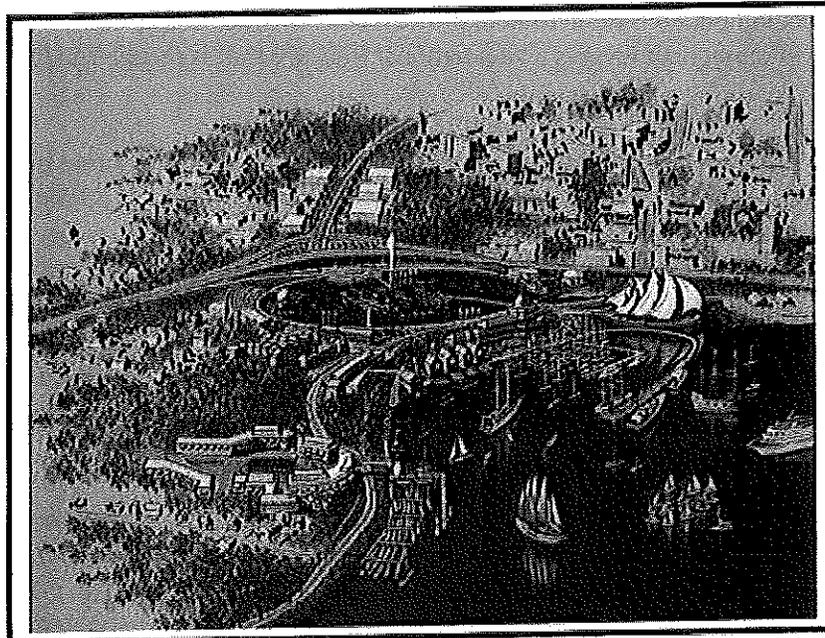


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DELETE EXISTING:

(f) Riverfront Redevelopment Area

This area has the potential to bring national retailers, a marina and high-end riverfront housing adjacent to Middletown’s downtown. The development is being planned in conjunction with the relocation of the city’s sewage treatment plan and the reconfiguration of the Rt. 9/Rt. 17 highway interchange. Once these two projects are complete, the area holds tremendous potential. It represents eighty-five (85) acres of land in the 2nd wealthiest county in the state. The area has direct highway access and other 3,000 feet of frontage on the Connecticut River. The challenge with this development will be the need to create a pedestrian friendly environment which links to the downtown and to ensure that this project complements and does not compete with the historic downtown. The Planning and Zoning Commission has the power and will to develop regulations that will accomplish this goal.



Proposed South Cove

While the South Cove area holds tremendous potential for the City of Middletown, the Connecticut River is a resource of regional significance. The Planning and Zoning Commission along with the Harbor Improvement Agency should facilitate a regional discussion with the towns’ of Portland and Cromwell to identify common goals and ideas, which could lead to a very unique tri-town plan for the development of the waterfront in the three towns.

ADD

(f) Riverfront Redevelopment Area

The Connecticut River runs 410 miles from the Canadian border to the Long Island Sound. It is the longest river in New England and the predominant feature of our landscape in Middlesex County. The lower Connecticut River, or the Connecticut River Estuary and Tidal River Wetlands Complex, begins near its mouth at the Long Island Sound and continues upstream for 36 miles to Cromwell and Wangunk Meadows just north of Middletown.

The City of Middletown owes its existence to the Connecticut River. It is a legacy that needs to be rediscovered and reintegrated into how Middletown functions as a Community for cultural and environmental awareness and stewardship, for recreational opportunity and for economic development.

This report is an effort to guide the City of Middletown in how to invest and encourage greater use of the Middletown riverfront for public use along the river and for private development around its edges. This report and companion documents recognized the realities of riverfront development, especially the possibility of annual flooding. The City should guide future development within the riverfront park by keeping intensive park facilities located in areas that have already been developed. These areas are between the Canoe Club Restaurant and the Columbus Point, and the area of the existing Sewer Treatment facility.

Everything that is recommended is done to help protect, develop in harmony or increase awareness of the Connecticut. The Connecticut River is a vital national treasure that is recognized for its importance by the following:

The Ramsar Convention- On October 14, 1994 this complex tidal ecosystem of the lower river with its extensive, high-quality tidal freshwater and brackish marshes and remarkable clusters of rare and endangered species, was recognized by an intergovernmental treaty as an internationally important wetland. This treaty established the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, now called the Ramsar Convention. (The convention was held at the Caspian seaside resort of Ramsar in Iran.) The Convention was adopted in 1971 it entered into force in 1975. The United States ratified the treaty in 1987. Today there are 168 convention member countries with 2,127 designated Ramsar sites representing all geographic regions of the world.

