

FINAL REPORT *for*
THE SCITUATE HARBOR VILLAGE CENTER
DESIGN CHARRETTE



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SCITUATE HARBOR VILLAGE CENTER DESIGN CHARRETTE
DRAFT FINAL REPORT

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SCITUATE HARBOR VILLAGE CENTER DESIGN CHARRETTE

FINAL REPORT

Introduction

Overview

This is a summary of an important public planning and design initiative that was undertaken to enhance the visual character and economic vitality of the village of Scituate Harbor. The goal of this initiative was to create a basis for community actions and private investment necessary to create an improved streetscape and open space network along the waterfront and within the Village Center. These improvements should reinforce the town's historic links to its maritime past, contribute to the vitality of the business district, and enhance the quality of experience for all residents and visitors to Front Street.

This charrette and follow-up report was funded by a grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the Department of Housing and Community Development's Massachusetts Downtown Initiative. This program provides towns with technical assistance in:

- identifying community needs,
- envisioning a revitalized downtown,
- reviewing solutions other communities have applied to similar problems,
- developing specific design actions and
- understanding the implementation steps necessary to realize the vision.

The emphasis in this revitalization effort must be on developing a shared vision for the future of the Harbor among the public and private interests who are the stakeholders in the community. For this reason, the public participation workshop was the most important element of this planning effort. The Cecil Group, Inc., a design firm with expertise in urban design and landscape architecture, provided professional assistance to the Town of Scituate in the preparation of this report.

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to provide design concepts that could help advance townscape improvements desired by the Town, and to link these concepts to action steps for implementing positive change. This report is intended to address key issues of concern to the stakeholders as expressed in the charrette session by exploring design options in order to establish a favorable combination of improvements to Scituate Harbor. The goals of the community for Scituate Harbor were to enhance the visual quality, safety and image of the village while developing a compelling vision of the harbor as a focus of commercial and recreational activities. The report also includes recommendations on design implementation.

Planning Process

The planning process for the workshop began with a review of relevant background documents, including the Scituate Harbor Access Study prepared by the Urban Harbors Institute in December, 2000. Sources included the Town Application for the Department of Housing and Community Development Downtown Technical Assistance Program. Discussions with the Town Planner, Laura Harbottle, provided an overview of local planning issues and insights into the concerns of both public agencies and the commercial sector.

Base plans were prepared from assessor's maps, GIS data files and aerial photographs provided by the Scituate Planning Office. Design team members visited the area to familiarize themselves with local conditions and to take photographs of important design opportunities and planning constraints. On November 14, 2001, a public planning workshop was held in Scituate to solicit issues, goals and design ideas from interested community members. Prior to the meeting, the Town Planner conducted a public outreach program to inform as many property and business owners, town residents and other stakeholders as possible of the planning effort.

At the workshop, the community was shown a photographic slide "tour" of the existing project area. The planning team highlighted a number of areas that represented opportunities for visual enhancement and downtown revitalization. Conditions that constrain the creation of a memorable urban district were also noted. Examples of other communities' successful revitalization efforts and design tools were shown to illustrate the range of possible solutions available to solve similar problems. Scituate residents were then encouraged to break into small discussion groups facilitated by team members to mark site maps with their perceptions of problem areas and design opportunities.

Breaking into work groups a second time, residents were asked to generate design ideas for improvements to enhance problem areas or underutilized district features on site maps.

The planning team then summarized the principal design ideas heard from the work groups and outlined resources available to fund some of these improvements. Implementation steps that the community might wish to undertake were discussed to conclude the workshop. As a final step, the planning team produced this report which included an outline estimate of the costs of some of the most important design elements. This was intended to guide the community in understanding the responsibilities and processes involved in realizing these revitalization visions over time.

SCITUATE HARBOR DESIGN CHARRETTE FINAL REPORT

Current Conditions and Issues for the Future

Description of Focus Area

The area under study for this project was the village of Scituate Harbor along Front Street, extending from Beaver Dam Road south to Edward Foster Road. The study area bordered a portion of the Scituate Harbor waterfront and included the town marina and the public right-of-way/parking lot known as Cole Parkway. The relationships between the study area and the intersecting residential neighborhood streets including Harbor Heights Road, Allen Street, Otis Place, Beal Place, and Brook Street were also considered.



Existing Conditions and Community Issues

The key issues for the downtown center of Scituate Harbor, as discussed at the community workshop held November 14, 2001, ranged from large scale issues such as the identity of Scituate Harbor and the general street character of Front Street, to specifics such as the addition of public restrooms at the harbor.

Creating an Identity

Separated from much of the Town of Scituate, the Scituate Harbor Center/Front Street area has a distinct character of its own. However, there is a perception that Scituate Harbor hasn't fully developed a coherent identity.

