



# West River Greenway

## Overview

### Vision

The West River Greenway will connect City Point to West Rock following the course of the West River. The greenway will be an off-road paved path wherever space and existing conditions permit. Between City Point and Orange Avenue, the greenway will introduce pedestrian activities into areas of predominantly industrial uses, which are characterized by poor aesthetic and environmental quality and which hinder access to the river. The greenway will create a greater awareness of and help form a unifying identity for the West River through New Haven.

### Key Points

- **Acknowledge and enhance existing extensive trail network in City's parks along the West River.**
- **Make the West River accessible at locations where public access is difficult or impossible because of non-compatible uses.**
- **Extend regional Regicide's Trail to New Haven Harbor with connection to proposed Harborside Trail**

## Existing Conditions

### WR – 1: City Point – Metro North Railroad

The area northeast of the Kimberly Avenue Bridge over the West River is dominated by space-intensive highway ramps. Connecticut DOT project #92-522 proposes the replacement of the circular ramps with a more standard diamond interchange with the Boulevard. Between the ramps and City Point, ConnDOT has a maintenance depot. The principal streets in the area, Kimberly Avenue and Ella T. Grasso Boulevard are subject to heavy traffic and are, in general, unfriendly to pedestrians, especially near their interchange with I-95. Vehicle traffic can be both heavy and high-speed. Kimberly Field Park is located just north of I-95 between Greenwich Avenue and Ella T. Grasso Boulevard. The park contains several ball fields. Going north, between the Boulevard and the West River is the City's Fire Fighting Academy. The Boulevard crosses the Metro-North Railroad right-of-way on a wide bridge, which carries four vehicle lanes and wide sidewalks on either side.



From Ella T. Grasso Boulevard looking south towards I-95. Though not visible in this photograph, Kimberly Field is to the left.

### Land Ownership

Public

State: -Highway ramps

City: -Kimberly Field Park, Fire Fighting Academy

### Connections

-Proposed Harborside Trail. Important node in City's greenway system.

-Kimberly Field Park

## Opportunities

-ConnDOT project #92-522

-The Comprehensive Plan proposes an MDP to better organize land use in the area

### WR – 2: Metro North Railroad – Orange Avenue

Metro-North Railroad crosses the West River on a low bridge with high wires. North of the Ella T. Grasso Boulevard Bridge over Metro-North Railroad, the area between the West River and the boulevard is industrial, consisting of several recycling facilities/scrap yards. North of the scrap yards, the area west of Ella T. Grasso includes assorted small commercial and industrial uses, a flea market, and New Haven Plaza, which houses several education and social services agencies. The east side of Ella T. Grasso is predominantly composed of commercial and industrial uses as well as a City park (Ernest McClain), and near Orange Avenue, a large cemetery.



Looking southwest from Ella T. Grasso Boulevard. The West River and Metro-North Railroad are visible in the background, the Bixon scrap yard in the foreground.

## Land Ownership

### Public

City: -Retained public access along the West River through some (though not all) of the properties along the shoreline.

-City-owned property along waterfront near New Haven Plaza

State: Parcel along former railroad right-of-way between Metro-North and Washington Ave. currently operated by Bixon's scrap yard.

Private

-With the exception of two parcels of City and State owned land, the properties in the area adjacent to the shore of the West River are privately held. Several are entirely privately held (no retained public access).

**Connections**

- Ernest McClain Park.
- Riverside Education Academy – Safe routes to school.

**Opportunities**

- The Comprehensive Plan proposes an MDP to better organize land use in the area

**WR – 3: Orange Avenue – Derby Avenue**

Between Orange Avenue and Derby Avenue is the City’s large West River Memorial Park, part of which is within the boundaries of the City of West Haven. The park’s many features include athletic fields, walking trails, maintained lawns, access to the West River, and a reflecting pool with a vista of West Rock.

**Land Ownership**

Public

City

- West River Memorial Park and Marginal Drive.

