

MALDEN RIVER CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

PLACEMAKING AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE ON THE MALDEN RIVER

DECEMBER 2020



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1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

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After 150 years of industrial development that obscured access to the Malden River, city leaders and residents identified the need to “develop the Malden River as new open space” as a top priority in the city’s 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan. From the 1990’s to the present, the City of Malden, the neighboring municipalities of Medford and Everett, community-based advocacy organizations, and private developers have created projects and plans that address the different conditions that impact the river.

Responding to a need to synthesize these individual efforts into a comprehensive strategy and engage the public in shaping the results, the City engaged the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to provide technical assistance for a creative placemaking project. The goal of the project was to develop a temporary placemaking installation that would illustrate how dimensional and use regulations in zoning along the river affect the public’s enjoyment of the riverfront. The desired outcome was for this shared knowledge to spark interest among elected and appointed officials and build public support for changes to zoning and other policies to incentivize the creation of a welcoming environment with physical improvements and programmatic activation.

GOALS

MAPC, the City of Malden, and project partners identified the following goals for the project’s creative placemaking activities:

1. Share knowledge about current conditions along Malden River by creating venues where local knowledge could be exchanged.
2. Spark interest amongst the City Councilors and municipal staff to remove regulatory obstacles and support efforts to create a welcoming public space along the waterfront.

PROCESS

From December 2018, through December 2019, MAPC synthesized studies and recommendations for the Malden River with analysis of planning conditions to engage residents in an informed dialogue about the future of the area. MAPC also sponsored partner organizations to develop programming on and along the river to demonstrate the impacts of increased public access and activation of the riverfront.

MAPC developed an outdoor exhibit with graphics communicating a synthesized vision for the river as a public amenity. This exhibit was on display during the events programmed by local partners. MAPC also engaged a filmmaker to create a video to promote current efforts and to make this vision accessible to a wider public.

This project was facilitated by MAPC with the support of numerous project partners and a diverse group of local residents.

PROJECT APPROACH

The Malden River Creative Placemaking Project provided an opportunity for MAPC to provide direct creative support to a municipality through a technical assistance grant. The expertise of the team included urban design

and graphic design skills, community engagement knowledge and expertise, video production and archival research, and arts and culture planning expertise. This allowed the team to develop a creative placemaking approach that reflected the mission of the agency, the values of the Arts & Culture Department and the shared history of the Malden community in service of the City's larger planning and revitalization goals.

Working in close partnership with the City of Malden and members of the Malden River Placemaking Advisory Committee, as well as active citizens that were trained as "interpreters" of the river, MAPC developed a creative placemaking concept and executed a demonstration project between January and December of 2019. This report was written and revised throughout 2020. The following sections provide an overview of the project and how it reflects the project partners' approach to creative placemaking.



2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Early Colonial History of the Mystic and Malden River Watershed

The Malden River is part of the larger Mystic River watershed. The importance of these waterways to the region predates seventeenth century colonization. The Malden River and the Mystic River watershed made up a critical collection of waterways within the lands of the Massachusetts tribe and the Pawtucket Confederacy of Indigenous tribes. The watershed and its tributaries provided food, transportation networks, and opportunities for trading among the Pawtucket, Massachusetts and Wampanoag peoples, and eventually with European colonists. During the period before the Plymouth Colony's founding in 1620, the Mystic River watershed was situated within a larger territory of allied Pawtucket and Massachusetts tribes led by Sachem Nanepashemet and his wife the Saunkskwa.¹ But the Confederacy was under threat; in 1619, a neighboring tribe to the north, the Tarrantine (Mi'kmaq), killed Nanepashemet in a raid on his stronghold in Winnisimet (thought to be in present-day Medford).² After his death, control of the area along the Mystic River passed to his widow (who remarried the Patucket physician Webcowit) and three sons: Sachem Wonohaquaham (known to the colonists as Sagamore John), Montowampate (known to the colonists as Sagamore James), and Wenepoykin (known to the colonists as Sagamore George).³ Montowampate and Wenepoykin married two of Sachem Passaconaway's daughters, forming an alliance between Passaconaway's Pennacook Confederacy and the Pawtucket Confederacy.⁴

The Sachem and her sons formed alliances with the English settlers through land grants to colonists and recognition of English government systems. Based on the assessment of the weakened power structure of the confederated tribes after Nanepashemet's death and due to the scourge of smallpox, these alliances may have been a strategy to protect their lands from encroachment by other tribes.⁵ After Nanepashemet's death, his widow married Webcowit, the tribe's physician. Colonists' records document the decimation of the Indigenous population, including her sons Wonohaquaham and Montowampate, as a result of smallpox outbreaks. Sometime between 1635 and 1639, the Saunkskwa and Webcowit signed a deed conveying a tract of land (including Malden) "with some reservations," to an English settler named Jotham Gibbons.⁶ In 1644, a delegation of sachems, including representatives from the Confederacy, signed a treaty formally submitting themselves to the authority of the English colonists.⁷ Subsequent efforts to convert Indigenous peoples to Christianity, sell them into slavery, restrict their movements through and rights within colonial settlements, and assert colonial ownership of Indigenous lands resulted in the near erasure of the original peoples of the Mystic River watershed within that territory today. Some of Nanepashemet and the Saunkskwa's descendants resettled in Natick among the

¹ Lisa Brooks, "The Saunkskwa of Missitekw, Massachusetts Territory." *Our Beloved Kin: Remapping a New History of King Philip's War*. <https://ourbelovedkin.com/awikhigan/missitekw>

² Thaddeus Piotrowski, *The Indian Heritage of New Hampshire and Northern New England* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Company, 2015), 123. Accessed September 20, 2019 on Google Books.

³ Arlington Historical Society, "Queen of the Mystic: Squaw Sachem." <https://arlingtonhistorical.org/queen-of-the-mystic-squaw-sachem>. Accessed September 20, 2019.

⁴ Piotrowski, *The Indian Heritage of New Hampshire and Northern New England*, 123. Accessed September 20, 2019 on Google Books.

⁵ Benjamin Bussey Thatcher, *Indian Biography: Or, An Historical Account of Those Individuals who Have Been Distinguished Among the North American Natives as Orators, Warriors, Statemen, and Other Remarkable Characters* (Harper, 1839). Original from Harvard University. Digitized Feb 14, 2008.

⁶ Corey, Deloraine Pendre. *The history of Malden, Massachusetts, -1785*. Malden, The author, 1899. Web.. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <[lccn.loc.gov/98002246](https://www.loc.gov/98002246)>. Pages 33-35.

⁷ Corey, *The History of Malden, Massachusetts*, 36.

Nipmuc⁸ while others of their Massachusetts kin and allies resettled at the Massachusetts reservation at Ponkapoag or among the Wampanoag after King Philip's War.⁹

For the next two hundred and fifty years, the Mystic River watershed shaped colonial life as a source of food and a foundation of early industrial development. The rivers initially supported fishing and farming; however industrial uses grew dominant by the nineteenth century. Railroads snaked along riverbanks, and mills and factories polluted the rivers, groundwater and soil. Engineering advances of the nineteenth and twentieth century restricted the flow of waterways into canals and culverts, burying streams, ponds, and other waterways in the watershed. Salt marshes were filled and paved over for new roads and industries. In the process, the Malden River disappeared into an industrial landscape that would be foreign to the indigenous inhabitants of the past.

The River Shapes Malden

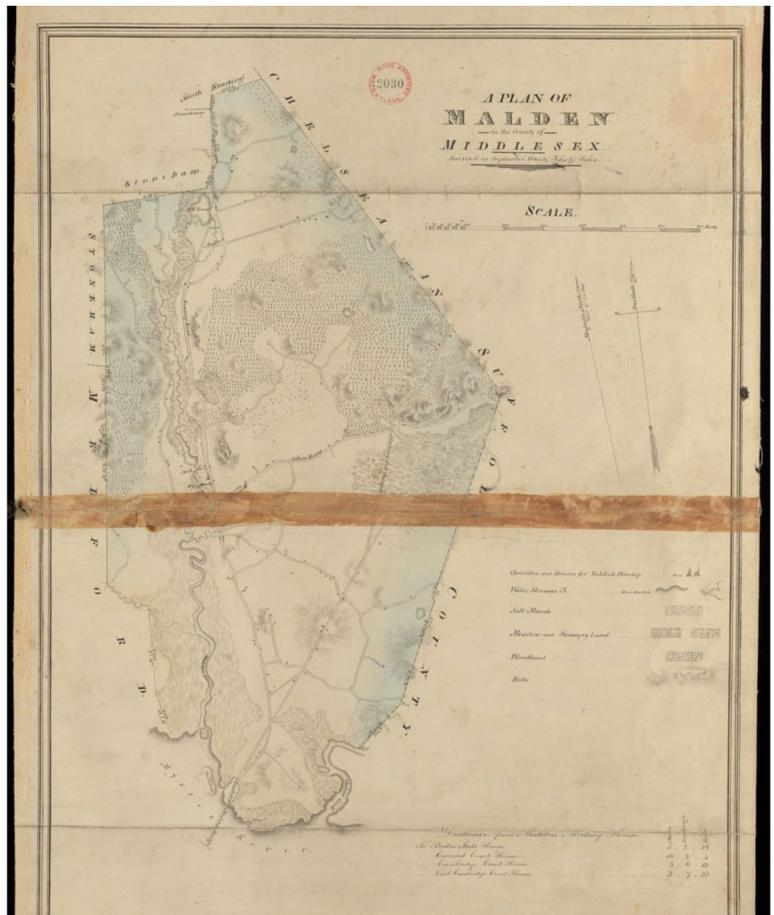
The Malden River has both influenced, and been shaped by, development in the City of Malden. Historic maps indicate that the river was once a crooked little stream that ran through a patchwork of woodlands, lush, grassy meadows, and salt marshes.¹⁰

As it still does today, the Malden River originated as a woodland stream stemming from Spot Pond in Stoneham and Ell Pond in current-day Melrose (formerly Malden). These two streams met near present-day Wyoming Hill Avenue, and continued south along a swampy meadow. Traces of this landscape may be seen at Coytemore Lea, a park where the river used to be above-ground. Today, the park contains an inclusive playground for children with special needs, as well as a sidewalk mural by Friends of the Malden River that points people to a grate where one may hear the sounds of the river flowing underground.

The freshwater river transitioned to a salt marsh near the confluence of Salem and Medford Roads (in present-day downtown Malden). As early as 1795, maps indicate that this was an important crossroads. These streets roughly

follow the base of the granite escarpment that forms the northern ridge of Boston Basin stretching from Lynn through Malden, Medford, and into Arlington. The slight drop in elevation from the escarpment to the basin likely contributed to the industrial activity along the river even before the railroads were built. South of these crossroads, the Malden River transitioned to become a salt marsh that meandered until it met the Mystic River.

By the time the City of Malden was divided in half in 1867, the boundaries of the river started to change as well. By 1885 the section of the river between Wyllis Ave and Adams Street was channelized into a canal as it



⁸ Sidney Perley. 1912. *The Indian Land Titles of Essex County, Massachusetts*, Essex Book and Print Club, p. 54. Accessed October 16, 2020 via Google Books.

⁹ The Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag, *Our History*, Accessed October 16, 2020. <http://massachusettstribe.org/our-history>

¹⁰ The Hales, John Groves. *Plan of Malden made by John G. Hales, dated September 1830*. Sep 1830. Web. 07 Dec 2020.

<<https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/25152n56b>>.

paralleled the Boston and Maine and the Saugus Branch Railroad lines. Just south of Little Creek where the Malden River travels into Medford and Everett, the Saugus Branch (and now the Northern Strand) shift south east, giving more room for the Malden River to fill into a piece of one of its old meanders that was cut through for navigation.¹¹

In 1885 Spot Pond Brook remained above ground and fueled industrial activity in the area between Mountain Ave, Salem Street, Linden Ave, and Main Street. By the turn of the 20th century, the river was channeled underground beneath downtown Malden. This work continued into the late 1950's as its tributaries were also buried.

In 1966, the ecology of the river changed further with the creation of the Amelia Earhart Dam. The dam, which was constructed just south of the confluence of the Malden and Mystic Rivers, separated these fresh water rivers from the tidal saltwater of the Massachusetts Bay. Instead of rising and falling with the tides, the Malden River now stays at a consistent depth. Although the Malden River no longer experiences tidal fluctuations, its history as a tidal basin invokes the public's right, codified in Chapter 91 regulations, to access open space along its banks.

Industrialization Creates Long-term Environmental Justice Concerns

Industrial development along the Malden River led to environmental degradation. Residential areas near the river provided close proximity to jobs while threatening negative health impacts. These threats were exacerbated by discriminatory residential lending policies and practices, which continue to impact residents along the Malden River today. In the 1930's the Homeowners Loan Corporation designated the areas surrounding the Malden River to be Hazardous, or "Redlined." Today, those areas are considered Environmental Justice communities because their residents earn low incomes, are isolated due to the language they speak, and are people of color.¹² Furthermore, as the Mystic River Watershed research has shown, people in these areas today are more prone to heat exposure because of a lack of tree canopy and an overabundance of impervious surface.¹³

These trends, however, are starting to change. In 2017 Redfin listed the Edgeworth neighborhood that abuts the Malden River to the west to be the #1 hottest neighborhood in Greater Boston. Future efforts to improve the area will need to include strategies that mitigate displacement and ensure that benefits accrue to the people who have historically made this area their home.

The River Pushes Back Against Industrialization

Industrial activity grew up around the Malden River from the mid-nineteenth century through the 1950's because it was well served by rail lines on either side of its banks. Many of these industries polluted the river, and water-based controls were put in place to quickly flush the streams – and their contaminants – so they would not stagnate and create a nuisance. Engineering solutions to managing the waterways included channelizing rivers to increase flow to bring pollutants out to the harbor more quickly, burying streams out of sight, and finally, building a dam to eliminate tidal fluctuations.

