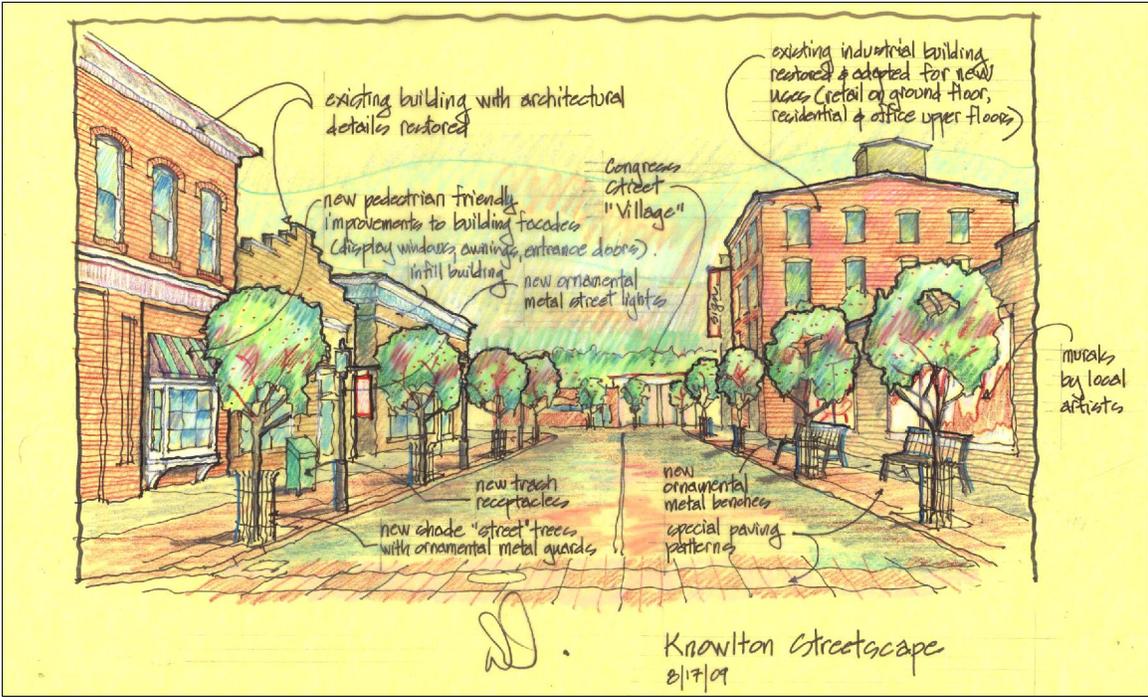


# East Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Strategic Plan



January 2010  
Prepared for the East Side Neighborhood  
Revitalization Zone Planning Committee

Prepared by  
*Killeen Partners LLC - PRE/view Landscape Architects - David Barbour Architects*

## East Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Strategic Plan

The Honorable Bill Finch, Mayor, City of Bridgeport

### City Council 2010

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- James Brown
- Ralph Buccitti
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- Joseph Kolar
- Angie Staltaro
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- Carmen Ayala
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The East Side NRZ Planning Committee adopted the NRZ Strategic Plan on January 13, 2010.

The City Council endorsed the Plan on May 3, 2010.



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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Direct technical assistance was provided throughout this planning process by Samuel Shaw, Project Planner with the Bridgeport City Planning Department. This Plan would not have been possible without his data collection support, mapping assistance, and guidance along the way. Angie Staltaro, of the City's Office of Neighborhood Revitalization (ONR), provided ongoing support of the NRZ Planning Committee and the East Side Neighborhood through her tireless community organizing efforts. We are also grateful to other City staff who helped shape and guide this Plan including Don Eversley, Director of Economic and Community Development; Tom Coble, Director of the Office of Neighborhood Revitalization; Bill Coleman, Office of Economic Development; and Lynn Haig, Senior Planner, City Planning Department.

## **DEDICATION**

This Plan is dedicated to the memory of Anthony Ball, East Side NRZ Facilitator, who initiated this NRZ process and gave vision and hope to the neighborhood. Those who were involved in this process were saddened by his premature death. As we completed the work he started, we all found that his spirit guided us through this project.

# EAST SIDE NRZ STRATEGIC PLAN

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## **I. Purpose and Background of NRZ Strategy**

City of Bridgeport officials and East Side neighborhood stakeholders joined together in 2005 to begin the development of this NRZ Strategic Plan as a mechanism for revitalizing the East Side, a neighborhood that possesses significant opportunities but also faces significant challenges. Neighborhood and City leaders agreed that the Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Process, established by the CT General Assembly in 1995, offered the appropriate vehicle through which a partnership could be forged to stabilize and improve the neighborhood. Through this process, various stakeholders (residents, businesses, non-profit organizations, community groups and City officials) were able to gain a voice in determining priorities and developing a plan of action for revitalizing the neighborhood.

The NRZ planning process officially begins with the adoption of a municipal resolution establishing the NRZ and creating the boundaries for that NRZ. The City of Bridgeport adopted a resolution endorsing the concept of Neighborhood Revitalization Zones on May 16, 1996. The City Council then adopted a resolution establishing the East Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone and its boundaries on February 5, 2007. (Resolution #278-05. See appendix).

While the State legislation created a mechanism for City and neighborhood leaders to work together creatively, there was no specific provision for funding of projects or programs identified within the NRZ Strategic Plan. The East Side neighborhood has received a variety of federal, state and local funds for revitalization projects in the past and is expected to continue receiving such funding in the future, as available. The NRZ Strategic Plan should not be viewed as one that abandons past revitalization efforts to start anew. Instead, it should be viewed as a “road map” to build on these efforts and to help guide limited resources towards the successful revitalization of the East Side neighborhood.

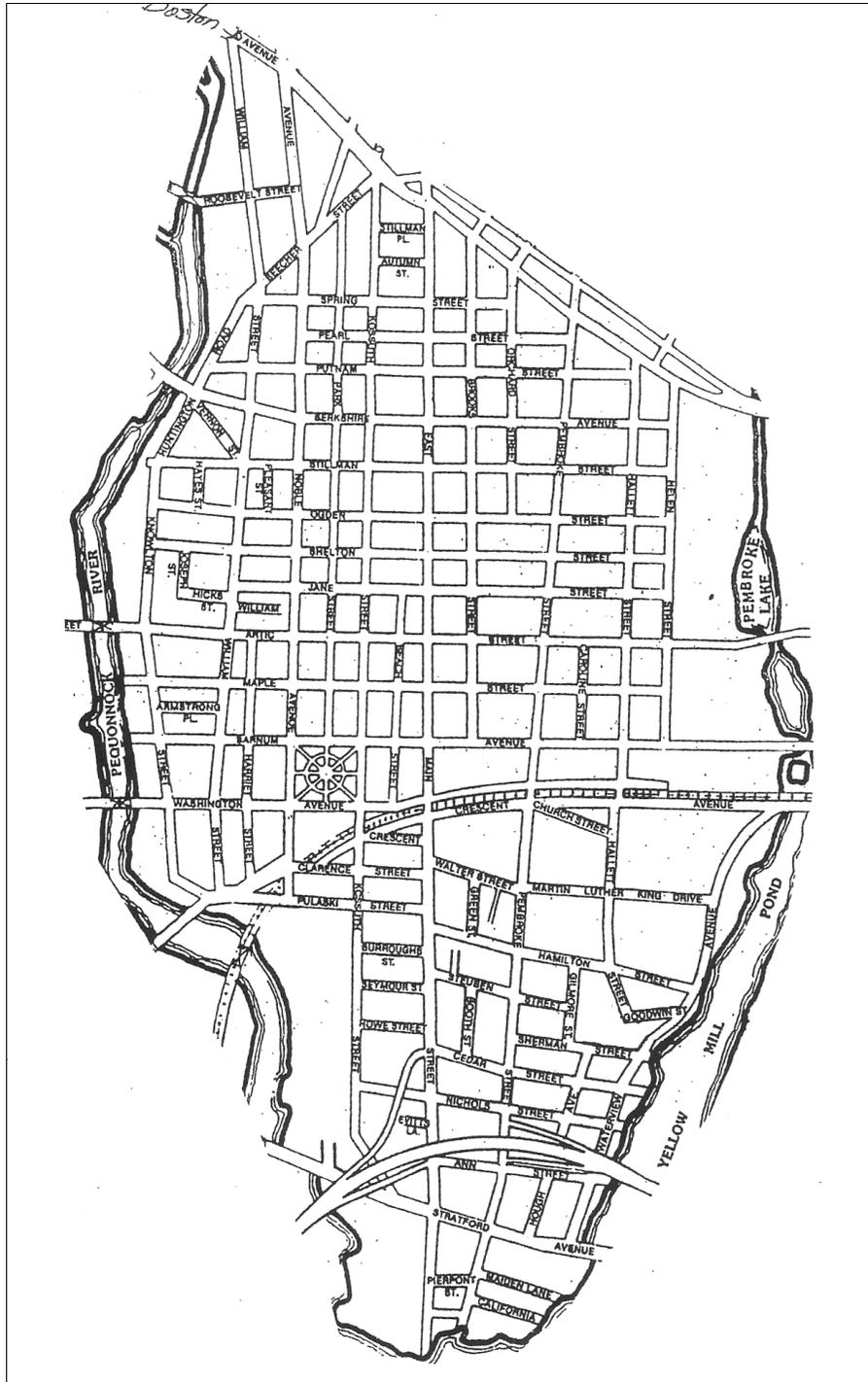
In addition to creating a strategic approach to revitalizing the neighborhood, there are specific tools the legislation established to assist in the revitalization process. Upon adoption of the NRZ strategic plan:

- the NRZ may request a waiver of state and local environmental, health and safety codes and other regulations that have been identified in the strategic plan as barriers to neighborhood development;
- the NRZ may recommend that the Mayor enter into tax agreements and allocate municipal funds to achieve the purposes of the plan;
- the NRZ may petition the judicial branch (local superior court) for appointment of a receiver of the rents for any deteriorated property;
- municipal corporations may be authorized, in accordance with established procedures, to take abandoned or blighted property in an NRZ, through eminent domain.

### **a. NRZ Neighborhood Boundaries**

The detailed boundaries for the East Side NRZ are contained in the City’s February 2007 resolution, a copy of which is contained in the appendix to this

Plan. The boundary map is provided below. In summary, the boundaries include:  
Blocks 800 to 864; 1600-1665, 1668, 1700-1777, 1802, 1804, and 1808.  
Census Tracts : 0735, 0736, 0738, 0739, and 0740



**EAST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION ZONE BOUNDARIES**

## b. East Side NRZ Strategic Planning Process

The first community meeting involving East Side stakeholders was convened on Tuesday, September 27, 2005 at Luis Munoz Marin School. Approximately 70 people attended the session, which was facilitated by NRZ Consultant Tony Ball. To formalize the partnership of local stakeholders, the East Side NRZ process has been overseen by the NRZ Planning Committee, which had broad representation of each stakeholder group.

