

Bridge Street Neck Neighborhood Revitalization Plan

Prepared for:
City of Salem, MA

Prepared by:
The Cecil Group, Inc.
GLC Development Resources
Peter Smith Associates

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DRAFT

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INTRODUCTION

This draft plan document compiles the key findings, planning concepts and recommendations developed for the Bridge Street Neck neighborhood of Salem during a five-month planning process, carried out from March to August 2009. It is envisioned that the recommendations and strategies herein proposed will help to shape the future of the community during the next five to ten years.

This study has been funded through a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) as part of its Gateway Plus Action Grant program, aimed at improving housing conditions, quality of life, and community engagement with the assistance of local municipalities. It has been prepared for the City of Salem's Department of Planning and Community Development with support provided by a team of professional planners and specialists in economics and housing.

Goals and Objectives

The overall purpose of this plan is to generate strategies for the revitalization of the Bridge Street Neck neighborhood, one of the oldest settlements in the City of Salem.

Key complementary goals of this study are the following:

- Improve the business climate along Bridge Street.
- Identify measures to reduce foreclosures and stabilize the local housing market.
- Recommend physical improvements that will enhance the overall quality of living in the neighborhood.

The original Gateway Cities Grant outline of tasks and services associated with this plan set three specific objectives for the study:

- Act to support neighborhood development and village style housing.
- Support and enhance commercial retention and development opportunities.
- Maintain and improve the area's pedestrian environment.

Planning Process

The planning process incorporated extensive community participation. A Civic Engagement Program was prepared early in the process to orchestrate a series of meetings, stakeholder interviews and information outreach. The planning team worked in conjunction with the Bridge Street Neck Working Group through several meetings and working sessions, including a neighborhood walk. The Working Group is made of community members representing local businesses and residents, who were selected by the City to steer the direction of the planning process.

Three public meetings were held with the community, including a planning charrette to generate ideas and share concepts for a variety of housing, commercial and neighborhood improvements. Some of these meetings attracted more than 100 participants, and served to provide direct community input into the plan recommendations.

Planning Area

The planning area comprises the entire Bridge Street Neck north of Webb Street. South of Webb Street, the study area includes the properties with direct frontage on Bridge Street and all the properties that are located between Bridge Street, the water and the Salem MBTA station to the west (shown in *Figure 1*).

The existing commercial properties along Bridge Street represent a special area of focus for the economic analysis and revitalization strategies. *Figure 1* shows the location and boundaries of this Focus Area with a separate outline.

Planning Background

Historically, the Bridge Street Neck grew as a gateway district organized along the main road and bridge that connects Salem to the cities of Beverly and Danvers (Bridge Street/Route 1A). Land use along the road has been focused on retail and commercial services that cater to residents of Salem and the surrounding communities, and depend on automobile access. Single- and two-family homes are clustered behind the commercial properties on both sides of Bridge Street, extending throughout the neck and all the way to the water (see *Figure 1*).

A new bridge and bypass road were built in recent years to increase roadway capacity and divert through-traffic from the neighborhood. The resulting decrease in traffic on Bridge Street, which used to include trucks and large vehicles, has contributed to substantially reduce congestion, noise and pollution in the neighborhood. However, lesser traffic has also affected the local businesses by decreasing their visibility and marketing share within the region. This has been reflected in a reduced volume of sales.

The residential areas in the neighborhood, traditionally an enclave of workforce and moderate income households, have been impacted by the recent economic downturn and foreclosures that affect Salem and the rest of the region.

Existing Conditions Summary

In order to maintain consistency with the three specific objectives initially set for the plan, the assessment of existing conditions and the plan recommendations have been organized in three main areas of focus corresponding to each objective: housing, commercial revitalization and physical planning.

Housing Assessment

The City of Salem has approximately 19,000 total residences, of which 6% or about 1,200 units are located in the Bridge Street Neck neighborhood. The homes in the Bridge Street Neck are characterized by small single-family and two-family detached homes. Key findings on housing conditions are the following:

- The Bridge Street Neck neighborhood stands out because within a well priced city it represents a lower price option.
- The neighborhood is well positioned to pick up new residents who like Salem, but would prefer a well priced home instead of a rental unit.

FIGURE 1: PLANNING AREA



- From January 1, 2007 to March 15, 2009 in the Bridge Street Neck neighborhood there were 20 properties in various stages of foreclosure, as reported by the Warren Group.
- Salem has been proactive in dealing with foreclosures. The Mayor has appointed a property team that makes sure buildings are boarded up, neighbors are notified and other actions are taken to provide neighborhood stability.
- The City provides counseling services through the North Shore Community Action Program and other organizations.
- Salem has a very useful website listing numerous sources for foreclosure prevention and legal resources.

Commercial Assessment

Interviews with business owners indicate that businesses dependent on through traffic have lost significant sales over the last year. On the other hand, businesses with a loyal customer base appear to have remained stable because their customers no longer need to wait in heavy traffic to get to Bridge Street. These businesses have expressed concern, however, that new customers are no longer being drawn to the area.

A review of the properties along Bridge Street was conducted by going building to building, identifying uses with retail frontage and using the City's GIS data to complete floor area take-offs of the different buildings. Using this approach, an estimate of approximately 174,000 gross sf of space dedicated to ground floor commercial uses was established. The median space was approximately 3,250 gross sf in area. Key findings on commercial areas include the following:

- Reduction of traffic has alleviated delays, but removed a portion of the customer base and reduced exposure to through traffic.
- There is a mix of retail and residential uses on Bridge Street.
- The neighborhood residential population is too small to support existing retail by itself.
- Very few businesses serve as a draw or anchor at present.
- The character of Bridge Street is influenced by its immediate surroundings (the positive presence of water views, the negative visual impact of gas storage tanks and electric lines, and the proximity of residential areas).
- The quality of the appearance of retail buildings has deteriorated in recent years.
- The streetscape appearance and infrastructure need improvements, and are awaiting planned reconstruction.

Physical Planning Assessment

The Bridge Street Neck neighborhood is comprised of relatively small parcels, with Bridge Street serving as a centralized circulation "spine" that has connecting roads and blocks extending to the east and west.

