

I. PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

A VISION FOR ELLSWORTH'S DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT

Ellsworth's waterfront offers an opportunity to build on the City's strengths. As a gateway to Downeast, crossroad, and county seat, Ellsworth's future is bright. The recent revitalization of Main Street in downtown, the dredging of the harbor, and the Council's commitment to planning for the historic waterfront, bode well for the City's future.

At the "Executive Committee for Waterfront Development" workshop, held on June 1, 2002, citizens of Ellsworth, and the region, developed a vision for this area. That vision for the waterfront is best seen from a "historical" perspective. Imagine, for a moment, that you just came across the following piece in the July 27, 2009, issue of *The Ellsworth American*.

----- "The Ellsworth American" -- July 27, 2009-----

Editorial

Ellsworth's New Waterfront - A Look Back

Between 2003 and 2008, following the reconstruction of City Hall, expansion of the Ellsworth Library, improvements to the City parking lot, and the successful revitalization of Main Street, Ellsworth's downtown district expanded south and west to the Union Riverfront. The results have been dramatic. They speak volumes as to the Council's commitment to the early master plan concept.

Quality, commercial businesses have been attracted to the restored waterfront; tourists and residents alike now enjoy stores, parks, trails, and historic exhibits; the entire area has seen an infusion of public and private dollars. Once marginal buildings and unorganized, haphazard parking lots have been redesigned and improved so good access, plentiful parking, and new attractions now make the area a destination, a regional center, and a focal point for those seeking to learn more about Ellsworth and its rich maritime heritage.

The entire area has thrived because it caters to a broad range of interests. Professional offices overlooking the river offer businesses prestige locations; shoppers and tourists find quality stores, restaurants, and historic exhibits; outdoor enthusiasts, and City residents enjoy the trails, parks, and the restored, revegetated shore; and new residents have been attracted to studio apartments, condominiums, and "empty-nester" townhouses. Best of all, the area provides: convenient, safe parking; a quality small town atmosphere; easy access to the City's cultural and civic amenities and a redesigned Ellsworth Harbor Park with its new amphitheater, enhanced recreational space, and much improved marina facilities.

THE SETTING

Background

During recent years the City of Ellsworth has come to recognize that its historic waterfront offers exciting potential - for economic development, recreation, and the expansion of downtown. Consequently, the Council appointed an Executive Committee for Waterfront Development and challenged them to develop concepts for the revitalization of this historically significant area. The area identified for study encompasses Main Street, on the north; Franklin Street and Bayside Road, on the east; Harbor Park and Indian Point, on the south; and the Union River (including its western shoreland) on the west (*see the Study Area map*). In January, 2002, after a number of meetings, the Committee sent out request for proposals to land use consultants. They asked that consultants organize and conduct a citizen workshop to gather ideas for the waterfront and then prepare a waterfront plan suitable for presentation to the City Council.

The Planning Process

This report with its maps, photographs, and illustrations is the product of the Committee's work. It is the result of a thorough planning process that has involved the Committee and members of the public and has required careful research and creative planning and design by a team with urban design, landscape architecture, and architectural experience.

The main steps taken to produce this plan for the waterfront have included:

- preparation of background materials
- conducting a one-day "visioning" workshop
- follow-up - research and documentation of design ideas
- preparation of waterfront plan concepts
- presentation of waterfront plan concept to the committee
- the finalization of the plan, before presentation to the City Council



City Hall as seen from Franklin Street.

Ellsworth's Waterfront

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING THE VISION: A SUMMARY

The Physical Elements

The key elements of the proposed Master Plan are:

1. An expanded downtown, from Franklin Street to the Morrison lot, with a mix of public and private uses.
2. A riverfront walk from Main Street to the harbor and beyond.
3. An expanded harbor park area with new marine, boating, and recreational uses.
4. A street system (and infrastructure) that's functional and attractive.
5. Conservation of historic and natural areas, including the west side and Indian Point

The Land Use Strategy

In order to achieve the Plan there must be a slow but purposeful transition from auto sales and other such uses along the river to a mix of retail, service, office, residential, and cultural/institutional uses, compatible with Main Street and a riverfront walkway.

