

1. Introduction

The Hicks-Logan-Sawyer District (HLS District) has the potential to become an improved asset to the City of New Bedford by evolving into a new destination area within the City, attracting new jobs, increasing surrounding property values, and improving its contribution to the City's tax base. The Hicks-Logan-Sawyer District Master Plan is a City of New Bedford led effort striving to create a blueprint for the revitalization of this historic industrial district. Located on the Acushnet River and served by exceptional regional access, the approximate 150-acres within the HLS District (Project Area) provide an untapped opportunity for creating a vibrant mixed-use district and a gateway into New Bedford.



Looking east towards Fairhaven, this aerial view of the project shows the regional connectivity of the I-195/Route 18 Interchange.

City Strategies for Transformation

This Master Plan is one step in the City's strategy for influencing change in this area. Concurrently, the City is working towards analyzing innovative funding mechanisms and implementation strategies that can expedite a revitalization process. These include the preparation of an Urban Revitalization Strategy, and the creation of a designated District Improvement Financing (DIF) plan for redevelopment in this area.

The Urban Revitalization Strategy is a compilation of information that has been assembled in such a way that it can be incorporated into a formal Urban Renewal Plan should the City decide to prepare such a physical plan. In fact, the Urban Revitalization Strategy is based on key elements of the State's Urban Renewal Plan (URP) program as it is a mechanism created to revitalize substandard, decadent or blighted areas. An Urban Renewal Plan gives a city leverage to work directly with developers and negotiate with property owners. As a result of URP recommendations, a city invests in public actions, such as land acquisition, demolition, infrastructure improvements, and new open spaces, geared to attract private investment within the identified urban renewal district.

A DIF is a public financing alternative that enables municipalities to fund public works, infrastructure, and development projects by allocating future, incremental tax revenues collected from a predefined district to pay for ultimate project costs. **No new taxes** are levied, and the DIF does not reduce or redirect current property tax revenues. A DIF empowers municipalities to



The project area is approximately 150 acres. Land associated with the I-195 interchange makes up about 15 acres dividing the project area into a larger 95-acre to the south of I-195, and a smaller 40-acre section to the north of I-195.

forward a public purpose while assisting the private partners in accomplishing these goals.

This Master Plan will form the basis for defining the vision and future projects for both New Bedford's Urban Revitalization Strategy and DIF analysis. It is a consensus-based plan, built through input from local businesses and property owners, local and regional governmental organizations, local non-profit groups, and other interested parties.

Project Area Defined

The Project Area is located approximately one mile

north of downtown New Bedford, between Route 18 and the Acushnet River. The approximate 150 acre project area includes 15 acres of land associated with the interstate highway (I-195) on and off ramps, a larger 95-acre section south of I-195, and a 40-acre portion north of I-195. New Bedford's Designated Port Area (DPA) and the proposed South Coast Commuter Rail Station are located adjacent to the Project Area.

For the purposes of this Master Plan, the HLS District (the Project Area) is bordered by Sawyer Street on the north, the Acushnet River on the east, Wamsutta Street on the south, and Route 18 and Mitchell Street on the west. The original Project Area was expanded, at the request of the Citizens Participation Committee, by adding the properties between Belleville Avenue and Mitchell Street. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) site and Ropeworks property on the northern side of Sawyer Street were also added into the Project Area. To better understand the connections between surrounding communities, the eastern side of Purchase Street and the Route 18 / I-195 interchange were taken into



Revere Copper Complex



Fairhaven Mill



Wamsutta Mill



consideration as well. It is important to note that the addition of land to the eastern side of Purchase Street and the I-195 interchange however, was not included in the DIF analysis, referred to in this Master Plan Report.

