Intensifying Urban Thresholds: Building Continuity for New Bedford's Waterfront

by

Susan Elizabeth Hollister

B.A. Anthropology, University of Vermont, 1975
M.A. Preservation Studies, Boston University, 1985

Submitted to the Department of Architecture in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Architecture

at the
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
February, 1994

Signature of Author.......................... Susan Elizabeth Hollister, Department of Architecture

Certified By................................. Jan Wampler, Professor of Architecture

Accepted By.................................. Rosemary Grimshaw, Assistant Professor of Architecture

© 1994 Susan Elizabeth Hollister. All Rights Reserved. The author hereby grants to MIT permission to reproduce and to distribute publicly paper and electronic copies of this thesis document in whole or in part.
Intensifying Urban Thresholds: Building Continuity for New Bedford’s Waterfront

by Susan Elizabeth Hollister

Abstract

This thesis explores issues of urban form through an understanding of vernacular traditions in a local context. The exploration consists of looking at the characteristics of a particular place in an attempt to understand how a past way of defining space might inform a future way of making.

The underlying concern in this thesis is the issue of disinvestment in our cities and towns. City centers -- once thriving commercial, civic, and community precincts -- have become fragmented, stratified, and isolated places. As crime, suburbanization, and disinvestment impoverish the public realm of the city center, those that can afford to avoid the plurality of the street for an increasingly privatized existence. Our built environment is a direct reflection of these trends -- the more we turn inward for stimulation, the less emphasis we place on the exterior; the more concerned we are with bottom line costs, the less we spend on public amenities and infrastructure.

By focusing on a city in which these problems are manifest one might explore ways that architecture can provide increased opportunities for interaction and communication between people. For the purposes of this exploration, the City of New Bedford was chosen; it is a place of longstanding building traditions that faces the disinvestment that plagues many American cities today. The methodology that has been developed is rooted in vernacular traditions, and it establishes a mechanism for strengthening and enriching the interface between public and private realms.
At the urban scale this methodology is used to re-establish a connection between the commercial and institutional center of the city and its working waterfront, and to articulate the interface between infrastructure and fabric. Through analysis of the traditional way of articulating the urban edge, a series of zones and transitions are identified. These zones are then used as a method to rehabilitate existing areas (Node 1 and 2) or as way to design new forms (Nodes 3, 4, 5). At the pedestrian scale the intervention seeks to emphasize and strengthen existing movement patterns, views, corridors, and edges.

By using these devices one can build the necessary opportunities for interaction and communication in to the urban environment, and thereby contribute to the growth and health of the city center.

Thesis Supervisor: Jan Wampler
Title: Professor of Architecture
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I: The Site</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II: The Problem</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III: Developing a Methodology: Defining the Public Realm</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV: The Intervention</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Documentation</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All photographs unless otherwise noted are by author.
Acknowledgements

This is dedicated to my Mother for her continual support, encouragement, heart, and hands...and to my family who have always been there for me - especially Barbara.

I would like to thank my Committee -- Shun Kanda, Roy Strickland, and Jan Wampler -- for their participation and comments. Special thanks to Jan for his energy, enthusiasm, and encouragement during my time here at MIT.

and of course the unacknowledged members of my committee...

Kristin, Leah, Bjorn, Paul, Cola, Greg, and Helen for all those special lunches and dinners together.

Pam because she knows who John Bearsford Tipton was, and Ming for putting up with us even when we were scary.

Lenore for her resolve and compassion for architecture and people.

Jen for some essential crits and excellent editing at the perfect time, and Robert who was there at the very beginning.

Carla a great thesis-mate and special friend who got me to submit when it was necessary.

Especially to Jules who listened patiently to every iteration, and then pasted it up.
Introduction

In the past several years there has been a growing body of writing which focuses on changing patterns of urbanism in our society. Much of this discourse has focused on the diminution of public space and the loss of a sense of civic spiritedness in our cities and towns. Urbanists cite privatization and militarization of the public realm, suburbanization, commodification and simulation of the environment, and spatial fragmentation and stratification as integral elements of this demise. As crime and disinvestment impoverish the public realm, those that can afford to are avoiding that most public and democratic of places, the street. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate some of these issues within the context of a specific place. How can public and private entities work together to create spaces which can support and intensify public space while acknowledging the needs of private ownership? Are there ways to make
spaces legible as Kevin Lynch proposed, but also receptive to change and multiple use? Can these goals be achieved in a way that supports the uniqueness and particularity of place? In city life, the one constant that forms a continuity and typifies what is public, is the street. What is allowed to occur on the street is that which we as a society accept as our common denominator. In a period of time when consensus on what makes us American is increasingly brought into question, and stratification and factionalism threaten our commonality and sense of community, the importance of understanding and strengthening common denominators is critical.
JFK Highway, New Bedford
Above: Map of New Bedford showing main streets in the downtown.

Left: Map of New Bedford south of Route 6. (USGS New Bedford South)

Far Right: Locus map. (Arrow Maps, 1986)
Chapter I

The Place

New Bedford is a city of 100,000 located 65 miles south of Boston and 35 miles northeast of Providence. The form of the city is long and narrow, only 3 miles by 10 miles, and roughly a third of the length consists of a steeply sloped, rocky peninsula which projects into the warm waters of Buzzard’s Bay. The western edge of the peninsula is bordered by the Acushnet River which drains into the Bay creating a natural wide harbor. The city is bisected by Route 195, an interstate highway which runs in an east-west direction between Cape Cod and Providence. In addition to the regular grid of city streets New Bedford is also served by Route 18, a limited access connector highway which runs parallel to the water’s edge from the city center north to Route 195, Route 140, another limited access
highway extending northwest of Route 195, and Route 6, which is the old east-west road that Route 195 replaced.

**Settlement Patterns**

Initially, what is now New Bedford was part of a much larger incorporated area known as Dartmouth, purchased by settlers from the Wampanoag chief Massasoit in 1652. Dartmouth was settled primarily by religious dissidents such as Quakers and Baptists, and the area was initially prized more for its agricultural promise and its remoteness from the rest of the Puritan colonies, than for its maritime value.

