

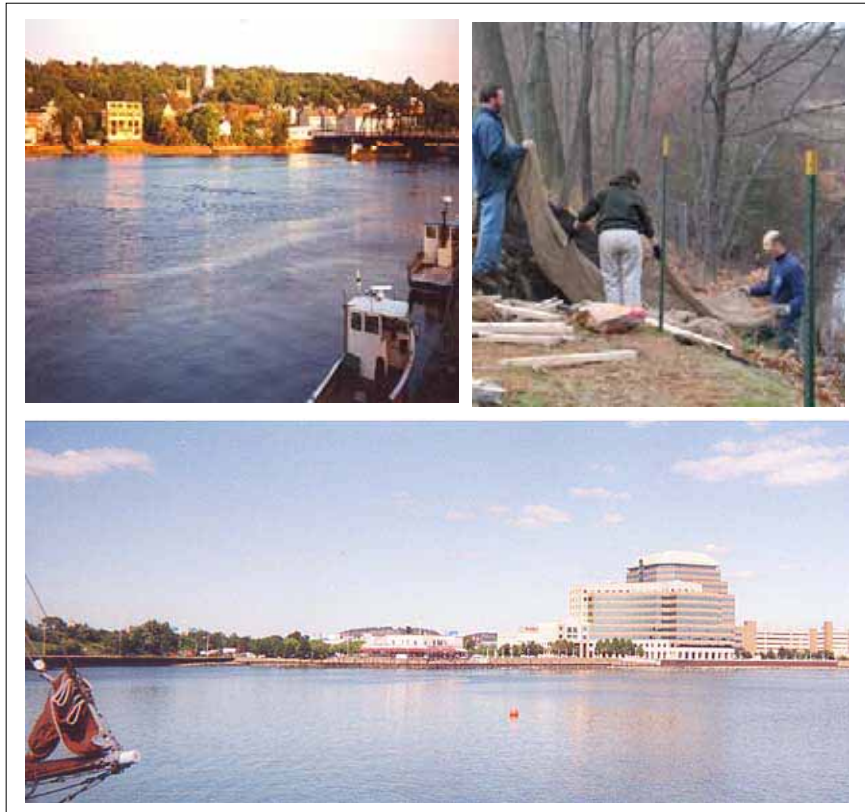
# City Plan Commission

June, 2006

## New Haven Coastal Program Project Summary



John DeStefano, Jr.  
Mayor



This document was financed in part by a grant through the Office of Long Island Sound Programs and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States Department of Commerce under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 and was prepared in cooperation with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Coastal Area Management Program and the US Environmental Protection Agency's CARE program.

**NEW HAVEN**  
IT ALL HAPPENS HERE



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# New Haven Coastal Program Project Summary



John DeStefano, Jr.  
Mayor

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The adopted Coastal Program, maps and relevant project reports are available online at [www.cityofnewhaven.com](http://www.cityofnewhaven.com) and at the offices of the City Plan Department, 165 Church Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, New Haven, CT 06510.

For more information on this project, kindly contact the City Plan Department at (203) 946-7814 or [mpiscite@newhavenct.net](mailto:mpiscite@newhavenct.net).



## New Haven Coastal Program New Haven, Connecticut



John DeStefano, Jr.  
Mayor

### Project Summary

The City Plan Commission recently adopted a new Coastal Program. The new Coastal Program provides a foundation for the Commission's coastal district zoning responsibilities and administration of the Connecticut Coastal Area Management Act (CCMA). The Commission traditionally has committed itself to CCMA objectives and has advocated for water-dependent uses, environmental stewardship and public access.

This document in part reconciles many of the inconsistencies between the 1983 Coastal Program, the Comprehensive Plan of Development and the Zoning Ordinance and provides a clear set of policies and objectives for coastal area management. The City's 3,700-acre coastal management district is an overlay zoning district which regulates most development activity within 1,000 feet of the mean high water mark. Within this district, the Commission administers coastal site plan review and determines the "coastal consistency" of a proposed project or activity.

The Coastal Program includes a review of relevant federal, state, and local regulations; a review of related state and municipal planning studies and documents; an overview of coastal management issues; discussions of existing land use, coastal program successes, and specific coastal issues in each of the eight coastal areas; and a presentation of recommendations. As such, the Coastal Program is meant to be used as a planning tool and as a guidance document for development applications within the coastal management district. With the Coastal Program in hand, the City anticipates that applicants will be better equipped to propose projects that are compatible with existing neighborhoods, improve environmental conditions, and provide access to the waterfront.