Land Use

The dominant land use in the neighborhood is residential, with a substantial proportion of residential land zoned for two-family houses. There are commercial uses located along Bridge Street and industrial uses located at the northeast section of the planning area. The commercial uses include a bakery, restaurants, lodging, automotive services, and boat sales. The industrial uses include facilities of the regional gas and electric utility companies. The neighborhood also has a church and an elementary school.

There are three public open space areas: Gonyea Park, Collins Cove Playground, and Curtis Park/March Street Playground. There are also two unconnected sections of a bicycle network located within the planning area. Additionally there is a park planned for the north end of Bridge Street, on the remaining portion of the former bridge connection to Beverly.

Historic Resources

The neighborhood is rich with historic resources. There are two National Register Districts and a building on the National Register of Historic Places located within the planning area, and a Local Historic District is located nearby.

Pedestrian Routes

Although the neighborhood has a comprehensive network of street sidewalks, the historical nature of the sidewalks (narrow and close to street level in many locations) reduces their effectiveness in establishing a safe and friendly pedestrian environment. The reconstruction of the sidewalks along Bridge Street is planned as part of the Bridge Street reconstruction project. This project includes landscaping and period lighting that will enhance the pedestrian environment in the commercial areas.

Parking

The neighborhood has limited parking for residences and businesses due to its dense street network and built environment. Additionally, there are no curbside areas monitored for short term parking in the commercial area.

Zoning

The Bridge Street Neck neighborhood has nine different zoning districts and one overlay district. This is a significant number of different zoning districts for the size of the planning area. While the existing zoning appears to be reflective of historical uses associated with the Bridge Street Neck, its specific mix and allotment may not be appropriate for the future.

More extensive and detailed discussion of the Bridge Street Neck existing conditions is provided in *Appendix A* of this document.

The Bridge Street Neck neighborhood should be an active mixed-use neighborhood, incorporating lively commercial and residential areas. The neighborhood should have a safe and enjoyable pedestrian environment that connects its different amenities and serves its residents and businesses. This district should be a stable residential community with engaging open spaces and a variety of housing options and homeowner resources. Commercial businesses and development opportunities that are compatible and complementary with the area's residential fabric should be encouraged and supported.

A neighborhood vision has emerged throughout the planning process that is aimed at maintaining the residential character and scale of the neighborhood, while attracting more business and visitors to its commercial areas. Group discussions during public meetings and interviews with residents and business owners clearly conveyed that the community is proud of the historical character of the neighborhood, which should be protected and maintained. Homeownership is also an important quality that local residents would like to promote as part of their vision for the future.

Wishes were expressed to have a more walkable neighborhood, with better sidewalks and safer pedestrian crossings. People would like to safely walk all the way to the restaurants located at the northern end of Bridge Street, and to Salem Common a few blocks to the south. The proposed Bridge Street traffic improvements, currently in the planning stage will greatly improve the pedestrian and streetscape conditions along Bridge Street. In addition, and looking toward the future, wishes have also been expressed by the community to have sidewalk and streetscape improvements that extend beyond Bridge Street into the residential areas and the open space resources located along the waterfront.

A more vibrant commercial environment would also contribute to making the neighborhood more walkable and attractive. More neighborhood-scale businesses and restaurants would be desirable, especially at the end of Bridge Street where a restaurant “cluster” could be developed. Public access and amenities, such as a waterfront walk with access to the existing small beach and the new park that is being designed for the site of the old bridge, would contribute to creating a local destination for families and visitors alike.

The physical appearance of the commercial areas should be enhanced through building façade and signage improvements, especially in some of the zones that appear more deteriorated. Cleaning and good maintenance of buildings and site areas visible from public vantage points should be paramount. The few vacant and underutilized properties that exist should be rehabilitated in ways that contribute to improving the overall image and quality perception of the neighborhood.

The assessment of commercial properties and the proposed commercial revitalization strategies recognize that there are zones or sub-areas along Bridge Street with different commercial characters and customer bases. To the extent possible, businesses located in the northern end of Bridge Street should capitalize on their advantageous location, views and accessibility to become a local “destination”, while businesses more centrally located within the neighborhood should tend to be more compatible with residential uses and more neighborhood-oriented.

Some of the existing wholesale/automotive and industrial properties may not be fully compatible with the vision of a residential and neighborhood-scale commercial district as the one herein described, and this plan outlines a possible strategy to facilitate the relocation of businesses willing to move to a more advantageous location, where they could enjoy better access, visibility or site conditions.

The revitalization vision for the Bridge Street Neck neighborhood also considers the possibility that some of the large commercial properties currently used for automotive repair businesses and boat storage could in the long term be redeveloped for residential uses. This could result in the creation of new townhomes and moderate-scale residential development that would increase home buying and rental opportunities for young families and smaller households.

Future residential development should be complemented with the creation of new open space, and bicycle and pedestrian connections through the neighborhood. These could be designed and constructed in conjunction with the redevelopment of large sites, linking Bridge Street to the surrounding residential areas and waterfront. An ultimate goal for physical improvements would be the creation of an interconnected network of pedestrian and bicycle paths leading to the water and extending along the entire length of the waterfront perimeter.

These ideas are further developed and supported by the plan strategies and recommendations. The proposed revitalization vision is illustrated in *Figure 2*.

FIGURE 2: REVITALIZATION VISION



PLANNING STRATEGIES

The recommended planning strategies have been organized in a manner similar to the arrangement of the assessment of existing conditions; they are organized to reflect the three main areas of focus that correspond to the basic plan objectives: housing revitalization, commercial revitalization and physical planning.

Housing Revitalization

The recommended housing revitalization strategies consist of the following:

- Stabilize the local housing market through a coordinated homeowner assistance and marketing effort.
- Support a healthy real-estate market that has a diverse mix of housing prices, housing types and low vacancies.
- Support the development of neighborhood-scale new housing.
- Mitigate unsightly housing conditions that impact the overall appearance of the neighborhood.

The Bridge Street Neck neighborhood offers opportunities and great value to buyers who are making the commitment to buy a new home. The housing market is functioning, although at a slower pace than in the recent past: sales are taking place, home prices are down, interest rates are low and financing is available.

The most cost effective way to spur neighborhood revitalization is to spur the housing market. Most critically this needs to be done in a multifaceted way as part of coordinated homeowner assistance and marketing efforts. The fundamentals that are already in place for housing revitalization include amenity values, market values and available financing.