American Heritage Rivers- The governors of four New England states that encompass the Connecticut River Valley nominated the Connecticut River for inclusion in President William Clinton's American Heritage Rivers program. Designated rivers receive the priority of federal assistance. In 1998 the Connecticut River was named an American Heritage River, one of just fourteen Rivers receiving the designation nationwide.

In 1990 the US Fish and Wildlife Service opened its Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center in Turner Falls MA. Sixty thousand shad swam through the Turner Falls Fishway toward Vermont and New Hampshire. In 1995 the entire Connecticut River watershed became the newest wildlife refuge. The Silvio O Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge was based a new concept, cooperation. It emphasized a watershed approach to landscape preservation through conservation partnerships and limiting the use of outright land purchases to preserve habitats.

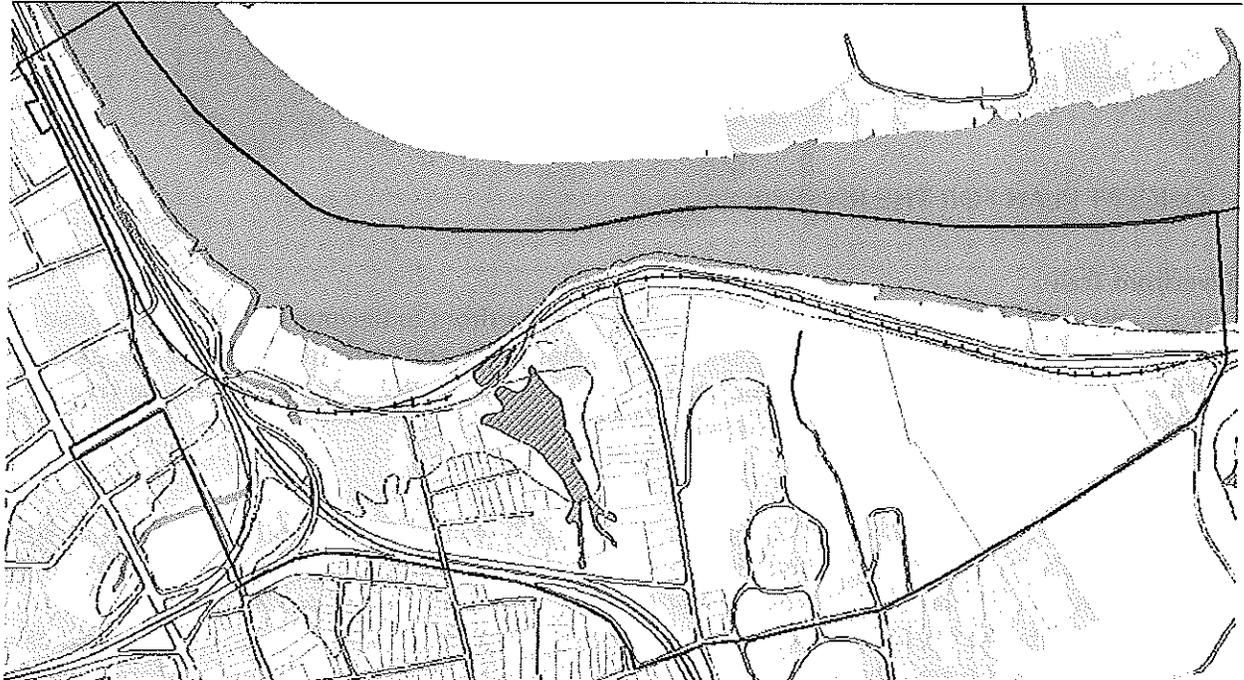
First National Blueway- In May, 2012 U. S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar designated the 410 mile long Connecticut River as America's first National Blueway, saying restoration and preservation efforts on the river were a model for other American rivers. " Most people didn't awake to the possibilities of the restoration of rivers and what they meant to the environment and to the economy and young people and health until very recently," he told reporters at the conclusion s of the ceremony.

Nature Conservancy 100 last great places- The Connecticut River and its estuary is named as one of the last great places by the Nature Conservancy.

