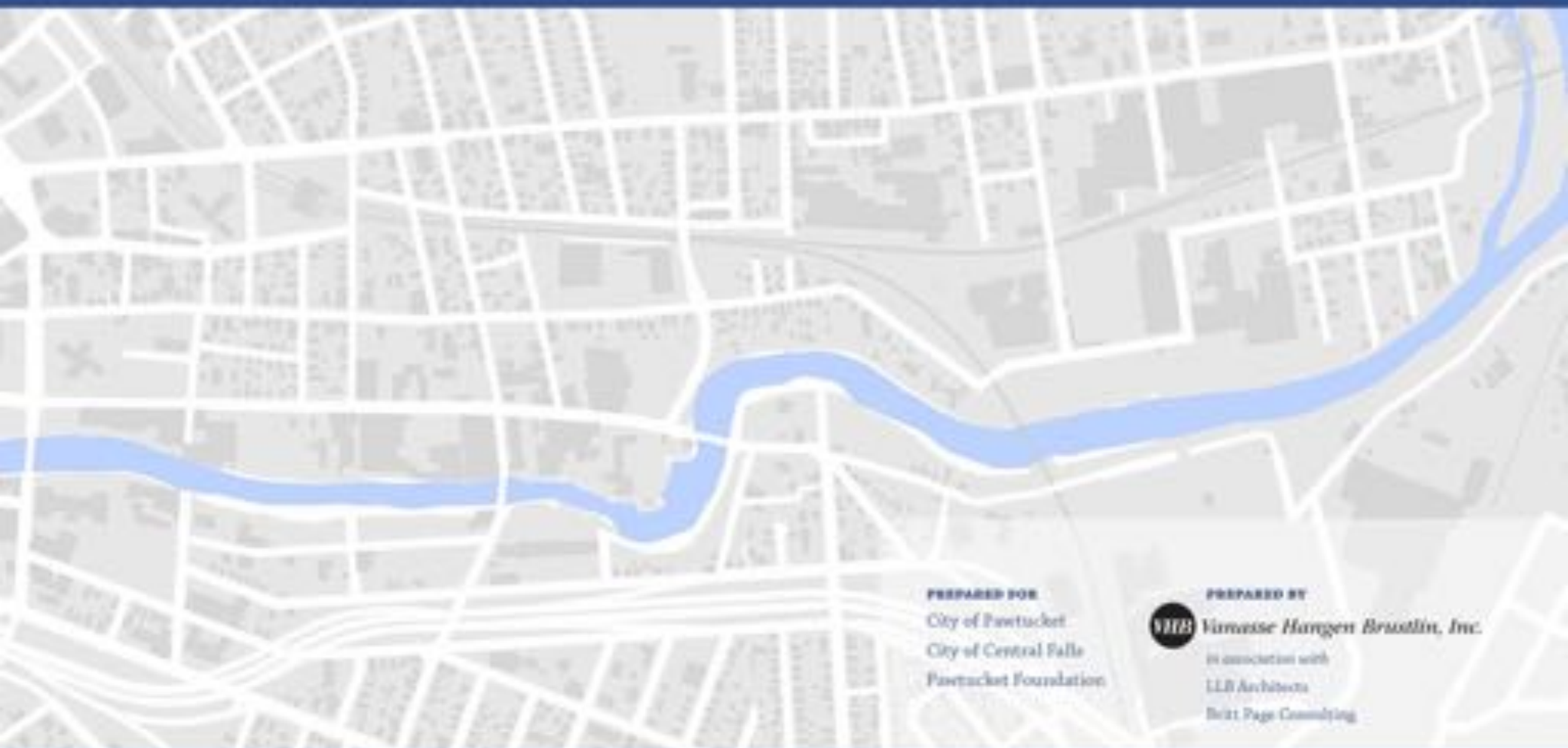


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09-25-13

# River Corridor Development Plan



PREPARED FOR  
City of Pawtucket  
City of Central Falls  
Pawtucket Foundation

PREPARED BY  
 **Vincent Hargen Brustlin, Inc.**  
in association with  
LLB Architects  
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## Acknowledgements

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#### BRITT PAIGE CONSULTING

- ❑ Britt Page

### RESIDENTS, BUSINESS OWNERS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Thank you for your participation at the numerous public events that were held during the study. We value the input and time you have given towards advancing planning efforts for this important part of our City.

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# Table of Contents

1	Project Overview	1
2	Existing Conditions	9
3	River Corridor Plan Elements	39
4	Implementation and Funding	61

## Appendices

- A Housing Inventory
- B Natural Resources Memorandum
- C Cultural Resources Memorandum
- D Building Inventory

DRAFT  
09-25-13

# 1 Project Overview

### Introduction

Over the past several years, the City of Pawtucket and Central Falls have taken important steps towards advancing planning and economic initiatives. Recent plans and projects, including the 2011 Pawtucket Comprehensive Plan, the Pawtucket Downtown Design Plan, as well as the Market Study completed by FXM Associates in September of 2012, have identified the river as an important natural and cultural asset.

Enabled by these studies and the Statewide Planning Challenge Grant which will help advance this vision, this River Corridor Development Plan consolidates development strategies for the Pawtucket and Central Falls along the riverfront to unlock its great potential, facilitate growth, promote historic preservation, increase affordable housing choices, implement transportation infrastructure and identify actions to keep the revitalization momentum moving forward.

### Study Area

The Plan primarily focuses on a 219 acre linear area along the Blackstone and Pawtucket River. Reaching upstream to near East Street in Central Falls and downstream to the Pawtucket Town Landing, the study area covers a major section of Pawtucket's riverfront.

The Study Area was broken into seven "River Corridor Districts", respectively the Tidewater District; the Riverfront Commons; the Slater Mill District; the Armory Arts District; the Front Street District; the River Mill District; and the Chocolate Mill Gateway. In addition, a site with development potential at the Central Falls Landing was also examined. The corner parcel, fronting both Broad Street and Madeira Avenue, is approximately 0.7 acres in size and currently underutilized with paved parking and a vacant building on site (see Figure 1.1).

### Purpose of the River Corridor Development Plan

Nationally, cities have recognized a trend of people and businesses re-congregating in core urban areas for improved settings, opportunities and quality of life. The City of Pawtucket and Central Falls have proactively responded to such trends by launching a series of planning initiatives. The 2011 Comprehensive Plan identifies the downtown, the riverfront, as well as the arts and entertainment districts as key focus areas for redevelopment. The Downtown Design Plan, on the other hand, successfully identified a number of capital infrastructure improvements. Recent downtown zoning changes further encourage redevelopment while preserving this area's historic character.

The City of Pawtucket created an officially designated Growth Center in areas targeted for growth and redevelopment which includes the downtown and riverfront. While downtown Pawtucket is almost entirely built-out and made up of many small parcels, the riverfront in Pawtucket and Central Falls contains larger parcels that are vacant and appropriate for large-scale redevelopment. To realize this potential and maximize the benefits of the riverfront redevelopment opportunities, the City of Pawtucket, in partnership with the City of Central Falls and the Pawtucket Foundation, have developed an action-oriented development plan from an economic, historic preservation, urban design, infrastructure and strategic development perspective.

With significant local and regional assets already in place - the Slater Mill, Armory Arts District, and ongoing mill building conversions - this River Corridor Development Plan will identify ways to bring additional development to the River Corridor by focusing on short and long term measures that will help the community and Cities prioritize their efforts.



Figure 1.1 — Study Area



**Legend**

- River Corridor Study Area
- Study Area Subdistrict
- City Boundary

- Building
- Open Space
- Water
- Railroad

- 1 Tidewater District
- 2 Riverfront Commons
- 3 Slater Mill District
- 4 Armory Arts District
- 5 Front Street District
- 6 River Mill District
- 7 Chocolate Mill Gateway
- 8 Central Falls Landing

0 350 700 1,400  
Feet

## 1 Project Overview

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Slater Mill, Pawtucket



Blackstone Avenue, Pawtucket



Roosevelt Avenue, Pawtucket



Garden Street, Pawtucket



Roosevelt Avenue - Chocolate Overlook, Central Falls



Tolman High School, Pawtucket



Armory Building, Pawtucket





High Street, Pawtucket



City Hall and municipal parking lot, Pawtucket



Slater Mill, Pawtucket



Main Street Bridge, Pawtucket



Visitors Center Parking, Pawtucket



The new Pawtucket River Bridge, Pawtucket

### River Corridor Development Plan Goals

- ❑ Develop a comprehensive coordinated strategy for the riverfront in Pawtucket and Central Falls. This cohesive strategy will coordinate various real estate development opportunities and planned public transportation improvement projects with an end goal of creating a regional destination and quality space.
- ❑ Ensure the strategy is sustainable by incorporating the following: residential density for all incomes, preservation of historic structures, well-designed and efficient multi-modal connections, and recreational opportunities.
- ❑ Prepare a transportation plan which identifies a well-designed approach for visitors to Slater Mill, integrates a regional bicycle network through one of the most constrained segments of the River Corridor, incorporates future rapid bus connectivity, and prioritizes the capital projects outlined in the recently complete Pawtucket Downtown Design Plan.

### Public Outreach

The first public meeting was held on January 17, 2013, at the Visitor Center in Pawtucket. The purpose of this meeting was to present existing conditions, issues and opportunities, as well as the draft vision for the River Corridor. The meeting included an open house, presentation, and was followed by a discussion session. The eight elements of the River Corridor Development Plan were the focus of the meeting.

The second public meeting was held on June 17, 2011, at the Visitor Center in Pawtucket. The meeting included presentation that summarized the results of the January public meeting, and was followed by an overview of the proposed signage / wayfinding system and the marketing procure that was developed. The meeting concluded

with a discussion session and outlined next steps.



Participants at the first public meeting view recommendations on the River Corridor

### Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were scheduled early in the planning process. The interviews included meetings with city departments, local property owners, businesses, and organizations that have an interest and/or history with the River Corridor study area. The interviews were scheduled over the course of a one day period. Participants were asked to discuss opportunities and challenges within the River Corridor. The consultant team used the information gained from these informal interviews to research background information during the existing conditions phase of the study. In addition, the Cities provided over a dozen background reports and studies associated with various initiatives within or adjacent to the River Corridor. These studies included prior vision plans, feasibility studies, market studies, signage and way finding proposals.

### Developer Outreach

During the summer of 2013, the Cities and consultant team held a series of interviews with real estate development firms to gain an understanding of how the Cities could advance implementation strategies for the River Corridor. The firms that were interviewed ranged in size and degree of local experience. Some firms had direct development experience in Central Falls or Pawtucket and others had

regional expertise but no Pawtucket or Central Falls projects in their portfolio. The focus of these interviews was to gain an understanding of which of the projects identified in the River Corridor Development Plan might be most impactful in terms of fostering additional investment and development within the study area. In addition, the discussions focused on current development trends and on tools that the Cities might wish to consider as a means for more effectively partnering with the development community.

Discussion points that emerged from the developer outreach include, in no particular order:

- ❑ continues to be a strong demand for rental housing in the near-term real estate market.
- ❑ Financing and structuring the development of mixed use projects is more complex and higher risk, and therefore more challenging for the development community, than single-use projects. The availability of tax incentives can be an important decision-making factor for developers and businesses when considering investment in a community.
- ❑ The Cities should consider offering 5-10 year tax stabilization to encourage redevelopment.
- ❑ The bike path would be valuable in attracting developer and resident interest in the community.
- ❑ Today's more complex development projects require multiple levels of debt and utilization of programs like New Markets Tax Credit. The Cities should become more familiar with how development projects are structured and the programs that are critical to making them viable. This also includes exploring the availability of Section 108 loan programs.
- ❑ Providing parameters on desired density and uses for particular development sites helps the development community effectively and efficiently respond to RFPs/RFQs. More generally, helping the development community to understand the Cities' goals removes some of the uncertainty from the design and permitting process, making it more appealing for developers to undertake projects in the study area.

- ❑ Knitting together the architectural character of the River Corridor is an opportunity to distinguish this area.
- ❑ There may be a return to investments outside of the Boston area, as the market picks up in more urban areas and developers, property owners, and tenants seek out more affordable places like Central Falls and Pawtucket.
- ❑ New construction projects are much more difficult to finance than mill building rehab projects.
- ❑ The River Corridor has numerous "pockets" or areas of investment. The Cities should explore ways to reinforce those pockets to establish a critical mass of development and investment.
- ❑ Cities should review zoning to ensure that residential and mixed uses are allowed in mill buildings.
- ❑ The Cities should consider the pros and cons of Requests for Proposals (RFPs) versus Requests for Qualifications (RFQ's). In either case the Cities should clearly outline the incentives that are being offered.
- ❑ The typical size of a mill redevelopment project is 100,000 square feet.

## Project Website

In efforts to publicize the River Corridor Development Plan, as well as provide an open channel of communication with the public, a Project Website has been developed at <http://www.vhb.com/rivercorridorplan/>.

A short introduction of the project background has been highlighted on the homepage to offer visitors an overview of the Plan. The Project Goals page, linked through a homepage tab, explains what this planning initiative tries to achieve. On the Study Area Photos page, Visitors have the chance to browse through pictures of existing conditions in the river corridor to gain a general understanding of the physical characters of the area.

The project schedule is provided on the website, as well as a dedicated page where publicized documents were posted for public access and reviewing.

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# 2 Existing Conditions



## Existing Conditions

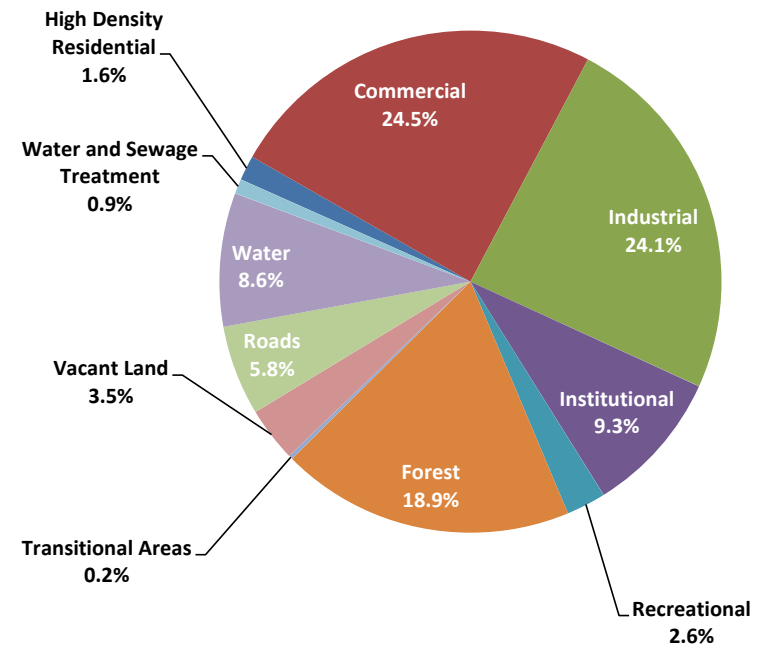
To fully understand the challenges and opportunities posed by the River Corridor area, an analysis was conducted to review current land use patterns, zoning requirements, cultural and historic resources, natural and environmental resources, transportation infrastructures, housing market, as well as building inventory of key sites.

