

# BEVERLY BASS RIVER DISTRICT VISION + ACTION PLAN 2014



**Funding provided by Barr Foundation and US  
Department of Housing and Urban Development**



**MAPC 50 YEARS**  
METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL  
SMART GROWTH AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

# Acknowledgements

This report documents the Beverly Bass River District Vision and Action Plan project. This project was a joint effort between the City of Beverly Planning Board, MAPC and residents. The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding from the Barr Foundation.

The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under an award with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the federal government.

We also thank the Metro Boston Consortium for Sustainable Communities for making this work possible.

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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Bass River District, identified as both a local and regional Priority Development Area in the 2011 North Shore Regional Strategic Planning Project, originally developed with the arrival of the Eastern Railroad to downtown Beverly in 1839, passing adjacent to the tidal river, and leading to a shift away from its earlier maritime trading, agricultural and fishing roots and into the industrial age. By the 1870's, thirty-five factories were included in the Bass River, Rantoul/Park Street neighborhoods and the City had embraced the leather and shoe making industries. At the head of the Bass River, the United Shoe Machinery Corporation, one of the first ever international corporations, constructed a quarter-mile stretch of factory buildings in 1902. The business stayed until 1980 and became today's Cummings Center in 1996. Today, the area continues to evolve around the downtown, commuter rail, and the new MBTA parking garage, shifting towards transit oriented development and mixed uses. MAPC worked with the City of Beverly to develop a community vision for the Bass River District and has created an action plan that includes connectivity and zoning recommendations that will help the District to continue to evolve from its industrial heritage into a vibrant and connected mixed-use neighborhood featuring locally-owned shops, services, restaurants, and homes-all adjacent to the Beverly downtown, commuter rail and the new MBTA parking garage.

The Bass River project continues the work Beverly began under its 2002 Master Plan, which identified the Bass River area as a key economic development area in conjunction with the past initiatives along Rantoul Street and the

development of the Cummings Center in the 1990s.

Elements of the overall vision from the residents, businesses, and property owners in the District and surrounding focus area included:

- Grow a zone of mixed uses from Beverly Depot out towards the waterfront and north to perhaps Bow Street.
- Connect the depot/gateway area to existing and planned shoreline trails around the Bass River, improving amenities along Broadway and at Bridge Street, and adding a new bike connection from the depot to the Cummings Center along McPherson Drive.
- Provide small boat access and launching facilities along Bass River.
- Maintain services and character of Park Street as an Industrial Arts neighborhood with studio and live/work spaces for artists, students and small business owners..
- New development needs to be set back from the river.
- The design of new buildings needs to be in keeping with traditional New England architecture and Beverly's downtown architectural styles.

Building upon the core concepts of what helps create successful mixed-use, bike and pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented development, MAPC and the City outlined a series of recommendations to capitalize on the opportunities and overcome impediments to stimulate investment in the District and nearby downtown areas. Key recommendations include:

## Land Use and Zoning

- Create the new Bass River Neighborhood Overlay District to overlay the Bass River section of the I-G Zoning District. The new overlay district will recommend regulations that are consistent with the principles and goals of this study, including:
- Setting a minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet for new projects using the overlay's regulations to enable smaller projects while still allowing for larger developments on consolidated lots;
- Creating maximum building height limits to better blend with neighboring commercial and residential districts;
- Offering height allowances for projects located in Special Flood Hazard Areas to incorporate flood-proofing and safety;
- Establishing frontage and yard setbacks to encourage active street frontage and blend with nearby neighborhoods;
- Encouraging the creation of affordable multi-family housing units in the overlay district and through the City's existing inclusionary housing ordinance;

- Incorporating the use of Beverly's existing Downtown Design guidelines while also encouraging the City to preserve public access and view-sheds within the overlay district;
- Altering parking requirements and encouraging shared parking arrangements to be more appropriate for a transit-oriented, walkable downtown neighborhood.

## Transportation

- Reallocating roadway right-of-way throughout the site area to better accommodate bicyclists through sidewalk installation of bicycle lanes or shared lane markings, as appropriate.
- Reconstructing poor condition sidewalks and installing a consistent tree canopy.
- Accommodating the needs of all users accessing the commuter rail station.
- Create a continuous riverfront path with various design improvements to make the area more comfortable and attractive.

## Public Realm Improvements

- Install wayfinding signs and other means to strengthen the connection between the site area and the Cabot Street retail area.
- Incorporate placemaking at Veteran's Memorial Park to add vitality to this important location.



Source: commons.wikimedia.org

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# **INTRODUCTION**

## Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to develop a vision plan for this district and provide a wide range of recommendations for how to achieve that vision.

## Project Background

This project continues work begun under the 2011 North Shore Regional Strategic Planning Project (NSRSPP). The NSRSPP identified Beverly's Bass River IG Zoning District as both a Local and Regional Priority Development Area. This project will provide recommendations that will enable the Bass River IG zoning district to provide additional opportunities for economic activity, waterfront recreation and housing.

## Scope of Work

The following tasks were delineated in an approved scope of work for the project.

- Conduct site visits to understand study area context and existing conditions.
- Meet with the working group to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the area and issues and for project direction.
- Hold two public meetings to obtain resident input and to present draft recommendations.
- Conduct market analysis study.
- Prepare recommendations for zoning, housing, complete streets and green infrastructure.
- Prepare a final report.

## Previous Plans and Studies

### 2002 City-Wide Master Plan

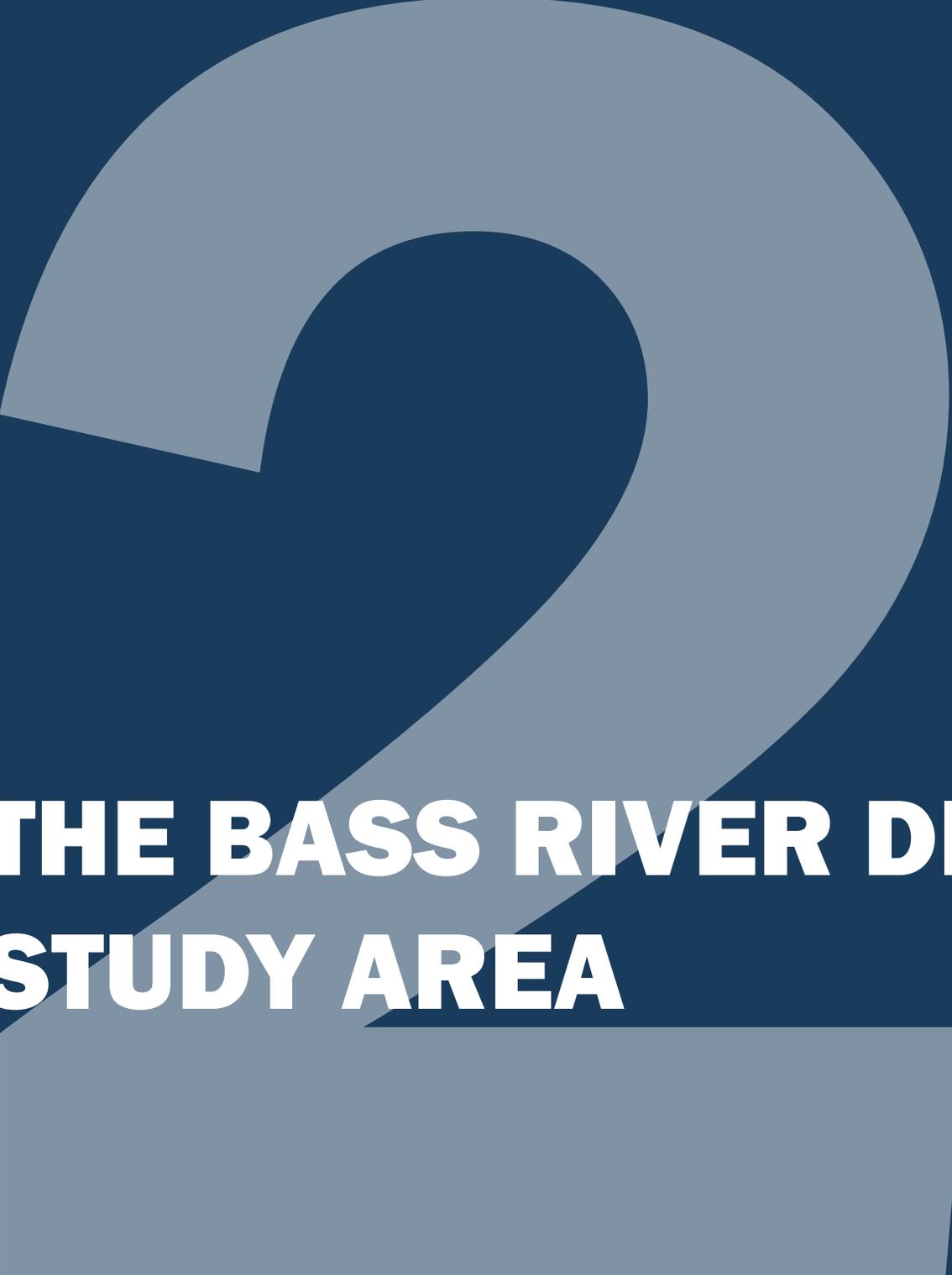
In 2001 the City contracted with The Cecil Group to prepare a city-wide master plan. This master plan identified the Bass River Harbor-front, Downtown, and Industrially- zoned properties along Park and River Streets as being areas for additional study and potential rezoning over time to continue the investment in the Downtown and waterfront areas. Some of the recommendations of the Master Plan for the Downtown and Harbor include:

- Redevelop portions of the commercial waterfront for mixed residential, commercial and recreational uses.
- Accommodate selected industrial uses within the area.
- Allow higher residential densities in the downtown area.
- Rezone the Bass River area to encourage mixed-use development.
- Encourage commercial redevelopment of the “working” section of the City’s waterfront that maximizes the economic potential of the parcels and creates a magnet for tourism and commercial activity.

### Harvard Study

In 2013, a group of Harvard professionals through Harvard’s Advanced Management Development Program in Real Estate formed teams to explore different development options for properties along the Bass River. The three teams came up with a wide range of proposals. The common themes that emerged included:

- Connections to the train station
- Mixed -use development
- Arts/retail and historical uses

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**THE BASS RIVER DISTRICT  
STUDY AREA**

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council has created a classification system of municipalities in Massachusetts to support planning, analysis and policy development. MAPC has identified five basic community types and nine sub-types. Beverly is classified as a regional urban center with a sub-type designation of sub-regional urban center. Sub-regional urban centers are characterized as having small to mid-sized urban downtowns and diverse neighborhoods. The urban-scale downtown cores are surrounded by more suburban residential neighborhoods. In general, these communities are nearly built out but may have undeveloped land around the periphery. New growth includes redevelopment in the downtown and industrial areas and greenfield development on the periphery. Population growth is either stable or growing slowly, depending on the amount of remaining undeveloped land.

## Description of the Study Area

The study area is located in southwestern Beverly and is served by the southernmost stop in Beverly on the MBTA commuter rail line. Figure 1 shows the study area in relation to the city and the surrounding region.

### Study Area Geography

Throughout this report, two different terms will be used to describe the geography under consideration. The term study area refers to the area shown within the green outline and is the primary area of concern for analysis and for recommendations. The term focus area describes an area within a ½ mile radius of a central point in the study area. In this case, the central point for the focus area is the Beverly MBTA station. The study area and the focus area are shown on Figure 2. The study area is 78 acres and the focus area is 472 acres.

