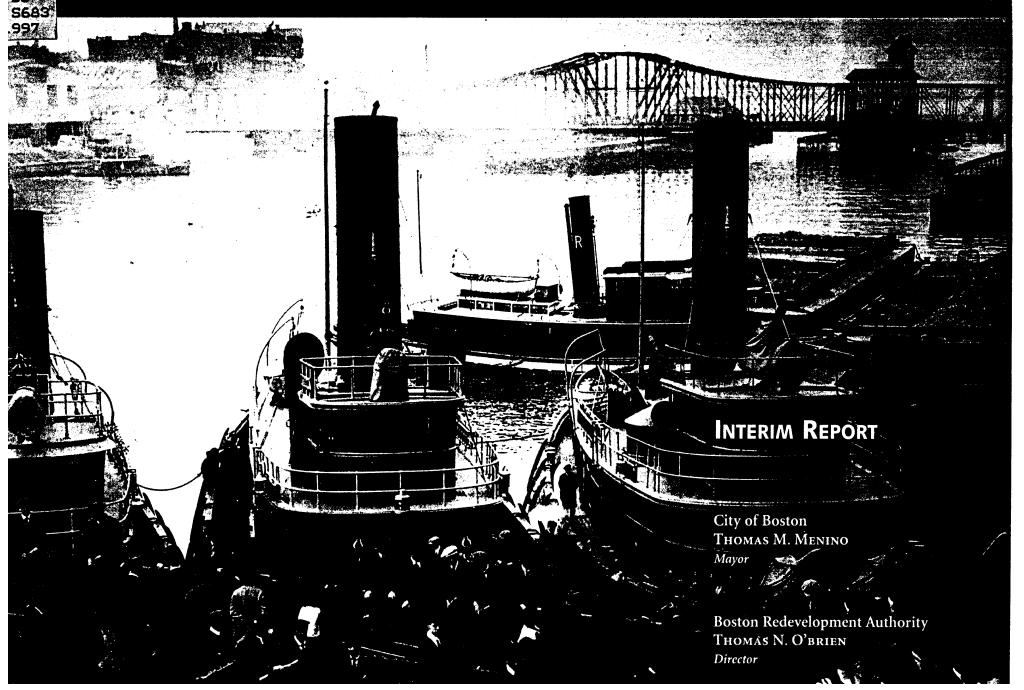
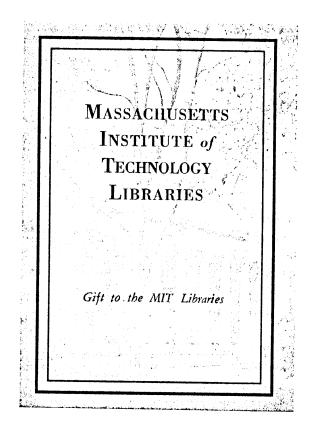
THE SOUTH BOSTON SEAPORT

A Master Plan for the Fort Point and South Boston Waterfront



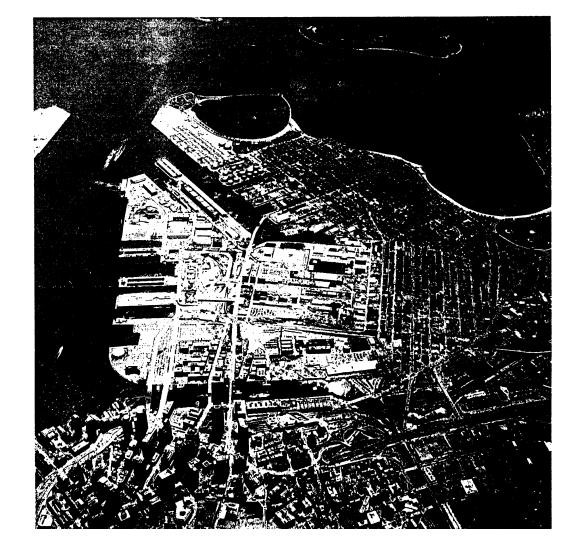


THE SOUTH BOSTON SEAPORT

A Master Plan for the Fort Point and

SOUTH BOSTON WATERFRONT

INTERIM REPORT



City of Boston
Thomas M. Menino, Mayor

Boston Redevelopment Authority



December 1997

Dear Friend:

I am pleased to present this plan for the South Boston Seaport — the next growth frontier for Boston. The goal of this plan is to ensure that the South Boston Seaport will provide a place not only for business expansion and job opportunities, but also offer an attractive public environment, an accessible waterfront, and a unique urban character in keeping with the high standards Bostonians have come to expect.

Few cities are fortunate to have over 1,000 acres of land and accessible waterfront adjacent to a downtown with an international deep water port, state-of-the-art transportation systems under construction, access to an international airport, and a nearby residential neighborhood with a skilled labor force.

I wish to thank the South Boston Waterfront Committee and other representatives of South Boston and Fort Point Channel residential and artist communities, business and civic organizations, area property owners, elected officials, and harbor advocates who have provided invaluable advice and direction in this planning effort. I look forward to continuing this productive collaboration.

The South Boston Seaport will be a vibrant 21st century addition to Boston. Its handsome boulevards, waterfront parks, plazas and generous Harborwalk will provide a source of enjoyment to all Bostonians for years to come. New economic development will create a solid foundation for business growth and job creation for current and future generations. The South Boston Seaport will be a place to work, live and play — a new destination for residents, workers and visitors.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Menino Mayor of Boston M.I.T. LIBRARIES
M.I.T. LIBRARI

