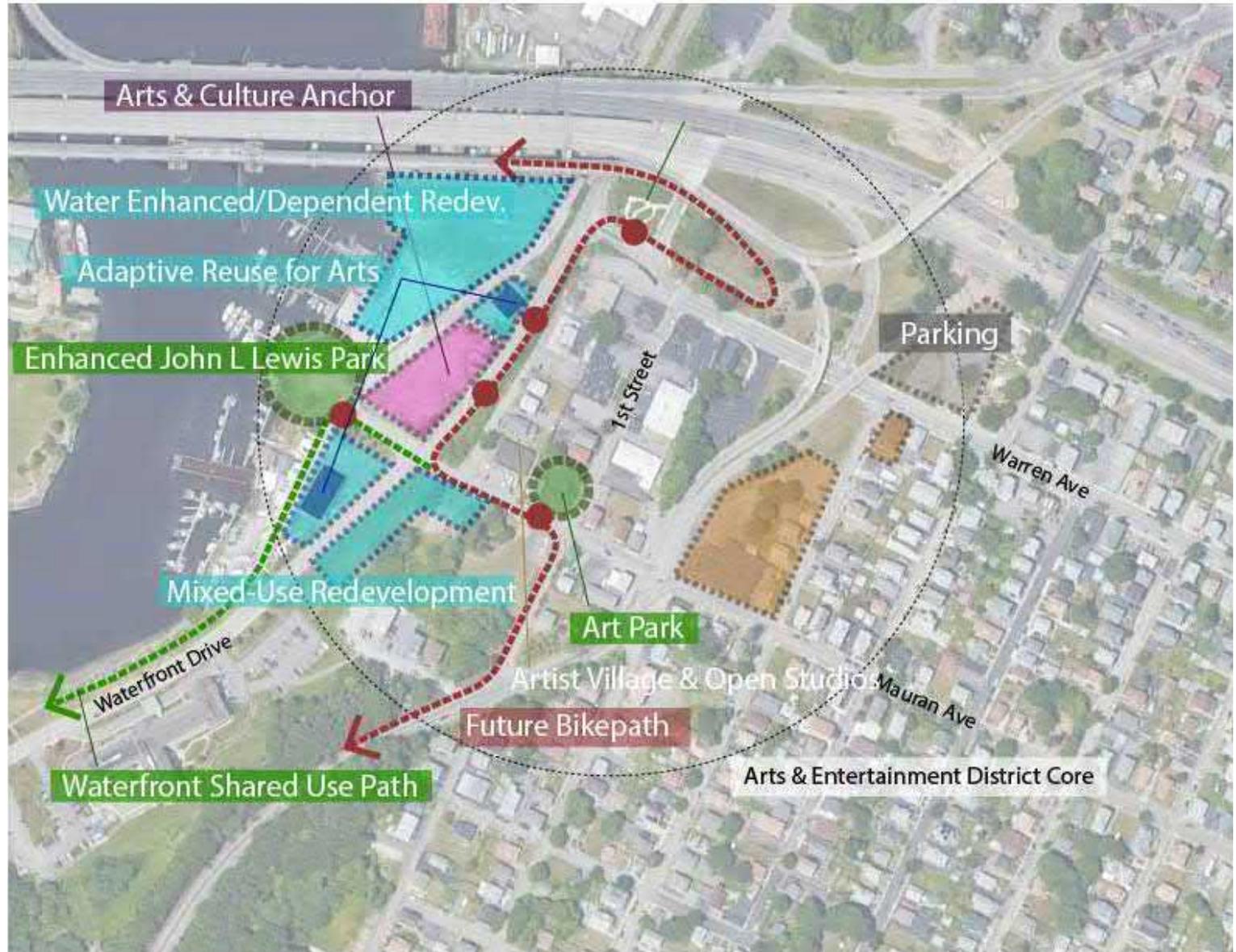
Economic Development Framework

- Make art visible within the district
- Promote adaptive reuse to support the arts
- Expand walkability
- Increase public parking
- Emphasize bikepath linkages
- Enhance connections for boaters to district
- Establish a strong anchor to "get the ball rolling"
- Activate underutilized Parking Area Ideal (within the walkable "core"; waterfront proximity; high visitor visibility)



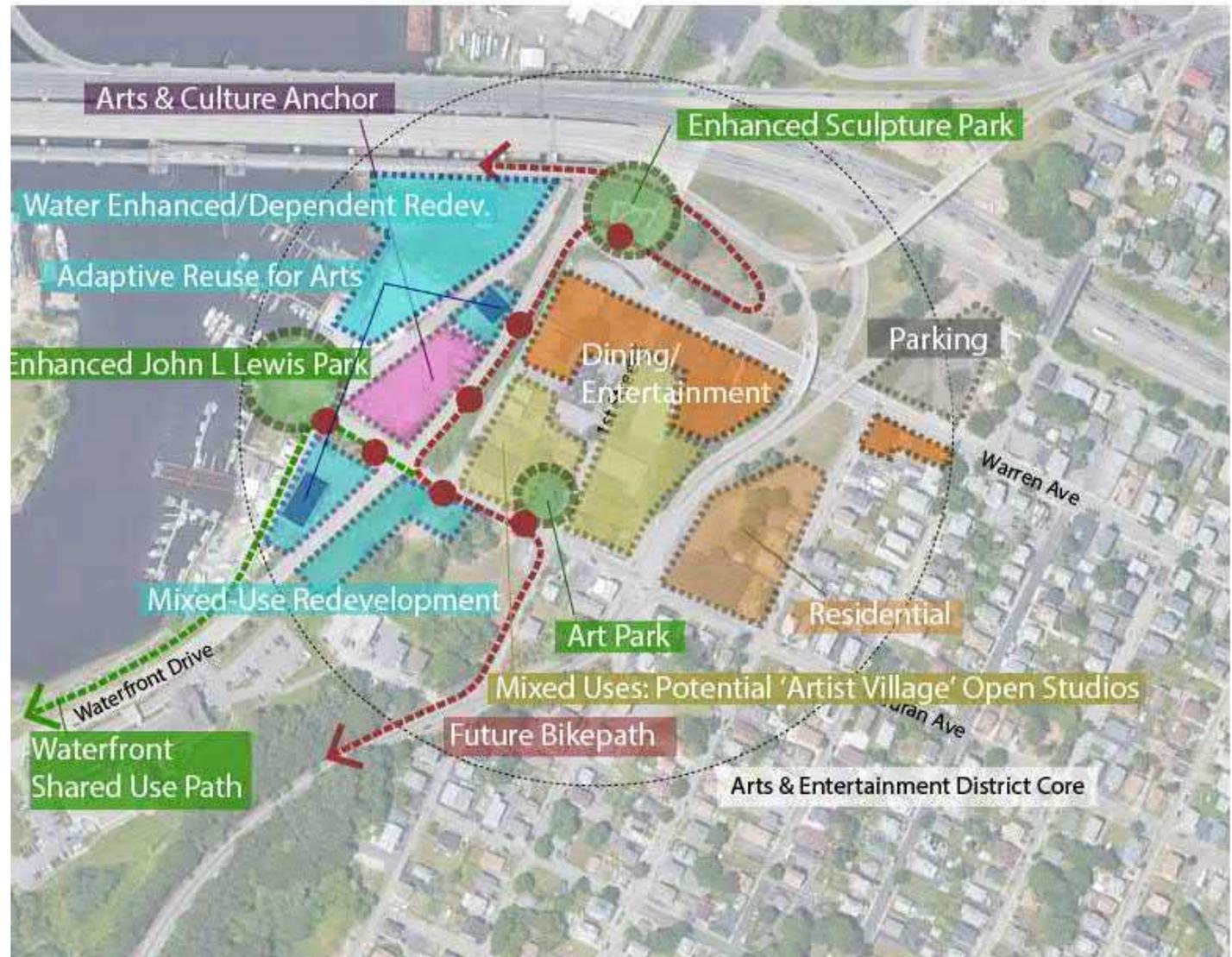
Economic Development Framework

- “Activate” in-fill and Redevelopment Sites
- Adaptive Reuse of Industrial Buildings
- Potential Tockwotton Development Site & MTTI Redevelopment



Economic Development Framework

- New Investment in Existing Buildings
- Expand dining / Entertainment Cluster
- Small "Artist Village" core with existing residential
- "Incongruent" Uses
 - Creatively adapt to district (e.g. add retail / showroom to manufacturing)



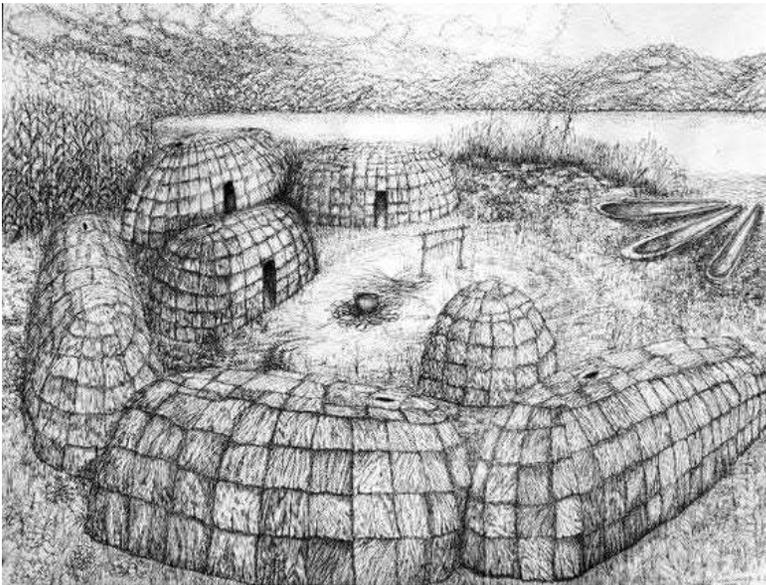
2. Existing Conditions

2.1 History

Pre-Contact

For over 10,000 years the shores of upper Narragansett Bay have been a place where Native Americans found bountiful resources. The inhabitants, the Algonquian people, later regionally known as Pokonoket Tribe occupied a vast region of land from south

of present-day Boston to Bristol, RI, and from Plymouth MA to present day Providence RI. The area had fertile soil, abundant wildlife and ready access to fresh and salt water was known by those inhabitants as Sowams or "South Country."

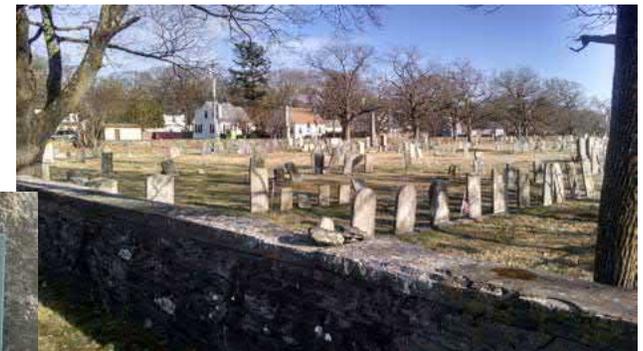
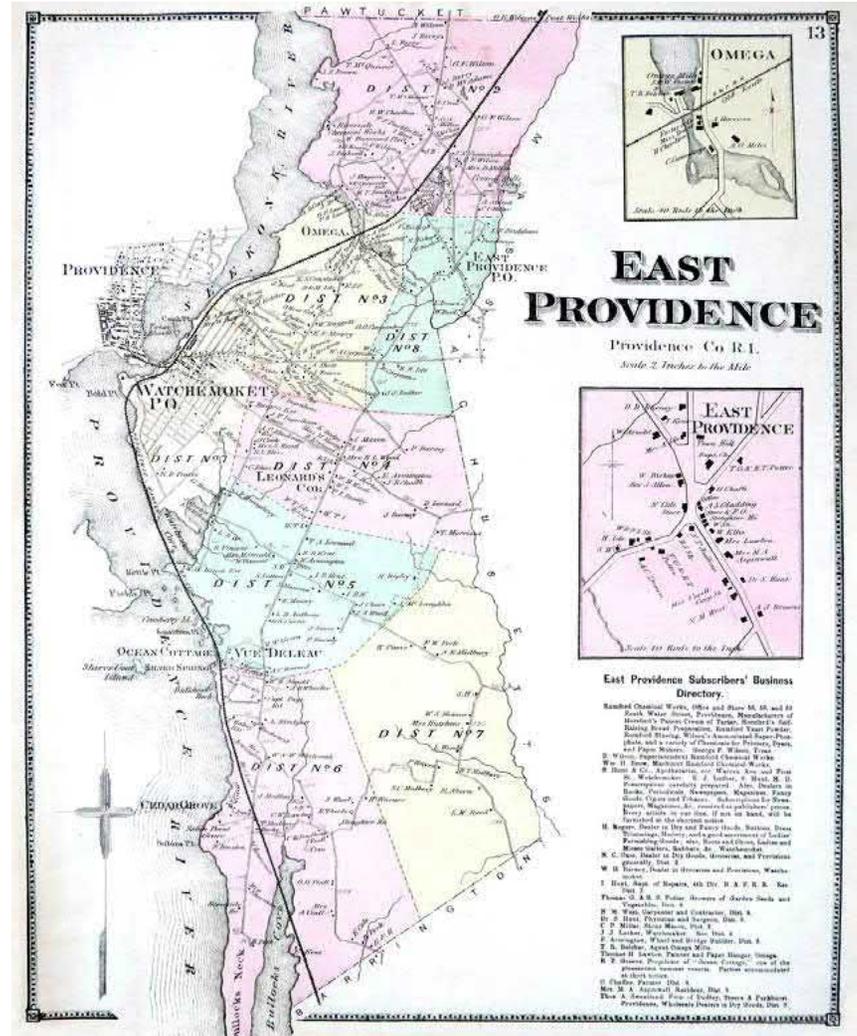


Defining Watchemoket

*American Indian word describing a proximity to the river and tidal marsh
the feel and smell of where the land and water meet.....*

17th & 18th Century

Historians have made the case that the Sowams are the “pivotal place of cultural exchange between the indigenous people and colonizing settlers in North America” and as such is the crucible from which our country arose from. In 1641 The Plymouth Bay Colony allowed John Brown and Edward Winslow the permission to purchase 64 square miles of land from the Pokanoket Chief Massasoit. Settlers were drawn to an area near the Seekonk River, with abundant flowing fresh water suitable to power grist and lumber mills, and constructed the initial homes in a roughly circular arrangement, later known as the Ring of the Green. This settlement was initially named Rehoboth and became a town unto itself, until it grew in population to such an extent that the area containing the Ring of the Green was separated into the Town of Seekonk. Forty years later in 1862 a western portion was again separated out and became the new Town of East Providence. Because much of the country’s earliest history unfolded in this area, the region has a vast and complex story that can be interpreted thru vestiges of the colonial era that remain visible today.

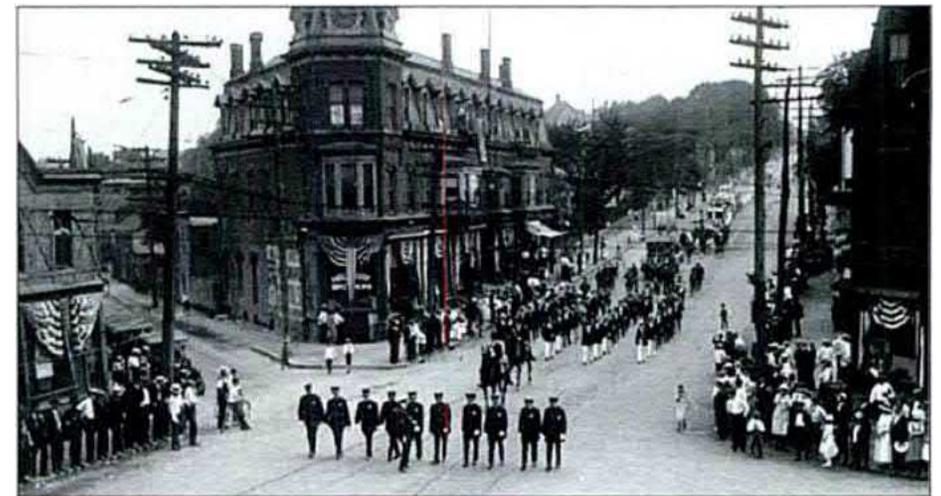


20th Century

As Providence emerged as a large Town, connectivity from the peninsula the settlement occupied to eastern and southern destinations became important. The Watchemoket Square area, site of the original fjord across the Seekonk River naturally grew into a convergence point for travel as a series of bridges were constructed across the river. East Providence became a place where many travelers passed thru, as such, gradually grew as a destination unto itself.

The western shoreline of the City became increasingly built-up as trade expanded and commercialized port areas became established. With network of roads and then railroad lines from regional towns and cities converging on this shore, here, an easy exchange of maritime goods and land based products, was established and the protected waterfront location continued to prove valuable.

Rapid and large scale Industrialization of the port led to an expansion of the infrastructure to support it, overtime creating a barrier to the water-front with layers of piers, wharves, electric utility poles, rail road lines, rail yards, warehouse and tank farms populating the shore upper Narragan-sett Bay.



21th Century

For nearly 400 years commercialization and industry grew exponentially along the shoreline, effectively erasing much of the natural resources concentrated in the area. However, the last 20 years have seen a contraction of growth and a gradual reversal and change in land use. Vast lands once held by large companies have been remediated and await redevelopment as industry has moved elsewhere. The shoreline is gradually returning to a place where people live. All the reasons for wanting to be near the place where the land and water meet remain and a bright future for this area awaits.



2.2 Site Conditions

The uniqueness of this distinct area of the East Providence waterfront has from the earliest times attracted both residential settlement and commerce, and as these activities were modernized they expanded over hundreds of years, eventually erasing all evidence of the grass marsh land and natural riverbanks. Crossing the Seekonk River was done by passing over one of several bridges. The expansion of railroads to move material to and from the active ports south of Bold Point created a wide barrier of tracks and power lines between neighborhoods to the east, effectively eliminating access to the waterfront except for those involved in industrialized commerce.



The pattern on the land from the railroads remains visible today, even though the last tracks were removed in 19xx. The regular and ordered grid of city blocks dissolves into triangular shaped parcels and long, rectangular swaths of land where rail lines and port-based structures once stood. City streets were extended to make connections to the waterfront and while vehicular access was provided for, no provisions for pedestrian access to the waterfront were made. There are no East to West sidewalks beyond 1st Street. Street.

This is remarkable when one considers that with over 14 miles of shoreline in East Providence, while this area represents the greatest collection of business and attractions within walking distance of the waterfront, and there are no sidewalks present to connect to the water's edge. For most pedestrians, the present day conditions are significantly lacking and actually discourage visiting the waterfront.

Further challenges exist to the east, where crossing Veterans Memorial Parkway is prohibited. The only pedestrian accommodations are found on Warren Avenue. These sidewalks dead-end at Valley Street.

2.3 Economic Conditions

1. General Economic and Market Challenges

- **The local and citywide population is declining in numbers, posing a challenge to new development.** The City of East Providence and the Neighborhood have experienced a decline in population since 2015. The population of both areas is projected to remain flat over the next several years.
- **Locally higher levels of unemployment and lower income levels characterize the Neighborhood.** With an unemployment rate of 10.0% and a median household income that is approximately \$5,000 less than the City of East Providence, there are local challenges to economic prosperity and growth.
- **Local job growth is muted.** Since 2014 the Neighborhood has added jobs at half the rate of the City of East Providence. While the City has experienced job growth of 6%, the benefits of this expansion have not been felt locally.

