

## MEETING NOTES

Meeting Date: May 5, 2009

Meeting Topic: Small Group Discussions of Issues, Opportunities and Constraints during the Public Meeting

Meeting Location: Carlton Elementary School, Salem, MA

Project: Salem Bridge Neck Neighborhood Planning Study

Attendees: Community members, The City of Salem Department of Planning and Community Development, The Cecil Group and subconsultants

Prepared by: Margarita Iglesia and Meghan Grafton

Copies: Department of Planning and Community Development Project File

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Over 100 people attended these group discussions, which were held at the Carlton School. This was the first public meeting for the Salem Neck Neighborhood Planning Study. During the meeting the members of the Consultant Team were introduced, and the findings of an initial assessment of current housing, commercial and planning conditions in the neighborhood were presented to the participants. Additionally, the participants were divided into five small groups. A mapping exercise and discussion to share the neighborhood's issues, opportunities, and constraints took place in each group. Goals and priorities for the neighborhood were also discussed.

*Section I* of these notes is a summary of the concerns shared by the participants of the small groups, in which we have tried to reflect our findings and learning from the discussions as closely as possible. *Section II* contains a comprehensive list of the issues, opportunities, and constraints as they were noted by the group facilitators during the small group discussions.

### **Section I**

#### **Issues:**


- Utilities are an eyesore, especially some Verizon poles in which they added a new pole and attached the old one to it which makes them stand out even more.
- Some houses are in disrepair and some properties have absentee landlords, which is often reflected in their exterior condition.
- Sidewalks and street crossings need to be improved, ideally beyond the boundaries of the traffic and streetscape improvements planned for Bridge Street.

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- Parking needs to be improved; in particular there is a lack of on-street parking for businesses.
  - The neighborhood should become a destination, in order to retain and expand the business customer base.

#### **Opportunities:**

- Historic character, this was the first settlement in the City.
- Commuter Rail access within walking distance.
- Pride in history and architecture, with many buildings contributing to the neighborhood historical character.
- A certain number of properties available for purchase present an opportunity for homeownership and building improvements.
- The neighborhood is located within walking distance to everything and close to downtown.
- Friendly neighborhood.
- The neighborhood is changing for the better.

#### **Constraints:**

- Power lines cross the Neck in the vicinity of the Clippership Inn.
  - Utility Corp/Appearance [?] of the industrial uses.
  - Absentee landlords and rundown buildings detract from the general quality of living.
  - Bureaucracy [?]
  - High commercial real estate taxes may pose an obstacle for some businesses.
  - Lack of a controlled signage program detracts from the overall design and image quality.
  - Decisions sometimes seem to be based on money and not on what is best for the neighborhood.
  - Traffic is heavy at some times, although commercial activity has decreased since the Bypass Road was built.
  - Bridge Street divides more than connects the east and west sections of the neighborhood.
  - Overcrowding of some properties
  - [already listed above] Perception of security is not good in some areas (car break-ins, graffiti, some people are afraid to walk at night).
  - Vandalism of vacant properties and landscaping contribute to detract from the neighborhood's image and appeal.
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## **Goals and Wishes:**


*General themes for goals and wishes were attracting business and tourists, improving the appearance of the area, improving green space, and zoning concerns.*


The following is a summary list of the goals and wishes compiled at the meeting, grouped by categories. It is intended as a condensed version of the goals and wishes listed in *Section II*, and it has been edited to clarify some of the ideas based on our recollections as group facilitators. However, this summary should not be assumed to be comprehensive. Please refer to *Section II* for a complete list of goals and wishes.

## **Appearance and Maintenance:**

- Get Verizon to fix the poles
- Relocate utilities underground
- Cleaning
- Reuse of empty buildings, good maintenance
- New and wider sidewalks
- [doesn't say where]Great signage - remove bad signs
- Gateway to Salem – make it beautiful
- Historic marker sign
- New name - Harbor View?
- Bridge Street beautification
- Solve traffic problems, especially at Webb Street
- Discourage graffiti
- Clean and orderly - less graffiti – less traffic

## **Attract business and tourism and improve the neighborhood feel:**

- Welcoming signs
  - Outdoor restaurant/ café seating
  - Nice like "Cabot Street"
  - Destination - not a pass through
  - Destinations to attract visitors
  - Marketing of businesses on Bridge Street
  - New businesses for tourists
  - Period lighting
  - Ice cream shop/ stand
  - Tourist destination - Antique shops
  - Self-guided walking tour
  - Fishing destination
  - Parking on Bridge Street allowed
  - Retail and transportation signage
  - Better connections to Beverly, other Salem neighborhoods
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- Better signage for directions
  - Fix Swampscott sign
  - Get rid of Orange Street cleaning sign
  - Events at new Bridge Park
  - More family/park/block party events
  - Safe for walking and bikes
  - Keeping a mix of types and affordability
  - Consolidated Business District
  - Control the wildlife (squirrels, skunks)
  - Bring a flower shop, Trader Joe's
  - Feel connection to Salem Common
  - Slower traffic
  - A more affordable neighborhood
  - Market / shop
  - Movie theater
  - Motel redevelopment
  - Carts/restaurant/ice cream parlor
  - [already listed]Boat access (ideally to Collins Cove)
  - Fishing pier
  - Safety - Tracy walk-way [?]


