

THE WEST END: ISLINGTON STREET CORRIDOR PRELIMINARY VISION PLAN



DESIGN NARRATIVE

The West End is envisioned as a cohesive Portsmouth neighborhood with an improved multi-modal, walkable street system, shared civic space, and a mix of land uses. New buildings will be designed to complement the existing historic structures in the area, including the Button Factory, the Eldridge and Frank Jones Brewery buildings. New street connections, parks, plazas, greens and buildings will be integrated within the historical context, creating more opportunities for living, working, shopping and engaging in the already-present arts and “maker” culture of the area. These changes will help the West End transform from the conventional suburban patterns that characterize it today. Implementing of this vision will likely require a wide array of innovative land use regulations, policies and programs, and a cooperative approach to redevelopment.

The West End Vision Plan has four main components:

CIVIC SPACE

The Plan incorporates a network of parks, plazas, and greenways. One essential feature is the creation of several new civic spaces designed to anchor the neighborhoods and provide places for recreation and gathering. One such space, envisioned for the area adjacent to the historic Button Factory, is ideally suited for a future transit station and includes plenty of space for recreation. A second civic space within the former Frank Jones Brewery complex is imagined as a plaza with the potential for outdoor dining and park space. Another important feature of the Plan is the daylighting of Hodgson Brook, and the creation of a greenway for walking, biking, and passive recreation along the restored waterway. A series of pocket parks, greens and plazas throughout the West End will ensure that residents and visitors are never more than a short walk from a well-designed civic space. One feature is the incorporation of a shared street into the Button Factory area, a place where working artisans can demonstrate their crafts and display their goods while pedestrians and motorists move through the space. Throughout the Plan, opportunities will be sought to incorporate street trees, particularly when whole blocks or streetscapes are redeveloped.

BUILDING DESIGN

The design strategy for the Vision Plan is based on the juxtaposition of existing historic homes, mixed use and industrial buildings and new, more contemporary buildings and additions. During the West End charrette, the public expressed their desire for a variety of building heights, volumes and massing, and were open to the injection of contemporary architecture into the mix. The intention is for these neighborhoods to develop their own character and styles, independent of downtown Portsmouth. In order to achieve a higher density of uses and buildings, structured parking will be required.

