

CITY OF PEABODY RIVERWALK & HISTORIC TRAIL MASTER PLAN

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CITY OF PEABODY

DOWNTOWN RIVERWALK & LEATHER CITY HISTORIC TRAIL



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CITY OF PEABODY

DOWNTOWN RIVERWALK & LEATHER CITY HISTORIC TRAIL



Adopted as a Planning Guide by the City of Peabody in the Year 2001.

I. PURPOSE / INTRODUCTION

The Downtown Riverwalk and Leather City Historic Trail, a one-mile linear green promenade, will link a series of parks, open spaces, historic buildings, and streetscapes into a comprehensive network. The Riverwalk will wind through downtown Peabody, providing a natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resource to the City. As open space, the corridor will also provide important environmental benefits, moderate the microclimate, provide flood storage, and provide habitat for birds and small mammals. This Riverwalk will create a regional Greenway and pedestrian link through the historic downtown, promote business opportunities, and enhance the character of surrounding neighborhoods. Eventually a network of open space and pedestrian links will serve a mixed-use downtown, which will include residential and commercial uses, shops, restaurants, cafes, theatres, artisan studios and lofts, galleries, farmers market, and offices. The Riverwalk is the pedestrian spine for the vision of a vibrant downtown.

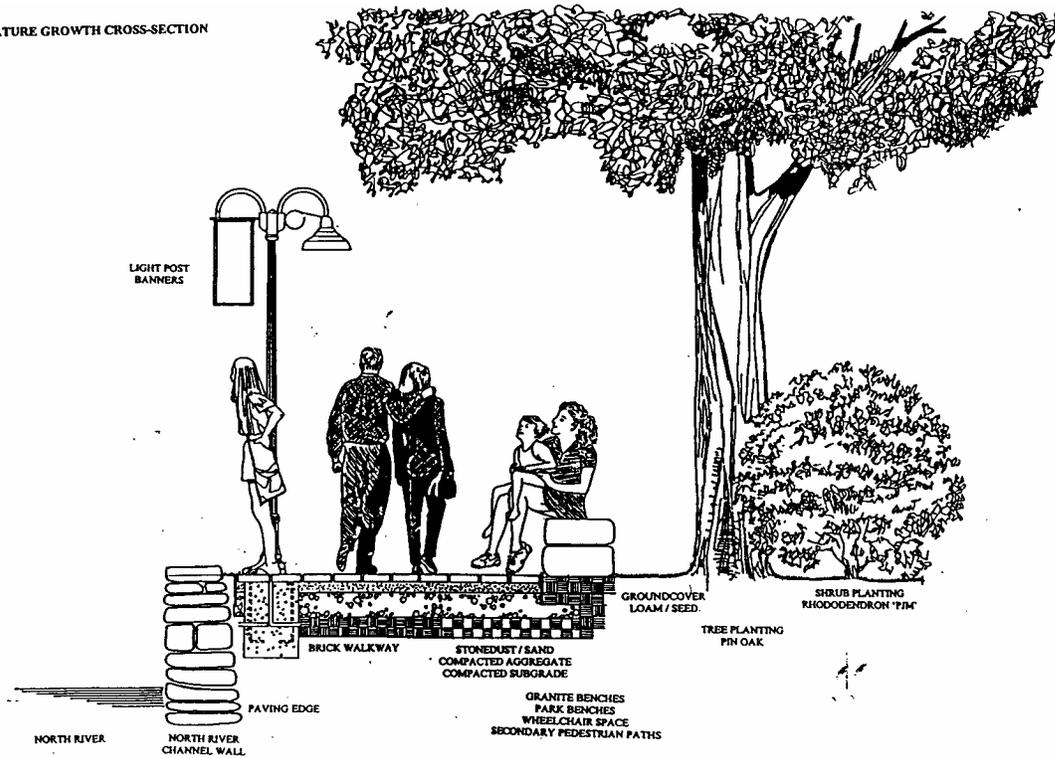
With the Riverwalk, the Community aims to create a green spine along the banks of the North River which is a source of enjoyment and pride for Peabody residents. Specific individual goals regarding the desired location, character, quality, and uses of the Riverwalk must guide us to achieve this overall objective. The component objectives will ensure that current and future activities or projects are not at cross-purposes with each other. This Riverwalk Master Plan serves to avoid these types of problems, by defining more precisely the community objectives for the site and its environs and coordinating the uses and projects related to the Riverwalk. The objectives listed are based on the original objectives established in the Riverwalk Design Competition in 1993, and refined and elaborated in the subsequent years. The Downtown Riverwalk and Leather City Historic Trail Master Plan illustrates that the City of Peabody has a cohesive plan for the realization of the project, and will therefore help tremendously with Capital Improvement Requests, federal and state grant applications, and negotiations with land and business owners.

II. PROJECT GOALS

The goals of the Riverwalk and Historic Trail are as follows:

- To preserve and enhance the ecology of the river corridor;
- To provide much needed green space in the downtown area;
- To enhance views and image, strengthen the existing businesses, and increase property values;
- To create a new front side for commercial enterprises;
- To encourage redevelopment of vacant buildings and land on adjacent parcels and in the downtown area (New businesses will increase the stability and marketability of the downtown area, and offset the cost of land acquisition, park improvements, and ongoing maintenance.);
- To create a consistent visual vocabulary in harmony (both scale and character) with the existing city fabric which will enhance and promote new development in the area;
- To link historic and cultural sites;
- To create new recreational opportunities for pedestrians and joggers, and cyclists;
- To promote greater evening and weekend use of the riverfront;
- To discourage illegal dumping.

LATURE GROWTH CROSS-SECTION



III. CITY / GENERAL HISTORY

The area around the North River was first settled in 1626, when a small band of English colonists led by Roger Conant left their encampment on Cape Ann for the more sheltered environs and better soils of the North River Valley. They called their village Brooksby for its "several sparkling brooks of clear water." Conant and his companions were joined in 1628 by Governor John Endicott who bore an official charter for the land, and named the settlement Salem, from the Hebrew "shalom," meaning peace.

The North River was said at this time to be navigable at high tide in small boats as far upstream as Mill Pond (now Peabody Square). Early maps show a wide, meandering stream interspersed with several small ponds. Around 1635, Captain William Trask, who owned some 50 acres of land along the North River, built a gristmill at Mill Pond. In subsequent years, he built additional mills at his homestead (near the present Howley Street) and further downstream at Frye's Mills (now part of Salem). Other early industries in the village included a glass factory on Aborn Street, which operated from 1638 to about 1645, pottery and brick works along Central Street, a soap factory on what is now Howley Street, and leather tanning near Trask's mill.

Around 1740, entrepreneur Joseph Southwick built a leather manufacturing factory on the river, expanding the cottage industry of leather tanning, and other manufacturers followed suit. The process of turning hides into leather required large amounts of water and oak bark; hence the resources of the community were ideally suited to the expansion of the industry.

Seeking greater control of their own affairs, Danvers (then known as the Village Parish of Salem) and Peabody (known as the Middle Precinct of Salem) banded together to seek separation from Salem. In 1752 they became the Town of Danvers, of which South Danvers (now Peabody) was a part.

By the 1850's South Danvers was primarily a manufacturing town. Its interests differed from those of Danvers, a farming community. As early as 1772, the question of separation had been raised, and was raised again in 1828, and in 1834. The town even had two town halls and two high schools, and town meetings alternated between the two. In 1855, South Danvers seceded from the Town of Danvers, to become the Town of South Danvers. In 1868, paying homage to their most famous native son, the international financier and philanthropist George Peabody, they renamed themselves the Town of Peabody.

George Peabody (1795-1869) was one of the country's first philanthropists. Born in the farmhouse at 205 Washington Street (now the George Peabody House Civic Center, a local history museum and civic meeting place), he was apprenticed as a clerk in an apothecary and general store at a young age. Further experience in his own wholesale dry goods business led him to

London on buying trips, where he gradually moved into the field of international banking. His reputation was established upon negotiating a risky \$8 million loan for the State of Maryland, and gradually became the best-known and most trusted American financier abroad. In 1854 Junius Morgan joined him as a partner, and on Peabody's retirement in 1864 the firm became J.S. Morgan and Company, predecessor to the famous New York financial institution.

During his lifetime, Peabody gave millions of dollars to charitable causes, including \$3.3 million to the Southern Education Fund and \$2.5 million to found the Peabody Homes in London, which today owns over 11,000 housing units in London. Many of his contributions benefited schools, colleges, libraries and museums, reflecting his belief, oft-quoted, that education is "a debt due from present to future generations."

By 1850, tanning had become Peabody's major industry. A map of 1852 shows Peabody as a thickly settled community along the banks of its downtown waterways. Further out, houses and farms were thinly scattered along the stream valleys. By this time two rail lines passed through Peabody, and the North River and Goldthwaite Brook had been channelized between massive granite block walls to accommodate the railroad tracks and their numerous sidings. A census of industry in 1855 showed 27 tanneries, 24 currying shops, 13 morocco and lining skin shops, a patent leather factory, and 12 shoe manufacturers. There were also three glue factories, two potteries, four carriage builders, seven textile mills, and several granite quarries. Throughout the 1850s and 1860s manufacturing grew rapidly, taking advantage of the stream of Irish immigrants who flooded the town.

