

## 2. Site Analysis and Existing Conditions

This section presents an evaluation of the existing conditions within the Project Area to better understand the type and extent of improvements that will be necessary for new development. These evaluations are based on field surveys, analysis of previous planning studies, and data provided by regional and local government entities including the community's input from focus groups and public meetings. The existing conditions analysis has been incorporated into GIS databases and maps.

The original study area consisted of 129 parcels and 108 buildings within the HLS District. When the study area was expanded in the North section to include the Ropeworks facility, EPA site, and the block between Belleville Avenue and Mitchell Street, approximately 35 more parcels and buildings were added to the study area, bringing the total acreage of the Project Area to 150 acres. The area associated with the I-195 interchange on and off ramps makes up 15 acres that divides the Project Area into a larger 95-acre section to the south of I-195 and a smaller 40-acre section to the north of I-195.

The existing conditions analysis addresses the following issues:

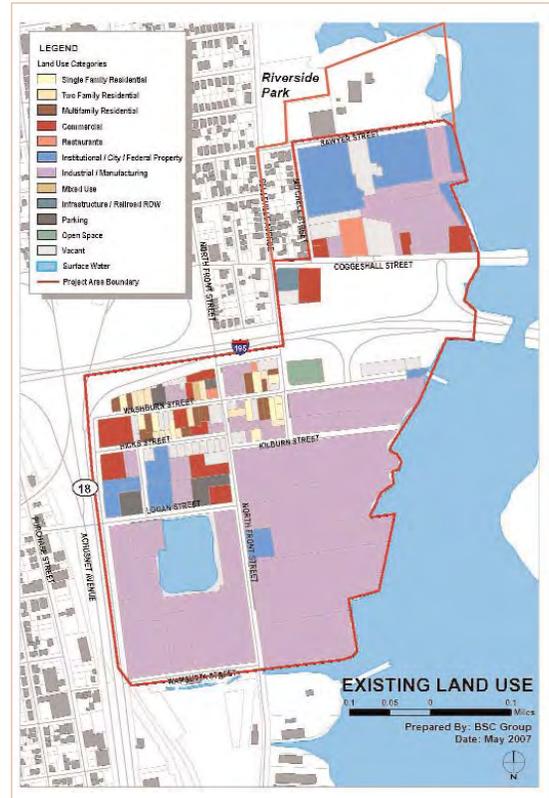
- Land use
- Zoning regulations
- Building and site assessments
- Transportation
- Market assessment



## Land Use

Existing land uses within the HLS District are reflective of its history as an historic mill district and commercial area. Based on the GIS database provided by the City and windshield surveys conducted

by BSC Group, the Project Area land uses are predominately industrial, with approximately 40 parcels in manufacturing or warehousing uses. The Project Area includes three major mill buildings, other prominent seafood businesses such as Kyler Seafood and MacLean's Seafood, F&B Rubberized -- a tire recycling facility along Washburn Street, and smaller light manufacturing businesses along Logan Street and North Front Street. The second largest land use is commercial and includes a mix of old and new businesses. Coggeshall Street is lined with commercial uses. South of I-195, commercial land uses include auto-repair/service shops and antique resale operations.



*As shown, the project area land uses are predominately industrial.*



Residential uses are restricted to the Hicks/Washburn area where remnants of mill-era housing with two and three-story houses exist. Many have been refurbished as multi-unit apartments for local workers. Housing in the Project Area will be increased by 250 units

