

Neighborhood Preservation District Study

Salem, Massachusetts

Prepared for	City of Salem, Department of Planning and Community Development Salem, Massachusetts
Prepared by	VHB /Vanassee Hangen Brustlin, Inc. Watertown, Massachusetts

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Introduction

Executive Summary

The City of Salem (City) contracted Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) to study the feasibility of creating Neighborhood Preservation Districts¹ as a component of the Salem *Preservation Master Plan*. This plan, which was completed in 1991, discussed the concept of Neighborhood Preservation Districts (referred to as Neighborhood Conservation Districts in the master plan), but no action has been taken to implement the recommendation. The major purpose of the current study was to research the concept of Neighborhood Preservation Districts (NPD) and ways that it might best fit Salem's situation, prepare a draft ordinance and draft design guidelines for two neighborhoods, and create educational materials for the public. The study and its final products and recommendations relied heavily on public input, gained through a series of neighborhood meetings, stakeholder interviews, dedicated page on the City's website, and other means. The study provides recommendations that will help the City of Salem and individual neighborhoods determine if a NPD program is right for the city's neighborhoods and can function alongside the Local Historic District (LHD) program already in place.

VHB was directly assisted in this study by the City's Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Planner, Kirsten Kinzer, who served as the Project Coordinator and a Working Group of Salem residents (Working Group), who were extremely diligent in their interest, time, and recommendations. These Working Group members were:

- Jane A. Guy, DPCD Assistant Community Development Director
- Barbara Cleary, Historic Salem, Inc. President
- Emily Udy, Historic Salem, Inc., Preservation Project Manager
- David Hart, Salem Historical Commission Member



¹ The term, Neighborhood Preservation District, was chosen by the study's Working Group to ease confusion with conservation areas and the local Conservation Commission. The terms, Neighborhood Architectural Conservation District, Architectural Conservation District, or Neighborhood Conservation District, are more typically used, but are only used in this study report to reference specific studies or reports or the name used by communities referenced in the report. Otherwise, the term, Neighborhood Preservation District, is used to describe the generic concept in this study and report.



- Jessica Herbert, Salem Historical Commission Member
- Maggie Lemelin Towne, Alliance of Salem Neighborhood Associations President

Christopher Skelly, director of Local Government Programs with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) provided oversight for the project and guidance on methodology and products.

The final report describes the outcome of the multi-phase investigation of the NPD concept's feasibility for Salem. Phase I involved background research on other communities' neighborhood preservation districts, Salem's historic properties and associated documentation, and field reconnaissance of Salem neighborhoods that could be potential candidates for such designation. Phase II focused on a series of presentations to 7 neighborhoods which explained the NPD concept and solicited feedback on residents' and property owners' interest and concerns. Two neighborhoods - Bridge Street and the Point - were then selected for further study in Phase III, based on expressed interest, architectural character, and potential threats. The Phase III study included an analysis of physical character and proposed design guidelines for these two neighborhoods. Three meetings were held with both of the neighborhoods to gain input on design guidelines and levels of design review. Phase IV, the final phase, is the completion of the final report. The Phase III tasks specified:

- Hold public meetings in the two neighborhoods selected for further study in Phase II utilizing PowerPoint presentation, NPD handout and design guidelines. Collect, review and summarize public comments received.
- Hold meetings with appropriate agencies and commissions to discuss the draft ordinance and design guidelines.
- Revise draft ordinance based on comments received from the public, agencies and commissions.
- Prepare recommendations for the NPD administration based on comments received from the public, agencies, and commissions.
- Prepare recommendations on priorities for future NPD designation, considering public interest expressed in Phase II and relative potential for inappropriate development.
- Prepare the draft Neighborhood Preservation District Study report, incorporating comments received from the City and the public.
- Provide 10 copies of the draft Neighborhood Preservation District Study report and one high resolution PDF.
- Attend meeting with DPDC and MHC staff to review draft Neighborhood Preservation District Study

Summary of Project Goals and Objectives

Specific goals and objectives for the study included:

- Create a definition of Neighborhood Preservation Districts (NPD) appropriate to Salem, including a rationale for NPDs in Salem and defining physical characteristics.
- Create a map of potential NPD boundaries, taking into consideration architectural style and character, building massing and siting, and streetscape characteristics.
- Provide recommendations for architecturally significant areas preferable as Local Historic Districts.
- Provide opportunities for public comment through public meetings.
- Develop a framework for NPD administration through the detailed analysis of two potential districts, including design guidelines and design review administrative procedures.
- Develop a draft NPD ordinance creating two selected NPDs based on the MHC Sample Architectural Conservation District Bylaw.
- Prepare sample design guidelines for two neighborhoods.
- Prepare a study report for Neighborhood Preservation Districts.

Methodology Statement

The study's methodology focused on the multi-phased tasks specified in the Scope of Work, procedures and practices of previous studies and designations, and current input solicited from a wide circle of residents, property owners, City staff and other stakeholders in Salem through a series of public meetings.

The process to determine which guidelines and procedures would work best in Salem was an iterative process, which involved many presentations featuring illustrated examples of possible appropriate and inappropriate scenarios for new construction, demolition, and alterations to existing buildings.

Description of Products

Each phase of the study resulted in several documents or products, including a report that detailed the outcomes of each phase. The products from each phase are noted below and were submitted with each individual Phase's report. These products are incorporated into this report to provide a single source compilation of

the study's outcomes. Appendix 1 contains copies of the products listed below by phase.

Phase I Products

- Handout explaining NPD concept
- PowerPoint presentation for general distribution
- Draft ordinance
- Draft map showing neighborhoods proposed for LHD and/or NPD designation
- Phase I report

Phase II Products

- Individual PowerPoint presentations for 7 neighborhoods (2 representative examples are included)
- Phase II report which included detailed sets of minutes from each presentation

Phase III Products

- PowerPoint presentations to Bridge Street and Point neighborhoods (2 each)
- Illustrated sample design guidelines for Bridge Street and Point neighborhoods
- Proposed NPD boundaries for Bridge Street and Point neighborhoods
- Finalized draft NPD ordinance
- Phase III report

Phase IV Products

- Final report that incorporates all received comments

Accomplishments of the Project

The study accomplished several major goals:

- Determined the level of interest Salem residents, property owners, and various neighborhoods have in the NPD concept and historic preservation reviews and regulations in general
- Gained an understanding of how strict reviews should be
- Further learned which issues are most important to neighborhood residents and property owners
- Educated Salem residents and property owners about existing City programs that could be of help to them, as well as relevant publications, agencies, and websites



- Provided a forum to discuss Salem's residents and property owners concerns and goals for historic preservation in the city.

Public Involvement

Many Salem residents and property owners attended the public meetings scheduled in Phase II and Phase III. Some attended the meetings primarily to find out more about the concept, while it is clear that others came to voice their opposition to "another level of bureaucracy". It is unclear if the opinions expressed in some meetings were representative of the majority of residents and property owners, but the dialogue that resulted from these meetings was invaluable in airing citizens' concerns about issues affecting their neighborhood and historic preservation practices in general.

Definition of extent of NPD Design Review

In general, people who attended the meetings were not open to the concept of reviews that covered the entirety of a building's exterior, such as those employed for local historic district review. The concerns expressed mainly had to do with delays associated with such reviews, arbitrariness of decision-making, and personality implications.

Identification of Issues Important to Neighborhoods

Besides preservation of historic neighborhood character, certain issues surfaced during some of the meetings that could be considered in the future. These issues included proper building and property maintenance, especially properties that were not maintained to the point of being nuisances. Demolition by neglect and affirmative maintenance ordinances were explained and discussed at these meetings, although it was acknowledged that such ordinances were outside of the scope of a NPD. Other issues important to attendees included simple maintenance and cleanliness of property; in some cases, newer, perhaps unsympathetic, buildings were preferred by individuals over older buildings that were not maintained.