Throughout the full document, coastal areas are discussed in the context of eight coastal settings or "neighborhoods" that are recognized in the Comprehensive Plan of Development: West River, City Point, Long Wharf, Canal/Belle Dock, Fair Haven, Quinnipiac Meadows, Port District, and East Shore. The document – and this summary – also include maps illustrating proposed land use and proposed projects across the city.



## **Planning Process**

This project was made possible in part by a grant through the Office of Long Island Sound Programs and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States Department of Commerce under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 and was prepared in cooperation with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Coastal Area Management Program and the US Environmental Protection Agency's CARE program. The City Plan Department managed the project with assistance from Milone & MacBroom, project consultants.

The project team interviewed numerous officials and held two community meetings in the fall of 2005. Consistent with recent experience, the department was pleased to host citywide discussions that promote an exchange of ideas from different neighborhoods. Likewise, City Plan reached out to the community groups and presented to Hill North, Hill South, East Shore and Fair Haven. In addition, City Plan met with the New Haven Port Authority. In total, approximately 100 people contributed to this program and provided many valuable contributions.

## **Prevailing Considerations**

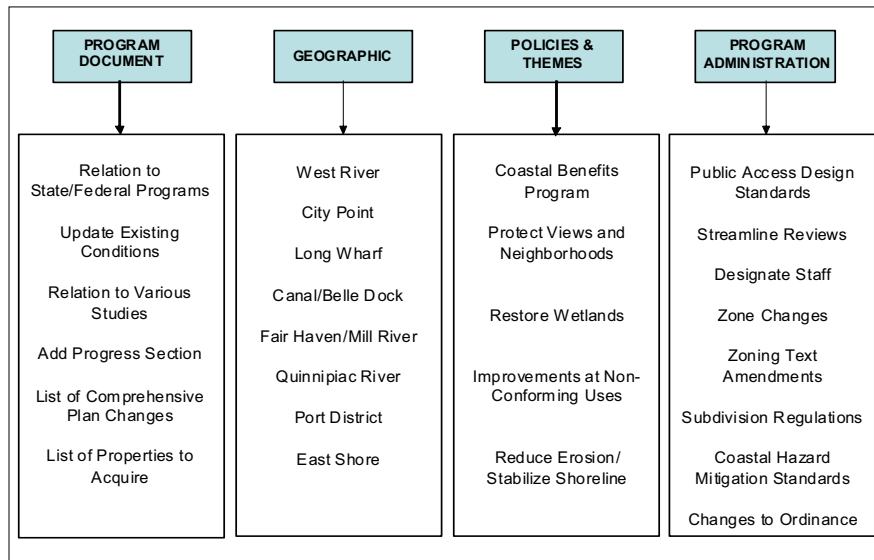
The planning process revealed a number of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for coastal zone management. Notably, New Haven is among the state's most active communities for coastal planning. The City has an active program and looks closely at coastal site plans for consistency with the program, state and federal law. Public access is available not only in public parks, but also at the terminus of some streets and on private property. Agreements for future coastal access on private property have been secured from property owners / developers throughout the city. The City has integrated coastal management into the economic development programs at Long Wharf, Belle Dock and River Street. The new port district establishes one of the state's largest water-dependent deepwater shipping zones in the state and region.

At the same time, there is a prevailing concern among city officials and the general public about the future of coastal zone management. While many easements have been secured, few have resulted in functional public access. Moreover, the overall condition of the shoreline is deteriorating in many locations. Along the Mill River, in particular, vacant buildings and blighting riparian and tidal zones are commonplace. At one community meeting, a resident noted that the required coastal improvements are often the



last to be built (if at all). This is the case with some of the residential developments along the Quinnipiac River and even at the Maritime Center, where a new marina and renovation of the Long Wharf pier were part of the original plan.

To improve the program’s effectiveness, the Commission has made distinct program changes (see table below). First, the new Coastal Program provides basic updates to the document (generally to align the plan with other planning documents pursuant to statute). Second, there are recommendations which pertain to specific parcels or geographic areas (generally consistent with the comprehensive plan of development). Third, policies and themes are established. Last, the program outlines a new approach to program administration (eg. implementation steps).



### Highlights

There are five cross-cutting highlights the new Coastal Program, reflecting both major policy shifts and the initial implementation steps under the new program.