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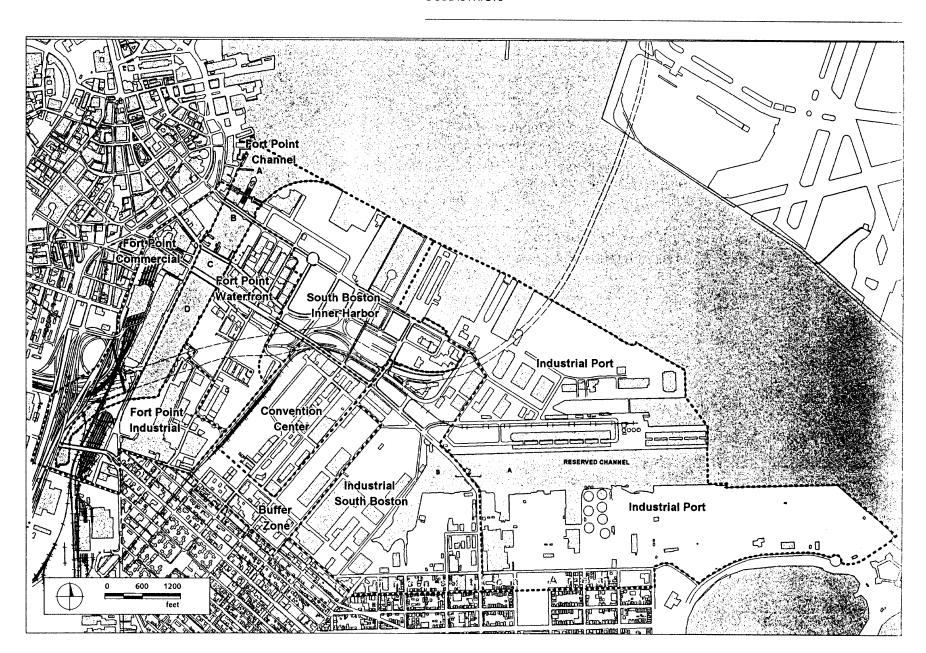


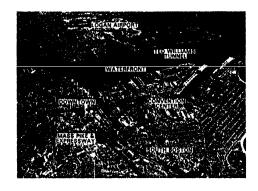
Congress Street Bridge (erected 1875)

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Note to the Reader: This document is an interim report that provides a summary of the Master Plan for the Fort Point and South Boston Waterfront. The final report will provide greater detail and additional Harborwalk and urban design guidelines.

SUBDISTRICTS





EMERGENCE OF THE SOUTH BOSTON SEAPORT AND PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE ITS GROWTH

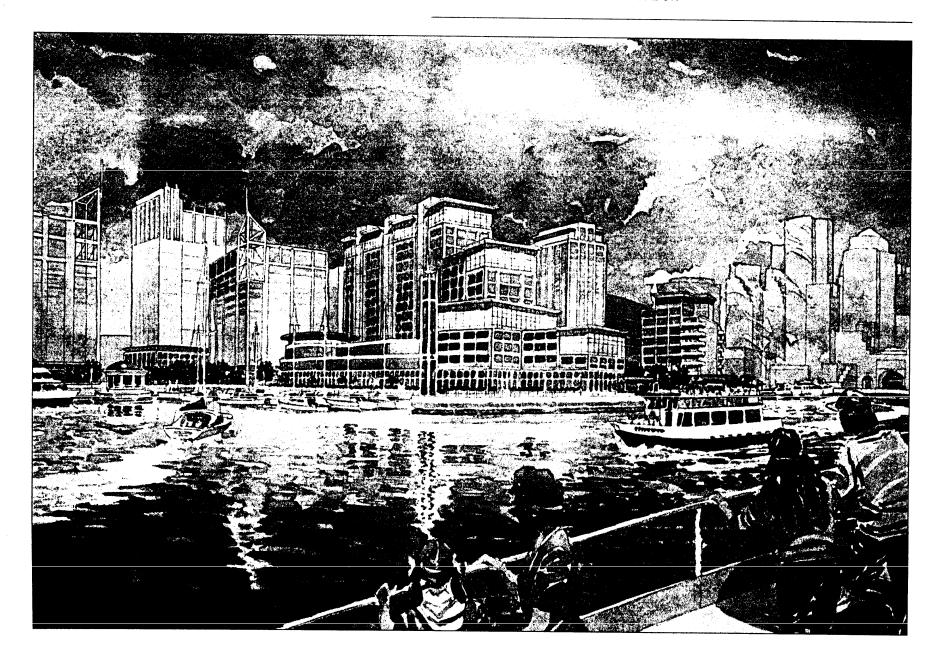
The South Boston Seaport — located at the confluence of the downtown core, the interstate highway system, the airport, deep water port, and South Boston neighborhood — is the next growth frontier for Boston. Containing over 1,000 acres of land and the immediately adjacent water sheet, this area encompasses the eastern edge of the financial district, Fort Point Channel, and the South Boston waterfront and backlands.

The Seaport is currently undergoing a major transformation of its economy, land use and urban character. Major new transportation projects will greatly improve access and open this area to substantial expansion of the Boston economy. Change of this magnitude has not occurred in the area since the turn of the century.

In recognition of the profound transformation that is underway, the Boston Redevelopment Authority has embarked on the preparation of a plan for this important part of the city. For planning purposes, this large area has been divided into nine subdistricts reflecting current and future land uses and development patterns.

Five key elements shape the future direction of the Seaport:

- Proximity to the financial district and downtown will help to ensure the mixed-use character of the area by affording the commercial economy the opportunity to expand at reduced heights and densities across the Fort Point Channel.
- ◆ Improved access from public investment in new infrastructure has set the stage for economic development, making the area attractive for a variety of uses that previously might not have considered locating there. The Ted Williams Tunnel provides a direct link to Logan Airport, while the Central Artery project will link the Seaport directly with Interstates 90 and 93. The South Boston Haul Road provides a dedicated truck route for port operations. The new South Boston Transitway will bring rapid transit into the Seaport for the first time and an expanded water transit system will take full advantage of the harbor location.
- ◆ The new convention center, to be located just two blocks from the waterfront on Summer Street, will be a catalyst that creates a spirited 18-hour, mixed-use economy and lively pedestrian activity. The facility will generate total economic impacts of \$765 million annually throughout the economy, a need for 3,800 new hotel rooms, and 6,400 new permanent jobs in the region.
- ◆ Connections between the South Boston neighborhood and the waterfront ensure that the South Boston Seaport is not being planned as separate from the rest of South Boston. Important connections are being made from the South Boston neighborhood to the harbor. D Street and Summer Street have been identified as key links between these two areas.
- ◆ The waterfront is the defining physical feature of the Seaport, including the inner harbor, the Fort Point Channel and the Reserved Channel. Boston's history and its future are inextricably tied to the harbor, and public access to the water guides the urban design of the Seaport. The extension



of the north-south street grid will bring people from the interior of the Seaport directly to the water, while Harborwalk provides a linear pathway along the water's edge. In areas with deep water access, the industrial port will continue to provide jobs and competitive advantages for Boston.

