

RECOMMENDED POLICY INITIATIVES

4.1 Zoning

While Manchester's existing zoning, adopted nearly five years ago, has encouraged healthy development trends within the Study Area, recent development and planning projects have revealed the need to modify some of the zoning requirements in certain areas.

As stated in the Zoning Ordinance, the Central Business District (CBD) "exists for the purpose of protecting and enhancing the economic vitality of the downtown area with maximum convenience to the public and including of a wide variety of uses, developed at maximum densities." As such, it is vital that the City focus on increasing residential densities within the district in order to provide support for future economic development. Currently, only two types of residential uses are permitted by right – townhouse dwellings and dwellings in upper stories of building with businesses on the first floor. Changing the zoning to allow more high-density residential uses and encourage infill residential development would help facilitate a migration of residents into the downtown.

The Central Business District should also be expanded to include the two Urban Multi-Family Districts (R-3) that lie between the CBD boundary and the Mill District in order to allow a mix of uses in those areas beyond merely residential. In general, the retail, commercial, and service uses permitted in the remaining R-3 Districts should be increased to allow for more vibrant downtown living.

The Redevelopment District (RDV) is intended "to provide a transitional mixed-use district that facilitates the redevelopment of areas lying between the CBD and the residential multi-family districts;" however, some of the uses permitted, particularly in industrial areas such as commercial construction and excavation, and manufacturing, should be scaled back because they discourage adjacent residential uses. In addition, the permitted mix of residential uses should be increased to encourage mixed-use neighborhood development.

In a similar scenario on the west side of the Merrimack, the areas zoned General Business District (B-2) that surround the residential neighborhood identified as the West Side Neighborhood in the Plan should be re-zoned Neighborhood Business District (B-1). Some of the permitted uses in B-2 Districts, such as large-scale retail and automobile-oriented uses, are too intensive to allow the type of traditional neighborhood mixed-use development envisioned for that area.

Finally, the Arena Overlay District should be officially adopted by the City.

4.2 Green Design

Mandating green design through public policy has benefits beyond the conservation of natural resources. Green design principles help to reduce building operation costs through the use of more efficient heating and cooling systems, upgrade the internal building environment through proper orientation towards sunlight and increased air quality, support public transit through accessible site selection, and promote healthy lifestyles through inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian friendly amenities – all while promoting the use of local building materials and conserving energy and natural resources. The pictures on the right show “green” modifications to traditional building elements.

Much of Manchester’s appeal lies in its natural amenities, the Merrimack River, and the extensive park system. By requiring new development to utilize green building principles, the City will ensure that future generations enjoy all of the features that make Manchester unique.

The United States Green Building Council administers the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System. Their website, www.usgbc.org, explains that LEED was created to:

- Define “green building” by establishing a common standard of measurement
- Promote integrated, whole-building design practices
- Recognize environmental leadership in the building industry
- Stimulate green competition
- Raise consumer awareness of green building benefits
- Transform the building market

