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VOLUNTEERS WORKING ON THE MURAL AT THE PICNIC AREA

IN CITY COUNCIL  
SEP 17 1998

READ  
WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT  
THE SAME BE RECEIVED.

CLERK

-285-

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# **THE WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER GREENWAY PLAN PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND**

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**THE PROVIDENCE PLAN  
&  
THE WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER GREENWAY PROJECT TASK FORCE**

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# **THE WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER GREENWAY PLAN PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND**

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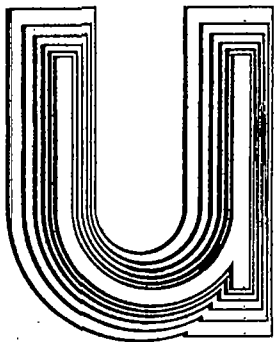
**Prepared for:**

**THE PROVIDENCE PLAN**

**&**

**THE WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER GREENWAY PROJECT TASK FORCE**

**Prepared by:**



**URBAN  
DESIGN  
GROUP**

Architecture  
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Landscape Design

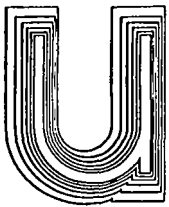
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August 11, 1997

Jane Sherman, Project Director  
The Woonasquatucket River Greenway Project  
The Providence Plan  
56 Pine Street, Suite 5B  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Mrs. Sherman:

We have pleasure in submitting the final report for the Woonasquatucket River Greenway Project. We hope the recommendations contained in the report will provide a realistic framework for ongoing efforts to recapture the river and to develop the Greenway as a catalyst for stimulating recreational opportunities and economic growth throughout the area.

We should like to thank you, key staff at The Providence Plan as well as members of the Greenway Task Force for your support and insightful comments throughout the planning process.

We wish you continued success in your efforts.

For Urban Design Group,

Ronald M. Wood, APA, RLA,  
Project Director.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Once a key center for the area's thriving textile industry, the Woonasquatucket River Valley has suffered progressively from economic decline and an ongoing deterioration of the quality of life in its riverbank neighborhoods.

The Woonasquatucket River Greenway Plan is the result of broad coalition of state, federal and local interests. Its primary goals are to recapture the Woonasquatucket River and return it for more productive use as a natural and recreational resource within the community and as a catalyst for economic growth and job opportunities for area residents.

This urban Greenway incorporates greenspace and recreational areas along 4.4 miles of both banks of the river from its northern terminus at Manton Pond, adjoining the Town of Johnston, to Waterplace Park in Downtown Providence. A proposed 5.7-mile walking and bike trail system along the Greenway will reunify the 5 riverbank neighborhoods of Manton, Hartford, Olneyville, Valley and Smith Hill and will provide access to a variety of area amenities.

There are an additional 5 neighborhoods within the Corridor, portions of which are within 0.5 miles or a 10-minute walk of the river and the Greenway. Combined, these neighborhood residents represent over 37% of Providence's total population. With the Greenway's linkage with the intown river park system and its connection to the East Coast Greenway, the benefits of the Woonasquatucket River Greenway will have broad impacts on a regional scale.

In recognizing the rich cultural diversity that characterizes the various riverbank neighborhoods, the following premise that:

***The Greenway Corridor Master Plan should serve multiple constituencies in a variety of ways.***

was integral in defining the following General Goals for the development of the Woonasquatucket River Greenway.

### **General Goals:**

- *To develop a continuous urban greenway system along the Woonasquatucket River from Manton Pond to Waterplace Park in Downtown Providence,*
- *To improve the environmental quality of the river and to protect and enhance the natural and cultural resources along its banks,*
- *To increase the range of recreational opportunities available to Woonasquatucket Valley residents by restoring parks and providing greenspace along the Greenway Corridor,*
- *To create a comprehensive system of biking and walking trails along the greenway linking neighborhoods, area amenities, employment centers and Downtown Providence,*
- *To stimulate economic redevelopment and provide increased job opportunities for neighborhood residents,*
- *To re-establish the Woonasquatucket River as a symbol for renewed neighborhood identity and civic pride.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Woonasquatucket River begins in Smithfield, RI and follows a southerly course through northern Rhode Island. The river finally merges with the Moshassuck River, just east of Waterplace Park in Downtown Providence. The Woonasquatucket River is the most western of these two river systems that converge at the head of the Providence River that flows into Narragansett Bay. The rivers, its harbor on the Bay and ultimately the railroads were to play major roles in the early development of Providence, supporting the city's active mercantile trade and its industrial growth, primarily in textiles.

By the early 19th. century, the Woonasquatucket River had become a center for growth, as the region shifted from an agrarian-based economy to one of intense industrial development. Both the Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck Rivers were exploited for their water power and factory sites. Company-sponsored housing and related industries began to line the banks as the mills flourished and spread out along the river corridors.

Once a center of industrial growth, the Woonasquatucket River Valley has undergone significant changes, as its economic importance has diminished. Once the mainstays of its economy, its manufacturing industries have experienced dramatic downturns, particularly over the past two decades. This has resulted in plant closures

and job dislocations for many of its residents and a growing destabilization of its neighborhoods. Today, these far-reaching changes have adversely affected the local economy and have transformed the river corridor into an area in decline, struggling to survive.

In recent years, the City of Providence has also strived to rebuild its local economy. Through diversification and a broad range of initiatives, the City has begun to see positive results for these efforts. One key element in these restructuring efforts was recognizing the role the rivers could play in revitalizing its Downtown area.

Subsequently, in the late 1980's, the City embarked on an ambitious program of recapturing and enhancing its network of rivers as catalysts for area renewal and economic reinvestment. These efforts are beginning to bear fruit and have generated a renewed sense of pride among city residents. Most importantly, an appreciation of the rivers and their potential has been increased.

It is within this general context that the Woonasquatucket River Greenway Project was conceived.

## **THE WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER GREENWAY PROJECT**

The Woonasquatucket River Greenway Project in Providence represents a concerted effort on behalf of a broad coalition of federal, state and city agencies, with strong backing from private sector interests, to restore the Woonasquatucket River:

*"As a natural and recreational resource for the community and to provide a focus and stimulus for revitalization efforts in the neighborhoods through which it flows."*

### **THE PROJECT AREA**

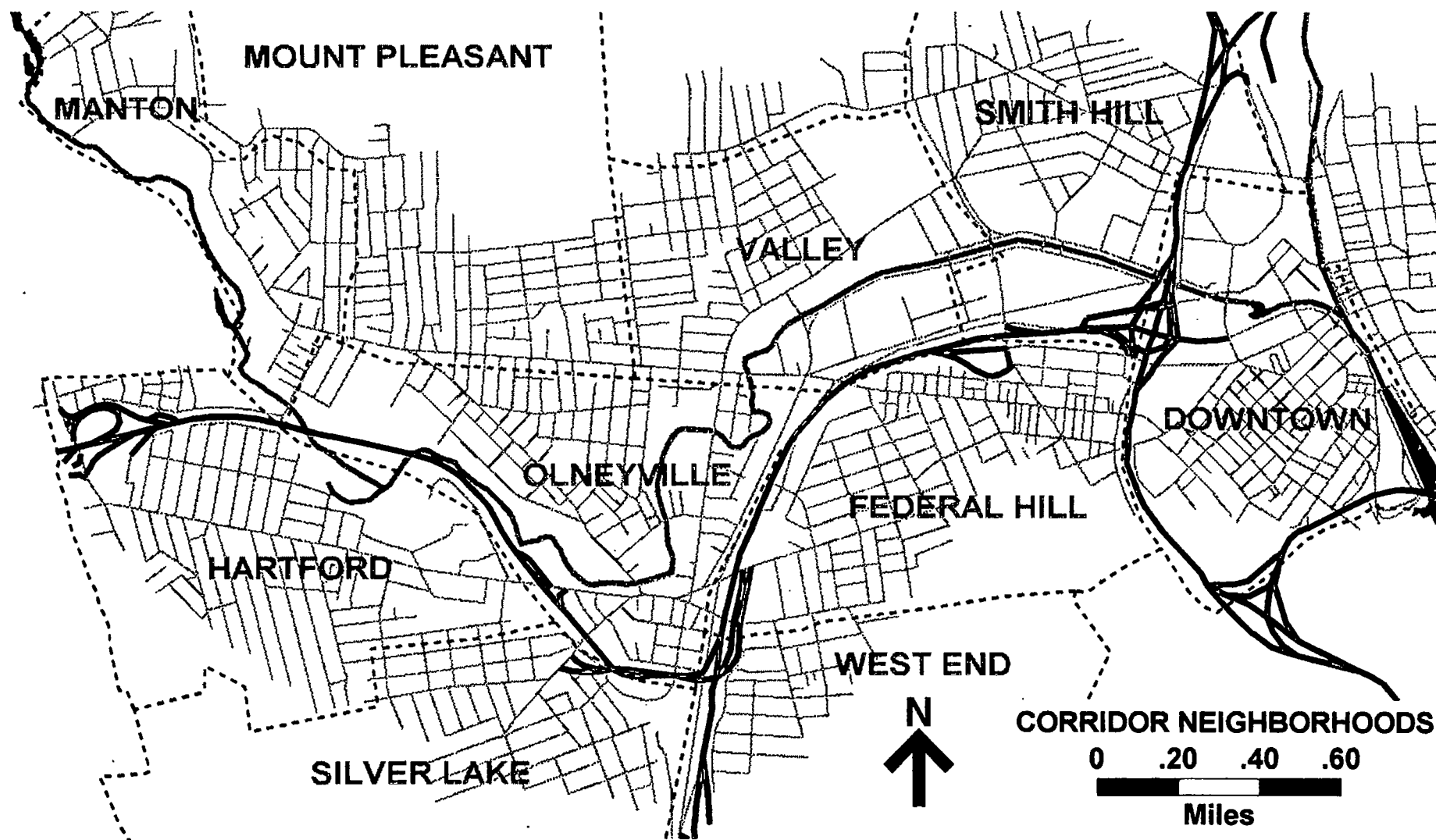
The project area for the Woonasquatucket River Greenway Corridor follows the course of the river for 4.4 miles. It extends from its western terminus on the Johnston town line to Waterplace Park in Downtown Providence. The Greenway Corridor Planning Area encompasses the 5 riverbank neighborhoods of Manton, Hartford, Olneyville, Valley and Smith Hill. In addition, those portions of Mount Pleasant, Silver Lake, West End, Federal Hill and Downtown that are within 0.5 miles of the river are also incorporated into the Corridor Planning Area.

### **REGIONAL CONTEXT**

The Woonasquatucket River Greenway Project is in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Providence. The Greenway is also consistent with recommendations by the Division of Statewide Planning contained in their report, "A Greener Path: Greenspace and Greenways for Rhode Island's Future". This report recommended the development of a state-sponsored network of some 500 miles of greenway corridors and 200 miles of bikeways. These corridors and trail systems, in turn, would tie in with the 87,000+ acres of public open-space land and connect into the East Coast Greenway. In addition, these proposals would be complemented, at a local level, by some 115 miles of greenways along rivers and stream banks, supported by 135 miles of bikeways and 70 miles of trails.

### **THE BENEFITS OF GREENWAYS**

Greenway corridors and trail systems were conceived as tools to protect our declining open space resources and cultural assets, to provide recreational opportunities and to stimulate economic development. In the Northeast, many of these projects have, for example, focused on linking river corridors, critical open space, existing rail and canal trails and urban pathways into a cohesive network of greenway corridors throughout the Region.



**WOONASQUACKET RIVER CORRIDOR NEIGHBORHOODS**

Here in Rhode Island, the success of the East Bay Bike Path and the Blackstone River Bikeway are excellent examples of this trend.

Over-reliance on the automobile as our principal means of transportation has resulted in air pollution, urban sprawl, increased highway construction and an overall decline in our public transportation services. Similarly, the economic vitality of our traditional downtown areas has also been seriously compromised, neighborhoods fragmented and many of our social patterns dislocated. Development of greenway corridors offers a positive approach towards addressing many of these issues.

Greenway corridors combining walking and bike trails offer attractive, healthy and cost-effective transportation alternatives for communities. Today, bicycling is the third most popular form of exercise after walking and swimming. About 100 million Americans occasionally ride a bike, while over 53 million over the age of 6 bicycle at least a half dozen times a year. Recent statistics also indicate that over 25% of trips that Americans make are less than 1 mile long and almost 50% of these trips are less than 3 miles in length. These represent comfortable distances, respectively, for both walking and biking.

Florida, with its sizable elderly population and where over 37% of its residents cannot legally drive, aptly demonstrates an example of demographic trends indicating that the proportion of non-drivers will continue to grow as the population ages. At a local level, when one considers that some 30% of New England residents cannot legally drive due to age, disability, or for other

reasons and must travel on foot, by bicycle, by public transportation, or rely on a friend with an automobile, the greenway concept provides an attractive alternative. These are telling statistics that reinforce the validity and benefits of the greenway concept.

Other social and cost benefits of Greenways show that:

- The quality of life of areas adjacent to Greenways has been substantially improved,
- Property values have increased and neighborhoods have stabilized,
- Economic development has been stimulated.

Greenways and trail systems, therefore, fulfill a need for a broad constituency of the population by offering varied options for recreation, open space conservation and cultural resource protection, transportation and economic development.

## THE WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER CORRIDOR: AN OVERVIEW.

### The Setting

#### ***Manton Pond and Dam to Aleppo Street/Olneyville.***

The Manton Pond and Dam form the northern boundary to the Greenway Corridor project area and were originally built as part of the former Manton Mill complex. The mill pond and its immediate area support a variety of wildlife. On leaving the pond, the river is contained in a narrow granite-lined canal as it follows a southerly course under the Manton Bridge. It then passes through a portion of the Town of Johnston and continues on to Dyerville State Park.

Dyerville Park is located on the west bank of the river and is owned by the State of Rhode Island. Partially located in both Providence and Johnston, it is undeveloped. Visually and physically isolated from its abutting neighborhoods, the park opens up to riverine plain, occupying both sides of the river. It is contained by a steep slope along its western perimeter, with the Maron Industrial Park situated along the top of the slope. The Woonasquaticket River defines the park's eastern boundary. Formerly a gravel pit, it is a barren area, softened only by vegetation growing along the banks of the river.

Located on the east bank of the river and opposite the park is the Dyerville Mill (c. 1835), the oldest remaining mill in the project area. Traces of its reliance on the river for water power can still to be found, including a dam and



DYERVILLE STATE PARK AND MILL BEYOND

power canal. The former right-of-way for the railroad, which follows the banks of the river and the remains of two sets of stone bridge abutments are also in evidence.

Beyond the Dyerville Mill property, a narrowing of the valley floor occurs, culminating in a steep and heavily-wooded gorge at the Glenbridge Avenue bridge area. Here, the area is overlooked by residential development ranged along the crest of the ravine. Here in the Upper Manton area, development is typically set well back from

both banks and rarely engages directly with the river, except briefly at the Manton Bridge area.

As the river passes under US RT.-6, the river landscape opens out to the south to another flat plateau containing the Lincoln Lace and Merino Park properties. Similar in topography to Dyerville Park, these two areas are bounded by a steep and heavily-wooded incline to the Hartford neighborhood, while US RT.-6 forms their boundary to the north.

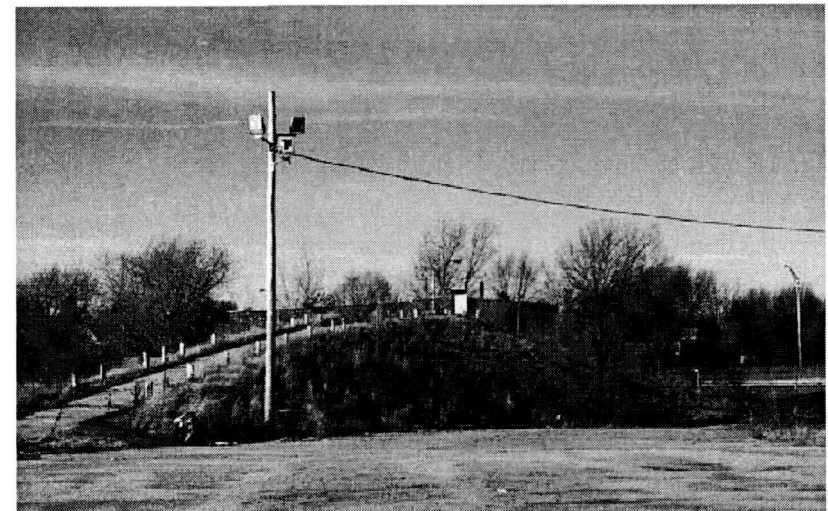
The vacant Lincoln Lace property, the original site of the Merino Mill, suffered a major fire and only one 2 story brick and stucco mill building remains. Other portions of its former mill use are still apparent including its tail race, the remains of a dam and a pair of old bridge abutments. This area's only means of access is by a steep driveway from Ponagansett Avenue.

Separated from the Lincoln Lace property by the river and the mill's tail race, is Merino Park. Owned by the City of Providence, the park is currently closed. It is visually and physically isolated from the Hartford neighborhood. Hartford Park, a large public housing development, is located at the top of the steep wooded slope, along the park's southern perimeter. A wooden stairway up the slope connects Merino Park to the Hartford Park housing complex.

RT.-6 forms a distinct barrier along its northern edge. The pedestrian bridge, over the highway to Sheridan Street in Olneyville and under reconstruction, is also located on this perimeter. A service road from Hartford Avenue skirts the site and provides the only vehicular



REMAINING BUILDING AT THE LINCOLN LACE PROPERTY



MERINO PARK AND THE SHERIDAN ST. OVERPASS



access to the park. This section of the Corridor has become more defined with the residential neighborhoods of Olneyville and Hartford lining the crests and slopes on both sides of the river valley. RT.-6 is now a dominant presence in the landscape, closely paralleling and traversing the Woonasquatucket River at several points. In the immediate area, two large public housing developments are centrally located on either side of the highway; Hartford Park, adjacent to Merino Park and Manton Heights, located just off Manton Avenue in Olneyville. Together, they represent one of the largest concentrations of public housing in the City and both lack recreational amenities, particularly for their many young residents.

The Woonasquatucket River continues to follow its natural course along the valley floor. On approaching the Olneyville Square area, however, there is an abrupt change in character. Unlike in its upstream environment, where the river rarely connected or engaged with its abutting neighborhoods, there is now a marked transition to one of intense urbanization with buildings crowding its banks.

The former Riverside Mills' property on Aleppo Street marks the beginning of this transition. Located on the fringe of Olneyville Square, it is currently vacant and occupies a considerable frontage along the north bank of the river. This mill complex was destroyed by fire in 1989 and only a small 2 story brick building, its mill office, remains. Several examples of its mill housing, however, are still to be found to the north, along the edges of a predominantly residential portion of Olneyville.

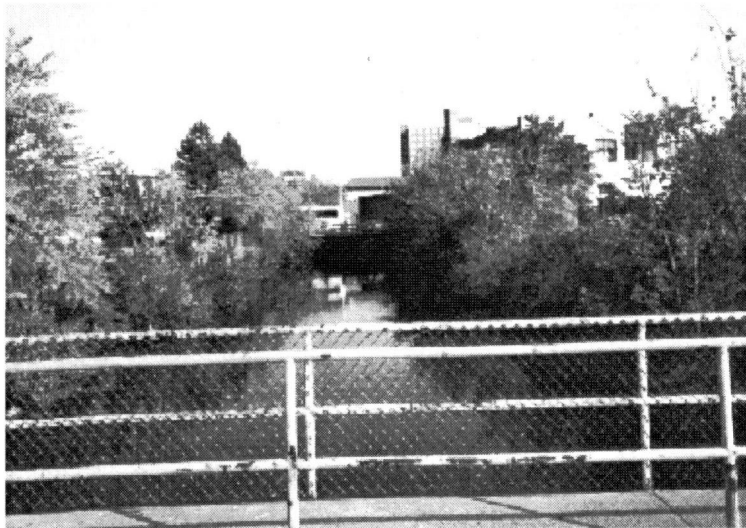


**ALEPPO STREET AND THE RIVERSIDE MILLS' PROPERTY**

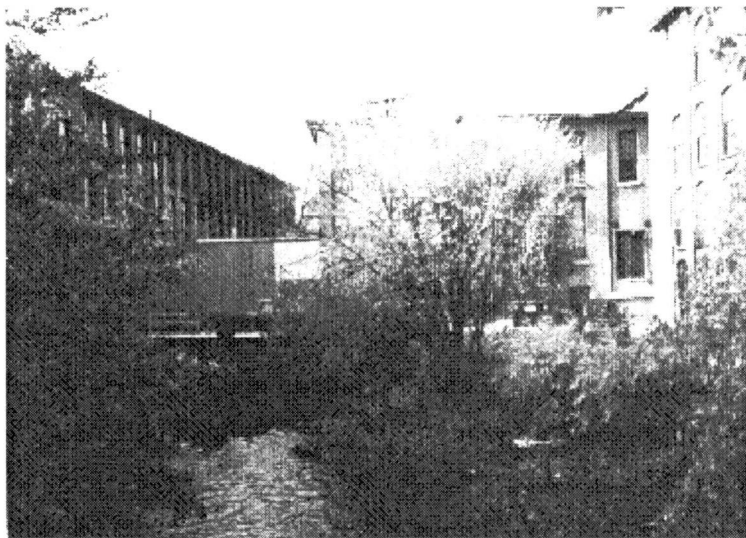
The dam at Riverside Mills is the point where the river shifts course to an easterly and then a northerly direction, looping around the square as it passes through the Olneyville and Valley neighborhoods. Up to this point, this stretch of the river has maintained its natural boundaries, to be breached in only two areas; at the bridges in Upper Manton and at Glenbridge Avenue.