With the assistance of the South Boston Waterfront Committee, eight comprehensive principles were defined to guide the emergence of this district. These principles, as follows, have been further articulated by the Committee into detailed strategies that will be incorporated into the final report.

Create a vibrant public realm that gives identity to the Scaport, welcomes pedestrians, provides routes and views to the waterfront, creates parks and plazas, fosters cultural uses, and generates activity day and evening.

Guarantee public access to the water by bringing Harborwalk to the perimeter of the Seaport, extending streets, pedestrian ways and view corridors from the interior of the Seaport to the harbor, and by creating multiple points of access to the water for water transit and commercial and recreational boating.

Enhance public use of the water sheet by maximizing landside facilities and creating opportunities for active water sheet uses, such

as water transit to cultural facilities, ferry service to the harbor islands, nautical festivals and special events, work boats, and scheduled commuter water transportation. Further opportunities at the mouth of Fort Point Channel, along the New Northern Avenue waterfront and in the Reserved Channel should be explored.

Protect and enhance maritime industrial and industrial uses by maintaining areas with deep water access for maritime industrial activities, ensuring that sufficient land is available for industrial activities (including new growth industries like biotechnology manufacturing) and maintaining the Truck By-Pass Road/Haul Road for commercial vehicles only.

Encourage economic and job diversity by accommodating a balance of maritime industrial and industrial activities, office development, and tourist and business visitor facilities, including the convention center and new hotels in appropriate districts.

Achieve benefits for the South Boston community, as the most immediately impacted neighborhood, by ensuring that neighborhood residents share in the benefits of the Seaport's revitalization in terms of job and business opportunities and public access to the waterfront. Encourage the development of neighborhood housing and artist live/work space.

Target linkage and other mitigation efforts to provide affordable housing, including home ownership opportunities, job training, and day care initiatives and toward activities that mitigate the environmental impacts of growth.

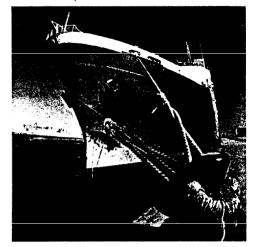
Provide uses and a level of density to create activity at different times of the day. On main streets of the Seaport, require ground floor retail and cultural space to enhance pedestrian activity. Create opportunities for residential use in appropriate districts to ensure activity in the evening and on weekends.

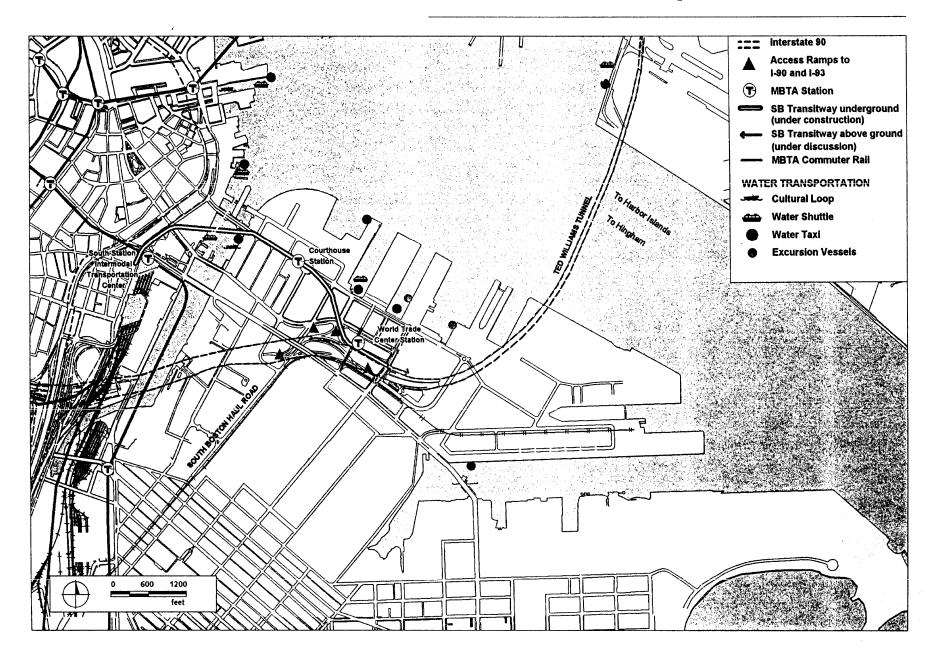
Conduct a public planning process to ensure that community concerns are addressed, that the actions of multiple government agencies are coordinated, and that any adverse impacts from growth are mitigated.

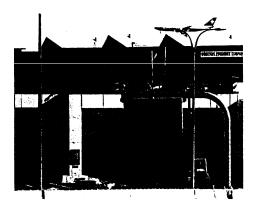


A vibrant public realm results from the right mix of uses and density levels

Areas with deep water access will be maintained







Framework for the Plan

New Infrastructure

Today, the South Boston Seaport is undergoing a dramatic change from an area of minimal roadway, transit and bridge capacity to an area with a state-of-the-art transportation network. Public investment in new infrastructure improvements provides a clear context for managing land use resources in the South Boston Seaport.