The demand for leather during the Civil War boosted Peabody's economy, but postwar changes in style challenged leather producers to innovate and respond to new market forces and methods of production. The Great Boston Fire of 1872 and the leather strike of 1886 dealt heavy blows to the heavy leather industry. The growth of the railroads meant that by the 1880s, livestock was slaughtered in the Midwest, and only the hides were shipped east, threatening the subsidiary industries of glue, gelatin, and soap, which had used byproducts of Peabody's slaughterhouses. However, by 1890, Peabody had 61 leather factories and 17 boot and shoe shops, employing a total of 1339 people. In 1894 A.C. Lawrence established the A.C. Lawrence Leather Company, and in 25 years built it into the community's largest tannery, employing 2150 workers on three separate sites.

By about 1919, at the peak of the industry, Peabody proclaimed itself "the Leather Capital of the World." It was a thriving manufacturing center that supplied leather to shoe factories and other industries. Over 8600 men and women worked in 91 tanneries and related businesses. Tanneries flourished along Foster and Walnut Streets, producing a total of \$521,000,000 in leather products. Immigrants from Greece, Turkey, Armenia, Poland, Ireland, Finland, Italy, Portugal, Russia, Latvia, and other countries thronged the city looking for work and to build a better life for themselves and their families. The International Festival commemorates this rich ethnic diversity in a weeklong celebration each September.

Aside from the leather industry, Peabody was also renowned for other products of significance such as glue, shoes, boots, textiles, soap, gelatin, chocolate, milled grain and bark. Some of these industries were leather by-products and others were established because of Peabody's abundant water supply. The Native Americans and earlier settlers appreciated Peabody's North River watershed. Native Americans were the first tanners in the area, and early settlers, such as Captain William Trask, built America's first gristmill.

From 1919 to the present, due to the rising cost of labor, accessibility to markets, and environmental regulations, many tanneries closed in Peabody, leaving the City with less than ten related leather industries still in operation. Following World War II, Peabody joined in the suburbanization of America. Thousands of homes were built on new subdivision streets in West Peabody on what had previously been farmland. The Northshore Shopping Center was built in 1958, drawing retail traffic from Peabody's Main Street. In the 1960's, cheaper overseas labor and increasingly stringent environmental and safety regulations led to the decline of leather production, and many plants closed or moved away. The North River was an integral part of the industrial complexes on Walnut and Foster Streets. The water from the river was used for both processing and disposal. But with the decline of the leather industries and environmental concerns, the use of the North River for manufacturing became obsolete.

Today, only a handful of leather-related factories remain, and most employ the leather finishing process only. Several of the tanneries have been converted to elderly housing or condominiums, while others remain vacant or are used for warehousing and storage. Spectacular fires during the 1980s destroyed two large blocks of tanneries. Industry in Peabody is now concentrated at Centennial Industrial Park, a campus-like setting adjacent to Route 128, where high-technology and other firms provide diversified jobs for the region.



IV. PROJECT HISTORY & CONTEXT

Downtown Peabody & North River Neighborhood

Despite the presence of two regional shipping malls within a three-mile radius of Downtown Peabody, commercial activity thrives along Main Street. Old-time wrought iron lampposts, renovated historic commercial facades, clean, tree-lined sidewalks, wood signs, and a healthy mix of retail and service establishments line the street. The North River flows virtually unnoticed in the heart of Downtown Peabody, beginning at the confluence of Goldthwaite Brook and Proctor Brook at Peabody Square. In contrast to the healthy commerce which serves nearby residents well, vacant lots and boarded-up buildings, including former leather tanneries, abut the narrow granite-walled channel from Peabody Square, through to Salem, before the river empties into Salem Sound.

Productive activities in industrial buildings have traditionally contributed to the vitality of the historic Downtown area. Now vacant land and underutilized industrial buildings create a swath from the Fire Site through the Walnut Street area to Central Street, and also stretching north of Upton Street. The area was home to over one hundred tanneries, for which Peabody was known as the “Leather Capital of the World.” Previous zoning changes were intended to help stimulate this important area, but after more than two decades, the desired rejuvenation has not occurred. Although millions of dollars have been spent on Main Street and in the surrounding residential neighborhoods through the Small Cities Program, the industrial areas on Walnut Street and Foster Street did not experience the intended rebirth. Instead the area has deteriorated further, and nearby residents are faced with the visual indications of economic difficulties. The industrial buildings have rarely been used for 20-35 years. Debris and fire hazards threaten the health and safety of residents. Jobs located in the area are important but limited in number. Tax revenues are also limited; tax abatements are frequent, and some properties are in the tax title process.

Because the area is not easily accessible from regional transportation, large industrial firms are unlikely to move to the area. The multistory mill buildings do not have the floor size, building services, access, or parking required by today’s industrial tenants. While healthy businesses are housed in some of the buildings, the character, history and location of this area provide many currently unfulfilled opportunities to the community.

The Riverwalk was first conceived in the 1990 Master Plan Update as a way to spur the revitalization of the blighted and largely vacant industrial districts downtown. Then in 1992, residents, business owners, and community leaders developed a blueprint for the future of these districts, focusing on the North River and its tributaries as catalysts for redevelopment. The plan recommends two general implementation strategies. First, develop the North River corridor as a Riverwalk: to connect open space and provide needed breathing room in the congested downtown area; to provide a setting for exploring Peabody’s history and rich ethnic culture; and to plan for future mass transit on the rail-bed which parallels the Riverwalk. Second, expand the allowed uses in the formerly industrial areas to include commercial, office, and residential uses, so that these areas will conform to the character of Main Street and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Through this participatory planning process and the efforts of citizen groups like the Master Plan Task Force, the Open Space Plan Advisory Committee, and the North River Neighborhood Plan Task Force, the concept for this Riverwalk has received

wide attention and support. The planning staff in Salem has also expressed their interest in carrying the Riverwalk downstream to Salem Harbor.

In 1992, Mayor Peter Torigian established the North River Neighborhood Plan Task Force to explore the future of the Downtown area, to find ways to increase its economic potential and to upgrade its visual character. The North River Neighborhood Task Force set three goals:

1. With the City of Peabody, oversee a design competition for the North River Riverwalk;
2. Promote the North River Corridor as an open space, transit, pedestrian, and historic link;
3. Identify economic development strategies for the highest and best use of the vacant lots and underutilized buildings in the North River corridor.

The sharp contrast between this busy commercial district and the run-down industrial area adjacent to it was a major focus of the City's 1990 Master Plan. With narrow, congested streets, multistory buildings, small lots, limited parking, and piecemeal zoning changes, the downtown required a comprehensive vision for the area, not parcel-based, developer driven change. The Master Plan Committee, composed of representatives from City boards and civic groups, recommended that the river be reclaimed as the centerpiece of a new urban park. Acting as the spine for economic growth and redevelopment, the park would be surrounded by a mixed-use district with retail and housing elements. Expanded commercial and institutional uses would be encouraged, through changes in zoning, to rehabilitate the old mill buildings and fill in the gaps in the cityscape created by vacant lots.

Comprehensive Planning & Public Policy

In comprehensive and open space planning from the 1970s onward, the City recognized the benefits, both ecological and recreational, of using long, narrow corridors of land to link natural, cultural, and recreational resources (historic buildings, parks, and conservation land) into a comprehensive network.

The Riverwalk project will play a critical function in reducing congestion throughout downtown Peabody. Downtown Peabody has been designated as a Concentrated Development Center (CDC) for the region through a Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Peabody, Mass Highway Department (MHD), and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). The Riverwalk will reduce congestion and energy consumption by providing an alternate means of transportation in and around downtown Peabody. It will improve the environment by providing a corridor landscaped with native plants suitable for this habitat in place of the barren, littered environment that currently exists. It will mitigate flooding by providing permanent flood storage capacity. It will improve pedestrian safety by providing an auto-free zone for pedestrian circulation. Lastly, it will contribute to revitalization of the downtown industrial area by acting as a new circulation spine for redevelopment.

Greenways Program

In 1998 the City completed the update to the Recreation and Open Space Plan (ROSP). The Division of Conservation Services described this plan as excellent and sections are used as a model for the program.

The Riverwalk is part of the City's comprehensive, citywide effort to create an integrated trail system that will eventually extend beyond the City's borders, to provide an alternative route to the region's congested roads and highways. Using a combination of railroad rights-of-way, publicly-owned property and negotiated easements with private property owners, the Riverwalk and intersecting Bikeway will create a continuous 7.2 mile-long greenway from its eastern boundary with Salem to its western boundary with Middleton/Lynnfield, which will link major open space parcels and cultural focal points within the City.

In comprehensive and open space planning from the 1970s onward, the City recognized the benefits, both ecological and recreational, of using long, narrow corridors of land to link parks and conservation land into a comprehensive open space network. Together, the Riverwalk and Historic Trail form a Greenway, travelling a one-mile corridor through downtown Peabody. The trail will connect Salem, Harmony Grove Cemetery, The North River, The Old South Burial Ground, Goldthwaite, Proctor and Strongwater Brooks, Main Street, historic districts and buildings, Peabody Square, City Hall, The Peabody Institute Library, Leather City Common, Riverwalk Park, Old Danvers Bleachery, and the George Peabody House Civic Center. If the City of Salem continues the trail, it could be possible for a person to walk or ride through the downtown, along the North River and its tributaries all the way to Salem where the North River empties into Beverly Harbor. As

envisoned, the North River Riverwalk will allow people to travel from the MBTA commuter system in Salem, along the North River, running parallel to Walnut Street to Peabody Square, and South parallel to Foster Street to the George Peabody House on Foster Street.