### ***Aleppo Street/Olneyville Square to the Eagle Street Bridge***

The Woonasquatucket River has now entered an area of intense industrial development that is going to characterize the remainder of its course to Downtown Providence. Unlike in the previous section of the river, where the valley's topography and dense vegetation screen the river from view, industrial development now



LOOKING EAST ALONG THE RIVER AT KINSLEY AVENUE



THE RIVER AND IT'S MILLS

## NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER



THE ATLANTIC DELAINE MILLS

lines both banks of the river. Mostly hidden from view, under-utilized and forgotten, the Woonasquatucket River passes behind, through and under an impressive concentration of mill buildings and industrial sites.

On leaving the Riverside Mills property, the river continues in a granite-lined canal, to the rear of the Atlantic Delaine Mills property on Manton Avenue. This immense 300,000 sq. ft. brick mill complex dominates the landscape and with its twin towers presents a highly visual landmark for area residents. Located on the edge of Olneyville Square and no longer operated as a textile mill, the complex is now home to a variety of small businesses, attracted by low rents and flexible work areas.

On entering the Olneyville Square area, the river continues in the narrow trench, flanked by parking lots as it flows easterly under the Manton Avenue bridge and flows along the north side of San Souci Drive. Once the thriving retail and commercial center for the Woonasquatucket Valley, over the years Olneyville Square has seen its role in the area diminished. Vacant stores and gap sites are common, while a lack of retail mix, poor circulation and visual clutter contribute to a poor self-image and an atmosphere that is neither conducive for shopping nor to conduct business in. In spite of these drawbacks, however, there is a core of successful business owners who have overcome these obstacles and are committed to the area.

Olneyville Square is surrounded by the residential



OLNEYVILLE SQUARE FROM THE MANTON ST. BRIDGE

neighborhoods of Olneyville, Federal Hill, West End, Silver Lake and Hartford. Extensive highway construction in the late 1950's and an extensive network of interchanges and ramps have unfortunately created visual and physical barriers that have effectively disrupted the square's relationships with these neighborhoods.

Although one is aware of the river's presence in Olneyville Square, it is neither exploited as an amenity nor as a visual feature. Stores and businesses typically disregard its existence, while, in the supermarket property, the river traverses its parking lots, unrecognized and forgotten, paved-in on either bank with asphalt. On leaving the square at San Souci Drive, the river swings to the north, flanked on either side by industrial uses on both Valley and Delaine Streets. Another dam is encountered as the river continues and flows under the

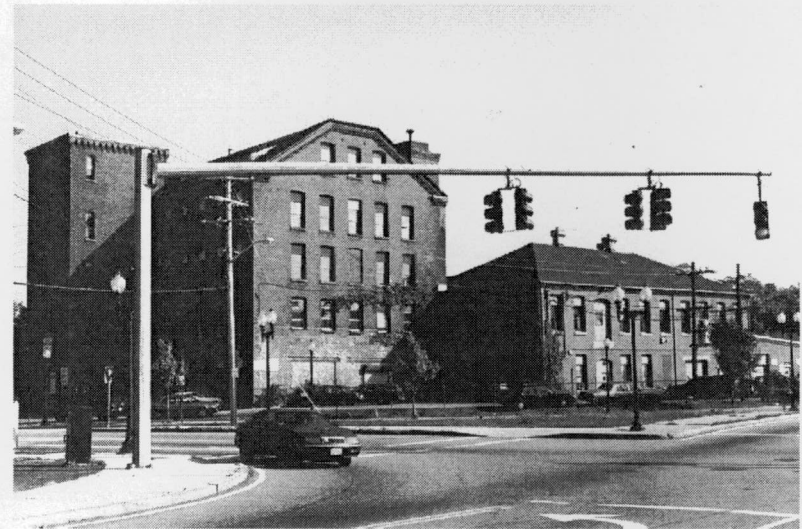
small bridge at Delaine Street. From there, it follows along the base of a steep wooded slope overlooked by housing. A large mill complex extends along the river's other bank to the east. Just prior to entering Donigian Park, a small neighborhood recreational area on Valley Street, the river passes over its final dam and becomes a tidal river. Passing through Donigian Park, where it assumes an easterly direction, the river eventually flows under the bridge at Valley Street on its final stretch to Waterplace Park.

At this point, the Woonasquatucket River shifts to a more meandering course through a compact late 19th. century residential enclave, as it loops around to pass under the historic Tar Bridge at Atwells Avenue as its direction

moves to the north. Another complex of mill buildings is encountered as the course of the river is further manipulated and channelized. Buildings continue to crowd its banks and visual and physical contact with the river becomes extremely tenuous as it veers to the east, before finally arriving at the Eagle Street Bridge.



DONIGIAN PARK AND THE RIVER



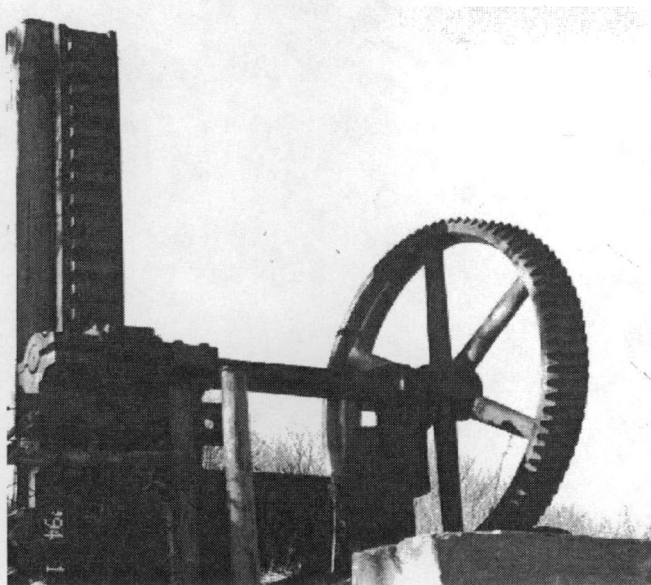
THE EAGLE STREET BRIDGE AREA



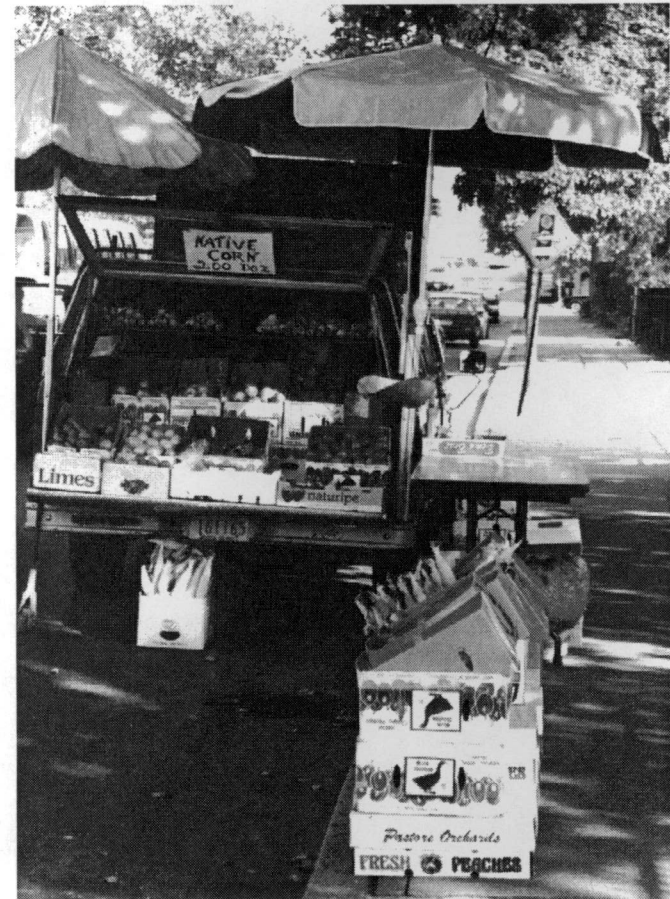
**NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER**



**THE DAM AT RIVERSIDE MILLS**



**SLUICE GATE AT DONIGIAN PARK**



**FRUIT VENDOR, ATWELLS AVENUE**

*The Eagle Street Bridge to Waterplace Park*

Another concentration of mills is encountered along Eagle Street, before the river assumes a more easterly and linear path through the Valley and Smith Hill neighborhoods. The Smith Hill escarpment rising from Valley Street defines the area's northern perimeter. The railroad tracks and US RT.-6 combined with the Interstate 95 overpass delineate the river's corridor to the south and east.

Along this segment of the Corridor, the Woonasquatucket River is still mostly hidden from view, but by vegetation that has grown up along its banks. This ribbon of green forms a strong visual element, softening the hard edges of the industrial landscape that still predominates. The river continues to be constrained, flowing in a narrow



PROMENADE STREET AND THE 'FOUNDRY' COMPLEX

granite-lined canal until it reaches Waterplace Park. Several bridges span this section of the river. Only at these crossings is the river visible and its tree-lined banks frame splendid views of the Downtown skyline.

The massive brick complex of the Brown and Sharpe Manufacturing Company and the I-95 interchange terminate this final segment of the river corridor, visually and physically separating it from Waterplace Park and Downtown Providence.



WATERPLACE PARK

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Since early in Rhode Island history, the waters of the Woonasquatucket River have been harnessed to power industrial uses along its banks. With the decline of the mercantile trade in the early 1800's and with advances in new technologies, an increasing interest in new capital investments evolved. New capital raised was invested, particularly in the developing textile industry and this infusion of money helped fuel its growth.

Although primarily a farming area, the river valley began to experience a shift in its economy as investors and millowners began to recognize the river's potential, both as a source of power, as well as its proximity to Providence and its port. From the mid 1800's and into the early portion of this century, the Woonasquatucket River Valley served as a catalyst for Providence's growth during this period of industrial expansion that enveloped the region.

As textile mills and other manufacturing businesses flourished, the demand for labor could not be met locally. Subsequently, many immigrant families relocated to work in the mills and the ethnic character of the neighborhoods changed significantly as successive waves of English, Irish, French-Canadian and Italian families settled in the area. Company housing for the workers was initially built in close proximity to the mills. As public transportation improved, however, housing began to expand and spread along Manton and Hartford Avenues and Valley Street. These housing developments gradually coalesced into the various riverbank neighborhoods of today.

As industrial growth intensified, Olneyville Square, located at the bend in the river, evolved as the transportation, commercial and social center for the Woonasquatucket River Valley. A rail line was built connecting the area with Providence and beyond and by the mid-1800's, the square had become an important terminus for the tramway system that had now spread throughout much of Providence.

Development of the railroad and ultimately highway construction caused dislocation amongst the riverbank neighborhoods. The visual and physical barriers created by the construction of US RT.-6 and I-95 had effectively severed area residents' emotional and physical links to the river, bisected neighborhoods and alienated many of the riverbank communities. Olneyville Square bore the brunt of these disruptions and found its vibrancy and economic stability significantly eroded and has never fully recovered. Nor has it fully regained its once dominant role in the area.

Latterly, manufacturing in the region underwent a deep recession. In particular, the textile and jewelry industries, which were once the mainstays of the area's economy, experienced dramatic downturns. Over the last two decades, for example, the river corridor has been confronted with successive plant closures and job dislocations for many of its workers. This has led to an out-migration of local families, leading to high vacancy rates and a growing destabilization throughout many of its neighborhoods.



## RECREATIONAL AREAS & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### Recreational Areas

1. Triggs Memorial Golf Course
2. Dyerville Park
3. Merino Park
4. Wallace Street Park
5. Donigian Park
6. Regent Avenue Playground
7. Davis Park

### Community facilities

- A. Hartford Park Community Center
- B. Perry Fields & Laurel Field Playground
- C. Olneyville Boys' & Girls' Club
- D. Nickerson Community Center
- E. Joslin Recreation Center
- F. Joslin Community Center
- G. Olneyville Community Health Center



Today, plagued by fires, vacant buildings and river pollution coupled with fragmented land uses and declining property values, communities along the Woonasquatucket River are struggling to maintain their integrity and protect their quality of life.

### **LAND USE**

Land use within the Woonasquatucket River Corridor is fragmented with conflicting land uses a common occurrence. Land use patterns generally reflect the legacy left over from the area's early days of industrialization. However, due to the decline in the area's economy, there are significant tracts of land in the industrial belt, along the river, that are either vacant or under-utilized. Similarly, the area is peppered with numerous vacant lots and gap sites, the result of fires or the forced demolition of deteriorated buildings.

The area's residential neighborhoods tend to be comprised of dense concentrations of multi-family housing in proximity to the mills, the river and around Olneyville Square. This density diminishes as these neighborhoods have expanded beyond the influence of the river, giving way to a mix of two-family and single-family homes. Only on the outer fringes of the Hartford neighborhood and in Upper Manton is there found a substantial concentration of single family-housing.

Throughout the river corridor, there is a distinct shortfall of recreational and open space areas to service the area residents. Institutional uses and community facilities are

scattered throughout, with a major concentration found in and around the Olneyville Square area.

### **CIRCULATION**

The Woonasquatucket River Corridor is dominated by US RT.-6, which closely follows the course of the river. Access and egress points to the highway occur at either end of the Corridor and at Olneyville Square.

Existing neighborhood street patterns indicate a predominantly linear east-west alignment in the northern segment of the river corridor, with Manton and Hartford Avenues serving as primary feeder streets. In the central section, Manton Avenue continues to be a primary east/west feeder street complemented by Atwells Avenue. Valley Street provides the main north/south access route to the Valley and Smith Hill neighborhoods in the Corridor's eastern section.

Olneyville Square acts as the main transportation hub for the Corridor, as well as serving as an important neighborhood transit center for the city and state-wide public transportation system (RIPTA). It is serviced by 4 bus routes.

A number of primary feeder streets from adjoining neighborhoods converge at Olneyville Square. These streets include:

#### **North to South:**

- Valley Street (Olneyville & Valley)

- Harris Avenue (Olneyville & Federal Hill)  
**East to West:**
- Manton Avenue (Manton, Mount Pleasant & Olneyville)
- Hartford Avenue (Hartford & Silver Lake)
- Broadway (Federal Hill)
- Westminster Street (West End)

The major streets, east from the established on an east-west pattern. Valley Street continues as a main feeder for the Valley and Smith Hill neighborhoods, complemented by Promenade Street. Kinsley and Harris Avenues service the predominantly industrial area on the south bank of the Woonasquatucket River. Pleasant Valley Parkway/Dean Street serve as a primary north-south collector street over Route 6, connecting Smith Hill with Federal Hill.

These neighborhood street patterns reinforce the Woonasquatucket River's traditional role as a natural feature that has delineated municipal and jurisdictional boundaries within the river corridor. It defined the various neighborhoods that line its banks and established Olneyville Square as the symbolic center for the area.

## **ZONING**

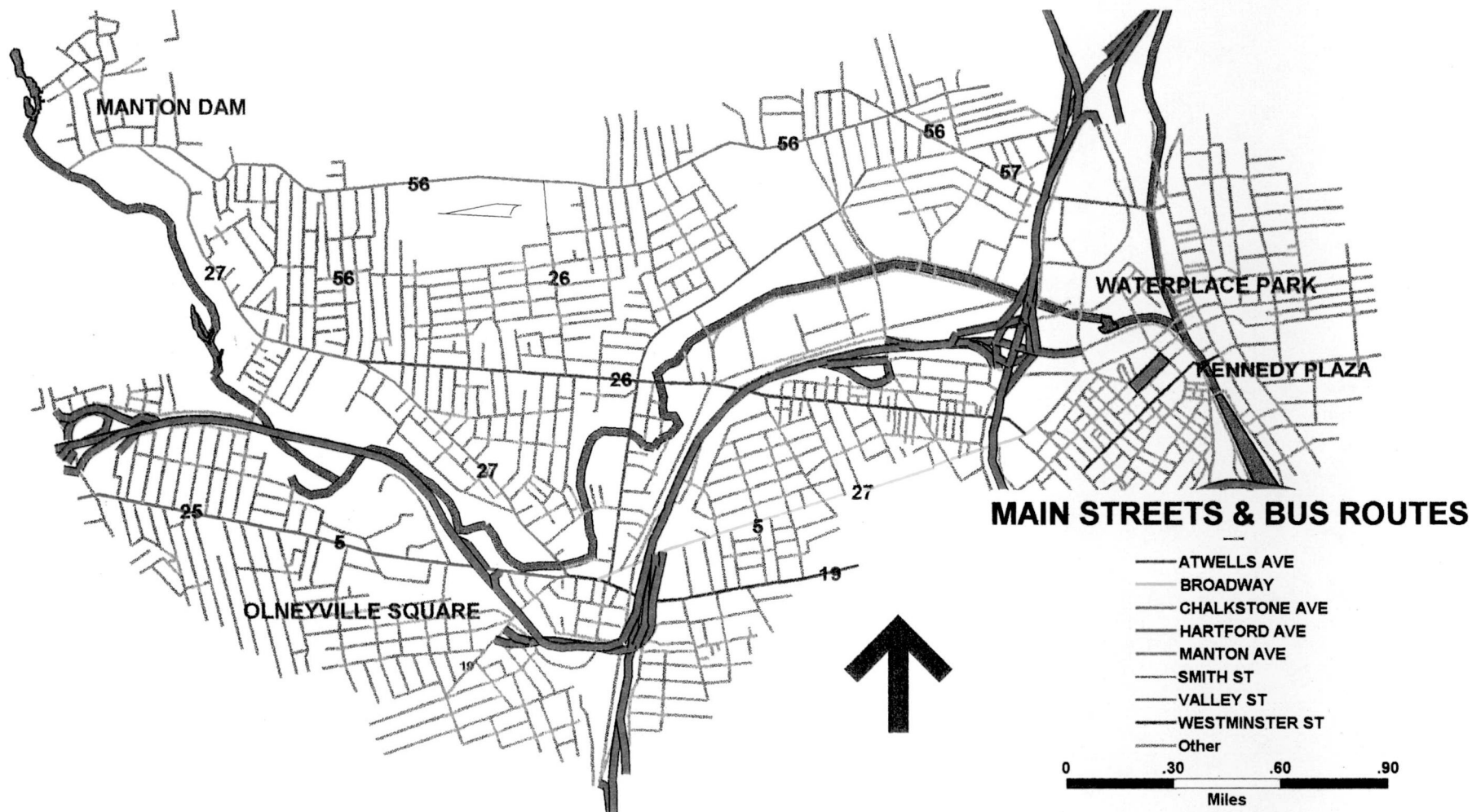
Current zoning closely reflects existing land use patterns found throughout the Woonasquatucket River Corridor. The prominent band of development that occurs either side of the river, for example, is zoned mostly industrial. The exception occurs at the eastern terminus of the

project area, where the Foundry and the Produce Market areas are classified as a Downtown Mill District.

The immediate area around Olneyville Square is zoned at two levels of commercial use (Heavy & General Commercial). Heavy commercial zones are also found along the east end of Valley Street at the Pleasant Valley Parkway, the south end of Manton Avenue at Olneyville Square, the intersection of Amherst Street with Manton Avenue and at the supermarket property in Upper Manton.

Neighborhood shopping areas are classified General Commercial zones and are located along portions of Valley Street, Atwells and Manton Avenues, in upper Manton Avenue and along Hartford Avenue. Limited Commercial zones are to be found on the north side of Manton Avenue at Manton Bridge and on the periphery of the Corridor, along part of Chalkstone Avenue and on Academy Avenue.

Residential zoning also closely follows existing land use and density patterns found in the surrounding residential neighborhoods. In the area of Olneyville adjacent to the mills, residential areas are zoned Multi-Family use, while further west zoning reverts either to Two-Family or, at the Manton Heights housing complex, to a General Residence zone. To the north, zoning gives way to a Three-Family District and this zoning pattern continues eastwards along the northern boundary of Valley Street and extends through to the Smith Hill neighborhood.



### MAIN CONNECTOR STREETS & BUS ROUTES

In the Hartford area, in proximity to the river and along Hartford Avenue, it is zoned mostly Two-Family, with the Hartford Park housing complex designated a Multi-Family Dwelling zone. The areas to the north and on the outer edges of this neighborhood are zoned Single-Family.

Other uses such as schools and community facilities are classified Public Space areas, while recreational areas are zoned as Open Space.

### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

While construction of US RT.-6, in one respect, had a negative impact on the Woonasquatucket River Valley, the residual land created from its right-of-way has evolved into a natural resource corridor, reinforced by its proximity to the river. Secluded and relatively inaccessible, these open space areas have developed naturally over the years, mostly undisturbed by human intrusion. This land, along with Dyerville and Merino Parks, now supports a rich diversity of native plants and shrubs, which, in turn, have created a natural habitat attractive to a variety of wildlife.

Red Maple is the predominant tree along the river corridor. Large cottonwoods, apple trees and dogwoods, as well as forsythia, blackberry and pepperbush, are also common.

Swans and mallards nest on Manton Pond, while red tailed hawks, belted kingfishers, downy woodpeckers and herons, along with swallows, cardinals and bluejays, are commonly found along the upper reaches of the Corridor. Similarly, raccoons, chipmunks, muskrats, skunks,

beavers and foxes have all made their home in the open space areas bounding both sides of the river.

