



## Report of Charrette: Re-Connect New London 2010

## Team Members and Acknowledgements

### Charrette Sponsor:

Re-New London Council (Director: Art Costa)

New London Landmarks

UConn Center for Transportation and Urban Planning

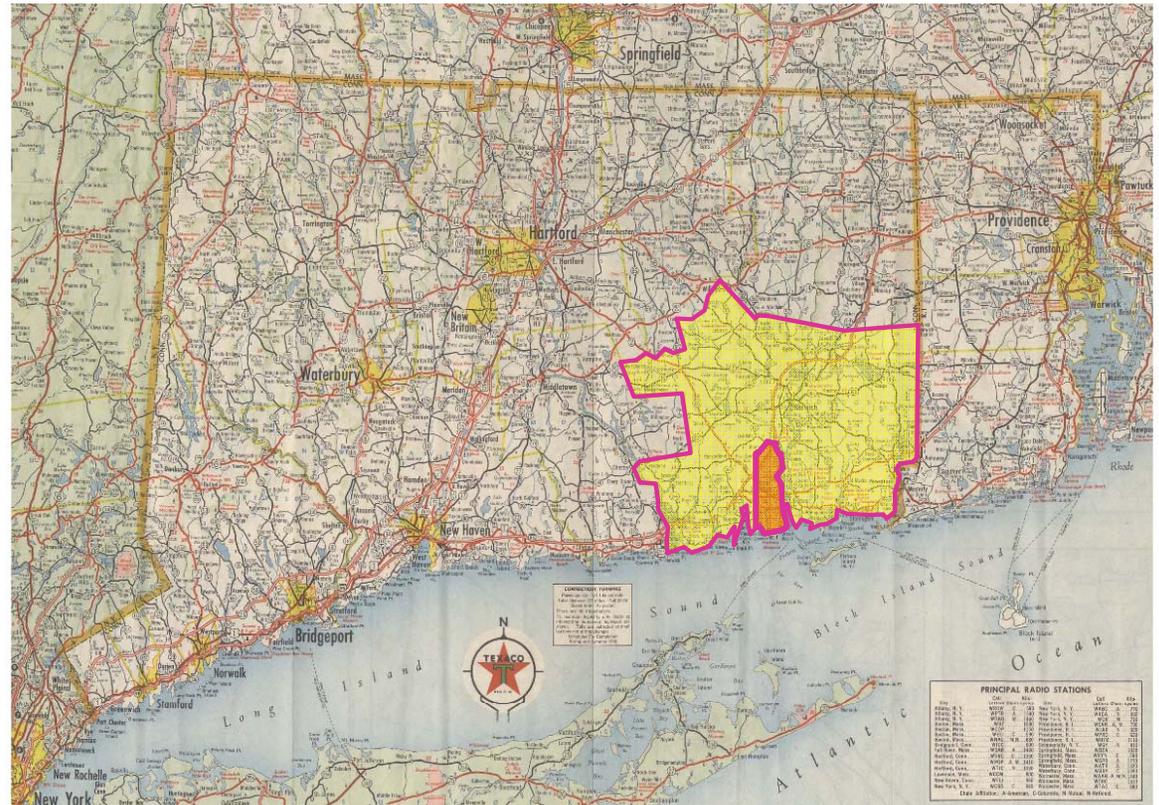
UConn Community Research and Design Collaborative

(CRDC) Director: Peter Miniutti

### Special Consultants:

Catherine Johnson (Architect/Urban Planner)

Lucy Gibson (Transportation Engineer)



1856 Map of Connecticut with New London County and the Town of New London highlighted.

# Introduction

## Project Introduction

When the 1800's became the 1900's, the city of New London was ideal. Its fabric had evolved over the previous century from a small coastal town into a flourishing port development with healthy interconnected neighborhoods. This urban fabric of streets and buildings was disrupted during the mid-1900's when the revolutionary interstate system swept across the country and I-95 was constructed just off center of downtown. Now, 60 years later, New London has not yet recovered from the shock of that dramatic alteration; the lands around the interstate are fragmented and vacant, and the Northern and Southern portions of the city are almost completely cut off from one another.

This situation is familiar to Dr. Norman Garrick, a professor at the University of Connecticut and renowned expert in urban transportation planning. While he has seen many cities fragmented by highway systems, New London caught his attention during his brief visit in the winter of 2009. He was struck by the vast disconnect that the interstate and high speed interchange had created between the exciting New London downtown South of I-95 and the College Campuses just North of the interstate. Intrigued, he contacted colleagues to organize a grant proposal with the intention of studying the New London situation and form a vision for restoring the connections in New London that were so quickly lost in the 1960's. (see Appendix A: Re-Connect New London, "Your Town" grant proposal)

Though the grant did not coalesce as planned, Dr. Garrick, colleagues at UConn (Community Research and Design Collaborative from the Landscape Architecture program), and the Re-Connect New London Council decided to move ahead with the investigation in the form of a three day charrette. This brief but intensive study would allow the team to assess the existing conditions of the areas adjacent to the interstate and high speed interchange, and begin exploration into opportunities for reconnecting the downtown with the isolated campuses and neighborhoods to the North.

Taking its cues from the original grant proposal, the focus of the charrette was on "restoring pedestrian and bicycle connections between the colleges and the downtown by taming and rationalizing the complex highway junction that stands as such an obstructive barrier". The New London Landmarks group joined as a sponsor of the study, and consultants were brought onto the team; Transportation expert Lucy Gibson and Architect/Urban Planner Catherine Johnson. Thus the team was composed of a well rounded group including experts in urban transportation, highway design, architecture, land use planning, ecosystem management, and spatial relationships.

The site



# Preface

## Outline of Charrette

In the interest of efficiency, the team divided itself into three areas of study; the transportation system, the built environment, and the natural environment. Independent research was performed in the months leading up to the charrette as each group familiarized itself with the function of their system within the city. Thus, when the charrette began, the groups were able to pool their knowledge and create a comprehensive view of the situation with its many opportunities and limitations.

After presenting the information gathered to active members of the community who attended the evening presentation, the team was able to gather feedback from the public, gaining a fresh perspective on the issues and filling gaps where information was lacking. Finally, after another day of collaborative work, the team presented some of the solutions that had been discussed; ideas which came from other cities who had dealt with similar issues as well as potential steps which could be taken by New London given its unique situation.

### Day 1

Charrette team workshop

- Site visit and photo inventory
- Preliminary Base Mapping
- Existing cross sections
- Historical mapping series
- 3-d model of Route 95

### Day 2

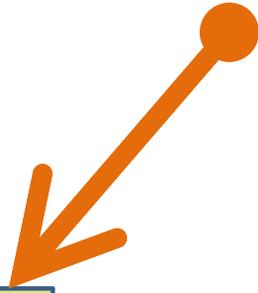
Charrette Team Presenting to Public and Obtaining Feedback

- A View of New London Issues
  - Team Presentations
- Public Comments and feedback

### Day 3

Charrette Team Sharing Potential Solutions w/ Public

- Team members brainstorm possible solutions
- Potential Solutions
  - Team Presentations
  - Case Studies
- Summary
  - Next Steps



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# Day 1

Charrette team  
workshop

# Site Visit

Photo Inventory of Existing Conditions

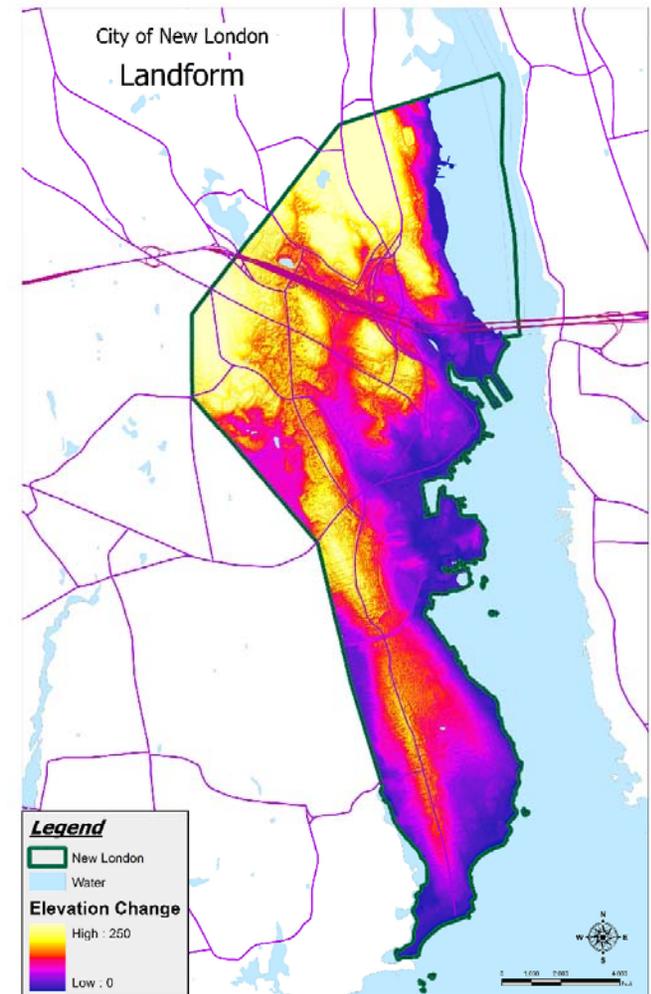
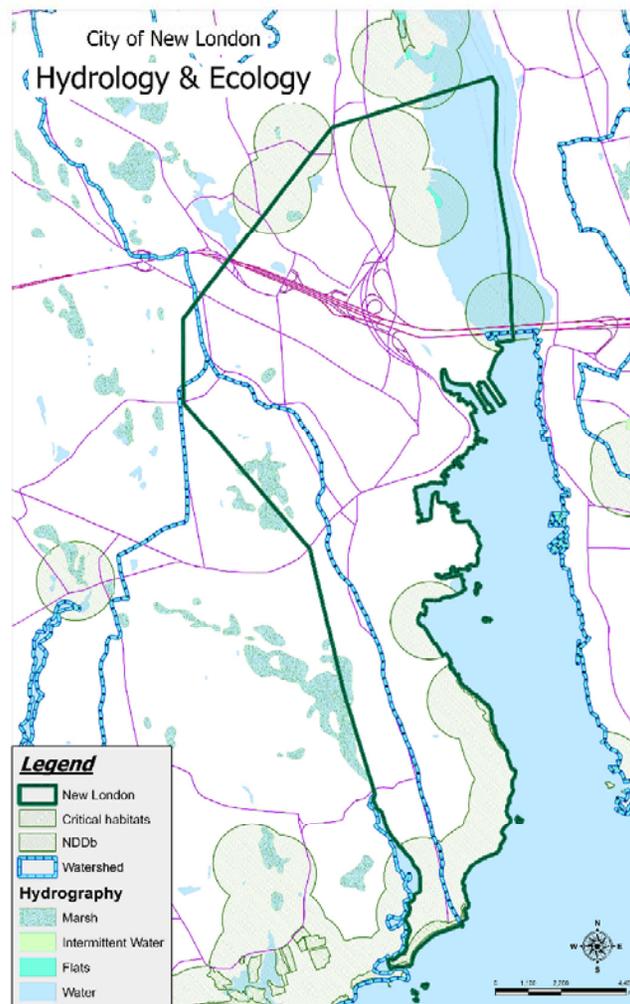
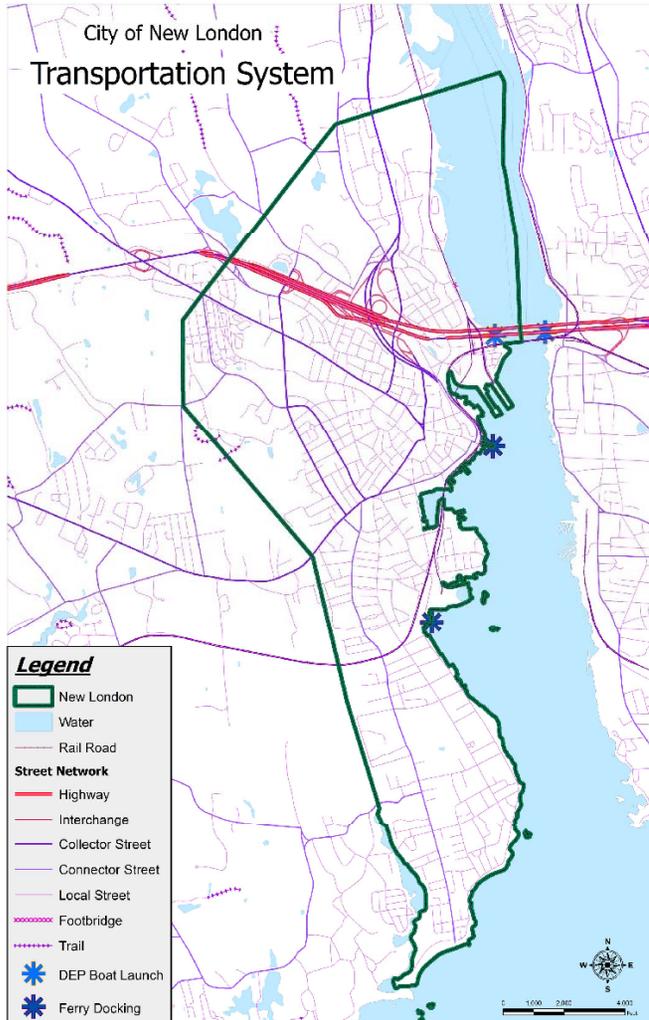


