



ACTION PLAN



CHOICES FOR NEW LONDON: NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING STRATEGY



Prepared for:
The City of New London, CT

Prepared by:
The Cecil Group, Inc.
Milone & MacBroom
Durkee, Brown, Viveiros & Werenfels Architects
FXM Associates

OCTOBER 2010

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This planning initiative has been conducted by the City of New London as a project of the New London Planning Department. Funding for this initiative was provided through a grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation.

The initiative was conducted with an extensive community engagement process that involved many of the citizens and other stakeholders in the future of the historic neighborhood that has been the focus of this effort. The insights and inspirations from this broad array of participants are gratefully acknowledged. A Stakeholders Committee was assembled with representatives providing perspectives from organizations, institutions, residents, and businesses. The Stakeholders Committee provided guidance and advice that is reflected in this report. Many community members attended open workshops to discuss issues and generate ideas. Others participated in interviews and informal discussions.

The grant funds supported the work of a consulting team of planning and design professionals, working with the Planning Department and community to generate this *Action Plan*.

New London Planning Department

Harry Smith AICP, *City Planner*

Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Brad Schide, *Circuit Rider and Project Manager*

Stakeholders Committee Members

Marcie Boyer, Owner, *Flavours of Life*

Sandra Kersten Chalk, *New London Landmarks*

Barry Levine, *Acting Chairman, Planning and Zoning Commission*

Frank McLaughlin, *Chamber of Commerce and NLDC*

Nadesha Mijoba, *Provenance Center*

Chris Nelson, Member, *Planning and Zoning Commission*

Sarah (Sally) Ryan, *City Historian*

Julie M. Savin, *Neighbor Works / New Horizons*

Rob Scala, *Olde New London Neighborhood*

Susan Tamulevich, *Custom House Maritime Museum*

Consultant Team

The Cecil Group, Prime Consultant (*urban design, landscape architecture and urban planning*)

Milone & MacBroom (*transportation planning and urban planning*)

Durkee Brown Vivieros & Werenfels (*historic architecture*)

FXM Associates (*redevelopment economics*)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview	1
Observations	3
Priorities for Action	4
Summary of Recommended Actions	5
Planning Process	10
Planning Area	10
Process	12
Vision	15
Strategic Actions	17
Implementation Matrix	17
Component Actions: Discussion and Additional Information	28
Stewardship for the Future	28
History, Historic Preservation and Culture	30
Uses and Redevelopment	32
Zoning and Regulations	36
Transportation, Circulation and Parking	39
Streetscapes	41
Markets and Marketing	53
Observations on Funding and Resources	56
Appendices	59
Appendix A: Context: Setting the Stage	
Stewardship Today	59
Historic Districts and Historic Preservation	62
Existing Land Uses and Neighborhood Fabric	65
Zoning	76
Existing Ownership Patterns	76
Existing Transportation, Circulation and Parking	81
Appendix B: Notes from Public Workshops	
Public Visioning (Workshop #1)	82
Public Feedback (Workshop #2)	87
Appendix C: Potential Additions to the Design Review Guidelines	92

List of Figures

	Page Number
1 Key Locations: Opportunities for Change	2
2 Planning Area	11
3 Study Process	14
4 Bank Street: Streetscape Scenario #1	43
5 Bank Street: Streetscape Scenario #2	45
6 Bank Street: Streetscape Scenario #3	47
7 Bank Street: Illustrative Streetscape Sections	50
8 Bank Street: Streetscape Vocabulary	51
9 Bank Street: Streetscape Vocabulary	52
10 Historic Districts	64
11 Existing Land Use	66
12 Existing Streetscape Inventory	68
13 Photo Inventory - Aerial Views of the Project Area	69
14 Photo Inventory - Commercial and Mixed Use Buildings	70
15 Photo Inventory - Homes and Houses	71
16 Photo Inventory - Civic Buildings and Spaces	72
17 Photo Inventory - Streets and Streetscape	73
18 Photo Inventory - Waterfront	74
19 Photo Inventory - Bank Street Commercial Area	75
20 Existing Zoning	77
21 Draft Incentive Housing Zone (IHZ) Boundary	78
22 Parcel Size Analysis	79
23 Residential Ownership Patterns	80

OVERVIEW

New London has a wealth of engaged organizations, historic properties, committed businesses and individuals, and municipal initiatives.

Revitalization along Bank Street and in its surrounding neighborhood will be accomplished by putting all the pieces together over the next few years.

New London's downtown and waterfront districts have been the focus of economic revitalization and historic preservation efforts for decades. A vital, successful outcome is now within sight, fully rewarding the many millions of dollars and tens of thousands of hours already invested by individuals, businesses, organizations, and the City. The challenge ahead is to bring all of the components together through a coordinated program of specific actions that focus the remaining stages of public and private reinvestment and accomplish the community's vision.

"Putting all the pieces together" has been the purpose of this special planning initiative undertaken by the City, using grant resources provided by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. A portion of the downtown and adjacent residential district were chosen as the well-defined subject for consideration - Bank Street and its environs. The neighborhood consists of a series of blocks and streets along the west side of New London's downtown, stretching along the central waterfront from the traditional commercial core and into the residential fabric that surrounds it. Key questions were then raised and answered:

- **What changes must be still be accomplished** to transform unrealized potential into a vital neighborhood while preserving and celebrating the history and heritage of the district?
- **Who** must undertake the necessary actions, and **when**?
- **What are the priorities** for positive change that can happen in the next few years?
- **Where** are changes and investments needed that will be keys to success?
- **How** can this be practically accomplished with attainable resources?

Keys to success include:

- *Clearly assigning responsibility for managing change and attracting reinvestment.*
- *Creating a dedicated program to target priority reinvestment towards a handful of key properties and locations*
- *Re-establishing two-way traffic and strengthening the pedestrian environment*

The result is this *Action Plan*, which describes a set of coordinated and practical steps that can be taken to substantially accelerate desirable reinvestment in the area. The reinvestment described in this report includes all of the components of a successful downtown and waterfront district – its businesses and residences, its public realm and open space, its civic and community institutions, and its infrastructure.

All of the actions described in this document are meant to fulfill the vision of the community and invite growing stewardship by the stakeholders in its future. The initiative actively engaged the participation of community stakeholders. The process was conducted by the City Planner and facilitated by the consultant team which also provided expertise in planning, urban design, architecture, landscape architecture, historic preservation, transportation, and redevelopment economics.



FIGURE 1: KEY LOCATIONS – OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE



Observations

This Action Plan grew from the many discussions among the long-time participants in New London's downtown and neighborhood revival. The professional team built upon the previous plans and ongoing studies within the downtown, and provided insights drawn from their direct experience helping other New England communities transform their historic waterfronts, downtowns and neighborhoods. The recommendations reflect a series of observations assembled by the professional planning team about the neighborhood's unusual strengths and particular challenges:

- **The rare resource of a relatively small and virtually intact historic district** – This neighborhood is among only a small handful of compact, historic, urban waterfront neighborhoods remaining in New England. This district has many attractive structures and clusters of buildings that have drawn highly successful redevelopment in similar locations, when the right “fit” can be found by adapting them to new uses.
- **The unusual wealth of committed organizations, institutions and public programs** – New London has invaluable assets associated with its extensive network of engaged individuals and entities committed to downtown revitalization and economic success. The challenge is to focus and coordinate key activities and programs so that everyone is more successful.
- **The critical importance of creating better pedestrian and vehicular access** – To be fully successful as a place to shop, work or live, the circulation patterns and environment for pedestrians and vehicles must be substantially improved with more choices for access. The existing vehicular circulation patterns divert approaching downtown traffic away from Bank Street and its businesses onto Green Street. Northbound through-traffic uses Bank Street as a channel, not a destination. The area's traffic must also be calmed, speeds reduced, and an attractive streetscape created linked to State Street, the rail station, the waterfront, and the surrounding neighborhood.
- **The existing strength of the mixed use district and the vital role being played by the arts, culture and historic interpretation** – This neighborhood already has a robust collection of arts and cultural uses, institutions, and places that distinguish it. This is a rare and valuable foundation upon which to expand the identity and unique character within both the city and the entire region.
- **The pragmatic market and reuse benefits of expanding residential use** – Residential uses are likely to be drawn to the district, and the demand for office and retail uses is unlikely to be enough to refill former commercial space. There are many benefits to a district that has a healthy stock of housing and residents to create a sense of security, quality and vitality.
- **The importance of improving highly visible locations with well-designed renovations, improvements and new development** – Many of the negative perceptions concerning the conditions in the neighborhood are associated with a handful of deteriorated or underutilized buildings and sites; targeted change will have disproportionately large benefits in changing the civic and market perceptions of the entire area.



Priorities for Action

The goals for this district require creating a self-sustaining, economically viable district that provides a high quality of life and preserves the irreplaceable historic buildings and assets found here. This Action Plan lists dozens of actions and indicates methods that may be used to accomplish these goals.

The Action Plan articulates several critical priorities, and also lists many other complementary initiatives that are needed over time, including:

- *Approaches to strengthening the design quality and value of investments and properties, recognizing that good design and attractive frontages are needed along public streets and pathways*
- *Recommendations to enliven the waterfront, including potential mooring and marina uses*
- *Methods to attract new uses and investments, including examples of programs used successfully by other communities*
- *Methods being used to enhance the role and success of the arts, culture and historic interpretation*

In order to attain the community's vision, significant additional real estate investment must be attracted to the area to create a more vital and valuable mix of residential, commercial and retail establishments. Most of this re-investment will take the form of adaptive reuse and renovation of existing structures; some new infill development can also be envisioned. The reinvestment cannot be sustained if it is targeted towards tourism; the mix of uses must be appealing to residents, attracting patrons from the region, and drawing visitors from further away. The redevelopment will include a major emphasis on additional housing units to complement commercial uses, shops, restaurants and places of entertainment that – together – will create a “critical mass” of uses.

The Action Plan expressed in this report discourages the concept that there is a single action or even limited group of actions that will lead to success. New London already has one of the most extensive networks of organizations, programs and tools available to support the revitalization effort for a City of its size. However, New London must organize itself in a manner that will allow key parallel actions to be coordinated and sustained over several years in order to realize the benefits within reach. Several actions are indicated as **critical priorities**; they are precursors of other actions needed to draw the types and amount of reinvestment that are required.

1. **Clearly define and assign City leadership** – A more clear designation and consistent application of the municipal leadership role as ultimate steward of the district is needed. The City must consistently apply its focused attention and assemble the public resources needed for those programs and improvements that only the public sector can provide.
2. **Identify and sustain role of a Redevelopment Coordinator** – Consistent funding and applied capabilities of a redevelopment coordinator are needed to identify and package a series of relatively complex redevelopment and marketing initiatives over several years. This role would be an extended and targeted assignment over several years, and could be similar to that of the New London Downtown Investment Coordinator which is currently funded and operating through an agreement between the City and the Chamber of Commerce.
3. **Focus on key properties and projects** - The programs and incentives must be focused on a limited number of projects and locations that will have the greatest positive impact on the character and quality of the district as a whole.
4. **Reconfigure the circulation patterns along Bank Street and Green Street** – The one-way pair should be reconverted to two-way traffic to support a diverse retail and business environment, and reduce traffic impacts on residential uses.

Summary of Action Recommendations

The recommended actions have been coordinated to create a coherent strategy, and then organized into categories to facilitate understanding and communication. This summary provides an overview of key components of the *Action Plan*, which are then further discussed in *Section 3: Strategic Actions*. The numbering has been used to simplify referencing concepts; priorities and timing associated with these actions is addressed within an Implementation Matrix, which is within *Section 3*.

Stewardship

1. Clear assignment of responsibilities and objectives within the City government - Successful revitalization will require a clear and consistent assignment of a stewardship responsibility that will endure over a period of at least several years. The stewardship role is policy-based but operational in its essence. For this reason, the City Executive job description and role within the City government may be the most appropriate location for this assignment, although several other approaches could also serve the same purpose. So, for example, the City Executive's job description and assignment could include specific tasks and reporting requirements to the City Council and to the New London community. The assignments should provide the municipal initiative and follow through on those actions contained in this report in which the municipality has direct interests and capabilities.
2. Focused and continuing program for development and recruitment - The current program for downtown development that is being managed through the Chamber of Commerce represents an essential component of the revitalization within this neighborhood. Revitalization will require multi-year consistent professional assistance targeting and supporting specific redevelopment opportunities. Refocusing the current role of the New London Downtown Investment Coordinator is one method to consider, so that the position becomes a Redevelopment Coordinator with assignments and responsibilities as articulated in this document.
3. Non-profit coordination with neighborhood revitalization – Actions should be undertaken to expand the agendas of meetings among the principle leadership of all of the non-profit associations and organizations that have stewardship roles within the district to review the status of initiatives and conditions, and share ideas for coordinated actions. The City Executive and others within the City government with direct responsibilities to foster revitalization and preservation in the district should be included in discussions. This initiative could include assigning the responsibility for convening meetings, creating and coordinating agendas, facilitating the conversation, and following up.
4. Social service coordination and strategy - Actions should be undertaken to regularly convene all of the social service agencies operating in and near the neighborhood to discuss the relationship between their activities and the neighborhood. If issues persist, the participants should adopt methods to evaluate the extent to which their location and operations enhance or detract from neighborhood objectives. Based on this evaluation, participants can better undertake changes or actions that would enhance the neighborhood in concert with other stewards of the district.

5. Create a continuing role for a Stakeholders Committee – The Stakeholder’s Committee assembled for this planning initiative has served as a useful forum for representatives from many aspects of the business, institutional and residential community. The formalization of a committee as a standing forum for ideas and coordination would provide long term benefits, as long as its role was limited to an advisory role and does not conflict with the existing network of organizations and advocacy groups.

History, Historic Preservation and Culture

1. Continue the advocacy and prioritization of the neighborhood as an historic treasure – New London already has in place an extraordinary network of knowledgeable historic preservation and restoration organizations and individuals. The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation has wisely focused upon this district as a State-wide priority because of its value. Great success has already been achieved. This may not be as apparent to those who have been involved with New London’s *historic* preservation over many years, in the face of the remaining challenges. However, the key is to maintain the energy and advocacy in the years ahead.
2. Refine the *Design Review Guidelines* as they apply to the neighborhood - The City has developed an excellent set of *Design Review Guidelines* intended to engender responsive architecture that is compatible with the historic buildings and enhances the neighborhood. Several refinements will strengthen the guidelines and have been included as recommendations within *Appendix C* of this document. In terms of the review process, it might be amended to require that proponents provide information about the nearby buildings and explain their specific approach to creating compatible relationships, for example.
3. Expand the role of the *Design Review Guidelines* – The use of the *Design Review Guidelines* can be expanded to make them increasingly useful in shaping renovation projects to enhance the historic character of the district, and to ensure that new projects are highly compatible with the historic fabric. The design review process – using the *Guidelines* – can be made a mandatory step in any City-administered façade or building improvement grants, or projects that include the disposition or use of municipally-owned land, for example.
4. Arts, arts, arts – This neighborhood is beginning to loom with art and cultural opportunities of many kinds. Actions should support and expand the existing activities and proactively invite more individuals and their artistic endeavors into the neighborhood. These include creating inclusionary live/work housing units as a requirement for any housing/mixed use projects that include public land, grants, financing or abatements if the scale of the project can reasonably support them. Public art projects should be included in the scope of streetscape and parking area improvement projects.

Uses and Redevelopment

1. Undertake a program to redevelop key, target properties – Many of the real and perceived problems in the vitality of the district can be narrowed down to a handful of properties and buildings where inactivity and disinvestment lag adjacent uses. A focused program is needed to advance ten improvement or redevelopment projects. Specific properties or projects should be defined, initiated and accomplished within a defined time frame. The first step in the process would be the orchestrated feasibility evaluation and associated cost/benefit analysis of various possible projects, and the resulting prioritization of projects through extensive interaction with property owners, potential investors, the City and other stakeholders.
2. Undertake a targeted, results-oriented program to attract more businesses – There are a handful of spaces and locations that will benefit from new business activity and contribute to the district as a whole. A focused program to draw ten new businesses should be defined, initiated and accomplished within a defined time frame.
3. Undertake a targeted, results-oriented program to attract more residents – The residential neighborhood benefits enormously from interested and interesting individuals who choose to live here. A focus program should be undertaken to attract ten new residents to the area who will contribute to its revitalization and to its life.
4. Fill the spaces through practical, low key approaches and incremental changes - While it is desirable to have high quality and costly renovations occur, it is far more important initially to populate the neighborhood with residents and businesses that effectively fill the available space. Pragmatic approaches to renovation and improvements should recognize the importance of these initial steps. Actions include marketing and promoting space that initially has relatively few major changes, keeping costs low because it triggers fewer code compliance requirements, for example. Other actions may include flexible application of the *Design Review Guidelines* if reinvestments will save existing buildings from demolition and preserve historic elements in a manner that will allow subsequent, higher quality historic restoration as market conditions, sales and rent values improve.
5. Use the full array of economic incentives available to the City for key projects and properties – The City should provide and extend the full complement of financial tools and incentives including programs such as tax abatement, and tax increment financing for targeted projects as described above.
6. Increase the number of residents in the neighborhood - In general, actions that encourage residential redevelopment are both helpful and practical. There is an oversupply of commercial space in the downtown due to major economic shifts that have occurred over decades. A shift towards a greater proportion of residential uses is healthy.
7. Defer redevelopment plans for the Green Street lots until the long term –Redeveloping the Green Street parking lots for mixed uses that restore the traditional historic fabric is a very important long term goal. However, such redevelopment will need to replace the existing parking and provide more parking. Most of this will need to be below grade or entirely concealed behind street frontages. This will be very expensive and complicated to fund,

finance and implement and will not be feasible without very large public subsidies or grants. In view of these circumstances, redevelopment of this area should be deferred until other components of this Action Plan are achieved, or when grant resources of great magnitude can be attained for this type of redevelopment.

Zoning and Regulations

1. Undertake some zoning changes - Several zoning changes are recommended, including promoting appropriate residential development, and strengthening the role of Design Review Guidelines.
2. Amend the Design Review Guidelines – Provide additions and revisions to the existing Design Review Guidelines to create a more complete basis for certain topics (structured parking, housing redevelopment) and to improve the clarity of this tool to communicate intentions and guide design.
3. Consider expanding the applicability of Design Review Guidelines over time – As they are strengthened, the Design Review Guidelines may become appropriate as a mandatory review and approval tool to ensure the value and quality of the district and attract increasing investment.
4. Check the benefits and potential impacts of the IHZ on the neighborhood before proceeding - The practical results that may occur if housing incentives are added should be checked relative to the real estate economics within the district. If adopted, the IHZ should not inadvertently lead to demolition and conversion of the historic fabric and its replacement.

Transportation, Circulation and Parking

1. Revert to a two-way circulation pattern along Bank Street and Green Street - Undertake the necessary process to study the reversion to a two-way pattern. Secure the infrastructure funding, and implement the change with the focused goal of supporting and revitalizing this portion of the downtown.
2. Improve parking lots and delay redevelopment planning for the Green Street lots – Over the long term, there may be redevelopment opportunities to restore the fabric of the neighborhood on the Green Street parking lots. However, the practical economics of this redevelopment are daunting. As a result, the need to provide convenient parking to support vital businesses should predominate as a short-term strategy.
3. Focus on pedestrian connections within the neighborhood, rather than connections to other locations – The first priority should be to complete an attractive pedestrian environment within the district. Distances to other areas are significant and will have little short term bearing on the revitalization of this area.
4. Create a revised wayfinding system and associated signage – In line with the revised parking and circulation network, a wayfinding system of signs needs to be created to indicate where visitors should go, park, and circulate to reach the many destinations in the district and the downtown.