### Land Use

Along the riverfront, land uses predominately consist of commercial, industrial, and institutional uses, and forested land. There is also a small amount of developed recreational land and high density residential land. A total of 3.5 percent of the study area is classified as vacant land. (See Land Use figure)

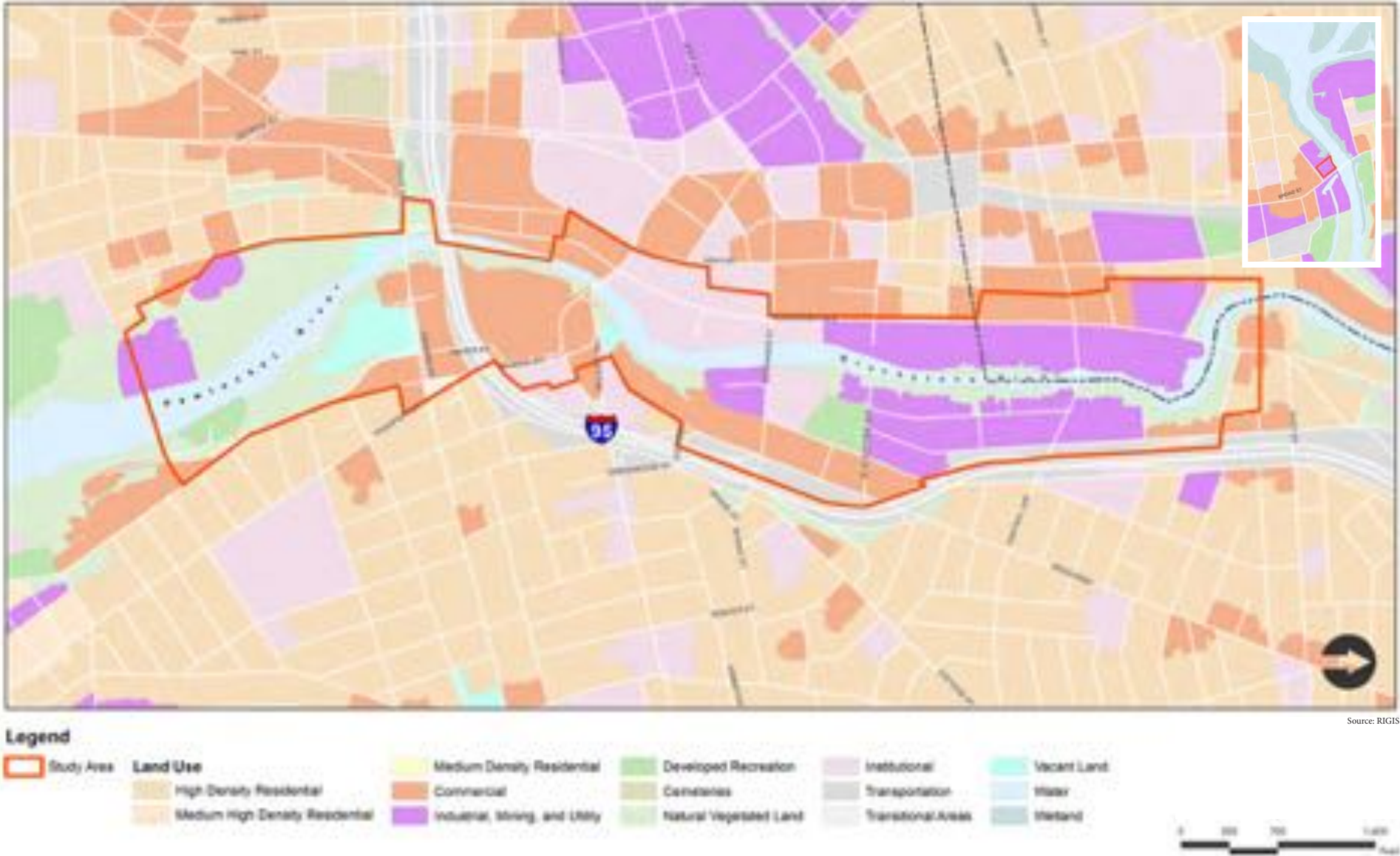
The study area is also home to numerous civic buildings and sites, such as the Police Station, High School, City Hall, and churches that are each “monuments” to their architectural styles and history.

**Land Use in the River Corridor Study Area**



Source: RI GIS

Figure 2.1 Existing Land Use



Source: RIGIS

### River Corridor Zoning Overlay Districts

The City of Pawtucket has adopted three Riverfront Development Zoning Districts to further regulate structures and uses of land in future developments in order to achieve goals of economic development and improve quality of life within the City. The purpose is also to apply urban design principles that are respectful of the river by sustaining public access, maintaining view corridors, regulating height and bulk of structures, and permitting a diversity of uses.

There are three districts, but only the RD1 and RD3 districts are located within the study area:

#### ❏ RD1 - Riverfront Public Open

The purpose of the Riverfront Public Open District is to promote and preserve public spaces, including parks, riverwalks and public amenities along the Riverfront.

- ❏ *All public buildings to be set back at least 30 feet from the river edge*
- ❏ *Buildings to be sited to maximize river views from parks or open spaces*
- ❏ *Public art, without blocking river views, are permitted*

#### ❏ RD2 - Riverfront Industrial

The purpose of the Riverfront Industrial District is to preserve existing industrial uses that are compatible with uses along the river in a manner that protects the river from industrial discharge, including stormwater runoff from large expanses of impervious paving.

- ❏ *Buildings to be set back at least 15 feet from the river edge*
- ❏ *Buildings to be sited to maximize river views from the lot immediately facing the river*
- ❏ *Buildings cover no more than 60% of the lot area*
- ❏ *Maximum height shall be 40 feet*

#### ❏ RD3 - Riverfront Mixed Use

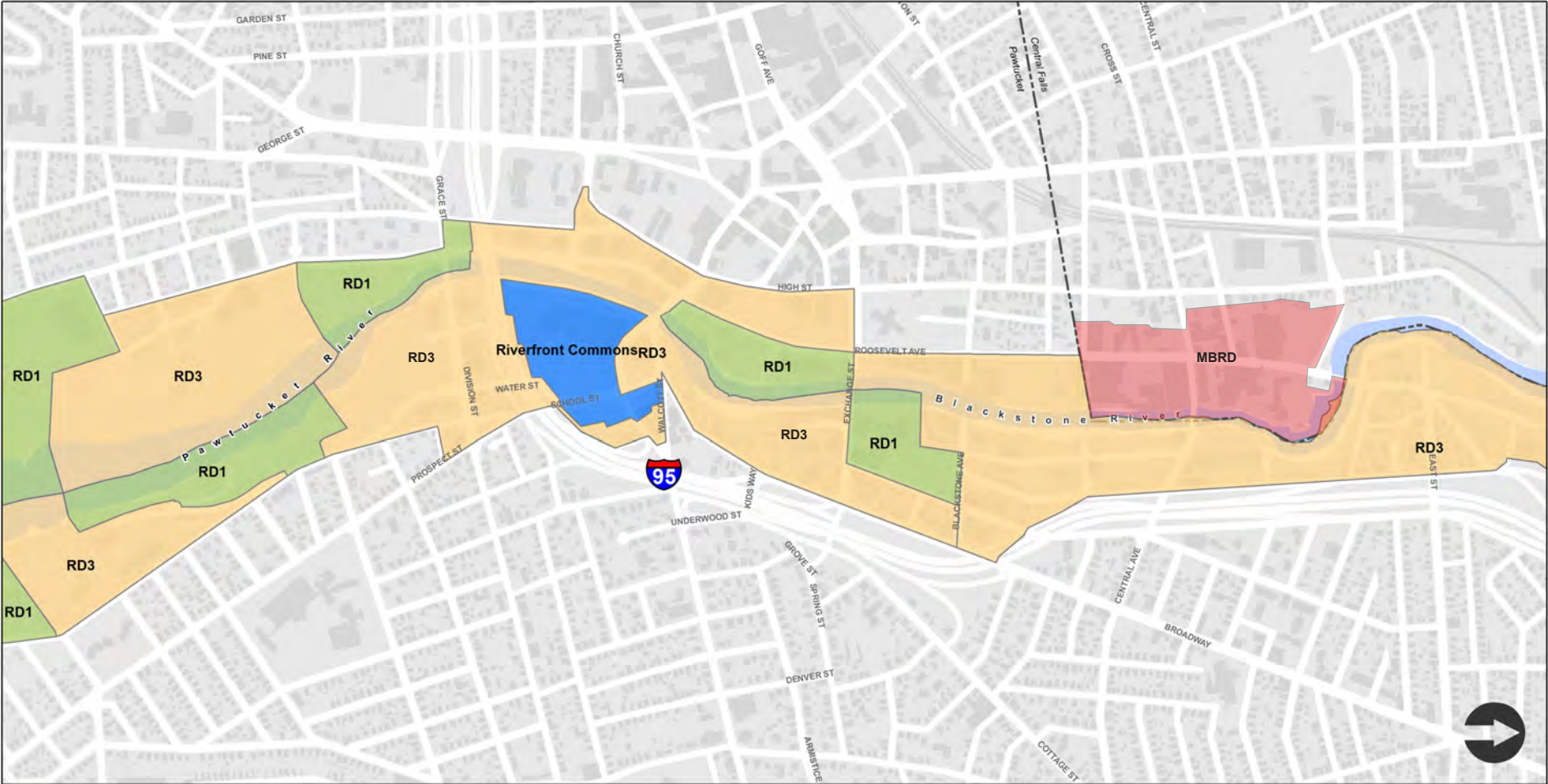
The purpose of the Riverfront Mixed Use District is to promote a mix of residential, commercial and light industrial uses that are compatible with uses along the river, including housing and commercial buildings, preserve and adaptively reuse existing mill type structures, promote variations in the siting of structures and amenities and to enhance view corridors to the river.

- ❏ *Buildings to be set back at least 15 feet from the river edge*
- ❏ *Buildings to be sited to maximize river views from the lot immediately facing the river*
- ❏ *Maximum height shall be 40 feet*

There is also a Riverfront Commons development district at the Apex site. Apex Development Company is redeveloping the Main and School Street block area in to a new lifestyle oriented mixed-use center.

The City of Central Falls, in addition, has a Mill Building Reuse Development (MBRD) zoning overlay district within the study area that can enhance the riverfront redevelopment potential through various beneficial provisions. The purpose of a MBRD is to allow for the development of sites containing obsolete or underutilized manufacturing and/or industrial buildings for mixed use development through careful site planning. A variety of uses such as residential, institutional, general services, and trade are permitted in a MBRD.

Figure 2.2 Riverfront Development Districts Zoning Overlay Map



Source: RIGIS, City of Pawtucket

**Legend**

- Water
- Building
- Railroad
- City Boundary

- Riverfront Development Overlay Districts**
- Riverfront Commons
  - RD1 - Riverfront Public Open
  - RD3 - Riverfront Mixed-Use
  - MBRD - Mill Building Reuse Development





### Cultural Resources

This section includes a preliminary review of existing cultural resources within the area. The historic buildings and landscapes within and adjacent to the study area represent, and are associated with, many of the most important historic events and the significance of Pawtucket and Central Falls. Their presence defines the visual character of the area and provides interesting spaces for the many activities that are currently carried on, as well as those planned for the future.

This Cultural Resources Inventory provides not only a summary of the historic resources in the area, but also a brief explanation of the implications of the designations possessed by these properties.

#### National Historic Landmark, Old Slater Mill

The Old Slater Mill, also known as the Slater Mill Historic Site, is located close to the center of the study area along the Blackstone River. The complex, which consists of three buildings that date to the late 18th century and the early 19th century, was designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1976 to recognize its importance as the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. The property is owned by the Old Slater Mill Association, which operates the 5-acre property as a museum and educational and community center.

National Historic Landmarks are nationally significant historic places designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. Project proponents must notify the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) if a federal undertaking may affect a NHL property.

### National Register Historic Districts

Seven National Register-listed historic districts are located within and in close proximity to the Development Plan Study Area (Figure 7. Historic Properties Within and Adjacent to the study area). These are the Downtown Pawtucket Historic District and Church Hill Industrial District on the west side of the Blackstone River, the Quality Hill, South Street, and Exchange Street Districts, which are east of the river, and Central Falls Mill Historic District and South Central Falls Historic District, which are also located west of the river in Central Falls. Both the Exchange Street District in Pawtucket and the Central Falls Mill Historic District in Central Falls lie totally within the study area boundaries. Each of these districts has been recognized for their architectural and historic importance and was listed through a formal nomination process. The districts, their general boundaries, and date of National Register listing, are:

- ❑ Church Hill Industrial District, Roughly bounded by S. Union, Pine, Baley, Commerce, Main, and Hill Sts, listed 1982
- ❑ South Street between Meadow and Fruit streets – listed 1983 as part of the Pawtucket Multiple Resource Area listing
- ❑ Quality Hill, bounded by I-95, Cottage, Lyon, Bend and Potter streets, as part of the Pawtucket MRA, listed 1984
- ❑ Exchange Street, roughly Exchange, Fountain and Front streets, listed 2002
- ❑ Downtown Pawtucket Historic District, bounded by Broad Street, Grant Street, High Street, East Ave. Ext. and Main Street, listed 2007 as part of the Pawtucket Multiple Resource Area listing
- ❑ Central Falls Mill Historic District, bounded by Roosevelt Ave and Blackstone River, listed 1976



Figure 2.3 Historic Properties



Source: RIGIS

Individual Property #	NRHP Individual Property Name	Individual Property #	NRHP Individual Property Name	Individual Property #	NRHP Individual Property Name	Individual Property #	NRHP Individual Property Name
1	Pitcher-Goff House	10	E. A. Burnham House	19	West High School	28	St. Mary's Church Complex
2	Pawtucket City Hall	11	Deborah Cook Sayles Public Library	20	John F. Adams House	29	Old Slater Mill Historic Site National Hist Dist
3	Pawtucket Lodge of Elks	12	Pawtucket Congregational Church	21	Nathaniel Montgomery House	30	Main Street Bridge
4	Elisha O. Potter	13	Bridge Mill Power Plant	22	Fuller Tenement House	31	Division Street Bridge
5	Alfred L. Childs House/Childs-Brown House	14	Pawtucket Times Building	23	Modern Diner	32	Liberty Arming the Patriot
6	Pawtucket Armory	15	Joseph Spaulding House	24	Gilbane's	33	Pawtucket Post Office
7	Fuller Tenement House	16	James Mitchell House	25	Church Hill Grammar School	34	Central Falls Congregational Church
8	St. Paul's Episcopal Church	17	First Ward Wardroom	26	Fire Station #4	35	David G. Fales House
9	Lorenzo Crandall House	18	St. Mary's Church Complex	27	St. Mary's Church Complex	36	Samuel B. Conant House
						37	Jenks Park and Cogswell Tower

Note: This is not a complete list. Only properties within the map extent are listed in the table above

- ❑ South Central Falls Historic District, roughly bounded by Rand, Summit, Dexter and Broad Streets, listed 1991

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) documents and records the nation's important and irreplaceable buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts worthy of protection. Based on local and state surveys, nominations to the NRHP are generally initiated by the local historical commission or individual property owners, which work with Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission staff to prepare the form. Nominations are then reviewed by the RIHPHC State Review Board at a public meeting and forwarded to the Keeper of the National Register for approval.

Listing in the NRHP recognizes the value of the nation's historical and cultural heritage and provides a basis for making informed planning and development decisions. NRHP status places no constraints on what owners may do with their property when using private funding. While the NRHP is not a design review program, it does provide limited protection from state and federal actions through state and federal historic preservation compliance reviews, as well as eligibility for matching state and federal restoration and research grants (when available) and certain federal tax benefits for certified rehabilitation projects.

