

Connecting Our Heritage

A Wayfinding Master Plan for Downtown Woonsocket

PREPARED FOR

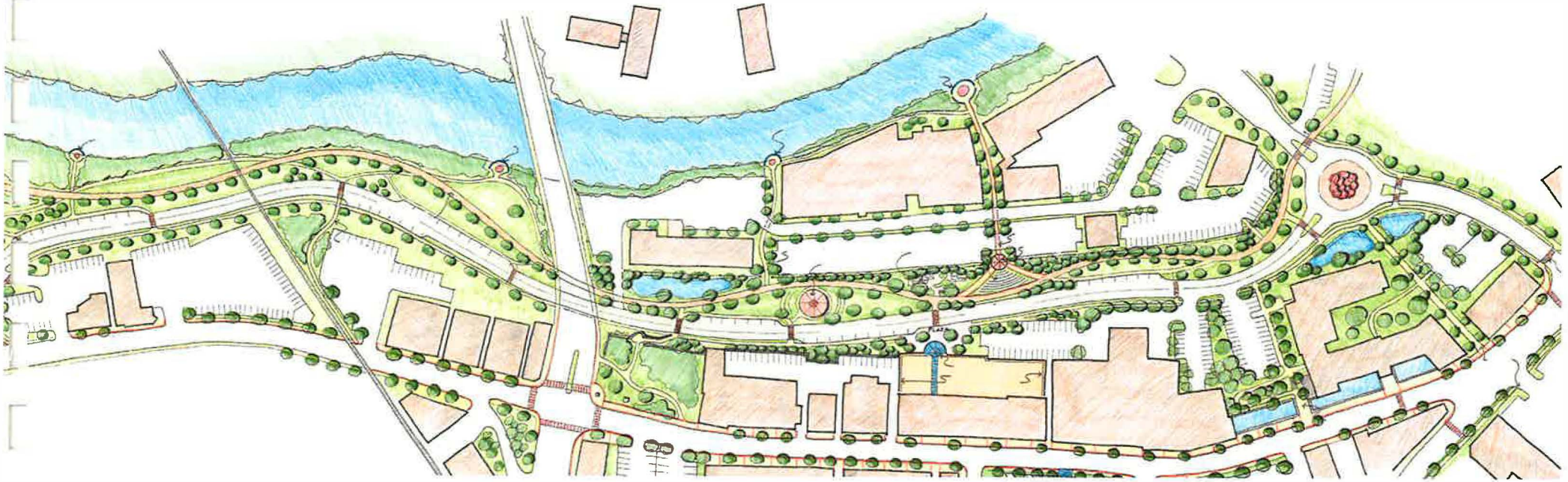
City of Woonsocket

Main Street-Riverfront Initiative Group

PREPARED BY

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A Wayfinding Master Plan for Downtown Woonsocket

Acknowledgements

This plan was produced by Woonsocket community representatives who shaped this agenda for our City's future by participating in public forums, interviews, focus groups and other activities. Participants came from the city's neighborhoods, business community, public interest groups and municipal departments. They represented a wide range of the cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds to be found here.

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City of Woonsocket

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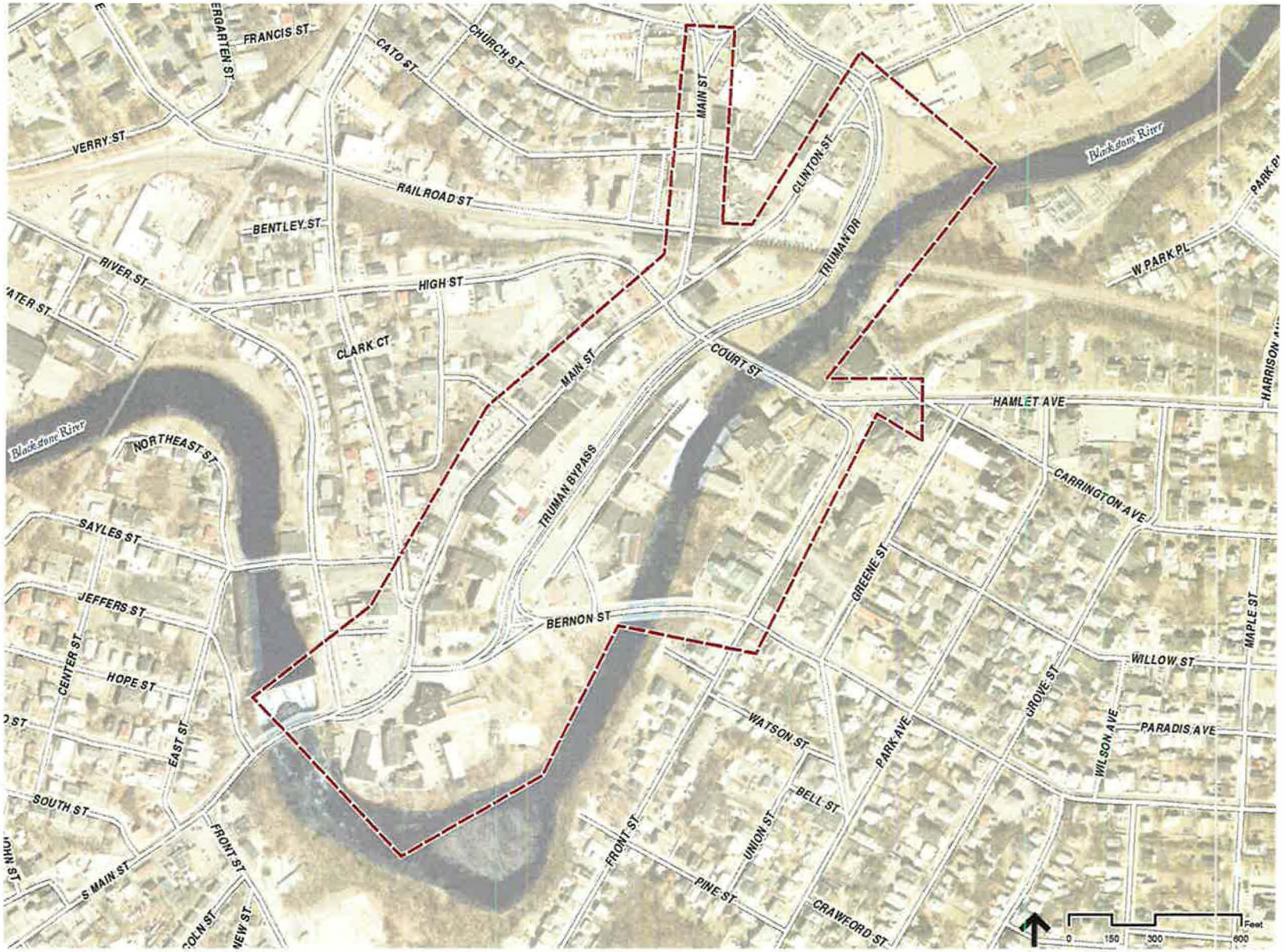
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1 *Project Overview*

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- Overview
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Study Area



Source: RIGIS

Overview

Present Assets

The initial improvements to the Main Street and Market Square area, the restoration of the P&W Woonsocket Depot Station and the construction of the River Island Park have all added benefits to the City – better quality of life, enhanced appreciation for the area's heritage, healthy recreational activities for young and old and accommodation for bicycle and pedestrian transportation. The recent transformation of the former mills into housing and retail use has brought more activity to the Blackstone River area.

The Vision

The City of Woonsocket has now set a vision for comprehensive improvements to the downtown area. Key elements will include improved connectivity to the Blackstone River, improvements to the Truman Bypass to foster a pedestrian friendly environment, integrating the planned Blackstone River Bikeway in a manner that generates enthusiasm and draws cyclists to the area, and introducing a wayfinding signage system celebrating Woonsocket's rich past and lending clarity in getting about for visitors and tourists.

These elements combined will serve to reframe downtown Woonsocket as a place that is fun to visit, pedestrian and cyclist friendly, and conveys its rich history in a way which is both entertaining and informative. The ultimate vision is of a City that draws tourists as a daytime destination while also offering a higher livability standard for its residents.

The Challenge

The Wayfinding Master Plan and its implementation strategy must link together these resources and the community's rich historical resources. Making connections between Main Street and the Riverfront requires a significant commitment, as there are significant grade differences that make ADA compliance difficult. The visual impacts of various urban landscape elements and amenities such as pavement surface, signage, streetscape furnishings and possible park spaces must be carefully considered to weave the path into the City's rich natural and historic fabric. Most importantly, the master plan must achieve a balance between facilities that meets appropriate design criteria while minimizing cost, environmental and right of way impacts.

Woonsocket Facts

A sampling of Woonsocket's rich history is captured in these facts:

- Woonsocket was home to one of the earliest industries in Rhode Island, Richard Arnold's sawmill, constructed at the base of the Falls in the 1660's.
- This same site saw active use for grist mills through the late 1800's.
- The original Village of Woonsocket grew up around this early site in what is today called Market Square.
- Construction of the Blackstone Canal in the 1820's transformed not only Woonsocket but the entire Blackstone River valley from Providence to Worcester, both physically and economically.

- Industry grew along the banks of the Blackstone River and Canal to such an extent the Blackstone River became known as "the hardest working river in America."
- The Blackstone River, Blackstone Canal and the myriad of power trenches and dams associated with the textile mills were the form-givers to Woonsocket's buildings, roadways and bridges, defining the City even as we see it today.
- In its heyday of the late 1800's-early 1900's as the textile industry flourished, Woonsocket was one of the most prosperous cities in New England.

Woonsocket Today

Woonsocket today is still a City justly proud of its heritage, but also looking to the future. Relatively recent developments which enhance the Woonsocket experience include improvements to Main Street and Market Square, restoration of the P&W Woonsocket Depot Station and construction of River Island Park. The present Wayfinding Master Plan will serve to further enhance these features while also setting the stage for a pedestrian and cyclist friendly environment attractive to tourists and residents alike.

Woonsocket, however, also has some distinct challenges. In its present state it is not a wealthy city, the days of its textile driven prosperity now gone. Given this, it understands it must work from a new model for success, drawing new life into the city though tourism and new residents through improved quality of life features.

The challenge of converting the Truman Bypass from the physical divide it presently represents between city and riverfront into an asset that invites pedestrians and cyclists into a more park-like environment need to be artfully accomplished. The Blackstone River Bikeway represents a key element that, properly introduced, can help facilitate this transformation.

Main Street, too, needs to be reviewed in terms of its streetscape appeal. Currently largely devoid of trees and dominated in locations by wide expanses of concrete sidewalks, it does not present a place to enjoy a walk and pleasant shopping experiences. Empty storefronts reinforce this attitude.

But Main Street does have some attractive and historic buildings which speak to a quality experience of the downtown. These special places can be used to anchor the streetscape design, setting the tone for a new Woonsocket experience.

Process

The planning process followed in this study involved the following:

Inventory of Existing Conditions

A comprehensive photo inventory illustrating the character of key areas of the project has been prepared as a visual resource for the reader's reference. Key areas include Main Street, the Truman Bypass, Mills and the Blackstone River, River Island Park, Market Square and Clinton Street.

Additionally, other project area aspects have been photo inventoried to convey their current conditions. These include Views and Vistas, Linkage Opportunities and Challenges, Existing Open Spaces, Streetscape Elements and Signage.

These photos serve to identify key buildings and roadways, parks and gathering spaces, streetscape conditions, the Blackstone River and environs, as well as the visual quality of these locations in terms of views and vistas.

Historic and Cultural Assets

The history of Woonsocket is examined as it relates to the project area and informs the planning process. Before one can begin to entertain planning opportunities it is imperative that a thorough understanding of this location's rich history is first explored, setting the foundation of local understanding upon which to build sensitive planning approaches.

To accomplish this, the history of Woonsocket as it relates to the project site is discussed in a narrative as well as via a chronological series of historic maps and an illustrated map of historic districts in Woonsocket.

The narrative provides an overview of the early history of Woonsocket, the later industrial/textile mill period through the 1800's and of the Blackstone Canal and how it influenced the region's development. This narrative history is further informed by the accompanying historic maps which clearly illustrate the progression of development, and the Historic District Map illustrating where these cultural assets are protected today.

Increasing Connectivity

Existing conditions of the project area having now been inventoried and historic and cultural background examined, the study now turns to exploration of planning opportunities to fulfill the vision of reframing downtown Woonsocket as a place that is fun to visit, pedestrian and cyclist friendly, and which conveys its rich history in ways both entertaining and informative. Central to these goals is providing enhanced connectivity from Main and Clinton Streets to the Blackstone River.

Three different Concept Plan approaches to fulfilling this vision are explored, each having different qualities to consider. Unique to each of the Concept Plans is how the Truman Bypass is treated in relation to this goal of connectivity as well as their compatibility with the planned Blackstone River Bikeway.

The Concept Plans were developed with community participation, including stakeholders meetings and a charette with the Riverzedge non-profit group in which the energy and ideas of local youth was harnessed.

As part of this review, connectivity is also explored through the development of sections at several key locations to convey the sometimes dramatic changes in elevation. An understanding of this is crucial in terms of assessing feasibility of each location in terms of ADA accessibility.

A location for connecting the riverfront to Main/Clinton Streets has then been selected for development at a larger scale suitable for pricing. Key to the location's selection is its buildability and cost effectiveness in terms of accomplishing grade changes while also meeting ADA requirements.

Truman Bypass Improvements

Improvements to the Truman Bypass are examined in the Connectivity section of the study relative to available public land to accommodate improvements suggested in the Concept Plans,

through a CAD drawing of the Bypass improvements as currently promulgated for the Blackstone River Bikeway, and in a new CAD drawing developed for this study which indicates the realignment of the Truman Bypass to accomplish the City of Woonsocket's vision as expressed in Concept Plan C.

A map is provided illustrating the distribution of public land in the project area as a visual aid in determining which portions of the project may require a public/private partnership or cooperation.

The CAD drawing of the Bypass improvements as currently promulgated for the Blackstone River Bikeway indicates a simple abandonment of the southerly side of the Truman Bypass as a vehicular roadway and its conversion directly to a bike way. While minimal realignment is indicated, this approach unfortunately results in an uninteresting parallel arrangement of bikeway and road rather than a more naturalized park experience, and does little to reduce the sense that the Truman Parkway acts as a divisive element rather than promoting connectivity from Main/Clinton Streets to the Blackstone River.

The new CAD drawing indicating a more comprehensive realignment of the Truman Bypass and a variable layout to the bikeway better accomplishes the City of Woonsocket's vision of a place that is fun to visit, pedestrian and cyclist friendly, and provides enhanced connectivity from Main/Clinton Streets to the Blackstone River. This plan presents a linear park theme that transforms the Truman Bypass from a vehicle-only oriented space to one which embraces pedestrian, cyclist and informal recreation activities.

Wayfinding and Historic Markers

The study concludes with an examination of possible wayfinding signage styles and a Wayfinding Master Plan of recommended locations for consideration by the City.

Signage design is recommended to remain generally consistent with The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Environmental Graphics Program Design Guidelines as well as with the Blackstone River Bikeway Sign Design Standards. This is in keeping with the goal of maintaining a consistent look and style for the signage to reinforce public perception that this section of Woonsocket ties in with the Blackstone River and Canal as part of a larger whole.

This interpretive signage may vary from the standards provided some commonality in colors and graphics are maintained. The goal is to create an attractive yet visually engaging design that draws the viewer in. Examples are provided for consideration in this section.

Potential locations for interpretive signage are indicated on the color Wayfinding Master Plan which incorporates the selected Concept Plan C layout of the Truman Bypass, bikeway and suggested roundabout. The signage locations have been selected based upon the investigation of Woonsocket's history earlier in the planning process and to provide an interesting sequence of educational experiences that draw one through the City.

Possible themes for interpretive signage might include the economic and cultural influence of the Blackstone River and Canal on Woonsocket, the history of industry and its influence on the form and architecture of Woonsocket, and immigrant groups who have settled in Woonsocket. Activities at various locations such as walking tours, organized hikes, dramatizations and scavenger hunts may add to the fun of the this educational experience.

2 *Inventory*

CONTENTS

- Overview
- Photo Inventory of Key Areas
- Photo Inventory of Features
- Opportunities and Constraints

Photographic Inventory

The Woonsocket study area presents both unique existing site conditions and historic features which will influence planning opportunities and decisions in the master plan. In order to set the stage for subsequent planning investigations, this section provides the foundation with a detailed photographic site inventory and discussion followed by an overview of the history of Woonsocket as it relates to the project site. Historic maps are also provided to help trace the different periods in Woonsocket's development supplemented with an illustrated map of current historic districts in Woonsocket.

The comprehensive photo inventory which follows illustrates the character of key areas of the project as a visual resource for the reader's reference. The major areas which are discussed include Main Street, the Truman Bypass, the Mills and the Blackstone River, River Island Park, Market Square and the Woonsocket Falls (Globe Dam), and Clinton Street.

Specific project area qualities and features with a strong bearing upon planning and design have also been photo inventoried to convey their current conditions. These include Views and Vistas, Linkage Opportunities and Challenges, Existing Open Spaces, Streetscape Elements and Signage.

These photos serve to identify key buildings and roadways, parks and gathering spaces, streetscape conditions, the Blackstone River and environs, as well as the visual quality of these locations in terms of views and vistas.

Main Street – from Court Street to Monument Square

This section of Main Street presents two visual gateways as one approaches the Veterans Memorial Bridge (which replaced the Court Street Bridge in 2000) and views to the Blackstone River beyond. The first is located at Monument Square, approached from Social Street (Route 126) to the east, North Main Street to the north and Blackstone Street to the west. Monument Square comprises a triangular shaped island featuring a central obelisk supplemented with a flagpole, plantings of perennial flowers and grasses and framed by concrete sidewalks along the edges. The sidewalks appear to have been in part recently repaired and, from a visual standpoint, detract from this key gateway by significantly reducing available greenspace.

The second visual gateway on this approach to the study area is located at Depot Square, home of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission office and formerly the Providence and Worcester Railroad (P&W RR) Depot. The historic Depot building has been fully restored and presents a highly attractive feature, as does the attractive landscaped beds in its foreground. It is, however, obscured by the P&W RR overpass as one arrives at Depot Square from Route 126 to the north. This key view is instead dominated by roadway and sidewalk pavement and a small landscaped island at the intersection with Clinton Street.

The streetscape edges through this section are characterized by relatively narrow concrete sidewalks devoid of tree plantings, special pavement treatments and street furnishings other than ornamental light poles. Consequently, the storefronts appear somewhat stark and

Main Street–North of Court Street





Gateway Views





Streetscape Edges





Streetscape Edges






Stadium Theater & Square

Main Street







Court Street Gateway







Veterans Memorial Park







City Hall







Streetscape

in some locations are partially hidden by un-interrupted runs of on-street parked cars. A municipal parking lot takes up a significant portion of the frontage along the western edge of this section of roadway, but unfortunately does not provide street tree plantings and furnishings for a more pedestrian friendly experience.

The Stadium Theater has been fully restored and enlivens this section of Main Street as a key anchor building. The YMCA building, formerly the Post Office, is also in good condition but unfortunately marred by rust stains on the building walls at the entrance as well as along the front steps. Chan's Restaurant presents an interesting, if not historic, façade with tiled awnings evoking the vernacular of an oriental pagoda. Like the Stadium Theater, Chan's also brings life in the evening to this downtown area, being a regional attraction for jazz and blues aficionados.

Main Street—from Clinton Street to Market Square

Main Street is the central business district of Woonsocket's historic downtown, and as such is presents a fundamental opportunity in inviting residents, shoppers and tourists to take the time to fully explore Woonsocket's features.

Its key visual gateway on the easterly approach is the previously mentioned Depot Square. Interestingly, while this gateway is visually weak approached from the north due to the P&W RR overpass, it presents itself well when viewed from the Court Street Bridge and from the west on Main Street itself. From these vantage points the Depot's restored architecture and landscape are highly attractive and further framed by Veterans Memorial Park opposite to it on Main Street. It could, however, be better supported by ornamental pavement treatments in both crosswalks and sidewalks as well as additional landscaping to reduce the perception of unbroken expanses of pavement.

Veterans Memorial Park is in need of upgrades, particularly to its internal stamped concrete walkways which have settled and pose tripping hazards in some locations, and to the major stairway leading from the park down to the Truman Bypass (see the Truman Bypass section of this inventory). The park's layout and plantings should also be revisited from a design standpoint to provide a more cohesive and inviting experience. As the key park space adjacent to City Hall (historically Harris Hall), it should present an appearance which evokes civic pride and serves as a clear attraction to tourists, being a natural overlook of the restored historic Blackstone River mills beyond.

Directly opposite Veterans Memorial Park is a municipal parking lot, the frontage of which is currently characterized by overgrown shrubs, unattractive timber benches in poor condition and a concrete sidewalk of dated appearance. This frontage presents opportunity for cost effective improvements with major paybacks in providing a better setting at this important gateway.

The currently unoccupied Rhode Island Hospital Trust building (constructed 1867) located on the Cook Block opposite City Hall, is architecturally prominent. Juxtaposed by City Hall's similar scale, it also presents a grand introduction to commercial and former mill buildings beyond. Opportunity for significant streetscape upgrades abound, its broad but barren concrete sidewalk presenting a blank canvas inviting introduction of pedestrian friendly improvements such as benches, plantings and ornamental pavement treatments.

Main Street cont'd



Streetscape







Streetscape







Power Trenches @ Hanora Lippett Building







Hanora Lippett Manor





These would also benefit City Hall, expanding the park experience of the Depot, Veterans Memorial Park and possible improvements along the municipal parking lot's frontage.

The streetscape of the central portion of Main Street is characterized largely by three story commercial buildings along the easterly edge which were built over the historic power trenches and in some cases front the former textile mills, and a second larger municipal parking lot which is also framed by three story commercial buildings. The ground floors of the buildings are now typically storefronts and restaurants, but unfortunately the area is in a state of decline evidenced by boarded up windows and vacant shops. The facades are frequently characterized by awnings covering much of the sidewalk below and precluding street tree plantings. Sidewalks are concrete in a mixed state of repair, and devoid of site furnishings or special pavement treatments which might enhance eye-appeal to pedestrians. Curb ramps for the disabled are generally not in compliance with ADA design standards, and crosswalks are both infrequent and devoid of any special pavement treatments.

The frontage to the municipal parking lot is comprised of a concrete sidewalk without ornamental pavement treatments, tree plantings, bike racks or other street furnishings. Due to this lack of a visual foreground, the impression is of an uninterrupted expanse of pavement extending from the opposite side of Main Street to the back edge of the parking lot, breaking the sense of a visual edge presented elsewhere by the storefronts.

Proceeding west on the opposite side of Main Street from the parking lot, one views the Woonsocket Call building with a 2 story block of commercial space alongside followed by an open portion of the historic Lyman-Arnold Trench. The Call building and shops alongside again have a relatively narrow concrete sidewalk fronting them, again devoid of any distinguishing streetscape features.

The sidewalk fronting the Lyman-Arnold Trench and the historic Hanora Lippett building (now called the Hanora Lippett Manor) beyond presents a dramatic overlook of the now grassed power trench viewed through an ornamental iron fence. This is one of the finest views along the Main Street corridor in terms of clearly conveying the history of Woonsocket through preserved architecture and power trenches. Unfortunately the plain concrete sidewalk has no special treatments bringing attention to this historic place, and is also devoid of any furnishings, plantings and interpretive signage celebrating it.

Immediately to the west of the Hanora Lippett building is a relatively new walkway connection from Main Street to the Truman Bypass and the River Island Park beyond. The walkway is in good condition and attractively landscaped.