This strategy makes sense because:

- Growth and development in downtown could be enhanced if new uses replace slum, blight conditions.
- The Water Street area presents a poor image that discourages growth and potential, new, tax-generating business.
- Downtown is cut off from the Union River and its historic, cultural, and scenic assets.
- Some key owners in the area have indicated they would prefer to locate elsewhere, if financially feasible; others wish to upgrade.

Implementation Strategies

- Seek out state and federal grants and loans from existing programs.
- Actively seek support from Maine's Congressional Delegation.
- Have the City take on a strong, proactive development role in this area.
- Cultivate public/private partnerships that result in gains for all participants.
- Consider floating a bond (or other creative financing) to kick-start implementation
- (with a focus on acquisition of the Morrison parcel and the construction of a parking deck (or large lot) in the Main/Franklin/ Pine/water Street block.
- Target TIF (tax increment financing) funds to this area.
- Allocate City capital funds for improvements on City-owned parcels and street right-of-ways.
- Initiate a business attraction program for the City in general and the downtown area in particular.

Organizational Framework

- Establish an Economic Development entity (with an Economic Development Director and board) with the tools needed to implement the waterfront plan (i.e., acquire, hold, lease, manage land and/or buildings; contract for services; administer a bond; finance projects; and enter into cooperative agreements).
- Strengthen the Downtown Business Association by expanding membership, funding and hiring a downtown manager, joining the Main Street program, etc.
- Involve a broad spectrum of local and regional groups who have interests here, i.e., historic, conservation, economic development, recreation, tourism, etc.

The Next Steps

- Continue meeting with key landowners to discuss their plans and goals.
- Continue to refine the Waterfront Plan outlined in this report and implement it in phases, according to priority; seek Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) implementation funds.
- Develop area specific plans, based on the "framework" plan, for the highest priority areas.
- Verify that floodplain (FEMA), coastal shoreline (U.S. Corps of Engineers), and possible soil contamination issues do not jeopardize the plan concepts and that the ideas are realistic and doable under these and other state and federal regulatory requirements.
- Revise existing zoning and ordinance provisions to achieve successful sensible implementation of the plan.
- Establish reasonable design standards for new buildings, parking, landscaping, signs, etc., to ensure that historic issues are addressed and quality development results.

Ellsworth's Waterfront
THE MAJOR GOALS AND SOURCES OF FUNDING

The Vision

Within the next 5 to 20 years, the City envisions:

- A vibrant mix of tax-generating uses set amongst parks, trails, and historic maritime exhibits;
- A revitalized waterfront with shore trail from Main Street to Harbor Park and Indian Point;
- An expanded downtown with sufficient, well-managed parking and quality businesses; and
- A regional center for culture, recreational boating, government, commerce and in-town residential living.

Implementing the Plan: Five Strategic Steps

- This plan can be realized with leadership, focus and adequate funding.
- The plan should be implemented in phases.
- Success depends on five key initiatives, all interrelated; they are described below, along
- With funding recommendations (see Framework Plan Map).

Five Initiatives	Major Goals	Possible Funding Sources (and other sources of assistance)
1. Improve the Downtown Waterfront Area	<p>Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote public/private economic development. • Reconnect downtown to the waterfront with a linear park or mall. • Create a new quality image for this two block area. • Provide parking to support business growth. • Encourage façade improvements and building upgrades. • Construct the waterfront trail on the Morrison lot. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Float a bond issue (or use other creative municipal financing tools) to help cover Morrison lot acquisition and parking improvements. • Create a Waterfront Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District and allow for TIF funds generated elsewhere to be expended here. • Make no- and low-interest loans available to target area businesses (e.g., CDBG microloans). • Investigate potential Economic Development Administration (EDA) funds. • Educate building owners about state and federal historic renovation tax incentives. • Seek out private investors willing to partner with the City. • Apply for CDBD funds' (e.g., Downtown, Public Facility, or Economic Development Infrastructure funding). • Solicit parking fees for limited, reserved parking.

¹ CDBG funds could be used for: parking, curbing, sidewalks, trails, landscaping, façade grants, microloans and sewer and water upgrades.