Several wetland areas have been identified. These include an area with flood plain wetlands in Dyerville Park, which has evolved in what was originally the impoundment area behind the old Dyerville Dam. In the Glenbridge Gorge area, a flood plain wetland is also found, while further south there are wetland areas located adjacent to both the Lincoln Lace and Riverside Mills sites.

Both the Lincoln Lace and the Riverside Mills properties have been identified by RI Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM), as having environmental problems. Designated "brownfield" sites, both properties are currently undergoing environmental assessments by RI DEM, under a grant from EPA Region 1, to determine their degree of contamination.

While water quality of the Woonasquatucket River has improved slightly due to tighter environmental controls and to some measure from volunteer cleanup efforts, degradation continues from illegal dumping and from upstream sources, as well as the 19 Combined Sewage Outflows (CSO's) which presently discharge into the river within the Greenway Corridor.

## **CURRENT ISSUES**

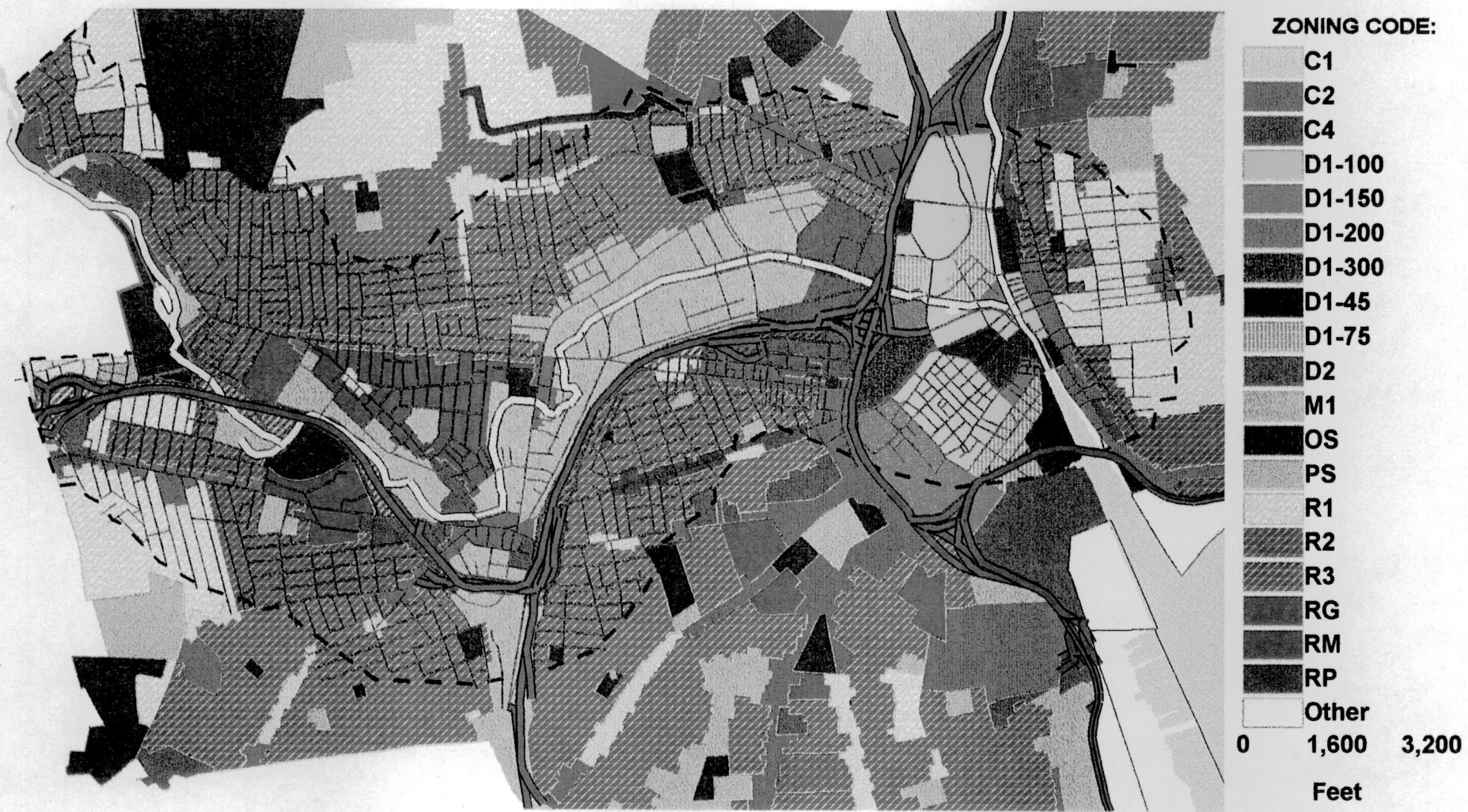
The following are some of the key issues confronting the riverbank communities:

- There is a distinct lack of recreational opportunities to service the Woonasquatucket River Corridor residents, particularly the area's significant number of children and 'young seniors'. Currently, there are only 2.1 acres of recreational land available per 1,000 residents,
- Visual and physical access to the Woonasquatucket River is limited,
- River pollution is prevalent,
- Illegal dumping along the river continues to be an ongoing problem,
- Highway construction has had a disruptive effect on the riverbank neighborhoods, disrupting their links with the river and connections with each other,
- The economy of the river corridor has not recovered physically or psychologically from the loss of its traditional manufacturing base,
- There are significant numbers of area residents, particularly children, living below the poverty level,
- Employment opportunities in the Corridor are limited primarily to low-paying and unskilled jobs,
- Unemployment is high,
- A significant number of area residents do not own an automobile,
- Olneyville Square, the retail/commercial center of the Corridor, lacks a well-rounded mix of

retail services and amenities to adequately service area residents,

- Land use is fragmented resulting in incompatible uses encroaching on residential areas,
- The quality of life and stability of many of the riverbank neighborhoods are being adversely affected due to:
  - ◊ A deterioration of the area's housing stock,
  - ◊ High vacancies,
  - ◊ Dilapidated buildings,
  - ◊ A growing transience amongst residents and
  - ◊ A lack of access to amenities and services.

In spite of many negative aspects confronting Woonasquatucket River Corridor residents and business owners, the significant number of community resources and assets present in the area, if restructured and capitalized on, could play positive roles in the revitalization of the Woonasquatucket River Corridor.



**WOONASQUACKET RIVER CORRIDOR ZONING MAP**





AREA MAP

### AREA ASSETS

The following summarizes a listing of area resources and assets:

- The Woonasquatucket River represents a powerful yet latent resource that could reunify the riverbank neighborhoods by providing greenspace and a variety of recreational opportunities to area residents,
- The right-of way for US RT.-6 has created a continuous natural resource corridor, supporting a variety of wildlife and vegetation,
- The undeveloped Dyerville State Park and the under-used Merino Park should be returned to the neighborhoods as active recreational areas tailored to meet local needs,

- The currently vacant Lincoln Lace and Riverside Mills properties should be redeveloped and returned to productive use,
- The large inventory of vacant and underutilized mill properties could be readapted and marketed to attract new businesses to the area,
- The cultural heritage of the area and its significant assemblage of historic properties offer an opportunity to improve neighborhood identity and civic pride,
- Olneyville Square has the potential for regaining its role as the retail/commercial and transportation center for the Woonasquatucket River Corridor,
- The area's housing stock is a resource that should be maintained and capitalized on,
- The rich cultural diversity that enhances the area is a valuable resource that should be nurtured.

There is no question that the Woonasquatucket River Valley is in decline and many of its remaining resources have been placed in jeopardy. Recapturing the river as a recreational, cultural and economic focus for the revitalization of its riverbank communities, however, offers a tangible way towards reversing these trends and sparking an area-wide effort of renewal.

## **THE WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER GREENWAY MASTER PLAN:**

### **ITS PLANNING CONCEPTS & ITS GOALS**

When The Providence Plan initiated the process for establishing a "greenway corridor" along the banks of the Woonasquatucket River, it recognized a latent opportunity to breathe new life into the river valley neighborhoods. By recapturing the visual and physical integrity of the river, it was convinced that the Woonasquatucket's renewed presence within the river corridor would provide a powerful tool towards revitalization of its neighborhoods, the enhancement of area amenities and the stimulation of economic redevelopment.

With strong support from the City of Providence, the Providence Plan initiated a series of community forums to stimulate resident involvement in the planning process and to identify neighborhood issues and aspirations. The team met with thirteen groups up and down the river. These initial meetings took place in areas bordering the river between November 1995 and May 1996.

The following are some of the preliminary thoughts and direct quotes put forward by area residents at these meetings:

Every group suggested a bicycle path along the river to get to stores, schools, churches and parks, including Waterplace Park in downtown Providence.

Manton Heights and Hartford Park Housing residents were most interested in the re-opening of Merino Park, considered by both to be their neighborhood park.

- ♦ *"The key to Olneyville is the river."*
- ♦ *"I want to be able to see a sunset in the middle of the greenway."*
- ♦ *"Link bike path to neighborhoods along the river and to other paths in the city."*
- ♦ *".....clear trees so that we can see people on the paths and in the parks."*
- ♦ *"Development of affordable housing at the mill sites which ties the neighborhood to the river."*
- ♦ *"Art Center at the remaining building at Riverside Mills."*
- ♦ *"Pedestrian bridges linking both sides of the river....."*
- ♦ *"Those people knew who the river before make me really excited. This is the kind of community I want!"*



This ongoing participation of these "stakeholders", both residents and area business owners along with The Providence Plan staff members, defined a series of goals as a framework to guide the development of the **Woonasquatucket River Greenway Plan**.

These are as follows:

#### **General Goals**

- *To develop a continuous urban greenway system along the Woonasquatucket River from Manton Pond on the Providence/Johnston line to Waterplace Park in Downtown Providence,*
- *To improve the environmental quality of the river and to protect and enhance its natural and cultural resources,*
- *To increase the range of recreational opportunities available to Woonasquatucket Valley residents by restoring parks and providing greenspace along the Greenway Corridor,*
- *To create a comprehensive system of biking and walking trails along the greenway linking neighborhoods, area amenities, employment centers and Downtown Providence,*
- *To stimulate economic redevelopment and provide increased job opportunities for neighborhood residents,*
- *To re-establish the Woonasquatucket River as a symbol for renewed neighborhood identity and civic pride.*

Along with these community meetings, The Providence Plan and the National Park Service embarked on an

awareness program designed to heighten area residents' appreciation of the river and its potential. With the assistance of the Olneyville Public Library, Olneyville Housing Corporation, the Coastal Resources Center, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, Save the Bay, Brown University and Baer's River Workshop plans were initiated to improve the area environment and promote use of the river and its riverbank areas.

Subsequently, River Festivals, canoe trips, riverbank clean-ups, bulb plantings, poster competitions and the involvement of area schools, through programs sponsored by the EPA and the Natural Resource Conservation Service, have all taken place. Concurrently, the Providence Plan began to seek funding to support these efforts as well as the technical assistance necessary to assemble the base data and surveys required to support the planning of the Greenway Corridor.

These efforts have been financed by the generous support of:

- The Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund,
- Citizens Bank,
- EPA Region 1,
- The Merck Family Fund,
- The Mary Dexter Chafee Fund and
- The Providence Journal-Bulletin,

along with assistance from a great number of volunteers.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLANNING CONCEPTS

After evaluation of the background data, a process of “fleshing-out” a series of conceptual planning strategies was explored, to ensure their viability as well as their consistency with the general goals for the Corridor Plan.

The overriding premise that has shaped these preliminary strategies was that:

***The Greenway Corridor Master Plan should serve multiple constituencies in a variety of ways.***

This approach reflects both the physical diversity that marks the 4.4-mile course of the Woonasquatucket River through the Corridor and the demographic makeup of its 5 riverbank neighborhoods. It was also felt that the impact and anticipated benefits derived from the proposed Greenway should not be exclusive to those 5 communities. With over a third of Providence’s population living within a 0.5 mile corridor along the river, and with its proposed connection to the East Coast Greenway, the Woonasquatucket River Greenway would, therefore, generate significant social and economic benefits throughout the region.

The main thrust of these planning concepts was to incorporate the river into the overall Master Plan, as a visual and thematic design element. The river, in turn, would act to unify a “necklace” of varied elements and events proposed along its banks.

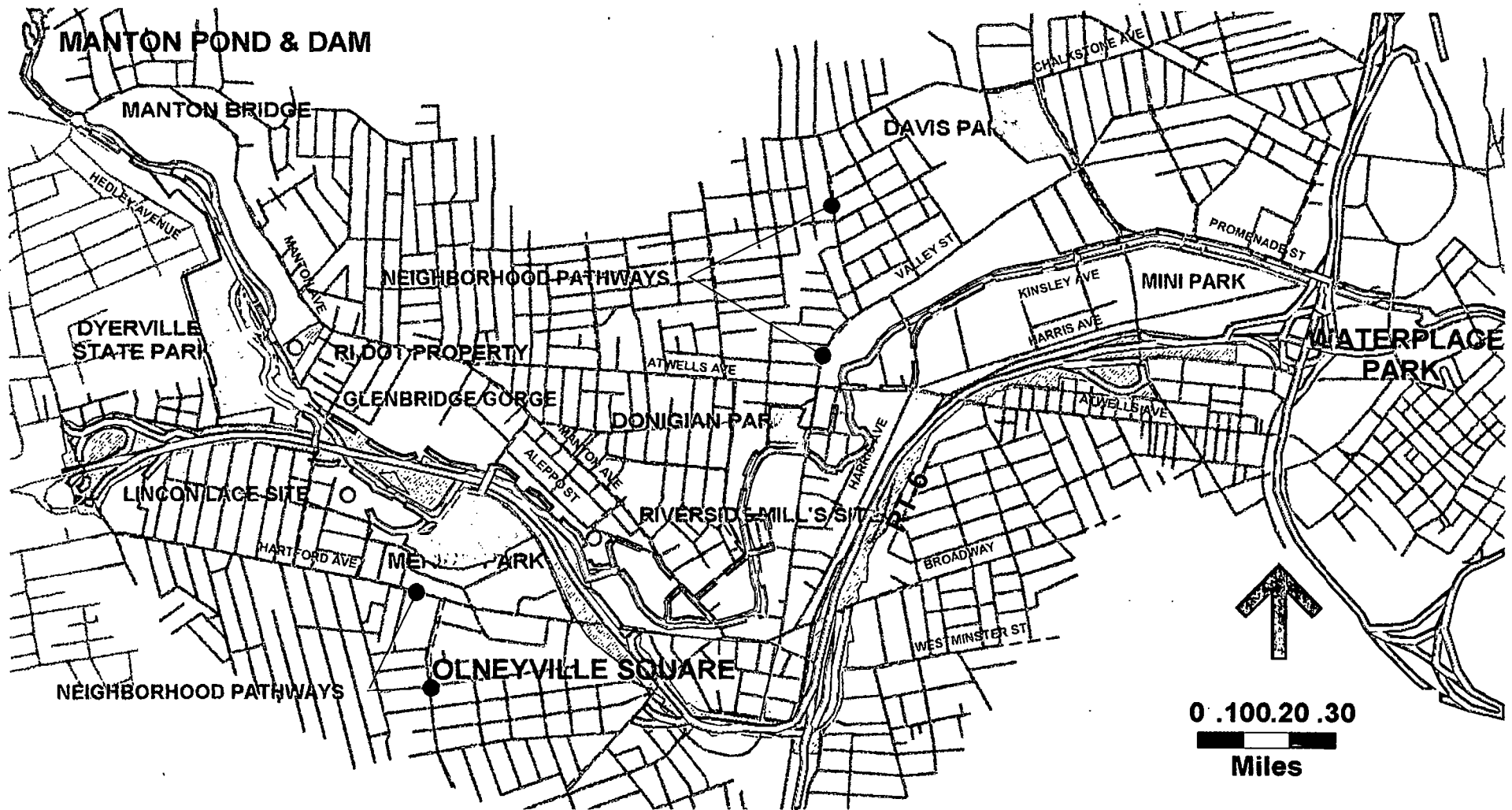
As the project evolved and planning concepts refined, the general goals were further defined to address specific issues, as they were identified. They are as follows:

### SPECIFIC PROJECT GOALS

- *Eliminate point sources of pollution and illegal dumping,*
- *Complete a comprehensive riverbank clean-up and establish an on-going program of stewardship of the river's natural and cultural assets,*
- *Identify and protect the environmentally-sensitive areas within the Corridor,*
- *Provide green spaces and recreational opportunities along the river,*
- *Create visual corridors and physical links to reconnect the neighborhoods with the river,*
- *Exploit walking and biking trails as multi-modal transportation alternatives that connect with public transportation and area amenities.*

### SUPPORTING GOALS

- *Encourage development of a series of inter-connecting neighborhood pathways linked to the riverbank neighborhoods, the Greenway and its trails system.*
- *Endorse the establishment of an overall trail and pathway network connecting both the Greenway and the riverbank neighborhoods with:*



## MAIN TRAIL: THE WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER CORRIDOR

- ◊ *Recreation Areas,*
  - ◊ *Schools and community facilities,*
  - ◊ *Neighborhood shopping,*
  - ◊ *Local employment centers and*
  - ◊ *Downtown Providence.*
- *Support infrastructure improvements that will leverage private reinvestment,*
  - *Create compatible economic development and job opportunities along the Corridor,*
  - *Foster the enhancement of the area's rich diversity of cultural assets, supported by streetscape improvements, as a means to reestablish civic pride and restore a "sense of place" to the riverbank neighborhoods,*
  - *Encourage revitalization strategies to re-establish Olneyville Square as the commercial and symbolic focus for the Woonasquatucket River Valley,*
  - *Support the renovation of vacant and dilapidated housing,*
  - *Endorse efforts towards creating neighborhood stability through code enforcement and the development of low interest rehabilitation loans and home ownership programs for area residents.*

On examination of the river corridor's physical characteristics and for planning purposes, the Greenway Master Plan has been broken into three distinct yet interrelated components, linked thematically by the Woonasquatucket River. Although different in character and requiring individual design treatments to highlight the "greenway corridor", these plan components will be

unified not only in purpose, but through the use of a palette of common design elements.

These design elements would include, for example, an integrated signage system and the use of selected lighting fixtures along streets and neighborhood pathways incorporated into the Greenway Corridor. Tree plantings and landscaping, as well as street and site furnishings, complemented by trail maps and supporting "greenway" brochures, would further reinforce the presence of the Greenway in the neighborhoods.

The 3 Plan Components have been identified as follows:

1. **The Northern Section:** runs from the project area's northern terminus at Manton Pond to the former Riverside Mills' site on Aleppo Street at Manton Avenue.
2. **The Central Section:** encompasses the densely built Olneyville section of the Greenway Corridor, including Olneyville Square and Valley Street to the Eagle Street Bridge.
3. **The Eastern Section:** incorporates the stretch of the Woonasquatucket River from the Eagle Street Bridge to its in-town terminus at Waterplace Park in Downtown Providence.

## **PLAN ELEMENTS**

The following discussion addresses the general concept and design treatment for the various plan elements that make up the Woonasquatucket River Greenway:

### **PRIMARY PLAN ELEMENTS**

- The Woonasquatucket River Greenway within the river corridor,
- The Walking and Biking Trails along the Greenway including the Dyerville-Merino Trail and the Heritage Trail,
- The 'Gateways' to the Greenway.
- Primary Action Sites along the Greenway:
  - ◊ Dyerville, Merino and Donigian Recreational Areas,
  - ◊ The Lincoln Lace and Riverside Mills' properties,
  - ◊ Reconstruction of the Sheridan Street pedestrian bridge,
- Funding Strategies and
- Implementation Phasing.

### **SUPPORTING PLAN ELEMENTS**

- The riverbank neighborhoods' pathway system connecting to the Greenway and its walking and biking trails,
- The Olneyville Square area revitalization,
- Supporting redevelopment activities,
- Development of corridor-wide business opportunity programs,
- Neighborhood stabilization and improvement activities,

- Regulatory mechanisms and
- Potential implementation strategies.

### **PRIMARY PLAN ELEMENTS**

#### **The Greenway**

The Woonasquatucket River Greenway encompasses the assembly of various properties along both banks of the river. The primary phase of this proposed land assembly will encompass a variety of publicly-owned properties. These include residual land left over from the US RT.-6 right-of-way, Dyerville State Park, Merino Park and property on Manton Avenue, owned by RI Department of Transportation (RI DOT). In addition, easements along land owned by Narragansett Electric will also be incorporated, along with acquisition of key properties and access easements, presently in private ownership. This proposed assembly of land will create a continuous 'greenspace' corridor along the river, in the Northern Section of the Master Plan, from Manton Pond to Aleppo Street.

'Greenspace' linkages along the river will be integrated with the proposed walking and biking trail through the more urbanized neighborhoods in the Central and Eastern sections of the Master Plan. They will complete the balance of the proposed Greenway Corridor to its in-town terminus at Waterplace Park. These 'greenspace' linkages will incorporate publicly-owned land (Donigian Park), coupled with the acquisition of several property and access easements, along the central section of the Greenway.