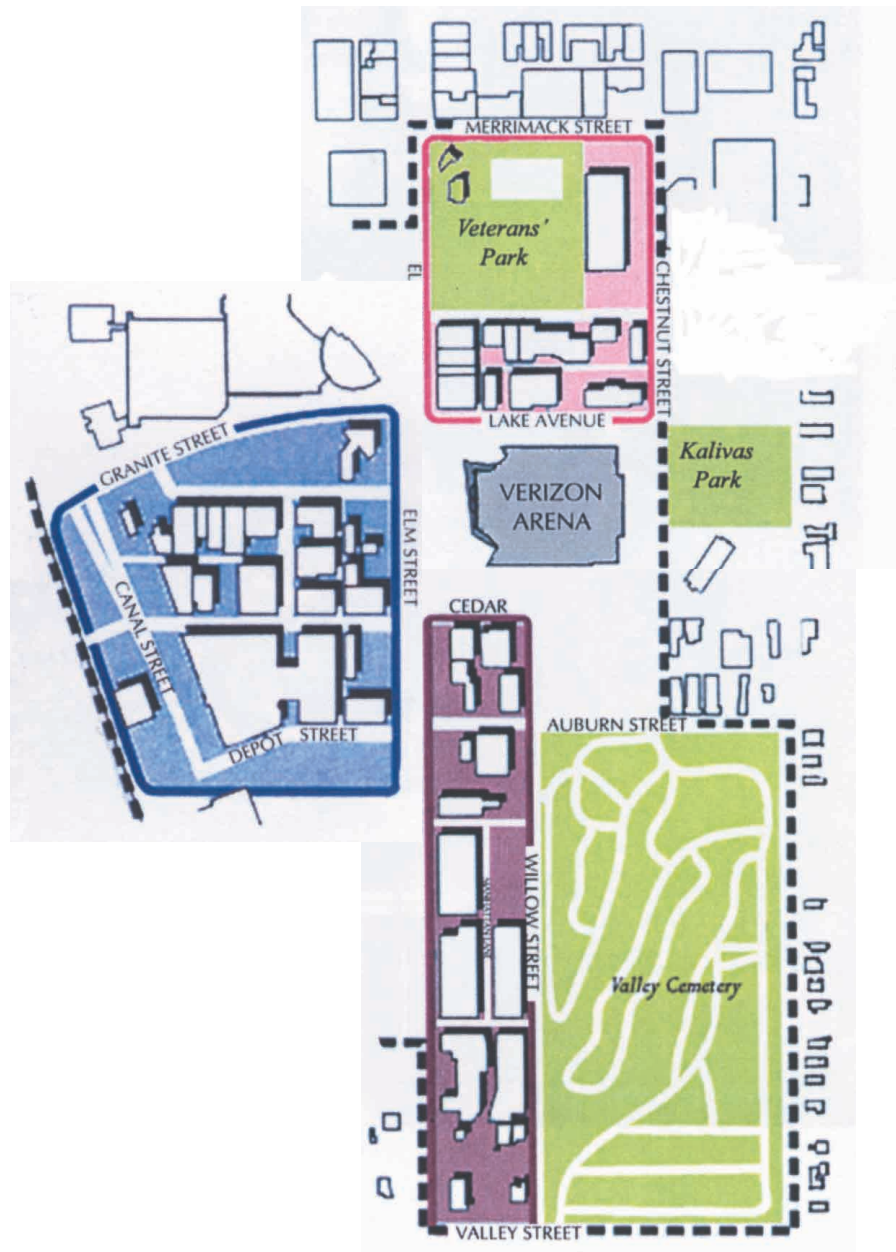
As such, LEED offers comprehensive guidelines to assist in designing sustainable buildings. Many state and federal funding sources now require that new buildings meet minimum LEED standards. It is recommended that the City of Manchester encourage developers to integrate LEED principles into new development proposals.



A “green” roof



Grass parking pavers



Arena District Urban Design Guidelines Areas (Source: City of Manchester)

4.3 Design Review / Approval Facilitation

Another tool that Manchester can use to encourage pedestrian oriented development and promote high quality design supportive of transit is its design review process. It is strongly recommended that the Arena District Urban Design Guidelines and the associated design review process be extended to include land parcels adjacent to the existing Gaslight District and including the site of an industrial building which has been identified in a later section as the recommended location for a new multi-modal transit center. The City may even want to consider extending the design review process throughout the entire Central Business District.

Some cities use the design review process as a way to provide public support for transit-supportive development projects, usually through property tax exemptions. However, in New Hampshire state law does not allow the use of tax subsidies.

Portland, Oregon runs a design review program through which transit-supportive development projects are evaluated. The criteria they use to judge projects are universally applicable and are listed below:

- The project provides safe, convenient, and effective pedestrian access, both within the site, and connecting the site to public sidewalks and to transit. Considerations include landscaping, lighting, and weather protection for pedestrians. Buildings should be oriented to the pedestrian network, and landscaping plans should integrate a variety of materials, textures, and blooming patterns. Barriers to pedestrian accessibility are minimized – in particular, auto parking placed either behind, under, or to the side of buildings. Buffer pedestrian pathways from moving traffic, and consider awnings and other means of weather protection.
- The project provides a pleasant ground floor elevation along all public rights of way (including sidewalks, pedestrian easements, and other walkways). Suggested treatments for interactive walls along the pedestrian network include ground floor retail uses (where zoning permits); art; landscaping; plazas; other extensions of the sidewalk; awnings; etc.