The Truman Bypass—from Bernon Street to Clinton Street

The Truman Bypass (officially called Truman Drive) was built in the 1960's as a means to reduce congestion in the central business area of Main Street. It was constructed as a 4-lane divided roadway capable of handling large traffic volumes which were never realized. It's usage was further reduced after Route 99 was opened and further diverted traffic from downtown Woonsocket. Consequently, it currently receives relatively light usage except during occasional summer festival events.

This broad four-lane roadway's alignment consists of long straight sections connected by broad radii curves creating the sense its intent is as a high speed connector. Its raised paved median and sidewalks devoid of planting strips further communicate this seeming intent.

Between Bernon Street and the Court Street Bridge (which passes over it), the southerly side of the Bypass has a narrow band of lawn behind the sidewalk and fencing as the only visual break separating the right-of-way from a parking lot beyond over an approximately 800-foot-long stretch. The northerly side in this section has little other than a narrow grassed strip with occasional tree plantings separating the road from parking lots between the Hanora Lippett Manor and the stairway from Veterans Memorial Park (alongside the Court Street Bridge), this over an approximately 700-foot-long section of road.

The result of all of the above conditions is a strong impression of a visually discordant sea of pavement presenting a formidable barrier to pedestrians from viewing the historic Blackstone River beyond.

The significant change in grade from Main Street to the Truman Bypass is a further challenge to connectivity. This 20-35-foot grade change is dealt with through a variety of retaining wall types and open rock faces, creating a visually stark and inhospitable edge to the lower elevation of the Truman Bypass.

The stairway which links Veterans Memorial Park to the Truman Bypass below is comprised of over 70 steps and is in disrepair. The upper landing presents a tripping hazard where it joins the park, sections of railings are rusted, and the concrete risers and landings exhibit deterioration in numerous locations. The stairway is also directly alongside an unattractive broken down concrete retaining wall behind City Hall. In terms of ADA accessibility, the stairway does not provide sufficient landings nor is it feasible to introduce a ramp system down at this location in the hillside.

The section of the Truman Bypass under the Court Street Bridge is comprised of a stone slope towards Main Street and retaining wall towards the Blackstone River. Visually, the Court Street Bridge also presents a very clear divide between the built sections to the south (towards Bernon Street) and expansive greenspace, much of it owned by the City, to the north (towards Clinton Street).

The Truman Bypass is visually transformed in this latter section, clearly showing the promise of capturing additional greenspace through possible lane reduction. In particular, there are two significantly sized level lawn areas which lie between the roadway and river's edge which show special promise as park spaces.

Mills and the Blackstone River

Woonsocket has a wealth of historic mill buildings extending from the south side of Main Street to the far shore of the Blackstone River within the project study area. Many of these have been recently restored or are in the process of being restored, these including the Bernon Mills (also known as Woonsocket Company Mills), numerous historic buildings in the Allen Street Historic District, the Lippett Woolen Mill on Main Street, the Falls Yarn Mill (now called River Falls) near Market Square, and others.

The Bernon Mills, which are completing renovations as residential condominiums, are a prominent landmark viewed from the Veterans Memorial Bridge and Park. As part of the restoration an extensive dumped stone rip rap embankment has been created which is visible

The Truman Bypass





Bernon Street Entrance






West Edge





Renovated Mills





East Edge

The Truman Bypass cont'd

Veterans Park Stairway





Court Street Bridge





Bridges





Greenspace





from the Allen Street Historic District buildings as well as from the Veterans Memorial Park. This greatly takes away from the historic vista and is recommended to be remedied with planted terraces.

The numerous buildings which have been restored and are undergoing restoration in the Allen Street Historic District are also highly visible from the Veterans Memorial Bridge and Park as well as from the Truman Bypass. While those buildings with completed restorations present attractive facades, they are marred by an ornamental fence along the Bypass which is not softened in appearance by landscaping. The parking areas facing the bypass also are largely unplanted, presenting a stark appearance.

Internally, no means of access to the riverfront is provided for citizens or tourists. Rather, this is a community isolated by its own security measures including gates, internal fences and no trespassing signs. A stonedust paved riverwalk is provided along a 300 foot section of the Blackstone River bank, but there is no access provided for the public even during daylight hours. This should be reconsidered by the owners. Similar to more urban environments such as the Providence River Walk, access can be creatively provided without compromising security.

Portions of the banks of the river are subject to damage to adjacent low-lying buildings from flood events as was seen in the spring of 2010. Should a river walk or overlook be introduced in such areas, it must be designed to either withstand such flood velocities or be easily replaced.

River Island Park

Constructed in 1993, River Island Park near Market Square was a major accomplishment of the Main Street 2000 project. River Island Park provides visual and physical access to the Blackstone River and is the site of many activities, such as summer events at the central gazebo and the Woonsocket Ice Skating Rink. However, it needs better pedestrian linkages to the surrounding community so that users both can easily find and feel safe walking to this major asset, as opposed to choosing to drive to the park.

The broad areas of unpaved parking adjacent to the site on Bernon Street take away from the sense of a quality park experience and should be remedied. Large sparsely planted plant beds with unnatural appearing red-dyed mulch are also out of keeping with the pastoral attitude of the park's design and should also be redesigned. In general, however, the park is in good condition and well maintained, evidencing community pride in it.

River Island Park can also serve as a powerful link in greenspaces if tied to redevelopment of the Truman Bypass as a linear park experience, serving to anchor its southern end at Bernon Street.

Mills and the Blackstone River

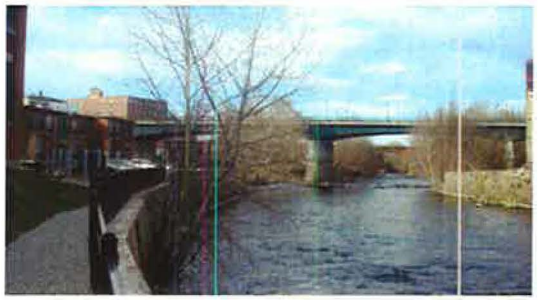
Bernon Street Mills



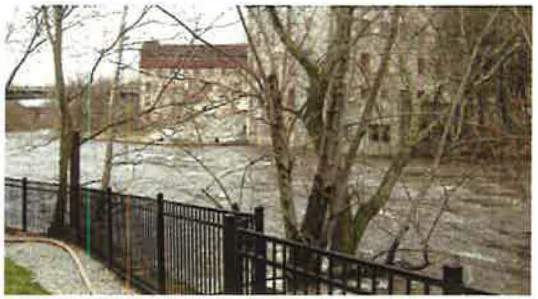


Private River Walkway





Private River Walkway


Floodplain and Parking





River Island Park





Entrance





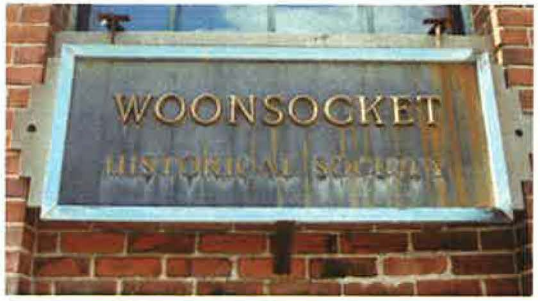
Open Space





Features and Gazebo





Walkway and Canoe Landing

Market Square and the Falls Dam

Market Square was redeveloped in the 1990's as a parking lot with significant amenities communicating the history of Woonsocket. The Market Square Pavilion, a brick tower constructed in the southwest corner, evokes mill architecture vernacular and provides a display of interpretive signage conveying the history and ethnicity of Market Square and the City of Woonsocket in the covered space at its base. Other major features include the re-creation of the Blackstone River power trench system through use of pavers laid out to represent their one-time locations at Market Square, along with a small centrally located stage for speeches, public gatherings and performances. Supporting amenities includes seating areas, bike racks, stone walls with ornamental iron fencing, ornamental lighting, an additional interpretive sign, a flagpole and plantings.

A lawn panel with trees separates the Market Square parking area from the historic mills opposite it across South Main Street. These buildings, all of which have been restored and include the Museum of Work and Culture, provide a wonderful edge to Market Square in keeping with the area's historic experience.

When one looks south down the Blackstone River from the South Main Street bridge (also called the Globe Bridge) at The Falls, one is viewing the historic "wading place", a shallow area where the river was traversed directly on foot and horseback just below the Thundermist Falls in the very early days of Woonsocket before any bridges had been constructed, the first being built in about 1730 . The Thundermist Hydro-Electric Plant is perched on the bank just before the bridge, providing hydro-electric power. Interpretive signage and a dedicated area for a true overlook would better celebrate this history location.

The Globe Dam (also called the Woonsocket Falls Dam) lies to the north of the South Main Street bridge in the onetime location of the Thundermist Falls. It has been reconstructed with mechanical flood control devices and a metal catwalk for inspection and maintenance, diminishing its historic appearance but still clearly demonstrating the power of the Blackstone River. Interpretive signage would add interest to this location, revealing its past history as the site of the Thundermist Falls, Richard Arnold's sawmill (circa 1600's) and the Globe Mill and Dam which preceded the current modern dam at this location.

A river overlook lies alongside River Street just north of the dam and in the vicinity of a boat launch area currently being planned by the City. The benches and pathway are in poor condition and should be upgraded.

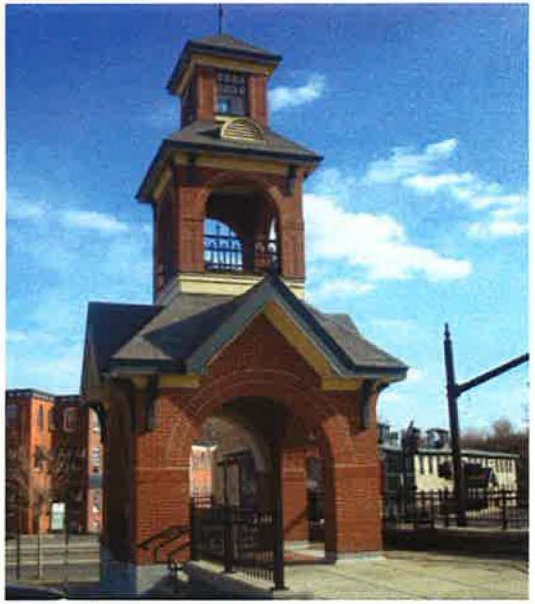
Clinton Street

Clinton Street is a one way road leading from the Court Street Bridge and Depot Square to Truman Drive's easterly entrance at Thomas A. Shipp Memorial Square. Unlike Main Street, it has cobra head lights instead of historic fixtures and concrete sidewalks which are narrow in the initial section leading from Depot Square as well as in other locations. In the sections which are bordered by parking lots, there frequently are no significant treed buffers, just the sidewalk itself separating roadway from parking lot pavement.

The Providence and Worcester Railroad (P & W RR) bridge is supported by broad stone abutments on both sides which impinge upon the usable sidewalk area as well as the roadway itself. This also

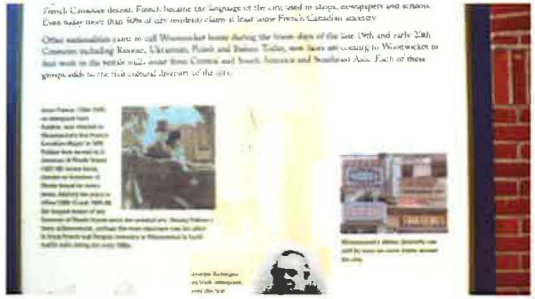
Market Square and the Falls Dam







Market Square


Existing Signage





River Street Park and Dam

Clinton Street

Truman Bypass Gateway





Views





Railroad Crossing





Court Street Approach





represents the strongest visual element along Clinton Street, effectively dividing it into two distinct sections.

Clinton Street does not presently provide a quality pedestrian experience, having neither a strong edge of historic buildings as is the case with Main Street, nor significant available greenspace as the Truman Bypass potentially offers. Rather, it is a vehicular oriented traffic connector with sidewalks treated as a secondary element. Commercial development along the northerly end of this section comprises a tire store and fast food restaurant, and Thomas A. Shipp Memorial Square is simply an intersection of Clinton Street with the 4-lane Truman Bypass and the 3-lane Worrall Street which presents broad views of pavement.

The areas on both sides of the P & W RR bridge between Clinton Street and the Truman Bypass are occupied by parking lots, the one south of the bridge being privately owned, the other to the north of the bridge is a municipal public parking lot. Both offer possible access routes for connectivity towards the Blackstone River. Should this be implemented, it could also serve as the key towards providing comprehensive pedestrian streetscape improvements to better integrate Clinton Street with Main Street and an improved Truman Bypass.

Views and Vistas

Some of the most dramatic views of Bernon Mills, the Riverfront Historic District and the Blackstone River are presented from the walkway on the Court Street Bridge. This high vantage point allows for panoramic "birds-eye" views which offer a strong sense of the interrelationships between river and city which informed the different phases of Woonsocket's industrial history.

Views along the Blackstone River's shore are also highly informative. Currently these are restricted in the Riverfront Historic District to views from the Bernon Street Bridge and from under the Court Street Bridge (accessible by foot from the Truman Bypass), the shore along the actual Riverfront Historic District itself being under private ownership and restricted by fences and no trespassing signs. Outreach should take place to help the private landowners understand the historic value these visual connections provide as well as how they raise the regional stature of Woonsocket as a destination for history and eco-tourists,

The plans by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to remove trees along portions of the river banks will open up additional views, one of particular interest being to the historic rafting location in the vicinity of the present P & W Railroad bridge crossing. This clearing will visually reconnect the Truman Bypass to the river.

Additional broad views towards the Riverfront Historic District and the Blackstone River beyond are available from Veterans Memorial Park as well as from alleys between the Main Street buildings. Many of these alleys are not ADA accessible and some on private land, so tourists cannot be formally encouraged to use them for views, however, they are present nonetheless. Unfortunately, the broad expanse of uninterrupted pavement that is associated with the Truman Bypass and adjacent parking areas compromises these views.

Pastoral views of the Blackstone River are available from River Island Park as well as from the back of the restored mill buildings east of Market Square. Additional open views to the river, the

Views & Vistas

Bernon Mills and Riverfront Historic District





Blackstone River





Views between Buildings





Veterans Memorial Park Stairway and Truman Bypass





"wading place", and the Woonsocket Falls Dam can be seen from the Main Street Bridge and the small park with seating area on River Street.

Interpretive signage combined with formalized viewing areas in these locations have the potential to truly tell the story of Woonsocket and this section of the Blackstone River Canal in a walking tour which can be an attraction for history buffs and tourists.

Linkage Opportunities and Challenges

The existing stairway leading from Veterans Memorial Park down to the Truman Bypass currently is the only centrally located physical link from Main and Clinton Streets to the lower elevations of the Bypass area and the river beyond. This stairway is currently passable but its landings and rails are in poor condition and require repair. More importantly, this location does not meet ADA (American's with Disabilities Act) design standards both in terms of length of runs of steps without intermediate landings as well as in not providing an accessible ramp system for wheelchair users.

The various alleys between buildings along Main Street which lead to vantage points overlooking the Truman Bypass are also of steeper gradients than allowed by ADA criteria and do not offer walkways separated from the vehicular drives. Additionally, many of the alleys are privately held.

The retaining walls between the backs of buildings on Main Street and the lower elevations of the Truman Bypass below present a formidable challenge in terms of providing connectivity. There is the possibility of using introduced elements within the buildings themselves as a connection between the different elevations, however this would require cooperation of building owners in constructing such improvements.

The open space east of the Hanora Lippett Manor presents a visual linkage between Main Street and the Truman Bypass. To accomplish a pedestrian link, however, the former power trench fronting the Hanora Lippett Manor would have to be bridged and a stair and ramp system provided to accommodate pedestrian access in compliance with ADA criteria. Any such improvements to the power trench, being a historic feature, would have to be approved by the Woonsocket Historic Society as well as the private landholder.

The existing walkway immediately west of the Hanora Lippett Manor does provide a pedestrian connection from Main Street to the Truman Bypass, Bernon Street and the River Island Park beyond and is in excellent condition.

Existing Open Spaces

The most significant public open space along Main Street is the Veterans Memorial Park located alongside City Hall at Depot Square. This park is seasonally maintained with flowering annuals and perennials in planters and beds and features veterans monuments, benches, and walkways. The internal bituminous walkway is stamped and colored to look like brick, but is in poor condition and presents steep gradients in several locations. Lawn areas are sparse due to shading by mature trees which might be thinned and pruned. But, even given these conditions, this park provides a keystone green space due to its prominent location.

Opposite the park is a small seating area fronting a municipal

Linkage Opportunities and Challenges



Existing Veterans Park Stairway







ADA Challenges and Alleys







Near Hanora Lippett Building







Walls





Existing Open Spaces





Veterans Memorial Park





Main Street





River Island Park





Truman Bypass

Streetscape Elements

Walkway Types





Furnishings





Furnishings





Lighting





parking lot. The heavy timber benches are of very dated appearance and in poor condition, as is the small plaza itself. It is recommended that this area be revamped as part of general maintenance of Main Street.

Other notable green spaces include the landscaped area fronting the restored Depot building as well as the power trench in front of the Hanora Lippett Manor. The former is well landscaped and maintained, providing an attractive foreground to the Depot. The power trench is simply lawn, however, the area beyond is landscaped with shade and evergreen trees, providing a soothing view from Main Street.

River Island Park, easily accessible on foot from Main Street, is the jewel of the area's public green spaces. It presents a largely pastoral landscape featuring open lawn areas for informal play, a winter ice skating area, a gazebo and stage for summer gatherings and performances, a canoe launch on the Blackstone River as well as numerous benches along tree shaded walkways. The Blackstone River itself presents a wonderful backdrop to the park. Areas which might be improved include the gravel parking areas under private ownership along the park's frontage on Bernon Street and inconsistent signage in this same area.

Opportunities also abound for new public park areas on undeveloped public land between the Truman Bypass and the Blackstone River. There are two major lawn areas in particular which, with relatively minor improvements such as walkways and benches, could be transformed into an extension of the River Island Park experience on a smaller and more informal scale. There are additional opportunities for visual overlooks of the Blackstone River in these locations as well.

Streetscape Elements

The streetscape elements through-out the project area are highly variable. Veterans Memorial Park is characterized by features including a brick planter with park signage, ornamental metal benches and trash receptacles and concrete block piers at the entrance to the stairs leading to the Truman Bypass. The planter metal furnishings are in good condition, but this is contrasted by the poorer condition of the park's pavement.

Several types of signage are used in Veterans Memorial Park including a plaque commemorating veterans on a granite monument, an additional plaque on a granite mill stone monument with the park name, a metal sign describing "McCarthy's Clock" and a contemporary metal framed sign noting "Woonsocket City Hall". These might be better unified by a consistent landscape treatment visually tying them together.

Opposite Veterans Memorial Park is a public parking lot with landscaping and a seating area fronting on Main Street. The benches are dated in appearance, being built of heavy wood members, and stained a red color. They do not fit in with the attractive metal benches in Veterans Memorial Park and should be replaced. Plantings in this area are overgrown and should also ideally be replaced.

The buildings on the opposite side of Main Street from the City hall have expansive concrete sidewalks devoid of any furnishings or plantings. Introduction of such improvements would lend a much more inviting pedestrian ambiance.

Main Street between Court Street and Market Square is devoid of pedestrian amenities such as benches, trash receptacles and bike

racks. Only a bus shelter at the municipal parking area located centrally along this section breaks up the hardscape of concrete sidewalks and roadway, lending a stark appearance. Introduction of such furnishings would create a more inviting environment for pedestrians.

Market Square introduces a raised platform for events and performances centrally in its parking lot and an attractive brick tower with interpretive signage along its front edge. Furnishings are sparse, primarily located at the tower, and include benches and trash receptacles of a different style from those at Veterans Memorial Park and a bicycle "ribbon" rack. Ornamental black metal fencing further sets the tower off as a special element.

River Island Park is characterized by yet another style of ornamental metal benches and trash receptacles. An attractive central wooden gazebo for performance and event use is located alongside the winter time ice skating area, a focal point of the park.

Lighting in the project area varies widely. Main Street utilized traditional ornamental pendant fixtures on fluted metal poles, many with banners reading "Downtown Woonsocket", and appear in good condition despite their age. Lighting along the Truman Bypass consists of "cobra head" lights for roadway lighting and bishops crook light poles for pedestrian lighting along the residential development as well as in River Island Park and at Market Square. A uniform lighting treatment should be selected for all major improvements which later derive from this study.

Signage

Signage varies widely throughout the downtown area. Interpretive signage is introduced at Market Square, but limited to this area rather than presenting a consistent theme through the downtown and along the Truman Bypass. As mentioned earlier, signage at Veterans Memorial Park also varies considerably even in its relatively small location.

In numerous locations of the downtown area signage of different types is closely grouped together, presenting a confusing impression to drivers and pedestrians alike. Efforts should be made to reduce this visual clutter by reducing the messaging to the minimum needed and providing proper separation of the signs.

Interpretive signage in particular is currently a missed opportunity. There are numerous buildings and sites throughout the downtown area which remain hidden treasures due to lack of any signage drawing attention to them and explaining what is unique about them. In a city so rich in history as Woonsocket, development of a consistent interpretive signage design and identification of locations for same is a high priority.

Signage


W3R
Washington
Rochambeau
Revolutionary Route
March To Victory
1781 - 1782

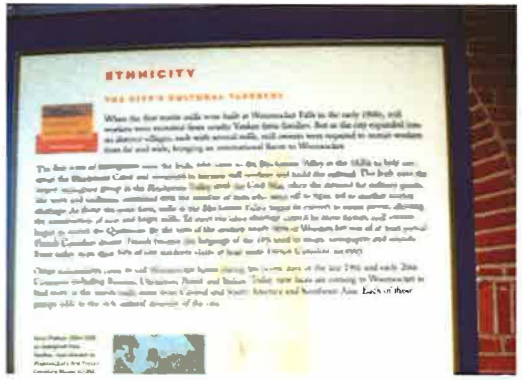

Pratt Dam 0.7 mi
Kelly House 3.1 mi
Calais, ME 567 mi
Lonsdale Marsh 0.4 mi
Slater Mill 4.0 mi
Key West, FL 2,385 mi


WELCOME TO
HISTORIC
DOWN
TOWN
WOONSOCKET


ASCENSION
ONE WAY




MARKET SQUARE

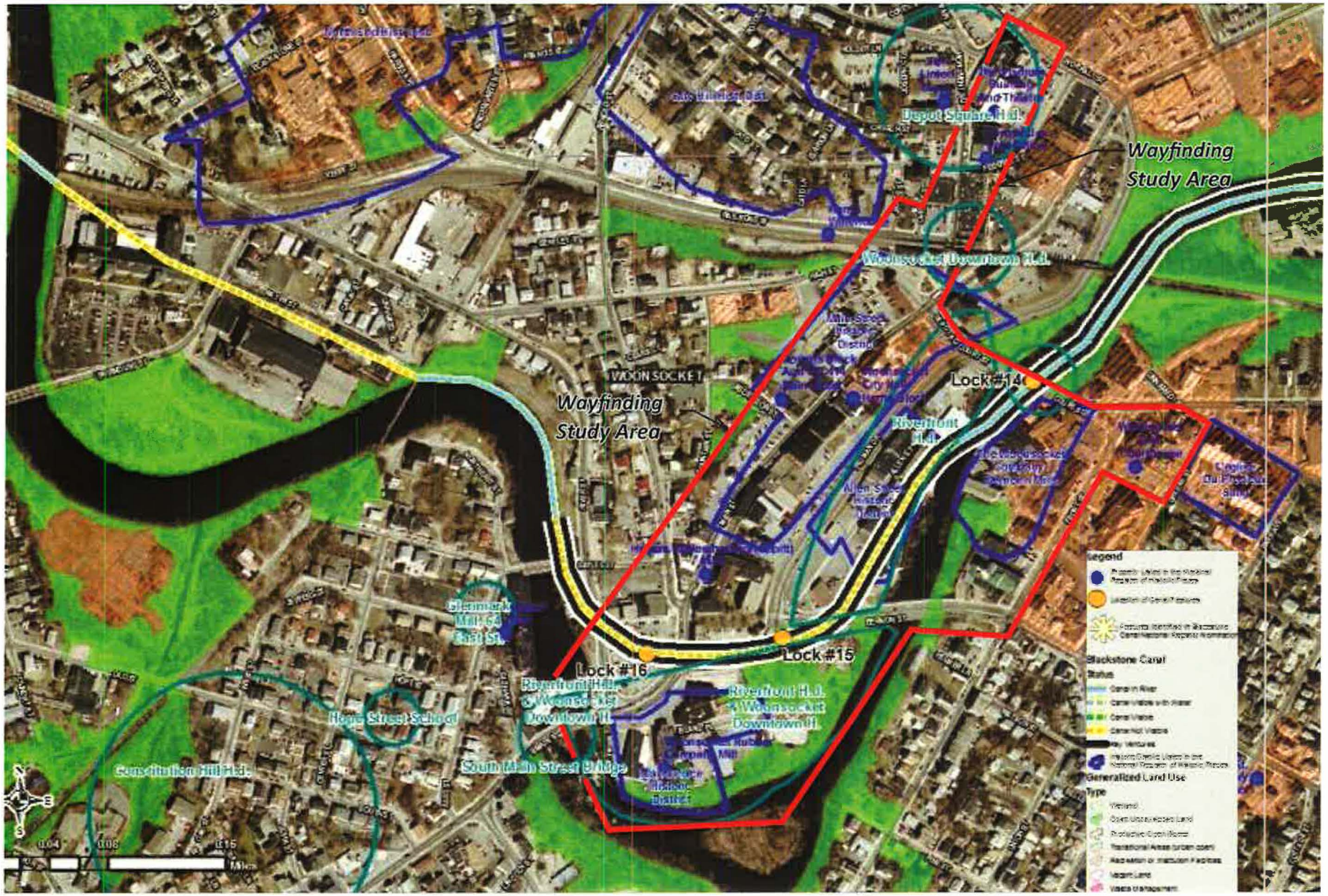

ETHNICITY

3 Historic & Cultural Assets

CONTENTS

- Introduction
- Woonsocket History: An Overview
- A Compendium of Historic Maps

Historic District Map



Introduction

The history of Woonsocket is examined as it relates to the project area and informs the planning process. Before one can begin to entertain planning opportunities it is imperative that a thorough understanding of this location's rich history is first explored, setting the foundation of local understanding upon which to build sensitive planning approaches.