### **The Woonasquatucket River Corridor**

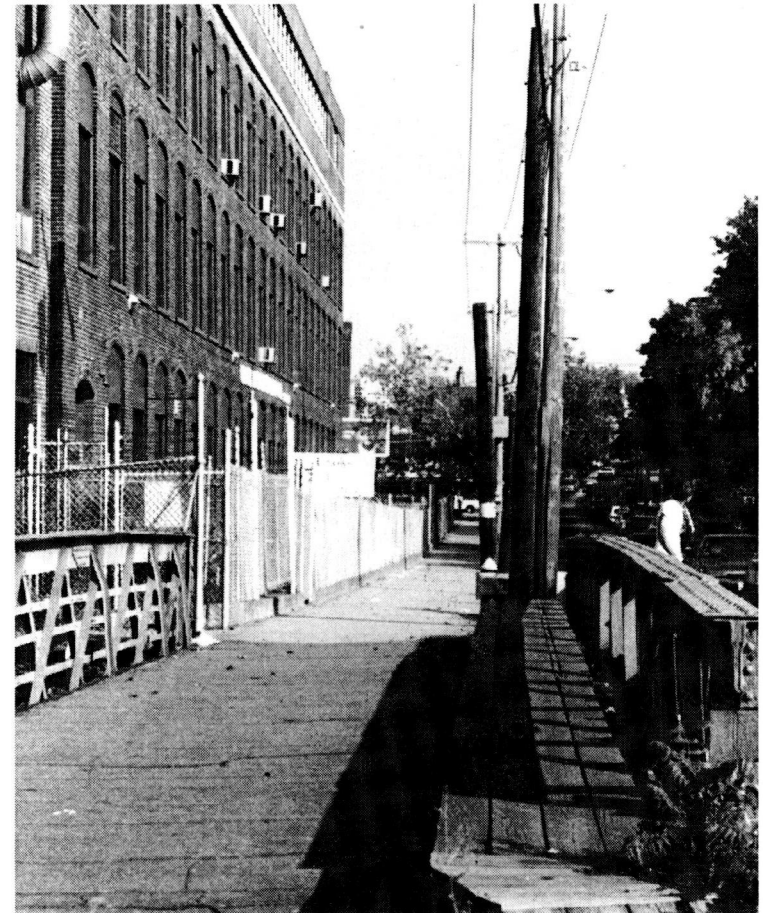
The proposed Greenway, in turn, would support a service area, within the River Corridor, comprising of the 5 riverbank neighborhoods that line its banks, namely Manton, Hartford, Olneyville, Valley and Smith Hill, which represent some 17% of Providence's population. In addition, there are an additional 5 communities, portions of which are within 0.5 miles or a 10-minute walk from the river. These secondary neighborhoods include Mount Pleasant, Silver Lake, West End, Federal Hill and Downtown. Combined, these primary and secondary neighborhoods within the River Corridor represent over a third of Providence's total population.



DELAINE STREET AND THE BRIDGE

### **The Woonasquatucket River Valley**

Reference in this report to the Woonasquatucket River Valley refers to the much broader geographic area defined by the topography along the banks of the river.



THE TAR BRIDGE AT ATWELLS AVENUE

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GREENWAY

### THE NORTHERN SECTION

#### ***Manton Dam to Aleppo Street***

Of the 3 planning components, The RI Department of Transportation (RI DOT) along with The Woonasquatucket River Greenway Task Force concluded that a 'Greenway' could be readily accomplished along this stretch of the river with minimal acquisition costs.

Utilizing a combination of utility company land (Narragansett Electric Co.) along the former railroad right-of-way in conjunction with property owned by the State of Rhode Island (Dyerville State Park), RI DOT (property at 580 Manton Avenue and portions of the right-of-way for RT.-6) along with property owned by the City of Providence (Merino Park), the majority of land required for establish the proposed 'Greenway' system along the Woonasquatucket River, falls within public ownership.

This northern segment of the 'Greenway' has all the ingredients of a conventional greenway plan:

- The Woonasquatucket River with a diversity of spatial and topographical changes along its course,
- Abutting recreational facilities (Dyerville State Park and Merino Park),
- An urban natural resource corridor supporting wetland areas and a rich variety of vegetation and wildlife,
- An ability to support a continuous walking and biking trail system that would connect with

- adjacent neighborhoods and with Downtown,
- Its potential for stimulating economic development and most importantly,
- The Greenway's' immediate proximity to a substantial number of users.

### RECOMMENDED 'GREENWAY' ACQUISITIONS

In order to implement the Greenway Corridor, the following property acquisitions are recommended:

#### *Tax Foreclosure:*

- The City of Providence acquires the present Lincoln Lane and Riverside Mills properties

#### *Outright Purchase:*

- Properties on Aleppo Street and Melissa Street,

#### *Acquisition for Right-of-Way Easements:*

- A portion of property on Glenbridge Avenue,
- Portions of properties on Salmon and King Streets.

This assembly of publicly owned land, along with the use of utility company land and the proposed acquisitions of the 2 properties and 3 easements, cited above, will be required in this segment, to create a continuous greenspace along the Northern Section of the Greenway Plan, as well as providing access to significant portions of the river.

Attention should also be paid to land on both sides of the river, in the northern section of the Greenway, for future acquisition and riverbank protection.







## THE CENTRAL SECTION

### ***Aleppo Street to the Eagle Street Bridge***

In the highly urbanized areas of both the Central and Eastern sections of the Greenway, a continuous belt of greenspace along the river becomes impossible. Similarly, physical and visual connections are extremely tenuous in many of these areas due to dense development along both banks of the river. Where this occurs, linkages between targeted 'greenspace' areas within the 'Greenway' are connected by a proposed system of walking and bike trails.

On leaving the Northern section of the Greenway at Aleppo Street, the river's course through Olneyville is marked by development concentrated along most of its length. Linkages along the Greenway Corridor would, therefore, be accomplished through a combination of the proposed trail system along existing streets, coupled with property acquisitions and easements along portions of the river. These linkages would eventually connect with Donigian Park on Valley Street, the only recreational area in this Central Section of the Greenway.

### **Recommended 'Greenway' Acquisitions**

#### *Acquisition for Right-of-Way Easements:*

- A portion of property on Manton Avenue, incorporating a proposed easement. This would be routed along the edge of the property, continuing east and connecting with the river. It would then follow along both banks of the river to Olneyville Square.

- A continuous easement along the east bank of the river, between San Souci Drive and Delaine Street, assembled from the rear of properties on Valley Street,.
- An easement at the southeast corner of property on Valley Street for access to the proposed pedestrian bridge over the river.

#### *Outright Acquisition:*

- Property on Amherst Street and a portion of property at the rear of Valley Street along the west bank of the river at Donigian Park.

This combination of 2 property acquisitions and 4 easements will be required for this section of the Greenway to provide public access as well as afford some measure of riverbank protection along this portion of the Woonasquatucket River.

## THE EASTERN SECTION

### ***The Eagle Street Bridge to Waterplace Park***

No acquisitions or easements are planned for this portion of the Greenway at this time. Access to the Woonasquatucket River would be provided along both Kinsley Avenue and Promenade Street.

Additional acquisitions of key parcels along the river will be considered in the future, when the opportunity and funds permit, to reinforce the Greenway and to protect and provide additional access to the river.

## **THE WALKING & BIKING TRAIL SYSTEM**

A proposed walking and biking trail would be incorporated into the Woonasquatucket River Greenway in order to provide a continuous trail system, from Manton Pond in the north to the Greenway's eastern terminus at Waterplace Park in Downtown Providence. This proposal reflects a direct interest expressed by area residents at community meetings that improved access to green spaces, community centers, stores and service facilities were goals that should be incorporated into the Plan.

While a continuous off-the-road bike path and walking trail are readily achievable in the northern section of the Greenway Plan, in the central and eastern sections of the Greenway, this, however, becomes much harder to accomplish. Where greenspace elements and right-of-way easements of the Greenway are not contiguous, these components would be inter-connected by a series of walking trails and bike paths along designated streets. These on-the-road bike trails would be located mostly in the central and eastern sections of the Greenway Plan.

### **GENERAL DESIGN OF THE TRAIL SYSTEM**

Introduction of a biking and walking trail system, particularly along the northern stretch of the Woonasquatucket River, will require a sensitive balance in respecting the area's unique natural environment, while also providing public access along the Greenway. Where the trail system does pass through particularly fragile environments within the Greenway Corridor, careful alignment of the trail system, in conjunction with the

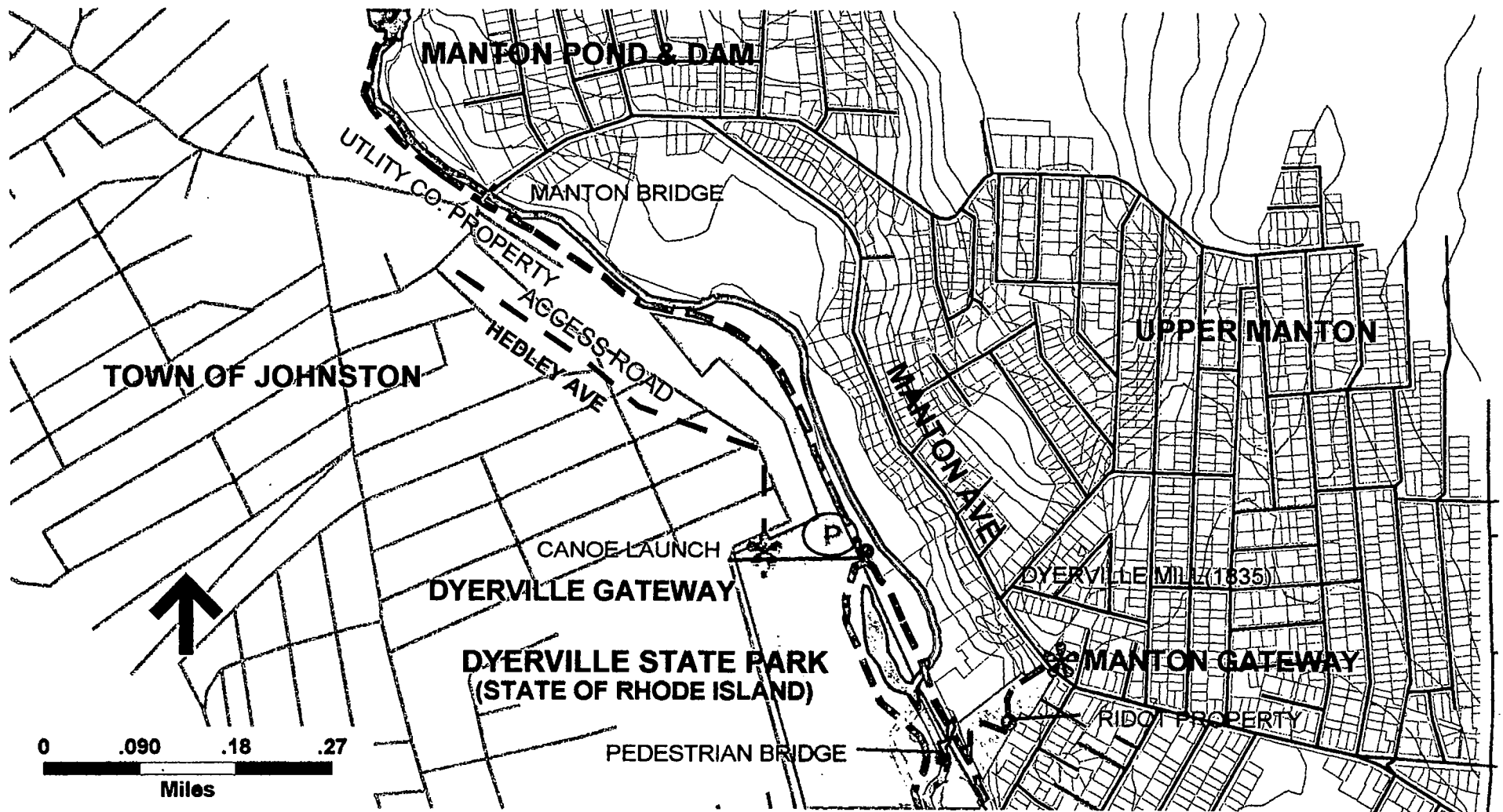
design of vegetative buffers, will be have to be devised to discourage encroachment into these sensitive areas.

In general, but particularly in the more remote stretches of the trail, security would be of primary concern. Good visibility throughout, elimination of dead-ends and frequent access/egress points, as well as clear shoulders along either side of the trail, would be major design considerations. Since the walking and biking trails are intended for use only during daylight hours, lighting of the trail system is not planned, except in those areas that incorporate existing streets and at key 'Gateway' areas.

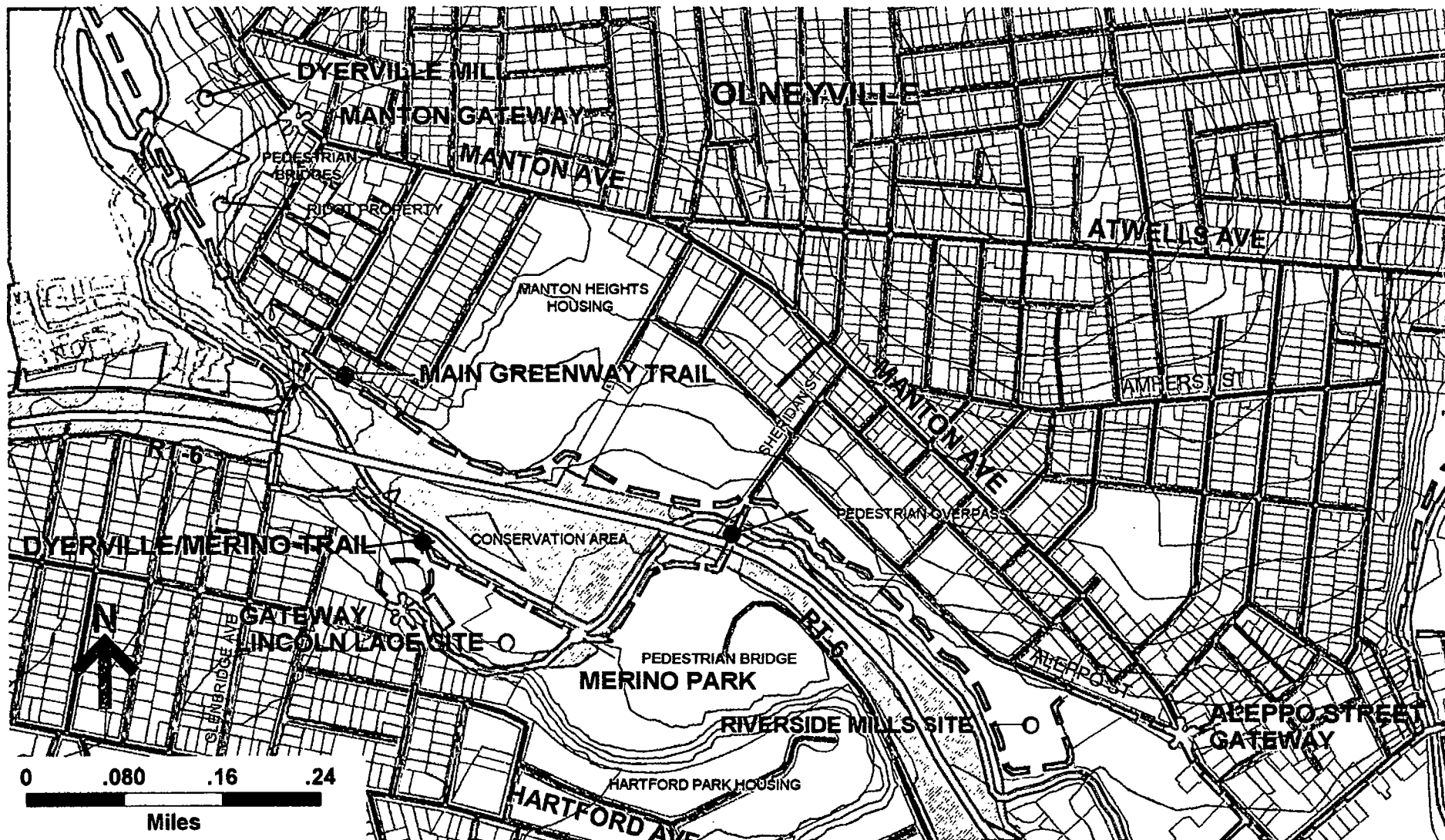
While the Greenway provides open space land and access easements along the Woonasquatucket River, the proposed trail system offers area residents direct access to the river and a network of biking and walking trails, connecting to a variety of amenities and services along its banks. A supplemental network of neighborhood pathways should be considered that would connect into the Greenway Corridor trail system at key points and further reinforce the neighborhoods' accessibility to the Woonasquatucket River and the Greenway.

### **THE NORTHERN SECTION**

Starting at Manton Pond, the proposed trail would follow the path of the former railroad right-of-way (Narragansett Electric) along the river's west bank, crossing Manton Avenue at the Manton Bridge. It would continue southwards along this easement and through Dyerville



### MAIN TRAIL: MANTON POND TO DYERVILLE STATE PARK



### MAIN TRAIL: THE DYERVILLE MILL TO ALEPPO STREET

State Park closely following the west bank of the river. Opposite The Dyerville Mill, the trail would skirt a wetlands area that flanks both sides of the Mill's former tail race.

Just south of this point, at the location of a set of stone bridge abutments, the main trail would cross the river via a proposed pedestrian bridge to the east bank, while the proposed Dyerville-Merino Trail would parallel the west bank of the river, eventually linking with Merino Park. The main trail would continue along the east bank, connecting with the RI Department of Transportation (RI DOT) land, just south of the Dyerville Mill.

This RI DOT property at 576 Manton Avenue has already been partially developed by the Department as a key 'Gateway' for providing neighborhood access to the Greenway. They have demolished an abandoned building on the site to create a plaza with trees and benches and a path leading to the river. The initial development of the Manton 'Gateway' by the RI Department of Transportation is a significant contribution towards the realization of the Greenway.

The trail would continue through the heavily-wooded ravine at Glenbridge Gorge, skirting another wetlands area, eventually connecting with RIDOT land along US RT.-6. From here, the trail would diverge from the river and parallel the highway along the base of the Manton Heights housing complex, while the river swings under the highway and crosses over to the Hartford neighborhood on the other side.

After the housing complex, the trail encounters the first break in its continuity using public land for access. Partial acquisitions are necessary to provide the required access to connect with the pedestrian overpass at Sheridan Street. Completion of reconstruction of the pedestrian bridge over RT.-6 to Merino Park will not only re-establish a vital link between the Olneyville and Hartford neighborhoods, but will also connect with the proposed Dyerville-Merino Trail, which would be routed along the other side of the river.

As the main trail continues along the river, an additional property acquisition would complete the necessary connections of the trail system to the Riverside Mills property. This property is recommended for foreclosure by the City and will form an important anchor for the northern section of the Greenway. Although a portion of the land is targeted as a potential development site, the trail path would continue through that property, along the river bank in land not suitable for development (flood plain area and wetlands). At the Riverside Dam, the trail would swing up to the north and connect with Aleppo Street, where the off- the-road trail would change to an on-the-road system, as it approaches the densely developed Olneyville Square area.

### **The Dyerville-Merino Trail**

To provide a variety of trail options as well as integrating the Hartford neighborhood more fully into the Greenway, a Dyerville-Merino Trail is suggested. This 0.72 mile segment of the trail system along a portion of the west bank of the river would reinforce the inclusion of both the

Lincoln Lace property and Merino Park as critical elements in the development of the overall River Greenway Plan.

This trail splits from the main trail system just north of the wetlands at Dyerville Mill and continues along the west bank of the river. At the Glenbridge Avenue bridge, the Dyerville-Merino Trail would leave the river and climb the valley slope up to Glenbridge Avenue. It then would proceed south along the street and access the Lincoln Lace property by means of an easement and one property acquisition. This off-the-road trail would then traverse the Lincoln Lace property by running along the south bank of the river, connecting into Merino Park by a pedestrian bridge over the river. From there it would complete its loop by crossing over the Sheridan Street pedestrian bridge and reconnects with the main trail, which would then continue on to Aleppo Street and Olneyville Square.

