
*ATLANTIC BEACH DISTRICT
MASTER PLAN
DRAFT*

*A Report to: Middletown Planning Board
July 2007*

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MAGUIRE GROUP INC. was founded in 1938, and since that time has grown to become one of the nation's leading Architectural, Engineering, Planning and Construction Management firms. Over 330 professionals and support staff, located in 12 offices throughout the Northeast and the U.S. Virgin Islands, provide a full complement of services. For more information about Maguire, please visit our Web site at www.maguiregroup.com. For more information about this report, please contact: David R. Westcott, AICP, 272-6000, extension 222 or DWestcott@MaguireGroup.com.



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Atlantic Beach District Master Plan DRAFT

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	3
PURPOSE.....	3
STUDY AREA	3
VISION.....	3
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	3
PUBLIC INPUT	6
<i>Public Workshop #1</i>	6
<i>Public Workshop #2</i>	10
DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS	11
MUNICIPAL DATA.....	11
CITY OF NEWPORT.....	11
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND	11
FIELD VISITS	11
FINDINGS.....	12
<i>Base Maps</i>	12
<i>Regulations and Policies</i>	14
Local	14
State Jurisdiction.....	17
CONCLUSIONS	20
EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES	24
LAND USES.....	24
TRAFFIC FLOW	26
<i>Valley Road at Aquidneck Avenue</i>	27
<i>Newport Avenue and Aquidneck Avenue</i>	28
<i>Crescent Road at Aquidneck Avenue</i>	29
<i>Aquidneck Avenue and Purgatory Road</i>	31
DUNLAP WHEELER PARK	32
SIDEWALKS AND STREETScape.....	37
RECOMMENDED PLANS	38
VALLEY ROAD AT AQUIDNECK AVENUE.....	38
AQUIDNECK AVENUE	39
NEWPORT AVENUE.....	40
CRESCENT ROAD	41
PURGATORY ROAD.....	43
DUNLAP WHEELER PARK	44
STREETScape PLAN.....	45
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT.....	46
NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS ASSOCIATION	46
IMPLEMENTATION	48

List of Tables

Table 1. Dimensions for Principal and Accessory Buildings in the Limited Business Zone.....	14
Table 2. Dimensional Standards for Signs in the Limited Business District.....	16
Table 3. Minimum and Maximum Off-Street Parking Requirements for Selected Land Uses	17
Table 4. Information Gathering and Analysis Summary	22

List of Figures

Figure 1. Location Map	4
Figure 2. District Boundaries s.....	5
Figure 3. 2000 Census Geograpahy.....	13
Figure 4. Zoning	15
Figure 5. FEMA FIRM, June 16, 1992.....	18
Figure 6. Freshwater Wetlands Jurisdictional Boundary between CRMC and RIDEM in Middletown	19
Figure 7. Coastal Features	21
Figure 8. Existing land uses of district properties.	25
Figure 9. Valley Road at Aquidneck Avenue	27
Figure 10. Newport Avenue at Aquidneck Avenue.....	29
Figure 11. Crescent Road at Aquidneck Avenue.....	30
Figure 12. Purgatory Road at Aquidneck Avenue.....	32
Figure 13. Dunlap Wheeler Park	33
Figure 14. First concept of reconfiguration of Dunlap Wheeler Park	35
Figure 15. Second concept for reconfiguration of Dunlap Wheeler Park.....	36
Figure 16. Third concept for reconfiguration of Dunlap Wheeler Park.....	36
Figure 17. Recommended roundabout at Valley Road and Aquidneck Avenue.	38
Figure 18. Existing and proposed typical cross section for Aquidneck Avenue	39
Figure 19. Conceptual typical cross section recommended for Aquidneck Avenue.	40
Figure 20. Conceptual illustration of T-intersection and park at Newport and Aquidneck Avenues.	41
Figure 21. Conceptual illustration of reconfigured intersection of Crescent Road and Aquidneck Avenue	42
Figure 22. Conceptual illustration of bump-out at the intersection of Purgatory Road and Aquidneck Avenue.....	43
Figure 23. Conceptual illustration showing reconfiguration of Dunlap Wheeler Park to accommodate a revised parking layout and pedestrian bridge to Easton’s Beach.....	44

Introduction and Background

Purpose

In 2005, the Middletown Planning Board began a process of soliciting input and support from the community for improvements to the Atlantic Beach District. The Town is seeking to enhance the area both as a tourist destination and for local residents. The Town was awarded a Planning Challenge Grant by the Statewide Planning Program in 2006 that provided partial funding from the US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration for the development of this master plan. The *Atlantic Beach District Master Plan* will serve as the primary document guiding the transformation of this area into a vibrant, walkable commercial area, capitalizing on its relatively dense development pattern and proximity to local beaches, historic Newport and other attractions. The Town expects to use this Master Plan, in part, to seek capital grants to implement recommended improvements within the public rights-of-way, and to guide private investment and development.

Study Area

The Atlantic Beach area is located in the southern end of Middletown, abutting the municipal boundary with Newport (Figure 1). The Atlantic Beach District begins in the north at the merge of Valley Road (Route 214) and Aquidneck Avenue (Route 138A) (Figure 2). North of this intersection is the Aquidneck Island Office Park. The district is bordered by Easton Pond, which is part of the Newport public water supply system, to the west and Easton's Bay to the south. Easton's (First) Beach is southwest of the district.

Vision

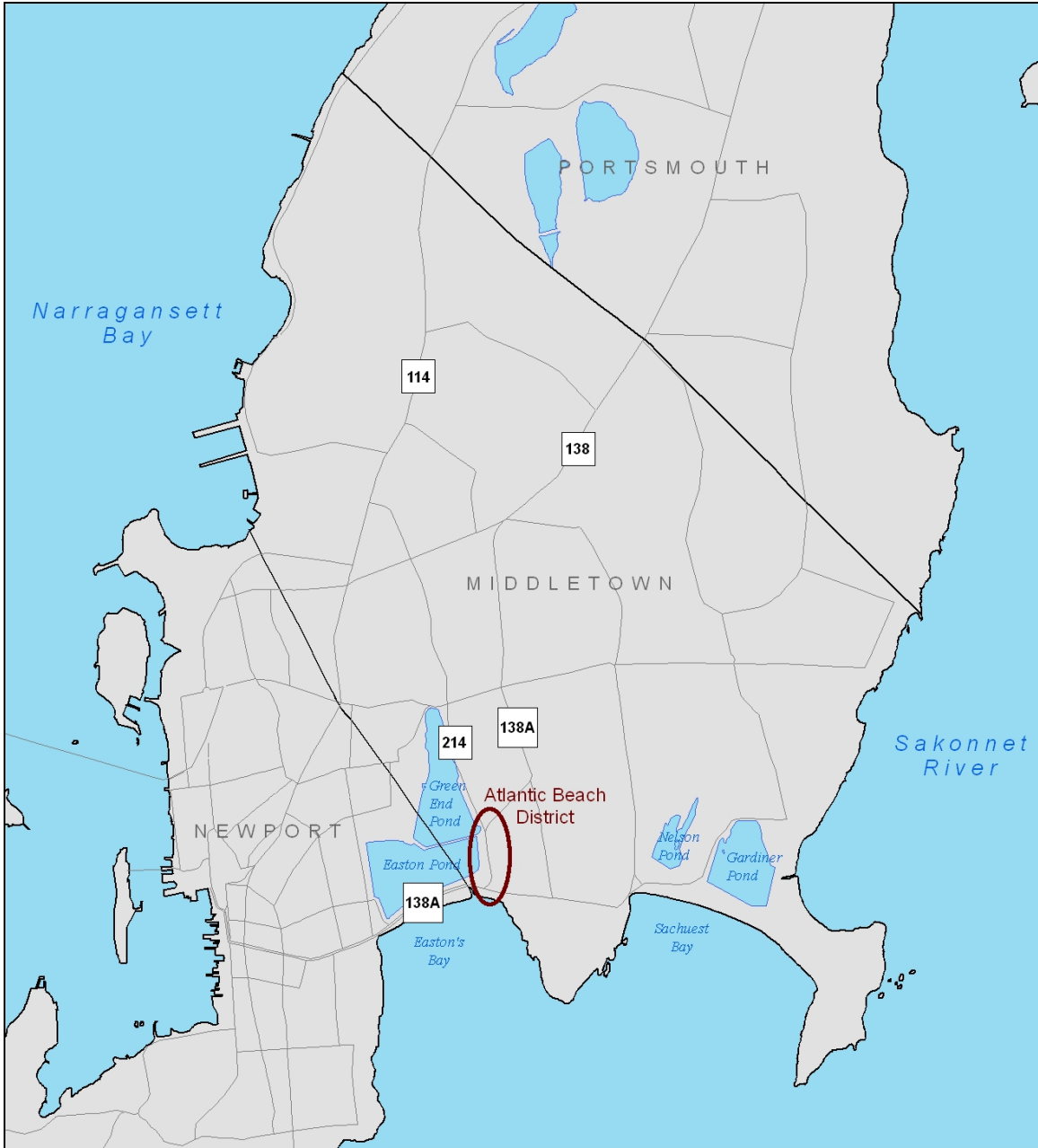
The Middletown Planning Board has established the following vision for the district:

...to become a more pedestrian-oriented, attractive and vibrant commercial village to serve the influx of seasonal visitors, the surrounding residential neighborhoods, and the town.

Goals and Objectives

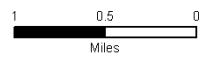
The following goals were adopted to achieve this vision:

- Develop and implement safety and aesthetic improvements to promote pedestrian activity that will support local small businesses, including streetscape improvements and pedestrian circulation throughout the district;
- Study traffic flow and parking within the district to provide safety and efficiency
- Identify opportunities to capitalize on the proximity of the district to beaches, hotels and other attractions for the benefit of local residents and the town business tax base
- Identify options to promote private development that will be consistent with the vision for the district, including opportunities to promote an appropriate mix of uses and building and site design.



ATLANTIC BEACH DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

**Figure 1
LOCATION MAP**

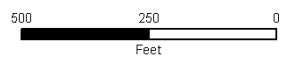


Data sources: Middletown GIS and RIGIS

Disclaimer: Some of the data herein was created by the Town of Middletown (the "Town") or acquired by the Town from other sources. The data are preliminary and have not been thoroughly reviewed, certified by a licensed engineer or surveyor, and/or accepted by the Town of Middletown. The Town, or the Town's other data providers shall not be liable to the user or subsequent transferees of said data for any damages including, without limitation, incidental or consequential damages, resulting from the user's use of or inability to use the original or modified data contained herein. All use of and reliance on this data, or modified data shall be at the user's sole risk and for general planning purposes only.



ATLANTIC BEACH DISTRICT MASTER PLAN
Figure 2
DISTRICT BOUNDARIES



Data sources: Middletown GIS and RIGIS
Aerial: 2005

Public Input

Public Workshop #1

A public workshop was held to solicit public involvement in the development of the Master Plan. In preparation for the public workshop, properties located within the district boundaries received a letter introducing the study and letting them know that they would be receiving a phone call from the hired consultant to discuss the issues of the Atlantic Beach area. The letter also invited them to contact the hired consultant themselves, if they chose to. Numerous business and property owners were reached and multiple telephone and personal interviews were conducted. Representatives from the City of Newport and the Newport County Chamber of Commerce were also contacted. The Newport Daily News also ran a story to publicize the event on February 22, 2007.

The first public workshop was held on February 28, 2007 with approximately 60 attendees representing the business and residential property owners within the district and the adjacent neighborhoods. There were also representatives from the City of Newport (Planning Department) and the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission. Maguire Group Inc. and Gates Leighton and Associates gave a brief presentation to explain the goals and objectives of the master plan study, the delineated boundaries of the Atlantic Beach District, and provide an overview of the public input activities. This was followed by an open floor discussion by attendees to state their views of the study and district in front of the larger group. Then the participants were asked to visit four stations set up at each corner of the room.

Station 1: “This place right here”

Participants were asked to identify specific master plan issues and mark them on a 22” x 36” printed aerial photograph of the district. Specific questions to participants focused on movement through the area (traffic, pedestrians and bicycles), land uses that existed and were needed, and focal points. Viewing the aerial photograph of the district gave participants a different perspective of the area. Marking the maps as a group allowed for discussion of issues and possible solutions that would be considered acceptable by the public.

Station 2: “Spend \$1 Million”

Participants were asked assign dollar amounts, or percentages of a total of one million dollars to areas where improvements should be made in the district. A pre-defined list was provided that included the focus areas of the study and additional space was provided to allow participants to write in their own suggestions.