**Connections**

- Connection to Barnard Environmental Studies Magnet School. Safe routes to school

**Opportunities**

- West River Memorial Park Master Plan. The plan includes development of a trail system within the park.

**WR – 4: Derby Avenue – Whalley Avenue**

Between Derby Avenue and Whalley Avenue is the City's Edgewood Park. The park's many features include athletic fields, tennis courts, a skating rink, walking trails, paved park roads for pedestrians and cyclists and access to the West River.



(left) Looking south on Yale Avenue towards Derby Avenue. Ample sidewalks and a wide roadway can easily accommodate a shared on-road trail section.

(right) Beneath the Edgewood Avenue Bridge over the West River looking north.

**Land Ownership**

Public

City: -Edgewood Park

**Connections**

-Edgewood Magnet School – Safe routes to school

**WR – 5: Whalley Avenue – West Rock Park**

North of Edgewood Park is Westville, a well-formed neighborhood business district consisting of storefront retail in historic one to three story buildings. North of Whalley Avenue, the West River's course is channelized by retaining walls. There are various older industrial facilities along the river, which probably grew up around the waterpower the West provided.

Between Whalley Avenue and Blake Street, public access to the river is provided along a narrow sidewalk atop a retaining wall. North and east of Blake Street is the City's West Rock Park, which connects to the State's West Rock Ridge Park.



(left) Existing trail section atop a retaining wall along the West River just north of Whalley Avenue.  
(right) Gustave X. Amrhyn Field, with the mass of West Rock in the background.

**Land Ownership**

Public

- City: -Public access/right-of-way along West River between Whalley Avenue and Blake Street
- West Rock Park including Gustave X. Amrhyn Field
- State: - West Rock Ridge Park

**Connections**

- West Rock Park and its trails which lead north to Sleeping Giant State Park in Hamden.
- Early Learning Center (Head Start), Common Ground (Charter) High School – Safe routes to school

**WR – 6: Blake Street – SCSU – Farmington Canal Greenway**

Along Blake Street between Stone Street and Farnham Avenue is a residential area composed of detached houses. Going north on Blake, atop the hill is the campus of Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU). The campus includes many walking paths, dormitories (mostly east of Farnham) and academic buildings between Farnham and Fitch Street and especially east of Fitch. A pedestrian bridge connects the portions of the campus on either side of Fitch and separates pedestrian movements from the busy vehicle intersection beneath. Going east, SCSU’s campus abuts the City’s Beaver Pond Park. The park contains walking trails and several ponds that suffer from deferred maintenance. A pedestrian path generally parallels Crescent Street to Fournier Street. North along Fournier is the City’s animal shelter and Veitch Field. South on Sherman, on the west side of the street is the City’s Police Academy and on the east side the Martin Luther King Jr. School. One block east of the school, Hazel Street crosses the Farmington Canal right-of-way



(left) Looking west across the pedestrian bridge over Fitch Street on SCSU's Campus. West Rock is visible in the background.

(right) Existing trail section paralleling Crescent Street in Beaver Pond Park

**Land Ownership**

Public

State: -Southern Connecticut State University

City: -Beaver Pond Park

-Martin Luther King Jr. School

## **Connections**

- Beaver Pond Park
- Martin Luther King Jr. School, Jackie Robinson School – Safe routes to school.
- Farmington Canal Greenway. Important node in City's greenway system.

## **Opportunities**

- Proposed Beaver Park improvements.