### **THE CENTRAL SECTION**

#### ***Aleppo Street to the Eagle Street Bridge***

The trail's connection to the river through Olneyville becomes more tentative due to the traditional practice of building mills on the river to exploit its water power. Consequently, physical and visual access to the Woonasquatucket River becomes extremely restricted as it wends its way downstream to Waterplace Park. It becomes apparent that the river cannot function solely as the visual thread that defines and marks the trail's path through Olneyville, as it

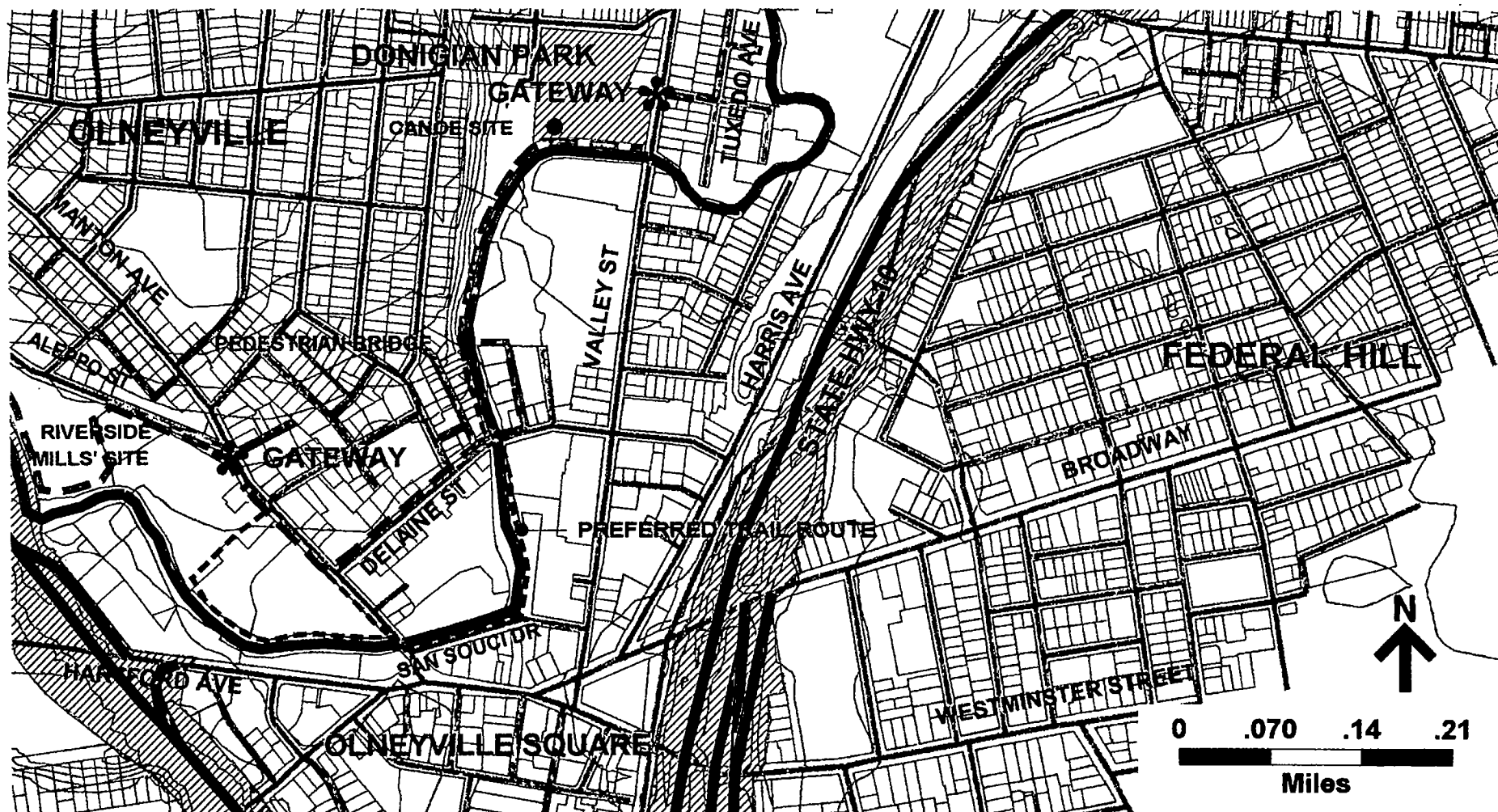


ALEPPO STREET SHOWING THE REHABILITATED MILL BUILDING ALONG WITH INFILL HOUSING OPPOSITE.

has further upstream.

On leaving Aleppo Street, the proposed path of the trail confronts automobile traffic for the first time along its route on Manton Avenue. Here the trail classification changes to an on-the-road trail, utilizing paint striping and signage to delineate its route along the existing streets. From Manton Avenue, the RI DOT Trail Study





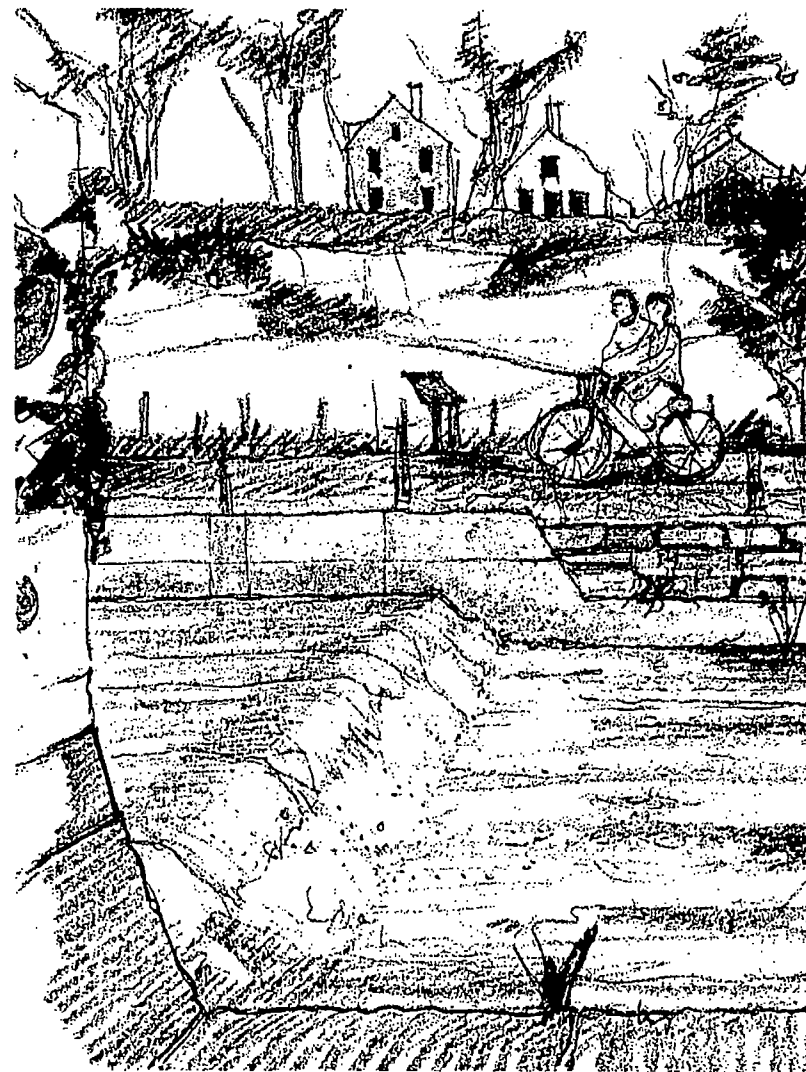
### THE MAIN TRAIL: OLNEYVILLE SQUARE TO DONIGIAN PARK

recommends crossing Manton Avenue and routing the trail along Delaine Street to the Delaine Street Bridge. From there, the trail would then proceed along Delaine Street and up Sonoma Court to a short east-west easement across the rear of property on Valley Street. This would connect to a proposed pedestrian bridge over to the west bank of the river and to another two parcels of land recommended for acquisition. Steeply sloping and wooded, this 2.4 acre triangular piece of land would provide an attractive and scenic route along the west bank of the river with direct access into Donigian Park. All of this portion would be an off-the-road trail.

From Donigian Park, the trail returns to an on-the-road system, crossing over Valley Street to Amherst Street and then along Tuxedo Avenue, passing through a late 19th century residential enclave, to Atwells Avenue and the historic Tar Bridge. Crossing Atwells Avenue, the trail would then continue east along Atwells Avenue to Eagle Street and its bridge.

While this is a pragmatic approach, this routing proposal for the trail unfortunately circumvents Olneyville Square due to safety concerns for the heavy traffic and restrictive street widths encountered in and around the square. It is believed, however, that this proposed trail routing would be a missed opportunity to spark Olneyville's Square's revitalization and to take advantage of the multi-modal transportation potential of the Greenway Plan.

***Elimination of Olneyville Square from the main trail route would leave a significant void in fulfilling the goals of the Greenway Master Plan.***



THE BIKE PATH AT THE DAM AT DONIGIAN PARK

## **PREFERRED TRAIL ROUTING (CENTRAL SECTION)**

To reinforce the trail's connection with the river and the square, it is recommended that the following trail routings be reevaluated as preferred alternatives to the current RI DOT proposals. They are as follows:

- *A 0.3-mile alternate trail route would continue along the west side of Manton Avenue to the former Almacs property, where it would cross the site in an easement and continue to run south along the east riverbank to the Manton Avenue Bridge. Here a bike rack and benches might be provided in the small landscaped park on the edge of the square. At this transition point, the trail would revert exclusively to a walking trail, as it crosses over into Olneyville Square proper, providing trail users direct access to both public transportation and area services.*
- *It is also proposed that San Souci Drive be made a one way street going west, allowing enough width for the trail to continue along the river on the south side of the street.*
- *An additional transition area with a bike rack and benches is also proposed. This transfer point for bicyclists would be located on the south side of San Souci Drive. This would offer a direct pedestrian access from the trail to the square, connected by a landscaped walkway.*
- *From the east end of San Souci Drive, the proposed trail alignment would run in an easement along the east side of the river to the rear of properties that front on Valley Street. This trail route alternative would follow the Woonasquatucket River past the dam and*

*up to Delaine Street, reconnecting with the original trail route at the Delaine Street bridge.*

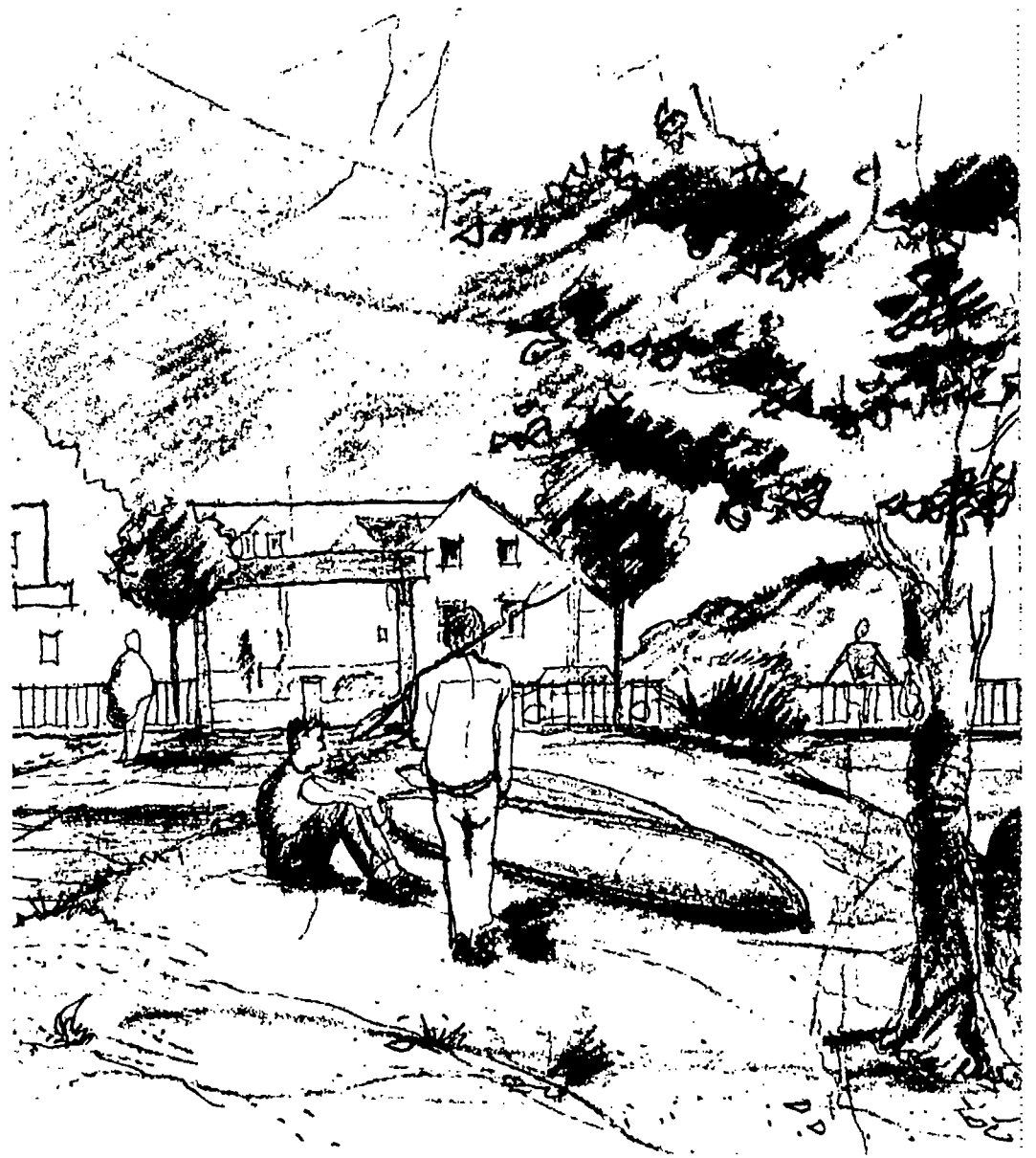
There is, however, one problem with a portion of this proposed trail routing. Accessibility just north of San Souci Drive is extremely narrow and would require a short section of cantilever to allow the path to bypass a building located at the edge of the river. If this can be resolved cost-effectively, either by acquisition or construction, it is suggested that this route should be the preferred one.

- *Rather than diverting the trail route down Sonoma Court, it is also recommended that a further evaluation be made of the continuation of the trail from the bridge along the west bank of the river to Donigian Park, a distance of 0.05 miles.*

Although restricted in width at the bridge abutments, construction of either a retaining wall or development of a cantilevered walkway may resolve this problem. At issue are the relative costs to accomplish this compared to the costs of an easement and construction of the pedestrian bridge, that would be required, as proposed for the initial trail route.

**The Greenway and the Trail System should maintain a strong connection with the Woonasquatucket River and Olneyville Square.**

The Greenway and the proposed routing of the walking and biking trail through the Olneyville neighborhood lack identity and a strong relationship with the river, which typify the northern section of the Greenway Plan. Other



BIKE PATH AND CANOE LAUNCH AREA AT DONIGIAN PARK

techniques and design approaches must be devised to overcome this problem. The following recommendation is one possible conceptual approach.

### **THE OLNEYVILLE HERITAGE TRAIL**

There appears to be a sufficient inventory of historic and cultural resources within the area to provide a framework for establishing a heritage trail system that would complement and reinforce the proposed route of the main trail. Supported by further historic research, this Heritage Trail would utilize the Woonasquatucket River, its dams and tail races, buildings, historic artifacts, industrial processes and rich social history to document and interpret the area's heritage. This concept would also seek to re-engage the river with the neighborhood and its residents, by providing a consistent visual theme and a series of "happenings" along the Greenway's passage through Olneyville.

It is suggested that the Heritage Trail might also accomodate interpretive themes incorporating, for example:

- The Textile Industry,
- Work,
- Play,
- Immigration (recent and past),
- Child labor,
- The Unions, etc.

These and other topics should be investigated further for possible inclusion into the Heritage Trail.

**To buttress the integrity of the Greenway Corridor through Olneyville, it is proposed that the Main Trail**

**be supplemented and reinforced with a Heritage Trail incorporating and highlighting places and events that celebrate the rich social and architectural history of the area.**

The proposed enhancement of this portion of the main trail would be a positive addition and help maintain the interest and momentum necessary to bridge the gap through this section of the Greenway Corridor.

### **THE EASTERN SECTION**

#### *Eagle Street Bridge to Waterplace Park*

On leaving the Eagle Street bridge, the trail continues as an on-the-road trail. An opportunity exists for the trail to be incorporated in the area between the south bank of the river and the present sidewalk along the portion of Kinsley Avenue to the Acorn Street bridge. At the bridge, it is suggested that the trail route cross over to Promenade Street to continue along the street past the "Foundry" complex. Although this alignment diverges from the RI DOT Plan, it is believed that further engineering and cost studies should be undertaken to explore this alternative. This stretch is the weakest link in the overall trail system both in terms of activities and overall visual interest. Maintaining a strong connection with the river and continuing a coherent progression of the trail through this area are critical factors in completing this section of the Greenway to its in-town anchor at Waterplace Park.

From this point at Promenade Street, the trail culminates in its final stretch along the river, passing under I-95 and through the Providence Mall complex, arriving at the Greenway Corridor's eastern terminus at Waterplace Park.

### **DESIGN TREATMENT OF THE TRAIL**

In the Northern Section of the Greenway, the proposed trail would be an off-the-road trail system. Its overall design treatment would be unintrusive and limited to creating a varied route along the Corridor. Landscaping would be restricted to clearing out the excess understory of vegetation along its path and selective pruning to create visual corridors which, combined with reinforcement plantings, will frame views and enhance the spatial and visual experience for trail users. Snags, created from dead trees to encourage nesting and the introduction of a variety of appropriate plantings, such as native fruit-bearing trees and shrubs to attract wildlife, would also be incorporated into the overall design.

Site furnishings would be confined to directional and interpretive signage (historic sites and plant identification etc.), benches, trash receptacles and perhaps several picnic tables, strategically located in appropriate areas. Consideration might also be given to incorporating a series of exercise trails (Vita Trails) that would connect into key pathways to the adjacent neighborhoods.

In the central and eastern sections of the Greenway, where the trail is routed through the densely developed sections of the Corridor, the trail system would, in many cases, be incorporated with existing streets. This trail route would be classified as an on-the-road trail system, where the street right-of-way would accommodate both automobiles and trail users. This trail route would be delineated by paint striping, supported by directional signage along the trail and at street crossings. In these areas, the trail's route would be further enhanced by tree

plantings and street lights, bike racks and other site furnishings, where appropriate.

Throughout the length of the trail and where appropriate, directional and interpretive signage, landscaping and rest areas with benches would be incorporated as part of the overall design treatment. In all aspects of the trail design, full accessibility under ADA guidelines would be recognized and accommodated.

### **GATEWAYS**

The Northern Section of the Greenway Plan has 5 primary entry points to the Greenway and the proposed trail system, namely:

1. The entrance to Dyerville State Park at Hedley Avenue in Johnston,
2. A secondary trail access at the RI DOT property on Manton Avenue, already partially developed by RI DOT,
3. The entrance to the US RT-6 pedestrian overpass at Sheridan Street in Olneyville,
4. A primary entrance to Merino Park incorporated with the Lincoln Lace site and
5. A primary entrance at the transitional area on Aleppo Street at Manton Avenue.

The Central and Eastern sections of the Greenway would also have 'Gateways' at:

6. Olneyville Square (2),
7. Donigian Park,
8. Atwells Avenue at Harris Avenue and Valley Street,





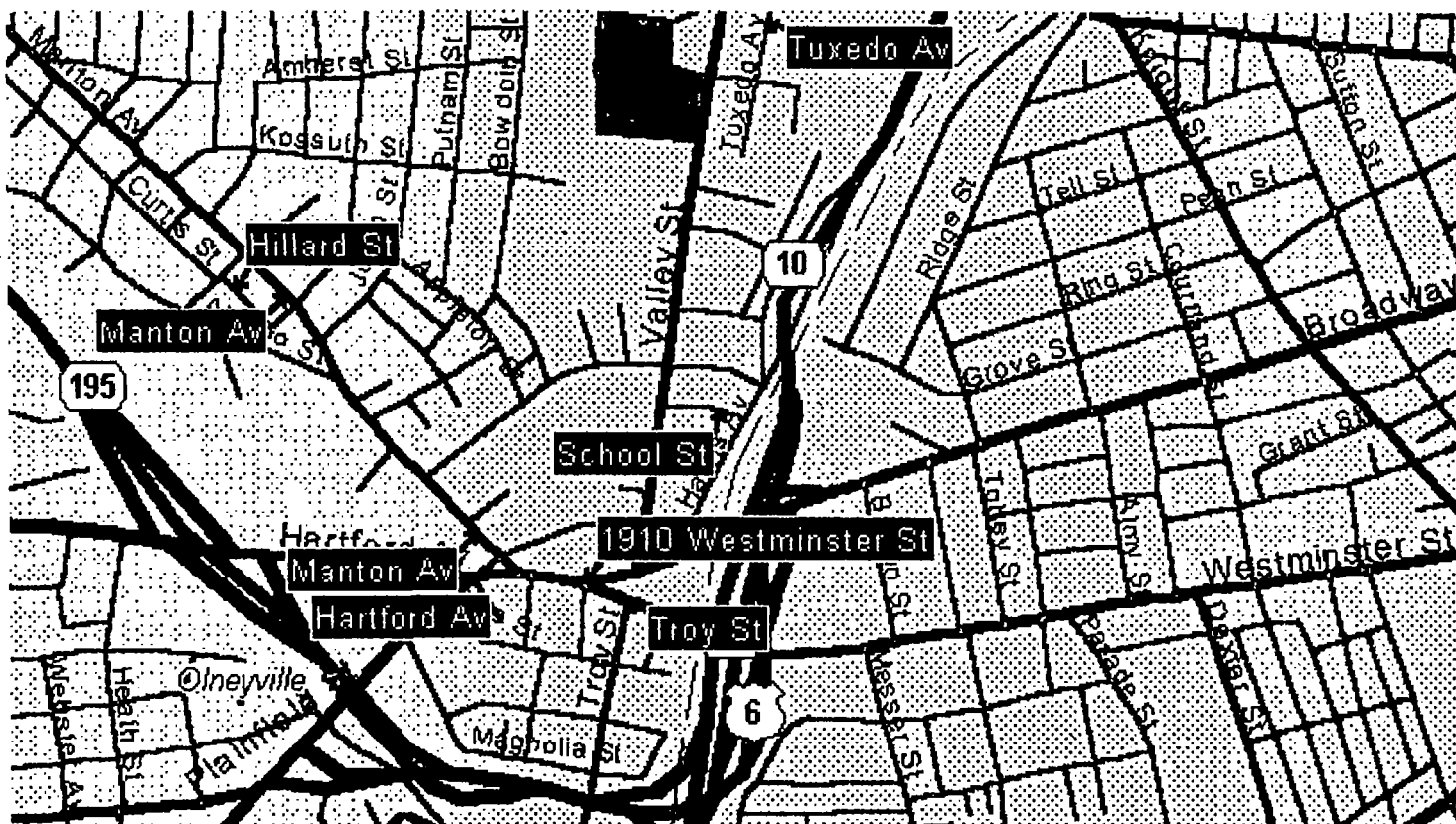
### SOME OF THE HISTORIC INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES IN THE GREENWAY CORRIDOR