<p>2. Build a Waterfront Trail (from Main Street to the Harbor)</p>	<p>Recreational, Cultural and Environmental Quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct a trail for residents and tourists. • Build the north and south segments first. • Make strong pedestrian connections to Water Street and Franklin Street. • Emphasize views/shoreline revegetation, historic (marine) ties, and a healthy place for exercise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for trail construction funds from the Maine Department of Conservation. • Invite participation and funding from the National Park Service. • Seek funding from Maine Department of Transportation's (MDOT) Enhancement Program • Use donated trail easements to match state and federal funds. • Investigate Land and Water Conservation (LAWCON) funding. • Private foundations and private donations. • CDBG, Public Facilities funding (for up to \$50,000).
<p>3. Enhance Harbor Park</p>	<p>Marine Economic Development and Recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand docking and mooring facilities. • Upgrade and expand shore-side recreation. • Provide additional marine services. • Create additional parking spaces. • Consider tax generating uses on the Schaefer property, e.g., a boathouse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for Small Harbors Improvement Program (SHIP) funds, from MDOT or Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) funds. • Seek funding from the Department of Conservation (DOC) Boat Facilities Program. • Enter into public/private partnerships with vendors/business in the marine trades. • Tap private sources for money/ facilities/ services to support recreation programs. • Solicit land donations to expand the park.
<p>4. Upgrade All Streets and Sidewalks</p>	<p>Efficient, Attractive Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring streets and sidewalks up to Main Street standards. • Improve the "streetscape" (e.g., lighting, landscaping, and street furniture). • Ensure existing and new businesses have easy access to all services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with MDOT to schedule road improvements on Water Street (Route 230). • Investigate pedestrian/bike lane Enhancement funds from MDOT. • Evaluate the potential for CDBG, Downtown, or Public Facility funding. • Invest City capital project funds in street and sidewalk improvements. • Consider MDOT "Gateway" funds. • Work with utility interests to upgrade their facilities and services.
<p>5. Conserve Historic and Natural Areas (near Waterfront)</p>	<p>Conserve and Recreate Historic Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build upon historic facts and features. • Adopt historic themes. Educate visitors about Ellsworth's history. • Consider a maritime museum on Water Street. <p>Conserve Scenic Wooded Shoreland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private, west-shore owners to conserve these lands. • Support efforts to acquire Indian Point for public use and scenic enjoyment. • Revegetate and restore riparian vegetation.. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local historians and the Historic Society to find funding. • Work with local land trusts (and similar groups) to conserve land and solicit private donations. • Apply for LMF (Land for Maine's Future) funds for the acquisition of Indian Point. • Solicit private gifts (or bargain sale) of west-shore protection easements.

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

Economic Development

Low Interest Loans	} Primarily through CDBG program
Façade Improvement Grants	} and City Economic Development
Tax Increment Financing (TIF funds)	} office, bonds, and/or City Capital
Infrastructure Improvements	} Investment Program
Historic Renovations	} Federal and State tax credits
Private Investment	} Owners and Developers

Land Conservation

Purchase of Public Access to Water	} Land for Maine's Future (LMF)}
Public Land Acquisition	} (available for next 2 years)}
Purchase of Development Rights	} LMF and Private (Land Trust) funds}
Outright Purchase	} Private and City funds

Trails (on and off the waterfront)

Trail Planning	National Park Service
Trail Construction	Department of Conservation
Water Access (e.g., boat ramps)}	Department of Conservation (LAWCON)}
Walkways and Bikeways	Department of Transportation

Harbor Improvement

Small Harbors Improvement Program (SHIP)}	Department of Transportation
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Other

Parking Facilities	City Bond Issue/Fees
Linear Park	Project Canopy (DOT)}

The Ellsworth Waterfront Plan: THE FIVE INITIATIVES

1. Improvements to the Downtown Waterfront

Major Goals

- Promote public/private economic development.
- Reconnect downtown to the waterfront.
- Create a new quality image for this two block area.
- Provide parking to support business growth.
- Encourage façade improvements and building upgrades.
- Construct the first phase of the waterfront trail.

Extent of Downtown Waterfront

The focus of this effort to improve and extend downtown into the area defined by the back of the Main Street buildings (on the north), Franklin Street, Pine Street, and the Union River.

Phasing of Improvements

Phase 1: Purchase and redevelop the Morrison parcel.

Phase 2: Work with owners within the Main/Franklin/Pine/Water Street block to create a mutually beneficial "master plan" that improves access and circulation, increases parking, upgrades property values, and open up redevelopment opportunities.