- The project is designed to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, and particularly with those developments which are supportive of transit. For instance, a project which abuts a traditional early 20th century residential neighborhood might integrate pitched roofs, gables, porches, and other features of the nearby building styles. Projects along “main streets” might incorporate materials, façade details, mass, and scale similar to nearby streetcar era commercial structures.

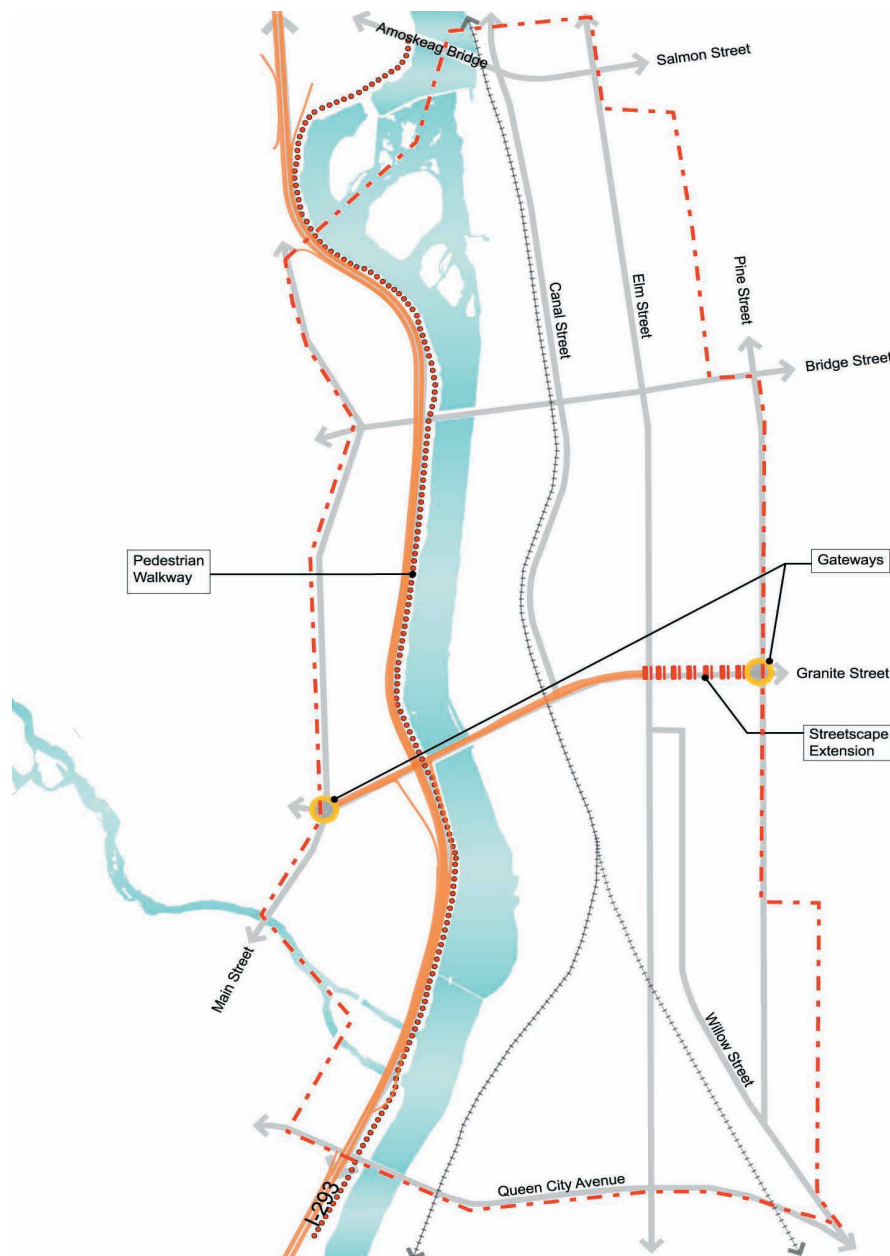
Whether the city chooses to expand its existing design review process or institute a new design review tailored to fostering transit-oriented development, a project review process that includes the parcels adjacent to the Gaslight District and the new transit center would allow the City to guide the substantial amount of new development occurring in the area and maintain a cohesive neighborhood feel south of Granite Street.