To accomplish this, the history of Woonsocket as it relates to the project site is discussed in a narrative as well as via a chronological series of historic maps and an illustrated map of historic districts in Woonsocket.

The narrative provides an overview of the early history of Woonsocket, the later industrial/textile mill period through the 1800's and of the Blackstone Canal and how it influenced the region's development. This narrative history is further informed by the accompanying historic maps which clearly illustrate the progression of development, and the Historic District Map illustrating where these cultural assets are protected today.

Woonsocket History: An Overview

Early River Crossings

In the 1600's and early 1700's one had to either wade across the Blackstone River (named after William Blackstone, the first settler in Rhode Island) in the area just below the Falls and the present location of the South Main Street Bridge, or raft across at the "narrows" at the present location of the railroad bridge.

The wading location was in the 1600's located at Richard Arnold's sawmill (once located in the island in the middle of the river) at the base of the cliffs known as the "thundermist falls" (thundermist is what the native American word "Woonsocket" means), where the water calmed and became shallow enough to cross on foot or by horse. It was still used in the early 1900's, well after construction of the first bridge in approximately 1730 (the current location of the South Main Street Bridge just below the Woonsocket Falls Dam). All vestiges of this crossing have apparently been lost and the character of the river altered by construction of the higher dams, mill trenches and flood control projects. Currents and pockets of deeper water now make wading across in this location too hazardous to allow.

The rafting operation was maintained for almost 200 years, from 1650 through the mid 1800's when the Providence-Worcester Railroad built the bridge. It was also the site of a tow bridge during the years the Blackstone Canal between Worcester and Providence was operated, 1828 to 1848, allowing horses towing barges to go from one side to the other.

Early Woonsocket Center

The village of Woonsocket, located just east of the Falls in the area of Market Square, became the Incorporated District of Woonsocket in 1837. This was the center of early manufacturing activity. Residential development became focused upon the nearby hill by Cato and Church Streets. It was later incorporated into the City of Woonsocket in 1888.

Early River Related Industry

The earliest industry in Woonsocket related to the saw mill built at

the Falls by Richard Arnold in the mid-1660's. Given the dense forest surrounding the site, logs were readily available for harvesting and milling, and the mill prospered for many years under the ownership of Arnold's family. In 1823 it was relocated across the river. The Arnold family also ran two corn "grist" mills at the Falls site until last recorded in 1876. These were among numerous other grist mills operated in Woonsocket on the Blackstone River.

Early Land Transportation

Woonsocket was connected to Worcester and Providence from 1815 to about 1850, at its peak with 6 lines running from a stage terminal located in Market Square by the Woonsocket Hotel. They were eclipsed by the advent of railroads in the 1850's, trains being able to average 25 miles per hour as compared to the stage coach's 10 miles per hour.

The Advent of Woonsocket Factories and Textile Mills

The early 1800's saw the beginning of major development of factories in Woonsocket, utilizing the Blackstone River as a source of hydro-power. They became models of engineering ingenuity in harnessing the river's power through a complex system of power trenches bringing the water through the City to feed the mill's power need.

Unfortunately, the early factories and textile mills were notorious for poor treatment of their workers. Conditions included long hours, use of child labor, and harsh punishment for any perceived misbehavior.

Out of this came a period of reform pioneered by the Woonsocket Company, incorporated in 1832, which took over the Russell Manufacturing Company. The owners, Dorr and Allen, along with the mill's manager Samuel Greene, set about instilling a new philosophy wherein workers were viewed as having a higher value than the machinery. A village of tenement houses was created to house the workers and broad tree-lined streets introduced. This new progressive mill complex was named the Bernon Mills in honor of Gabriel Bernon, an ancestor of a member of the firm.

Workers at the Bernon Mills received benefits that could range from subsidized housing, company discount stores, churches, athletic teams, hospitals, free medical care, city halls, libraries and even brass bands.

The many other factories and mills are still in evidence with their masonry architecture which has so well withstood the test of time. These can be seen as they evolved through the years on the maps included in this study, and many are still in place and operating for new uses including housing, restaurants, retail and museums.

The Blackstone Canal

Constructed between 1824 and 1828, the Blackstone Canal connected Providence, RI and Worcester, MA. Though superseded as a transportation system by the construction of the railroad in 1847, remnants of the Canal remain discernible in Woonsocket and along its route through Rhode Island. The Blackstone Canal is perhaps one of the primary shape givers to Woonsocket, combining with the power trenches devised to operate the mill buildings as the framework around which Woonsocket evolved.

Upon its completion in 1828, the Blackstone Canal was a major engineering structure of the early 19th century. For two decades it served as the primary transportation corridor for the movement of agricultural products, raw materials, and manufactured goods between Providence, RI and Worcester, MA. The evolution of the

Canal and its significance in the transportation and industrial history of the Blackstone River Valley make the Blackstone Canal an important historic and archaeological resource.

The Canal was the last major transportation canal to be constructed in New England, and it embodies the distinctive design, materials, workmanship and methods of construction typical of the period.

The Blackstone River Valley of Massachusetts and Rhode Island is popularly known as the "Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution," the place where America made the transformation from an economy based on agriculture to one centered on industry. In December 1789, Providence merchant Moses Brown hired Samuel Slater to help establish a new factory at the falls of the Blackstone River in Pawtucket, RI, to spin cotton fiber into thread. One year later, it became the first successful water powered cotton-spinning factory in the United States, and the beginning of a new age of industrialization that inspired other entrepreneurs to build their own mills, first in the Blackstone Valley and eventually all over New England.

In addition to the Industrial Revolution, a transportation revolution was needed to cheaply and efficiently move heavy cargo between the mills on the river and the port of Providence and to link the rural countryside with the urban centers. Due to its change in elevations and numerous waterfalls, the Blackstone River was impassible to large boats, and horse drawn wagons were too slow and expensive. The need for a navigable waterway connecting the tidewater port of Providence with inland central Massachusetts was viewed by many merchants and industrialists as crucial to expanding their trades.

As early as 1792, the idea of constructing a canal to allow horse-drawn boats to carry freight and passengers between inland factories and coastal seaports was receiving significant interest. Overland travel on unreliable and poor quality roads was time consuming and expensive; significant savings could be realized by a canal from Worcester to Providence.

Inspired by the success of the Erie Canal, where construction began in 1817, similar ventures were begun in New England. The expansion of textile manufacturing along the Blackstone River in the early 19th century helped to generate additional support for the construction of the Blackstone Canal, and in 1822, the project was revived and a survey of the proposed route was conducted. Charters were finally obtained for the complete project, and the Blackstone Canal Company (BCC) was formed in 1823. The cost of construction was estimated at $500,000. Holmes Hutchinson, a veteran of the Erie Canal, was appointed chief engineer to oversee the project.

Construction of the Canal began in both Worcester and Providence in 1824. As most of the construction work was done by hand with picks, shovels, and wheelbarrows, the survey route followed existing contours of the Blackstone River and the Moshassuck River as closely as was reasonably possible. Construction of the entire Canal was completed in the fall of 1828. A final survey and mapping of the finished corridor was conducted in 1828 by Edward N. Phelps, who was brought in by the BCC in March 1828 as a new assistant engineer.

The actual cost of building the Blackstone Canal reached $750,000, exceeding the original cost pitched to BCC shareholders by $250,000. Yet, despite its initial financial problems, the BCC was able to declare modest dividends for its shareholders from 1832

through 1836. Even during these years, however, operations were hampered by difficulties in sustaining a consistent water level, maintenance problems, and disputes with mill owners over water rights. Historians have noted that if the canal had been constructed when originally proposed in 1796, there would have been few mills to compete with the BCC over water rights. But, with the expansion of industrial activity, by 1844 there were over 90 cotton factories that lined the River between Worcester, MA and Pawtucket, RI.

The contentious relations due to competition and negotiations for water flow resulted in numerous lawsuits filed by mill owners. However, higher water levels created by the canal also precipitated the development of new mills along the route, and the Canal's reservoir impoundment system benefited factories as well. By the late 1830's, the BCC's operations were adversely affected by water flow arrangements.

The operations were also adversely affected by the emergence of railroad transportation as a cheaper, faster and more reliable means to transport goods and materials, including a series of new railroad lines that were being developed in Massachusetts. However, unlike earlier antagonistic relations, the BCC's proposals to close the Canal in the 1840's were opposed by mill owners concerned about the loss of the reservoir system that helped stabilize their water power supply.

In 1844, the same year that the Providence & Worcester Railroad was chartered, the last boat traveled the full length of the Blackstone Canal. In 1846, the northern portion of the Canal was closed, and the Providence & Worcester Railroad bought all the canal property, exclusive of the reservoirs. The railroad, which opened in 1847, generally followed the canal corridor, and was built in part on the canal towpath.

The BCC finally closed all aspects of its business in 1848, with the last toll collected on a run from Providence to Woonsocket, RI. With the closure of the company, most of the Canal's locks were dismantled, the stone was sold, and many road crossings were filled in. By 1851, disposal of all of the BCC's property along the canal route, including the reservoirs, was complete.

The defunct Blackstone Canal was quickly supplanted by five railroads which opened in Worcester between 1835 and 1848, linking Worcester to Boston, New York, Providence and other cities, thereby creating a regional rail center in Worcester. With the closure of the Canal, mills along its route acquired the water rights or reclaimed rights taken by the BCC. The canal trench was converted to power canals for existing and new mills in many locations, augmenting the industrial use of the river's waters.

Within the Rhode Island section of the Blackstone Canal, the primary physical components of the Canal (i.e. the canal trench, the towpath and berm) are reasonably intact and recognizable in certain locations but have been covered over or destroyed in other locations. In addition, related engineering features, such as masonry walls, spillways, basins, bridge footings, as well as water power features and buildings associated with post-canal use of the water channel by local industries, exist in several locations.

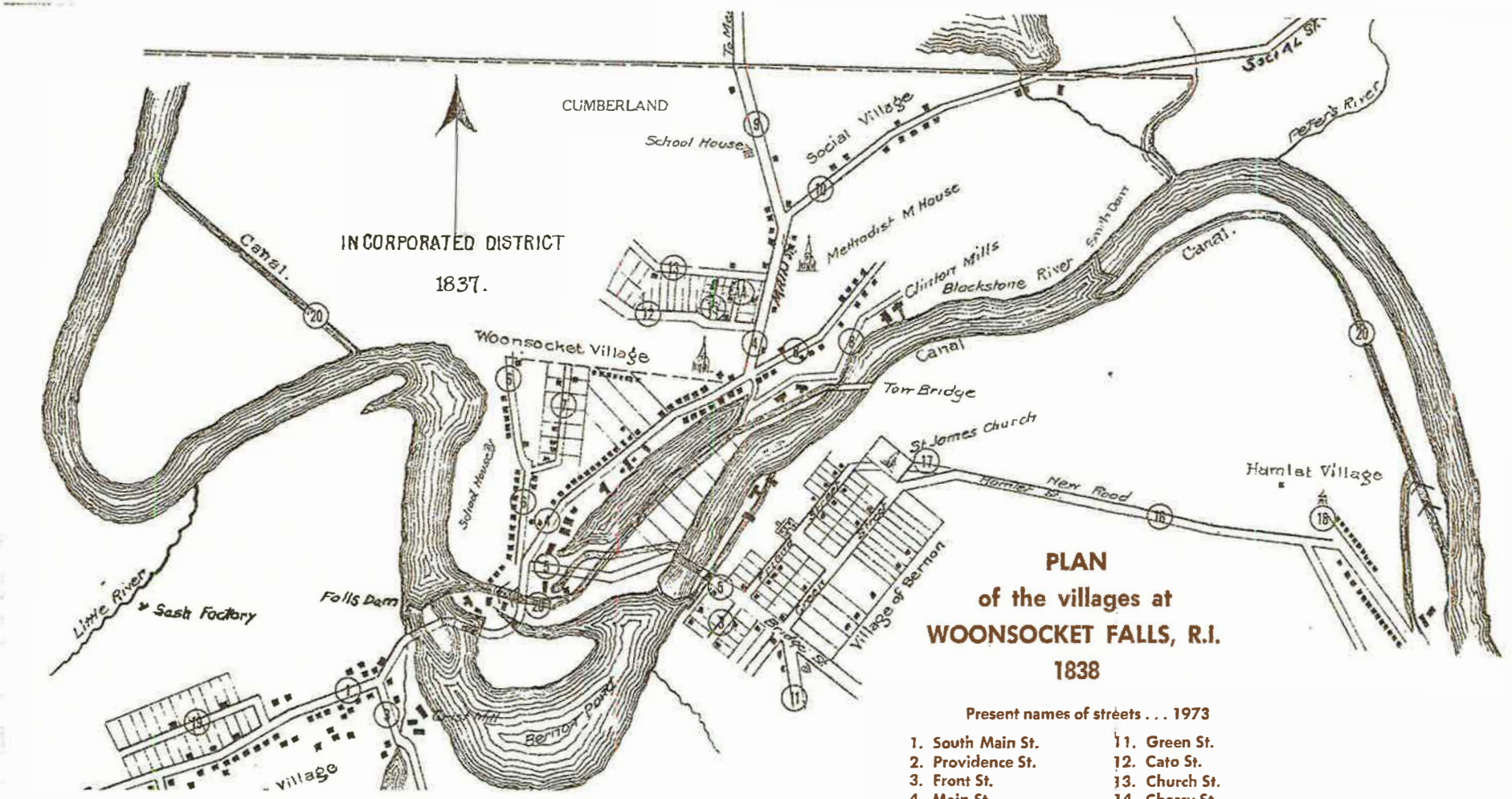
Over the entire length of the Canal, in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, approximately 85 percent of the Canal consisted of trenches that were hand-dug using wheelbarrows, ox-carts, picks, axes, iron bars, shovels, and limited quantities of black powder, while the remaining approximately 15 percent of the Canal was merged with navigable portions of the Blackstone River and the Moshassuck River, referred to as "slackwater navigation." The Canal

was fed by a system of reservoirs, most of which were natural ponds that were enlarged by dams.

The section of the Blackstone Canal which falls within the limits of the Wayfinding Master Plan in Woonsocket included a section of manmade canal which allowed for transport along the present path of the Truman Bypass and across Market Square, and rejoining the Blackstone River above the Woonsocket Falls. The Blackstone River itself served as the canal beyond both ends of this section, a condition not unusual where its depth, width and elevation drop allowed.

Unfortunately few vestiges of the canal remain visible today. Clinton Pond was paved over during construction of the Truman Bypass and Market Square developed over a section of canal along with the power trench system utilized by the textile mills.

1838

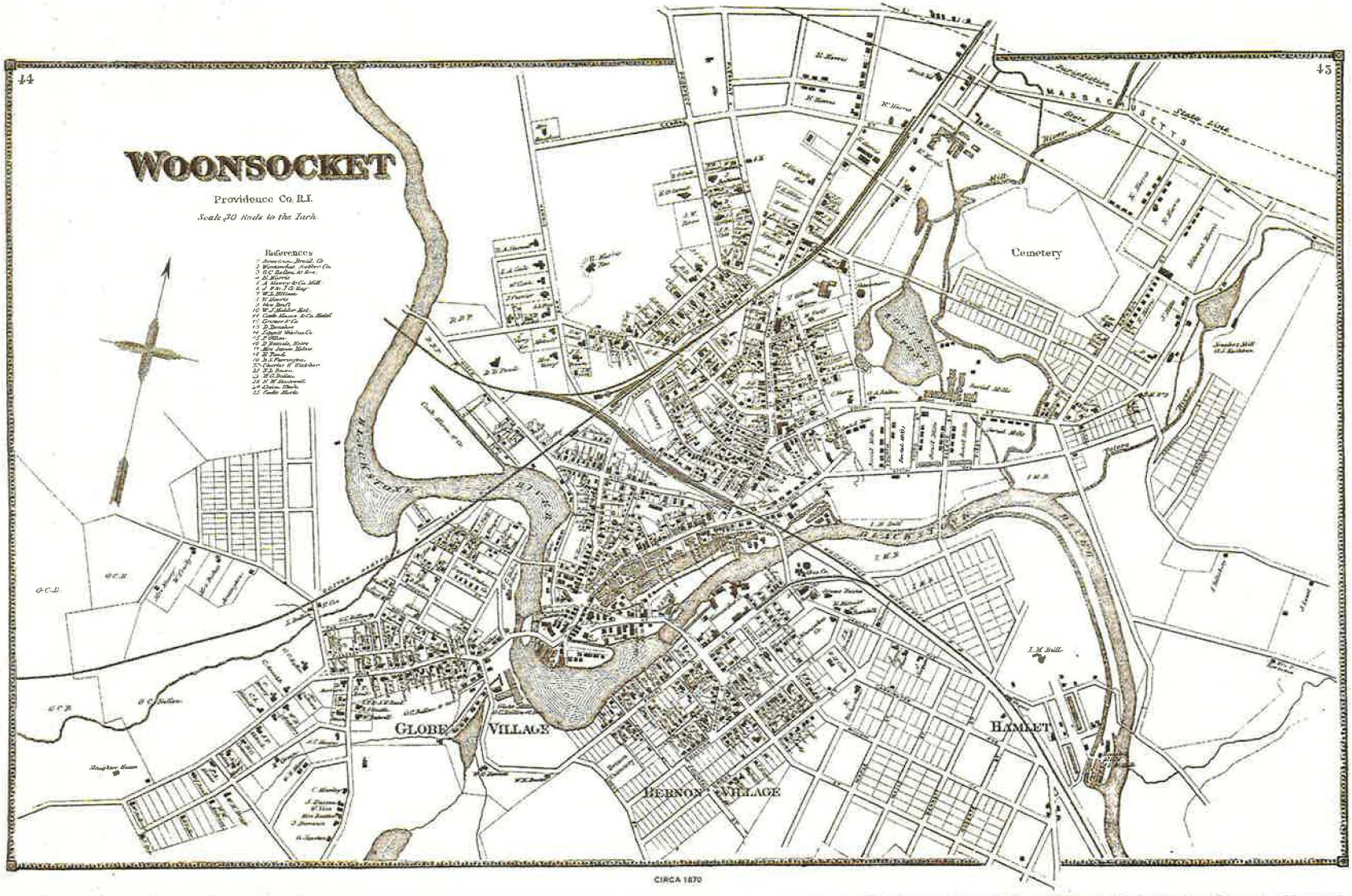


PLAN
of the villages at
WOONSOCKET FALLS, R.I.
1838

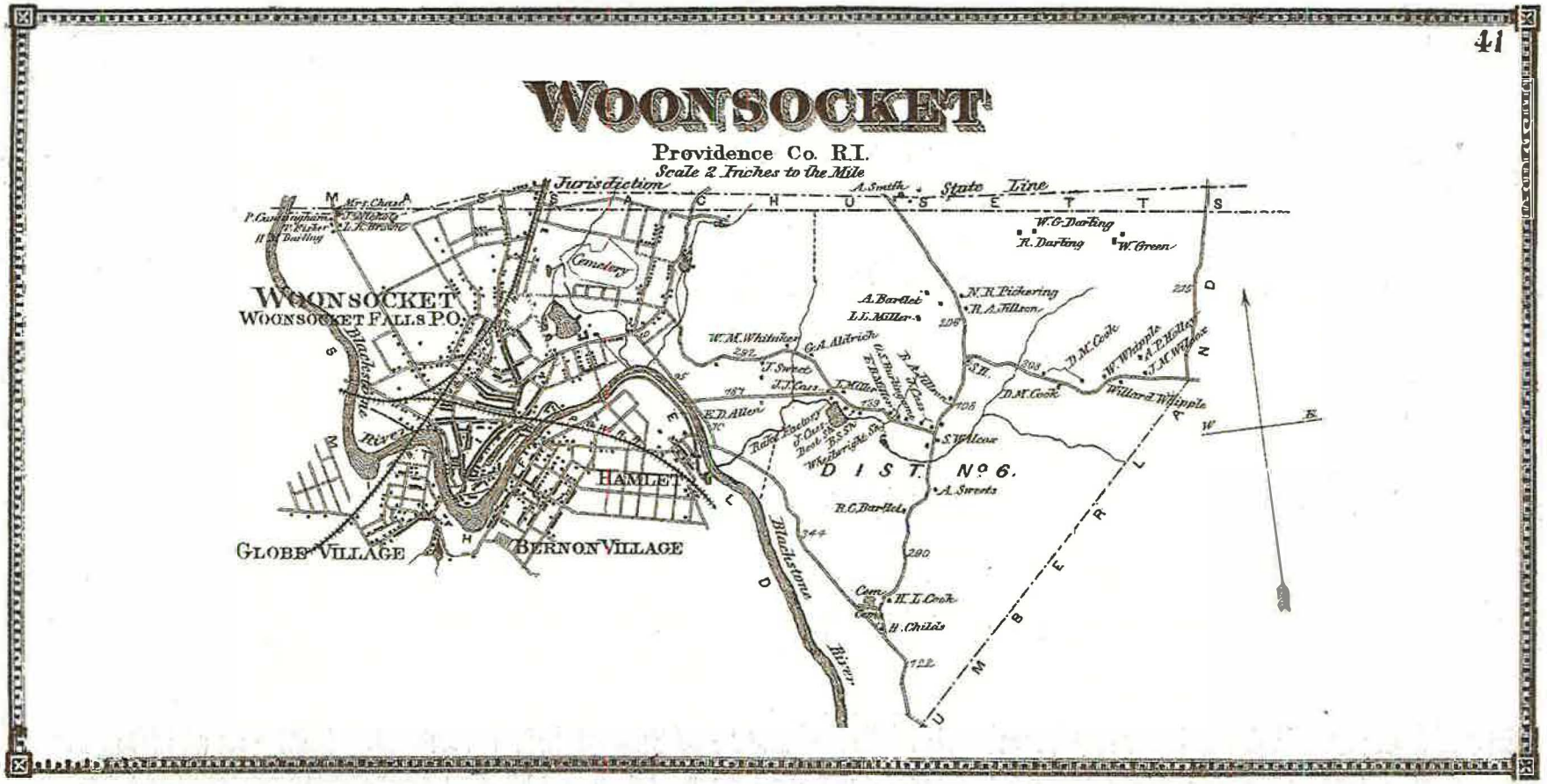
Present names of streets . . . 1973

1. South Main St.
2. Providence St.
3. Front St.
4. Main St.
5. Bernon St.
6. Arnold St.
7. Fountain St.
8. Clinton St.
9. No. Main St.
10. Social St.
11. Green St.
12. Cato St.
13. Church St.
14. Cherry St.
15. James St.
16. New Hamlet Av.
17. Old Hamlet Av.
18. Drown St.
19. Pleasant St.
20. Blk'stn Canal

