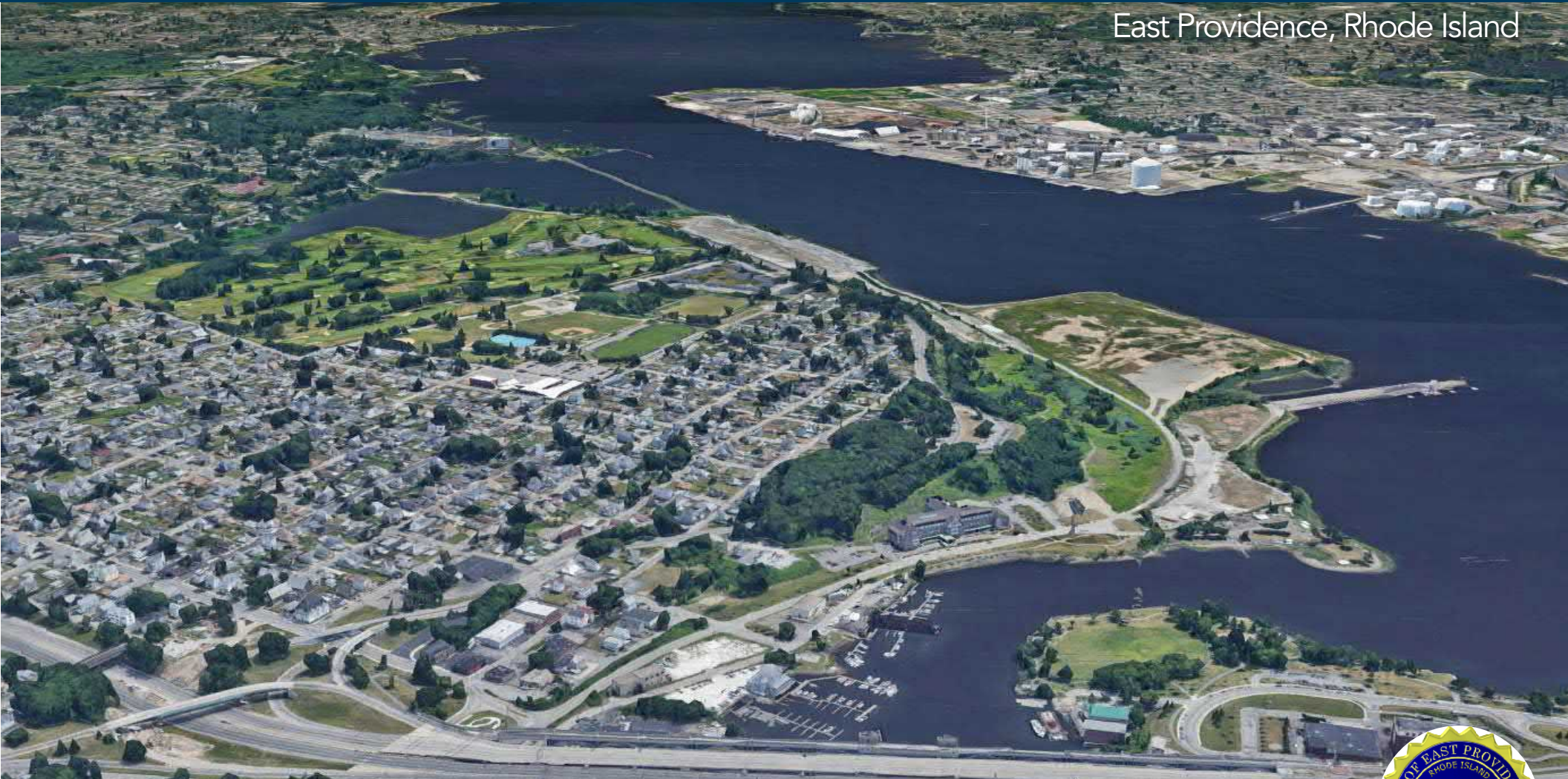




11.19.2020 - D R A F T - Report

Watchemoket/Waterfront Gateway Place-making and Multi-modal Access Improvements

East Providence, Rhode Island



November-2020

Prepared for:
City of East Providence



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Appendix A. Economic and Market Analysis
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Acknowledgments

Sponsorship

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

This project was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, with the City providing in-kind match of services. All base mapping and survey work performed by the city of East Providence

This project was funded by a grant from The US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

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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 place-making 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 complement 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.

Sense of Place

History

Transportation

Active Transportation -Bike/Pedestrian

Automobile

Transit

Watercraft

Economic

Diverse Business

Arts & Entertainment

Dining

1. Executive Summary

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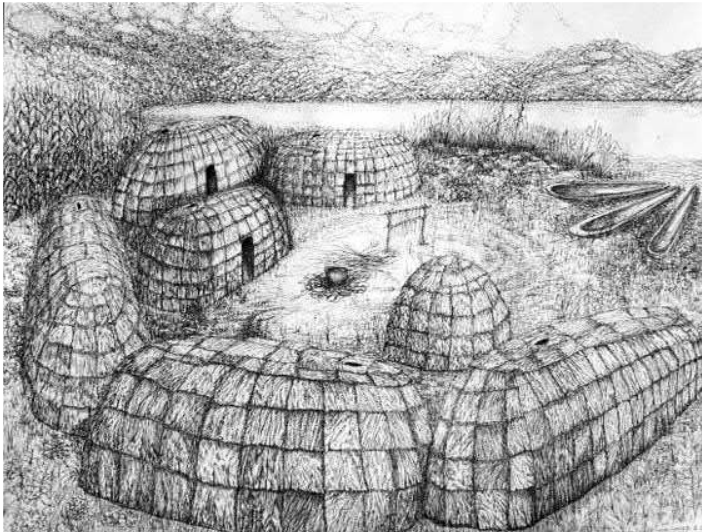
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2. Existing Conditions

History

Pre-Contact

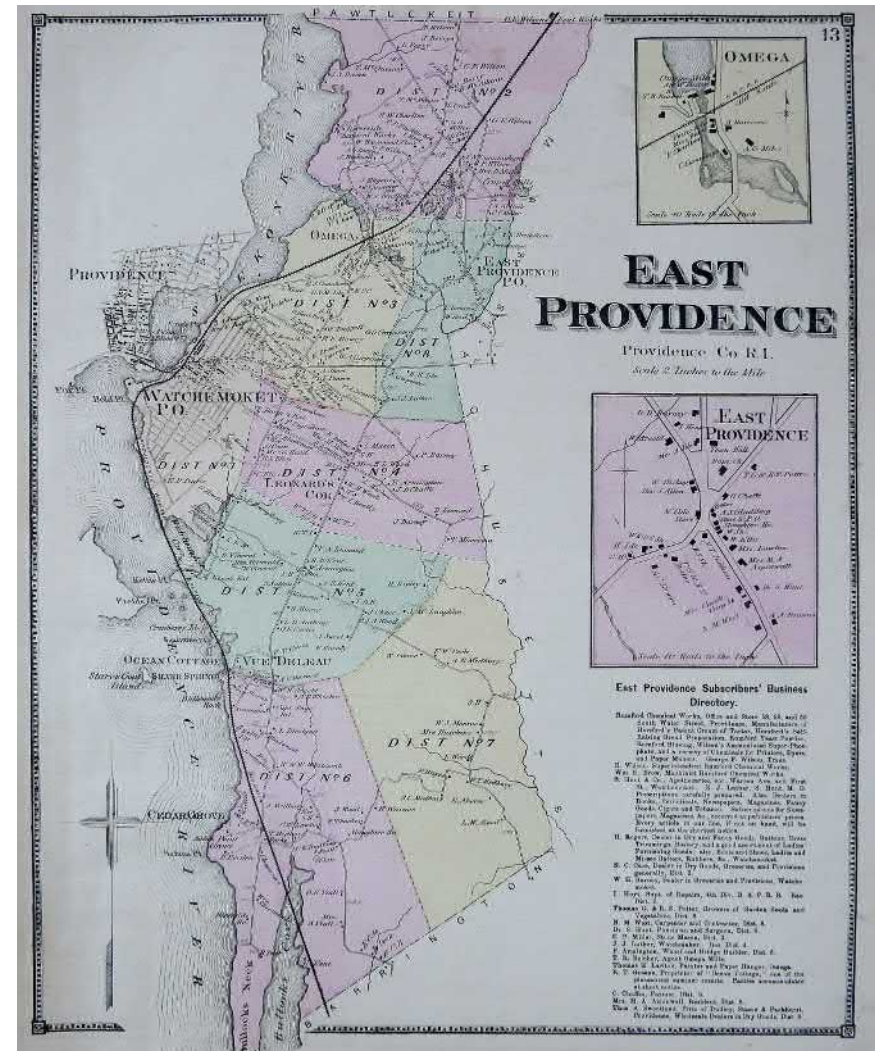
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Defining Watchemoket
American Indian word describing a proximity to the river
and tidal marsh
the feel and smell of where the land and water meet.....

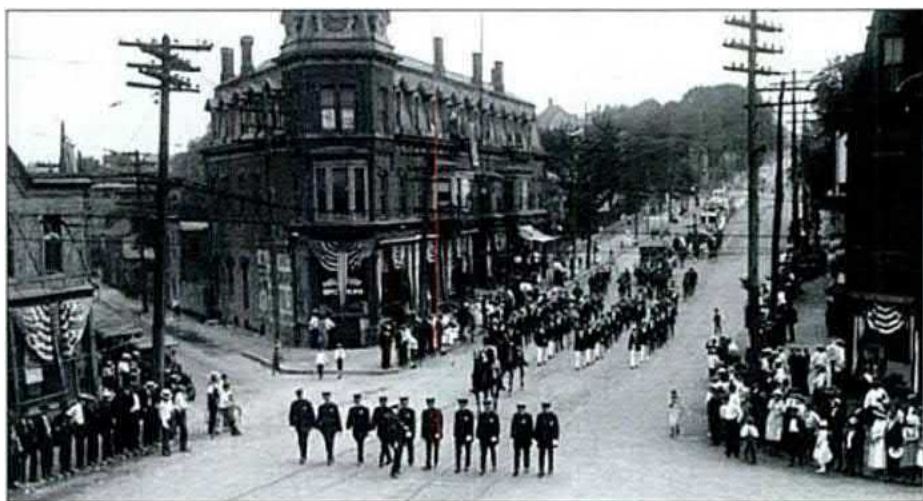
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21th Century

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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.