4.4 Long Term Public Realm Improvements

4.4.1 Augment Existing Public Projects

Manchester is undergoing several large public improvement projects including the Granite Street Improvements and the I-293 Highway Expansion project. Local and state representatives for these projects should be approached to inquire about the possibility of augmenting the Granite Street Improvement project to provide gateway expressions at the intersections of Granite and Pine Streets and Granite and Main Streets. Representatives should also be approached about the possibility of augmenting the I-293 Expansion project with a structured pathway on the west side of the Merrimack River. Pedestrian connections to the River and to the Amoskeag, Notre Dame, and Queen City Avenue Bridges should also be considered part of the I-293 project. Improvements to the Hands Across the Merrimack pedestrian bridge, recommended by several other studies, might also be considered part of the overall pedestrian enhancement related to these two projects.

Funding for these enhancements might be available through the newly appropriated SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act) for 2005 through 2009. Under the SAFETEA-LU, the enhancement program is guaranteed more than \$3.2 billion over the 2000–2009 period. Enhancements funded include pedestrian related amenities and/or special public arts funding projects.



Augmenting Existing Projects Map

4.4.2 Streetscape and Gateways Master Plan and Implementation

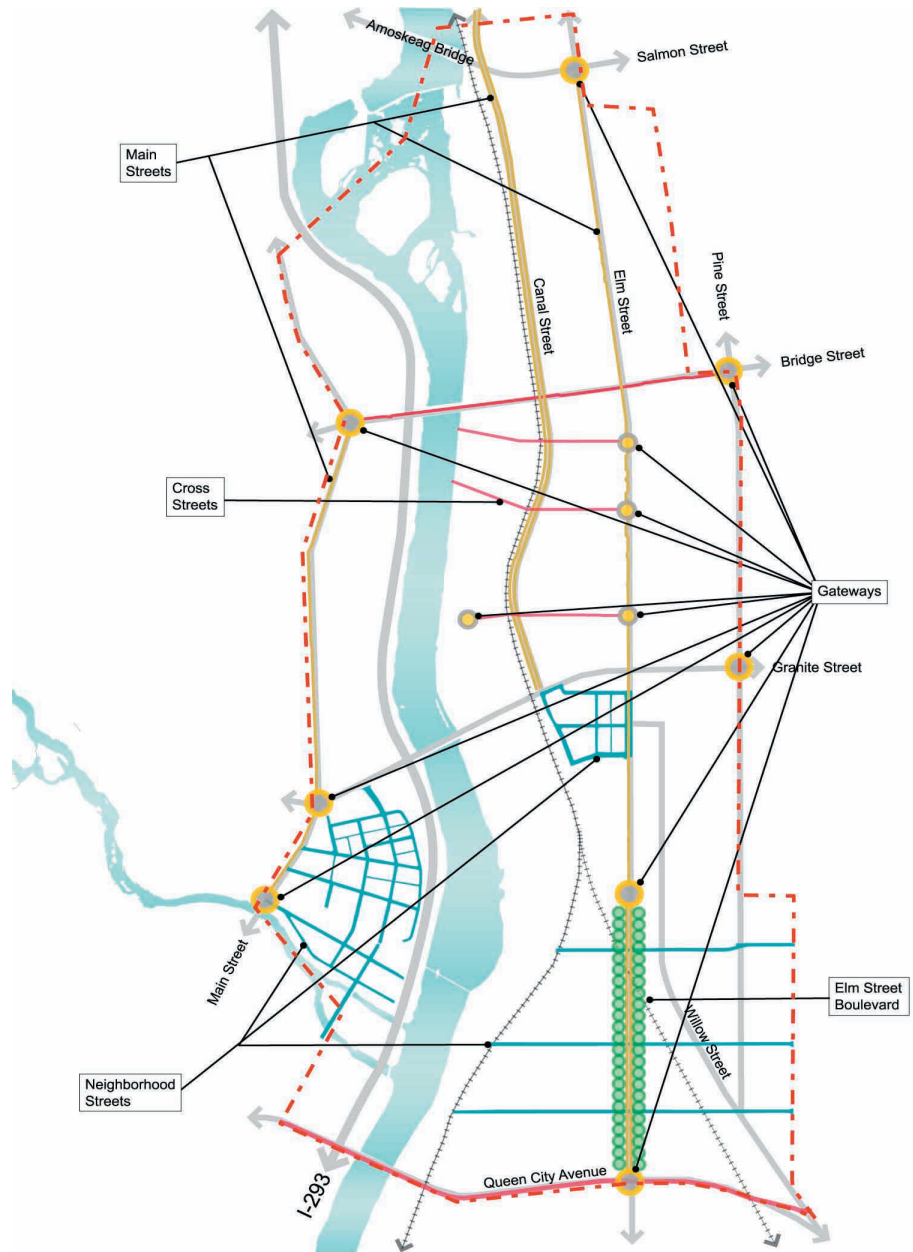
Traffic analyses need to be done to determine how the existing street rights of way can be used to best accommodate pedestrian, bike, and vehicular traffic. A hierarchy of roadway and sidewalk widths, materials, lighting, pedestrian crossings, and street tree plantings should be planned with costs and recommendations for phasing and implementation. Visual markers or gateways should be incorporated into the streetscape projects to create a sense of entry upon arriving in downtown Manchester. The hierarchy of streets should range from boulevards to neighborhood streets with associated design guidelines based on pedestrian and vehicular usage and counts. (The Arena District Urban Design Guidelines have already done this for the downtown area around the Verizon Wireless Arena.) The following paragraphs give examples of appropriate streetscape upgrades.