By the time the Amelia Earhart Dam was completed in 1966, community groups began to clamor for alternative solutions to water pollution that would reclaim waterfronts for public use. In the 1960s and 1970s, community advocates banded together to create watershed associations for the Charles River (1965), and the Mystic River

¹¹ Massachusetts Topographical Survey Commission, "Atlas of the boundaries of the City of Malden, Middlesex County," *Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, 1898. <https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/handle/2452/106278>

¹² <https://www.mass.gov/doc/ej-2010-pdf-map-boston-metro/download>. Accessed October 12, 2020

¹³ <https://mysticriver.org/news/2020/8/14/myrwa-racial-justice-and-covid-19-why-its-connected> Accessed October 12, 2020

²² Hales, John Groves. "Plan of Malden made by John G. Hales, dated September 1830." Map. September 1830. Digital Commonwealth, <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/25152n56b> (accessed December 07, 2020)

(1972) to spearhead advocacy and river protection efforts. Local efforts like these were supported by the 1972 passing of the Federal Clean Water Act, which aimed to restore and maintain waterfront habitats.

Massachusetts Waterfront Laws Aid Environmental Restoration

The coastline along Massachusetts and Maine (because the state was formerly Massachusetts) adheres to a legal doctrine that creates a right for the public to use tidelands and their waterways. The “public trust doctrine is older than the nation itself; it dates to the common law of England.

The public trust doctrine says that the “sea and with it the shore of the sea”¹⁴ are the common property of all people. In the 1600s, when the Massachusetts Bay colonists claimed the lands of eastern Massachusetts for the King of England, they declared that the public had the right to “fish, fowl, and navigate” on all lands affected by the tides.

To make decisions about the use of the public lands, the government acts as the public’s “trustee” and has a duty to make decisions in the best interest of the public.

Although the 1966 construction of the Amelia Earhart Dam converted the Malden River to be solely freshwater, the lands that encompass the historic path of the river still fall under the jurisdiction of the modern law that enforces the public trust doctrine called the Waterfront Act (Chapter 91). The Waterfront Act went into effect on January 1, 1984 and guarantees the public’s right to access property along tidelands. It applies to all construction after 1984, and to older buildings if property owners make major improvements. However, the Waterfront Act is not generally well known or understood by local residents.

Private property owners along most rivers typically have a right to limit public access to the water. Not so along the Malden River. The Malden River is unique because the section of river south of Malden Center used to fluctuate with the tides. Therefore the laws that permit public access to the ocean also govern land along the Malden River.

The Waterfront Act (Chapter 91) Buttresses Environmental Enforcement

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) represents the state and makes decisions about how public land is used. For every decision the MassDEP makes, they must first protect the public interest – even over the interests of property owners.

Tidelands are often privately owned and developed. To build or operate a business on them, the owner must apply to MassDEP for a waterways license or permit. MassDEP can only issue this license after certain conditions are met:

- a) public comments are accepted
- b) a decision is made that the project protects the public’s interests.

During this licensing process, residents of Massachusetts have a right to share their opinions and weigh in on decisions. This public input period is where community-based advocacy groups supported by an engaged public can advocate for enhanced public benefits.

The Course of the Malden River Today

Although the river may have looked different in the past, the watershed boundaries are still roughly the same. The river still originates north of Malden at Spot Pond in Stoneham, trickling east as Spot Pond Brook through the

¹⁴ “Public Rights Along the Shoreline,” *Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CSM)*, 2005.
<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/public-rights-along-the-shoreline>

Middlesex Fells Reservation. After crossing into Melrose, the stream is diverted into the West Wyoming Avenue culvert where it meets water from the other end of the watershed at Ell Pond. The Wyoming culvert continues below the streets of Melrose, resurfacing just south of the Wyoming Hill commuter rail station. From there, Spot Pond Brook roughly parallels the Commuter Rail train tracks into Malden, past Oak Grove where the Orange Line begins. Nearby Oak Grove at Winter Street, the river is diverted into another culvert that flows through a residential neighborhood, Coytemore Lea Park, and underneath downtown Malden until it reemerges south of Anthony's Restaurant, 105 Canal Street, near the intersection of Canal Street and Charles Street. Along the way, the waterway is fed by rainwater collected by other underground channels that flow from the hills to the point.

Just south of the Medford Street bridge, the river widens and continues south at which point it joins Little Creek, marking the boundary between Malden and Medford, and to the east, Everett. The river continues out of Malden, separating Everett from Medford until it empties into the Mystic River, which connects to Boston Harbor and, eventually, to Massachusetts Bay.

PLANNING CONTEXT

City of Malden

The City of Malden is a Metropolitan Core Community (MCC) within the Inner Core sub-region of MAPC. The City is situated to the north of Medford and Everett, west of Revere, and south of Melrose. A granite escarpment bisects the city from east to west, situating the neighborhoods in the northern half on hilly terrain, whereas the neighborhoods in the southern half of the city feature flatter landscapes. The streets in the north tend to follow the irregular landscape, sometimes resulting in dead ends, whereas the neighborhoods in the flats tend to have a more rectilinear and contiguous street pattern.

Transportation

Malden's sidewalk network, public transit service, and commercial centers make it a pedestrian friendly environment with a Walk Score of 97. Its public transit network features both Haverhill Commuter Rail Line and two stops on the MBTA Orange Line as well as numerous bus routes. The Malden River has played an influential role in shaping the region's historic and present-day transportation network. The active rail lines in Malden operate along the original 1833 Boston and Maine Railroad right of way established along the western bank of the river. This transportation spine still bisects Malden today, leaving one third of the city's landmass to the west, and the remaining two thirds to the east of the rails.

The Malden Center Station, located a half-block north of the Commercial Street Corridor adjacent to the Malden River, is a multi-modal hub with access to the Commuter Rail, the Orange Line, and 13 bus routes that stretch in every direction from the city center. Malden Center links to the Oak Grove Orange Line station to the north, and it is the city's only access point to the Commuter Rail. A potential infill station on the Orange Line near the Malden DPW, which marks the midpoint between a 1.7 mile distance between Malden Center and Wellington Station, is a project of interest to the City of Everett¹⁵, which currently lacks subway access.

Another rail right-of-way was established along the eastern bank of the Malden River for the Saugus Branch Railroad in the 1850s to bring passengers from Lynn, Saugus, Malden, and Everett to Boston. This inactive rail line travels east through Malden, then north into Saugus, and east again to downtown Lynn. Its path shifts from north to east at Charles Street where the Malden River emerges from channels beneath Malden's street network. Today, the Saugus Branch right of way is the Northern Strand Community Trail – a community pedestrian and

¹⁵ "The Everett Transit Action Plan," Massachusetts Department of Transportation, November, 2016. This plan recommended exploring a public-private partnership to construct this infill station.

bike path with art (curated by Malden Arts) and community gardens lining its sides. By 2024, Bike to the Sea, a local community-based advocacy group who has been working to build the path since the organization's founding in 1993, estimates that all of the missing connections will be constructed, offering a contiguous 20-mile journey from Everett through Malden and Saugus to the sea in Lynn. As of the summer of 2020, 7.5 miles of contiguous dedicated path had been paved through Everett and Malden; the Saugus sections were in the process of being paved. A bridge to connect the path to downtown Lynn has yet to be built.

Malden residents' nearest access to Interstate 93 is in Medford, a mile from Malden's westerly border. Malden residents may access ramps to Route 1 via Salem Street along the city's northeast boundary.

Population and Ethnicity

Malden is a growing city that is home to estimated 67,800 residents, an increase of 9% from 2000.¹⁶ As the city's population has increased, so too has the racial diversity of its residents. Between 2008-2012 the city passed a milestone, shifting from having a population where the majority of people identify as White, to a population where the majority of people identify as non-White. After witnessing a 14.2% decline in its White population between 2000 and 2010 and a 7.1% increase in its African American population in that time frame,¹⁷ in 2018, Malden was similar to its cohort of Metropolitan Core Communities in terms of its share of White and African American populations.¹⁸

While Malden may have a similar share of people who identify as White and African American as other Metropolitan Core Communities, Malden's share of Asian-identifying people (23.37%) is more than double the share of Asian-identifying populations in other Metropolitan Area Core Communities (10.43%). Between 2000 and 2010, the population identifying as Asian increased by 7.1%.¹⁹ According to the 2014-2018 American Community Survey, Malden has the fifth highest share of Asian populations in any municipality in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Language

Malden has a diverse population as evidenced by the 63 languages that are spoken at Malden High School.²⁰ As of 2017, 43.3% were born outside the US.

Malden has the highest percentage of Asian people who do not speak English well (56.39%) compared to other Metropolitan Area Communities with a high share of population of Asian people. These communities include Lowell (whose population is 23.06% Asian, of whom 42.53% do not speak English well), and Quincy (whose population is 31.13% Asian, of whom 55.48% do not speak English well).

The language gap in Malden is evident across the city's diverse linguistic groups, and is indicated most acutely within its Asian population. Addressing issues around equity will entail focusing on overcoming language barriers. Placemaking creates opportunities for people across linguistic groups to engage in a shared experience that can build public awareness and a sense of ownership over public space.

¹⁶ Metropolitan Area Planning Council, *Basic Housing Needs Assessment for Malden*, accessed October 23 2020.

<http://www.housing.ma/malden/report>

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2000 and 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; generated by MAPC; using DataCommon; Race and Ethnicity Estimates (Municipal) <<https://datacommon.mapc.org/browser/datasets/6>>; (20 August 2020).

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2014-2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; generated by MAPC; using DataCommon; Race and Ethnicity Estimates (Municipal) <<https://datacommon.mapc.org/browser/datasets/6>>; (20 August 2020).

¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2000 and 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; generated by MAPC; using DataCommon; Race and Ethnicity Estimates (Municipal) <<https://datacommon.mapc.org/browser/datasets/6>>; (20 August 2020).

²⁰ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; School and District Profiles, 2017 Massachusetts School Report Card Overview Malden High (01650505). (20 August 2020).

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/reportcard/SchoolReportCardOverview.aspx?fycode=2017&orgcode=01650505&>

Income

Malden exhibits greater income equality than Metropolitan Core Communities generally. Across racial and ethnic groups, the majority of residents earn less than \$100,000 annually while residents are no more likely to live in poverty than in other similar communities. According to the 2014-2018 American Community Survey, per capita income in Malden is \$31,086, which is \$10,000 lower than the state median.²¹ However, the percentage of Malden households that live in poverty (17.67%) is roughly the same as the percentage of people who live in poverty in other Metropolitan Core Communities (17.68%).²²

Malden may have more income equality generally, but differences persist among racial and ethnic categories. Residents who identify as Asian and African American are more likely to earn less than \$100,000 than White residents, while residents who identify as Latino are more likely than White residents to earn more than \$100,000. 71.7% of all White households earn less than \$100,000 a year, constituting a larger share than comparable White households in other Metropolitan Core Communities (59.23%), and across the MAPC region (53.58%). It is notable that a smaller share of African American residents in Malden earn less than \$100K (76.04%) compared with similar households in the MAPC region as a whole (77.6%), while a higher share of Malden's Asian residents earn incomes less than \$100,000 (73.2%) compared with others in the region as a whole (54.78%). A greater share of the Latino population earns less than \$100,000 in the region (78.19%) than in Malden (70.52%).

Employment

The largest employment sector in Malden is in professional, technical, management, administrative, and waste management services, and the second largest is manufacturing.²³ Land parcels around the Malden River provide space for facilities that support these jobs. In all, over 10% of all jobs in the city are located within the Commercial Street Corridor, which sits adjacent to the Malden River.²⁴

DEVELOPMENT & OPEN SPACE CONTEXT

Restoring the Malden River Begins with a Collaborative Model at River's Edge

River's Edge in Medford is central to Malden's efforts in reclaiming the river for development and public access. Despite being located in Medford, the site's development was driven by collaboration among Medford, Malden, and Everett. The Commission that arose from this collaboration hires the Malden Redevelopment Authority to perform day-to-day management of the site today. Within the history of the Malden River, River's Edge is the catalyst project that created a model for municipal collaboration for environmental restoration and articulated a vision that all three communities are working towards.

After decades of environmental degradation, interest in restoring the Malden River began in the late 1990's when the Cities of Malden, Medford, and Everett created the Mystic Valley Development Commission (MVDC) to redevelop three adjoining brownfields along the river. The MVDC designated the Malden River Task Force and the Citizens Advisory Board ("CAB") consisting of citizens of the three communities to provide design and other input for the project.

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2014-2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; generated by MAPC; using DataCommon; Per Capita Income (Municipal) <https://datacommon.mapc.org/browser/datasets/150>

²² U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2014-2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; generated by MAPC; using DataCommon; Households in Poverty by Household Type (Municipal); <https://datacommon.mapc.org/browser/datasets/50>

²³ Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, 2001-2016. Generated by MAPC; using DataCommon; Malden Community Profile: [Occupational Employment and Wages by Industry \(NAICS\) \(MA\)](https://datacommon.mapc.org/profile/malden/economy)

²⁴ Hariman, Prepared for the City of Malden, Sponsored by the Office of Mayor Gary Christenson, the Malden Redevelopment Authority, and MassDevelopment, *Commercial Street Corridor Framework Plan*, (2018) Accessed 19, July. <http://icic.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Commercial-Corridor-Framework-Plan-FINAL.pdf>

Preotle, Lane & Associates ("PLA") was selected as the master developer, and the Malden Redevelopment Authority (MRA) was made the agent to oversee the development. In 2004 site work on the Medford side of the river began with cleaning up the riverbanks and constructing a 7-acre park that provides public access to the river. The resulting development, River's Edge, established a new benchmark for private developments that set back buildings 150'-200' from the river, and provided enhanced public benefits in the form of a privately-owned public space (POPS) all along its bank.

Little Creek, a small tributary of the Malden River, forms the boundary between Malden and Medford, and also marks the northern edge of River's Edge. This area was particularly blighted before the completion of River's Edge. In 2014 Preotle Lane Associates (developers of River's Edge), partnered with the MVDC on a successful National Resource Damages (NRD) Grant to restore the wetland area and over 5,000 square feet of riverbank at the confluence of Little Creek and the Malden River. This protected wetland is now abundant with wildlife, and the effort provides an example of the positive change that can result from collaborative efforts between developers, municipal entities, and volunteers.