Commercial Revitalization

The recommended commercial revitalization strategies are the following:

- Promote the improvement and commercial redevelopment of sites with location advantages such as visibility, size and proximity to the water.
- Enhance the attractiveness and success of the waterfront area through new investment and reinvestment in a cluster of restaurants and destination uses.
- Improve the appearance of existing business properties.
- Attract new small businesses and reinvestment in existing businesses.
- Provide adequate and convenient parking for commercial uses.
- Enhance amenities to attract visitors to the Bridge Street Neck area.
- Enhance commercial identity and wayfinding signage.
- Promote and facilitate neighborhood business stewardship.
- Work with businesses that could benefit from moving from less compatible to more compatible sites, either within the neighborhood or to other areas of Salem.

For the Bridge Street commercial district to thrive again, it needs to give potential customers a better reason to come to Bridge Street, create a more visible and identifiable character capitalizing on its proximity to the water and downtown Salem, and tie together the retail and residential uses in a way that will help younger people see this neighborhood as an attractive residential option.

The City and local stakeholders are limited in their ability to bring about desirable changes in the retail mix and offerings that characterize the neighborhood commercial areas. But they can restrict to some extent undesirable uses, remove restrictions that currently impede desirable development, improve the environment through improvements to infrastructure, and support desired development.

One opportunity for improvement in the shorter-term is better signage. In addition to the existing highway signage, a controlled Bridge Street signage program would help to improve the image of the commercial area while drawing visitors and new customers.

Neighborhood Improvements

The recommended neighborhood improvement strategies consist of the following:

- Expand streetscape improvements along side streets, once the Bridge Street improvements are completed.
- Expand and improve open space connections and amenities.
- Extend pedestrian and bicycle access.
- Promote neighborhood stewardship.
- Support new development and renovations at key locations that are apt to change because of their size, location, potential value and relationship to the surrounding neighborhood.

Future infrastructure projects could include extending the Bridge Street renovation and reconstruction to key side streets, in order to extend vehicular and pedestrian improvements throughout the neighborhood. Increasing the Bridge Street Neck connection to the waterfront through public access, open space connections, bike paths and preservation of views can significantly enhance real estate values, civic life and commercial activities in the neighborhood.

Potential Redevelopment Sites

There are a couple of large properties on Bridge Street which could be reused in ways that would benefit both the owner and the neighborhood. There are also some smaller properties that contain vacant, run-down buildings which detract from the overall image and quality of living in the neighborhood. Conceptual development feasibility tests were conducted for these parcels and indicate that the redevelopment of these properties would not make economic sense in today's economic climate but conceivably could be feasible in the future. Potential reuse concepts could include an enhanced motel, a neighborhood-scale destination business, and a moderate-scale residential development.

Table 1 lists the proposed planning strategies and outlines key recommendations under each of the proposed strategies, including specific implementation measures. More detailed information and descriptions of the recommended strategies are provided in the document sections that follow.

Table 1. Planning Strategies

<i>Planning Strategy</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
HOUSING REVITALIZATION		
Stabilize the local housing market through a coordinated property owner assistance and marketing effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist homeowners at risk of foreclosure • Assist new owners in rehabilitating foreclosed properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orchestrate a multipronged effort to assist homeowners at risk of foreclosure and attract new resident owners • Focus information and enhance outreach within the community to identify opportunities such as homeowner assistance programs (e.g. North Shore Community Action Program, MassHousing purchase and rehabilitation loans for eligible families) • Provide access and education regarding City and state sponsored homeownership and home rehabilitation programs
Support a healthy real estate market that has a diverse mix of housing prices, housing types and low vacancies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract new residents to available housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market the neighborhood as an opportunity for first-time buyers • Coordinate marketing efforts to bring new buyers, lenders and partners
Support the development of neighborhood-scale new housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of low-rise multi-family/infill housing • Allow the conversion from commercial to residential use in appropriate locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake zoning and regulatory changes to allow mixed use and residential development along Bridge Street (e.g. change zoning from B4 to B1 district) • Consider special zoning strategies to promote appropriate and economically beneficial redevelopment (e.g. contract zoning)
Reduce unsightly housing conditions that impact the overall appearance of the neighborhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve deteriorated properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with property owners to seek grants, financial assistance when possible • Set up programs to help renovate foreclosed property • Help at-risk residents to seek loan modifications • Undertake additional, focused code enforcement

Table 1. Planning Strategies (Continued)

<i>Planning Strategy</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION		
Promote the improvement and commercial redevelopment of sites with location advantages such as visibility, size and proximity to the water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support enhanced business and restaurant clusters along the waterfront • Promote additional hospitality uses (hotel/motel/bed & breakfast) • Enhance waterfront access and amenities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with business owners to identify potential for improvements and need for technical/financial assistance • Promote shared strategy for marketing, waterfront amenities • Work with business/property owners to provide public access along the water • Create partnership for funding and building 1st phase of walkway along waterfront (from planned park at the end of Bridge Street to the 99 restaurant)
Enhance the attractiveness and success of the waterfront area through new investment in a cluster of restaurants and destination uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a focused redevelopment strategy suited to this tightly constrained area • Coordinate public access and use of the new park and waterfront edge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create special zoning or other regulatory tools and processes to encourage redevelopment • Work with property owners to promote reinvestment • Work with property owners to create and implement a shared parking strategy
Improve the appearance of existing businesses properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake façade improvement • Improve signage • Improve landscaping of parking lots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current design guidelines for commercial properties, and determine appropriateness with local business/property owners • Consider updating the design guidelines to incorporate guidance on the use of innovative materials and technologies (e.g. LED signs) • Reach out and work with interested property owners to achieve individual business results • Undertake additional code enforcement activities • Undertake outreach to educate business owners about existing programs

Table 1. Planning Strategies (Continued)