Elm Street from Valley Street to Webster Street is the main north-south street east of the Merrimack River. Elm Street has an appropriate right of way cross-section through the downtown business district of two lanes of traffic with angled parking on both sides of the street. This same right of way should be established both north of Bridge Street and south of Granite Street to Valley Street to extend and create a longer Elm Street mixed-use spine.

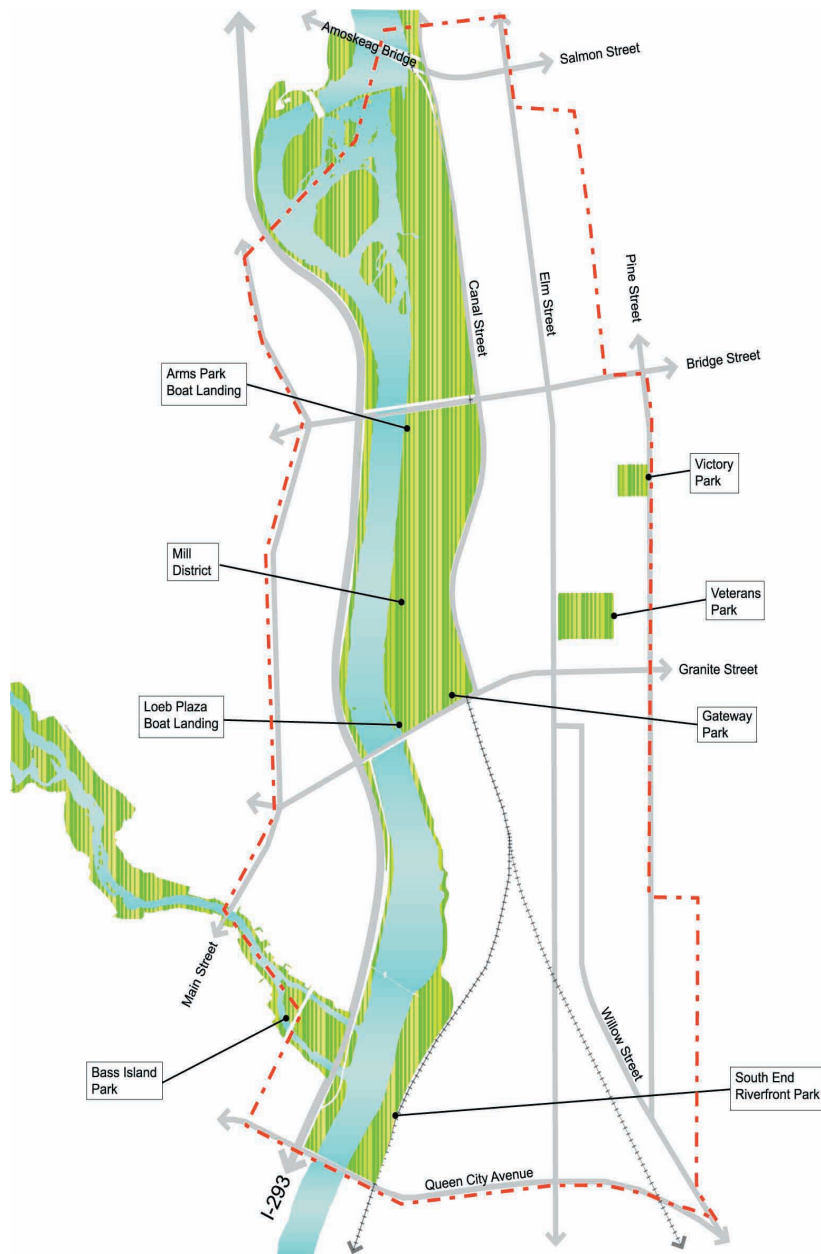
At Valley Street, a gateway would announce one's arrival from the south into the Elm Street mixed-use area, and from the north into the South End residential community. The streetscape of Elm Street from Valley Street to Queen City Avenue might be differentiated from the business district by creating an urban residential boulevard with a cross-section of street trees and a planted median in this portion of Elm Street.