## **Alignment & Major Issues**

### **WR 1: City Point – Metro North Railroad**

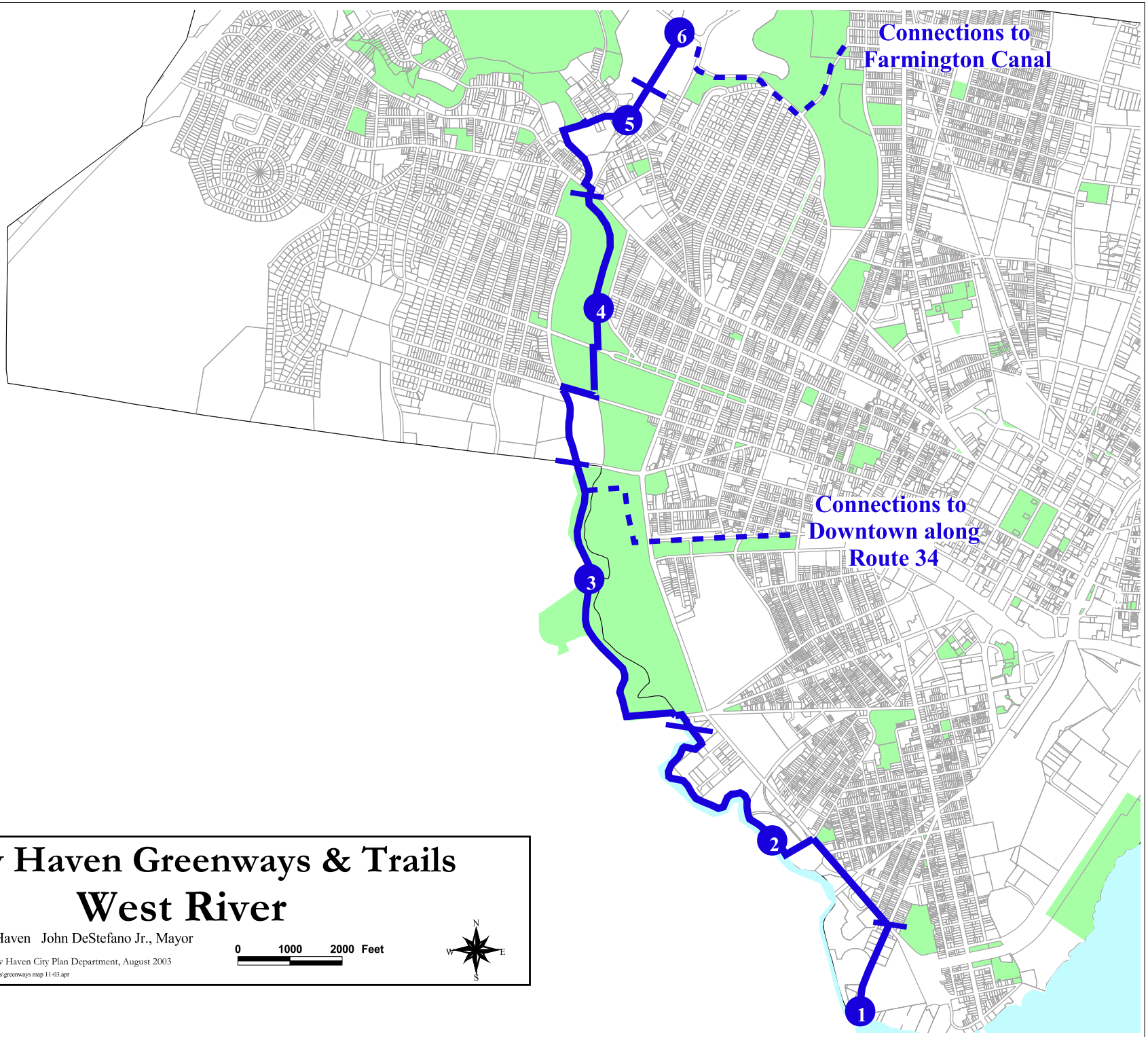
#### Alignment

From the Harborside Trail at Sea Street and Harbour Close, there are two options. One option would be for an on-road signed shared route to proceed north along on Sea Street and then Ella T. Grasso Boulevard through the revamped interchange with I-95 towards Kimberly Field Park. Another option would be to begin near the approach to the Kimberly Avenue Bridge over the West River and proceed north as an on-road shared route to Ella T. Grasso Boulevard. A share-the-streets solution will be necessary along the Boulevard (and potentially Kimberly Avenue) for lack of a viable off-road route. An off-road route is not viable because the Metro-North Railroad tracks and the fire fighters academy make accommodating the trail near the river difficult. Although there is high-speed traffic on Ella T. Grasso Boulevard, the bridge over the Metro-North Railroad features wide sidewalks.