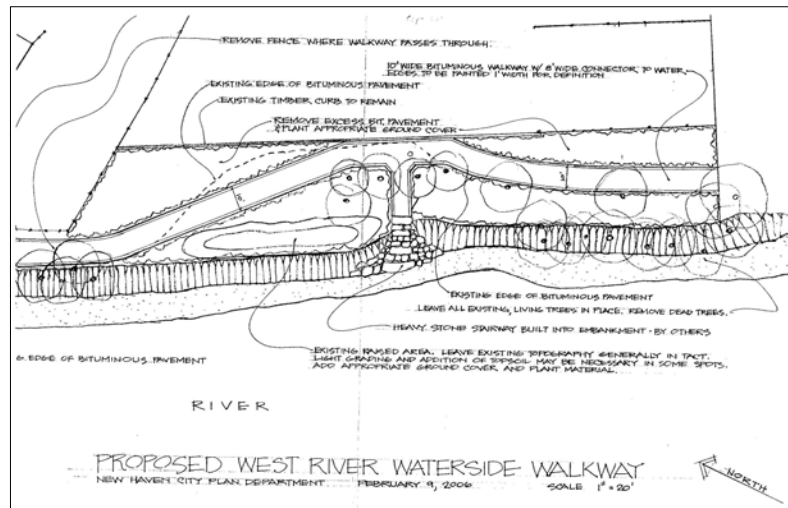
1. **Zoning Amendments.** Coastal area management is deeply affected by the underlying zoning. Specific map and text changes are proposed for the IH zone in particular. New PORT and OPEN SPACE zones are proposed as well.
2. **Administration.** The existing administrative process fails to differentiate small from large projects. City Plan proposes amendments to the review process, placing more



emphasis (and more performance requirements) on larger developments. Likewise, City Plan proposes to improve the application form and clarify submission requirements.

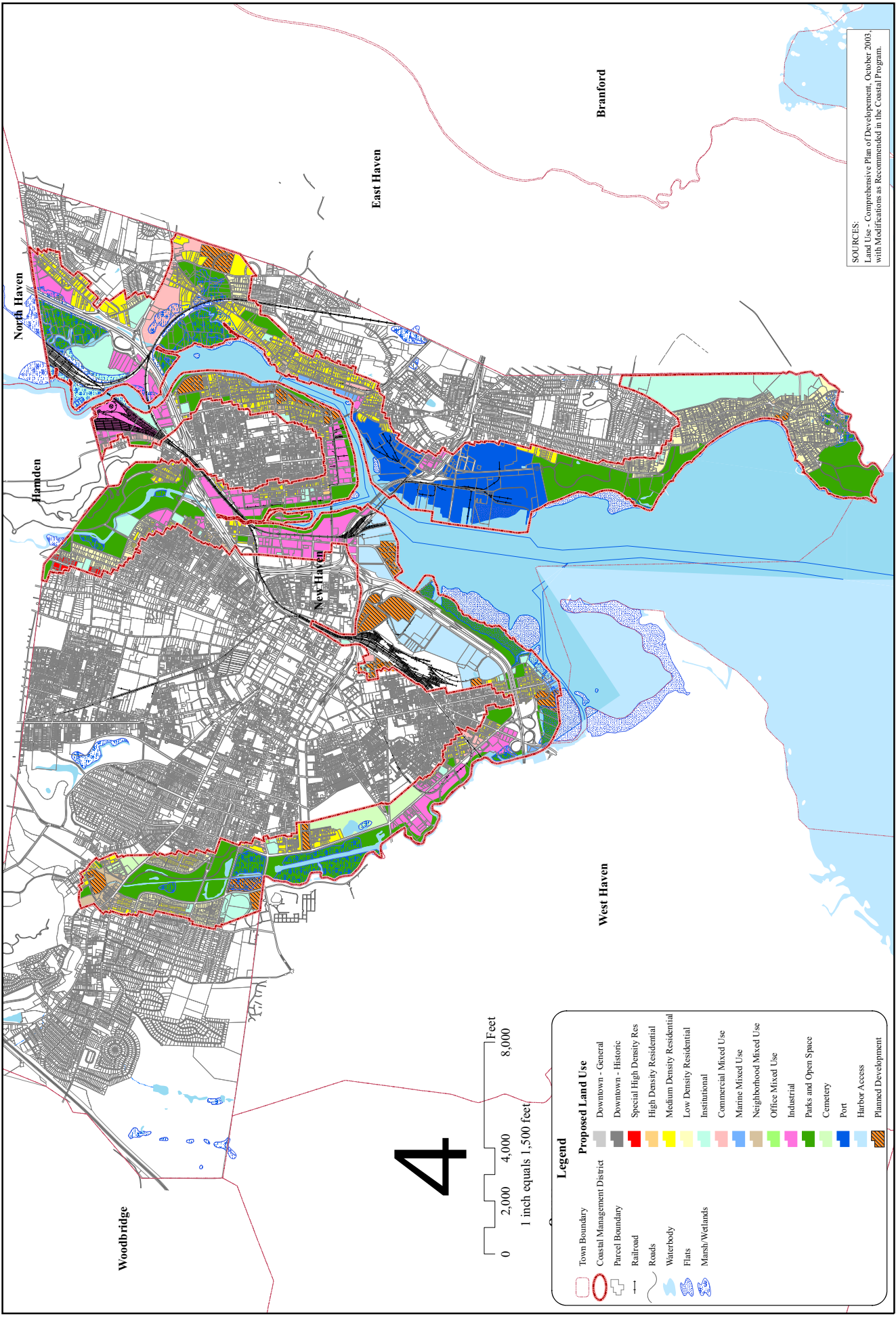
3. **Development Standards.** There are few coastal-specific development standards in Section 55 of the Zoning Ordinance. Rather, the Commission often reviews the impacts without clear direction for expectations. To clarify this, the Commission proposes to develop a series of standards related to coastal buffers, public access, etc.