Streetscape

1. Undertake a major streetscape project along Bank Street – Bank Street receive priority reinvestment with an attractive streetscape that calms traffic and enhances the pedestrian environment. This should be undertaken in concert with the reversion to a two-way circulation pattern.
2. Extend streetscape improvements between the waterfront, Bank Street and Green Street – The next priority is to create an enhanced pedestrian environment linking pedestrian areas, the waterfront and its amenities, and other neighborhood streets.
3. Complete a comprehensive program of neighborhood streetscape improvements – The final step should upgrade conditions and aesthetics of the remaining sidewalks and streets in the neighborhood.

Markets and Marketing

1. Create a targeted marketing program to specifically attract new retail/restaurant ventures, new redevelopment projects, and new residents - This program should be managed by the Redevelopment Coordinator, and be crafted with professional assistance and the collaboration of stakeholders and the City. It should be a formalized plan with goals, action assignments, time frames, and budgeted activities.
2. Continue the marketing efforts...you're doing great – The district has benefitted from the energetic marketing and promotion that has been provided to date. The key action is to keep it up.
3. Create and implement informal, viral marketing targeted to attracting new businesses, residents and investors – Attracting new investment may be partly accomplished through an approach that allows investors to “discover” the district and its intriguing possibilities rather than traditional marketing methods.

Planning Area

The area that is the focus of this planning initiative is indicated in Figure 2. The area is bounded by Golden Street on the east, Methodist, Washington and Coit Streets on the north, Reed Street on the west, and the harborfront on the south. A collection of parcels and buildings reaching to Jay Street has been included in the northwest corner of the Planning Area, as well.

The planning process also took into account the relationships with adjacent areas, including the issues, trends and opportunities that may influence decisions about the neighborhood. Consideration of this larger context was important in crafting a specific *Action Plan* for the more compact neighborhood that is the subject of this report. Some of the recommended Actions may be applicable to similar circumstances beyond the formal limits of the planning area and might be considered as part of future planning efforts for the downtown, the central waterfront, and the historic neighborhoods of New London.

FIGURE 2: PLANNING AREA



Process

The planning process for this initiative spanned approximately six months. The process was organized as a series of sequential steps leading to this *Action Plan*. Each step was based upon a commitment to community engagement and participation. The following diagram describes the process (Figure 3).

A Stakeholders Committee was established to provide guidance and advice throughout the process. The committee was composed of representatives of area businesses, organizations, City commissions, and institutions.

The first step in the process assembled information and insights about the planning area and the conditions that can shape its future. The planning team reviewed regulations, conditions, reports and studies that create a framework for the future. Numerous interviews were conducted with individuals who contributed their vantage points about the community and the planning area, including business and property owners, associations and organizations, and the print media.

For the second step in the process, the consultant team prepared a series of studies and concepts to assist the community in envisioning its choices for shaping this neighborhood. This step included preparing a range of design ideas for improvements along Bank Street, and considering enhancements to the City's existing *Design Review Guidelines* for the area.

The third step was focused on two community workshops, which drew many interested citizens including a wide range of residents, business owners, civic leaders, developers and advocates from area associations and organizations. The first workshop gathered everyone's perspectives on the key issues and opportunities for the area, charting locations and ideas for positive changes. The workshop included using maps to record participant's perceptions of strengths and weaknesses in the area. This was accompanied by creating list of assets, issues and liabilities. The concluding discussion asked participants to articulate goals and objectives for the neighborhood that might help shape a vision. Notes from the first workshop are included in *Appendix B*.

The information generated was summarized and distributed to the Stakeholder Committee. While there were numerous differences of opinion on individual topics, a shared vision for the future emerged by combining the expressed goals that were common among nearly all of the participants. This shared vision and the associated objectives form the foundations of this *Action Plan*. Notes from the first workshop are included in *Appendix B*.

The second workshop focused on ideas for action that could be undertaken to advance the community's goals for the area. A presentation described how other similar communities have successfully unlocked revitalization and beneficial changes in historic districts. Initial ideas for implementing positive change were provided to working groups that discussed each topic. Notes from the second community workshop is included as Appendix B in this document.

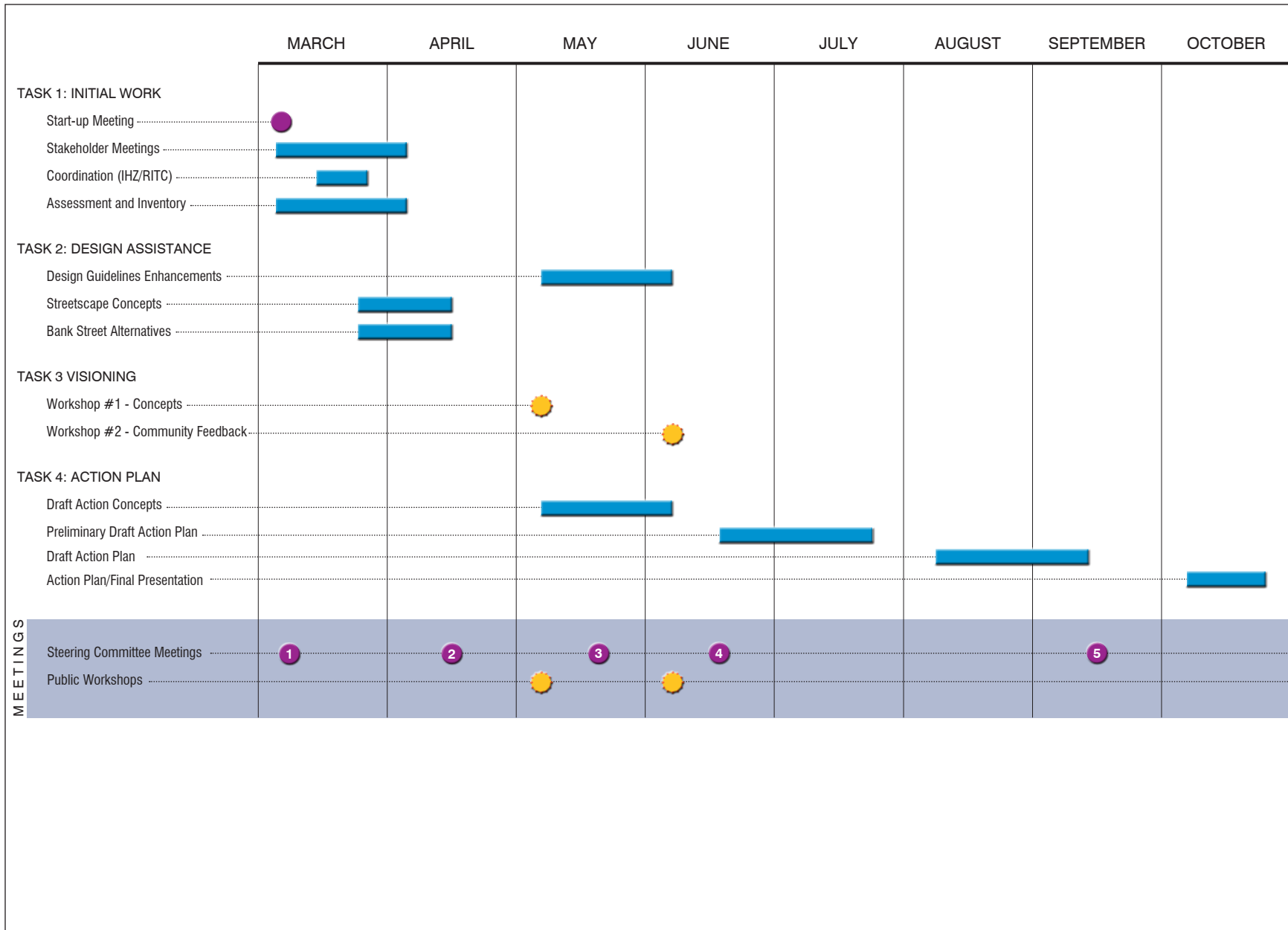
The list of recommended actions was then assembled based on the community discussion, and using the input from the various stakeholders and participants in the process. The consultant team used several criteria to choose among the extensive list of ideas and suggestions that had been raised:

- Applicability – Ideas that were largely focused on properties or areas outside of the Planning Area were generally not considered within the context of this district-based initiative, regardless of their usefulness or merit for other areas of the City.
- Potential effectiveness – The consultant team applied its experience and understanding of the community vision to distinguish actions that are most likely to be effective in accomplishing the goals and objectives that have been articulated, in the context of existing conditions and trends for the area.
- Ability to accomplish multiple purposes – Actions are favored that accomplish multiple purposes, rather than singular changes. So, for example, a pedestrian link to one adjacent area provides less total benefit than streetscape and sidewalk improvements within the neighborhood that benefit all of the uses within it.
- Priorities – The team identified actions that appear to be necessary precursors of other programs, projects or outcomes. So, for example, the re-organization of the street circulation patterns is a pre-cursor for changed visibility and identity for business revitalization, wayfinding signage, parking strategies, streetscape improvements and many other components.
- Reasonable resources – The action must be able to be reasonably funded and staffed within the context of revitalization of a relatively small scale area and within a municipality that is challenged to provide many core services and improvement programs, in addition to this focus district.

The final step in the process was the formation of this *Action Plan*. Draft ideas were assembled and discussed with the Stakeholder Committee, and then refined and documented in this report.

Other work products created during the planning process included digital presentations for public workshops and Stakeholders Committee meetings, along with the agendas and announcements about the meetings. Recommendations regarding certain topics addressed by the City’s Design Review Guidelines were also prepared and are included as *Appendix C* of this report.

FIGURE 3: STUDY PROCESS



Vision

The vision for the neighborhood's future has been assembled through the community engagement process associated with this planning initiative, in concert with other City policies and community goals. This vision recognizes that it has underlying - and growing - vitality and identity linked to the urban qualities of city and downtown that are actually quite small in size but very rich in their variety. The future will build upon these strengths.

Bank Street and its bordering historic neighborhood will emerge as a vital sub-district of New London's downtown that is identified by its activities and life, and composed within its intact, restored, historic fabric of buildings. The cultural and artistic life within the district will be readily apparent to anyone in the district in many different ways. It will become an increasingly activated and complex urban district that attracts and supports residents who appreciate its genuine history, architecture and its distinctive lifestyle, some of whom live in traditional housing, and others who prefer the loft-type environments that can be created in former commercial buildings. The district will be scaled to support a variety of specialized businesses, shops, restaurants and entertainment venues that increasingly benefit from patrons drawn from the region - so successfully that tourists will also be drawn to visit.

Rather than reverting to a narrow or common theme, the district will be known because of its healthy urban variety that distinguishes it from any other district in the wide region around it. Rather than skewing the district's development towards seasonal tourism, the district will be geared to be self-sustaining within its regional economy and be attractive as a tourist destination because of the inviting setting that will be created for the museums, interpretive centers, historic features and special events found here.

Reinvestment will be attracted to the area, largely accomplished through a steady upgrading and preservation of the historic buildings and traditional downtown fabric. New buildings will be invited and encouraged on open sites or where substantial reconstruction is needed as a practical matter, but designed in a manner that is respectful of the historic context without mimicking it. However, the uses will remain varied and the scale of buildings will remain within the range of existing structures.

A balanced mix of diverse uses and population is a key to the vitality and success of the district. The mix of actions and incentives should be designed so that the district does not tip towards dominant patterns that are inconsistent with other neighboring uses. Housing should be available for many incomes and for ownership and rental that provide a quality environment. Entertainment uses should enliven the district without dominating evening life. Business opportunities should be geared towards the local and regional market, while including opportunities for tourists.

- History and Historic Resources – The history of the district is, in part, vested in the array of building types and styles that remain from previous eras. The original character and architectural quality should re-emerge through incremental renovation and restoration to display the original quality and character of the buildings.

- A Living Community – The district should house more people over time so that it contains a larger, diverse population. No housing should be substandard, overcrowded or allowed to deteriorate.
- Circulation and the Pedestrian Experience – The district should welcome and encourage people to explore on foot and allow vehicles to circulate with relative ease.
- Filling the Spaces – While commercial uses on the street are needed to maintain its vitality, residential uses should be allowed to fill other first floor spaces.
- Public Realm: a Townscape – Public and private improvements in the public realm should be applied to reinforce the character and quality of the district as a unique portion of the downtown.
- Design: Texture and Scale – The district includes blocks that provide different texture and scale. New development should respect the scale of the different blocks within the district.
- Culture and Cultural Resources – The cultural resources are a key reason the district stands out among similar cities. The preservation of the historic qualities and the addition of compatible development will reinforce those qualities.
- Residences – New residents should be embraced as part of the vitality of the downtown. The future residents will be interested in the lifestyle that New London has to offer as a unique home.
- Business Development – The variety and types of businesses are what makes the district ‘funky’ and attractive. Business development efforts should continue to promote these qualities.

Implementation Matrix

The implementation of Neighborhood Planning Strategy in New London as described within this Action Plan will require many coordinated actions over an extended period of time. The following matrices summarize many of the principal recommendations that would require initiatives by the City, institutions and organizations. The matrix suggests approximate time frames, and suggest possible resources that may be sought to implement the changes, and the entities that would be involved in accomplishing the tasks ahead. Additional observations regarding funding and resources is contained at the end of this section.

The first matrix lists priority actions that are pre-requisites that should be advanced in the near term (approximately one year) to establish the framework for subsequent coordinated actions. The subsequent matrices organize all of the actions in the categories employed in this document:

- Stewardship for the Future
- History, Historic Preservation and Culture
- Uses and Redevelopment
- Zoning and Regulations
- Transportation, Circulation and Parking
- Streetscapes
- Markets and Marketing

PRIORITY ACTIONS				
Action	Components	Priority	Resources	Responsibility
1. Clearly define and assign City leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a special job description and regular assignment for the City Executive position – or other similarly clear and measurable assignment with regular reporting responsibilities to City Council and coordination roles with Stakeholders Coordination Committee and Redevelopment Coordinator (see below) • Establish City Council agreement regarding the need for coordination and designation of relevant roles and responsibilities for Council members and relevant committees. • Create, staff and maintain a standing Stakeholders Coordination Committee for the district, extending the success of this neighborhood revitalization process with regular meeting schedule and reporting requirements. 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City
2. Identify and sustain role of a Redevelopment Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent funding and applied capabilities of a redevelopment coordinator are needed to identify and package the complex redevelopment and marketing initiatives over several years. • Job description and experience must include packaging development and financing for complex projects, and marketing abilities 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmatic funding through Chamber of Commerce and targeted campaign for corporate sponsorship • State or federal economic development grants • City matching resources if required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City identification, with NLDC and/or • Chamber of Commerce participation
3. Focus on key properties and projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programs and incentives must be focused on a limited number of projects and locations that will have the greatest positive impact on the character and quality of the district as a whole. 	High	No additional resources required to identify and create targeted program of properties and projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment Coordinator, in coordination with the City Executive and Stakeholders Committee

PRIORITY ACTIONS				
Action	Components	Priority	Resources	Responsibility
4. Reconfigure the circulation patterns along Bank Street and Green Street/Eugene O'Neil Drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare funding requests and obtain initial study and design funds for this initiative • Incorporate streetscape and parking planning and design into the scope of the effort • Undertake initial study and design steps • Prioritize project within the City, and advocate priority status on the State Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) • Seek funding for improvements • Implement improvements 	High	Regional Planning Agency (SCCOG) planning funding State (ConnDOT) and Federal funding including potential demonstration project under Federal highway funding re-authorization or other special appropriation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Executive and City departments

STEWARDSHIP FOR THE FUTURE				
Action	Components	Time Frames	Resources	Responsibility
1. Accomplish the clear assignment of overall responsibility and objectives within the City government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information briefing and action priorities to City Council • Establish working group to create a clear and focused assignment of responsibility and objectives within the City, including potential to assign management and reporting role to the City executive • Create formal policies and assignments as required • Provide for a system of regular updates and feedback to continue to clarify and coordinate all assignments and City responsibilities. 	Within one year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Council • City Executive • Participating City Staff (Planning & Zoning, Economic Development, Public Works, etc.)
2. Create a focused and continuing program for development and associated recruitment with a staffed position: Redevelopment Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemble stewardship group to consider methods to fund and operate this program • Create job description and 3-5 year budget • Solicit and secure funding • Provide for performance reporting and updates on a regular basis to stewardship and sponsorship groups 	Within one year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmatic funding through Chamber of Commerce and targeted campaign for corporate sponsorship • State or federal economic development grants • City matching resources if required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City leadership or active support (Executive and Council) • Chamber of Commerce • NLDC • Other potential contributing stewardship groups or sponsors
3. Non-profit coordination with neighborhood revitalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish program of meetings and agenda items for non-profit stewards 	Within one year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional funding required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City leadership
4. Non-profit Coordination Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish program of meetings and agenda items for non-profit stewards 	Within one year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional funding required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City leadership
5. Create a continuing role for a Stakeholders Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalize membership and role, invite members, establish program of meetings and agenda items for non-profit stewards 	Within one year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional funding required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City leadership

HISTORY, HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND CULTURE				
Action	Components	Time frames	Resources	Responsibility
1. Continue the advocacy and prioritization of the neighborhood as an historic treasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the continued focus and advocacy by the existing advocacy and history-based organizations by implementing the stewardship steps described in this Action Plan. • Invite and support the continued role and advocacy of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation 	Ongoing	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stewards including City leadership
2. Refine the Design Review Guidelines as they apply to the neighborhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconvene the working group that created the existing Design Review Guidelines to consider the specific recommendations within this Report • Prepare recommendations concerning amendment and revision contents and process • 	Within one year	City staff time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning staff • Volunteer participants in the preparation for the Design Review Guidelines
3. Expand the role of the Design Review Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require that the Design Review Guidelines be employed as a criteria of approval of projects employing City grants, financing, or municipal land through agreement, lease or disposition 	Within two years	City staff time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Council and City leadership • City staff implementing development programs and projects (Planning Staff)
4. Sponsor arts-oriented development and public improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate zoning and/or development requirements for inclusionary live/work artist housing within developments of adequate size • Implement inclusionary live/work requirements where appropriate, particularly on housing/mixed use projects that include public land, grants, financing or abatement • Require public art as integral in the design of streetscape enhancements • Create incentive program to attract resident artists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial study: within 2 years • Implement policies and regulations, with 3 years • Include art in public designs and project scopes within one year • Artist invitation program within 3 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City staff time • Infrastructure project funding • Arts organizations and non-profits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning & Zoning • Planning staff • City leadership • Public Works • Arts advocacy groups and stewards