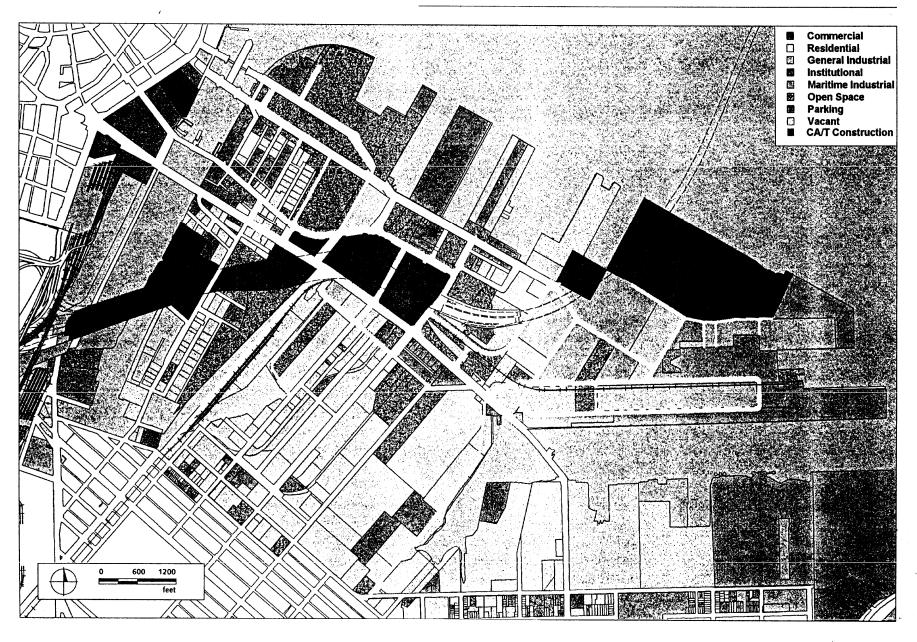
- ◆ The Ted Williams Tunnel, a new four-lane, cross-harbor tunnel links the South Boston Seaport directly with Logan International Airport and points north. Where the tunnel emerges, the Seaport Access Road will link the Seaport to the interstate highway system connecting to the Massachusetts Turnpike and points west, and to Interstate 93 and points south. On and off-ramps located in the Seaport will provide direct access to these interstate highways.
- The South Boston By-Pass/Haul Road provides a dedicated truck route from interstate highways to the waterfront and to industrial uses in the backlands of the

other traffic and from the residential neighborhood of South Boston.

◆ The MBTA's South Boston Transitway is a fixed-route transit line from South Station into the Seaport scheduled to begin service in 2002. Transitway vehicles will run in a tunnel to the World Trade Center and then emerge at grade on D Street and continue on the surface. Transitway stations include Courthouse Station on New Northern Avenue and World Trade Center Station on Viaduct Street. The current plan is that transitway vehicles, once on the surface, would turn left and right on D Street to provide routes to the Marine Industrial Park and the South Boston neighborhood. The MBTA and Massport are currently evaluating an alignment that would bring the surface route across D Street connecting to the Massport Haul Road to improve traffic conditions and also provide the opportunity for an additional stop east of D Street. Transitway service directly from South Station to Logan Airport is also being evaluated. In addition, the MBTA and the City will work together with

South Boston community representatives to evaluate appropriate surface routes into the South Boston neighborhood.

- ◆ The Evelyn Moakley Bridge, constructed next to the existing Northern Avenue Bridge, is designed to carry a greater volume of traffic than the older bridge, which has been closed to vehicular traffic. The City is currently seeking to maintain the old Northern Avenue Bridge corridor for use by pedestrians. In the future, the old Northern Avenue Bridge corridor and land parcels on either side could become the basis of a unique development project that creates a gateway from downtown into South Boston.
- ◆ Just west across the Fort Point Channel is the region's most modern ground transportation terminal, the South Station Intermodal Transportation Center, with access to Amtrak, commuter rail, rapid transit, and buses, as well as substantial parking capacity. The South Boston Transitway will connect directly to South Station



Extensive water transit is being planned for the inner harbor with a focus on integrating the South Boston Seaport with the downtown and other waterfront neighborhoods. The BRA is preparing a passenger water transportation plan that will identify suitable locations for additional dockage with a view toward maximizing the efficiency of both the water sheet and waterfront land for water-based transportation. New service associated with Central Artery (CA/T) mitigation has begun from Lovejoy Wharf at North Station to the World Trade Center. A water transportation dock will also be constructed at Russia Wharf in 2001 by the CA/T project. A summer service, Boston by Boat, connects Boston's waterfront cultural attractions including those at Museum Wharf.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Comprised substantially of lands reclaimed from Boston Harbor through the filling of the South Boston Flats between 1870 and 1920, this area was created originally to serve the rail lines that converged at the harbor's edge. It later became an industrial and warehousing district, with many handsome masonry structures built along Fort Point Channel. The district has long had a focus on maritime industries such as fish processing, ship repair and cargo transshipment. Several monumental structures remain from a former army base and naval annex. Several of the structures in the Seaport have

historic status and contribute considerably to the fabric of the public realm.

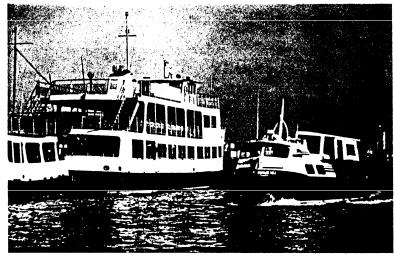
EXISTING LAND USES

Much of the eastern portion of the South Boston Seaport is currently devoted to maritime industrial and industrial uses. Both sides of Fort Point Channel north of Summer Street are home to a variety of commercial and office uses and — with the construction of the federal courthouse on Fan Pier — a prominent government presence as well.

Because of the area's deep water access, a great deal of Boston's industrial port is located here, including intermodal cargo transportation, seafood offloading and processing, ship repair services, and the ocean cruise industry. Uses that support the port are located throughout the backlands area.

The Fort Point Waterfront is home to a wide variety of businesses, particularly the printing industry and related services such as graphic design houses and photography laboratories. Artists live and work here. At the water's edge, Museum Wharf contains important cultural and tourist-related attractions including the Children's Museum, the Computer Museum and the Tea Party Ship.