A pattern of dispersed settlement continued in the area until the 1750s when Joseph Russell III built a homestead on an area of land that now comprises much of downtown New Bedford (Elm Street, County Street, Spring Street, and the Acushnet River). Russell's vision was to establish a village on the western shore of the Acushnet River, and he began to lay out streets and sell house lots along what is now present day Union Street. Russell also set up a small tryworks along the river and began rendering whale oil, thereby sparking the start of New Bedford's whaling industry, -- one of the most successful and colorful chapters in the City's history. For the next 100 years...
years the whaling industry developed into the leading economic resource of the community, and was the impetus for the development of much of the harbor and waterfront areas. The area from Water Street down to the harbor was filled with ropewalks, chandleries, warehouses, saillofts, counting houses, candleworks, and banks, as well as dwellings, lodging houses, and saloons.

"Still New Bedford is a queer place. Had it not been for us whalemens, that tract of land would this day perhaps been in as howling condition as the coast of Labrador. As it is, parts of her back country are enough to frighten one, they look so bony. The town itself is perhaps the dearest place to live in, in all New England. It is a land of oil, true enough: but not like Canaan; a land also, of corn and wine. The streets do not run with milk; nor in the spring-time do they pave them with fresh eggs. Yet, in spite of this, nowhere in all America will you find more patrician-like house; parks and gardens more opulent, than in New Bedford. Whence came they? How planted upon this once scraggy scoria of a country?..Yes all these brave houses and flowery gardens came from the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans. One by one they were harpooned and dragged up hither from the bottom of the sea."
By the 1850s the whaling industry that had built the “patrician houses and opulent parks and gardens” had slowly declined. Sperm whales which produced the purest oil needed for the brightest light were harder to find, and whaling ships were forced to go farther afield to the South Pacific and into the Arctic. The maritime blockades of the Civil War and the development of other, cheaper forms of illumination, brought large losses to ship captains and owners and foreshadowed an end to the industry.

In order to maintain its economic viability, the leaders of New Bedford turned to other industries, primarily textile fabrication. From the 1870s on, local industrialists began constructing a series of huge brick mills along the Acushnet River, and at the industry’s peak in 1900 there were more than fifty mills in the city and the population had swelled to 62,442. This new population was composed primarily of immigrants from Ireland, England, Canada, Portugal, and the Azores.

Although there was a clear shift from a maritime to an industrial economy, New Bedford’s excellent harbor and its seafaring experience were essential supports for the textile industry. Steamships from New Bedford plied the coastal waters bringing bales of cotton from the South, rather than barrels of oil from the Arctic, to feed the new factories. At the height of industrial-
Bales of Cotton Being Unloaded at State Pier, 1918. (Boss, p. 173)

Right: Wamsutta Mills, New Bedford. (Boss, p. 112)
ization New Bedford ranked third behind Lowell and Fall River in textile production, and in 1905 one out of every two jobs was textile related. As World War I brought an even greater demand for woven products the industry reached an all time high in 1919. In the 1920s the bottom fell out of the textile manufacturing industry in New England, and New Bedford's economy again fell into decline. Antiquated machinery and production methods, an expensive and well organized labor pool, and poor management caused companies to move to more economical and competitive locations in the South. The end to textile manufacture also coincided with the final chapter of the city's whaling history. The last active whaleship, the Wanderer, was wrecked off Cuttyhunk Island in 1924. Five years later, in 1929, the Great Depression marked a definitive end to textile manufacture in New Bedford, and the massive factories located along the river's edge lay idle and empty.
From the 1920s through the 1970s New Bedford’s economic growth and development was almost non-existent. Offshore commercial fishing, which began to develop in the late 1920s, garment assembly, and golf and rubber production were among the few industries to remain viable during this period. The same problems that eroded the textile industry also affected other corporations and businesses. Improvements to infrastructure were deferred, skilled laborers moved elsewhere, the median education levels dropped, and high state taxes made new industrial development difficult or impossible. In 1955-56 the City encouraged the development of a private industrial park, sparking the first new industrial construction since 1929. To address these chronic economic problems the City formed the New Bedford Redevelopment Authority (NBRA) in the mid-1960s, and the agency began an aggressive campaign to renew the industrial base in two main locations - the industrial park and the harbor.

Urban Renewal

The City, recognizing the importance and uniqueness of its harbor resources, directed the NBRA to foster development of maritime-dependent activities such as fishing, fish processing, and shipping. To this end the NBRA cleared hundreds of acres of land, razed obsolete and decayed
building stock, began the construction of modern terminal facilities along the harbor north and south of the present downtown, made extensions and improvements to the piers and bulkheads, and erected the hurricane barrier at the mouth of the harbor. In 1975, Rt. 18 (the John F. Kennedy Highway) was completed which provided a limited access highway from the terminal areas to Rt. 195.

The area cleared for construction consisted of a mix small and medium scale factories, rooming houses, bars, stores, and warehouses. Most significantly, the razed area had previously acted as a mediating space between the scale of the waterfront and the much smaller scale of the city. Although undoubtably many of the improvements were necessary, the urban renewal program removed huge portions of significant industrial history, created a barrier between the city and waterfront, and interrupted the grain of the city.

"In summary, the road construction has greatly effected the waterfront historic district. On the one hand, the downtown connector has cut off the district from the waterfront. Although the fishing boats will still continue to moor along the wharves just to the east of the district, and will be clearly visible from Johnny Cake Hill, visitors wishing to get a closer look will have four lanes of highway plus two lanes of service roads to cross."
At the time, however, the connector was seen as absolutely necessary for stimulating the economy, and the loss of a decayed and derelict area a small price to pay.

"The downtown connector is a potential generator of activity for both the district and the waterfront as well as a barrier between the two. It is a question of philosophy whether a unified decaying area is preferable to an active divided one. It is hard to imagine a realistic solution that could provide an active and undivided area."

It is likely that more of the downtown would have been cleared had the 14-block area west of the JFK Highway not been established as an historic district in 1966. The clearance associated with the new connector galvanized people to protect the rest of the historic district. Concerned about the poor conditions in the area, and threatened by plans to demolish dilapidated structures, people banded together to form a preservation and revitalization organization called WHALE. Under the direction of John Bullard, the organi-
Work in Progress by WHALE. Between 1965 and May 1981 WHALE spent more than 3 million dollars in the acquisition and rehabilitation of buildings in the Waterfront Historic District. (Boss, p. 217)

The timing was right for these types of ideas since there were federal and state funds available to subsidize redevelopment activities, and a residual bicentennial enthusiasm for historic and beautification projects. Historic preservation activities, such as those at Quincy Market in Boston, and the federal Investment Tax Credit program, showed that preservation and rehabilitation could be profitable and successful. Places like New Bedford, which had a reasonably intact historic architectural fabric and affordable real estate prices, were appealing to developers who formed limited partnerships to convert warehouses and residences into professional offices, commercial, and retail space. Through the combined efforts of the City and WHALE numerous improvements were made to the historic district and the downtown area including: signage, building restoration, street and infrastructure upgrades, the closing of Purchase street for pedestrian use, the construction of a large parking garage and pedestrian overpass to the water, and public transportation improvements.
The masthead of O Novo Mundo, 1891. The paper was the first Portuguese newspaper in New Bedford. (Boss, p. 121.)

