



City of New Bedford

Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development

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STAFF REPORT

NEW BEDFORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

September 11, 2017

Case #2017.16: CERTIFICATE OF APROPRIATENESS
Union Street Improvements
N Water Street to Acushnet Avenue

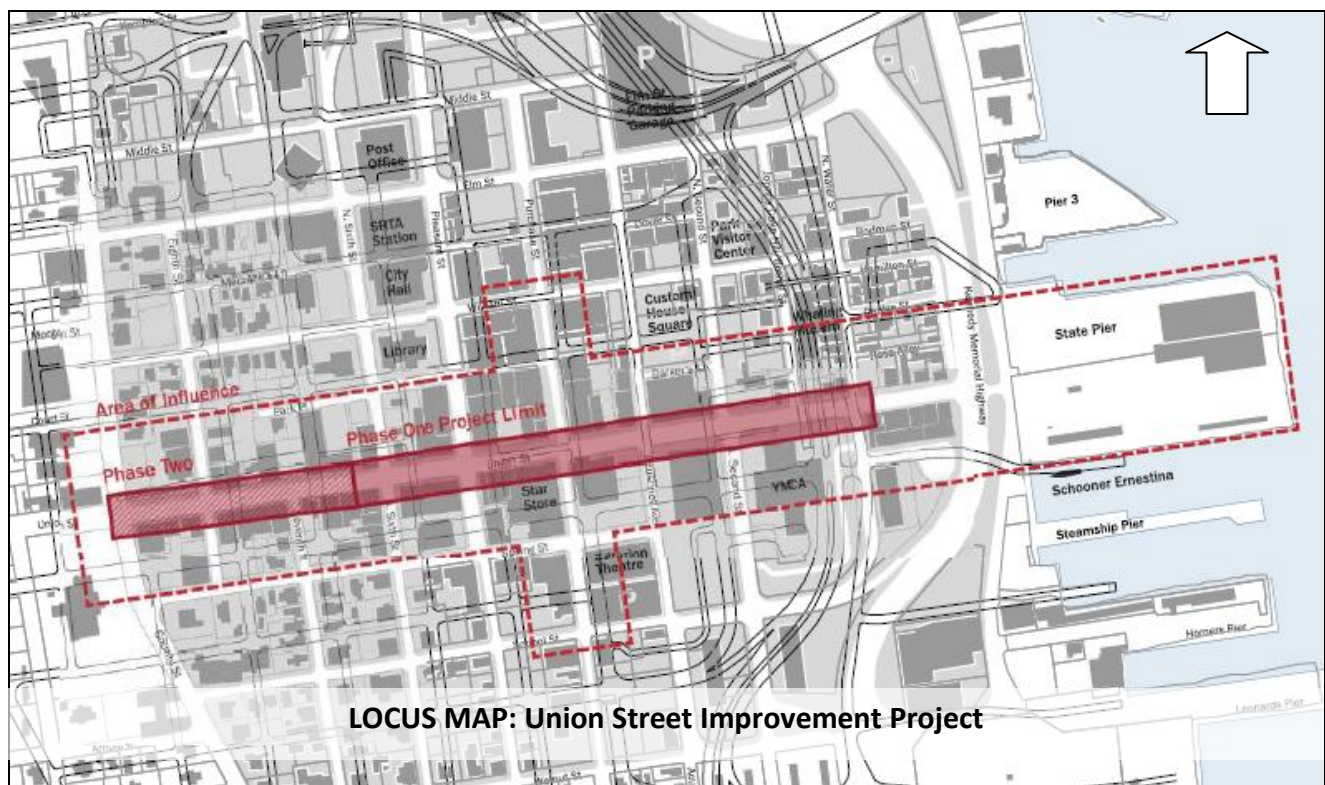
OWNER/ APPLICANT: City of New Bedford
Department of Public Infrastructure

APPLICANT'S AGENT: Lisa Sherman, PE
CDM Smith, Inc.
260 West Exchange Street, Suite 300
Providence, RI 02903



Typical Sidewalk: Northwest Corner of N Water & Union Street

OVERVIEW: The Union Street Improvement Project is a two-phase, two-year enhancement project to upgrade infrastructure along one of the most important corridors in the City in two phases. The Project includes improvements along Union Street from Water Street to County Street, a distance of 2,000 feet.



LOCUS MAP: Union Street Improvement Project

PROPOSAL: The Project falls within a portion of the Bedford-Landing Waterfront District and will include the following infrastructure upgrades:

- Utility upgrades including water service, sewer service, and upgrades of the existing drainage system;
- New ADA compliant sidewalks, ramps and crosswalks. Within the historic district area, the project endeavors to maintain or replicate existing sidewalk treatments, replacing wheelchair ramps where necessary;
- The bluestone wheelchair ramps at Acushnet Avenue and Second Street will be replaced due to ADA concerns and the condition of these ramps. While the bluestone wheelchair ramps will be removed, the bluestone ribbon strip across the street will be retained;
- Proposed concrete wheelchair ramps in the historic district will be dark cement concrete as opposed to the standard bright off-white or gray concrete;
- Along the north side of Union Street, the project will match the existing conditions: brick sidewalk between Acushnet Avenue and Second Street; bluestone sidewalk with a brick amenity strip from Second Street to Water Street (the concrete sidewalk outside St. Anne Credit Union will be replaced to match the sidewalk at the corner of Johnny Cake Hill);
- Work between Johnny Cake Hill and Water Street will be limited to the corner at Johnny Cake Hill where a curb extension will provide an ADA compliant wheelchair ramp, sidewalk, and crosswalk. The remaining length of sidewalk to Water Street will be retained;
- New and consistent street furniture (benches, bicycle racks and trash receptacles);
- A triangular shaped planting area at the curb extension along Union Street at Second Street in the Historic District to be planted with drought resistant plants;
- No new trees, but existing trees will be retained;
- Upgraded traffic signal equipment to facilitate coordinated traffic signal operations including one mast arm per location (Union at Second, Union at Purchase, Union at Pleasant) and all signal equipment in black;
- Within the historic district area (i.e. Acushnet Street to Water Street), the City will maintain existing copperheads along north side of Union Street and add New Bedford style street lights along the south side of Union Street;
- Pavement rehabilitation with updated parking space markings.

Please see attached Plans and Images

STATEMENT OF APPLICABLE GUIDELINES: *The Bedford Landing District Design Guidelines* state the following relative to this proposal:

LANDSCAPING (HARDSCAPE): Retain historic hardscape features including, walkways, steps and sidewalks, in their original locations. When deteriorated, repair with materials that match or are compatible to the original.

- **LIGHT FIXTURES:** Retain and preserve exterior lighting fixtures that are important in defining the overall historic character of the district. If new light fixtures are needed either replace with like design and scale or select reproductions that are compatible with the style and character of the District.
- **SIDEWALKS:** Existing historic sidewalks should be retained and maintained. Replace only those portions that are deteriorated beyond repair. If replacement is necessary, the replacement shall replicate the original design. A new sidewalk should align with those that already exist along a block. Use materials that match existing in design and appearance to reinforce the historic character of the district's features.
- **BENCHES:** Existing benches should be retained and maintained. Introduction of additional benches should reinforce the historic character of the District. Limit the quantity of benches and place them in less prominent locations. Bench furniture should only be used if the sidewalks are wide enough to accommodate them and should not obscure pedestrian paths or existing architectural features.
- **BIKE RACKS:** Simple, modern/contemporary-style bike racks are encouraged. Limit the quantity placed along the primary right-of-way and assure appropriate pedestrian and wheelchair passage width is maintained.
- **TRASH CANS AND PLANTERS:** Trash receptacles and Planters in the District should be uniform in design, material, size, color, and finish. The material, design and location of trash receptacles and planters should reinforce the historic character of the District. These features should appear along sidewalks in an unobtrusive fashion.

FOR BOARD MEMBER CONSIDERATION: The Union Street Improvement Project is funded through the MassWorks Infrastructure Program. In compliance with the funding, CDM Smith submitted a Project Notification Form (PNF) to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) seeking their review of the proposed work. MHC provided a response dated February 27, 2017 in which they asked CDM to coordinate review with the NBHC and for the NBHC to provide comments to MHC.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Generally, the proposed infrastructure improvements are sensitive to the District and the new sidewalk materials, although different than the current bluestone, are compatible and necessary to meet ADA compliance. Staff recommends the approval of the application and the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness with the conditions noted below.

- The corners of Acushnet Avenue and N Water Street will have new crosswalks and ADA compliant wheelchair ramps located at the new bump-outs. The current bluestone wheelchair ramps will be removed; however the bluestone ribbon strips across the streets will be retained. Staff recommends that the existing bluestone ribbon strips be replaced with Belgian blocks, as the bluestone is difficult to maintain and no longer provides a necessary function.
- A color for the detectible warning surface is not specified. Staff recommends the use of white, which is the color of the detectible warning surfaces on lower Union Street.
- The plan specifies for the installation of Washingtonian style streetlights along the south side of Union Street. Staff recommends for consistency, the installation of copperheads on the south side of Union Street, between Acushnet Avenue and Water Street.
- The proposed street furniture is "standard" city type. The existing street furniture along Union Street within the District currently consists of planters and trash receptacles. Staff should collaborate with DPI to identify appropriate and consistent benches and bike racks.



Union Street – northwest corner of Water Street looking west



Union Street – looking west towards Paul Cuffe Park & Johnny Cake Hill



Union Street – looking north up Johnny Cake Hill



Union Street – bluestone ramp looking north up
Johnny Cake Hill from Union Street

Johnny Cake Hill to North Second Street



Union Street - transition from stone to concrete walk

*Union Street Improvement Project - New Bedford, Massachusetts
Photographs of Existing Conditions*



Union Street - looking west from Johnny Cake Hill



Union Street - looking west at concrete sidewalk outside
St. Anne Credit Union



Union Street - looking west across North Second Street

Second Street to Acushnet Avenue



Union Street - looking west from North Second Street

*Union Street Improvement Project - New Bedford, Massachusetts
Photographs of Existing Conditions*



Acushnet Avenue - looking north from Union Street



Acushnet Avenue - looking west at transition from concrete to bluestone sidewalk



Union Street - looking at northwest corner at Acushnet Avenue at transition from brick to bluestone