Station 3: “Other Places”

Participants were asked to name other places they have visited that they felt the Atlantic Beach District could be like or is currently similar to. They were also asked about building styles they prefer, for example which buildings they liked or did not like in the district, in town or on Aquidneck Island. Again, this discussion among the group allowed for dialogue between participants.

Station 4: “Before and After”

Participants were asked to sketch something within the district they felt needed improvement on one side of a paper. They were then asked to draw a sketch showing how they felt it could be improved on the other. Participants were then asked to describe their sketches to the facilitator and to the group at the station. The group then discussed the concepts provided.

Summary

The input received from the public workshop was two-fold. First, and most importantly, it provides public involvement, which is essential in the planning process. Perceptions and opinions of the area, both good and bad, assist in the development of concepts and recommendations. Secondly, it either confirmed or negated the issues identified in the field. What one person sees as an impediment may be an asset to another.

As with most public opinion sessions, there were some contradictory views presented and a few statements were of questionable veracity or were outside the scope of this study. Overall, however, the participants were eager to contribute and provided excellent information that will prove invaluable in developing a Master Plan for the District. Statements from the workshop are provided here as a record of the meeting.

Access Management

- Access to residences in the district needs to be maintained.

Aesthetics/Landscaping

- There needs to be more landscaping, specifically at the intersection of Valley Road and Aquidneck Avenue.
- Utilities should be put underground.
- The area needs more elements to make it attractive.
- Landscaping should screen parked cars.

Building and Site Design

- Maintain the views and vistas of the water by leaving the spaces between buildings (Aquidneck Avenue to Easton Pond) (small scale).
- Keep buildings set back from the sidewalk.
- Public safety issues need to be considered in building placement and design.
- The new hotels have established a theme with their scale and style and they should be used as references.
- The shingle style is attractive and appropriate for the area.

Circulation/Traffic

- Traffic volume was not specifically seen as a major issue in the area, but circulation problems were reported.
- Heavy traffic is typically seen fewer days as the “season” gets shorter – June through August and mostly on the weekends.
- Crescent Road is used as a short cut to avoid the light at Aquidneck Avenue.
- It is difficult to make a left onto Aquidneck Avenue from Briarwood Avenue.

- Wave Avenue is also used to avoid the light at Aquidneck Avenue.
- Traffic lane changes need to be addressed before considering more businesses.
- Maybe Wave Avenue should be one-way south and Aquidneck Avenue should be one-way north.
- Do away with the merge from Memorial Boulevard to Purgatory Road.
- Make Wave Avenue the thru street and Aquidneck Avenue pedestrian only.
- Speeding is an issue on Wave Avenue.
- There was discussion of running a shuttle from the area to Newport – doesn't have to necessarily be RIPTA, availability of Newport Trolley.
- Wave Avenue should be more perpendicular to Aquidneck Avenue.
- Make the intersection of Aquidneck Avenue and Purgatory Road more of a T-intersection with a right turn only lane from the west.
- When traffic is heavy on Aquidneck Avenue, people cut through the neighborhood, using Wolcott or Elery Avenues.

Land Uses

- Weekly rentals in the adjacent neighborhood are concentrated along Purgatory Road and in the Easton's Point neighborhood.
- There need to be hotels that can accommodate longer stays.
- More hotels are not needed.

Master Plan Document and Preparation

- Participants were concerned that eminent domain might be used to implement the master plan and did not favor use of eminent domain in the District.
- Where will the money come from to implement the plan?
- What is the timeframe to develop the plan?
- The study is too focused because the area is a pivotal point between several areas in Middletown, almost like a gateway. This role needs to be expanded.
- How realistic can our expectations be that the plan will be implemented?
- The master plan needs to have implementation strategies.

Other comments

- Local hotel owners should send patrons to restaurants in the area.
- Local hotel owners should also encourage their patrons to leave their cars by taking cabs into Newport or by walking to local businesses.

Parking

- Aquidneck School on Reservoir Avenue is used as parking for the beach and bars/restaurants in the area.
- New businesses will not be attracted to the area if there is no parking.
- Some suggested parking garages others did not want them considered.
- Memorial Boulevard in Newport should be narrowed to two lanes and the other two lanes on the northerly side abutting the pond should be parking lot.
- The Town should purchase properties behind commercial areas to provide parking.
- Business owners tell their employees to park in the neighborhoods and there is little enforcement of existing parking regulations. Would a shuttle bus be

- appropriate?
- Questions were raised if parking could be shared with Newport at Easton's Beach.

Public Spaces

- Accurate locations of public rights-of-way in the area needed to be clearly marked.
- Fix Dunlap-Wheeler Park.
- There needs to be a footbridge from Easton's Beach parking lot to Dunlap-Wheeler Park.
- Make parking at Dunlap-Wheeler Park for residents only.

Signage

- There needs to be better signage on Memorial Boulevard into Middletown as the roadway goes from two lanes into one.
- Existing traffic signing is ineffective – people are not yielding on Purgatory Road and it is unclear that Rt 138A continues north.
- Traveling south of Aquidneck Avenue north of the district, traffic is directed through the district and downtown Newport to access the Newport Bridge.
- A signage ordinance for the district would bring a sense of place. Malibu was mentioned as an example.

Walkability/Pedestrians

- The area should be enjoyed by the neighborhood by making it easier to walk around and safer.
- There needs to be more pedestrian links between the neighborhood and Aquidneck Avenue.
- The sidewalks are not wide enough and how do you create more space to make them wider.
- Put a walkway on the berm around Easton Pond.
- It is difficult for pedestrians to cross at crosswalks because cars do not stop.
- It is difficult to cross at the Aquidneck Island/Purgatory Road light.
- The sidewalks are in horrible condition.
- The crosswalk in front of Easton's Point Pub is too dark at night.
- Crosswalks should stand out more, textured, etc.

Water Quality

- Will the water quality issue be addressed by the time this study is done?
- Beach contamination needs to be addressed.
- Cover or reroute the pond overflow.
- Pipe the overflow underground into the ocean.

Participants in the public workshop were sincere and helpful. They were passionate about their concerns and seemed clearly able to articulate what they felt defined the District as a place. There was a lot of agreement on the issues at the workshop even though the concepts presented and the solutions proposed varied widely.

Public Workshop #2

A second workshop was held on May 24 at Middletown Town Hall. During the workshop, the findings and conclusions of the data collection and analysis were presented, including a summary of the first workshop and interviews conducted. Based on this input, preliminary concepts were drafted and offered for review that evening. An open discussion followed with questions and answers. Attendees provided comments on aspects of alternatives that were preferred and those that were not desirable. Feedback received during this meeting was critical to the concepts recommended in this report. A summary of those presented at the workshop are described in detail in the sections “Evaluation of Alternatives” and “Recommended Plans” of this document.

Data Gathering and Analysis

Municipal Data

The Middletown Planning Department provided geographic information system (GIS) data and 2005 aerial orthophotography. These were used to develop working base maps. To supplement these data, new and proposed developments not shown on the orthophotography were added and recent design plans for the Dunlap Wheeler Park were obtained to be incorporated into concept alternatives. The Town also provided a traffic study prepared for the developer of a proposed hotel in the district.

City of Newport

The City of Newport was contacted to obtain any information relevant to the study area and to participate in meetings and workshops. Outreach was done to the Planning, Public Works, and Parks, Recreation and Tourism Departments. Because Aquidneck Avenue and Memorial Boulevard are state-maintained roads (Route 138A), traffic data were not available from the city for these roads. The Newport Water Department is concluding studies relating to water quality concerns at Easton Pond. These reports will be available in the near future and will be reviewed as they relate to the Atlantic Beach District Master Plan. The Newport County Chamber of Commerce was also approached and asked to participate.

State of Rhode Island

Data were also collected from the state. The Department of Transportation (RI DOT) provided plat maps for the right-of-way along Aquidneck Avenue. These maps show the state highway line and dimensions within the state ROW. Also available were construction plans for improvements to the roadway, which show a wealth of information including lane widths, sidewalk widths, radii, and other roadway dimensions.

Data from the Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS) Program were used to supplement the municipal GIS, particularly:

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain data
- RI Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) public access points and coastal features
- Historic and cultural points
- Conservation parks and lands of state, local, and non-governmental agencies
- Wetlands
- Soil characteristics
- RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) bus routes and stops (June 2006)
- Bike paths
- Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes for State roads in the area

Field Visits

The project team conducted field visits of the area on December 12 and January 11. Field notes and photographs documented the visits.

Findings

Base Maps

The base maps used for analysis are provided in the Appendix. The Atlantic Beach area is located in the southern end of Middletown, abutting the municipal boundary with Newport (Figure 1). The Atlantic Beach District begins in the north at the merge of Valley Road (Route 214) and Aquidneck Avenue (Route 138A) (Figure 2). North of this intersection is the Aquidneck Island Office Park. The district is bordered by Easton Pond, which is part of the Newport public water supply system, to the west. The pond is surrounded by a berm with a toe drain that floods periodically. There is a rough walking path along the top of the berm which can be reached by crossing the toe drain via makeshift plank bridges.

Purgatory Road crosses west/east along the southern end of the district from the municipal boundary. Memorial Boulevard extends from Newport to Crescent Road where the district ends. Route 138A continues via Purgatory Road from the north (Aquidneck Avenue) and west into Newport on Memorial Boulevard. Wave Avenue is completely within the district on the southwest end and Crescent Road enters into the district from Purgatory Road at the southeast. Briarwood and Newport Avenues are perpendicular to Aquidneck Avenue and connect to the residential neighborhood that borders the district to the east. Atlantic Beach is located at the southern end of the district where it abuts Easton's Beach (also known as First Beach).

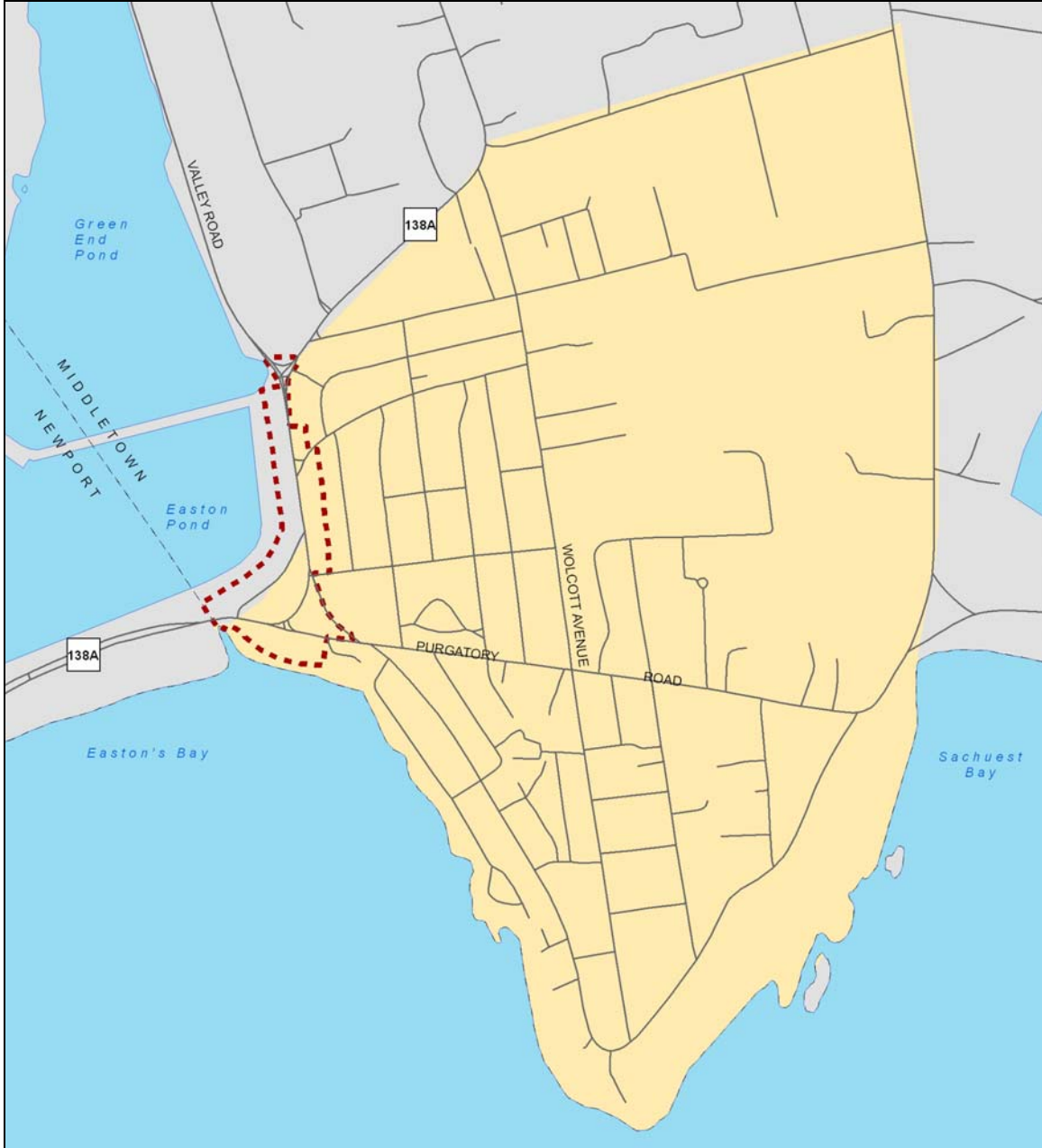
Aquidneck Avenue is the major through-way of the district. It is a two-lane road with a posted speed limit of 25 miles per hour. The roadway has sidewalks that average about four-foot wide on both sides and there is no on-street parking. The right of way (ROW) ranges from 40 feet to 50 feet in width.