Education of Residents and Business Owners

The series of meetings held for this study provided an important forum for discussion and explanation of a number of issues. We believe many residents were better educated on not only the NPD concept, but also about various City and State programs that could better enable them to take care of their properties, differences between National Register, local historic districts, and neighborhood preservation districts, and architectural character and significance of their neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Preservation District Definition

In this study, a Neighborhood Preservation District was initially defined as a predominantly residential area that displayed a physical character worthy of a flexible level of review over certain important physical changes determined by the neighborhood residents and property owners. Through comments made at neighborhood meetings, it became clear that residents and business owners are interested in the inclusion of both residential and commercial areas in individual NPDs. The PowerPoint presentations that introduced the NPD concept noted that NPDs (or neighborhood conservation or architectural conservation districts) could take many different forms, depending on the character of the area and the residents' and property owners' desires regarding which changes to elements would be subject to review and approval by a commission.

2

Public Process

The public process in this study spanned all four phases. During Phase I, VHB consultant Rita Walsh contacted individual stakeholders recommended by the DPCD and the Working Group for their opinions on the NPD concept. A general meeting with a city-wide neighborhood group, the Alliance of Salem Neighborhood Association, was also held during Phase I. Seven neighborhood meetings were held during Phase II to introduce the NPD concept and gain feedback on its feasibility in individual neighborhoods. Based on the feedback received in these meetings, two neighborhoods, the Point and Bridge Street, were selected for further study in Phase III.

The Phase III public process involved several meetings with residents and property owners in two selected neighborhoods which had expressed interest in a trial analysis of neighborhood character and formulation of sample design guidelines. The meetings included walking and driving tours to discuss particular issues that could be addressed by NPDs, followed by two public meetings to assess which elements should be subject to review and if advisory or binding review was acceptable. Phase IV includes a city-wide presentation to publicly present the study's outcome.

Phase I Public Process

A number of individuals, mainly those who owned large numbers of properties in candidate neighborhoods or those involved in Salem's preservation activities, were contacted during the first phase of this study. In general, the property owners contacted were not in favor of additional restrictions. A presentation to the Alliance of Salem Neighborhood Associations revealed some interest in the value of the NPD concept, although it was clear that clarification about the NPD concept as compared to local historic district and National Register designation was needed for upcoming meetings in Phase II.

Phase II Public Process

DPCD staff Kirsten Kinzer and consultant Rita Walsh held seven (7) public meetings between March 18 and April 28, 2008. The meetings geographically targeted the areas



recommended for possible consideration as Neighborhood Preservation Districts in Phase I. The neighborhoods and dates of respective meetings were:

- South Salem Neighborhood - March 18, 2008
- Derby Street & Salem Common Neighborhoods - March 27, 2008
- Salem Willows Neighborhood Meeting - April 8, 2008
- North Salem Neighborhood Meeting - April 15, 2008
- Gallows Hill Neighborhood Meeting - April 21, 2008
- Bridge Street and Common Neighborhoods Meeting - April 22, 2008
- Point Neighborhood Meeting - April 28, 2008

Some of the meetings were held under the auspices of a neighborhood association or were targeted to distinct areas, such as the Willows neighborhood. Several of Salem's City Councillors arranged and advertised the meetings, which assisted in boosting interest and attendance. The number of attendees at the meetings ranged from 4 to over 40 people, who were a combination of residents and property owners.

The format was similar in each meeting, consisting of a PowerPoint presentation that explained the Neighborhood Preservation District concept and how it could work in Salem. The presentation included a discussion of benefits of establishing such districts, how they differ from National Register and Local Historic districts, and a map showing areas that could be considered for such designation and previously established and recommended districts. Images of representative streetscapes at the end of the presentation usually helped spark comments on issues in the respective neighborhoods. Typically these meetings lasted 2 or more hours, with time generously devoted to discussion and questions after the formal presentation. The PowerPoint presentations for two of the neighborhoods - Bridge Street and the Point - are included in Appendix 1, Phase 2 of this report.

Common Themes in Phase II Public Comment

While attendees at each of the meetings had specific or unique concerns and questions, several common themes emerged at most of the meetings. These themes are loosely presented by topic, but are in no order of priority or ubiquity. By no means were people unanimous about these concerns:

Administration

- Desire little or no representation by Salem Historical Commission members on the NPD Commission
- Concern about increased review time in order to obtain a building permit
- More detail requested on member composition of NPD Commission
- Need for additional city staff to administer and assist the NPD Commission could lead to increased taxes to pay for this service



- Education is a very important task – we have to talk to more people about this concept – one meeting is not enough.
- Concern about lawsuits or other civil action due to unpopular decisions by the NPD Commission
- Liked the ability for a neighborhood to opt out of the district designation if it was not working
- Each NPD should have its own neighborhood commission; concern expressed about non-neighborhood members reviewing proposed work.

Design Review in General

- Opposition to others telling them what to do with their own property
- Fear that costs of improving property will increase due to higher standards
- Paint color, application of substitute siding, and window sash replacement should not be reviewed
- Concern that not enough people attended these meetings to realistically gauge interest in the concept
- Questions about drawbacks of such designation, in response to a discussion of benefits of NPD designation
- Most could not envision potential threats to their neighborhood; individuals who had experienced inappropriate new construction or an unwelcome demolition near their property more readily understood the NPD's purpose
- In general, binding review over new construction and demolition was acceptable to the majority; more concern was expressed about review of alterations to existing buildings

Relationship to Existing Review Processes

- Dislike of an additional layer of bureaucracy
- Belief that zoning adequately covers new construction (additions and new buildings) issues
- Question how and to which group (e.g., Zoning Boards of Appeals) appeals would be handled

Other Phase II Public Comments

Other comments that were not as routinely expressed included questions about individual property owners' ability to opt out of the district, how much this study cost and where the funding came from, and concerns that the study was one more City-sponsored action that would not be completed and end up as a document on a



shelf. Questions were also posed about review of proposed demolitions and related review criteria; possibility of grants/low-interest loans to assist owners to rehabilitate their property; and whether each neighborhood would have an individual set of design guidelines.

Phase III Public Process

Following the selection of Bridge Street and the Point for further study in Phase III, DPCD staff Kirsten Kinzer and consultant Rita Walsh held 6 public meetings in the Bridge Street and Point neighborhoods between May and July 2008.

The meetings were held on the following dates:

- Bridge Street walking tour - May 22, 2008
- Point Neighborhood driving tour - May 29, 2008
- Point Neighborhood presentation I - June 17, 2008
- Bridge Street presentation I - June 19, 2008
- Bridge Street presentation II, - July 23, 2008
- Point Neighborhood presentation II - July 28, 2008

The meetings included an initial Bridge Street walking and Point driving tour with interested residents and property owners. Two presentations for each neighborhood followed these initial tours. The purpose of presentation I in both neighborhoods was to review the study's purpose and to ask interested residents for their opinions and comments on proposed design guidelines and the level of review. Presentation II focused on the final proposed guidelines and their level of review based on public comment. Examples of both presentations are included in Appendix 1, Phase III.

In general, residents and property owners were eager for review over new construction and demolition, although how new construction design guidelines would be structured and which buildings should be subject to demolition review and approval varied. Most residents and property owners also expressed interest in advisory review of certain elements of existing buildings although the types of elements and what level of review would be acceptable varied at the meetings.

Kirsten Kinzer of the City of Salem DPCD and Rita Walsh of VHB gave a final presentation on the study in order to inform the public about its findings and products.

Working group meetings

The study's Working Group met several times with City staff and the consultant throughout the study. These meetings involved an explanation of the NPD program and how it has worked in other communities; definitions of what this program is and can be, versus what it is not; and review and recommendation of areas to be considered for further study as NPDs. The Working Group, City staff and consultant



also discussed content of the two-page handout, PowerPoint presentation for public meetings, draft ordinance, and the public meeting process. Subsequent telephone and group e-mail discussions helped finalize the content and layout of the draft ordinance, brochure, and PowerPoint presentations. The Working Group also provided suggestions on ways to make the concept more acceptable and attractive to the neighborhoods, including financial incentives and educational forums. The Working Group's contribution to the study was extremely beneficial, seen in their thoughtful input and vastly improved products.

3

Salem Neighborhood Preservation District Ordinance

The draft Neighborhood Preservation District ordinance, one of the required products of this study, resulted from adaptation of the MHC model Architectural Conservation District by-law, other MA communities' ordinances and bylaws, and consultation with City of Salem Planning staff and the Working Group. A copy of the draft ordinance is in Appendix 2.