Leveraging Private Development for Public Access

An assessment of recent developments along the Malden River offers examples for the kinds of investment in public space that developers may voluntarily build given existing regulations. All developments that are subject to Chapter 91 must set aside land for public access, but Malden's zoning bylaws do little to reinforce, and further clarify, these regulations, leading to varied interpretations and outcomes. Whereas Preotle, Lane & Associates made an exceptional investment in the public space around their buildings, other developers have not been as generous.

Minimal Compliance: 188 Commercial Street

In 2011, a shopping center was constructed here. Although this shopping center met the requirements of Malden's local zoning bylaws and the state law, Chapter 91, the resulting public access granted to the river was originally minimal, and the surrounding landscaping did little to improve the river's health. Malden's mixed-use zoning requires that all parking for each use be aggregate, resulting in the creation of a large parking lot surrounding the strip mall. This wide swath of impervious surface increases water runoff into the river. Public access requirements through Chapter 91 were fulfilled with the addition of a bench (located near the supermarket dumpster) and a grassy area – mowed to allow pedestrian access – between the river and the blank façade at the back of the building. The resulting area was technically publicly accessible, but in practice was so unwelcoming and disconnected from adjoining parcels that the public did not use the area. Local advocacy resulted in significant improvements in 2019 when the building owners applied for a special permit to place a restaurant in the strip mall. FoMR wrote letters to the City to draw attention to the minimal maintenance of the public access area. Since then, the property owners have installed a new bench, a new 10' wide crushed stone path, and have relocated the dumpster away from the path. This site provides an example of what may be gained – and lost – through an ad hoc process where regulations are not clearly outlined for property owners and the public. It is also an example for how the public process of Chapter 91 only works if residents are aware of the river as a resource and are active in advocating for robust public access.

Potentials and Pitfalls: 295 Canal Street

This property is an example of the ways in which state and local laws can work in tandem with private developers to incentivize the construction of a greenway path parcel by parcel, and it is also an example of the potential pitfalls in the public advocacy process.

In 2018, Combined Properties constructed a new, 5-story building at the corner of Medford and Canal Streets, triggering the need for a Chapter 91 license that also addressed their adjoining parcel at 195 Canal Street. The developers provided the state-mandated public access to the river by constructing an 8' crushed stone path that now offers contiguous access from Medford Street to the DCR-owned parcel at

the northern end of the river. Malden zoning bylaws offered little guidance that would effect the quality or quantity of new public space along the river, but it did incentivize the developer to make aesthetic changes to the building. Malden's zoning only permits four story buildings to be constructed in the industrial district by right, so developers applied for, and were able to obtain, a special permit to build the fifth story as long as it could not be seen from the street level.

While a new path was created to offer contiguous north-south public access along both parcels adjacent to the river, this new development eliminated an opportunity to formalize an east-west connection from the river to the Northern Strand Community Trail that had been carved through a grass median that previously separated the two parcels. When the Northern Strand Community Trail was constructed, stone pillars were installed along the path to mark a gateway where pedestrians could access the river through this route. Rather than enhancing the path as part of the new development, the path was eliminated because state or local laws did not require it, and community advocates did not realize that the path would be absent from the development until after construction was complete and permits were granted.

Plans Separately Explore Private Development and Public Space

With the River's Edge development underway, it became clear by 2014 that development pressure was increasing on parcels around the Malden River. In response, MassDevelopment and the Urban Land Institute worked with the cities of Malden and Everett to create a Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) site in the areas surrounding the river. In 2018 the City of Malden created a plan for its portion of the TDI district, resulting in the Commercial Street Corridor Framework Plan. The Plan found that 87% of the area around the Malden River is currently zoned as Industrial. While industrial zoning in Malden allows some commercial uses as of right, few incentives are in place that would encourage developers to enhance public space in exchange for these concessions.

While the Corridor Plan was being developed, The Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) ran a parallel planning process to create a Malden River Greenways Plan. This Plan created a vision for privately owned public space (POPS) to be developed on each parcel surrounding the river, eventually connecting a continuous publically accessible path. Community members supported the effort through a partnership with the Friends of the Malden River (FoMR), a community-based advocacy group that began in 2012.

Environmental Restoration of the Malden River

With the creation of these new developments and open spaces, it was still an open question as to whether or not it was actually safe for the public to be near the water. People wondered whether the river was so polluted as to be a hazard – and whether that would impede future growth. In 2019, FoMR teamed up with the City of Everett to conduct a study and secure funding from the Lewellyn Foundation, the Fine Foundation, Preotle Lane & Associates, Mystic River Watershed Environmental Fund, and Mystic Valley Development Corp. The Mystic River Watershed Association, MIT CEHS, and Gradient Corp. provided in-kind support.

Dr. Kathleen Vandiver, the Director of Community Outreach and Education Core at the Center for Environmental Health Sciences at MIT worked with Gradient Corporation to collect and test water and sediment samples at various times and locations along the river. The results were favorable for non-motorized boating as even while assuming maximal exposures to the water and sediment, all boaters' health risks met all state and federal standards for acceptable environmental health risks.²⁵

²⁵ "The Human Health Risk Study Report-Back: The Malden River is Cleared for Public Boating" *MIT Center for Environmental Health Science*, Accessed December 24, 2020. <https://cehs.mit.edu/human-health-risk-study-report-back-malden-river-cleared-public-boating>. Adapted from "Malden River Cleared for Public Boating," *Mystic River Watershed Association*, April 10, 2019. <https://mysticriver.org/news/2019/4/10/malden-river-cleared-for-public-boating>.

While the Malden River has proven safe for non-motorized boating, it is not yet clean enough to allow for the consumption of fish that are caught in the river, nor has it been found safe for swimming. If a boater were to fall into the water, that person would not likely be exposed to enough pollution from former factories to warrant a health risk, however the bacteria content of the river may make it unsafe. The Mystic River Watershed Association provides daily updates about the projected bacterial content of the Malden River so boaters may assess whether it is a good day to actively use the river.²⁶

Cleanup of trash - the other environmental hazard that is more visible, but less impactful to human health - has already begun for the trash that flows into the Malden River through the city's storm water system. For ten years until 2017 the Water Supervisor of the City of Malden Public Works installed and maintained a trash boom just south of where the major culverts flow into the Malden River. In 2019, the Clean River Project of the Merrimack River donated a new trash boom that has been maintained by The Friends of the Malden River and Gentle Giant Rowing Club ever since. A grant from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust is currently funding a program to involve the community in the cleanup and education efforts, and will allow FoMR to track the amount of trash that flows into the river from its buried tributaries. A portion of an additional \$1.27 million grant from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) fund will fund the installation of a permanent trash boom on the Malden River.²⁷

ZONING CONTEXT

State Law Chapter 91 is limited in its ability to guarantee public access to the waterfront. When buttressed by local zoning regulations however, more consistent outcomes may be generated. Local zoning can clarify expectations for both developers and the public.

Zoning in Malden however, does not reference Chapter 91 or provide clarity for how it may be implemented on a local level. Malden's existing zoning regulations do not currently make use of key elements that could incentivize developers to increase public access. Zoning is not the only instrument that the city can use though, it can also be a blunt instrument that can limit development – and any potential access to open space that development could otherwise create.

Thus the city should work collaboratively with developers, municipal departments, and community advocacy organizations to negotiate mutually beneficial arrangements through zoning, programming, and other potentially coordinated efforts like the procurement of public amenities. These issues provide opportunities to amend local zoning regulations to incentivize property owners to create a welcoming public space along the river.

²⁶ "Water Quality," *Mystic River Watershed Association*, Assessed August 4, 2020. <https://mysticriver.org/water-quality>
Assessed August 4, 2020

²⁷ "\$1.27 Million Coming to the Mystic for Environmental Restoration," *Mystic River Watershed Association*, August 4, 2020.
<https://mysticriver.org/news/2020/8/4/127-million-coming-to-the-mystic-for-environmental-restoration>

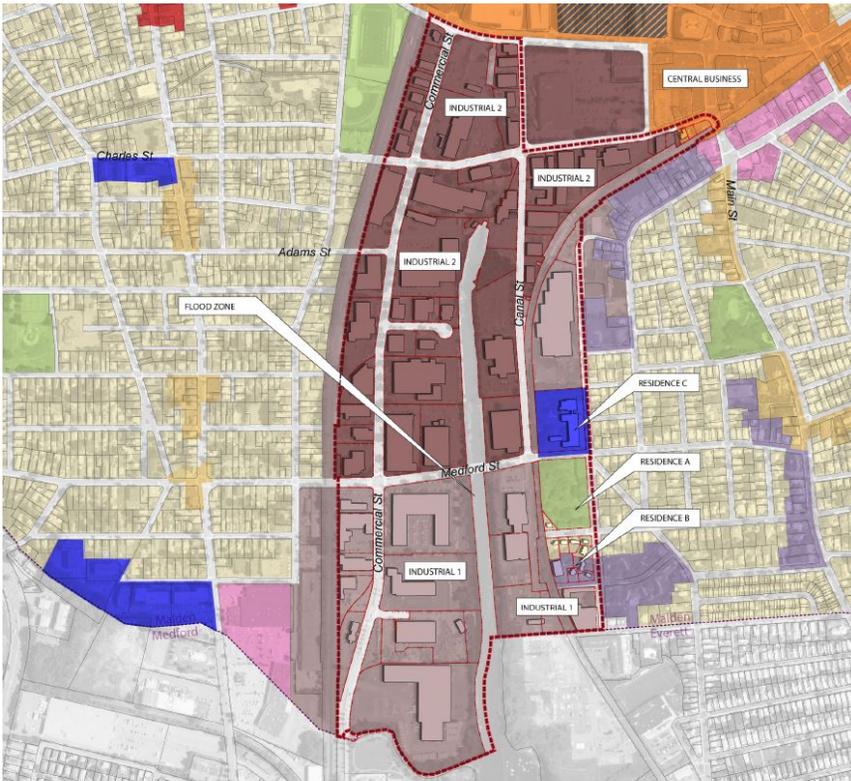


Figure 12: Zoning Districts within the Corridor
 Commercial Street Corridor Plan, Page 26

The current zoning regulations in Malden do not use planning tools that could prevent the placement of buildings that would become too close to the river. Under Malden’s existing zoning for industrial uses, which applies to 87% of the properties surrounding the Malden River, developers may waive existing rear yard setback requirements if their property abuts a river. This regulation runs contrast to the goals of creating a viable publicly accessible waterfront.

Uses

Referring to Section 300.3 of Malden Zoning, only three industrial uses are allowed by right in industrial districts: Building Construction & Contracting, Manufacturing and Repair, Marina, and in areas zoned I2, a fourth use is allowed for Research and Development. Other industrial uses such as Warehouse, Wholesale and Distribution, and Light Manufacturing require a special permit, whereas other non-industrial uses are

allowed by right, including offices, retail sales and services (less than 5,000 sq/ft), parking, and public service corporations.²⁸ Because few of these uses would benefit from an active waterfront, this mix of uses is not currently in alignment with recommendations from the Commercial Street Corridor Plan.

The existing regulations have helped to foster a thriving industrial cluster around the Malden River that is centered on food manufacturing with ancillary retail operations (including New England Coffee, Piantedosi bakery, La Marca and Sons, and Dom’s Sausage). The Commercial Street Corridor Framework Plan recognized the possibilities for enhancing this sector, and recommended that the city rebalance its industrial uses to allow private development with office, retail, and housing along the river. In addition to regulatory changes to the area, the Corridor Plan made recommendations in three other categories of action including economic development, placemaking, and infrastructure so that the industrial uses could become compatible with enhanced public space and amenities.

Minimal Usable Open Space

Minimal usable open space requirements are another part of zoning regulations that can incentivize the creation of a welcoming public waterfront. Unfortunately industrial districts in Malden have no minimum usable open space requirement. One could argue that for industrial uses, a wider setback is required to ensure a healthy, safe, and enjoyable environment beside the river. Particularly for industrial uses that are not water-dependent, much larger setbacks with minimum usable open space might be reasonable. Since it may not be economical to invest money in landscaping, the City may engage property owners in a negotiation to pay into a fund or put a section of the land into public control in exchange for reductions in some other zoning restriction.

The lack of municipal incentives for development that would benefit from proximity to a vibrant public space and the lack of dimensional standards and minimum usable open space requirements that would reserve open space

²⁸ City of Malden Zoning Ordinances 2016. *Use Regulations* Chapter 12, Section 300.3. Accessed August 4, 2020 https://maldenredevelopment.com/sites/default/files/city_of_malden_zoning_ordinances_6-30-16.pdf

for public use in industrial areas, leaves the City fully reliant on the state's enforcement of Chapter 91 to ensure public access to the Malden River.

Rear Yard Setbacks

Because the rear yard requirement for allowable uses within industrially zoned land in Malden is only 10-20' (depending on the use), and may be waived when it abuts a river, the public may not be able to expect to gain much public access. Chapter 91 may not guarantee much else either. The minimum state requirement for public access is for a 10' right of way, so buildings could potentially be placed very close to the river, casting shadows, and limiting the space available for enhanced public benefits such as plazas with street furniture (benches, lighting, etc.), ecological restoration of riverbanks, or even parking. Without a change to Section 400.5.1 of existing zoning, Malden may expect more developments like 188 Commercial Street. Built only in 2011 with a setback of 35' from the shoreline, it is now the closest building to the river.



2. CREATIVE PLACEMAKING Outreach, Engagement, and Outcomes

3. CREATIVE PLACEMAKING: OUTREACH, ENGAGEMENT, AND OUTCOMES

Since 2000, many initiatives have taken place to revitalize the Malden River, ranging from multi-million dollar real estate developments such as River's Edge to volunteer neighborhood cleanup efforts sponsored by the Friends of the Malden River. While these individual initiatives have brought significant change to the waterfront, they have happened in an ad hoc manner. Public officials and planners have not refined local regulations to support their vision for the waterfront. And residents and the general public remained largely unaware of the river as a resource, so it has been challenging for them to mobilize and advocate for their rights. Additionally, the uneven pace of private development has created a lack of clarity as to what is happening where. And without the shared knowledge that the river was safe for boating, there were lingering doubts as to whether an increase in public space would be hazardous for public health.