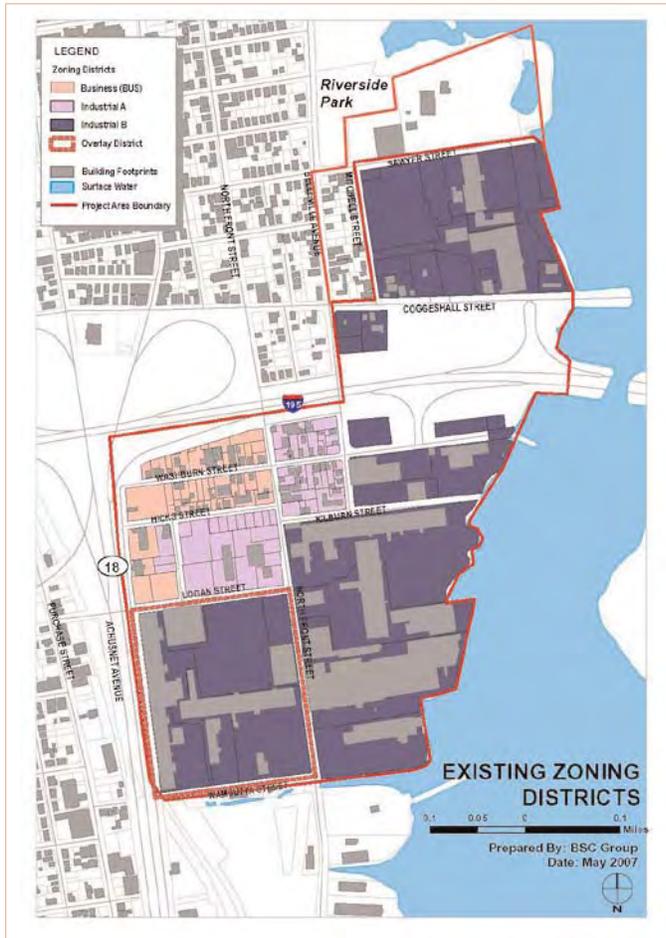
with the completion of the Wamsutta Mill rehabilitation project. Public open spaces are non-existent within the Project Area, with the exception of a single basketball court just south of I-195 along Belleville Avenue. Several community service providers are located in the HLS District including the "Community Substance Abuse Centers High Point Treatment Center" along Kilburn Street and the Department of Social Services along North Front Street. Additionally, the Project Area has two religious organizations that serve the local community, one of which is the Christian Revival Temple located on Acushnet Avenue.



*This view west on Washburn Street is an example of adjacent industrial and residential land uses.*



*There are no land use buffers to separate these mixed land uses at the corner of North Front Street and Washburn Street.*



The Project Area is comprised of three zoning districts: Industrial A, Industrial B, and a mixed use Business District.

It is evident from the mix of land uses that the Project Area has undergone natural development to respond to market conditions over the past century. In most cases, land uses, such as industrial and residential, exist adjacent to one another without adequate land use buffers or barriers.

### Zoning Regulations

The City's existing zoning code divides the Project Area into three districts - two industrial and one for mixed use business.

- The Industrial B District consists of approximately 40 parcels covering 50 percent of the Project Area, and includes parcels along the

Acushnet River, including the Fairhaven Mills, the Revere Copper complex, and smaller properties around Kilburn Street and Washburn Street. It also includes the Wamsutta Mills site, which is in a Mill Overlay District.

- The Industrial A District covers three blocks south of I-195. Two blocks of the Industrial A District are bounded by Kenyon Street, Belleville Avenue, Kilburn Street, and North Front Street. The third block is bounded by Hicks Street, Logan Street, Howe Street, and North Front Street. There are a few additional parcels in the Industrial District A, between Hicks Street and Logan Street. Allowable uses include manufacturing, warehousing, light industrial, research facilities, and institutional. No residential and limited commercial uses are allowed within the Industrial A District.
- The Business District extends west of North Front Street covering parcels around Washburn Street, Hicks Street, and Acushnet Avenue.

The City of New Bedford recently adopted an Overlay District for the Wamsutta Mills block bound by Wamsutta Street, Acushnet Avenue, Logan Street, and North Front Street. The Wamsutta Mill Overlay District (WMOD) encourages new construction within existing facilities and the rehabilitation of other structures to promote economic and cultural redevelopment. The WMOD promotes a mix of residential and commercial uses and allows for reduced parking requirements due to its close proximity to the proposed commuter rail station, promised by 2016.

Overall there is a clear discrepancy between existing land uses and current zoning designations. A large number of residential properties are zoned for either industrial or business uses. Similarly, properties along Coggeshall Street are zoned for industrial uses but currently house a variety of commercial uses.

## Building and Site Assessments

Site assessments were conducted for all buildings and parcels within the original Project Area (before Ropeworks, the EPA site, and the block between Belleville Avenue and Mitchell Street were added). The purpose of the assessments was to document buildings in poor or substandard condition that may be demolished and replaced with new economically viable uses.