Combining the North River corridor with open space parcels would provide the downtown area with the following benefits:

- Recreational jogging and walking will be possible for residents and employees of the downtown. The trail will provide for more efficient and safe movement of pedestrians, by providing a pedestrian only route between the commercial and residential areas of the downtown. The linear trail will expand the choice of non-motorized routes when completing errands.
- Preserving the corridor as open space would also provide important environmental benefits. Such a corridor would moderate the microclimate, cooling surrounding properties in the summer and buffering them from harsh winds in the winter.
- The corridor would provide flood storage during periods of intense or prolonged rainfall, channeling water away from private properties downstream to Salem Harbor. The corridor would provide habitats for birds and small mammals, allowing free movement and providing habitat edges, where species diversity is highest. The improved landscaping would help dilute non-point source pollution before entering the North River.
- An open space corridor, combined with transient options, would provide a third means for moving people through the downtown area, potentially reducing traffic on Main and Walnut Streets, and creating a new "front side" for commercial enterprises.
- The Riverwalk would utilize vacant lots, sites of abandoned buildings, and non-vegetated gravel areas. The development of this project will greatly enhance the condition of these and surrounding areas. Additional landscaping will create a welcoming environment for visitors to the downtown.

There is little existing vegetation along the route of the Riverwalk. There is brush (maples, sumac, etc.) and seasonal herbaceous growth (grasses, goldenrod, etc.). A row of maples (a mix of *Acer negundo* and *Acer saccharum*) along the bank of the river behind the Post Office are relatively similar in height, about 35 feet. They are about 6 to 8 inches in diameter, and are in good condition.

Master Plan

The City's Master Plan is updated every ten years. The 1990 Master Plan was adopted by the Peabody City Council in early 1991. (The 2001 Master Plan Update is now being drafted.) The 1990 plan outlines issues and recommendations for the downtown area. The Downtown 2005 Plan provides an action plan for the downtown area, noting the importance of constructing the Riverwalk.

During the development boom of the 1980s, and prior to beginning the master plan process, the City Council entertained rezoning proposals for conversion of several of the vacant tanneries downtown into market-rate condominiums. Since residential use is not allowed in the Light-Industrial zoning district, several parcels were rezoned to Business Central. These include the Gnecco and Grilk and JEC tanneries on Foster Street, and the Flynn tannery on Howley Street. A similar proposal for the former Henry Leather site on Main Street was disallowed, because of its immediate proximity to operating tanneries.

During the public hearings for these rezonings, and again during the public participation component of the 1990 Master Plan, residents and employers raised several concerns regarding the future of the industrial. The task force addressed the following issues in formulating its findings:

Although the Walnut Street area is no longer a thriving industrial center, the area still hosts many jobs. The task force therefore sought to build on the strengths of the Walnut Street area: to find businesses for the vacant or underused structures which compliment or augment those already in place; to take advantage of the built-in labor force in the neighborhoods nearby; to stimulate retail and commercial growth by allowing residential development on selected parcels not adjacent to active industry; to carefully control the type of residential development so that it neither gentrifies nor blights the area; and to beautify the downtown with the Riverwalk and streetscape improvements so that the North River corridor will be an active focal point for open space, historic, cultural, pedestrian, and mass transit links throughout the downtown area.

Mass Transit Links and Transportation

The Boston and Maine Railroad, a division of Guilford, owns and operates the single line of railroad track which runs parallel to the North River from the Salem Depot to Peabody Square. At Peabody Square, this line branches to the south and west. About half the length of the Riverwalk is paralleled by this at-grade, single-track railroad line which provides freight service to Eastman Gelatine Corporation on Washington Street and to businesses at Centennial Industrial Park. The freight train rumbles through Peabody Square as often as twice per weekday, depending on demand. This cargo spur connects with the main line between Boston and points north at the Salem commuter rail station on Bridge Street.

The southerly branch crosses Central Street and Lowell Street, at Peabody Square and heads south parallel to Foster Street to Route 95. This southerly branch is currently used to transport cattle bone and freight to Eastman Gelatine Corporation on Washington Street. Although this spur is in good repair all the way to First Ave, it is not used extensively. On the westerly side of First Ave, the southerly branch is an abandoned right-of-way across land owned by Eastman Gelatine.

The westerly spur out of Peabody Square branches to form two lines, the Lowell Line and the Danvers Line. The Main Lowell Line is abandoned west of Peabody Square as it parallels Lowell Street. This spur is currently in the planning and design phase for construction of the Peabody Bikeway, which will provide connections from Peabody Square through to Middleton.

The Danvers line and several other abandoned or underutilized lines provide additional opportunities to create Greenway connections throughout the City.

The 1990 Master Plan highlighted the possibility of using this railroad right-of-way for passenger service at some point in the future. Currently, Peabody is not served by the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) Commuter Rail; however, private bus service is available from Peabody Square to Salem and the shopping malls in Peabody and Danvers. Additionally, the City of Peabody is researching the possibility of a comprehensive bus program that will connect commuter termini in Salem and Lynn with the major employment centers at Peabody Square, the Northshore Shopping Center, and Centennial Industrial Park. Peabody also has several taxi companies and an on-demand van service for elderly citizens run by the Council on Aging. At present, ongoing use of the rail line prohibits use of the right-of-way for construction of the Riverwalk. Future abandonment of this line may provide the opportunity to create two parallel walkways along each side of the channel, and create a clear and direct connection from the Salem line to Peabody Square, where the trail intersects the Peabody Bikeway and the southern stretch of the Riverwalk.

Water Quality

Watershed and tributary maps for the North River, Goldthwaite Brook, and Proctor Brook are provided in Appendix D.

The following are notations from the record in a historical review of North River water quality:

In 1877 a Commission was appointed to investigate and plan to eliminate the existing nuisance of the North River. The Commission recommended two inceptor sewers, one from the north side and the other from the south side of the City. It was suggested that the north branch take care of sewage of Peabody. The special commission on sanitary matters proposed extending all sewers to deeper water from their present outlets. A minority report suggested the building of a tide dam at the North River outlet and filling in of the flats.

In 1893 it was recognized that filthy conditions in waters, in and around the City, needed prompt attention.

In 1896 one of the prime causes for a trunk sewer was the pollution of the North River from Peabody waste. The State Board of Health said that the worst nuisance was found in the North River.

In 1901 the State Legislature gave the Salem and Peabody Boards of Health mandatory authority to prevent the pollution of the North River.

In 1903 the North River was recognized as nothing more than an open sewer running through the heart of the City, befouling the atmosphere of the neighborhood, a menace to health, and destructive to the hope of increasing real estate values.

In 1908 the Salem Board of Health asked for \$25,000 to dredge the North River.

In 1909 the Salem Board of Health requested that the State Board of Health provide assistance with cleaning the North River. It became necessary to discharge sewage to the North River at the City line because of the condition of the trunk sewer, built in 1906.

In 1914 Peabody Industries began to grow. The North River was used to dispose of tanning waste. Sludge began flowing down the river, bathing had to be discontinued and the Bath House at Rope point was taken down. The Salem Health department petitioned the State Health Department to prevent the overflow of sewage into the North River.

In 1918 it was estimated that 872 million gallons of sewage was discharged into the North River between 1916 and 1918. Conditions in the North River (above the dam) were almost as bad as they were before the sewer inceptor was operative.

From 1919 to 1921 the North River conditions continued to worsen.

In 1921 the State Board of Health held a hearing on the North River nuisance. The Salem Board of Health said drastic action should be taken to bring about observation of laws and regulations governing the North River and the wastes discharged thereto. Existing conditions were a serious threat to the health and comfort of the people. Salem petitioned the State Board of Health to investigate the North River and enact orders to prevent further pollution. A hearing was held at the state house.

In 1923 the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) said the discharges of sewage into the North River through the by-pass gate at the City line was the chief source of its serious pollution in recent years. Considerable pollution was also due to drainage and seepage from sludge deposits that were likely to increase and was difficult if not impossible to prevent. After the trunk sewer was completed, its operation for a time relieved the objectionable conditions of the North River. But in recent years the serious nuisance had again appeared in the North River.

In 1929 Peabody reported that over 500 people in Salem, near the March Street area, were using the North River as a cesspool. Peabody discharged 2 million gallons a day of waste into the North River.

In 1933 the condition of the harbors and their tributary waters were reported as "obnoxious."

In 1934 the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) ruled that the offensive condition of the North River and portions of Salem Harbor required concerted action by the South Essex Sewage District (SESD) and by the Salem and Peabody Boards of Health. A hearing was held before the State Legislature. The North River was admitted to be an open sewer.

In 1935 Counsel for the South Essex Sewage District (SESD) favored the monitoring of the North River sewage and pollution-control regulations by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). The MDPH had similar legislation for other rivers. There were local concerns that pollution laws could strangle industry and many court cases were expected. SESD suggested that the MDPH personnel be increased to insure administration of control programs especially in Salem and Peabody.