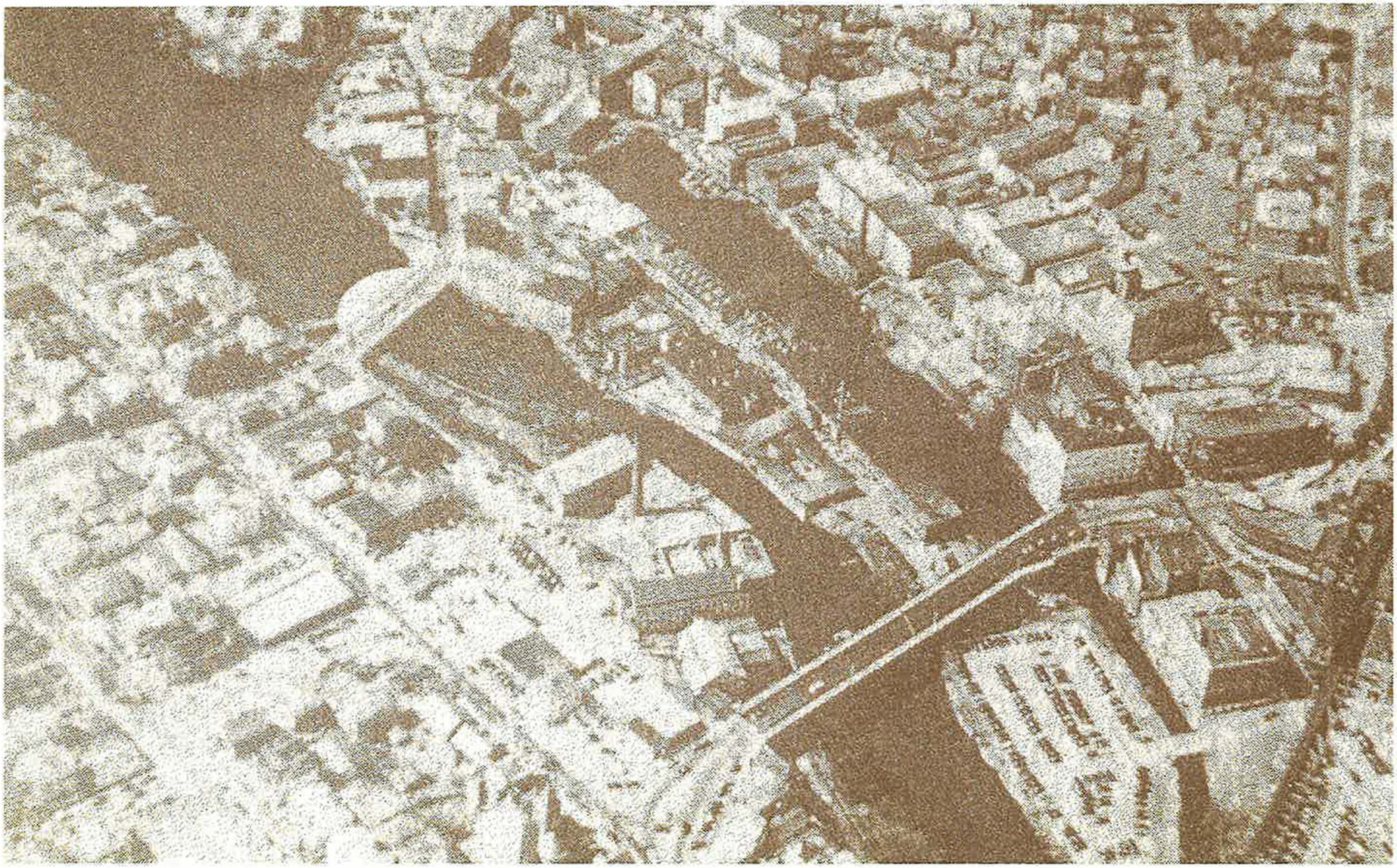
1870


WOONSOCKET
Providence Co. R.I.
Scale 30 rods to the Inch.
References
44
45
Cemetery
GLOBE VILLAGE
BERNON VILLAGE
HAMLET
CIRCA 1870

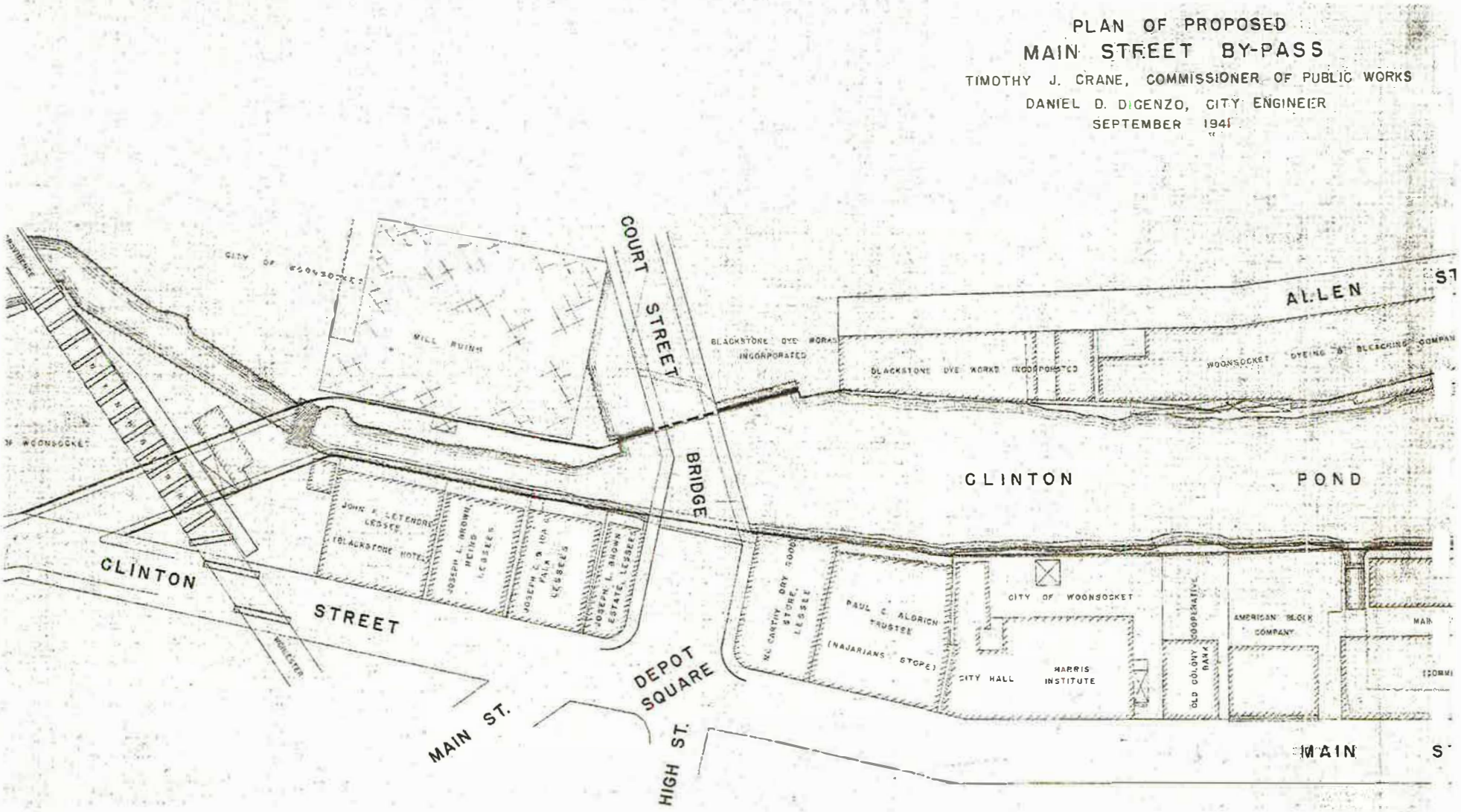
1871

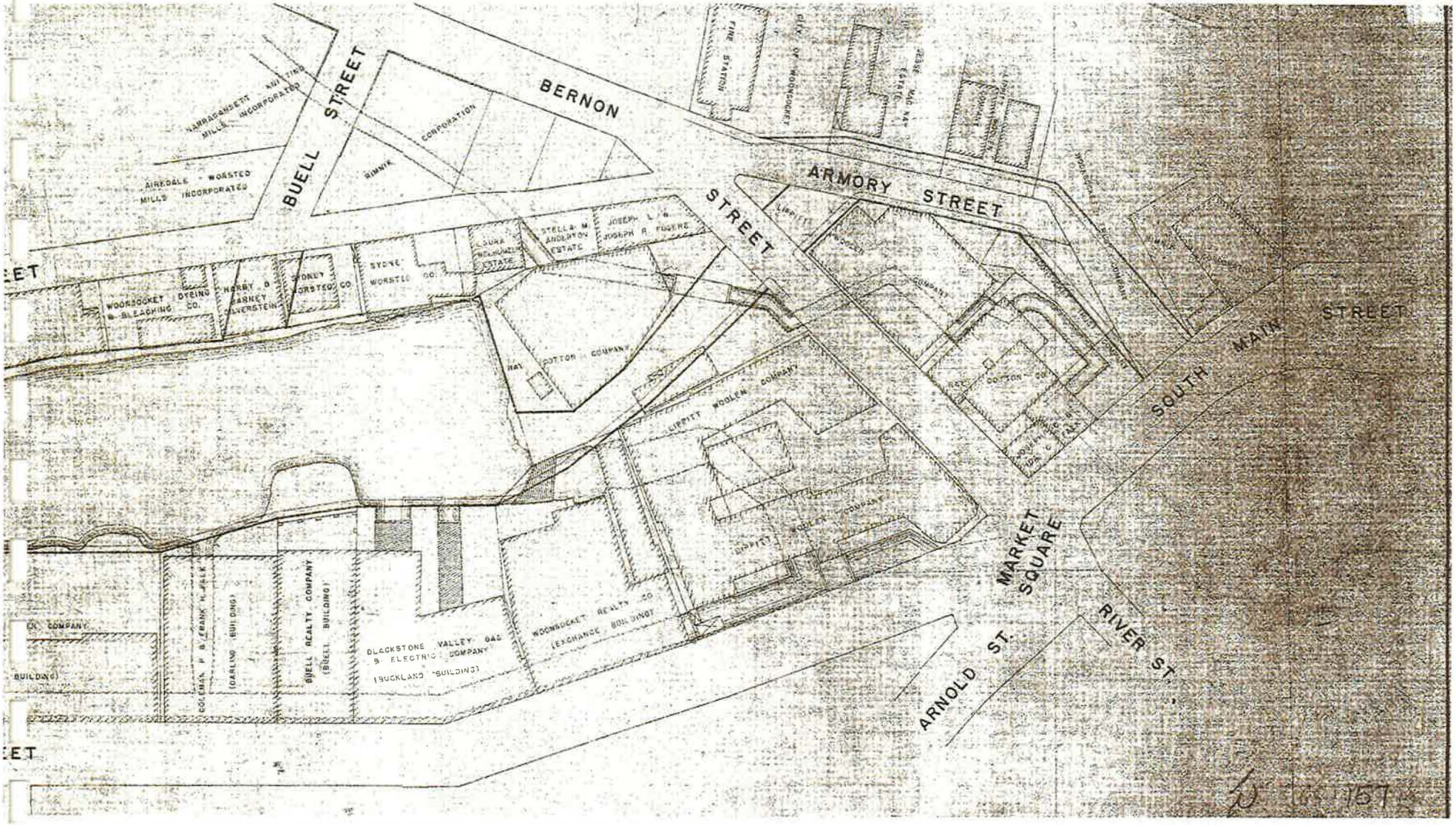

41
WOONSOCKET
Providence Co. R.I.
Scale 2 Inches to the Mile
Jurisdiction
State Line
CHUSETTS
WOONSOCKET
WOONSOCKET FALLS P.O.
Cemetery
Blackstone River
HAMLET
GLOBE VILLAGE
BERNON VILLAGE
DIST. No 6.
Blackstone River
MASSACHUSETTS
A. Smith
W.G. Darling
R. Darling
W. Green
A. Bartlet
N.R. Pickering
R.A. Tillson
L.L. Miller
W.M. Whitaker
G.A. Aldrich
J. Sweet
J.J. Cass
J. Miller
E.D. Allen
D.M. Cook
W. Whipple
A.P. Hellay
J.M. Wallace
Willard Whipple
S. Wilcox
A. Sweets
R.C. Barfield
H.L. Cook
H. Childs

1950



Main Street 1941




BERNON
BUELL STREET
ARMORY STREET
STREET
SOUTH MAIN STREET
MARKET SQUARE
ARNOLD ST.
RIVER ST.
FIRE STATION
CITY OF WOONSOCKET
NARRAGANSETT KNITTING MILLS INCORPORATED
AIREDALE WORSTED MILLS INCORPORATED
CORPORATION
RIMMIA
WOONSOCKET DYEING & BLEACHING CO.
HARRY B. HARKEY SILVERSTEIN
STONE WORSTED CO.
LOUIS BELLMAN ESTATE
STELLA M. ANDERTON ESTATE
JOSEPH L. & JOSEPH A. FUSARO
RAY COTTON COMPANY
LIPPITT WOOLEN COMPANY
COTTON CO.
BUELL REALTY COMPANY (BUELL BUILDING)
BLACKSTONE VALLEY GAS & ELECTRIC COMPANY (BUCKLAND BUILDING)
WOONSOCKET REALTY CO (EXCHANGE BUILDING)

4 Increasing Connectivity

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- Potential Connectivity Improvement Location "A"
- Potential Connectivity Improvement Location "B"
- Potential Connectivity Improvement Location "C"
- Potential Connectivity Improvement Location "D"

Overview

Improving physical connections between Main Street and the Truman Bypass presents one of the most important and challenging improvements the City can make to the downtown area. The significant grade change, as well as existing buildings that form a barrier, require careful evaluation in order to identify potential creative solutions.

Accommodating ADA access as part of any proposed connection is also a key element in this review. By example, initially the alleyways between some of the buildings appeared to present opportunities for additional connections. However, upon further examination the alleys were found to have gradients which exceed allowable slopes for ramps based upon ADA design criteria. They are also too narrow to allow for the introduction of safely separated sidewalks.

Historic issues also enter into the evaluation of potential routes for enhanced connectivity. The existing walkway alongside the Hanora Lippit Manor parking area presents an ADA accessible route in terms of grades, however, in order to reach it from the higher elevations of Main Street a bridge crossing of a historic power trench would be required, as would a ramp system on the downhill side. The potential bridge crossing in particular would alter the appearance of the power trench and require review by the Woonsocket Historic Commission.

In terms of dealing with the dramatic grade change between Main Street and the Truman Bypass, vertical circulation within existing privately owned buildings can potentially provide secondary linkages. Even though these connections would only be available when the building is open and pedestrians are visiting the establishment, they can become part of the network. However, for this to occur, the selected Main Street building would require internal alteration and possibly new additions that front the Truman Bypass. The advantage of this approach would be introduction of new storefront and/or restaurant facades along the Truman Bypass which will attract pedestrians to this street and create a more inviting environment.

In evaluating the project area for potential connectivity improvements, four locations of promise were studied through development of sections to study gradient changes and plans to study layout. An overall Connectivity Locus Map is provided illustrating each location in terms of where gradient cross sections have been prepared.

Upon evaluation of the four trial studies, a final consensus location for specific improvements was identified and developed as a CAD plan suitable for pricing of recommended improvements. Each of the trial studies is presented below accompanied by photographs which convey the character of each area and descriptive narratives. The selected connectivity improvement location is presented as the first of these studies below.

Connectivity Improvement Locations



Potential Connectivity Improvement Location "A"

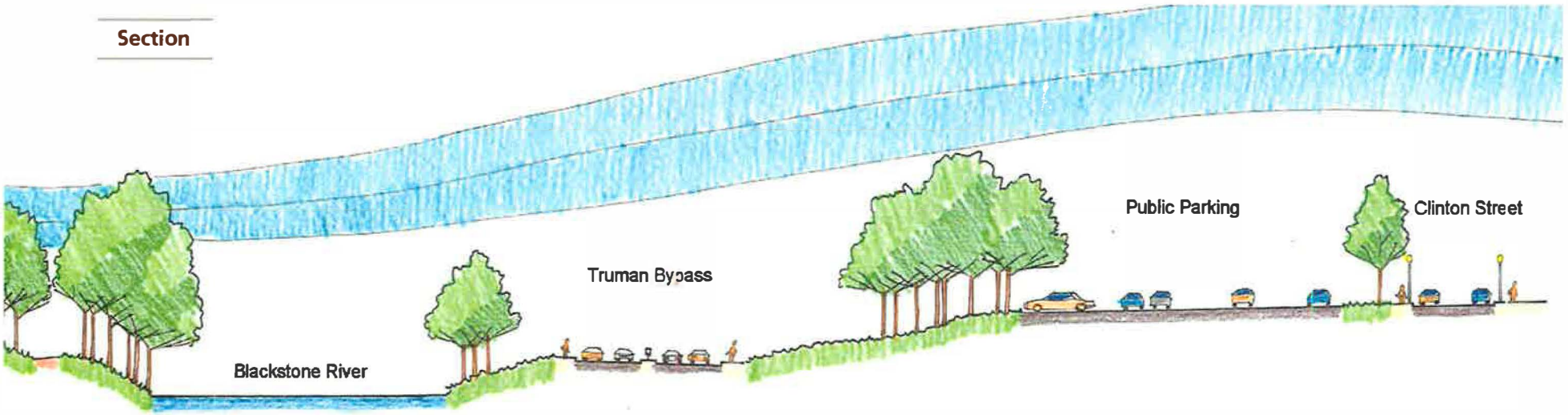
This first site for pedestrian connectivity improvements links Clinton Street to the Truman Bypass and is located alongside the P & W RR trestle, it's location illustrated on the Connectivity Locus Plan. Section A illustrates the moderate gradients which characterize this location in terms of possible pedestrian access to Truman Bypass and the potential parkland beyond.

Two options have been explored in this location:

1. Option 1 is fairly restricted in layout area but is located on City owned property north of the trestle. It is adjacent to the municipal parking lot and presents a 12 foot change in elevation from the parking lot down to the Truman Bypass.
2. Option 2 is characterized by more moderate gradients and a larger potential landscaped setting but is located on privately held land which is currently not largely wooded. It too is located adjacent to a parking lot and presents a 15 foot change in elevation from the parking lot down to the Truman Bypass.

Key to both of these locations is the standard at-grade construction which can be employed in constructing an ADA accessible walkway, ramp and stair system to navigate the change in grade. No structural solutions to buildings or historic features are required and there do not appear to be any environmental impacts. Properly landscaped with shade trees and low maintenance ground covers, both locations can present an attractive appearance, however, Option 2 clearly has the advantage in creating a potential park experience as part of the link.

Section



Either of the options provides a clear link to the planned bikeway, to the Blackstone River shore with overviews and to associated potential expansion of park space located on the side opposite of the Truman Bypass from the connectivity link.

This location was selected by consensus as the most feasible connectivity enhancement in the near-term, not being dependent upon major ramp systems, elevators or structural alterations to buildings or historic features. Consequently, it has been developed as annotated CAD plans with detailed grading and landscape treatments for each of the two possible options. These will allow for pricing of the improvements towards establishing a final design and construction budget.

Site Photos







Connectivity Improvement Location 'A'—Option 1



Connectivity Improvement Location 'A'—Option 2



Potential Connectivity Improvement Location "B"

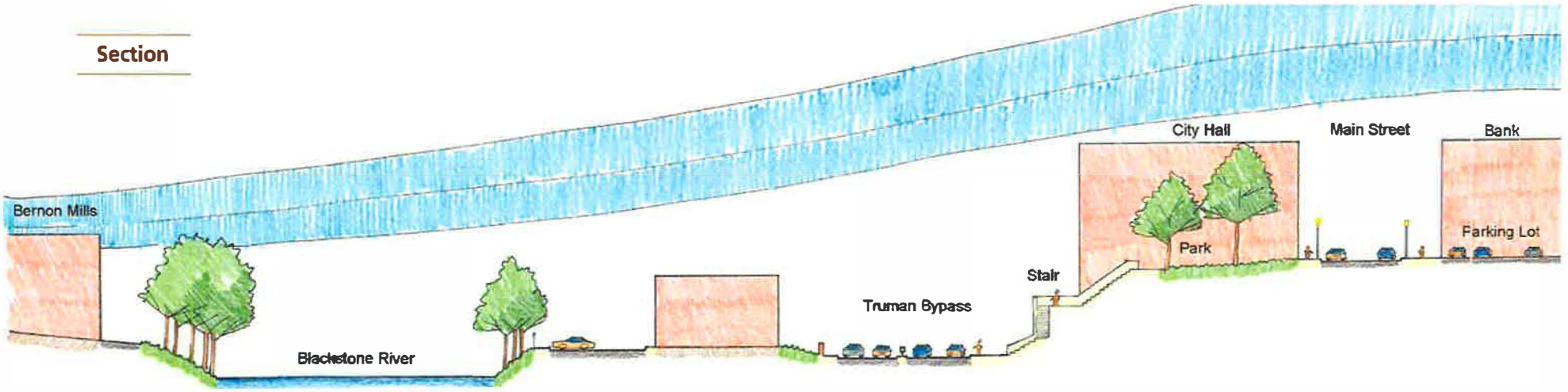
This second site for potential pedestrian connectivity improvements is located at the existing stairway from Veterans Memorial Park alongside City Hall and the Truman Bypass below, as illustrated on the Connectivity Locus Plan. Section B illustrates the close to 40 foot drop in elevation which must be navigated at this location in terms of possible pedestrian access from the Veterans Memorial Park to the Truman Bypass and potential bikeway and park amenities beyond.

As discussed in the Inventory section of this study, the stairway is currently in need of repair to existing spalled concrete risers and treads, rusted handrails as well as landings which have settled or cracked. The stair is also not ADA accessible and would require being supplemented by either an elaborate ramp system traversing the hillside and associated retaining wall, or with an elevator.

In terms of the former, approximately 16 ramps of 30 foot length at the ADA maximum 8.33% gradient would be required, each ramp section only allowing a 2.5 foot elevation drop. The ramps would require expensive structural support and significant future maintenance to preserve their integrity. Most significantly, it is unlikely such a lengthy ramp system would see use by the disabled due to its inconvenience, leaving it prey to skateboarders and vandals.

