

Harnessing the potential of Wickford's privileged location on the bay
Concept note
Draft – January 2, 2015

The North Kingstown Market Study highlighted that one of Wickford's main assets is its privileged location on Narragansett Bay, but it is underutilized. Harnessing this potential would make the village more attractive to visitors and residents, help develop local business, and generate new sources of Town revenue. The Town could lead the way by developing the harbor walk, enabling more effective use of public docks, freeing 55 Brown Street for business use, and expanding the Old Library Park as the main pedestrian avenue between Wickford's commercial and recreational areas.

Harbor walk

The recreational area along two sides of the municipal parking lot can be developed into a prime waterfront walk for visitors and residents:

- double the effective width of the waterfront walking area by adopting diagonal parking along the docks, widening the sidewalks by about 3 ft, and removing the barrier posts
- enlarge the corner area to accommodate the Narragansett Rune Stone, replace the map by an unattended information kiosk for land and boating visitors, and use for community events
- provide safe pedestrian access to Brown Street by extending the harbor walk along the creek on an easement from the owners of the reserved parking area
- add features of interest to children
- improve landscaping and seating throughout

Public docks

The floating docks along the harbor walk can be used more effectively to attract transient small boaters to the village, add interest to land visitors, and generate new revenue for the Town:

- acquire or secure rights for public use of the privately-owned corner dock, and upgrade to the standard of the town docks
- experiment with fee-based overnight docking
- examine the feasibility of adding floating docks in the creek for fee-based use
- license seasonal scheduled boat tours and launch services

55 Brown Street

Relocating government offices out of the historic Old Library building would enable the Town to redirect this property towards revenue-earning business uses. This would be consistent with the need to consolidate Town offices and would:

- contribute to the appeal of Wickford as a historic waterfront community
- relieve the waterfront from government-related traffic and parking
- generate substantial rent for the Town, as with sewers the adjacent area develops into higher value-added business activities

Old Library Park

The lovely Old Library Park can become the main pedestrian avenue between the commercial area and the harbor walk:

- push back parking behind 55 Brown St to the edge of the property, so that space now occupied by cars and sidewalk can be added to the park
- integrate the yard behind 55 Brown St to the park by removing the stone and shrub barrier between them
- remove office access structures behind 55 Brown St and integrate this space to the park
- install a 'little free library' near the sculptures and promote children activities nearby in the rear lower level of 55 Brown St
- improve signage to help visitors find their way to local attractions, shops, and pathways