Memorial Boulevard from Newport into Middletown merges from two lanes into one at the town line, where it becomes Purgatory Road. Purgatory Road continues as a two lane road and has four-foot wide sidewalks from the town line to Aquidneck Avenue and no sidewalks beyond that. There is no parking allowed on Purgatory Road. The ROW ranges from 38 feet wide near Crescent Road to nearly 54 feet at the town line.

The intersection of Purgatory Road and Aquidneck Avenue is a signalized intersection. Westbound traffic on Purgatory Road is controlled by the signal and directed to Aquidneck Avenue northbound. Eastbound traffic on Purgatory Road is merged with traffic from Aquidneck Avenue southbound onto Purgatory Road.

Wave Avenue and Crescent Road are both two-lane roads without sidewalks. Neither has lane stripes and there is no parking allowed on either side. The ROW of Wave Avenue varies from 40 feet 52 feet wide. Crescent Road's ROW is narrower at 24 feet wide.

According to the 2000 Census, the population of the adjacent residential neighborhoods shown in Figure 3 was 2,314. There were 1,176 dwelling units, single and multi-family structures. Of these units, about half (52%) were owner-occupied (property owner lived on the property), one third (36%) were rented, and the remaining 12% were vacant. Vacant is defined by the US Census as either available for rent with no occupant, seasonal rental, or other condition where no one lived at the property.



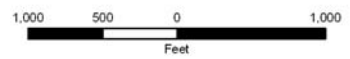
ATLANTIC BEACH DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

Figure 3
2000 CENSUS GEOGRAPHY



Legend

- Roads
- - - Municipal Boundary
- Surface Water
- Census Tract 404 Block Group 003



Data sources: Middletown GIS and RIGIS

The district is a mix of small businesses and residences. While the business types are diverse, the majority of the commercial space is occupied by restaurants and hotels/motels. Most have on-site parking. Other businesses include office space, service sector businesses (i.e. gasoline station, laundry) and retail/convenience. The residences within the district are also diverse in their occupancy, including owner-occupied residences, year-round rentals, seasonal rentals and seasonally occupied units.

The Atlantic Beach District is a coastal community. Most of the district is located within the 100-year floodplain and/or velocity zone, as delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) (1992). Natural features in the district and its vicinity include Easton Pond and the stream that abuts the berm, marine rocky shore and coastal beach. The RI Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) classifies the southwestern area of the district as barrier beach with a hard shoreline feature, identified as a revetment and bulkhead from Atlantic Beach to Easton’s Beach.

Regulations and Policies

Local

The district is zoned **Limited Business** (Figure 4). According to the Middletown Zoning Ordinance, the types of businesses permitted would be neighborhood-oriented, such as convenience or day-to-day shopping needs, and specialized business uses. Residential uses and hotels are also allowed by special use permit from the Middletown Zoning Board of Review. Most professional services and office-oriented businesses are allowed. Dimensional requirements for the Limited Business Zone are shown in Table 1.

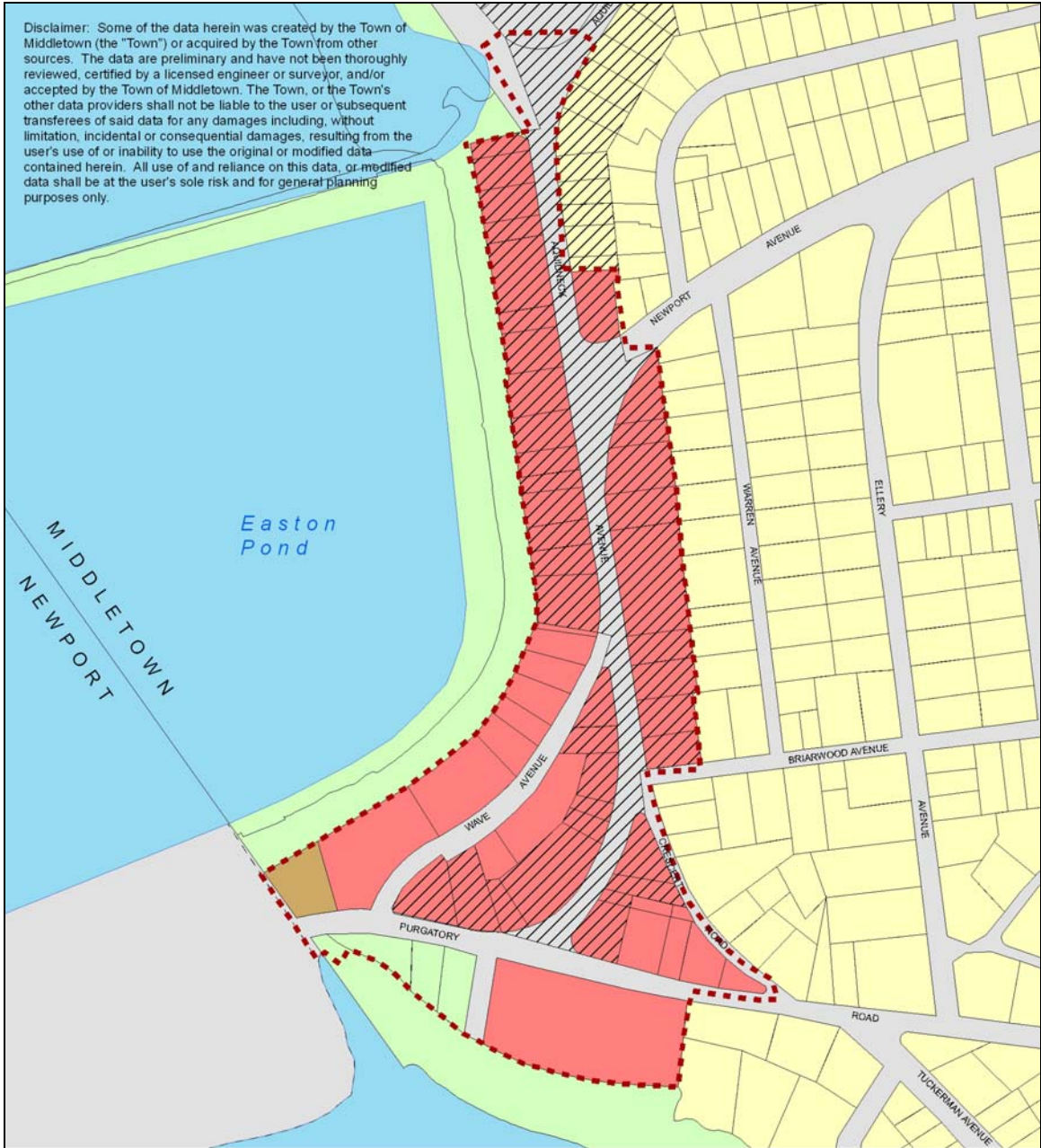
Table 1. Dimensions for Principal and Accessory Buildings in the Limited Business Zone

	MINIMUM LOT SIZE		MAXIMUM PERCENTAGE OF LOT TO BE OCCUPIED	MAXIMUM HEIGHT OF BUILDING		MINIMUM YARD DIMENSION			ACCESS. BUILDINGS MINIMUM DISTANCE IN FEET TO	
	AREA (S.F.)	WIDTH/FRONT-AGE (FT)		PRINCIPAL & ACCESS. BUILDINGS	PRIN. (FT.)	ACCESS (FT.)	FRONT (FT.)	SIDE (FT.)	REAR (FT.)	SIDE LOT LINES
Single-family dwelling	10,000	100	25%	35	15	10	15	30	20	10
Two-family dwelling	15,000	120	25%	35	15	10	20	30	20	10
Multi-family dwelling structure	40,000	150	30%	35	20	10	25	40	25	10
Miniature Golf, driving range, pitch & putt, etc.	80,000	200	20%	40	20	10	30	50	25	5
Small-scale Shopping center	20,000	120	25%	40	20	10	20	50	25	5

Source: Middletown Zoning Ordinance, October 30, 2006

The abutting neighborhood is zoned R-10, which is a medium-high density area. In this zone, minimum lot size for a single-family residence is 10,000 square feet, or 4.4 dwelling units per acre.

The Atlantic Beach District is also contained within a **Traffic Sensitive District** (TSD). The Town has established the TSD for the following purposes:



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ATLANTIC BEACH DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

Figure 4
ZONING



Legend

- Surface Water
- Approximate parcel boundaries
- Atlantic Beach District
- Limited Business
- Open Space
- Public
- High Density Residential (R-10)
- Traffic Sensitive District



Data sources: Middletown GIS and RIGIS

- To facilitate movement of traffic along major roadways in a safe and orderly manner
- To reduce the number and increase the spacing of driveways which may disrupt traffic flow
- To reduce infringement on the rights of the public to travel roadways in a safe manner, while at the same time providing for adequate ingress and egress to properties
- To protect public safety along major thoroughfares where accidents have frequently occurred.

The minimum lot frontage in the TSD is to be 300 feet and only one driveway or curb cut per original lot (should lots be merged) is permitted.

The **Sign Ordinance** outlines what signs are permitted and sets standards for their appearance. Being in a TSD also imposes specific requirements and dimensional standards for signs for the Atlantic Beach District (Table 2). Signs are required to be at a smaller scale, made of wood or metal, and may have no more than three colors. Signs with interior lighting are prohibited.

Table 2. Dimensional Standards for Signs in the Limited Business District

FREESTANDING POLE SIGNS	
Height (maximum feet)	12
Area (maximum square feet)	12
Ground Clearance (minimum feet)	7
OTHER FREESTANDING SIGNS	
Height (maximum feet)	4
Area (maximum square feet)	24
Ground Clearance (minimum feet)	0

Source: Middletown Zoning Ordinance, October 30, 2006

The Town of Middletown has established **Commercial Development Design Standards** that apply town-wide. The local zoning ordinance outlines the objectives of the town with regards to site design (layout, parking, circulation, utilities, exterior lighting and infrastructure), architecture (building elements and materials), landscaping (plantings, trees, screening, buffers and views), environmental impacts and signage.

The **Off-Street Parking and Loading Ordinance** also affects businesses within the district by establishing the allowable number of off-street parking and loading facilities by business type. This ordinance sets standards for these improvements, including location, minimum and maximum number of parking spaces, and dimensional requirements. Typical requirements that would apply to the Atlantic Beach District, based on the existing land uses, are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Minimum and Maximum Off-Street Parking Requirements for Selected Land Uses

Type of Use	Minimum Parking Spaces Required
Gas Station/Mini Mart	1 space for each employee plus 4 fore each service bay
Restaurants, taverns, etc.	1 space for each 3 persons of total capacity
Small Scale Shopping Center	3 for each 1,000 sf of gross leasable floor area
General Retail	4 spaces for each 1,000 sf of gross leasable floor area
Offices (professional services)	3 for each 1,000 sf of gross leasable floor area
Hotel/Motel with restaurant/meeting room	5 spaces plus 1 space per unit
Hotel/Motel only	4 spaces plus 1 per unit
Residential Dwelling	2 spaces per dwelling

Source: Middletown Zoning Ordinance, October 30, 2006

As noted above, much of the Atlantic Beach District is located in the 100-year floodplain and parts are in the velocity zone. These areas are subject to regulations under the town’s **Floodplain Ordinance**. The ordinance requires new development and substantial improvements to meet the building inspector’s requirements for building construction. The lowest occupied floor, including the basement, must be above the level of the base flood elevation or the structure must be flood-proofed according to the Rhode Island State Building Code. In the Atlantic Beach area, the base flood elevation ranges from 13 to 19 feet above mean sea level (NGVD) in the southern and western portions of the district (Figure 5). In general, the land surface ranges in elevation from sea level at the beach to roughly 20 feet above sea level at the northern limits. Since the average elevation within the district is about 10 feet, or 3 to 9 feet below 100 year flood elevation, most new structures must have elevated first floors.