From the 1950's on, a great deal of land formerly occupied by rail yards was sold and used for surface parking, particularly those parcels

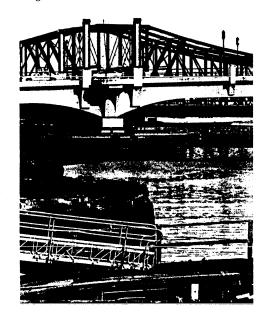


Water transit service will be increased

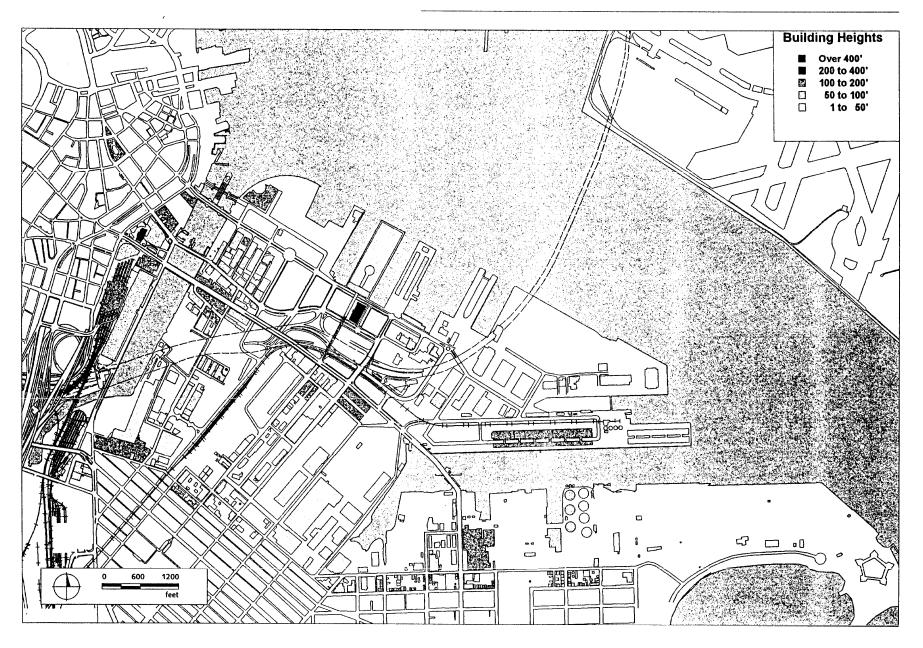
closest to downtown where commuters sought inexpensive parking. This highly underutilized land is now emerging to be developed for more productive uses.

The World Trade Center meeting and convention facility has created a magnet for business visitors. Across the street, a new hotel is under construction and two office buildings planned. The construction of the new convention center nearby will substantially expand the visitor economy in the Seaport.

The new Evelyn Moakley and old Northern Avenue Bridges



Existing Building Heights



PHYSICAL CHARACTER Land Ownership Patterns

In the South Boston Seaport large tracts of land are held by single entities. The concentration of land ownership makes it relatively easier to conduct master planning on a scale large enough to effectively address the characteristics of the public realm. Unlike a developer who must assemble many individual parcels from a variety of landowners, a single owner who already controls land can more easily work with the City and the public to achieve a master plan vision.

Urban Design Context

Originally constructed as an industrial district serviced mainly by rail, the South Boston Seaport has few streets. For the most part, these streets served truck traffic, a street pattern still in evidence today. Streets and sidewalks are narrow and there are few public amenities. One of the area's distinctive characteristics — elevated streets and viaducts — arose because of the need to create a road network to separate trucks and cars from the rail network at grade. Almost all of the rails have been replaced by parking lots in recent years, and as a result, in many locations little conventional

pedestrian-friendly urban fabric is in place. Other important elements that contribute to the area's existing urban character include the wharves and piers, the industrial infrastructure such as bridges and drydocks, and the brick and masonry warehouses built around the turn-of-the-century along Fort Point Channel.

Existing Building Heights

With respect to building height in the South Boston Seaport, low-lying industrial buildings of 50 feet or less predominate. The Fort Point Waterfront is an exception, however, having a fairly consistent building height averaging between 80 and 120 feet. On the Fan Pier, the federal courthouse has a height of 135 feet. The World Trade Center's new Seaport Hotel is approximately 200 feet, while two future office buildings are planned at 250 feet.

Many of the buildings built in the early 1900's are industrial in character, relatively low in height, and cover a very large area. When constructed in 1914, Commonwealth Pier was the largest pier building in the world. South Station, with its now demolished train shed, was the largest railroad station in the country when it was completed in 1900. The South



Aerial view of elevated Summer Street

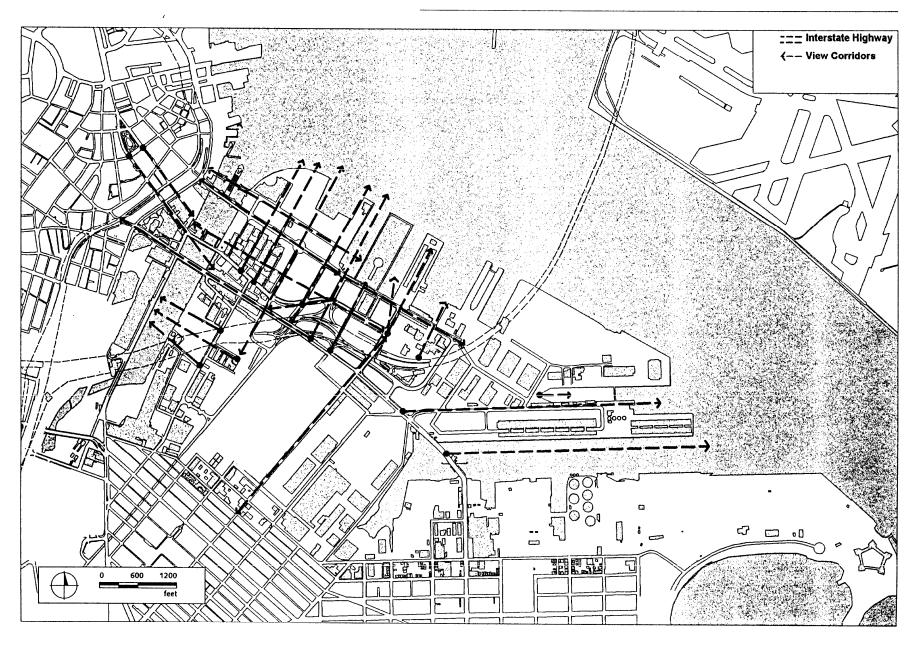
Boston army base and naval annex structures are impressive in height, length and ground coverage. Seafood processing, warehousing and other industrial uses, typically only one-story high, can cover the entire length of a block.