Main Street is, as the name implies, the north-south local street for Manchester on the western side of the Merrimack River. This streetscape and subsequent cross-section might become a corporate and institutional avenue in character utilizing concrete sidewalks and clean, modern lines of furniture, lighting and signage. In all cases, the pedestrian sidewalks should be continuous and of adequate width.

Canal Street currently acts as a north-south bypass through the downtown area from Granite Street to the Amoskeag Bridge. It is, in fact, very much a highway, lacking pedestrian amenities and sidewalks, safe crossings and adequate lighting;



Streetscape and Gateways Master Plan Map



Parklands and Open Space Planning Map

it presents a physical and aesthetic barrier between the downtown area and the historic Mill District and Merrimack River beyond. Further traffic study will be required to determine if Canal Street can be reconfigured to create an urban boulevard, with signalized pedestrian crossings, north-south pedestrian and bike routes as well as the future location of both commuter rail and transit links to the airport and beyond.

Stark, Spring, Pleasant, and Commercial Streets connect the art and cultural, historic, business, and residential neighborhoods to the Merrimack River and the Mill District. Studies that have been done as part of the Mill District Master Plan suggest grading and accessible solutions for these streets. These ideas need to be studied in depth and implemented as part of a comprehensive city-wide streetscape master plan. In addition, cross streets in the South End – Hayward, Silver, and Clay Streets – might be extended west across Elm Street to reconnect the neighborhood to the river and recreate the historic neighborhood fabric.