The East Side NRZ met on a monthly basis throughout the planning process. The meeting format was designed to allow all stakeholders the opportunity to participate and to identify issues they felt needed to be addressed in the revitalization strategy. Decision-making was achieved predominantly through consensus-shaping, and meetings were kept relatively informal to encourage participation even by those who were able to attend only a few of the meetings. The East Side NRZ Bylaws are included as an Appendix to this Plan. These Bylaws were adopted by the East Side NRZ Planning Committee on February 8, 2006.

### **SUBCOMMITTEES**

The NRZ formed the following subcommittees to carry out its mission:

Housing Subcommittee (affordability, new construction; anti-blight, predatory lending), Chairman: Keith Cryan

Infrastructure Subcommittee (sidewalks, streets, traffic patterns, gateways, streetscapes, parking, bridges (Congress Street Bridge) and utilities - Records of meetings unavailable.

Economic Development Subcommittee (small businesses, job creation and retention, Steel Point), Chairman: Thomas Corso

Services Subcommittee (Public safety, education, public transportation, child care, health), Chairman: Ludwig Spinelli

Zoning Subcommittee - Records of meetings unavailable.

These subcommittees met regularly from 2005 to 2006. While there were no final reports issued by the subcommittees, minutes from the subcommittee meetings provided guidance and direction to the NRZ strategy throughout the planning process. Much of the work of subcommittee members was crucial to the design of the Community Charrette and the Neighborhood Workshop, as well as the Final Plan. Subcommittee recommendations have been referenced in various parts of this Plan, where appropriate.

## **CHARRETTE**

One of the most significant early initiatives of the East Side NRZ was to hold a Community Design Charrette, a community meeting focused on addressing design issues in the neighborhood revitalization process. Eight design professionals (architects, landscape architects and engineers) provided technical assistance to small group sessions that were focused on design themes for three distinct sections of the neighborhood (waterfront/Knowlton Street, Upper East Side industrial area, and the Lower East Side) . The charrette was conducted as a weekend-long event from May 5 to May 7, 2006 at two local East Side schools (Garfield School and the Luis Munoz Marin School).

The neighborhood charrette was an intensive, open and inclusive process in which all community stakeholders came together to help visualize change for the neighborhood. Nearly 200 residents, businesspeople, City officials and institutional representatives provided input on the designs and plans they considered appropriate for the East Side. The event was supported by the City of Bridgeport and numerous businesses interested in the revitalization of the East Side. Several important areas of concentration began to emerge from that charrette:

1. Cleaning up and beautifying the East Side
2. Providing increased public access to and better use of the waterfront
3. Making Streetscape and Gateway Improvements
4. Improving industrial areas and creating residential buffers
5. Promoting the establishment of a new East Bridgeport Train Station

## **CONSULTANT SUPPORT**

Over the subsequent years, the NRZ Planning Committee and its subcommittees continued to meet to address the various issues that had been identified through the charrette process. Unfortunately, the momentum of the NRZ process suffered when NRZ consultant Tony Ball passed away prematurely in 2007.

In 2008, the City secured funding to hire a team of consultants to assist the Planning Committee in completing the East Side NRZ Strategic Plan (Killeen Partners LLC; PRE/View Landscape Architects; and David Barbour Architects). The consultant team familiarized themselves with the work that had been completed, conducted additional assessments, and began formulating the strategy that could bring the various pieces of the neighborhood plan together.

**NEIGHBORHOOD WORKSHOP**

To reenergize the NRZ process, a Neighborhood Workshop was conducted at the Achievement First Bridgeport Academy on March 14, 2009. The session enabled neighborhood stakeholders to review the elements of the NRZ strategy and to help rank the relative importance of the various plans under consideration. With approximately sixty-five (65) people in attendance, there was clear indication of support for the continued development of an NRZ Strategic Plan for the East Side. Participants vocalized their priorities for the NRZ Strategy. The Consultant team met with the NRZ Planning Committee in May 2009 to validate the reported results of the workshop and to receive further guidance on the priorities for the Plan.



*Residents, businesspeople, non-profit organization representatives and other neighborhood leaders reviewed the various projects under consideration and ranked them in order of importance. Reports were given from each of the discussion groups.*

## **II. COMMUNITY PROFILE: Neighborhood Assessment and Profile**

This section assesses the various neighborhood conditions that most directly affect a successful Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Strategic Plan. Included are population and housing profiles, neighborhood assets, and overall condition assessments, as well as an identification of opportunities available to the neighborhood. This section does not attempt to be an exhaustive statistical study of the East Side. Instead, it identifies major neighborhood characteristics and trends that must be recognized in the revitalization plan.

### **1. Demographic and Economic Trends**

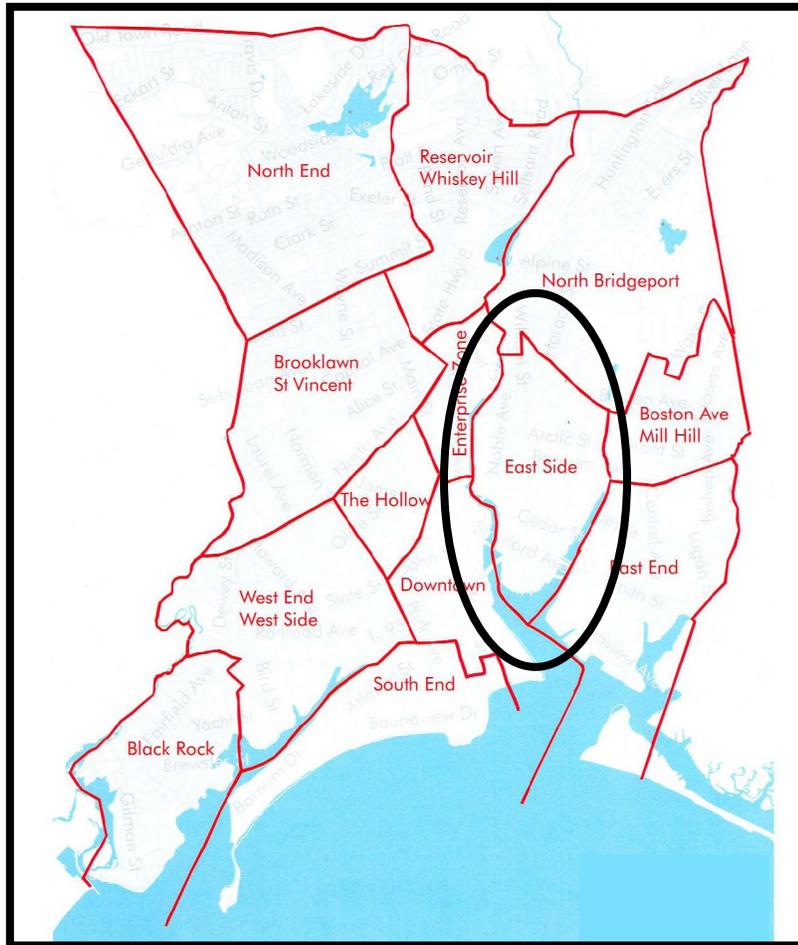
#### **a. Neighborhood Boundaries, Census Tracts**

The East Side is one of eleven residential neighborhoods in Bridgeport, strategically located adjacent to Downtown and the Enterprise Zone. The East End neighborhood, located to the East, completed an NRZ Planning Process in recent years as well. As noted earlier, the East Side Neighborhood was composed of five Census Tracts in the 2000 U.S. Census: 735, 736, 738, 739, and 740.

Since the next official U.S. Census will not be taken until 2010, after the scheduled completion of this planning process, this study will use readily available public estimates of current population and housing characteristics at the zip code level for comparative purposes. The boundaries of Zip Code 06608 closely resemble the boundaries of the East Side neighborhood (The 2000 population count for the five census tracts was 13,095, while the 2000 population count for zip code 06608 was 13,400). Data reported here are from the 2000 U.S. Census unless otherwise noted. Sources for recent population estimates and projections include The Bridgeport Master Plan of Conservation and Development 2008, "Bridgeport 2020: A Vision for the Future" prepared by BJB Planning, the Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc. (CERC) 2009 and City-Data.com.

The East Side covers a land area of approximately 1.684 square miles. Population Density in the neighborhood is high (urban), though it is slightly lower than for the City as a whole: 7,971 people per square mile in the East Side compared to 8,721 people per square mile for the City of Bridgeport. Existing development patterns show an infrastructure that is designed to support a higher density pattern. The lower density is due to high levels of vacancy that are discussed later.

Politically, the East Side neighborhood is contained within City Council District 137.



Map illustrating Neighborhoods of Bridgeport, Connecticut  
(East Side is highlighted)

Source: City Master Plan, BJJ Planning.

**b. Population Characteristics and Trends**

There were 13,095 people living in the East Side in 2000, a decline of 4,379 persons from the neighborhood’s population in 1990 - a total reduction of 25% in a ten year period! The major cause of decline was associated with the demolition of Father Panik Village and the clearing of the Steel Point Redevelopment Area, both of which were located in the lower East Side (Tract 740).

Recent estimates of population for the East Side (Zip Code 06608) show that the population has stabilized in the last seven years and is starting to grow once again. The next chart shows that the estimated East Side population for 2007 is 13,423, a meaningful increase of 2.5% since the 2000 Census. The City population was estimated to decrease 1.9 % by City-Data.com. The City’s recent Plan of Conservation and Development also showed a similar population decline. Meanwhile, CERC estimates Bridgeport’s population at 144,515, an increase of

3.6%. CERC also projects City growth for the next five years at an annual rate of .4%.

Estimated population  
2007  
East Side, Bridgeport, CT

	<b>East Side</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>Bridgeport</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Total Population 2000	13,095	-25%	139,342	-1.5%
Total Population 2007	13,423	+2.5%	136,695	-1.9%

This increase in total East Side population is no doubt a result of significant efforts to construct new infill housing within the neighborhood and to rehabilitate housing stock that had been previously vacant. A stable population base will be an important factor in the neighborhood’s overall revitalization.

At a statewide level, Connecticut’s population of just over 3.4 million in 2000 was estimated to increase almost 3% for the same period.

The East Side has played an historic role for new immigrants, and that role continues to this day. The East Side population is predominantly characterized as Hispanic or Latino (67% of the population), followed by non-Hispanic Black (24%), White non-Hispanic (6%) and Asian (3%). Within the Latino population, an increasing number of residents are recent arrivals from Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Central and South America, as opposed to Puerto Rico. Approximately 15% of the East Side residents were foreign-born as of 2000.