#### **Green Space:**

- More green space
- Walk all the way to the restaurants and the park
- Bike path used in a better way
- Better sidewalks
- More pedestrian friendly
- Better landscaping
- More trees
- Natural features and views / parks and trees

#### **Zoning:**

- Density - maintain lower level density
- Worried about zoning changes - avoid big project

#### **City Action:**

- City to show that they have heard Citizen's input, follow up and act on recommendations
  - See action spreading fast - no more meaningless studies
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## **Section II**

### **Issues**

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Utility construction  
Development at Bridge Park  
North End Street Walk  
Late night businesses  
Disrepair of houses on Bridge St  
Redundant light posts/phone polls  
Unfinished pier - not accessible  
Traffic coming off new bridge  
Lack of parking-whole neck  
Northey / Bridge St. Intersection is dangerous (mentioned 3 times)  
Need better restaurants  
Better retail corridor  
Need a laundromat  
Absentee landlords  
Proximity of aura-related businesses to residential

Dangerous crossing for kids  
Sidewalks are bad  
Verizon telephone poles-double telephone poles  
Salem building and properties - need redevelopment  
Need for trash barrels  
Parking is lacking / invading residential area  
Blight  
Need to improve conditions at dilapidated properties  
Clustered foreclosures  
Deserted buildings on Bridge Street  
Snow removal problems

### **Constraints**

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Power lines  
Rundown buildings  
Utility Corp/ industrial uses appearance  
Absentee landlords  
Dealing with utilities and wires crossing streets  
Bureaucracy  
High commercial real estate taxes  
Getting more open space  
Lack of controlled signage program  
Lack of care for houses businesses  
Decisions based on money-not on what is best


Traffic  
Bridge Street divides more than connects  
Overcrowding of some properties  
Graffiti need to clean  
Run down properties  
Car break-ins  
Some people are afraid to walk at night  
Vandalism of landscaping  
Vandalism of vacant properties  
Snowy sidewalks on Bridge Street

### **Opportunities**

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Building South Bridge Street  
Power lines underground  
Webb Street Park  
Better lighting  
Water on both sides  
Water views and water smell  
Historic homes/ beautiful houses  
Walkable  
1st settlement  
Commuter rail  
Collins Cove  
Great potential to be beautiful  
Electrical utilities buried  
Pride in history and architecture  
Local restaurants  
Jail renovation

Park on one end (gateway, green)  
Properties available (need to steer to owners vs. investors)  
Streetscape, sidewalks  
Bike path (Committee meeting on May 13)  
Walking distance to everything  
Local to downtown  
Very friendly  
Neighborhood is changing- for the better  
Have a hospitality place (could be improved)  
Park at the end of Bridge Street



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**Goals and Wishes**

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City to listen  
City to act on recommendations  
City to show that they have heard and follow up  
Density - maintain lower level density  
Worrier about zoning changes - means big project  
See action fast - will spread - no more meaningless studies  
See what other groups said  
Cleaning  
New sidewalk  
Walk all the way to the restaurants and the park  
Reuse of empty buildings, good maintenance  
More green space  
Welcoming signs  
Wider sidewalks  
Outdoor restaurant cafe  
Nice like "Cabot Street"  
Bike path used in a better way  
Get Verizon to fix the poles  
Send utilities underground  
Control the wild life (squirrels, skunks)  
Fishing destination  
Flower shop, Trader Joe's  
Feel connection to Salem Common  
Better sidewalks  
More pedestrian friendly  
Better landscaping  
Destinations  
Fishing pier  
Period lighting  
Ice cream shop/ stand  
Tourist destination - antique shops  
Self-guided walking tour  
Great signage - remove bad signs  
Gateway to Salem - beautiful  
Historic marker sign  
New name - Harbor View  
Improved appearance  
Safety - Tracy walkway  
Destination - not a pass through  
Incentive for more retail and restaurants that will support foot traffic

More trees  
Cleaned up  
Slower traffic  
Marketing of businesses on Bridge Street  
New businesses for tourists  
Affordable for us  
Keeping a mix of types and affordability  
Better connections to Beverly, other Salem neighborhoods  
Better signage for directions  
Fix Swampscott sign  
Get rid of Orange Street cleaning sign  
Events at new Bridge Park  
More family/park/block party events  
Consolidated Business district  
Market / shop  
Movie theater  
Motel redevelopment  
Carts/restaurant/ice cream parlor  
Parking on Bridge Street  
Bridge Street beautification  
Retail and transportation signage  
Discourage graffiti  
Clean and orderly - less graffiti - less traffic (Webb street)  
Safe for walking and bikes  
Natural features and views / parks trees  
Parking  
Boat access  
New sidewalks  
More like Rantoul Street - small businesses  
Cleaner improved utilities  
Bridge Street as a walking place  
Water oriented park at Bridge end  
Day care at Commonwealth and Bridge Street - pedestrian crossing  
Small business assistance  
Slow traffic on Bridge Street  
Improved business aesthetics  
Diverse retail  
Bike Lane-improved access  
Urban wilds  
Small retailers  
Pleasant walks on Bridge  
New park