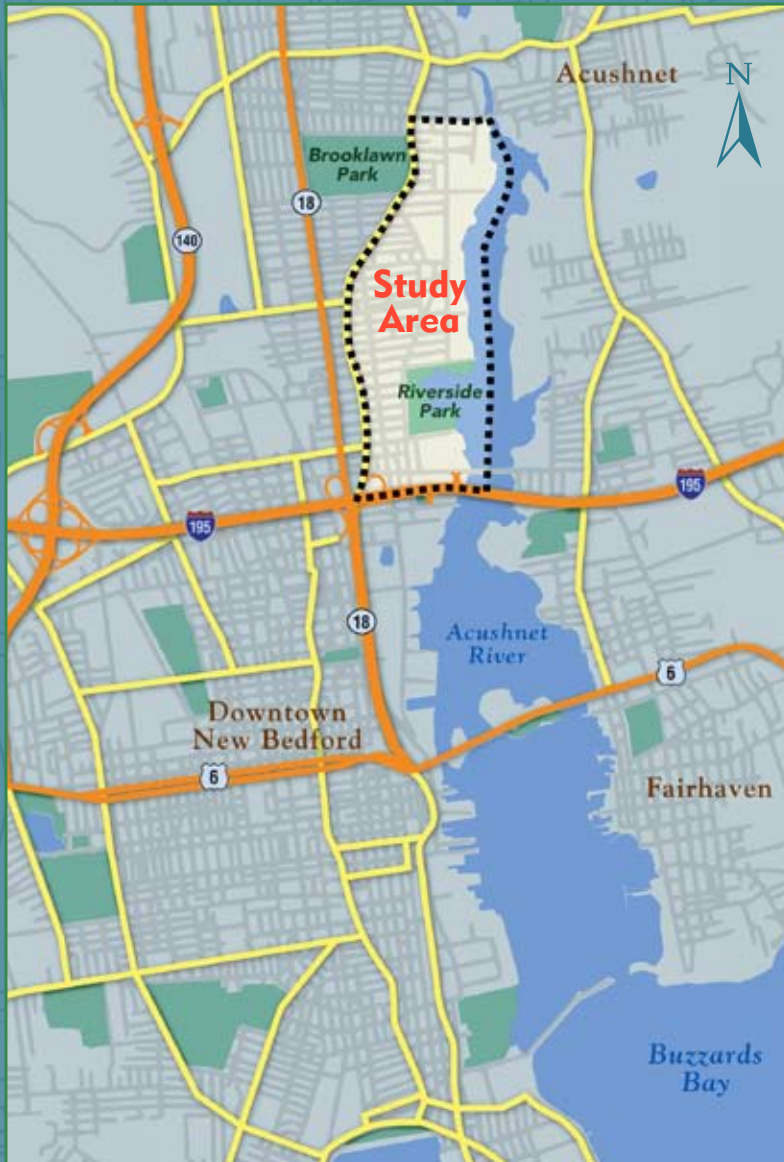


New Bedford Upper Harbor Community Visioning Workshop

The City of New Bedford and the New Bedford Economic Development Council, assisted by planners from Goody Clancy, sponsored a Community Visioning Workshop focused on New Bedford's Upper Harbor on February 16th, 2008. The Joseph Abboud Manufacturing Corporation made its cafeteria available for the event. This poster documents the workshop and the vision that emerged from a day of work by over 60 New Bedford residents and leaders.

Community members approved the Vision Plan in three public meetings during the summer 2008, focusing especially on access to the river and developing Acushnet Avenue as an international marketplace. (The meetings are documented in *City of New Bedford, Upper Harbor Vision Plan Community Meetings*, summer 2008.)

Funded by MassDevelopment and the Garfield Foundation with assistance from the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.