2. General Economic and Market Opportunities

- **Positive Local Neighborhood Demographic Characteristics may Present Opportunity.** The Study Area Neighborhood skews younger compared to the rest of the City and the region as a whole. The presence of relatively younger households may present an opportunity for new entertainment businesses, given the consumer preferences and purchases of younger households on entertainment and dining.
- **The Local Neighborhood has Economic Strengths in Tourism-related Sectors.** The neighborhood has a relatively large number of jobs in retail and accommodation and the food services and these sectors have seen recent robust growth locally with 9% growth over five-years in both the neighborhood and City of East Providence compared to only 1% in the region as a whole. Additionally, the local neighborhood and the City as a whole have an above average concentration of jobs in the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation sector indicating an existing economic strength and a foundation from which to establish a future waterfront arts and entertainment district.
- **The Health Care industry is Strong.** The Health Care and Social Assistance sector is the top sector in terms of employment, making up 17% of all jobs in the City of East Providence and 16% of all jobs in the Neighborhood. Over the last five years, this sector has added jobs in both geographies.
- **Manufacturing retains a large presence.** The Manufacturing sector is one of the more highly concentrated sectors in the Neighborhood and the City of East Providence. Although employment in this industry is declining, a history and tradition in manufacturing industries represents an opportunity to translate the area's industrial roots into more creative industries. Throughout the region and in neighboring cities former industrial spaces are being repurposed into creative spaces that cultivate the arts and creative manufacturing.

- **Finance and Insurance is growing.** The Finance and Insurance industry has seen substantial growth in the City of East Providence with over 1,000 jobs added in this sector from 2014 through 2019. The City now has a relatively high concentration of jobs in this sector, indicating future industry growth potential as well as potential market opportunities related to housing and retail / services for professionals in this sector that have relatively higher incomes.
- **Potential for Multi-Family Apartments.** East Providence's existing housing stock is characterized by owner-occupied, single family units. National trends of a preference for rental units, particularly among millennials and retirees indicate that there may be an opportunity for the market to support additional multi-family apartment housing options. Affordable "live-work" facilities that combine modern apartments with co-working spaces are increasing in popularity among the arts community and present an opportunity to foster the creative culture that the neighborhood desires.

3. Arts & Entertainment District Feasibility Discussion Strengths / Opportunities

- **The Neighborhood is well positioned to attract arts and cultural activity.** Within East Providence and neighboring Providence there are a number of arts events, initiatives, and festivals that have been successful in establishing a creative cultural and reputation for the region. As this activity continues to grow, the Neighborhood is opportunely located to capture some of this activity, potentially by offering more affordable prices than what already exists in the City of Providence.

- **An Industrial and maritime history is attractive to artists and for creative activities.** Existing industrial building stock offers grit and authenticity that is sought by many in the creative fields. An opportunity exists to capitalize on these preferences to repurpose industrial buildings into new, creative and arts-oriented uses.
- **Restaurants and dining have the potential to anchor to the area.** An existing restaurant base and new investment in trendy restaurants make this growing sector an attractive local opportunity. In addition to residents, restaurants have the opportunity to attract bike path users to their establishments and to capitalize on the new concert attendees that will be in the area.
- **Easy accessibility and strong traffic counts are attractive to new business.** The Gateway area is a prime location that is bolstered by additional pedestrian and bike traffic from the East Bay Bike Path make this an ideal location for restaurants, retail, and other businesses.
- **Strong potential to create a live music niche exists.** With an existing concentration of music groups and a new planned outdoor concert facility, the waterfront area could achieve success in branding itself as a music destination. Concertgoers who attend events at the new facility represents a new market for local business, and add an additional cultural layer to the area.
- **Artists housing is an opportunity, and necessary to attract artist and other creative residents.** Though necessary such housing will require a subsidy to ensure

affordability for the target market. There is a precedent for success of artist housing in the larger local market. Artist housing has been successfully implemented and led to the creation of artistic neighborhoods in nearby municipalities, both through standalone residential units and live-work communities.

- **Market-rate apartments can support artist housing development.** The waterfront location, accessible commute, proximity to amenities, and lack of similar housing options indicates that there would be strong demand for market-rate apartments. Coupling this with artist housing would help to make such residential development more financially feasible.
- **Existing Cultural events, festivals, and creative businesses provide a solid base to support additional activity.** Demand for these types of events is present in the area. By building off of existing events and efforts new initiatives will be set up for success.
- **Tockwotten on the Waterfront's senior residents represent an additional market opportunity.** By catering craft fairs or markets to this demographic, local artists and creators will be able to capture businesses that is already present within the local area.

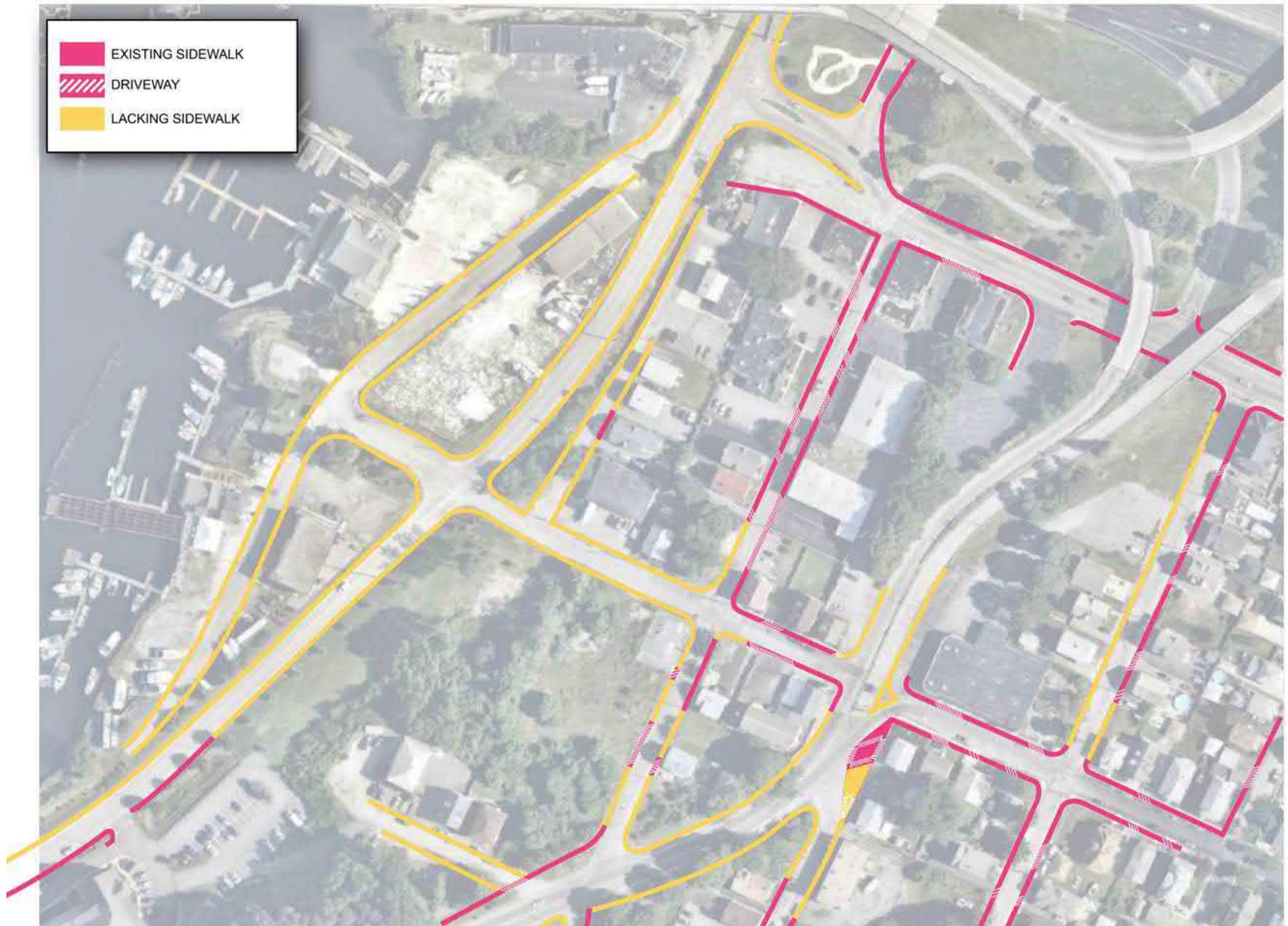
4. Arts & Entertainment District Feasibility Discussion Weaknesses / Challenges

- **A lack of available development sites could prohibit new growth.** The area is relatively built-out with few options available for new development. This may prevent

the area from capitalizing on potential new opportunities for artistic and cultural growth.

- **Minimal public ownership further prevents new development.** Creating an arts and entertainment district will be limited by a lack of public ownership of buildings and development sites. Strong community buy-in and efforts along with building owner support will be needed to make this transition.
- **The area is missing a significant arts and cultural anchor.** Without an existing institution and institutional partnerships, the effort to build an arts and entertainment district will require a large amount of grassroots effort.
- **The number of artists living in the City of East Providence has declined.** A lack of affordable housing and work facilities has resulted in a decrease in the number of self-employed artists in the City. Reversing this trend and attracting artists to the City is critical in supporting and artistic culture.
- **Competition from established institutions in East Providence and Providence is real.** Both cities have established cultural institutions and are already on the path to branding themselves as arts and entertainment hubs. The neighborhood will have to capitalize on its unique assets, including the waterfront location, ease of access and affordability, to position itself as a unique and appealing district.

EXISTING SIDEWALK INVENTORY



EXISTING PARKING INVENTORY

Watchemoket / Waterfront Gateway Placemaking • Multimodal Access Improvements On-Street Parking Inventory May 2020

Scale: 1" = 50' - 0" 0' 25' 50' 100' 150' 200'

- SIGNED NO PARKING
- UNSIGNED
- SIGNED ON-STREET PARKING
- TEMPORARY ON-STREET HANDICAP PARKING
- OBSERVED ON-STREET PARKING
- CURB CUT



3.0 Revitalization Strategy

Overview

This section presents a strategy for enhancing the economic vitality of the Watchemoket Square in harmony with transportation and quality of place improvements. The study area has immense potential as the gateway to both East Providence and the City's Waterfront District. Anticipated future development of the waterfront area, including a new concert venue and substantial mixed-use development will drastically change the market dynamics and economic potential of Watchemoket Square.

The Revitalization Strategy envisions a Watchemoket Square that is an arts, entertainment, and recreation hub for both the Waterfront District and the City's Arts District. The walkable nature of the area, combined with its strategic gateway and waterfront location, lends itself to assuming this role. The strategies presented in this section represent a strategic approach to transforming the area into a vibrant hub, while also maintaining a sense of authenticity and character that will help build a unique sense of place, differentiated from other commercial corridors in the City and other portions of the Waterfront District.

A guiding objective is to make Watchemoket Square the core of the City's new Arts District to grow tourism activity. The City should position the Watchemoket square as the heart of the expansive Arts District through marketing efforts, infusing public art, establishing an anchor institution, and other actions to help define the area as an arts and culture destination.

3.1 Arts & Culture

1. **Create Arts & Cultural Anchor:** There is not currently a strong arts and cultural presence within Watchemoket Square from which to build a vibrant arts scene. While incremental growth in arts and cultural activity can be generated by the City, Watchemoket Square needs a strong arts and culture institution to catalyze the evolution of the area into the envisioned arts and cultural hub of East Providence. The anchor institution should serve as a visitor draw, while also supporting local artists, such as through studio space, gallery space, or other uses. The rich history of the local area may also help to attract the important heritage visitor segment.

Other recommended uses to explore for integration into the proposed anchor include a visitor center, bike-oriented elements (such as bike parking, restrooms, etc.), outdoor recreation rentals (fishing gear, bike share/rental, etc.). The inclusion of private uses as part of the facility should also be explored to enhance the tax base of the study area, and generate new tax increment financing (TIF) revenues that can be re-invested in the study area.

Short Term:

- conduct feasibility study

Mid-Term:

- Secure site control, establish public private partnerships

2. Brand and market the gateway area: The public improvement projects and actions proposed in this report present an opportunity to “re-introduce” Watchemoket Square to the Providence/East Providence Region. A strong brand should be developed for the area that emphasizes the district as an authentic arts, entertainment, and recreation destination – and at least in the short term – a COVID-safe place for outdoor entertainment and activities.

Short Term:

- Conduct a branding process.
- Design/branding competition engaging youth.
- Produce new logo

Mid-Term:

- Visitor website Marketing campaign
- New on-brand signature event

3. Create a robust public art program to infuse new art throughout the area: The City should take a leadership role in implementing public art in the gateway, which will create a strong visitor draw and help brand the gateway area as an arts and cultural destination. A formal city public art policy and program, combined with a dedicated public art fund, will provide a structure for soliciting, evaluating, siting, managing, and funding public art on public property in the gateway area. Public art should be installed at key entry points into Watchemoket Square and integrated into signage and wayfinding elements to help establish a unique sense of place and strong arts and culture brand.

Short Term:

- Establish a Lantern Trail Throughout the Gateway Area and Arts District.
- Integrate new and different public art installations into the trail.

Med-Term:

- Build an “Arts Pocket Park” at the intersection of 1st & Mauran on existing publicly owned land. Include space for a rotating “gateway” piece to showcase pieces from local artists. Focus on flexible design such as outdoor gallery space that could potentially accommodate small events.
- Update the existing sculpture park by soliciting proposals for new art pieces through the proposed public art program (which will include evaluation and selection criteria). Consider a design competition and allow the community to select a winner from several finalists.

4. Facilitate the Creation of New Artist Housing & Studio Space: Artist housing and work space typically have rental rates below market value and the City should be proactive in the supporting the creation of these spaces in and around the Watchemoket Square District. Artist housing and work space is essential for both maintaining a sense of authenticity for the Arts District, which has implications for a strong visitor base, and in supporting local artists who are entrepreneurs and business people in addition to producers of art.



Short Term:

- Create a developer incentive to provide artist housing, including inclusionary zoning provision for artist housing for residential development within the Waterfront District.
- Explore the creation of a developer density bonus for the inclusion of public art, potentially with an -in-lieu fee alternative.

Mid- Term:

- Support the conversion of existing industrial buildings in the district into artist housing/studio spaces, while being respectful of existing private ownership. Work in partnership with willing property owners and explore incentive options.

5. **Implement new events to increase excitement around the district:** In addition to the existing Watchemoket Square Day, a new on-brand signature event should be established for the District related to arts or food (or both). Additionally, a recurring “First Friday” event or similar recurring event through the warm weather months should also be considered. Initially, temporary outdoor gallery spaces may serve as the attractions until a critical mass of artist studio space and galleries are established in the district.

Short Term:

- Explore potential “signature event” options and identify a “champions” or partners to plan an inaugural event. Coordinate involvement from all businesses within the District.

6. **Create an open-air market:** Designate an outdoor space to be a market, either permanently or on certain days, for local artists and businesses to sell their product while conforming to social distance guidelines. Making this easily accessible for bike path users would be ideal.

3.2 Dining & Entertainment

1. **Transform Watchemoket Square into a unique dining hub with a focus on outdoor dining approaches.**

A variety of dining options will help build a critical mass of establishments that will establish Watchemoket Square as a dining destination, which will enhance and complement its evolution into an arts and cultural hub.



2. **Create new public outdoor dining spaces: Integrate outdoor dining settings in public parks and spaces throughout the district.** Opportunities include facilities at John J Lewis Waterfront Park, Bold Point Park, the proposed “pocket arts park,” and the existing sculpture park. Discrete dining areas on public land will help support local restaurants by providing take-out eating areas. Further support for local restaurants can be provided by formalizing the network of outdoor dining



spaces into a map with numbered locations to provide delivery locations for establishments offering this service. Public art should be incorporated into these dining areas to the extent possible to both support local artists and create a unique visitor experience.

Short Term:

- Add picnic tables throughout the district and work with local artists and arts organizations to paint the tables or provide other artistic treatment. Traditional wood picnic tables are relatively low cost and will provide a way to pilot this idea.
- Integrate food truck parking into the design of public transportation/ infrastructure improvements.

Mid-Term:

- Create permanent outdoor dining areas by installing high quality dining furniture, shade structures, concrete pads, etc.

Long-Term:

- Work with local restaurants to formalize the outdoor dining program by creating a map and building buy-in to a “micro-delivery” program to the individual dining places.

3. **Facilitate and recruit new restaurants to Watchemoket Square and Encourage the adoption of outdoor dining areas:** The City should play an active role in attracting new dining establishments to the area. This may involve playing matchmaker between property owners and restaurateurs.

Short Term:

- Review land use regulations to ensure they allow dining establishments and are supportive of outdoor dining throughout the Square.
- Plan for the integration of outdoor dining areas as part of public right-of-way improvements, including along 1st Street.
- Explore design guidelines or incentive zoning options to encourage establishments to create outdoor dining areas.

Mid-Term:

- Work with the owner of the MTTI property to explore future reuse of the property as a waterfront restaurant with outdoor dining and recreational amenities. Provide relocation assistance as needed for MTTI operations to help incentivize reuse.

4. **Attract recreational boaters by marketing Watchemoket as a “Dock and Dine” destination:** Watchemoket Square has a unique opportunity to capitalize on recreational boaters on the Seekonk River/ Providence River. With the right dock infrastructure, the City would be able to attract this market segment to visit Watchemoket Square to patronize local businesses. With the anticipated cluster of entertainment options on the East Providence Waterfront, there may be an opportunity to draw boaters to spend a full day or half-day on the City’s Waterfront.



Short Term:

- Undertake a study to determine the feasibility of a city-owned dock for transient boaters within walking distance of Watchemoket Square

Mid-Term:

- Secure funding and build public dock. Partner with private property owners if necessary for access.

Long-Term:

- Create a marketing campaign targeting recreational boaters that spotlight the many entertainment and recreation offerings within a walking distance of the public dock.

3.3 Waterfront Setting

1. **Create new outdoor recreation amenities:** New amenities will help attract visitors to Watchemoket Square and take advantage of the “bike path” market segment of active recreationists. As concerts transition out of Bold Point Park, the park should be overhauled with a mix of active and passive recreational opportunities. Other opportunities include partnering with Tockwotton and the VCA Povar animal hospital to build a dog-park on waterfront-adjacent land across from Tockwotton. This would help integrate the animal hospital into the district, provide an amenity for residents of Tockwotton, and provide an amenity for other future residents in the Waterfront District. The dog park could have outdoor dining space incorporated as part of the proposed outdoor dining program. The City should also explore the creation of a public fishing pier that would provide a recreational amenity and opportunity to support heritage tourism with interpretive panels about historic fishing activity in the area.

Short Term:

- Create a design plan for the future of Bold Point Park
- Explore the feasibility of a fishing pier
- Initiate discussions with potential partners regarding a dog park

Mid-Term:

- Secure funding and initiate outdoor recreation projects

2. **Attract Private Outdoor Recreation Businesses:** The City should leverage investments in outdoor recreation amenities for further economic development by attracting private enterprises. Watchemoket Square is envisioned to evolve into a bike destination with numerous other recreation activities, including fishing. Appropriate businesses, therefore, include a bike shop/rental business and other outdoor recreation rental/outfitters such as a small bait and tackle shop or stand.

Short Term:

- Partner with existing outdoor recreation businesses to have a pop-up location during major events or select times as a way to generate their interest in re-locating or opening an additional location.

Long-Term:

- As part of the any future anchor institution development in which the City is a partner, explore integrating space that can be leased to a private outdoor recreation business.

3. Make Watchemoket Square a Bike Destination:

Watchemoket Square should be bike-oriented in addition to being a walkable pedestrian-friendly district. As a bike destination, the City will be able to better capture existing users of the bike path by encouraging them to stop in the Square, either as a destination or along their route, and patronize local businesses. In addition to bike paths, lanes and other transportation improvements, bike amenities such as bike parking/lockers are critical for bikers to be able to stop and visit businesses. The City can also explore a shopping program for bikers, such as a discount for those arriving by bike.

Short Term:

- Identify locations suitable for bike racks/storage
- Partner with local property owners to install bike racks in key strategic locations

Mid Term:

- Work with local business owners to create a discount program for bikers patronizing Watchemoket businesses

3.4 Business Environment

1. **Create “park once” District:** New parking facilities will be necessary to realize the vision for Watchemoket Square as a walkable/bikeable district. Public parking should be added within walkable distance of the heart of Watchemoket Square, but great care should be taken not to include expansive parking areas within the district, which will adversely impact the walkability and character of the district.