In order to keep momentum from the Greenways plan and visionary developers going, the City requested technical assistance from MAPC to develop a placemaking initiative that would demonstrate the value of the river as an amenity and to engage residents and municipal officials in conversations about the river's future. The Malden River Creative Placemaking Project started in December 2019 by building a coalition of local partners, generating consensus around a series of initiatives that could celebrate the work already accomplished, and promote new initiatives from the City and community advocacy groups. Placemaking was identified as a strategy that could both aid public officials and planners in identifying new regulations to put into place and to develop public awareness of and support for these measures.

These initiatives have resulted in overwhelming support from the community and city leaders to enact the vision for an expanded Malden River Greenway. Since MAPC's project to foster creative placemaking activities ended in 2019, and over the course of 2020 when this report was being written, project partners have built on the relationships that were deepened during this creative placemaking project, and the city and project partners have worked together to expand their activities on the river. While these initiatives hold promise to provide Malden residents with new access to open spaces, the dream of a dedicated pedestrian path along the entire length of the river remains elusive. As 2020 comes to a close, issues that were raised by this placemaking project, especially as they relate to zoning, remain unresolved.

WHAT IS CREATIVE PLACEMAKING?

Project partners referenced a definition of creative placemaking adapted from the definition developed by Markusen and Gadwa for the National Endowment for the Arts:²⁹

Creative placemaking (CP) is a planning and community development process that occurs when planners, community development practitioners, artists, and others deliberately integrate art and culture into community revitalization work – placing arts at the table with land use, transportation, economic development, education, housing, infrastructure, and public safety strategies.

Creative placemaking can include short-term and long-term initiatives and actions. Creative placemaking strategies span a wide range of activities including funding artist participation, convening cross-sector

²⁹ Markusen, Ann and Anne Gadwa, 2010, *Creative Placemaking: Executive Summary. A White Paper for The Mayors' Institute on City Design*, a leadership initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the United States Conference of Mayors and American Architectural Foundation. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts p.3.

stakeholders, fundraising, promotion, designing and implementing demonstration projects, evaluation, and reporting.

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING ALONG THE MALDEN RIVER

MAPC worked with the City of Malden to assemble a diverse group of project partners to initiate a series of short-term creative placemaking efforts along the Malden River. Three intended outcomes guided the creative placemaking work:

1. activating people, creating new connections and fostering new collaborations;
2. revitalizing the existing places and spaces along the Malden River; and
3. instigating planning, policy, and programmatic changes to increase public space and public access to the river over the long-term.

The creative placemaking process involved convening stakeholders, designing creative engagements, and funding artists and community partners to develop and execute demonstration projects. Cultural equity was a guiding principle for the project. Based on the demographic analysis, MAPC identified the Asian-American communities in Malden as priorities for targeted outreach and partnership in the project.

The project included an interpreter-training workshop with leaders of Malden’s communities of diverse language backgrounds, providing an introduction to Malden River planning issues. These community leaders provided both linguistic and cultural translation of this critical knowledge to Malden’s diverse communities, particularly to people in their communities who do not speak English well.

This creative placemaking project was envisioned as a way to bring people to the river, to experience the public spaces that already exist, and to imagine a future where the entire riverfront landscape could become accessible to the public. All events were free, and invitations were translated into the languages of their target audiences. The project culminated with a public boating event at the Malden DPW and the installation of a semi-permanent outdoor exhibit with visioning graphics and text that is translated into five different languages: Mandarin, Vietnamese, Arabic, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole.

PROJECT TIMEFRAME

Date	Malden River Placemaking Activities with MAPC and its Partners
Dec. 19, 2018	Project Kick-off with Advisory Committee
July 27, 2019	“Exploring the Malden River” event at River’s Edge co-produced by MAPC and CCC with participation from Friends of the Malden River and Malden Reads.
Aug. 31, 2019	GMAACC hosts a signage-making visioning session with MAPC support
Sept. 25, 2019	MAPC works with local graphic designer, Naomi Kahn to install placemaking exhibit at the Malden DPW Yard
Sept. 28, 2019	MAPC partners with MyRWA and FoMR to organize “Cruise in a Canoe.” During the event, GMAACC invites youth to help paint a new ‘Welcome to the Malden River’ sign. Y Leaders volunteer to assist with logistics.
Oct. 5, 2019	‘Welcome to the Malden River’ sign installed by MAPC and Councillor Ryan O’Malley;
Oct. 21, 2019	FoMR organizes a Malden River Cleanup with local youth from the Y Leaders
Nov. 18, 2019	Malden River Works Kick-off Meeting with participation from project partners and MAPC.
December 31, 2020	Final Report Completed

STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Stakeholder Convenings and Coalition Building

The project began with an extended scoping process in which MAPC engaged in one-on-one conversations and community meetings to listen and develop mutual understanding amongst project partners about the goals and objectives of this new placemaking initiative.

The partnership building process was iterative. Some groups who seemed like obvious partners from the outset (eg. MaldenArts), were unable to participate because they were already overcommitted with their own initiatives. Other stakeholders, like the Greater Malden Asian American Community Coalition, were brought in late into the project as gaps emerged and they expressed interest. Each partner had its own set of goals for becoming involved, and deliverables needed to be changed to further their objectives in a way that could build towards the larger objective of restoring the Malden River.

Project partners were identified because of their relationship to the river and to groups of people who traditionally had the least access to decision-making power. It would be impossible to reach every person from every demographic in the city, so MAPC developed an Interpreter Training Workshop to develop ambassadors who could connect their communities to the placemaking project.

Interpreter Training Workshop – July 23, 2019

In order to invite participation from Malden's diverse communities, MAPC organized a training session with seven local Interpreters. The workshop included information from a Planning 101 workshop provided by MAPC staff through the Mel King Institute, a brief history of the Malden River, and a tutorial on the challenges facing the Malden River as they relate to planning and human intervention.

Participants were chosen because of their capacity to translate this knowledge into another language that is predominantly spoken in Malden, namely: Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Haitian-Creole, and Spanish. The Interpreters were also chosen because they are known leaders in their communities.

Following the completion of the workshop, participants were invited to provide interpretation support during each event so others could learn about the river in their own language. Through this program, MAPC sought to plant seeds that could live on past the project, connecting people and amplifying knowledge about how to become engaged advocates that are prepared to participate in long-term planning efforts while being ready for timely actions as they arise.



Speakers

Daniel Koff, MAPC
Evan Spetrini, Malden Redevelopment Authority
Kathleen Vandiver, Friends of the Malden River
Mei Hung, Chinese Culture Connection

Interpreters

Souad Akib
Jacqueline M. Chau
Windy Yu Chu
Marie Coulanges
Lipin Ji
Ramon Norales
Emily Rivera

Space Provided By

Mai Du, Greater Malden Asian American Community Coalition in partnership with South Cove Community Health Center

Creative Engagement Design and Implementation

Materials to communicate a vision and planning priorities that would incentivize the creation of public access to the Malden River were developed iteratively during the course of the initial placemaking events and final versions semi-permanently installed in time for the final placemaking events at the Malden DPW. The Interpreters provided particularly insightful feedback that informed the printing of a preliminary set of graphics which were displayed at the first public event at River's Edge.

Planning graphics included architectural renderings on top of existing photographs of the Malden River showing a vision for what one might see in the future. Text was translated into five languages, enabling members of the public and city officials to become strategic partners in enhancing the Malden River waterfront.

Outdoor Exhibit – July-September, 2019

In order to encourage active use of the river, MAPC designed a site-specific exhibit to help people envision a potential future for the Malden River and to discuss the tradeoffs that it will take to enact their vision. Graphics were created to present visual “menus” of options for the kinds of public benefits that could be associated with new zoning regulations for the river. The graphics were meant to be visual aids for the Interpreters to use in discussions. The visioning graphics were presented as part of the first event at River's Edge, and the boards were further refined that following month and presented as a permanent installation at the boat launch behind the Malden DPW for the next event, Cruise in a Canoe.



Design by
Daniel Koff, MAPC

Fabrication and Installation by
Cambridge Reprographics

Events

The Malden River Placemaking Project included the production of two public events that were co-created by MAPC and local community-based organizations as a way to engage their core constituents and to create opportunities that could expand the reach of their target audiences. To build stronger buy-in from Malden's elected officials, a third event offered elected officials a preview of the second public event.

During the project MAPC entered into partnership agreements with the Chinese Cultural Connection and the Mystic River Watershed Association and allocated funds to the partners to support their staff's time in planning their events. MAPC advised on the outreach strategy and communications collateral, but the scope of work specified that the partners create the invitations as a way to ensure that the message would be inviting to their audiences.

These partners were chosen because of their abilities to be inclusive to as wide a range of Malden residents as possible. Thanks to their efforts with the Malden River Greenway Plan, and their status as a fiscal agent of the Friends of the Malden River, the Mystic River Watershed Association was chosen because of their reach in the community to people who are generally knowledgeable about planning efforts in Malden, and because of their desire to expand their reach into other ethnic communities.

The Chinese Culture Connection was chosen as a partner because they engage with the most difficult-to-reach population in Malden (Asian-identifying people who do not speak English well). The two events were organized as a way to engage as wide a range of Malden residents as possible, and also as a pilot to show how community-based organizations can be encouraged to plan events in new public spaces as a way to introduce these resources to various segments of the Malden community.

Exploring the Malden River – July 27, 2019

On Saturday, July 27, over 200 people gathered at River's Edge to explore quality open space along the Malden River, to enjoy an evening of family-friendly activities there, and to learn about opportunities to add more public space.

The Chinese Culture Connection, in coordination with MAPC and Friends of the Malden River, organized “Exploring the Malden River” as part of their East Meets West Dialogue series. Events included Tai Chi, tug o’ war, face painting, leaf rubbing, water balloon catch, drawing yourself on the Malden River with magnets, storytelling with Malden Reads, and an interactive activity about water runoff that was run by the Friends of the Malden River with materials borrowed from the Charles River Watershed Association.



Figure 1: Children engaged in one of the activities of the evening - tug o' war

On display were visioning boards using graphics from this project to engage people in an open-ended conversation about the river, as well as boards developed during the Greenways project to test whether the priorities of this audience matched the outreach that was conducted through that earlier process. People were given sticker dots to place on top of images that corresponded to the amenities that they would most like to see in a future Greenway. The following categories received the following number of dot votes: Natural Areas (48), Recreation & Mobility (41), Community and Social Spaces (28), Public Programming (26). The survey conducted during the Greenways plan gathered that the top priorities for the area should be: dedicated paths for biking and walking, new parks or open space, and natural areas. People responding to surveys during the Greenways plan were least excited about athletic fields, stores and restaurants³⁰ which was also confirmed at Exploring the Malden River where the image of SOWA market showing a crowd of people only got one vote. It may be worth noting that an image of an active waterfront with seating under umbrellas and a packed boat travelling past received 8 votes, making it the 6th most popular image (of 19). Perhaps this is because it offered a place for people to sit in a leisurely environment which was similar to two other high-scoring images. Overall, the results generally confirmed the findings of the Greenways plan, that people generally envisioned the Malden River to be a place that would be “a convenient path system for residents of Malden, Everett, and Medford with safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists.”³¹

The finding that the priorities of this audience matched those that were surveyed during the Greenways plan was reassuring considering that they came from very different audiences. During the Greenways planning process, 83.6% of survey respondents were white, 1.6% were Asian.³² This event was highly targeted at Malden’s Asian community, which was reflected in the survey statistics. 68.5% were from China, 3.7% were from Hong Kong, and only 20.4% were from the US. The fact that these groups of people have similar priorities reflects the need for the City to ensure that the Greenway gets built.

Although only 27% of attendees who completed the survey at Exploring the Malden River were very aware that this waterway existed before the event, 80% of respondents self reported that they would frequently visit the river (at least once a month) if the area in Malden were more available for public use, showing how the gathering demonstrated the river's potential to be a vital recreational space for people

³⁰ Utile, “Malden River Greenway, Public Meeting #3, Slide 17” MyRWA, October 4, 2017.

³¹ Utile, “Malden River Greenway, Public Meeting #2, Slide 20” MyRWA, August 4, 2017.

³² Utile, “Malden River Greenway, Public Meeting #2, Slide 15” MyRWA, August 4, 2017.

of all ages. Survey respondents spanned every age group: 10.3% of respondents were under 18 years old, 20.8% were aged 22-35, 26.4% were aged 36-50, 9% were aged 51-60, and 24.5% were aged 66+. 49.1% reported the event was “excellent,” while another 49.1% rated it as “good,” one person said it was “so-so” and no one reported that the event was “poor.” Engaging this population in a positive activity along the river both validated earlier findings and provided even more evidence of the need for change.

View an additional summary of the event on the MAPC Planning 101 blog here:

<https://www.mapc.org/planning101/a-day-of-fun-on-the-malden-river/>



Karen Buck (FoMR) teaches children about water runoff

Sponsors

MAPC
Eastern Bank

Lead Partner

Chinese Culture Connection

Associate Partners

Friends of the Malden River
Malden Reads
Y Leaders

Boat Tour and Preview of the Exhibit – September 25, 2019

On September 25th, MAPC organized a preview of the exhibit and boat tour for decision-makers in Malden. Invitations were sent from the Mayor’s Office to members of the Malden Redevelopment Authority, City Councillors including the Waterfront Access Committee, Conservation Commission, Walkability Committee, and the Planning Board. Staff from the MAPC Arts & Culture and Land Use Planning Departments were also present.

After a preview of the exhibit, participants were invited on a canoe ride to experience the river from the water. Some people stayed on land, and some went on boats, each group engaging in an informal conversation about the future of the river. The goal of the event was to create a low-stakes environment for discovery that could show decision-makers how the riverfront landscape could be changed to create a refuge for water life, a welcoming space for people, and businesses to use the river.

Cruise in a Canoe – September 28, 2019

To celebrate the positive results of a recent Health Risk Assessment Study that found that the Malden River is safe for boating, MAPC partnered with the Friends of the Malden River and the Mystic River Watershed Association to organize a free day of canoeing on the River. Boats were provided by Paddle Boston. During the event boaters viewed the installation and learned more information about the river ecology from interpreters and by staff who were seated at the project partner’s tables. Over 60 people attended in shifts throughout the day, including the Mayor and nearly half the all City Council. Over a dozen youth from the Y Leaders program volunteered, and in response to their interest in the river, FoMR hosted a boating event for the Y Leaders program the following week.