# Day 1

Charrette team  
workshop

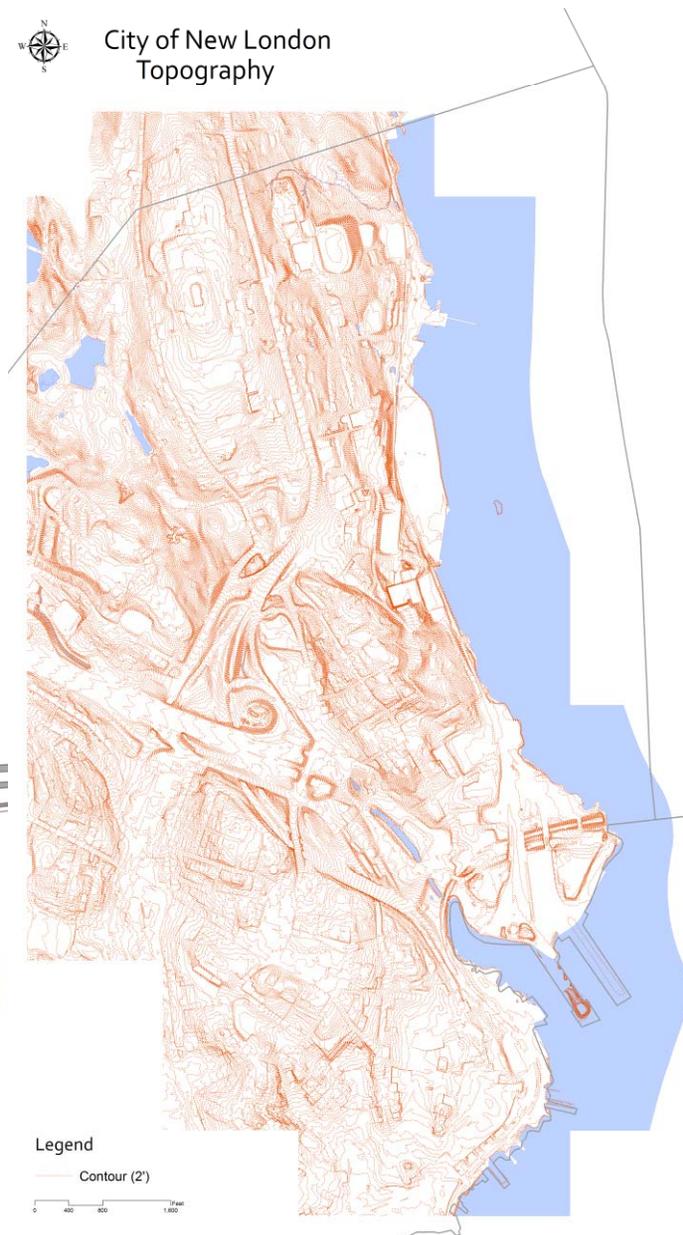
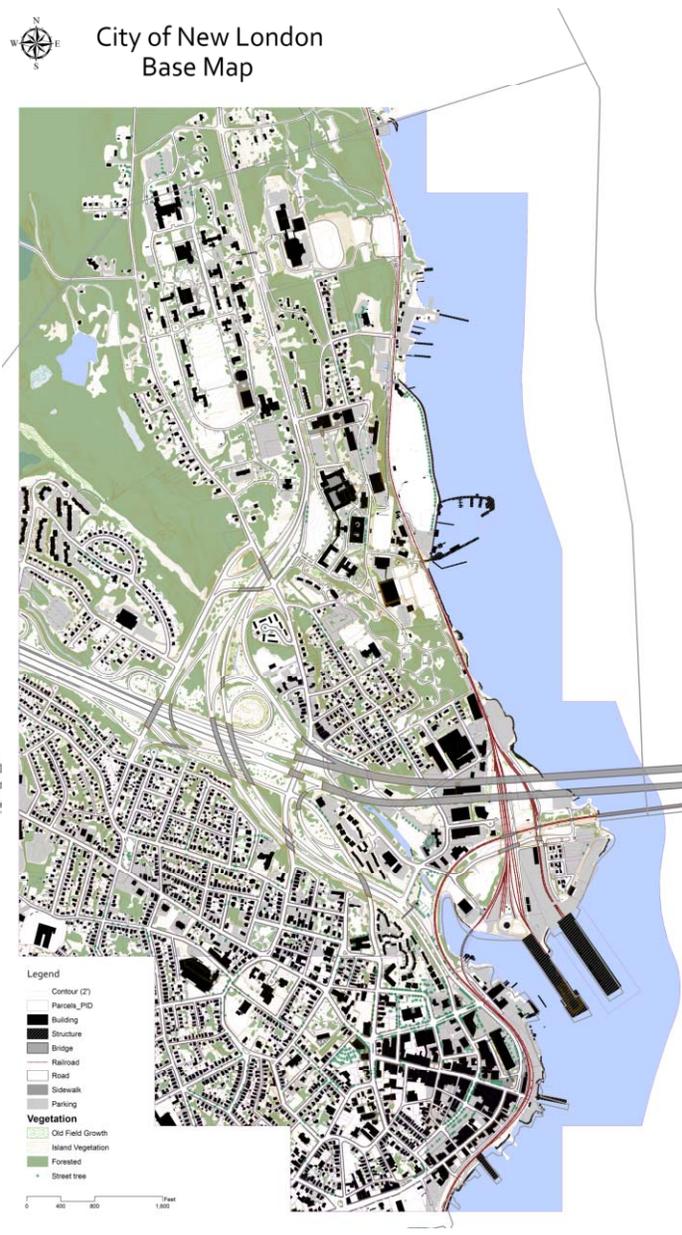
# Preliminary Base Mapping

Existing Conditions of New London



**Day 1**  
Charrette team  
workshop

**Preliminary Base Mapping**  
Existing Conditions of New London

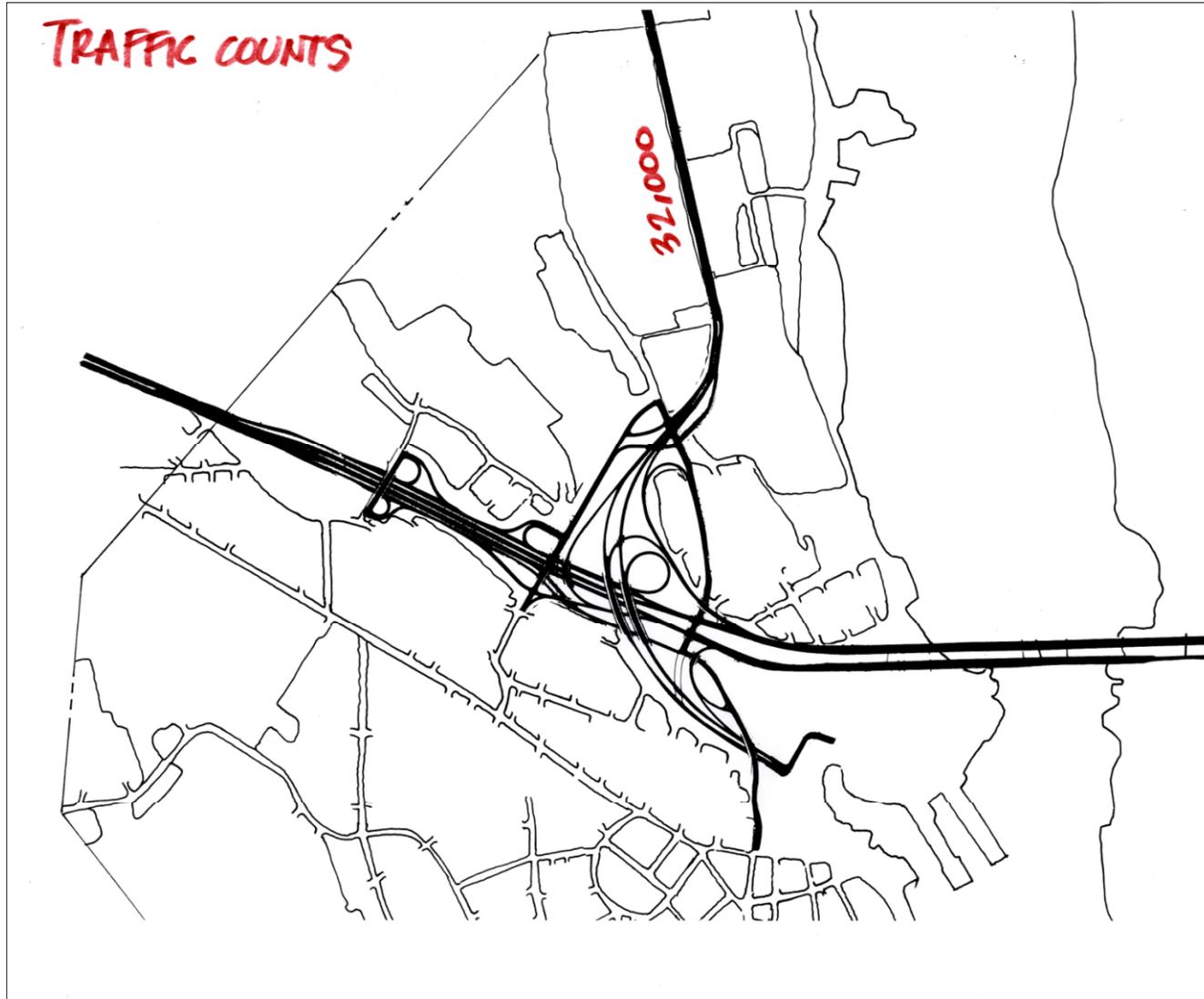


Day 1

Charrette team  
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# Preliminary Base Mapping