State Jurisdiction

Aquidneck Avenue is a state road designated Route 138A. Therefore, any proposed improvements or changes on the road ROW will require participation by **Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT)** for implementation, both administratively and financially. RIDOT has expressed a willingness to support municipalities that develop master plans for a roadways. While no specific improvements are presently proposed within Atlantic Beach, it is reasonable to assume that, within the next 20 years, RIDOT will undertake roadway improvements in the area. Having a District highway plan can assist RIDOT in its decision-making process; provide guidance and show that the town is proactive. For example, RIDOT can consult a master plan when approving Physical Alteration Permits, which are required when a new curb cut is proposed on a state roadway. Additionally, RIDOT must also ensure that sidewalks on state roadways are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To be ADA compliant, sidewalks must at least provide a minimum width free of obstructions and be equipped with curb ramps. Sidewalk reconstruction within the District will be necessary to provide ADA compliance.

Environmentally, the Atlantic Beach District falls within jurisdiction of the Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) and the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC). Projects affecting inland wetlands are reviewed and approved by RIDEM. Projects that may affect wetlands in the vicinity of the coast are reviewed and approved by CRMC. The boundary between CRMC and RIDEM jurisdiction, as show in Figure 6, follows Aquidneck Avenue from Valley Road south,

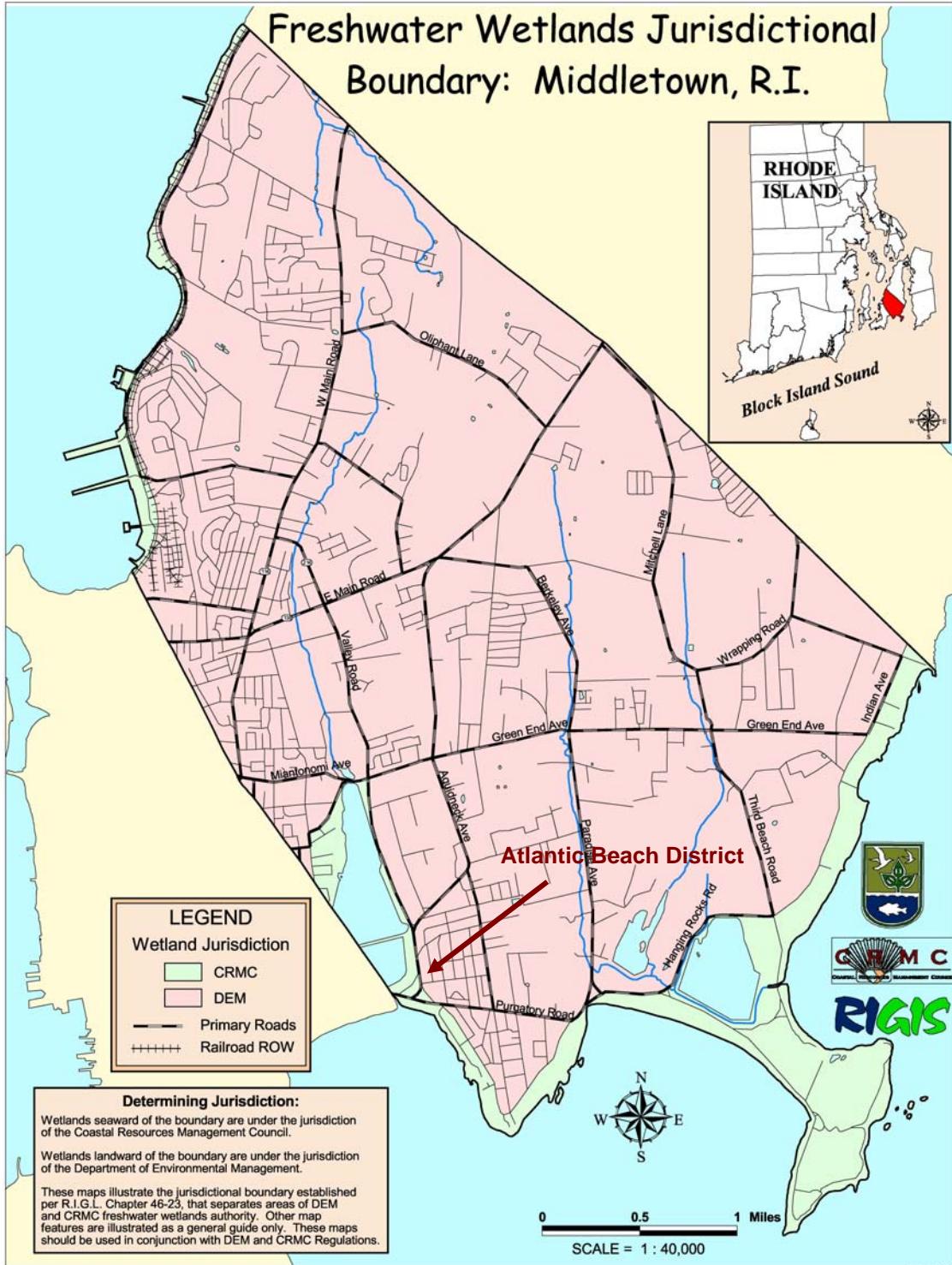


Figure 6. Freshwater Wetlands Jurisdictional Boundary between CRMC and RIDEM in Middletown

then Crescent Road to the southeast. Projects that may affect coastal features, shown in Figure 7, and all projects that are within 200 feet of a coastal feature, must be reviewed and approved by CRMC. CRMC reviews projects for their impacts on wetlands, natural resources, water-dependent uses in the area, and public access to the coast.

Conclusions

The Atlantic Beach District serves the seasonal visitors to the area and the abutting residential neighborhoods in two different ways. Existing businesses, such as the hotels, provide an atmosphere for tourists who want to experience a beach neighborhood and low-key vacation. Many business owners know each other and some proprietors recommend other establishments in the area, so there is a sense of an informal business community within the district. Residents frequent local businesses as well, helping to sustain them in the off season. During the public workshop, there was a sense that the area has the basis to be a thriving commercial area, and the businesses and residences want to see more attention paid to improving circulation, both for pedestrians and traffic, and improving aesthetics and landscaping. Equally important, people want to maintain views of Easton Pond and the beaches and clearly define links and access to them. These are the natural features that give this area a sense of place and should be used as a stepping-stone in the development of conceptual designs.

Table 4 provides a summary of the key findings of the information gathering and analysis phase of the Atlantic Beach District Master Plan study.

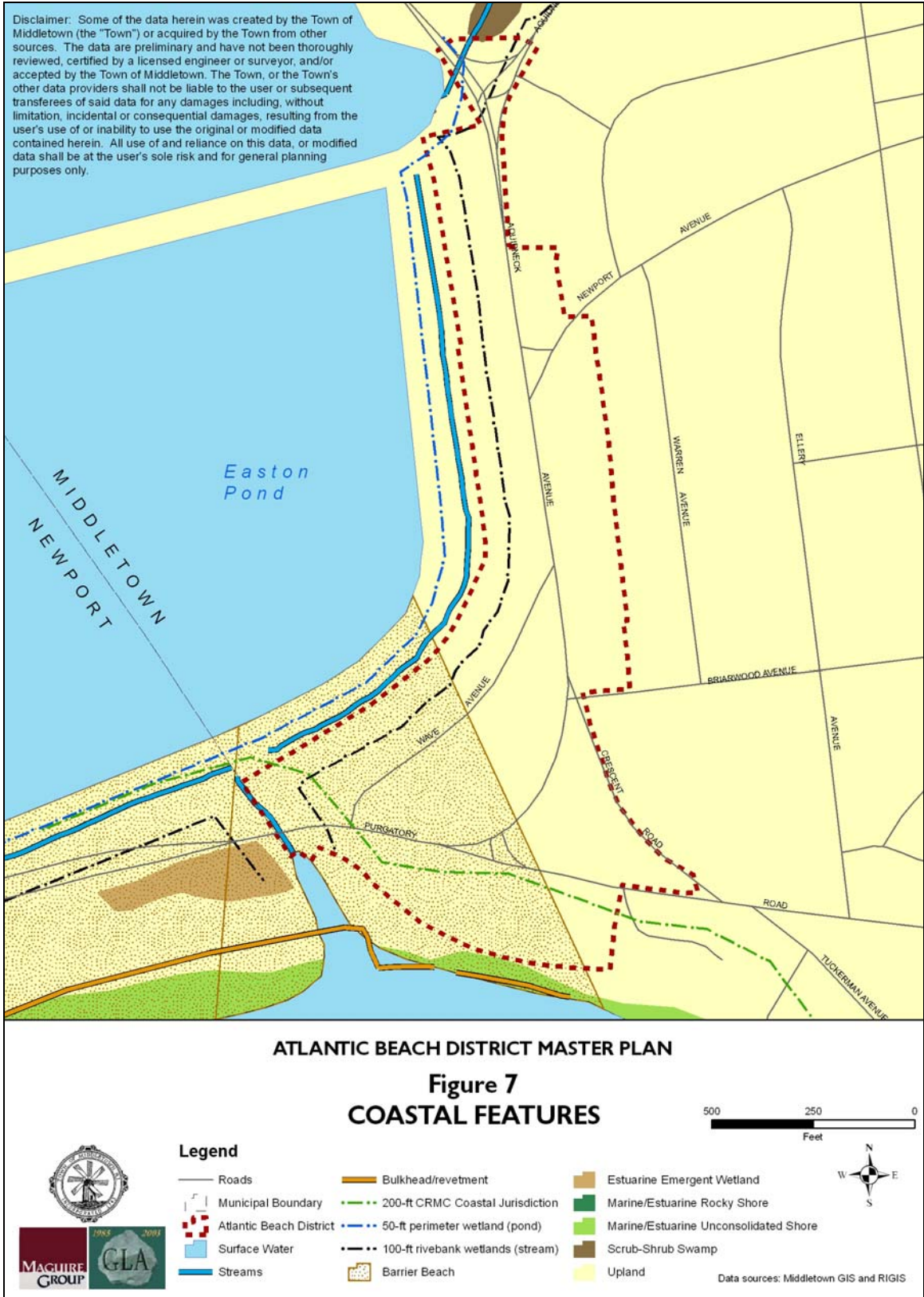


Table 4. Information Gathering and Analysis Summary

Focus Area	Existing Conditions	Issues of Concern
Congestion and Traffic Flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aquidneck Avenue is a state roadway (Rt 138A). ▪ Local roadways in the district are Crescent Road and Wave Avenue ▪ Overlay zone: Traffic Sensitive District (TSD) ▪ Purgatory Road from Newport (Memorial Boulevard), two lanes into one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crescent Road, Briarwood and Aquidneck Avenues meet awkwardly ▪ Crescent Road used as a cut-thru street to avoid light at Purgatory Road and Aquidneck Avenue ▪ Wave Avenue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A cut-thru street to avoid Aquidneck Avenue/Purgatory Road light ○ At an angle with Purgatory Road ○ Speeding ▪ Deliveries to businesses need to be considered ▪ The light at Aquidneck Avenue and Purgatory Road <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lane identification for the left turn from Aquidneck to Purgatory can be unclear ○ Traffic on Purgatory traveling eastbound does not merge with traffic from Aquidneck Avenue (left turn) ▪ Neighborhood streets are used to avoid intersection of Aquidneck Avenue and Purgatory Road when traffic is heavy ▪ Signing directing traffic is unclear
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parking exists for individual businesses ▪ No on-street parking on any streets within the area ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parking on lawns and sidewalks ▪ Some businesses have limited parking to none ▪ In the summer, Aquidneck School on Reservoir Avenue is used for parking (grass area/athletic fields) ▪ Business employees parking on neighborhood streets ▪ Enforcement of existing parking regulations
Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sidewalks along Purgatory Road to Aquidneck Avenue, along Aquidneck Avenue to Valley Road ▪ No sidewalks on Wave Avenue and Crescent Road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encroachment of buildings into sidewalk blocks “view corridor” and limits width of sidewalk significantly ▪ Sidewalks are not ADA compliant (curbs, width) ▪ In some locations no buffer/clear definition between pedestrian and car spaces (gas station, parking lots) ▪ Sidewalks need to be clearly defined ▪ Crosswalks are not yielded to, not very well light at night
Land uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zoned for Limited Business and abuts R ▪ Mix of uses – hotels, restaurants, limited retail, residences ▪ Abuts residential neighborhoods ▪ Beaches – Atlantic and Easton’s (First) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The park can be used to a greater advantage ▪ The public access points need to be clearly defined ▪ The public has an interest in making use of the berm around Easton Pond as a public ROW

Focus Area	Existing Conditions	Issues of Concern
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Easton Pond ▪ Dunlap-Wheeler Park 	
Building Design, Signs, and Landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Newly built structures have a similar style – wood-shingled exteriors reminiscent of colonial New England ▪ Mix of building styles ▪ Adopt-a-spot is maintained locally ▪ Some businesses and residences have landscaping (shrubbery, plantings) ▪ Some business signs are internally light and non-conforming – grandfathered; also greater height 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As buildings are renovated, they need to incorporate similar design elements ▪ Landscaping elements need to be introduced ▪ Views of the pond and bay need to be maintained as new developments are proposed
Streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lighting is “cobra-style,” overhead on utilities poles (west side of Aquidneck Avenue) ▪ Mailboxes are within sidewalk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No trash receptacles ▪ Lighting is for car traffic and not pedestrians

Evaluation of Alternatives

The Atlantic Beach District Master Plan embodies the vision of the Town along with that of the businesses and residents of the area to make it more pedestrian, attractive, cohesive community. The master plan is presented as separate elements, such as land use or traffic flow; however, they should not be taken in isolation. Each overlaps and supports the ideas and concepts of elements to create a holistic vision of the area.