### Individually Listed Properties

Thirty-seven properties that are individually listed in the National Register are within or relatively close to the study area in both Pawtucket and Central Falls. Eight of these properties are within the boundaries of the study area, while the rest are within approximately a quarter-mile of the study area.

The properties, like the historic districts, were recognized for their significance in a variety of historic and architectural contexts, and include the Bridge Mill Power Plant (#13); Pawtucket City Hall (#2); the Pawtucket Armory (#6), and Jenks Park and Cogswell Tower (#37) etc. The list of individual properties is noted and mapped on Figure 7. Historic Properties within and adjacent to the study area.

### Pawtucket Local Historic District

The City of Pawtucket established the Pawtucket Historic District Commission in 1989 under the authority of Article V. Historic Districts, Section 410.30 of the Pawtucket Zoning Code. The Commission is authorized to create local historic districts for the purpose of protecting the city's valuable historic properties through a regulated review process for proposed exterior changes. The Pawtucket Local Historic District is the city's only local historic district, which currently includes over 200 individual buildings. Only two buildings within the study area proper are included in the Local Historic District, but many are located nearby, some of which are located within the existing National Register-listed historic districts. Property owners submit a nomination form to the Department of Planning and Redevelopment for consideration of their individual property to enter the Local Historic District. The Historic District Commission reviews these nominations and recommends properties for inclusion in the district, but the City Council is responsible for the final decision (<http://www.pawtucketri.com/departments/planning/historicdistrict.php>)

Individual property owners who occupy their buildings that are within the local historic district are eligible for state and local programs that provide financial assistance to historic property owners. These property owners are also eligible for a \$45,000 abatement on local property taxes.

## **John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (BRVNHCC)**

The entire study area is included within the BRVNHCC. In 1986, the U.S. Congress created the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, which encompasses 24 communities in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, in recognition of the region's central role in the early industrialization of America. At the same time, a federally-appointed Commission (the BVRVNHCC) was created to oversee activities within the Corridor, staffed by employees of the National Park Service (NPS). The BRVNHCC works in partnership with a variety of Federal, State and local agencies, and non-profit and private organizations to preserve the historic and environmental elements of the Valley's landscape, and to promote investment in the Valley's historic mill villages and revitalization of its river system. In October 2012, the BRVNHCC that managed the Corridor -- and which is authorized by Congress -- expired, with management transferred to a new non-profit organization, the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, Inc.

## **Special Resource Study of the BRVNHCC**

After several years of study, the National Park Service (NPS) released a Special Resource Study in July 2011 of the Blackstone River Valley. The purpose of this study was to determine whether the sites and landscape features within the BRVNHCC that contribute to the understanding of the Blackstone River Valley as the Birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in the United States are eligible for inclusion as a unit of the National Park System.

A bill to establish the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park was introduced in Congress in October 2011. The bill has

not passed, but there is still optimism that it (or similar legislation) will, as there is strong support from the Congressional delegation (both MA and RI Senators and Representatives). As the legislation is currently written, the park would include Slater Mill as well as the mill villages of Slatersville (in North Smithfield, RI), Ashton (in Cumberland, RI), Whitinsville (in Northbridge, MA) and Hopedale, MA. The park would be a "partnership park," with the NPS working with private property owners, non-profits, historic sites, etc. with the NPS owning very little property. For example, Slater Mill would continue to be owned by the Old Slater Mill Association but operated with support from the NPS. Similar models include New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park and Boston National Historical Park.

Preliminary recommendations regarding historic properties and proposed projects that may affect them are:

- ❑ Project proponents should ensure that compliance reviews are carried out completely and expeditiously, if there is state or federal involvement in any proposed projects within the Development Plan Study Area. Projects with federal involvement require that a review entitled Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, be undertaken. Section 106 requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties, and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment.
- ❑ The Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act (RIGL 42:45 et seq) requires a similar review for state and local projects. Projects which are entirely private undertakings, and have no state or federal involvement, are not subject to review by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, the state's historic preservation office. (<http://www.preservation.ri.gov/review/process.php>)

- ❑ Project proponents must notify the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) if a federal undertaking (such as a project funded with federal monies, road projects, or other undertaking that involves a federal license, permit, funding, or approvals) may affect a NHL property, per Section 106 regulations. If there is a federal undertaking that may affect the Old Slater Mill, then project proponents must notify the ACHP early in the review process.
- ❑ Project proponents should be aware that existing individual buildings that are either individually listed in the National Register or are contributing resources to a National Register-listed historic district may be eligible for historic tax credits (20% federal) if their rehabilitations meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and undergo a state and federal application and review process; they are officially listed in the National Register; and are income-producing buildings. Alternatively, the buildings within the study area that were constructed before 1936 but are not listed in the National Register would qualify for a 10% federal credit for rehabilitation if they are converted to non-residential, income-producing uses. The review and application process for the 10% credit is minimal.

### Natural Resources

This section includes an inventory of natural resources within the study area. The northern limit of the study area is the Central Falls Landing off Madeira Avenue in Central Falls, and the southern limit is the Tidewater area at Bowles Court and Beechwood Avenue in Pawtucket. The Blackstone River corridor within the study area is bounded on the east and west by a densely developed urban environment. Generally, the limits of the existing developments butt against, and in some cases,

encroach into the channel of the river. These developments are typical of the river in general which has been subject to anthropogenic manipulation since the days of the Industrial Revolution. Evidence of this persists in the form of four dams that span the river within the Study Area. Valley Falls Dam is in the north end, located just downstream of the Broad Street Bridge; Central Falls Dam is at a bend in the river between Roosevelt Avenue on the north and Central Avenue on the south; Pawtucket Upper Dam is located at Slater Mill, south of the Exchange Street Bridge; and finally, Pawtucket Lower Dam is located immediately upstream of the Main Street Bridge. Recent efforts have been made to restore anadromous fish passage to the Blackstone River. Fish ladders have been designed and permitted for the Pawtucket Lower and Upper Dams, and the Central Falls Dam. A fish ladder is proposed for the Valley Falls Dam. With the exception of Slater Mill Dam, all of these dams support hydroelectric power generation facilities.

### Natural Resources

#### WETLANDS

Within the study area, the river corridor exhibits three distinct wetland resource systems: riverine systems, palustrine systems and estuarine systems. Generally speaking, the riverine system is a freshwater system and includes the river channel and adjacent bank features which may be characterized by earthen, gravel, cobble or rock substrates, or may support the growth of non-persistent emergent vegetation. Palustrine systems are freshwater systems that support the growth of persistent emergent vegetation, and woody shrubs or trees. Palustrine wetlands may border rivers, streams and lakes, or may exist independent of these features. Estuarine systems include tidal waters and adjacent tidal wetlands that are often semi-enclosed by land by have restricted access to the open ocean. The salinity of estuaries is greater than 0.5 percent.



Figure 2.4 Wetlands





In the study area, the boundary between the freshwater and tidal systems occurs at the Pawtucket Lower Dam, proximate to the Main Street Bridge. Above the Dam, the river is freshwater, and below the Dam it is tidal. The tidal segment of the river is the Seekonk River which is locally known as the Pawtucket River. Within the freshwater reach of the river, palustrine wetlands are sporadic and generally occur as pockets or fringes in areas where steep slopes, bends in the river, or other features made these areas less desirable for development. Downstream of the dam, conditions are similar as the shorelines along much of this segment have been hardened by bulkheads or other shoreline stabilization methods, except where steep slopes have created an impediment to development.

### WATER RESOURCES

Within the study area, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) has classified the water quality standard as Class B1{a} in the Blackstone River and Class SB1{a} in the Pawtucket River. These areas designated for primary and secondary contact recreational activities and fish and wildlife habitat that shall also be suitable for aquacultural uses, navigation, and industrial cooling. These waters are required to have good aesthetic value. Primary contact recreational activities may be impacted due to pathogens from approved wastewater discharges. The {a} indicates a partial use classification indicating that the waters may be degraded due to discharges from combined sewer overflows (CSOs.)

### FLOODPLAIN

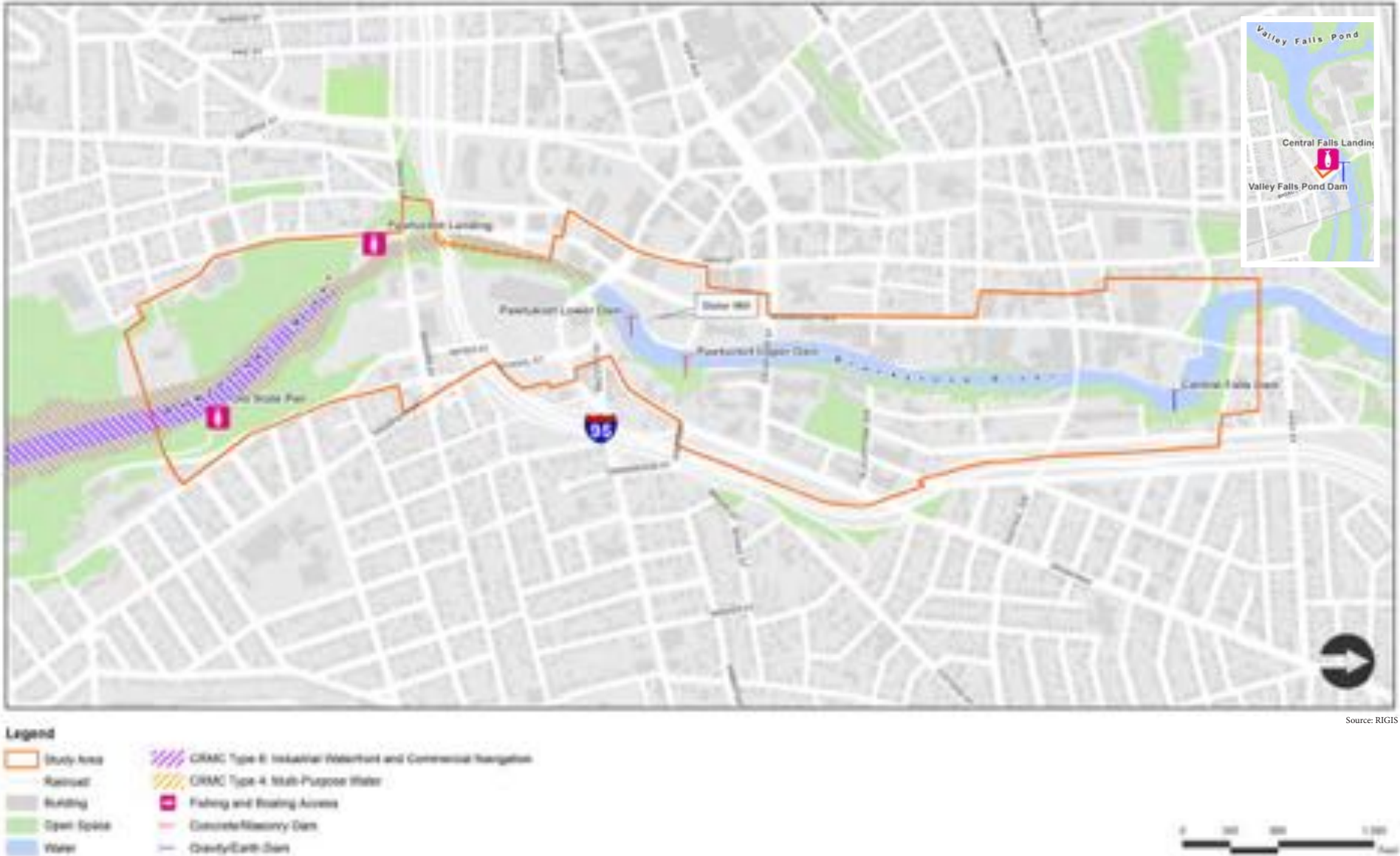
The United States Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has mapped floodplains in the Study Area. There are three types of floodplains mapped:

- ❑ Zone V – Coastal Velocity Zone with Storm Wave Hazards, greater than 100 year frequency recurrence interval (> 1% Annual probability).
- ❑ Zone AE – Areas of Floodplain with a 100 year frequency recurrence interval (1% Annual probability).
- ❑ Zone C – Areas of Floodplain with a 500 year frequency recurrence interval (<1% Annual probability).

Generally, the Zone V floodplain is associated with the tidal reaches of the River south of Division Street, where waters are susceptible to wave action and storm surge due to the connection with open ocean waters and increased fetch. The Zone AE floodplain is present generally from Division Street north along the river through the Study Area. The Zone AE areas encompass the river channel and some adjacent areas. Zone C floodplain extends somewhat beyond the Zone AE and Zone V floodplains within the Study Area. Floodplains present hazards to development and human safety, and are a restriction to development. Development activity within mapped Zone V and Zone AE floodplain is regulated by the standards imposed within the Rhode Island State Building Code, as well as state environmental regulatory programs as described in the following sections.

The Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) is the federally-designated coastal zone management agency in Rhode Island. CRMC has jurisdiction over all projects starting off shore at the 3-mile limit and continuing landward to distances in excess of 200 feet from a shoreline feature depending on what regulatory overlay the project site may be located within. CRMC's regulatory authority over coastal waters and adjacent uplands is provided under the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act, and Rhode Island General Laws 2-1-18 et seq. and 46-23. CRMC exercises its authority through one or more sets of

Figure 2.5 Coastal Resources



2 Existing Conditions

Figure 2.6 Floodplain



regulations including the Coastal Resources Management Program, the Rules and Regulations Governing the Protection and Management of the Freshwater Wetlands in the Vicinity of the Coast, the Federal Consistency Manual, and several Special Area Management Plans.

## Transportation Infrastructure

### Infrastructure – Existing

This section includes a preliminary review of existing utility systems within the area. The area is predominantly served by Verizon telephone, Cox cable, National Grid for electric and gas, Narragansett Bay Commission for Sanitary Sewer, Pawtucket Water Supply Board for Water and Municipal surface water drainage systems.

These utility systems are immediately available within the project area. The capacity of the utility systems to accommodate future development depends on the requirements of the project and the specific location. Future development drainage systems will need to comply with the latest edition of the Rhode Island Stormwater Design and Installation Manual. The new regulations encourage infiltration methods to manage and treat stormwater.

### Transportation - Existing

VHB conducted a preliminary assessment of the existing transportation network within the study area. VHB documented existing transit and alternative transportation options, including bus, rail, bicycle and pedestrian.

#### AUTOMOBILE

- ❑ The study area is heavily influenced by roadways which are classified as urban arterial's and collector roads. The majority of these roads have average daily traffic volumes (ADT) of 16,000 vpd or below,

indicating that traffic volumes are not indicative of transportation operation issues. A number of major streets in the study area have direct access to Interstate 95, including Garden St., George St., Prospect St., South St., Main St., Walcott St., Exchange St., Cottage St., Broadway, East St., and Roosevelt Ave.

#### PEDESTRIAN

- ❑ Pedestrian activity within the study area is high given the bus station hub, downtown business district, two high schools, city hall and historic sites.
- ❑ The majority of roadways have concrete sidewalks on both sides of the street. Roosevelt Avenue from Exchange Street to Main Street has brick sidewalks. All sidewalks vary in condition but are generally in fair to good condition. The majority of sidewalks do not meet the latest ADA wheelchair ramp standards.