<i>Planning Strategy</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION		
Attract new small businesses and reinvestment in existing business properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote new infill businesses and reinvestment for neighborhood-compatible businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a promotional program for leasing and reinvestment by organizing collaborations among property owners and the commercial brokerage community Work with local property owners and technical assistance/business development programs to attract new businesses Assess the conformability of existing business properties and adjust zoning if needed to support viable businesses
Provide adequate and convenient parking for commercial uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance the parking supply on- and off-street Support the creation of shared and convenient parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage on street parking along Bridge Street to ensure availability of convenient parking for business customers Initiate conversations with business owners and utility companies to identify opportunities for new parking locations If agreement is reached, establish partnership to initiate technical parking studies and a shared parking strategy Support shared parking solutions through zoning
Enhance amenities to attract visitors to the Bridge Street Neck area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance waterfront access and activities, including provisions for transient boat access Promote the organization of summer festivals, program activities at the new park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake feasibility study for public amenities and recreational programming Undertake feasibility study for boat access Seek additional public funding of waterfront access and amenities Work with neighborhood businesses and residents to organize program of activities
Enhance commercial identity and wayfinding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complement the existing directional signage along the Bypass road (Route 1A) Provide wayfinding and informational signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complement the existing directional signage along the bypass road (Route 1A) with signs directing to the Bridge Street businesses for vehicles leaving Salem Create wayfinding and informational signage promoting the Bridge Street Neck businesses within the neighborhood and Downtown Salem Provide identification signage at each end of Bridge Street for vehicles and pedestrians

Table 1. Planning Strategies (Continued)

<i>Planning Strategy</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION		
Promote and facilitate neighborhood business stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the creation of a neighborhood business association or working group that incorporates local businesses and property owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue working with local residents and business owners building upon the Working Group interaction generated during this planning process
Work with businesses that could benefit from moving from less compatible to more compatible sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and enable business relocation and site reorganization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with property owners/businesses to consider opportunities and options Investigate mechanisms for technical/financial assistance and zoning incentives Investigate potential sites for business relocation within Salem Undertake zoning and regulatory changes to promote feasible redevelopment when market conditions allow

Table 1. Planning Strategies (Continued)

<i>Planning Strategy</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENTS		
Expand streetscape improvements along side streets, once the Bridge Street improvements are completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for sidewalk improvements and landscaping where possible • Connect improved sidewalks to waterfront, shared path and open space network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek and secure additional public funding and target local improvements in a strategic, step-by-step improvement program • Improve sidewalk conditions throughout the neighborhood • Study and implement traffic calming elements at selected locations along Bridge Street • Study the possibility and long term cost of undergrounding utilities
Expand and improve open space connections and amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand and improve open space along the water • Promote the creation of open space connections through new development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the provision of bonus incentives through zoning in exchange for the creation of open space and public amenities • Seek and secure additional public funding
Extend pedestrian and bicycle access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend pedestrian and bicycle access along the waterfront • Extend pedestrian and bicycle access through potential new development • Seek opportunities to generate a network of interconnected bike paths/shared paths, building upon the planned extension of the bike path along Route 1A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate feasibility studies to provide for public use and access where there are opportunities associated with zoning, Chapter 91 regulations or other methods • Study feasibility to extend the existing bicycle path from Webb Street north to Collins Cove Park, and to the planned park and open space at the end of Bridge Street • Improve signage and markings for the dedicated pedestrian and bicycle paths • Seek and secure additional public funding
Promote neighborhood stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a stewardship and leadership group through the participation of area residents, and create programs and activities at a neighborhood scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build upon Working Group interaction generated during this planning process by convening a meeting of interested parties, and identifying leadership to move the stewardship effort forward

Table 1. Planning Strategies (Continued)

<i>Planning Strategy</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT SITES		
Support new development and renovations at key locations which could change because of their size, location, potential value and relationship to the surrounding neighborhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterfront restaurant cluster • Brake & Clutch site • Clipper Ship Inn • Former plumbing facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with business/property owners to achieve shared goals and mutual benefits

HOUSING REVITALIZATION

The recommended housing revitalization strategies consist of the following:

- Stabilize the local housing market through a coordinated homeowner assistance and marketing effort.
- Support a healthy real estate market that has a diverse mix of housing prices, housing types and low vacancies.
- Support the development of neighborhood-scale new housing.
- Mitigate unsightly housing conditions that impact the overall appearance of the neighborhood.

A more detailed list of recommended steps and tools for implementation is provided in the *Implementation* section of this document.

The Bridge Street Neck neighborhood offers opportunities and great value to buyers who are making the commitment to buy a new home. The housing market is functioning, although at a slower pace than in the past; sales are taking place. Home prices are down, interest rates are low and financing is available.

In maximizing the effort by working with the market, the most cost effective way to spur revitalization of the area would be to spur the housing market. Most critically this needs to be done in a multifaceted way as part of coordinated homeowner assistance and marketing efforts. The fundamentals that are already in place for revitalization include amenity values, market values and available financing,

Amenity Values

- Ten minute walk to train and Pickering Wharf
- Water views all around
- Historic character, village settings
- Bike paths, walkability for shopping and recreation

Market Values

Based on a small sample of single family properties that have sold in the Bridge Street Neck neighborhood from June 2008 to March 2009 home values have dropped notably, making it a good time to buy. These single family homes sold at an average price of \$206,950 versus the asking prices of \$247,918. Homes took an average of 194 days to sell versus an average of 90 days in better times. It should be noted that the average sale price might have been lower at \$206,950 than the average sale price at other locations because the homes sold were on the smaller side—1,493 square feet versus a more probable average of over 2,000 square feet.

Data on single family sales is compiled in *Table 2* and *Table 3* below.

Table 2. Single Family Sales

Property Address	Bedrooms/bath	Square footage	Sale Date	Value
25 Cross St	2 bedroom/ 1 bath	1,104	3/12/2009	110,500
5 Cross Street Ct	4 br/2.5 baths	1,600	11/12/2008	242,200
22 Lathrop St	3br/1.5 baths	1,140	11/20/2008	199,000
31 Osgood St	2br/1 bath	2,348	3/9/2009	243,000
50 Osgood St			7/31/2008	257,000
17 Skerry St	4br/2.5	1,272	2/27/2009	190,000
		Average 1,493	Average	\$ 206,950

Source: Multiple Listing Service

Table 3. Single Family Sales Characteristics

Property Address	Price/SF	Original Price	Asking minus final	Days on Market
25 Cross St	100.09	154,900	44,400	264
5 Cross Street Ct	151.38	259,888	17,688	54
22 Lathrop St	174.56	239,900	40,900	104
31 Osgood St	103.49	259,900	16,900	132
50 Osgood St				
17 Skerry St	149.37	325,000	135,000	416
Average	\$ 136	\$247,918	\$ 50,978	194

Source: Multiple Listing Service

Available Financing

Although underwriting has tightened, credit for home purchases and renovations is readily available. Conventional lenders, particularly local banks, have mortgages to lend at unusually low rates. There are also a number of first time homebuyer mortgages available. MassHousing offers loans up to 100% of the property market value. MassHousing loans are targeted to single family homes, condominiums and small multifamily properties (less than 4 units) at prices from \$125,000 to more than \$400,000, very much the strike zone for property for sale in the Bridge Street Neck neighborhood.