With the exception of the "malling" of Purchase Street, these changes were all fairly successful and encouraging. However, with the recession in the late 1980s New Bedford's fragile steps towards revitalization were halted. It became painfully apparent that in a blue collar community such as New Bedford, real estate and service industry growth were not adequate substitutes for industrial and manufacturing development. During the eight year period from 1982 through 1990 there was a 13% decline in manufacturing jobs, and only a 7% increase in lower-paying service and retail jobs. In addition, the effects of the recession can be seen in comparative census data which shows unemployment at almost twice the state average.

**Present Conditions**

The cycle of industrialization, decline and revitalization has left its mark on the experience of the place. The city is predominantly a working-class community with a large Portuguese and Cape Verdean population. Unemployment is high, and education levels are lower than average for the state. The closing of Purchase Street, the main shopping and commercial street of New Bedford, was a disaster. Historically, New Bedford was a local
Left: Fish Pier, 1936. By 1936 New Bedford's fishing industry was a million dollar a year industry. (Boss, p. 195)

Below: View of Fish Pier with the freighter Marie Lousie tied up along State Pier.

urban center providing goods and services to the outlying coastal and agricultural villages. Within the past few years, however, some of these outlying communities -- Fairhaven, Dartmouth, and the northern most extremities of New Bedford -- have begun developing localized shopping centers to serve the growing suburban population. This trend has escalated within the past two years as a WalMart, Super A&P, and an enhanced K-Mart have opened in adjacent Fairhaven. The North Dartmouth mall area has expanded, and a regional shopping mall, the Silver City Galleria, has opened in Taunton, adjacent to Rt. 140, 20 miles north of the New Bedford city center. In ? the City removed the Purchase Street mall and reinstated vehicular passage, but much of the street remains vacant or underutilized and appears forlorn. The recession has also affected businesses in other parts of the downtown and there are a number of vacancies in the historic district and along Union Street.

The Waterfront

Currently the most active and lively place within the downtown area is the waterfront. Most of this activity is due to the fishing and maritime-related industries that occupy much of the north and south terminal areas and the
bulkheads opposite downtown. Although statistically the fishing industry directly provides a relatively small number of jobs in New Bedford -- a fleet of about 150 boats employs only about 4% of the total workforce -- it is a very significant industry for the community because the value of the catch is extremely high. In 1990 New Bedford ranked number one in the nation in terms of dollar value of catch - 160.4 million dollars (114.8 million pounds) with much of this figure due to high value seafood like scallops, haddock, and cod caught off George's Bank. However, this industry is subject to severe fluctuations, such as over fishing, competition with corporate fishing outfits, as well as reductions in fishing capacity. Currently overfishing of stocks of scallops, cod, haddock, and yellowtail in the marine-rich George's Bank area are significant issues. Resource management and new technologies are sorely needed to maintain a viable owner-operated fishing fleet in New Bedford. Despite these issues fishing and seafood processing continue to be a significant industry. Approximately half of the fleet dock along the piers opposite the downtown, and combined with the Portuguese and Cape Verdean freighters and the Coast Guard activities at State Pier they provide a fascinating and continually changing array of activity.

The elements that have contributed to New Bedford's decline have also been part of its salvation. Due to the poor economic climate, large-scale
reinvestment schemes such as the superblock concept proposed in the 1970s were only partially developed, and much of the low-rise, pedestrian-scaled qualities of the city have not been disturbed. Investment that did occur -- in the form of a large parking garage, three 15-20 story residential blocks, and a 6-story office building -- are located on the periphery of the downtown, and their impact on the 3 to 4 story scale of the city is not too disruptive.

New Bedford's exotic history and periods of extreme economic success have also blessed the city with an extensive, high quality architectural inventory. The downtown area is surrounded by historic residential areas, many of which have been renovated for both professional or domestic use. The proximity of these residential areas to the downtown provide an excellent market base for a successful and improved city center. The existence of a regional airport, port facilities, ample industrial real estate, and excel-

William R. Rodman Mansion, 388 County Street. This imposing Greek Revival style house designed in 1833 by Russell Warren, was renovated in the 1980s for professional office suites.
lent transportation connections are also resources that can be used a basis for redevelopment and rejuvenation of the city.

**Future Potential**

In discussing a downtown renaissance, the waterfront is a key element. Tourism was seen as a major component of the revitalization effort in the 1970s, and much of the commercial space in the historic district catered to tourist consumption. The presence of the highway prevented the waterfront from sharing in this development, and it continued to function as an industrial working harbor unapproachable to the casual observer except via a pedestrian overpass. As a result, unlike other cities such as Boston, gentrification of the waterfront and displacement of the functional aspects of the harbor never took place. Large-scale maritime uses have remained along the bulkheads adjacent to the city center. Attempts to make the waterfront more accessible to the public have consisted of the construction of a rather intimidating pedestrian overpass, which starts at the foot of Rodman Street and ends on Fish Pier, and the installation of a traffic signal at the junction of Union Street and the JFK Highway. The Union Street interchange allows cars and pedestrians to have access to Mac Arthur Boulevard, the service road that parallels the Highway. Once on Mac Arthur Boulevard, however, there is no simple way back to the downtown area.
Recently the City has inaugurated a second revitalization plan called *Cornerstone for Change*. The new master plan for the City outlines a complete strategy for realizing New Bedford’s economic and development potential. It is a very positive and hopeful sign that the master plan fashions New Bedford as a regional transportation and port facility with an expanded working harbor and accessible waterfront areas which attempt to incorporate public access and marine-related tourist activities into this environment. Some of the devices identified are the establishment of a year-round ferry terminal serving Martha’s Vineyard, the creation of a federally funded National Maritime Park, the development of a visitor center and maritime industries museum, the reduction of highway lane width and the insertion of a greenway between lanes to buffer the crossing, the creation of a Coastal Zone Resources Laboratory run by the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, and the enhancement of fish and seafood processing activities and improved marine transportation.
Chapter I - Endnotes