#### BICYCLE

- ❑ An existing bike route is striped on Roosevelt Avenue from Charles Street southerly to Main Street. The route is depicted by markings on the pavement and intermittent signing. The route is interrupted and detoured at Main Street due to Construction of an I-95 bridge. The detour follows a route that ultimately connects into a portion of the Blackstone River Bikeway. The Blackstone River Bikeway continues southerly to Providence with bike lanes, shared roadway and regular signing.
- ❑ The City of Pawtucket is currently designing proposed bike lanes and related improvements on Exchange Street between I-95 and Roosevelt Avenue.
- ❑ Bicycle usage is not considered in signing and striping elsewhere in the study area.



### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- ❑ The study area is serviced by Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) routes 42, 51, 71, 72, 76, 77, 78, 79 and 99. These routes cover much of the study area except the portion north of Exchange Street.
- ❑ The bus system has a system hub at the corner of Roosevelt Avenue and Main Street. This activity causes some congestion to the area given multiple buses and pedestrian traffic. Another issue of the bus hub is standing buses waiting for staff change or schedule times. These standing buses utilize potential parking and are a visual impairment for pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles using the corridor.
- ❑ MBTA Commuter Rail Train service to Pawtucket is not currently available. However, plans for a proposed station are being developed. The station is proposed to be approximately 1/2 mile north of the project area.

### Transportation – Findings

#### AUTOMOBILE

- ❑ Traffic congestion within the project area is not a large problem. Traffic navigation through the area is complicated by numerous one way streets. The City is implementing changes to the traffic circulation based upon the Pawtucket Downtown Design Plan completed in 2011.
- ❑ Traffic signal coordination could be considered to enhance traffic operation along important transportation corridors

#### PEDESTRIAN

- ❑ Given the pedestrian traffic, a few key intersections within the Downtown and City Hall areas and associated traffic signals, should be reviewed to provide easier and safer pedestrian crossings, for example along Roosevelt Avenue, at Exchange Street and Main Street, and at Main Street and High Street.

- ❑ Institute a program within downtown Pawtucket and along the River Corridor to install and/or upgrade sidewalk ramps to meet the current ADA criteria.

#### BICYCLE

- ❑ The City of Pawtucket should prepare a Bicycle Master Plan which indicates the roadways the City desires to eventually become bicycle corridors. Potential bicycle routes would be reviewed based on pavement width, pavement condition, traffic volume, truck volume, traffic speed, parking conditions, horizontal and vertical alignment, frequency of curb cuts and intersections and connections to areas of interest.
- ❑ The City should support the proposed Blackstone River Bikeway through the study area. The City must agree to a desired alignment which they can present and request RIDEM and RIDOT to construct.
- ❑ Improve School Street/Prospect Street to include a bike route through signing and striping.

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- ❑ Plans to relocate the bus hub are being developed. The bus hub will be relocated from its current location to be away from Roosevelt Avenue and Slater Mill. This will improve pedestrian and vehicle travel along Roosevelt Avenue.
- ❑ RIPTA is implementing a high speed bus line (Route 99) to service Pawtucket. The high speed buses will make fewer stops and have the ability to communicate with traffic signals minimizing delays along the route.
- ❑ Train service from MBTA are anticipated at a planned train station in the vicinity of Barton Street. The planned station will be within walking distance of the bus system and Downtown Pawtucket business and historic areas.



Figure 2.7 Roadway Classifications



Source: RIGIS

**Legend**

- |            |                |
|------------|----------------|
| Railroad   | Highway        |
| Building   | Arterial Road  |
| Open Space | Collector Road |
| Water      | Local Road     |



2 Existing Conditions

Figure 2.8 Average Daily Traffic



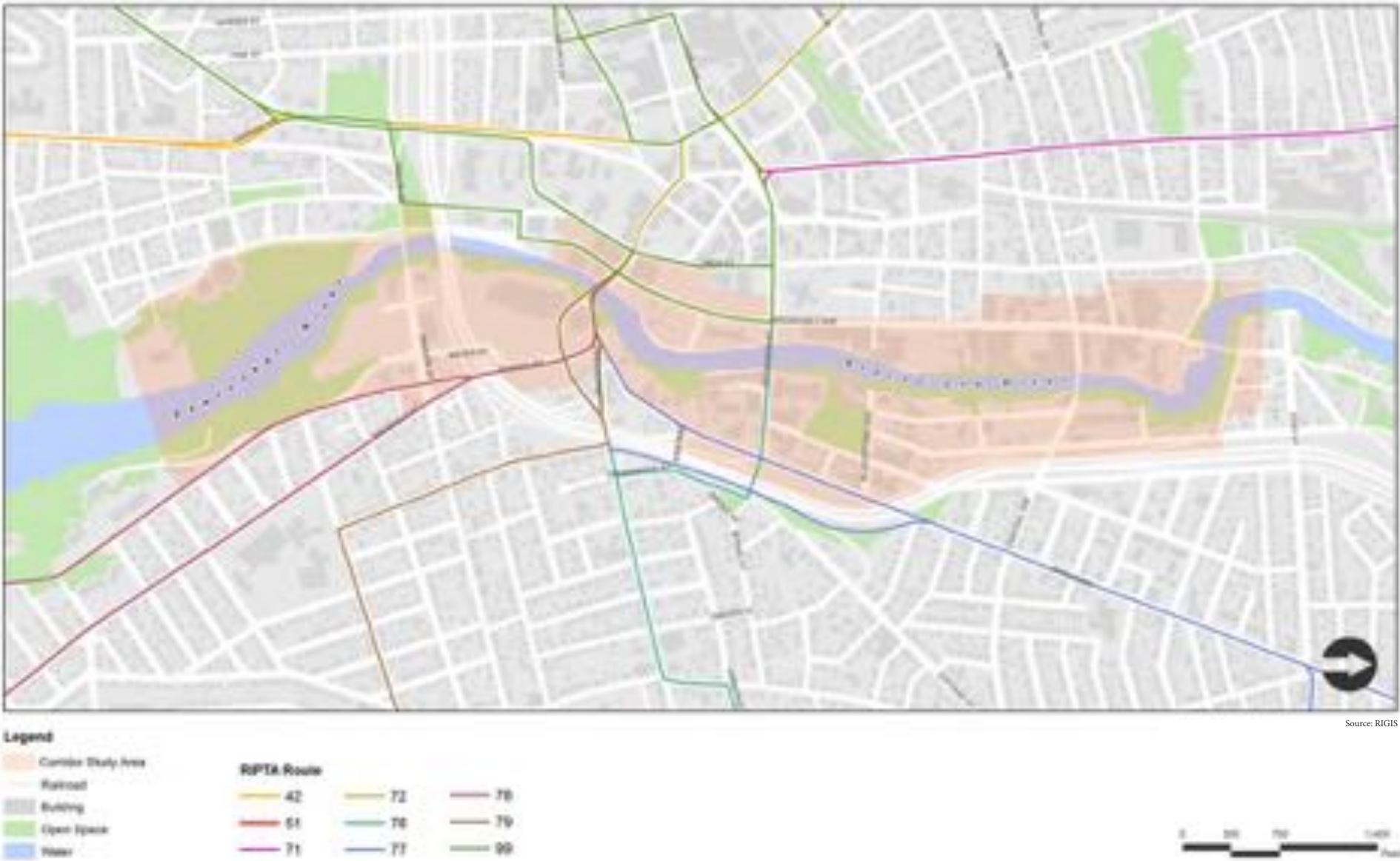


Figure 2.9 Bikeways



2 Existing Conditions

Figure 2.10 Public Transit





# Housing

The goal of the housing assessment was to characterize housing conditions in the river corridor study area and immediate surroundings, comparing the profile of study area housing to the broader geographic context including Pawtucket, Central Falls, Providence County, and Rhode Island. The inventory complements the data presented in the 2012 Pawtucket-Central Falls River Corridor Market Analysis and informed the formulation of recommendations in this Plan, which aims to improve connectivity and street activation for the existing residential population as well as for potential new residential and commercial occupants.

The housing inventory, presented in Appendix B, summarizes existing conditions related to housing within an approximate ½-mile radius of the river corridor study area parcels. Figure 2.11 shows the ½-mile study area boundary, along with the Census tracts analyzed as part of the ½-mile study area.

The housing inventory memo is organized into four sections, including: a) Overview of Study Area Housing; b) Selected Housing and Household Characteristics; c) Profile of Study Area Loft Housing; and d) Summary

of Broker and Developer Interviews. Key findings from each section are summarized below.

## Overview of Study Area Housing

The ½-mile river corridor study area spans two municipalities and contains a mix of housing types. As shown in Figure 2.12, the study area is dominated by two- to five-family homes, with apartment and condominium buildings scattered throughout. Single family homes are also located throughout the study area, but are generally more concentrated at the southern end, towards the Oak Hill neighborhood of Pawtucket.

## Selected Housing and Household Characteristics

### HOUSING AND OCCUPANCY

The ½-mile study area contains 13,642 housing units, representing approximately 35 percent of housing units in Pawtucket and Central Falls. Table 1 summarizes key housing characteristics for the study area and comparison geographies.

Table 1: Housing Units, Occupancy Status, and Housing Tenure, 2010

	Study Area		Pawtucket		Central Falls		Providence County		Rhode Island	
	Units	Percent	Units	Percent	Units	Percent	Units	Percent	Units	Percent
Total Units	13,642	100%	32,055	100%	7,478	100%	264,835	100%	463,388	100%
Occupied	11,817	87%	29,022	91%	6,526	87%	241,717	91%	413,600	89%
Vacant	1,825	13%	3,033	9%	952	13%	23,118	9%	49,788	11%
Owner Occupied	2,596	22.0%	13,020	44.9%	1,463	22.4%	130,368	53.9%	250,952	60.7%
Renter Occupied	9,221	78.0%	16,002	55.1%	5,063	77.6%	11,349	46.1%	162,648	39.3%

Source: 2010 Census, US Census Bureau

2 Existing Conditions

Figure 2.11 Housing Study Area



Source: RIGIS







### HOUSEHOLDS AND INCOME

The study area contains 11,817 households and has an average household size of 2.44 persons per household. A high proportion of renter-occupied units are inhabited by one-person households (40 percent), compared to owner-occupied units (23 percent). The median household income for the study area was approximately \$28,773 in 2010, substantially lower than all of the comparison geographies. This discrepancy is due in part to Census Tract 152, which contains 13 percent of the study area's households and has a median household income of \$13,261. This tract contains two public housing facilities, Kennedy Manor (171 units) and Fogarty Manor (248 units).

### HOUSING VALUE AND RENTS

Based on the most current US Census Bureau data, the median home value in the study area was \$256,443 in 2010 (or \$269,415 expressed in 2012 dollars). This is approximately 12 and 13 percent higher than the median home value in Pawtucket and Central Falls, respectively, and roughly 8 percent lower than the statewide median.

Census data on median home value were supplemented through interviews with local real estate brokers and a review of current online residential listings. Based on November 2012 residential property listings posted in RILiving.com and grouped into \$25,000 increments, the highest proportion of single family homes (27 percent) are priced at between \$125,000 and \$149,999. In Central Falls, RI Living showed 36 multi-family properties for sale as of November 19, 2012, with the highest number (10 properties) listed for between \$75,000 and \$99,999. RI Living showed nine single family homes for sale in Central Falls as of November 19, 2012, most priced under \$100,000.

The median gross rent for the study area was \$715 in 2010 (\$751 in 2012 dollars), between 7 and 19 percent lower than all of the geographies analyzed. This is due in part to the low median gross rent reported for Census Tract 152 (\$296 per month), which contains 1,246 occupied units paying rent. The US Census Bureau's median gross rent figures for Pawtucket and Central Falls are lower than the average figures reported in the Rhode Island Housing 2011 Rent Survey, which indicates that average rental rates for a 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom, and 3-bedroom apartment in Central Falls were \$761, \$849, and \$1,133, respectively, in 2011 and the average rental rates for a studio, 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom apartment in Pawtucket were \$608, \$779, \$990, and \$1,325, respectively.

### Profile of Study Area Loft Housing

The study area contains a number of buildings, primarily mill buildings, which have been converted to residential use in recent years. Four of these loft residence buildings are located within the river corridor study area, with the remaining three located west of the corridor. In total, the buildings contain 467 units, including both condominium and rental apartments.

Within the ½-mile study area, the per square foot sale values and assessed values for residential units located in rehabilitated mill buildings are substantially higher than other types of housing. A review of the tax assessor databases for Central Falls and Pawtucket indicates that units in selected study area's residential loft buildings have assessed values that are between 2.5 and 5 times the average for all units in the cities in which they are located.



## Broker and Developer Interviews

Targeted interviews with area stakeholders including residential developers and brokers were conducted during October and November, 2012. The interviews were intended to supplement the ½-mile study area residential profile developed through Census data research, city tax assessment data, and online research, and to help identify the area's key strengths and weaknesses as a place to live, as well as opportunities for new residential development or conversions going forward. Key themes are summarized below.

- ❑ Study Area Strengths: Interviewees noted the historic character of the ½-mile study area as an asset. Housing costs, which are generally lower than in nearby neighborhoods, were also cited as an asset, as was accessibility to Boston via the MBTA commuter rail. Interviewees indicated that the river is an underutilized resource that could be an important draw for potential residents if riverfront access were improved.
- ❑ Study Area Weaknesses: One of the key barriers to attracting residents to the study area is the scarcity of amenities, including retail stores and grocery stores, restaurants, cafes, and bars, as well as neighborhood services such as dry cleaning.
- ❑ Barriers to New Housing Development, Residential Conversions, Resident Attraction: Current economic conditions were cited as a key barrier to residential development and conversion in the study area. Apart from this underlying issue, interviewees identified the following challenges: lack of amenities, city permitting process, need for additional financial incentives or financing tools, and inadequate methodology for appraisal of loft housing.
- ❑ Opportunities & Additional Observations: Interviewees indicated that new study area housing should be varied in type, size and price, encouraging a mix of new households. Brokers indicated that there seems to be a gap in the regional market in for-sale housing geared towards young professionals, particularly those earning between \$35,000 and \$50,000. Interviewees agreed that there is generally more demand for rental housing than for-sale housing in Pawtucket and Central Falls, and indicated that loft housing is a “bright spot” in the study area housing market.

2 Existing Conditions

Building Inventory

LLB Architects conducted a high-level survey of notable real-estate opportunities included within the boundaries of the Pawtucket River corridor. Certain conditions influenced the selection of these buildings to be part of the survey, including location, current ownership status, building type, and current utilization. Focus was given to providing an assortment of real estate suited for redevelopment. Since a housing study is a separate aspect of the River Corridor Plan, we focused on commercial and industrial properties.

Building conditions were analyzed using 2 parameters. The building type parameter provides insight into the construction, age, and original or most recent use of the building. It also aids in predicting rehabilitation issues due to codes like accessibility, fire and life safety.

The building condition index describes the potential of the building’s reuse in its current state. Condition descriptions use a hybrid of office space classifications (Class A, B, C) and two more descriptions for buildings which may require extensive rehabilitation.

Building conditions were observed and assessed using an exterior “windshield” or walking survey method.

All building data was collected from existing assessor records and property valuation databases, cited on Pawtucket and Central Falls’ municipal websites.