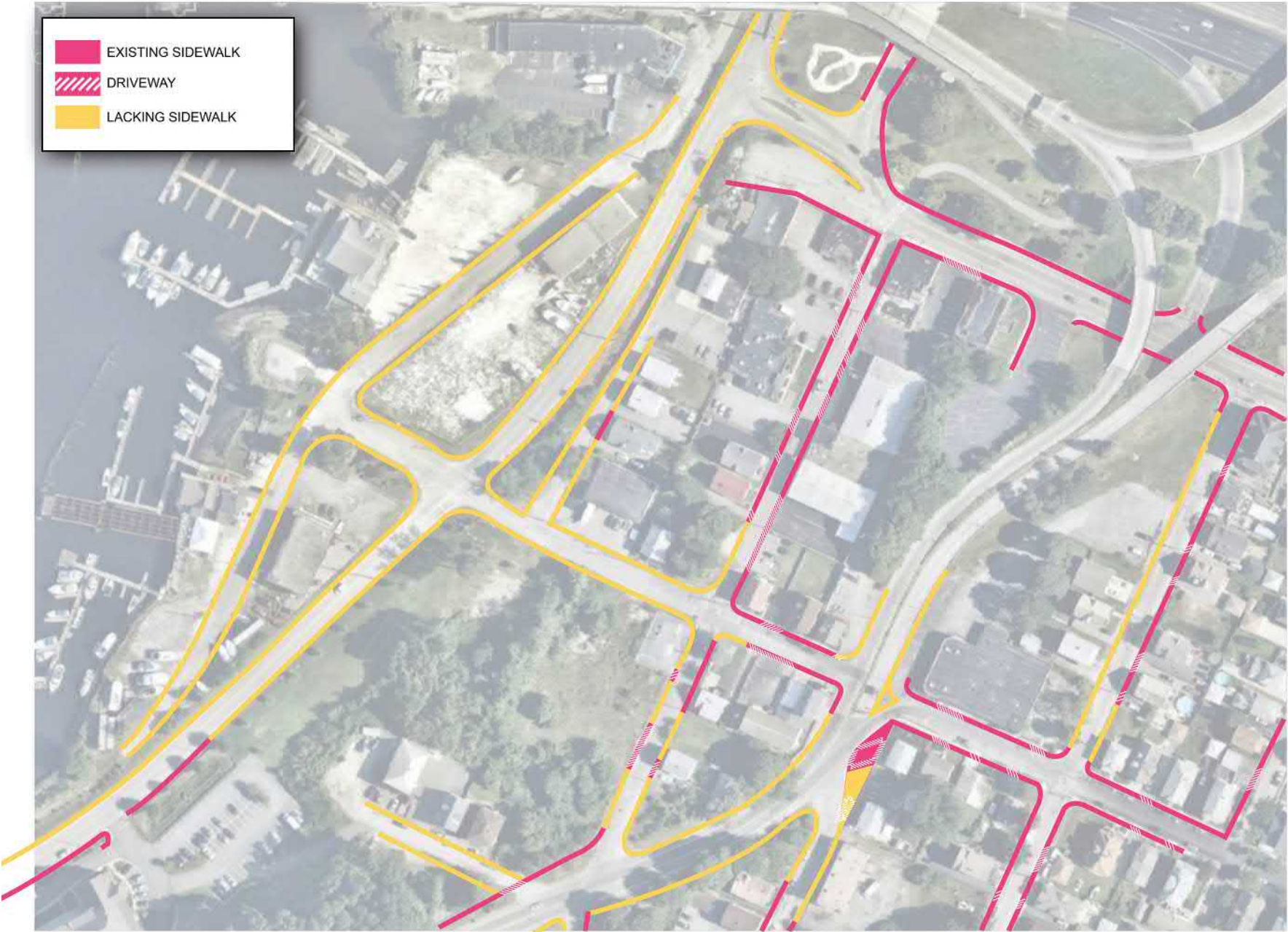


The pattern on the land from the railroads remains visible today, even though the last tracks were removed in 19xx. The regular and ordered grid of city blocks dissolves into triangular shaped parcels and long, rectangular swaths of land where rail lines and port-based structures once stood. City streets 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.

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.

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

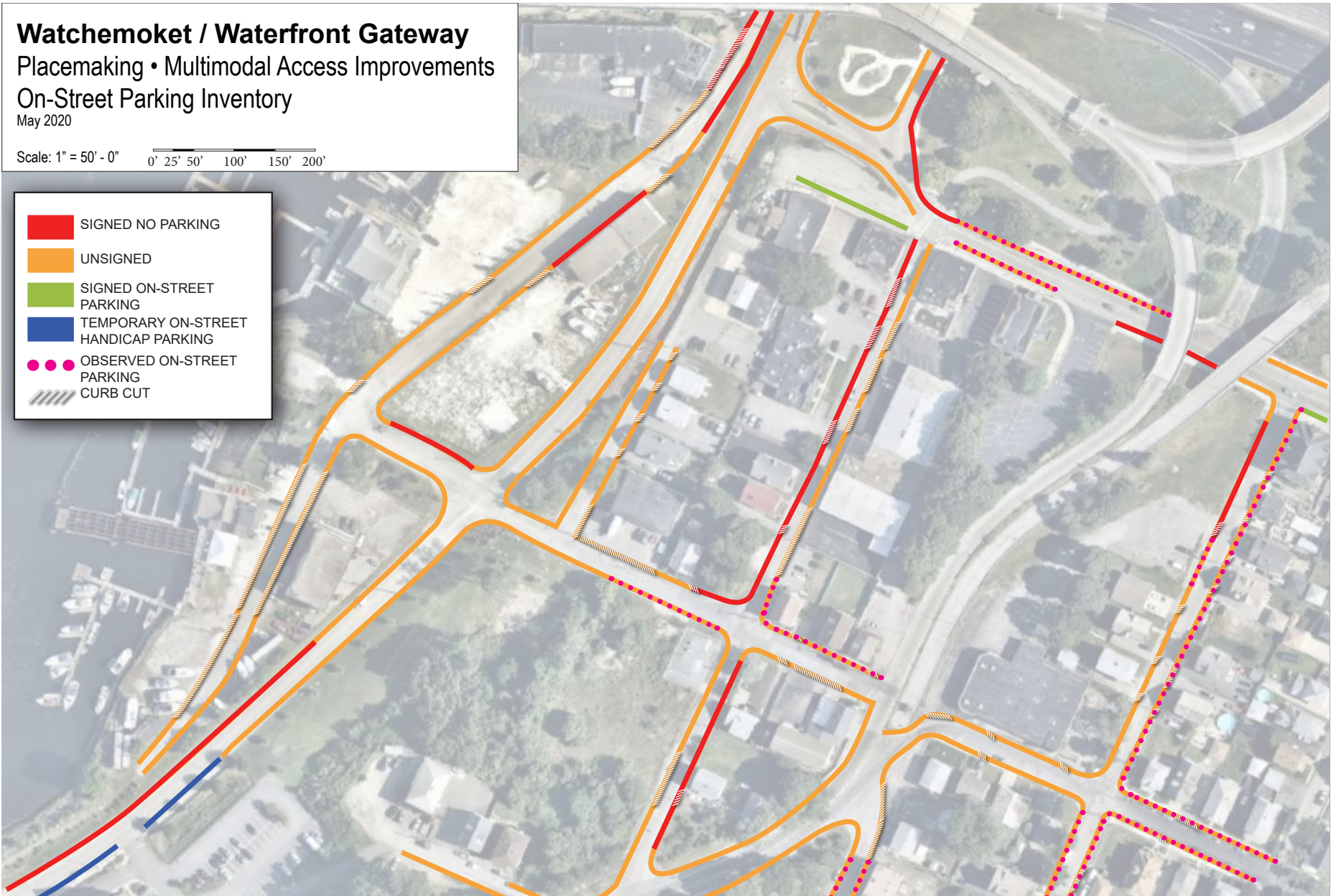
UNSIGNED

SIGNED ON-STREET PARKING

TEMPORARY ON-STREET HANDICAP PARKING

OBSERVED ON-STREET PARKING

CURB CUT



3.0 Revitalization Strategy

3.1 Introduction (((..... text here)))

3.2 Strategies (((..... text here)))

3.2.1 Make Watchemoket Square the core of the City's new Arts District to grow tourism activity

a. Create Arts & Cultural Anchor

- i. Conduct Feasibility/Needs Assessment Study (short-term)
- ii. Explore: visitor center integration, bike path connectivity (and amenities such as bike parking, bike share station, restrooms), outdoor rec rentals (bikes, fishing poles)
- iii. Explore private-ownership models (e.g., first floor of mixed-use redevelopment project) as way to enhance tax base – support TIF revenues.

b. Establish a marketing and branding campaign for the gateway area

- i. Increase the visibility of local arts and culture activities on a regular basis
- ii. Raise awareness for the district

- iii. Promote the district's cultural identity through a consistent brand and partnership with local organizations
- iv. Create a central website for the district where local artists and galleries could potentially promote and sell their work

c. Public Art Installations

- i. Create the Lantern Trail of art work
- ii. Install at Gateway and other strategic Locations
- iii. Integration with way finding elements
- iv. Rotate artwork rather than static installations
- v. Integrate with public web cams that people can access from a website to check out the current public art installations.

d. Create a formal public art program

- i. City Public Art Policy & Program
- ii. Public Art Fund

e. New Artist Housing & Studio Space

- i. Create a developer incentive to provide public art and artist housing
1. Go hand in hand with creating an Arts District benefit for artist housing
 2. Inclusionary zoning provision for artist housing
 3. Developer density bonus for inclusion of public art (with in-lieu fee option)

- f. Build an “Arts Parks” at 1st and Mauran on Public Land
 - i. At Mauran Ave -Space at corner for rotating “gateway” piece
 - ii. Flexible design – outdoor gallery/showcase for local artists, small event potential
 - iii. Re-Brand Bold Point Park -Outdoor Movies etc.
- g. “Update” existing sculpture park
 - i. Appropriate scaled piece for site
 - ii. Vet artwork through new public art program
 - iii. Design competition potential (can be part of marketing push/launch for Arts District)
- h. Adaptive Reuse of Industrial Buildings for Arts Uses to Maintain Authenticity and Appeal
 - i. Facilitate conversion of two industrial buildings (Al’s and Taekwondo) to be artist housing/studio spaces (public/dining spaces on top).
- i. 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.
- j. 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.