The goal of this event was to raise awareness both about the current conditions and future potential for the river. It was meant to attract the core group of advocates that FoMR and MyRWA had cultivated during and since the Greenway plan was released. Since it was assumed that most people in this group

had participated in earlier planning processes, and that they would be tapped for future planning initiatives with Malden River Works (the grant for which was announced days before this event transpired), this group was not given preference surveys at the event. Similar to the boat tour for counselors, it was meant to provide a low-stakes environment where people could build relationships and participate in a shared experience along the river, priming them to become advocates for change.



Sponsor

MAPC
Paddle Boston
Dom's Sausage

Lead Partners

Friends of the Malden River
Mystic River Watershed Association

Volunteers

Y Leaders
Tufts Rowing Team

Elected Officials who Attended Boating Events

Mayor Gary Chistenson
Peg Crowe, Ward 1 Councillor
John Matheson, Ward 3 Councillor
Ryan O'Malley, Ward 4 Councillor
Barbara Murphy, Ward 5 Councillor, Waterfront Access Committee
Debbie DeMaria, Councillor At Large
Craig Spadafora, Councillor At Large
Stephen Winslow, Councillor At Large, Waterfront Access Committee

Artist Involvement

After completion of the first event with the Chinese Culture Connection, and as plans were finalized for the second event with the Mystic River Watershed Association, it became clear that although these “creative placemaking” events were bringing new attention to the river, they were doing little to inject the arts into these spaces.

Public Art by GMAACC – September-October, 2019

A third partner was brought into the project – the Greater Malden Asian American Community Coalition (GMAACC) – to engage their youth in a community-designed mural which could be painted during the final event and then placed along the river as a new feature of public art. In years past GMAACC had conducted public art projects along the Malden River. When GMAACC founder Mai Du was a youth, she worked with the Friends of the Malden River to paint the original “Welcome to the Malden River” sign. Over a decade later that sign had fallen into disrepair. MAPC partnered with GMAACC to reconnect that organization to FoMR, and enabled GMAACC to introduce their artist-board members Shaina Lu and Vivian Ho who were tapped to lead a design workshop with youth, and then to outline a design based on their feedback. MAPC acquired the supplies, and paid GMAACC for their efforts. In return GMAACC brought their youth to the Cruise in a Canoe event where they enjoyed a day on the river and helped to

paint the sign. MAPC and Councillor Ryan O'Malley installed the sign with the assistance of local property owner Anthony Spadafora.



Sponsor
MAPC
Anthony Spadafora

Lead Partners
Greater Malden Asian
American Community Coalition

Aspirational Video – Premiered January 17, 2020

To increase visibility of the river and planning processes to increase public access to it, MAPC created a short, 1.5 minute video to be shared on social media, at future tabling events, and on local cable access television. The piece was originally produced as a way to promote the kickoff meeting for a new planning process for Malden River Works, a new project in Malden to reorient the Malden DPW operations so a new public park and permanent boathouse could be built adjacent to the river in a way that would foster equitable resilience.



Sponsor
MAPC
Malden City Council

Editor
Nicholas Vandenberg

Camera
Jayme Aronson, Fly By The Moon Media

Promotional Resource Development

This project was meant to serve as a catalyst for new efforts to increase public access to the river. The project engaged artists to create a catalogue of visual materials for use by the City of Malden and project partners to support ongoing advocacy, programming, and planning efforts. A professional architectural illustrator with

experience in developing images of prospective waterfront designs, Stephanie Braconier, was hired to illustrate future scenes on top of photographs from the ground and from the air via a drone.

MAPC worked with local artists to document events using video and photography. Photographic documentation of the creative placemaking events were edited into a video by Nick Vandenberg to promote the collaborative efforts to improve the riverfront landscape and encourage people to participate in the Malden River Works project, which could offer a new park along the river. During the Cruise in a Canoe event, MAPC hired Jayme Aronson, a local filmmaker, to document the public boating event and to mentor a young professional who was taking on media responsibilities for the Malden River Works project. Together they recorded interviews with people about their feelings about the river. MAPC is maintaining copies of the documentation – as well as release forms – so that these videos will continue to be available to project partners to use free of charge in perpetuity.

LESSONS LEARNED

When this project was proposed, large-scale events and permanent installations were immediately considered. However, the extended scoping process that brought partners into the process early and often shifted priorities towards smaller-scale initiatives that could increase capacity at the city and from local organizations. Community groups were already trying to make change on the river. They just needed support.

Rather than focus on the creation of a signature project, this placemaking effort shifted focus to amplifying what had been piecemeal local efforts into a cohesive project that could result in deeper systemic change and greater collaboration between the city and the public. Key learnings from the project include:

- The process of meeting, building coalitions, and opening lines of communications between various parties in the non-profit and municipal sectors can be just as effective at furthering goals as the delivery of the actual placemaking project.
- Generating enthusiasm and buy-in requires deep listening and flexibility.
- Strategic partners can increase capacity to a project and bring in new audiences into the planning process.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

This project has brought renewed interest to the river and kept both the public and municipal leaders focused on improving public access. The project can trace the following outcomes that continue to reverberate today.

Activation of the Malden River

The placemaking events brought people to the river that were not aware that it is an available resource. At least half of the Interpreters who participated in the program have gone on to become Steering Committee members in the Malden River Works project. This Placemaking project activated interest that continues to this day.

Images of people actively using the river during the placemaking project are also shown in other planning initiatives as examples for the kinds of activities that can happen if more investment is made along the river.

Lastly, the placemaking installation has catalyzed further improvements in the area. After placing the new “Welcome to the River” sign by GMAACC, the stencils of duck feet leading from the street to the river were

repainted by FoMR. Additionally, the owner of 188 Commercial Street improved the area by building a 10' stone dust path along the river, as well as removing a dumpster which had been located at the trailhead.

Collaboration & Partnerships

This project has stitched together local advocacy groups, municipal leaders, and diverse publics to increase lines of communication and to ensure that all parties are working towards shared goals. The exhibit and events, and the planning process that produced them, have generated consensus among all parties about the kinds of public benefits that people can expect from developers. What had been an ad-hoc strategy to improve the riverfront is turning into a community-wide effort to educate and hold property owners accountable to their requirements to provide public access under the Waterfront Act.

Instigation of planning, policy, and programmatic changes along the Malden River

This Creative Placemaking Project has renewed Malden's municipal leaders' interest in revitalizing the Malden River. Since completion of the creative placemaking activities, two major initiatives have developed and are being carried out along the river.

After meeting together for this placemaking project, the Friends of the Malden River identified another opportunity through MIT and were able to utilize the existing networks to apply. The Friends of the Malden River joined the Mystic River Watershed Association, members of the public (including trained interpreters), and the Mayor's Office on a successful application to win the Leventhal City Prize from MIT to develop a new park along the river at the DPW site that can foster equitable resilience. Since the conclusion of this project's placemaking activities, four community meetings have been held to generate input to inform the park's design.

In the last community meeting, with a design roughly approved by the participants, attention was focused on the details of the park. The themes of art, culture, environment, and history were all discussed in small groups, with the most participants selecting art as a topic they wanted to discuss. The community-designed mural produced by GMAACC was cited as an example of the kinds of work that people were most interested in seeing, with the walls of DPW offered as a site, following the inclusion of art in that location on the visioning aerial graphic that was produced as part of the placemaking initiative. The placemaking project was thus a way to model the process and show the potential for more art to be created along the Malden River.

The second major initiative that has been carried out by the City since completion of the Placemaking Project was the installation of a 3.2 mile loop around the Malden River in Malden, Medford, and Everett. This path was built to promote a continuous path along the Mystic and Malden River watershed, providing additional recreational outdoor activities for people during the Covid-19 era. This project follows up on the longstanding partnership between these communities in revitalizing the river and enacts a major recommendation of this report to continue to foster cross-municipal collaboration.

Lastly this project has encouraged Malden's municipal leaders to develop an internal working group that is identifying potential changes to zoning along the river. The visuals and open conversations that were developed as part of the placemaking project is informing this group in how to proceed towards implementation.



4. ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

4. ENVISIONING THE FUTURE MALDEN RIVER

CREATING PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE RIVER IN MALDEN

Efforts to create a path along the river through the City of Malden must take a parcel-by-parcel approach. Recent developments have created hope for public access to be created based on Chapter 91 on two key properties:

Malden City Yard, Dept. of Public Works, 356 Commercial Street, Malden

In 2019 the City was awarded the MIT Leventhal City Prize to design a new park and to reorganize the DPW yard at the Malden DPW. The Malden River Works project is intended to foster equitable resilience and lead to a more accessible public riverfront. The project team includes members from the Friends of the Malden River, the Mystic River Watershed Association, the Mayor, MRA, Landing Studio, and the MIT Center for Environmental and Health Sciences. The team also includes a Steering Committee whose members represent Malden's diverse publics. The teams conducted four public input sessions in 2019-2020, and are in the process of finalizing a shovel-ready design. The City will seek additional sources of funding to cover construction costs.

National Grid, 270 Medford Street

In 2018, after two years of litigation to obtain a waterways license, National Grid funded a concept design, land survey and cost estimate for a new half-mile public path along the length of their property connecting Medford Street to Rivergreen Park. This property includes land in both Malden and Everett. Due to the tight configuration next to existing buildings, part of the path would likely need to be cantilevered over the river, adding additional construction and permitting costs. It is currently unclear as to who would be responsible for paying for construction of the path.

BEYOND MALDEN, PUBLIC ACCESS EXPANDS AROUND THE RIVER

In 2020, the City of Everett celebrated the completion of Rivergreen Park, a signature park along the river. Funding was provided through funding from Encore Boston Harbor Hotel and Casino. The park includes a riverwalk, playground, ball fields, pavilions, paths, and a boat launch.

One small missing link remains in what will become a contiguous public path along the Malden River throughout Everett. The Mystic River Watershed Association is currently working with the property owner, Gerry Berberian,³³ on plans to build a path along that one remaining parcel to enable people to travel on a dedicated public path from the Encore Hotel and Casino to Malden.

Recent construction in Medford is creating contiguous public access along the Malden River in that community as well. Design development is currently underway for the Clippership Connector, a path under route 93 in Medford that would address a key missing link to creating a complete contiguous path along the Mystic River.³⁴

Because Malden is the only community that controls both sides of the river and occupies the area where the two banks meet, it forms a lynchpin to the eventual creation of a contiguous, dedicated pedestrian path along the Malden River and the Mystic River watershed. In 2020 the City of Malden continued their partnerships with Medford and Everett to unveil a 3.2 mile pedestrian loop around the Malden River from Medford Street to

³³ Independent Staff, "Major Property Owner in Village Area Sees Transformation," *Everett Independent*, October 13, 2017.

<https://everettindependent.com/2017/10/13/major-property-owner-in-village-area-sees-transformation/>

³⁴ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/clippership-connector-project-mystic-river-greenway-meeting-presentation/download>

Route 16. The path is dedicated to Joseph Croken and to Louise Stokes.³⁵ For now, the path through Malden does not travel adjacent to the river. Instead, it follows the Northern Strand Community Trail to Medford Street where it travels along sidewalks at Medford and Commercial Streets to Medford where it dips back along the Malden River through dedicated paths at River's Edge.

ENVISIONING THE FUTURE WATERFRONT

However, amendments to the zoning ordinance could include new requirements for more generous setbacks. Placemaking elements were developed to help demonstrate the potential for delineating rear yard setback requirements that would take into account the unique conditions along each parcel that abuts the river.

Furthermore, this placemaking installation explores ways in which the city may work with property owners and members of the public to determine different uses that may be allowed within the building setback zone. In addition to determining setbacks for buildings, the city may annotate additional zones for a pedestrian path, areas for street furniture (benches, lighting, trash receptacles, etc.) vehicular parking (to allow for additional parking behind buildings), pedestrian plazas that may be used by the public or administered by the local property owners, and more. Zoning may be a bit of a blunt instrument to require such details, but can use other policies and programs to assist developers in creating a high standard of open space.

See the images below to understand how the placemaking installation explores the unique spatial conditions along different parts of the river, as well as the range of public benefits that may be addressed through a comprehensive drawing of boundaries for different setback distances for various public and private uses.



Compare the aerial photograph from May 2019 with the artist rendering of a potential future riverfront landscape. The rendering shows a new park behind DPW that is being designed through the Malden River Works project. To the north, outlines of buildings are shown with setback distances of 200', 150', and 100'. Even with those generous setbacks in place, there may still be room for a developer to construct a new neighborhood with interior streets.

³⁵ Amanda Hurley, "Malden River Loop Dedication: The Story of Louise Stokes," MATV's Neighborhood View, September 2, 2020. <https://neighborhoodview.org/2020/09/02/malden-river-loop-dedication-the-story-of-louise-stokes/>

EXPLORING BUILDING SETBACK DISTANCES

Determining building setback distances that are aligned to the spatial and economic conditions of an area is one of the fundamental outcomes of a municipal harbor planning process wherein municipal and state guidelines are aligned and codified into clear and transparent regulations.