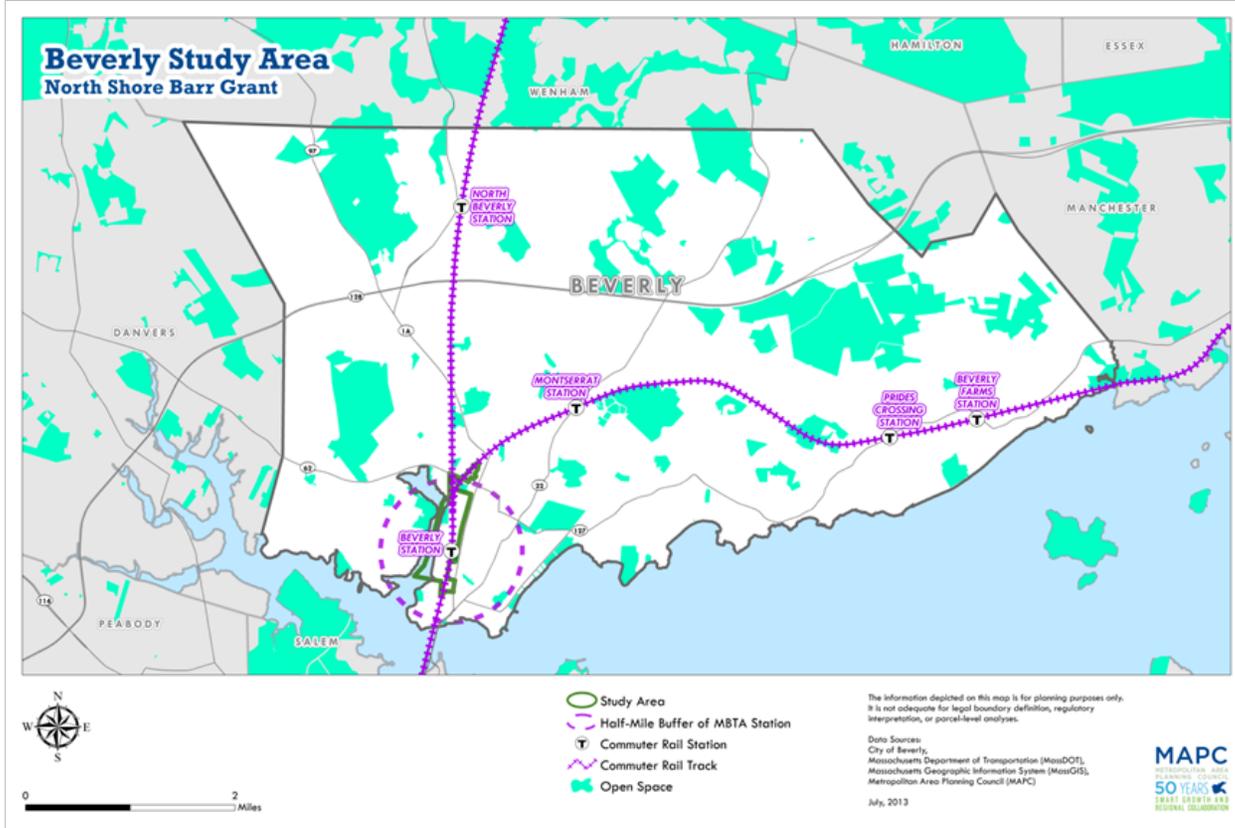


Figure 1: Regional Context of the Bass River District Study Area

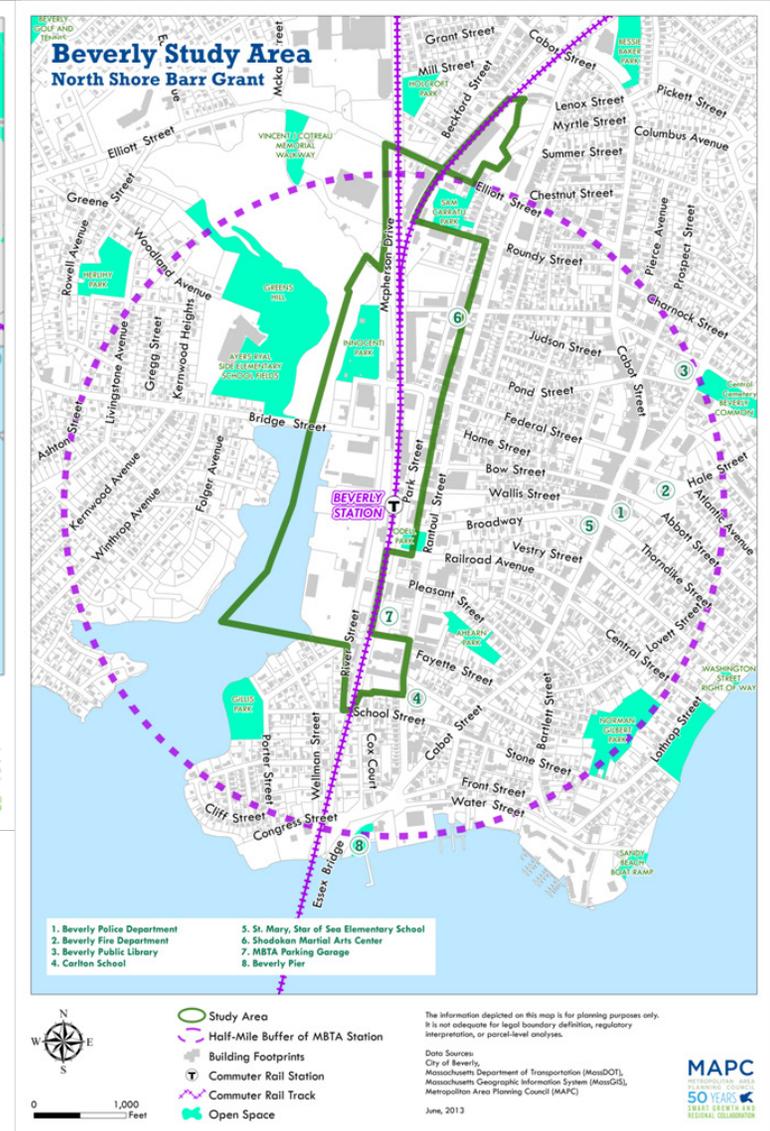


Figure 2: Bass River District Boundaries

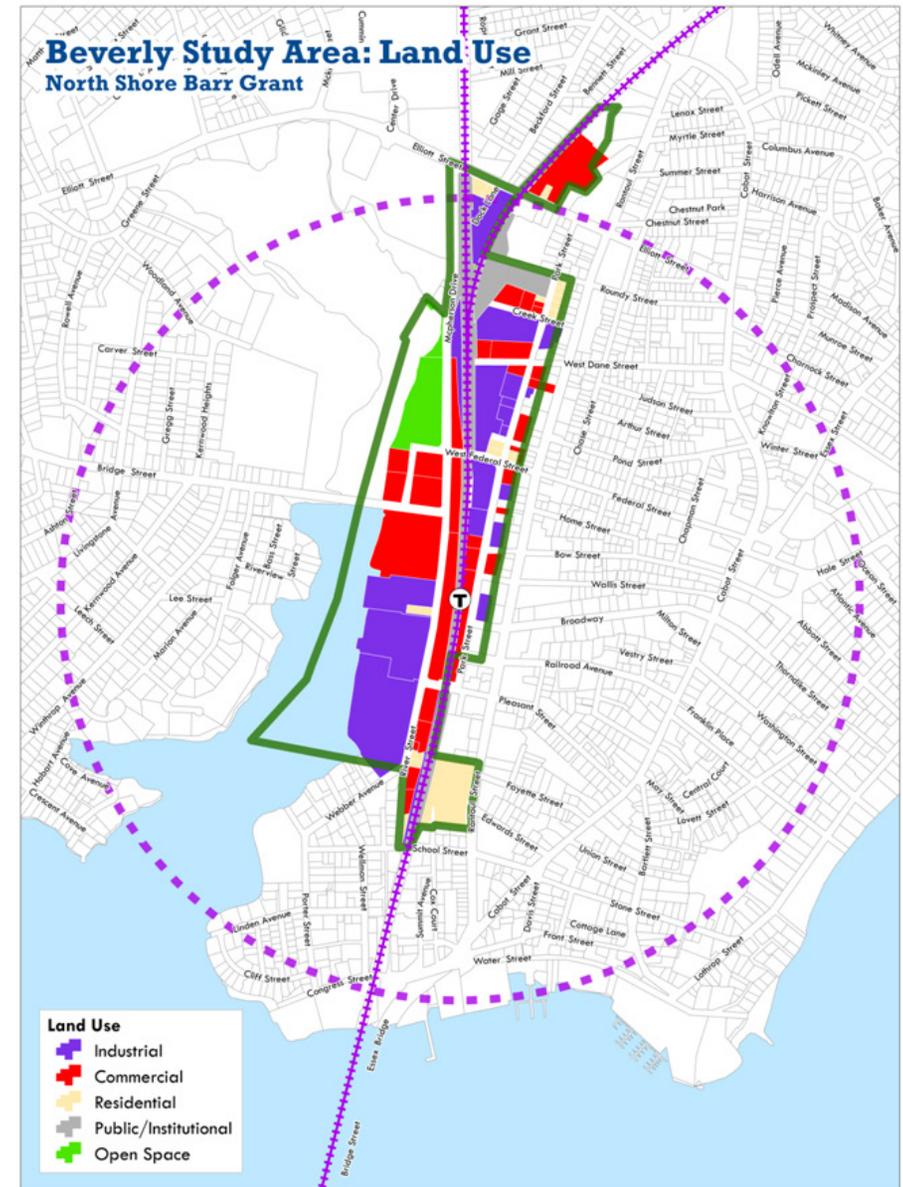
# Land Use and Zoning in the Study Area

## Land Use

Although the entire study area is zoned industrial, the area contains a mix of industrial, commercial, residential, public/institutional and open space uses. The study area is primarily industrial and commercial. The least amount of acreage is devoted to residential development. There are 24 parcels within the study area. In contrast, the focus area is more heavily residential than the study area and has very little industrial land. Land use within the study area is illustrated in Figure 3.

Table 1: Land Use

Land Use	Study Area		1/2 Mile Boundary	
	Acres	% of Study Area	Acres	% of 1/2 Mile Area
Residential	4.9	6%	215.1	46%
Commercial	30.2	39%	29.2	6%
Public/Institutional	19.2	25%	98.5	21%
Open Space	9.3	12%	31.7	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>78.1</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>472.5</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analyses.

Data Sources:  
City of Beverly,  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT),  
Massachusetts Geographic Information System (MassGIS),  
Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

July, 2013

Figure 3: Land Use

# Overview of the Study Area

There are two major north-south roads that traverse the study area; River Street and Park Street. The study area is bounded on the north by Elliott Street and on the south by School Street. The commuter rail tracks bisect the study area between River Street and Park Street. Rantoul Street is just east of the study area. The Bass River is on the western edge of the study area and is the site of the Bass Haven Yacht Club.

## Municipal Uses

There are a number of municipal uses within the study area. Within the study area there are two parks: Innocenti Park to the north situated directly on the river and O'Dell (Veteran's Park) which is southeast of the Beverly Depot. Innocenti Park provides active recreation while O'Dell Park is a landscaped park for passive recreation and is the site of the Beverly Farmers Market. Another neighborhood park (the Sam Coratu Park) is immediately adjacent to the study area on the north and the Vincent J. Cotreau Memorial Walkway is located behind the McDonald's off of Elliott Street. This park is outside the study area but is accessible by the public access walkway required by Chapter 91 through the Bass Haven Yacht Club. This park provides a walkway along the river and benches for sitting. The MBTA owns the Commuter Rail tracks and station going through the heart of the study area. The Beverly Public Services Department and the Beverly City Garage are also located in the study area.

## Residential Development

Residential use occupies only 4.9 acres of the study area and is not permitted by the I-G zoning. Residential uses are therefore, non-conforming uses which are grandfathered. The housing units are generally located on the periphery of the study area and include several units of single-family, two-family, and three-family housing and one six-unit three-story apartment building.

## **Industrial Uses**

The study area is predominantly occupied by industrial uses, concentrated in the southwest edge of the study area and east to the Commuter Rail tracks, with isolated commercial land use occupied by retail trade and service businesses, many of which provide automobile-related services. Zoned as a General Industrial district, a large portion of the study area is occupied by manufacturing buildings and utilities.

Gas and electric utility firms own some of the largest industrial parcels in the study area, including liquid natural gas tanks owned by National Grid, a gas pressure control station owned by the Boston Gas Company, and an electric transmission right-of-way owned by the New England Power Company.

## **Commercial Land Use**

Commercial land use is mostly concentrated east of the commuter rail tracks, and isolated in the northern and eastern parts of the study area. Most of the commercial land is occupied by businesses in retail trade and service industries, including many providing automobile-related services such as vehicle sales, repair, and car wash businesses. There are also several retail and recreational commercial properties in the study area, including hardware and clothing stores, restaurants, and indoor recreational facilities.

## **Social Services**

There are a number of social service agencies also located within the study area including the North Shore Veterans Center and the River House, a homeless shelter.

# Who Lives in the Study Area

It is important to begin any planning process or discussion of the future with an understanding of the people who currently live in the area.

## Population

More than 8,500 people live within a half-mile radius of the Beverly Depot Commuter Rail Station, located at the heart of the study area. Though it only accounts for 5% of Beverly’s total land, approximately 22% of the city’s total population resides in the focus area, making it the most densely populated area in Beverly.

Compared to the rest of the city, the population residing within the focus area contains a higher percentage of young adults, and a lower percentage of juveniles, middle-aged and senior adults. More than 30% of residents living in the focus area are between the ages of 20-34. The median age of the focus area population is 37.6 which is younger than Beverly’s average by 2.5 years. Only 11% of the focus area’s residents are currently seniors (65 years old and above) versus 15% in the city as a whole.

Households living near the study area tend to be smaller in size. Average household size in the focus area is 1.9 people, lower than the 2.4 people per household in Beverly overall.

The focus area shares a similar racial/ethnic composition with the rest of the city. Almost 90% of the focus area population is non-Hispanic white. The largest minority group is Hispanic/Latino (4.3%), followed by non-Hispanic Black/African American at 2.1% and non-Hispanic Asian at 2.2%.

Table 2: Population by Age

Population by Age		
Age Group	Number	Percentage
<18	1,477	17.2
18-34	2,608	30.3
35-44	1,225	14.2
45-54	1,359	15.8
55-64	989	11.5
>65	943	11.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>8,601</i>	<i>100.00%</i>

Source: 2007-11 American Community Survey.

## Income and Poverty

The weighted average median household income of the four census tracts that comprise the focus area is \$64,089, lower than the City of Beverly's \$67,733 and the state average \$65,981.

There is great variation in median household income among the four census tracts, ranging from a low of \$48,382 to a high of \$85,263. Tracts 300 and 400, the two census tracts that share portions of the study area, have significantly lower median household income than the city and state averages. In contrast, Tracts 202 and 500, the two tracts that are farther away but intersect the half-mile radius station buffer, both have median household incomes higher than \$70,000.

An estimated 933 (or 11.2%) of the 8,310 households living in the four surrounding census tracts of the study area earn incomes below the poverty level. 8.2% of family households and 14.9% of non-family households are living in poverty. The overall poverty rate in and around the study area is similar to the levels of Beverly (9.9%) and Massachusetts in general (11.3%).

The poverty rate varies greatly among the four census tracts. Again, households living in Tracts 300 and 400, which the study area intersects, have worse economic conditions than those living farther away from the study area. The poverty rates in Tracts 300 and 400 are close to 15%, higher than the city and state averages, while the other two tracts both have poverty rates lower than 9%.

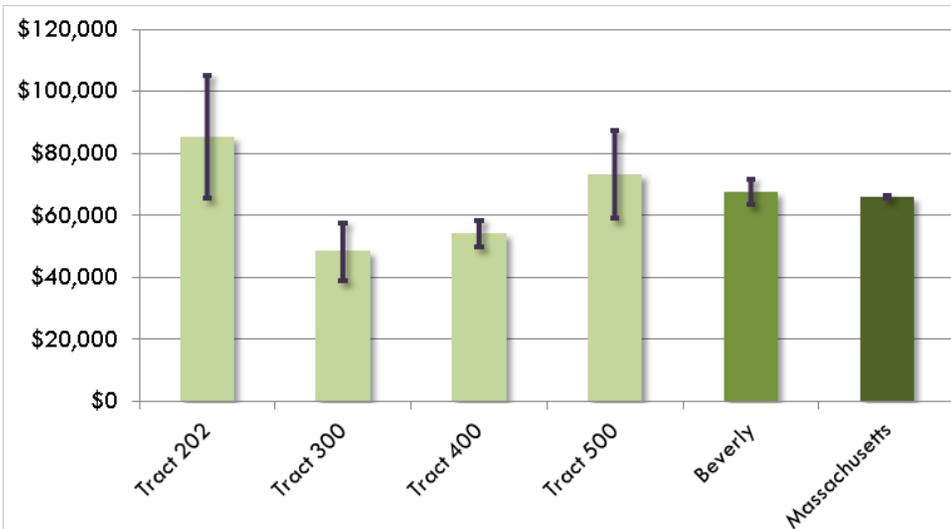


Figure 4: Median Household Income in nearby census tracts

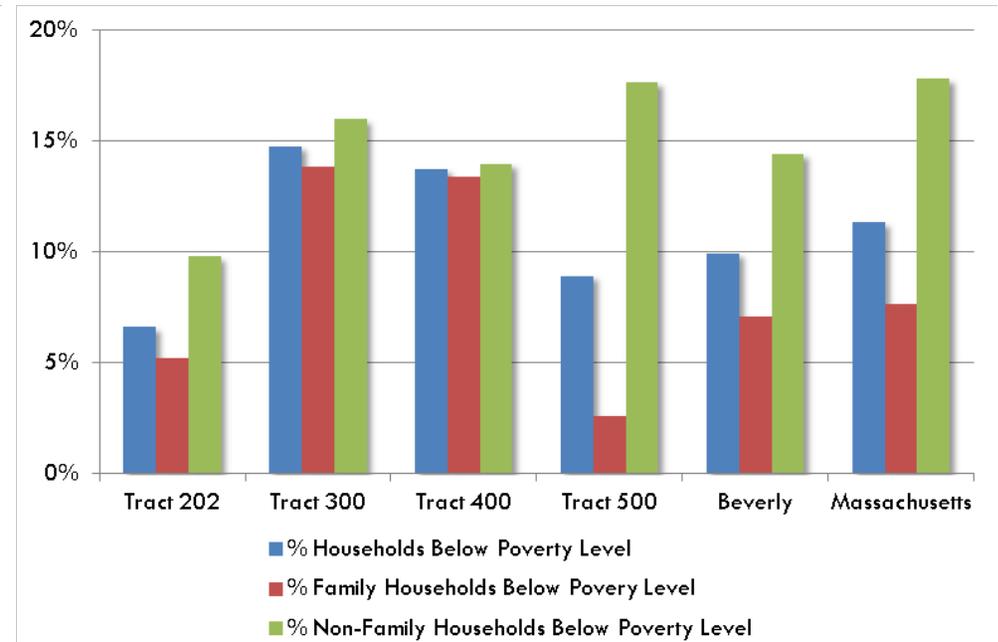


Figure 5: Households below the Poverty Level

## Housing

There are approximately 4,200 occupied housing units located within the focus area.

Housing stock near the study area is characterized by a high percentage of rental units, especially those concentrated just east of the study area boundary. Roughly 40% of housing units in the focus area are owner-occupied, and 60% are occupied by renters, almost the reverse of the breakdown of the City of Beverly where 60% of housing units are owner occupied.

A standard way of measuring housing affordability in the United States is the percentage of income spent on housing expenses (i.e. rent or mortgage, utilities, insurance, and related taxes). A household is considered cost burdened if it spends more than 30% of household income on housing expenses. Severe cost burden describes households that spend over 50% of household income on housing expenses.

The census tracts surrounding the study area include both cost burdened renters and homeowners. Overall, 38% of households living in the four census tracts are cost burdened. Renter households are more likely to spend higher expenses on housing than owner households—45% of households living in rental units and 33% of those who own their properties are cost burdened.

Compared to the City of Beverly and Massachusetts, percentage of cost burdened households around the study area appears slightly lower. However, similar to median household income and poverty rate, Tracts 300 and 400 have higher percentages of cost burdened households than both the other tracts and the city and state averages. In addition, Tract 500, which lies to the east of the study area, also suffers a remarkably high percentage of cost burdened renter households at 50.3%.

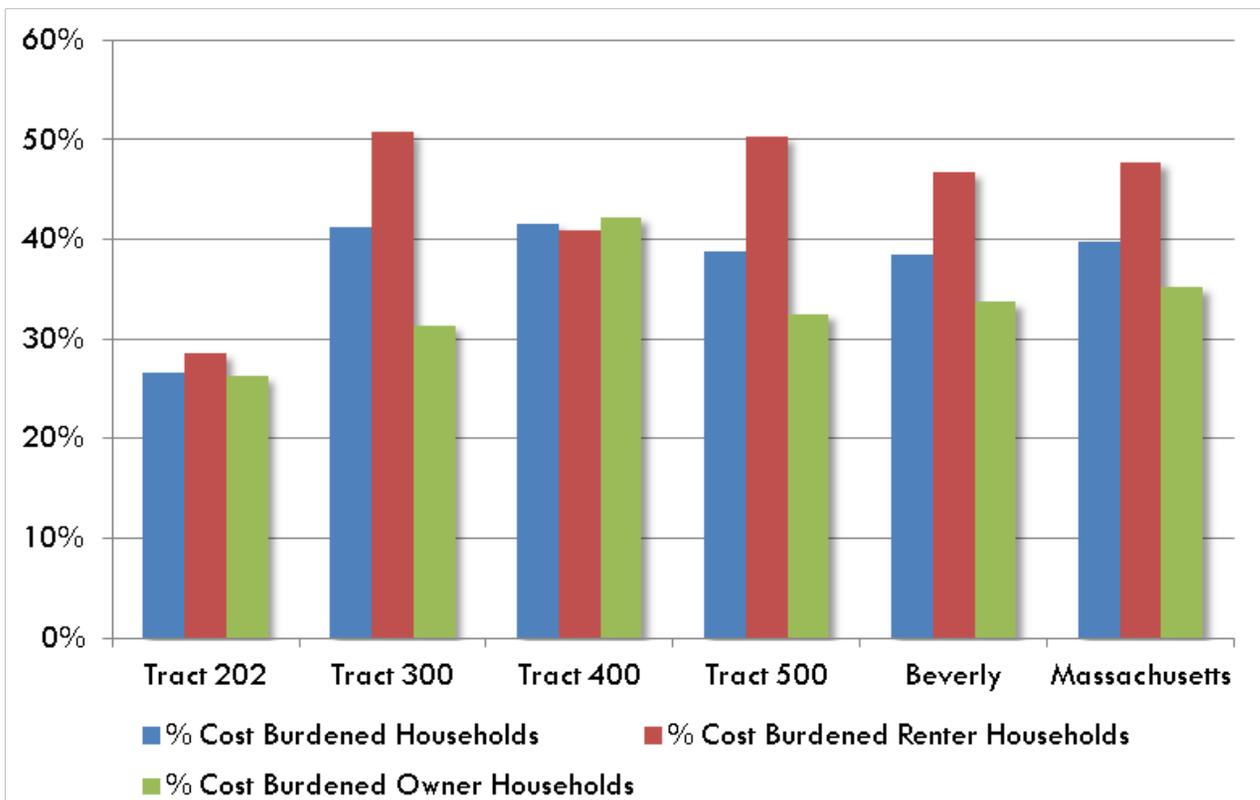


Figure 6: Housing cost burden in nearby census tracts

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# **THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS**

The major elements in the process were consultation with planning staff, boards and committees, working group meetings and two public meetings. These meetings are described below.

## Site Visit

On July 3 MAPC staff toured the study area along with the Beverly Planning Director. Staff made additional site visits on an as-needed basis. During these site visits, planners took measurements of road widths and photographs to document existing conditions.

## Working Group

A working group was formed to provide guidance and feedback to MAPC throughout this project. The working group is composed of residents, area architects, business owners and city staff. The group met for the first time on August 8, 2013.

## Working Group Meeting (August 8)

At this meeting, members were briefed on the purpose and scope of the project and then were asked to talk about strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in the Bass River and adjacent downtown area. The following themes emerged from that discussion.

- Grow zone of mixed uses from Beverly Depot out towards the waterfront and north to perhaps Bow Street.
- Broadway as a gateway to downtown from the east into Vets Park, depot area and

continuing with walking and boating access to the Bass River. Walking access to the waterfront via easement from National Grid with long term vision to redevelop most of these two parcels into a waterfront park, commercial and residential uses.