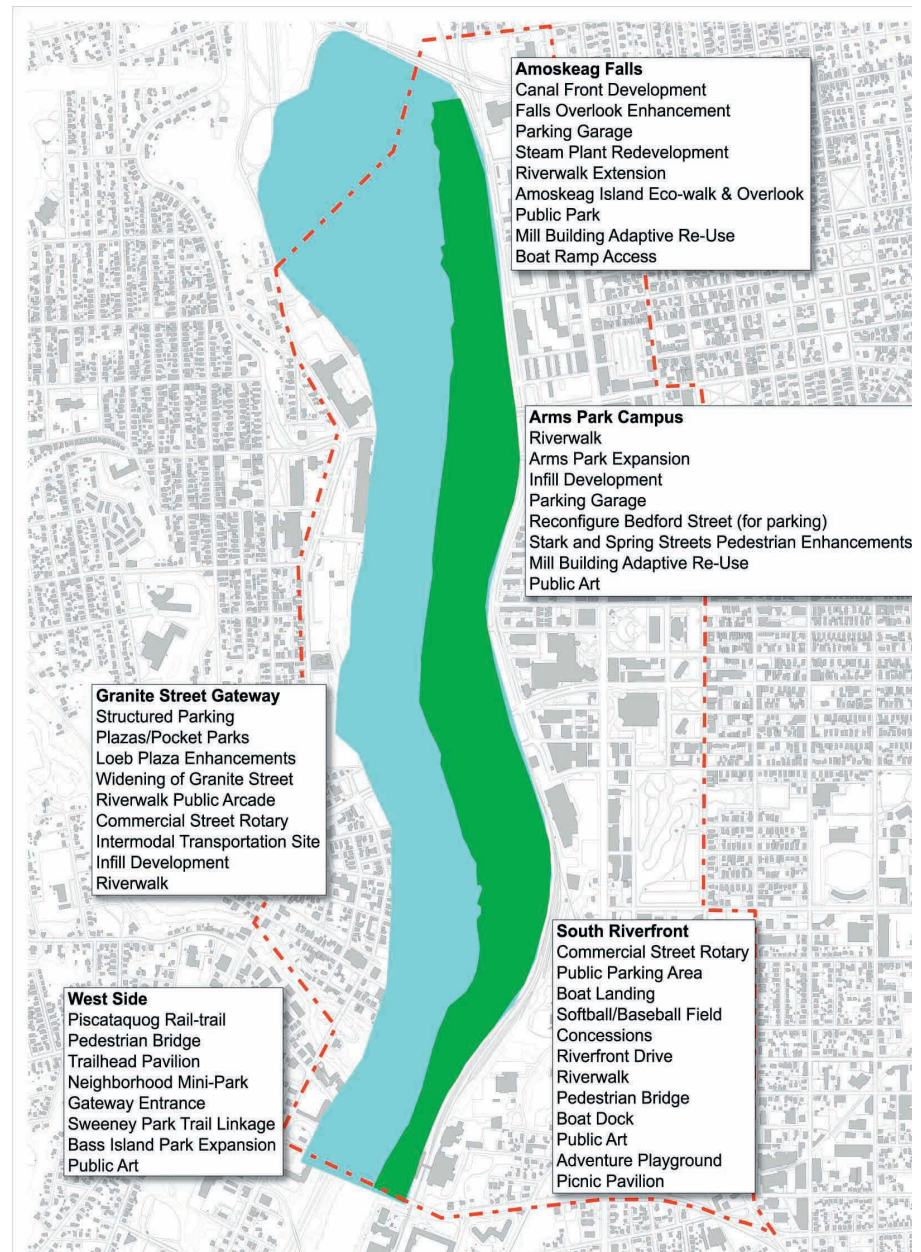
Neighborhood streets within the tightly knit residential neighborhoods to the east and west, the Gaslight District, and South End neighborhood need public realm improvements such as curbing, new sidewalk paving, lighting, street trees, and signage. These improvements could either be identified as required streetscape within these special districts with specific guidelines that require private investment and development to finance these improvements within a comprehensive Streetscape Masterplan, or the streetscapes can be done prior to private investment in order to attract businesses into the special districts.