3.2.2 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 for T&T, Integrate Black Duck's outdoor dining with street scape on 1ST.

- ii. Incentivize design guidelines, or zoning regulations For new restaurants that encourage/require outdoor dining areas.
- e. Link Waterfront and Watchemoket Square once again:
 - i. Dock and Dine Marketing and Branding (or Dock, Bike, Run and Dine/shop/do fun stuff <Need clever marketing phrase here>)
 - ii. Market to recreational boater segment <https://vimeo.com/277341684/c234f695a7>
 - iii. Partner with Live Nation (boat-in to concerts? Might be willing to provide dock facilities)
 - iv. Public dock facilities within walking distance of 1st street core area (public dock potential at John J Lewis Park? Bold Point another option)

3.2.3 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.



3.2.4 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?

3.2.5 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. St and Mauran Ave while eliminating a 25 year-old gap in the East Bay Bike Path.

4.0 Recommendations

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 plan identifies and ranks district gateways as follows

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

Signage is separated into three categories

1. Way finding
2. Place-making
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

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

2. Host Awareness events

- a. Bikeway Demonstration Projects.

First 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 ParkwayBranded as 'The Link'. A temporary two-way bikeway is envisioned to be separated from traffic by barrels, cones, pavement markings and signage. First 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 First Street and Warren Avenue will consider providing outdoor eating areas that are both visible and accessible from First 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 as 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

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)

4. Economics of Place

- a. 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.

- b. 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.

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
4. Economics of Place
 - a. Xxx

Long Term Recommendations 5+ years

1. Planning/Design Actions
 - a. RIDOT
 - b. National Grid
2. Awareness /Events Actions
 - 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

4. waterfront routes (North and South) and 2) 'highland' route (existing East Bay Bike path)

- 5. Economics of Place
 - a. Xx

4.4 Projects and Budgetary Costs

- 1. Short Term Specific Project Considerations
- 2. Budgetary Forecasts

4.5 Approach to Implementation

- 1.
- 2.

4.6 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/>

RIHousing 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/>

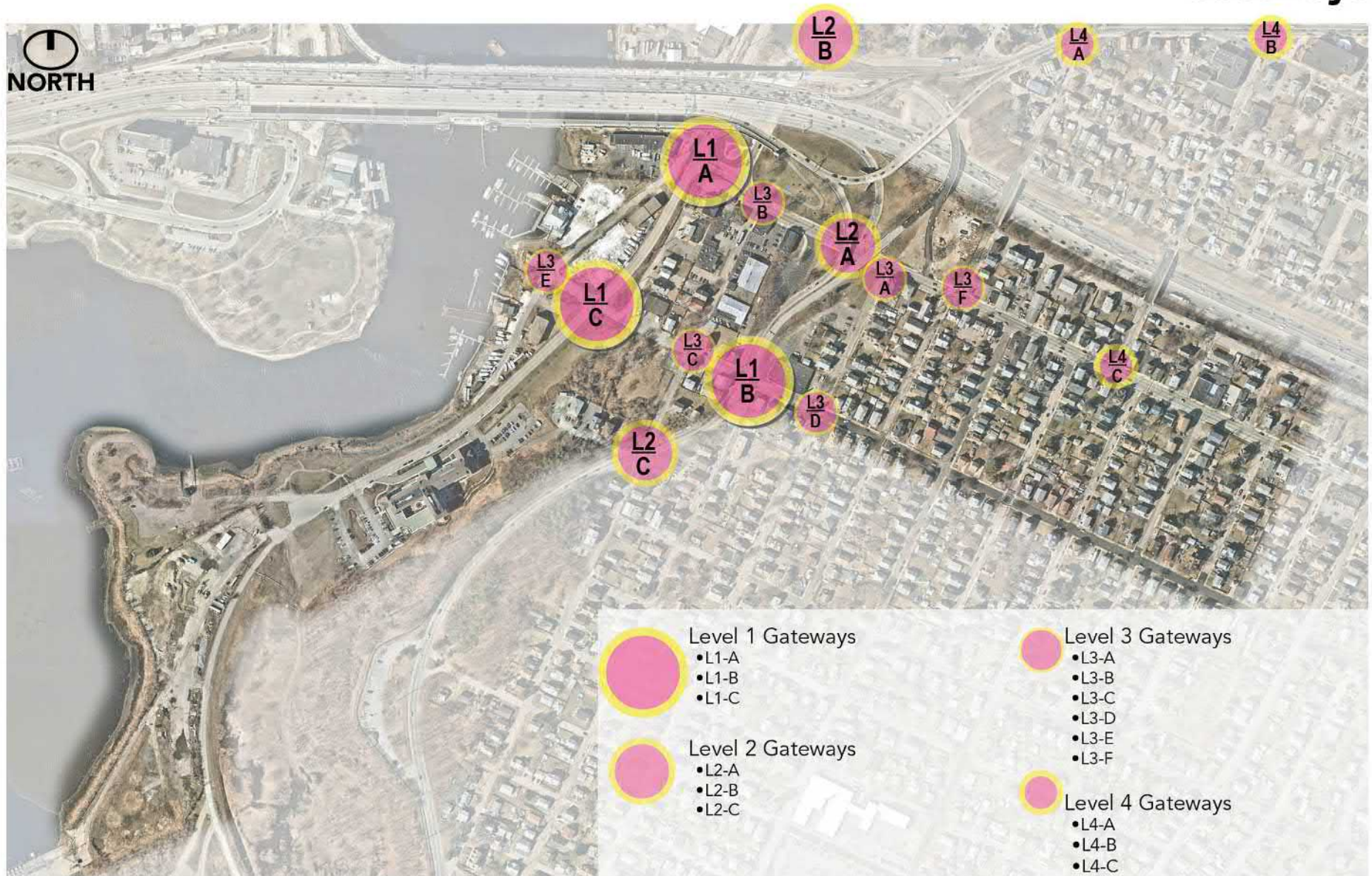
Rhode Island Expansion Arts Program: Supported by a collaboration between Rhode Island Foundation, Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (RISCA), and Rhode Island Council for the Humanities (RICH), the Rhode Island Expansion Arts Program (RIEAP) offers funding and organizational assistance to community-based, 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

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emquidebis alit, tet audanti atem fuga. Ita