- Connect the depot/gateway area to existing and planned shoreline trails around the Bass River, improving amenities along Broadway and at Bridge Street, and adding a new bike connection from the depot to the Cummings Center along McPherson Drive.
- Provide small boat access and launching facilities along Bass River.
- Maintain services and character of Park Street as an Industrial Arts neighborhood with studio and live/work spaces for artists, students and small business owners.

## Planning Board Meeting

On September 17 MAPC met with the Planning Board to brief them on the project and to hear their concerns.

## First Public Meeting

A meeting was held on September 26, 2013 at the Beverly Public Library and was attended by 38 residents and business owners. The meeting included a presentation about the demographics of the area, a visual preference survey and small group discussions about the strengths, challenges and opportunities in the study area. Some of the key issues that emerged included the following:

- The scale of buildings near the river is a concern. Care needs to be taken so that buildings don't block views of the river or create a canyon effect.
- The industrial history of the area can be an asset.
- There is a need for more river access and a public boat launch.
- There are real and perceived safety issues because the concentration of social service agencies attracts many homeless people.
- National Grid is a major hindrance to improving water access and redevelopment.
- The area lacks a distinct identity. It may be possible to build on the industrial character or promote the area as a creative arts neighborhood.
- It is important to retain industrial uses because of the tax base and there are potential conflicts between industrial uses and new residential development.
- The commuter rail stop is a key asset but the tracks serve as a visual and physical barrier to the riverfront area which feels isolated.
- New development needs to be set back from the river.
- The design of new buildings needs to be in keeping with traditional New England architecture and Beverly's downtown architectural styles.

## Second Public Meeting

The second public meeting was held on December 4, 2013 at the Beverly Public Library. The meeting focused on transportation and land use recommendations. Transportation recommendations included pedestrian issues, bike safety and streetscape improvements. The land use recommendations covered a potential overlay district and design review. Some of the key issues that emerged were:

- Bike route alternative to Broadway- Use street next to old Bell Market (Oak) to go between Cabot and train depot area. Beverly Main Streets has supported use and improvement of Broadway as Cabot/depot connector. Bike routes open to debate; Broadway used as an example and gateway to depot.
- Making Broadway one-way could limit access to businesses; can be seen as an improvement for all travelers vs just car users.
- Rantoul Street reconstruction in 2015 will add two five-foot bike lanes. What other connections could be made from these

lanes? Beverly Bike Committee member notes that there are about 50-60 active bikers in Beverly, with five bike shops and one large riding club, all with interest in better bike/ped safety, safe bike routes.

- MA Department of Transportation is now actively supporting bike lanes. Most of the bike and ped safety changes are aimed first at ensuring safe rides for families and casual riders in town.
- Many bike and ped fixes can be done for little money- striping, signage, etc.
- Support for Share the Road signs on Hale Street noted.
- Parking around train depot discussed. There's an 80 foot ROW on Park Street in front of the depot that is generally not well delineated and could be used more safely and effectively. Depot owns ROW just in front of the depot and charges for parking there currently.
- MAPC discussed alternatives at Depot: raised ped crossing, taxi stand, better parking delineation, bus drop offs at depot by MBTA.

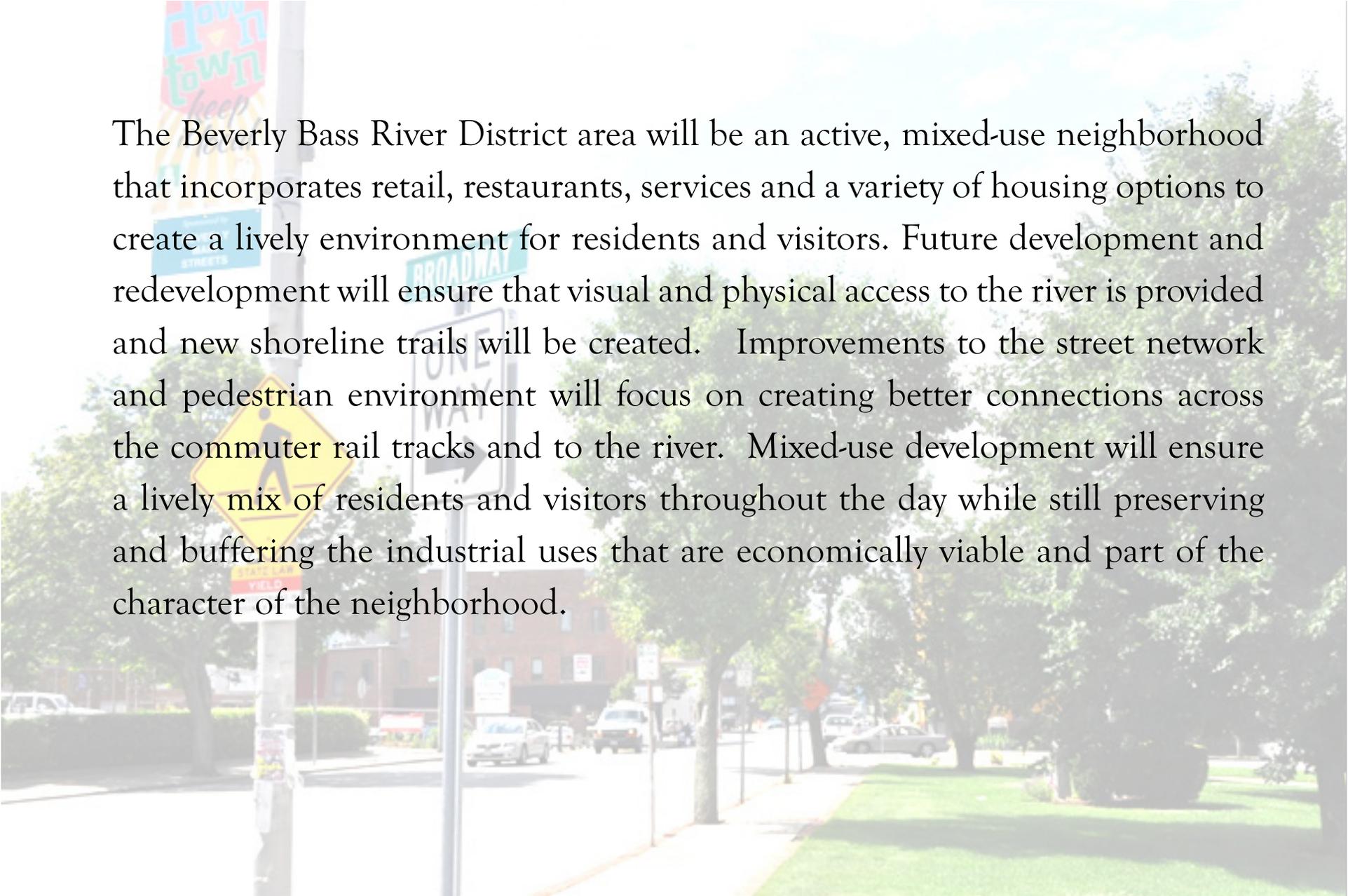
- Veterans Park: There are some restrictions on what can be trimmed or removed at the park; vets would have to be consulted. MAPC suggests opening a view shed between depot and Post Office. One comment is that Park is too small to improve and another notes that the Monday Farmer's Market has been very successful in the park.
- 12 hour on-street meters around the park may be blocking use of the park, as well as detracting from its beauty. This could be changed to parking kiosk or be removed. Some felt that the city should not be metering side streets.
- Land use discussion needs to focus on neighborhoods, quality of life. One commenter objects to use of overlay on Rantoul Street and recent construction there- height, building design, lack of landscaping; sees overlays as spot zoning; suggests that Bass River overlay be called Bass River Neighborhood Overlay.



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**THE BASS RIVER DISTRICT  
VISION STATEMENT**

This vision statement was prepared after careful consideration of all previous plans and studies, comments received from residents at the public meetings and input from the working group. The various elements presented in the following pages are designed to help the city achieve this vision.



The Beverly Bass River District area will be an active, mixed-use neighborhood that incorporates retail, restaurants, services and a variety of housing options to create a lively environment for residents and visitors. Future development and redevelopment will ensure that visual and physical access to the river is provided and new shoreline trails will be created. Improvements to the street network and pedestrian environment will focus on creating better connections across the commuter rail tracks and to the river. Mixed-use development will ensure a lively mix of residents and visitors throughout the day while still preserving and buffering the industrial uses that are economically viable and part of the character of the neighborhood.

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**ACHIEVING THE VISION:  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

## Overview of the Recommendations

This chapter sets the stage for the remainder of the report which contains numerous recommendations related to the transportation system and zoning. The first section discusses the benefits of mixed-use while the second section presents the basics of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) as a tool for achieving a walkable, mixed-use neighborhood. The sixth chapter in this report outlines how to create a connected neighborhood in which a multi-modal transportation system knits together the various parts of the District and surrounding areas. The following chapter outlines recommendations for zoning to support the mixed-use neighborhood.

## The Benefits of a Mixed-Use Neighborhood

A basic premise of this planning effort was to strengthen the Bass River IG district area as a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood that embodies smart growth principles. Smart growth is a principle of land development that emphasizes the mixing of land uses, increases the availability of a range of housing types in neighborhoods, takes advantage of compact design, fosters distinctive and attractive communities, preserves open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas, strengthens existing communities, provides a variety of transportation choices, makes development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective, and encourages community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

Mixing of land uses creates an environment where people are able to work to meet more of their needs and offers multiple destinations to attract more people throughout the day and evening. These neighborhoods are very attractive to young adults and older individuals who enjoy not having to drive everywhere. The Bass River IG district already has many of these characteristics and the goal of this plan was to build on those assets.

# Transit-Oriented Development

Transit oriented development (TOD) is a strategy to integrate a mixture of housing, office, retail and other daily needs in a walkable neighborhood within close proximity to quality public transportation. TOD is usually accomplished through higher intensity, mixed-use, mixed-income development close to the station area with decreasing intensity as one gets further from the station. Successful examples of TOD include a mixture of housing types at varying price points, ensuring that those who need to live near transit and those that choose to live near transit can be accommodated.

The ability of residents and employees to walk and bike to and from the station area is also extremely important. A safe and well connected walking and biking network helps connect residents to local businesses, jobs, recreation areas, and the transit station itself. More trips taken by cyclists and pedestrians can help reduce auto traffic on local and regional roadways, improving congestion and air quality.

By coordinating investments in transportation and existing and future development, Beverly can greatly improve the quality and ease of life for its residents. TOD has a number of benefits for a community depending on the type and quality of the transit service available.

## Benefits of Transit Oriented Development

TOD can provide transportation choices - TOD provides transportation for young people, the elderly, people who do not drive, and those who choose to or cannot afford to own a car.

TOD can increase transit ridership - TOD improves the efficiency and cost effectiveness of transit investments. New development around transit stations can increase transit ridership by 20 to 40 percent, which would increase revenue for the MBTA.

TOD can reduce reliance on automobiles - By creating neighborhoods where housing, jobs, and shopping are within walking distance to transit, reliance on driving can be reduced. TOD can reduce annual household rates of driving by 20 to 40 percent.

TOD can reduce air pollution and energy consumption - With more pedestrian, bike, and transit travel taking place, reductions in driving can ease congestion and improve local air quality. TODs can reduce rates of greenhouse gas emissions by 2.5 to 3.7 tons per year for each household.

TOD can increase households' disposable income - Housing and transportation costs are the number one and two highest expenses households have to account for. Some estimates show that reducing household driving costs can help save \$3,000-\$4,000 annually. This can greatly increase a household's disposable income and ease overall household cost burden.

TOD can bolster the local economy - Constructing housing in walking distance to existing or future business districts means local businesses can be supported by the surrounding neighborhoods.

TOD can increase the municipal tax base - New development around the transit station can add to the municipal tax base without large infrastructure costs. This can mean new investments in schools, municipal services, or parks and recreation.

TOD can contribute to more affordable housing - By reducing household expenditures on transportation costs, more disposable income is available to be spent on housing costs. New development around transit stations should also include deed restricted affordable housing units for households making below the area median income.

TOD concepts can be applied in a context-sensitive manner to fit the character of the community, from small suburbs to urban centers. The accompanying photos are examples of TOD in a variety of community types.



Manchester by the Sea



Newton



Chelsea



Boston

A large, light blue number 6 is centered on the left side of the image. The background is a solid dark blue. The number 6 is composed of two main parts: a top loop and a bottom loop, both rendered in a light blue color. The top loop is slightly tilted to the right.

**A CONNECTED NEIGHBORHOOD**

# INTRODUCTION

A neighborhood's roadways can have a tremendous impact on both the character and quality of life of the area. The designs, types of facilities, and streetscape elements can help unify a neighborhood, as well as make it safer, more comfortable, and accessible to all users. A safe and attractive environment for all users requires a high standard of design and should include quality pedestrian facilities, integration with the roadway, and the relationship to surrounding buildings and activity centers.

Within the Bass River District study area, Rantoul Street, River Street and Park Street are the primary arterials running approximately north-south. Rantoul Street is the primary travel corridor in the area and will soon undergo a reconstruction that includes vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian improvements. Rantoul Street is set to become the first roadway in the City that includes dedicated five-foot bike lanes.

Several east-west connecting streets intersect Rantoul Street and Park Street, including Broadway which is the primary road connecting the Bass River District to the Cabot Street area. In addition, Broadway and Railroad Avenue provide access from the downtown directly to the commuter rail station. The blocks between the Cabot Street area and the study area are primarily residential.

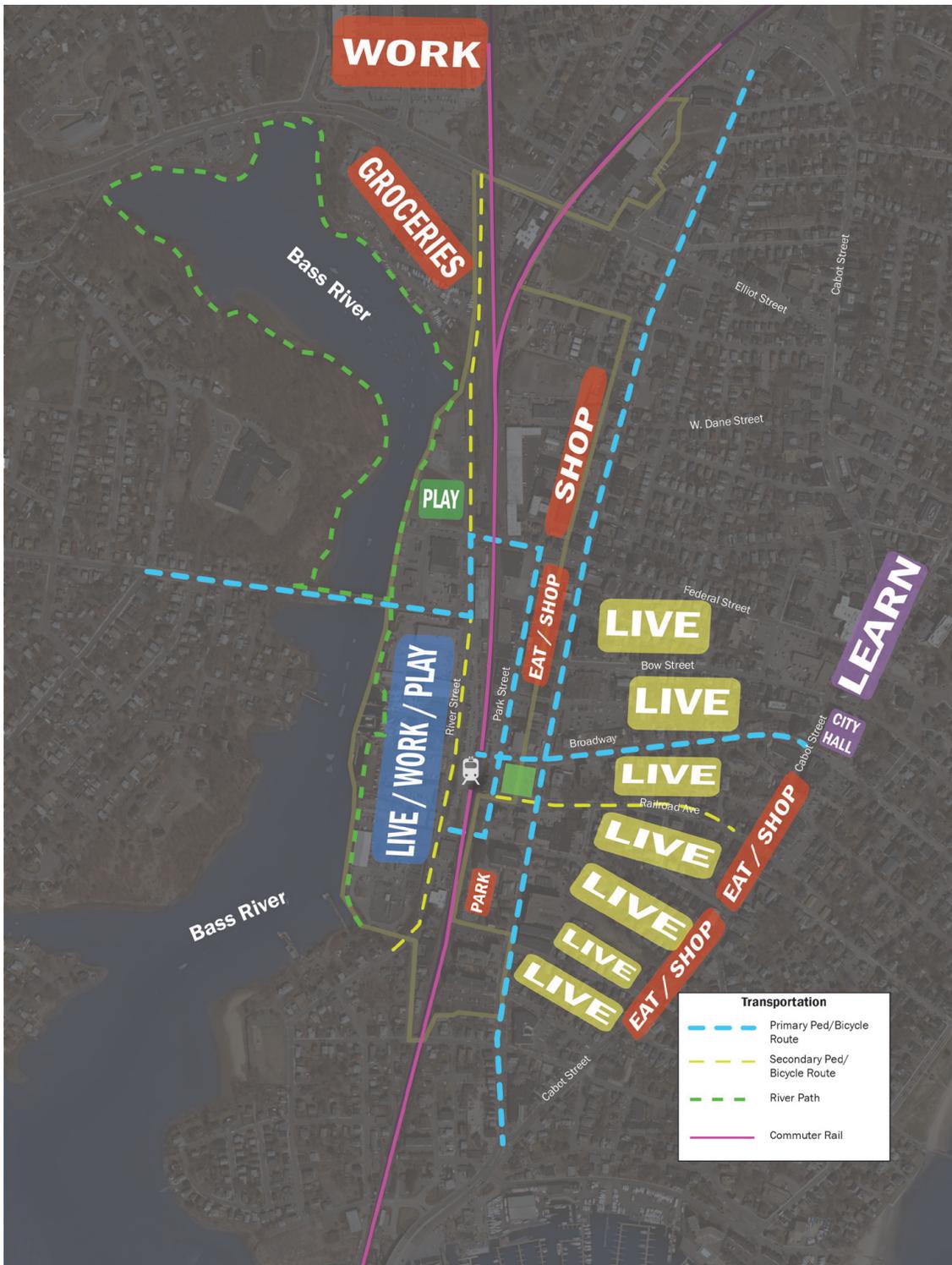


Figure 7: Bass River District Network Plan

Figure 7 provides a “Network Plan” for the Bass River District and surrounding area. The focus of the Network Plan is to illustrate connections among the various assets within the district, as well as to the Cabot Street area, through a variety of transportation options, including walking and bicycling. In particular, the Network Plan:

- Connects the future waterfront mixed use neighborhood to the existing downtown areas, as well as other community assets such as the grocery store and Cummings commercial office property located north of the study area;
- Delineates between primary and secondary walking/cycling routes, as a means to prioritize investment in appropriate facilities;
- Utilizes Broadway as a gateway to the Cabot Street area from the east into Veteran’s Memorial Park and the Beverly Depot Commuter Rail station; and,
- Conceptualizes access to the river via a waterfront path, improving amenities at Bridge Street, and building upon existing plans for a pathway along the west bank of the Bass River.

The following sections describe the bicycle and pedestrian facilities considered to link these various assets in a safe and accessible way for all users.