Building Inventory Index

BUILDING TYPES

- 1. Masonry mill (ca. 1900)
- 2. Wood frame historic (ca. 1900)
- 3. Masonry commercial (1950-1970)
- 4. Monumental/Civic

CONDITION INDEX DESCRIPTIONS

- A. Excellent (Class A)
- B. Good (Class B)
- C. Fair (Class C)
- D. Poor or under-utilized
- E. Vacant, requires complete rehab

Example of a Building Inventory Index:

1	B
BUILDING TYPE	CONDITION INDEX

## BUILDING TYPES

### MASONRY MILL (CA. 1900)

The buildings in this category are historic mill buildings that quintessentially express the heritage of Pawtucket and Central Falls. They are cornerstones of the type of place making that people actively seek as they move back into cities – history, authenticity, uniqueness, and community. In addition, their generous open floor plans and large windows make them ideally suited for conversion to housing – whether live/work, micro lofts, condos, or apartments. This dovetails nicely with the FXM market analysis, which showed a demonstrable demand for this type of housing, and for “loft living” in particular. The commercial real estate market remains soft, with the exception being contemporary flex office space and live/work. Fortunately, these uses are also easily accommodated in historic mill buildings. While industrial/warehouse remains a viable use, it does not increase the density or number of potential consumers who would assist in long-term revitalization; therefore it is not considered a “highest and best use.” In sum, these turn-of-the-last-century buildings are an irreplaceable asset for Pawtucket and Central Falls to capitalize upon to revitalize both the economy and quality of life for all. Preserving, rehabbing, and adaptively reusing these buildings should be a top priority in any strategic plan.

### WOOD FRAME HISTORIC (CA. 1900)

The only building in this category is the one at Central Falls Landing. The importance of this site to the City of Central Falls cannot be understated. This site cannot be developed by ordinary means, nor

should it be privatized without preserving the public amenities of its unique location. The building itself would require significant structural and envelope repairs to stabilize the building for reuse.

It would be worthwhile to examine the landing site to determine if river amenities can be expanded even if the building is not sold or renovated in the near term. For example, temporary options such as licenses to food trucks and boat/kayak rentals would help to utilize and activate the site.

### MASONRY COMMERCIAL (1950-1970)

This era of building can be difficult to modernize to meet current building and fire codes without significant investment. However, re-investment is not possible without corresponding market demand. With the commercial real estate market remaining flat for the near term, alternative uses other than traditional office space should be explored. Street enhancements would greatly improve curb appeal for this grouping of buildings as well as improve the image of the City of Pawtucket along a major vehicular artery. In general, the prospects for commercial and retail establishments would improve with a greater density of population, i.e. more housing. Programs provided by National Grid and RISE may assist in making these buildings more energy efficient, and therefore more cost effective to lease.

2 Existing Conditions

Figure 2.13 Building Inventory





Figure 2.14 Example Site in the Building Inventory



ADDRESS	175 Main Street, Pawtucket
COMMON NAME	Visitor's Center
OWNER	Pawtucket
PLAT AND LOT	43-581
ZONE	CD
PARCEL AREA	2.5 acres
BUILDING USABLE AREA	55863 sf
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1969
NUMBER OF STORIES	3
TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION	II
CURRENT USE	Public/office
ORIGINAL/PREVIOUS USE	Office building
ENVELOPE/STRUCTURAL SYSTEM	Exterior brick veneer
HISTORIC RECORD	No

**3** **C**  
BUILDING TYPE CONDITION INDEX



2 Existing Conditions

# 3 River Corridor Plan Elements

## Introduction

All proposed improvements have the underlying goal of re-engaging the river in various ways, whether visual or physical. Reconnecting to the river provides a value added measure to all of the following plan elements. Thus the value of the River Corridor Development Plan is that it uses the most defining characteristic of Pawtucket and Central Falls, the river, to be the backbone of a plan that provides a physical connection for a series of improvements.

### 1. Transform Division Street into a Village Center

By providing an integrated, cohesive, and legible series of streetscape improvements, centered on a rhythm of street trees, well defined street edges and improved intersections for both the vehicle and pedestrian, the appearance of Division Street can be transformed into a Village Center positioned to attract private investment dollars on the surrounding underutilized and City owned properties.

### 2. Rethink School Street

By increasing attention to pedestrian amenities such as crosswalks, views to the river, pedestrian scale street lighting, and added bike lanes, School Street could function as a multimodal spine reconnecting the surrounding neighborhoods to the River and each other.

### 3. Create a downtown “hub” of activities, linking resources and destinations

Rethinking and consolidating parking and overlaying a strategic pedestrian circulation network transforms the larger area into a community campus backed by cultural amenities, civic institutions, new commercial possibilities, and memorable open space.

### 4. Enhance the riverfront at Slater Mill

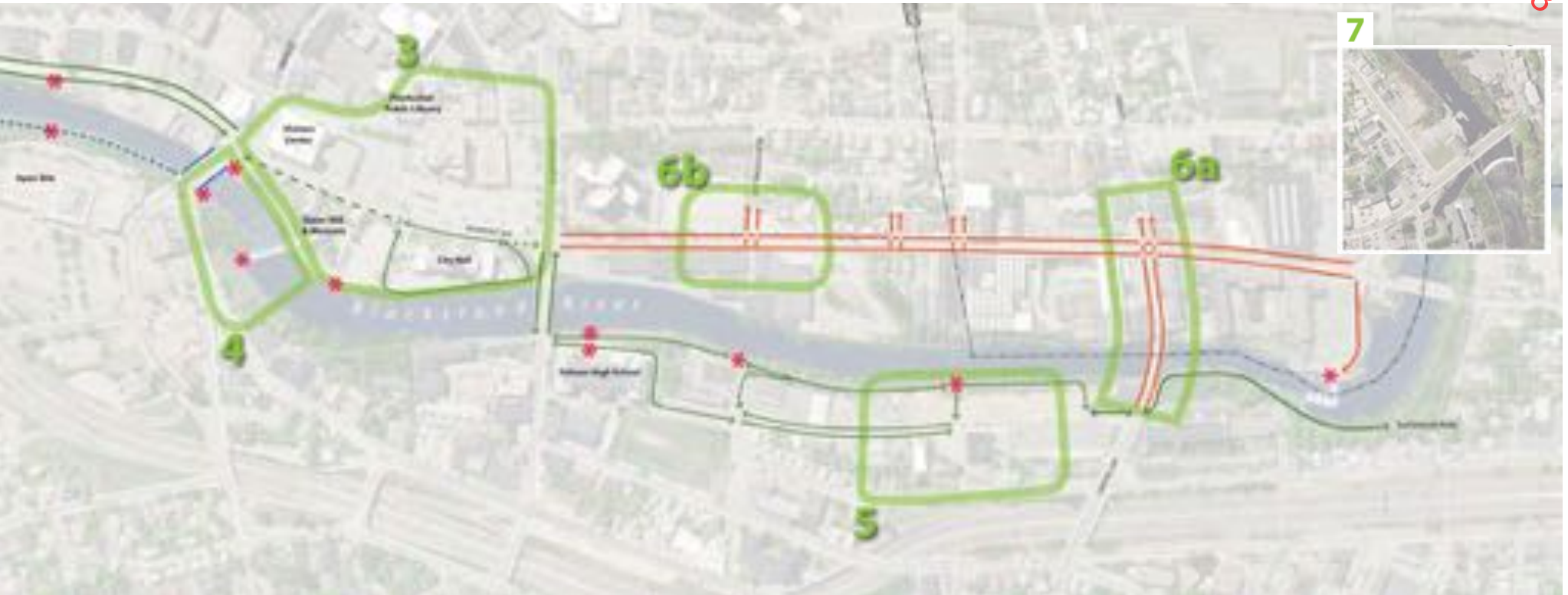
In connecting to a larger pedestrian circulation network being proposed along the riverbank, key overlook areas have been identified and designed with similar materials to the existing precedent of the Historic Mill as a means to seamlessly knit these new amenities in the larger context. These overlooks provide new opportunities for educational interpretation of the environmental and cultural history of the River.



### 5. Infill Front Street with new streetscape and development and provide connection to the River

By thinking about this district holistically, and providing targeted improvements, the City of Pawtucket has a great opportunity to use the existing infrastructure to connect and open paths for both redevelopment and connections to the river.





## 6. Make Roosevelt Avenue a Great Street

The Roosevelt Avenue corridor has already begun to see redevelopment and public investment. Additional targeted improvements will create nodes along the corridor. The Roosevelt / Central Street and Roosevelt / Blackstone Avenue were two case studies explored in this plan. Attention to the streetscape and pedestrian realm in the way of street trees, sidewalk and infrastructure improvements and targeted infill will create a recognizable rhythm along the roadway.

## 7. Identify goals and objectives for Central Falls Landing

Central Falls Landing is positioned along Broad Street at a unique spot along the Blackstone River. Current riverfront access provides a clear destination for those wishing to connect with and utilize the benefits of the Blackstone River, but this area could become a more memorable destination through the development of enhanced pedestrian connections, planned recreational facilities and expanded riverside access.

## Element 1: Transform Division Street into a Village Center

Division Street has recently experienced targeted streetscape upgrades in conjunction with the adjacent bridge improvements. These upgrades include roadway resurfacing, widening of the existing concrete sidewalks, and the design of a stormwater management park. Though helpful, these improvements are simple precursors to larger targeted projects, both public and private that can help to transform Division Street into its goal of becoming a Village Center.

Additional improvements aimed at increasing and improving non-vehicular circulation including extending a trail system along the river that links Division Street to the State Pier site and providing additional streetscape amenities from the Division Street bridge to Prospect Street such as, improved intersections and crosswalks, adding a rhythm of street trees and lights, and enhancing the triangle park on Prospect Street as a visual gateway.

Additional improvements aimed at unlocking redevelopment potential and private investment including creating a new development fronting Division Street and activating the intersections on the land currently owned by the City, and seeking additional infill opportunities along the Division Street corridor.



Division Street Area

**Figure 3.1 Division Street Vision**



- 1 Proposed park (Park is part of bridge reconstruction project)
- 2 Extend the trail system along the river
- 3 Potential redevelopment / reuse of the existing vacant building
- 4 New development on the city-owned Division Street property. New development should "front" the street and have active ground floor uses
- 5 Streetscape enhancements (from Division Street bridge to Prospect)
- 6 Identify opportunities for an internal road that links cars, pedestrians, and bicyclists
- 7 Extend an off-road bikeway segment to connect Prospect and School Streets
- 8 Link the Division Street development site to the State Pier site via a trail
- 9 Enhance the triangle park on Prospect Street as a visual gateway
- 10 Seek infill development opportunities along Division Street



## Element 2:

### Rethink School Street

At nearly 3 full lanes wide, School Street functions primarily as a vehicle-dominated thoroughway. Bordered on the east by a mix of residential and commercial buildings and the west by an overgrown and trash filled tree line obstructing views of the river, School Street is not welcoming to bicyclists or pedestrians.

By rethinking School Street and addressing these problems with simple design solutions, School Street could be transformed into a multimodal tree lined avenue comfortable to both the pedestrian and vehicle. These design solutions include trimming the trees and cleaning up the garbage and underbrush along the river corridor to provide views to the water, replacing and widening the existing sidewalk on the western side of the street, adding a rhythm of street lights with banners, adding a dedicated bike lane along the street edge, providing new crosswalks as a means to link the neighborhood to the river's edge, and restriping the vehicular travel lanes to reduce lane width and cut vehicle travel speed.

Under its current condition, School Street is a wide, vehicle-dominated boulevard, with no connection to its surroundings. By increasing attention to pedestrian amenities and through re-striping the roadway to add bike lanes, School Street could function as a multimodal spine reconnecting the surrounding residential and commercial neighborhoods to the River and each other.



School Street - Existing Conditions (looking south)



**Figure 3.2 School Street Vision**



**School Street - Future**

- 1 Trim trees, and open views to the river, and clean up garbage
- 2 Replace and widen sidewalk along rivers edge
- 3 Add street lights and banners at crosswalk locations
- 4 Add a dedicated bike lane along School Street
- 5 New crosswalks will link neighborhoods to the river
- 6 Restripe the vehicular travel lanes to reduce lane width and accommodate a new bike lane

## Element 3: Create a downtown “hub” of activities, linking resources and destinations

Recent investment along Roosevelt Avenue has produced marked improvements to the streetscape along Slater Mill and the Pawtucket Transit Center. Dedicated bike lanes and improved sidewalks have begun to soften this automobile dominated area. Master Planning efforts should focus on creating additional useable public amenities while opening up areas for future private investment.

The planning for this area has been broken down into phases. Short-term improvements include moving the Roosevelt Avenue bus operations to High Street. By relocating the bus activities from Roosevelt, a less congested and much safer connection from the Visitor’s Center to the Slater Mill can be created. With the relocation to High Street, a new bus shelter, waiting area and plaza should be created to help define the pedestrian realm and activate the space. Utilizing the existing change of grade from High Street to Roosevelt, a new stair and ramp system could be constructed to as a means to link the bus hub to Slater Mill and the Visitor’s Center.

Long term improvements include creating a grand civic space that links High Street to the river. This space will include an integrated stair and ramp system to make up the +/- 20’ of grade change, outdoor class rooms, benches and tables, and historic interpretive elements. In addition, plans include expanding the Visitor Center with a mixed-use development that could include enhanced programming for Slater Mill. The City parking lot site design should be advanced to include a parking deck aimed centralizing all parking for the area. Current ground lots

behind City Hall and between the Visitor Center and Exchange Street could be concentrated into a multi-level deck and open up development potential for private investment and additional open space to expand the riverfront park system. These steps will transform the area into a more usable and economically vibrant space.

From the exit below the turret of the library the view of Slater Mill and the Falls beyond is breathtaking. The physical connection, however, is convoluted and circuitous. By creating a phased redevelopment approach focused on enhancing pedestrian amenities, a new connection can be created linking the library and a new Bus Hub on High Street to the Pawtucket Visitor’s Center, Slater Mill and Museum, City Hall and the Falls.

**Figure 3.3 Downtown Vision**



Short term improvements

- 1 Move the Roosevelt Avenue bus operations to High Street
- 2 Create a new bus shelter, café, waiting area and plaza on High Street
- 3 Link the bus hub to Roosevelt Avenue, Slater Mill, and the Visitor Center via a stair and ramp
- 4 Implement parking improvements and the off street bikeway at Slater Mill



Long term improvements

- 1 Create a grand civic space that links High Street to the river (Stairs, ramps, outdoor class rooms, historic interpretive elements)
- 2 Expand Visitor Center with mixed use development that could include enhanced programming for Slater Mill
- 3 Rework parking to expand the riverfront park system
- 4 Provide streetscape enhancements on both sides of Roosevelt Avenue
- 5 Continue the off street bikeway along the eastern edge of Roosevelt
- 6 Advance redevelopment of the city parking lot site (New Buildings, parking deck, remove parking lot behind City Hall)



## Bus Hub Shelter

As part of this project, a bus shelter design was explored for the bus hub. The bus shelter will be designed as a flexible activity center located off High Street, visually connecting the library, Slater Mill, and the Blackstone River.

The initial design is inspired by the traditional forms of Pawtucket's mill history – brick chimneys, masonry, and sawtooth roofs – but is detailed in a modern way with elements such as glass and LED light columns. Recesses in the brick wall accommodate plaques that illustrate the City's rich history. The cascading sawtooth roof covers the bus shelter, a glass-enclosed café/convenience kiosk, and outdoor plaza as well as a landscaped amphitheater below. The remaining structure is light to permit views and traffic to permeate through the canopied space.

As the River Corridor planning process progressed, it was decided that the design of the bus shelter needed further exploration. As such, the City decided to postpone advancement of the conceptual design.