The draft ordinance was based on a number of similar documents, including the Massachusetts Historical Commission's sample bylaw and other Massachusetts communities' bylaws or ordinances, including Cambridge, Wellesley, Lincoln, and North Andover. The draft ordinance was also influenced by comments expressed at public meetings held during the study, especially concerning the required percentage of property owners needed for approval at the study and designation phases, levels of review for selected activities, and composition of the NPD commission.

A Neighborhood Preservation District ordinance can help achieve the following objectives:

Preserve Character of Salem's Neighborhood s

A major concern expressed in neighborhood meetings was the level of inappropriate alterations in areas where there is minimal design control. The City's Zoning Ordinance dictates such standard items as setback and height, but variances and special permits on these items as well as use can be granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals, which have impacted some neighborhoods' character. Identification and subsequent review of changes to the most important features of a neighborhood's character was a stated intention of the program.

Provide More Oversight on Proposed Demolitions

The City of Salem's demolition delay ordinance applies to buildings or structures listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or which are fifty or more years old. Proposals for demolition of such buildings or structures are reviewed by the Salem Historical Commission. If the building or structure meets the criteria stated in the ordinance, then a period of 180 days (six months) is allowed for the Commission to work with the property owner and to conduct investigations in order to issue a written recommendation regarding the demolition. If no agreement to preserve the building is reached within the six-month demolition delay period, a demolition permit is issued by the Building Inspector.

Within Salem's Local Historic Districts and the Urban Renewal Area, demolition permits can be denied by the Salem Historical Commission and the Salem Redevelopment Authority, respectively. Some residents voiced a desire for this level of control due to the loss of historic buildings in other Salem neighborhoods.

Help Control Future Development Concerns

Although Salem is currently experiencing a slight downturn in real estate values and development projects, it is believed that the near future will see a renewed and increased interest in redevelopment of areas adjacent to Salem's waterfront and unprotected areas near the downtown. The capability of a neighborhood preservation district ordinance to have additional input on both demolition reviews and new construction design was considered an essential component of the NPD program. The aim was to have some level of protection in place before the onset of possible negative impacts of future development.

Specific aspects of the ordinance that were considered in discussions with the Working Group, the public, and MHC are:

Inclusion of Advisory Review

The ordinance originally only contained binding review by the NPD Commission on the elements that the neighborhood agreed should be regulated. The educational value and possible persuasive power of advisory review for minor elements are seen as positive reasons to include advisory of review in the ordinance but the Working Group was concerned that residents will not take advisory reviews to heart. In many of the meetings held in Phase II, residents repeatedly expressed opposition to binding review of architectural details such as siding and window replacement but agreed that alterations to these building elements can have a major impact on neighborhood character. Advisory review was added to the ordinance to create a method for providing education and design advice to residents on building elements



that impact neighborhood character to a lesser degree than demolition or new construction.

Removal of Designation Process Details

The ordinance originally detailed the study and designation process. This level of detail was removed, based on MHC comments that too high a level of detail within an ordinance can bind the City to an outdated process in the future. The administrative process will be governed by a Department of Planning policy, which can more easily be updated to incorporate changes in the administrative needs of the designated districts and the Commission. A draft policy is included in Appendix 3 and is based on the input from residents and the Working Group through the course of this study.

Composition of Neighborhood Preservation District Commission

A single NPD Commission responsible for all NPD project review in the city was initially envisioned in the ordinance. The conflict between neighborhood concern about non-neighborhood members' review of projects and the inability of DPCD to staff multiple commissions prompted the proposal of a commission with a "spokes of a wheel" structure. An attendee of two of the public meetings suggested the concept as a way to maintain one commission but ensure that the majority of the members reviewing a project in a given district are residents or business owners from that district. This structure is illustrated in Diagrams 1 through 3 on pages 16-18.

The ordinance proposes a core group of three Core Members that review projects in all NPDs throughout the city. In each district, projects are also reviewed by two District Members who are either district resident or business owners. This structure allows a review by five members, the majority of whom are residents or business owners from the district that the project under review is located in. As districts are designated, the composition of the Commission changes to enable continued review by a majority of district residents and business owners.

After the first district is designated, the core group would be composed of one member of the first NPD that is created and two general members who have experience with design review (architect, preservation specialist, contractor, real estate agent) and is a Salem resident. Two additional District Members, considered the spokes, would be added to result in a commission of five members. Two alternate members from this first district would also serve the initial commission, when needed due to members' absences or project review recusals. Diagram #1 graphically shows this concept.

When a second NPD is created, the composition of the core members will change. The core will be composed of a Core Member from each district and a single design

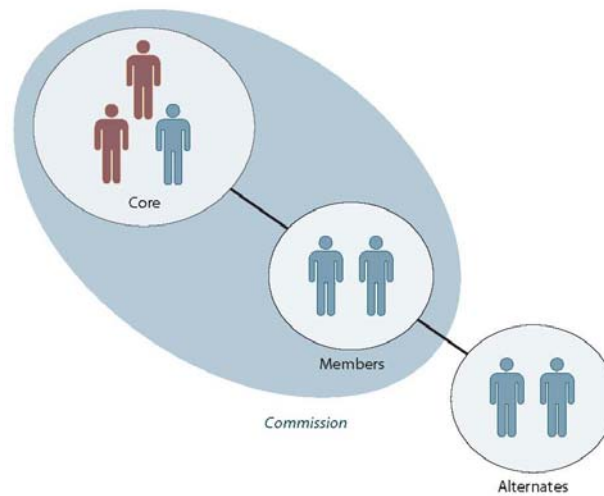


professional. A second 'spoke' will be formed, consisting of two District Members and two alternate District Members. Proposals in the first district designated will be reviewed by the Core Members and the District 1 Members and proposals in the second district will reviewed by the Core Members and the District 2 Members. Diagram #2 illustrates this second concept.

When a third district is added, the core group of three members will change again to include a single member from each district. A third 'spoke' will then be formed, consisting of two District Members and two alternate District Members Diagram #3 shows this expanded hub-and-spoke concept. No provision has been made at this time to accommodate a fourth NPD, or any additional NPDs. The ordinance would be changed at that time to consider how changes should be made to the composition of the core group.

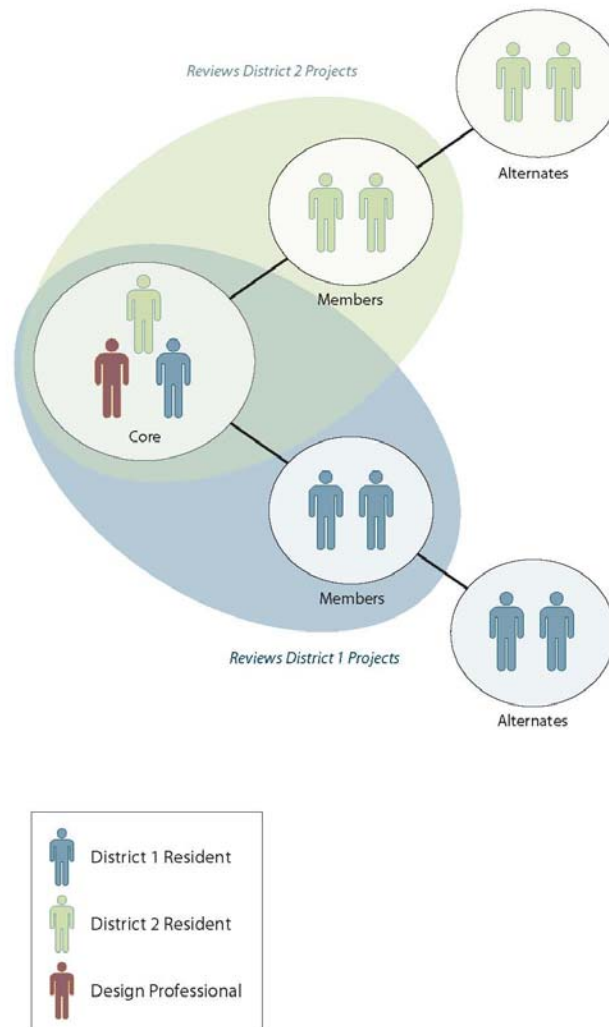
As noted above, the concepts as proposed allow for the creation of a single commission while ensuring that a majority of the members reviewing a project in a given district are district residents, property owners, and/or business owners. Each individual district will have separate design guidelines tailored to that neighborhood's character. The Mayor of Salem will appoint all members, followed by City Council approval – an approval process identical for all City commissions.