Traffic Counts

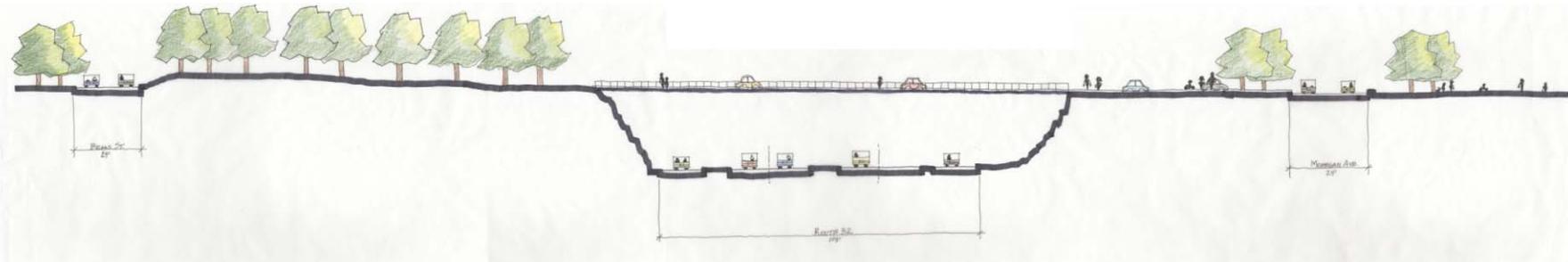


# Day 1

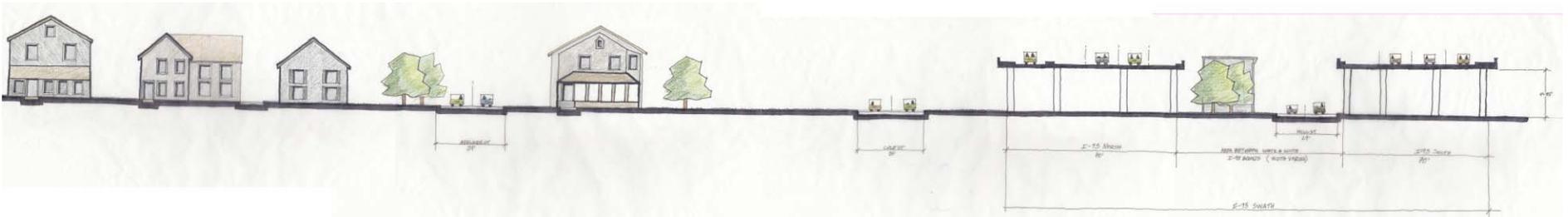
Charrette team  
workshop

## Existing Condition Sections

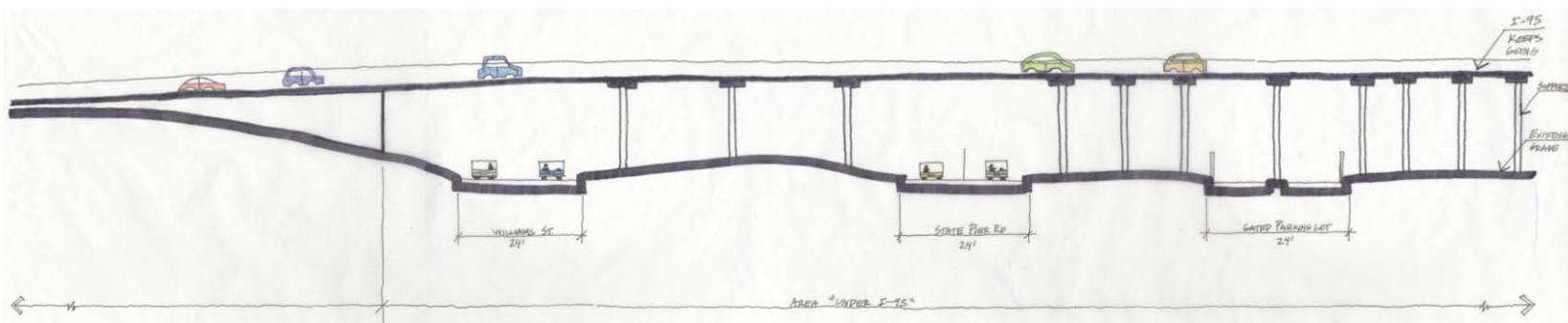
### Section along Williams Street



### Section thru Adelaide St. and residential neighborhood adjacent to I-95



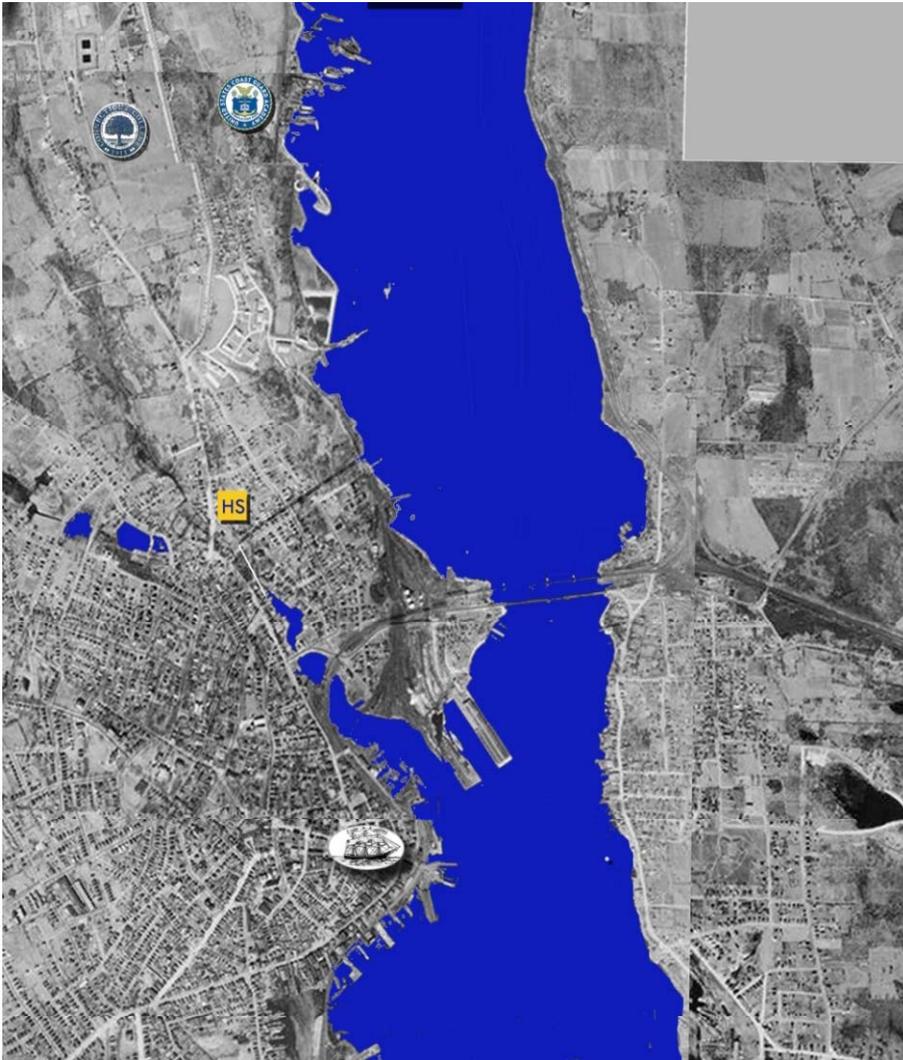
### Section along I-95 thru Williams St, State Pier Rd, and Winthrop St.