# Transit and Commute to Work

A key asset in the study area is its proximity to public transportation. Access to the commuter rail provides area commuters with easy access to destinations along the line, including downtown Boston. The Beverly Depot is the third busiest station in the commuter rail system and overall the focus area has a higher percentage of people using transit, walking, and bicycling, than the City as a whole. From 2003 to 2009 (the most recent data available) utilization of the commuter rail has been steady except for a drop in 2007, which was the result of fare increases and restructuring of the MBTA system. In 2009, boardings at the Beverly Depot station experienced another dip from the previous year, likely the result of rising unemployment related to the most recent recession.

The following figure describes the method of transportation riders use to access the Beverly Depot the station each day. While a large percentage (47%) of those taking the commuter rail drive to the station and park, there are also significant numbers of pedestrians and people being dropped off at the station (40% and 12%, respectively). While bicyclists only comprise approximately 1% of those accessing the station, this is a number that could grow as bicycling in the City continues to grow, cycling becomes safer and easier with the construction of more cycling infrastructure, and more people live within cycling distance of the Depot.

As part of the on-going redevelopment within the site area, construction has begun on a 500+

space MBTA commuter parking garage which is identified on the Network Plan as “Park.” The garage, owned by the MBTA, will serve daily commuters utilizing the Beverly Depot station. It is located between Rantoul Street and the commuter rail tracks, with access via Court Street. During off-peak hours, there is the potential for the garage to be used for other purposes in addition to serving commuters, such as overnight parking for area residents, parking for visitors to the downtown, and parking for Bass River District restaurants and shops. Once the garage is constructed, the City and MBTA should monitor its utilization and peak hours to determine if it is feasible to use the garage for other parking customers.

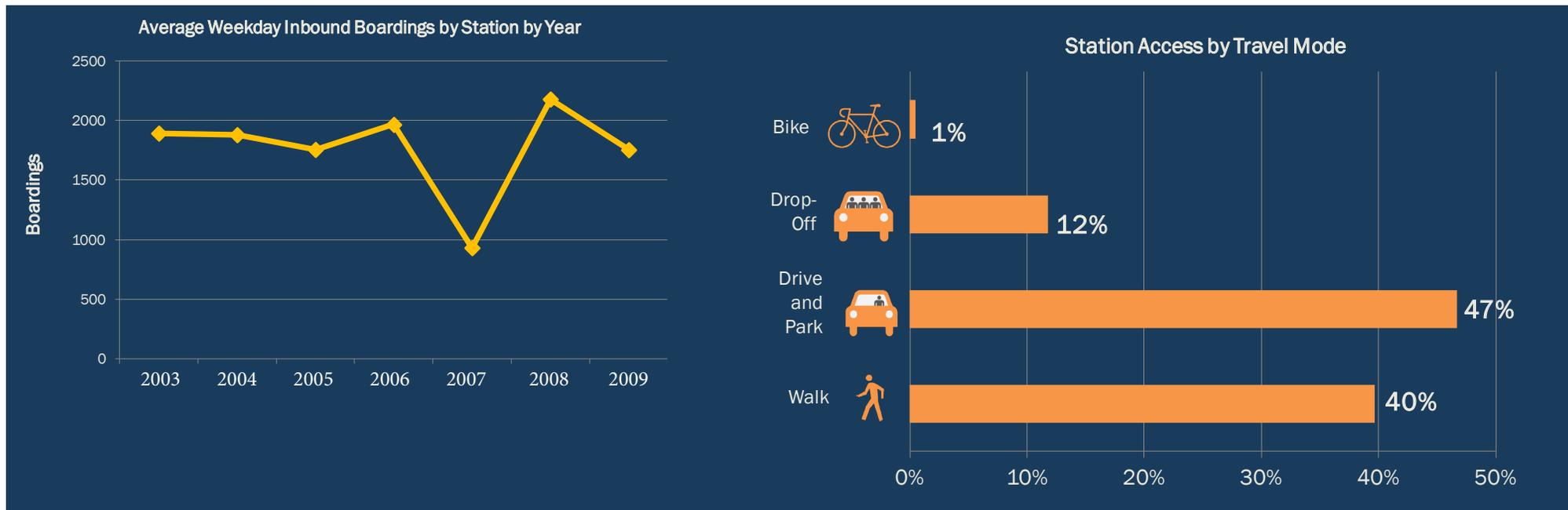


Figure 8: Selected Commute to Work Data

# Bicycle Infrastructure

Bicycle lanes provide an exclusive space for bicyclists within the roadway, designated by striping and markings. While they have been used in larger cities for years, they are becoming increasingly popular in a number of communities within the Metropolitan Boston region. In Beverly, the City has finalized plans to reconstruct Rantoul Street with bicycle lanes where the right-of-way permits and new sidewalks.

Ideally, bicycle lanes should be at least 5' in width, although they may be reduced to as narrow as 4' if necessary (e.g., because of limited right-of-way width). When adjacent to on-street parallel parking, bicycle lanes should be at least five feet wide in order to avoid potential conflicts with motorists opening their doors into the lanes, which can cause serious injuries to cyclists.

On each of the roadways which MAPC recommends bicycle lanes, they may be added to the roadway without altering the existing curb-to-curb width. This provides a significant cost savings over reconstructing the width of the roadway. The subsection Existing and Proposed Cross Sections includes additional details on how the roadway space may be allocated to accommodate all users.

In some cases the right-of-way may not be wide enough to safely accommodate bicycle lanes along with the vehicular lanes. In these cases shared lane markings (sharrows) may be used. Sharrows are pavement markings used to alert motorists that bicycles may be present on the roadway in cases where the streets are too narrow for conventional bicycle lanes. They symbolize a roadway that is shared between cyclists and vehicles. The placement of the marking also indicates the approximate location of where cyclists should ride to avoid the door zone, although cyclists are permitted by law to use the full travel lane.

In addition to bicycle lanes and sharrows, adequate bicycle parking is needed to ensure that cyclists have appropriate places to lock their bicycles. Bicycle racks should be placed at all locations where bicyclists may be present, especially at the Depot Commuter Rail Station, Veterans Park, and along Rantoul Street.



Example of a bicycle lane



Example of a sharrow

# Pedestrian Improvements

Having a safe and accessible environment for walkers can add vitality to a neighborhood. As the Network Plan indicates, in the future the area along the Bass River may become a mixed-use district, where people live, work, and recreate in the same location. This area, the Beverly Depot Commuter Rail Station, Veteran's Memorial Park, Rantoul Street, and the Cabot Street area have the potential to be better connected through a safe and attractive pedestrian environment. The following describes several of the important elements considered for creating a safe, accessible, and comfortable neighborhood for walkers.

## Sidewalks

Sidewalks are a critical component to creating a walkable, safe, and well-connected downtown area. Sidewalks, provided on both sides of a street, are generally the preferred pedestrian facility and provide for a safe walking area outside the motor vehicle traffic travel-way.

The preferred sidewalk surface is concrete, as it requires the least maintenance, has a long life span, and is a stable, slip-resistant material. Brick sidewalks can be aesthetically pleasing, but can be uneven over time and slippery when wet. When possible, a buffer with grass, plantings, and/or trees along the area immediately adjacent to the curb can increase the comfort of pedestrians.

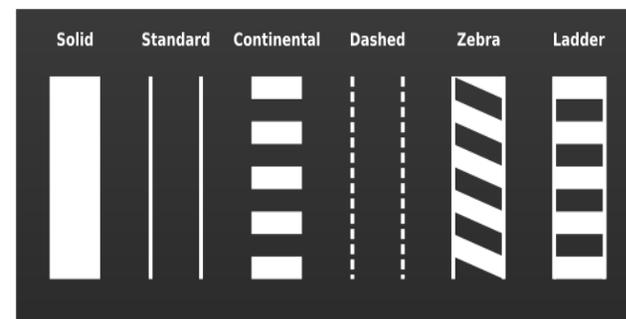
Sidewalks are present throughout the site area. The City, however, should consider investing resources into improving the primary pedestrian routes, as identified on the Network Plan. On Broadway, for example, although the sidewalks are generally wide (approximately 10') the surface is often uneven and tree coverage is sporadic. Prioritizing funding resources, therefore, could be utilized on reconstructing the sidewalks on this key route.

## Crosswalks

Marked crosswalks contribute to pedestrian safety. Crosswalks should be provided at intersections where there is pedestrian activity, be placed at regular intervals and convenient locations, and be visible to both the motorist and the pedestrian.

MAPC recommends utilizing the continental or ladder style crosswalks as opposed to the standard marking style (two parallel bars), because the former are more visible to motorists. Crosswalks should be at least 10' wide, and should consist of non-skid, thermoplastic, retro-reflective material. Although this material is initially more costly than paint, it is longer lasting and requires less maintenance; therefore, it is more cost effective in the longer run.

As with sidewalks, crosswalks should be smooth and accessible for those in wheelchairs and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. Brick crosswalks, therefore, should be avoided. The City may wish, however, to utilize enhanced crosswalk designs that do not impede users' ability to cross. These designs include different colored pavements and/or bands of decorative paving along the outside edges of the crosswalk.



Crosswalk styles (Source: commons.wikimedia.org)

<sup>2</sup> Primary sources for developing the recommendations in this section are the 2010 Boston Region's Transportation Plan (MAPC), 2006 Project Design and Development Guide (MassDOT), and the 2013 City of Boston Complete Streets Guidelines (Boston Transportation Department). Please refer to these sources, available online, for additional information and resources.

<sup>3</sup> In some cases, it may not be feasible to construct sidewalks on both sides of the street. For example, Willow Street has sidewalks on one side, but there may not be existing right-of-way wide enough to allow for construction on the other side.

<sup>4</sup> If the City wishes to consider constructing brick sidewalks, MAPC recommends consulting the City of Cambridge Pedestrian Plan as a model for appropriate brick sidewalk design standards.

## Other Pedestrian Amenities

There are a number of additional potential pedestrian improvements that the City should consider at intersections and areas of high pedestrian activity. The following provides brief descriptions of several of these considerations. These amenities have been categorized as primarily a) improving safety and b) improving aesthetics.



### In-street Yield to Pedestrian Signs

These signs are placed in the center of the roadway at crosswalk locations to increase the visibility of pedestrians and remind motorists to yield to them.



### Curb Extensions

Also known as neckdowns, bump-outs, or bulb-outs, these extend the sidewalk at crossings, which decrease the crossing distance for pedestrians and increase their visibility.



### Advanced Yield Lines

These markings encourage drivers to stop further back from crosswalks and improve visibility of pedestrians.

# Aesthetics



## Pedestrian Scale Lighting

Pedestrian scale lighting can beautify an area, emphasize historic character, and increase safety along the roadways.



## Street Trees

Street trees provide several benefits, such as shade during warmer months, aesthetic improvements to the street, and air and water quality improvements.



## Seating

When placed in locations where pedestrians tend to gather, especially near transit and retail locations, benches can add life to an area by providing an opportunity for people to linger. Adequate seating also provides periodic opportunities for pedestrians to rest during their trips throughout the area.

# Existing and Proposed Cross Sections

The following are examples of cross sections illustrating existing and proposed conditions of several streets within the site area which incorporate the recommendations above. These cross sections highlight different options to show how pedestrian and bicyclist improvements can be made by reallocating existing roadway space.

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation recommends most roads to have a vehicular travel lane width of 10 to 12 feet. Narrower travel lanes have the effect of “calming traffic,” which improves the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. MAPC often recommends narrowing the travel lanes to the extent practicable, both to allow for the installation of bicycle lanes, as well as to calm the traffic within this area.<sup>3</sup>

## Broadway

The Network Plan identifies Broadway as the primary corridor connecting the Bass River District to the Cabot Street area. The roadway is approximately 37’ in width and is comprised of parking on both sides and one vehicular lane in each direction. The roadway is unstriped for the majority of the segment between Park Street and Cabot Street. The sidewalks are 10’ wide, which provides adequate room for pedestrians, street trees, lighting, etc. Many sections of the sidewalk are in poor condition with cracked and uneven surfaces and sporadic tree coverage.

MAPC, with input from residents, provided several alternatives to improve Broadway for pedestrians and bicyclists. In each case MAPC recommends reconstructing the sidewalk to address the deficiencies outlined above.

In the first alternative, MAPC assumes that the existing two-way road configuration with parking on both sides of the street will remain. Due to the limitations of the curb-to-curb width, there is inadequate room for striping bicycle lanes. Instead, the City may stripe sharrow to emphasize that the roadway is accessible to both vehicles as well as bicyclists. Wayfinding signs between the Cabot Street area, the Commuter Rail station, and the Bass River could be installed to emphasize the connection between the two areas. In addition, “share the road” signs could be installed to increase the safety of cyclists.

<sup>3</sup>Note that the following cross-sections were based upon individual measurements during site visits. Because conditions along the road segment may vary, the Department of Public Works should verify roadway widths and conditions to determine whether the recommendations proposed below are practicable along the entire roadway segment.

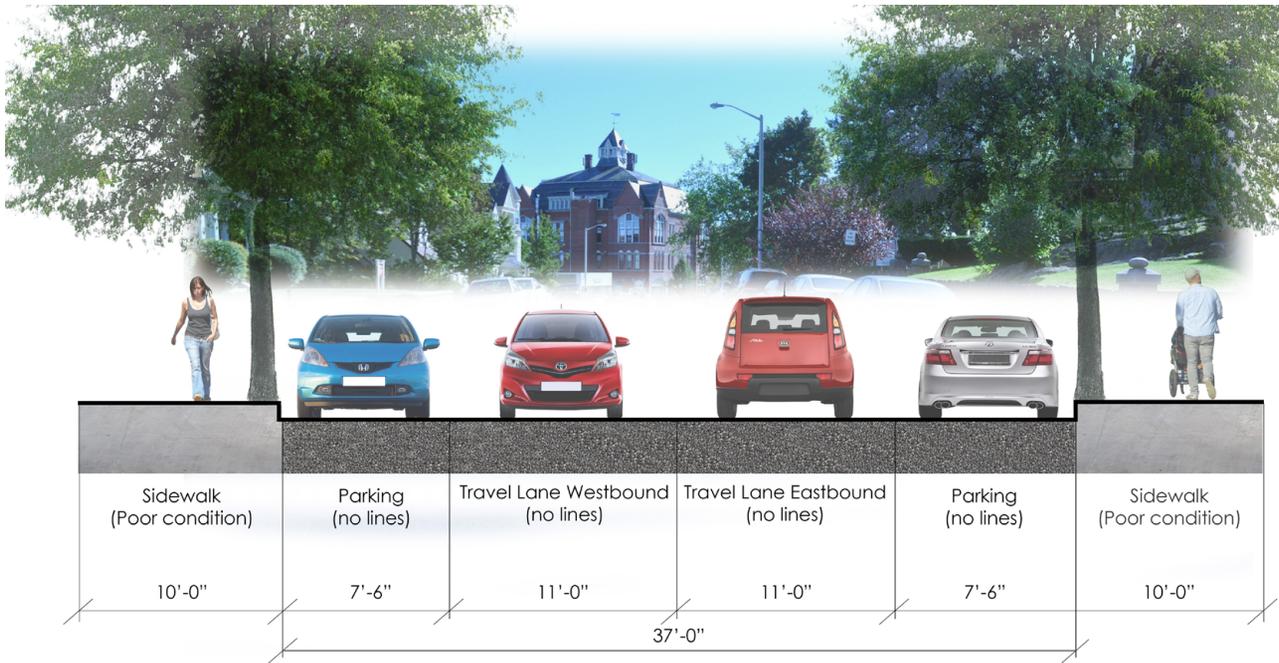


Figure 9: Broadway - Existing



Example of a share the road sign

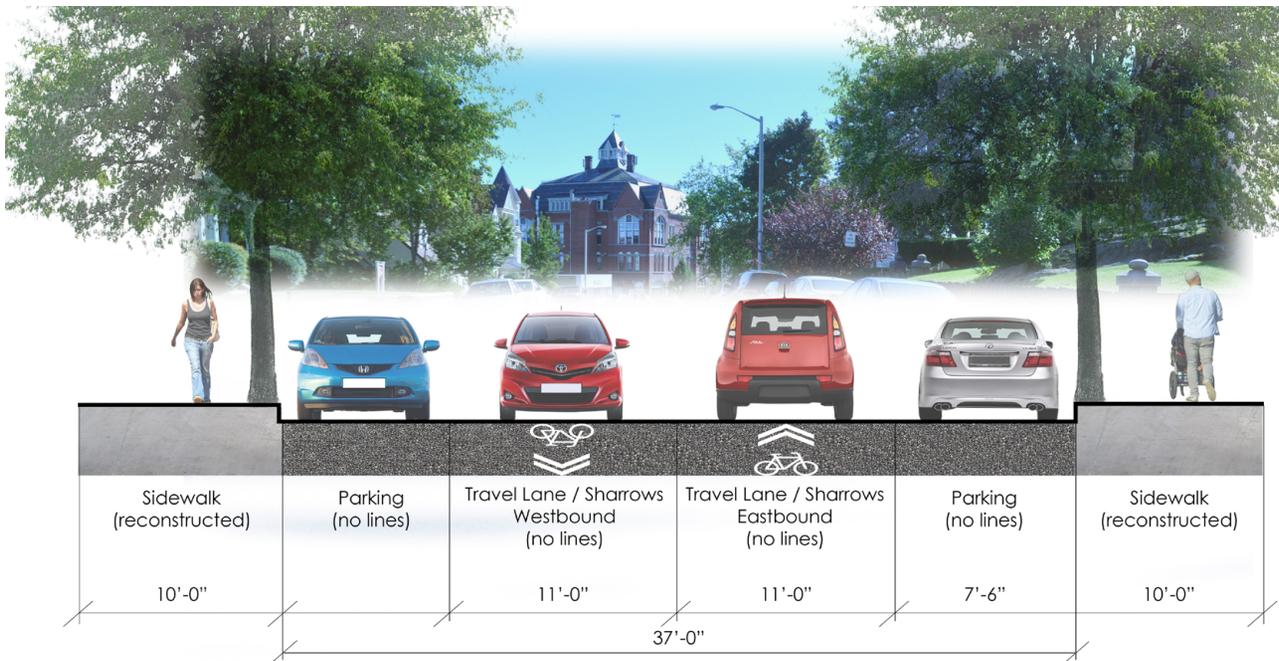


Figure 10: Broadway - Alternative 1: Maintain Configuration



Example of wayfinding signage

In the second and third alternatives, MAPC assumes that Broadway will become a one-way street westbound. Railroad Avenue would become one-way eastbound, thus forming a “couplet” whereby vehicles have access in both directions through these two streets. Additional analysis and public input would be required to more fully understand the feasibility and implications of changing the roadway configuration in this manner.