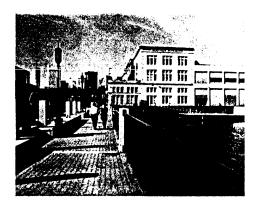
Using these existing characteristics as important benchmarks, a plan for the public realm has been fashioned that protects the existing character of the built environment and provides a framework for new development.



Shellfish for sale on Northern Avenue

Proposed View Corridors





THE PUBLIC REALM

The public realm is that aspect of the environment that is visible and accessible to the public, including both spaces and the building walls that frame them. The principle of the public realm rests on the belief that cities by their nature are public places as well as clusters of private property and therefore, the public has an historic, necessary and abiding interest in the way the city develops and changes.

Unlike downtown Boston, where the existing urban context is readily apparent and the clues for designing buildings that fit within the context are clear, the South Boston Seaport has not yet found its image as a district. In the South Boston Seaport, there is the opportunity — and the responsibility — for creating a different context that is as responsive to its time and place as the Boston Wharf warehouses were to theirs.

The creation of the public realm in the Seaport involves identifying and expanding upon

existing strengths, then creating the framework within which new development will be located. This involves a layering of elements, moving in degree from one level to the next: the view corridors, the street system, Harborwalk and open space, distinctive features, and maritime and industrial imagery. In this manner, the plan evolves directly from the current context and resources of the area and is not an isolated invention that displaces that which came before it.

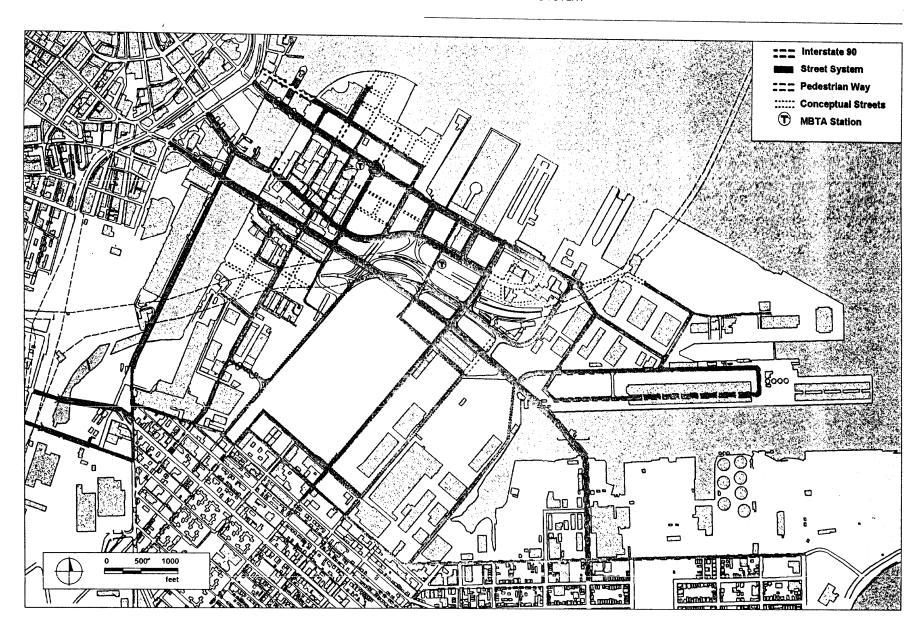
A critical aspect of the public realm is the water sheet, which should be activated for public uses, such as recreational boating, excursion vessels, public water transportation, special events and festivals, and work vessels.

VIEW CORRIDORS

As streets and sidewalks create the physical links for drivers and pedestrians, view corridors create the visual links that give meaning, orientation and identity to the South Boston Seaport by connecting it directly to the harbor, the downtown skyline, its own notable features and back to the South Boston residential neighborhood and Dorchester Heights.

As development occurs it will be increasingly critical to insure that important views are maintained to key features both natural and man-made in the surrounding environment. In response to this requirement, the plan locates future development to preserve existing and create new view corridors.

Nine north-south view corridors and 12 east-west view corridors are identified on the map opposite. Perhaps the two most prominent are the long north-south corridor between a proposed structure at the tip of Fan Pier (such as a beacon or light) and the smokestack on Wormwood Street, and the view from the Summer Street Bridge down the Reserved Channel.



THE STREET NETWORK

Using the view corridors identified in the previous section as a guide, the predominant grid pattern in the South Boston Seaport is being expanded and a hierarchy among the streets established and articulated through streetscape treatment.

Major East-West Streets

The major east-west streets, running parallel to the water, are critical in connecting the Scaport back to the downtown. Each will have a different character from the other, engendered by section, landscaping, traffic volume, and the uses and heights of the buildings along their edges.