In the 2010 Lynn Municipal Harbor Plan and Designated Port Area Master Plan (2010 Lynn MHP), a 200' setback was established. Once the economic assumptions on which those regulations were tested however, the setback distance was reduced to 100' in the 2019 Lynn Municipal Harbor Plan (MHP),³⁶ the same baseline that is established in the East Boston Waterfront District Municipal Harbor Plan.³⁷ In the North End of Boston, where the urban environment is much more dense, setback distances are set to 35' from the shoreline, or 50' from the ends of piers.³⁸



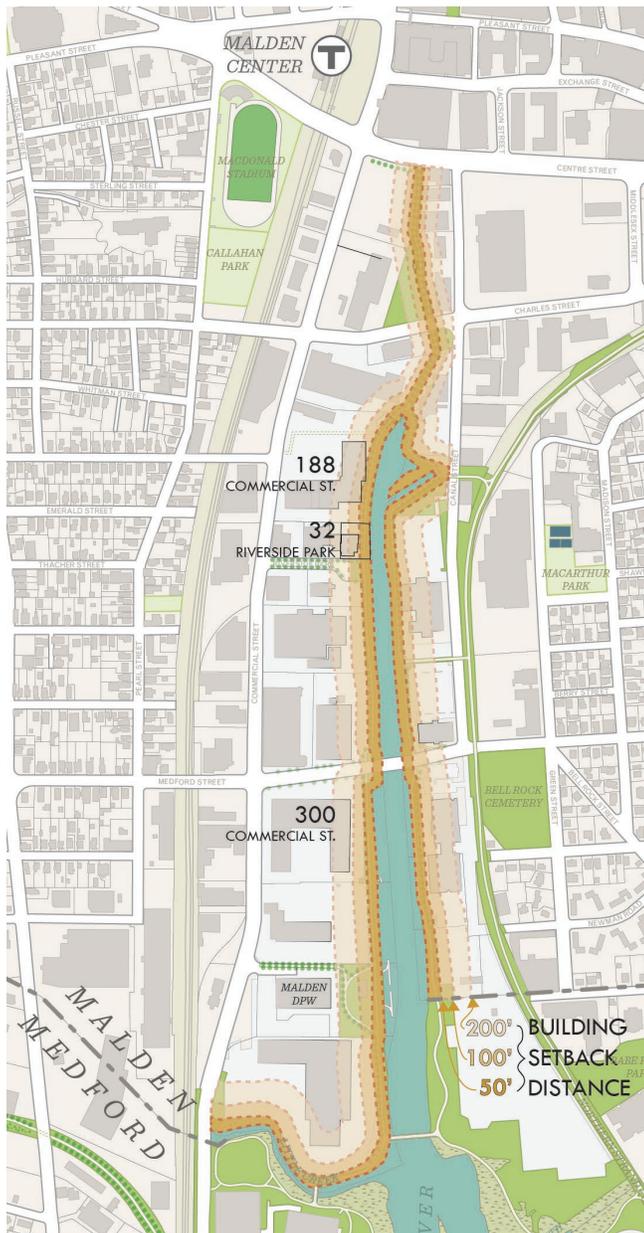
Pictured above is the placemaking installation at the DPW yard, showing the distance markers that were installed along both sides of the fence for people to use as a reference as they imagine different setback distances while on site. The red marker at the center of the image is at 100' from the shoreline. The blue 50' marker can be seen to the left, and the orange and yellow 150' and 200' markers can be seen to the right.

³⁶ Utile, "Lynn Municipal Harbor Plan Amendment," Prepared for the City of Lynn, June 11, 2019, Accessed August 6, 2020.

http://www.ediclynn.org/documents/Revised%20Waterfront%20Master%20Plan/2019-06-11_Draft%202019%20Lynn%20Municipal%20Harbor%20Plan%20Amendment.pdf

³⁷ Cecil Group, Prepared for The City of Boston, May 15, 2008, Amendment to the East Boston Waterfront District Municipal Harbor Plan, Accessed August 6, 2020. <http://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/880aada3-4e4b-429d-8749-16521369069e>

³⁸ Boston Development and Planning Agency, 2008, Article 42A Harborpark District: North End/Downtown Waterfront and Dorchester Bay/ Neponset River Waterfront. Accessed August 6, 2020. https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/embed/file/2018-05/42a_1990-harborpark-plan.pdf



This map shows how generous building setback distances may impact the development potential of parcels along the Malden River. This diagram shows how a very generous setback of 200' may only be feasible on parcels to the southwest side of the river including the future Malden River Works site and the parcel to the north where signature parks may be developed.

188 Commercial Street, which was constructed in 2011, has a minimum setback of 35'. It is the closest building to the river, showing how Malden's existing zoning does not require generous building setbacks in new development.

The building at 300 Commercial Street is set further back from the river—approximately 115'. Parking is 55' from the river; the path is 8' wide and there is a 45' waterfront yard area between the path and the watershed. This property could be a model for how different setbacks may be annotated through zoning.

As shown by the example of 32 Riverside Park, where the entire property and existing structure is within 135' from the river, setback distances will have to be adjusted based on the unique spatial conditions of each parcel. Adding a minimum open space requirement to zoning for industrial lands would help ensure that properties like this one remain viable for commercial use while public amenities are maintained.

Likewise, parcels to the east of the Malden River are confined to a smaller area between the river and the street, so setback distances here may need to be smaller than along parcels to the west.

DEFINING THE HIGH-WATER LINE

Maps like the one above imply that the shoreline is the point from which building setbacks may be measured. That may be the case for future regulations that may be imposed by the city. However, the existing shoreline is not the point that the state uses to determine compliance with Chapter 91. The public trust doctrine, which is enshrined into law with Chapter 91, follows the historic high water line mark: the highest elevation that tidal waters historically reached the shore. The fact that the historic water line is located on properties that do not currently abut the river indicates that these properties are buried on a floodplain. There may be additional environmental considerations related to water runoff, pollution, and seismic conditions that could be considered in the zoning and/or building codes for these parcels.

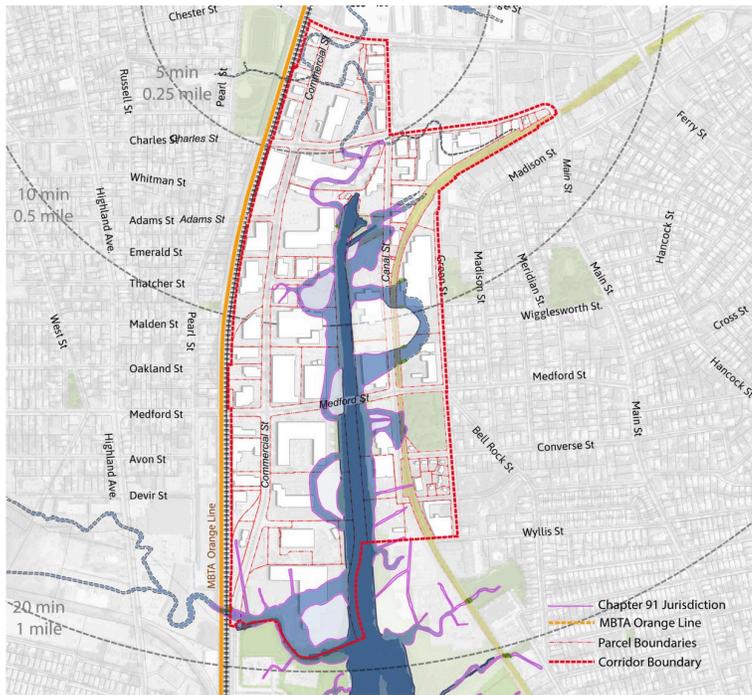
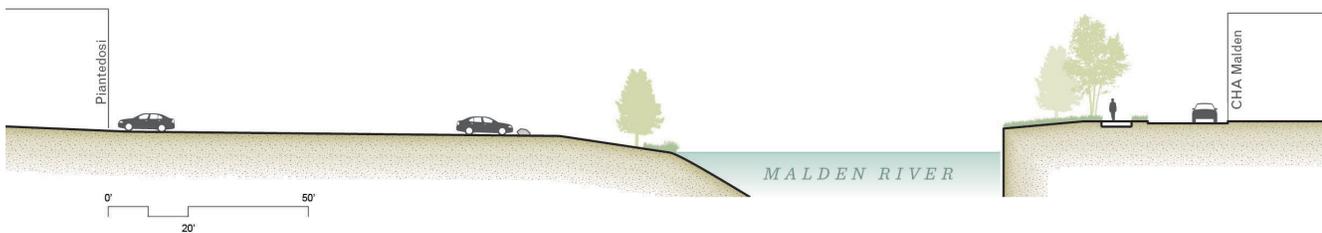


Figure 13: Historic Location of the Malden River
Commercial Street Corridor Plan, Page 28

Before the Malden River was straightened into the form as it exists today, it meandered through tidal flats, resulting in boundaries that cross irregularly through existing land parcels. These historic boundaries are the ones that apply to M.G.L. Chapter 91. In a Municipal Harbor Plan or other comprehensive planning process, the City may work with the DEP to reconcile existing and historic high water lines to codify a new set of boundaries where Chapter 91 applies, creating a more practical regulatory regime.

Below, a section from 240 Commercial Street to 195 Canal Street shows a comparison of existing building setback distances on either side of the river. Piantedosi Bakery is approximately 140' from the river, while the Cambridge Health Alliance on the east side is at minimum approximately 60' from the river. The river itself is approximately 85' wide at this point.



DEFINING USES IN THE WATERFRONT AREA

Malden's zoning bylaws may go beyond just establishing minimum rear yard building setback requirements; they may also outline the ways in which the land between the building and the river may be used. This section above may therefore also be used to explore possible widths for paths, parking, and other public benefit and ecological restoration zones that may be delineated in zoning.

One standard requirement in zoning for waterfront areas is to require construction of a path of a certain width (typically 8, 10, or 12') to be constructed (often with specified materials such as paved asphalt, crushed stone, etc.) so that it connects to paths on adjoining parcels.

Outside of the path, urban design guidelines with a transparent procurement process may be put into place to specify the installation of public amenities such as lighting (spaced every 30' or 50'), streetscape furniture (benches, picnic tables, trash receptacles), outdoor plazas, or parking. Separate setback requirements may be established for a subset of these uses – like vehicular parking – to allow for additional parking behind the buildings, but not so close to the river so that polluted runoff may be filtered by the soil before traveling directly into the river.

While it is unlikely that industrial business owners would agree to invest in a high level of enhanced public space, commercial establishments may benefit from a coordinated approach to providing public amenities.

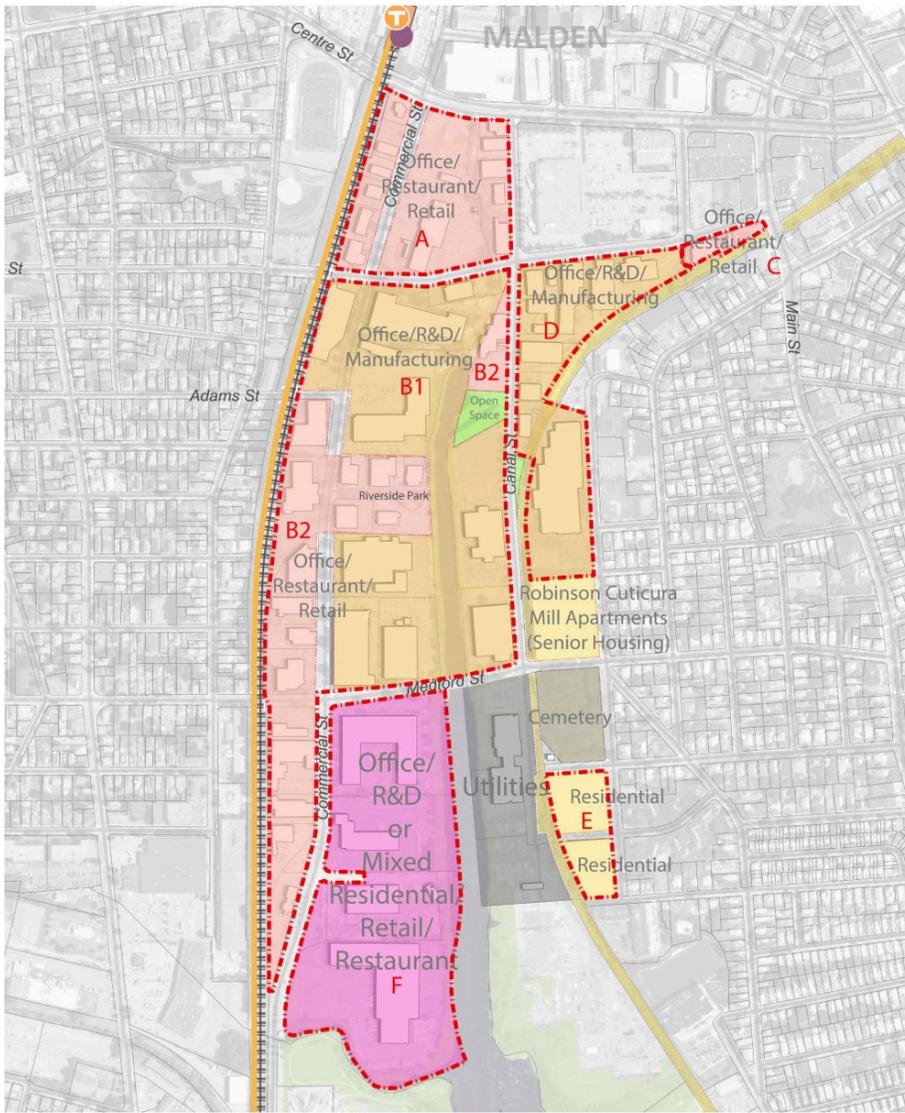


Figure 20: Proposed Future Land Uses in the Corridor
Commercial Street Corridor Plan, Page 44

Even though permanent buildings may not be permitted within the setback area, this zone may allow for complimentary commercial uses such as food trucks, container shops, and street vendors. Commercial uses may provide additional outlets for local food manufacturers to sell their products, especially in areas like Riverside Park where a parklet is shown on the Greenways plan.

Zoning alone cannot create a vibrant public space with robust amenities and an activated public access zone. However, programming and activities developed in partnership with other organizations such as FoMR, MyRWA, GMAACC, and others can help achieve this goal. Beyond relying simply on the local property owners, the collaborative installation and maintenance of the trash boom by the City and FoMR offers an alternative strategy for how public amenities may be continuously maintained and programmed.



5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of the project was to develop a temporary placemaking installation that would illustrate dimensional and use regulations that affect the public's enjoyment of the riverfront. The desired outcome was for this shared knowledge to spark interest in changing regulatory obstacles to incentivize the creation of a welcoming environment with physical improvements and increased programming.