In the second alternative, parking on both sides would remain and the westbound travel lane would be 11 feet. A 5.5’ bicycle lane would travel westbound. In addition, a 5.5’ bicycle lane would travel eastbound, a configuration known as a contra-flow bicycle lane. Contra-flow lanes are useful to reduce distances bicyclists must travel and can make bicycling safer by creating facilities to help other roadway users understand where to expect bicyclists. Contra-flow bicycle lanes have been implemented successfully in Cambridge, MA and are included as part of the City of Boston’s Complete Streets Guidelines.



Figure 11: Broadway - Alternative 2: One way with bike lane and contra-flow bike lane



Figure 12: Example of a contra-flow bicycle lane, Cambridge MA (source: www.bikexpert.com)

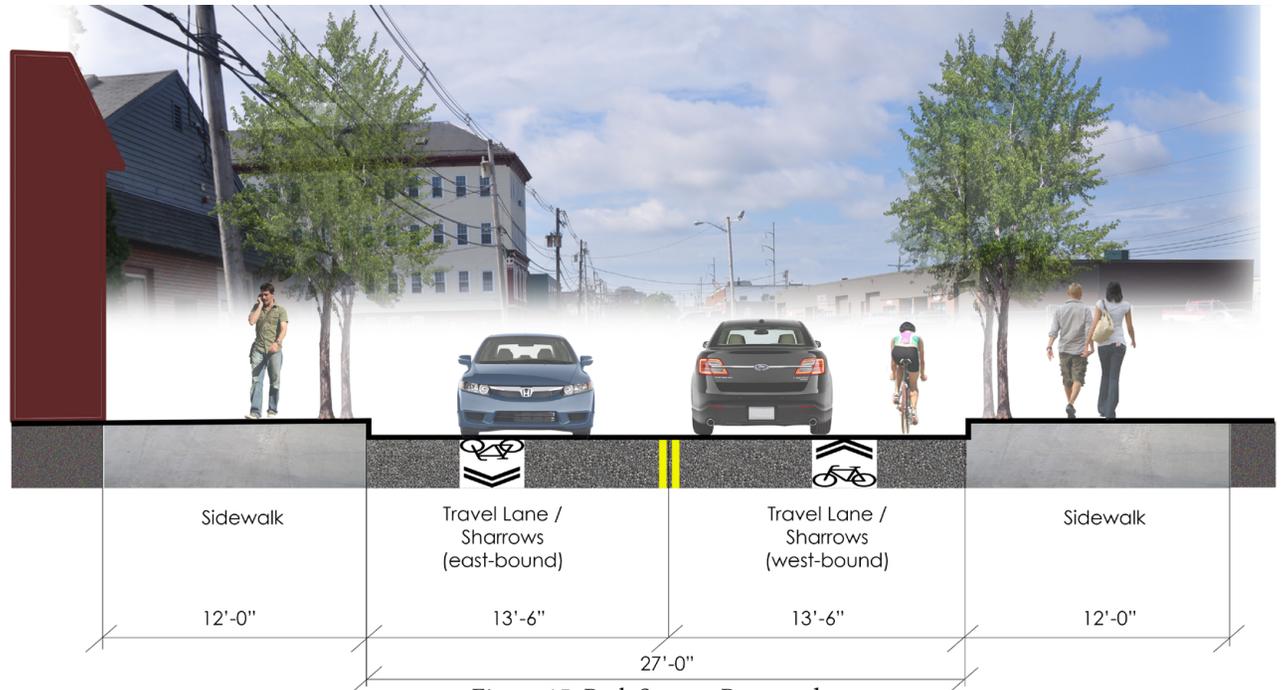
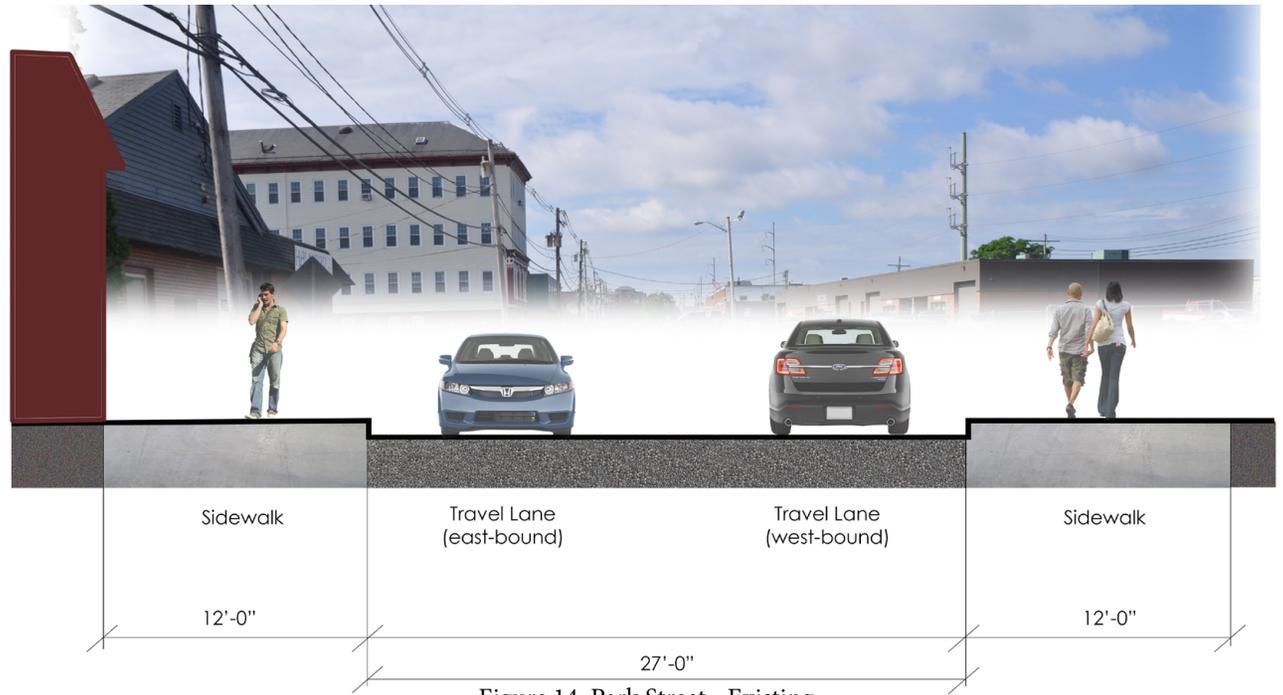
In alternative 3, one westbound bicycle lane with a painted buffer is installed. Buffered bicycle lanes are conventional bicycle lanes paired with a designated buffer space separating the bicycle lane from the adjacent motor vehicle travel lane and/or parking lane. Buffered bicycle lanes can increase cyclists' comfort by providing additional separation from travel lanes. This one-way configuration would require cyclists to travel on Railroad Avenue or Wallis Street in order to travel eastbound to the Cabot Street downtown area. MAPC recommends that the City consider bicycle facilities on the streets if a one-way couplet option is implemented on Broadway and Railroad Avenue.



Figure 13: Broadway - Alternative 3: One way with buffered bike lane

# Park Street

Park Street runs parallel to River Street, connecting to the Beverly Depot Commuter Rail stop. From Federal Street to approximately Wallis Street, the curb-to-curb roadway width is 27 feet, which is too narrow to include bicycle lanes. The City should consider striping sharrows to emphasize that the roadway is to be shared by cyclists and vehicles. Although there are sidewalks on both side of the roadway near Federal Street, as one heads toward the Beverly Commuter Rail station a sidewalk only exists on the southbound side. Over the long term the City should work to construct and maintain sidewalks on both sides of the street, especially as parcels are redeveloped.



# River Street

River Street, running parallel to the Bass River, is adjacent to the future mixed use overlay district. Near the intersection with Bridge Street, the eastbound and westbound travel lanes are extremely wide (15' and 17'), which can encourage high vehicular travel speeds. This roadway width would allow for 5' bicycle lanes in each direction, while reducing the vehicular travel lanes to 11 feet. Further south, the street contains on-street southbound parking. During this segment, down past Pleasant Street, the right-of-way is constrained and only sharrows are able to be striped.

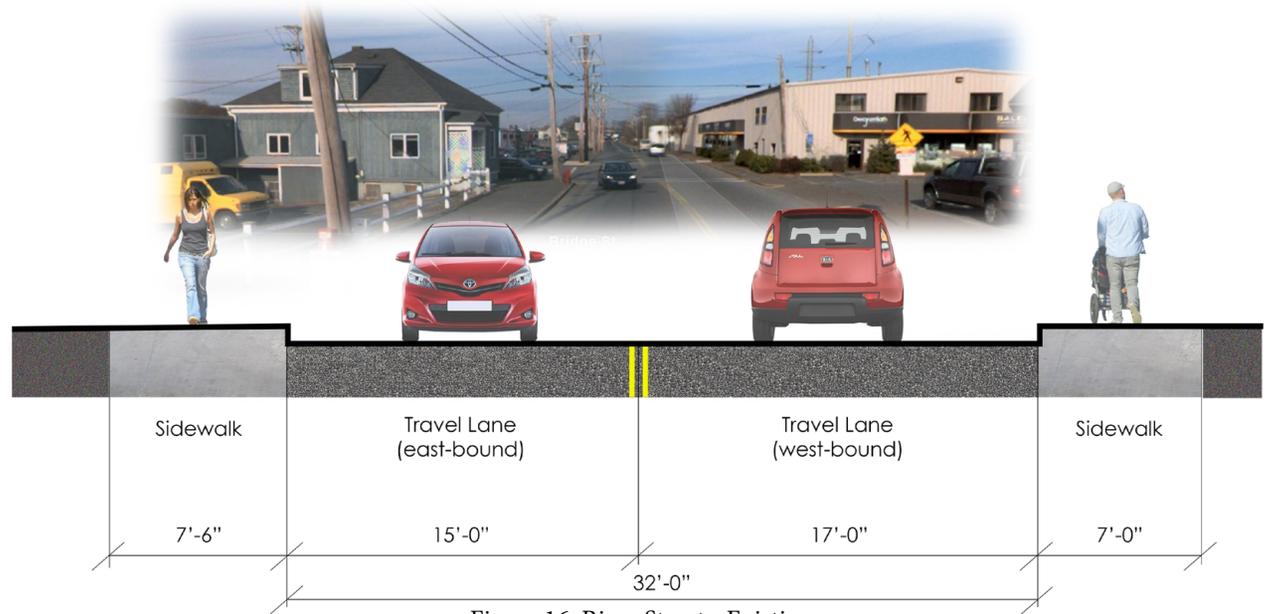


Figure 16: River Street - Existing

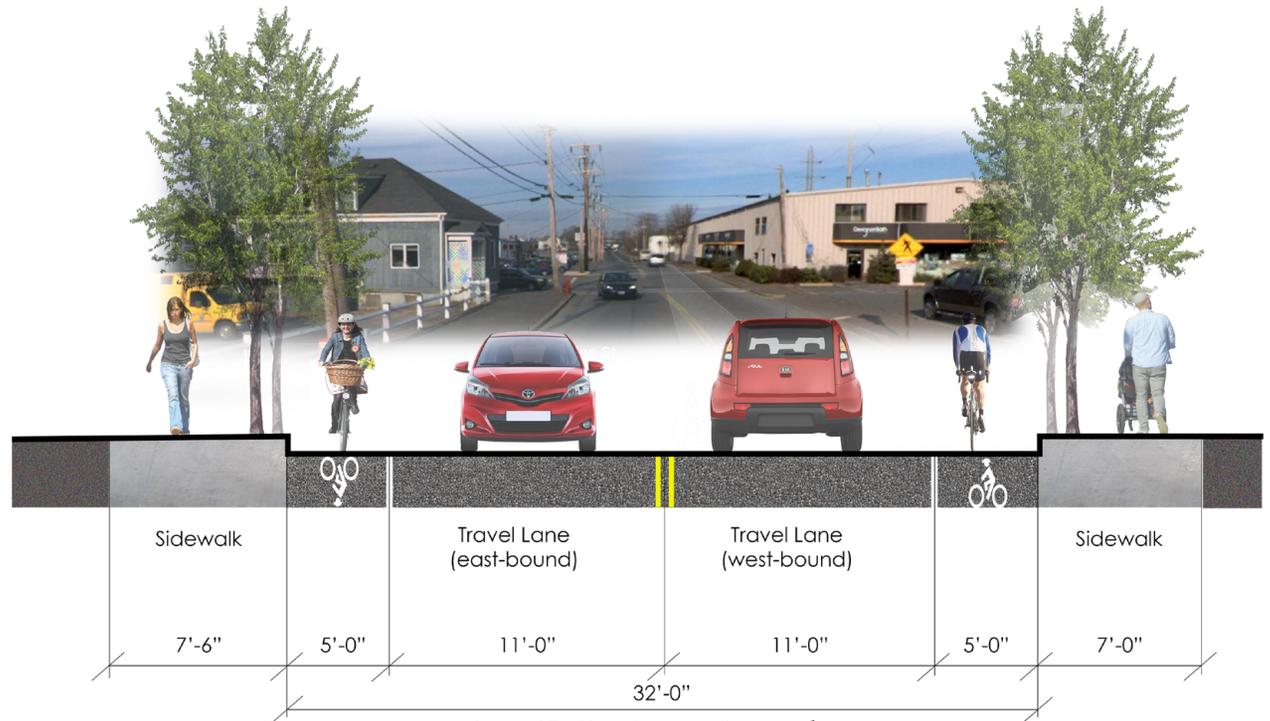


Figure 17: River Street - Proposed

## Federal Street

As with River Street, Federal Street (Rantoul to River Street) contains excessively wide vehicular travel lanes. This represents an opportunity to incorporate bicycle lanes on the roadway. One option on Federal Street is reducing the travel lanes to 10.75' each and adding 5' bicycle lanes in both directions.

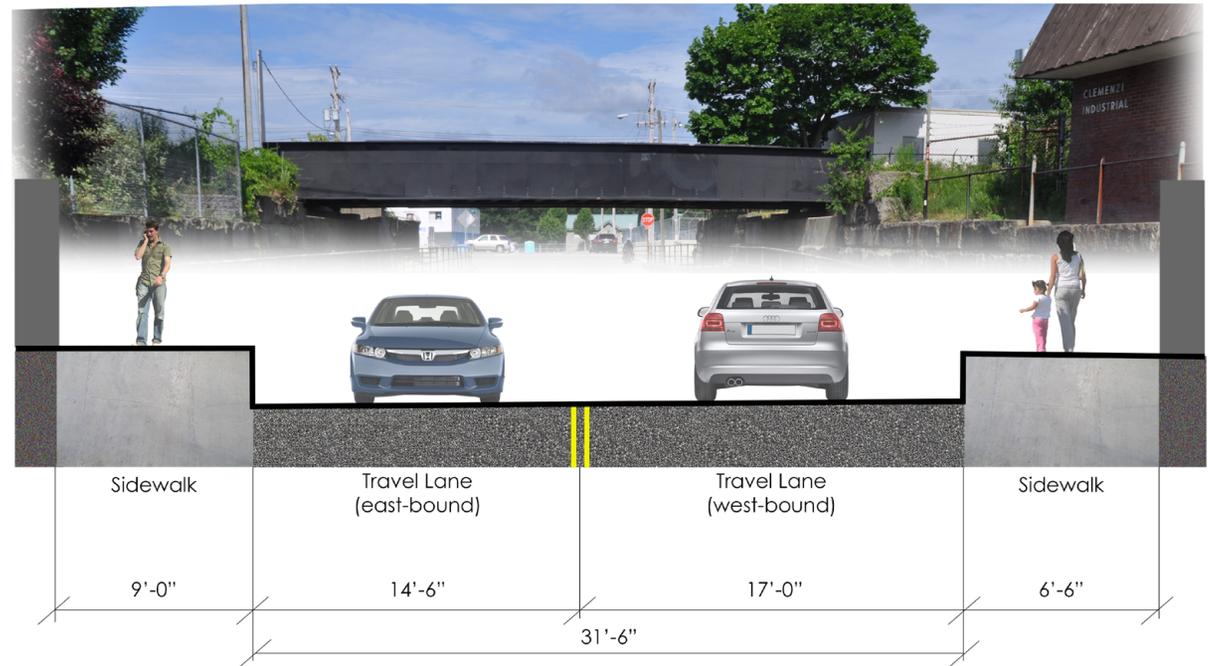


Figure 18: West Federal Street - Existing

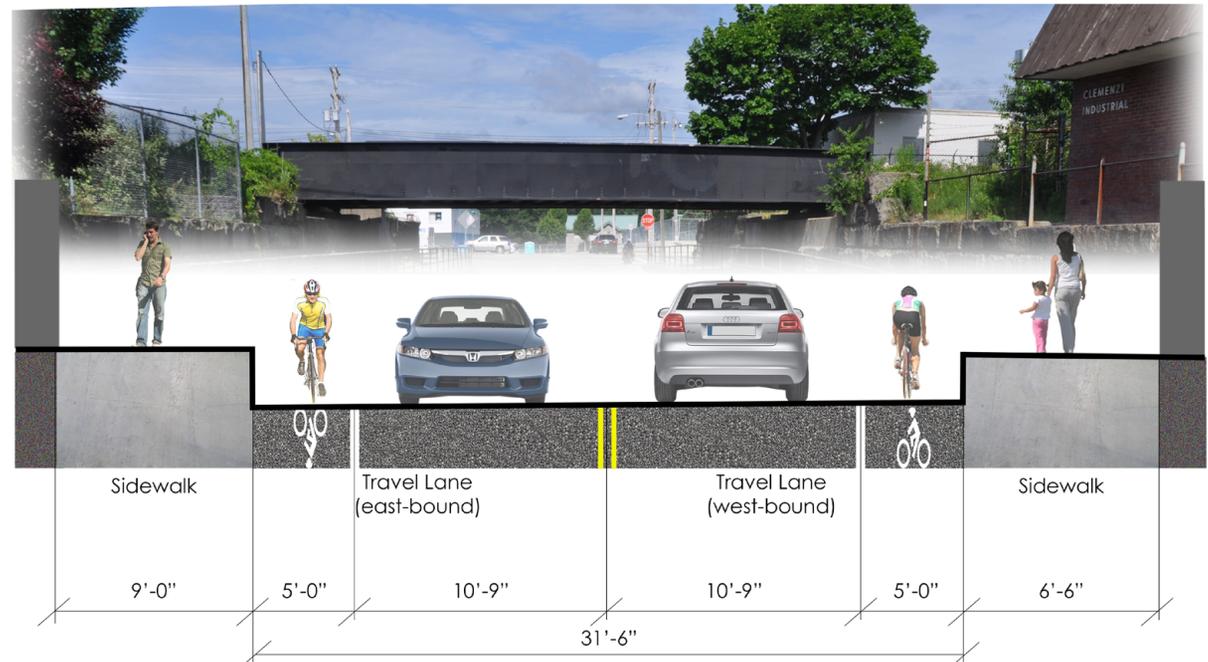


Figure 19: West Federal Street - Proposed

# Existing and Proposed Sections Summary

The following table provides a summary of existing conditions and proposed recommendations for various roads within the site area.