Gateways

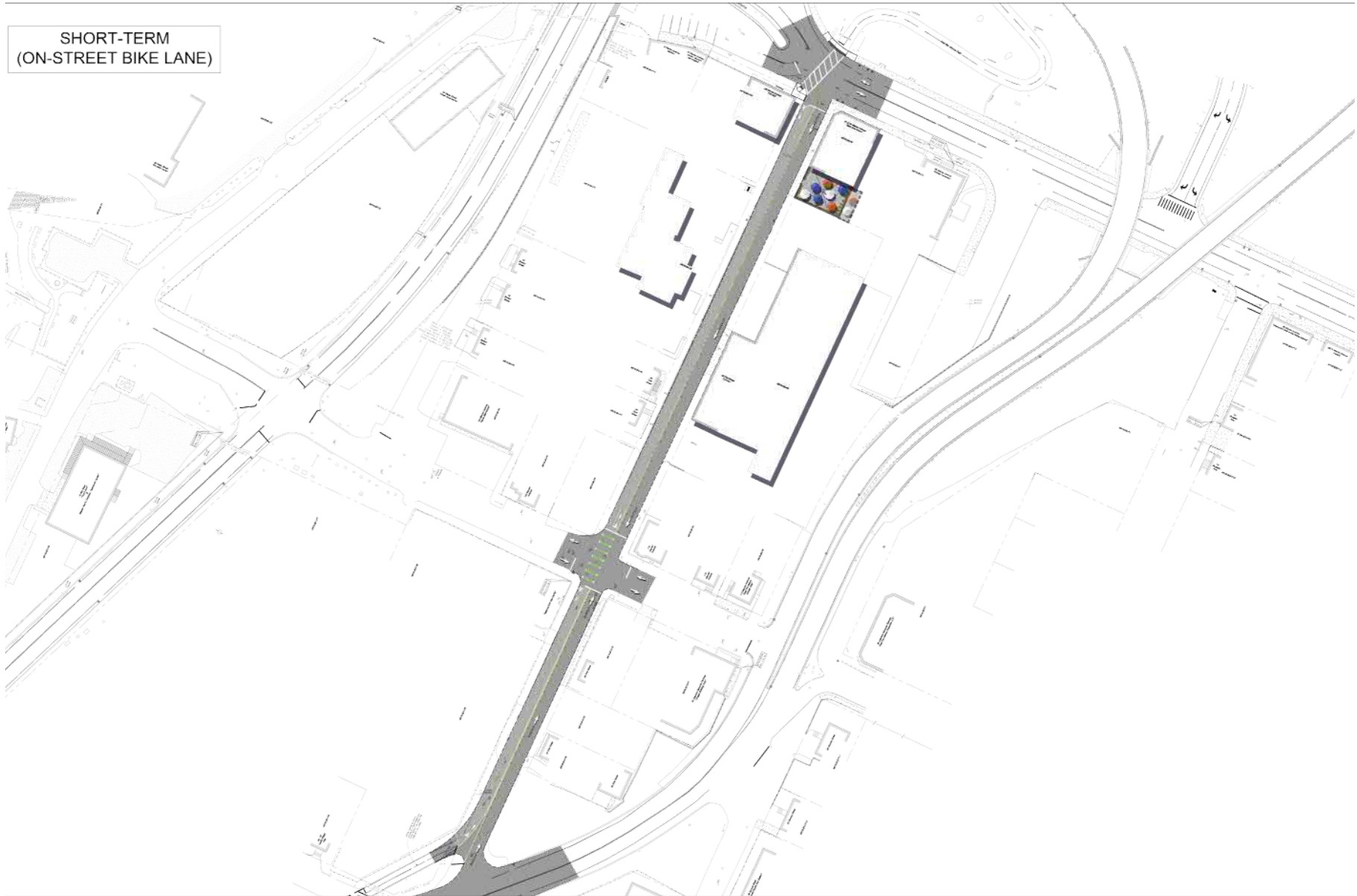


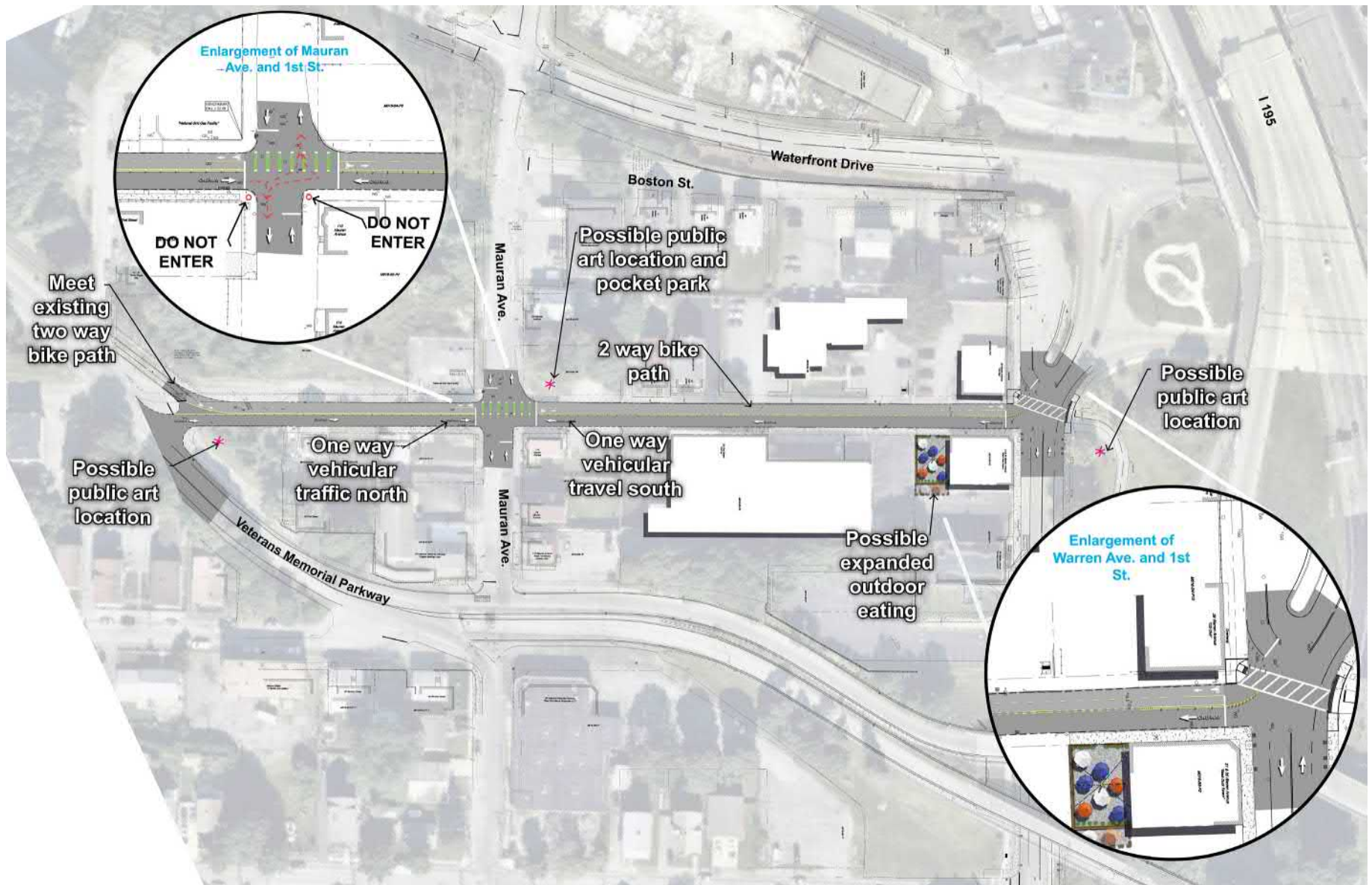
LONG TERM - OPTION A





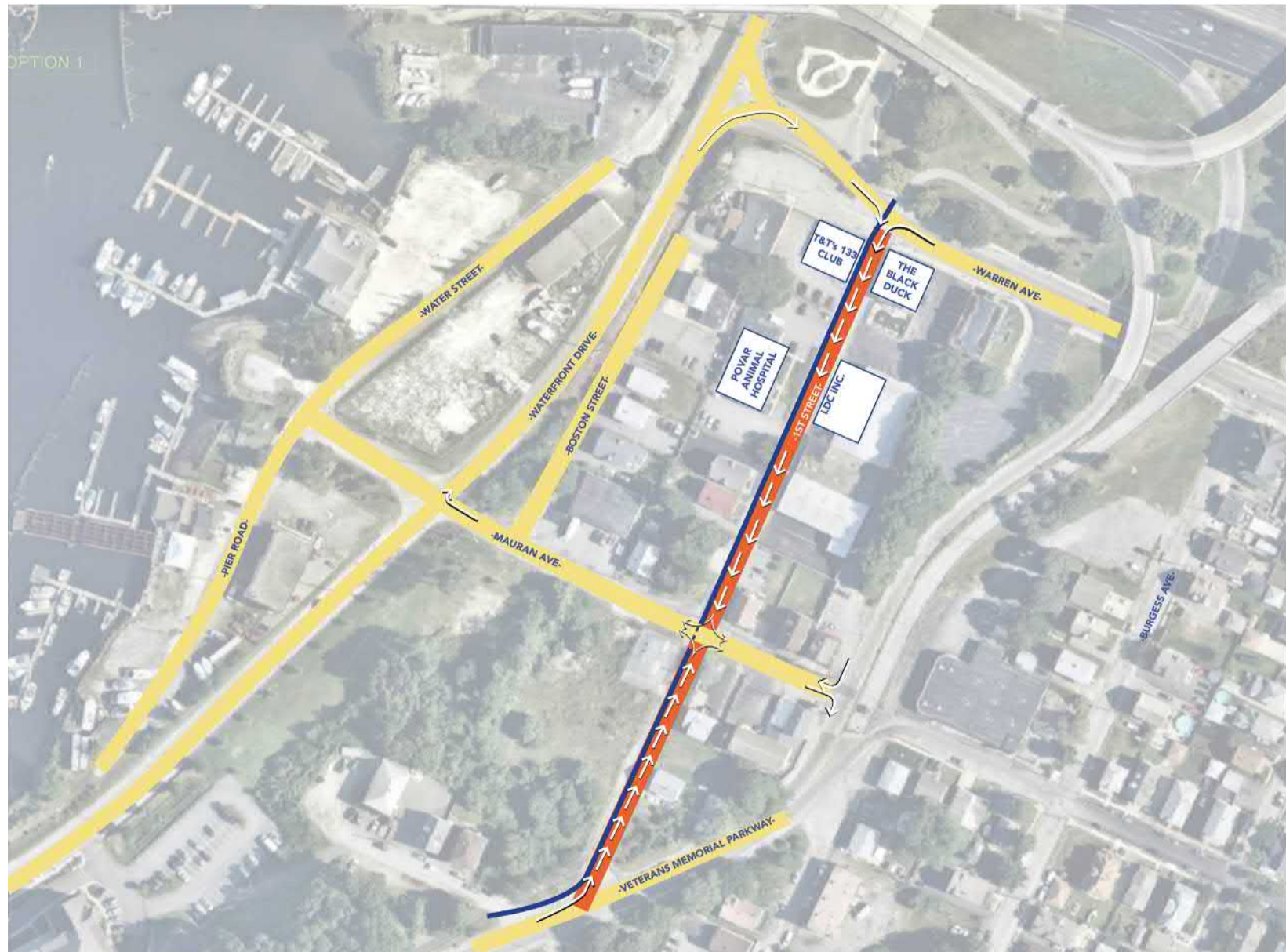
SHORT TERM - FIRST STREET PILOT PROJECT





SHORT TERM - FIRST STREET PILOT PROJECT

Circulation Pattern



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.



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



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
 - Vehicles
 - Bicycles
 - 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 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.

The following pages contain visualizations depicting some of the afore mentioned ideas. In the case of 1St. 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.



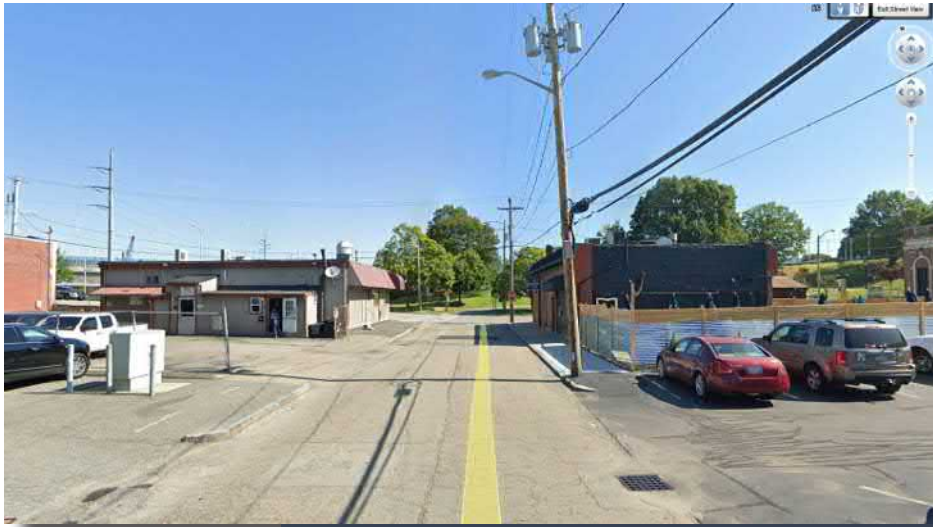


Waterfront Gateway: Enhance Warren Avenue

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.