The center retains a historical connection with the water. Fishing, lobstering and maritime activities are still an active part of the economy of the town. The location of the town pier and views to the lighthouse on Cedar Point continue the maritime legacy of the area as well. However, the waterfront itself is not developed as a destination, the connections to the waterfront are not accentuated, and the nautical past of Scituate Harbor has little physical embodiment along Front Street. Because the Town offices and Town Hall are located in another part of the community, there are no civic uses in the area that help define Front Street as a Town Center.

Front Street's termini are defined on both ends by the turn from Beaver Dam Road and the precarious intersection at Brook Street. The entry points from both the north and south to Front Street remains unclear. Confusing directional signs, competing commercial signage, and unattractive landscaping obscure any focal gateway. There is little indication to the visitor that he or she is entering a historic maritime downtown with shops and amenities. Some residents who are averse to additional visitors may favor a lack of directional signage. However, many of the Center's businesses also depend upon patrons from outside as well as inside the Scituate community in order to be vital and successful.



Improving the Front Street Streetscape

A substantial portion of Front Street, from Harbor Heights Road to Beal Street, is landscaped with street trees and the storefronts are decorated with flower boxes. While these treatments provides an attractive pedestrian friendly streetscape in that area, the remaining portions of Front Street are less consistent in their landscape treatment and, as a result, lose much of their potential for creating a unifying pattern or for the establishment of a center-wide character and scale.

Overhead utilities and utility poles detract from the landscaping and from the pedestrian scale it promotes. Current streetlights are standard highway “cobra head” fixtures attached to utility poles. While efficient and economical, this type of fixture casts a harsh light and contributes to the establishment of a suburban or highway road feel that is not in scale with pedestrian activities.



Sidewalks along Front Street vary in condition along its length. On parts of Front Street sidewalks are old and in poor condition, in other parts sidewalks are non-existent. ADA compliant curb ramps are absent from most of the Front Street intersections and crosswalk locations. The street furniture used throughout the district is an eclectic collection of benches, trash receptacles, and wood planters. Little continuity exists in the materials or styles of these furnishings.



Signage and commercial facades along Front Street represent a collection of varying styles that do not consistently reinforce the character of a traditional New England waterfront community. There are also some cases of buildings and signs that need some basic improvements. Along Front Street, between Harbor Heights Road and Brook Street, while signage could be improved, it nevertheless reflects the more individual character of the establishments rather than generic business signs. Existing directional signage does a poor job in guiding visitors to public facilities, individual businesses or amenities. There is also little informational and interpretive signage to inform residents and visitors of local events and history.



Improving the Waterfront

The waterside location of Scituate Harbor is one of its strongest assets. Currently, connections to the harbor, particularly pedestrian connections, are weak, although significant opportunities exist at a few points along Front Street where there are alleys or breaks between buildings. Both visual and physical pedestrian and bicycle links to the harbor could be increased and enhanced giving the maritime character and history of the area more emphasis.

It was suggested that the area appears to have “turned its back on the ocean.” Business frontage often faces Front Street while service functions, including parking, face the harbor. As a result, the harbor-facing sides of businesses are far less attractive and less well maintained than those on Front Street. Additionally, because pedestrian circulation on the harbor



side is limited in some areas, businesses fail to take advantage of the harbor's appeal and potential as a draw for customers. Most of the area between Front Street and the harbor serves as parking. This "sea of asphalt" detracts from the aesthetic appeal of the harbor.



Sidewalks exist only along some sections of the harbor edge. Aside from outdoor eating opportunities at the Mill Wharf restaurant, the town pier and a small bandstand at Cole Parkway, few amenities draw visitors to the water. Some useful improvements do include new benches along one stretch of the waterfront, and the small gazebo/bandstand near the water at the rear of Cole Parkway, the largest parking area. These were noted as positive elements by some participants. All these factors contribute to a waterfront edge that is underutilized both as an attraction for visitors and residents and as an amenity to waterfront businesses.



Coordinating Design

The architecture of Front Street includes historic structures, but the quality of design, building maintenance and plantings varies from establishment to establishment. The landscape, signage and facade treatments along the whole length of Front Street do not consistently reinforce the participant's sense of appropriate village-oriented design. The experience of Front Street as an identifiable place could be enhanced by coordination of color, landscaping and signage particularly at the areas north of Harbor Heights Road and south of Beal Place.



Creating Public Facilities

One obstruction to increasing pedestrian traffic along the harbor is its lack of public facilities. In order to become a viable destination for residents and tourists alike, easily located restrooms and outdoor

resting areas should be provided. No major functional open space exists within Scituate Harbor. Creation of this type of public space could be utilized to energize the waterfront’s pedestrian edge or to help better define the Front Street shopping area.