In summary, Salem offers particularly good value now relative to other communities and the Bridge Street Neck neighborhood offers a best value opportunity for new homeowners.

Special Marketing

Salem and more particularly the Bridge Street Neck neighborhood have the opportunity to achieve a very successful marketing program. What follows is an outline of key potential program components.

The basic model could follow what MassHousing now calls its Buy Cities Program, which is modeled after the very successful Worcester program called *“Buy Worcester NOW—Take a Closer Look—There Has Never Been a Better Time to Purchase a Home in Worcester”*.

A similar program could have even greater results in Salem, where property values have been more stable and there have been fewer foreclosures (125 in Salem and 1,219 in Worcester using the same Neighborhood Stabilization Programs measurement parameters).

On the program management side there are key lessons to learn from Worcester. Salem would need to set up its own website providing neighborhood by neighborhood listings and presumably starting with the Bridge Street Neck neighborhood, and the strong engagement of the real estate brokerage community is a threshold requirement.

What makes Worcester’s program successful is the inclusion of new partners, new forms of assistance, and a strong marketing effort. Key elements of the program include the following:

- Down payment assistance: Colleges, businesses and other institutions offer down payment assistance programs for buyers. The Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) matches down payment assistance grants made by others and markets the program at no cost to Worcester.
- More lenders: Lending institutions are prequalified and induced to join the program with slightly reduced rates and closing costs. A constant mantra is responsible mortgage products versus what had been offered in years past.
- Special lending programs: MassHousing and MHP working with local banks can offer special mortgage products.
- Purchase and rehabilitation loans: Loans for first time homebuyers with incomes up to 120% of area median, and offering mortgage payment protection for up to 6 months if job loss or layoff occurs.
- Homebuyer Fairs: Events that match potential buyers with brokers and lenders.
- Historic preservation tax credits: 20% historic tax credit on applicable improvements (the program offers counseling on how to apply).

Conclusions and Next Steps

The recommended next steps for housing stabilization are the following:

- Help current residents facing foreclosure to seek loan modifications and refinancing opportunities if possible through MassHousing or the new federal

Making Home Affordable Program. Counseling is critical. Saving a home from foreclosure is best for the owner and the neighborhood.

- Expand the effort of the Problem Property Teams for coordinated effort to regulate properties in trouble. If not currently available, create common data base for property specific reporting that includes code, sanitary, foreclosure id, police and fire reports so full view of property situation can be determined quickly. If appropriate and eligible, extend resources for improvement.
- If workouts on all the foreclosed homes are not possible, then it is important to move the properties to new buyers through short sales auctions and other sales means. To help prepare for these sales to new owners, Salem can facilitate the process through a special marketing program, qualifying and training first time homebuyers, working with the CHAPA clearinghouse to make sure properties can be sold efficiently to qualified nonprofit buyers.
- Set up programs to help renovate foreclosed properties. Although funding from the Neighborhood Stabilization Program may not be available, Salem can still participate in Mass Housing Partnerships Enhanced Soft Second program and MassHousing's purchase rehabilitation mortgage program. Ideally, Salem rehabilitation program funds could be used with these programs.
- Coordinated marketing efforts as described in the Special Marketing Section on the Bridge Street Neck neighborhood will bring new buyers, new lenders, new partners—all of which can have a larger and more timely impact on improving the neighborhood.
- If a multipronged effort is not directed soon and the market further declines, then investors may arrive in greater numbers and take over on acquisition of homes. It is important to work with prospective homeowners before this could happen.
- As a cautionary note, whatever public programs are used need to be in place soon while key target parcels for neighborhood revitalization are available.

COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION

The recommended commercial revitalization strategies are the following:

- Promote the improvement and commercial redevelopment of sites with location advantages such as visibility, size and proximity to the water.
- Enhance the attractiveness and success of the waterfront area through new investment and reinvestment in a cluster of restaurants and destination uses.
- Improve the appearance of existing business properties.
- Attract new small businesses and reinvestment in existing businesses.
- Provide adequate and convenient parking for commercial uses.
- Enhance amenities to attract visitors to the Bridge Street Neck area.
- Enhance commercial identity and wayfinding signage.
- Promote and facilitate neighborhood business stewardship.
- Work with businesses that could benefit from moving from less compatible to more compatible sites, either within the neighborhood or to other areas of Salem.

For the Bridge Street commercial district to thrive, it will need to create a more visible and identifiable character capitalizing on its proximity to the water and downtown Salem, and tie together the retail and residential uses in a way that will help younger people see this neighborhood as an attractive residential option.

It makes sense to promote the existing characteristics that now loosely define the northern and southern sections of Bridge Street:

- The southern end has building stock and density that is well suited to smaller mixed use buildings with pedestrian friendly retail. This character could be maintained and improved through better sidewalks and streetscape, and the collaborative work of the existing business owners in some type of local business organization.
- The northern end will also be improved by the new park that can host events drawing visitors to the Bridge Street Neck neighborhood. The motel site could potentially be more intensively redeveloped, for a larger and enhanced motel, a significant retailer and office use. The reintroduction of night time use for entertainment could be considered, if it can be done with limited impact on the residential neighborhood.
- The middle zone of Bridge Street may be repositioned to knit together the two ends smoothly, while establishing a clear buffer for the residential and more automotive, boat and night life oriented retail. This zone is a good target location for clustered retail that could share parking. It could also be potentially redeveloped as a location for new moderate density residential and mixed use development projects (conceptual analyses of development feasibility are presented in *Appendix B*).