In 1944 Salem engaged engineers to investigate the North River, to advise whether conditions indicated that any outlets in the River were dumping waste material of any kind, and to advise steps necessary to eliminate the North River nuisance. The Salem Board of Health ordered that the SESD by-pass gate at the Peabody line must be kept closed at all times or it would proceed in filing complaints against the SESD, as provided by law.

Historically, the river once supported such uses as swimming and shellfish harvesting. However, due to the poor water quality of the river, particularly high fecal coliform counts, the North River is currently classified as "SC," which means it is suitable for most recreational uses except swimming and shellfish harvesting. The high fecal coliform levels have resulted in the closure of all shellfish areas in the North River. According to the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) there are soft-shelled clams and quahogs in the River, however the beds have been closed since the mid-1960s. DMF also indicated that there are no fish runs in the river due to poor water quality. Low dissolved oxygen (DO) levels in the river, as identified on the Massachusetts 303(d) list of waters, make it difficult to support aquatic life in the river and are likely impacting the aquatic population in both the North River and its tributaries. A copy of Salem Sound 2000's most recent "Beaches and Streams" water quality report is provided in Appendix H. Unchecked non-point source pollution in the North River and its tributaries can adversely affect the various coastal boating, fishing, swimming, and other recreational activities downstream. Water from the North River reaches the North River Canal Park in Salem, Salem Willows Park in Salem, Dane Street Beach in Beverly,

Lynch Park in Beverly. Best Management Practices are increasingly used in new developments and redevelopment projects, under recent environmental regulations, including Floodplain Zoning, the State Wetlands Protection Act and Rivers Protection Act, new State Stormwater Regulations (Phase I & Phase II), and the City of Peabody Wetlands and Rivers Protection Regulations. The proposed open space protection, enhancement, and mitigation is consistent with the North Coastal Watershed Team (NCWT) and Salem Sound 2000 initiative to increase water quality standards for tributaries leading to Salem Sound.

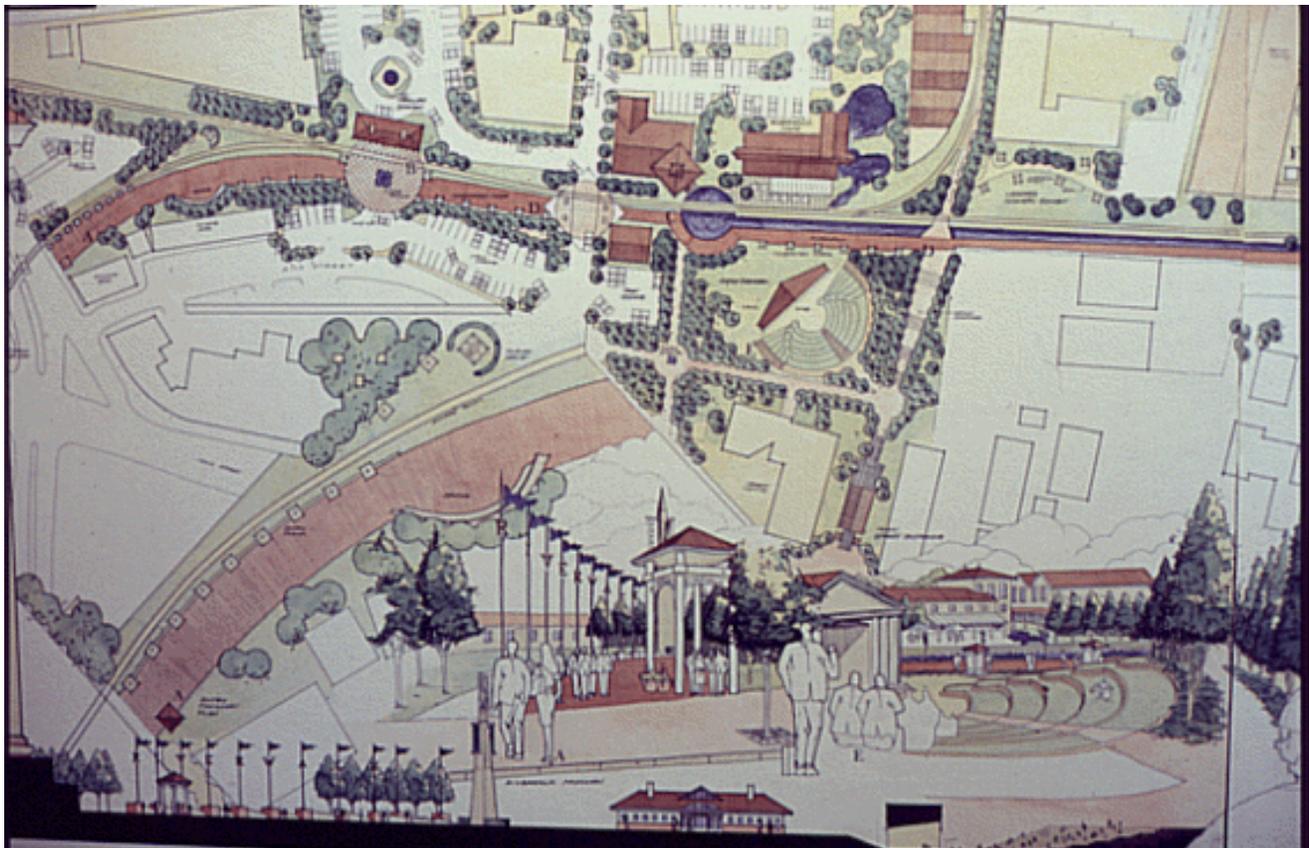
Environmental Permitting may be required for constructing portions of the Riverwalk. These permits include: a Notice of Intent (NOI) and Order of Conditions (OOC) from the Peabody Conservation Commission (PCC); an Environmental Notification Form (ENF) from the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA); a 404 Permit from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers; and a 401 Water Quality Permit from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The City does not anticipate obstacles to obtaining any of these permits, in consideration of the environmental benefits of the Riverwalk project.

Floodplain & Floodway Protection

Many years ago the North River, Goldthwaite Brook, Proctor Brook, and Strongwater Brook, were covered over without consideration for the free flow of water. Channelization of the North River was seen as a great improvement for abutting properties and businesses.

Much of the Riverwalk falls within the Flood Boundary District, which is an overlay district. The land planned for the Riverwalk is in the floodplain and floodway, and cannot be intensely developed under current zoning. The Riverwalk will ensure protection of new open space within the downtown, within the Flood Zone and along the Floodway.

In 2000, the City of Peabody adopted the Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan, in the effort to eliminate and mitigate flood hazards in City, particularly in the downtown, along the banks of the North River, Goldthwaite Brook, and Proctor Brook. Since the banks of these waterways are in the flood plain, and cannot be built upon, the Riverwalk is a natural way to provide flood storage, to preserve the river ecology, and to furnish new recreational opportunities for the downtown area. Protection of open space along the Riverwalk Corridor will reduce the amount and severity of flood damage.



V. DESIGN COMPETITION

The first challenge in the Riverwalk planning process was to enable the North River Neighborhood to see the North River canal in a different light. In 1993 the Department of Community Development and Planning sponsored a design competition for the Riverwalk concept. The City had several goals for the competition, including:

- Focus attention on this neglected river corridor;
- Spark the imagination of business groups and citizens by showing them practical yet exciting and innovative solutions for a Riverwalk;
- Show in pictorial form the ideas which could be incorporated in the Riverwalk;
- Highlight the connections between the River, the rail line, and nearby historic buildings;
- Show how the "backs" of buildings that overlook the river could be altered to take advantage of the scenery and pedestrian circulation from the Riverwalk;
- Illustrate how businesses in converted buildings, walkways, parking areas, the rail line, and the river could weave together to create an urbane outdoor area in a major urban center;
- Sketch views of the Riverwalk;
- Consider how visitors and members of the community could gain enjoyment from the river's edge and the downtown.

Five planners from the Department presented the format to the Mayor and City, and the benefits which would accrue. The jury was composed of design professionals who had previously worked for the City, as well as local civic leaders. Through press coverage and outreach to schools and universities beginning in January 1993, word spread, and the City received 82 registrations from all over the United States, Canada, and the People's Republic of China.

Participants were invited to design a new Riverwalk along the historic North River, featuring plazas, historic and cultural features, pathways and green connections to Peabody's central business district and surrounding neighborhoods. The program required a continuous paved path along a half-mile length of the land designated for the Riverwalk (the stretch between Peabody Square and the Peabody-Salem line), with an entry plaza and other plazas at designated locations, secondary paths to important cultural landmarks, and edges formed by fencing, plantings or the walls of new or renovated buildings. A fence or impenetrable plantings were required to separate the primary path from the North River, whenever the Riverwalk directly abuts the River. A similar barrier was also required to separate the primary path from the railroad, whenever the Riverwalk directly abuts the railroad right-of-way.

Participants at the presentation were primarily concerned with the potential for enlarging the competition site. Although competitors were allowed to sketch the facades of new or rehabilitated buildings fronting on the Riverwalk, the area actually allotted for the Riverwalk was narrow, and several designers requested expansion onto adjacent vacant sites. The City maintained the site restrictions in order to find realistic design solutions. In retrospect, the City realized that the planning and design process must take into account adjacent land-use and pedestrian connections. The jury favored schemes that followed the site constraints. The cover of this Plan highlights the second-place entry submitted by Wayne John Jacques of Mansfield, MA (Appendix A).