USES AND REDEVELOPMENT				
Action	Components	Time frames	Resources	Responsibility
1. Undertake a program to redevelop key, target properties (10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an initial list of key properties and projects based on ownership, past and current proposals, locations and information gathered during this process • Undertake feasibility and cost/benefit evaluations of prospective projects through gathering of available site and building information, consideration of possible uses and redevelopment costs and revenues, availability of subsidies and funding resources, and coordination with property owners and prospective investors, Prepare a short-list of target locations and properties with City leadership involvement • Undertake targeted promotional and support initiatives • Review progress regularly (six month intervals, and refine list if necessary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 5 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Funding associated with Redevelopment Coordinator position • All available grants, subsidies, loans and abatements for implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment Coordinator • City leadership
2. Undertake a targeted, results-oriented program to attract more businesses (10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an initial list of target businesses based on regional ownership, past and current proposals, locations and information gathered through stakeholder involvement • Prepare a short-list of target businesses and potential property matches with stakeholder involvement • Undertake targeted promotional and support initiatives • Review progress regularly (six month intervals, and refine list if necessary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 2 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Funding associated with Redevelopment Coordinator position • All available grants, subsidies, loans and abatements for implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment Coordinator • City leadership
3. Undertake a targeted, results-oriented program to attract more residents (10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in creating a focused marketing program (see below) • Implement information and outreach program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 2 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Funding associated with Redevelopment Coordinator position • All available grants, subsidies, loans and abatements for implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment Coordinator • City leadership

USES AND REDEVELOPMENT				
Action	Components	Time frames	Resources	Responsibility
4. Fill the spaces through practical, low key approaches and incremental changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a coordinated service that packages grants, loans, abatements, building permitting and regulatory approvals with an active advocate (Redevelopment Coordinator) • Defer stringent application of <i>Design Review Guidelines</i> if needed to advance feasible reuse if the underlying historic structures and features are retained and available for future, higher quality renovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All available grants, subsidies, loans and abatements for implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment Coordinator • City leadership • Planning & Zoning
5. Use the full array of economic incentives available to the City for key projects and properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize use of City-sponsored grants, funding, financing, abatements and other programs to align with the prioritized projects identified for the district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All available grants, subsidies, loans and abatements for implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City leadership • City management and departments responsible for programs
6. Increase the number of residents in the neighborhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and encourage regulatory changes and project proposals that increase the number of residents while meeting other economic and historic preservation goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional resources required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City leadership • Planning & Zoning Commission
7. Defer redevelopment plans for the Green Street/Eugene O'Neil Drive lots until the long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor progress and potential resources for long-term redevelopment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indefinite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional resources required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City leadership • Planning Staff

ZONING AND REGULATIONS

Action	Components	Time frames	Resources	Responsibility
1. Undertake targeted zoning changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare evaluations of specific zoning recommendations within this report to encourage appropriate, increased residential development and other changes • Consider “form-based” code provisions only if they will provide practical directions that will be consistent with enhancement of a highly varied historic context and do not deter well-designed, desirable and feasible redevelopment • Advance zoning changes through the review and approval processes • Implement approved zoning changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 2 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City and staff resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City leadership • Planning staff • Planning & Zoning Commission
2. Amend the Design Review Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider report from the working group that created the existing Design Review Guidelines regarding potential amendments and revisions to create a more complete basis for certain topics (structured parking, housing redevelopment) and to improve the clarity of this tool to communicate intentions and guide design. • Draft amendments and revisions • Adopt amendments and revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 1 year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City staff time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning & Zoning Commission • Planning staff • Volunteer participants in the preparation for the Design Review Guidelines
3. Consider expanding the applicability of <i>Design Review Guidelines</i> over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the potential costs and benefits of expanded use as part of mandatory review and approval processes as part of an annual progress review on revitalization among city leadership and participating departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 3 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City staff time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City leadership • Planning Staff
4. Check the benefits and potential impacts of the IHZ on the neighborhood before proceeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider and review the results of the IHZ studies and specific zoning language to ensure consistency with this Action Plan and the associated community Vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 2 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City staff time • Consultant assistance through grant sources, if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City leadership • Planning & Zoning Commission • Planning staff • Historic preservation advocates

TRANSPORTATION, CIRCULATION AND PARKING				
Action	Components	Time frames	Resources	Responsibility
1. Revert to a two-way circulation pattern along Bank Street and Green Street/Eugene O'Neil Drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate initial scoping and project funding investigations within the City • Seek regional (SSCOG) or special state or federal funding for initial design and planning studies • Prioritize improvements within the municipality • Advocate for placement and prioritization within the State Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) • Seek special state or federal project funding • Seek ConnDOT normal project funding • Finalize design and implement construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 5 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSCOG Planning grants or funding • Special state or federal funding for initial design and planning studies and construction (such as special demonstration project as part of federal highway reauthorization) • Normal ConnDOT priority project funding sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City leadership • Public Works • Planning Staff • Other stewards of the neighborhood (participation and advocacy)
2. Improve parking lots and delay redevelopment planning for the Green Street/Eugene O'Neil Drive lots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide improvements in concert with re-organized circulation and other improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above
3. Focus on pedestrian connections within the neighborhood, rather than connections to other locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create district-based sidewalk, streetscape, lighting and improvement program • Consider special funding sources in addition to normal funding of neighborhood infrastructure improvements • Design and implement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal city sources with available state or federal resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above
4. Create a revised wayfinding system and associated signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide improvements in concert with re-organized circulation and other improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include with circulation change funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above

STREETSCAPES				
Action	Components	Time frames	Resources	Responsibility
1. Undertake a major streetscape project along Bank Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare initial design concepts in accordance with the community vision and consistent with the circulation changes and improvements • Initiate those streetscape improvements in advance of circulation changes only if they will be consistent with subsequent circulation changes • Complete streetscape improvements along with final circulation enhancements and changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 5 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSCOG Planning grants or funding • Special state or federal funding for initial design and planning studies and construction (such as special demonstration project as part of federal highway reauthorization) • Normal ConnDOT priority project funding sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City leadership • Public Works • Planning Staff • Other stewards of the neighborhood (participation and advocacy)
2. Extend streetscape improvements between the waterfront, Bank Street and Green Street/Eugene O'Neil Drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include these improvements in the scope of the circulation changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above
3. Complete a comprehensive program of neighborhood streetscape improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an incremental program of improvements as part of City's ongoing infrastructure repair and improvement program, with enhanced period lighting, crosswalk and sidewalk enhancements according to a planned design menu. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal city sources with available state or federal resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above

MARKETS AND MARKETING

Action	Components	Time frames	Resources	Responsibility
1. Create a targeted marketing program to specifically attract new retail/restaurant ventures, new redevelopment projects, and new residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate formulation of an advisory committee and solicit resources to engage professional marketing consultants • Prepare a draft and final marketing plan • Ensure that the plan addresses multiple markets and varied uses, rather than focusing on a single theme or market segment • Implement the plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan within 1 year, implement within 3 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Center District • Chamber of Commerce • Solicited business and non-profit sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment Coordinator • Participation by other stakeholders
2. Continue the multiple district marketing efforts already underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue and support existing activities • Increase coordination through the stewardship actions listed in this report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders
3. Create and implement informal, viral marketing targeted to attracting new businesses, residents and investors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact business programs at the University of Connecticut and other schools to explore opportunities to explore new forms of social networking and viral marketing for the district • Seek joint public/educational funding or grant sources to fund pilot project • Create a focused marketing plan in concert with key stakeholders and City leadership • Sponsor special “developer” charrettes and similar programs to inform and engage potential investors in redevelopment • Implement the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan within 1 year, implement within 3 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff resources, Redevelopment Coordinator • Grants from foundations or other business-related sponsors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment Coordinator • Participation by City leadership and other stakeholders

Action Components: Discussion and Additional Information

This section of the report describes a series of actions that respond to a vision for the future of the neighborhood that is the focus of this planning initiative. The evaluation of the existing circumstances and discussions with many community members reinforces the general observation that the district is well on its way towards success. Important historic landmarks are already preserved and a vital and active business and residential community is committed to the future. The regulatory structure of Zoning and *Design Review Guidelines* are largely in place and are well suited to guide appropriate development. Core portions of the infrastructure are in place – a convenient parking supply, major investments in the waterfront, and regional rail access. The expansion of the community engaged in arts and cultural events is inspired and growing. The vitality of the district extends into the evening with the success of restaurants and entertainment establishments.

The actions described in the following discussion have been assembled to bring the revitalization to a more sustainable level over the next five to ten years. The actions that are suggested comprehend that there are limited resources in terms of people and dollars. As a result, the actions are targeted and gauged to correspond to the aspirations of the community but within reasonable reach.

The principal recommendations are assembled in matrix format at the beginning of this section to facilitate understanding of the relationship among the many components of revitalization described below.

Stewardship for the Future

The revitalization of a district as complex as this neighborhood requires consistent stewardship that is able to focus and accomplish a strategy over many years. From a perspective drawn from experiences in many other communities, New London does not lack individuals, organizations, and institutions devoted to the downtown and the historic districts and their future. What is required, however, is a more coherent applied stewardship to achieve the next stages of physical and economic revitalization.

The primary steward for the district must be the City of New London. The municipal government is in the sole position to coordinate the public actions and regulatory initiatives that will be required. Other municipalities have taken many different routes to accomplish major neighborhood revitalization programs. In New London's case the most appropriate assignment of consistent stewardship and management of the process may best lie in the Office of the City Executive. In its form of government, City Council plays important policy and legislative purposes and provides City-wide coordination of many issues and programs. The City Executive has the "line position" to administer the directions that the City Council sets.

This report recommends that City Council consider structuring a portion of the City Executive's job to coordinate and advance the set of recommendations that will both require and benefit from City guidance. The City Executive should create a schedule and program of actions linking infrastructure improvements, redevelopment and economic

initiatives, and regulatory changes. A schedule and process should be set for coordinating the many activities over a multi-year period. The City Executive should report periodically regarding successes and problems, so that the course can be adjusted if necessary.

The operational responsibilities could be effectively assigned or agreed upon by the City, but undertaken by a separate or special entity. This has occurred in many forms in other communities. Examples of various structures include non-profit organizations, public authorities, and community development corporations. However, the City government must both acknowledge and then consistently work within a management framework that is selected.

One of the critical tasks for effective revitalization of this neighborhood is staffed professional assistance to enable and attract desirable redevelopment ventures and new businesses. This is currently being provided, in part, through a grant-funded program being conducted through the Chamber of Commerce and funded through the New London Development Corporation (NLDC). The City should work with its stakeholders and advocates for the area to extend and focus these services by locating and allocating adequate resources for at least several years. As further described in the discussion of development-related actions in this report, the redevelopment and improvement of properties and buildings is a complex undertaking that will require packaging of public and private resources and incentives in creative ways. This complexity is a major barrier for the relatively small-scale reinvestments that will be required in multiple locations over time. The services of a redevelopment coordinator linked to the City policies and programs will dramatically accelerate the reinvestment process.

The non-profit community of advocates and organizations committed to its downtown and neighborhoods is both large and active. In comparison to other communities, there is an astonishing level of engagement and stewardship. The critical need appears to be enhanced discussion and coordination. The goal should not be to narrow efforts into a single direction. However, it appears that the constituent groups could benefit from regular structured meetings as they shape their own mission relative to others. As a result, this report recommends that an annual update be undertaken by convening the nonprofit participants in the future of the neighborhood. One group should step forward to organize and host the meeting and invite participation in the planning and facilitation. The key City stewards should be invited and participate in the discussions. The results are likely to provide new avenues for collaboration and efficiencies in allocating time and resources to the many directions and programs that will be sponsored and conducted in the future.

During the course of the planning process, a number of participants described their perception that the neighborhood and downtown have become unbalanced because of the extent of social services offered within the district. These perceptions are related, in part, to the sense that individuals who are clients of social programs populate the streets and public places to the extent that they affect the vitality of the business environment. Whether there are actual or perceived issues associated with a concentration of social services uses should be examined and discussed openly with the service providers. A sequence of meetings could be held to share information and observations regarding the relationship between these essential community services and their relationship to the district life. Through this

discussion, practical ideas may emerge to enhance public information and to change operational patterns if appropriate. The process should ensure the high level of thoughtful communication and adjustments essential to a healthy neighborhood environment.

The Stakeholders Committee convened for this study contribute valuable stewardship insights and advice during the process. The City should consider refining the role and responsibilities of such a group, and establishing a standing stewardship advisory group that can serve as a coordinating sounding board for ongoing initiatives and actions.

History, Historic Preservation and Culture

The neighborhood will benefit from the continued clear advocacy and engagement of the historic preservation organizations and institutions that have already contributed so much to New London. The actions required are linked to continuing and expanding the programs and information of the constituent organizations to the extent possible. This planning process should raise the profile of the potential to restore the traditional fabric of this largely intact district through the continued use of the tools available. These include:

- Historic district tools – The two historic districts and the identification of contributing structures provides an important framework for future preservation. The preservation community must remain alert to actions that would damage or remove historic resources where State and Federal processes can be used to intervene. This will be particularly true for projects that are sponsored by, or receive Federal or State funds, that would trigger formal reviews and approvals.
- Historic tax credits – The availability of federal and state tax credits will be a critical component in accomplishing feasible renovation and preservation. New London can only take advantage of such programs if they are continued, or enhanced with additional funding and benefits. As a result, the only action that New London can practically take is to remain a strong advocate for their future funding and use.
- Grants and special programs – The community and the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation have successfully contributed to this catalytic initiative for the neighborhood. Identification of additional resources and application of funds to priority initiatives can continue to play an important role in advancing the successful vision for the neighborhood.
- Design Review Guidelines - The City has established *Design Review Guidelines* that apply to the downtown historic district through an advisory process. As part of the planning process, these *Design Review Guidelines* were reviewed and considered in light of the more focused goals for the planning area that is the subject of this report. The *Design Review Guidelines* can be strengthened with several minor changes as described in the actions for Zoning and Regulations, below. As further described in that same section, the City should expand the effectiveness of the guidelines by making them mandatory. The processes for successfully and reasonably applying mandatory guidelines

have been successfully accomplished in many other communities throughout New England. As New London strengthens its review and guidelines processes these experiences should be reviewed and the “lessons learned” incorporated into the methods for applying these important standards. Many similar districts have demonstrated that well-crafted and consistently applied guidelines add economic and real estate value.

The Bank Street area has already established itself as a vital community center for the arts and cultural activities. This character is enormously valuable as a component of the district’s identity and should be supported and enhanced in the future. The most visible expression can be found in the Hygienic Art Park and Galleries and the other galleries that have been established in the district. The wall murals and seasonal event are memorable and add to the growing identity. The importance of the arts and cultural identity is likely to be one of the most of the important components attracting new residents and business activities into the area. As a result, public programs and policies should be specifically directed to invite and support additional organizations, institutions, individuals, and activities directly related to a rich and diverse cultural life. This could range from support for live/work artist housing, support for public performances and exhibits, and a program of public art that could be incorporate directly into the streetscape design on Bank Street.

In regards to live/work, the City should consider two implementation mechanisms – regulation and direct action.

Some communities include inclusionary live/work housing as part of their land use regulations in certain districts or circumstances. For example, the City of Boston has advanced live/work housing as a component of its inclusionary zoning initiatives, with certain large projects qualifying for the provision of up to 15% of the units for these purposes. Through its Planning & Zoning Commission, the City might undertake a study of this and other provisions that have emerged nationally including programs in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, Portland, Oregon and other municipalities and determine whether similar approaches might be appropriate and applicable to New London.

In other communities, the provision of live/work artist housing can become a pro-active requirement for projects that have municipal or community non-profit stakeholders. The Malden Redevelopment Authority in Massachusetts and the Urban Redevelopment Authority in Pittsburgh have helped sponsor mixed-use, mixed-income housing projects that include artist housing as part of the projects. In other locations such as in Prince Georges County (Maryland), artist housing is being created in concert with non-profit Community Development Corporations, advancing public goals. The City could require the inclusion of artist live/work units as part of new developments or redevelopment in which the City has a special interest due to the use or sale of public land in the project, or the provision of municipal funds, tax abatements or other incentives. However, the City should not impose requirements if artist live/work housing would block feasible development and financing of an otherwise desirable project.

A review of programs in other communities reveals that direct subsidies may be provided to attract artists to live and work in a community. Bradenton, Florida, for example, offers a \$10,000 matching grant for renovations in selected areas of the community (www.villageofthearts.com).

Uses and Redevelopment

Although the traditional neighborhood fabric is physically intact in most locations, there are prominent but deteriorated buildings and sites that detract from the visible quality and economic health of the district. The challenge is to identify and prioritize those buildings and sites where positive change will shift in perceptions and raise the value of the entire area. Many suggestions for improvements at key locations were described by participants in the planning workshops and meetings during the course of the planning process. However, the total number of “problem” properties appears to be a relatively small fraction of the existing inventory of buildings and spaces in the neighborhood.

Opportunities for Redevelopment and Key Public Improvements

A number of locations and inspirations for targeted reinvestment are indicated on Figure 1 at the beginning of this report. This diagram indicates redevelopment or renovation opportunities at several key locations - at entry points to the district, along its edges, and along Bank Street. These ideas were gathered during the workshops and other meetings and represent a starting point for the detailed strategy that should unfold. The following discussion describes the rationale behind some of the specific observations and ideas.

- Gateway sites – Two sites stand out at key transition points along streets that connect the planning area with surrounding neighborhoods. The lots at the intersection of Truman, Jay and Coit Streets contain poorly maintained, large residential buildings in obvious need of repair. The commercial property and site at the bend in Methodist Street is poorly maintained and in need of improvement. A significant stone maritime commercial structure remains in at a gateway to the Bank Street commercial areas at the foot of Tilley Street. Redevelopment and rehabilitation of these sites and buildings would help transform the perceptions of the district because of their prominence.
- Open lots and parking areas along Bank Street at Sparyard Street – The development pattern along this edge of Bank Street is occupied by strip-type commercial parking and open land that is inconsistent with the traditional fabric and density of the more urban New London waterfront that begins to the northeast of these sites. Redevelopment to increase density and recreate a “street wall”, while retaining some view corridors to the waterfront would be desirable.
- Combined infill and redevelopment – In some cases, small infill sites exist but will be very challenging to develop because of their small scale and neighboring buildings that are in poor condition. In these cases, a combination of infill development and renovation might be pursued as more efficient, larger projects.
- Cluster renovation – The diagram identifies adjacent buildings that are potential candidates for simultaneous, cluster redevelopment. If the buildings can be improved together, several advantages may be gained. Cluster development improves the appearance and promotes more continuous reuse that makes spaces and units more marketable and desirable. There can be significant efficiencies in obtaining and packaging grants, financing incentives, in managing

development, and during construction. Finally, if horizontal connections can be established, fewer elevators and stairwells may be needed to serve a complex of buildings.