1. Neighborhood Preservation District - Composition of Neighborhood Preservation District Commission



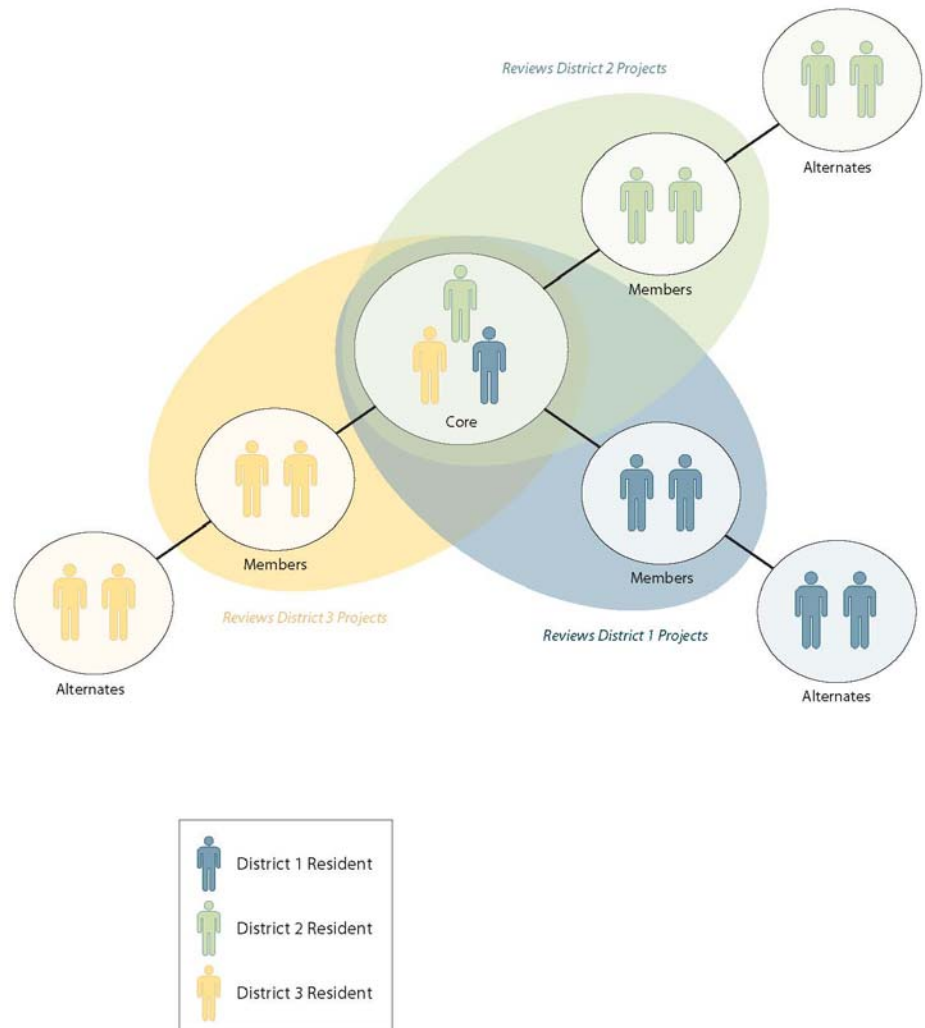
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2. Neighborhood Preservation Districts - Composition of Neighborhood Preservation District Commission



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3. Neighborhoods Preservation Districts - - Composition of Neighborhood Preservation District Commission



City of Salem Neighborhood Preservation District Study

Criteria for Neighborhood Preservation District Designation

The criteria for determining which areas are likely candidates for NPD designation centered on an area's physical cohesiveness and its display of relatively few significant alterations. The criteria as defined in the draft ordinance are relatively broad:

- The area contains buildings and/or structures and/or settings that are significant to the architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic or social history of Salem; or
- The area has generally cohesive features, such as the scale, size, type of construction, materials, or style of the building and structures, and/or land use patterns and landscaping

Certain aspects of designation criteria that were discussed during the study, but not definitely resolved were:

District Size

The appropriate minimum/maximum size and number of properties that could be included in an individual district was not determined. Discussions have considered a minimum of 75 properties, similar to the City of Cambridge's regulations. The understanding is that a district that contains fewer properties may be unable to sustain a steady supply of neighborhood Commission members. Conversely, a district that is too large may be unwieldy in terms of the number of applications that would come before the volunteer Commission.

The possibility of designating several smaller districts (those with less than 75 properties) as a single non-contiguous district was fairly well received as a way to not only protect several small discrete areas, but also allow a single Neighborhood Preservation District commission to administer these areas. Involvement of existing or additional new DPCD staff in NPD administration and review was not extensively discussed. It was acknowledged during public presentations, however, that a city staff person must be involved in NPD administration in order to facilitate documentation and provide guidance on the design guidelines.

Building Age

Areas with a majority of buildings over 50 years old were deemed the likeliest candidates for NPD designation.



Building Condition

The condition and physical integrity of buildings within a neighborhood are important factors. The areas that contained buildings that were well maintained and exhibited the least alteration were the most obvious candidates although residents also expressed interest in the use of an NPD to address issues of disinvestment in historic neighborhoods.

Historic Significance

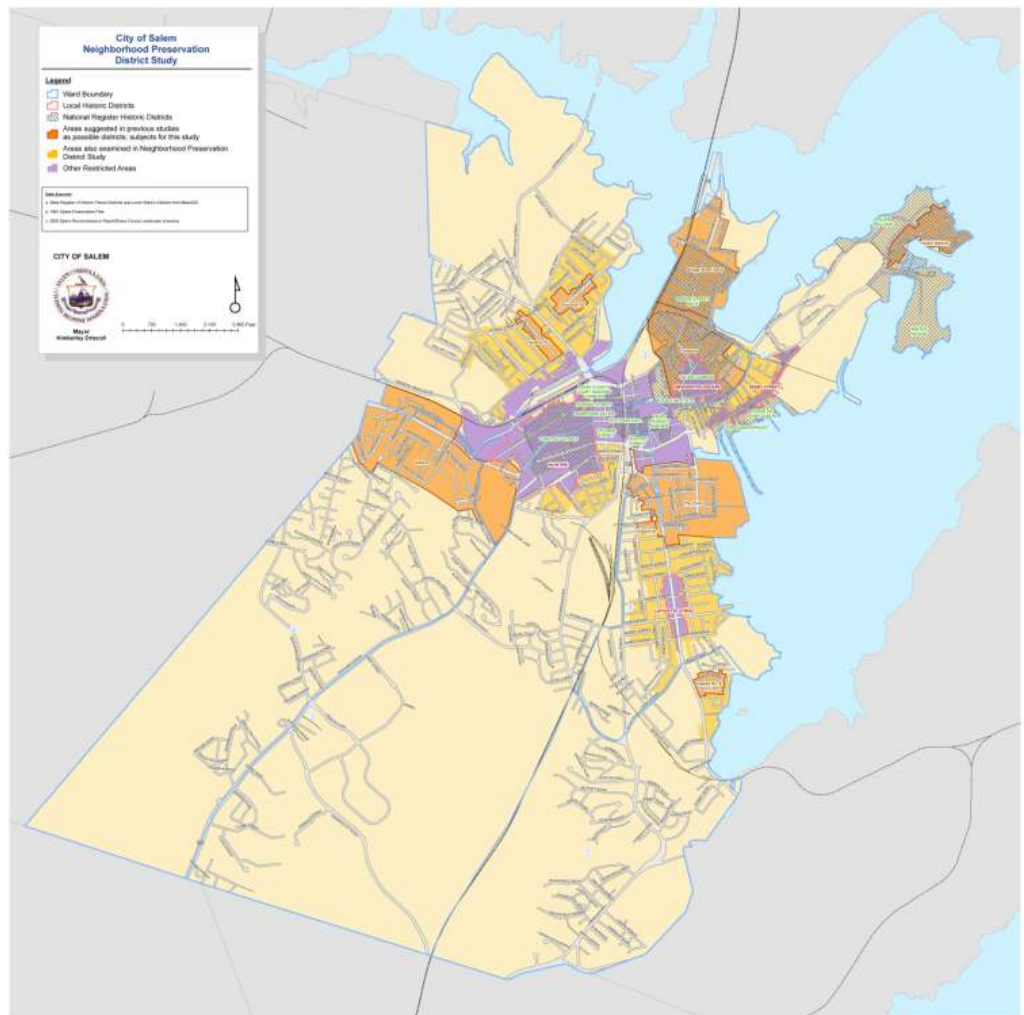
An area's historic significance was considered important, but it is clear the physical qualities that characterize a neighborhood would receive more consideration in NPD designation criteria.