Riverfront Area

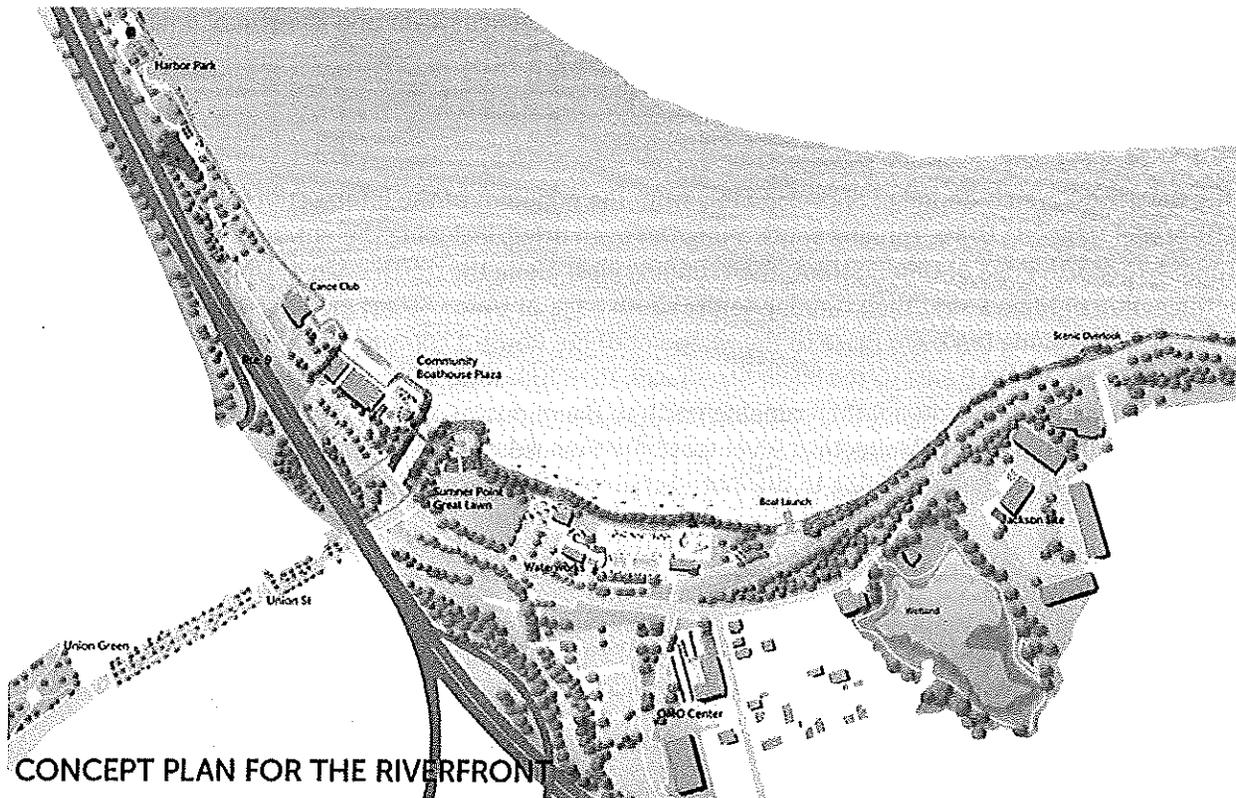
The Riverfront area is bounded approximately from the midpoint of the intersection of Washington Street and DeKoven Drive, running south along DeKoven drive, including the entrance to Harbor Park tunnel, to north edge of Union Street, then running west along the north edge of Union Street to the intersection of Main Street then running to the south edge of Union Street east to DeKoven drive, then running south along DeKoven Drive to the Midpoint of the Route 17/Route 9 connector, then following the path of the Route 9 east to the Silver Street exit, then following Silver Street east to the intersection of Silver Street and River Road, then running north to the midpoint of the Connecticut River and following midpoint of the Connecticut River west and then Northwest to a point in the vicinity of Washington Street, then returning to the intersection of Washington Street and DeKoven Drive.

Map of the Study Area



What shall be included in future riverfront development?

This question is answered comprehensively by the January 2014 Project for Public Spaces final report, A Placemaking Plan for the Middletown Riverfront. The Commission recommends that the Project for Public Spaces report be utilized and implemented as the guiding vision and basis for future Riverfront development. The following is a summary overview of key components for what should be included.



Riverfront Trail-

The 1.5 miles from the North End of Harbor Park along the riverfront to the intersection of River Road and Silver Street should be a continuous uninterrupted public bike and pedestrian path. A pedestrian and bike bridge should span Summer Brook near where it feeds into the Connecticut River. The Trail should be wide enough to accommodate pedestrians and bikers.