Judging Criteria

The following six judging criteria should be used as a basis for future design and construction of the Riverwalk:

1. The design should develop a consistent visual vocabulary to create a walkway that will be perceived as a continuous spatial experience.
2. The Riverwalk design should acknowledge the scale and character of surrounding buildings and landscape.
3. The design should promote safe pedestrian traffic in the downtown area.
4. The design should encourage the future development of the Walnut Street area (see locus map), while seeking to preserve the viable businesses that now operate there.
5. The Riverwalk must be accessible to persons with disabilities.
6. The design should be durable, of lasting materials, and should not require extraordinary expense to maintain.

Winning Entries

The first place winner was Jorge Enes of Peabody. His scheme, captured in simple vignettes that conveyed the urban character of the place, was composed of understated site interventions. Generally, Enes's scheme did not address the re-use potential of vacant sites or buildings adjacent to the Riverwalk. Enes proposed a tree-lined walkway with community garden plots reminiscent of the gridded leather tanyards, and steel and concrete site details which evoke the site's former utilitarian structures. Enes used a vocabulary already established elsewhere downtown, such as rows of trees, masonry walls, wrought iron fencing, and trellises. The jury applauded the scheme for its feasibility and faithful adherence to the City's existing urban character.

The second-place winner was Wayne John Jacques of Mansfield, Massachusetts. In an extraordinary graphic presentation, flags, banners, kiosks, an outdoor café and lighting created a festival atmosphere along the promenade. Obelisks and rehabilitated architecture formed focal points along various axial paths, while adaptive reuse of buildings was evident in such labels as lofts, galleries, and new retail areas. The architecture and detailing, with red hipped roofs, classical columns, and clipped hedges, were reminiscent of Italian hillside villa-gardens. The jury appeared to be uneasy with the Mediterranean style of this scheme.

The third-place winner, Phil Bevins of Waltham, Massachusetts, focused on the redevelopment aspect of the Riverwalk. Bevins suggested garden apartments, riverside cafes, shopping arcades, a museum, a gallery, and an open amphitheater, all linked by a path of concrete pavers accented with wrought iron fencing, stone columns, rows of trees, and formal flower beds. The additional programming was well integrated with the Riverwalk, but appeared to rely on tourist demand for the facilities.

The five honorable mentions were all characterized by a theme: the telling of Peabody's history through a narrative Riverwalk. One interpreted Peabody's leather history, calling the Riverwalk "The Blueskin Trail." Another focused on cogs and wheels as design elements, inventing a kind of "found" industrial landscape. Others envisioned the Riverwalk as a chronology of man's presence in the North River valley. In the end, the jury preferred schemes without a heavy narrative agenda that would be the backdrop of a new economic landscape.

The winning competition entries were exhibited at the City's International Festival, a popular ethnic fair, and were received enthusiastically. Involvement with the North River planning process at every step empowered the community. . The City built support, raised expectation levels, and is making progress with the project.

VI. ACTION PLAN

The community's overriding goal for the Riverwalk is to create a park that is a source of enjoyment and pride for Peabody residents. To achieve this overall objective, however, there must be a more precise statement of the desired character, quality, and use of the riverfront. A coherent, consistent set of objectives should ensure that various activities and projects do not conflict with this plan, and that this plan does not preempt the ability to carry out those projects.

The following sections provide a comprehensive plan for implementing the Riverwalk concept as a park along the banks of the North River, extending from the Peabody-Salem line to the George Peabody House Civic Center. A conceptual plan of the proposed Riverwalk is illustrated in Appendix L.

The proposed Riverwalk extends from the Peabody-Salem line, where future connection will link to the new North River Canal Park in Salem. The Riverwalk travels along the North River, adjacent to Harmony Grove Road. At the intersection of Howley Street, the Riverwalk turns and crosses from the SESD station and auto-repair shop behind the old Stahl Building, crossing the Railroad, and travels west along the North River. Several buildings in this area must be removed or relocated in order to allow necessary room for the Riverwalk. The Riverwalk continues West to Peabody Square, crossing Caller Street and Wallis Street. At Wallis Street the North River channel diverts underground from Walnut Street. The North River is formed by the confluence of Proctor and Goldthwaite Brooks under Peabody Square and the Peabody District Courthouse. The Riverwalk crosses Peabody Square and meets Goldthwaite Brook at the Foster Street Municipal Parking Lot. The Riverwalk travels adjacent to the Brook, crossing Church Street, to Franklin Street, where the brook again travels underground along Foster Street. The Riverwalk travels along Foster Street, to Goldthwaite Brook, where the channel again emerges, providing access to the public. From here, the Riverwalk continues down Foster Street, accessing the main entrance to the Old Danvers Bleachery, traveling underneath the bridge connecting Woodman Engineering, through 119R Foster Street, and Rex Finishing, to the George Peabody House Civic Center, the birthplace of George Peabody, namesake of the City.

The following objectives provide a unified strategy for the realization of a complete Riverwalk Park, including planning, funding, land and easement acquisitions, design, and construction of enhancements.

Action 1: Funding - Obtain funding for the acquisition of land and easements, construction of the Riverwalk, and instillation of historic signage.

The City must appropriate funding for Riverwalk acquisition and construction. While several federal and state grant programs exist which may assist in funding for the project, funds are limited and prioritized, and several of the grant sources require municipal control (easement or ownership) of the construction corridor. A Capital Improvement Project Request is contained in Appendix F. This document provides a systematic funding sequence, by prioritizing trail segments with estimated acquisition costs.

The Riverwalk will likely be constructed using a combination of grant monies, city funds, and leveraged private investment. Wherever possible, the City should attempt to leverage private funding for construction or installation of amenities on private property. The City should apply for state and federal funding for construction of the Riverwalk, including the following programs:

- TEA-21 Enhancements - Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities - The *North River Walk* is listed for funding under the State Transportation Bond Bill. It is listed as Project #728 in the TEA-21 Legislation, Subtitle F, High Priority Projects. The *North River Walk* corridor is also identified as an Active Project, on page F-16A, in Appendix F, of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The City should work to maintain this status and obtain available funding. Additional information is contained in Appendix E.
- DEM Recreational Trails Program
- DEM Greenways Small Grants Program
- DEM Riverways Grant Program
- CZM Coastal Access Grant Program
- Small Cities Program - Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).
- MHC Survey and Planning Grant (Historic Trail Amenities)

Action 2: Land Acquisition - As necessary, purchase land and easements along the banks and trail corridor.

In most cases permanent easements and right-of-ways can be obtained from landowners and as part of site plan review procedures and negotiations with developers. Other riverfront land and corridor land can be obtained through a fee simple purchase of critical parcels of land. There are several stretches where land or easements along the river must be in public ownership to insure a continuous Riverwalk. The City must negotiate with landowners to acquire land and easements along the corridor. It may be necessary or desirable to acquire land and easements for complete stretches of the Riverwalk before finalizing design and construction plans. This will ensure that the trail segments do not dead-end, and that there is an immediate public benefit to any construction. Alternatively, it may be in the City's best interests to construct specific stretches of the Park as land and easements become available. Design for each segment of the trail must meet the overall unification and enhancement of the corridor, and the constraints and opportunities of each location. A draft Easement Agreement is provided in Appendix C.

The following section, entitled "Existing Conditions & Site Improvements by Parcel," contains a parcel-specific plan for acquisition of land and easements.

Action 3: Corridor Improvements - Design and implement site-level improvements to the rivers edge, as land and funding becomes available, for construction of the Riverwalk, including nodes, corridors, gateways, and edges.

Obtain complete parcel by parcel and corridor survey basemaps. Design site-level improvements consistent with the conceptual plan and design palette for the Riverwalk and Historic Trail. The following section, entitled "Existing Conditions & Site Improvements by Parcel," contains a parcel-specific plan for easements and site improvements.

Action 4: Railroad Right-of-Way - Accommodate active rail service, and allow for potential future passenger service.

The proposed route for the Riverwalk is alongside the existing channel, opposite an active cargo rail line. Future abandonment of this spur may facilitate expansion and improvements to the Riverwalk, and/or a potential transit link.

Currently it serves two major industrial firms (Eastman Gelatine & Stahl Finish), and offers the potential of freight service along Foster Street to the industrial park area. Stopping active rail use would inconvenience current customers and close off the option of future rail service.

The railroad is as much a part of Peabody's industrial heritage as the River, the tannery buildings, and the workers' homes, and incorporating the lines into the design of the area will help ensure the success of the multi-modal objective of the project. The regular movement of the trains will add vibrancy and life to the downtown, and reminds residents and visitors that the industry and commerce are still very important elements of the City's character. Because of the downtown's surface crossings, the railroad already follows stringent safety precautions, and trains move very slowly.

There is currently the opportunity to create a region-wide mass transit system, which the City will want to be involved with. Rail passenger service to Peabody Square will provide a competitive advantage for local businesses and a convenience to local residents. For this reason, the existing rail line should be preserved and incorporated into the design for the Riverwalk. Plans for the park should allow for a passenger terminal should be located at near Peabody Square. Even before regional service, a local trolley could provide service during the hours that the rail branch is not used by freight trains.

Action 5: Mixed-use Redevelopment - Work with land and business owners to redevelop buildings that overlook the area, and implement façade improvements.