2 Melville, Herman, *Moby Dick*, p. 50.
5 Ibid, p. 151.
8 Ibid, p. 34.
9 WHALE is an acronym for the Waterfront Area Historic LEague, a private non-profit preservation organization founded in 1962 to support physical and economic revival in the Waterfront Historic District.
11 *City Facts*, No. 77.
12 Census Disk
13 *City Facts*, No. 77.
14 *City Facts*, No. 63.
Chapter II

The Problem

As the preceding chapter has illustrated, the City and private coalitions have tried to address the problems of creating and retaining a lively, economically viable city center. Their efforts, however, have been only partially successful. A walk through the downtown makes it clear that a significant problem faced by the city is the fragmentation of urban space. Prior to revitalization efforts it was more profitable to tear down a derelict structure for parking than it was to rehabilitate. As a result there is a large quantity of unbuilt space which creates a loose fabric in which the continuity and density appropriate to an urban center is compromised. (Figure 1) The most damaging discontinuity is the aggressive intervention of the highway which slices through the downtown, cutting the city off from the water. At a smaller scale, the random vacant parcels that exist throughout the district create holes in streetscapes and city blocks that physically and visually erode the edge of the street. These spatial discontinuities directly effect the life of the street by isolating activities and landmarks, thus preventing the build-up of a network of public experiences that attract and support the attention and needs of the pedestrian.

Figure 1: Figure/Ground of Downtown area of New Bedford.

Left: View down Rose Alley to the Lightship New Bedford.
The Highway

The waterfront has been an economic and spiritual resource for the community throughout New Bedford’s history. The form of the city has taken shape through its relationship to the water and the harbor; dominant streets run perpendicular to the shore, and gravity and topography pull the pedestrian to the sea. Prior to the intervention of the highway, the land between the sea and the city was an area of mixed uses - warehouses, small factories, lumber yards, maritime suppliers, cold storage facilities, and railroad lines. The urban fabric was continuous between the wharves and the city, despite variations in the scale, uses, and level of publicness. The intervention of the highway destroyed this relationship by removing the layer of buildings that supported a transition from the finer grain of the city to the larger industrial world of the harbor. With the land cleared and the highway inserted, an odd juxtaposition exists between the small, pedestrian

Map of New Bedford, 1876. (Leonard B. Ellis, Publisher, New Bedford)
scale of the buildings along Centre, Hamilton, and Rodman streets, and the scale of the waterfront where 400-foot long buildings and wharves finger into the harbor. The current pedestrian link is an 8-foot wide walkway which tenuously forges a connection between the city and the water. The walk extends only far enough to cross the immediate obstacle, the highway, and does nothing to bridge or connect in the larger sense.

The City Fabric

Over the years the downtown has suffered a fair amount of building loss, especially in its commercial center. Before urban renewal and deferred maintenance took their toll in the 1960s and 1970s, the downtown area consisted of a dense 12-block core of continuous building facades lining both sides of Purchase Street from Spring Street to Middle Street (Rt. 6) and extending below Acushnet Street. (Figure 2) Currently

Figure 2: From Sandborn Map, 1961. Diagram shows how in 1961 New Bedford had a denser city center (gray) and a more continuous street edge along Union Street than today. Note that all blocks along primary streets such as William, Purchase, and Acushnet have unbroken perimeters.
Highrise housing located at the northern end of Purchase Street. The building is an object set back from the street. Placement of a large parking lot in front of the building prevents the development of a relationship between the building and the street. This isolates and privatizes the structure leaving the street perimeter vacant and exposed.
there is 20% more open land in this same area than there was in 1961. The few new buildings that have been constructed are much more object-like, in other words they tend to be set back from the property line and do not use their form to build a continuous street edge. When this tendency occurs in areas of the downtown with high vacancy rates and underutilized spaces such as lower Union Street and the northern end of Purchase Street, the perception is that the area is inactive, discontinuous, and bleak.

Critical Mass

Fragmentation and erosion of the urban fabric have also prevented natural clusters and corners from developing into nodes of activity that can support pedestrian life. For instance, the corner of Pleasant Street and William Street has the potential, through the location of City Hall and the main branch of the library, to create a natural civic node, a concentration of public activity. Both City Hall and the library are set back from the street corners creating the opportunity for public/ceremonial space. Unfortunately the other two corners are occupied by a vacant building and rehabilitated office space occupied by the City. The ground floor uses of these buildings are either non-existent or are not publicly accessible. As such, they do not contribute to the building of a sense of continuity from one side of the street
Below: Pleasant Street at the corner of William Street. The building on the left side of the image is a vacant bank building. The lack of articulation at the street edge impoverishes the quality of the street and directly effects the experience of the place.

Left: The New Bedford Public Library, Pleasant Street at the corner of William Street. An attempt has been made to articulate the space between the street and the building. Although this is better than the bank building across the street, compare it to the historic image of the building. (Opposite) Shade trees and benches encourage use of the space vs. its memorialization. (Hammond)
to the other. Thus City Hall and the library support each other, but they do not support the larger spatial order of the street. Corners never make places which then connect with other places which build the direction of the street. This occurs again at other significant corners within the district. Lost opportunities such as these directly affect the quality and intensity of streetlife in New Bedford. (Figure 3)

Tourism and Development

Another issue which has had a significant impact on the development of public space in New Bedford is the relationship between tourism and the existing historic fabric. Revitalization efforts of the 1970s placed a great deal of emphasis on tourism as a method for bootstrapping economic renewal. For economically hard-pressed cities like New Bedford, history and architecture represented the only commodity available for leveraging reinvestment dollars. For a period of time this was a very successful method of urban renewal for the city, and by creating the Central New Bedford Historic District next to the Waterfront Historic District the city used federal and state monies to fund repair and rehabilitation of most of the downtown. (Figure 4)
While preservation efforts have accomplished many significant things for New Bedford, the downtown has also felt the impacts of gentrification and commodification of historic resources. In the mid-1980s the City debated the idea of developing the State Pier area into a first-class hotel and exhibition complex, but abandoned the idea in the face of opposition from the fishing industry. Currently, the City is actively pursuing designation as a National Heritage Park devoted to New Bedford's extensive maritime history. Bringing public life to the waterfront and enhancing the maritime history of the area is a desirable goal. However, it is important that this type of development not eliminate the real-life activities from the waterfront, nor create places where:

"The contemporary spectator in quest of public urban spaces increasingly must stroll through recycled and revalued territories like South"
Street Seaport, city tableaux that have been turned into gentrified, historicized, commodified, and privatized places."