#### Major Issues

**-Kimberly Avenue/Ella T. Grasso Boulevard Interchange with I-95.** Provision must be made to safely accommodate the West River Greenway from its connection with the Harborside Greenway to Kimberly Field. Because of the high-speed traffic, limited visibility, and complex nature of the traffic pattern in the vicinity of the ramps, special care must be paid to the precise alignment in order to maximize safety. The best opportunity to implement this section of the trail is as part of ConnDOT project #92-522 for the reconstruction of the I-95 bridge over the West River and interchange with Ella T. Grasso Boulevard. While a dedicated right-of-way making use of surplus land would be optimal, well-designed pedestrian amenities (quality sidewalks,





Connections to Farmington Canal

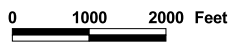
Connections to Downtown along Route 34

# New Haven Greenways & Trails West River



City of New Haven John DeStefano Jr., Mayor

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appropriate intersection treatments) would go a long way toward making this area pedestrian-friendly. Adequate space to accommodate a wide (10' – 14') trail beneath the I-95 bridge over Kimberly Avenue on the east side of Kimberly Avenue is desirable.



From Ella T. Grasso Boulevard looking north. Kimberly Field is visible to the right. Though the sign may welcome travelers to New Haven, pedestrian facilities along the Boulevard are un-welcoming.

**-Accommodating Bicyclists and Pedestrians on Ella T. Grasso Boulevard.** The Boulevard has some of the heaviest traffic volume for surface streets in the City. In addition, traffic can speed along the Boulevard at high velocities and most of the businesses in the area are oriented towards the automobile. Safe accommodations for both modes will be key to the trail's overall success.



(left) Looking north across the Boulevard bridge over Metro-North. This segment is the most un-green portion of the greenway



(right) As seen from the Kimberly Avenue Bridge over Metro-North Railroad, scrap metal recycling facilities make inserting a trail near the West River difficult, at best.

## **WR 2: Metro North Railroad – Orange Avenue**

### Alignment

Once across the bridge at the intersection of Ella T. Grasso Boulevard and Washington Avenue, the trail will proceed west along Washington Avenue and then north through public easements. Careful attention must be paid to enforcing the separation of non-compatible industrial and pedestrian/bicycle activities in the vicinity of the recycling facilities/scrap yards. This section of the greenway is also dependent on the City obtaining the remaining necessary easements along the West River to make public access continuous along the waterfront.

### Major Issues

**-Recycling/Scrap Facilities.** Because of the nature of the commercial activities that take place at these facilities, safety concerns, and poor aesthetic qualities, inserting the trail along the West River in the vicinity of these facilities may be impossible in the near term. Extension of the West River Trail between West River Memorial Park and the harbor could either be a long-term goal of the City or a regional opportunity with the City of West Haven (joint MDP?) to find a better route on the opposite shore of the West River.

## **WR 3: Orange Avenue – Derby Avenue**

### Alignment

Going north, the trail will meet Orange Avenue just east of the bridge over the West River and use the bridge for a short on-road segment. Once across the bridge from the northern side of Orange Avenue, two routes are possible to reach Derby Avenue:

(1) Marginal Drive. On the west side of the West River Memorial Park in the City of West Haven would utilize Marginal Drive, a wide paved way that is closed to vehicular traffic. Marginal Drive meets Derby Avenue and Yale Avenue at a signalized four-way intersection in the vicinity of Yale University's athletic facilities and the Connecticut Tennis Center.