Improving Parking Conditions

The majority of parking spaces within Scituate Harbor occur in two large lots between Front Street and the harbor. While these lots are used to near capacity at peak times during the summer, most of the year they are underutilized. The charrette attendees expressed that both lots generate an aesthetic impression

of too much asphalt. These lots are environmentally unpleasant in that they add to a heating effect in the summer and a cooling effect in the winter while offering little relief through landscaping.



Some on-street parking exists along Front Street in the form of parallel parking spaces between Otis Place and Brook Street. The lack of convenient on-street spaces on the portion of Front Street north of Otis Place apparently compels visitors to park their cars on the narrower residential streets intersecting Front Street, namely Harbor Heights Road, Allen Street and Otis Place.



Improving Cole Parkway

The public right-of-way and parking lot known as Cole Parkway is viewed as an underutilized “dead zone” on the waterfront. Although this open spaces’ potential was mentioned as a terrific opportunity by attendees, in its present condition Cole Parkway’s dual roles as a parking lot and seasonal open space must compete with one another.

SCITUATE HARBOR DESIGN CHARRETTE FINAL REPORT

Workshop Summary

Concepts and Recommendations

(1) CREATING AN IDENTITY FOR SCITUATE HARBOR

General Concepts

Comments from the workshop covered many aspects of Scituate Harbor, from physical streetscape issues to marketing efforts for Front Street. Participants felt that efforts should be directed towards developing an identity based on Scituate Harbor's nautical past and historic connection with the water.

Along Front Street there are several points where the connection to the harbor could be explored and emphasized. Much of Front Street already benefits from a strong collection of specialty shops and businesses. The village-like character of the area could be developed and reinforced by encouraging additional commercial and mixed-use enterprises along this stretch, and through introduction of civic uses along Front Street (i.e. a senior center or library.) This could help create a more defined town center along Front Street.

Specific Recommendations

- Develop a theme for Front Street, based on its identity as a working harbor through general design, street furniture and lighting.
- Create gateways to Front Street at Beaver Dam Road and Brook Street through design elements, landscaping, and signage.
- Implement coordinated signage along Front Street to direct visitors to attractions and merchants.
- Establish an information kiosk or a community bulletin board at a highly trafficked central location along Front Street.

(2) IMPROVING THE STREETScape DESIGN OF FRONT STREET

General Concepts

Two locations were identified as suitable for "gateways" to the downtown area. The first gateway opportunity identified was where Beaver Dam Road bends and turns into Front Street. Many felt that the installation of signage, particularly a merchant directory, special pavement treatment, additional street trees and planters which accentuate the view corridor to the harbor could create a memorable visual event at this potentially dramatic entry to Scituate Harbor from the north.

The second gateway location is at the intersection of Front Street and Brook Street. Improvements in this location should include the reconfiguration of the intersection into a safer juncture for both vehicles and pedestrians. Specifically, a reduction of crosswalk distances through the use of planted curb extensions and the provision of a landscaped separation between on-street parking and the Front Street's right-of-way should be considered. The introduction of landscaping and prominent placement of a monument, flagpole, or other focal point would serve to mark entry into the Center.

The guardrail along Front St. at Satuit Brook is out of character and should be replaced with a railing that is consistent with the character of the village. This could also improve the view of the Harbor from Front St. at this location.

Utility poles and lines were cited as contributors to visual clutter throughout the downtown area. Charrette participants recommended burying utility lines on Front Street. Because the burial of utilities will require the excavation of significant segments of roadway pavement, this operation should be closely coordinated with future roadway improvements to minimize disruption and to realize the economies of shared costs such as demolition and repaving.

Recognizing that the current “cobra-head” highway luminaries attached to utility poles do not contribute to a desirable character in Scituate Harbor Center, charrette participants recommended installing historically inspired ornamental street lights along Front Street. It would probably prove cost-effective to install the ornamental lights first for immediate impact and remove the overhead utilities and associated poles later as additional funds become available. Complimentary light fixtures may also be installed in other locations, such as along a harbor walk and in parking areas.

Workshop participants’ signage recommendations centered on developing signage controls to encourage a more attractive visual environment on Front Street. Other participants wanted to develop a coordinated system of clear directional signs to guide drivers and visitors to local attractions and businesses. Informational kiosks listing ongoing activities and interpretative signs relating to the history and attractions of Scituate Harbor were recommended. Town entry and “welcome” signs were also suggested as part of previously described “gateway” elements.

Workshop participants understood the role street furniture can play in strengthening the character of Scituate Harbor. Street furniture was recognized as a supporting element of larger scale streetscape improvements. Participants recommended the installation of additional benches, trash receptacles, bike racks and interpretive stations kiosks, in conjunction with other improvements in areas where the public might be encouraged to linger both along Front Street and at the water’s edge.