- ◆ New Northern Avenue, the major boulevard of the Seaport, will connect the Seaport to the downtown and the new Central Artery open space. It will have double rows of trees on either side and a planted median up to East Service Road. From that point, it becomes a unique waterfront boulevard with trees on the south side and Harborwalk on the north side with unobstructed views. Buildings will have their main entrances fronting on New Northern Avenue.
- Congress Street is a second major boulevard and provides a connection from Government Center and Post Office Square

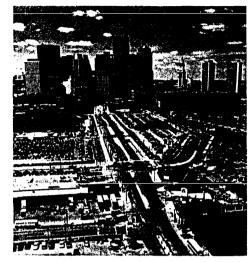
to the Seaport. Its character changes as it passes through the older Boston Wharf area, where sidewalks will remain narrow, into new areas where it will become wider, with double rows of trees on the north side and a single row on the south. Congress Street will also be the primary vehicular distributor for the roadway system in this area. The BRA is evaluating the merits of extending New Congress Street east of D Street, then curving northward to arrive at New Northern Avenue just west of Wharf 8. This curvature of New Congress Street would provide a dynamic parcelization for the east of D Street area and a pedestrian network emphasizing the waterfront as a destination.

- ◆ Summer Street will remain as the elevated local vehicular connector between downtown and the Seaport. The new convention center will front on Summer Street, giving the street a prominent civic structure.
- Old Northern Avenue will be an intimately scaled walking street emphasizing active ground floor public uses, pedestrian access to Harborwalk, and open space.

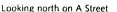
Major North-South Streets

Running perpendicular to the water's edge are streets that penetrate the South Boston Scaport in a north-south direction, connecting the waterfront to the interior portions of the Seaport.
While there will be many north-south streets, the major ones are listed below:

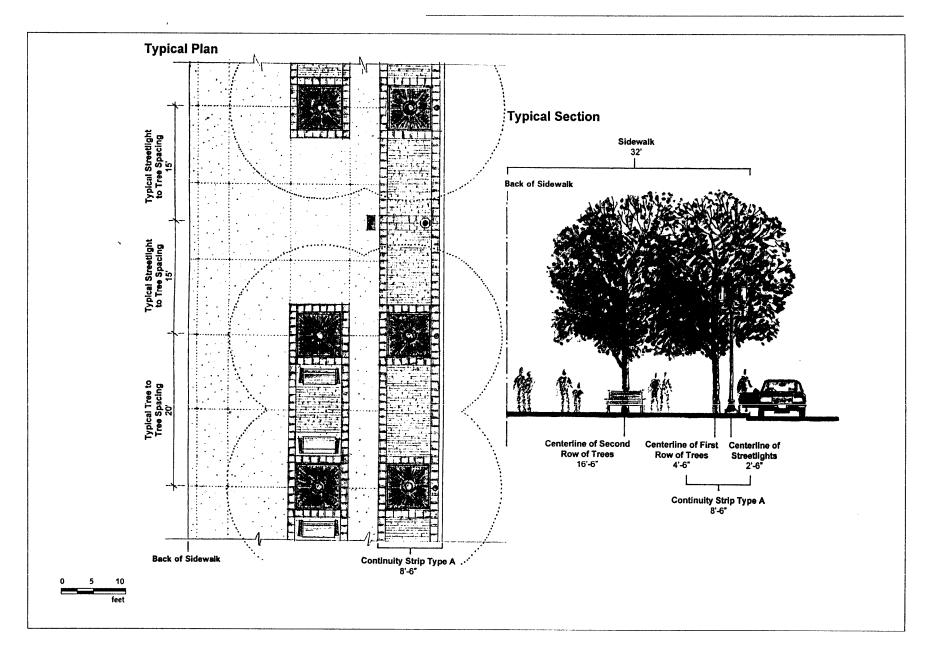
- ◆ D Street and A Street are important streets that connect the South Boston neighborhood to the waterfront. D Street will be tree-lined from West Broadway to New Northern Avenue and will be the primary
 - pedestrian route from the South Boston neighborhood business district to the Fish Pier and the water's edge.
- ◆ West Service Road will be the primary street connecting the Summer Street convention center area to the waterfront at the cove between Fan Pier and Pier 4. To give special emphasis to the intersection of West Service Road and New Northern Avenue a circular roadway configuration has been developed. This feature provides an opportunity for a distinctive treatment over the MBTA's transitway station and enhances the pedestrian connection between the convention center on Summer Street and the Harborwalk and open spaces along Fan Pier.



From the Seaport Hotel looking west down Northern Avenue







- East Service Road and B Street are vital links from Congress Street that will provide both pedestrian connections to the sea and vehicular connections to the regional highway system.
- ◆ Farnsworth Street and Pittsburgh Street are part of the older grid pattern found in the Boston Wharf Company area. Their extension toward the water will result in maintaining important view corridors as well as creating vehicular connections to the north.
- Viaduct Street is a bridge connecting elevated Summer Street to the meeting facilities of the Seaport (World Trade Center and the convention center) and to a new public transportation station accessible from both Viaduct Street and ground level.

Urban Design Guidelines for the Streetscape

A collaborative effort to develop streetscape guidelines has been ongoing among government agencies involved in constructing portions of the new street network. This will help to coordinate the building of the public streets over the next few years, and also set high standards for private street and sidewalk development. The goal is to create an inviting

pedestrian environment and a well-defined sense of place in the Seaport. This section summarizes the most important streetscape design features; the full text of the urban design guidelines will be available in the final report.

The continuity strip is an important feature of this planning. It provides coherence in the design of the public realm by using repetitive elements. Within the continuity strip, areas are designated for the placement of street lights, the grates to house trees, and any other important elements (fire hydrants, parking meters). The paving material is a simple concrete paver with granite curbing. The width of the continuity strip varies according to the width of the sidewalk and the prominence of the street, while construction materials remain the same.

A special *light fixture*, designed specifically for the Seaport, is an adaptation of the historic light fixture on the Congress Street Bridge. On all streets that have the continuity strip, the Seaport light fixture will be required.

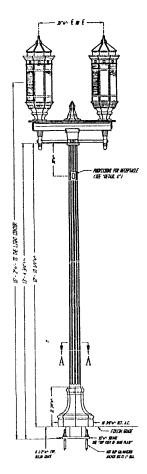
The building setback zone is the area located behind the continuity strip that is part of the sidewalk area available for pedestrian use. The building setback zone varies in width according to designated sidewalk dimensions.

Paving materials should provide a smooth walking surface.