# Day 1

Charrette team  
workshop

# Historical Comparisons Mapping Aerials



1934

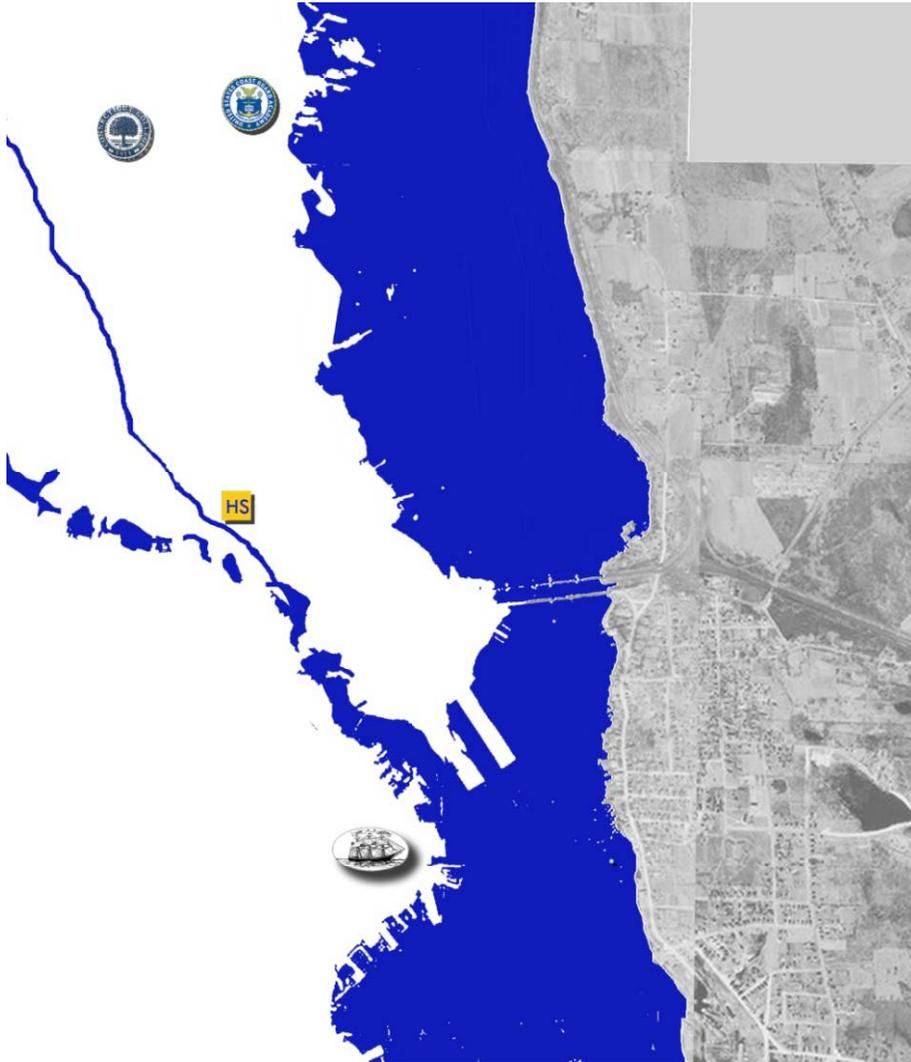


2010

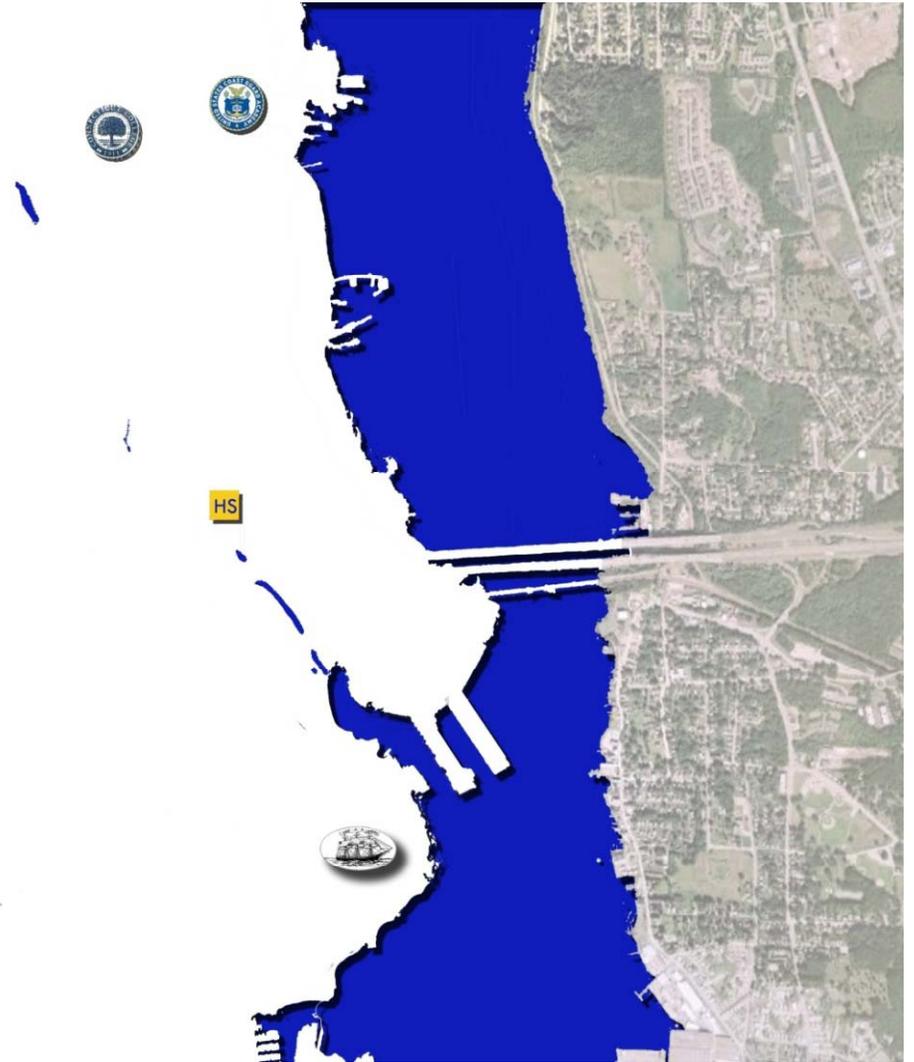
# Day 1

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# Historical Comparisons Mapping Surficial Water



1934



2010

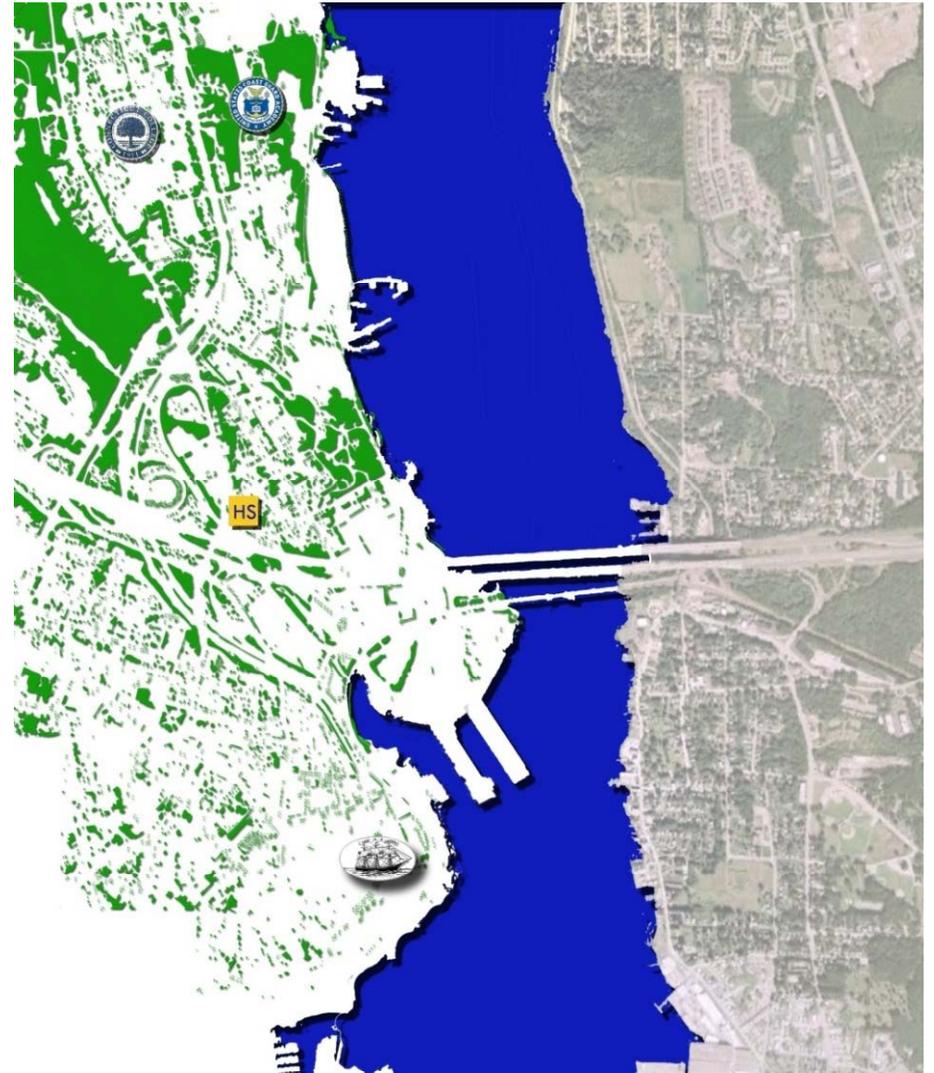
# Day 1

Charrette team  
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# Historical Comparisons Mapping Trees and Wetland Flora



1934



2010

# Day 1

Charrette team  
workshop

# Historical Comparisons Mapping Street Grid



1940



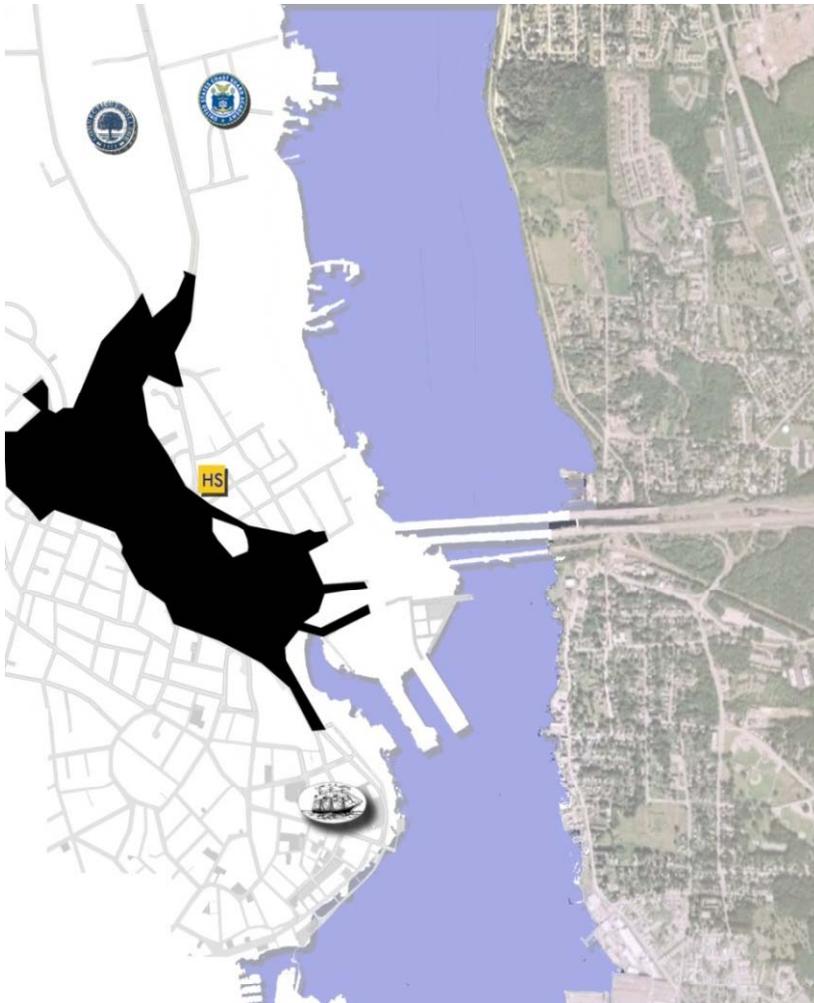
1992

# Day 1

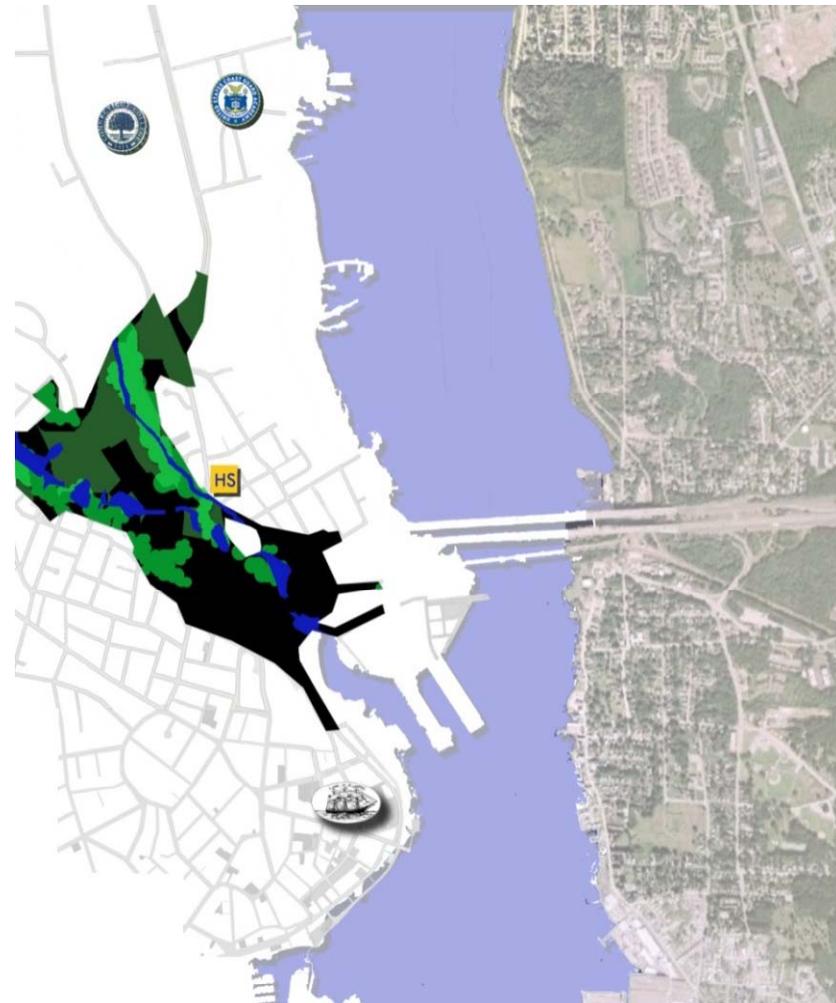
Charrette team  
workshop

## Problem Definition Resources Lost & Street Grid Analysis

The black hole is representing the highway interchange system which is separator of neighborhoods, people and ecological systems.