Participants at the workshop noted that the current character of the streetscape has been negatively affected a cacophony of utilities and signage, and the lack of a cohesive theme or aesthetic design. Charrette participants agreed that the use of brick pavement accent bands along sidewalks throughout the Scituate Harbor Center would serve as a unifying element for the whole area. In addition, larger expanses or “carpets” of brick could be used to designate key intersections and pedestrian crossings as well as places of interest.

Specific Recommendations

- Provide a continuous, handicap accessible, sidewalk along Front Street that is unified by a brick accent band.
- Enhance the gateways and residential neighborhood intersection “nodes” in order to better celebrate the experience of entering the Town Center through the use of signage, banners, planting, special pavement and open space. A portion of the Town Pier could be designed as a small “open space” area for viewing the Harbor.
- Use special treatments such as granite edging or a field of specialty pavement at crosswalks to improve the street aesthetic and to signify pedestrian zones to car traffic.

- Minimize the appearance and effect of utilities, possibly through burial of some overhead utilities; and replace cobra-head lighting along Front Street with decorative lights of a historic character that are pedestrian in scale.
- Establish design guidelines for the improvement and renovation of properties along Front Street. Guidelines should be administered under the direction of an Advisory Committee or a Village Coordinator to ensure cohesiveness in landscape and architectural features.
- Establish public gathering spaces and opportunities for social interaction through street furniture and public facilities. These would be best located either at interest points along Front Street or at links to the harbor and could incorporate public art, especially with nautical or local themes.
- Improve the maintenance and aesthetics at “alleyway” connections between Front Street and the harbor. Enhance these areas both visually and functionally, and develop them into useful, pedestrian friendly links to the waterfront through the use of brick pavement, landscaping, benches and lighting.
- Require that trash dumpsters be screened or enclosed in aesthetically pleasing enclosures in minimally visible locations.

(3) TRAFFIC, CIRCULATION AND PARKING

General Concepts

During the workshop, citizens identified the key entrance points to Scituate Harbor as those locations most in need of traffic improvements. The participants focused on providing clearer directions for both destination traffic to, and through, traffic passing by, Scituate Harbor. Methods of addressing traffic issues along Front Street ranged from directional signage to the introduction of design elements. They also reviewed other methods of bringing visitors to Scituate Harbor.

Pedestrian and bicycle safety was a concern of the participants. Provision of sidewalks along the waterfront, as well as on Front Street were seen as important steps in promoting pedestrian activity. The addition of space for bicycles along Front Street and/or along the waterfront would also increase options for non-automobile travel.

A need to reduce the speed of traffic entering Scituate Harbor was cited by workshop attendees as a principal safety concern. Reducing speed through the use of “traffic calming” techniques was identified as a possible solution for this problem. Traffic calming techniques use physical design features to encourage lower speed by providing visual cues to motorists that the road has changed from a suburban or rural environment to a town environment. Commonly used traffic calming methods include welcome signs, differentiated pavement surfaces and features that perceptually reduce the apparent width of the road such as street trees, lower scale ornamental lights and curb extensions.

Possible pavement treatments include rumble strips, textured surfaces such as cobbles, unit pavers or embossed asphalt pavement, called “streetprinting,” for crosswalks. The continuation of a strong corridor defined by street trees can aid in reducing vehicle speed through a visual narrowing of the roadway where it is not possible to actually reduce street width. A strong “gateway” event at the principal entrances into the village could also aid in slowing traffic. Other traffic calming techniques include village entrance signs and strict enforcement of the speed limit.

Parking was another issue addressed at the workshop. Parking needs in Scituate Harbor fluctuate according to the seasons.. During certain months of the year there appears to be more than sufficient parking available, but in the summer months, demand for parking spaces often exceeds the supply. Some parking recommendations were made during the charrette, such as the reconfiguration of the spaces in Cole Parkway to create a safer lot, and providing additional on-street parking on the north end of Front Street. A parking study investigating the present and future parking needs and patterns of Scituate Harbor should occur before any long-term parking improvements are implemented.

Specific Recommendations

- Redesign the parking lots between Front Street and the Harbor so that they are more safe, attractive, and pedestrian friendly.
- Investigate the current and future parking needs and use patterns through a comprehensive parking study in order to better understand the Harbor’s parking needs and explore the possibility of the redistribution of existing space in Cole Parkway.
- Explore the use of the High School for long-term parking during the peak summer season in coordination with development of public transportation to the Harbor and other areas.
- Investigate the possibility of additional on-street parallel spaces on Front Street, particularly at the north end, to reduce overflow parking occurring on the narrower residential side streets.
- Explore the feasibility of diagonal parking on Front St. in combination with a one-way traffic system.
- Reduce the speed of traffic on Front Street through the use of traffic calming features and speed limit reduction and enforcement.
- Increase the efficiency of the existing on-street “convenience” parking on Front Street by placing and enforcing thirty minute and one-hour time limit parking restrictions.