#### Address

610 Manton Avenue:  
 Ponagansett Avenue:  
 120 Manton Avenue:  
 Aleppo Street  
 Troy Street at Dike Street  
 299 Carpenter Street:  
 50 Valley Street  
 166 Valley Street:  
 325 Valley Street:  
 Valley Street at Hemlock Street:  
 Promenade Street at Holden Street:  
 160 Kinsley Avenue:  
 23 Acorn Street:  
 45 Eagle Street:

#### Property

The Dyerville Mill (c1835)  
 Merino Mills' site (1851 and later)  
 The Atlantic Delaine Mills (1863 and later)  
 The Riverside Mills site (1863, 1865 and later)  
 The Waterman-Weybossett Mills (1836-1881)  
 Grant Mill (1910)  
 Providence Dying, Bleaching & Calendering Co. (1843)  
 Providence & National Worsted Mills (c. 1887)  
 Woonasquacket Print Works (1895)  
 R I Locomotive Works (1880)  
 Browne & Sharp Manufacturing Co. (1876-1916)  
 Merchants' Cold Storage (1893)  
 Nicholson File Co. (1864 and later)  
 Valley Worsted Mills (1866 and later)



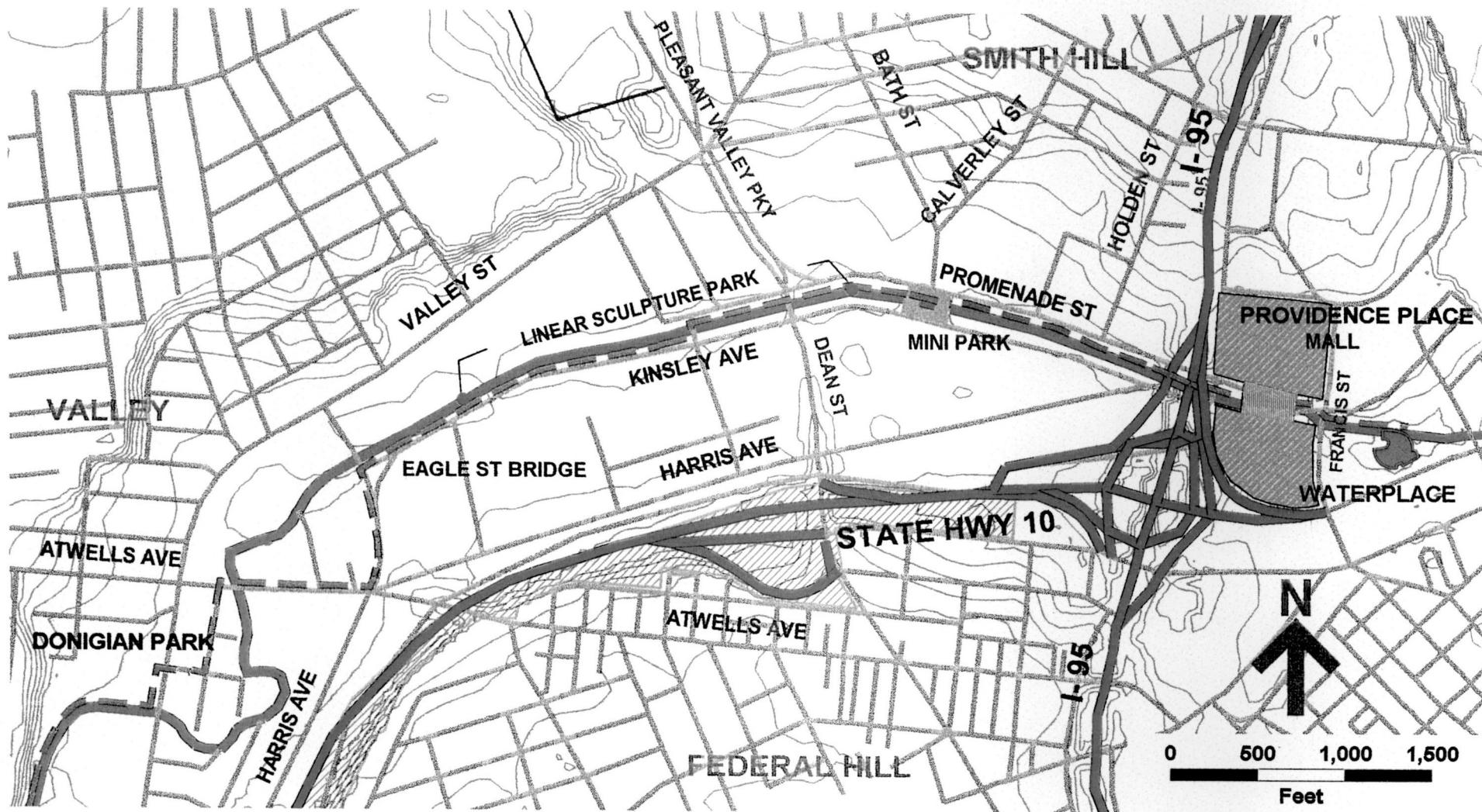
## OLNEYVILLE: HISTORIC RESIDENTIAL/COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

### Property

Mill Housing(c. 1860)  
 Atlantic Delaine Mills Gasometer Building(1863)  
 Neal Flynn's Newspaper Store  
 Site of the public water pump, First Free Baptist Church(1828), Dyer's  
 Opera House, and the Methodist Episcopal Tabernacle  
 Church of the Messiah  
 Late Victorian residential areas

### Address

Manton Avenue and Hilliard Street  
 Aleppo Street  
 1910 Westminister Street  
 Olneyville Square  
  
 Troy and Westminister Street  
 Tuxedo Avenue and School Street areas



**MAIN TRAIL: DONIGIAN PARK TO WATERPLACE**

9. The Eagle Street Bridge area,
10. Pleasant Valley Parkway at Dean Street and at
11. Waterplace Park

Design treatment of the proposed 'Gateways' in the more undeveloped areas of the Greenway would be less defined than elsewhere in the Greenway. Limited parking would be provided and designs would be developed to highlight and reinforce these key entrances. 'Gateways' at the more developed areas (Locations #2, #3 and #5) would have a higher level of design treatment appropriate for their settings and may also include area lighting and additional parking, where feasible and appropriate. All entrances, however, would be unified in their treatment of other site improvements. This underlying consistency of design would include such items such as landscaping, site furnishings and signage, etc.

There are multiple access points to the Greenway in both the central and eastern areas, due to existing street patterns. It is recommended, therefore, that defined 'Gateways' (#6 - #11) be restricted only to those primary neighborhood access points identified above.

The suggested network of neighborhood pathways, discussed below, would serve as more informal but no less important linear connections to the Woonasquatucket River Greenway. This hierarchy of access points and secondary links, serving the Greenway and its trail system, is crucial in attracting and distributing both neighborhood residents and trail users throughout the length of the Greenway Corridor.



THE GATEWAY TO THE GREENWAY AT MANTON AVENUE

## PRIMARY GREENWAY ACTION SITES

The following is a discussion of the various primary Action Sites that have been identified along the River Greenway. The redevelopment and integration of these sites into the overall Greenway are crucial to the short and long-term success of the Woonasquatucket River Greenway Master Plan.

Secondary development areas have also been targeted that would support and embellish the Greenway. These, however, would rely largely on action by others and are identified to indicate the range of revitalization activities and opportunities that would be generated by the Woonasquatucket River Greenway.

### THE NORTHERN SECTION

#### Dyerville State Park

This 34-acre property is located on the west bank of the river, just south of the Manton Bridge. The park, which mostly falls within the boundaries of the Town of Johnston, has limited public access. Currently, it is either entered from Hedley Avenue in Johnston or from the Maron Industrial Park access road, off Glenbridge Avenue.

#### Current Status:

- Park is owned by the State of Rhode Island and managed by RI DEM.
- It has never been developed as a recreational area.
- The Southside Community Land Trust has recently signed a management contract with RI DEM to develop and operate the area as a

mixed-use recreational/urban resource area

#### Planned Actions:

- Short and long-term plans for the site include:
  - ◇ The Narragansett Bay Commission plans to use a portion of the site for construction of an underground storage tank,
  - ◇ Replacement of top soil and reseeding,
  - ◇ Revegetation and tree planting,
  - ◇ Development of a portion of the site for unstructured recreation,
  - ◇ Construction of off-site parking area on the periphery of the site,
  - ◇ Establishment of a canoe put-in.
- The land trust also proposes to incorporate a job training program, based on development of a variety of urban agriculture projects, including:
  - ◇ Community gardens operated in conjunction with a Farmer's Market,
  - ◇ A tree farm and
  - ◇ A nursery for wetland plants.

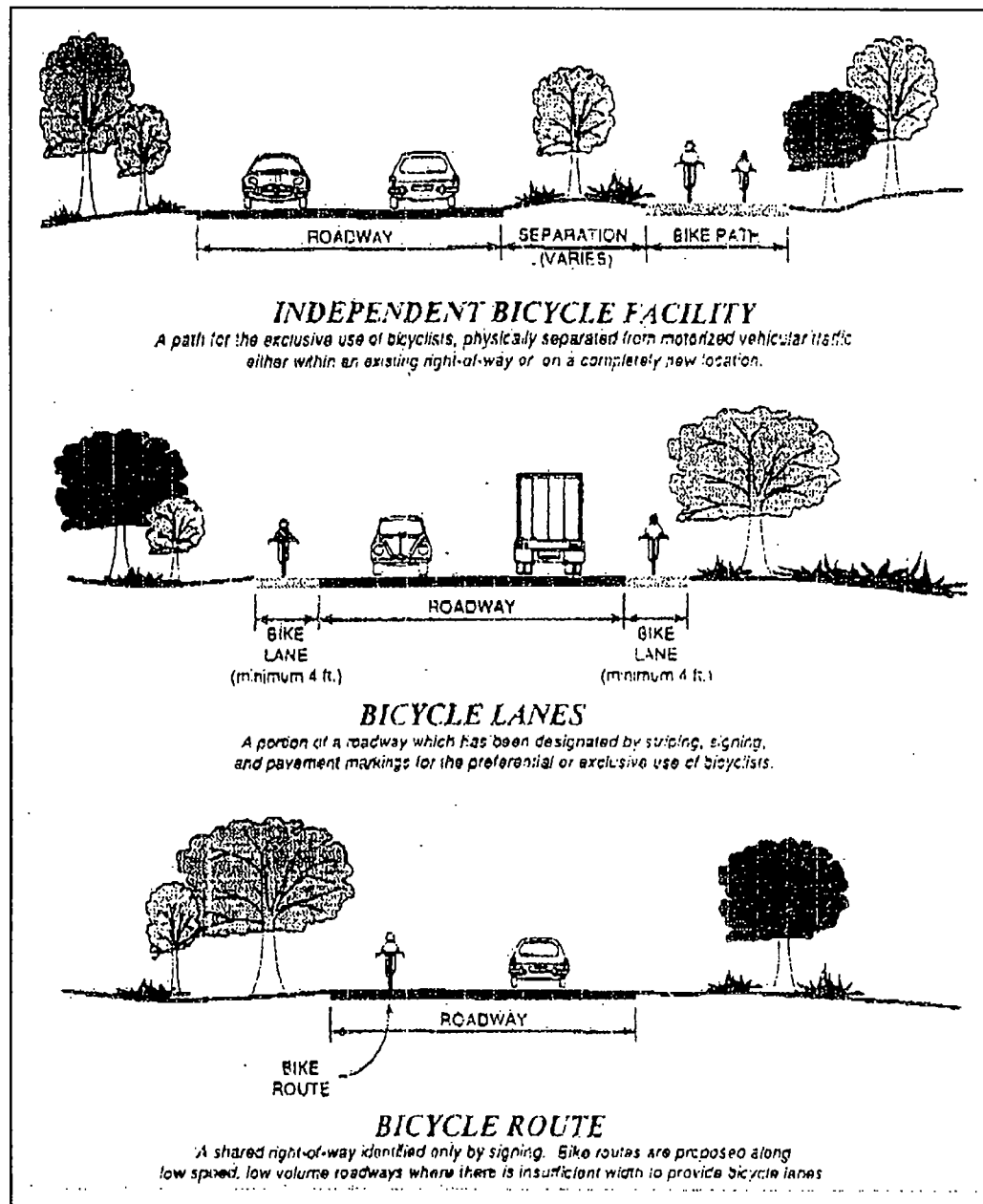
**These far-reaching proposals, which are consistent with the objectives of the Greenway Corridor Plan, should be actively supported.**

In particular, establishment of a tree farm and wetlands nursery are not only compatible uses within the Woonasquatucket River Corridor, but are job-creating activities for local residents and

**OFF-ROAD-TRAIL**  
(Formerly Class-I)

**ON-ROAD-TRAIL**  
(Formerly Class-II)

**ON-ROAD-TRAIL**  
(Formerly Class-III)



**BICYCLE TRAIL CLASSIFICATIONS**



respond to a significant local demand for wetland plantings, which until now has only been met by out-of-state suppliers.

### The Manton Avenue 'Gateway' Site

This wedge-shaped property at 576 Manton Avenue is owned by the RI Department of Transportation. With frontage on Manton Avenue, this 2.4-acre site slopes steeply down to the river and abuts the Narragansett Electric property that runs along the east bank of the river. As such, this site provides an important access point to the Greenway for residents of Upper Manton and Mount Pleasant.

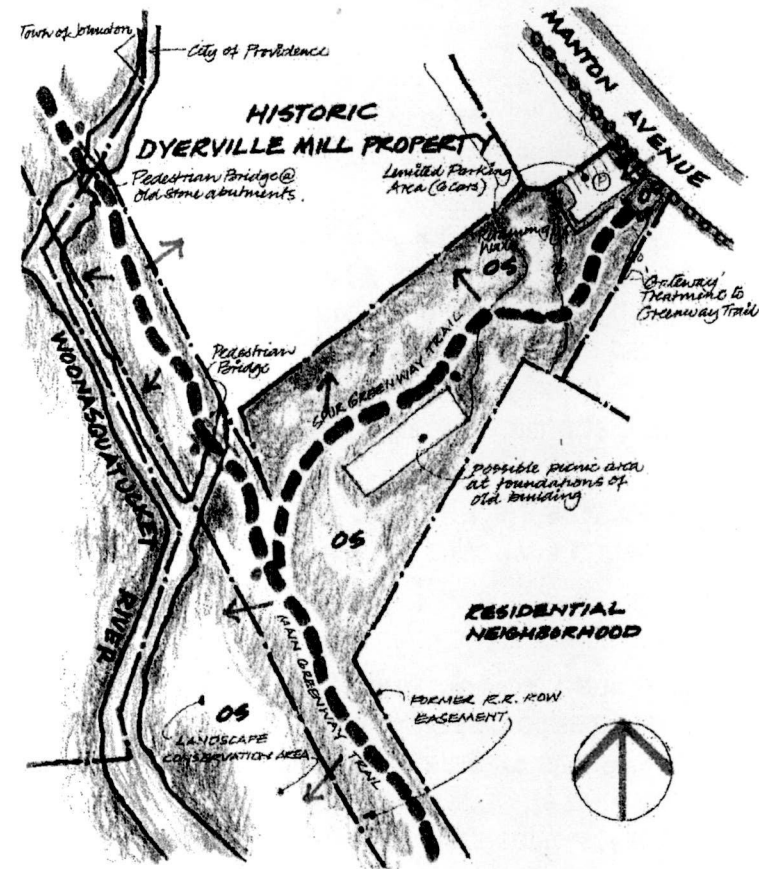
#### Current Status:

- In June of 1997, RI DOT undertook the initial development of the Manton Avenue 'Gateway' project, including:
  - ◊ Demolition of an existing building,
  - ◊ Development of a landscaped plaza with trees, shrubs and granite benches,
  - ◊ Cleared a trail to the river and
  - ◊ Regraded the upper portion of the site for the eventual development of a small parking area.

#### Planned Actions:

RI DOT's early commitment to the realization of the Greenway has set the stage for future actions. Further development plans for the site include:

- Completion of the parking area,
- Design and construction of a 'Gateway' design element to the Greenway,



ACTION SITE:  
THE MANTON AVENUE 'GATEWAY'.

- Development of a picnic area in the lower portion of the site,
- Completion of the trail and landscaping of the site and
- Installation of directional and interpretive signage.

### **The Sheridan Street Pedestrian Overpass**

Owned by RI DOT, this pedestrian bridge over RT.-6 provided residents with an important connection between the Olneyville and Hartford neighborhoods.

#### **Current Status:**

- The pedestrian bridge is presently being rebuilt and a late 1997 completion is anticipated.

#### **Planned Actions:**

- The reopening of the Sheridan Street overpass will:
  - ◊ Re-establish this pedestrian link between the Olneyville and Hartford neighborhoods,
  - ◊ Create a 'Gateway' to the Greenway and the proposed trail system,
  - ◊ Provide a major connection to both banks of the river,
  - ◊ Provide access to the Manton Avenue "Gateway" site, Merino Park and the Lincoln Lace property, key **Action Sites** along the Corridor,
  - ◊ Connect the proposed Dyerville-Merino Trail to the Main Trail.

Designs for the proposed reconstruction of the Sheridan Street pedestrian bridge incorporate a switchback ramp system at Merino Park, necessary to comply with ADA accessibility requirements.

- The rebuilding of the pedestrian overpass offers a significant design opportunity that:
  - ◊ Reinforces and enhances the access points at Sheridan Street and Merino Park,
  - ◊ Truly celebrates this important connection to both sides of the River Corridor,

- ◊ Fully integrates the ramp as a playful sculptural element into the overall plans for Merino Park and the pedestrian bridge's access point at Sheridan Street.

### **The Lincoln Lace Property**

Somewhat similar in topography to Dyerville State Park, this secluded enclave contains the Lincoln Lace Property, the 8.8-acre site of the former Merino Mill (1835) complex. A city-owned recreational area, Merino Park, is adjacent and is separated from the Lincoln Lace property by the river and the mill's tail race.

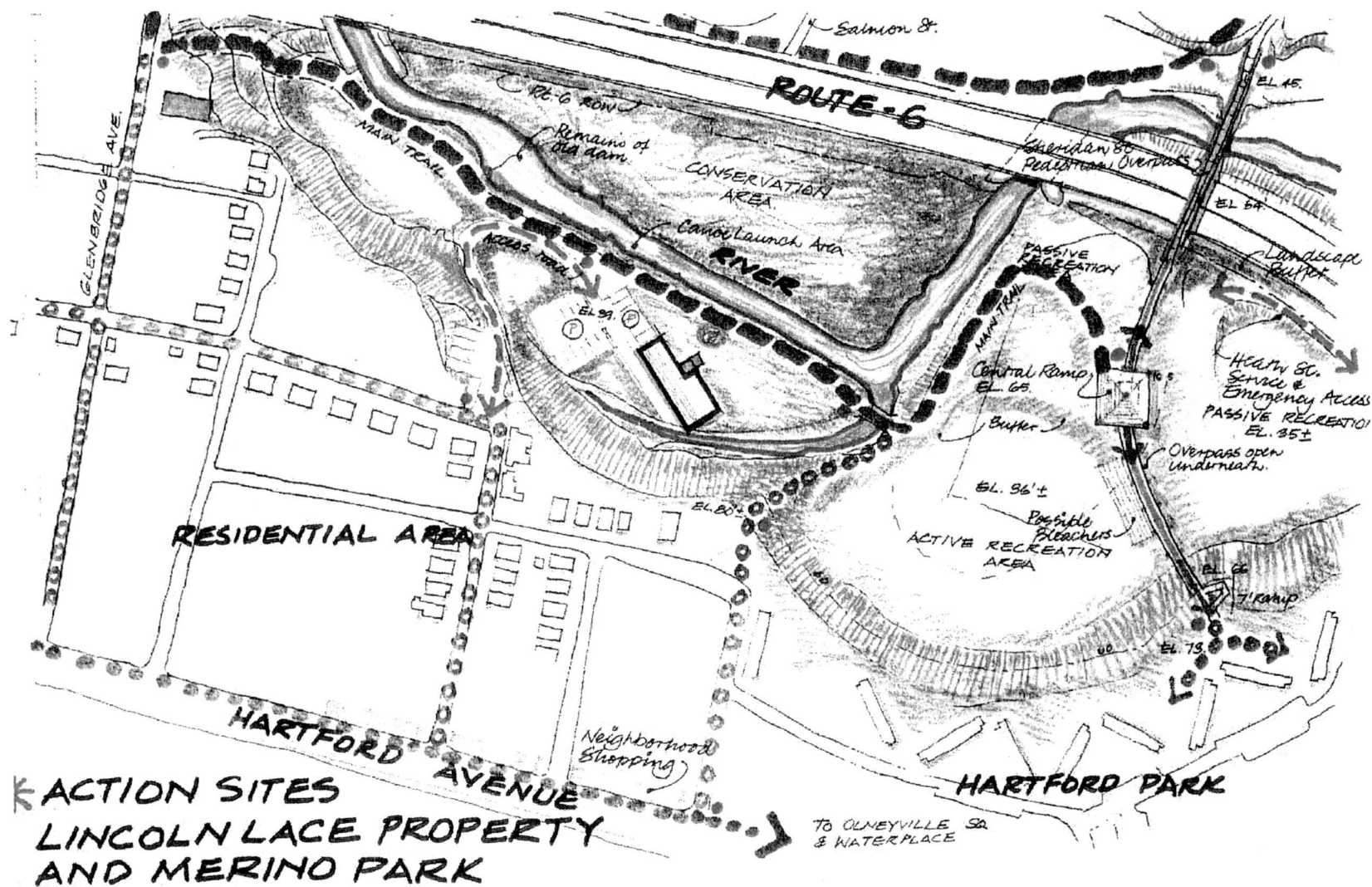
Both areas are visually and physically isolated from the rest of the Hartford neighborhood. Its only access is down a steep driveway at Ponagannsett Avenue. Along with Dyerville State Park, both two sites have considerable frontage along the west bank of the Woonasquatucket River.