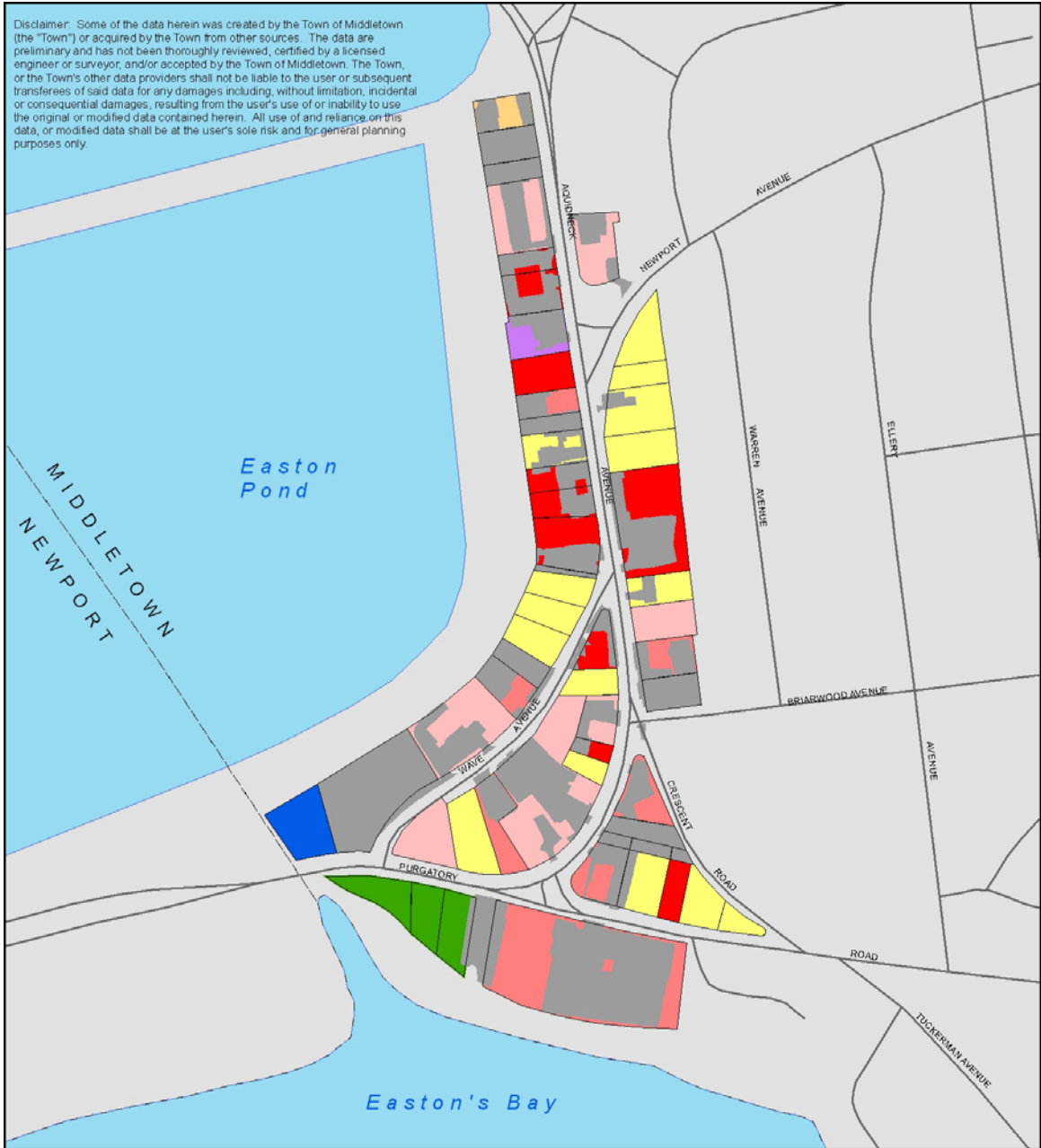
Land Uses

Figure 8 shows existing land uses in the District. The district includes 58 separate properties. Land uses are summarized in Table 5 below. Apart from wetlands, dominant uses in the District are restaurant (17.2%), hotel/motel (16.1%), residential (15.8%), and parking (9.9%). Retail uses occupy only 6 parcels or about 5.7% of the properties in the District.

Table 5: Land Use in the Atlantic Beach District

Land Use	No. of Parcels	Area (s.f.)	Area (acres)	Area (%)
Hotel/Motel	7	138,392	3.2	16.1
Light Industrial	1	12,116	0.3	1.4
Municipal	1	15,128	0.3	1.8
Office	1	8,857	0.2	1.0
Park	3	29,344	0.7	3.4
Parking	11	84,815	1.9	9.9
Residential	15	135,648	3.1	15.8
Restaurant	7	147,536	3.4	17.2
Retail	6	48,922	1.1	5.7
Catering	1	10,369	0.2	1.2
Gas Station	2	15,450	0.4	1.8
Retail/Restaurant	1	34,037	0.8	4.0
Wetland	2	178,254	4.1	20.8
Total	58	858,868	19.7	100.0

The relatively high concentration of restaurants and hotel uses is indicative of the tourist driven economy of the District. These uses, especially the hotels, serve tourists and visitors more than they serve local residents. A higher concentration of retail uses and fewer hotels and restaurants would normally be expected in a village center that primarily served local residents.



ATLANTIC BEACH DISTRICT MASTER PLAN
Figure 8
EXISTING LAND USES OF DISTRICT PROPERTIES



Legend

Roads	Light Industrial	Restaurant
Municipal Boundary	Office	Commercial (all other)
Surface Water	Parking	Municipal
Not within district	Residential	Park
	Hotel/Motel	



500 250 0
Feet

Data sources: Middletown GIS and RIGIS

This suggests that, in order to more effectively serve the needs of local residents, the Town should encourage additional retail uses within the District. That, in turn, fits well with the desire expressed by some local residents for additional retail uses in the District such as a convenience store (“milk store”), sundries market and/or a drug store. These uses could easily be adapted to serve both local residents and tourists.

It is also likely that the location of the District within the floodplain has had an impact on land use. New construction must abide by development restrictions that require the first occupied floor of new structures to be above the 100 year floodplain elevation. Much of the District is at an elevation around 10 feet above sea level, with floodplain elevations ranging from 13 to 19 feet above sea level. This compels new construction to be raised above street level, limiting the potential for street level retail construction in much of the District. New retail uses in the District would have to be located in the northern and eastern areas outside the floodplain or where the ground elevation is close enough to the floodplain elevation to permit storefront access relatively close to grade.

The zoning within the District (see Zoning above) is generally appropriate for the types of uses that exist within the area and for the types of uses that should be encouraged to meet the Town’s goals for the District. However, a review of the Zoning Ordinance indicates that some uses are permitted by special permit that would not contribute to these goals. In particular, the Limited Business zone permits some uses that are more typically associated with industrial or general commercial zones such as production and assembly uses and commercial storage facilities that would not effectively contribute to the village character or pedestrian scale that the Town is seeking to create. The Town should consider limiting these types of uses either by denying special permits that are not consistent with the District Plan or by modifying the zoning regulations to restrict these uses within the Atlantic Beach District.

Traffic Flow

The roads within the District carry heavy concentrations of traffic because of the District’s location adjacent to the beach and to major tourist attractions in Newport. Many drivers attempt to avoid congestion on other routes to Newport by using Aquidneck Avenue as a “back door” approach to the City. This results in a high volume of through traffic, complicates peak hour congestion and, especially during off-peak hours, results in many vehicles passing through the District at speeds that are too high for the land uses and roadways present within the District.

During the summer tourism months, local roads and intersections in the area are subjected to far heavier traffic than the “normal” traffic flows. Reconstructing roadways and intersections to accommodate these heavy seasonal volumes is generally impractical, particularly in well-developed communities. There are, however, strategies, operational improvements, and amenities that could offer *some* improvement, making the driving experience to and through Atlantic Beach more tolerable.

There are four areas within the District where intersection geometry leads to traffic conditions that are problematic. From north to south, these areas are:

- Intersection of Valley Road with Aquidneck Avenue,
- Intersection of Newport Avenue and Aquidneck Avenue,

- Intersection of Crescent Road, Briarwood Avenue, and Aquidneck Avenue, and
- Intersection of Aquidneck Avenue and Purgatory Road.

Each of these areas is described in more detail below.

Valley Road at Aquidneck Avenue

The intersection of Valley Road and Aquidneck Avenue is shown in Figure 9. This is a signalized intersection with multiple traffic islands that divide traffic flow. The intersection can be confusing for motorists and during peak traffic periods there are frequent delays. Drivers are sometimes required to wait for more than one cycle of the traffic signal to transit this intersection.



Figure 9. Valley Road at Aquidneck Avenue

This intersection operates reasonably well under normal commuter volumes. The approaches are of adequate width, and all turning movements are adequately accommodated. It could well be argued that at off-peak hours, the intersection geometry works too well, not providing the necessary queues for southbound motorists traveling on

relatively open roads to enter the highly developed Atlantic Beach community, with its multiple residential and commercial driveways and higher pedestrian population.

When the opportunity to reconstruct this intersection comes around, the feasibility of replacing this traffic signal with a roundabout should be seriously considered. Roundabouts compare very favorably with traffic signals in their ability to accommodate moderately high volumes. It reduces delays by providing a low speed, continuous operation where at any given time *all* vehicles have an opportunity to proceed through the intersection.

Further, the geometry of the roundabout provides opportunities for enhancements and amenities to define the character of Atlantic Beach, in sharp contrast to the more open road conditions on Aquidneck Avenue to the north and Valley Road.

Newport Avenue and Aquidneck Avenue

This intersection, for the most part, has no capacity problems. It actually operates as three separate intersections (Figure 10). This configuration leads to two potential conflict points for left turning vehicles traveling to or from Newport Avenue. The severely skewed geometry of this intersection provides ambiguous routing queues for vehicles using it.

As can be seen in the figure below, the right-of-way that this intersection occupies is extremely generous. This large area provides ample opportunity for geometric improvement to the intersection as well as other community enhancements.

This availability of public lands, providing opportunities for better traffic operations, but its overall size can be reduced to a scale more appropriate for the volumes of turning traffic using it. By bringing the entire Newport Avenue approach more perpendicular to Aquidneck Avenue, traffic calming benefits are achieved, crosswalks can be shortened, and rights of way are more clearly defined.

Given the relatively low traffic volumes and the residential character of Newport Avenue, a simpler, more traditional intersection should be considered at this location. By moving this intersection more to the north, a safer intersection alignment can be achieved. This will require well thought out grading design, and some shifts in residential driveways, also improving safety.