Main Street is primarily commercial, with offices or apartments above the ground floor in some buildings. Generally buildings are not setback from the sidewalk. Many of the facades on Main Street have been recently refurbished with updated or more contextually sensitive materials and more tasteful signage. Although the buildings are from different architectural periods, and have varying heights, together they form a cohesive streetscape with strong sense of enclosure. Walnut Street is transitioning from heavy industrial use to commercial and light-industrial use. A few of the buildings toward the Salem boundary have apartments above. Although generally the buildings on Walnut Street sit adjacent to the sidewalk, because of the vacant lots and lack of windows on the street, the streetscape is neither cohesive nor inviting. The side streets (Wallis, Caller, and Howley) have similar uses, interspersed with wood frame houses.

Peabody has twenty-two types of zoning districts in three general categories: residential, business, and industrial. Four of these zoning districts are represented in and around the Riverwalk Park. The Riverwalk and its immediate surroundings are zoned Light Industrial (IL). The properties on both sides of Main Street, and along Central Street and Foster Street, are zoned Central Business (BC). North of Walnut Street is a neighborhood zoned Residence Two (R2). The IL district allows retail and other commercial uses, various automotive uses including auto service stations, manufacturing, leather processing, machining, and stone cutting, all by right. The BC district allows one- and two-family dwellings and municipal buildings by right, and cluster developments, public housing and institutional uses by special permit.

The 1990 Master Plan suggested extending the revitalization of the Downtown to the underused industrial land and buildings by stimulating and assisting planned mixed-use redevelopment. Historically, the downtown's vitality has sprung from a mix of mutually supporting land uses, such as retail and service firms, manufacturing, municipal government, and residences. Carefully planned redevelopments that incorporate a similar lively mix of activities offer the best opportunity to upgrade this area in a manner that is responsive to the market, retains the character of surrounding neighborhoods, and benefits the civic center. Designating the area in the Zoning Ordinance as a Mixed Use District will aid landowners and developers adjacent to the Riverwalk in making best use of their property through a flexible, negotiated review procedure, similar to that overseen by the Community Development Authority (CDA) in the Designated Development District (DDD).

Encouraging mixed uses does not displace industry or change the character of the neighborhood. Rather the policy should give owners, whose property has been vacant for a number of years, an opportunity to consider other uses. Types of activities that could take root and flourish next to the Downtown commercial core include performing arts and other entertainment, artisans' studios and lofts, and neighborhood services.

Currently the buildings along Main Street present their backs to the river's edge and Walnut Street areas. The landform gives these buildings a fine potential view over the river's edge and beyond. Once improvements have occurred along the river's edge and new uses and pedestrian patterns evolve, owners of the buildings that overlook the area will have incentives to take advantage of the view and the customer stream. As land and business owners work to present a welcoming face north from Main Street, and south from Walnut Street, to the River, they will be helping complete the rehabilitation of the River's edge and surrounding areas, providing restaurants, shops, and other commercial activities that will attract people to the riverfront, serve riverfront visitors, and produce a sense of liveliness and vitality.

Facade improvements along the backsides of buildings that abut the Riverwalk will greatly improve the aesthetic appearance of the surroundings, until other improvements or new developments can replace them. It is anticipated that new building facades will be oriented toward the Riverwalk, to take advantage of increased pedestrian circulation.

Action 6: Secondary Corridors Network - Continue to make necessary improvements to the sidewalks and secondary corridors.

All the streets in the downtown area have sidewalks on both sides of the street. Future improvements to streets and intersections will create a network of pedestrian connections throughout the downtown, extending from the spine of the Riverwalk. Main Street's vitality has depended in part on the ability of residents to walk into and within downtown, but improvements could be made to encourage economic growth. Citizens' feelings of safety and comfort have been important to the social and civic life in the downtown. The flow of pedestrians is disrupted by traffic on major streets, such as Main Street, Central Street, and Foster Street. The City should work with landowners to establish safe, attractive walkways, where appropriate. Over time, as part of development review and approval procedures, and other negotiations, the City will obtain sidewalks and other accessways from new development and redevelopment to increase the network of circulation routes into and through the downtown area. The City should conduct a feasibility study for the instillation of neck-downs at crosswalks, and of widening main street sidewalks to allow for larger pedestrian environment. Main Street could be returned to its historical design by replacing the existing double-lanes with single lanes and angled parking to allow for tree plantings, benches, planters, and other amenities.

Action 7: Maintenance Plan - Work with the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department, or outside landscaping company, to provide regular maintenance of the Riverwalk.

The Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department and the Department of Community Development and Planning will maintain the Riverwalk and Riverwalk Park. In addition, the City may add the Riverwalk to the City's Roadside Maintenance Contract (Department of Public Services). Private contributions to the trail may include new plantings, extensions, and maintenance of the trail. Regular maintenance will include removal of litter and weeds, horticultural maintenance of planting beds, removal of garbage. A new extension of the Pride in Peabody program could include upkeep of planting beds along the entire trail, as a tangible symbol of community contributions to aesthetic improvements throughout the downtown.

Additionally, the Parks Department will develop tours and cleanups along the Riverwalk as part of National Trails Day, Earth Day, and Preservation Week. Local schools, boy and girl scout troops have expressed interest in trail maintenance projects.

Action 8: Historic Trail & Cultural Amenities - Coordinate the instillation of historic signage, art, and amenities in conjunction with trail improvements.

The Riverwalk will be an ideal location to feature public art, such as murals and sculptures. Selected art can reflect the historic, cultural, and aesthetic values of the community. The City should make every effort to incorporate such works into site-level improvements, working with local artists, schools, the Peabody Historical Commission, Peabody Historical Society, and George Peabody House Curator.

The Leather City Historic Trail will travel with the Riverwalk from the Salem line to Howley Street, where the trail diverges to highlight historic sites on Main Street. At Church Street the two trails meet again to travel down Foster Street to the Riverwalk Park, through the old Danvers Bleachery, to the George Peabody House Civic Center. A comprehensive plan for the Historic Trail can be found in Appendix N, as an application for the 2001 Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) Survey and Planning Grant.

The Leather City Historic Trail will highlight the industrial and architectural heritage of Peabody. In addition the City should work to establish a Tannery Museum. Development of the Leather City Historic Trail in conjunction with the Riverwalk will accomplish several goals:

- Development of a recreational historic trail will expose the public to an area of the City that is not accessible or inviting to residents or potential businesses. An historic trail will provide an incentive to convert an existing tannery into a working museum of the leather-making process. The trail will be a valuable educational experience for both children and adults.

In portraying the thriving 19th century industry in its original location, the trail will help residents to connect their current landscape with the past.

- Use of tannery artifacts (including smokestacks, machinery, etc.) will enhance the trail and provide dynamic and physical elements to this historic walk. Photographs will describe how tannery workers used each machine.
- Providing an historic link to the North River will give the City an opportunity to display interesting historical facts regarding the river, the railroad, downtown, and the industries.
- The historic trail also presents an opportunity to elaborate on Peabody’s ethnic past. Prior to World War I, Irish Greeks, Turks, and Italians were among the tannery employees. At that time, Greeks and Turks frequented the coffeehouses along Walnut Street and the Irish dominated the area south of Howley Street then known as "Dublin." Today, signs of its Greek heritage are still visible along Walnut Street, along with indications of other ethnic groups, such as the Portuguese, which have more recently inhabited the area.

Action 9: Design Guidelines - Coordinate the instillation of site amenities and the use of a consistent materials palette in conjunction with trail improvements.

The visual quality and scale of the corridor is important for creating a comfortable environment, and is dependent on easy pedestrian movement, orderly progression and orientation. Amenities such as lighting, clearly defined edges between activities, overhead tree canopies, uniform and comprehensible signage, and high quality paving materials will help establish a secure space. The overall cohesion of the Riverwalk is dependent on design elements and amenities that identify it as a single entity. Repetition of such amenities as lighting elements, signage, tree groupings, and cleanly defined edges will provide logical sequential movement and unity throughout the corridor. The City may wish to adopt a donation program for Riverwalk trail amenities. A simple set of design guidelines and materials palette is provided in Appendix K. All pedestrian ways and crossings must meet the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Action 10: Comprehensive Planning - Continue ongoing implementation of actions in related comprehensive plans.

Continue to implement the action plans of the 1990 Master Plan, 2001 Master Plan Update, 1998 Recreation and Open Space Plan (ROSP), and Downtown 2005 Plan, which recommend utilizing the Riverwalk as a magnet to attract people to the heart of the City, and to design spaces, facilities, and features to attract people both day and night, on both weekdays and weekends.

Action Matrix: Riverwalk Implementation Schedule:

Action No.	Theme	Responsible	Yr.	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Ongoing
Action 1	Funding	PD,M,CC,OA		*	*	*	*	*	
Action 2	Land Acquisition	PD,M,CC,OA		*	*				
Action 3	Corridor Improvements	PD,PRD, DPS		*	*	*	*	*	
Action 4	Railroad Right-of-Way	PD							*
Action 5	Mixed-use Redevelopment	PD		*	*				
Action 6	Secondary Corridors Network	PD,PRD, DPS				*	*		
Action 7	Maintenance Plan	PD,PRD, DPS							*
Action 8	Historic Trail & Cultural Amenities	PD,OA			*	*			
Action 9	Design Guidelines	PD		*					
Action 10	Comprehensive Planning	PD							*

PD	Planning Department
M	Mayor
CC	City Council
PRD	Parks & Recreation Department
DPS	Department of Public Services
OA	Outside Agency

VII. EXISTING CONDITIONS & SITE IMPROVEMENTS BY PARCEL

North River Corridor Description

The North River watershed is located in the eastern portion of the City, and is a 9.96 square mile drainage basin which receives drainage from four major brooks: Proctor, Goldthwaite, Tapley, and Strongwater. Proctor Brook flows from west Peabody parallel to Lowell Street, and Goldthwaite Brook parallels Lynnfield Street in South Peabody. These two brooks are piped under Peabody Square and meet under the District Courthouse to form the North River.