#### **Current Status:**

- Destroyed by a fire, the property is currently vacant,
- The only remaining structure is a stuccoed 2-story brick mill building,
- The property is facing foreclosure due to delinquent real estate taxes,
- On account of site contamination, the property has been declared a 'brownfields' site by RI DEM and has been awarded an EPA Region 1 grant to conduct an environmental assessment of the site.

#### **Proposed Actions:**

- It is recommended that the City acquire this property through the tax courts in order to:
  - ◊ Establish a more productive use for the property,



ACTION SITES:  
MERINO PARK AND THE LINCOLN LACE PROPERTY

- ◇ Incorporate a portion of the property into the Greenway Corridor,
- ◇ Provide improved neighborhood access and parking for Merino Park and to
- ◇ Sponsor compatible redevelopment of the property in conjunction with the proposed Merino Park renovations that will help alleviate the park's present visual and physical isolation.

The existing mill building appears to have rehabilitation potential. However, a detailed engineering analysis would be required to assess whether this is a realistic option. There has also been interest in development of this property and several proposals have been put forward, including its potential reuse as a Center for Environmental Education.

This site contains several other items of interest, including the tailrace which should be cleared of debris, a significant old-growth oak meriting protection and the remains of a dam and a set of stone bridge abutments. These artifacts should be preserved and identified, to ensure that the history of the site and the role the Merino Mill played in the early development of the Woonasquatucket Valley are recorded and protected.

**Acquisition of the Lincoln Lace site by the City and its productive reuse are important factors in the successful renovation and security of Merino Park.**

### **Merino Park**

This-18.6 acre recreational area, owned by the City of Providence, is located in the Hartford neighborhood. It abuts The Lincoln Lace property to its north, US RT.-6 to

its east and the Hartford Park public housing complex, a 508-unit development of family housing, which is located at the top of a steep wooded embankment. It was formerly connected to the Olneyville neighborhood by the Sheridan Street pedestrian bridge over US RT.-6.

### **Current Status**

- The Park is currently closed due to:
  - ◇ Its physical and visual isolation,
  - ◇ Limited neighborhood access,
  - ◇ Security issues related to its present isolation.

### **Proposed Actions**

- As part of the Greenway Master Plan, the City Parks Department is planning to renovate the Park which will provide much-needed recreational opportunities for area residents,
- The redevelopment of the Lincoln Lace property and the reconstruction of the Sheridan Street pedestrian overpass will improve access to the park, while its use by neighborhood residents will be broadened and security concerns will be substantially removed,
- The joint development of the two properties will also create an important 'Gateway' to the Greenway, by connecting the proposed Dyerville-Merino Trail to the main trail system.

The recommendation to create the primary park entrance and off-site parking at the Lincoln Lace property with access to the park by a pedestrian bridge over the river are among several suggestions to address and resolve security concerns. Other recommendations include:

- Limiting Heath Street for only service and security access. This would create a loop across the proposed

bridge and connecting to Ponagansett Avenue, making park surveillance easier,

- Identifying a compatible use for the existing mill building that would establish an active presence in the immediate area.

**The combined redevelopment of Merino Park and the Lincoln Lace property are major components in the successful implementation of the Greenway Plan and would act to 'seed' other activities along the Greenway.**

### **Riverside Mills' Property**

Located on Aleppo Street, the former Riverside Mills complex and the surrounding area play a pivotal role in the Woonasquatucket River Greenway. At this transition point, the Greenway reverts from a continuous greenspace corridor to a predominantly urban corridor. This property occupies a considerable frontage along the east bank of the river. In spite of a disastrous fire, the site still contains a dam and traces of its canal trenches, lades and tail races that were formerly used to power the mill.

### **Current Status**

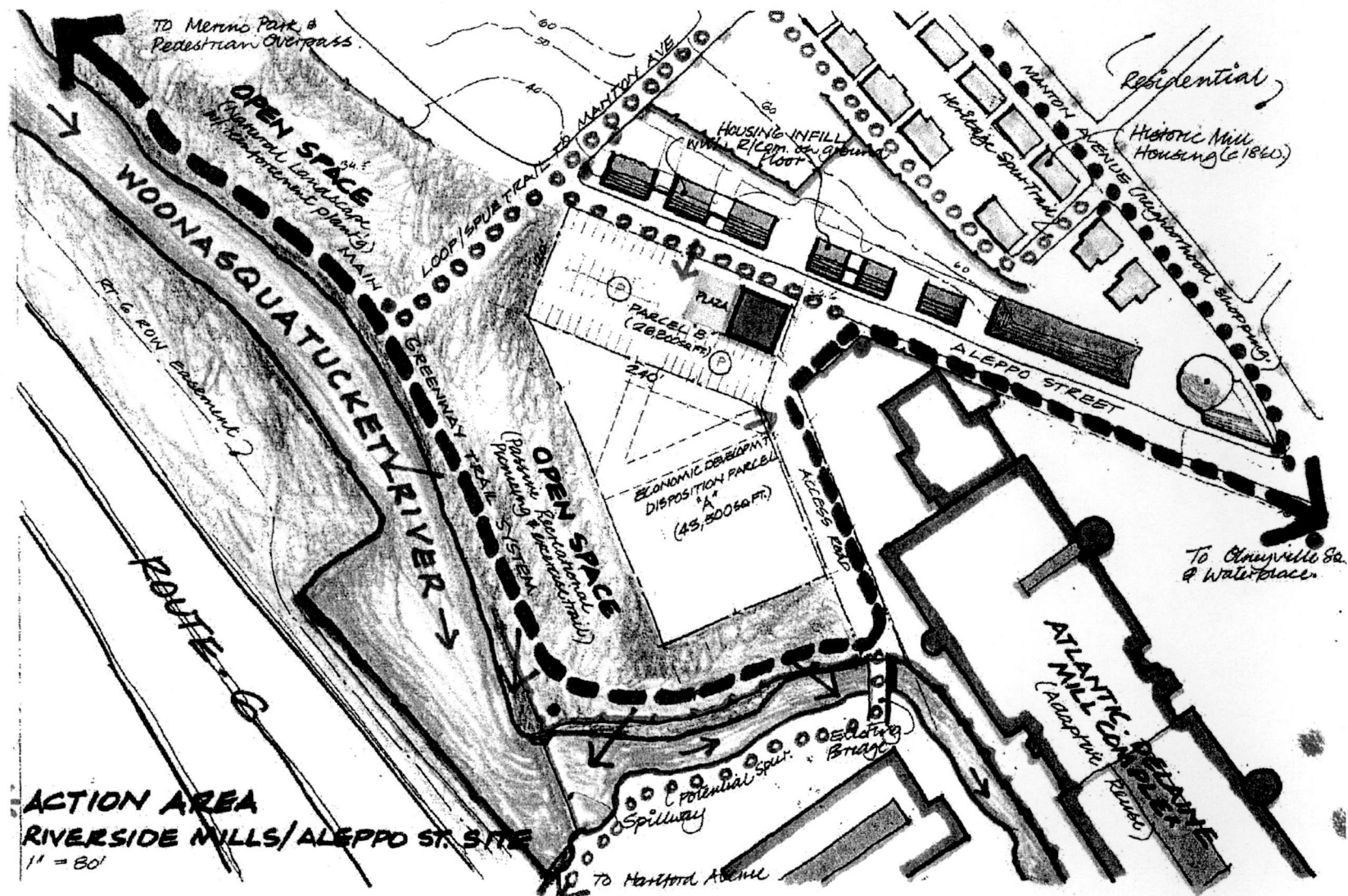
- This vacant 5.8-acre site has only one small brick structure remaining,
- The site is contaminated and has been declared a 'brownfield' site by RI DEM,
- The property is pending foreclosure due to delinquent real estate taxes,
- The property contains wetlands and a portion of the site falls within a flood plain area.

### **Proposed Actions**

- The City acquires the property for more productive reuse and
- The City designates a portion of the property "**an economic development site.**" This proposed development site would include the following:
  - ◇ A 1-acre<sup>±</sup> disposition parcel, adjacent to the Atlantic Mill complex, accessed from Aleppo Street and an existing right-of-way that runs along the property's east boundary, from Aleppo Street to the existing trestle bridge at the river and
  - ◇ A disposition parcel of 28,800 sq.ft. (0.66 acre), incorporating the existing 5,000sq.ft. 2-story brick building that fronts onto Aleppo Street.

**The City of Providence should acquire the Riverside Mills' property for eventual disposition as an economic development site and as part of the Greenway.**

These two sites could be marketed by the City, jointly or individually, as development parcels. With the City owning the land, the reuse of the Riverside Mills property can be shaped by establishing design controls that ensure the compatible use of the property(s), future building placement, massing etc., that are consistent with neighborhood goals and the Greenway. The site's proximity to Olneyville Square, the Greenway and the river can all play positive roles in the marketing of these two disposition parcels.



ACTION SITE:  
THE RIVERSIDE MILLS' PROPERTY & THE ALEPPO STREET. AREA



**Development of this property can play a significant role in the implementation of the Greenway and the area's economic recovery.**

## **SUPPORTING DESIGN ELEMENTS**

### **NEIGHBORHOOD PATHWAYS**

To reinforce the main walking and biking trail, a network of primary and secondary neighborhood pathways should be encouraged. These pathways would be incorporated into the existing pattern of neighborhood streets.

The primary pathways along Manton and Hartford Avenues, supported by a series of secondary neighborhood pathways, would provide critical linkages between the Woonasquatucket River Greenway and its neighboring riverbank communities by reinforcing access to local shopping, area amenities, schools and jobs.

Design treatment of this network of pathways should concentrate on creating a strong visual identity for these neighborhood pathways through a variety of streetscape improvements. These improvements would develop a common design language to accomplish this, using for example:

- Sidewalk renovations,
- Directional signage and markers,
- Tree plantings and landscaping,
- Street furniture and area lighting.

Where feasible, critical viewsheds to the Greenway would also be established as a way to visually reconnect the

riverbank communities with the Woonasquatucket River and the Greenway Corridor.

## **SUPPORTING ACTIONS**

In support of the Greenway and the Action Sites discussed above, a number of additional development opportunities in the Northern Component have been identified. The realization of these activities will rest on the commitment and actions of other public agencies, as well as the private sector.

### **Environmental Education**

- To take advantage of the diversity of natural resources found along the Greenway Corridor, it is recommended that the area be established as an outdoor teaching laboratory for area schools. This concept might incorporate for example :
  - ◇ A variety of interpretive displays and signage to identify flora and fauna found in the area
  - ◇ The use of Glenbridge Gorge and its wetland area as a primary teaching site.
  - ◇ Renovation of the Lincoln Mill's building as a Center for Environmental Education.

### **Housing Development**

To reinforce the Aleppo Street area, the following development scenario is proposed:

- ◇ Construction of infill housing, built into the side of the hill along the north side of the street,

- ◇ The ground floor use is set-aside for small businesses servicing both neighborhood residents and trail users,
- ◇ Investigation of the conversion of the vacant mill building on the corner of Bosworth and Curtis Streets for housing.

### **Heritage Conservation**

- The immediate area around Aleppo Street contains a number of buildings and artifacts of historic interest. These include:
  - ◇ The Riverside Mill dam, power canal and tail races,
  - ◇ The Atlantic Delaine Mill complex,
  - ◇ A 3-story round brick structure built as a gasometer for the nearby Atlantic Delaine Mills,
  - ◇ A grouping of early 1½-story wood-framed mill worker housing off Manton Avenue.

These and other historic remnants are scattered throughout the Olneyville neighborhood and form important reference points, marking the historic and social development of Olneyville. These properties and other cultural resources should be protected and incorporated into the proposed Heritage Trail.

### **Olneyville Square**

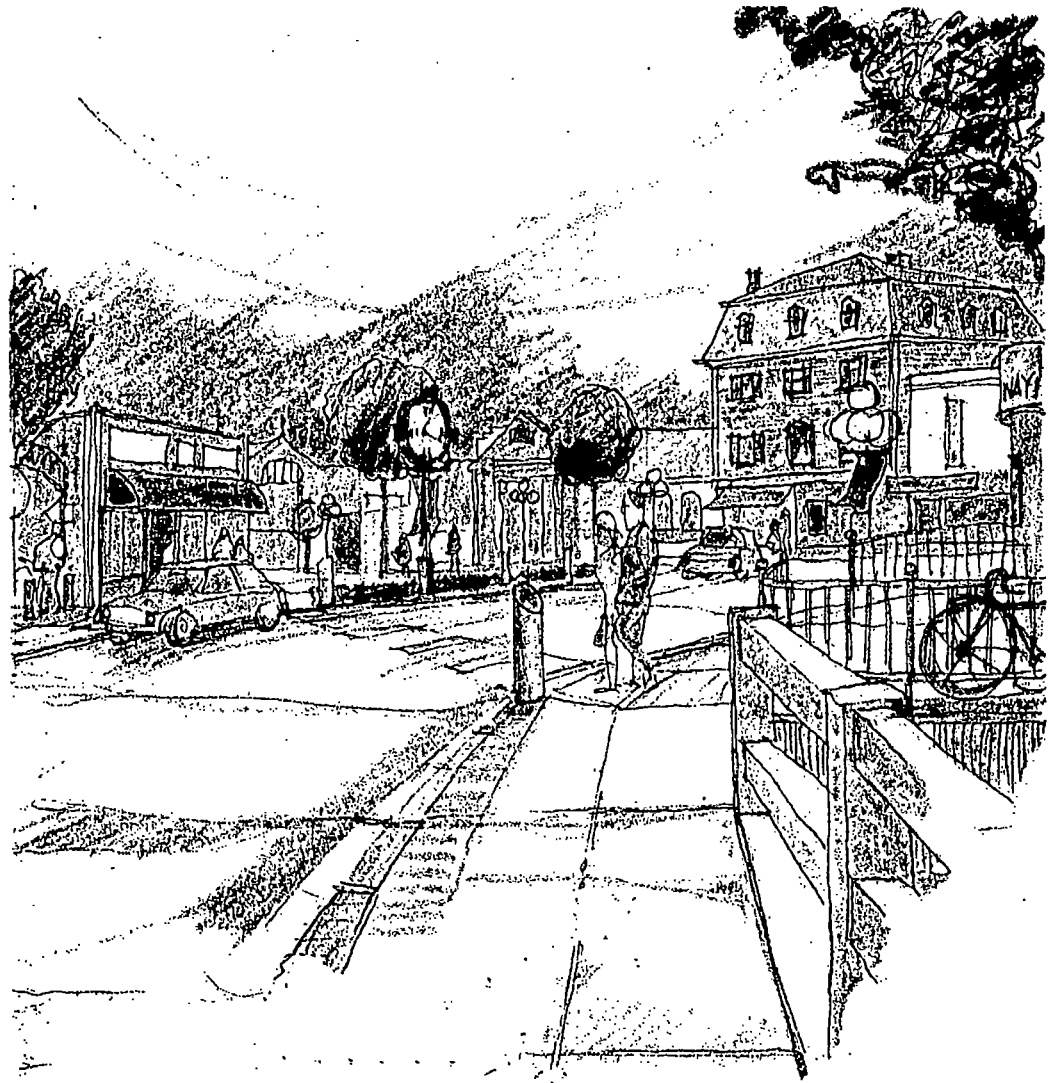
The square has seen a continued decline in business activity over the years and its physical appearance bears ample witness to that. The square lacks the ambiance, retail mix, amenities and cohesiveness that makes a shopping area successful. While market data and traffic counts indicate that the area has the potential to support

new business, it is believed that its current appearance is an inhibiting factor in attracting businesses and new investment. The Woonasquatucket River Greenway can act as an important impetus in the revitalization of Olneyville Square.

- A coalition of public and private sector interests should, therefore, be encouraged to capitalize on the various proposed activities along the river corridor to:
  - ◇ Improve overall parking and circulation in and around the square,
  - ◇ Provide a bus shelter and waiting area for residents,
  - ◇ Coordinate with the Greenway Plan to provide and reinforce connections to the proposed trail system and the river,
  - ◇ Develop a program of streetscape enhancements that include:
    - Improved street lighting,
    - Additional landscaping and street trees
    - Street furniture including benches, waste receptacles, bike racks etc.,
    - A comprehensive program for directional and business signage,
  - ◇ In conjunction with the City, initiate a low-interest loan program for storefront improvements,
  - ◇ Establish marketing strategies to attract new business and shoppers to the Square.



MAIN TRAIL WITH VIEW DOWN TUXEDO AVENUE



OLNEYVILLE SQUARE SHOWING THE TRANSITION AREA FROM  
THE MAIN TRAIL TO THE SQUARE

**Revitalization of Olneyville Square will have a positive effect throughout the Greenway Corridor. It will restore the area's sense of pride and provide a focus for renewed commercial and retail activities serving area residents.**

While market data indicates that there are definite opportunities for new businesses in Olneyville Square, there are other factors that strongly reinforce this. With a significant population of elderly residents and a large proportion of area families lacking a car, there is, in a sense, a 'captured audience' of shoppers who currently rely on public transportation for access to goods and services unavailable in Olneyville Square. With area improvements, vision, and a commitment by the business community, a real opportunity lies in capitalizing on the latent potential of Olneyville Square.

## **OTHER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

To be successful, renewal efforts must be conceived to exploit a broad range of opportunities. The following are some development strategies that have been identified and merit further study:

### **An Ethnic Marketplace**

With the significant in-migration of Hispanics and Southeast Asians to many of the riverbank neighborhoods, the opportunity exists to capitalize on the area's growing ethnicity. Recent market data indicates that the buying power of Hispanics has demonstrated a remarkable growth over the last few years. Manton Avenue, for example, has

already experienced an increasing proliferation of ethnic stores and businesses. As a marketing tool, it is not inconceivable to begin the groundwork to establish Olneyville as an ethnic center for retail goods. This concept might include:

- Establishment of a business co-operative to assist small start-up businesses with leasing, financing and technical assistance and
- The co-operative development of a "Mercado" on the ground floor of the Atlantic Mills complex.

By providing a central location for a variety of ethnic produce and goods, it is believed a strong customer base could be generated. By creating a variety of goods and the critical mass, Latino and Asian customers from throughout Southeastern New England and other shoppers would be attracted by the range of goods available and the unique atmosphere it offered.

### **Business Incubators**

The Greenway Corridor has all the characteristics of a 'grass-roots' incubator, supporting a variety of small start-up businesses scattered throughout much of the area. This latent pattern of economic growth should be nurtured and exploited, including:

- Development of an inventory of area firms and identification of prospective new businesses,
- Establishment of a roster of buildings suitable for rent/development,
- Targeting of a suitable building for conversion as a business incubator for small start-up businesses,
- Development of a marketing program to sell the

- area,
  - Initiation of technical assistance programs including advice on the packaging and processing of business development loans.

The area certainly has the buildings, available space and rental structure that are attractive to such enterprises. Providing the back-up services and support infrastructure to attract a range of compatible businesses would be a positive addition in the successful revitalization of the area.

### **Office Development**

An emerging pattern of land use has established a linear concentration of quasi-public and state-occupied buildings within the river corridor. Starting with the State House and the Capital Center complex, this pattern of use extends down along Promenade Street with RI DEM and several other State offices located in the Foundry complex. This is followed by the RI Blood Donor Center, the Narragansett Bay Commission offices on the corner of Pleasant Valley Parkway, as well as several State offices located on both Harris Avenue and Valley Street. Although the continuity of this concentration of uses is disrupted in the Olneyville area, this motif re-establishes itself with the location of the Department of Labor offices in the Dyerville Mill and the Department of Children, Youth & Family Services on Mount Pleasant Avenue, in the northern portion of the Corridor.

**It is suggested that additional State office uses, strategically located within the Corridor, would have a significant impact on the area and should**

**be explored further with the relevant state agencies.**

### **Mill Conversions**

The feasibility of adaptive reuse of mill structures for more productive uses including offices has already been proven.