Strengthening the Upper Harbor: Improving connections to the Acushnet River and preserving the community's rich cultural heritage

Early Action Initiatives

- Create the Upper Harbor Heritage Trail by connecting a variety of landmarks and important institutions with Riverside and Brooklawn parks with interpretive signage and public art
- Create an Acushnet Avenue Corridor Plan to strengthen its identity, appearance, and character
- Create two public access points to the River behind the Coalition for Buzzards Bay building and at the end of Howard Avenue
- Install "River-Cams" (cameras with live video feeds to the internet) at the two priority access points to the River and at Riverside Park
- Work with property owners to screen the junk yard from the neighborhood through the use of mural and/or ivy covered walls
- Host free festivals, movie screenings, and farmers' markets—short-term projects that could help give the redevelopment momentum
- Create a map of the Trail that incorporates the history of the community, the River, and a variety of landmarks and important institutions
- Create the Upper Harbor Walking Club, possibly run by the Parks Department, to promote the Heritage Trail, increase public health, and increase public education
- Work with property owners to construct Phase I of the Acushnet Riverwalk between Coffin Avenue and Hathaway Street



Building the Vision

THE PLACE

The study area for the New Bedford Upper Harbor Community Visioning Workshop is bounded at the south by I-195, at the west by Acushnet Avenue, at the north by Wood Street, and at the east by the Acushnet River. It can be divided into three distinct zones:

- A waterfront zone comprised of both valuable underutilized land and historically significant mill buildings that limit physical and visual connections to the waterfront from the neighborhood to the west
- A culturally rich commercial corridor with community centered businesses along Acushnet Avenue
- A residential zone that lacks connections to the many wonderful existing assets within the community

ASSETS

- Brooklawn Park and Riverside Park
- The Acushnet Avenue commercial area
- Diverse neighborhoods
- Numerous schools and churches
- Museum of Madeiran Heritage
- The site of the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament and other Portuguese cultural traditions
- Historic mill buildings
- The Acushnet River itself
- Thriving manufacturing in some mill buildings
- Successful adaptive-reuse in some mill buildings
- Three Portuguese social clubs