Short Term:

- Conduct a parking needs assessment based on the future vision (build out) of Watchemoket Square
- Identify appropriate areas for public parking

2. Support the Development of Appropriate Development That Will Support Arts, Entertainment, and Cultural uses:

While these visitor-oriented uses are critical, a mix of other uses is appropriate to create and maintain a diverse, authentic, and vibrant district. Multi-family housing is an ideal complementary use that will bring a new population base to the Gateway area, which will support local businesses while enhancing the tax base. Small-scale manufacturing, of which some activity is already present in and around Watchemoket Square, is another complementary use and an important part of the local economy. These uses can be better integrated into the future district by encouraging them to offer retail/showroom opportunities and participate in public art endeavors.

Long-Term:

- Work with local manufacturers in the Arts District to explore possibilities for visitor-oriented programs or facilities.
 - a. Create a formal public art program
 - i. City Public Art Policy & Program
 - ii. Public Art Fund
 - b. New Artist Housing & Studio Space
 - c. Create a developer incentive to provide public art and artist housing

- d. Adaptive Reuse of Industrial Buildings for Arts Uses to Maintain Authenticity and Appeal
 - i. Facilitate conversion of two industrial buildings (AI's and Taekwondo) to be artist housing/studio spaces (public/dining spaces on top).
- e. Implement recurring events to increase excitement around the district
 - i. A "First Friday" (or other similarly catchy event)- where each art gallery and creative business in the district would be open to the public on the first Friday of the month, sometimes with bigger special events. Some form of this could be offered in a virtual format during periods of social distancing.
- f. Create an open air market
 - i. Designate an outdoor space to be a market, either permanently or on certain days, for local artists and businesses to sell their product while conforming to social distance guidelines. Making this easily accessible for bike path users would be ideal and offer an array of benefits to multiple parties.

3. Build Watchemoket Square as a unique dining hub with a focus on outdoor dining and Covid-safe approaches.

- a. Integrate outdoor dining into public parks and spaces
Create "micro-picnic" parks to provide social-distance conforming eating areas for patrons of existing and new businesses.

- b. Facilitate redevelopment of Legacy Use Properties
For example convert MTTI property into a waterfront restaurant with outdoor/picnic dining and recreational amenities.
- c. Integrate food trucks
 - i. Create parking and utility connections in public transportation/infrastructure improvements.
 - ii. Implement a delivery program where district restaurants and food trucks deliver your meal to your "micro-picnic" space
- d. Encourage the provision of outdoor dining areas – new and existing restaurants.
 - i. Partner with existing establishments when doing improvements along 1st Street (City could build outdoor dining area along 1st Street for T&T, Integrate Black Duck's outdoor dining with street scape on 1st Street.
 - ii. Incentivize design guidelines, or zoning regulations
For new restaurants that encourage/require outdoor dining areas.

4. Enhance, build, and capitalize on outdoor recreation.

- a. Highlight Watchemoket Square as an area where the waterfront and Bike Path converge in an urban setting
 - i. Promote the intermodal interface
- b. Bold Point Park Enhancements
 - i. Create sidewalks into the park to promote walk-ability
 - ii. Redesign Park for use when concerts are relocated

- c. Pet-Friendly
 - i. Create a dog park as an amenity to support new residential development, attract more people to Square.
 - ii. Explore programming and sponsorship opportunities with Tockwotten and VCA Povar Animal Hospital.
 - iii. Create an outdoor coffee bar and beer garden space for humans to use while their dogs play in the dog park. Can support either a permanent tenant or a rotating schedule of existing local businesses.
- d. Create a fishing pier
 - i. tie in with historic fishing activity – interpretive panels etc.).
 - ii. Recruit a bait and tackle shop or stand.
- e. Recruit outdoor recreation rental business operator
 - i. Create public-private partnership with rental facility at Bold Point Park or as part of arts/culture anchor).
 - ii. Bike rentals
 - iii. Fishing gear
 - iv. Small Watercraft and Kayaks
 - v. Maybe some retail - Kite sales for use at Bold Point? Frisbees, etc.
- f. Make the district a bike destination not a pass-thru
 - i. Incorporate bike parking facilities throughout district
 - ii. Create a centralized place for public bicycle amenities, including a Fixit stand for bicycle repair and a bicycle supply vending machine.
 - iii. Encourage local trips by bicycle by partnering with local businesses to provide discounts to resident bike

riders. Allow residents to purchase a helmet sticker or other similar pass that makes them eligible to receive discounts at participating local businesses when riding their bikes.

- iv. Recruit a bike shop/rental business.

5. Take Pro-active steps for re-development

- a. Encourage new private development and redevelopment (and businesses) within the District that aligns with the City's vision for Watchemoket.
- b. Build on this planning initiative
 - i. Grow and Recruit to establish a desired business mix: bars and restaurants, entertainment, outdoor-recreation/sports/fitness-oriented, art galleries/showrooms, small-scale manufacturing (micro-producers), unique/boutique retail.
- c. Integrate Existing and New Small-scale manufacturing into Arts District
 - i. Make part of visitor experience while maintaining important jobs/tax base
 - ii. Encourage showrooming and on-site retailing of products (jewelry manufacturer on 1st Street as a focus)
 - iii. Public art pieces on-site that reflect manufacturing sector/industry (e.g., let someone paint a mural on their building, or encourage to sponsor sculpture piece out front of their building).
 - iv. Work with manufacturers and other artists to implement a series of online workshops and classes.
 - v. City might need to help finance -possible micro-loan/grant program?

6. Cultivate Public/Private Partnership

- a. Create a partnership with Tockwotton Home to develop corner site (Waterfront Drive and Mauran Ave) in a manner that fosters a sense of Gateway to the Waterfront.
- b. Partner with National Grid to create a well landscaped off-street bike path link that serves to both buffer their operations on the corner of 1st Street. St and Mauran Ave while eliminating a 25 year-old gap in the East Bay Bike Path.

4.0 Recommendations

Overview

Recommendations set as Short, Medium and Long Term and are organized in four categories:

1. Planning & Design
2. Awareness & 'Brand Enhancement'
3. Site Improvements
4. Economic Development

The promotion of active transportation through walking and bicycling can be an incubator for economic development. Watchemoket Square can be developed not only to provide enhanced walking and biking infrastructure, but also to create a "sense of place" where people will want to visit, eat, shop, relax and spend time with passive recreation and cultural activities. Businesses should cater to active transportation participants including providing healthy food choices, outdoor dining and seating areas, passive recreation activities such as board games, corn hole, playgrounds, and shaded seating areas. Amenities should be developed for people of all ages and abilities. Bicycle parking areas and fix-it stations should be provided.

Seek to establish Sowams Heritage Area to promote Tourism to the City and region. Establish East Providence as the Gateway to the past, quite literally as an exit off the highway delivers you into the heart of Watchemoket Square.

The plan identifies and ranks district gateways as follows

- L-1 Primary
- L-2 Secondary
- L-3 Functional

Signage can be separated into three categories

1. Way finding
2. Placemaking
3. Interpretive

Public Art opportunities exist throughout the district.

1. Gateway treatments
2. Highway ramps and interchange
3. Bikepath corridor
4. Parks and Nodes
5. Linkage corridors

4.1 Short Term Recommendations 0-3 years

1. Planning/Design

- a. RIDOT coordination: Veterans Mem. Parkway ramps, I-195 off ramps Henderson Bridge, Waterfront Drive,
- b. RIDEM coordination Veterans Mem. Parkway and ROW areas
- c. Scenic Byway Coordination
- d. National Grid Coordination
- e. Sowams Heritage Area
- f. Heritage and Cultural Sites ADA Ramp compliance inventory
- g. Street RSR values -paving prioritization

- h. Utility Betterment Projects in planning- coordinate
- i. Plan for integration of outdoor dining areas as part of public improvements
- j. Explore design guidelines and/or incentives to encourage establishments to create outdoor dining areas.
- k. Initiate discussions with partners about a potential dog park
- l. Identify locations suitable for bike racks/storage and partner with property owners as necessary to install
- m. Conduct a parking needs assessment and identify appropriate areas for public parking

2. Awareness events

- a. Bikeway Demonstration Projects.
1st Street is a future funded bicycle lane project listed in Moving Forward, Rhode Island's Statewide Bicycle Mobility Plan (2019). It is planned as a protected bike path between Warren Avenue and Veterans Memorial Parkway Branded as 'The Link'. A temporary two-way bikeway is envisioned to be separated from traffic by barrels, cones, pavement markings, and signage. 1st Street will be restricted to one-way southbound travel for the demonstration period. The southbound one-way travel lane will be approximately 12 feet wide which will accommodate emergency vehicles and access to private residences and businesses will

be maintained. It is envisioned that the two existing restaurants that abut 1st Street and Warren Avenue will consider providing outdoor eating areas that are both visible and accessible from 1st Street. Bicycle parking can be provided. Operations will be monitored throughout the demonstration period including recording traffic, pedestrian, and bicycle volumes. Feedback from abutters, users, and City staff will be solicited and summarized. The demonstration project will be publicized with beginning and end dates and events.

- b. Open Studio Event with Artists. An open studio event can be held to promote local artists, Watchemoket Square, local businesses and restaurants, and pedestrian and bicycle connections. A map can be developed and sponsored by local businesses that show the locations and hours of open studios. Active transportation modes will be encouraged and areas where visitors can park, and then walk or ride will be indicated. Food trucks for the event can be considered.
- c. Art Installation at Lewis Waterfront Park and Bold Point Parks. The locations for permanent art installations in these parks should be identified. Bicycle racks should be provided and potentially bike share stations.
- d. Art Installations along the bike path should be considered for both temporary and permanent installations. A program can be developed to implement temporary art along the bike path by encouraging local artists, residents, and students to provide pieces. The art can be replaced periodically,

such an annually. These art installations will help to promote the bikeway and encourage participation by the public. An “opening” can be held to promote the art and the Bikeway. The “opening” could potentially be held at the same time as the Open Studio event.

- e. Murals. A program can be developed to paint murals on building walls (private and public) in the Watchemoket Square area. The murals should be developed by artists at a high artistic level to encourage visitors and to promote awareness of the Watchemoket Square area. A request for murals solicitation can be distributed. The intent would be to give preference to local artists. Some murals can be developed to depict the history and culture of the area. A minimum of funding would be needed for artists supplies, but the artist's time would be pro-bono. The artists and their work would be promoted and publicized. A map can be developed and sponsored by local businesses that show the locations of each mural and artist. Active transportation modes will be encouraged and areas where visitors can park, and then walk or ride will be identified. The City of Worcester has developed a successful mural program in its downtown.
- f. Music Festival. The Bikeway can be used as a linear venue to host a music festival. Volunteer performers would be scheduled at specific times and identified locations along the bikeway, including the parks. Acoustic and electric performers can be considered. A map can be developed and sponsored by local businesses that show the locations and hours of performers. Active transportation modes will be

encouraged and areas where visitors can park, and then walk or ride will be indicated. Food trucks for the event can be considered. This event can be combined with the art “opening” in item d above. Similar programs can be developed for poetry jams and storytelling.

- g. Showcase History. The area is rich in history, each layer significant and intriguing unto itself. Continue to develop Watchemoket Square Day and promote the rich colonial and native American history of the area.
- h. Watchemoket Logo/Brand Art Competition
- i. Conduct a marketing and branding effort for the Gateway area, with community input and potentially a design contest.
- j. Create a design plan for the future of Bold Point Park that incorporates a variety of passive and active recreational uses

3. Site Improvement Actions

- a. Vegetation Management -open-up views of intersections, open-up views to water
- b. Dead Tree removal
- c. Park improvements
- d. Fencing and associated landscape plantings
- e. Sidewalk connection to Bold Point. Provide connection

via 1st Street, Mauran Avenue and Waterfront Drive.

- f. Pedestrian Walkway into Bold Point
- g. Signage clarity. Develop signing plan for regulatory, advisory and information signs. Develop way finding signage to destinations, include distance to destinations.
- h. Signage: Highway Signs should say East Providence. Once off the highway, provide signs that have a uniform and consistent design and develop a logo brand for Watchemoket Square. (See graphic concepts)
- i. Painted crosswalks, bike lane etc. Establish standards for crosswalks and bike lanes that are consistent with local and state bicycle standards. This includes materials (paint, thermoplastic, etc.); patterns such as international crosswalk type; colors; retro-reflectivity; widths and dimensions of lines. Raised crosswalks can be considered for selected locations.
- j. Interpretive panels
- k. John J Lewis Park waterfront access improvements
- l. Landscape pocket park (Mauran Ave)
- m. Add picnic tables throughout Watchemoket Square on public property as a first step towards an outdoor-dining program
- n. Integrate food truck parking into the design of public improvements

4. Economics of Place

- a. Conduct a feasibility study for an Arts & Cultural Anchor Institution/Facility
- b. Establish a lantern trail throughout the Gateway Area and Arts District
- c. Create a developer incentive to provide artist housing and public art
- d. Review land use regulations to ensure they allow dining establishments and outdoor dining
- e. Undertake a study to determine feasibility of a public dock for transient boaters
- f. Explore potential for a public fishing pier
- g. Partner with existing outdoor recreation business(es) to have a pop-up location as a first step in recruiting to locate in Watchemoket Square

4.2 Medium Term Recommendations 3-5 years

1. Planning/Design

- a. Tockwotton Home Vacant Parcel
- b. Streetscapes
 - Street scape Planning + Design
 - Mauran Avenue
- c. Intersection Planning + Design

- Reconfigure Warren Avenue/Valley Street/1st Street (L-3)
- d. Bike Route Planning + Design. Develop new bike facilities:
- Separate Bikeway connection from Waterfront Street to Warren Avenue via Valley Street underneath interchange. The bikeway would then connect with Waterfront Drive where it would travel on the east side of Waterfront Drive in separated from traffic and cross to the west side at Mauran Avenue and continue to Bold Point Park
 - Bike lanes on Mauran Avenue from east of Veterans Memorial Parkway to John J Lewis Waterfront Park.
 - Bike lanes on 2nd Street south of Mauran Avenue.
- e. Heritage Site Interpretation Center – Planning & Design

2. Awareness Events

- a. Waterfront 'Dock and Dine' Initiative

3. Site Improvement Actions

- a. Address lack of walk-ability
 - i. ADA curb ramps
 - ii. Add Curbing where missing
 - iii. Add Sidewalk connections where missing
- b. John J Lewis Park: Create improvements for waterfront access
- c. Build an "Arts Pocket Park" at the intersection of 1st & Mauran
- d. Update existing sculpture park

- e. Create permanent outdoor dining areas on public lands in the district
- f. Build a public dock for transient boaters

4. Economics of Place

- a. Create a visitor website for Watchemoket Square
- b. Establish a new "on-brand" signature event for the Gateway Area, such as a new food, art, or outdoor recreation themed event.
- c. Work with willing property owners of industrial buildings to repurpose
- d. Create an open-air marketplace
- e. Work with local businesses to create a discount program for bikers patronizing Watchemoket businesses

4.3 Long Term Recommendations 5+ years

1. Planning/Design Actions

- a. RIDOT
- b. National Grid

2. Awareness Events

- a. Outdoor Sculpture Competition and Exhibits
- b. Land & Water Based events

3. Site Improvement Actions

- a. Reconfigure Waterfront Drive & Warren Intersection (L-1)
- b. Reconfigure Mauran Ave & Veterans Memorial Parkway Intersection (L-1)
- c. Reconfigure Mauran Ave & Waterfront Drive
- d. Establish Permanent off-street protected Bike Path connection from the Washington Bridge for both of these waterfront routes (North and South) and 2) 'highland' route (existing East Bay Bike path

4. Economics of Place

Working with local restaurants to formalize an outdoor dining program by creating a map and establishing "micro-delivery" program

- a. Work in partnership with the owner of the MTTI property to explore reuse opportunities
- b. Create a marketing campaign targeting recreational boaters
- c. Explore integrating leasable space in any future anchor

institution that can be leased to outdoor recreation business

- d. Work with local manufacturers in the Arts District to explore possibilities for visitor-oriented programs or facilities

4.4 Projects and Budgetary Costs

An array of enhancements and improvements to Watchemoket Square are identified in this study. Some need long term planning and coordination with public and private sector partners, and require robust funding. Other recommendations require less funding and may be implemented in a phased manner, creating incremental change. Some objectives can be reached through the deployment of already available City resources and individual or group volunteer efforts. Noted projects of interest are listed as examples with relative costs shown below.

Mauran Ave / VMPW Intersection Improvements	\$\$\$\$
Warren Ave / Waterfront Dr Intersection Improvements	\$\$\$\$
District wide ornamental street lighting	\$\$\$\$
Waterfront park enhancements	\$\$\$
Sidewalk Improvements	\$\$
Signage / Wayfinding / Placemaking	\$\$
Public Art Installations	\$\$
Protected Bike Path Pilot Project	\$
Vegetation Management	\$

4.5 Partners and Funding

Tax Increment Financing (TIF): In 2019 the City approved and issued nearly \$10M in TIF bonds to fund municipal infrastructure and public amenities on the Waterfront.

East Providence Opportunity Zone: Watchemoket Square falls within the City’s designated Opportunity Zone, making projects in the area eligible for the tax incentives of the federal program. While the scale of project possibilities in the Watchemoket Square area is relatively small compared to anticipated major development elsewhere on the waterfront, smaller projects can be “packaged” with other development efforts for Opportunity Zone fund investors.

Public Art Fund: A public art fund established by the City could provide small grants for public art throughout Watchemoket Square. Other communities have established similar funds through a variety of mechanisms, including state-level grants, charitable donations, and through density bonus programs with real estate developers.