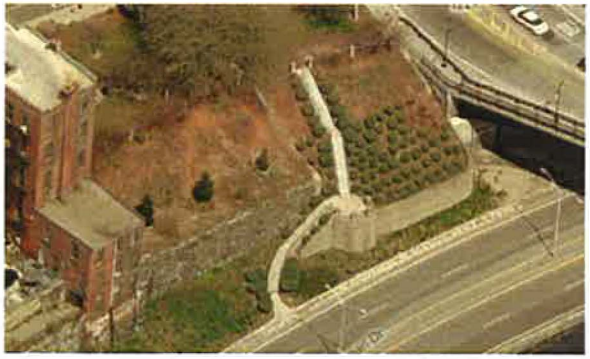
The solution of an elevator in this location was seriously considered but ultimately ruled out due to concerns over cost, maintenance and potential entrapment of occupants. It would also trigger a requirement to upgrade the stairs to ADA standards, an additional expense.

Section



Site Photos







Site Plan



Potential Connectivity Improvement Location "C"

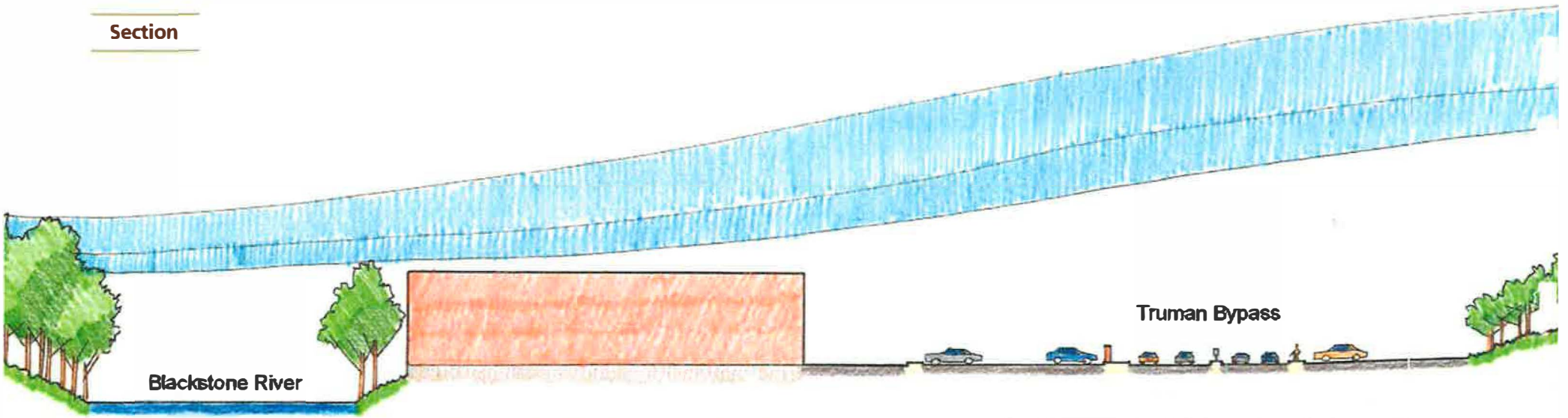
This third site reviewed for potential pedestrian connectivity improvements is located to the rear of an existing commercial/ residential building located at 97-113 Main Street, as illustrated on the Connectivity Locus Plan. Section C and the site concept plan illustrate how the building might serve as a grade transition to accommodate ADA accessibility requirements.

Such an approach would utilize an existing interior elevator and/or hallway to connect with a new pedestrian bridge and building with elevator facing upon the Truman Bypass. In order to make such a significant expenditure, the new retail building or restaurant as illustrated on the plan is believed to be necessary to generate a sufficient revenue stream for the property owner.

The potential building and pedestrian bridge have been sited adjacent to an existing raised parking lot and in a location which is currently comprised of very steep hillside and walls. Consequently, the building footprint can be kept out of the Federal Emergency Management Agency floodway and floodplain as defined on current mapping, eliminating the need to provide compensatory flood storage.

The parking lot appears lightly used, being intended for building tenants only, but a significant parking improvement to the area may be feasible by removing the current raised lot and replacing it with a parking deck set at the same elevation of new parking spaces set

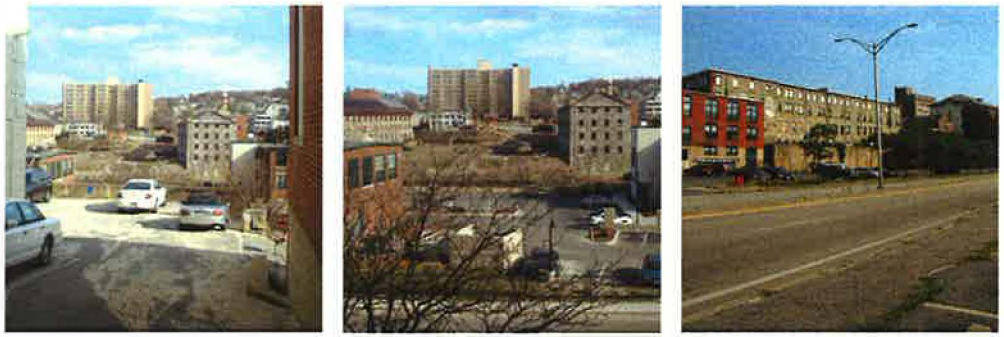
Section

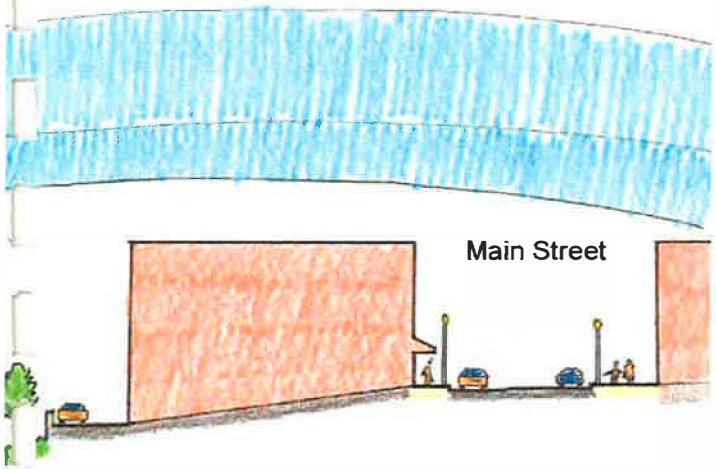


below it at similar grades to the Truman Bypass. This new lower level parking might even be faced with small retail shops, further enlivening the Truman Bypass area and providing an attractive break in the retaining walls lining this section of the Bypass.

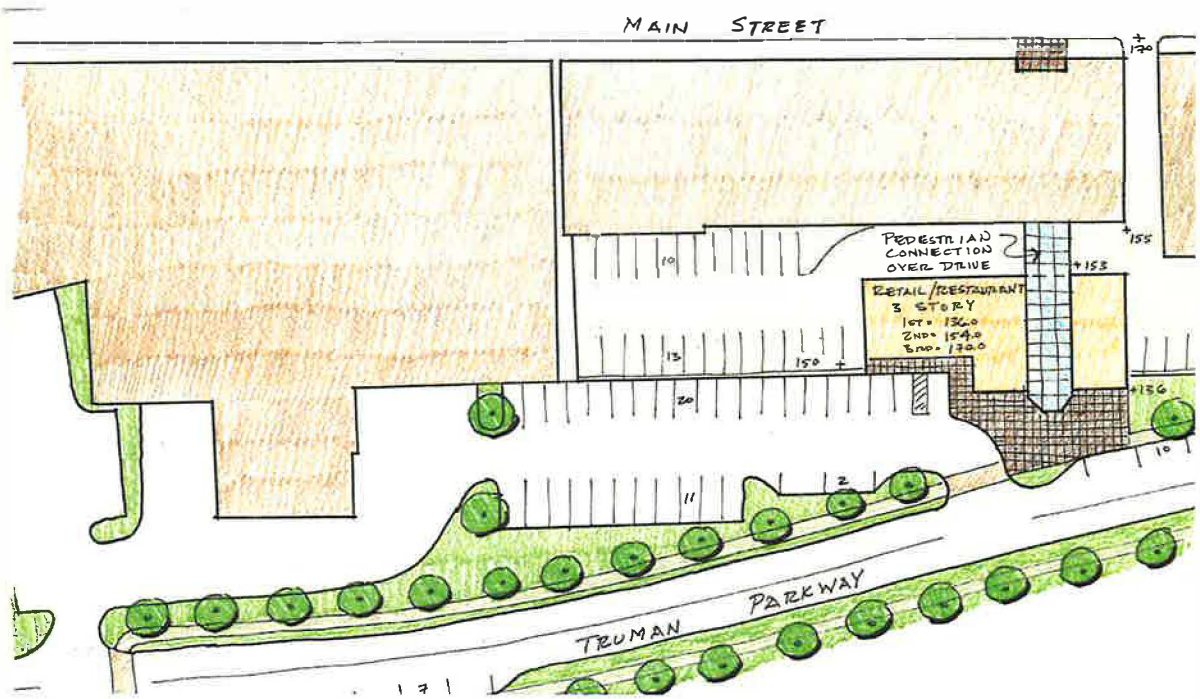
While this option presents real promise in terms of long term planning of the project area, its complications and expense in the current economy preclude our recommending it at the time of this study. However, it does provide a model for such a development in the future which can be shared with property owners and interested developers in the area.

Site Photos





Site Plan



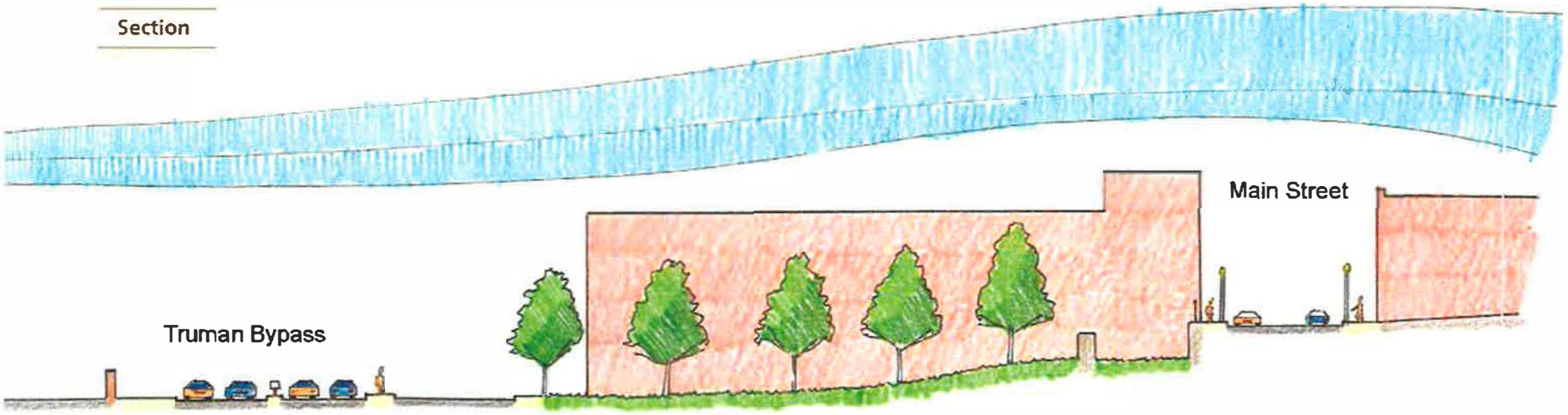
Potential Connectivity Improvement Location "D"

The fourth site reviewed for potential pedestrian connectivity improvements is located along the north side of the Hanora Lippett Manor, crossing the existing exposed historic power trench, as illustrated on the Connectivity Locus Plan. Section D and the site concept plan illustrate how a pedestrian bridge might cross the power trench and a ramp system towards the Manor's parking lot could accommodate ADA accessibility criteria.

The appeal of this site is it's clear visual connection to the Truman Bypass and potential park and bikeway improvements beyond. The Main Street sidewalk's existing low wall and ornamental metal fence provide an ideal vantage point for viewing this scene, and the pedestrian bridge could provide a fun experience in viewing the power trench from different angles. The power trench might even be re-watered in this section to bring its actual usage back to life and reengage the public with this key facet of Woonsocket's proud past.

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, the primary issue with any such solution would be its relationship to the historic qualities of the power trench and the mill buildings which face upon and were once served by it. Such a solution would require review and input by the Woonsocket Historic Commission to assure a historically appropriate bridge design which least impacts the power trench's visual integrity.

Section

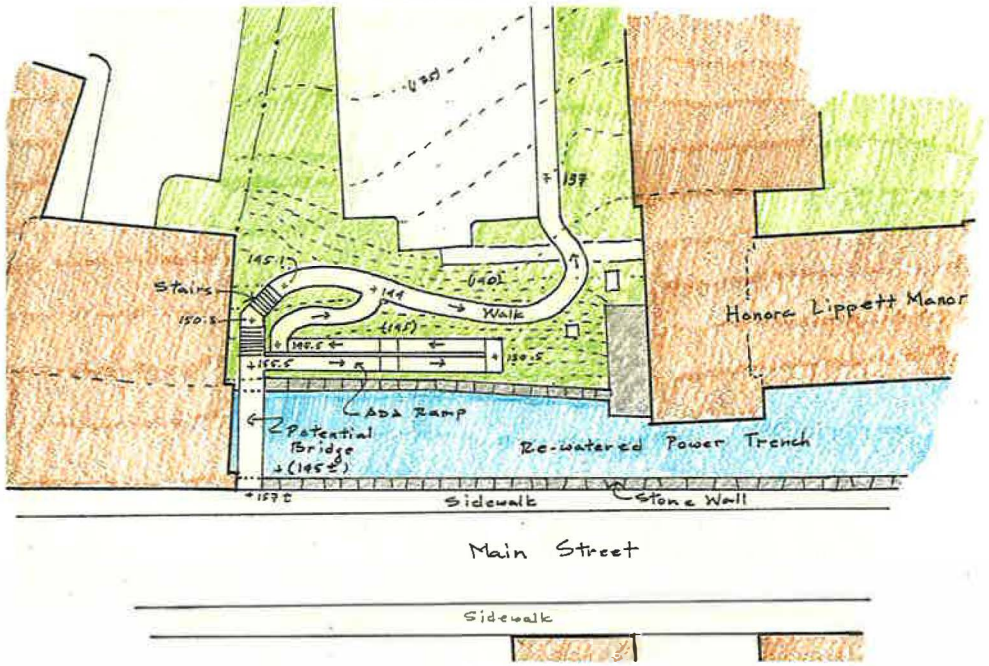


Summary

The four sites studied for connectivity linkages between Main Street and the Truman Bypass all present distinctive qualities and opportunities. Some of the more adventurous, particularly Options C and D, may become more viable as the economy recovers and development investment re-emerges as a significant force within the community. Option D also has merit, but requires careful evaluation by the Woonsocket Historic Commission in terms of its compatibility with the historic landscape.

Option A shows the greatest merit in terms of short term feasibility both from an economic and land ownership standpoint. Situated in a location characterized by more moderate gradients than the other sites, and with the first explored alternate design situated on publicly owned land, this location can be constructed in the near time and represent an early public example of larger improvements to follow in subsequent phases.

Site Plan



Site Photos





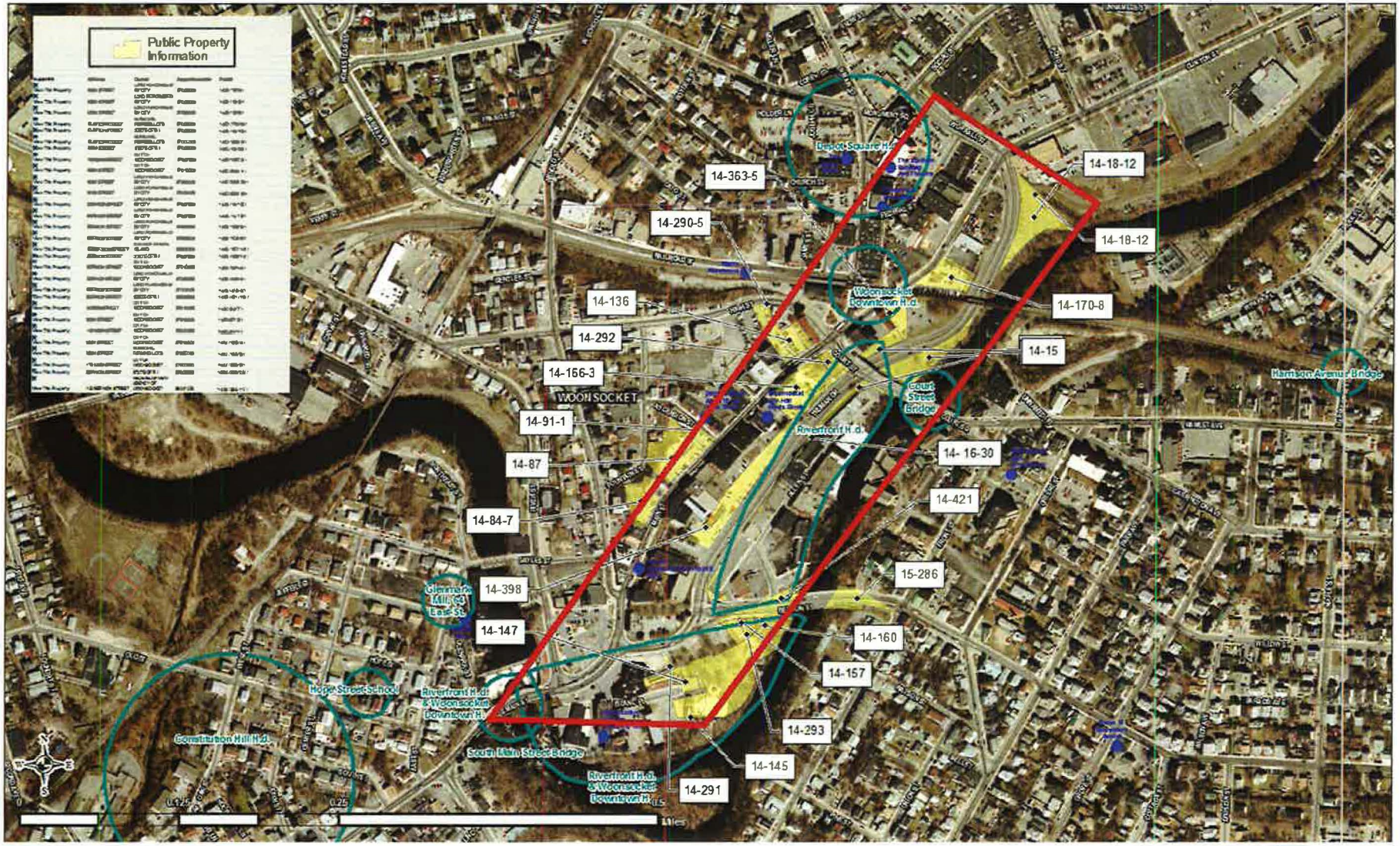


5 Truman Bypass—Master Plan Alternatives

CONTENTS

- Overview
- Blackstone River Bikeway
- TrumanBypass
- Master Plan Alternative A
- Master Plan Alternative B
- Master Plan Alternative C
- Summary

Truman Bypass and Vicinity



Truman Bypass— Master Plan Alternatives

Overview

Constructed in the 1960's as a bypass to Main Street, the Truman Bypass (officially called Truman Drive) comprises a 4-lane divided roadway with paved central median. As discussed in the Inventory section of this report, it typically receives light traffic volumes which appears to be well under capacity, and consequently appears out of character with the Woonsocket experience. Its construction also unfortunately resulted in the filling of historic Clinton Pond at its southern end, an irretrievable loss in terms of history and visual character.

In the various public stakeholders meetings and workshops held during the course of this study, the desire to have the Truman Bypass reduced in width or eliminated entirely was repeatedly expressed. A common opinion shared by the attendees was that the Truman Bypass currently functions as an unnecessary impediment to pedestrian accessibility between Main Street and the Blackstone River. A vision was also expressed to transform at least part of the area currently occupied by the Bypass into a linear park experience which incorporates a segment of the Blackstone River Bikeway.

This latter idea is not without precedent, for in 2000 the preparer's of this report developed plans for the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) illustrating an alternative route for a section of the planned Blackstone River Bikeway which involved elimination of one lane of the Truman Bypass. This early study, still supported by RIDOT, served as the genesis for the Master Plan studies prepared for this report.

Working with the City of Woonsocket, VHB has now prepared three Master Plan Alternatives during the course of the study, each describing a unique character for the project area. Key to each alternative has been extensive input garnered from meetings with representatives of the City, public interest groups, RIDOT and the National Park Service.

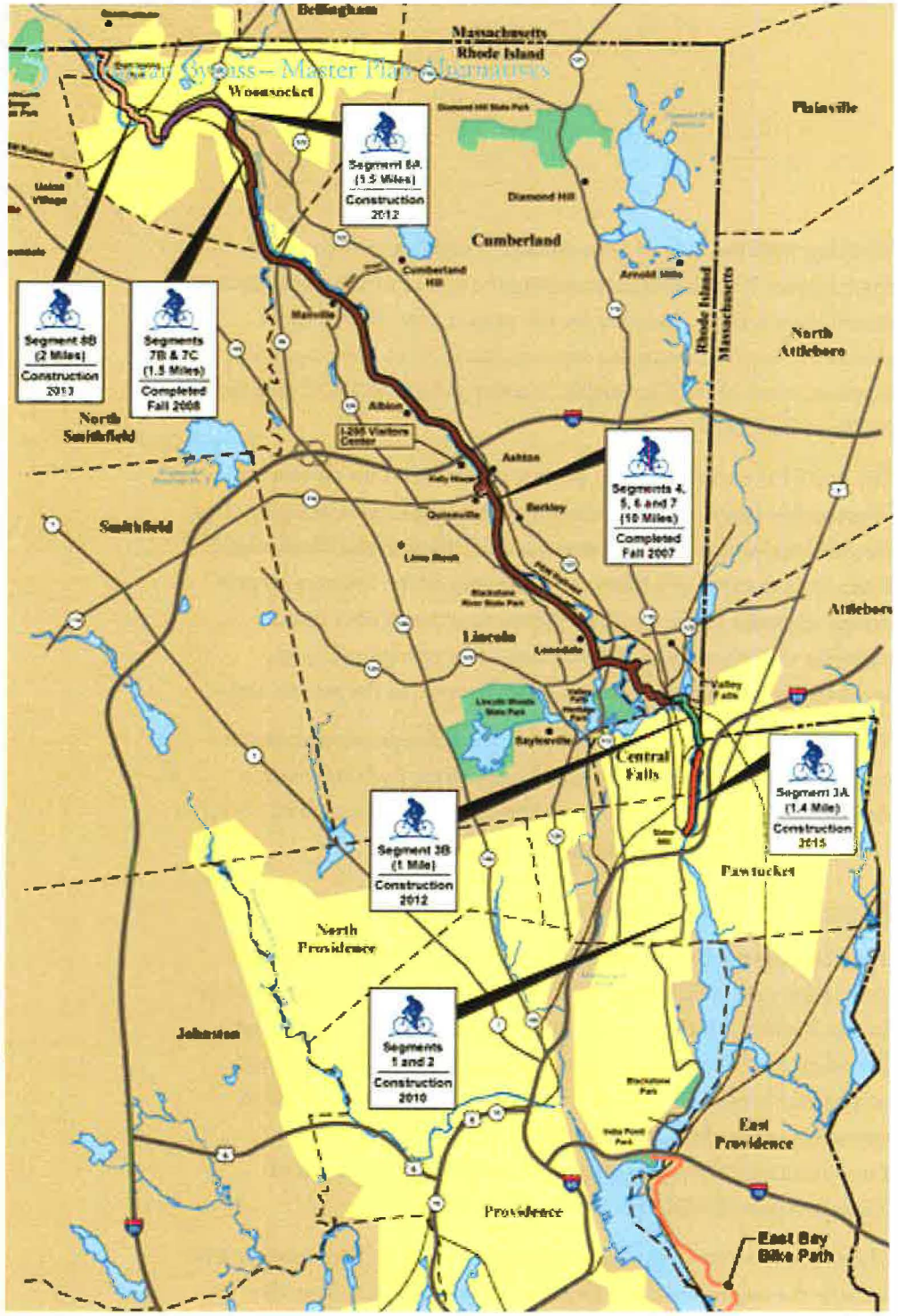
The goal of the studies was to present a new vision for downtown Woonsocket based upon creation of a linear park experience. Each of the Alternatives provides improved connectivity to the Blackstone River, introduction of a bikeway in the area of the Truman Bypass, design upgrades to the Truman Bypass to accomplish a more park-like experience, and introduction of wayfinding signage speaking to the history of Woonsocket integral to the project area.