ISSUES

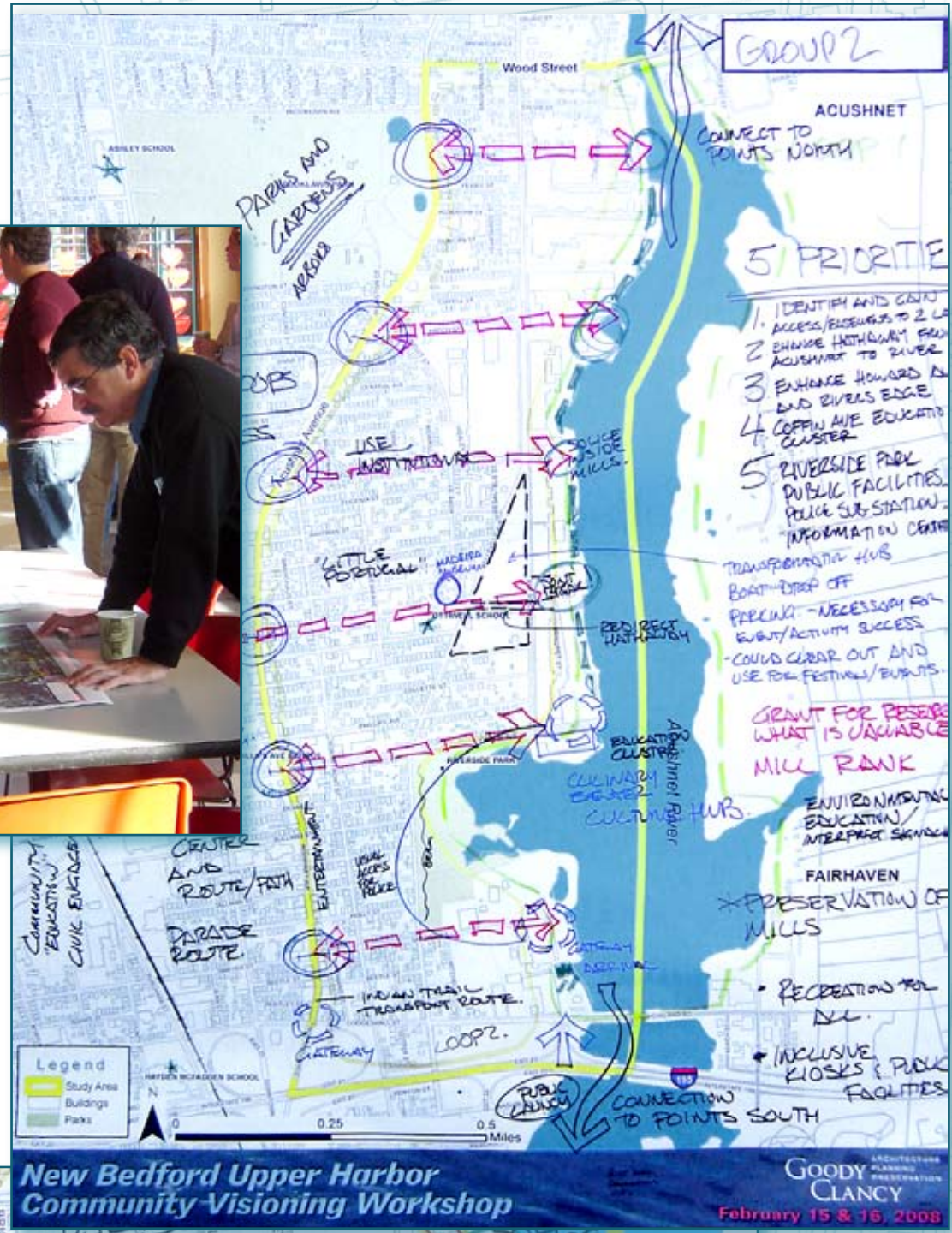
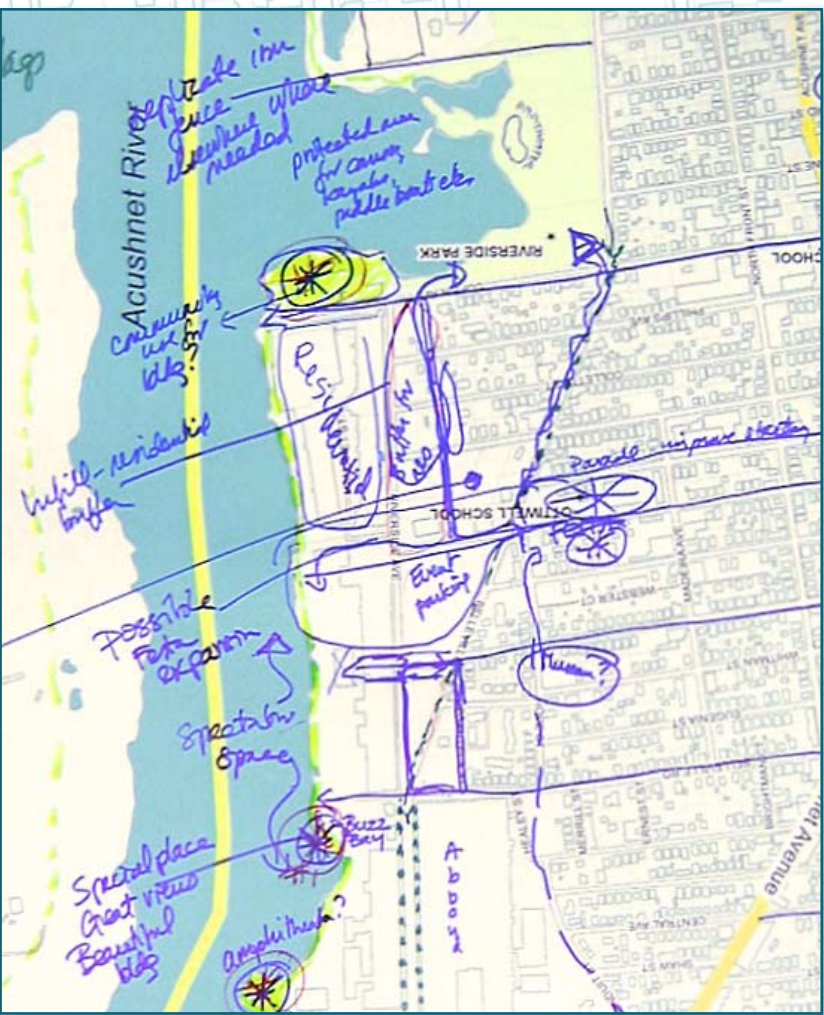
- Vacant or underutilized land along Belleville Avenue
- Vacant historic mill buildings
- Continuing periodic dredging for environmental clean-up of river
- Neighborhood-incompatible uses, such as a junkyard
- Historic storefront facades covered with newer, less attractive materials
- Parking lots in front of newer businesses detract from pedestrian experience along sidewalks
- Need to accommodate festival and business parking
- Concerns about gangs and crime in some parts of the neighborhood



