

III. SUPPORTING RESEARCH

REGULATORY ISSUES (BY WRIGHT-PIERCE) *Memorandum on file*

HISTORIC RESEARCH (BY MARK E. HONEY) *Report on file*

WORKSHOP GOALS

- Produce four(?) concept plans for the waterfront area
- Listen to diverse opinions and respect differences
- Recognize public and private property rights and bounds
- Encourage “outside-the-box,” long-range (± 20 yrs.) thinking
- Focus on what’s doable and realistic
- Dare to be bold and creative!
- Think about access (for people, bikes, cars, buses, boats, etc.)
- Encourage tax-paying, private development
- Find ways to link the waterfront (visually, physically, etc.) to downtown.

Regulatory Realities

Flood Zone

Much ($\pm 90\%$) of the area between the shore and Water Street is in the 100 year flood zone, and is subject to FEMA regulations. Fill is generally not permitted and buildings must be built at least 1 foot above the flood plain (i.e., about 1 foot above Water Street).

Current Zoning

The City’s current zoning ordinance allows a mix of uses in this area, including commercial, retail, offices.

Shoreland Zone

Land near the shoreline is subject to shoreland zoning; generally this means any new building must be set back 75 feet from the shore, unless it’s used for marine purposes. [Of course, the law can be revised.] At present only 40% of a lot can be covered with buildings.

Submerged Lands

Any expansion of a shoreland use into coastal waters requires a Submerged Lands Permit from the Department of Conservation. These permits can be denied.

Department of Environmental Protection

The Department of Environment Protection also regulates construction in the flood zone under the Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA).

WORKSHOP ISSUES/OPPORTUNITIES/CONSTRAINTS

Issues	Opportunities	Constraints
History of Land Use	Learn from . . . build upon	None
Transportation (vehicles)	Brings people, commerce, access	Divides and cuts off
Infrastructure	Sewer/water/road . . . all in place	Some infrastructure old and dated
Public ownership	Upgrade to serve residents/businesses	Is limited . . . little leverage
Regulation	Sets standards; protects environment; can be revised	Can limit development
Private development	Profit for new uses and infrastructure	Lack of public support/funds
Conservation	Protect and enhance scenic and environmental resources	Relies on public and private support
Land/sea connection	Open new markets; tourism? recreation? marine? focus	Most shore in private hands
Access/sidewalks/paths/parks	North/south and east/west linkage	Lack of public ownership
Parking	Create more surface and deck	Obscures views, costly, scale?
Phasing	Essential, practical	N/A
Funding	Tie to local, state, federal sources	Always difficult, but . . .
Land Use/ Markets	Innovate, look for good mix	Focus on the doable
Scale/themes	?	?

COA STUDY: GENERAL FINDINGS (1999)

- History**
- home to Abenaki Indians
 - sawmills and shipbuilding
 - decline in water-related uses
 - current dredging of harbor
 - river (and downtown) was a focal point of region
- Water Street
(Existing Conditions)**
- no common theme
 - not pedestrian friendly
 - profusion of parking and driveways
 - varied building designs
 - “industrial” waterfront
 - no sidewalks on river side
 - lack of character
 - heavy traffic
- Water Street
(Ideas)**
- facilitate access to the riverfront
 - redevelop the Morrison lot
 - create a riverwalk
 - bring back the history
 - upgrade the streetscape
 - respect private property owners
- Visions**
- a walkable city/waterfront
 - the harbor connected to downtown
 - green space along the entire river
 - paths, benches, trees along the river
 - offices, restaurants, and housing along the river
 - commercial development that’s compatible with the river’s environmental, cultural, and recreational assets
 - develop a consensus plan
 - establish museums and educational facilities on the river
 - “capture” through-visitors
 - a place (or places) to go at night
 - activities and uses that are river and pathway related

COA STUDY: SPECIFIC FINDINGS (1999)

- Morrison Lot
(Suggested Goals)**
- public access to river
 - smooth transition from Main Street to riverfront
 - pedestrian friendly
 - community meeting place
 - more green space
 - commercial uses that complement Main Street (e.g., offices and restaurant)
 - farmer’s market ? . . . and parking
- Morrison Lot
(Constraints)**
- existing pump station
 - zoning ? (zoned commercial/light industrial)
 - parking requirements in ordinance too limiting (i.e., require too much parking)
 - shoreland zoning requires:
 - ✓ 100 ft. shore setback
 - ✓ 40% building coverage of lot
 - ✓ 70% total coverage of lot (building and parking)
 - flood plain requirement: buildings be + 1 foot above base flood elevation of 11 feet (what is current elevation of site?)
- Riverwalk Concept**
- it provides green space in downtown
 - it links downtown, Morrison lot, and Harbor Park
 - it provides educational and recreational opportunities
 - murals along trail (on buildings)
 - interpretive sites¹ and river overlooks
 - it is handicapped accessible
 - at constrained (behind building) locations, the trail:
 - is built on top of boulder fill or
 - is built as a raised walk on pilings
- (Note: a sidewalk on the west side of Water Street is deemed unwise because of numerous curb cuts)**
- build a bridge at the cove near the treatment plant or
 - follow the curve of the cove with a path
- Riverwalk
Landowner Options**
- negotiate licensing trail land to City
 - give or sell a “path use” conservation easement
 - outright sale of shorefront land
 - give or sell a scenic easement (on west side)

¹ *Interpretive themes suggested: log driving/lumbering; river dams/mills/hydro; Native American history; the fire of 1933; shipbuilding*

STATEMENTS FROM “DEVELOPING A VISION FOR THE UNION RIVER”

Summary of Statements from “Developing a Vision for the Union River,”
a Forum Held April 15, 1999 and Attended by 31 People.

- Car dealerships and similar businesses have been relocated.
- The waterfront is an integrated scenic, architectural, and natural environment around which other businesses have developed.
- A boardwalk with benches, grass, and tree planting extends from the State Street bridge to the marina.
- The Marina is within walking distance of marine supply shops and other retail stores, restaurants, and services.
- Ellsworth is a destination city and is an increasingly favored destination port city for the yachting community.
- New waterfront development respects its historic past but provides clean modern services and systems.
- The City of Ellsworth needs to take the lead in making the vision a reality.
- Space for boats (and parking).
- Convenient access to the waterfront.
- Adequate finger floats.
- Well supervised harbor.
- Site seeing boats.
- Economic activities compliment public waterfront activities.
- Concentrated economic development next to a scenic attraction.
- A multi-purpose convention center connects High Street to the marina.
- Emphasize a history theme – “Port of Ellsworth.”
- A full service marina.
- Recognize the value of natural resources and habitats.
- The green space is a reason to go downtown.
- The west side is passive and wooded.
- No sewage discharging into the river.

Other documentation on file.