If accomplished, these initiatives will improve public amenities and create more reasons for people to visit the waterfront. Given the problems identified in earlier chapters, it seems crucial to use these programmatic improvements as instruments for building urban continuity in both a physical and contextual sense, that enhances the public domain and makes a place that is about how people work, and not about how they consume.

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a method for providing continuity and legibility within the urban environment. This methodology will develop an urban design response that establishes a recognizable network of public space and access through the city, articulates the interface between public infrastructure and semi-public and private fabric, reconnects the city to its largest cultural and physical landmark -- the waterfront, and strengthens existing urban patterns.
The arcades of Bologna lend a continuity of form and an order to a medieval city. They provide protection from the elements, they mediate the relationship between public and private, and they form a recognizable city-wide building system. (Levi, p. 52)
Chapter II - Endnotes

1 Sorkin, Michael, *Variations on a Theme Park*, p. 204.
Storefront Window, Union Street.
Recognizing Transistions

When Melville described the topography of New Bedford he described the city as a place upon a bony spur. This poetic phrase is very descriptive of the city's terrain as it slopes down to the harbor. In the course of 6 blocks the elevation drops 60 feet, and there are frequent rocky outcroppings and retaining walls. This slope has given the city an appreciable east-west grain that orients one from the top of the hill to the harbor. This strong direction is balanced by a natural, peninsular terrain which runs north-south. It is not surprising, therefore, that the downtown portion of New Bedford is laid out in a regular grid of streets coincidental with these two directions. Within this pattern the dominant streets are Union Street, which forms a continuous connection from the harbor on the east to Buttonwood Park on the western edge of the city, and Purchase Street, the main shopping avenue which runs from north to south. Historically, Union Street was the main commercial and pedestrian street. Today, however, its 40-foot width and its discontinuous street edge have changed its focus to a vehicle-dominated street.
Above: Union Street, 1845. Note the wooden awnings creating an arcade along the sidewalk. (Boss, p. 58)

Right: Map of New Bedford, 1834. Union and Purchase Streets are highlighted. (New Bedford Public Library)
Purchase Street, along the two block section from Union to Elm Street, has a fairly continuous, and intact street edge made up of 2 to 5 story commercial buildings. This is the street that was made into a pedestrian mall in 1974, re-opened to vehicles in 1987, and widened for parking in 1991. William Street runs parallel to Union Street and extends 8 blocks from County Street, past the library and City Hall on Pleasant Street, to Water Street and the Whaling Museum in the historic district. Although William Street is shorter and narrower than the other two streets, it is now the dominant axis in the downtown, and New Bedford's pedestrian-oriented streetlife takes place along it, predominantly below Purchase Street. This condition is somewhat surprising given that the street has a high degree of unbuilt space and a fairly discontinuous edge. Despite these conditions, William Street is clearly a more comfortable and successful pedestrian experi-

Purchase Street, ca. 1890. (Boss, p. 101)
Above: Storefront Condition on Purchase Street.

Right: Storefront Condition at the corner of William Street and Bethel Street.
ence than either Purchase Street or Union Street. This condition is apparent for several reasons. In comparing Union and Purchase Street to William Street one of the most apparent differences between them lies not so much in scale as in the level of articulation given to the zone between the buildings and the street. Along William Street entrances are recessed, stoops and thresholds extend outward, awnings and canopies cover and protect, and retaining walls, fences, and curbs mark edges and boundaries. In many cases this condition can occur because buildings are set back from the property line leaving more territory for definition. In other cases the setback is equal to or less than what exists along Purchase Street. Purchase Street in contrast has a relatively minimal articulation of the street edge which is limited primarily to recessed store entrances, sidewalks, streets and crosswalks.
Above: Compass Bank, Pleasant Street.

Right: New Bedford Institution for Savings Bank, corner of William Street and Second Street.
Many of the elements that contribute to the making of this zone between public and private are traditional ways of articulating entrances, paths, and boundaries. The significance of the area along William Street is found in the fact that there is always space given for a transition from public to private, and the subtle, yet clear articulations, are part of a language that can be read by the pedestrian. Kevin Lynch calls this phenomenon "legibility". Lynch says:

"The environment is a medium of communication, displaying both explicit and implicit symbols: flags, lawns, crosses, signboards, picture windows, orange roofs, spires, columns, gates, rustic fences. These signs inform us about ownership, status, group affiliation, hidden functions, goods and services, proper behavior, and many other things which we find it useful or interesting to know. This is a component of sense that we might call legibility: the degree to which the inhabitants of a settlement are able to communicate accurately to each other via its symbolic physical features."

Hamilton Street.
William Street at the Corner of Purchase Street. This portion of the street has multiple uses - movement, services, utility operations - yet none are given adequate space or are articulated with any clarity. In this type of an environment there is no room for a space between public and private.
Ledgibility and transparency, the ability to see and experience the activities occurring in a particular place, help us to interpret and understand our environment. Subtle distinctions in materials and design give clues to use, occupancy, direction, and ownership. They also personalize the experience of the place. When these elements are reduced to a minimum, internalized, or absent, the sense of place is diminished and impoverished.

Fence and sidewalk in front of the Mariner's Home, Johnny Cake Hill.
The Precedent: The Double Bank Building

The Double Bank Building is located at the foot of William Street and is an extremely significant building in the fabric of the city. At the macro-scale, the building's location at the end of William Street terminates the street and provides a strong visual landmark in the downtown. At the micro-scale, the building is a lucid articulation of a system of transitions from public to private, from inside to outside, from the street to the building. The Double Bank Building allocates territory for each of the natural activities that happen when one moves from the street to the building. For instance, a utility zone along the street is called out in red brick; a pedestrian movement zone is called out in green slate; an area for people to pause, change direction, or converse is called out in yet another color of slate; the building threshold is rendered in granite, and the entry in brown and bluestone tiles. (Figure 5)

In section, similar articulations are made which create a transition from public to private by moving up from the ground plane of the street. (Figure 6)

Along any street a condition always exists where public meets private. By articulating the connection between the two in a series of defined layers, a boundary is established. The term "boundary" is used in the sense of being bound together or connected in a collective connotation; it does not mean that a line is drawn to mark or separate. In the Double Bank Building the
Figure 5: Double Bank Building showing zones in plan.
Figure 6: Double Bank Building showing zones in section.
edge becomes a means of connecting public and private realms, and through its articulation it provides pedestrians with clues as to where they are relative to public and private space. By clearly articulating these distinct zones of activity in both the public and private realms, an interface is created that is part of both worlds, understandable in a variety of ways. This space allows for transition, overlap, multiple readings, and transparency. It creates a space that enables people in the public world to coexist with those in the private. The smallest of gestures can show how important this definition is to creating an understanding of what is public and what is private, and how to move between the two. Understanding the traditional language used to articulate such transitions in new New Bedford can be helpful in mending the discontinuity which troubles unsuccessful places like Purchase Street and in building new pieces of the city. By understanding the vernacular tradition a philosophical continuity between the past and present can be main-

Storefronts on Union Street at Johnny Cake Hill. Thresholds create a zone between public and private.
tained as well as establishing a physical link that is related to a local way of making.