- Watersheet uses (marina) – The watersheet along the harbor is not consistently used, either year round or on a seasonal basis. Some have suggested that this downtown waterfront area might be used for a marina and/or mooring field. This concept should be confirmed from a regulatory and ownership standpoint. If there are no insurmountable legal or regulatory impediments, the City might sponsor a feasibility evaluation and/or invite private proposals for marina redevelopment. A useful and successful model for marina development can be found at the Town of Hull in Massachusetts. A feasibility study and development Request for Proposals has resulted in a vital and attractive redevelopment along the municipal pier.
- Harbor park enhancements - The public open space adjacent to the City’s harborfront piers and walkways are open and frequently unoccupied. Other communities have instituted seasonal programs to create special destinations. A notable example includes the artwork and crafts booths along the harbor in Hyannis. These or more permanent, year-round improvements could be considered.
- Green Street lots – The reorganization of the downtown circulation patterns and the need for parking are among the factors that led to the removal of the traditional building fabric and uses along one side of Green Street. Eventual redevelopment will be required if the traditional density and character of the entire district is to be restored.
- Open land between Reed and Coit Streets –There are several open land parcels that are neither contributing to the fabric of residential blocks, nor providing high quality open space. This area is being used informally as recreational open space today. A combination of redevelopment and public open space improvements might be considered to consolidate and improve this area.
- Primary streetscape improvements along Bank Street – The diagram emphasizes the importance of creating an improved streetscape along Bank Street that connects the diverse use and architectural components of the district. The improvements should enhance the pedestrian and bicycle environment, while promoting a more accessible and understandable vehicular circulation pattern.

These and other observations suggest that New London will benefit from targeted redevelopment that focuses on properties and buildings that are visibly detracting from the value and quality of their surroundings because of their location and condition.

Recruiting New Development

This report recommends that a focused program be established to prioritize 10 properties where redevelopment or other improvements will have major positive impacts on the surroundings, to be accomplished in 5 years. This recommendation is based, in part, on successful programs that have included participation by members of the consultant team and were discussed during the second community workshop. These communities included New Bedford, Massachusetts (FXM Associates) and Providence, Rhode Island (Durkee Brown Veveiros and Werenfels).

The priority list should be established with an eye towards financial feasibility as well as net benefit to the owners and the district. The process of preparing this list will require the Redevelopment Coordinator to prepare feasibility and cost/benefit evaluations of prospective projects through gathering of available site and building information, consideration of possible uses and redevelopment costs and revenues, availability of subsidies and funding resources, and coordination with property owners and prospective investors. After this process is accomplished, the Redevelopment Coordinator can prepare a short-list of target locations and properties with City leadership involvement, and participation by other stakeholders. Once the project list has been finalized, the City and the Redevelopment Coordinator should proactively engage the property owners, businesses, investors, funding sources, and others who will be needed to unlock revitalizing improvements.

Most of the projects will engage private properties. But some of the projects may include public realm improvements. For example, concepts have been advanced to visually enhance the park-like environment of the waterfront esplanade and provide special seasonal artwork or uses to enhance the harbor park. Another concept would extend marina floats from the waterfront piers and create an active marina facility.

Feasible reinvestment in the neighborhood's historic stock of buildings will be greatly enhanced through the use of state and federal historic and/or federal newmarket tax credits, combined with other available subsidies, tax abatement, tax increment financing, grants and programs established to provide incentives for redevelopment. The task of the Redevelopment Coordinator will include knowledgeably guiding prospective developers and property owners through the maze of options, applications, and approvals. In this regard, there may be distinctive advantages of scale. Development costs can be substantially decreased if multiple buildings and properties are simultaneously packaged and advanced through renovation and redevelopment. This should be taken into account as the priority projects are selected for assistance.

Recruiting New Businesses

Catalytic economic benefits can also be obtained by attracting additional businesses to Bank Street and nearby commercial areas. This report suggests that a target be established to attract 10 new businesses to the downtown in the next 3 years. Within their stewardship roles, the City and the Redevelopment Coordinator should focus their efforts on attracting a targeted number and types of businesses to the area. Property owners seeking new tenants should be contacted and assisted in their marketing efforts. A key component of revitalization in other similar communities has

been the creation of downtown locations which expand upon other existing successful businesses within the region. So, for example, restaurants in nearby communities may be very interested in opening up a second location in downtown New London if actively invited. Experiences from other communities should be mined for other methods and approaches that have proved successful.

Among those that might be usefully contacted include the economic development and planning staff associated with Boston's Main Street program, Providence's downtown revitalization, and New Bedford's downtown redevelopment programs.

Approaches to creating an effective business recruitment program are described in the discussion on Markets and Marketing towards the end of this section.

Because of the gradual shift in the economic patterns within American communities, most traditional downtowns are oversupplied with retail and commercial space relative to achievable occupancy by those uses. The revitalization of urban districts has proved successful in many cases by reusing commercial space as housing, and attracting additional residents that appreciate and support the more diverse urban environment that a downtown neighborhood could provide. New London's downtown and neighborhood revitalization will benefit from actions that encourage new residential development and the conversion of surplus commercial and retail space into residential units. In part, this can be achieved through the choice of priority projects for public support and through refinements in zoning.

In some areas, the shift to ground floor residential uses could be detrimental to the shops, restaurants and personal service establishments. The City should define the concentrated locations along Bank Street where continuous, activated frontage is critical to the vitality of the district. In other locations however, the provision of ground level residences should be permitted, subject to design review. Special design standards addressing this issue were recently developed by The Cecil Group for ground level residential uses for new waterfront development in Dover, New Hampshire on behalf of the City's Housing Authority, and might be considered as one source of ideas for regulation.

Recruiting New Residents

As a third initiative for revitalization engaging the Redevelopment Coordinator, this report suggests that a target be established to attract 10 new residents to the neighborhood in the next 3 years. A promotional effort should be undertaken to invite individuals to live in the district, perhaps focused on artists and craftspeople who can directly contribute to the cultural life and vitality of the neighborhood.

An interesting approach taken by another community to create an effective resident recruitment program is described in the discussion on Markets and Marketing towards the end of this section.

Zoning and Regulations

Clarity of intent and flexibility in application are the keys to regulations supporting successful redevelopment in a predominantly built-out area with significant historical character. The New London Zoning regulations - for the most part - provide that clarity and flexibility. There are a few instances where the regulations may be improved and reconsidered to implement change in the study area. These are in the use allowances, parking requirements and design standards.

Use Allowances and Restrictions

In dynamic downtown districts, consideration is often given to providing active first floor uses such as retail and discouraging residential and office uses that do not promote as much traffic on the street. However, in the New London market, the difficulty of filling spaces impacts the ability to create feasible projects. Consequently, consideration is given to amending the use allowances and restrictions in the zoning districts.

Within the study area there is a residential district (R-3, section 420), which restricts most uses to residential, but allows certain - mostly home-based - commercial uses by special permit. The adjacent General Commercial (C-1) district allows for behavioral, mental health and homeless service centers, while residential uses are “discouraged” (sections 510). The two districts have developed with a fairly wide range of uses. During the course of the study several discussions focused on whether to allow a continued mix of uses in the residential district as a peri-urban district or to place greater restrictions for a residential enclave adjacent to the CBD, and secondly whether the social service agencies were creating too high a concentration of those uses adjacent to the downtown.

The recommendation is to consider expanding the allowed uses in the General Commercial districts to include multi-family, and to provide more flexibility in the allowances for office uses in the residential district. These actions will:

- Maintain the residential character of buildings in the R-3 district but provide a basis for reinvestment
- Encourage continued reinvestment in the properties in the General Commercial district
- Encourage the movement of the concentrated social service agencies to other locations through the added value for reinvestment in other uses

In the Central Business District under sections 530.3 and 535.3, uses allowed on the first floor by Special Permit include one and two residential units where the buildings were previously designed and occupied as residences, and live work spaces where the ground floor space in the live/work unit is predominantly visible from the street and a certain percentage of floor space is devoted to the work function. This is fairly restrictive, especially with the current real estate market limitations. The recommendation is to specifically allow multiple residential units on the first floor when:

- The entrance features clearly indicate a residential building
- The historic façade features are maintained
- Pedestrian passage is encouraged on the adjacent sidewalk through lighting and site features

Several actions are recommended relative to the Incentive Housing Zone (IHZ) district currently under consideration by the City mostly to the east of the study area. A review of the draft information raises several important issues that should be considered relative to the vision for the neighborhood articulated in this report. The IHZ includes incentives to provide relatively dense housing that includes a proportion of affordable units. It is important that the incentives do not result in demolition of historic structures or fabric where the community would be better served by renovation or smaller scale infill development. The IHZ should not result in incentives to create parking structures that would be inconsistent with the *Design Review Guidelines* or urban design of the district.

The City should consider the IHZ concept in the context of this *Action Plan*, focusing on several major questions:

- Will the method for provision of affordable housing and the resulting reinvestment be consistent with the vision for a district that provides a balanced mix of residents in terms of ownership and income?
- Will the minimum densities of multi-family housing be practically developable on sites within the neighborhood while still meeting the *Design Review Guidelines*?
- Will the zoning create unintended incentives for redevelopment resulting in regrettable demolition of historic structures for new buildings and structured parking?
- More generally, are the provision for parking solutions reasonable and practical in a manner that will be consistent with the urban design of the district?

Parking Regulations

Adequate parking is a requirement for successful downtowns in small cities; to be competitive, the shops, offices, services and restaurants must be reasonably convenient to patrons and employees who drive to their destinations. The neighborhood is generally well served by existing municipal parking facilities and on-street parking within and adjacent to the district. Providing on-site parking will be difficult or entirely impractical for many businesses, and can be very destructive to the compact, pedestrian-oriented environment that is a key characteristic of the neighborhood. Several refinements to the existing zoning should be considered to ensure that the district's urban design qualities are protected, while providing for adequate parking options.

While the City allows for the provision of off-site parking to fulfill parking needs through a special permit, the parking standards that would otherwise apply appear to be unreasonable. As a result, development projects are subject to the uncertain outcome of a special permit process. For example, the standards in Section 614(B) do not recognize advantages that may occur for multiple uses which can share parking and reduce demand. Multi-family projects are required to include additional parking spaces above those listed for residential units in the parking table. While Section 614(D) allows use of off-site parking areas and shared parking options, and Section 614(E) allows reductions in the number of required parking spaces through special permit, it does not provide quantitative standards that could prove helpful. Norwalk, Connecticut has encountered a similar situation as they promote traditional development in the urban districts of that city; some of the approaches that they have used to calculate adequacy of off-site parking within their zoning code could be reviewed as a potential model for more clear regulations.

The zoning also allows front and side-yard parking in some instances within the neighborhood. This type of solution can degrade the pedestrian environment and diminish the coherence of the streetscape. Zoning should be amended to direct parking to the rear of business sites in the future.

Design Guidelines and Standards

The *New London Design Review Guidelines* were adopted in 2009, and a professional review of those guidelines suggests that the standards are generally well-drafted and appropriate for the planning area. Several revisions are recommended, and are included in a separate memorandum that reviews the guidelines:

Application of the *Design Review Guidelines* should become mandatory over time, enhancing their effectiveness. The requirement for façade review is established under Sections 530.6 and 535.6 of the Zoning Regulations. However, these reviews are non-binding referrals to the Planning Board, which provides advisory reviews. It is possible to use zoning to apply the *Design Review Guidelines* through mandatory approvals. Several methods were considered to strengthen the influence design standards:

- Village Districts – Village Districts are permitted under Connecticut General Statutes under sections 8-2 and 8-2j as the only option enabling design standards within zoning district regulations. They have been applied in many instances such as in the City of Stamford’s recent rezoning for the Glenbrook and Springdale neighborhoods, which is now also being considered for the West Side neighborhood in that city. The enabling legislation requires the architectural standards to apply to only those aspects of design visible from the public rights of way. Otherwise, the district is very flexible in the allowed design criteria. The distinctive character, historic features, landscape, and views and relationship to adjoining structures, and preservation of historic features and buildings in accordance with the “Connecticut Historical Commission - The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings,” may all be included in the regulations. Consequently, this is considered an appropriate tool for the study area.

- Hybrid Type of Form-Based Code – Form-based zoning provides specific approaches to shape the configuration of buildings, siting, and site improvements. This zoning method controls development within comprehensive standards of design and design quality according to a master plan of development. Hybrid versions of this type of zoning modify the approach so that projects can adapt to existing patterns of development. Examples of hybrid form-based codes have been created in several Connecticut communities. However, neither form-based methods nor hybrid variations are recommended as likely to be appropriate methods for this neighborhood. The development sites within the district are highly varied and the massing, architecture and site improvements must respond to the unique circumstances and the highly varied architectural heritage that distinguish this district. Successful form-based codes have been more frequently associated with shaping entire new districts where multiple new buildings and public ways are being created. In this district, the form of each new project will need to be responsive to the varied shapes of specific historic buildings and existing structures that form its context. All projects will effectively require a tailored design response, rather than conforming to predetermined formulae. There is also a high probability that the planning cannot usefully predict all of the factors that will influence the uses, configurations and economic feasibility of every specific site. Once a form requirement is established as zoning, innovative design and development approaches may be inadvertently prevented because of well-intentioned but limiting restrictions. If this occurs, then desirable development may be delayed or blocked because of the increased time, risk and expense associated with accomplishing a zoning change. For these reasons, design guidelines are more frequently used as the best method for shaping development proposals in historic districts.

As a result, this study recommends evaluating and then applying the Village District method as the best zoning tool for the conditions in the study area. *The Design Review Guidelines*, including historic preservation standards, may then be applied as mandatory standards through the Village District regulations.

Transportation, Circulation and Parking

Reorganizing the traffic circulation patterns along Green Street and Bank Street should receive a very high priority among the actions that can most benefit the neighborhood's revitalization. The conversion of the existing one-way pair to a two-way pattern for both streets can transform the business and residential environment in fundamental ways.

The current arrangement brings all visitors and patrons into Bank Street from the “back” side of the commercial street. The Green Street area is relatively unattractive as an approach to the district, compared to proceeding down State Street past the Parade and a view of the rail station and waterfront, before turning into the historic Bank Street. Directions for right-hand turns towards the Green Street lots can easily be created. Traffic would be slowed, enhancing the pedestrian and business environments. For those familiar with the local traffic patterns, Green Street could remain as a bypass route from either direction. Traffic is likely to become more dispersed, rather than concentrated at a few intersections.

The process for converting the traffic flows to a two-way system may be somewhat long and complicated, so persistence will be required. Funding for the traffic studies must be secured, and an extensive process undertaken to gauge the benefits and impacts of this significant change. Preliminary designs must be prepared, cost estimates created, and the final design and construction funding secured. Construction should be fully coordinated with the streetscape, so that all of the improvements along Bank Street are completed together.

Major redevelopment initiatives for the Green Street lots should be deferred until the later phases of neighborhood revitalization. In the long term, there may be opportunities to redevelop these lots with a mix of uses, if substantial subsidies can be found to relocate public parking below grade. But for an extended period stretching years into the future, the Green Street parking reservoir that exists today will be needed to support the increasingly successful businesses and destinations along Bank Street and nearby areas. Additional pedestrian improvements to strengthen connections should be pursued, along with landscape enhancements where practical.



Streetscapes

Bank Street

In an increasingly competitive economic environment, New London's commercial districts and neighborhoods must marshal their best physical assets to create environments that are vibrant, attractive and functional. The civic identity of the planning area is rooted in its unique blend of historic structures, residences, shops, streets and the waterfront. The streetscape - composed of sidewalks, landscaping, lighting and street "furniture" - provides the public environment that establishes the connections among the diverse parts.

Practical and aesthetic streetscape improvements to the Bank Street corridor, coordinated with revised traffic circulation patterns, represent an opportunity for the City to strengthen the district by enhancing its image and identity.

Streetscape improvements for Bank Street are intended to:

- Develop a streetscape that will visually strengthen the identity of the area and encourage pedestrian movement among the many destinations within the district
- Enhance the setting for the buildings that compose the traditional and historic character of the district
- Enhance pedestrian movement by clarifying pedestrian zones and clearly identifying pedestrian crossings
- Redirect and calm traffic flows to enhance the residential and business uses
- Organize on-street parking resources
- Provide a setting for public art and special events that celebrate the existing culture, history and traditions of New London.

Bank Street Improvement Alternatives

To test a range of potential improvements to visual character, pedestrian safety and motor vehicle operations on Bank Street, three curb alignment and streetscape alternatives were studied. These alternatives considered opportunities to create more space on Bank Street to accommodate a variety of desirable, non-vehicular uses. By modifying the Bank Street/Reed Street intersection geometry, opportunities were created to make programmatic improvements to the streetscape between Reed Street and Tilley Street. Plans summarizing the alternatives are shown in Figures 4, 5 and 6. Arrows have been used to show the general locations and directions of lanes on Bank Street. These alternatives were presented and discussed at meetings and workshops, leading to the subsequent recommendations.

Alternative 1 – Planted Median Islands

Under this scenario, the through/left-turn lane from Bank Street westbound to Howard Street southbound has been removed, allowing the creation of a twelve-foot wide curbed median extending several hundred feet east from the Reed Street intersection.

An exclusive right turn lane, a through-lane and a shared through/left-turn lane are retained on westbound Bank Street at the Reed Street intersection. The new median has been laid out with gaps to allow vehicles to turn into parking lots on the opposite side of the street. Street trees are provided on both sides of Bank Street from Reed Street as far as Tilley Street

Benefits of this approach include:

- The new median would create an opportunity to install new street trees and low shrubs allowing Bank Street east of Reed Street to present a parkway-like aspect
- The planted islands would break down the apparent width and scale of Bank Street
- Median islands would provide a location for siting ornamental street lights
- Additional street trees at the street curb line would provide spatial definition on the corridor and complement the trees planted in the median to create a processional path into the heart of the district
- Street trees would buffer views of adjacent, open parking lots

Disadvantages of this approach include:

- The parkway qualities would be inconsistent with the historic character of a more urban street that has characterized Bank Street in the past.
- The planted median would not part of the sidewalk system and does not add useful space to the pedestrian circulation realm
- The ability to widen sidewalks would be reduced relative to other alternatives
- The median would be difficult and expensive to maintain in this urban neighborhood setting

FIGURE 4: BANK STREET – STREETScape SCENARIO #1



Alternative 2 – Bike Lanes and Sidewalk Extensions

By removing the exclusive left-turn lane from Bank Street westbound to Howard Street southbound, space has been freed to allow the creation of two five-foot wide bike lanes. The new bike lanes are aligned at the edge of the travelled way adjacent to the parking lanes.

Curb extensions – sometimes called sidewalk “bumpouts” - have been installed at crosswalks and widened sidewalks provide space for installation of street trees on both sides of Bank Street from Reed Street to Tilley Street.