These elements have been addressed from different perspectives in each of the following Master Plan Alternatives. Each reframes downtown Woonsocket as a special historic place also rich in recreation and tourist generating opportunities.

Blackstone River Bikeway

The Blackstone River Bikeway is planned as a 17 mile long scenic shared-use path which will connect with a section being designed in Massachusetts. This will result in a 48 mile long bikeway linking Providence to Worcester. To date, 12 miles of the Rhode Island section has been designed, permitted, constructed and placed in operation under the supervision of the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and the Department of Transportation (RIDOT).

The section of bikeway passing through the City of Woonsocket will include the approximately half-mile long section traversing the



project study site. The opportunities to offer a meandering path experience are fully explored in the Master Plan Alternatives detailed later in this section of the study.

Truman Bypass

As mentioned earlier, VHB, Inc. developed plans illustrating an alternative route for the Blackstone River Bikeway where it passes through the project area for the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) in 2000 . This alternative route reduces the width of the Truman Bypass by one lane and introduces the bikeway in this location. It also introduces a treed median over a substantial portion of the Bypass, reducing the visual scale of the roadway and providing a buffer to the bikeway.

This early study, still supported by RIDOT, has been expanded upon in the Master Plan Alternative studies prepared for this report with the goal of expanding the scope of the concept into a linear park treatment for the length of Truman Bypass..

Master Plan Alternative A (SEE P. 76)

In Master Plan Alternative A, the Truman Bypass has been redesigned to eliminate the southernmost two drive lanes and the concrete median, preserving the northern two drive lanes for what will become two way traffic (currently these lanes are dedicated to one way traffic). The area of the southernmost two drive lanes has been rededicated to a multi-use path which accommodates the bikeway running the length of the Truman Bypass and serves as a link in the planned expansion of the regional Blackstone River Bikeway.

Tree plantings have been introduced on both sides of the proposed

two-lane Truman Bypass, creating a boulevard experience inviting to pedestrians walking the corridor. Trees also flank the shared-use path except in select areas where open views towards potential park spaces and the Blackstone River avail themselves.

Linkage to the Blackstone River is provided in two locations leading from the multi-use path to potential river's edge overlooks. These paths lead through privately owned properties and would require permission from the property owners for access easements or rights of way.

Links between Main Street and the Truman Bypass are indicated in three locations on this Master Plan Alternative. The first would be via a possible new bridge crossing of the power trench immediately east of the Hanora Lippett Manor, tied to a new ADA accessible ramp and walkway leading from the power trench crossing to the Truman Bypass. This crossing of the power trench would require review by the Woonsocket Historic Society to assure it does not impair the historic character of the power trench.

The second link between Main Street and the Truman Bypass is located immediately west of the Hanora Lippett Manor via an existing walkway. This existing link further provides direct access to Market Square on its westerly end and to River Island Park on its easterly end. This walkway should be reviewed to assure it meets ADA slope criteria, and if it does not meet these criteria, accommodations made for accessibility to all who might use it.

The third link, and the one most Woonsocket residents are familiar with, is the staircase leading from the Veterans Memorial Park at the corner of South Main Street and Cross Street alongside the City Hall. This staircase is in disrepair and has approximately 70 stair treads, lending it unusable as an ADA accessible route.

Master Plan Alternative B (SEE P. 78)

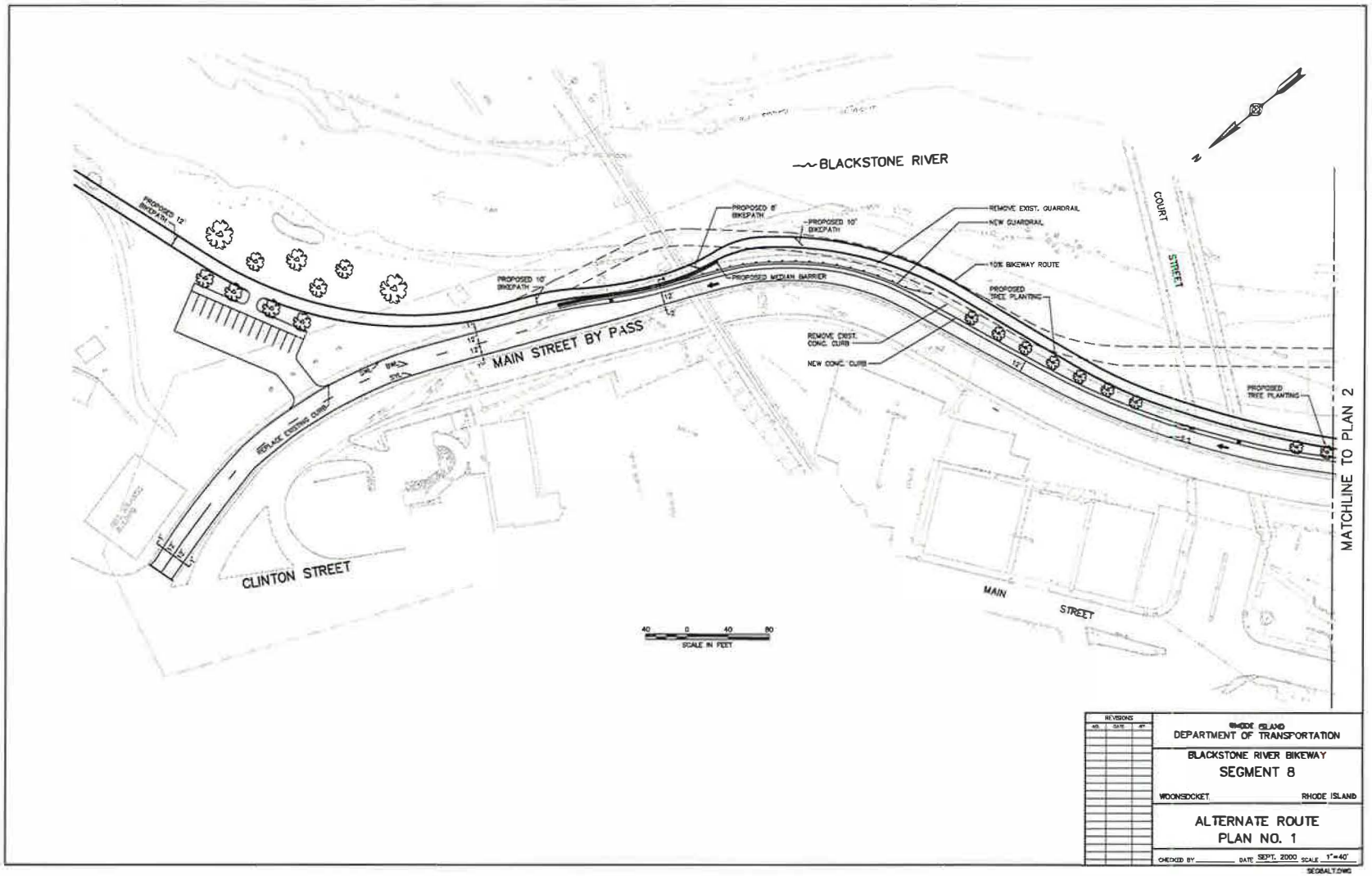
Master Plan Alternative B evolved out of a stakeholders meeting in which many attendees felt Alternative A should be further developed as a true linear park space with an emphasis on being pedestrian and bicyclist friendly space, and a workshop with Woonsocket teens sponsored by the Riverzedge Arts Project. The latter workshop in particular informed the design of this Master Plan Alternative, the youth providing many fresh ideas towards the creation of an exciting reuse of the Truman Bypass corridor as a new hub of recreational, entertainment and tourist activity.

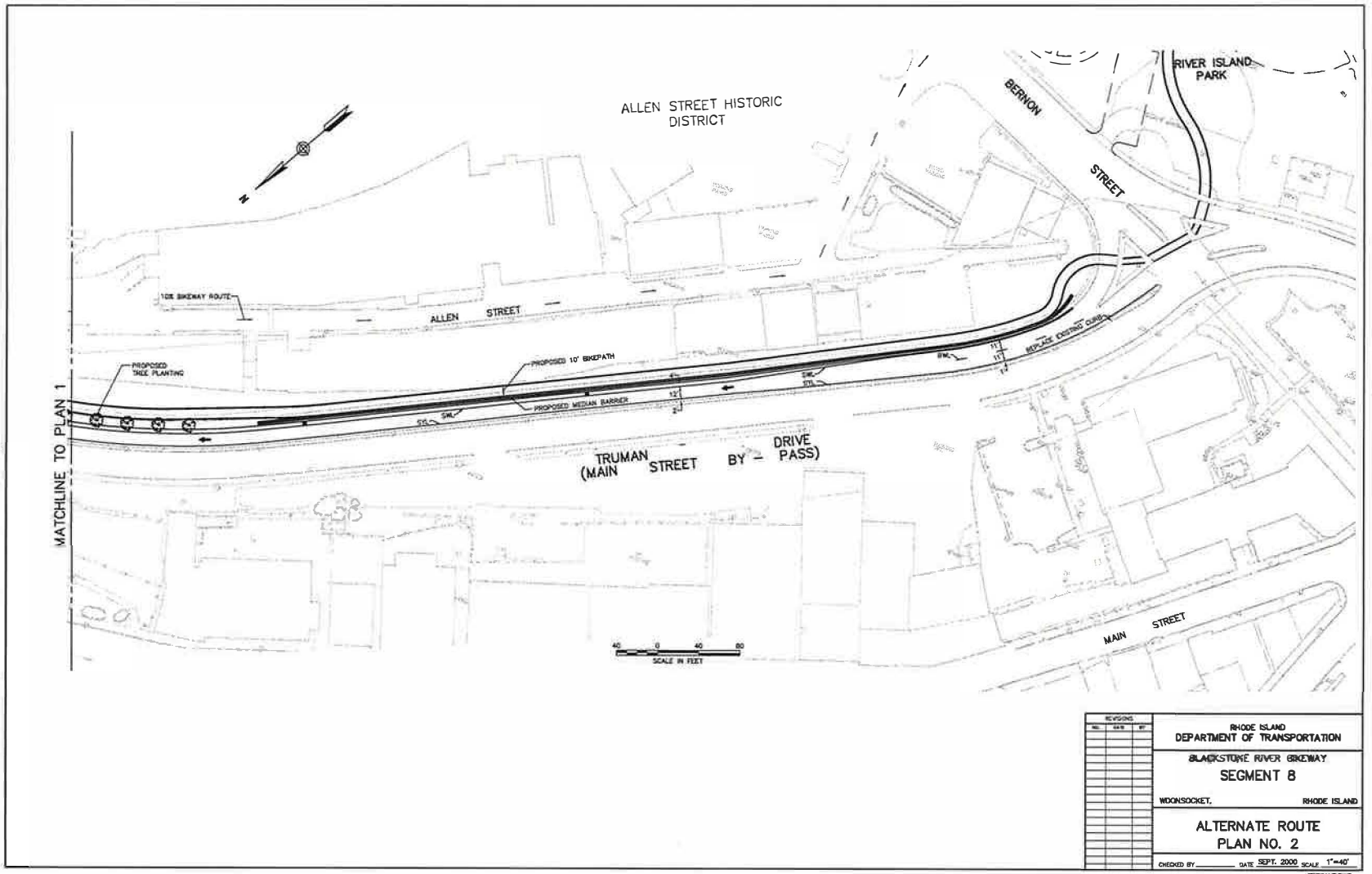
The essence of this design was the expressed desire to eliminate the Truman Bypass in its entirety, replacing it with a broad shared-use path which could also accommodate emergency vehicles. The sense of many stakeholders and the Riverzedge youth was that the Truman Bypass was found not to be missed when the Bypass was closed to traffic for two years during Court Street Bridge repairs. Many stakeholders felt the Bypass has had a negative impact in diverting possible shoppers from the Main Street commercial zone.

Consequently, this Alternative was developed to optimize the Truman Bypass corridor as purely park space featuring new amenities including an ice skating pond, amphitheater space for summer concerts, a carousel, a skateboard park under the Court Street Bridge, a new tot lot and new park spaces with overlooks alongside the Blackstone River on publicly owned land. Vehicular access to the service area and parking for the Woonsocket Call are also accommodated in the plan.

Creative ideas are introduced for improved connectivity between

Bikepath Alternative




ALLEN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT
BERNON STREET
RIVER ISLAND PARK
ALLEN STREET
10E BIKEWAY ROUTE
PROPOSED TREE PLANTING
PROPOSED 10' BIKEPATH
PROPOSED MEDIAN BARRIER
REPLACE EXISTING CURB
MATCHLINE TO PLAN 1
TRUMAN STREET (MAIN BY - DRIVE PASS)
MAIN STREET
SCALE IN FEET
RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
BLACKSTONE RIVER BIKEWAY
SEGMENT 8
WOONSOCKET, RHODE ISLAND
ALTERNATE ROUTE PLAN NO. 2
CHECKED BY _____ DATE SEPT. 2000 SCALE 1"=40'
SEGSALT.DWG

Main Street and the site of the Truman "Park". One of the most dramatic is the introduction of a glass enclosed elevator suggested by the Riverzedge youth in a workshop. This would potentially be accessed through one of the privately held buildings by agreement with the owner, providing ADA compliant access from Main Street to the Truman Bypass below. It could also be architecturally designed to become an iconic element in the heart of downtown Woonsocket, both drawing upon historic vernacular of the mills and their towers while also presenting a fresh and inviting element to draw tourists and residents alike.

A second ADA accessible link was introduced between the Truman "Park" and Clinton Street immediately south of the P&W railroad overpass. This link comprises a meandering ADA accessible ramp in conjunction with easily navigated stairs set into the landscape in a manner which creates a park-like setting.

Both of these new links from the upper elevations of Main/Clinton Streets to the lower elevations of the Truman "Park" continue on to tie into a pathway system leading to a series of overlooks of the historic Blackstone River. Those along the northern section of the Truman "Park" are located on public land which might be further developed as additional park space, and allow for access free of any special arrangements with private property owners.

The previously described link between Main Street and the Truman Bypass via a possible bridge crossing of the power trench east of Hanora Lippett Manor is also indicated, as is the link between Main Street and the Truman Bypass west of the Hanora Lippett Manor via an existing walkway. This link, which further provides convenient access to Market Square and River Island Park, should be reviewed to assure it meets ADA slope criteria.

Finally, the staircase located at Veterans Memorial Park offering access between Main Street and the Truman "Park" is indicated as a link, mindful that it requires repair and is unusable as an ADA accessible route.

Master Plan Alternative C (SEE P. 80)

Master Plan Alternative C was developed in response to comments received from the Woonsocket Police Safety Officer attending a follow-up stakeholder's meeting, the RIDOT representative attending a design review meeting and from a meeting with the Mayor.

The consensus view expressed by these participants was that the Truman Bypass had to remain in some form as a 2-way access road to meet emergency access and traffic control requirements. The Mayor further expressed a desire for programming in potential retail and restaurant uses along with additional parking on the Truman Bypass, possibly even utilizing some of the sites identified in Alternative B as potential parks alongside the Blackstone River. A last request by the Mayor was to consider placement of the bikeway along the easterly side of the Blackstone River.

The expressed roadway requirements were explored through a series of trial studies. It was determined that the Truman Bypass could remain as a 2-way access road while still preserving the linear park experience of Alternative B through creative realignment of the two lanes to remain. The new design approach introduces a more meandering roadway alignment than currently exists while remaining within the current right of way. This approach serves as a traffic calming device, reducing vehicular speeds through elimination of long straight sections of road, narrowing of the

roadway, use of special pavement treatments at numerous pedestrian crossings and introduction of a comprehensive landscape design framing the narrowed roadway.

RIDOT's representative further requested that introduction of a roundabout at the intersection of the Truman Bypass and Bernon Street be explored. Upon evaluation it was found this appears feasible at a conceptual level and would provide benefits in additional traffic calming, elimination of traffic signals and introduction of a new gateway celebrating Riverside Park. Further evaluation at a later design phase is recommended to assure functionality as well as possible small takings of private land which might be necessary to accommodate the roundabout.

The Mayor's request to program in potential retail and restaurant uses along the Truman Bypass were accommodated via a potential pedestrian bridge link from the retail block on Main Street. This connection would occur across a small existing drive behind the retail block which leads an existing parking structure. Cooperation of the property owner would have to be further explored through more detailed design.

The request for additional parking along the Truman Bypass has been accommodated through preservation of the Woonsocket Call parking and service area in combination with introduction of significant on-street parallel parking areas alongside the realigned roadway. The areas of parallel parking are kept in "coves" of spaces alternating on opposite side of the roadway, maintaining the sense of a narrowed pavement section conducive to traffic calming.

Utilization of sites alongside the Blackstone River for additional commercial development was explored and ultimately dismissed as impracticable both due to the small size of the sites and, more importantly, their residing within the FEMA defined floodway and 100 year floodplain of the Blackstone River. Any buildings introduced in this zone could not be compensated for in terms of lost flood storage space.

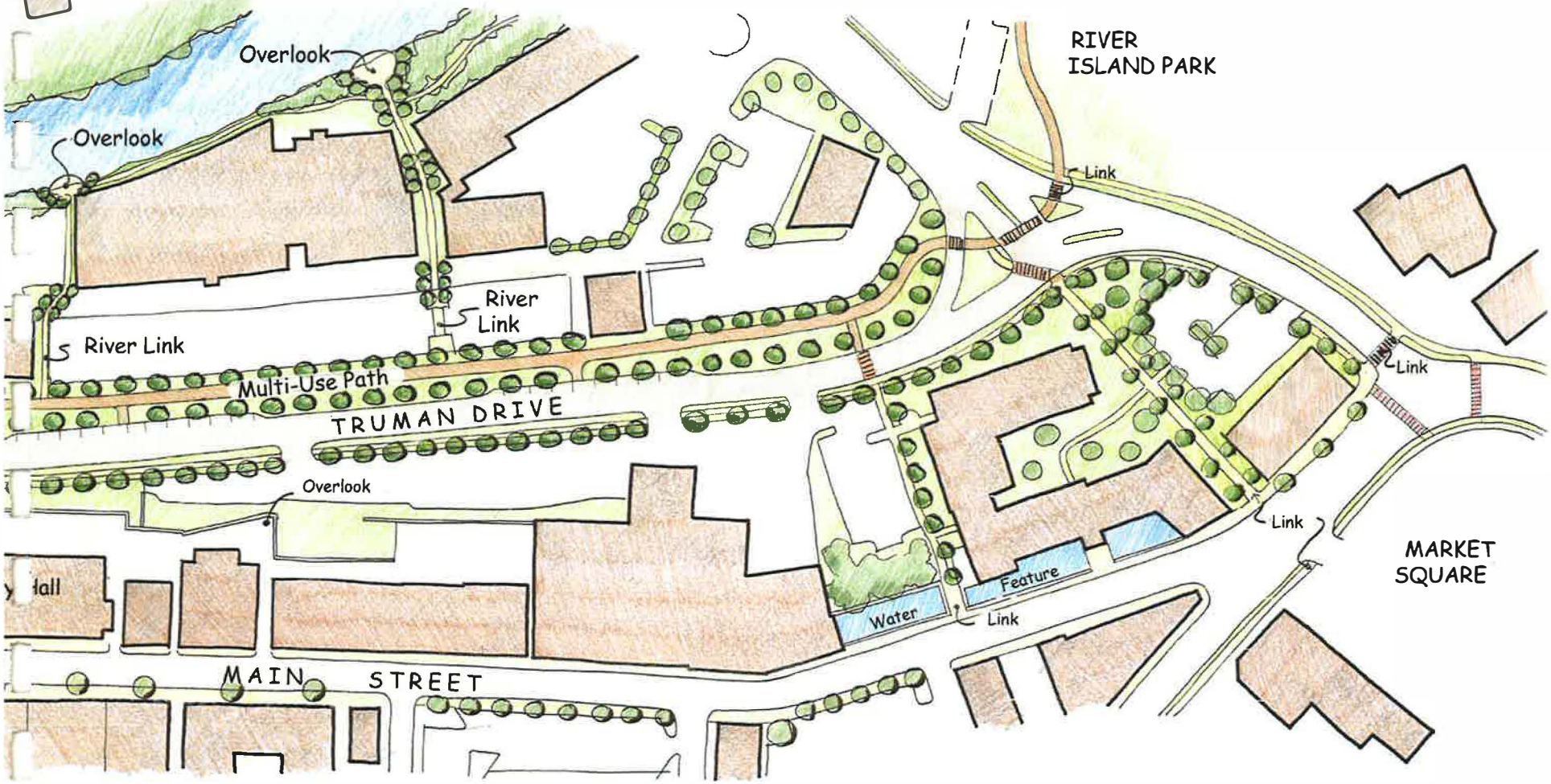
The option of placement of the bikeway along the easterly side of the Blackstone River was also explored. It was found to be impracticable due to its being located on many private properties, some with buildings directly on the river bank, which would have to be purchased or taken by eminent domain, and again more importantly, within the FEMA defined floodway and 100 year floodplain of the Blackstone River. As evidenced by the severe damage caused by the flooding of this section of the Blackstone River in spring of 2010, any bikeway construction on this steep bank would be needlessly exposed to damage in future flood events.

Master Plan Alternative C, while not offering the full array of features availed by Alternative B's replacement of the Truman Bypass in entirety with purely park space, does retain the linear park theme through realignment and reduction in lane width of a proposed 2-lane drive. Park spaces alongside this new "Truman Parkway" are optimized by a playful meandering of the multi-use path, its interplay with the drive and the Blackstone River serving to informally frame the potential new parks and overlooks of the river.

Many key features of Master Plan Alternative C have been preserved including a small ice skating pond, amphitheater space for summer concerts and a site for a possible carousel. Sites for a skateboard park and tot lot can also be found in the captured greenspace this layout provides.