A standard property evaluation template was used for this survey. Parcels were evaluated based on the following elements:

- Physical features
- Overall site conditions (well maintained or unkempt)
- Parking availability (type of parking and number of spaces)
- Access to infrastructure (electrical, water, sewer, gas service, etc.)
- Documentation of plantings, lighting, fencing, and similar elements that contribute to the function and appearance of the property
- Presence of sidewalks and pavement condition

On parcels containing buildings, the buildings' exteriors were also inspected. Exterior building analysis consisted of documenting the existence and condition of various building features critical to the function and appearance of the structure, such as the roof, windows, doors, foundation, siding, and similar elements. Following these inspections, building conditions were summarized. The structures were then grouped into one of the following four rating categories: good, serviceable, moderate disrepair, and severe disrepair.

## Rating Categories

- **Good** – Conditions of the parts of the building included new to well maintained and appear new or at least in good shape, well cared for, and in no need of maintenance.



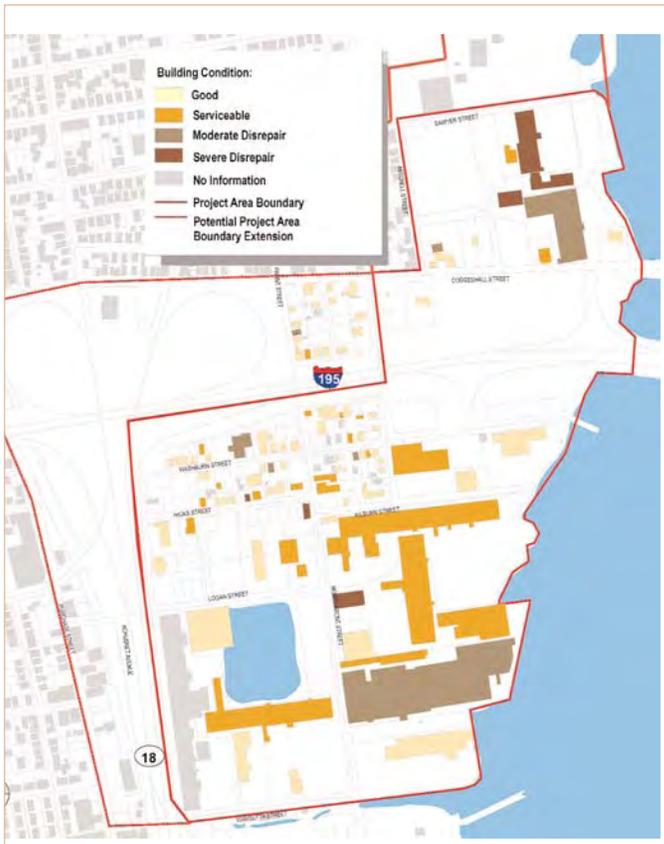
The majority of buildings within the Project Area are identified to be in "good condition." In some cases, poor site conditions such as unpaved driveways,

poorly maintained landscaping, etc. create a perception of buildings being in poor condition. Detailed surveys were not completed for the buildings that were added to the northern portion of the Project Area, however, based solely on windshield surveys, the majority of those buildings would also be considered in "good" condition.

- **Serviceable** – Conditions of the building under evaluation were in deteriorating shape and in need of paint, caulking, power washing, re-pointing, scraping rust, etc., but still able to function at its intended purpose.

Many buildings within the Project Area are classified as in "serviceable" condition. Most buildings on the Revere Copper site can benefit from minor rehabilitation and maintenance work. Similarly, the large warehouse building located along Kilburn Street can benefit from repair and maintenance.





Only six buildings, shown on the map in the darkest shade, have been identified to be in severe disrepair.

- **Moderate Disrepair** – These are the conditions of buildings that have worsened past cosmetic and economic repair. Thin cracks in masonry walls would allow potential for water penetration. Areas of missing mortar around brick would be indicative of constant dampness, excessive water, or interior moisture telegraphing through.



The need for re-pointing and attention to the underlying causes would represent moderate disrepair. Broken glass, damaged frames, missing roof shingles, broken or disrupted cornice/eaves/gutter systems can all be considered a moderate disrepair condition.

Only six buildings were classified as being in "moderate disrepair." Some examples of such buildings include the large warehouse building on the Revere Copper site just north of Mar-Lees Seafood, Mill Building #4 on the Fairhaven Mills site (where only one section is in "moderate disrepair" condition), and the tire recycling facilities along Washburn Street.