(4) IMPROVEMENTS TO THE WATERFRONT

General Concepts

Residents and business owners in Scituate Harbor were appreciative of the opportunities and qualities the harbor brings to the area. They noted, however, that both access to and views of the waterfront from Front Street were not fully developed. Improved pedestrian and bicycle links to the water’s edge with a continuous waterfront walk or promenade that is adorned with carefully developed “destination” points would make open space amenities a part of the everyday experience of Front Street.

It was suggested that the harbor side face to Front Street businesses be further improved. This face should have secondary storefronts and would benefit from being connected by a pedestrian mall that was landscaped and lit. This new pedestrian mall should receive a unit paver accent that is complimentary to proposed sidewalk paving on Front Street.

Specific Recommendations

- Develop a continuous pedestrian way or promenade along the waterfront, connecting one end of Front St. to the other, with interspersed “destination” amenities such as information kiosks, seasonal retail uses/vending carts, seating/eating areas, and open gathering spaces.
- Create more green space along harbor’s edge.

- Encourage mixed-use development including businesses facing waterfront.
- Create a pedestrian mall connecting harbor side storefronts through the use of landscaping, unit paver accents pavement, and lighting.

(5) COLE PARKWAY IMPROVEMENTS

General Concepts

During the workshop, citizens identified Cole Parkway as an area along the harbor that, although it has potential, lacks definition in its function. The majority of Cole Parkway is bituminous pavement and is used as a public parking lot. A narrow landscape strip and small gazebo are present at the very edge of the Harbor.

In general, it was felt that the Cole Parkway parking lot should be redesigned so that it is safer, attractive and pedestrian friendly. A pedestrian link could be added across the parking lot connecting the stores with the waterfront. It was felt that parking at the business side of the lot should remain and that angled parking should be added in front of newly developed harbor side storefronts.

A well-designed public gathering space of substantial size that includes landscaping, benches, trash receptacles, game tables, space for vendor carts and outdoor eating and a more substantial gazebo or bandstand should be developed along the water's edge. A portion of this gathering space could consist of a specialty pavement or reinforced turf that could be used as overflow parking when needed.

Specific Recommendations

- Reconfigure parking lot to be safer, more attractive and pedestrian friendly, with a substantial pedestrian walkway across the parking lot linking the stores to the waterfront.
- Utilize waterfront edge for open space recreation.
- Introduce "dual-use" surface such as reinforced turf or specialty pavement at water edge that can function as either public open space or overflow parking as parking needs peak.
- Replace or expand the gazebo.
- Make Cole Parkway more useful.

(6) OTHER IMPROVEMENTS

Some improvements suggested by workshop participants fell outside of the scope of the project area, but have the potential to improve the quality of life in the community of Scituate Harbor and along Front Street and deserve serious consideration. Other recommendations produced over the course of the workshop are not design strategies, but are initiatives the Town may also wish to implement.

- Involve youth in renovation of the waterfront through artwork, design of improvements and development of community facilities for youth and others.
- Develop a Storefront Association for building improvements.
- Improve Town services regarding sidewalk and street cleaning maintenance.

- Encourage prompt removal of trash stored outside on private property.
- Promote mixed-use development by allowing residential use above retail on Front Street. This will add both dollars and energy to Front Street.
- Create more community and special events similar to Scituate Heritage Days, including fairs and festivals that can attract tourists and celebrate the heritage of Scituate Harbor.
- Promote local events that can contribute to a unified feeling of community.

SCITUATE HARBOR DESIGN CHARRETTE

FINAL REPORT

Design Report

Recommended Design Alternative Description

As a result of the input gathered from the community workshop, the design team developed a Recommended Design Alternative. The Recommended Design Alternative emphasizes a cohesive, unified streetscape with strong links to open space and recreation resources, and safety improvements to pedestrian walkways. Prominent and legible signage will direct visitors to the amenities in and around Scituate Harbor. The pedestrian atmosphere created by new design efforts will make the downtown area a desirable place for commercial activities.

The initial impression of Scituate Harbor from Beaver Dam Road with its panoramic view is an opportunity to introduce visitors to a special place with much to offer. Tourists or visitors traveling into the Harbor from the south should also be greeted by a "gateway" entry. By using imagery related to the maritime identity of Scituate Harbor, this entry portal on the south can also invite travelers into the downtown area. The maritime theme will be continued with a signage system employing consistent imagery that directs visitors to shops, points of interest, and historic interpretive opportunities.

Cultural features along Front Street should be emphasized as visible destinations for visitors on foot. Crucial to the recommended plan are strategies to enhance the pedestrian experience along Front Street and by the harbor's edge. These include pedestrian links between the shopping area and the water, and the continuous waterfront pedestrian walk connecting the two ends of Front St. These should include spaces for informal eating, recreation, and casual "milling around" as well as for walking. These activities enliven streets and by inviting visitors to spend more time in the area, bring direct benefits to the merchant community.