Harbor Park-

The pedestrian tunnel will remain a major gateway and access point to the riverfront for the foreseeable future, particularly for pedestrians and bike riders coming from downtown. But Harbor Park will also become a gateway into downtown for people arriving by paddle boat, kayaks and boat to the floating docks proposed by the city for the area near the tunnel. Enhancing the gateway and arrival experience at the tunnel, a gazebo and new floating docks will be an important first step towards transforming Harbor Park. Proposed gateway enhancements discussed in the public process include visible directional and informational signage, lights, including light art for the pedestrian tunnel, colorful banners or flags along the boardwalk railing, and attractive colorful focal points at key locations such as landscaping, public art, etc.

The gazebo and landing plaza around it should also be improved in the short-term by adding comfortable, attractive seating – picnic tables, benches, or Adirondack chairs – with views of the river. The gazebo could become a temporary site for a visitor information booth welcoming people arriving on foot from downtown and transient boaters, once the floating docks are completed at this location. These improvements should be seasonal to begin with, and should be timed around larger or organized events when visitors are expected to arrive at Harbor Park.

In the long-term the successful elements from the short-term experiments could be made permanent.

The Community Boat House-

Significant interest was expressed in building a new rowing facility in the vicinity where the existing boat houses stand that would serve current and future rowing programs and provide room for expansion. There are also potential donors who could help the city and the schools build a new boat house.

Workshop participants and interviewees stressed the need for more event spaces in Middletown for private functions, such as weddings, parties, and performances suggesting that such a space could be accommodated in an expanded boat house, possibly over the boat storage facility.

A space that could hold 300-400 people for a performance was suggested several times. We estimate that a space of about 6,000 sf on the second floor above the boat storage could serve that function. That way it would be above the floodplain and offer great views over the river.

The plaza next to the community Boathouse would be the heart of the riverfront, providing information, food, possibly bike and small boat rentals, and serving as an event space for private and public functions, markets and small performances. It would also provide a great viewing area for boat races, fireworks and other activities on the river. It would be linked by a pedestrian bridge to the Sumner Point Great Lawn which would provide a space for larger events.

Sumner Point Great Lawn-

With its proximity to the entrance to the riverfront and to Boathouse plaza, this large open space, the former site of Peterson Oil storage facilities, will make a great flexible space for a variety of outdoor performances and programs. It offers over two acres of programmable space that will easily hold several thousand people. The two spaces – the plaza and the lawn - could be programmed simultaneously for festivals and performances (e.g. jazz festival or a river music festival). When not programmed, the lawn is a versatile space for informal activities (e.g. frisbee, kite flying, pick-up soccer games, badminton, picnics) and for more organized activities through the YMCA or parks and recreation departments.

We recommend that no formal amphitheater or permanent stage be built since that could constrain the types of performances that could be held there. Utility infrastructure for power, lighting and sound systems should be provided at several select locations on the Great Lawn. Landscaping should be minimal but shade trees and low-growing shrubs could provide protection from the sun and help to define the space without blocking views into the park or of the river.

The Water Works-

The Water Works will be a dynamic, multi-use recreational, entertainment and cultural destination proposed to replace the Middletown waste treatment plant.

The waste treatment plant features a number of structures located in the floodplain that, if fully demolished, could never be replaced. Instead of demolishing all buildings and water treatment tanks, we propose to preserve, adapt and remodel existing buildings and some of the tanks. While the primary treatment tanks may be too polluted for retrofitting, as many as possible of the remaining tanks should be preserved and adapted for new recreational uses, such as swimming and wave pools, scuba diving, skateboarding ramps and bowls, climbing walls, high ropes courses, etc.

The place making concept envisions creating several places within the Water Works, each centered on or around a re-used building or tank. The two-story main service building, where the pumps are housed today, could easily be remodeled into a space for either a full size restaurant, or a smaller kitchen

servicing primarily an outdoor beer garden. An important element of the plan, the outdoor beer garden, would have great views of the river and could, for special events and festivals (like Oktoberfest) spill on both sides of the building.

Another possibility is for the building to accommodate a micro-brewery which would then serve local brew in the beer garden. The beer garden environment is meant to be simple, light, informal, and easy going.

The space between the pools and the building should become a patio with outdoor seating, deck chairs, cart offering coffee, snacks, soft drinks and ice-cream, and spilling into an attractive, fun water playground. The city should acquire all land on the river side of River Road for public purpose. Currently there is one parcel of property privately owned.