4

Areas Recommended for Neighborhood Preservation Districts

Two neighborhoods -Bridge Street and the Point - were ultimately subject to further investigation in Phase III of this study. A generous list of areas was considered in Phase I and Phase II that could certainly be considered for NPD designation in the future. The figure on page 22 displays recommended areas for NPD consideration; a larger version of this figure is included in Appendix 1, Phase I. The areas considered in Phase I-II are briefly described below, but are not listed in order of preference or importance:

- **Bridge Street Neck** – Recommended in the 2005 heritage landscape reconnaissance survey for neighborhood conservation district status, the Bridge Street Neck area was recently listed (2002) in the National Register of Historic Places. The streets north of March Street, however, were not included in this nomination. The area, one of the earliest to be settled in Salem, contains 19th and 20th century houses and commercial structures, and a small number of institutional structures. Bridge Street, the main corridor that bisects the districts, is largely commercial and has some fairly recent automobile-oriented commercial establishments which interrupt the series of early to late 19th century buildings here. The recommended boundaries for the NPD could roughly follow the National Register boundaries on the south and west, but could also include the streets to the north and the entirety of the eastern waterfront.
- **Salem Willows** – The entire neighborhood, including Salem Willows Park, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1994. The area was recommended for National Register listing and local historic district designation in the 1991 plan. The 2005 heritage landscape reconnaissance survey identified Salem Neck, of which it is a part, as a priority heritage landscape and recommended the Juniper Point area as a possible neighborhood conservation district. This almost exclusively residential area contains former summer cottages and more substantial houses from c. 1870 to the present. The area recommended for NPD designation excludes the park and Restaurant Row at the north end of Fort Avenue, but otherwise encompasses the entire Salem Willows area.



- **Areas between Derby Street and Salem Common** – The 1991 preservation master plan recommended the inclusion of the many short streets between Essex and Derby Streets and the streets east of Salem Common in expanded Derby Street and/or Washington Square Local Historic Districts. The 1991 plan also recommended the expansion of the Derby Waterfront National Register Historic District to encompass the streets between Essex and Derby Streets. These streets contain some of Salem’s oldest houses; despite alterations to individual buildings, the streets exhibit a very cohesive character, with narrow setbacks and lot sizes commonly seen. Some of the streets west of the Washington Square Local Historic District are within the Essex Institute and Salem Common National Register Historic District, although sections of Boardman and Forrester Street, which contain high style residences from the 19th century, are not within these boundaries. A possible NPD could extend from the Washington Square Local Historic District east to Collins Cove (just east of Webb Street and also encompass the streets north of Washington Square bordered by Webb and North

Streets. Either a second, or combined, NPD is seen in the short cross streets between Derby and Essex Streets.

- **Point Neighborhood** –Two small areas containing the most architecturally cohesive collections of buildings within this neighborhood just south of Salem’s downtown were recommended for National Register listing in the 1991 preservation master plan. The 2005 heritage landscape reconnaissance survey noted the area as a priority landscape area and recognized its potential as a neighborhood conservation district. The 2006 survey and preservation plan which focused on this neighborhood recommended National Register eligibility for the entire neighborhood for its association with the systematic rebuilding effort here after a major fire in 1914 and architectural cohesiveness of the area, largely rebuilt over a three-year period. A small area west of Lafayette Street was included within the recommended National Register boundaries, due to their similarity in building types and style and shared age and history. The NPD boundaries follow those recommended for the National Register.
- **High/Endicott Streets Area** –This triangular area is tucked between Margin and Jackson Streets and the southern boundaries of the McIntire Local Historic District and the Urban Renewal Areas. The northern half includes a small number of 18th century houses, including the Gedney House on High Street owned by Historic New England. The remaining areas were devastated in the 1914 fire which also destroyed the Point neighborhood. The area exhibits many multi-family buildings that are quite similar in age and style to those seen in the Point neighborhood. Although not prevalent, massive sycamore trees characterize some of the streets. The recommended NPD boundaries roughly follow Margin Street and Jackson Street, but it is unclear if the older buildings could be included in an expansion of the McIntire Local Historic District and/or if the remaining sections could be part of a non-contiguous Point Neighborhood designation.
- **North Salem** – Salem’s northeast quadrant, clearly demarcated by a former railroad line and the North River, contains a number of potential NPD areas. These areas could either be separate districts or combined to form a single large district bounded by School/Orne Street on the north; Felt Street and the North River on the east; Tremont/Phillips Street on the east; and the North River Canal area on the south. The most distinct areas are described below:
 - **Grove Street** – The area of Grove Street west of Tremont Street contains a number of single and multi-family residences that date from the mid-to-late 19th century. The area’s proximity to Harmony Grove Cemetery and Mack Park lend a gracious air to this grouping of workers’ housing. Surrounding streets, including the major spine of Tremont Street, display houses from a similar period although the groupings are not quite as cohesive.

- **Buffum Street** – The 1991 preservation master plan recommended both National Register listing and local historic district designation for Buffum Street. The street displays many high style residences from the mid-to-late 19th century that are well-maintained. The street could stand alone as a local historic district, or could be united with surrounding streets for a larger NPD designation.
- **Flint Street** – This one-block residential area lies between Mason Street on the north and the MBTA tracks on the south. The street is adjacent to the North River Canal area, which is protected by a separate zoning ordinance. The street is lined with multi-family and single family residences that have very similar setbacks, most featuring a front gable roof and similar late 19th century styling. The area could be combined with the nearby streets of Friend and Oak, but the houses there are not as cohesively grouped and display more alterations.
- **Dearborn Street** – The 1991 preservation master plan also recommended both National Register and local historic district designation for portions of the street between Upham and Lee Streets. This street is lined with high style single family homes from the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century. The eastern end of the street faces the North River and Salem’s central business district beyond. Surrounding streets are similar in age, but feature slightly smaller houses though of a similar stylistic quality. The entire area bounded by North Street, the North River shoreline, Felt Street, and Orne Street could be a single NPD area.
- **Salem Rebuilding Area** – A small triangular area bounded by Franklin, Foster/Walter, and Osborne Streets and bisected by Hayward Street, the Salem Rebuilding Area was built by the Salem Rebuilding Trust to demonstrate the possibilities for quality, affordable housing for factory workers. The 12 houses, featuring two modes of double residences, were designed by the Boston architectural firm of Kilham and Hopkins. This distinctive area could be designated separately or could be incorporated into a larger North Salem NPD.
- **North Street** – North Street is the major northwest transportation corridor and contains both residential and commercial uses, many of the latter within 19th century houses. Similar to Bridge Street, a number of automobile-oriented businesses disrupt the formerly residential character of this thoroughfare. The street could either be part of a larger North Salem NPD or part of either a west side of North Street or east side of North Street district.
- **South Salem** – Sections of Ward 5 and Ward 7 in Salem’s southeast quadrant were the subject of the reconnaissance survey. The area is south of the Point neighborhood, whose southern border is Chase Street. Lafayette Street forms the major spine in this area. Canal Street was the nominal west side of the surveyed

area; the waterfront formed the east side. The north end of the area surveyed was within the 250-acre swath of Salem destroyed in the fire of 1914. But areas to the south were either not affected or had not yet been developed. Like North Salem, several areas distinguished by either their history or architectural cohesiveness could either be separate smaller NPDs or joined to form a larger district. The most comprehensive potential district, bounded by the waterfront on the east, Saltonstall Parkway/Cypress Street on the north, Canal Street on the west, and Loring Avenue on the south, is depicted on the figure included with this report.