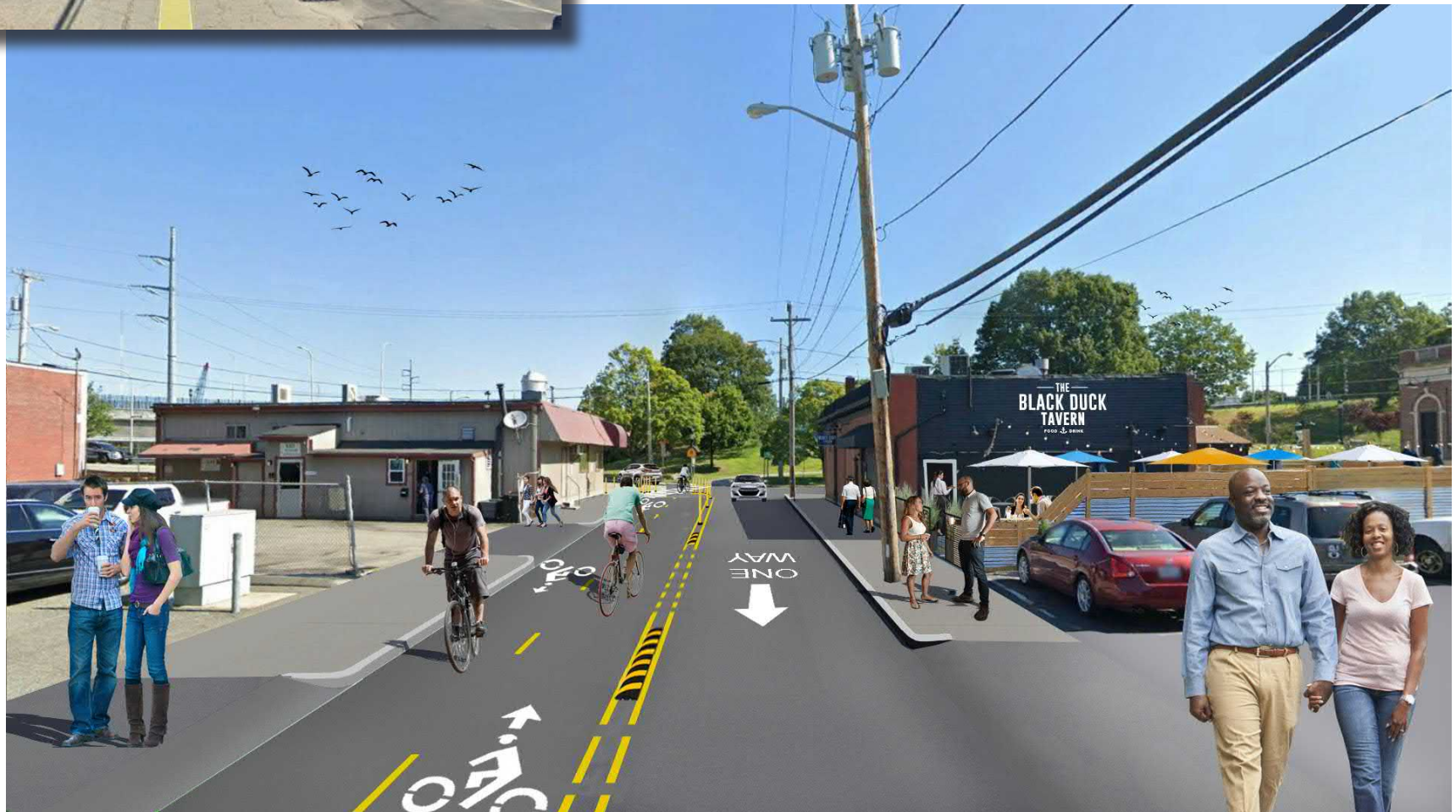




Active Transportation: Enhance 1st Street

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.

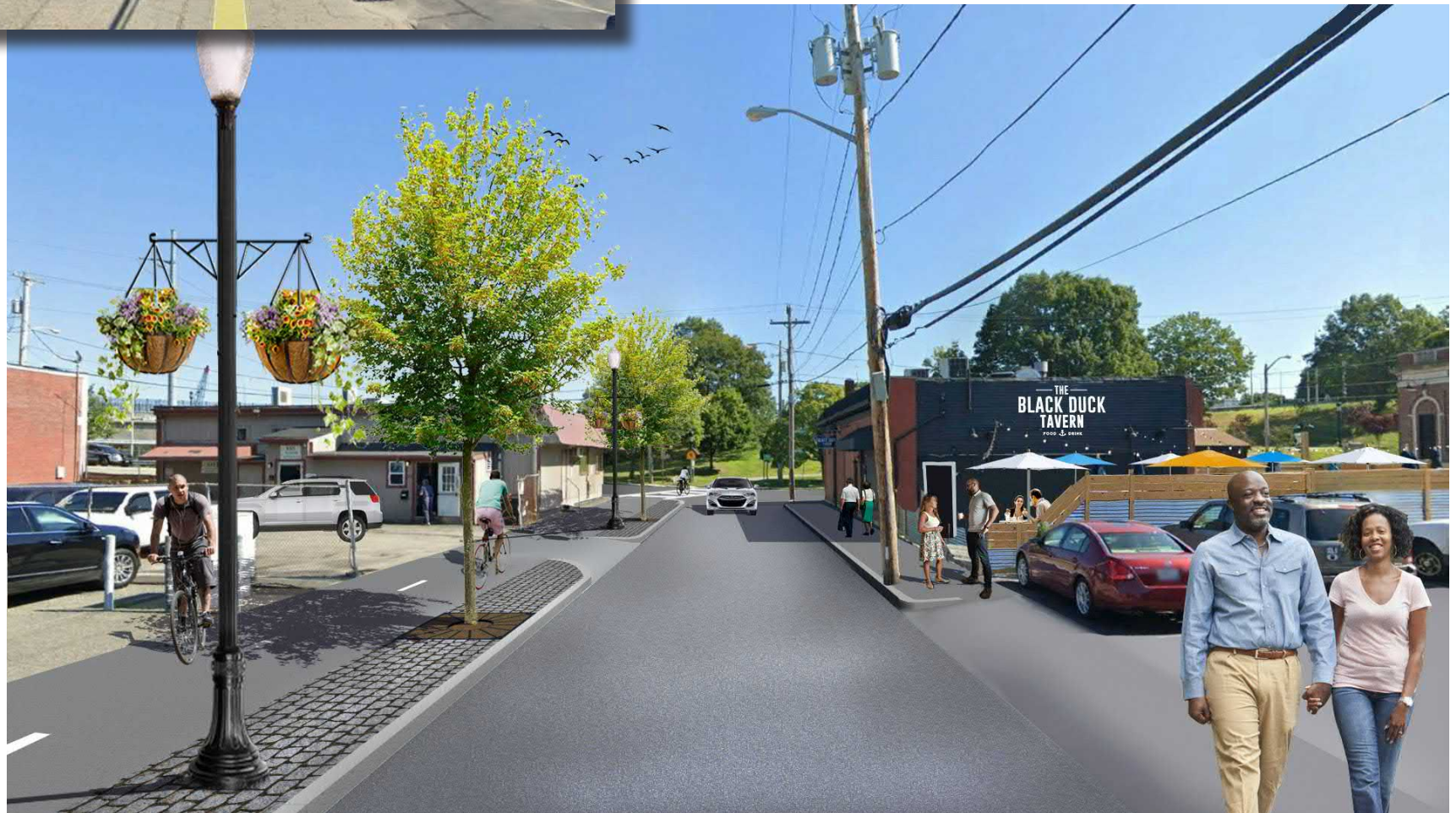
Envisioned as a Pilot Project, initial improvements consisting of modifying vehicular traffic patterns, new signage, paint, and bollards would help re-invent the roadway corridor and lead the way to greater changes in the surrounding area.





Active Transportation: Enhance 1st Street

Future enhancements with greater permanence on 1st Street could traffic pattern changes, and include curbing and drainage work with ornamental lighting and a permanent grade separated multi-use pathway.





Active Transportation: Enhance 1st Street

text here





Active Transportation: Enhance 1st Street

text here





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

1. text here





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.

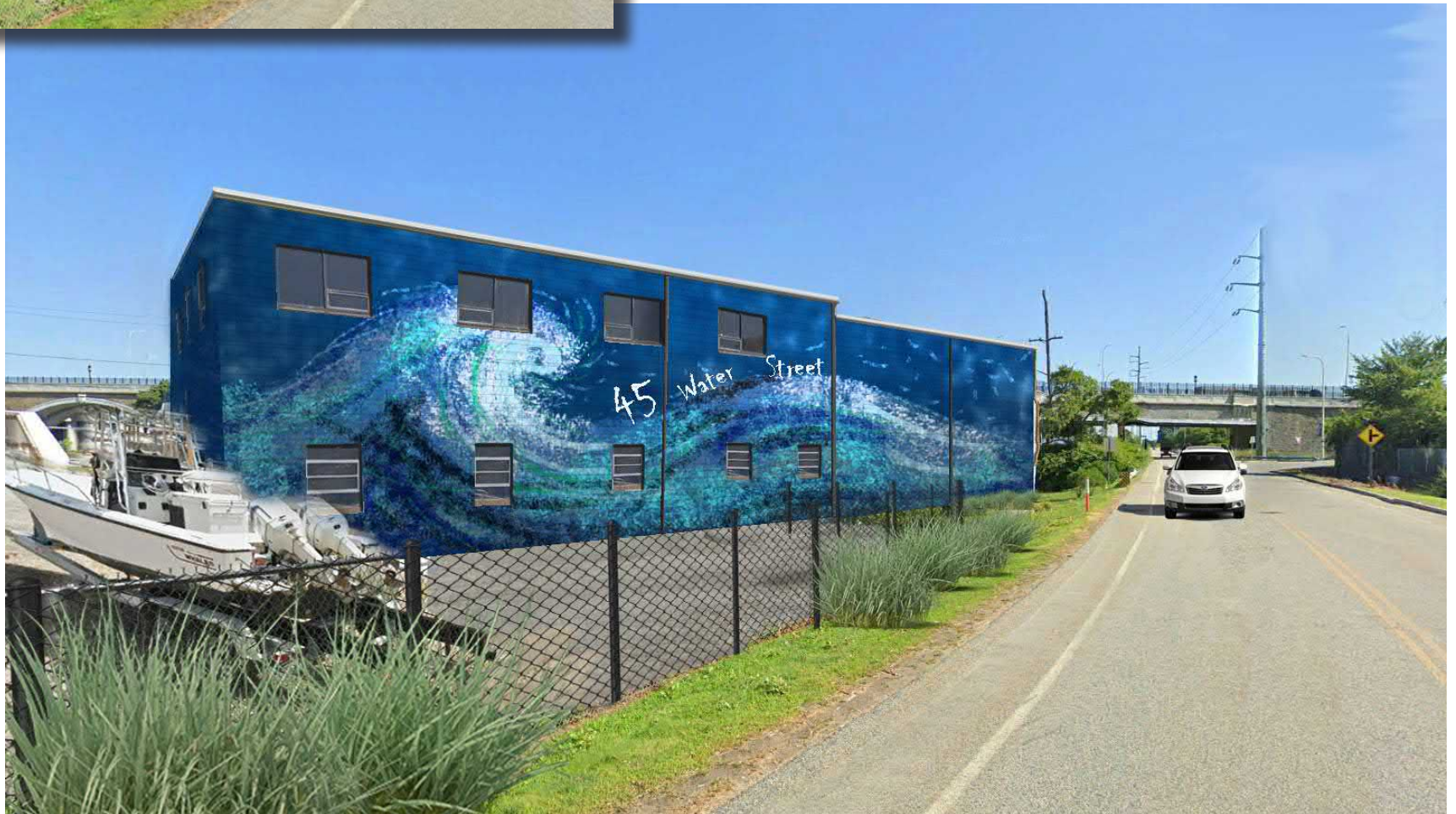
Bright, full building wrap murals represent a short term way to unify and re-brand the area.