The Omo Site-

The land's central location on the riverfront and its environmental challenges make it a good location for a parking lot that could serve much of the riverfront, providing space for up to 175 cars, in addition to boat trailers.

Restore the brook through dredging, the removal of invasive vegetation, erosion control and new plantings. This community project could result in better water quality and wild-life habitat, as well as new ways for the community to enjoy the brook with nature trails and a kayak launching site.

The City should encourage restoring / renovating the historic industrial buildings at the southeast corner of the site for cultural and commercial use such as craft or flea markets, art galleries, coffee shops, or an indoor public market. The City should also encourage the building at the back of the site adjacent to Route 9 to be redeveloped as commercial offices. In particular, the possibility to develop incubator space for start-up high tech businesses should be vigorously explored.

Boat Launch-

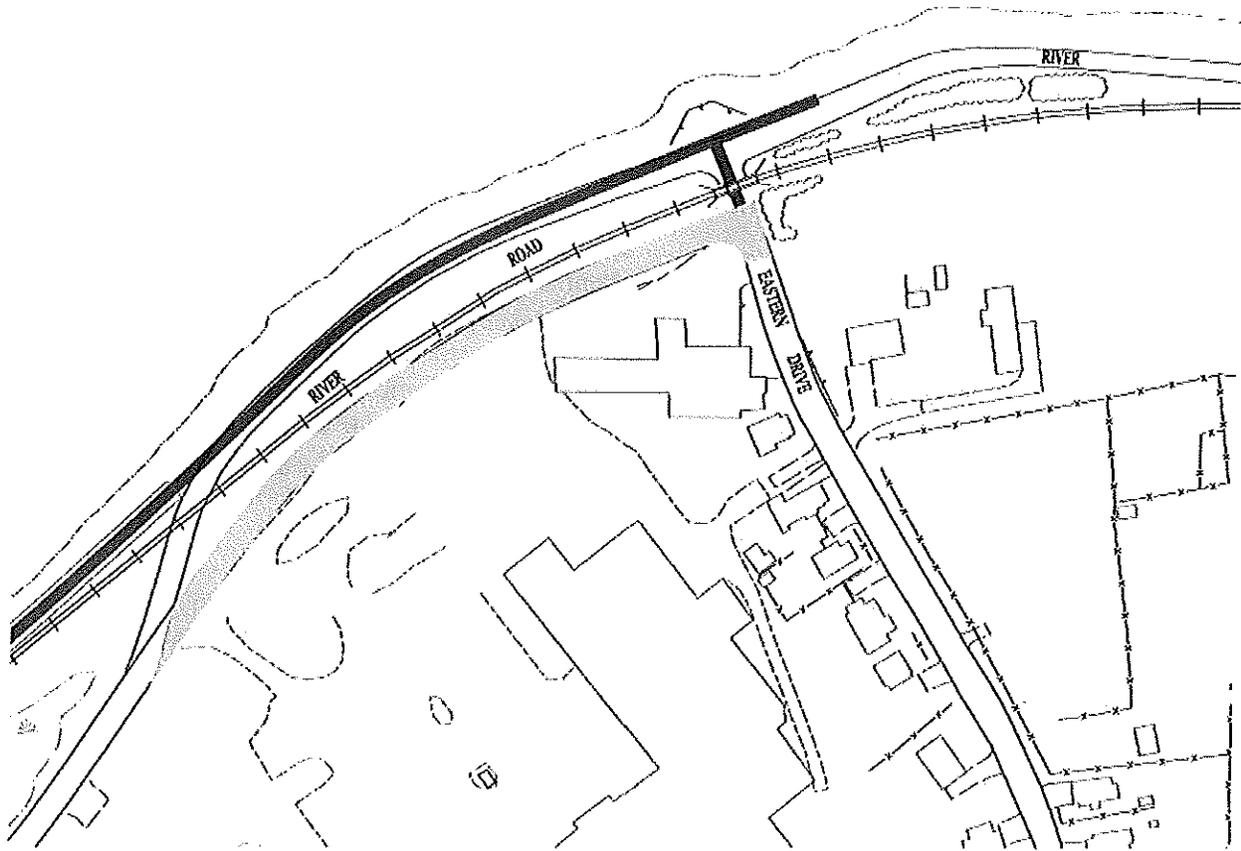
While most of the Waste Treatment Plant site is filled to above 20 feet, there is a low area at the east end that gradually slopes to the water. It is possible that a small boat launch ramp could be built there, with most of the trailer parking located remotely, but this site must be investigated more thoroughly.