The Project Area has three major mills that thrived during the earlier manufacturing era and peaked around 1920. These include:

- The Revere Copper and Brass facility, founded in 1862, which recently announced that it would be closing its operations at this location to consolidate in New York State
- The Fairhaven Mills, constructed in the early 1890s that was destroyed mostly by fire in 2004, and is currently owned by the City and other private parties
- Wamsutta Mills, New Bedford's first and most prominent textile manufacturer of fine cotton fabric,

established in 1846, and was one of the largest local employers of multi-cultural tradespersons in the early 20th century

These mills are surrounded by neighborhoods that provided housing to accommodate an expanding immigrant population employed within the HLS District. The Acushnet Heights Neighborhood, to the west of the Project Area, is currently undergoing a revitalization effort through City assisted rehabilitation of older historic housing and an investment in new commercial projects. The North End neighborhood, located to the north and west of the Fairhaven Mills site, has been traditionally a mixed-use community with businesses and residences located along Acushnet Avenue and mostly high density residential in the surrounding blocks. This neighborhood has also seen recent investment in upgrading housing stock and public improvements.

In summary, the Project Area has many important qualities needed for successful urban revitalization: an historic mill district, a regional gateway, significant waterfront properties, and close proximity to New Bedford's active harbor.

Previous Planning Efforts

As an important City target for revitalization, the HLS District has seen numerous public and private planning studies, visioning plans, and redevelopment analysis studies. The New Bedford/Fairhaven Municipal Harbor Plan, prepared in 2002, recommended the District's designation as an urban industrial park, with the intention of preserving existing jobs and attracting new opportunities.

Other recommendations that were part of the 2002 New Bedford/Fairhaven Municipal Harbor Plan have been incorporated into this Master Plan as well, and include:

- A new marina and boat ramp along the Acushnet River south of I-195

- Public open space along the Acushnet River
- Mill revitalization and job creation
- Attractive new community gateways

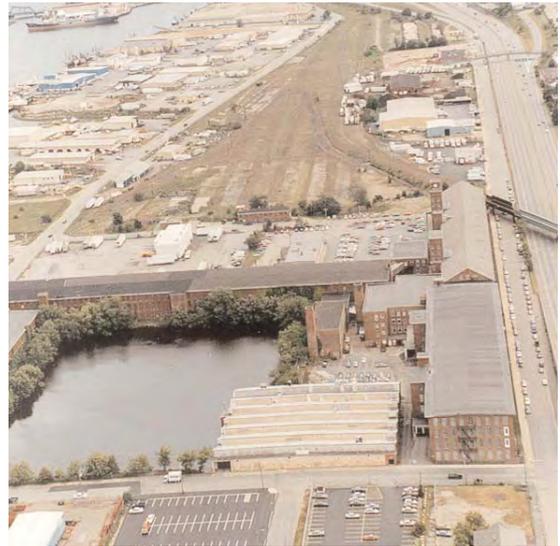
In 2005, the study entitled "Planning for the Hicks-Logan-Sawyer District: Smart Growth and Economic Development" prepared by the New Bedford Economic Development Council listed a detailed assessment of the District, and evaluated its economic potential for industrial, marine technology, and a mix of other uses. Along with that effort, a "Vision Plan and Regulatory Strategy" was prepared for the City's Redevelopment Authority and New Bedford Economic Development Council. The Vision Plan and Regulatory Strategy established a framework for future development in the HLS District, with the intention of suggesting smart growth, improved circulation, and the creation of new open space. It also identified four sub-areas in the HLS District:

- Mill Reuse Transit Oriented Development Sub-district
- Port Transition Sub-area
- Marina Sub-district
- Gateway Reinvestment Sub-district

As recommended by the 2005 Smart Growth Plan, the City embarked on an effort to create an Urban Revitalization Plan and DIF Strategy to provide funding for new projects.

Future Planning

Other plans and studies conducted by regional planning agencies and private developers are currently underway for individual sites within the Project Area. A traffic study was conducted to analyze the impacts of new development at the Fairhaven Mills site. Additionally, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has begun



This aerial view looks south towards a future SouthCoast commuter rail station, an opportunity to enhance the District's proposed multi-modal transportation options.

an extensive study to evaluate the feasibility of commuter rail connections between Boston and New Bedford. The New Bedford rail station under study would be located south of Wamsutta Street, adjacent to the Project Area.