- **Severe Disrepair** – Conditions included wide cracks in masonry walls; a sinking foundation; broken or rotted out condition of walls, windows, doors, eaves, etc.; metal fasteners severely reduced by rust; entire roofing assemblies missing; and signs of compromised structural integrity.



In some cases, water damage from rainwater and snowmelt has caused severe disrepair to the exterior materials of the building thereby degrading the entire structure.

An analysis of the buildings' conditions explained (good, serviceable, moderate, severe) shows that only six buildings within the Project Area were identified to be in severe disrepair (buildings in the darkest shade on the illustration). These include the damaged sections of Fairhaven Mills and the Ice House Building on the Revere Copper facility site. The Ice House Building, though in poor condition, is a rough cut granite building with unique architectural qualities that is highly valued by the community.



## Transportation

Located within the I-195 and Route 18 interchange, the Project Area is located at a regional gateway from the east and west. Route 18, the western boundary of the Project Area, is a limited access highway from I-195 connecting to Route 6. Further south, beyond the Route 6 connection, Route 18 changes into a boulevard with signalized intersections as it enters New Bedford's downtown area. Although I-195 brings the HLS District regional connectivity, it also has challenges similar to other major urban interchanges:

- **Short Queuing Distance** – The ramps to and from I-195 are narrow and provide limited queuing distance. While they are sufficient for the Project Area's current usage as a partially occupied industrial area, any



*Hicks-Logan-Sawyer District is located within the I-195 and Route 18 interchange providing regional connectivity to the Project Area.*

additional mixed-use development is likely to exceed the capacity of this existing transportation infrastructure. Analysis required for the Home Depot proposal studied the impacts of new development at the Fairhaven Mills site and also substantiated the need for increasing the length of ramps that connect to I-195.

- **Limited Weaving Capacity** – The distances between on and off ramps connecting from Route 18 to I-195 are very limited and potentially dangerous to vehicles exiting to Washburn Street. (See the Coggeshall Street Corridor Study by the Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District dated January 1999.)
- **Turning Limitations** – The existing roadway geometry makes it difficult for large vehicles to turn on the I-195 ramps.
- **Constraints** – Relocating and/or expanding the I-195 ramps are constrained by existing buildings, rights of way, and wetland resource areas, as well as a lack of federal funding.

Other factors affecting transportation and circulation within the HLS District include:

- **Route 6 Bridge** – The inconsistent operation of the Route 6 swing bridge between New Bedford and Fairhaven limits marina uses to its north along the New Bedford Harbor.
- **Coggeshall Street** – The Coggeshall Street corridor contains the primary east-west arterial that connects residential and commercial land uses to I-195 and the bridge over the Acushnet River connecting New Bedford with Fairhaven. A corridor study by the Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District prepared in 1999 made several recommendations to widen the roadway, improve traffic signal system operations, and make minor modifications to travel lanes that would result in improved traffic flow and overall safety. To date, none of these recommended improvements have been implemented.

- **Local Roadway Connection** – Access to the HLS District from adjacent neighborhoods is limited. Belleville Avenue and North Front Street connect to the north. Logan Street connects to the west, and North Front Street and Acushnet Avenue connects to the south.

## Market Assessment

Following is a summary of the findings of a detailed market analysis of the HLS District. The analysis was conducted in the fall of 2007 by RKG Associates, an economic, planning and real estate consultant.

### Employment Base and Trends

- 42% of employment in New Bedford is evenly distributed between manufacturing and health care and social assistance providers:
  - Manufacturing jobs are decreasing (a decline of 6% between 2001 and 2006)
  - Health care and social assistance jobs are increasing (a gain of 12% between 2001 and 2006)
- The local economy is also strong in other sectors, including:
  - Fishing
  - Finance and insurance
  - Utilities
  - Information services
  - Wholesale trade
- The local economy is weak in some sectors, including:
  - Retail trade
  - Arts, entertainment, and recreation
  - Accommodation and food service