While the extent of improvements will be dependent on funding, there are a number of modifications that should be implemented to foster street activity. Safety and convenience elements such as prominent crosswalks at selected locations along Front Street should be a priority. These could be constructed with sidewalk extensions, special detailing, paving or imprinted pavement so as to be highly visible to both motorist and pedestrians. Other important elements are the intersection redesign at Front Street and Brook Street, and the bridging of gaps in sidewalk routes to allow pedestrians to be able to walk safely and comfortably along the entire corridor. The supplementation of street trees, and replacement of existing but failing trees is an aesthetic improvement that, while relatively simple, could be a highly effective method of unifying the street. Additional aesthetic improvements, such as brick pavement accents, landscaping and historically inspired ornamental lights, should be considered as funding allows.

Also important to a positive perception of Scituate Harbor are amenities that give the corridor a unique identity. In order to attract pedestrians, both residents and visitors must feel a connection with the Harbor, and understand it as a special place. In the Harbor, this sense of "place" is necessarily linked to the waterfront identity of the area. It is thus most important to make strong physical connections between Front Street and the harbor. In addition, view corridors extending from Front Street to Scituate Harbor can provide important visual connections to the waterfront amenities of the area.

SCITUATE HARBOR DESIGN CHARRETTE FINAL REPORT

Implementation

The critical issues involved in the realization of improvements to Scituate Harbor are funding for capital improvements and the development of a maintenance program that will ensure the longevity of any improvements. The implementation program cannot be undertaken by a single town entity. Cooperative efforts of several public agencies will be necessary to make the plan viable.

Agency Coordination

Stakeholders in Scituate Harbor include residents and business owners, and a variety of public and private entities located there such as the U.S. Coast Guard, the Scituate Harbormaster's office, Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association, and St. Mary's Church. The Conservation Commission has custody of Town-owned land adjacent to the project area. Groups who might be approached for cooperation with this effort include the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Department of Public Works, Waterways Commission, Conservation Commission and Beautification Committee. .

A cooperative planning process is necessary to ensure coordinated choices for the entire project area. It is important to reach an agreement that will be supported by all of the town boards referred to above and the community of Scituate Harbor. The town should develop a structure to direct decision-making and oversee the funding, construction and maintenance of any improvements to Front Street. While certain individuals or agencies may have a particular interest in a specific improvement, all involved parties must act in a coordinated partnership if funding credibility is to be established and political paralysis is to be avoided.

In order to guide the design alternatives suggested in this report, as well as any future improvements that may occur, it is recommended that Scituate create a committee who will oversee improvements to Scituate Harbor. The tasks of this committee may include formulating and administering design guidelines for façade improvements, landscaping and streetscape improvements; preparation of a Harbor Plan; development of design plans for physical improvements for pedestrian circulation, traffic, parking and public open spaces; offering guidance to property owners; and generally acting as a resource concerning design issues as they affect Front Street. This committee should be comprised so that it represents a variety of interests in Scituate Harbor, including business owners, citizens, and design professionals.

Cost

It is difficult to estimate the total cost of implementing the ideas proposed for Scituate Harbor. As a first step, a preliminary master plan should be developed which breaks down the larger program into separate, do-able components. Information on costs and current funding programs for these components should be included, and may be helpful in establishing priorities.

Unit costs for the principal design elements recommended by workshop participants have been included in the Appendix A for purposes of understanding very rough costs. For example, if ornamental streetlights are estimated to cost approximately \$3,500 each, including conduit and controls, and the lights are spaced 75' apart, it will cost approximately \$45,000 to install ornamental lights on a 1000' length of road.

Funding Sources

As can be seen from a glance at the Unit Costs, capital improvements to Scituate Harbor will require funding for both execution and maintenance. The full range of local, state and federal sources should be explored as part of the implementation effort. A brief description of a number of public funding programs that may have relevance to the implementation of the Scituate Harbor improvements follows.

Source:	MA Community Development Action Grant
Amounts:	\$1 million cap; requires match by the Town.
Uses:	Community and Development funds for economic development; no restriction on spending but must be spent on publicly-owned facilities.
Timing:	State-appropriated and bonded every four years.
Note:	Matching funds can come from Town's CDBG funds.

Source:	Public Works Economic Development Grant
Amounts:	Up to \$1 million spent every two years.
Uses:	Public works infrastructure improvements that result in economic enhancement, possibly including streetscape improvements in line with the economic enhancement potential of the improvements.
Timing:	Every two years.