Contemporary "Black Hole"

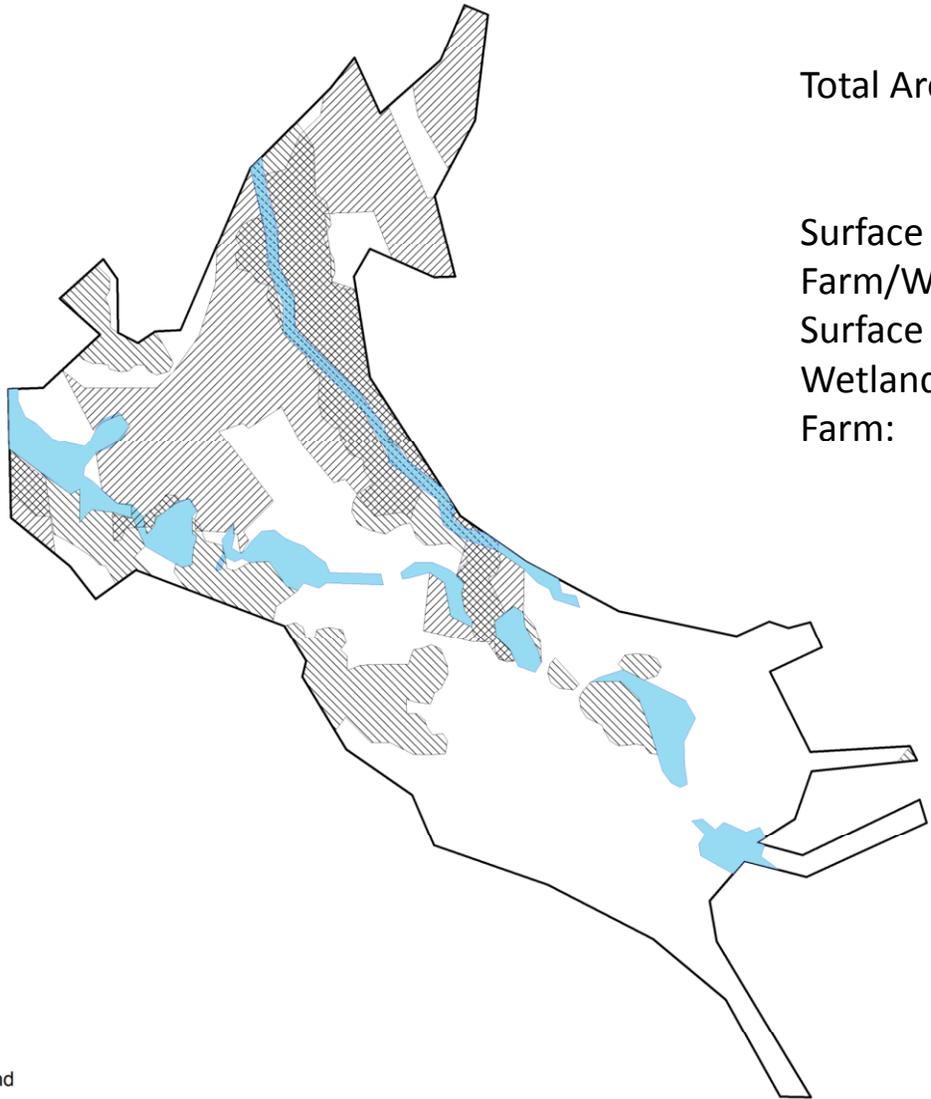


"Lost" Resources ( waterways, farmlands, and woodlands)  
represented by colors.

Day 1  
Charrette team  
workshop

# Problem Definition

Contemporary “Black Hole” and “Lost” Resources



Total Area: 161 acres

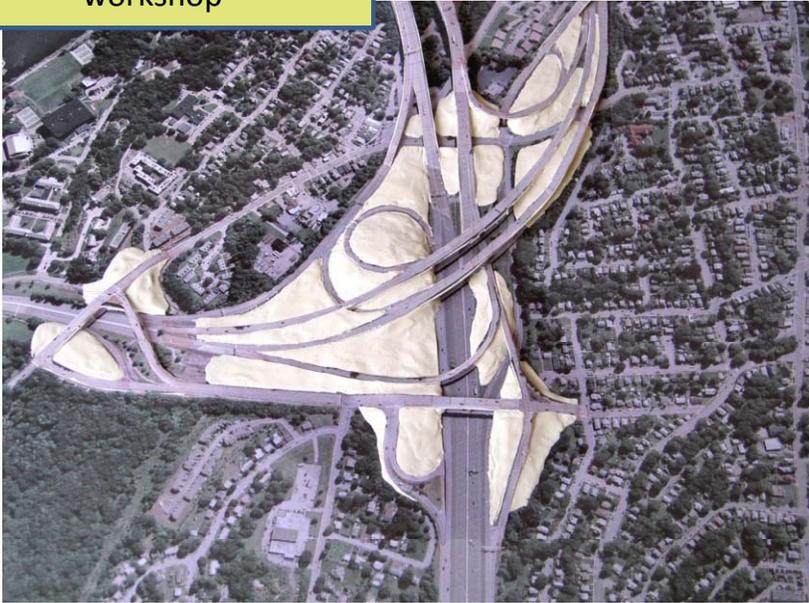
Surface Water/Wetland:	3 acres	2%
Farm/Wetland:	15 acres	9%
Surface Water:	16 acres	10%
Wetlands:	37 acres	23%
Farm:	50 acres	31%

Legend  
**AreaLost**  
feature

- wetland
- farm
- water
- water/wetland
- Areal95

# Day 1

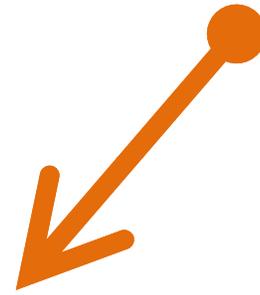
Charrette team  
workshop



# Problem

Model of I-95 Interchange in New London





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# A View of New London's Issues

## Norman Garrick's (Transportation Engineer) Presentation

### 1. New London a College Town that doesn't act like a College Town

- The major separation between campus and Downtown is the highways interchange
- No connection Present. " You can see it and it seems to be there, but there is no connection" Image 1 (View from Conn. College).
- Examples of places who made good decisions : Zurich , Switzerland; Copenhagen; Davis , California. Each city accommodated to what is best for support of life, street cars or bike lanes.

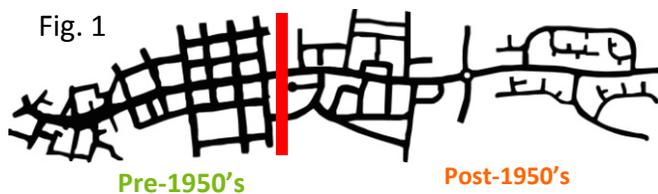
### 2. The real problem in New London = Ramp Pattern

- Lewis Mumford said fundamentally transportation is about access not mobility
- Cities before 1950's had better connectivity and after 1950's some cities have been disconnected, just like New London. The street grid was also disturbed. (Fig. 1).

### 3. "How we build a community has a huge impact on how people behave"- NG

- The street grid provides better connectivity and the chances of fatalities are lower.
- Example Davis, CA 14%of people ride bikes to work, and they have one of the lowest fatality rates.
- New London must understand city's potential and then take advantage of those opportunities, to weave the city back together. In addition encouraging rail service for better connectivity.

Fig. 1



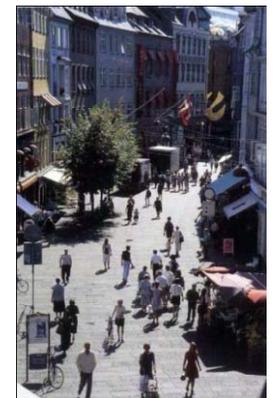
Adapted from Stephen Marshall



Image 1



Zurich



Copenhagen

# Day 2

Charrette Team Presenting to Public and Obtaining Feedback

# A View of New London's Issues

## Catherine Johnson (Architect +Planner) Presentation

### 1. A town that doesn't feel like a college town.

- Streets are unpleasant and uninviting making distances feel greater than they are.
- The distance from Conn. College to downtown is 1 ¼ mile, but the perception of distance is much more further away.
- Highway interchange and its ramps are not at an intimate scale, not a human scale.
- Currently is not safe to walk or bike to downtown, the current streetscape is not appropriate for those activities.
- There is no building to street relation. Making it unsafe.

### 2. A lot of land is taken up with the ramps and the high-speed interchange, all of which is non-taxable.

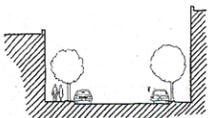
- It interrupted a small city continuity.
- It offers no profit for the town.
- It reduces the social and commercial potential of its downtown. The way places are design affects neighborhoods.

### 3. Street network interrupted and neighborhoods erased as a result of the interchange construction.

- Neighborhoods are disconnected.

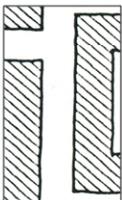
#### THE STREET

##### Traditional Street



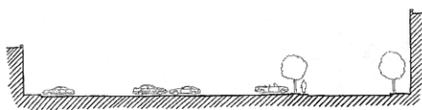
**DEFINING THE STREET**  
Buildings close to the sidewalk help define the street. The street feels intimate, like an outdoor room.

Building close to street. Few gaps between buildings



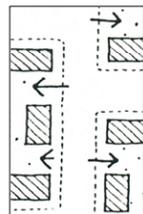
Pedestrians know sidewalk is their domain.

##### Suburban Sprawl



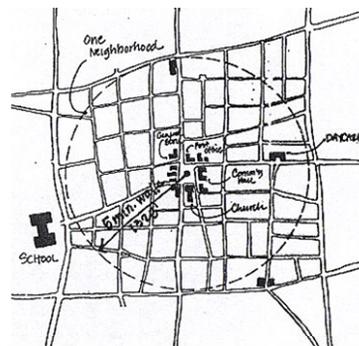
**NO DEFINITION OF THE STREET**  
Parking between building and sidewalk pushes building far back from street.

Building far from street. Big gaps between buildings



No safe zone. The pedestrian feels out of place and vulnerable.

#### Neighborhood

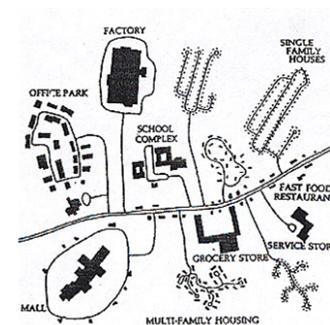


##### INTEGRATED USES

Live, work, shop, play in the same place  
Each has a living, independent identity

Size: 5-minute walk from center to edge

#### Zones (Sprawl)



##### USES SEPARATED FROM ONE ANOTHER

Isolated pods  
Every strip looks like any other strip

Size: no limit (tank of gas)

#### Streets erased



## Day 2

Charrette Team Presenting  
to Public and Obtaining  
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# A View of New London's Issues