- **Fairfield Street** – As noted above, the single block of Fairfield Street between Cabot and Lafayette Street is recommended for either local historic district or NPD designation. The street contains large stately single family homes of brick and wood frame construction that date from the 1910s and 1920s. The surrounding area is predominantly multi-family housing from the same period, except for the area to the west, which features houses from the late 19th century.
- **Pre-fire Area** – The area bounded by Cabot Street on the east, Cypress Street on the north, Canal Street on the west, and Roslyn Street on the south is the only area north of Leach and Holly Streets that escaped the fire of 1914. As a result, the area is surrounded by construction that dates from the 1910s and later. The area's modest houses are mainly quite small and were built for Salem's workers between the Civil War and the end of the 19th century.
- **Derby and Messervy Estates Area** – Named for the early 19th century landowners in this area, the area is bounded by Leach Street on the north, Canal Street extension on the west, waterfront on the east, and Loring / Clifton Avenue on the south. The area includes the existing Lafayette Street Local Historic District, which is on both sides of Lafayette Street between Holly/Leach Streets on the north and Clifton Street on the south. The area was developed between the Civil War and the early 20th century. The area's architecture is representative of this long period of development, displaying high style examples of all of the popular styles, including Italianate, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Tudor Revival.
- **Naples and Savoy Roads** – This small, self-contained neighborhood south of Loring Avenue and just east of Salem State College's campus developed in the early 20th century. The neighborhood is unique in its possession of a small private beach. The streets are cohesively lined with single family houses in Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Tudor Revival styles. The area was recommended eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and as a local historic district in the 1991 preservation master plan. A small number of houses on Lafayette Street were also included. Similar boundaries, but with the addition of Hemenway Road adjacent to the private beach and Fairview Road, which contains late 1940s-1950s single family houses, are recommended as a possible

NPD. Individual properties further south on Lafayette Street may also be considered in this district.

- **Gallows Hill and Boston Street Area** – The Gallows Hill area and its major corridor of Boston Street were noted by the community as significant landscapes in the 2005 heritage landscape inventory. The neighborhood contains many older residential areas, especially on Boston Street and nearby streets. It is the most diverse neighborhood architecturally, with many newer residences intermingled throughout the area. The area has experienced more alterations than the other areas examined in the reconnaissance survey and has more open parcels. A possible NPD might be bounded by the MBTA tracks on the north; Highland Avenue on the east; the Salem/Peabody city boundaries on the west; and Maple/South/Procter Streets on the south.

District Rationale and Physical Characteristics of Bridge Street and Point Neighborhoods

The DPCD was ultimately responsible for selecting the two neighborhoods that were studied in Phase III. Neighborhoods in which residents and property owners expressed interest in being the subject of the Phase III study received sole consideration. The DPCD also gave consideration to the potential threats facing a particular neighborhood and their quality of resources.

As a result of their expressed interest, the DPCD selected the Bridge Street and the Point neighborhoods for further study in Phase III. Residents and property owners in both of these neighborhoods evidenced interest in the NPD concept, mainly due to concerns about future developments in these neighborhoods. The Bridge Street neighborhood is facing an unknown future for its commercial spine of Bridge Street due to a new parallel bypass road that opened in late summer 2008. Business owners on the street want to encourage more neighborhood-supported businesses and pedestrian activity, but do not want new development discouraged by overly strict design regulations. Both the Point and Bridge Street Neighborhoods were concerned about absentee landlords and their lack of property maintenance responsibilities. Both neighborhoods also have significant numbers of vacant or underutilized parcels whose possible redevelopment and resulting appearance would be of interest to the communities.

Bridge Street

As noted above, the Bridge Street neighborhood was recently listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The historic district met both Criteria A and C for its association with the evolution of Salem's earliest settlement from a maritime-based area to one transformed in the late 19th and early 20th century by its proximity to major transportation corridors, as well as its collection of well-preserved vernacular architecture from the late 18th century to the early 20th century. Bridge Street, the



main corridor that bisects the districts, is largely commercial and has some fairly recent automobile-oriented commercial establishments which interrupt the series of early to late 19th century buildings here.

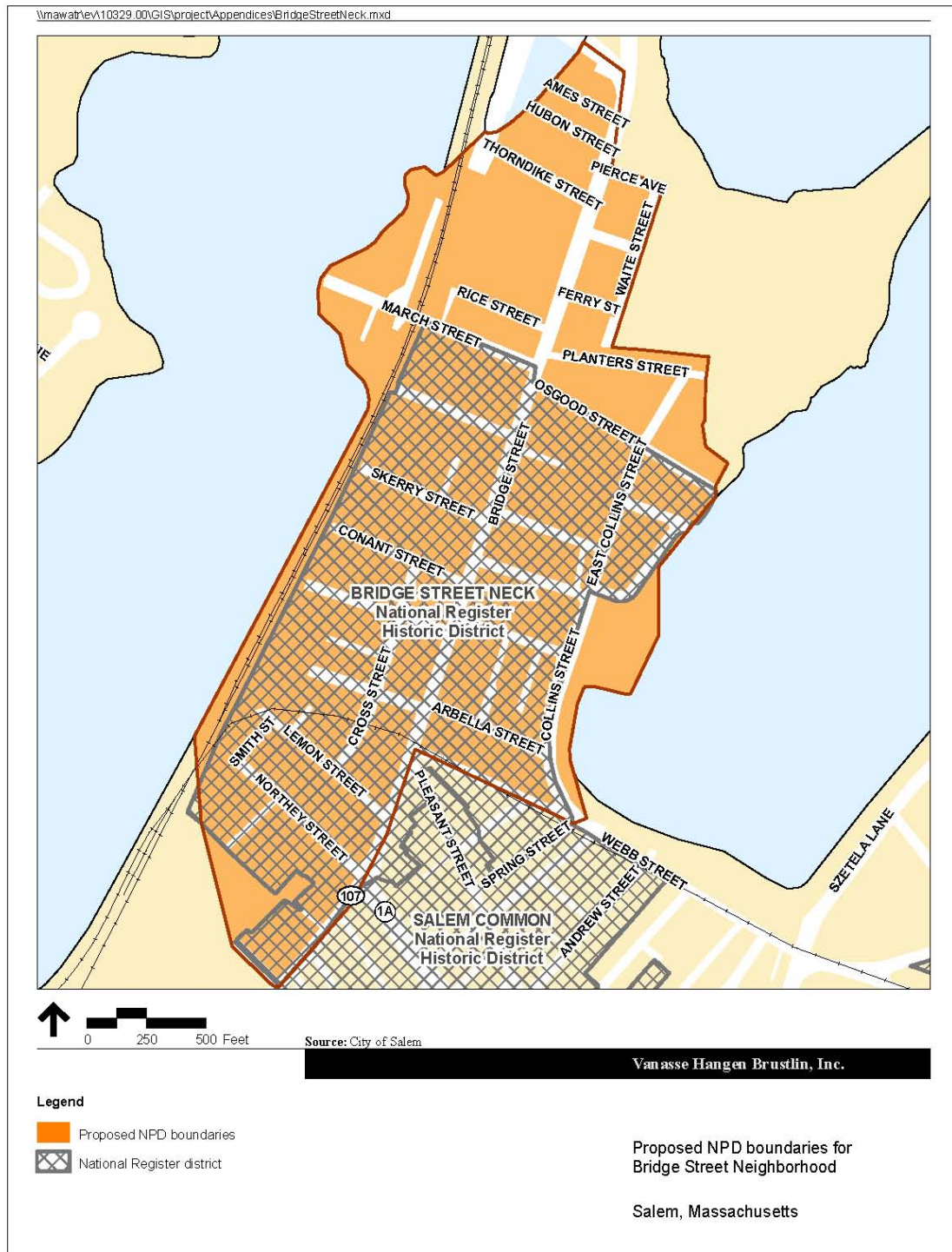
Physical characteristics of the neighborhood noted in the nomination and by the study's consultant include:

- Buildings are set close to the street and to one another – a historic pattern seen in many Salem neighborhoods. Most buildings do not have a front yard; the buildings are directly next to the sidewalk.
- Variety of styles and building types reflect continual development from the 18th century to the present
- In general, building shapes and size are compatible on many blocks, despite different construction periods
- Building forms are simple without much ornamentation
- Detail is concentrated on porches, doorways, and bays
- Bridge Street's commercial buildings are a mix of converted residential structures and mid to late 20th century buildings on large parcels with surface parking lots. Most of the latter are one-story in height and are in the eastern section of the neighborhood.