4. **Coastal Benefits.** The Commission proposes a “coastal benefits” initiative which seeks to improve the existing condition through extraordinary pollution prevention efforts, functional public access and high quality design. The Commission’s aspirational thinking is shown in a recent plan review for a building at 30 Orange Avenue. Rather than accepting a coastal easement, City Plan staff prepared a design to create a buffer between a sheet flow parking lot and the bank of the river. The plan – shown below - re-introduces native plantings and provides dedicated public access to the river in a cost-effective manner.



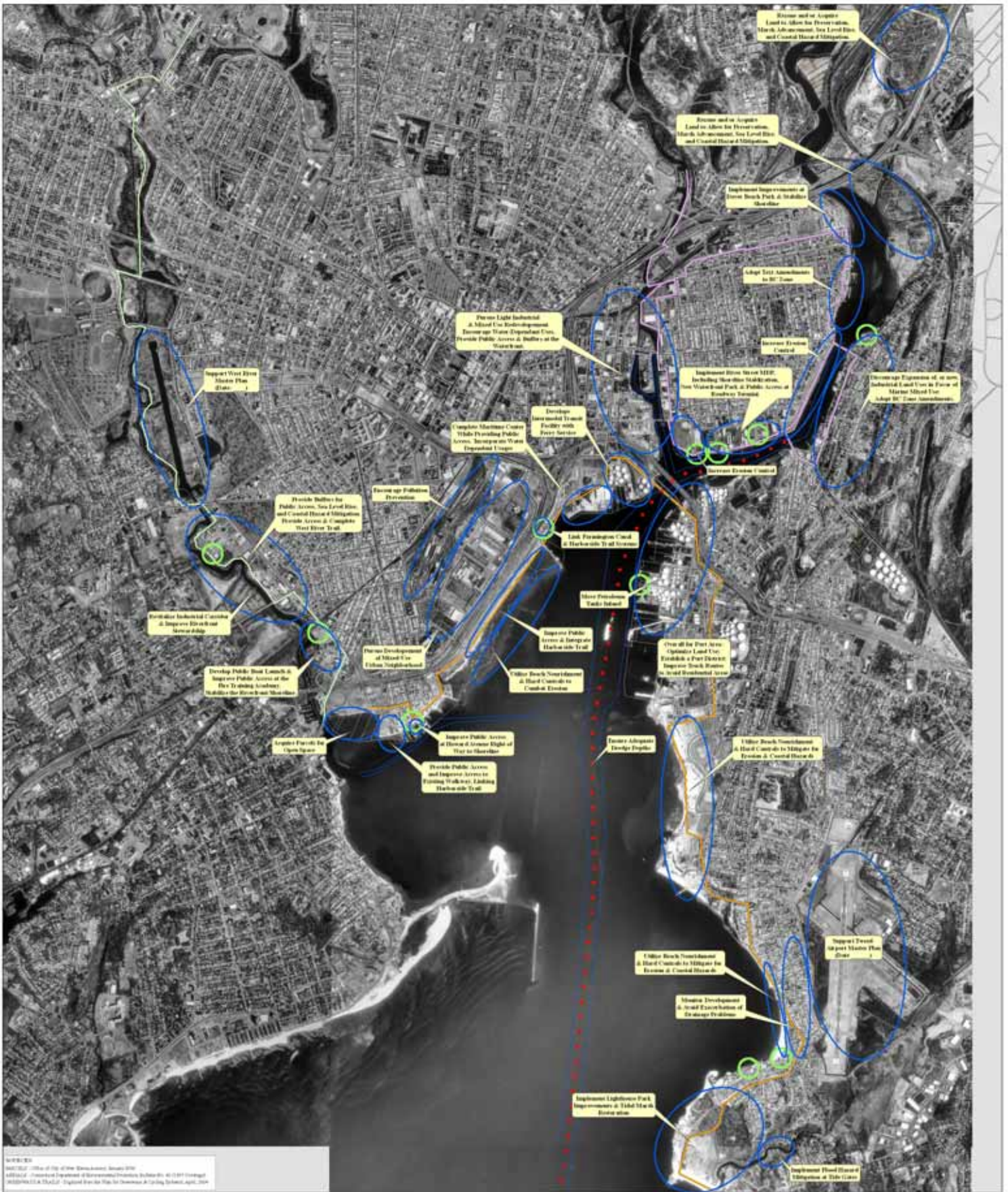
5. **Shoreline Stabilization / Sea Level Rise.** The deteriorating quality of our shoreline was noted in the recent *Hazard Mitigation Plan* and is restated herein. Coastal erosion threatens our park land (East Shore, Dover Beach) and our commercial areas (River Street, Mill River). Sea level rise is among the first manifestations of climate change and is noted not only in low lying areas, but also in areas protected by rip rap and bulkhead. To that end, we are proposing new development standards and unique concepts (eg. “freeboarding”) which will better prepare the coastal zone for continuing sea level rise.