The population of the East Side is considerably younger, on average, than residents of the City of Bridgeport and the State of Connecticut as a whole. In 2000, the median age for the East Side population was 25, compared to 31.4 for the City as a whole and 37.4 for the State.

Race, Ethnicity  
2000  
East Side, Bridgeport, CT

	East Side	%	Bridgeport	%
White	4,399	33.59	63,018	45.2
Black	3,308	25.26	42,478	30.4
Amer. Indian/Eskimo	21	0.16	59	0.3
Asian	189	0.67	4492	3.2
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0	59	0.1
Other	4,081	30.68	20,519	14.7
Multi-Racial *	1,097	8.4	8,477	6.1
Hispanic **	8,711	66.52	44,568	31.9

*\* Multi-Racial is defined as persons having identified two or more races as a person's racial background in response to the U.S. Census.*

*\*\*Hispanic is defined as being an ancestry or origin rather than a race. Persons who identified themselves as Hispanic also needed to identify a racial background in the U.S. Census.*

**c. Household Characteristics**

As of 2000, there were 4,018 households in the East Side, with an average of 3.26 persons per household, higher than the citywide household average of 2.7 persons. This also represented a slight increase in the East Side average household size of 3.23 persons in 1990.

The largest household type in the East Side is single female-headed household with children (32%), followed by couples with children (20%) and couples without children (14%). For Bridgeport as a whole, single person households were dominant (29%) followed by couples without children (over 18%) and couples with children (under 18%). The largest East Side household type in 1990 was also single female-headed households with children (29%), followed by single persons (21%).

East Side Household Types Census Tracts 735, 736, 738, 739 & 740 Years 1990 - 2000						
	2000	%	Bridgeport	%	1990	%
# Households	4018		50,305		5408	
Ave. Persons per Household	3.26		2.7		3.23	
Household Type:						
Single Persons	783	12	14,568	28.9	1165	21.4
Couple with Children	735	19.8	8,984	17.9	1136	20.1
Couple without Children	497	13.5	9,172	18.2	655	11.9
Single Male with Children	189	0.8	1,482	2.9	345	11
Single Female with Children	1061	31.8	7,346	14.6	1516	29.2
Grandparents with Children	309		1,757		N/A	

**d. Household Income**

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, median family income (MFI) in each East Side Census Tract was substantially lower than in both Bridgeport (\$39,571) and Fairfield County (\$77,690):

Census Tract	735	736	738	739	740
MFI (\$)	26,338	19,464	19,674	24,583	25,625

More than a third (34.1%) of East Side households was below the poverty level, according to the 2000 Census, compared to a 7.9% poverty rate in the state and a 6.9% rate in Fairfield County.

Recent estimates suggest that income levels in the East Side continue to trail significantly behind income levels for the City and for the State as a whole. Estimated median household income in 2007 was \$44,216 for the City of Bridgeport compared to \$65,967 for the State of Connecticut. Median household income in the East Side for the same period was just \$27,586 or 62% of City income levels and 42% of State income levels.

**e. Social Issues**

The Services Subcommittee met on several occasions and identified the following issues for consideration in the NRZ Strategic Plan:

1. Public Safety Issues and Community Policing (Fire and Police) - These discussions focused on the need for block watches and close coordination with the Fire and Police Departments. The Committee specifically raised the concern that the current inoperable condition of the Congress Street Bridge (stuck in an open position) has affected service levels for the East Side. Public safety vehicles must take alternate routes that increase response time considerably. There is also a concern that East Side businesses have been harmed since this direct connection with downtown was severed.
2. After School Activities and Youth Recreational Needs–The Committee believed that the lack of quality youth activities in the neighborhood has increased the likelihood that youngsters would become involved in mischievous or even criminal activity. The Committee supports the creation of after school activities and youth recreation programs to provide an alternative to hanging around on a street corner.
3. Senior Needs and Resources - While the population of the East Side tends to be younger in general, it was noted that elderly residents here were more likely to defer maintenance on their properties due to income limitations. They were also more likely to leave a rental apartment vacant for periods of time in order to avoid costly repairs and the administrative responsibilities of being a landlord.
4. Single Parent Households - The high level of single parent households (predominantly single female with children, 31%) could represent a need for expanded social services, especially when coupled with other poverty indicators.
5. Job readiness - There is a real need to establish programs and to reinforce school curricula to help East Side students prepare themselves sufficiently for careers that will sustain them in future years.

The following statistics demonstrate the degree to which Spanish is spoken as the primary language in the household - 59% speak Spanish, while English is spoken only in 30% of the households.

<b>Table A – Population &amp; Race (continued)</b>						
	<b>2000</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Bridgeport</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Language Spoken in Household:</b>						
English	1197	29.9	28,034	55.7	522	44.1
Spanish	2484	58.9	13,749	27.3	631	53.3
Asian/Pacific Island	46	0.6	1,065	2.1	0	0
Indo-European	274	9.8	6,783	13.5	N/a	

## **2. Physical Development and Existing Conditions**

### **A. Housing Stock and Current Conditions** **(Blighted Buildings/Lots)**

#### Overview

As of 2000, there were a total of 4,577 dwelling units in the East Side neighborhood. The large majority of housing in the neighborhood is multi-family (67%) and located within buildings containing three to six units. Housing density in the East Side, at 2,717 dwelling units per square mile, is high and typical of an urbanized neighborhood in spite of the large sections of vacant land in the neighborhood.

#### Age of Housing Stock

The housing stock on the East Side is considerably older than average. Over 90% of the neighborhood's housing units were built before 1980 and, much of it dates back to the late 1800s. Only 11.4% of existing units were built in the last 20 years. Due to the age of the housing stock, there is a particular concern about the health hazards of lead poisoning since lead was commonly used in paint until 1978. These hazards are particularly acute for children who live in these homes and can become exposed to lead in paint that is chipping or peeling.

#### Building Quality/Condition

To determine overall condition and occupancy level of the East Side, the City hired an independent consultant to complete a comprehensive property inventory (CityScan). Conducted from March to April 2006, the inventory was a systematic review of all properties within the neighborhood, to determine current conditions and identify vacant and blighted properties. The following building conditions were reported:

Total Number of East Side Properties Scanned = 2,666

All Properties/Residential Use = 1,799 (67.5%)

All Properties/Mixed Use = 81 (3%)

All Properties/Commercial = 185 (7%)

All Properties/Other = 67 (2.5%)

Total Number of Vacant Lots = 534 (20%)

Total Number of Blighted Buildings = 93 (3.5%)

Blighted Buildings/ Residential Use = 77 (83%)

Total Number of At-Risk Buildings = 84 (3.2%)

At-Risk Buildings/ Residential Use = 69 (83%)

Total Number of Well-Maintained Buildings = 1,955 (73.3%)

While there are a number of dwellings that do not fully comply with local housing codes on the East Side, almost all dwellings possess basic modern facilities. Only 3% were identified as lacking plumbing or kitchen facilities in 2000.

The map on the next page illustrates the locations of vacant properties that were identified during the CityScan process (lots in yellow are City-owned). Concentrations occur in the industrial areas on the Upper East Side and extensively throughout the area cleared for the Steel Point redevelopment project. The map shows vacant properties scattered through virtually every part of the East Side. While almost 75% of the buildings inventoried were well-maintained, there are a significant number of properties that are either vacant, blighted or at risk. The concern is that if nothing is done to stem the decline, the blighted conditions will likely spread to other parts of the East Side neighborhood, making it increasingly more difficult to achieve a successful neighborhood revitalization.

Blighted Buildings/Lots

Blight Indicators (2005-2006)

Number of blighted property citations:	239
Number of City foreclosures:	2

As noted earlier, 83% of the properties that were identified as blighted or “at-risk” by CityScan were residential. While it was decided not to publish a map of the blighted properties located in the neighborhood, the large number of residential properties that are blighted is a potential threat to confidence levels for individuals and business owners who plan to invest in the neighborhood.

Housing Value

Between 2004 and 2006, the average sales prices on the East Side :

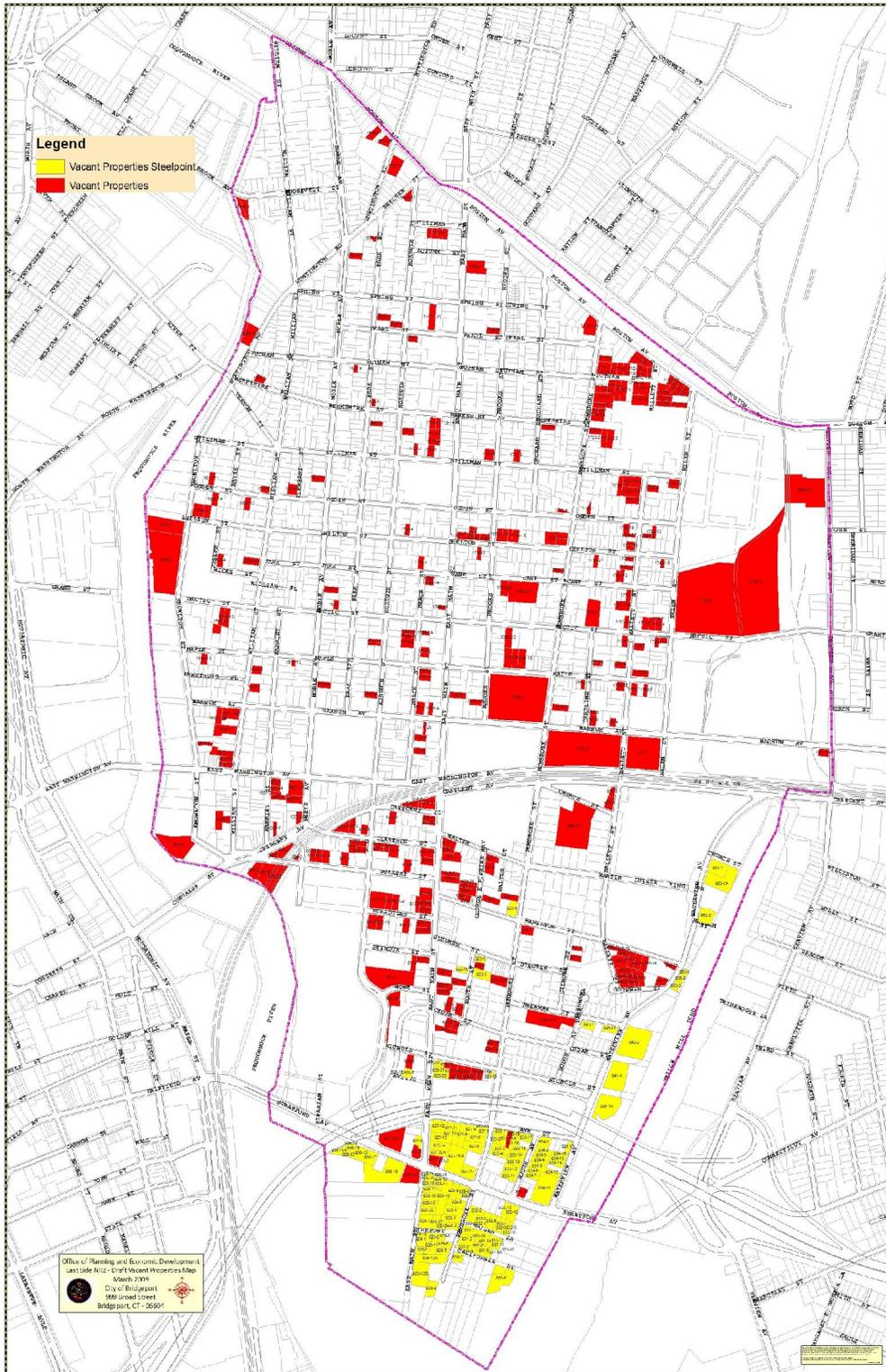
Single Family	\$150,578
Multi-family	\$240,510