Rebuild Rhode Island Tax Credit Program: Rebuild Rhode Island can fill the financing gap in real estate projects with redeemable tax credits covering up to 20% – and, in some cases, 30% – of project costs. Commercial office, industrial, residential, mixed-use development, ground-up construction, and historic rehab can qualify. A minimum project cost of \$5 million and certain square footage/project size minimums may apply. Approved projects can also be exempted from sales tax on construction materials, furnishings, and equipment. Arts is a target industry of this program. <https://commerceri.com/incentives/tax-credits-and-financing/>

Qualified Jobs Incentive Act: If a company is expanding its Rhode Island workforce, or relocating jobs from out of state, it can receive annual, redeemable tax credits for up to 10 years with the Qualified Jobs Incentive program. Credits can equal up to \$7,500 per job per year, depending on the wage level and other criteria. The minimum number of new jobs needed to qualify varies by industry and company size, but can be as few as 10. The first 500 jobs approved under the program will receive the maximum credit available. Arts is a target industry of this program. <https://commerceri.com/incentives/tax-credits-and-financing/>

Main Street RI Street scape Improvement Fund: The Main Street Rhode Island Street scape Improvement Fund awards grants or loans on a competitive basis for improvements to commercial districts, such as enhanced sidewalks, new street furniture, new way-finding signage, upgraded building facades, and improved street lighting. Projects can receive up to \$300,000 in funding. Applicants must have matching funds of at least 30% of the total project cost. <https://commerceri.com/incentives/main-street-ri-streetscape-improvement-fund/#:~:text=The%20Main%20Street%20Rhode%20Island,facades%2C%20and%20improved%20street%20lighting.>

RI Commerce Corporation Small Business Loan Fund (SBLF): The SBLF aims to fill the gap in financing that small and mid-sized businesses face. SBLF provides direct, fully secured loans up to \$500,000 to existing manufacturing, processing, and selected service businesses. Manufacturers seeking to finance the acquisition of land, buildings, and equipment may qualify for loans in excess of \$500,000. Interest rates are fixed, repayment terms are flexible, and

there's an expectation that at least one job will be created for each \$50,000 borrowed. <https://commerceri.com/financing/>

RI Commerce Corporation tax exempt private activity

bonds: These are available for companies to finance manufacturing projects with a \$10 million maximum limit per project. The bond can finance a percentage of the cost for a manufacturing project including land, new machinery and equipment, building costs, and certain eligible soft costs. Interest rates are determined by the market. While major manufacturing uses are not anticipated in Watchemoket, this source may be appropriate for certain small-scale/micro-producers that are envisioned to be a part of the future Watchemoket Square and Arts District business mix. <https://commerceri.com/financing/>

RI Commerce Corporation taxable bonds: These are available for businesses that are expanding and require a long-term financing solution. These bonds are almost identical to the tax-exempt bonds, but they are taxable for financing fixed commercial assets such as land, building, machinery and equipment, and related "soft" costs. The limit per project is established by the bond purchaser or credit enhancer. <https://commerceri.com/financing/>

LISC: LISC is a lender for developers working to create affordable housing in Rhode Island. LISC Rhode Island also plays a critical role in financing other important community development projects like child care facilities, small businesses, arts and cultural centers, charter schools and more. Through its lending program, qualified nonprofit partners and for-profit developers can access a full range of financial products that cover the various stages of the real

estate development process, including loans, recoverable grants and equity investments. Predevelopment loans, acquisition loans, construction loans, bridge financing, and working capital are available for a variety of projects, including arts and cultural facilities. <http://rilisc.org/lending/>

RI Housing HOME Investment Partnership Program

(HOME) and Housing Trust Fund (HTF): These programs provide low-interest loans to encourage the construction or rehabilitation of affordable homes, provided that matching funds are available. For HOME, rental proposals must serve households earning no more than 60% of area median family income with homeownership proposals serving households earning up to 80% of area median income. For HTF, the income targeting is much deeper, serving households at or below 30% of area median income. For both, the applicable resale, income and rent restrictions are monitored annually. <https://www.rihousing.com/home-htf/>

Rhode Island State Council on the Arts: Project Grants for Individuals (PGI) provides \$500-\$3,000 grants to artist instigated and organized arts projects with a strong public component. Through PGI, RISCA supports highly creative and talented artists who seek to create, produce, perform, teach, or share their work with the public. Projects might include the coordination and/or creation of: community arts events, public performances, arts workshops and classes, public visual art, and creative collaborations. These grants are for individuals creating work outside of nonprofit or other institutional support and structures. These grants are not for individuals looking to support their studio practice, but for projects that directly engage Rhode Island residents in some way. <https://risca.online/grants/>

Rhode Island Expansion Arts Program: Supported by a collaboration between Rhode Island Foundation, Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (RISCA), and Rhode Island Council for the Humanities (RICH), the Rhode Island Expansion Arts Program (RIEAP) offers funding and organizational assistance to community-based, culturally diverse arts and cultural organizations. It supports small organizations whose programs and missions center on the cultural practices and traditions of Rhode Island’s diverse peoples. RIEAP provides the skills and tools these organizations need to grow as equal partners in the Rhode Island arts and cultural community. Priority is given to newly-emerging groups and those with little history of grant funding. In seeking to build the capacity of these organizations, RIEAP recognizes the broader role they play in strengthening their communities including cultural preservation, education, and youth development. <https://risca.online/rhode-island-expansion-arts-program/>

National Endowment for the Arts Grants for Arts

Projects: Grants for Arts Projects is the National Endowment for the Arts’ principal grants program. Through project-based funding, the organization support public engagement with, and access to, various forms of art across the nation, the creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence, learning in the arts at all stages of life, and the integration of the arts into the fabric of community life. Projects may be large or small, existing or new, and may take place in any part of the nation’s 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. <https://www.arts.gov/grants>



5.0 Graphic Plans and Studies

The study area bounded by the Seekonk River to the West and residential neighborhood to the East stretches North to South along the Seekonk River. Physically limited by interstate I-195 to the North, the area extends south to Bold Point Park.

The highway serves as a direct conduit bringing people into the City via several off-ramps, two east-bound ramps exiting directly into the project area, with a third, a west bound ramp, presently in design, north of I-195 will add previously unprecedented access to the waterfront.

It should be noted that there are no signs on the highway for “East Providence Waterfront” or “Historic Waterfront” or “Waterfront District”, a condition that should be addressed. Watchemoket Square has always been the gateway to the Waterfront.

Through the process of developing this study a hierarchy of gateway areas was identified.

Level 1 Gateways represents the highest level of activity and sense of arrival to the waterfront, and the intersections require wayfinding and branding to welcome residents and visitors alike and guide them to their destination and the local attractions.

- Warren Avenue Intersection with Waterfront Drive.
- Veterans Memorial Parkway intersection with Maura Avenue
- Maura Avenue and Waterfront Drive

Level 2 Gateways are of nearly equal importance, with the slight distinction being they are recognized decision points or intersections that are encountered after decisions have been

made by the traveler to exit the highway or arterial street. These are also all primarily accessed by vehicles.

- Exit 5 from I-195 to Warren Avenue.
- Future exit from I-195 West-bound to Waterfront Drive.
- Arrival to district from Veterans Memorial Parkway.

Third level gateways are important locations as decision points within the district itself. These are often decision points for pedestrians and bicyclists as well.

- Warren Avenue and Burgess Street
- Warren Avenue and 1st. Street
- 1st. and Maura Avenue
- Maura Avenue and Burgess Street
- Maura Avenue and Pier Street
- Warren Avenue and Potter Street

All these locations above represent locations of key decision points, and should be opportunities to signify the arrival to the Waterfront Gateway area.

Level 4 gateways are the outermost access points, most remote from the center of Watchemoket Square. They are none the less important areas to capture and direct people to the Waterfront.

- Taunton Avenue and Potter Street
- Taunton Avenue and Purchase Street
- Purchase Street and Warren Avenue

Concepts visualizing types of signage and gateway treatments can be found in the following Section. It is important that

the branding and approach to signage be developed collaboratively and the types and physical shape, size and configuration of the signage be considered at a detailed level.

The process of considering the various gateways to Watchemoket Square gave rise to the exploration of several concepts regarding connectivity and treatments at the different gateway areas. Key concepts depicted on the Master Plans include

- Improving the following intersections to clarify decision points, improve pedestrian and bicycle access and safety is essential to making the district more walkable and inviting for residents and visitors and will enhance business and redevelopment opportunities.
 - Warren Ave - Waterfront Drive
 - Waterfront Drive and Muaran Avenue
 - Veterans Memorial Parkway and Muaran Avenue

A central aspect of the planning process is making an off-street shared use path connection from the George Redman Linear Bridge to the East Bay Bikepath configured to facilitate connections to anticipated future destinations on the Waterfront as well as to lands north and south of I-195 that are in the process of being redeveloped.

- The most desirable shared use path system would occupy excess ROW along Waterfront Drive.
- Connections across the former Valley Street and Sculpture Park should be enhanced, with safe high-

visibility crossings at key inter-sections.

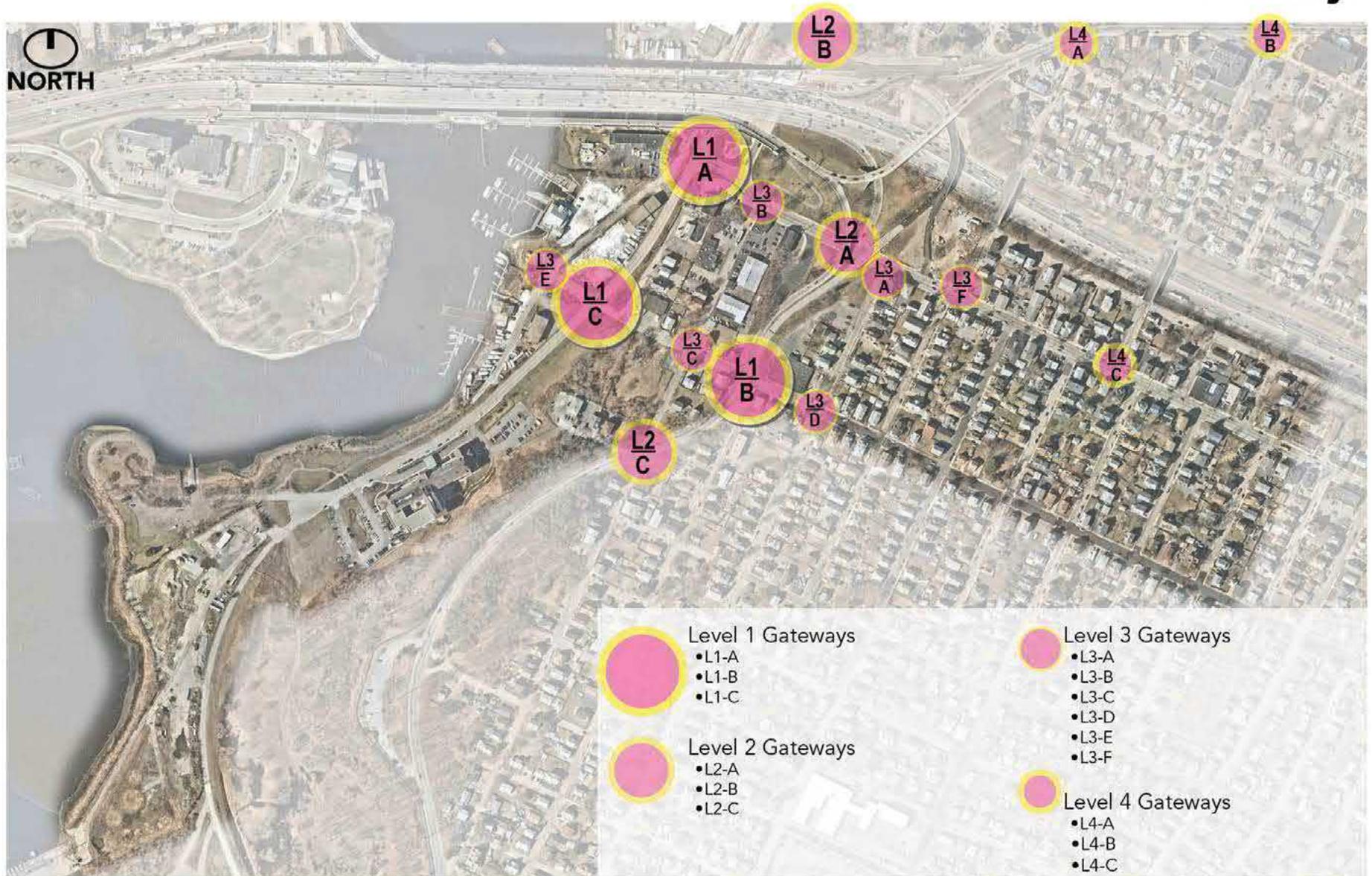
- Build upon early conversations with Tockwotton Home and National Grid to create a connection along the northern and eastern edges of land owned on Muaran Avenue and 1St Street.
- The design of an off-street connection to the East Bay Bike Path would create a tremendous asset and would solve a design challenge that has been unaddressed for over 20 years. Designed correctly the bike/ped linkage corridor would offer a needed land-scape buffer for any substation .
- In October 2019 members of the City Planning and Economic Development Office provided a briefing to attendees at on Viable options for bike connectivity along 1St. Street remain as well, though of a lesser quality. Preliminary concepts such as the creation of an on-street protected bike path link explore one approach to improving connectivity within the statewide bike network.

Enhancements needed across the entire district include new and wider sidewalks, accessible wheelchair ramps, crosswalks, street trees, ornamental lighting and related site amenities.

Both Lewis Waterfront Park and Bold Pont Park need enhancements to attract and retain users, provide better access, better accommodate expanded programming and facilitate maintenance and upkeep.