Commercial Revitalization Strategies

Table 4 provides specific recommendations for commercial revitalization that the City can apply to working with the existing businesses on an individual basis. The table includes a complete listing of all the businesses that exist today in the planning area, including an assessment of physical conditions (based on assessor's records and complemented with on-site observations from public vantage points). The table also provides an assessment of the land use compatibility of the businesses with the surrounding properties, and with the goals and vision identified for this study.

Figure 3 illustrates the available commercial property categories and *Figure 4* illustrates the overall physical conditions of business properties.

Character and Signage

One opportunity for improvement in the shorter-term is better signage. In addition to the existing highway signage, a controlled Bridge Street signage program would help to improve the image of the commercial area while drawing visitors and new customers.

Desires for better signage were expressed by local businesses and residents in meetings and interviews. Businesses would like to better advertise their location to vehicles traveling along the Bypass road and visitors to the downtown. They also would like to provide wayfinding orientation within the neighborhood itself and, if possible have a location where a listing of Bridge Street businesses could be provided.

There are signs on the Veteran's Memorial Bridge (Rte. 1A) providing directions to the Bridge Street businesses for vehicles entering Salem from Beverly. However, there are no signs providing directions to the Bridge Street Neck for vehicles leaving Downtown Salem on traveling north on the Bypass Road.

Figure 5 shows proposed signage improvements to increase awareness of the Bridge Street Neck businesses to regional through traffic, and identify gateways into the neighborhood. These include proposed directional and informational signs at both ends of Bridge Street, and a possible location for wayfinding elements at the northern end of Bridge Street.

Table 4. Commercial Revitalization Strategy

							Work with business owners to market the area, organize events and outreach	Provide assistance, incentives for business expansion, public amenities	Work with building owners to improve facades, storefronts, signage	Consider incentives, assistance to move some businesses to better location	Support the redevelopment potential of certain parcels through zoning, promotion
Address	Store Name	Story	Total Gross Sq. Ft.	Useable Sq. Ft. 85%	Physical Condition	Zoning	Compatibility with Land Use, Vision				
2 Bridge Street	Black Lobster	1	4,222	3,589	Fair		High	✓	✓	✓	
3-5 Bridge Street	Bridge Street Market	1	2,095	1,781	Fair		High	✓	✓	✓	
9 Bridge Street	Bill & Bobs	1	3,564	3,029	Very Good		High	✓	✓		
15 Bridge Street	99 Restaurant	1	13,536	11,506	Very Good		High	✓	✓		
26-30 Bridge Street	Cosgroves Liquors	1	4,261	3,622	Fair		Moderate	✓		✓	
29 Bridge Street	Yoga studio	1	6,351	5,398	Renovation		High	✓			
31-31A Bridge Street	Dunkin Donuts & Realtor	1	4,394	3,735	Good		High	✓			
33 Bridge Street	Clucky Wings/ Dinatas Pizza	1	2,662	2,263	Fair		Moderate	✓		✓	
34 Bridge Street	Spinale Auto	1	1,452	1,234	Fair		Low	✓		✓	
35 Bridge Street	Pegasus Auto	1	10,931	9,291	Fair		Low	✓		✓	✓
36 Bridge Street	Auto Body Restorations	1.5	1,341	1,140							
38 1/2 Bridge Street	Tanning 2nd Floor		1,527	1,298	Good		Moderate	✓			
39 Bridge Street	Auto- Nestor Financing	1	8,155	6,932	Fair		Low	✓		✓	✓
40 Bridge Street	Clippership Inn	1	11,670	9,920	Fair		Moderate	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Clippership Inn (2nd Building)	1	11,578	9,841	Poor		Moderate	✓			
41 Bridge Street	Vacant	1	1,556	1,323	Poor		Low	✓		✓	✓
43 Bridge Street	Vacant	1	6,636	5,641	Vacant		Low				✓
44 Bridge Street	Tanning 1st Floor		1,202	1,022	Fair		Moderate	✓		✓	
45 Bridge Street	Once and Again Antiques	1	2,078	1,766	Fair		High	✓		✓	
47 Bridge Street	Vacant- yellow building	2	2,834	2,409	Vacant		Low				✓
49 1/2 - 49 Bridge Street	Office for Bill Johnson Plumbing	1	2,721	2,313	Vacant		Low				✓
51 Bridge Street	Joe's Hair	1	592	503	Fair		Moderate	✓		✓	
53 Bridge Street	Aqua Hair	1	3,350	2,848	Fair		Moderate	✓		✓	
56-54 Bridge Street	J&W Marine Boat Sales	1	3,154	2,681	Fair		Moderate	✓		✓	✓
57-59 Bridge Street	Sign Painting, Construction	1	1,403	1,193	Fair		Moderate	✓		✓	✓
63 Bridge Street	Salem Brake & Clutch	1	16,978	14,431	Fair		Low	✓		✓	✓
64 Bridge Street	Multiple Office	2.5	5,085	4,322	Good		High	✓			
65A Bridge Street	Salem Brake & Clutch	1	1,425	1,211	Fair		Low	✓		✓	✓
69-67 Bridge Street	Saws	2.5	6,883	5,850	Good		Moderate	✓			
77 Bridge Street	Boats and Nautical Gifts	2	18,806	15,985	Fair		Moderate	✓		✓	
81 Bridge Street	Cycle Parts	2.5	4,825	4,101	Fair		Moderate	✓		✓	
85 Bridge Street	Pulmonary Services	2	4,304	3,658	Fair		Moderate	✓		✓	
87 Bridge Street	Computer Repair		1,906	1,620	Fair		Moderate	✓		✓	
94 Bridge Street	Mobile Gas Station	1	2,921	2,483	Good		Moderate	✓			
95-93 Bridge Street	Countertops 1st Floor		1,476	1,255	Vacant		Low			✓	✓
96 Bridge Street	Coffee Time	1	2,391	2,032	Good		High	✓	✓		
99-97 Bridge Street	Stacia's Restaurant		1,164	989	Fair		High	✓	✓	✓	
106 Bridge Street	Magic Muffler	1	4,363	3,709	Fair		Low	✓		✓	✓
107 Bridge Street	Salem Used Furn. & Repair		2,225	1,891	Fair		Moderate	✓		✓	
109 Bridge Street	Liquor & Minimart	1.5	4,193	3,564	Fair		Moderate	✓		✓	
1 East Collins Street	Ward II Social Club of Salem	1	5,382	4,575	Good		High	✓			
52 Howard Street	Pelletier & Sons	2.5	8,732	7,422	Fair		Moderate	✓		✓	
1 Pleasant Street	Commercial	2	1,970	1,675	Good		High	✓			
8 Waite Street	Auto Repair Warehouse	1	3,320	2,822	Fair		Low			✓	
TOTAL			173,477	147,455							
Median			3,252								