Further, the land vacated with the Newport Avenue shift lends itself well to the development of a “pocket park” expanding on the theme of the well-maintained plantings currently in place at the traffic island of this intersection.

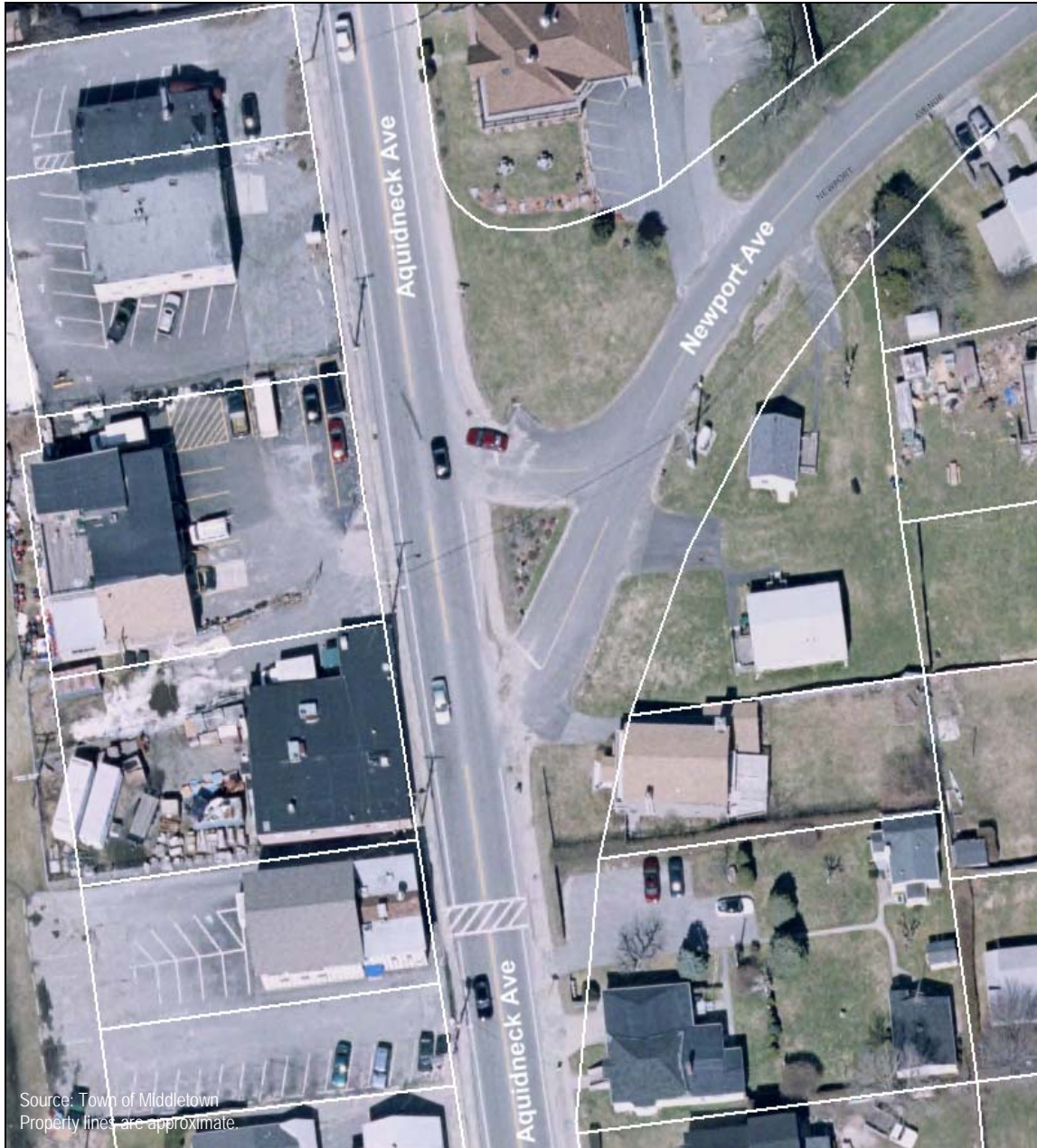


Figure 10. Newport Avenue at Aquidneck Avenue

Crescent Road at Aquidneck Avenue

Crescent Road has a predominantly residential character, in sharp contrast to the intersection at its northern end, where commercial / retail land uses dominate the roadside. It is poorly suited for thru traffic due to its narrowness, the proximity of roadside development, and poor vertical geometry. Nonetheless, its location makes it an attractive “shortcut” around parts of Atlantic Beach (see Figure 11).



Figure 11. Crescent Road at Aquidneck Avenue

The intersection at Aquidneck Avenue occurs at a very acute angle. This intersection geometry requires an awkward merge for northbound traffic, made worse by the proximity of the Briarwood Avenue intersection.

The Briarwood Avenue intersection is dangerously close to the Crescent Road intersection. In fact, this Briarwood Avenue intersection is unsafe almost exclusively *because* of the Crescent Road intersection.

Careful reconsideration of the suitability of Crescent Road for thru traffic appears to be in order. Among the potential solutions is to minimize or even eliminate thru traffic on Crescent Road. Two possible strategies have been explored:

- Thru traffic reductions would be achieved by making this road one-way. *Northbound-only* traffic would eliminate left turns from Aquidneck Avenue to Crescent Road and from Crescent Road to Purgatory Road. *Southbound-only* traffic would eliminate the unsafe merge of northbound Crescent Road traffic and northbound Aquidneck Avenue traffic.

- Thru traffic elimination would involve eliminating the northern end of Crescent Road, providing access to these residences only from Purgatory Road. This would eliminate the relatively unsafe intersection with Aquidneck Avenue. It would require some land acquisition or land swapping on behalf of the Town, in order to construct a cul-de-sac or turn-around. Retail/commercial locations would have access/egress solely from Aquidneck Avenue.

As previously discussed, the Briarwood Avenue intersection is dangerously close to the Crescent Road intersection. If the Crescent Road intersection were to remain unchanged, safety considerations may well require eliminating the Briarwood Avenue intersection completely. As was the case with Crescent Road, Briarwood Avenue has a residential character completely different from this segment of Aquidneck Avenue. By abandoning the west-most 120' of Briarwood Avenue, this area would still be used by local businesses for access and deliveries. The remaining section of Briarwood Avenue, would be retained with a reinforced residential character, by screening it from Aquidneck Avenue.

Aquidneck Avenue and Purgatory Road.

This signalized intersection provides access to the southwestern beaches of Middletown. While its east-west layout is favorably aligned with the west leg of Aquidneck Avenue (near the Newport line) it has been correctly designed as the “stem” of a T-intersection with Aquidneck Avenue, to facilitate the more-favored travel path from west-to-north at this location (Figure 12).

As a traffic calming improvement, and to promote pedestrian and motorist safety, the Purgatory Road approach should be better delineated to remove ambiguity of lane assignment for westbound traffic. This is a two-lane approach, but its effectiveness is frequently compromised by a single left-turning vehicle.

In addition, the “free right” for eastbound traffic onto Purgatory Road should be interrupted by a widened sidewalk on the south side of the intersection, shifting the right turn lane further into the Aquidneck Avenue curve at this location. Capacity would be better served by extending the Aquidneck Avenue right turn lane as far as possible to the west. Access to the parking area between the Atlantic Beach Club and the Dunlop-Wheeler Park would be slightly impacted, requiring westbound traffic to turn across two lanes of traffic, to enter the parking area.

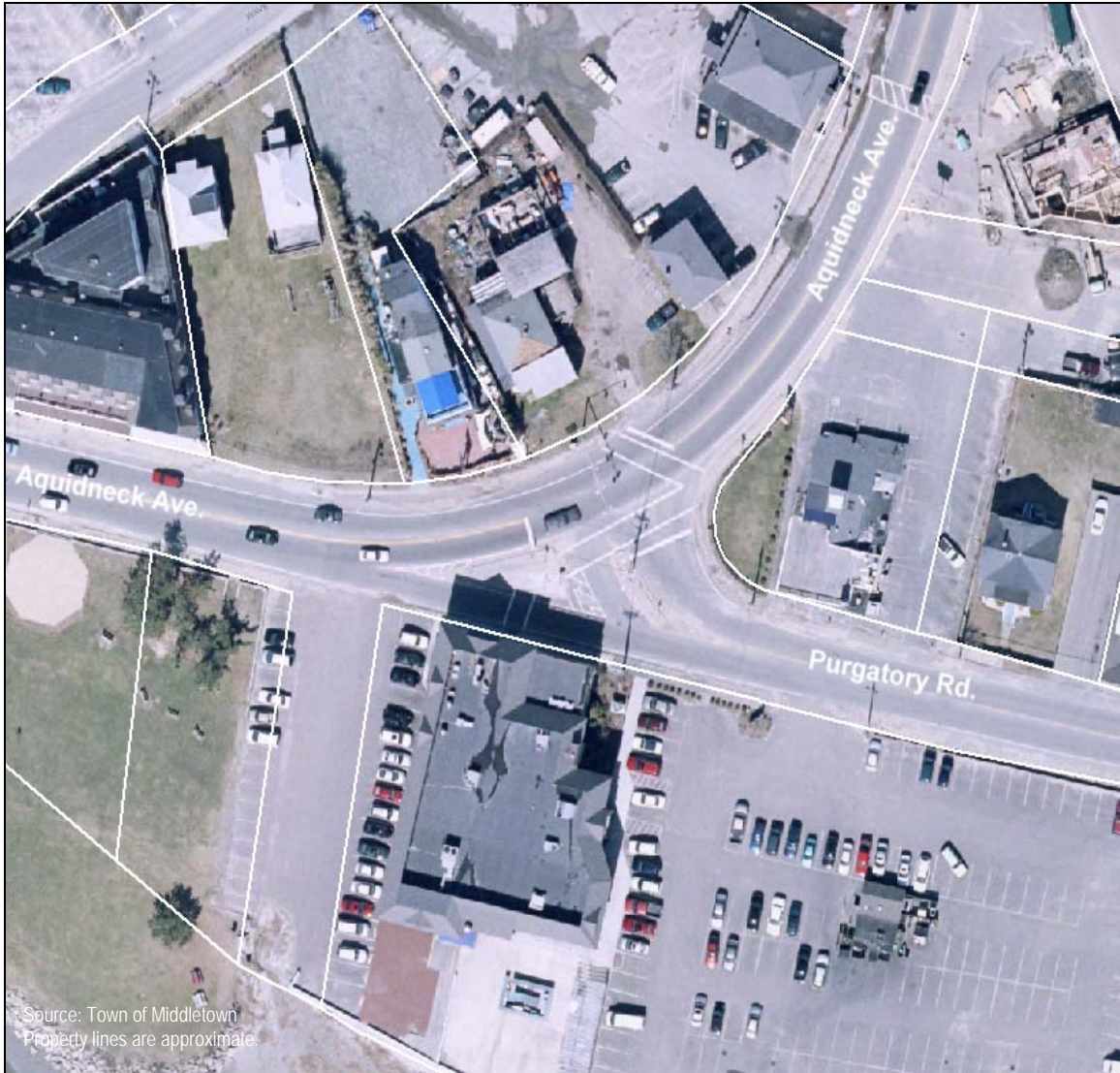


Figure 12. Purgatory Road at Aquidneck Avenue

Dunlap Wheeler Park

Dunlap Wheeler Park occupies a prominent location adjacent to Atlantic Beach east of the Newport/Middletown line in the southwest corner of the District (Figure 13). The park is prominently placed to offer excellent views and important open space in a densely developed area, but has a long history of under-utilization. In 1941, the Middletown Improvement Association spent \$7,425 to secure the property overlooking the beach and the Ocean. The intent was to preserve the land as a park from which to enjoy the coastal views at the end of Easton's Beach. In 1947 the 0.97-acre piece of property was turned over to the town of Middletown for the sum of \$10, to be used as a park or a common. The Association, however, did not leave a maintenance fund or arrange to landscape the park. The park served as a dirt parking lot for over two decades throughout the 1950s and 1960s.



Figure 13. Dunlap Wheeler Park

In 1970 the town of Middletown dedicated the park to Alan R. Wheeler (1879-1956) and Anne Slater Dunlap (1922-1968), for their contributions to beautification of the town. In the early 1980s, in response to concerns expressed by Rowena Dunlap, daughter of Anne Dunlap, the town planted grass in the park and agreed to landscape the area.