5.1 District Gateways

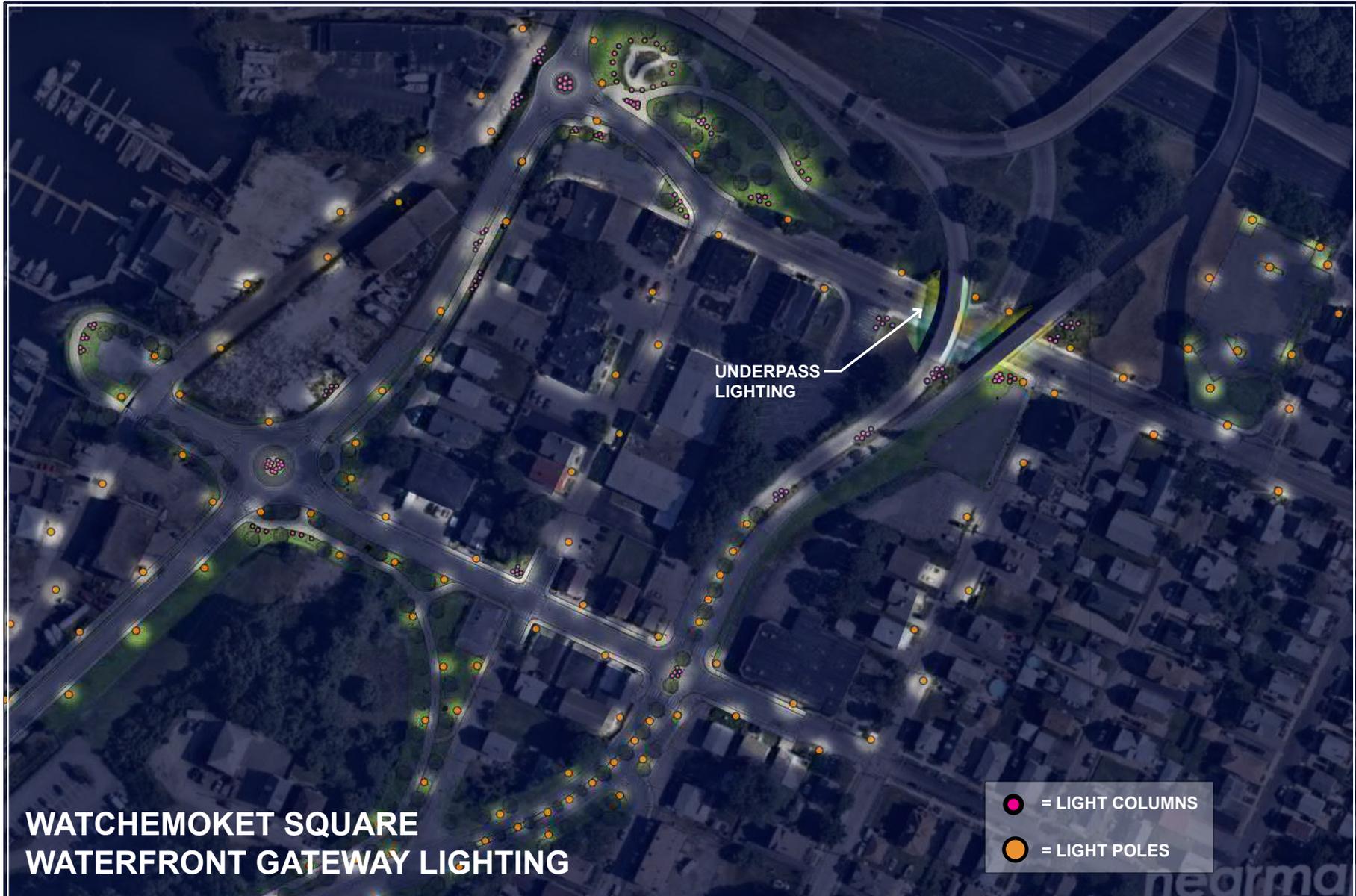
Gateways



5.2 Master Plan Studies - Concept A



5.2 Master Plan Studies - Lighting



5.2 Master Plan Studies - Concept B

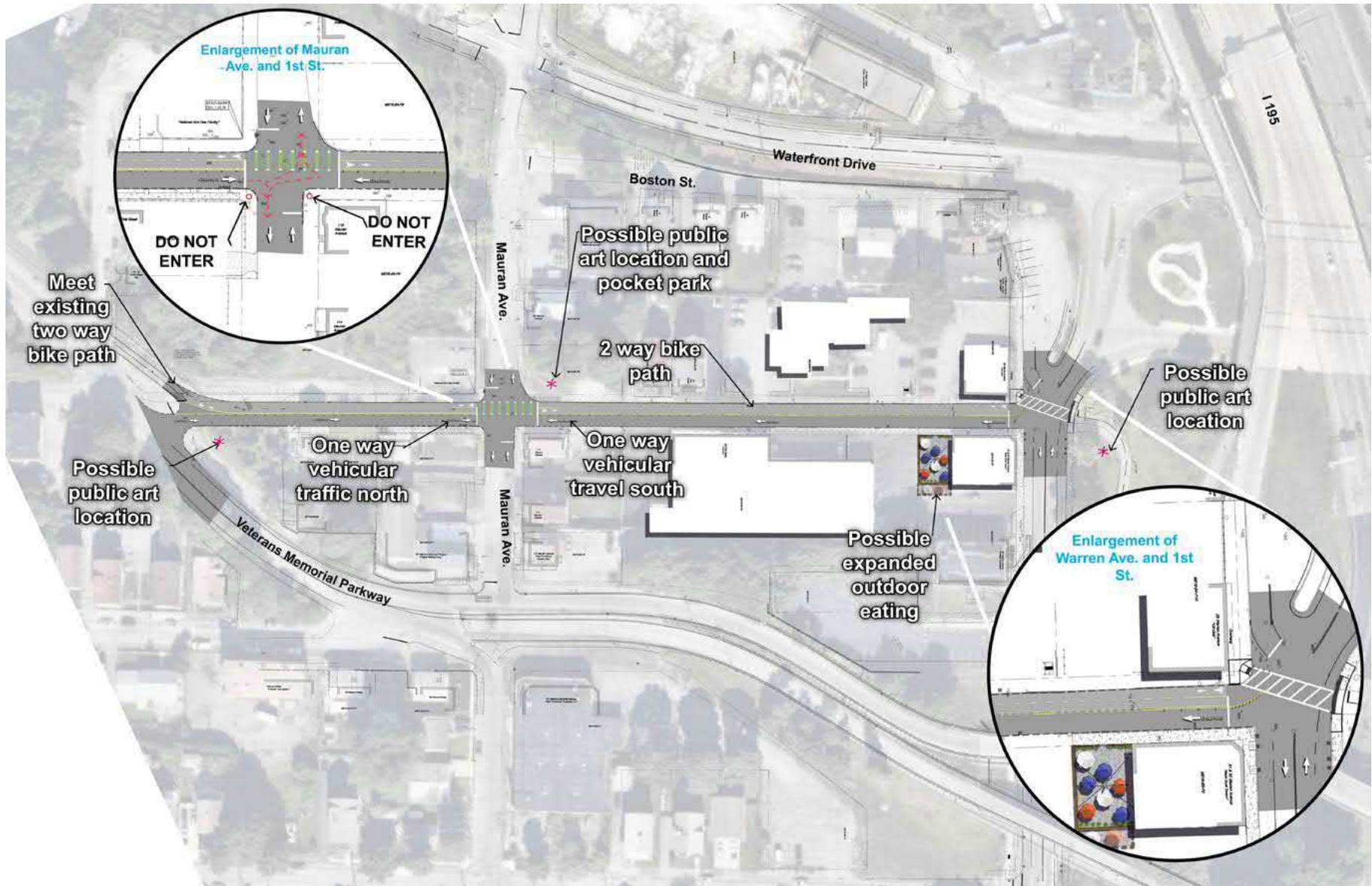


5.2 Master Plan Studies - Concept C



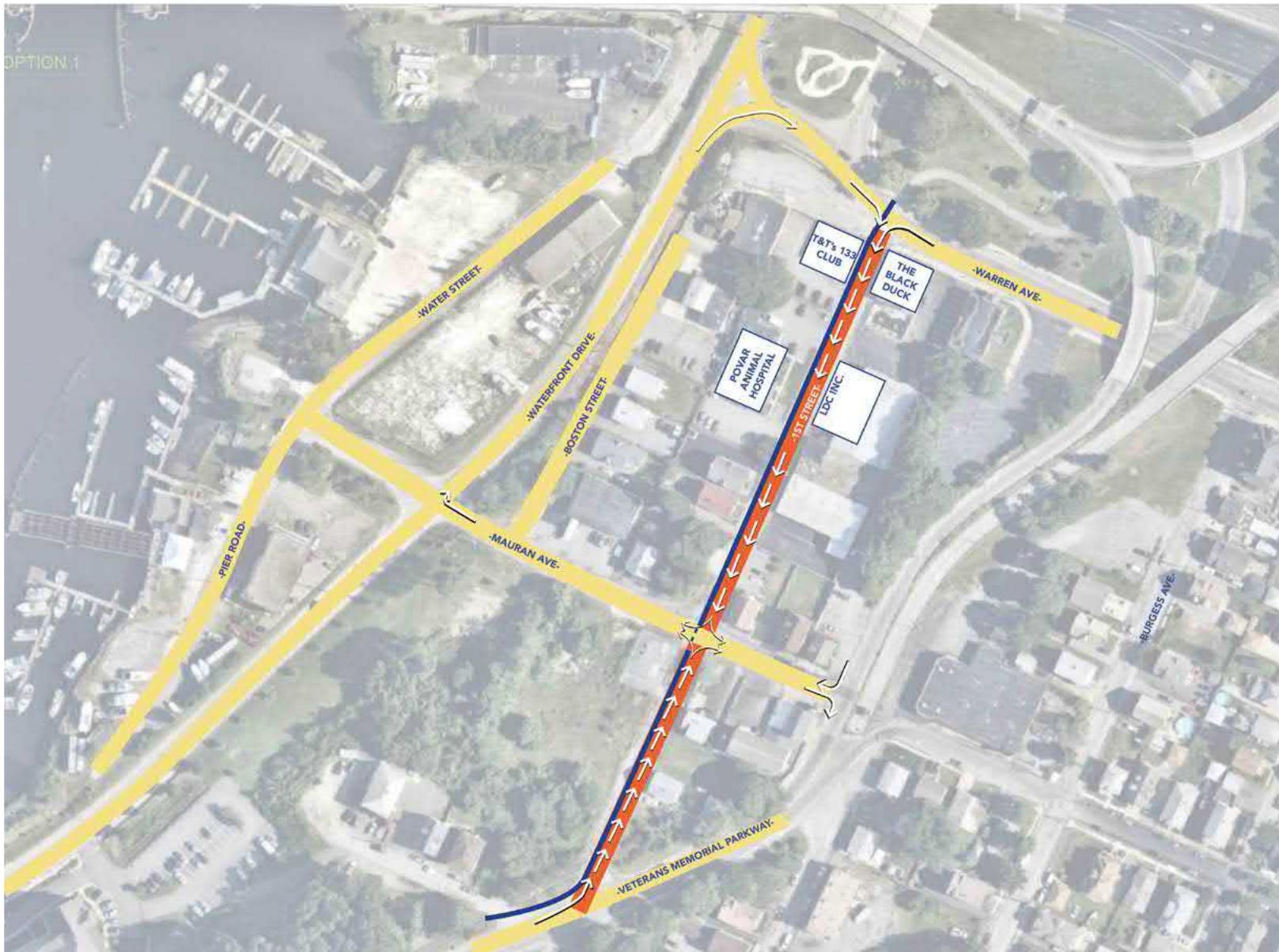
5.3.1 1st. Street Studies

Protected Bikepath Pilot Project Conceptual Plan



5.3 1st. Street Studies

Protected Bikepath Pilot Project Vehicular Circulation



5.4 Connectivity

Making Connections to Capitalize on the Bike / Ped Network

Watchemoket Square is the Gateway to the City's Waterfront lands, both those north and south of Interstate I-195. The approach to enhancements and circulation in this area must draw inspiration from the earliest days of the square when Tanuton Avenue met Warren Avenue. This historic street intersection is what in-fact became 'the square' which was a center of commerce, civic pride and a hub of connectivity.

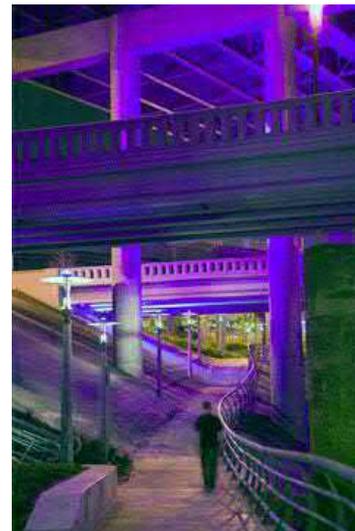
Currently design and engineering work is underway to create an exit off west-bound I-195 bringing vehicles to Waterfront Drive. Actively incorporating the key objectives of multi-modal connectivity, way finding and branding is critical to connecting land and businesses north and south of I-195. The east-west highway should not be allowed become a barrier to the City's waterfront resources which follow the river, north to south.

It is critical that pedestrian and bicycle mobility is provided for in a north-south manner, and that safe linkages are made to Valley Street, Waterfront Drive and re-developed lands west of Waterfront Drive.

Incorporating objectives that seek to make robust connections below and beyond I195 is critical to unifying the waterfront. The anticipated discontinuance of Valley Street as a thru street may provide an opportunity for enhanced pedestrian connections and possibly provide additional parking near the bike path. The successful re-use and development of lands immediately north of I195 and east of Waterfront Drive will be related to the ease and level of access to the East Bay Bike Path and George Redman Linear Park/Washington Bridge.

Any spaces and passageway under the highway must be well lit

and would be best served if activated by public creative lighting, art installations or interpretive exhibits, to help add vibrancy and interest to the spaces below the highway for users of the shared use path and any parking areas created.



5.4 Connectivity

Connection for bicycles and people must be enhanced to leverage the existing bike network and activate vast areas of open land ready for redevelopment. Attractive and safe passage below the highway is essential. Re-use of Valley Street (A) may

provide the best opportunity as Waterfront Drive (B) experiences heavy traffic and is without sidewalks and is somewhat constrained in width under the highway. Refer to before and after visualizations for conceptual treatments of this area.



Connecting the Waterfront: A shared-use path connection beneath I195 is a key component of creating value along the waterfront. Safe cross-walks will ensure bike and pedestrian mobility and will allow waterfront development and

neighborhoods to the north to connect to Watchemoket square and Bold Point Park. Creating convenient bike path parking would further make use of otherwise 'dead' space below the highway.



6.0 Before & After Visualizations

Watchemoket Square is uniquely defined in the minds of people that frequent the area. For most visitors to the area the diverse uses and fragmented street pattern makes getting around the area difficult.

In many cases minor improvements to the physical environment would make a significant difference and add greater clarity for people coming to the area.

- Creating visual clarity by simplifying decision points
- Identifying Gateways
- Clear Way finding Signage
- Equalize emphasis of various transportation modes
 - o Vehicles
 - o Bicycles
 - o Pedestrians

Modifications to the physical environment can be complex or extensive, with correlating scale of costs. But often slight refinements to existing conditions may make significant differences in the way a place is perceived. Simple ideas as listed below can dramatically alter and unify an area.

- Paint: Painted bridge abutments, graphically painted buildings,
- Large-scale murals etc.
- Vegetation Management – Removing weeds, pruning or removing overgrown trees, removing dead or ‘non-contributing’ trees.
- Re-defining the edge of public space - adjusting the location of visual and physical barriers to unify the district. Public display of art - temporary and rotating art pieces can add interest and energy to an area, and signal the presence of a robust arts community.

Enhancements can be phased in, to encourage near term use and enhanced perception of an area, with later and more permanent improvements to follow. For example, developing a protected on-street bike path on 1st Street. Street with signage, paint and bollards would signal a dramatic emphasis on active transportation and as such welcome bicyclists and pedestrians to the area. National and international examples reflect that such actions can result in an engaged business response in the form of new services, restaurants and café’s in place along the bike path corridor.

Early, modest enhancements can part of a phased approach to arriving at more permanent solutions which might include improvements to drainage, curbing, signage, sidewalks, lighting and landscaping and site amenities.

Large scale, transformative improvements such as the re-configuration of the Mauran Ave/Veterans Memorial Parkway intersection, enhancements to Lewis Park, district-wide ornamental lighting and creating a permanent bike path connection require more planning, permitting and funding. But they are essential components of fully establishing Watchemoket Square as a distinctive arts and entertainment destination.

The following pages contain visualizations depicting some of the afore mentioned ideas. In the case of 1st Street. Street a phased approach is illustrated to reflect an approach to developing near term enhancements that may be of particular importance in the era of the COVID -19 Pandemic as more people are actively cycling than ever before.

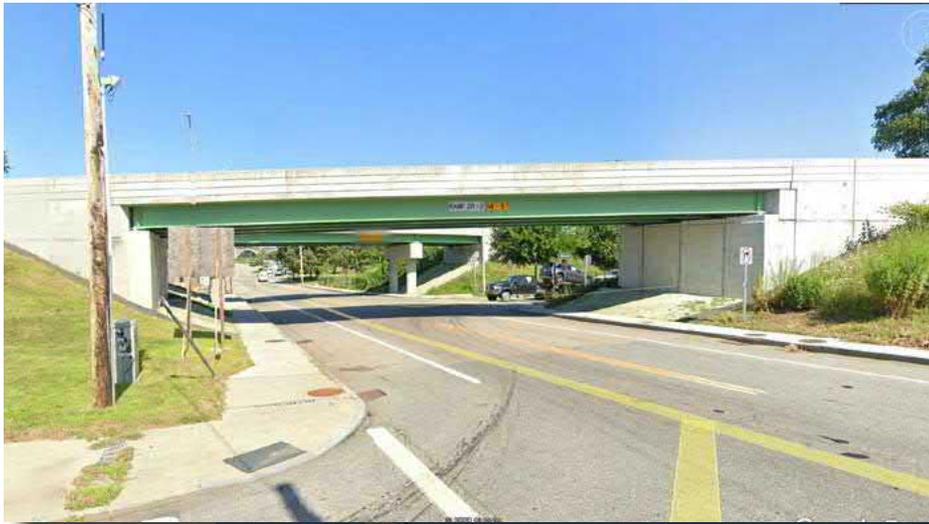


Waterfront Gateway: Enhance Warren Avenue

Removing vine growth and other unwanted vegetation throughout the district will facilitate efficient maintenance practices and make the district more enticing.

Relocation or the elimination of fencing will help to visually open and unify the East/West Warren Avenue corridor and de-emphasize the nearby highway.





Waterfront Gateway: Enhance Warren Avenue

Short-term low cost enhancements to the Warren Avenue Corridor could include developing unified abutment or bridge treatments to visually emphasize the street and create awareness of the Watchemoket Square District. Initial improvements consisting of vegetation management and coordinated and thematic paint would help encourage East/West walk-ability.

In later phases bridge and site lighting should become a top priority to connect business and parking areas.

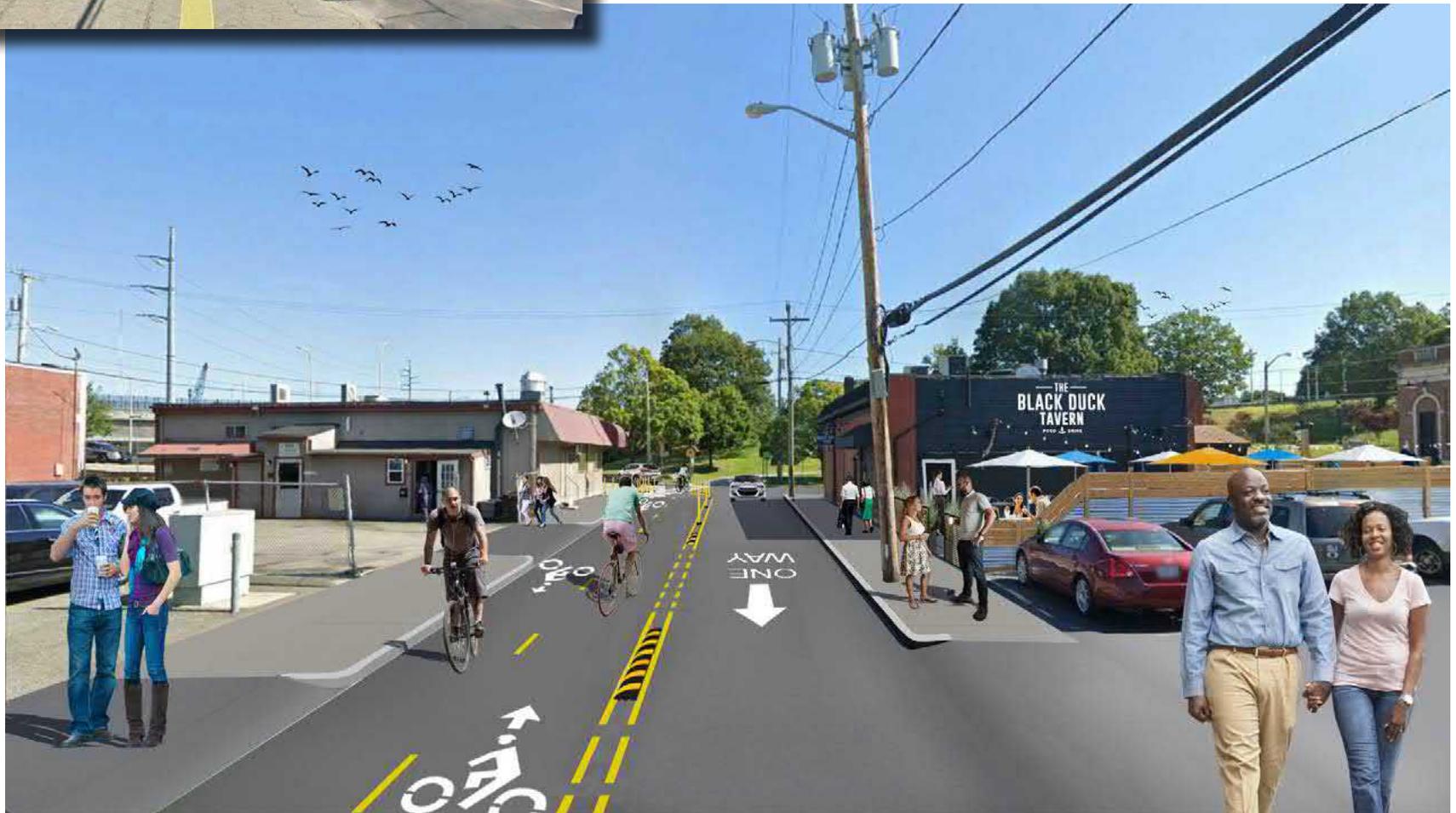




Active Transportation: Enhance 1st Street

Acknowledging the East Bay Bike path connection to the Redman Linear Park / Washington Bridge is a key part of rethinking and changing perceptions of the district. Enhancements would make this identified “Bike Network Gap” safer for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists alike.

Envisioned as a Pilot Project, initial improvements consisting of modifying vehicular traffic patterns, new signage, paint, and bollards would help re-invent the roadway corridor and lead the way to greater changes in the surrounding area.





Active Transportation: Enhance 1st Street

Future enhancements with greater permanence on 1st Street would require traffic pattern changes, and include curbing and drainage work with ornamental lighting and a permanent grade separated shared use path.

Perspective view depicts vehicular travel one south-bound, eliminating vehicles crossing Warren Avenue to Valley Street which often creates conflicts with cyclists and pedestrians.





Active Transportation: Enhance 1st Street

Conceptual rendering depicting potential improvements on the western edge of 1st Street in the form of a shared use path (sidepath) facility.





Waterfront Gateway: Enhance Mauran Avenue

Mauran Avenue is a well-scaled, walkable link between the waterfront and neighborhoods to the east. With the creation of a safe crossing at Veterans Memorial Parkway the roadway can be re-configured to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians. Presently there are no sidewalks west of 1st Street on Mauran Avenue.

Future enhancements of Mauran Avenue include curbing and drainage work with ornamental lighting and a permanent grade separated multi-use pathway.





Gateway Treatments

Mauran Avenue once was a direct connection from residential neighborhoods to the east to the Waterfront. While less well known than Warren Avenue, the street could offer residents a better and more walkable connection to Waterfront Drive and Bold Point Park. Establishing a safe crossing of Veterans Memorial Parkway is essential to activating this link to the waterfront. Intersection improvements necessarily would include traffic control and calming measures such as enhanced pedestrian crossings, landscaped islands and pedestrian walk signals.



Enhance Existing Buildings

The visual form and character of many of the existing industrial and warehouse buildings in Watchemoket Square is evocative of the areas history as a working waterfront. These buildings should be emphasized and become central to the Watchemoket Square district and branding.

Bright, full building wrap murals represent a short term way to unify and re-brand the area.





Enhance Existing Buildings

Conversely, utilizing different colors but identical graphics is another way to create cohesiveness.

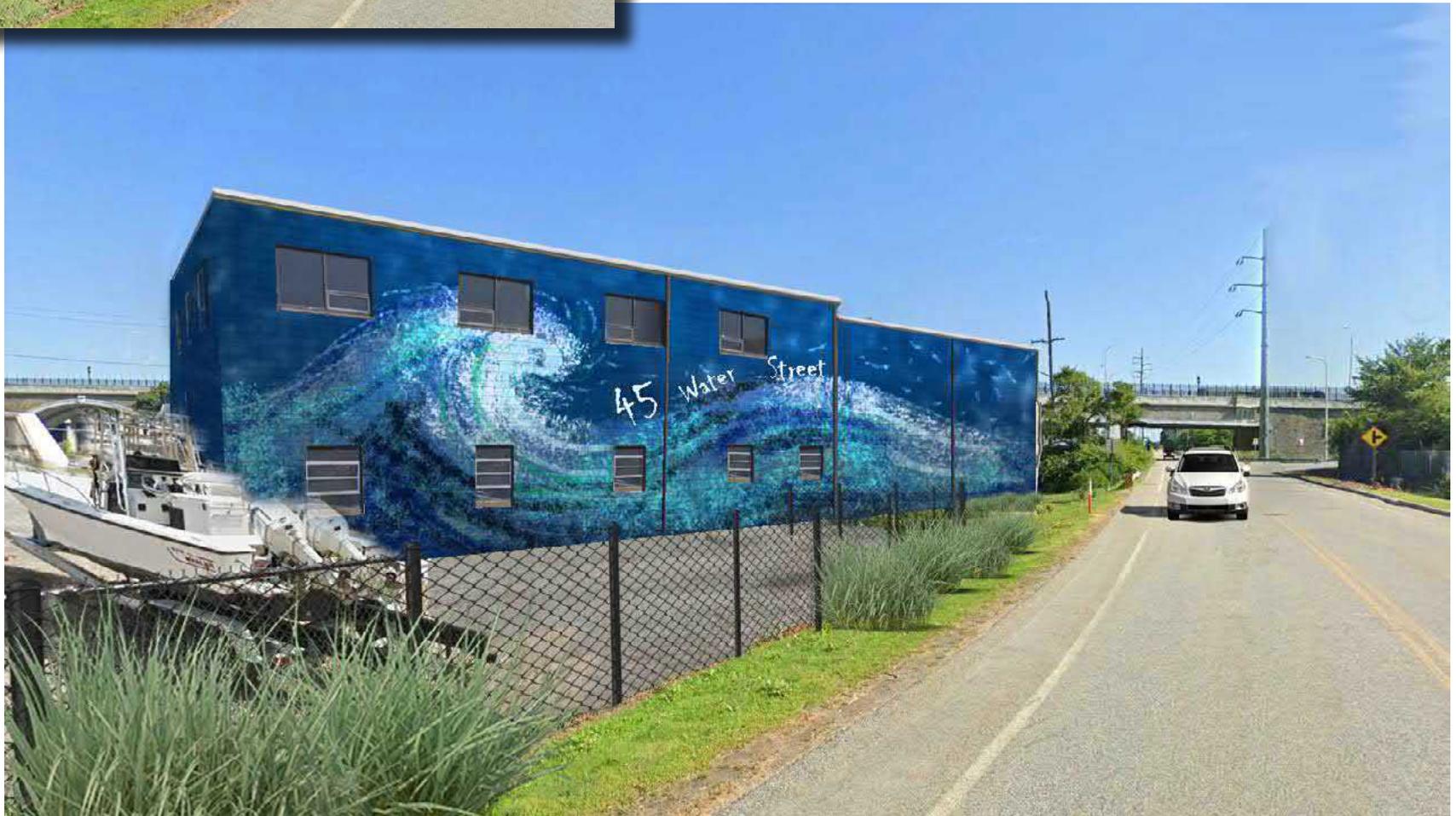
With this approach interest is added using strongly consistent graphic language, but the background colors are purposefully different but complementary colors.