FIGURE 3: COMMERCIAL PROPERTY CATEGORIES



FIGURE 4: COMMERCIAL PROPERTY CONDITIONS

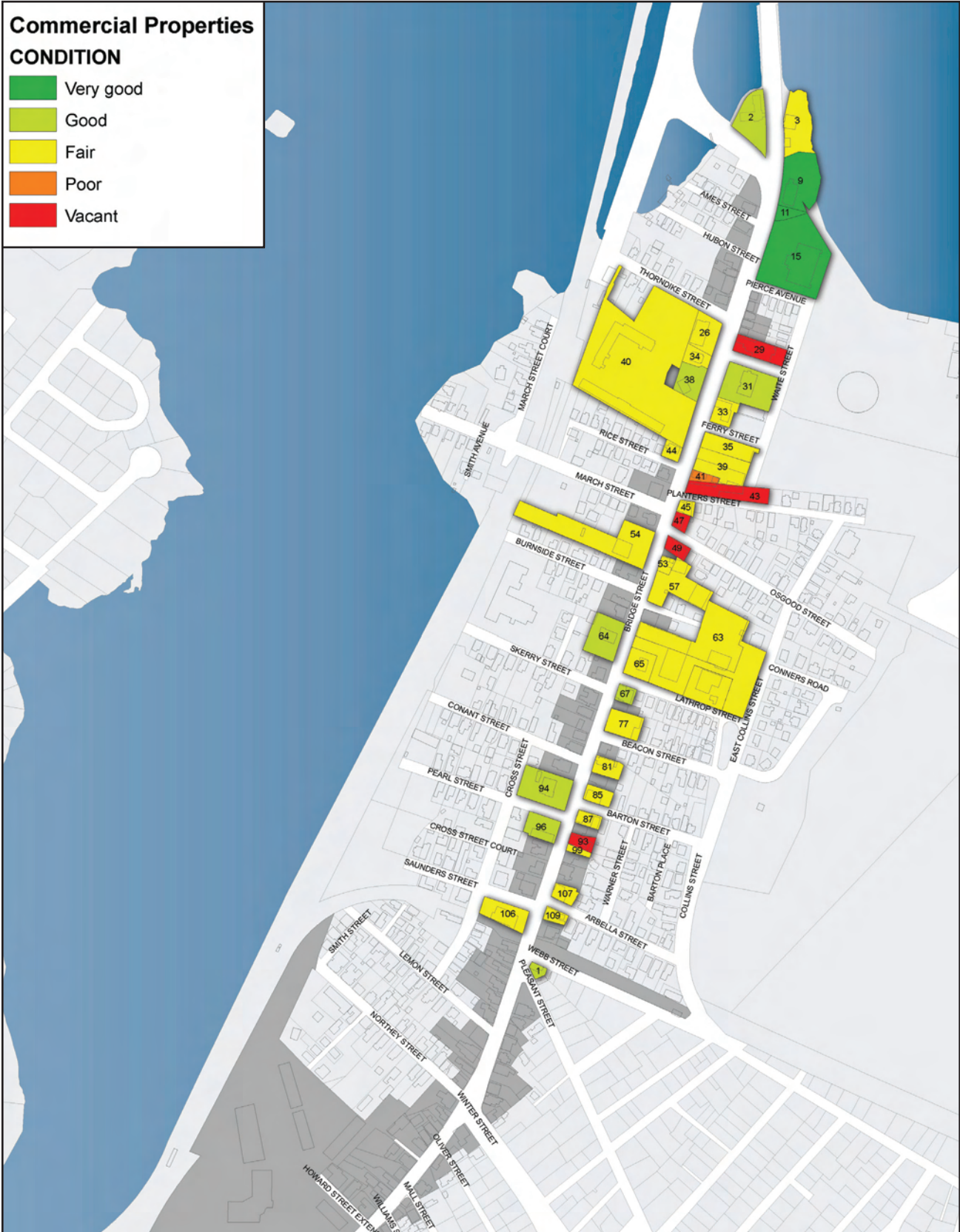


FIGURE 5: PROPOSED SIGNAGE IMPROVEMENTS



NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENTS

Physical improvements aimed at enhancing the quality of the pedestrian environment and neighborhood public spaces in the Bridge Street Neck are recommended, summarized by the following neighborhood improvement strategies:

- Expand streetscape improvements along side streets, once the Bridge Street improvements are completed.
- Expand and improve open space connections and amenities.
- Extend pedestrian and bicycle access.
- Promote neighborhood stewardship.
- Support new development and renovations at key locations that are apt to change because of their size, location, potential value and relationship to the surrounding neighborhood.

The assessment of existing conditions indicates that many sidewalks are old and narrow, interrupted by utility poles and difficult to travel. The proposed Bridge Street traffic improvements will serve to regularize sidewalks and introduce streetscape amenities; however, these improvements will not extend to adjacent residential streets. Views of the water are available from many areas; however, the neighborhood is largely bisected from the waterfront by the bypass road and gas storage facilities. The existing bike path, recently built as part of the Bridge Street Bypass construction, provides a great opportunity to easily connect along the western edge of the neighborhood by foot and bicycle; however, more opportunities need to be found to extend pathways and connections to other locations within the planning area.

The proposed neighborhood improvement strategies recommend the extension of streetscape improvements to the residential areas, and the creation of additional pedestrian and bike connections along the waterfront.

Streetscape Improvements

Many of the existing sidewalks are very low in relation to the street areas dedicated to vehicle travel and parking, and sidewalks are often built of bituminous materials similar to the street pavement. This makes them difficult to recognize, and cars often park on them, especially in narrow roads. Utility poles often occupy the space dedicated to pedestrians and, in some cases, new utility poles are attached to the old ones in effect duplicating the extent to which poles take over the available sidewalk space.