Enhance Existing Buildings



Enhance Existing Buildings



Enhance Existing Buildings



7.0 Art and District Branding

Brand

Developing a clear brand identity 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

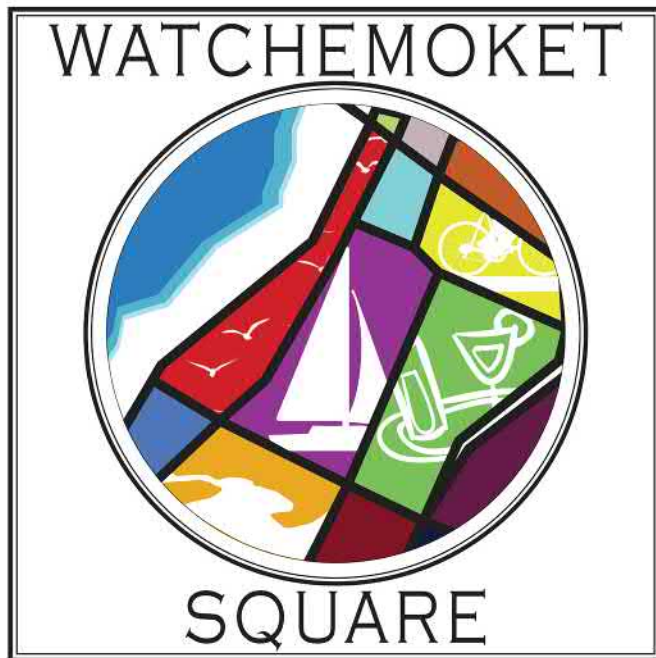
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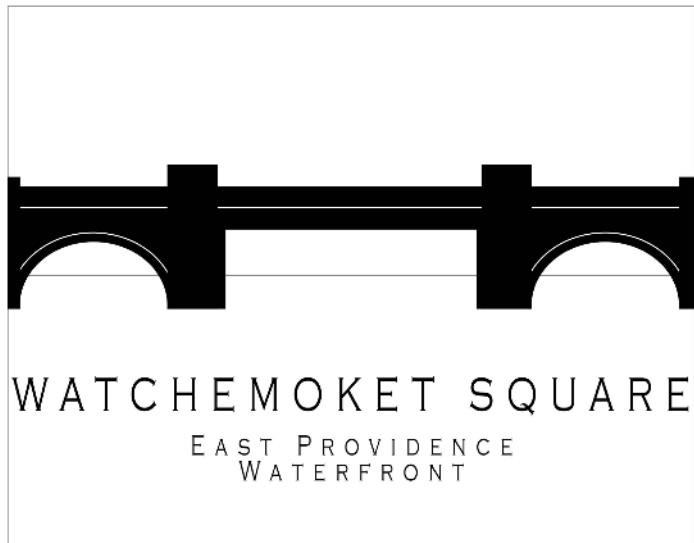
Traditional

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



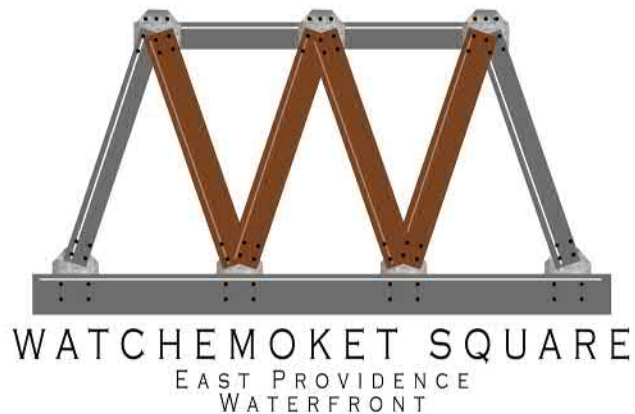
Attraction Themed

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.



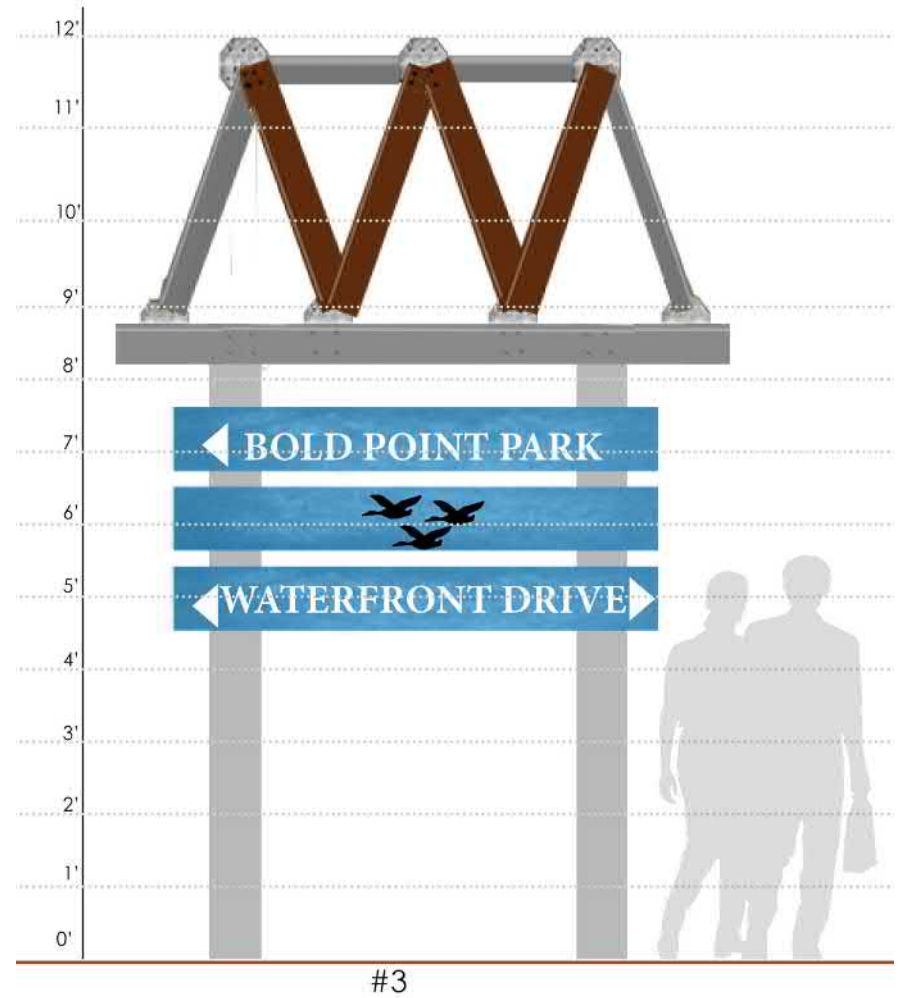
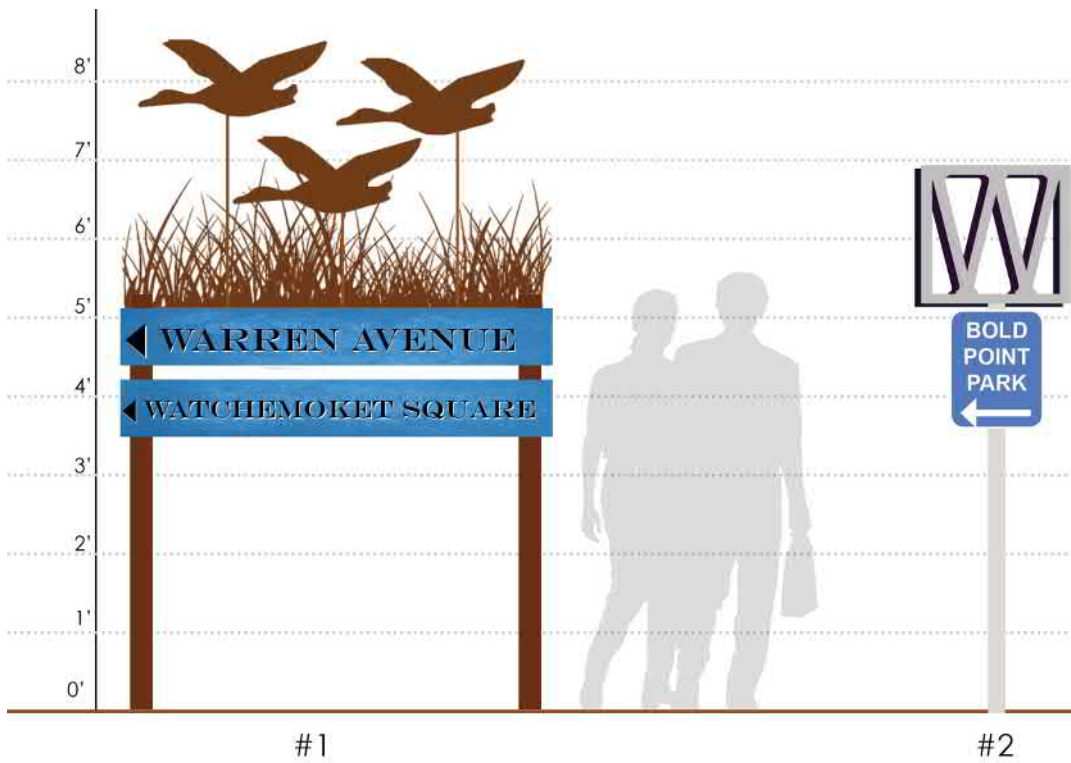
Natural Themed