Housing prices have fluctuated dramatically. By 2007, the median price of a home on the East Side was \$197,749. The recent economic downturn clearly had an impact, but its affect is turning around. By the beginning of 2009, housing prices dropped below \$100,000 as a result of high foreclosure rates. Fortunately, by the fall of 2009, median sales prices were rising above \$150,000 once again.

Ownership/ Investment

Levels of home ownership currently are very low on the East Side:

Owner-Occupied Units	20.5 %
Renter-Occupied Units	66.8 %



**Vacant Properties on East Side.**  
Source: CityScan 2006, City of Bridgeport Planning Department

For the State as a whole, the average level for renter-occupied units is 33% --half that of the East Side. Low home ownership levels typically results in a less stable neighborhood. Aside from the value of their security deposit, renters are generally free to move from one address to another or from one neighborhood to another with little risk and little obligation (aside from social connections such as school and church). On the other hand, a property owner is invested in their home, and their equity is at stake (this includes down payment, principal payments, and investments in maintenance and property improvements). Homes that are owner-occupied are generally better maintained than renter-occupied units. In the extreme, absentee property owners (landlords) can defer maintenance of their properties for long periods of time, drawing income from rents while their properties continue to deteriorate. This condition is a significant threat to the revitalization of the East Side neighborhood.

Compatibility with surrounding Land Uses

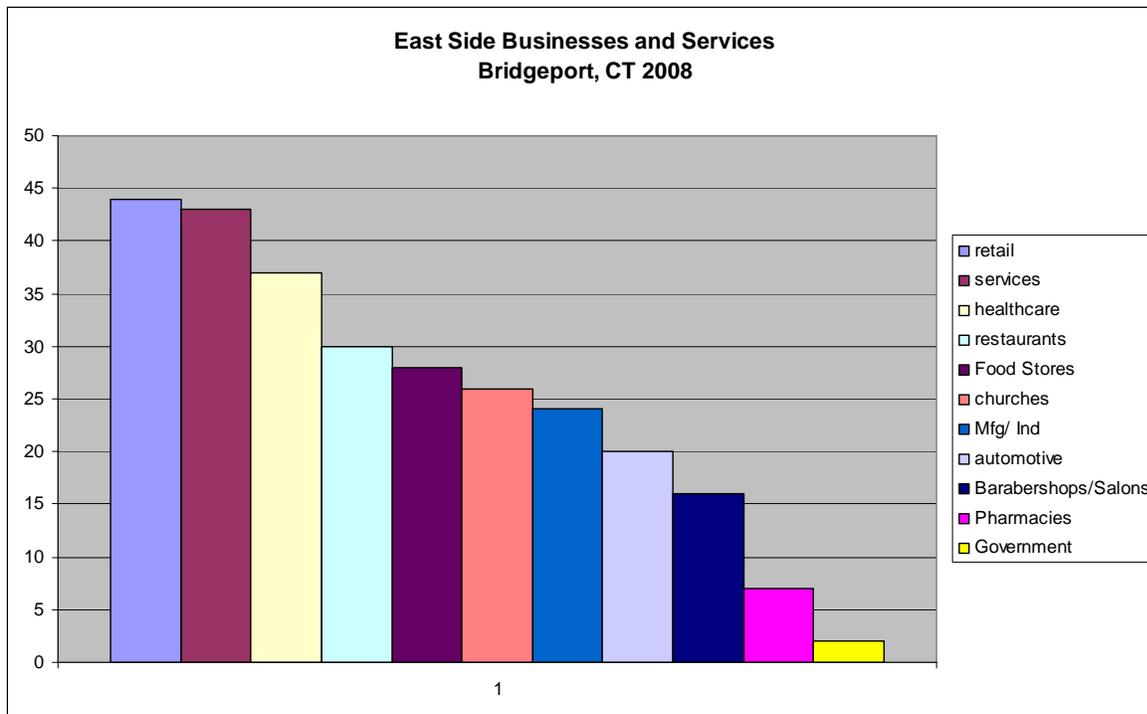
In some parts of the East Side, commercial and industrial uses have expanded and their operations have impacted the quality of adjacent residential areas. This has happened especially in sections of the neighborhood where deteriorated residential buildings have been razed, allowing for business expansion. This situation is also compounded by the fact that current zoning regulations enable a variety of commercial uses (Home offices are permitted and offices, retail sales and services are medical centers are allowed as Conditional or Special Permit Uses) within the R-C Residential Zone, the predominant zoning classification throughout the East Side.

During the charrette process, stakeholders identified industrial buildings and transportation features such as Interstate-95 as imposing to the neighborhood character of the East Side as well.

**B. Business Profile and Conditions**

The chart on the next page provides a summary of the approximately 300 businesses that were operating in the East Side as of 2008. Predominant business uses are retail uses (44), service uses (43), healthcare (37), restaurants (30) and food stores (28). Manufacturing or industrial uses have dropped dramatically over the year, which is evidenced by the extensive vacancies that can now be seen in the East Side. Only 24 industries were counted in 2008.

Retail uses are concentrated along East Main Street and Boston Avenue to the north. Convenience stores are scattered throughout the neighborhood.



**Top industries in 06608 by the number of employees in 2005:**

- Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services: Janitorial Services (250-499 employees: 2 establishments, 5-9 employees: 1 establishment, 1-4 employees: 2 establishments)
- Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services: Security Guards and Patrol Services (500-999: 1)
- Health Care and Social Assistance: All Other Outpatient Care Centers (100-249: 1)
- Educational Services: Elementary and Secondary Schools (50-99: 1, 20-49: 1, 1-4: 1)
- Wholesale Trade: Home Furnishing Merchant Wholesalers (50-99: 1)
- Health Care and Social Assistance: Outpatient Mental Health and Substance Abuse Centers (20-49: 1, 10-19: 2)
- Construction: Finish Carpentry Contractors (20-49: 1, 10-19: 1)

**Vacancy/Underutilization**

The great majority of the 185 vacant commercial properties identified through the CityScan inventory process were industrial buildings of varying sizes. Stakeholders are concerned about large vacant industrial buildings located on the East Side, especially the Remgrit buildings located along Helen Street on the eastern edge of the Upper East Side. This complex occupies 16.7 acres and includes over 340,000 square feet of industrial floor space, constructed since 1915. Once productive employment centers, these industrial buildings are currently vacant. Until recently, Habitat

for Humanity used some of this industrial space for limited warehousing purposes, but it was recently relocated to a facility on Barnum Avenue. Some of these historic industrial buildings possess significant architectural character, most notably the Shot Tower Building.

Remgrit industrial building located below.  
Shot Tower Building at right.



### **Local Economic Conditions**

Unemployment levels in 2005 were at a very high 16.2% in the East Side compared to 10% for the City as a whole and approximately 6% for the County. The nation's recent economic downturn has most certainly had a devastating impact on neighborhoods such as the East Side.

According to the City's recent update to the Plan of Conservation and Development (2008), "The concentration of Bridgeport's residents in lower skilled occupations has resulted in declining real incomes over the past fifteen years." A comparison of average annual wages in 2005 for Bridgeport residents showed them to be significantly lower than for the Bridgeport-Norwalk-Stamford region (\$44,119 compared to \$68,746).

Incomes below poverty level: 16% for Bridgeport; 5 % for the Region.

The lack of significant economic generators or uses on the East Side threatens its ability to be self-sufficient. The revitalization strategy should seek to increase local business on the East Side and also enable residents to access employment opportunities within the City and region. An important element of that movement should focus on increased job training, particularly for specialized skills, and recruitment within the area. The Greater Bridgeport OIC would be a supportive partner in this area.

## **Economic Development Subcommittee**

The Economic Development Subcommittee met on several occasions during the NRZ Planning Process. The Subcommittee reviewed 17 development projects under consideration for the East Side and helped rank priorities for this Plan. The group also kept abreast of the Steel Point redevelopment project (later called the Steelpointe Harbor Project) and informed the NRZ Planning Committee of areas for coordination. Areas of concern identified by the Subcommittee:

- Disposition of large vacant land parcels and industrial sites;
- Programs for job development/creation;
- East Main Street Façade Improvement Program;
- ACME United remediation of Knowlton Street property;
- The Asbestos Abatement program (Pomfret an example of “Best Practices”).

The Subcommittee recommended that the NRZ track job training and referrals of new jobs. One significant opportunity exists with the Steel Point redevelopment project. There was also a strong interest in supporting small businesses as a critical component of the revitalization strategy.

## **C. Infrastructure**

### **a. Transportation - Fixed Rail**

The East Side is bisected by the Connecticut Metro North/Amtrak railroad line which distinctly defines the Upper East Side and the Lower East Side. New Haven Metro North Line carries approximately 87 trains through Bridgeport daily, and Amtrak operates ten trains through the area daily. An additional 12 trains run along the Waterbury branch of Metro North daily.

### **b. Transportation - Roadways**

Connecticut Turnpike (Governor John Davis Lodge Turnpike, I-95 crosses through the East Side neighborhood (length: .81 miles) in both directions (north-south). There are two entrance/exit ramps serving the neighborhood.

Boston Avenue (US Highway 1) forms the northern boundary of the East Side. Boston Avenue runs in an east-west direction (Length: 1.12 miles)

Stratford Avenue (State Highway 130) runs in an east-west direction (.77 miles)

East Main Street is the most significant local road serving the neighborhood. Measuring 1.57 miles in length, the north-south road serves as the main commercial corridor serving the East Side neighborhood, a role it has historically filled since the inception of the neighborhood.