SOURCES:  
 Land Use - Comprehensive Plan of Development, October 2003,  
 with Modifications as Recommended in the Coastal Program.





WFR-01  
 06/15/02 - Office of the City Engineer, New Haven  
 08/15/02 - Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Submittal #01001 (00000)  
 04/20/06, 05/18/06, 07/20/06 - Drafted for the City of New Haven, 41 Spring Street, April, 2006

**Project Legend**

- Coastal Management District
- Proposed Projects
- Avoid Closure of Roadway Termini and Maintain Public Access

**Support the Following Trail Systems:**

- Fair Haven
- Harborside
- West River



**FIGURE 2  
PROPOSED PROJECTS  
Draft for Public Comment - January 30, 2006  
CITY OF NEW HAVEN  
COASTAL PROGRAM**

0 800 1,600 3,200 Feet  
 1 inch equals 800 feet

Engineering,  
 Landscape Architectural  
 and Environmental Science  
**MILONE & MACBROOM**



**CITY PLAN COMMISSION  
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT**

**RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, the City Plan Commission is established under the Charter of the City of New Haven, Section 179 (c) and Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.), Section 295-302, An Act Creating a City Plan Commission in the City of New Haven; and

WHEREAS, the City of New Haven adopted a Municipal Coastal Program in 1983 in a manner consistent with the Connecticut Coastal Area Management Act; and

WHEREAS, the Coastal Program addresses the area within the coastal boundary and landward of the mean high water mark as delineated on the official zoning maps of the City of New Haven; and

WHEREAS, the properties in this area are subject to Section 55 of the New Haven Zoning Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection provided a coastal planning grant to the City of New Haven for the purposes of updating the New Haven Coastal Program; and

WHEREAS, the City Plan Department prepared the new Coastal Program in a manner consistent with C.G.S. Section 22a-101; and

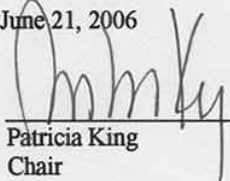
WHEREAS, the City Plan Commission held a public meeting on January 11, 2006 and a public hearing on this matter on June 21, 2006; and

WHEREAS, the new Coastal Program strives not only to achieve consistency with the municipal plan of conservation and development (the comprehensive plan), but also to establish the City's policy objectives for coastal zone management, and articulate the City policies relative to the Connecticut Coastal Management Act; and

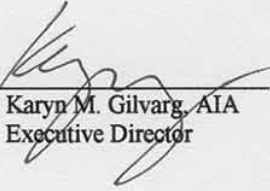
WHEREAS, the Coastal Program provides a basis for the City Plan Commission's future Coastal Site Plan Review (CSPR) findings, and will become an essential part of the review of zoning applications, coastal land use decisions, and public investment priorities;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Plan Commission of the City of New Haven, that the City Plan Commission does hereby adopt the New Haven Coastal Program.

**ADOPTED:** June 21, 2006

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Patricia King  
Chair

**ATTEST:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Karyn M. Gilvarg, AIA  
Executive Director