Enhance Existing Buildings

Creating a new look to the district that showcases individualism and artistry with unique building murals suggests the presence of a strong arts community. Such graphics could also signal reuse and communicate to the public the buildings have been re-purposed and are destinations within the district.





Enhance Existing Buildings

Applying graphic wrap-around murals or paint to existing industrial buildings becomes a stronger, less individualized and more cohesive statement when such treatments are applied to multiple buildings.

Utilizing the same color scheme on different buildings for example would unify and serve to visually reinforce the character of an area.

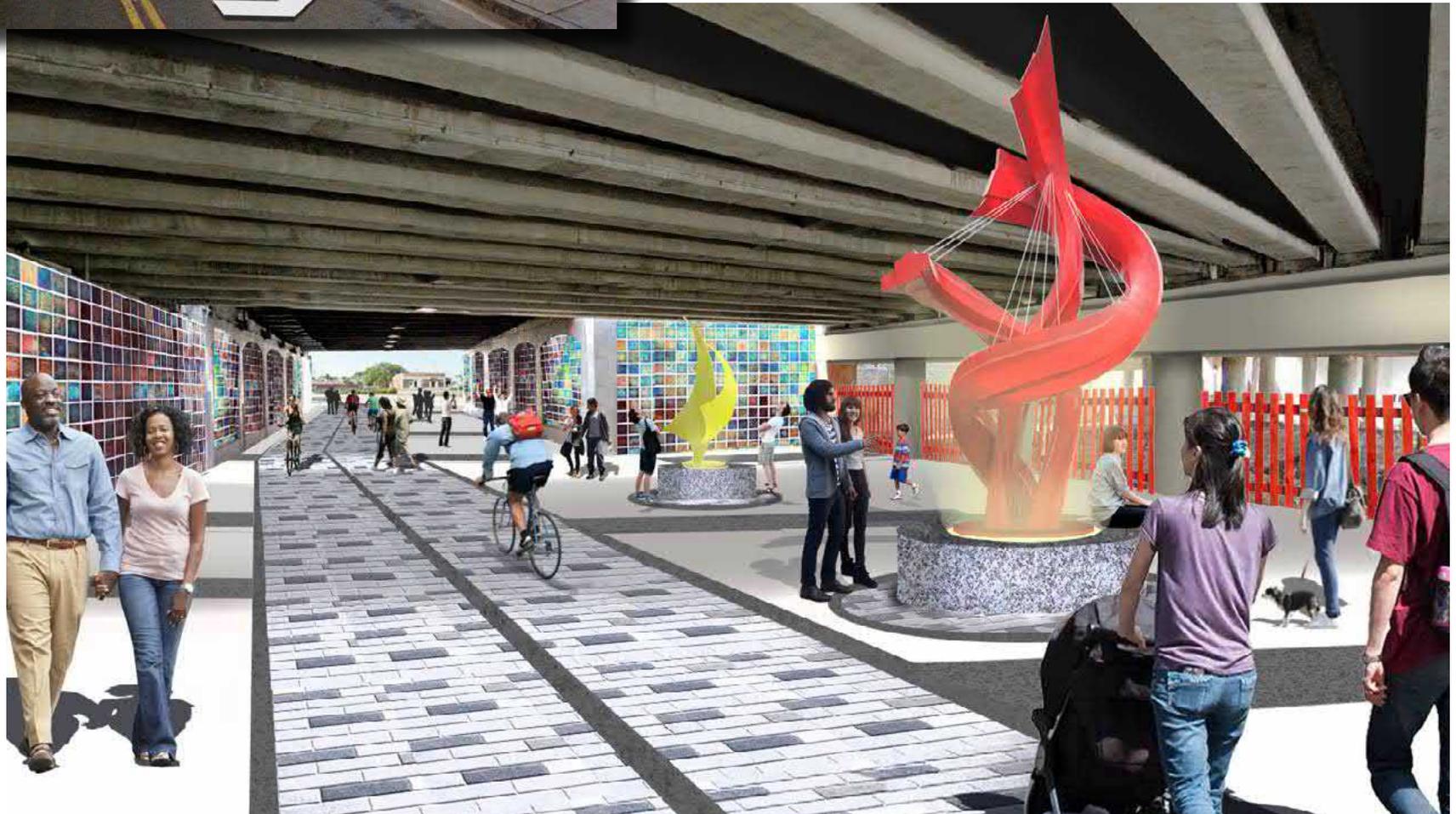




Enhance Waterfront Connections

The proximity of I-195 affords great opportunity and positions the Watchemoket Square Area as the Gateway to the City's Waterfront. The west-bound off ramp to Waterfront Drive will eliminate a section of Valley Street.

This vacated space below the highway should be reused. One option is to create a safe and interesting passage that serves to link users of the East Bay bike path/George Redman Linear Park bike/ped network to waterfront destinations north of the interstate. Making such a connection for pedestrians and bikes on Waterfront Drive is challenging.





Enhance the Public Spaces on the Waterfront

Lewis Park is a overlooked asset on the waterfront. The park is located at the western end of Mauran Avenue and physically represents the strongest visual and walkable link between the waterfront and the center of Watchemoket Square. Restoring public access to the water in the form of a pier and floating dock at this location is a key part of re-establishing Watchemoket Square as a gateway. Enhancements to the park should include ornamental lighting, site amenities, interpretive signage, public art and landscape enhancements to the green space. The creation of on-street parking nearby would allow for the conversion of gravel parking lot to grassed areas.



7.0 Art and District Branding

Brand

Developing a clear brand identify for Watchemoket Square and framing the area as the gateway to the East Providence Waterfront is important for many reasons, not the least of which is instilling a sense of place and meaning. In Rhode Island streets and places with names like Wickenden Street, Southern Thames Street, Ferry Street, Water Place, Washington Square, Davol Square, and Water Street are all evocative names of interesting places people seek to visit. Restoring name recognition for the district is important and intertwined with both the history of the area and the future vision for the City's Art and Entertainment District.



Ultimately the selection of brand and logo imagery are an essential part of restoring a lost sense of place and capturing the interest of residents and visitors alike. Communicating what Watchemoket Square once was and now more importantly is becomes necessarily linked to projecting the area as the artistic and entertainment hub of the city.

A several concepts for branding of the district are shown on the following pages. They are representative of themes that may resonate with the businesses and residents of the area. Finalizing a district brand may be best handled thru a local competition to flesh out all relevant themes, with then professional support in the final refinement and execution of the actual logo/brand design. It is important that the branding chosen be translatable into various media forms of assorted shapes and sizes, consumable in different formats. The logo/brand must appear consistently and also be strongly translatable to various forms of signage for use at gateways and other important locations.



Art

Projecting visual cues and evidence of a thriving arts and entertainment district helps convey a vibrancy of the area and draws interest. Clear and well executed art and craft work should be evident in the character of the area, and not related to gallery spaces only. Built elements in the district including building facades, street lighting, paving, and site amenities should all be carefully considered to convey a sense of artistry.

Well-sited sculptures and outdoor art installations will create destinations for visitors to visit. These features telegraph the presence of the arts community and invite people to walk about and explore.

The East Providence Arts Council has already developed the concept of a "Lantern Trail", in essence a series of outdoor art installations with a uniform kiosk like appearance and 2-D art



displays from different artists. The project is supported by local artists and would be best deployed in a focused manner starting within the study area and extending a long the bike path and into Bold Point Park.

Installing simple granite block bases to accommodate temporary art installations would immediately start a conversation in the regional arts community and set the stage for a more visible arts presence. The key to advancing the presence of art is to start.



Inspiration for Signage Concepts

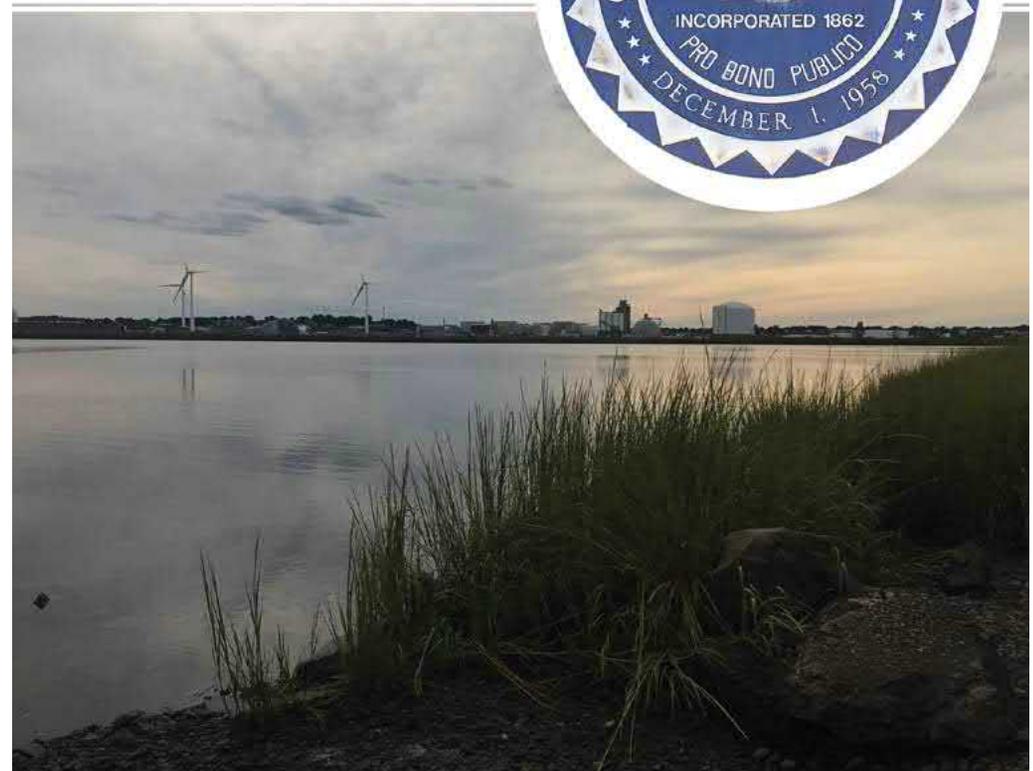
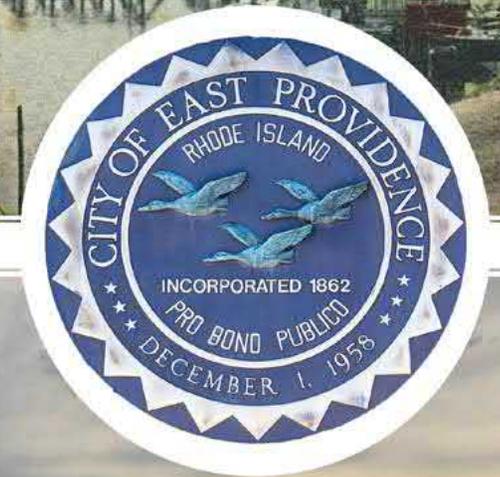
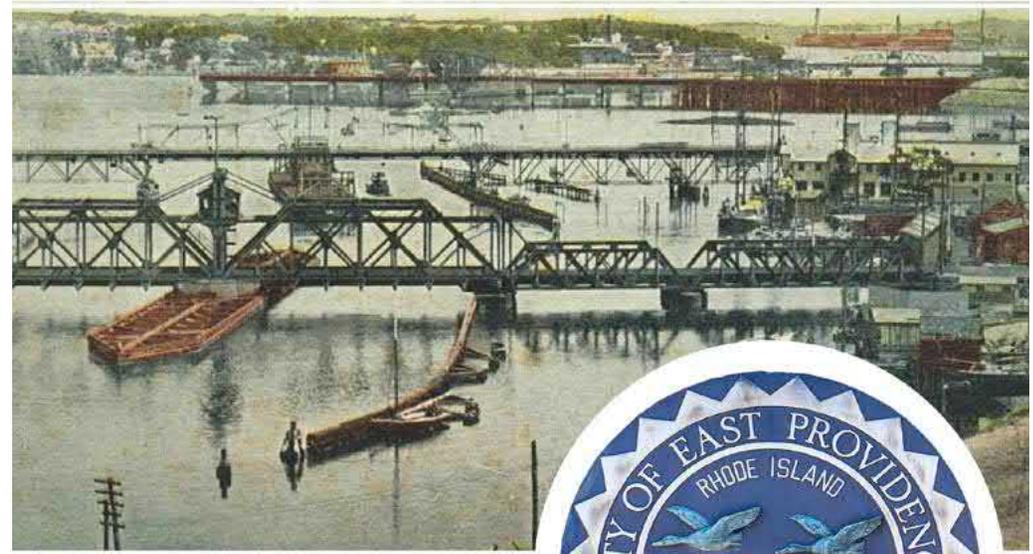
The Watchemoket Square area has wealth of influences to draw from when considering how best to develop an approach to signage.

The history of the area and importance of the waterfront to the City is perhaps the most significant and commonly discussed theme. Many feel the redevelopment of the waterfront represents the future of the City. Clearly this area once again holds vast potential.

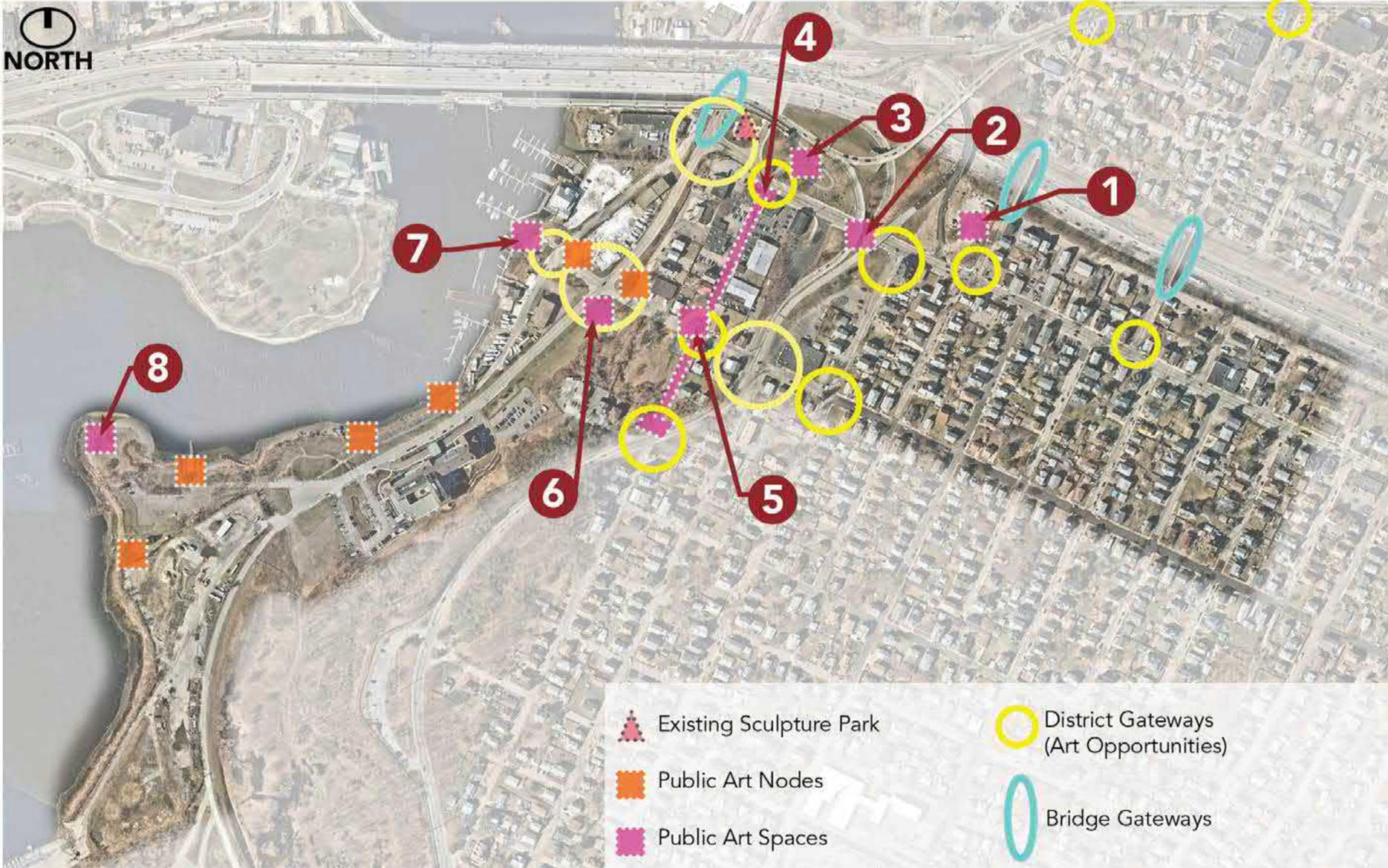
The natural environment and overall waterfront setting emerged as strong theme, and links to the City seal and the origins of the naming of the Seekonk River and Watchemoket Square. Even today visitors can walk to the waters edge and take-in a setting that has similar landscape features to those present pre-colonization. In many cities urbanization has hardened the waters edge and changed it beyond recognition from its natural state.

A notable counterpoint to the natural setting that emerged was an interest in the industrialization of the waterfront, noted as a source of inspiration. Many elements from that era could be re-envisioned and interpreted in a modern, artistic and urban context. Introduction of elements such as steel beams and trusses for use in lighting and signage granite blocks, capstans, bollards and pilings are all evocative of the past history of the working waterfront and also relate to architecture in the area.

Preserving and promoting either of these two themes would impart a distinct and strong sense of identify for Watchemoket Square that could differ from many other coastal RI communities, making the area a distinct destination.



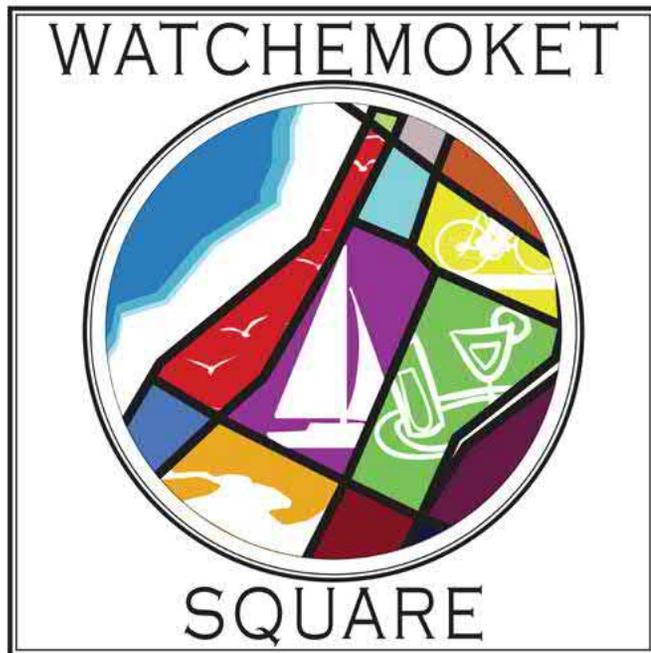
Potential Public Art Areas





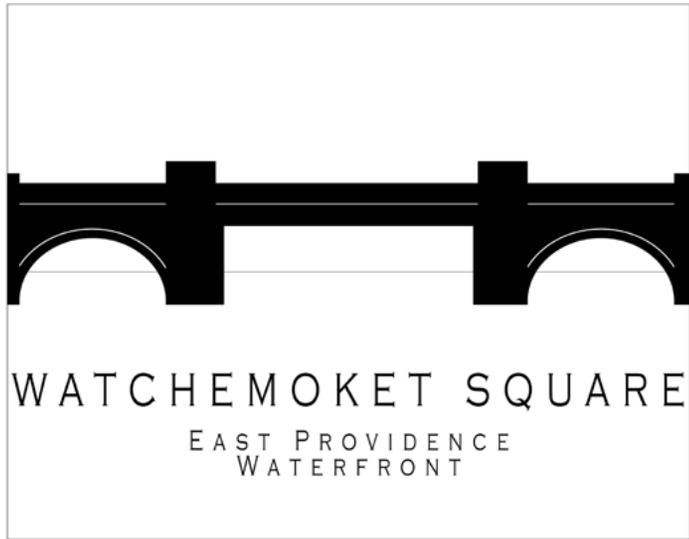
Traditional

Inspired with a traditional and simple approach, this design offers a bold statement that immediately stylizes the name of the square, which currently is not widely known or understood. The visual of a strong graphic shape of a square offers a play on words, yet creates a clean frame for the intent of the design. This type of graphic can easily be incorporated into East Providence website pages, fliers, signs, and more without visual clutter or taking attention away from other graphics, yet will still be a stand-alone brand for Watchemoket Square. This style of brand / logo can also be reproduced easily at various sizes with clarity.