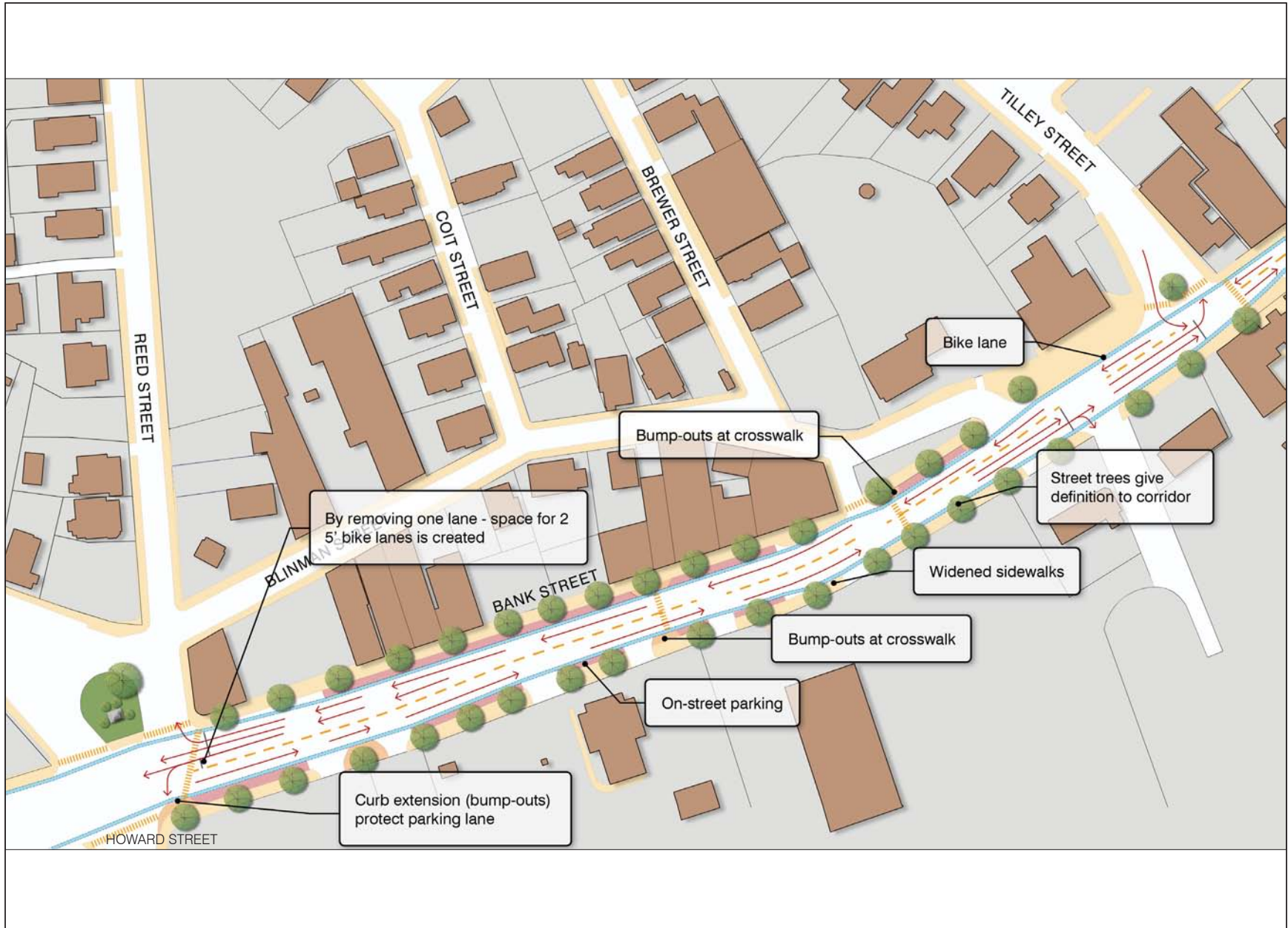
Benefits of this approach include:

- The new bike lanes would increase safety and connectivity in and between neighborhoods
- Curb extensions would reduce pedestrian exposure to traffic and increase visibility of pedestrians in crosswalks
- Curb extensions would create a traffic calming effect that both reduces average vehicle speed and protects parked cars
- Street tree plantings would create a graceful transition from the motorway scale of Bank Street west of the Reed Street intersection to the intimate scale of historic Bank Street east of Tilley Street
- Street trees would buffer views of adjacent, open parking lots

Disadvantages of this approach include:

- Bike lanes would not contribute to reducing the apparent scale/width of Bank Street
- Curb extensions provide an appearance somewhat different from the simpler, traditional configuration of street corners, curbs and sidewalks.

FIGURE 5: BANK STREET – STREETScape SCENARIO #2



Alternative 3 – Emphasis on On-Street Parking

Within this alternative, the removal of the left-turn lane from Bank Street westbound to Howard Street southbound would allow the exclusive right turn lane from Bank Street westbound to Reed Street northbound to be relocated about ten feet to the south. This relocation would create new on-street parking by extending the north side parking lane nearly to the Reed Street intersection.

By narrowing Bank Street travel lanes near Blinman Street to a still-generous fifteen foot width, additional parking lane length has been realized on the south side of Bank Street in the area.

Curb extensions or sidewalk ‘bumpouts’ have been created at crosswalks and street trees have been installed on both sides of Bank Street from Reed Street to Tilley Street.

Benefits of this approach include:

The reduction in the number of traffic lanes has allowed maximization of the parking resource on Bank Street
Curb extensions reduce pedestrian exposure to traffic and increase visibility of pedestrians in crosswalks
Street trees better define the edge of the street and buffer views of adjacent parking lots

Disadvantages of this approach include:

Additional parking lane length/capacity does not contribute to reducing the apparent scale/width of Bank Street
Curb extensions create a minor reduction in parking capacity

FIGURE 6: BANK STREET – STREETScape SCENARIO #3



Recommended Bank Street Improvements

The most advantageous approach to the preferred streetscape treatment is likely to be a hybrid plan, combining the best parts of the studied alternatives and based on two-way circulation on Bank Street. Recommendations include improvements to traffic lanes, curb lines, crosswalks, district sidewalks and links to the wider neighborhood.

The specific recommended traffic and streetscape improvements may be summarized as follows:

- Reorganize curb lines, pavement striping and sidewalks extensions at the Bank Street/Reed Street intersection to create new travel lanes that will rationalize vehicle flow, but not increase speed, on the Bank Street approach to the district.
- Test traffic signals to insure pedestrian crossing phases are adequate.
- Introduce traffic calming measures to reduce vehicle/pedestrian conflicts.
- Install curb extensions to reduce crosswalk lengths.
- Treat crosswalks with unit pavers to provide better long-term wear and safer crossings for pedestrians.
- Narrow street widths to create additional parking capacity where appropriate.
- Study potential for angle parking spaces on Bank Street east of Reed Street.
- Utilize narrower street width and street tree alignment to create a spatial transition for eastbound traffic - signaling entrance to the district.
- Reduce excess street pavement where possible to create an enlarged sidewalk and larger pedestrian environment.
- Reconstructed sidewalks can reinforce the west-to-east transition on Bank Street – Sidewalks might be constructed entirely in scored concrete west of Reed Street; a combination of scored concrete with a 5' wide brick accent band and iron tree grates between Reed Street and Tilley Street and entirely brick construction east of Tilley Street.
- Sidewalks on cross streets linking the neighborhood to the waterfront can also exhibit transitional treatments – more detailed in the historic districts and at the waterfront and a simpler treatment in outlying zones.
- Install street trees to better define the streetscape corridor and buffer views of adjacent parking lots – provide summer shade and fall color to the neighborhood.
- Install district ornamental street lights to “punctuate” the streets.
- Provide benches, trash receptacles, bike racks where sidewalk width allows creating an attractive environment for pedestrians.

These recommended actions are intended to strengthen the best facets of the neighborhood and support local businesses by creating comfortable pedestrian areas and an attractive setting for shopping.

Streetscape and Connections to Bank Street from Water and Green Streets

While Bank Street streetscape enhancements are a priority recommendation of this report, streetscape improvements should also extend along the streets that connect Bank Street to the parking, uses and amenities along Green Street and Water Street. Funding for attractive improvements should be studied, designed and funded that will extend the pedestrian environment along the streets and passageways that connect Bank Street to its environs.

Additional Streetscape in the Neighborhood

Eventually, the entire network of sidewalks in the neighborhood should be planned for appropriate streetscape enhancements. The attention to the pedestrian realm will enhance all of the uses in the district, and add value to the residential and other uses that line the streets.

FIGURE 7: BANK STREET – ILLUSTRATIVE STREETScape SECTIONS

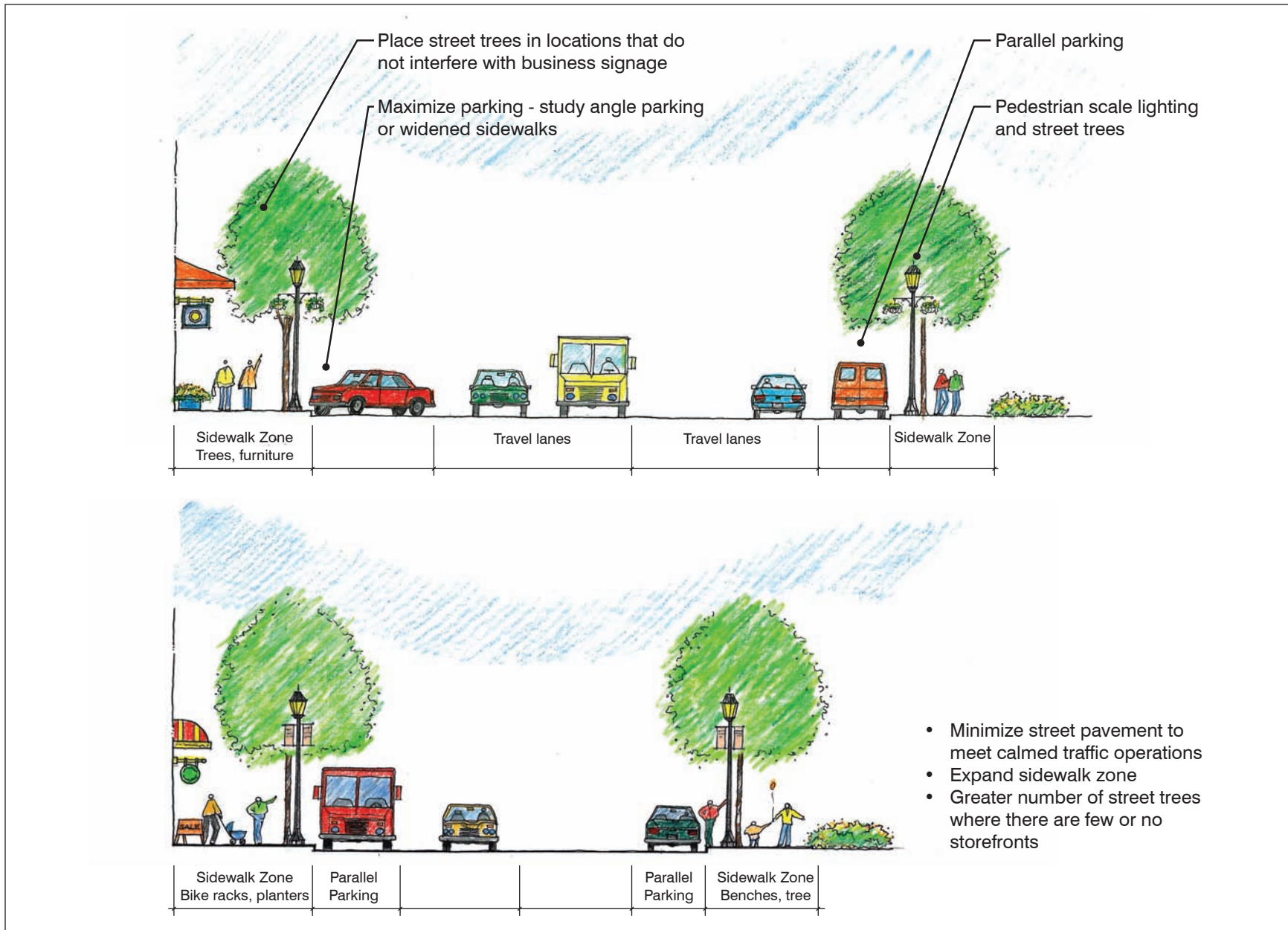


FIGURE 8: BANK STREET – STREETScape VOCABULARY

SITE BENCH



New London waterfront bench



Metal bench

BICYCLE RACKS



Hitch post type



Hoop type



Ring type

SEASONAL PLANTING



Inground planters



Seat wall planters



Modular planters

FIGURE 9: BANK STREET – STREETScape VOCABULARY

STREET LIGHTS



New London historic light



Ornamental post top light

UNIT PAVERS - EDGES AND ACCENTS



Clay brick



Concrete unit pavers



Granite pavers

Markets and Marketing

The revitalization of this neighborhood and the preservation of its historic assets will require constant and imaginative marketing. Substantial efforts have been underway for years, and must be maintained for years ahead for the large variety of destinations, events, businesses, and residences. The marketing of the district should recognize that there is no single target markets, but a complex layering of many different markets for the unique opportunities that this part of New London provides.

Marketing Development Opportunities

Various techniques might be utilized to market development opportunities for revitalization projects within the district. Among the techniques that have been used in other historic communities and restoration initiatives are the following:

- List Building and informational meetings with candidate developers – New England’s development market includes numerous entities with extensive experience in historic restoration, use of tax credits and other subsidies, mixed use and housing conversions. A process can be undertaken to build lists of qualified development entities through inquiries with other comparable communities in the region. This should include Hartford, Providence, New Bedford, Newburyport, Amesbury, Newport, Boston, Newton, Somerville, Lowell, Portsmouth and Portland – and other communities that have attracted relatively small scale and innovative historic adaptive reuse projects. A package of information regarding potential target properties and projects should be made available as part of informal discussions, meeting and invited visits to the community and district.
- Marketing of candidate private properties with owner assent and cooperation – The City or non-profit stewards can directly market candidate properties with the assent and cooperation of the owner. This approach was successfully employed by the Community Development Department of the Town of Amesbury Massachusetts for the former Merrimac Hat Factory, which had become derelict. Following a professional prepared feasibility study, the Town was in a position to promote the sale and redevelopment of the property and avoid tax-related acquisition of the environmentally damaged buildings and land. The property has been successfully advanced through the first phases of redevelopment for residential uses.
- Development “Charrette” - To attract potential development interests to three historic and empty theaters in downtown Boston, the regional office National Trust for Historic Preservation co-sponsored a “Redevelopment Charrette” with the City of Boston and the Boston Society of Architects. This workshop was open to a selected group of specialists in real estate and development economics, designers, City officials and agency staff, preservation specialists, and developers. The identification of the developer for one of the three projects (the “Opera House”) resulted directly from this process, and it unlocked key relationships leading to the eventual successful renovation of all three historic theaters. The program was co-led by Wendy Nicholas and Steven Cecil, and was based on a

similarly successful program organized by the Providence Preservation Society for a former department store structure in downtown Providence.

- Urban Land Institute (ULI) Case Study – Through the participation of a member of this organization, various challenging redevelopment problems can be brought before an expert panel for advice. The participation in such processes often attracts interest from development entities, which attend the panels and follow the results. This technique helped set the stage for the eventual renovation of the former Wentworth-by-the-Sea hotel in New Hampshire, which also benefitted from being named among the 11 most endangered buildings in America through an annual program staged by the National Trust. Steven Cecil prepared the briefing package and helped the developer prepare and present the case study at the ULI national convention.

Marketing for Business Recruitment

Marketing the neighborhood to attract new businesses can be accomplished using several methods. A marketing plan could consider the following techniques and examples:

- Market evaluations to identify opportunity niches – A properly crafted market analysis can often identify particular types of uses that may be supportable within a commercial district, in view of the economic and demographic profiles of potential business patrons. Such a study must be created in the context of a prospective marketing effort and use techniques scaled to the circumstances of New London.
- Identification of regional candidates for additional locations – Through available lists of business enterprises and related data, the marketing team can identify businesses that appear to be successful and may be candidates for creating second locations. This can include successful restaurants or food-related businesses, service businesses, or specialty shops. A solicitation support package with relevant economic and demographic data should be prepared, along with the menu of business support services, incentives and redevelopment initiatives in the downtown and district. The list of prospects should be prioritized, and then informal informational meetings and visits organized that focus on available spaces, landlords and redevelopment projects.
- Workshops for owners, brokers and real estate brokers regarding targeted opportunities – A workshop should be staged to convey the targets of opportunity growing from market evaluations and prioritized types of candidate uses being sought.
- Media exposure and information campaign - A focused effort to invite articles on the progress and prospects in New London should be undertaken, targeted to attract the attention of businesses within communities where relocation or creation of a new location is a reasonable possibility, largely consisting of Connecticut, Rhode Island, and eastern Massachusetts.

Marketing for Residential Recruitment

It is unusual to specifically seek new residents for an area, apart from the marketing efforts associated with private sector, real estate developments. But there are some interesting and potentially useful instances from which lessons might be drawn.

- Artist in Residency Programs – Some communities and associated arts organizations provide space and opportunities for artists in residency within their communities. The Corning Center for the Fine Arts in Adams County, Iowa is a good example of a program and the promotional information that is associated with its website is informative (<http://www.corningfinearts.com/artist-residency>).
- Artist Recruitment Plan – An outreach effort could be organized in conjunction with special funding or incentives that may be arranged to recruit permanent artist residents. The website information associated with various recruitment programs may be an effective way of marketing opportunities. Good examples can be found for other communities in an article authored by Kim Hall in the online *ArtsCalendar the Business Magazine for Visual Artists* (<http://orders.artcalendar.com/article.asp?ID=70>)
- Resident recruitment information – The participating stewardship organization might provide on-line information to attract residents by providing inviting information that depicts the opportunities and amenities.

New Techniques in Marketing: Social Networking and “Viral” Marketing

As marketing strategies are crafted among the stewards of the district, attention might be paid towards emerging methods to raise awareness and interest. “Viral” networking and the use of web-based social media may become valuable ways to spread the word that New London – and this district – is the place to be.

These new marketing techniques are becoming a specialized field. The City and other stewards of the district should consider approaching the University of Connecticut Business School and explore opportunities to establish a pilot study and program to explore the use of emerging techniques to promote the specific development, business and resident recruitment initiatives.

Alternatively, support funds for such an innovative program might be sought through business stewards such as the Chamber of Commerce to provide professional assistance in crafting either social networking or viral marketing programs.

Observations on Funding and Resources

In most cases, there are no new and readily available set of public resources identified through the research conducted for this project. Rather, there are a variety of programs that already exist or have been identified and created within the City's agencies and the various non-profit organizations involved in New London revitalization advocates. New programs emerge nearly constantly from public entities and are subsequently publicized and provided with legislated or administratively distributed funding for qualifying projects and communities - or disappear again as funding is reduced, delayed or withdrawn.

This is one of the reasons behind the emphasis on continued, defined stewardship that is underlined within this Action Plan. There will be a constant need to link advocacy for the area to process of grantmanship by the City and the non-profit stakeholders in the area that are eligible for expenditures, grants, loan resources, or other funding. The matrix identifies certain sources that have been used in the past or have been recently available for New London and similar communities as initial suggestions. Additional information concerning State of Connecticut programs and funding patterns is indicated below, to provide additional ideas.

Federal Programs and Resources

- Historic Tax Credits – One of the most powerful tools for historic urban revitalization for many years have been federal historic tax credits. This is the largest federal incentive program for neighborhood and urban revitalization. It attracts private reinvestment in adaptive reuse of historic structures. A qualifying development can provide the owner of a certified historic structure with a federal income tax credit for 20% of the qualified rehabilitation expenses. The program also includes a companion program that provides a 10% credit for certain older but non-historic buildings. Tax credits have been syndicated to create a more flexible market mechanism for the financial benefits of this program.
- New Market Tax Credits – This program provides tax benefits for equity investments by qualified community development entities (CDE's) in private development projects that serve low income communities and residents. Examples of CDE's include non-profit development corporations and community development corporations.
- Community Development Block Grants – This HUD-administered program provides funding for a variety of programs and project types for qualifying communities. New London is a CDBG-eligible community. Some municipalities (for example, Quincy, Massachusetts) programmed considerable funds for building renovations and façade improvement programs from these sources. However, CDBG resources are typically in high demand for a number of municipal programs and needs.
- Special Allocations – The federal government frequently provides special allocations for projects and programs within individual communities through both legislative and executive branches, in great part influenced by the

Congressional delegations and other elected representatives. Accessing such funds requires pro-active interaction and advocacy with the district and state Congressional delegation, and the Governor.

