



# VINAL SQUARE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN



March 11, 2015

# Committee Members

- William J. Gilet, Jr., Resident and Committee Chair
- Ryan Donaher, Resident and Committee Vice Chair
- Karen K. Mahoney, Business Representative and Committee Secretary
- Dr. John P. Crane, Business Representative
- George R. Dixon, Jr., Board of Selectmen Representative
- Robert P. Joyce, Planning Board Representative (March 2013 – April 2014)
- George Zaharoolis, Planning Board Representative (April 2014 – plan completion)
- Laura A. Lee, Historical Commission and North Town Hall/Community Center

# Vinal Square Strategic Action Plan

- Master plan for the Vinal Square Area
- Provides vision and direction for future development and improvements in the area



# Vinal Square Strategic Action Plan

- Neighborhood has a diverse population with differing needs
  - ▣ Many young adults (ages 20-45) and older adults (80+)
  - ▣ Many families with children
  - ▣ Many local businesses



# Study Area



# Key Committee Findings

- Need to address and define historic preservation goals
- Lack of visual markers or signs to indicate historic or important properties
- Capital improvements are necessary for both Varney and Southwell



# Key Committee Findings

- Lots of support for new and expanded recreational programming
- Need to develop and define economic development goals
- More branding and marketing initiatives are needed to keep residents involved and aware of what Vinal Square has to offer



# Recommendations

- 30 Recommendations in five categories
  - Historic and Cultural
  - Recreation and Programming
  - Economic Development and Revitalization
  - Regulatory and Procedural
  - Traffic and Infrastructure
- Recommendations developed by Committee with community input

# Historic & Cultural

- Document historic resources
- Encourage the use of historic signs
- Promote the area's heritage and culture through collaborative activities with local businesses and organizations
- Further investigate the establishment of a National Register Historic District that includes Vinal Square as well as surrounding residential and industrial areas
- Pursue the Cultural District Application

# Recreation & Programming

- Update and distribute a self-guided walking tour brochure for Vinal Square
- Implement the Varney Playground Master Plan and explore additional programming at Varney Park
- Investigate the possibility of charging resident and non-resident fees for use of Varney Park and the beach at Freeman Lake
- Increase utilization of the North Common for community events and for marketing the businesses and cultural resources within Vinal Square
- Establish a collaborative focus on improving water quality in Freeman Lake

# Recreation & Programming

- Work with community organizations and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to improve Southwell Field, including the boat ramp located on the Merrimack River
- Link community events at the North Town Hall/Community Center, the North Common, the MacKay Library, local parks, and the Senior Center to businesses within Vinal Square
- Organize special events similar to Doors Open Lowell and AHA (Art, History, Architecture) in New Bedford and take advantage of the Massachusetts Historical Commission's (MHC) On the Road Program

# Economic Development & Revitalization

- Review potential revitalization programs, such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program, and determine the level of interest among the various potential stakeholders
- Seek technical assistance through available state programs such as the Department of Housing and Community Development's Massachusetts Downtown Initiative
- Forge a strong partnership between the local business community and the Town

# Economic Development & Revitalization

- Create and implement targeted economic development and marketing initiatives, partly focused on services for young adults and young families
- Work with area businesses to establish a local business association
- Pursue Community Development Block Grant funding for housing and business improvement projects within the study area

# Economic Development & Revitalization

Establish a façade improvement and streetscape program



# Regulatory & Procedural

- Refine and adopt the *Mixed Use Overlay Zoning Bylaw and Design Guidelines for Vinal Square*
- Consider amending the Zoning Bylaw and/or Regulations to guide the character and appropriateness of single-family residential construction
- Investigate the creation of a Neighborhood Conservation District Bylaw
- Retain the existing Vinal Square Strategic Action Plan Committee (VSSAPC) to serve in an advisory capacity

# Regulatory & Procedural

Modify the Community Enhancement and Investment Overly (CEIOD) Bylaw to include requirements and design criteria specific to Vinal Square



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*The CEIOD allows for more flexible zoning in exchange for applicants following specific design guidelines. These guidelines should be customized to Vinal Square to encourage consistency with existing structure and character.*

# Regulatory & Procedural

## Refine and adopt the Mixed Use Overlay Zoning Bylaw and Design Guidelines for Vinal Square



*The history, character, and architecture of Vinal Square are unique and should be celebrated. The Committee would like to see Design Guidelines specific to Vinal Square that take it's existing character and architecture into account.*

# Regulatory & Procedural



Consider amending the Zoning Bylaw and/or regulations to guide the character and appropriateness of single-family residential construction

*There have been several projects that Committee members and residents feel are not in keeping with the neighborhood's existing character. The only way to ensure that future construction is appropriate is to regulate the design, character, and scale of single-family projects.*

# Traffic & Infrastructure

- Permanently secure the public parking area located at 40 Vinal Square and improve signage for the parking areas
- Study the possibility of assuming local ownership and control of the state-owned roadways within Vinal Square
- Improve pedestrian facilities and connectivity within the study area
- Work with MassDOT to optimize the phasing and timing of the Princeton Street/Wotton Street traffic signals
- Continue to monitor the proposed commuter rail extension project

# Vinal Square Strategic Action Plan



Questions and Discussion