When public and private meet abruptly, it is often the case that the private realm is forced to intensify its privacy by turning away from the public, or that the private begins to lay claim to the public realm. Although intensifying privacy may be perfectly appropriate in certain areas, it should not be the case in the most public parts of the city. For instance, at Rowe's Wharf in Boston, the water side of the development is part of a public pathway. In fact, the space feels completely private. A large portion of its outdoor area is given to public circulation, but very little of it has been articulated clearly as to what is public domain and what is private territory. Although there are no physical barriers between the public passage and the private space, the entire place feels private, because public and private have no common ground.

"The fence and the boundary line are the symbols of the spirit of justice. They set the limits upon each man's interest to prevent one from taking advantage of another."  

Today it is very difficult for cities and towns to provide and maintain major
public amenities and civic institutions. At the same time there is a pressing need in our increasingly diverse and stratified society for those very elements that provide connections and build communities. One solution has been to look to private entities for sponsorship. Joint ventures and hybrid development schemes are well known and often very successful. It is critical, however, that these projects begin to provide some kind of interface between public and private so that these distinctions are not lost.

"The actual effect of most inward-oriented, mixed use developments is to diminish the multiple use character of the surrounding streets. The streetscape is reduced to a simple path, and the shopping experience, now inside the building, becomes more like that of the suburban mall. The downtown internalized mall offers a competing street, which shoppers may prefer, but others may be reluctant to enter because it is inconvenient to their destination or because it seems to be (and is) a private place."

Unlike the private shopping mall of today, the streets of towns such as New Bedford provide a greater diversity of place, use, and meaning. The significance of the Double Bank Building lies in the fact that, despite being a private institution, it works hard to build a relationship with the public realm of the street. It reflects a period of time when public roads and streets were the center of social and civic life, not just elements of economic or circulation systems. As a result, private institutions were once willing to contribute
space to build an interface between public and private. New interventions in our cities should recall this method of building and its relation to the public realm.

**Viewing the City**

In order to try and understand and interpret the forces acting on a place it is important to look at the elements that contribute to the definition of a city. There are a multitude of sociological, physical, economic, and environmental analysis that can be completed, however, the following diagrams represent some of the more significant elements that pertain to New Bedford. By understanding these components of the city life and the vernacular way of building represented by the Double Bank Building it is possible to build the interface necessary for a healthy public life in the city.
A. Destinations.

1. Library
2. City Hall
3. Bus Station
4. Post Office
5. Zeiterion Theater
6. YMCA
7. Whaling Museum

B. Landmarks

1. The Water
2. Whaling Museum
3. Residential Tower
4. Route 6

C. Civic Structures and Cultural/Commercial Attractions

- Civic
- Cultural/Commercial

1. Courthouse
2. Public Library
3. City Hall
4. Bus Station
5. Post Offices
6. Police Station
7. Custom House
8. Harbormaster
D. Pedestrian and Vehicular Circulation
E. View Corridors
F. Vacant/Surface Parking Lots
Chapter III - Endnotes

1 Lynch, Kevin, Good City Form, p. 139.

2 This building is called the Double Bank Building because it was originally constructed as the headquarters for two separately chartered banks - the Merchants Bank and the Mechanics Bank. The building, designed by a fine local architect Russell Warren ca. 1830, consists of two nearly symmetrical halves with a dividing wall down the center of the building. Two different contractors were hired to construct each half of the building. At some point in the the late 19th century the interior was remodeled in a late Victorian Gothic style, and the two exterior vestibules added. The brownstone tiles in the portico may also date from this time.


5 Vernez-Moulton, Anne, Public Spaces for Public Uses, p. 277.
Chapter IV

The Intervention

The goals of this design intervention are to 1) reconnect the city and the waterfront; 2) to provide a recognizable network of public space and access through the city; 3) to emphasize and strengthen existing pedestrian movement, views, corridors, and edges; 4) to articulate the interface between infrastructure (public) and fabric (semi-public, private). In addition, the intervention retains as much of the existing context as possible. New Bedford has lost so much of its building stock that it is imperative that an intervention entail minimal demolition of existing structures. As discussed previously, more public access often results in gentrification and displacement of existing uses therefore it is important that existing uses be maintained and supported, particularly along the waterfront. To this end a significant number of programmatic elements identified in the intervention are maritime or waterfront dependent activities, public and semi-public in nature, and they are directed primarily at local use vs. tourist use.

Re-connecting

There are three possible ways to address the reconnection of the waterfront and the city. 1) submerge the highway and reconstitute the old street patterns at grade level; 2) maintain the existing configuration, but mitigate its impact through enlarged
medians and congenial landscaping, more traffic signals and vehicular controls, clearer signage and circulation; 3) bridge over the highway. The most efficacious solution would be to submerge the highway, however it is clearly the most expensive, unrealistic, and disruptive option. The second solution, which should probably be done in any case, is the cheapest and easiest, but its focus is more on limiting the impact of the highway rather than on reconnecting the city and the harbor. For the purposes of the thesis the third option has been chosen. A pedestrian bridge, while still expensive, is a more realistic option for the city to undertake. The nature of a bridge forces one to address the issues of connection and anchoring as well as access, movement, and inhabitation.

Public access

The second goal of this proposal is that of providing a recognizable network of public space and access in the city. As has been discussed previously, one of the significant urban issues in New Bedford is that of fragmentation and loss of continuity in the urban fabric. Roads and pathways at their most essential level are physical connections which promote association and communication. At the urban scale, streets and paths are connectors which link different areas and sections of a city together; at the pedestrian scale good streets surpass their function as
conduits to become zones of transition and access which modulate and bind blocks together. Streets, if constructed and maintained by the city or state, are also the most public and ubiquitous elements of civic infrastructure in a community. Therefore through their design and articulation they have the opportunity to define the community’s attitude toward the public realm. Thus, one way to address the issue of public access is to use the medium of a street as a way to build and revive continuity. By thinking of the street as a series of zones that encompasses vehicles, pedestrians, and structure, and that operates in plan and section, a richer spatial experience may be achieved. Similarly by thinking of the bridge as a street suggests that the bridge will not be simply a bridge, but rather a piece of public access that will have varying levels of publicness and privateness.