Bus Shelter Concept Plan



Bus Shelter - Looking towards Slater Mill



Bus Shelter Concept - Looking along High Street



## Element 4:

### Enhance the Riverfront at Slater Mill

The west bank of the Riverfront is home to the Slater Mill National Landmark. The east bank possesses the opportunity to expand the Slater Mill site.

Key improvements include, connecting a riverwalk from the Apex site to Slater Mill and providing a new pedestrian crossing on Broadway to improve safety and access to the park. Internal improvements include making landscape enhancements through selective trimming and clearing of existing vegetation, adding additional landscape along new accessible pathways and overlooks, adding Fish Ladder viewing areas in specific locations with educational signage and enhancing the existing overlook on the west bank, and providing new information kiosks, artwork and signage throughout the park.

As part of an overall goal to reconnect the community to the River and its history, additional pedestrian amenities have been proposed to the east bank adjacent to Broadway. Key overlook areas have been identified and designed with materials and architectural details which reflect the style of the historic Slater Mill. These overlooks provide new opportunities for educational interpretation of the environmental and cultural history of the River, and when matched with the existing industrial history being presented at Slater Mill.

**Figure 3.4 Riverfront Vision**



**Blackstone River / Slater Mill Park**



- 1 Connect the riverwalk from Apex to Slater Mill Park
- 2 Make landscape enhancements to Slater Mill Park
- 3 New fish ladder viewing areas
- 4 Enhance the existing overlook
- 5 New landscape and accessible sidewalk improvements
- 6 Information kiosks, artwork, and signage
- 7 New pedestrian crossing to improve access to the Slater Mill Park

## Element 5: Infill Front Street with new streetscape and development and provide connection to the River

The Front Street district is a prime location for the City of Pawtucket to meet two of its overall goals and objectives. First, it is an area where strategic investment of public dollars creates a premier development site for future private investment. A new streetscape including lighting, street trees, buffer plantings, new sidewalks, and intersection improvements matched with a new overlook with connections to the River and new local bikeway, set the framework for private investment into infill development. Second, it is a great area to provide public access to the River.

Specific improvements at Front Street and Blake Street include a new overlook park with views to the river and connections to Blake Street, streetscape improvements including, sidewalks, street trees and lighting, intersection improvements at Blake street and Front Street including new crosswalks and signage, landscape buffers to the adjacent industrial uses, selective clearing and trimming of vegetation along the river's edge to open view corridors, and connection to a new bikeway along the river's edge.

Specific improvements at Blackstone Avenue and Front Street include, fencing and landscaping along the existing open expansive parking lot to help define the street edge, new cross walks and sidewalk improvements for the students that often frequent this area on their

way to and from school, landscape screening of the adjacent active industrial uses, a rhythm of new street trees.

By thinking about this district holistically, and providing targeted improvements, the City of Pawtucket has a great opportunity to use the existing infrastructure to connect and open paths for both redevelopment and connections to the river.

**Figure 3.5 Front Street Vision**



- 1 Fencing and low growing flowers
- 2 New crosswalk and sidewalk improvements
- 3 Landscape screening of active industrial uses
- 4 New street trees along Blackstone Avenue and Front Street
- 5 Banners identify the proximity of the Blackstone River and nearby viewing areas



- 1 New overlook park with views to the river and connections to Blake Street
- 2 Streetscape improvements (sidewalks, trees, lighting)
- 3 New infill development
- 4 Streetscape improvements at Blake Street intersection
- 5 Landscape buffers to industrial uses (explore limited vehicular access on Front Street)
- 6 Trimming of vegetation to open views to the river
- 7 Explore possible routes for Bikeway (space along rivers edge / along Front Street)



## Element 6:

### Make Roosevelt Avenue a Great Street

The Roosevelt Avenue corridor has already begun to see redevelopment and public investment. As part of the Cherry Tree program, its streetscape has started to see noticed improvement, redevelopment of certain industrial buildings into residential properties continue the character change. Additional targeted improvements will create memorial nodes along this improving corridor. Roosevelt and Cross Street and Roosevelt and Blackstone Avenue are two case study intersections explored in this plan. At these locations attention to the streetscape and pedestrian realm will create a recognizable rhythm and help develop a theme currently missing.

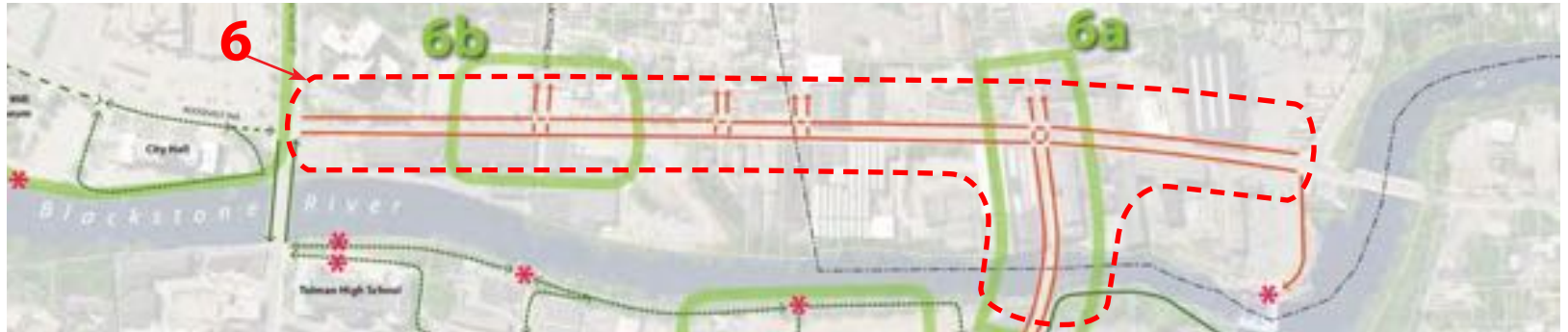
Specific improvements at Roosevelt and Blackstone Avenue and Roosevelt and Cross Street include upgrading the intersections with a consistent palette of materials to establish a recognized theme or character to the street. Improvements could include imprint crosswalks, sidewalk improvements incorporating special pavers, or widened and expanded pedestrian zones. Infill opportunities should be sought after, and when proposed, especially at the intersections, should reinforce the character of the intersection and embrace, activate and strengthen its edges. The number of curb cuts should be reduced and street trees added where possible as a means to provide a clear and legible street edge. Within the roadway, the potential to add “share the road” bicycle signage or pavement markings such as sharrows should be explored as a means to link bicyclists from Roosevelt to Front Street.

Figure 3.6 Roosevelt Avenue Vision



6a Roosevelt Avenue at Cross Street





6b Roosevelt Avenue at Blackstone Avenue

Legend for 6a and 6b

- 1** New crosswalk and sidewalk improvements at all intersections along Roosevelt Avenue
- 2** Seek infill development opportunities along Roosevelt Avenue, targeted at the intersections
- 3** Reduce the existing number of curb cuts where possible
- 4** Add special pavers, landscaping, and sidewalk extensions at the intersections along Roosevelt Avenue
- 5** Plan ahead for future road resurfacing to improve "share the road" bike signage and its associated wayfinding
- 6** Add street trees along Central Avenue
- 7** Explore potential to add "share the road" to Central Avenue, linking bicyclists from Roosevelt to Front Street, including sharrows, bike signs and striping where feasible.

## Element 7: Identify goals and objectives for Central Falls Landing

Central Falls Landing is positioned at a unique spot along the Blackstone river. This area could become a first class destination through the development of enhanced pedestrian connections, planned recreational facilities and expanded riverside access. An exciting new infill opportunity at this location could help seamlessly connect this expanded riverside activity to the existing neighborhood context.

Specific improvements could include enhancing access to the river by making connection to the existing and planned recreational facilities. Plans for the area include an improved boat launch, a river walk, nature trail, and connection to the Blackstone River Bikeway. The historic character of the area should be preserved and interpreted through signage and educational outreach. It should celebrate the history of the Blackstone River and its role in the development of the City of Central Falls. Any expansion of the historic building along the river's edge should include ground floor uses that increase activity. Building placement should reinforce the street edge, and attention should be given to improving the streetscape and signage to help define the area as a gateway entrance to the City.

The City should explore temporary uses of the site to help market its redevelopment potential. This could include events that connect people to the river. The City should explore implementation improvements that can catalyze the redevelopment of the site, like sidewalk, street light, and parking improvements.



Central Falls Landing - Existing Conditions

**Figure 3.7 Central Falls Landing Vision**



- 1** Enhance access to the river by improving sidewalks to existing and planned recreational facilities along the river (i.e. boat launch/decks and dock, planned river walk/nature trail, Blackstone River Bikeway)
- 2** Seek opportunities to improve the riverside deck and platform (lighting banners)
- 3** Preserve the historic character of the site by exploring opportunities for signage, interpretive feature and educational programs that celebrate the industrial history of the Blackstone River
- 4** Include active ground floor uses in future redevelopment that will help create a regional destination/attraction
- 5** Place new buildings and/or additions to the existing building along Broad Street to reinforce the street edge
- 6** Provide streetscape and signage improvements along Broad Street in order to define a "gateway" entrance to the city
- 7** Encourage temporary / seasonal uses of the site that connects residents to the river and supports historical and tourism opportunities



## Element 8: Create Gateway Streetscape and Signage Enhancements

The numerous highway access points in Pawtucket and Central Falls provide the cities a number of opportunities to make lasting first impressions. Elements to consider when developing memorable gateways include well-defined directional signage, colorful and easily maintained landscaping, screening of unsightly utilities, standard light fixtures, street trees that define corridors, specialty fencing with incorporated artwork on the bridges over I-95, and banners and signage to establish branding.

Creating a legible and cohesive wayfinding system is important to Pawtucket and Central Falls. Developing a clear and concise signage system aimed toward directing motorists and pedestrians to their destinations is the first step.

Figure 3.8 Gateway Enhancements



Potential enhancements at Pearl & Garden Street



Potential enhancements at Broadway

- 1 Wayfinding
- 2 Colorful landscaping / flowers
- 3 Landscape buffers to utilities
- 4 Paint / replace poles (black)
- 5 Additional street trees
- 6 Specialty fencing and art work on bridges
- 7 Street lights and banners



Figure 3.9



The goal of this signage toolkit is to create a clear, user friendly and well-designed signage and wayfinding system that engages multiple user types, both arriving and departing from Pawtucket and Central Falls, while reinforcing the brand and identity of the respective cities. The signage system will match the wayfinding and identification, the “from

here to there” and “you are here”, with the branding and character, the “what is the identity” and “look and feel” to create a holistic system toolkit that both communities can use.

Figure 3.10

The hierarchy of the family of signs will be cohesive and comprehensive, and recognizable both up and down the system. While being clear and concise it will also have a targeted objective to reinforce the Pawtucket and Central Falls brand. The hierarchy has been divided into six main signage types; regional, district, corridor, park and landmark, public plaza and bicycle. Each type relates to the other by using similar color, font, icons, logos, and symbology, and is an integral part of the wayfinding system.

Once exiting a highway off ramp, Regional Directional Signage introduces travelers to the various destinations throughout the city by providing direction to those major destinations. Regional Directional Signage should give a sense of City character and brand; the color, font, legibility, logo and directional arrows and symbols should be clear and consistent as the Regional Directional Signage will act as the first recognizable sign within the wayfinding package.