Table 3: Bass River District Study Area Existing and Proposed Sections

Street Name	Location	Roadway					Existing Conditions*						Recommendation	Recommendation - Details								
		Travel Direction		Parking			Curb-to-Curb	Shoulder	Parking	Travel Lanes		Parking		Shoulder	Parking	Bike Lane	Buffer	Travel Lane (s)	Travel Lane (s)	Buffer	Bike Lane	Parking
		Two-Way	One-Way	None	Both	One Side	Width	WB/SB (Width)	WB/SB (Width)	WB/SB (Width)	EB/NB (Width)	EB/NB (Width)		EB/NB (Width)	WB/SB	WB/SB	WB/SB	WB/SB	EB/NB	EB/NB	EB/NB	EB/NB
Bridge Street	At Bass River	X		X			30.5	3		11	13		3.5	Bicycle Lanes		4.25	11	11		4.25		
Bridge Street	West of Bass River	X				Westbound	37.5		7.5	12.5	13.5		4	Bicycle Lanes	7.5	5		10.5	10.5		4	
Federal Street	Rail line underpass	X		X			31.5			17	14.5			Bicycle Lanes		5		10.75	10.75		5	
Park Street	Franklin Street to Wallis Street	X		X			27							Shared Lanes				13.5	13.5			
River Street	Federal Street to south of Bridge Street	X		X			32			17	15			Bicycle Lanes		5		11	11		5	
River Street	South of Bridge Street (where on-street parking begins) to Pleasant St	X				Southbound	31.5		8	12	11.5			Shared Lanes	8			11.75	11.75			
Broadway	At Park Street					Westbound	35							Buffered Bicycle Lane	8	5	3	11			8	
Broadway	At Rantoul Street (west side)					Westbound	39							Buffered Bicycle Lane	8	5	3	15			8	
Broadway	At Rantoul Street (east side)	X				X	40		8			8		See Report for details on proposed alternatives								
Broadway	Midblock between Rantoul St and Cabot St	X				X	37							See Report for details on proposed alternatives								
Broadway	At Cabot Street (west side)	X				X	40		8			8		See Report for details on proposed alternatives								

**Notes:**

--Red text in the travel lanes indicates shared lane markings.

--\*A breakdown of Existing Conditions striping within the curb-to-curb space is provided when possible. If blank this indicates that either the roadway does not have existing striping.

# Veteran's Memorial Park

Veteran's Memorial Park (O'Dell Park) is located between Rantoul Street to the east and the commuter rail station to the west. The park is well-maintained with landscaping, lighting, seating, and a series of memorials. In addition, a seasonal farmer's market takes place at the adjacent parking spaces along Railroad Avenue.



## Impediments

While Veteran's Park is well-maintained and offers one of the few options for open space in the Bass River District, it feels physically and visually isolated from its surroundings despite being centrally located. Part of this disconnect is a result of the surrounding roadways being oversized with little connection to the park and surrounding development opportunities. Park Street, which separates the park from the Beverly Depot station is approximately 80' wide and in poor condition. As a result, crossing can be difficult for pedestrians and the traffic patterns and wide roadways around the site are not allowing the park to act as a gateway to the downtown for those coming in or out of Beverly on the commuter rail.

An additional issue impacting Veteran's Memorial Park, especially along Park Street, is accommodating the various users of the commuter rail, including motorists driving and parking for the day, commuters being dropped off/picked up, taxis and shuttle buses providing rides, pedestrians, and cyclists. During the public engagement process several community members mentioned that this area could benefit from a design that organizes the roadway to safely and effectively provide space for all these users.

Finally, we heard throughout this process that the park is somewhat disconnected from the surrounding buildings and transportation network. The trees that have been planted in the park have matured and block views from the commuter rail station to the Rantoul Street area. If the trees were pruned or repositioned within the park, views through the park could be established which may invite more people to walk through and use the park.



Veteran's Memorial Park is separated from the commuter rail station by approximately 80' of uneven pavement.

# Opportunities

## Accommodating All Users

Every day there are hundreds of people accessing the Beverly Depot commuter rail station by foot, bike, transit, and car. Organizing the area of Park Street between the Veteran's Park and the Depot would help to make travel in the area safer and movements by people and vehicles more predictable. Each user group has different needs and travel patterns for how they enter and exit this area. Understanding these needs and planning for how they can happen safely and predictably will help in making this area less chaotic and much safer. The following diagrams illustrate potential circulation patterns for each of the user groups. Note that these diagrams are intended to provide examples of how the various users can be safely accommodated. A more in-depth analysis would be required to model the effects of various circulation configurations and should accompany any redesign efforts of this area.

Pedestrians



Key needs:

- Safe crossings
- Continuous sidewalks

Primary routes:

- From Cabot Street
- From MBTA Garage

Other consideration: creating a “place to linger”

- Improving Park
- Taking advantage of commuter rail stop and Train Depot Restaurant

Bicyclists



Key needs:

- Bike lanes (when possible) or sharrows
- Bike racks

Primary routes:

- From Cabot Street via Broadway
- From Rantoul Street

Other consideration: creating a “place to linger”

- Similar potential as with pedestrians

### Buses/Shuttles



Key needs:

- Stop(s) at convenient location(s)
- Adequate turning radii

Potential route:

- Creating a loop along Veteran's Memorial Park to Park Street

### Motorists



Key needs:

- Adequate parking (primarily via MBTA garage)
- Ability to access and depart area easily

Primary routes:

- From all directions

### Taxis



Key needs:

- Dedicated standing location near commuter rail station
- Ability to access and depart area safely

## Placemaking

The nexus of the Commuter Rail Station and Veteran's Memorial Park is an opportunity to improve the vitality of this area through placemaking. Placemaking refers to "the process through which we collectively shape our public realm to maximize shared value... [It] involves the planning, design, management, and programming of public spaces."<sup>5</sup>

Key attributes and considerations when making a great place include:

### 1. Comfort

- What enhancements can make a place more comfortable and inviting?
- What can give a place a stronger identity?

### 2. Multiple uses

- What additional uses (including informal uses) could be clustered here?

### 3. Easy access and linkages

- Is the place safe and comfortable to get to from various users?
- Is the place connected to nearby attractions (e.g., waterfront and downtown?)

At a minimum the City should repave the segment of Park Street adjacent to Veteran's Memorial Park, restripe crosswalks, and include signs to alert motorists to crossing pedestrians.

The City and the Main Streets organization may wish, however, to invest resources into activating the park with additional uses and activities. To this end, the City should consider redesigning this segment of Park Street to repurpose unneeded extra pavement space. For example, the following diagram illustrates how the existing commuter rail station platform could be widened. This space could be used for placemaking activities to take advantage of the important location and daily foot traffic. As noted above, the presence of multiple uses and "things to do" are important to creating vital spaces. Examples could include comfortable/unique seating, tables, kiosks, public art and food trucks. These activities could build upon the existing programming in the park, which currently includes a farmer's market.



Figure 20: Potential placemaking locations

<sup>5</sup>[http://www.ppsat.org/reference/what\\_is\\_placemaking/](http://www.ppsat.org/reference/what_is_placemaking/)

## Creating a Visual Connection

Despite the proximity, the commuter rail stop seems like a separate area from Rantoul Street. Pruning and/or repositioning certain trees within Veteran's Memorial Park can create a visual connection between the station and Rantoul Street and guide people to and through the park. A view could be created that would visually connect the train station platform to the Beverly Post Office, a historic building on Rantoul Street. Repositioning several trees within the Park can create this view while maintaining shade coverage in the Park.



Beverly Post Office

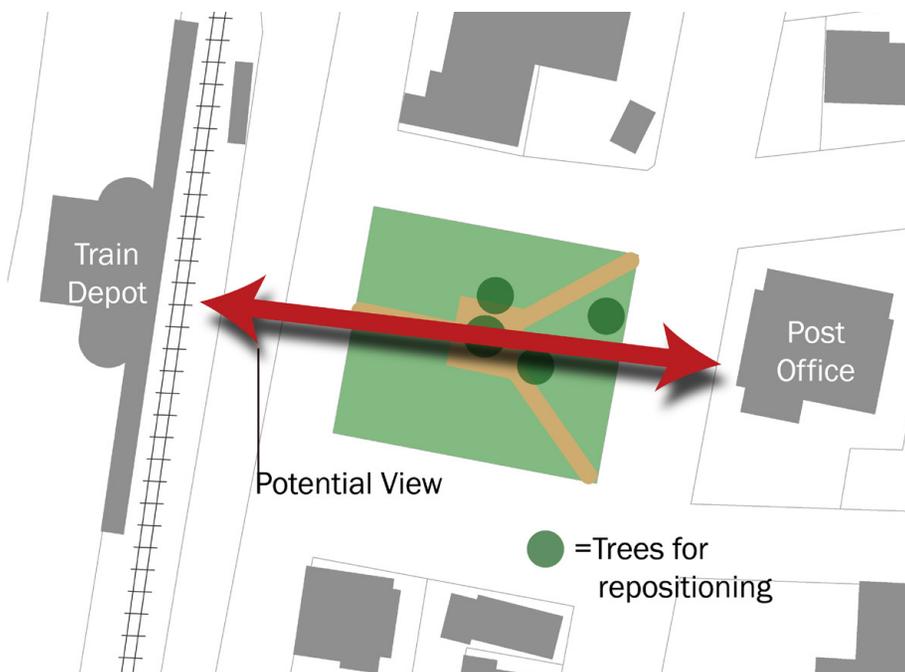


Figure 21: Creation of potential view-shed

# River Walk

Waterfront access along the Bass River is a key amenity within the district and to Beverly as a whole. The Bass River contains a mixture of working docks and leisure boating. Along the river there are existing pedestrian paths, a planned path on the west bank, as well as gaps to creating a cohesive network.

## Impediments

The existing waterfront path is a relatively short segment along the river with gaps at several locations. In addition, the condition of the path could be improved. Currently there is a chain link fence along the waterfront, asphalt paving, and sporadic signage, including spray painted stenciling on the path itself. The path also lacks amenities such as seating and consistent tree coverage. Access in some locations to the path is not fully accessible.



## Opportunities

As illustrated on the Network Plan, MAPC recommends creating a continuous, connected waterfront pathway. The pathway would extend along the Bass River District, connect across the river at Bridge Street, connect to the planned pathway on the west side of the River, and connect along the northern terminus of the Bass River.

In addition, MAPC recommends making design improvements to the path in order to make the area more active and attract more users. The Gloucester HarborWalk provides a precedent that the City of Beverly may wish to look to as an example. As illustrated in the following photographs, the HarborWalk contains:

- Attractive and varied surfaces (polished wood, distressed wood, brick, etc.)
- Plantings
- Wayfinding and information signage
- Pedestrian scale lighting
- Seating





**CREATING A VIBRANT, MIXED-  
USE NEIGHBORHOOD:  
MARKET ANALYSIS + ZONING**

# Market Analysis

The first step in putting together a realistic and achievable plan for development around transit and in the study area is to understand the market for new development. An analysis of market demand for residential, retail, and office development can help a community identify specific parcels that may accommodate future development, understand the level of development that may be possible in an area, and help inform changes to zoning. MAPC hired RKG Associates to complete a market analysis for the half-mile station areas around the Bass River study area which included demand estimates for rental and owner-occupied residential units and retail space. This section will highlight the major findings from the market study, and talk about potential opportunities and impediments to development from a market perspective. The full market analysis can be found in Appendix A of this report.

## Residential Market Analysis

RKG completed a residential market analysis for the entire City to look at current housing supply and demand, as well as looking out over a five year time horizon at future demand. Over the last decade, the City housing supply has increased by 2% while it increased by 4% within the Bass River focus area, capturing 90% of the increase in owner households citywide. Renter households in the focus area declined by 5% over the last decade and accounted for much of the City's loss of renters overall.

According to RKG, there is demand for additional housing in Beverly over the next five years. Estimates show there is an absolute demand of around 180 units annually over the next five years. Demand for additional housing is seen to be split,

<sup>6</sup>Based on 2010 Census figures of total households in the half-mile area.

with 37% going to owners and 63% devoted to renters, a reversal of Beverly's current overall housing picture. Given this projection, it is reasonable to consider additional rental housing in the Bass River I-G District and the surrounding study area, given the area's proximity to downtown amenities, bus service and commuter rail. RKG also feels that new growth would only make up about 3% of the total demand for new housing, with the rest being the result of turnover. This translates to a 5% demand for owned housing and 2% of renter demand.

New owner-occupied housing in Beverly over the next five years is estimated to be between 10-15 units annually. New construction in Beverly would likely be marketed to the 45-64 year age-range, with 71% of demand for new units coming from those making more than \$125,000 per year. Owners with incomes between \$75,000- \$99,000 would make up about 20% of the demand for new ownership units in the Bass River and surrounding focus area.

New renter housing is estimated to be 15-20 units annually over the next five years. On the rental side, units affordable to households making \$75,000 per year and above make up about one third of the total demand in Beverly. These households could afford rents starting at \$1,875 per month and above. Renters making less than \$60,000 per year and able to afford rents up to \$1500 per month would comprise about two-thirds of new demand.

## Retail Market Analysis

Understanding the retail market as part of a station area plan is very important. First floor retail as part of a mixed-use development scenario is one of the key pieces to creating an active and engaging street frontage. Being conscious of retail market demand is

also important from a zoning perspective as well. In station areas where market demand for retail may not be as strong, municipalities may not want to require first floor retail for all buildings and may want to be more strategic about where retail is placed. Over-zoning for retail can lead to vacancies and actually hurt a business district.

In order to determine the annual retail spending power of households within the focus area's half-mile radius, RKG completed a retail demand analysis. Existing households<sup>6</sup> account for more than \$76 million in spending demand for selected retail goods and services. Based on average sales volumes (on a per square foot basis) this spending demand equates to an estimated supportable 205,000 square feet of supportable retail. A majority of this retail demand is currently absorbed by existing retailers in Beverly, and some is "leaking" out to other communities where specific goods and services can be found that are not located in Beverly. These could be places such as regional retailers, shopping plazas, malls, or big box retailers.

Considering the proximity of the focus area to downtown Beverly, coupled with the anticipated growth of pre-retirement (55-64) householders with greater discretionary spending in the focus area, it is RKG's opinion that there are market opportunities to add additional dining and drinking establishments, niche/specialty retail and apparel/accessories businesses. As more residential development takes place in and around the downtown, these households will bring additional retail spending power that can support existing and future retail establishments in the area.

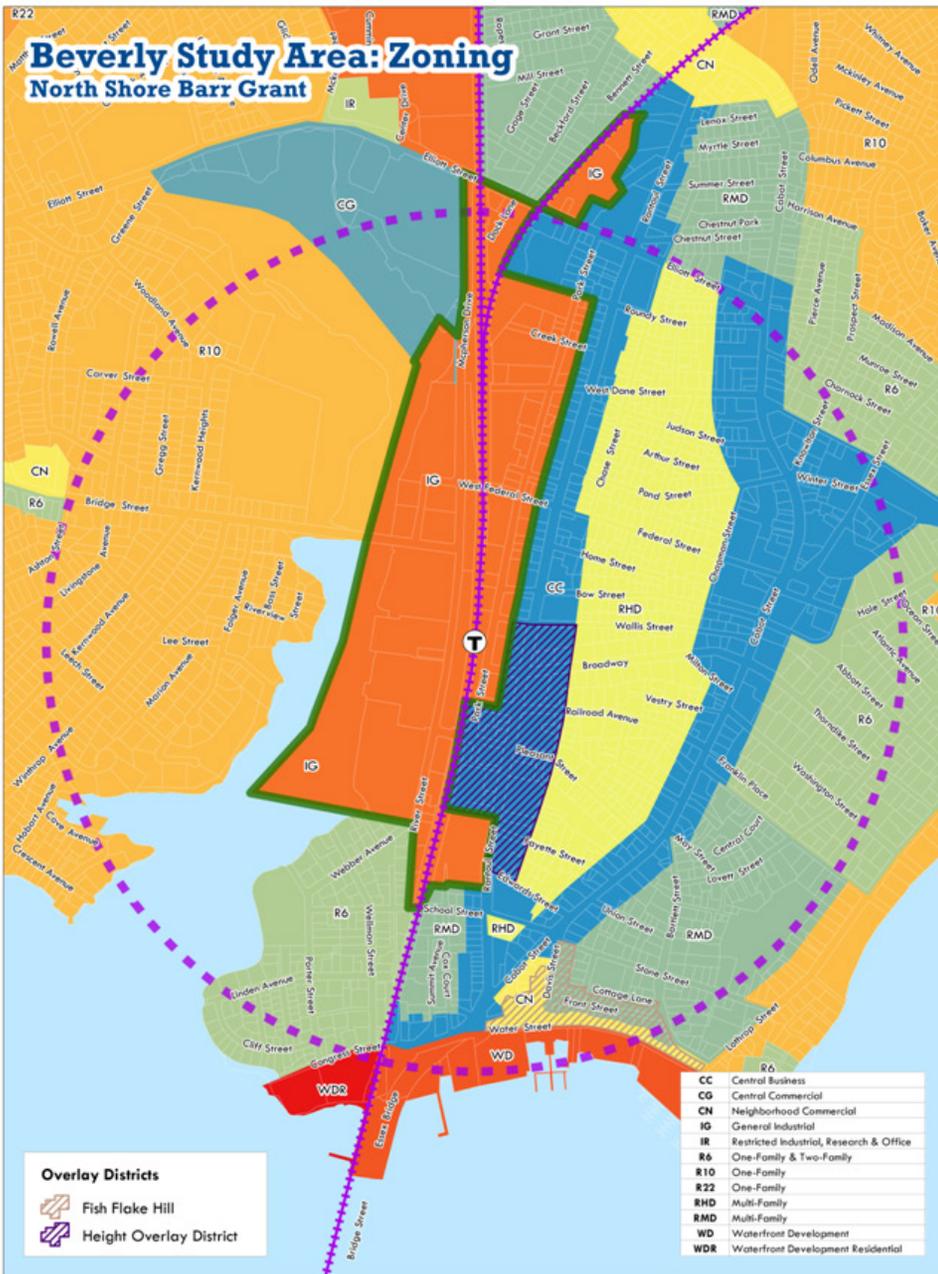
# Zoning Analysis

The arrival of the Eastern Railroad to Beverly in the 1839, passing adjacent to the tidal Bass River, led to a shift away from its earlier maritime trading, agricultural and fishing roots and into the industrial age. By the 1870's, thirty-five factories were included in the Bass River, Rantoul/Park Street neighborhood and the City had shifted over to boot and shoe making. At the head of the Bass River, the United Shoe Machinery Corporation, one of the first ever international corporations, constructed a quarter-mile stretch of factory buildings in 1902. The business stayed until 1980 and became today's Cummings Center in 1996. The area continues to evolve around the railroad and the new MBTA parking garage, shifting towards pedestrian-oriented transit oriented development and mixed uses.