In general, the neighborhood is accessible by a network of major and local roads and by an extensive system of bus routes managed by the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority.

One significant issue is the Congress Street Bridge, which connected the East Side neighborhood to the downtown area until the bridge became stuck in an open position over five years ago.



**c. Transportation - Ferry Service**

Year round ferry service operates from nearby downtown Bridgeport to Port Jefferson, Long Island. The service provided over 1.5 million passenger and vehicle trips in 2005.

**d. Public Utilities**

Due to an extensive network of public water lines (Aquarion Company of Bridgeport) and public sewer lines (maintained by the City of Bridgeport) that service all sections of the East Side neighborhood, the neighborhood is able to support large areas of high density development of various types (residential, commercial, manufacturing, mixed-use).

As with many older urban cities and neighborhoods throughout the country, the conditions of the existing infrastructure serving the East Side vary considerably. One of the biggest issues for Bridgeport is the fact that a majority of their storm and sanitary sewer systems are combined. While the City's two wastewater treatment plants are sufficient to handle sanitary sewer discharge demands, they cannot handle the combined flow of sanitary and stormwater discharges, resulting in occasional release of partially treated and disinfected wastes into local waterways and Long Island Sound. The City is currently engaged in a Phase II CSO elimination project to address the issue on a citywide basis.

**e. Sidewalks and Bicycle Trails**

There is an extensive system of sidewalks throughout the East Side, but many of the sidewalks in the neighborhood are in need of repair, as reported in the CityScan inventory. Currently, there are no specific bicycle trails within the neighborhood. Additionally, the roads are not marked in any way to designate bike routes, and there are no intersection improvements that would enhance bicycle crossings.

**f. Home Utilities**

The great majority of homes (72%) are heated with gas, 18% are heated with oil and approximately 6% are heated by electricity. Only 3% used bottled gas.

**D. Architecture**

In 1851, East Bridgeport was developed as a planned residential and manufacturing suburb radiating out from a five-acre central square (Washington Park). Largely influenced by the efforts of then-Mayor P.T. Barnum and his industrial acquaintances, much of the East Side's early layout is still evident in the neighborhood's existing street and development patterns.



Victorian homes located along a typical residential street in the East Side date back to the late 1800s.



High-style Victorian houses and churches flank all sides of Washington Park.

The map on the next page illustrates the location of inventoried historic structures throughout the East Side neighborhood. Historic structures are highlighted in gold. The great majority of historic properties are located in the Washington Park area and along East Main Street.

**E. Neighborhood Resources/Assets**

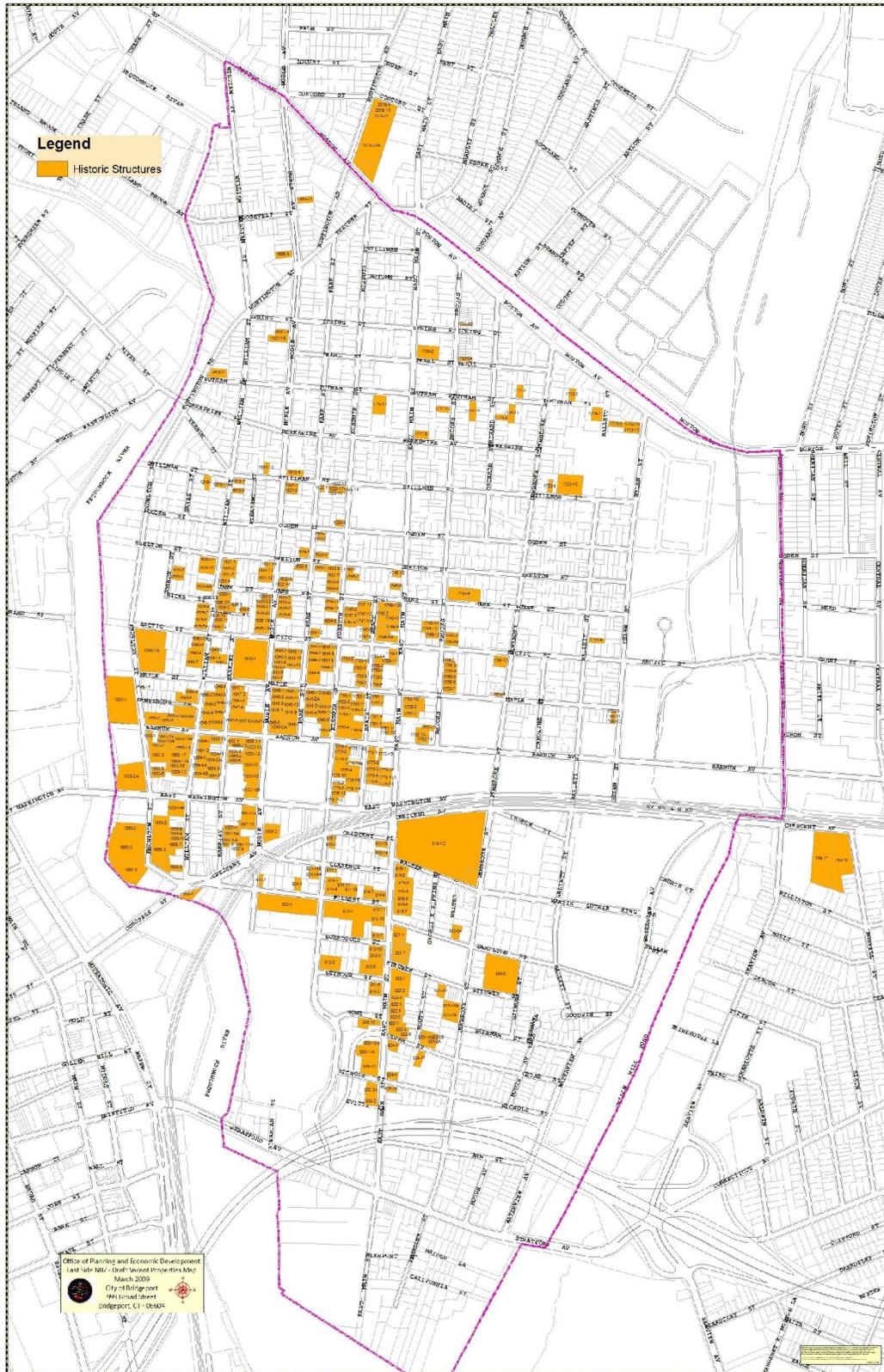
a. Human Resources

i. Health Services

Optimus Health Care, Inc. (formerly the Bridgeport Community Health Center) is located on Barnum Avenue. The nonprofit health center is the largest provider of primary health care services in Southwestern CT and has 12 service delivery sites located in the Cities of Bridgeport and Stamford, and the Town of Stratford. The Health Center operates a satellite office on East Main Street. The East Side neighborhood is located in close proximity to Bridgeport Hospital as well.

ii. Human Services

There are approximately eighteen organizations that provide a variety of social and support services to East Side residents, including Hall Neighborhood House and the McGivney Community Center and the Spanish American Development Association. There are a number of halfway houses and programs providing drug treatment in the East Side as well. Numerous social service agencies operating in Bridgeport provide a wide variety of social, educational and training services, however many of these agencies have limited resources with which to assist East Side residents. This situation has become particularly acute with the economic recession of 2008 to 2009, during which nonprofit organizations have found contributions dropping off significantly.



Historic structures Located within East Side Neighborhood; Source: City of Bridgeport Planning Department

The Hall Neighborhood House's main building is located at 52 George E. Pipkin's Way Hall. The organization offers a host of community resources and programs that service the demands and needs of the community, including:

- Early Childhood Education
- Youth Services, Counseling and College Prep
- After School Recreation
- Performing Arts, Music & Dance
- Senior Citizen Support Services
- Affordable Housing, Home Ownership Counseling
- Job Training and Entrepreneurial Development

As a settlement house, Hall Neighborhood House's mission is to provide quality human services to a diverse population of children and families and to develop a blueprint for financial stability, programmatic excellence and the creation of new initiatives to strengthen the organization and better serve the community.

The McGivney Community Center is a non-profit organization founded in 1992 by a group of concerned businessmen and community leaders. It was founded to provide youth with an educational "safe haven" from the dangers of the streets. The Center provides young people with After-School and Evening Programs, as well as a Summer Camp.

iii. Religious Institutions



Churches, synagogues and other religious organizations are an anchor of the East Side community. There are numerous denominations serving the neighborhood's diverse population.



Religious institutions are an important element of the social fabric of the East Side neighborhood. Over thirty separate churches and temples were identified in a 2008 survey of the neighborhood, including various Hispanic denominations, Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Pentecostal, and Russian Orthodox churches. These churches help promote communication throughout the community in the various languages of the community. They also provide a wide range of services to support the social health of the neighborhood (e.g. food banks, serving dinners, counseling, etc.). They often play an important role in promoting civic programs and neighborhood improvement projects as well.

#### iv. Education

Almost 54% of the adult East Side population has not completed high school. Only 28% have high school diplomas and, while 15% have taken some college classes, only 3.3% of the population possesses a college degree.

Statistics also demonstrate that many of the students from the East Side are ranking low in their studies. In 2006, only 5.42% of fourth graders and 7.90% of sixth graders have met Connecticut Mastery Test Goals.

Average SAT Scores for 2006 were also low for the East Side: Verbal (374) and Math (370).

Public Schools serving the East Side Community:

- Barnum & Waltersville Elementary School was recently completed on the lower East Side. The school replaces the two separate elementary schools as follows:
  - WALTERSVILLE SCHOOL (Students: 500; Location: 150 Hallett ST., Grades: PK - 08)
  - BARNUM SCHOOL (Students: 750; Location: 495 Waterview Avenue; Grades: PK - 08)
- Luis Muñoz Marin School (Students: 900; Location: 479 Helen Street, Grades: PK-08)
- Achievement First Bridgeport Academy; the public charter school began operations at the former Holy Rosary School on East Washington Avenue. In the last year, the school purchased the former Barnum School on Noble Avenue and Garfield School on Stillman Street. The Barnum School has become the Middle School, Grades 5-7, 232 students. The School is expected to convert the the Garfield School to its elementary school. They are expected to open kindergarten classes for 84 students by the Fall 2010. Prospective students must live in the East Side, the East End or the West End.
- Harding High School, located on Central Avenue in the East End serves the East Side neighborhood as well

**F. Neighborhood Organizations and Activities**

A number of community organizations, neighborhood groups and nonprofit organizations have been operating for years on the East Side. These groups are vital to the success of the neighborhood revitalization strategy since they focus leadership and available resources towards the improvement and growth of the neighborhood. Among these groups are:

- The East Side Community Council
- Washington Park Association
- East Main Street Revitalization Association (EMSRA)
- Lower East Side Development Corporation (LESDCO)
- Hall Neighborhood House
- Habitat for Humanity
- Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust
- McGivney Community Center

Each organization has demonstrated leadership in securing grants and identifying programs to address neighborhood issues, ranging from redevelopment projects to neighborhood cleanups and beautification programs.