The most direct way to create more public space along the river would be for the City to develop parks and open space on land for which it has direct control. However, only the public owns only a small proportion of the land around the river, with the Malden Redevelopment Authority being that sole public property owner. This public property is the site of the Malden Department of Public Works (DPW). Because the public directly controls such a limited area, increasing public access to the river will require the development of publicly accessible open space on privately owned land. The Boston Harborwalk is an example of how public access to the waterfront can be created on privately owned land through the coordination of municipal regulations and Chapter 91 restrictions. Because the creation of public space along the Malden River is so intricately tied to private development and public advocacy, this project seeks to situate recommendations that can move the city forward on both fronts.

Current and future placemaking efforts along the Malden River are hampered by the lack of public access and the perceptions of poor quality and unsafe conditions of the river. By instituting the following recommendations at the municipal level, the City and community groups will be empowered to enhance the riverfront areas in order to make it a more welcoming space for the public. Feedback elicited from participants of the Malden River Creative Placemaking Project inform these recommendations.

1. REVISIT ZONING BYLAWS FOR INDUSTRIAL USES THAT ABUT THE RIVER, AND ESTABLISH A REAR SET-BACK AND MINIMAL USEABLE OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS TO RESERVE LAND FOR THREE ELEMENTS OF A HEALTHY AND ACCESSIBLE RIVERFRONT: ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION, A PUBLIC PATH FOR PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS, AND PUBLIC AMENITIES AND PROGRAMMING.

- a. (Short-term: Year 1) Change the text in section 400.5 In Industrial Districts regarding considerations for dimensional requirements where rear yard setbacks may be waived if a property abuts a river. Remove "rivers" from the text of 400.5.1 so that rear-yard setbacks in industrial districts may not be waived by right.
- b. (Short-term: Year 1) Create a new amendment, 12.12.111 RIVERFRONT DISTRICTS that would regulate all properties that fall within Chapter 91 jurisdiction. This revised designation would create room for a more targeted revision to the text of the zoning code that would allow the City to regulate these parcels differently from other parcels in the city. This new amendment should seek to halt the detrimental placement of building footprints within the portion of land that could become a public right of way by addressing building setback and minimum usable open space requirements. Setback distances may be represented as a visual diagram annotating different distances to the north and south of Medford Street to conform with the different spatial conditions on either side of the river. Setbacks may also be delineated for public benefit areas such as parking, pedestrian access, and ecological zones (for more details, see following section on Exploring Implementation Strategies with Placemaking on page XX). While all of the parcels that fall under Chapter 91 jurisdiction are currently designated as Industrial, this amendment should be written so that it will continue to apply to these properties if a map change occurs that alters the use of any particular parcel.
 1. Lead: the Mayor's Office, MRA, and City Councillors

2. Support: FoMR, MyRWA, Malden River Works, CLF, and local property owners

2. IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF THE RIVER BY CREATING POLICIES THAT WILL LIMIT LAND-BASED SOURCES OF POLLUTION FROM ENTERING THE WATER.

- a. (Short Term: Year 1) Use creative interventions to halt the influx of trash coming into the river through local storm water drains and flowing out of the river into the sea. The city and local community groups have already made progress towards this goal. The city's plastic bag ban is limiting the amount of plastic that goes into the drains, and MyRWA's successful application to the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant will fund the purchase and installation of a new trash boom which will engage young people in the collection of trash after it flows out of the culverts, but before it travels far downstream.³⁹ The other possible solutions may include instituting closed-top trash and recycling bins for at-home trash pick-up, and installing signage (decal or spray painted) at all drains that flow into the Malden River. These environmental restoration efforts offer an opportunity to increase collaboration amongst community groups in the city, including the Greater Malden Asian American Community Coalition, MaldenArts, and the local schools.
 - i. Lead: the Mayor's Office
 - ii. Support: FoMR, MyRWA, CCC, GMAACC, Malden Arts, and more.
- b. (Short to Medium Term: Years 2-3) Update local wetlands management bylaws to encourage local property owners to address stormwater runoff from their properties by creating more permeable surface areas near the river and implementing natural riverfront planting in ecological zones. According to the June 2019 City of Malden Stormwater Management Plan, section MCM 5: Post Construction Stormwater Management in New Development and Redevelopment, the City of Malden Engineering Department will "develop a report assessing requirements that affect the creation of impervious cover. The assessment will help determine if changes to design standards for streets and parking lots can be modified to support low impact design options." By June 30, 2022, the City Engineering Department will "complete report and implement any recommendations," including drafting the pending Attachments 19-26 which include MCM 5.2 – Street Design and Parking Lot Guidelines, and MCM 5.2 – Green Infrastructure Report. The city should take steps to ensure that the report is conducted during FY21 so that guidelines may be implemented and adopted by the conclusion of FY22 in order to achieve the target goal.
 - i. Lead: Malden City Engineering Department,
 - ii. Support: Nangle Consulting Associates, the Mayor's Office, City of Malden Department of Public Works, Public Facilities, and Permits, Inspections, and Planning Services, Conservation Commission, MyRWA, and FoMR

3. CONTINUE TO EXPAND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE CITY, MRA, FOMR, MYRWA, GMAAC, CCC, AS WELL AS COMMUNITY INTERPRETERS AND OTHERS TO KEEP MALDEN'S DIVERSE COMMUNITIES INFORMED AND INVOLVED IN THE VISION FOR A SAFE, INCLUSIVE, ARTS-INFUSED, ACCESSIBLE RIVERFRONT IN MALDEN.

- a. (Short and Long term: Years 1-5) Continue to build partnerships with community-based organizations to meaningfully advance equitable access to the public realm

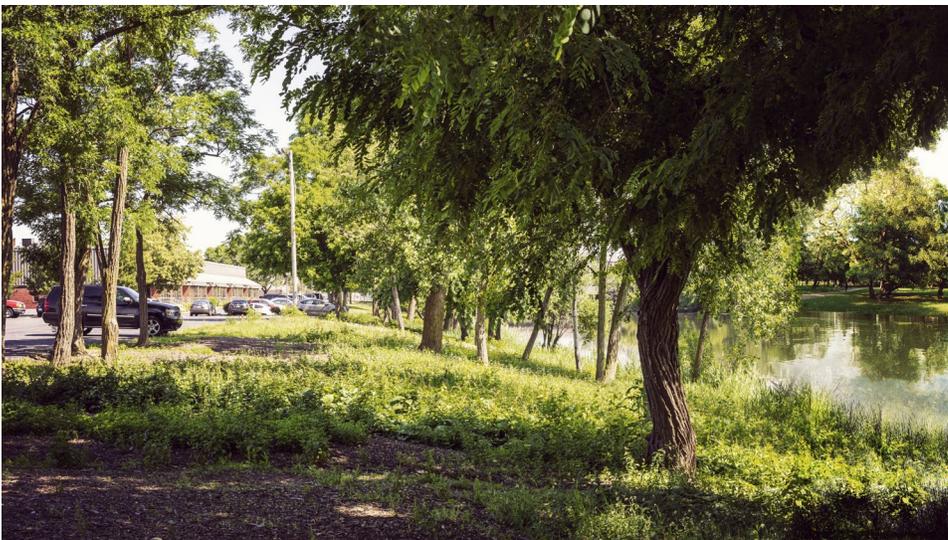
³⁹ Mystic River Watershed Association, August 4, 2020, *\$1.27 Million Coming to the Mystic for Environmental Restoration*, Accessed August 6, 2020. <https://mysticriver.org/news/2020/8/4/127-million-coming-to-the-mystic-for-environmental-restoration>

along the riverfront. This placemaking initiative, the Malden River Works project, and the recent collaboration between the cities of Malden, Medfield, and Everett to install signage for a 3.2 mile Malden River loop are positive steps in the direction of expanding access to the river. The city can continue these efforts through local partnerships to activate spaces as they become accessible and available for design improvements and programming.

- b. **(Short and Long term: Years 1-5) Build partnerships with Native American artists and tribal organizations to increase the visibility of Native American history and living heritage along the Mystic and Malden Rivers.** Original research in this report may serve as a first step in recognizing some of the indigenous heritage of the land around the Malden and Mystic Rivers, but more can be done. The City can conduct their own research and outreach, and may incentivize local organizations to continue this work by building partnerships with indigenous communities.
 - i. Lead: the Mayor's Office
 - ii. Support: FoMR, MyRWA, Malden River Works, CCC, GMAACC, Malden Arts, and more.

MOVING FORWARD

The 2019 photograph below looking north from the Malden DPW site, combined with the artist rendering of how the area could appear with enhanced public benefits, communicates a menu of options to consider when crafting new zoning regulations and working with developers and property owners.





From left to right, the following public amenities are shown in the artist rendering:

- Food stalls and plazas with public programming
- Benches and lighting every 30'-50'
- Paths for walking *and* biking
- Trash receptacles and dog waste bins
- Signage promoting free passage and other uses
- Fishing and boating

To ensure the development of a cohesive trail with similar amenities throughout each industrial parcel of land, these elements can help guide ongoing communications between local property owners and the City. Generating buy-in among property-owners and developers for the long-term vision of an accessible riverfront will be important for achieving public access and activation of the public space.

The primary recommendation of this project is to encourage the City to revisit the rear yard setback and/or minimal usable open space requirements for industrially zoned to establish a public right-of-way along the river. At minimum, the existing regulation, which allows rear yard setbacks to be waived, should be repealed. Optimally, the City would increase the 10'-20' required setback for industrially zoned parcels abutting the river to 50' to 100', depending on parcel characteristics, which may be annotated on a visual diagram.

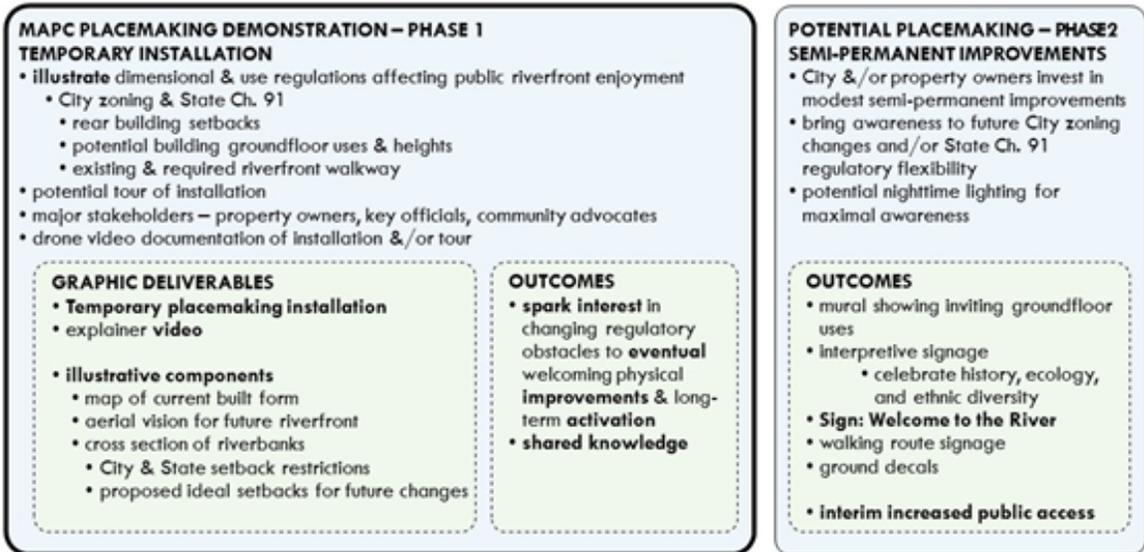
If the City decides it needs time to build capacity to address setback or minimal usable open space requirements in the short term, then it is recommended that the City adopt an Interim Planning Overlay District (IPOD) that would temporarily halt the detrimental placement of buildings adjacent to the river. To learn more about this and other alternative zoning strategies such as a municipal harbor plan, view the matrix in the Appendix titled Review of Zoning Strategies to Enhance Public Access to the Malden River and the subsequent diagrams.

If the City can update local zoning bylaws to ensure public access to the river, while taking steps to improve its health, then quality of life will improve around the Malden River for generations to come.



50
Feet

**MAPC MALDEN RIVERFRONT PLACEMAKING DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL – PHASE 1,
& Potential Subsequent Separate City Initiatives**



STRATEGIC DECISION

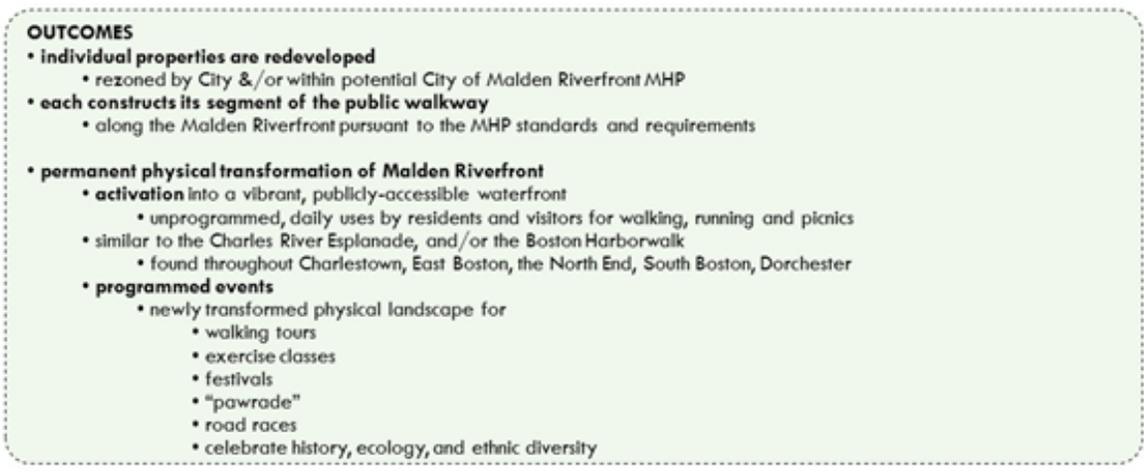
- depending on interest, support, & resources

CITY CHANGES ZONING OBSTACLES

- City rezones Riverfront zoning to
 - **incentivize redevelopment** by property owners
 - **require riverfront setbacks & riverfront walkway improvements**
- **eliminate conflicts** between building heights, minimum lot sizes prescribed by single-use buildings - allow mixed-use buildings
- **require public groundfloor uses** along Riverfront and transparent rear building facades
- reflect the intent of State Ch. 91 laws for public access to Commonwealth waterfronts to avoid privatization

CITY LEVERAGES STATE CH. 91 PUBLIC WATERFRONT LAW VIA MUNICIPAL HARBOR PLAN PROCESS

- City leverages existing State Ch. 91 public waterfront laws
- require property owners to balance their property use and development with State law protecting public access to waterfronts
- an approved MHP outlines
 - approved future building setbacks, volumes, and delineates required unobstructed public walkways along perimeter of the Malden Riverfront
- City then rezones its portion of the Malden River to reflect MHP dimensions, uses and required physical improvements



Review of Zoning Strategies to Enhance Public Access to the Malden River

The Waterfront Act, Chapter 91⁴⁰, was created to enshrine into State Law the public’s right to access historic tidal zones such as the Malden River. Yet without State enforcement and reinforcement by local regulations, that law is often insufficient in ensuring that the public can use the river. The recommendations above simplify this table based on knowledge of existing conditions in Malden. However, alternative paths may be taken to achieve similar ends, so the below table presents a range of zoning reform strategies that the city can employ to strengthen and even go beyond the requirements as established by State Law.