Phase 3: Upgrade Water, Franklin, and Pine Streets with streetscaping.
(*This phase could coincide with Phase 2.*)

Recommended Improvements

The redevelopment concept for the Downtown Waterfront is illustrated in **Exhibit 1A** of the *Downtown Waterfront Site Plan*. The following Exhibits (1B, 1C, and 1D) feature aspects of the plan.

Ultimately, as these exhibits show, the plan envisions a waterfront trail, linked to Main Street, to the north, and to Franklin Street by way of a public pedestrian mall or linear park, on the east. New commercial buildings (up to 73,000 sq. ft.), built in historic styles, form the public spaces while generous new parking lots and a two-level deck provide 263 parking spaces, close by. Operations at Maine Shellfish remain unchanged.

The plan features formal axial ways, similar to that created by City Hall and Franklin Street; the axial way is a historic device (used by ancient Greek and Roman city designers) that draws the eye, and the viewer, toward publicly significant buildings or features (such as the Lincoln or Washington monument). In Ellsworth, these axial ways can create intimate landscaped pedestrian spaces and a superb village-like environment that will draw residents, visitors, and developers.

Exhibit 1B shows an aerial view of the concepts described above. It shows a revegetated riverbank, shaded riverwalk, and three prominent, more formal river overlooks. New buildings, on the Morrison lot, line Water Street yet face onto a public square. Parking lots are tucked behind the buildings and inland from the trail.

Exhibit 1C shows the view from the proposed parking deck west, to two public parks (on either side of Water Street) and new buildings on the Morrison lot. This axial way, or mall, passes through a tunnel to reach the waterfront; other axes (pathways) branch off this mall to connect to other river overlooks and Main Street. A sculptural image of a typical coastal schooner, similar to those found in Ellsworth Harbor in the late 19th century, is shown.

Exhibit 1D illustrates the pedestrian mall in the form of a cross-section that extends from the Union River and waterfront trail, all the way to Franklin Street, by way of a grand stairway which allows the mall to surmount the parking deck and rise with the grade change.

TABLE: PROPOSED COMMERCIAL SPACE AND PARKING		
Morrison Lot	Floor Area (2 levels)	Floor Area (3 levels)
Building 1	6,750	10,125
Building 2	6,750	10,125
Building 3	<u>11,000</u>	<u>16,800</u>
Total floor area	29,500	36,850
Total parking	88 spaces	88 spaces
Main/Water/Pine Block (Assume 2 levels plus 1 level added to Key Bank.)		
Total floor area (for 6 buildings)	36,200 sq. ft.	
Total parking	175 spaces (148 in parking structure)	

2. Proposed Waterfront Trail

Major Goals

- Construct a trail for residents and tourists.
- Build the north and south segments first.
- Make strong pedestrian connections to Water Street and Franklin Street.
- Emphasize views/shoreline revegetation, historic (marine) ties, and a healthy place for exercise.

Extent and Phasing of Trail

Ultimately, the proposed trail should link the existing trail at the library, under the Route 1 bridge (to the north) to Indian Point, on the far south of the study area. The first phases should include: the waterfront from Route 1 (Main Street) to Maine Shellfish; this would be primarily on the Morrison Lot; and the City-owned "harbor" land. Subsequent phases should be built to provide continuity for a permanent waterfront trail, accessible to the public and linked to downtown and residential areas to the east.

3. Enhancements to Harbor Park

Major Goals

- Expand docking and mooring facilities.
- Upgrade and expand shore-side recreation.
- Provide additional marine services.
- Expand the park and related parking.
- Consider tax generating uses on the Schaefer property, e.g., a boathouse.

Extent of Harbor Park

Today Harbor Park comprises City-owned land, that extends from the wastewater treatment plant south along the river shore to the Health Center. The area includes the recently acquired Schaeffer property, next to the entry road, off the Bayside Road. It also includes the newly dredged harbor.

Phasing of Improvements

Phase 1: Complete the dredging (to the south) and build additional docks for boaters
(See Exhibit 3A)

Phase 2: a) Resculpt and expand the amphitheater.
b) Build a waterfront trail the length of the park.
c) Consider further property acquisition, to the south

Phase 3: a) build a new wharf to allow for larger vessels, if feasible.
b) Restore the Schaeffer building for marine uses and expand parking

or

Seek funding for a boathouse, with seasonal restaurant and marine facilities;
Pull down the Schaeffer building to create more parking

or

Purchase the Health Center and convert it for marine uses; tear down the Schaeffer building.