- The present concentration of vacant and under-utilized properties in the Greenway Corridor is an untapped resource that should be exploited. Benefits associated with these resources include:

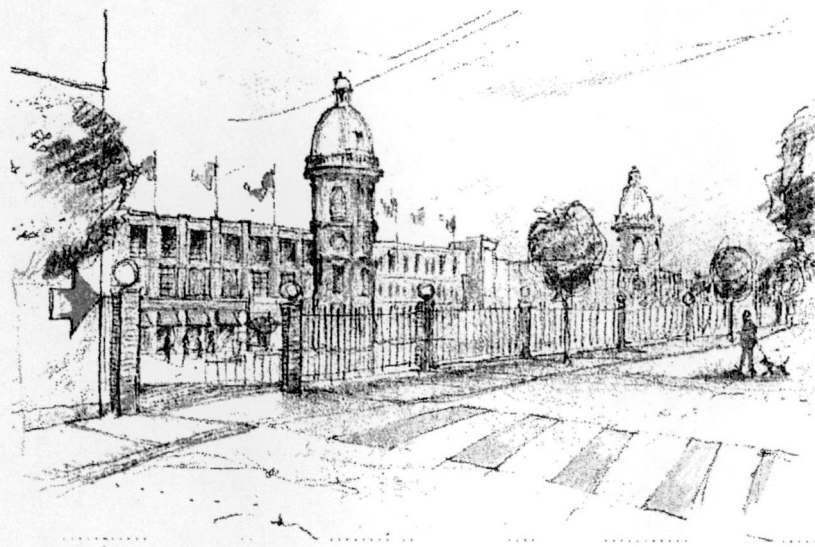
- ◇ A proximity to the Downtown area,
- ◇ Easy access to the highway system,
- ◇ Flexible floor areas,
- ◇ Favorable rental costs and
- ◇ Available parking.

The area's present image, however, is a major issue currently inhibiting development interest. It is believed, however, that once the Greenway becomes a reality, this will spark a renewed interest in this latent segment of the local real estate market and its potential for development.

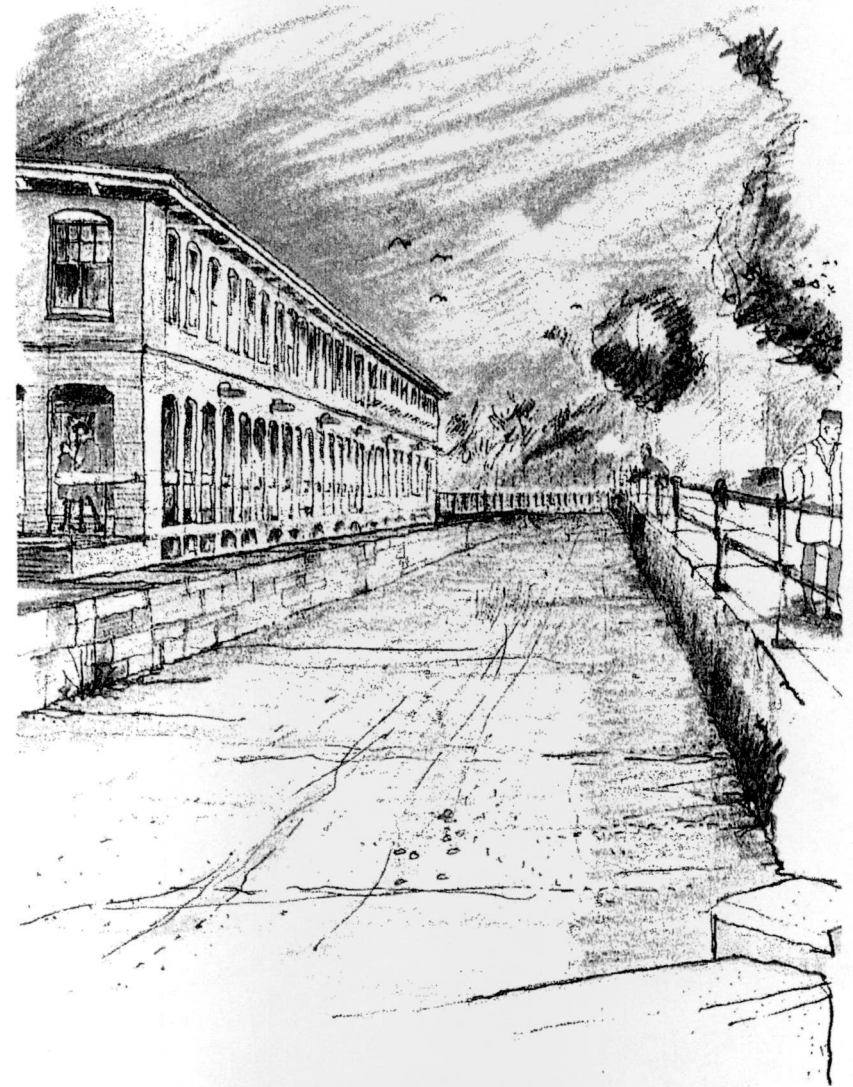
**It is recommended that an ongoing inventory of available land and buildings be established as a tool to aggressively market the area.**

Except in the immediate area adjacent to the Foundry complex, the eastern section from the Eagle Street Bridge to Waterplace Park, lacks the visual interest and activities that characterize the other areas of the Greenway. To compensate, the following recommendations are made:

## SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES



A PROPOSED "MERCADO" AT THE ATLANTIC MILLS



ADAPTIVE REUSE:  
THE IMPERIAL PEARL BUILDING, OLNEYVILLE SQUARE  
(INCORPORATING AN INTERIOR WALKWAY ALONG THE RIVER.)





*Promenade Street*

PROMENADE STREET;  
REUSE OF GROUND FLOOR AREAS FOR RETAIL/COMMERCIAL  
ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT THE MAIN TRAIL

### **The Promenade Mini-Park**

- Widening of the two pedestrian bridges over the river, in the vicinity of Bath Street, to create a platform for a landscaped mini-park and viewing area,
- Possible incorporation of an outdoor cafe.

Development of the proposed mini park would help to break up the linearity of this portion of the Greenway. It would also reinforce connections with both sides of the river and provide a needed open space amenity for both trail users and for nearby office workers.

### **Linear Sculpture Park**

- Creation of an outdoor sculpture park along this section of the Woonasquatucket River,

This proposal would provide the visual interest and ambiance currently missing in this portion of the Greenway and would recognize Providence's long association with the Arts by providing a showcase for both local and international artists. Viewed as a revolving exhibit, it would bring added vibrancy and activity to the area and be an extension of the art events sponsored during the successful 'Convergence' Festival.

### **Providence Place Mall**

With construction of the Providence Place Mall underway, its impact on the Downtown area and on the Greenway, in particular, will be considerable. This 3-story, 150 store urban shopping mall with a 4,000 car parking garage straddles the Greenway's connection with Waterplace Park.

Creative design and treatment of the link through the Providence Place Mall connecting the Woonasquatucket River and the Greenway directly with Waterplace Park will be essential. Minimizing this visual and physical interruption will be an essential ingredient in maintaining and reinforcing the continuity of the Greenway.

Located on the east side of I-95, the parking garage serving the shopping center is directly connected to the highway infrastructure with a series of access and egress ramps. Consequently, a substantial increase in traffic in the immediate area is anticipated. Unless properly controlled, this could result in negative impacts on the eastern section of the Greenway and for its trail users.

Similarly, development pressures along this segment of the Greenway will certainly increase and will have to be closely monitored to ensure compatibility with the long-range goals of the immediate neighborhood and the Greenway. Regulatory controls must, therefore, be drafted and in place, to address these and other development issues that will surely surface in this area, as the Providence Place Mall is completed.

On a positive note, some 2,500 jobs are projected to be generated by this development. The Greenway will provide not only access to job opportunities for local residents, but will also serve as a pleasant amenity for both shoppers and the Mall's many employees.

The ripple effect generated by this development, if properly guided, can be a positive catalyst for area

renewal, will strengthen the Greenway's connection with the Downtown and will help provide the activity currently lacking in this segment of the Greenway.

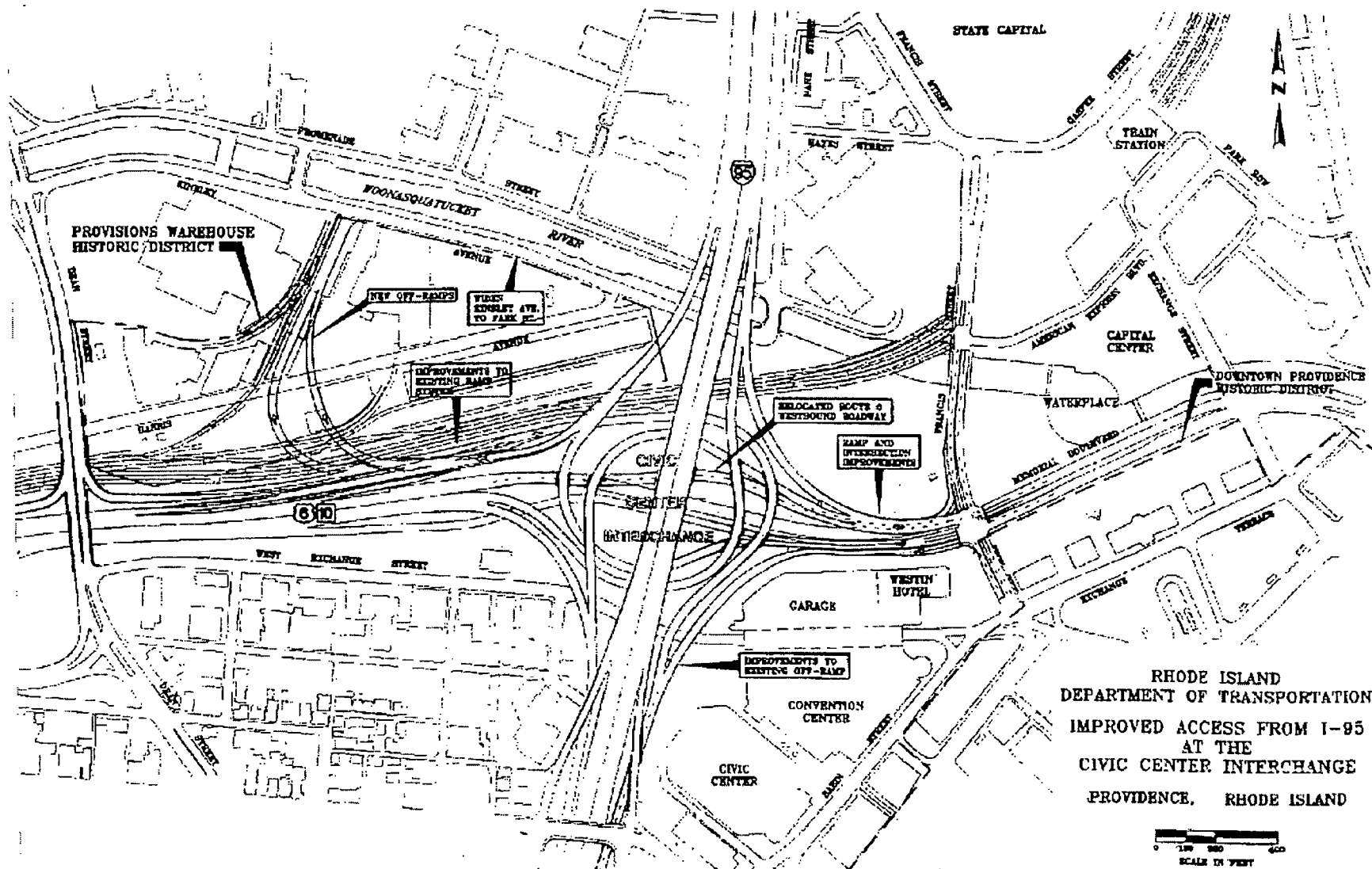
### **Legislative Controls**

Current land use and zoning controls within the Greenway Corridor reflect the area's long association with manufacturing, with large areas, along both sides of the Woonasquatucket River, zoned for industrial use. It is recommended that the present zoning categories within the Greenway Corridor be reevaluated and the area rezoned to be consistent with the uses and open space characteristics proposed for the Woonasquatucket River Greenway. Either a **"Greenway Special Zoning District"** or a **"Greenway Overlay District"** should be drafted and adopted as part of the Providence Zoning Ordinance. These mechanisms would provide the City with the regulatory tools that recognize and protect the character and uses proposed within the Greenway. These controls on future development proposals would also allow for project review by the City, to ensure compatibility with established goals for the immediate area as well as the Greenway.

It is obvious that the shopping mall's impact on the Greenway Corridor, if properly controlled, will accrue many positive 'spin-offs' and create the synergy for stimulating a wide range of compatible activities along the edges of this section of the Corridor.

The recommendations contained in this Report continues the City of Providence's quest in recapturing its rivers as a positive catalyst for area-wide revitalization. By

providing a broad range of recreational opportunities and greenspace along the Woonasquatucket River, by offering an attractive and alternative mode of transportation between its riverbank neighborhoods and Downtown and by creating a positive stimulus for economic development, the Woonasquatucket River Valley will, once again, play an important and vibrant role in Providence's future.



PROPOSED RAMP SYSTEM AT THE CIVIC CENTER INTERCHANGE AT THE PROVIDENCE PLACE MALL



RIVERWALK AT WATERPLACE PARK CONNECTING TO THE WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER GREENWAY

## **FUNDING STRATEGIES**

### **WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER GREENWAY -**

#### **ACQUISITION AND GREEN SPACE/RECREATION SPACE DEVELOPMENT**

1. The City of Providence has pledged \$3 million to be allocated from the Neighborhood Improvement Program Bond Issue.
2. The Trust for Public Land, a national non-profit land conservation organization has pledged to raise, on a 1 : 1 basis, the City's commitment to the project.

Potential sources of funding for this project includes, but is not limited to:

- Land and Water Conservation Funds (Federal dollars for state funding),
- Several private foundations.

3. Other: Proceeds from the sale of development parcel(s) at Riverside Mills and Lincoln Lace and Braid.

#### **BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH**

The City of Providence has requested a \$2.8 million allocation in the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for the years 1998 to 2000. The source of funding will be 80% Federal ISTEA funds, with a 20% match by the state. Private and city funding can be used by the state for the required match.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND PHASING PLAN

1997	NORTHERN SECTION	CENTRAL SECTION	EASTERN SECTION
	Acquisition of 3 Parcels by The Trust for Public Land (TPL.)	A/E study and design for improvements to San Souci Drive (City of Providence/TPP.)	Finalize bike route (RI DOT.)
	Creation of Manton Avenue 'Gateway': Initial Development completed by RI DOT, June 1997	A/E Designs for Donigian Park (City of Providence/TPP.)	Riverbank maintenance and clearing: Ongoing by RI DEM and the Smith Hill Center.
	Trail Clearance: Dyerville Park to Merino Park: Completed by AmeriCorps NCC Team	Improvements to San Souci Drive. (City of Providence)	Riverwalk linkage: Park Street to Waterplace Park. (State of Rhode Island & Providence Place Mall)
	Construction of RT.-6 pedestrian overpass: Completion by RI DOT, November, 1997	Begin Improvements to Donigian Park	
	A/E designs for Merino Park (City of Providence/TPP.)		
	Begin improvements to Merino Park		
	Rezoning: Greenway Overlay	Rezoning: Greenway Overlay	Rezoning: Greenway Overlay

**Note: Listing of projects is not based on priority.**



1998	NORTHERN SECTION	CENTRAL SECTION	EASTERN SECTION
	A/E Designs of Site Improvements: The Greenway, Gateways, Green Spaces, (City/TPP)	A/E Designs of Site Improvements: The Greenway, Gateways, Green Spaces, (City/TPP)	A/E Designs of Site Improvements: The Greenway, Gateways, Green Spaces, (City/TPP)
	A/E Design of Bicycle Path (RI DOT)	A/E Design of Bicycle Path (RI DOT)	A/E Design of Bicycle Path (RI DOT)
	A/E Design: Amenities, Signage and Furnishings.	A/E Design: Amenities, Signage and Furnishings.	A/E Design: Amenities, Signage and Furnishings.
	Complete land and easement acquisitions. (TPL.)	Complete land and easement acquisitions. (TPL.)	Identification of sites for linear outdoor sculpture park
	Greenway Signage	Greenway Signage	Greenway Signage
	Gateway Development.	Gateway Development.	Gateway Development.
	City acquisition of Lincoln Lace and Riverside Mills properties	Complete San Souci Drive Improvements	Riverbank Maintenance and Conservation (Volunteers)
	Preparation of Bid Documents: Remediation of Lincoln Lace and Riverside Mills' properties for Greenway Improvements		Completion of Riverwalk from Providence Place Mall to Waterplace Park.
	Begin remediation of Riverside Mills' site	Improvements to Donigian Park	

	Suggested Reuse Riverside Mills' property	Riverbank Maintenance and Conservation (volunteers)	
	Begin remediation of Lincoln Lace property	Identification of Heritage Trail landmarks	
	Propose reuse for Lincoln Lace building		
	Complete improvements to Merino Park		
	Initiation of Dyerville State Park improvements. (RI DEM, Southside Community Land Trust)		
	Determination of wetland reclamation at Aleppo Street		

1999	NORTHERN SECTION	CENTRAL SECTION	EASTERN SECTION
	Construction of Bicycle path	Riverbank Maintenance and Conservation (Volunteers)	Riverbank Maintenance and Conservation (Volunteers)
	Complete remediation of Lincoln Lace and Riverside Mills' properties	Interpretive signage and programming for Heritage Trail	
	Completion of Lincoln Lace site		

	Complete improvements to Merino Park	Interpretive signage & programming for the Heritage Trail	
	Continued renovations to Dyerville Park	Complete improvements to Donigian Park	Improvements to pedestrian crossing at Pleasant Valley Parkway
	Gateway Development	Gateway Development	Gateway Development

<b>YEAR</b> 2000-2002	<b>NORTHERN SECTION</b>	<b>CENTRAL SECTION</b>	<b>EASTERN SECTION</b>
	Complete construction of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Path	Construction of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Path	Construction of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Path
		Install Greenway Heritage Trail	
	Riverbank Maintenance and Conservation	Riverbank Maintenance and Conservation	Riverbank Maintenance and Conservation

## WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER GREENWAY SUPPORTERS

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City of Providence  
Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund  
Citizen's Bank  
Merck Family Fund  
Mary Dexter Chafee Fund  
Providence Journal -Bulletin

Senator John Chafee  
Senator Jack Reed  
Congressman Patrick Kennedy  
Congressman Robert Weygand  
US Attorney Sheldon Whitehouse

National Park Service  
US Environmental Protection Agency  
Roger Williams Memorial Park  
Federal Highway Administration  
Corporation for National Service  
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Governor Lincoln Almond  
RI Department of Transportation  
RI Department of Environmental Management  
RI Department of Administration  
Statewide Planning Program  
Narragansett Bay Commission  
RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission

State Senator Frank Caprio  
State Senator Robert Palazzo  
State Senator Charles Wilson  
State Rep. Anastasia Williams  
State Rep. Steven Smith

Mayor Vincent A. Cianci, Jr.  
Providence City Council  
Ronald W. Allen  
Robert M. Clarkin  
Joseph DeLuca  
Josephine DiRuzzo  
Evelyn V. Fagnoli  
Thomas Glavin  
David V. Igliozzi  
Kevin Jackson  
John J. Lombardi  
Peter S. Mancini  
Patricia K. Nolan  
Carol Romano  
John H. Rollins  
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Balbina A. Young

Providence Housing Authority  
Providence Parks Department  
Providence Department of Planning and Development  
Providence Public Works Department  
Providence Department of Public Safety  
Providence Community Police  
Providence Fire Department

The Providence Plan  
The Trust for Public Land  
Olneyville Businessmen's Association  
Promenade Center Association  
Providence Public Library  
William D'Abate Elementary School  
Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School  
Asa Messer Elementary School  
St. Patrick School  
Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy (CHisPA)

Rhode Island Organizing Project  
Manton Heights Recreation Center  
Hartford Park Community Center  
Joslin Community Development Center  
Nickerson House  
Silver Lake Community Center  
West Broadway Neighborhood Assoc.  
Smith Hill Center  
Olneyville Boys and Girls Club  
Silver Lake 4-H  
Hartford Park Tenants' Association  
Olneyville In Action  
Olneyville Housing Corporation  
Parents Making A Difference  
Manton Heights Housing Project  
Olneyville Branch Public Library  
Urban Forestry Council  
Saint Teresa's Church  
Church of the Messiah  
St. Anthony's Church  
Keep Providence Beautiful  
Tides Family Services  
Child Opportunity Zone at  
William D'Abate Elementary School  
Quisqueya in Action  
Narragansett Bay Wheelmen  
Providence Preservation Society  
Audubon Society of Rhode Island  
Save the Bay  
The Nature Conservancy  
Southside Community Land Trust  
Sierra Club, RI Chapter  
Environmental Council of Rhode Island  
Northern RI Conservation District  
Brown University  
Johnson and Wales University  
University of Rhode Island  
Rhode Island School of Design

## **WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER GREENWAY TASK FORCE**

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Robert McMahon, Deputy Superintendant

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Jeffrey Scorza, L. A. Torrado Architects

Luis Torrado, L. A. Torrado Architects

Kathie Wheaton, Design Collaborative

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Chamroen Preap, CAD/Technical Assistance

**The Office of Thomas J. Martin**, Cambridge, MA

Robert Brais, Project Economist

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OTCA  
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**Contour Maps (2' and 10'):** The Providence Department of Planning & Development.

**Zoning Map:** The Providence Department of Planning & Development.

**Land Use Map:** The Providence Department of Planning & Development.

**Wetlands Maps:** EPA & USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NCRS).

**Soil Maps:** USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NCRS).

**Flood Hazard Boundary Maps:** Federal Emergency Management Agency

### **Note:**

Additional reference materials including a series of Technical Memorandums pertaining to this Report are on file at the offices of the Providence Plan, 56 Pine Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903.