State Funding and Resources

Within the State of Connecticut, the City of New London is classified as a Public Investment Community (PIC) for the purposes of a limited list of state-sponsored urban redevelopment programs. These include:

- Connecticut Historic Structures Rehabilitation Tax Credit program – This program is available for qualifying historic buildings and provides tax credits for up to 25% of rehabilitation costs in specified categories. The program is primarily targeted towards the adaptive reuse of historic commercial and industrial buildings for residential uses, although partial credits can be obtained for certain mixed use (residential and commercial) developments. The program is enabled by Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) Section 10-416a.
- Urban Action Bond assistance – This program provides funding for qualifying physical development projects within the state. It is administered by the Office of Policy and Management as described in the enabling legislation (Connecticut General Statutes Section 4-66c).
- Community Economic Development program – This initiative provide funding for small business and community-based projects that demonstrably create jobs or otherwise physically improve distressed neighborhoods. It is administered by the Department of Economic and Community Development. The relevant legislation can be found at Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-240k to 8-240n.
- Residential Mortgage Guarantee program- This program provides loans to cover the down payments on mortgages for qualifying buyers and properties. The program is administered by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority as described in Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-286.
- Enterprise Corridor Zone – This mechanism is available for qualifying areas and is a prerequisite for certain corporate business tax credits and certain property tax relief programs for eligible participants. It is administered by the Department of Economic and Community Development and is enabled through Connecticut General Statutes Section 32-80.
- Transportation Studies and Improvements – The state generally relies on a well-developed system of regionally-based studies and priorities to manage transportation funding and resources. The regional planning entity is the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) in which New London participates. The SCCOG establishes a list of priorities on a regional level, which is then used to create and help prioritize the list of projects awaiting design and construction funding administered by the state, but normally including federal funding components. The statewide priority list is regularly updated, and is called the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

City Funding and Resources

The City of New London provides an array of programs that provide resources for redevelopment. These programs and the entities that manage them are generally describe in Appendix A, within the discussion of Stewardship Today.



Stewardship Today

This neighborhood has many entities, organizations and individuals who are directly engaged in its present circumstances and future potential. “Stewardship” is a term that conveys the responsibility for what occurs within the district and advocacy for its component parts. Understanding the existing network of responsibility and advocacy is important to consider relative to the actions that may be needed to accomplish significant positive changes in the future.

Based on the consultant team’s experience in many other communities that have undertaken neighborhood revitalization efforts, New London has an extensive and impressive network of stewards focused on the Bank Street district and its environs. While this network currently lacks shared strategies and coordination in some regards, it represents a potent and essential set of compatible interests and resources. The following observations provide an overview of some of the key stewardship entities and roles as they exist today. There are additional groups and individuals who are also involved and need to be considered – and enlisted – to help with the neighborhood in the future.

City Government

New London is incorporated as a City, although its geographic size and population characteristics are similar to many small towns. However, New London has long been a regional center for many smaller and more rural communities in southeastern Connecticut.

The form of government includes a City Executive who reports to the City Council, which is the legislative and policy-setting body in New London. The Mayor is selected from among the City Councilors, who are at-large elected representatives. The City Councilors provide stewardship, in part, through a series of committees and liaison assignments that address different aspects of the community. Relative to this neighborhood, important roles include the Councilors who focus on New London Main Street; Neighborhood Alliance, Port Authority and Harbor Improvement Agency, Public Welfare, and Transportation and Parking Commission.

The City Executive is responsible for many of the operations of the City government, directed through the departments that have been established.

There are a series of elected and appointed boards and commissions whose responsibilities lead to integral involvement in decisions relating to the neighborhood that is the subject of this *Action Plan*. The following list includes some of the key City government components whose engagement in a shared strategy for revitalization will be required:

- Office of Development & Planning (ODP) - This office groups city planning, land use regulatory responsibilities, and economic and community development programs. Within ODP are departments responsible for Planning,

Zoning & Wetlands, Economic Development, and Community Development. There are a number of programs administered by ODP that could contribute to the revitalization of the district, or at least require coordination to ensure that they are consistent with a shared strategy for neighborhood revitalization. Examples of these programs include the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and the Housing Conservation Program. The Neighborhood Improvement Program includes Neighborhood Enhancement (focused on deteriorated buildings and vacant, underutilized lots), Neighborhood Preservation and Development (providing for infrastructure improvements, supporting neighborhood associations and other activities), and code enforcement. The ODP staff are responsible for conducting planning and supporting implementation of the adopted outcomes, including the Plan of Conservation and Development, the Downtown Action Agenda, a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and the Consolidated Housing and Community Development Strategy.

- City Center District (CCD) – The City has designated a core area of the downtown as a special district, including portions of the Planning Area that is the subject of this report. The district’s activities are directed towards the improvement of the district, are governed by a volunteer commission and funded by a special tax paid by building owners. The CCD is a form of Business Improvement District, and mechanism used in many cities throughout the U.S. to fund and administer special programs, needs or initiatives that will p benefit the economic vitality of that district.
- Port Authority – This authority has responsibilities associated with the watersheet use in New London harbor and the landside activities needed to support maritime activities.
- Parking Commission – This is a City entity that is a state-enabled authority that is responsible for the City’s parking facilities, and which has certain powers and responsibilities that can help create, operate and coordinate parking supplies in the downtown.
- Planning and Zoning Commission – The Commission is responsible for a variety of planning and regulatory actions associated with land use and other aspects of development.
- Public Works – The Public Works Department are responsible for the street and roadway construction, operation, and maintenance, as well as the maintenance of the City parks.

Cultural and Promotional Organizations and Institutions

- Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut – In addition to serving as the business advocate and information center for the region, the Chamber of Commerce is actively engaged in programs to specifically promote and enhance the development and business climate within downtown New London. This includes staffing the position of New London Downtown Investment Coordinator, who works to attract new businesses and investment.

- Custom House Maritime Museum/New London Maritime Society (NLMS) – This organization and the museum that it operates is a local non-profit whose mission includes the preservation of the historic Custom House on Bank Street within the neighborhood that is the focus of this *Action Plan*.
- Downtown New London Association (DNLA) – This merchant and business-based association generally promotes the downtown and specifically stages special events that engage the neighborhood area that is the subject of this *Action Plan*, including Sailfest in July of each year.
- Hygienic Art – This is a non-profit organization that organizes and promotes an array of arts with the specific objective of creating a vital cultural life and experiences for citizens and visitors to downtown New London. The Hygienic Galleries and Art Park on Bank Street in an historic structure that the organization saved from demolition and has renovated. They host gallery showings and special events, as well as sponsoring and supporting a host of other events and arts initiatives in the district and the community.
- New London County Historical Society – This society serves multiple roles as advocates for historic resources and as a source of information and interpretation. They are located in the historic Shaw Mansion near the intersection of Bank and Tilley Streets, a landmark near the center of the neighborhood that is the subject of this *Action Plan*.
- New London Development Corporation (NLDC) – This is a non-profit development corporation with a broad mission to help develop the economy of New London and specific areas of focus. Relevant NLDC objectives include enhancing the housing stock and generally supporting economic development initiatives, studies and communication.
- New London Landmarks - This non-profit corporation works to both preserve the historic urban fabric of New London and promote appropriate development including significant buildings, open spaces, streetscapes and neighborhoods.
- New London Main Street (NLMS) - This nonprofit organization’s mission is to advocate and initiate programs and actions to revitalize the historic downtown and the life within it. This type of organization and program has been used throughout Connecticut and other areas of the U.S. to attract reinvestment and patronage of business districts. The district that is their focus includes most of the neighborhood Planning Area addressed by this report, as well as other areas of the downtown. Their activities link objectives to preserve and enhance the historic resources, expand the cultural life of the community, and enhance the economy of the downtown. Relevant component committees of NLMS are noted below:

NLMS Main Street Design Committee - This committee has been established to provide advisory design reviews and administers *Design Review Guidelines* intended to enhance the visual quality and character of the Historic Waterfront District.

NLMS Economic Enhancement Committee - This group's purposes include many aspects of business vitality within the downtown and the Historic Waterfront District, including stewardship of helpful market data, initiatives to adaptively reuse existing businesses, and recruitment of new businesses.

NLMS Organization Committee – This committee is devoted to supporting and maintaining a strong Main Street organization for the Historic Waterfront District by recruiting volunteers and encouraging participation through communication and other methods.

NLMS Promotion Committee – This committee is specifically focused on public relations and marketing associated with the range of special events and destinations within the Historic Waterfront District.

- New London Parks Conservancy (NLPC) – This is a non-profit organization devoted to advocacy and programs that preserve and restore the City's parks and promote active use and stewardship.

Social Service Organizations

New London's downtown hosts a variety of social service agencies and organizations within and near the neighborhood, including the Salvation Army Thrift Store in a storefront at 170 Bank Street. Other nearby facilities and services include Sound Community Services, Covenant Shelter of New London, the Women's Center of Southeast Connecticut, and the Centro del la Comunidad.

Businesses

A wide variety of businesses are located within the Planning Area, including retail shops, service establishments, restaurants and entertainment venues that largely occupy the first floor levels of commercial buildings within the district. A number of service and office uses are also located within the district. Many of the business and property owners are actively involved in the stewardship of the area through the variety of organizations and activities, as well as individual efforts to advocate for positive changes.

Residents

The area includes a significant number of residents in both rental and ownership properties, with a growing number of ownership units. The housing stock includes new condominiums at Shaw's Landing, a 4-story 35-unit building at 400 Bank Street and Harbour Towers, a 52-unit condominium project at 463 Bank Street. Of particular note in regards to stewardship for the district is the residential association of homeowners along Starr Street. This street is composed of restored historic homes that were the focus of a revitalization initiative, and the residents maintain an active role in advocacy for their neighborhood.

Historic Districts and Historic Preservation

A majority of the planning area is contained within the designated historic districts. As shown in Figure 10, the Downtown Historic New London District includes all of the properties along Golden Street and extends westwards to Sparyard Street and along both sides of Tilley Street. The Coit Street Historic District is a compact area flanking

both Coit and Brewer Streets. Only limited areas along Reed Street and Bank Street are not designated within the districts. Both districts are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

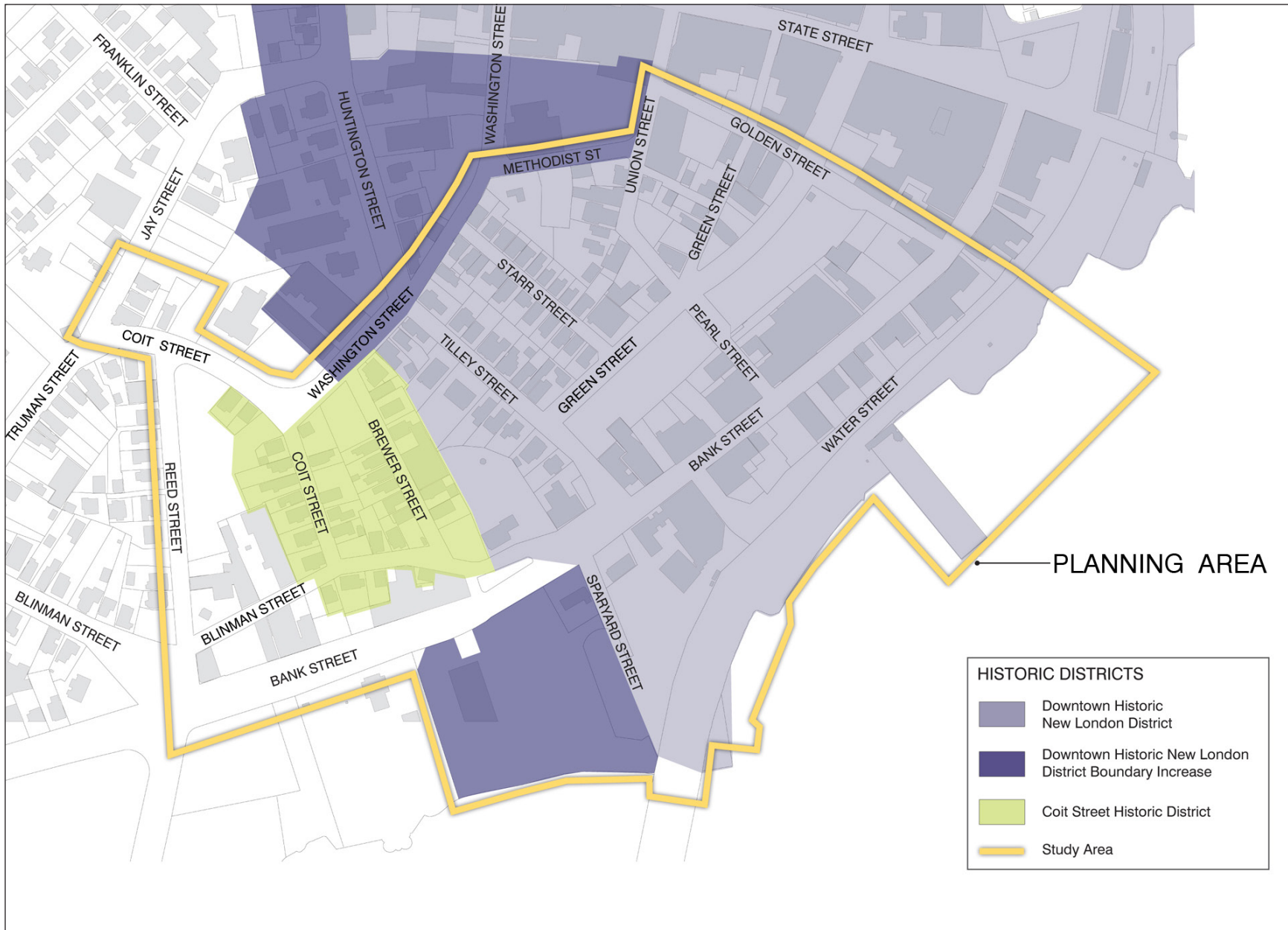
The Downtown Historic New London District incorporates the varied and rich architectural components of the downtown. Within the planning area, the Customs House is separately designated in the National Register of Historic Places because of its historic importance.

The Coit Street district is composed of residential architecture with 33 buildings designated as contributing to the historic qualities. The architectural styles vary, and include outstanding examples of Federal, Greek Revival and Victorian-era design.

The designation as an historic building within an historic district provides a number of potential benefits for development, as well as protections. Redevelopment of contributing buildings are eligible for historic tax credits that may be available at the federal and state levels, subject to meeting high standards of design restoration. Buildings may also be protected against demolition under certain circumstances, such as the use of federal or state funding in a project associated with the property.



FIGURE 10: HISTORIC DISTRICTS



Existing Land Use and Neighborhood Fabric

The planning area contains a wide variety of uses that make up the physical fabric of the neighborhood. The City's recent data for the district is shown in Figure 11: Existing Land Use. The information is largely accurate, except for the most recent developments.

The properties along both sides of Bank Street are largely classified as commercial use, composed of shops, offices, service establishments, restaurants and the like. Scattered commercial designations indicate businesses along other area streets, notably Golden, Green and Washington Streets. Residential uses are concentrated along the streets that lead perpendicularly away from the waterfront north of Green, Blinman and Bank Streets. Recent condominium developments have been constructed on sites that take advantage of the spectacular waterfront views and location within the downtown along Bank Street at the southern and western edges of the neighborhood considered within this *Action Plan*.

The rail right-of-way and active tracks stretch along the waterfront, separating the neighborhood from the linear municipal waterfront park that includes piers and floats that provide opportunities for boat access.

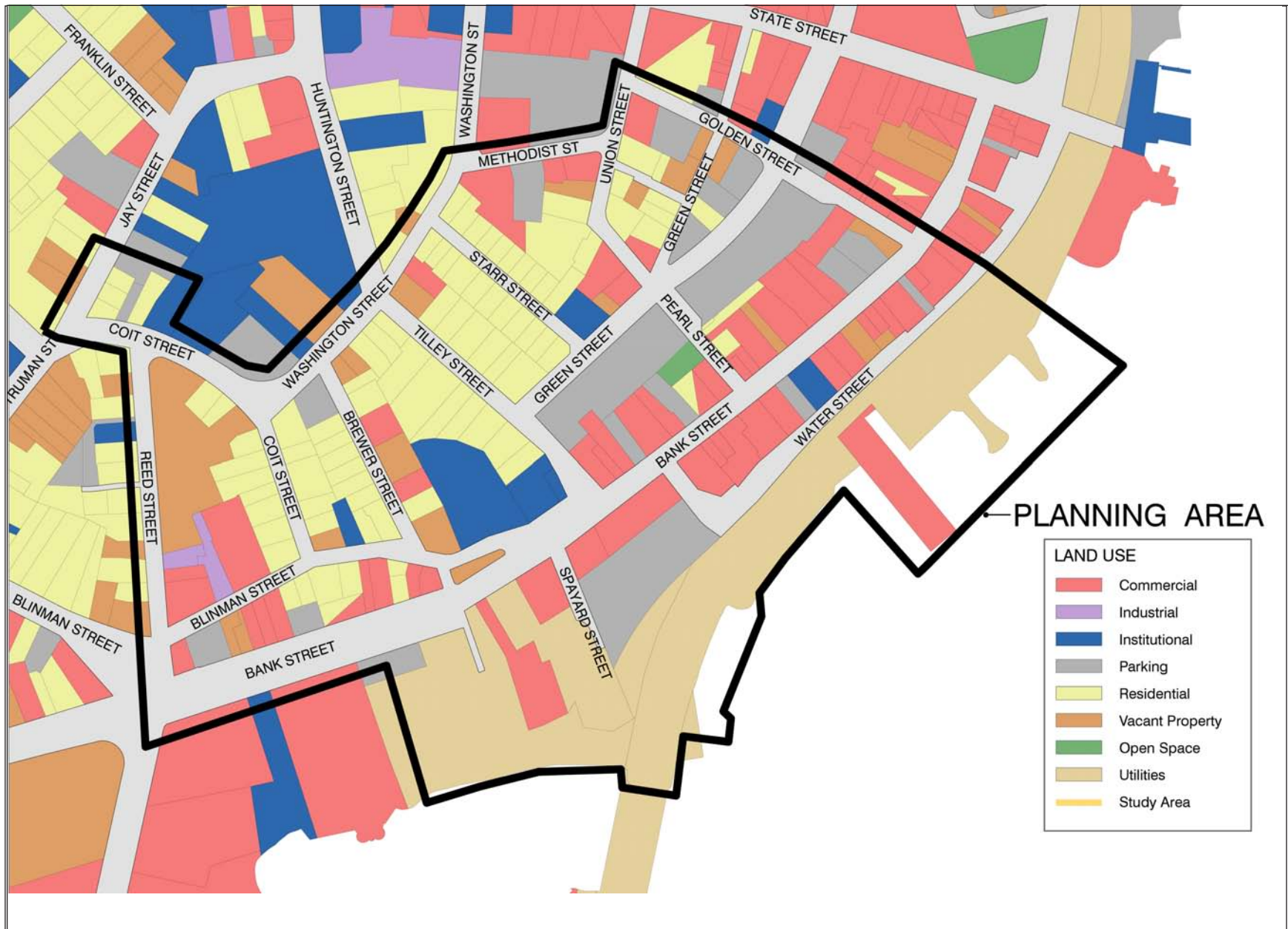
There are several clusters of surface parking within the area, notably the lots serving commercial uses between Sparyard and Water Street, and several blocks of municipal parking south of Green Street, between Golden and Tilley Street.