Phase 4: a) extend the waterfront trail southward to Indian Point.
b) Continue to upgrade landscaping, lighting, and other public facilities in the Park.

Recommended Improvements

The concept behind Ellsworth Harbor Park is to enhance the area for both boating and recreation, so as to draw more visitors. More, better, marine uses and facilities, along with better recreational/cultural activities will make Harbor Park a destination that people can reach by boat, car, or on foot, along the waterfront trail.

Exhibit 3A shows one possible site plan with additional parking on the Schaeffer site and on the Health Center site (the building is demolished). The expanded docking facilities and amphitheater upgrades are also illustrated. A boathouse overlooking the harbor is also proposed.

Exhibit 3B shows the community built boathouse housing a seasonal restaurant above and a mix of marine related uses below. Under this scenario the City could lease space to small businesses for kayak rentals, marine hardware, and other water dependent uses.

4. Streetscape and Infrastructure Improvements

Major Goals

- Bring streets and sidewalks up to Main Street standards.
- Improve the "streetscape" (e.g., with lights, landscaping, and street furniture).
- Ensure existing and new businesses have easy access to all services.

Extent of Improvements

Major improvements, to complement those on Main Street, are essential. These upgrades are needed to: Water Street, south to where Bayside Road intersects with Washington Street; Franklin Street (to the Water Street intersection); and Pine Street.

Phasing of Improvements

As Water Street/Bayside Road is also State Route 230, the City should coordinate improvements here with the Maine Department of Transportation. The Pine and Franklin Street work should occur within the same timeframe; however, Water and Franklin should act as alternative routes and not be under construction at the same time.

Recommended Improvements

Before any further design work is undertaken the City should evaluate all below grade infrastructure to assure that existing sewer, water, and storm drains are adequate to support new development. This investigation should also determine the feasibility of installing below grade electric lines. Redesign of the streets should emphasize quality and safety, for all users. Priority should be given to:

- providing wide (8 ft.) sidewalks on both sides of Water, Franklin, and Pine Streets;
- providing 10 foot travel lanes with minimal access (curb cuts);
- providing on-street parking only where the right-of-way allows;
- installing streetlights that match those on Main Street;
- planting street trees, where feasible; and
- building neck-downs on Water and Franklin Streets to facilitate pedestrian crossings.

Exhibit 1A (on page 1-14) illustrates these concepts while 4A and 4B illustrate improvements to Water Street, a major traffic artery within the narrow (50 ft.) right-of-way. Priority should be given to sidewalks (8 ft. wide) and, where feasible, on-street parking, on the west side of the street only.

Other recommended features shown, include:

- An avenue of street trees (hopefully with the consent of private property owners);
- New light fixtures, to match those on Main Street;
- The elimination of overhead lines and utility poles;
- Bollards and a "necked-down" pedestrian crossing (see 4B); and
- Granite curbs with patterned, concrete, sidewalks.

Similar design standards should be applied to the recommended improvements on Franklin and Pine Streets and provision for trash receptacles, benches, and quality signs should be made.

5. Historic and Natural Area Conservation

Major Goals

- Build upon historic facts and features.
- Adopt historic themes.
- Educate visitors about Ellsworth's history.
- Consider a maritime museum on Water Street.
- Work with private, west-shore owners to conserve scenic wooded shoreland.
- Support efforts to acquire Indian Point for public use and scenic enjoyment.
- Revegetate and restore riparian vegetation, along the banks of the Union River.

Extent of Conservation Areas

The conservation and restoration of historic artifacts and natural areas should occur within the entire master plan study area, i.e., between Franklin Street and the river and south from Main Street to Harbor Park. Conservation of the wooded, undeveloped shore visible from the waterfront trail, all along the Union River, should also be accomplished.

Phasing of Improvements

Phase 1: a) research historic records and explore the shore to find worthy, restorable remnants of Ellsworth's maritime history.

b) Initiate efforts to acquire scenic/conservation easements or outright fee purchase of shoreland.

c) Begin revegetation of the east shore, consistent with trail plans.

Phase 2: Complete b and c, above, and begin historic shoreline restoration.

Phase 3: a) expand upon the historic, marine/port theme throughout the waterfront area.

b) Initiate efforts to establish a maritime museum on land between the shore and Water Street.