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 Warren Avenue and Waterfront Drive



Intersection at Veteran's Memorial Parkway and First Street



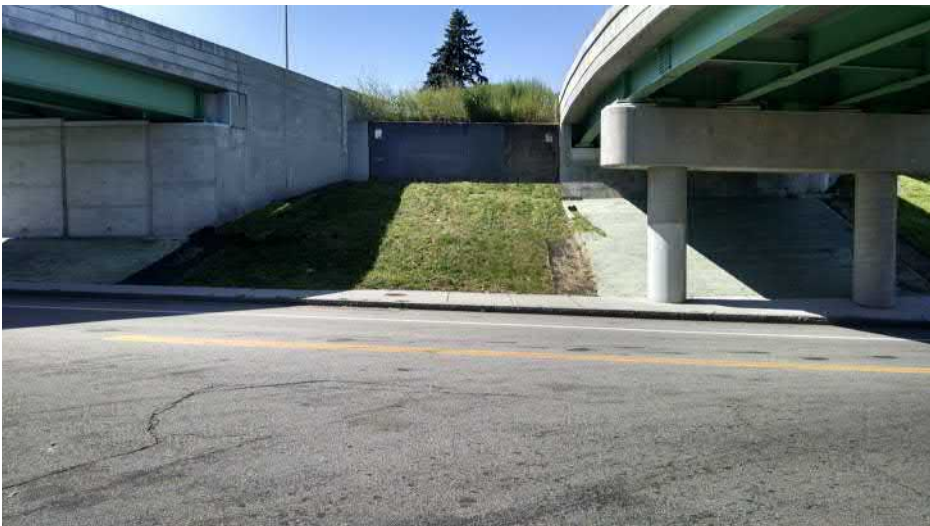
Gateway Treatments

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Gateway Treatments

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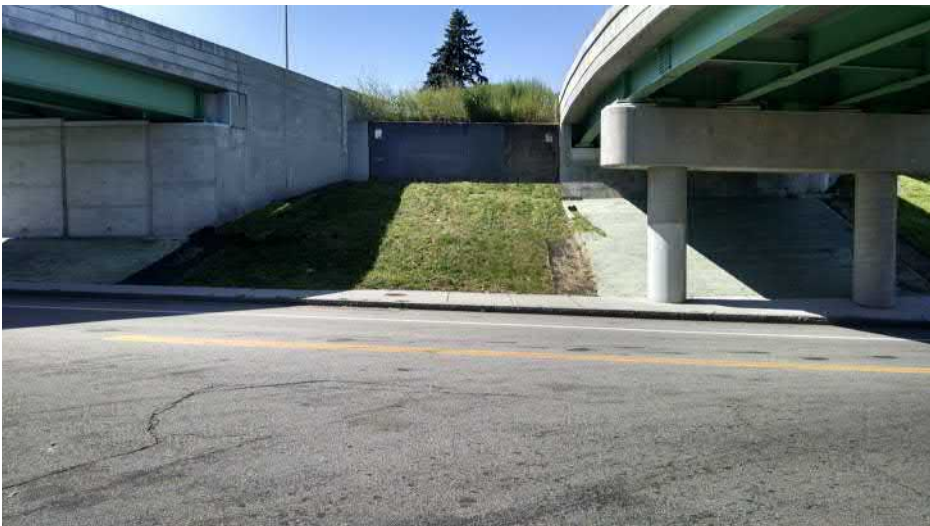
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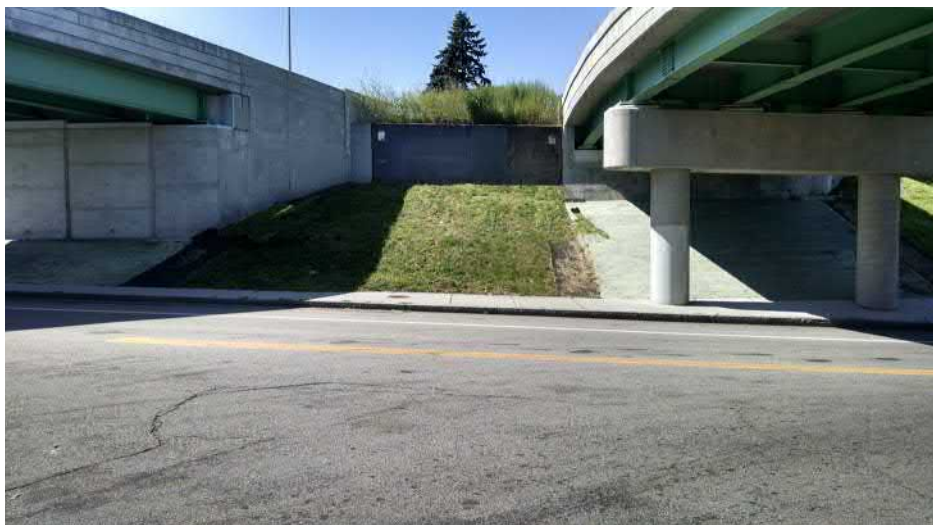
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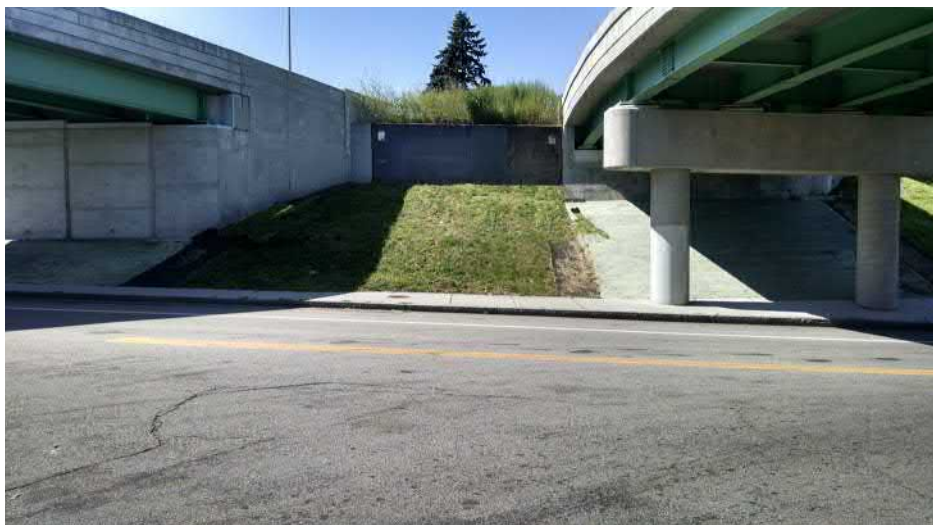
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Gateway Treatments

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Potential Public Art Areas



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 Place-making 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.





Open Studio Space	
Sculpture	
Lantern Trail	
Asphalt Art	

→ "All of this makes a healthy square. 'Green jacket square'."

→ "Business = manufacturing = store fronts should be encouraged! - Strong mix of business types"
"Protect small and local businesses."

Dining 

Retail	
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Galleries

—Artist Housing ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Maritime History

—Fishing and Industry

Transportation





- "Boat launch, public access to water."
- "More parking, better lighting."

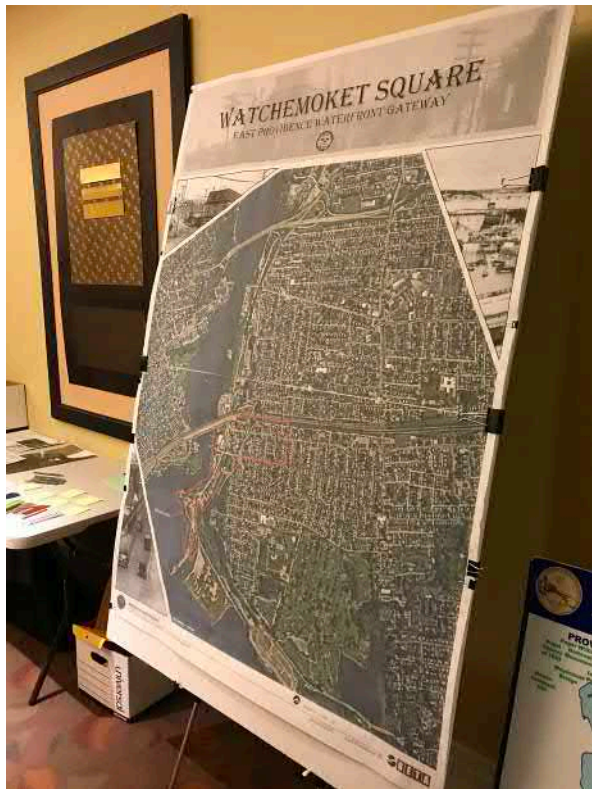
Festivals	15
Outdoor Concerts	8
Art Events	7
Indoor Performance Venues	4



→ "If there are interesting places to live in WS, those people will drive retail/amenities"

(On open space of board) "Impossible to walk safely."
"Waterfront business to be rewarded?"