The neighborhood is largely composed of traditional patterns of building types and architecture that flank well-defined streets. Bank Street between Golden Street and Tilley Street has nearly continuous bands of structures designed for commercial use, fronting the sidewalk and containing storefront space at the ground level. This pattern is punctuated by notable exceptions, including the historic Custom House on the south side and the open space of the Hygienic Art Park on the north side.

Like most New England coastal and harbor communities, buildings along the commercial district face away from the harbor, and are oriented towards Bank Street instead. This gives rise to the seeming contradiction in the building architecture: the buildings have rear facades along the attractive waterfront views. In other communities, the buildings have been re-oriented over time to take advantage of the views and water orientation. This has not been the case in New London yet.

Few remnants remain of the mercantile and industrial structures that were historically associated with the era of waterfront trade; the Custom House and the handsome stone structure on Bank Street opposite Tilley Street are important links to this past.

FIGURE 11: EXISTING LAND USE



The repopulation of the district with new residential structures represents a major change in the building types from historic precedents. These are relatively large footprint buildings that rise above the surrounding buildings to take advantage of the views. The design compatibility of these buildings has become an important consideration within New London, and has been part of the impetus for the institution of *Design Review Guidelines*.

The open blocks of parking along Green Street are a significant visible interruption in the relatively complete fabric of the other portions of the neighborhood. Like most historic downtowns, the need for parking areas and the decline in the viability of downtown uses led to the creation of consolidated properties. As a result, however, Green Street is no longer flanked by buildings in the manner that defines traditional streets and building patterns. The buildings that face Green Street along its northern edge have no corresponding “partners” on the south side.

The planning team undertook an inventory of the streetscape within the neighborhood to understand the urban design character that exists today and its relevance to the aesthetics of the historic district and the pedestrian and vehicular circulation that the streets support. A diagram has been provided indicating the major components of the streetscape (Figure 12). The paucity of street trees is a quite noticeable; limited segments of the streets and parking areas have been planted. The sidewalks along Bank Street and Green Street are relatively wide, while the connecting streets and residential areas are characterized by narrow sidewalks that are a hallmark of 18th and 19th century development patterns. The street lighting fixtures include several types of historically-inspired designs that appear attractive and appropriate. While there are stretches of overhead utilities lines within the district, they are neither as extensive or obtrusive as often occurs in traditional neighborhoods.

A cluster of photographs of the neighborhood are provided on the following pages to convey the character of the buildings, places and streets of which it is composed. They depict a district that is remarkably intact, not simply as a collection of historic structures, but as a traditional pattern built through incremental eras of economic and civic life.

FIGURE 12: EXISTING STREETScape INVENTORY



FIGURE 13: PHOTO INVENTORY – AERIAL VIEWS OF PROJECT AREA



FIGURE 14: PHOTO INVENTORY – COMMERCIAL AND MIXED USE BUILDINGS



1. This Bank Street building represents the traditional relationship of retail shops along the ground floor and several upper levels that may have been designed for either residential or commercial use. 2. This intact historic Federal style structure on Bank Street has three entrances – two for its storefronts, and one for the upper floor uses. 3. This Bank Street building has upper floors that are largely intact, but has retail storefronts that retain transparent shop windows and a retail entrance. 4. This Bank Street commercial structure retains its historic integrity, although its current underutilization is apparent through the windows of the upper floors. 5. The new residential complex along Bank Street near Reed Street evokes historic styles, without correctly employing them in a manner that is consistent with its original purposes or effects. For example, an applied Mansard roof is reminiscent of architecture popularized during the Victorian era, but is a simple, applied element one floor below the top level. As a result, the Mansard does not cap the building scale or reduce the apparent size of the “attic” floor to which it is applied.

FIGURE 15: PHOTO INVENTORY – HOMES AND HOUSES



1. Starr Street has been a symbol of restoration within New London. 2. The streetscape enhances the identity and quality of the area. 3. There are individual examples of historic styles, including this Federal Style house. 4. The collection of similar buildings creates a "fabric" that is valuable because it is intact.

FIGURE 16: PHOTO INVENTORY – CIVIC BUILDINGS AND SPACES



1. The historic Customs House and the Maritime museum that it contains are landmarks along Bank Street.
2. The adaptive reuse of this building near Tilley Square on Bank Street is an excellent example of a contemporary interpretation of historic styles.
3. The firehouse creates a transition from the predominately commercial portion of Bank Street to the more residential areas further south.
4. Unfortunately, this public open space is set against a broad and busy traffic intersection.



FIGURE 17: PHOTO INVENTORY – STREETS AND STREETScape



1. Golden Street is a narrow urban way that creates an important pedestrian and vehicle connection from Bank Street. 2. Although the stretch of Bank Street between State Street and Golden Street is outside of the Planning Area for this study, it will appropriate to extend many of the recommended planning concepts and actions to help ensure that Bank Street is a continuously vital, historic corridor. 3. The multiplicity of building styles, materials, heights and massing along Bank Street adds variety and interest. 4. The consolidation of two buildings into single ownership that joins a ground floor business has somewhat obscured the distinguishing architecture of the two structures; future improvements could consider methods to create continuity while retaining the integrity of the underlying structures.

FIGURE 18: PHOTO INVENTORY – WATERFRONT



1. The broad esplanade can seem empty and uninviting when there are no events underway. 2. Water Street today is largely lined with the “backs” of Bank Street buildings, and the protective fencing along the rail right-of-way. 3. The alley-like view corridors to the water are important visual connections for the neighborhood. 4. The pier improvements are impressive and well designed; additional waterside uses would be an enhancement. 5. The ability to stroll along the waterfront and enjoy the view is a key amenity.

FIGURE 19: PHOTO INVENTORY – BANK STREET COMMERCIAL AREA



1. The entrance to Golden Street and the nearby parking areas is not well marked.
2. Although improvements are needed, this facade exemplifies the advantages of variety in the materials and styles of commercial structures along Bank Street.
3. Judiciously located street trees could enhance the scale, variety and seasonal interest of the streetscape.
4. The use of murals and other architectural enhancements serves to upgrade the pedestrian experience along connecting streets where there are limited doorways, windows and building frontages.



Zoning

The City regulates land use and building patterns largely through its zoning and subdivision ordinances. The current zoning map for the neighborhood is displayed in the following diagram (Figure 20). The C-2 Commercial district is aligned along Bank Street and allows for a wide range of commercial uses. The adjacent General Commercial (C-1) district similarly allows for a wide range of commercial and social service uses, while residential uses are “discouraged” (sections 510). The house-lined streets are within a residential district (R-3, section 420), which restricts most uses to residential, but allows certain commercial uses by special permit. A General Commercial District extends along Reed Street and Jay Street, and is anomalous relative to the residential structures and uses that are nearby and contained within it, because the zoning generally discourages residential uses.

The City is in the process of evaluating the potential advantages of instituting a new overlay zone within the downtown, which would overlap portions of the neighborhood planning area that is the subject of this *Action Plan*. The potential location of this Incentive Housing Zone zoning (IHZ) is indicated on Figure 21. The purpose of this zoning category is intended to provide incentives for investment in housing that takes advantage of the urban densities and infrastructure associated with village, town and city centers. The zoning seeks a method to ensure that at least a proportion of the housing is affordable.

Existing Ownership Patterns

The City’s geographic data base provides an opportunity to evaluate the existing patterns of ownership. This is a useful way of understanding how and where change may occur, and to better understand the relationships among sites and uses. Figure 22 depicts the sizes of parcels within the planning area. The majority of parcels are relatively small, corresponding to the scale and variety of a compact and diverse urban district. Two large, consolidated parcels stand out along the waterfront; the larger sites have been – and may in the future – serve as opportunities for significant change and redevelopment. The large vacant parcel along Reed Street similarly suggests opportunities for change in the future. The municipally-owned Bank Street lots serve as the district’s parking reservoir; their size and locations have given rise to many ideas about possible changes there.

Figure 23 provides some insight into residential ownership patterns. The data is imprecise but indicative of a fairly even balance between rental and ownership properties. However, the rental properties are more concentrated along the western streets, while Starr and Tilley Streets are largely flanked by owner-occupied homes and units.

GIS evaluations also examined parcels that are grouped within the same ownership. There are no indications of substantial parcel or block assembly that might precede major shifts in use or investment. In short, the parcels are relatively small, the ownership diverse, with a few locations where ownership and parcel configuration suggests the possibility of significant changes eventually.

FIGURE 20: EXISTING ZONING

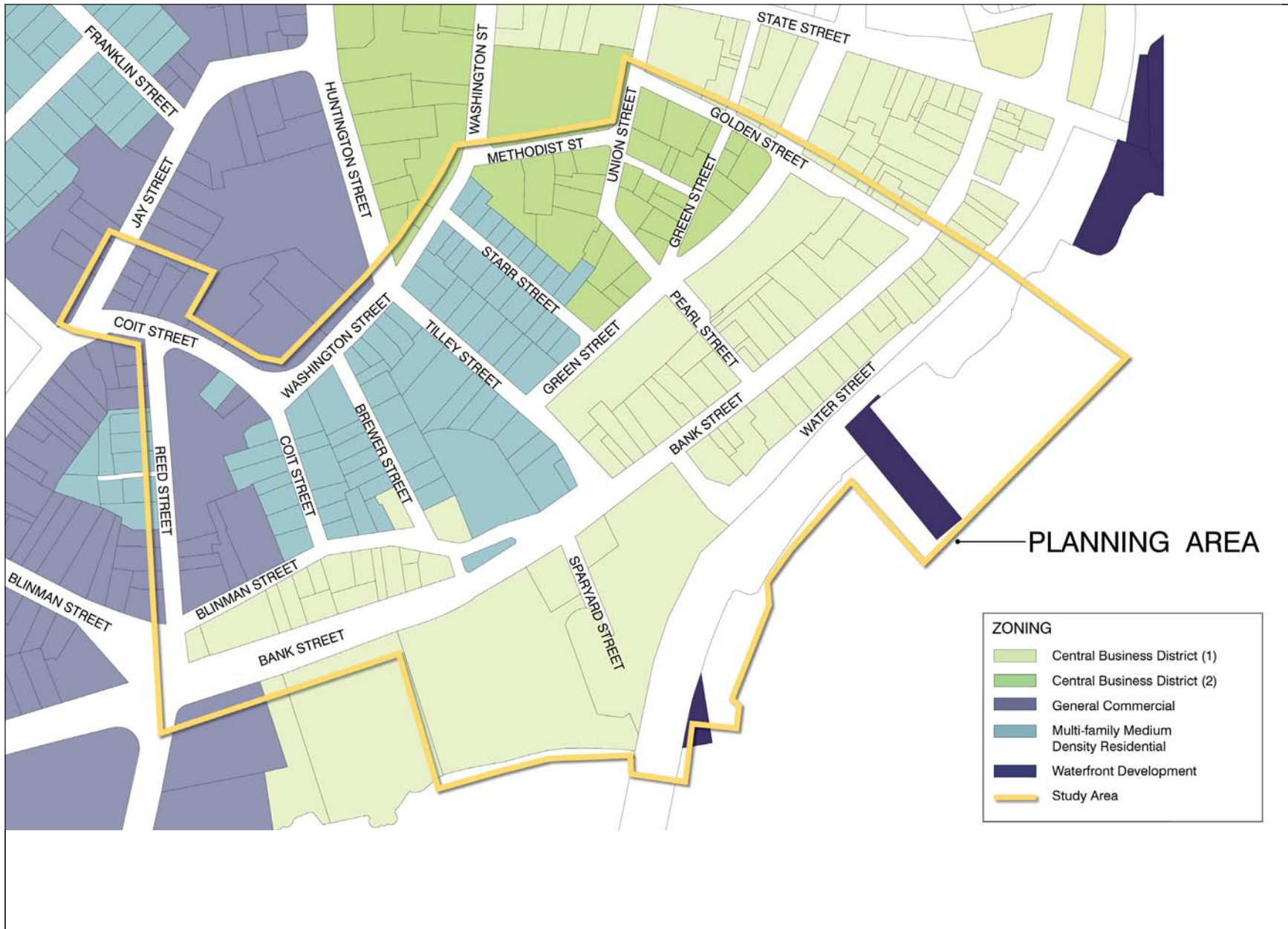


FIGURE 21: DRAFT INCENTIVE HOUSING ZONE (IHZ) BOUNDARY



FIGURE 22: PARCEL SIZE ANALYSIS

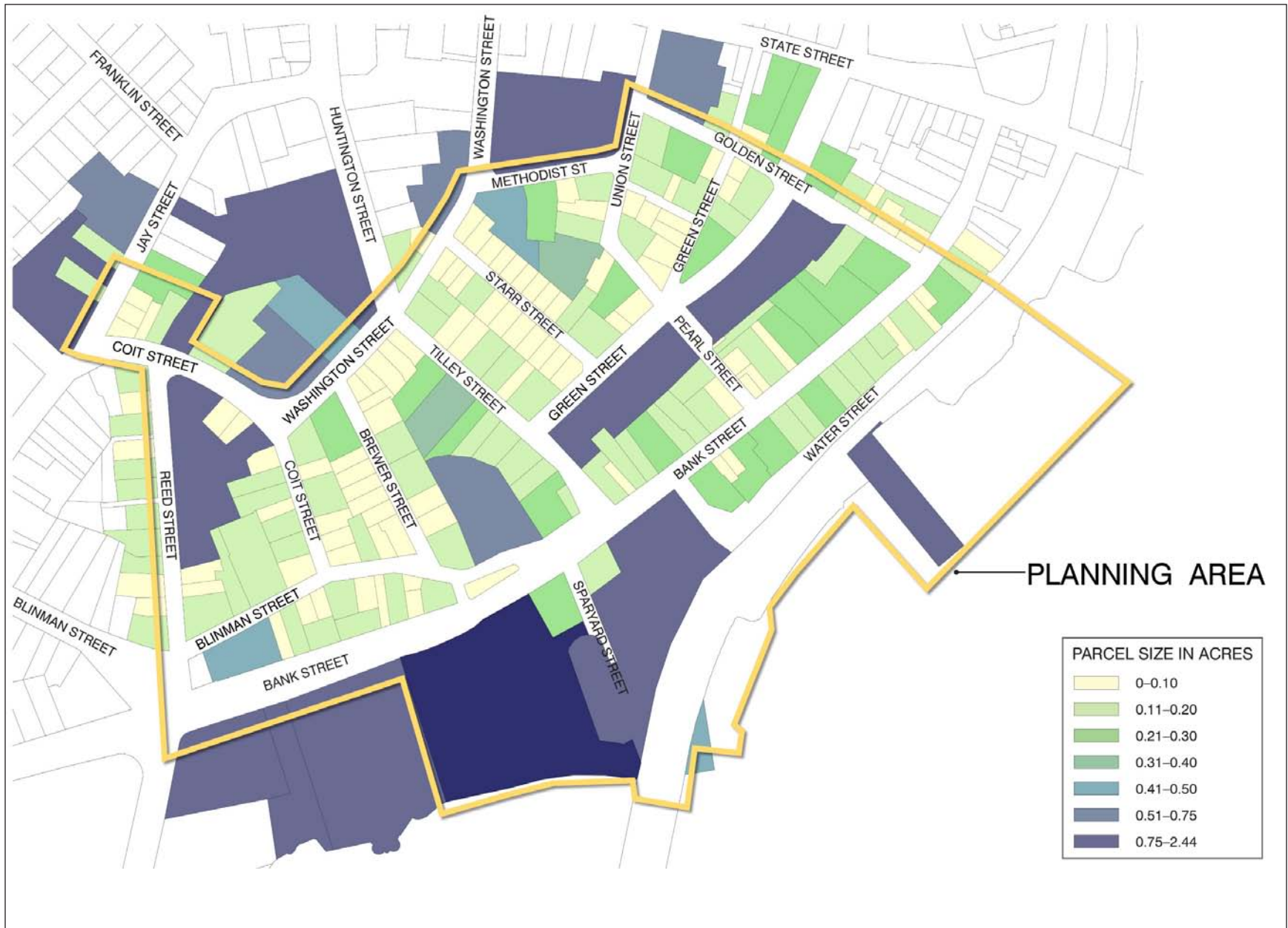
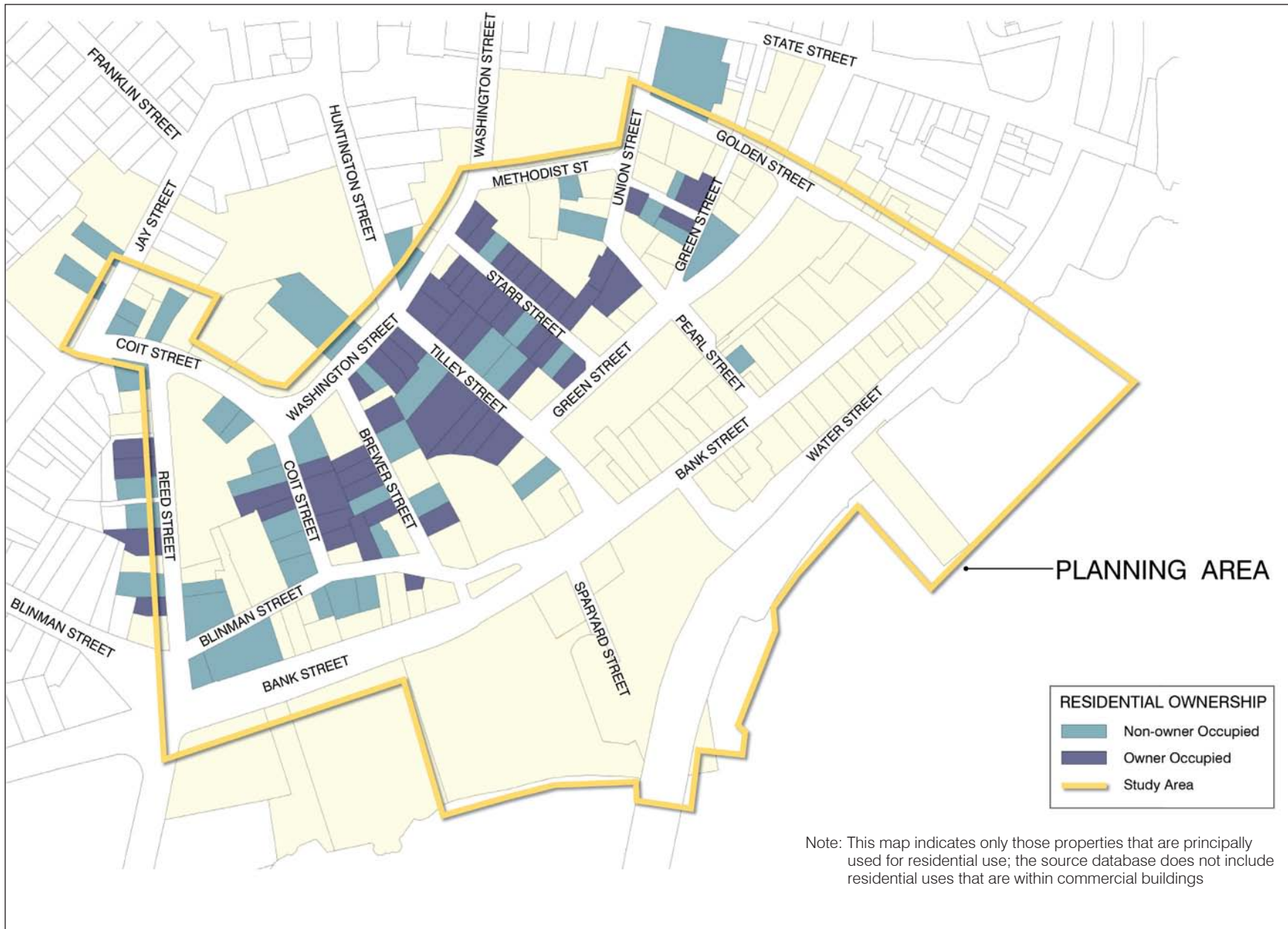