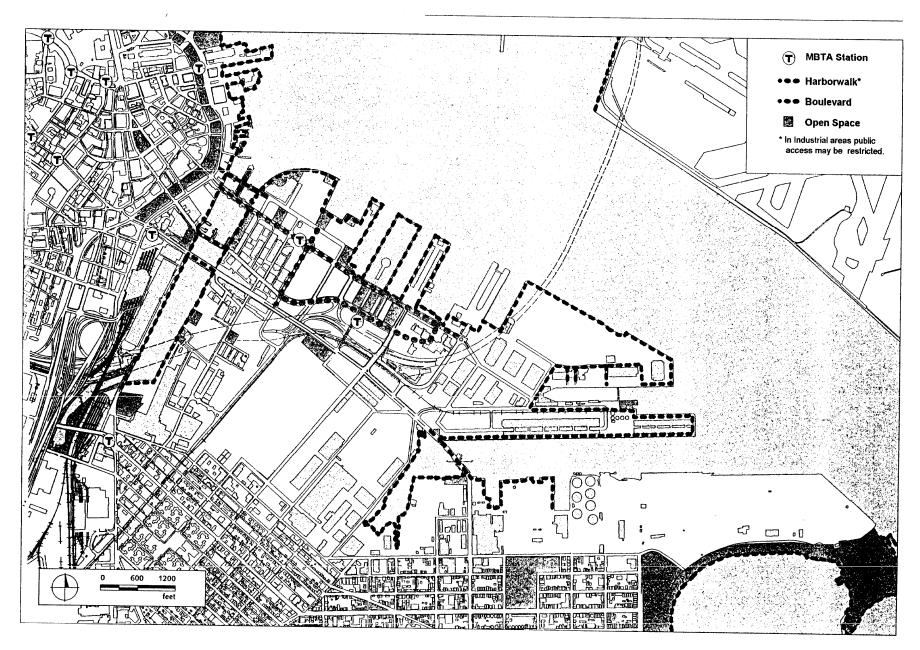
Street furniture (benches, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, etc.) is strongly encouraged. The most appropriate location is within the building setback zone or beneath the tree canopy where the width of the continuity strip allows. Street furniture should be simple in design and black in color.

Signs: Harborwalk signs should be erected on those streets that run perpendicular to the water and connect the interior of the Seaport to the harbor's edge. These streets include Farnsworth Street extension, West Service Road, East Service Road, B Street, and D Street.

Street trees are recommended in the majority of the Seaport with the exception of sidewalks less than 10 feet wide. In industrial areas, the presence of trees will signal to pedestrians that the streets are public and pedestrians are welcome. The species of tree used may vary. On narrower streets, a columnar-type tree may be preferable. A salt-tolerant or maritime variety may be more appropriate for New Northern Avenue and other streets at the edge of the harbor.



Seaport District light fixture



HARBORWALK AND THE SEAPORT'S OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

Harborwalk

Few places are as alluring as the threshold between land and sea. Boston's history and identity are inextricably bound with the sea, with Boston Harbor as its gateway. The prime means of achieving the goal of waterfront public access is Harborwalk, a continuous walkway along the harbor's edge that is, in effect, a re-established shoreline. When completed, Harborwalk will stretch some 43 linear miles as it moves along wharves, piers and the shoreline from Chelsea Creek to the Neponset River. Harborwalk is achieved by requiring that new development set back from the edge of the water a certain distance and then improve that setback area as a pedestrian path open to the public. Thus, Harborwalk is constructed in segments as development occurs.

Part of the richness of Harborwalk is that it changes character along its length. If Harborwalk, when completed, were a repetitive and predictable path, it would be woefully inconsistent with the eccentricities that give much of downtown Boston its distinctive character. Nowhere is it more appropriate to promote these beguiling irregularities than along the edge of the harbor, where almost four centuries of large and small alterations and additions have been undertaken pier by pier and

block by block without larger concern for their immediate environs.

The Harborwalk program is being extended to the South Boston Seaport and will be interconnected with the Scaport's open space network. The width of Harborwalk will vary depending on the character of the district and site. It can range from a 12-foot setback at the side of piers to between 50 and 60 feet at the heads of piers. Where a densely built environment already exists, such as the eastern edge of Fort Point Channel, Harborwalk may be modest or in some cases, even pass through existing buildings. Where a street exists such as Dorchester Avenue along the Fort Point Channel, new development in that location would be required to maintain a 90-foot setback to incorporate Harborwalk at the edge of the Channel and Dorchester Avenue behind it. While pedestrian passage along Dorchester Avenue is prohibited today, Harborwalk should be extended into this area as soon as possible.

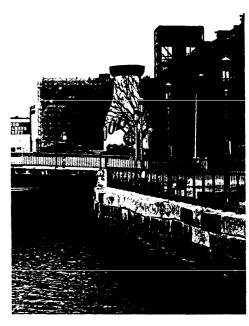
Harborwalk is shown extended into maritime industrial areas, although there may be limitations to public access at certain times or in certain locations so as not to interfere with the operations of industry or pose a safety hazard. It is important, however, to create a series of observation points where the public has the opportunity to view, at close range, the exciting operations of a working industrial port.

Open Space

Open space is not spread evenly throughout the Seaport, but located strategically and in greater concentration toward the water's edge, rather than the center, in order to encourage as much activity as possible along the harbor. The parks and plazas shown compose the primary framework. Additional spaces will be required on private parcels of land when more specific sets of uses and densities are determined. The newly designed city streets and

view corridors become integral to the open space system as they lead pedestrians to the harbor and Fort Point Channel.

Existing open spaces include the Museum Wharf terrace, the viewing platform at the head of Drydock No. 3, the harbor front park at Coastal Cement and a small park on the Reserved Channel at the Summer Street Bridge. Soon to be constructed are three new open spaces: the park at the federal courthouse, a park at D Street and Northern Avenue, and a unique upper-level park at Viaduct Street at the World Trade Center.



Fort Point Channel Harborwalk