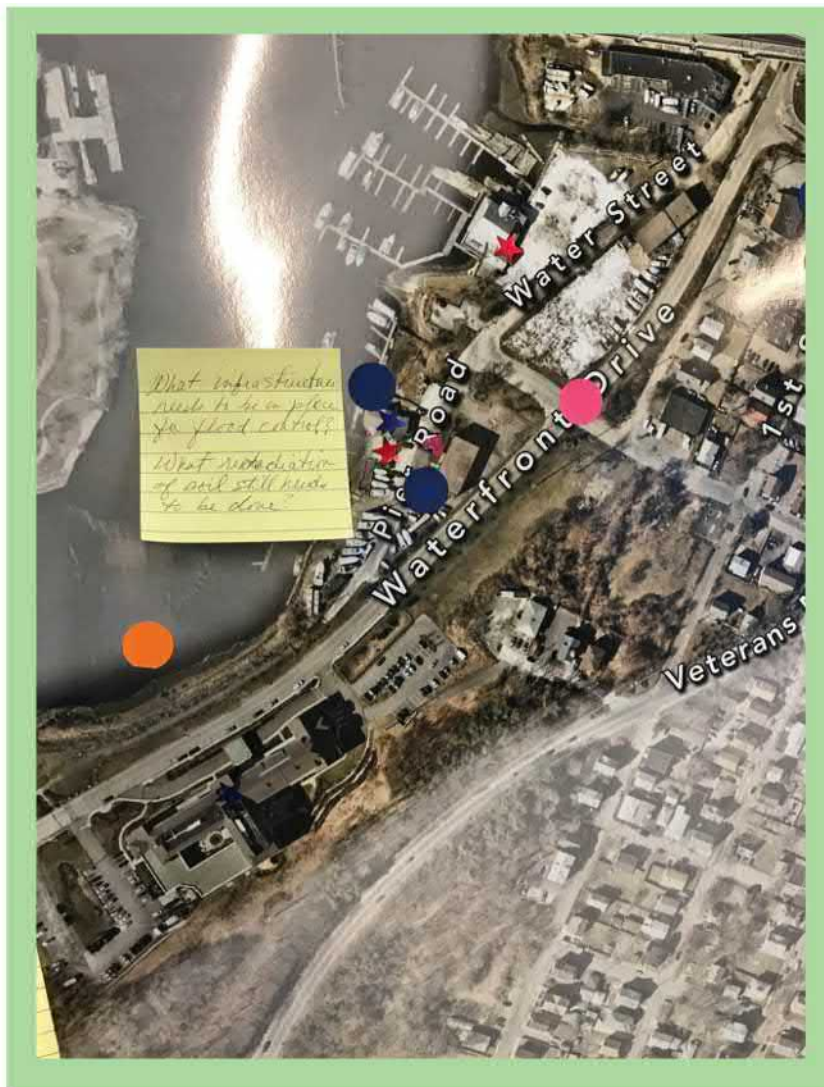
"What attention is being paid to the indigenous/ Native American place on this land 1675 and before?"



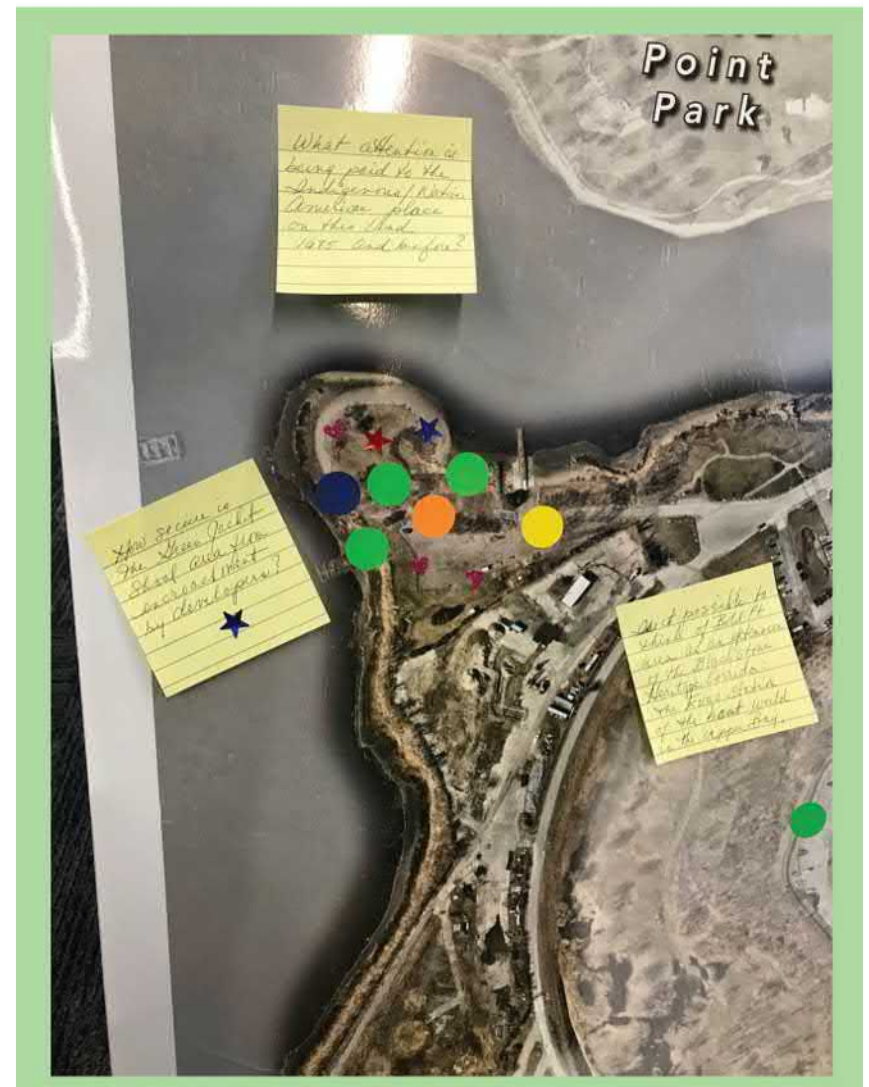
"Public access to waterfront."
 "Signage above Green Jacket Shoals."
 "Fix this road."



"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

Text by AWG

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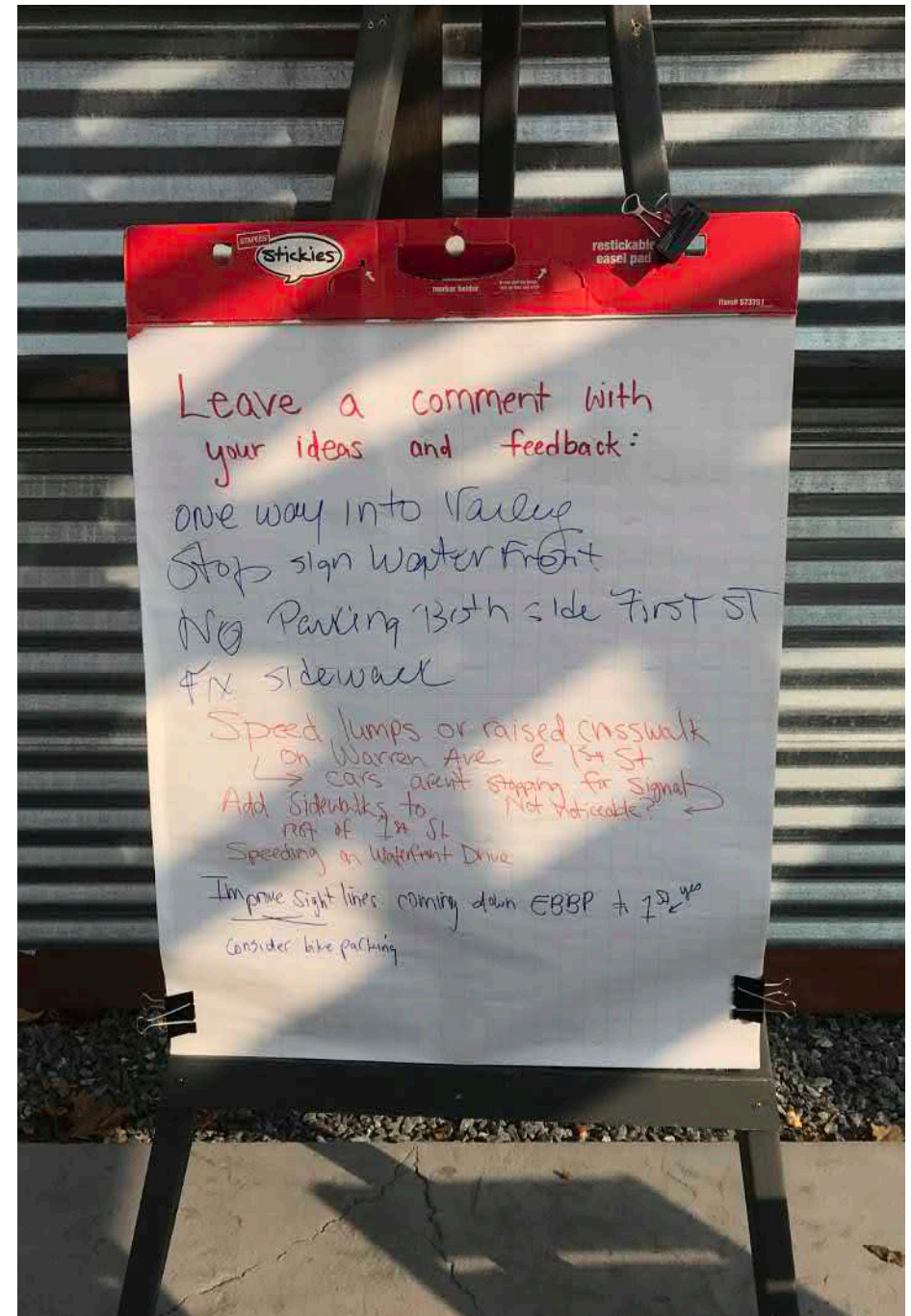
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TAKEAWAY NOTES FROM BETA GROUP

- 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 First Street.
- Common concerns with crossings at Warren Avenue.
- Intersections at First 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

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<https://www.9news.com/article/life/style/colorado-guide/rino-support-fund/73-d83dc1ea-32c3-4c0c-96f0-c79bae2610e0>

<https://wheatridgetranscript.com/stories/covid-19-pandemics-impact-on-40-west-arts-district,297466>

<https://40westarts.org/first-friday>

References:

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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.preservation.ri.gov)

<https://www.eastprovidenceharborfront.com>

<https://reportertoday.com> 09.29.2019

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

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

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

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