Art Inspired

Derived from the public's desire for a distinct Arts District, this design highlights important aspirational aspects of what Watchemoket has to offer as a mosaic graphic, while subtly mimicking the layout of streets and blocks in the square. Each shape resembles blocks in the square highlighting aspects such as the restaurant business, waterfront activities, bike and pedestrian access, and more. By including a display of vibrant colors, this design is easily recognizable and relates directly to the geographic layout of Watchemoket Square.



Gateway Themed

Focusing on the important and historical gateway from Providence to East Providence, the graphic highlights the Washington Bridge which is a well known passage for individuals traveling into either city. Both by car and by boat, individuals recognize this bridge as entering the cities and the East Providence Waterfront. The Washington Bridge is shown as a simple silhouette offering a very intentional design. The significance of the bridge is that it is also a primary connection for bicyclists into Watchemoket Square



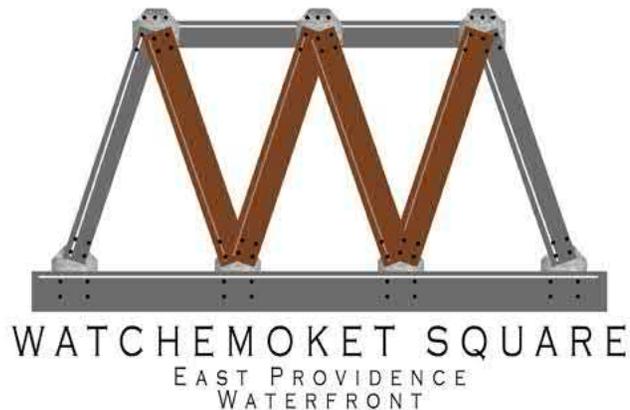
Attraction Themed

Touching upon the mosaic design but utilizing a monochromatic color approach, this graphic displays the aspects of the square and is overlaid with the letter W. The layering offers depth with also a playful artistic approach. The layout is more fluid which makes it unique compared to a more formal design, while also showing the attractions of the square.



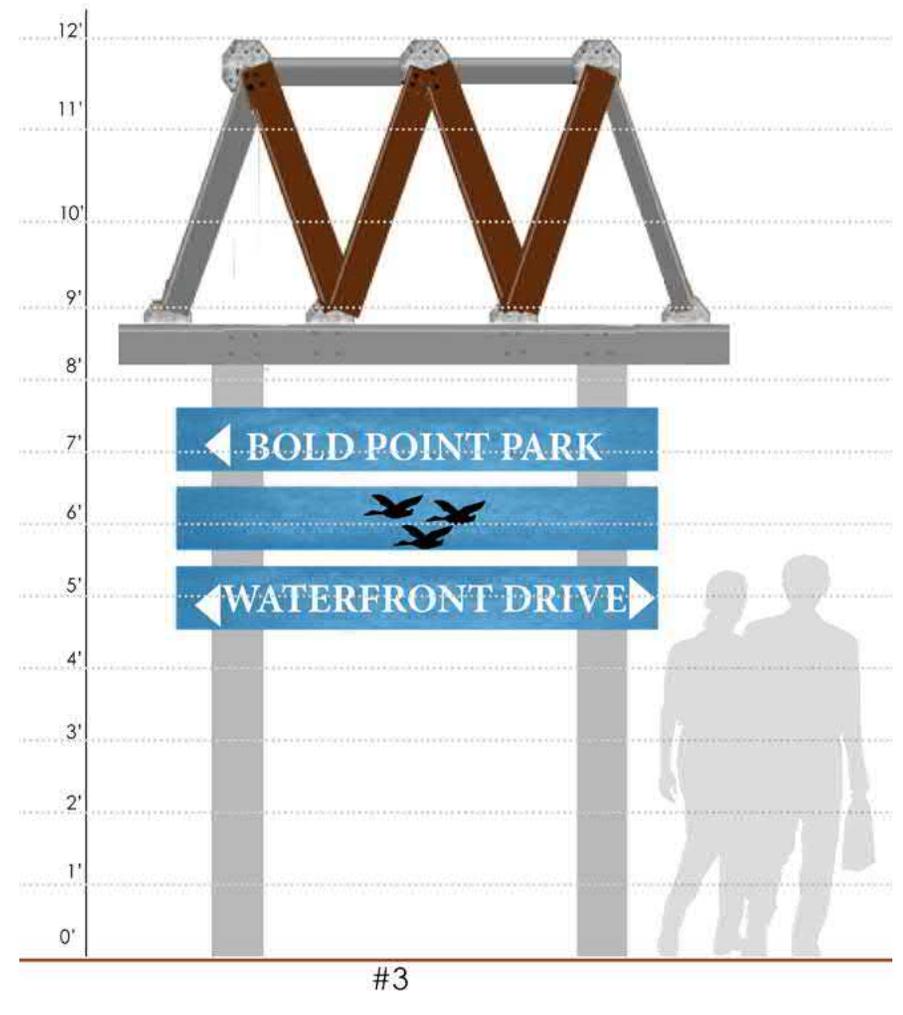
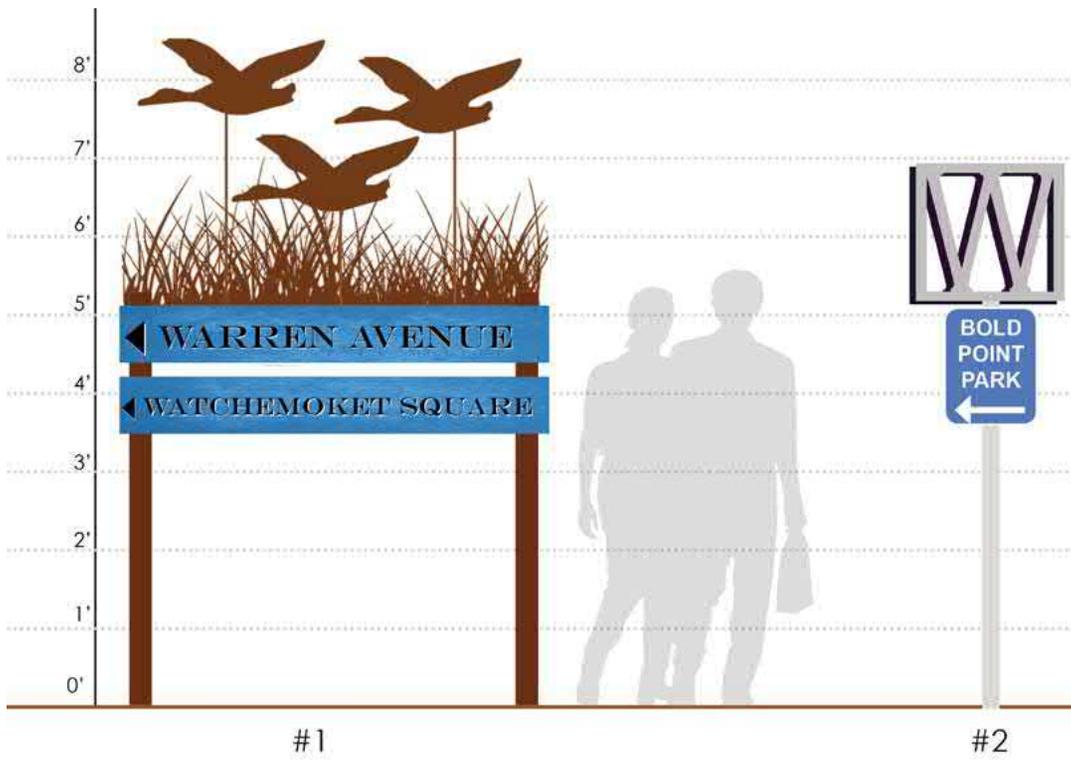
Natural Themed

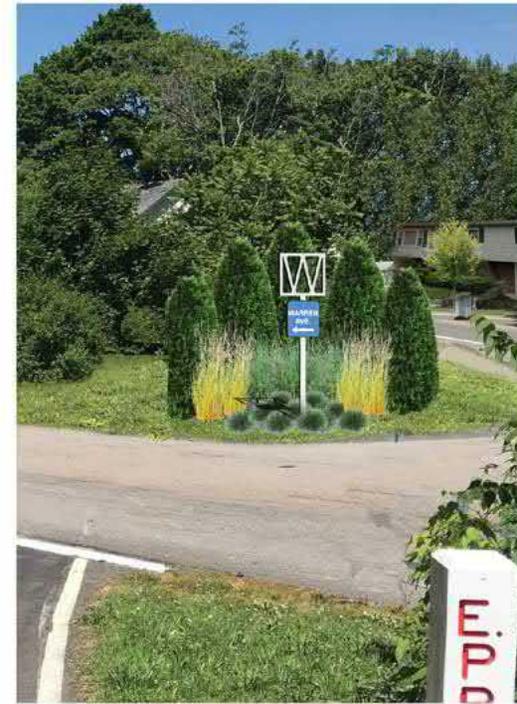
Evoking the natural aspects of the waterfront along Watchemoket Square and East Providence, this design draws upon recognizable layout of ducks found on the City's Seal and incorporates natural landscape imagery. The East Bay Bike Path runs directly through Watchemoket Square and then onto a stretch surrounded by the waterfront where the silhouette of waterfowl can be seen in the landscape. This approach reflects a greater connection to the natural world, one that uniquely captures the City's geography and natural resources.



Industrial Themed

Evoking the City's past industrial waterfront history, this design approach incorporates the 'W' in a truss fashion for Watchemoket Square. This also reflects the India Point Rail Road Bridge as well as the 'Crook Point Bascule Bridge to the North. This theme recalls significant historic structures and gateways into the city and ultimately the square. While keeping history alive, the design recalls the era of a working waterfront and offers a modern take on what helped make Watchemoket Square the center of it all.





Intersection at Veteran's Memorial Parkway and First Street

District Gateway Signage

This series of graphic studies explores how brand/logo decisions might appear when translated in to district gateway locations.

Smaller, simple brand logs are more flexibly implemented, require less space, and can be augmented with plantings where space exists.

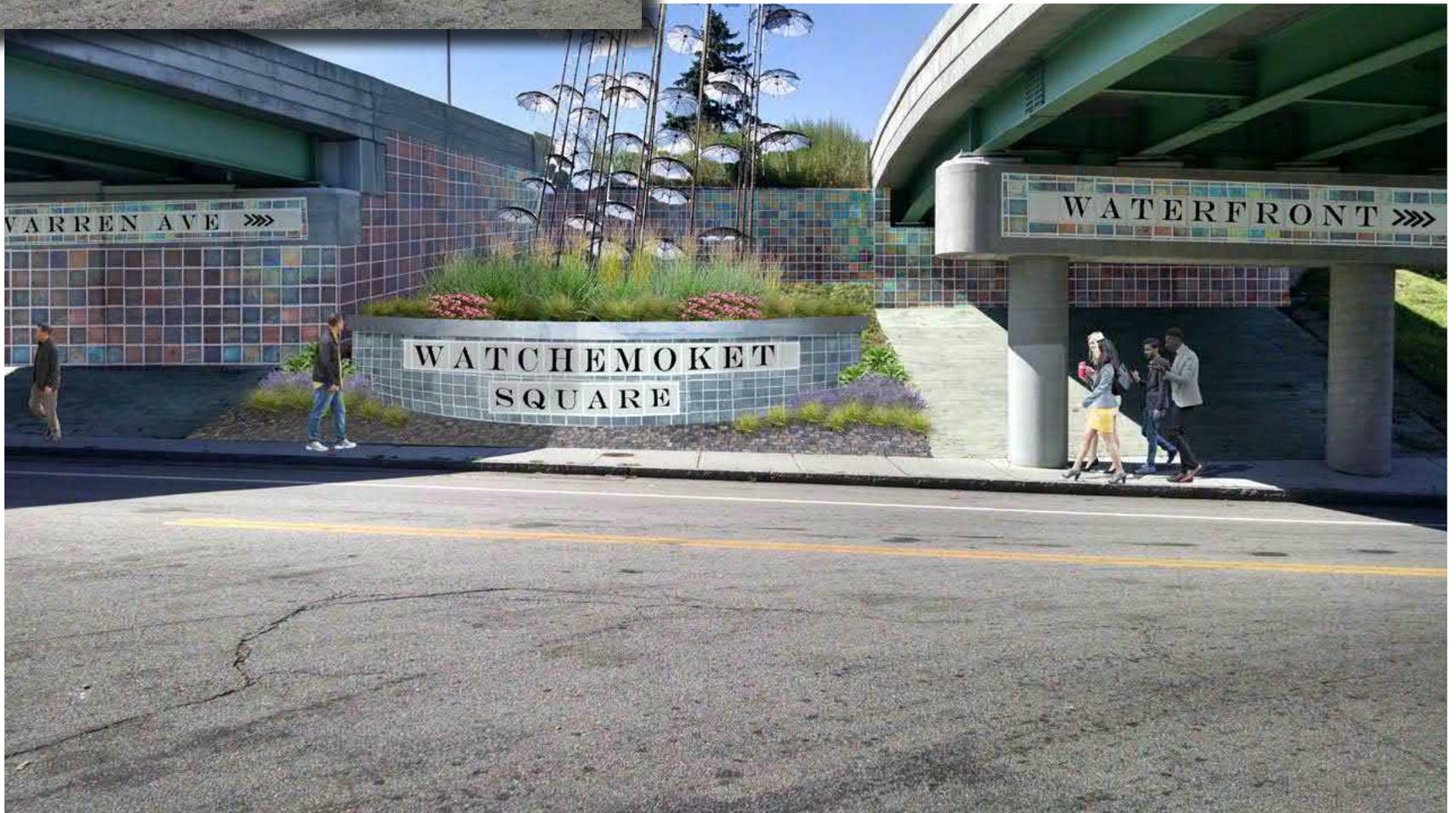




An Approach to Primary Gateways

Transforming this gateway into a place that is more welcoming requires working with the RIDepartment of Transportation to explore implementing acceptable treatments and enhancements to this space.

Signage, artwork, hardscape improvements and landscape plantings comprised would dramatically change the 'Front Door' to the East Providence Waterfront. These ideas should be unified and applied to all primary gateways.





Gateway Treatments

Addressing this primary gateway into the City and Watchemoket Square specifically is critical for the creation of establishing a sense of place. In this concept large scale granite blocks establish a vertical edge and define the limits of the highway, and provide a sense of human scale and maritime history to the intersection. Prominent signage serves to welcome and direct visitors. Landscape plantings further define and enhance the area.

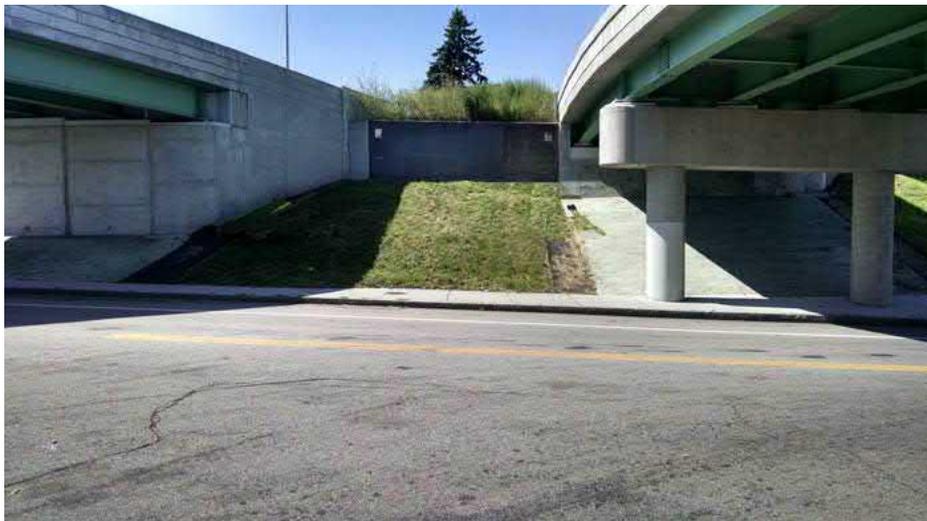




Gateway Treatments

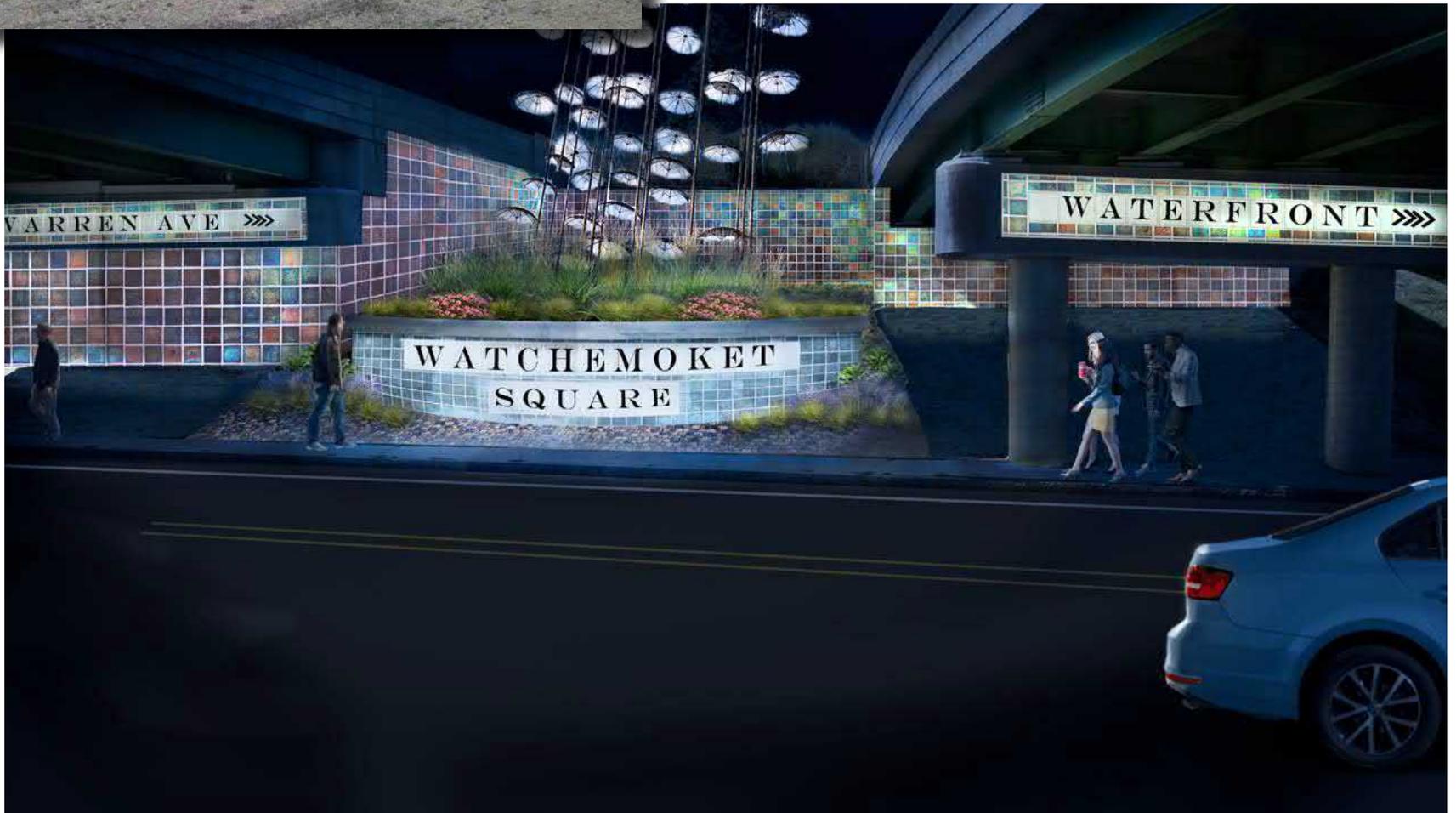
Another approach to creating a noticeable and welcoming setting would be the introduction of elements related to the architecture of the bridges and abutments. The concept depicts a curved wall of cast-in-place concrete with lettering as the signage. The wall creates a space behind that could include landscaping or art work as a “Arts District” gateway element. Adding treatments such as murals to the abutments adds further interest to the space.