From the District Courthouse, the North River flows under Railroad Avenue and across Central Street. The River is visible at the rear of the parking lot behind the Skaliotis building at the corner of Central and Walnut Streets, and then is carried in culverts until it emerges behind the Post Office on Wallis Street. The river runs parallel to the railroad line from Wallis Street to Howley Street. East of Howley Street, the North River continues parallel to the railroad line into Salem to empty into the ocean at Beverly Harbor.

The granite and concrete walls that enclose the North River are generally in good condition, but repairs are necessary in several places. A small portion of the Proctor Brook granite block canal in the Courthouse parking lot has been improved.

Water elevation fluctuates significantly depending on season and rainfall, but is generally five to six feet below the top of the walls. Much of the North River is cluttered with debris (tires, shopping carts, building materials, etc.) and is inaccessible to the public.

Much of the land that abuts the North River has a historic tanning industry base. Some of the land use is still used for tanning, but many of the former tannery sites are currently vacant, underutilized or used for small incubator type businesses. For the most part, the current land uses turn their back to the North River.

Many communities have upgraded their rivers to stimulate revitalization. Similarly, upgrading the North River could provide many opportunities for the City:

- The view and image of the area will be enhanced if the North River is cleaned up and upgraded. A great deal of effort has been put into improving the City's image and self-respect through the Pride in Peabody campaign. Cleaning up the North River will compliment these efforts.
- An enhanced North River will strengthen the existing businesses. Although current businesses do not have the link to the river that they once had, the enhanced environment will increase the value of the abutting property and improve customer perceptions and images. Existing businesses would be strengthened as they find new ways to take advantage of their prime location along the Riverwalk.
- An improved North River will encourage redevelopment of existing buildings. It has been proven in Downtown Peabody and Centennial Industrial Park that a suitable environment stimulates private investment. In addition, the opportunity to reorient existing businesses to the improved North River will result in building improvements and possible historic preservation.
- Vacant parcels or buildings will be more attractive to new businesses due to an upgraded North River. The development of vacant parcels in particular will take advantage of this new amenity, boosting tax revenues, creating new jobs, and increasing the stability and marketability of the downtown area.
- An improved North River area will discourage illegal dumping and the presence of transient individuals. More attention and increased use of the area will make it more difficult for individuals to abuse this part of the City. Squatting and vandalism would be reduced, as the area would no longer be perceived as neglected wasteland or "leftover" space, and would be inhabited by more travelers.

The land proposed for the Riverwalk is a swath of variable width through Downtown Peabody. For the majority of its length, the Riverwalk is adjacent to the North River. The corridor begins at the Peabody-Salem line and runs west and south to the George Peabody House Civic Center, a distance of about one-mile. A joint effort between the City of Peabody and the City of Salem will facilitate a connection along the North River, adjacent to Harmony Grove Road.

For the purposes of this plan, the boundaries of the park are limited to the area adjacent to the North River, Goldthwaite Brook, and Foster Street. Future connections will create a network of green corridors, pedestrian links to major streets and points of interest off the trail, throughout the downtown.

For the length between the Peabody-Salem line and Peabody Square, the trail is paralleled by an at-grade, single-track rail line, which provides freight service to industries in south Peabody on an on-demand basis. Freight trains use these tracks as often as twice daily during the week. Through correspondence with the Boston and Maine Railroad (B&M), it does not appear feasible at this time to utilize the railroad right-of way to construct any portion of the Riverwalk. B&M has expressed concerns regarding pedestrian safety and proximity to the tracks. Although future expansion of the Riverwalk is possible with the construction of a parallel walkway within the right-of-way, this expansion has not been included in the Riverwalk Master Plan.

A conceptual plan for the Riverwalk is provided in Appendix M. The proposed Riverwalk utilizes numerous public and privately owned parcels of land adjacent to the North River and Goldthwaite Brook, and along Foster Street. Time and expense is necessary to negotiate purchases, easements, and park improvements. The minimum desirable width of the corridor is twenty (20) feet to allow for the channel walls, walkway, seating, and landscaping. Wherever possible, the City should provide larger open spaces (nodes) along the main corridor. Following is a listing and description of the land comprising the Riverwalk, by Map and Lot, from the Peabody-Salem line to the George Peabody House Civic Center. Requirements and Recommendations are included. A table of these parcels containing additional information can be found in Appendix I. Conceptual sections of the proposed Riverwalk are shown in Appendix J. Visual support is provided in Appendix B. Parcel specific maps are shown in Appendix M.

Harmony Grove Road

The Riverwalk enters Peabody at the Peabody-Salem line on Harmony Grove Road. This portion of the corridor is the least urban due to increased vegetation and few buildings. The River itself is bordered by a gentle slope of grasses and wildflowers. A stand of aspens borders the railroad right-of-way. In the distance, stands of pines are visible at Harmony Grove Cemetery. The Salem Planning Department, through informal meetings, has expressed enthusiasm about continuing the project through the North River Canal Park in Salem. However, there are no plans for this extension, and no funds have been committed to date. A new park was constructed along the North River, adjacent to Bridge Street in Salem, in 1999. This stretch of walkway should also include a “Welcome to Peabody” arch, in accordance with the City’s Gateways Program.

Map-Lot 086-135A

This parcel is the first property within the City of Peabody, where the Riverwalk enters from Salem, and contains a small utility building owned by the South Essex Sewage District (SESD). The North River flows naturally along this stretch, and is entirely open to the valley walls on both sides. While several options are available for providing access from the Peabody-Salem line to Howley Street, it does not appear feasible to create an appropriate connection on this property, either along the North River, or through the parcel. The Riverwalk should be created as improvements to the existing sidewalk along Harmony Grove Road. The wooded slopes of Harmony Grove Cemetery lie to the north of this road. To the south of the river is the railroad right-of-way and a Star Market on the site of the old Flynn Tannery and the Larrabee and Hingston Company Shop. Beyond these, the land slopes up to the Old South Burying Ground and Main Street. South Essex Sewage District (SESD) has agreed to work with the City to develop a satisfactory plan for Riverwalk construction, public access, and maintenance. At present, the location of the North River, the utility building, underground utilities, and on-site activities require that the Riverwalk be constructed as an extension of sidewalk improvements on Harmony Grove Road.

Map-Lot 086-135

This parcel contains a small concrete block commercial building. Although access is available to construct a pedestrian link along the southern side of the property between the existing building and the North River, constraints on the SESD property negate this option. The Riverwalk should be created as improvements to the existing sidewalk along Harmony Grove Road, down Howley Street to a crossing that will meet the trail, continuing south of the River, on the site of the old Pyburn Company building.

Map-Lot 086-162

This parcel is occupied by a bright yellow one-story concrete block building. This building, or a portion of it, may need to be relocated in order to provide continuous access to the North River and the connection through to Howley Street and into Salem. Future development on this site should be coordinated with development on the Fire Site (Map 86 -Lot 150) and Bob-Kat property (Map 86 - Lot 150A). To the north, the river is bounded by the railroad tracks and a four-story brick building

with regular fenestration, owned by Stahl Finish. This building has a wooden lean-to structure built over the river. Beyond the railroad tracks, a recycling center made of concrete blocks, and several work yards of equipment and materials are separated by a slight incline and a chain link fence.

Map-Lot 086-150A

This parcel is occupied by Bob-Kat Leather Company, and is accessible via an easement through the fire-site property (Map-Lot). It will be necessary to acquire this property in order to relocate the one-story concrete block building to allow construction of the Riverwalk. Currently this property is for sale by the Drumlin Group of Salem, MA. David Drumlin has offered to facilitate a meeting between the City and a potential buyer to discuss the grant of an easement a site design necessary for the Riverwalk.

Map-Lot 086-150

This parcel, known as the Fire Site, is currently vacant. However, plans for this parcel should include the easement necessary to construct the Riverwalk. Additionally, a secondary easement should be provided for a linear connection to Main Street along the channelized segment of Strongwater Brook. A small bridge will be necessary to cross Strongwater Brook at its confluence with the North River. This parcel has been considered for the construction of a new downtown YMCA building with related mixed-uses, such as housing. The current owner has agreed to work with the City to establish a suitable easement that will benefit both the City and developer.

Map-Lot 086-150B

This parcel contains the parking lot owned by the adjacent John D. Smidt Leather Company. Access to the channel is clear. Because of the narrow configuration of this lot, special negotiation must be made with the owner for the easement necessary along this stretch. Specifically, the owner has requested that the City provide a new concrete loading dock to allow for diagonal truck access from Caller Street. This new orientation for truck access will be necessary with construction of the Riverwalk path on the northern side of the property. The granite walls of the channel in this location are also in need of repair.