Bottom: Sketch showing a continuous form crossing Bethel Street.
Strengthening Existing Patterns

The intervention strengthens the existing patterns and framework of the city. The intervention reinforces the traditional grid pattern of the streets, strengthens edges, bolsters east-west movement as the primary path, and supports the north-south direction as secondary. To this end the intervention emphasizes the William Street axis by extending it to the water. This continuity of the axis creates a dominant east-west direction linking the civic/commercial path with a maritime/institutional path. The overlap of the two axes at the corner of Water and William Street creates an opportunity for the establishment of a stopping/turning point as well as a point for the bridge to re-attach itself to the city.

Interface

In order to define and articulate the interface between public and private the methodology used is rooted in existing patterns. Local precedents, such as the Double Bank Building, have been analyzed and expanded upon to provide a system for articulation of this interface. (Figures 7 and 8) In both plan and section a series of zones has been identified along with constituent elements and their articulation, which provides a system for designing the
Figure 9: Diagram of the downtown area; toned areas indicated enhanced edge zones and nodes.
interface. Because the system is based upon standard, even mundane elements such as overhangs, canopies, street furniture, bollards it has the advantage of being used in both new and existing contexts. Therefore as a system it is applicable to the design of the connection as well as to interventions in existing contexts along William Street.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDGE CONDITION</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>ARTICULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Street Zone</td>
<td>The area dominated by cars. This zone may have a number of lanes of movement which will vary in width from a minimum of 8'-0&quot;.</td>
<td>Traffic lanes</td>
<td>Paving material, color, texture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Zone</td>
<td>A subset of the street zone. May be parallel or head-in (6'-0&quot; - 10'-0&quot; wide) or angled (6'-0&quot; - 8'-0&quot;),</td>
<td>Curbs, curb cuts,</td>
<td>Paving material, color, texture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility Zone</td>
<td>An area adjacent to the street which houses many of the functional aspects of the street; Dimensions: 2'-0&quot; to 6'-0&quot;.</td>
<td>Street lights, signals, trees, parking meters, transportation stops, benches, planters, waste recepticals</td>
<td>Paving material, texture, color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Movement</td>
<td>The most active portion of the pedestrian path, its primary use is movement and direction. Dimensions: 2'-0&quot; to 6'-0&quot;.</td>
<td>Sidewalks, HP access</td>
<td>Paving material, texture, slope, steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Pause</td>
<td>The portion of the edge where the pedestrian may stop, browse, make decisions, change direction. Dimensions: 3'-0&quot; to 8'-0&quot;.</td>
<td>Displays, signage, benches/furniture, awnings, terraces, plazas</td>
<td>Curbs, texture, landscaping, furnishings, bollards, retaining walls, non-structural canopies, open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDGE CONDITION</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>ELEMENTS</td>
<td>ARTICULATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold</td>
<td>The point where the building structure and path meet.</td>
<td>Columns, soffits, steps, stoops, display windows, porticos, loggias, arcades</td>
<td>Level change, material change, structural projections, overhead covering, transparency of edge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrance Zone</td>
<td>The point where a person enters the building envelope.</td>
<td>Doorways, entries, gates, weather seal, vestibule</td>
<td>Level change, physical threshold, material change, thickness of wall, change in light, change in dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobby</td>
<td>Shared interior space, public and semi-public.</td>
<td>Building interior, lobby, utility cores, vertical and horizontal circulation systems</td>
<td>Horizontal overlap, multiple uses, light zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior</td>
<td>The point where the programmatic functions of the building occur.</td>
<td>Stores, offices, restaurants</td>
<td>Closure, structure, partitions, privacies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Visual or physical link to the outside</td>
<td>Double entrance, view through occupied space, passage</td>
<td>Glass, continuity of circulation, light, operable windows/walls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDGE CONDITION</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>ELEMENTS</td>
<td>ARTICULATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Grade Zone</td>
<td>The area below grade or street level. Dimension: 8'-0&quot; to 10'-0&quot;</td>
<td>Areaways, lightwells, clearstory windows, retaining walls</td>
<td>Exposed lower levels through grade changes, transparent vertical connections, changes in materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Level Zone</td>
<td>The area perceived by someone at grade, generally the first and second floor levels. Dimension: 8'-0&quot; to 20'-0&quot;</td>
<td>Entrances, atria, lobbies, signage</td>
<td>Large floor to ceiling heights, bay windows, lobbies, double height spaces, high degree of transparency, most public elements, entablature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mezzanine Zone</td>
<td>A balcony or loft level above the reference floor and overlooking it; a subset of the main floor. Dimensions: 6'-0&quot; to 12'-0&quot;</td>
<td>Balconies, cantilevers, catwalks, separate circulation system</td>
<td>Level change, transparency to ground floor or upper floors, lower ceilings, visual connection to main level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level Zone</td>
<td>Multiple floors or building elements that are higher than 20'-0&quot;. Generally upper level floors are not perceived individually, but rather as a zone above the ground floor and below the cornice</td>
<td>Balconies, fire escapes, windows, sills, spandrels, string courses, pilasters</td>
<td>Repeated elements, vertical and/or horizontal emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky Zone</td>
<td>The connection to the sky, the termination of the building.</td>
<td>Cornices, cupolas, windows walks, spires, antennas, weather vanes, skylights, half windows</td>
<td>Dematerialization, vertical emphasis, change in color or material, irregularity of form</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Right: Double Bank Building Zone Analysis

Below: Typical Section through Intervention. Diagram indicates edge zones.
Analysis

The junction of William and Pleasant Streets is an important locus, and there exists the potential for a strong civic presence here since all four corners are owned or occupied by the City.

The vacant structure is to be renovated as a city museum and the other building is back office space for the City.

City Hall and the Library are set back from the street edge and have moderately articulated edge zone.

The east side of the street is very weak; edges are not articulated, ground floor spaces are non-commercial, not publically accessible, and not transparent.

Intervention

The goals of the intervention at this location are to:

Create a relationship between the four corners through a unified treatment of the corners. This may be accomplished by adding a utility zone on the east side of Pleasant Street, and by using common materials and dimensions on all four corners for the utility and movement zones.