## Lucy Gibson's (Transportation Engineer) Presentation

### 1. Functional classification system

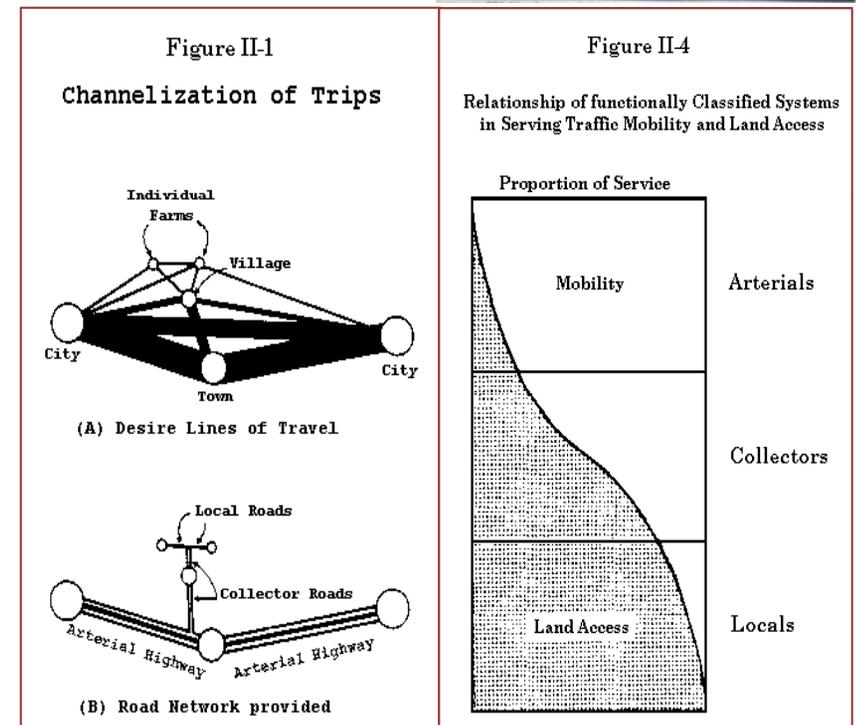
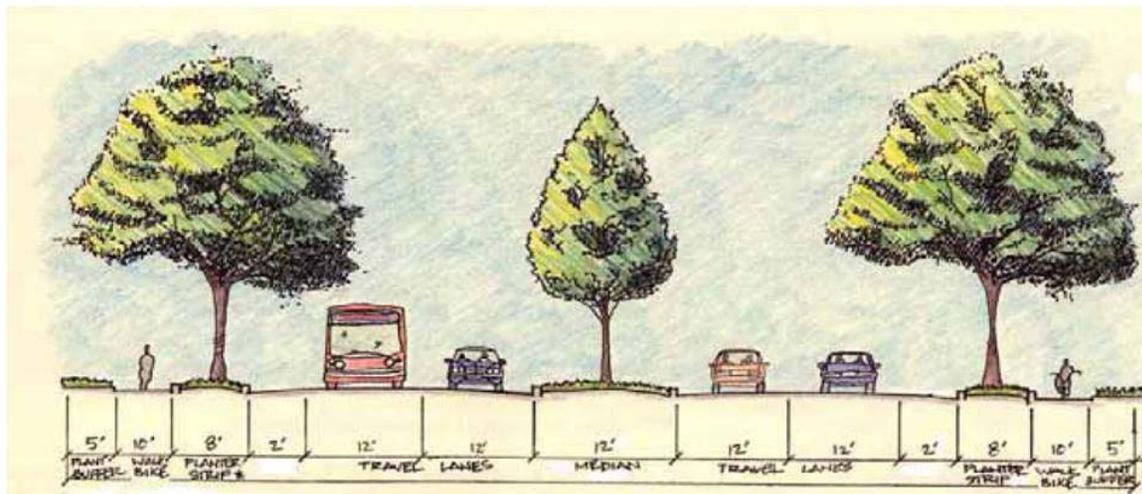
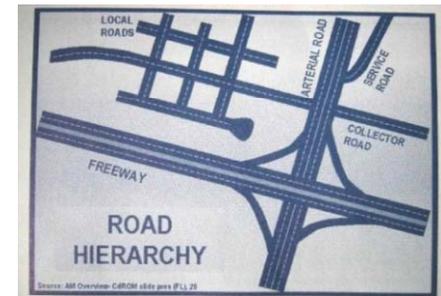
- Highways has too many high speed interchanges added. Lack of hierarchy in highways and roads.
- High speed does not equal high volume.

### 2. Funneling effect: arterial all about mobility (bad)

- Arterial streets are faster, and they are supposed to be for slower speeds
- The policy and guidelines by ITE for arterial streets change and is now to carry slower speeds

### 3. No revenue of land occupied by highways and interchanges

- Once you lower the speed you have much more design flexibility
- State selling land pays for changes on transportation systems
- Other options for highways converting them into parkways.
- Points to Consider: speed vs. access, economic value, and transportation choices.



## Day 2

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# A View of New London's Issues

Peter Miniutti (Landscape Architect - CRDC) Presentation

### 1. Lack of connectivity and circuitry for all living things

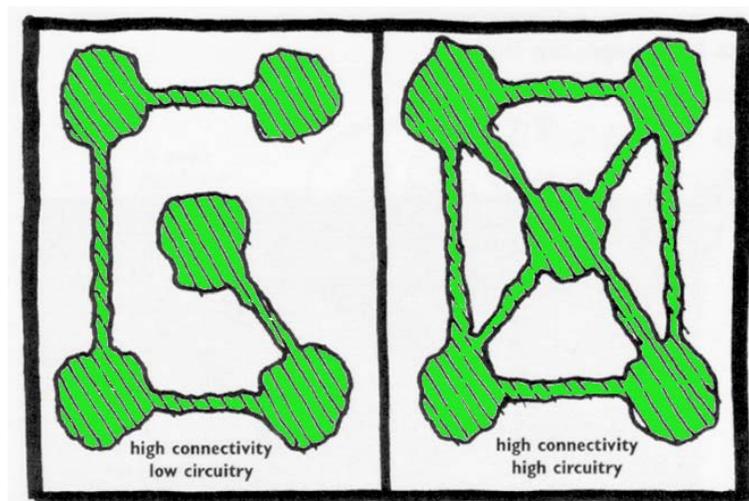
- High level of connectivity among roads. "By taking care of high speed auto, we did not take care of the pedestrian or the ecology" PM
- Ecological patterns are fragmented
- Ecology –thrives- upon connectivity and circuitry\

### 2. Lost of important resources

- The complicated highway system took over the rivers, wetlands, and forested farmlands that were present before.
- Approximately 160 acres are State highway ownership. That provide no revenue to the town.

### 3. Re-establish connections among all living things

- The higher degree of connectivity and circuitry the healthier the ecosystem.
- Example of connectivity and circuitry is the Emerald Necklace by Olmsted.



Patterns and Ecological Health



Traditional building forms and settlement patterns are the products of dialogues among natural and cultural processes.

-A. W. Spirn, *New Urbanism and the Environment*-

## Day 2

Charrette Team Presenting  
to Public and Obtaining  
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New London Public Comments  
June 24, 2010

### Dan Friedman

- Interconnectivity with floral, fauna and people
- Like seeing Old Mill as educational value
- Look at New London as whole piece, connected:
  - Connecting Connecticut College
  - Downtown
  - Hodges Square
  - Winthrop Cove as Estuary?
  - Park-like walk, bike route along water
- Materials for sound dampening
- Resented: Comment about Old Mill not existing
- Expansion joint on highway is making noise

### Bud McCallister

- Bioneers Discussion
- Winthrop Cove regeneration
  - Music to dampen noise from bridge
- Not mentioned: NL port was sole hub for CCC in area
- Cleanups

### Clark Vanderlyke

- NL native
- William St and 32 was beautiful
  - Killing zone for wildlife from arboretum
- Shocking what was lost
- Parade: mistake to have reworked it (have to go down and around, back up, etc)
- Need a reason to go downtown (students), other than walking
- Main Street was wonderful: Eugene O'Neil Dr

### Anne Devlin

- Studies Environmental
- Students interact via social services, not commercial
- See potential in change of environment
- Hodges Sq as opportunity
- More on built environment
- Foreshortened perspective to get to downtown
- Good presentation, though too much emphasis on Hodges Sq like a midpoint to walk downtown.
  - Catherine's reply to Anne – kink in road makes it memorable

# A View of New London's Issues

## Publics Comments and Questions

### Sandy

- Come to believe that good use of roads is building blocks
- Intrigued by suggestion to restructure highways
  - Wonderful to see it is possible
  - Long term is fine, as long as we have an accepted plan
- Suggest restructuring changes that are possible
- Must have something to present to city as whole
- Many concepts presented
- Accepted length of projects and would like to see specific solutions and possibilities that can be done

### Mark Roberts

- Growth of big box retail is declining
  - Force in favor of our project
- Major forces: Shopping, retail, malls
  - Moving retail areas into downtown
- Example of cities that have reworked the city after highway:
  - Dr. Garrick – Sol-S Korea
  - Freeway Park, Seattle
  - Lucy – Syracuse
    - I-89 challenge = links to case studies
  - Dr. Garrick – Raised highway allows for connections
  - Mark Roberts – Could land use under highway create/enhance connections?
  - Dr. Garrick – Potential connections along River

### Francis

- Financing and maintenance of Road Systems
- Something has to give – lower inspection cost
- Priority of funding is against us
  - 4-5 years of unfunded projects
- Focus on high value investments
- What can we let fall apart?
- Rebuild to limit maintenance costs
  - If you don't have a bridge, costs go way down

### Kenrick

- Planning takes long enough that it would cause issues with continuity; will we be ready for next era?
- 2<sup>nd</sup> bridge: Northbound I-95, original Southbound
- Scale: height and speed
  - Best use of land, health issues
- McCallister – jobs may not require two bridges (existing) in 25 years
  - In past, necessary to have two bridges for Pfizer and GM

## Day 2

Charrette Team Presenting  
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# A View of New London's Issues

Publics Comments and Questions -Continued -

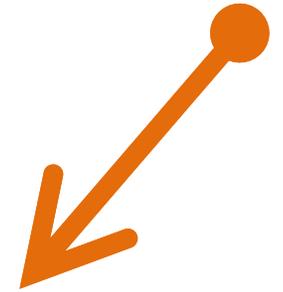
Brian Kent – LA

- Vision plan = ill conceived – vista walkway
- Establish big idea to fire up imagination – get things moving
- Look at concurrent studies
  - Transportation study – adopted ideas and others not adopted
- Improving the environment for bikes in NL
  - Connecticut College doesn't want to encourage students to bike to downtown
  - Improvement on 32 safety would encourage biking
- How our project was conceived, and how does it finish?

Mary Olsen – city counselor

- Pedestrians, bikes, buses, trolley, funding – Who is going to pay for all of this?
- Short-term planning and long-term planning
- Integrate students into this project
- Studies that are overlapping
- July Ferry between here and New York
- Downtown is very active
- Community doesn't feel welcome on campuses
- NL has a lot of historical value
  - Dr. Garrick – not about money, about rethinking the policy to design, reconstruct – it's a mindset
- Redevelopment commission
  - Overlapping studies – Intermodal – contradicts new parade
  - High-speed ferry
- Mark Roberts – Kayak clean up

Tax incentive to maintain historic building



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# Potential Solutions

### 1. There is no need for all the highway structures currently in place

- Less confusion among people driving in your town.
- Help remediate some of the damage done by creating more efficient connections. Bring new London's character alive. Making it feel like a college town.

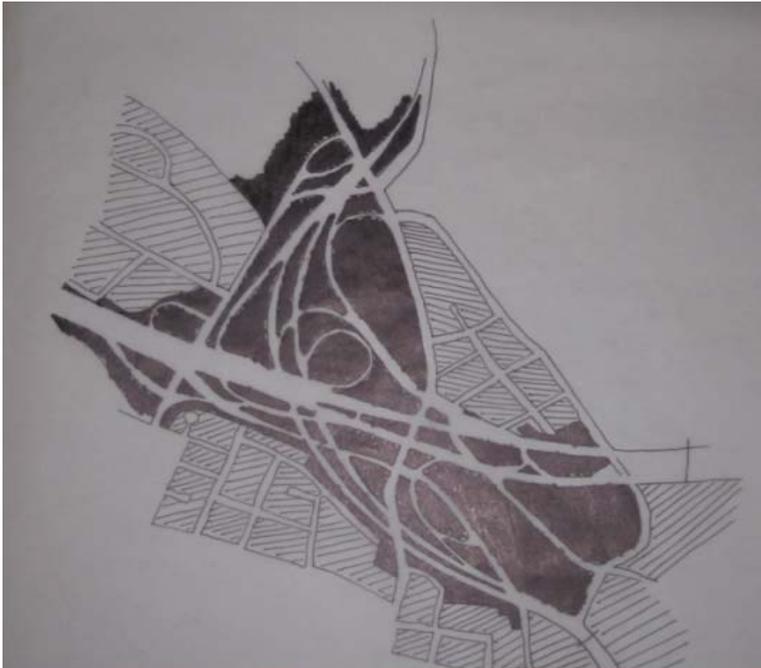
### 2. New Transportation policy of this administration is excellent

- They are looking in new directions to help weave cities back
- Transportation is about access. Simplifying the pattern system will provide easy access and way-finding will be easier.