Map-Lot 086-142A

This parcel is currently the site of Clark Steel Drum. Land adjacent to the channel is occupied by one of the buildings, which must be relocated to allow continuous pedestrian access to the North River. Visual improvements must be made to the properties north of the river and the rail line at this location. This stretch of land is accessed from Walnut Street. A row of trees and shrubs, as well as fencing, may provide a more aesthetic backdrop for pedestrians looking north over the channel from the Riverwalk. Additionally, Paleologos Street creates an interesting focal point and visual access, looking north from the Riverwalk.

Map-Lot 086-142B

This parcel currently provides access to Clark Steel Drum and several other adjacent businesses. A small easement may be required for the construction of the Riverwalk path.

Map-Lot 085-041A

This parcel is currently vacant, however, a substantial amount of garbage and debris, as well as scrub vegetation, must be removed in order to construct the Riverwalk along the southern side of the North River Canal. The North River makes a 90-degree bend to head north under an old wooden contractor's building. Visual improvements must be made to the properties north of the River and the rail line at this location. This stretch of land accessed from Walnut Street. A row of trees and shrubs, as well as fencing, may provide a more aesthetic backdrop for pedestrians looking north over the channel from the Riverwalk.

This parcel is also the site of the Wallis Street Post Office. While there is sufficient space to create a direct path west along the north side of the post office, crossing Wallis Street, future relocation of the post office will allow a more substantial tree and landscape buffer along the south side of the Riverwalk.

Map-Lot 085-042

This parcel is the site of the Mill Street Municipal Parking Lot. Two or four parking spaces will need to be relocated at the north-east corner, to allow a direct connection and vegetation buffering for the Riverwalk path across Wallis Street and along the railroad tracks.

Map-Lot 085-060B

This parcel is currently occupied by a concrete block warehouse, which will be removed. This parcel connects with the municipally owned Wallis Street Parking Lot, and thence to Wallis Street. Minor redesign of the parking lot in conjunction with the Riverwalk Park will allow for a continuous linear connection from this parcel to the North River channel, where it emerge on the eastern side of Wallis Street behind the post office.

This stretch of land has an open, but urban, character. The railroad right-of-way is 80 feet wide to accommodate the convergence of the two rail lines and a spur to the warehouse. Two parking lots on Wallis Street, on either side of the corridor, further contribute to the lack of spatial definition. The Charles Motel occupies the south side, which is a small wood-frame single-story building, a 1 1/2 story wood house, and the two-story Century Bank. North of the railroad tracks, the backs of the buildings on Walnut Street form a continuous two-story edge to the corridor, but window and door placement is haphazard, and the facades have ductwork, piping and other utilitarian structures.

Map-Lot 085-58

The Riverwalk travels on this small narrow parcel between the Central Street parking lot and the Century Bank parking lot. This parcel is so small in size that the entire lot must be owned or under easement by the City to construct a link for the Riverwalk trail at Peabody Square. The size of this parcel will allow for only limited plantings and site amenities. A welcoming arch may serve to provide a visible gateway to the trail at this location. Pedestrians can cross Peabody Square to connect to the 6.3 miles Peabody Bikeway (a rail trail now nearing design completion) at this location.

Map-Lot 085-181

This parcel contains the only portion of the trail that has been constructed to date. The brick walkway and Pin Oak tree row was incorporated as part of the plan for the Foster Street parking lot, from Constitution Park at Peabody Square to Church Street. Design was completed in-house by the Department of Community Development & Planning. The approximately \$90,000 project was contracted by Meola Construction of Chelsea. Meola also constructed the nearby Leather City Common.

Map-Lot 085-177

This parcel is currently leased by Eastern Bank. Eastern Bank has agreed to coordinate Riverwalk construction with proposed improvements to the rear parking lot. The owner has agreed to sign the Easement Agreement provided that the construction meets the requirements and recommendations of Eastern Bank.

Map-Lot 085-176A / Map-Lot 085-176

Both of these parcels contain small businesses, which directly abut the Goldthwaite Brook Channel and underground culvert. The easement required for the Riverwalk straddles the property line along an abandoned and paved railroad track. This will be a narrow crossing for the Riverwalk path, and may allow for only limited plantings and trail amenities.

Franklin / Foster Street Corridor

From Franklin Street to the entrance of the Old Danvers Bleachery, at 119R Foster Street, pedestrians travel along sidewalks. Portions of Franklin and Foster Street have a brick edging, in continuation of the Riverwalk path. Combined with a heavy volume of vehicular traffic, the existing conditions of Foster Street do not invite pedestrian traffic. Foster Street between Church and Washington Streets lack well defined sidewalk spaces due to frequency of curb cuts, lack of street trees, and undefined pedestrian crossings. Portions of Foster Street require improvements to provide a more pedestrian oriented streetscape. Specifically, sidewalks should be widened two to three feet to allow for instillation of lighting, signage, benches, planters, trees, and shrubs. The amenities will act as a buffer between the pedestrians on the Riverwalk and vehicular traffic on Foster Street. The City has recently completed culvert reconstruction in this location to reduce flood damage from

Goldthwaite Brook. during heavy storms. Any future reconstruction of this roadway and its sidewalks must incorporate the Riverwalk trail on the western sidewalk.

Map-Lot 095-001C / Map-Lot 095-427

Background: In 1992, the City bought a blighted former tannery site on Lowell Street near City Hall and built a 1.5 acre Common, which includes new lighting, benches, trees and flowers. Proctor Brook flows through the property between granite block walls and brick arches uncovered during excavation. On this very similar property, the City built a downtown common which honors the leather workers of this City.

The City applied for an Urban Self-Help Grant from the Division of Conservation Services in 2000 for the purchase and protection of this open space within downtown Peabody, the existing floodplain, and along Goldthwaite Brook. The proposed Park was to be part of the Riverwalk Park. Unfortunately the City could not afford the purchase price demanded by the owner. The City was required to forfeit this federal and state grant for acquisition. Since that time, developer Robert DeNisco has arranged to purchase the property for the construction of housing. DeNisco has offered to grant the City an easement for construction of the Riverwalk Park along the banks of Goldthwaite Brook. The downsized Riverwalk plaza and corridor will provide an amenity to local residents and the larger public. Future applications for funding from the Division of Conservation Services may facilitate construction of the park on this or other properties in City control.

Map-Lot 094-007A

Naumkeag Associates, LLC, currently own this property. A small linear easement will be required along the existing sidewalk adjacent to the access drive, and traversing several access roads. A walkway compatible with existing and foreseeable vehicular access will result in only minor alteration to the existing walkways.

Map-Lot 094-007C

This property is currently owned by Woodman Engineering. Chris Woodman purchased this land from the City in 1999 and completed many improvements in the effort to revitalize this portion of the Bleachery Complex. A small easement will be needed along the access drive, adjacent to the building, and along the rear of the parking lot at the rear.

Map-Lot 094-007I

This property contains a portion of the subdivided Old Danvers Bleachery and appurtenant parking at the rear. A small easement along the rear of the parking area will create a connection from the Woodman Engineering property to the George Peabody House (through the remainder of the Old Danvers Bleachery parcels and Eastman Gelatine). It may be possible to arrange for an easement in conjunction with a utility easement currently under agreement to the Peabody Municipal Light Plant (PMLP) to provide electricity to a portion of the Old Bleachery complex.

Map-Lot 094-006C

Regis Brothers of Rex Finishing currently own this property. Developer Robert DeNisco is currently finalizing a purchase and sales agreement with the Regis' for this portion of the Bleachery Complex and two vacant parcels on Foster Street. Mr. DeNisco has expressed interest in granting the City an easement for construction of the Riverwalk on the Foster Street lots. A similar easement will be needed at the rear of the parking lot to continue the trail from Woodman Engineering to the George Peabody House. Mr. DeNisco is also open to the possibility of the City's use of the brick building (circa 1884) for a Leather City Museum. An extended easement or secondary path will connect the Leather City Historic Trail to the Leather City Museum.

Map-Lot 094-005

The Eastman Gelatine Corporation, under its parent company, Kodak, currently owns this property. The Eastman Gelatine Corporation has sold, donated, and leased several parcels of land within Peabody to the City for park and open space protection. Grant of a small easement or donation of land for the Riverwalk Park will allow an essential connection to the George Peabody House through the Old Danvers Bleachery and along Goldthwaite Brook.

George Peabody House

This property is the destination for the Riverwalk and Historic Trails, and is owned by the City of Peabody. A pedestrian path connecting to the rear lawn and extension will provide a connection to the Riverwalk corridor.

In 1986, Eastman Gelatine Corporation, a manufacturer of gelatin emulsions for film, donated the George Peabody House, birthplace of the City's namesake, to the City. The City has renovated it as the George Peabody House Civic Center, and it contains local history exhibits, archives, and small meeting rooms. The Civic Center is planned to be the western terminus of the Riverwalk.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Construction of the Riverwalk Park will benefit the City as a whole by providing a much-needed natural, cultural, and recreational link through downtown Peabody. The Riverwalk will: protect the ecology of the River; enhance the character of the Downtown; encourage redevelopment; compliment new mixed-use development; link historical and cultural sites; promote greater use and appreciation of this Downtown resource; discourage illegal dumping; provide a regional Greenway connection and an alternate mode of transportation; improve local ground and water quality; and will protect the core floodplain and floodway from future development.