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LAND USE

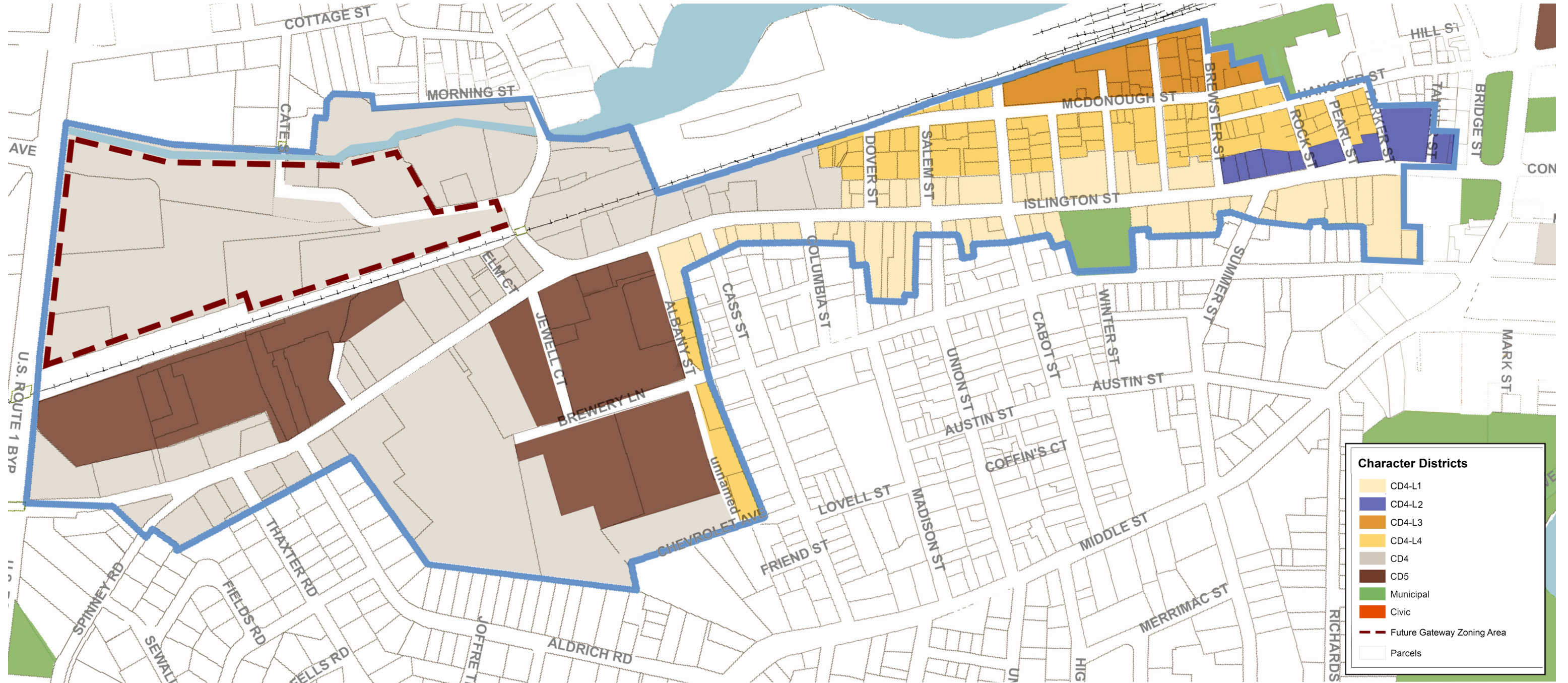
Land uses in the West End will include a variety of residential, office, civic and commercial spaces, including light industrial “maker” spaces and artist’s workshops. Charrette participants voiced the need for additional housing, which could include rowhouses, live-work units, artists’ lofts, small single-family homes, mid-rise multi-family buildings and possibly microhousing apartments. While a full range of housing opportunities should be provided for residents of all income levels, some emphasis should be placed on keeping existing housing affordable and creating additional workforce housing units. Ground floor uses in most areas along the corridor will be commercial in order to activate streetscapes and keep residences out of potential flood zones. Parking will be located on street, in the rear yards, in underground garages, or in lined parking structures concealed from public view. The introduction of a new Artisan Industrial Character District will allow for the type of development envisioned for the Button Factory maker place.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Participants in the West End charrette were quick to point out the safety concerns at intersections, rail crossings, and the lack of pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the area. The Plan provides for a better connected street network and harmonious integration of various modes of transportation including pedestrian, bicycle and motorist, as well as public transit. The transit-ready plan includes a potential hub for future connections to downtown Portsmouth and the surrounding region by way of a bus or an on-street trolley line. Three major intersections have been redesigned to facilitate flow of traffic and accommodate large truck circulation. All thoroughfares are designed to be pedestrian-friendly and incorporate multi-modal design features including generous sidewalks and bike lanes where possible. One unique feature of the Vision Plan is the introduction of a shared street adjacent to the Button Factory, where pedestrians and slow-moving motorists will utilize the same pavement area. Finally, the creation of a rail trail along the existing rail line will improve pedestrian and bike connectivity to other parts of Portsmouth and the region.

The West End Vision Plan is meant to be inspirational and used as a helpful tool to guide and shape the city’s future land use regulations, policies and programs. Accordingly, all areas shown as either civic space (such as parks or playgrounds) or new streets and buildings are only intended to illustrate how the West End might look in the future if the city’s land use regulations, policies and programs are revised to support the concepts shown on the plan. Importantly, the private property owners will ultimately chose when and how to redevelop their property.

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PRELIMINARY REGULATING PLAN

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CIVIC SPACE NETWORK

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PROPOSED PLAZA AT HISTORIC FRANK JONES BREWERY

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PROPOSED DISTRICT CENTRAL SQUARE ADJACENT TO HISTORIC BUTTON FACTORY

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SHARED STREET/ARTISAN INDUSTRIAL AT THE HISTORIC BUTTON FACTORY

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TYPICAL RESIDENTIAL: MCDONAUGH STREET NEIGHBORHOOD