Source:	Community Development Block Grants (CDF2)
Amounts:	Up to \$ 1 million per year.
Uses	Streetscape improvements if the surrounding area is shown to meet certain needs criteria. CDBG funds may be matched to dollars obtained from other sources.
Timing	Yearly

Source:	MA Ready Resource Fund
Amounts:	Up to \$400,000 per year.
Uses:	Public facilities, parking lots and infrastructure improvements for the enhancement of business districts (a more targeted subsection of Community Development Block Grant program).
Timing	NA

Source:	MA Department of Environmental Management - Historic Landscapes Program
Amounts:	\$50,000 maximum.
Uses:	Grants are given to municipalities for historic parks, commons, and public buildings.
Timing:	Annual.

The likelihood of acquiring funding under any of these programs or other sources depends on a variety of factors, including timing, eligibility, competing applications, aggressive support of elected officials and legislative delegation. At the same time, Scituate Harbor occupies such an important place in the community's history, geography and civic life that its position would undoubtedly be strong in any competitive review process.

Several of these potential funding sources are geared towards urban design and infrastructure improvements, and could be directly applicable to recommendations for sidewalk, streetscape and lighting improvements. Utility infrastructure such as overhead utilities may also be visually improved with this funding.

The funding for burial of overhead utilities may also be approached in a different way. Several Massachusetts communities have financed burial of overhead utilities by enacting a local bylaw in accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 166, Section 22D. Towns have filed special legislation to give the municipality the authority to issue bonds to pay for the burial of utilities and to do the work itself, receiving reimbursement from the utility. This may be less costly than having the utility do the work. Under this legislation the utility is allowed to pass along the cost of funding this arrangement to the rate payers in the form of a two per cent surcharge on their electric and telephone bills.

As an example, the Town of Norfolk financed the burial of 3/4 mile of overhead utilities in the town center under this special legislation. The commercial users and 3,000 household in the town were surcharged 2% of their electric and telephone bills by the utility companies. To an average \$89.00 monthly residential electric bill, \$1.78 was added (2%). To an average \$55.00 monthly residential telephone bill, \$1.10 was added (2%). The total surcharge for this hypothetical average family was \$2.88 / month. Under a best-case scenario, the annual revenue stream paid to the town as a result of the surcharge was \$166,000. This allowed the town to pay the principal and interest on a 7-year bond of \$800,000. This bond was sufficient to allow the town to pay for the burial of utilities and for new streetlights within the town center.

The Town of Scituate is currently undertaking an inventory of its historic buildings. At the completion of such a process, it should be possible to determine if any structures or sites are potentially applicable for aid under the Historic Landscapes Program or programs available through the Massachusetts Historic Commission and other agencies.

Summary

Scituate Harbor is a village with many natural, visual and historic assets. Among its most important resources are its citizens, who have energy, involvement and vision in abundance. The public workshop attended by these citizens provided a forum in which community goals, objectives, and design ideas could be put forth. The vision for Scituate Harbor's future is the result of the community's efforts; the study team merely recorded the comments, synthesized the ideas and developed themes its members identified into this report.

If implemented, the recommendations of the report offer an opportunity to reduce traffic impacts, improve pedestrian safety, provide a sense of visual continuity and reinforce a community center with a true sense of place. These improvements can make Front St. and Cole Parkway cleaner, safer and more attractive, and provide a more accessible and enjoyable waterfront. By so doing, they will help attract visitors and over time, bring additional commercial activity to Scituate Harbor. The recommendations described in this report will visually and functionally unify Scituate Harbor, thereby helping it contribute even more to the quality of life for its community's residents.

SCITUATE VILLAGE CENTER DESIGN CHARRETTE

FINAL REPORT

Appendix A

DESIGN ELEMENTS

Description	Unit	Unit Cost	Remarks
Site Demolition			
Demolish and remove existing asphalt pavement	SY	\$3.50	Demolish existing bit conc. Road and sidewalk pavement
Demolish and remove existing concrete pavement	SY	\$3.50	Demolish existing conc. sidewalk pavement
Pavement			
Unclassified excavation at road and crosswalks	CY	\$5.50	Assume 12" excavation of existing subgrade to remove unsuitable material
Unclassified excavation at new sidewalks, and realigned curbs	CY	\$5.50	Assume 10" excavation of existing subgrade to remove unsuitable material at walks and curbs
Gravel borrow base course at pedestrian sidewalks	SY	\$2.50	Bank run gravel spread and compacted - 6" depth
Fine grading and compacting subgrade areas	SY	\$1.50	Grading subgrade areas under all pavements
Ornamental unit pavers at sidewalks and crosswalks	SF	\$16.00	4 x 8 pavers, handtight joints swept with sand/cement mix. including concrete base
Cement concrete pavement at new sidewalks	SF	\$4.00	4" cement concrete (6" @ driveways) sidewalk with expansion joints and score joints
Planting			
Street Trees	EA	\$800.	Shade trees - 4-5" caliper installed in sidewalks
Tree Grates	SF	\$500	Cast iron 5' x 5' tree grates in sidewalks
Loam & seed	SY	\$5.00	Assume 6" topsoil in new lawn areas - offsite loam Turf grass seed mix - 4 lbs./1000 SF - hydroseeded. In potential park areas
Site Furniture / Improvements			
Benches	EA	\$1,000	6' length metal frame wood or recycled plastic slats
Trash receptacles	EA	\$800	
Bike racks	EA	\$700	
Kiosk	EA	\$1,700	Wood kiosk for community announcements
Signage	LS	\$22,000	Informational, directional, regulatory and parking lot signs. Lump sum allowance
Lighting			
Ornamental street lights	EA	\$3,800	Assumes 14' fiberglass poles with photo control receptacles and ornamental luminaries with 100 watt metal halide lamps. Includes footings handholes, conduit and excavation