THE WORKSHOP

The workshop event included analysis maps of the area, a brief presentation by the Goody Clancy planning team, and two sessions of small group activities. A week before the workshop, the planning team met with a focus group of local residents, city officials, and staff to identify a set of themes for the first round of small group discussions.

Five small groups discussed these themes in a morning session. In the afternoon participants worked in three groups to create visions for the Upper Harbor area by working with maps and markers and focusing on improving connections between the waterfront, the surrounding neighborhood, and Acushnet Avenue. These visions were presented to the larger group at the end of the day. The common priorities and elements from these visions provided the basis for the final Vision Plan. The findings are summarized below:



PRIORITIES FOR THE VISION PLAN

Group 1 - Key priorities:

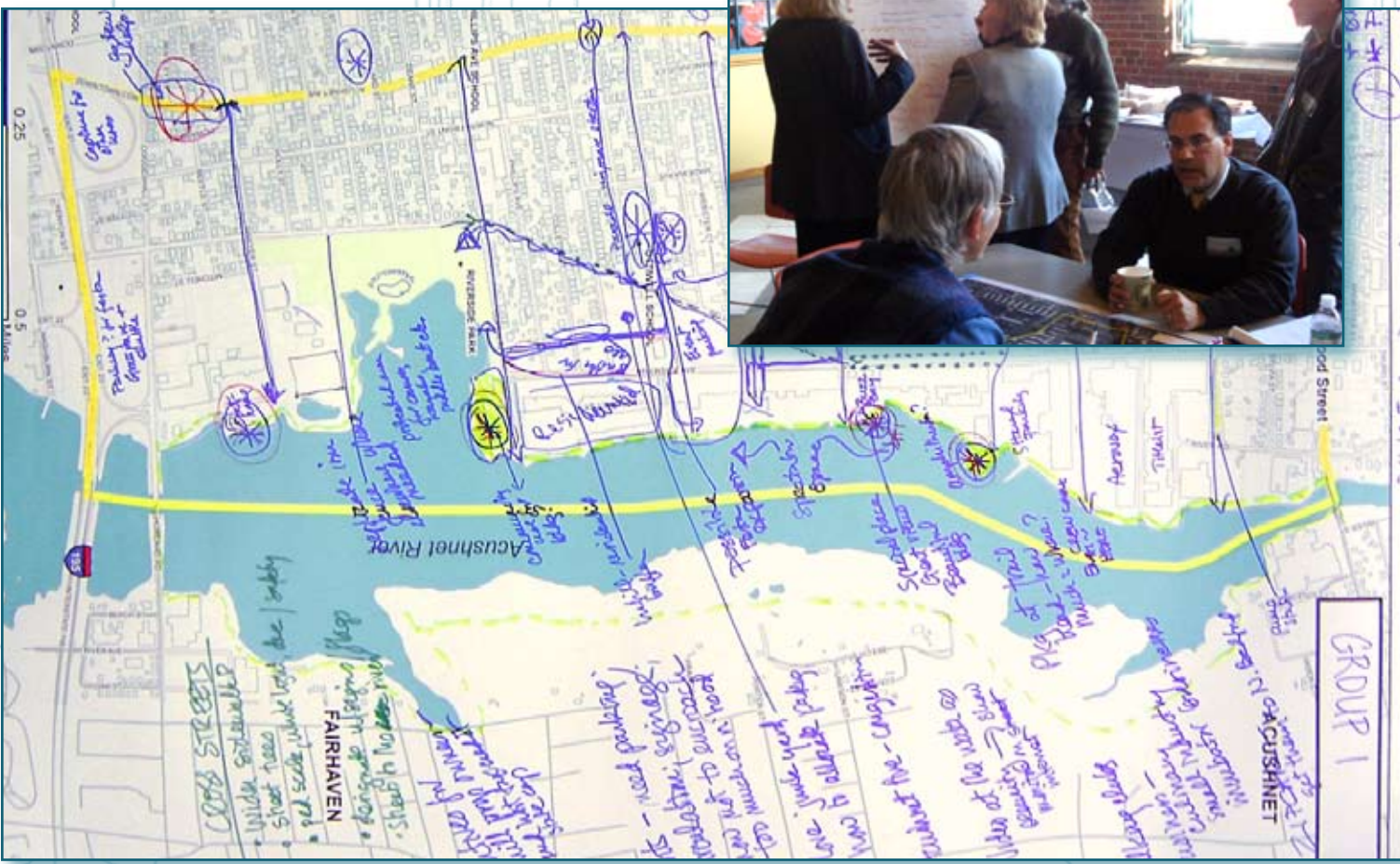
- Create a pilot site for public waterfront access and events behind the Coalition for Buzzards Bay building with appropriate signage and cameras for safety
- Increase signage along key east-west connector streets
- Obtain the easements needed to gain public access to the River at key points and to create a riverwalk
- Create a pilot access point to the River at Howard Avenue
- Provide additional bus service throughout the neighborhood, especially along Acushnet Avenue
- Improve Acushnet Avenue between Coggeshall and Phillips streets with Community Development Block Grant funds for façade improvements, streetscape enhancements, and crosswalks
- Initiate an "eyes on the water" web-cam program to increase safety
- Improve housing
- Strengthen the connection between Brooklawn and Riverside parks