Recommendations

Exhibit 5A shows the busy port of Ellsworth in 1879. Seventeen large ships can be seen on the river and at various wharves. Residents attending the workshop on June 1, 2002, overwhelmingly favored re-creating this nautical theme on the new waterfront and within the expanded downtown.

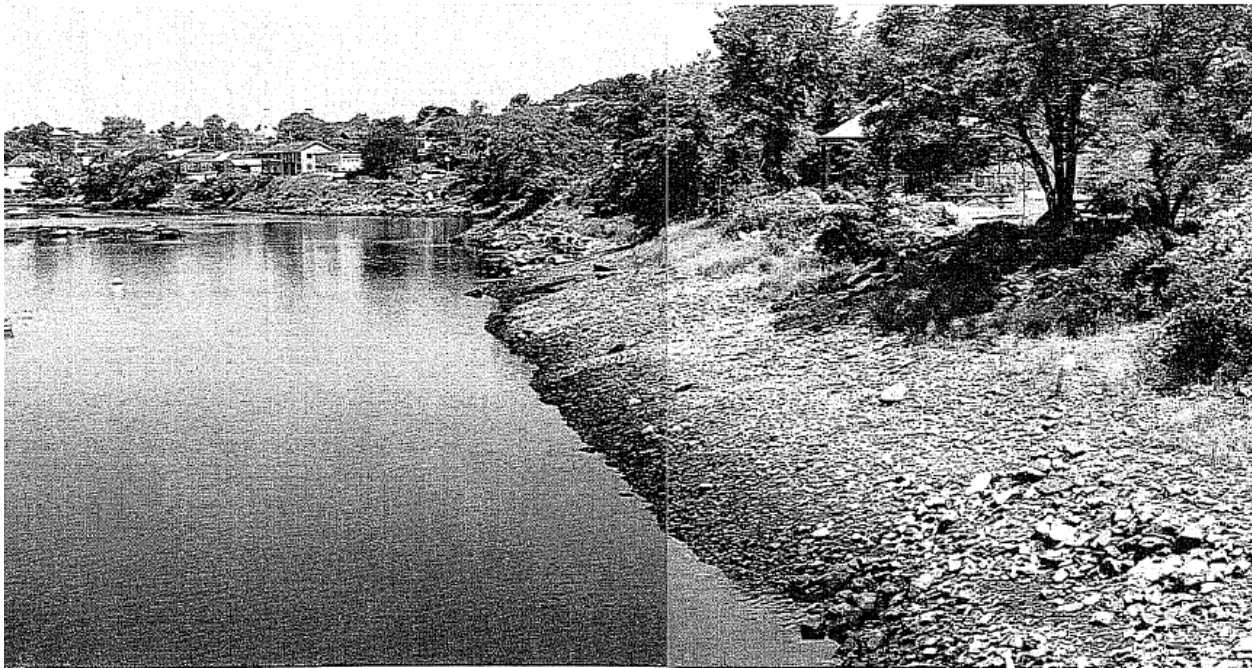
Many ideas emerged. They included:

- Place interpretive signs, with illustrations, along the main walkways, trails, and overlooks (see *Exhibits 2A-D*);
- Display interesting artifacts outdoor, e.g., ship's bells, large anchors, masts and sails, ship models, etc.
- Use nautical lighting, flags, sculpture, etc., to highlight Ellsworth's maritime connections;
- Consider placing a full size replica of a sailing vessel on shore, and/or on the water, next to a maritime museum (see *Exhibits 1 C and 5B*).

Exhibit 5C is a photograph taken from Harbor Park. It serves to show the visual and scenic importance of all the southern and western shore of the Union River and the "port." These same features can be seen by boaters and future waterfront trail users, as well as the occupants of new buildings along the east shore. Clearly, development on these southern and western shores would change the character of the area and make it far less scenic.

Two major conservation initiatives are recommended:

1. The City should be an active partner in trying to acquire the development right or full fee ownership of Indian Point. This is a historically significant property (tied to the Black House estate) that could become the southern trailhead for the waterfront trail.
2. The City, along with Frenchman's Bay Conservancy (Land Trust) should work with willing west shore owners to protect the immediate, scenic, shoreline across from downtown and Harbor Park.



View north from the harbor. Westside shore needs view protection through conservation easements. Eastside shore edge needs some revegetation and stabilization.