## **G. Existing Land Use Profile and Patterns**

### **1. Overview**

Vacant land is the predominant land use in the East Side, accounting for over 26% of total land area in the neighborhood, followed closely by two-to-four family (multi-family) residential uses, which comprise almost 22% of the neighborhood. Industrial uses occupy just over 15% of the neighborhood's land area, and commercial uses account for about 10% of the land area.

Summary: While more detailed descriptions of each use are provided on the following pages, the following is a summary of current land uses in the East Side, as shown on the map of existing land uses shown on the next page:

- Single Family Residential Use (7.0%)
- Two-to-Four Family Residential Use (21.9%)
- Five + Family Residential Use (5.6%)
- Commercial Use (10.5%)
- Mixed Use (2.6%)
- Light Industrial Use (7.8%)
- Heavy Industrial Use (7.7%)
- Utility (.03%)
- Parks/Open Space/Cemeteries (2.6%)
- Institutional (7.8%)
- Vacant Land (26.4%)

\*\* Approximately 17.4% of the neighborhood is classified as Brownfields

### **2. Commercial**

Commercial uses account for just over 10% of the developed land areas in the East Side. Commercial uses are concentrated along the East Main Street commercial corridor, along Boston Avenue, and along Knowlton Street. Commercial uses are mostly retail, grocery and convenience stores and service uses such as beauty parlors and nail salons.

The largest single piece of commercial property is the Shoreline Star property located on Kossuth Street, which is 16.13 acres in size. While it is the largest commercial property, it has been largely underutilized since the days it was used as a dog track. Today it used for Off Track Betting.

Existing Land Use, City of Bridgeport - Plan of Conservation and Development 2008



LEGEND - EXISTING LAND USE - East Side Neighborhood

Yellow	1 Family
Orange	2-4 Family
Red	5+ Family
Pink	Commercial
Purple	Mixed Use
Light Purple	Light Industrial
Dark Purple	Heavy Industrial
Grey	Utility
Green	Park/Open Space/Cemeteries
Blue	Institutional
White	Vacant
Light Blue	Water



*-Colorful Bodegas line the Streets of the East Side... adding to the ethnic character and appeal of the neighborhood-*

### 3. Industrial

Industrial uses are concentrated on the eastern edge of the Upper East Side, and currently along Knowlton Street. As noted from the CityScan results, a large number of industrial/business uses (185) are currently vacant. One of the largest employers in the neighborhood is the Prime Resources Corporation on Boston Avenue, employing 440.

### 4. Residential

Single family Residential uses are concentrated in the upper East Side area. On the lower East Side, single family residential uses are primarily located within residential redevelopment areas built over the last ten years to replace the previous Father Panik Housing Development.

### 5. Open Space/Parks

There is a relatively small amount of dedicated open space or parks currently located in the East Side (2.6% of the neighborhood and approximately 1.1% of the City's open space). The primary park serving the neighborhood is Washington Park, approximately five acres in size. There is also the waterfront park located along Yellow Mill Pond on Waterview Avenue (James Brown Park, Marin-Garfield Park, William Barnum Park and Friendship Park (across from Garfield School).

The City of Bridgeport officially recognizes and owns six Community Gardens within the Boundaries of the East Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone. These properties were procured through financial assistance in the form of grants from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the City of

Bridgeport's Community Land Trust (BCLT) matching funds. The funds were further administered through the City's then Urban Green and Community Initiative.

In the event that the City needs to utilize said designated parcels for other uses in the public interest, the properties (s) will be substituted with like property (s) over the duration of the contractual period of 10 years.

The following properties are fall under the aforementioned classification:

122 Arctic Street  
509 Arctic Street  
749 Hallett Street  
28 Stillman Street  
617 Ogden Street

## 6. Current Development Controls and Regulations

### A. LAND USE REGULATIONS: CURRENT ZONING MAP - PLANNING AND ZONING

Current Zoning Districts - As noted earlier, the majority of the East Side is located within the R-C Residential High Density Zoning District. Other Zoning Districts within the East Side neighborhood (illustration next page):

1. OR-N (Office/Retail Neighborhood) - This is the zoning classification currently established for the majority of East Main Street in the Upper East Side and along upper Noble Avenue)
2. MU-P (Mixed Use Perimeter) - This zoning classification currently applies to East Main Street within the lower East Side and Boston Avenue around its intersection with East Main Street. The purpose of this zone is to promote mixed use development in between major industrial and commercial areas and residential neighborhoods.
3. I-HI (Heavy Industrial) - Land along the western shore of the East Side as well as the eastern edge of the Upper East Side are zoned Heavy Industrial. All of the waterfront property along the Pequonnock River is zoned Heavy Industrial, preventing the suitable use of this area for waterfront purposes.

### B. CURRENT ZONING REGULATIONS

The current Zoning Regulations were adopted in August 1996 and have been amended through July 2007.

Current Zoning Regulations restrict waterfront uses along the neighborhood's waterfront. Regulations for the R-C High Density Residential District allow residential development at a rate of 2700 sq. ft. per dwelling or up to 16 dwelling units per acre.



C. COASTAL MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS/FLOOD PLAIN BOUNDARIES

The City's current Coastal Site Plan Review procedures are outlined in Article 14.3 and implement Sections 22a-105 through 22a-109 of the CT General Statutes. There are no specific additional local requirements for implementing the State's coastal policies. Flood hazard areas (100-Year Flood Boundary) are located along the western and eastern shores of the East Side neighborhood, and there is one additional low-lying area prone to flooding that is located between East Main Street, Boston Avenue, Stillman Street and Huntington Road.

D. CITY PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT 2008

The City Council and the City Planning and Zoning Commission recently adopted an updated Plan of Conservation and Development, which was prepared by Buckhurst Fish and Jacquemart PC, New York, NY. The Plan was prepared as a major rewrite to the existing Plan and was developed with significant input from the Community. The Citywide plan provided a great deal of direction for the development of the East Side NRZ Strategic Plan. In general, the closer the neighborhood can align itself to the development directions of the City as a whole, the more successful the revitalization strategy will be.

The Land Use Plan would encourage the creation of greenways and public access along the waterfront throughout the East Side neighborhood. The Land Use Plan also recommends increased flexibility within the current industrial areas along the waterfront to encourage mixed-used developments (residential, retail/commercial services and office uses).

Proposed Amendments to Zoning Map and Zoning Regulations

The proposed amendments to the Zoning Map and Zoning Regulations currently under consideration by the Planning and Zoning Commission would help implement significant recommendations of the City's new Plan of Conservation and Development, including the following changes:

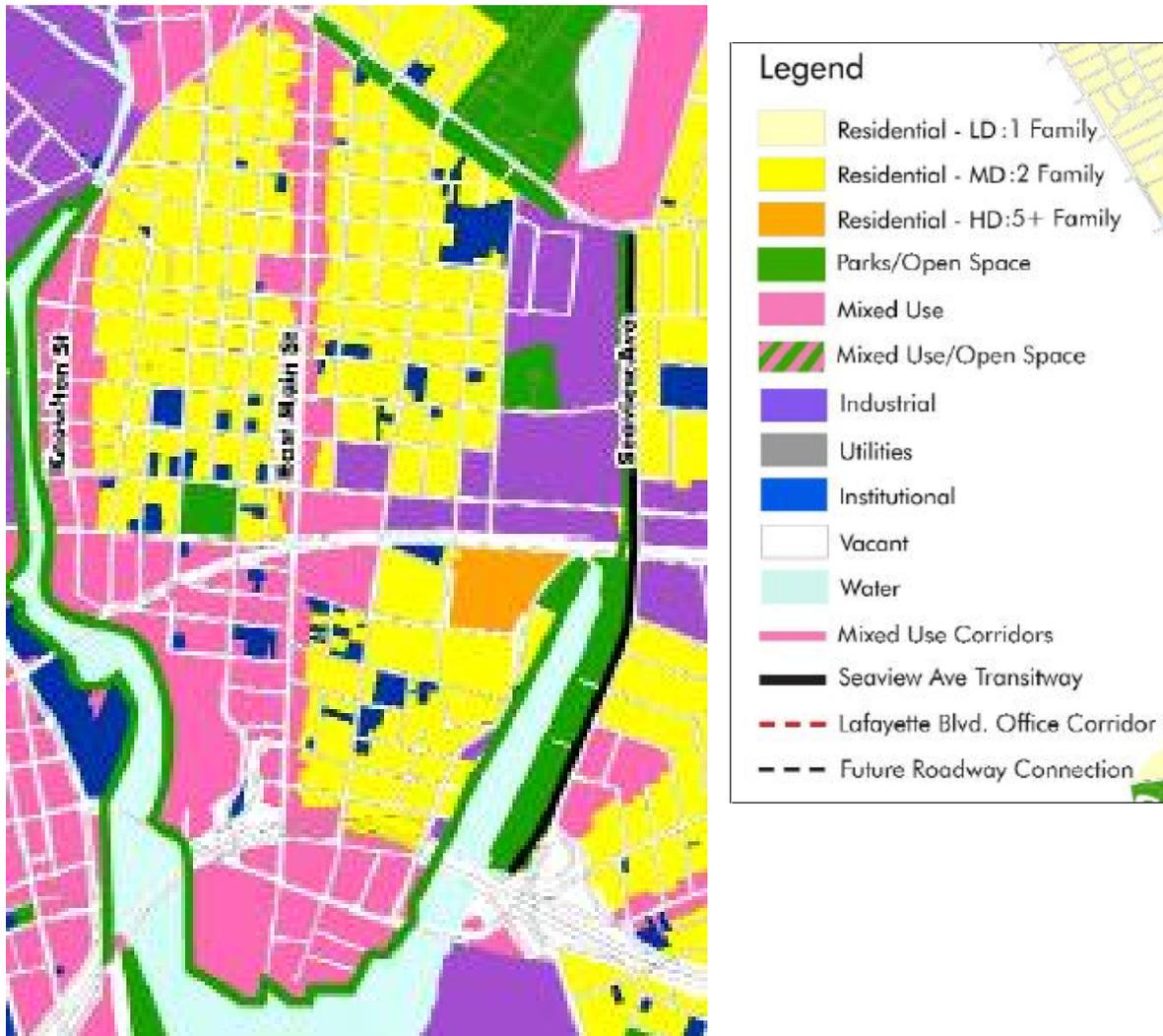
- Light Industrial Areas along the Pequonnock River would be replaced with Mixed Use/Light Industrial Zoning Districts and OR-G Districts (Office and Retail)
- Mixed Use - Perimeter Zones would be deleted from the zoning regulations.
- There are no significant changes within the residential zones.
- There are no significant changes within the industrial zones.