The Jackson Site-

The site that is now home to Jackson Corrugated Container Corporation, a carton manufacturer, is a prime redevelopment site on the riverfront suitable for residential and possibly other uses due to its location above the 100-year flood plain, its easy access from Eastern Drive and its lovely views of the river.

Continuous public access along a waterfront is critical, even at developments that are primarily residential. The City should ensure that there is a public access corridor between the shoreline and the railroad line..

As recommended in previous studies the city should investigate the feasibility of relocating River Road onto the land between the Jackson Corrugated property and the railroad all the way down to Meadow Meat (see map below). This would eliminate the need to use the very low railroad underpass, take the majority of the road out of the flood plain and eliminate a vehicular at grade rail road crossing. It would also open up the existing 50 foot River Road right of way (along the river) for a multi-use trail.



The Wetland-

To the west of the Jackson Site is a low-lying, wetland area that has little development potential. Residents suggested that the City purchase the property to be preserved as wetland and used for environmental education purposes. A path or boardwalk around or through the wetland area would provide access for birders and school classes, and expand the reach of the Riverwalk. This property should be acquired both to eliminate the current blight and to establish the public use described above.

River Road-

While we recommend that it be closed to vehicular traffic between Silver Street and Eastern Drive to allow for safe walking and bike riding, there was interest in having it open to one way vehicular traffic during the week but closed to traffic during the weekends to promote more biking and walking.

To encourage more use and as biking increases in Middletown, and so River Road becomes a link in a larger network of bike trails and lanes, the road could be closed to traffic permanently.

A Nature Trail-

Because of its natural beauty and remote location, the stretch of shoreline between Eastern Drive and Silver Street is an ideal place for a nature trail that skirts the edge of the slope leading down to the river and offers a different experience from River Road. If the vegetation along the river is both opened up (by the removal of invasive trees, shrubs and vines) and restored with native species, views could be enhanced while more birds and other wildlife could be attracted.

Silver Street Pier-

At one time a pier that provided a place for the launching of small boats stood near the intersection of Silver Street and River Road and it was served by a small parking lot. The pier and parking lot could be recreated at this site, if the shallow water and steep slope meet state requirements at this location. A new pier must be handicapped accessible (with an ADA compliant ramp) and the parking lot must provide ADA compliant parking spaces. Picnic tables with views of the water would enhance the pier as a destination.

Union Street: A Gateway-

Union Street should be a better gateway to the riverfront and act as part of a larger system to connect the Downtown, Wesleyan University and other important stakeholders to the riverfront. Union Street should be given a "boulevard" treatment with better, safer access for pedestrians and bike riders, more effective way-finding signage, and an attractive gateway to the riverfront. We propose wide sidewalks with attractive lighting and street trees on both sides of Union Street from Main Street to River Road separated from the roadway by a 5' planted verge. Consideration should also be given to reducing the width of Union Street from four lanes to two between Main Street and deKoven Drive.

Designing the Riverfront with Flooding in mind-

Members of the community have voiced concern about climate change and its impact on flooding and sea level rise on the Middletown riverfront. There is no doubt that the riverfront will be affected by the increase in extreme storm events and flooding, and areas within the 100 year flood plain, whether park land or structures, will have to be built or retrofitted with the potential for flooding in mind. This should not curtail the use of the riverfront, however. Waterfronts around the world are adapting to these harsh realities while continuing to operate as vital community places.

What types of zones/land use issues should be considered and/or implemented and how will those affect economic development goals identified by the task force?

The Planning and Zoning Commission has reviewed a number of options available to rezone the riverfront not only to allow for the creation of a public park, but also to encourage adjacent development to complement and benefit from an expanded and more active riverfront park.

The Planning and Zoning Commission will be discussing a proposed floating zone option put forth by staff, including the Office of General Counsel, as well as other options and suggestions from members of the public. A floating zone is the adoption of regulations that would replace the underlying zone when a developer has a specific proposal for new development.

What, if any, changes to existing highway patterns will be required to responsibly develop riverfront property and how can Middletown best interact with DOT to ensure efficacious planning?

Investing in transportation will help leverage other investments to support Middletown's goals for the Riverfront and supports the State initiatives to enhance economic competitiveness, provide better access to quality jobs and housing, preserve the State's environmental integrity, and sustain and promote the livability of Middletown for residents, commuters and visitors.

Access between the Downtown and the River is a long-term necessity. There are five tests that should be address for any proposal to be considered a successful solution.