### 3. Look at places that made good decisions and that are at forefront

- Example Cambridge which made their decisions in regard to the highway system 40 years ago.
- Making good decisions in New London will better people's behavior. Taking care of their city.
- New London has the potential to become a lead example for other cities where highway systems has displaced neighborhoods and all living systems.

Existing Highway System



Proposed Highway System



## Day 3

Charrette Team Sharing  
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# Potential Solutions

### 4. Remove interchange, use Briggs St. and 2 other exits to the west in place of high speed interchange.

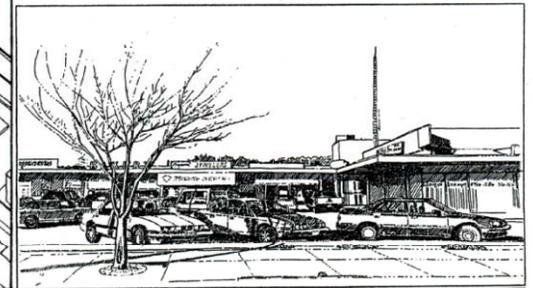
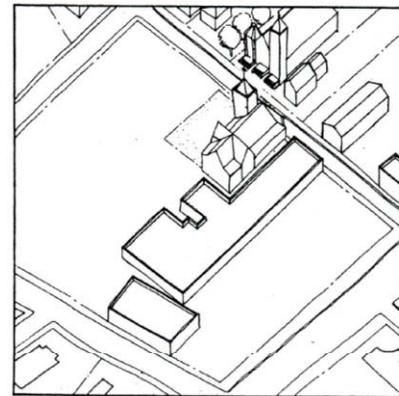
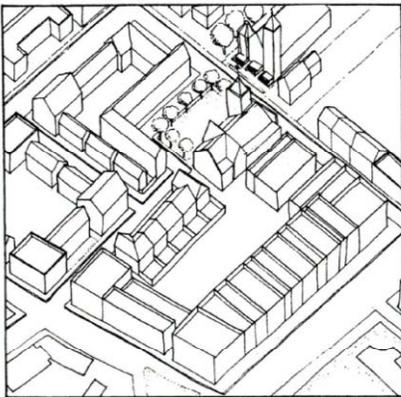
- Reduces confusion for drivers.
- Allows for opportunities to reconstruct the urban fabric
- Cohesion and connectivity of neighborhoods
- “Build in neighborhood increments” CJ

### 5. Re-establish Hodges Square as a major neighborhood center.

- Rebuild central commercial properties with 3-4 story buildings. Ground floor retail, office/apartments above.
- Relocation of Gas stations to Biggs St.
- Fill in empty lots with new bldg's close to sidewalk.
- Creating alley systems behind buildings to access parking, accessed from side of streets.
- Guarantee a high quality pedestrian environment protected from traffic, with rarely interrupted sidewalk (i.e. no driveways), parallel parked cars and street trees between sidewalk and roadbed.

### 6. Create a more direct link between Hodges Square and Downtown to attract more people from one place to the other.

- Build new segment of road from Hodges Square to downtown. To guide and re-orient people.
- New street will need buildings next to it, just like in downtown. In order to keep street interesting, welcoming, and safe.



How far back a building sits from the street determines the character of the street, ultimately it could determine its real estate value



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Potential Solutions w/  
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# Potential Solutions

### 1. Streetscape more pleasant and safe for pedestrians and cyclists.

- More eyes on the street = safer street
- Slower speeds = safer street

### 2. Re-thinking how we redesign systems

- Space for new development = revenue for the town.
- Bigger economic assets for the city.

### 3. Simplifying the highway system creates:

- Healthier grid with high connectivity. Re-establish the grid network, to help weave city back together.

Before



After



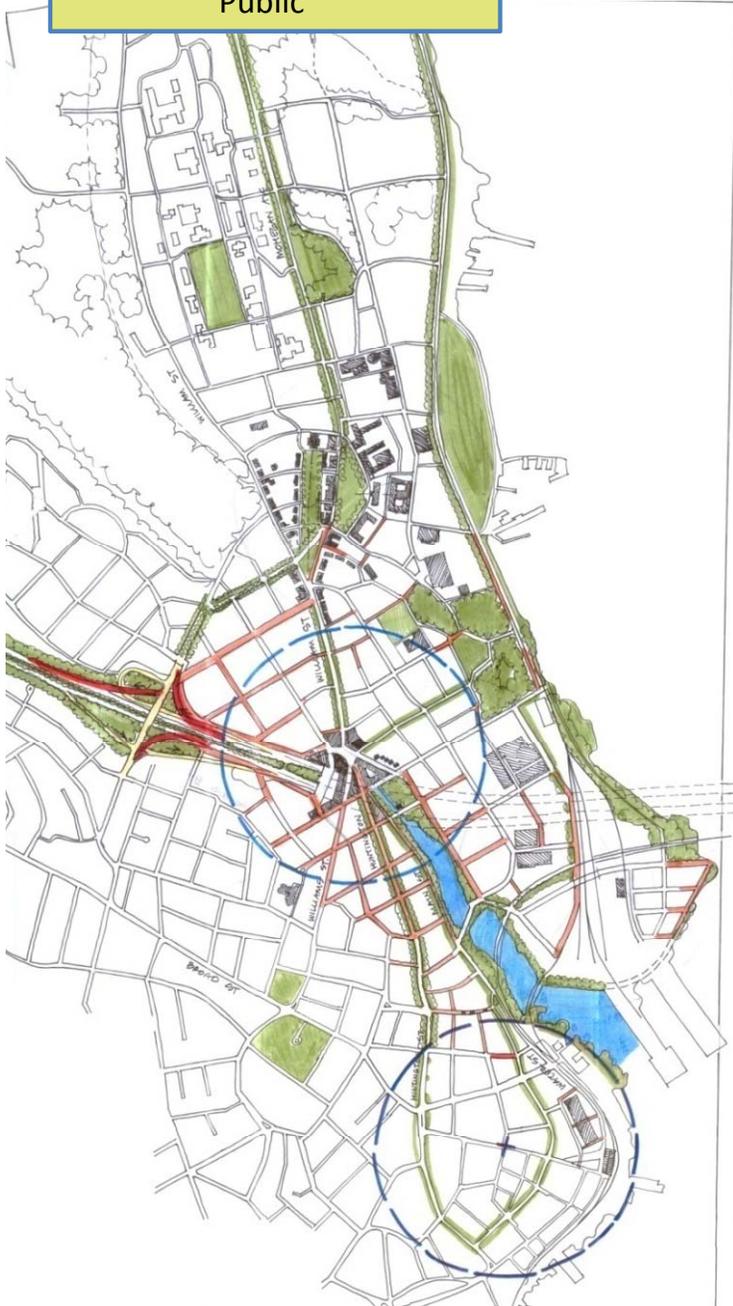
Fredrick Law Olmstead Parkway New Urban Interchange in Delaware Park, Buffalo New York



Trenton Route 29 Street Network in Trenton, New Jersey

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# Potential Solutions

Plan of possible solutions

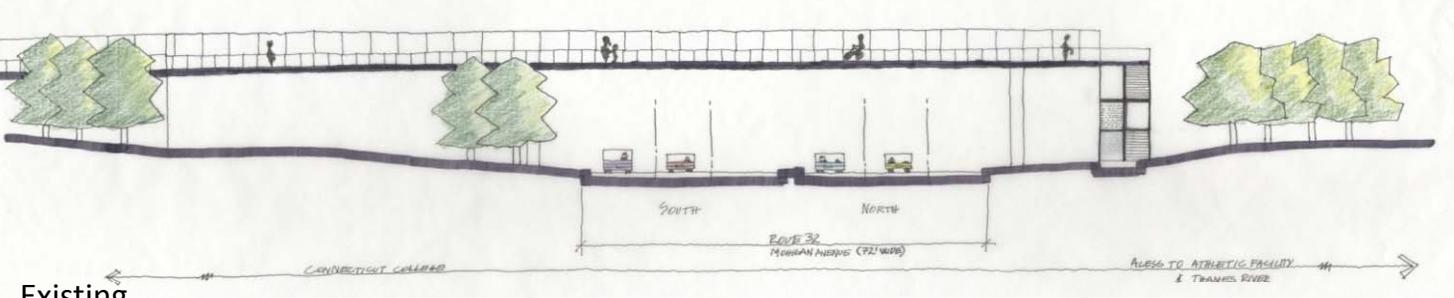


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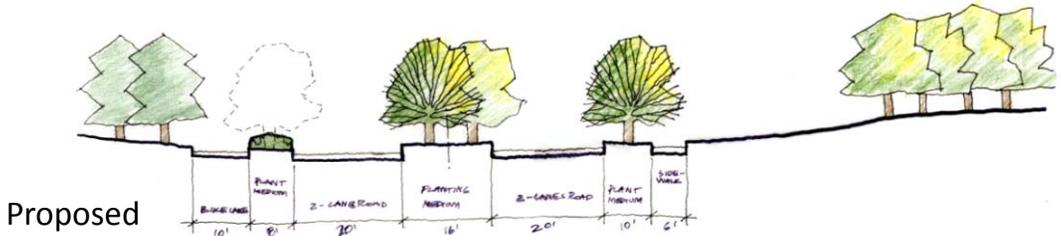
# Potential Solutions

## Section of possible solutions

Section thru Rt. 32. Existing infrastructure is wide enough to accommodate a multimodal streetscape



Existing

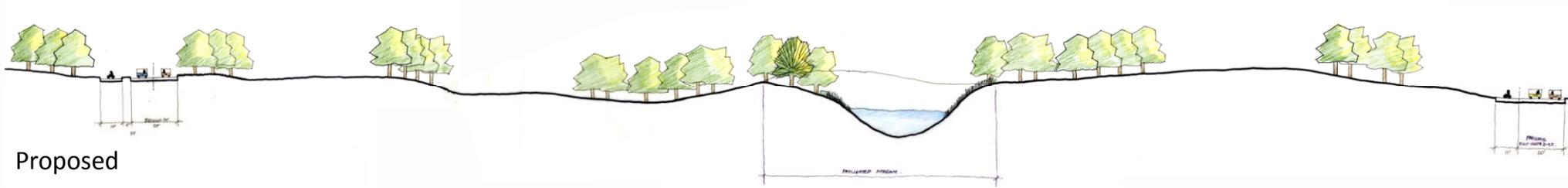


Proposed

Section thru Rt. 32 north and south bound. Proposed section shows day-lighting the stream, present before highway system