Impacts on Neighborhood Development

In the context of this NRZ Strategic Plan, the amendments to the City's Plan of Conservation and Development, Zoning Map, and Zoning Regulations should have a positive impact on the directions envisioned by the neighbor's stakeholders, especially with regard to waterfront development and access. The

City’s long-range plans also foresee the medical industry and related services as being an area of growth for the City over the next 10 to 20 years. That direction is seen as playing a positive role in the East Side’s revitalization as well.

### Land Use Plan



## 2. HISTORIC DISTRICT REGULATIONS

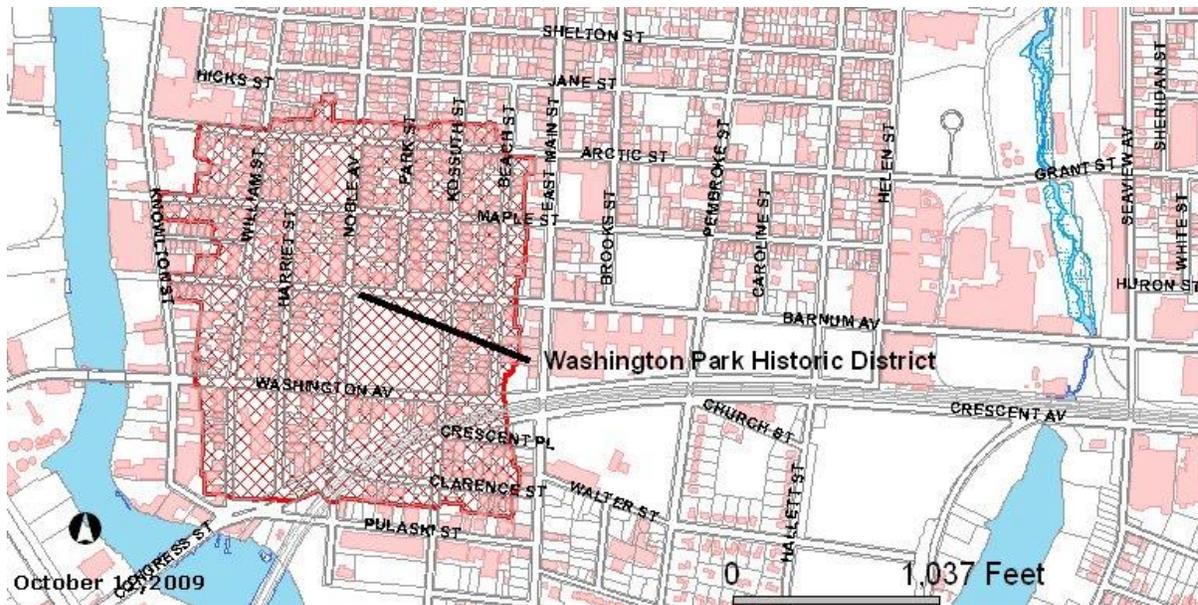
### a. Local Historic District

Pembroke City Historic District; bounded by Crescent Avenue; East Main Street and Pulaski Street. The local historic district is adjacent to both the East Bridgeport Historic District and the East Main Street Historic District.

This is one of five (5) local historic districts. It is also located on the National Register of Historic Places

b. National Register of Historic Places

1. East Bridgeport Historic District - this area was designated in 1979 and includes approximately 250 buildings. The total area is 938 acres in size. Railroad Tracks, Beach, Arctic Street, and Knowlton Street.



2. East Main Street Historic District, Listed in 1985; 160 acres in size, includes 33 buildings.

Local and national historic districts can each play an important role in the revitalization strategy, but design is directly regulated in a local historic district (Pembroke City Historic District). Any proposed modification to a building within the local historic district must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic District Commission before a building permit can be obtained. The Commission must determine that proposed improvements, visible from the street or public right-of-way will not negatively affect the historic character of the building and property.

Listing on a National Register of Historic Places makes the property eligible for certain tax credits and grants, although many of the grant programs are available primarily to buildings that are open for public access and use. When historic funds are used for building improvements, the design must be approved by the State or Federal agencies, depending on the funding source.

### III. REINVESTMENT/DEVELOPMENT CLIMATE IN THE EAST SIDE

Investment and reinvestment in the neighborhood are direct indicators of potential for revitalization of the neighborhood. There has been a significant level of reinvestment in the East Side over the years. The degree of success the East Side will have in achieving its full revitalization will depend largely on the degree to which property owners continue to make investments in their properties and in their neighborhood. The East Side NRZ effort has been underway since 2005, and its efforts have been bolstered by the individual investments of residents and business owners within the community. The nonprofit sector has played a lead role in these revitalization efforts and should be seen as a continuing force to rebuild the East Side as a viable neighborhood. Some substantial revitalization projects have already been completed within the neighborhood, and the revitalization strategy should be designed to build on the strength of these efforts. The following are some good examples of the kind of work that has been realized to date:



East Main Street Mews; 588-612 East Main Street. (Pictured at left, before; and after renovation at left, below). (Mixed-Use)

Conversion of 6 historic buildings (Victorian row structure) into 20 apartments and four retail stores. 16 of the 20 apartments were income restricted/affordable apartments for families whose incomes were below 60% of the Area Median Income. Four were market rate units. Project was completed in late 2007 with occupancy in early 2008.



1001-1007 East Main Street (Mixed-Use)

Anti-blight Action: Rehabilitation into four 3-bedroom units with restaurant on lower level (El Flamboyán Restaurant) September 2007

1131 Noble Avenue - Rehabilitation, four (4) dwelling units, private. \$400,000.

1055-1069 Pembroke Street - 25 units, affordable. \$5 Million investment, \$700,000 HOME funding. Webster Bank. ChFA, FHLB, LISC.

101 Barnum Avenue - Four- unit historic renovation. Four condo units were created, each Affordable at below 80% AMI. \$1.1 Million. Funding sources: DECD, CHFA, CT CDFI Alliance. 15 year deed restriction. Start: 2007. End: 2008. Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust, Mutual Housing of Southwestern CT.



*101 Barnum Avenue, above, as it appeared before renovation and, at left, after renovation. This renovation created quality affordable housing, improved the neighborhood, and serves as a very good example of the importance of historic preservation.*

235-237 William Street - Historic Renovation that converted original 21-unit structure into a 12 unit historic development. Financing: CT Historic Homes Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program, Federal Home Loan Bank, Bridgeport HOME funding, private donations, corporate sponsorships; \$1.2 Million. Partnership between Mutual Housing Association and Habitat for Humanity of Coastal Fairfield County.

665-679 Arctic Street Areyto Apartments. 20 one bedroom apartments, income restricted, for formerly homeless individuals with mental illness and/or substance addictions. \$6,082,723. Funding: 3 year PILOT. Begin: 2007. End: 2008

52 George E. Pipkin Way - Hall Commons Senior Housing. 41 units HUD Section 202 Senior Housing; Section 8 Rents. Funding: HUD, \$6 Million. Hall Neighborhood House.

Achievement First - Charter School, 409 East Washington Avenue  
Completed Fall 2008 to house 84 fifth graders, with plans to expand to 720 students, level K-8. \$1.5 million over next 9 years, City of Bridgeport.

Bridge Academy Charter School, 401 Kossuth Street; Connecticut Coast YMCA Day Camp. \$3.3 Million state and private funding. Opened September 2005

Barnum and Waltersville Elementary Schools  
252 Hallett Street, corner of Martin Luther King Drive.

New elementary school was completed for August 2008 occupancy. The 172,000 square foot building was designed to accommodate 1,250 students. Total investment: \$58.3 Million

New Marin-Garfield Fire Station; 950 Boston Avenue. \$5.5 Million, Federal and City bond funds. Begun May 2004, occupied April 2007

New Marin-Garfield Park - Between Boston Avenue and Marin Garfield School; new play fields and playgrounds including new turf and watering system, completed Fall 2006. \$1.8 Million, Federal and State.



574 Stillman Street - Caroline House, Literacy Program for women and children,.

2326 East Main Street The Montano Center, state-of-the-art Interactive Learning Center for individuals with physical and cognitive limitations. \$100,000 (\$50,000 CDBG).

### BLIGHT ENFORCEMENT

The City's Office of Neighborhood Revitalization (ONR) has been instrumental in promoting the renovation and reuse of a number of East Side properties in recent years, including the following:

192 Beach Street - private demolition, pre-fab construction; warning issued: 7/05/06; In compliance as of 11/6/2006

66 Barnum Avenue - anti-blight & Condemnation Board - Construction by new owner. WarningL 6/12/05; In compliance as of 6/20/07

1568 East Main Street - warnings issued June 2005, compliance in February 2007

304 Kossuth Street - Anti-Blight and Condemnation Actions

616 Kossuth Street - Mutual Housing Association Conger House LLC Supportive Housing; Warning issued: June 2006, In compliance as of May 2007; 8 rental apartments and two large community spaces to serve 16 homeless individuals with a permanent disability. \$1.4 Million (\$387,000 HOME funding). Mutual Housing Association of Southwestern Connecticut.

343 Maple Street - Anti-Blight Action. Warning issued: May 2005; In compliance May 2006.

Examples of this type suggest the need for continued use of blight enforcement to counteract neighborhood decline. During the Committee process, concerns were raised about the need to refine the definition of blighted properties and to make sure that long-term blights (e.g. 291 Harriet Street), are resolved.

## **Planned and Proposed Developments**

### **Steel Point Redevelopment**



#### **Original Plan for redevelopment of the 52-acre Steel Point site.**

The most significant development plan on the books that would directly influence the East Side revitalization strategy is the Steel Point Redevelopment Area. The project involves the development of a new mixed-use community with a waterfront pedestrian promenade, dedicated open space and a marina on a 52-acre peninsula on the lower section of the East Side, along Bridgeport Harbor. The developer, Bridgeport Landing Development LLC reached an agreement with the City on the development of Steelpointe Harbor in November 2007. The original concept included a 732,400 square foot retail center; 90,000 square feet of waterfront retail space, over 2,000 units of residential development (including 300 units that would be income restricted in perpetuity).