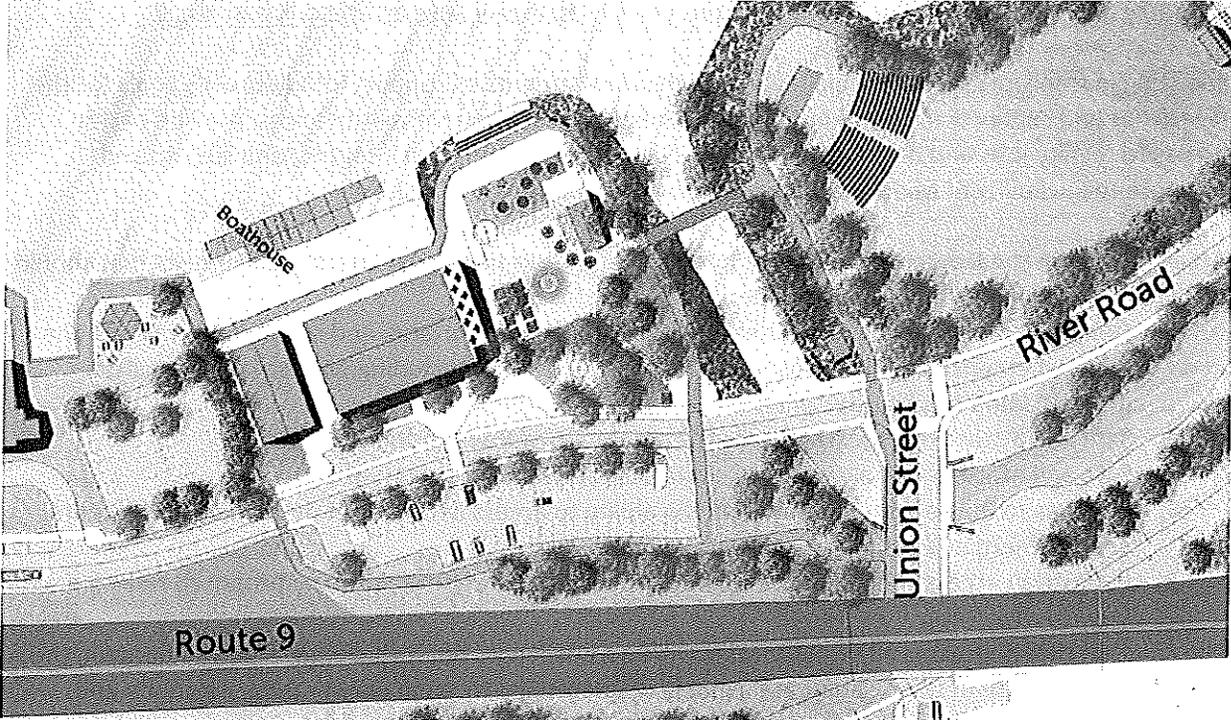
1. Designed, maintained and operated to enable safe, comfortable and convenient travel to the greatest extent possible for users of all ages and abilities including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders;
2. Safe and attractive pedestrian access from the Downtown to the Riverfront;
3. Safe and efficient circulation of cars into downtown and through downtown;
4. Changes to Route 9 should maintain the ability to access Main Street in the north end, center and southern end of Downtown.
5. Pedestrian access should not be isolated, but rather integrated into any proposed redesign.

The solution that addresses all of these tests will be a challenge, but a challenge that Middletown, the Region and the State of Connecticut are capable of addressing through cooperating, ingenuity and resourcefulness.