The recommended boundaries for the NPD roughly follow the National Register boundaries on the south and west, but are recommended to also include the streets to the north and the entirety of the eastern waterfront. A figure showing the proposed boundaries is on page 28.

Interest/Potential Threats

Residents and property owners expressed interest in NPDs, due to recent developments that were seen by some to detract from the architectural character of certain streets. Others at the meeting were concerned about an additional review layer and incrementally-growing control over alterations and development. Most felt that the mainly commercial Bridge Street should be included in any potential NPD in the neighborhood. Threats facing the Bridge Street Neighborhood were the number of poorly-maintained and vacant properties, an unknown future for Bridge Street as a result of the bypass road, and potential large residential developments that would disrupt the views and character of certain streets.



Point Neighborhood

The 2006 Point Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey and Preservation Plan which focused on this neighborhood recommended National Register eligibility for the entire neighborhood for its association with the systematic rebuilding effort here after a major fire in 1914 and architectural cohesiveness of the area, largely rebuilt over a three-year period.

Physical characteristics of the neighborhood noted in the nomination and by the study's consultant include:

- Buildings are set close to the street and occupy most of the lot footprint
- Most of the Point's buildings were constructed within a 3-year period from 1914-1917, using a model building code that stressed fireproof qualities
- Residents chose designs from plans provided to them or were architect-designed, which has resulted in many similar building types and forms in the neighborhood
- In general, building shapes and size are compatible on many blocks with a height restriction of 2-4 stories imposed by the model building code
- Porches are one of the most characteristic elements: open porches across the front of buildings and multi-story porches on the rear and sides
- Buildings are simple without much ornamentation, although classical elements dominate

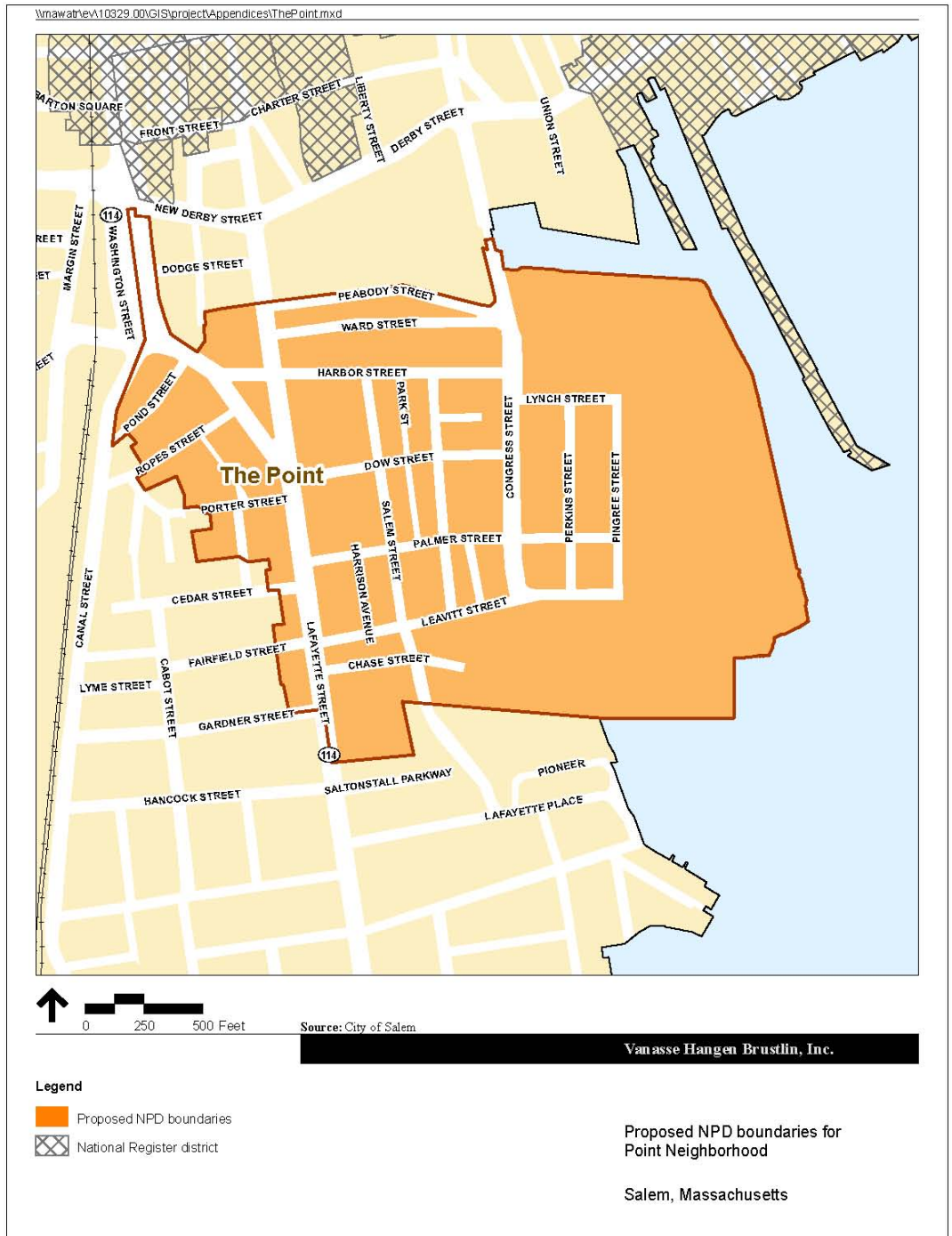
A small area west of Lafayette Street was included within the recommended National Register boundaries, due to their similarity in building types and styles and shared age and history. The NPD boundaries follow those recommended for the National Register. A figure showing the proposed boundaries is on page 31.

Interest/Potential Threats

Attendees at the Phase II and III meetings, which included property owners and residents, were generally in favor of the NPD concept but stressed that the majority of the rental property in the neighborhood is owned by individuals who did not attend the meetings. Individual concerns were expressed regarding the protection of open space in this extremely dense neighborhood and control over the size of new developments so that open space is retained as much as possible. One attendee noted that design guidelines should not discourage energy efficiency, such as installation of solar panels on roofs. Others expressed their favor of retention of older architecture, despite their existing or former unkempt conditions. Most recognized that front porches and multi-story rear and side porches were important character-defining elements and believed that removal or enclosure would have a negative impact. Others noted infill of original garage and storefront areas due to their conversion to residential uses and the practice's negative impact on the neighborhood's historic



appearance. The large percentage of absentee landlords who own buildings in the neighborhood is an important concern to many; some felt that these landlords would be opposed to the NPD concept and may not make any improvements as a result of their opposition.



5

Neighborhood Preservation District Design Guidelines for Bridge Street and Point Neighborhoods

The Phase III study resulted in an individual set of sample illustrated guidelines for both the Bridge Street and Point neighborhoods. The sample guidelines are presented in three major categories: new construction, demolition, and alterations to existing buildings. Proposed new construction and demolition of buildings over 50 years old is subject to binding review, while alterations to certain elements of existing buildings will only receive an advisory review by the NPD commission. The illustrated publications for both neighborhoods are included in Appendix 4.

The review categories of new construction, demolition and alteration to existing buildings cover the elements that Salem residents and property owners agreed required either binding or advisory review. New construction and demolition were chosen for binding review because of the greater impacts these actions would have on a block of existing buildings in both neighborhoods. The decision to have advisory review for alterations to certain elements of existing buildings resulted from the general concept of neighborhood preservation districts, which allows more flexible review over such changes. Additionally, most Salem residents and property owners opined for advisory review, rather than strict binding reviews for these changes. The elements of existing buildings stipulated for advisory review were those that primarily characterize a majority of buildings in the neighborhoods and were the elements about which Salem residents and property owners expressed most concern.