One of most important components of the vision, which the City of Beverly has jurisdiction over, is the zoning in the Bass River study area. The existing zoning was identified as a potential impediment to new development by MAPC in our analysis of zoning and development feasibility. This section describes the existing zoning characteristics in the study and focus areas, identifies the impediments, and offers recommendations to improve the zoning and make it more flexible to allow for the type of

development identified by the community in the vision.

Zoning for the study area and the focus area is shown in Figure 22. While the study area itself is zoned entirely IG, the zoning in the focus area is more varied. On the west side of the Bass River in the Rial Side neighborhood, the R-10 zoning is primarily single-family residential with a smaller amount of General Commercial (CG) at the northern end of the focus area. South of Bridge Street and west of the MBTA commuter rail line in the Goat Hill neighborhood, the R-6 one and two-family residential zoning is found. East of the railroad line, the downtown's Central Business (CC) district, including the Rantoul Street Height Overlay District, surrounds a large section of multi-family (RHD) zoning, with a pocket of multi-family high density (RMD) south of Stone Street and directly adjacent to the tracks. Below Water Street, the focus area captures a strip of the Waterfront Development (WD) zone, along with the area zoned for Neighborhood Commercial (CN) between Cabot and Water Streets, which also includes the Fish Flake Hill Historic District. The easternmost section of the study area, beyond the spine of Central Business (CC) centered on Cabot Street, shifts back to One and Two family Residential (R-6) housing.



The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis.

Data Sources:  
 City of Beverly,  
 Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT),  
 Massachusetts Geographic Information System (MassGIS),  
 Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

July, 2013



The current zoning districts in and near the Bass River area are fairly exclusive to their dominant use classes. That is, the commercial districts allow primarily commercial development (retail and service establishments), while the residential districts are fairly exclusive to residential development. The result is that there are few opportunities to mix uses and, as all of the study area is devoted to business uses, there are limited means to support additional residential uses in the study area.

Table 4: Land Use

Land Use	Study Area		1/2 Mile Boundary	
	Acres	% of Study Area	Acres	% of 1/2 Mile Area
Residential	4.9	6%	215.1	46%
Commercial	30.2	39%	29.2	6%
Public/Institutional	19.2	25%	98.5	21%
Open Space	9.3	12%	31.7	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>78.1</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>472.5</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Figure 22: Zoning in the study area.

## I-G District - Bass River

There are two General Industrial (I-G) zoned districts within Beverly. One encompasses the Bass River study area, running from School Street in the south on both sides of the commuter rail line north to include the River and Park Street neighborhoods and a small section of I-G north of Elliot Street and east of the commuter rail line. The other is the Cummings Center property north of Elliot Street. The Bass River IG site has 24 parcels and is 78.1 acres in size. A general purpose commercial and industrial district, the IG district allows for a wide range of uses.

Officially, I-G allowed uses include business and professional offices, sanitary landfill facilities, re-manufacturing processes, electrical and mechanical instruments/optical and pharmaceutical production, administrative offices, data processing centers, printing/publishing, contractors and craftsmen's shops, open storage of building materials, general industrial uses, agricultural and horticulture and taxi/bus rail passenger terminals. Uses considered only by Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) include subsidized elderly housing, commercial marinas, sit-down and take out restaurants, animal hospitals and kennels, auto body shops, open storage of industrial materials, motor or rail freight and service buildings, parking lots and garages as principal uses, Bed and Breakfasts, and commercial mobile radio services. Residential uses are not allowed in the I-G district.

Historically, this area was created for heavy industrial purposes; however this is no longer the case. More distribution, warehouse facilities, and service uses occupy these districts today. The original locally owned businesses centered in these industrial zones are slowly transitioning to other uses.

## Surrounding Residential and Commercial Districts

### Residential

The surrounding residential and commercial districts that comprise the .5 mile focus area study surrounding the Bass River I-G district are important to understand as context for potential zoning changes.

In the outlying Beverly focus area, about 46 % of the 472-acre focus area consists of residential uses, with 21% commercial uses and 6 % industrial uses. About 98- acres or 21% of the focus area consists of parks, yards and open space uses, including Innocenti Park and City-owned open space(Green's Hill) on the west side of the Bass River near the Ayers School, and near the end of Folger Avenue and Bathing Beach Road.

The largest residential zoning district within the focus area is **R-10** in the Rial Side neighborhood west of the study area. R-10 is primarily a single-family home district with a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet. Other allowed uses include certain non-profits, sanitary landfills, home occupations, and agricultural/horticultural

and floricultural uses with a minimum lot size of 5-acres. By Special Permit of the ZBA, R-10 also may allow subsidized elderly housing, commercial marinas, non-commercial stables, bed and breakfasts, pork chop lots, and accessory buildings, swimming pools and tennis courts that may not meet setbacks.

Designed primarily for high density multi-family homes, the **RHD Multi-Family District** located in the heart of downtown Beverly also allows single and two-family homes, with each residence requiring a 6,000 square-foot minimum lot size plus 3,000 for each additional dwelling unit over two units. All uses allowed by-right in the R-10 district are also allowed in RHD as well as subsidized housing for the elderly. By ZBA Special Permit, rooming houses, gyms, private clubs/ community services, commercial mobile radio services, pork-chop lots, parking lots for commercial uses in adjoining CC Commercial district and smaller horticultural and floricultural uses are also RHD uses.

The **R-6 District**, the next largest residentially zoned area within the one-half mile focus area radius, is a single and two-family home residential area that includes all of Goat Hill and portions of the Dane Street Beach/Lyons Park residential neighborhood. The zoning maintains the tradition of allowing homes on smaller lots, requiring only a 6,000 square-foot minimum lot. Other allowed and Special Permit uses mirror those of the R-10 single-family zone.

Found within the southwestern quadrant of

the focus area between the Goat Hill and the Dane Street Beach neighborhood, the **RMD District** is designed as a medium density multi-family residential area, requiring a minimum 8,000 square-foot minimum lot area with 4,000 additional square-feet required for any development over two units. Multi-family dwellings and apartment buildings are allowed by-right, if special requirements are met, in addition to single and two-family houses. Other allowed uses match the R-6 requirements while adding planned residential development as a Special Permit use under the ZBA. The Fish Flake Hill Historic Overlay District is partially underlain by RMD zoning.

The **Waterfront Development District (WD)**, running east from the commuter rail line along Water Street and Beverly Harbor to Maple Avenue, was designed for commercial fishing uses, marinas, restaurants, and public access along the waterfront. Multi-family homes and apartments are allowed by right, subject to design conditions for multiple-dwellings. The maximum Floor Area Ratio of 0.25 may be increased to 1.0 in exchange for the provision of public walkways, expansion of Water Street's right of way where it less than 40-feet, preservation of harbor views, and the inclusion of a water-dependent use to at least a 20% level. FAR can be further increased to 1.5 if all the listed requirements are met and if 10% of the gross site area is maintained a public open space.

### **Commercial Districts**

Beverly's Central Business District (CC) offers a wide range of allowed uses, including mixed residential and commercial buildings where residential uses are limited to 75% of the building's total floor area and commercial uses occupy at least 25% of the first floor. One and two-family homes, subsidized elderly housing, home occupations, retail, services, and office uses are allowed uses. By ZBA Special Permit, multi-family dwelling units or apartment buildings with greater than 75% of the use being residential are considered in the CC district, as well as rooming houses, gyms/health clubs, hotels/motels, places of public recreation such as bowling alleys or theaters, parking lots and garages. Minimal lot sizes, ranging from zero to 1,000 square-feet, are required depending on what uses and combinations of uses are anticipated. For example, commercial uses combined with residential uses abutting a residential district require no minimum lot area for the commercial uses but 1,000 square-feet of lot space per each residential unit. The Planning Board, by Special Permit, may allow building heights to exceed the 55-foot limit in the Central Business zone overlay district, up to 75-feet, if screening and buffering requirements are met and the City's Design Review Board finds the proposed development to have met the City's 2007 Design Guidelines for Tall Buildings.

Developed primarily to serve the needs of adjacent residential neighborhoods, the Neighborhood Commercial (CN) zoning district

makes up a small portion of the focus in the area between Water Street, Cabot and Davis Streets. This is a limited mixed-use district that allows for single and two-family detached and semi-detached buildings, allowing one or more dwellings in a commercial building and allowing service shops and smaller retail establishments up to 5,000 square feet by-right. Commercial marinas, sit-down restaurants, bed and breakfasts, taxi/rail/bus passenger terminals are among Special Permit uses considered by the ZBA. There are screening and landscaping requirements for commercial uses that any residential district and no retail or commercial business may operate between midnight and five a.m. within the CN district.

The General Commercial (GC) zone abutting the Bass River district at its northwestern corner is devoted largely to suburban and auto related commercial uses near residential areas and shares some frontage along Elliot Street with the I-G district. Allowed uses include hotels and motels, retail, fast food and sit-down restaurants, personal/consumer establishments, places of commercial recreation such as bowling alleys or skating rinks, office uses, transportation passenger terminals, car washes and automotive sales uses. By Special Permit, subsidized elderly housing, private/social clubs, marinas, stables, gas stations, utilities, Bed and Breakfasts, and commercial radio facilities are also allowed.

## Dimensional Standards

The zoning within the half-mile radius surrounding the Bass River District is comprised of several different zoning districts, creating some inconsistencies between the dimensional standards of development projects. The different zoning districts create distinct differences in the study area for building heights, setbacks, location of parking, lot coverage, and amount of open space.

Table X illustrates the different dimensional requirements for the Bass River area and the adjoining zoning districts within the surrounding Beverly neighborhoods.

Table 5: Dimensional requirements (Bass River District and surrounding areas)

	Use	Min lot size	Max lot coverage	Frontage	Depth	Setbacks			Height	Stories	FAR	Open Space
						Front	Side	Rear				
I-G	Any	NA	50% building coverage	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	35, 70 <sup>(1)</sup>	NA	NA	NA
<b>Focus Area</b>												
R-10	All but Cluster	10,000	NA	100	NA	20	15	25	35	NA	NA	NA
RHD	Detached single-family housing, all other uses	6,000	NA	50	NA	15	10 <sup>(2)</sup>	20	55	NA	NA	NA
RHD	Semi-detached dwelling unit <sup>(3)</sup>	3,500	NA	50	NA	15	10 <sup>(2)</sup>	20	55	NA	NA	NA
R-6	All but semi-detached dwelling unit	6,000 plus 1,000 for one additional dwelling unit	NA	65	NA	20	10	25	35	NA	NA	NA
R-6	Semi-detached dwelling unit <sup>(3)</sup>	3,500	NA	40	NA	20	10	15-one side only	35	NA	NA	NA
WD	All	NA	NA	NA	NA	5	25	20	35	NA	0.25 <sup>(4)</sup>	NA
CC	Commercial, residential or combined uses with side and/or rear yard abutting residential district	NA	Comm. - NA  Res.- 1,000 per dwelling unit	Comm.-NA Res.- 50	NA	NA	10 <sup>(5)</sup>	20- if abuts res. zoned lot	55 – abuts RHD 35- abuts RMD or R6	NA	NA	NA
CC	Residential uses not abutting residential district	1,000 per dwelling unit	NA	50	NA	15	10 <sup>(2)</sup>	20	55 <sup>(6)</sup>	NA	NA	NA
CC	Commercial uses which do not abut a commercial district	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	55 <sup>(6)</sup>	NA	NA	NA

Table 5: Dimensional requirements (Bass River District and surrounding areas)

	Use	Min lot size	Max lot coverage	Frontage	Depth	Setbacks			Height	Stories	FAR	Open Space
						Front	Side	Rear				
CC	Commercial or residential uses within existing structures	Commercial-NA Residential-1,000 per dwelling unit	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	55 NA	NA	NA	NA
CC	Combined commercial and residential uses with side/and or rear not abutting residentially zoned district	NA	NA	50	NA	NA	NA	NA	55 <sup>(6)</sup>	NA	NA	NA
CN	All <sup>(7)</sup>	(7)	(7)	(7)	(7)	(7)	(7)	(7)	(7)	(7)	(7)	(7)
CG	All	10,000	35 %, 65 % impervious	80	NA	30	15	15	35	NA	NA	NA
Notes	1. Buildings set back a minimum of 400 feet from all abutting public ways are allowed 70 feet maximum											
	2. 15 feet if over three stories											
	3. Minimum lot width for semi-detached dwelling unit: 40 feet											
	4. Unless modified by Special Permit											
	5. 15 feet if building is over 3 stories for that side yard which abut the side or rear of a residentially zoned lot											
	6. Planning Board, by Special Permit, may authorize up to 75 feet in CC Overlay District											
	7. Dimensional requirements are the same as the least restrictive adjacent residential district											

## Parking Requirements

Parking is a critical component to downtown development and can be an asset or a hindrance to the success of development around transit or mixed-use. One of the goals of diversified, mixed-use style development is to provide options for travel that do not rely solely on personal vehicles. Limiting parking around transit or more densely settled, mixed-use areas is one way to ease traffic congestion and promote more walking, biking and transit use as part of new development.

In Beverly, there are six public parking lots located in the downtown focus area.

The parking requirements in Beverly are measured on a per residential unit basis or on a square footage basis for retail and office development. There may be an opportunity to reduce the residential parking requirement to a standard more consistent with other mixed-use type standards.

Generally, the office and retail requirements are on par with typical suburban parking standards. The City does allow one parking space per unit for any one or two bedroom dwelling units located within the Depot Overlay District, adopted in 2011, which includes those lots south of Federal Street with frontage on Rantoul Street.

Requiring two-spaces per residential dwelling unit in other areas of focus area, as well as one space for each 275 square feet for smaller personal retail and office uses as now written in the Beverly zoning bylaw might discourage the redevelopment of downtown areas such as the Bass River District. Land area that could have been used, and taxed, for commercial or residential development is used for parking, reducing the profitability of the site and often leading to smaller buildings surrounded by parking spaces that are under-utilized. The current parking regulations for sample residential, retail and office uses are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Examples of Beverly Parking Requirements by District and Residential and Commercial Uses

District	Use	Parking Requirement
<b>Bass River Study Area-required parking for example uses</b>		
I-G	Manufacturing, Assembly, Processing, Research, Printing and Publishing	2.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet gross floor area
I-G	Marina	.5 spaces per boat moored, docked, stored or trailered
<b>.5 Mile Radius Focus Area-required parking for example uses</b>		
R-10	Single family home	Two spaces per dwelling unit (2)
R-10	Bed and Breakfast	1 space per every room rented, plus two spaces
RHD	Subsidized elderly housing	.75 spaces per unit
RHD	Rooming House, Hotel, Motel	1 space per each rental unit
R-6	Two-family home	2 spaces per dwelling unit (4)
RMD	Historic site or non-profit museum	1 space per 400 square feet of gross floor area
RMD	8-unit apartment building	2 spaces per dwelling unit- 16 spaces
WD	Restaurant- sit down	1 space for every four seats
WD	Home Occupation	1 space per each vehicle owned by the occupants of the home, up to two spaces, 1 space for the employee if there is one, 1 space for each client- up to maximum of four spaces total

Table 6: Examples of Beverly Parking Requirements by District and Residential and Commercial Uses

District	Use	Parking Requirement
CC	Retail	1 space for every 275 square feet of gross floor area for businesses under 10,000 square feet  1 space for every 250 square feet gross floor area for businesses over 10,000 square feet
CC	Office	1 space for every 250 feet of gross floor area
CC	Theater	1 space for every four seats
CN	Neighborhood Store	1 space for every 275 square feet of gross floor area for businesses under 10,000 square feet
CG	Club or lodge	1 space per 400 square feet of gross floor area
CG	Hotel, Motel	1 space per each rental unit plus 1 space per for each 8 seats provided for eating and meeting facilities

# Opportunities and Impediments - Zoning

There are several parts of the existing zoning bylaws regulating development in the Bass River District, zoned currently as I-G, that offer opportunities for encouraging mixed-use downtown development around the Beverly commuter rail station, as well as parts that are potential impediments to this type of development. This section will mostly focus on the I-G district but these opportunities, impediments and recommendations could be applied to other downtown areas being considered for modification to support more compact, pedestrian and bike-oriented downtown development in Beverly.