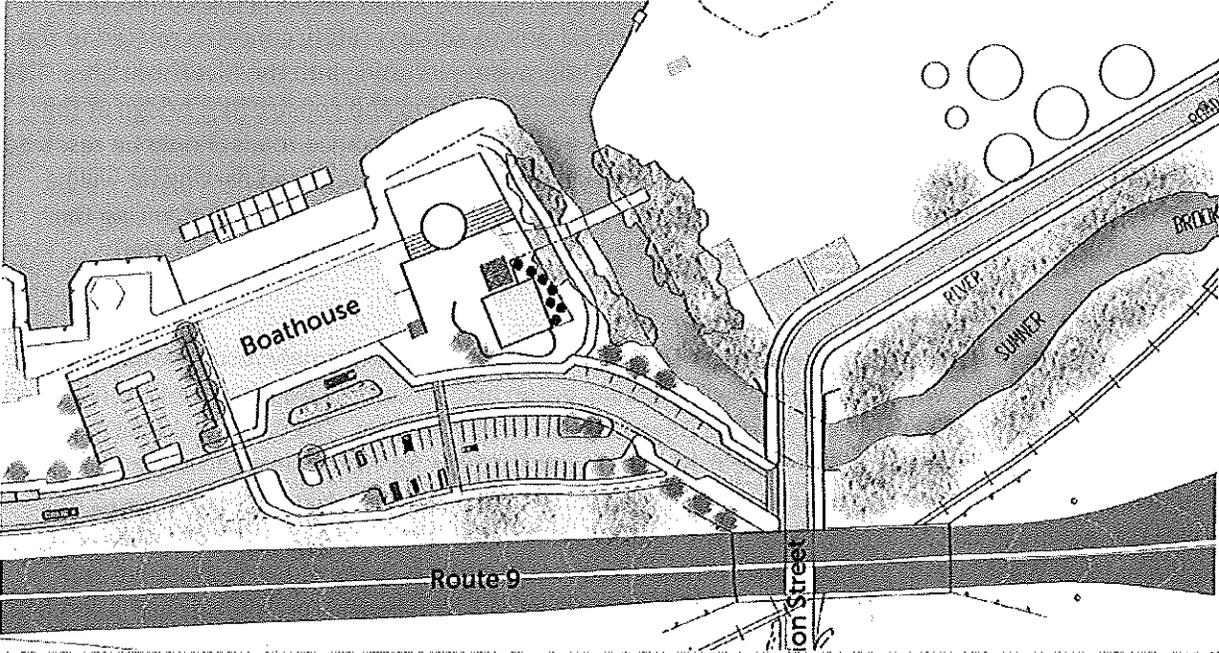
In the short-term the Middletown Riverfront Redevelopment Commission supports the Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) proposal Project 82-309 to address safety concerns related to the on ramp from Route 17 on to Route 9, and associated improvements going into the Riverfront area. The proposal changes the Route 17 ramp, closes the Harbor Drive on ramp and constructs a bridge at the end of Union Street over Sumner Brook with one or two bridges. The entrance roads should be resolved so that the City will know how the placement of a new Community Boathouse and parking lot will be affected. The proposed changes by the DOT include enhancing the entire gateway by enhancing the underpass and new decorative bridges will be funded by the DOT and will greatly improve the appearance of the area.

However, before proceeding with the current DOT plan, the Commission strongly recommends that the City initiate discussions with DOT's policy and planning group and/or Commissioner to move forward on a long-term solution for access between the Downtown and the riverfront. The City should encourage DOT to explore implementing a "boulevard" or "city streets" design for the downtown portion of Route 9 to achieve traffic calming and provide greater pedestrian access to the riverfront. Examples of this approach include Route 34 in New Haven, the Embarcadero Freeway in San Francisco, and the West Side Highway (now West Street) in New York. A "boulevard" could address many of the tests above and should be earnestly investigated by DOT. If DOT is receptive to a "boulevard" or "city streets" approach, the City should pursue federal and State grants to begin the process. Another consideration that should be discussed with DOT is construction of a pedestrian walkover across Route 9 to provide access between the riverfront and downtown.

Connecticut Department of Transportation Project 82-309



Project for Public Spaces Modification (reviewed with DOT)



What level of site control should the City have over parcels with potential for development? Should the City identify parcels of land for acquisition to guarantee a specific end use?

There is a role for private development and it should be largely controlled and encouraged through the floating zone process described above. Furthermore, the survey rating the Project for Public Spaces recommendations shows strong support for the development of amenities and facilities that are open to the public. The amenity that has the most support is the creation of a 1.5 mile river's edge multi-use path from the tunnel in Harbor Park to Silver Street. Any property or portion of a property that enables the creation of this path should be prioritized for site control by the City.

The City should also explore acquisition / land-banking of other properties that have low potential for beneficial private development but are suitable for public use, or are adjacent to property currently owned by the City that fronts on the river. One property identified by some residents is a low-lying wetland area to the west of the Jackson site. It was suggested that it be purchased and preserved as wetland to be used for environmental education purposes. Another site is the EPA cap site at the Omo property. This area should be incorporated into the park area for parking and future kayak/small boat launch into Sumner Brook. The Commission supports this idea if it can be achieved at a reasonable cost.



- Green Properties are owned by the City of Middletown.
- Yellow Properties should be owned by the City of Middletown in the future.
- Red Properties should remain in private hands and be developed according to zoning regulations.