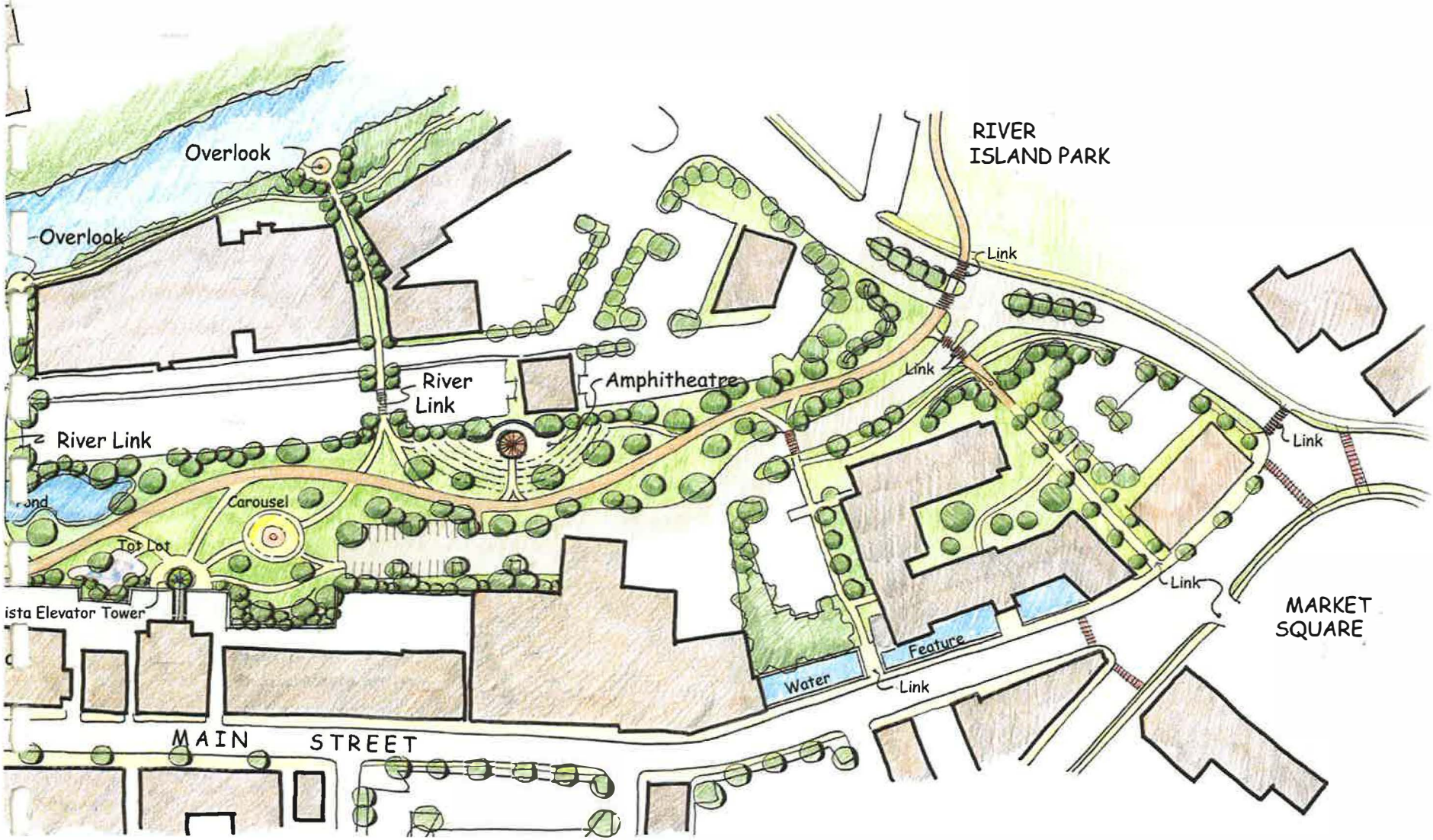
Master Plan Alternative A




Overlook
Overlook
RIVER
ISLAND PARK
Link
River
Link
River Link
Multi-Use Path
TRUMAN DRIVE
Link
Overlook
Link
MARKET
SQUARE
Feature
Water
Link
MAIN STREET

Master Plan Alternative B




RIVER
ISLAND PARK
Overlook
Overlook
Link
River
Link
Amphitheatre
Link
River Link
Link
Carousel
Tot Lot
Link
MARKET
SQUARE
ista Elevator Tower
Feature
Water
Link
MAIN STREET

Master Plan Alternative C




Overlook
Overlook
RIVER
ISLAND PARK
Roundabout
River Link
Bandstand
Tot Lot
Amphitheatre
River Link
Carousel
Ponds
Link
TRUMAN
PARKWAY
Plaza
Parking
Elevator
Restaurant
Cafe/Retail
Link
MARKET
SQUARE
Feature
Water
Link
MAIN
STREET

The concept introduced in Alternative B of a glass enclosed elevator might still be introduced as part of the potential restaurant which links South Main Street to the Truman Bypass's lower elevations, providing ADA compliant access from South Main Street to riverfront areas.

In terms of additional links from Main/Clinton Streets to the Truman Bypass area, Master Plan Alternative C maintains the potential ADA accessible link alongside the P&W railroad overpass, the link between Main Street and the Truman Bypass via a possible bridge crossing of the power trench east of Hanora Lippett Manor, and the link provided west of the Hanora Lippett Manor via an existing walkway. The staircase located at Veterans Memorial Park is also indicated as a link, although one must recognize it is in need of repair and does not provide an ADA accessible route.

Summary

The three Master Plan Alternatives represent an evolving process of improvements based upon community, municipal and agency input in concert with evaluation of their planning implications by VHB. All offer significant improvements in terms of pedestrian and cyclist access, recaptured greenspace along the critical Truman Bypass corridor, and connectivity from Main and Clinton Streets to the Blackstone River.

That being said, it also becomes clear that while Master Plan Alternative A provides the simplest approach to accommodating a bikeway through its replacement of one side of the Truman Bypass, it also offers the least in terms of meeting the public's expressed vision for a true "re-branding" of Woonsocket. This vision requires a Master Plan which is bold and comprehensive, taking full advantage of the project site's physical and historic potential to become a regional destination for tourism and also a City celebrated by its citizens with a new-found sense of pride.

Master Plan Alternative B clearly succeeds in terms of a bold reinterpretation of Woonsocket's essence, replacing the "sea of pavement" currently represented by the 4-lane Truman Bypass and its unscreened adjacent parking areas with a visually rich linear park endowed with many attractions for public participation by both residents and tourists. This represents a potential game changer in how Woonsocket is viewed both within Rhode Island and in the New England Region. The integration of comprehensive interpretive wayfinding signage speaking to Woonsocket's historic tradition serves as an array of jewels leading the visitor through the re-born City. Clearly this plan also captured the hearts of many of the workshop and stakeholder meeting participants.

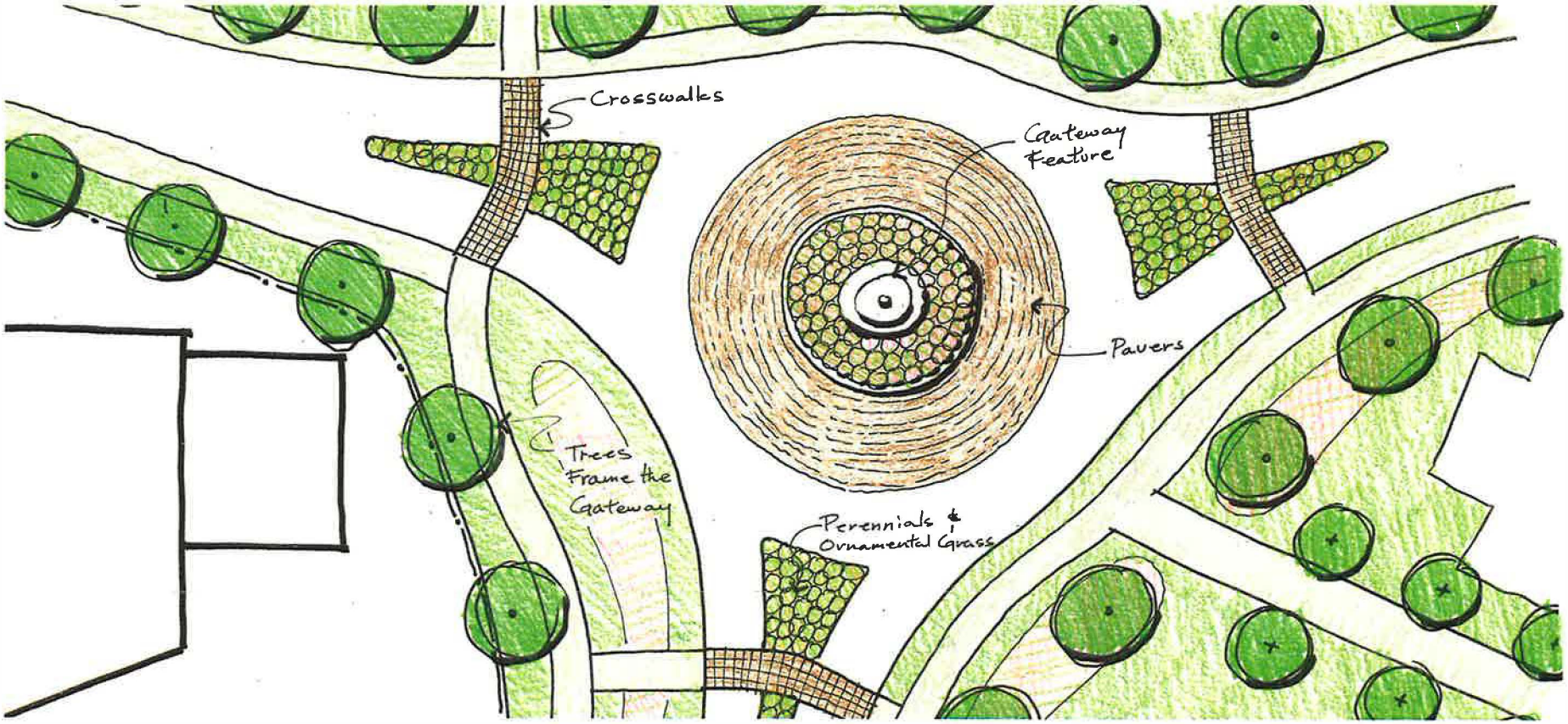
But it had weaknesses as well, primary among these being the loss of vehicular access, including that of emergency vehicles. The desire for potential introduction of retail and restaurants uses along with improvements in parking as a catalyst to help revitalize this key area of Woonsocket also went unmet. The consensus was that while Master Plan Alternative B provided the purest interpretation of the public vision for a linear park as an enlivened meeting ground between Main Street and the Blackstone River, and as a recasting Woonsocket as a "green" city in terms of sustainable design and introduced park space, it did not successfully meet functional needs.

Master Plan Alternative C captures the spirit of the major linear park expressed in Alternative B, while also incorporating vehicular access needs along with the introduction of potential retail and restaurants uses with parking as a catalyst to revitalize the Bypass area. It also

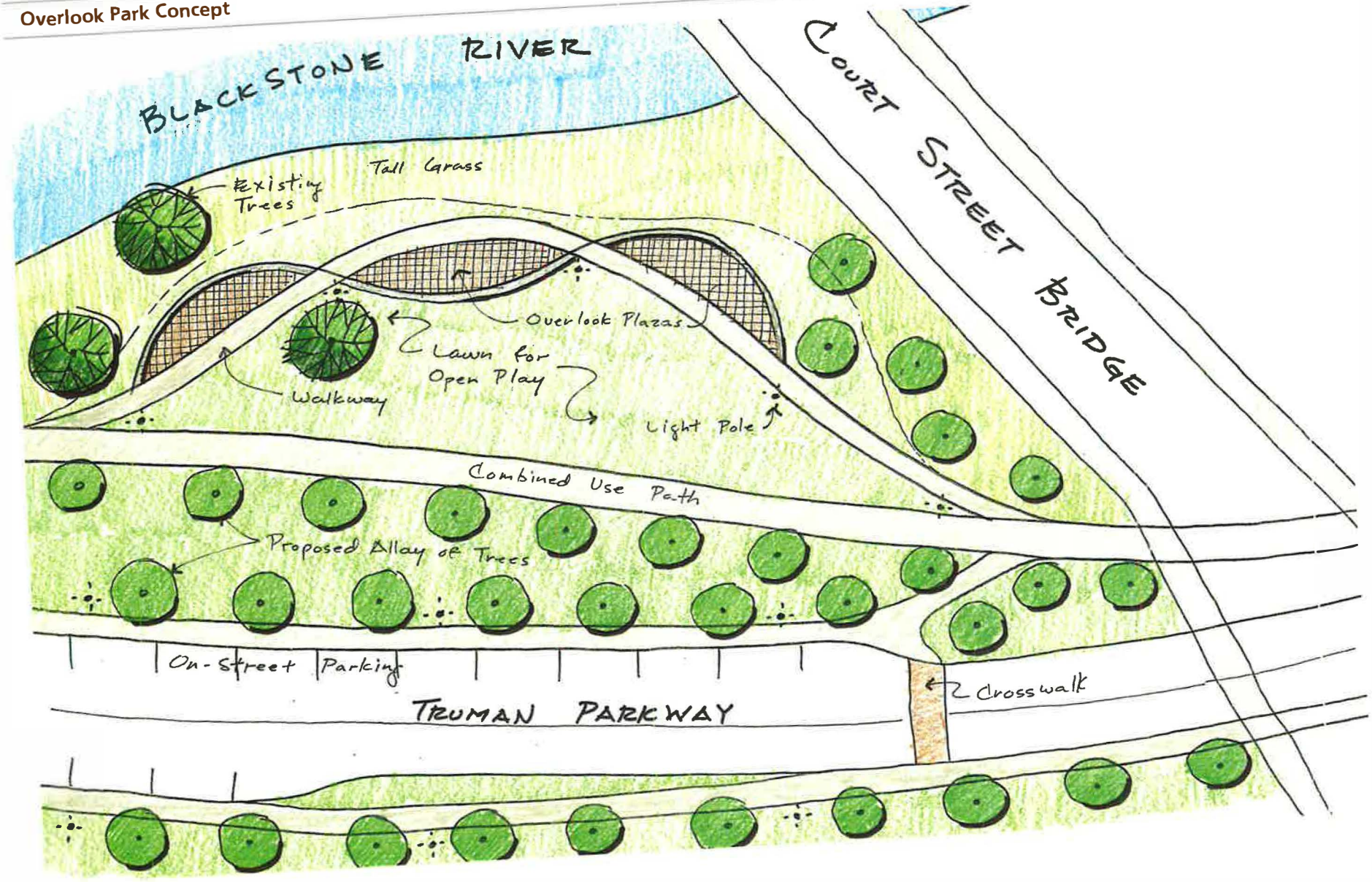
maintains many of the attractions for public participation, transforms a vehicular and pavement dominated experience into an attractive parkway lined with greenspace, and introduces an elegant meandering bikeway along with multiple links between the Blackstone River and Main Street.

While not quite as bold as Alternative B, Master Plan Alternative C is endowed with the quality of being more achievable as a phased project with discreet elements that can be introduced as funding sources are realized. In this sense, this Alternative is perhaps the greatest potential game changer for the re-branding of Woonsocket as a regional tourism destination and place of renewed pride for its citizen.

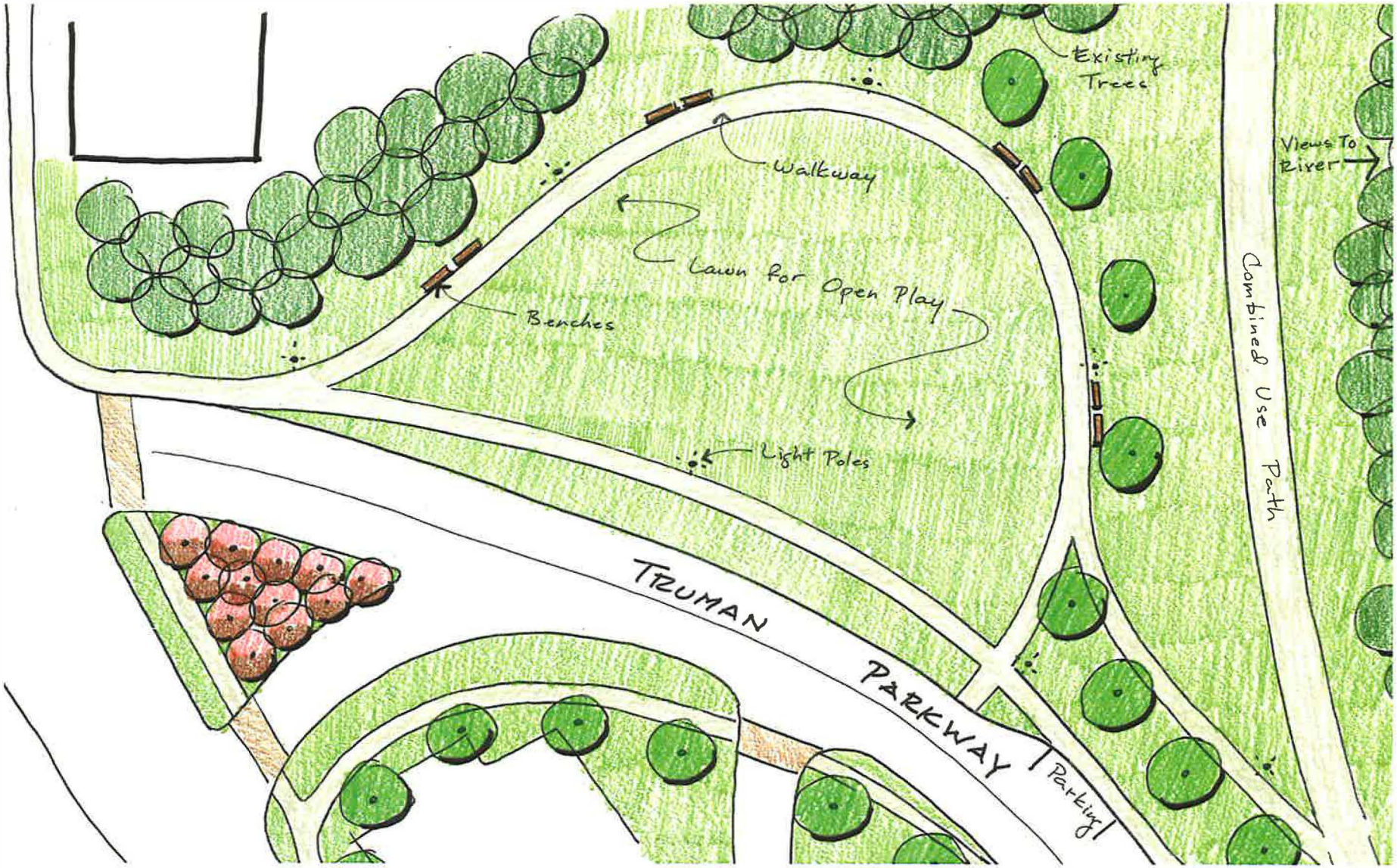
Roundabout Concept - Bernon and Truman



Overlook Park Concept



Park Concept at North End of Truman



Final Concept Plan



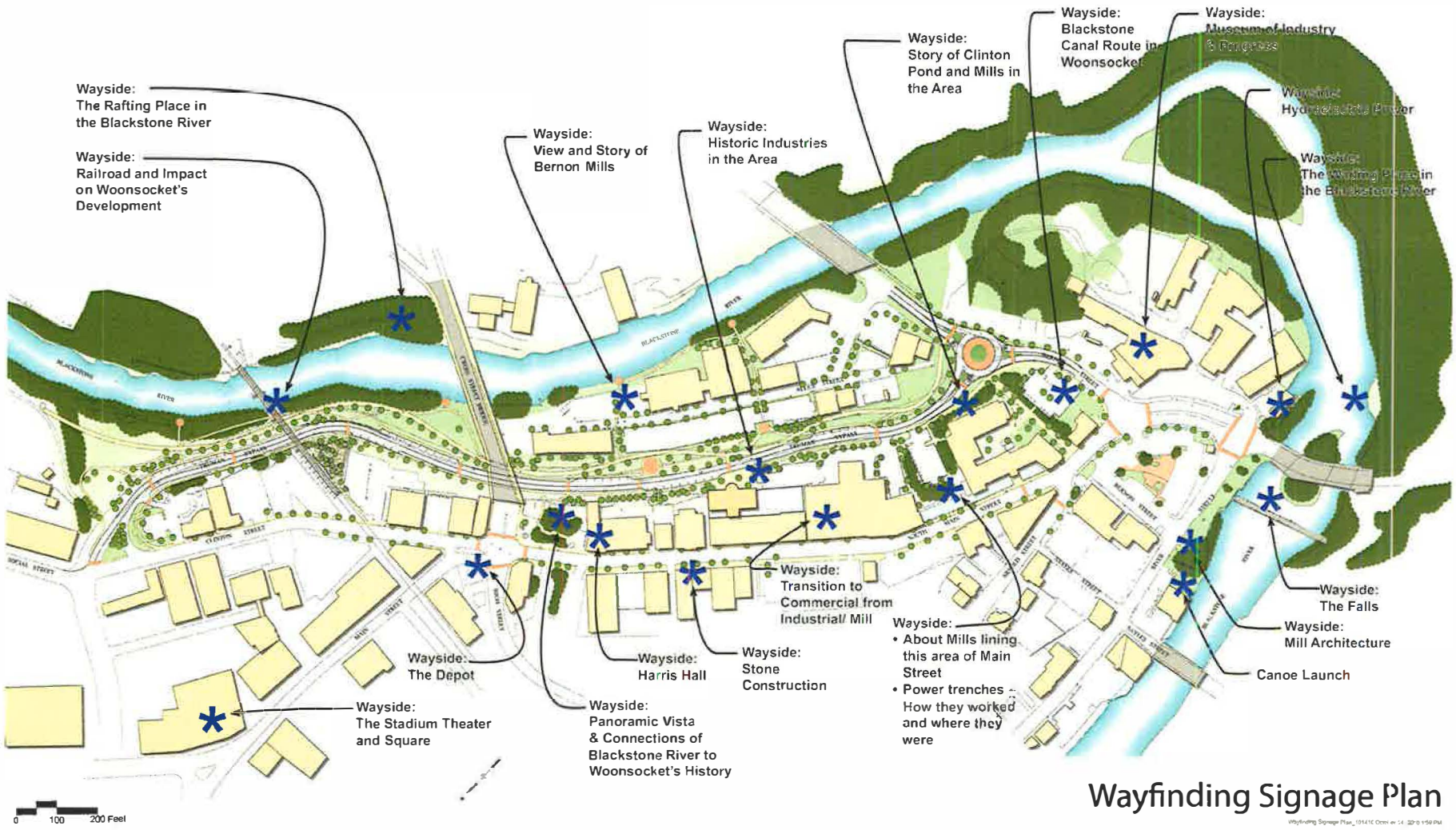

RIVER
ALLEN STREET
TRUMAN BYPASS
BERNON STREET
SOUTH MAIN STREET
ARNOLD STREET
SAYLES STREET
BERNON STREET
STREET
RIVER
RIVER
BLACKSTONE

6 Wayfinding and Historic Markers

CONTENTS

- Wayfinding Signage Plan

Wayfinding Signage Plan



Wayfinding Plan and Signage

As discussed in the Wayfinding Master Plan section, detailed research was performed to better understand the major events, locations and historic landmarks through the course of Woonsocket's history to inform signage design and placement.

The Wayfinding Signage Plan indicates recommended locations for all interpretive signage set in an easily walked loop from Main Street to Market Square and then down the Truman Bypass. It has been designed to draw both Woonsocket citizens and visiting tourists in, becoming a significant part of the whole experience of Woonsocket and its history. The Museum of Work and Culture will serve as an ideal jumping off point for a walking tour.

VHB graphic designers developed numerous graphic approaches to expressing the information in a manner which is visually engaging and fresh in appearance, the thinking being that to involve the public in walking a circuit of sites they must find the information both fun and informative.

The sign design selected by the City and stakeholders best represents the results of this process. A distinct logo has been designed to set the theme for the new wayfinding signage system, words are clearly presented and kept to a number which will be easily read, and graphics include both photos of present conditions as well as images drawing upon the past.

Blackstone River Bikeway signage will be drawn from the palette of signs already prepared for that project by MERK. This will provide consistency through-out the Blackstone River Bikeway corridor and clearly show that Woonsocket is a key link in the overall system.