FIGURE I: Existing Conditions

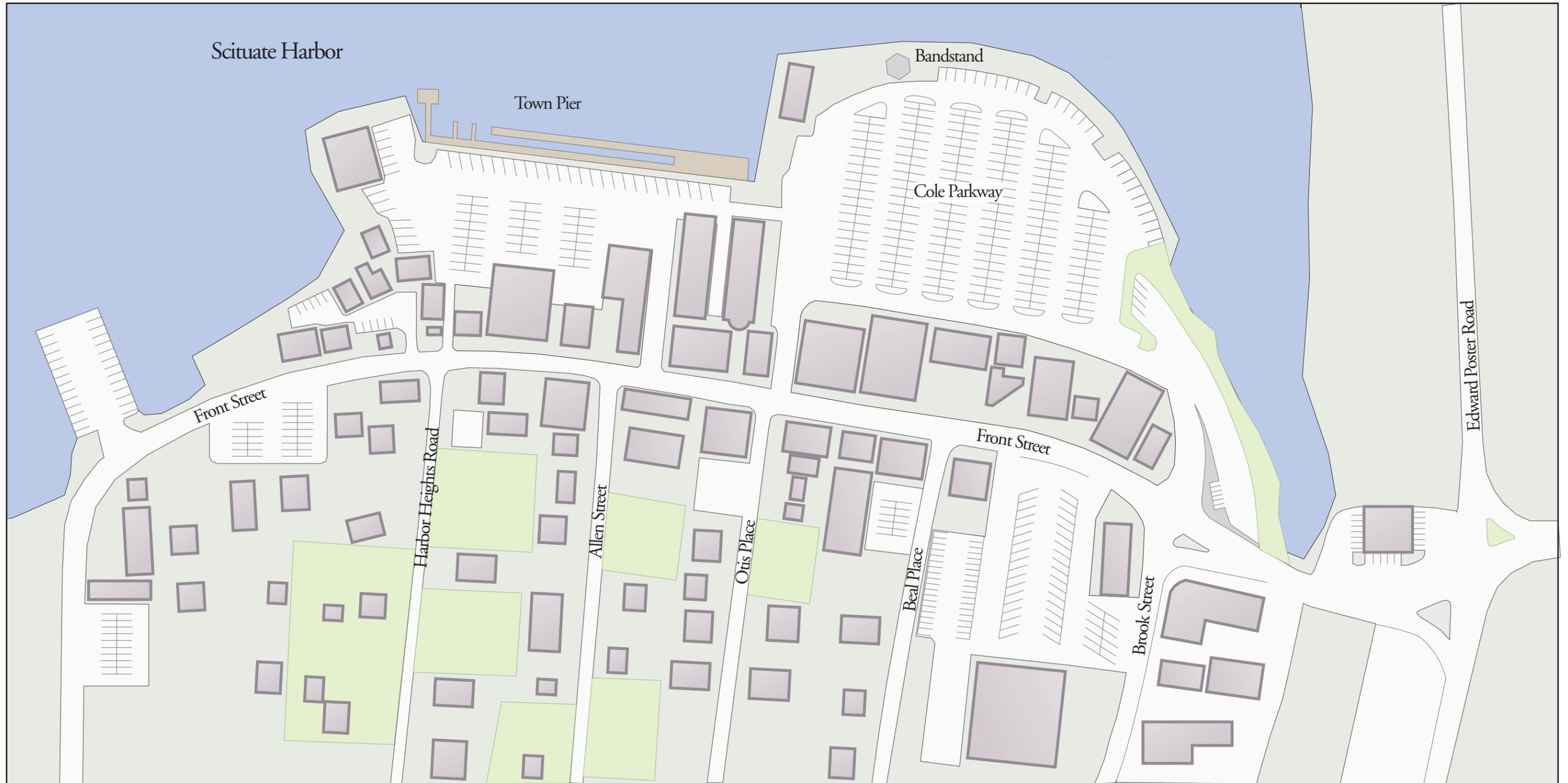


FIGURE II: Recommendations