Group 2 - Key priorities:

- Identify and gain easements to create a recreational "loop" around both sides of the river
- Enhance Hathaway Street from Acushnet Avenue to the River, Howard Avenue, and the River's edge
- Create an educational cluster in the Coffin Avenue area
- Create public facilities, a police sub-station, and an information center at Riverside Park

Group 3 - Key priorities:

- Create a plan for a riverwalk and secure funding
- Secure funding to build a dock at the end of Sawyer Street
- Continue the City's strong effort to stabilize the area between Sawyer and Nye streets to eventually accommodate a walking loop and streetscape improvements
- Create a safe, structured after school activity for the youth
- Create a map and walking trail that incorporate the history of the neighborhood, the River, a variety of landmarks, and restaurants
- Create a plan for the future use of the Coalition for Buzzards Bay building



THEMES FOR THE VISION

Group 1: Jobs and Small Business

This group was keenly interested in building on the area's rich cultural heritage. Ideas that emerged from this group included:

- Business collaboration and the organization of a business association
- Expanding festival areas towards the River
- Educational opportunities and government programs to keep talented people and businesses from leaving the area
- Resolving transportation access from Interstate 195 to Belleville Avenue, and for a "gateway" experience to create a better draw into the area

Group 2: Waterfront Access

Priorities for the group included:

- Improving access and views to the water
- Enhancing connections to existing neighborhood assets, especially Riverside Park and local schools
- Promoting pedestrian, bicycle and bus routes
- Connecting to Hicks-Logan and points south

Group 3: Environmental Issues

This group focused on cleaning up the existing polluted conditions in the River and creating new, attractive environmentally-themed destinations:

- Prioritize cleaning the contaminated water of the Acushnet River
- Clean the littered streets
- Improve public safety
- Create publicly accessible landscaped areas along a Riverwalk
- Create community gardens
- Enhance both views and access to the Acushnet River by punching holes through the underutilized waterfront mill buildings

Group 4: Historic Character and Reuse

Themes that emerged from this group included:

- Document and inventory historic structures
- Create programs to educate children and the public on the historic importance of the Upper Harbor
- Determine whether historic storefront facades could be restored
- Determine best opportunities for underutilized mill buildings

Group 5: Recreation and Special Events

Special events are an immediate way to inspire change and interest in the area. Ideas that emerged from the discussion include:

- Year-round activities to draw people together, such as free festivals, movie screenings, and farmers' markets
- Strengthen access and views to the waterfront and a naturalized coastline
- Improve directional signage to events and areas of interest within the Upper Harbor