Master Plan Objectives

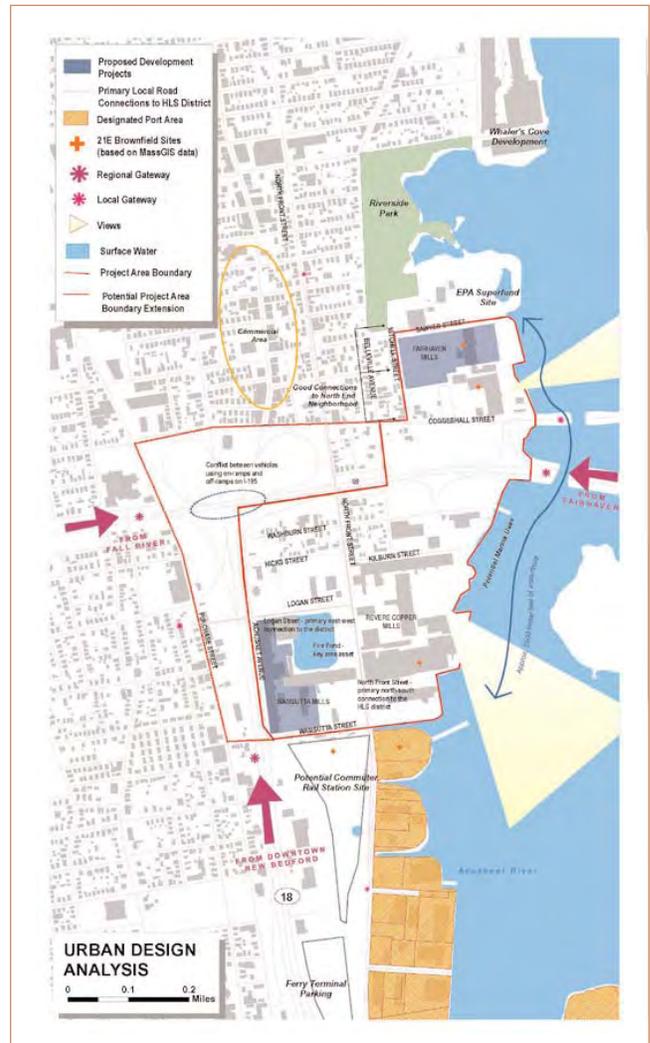
The objective of this Master Plan is to provide a blueprint for future development in the Hicks-Logan-Sawyer District. The Master Plan is a culmination of information from previous pertinent studies, guidance from the City of New Bedford, and an extremely successful community participation process. The plan strives to meet the following goals as established by the New Bedford Planning Department:

- Generate economic revitalization by retaining existing, and attracting new, sustainable businesses into the District
- Maintain the historic character of the District

- Create a vibrant mixed-use center as a new City destination
- Utilize and enhance the City's current and proposed multi-modal transportation options
- Improve the appearance of the Project Area by removing blighted structures
- Better utilize the waterfront and public access to the Acushnet River
- Improve internal circulation and connections to surrounding neighborhoods
- Expand public open spaces and community resources within the Project Area

Hicks-Logan-Sawyer District and describes the community participation process used in seeking public participation in preparing this HLS District Master Plan. This report further gives an overview of the genesis of preliminary development planning, and a detailed description of development projects recommended in the Final Master Plan. The conclusion of this Master Plan Report lists the principles and specific projects necessary for plan implementation, as well as potential funding available through federal, state, and local sources.

This Master Plan Report suggests an overview of the existing conditions found in the



The urban design analysis depicts the project area and highlights key features such as proposed development projects, the designated port area, as well as local and regional gateways.