Gateway Treatments

Decorative lighting is essential to creating an interesting and vibrant setting in addition to enhancing pedestrian safety. Lighting designed in conjunction with artistic treatments will maximize the value of both and establish a creative signature /district identity



8.0 Public Outreach

In October 2019 members of the City Planning and Economic Development Office provided a briefing to attendees at Watchemoket Square Day outlining the status of several key projects, some in various stages of planning and others nearing construction. At that time, the Placemaking Study was announced and initial conversations began with residents and business people that were attending the sessions.

On January 15th 2020 the first public workshop was held at Tockwotton Home to discuss preliminary findings and review early concepts and overall project objectives. The session included public voting regarding thematic ideas and areas of interest as well as conversations with the design team members.

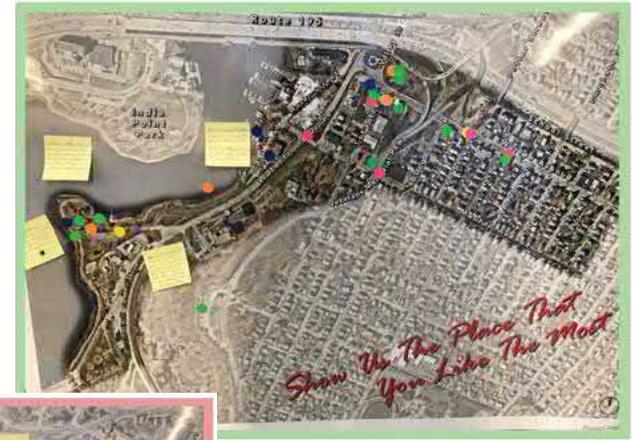
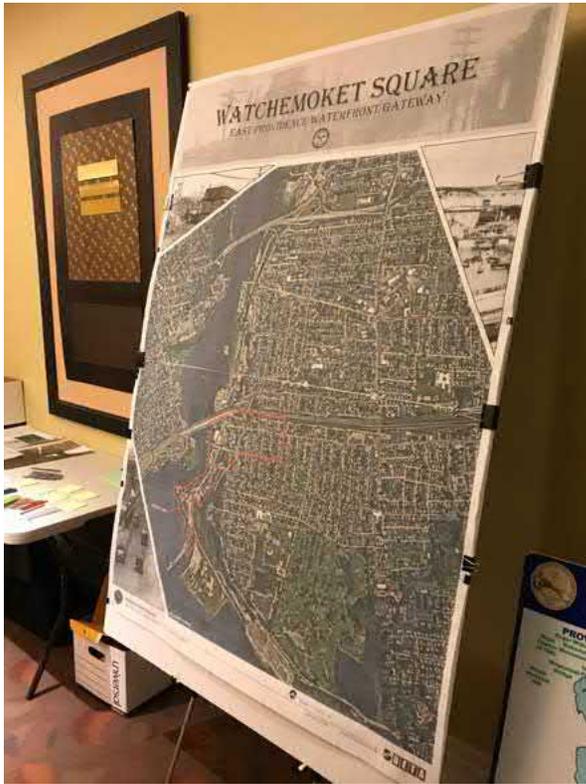
Notable attendees included members of the Pokonoket Tribe, direct American Indian descendants of the original inhabitants of these lands. The Sagamore, William ‘Winds of Thunder’ Guy spoke of the significance of this area, in particular the shoreline and the convergence of land and water and what the resources meant to the people living in the area. The Sagamore delivered as message of remembrance and a desire to bring greater understanding and interpretation to the larger Sowams region. In many ways these early conversations at the workshop began to position

Watchemoket Square as a physical and literal gateway to the past, made clear by the Pokonoket presence, and brought to light the powerful and complex history of the region, giving rise to discussions regarding a federally recognized Sowams Heritage Area.

Images and notes from the three-hour workshop are included on the following pages, with summaries regarding input collected on a range of topics, including questions about perceived barriers to opportunity as well as transportation and safety needs within the study area.

Clear areas of emphasis from the public included Bold Point Park, enhancing walkability, bike safety and highlighting the areas deep history.





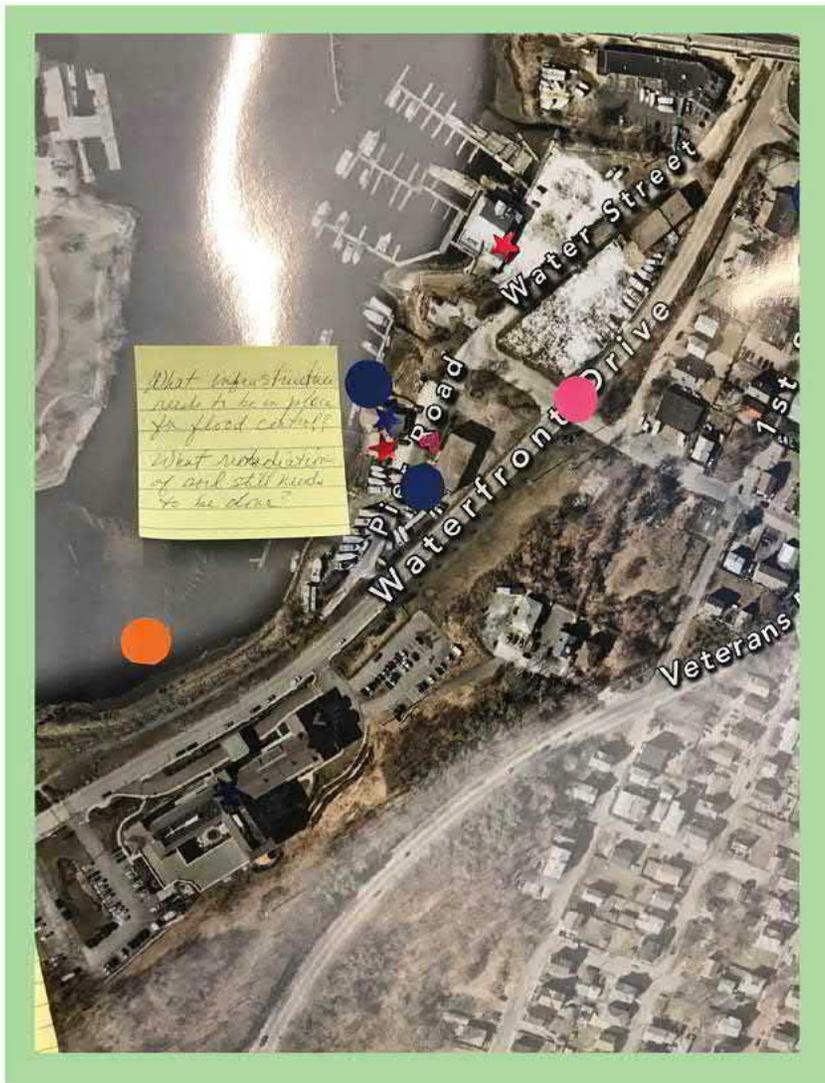
"What attention is being paid to the indigenous/ Native American place on this land 1675 and before?"



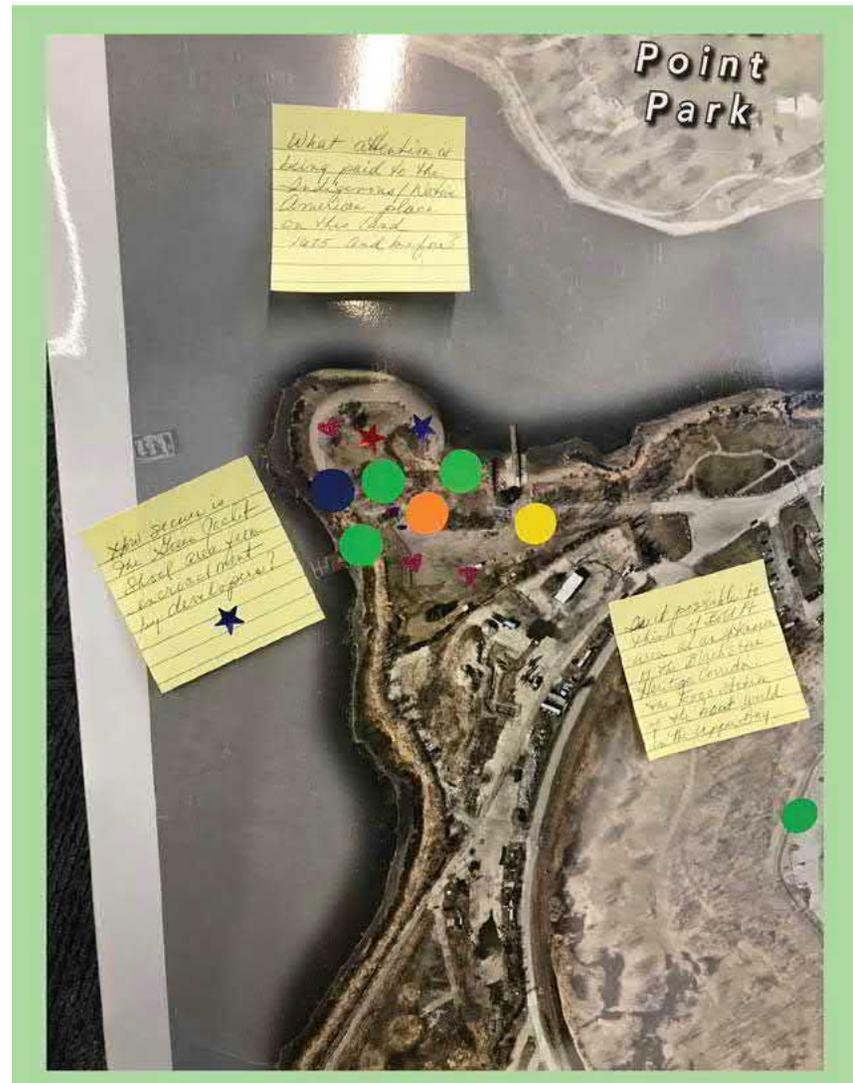
"Public access to waterfront."
 "Signage above Green Jacket Shoals."
 "Fix this road."



"Clean it up!"
 "Billy Gilman #1"
 "2 interpretive panels. Indian Fort - locate it + interpretive panels - Green Jacket Shoal."
 "Improve park."



"What infrastructure needs to be in place for flood control?"



"How secure is the Green Jacket Shoal area from encroachment by developers?"

"What attention is being paid to the indigenous/ Native American place on this land 1675 and before?"

"is it possible to think of Bold Pt. area as an extension of the Blackstone Heritage corridor: the Esso station of the boat world in the upper bay."

Takeaway Notes From BETA Group

- Signage could include welcome to Pokanoket nation/ mention of native land
- Town square = concentration w economic benefits of concentration of events, fun, dining, identity, artist housing, festivals
- No handicap accessible connections to the water – tough to do but an idea
- Need for clean beaches and easy access
- Need for safer transportation



- The project should promote the idea of utilizing the waterfront to get into the water, possibility of coming to and from the space by boat.
- Boaters = \$\$\$\$. If we provide an additional opportunity for people to come to the space, by boat, people will spend money at art shops, restaurants, stores. There is a missed opportunity as some people who live in East Providence keep their boats in Southern RI because there are no places to keep their boats in East Providence. Inherently, they are spending their money elsewhere.
- Need to start with recognizing the history of the people and the space when thinking about the future***



- Bike Path presents opportunities for development – Borealis Coffee being a great example
- Somehow display all different types of people that have come to east providence throughout history through one art piece/ display
- Project should implement waterfront activities that are family friendly. On a really hot day, instead of driving down to the beach in southern RI, it would be great to have access to the waterfront / water-based activities. These might consist of a splash pad / spray park or a family friendly waterfront park



- Art is important to the public.
- The Sculpture Park is widely considered to be a gateway into downtown East Providence. The sculpture in the Sculpture Park is not a great representation of East Providence.

Watchemoket Square and Waterfront Gateway Public Meeting September 2020 - Pilot Project

In September 2020 the Mayor's office in conjunction with the City Planning Department convened an outdoor, 'socially distanced' public meeting to discuss a few of the specific goals identified in the Placemaking Study. The workshop began with a presentation that highlighted key 'big picture' statewide objectives, gave background on shared streets, and set local goals regarding the City bicycle and pedestrian network and safety. The discussion centered on a proposed pilot project to create an on-street protected Bike Path between Veterans Memorial Parkway and the George Redman Linear Park pedestrian and bicycle bridge.

The project is intended to address a 'network gap' identified in the Bicycle Mobility Plan (BMP) prepared by RI Statewide Planning Office. The long-term over-arching challenge that exists specifically in Watchemoket Square is that for approximately 900 linear feet on 1st Street, cyclists and pedestrians are forced from off-street facilities on to the street abruptly, after utilizing a grade separated and protected facilities for many miles. The abrupt transition from an off-street bike path to on-street riding with motor vehicles, a change that is difficult at best for experienced riders and dangerous for less confident riders or riders with small children that are uncomfortable riding within traffic.

The proposed pilot project seeks to temporarily establish an on-street protected bike/ped facility between the George Washington Bridge linear bikeway and the East Bike path. The proposal under consideration requires a change in traffic pattern, converting 1ST Street to one-way traffic. The solution allows Warren Ave. and Mauran venue traffic to remain as it currently is. Warren to Mauran Ave. would be one way south, Veterans Memorial Parkway to Mauran



Ave. would be one way north, thus eliminating some of the more complicated and high conflict traffic movements as well. It is anticipated a side benefit to creating a robust bike/ped connection will be simplification of traffic patterns and elimination of dangerous turning movements, particularly at the Veterans Memorial Parkway and at Warren Avenue/Valley Street.

The workshop included extensive Q&A, with businesses and property owners on 1st Street voicing concerns about current conditions and safety, based on observations of bicycles and pedestrians on the roadway and sidewalk in conflict with vehicles, as well as highlighting business operational concerns regarding deliveries, rubbish and recycling service, and potential customer confusion regarding parking and access.

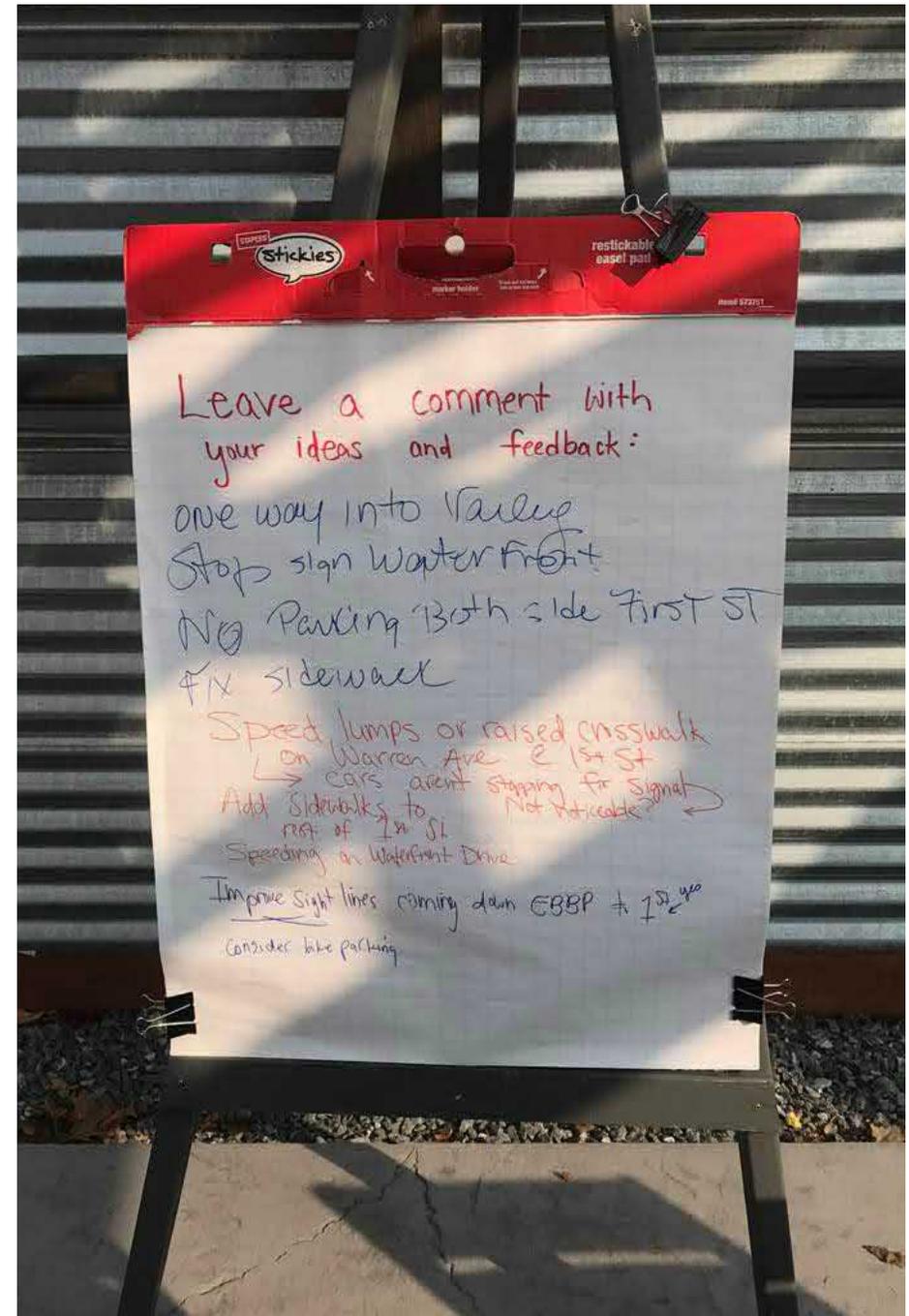
Support for the Pilot Project was voiced by other attendees, citing safety enhancements and the potential for business development along the bike/ped link, as it is one of few locations where the East Bay Bike Path passes thru a commercial setting.

Other attendees noted that under the current COVID-19 Pandemic, many communities had advanced projects designed to facilitate walking and biking with shared streets initiatives going forward across the world as a way to promote health, safety and business support.



TAKEAWAY NOTES FROM BETA GROUP

- Concerns from local business owners that will be affected by pilot project - specifically access for delivery trucks/ customers.
- Residents of the area are excited to see a safer way to get around the square and too and from the north and southern parts of 1st Street.
- Common concerns with crossings at Warren Avenue.
- Intersections at 1st Street and Veteran's Memorial Parkway is know as one of the most dangerous intersections in the city and is recognized by police and fire departments



9.0 Reference Material and Resources

References:

East Providence Waterfront Commission - <https://www.eastprovidencewaterfront.com>

East Providence Historical Society - <https://www.ephist.org>

Sowams Heritage Area - <https://www.sowamsheritagearea.org>

Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission - preservation.www.ri.gov

<https://www.eastprovidenceharborfront.com>

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Urban Land Institute - <https://uli.org>

Project for Public Spaces - <https://www.pps.org>

Public Square - CNU Journal - Placemaking, Steuteville, Robert <https://www.cnu.org>

Rhode Island Long Range Transportation Plan and Bicycle Mobility Plan - <https://planri.com>

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