Increase the publicness of ground floor spaces by heightening the level of transparency.

Create a deeper, more complex edge zone for pedestrians by extending the zones of pause, threshold, and entrance where possible. Since the space between the sidewalk and building edge is limited on the east side, the vacant building presents an opportunity to reconfigure the structure to have zones occur on the interior of the building. The structure is thus preserved, and public access is enhanced.
Above: Office Building at northeast corner of William and Pleasant Streets

Below: Vacant bank building at southeast corner of William and Pleasant Streets. Proposed for reuse as a city museum.
Node 1 - Plan New
Node 1 - Diagram Pedestrian Movement, Pause, Threshold

Node 1 - Diagram Street Zone, Utility Zone, Entrance Zone

Node 1 - Section A Diagram
Node 2

Analysis

The junction of Aucushnet and William Street is the point where the historic district begins.

Three of the corners are occupied with retail businesses.

Two parking lots on either side of William Street and an underutilized outdoor seating area separate the corner from the adjacent buildings on William Street, and erode the street edge.

The existing corner buildings address only William Street and not Acushnet Street.

Intervention

This area has the potential to be a more intense commercial zone. The surface parking lots, however, prevent a critical mass of buildings from developing.

The intervention inserts a new building at the corner of Acushnet and William Streets, creates a pocket park with parking behind to link the two structures on the north side of William Street, and proposes a public and private outdoor space, and through block passage on the other unoccupied corner.

Unlike Node 1, adequate exterior space is available between the street and the building edge, however it is not articulated, and therefore is alienating to the pedestrian. The new building attempts to increase transparency at the corner and enhance the street edge on both Acushnet and William Street. The existing building facades that face Acushnet Street have also been opened up to acknowledge the corner condition and address the side street.
Above: Southwest corner of William and Acushnet Streets.

Below: Southeast corner of William and Acushnet Streets. Custom House in background.
Node 2 - Section B Diagram
Node 2 - Section B

93
Node 3

Analysis

The junction of William Street and Water Street is significant as the location where the bridge begins, and the pedestrian must move off the axis of William Street and move up from the ground plane.

The Double Bank Building and the Rodman Candleworks building are very strong visual anchors on the eastern edge of Water Street. Although they are not very public or transparent buildings their form and architectural merit contribute significantly to the articulation of the edge.

Opposite these two buildings are two closed forms - a small factory building and parking lot and the auditorium for the Whaling Museum.

Intervention

The goal for this node is to create a space that supports the public gestures made by the Double Bank Building, and to provide a public movement up from the ground level to connect with the bridge to the waterfront. Sectional zones are established by having existing second floor office space access the bridge level.

To promote access to the bridge, a deep public edge is made in the form of an open plaza. This also gives a foreground for the Double Bank and Candleworks Buildings. The factory building has been removed and a new building constructed. The new building has ground floor retail with a deep threshold zone and transparent edge along the plaza.

Through block movement is encouraged with an entrance to the bridge from Bethel Street. This is consistent with other inter-block passages elsewhere in the downtown, and it provides a connection to the parking garage on Elm Street and an existing developable parcel at the corner of Bethel and Elm Street.
Node 3 - Diagram Pedestrian Movement, Pause, Threshold

Node 3 - Diagram Street Zone, Utility Zone, Entrance Zone
Node 3 - Section C
Node 4

Analysis

Currently Node 4 is a parking lot along the north side of the Candleworks Building bounded by the highway on the east and Water Street on the west.

The existing pedestrian bridge begins at the foot of Rodman Street.

A successful restaurant occupies the ground floor space of the Candleworks building, but much of the time the area is very sparsely populated and the pedestrian overpass is intimidating.

Intervention

The intervention here consists of the addition of two mixed use buildings which, with the Candleworks Building, form a partially enclosed, covered courtyard space.

Due to the sloping grade, the below grade level on the north side of the Candleworks building is exposed creating an opportunity to create more sectional exchanges between various edge zones.

Continuous public access through the node is accomplishes at both the ground and bridge levels via public pathways which are accessible 24 hours a day.

Connections between the ground and bridge are made at points that reinforce the existing streets and movement patterns.

Visual connections through buildings and from the ground to the bridge level ensure safety give clarity to public and private uses along the path.
Node 4 - Diagram
Pedestrian Movement, Pause, Threshold

Node 4 - Diagram Street Zone, Utility Zone, Entrance Zone

Node 4 - Section D Diagram
Node 4 - Section D
Node 4 - Section E
105
Node 5

Analysis

Node 5 is the point where the bridge reconnects with the waterfront. Currently the space is occupied by the New Bedford Seafood Coop building and an open parking lot on Fish Pier.

The current pedestrian walkway, approximately 20 feet above ground, provides an excellent vantage point to survey the harbor, but it is exposed and without amenities. It also does not connect with the water, but stops abruptly just beyond the edge of the highway.

Intervention

The intervention at the water creates a point where the prevailing east-west direction of the bridge connects with the north-south orientation of the shoreline.

Institutional entities consisting of a marine sciences laboratory and a maritime museum, anchor the bridge on the waterfront. These provide semi-public and public maritime-related uses which are compatible with the working waterfront yet public enough to attract people to the waterfront and assure public use of the bridge.

Two large structures -- the marine sciences laboratory and the administrative section of the maritime museum -- reflect the north-south orientation of movement along the waterfront.

Significant vertical connections tie the bridge level with the ground and maintain pedestrian orientation and access.

Articulation of pedestrian pause, threshold, and entrance zones modulate public access at all levels.
Node 6

Intervention

The current waterfront condition does not allow the casual observer to experience the water, rather the piers end bluntly and abruptly.

The final intervention provides more appropriate accommodations for the harbormaster, and also allows the visitor the opportunity to move out and over the water. The board walk terminates physically at the harbormaster’s quarters, but experientially the path continues.
Node 6 - Section K Diagram
Node 6

121
Project Documentation
Model: View of Bridge over Route 18
Model: View from Harbor to Downtown
Bibliography

New Bedford


**Waterfront**


**General**


**Theses**


**Maps**

1:40,000  NOAA Buzzards Bay, 1983  
1:2,500  USGS New Bedford North, 1979  
1:2,500  USGS New Bedford South, 1977  
1:800  New Bedford City Zoning Map,  
1:200  Central Business District Map, 1988  
1:200  Aerial Views, Downtown and Waterfront, No Date