### Housing Supply Characteristics and Trends

- 72% of New Bedford's housing stock was built before 1960

- A significant portion of housing units are multi-family structures
  - Multi-family units regionally = 38%
  - Multi-family units in New Bedford = 69%
- New Bedford has a lower home-ownership rate than the region
  - Home-ownership rate regionally = 66%
  - Home-ownership rate in New Bedford = 49%
- Affordable housing
  - Affordable housing regionally = 9%
  - Affordable housing in New Bedford = 12%
  - New Bedford supplies 49% of the regional housing supply
  - New Bedford supplies 67% of the regional subsidized housing supply

### Residential Market Activity and Median Pricing Trends

- New Bedford's single-family sales are lower than regional sales
  - Single-family sales regionally are between 54%-61%
  - Single-family sales in New Bedford are between 40%-48%
  - Fewer single-family home sales per month in New Bedford than in the region
- New Bedford's condominium sales are higher than regional sales
  - Condominium sales regionally are between 4% and 7% of total activity
  - Condominium sales in New Bedford are between 6% and 9% of total activity
  - More condominium sales per month in New Bedford than the region
- Housing Values
  - Single-family home median value in 2007 is \$210,000 which is 9% below the 2006 peak price

- Condominium median value in 2007 is \$179,000 which is the highest price in the last 20 years
- 2007 median values for single-family homes and condominiums are 20-25% below values in the region
- 2007 rent prices are 20% below rents in the region (\$820/month versus \$1,030/month)
- A national retail developer has an option on the Revere Copper site and adjoining parcels

### Tax Base Trends

- Total taxable assessment of properties increased by 130% between 2001 and 2007
- Taxable assessment of residential properties increased by 152% between 2001 and 2007
- Residential properties account for 84% of the total assessed properties in New Bedford

RKG was able to describe how the market characteristics described may affect the HLS Project Area in the future. Below is a brief summary of RKG's market outlook.

- The current weakness in tourism and related industries may become an opportunity for the HLS District because of its location
- Future demand for properties in the HLS District will:
  - Come from a combination of new growth as well as expansion of existing businesses and households
  - Promote "smart growth" principles
  - Take advantage of a highly visible and accessible HLS District location
  - Capitalize on the District's proximity to the waterfront and future commuter rail station
- Current development projects and proposals in the HLS District are:
  - The Wamsutta Mill site is being converted into 250 residential units
  - A retail developer is interested in the City-owned Fairhaven Mill site

### Industrial Use in the Future

- Building stock in HLS District is not well suited to attract modern 21st century industrial users
- New Bedford Business/Industrial Park has an additional 100 acres available
- There is an adequate supply of space available at industrial parks throughout the region
- Continuing all existing industrial uses, in their current condition, would not help to increase the City's tax base
- Upgrading and expanding existing light industrial facilities would meet the forecasted need for future industrial space (100,000-500,000 sf over the next 5-15 years)

### Office, Research and Development in the Future

- HLS District may capture 100,000-200,000 sf of office employment growth in the region
- Forecasted need for maritime technology space is between 50,000 and 120,000 sf over the next 5-10 years
- Existing office expansions may create a need for an additional 200,000 sf
- A total of 400,000-500,000 sf of office space will be needed in HLS District over next 10-20 years
- Up to 80% of these users may renovate existing structures to accommodate business due to proximity to I-195
- 20-40% of these users may build new facilities

- Retail and Other Commercial Uses in the Future
  - Nearly 80,000 sf of retail space is vacant in the downtown area
  - Potential to recapture retail "leakage" could result in the need for 240,000 sf of retail space (mostly in the downtown area)
  - HLS District may have the potential for 200,000-400,000 sf (long term) of retail space, taking advantage of its location along I-195
  - Possible hotel site with visibility from I-195 (long term)
- Residential Uses in the Future
  - Ropeworks and Whaler's Cove are successful examples of residential projects near the HLS District
  - Wamsutta Mills (250 units that are all market rate rental) is currently under construction within the Project Area, and is currently being marketed
  - Potential for 400-650 units over the next five years (citywide) according to State sponsored build-out analysis
  - Potential need for 1,600-2,600 units over the next 20 years (citywide)
  - Potential need for 700-1,000 units in the HLS District over the next 20 years with a mix of 70-80% condominiums and 20-30% apartments
  - Condominiums would provide greater value to the tax base than apartments
  - 20-25% set aside as affordable housing to comply with State legislation for transit-oriented development