4.4.3 Parklands and Open Space

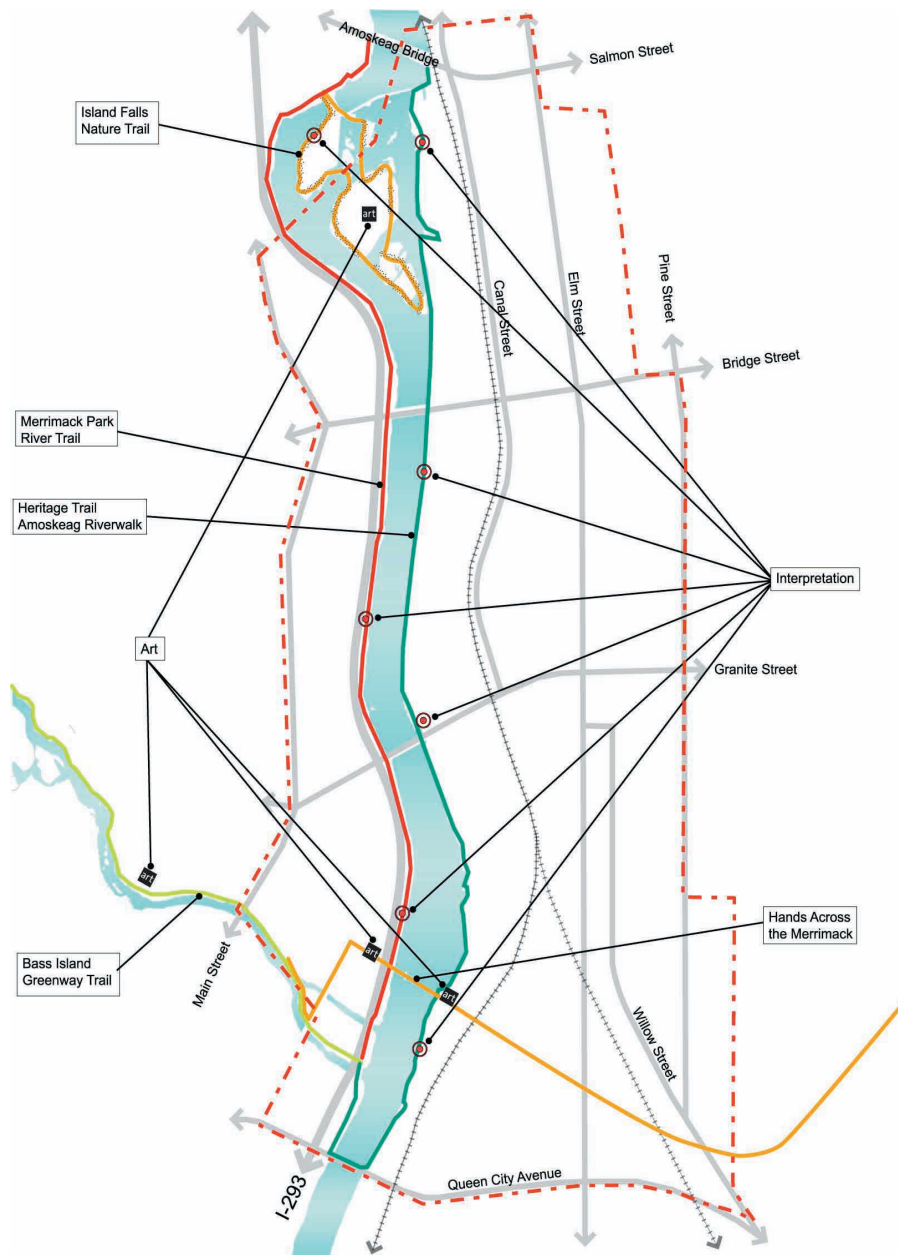
The City of Manchester is fortunate to have a variety of parklands and recreational and natural resources. Within the downtown area several opportunities exist to augment the downtown experience and draw both residents and visitors to Manchester's most valuable natural asset, the Merrimack River. The following recommendations for parks should be integrated with the City's current parks master planning effort to unify the individual existing resources and opportunities into a magnificent park system for the downtown area. The park and open space programs need to be looked at city-wide to ensure that they are coordinated with the needs of the community and the facilities provided in the open space or park in which they are located.

4.4.4 Merrimack River Park System

The Merrimack River Park System would be comprised of components that together would complete a comprehensive park system inclusive of the historic mill district with new Riverwalk along the eastern banks of the river, a new pedestrian walkway built in conjunction with the I-293 improvement project; the Amoskeag Fishways Learning and Visitor Center and the islands adjacent to the Amoskeag Falls, a new riverfront park in the South End, the Bass Island Park system, and the east-west connecting pedestrian bridge, Hands Across the Merrimack. This park system should provide a continuous pedestrian loop allowing Hands Across the Merrimack, the Heritage Trail system, the Amoskeag Riverwalk, and the CrossTrails project to combine and create pedestrian access at the Amoskeag, Granite Street, and Queen City Avenue Bridges.



Riverfront Development Plan Recommendations Map



Signage, Interpretation, and Art Master Planning Map

4.4.5 Signage, Interpretation and Art Master Plans

A signage and interpretive master plan should be done to develop a hierarchy of informational, directional, and interpretive signage and exhibits. These signage systems should augment existing signage programs and should highlight and include existing and new destinations and trail systems such as the Bass Island Park, Hands Across the Merrimack Bridge, the Heritage Trail, the Island Falls Nature Trail, Amoskeag Riverwalk, and the Merrimack River Park System. Directional signs for pedestrians and cars as well as bike paths and pedestrian crossings should also be included. Locations for interpretive signage and exhibits for historic, cultural, and natural sites and facts should be identified and located within this network of pedestrian paths and bikeways to create a comprehensive story of the richness of Manchester and its historic significance.

A public art master plan should be done in conjunction with the signage and interpretive plan according to the recommendations of Manchester's existing Cultural Plan. Public art located within the park and along the Riverwalk and park trails is a program element that provides a sense of discovery, awe wonder, and contemplation. A public art master plan should also be coordinated with the comprehensive park programming that has been proposed. Art and literary festivals, music, and performances can support or be supported by arts and programming.



An example of public art