The initial design for landscaping of the park was developed by Amaral Landscaping in September 2000. The Town and local advocates then pursued funding to implement the plan. Several grants were sought and awarded including \$2,500 from the Aquidneck Island Land Trust, a matching grant of \$11,000 from the RIDEM, and an \$11,000 grant from the Bank of Newport. Private contributions were also solicited through local fund raising events. These monies were deposited in a town account expressly for Dunlap Wheeler Park.

In August 2001, a chain link fence that had surrounded the park was removed, greatly improving the appearance of the site. In the spring of 2003, the town of Middletown approved plans for the park developed by landscape architect Anna Tillinghast. This plan would maintain an open lawn area overlooking Easton's Beach and the Ocean while adding walkways, benches, and sculptures. To date, the plan has not been implemented. Due to the poor soils on the site and the exposure to salt spray, sand and sun, the Town has had difficulty sustaining plantings and landscaping in the park.

There is a small municipal parking lot associated with the park. It is located directly to the east of the park and shares a right-of-way with the Atlantic Beach Club to

the east. The parking lot is maintained by the Town of Middletown and town resident stickers are required to park in any of the 16-17 spaces in this lot. The right-of-way is a public access to the shore and local residential property owners reportedly have deeded rights to use this right-of-way as their access to the beach and for launching small boats.

There are several geographic features that have affected the use of the park and the parking lot. First, most of the park fronts on a freshwater stream rather than on the beach. This stream, which marks the boundary between Middletown and Newport, effectively separates the park from Easton's Beach. Water quality problems with the stream have historically limited its recreational use and, more recently, have been responsible for beach closures due to bacterial contamination. Studies are currently underway to address these water quality problems but, in the meantime, local residents are understandably reluctant to wade through the stream and generally try to avoid contact with stream flow. This has had a significant negative effect on the relationship between the park and the beach.

Second, the part of the park that does front on the beach consists mostly of steep slope protected by rip-rap that is not conducive to pedestrian passage. The rip-rap serves as a barrier between the park and the beach. The only convenient pedestrian access between the park and the beach is through the parking lot and the associated right-of-way to the east of the park. The parking lot and right-of-way do not provide an attractive setting for public passage. To the casual observer, the right-of-way is not apparent and the parking lot appears to be a private lot associated with the adjacent Atlantic Beach Club. Even some local residents were apparently unaware that the parking lot is publicly owned and several residents expressed surprise to learn that they could park there (with a resident sticker).

In response to these concerns, alternatives were evaluated to reconfigure the park and the parking lot with the goal of providing better connection between the park, the beach and the District. Better connections would make it easier for residents and visitors to use the park and would provide a better flow of pedestrians between the Beach and the District.

The first concept considered would provide a bridge between the park and the eastern end of the walkway at Easton's Beach. The bridge would serve to provide an easy connection between the beach and the park and would obviate the need for contact with stream waters in accomplishing this passage. This bridge would make it easier for local residents to obtain access to the beach through the park. It would also enable beach users strolling on the walkway to obtain easy access to the park and thereby to the District.

The bridge should be a pedestrian bridge and ideally should be located at the existing terminus of the Easton's Beach walkway. The walkway would then end at the park, instead of stopping as a dead-end adjacent to the stream. This could be accomplished by constructing a new bridge or by reusing all or part of an historic bridge structure made available by the Department of Transportation as part of one of its bridge replacement projects.

The second concept would reconfigure the pedestrian paths within the park to facilitate passage between the parking lot, the District and the bridge. Three alternatives were developed conceptually to provide compatible circulation and amenities within the park. These are shown in Figures 14 through 16 below. Each of these concepts includes

the pedestrian link to the Easton's walkway, crosswalk linkage to the District an differing levels of reconfiguration for the parking lot. Parking lot changes, as conceived here, would be directed toward providing better separation between public and private parking and to enhancing the public right-of-way through the parking area.

Note that these concepts do not represent detailed design plans for the park, but only provide rough concepts to show how the park could potentially be reconfigured to relate more effectively to the beach, the parking lot and the District. These concepts were presented to the public at a workshop in May of 2007 for public comment and review. Public comments were taken into consideration and used to develop the recommended concept as presented in the next chapter of this Master Plan.



Figure 14. First concept of reconfiguration of Dunlap Wheeler Park



Figure 15. Second concept for reconfiguration of Dunlap Wheeler Park



Figure 16. Third concept for reconfiguration of Dunlap Wheeler Park

Sidewalks and Streetscape

The existing sidewalks in the Atlantic Beach District are, in many places, not ideal to encourage pedestrian circulation through the area. They are narrow, discontinuous and generally in poor condition. Because of their narrow width, frequent obstructions, lack of curb ramps, and deteriorated surfaces, they do not meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Sidewalks are generally too narrow to allow space for street furniture (planters, benches, trash receptacles, etc.). Further, sidewalks in several places are not well defined and there is no clear distinction between the back edge of sidewalks and the front edge of adjacent parking lots. In these areas motorists frequently drive on and over the sidewalks and motor vehicles are often parked extending into the state right-of-way over sidewalk areas. This leads to conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles that are neither safe nor comfortable for either party.



One way to correct this problem would be to provide continuous, wider sidewalks throughout the area. Wider sidewalks would make it possible to meet ADA requirements without relocating power poles and other obstructions in the existing sidewalk. Contrasting materials, such as stamped concrete, stamped or colored asphalt, brick, or colored pavers could be used to provide a clear distinction between the sidewalk and adjacent parking areas, minimizing the encroachment over the back of sidewalk or at least making motorists aware of the distinction between the sidewalk and adjacent parking areas.



Recommended Plans

Preliminary concepts were presented to the Middletown Planning Board and a second public workshop was held in May to solicit public comment on the working concepts. Based on input received from these groups, the following are recommended.

Valley Road at Aquidneck Avenue

The recommended concept for Valley Road at Aquidneck Avenue is a new roundabout (Figure 17). The roundabout will remove the confusing pattern of traffic islands, smooth traffic flow, provide a more attractive setting, provide an opportunity for a gateway sign welcoming visitors to Atlantic Beach at the northern end of the project area, and improve pedestrian circulation through the intersection. A roundabout differs from a more traditional rotary in that it has a smaller radius and is driven at comparatively lower speeds. A new roundabout at Valley Road would be accompanied by new signage informing motorists of the roundabout and clarifying directions to the Newport Bridge.



Figure 17. Recommended roundabout at Valley Road and Aquidneck Avenue.

Aquidneck Avenue

The existing layout of Aquidneck Avenue could be replaced with a cross section that is more pedestrian friendly and enhances parking opportunities. To accomplish this, the recommended concept is a new cross section with wider sidewalks and shoulders. The new cross-section would fit within the existing state right-of-way without additional property taking. It would provide a more pedestrian friendly environment by increasing the width of the sidewalks. A six foot wide sidewalk along the east side would provide ample room for pedestrians while a wider, ten foot sidewalk along the west side would provide additional space for plantings and street furniture such as benches, banners, trash receptacles, information kiosks, pedestrian scale lighting, etc. These amenities would dramatically change the character of the streetscape, converting it from an automobile dominated environment to one which is more welcoming and friendly to pedestrians.

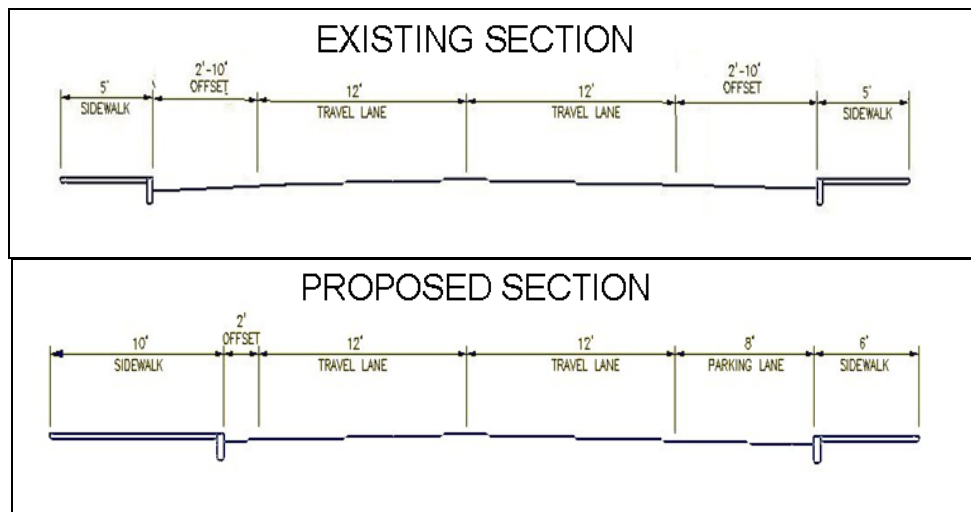


Figure 18. Existing and proposed typical cross section for Aquidneck Avenue

The new cross section, shown conceptually below, would help to clarify the relationship between the sidewalk and surface parking, minimizing the use of sidewalks for parking and would also provide space for on-street parking in those areas where such parking may be appropriate.

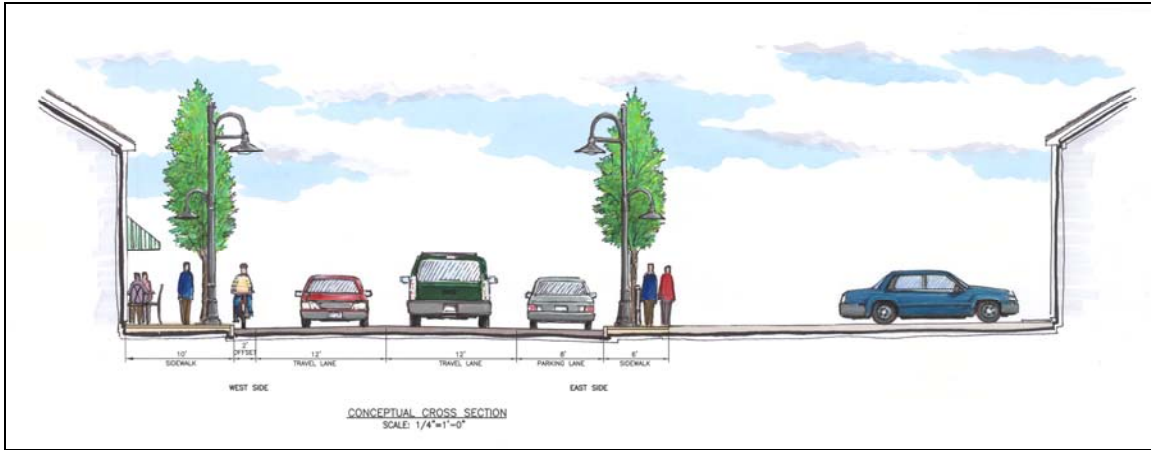


Figure 19. Conceptual typical cross section recommended for Aquidneck Avenue.

Newport Avenue

At Newport Avenue, excess right-of-way could be used to enhance the District by adding a park. This would provide approximately 8,900 square feet of public space roughly in the center of the District. This park could be constructed on property which is currently owned by the Town, without additional property acquisition. As presently conceived, the park would be developed by relocating the intersection of Newport Avenue and Aquidneck Avenue northward, freeing up space to the south of the intersection for park development. The park should be designed to be integrated with the sidewalk and could include such pedestrian amenities as trees, shrubs, benches, an informational kiosk, a flagpole, memorial or historical placards, etc. Development of the park will require rearranging driveways for two of the houses currently fronting on the intersection. New driveways can be provided in a manner that ensures continued access while providing the maximum amount of public green space for the park. The park, shown conceptually at right, should be designed to provide appropriate screening for adjacent residences in a manner which enhances the character of the residential neighborhood.



Figure 20. Conceptual illustration of T-intersection and park at Newport and Aquidneck Avenues.

Crescent Road

As noted above, Crescent Road is commonly used as a short-cut between Purgatory Road and Aquidneck Avenue. Crescent road thereby provides a means for local residents to avoid the signal at the intersection of Purgatory Road and Aquidneck Avenue in front of the Atlantic Beach club. One local resident describe Crescent as a “pressure relief” for the traffic at the signal. However, the use of Crescent as a short-cut

leads to high volumes of traffic and, because of the skewed intersections, threatens safety on both Purgatory Road and Aquidneck Avenue.



Figure 21. Conceptual illustration of reconfigured intersection of Crescent Road and Aquidneck Avenue

The proposed solution is to make Crescent Road one-way northbound and to reconfigure the intersection of Crescent Road with Aquidneck Avenue to provide a 90 degree intersection. The 90 degree reconfiguration at the north end will make the intersection safer while the change to a one-way street will eliminate conflicts at the

south end. This will require reconfiguring the traffic islands at the north end of Crescent Road and will require a change to the driveway used by the liquor store at the intersection of Crescent Road and Briarwood Ave.