FIGURE 23: RESIDENTIAL OWNERSHIP PATTERNS



Existing Transportation, Circulation and Parking

The transportation, circulation and parking in this neighborhood have been extensively studied and evaluated as part of other planning efforts. Helpful insights and information can be gained by reviewing the reports associated with the Regional Intermodal Transportation Center (RITC) study and the IHZ zoning studies, particularly in regards to parking. Several observations regarding the transportation network and vehicles in the district are important to underline relative to the neighborhood that is the focus of this *Action Plan*:

- One way street pair of Bank Street and Green Street – The one-way street pairing may have some benefits for traffic moving through the district, but has several important drawbacks that are deleterious to the neighborhood. From the perspective of the businesses and institutional destinations along Bank Street, the circulation pattern reduces passerby traffic substantially relative to a two-way traffic pattern. Importantly, visitors and potential patrons to the Bank Street commercial and civic district are required to approach it from the relatively unattractive “back” side, travelling along the open parking areas. The intersection where the one-way pair meets creates a broad and busy vehicular zone that reduces the visual and pedestrian continuity along Bank Street. The configuration of the streets and intersections appears conducive to through traffic, and vehicle speeds have been mentioned as a deterrent to a more attractive pedestrian environment.
- The rail station and rail access – This district is distinguished from many other historic neighborhoods by the presence of the major northeast rail corridor and a station that is steps away. The prospect of growing connections to other urban areas and the extension and expansion of commuter-oriented service may prove to be a vital component in the revitalization of the neighborhood for its residents, and to a more limited extent for visitors and business patrons.
- Other one-way streets – There are several other one-way streets in the area, mostly along predominately residential streets. To the extent that this provides a better pedestrian environment and appropriate on-street parking, this pattern is helpful.
- On-street parking – On-street parking is fairly plentiful within the area where the width of streets allow. In general, on-street parking is very important to fostering a convenient business environment.
- Public parking supply and locations – The district enjoys the benefits of convenient parking in the Green Street lots, which are connected along side streets to Bank Street and other destinations in the area. The value of this resource in relationship to future reinvestment should not be overlooked. The City also maintains large parking structures in the vicinity of the district, notably the multiple story facility to the north across State Street. The recent improvements at the Parade and streetscape along State Street provide excellent and convenient pedestrian connections to the district, and will prove to be an essential resource to support the reinvestment and revitalization of the neighborhood over time.

APPENDIX B: NOTES FROM PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

Public Visioning Workshop #1 Meeting Notes

Meeting Date:	May 5, 2010
Meeting:	Public Visioning Workshop #1
Meeting Location:	Public Library of New London, New London, CT
Project:	New London Neighborhood Revitalization and Visioning Study
Attendees:	Community members, Study Steering Committee members, The City of New London Office of Development and Planning members, Project Consultant Team members
Copies:	Project Steering Committee Members, Project File

On Wednesday, May 5th approximately fifty community members attended the first Public Visioning Workshop for the New London Neighborhood Revitalization and Visioning Study. Agendas and comment sheets were distributed to the participants.

After a brief introduction, the members of the Consultant Team gave a presentation of the initial findings of the study. This included a review of the study area's physical inventory, traffic conditions, and historic resources. Recommendations for potential changes to the New London Design Guidelines were discussed and a conceptual plan for streetscaping along a portion of Bank Street was presented.

Following the Consultant Team's presentation, the participants were divided into five working groups for a series of visioning activities and group discussions. Participants worked collaboratively to identify assets, liabilities and redevelopment opportunities within the study area. Using aerial photos of the study area, participants also created conceptual development schemes. Members of the Consultant Team facilitated discussions on a vision for the neighborhood. Topics of discussion included identifying a potential marketing strategy for neighborhood elements, brainstorming ways to raise awareness of historic elements and resources, and discovering possible connections between the diverse groups within the community (residents, businesses, cultural institutions, nonprofits, etc).

The following section contains a summary of participant feedback during the presentation and working group sessions. These notes are not intended to provide a comprehensive account of the evening but, instead, identify common themes of discussion.

Vision for the Neighborhood

- Support neighborhoods
- Improve the flow of traffic
- Aesthetics
- Create a welcome, safe and inviting marina
- Boat show with Mystic Seaport
- Create a vision for the Harbor
- Presentation on web - Regional website
- Coast of New London - 7 miles of underutilize – lack of access
- Create services for residential development
- Access to water
- More events and festivals – block the streets – make people park and walk
- Boardwalk between City Pier and Spar Yard
- Sidewalk historic – connect Hempstead House to Shaw’s Mansion
- Gateways
- Harbor access for all kinds of boats
- Architecture
- Ways to screen parking
- European/Caribbean flair in New England with New England architecture
- Jitney/trolley/light rail: safe, closed circuit TV, reduce congestion
- Bike path to Ft. Trumbull
- Cross walks need to be defined and bump outs are needed
- Green roofs – funding for sustainability?
- Consensus
- A one-way on Bank Street: Increase parking, Eliminate through traffic, Reroute to S. Water Street?
- Boating community as customer base off S. Water and Water Street Park
- Need for balance (respect) between commercial and residential to create a coordinated direction and vision
- Reduce noise and traffic
- What kind of residential area: should Bank and Tilley be regional or local?
- What kind of business area: regional versus serve the needs of local residents? Is this economically realistic?

- Improved/appropriate public transit and trolleys – frequent and usable
- More Starr St – Coit/Brewer/Tilley
- Restore integrity of original street grid
- More pedestrian friendly and bike friendly
- More upper floor housing on Bank Street
- Green space / public space
- Greater density
- Keep focus on the water
- Create a walkable neighborhood with safe pedestrian ways
- Trees
- Parking
- Mixed use
- Proximity to transportation: Water, Rail, and Highway
- Mixed zoning – local business
- Potential
- Night business
- People want it to work
- Developing arts community
- Waterfront substitutes for green space
- Boating
- Many small historic sites

Assets

- Both sides of Bank Street
- Waterfront park
- Residential neighborhoods
- Historic districts
- Fire house
- Green open spaces
- Capitol theater

- Piers
- Historic homes
- Custom House Piers, Amistad
- Business on Bank Street (long-term)
- Waterfront location
- Historic nature
- Wealth of specific historic buildings
- Potential for transient boat traffic customers
- Galleries
- Potential for re-worked streets and parking to support neighborhood revitalization and character
- Potential to draw customers from ferry customers/passengers

Issues and Liabilities

- Blighted homes
- Need for neighborhood association
- Solve traffic pattern issues
- Traffic patterns leading to Tilley / Bank Street
- Major traffic arteries break neighborhoods and isolate residential areas from downtown
- Traffic on all streets - roads are pass-throughs
- Traffic coming out of Ferry Terminal
- Parking lots on Green
- Appearance of parking lots
- Current parking configuration limits residential development
- Street network still facilitates illegal activity although it is less than in the past
- Safety – perception
- Brewer/Coit Street area unsafe
- Improving aesthetics
- Train tracks (lack of Harbor maintenance / access)
- Number of small bars
- No grocery store

- No open space for people and animals
- Enormous amounts of empty commercial space
- Public transportation is not adequate
- Width of Bank Street – Tilley to Howard
- Image of Bank Street - History/legacy
- Lack of transit
- Fence along tracks
- Poorly maintained low income housing Brewer/Tilley/Coit
- No supermarket
- Night business
- Closed on Sunday
- Lack of place for youth
- Lack of green space
- City Pier falling apart

Public Feedback (Workshop #2)

Meeting Notes

Meeting Date:	June 8, 2010
Meeting:	Public Feedback (Workshop #2)
Meeting Location:	Public Library of New London, New London, CT
Project:	New London Neighborhood Revitalization and Visioning Study
Attendees:	Community members, Study Steering Committee members, The City of New London Office of Development and Planning members, Project Consultant Team members
Copies:	Project Steering Committee Members, Project File

On Tuesday, June 8th approximately 35 community members attended the second Public Visioning Workshop for the New London Neighborhood Revitalization and Visioning Study.

The workshop began with an introduction by the Consultant Team to review the purpose of the study and the study's progress to date. Next, the Team reviewed the results of the first Public Visioning Workshop during which they shared participant feedback regarding the main assets and issues within the study area as well as ideas and inspirations for the area's future. A presentation of other communities that could serve as case studies for New London followed the review of the first workshop. The case study communities were:

- New Bedford, MA
- Providence, RI
- Newburyport, MA
- Portsmouth, NH
- Plymouth, Ma

A copy of the PowerPoint presentation used for this portion of the workshop was attached to the minutes.

After the presentation, the participants were divided into small working groups for an activity designed to identify actions, resources, and responsibilities concerning the four main stakeholders in the neighborhood. These stakeholder groups were:

- The public sector and the public realm
- Institutions and organizations
- Business and investment

- Residents and residences

The following section contains a summary of participant feedback during the small working group sessions. These notes are not intended to provide a comprehensive account of the evening but, instead, identify common themes of discussion.

Public Sector and the Public Realm

Action	Resource	Responsibility
<u>More Parking</u> Parking deck on Green Street/Eugene O’Neil Drive	\$ City- owned land Private sector Parking commission P2C	City Private sector P2C
<u>Density</u> Residential on first floor may be necessary	City	City
<u>Traffic</u> Fly over on I-95 S Bank Street – one way/two way Median on Bank and Reed Walking/traffic/sprawl Poor design overall	City	City/State
<u>Connections</u> Fort Trumbull Hodges Square Safety <u>Complete Streets</u> Public transit Connecting waterfront park to Fort Trumbull	Private property	Amtrak Colleges City

Business and Investment

Action	Resource	Responsibility
Unique shops (10 businesses)	Continued rent subsidies from City	City or Main Street
Business support services	Continued funding	

Event attraction	More dollars	Economic coordination
Better economic development program	Funded grants	
Mixed use development aid		
Other development aid		
Package subsidies for small business		
Fill existing buildings with residents	More options to convert ground level space to residential Obtain seed money from city Other uses for ground level space Downtown services and shops Property tax relief Permitting/approval assistance	
Linking downtown to Ft Trumbull	New bridge Extend waterfront walk	
Truly develop the waterfront	Get DEP approval	
Get more density	Build from successful areas and connect to them Make Bank Street more pedestrian friendly Change the traffic patterns Activity on Water Street side Connect neighborhood to “real” streets Bikes and pedestrians	
Seize on funkiness (art shows, plays...)		
Viral marketing	Own resources	Funky merchants
Establish and maintain mix		Business recruitment
Get participation of non-profit lenders		
Get participation of non-profit developers		
Help “package” subsidies for small projects	Money – funded position through city grants	City
Key property target list (example – Kronin Building)		City
Marketing beyond New London (Hartford, Providence)	Business Assessment through special events	City
Fill waterfront for passersby		Main Street, City

Institutions and Organizations

Action	Resource	Responsibility
Downtown presence for colleges	Partner in mixed use project	Institutions Habitat NeighborWorks Salvation Army 3 Colleges
Engaging students Motivation: Better Downtown, Better Institutions	Transportation Attractions Greater knowledge Food money	City/institutions Main Street events New partnerships between the City and Institutions
Revitalize neighborhoods (working with current homeowners - 50% inc.)	Volunteers and donors	Habitat
Organizations sharing space and resources Moving social service organizations	Existing budgets	Organizational
Define roles/difference in mission of organizations for coordination and efficiency	Facilitator + Summit	Connecticut Humanities Council Connecticut Association of Non-Profits City grant
Town Calendar		Main Street (Limited) Culture Czar City Executive
“Saturday” Parade Event was a success because of participation – model for others	Donations City Personnel Organizations AmeriCorps Jobs	
Respond to Community Program Needs	Maritime Museum	
Teach public about social service agencies	Salvation Army Store	State? Agencies? City?

Residents and Residences

Action	Resource	Responsibility
--------	----------	----------------

Revolving fund	City	Non-Profits
Land value tax	Revenue concurrent with success	State/City
Regular transit		Shoreline East
Zoning for appropriate uses	State	City
Good buffers (trees, new buildings)		City
Improving the traffic pattern		City/Developers
Improve walk-ability and bike-ability		City
Less on-street parking and more room for bikes and pedestrians		City
Greater advocacy	City Citizens	Citizens
Buzz that New London is a “cool” place	City Citizens	Citizens Residents

Introduction

This document provides professional observations and recommendations concerning refinements of New London's *Design Review Guidelines*.

The City of New London has established a set of *Design Review Guidelines* to help improve the downtown business district as a convenient, safe and attractive place that is economically vital. The current set of guidelines was formally adopted by the City's Planning & Zoning Commission (September, 2009). The document was prepared by New London Landmarks through the collaborative efforts of a Design Review Study Committee appointed by the Planning & Zoning Commission and consultants for New London Landmarks. The guidelines were authored by Sandra Kersten Chalk, Executive Director of New London Landmarks.

This review has been undertaken as a task within the New London Neighborhood Revitalization and Visioning Study that has been conducted by the City of New London. That study has been funded by a grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, has been managed by the City Planner and guided by a special Steering Committee assembled for that initiative.

The *Design Review Guidelines* are an important tool that can be used to advance historic preservation and neighborhood revitalization within New London. This review provides an independent professional review of that tool in the immediate context of historic neighborhood revitalization in the areas under study, as well in the broader context of other areas to which the *Design Review Guidelines* may be applied. The review has been undertaken by The Cecil Group and its professionals that include licensed architects, landscape architects, urban designers and urban planners who have prepared and helped implement similar guidelines and tools in other historic communities.

This review and recommendations focus on the contents of the *Design Review Guidelines*. It addresses several topics and provides recommended additions to the *Design Review Guidelines* specifically requested by the City:

- New multi-family, commercial or mixed-use buildings with lower floor(s) devoted to parking.
- Bulk and massing, height, setbacks, building orientation, and design of one, two and multi-family infill housing including guidance regarding incorporation of "within building" garages with doors facing street frontage.
- Issues associated with blending new (or retrofitting existing) commercial development into this and similar historic neighborhoods in the New London.

In addition to the specific topics noted above, a series of general observations have been separately forwarded to the City Planner which considers how the *Design Review Guidelines* might be refined to provide an increasingly effective tool for the future.

Observations and recommendations regarding the methods that may be used for applying the *Design Review Guidelines* are separately addressed in the Action Plan that have been prepared as a final report of the New London Neighborhood Revitalization and Visioning Study.

Guidelines for Lower Floor(s) Devoted to Parking

The current guidelines do not address design goals or methods that could be used to ensure that exterior appearance of parking levels on the ground floors or lower levels of buildings are compatible with the historic architectural context in which they are placed.

We suggest that the following be added to the section of the *Design Review Guidelines* that addresses Infill Development:

Goals for Parking within Buildings or Structures

Special design provisions should be undertaken to conceal parking that is contained within buildings and create exterior architectural envelopes and site enhancements to avoid the appearance of large scale, undifferentiated surfaces or volumes. The design provisions should serve to disguise the automobile uses that are contained within the structures.

Concealed Parking Design Review Criteria

1. To the extent consistent with feasible development, building design should provide uses along street frontages for uses other than parking, and conceal parking below grade or behind those uses.
2. If there is no feasible method to conceal a single level parking completely behind other uses or below grade, then partial concealment may be achieved by lowering the parking level relative to the adjacent street grade to approximately ½ of its vertical height, and providing building entrances at or near grade level.
3. Modest setbacks from the sidewalk edge may be used to create a varied landscape edge and buffer parking levels that are concealed behind facades at the lower levels of buildings.
4. Trellises, screens or other architectural features should be used to partially cover and conceal ventilation openings into parking levels.

5. Architectural facades should conceal as much of the exterior surface area of parking levels as possible, except for the minimum area needed to provide adequate ventilation.
6. Architectural facades concealing parking levels should appear to be integral components of the larger façade of which they are part, which in turn should meet all other applicable design criteria for facades contained in the *Design Review Guidelines*.

Guidelines for Infill Housing

The existing *Design Review Guidelines* do not distinguish housing as a building type; rather, they seek to define criteria that are based on the broad concept that compatibility is sought relative to neighboring and historic structures. In this regard, the existing structure of and content of the Guidelines is generally appropriate and applicable to infill housing, with a few exceptions.

In several locations, the design guidelines imply an inappropriately limiting approach to the provision of infill housing by seeking retail or active use of the ground level. This approach is not consistent with many of the buildings and streets within the downtown which were not commercially oriented in the past, and were predominately residential in character. Additionally, the downtown is unlikely to be able to sustain the extent of retail, commercial or other active ground floor use that it once supported. As a result, provision needs to be made to provide flexibility in use at the ground level, while reinforcing the traditional architectural fabric and patterns where possible. The following additional language is suggested, in the section of the *Design Review Guidelines* devoted to infill development.

Goals for Infill Housing

Infill housing should be designed to be compatible with the traditional scales, forms and architectural patterns of the buildings that are adjacent and nearby, regardless of whether those buildings were originally designed for residences.

Infill Housing Design Review Criteria

1. In general, the design review criteria for buildings and sites that are applicable to any infill project are applicable to housing developments, except as specifically noted below.
2. Where housing development would occur on a site that is along a street or portion of a street that has been predominately residential in use at the ground level, then residential uses may occupy the ground level.
3. Commercial or retail uses on the ground level may not be feasible for some locations for new multiple-story buildings with residential uses. However, in those locations where the ground floors of adjacent buildings were originally designed for commercial or retail uses, then the ground levels will of infill housing should be

designed to replicate that pattern and architectural character, even if the ground level is occupied with housing.

Guidelines for Compatibility of New or Renovated Commercial Developments

The existing *Design Review Guidelines* do not distinguish commercial development (or other specific uses) as building and architectural types; rather, they seek to define criteria that are based on the broad concept that compatibility is sought relative to neighboring and historic structures. As we have noted regarding infill housing, the existing structure and content of the *Guidelines* is generally appropriate and applicable to new or renovated commercial development. However, circumstances could arise where new commercial development is proposed within the context of a building or neighboring structures that are predominately residential in terms of building type or architecture. The following General Criteria might be added to address this issue:

In the event that commercial development is undertaken within a building originally designed as a residence, or where new commercial infill development occurs where the neighboring structures are largely composed of buildings originally designed for housing, then residential architectural styles, massing and characteristics should be retained and employed.