(2) East Side. The other route would proceed north along the eastern portion of the park generally paralleling Ella T. Grasso Boulevard and giving access to the playing fields and maintained lawns of the park. At Derby Avenue, the trail would proceed west through the park, crossing the West River on the south sidewalk of the Derby Avenue Bridge and meeting the Marginal Drive routing at the above mentioned four-way intersection.

## Major Issues

**-Crossing Orange Avenue.** A signalized crossing with an appropriate bike/ped treatment will be needed to safely accommodate potential greenway users across this busy thoroughfare.

**-Marginal Drive.** Regular maintenance of Marginal Drive will be necessary to safely accommodate bicycles and wheelchairs.

### **WR 4: Derby Avenue – Whalley Avenue**



From Yale Avenue, looking south across Derby Avenue towards the northern terminus of Marginal Drive.

After proceeding through the signalized crossing at the Derby Avenue-Yale Avenue-Marginal Drive intersection, the trail will proceed north as dedicated bike lane route along Yale Avenue. The width of Yale Avenue is such that providing a lane of ample width for bikes in each direction should be simple. Provision must also be made to permit through passage for pedestrians and bicycle along Yale Avenue when the street is closed to vehicular access during major sporting events such as the annual tennis tournament. At the intersection of Yale Avenue and Chapel Street, the trail will proceed east along Chapel Street as an on-road shared path towards the Chapel Street bridge over the West River. Just before this bridge on the north side of Chapel Street exists a set of stairs leading into Edgewood Park.

Once down the stairs, the trail would proceed north on a new paved trail section towards the Edgewood Avenue Bridge over the West River. Just north of the bridge, a new lightweight pedestrian/bicycle span will carry the trail to the opposite bank. From there, the trail will proceed north along the wide, existing pedestrian path to Whalley Avenue.

## Major Issues

**-Crossing Derby Avenue.** An improved crossing with a better bike/ped treatment will be needed to safely accommodate potential greenway users across this busy thoroughfare.

**-Yale Avenue into Edgewood Park.** Potential greenway users will have to navigate an acute angle at this broad four-way intersection. An improved bike/ped treatment will be needed to safely accommodate potential greenway users through this intersection. Redesign of the intersection with the incorporation of a share-the-streets standards would be optimal.

**-Entering Edgewood Park.** Existing access to Edgewood Park from the eastern portion of Chapel Street uses a set of stairs to make an elevation change. A new entrance point, potentially from the intersection of Chapel Street and Yale Avenue would improve ADA and bicycle access.

**-New West River crossing north of Edgewood Avenue.** A new West River crossing north of Edgewood Avenue will help to connecting the eastern and western portions of the park and facilitate a more direct and logical routing for the greenway. Look to the existing pedestrian bridge over the West River south of Whalley as an example.



Public access along the West River between Whalley Avenue and Blake Street. West Rock is visible at right. A privately owned chain link fence (left side of photo) impairs enjoyment here and must be replaced with a more appropriate treatment.



Looking northwest at the Yale Avenue – Chapel Street intersection.

### **WR 5: Whalley Avenue – West Rock Park**

#### Alignment

North of Edgewood Park, the trail will cross Whalley Avenue at its intersection with Fitch Street and will proceed west as an on-route shared path for approximately 160'. Just before the Citgo gas station, the trail will turn north off Whalley onto a narrow public access that follows the bank of the West River atop a retaining wall. The narrow public access, probably too narrow for bicycles, leads to the Blake Street Bridge over the West River. At Blake Street, the trail will proceed northeast across the bridge and then to the other side of Blake into the City owned portion of West Rock Park. From here, connections are possible to West Rock Park's existing extensive trail system and longer regional trails which lead to Sleeping Giant State Park in Hamden (Regicide's Trail).

#### Major Issues

**-Crossing Whalley Avenue.** An improved crossing with an appropriate bike/ped treatment will be needed to safely accommodate potential greenway users across this busy thoroughfare.