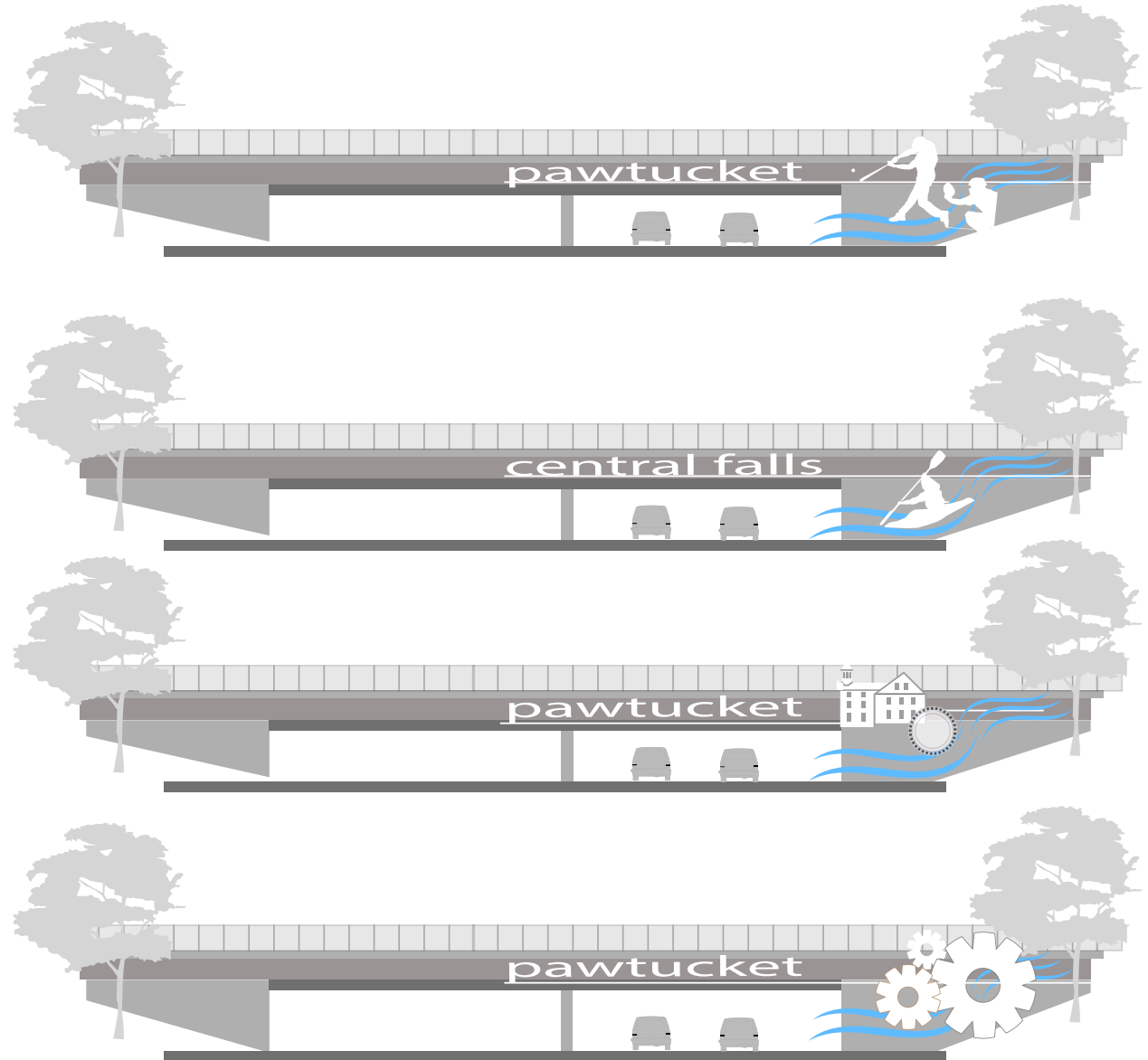
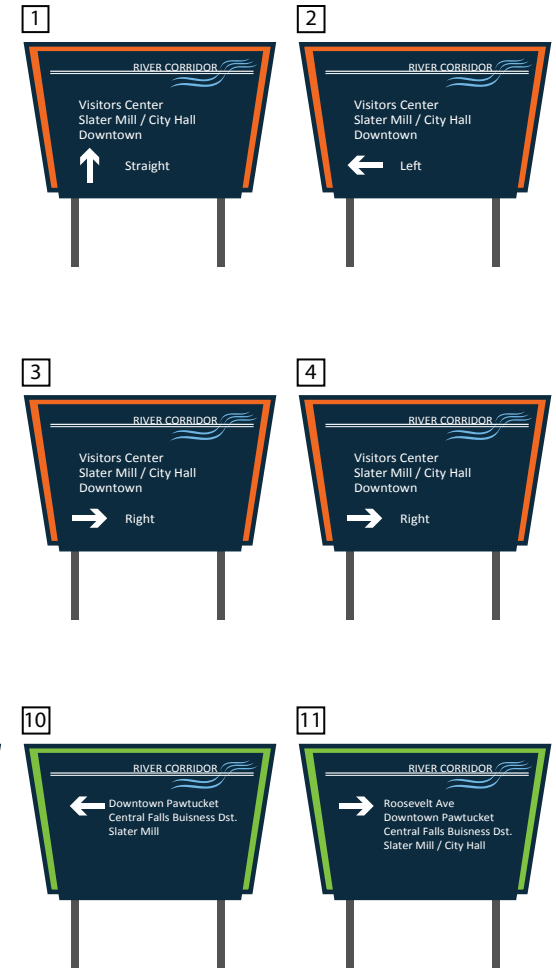
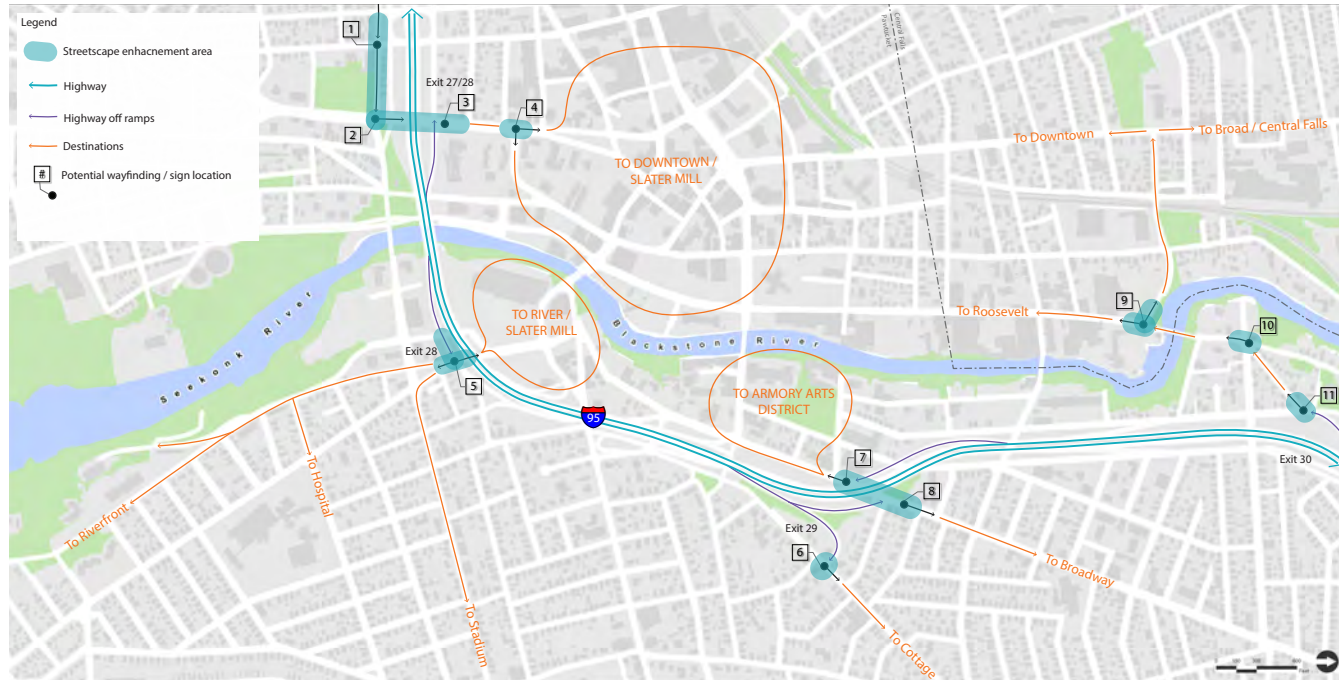


Figure 3.11



Regional Identity Signage focuses on highway traffic. Assumed users would be Pawtucket and Central Falls visitors and Interstate 95 travelers. Given the signs proposed locations along the Interstate 95 corridor, the value of these signs is that they can potentially reach local,

regional, and national travelers. The corridor presents a front door to Pawtucket and Central Falls and these signs will present the communities identity and unique destinations.

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# 4 Implementation and Funding

### Implementation Overview

This chapter includes general recommendations on critical implementation approaches to:

- ❑ Realize building redevelopment;
- ❑ Improve transportation systems;
- ❑ Capitalize on historic preservation; and
- ❑ Outline key regulatory considerations.

An overview of the environmental regulatory framework is also included. Furthermore, more detailed implementation recommendations specific to each Plan Element are discussed, and are followed by a comprehensive evaluation matrix helping to prioritize various actions with a summary of funding resources to facilitate the implementation process.

Implementing the Development Plan will require ongoing and focused efforts as it is likely that the projects identified in this plan will be implemented under numerous initiatives and funded through a variety of sources.

Since the design elements are only conceptual at this time, the following preliminary recommendations should not be considered an exhaustive list, but rather an outline to provide a guidance on the directions and actions needed to move projects forward.

#### **Building / Redevelopment Recommendations**

The buildings along the Pawtucket River Corridor vary widely in use and type, but all have the chance to share and participate in the use of the waterway. Currently most occupied buildings act as independent silos of

activity – that is, there are few amenities to connect neighborhoods and to create truly walkable communities. In most cases marginal market rents cannot justify exterior improvements by property owners, such as lighting, signage, and plantings. The lack of curb appeal creates a self-fulfilling prophecy – retail establishments are less attracted without perceived prosperity and foot traffic, which contributes to the lack of amenities and foot traffic.

In order to improve the conditions for the absorption of vacancy, basic city services such as graffiti removal, sweeping, weeding, trimming, mowing, and trash collection should be improved – either by a recommitment by the cities to these services or by public/private partnerships such as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). For example, simply removing abandoned phone booths would assist in dispelling the impression that the two cities are stuck in time – a lost time. Additional improvements, such as lighting, street trees, plantings, signage, and banners, would improve curb appeal and may assist in attracting retail and business establishments.

Neither city takes best advantage of the power of their websites. Both websites have links that are broken, and basic information requires multiple steps to obtain (such as the zoning ordinance). At a minimum, the websites should be revisited to ensure they contain accessible, user-friendly information. Other cities and towns have more robust GIS, tax assessor, and zoning maps available online – these are useful tools, especially when city resources are limited.

The Riverfront Mixed-Use RD3 Zoning District and the Riverfront Commons District RCD have been established in Pawtucket. However, it is unclear to some how these districts function and may be of use to potential developers, and what procedural steps are required. Publishing of maps and guidelines for these areas would be useful.

The Economic Expansion Incentive Program (EEIP) in Central Falls is a welcome step. This program supports the Jobs Creation Incentive Plan and the Real Property Improvement Plan which offers tax exemption percentages to any property owner renovating or upgrading any property within the City where such renovations or upgrades result in an increase in the assessed value of the structure. While this program offers a good model of transparent, standardized tax stabilization plans, the effectiveness and use of these types of programs need to be evaluated as economic development and jobs creation in both cities remain flat.

#### PROCEDURAL CHANGES

- ❑ Initiate a process for Central Falls and Pawtucket to coordinate zoning ordinances and codes, especially where overlap, adjacency, and mutual benefits occur. Roosevelt Avenue is a prime example where cooperation between cities would be highly beneficial for both property owners and city planners. For example, consider implementing a Roosevelt Avenue Overlay District that addresses the unique aspects and development opportunities along this important spine that connects the two cities.
- ❑ Work with state agencies, such as the Office of Regulatory Reform and the Economic Development Corporation, to map and streamline the permitting process.

#### REGULATORY APPROVALS

- ❑ The Mill Building Reuse Development District is an overlay in both Pawtucket and Central Falls that allows mixed use, which is certainly desirable in these types of buildings. However, it requires approval on a case-by-case basis. This process may make it difficult for developers to gauge whether investment is viable. Consider expanding administrative reviews and approvals in lieu of zoning

board approvals.

- ❑ Implement streamlining of regulatory approvals wherever possible. Permits remain a time consuming and expensive hurdle, especially to small and incremental development.
- ❑ The Pawtucket Rehab Code remains an important tool for developers and should be maintained despite pressure to retire this code.

#### FUNDING STRATEGIES

- ❑ Historic buildings have a myriad of challenges, and both cities have a large stock of these types of buildings. Consider additional incentives for development, such as waiving or reducing permitting fees for those buildings who qualify for the Federal Historic Tax Credit program. Similarly, the State Historic Tax Credit Program is essential for the development of challenging historic buildings that rely upon every source of funding. Support the reinstatement of the state historic tax credit program.
- ❑ Both cities along with quasi-government agencies have a myriad of programs available to help businesses grow. However, not all of the website links work, and the information is scattered. Invest in website updates to augment information available to businesses and developers online.
- ❑ Incentivize reinvestment in exterior appearance, curb appeal, and connection to the neighborhood and streetscape with low-interest loan and grant programs, and couple this with Tax Stabilization.
- ❑ Implement transparent, fair, and public tax stabilization programs to encourage exterior improvements that don't incur an immediate tax penalty.
- ❑ Work with neighborhood groups such as the Armory Arts District Group to remove administrative roadblocks to privately-initiated improvements on city property.

## 4 Implementation and Funding

- ❑ Explore public/private partnerships such as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to fund improvements.
- ❑ Ensure that Community Development Block Grants are utilized to their maximum potential to fund improvements wherever possible.

### Transportation Recommendations

- ❑ Identify important pedestrian corridors, install sidewalks, handicapped ramps, crosswalks, and pedestrian crossing lights along these important routes (see Plan Elements).
- ❑ Identify, sign and stripe important bicycle routes, and make connections to parks, schools and businesses.
- ❑ Clarify and enforce rules for loading, pedestrian, vehicular, and bicycle traffic on Roosevelt Avenue.
- ❑ Create on-street parking where possible and practical (provides an amenity for businesses as well as traffic calming).
- ❑ Confirm consistent directional signage is provided from I-95 to place of interest and back.

### Historic Recourses & Preservation Recommendations

One of the core implementation components that ensures the successful revitalization of the River Corridor is to preserve the historic features and characteristics of the area while capitalizing on such valuable assets. The recommendations below, which apply to both specific sites and the River Corridor as a whole, aim to help reinforce the preservation efforts and transform them into engines for economic development:

- ❑ Capitalize on inclusion of the Old Slater Mill in the proposed National Park Service (NPS) park through participation in partnerships and programs and seek new available funding sources

as a result of this designation:

- ❑ *Promote the partnership of the Old Slater Mill organization with the NPS through informal meetings, tours, and encourage them to sponsor events together, now*
- ❑ *Identify what new available funding sources are and how they will work in order to be prepared to respond and to come up with ideas for grant sponsorship*
- ❑ Assist developers with building rehab projects by dedicating a staff person to the effort, who would help with technical support, information, and publicity:
- ❑ *Hire part-time staff person/train existing staff person to assist developers and architect*
- ❑ Seek opportunities everywhere to tell the interesting stories about the buildings, events, and people associated with this area – inside and outside buildings, sidewalk pavement, “living history” actors, website stories and exhibits, design elements of infrastructure, paper media (walking tour brochures, informative maps of area), and at specific events:
- ❑ *Seek input on the stories from the community, arts and historical organizations, NPS, Old Slater Mill, for a large cache of stories and images, etc. to tell these stories*
- ❑ *City, Old Slater Mill, NPS, and arts and historical organizations collaborate on the physical elements and paper media to both gain consensus on what is presented and how it looks. Obtaining funding for the efforts should be shared to take advantage of foundation and possible state/federal funding programs.*



### Permitting Challenges and Regulatory Framework

During the course of implementing the elements defined within the River Corridor Development Plan, work will likely need to be performed within the natural resource areas that are described in Chapter 2 Existing Conditions. As such, there will be a series of environmental considerations needed as those projects advance from a vision into a more refined and specific project.

Depending on the nature and extent of the projects, necessary considerations will range from on-site analysis identifying significant natural features, survey and control of hazardous building materials, to wetlands and stormwater permitting, as well as shoreline buffer zone and vegetation management, etc. Some elements may be streamlined or realize economies of scale if considered as a group early on in the planning process. An example would be the various development or redevelopment site elements (School Street, Front Street) where a regional approach to regulatory compliance may ease the burden for each individual lot development.

In addition, several regulatory entities have jurisdiction over the natural resources in the Study Area including the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), and the RIDEM. Below in Table 4.1 is a summary of regulatory jurisdiction. At the planning stages of these projects it would be beneficial to check in with these agencies to gain confirmations of jurisdiction issues and understand potential permitting requirements.

Level	Agencies	Jurisdiction	Requirement
Federal Regulations	USACE	Waterways and adjacent wetlands	Programmatic General Permit
State Regulations	EPA/RIDEM-RIPDES	Discharges of stormwater to surface waters	Notice of Intent
	CRMC	Tidal waters, coastal features, 200-foot area contiguous to coastal feature	Coastal Assent
	RIDEM	Freshwater wetlands (swamps, marshes, bogs, forested or shrub wetlands, emergent plant communities, rivers, streams, ponds, and areas subject to storm flowage, 50 foot perimeter wetland, 100/200 foot riverbank wetland, floodplain)	Freshwater Wetlands Permit
	RIDEM	Discharges to waters of the State	Water Quality Certification
	Rhode Island Storm-water Design and Installation Standards Manual	Management, treatment and discharge of stormwater runoff	Triggered under any of the State permits above

# Implementation Recommendations

## Element #1

### Transform Division Street into a Village Center

In order to implement the redevelopment and public improvements outlined in Element 1 there are several action items that will need to occur.

#### Short term

1. Park at School and Water Street - Coordinate with the Department of Public Works to repaint the crosswalks and install handicapped ramps at the existing intersections at Water, School and Prospect Street. Identify and repair failing park and streetscape elements, limb-up existing vegetation and plant new, reseed and reestablish a thick natural turf and clean up the existing triangle park formed by School, Prospect and Division streets.
2. Develop an RFP reliant on the design guidelines and aimed at meeting the goals of this plan for the city owned piece of property at the intersection of Division and Water Street. Goals should include:
  - ❑ Creating the internal roadway linking cars, pedestrians and incorporating bicycles.
  - ❑ Having buildings front the street to reinforce the urban street edge and hide parking.
  - ❑ Providing connections from the site to the trail system linking to the State Pier.
3. The proposed park that is being constructed as part of the bridge reconstruction project should be re-examined to assure that the edge treatments coordinate with the overall goals, site furnishing and materials to be developed as part of the streetscape improvements

proposed in this Element. Pedestrian access points should be coordinated to allow for seamless circulation throughout the area and into the park.

