
Objective #3: Investment in the Mill Corridor

Create a plan and investment strategy for the mill corridor to preserve and create jobs, add complementary new uses, identify public infrastructure and amenity improvements, and secure riverfront access.

Short Term Actions

- Publicize available public and privately-owned sites within the district. Building off of the success of the Historic Mill Inventory¹ compiled by City Planning and the NBEDC, continue to serve as a clearing house for information on district properties. Bring together property owners with potential tenants and developers. Specifically target the building soon to be vacated by the Coalition for Buzzards Bay for an intensive marketing effort.
Lead Role NBEDC
Estimated Cost..... N/A

- Enact an Interim Planning Overlay District (IPOD) for the riverfront district. The purpose of the IPOD is to “to regulate redevelopment in the Upper Harbor District to permit the City of New Bedford adequate time to implement new permanent zoning regulations consistent with the Upper Harbor District Plan”.
Lead Role..... Planning Department
Estimated Cost..... N/A

- Engage an environmental firm to undertake site-specific environmental assessments to determine in a general manner what level of remediation is required and at what cost, similar to the work done in recent years for the Aerovox site. Other key sites for investigation include the Cliftex buildings and the Star Plating site. The full cooperation of building owners will be crucial in gaining access. Consider a proactive negotiating approach and attempt to identify “win-win” solutions where possible. Include issue of public access in all discussions with property owners.
Lead Role..... Planning Department
Estimated Cost..... \$40,000 per site

- Develop a comprehensive analysis of existing zoning along the river, with an emphasis on tailoring allowed uses to co-exist with environmental conditions and/or remediation

¹ http://www.ci.new-bedford.ma.us/planning/NB_MillInventory08.pdf

actions. Identify relevant case studies from other cities where waterfront mill structures were redeveloped. Propose a new zoning district for the riverfront area with appropriate standards for use, density, and public access, among other issues (taking into account the findings of any new environmental studies). The goal of the new zoning is to encourage “economic revitalization by retaining existing, and attracting new, sustainable businesses into the District, maintaining the historic character of the District, creating a mixed-use district as a new destination within the City, removing blighted buildings to improve the appearance of the Project Area, better utilization of the waterfront and public access to the Acushnet River, improvement of internal circulation and connections to surrounding neighborhoods, and expansion of public open spaces and community resources within the Project Area”. Consider allowing a range of appropriate “interim uses” for underutilized parcels awaiting redevelopment, including event parking, farmers’ markets, community gardens, or other community uses. Submit proposed zoning changes to the Planning Board and City Council for approval and ratification.

Lead Role..... Planning Department
Estimated Cost.....\$60,000

- Simultaneously with the zoning review, develop a program of appropriate public realm improvements for the district. Identify access deficiencies (pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular) and propose appropriate improvements, specifically addressing potential locations for new public access to the riverfront alongside or through existing structures, potentially including selective demolition to open up important view corridors. The Cliftex structures are of particular interest in this respect.

Lead Role..... Planning Department
Estimated Cost..... \$40,000

- Reach out to the owners of the junkyard to commence a dialogue about potential relocation. In the short term, work with property owners to screen it with walls suitable for murals or plantings.

Lead Role..... NBEDC
Estimated Cost..... N/A

Mid Term Actions

- Consider implementing a District Improvement Finance (DIF) mechanism to ensure that the district is appropriately maintained going forward. A DIF operates by collecting a fee from the businesses benefitting from its services. Eventually, a DIF could take over event programming for the waterfront from the City’s Recreation Department.

Lead Role.....NBEDC &City Planning

Estimated Cost..... \$20,000 (DIF-related consulting and legal fees)