Purgatory Road

The recommended action at the intersection of Purgatory Road and Aquidneck Avenue is provision of a “bump-out” in front of the Atlantic Beach Club. This “bump-out” will provide an enhanced pedestrian environment by increasing the amount of space provided to pedestrians at this point and by providing a better pedestrian linkage across Purgatory Road into the District. The “bump-out” would be provided with landscaping and walkways and integrated to crosswalks providing a connection to the north. This “bump-out” could provide a place for an informational kiosk orienting pedestrians within the district and pointing out business, attractions and events within the surrounding area.



Figure 22. Conceptual illustration of bump-out at the intersection of Purgatory Road and Aquidneck Avenue.

A “bump-out” at this location will also correct existing traffic problems in two ways. First, by clarifying that the move to Purgatory Road is a right turn off of the State highway, it will make it clear to motorists that the through movement is to bear left on Aquidneck Avenue. This will reduce the incidence of drivers entering Purgatory Road by mistake and, in turn, reduce the number of vehicles turning around in driveways along

Purgatory Road in order to return to Aquidneck Avenue. Second, by compelling drivers to pause briefly before taking a right turn (either a free right or a right on red) the “bump-out” will reduce traffic speeds and reduce the problem of drivers breaking away from the queue in front of the Atlantic Beach Club and accelerating into the residential neighborhood to the east along Purgatory Road.

Dunlap Wheeler Park

The recommended concept for Dunlap Wheeler Park would reconfigure the parking lot to clarify the distinction between the resident parking and the private parking adjacent to the Atlantic Beach club. This approach would preserve the existing public right-of-way through the parking lot, but would reconfigure internal pedestrian circulation within the park. The critical component of this reconfigured connection would be a new bridge connecting the boardwalk at Easton’s Beach to the park. This would make it easier for local residents to park in the lot and use the bridge to cross over to the beach. It would also encourage beach users to stroll the boardwalk into the park and then into the Atlantic Beach District. Coupled with crosswalks and sidewalks, this reconfiguration would enable a better flow of pedestrians between the District and the Beach.



Figure 23. Conceptual illustration showing reconfiguration of Dunlap Wheeler Park to accommodate a revised parking layout and pedestrian bridge to Easton’s Beach.

Streetscape Plan

Combining the elements described above would enable the development of a systematic streetscape plan for the District. Elements of the streetscape plan would include:

- Gateway treatments – Gateway signs located at the north and south ends of the District would clearly identify the District as Atlantic Beach and would welcome visitors and residents. These gateway signs would help to create a sense of place and help to give the District a clear identity. The northern gateway sign would be located in the center of the roundabout at Valley Road and the southern gateway sign would be located next to Aquidneck Island at Dunlap-Wheeler Park.
- Signs, banners, kiosks – Clear directional signs for motorists and pedestrians would clarify directions to key local destinations and would point out attractions in the area. The wider sidewalk along the west side of Aquidneck Ave. would enable the placement of banners identifying the neighborhood and attracting attention to local events. Centrally located kiosks place, for example, at the “bump-out” in front of the Atlantic Beach Club and/or in the park at Newport Avenue would provide orientation and information for pedestrians along with space for notices of local interest, small scale advertisements, and information on local attractions.
- Public spaces at Newport Avenue at Dunlap-Wheeler Park and at selected public and private locations within the District would enable pedestrians to gather, as well as providing shade and resting space for tourists and local residents walking within the area.



- Pedestrian amenities such as signs, benches, kiosks, plantings, and trash receptacles would enhance the “walkability” of the District. This will encourage local residents to leave their motor vehicles at home and encourage tourists to leave their vehicles in the parking lots and walk, rather than drive within the District.
- Sidewalk and crosswalk improvements – along with the pedestrian amenities, full width sidewalks would also encourage pedestrians. Clear definition between sidewalks and parking areas can be provided through the use of contrasting materials. Sidewalks would be repaired and/or reconstructed to eliminate broken surfaces, replace missing pavement, and provide

smoother surfaces. New sidewalks would include curb ramps and would meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), thereby improving accessibility for persons with limited mobility.

- Landscaping – landscaping within the parks and along the sidewalks would improve the appearance of the area. Planters could be placed to contain flowering plants, business owners could be encouraged to install and maintain plantings along the sidewalks. Flowering plants would add color and interest to the streetscape, and tree plantings within the park and along the west side of the street would provide shade for pedestrians passing through the District.



- Lighting – existing lighting, which is scaled predominantly for automobiles, could be replaced with pedestrian scale lighting or with composite light fixtures that provide street level lighting for automobiles and more attractive, lower elevation lighting for the sidewalks. This would further enhance the sidewalks and create more of a “village” feel to the district at night as well as in the daytime.



- On-street parking along the east side of Aquidneck Avenue could be provided in selected areas where this parking is most critically needed. Provision of additional parking on the street will aid in traffic calming, will help to provide pedestrians with more security by placing parked cars between pedestrians and traffic, and will help to reduce pressure for illegal parking within and outside the District.

Business Improvement District

One way to implement area-specific improvements is the development of a business improvement district (BID). A BID is a public-private partnership between the business owners and the town. Businesses agree to contribute funds into the district for such expenses as infrastructure improvements, maintenance, such as landscaping maintenance, or purchase and upkeep of special features like banners or signs that promote the area. The BID is created through local legislation.

Neighborhood Business Association

Another recommendation of this plan is the formation of a neighborhood business association within the District. A business association can further enhance a BID. Public meetings conducted for this study attracted a number of business owners who appeared to share many common interests regarding the future of the District. The formation of a local business association would enable these business owners to cooperate in carrying

out the goals of this plan and in furthering their common interests. A business association would provide a forum for business owners to discuss and solve common problems. It would provide a common basis in advocacy for civic improvements and it could assist in promotion of area and local businesses through printed materials, business websites, etc.

A local business association could help to develop advertising materials for placement in local hotels in an attempt to retain more business from local visitors and compete more effectively with Newport destinations among visitors who are already staying in hotel rooms within Atlantic Beach. The association could help develop displays for the kiosks, monitor the kiosk displays, select appropriate banners for display along the sidewalks, cooperatively plan local sales events and sponsor art displays and events at public parks in the District.

Implementation

The following provides guidance for implementation of this Master Plan. Estimated costs, provided in 2007 figures, are separated into general categories such as design and engineering, construction, and landscape improvements. These costs are for budgetary purposes based on preliminary concepts. More detailed costs will be obtained from more detail design.

It should be noted that the cost estimates given below do not include the movement of any utilities located underground within the right of way where work would be conducted. Nor do they include costs for relocating utility poles above ground moved underground, should that be desired during the design of recommendations. Relocating utilities underground is a very expensive undertaking and would need to be coordinated with National Grid. Additionally, figures do not include traffic control during construction.

Roundabout at Valley Road and Aquidneck Avenue

Traffic and roadway improvements within the right of way of Aquidneck Avenue and Valley Road would be performed by RIDOT. Roadway reconstruction projects are eligible to be included as part of the Rhode Island Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is a multi-year program of highway (including bicycle and pedestrian), transit (bus, rail, and ferry), inter-modal, airport, and rail freight projects for the state using federal funding. The Town should advocate for this roundabout's inclusion on the TIP.

Estimated costs associated with the roundabout are:

• Design and engineering	\$55,613
• Roadway construction	\$293,000
• Landscape improvements (brick paving, trees, plantings, loam & seed)	\$77,750
• Contingency (10%)	\$42,636
<i>ESTIMATED TOTAL:</i>	<i>\$468,999</i>

Aquidneck Avenue – Sidewalks and New Lane Configuration

RIDOT is systematically going throughout the state and identifying sidewalks along state-maintained roads that are not ADA compliant. Currently, portions of the sidewalk along Aquidneck Avenue are not meeting minimum standards and will be targeted. At that time, the Town can present to the state the District's adopted Master Plan and work with them in implementation. Typically, the Town would cover the additional costs associated with decorative features such as stamped and/or tinted pavement within the sidewalk. Some streetscape elements could also be incorporated into this improvement. This would include street trees and decorative lighting.

Resurfacing is an eligible project for the TIP and it is reasonably foreseeable that RIDOT will be resurfacing Aquidneck Avenue within the next 20 years. Therefore, the Town should also advocate for its inclusion on the TIP. When resurfacing of Aquidneck Avenue occurs, new lanes alignments and on-street parking can be established.

Installation of new lighting fixtures and street trees (west side only) would also take place with the widening of the sidewalk. It is estimated that lighting will be spaced typically 100 feet apart intermittent with street trees.

Estimated costs associated with Aquidneck Avenue roadway improvements are:

Park at Newport Avenue

The proposed park at Newport Avenue would be constructed on town property and therefore, can be initiated by the town when funding is secured. Sources can be grants for park development or even traffic safety or part of the Town’s capital improvement program (CIP). Coordination with the Parks and Recreation Department would be necessary as well as the Garden Club of Middletown, who currently maintains an adopt-a-spot at the intersection of Newport and Aquidneck Avenues where the park is proposed.

Estimated costs associated with the proposed park at Newport Avenue are:

Crescent Road

Crescent Road is a town-maintained road; therefore, reconfiguring the road to make a ninety degree angle with Aquidneck Avenue would be part of the Town’s CIP. Coordination with RIDOT will be necessary.

Estimated costs associated with the proposed improvements to Crescent Road are:

• Landscape improvements (trees, loam and seed)	\$15,250
• Contingency (10%)	\$8,654
<i>ESTIMATED TOTAL:</i>	<i>\$95,191</i>

Aquidneck Avenue at Purgatory Road

The proposed reconfiguration of the intersection of Aquidneck Avenue and Purgatory Road would require placement on the TIP. The bump-out would also require new sidewalks and landscaping.

Estimated costs associated with the bump-out are:

• Design and engineering	\$22,088
• Construction	\$131,000
• Landscape improvements (trees, plantings, loam and seed)	\$16,250
• Contingency (10%)	\$16,934
<i>ESTIMATED TOTAL:</i>	<i>\$186,271</i>

Dunlap-Wheeler Park: Parking and Pedestrian Bridge

The existing parking next to Dunlap-Wheeler Park is located on town property. This project can be included as part of the Town’s CIP. The pedestrian bridge that would connect Dunlap-Wheeler Park and Easton’s Beach could be obtained in two ways. First, if RIDOT or other state agency is replacing a historic bridge that is at an appropriate scale and can be reused at the site. While cost of the bridge could be minimal, transporting the bridge to the new location would have costs. Second, the Town could also design and engineer a new bridge, which is the assumed scenario.

It is also anticipated that one the pedestrian bridge project moves forward, the alignment of walkways through and around the park and the public parking lot would have to be reconsidered to guide people to the bridge. Coordination with the Dunlap family and Parks and Recreation Department would be necessary.

Estimated costs associated with improvements to the public parking lot are:

• Design	\$139,596
• Pedestrian bridge	\$600,000
• Boat ramp/platform	\$50,000
• Bandstand	\$108,000
• Benches	\$19,200
• Flag pole	\$5,000
• Parking lot (including striping)	\$46,840
• Landscape improvements (walkways, trees, plantings, loam and seed)	\$101,600
• Contingency (10%)	\$107,024
<i>ESTIMATED TOTAL:</i>	<i>\$1,177,260</i>

Additional Streetscape Improvements

Additional streetscape improvements listed here are those not associated specifically with any of the above projects, but part of the overall streetscape plan. This includes additional street trees and lighting that line Aquidneck Avenue. Banners, assuming every other light pole, and a gateway sign are also listed.

Estimated costs associated with general streetscape improvements are:

• Gateway sign	\$25,000
• Banners	\$2,000
• Contingency (10%)	\$2,700
<i>ESTIMATED TOTAL:</i>	<i>\$29,700</i>

Total cost of streetscape plan and roadway improvements:

Roundabout at Valley Road and Aquidneck Avenue	\$468,999
Aquidneck Avenue – New Sidewalks and Lane Configuration	\$1,182,775
Park at Newport Avenue	\$393,415
Crescent Road	\$95,191
Aquidneck Avenue at Purgatory Road	\$186,271
Dunlap-Wheeler Park – Parking and Pedestrian Bridge	\$1,177,260
Additional Streetscape Improvements	\$29,700
<i>ESTIMATED TOTAL:</i>	<i>\$3,533,611</i>