#### Mid term

1. In order to extend the trail system along the river and to link the Division Street Development site to the State Pier, additional analysis of environmental conditions and constraints in conjunction with preliminary and final permitting will need to occur, also, dialogue with various landowners in preparation for the brokerage of easements should commence.
2. A set of overall design guidelines should be created focusing on the siting and architecture of the various redevelopment sites. These district guidelines should not dictate use, but rather be an overall vision for the form of the redevelopment being proposed, and be used as a tool to frame the public and private realm. A series of guidelines such as this would assure that the circulation, streetscape, and urban fabric proposed in this document will be met while still providing freedom to the city and private landowner's to allow the market to dictate the highest and best use within the current zoning.
3. Assure coordination with any newly developed signage and wayfinding system.

## Element #2

### Rethink School Street

In order to implement the public improvements outlined in Element 2 there are several action items that will need to occur.

#### Short term

1. Coordinating with the Department of Public Works to clean up the garbage, within the woods between School Street and the river
2. Coordinate with the Department of Public Works to assure midblock crossing compliance to repaint the crosswalks and confirm handicapped ramps exist at the existing intersections at Pond, Woodland, Rosewood, and Chestnut Street

#### Mid term

1. Assure environmental and permitting approval to trim trees and remove underbrush to open of views of the river from School Street.
2. Work with the Public Works Department to add additional street lights with banners at the crosswalk locations
3. Work with the State and City to develop a restriping plan to reduce lane width and accommodate bicycles by providing a bike lane.
4. RFP for streetscape improvements along School Street to include widened sidewalks, improved intersection crossings and street trees.
5. Assure coordination with any newly developed signage and wayfinding system.

## Element #3

### Create a downtown “hub” of activities, linking resources and destinations

In order to implement the redevelopment and public improvements outlined in Element 3 there are several action items that need to occur.

#### Short term

1. Continue to work with RIPTA, RIDOT and the City to advance plans and funds for the Bus Station relocation
2. Reassess the location of the proposed Bus Shelter and program to assure it meets the city and public objectives
3. Develop a working budget, timeline and funding source for the construction of the Bus Shelter
4. Develop Phase I design budget and funding for the demolition and subsequent plaza improvement project
5. Develop a timeline and funding source to implement the overall future phase bus and plaza improvements
6. Facilitate coordination meetings between the Visitors Center, Slater Mill and City Hall to achieve consensus and receive direction about the longer term project.
7. As part of the potential sale of the Visitors Center Building, explore potentials for expansion of the building into the adjacent parking lot
8. Advance designs for the streetscape improvements on both sides of Roosevelt, from Main to Exchange Street. Assure improvements include the off street bikeway along the western edge to match the precedent developed by the Slater Mill parking project. Develop a budget, design, timeline and funding strategy for the improvements

### Mid term

1. Confirm direction of prior studies for the redevelopment of the municipal parking lot with an emphasis on meeting market demand and parking requirements.
2. In conjunction with the municipal parking redevelopment, include relocation of City Hall parking to allow for expansion of a riverfront park system around the City Hall campus.
3. Assure coordination with any newly developed signage and wayfinding system.

## Element #4

### Enhance the riverfront at Slater Mill Park

In order to implement the redevelopment and public improvements outlined in Element 4 there are several action items that need to occur.

### Short term

1. Solicit preliminary design for park expansion and improvements.
2. Develop a vision for the park that recognizes the environmental and historical opportunities, especially the history of the Blackstone River, Slater Mill, and other interpretive opportunities.
3. Coordinate with the State on the fish ladder design and final location to assure integration with Park design, modify pedestrian paths accordingly.

### Mid term

1. Develop a scope, timeline and funding source for a RFP for park improvements along the southern bank of the falls within the Slater Mill Park, meeting the goals outlined in element 4.
2. Assure coordination with any newly developed signage and wayfinding system.

## Element #5

### Infill Front Street with new streetscape and development and provide connection to the River

In order to implement the redevelopment and public improvements outlined in Element 5 there are several action items that need to occur.

### Short term

1. Install buffer plant material within right-of-way on publically owned property. Main objective for plant material should be screening of light industrial uses and surface parking.
2. Continue to work with property owner's to develop expanded planting buffer/ screening fence system to go along with city installed screening material.
3. Coordinate with Department of Public Works to restripe crosswalks at Blackstone Avenue and Front Street
4. Add banners on existing light poles along Front Street
5. Assure compliance with any required environmental permitting, then clean up within the woods, limb up trees, and remove underbrush to open up views of the river from the end of Blackstone Avenue to Central Avenue.
6. Continue to work with property owners to finalize bikeway locations and incorporate bikeway into above improvements.

### Mid term

1. Work with property owners of the underdeveloped site along Front Street to review goals for public access from Blake Street to the river. Further advance designs of public overlook and bikeway, and reassess the location of the public right-of-way.



2. Develop a scope, timeline and funding source for a RFP for Front Street Streetscape improvements and public plaza and overlook park at the end of Blake Street.
3. Work with property owners to assure new infill development meets goals of this plan.
4. Assure coordination with any newly developed signage and wayfinding system.

## Element #6

### Make Roosevelt Avenue a Great Street

In order to implement the redevelopment and public improvements outlined in Element 6 there are several action items that need to occur.

#### Short term

1. Work with the Department of Public Works to implement new crosswalk striping and confirm handicapped ramps exist at the intersections along Roosevelt Avenue, including Blackstone Avenue, Jackson Street, Clay Street, and Cross Street.
2. Work with the Department of Public Works to install bicycle striping or sharrows along Roosevelt Avenue and install appropriate bicycle signage.
3. Continue the street tree program along Roosevelt Avenue and infill where trees are missing or did not survive.
4. Add banners on existing light poles.
5. Work to limit driveways and loading doors along corridor via improved site plan review and new ordinance.

#### Mid term

1. Develop a scope, timeline and funding source for a RFP for Roosevelt Avenue and Cross Street Streetscape improvement.
2. Assure coordination with any newly developed signage and wayfinding system.

## Element #7

### Identify goals and objectives for Central Falls Landing

In order to implement the redevelopment and public improvements outlined in Element 7 there are several action items that need to occur.

#### Short term

1. Develop a scope, timeline and funding source for a RFP for Broad Street Streetscape and “Gateway” improvements.
  - ❑ Advance design concepts with future developer to assure public access is maintained to the waterfront through the city owned parcel and that a shared parking system can be created in conjunction with the privately redeveloped parcel.
2. Work with the Department of Public Works to implement new crosswalk striping and handicapped ramps at the intersections of Madeira Avenue and Broad Street.
3. Work with the Department of Public Works to install bicycle striping or sharrows along Broad Street.
4. Add banners on existing light poles
5. Work with the existing landowner, encourage redevelopment to occur in conjunction with the goals of this plan, assuring the street edge is

defined with well-placed building and reinforced with well-designed architecture.

6. Continue to work with the Blackstone River National Heritage Corridors, Slater Mill, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, and RIDOT to develop well designed and expanded riverfront access.

7. Coordinate with the Blackstone River Valley Tourism Council to develop targeted interpretive history and educational opportunities to be presented at the public waterfront access area.

8. Identify temporary uses for the site that promote recreation, connections to the river, and tourism.

### Mid term

1. Assure coordination with any newly developed signage and wayfinding system.

2. Incorporate the Blackstone River bikeway to the vision by establishing connections between the site, river, and neighborhoods.

## Element #8 Create Gateway Streetscape and Signage Enhancements

In order to implement the public signage improvements outlined in Element 8 there are several action items that will need to occur.

### Short term

1. Continue conversations between Pawtucket and Central Falls to develop consensus with signage branding and identity.

2. Work with both of the municipalities to further develop districts and defining icons.

3. Solicit input from targeted city and community groups to better

define the goals and destinations for the community wide signage system.

4. Undertake a limited signage demonstration project that will compliment the completion of the new Pawtucket Bridge. This could include the installation of several regional signs at targeted locations.

### Mid Term

1. Prepare scope, timeline and funding source for a RFP for a citywide signage and wayfinding system based on the hierarchy developed within this report and the demonstration project.

## Implementation Evaluation Matrix

To better facilitate the implementation of the River Corridor Plan, an Implementation Evaluation Matrix for each of the eight Plan Elements has been developed to provide a visual index on the overall benefit and implementability of individual improvement items (see appendix).

The matrix evaluates each improvement action in terms of what its order-of-magnitude cost is, how much can the improvement actively transform the physical characteristics of the subject area, how complex it is to carry out the action, and how much economic development potential it will bring to the region upon successful implementation. An overall ranking has been given to each individual improvement action based on the evaluation, indicating whether an improvement is implementable in the short term and will bring the most significant benefits to the River Corridor development.

While the matrix as a whole is meant to be used as a general reference of implementation priorities, the top eight improvements are identified and highlighted on the right as a recommendation for short-term transformative actions that should be taken to jump start the River Corridor development.

## Top 8 Actions for Short-term Implementation

- ❑ Enhance streetscape from Division Street bridge to Prospect Street, particularly the triangle park on Prospect Street as a visual gateway.
- ❑ School Street will immediately benefit from street cleaning, tree trimming, and view corridor connections with the river.
- ❑ Improve intersections at various locations on Schools Street and Roosevelt Avenue to a higher quality.
- ❑ Create a downtown “hub” of activities, the most beneficial short-term action is to create a new bus shelter, waiting area and plaza on High Street.
- ❑ Enhance landscaping and existing overlook at Slater Mill park and provide new fish ladder, viewing, and sidewalk access.
- ❑ Trim vegetation to open views to the river from Front Street, and plant new street trees along Blackstone Avenue and Front Street, and provide landscape screening of active industrial sites.
- ❑ Provide streetscape and signage improvements along Broad Street to define a “gateway” entrance to the city.
- ❑ Develop way finding signs and special fencing and art work on bridges.

### Funding

There are an array of financing tools and incentive programs offered at the city, state and federal level that can be utilized to introduce new business activities, encourage business expansion and job growth, and facilitate building reuse and restoration within the River Corridor.

#### Loan Programs

The Pawtucket Business Development Corporation offers a variety of loan programs to help promote economic development in the City:

##### Commercial Ventures:

The purpose is to provide matching loans to retail and service-sector borrowers, including start-ups. Eligible uses of funds include inventory and leasehold improvements. Term of this loan cannot exceed three years and the maximum loan amount is \$10,000.

##### Equipment Loans:

The purpose is to provide matching loans to industrial borrowers seeking to purchase equipment or upgrade existing equipment. It allows borrower to borrow up to 90% of value of equipment. Used equipment may be purchased, however an appraisal is required. The term of this loan cannot exceed five years unless it is used to match bank terms, which may extend term to seven years. The maximum loan amount is \$50,000.

##### Real Estate Loans:

The purpose of this loan is to enable industrial and commercial borrowers to acquire and rehabilitate real estate. It allows borrower to borrow up to 90% of the value of the real estate. Eligible activities

include acquisition of land and buildings, new construction, and renovation of existing property. Loans will be targeted to older building stock. Borrowers must be owner/occupants, except by waiver of PBDC. The term of this loan cannot exceed 10 years and the maximum loan amount is \$10,000 or higher if funds are available.

##### Working Capital Loan:

The purpose is to provide working capital for inventory, materials, marketing, and related expenses to industrial and commercial borrowers. Relocation-related expenses for businesses moving into the City of Pawtucket are included in this category. The term of this loan cannot exceed three years unless it's used to match bank terms, which may extend term to five years. Maximum loan amount is \$50,000.

##### Restaurant Loan Program for Arts & Entertainment District

PBDC provides incentive funding for the improvement or expansion of restaurants located in the City of Pawtucket's Arts & Entertainment District or those interested in relocating to this area. Applicants may be individual owners, partnerships or corporations. The maximum loan amount is \$50,000.

##### Fire Safety Loan Program

The purpose of this loan is to encourage property owners and long-term lessees to continue or expand the use and reuse of existing buildings in Pawtucket. PBDC will provide below-market rate loans to the owners and long-term leaseholders of existing commercial properties to assist them in meeting the requirements of the RI Fire Safety Code. The loan proceeds can be used to finance permanent property improvements that install or upgrade equipment necessary to meet the Code. The maximum



loan amount is \$30,000. Loans equal to or exceeding \$10,000 will have a loan term of up to 15 years, while loans of less than \$10,000 may have a loan term of up to 10 years.

The Pawtucket Redevelopment Agency, in addition, offers a Commercial Rehabilitation Loan Program. This loan aims to provide assistance to commercial property owners in physically upgrading their Pawtucket properties. Loans range from \$10,000 to \$100,000 at a 5% interest rate.

## **Tax Incentives**

### **State Tax Incentive Program in City's Arts & Entertainment District**

Equipment Loans – Providing state income tax incentives for eligible artists residing in the City's Arts and Entertainment District. Eliminates sales tax for art work purchased from eligible galleries and artists in this geographical area.

### **City Council's Tax Stabilization Treaty**

The City of Pawtucket offers a tax stabilization treaty for projects that create employment opportunities. This program phases in increases in property taxes for new construction or rehabilitation of property.

### **Central Falls Economic Expansion Incentive Program**

This program supports the Jobs Creation Incentive Plan which offers tax exemption percentages to businesses operating within the City that create and/or add a minimum of five new permanent full-time or equivalent jobs. The program also supports the Real Property Improvement Plan which offers tax exemption percentages to any property owner renovating or upgrading any property within the City where such renovations or upgrades result in an increase in the assessed

value of the structure.

### **Historic Tax Credit**

The Historic Tax Credit program was reintroduced in August of 2013. The program is using up "abandoned" tax credits left over from the old program that ceased in 2008. The amount of the "abandoned" credits is approximately \$34.5 million. Tax Credit projects can receive up to \$5 million.

### **Enterprise Zone Business Tax Credit**

The Central Falls portion of the River Corridor is located in a state-designated Enterprise Zone. Any business with a certified business facility within an Enterprise Zone in Rhode Island, when increasing its employment by at least 5 percent annually, may be eligible for a state business tax credit equal to 75 percent of the total wages paid to employees living in an enterprise zone or 50 percent of wages paid to workers not living in an enterprise zone. All new hires must be Rhode Island residents and the jobs must be classified as full-time.

### **Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) Program**

Portions of the River Corridor are located in Historically Underutilized Business Zones (HUBZones) designated by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). SBA's HUBZone Program aims to promote economic development and employment growth in distressed areas by providing access to more federal contracting opportunities. The program's benefits for HUBZone-certified companies include competitive and sole source contracting, 10 percent price evaluation preference in full and open contract competitions, as well as subcontracting opportunities.

### **Transportation Funding**

In addition, there are several funding programs that can be considered to specifically support various transportation improvements proposed in the plan.

#### **Transportation Alternatives Program**

This program provides fundings for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, improved access to public transportation, community improvement activities, environmental mitigation, recreational trails and safe route to school. Program is administered by the RI Department of Transportation. Funding is generally 80% federal and 20% local.

#### **Statewide Planning Challenge Grant**

The Rhode Island Division of Planning oversees several grant programs. Grants are awarded through a competitive process. Projects must include transportation planning focus, demonstrate local government support and sponsor commitment, and provide opportunities for public involvement.

#### **Statewide Transportation Implement Program (TIP)**

The Transportation Implement Program is a list of transportation projects the state of Rhode Island intends to implement using United States Department of Transportation funds. A new TIP is developed every four years. New transportation related projects prepare an application for preliminary screening. High ranking projects prepare a more detailed application for the final review process. Inclusion to the TIP does not guarantee funding, but indicates the State agrees the project should be funded if funds are available.



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