The agreement with the developer was recently revised due to market conditions and other factors. The Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee and the City Council have recently approved a new agreement with the developer, and the City Planning Department has provided the following update on the status of the project and key elements to be included in the plan:

1. Presently submitting regulatory applications PDD, GDP & CAM
2. LDA recently completed
3. Public Board Walk
4. Parking
5. Restaurants
6. Big box anchors/ increase in retail square footage
7. Residential units 1200 +/- market rate
8. Additional offsite affordable rehab and infill.

The site has been cleared for demolition over the last 3 years. The future development of a project of this size could have dramatic impacts on the East Side revitalization strategy.

#### Waterview Avenue Marina Project

As an indicator of the potential for additional waterfront development in the East Side, the MOVE Yacht Club is being relocated from California Street in the Steel Point Redevelopment Area to Waterview Avenue. The Yacht Club building and marina were recently approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Common Council approved the abandonment of a portion of Nichols and Cedar Streets to support the development. The proposed marina retail complex will include the following components:

1. The square footage of the site is 46,180 sq ft or 1.06 AC+/-
2. There will be approximately 12 slips
3. Include three - four retail operations related to marine activity
4. Will Not include a large scale repair operation.
5. Restaurant will not be a component
6. Winter dry storage of boats will not be Included (denied because it diminished available retail parking requirements so as to not meet minimum zoning reqs.).
8. Slips will be connected with a ramp
9. Embankment will be contained with rip-rap.
11. Boat launch will be provided for "private" club member use. (Possible "for fee" use for general public.)



## **IV. Summary of Development Issues and Opportunities Facing the East Side Neighborhood**

### **DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

The following issues are seen as requiring the greatest attention in the NRZ Strategic Plan:

#### 1) Population Loss

Total East Side population dropped almost 25% from 1990 to 2000, primarily the result of concentrated efforts to redevelop large sections of the lower East Side (Father Panik Village and the Steel Point area). Among other factors, this dramatic reduction in population has caused significant change that has had a marked impact on the overall condition of the East Side neighborhood.

#### 2) High Levels of Vacancy and Vacant Land

Vacant land is the highest existing land use on the East Side (26%). This is a serious issue for the neighborhood and for the City. Large vacant lots are a blighting influence and become targets for illegal dumping. These lots do nothing for building the tax base of the community.

#### 3) Neighborhood Ranking - Quality of Life

The East Side was ranked last among the City's neighborhoods in terms of quality-of-life in the City of Bridgeport's recently-updated Plan of Conservation and Development (effective March 17, 2008). "The neighborhood has some of the highest crime rates and lowest income levels in Bridgeport."

#### 4) Unemployment Rates are high

The East Side's unemployment rate (16.2%) has been higher than that of the City (10%) and the State (6%).

#### 5) Income levels are low

As of 2007, median household income in the East Side was \$27,586 compared to \$44,216 for the City of Bridgeport as a whole and \$65,967 for the State of Connecticut. 34.1% of the neighborhood's households were below poverty level, while only 7.9% of the State's households were below poverty level.

#### 6) High level of single parent households

31.8% of the households in the neighborhood were female headed, single parent, households, more than twice the rate for the City as a whole.

7) Education levels and skill levels are low

Only 28% of the adult East Side population has graduated from high school.

8) Home Ownership Levels are Low

Only 20.5% of the dwellings in the neighborhood are owner-occupied. For the state as a whole, home ownership rates are above 75%.

9) Property taxes are high

Property tax rates in Bridgeport have been raised as a concern to attracting new business development in the community.

10) Crime levels are high

According to Bridgeport Police Department, the East Side neighborhood ranks as one of the highest for incidences of crime.

11) Brownfields

A high percentage of industrial buildings are classified as brownfields (17.4% of neighborhood), pointing out the importance of incorporating cleanup strategies into revitalization plans.

## **DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

### **A. Waterfront**



The East Side possesses a significant waterfront along the Pequonnock River to the west and Yellow Mill Pond to the east. Much of the waterfront along the Pequonnock River on the Upper East Side (Knowlton Avenue) has been developed for industrial and other commercial uses, none of which are water dependent uses, as defined by the CT Coastal Management Act; there are a small number of docks located along the Congress Street Bridge Plaza Area.

While the waterfront could provide access for passive recreation, fishing and various forms of boating, none of those uses currently exist since most of the waterfront is blocked from public access. On a citywide basis, it has been recognized that much of the riverfront has been zoned and developed for industrial purposes. This led to a primary recommendation of the City's recent Master Plan to move industrial zones away from the waterfront to make the waterfront available for more appropriate uses. The largest singular piece of waterfront property is the Shoreline Star property on the lower East Side.

### **B. Waterfront Access**

While there is an extensive waterfront in the East Side, there are very few opportunities for public access to the waterfront for the residents of the neighborhood currently, and the neighborhood needs more spots for fishing. Along Knowlton Street, even some of the public rights-of way to the waterfront are blocked by industrial uses that have incorporated these rights-of-way into

their operations. The waterfront park on Waterview Avenue has the potential for providing public access for the neighborhood, however, access for driving through and parking within the Park is restricted, and the park is not currently inviting for public use.

C. Transportation Infrastructure

Proximity to fixed-route rail lines offers the greatest long range opportunity for the revitalization of the East Side neighborhood. Parts of the East Side are already within walking distance of the existing train station in downtown Bridgeport, creating the potential for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in the neighborhood -- high density mixed use village developments that enable residents the potential for connecting with employment centers in the broader region. Proximity to the major highway infrastructure and ferry service to Long Island is another key asset for future revitalization of the East Side.

D. Proximity to Downtown

The East Side neighborhood is convenient to the downtown, providing opportunities for employment and access to some of the region's most important cultural assets.

E. Historic Properties

The substantial supply of historic buildings in the East Side provides an asset to the revitalization strategy. Redevelopment can achieve a high standard of architectural design and character and incorporate architectural elements that enhance an overall revitalization initiative.

## **V. NRZ Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives**

An effective plan must include a statement or description of the desired result the plan intends to achieve - a “vision statement” that describes the successful result of the plan. This is especially important for an NRZ strategic plan, which emphasizes follow-up and implementation. This section is devoted to the long range vision statement for the East Side NRZ Plan, along with a series of goals and action steps help the neighborhood move towards that vision.

### **VISION STATEMENT**

This NRZ Strategic Plan envisions the East Side as a vibrant, culturally diverse neighborhood, one that is considered a community of choice for residents and business owners alike, and one which possesses an active waterfront, a healthy supply of diverse jobs, quality housing choices, and a full range of neighborhood amenities.

#### **Making the East Side a Self-Sufficient or “Sustainable” Community**

In recent years, there has been increasing emphasis among planning professionals and City and neighborhood leaders around the need to move distressed neighborhoods beyond just a physical revitalization - and towards the attainment of being livable or “sustainable communities”. Sustainable communities are ones that not only look good, they function effectively. They are healthy, long-term neighborhoods of choice that can be independent and durable. Being a sustainable community requires the physical improvement of the neighborhood at a minimum. Every abandoned, blighted or under maintained property in the neighborhood is a sign of “disinvestment” to the outside community. A vacant building is a tangible symbol that there is no demand for that building. In the East Side, stakeholders are especially concerned with the deteriorated condition of streets and sidewalks and the general lack of street trees. Beyond these physical improvements of the neighborhood, the East Side NRZ has to address the need to create a stable economic base within the neighborhood, providing good jobs and job training and a positive business climate, and the addition of neighborhood amenities that will make the neighborhood livable -- and desirable.

The concept of sustainability is especially relevant to the East Side neighborhood. The East Side NRZ Strategy should be viewed as four progressive steps or levels. These steps should be viewed as building blocks that can lead to the effective revitalization of the neighborhood. The East Side NRZ Steering Committee should continually review its efforts within each of these steps and develop an annual work plan to assure that any effort builds on the strategy and to make sure that all levels of the strategy are being addressed to the extent feasible.

## **GOALS**

1. To reduce the number of blighted properties in the neighborhood until they are eliminated.
2. To encourage prompt rehabilitation of at-risk properties, while taking steps to preserve properties that have historic character.
3. To reduce litter, improve maintenance and encourage efforts to beautify the overall appearance of the East Side neighborhood
4. To rehabilitate and adaptively reuse buildings that lack code compliance in order to provide quality mixed-income housing
5. To increase affordable housing options for East Side residents
6. To increase levels of home ownership
7. To improve the levels of security in the East Side neighborhood.
8. To increase public access to the neighborhood's waterfront
9. To increase educational levels and skill levels in the neighborhood for children as well as adults.
10. To Increase employment opportunities for the East Side.
11. To strengthen the influence that community organizations have in the redevelopment of the East Side neighborhood.
12. To create a business environment that is conducive to attracting continued investments in commercial, industrial, and mixed use developments throughout the neighborhood.
13. To increase the availability of youth activities and elderly services for East Side residents.
14. To increase communication by using the media that is available to the community (making sure that communication is sent out in English, Spanish and other languages that will be understood by a majority of the neighborhood's residents).
15. Since the East Side has such a high percentage of children with elevated blood lead levels, the neighborhood should consider making lead education and poison prevention a priority/goal.

## **Objectives**

1. The general appearance of the East Side needs to be softened and beautified with trees, landscaping and buffer plantings that balance expansive views of buildings, roads, highways, paved parking lots and other impervious surfaces. Streetscape improvements throughout the neighborhood are seen as very important to this effort.
2. The East Side NRZ Planning Committee sees its most significant revitalization opportunity as the development of the neighborhood's waterfront for public access and for mixed-use communities (pedestrian walkways, restaurants, shops, boating, etc.).
3. To help increase employment and income levels on the East Side, the NRZ Planning Committee is interested in encouraging job training/career development for East Side residents with a focus on the health-related field, which is envisioned as a growth industry for Bridgeport.
4. Support the efforts of the Bridgeport Public Library to begin work to identify and negotiate a replacement for the Old Mill Green library branch with a larger, more modern, permanent library.
5. In addition to the major areas of focus above, the following recommendations are viewed as supporting the long-range vision for revitalization of the neighborhood:
  - a. Promoting the adaptive reuse of industrial buildings, especially along the eastern edge of the neighborhood (e.g. Remington)
  - b. Continued commitment to the East Main Street Revitalization effort and enhancement of the neighborhood's gateway areas.
  - c. Creation of a Congress Street "Village" area, once the Congress Street Bridge has been replaced.
  - d. Development of a new East Bridgeport Train Station off of Barnum Avenue central to the East Side and East End neighborhoods
  - e. Bringing into the neighborhood (or linking to) training for East Side residents and creating a community center for such services and other community needs.
  - f. Recognize and support events on the East Side such as the East Main Street Festival and other community events, with an emphasis on using Washington Park.