Wherever possible, new concrete sidewalks with raised curbs should be provided in residential areas. These should be ADA compliant and enhanced with trees (similar to the existing sidewalks in March Street).

A strategic, step-by-step improvement program should be developed to target local improvements and seek additional public funding.

Open Space Connections

The planned construction of a new waterfront park at the northern end of Bridge Street, on the abutment of the former bridge to Beverly, will provide a new recreational

amenity for local residents and visitors. The new park will include a landscaped outlook and seating area, and a fishing pier.

The new waterfront park could become the initial step in a strategy to extend public waterfront access along Beverly Harbor and Collins Cove. Although it would be desirable to enjoy public waterfront access along the entire length of the Bridge Street Neck perimeter, access along the North River is highly constrained by the MBTA rail line and the Bridge Street Bypass.

The gas and electric facilities located on the northeastern portion of the peninsula command the best views of Beverly Harbor along a significant extension of shoreline, and the initiation of conversations between the City and the utility companies is recommended to investigate the possibility of creating a walking path along the shoreline. A walking path in this area would serve to connect the proposed new Bridge Street park to the Ward II Social Club on East Collins Street, and to Collins Cove Playground and Collins Beach further south.

Additional opportunities for open space connections could become available in the future through the potential redevelopment of any of the existing large vacant or underutilized properties.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections

New open space connections would also allow for the creation of more pedestrian and bicycle connections that would help to better interconnect both sides of Bridge Street, in the spirit of the bike path extension that is being planned to connect the Bypass bike path to Webb Street using MBTA owned property near Lemon Street.

The northern end of the Bypass bike path will connect to Bridge Street and the planned new waterfront park as part of the Bridge Street reconstruction project. The southern end should connect to a specific destination, such as the MBTA rail station, Downtown Salem, or the section of the bike path that runs along the North River Canal and stops at the North Street Bridge.

Waterfront Walk and Shared Path

A very important connection for business purposes would be a waterfront walk along the back of the existing restaurant properties at the end of Bridge Street, which borders the water. Properly landscaped, and equipped with benches and pedestrian lighting, this walk could attract visitors and potential customers to the restaurants, contributing to enhance the image and amenities available at the “restaurant cluster” proposed as part of the commercial revitalization strategy. Restaurant dining rooms and outdoor dining terraces could front on the walkway, enjoying the views and contributing to animate the pedestrian environment.

A waterfront walk at this location could also serve to connect restaurant customers to shared parking areas that could possibly be located in the vicinity. The walkway could be designed to allow access to the small beach located right below. Water access could be enhanced through the construction of a floating pier for transient boats, should the water depth be sufficient to allow boat access at high-tide.

Shared access for bicycles could also be allowed parallel to the walkway. Continuous bicycle access from Bridge Street to Waite Street and Planters Street could be achieved, if an agreement could be established with the owner of the former plumbing business or the utility companies to allow for a narrow bike path easement south of Waite.

Neighborhood Stewardship

Continued stewardship of the neighborhood should be established through the collaboration of a group of active and committed neighborhood representatives. The implementation of a complex vision, such as the one advanced by this plan, which combines physical improvements, clean up and maintenance programs, and the programming of recreational activities, will require active participation of the local residents working together with the City and the local business community.

The opportunity exists to continue working with the Working Group selected by the Mayor to steer this planning process, once the official planning process is over. The Working Group could sow the seeds for a future neighborhood association or, at least, help communicate the idea of forming a neighborhood stewardship group to the local residents that may desire to continue participating.

Potential Redevelopment Sites

The assessment of existing conditions identified a few Bridge Street Neck properties that could be apt for redevelopment should the market conditions be favorable. Some of these properties are among the largest parcels of land in the neighborhood and are strategically located along the central and northern portions of Bridge Street. Thus, any changes that might take place in these parcels would have a definite impact on the land use and urban design character of the surrounding residential areas.

It is important to consider the potential for redevelopment of these parcels in order to plan accordingly and define the mechanisms that will bring about mutually beneficial changes for the businesses, the neighborhood and the City.

The parcels identified as having redevelopment potential are the following:

- The Brake & Clutch site at 63-65 Bridge Street and 9-11 Lathrop Street.
- The Clipper Ship Inn at 40 Bridge Street.
- The Salem Plumbing building site at 43 Bridge Street.

Development feasibility tests were conducted for these parcels as part of this study, assuming site-appropriate and possible development scenarios. The results of these analyses are described in detail in *Appendix B* of this document.

The development feasibility tests indicate the following:

- The Brake & Clutch site could possibly be redeveloped as a multi-family residential complex of approximately 60 residential units, made up of one- and two-bedroom apartments in a small building facing Bridge Street plus townhouses along Lathrop and East Collins Streets. In order for this type of development to be feasible, it would need to include a certain number of affordable units. In today's market, all the units would need to be affordable.

- The Clipper Ship Inn could become an enhanced hotel by replacing the older, outdated building with a new two-story building that could hold twice as many rooms. The total hotel capacity would be expanded from 60 to 90 rooms. The required revenue increase is likely to be possible when the market improves.
- The Clipper Ship Inn could alternatively become a cluster of retail stores large enough to become a shopping destination, including approximately 40,000 sf of retail space and associated parking. An important condition for success would be signage that could be seen from the Bypass road and the bridge from Beverly.
- The Salem Plumbing building site is too small to hold a retail or office use, and infill multi-family residential development could be feasible and a good alternative to the blighting influence of a vacant building.
- A similar infill multi-family residential development approach could be applied to other small vacant and foreclosed properties throughout the neighborhood, which would likely be viable in the current economy as long as it consists of affordable housing. This initiative could be advanced with the assistance and participation of the Salem Community Development Corporation (CDC).

The City could work with the community and individual property owners to create site-specific strategies that would be conducive to the redevelopment of the particular parcel in a manner that is financially sustainable while, at the same time consistent with the revitalization vision for the neighborhood.

Once a shared vision and development strategy are established for each parcel, the corresponding implementation tools and mechanisms can be applied to guide the redevelopment process. These could include zoning changes that would support the revitalization vision for each parcel, or innovative zoning mechanisms that could be tailored to the specific needs of each site and redevelopment concept. These and other implementation mechanisms are further discussed in the *Action Plan* section that follows.