Interpretive Signage - Vertical Studies

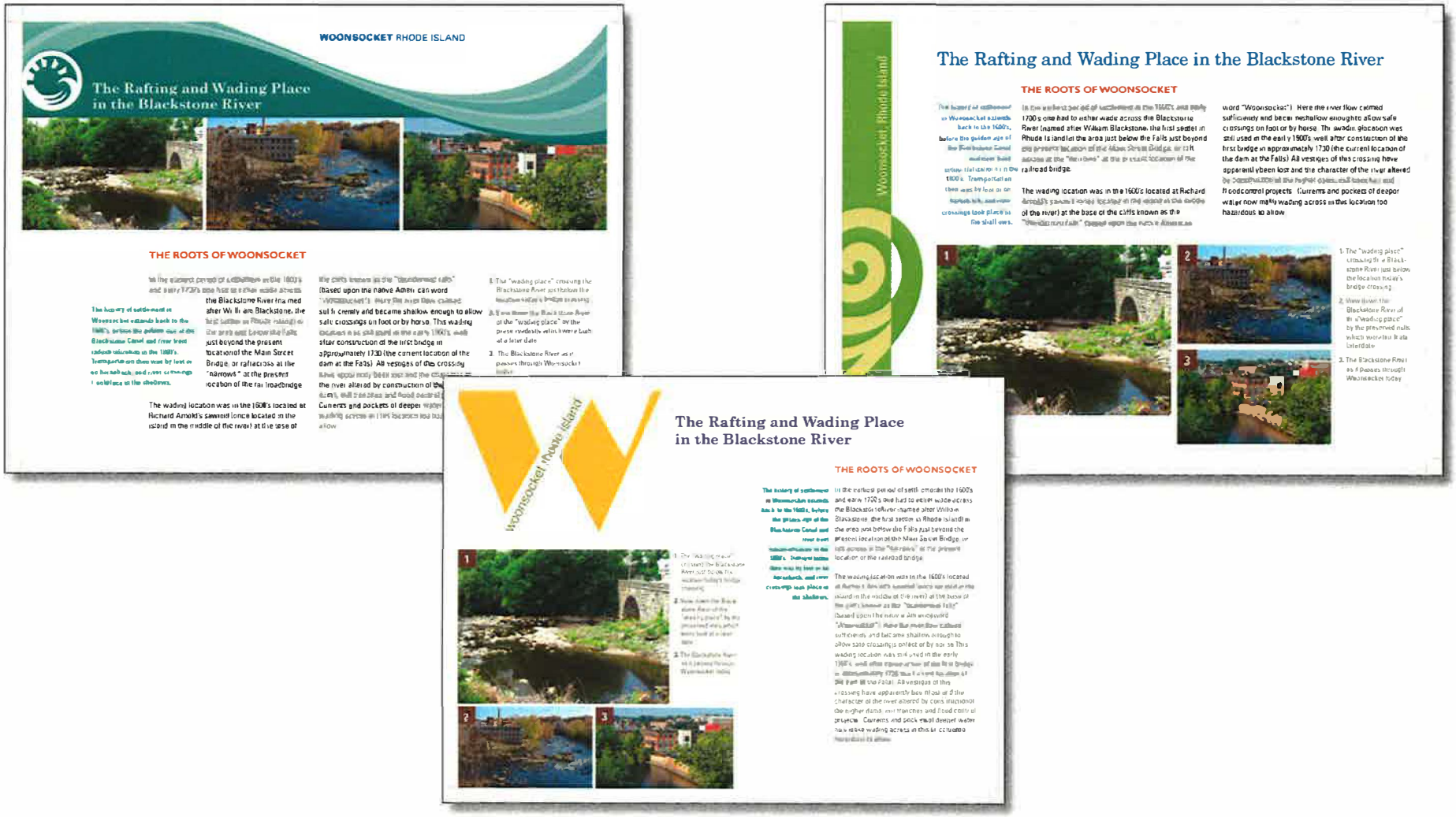








Interpretive Signage - Horizontal Studies

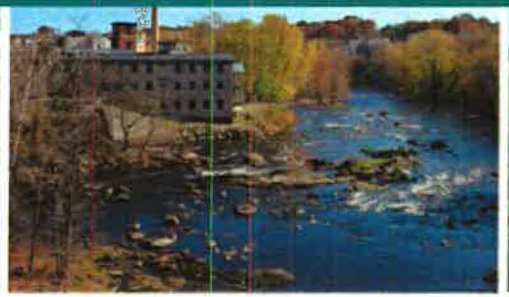


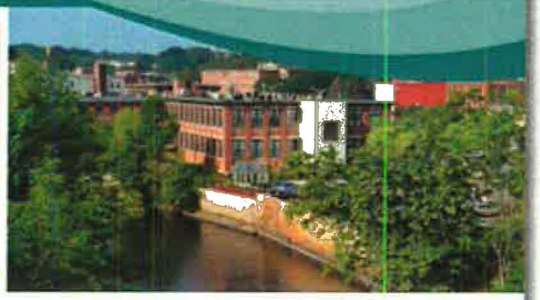
Interpretive Signage - Selected Design

WOONSOCKET RHODE ISLAND

The Rafting and Wading Place in the Blackstone River







THE ROOTS OF WOONSOCKET

The history of settlement in Woonsocket extends back to the 1680's, before the golden age of the Blackstone Canal and river front industrialization in the 1800's. Transportation then was by foot or on horseback, and river crossings took place in the shallows.

In the earliest period of settlement in the 1600's and early 1700's one had to either wade across the Blackstone River (named after William Blackstone, the first settler in Rhode Island) in the area just below the Falls just beyond the present location of the Main Street Bridge, or raft across at the "narrows" at the present location of the railroad bridge.

The wading location was in the 1600's located at Richard Arnold's sawmill (once located in the island in the middle of the river) at the base of the cliffs known as the "thundermist falls" (based upon the native American word "Woonsocket"). Here the river flow calmed sufficiently and became shallow enough to allow safe crossings on foot or by horse. This wading location was still used in the early 1900's, well after construction of the first bridge in approximately 1730 (the current location of the dam at the Falls). All vestiges of this crossing have apparently been lost and the character of the river altered by construction of the higher dams, mill trenches and flood control projects. Currents and pockets of deeper water now make wading across in this location too hazardous to allow.

1. The "wading place" crossing the Blackstone River just below the location today's bridge crossing.
2. View down the Blackstone River of the "wading place" by the preserved mills which were built at a later date.
3. The Blackstone River as it passes through Woonsocket today.

Blackstone River Bikeway Signage (Designed by MERK)



Blackstone River Bikeway

design:
MERK
graphic communications
160A West Brookline Street
Boston, MA 02118
v 617.450.0622
f 617.424.9262
e [illegible]

Notes
- Alternate Urban Trailblazer can also be mounted to an existing post if conditions warrant.

Scale: n.t.s.
Date: February 4, 2000
Title: Color Sheet 1
Drawing No:
6

Blackstone River Bikeway Signage (Designed by MERK)



Blackstone River Bikeway

design:
MERK

160A West Brookline Street
Boston, MA 02118
t 617.450.0622
f 617.424.9262
e rmerk@earthlink.net

Scale: n.t.s.
Date: February 4, 2000
Title: Color Sheet 3
Drawing No:
8

7 Summary

CONTENTS

- Summary of Findings
- Implementation Plan
- Potential Funding Sources

Summary of Findings

The Vision

The Wayfinding Master Plan and its implementation strategy have been designed to link together the physical characteristics of the Main Street and Truman Bypass areas with the community's rich historical resources. Making connections between Main Street and the Riverfront requires a significant commitment, as there are significant grade differences that make ADA compliance difficult. Most importantly, the master plan must realize the community's vision of recasting Woonsocket as a very special place which imbues as sense of civic pride and invites in new tourists and commerce for a more vibrant community. A true balance must also be achieved between improvements that meet appropriate design criteria while minimizing cost and environmental impacts.

Increasing Connectivity

Based upon the analysis of all potential locations for improved connectivity from Main and Clinton Streets to the Truman Bypass and Blackstone River beyond, and informed input from the City and key stakeholders, four locations for potential improvements were identified and evaluated in detail.

Each of these locations has been documented with photographs and studied in plan and section views to determine feasibility with the findings recorded in the Connectivity section of this report.

They include:

1. Potential Connectivity Improvement Location A: located between Clinton Street and the Truman Bypass adjacent to the P & W RR trestle, two options were studied for this location. Both options were found to be highly feasible due to their standard at-grade construction, Option A being sited on City land but constrained in layout area, Option B being located on an unused portion of privately held property which provides more expansive area for a park-like setting.
2. Potential Connectivity Improvement Location B: located at the existing stairway leading from Veterans Memorial Park to the Truman Bypass, this site is complicated by both the 40+ foot drop in elevation down to the Bypass as well as the present poor condition of the existing stairway. It would require either approximately sixteen 30' long ramps or introduction of an elevator to meet ADA accessibility standards. The stairway would also require significant improvements to repair spalled steps, rusted railings and settlement at landings.
3. Potential Connectivity Improvement Location C: located to the rear of an existing commercial/residential building located at 97-113 Main Street, the site concept would involve utilizing the existing building along with a potential expansion as a grade transition to accommodate ADA accessibility requirements. This approach would introduce new retail and/or restaurant uses along the Truman Bypass, enlivening this area. It would, however, require significant expenditure by the owner or possibly a public/private partnership to fund the improvements.
4. Potential Connectivity Improvement Location D: located to the north of the Hanora Lippett Manor, the site concept would introduce a pedestrian bridge along Main Street which would cross the existing historic power trench in combination with stairs and an ADA ramp system leading to an existing walkway

and the Truman Bypass beyond. This design would require review by the Woonsocket Historic Commission and entail cost premiums for the pedestrian bridge and ramps.

Based upon review with the City and stakeholders, Connectivity Location A was selected for a higher level of design study, CAD layout and grading plans having been developed for both options considered. These each have a level of detail suitable for preliminary pricing and are included in the Connectivity section of this report.

The other three options all have merit and should be viewed as longer term additional solutions to improve connectivity from Main Street to the Truman Bypass. Connectivity Location C in particular would bring new life to the Truman Bypass area through introduction of new shops and/or restaurants and might be keyed to future urban renewal funding sources. Connectivity Location D also has great merit in providing relatively simple additional access to the Bypass and Blackstone River beyond in a location endowed with a strong visual connection from Main Street.

The Final Master Plan additionally indicates potential paths for daytime access to the Blackstone River through the Allen Street Historic District. These will require access agreements with the property owners and a move away from the present strong emphasis on visible security measures such as fences, gates and no trespassing signs. It is recommended that a shared commitment to ensuring security through more open visibility combined with coordination with the police department in surveillance of the property be explored. Certainly, daytime public access to this historic area with its wonderful views of the river and Bernon Mills beyond is an asset Woonsocket should celebrate rather than discourage.

The Final Master Plan also indicates two parks located between the Truman Bypass and the riverfront to take advantage both of views of the Blackstone River as well as new opportunities for informal play and passive recreation. Both of these parks will serve as connections to the river which can be further celebrated with interpretive signage.

Truman Bypass Improvements

Built in the 1960's, the Truman Bypass has been found to be out of scale both with Woonsocket's transportation needs as well as its urban fabric. Its four lanes of pavement, paved median and close adjacency to paved parking areas alongside give the sense of a sea of pavement which presents an unnecessary barrier to pedestrians endeavoring to cross it.

An early response to this can be found in the RIDOT plan developed by VHB in 2000 which introduces a new segment of the Blackstone River Bikeway by eliminating one lane of the Truman Bypass and introducing a planted median.

VHB explored several opportunities for realizing the City and stakeholders vision of transforming the Truman Bypass into a major linear park experience. The original study we prepared, Master Plan Concept A, is a straightforward abandonment of both lanes and the paved median on the south side of the Bypass and replacing them with the bikeway link and introduced greenspace. This approach envisioned the new two-lane Truman Bypass as a tree-lined boulevard with no changes to its alignment.

The stakeholders expressed the strong desire in one of the community outreach meetings that they wanted to push the envelope further, possibly even eliminating the Bypass entirely to

allow full introduction of a major linear park. This opinion was repeated at a Riverzedge workshop with Woonsocket youth where many ideas were brought to the table for elements for the introduction of entertainment, concert and skating features in the recovered greenspace.

Master Plan Concept B explores these ideas, substituting a 16 foot wide multi-use path which meanders through a series of park and entertainment spaces while also providing for pedestrians, cyclists and emergency vehicles. Vehicular access was maintained to the Hanora Lippett Manor and Woonsocket Call service and parking areas.

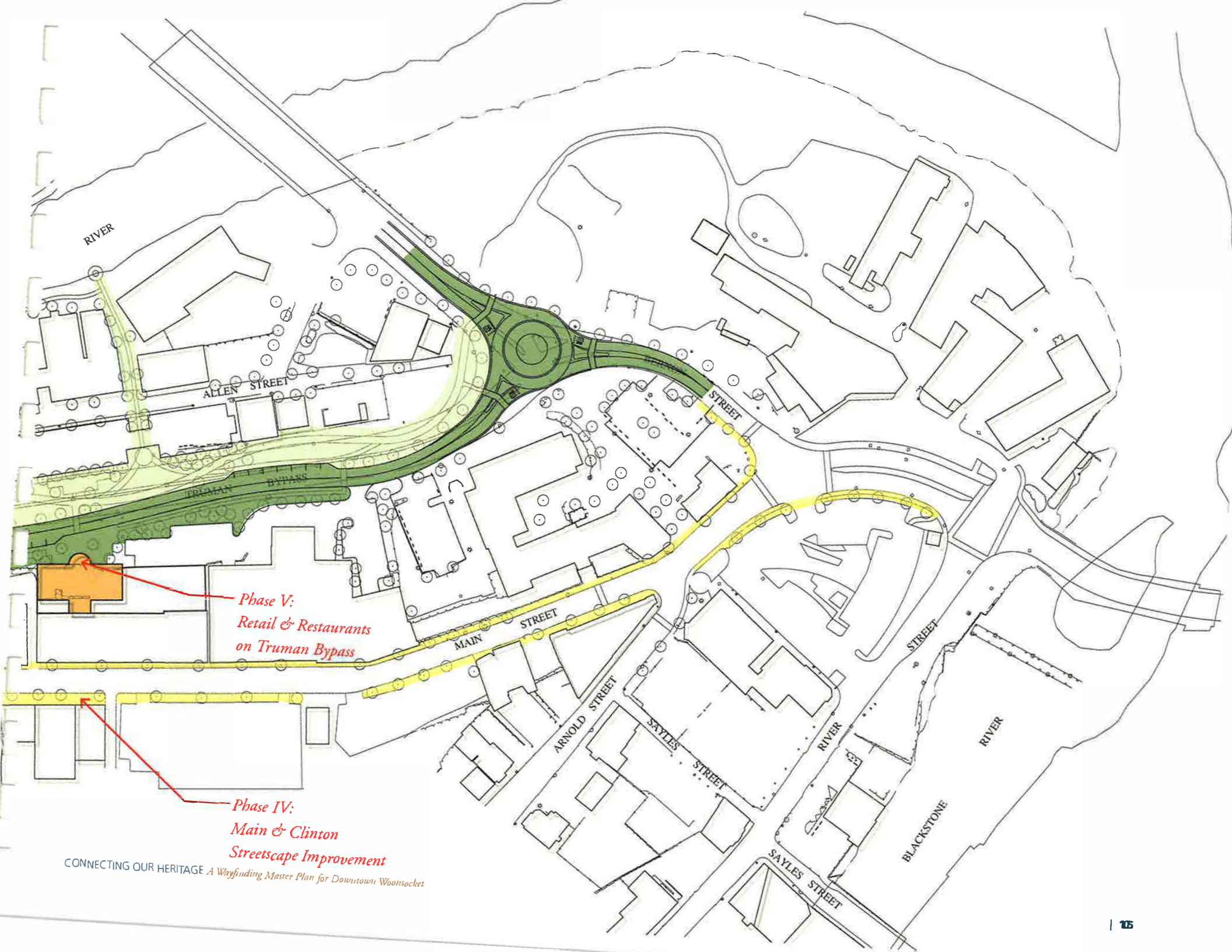
This plan is perhaps the purest interpretation of the vision held by many in Woonsocket to "re-brand" the City as a haven for cyclists, pedestrians and visiting historic and eco-tourists. It would replace the Bypass with a vibrant linear hub of activities, both active and passive in nature. It would also create a spine for conveying the history of Woonsocket through a circuit of interpretive signage leading from Main Street and Market Square.

Concerns were expressed over Concept B by police and fire safety officers that they would no longer be able to use this as a high speed emergency route bypassing any congestion on Main Street. Concerns were also expressed by the RIDOT representative that the State would have serious reservations over a plan proposing complete elimination of the Bypass.

Master Plan Concept C was developed to address these concerns. It strikes a balance between preserving the linear park theme while maintaining 2 lane vehicular access through the bypass' corridor. Adjustments to the alignment of the Bypass are introduced to create a more meandering path which would slow traffic down. Traffic calming measures include use of coves of on-street parallel parked cars terminated in landscaped bumpouts which create an impression of a narrowed roadway. A roundabout has also been introduced at the intersection of the Bypass with Bernon Street at the suggestion of the RIDOT representative, presenting both traffic calming features as well as a new gateway to the both the linear park as well as River Island Park.

Implementation Plan




RIVER
ALLEN STREET
TRUMAN BYPASS
STREET
Phase V:
Retail & Restaurants
on Truman Bypass
MAIN STREET
ARNOLD STREET
SAYLES STREET
RIVER
STREET
RIVER
BLACKSTONE
SAYLES STREET
Phase IV:
Main & Clinton
Streetscape Improvement

8 *Appendices*

CONTENTS

- Potential Funding Sources

Potential Funding Sources

The Wayfinding Master Plan presents a phased approach towards implementing improvements based upon prioritization established in the working groups and meetings with City staff during the course of its development. It represents a vision for The City of Woonsocket's future where its rich history is proudly displayed and introduced park space, bikeway and streetscape improvements serve to recast the downtown as a destination attraction.

Key to successful implementation of the Master Plan will be full exploration of potential funding sources by the City. Towards this end, the following lists have been prepared summarizing known funding sources at local, state and federal levels as well as possible sources for private grants.

Additionally, it is recommended that the City reach out to their State Representatives and Senators to solicit their support and help set a roadmap towards garnering funds from those sources which hold the most promise in the current economic climate.

In this same line of thinking, public find raisers should be explored as an avenue towards helping to finance final design and implementation of the recommended improvements as well as towards building a sense of community ownership for each stage of the Master Plan as it is implemented.

Woonsocket Main Street Riverfront Initiative

Private-non-profit organization created by the City of Woonsocket and the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce.

- 169 Main Street
  Woonsocket, RI 02894
  (401)767 9203

National Center for Safe Routes to School

- 730 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd, Suite 300
  Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3430
- www.saferoutesinfo.org

US Dept of Health and Human Services

- Office of Grants Management
  Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH)
  Department of Health and Human Services
  (DHHS) c/o Grant Application Center
  1515 Wilson Blvd., Suite 100, Arlington, VA 22209
- www.hhs.gov/ophs/funding/index.html

EPA Smart Growth

- Office of Sustainable Communities (MC 1807T)
  US Environmental Protection Agency
  1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
  Washington, DC 20460
  202-566-2878
- smartgrowth@epa.gov
  Contacts: Rosemary Monahan Sustainability Grant

Bikes Belong Grant Program

The Bikes Belong Grant Program "funds influential projects that leverage federal funding and build momentum for bicycling in communities across the U.S. These projects include bike paths and rail trails, as well as mountain bike trails, bike parks, BMX facilities, and large-scale bicycle advocacy initiatives.

- www.bikesbelong.org/grants/

PepsiCo Grants

Submitted through PepsiCo's Letter of Interest process, highly competitive

PepsiCo Contributions' goal is to strengthen the communities where we live and work through community investment.

- 700 Anderson Hill Road
  Purchase, NY 10577
  (914) 253-2000
- www.pepsico.com/Purpose/PepsiCo-Contributions/Grants.html

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for local community development activities such as affordable housing, anti-poverty programs, and infrastructure development, largely used at the discretion of the state and local governments and their subgrantees.

Additional Funding Sources

In the past, funding and planning for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations were largely afterthoughts; however it has been realized that in order to advance transportation options it is imperative to integrate these modes into the general transportation and land-use planning and funding processes.

The US DOT continues to develop stronger support of non-motorized transportation, demonstrated most recently with the Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Regulations and Recommendations signed on March 11, 2010. The USDOT/FHWA supports the development of fully integrated active transportation networks and is moving to integrate supporting initiatives within federal policies and via collaboration among federal agencies.

Livability and sustainability have become significant initiatives and not just buzzwords. The revised official Policy Statement reads; The DOT policy is to incorporate safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities into transportation projects. Every transportation agency, including DOT, has the responsibility to improve conditions and opportunities for walking and bicycling and to integrate walking and bicycling into their transportation systems. Because of the numerous individual and community benefits that walking and bicycling provide — including health, safety, environmental, transportation, and quality of life — transportation agencies are encouraged to go beyond minimum standards to provide safe and convenient facilities for these modes.

Federal surface transportation law provides flexibility to States and MPOs to fund bicycle and pedestrian improvements from a wide

variety of programs. Virtually all the major transportation funding programs can be used for bicycle and pedestrian-related projects. When considering ways to improve conditions for bicycling and walking, States and MPOs are specifically encouraged to:

- Include bicycle and pedestrian improvements as an incidental part of larger projects, as described above; and
- To review and use the most appropriate funding source for a particular project and not rely primarily on the Transportation Enhancements activities. Many bicycle and pedestrian projects are more suitable for funding under the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program, Surface Transportation Program, or another program.

The US DOT encourages states, local governments, professional associations, community organizations, public transportation agencies and other government agencies to adopt similar policy statements on bicycle and pedestrian accommodation as an indication of their commitment to accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians as an integral element of the transportation system. The US DOT has partnered with the US Environmental Protecttion Agency and US Housing and Urban Development to help foster livable communities, in part through grant funding aimed at reducing automobile dependence.

The following table represents a sampling of Federal funding sources that presently exist:

Table Key

NHS	National Highway System	**BRI**	Bridge
STP	Surface Transportation Program	**402**	State and Community Traffic Safety Program
HSIP	Highway Safety Improvement Program	**PLA**	State/Metropolitan Planning Funds
SRTS	Safe Routes to School Program	**TCSP**	Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Program
TEA	Transportation Enhancement Activities	**JOBS**	Access to Jobs/Reverse Commute Program
CMAQ	Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality Program	**RTP**	Recreational Trails Program
FLH	Federal Lands Highway Program	**FTA**	Federal Transit Capital, Urban & Rural Funds
BYW	Scenic Byways	**TE**	Transit Enhancements

Federal Bicycle/Pedestrian Funding Opportunities (many administrated through state DOTs)

	NHS	STP	HSIP	SRTS	TEA	CMAQ	RTP	FTA	TE	BRI	402	PLA	TSCP	JOBS	FLH	BYW
Bicycle and pedestrian plan		*				*						*	*			
Bicycle lanes on roadway	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*					*	*
Paved Shoulders	*	*	*	*	*	*				*					*	*
Signed bike route	*	*		*	*	*									*	*
Shared use path/trail	*	*		*	*	*	*			*					*	*
Single track hike/bike trail							*									
Spot improvement program		*	*	*	*	*										
Maps		*		*		*					*					
Bike racks on buses		*			*	*		*	*							
Bicycle parking facilities		*		*	*	*		*	*							*
Trail/highway intersection	*	*	*	*	*	*	*								*	*
Bicycle storage/service center		*		*	*	*		*	*				*	*		
Sidewalks, new or retrofit	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*					*	*
Crosswalks, new or retrofit	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*						*	*
Signal improvements	*	*	*	*	*	*										
Curb cuts and ramps	*	*	*	*	*	*										
Traffic calming		*	*	*									*			
Coordinator position		*		*		*							*			
Safety/education position		*		*		*					*					
Police Patrol		*		*							*					
Helmet Promotion		*		*	*						*					
Safety brochure/book		*		*	*	*	*				*					
Training		*		*	*	*	*				*					