The guidelines for the appearance and placement of new buildings focus on broader concepts of scale, form, and setback and do not intend to dictate exactly what the appearance of a new building should be. For new construction, buildings over 50 years old in the vicinity of the new building are the primary guide for appropriate size, form and materials. The City planning staff assigned to the NPD commission is expected to assist property developers with these concepts so that meetings with the Commission can be minimized.

In addition to these sample design guidelines publications, the NPD Commission as well as project proponents are encouraged to use two excellent sources of guidance previously prepared for Salem's residential areas and commercial districts. The 1977 *Salem Handbook*, published by Historic Salem, Inc. and about to be re-published, focuses on residential buildings. The handbook offers information about historic architectural styles and their major characteristic features, exterior elements such as fences and walls that are appropriate, and guidance on siting new buildings on an existing block of houses. The recently published 2005 *City of Salem Commercial Design Guidelines* presents numerous examples of appropriate and inappropriate design for commercial buildings, including storefront system design, awnings, signage, and placement of new buildings. The latter publication is available on the City of Salem's website; hopefully the *Salem Handbook* can be as accessible as well in the future.

The sample design guidelines booklets are illustrated for a very specific purpose. Narrative text stating what the guidelines are best understood if they are supported by visual examples of what would be acceptable and what would likely not be approved. All three of the publications, the specific design guidelines for the neighborhood, the Salem Handbook, and the commercial design guidelines, display both photographs of actual examples as well as line illustrations to depict appropriate and inappropriate design. If NPD districts are established, we recommend that simple line illustrations continue to be generated to demonstrate more clearly the appropriateness of various proposed projects that come up for review.

6

Recommendations for Further Study

Further study is recommended on the following topics, some of which were discussed at the neighborhood meetings.

- Feasibility of an affirmative maintenance ordinance
- Feasibility of enforcement of commonly-accepted community standards that promote cleanliness, order, and other desirable characteristics
- Definitive and/or updated study of possible funding/financing sources for property maintenance.
- Feasibility of a demolition by neglect ordinance

Recommendations for NPD Approval Process

The NPD approval process should incorporate the following recommendations:

- The study petition should be signed by at least 20% of the neighborhood's property owners.
- Educational sessions are required to be held during the study process that focus on the implications of designation, proposed boundaries, and the choice of elements and their level of review.
- City Councillor(s) for the neighborhood under study should attend educational sessions and public meetings or be briefed by City staff during the study period so that they are informed about the process and the neighborhood's opinions.
- During the study period, a house-to-house survey to notify residents and property owners of the study and designation process should be conducted. This effort may also put more people in the information loop that will be crucial to the designation's success.

Recommendations on Priorities for Future NPD Designation

At this point in time, the Bridge Street and Point neighborhoods merit the highest priority for future designation should interest and desire for the designation be sustained. Education, through additional meetings, workshops, and publications to neighborhood residents and property owners, City Council members, and members of commissions, such as the Zoning Board of Appeals, is recommended to help gain understanding and support for future designation.

Some residents and property owners in other neighborhoods, notably South Salem, North Salem and Gallows Hill also expressed interest in the NPD concept; the City should continue communications with these individuals and with the neighborhood groups to gauge their future intent for NPD designation.

7

Annotated Bibliography

Brookline NCD Study

The Neighborhood Conservation District Study for the Town of Brookline, prepared by Larson Fisher Associates in 2005, is a comprehensive source of neighborhood conservation district definitions, processes, and practices around the country. As of 2008, Brookline has not yet adopted a Neighborhood Conservation District bylaw. The appendices included with that study are enclosed here.

Since the 2005 study, the communities of Lincoln, North Andover, Wellesley, and Lowell have instituted neighborhood preservation district legislation. Both Lowell and North Andover have one or more established neighborhood preservation districts, while Wellesley and Lincoln are in the study process for individual districts' designations. Links to these communities' studies and legislation, along with communities with older, well-established programs are noted below.

Links to Relevant Websites

Massachusetts Communities with Neighborhood Preservation District Legislation

City of Amesbury

http://www.ci.amesbury.ma.us/home.nfs?a=amesbury&s=special&document=6832&group_id=76 (Link to the Establishment of Neighborhood Conservation Districts under Section 40A, Section 5)

City of Boston, Boston Landmarks Commission

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/environment/downloads.asp> (Link to information about all of Boston's local historic and architectural conservation districts, including maps, reports, and guidelines.)

City of Cambridge, Cambridge Historical Commission

<http://www.cambridgema.gov/Historic/districts.html> (Link to information about all of Cambridge's local historic and neighborhood conservation districts, including review process, maps, reports, and guidelines.)

Town of Lincoln

Bylaw

<http://www.lincolntown.org/NCD%20bylaw%20030506.pdf>

Overview of the Neighborhood Conservation District Program

<http://www.lincolntown.org/NCD%20Overview%20and%20Summary%20030506.pdf>

City of Lowell, Lowell Historic Board

<http://www.historiclowell.net/review-districts-permitting/downtown-historic-district/review-districts-permitting/review-districts-permitting> (Link to information about all of Lowell's local historic and neighborhood districts, including maps, reports, and guidelines.)

City of Northampton

Ordinance, Chapter 156, Central Business District Architecture

http://www.e-codes.generalcode.com/codebook_frameset.asp?ep=fs&t=ws&cb=2226_A

Downtown Northampton Central Business District, Design Guidelines Manual (1999)

http://www.e-codes.generalcode.com/codes/2226_A/2226-156a%20Central%20Business%20Architecture%20Design%20Guidelines.pdf#xml=http://www.e-codes.generalcode.com/searchresults.asp?cmd=pdfhits&DocId=28&Index=C%3a%5cProgram%20Files%5cdtSearch%5cUserData%5c2226%5fA&HitCount=12&hits=6+7+51+52+7c+7d+1141+1142+237e+237f+238b&hc=134&req=Central+Business

Town of North Andover – Machine Shop Village

http://www.townofnorthandover.com/Pages/NAndoverMA_CommDev/MSV/NeighborhoodConservationDist (Link to bylaw, study report, guidelines, and map of Machine Shop Village)

Town of Wellesley

Bylaw and explanatory pages

http://www.ci.wellesley.ma.us/pages/wellesleyma_HistComm/NCD2

Denton Road NCD Final Study Report

http://www.ci.wellesley.ma.us/pages/wellesleyma_HistComm/FinalReport

Salem Sources

Berg, Shary Page, Gretchen G. Schuler, and Virginia Adams

Salem Reconnaissance Report: Essex County Landscape Inventory, Massachusetts
Heritage Landscape Inventory Program, May 2005

Brengle, Kim Withers, Northfields Preservation Associates

*A Preservation Master Plan for the City of Salem, Massachusetts: Strategies for the
Preservation of Salem's Historic and Archaeological Resources*, August 1991

City of Salem, Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD)

The DPCD has copies of Massachusetts Historical Commission inventory
forms (area, building, structure, etc.) and National Register nominations for
all Salem properties.

Historic Salem, Inc.

The Salem Handbook, 1977.

Mountjoy, Alan, Chan Krieger & Associates and William Finch, Finch & Rose

City of Salem Commercial Design Guidelines, 2005

Municipal Code Corporation

Zoning Ordinance, City of Salem, Massachusetts, 1991, Reprinted 1999

Salem Historical Commission

Salem Historical Commission Guidelines Notebook, 1984, amended 2004

Salem Redevelopment Authority

*Urban Renewal Plan, Heritage Plaza East Urban Renewal Project, Salem, Essex
County, Massachusetts*

VHB/Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

The Point Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey and Preservation Plan,
September 2006

Other Sources

Heuer, Tad

"Living History: How Homeowners in a New Local Historic District
Negotiate Their Legal Obligations", *The Yale Law Journal*, 116:768, 2007



Study of the newly-designated City Point Local Historic District in New Haven, CT, which analyzed the neighborhood's perceptions of the district's importance as well as the positive and negative features of district controls. The article made several recommendations for improving perception and administration.