Existing



Proposed

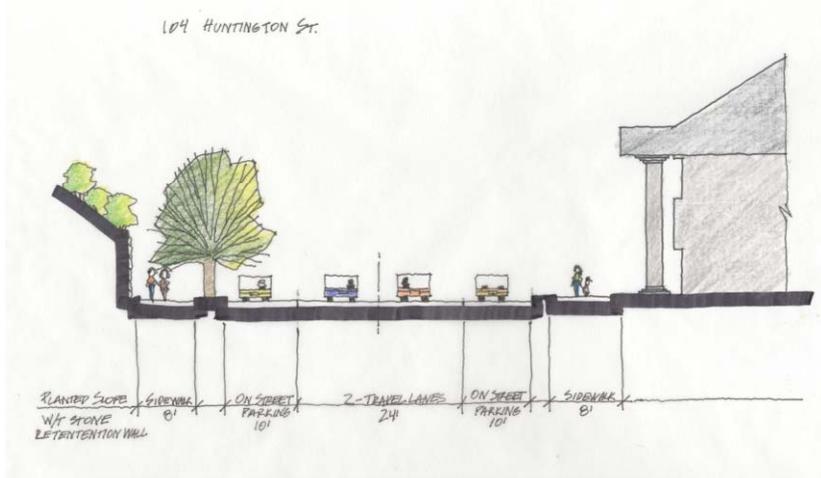
# Day 3

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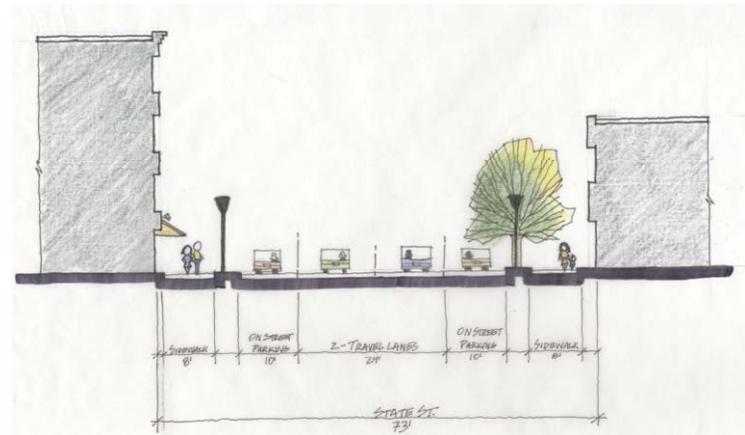
# Potential Solutions Sections of Downtown

Sections of downtown conserve a good building to street relationship and should be emulated.

### Section thru 104 Huntington St



### Section thru State St



### Section at corner of State St and Huntington St



### Section thru Governor Winthrop Blvd.



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Images from Google Images

# Case Studies

## Granville Island, Vancouver

### From Industry to Artistry

Talk about a transformation. In the late 1970s, Granville Island began to change. From a declining 37-acre industrial wasteland in Vancouver's False Creek, to one of the most successful urban redevelopments in North America.

### The Early 20th Century: Industrial Boom

In 1909, a second Granville Street Bridge was built to span the Creek. This one made of steel. And in 1915, the Vancouver Harbour Commission approved a 35-acre reclamation project for the Island. Almost a million cubic yards of fill was dredged from False Creek to create the spreading pancake under the Granville Street Bridge. It was initially christened "Industrial Island," but the name that eventually stuck came down from the bridge overhead. Total cost for the reclamation in 1915: \$342,000. The first tenants of Granville Island served the forest, mining, construction and shipping sectors.

### The Island Today: Reclamation Reformation

Walking Granville Island today, you can see the traces of its origins. Around some of the trees you can see the sandy soil deposited for millennia by the streams draining into False Creek. Railway track can still be seen amongst the cobblestone streets and the industrial heritage of the Island is stamped on every building.

In the narrow lots and buildings, you can see the logic of early Twentieth-Century industrial land use; the 50-60-foot-wide lots allowed the tenants frontage to the water at one end and to the Island's rail network, running roughly along the course of today's streets, at the other.

Granville Island now sustains a thriving, healthy ecosystem. Nature has regenerated itself, with the help of the Government of Canada, the City of Vancouver and private developers. Thanks to the efforts of several visionary people, the dream for a unique urban oasis is a thriving reality, and will continue evolving and shaping itself into the future.

From Website: <http://www.granvilleisland.com/discover-island/island-heritage>

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If Granville Island is the king of Vancouver destinations, then the Public Market is the jewel in the Island's crown. A fascinating assortment of colourful stalls, showcasing unique homemade products and the very finest in gastronomic delights.

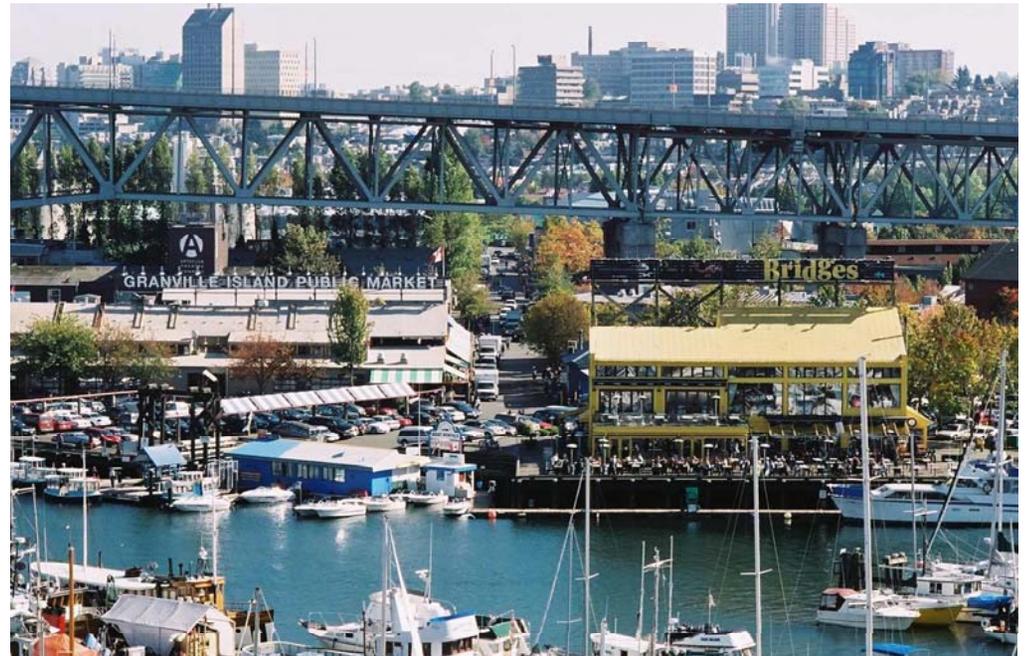
From: <http://www.granvilleisland.com/public-market>



Images from Google Images

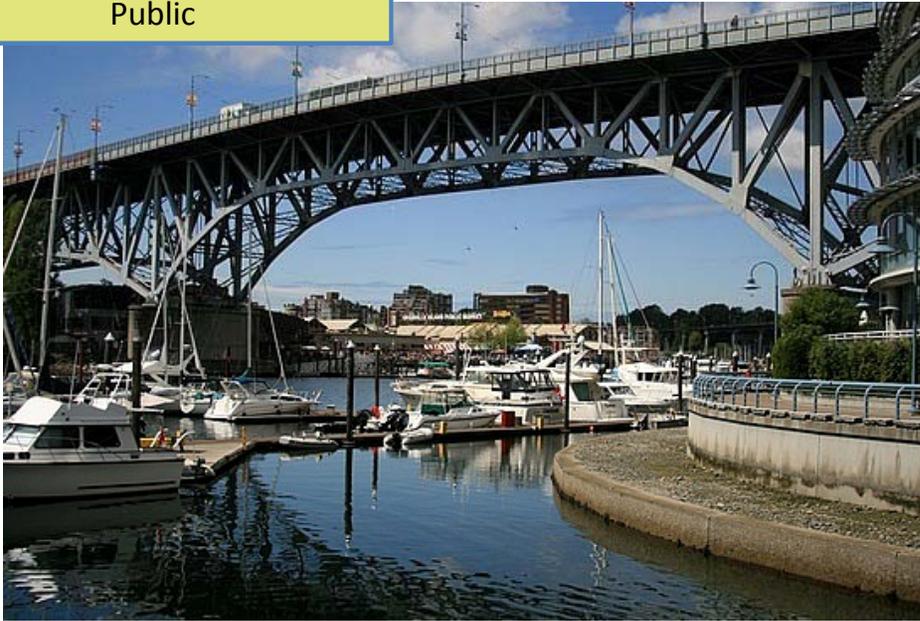
## Granville Island, Vancouver

Granville Island was once an industrial manufacturing area, but is now a major tourist destination, providing amenities such as a large marina, public market, a hotel, a great arts community and wonderful shopping areas. There are only two industrial places that have a long history in the Island and still exist, a cement plant and a machine shop.



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## Granville Island, Vancouver



The two bridges are, from top, the Burrard Street Bridge and The Granville Street Bridge. They link Vancouver's dense downtown with the more residential West Side. Underneath the Granville Street Bridge is one of the coolest neighborhoods anywhere. Granville Island. It is truly wonderful to visit and wander and shop. The market is world class.



Images from Google Images and <http://www.seegranvilleisland.com/>

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### Steps to creating a Great Waterfront by : Project for Public Spaces

From : <http://www.pps.org/stepstocreatingagreatwaterfront/>

1. Look First at the Public Space
2. Make Sure Public Goals are the Primary Objective
3. Build on Existing Assets & Context
4. Create a Shared Community Vision
5. Create Multiple-use Destinations by Tapping the Power of 10
6. Connect Destinations Along the Waterfront
7. Maximize Opportunities for Public Access
8. Balance Environmental Benefits with Human Needs
9. Start Small to Make Big Changes



## Case Studies

### Project for Public Spaces

#### About Project for Public Spaces (PPS)

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a nonprofit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. Our pioneering Placemaking approach helps citizens transform their public spaces into vital places that highlight local assets, spur rejuvenation and serve common needs.

From: <http://www.pps.org/about/approach/>

For more Information please visit: <http://www.pps.org/>



## Day 3

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## Summary

### Results of the charrette process

The work compiled through this charrette demonstrates that the rift presently marring the City of New London can be overcome, and could even become the source of great achievements.

At the core of any solution must be the reworking of the high speed interchange which presently confounds residents and visitors alike, fragments land, and inhibits movement from one side to the other. Understanding why the system developed as it did, and examining traffic flow and counts, the team's transportation experts are confident that the current system is unnecessary and causing more problems than it resolves.

Closely related to the untangling of the interchange is the redevelopment of the urban fabric which was eliminated with the construction of the interstate and interchange. The existing infrastructure can readily accommodate retrofits as green/complete streets; streets which function as open space through which multiple modes of transportation move in a comfortable environment. A large aspect of repairing the urban fabric entails infill and adaptive reuse of buildings to enhance the street edge and invigorate the connecting corridors.

There is also great potential to reestablish natural connections through steps such as day-lighting Briggs Brook, removing the fencing which isolates wetlands, and identifying key parcels to create an open space system that improves environmental health and increases the health/quality of life for residents.

Case studies introduced through this charrette are but a few examples of the possibilities that other locals have implemented to take back control of their public spaces. By observing the methods utilized by other cities, New Londoners can begin to see what could work in their own situation. With ambition, ingenuity and patience, the existing scar that is the interstate and interchange can be transformed into a new and exciting borough which reconnects the pieces of the city once more.

## Day 3

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## Summary

### Next Steps

The Re-Connect New London team encourages the City of New London to approach this situation as an opportunity to showcase its artistic nature and exemplify the value it places in its citizens and spaces. There are three avenues which need specific attention, remembering that while unique, they are closely related to one another.

- 1.) The city can begin to re-organize the interchange and local streets into a multi-modal transportation network which encourages public transit, walking and biking alongside the ever present cars and trucks.
- 2.) The vacant lands among the interstate and interchange could be redeveloped into creative mixed use developments which are attractive to visitors, residents, and potential residents.
- 3.) The entire area would benefit from a serious look at the open space system and how it could be refurbished as an amenity which helps to link the communities and improve quality of life. Specifically, Riverside Park, Winthrop Cove Park and the Old Mill are unique amenities which are sadly underutilized.