	Time and Cost	Pros	Cons	Recommendations
	•	•	•	
Amend Zoning Bylaws in Industrial Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Months • City staff time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land adjacent to the Malden River would be set aside from development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These requirements may not likely conform to the jurisdictional boundaries of Chapter 91, adding additional legal costs for future development. • Enhanced setback requirements alone will not incentivize private landowners to create quality open space with enhanced public benefits along the Malden River. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the zoning and wetlands management bylaws are amended to conform with the June 2019 Stormwater Management Plan. • New policies should be adopted based on the upcoming Street Design and Parking Lot Guidelines Report as well as the Green Infrastructure Report.
Create Interim Overlay Planning District (IPOD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Months • City staff time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Interim Planning Overlay District (IPOD) can be established to essentially limit the quantity and impact of development within an area of concern until a more permanent solution can be created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically has a sunset clause within an immediate planning horizon, in order to keep the City accountable to developing a permanent solution within 1 to 2 years or so 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately implement an IPOD to halt detrimental placement of building footprints within the portion of land that could become a public right of way. • Setback distances may be represented as a visual diagram annotating different setbacks to the north and south of Medford Street.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short Time Frame – months to a year or so • City staff time, or small-moderate consultant cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlying zoning would reinforce and go beyond requirements of Chapter 91 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Lack of consistency between overlay district and underlying bylaws could create confusion and increase development costs if not done carefully with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

⁴⁰ M.A. Code Ann. § 1-14-91 (1984) <https://malegislature.gov/laws/generallaws/parti/titlexiv/chapter91/section1>

			<p>full understanding of underlying zoning issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New regulations may conflict with Chapter 91; if not done carefully with full understanding of Ch. 91 • Regulations could be subject to special interests when created without a robust public process 	
<p>Create a Municipal Harbor Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 to 2 years typically • moderate-to-costly consultant cost typically well over \$100,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlying zoning would reinforce and go beyond requirements of Chapter 91 • Provides mutual certainty for the public and property owners • Creates a streamlined application process for local and state development approvals • Creates a long-term vision for the waterfront area • MHP follows a prescribed formula • Adopted regulations have the power of the State behind them • Provides uniformity and standardization of public access that accounts for unique dimensional requirements of each parcel • Reconfigure fragmented geographies of historic path of river to align with current conditions and future development potential of each parcel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MHP's can cost as much as \$200,000 • Process typically lead by a consultant • Boundaries may cross municipal lines and require coordination amongst multiple cities and towns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>Change Underlying Local Zoning Bylaws</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Months to a year or more • City staff time; or • Moderate consultant costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlying zoning would reinforce and go beyond requirements of Chapter 91 • Provides mutual certainty for the public and property owners • The rezoned area absent an MHP would 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires a supermajority of the City Council • Changing local zoning bylaws would impact the entire City and would demand a public process for which there is no specific formula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If conducting an MHP is unfeasible, changing the underlying zoning in Malden is recommended, as long as it is consistent with Chapter 91 regulations. • However, because conversations around zoning and development

		<p>have to done carefully to “mimic” MHP and Ch. 91 principles and requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rezoned area subsequent an MHP would benefit from the backing of State requirements, and would essentially be a municipal “codification” of the MHP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties that are grandfathered into older bylaws may not be impacted unless they make major modifications to their property. • Property owners may be discouraged from taking on voluntary measures to improve the health of their riverbanks if they perceive that zoning changes were forced onto them without their consent. 	<p>have become a lightning rod in Malden, it is recommend that the City undertake a consensus-building effort to work with adjacent property owners, community advocacy groups (such as FoMR and MyRWA), and City Councillors, before the rewrite is referred to City Councillors for a vote.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Malden Works project offers a fortuitous opportunity to engage the public and property owners in a larger conversation about the potential for a linear park along the Malden River that can connect a future park at the DPW site to the rest of the city. Organizing a round-table discussion with property owners as part of the process would help generate consensus for this effort.
<p>Maintain Status Quo</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing • Requires time and vigilance by City and community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no pro’s to maintaining the status quo. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relies on determination by state and site-by-site approach to enforcing minimal standards set by Chapter 91 only if the property goes through a major modification • Current ongoing enforcement of special conditions placed on properties through local regulatory processes occurs in an ad-hoc manner that relies on community members to report non-compliance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining the status quo is not recommended. Current zoning bylaws do not reinforce Chapter 91, and costly litigation with National Grid and Combined Properties has shown the invariable ability of monitoring for compliance with Chapter 91 requirements to guarantee high quality public access to the river. • The status quo will have to change by June 30, 2022 when recommendations set forth in the June 2019 Stormwater Management Plan are scheduled to be adopted which will demand an update to policies, programs, and procedures that will impact the river. •

CHAPTER 91 REFERENCES

Waterfront Regulations

What is a Municipal Harbor Plan?

A document stating the community's goals, standards, and policies to guide public and private land use along harbors. If the MHP is approved by the Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, it will help guide and coordinate, local, state and federal actions along the Chelsea Creek waterfront.

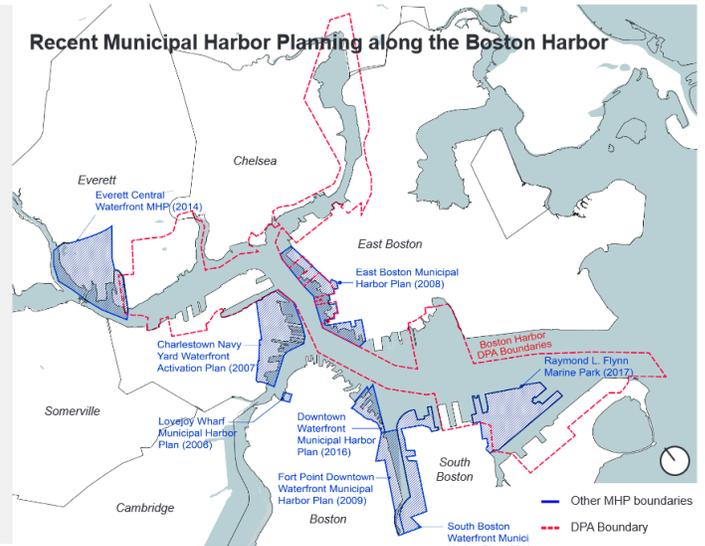
What **can** an MHP do?

- Alter dimensional standards required by state regulations
- Request a change of land use
- Suggest new water-dependent uses
- Advocate for additional waterfront access for public enjoyment

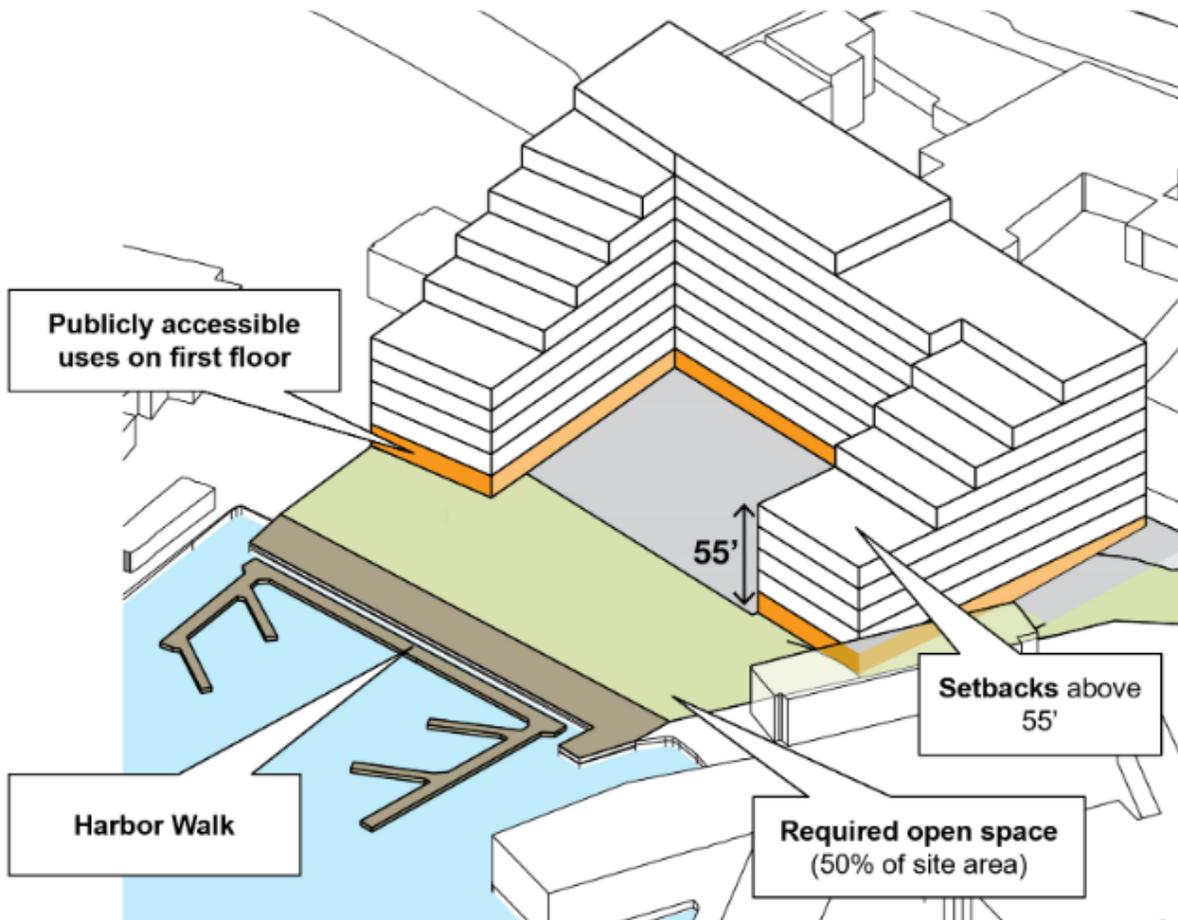
What **can't** an MHP do?

- Serve as a tool for managing flooding or other environmental threats
- Provide a traffic study for industrial areas
- Reprogram land under active water-dependent industrial uses
- Achieve all the recommendations of the visioning study

Recent Municipal Harbor Planning along the Boston Harbor



For non-water dependent uses, Chapter 91 regulates:



HYPOTHETICAL DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING DIMENSIONAL REGULATIONS AFFECTING CREATION OF STATE CH.91 REQUIRED WATERFRONT PUBLIC REALM





7. RESOURCES

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FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE RIVER:

The Commercial Street Corridor Framework Plan (2018) looked at the best uses for private development. It considered how to balance industrial uses with office, retail, and housing along the river.

https://maldenredevelopment.com/sites/default/files/commercial_corridor_framework_plan_final_1_cover_toc.pdf

The Malden River Greenways Plan (2017) explored riverfront public uses, such as paths, pocket parks, and connections to the community.

<https://mysticriver.org/maldenriver>

<https://www.utiledesign.com/work/malden-river-greenway-planning-study/#:~:text=Utile%20worked%20with%20the%20Mystic,a%20continuous%20waterfront%20path%20system.>

The Open Space and Recreation Plan (2017) identified the goal of developing the land around the Malden River into a new open space.

<https://www.cityofmalden.org/DocumentCenter/View/862/Open-Space-and-Recreation-Plan---Draft-PDF#:~:text=The%20Plan%20is%20designed%20to,address%20those%20needs%20were%20developed.>

Health Risk Assessment Study 2018

A comprehensive (and conservative) analysis by Gradient Corporation, a leading Environmental and Risk Assessment Consulting Agency, determined that the Malden River is safe for boating!

<https://mysticriver.org/news/2019/4/10/malden-river-cleared-for-public-boating>

Water Quality --- The Mystic River Watershed Association issues daily warnings about the bacteria content of the Malden River

<https://mysticriver.org/water-quality>

<https://mysticriver.org/epa-grade#:~:text=Water%20quality%20in%20the%20Mystic%20River%20Watershed%20is%20comparable%20to,than%2090%25%20of%20the%20time.>

Audio Story - We recommend you check out this audio story, produced by planning students at Tufts in collaboration with Friends of the Malden River

<https://maldenriver.wordpress.com/audio-documentary-presentation/>

Malden River Works - A new partnership between the City, Friends of the Malden River, Mystic River Watershed Association, and numerous community leaders to design a new community park on the banks of the Malden River behind the Malden DPW Yard.

<http://www.maldenriverworks.org/>

Friends of the Malden River (FoMR) - A community-based advocacy organization that meets monthly to plan initiatives to help improve conditions in and along the river.

<https://maldenriver.wordpress.com/>

Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) - A non-profit watershed organization that protects and restores the Mystic and Malden Rivers. <https://mysticriver.org/>

Chapter 91 Resources - The State of Massachusetts provides in-depth online resource that is available to the public, and the Conservation Law Foundation produced a public-facing guide to the Waterfront Act.

<https://www.mass.gov/guides/chapter-91-the-massachusetts-public-waterfront-act>

<https://www.clf.org/newsroom/conservation-law-foundation-releases-guide-to-the-massachusetts-public-waterfront-act/>