## Opportunities

**Opportunity:** The Bass River I-G District, as currently zoned, is a piece of Beverly's historic industrial past that served the City well during the Beverly's heyday as a manufacturing center for the leather and shoe industries. Dotted with factories and warehouses, the waterfront served as both a marine and railroad terminal. Heavy industrial processing and businesses were the norm for more than a century. Today, the MBTA is finishing a new parking garage directly across River Street and the rail line from the District and the City is experiencing increasing residential development downtown. A variety of uses fill the Bass River study area, including a utility substation and service parking area, lumberyard, plumbing showroom, carwash, marina, city park, industrial park and bowling alley. One of the strengths of the downtown area is its diverse grouping of once predominantly industrial and now mainly commercial and service uses found in the Bass River I-G area. These all purpose zones are not uncommon in older communities with long maritime, trading, industrial and suburban histories like Beverly. The zoning, when finally adopted, was often matched to the existing uses already in place, leading to patchwork districts like I-G. With the area transitioning again to a mix of business and residential use as younger residents, pre-retirement households and seniors are drawn to convenient and safe downtown areas, it's unlikely that the heavier industrial uses in I-G along the waterfront will be reused, but the City may wish to review some of the existing uses in I-G to see if they are still a good fit for the neighborhoods where they are located.

**Opportunity:** MAPC also heard support for preserving the commercial/service shop nature of the Park Street I-G neighborhood between West Dane Street and Broadway as people would like to see service shops and craftspeople remain downtown within walking distance to downtown residential neighborhoods. There was also support expressed for allowing a limited amount of housing options in this area, particularly for students and artists. As part of its review of the I-G District, the City may wish to consider allowing a limited amount of live/work housing options in this area that would support small business development and offer loft or studio space to crafts persons, small businesses and artists, perhaps on a Special Permit basis.

**Opportunity:** Setbacks - In the I-G district, the setbacks have been designed to encourage buildings to meet past industrial needs, where road frontage and setbacks were of little concern. Coincidentally, limited setbacks also allows buildings to better meet the street and provide a more engaging setting for traditional mixed use settings. The limited front setbacks also encourage parking to be located behind the building or to be accommodated on-street in some locations.

**Opportunity:** Lot size- There is no minimum lot size requirement for the I-G District. Often noted in older, downtown districts where buildings predated zoning and where more than one building sometimes occupied a parcel, zero minimum lot size requirements historically have allowed modest businesses and offices on smaller lots in smaller

downtown areas that were developed prior to the need for substantial parking. Ironically, it is one factor that allows smaller business uses to stay in downtown areas and preserve the character of working neighborhoods.

**Opportunity:** Lot Coverage – Along with minimum lot size, maximum lot coverage can impact the financial feasibility of a development proposal. In the I-G district there is no maximum lot coverage percentage meaning a building could cover 100% of the lot area. This of course does not occur because a developer has to account for the setbacks, parking requirements, and open space requirements on a site. Having no maximum lot coverage provides added flexibility for a developer and also lets the other dimensional and regulatory requirements determine how much of the parcel will be taken up by the building.

**Opportunity:** Open Space-The I-G district has no open space requirement. While the incorporation of open space on development sites is important, open space requirements that are too high can limit the ability of developers to construct buildings large enough to cover costs. The Corridor already benefits from a number of nearby open space and recreation areas including Innocenti Park and Green’s Hill across the Bass River. The City may wish to incorporate a 5-10 percent open space requirement within the new overlay area.

## Impediments

Impediment: Implementing new zoning regulations - There are three basic options for changing zoning requirements:

- One option is to adjust the current underlying zoning district regulations in a zoning district to reflect these changes;
- The second is implementing a new , or expanding an existing overlay district;
- The third is to create a brand new zoning district.

While the first option obviates the need for an additional district, it runs the risk of running against established uses and traditions within an area and may require a community to make difficult political decisions on what land uses and zoning dimensions to change, add or discard.

An overlay district allows the underlying uses in a zoning district to continue while adding new ones under certain conditions. A property owner can develop his or her property using either the existing underlying zoning or choose the uses offered under the overlay district, agreeing to be permitted using the overlay’s regulations. The overlay method allows a more gradual land use transition. Over time, if development impediments are corrected and quality projects are permitted, bike and pedestrian-oriented downtown areas such as the Bass River District may become increasingly valuable and the market may shift towards building more inherently valuable mixed-use projects.

Creating a new zoning district, while more straightforward to permit than an overlay district, may raise some of the same issues as adjusting an existing zoning district. It can also create significant use and dimensional non-conformity issues for existing property owners and can potentially reduce the number of choices a landowner has to develop their property.

Each of these tools has applicability in certain situations.

**Recommendation:** Since it may not be appropriate to make wholesale changes to the to the remaining I-G zoned areas, or create a new Bass River Neighborhood Zoning District for the reasons described above, MAPC recommends that a new Bass River Neighborhood Overlay District be created to overlay that portion of the I-G district that lies south of Elliot Street down to School Street, not including the other areas of I-G north of Elliot Street.

The new overlay district will set regulations that are consistent with the principles and goals of this study and promote mixed-use, walkable and bike-friendly development around a traditional Beverly downtown neighborhood. The City can work with residents, business owners, and property owners to define the final boundaries of the overlay district as well as engage in further discussion about the appropriate uses and regulations for the overlay district. See Appendix B. Draft Bass River Neighborhood Overlay District Ordinance.

Impediments found within the current I-G District and further recommendations include the following:

- **Residential Uses:** The I-G District does not allow any residential uses, either as allowed uses or by Special Permit. While the area has benefited from many of the diverse uses and dimensional settings allowed under I-G, it is essentially a commercial/industrial district. Any mixed-use in the study area most likely precedes the adoption of zoning and could not be redeveloped in the same manner under current rules. MAPC's recommendation for the new Bass River Neighborhood Overlay District is to allow mixed-use buildings and multi-family residential uses by special permit. The City should consider allowing a multi-family development of up to four units as a by-right use, either as part of a mixed use building or as a single use.
- **Lot Size:** There is no current minimum lot size required under I-G. While zero lot size can offer the greatest degree of building design flexibility, MAPC recommends that a 5,000 square-foot minimum lot size be established in order to better blend with nearby R-10 neighborhood residential uses, the most common of which are single-family homes zoned for 10,000 square-foot lots. The 5,000 square-foot lot size for the Bass River overlay will still allow a property owner to avoid having to seek a variance to develop a smaller parcel or combine it with other parcels to create a larger project.

- **Height limits within Bass River Overlay District:** The current height limit in the I-G District is 35-feet. This height limit is restrictive for developers, especially those looking to construct mixed-use buildings with residential on the upper stories in proximity to the commuter rail station and to downtown Beverly. MAPC recommends a maximum height of 45-feet. This allows for some development flexibility with taller structures, as lot space can be consumed by parking requirements and setbacks, making a shorter building financially infeasible. If height and massing are a concern, the City should address this through design review or design criteria instead of specific height restriction clauses.
- **Building within a Special Flood Hazard Area:** Much of the Bass River I-G district is in a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). The land area covered by the floodwaters of the base flood is the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) on National Flood Insurance Program maps. The SFHA is the area where the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP's) floodplain management regulations must be enforced and the area where the mandatory purchase of flood insurance applies. MAPC recommends that the City, by Special Permit, allow buildings within the SFHA to be elevated beyond the recommended maximum height limit to provide flood-proofing that meets or exceeds the flood elevation requirements of the MA Building Code (780 CMR). Buildings cannot exceed

a maximum height limit by more than six feet, including all screened roof top mechanicals.

- **Frontage and Yard Setbacks in the Bass River Overlay District:** Though the current zero frontage and setback requirements in the study area approximate those of the adjacent CC district and offer maximum flexibility, the City should consider adopting functional overlay setbacks that offer flexibility while still blending with the neighboring R-10 and R-6 districts' requirements. MAPC recommends that the City adopt a minimum lot frontage of 50 feet, with a flexible 10 foot front yard setback, 5 foot side yard setbacks except abutting a single-family zoning district, where it would be 20 feet. Rear yard setbacks should be ten feet except where abutting a single-family district, where it would be a minimum of 20 feet.
- **Design Guidelines:** The existing Downtown Beverly Design Guidelines offer guidance to help create structures and developments that are compatible with the traditional architecture of downtown Beverly. The City should incorporate review using the Guidelines for any development within the overlay. As part of the Special Permit process, the City should be careful to encourage and incorporate public access to the Bass River, including preserving view sheds to the Bass River and seeking small boat launching facilities, river paths and walkways, and public amenity improvements.

- **Impediment: I-G Uses** – While the I-G District’s large array of diverse uses has helped the City historically, the City may wish to examine of the industrial and larger commercial uses still allowed in all the I-G Districts to see if they are still a good fit for areas that may be transitioning away from these types of uses.
- **Impediment: Parking Ratios** – The City’s parking ratios for office and retail development in all of its zoning districts are somewhat consistent with industry standards for suburban development, but are slightly higher than what may be appropriate for a mixed-use downtown setting. The current ratio for office and retail development in the Beverly bylaw varies but is in the range of 1 parking space for every 250-275 square feet of development. MAPC would recommend that the City consider standardizing their parking requirements and increasing their minimum parking requirements for retail and office development from the current range to 1 space per 350 square feet.
- **Shared Parking:** The City adopted Special Off-Street Parking Provisions, Section 38-25(D)(1) zoning language in July of 2013 that allows, by Special Permit, for up to a 50% reduction in parking for mixed-use projects as well as 25% reductions for projects within 500 feet of an off-site parking facility. MAPC recommends that any project within the Bass River Overlay District be considered under this provision if applicable.

MAPC also recommends that Beverly consider implementing parking minimums and maximums for all residential units, as well as adjusting the number of spaces required based on the number of bedrooms per unit. MAPC recommends the City consider a tiered set of parking minimums and maximums as described below:

- **Studio and One Bedroom Units** – Minimum of 0.5 spaces per unit to a maximum of 1 space per unit.
- **Two Bedroom Units** – Minimum of 1 space per unit to a maximum of 1.5 spaces per unit.
- **Three+ Bedroom Units** – Minimum of 1.5 spaces per unit to a maximum of 2 spaces per unit.

# Affordable Housing

The market analysis prepared by RKG Associates, Inc. states the need for housing in the Bass River study focus area, and suggests the demand for new housing in Beverly is for 900 households over the next five years, of which 3% would be new growth. The analysis suggests that new housing could serve two specific markets: potential owner households with a gross annual household income at or above \$100,000 and potential renter households with a gross annual household income at or below \$75,000. The analysis suggests a number of reasons why certain types of housing development may or may not be feasible on site and explains that reliance upon the turnover of existing units would fill a majority of the market's rental housing needs.

The following recommendations will assume that development moves forward in the study and focus areas and includes a component related to affordability both on site and to address affordability in the surrounding neighborhood.

The City adopted its inclusionary housing zoning ordinance in 2007 to advance programs and policies to preserve and create affordable housing opportunities. The ordinance, Section 38-34 of the Zoning Ordinance, requires developers of residential or mixed-use properties with ten or more residential to set-aside at least 12% of the

residential units for households earning at or below 50- 80% of the area median income (AMI). The ordinance allows, in special circumstances, for a developer to make a payment in-lieu-of housing on site to the North Shore Community Development Coalition or to donate developable land to the City. MAPC recommends that the City ensure that any new development with a housing component incorporate affordability. It is critical that development within close proximity to transit assets, like commuter rail stations, have affordable housing options as part of the unit mix. MAPC recommends that the City either 1. designate that sites located within Bass River overlay district include a minimum of 12% of the units as affordable or 2. help developers leverage discretionary funds for affordable housing in mixed-use properties (such as the Housing Development Support Program). The City could also negotiate a density bonus for additional affordable units via the Special Permit process set forth in Section 38-34(H)(2).

While limited, local HOME or Affordable Housing Trust funds might be leveraged to offset development costs, including site preparation, gap financing, or the creation of rental housing or down payment assistance for first-time home buyers.

## **Preserve Existing Affordable Rental Housing**

Preserving housing units and developments with an expiring affordability restriction (“expiring use”) should be a priority for the City. Beverly can take steps to preserve existing affordable rental homes and create new homeownership and rental opportunities that will remain available to low- and moderate-income households over the long term.

Some of the neighborhoods close to surrounding the Bass River district are heavily residential, majority single-family. Preservation of any existing affordable or market rental housing in this area is critical, as well as potentially acquiring or rehabilitating and preserving new affordable housing, while also working to address any affordable expiring use properties. HOME and Affordable Housing Trust funds can be used for these activities. Preservation of units ensures that housing is affordable to low- and moderate-income households by protecting the units with a deed restriction. The North Shore Community Development Coalition may also be positioned to purchase rental housing property to ensure that rental units are made affordable to households earning at or below 80% of the AMI.

### **Create and Preserve Affordable Homeownership Opportunities**

“Shared equity” programs, such as the City’s First Time Homebuyer program, funded through federal HOME funds, bring the cost of homeownership within reach of low- and moderate-income households by using a formula to balance long-term affordability goals and individual asset accumulation. These programs provide an initial subsidy to lower the cost of a home and then split any price gains realized upon home resale between the seller and the City or a housing program sponsor, such as a local non-profit affordable housing developer, including the North Shore Community Development Coalition. The sponsor’s appreciation share may either remain with the home to ensure affordability for the next qualified buyer (this is essentially a transfer of the deed restriction at the time of sale), or the appreciated value is returned to the program sponsor who might collect these funds into a larger pool to benefit other future lower-income buyers.

Homeownership programs that incorporate shared equity mechanisms are particularly useful for creating and preserving affordable homes in areas where transit stations or other neighborhood improvements are expected to

contribute to long-term home price increases. Shared equity homeownership includes deed-restricted housing. Beverly can take steps to ensure that existing low-income homeowners can afford to remain in their homes as property values increase.

As market demand increases in the Bass River/ Downtown neighborhoods, existing residents may experience an increase in their assessed home values, leading to increases in required property taxes. Those living on a limited or fixed income may be unable to find room in their budgets to cover these added costs. “Circuit breaker” programs provide tax relief by freezing the assessed home value at an earlier level or freezing or reducing the overall tax bill to prevent dramatic increases. While these programs commonly target households with disabled or elderly homeowners, some communities have broadened eligibility to include all low-income households.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Information about Massachusetts Circuit Breaker Tax Credit Program can be found at <http://www.massresources.org/circuit-breaker-tax-credit.html>



**NEXT STEPS**

# Short Term

1. The City should consider continuing to meet with the current Bass River Work Group that is made of up a City Staff person, City Councilor for the area, business owners, Beverly Bike Committee member, property owners, and residents. The working group can assist the City in evaluating this report, keeping momentum moving and spearheading educational efforts within the community as changes begin. The working group could also help organize short-term public realm improvements and establish programs and events along the Corridor to help showcase to the public that this is an area ripe for investment.
2. One of the first action steps the City should take is evaluating and implementing the recommended zoning changes, creating a Bass Neighborhood River Overlay in a portion of the I-G study area.
3. Beverly should re-examine its current required parking ratios and consider updating them.
4. Reallocating roadway right-of-way along some streets in the Bass River District to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians. Addressing the transportation improvements in the short-term can be accomplished through temporary changes to the street to test whether or not reallocating the roadway for other users is effective. Cones, tape, removable paint or

striping, barriers, and signage can be used to delineate wider sidewalks, bike lanes, or adjusted travel lanes on the street. If these temporary improvements do not work well, they can be easily removed and the street can go back to functioning as it did before. If the improvements work well, the City can pursue means to make the improvements permanent (see Long Term improvements). Bicycle facilities, such as bicycle lanes, are a relatively inexpensive treatment that can be striped in the short term or medium term.

5. Other short-term, but permanent, transportation improvements such as crosswalk re-striping or signage improvements should be made by the City through their annual maintenance programs.
6. Public realm improvements can also be accomplished through simple, quick, and cost-effective means. Key areas to concentrate on are the river walk area and Veteran's Memorial Park. Efforts to improve the streets and potential green spaces for public use can be done through temporary measures as well. Temporary benches, planter boxes, tables, chairs, public art installations, plantings, etc. can be constructed from recycled materials like pallets or scrap wood. Temporary plantings could be donated by a local landscaping business. Public art could be constructed or painted by local artists or temporarily borrowed from an artist from outside the area.

7. The City should analyze whether the improvements recommended for Veteran's Memorial Park are feasible and examine possible funding sources to implement the recommendations.
8. In concert with the public realm improvements, events and programs could be planned for the Bass River district and downtown to engage the community and bring people together. These events could be arranged around constructing the short-term public improvements or a day to explore the temporary transportation network changes. Events like a bike rodeo, or sidewalk sales for businesses around the Commuter Rail station could bring people to the area and have them engage with the transportation changes first hand.
9. Funding for these short-term improvements may not be available in full through the City. In this case, funding for the lower-cost short-term improvements may come from public/private partnerships between businesses and the City, private donations by businesses, private donations by residents, organized through non-profits, or even collected through an online source like Kickstarter.

# Long Term

1. If temporary changes to the roadway configuration throughout the district prove to be successful, the City should pursue permanent changes through roadway construction projects. This may require moving curbs, utilities, adjusting traffic signals, extending medians, and new roadway striping. The City could consider several different funding sources for this work including City transportation improvement funds, state funding through a program like MassWorks, or federal funding through the Boston MPO.
2. Extending streetscape elements such as period lamp posts, street trees, benches, bike racks, and trash receptacles will help create a cohesive look and feel throughout the district. This could be completed through a partnership between the City and businesses, or possibly through a combination of local, state, and federal funding sources.
3. Based upon the results of its analysis the City should implement the recommendations for Veteran's Memorial Park to the extent feasible and desired.



# APPENDICES

The following appendices are provided to supplement the work described in this report. These appendices are provided as separate documents.

### **Appendix A: RKG Market Analysis Report**

### **Appendix B: Draft Bass River District Overlay District Ordinance**

The new Bass River Overlay District would offer modified dimensional language and use requirements, while preserving underlying uses and permitting processes. The ordinance provides the zoning language to help achieve the vision for the Bass River District, i.e., supporting context-sensitive mixed use developments, including residential uses.