**-Narrow right-of-way for bicyclists.** Going north from Whalley Avenue, the public access to the West River is narrow and constrained. Bicyclists who wish to use the greenway will have to find an alternative route along City streets or else dismount and walk their bicycles. Possible alternatives for bicyclists would be along Whalley Avenue to Blake Street or along Fitch Street to Blake Street.

**-Crossing Blake St.** A signalized crossing with an appropriate bike/ped treatment will be needed to safely accommodate potential greenway users across this thoroughfare.

### **WR 6: Blake Street – SCSU – Farmington Canal Greenway**

#### Alignment

From the main section of the greenway, a spur greenway will follow Blake Street north to Farnham Avenue as an on-road shared route. The greenway will continue as an on-road shared route north on Farnham towards SCSU's campus. A share-the-streets solution is applicable to this section of the greenway and consistent with the City's efforts to improve its streets. (Alternatively, the City could partner with SCSU to find an off-road solution from the Bowling Green of West Rock Park across Wintergreen Brook to SCSU's campus and its existing path network). In the vicinity of Connecticut Hall, the greenway will migrate onto SCSU's path network, across the pedestrian bridge over Fitch Street, and into the central portion of campus. The greenway will continue east along pedestrian paths and through parking lots north of Crescent Street. From there, an existing trail through Beaver Pond Park takes the greenway to Fournier Street. The greenway will turn towards the north and follow Fournier as an on-road shared trail, reentering the park just south of Veitch Field. Past Veitch Field, the greenway will turn south onto Sherman Avenue as an on-road shared route. A share-the-streets solution is applicable to this section of the greenway and consistent with the City's efforts to improve its streets. South of Sherman's intersection with Hazel Street, the greenway will turn east, passing through the northern side of the Martin Luther King Jr. School site, then across Dixwell, and east along Hazel Street as an on-road shared path. Hazel Street intersects with the Farmington Canal Greenway less than a block east of Dixwell.

#### Major Issues

**-Work with SCSU.** Although an on-street solution for the greenway between Blake Street and SCSU's campus is proposed, there exists the potential to link West Rock Park with SCSU's campus via an off-road route. In any case, the City and SCSU should work together to accommodate the greenway through campus along its walking paths and through its parking lots.

**-Trail section through Martin Luther King Jr. School Site.** A portion of the greenway is proposed to pass through the extreme northern portion of Martin Luther King Jr. School's grounds near the fence. Working with the school's administration and the Board of Education presents the best opportunity to find an appropriate design treatment for the greenway through the school grounds.

## Directions and Priorities

- **Create a unifying identity for the Greenway for portions north of Orange Avenue.**  
Because most of the trails already exist north of Orange Avenue, organizing and presenting them as a West River Greenway would be relatively easy. Further, having a trail with an identity to build upon might further efforts towards finding a viable route for the Greenway south of Orange Avenue.
- **Accommodate the West River Greenway through the highway ramps.** Provision must be made to safely accommodate the West River Greenway from its connection with the Harborside Trail to Kimberly Field and Ella T. Grasso Boulevard. Incorporating this trail segment into ConnDOT project #92-522 represents the best opportunity to make provision for and implement this portion of the trail with the safety of potential greenway users in mind.
- **Accommodate the West River Greenway through the recycling facilities/scrap yards.**  
Because of the nature of the commercial activities that take place at these facilities, safety concerns, and poor aesthetic qualities, inserting the trail along the West River in the vicinity of these facilities may be impossible in the near term. Connecting the West River Memorial Park and the Harborside Trail should either be a long-term goal or a regional opportunity with the City of West Haven to find a better route on the opposite shore of the West River. The City Plan Commission should continue to seek easements along the West River in this area as opportunities arise. The City's Comprehensive Plan proposes a Municipal Development Plan for the Boulevard between City Point and Orange Avenue to better plan land uses.