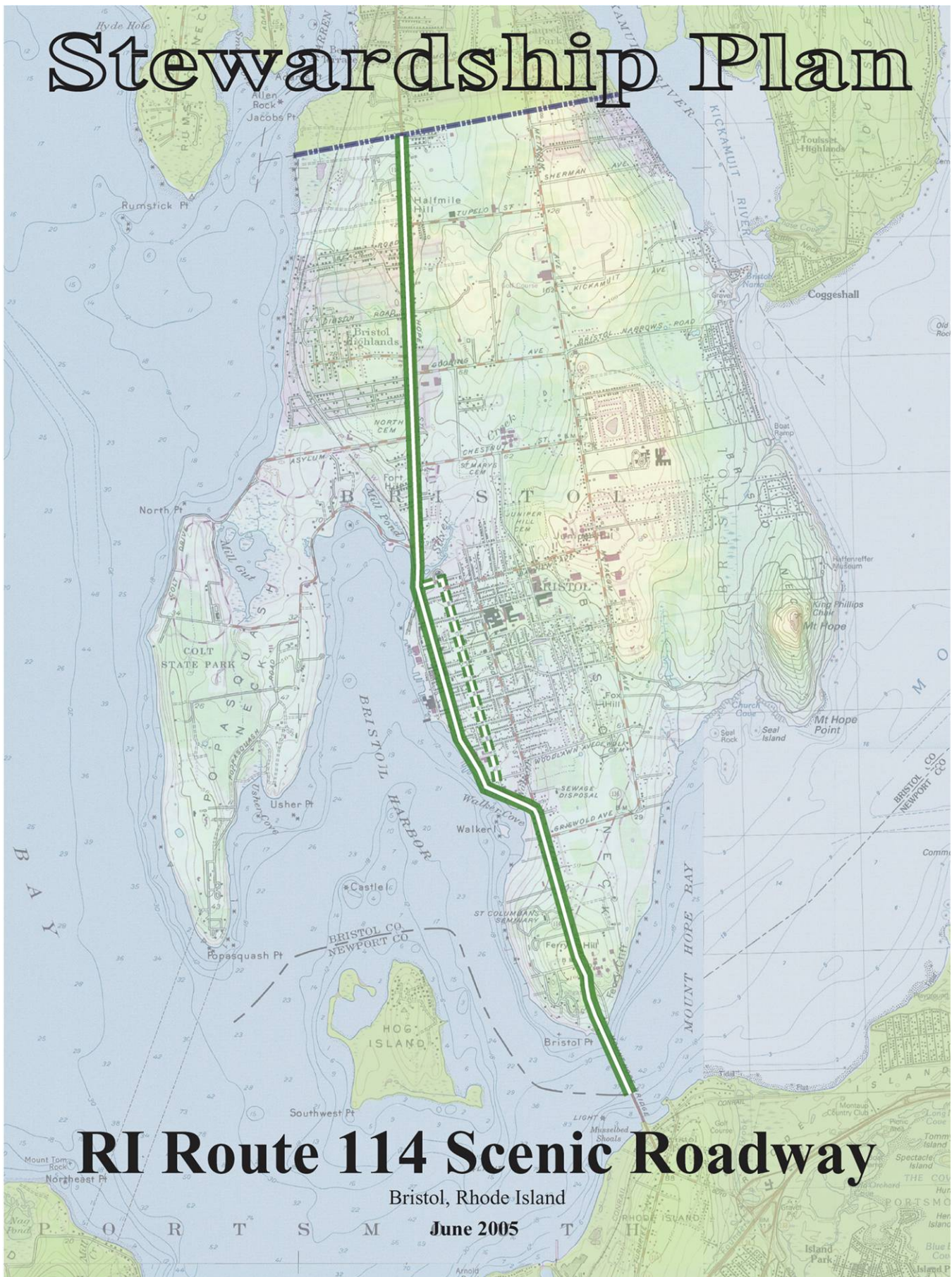


# Stewardship Plan



## RI Route 114 Scenic Roadway

Bristol, Rhode Island

June 2005



This Report was prepared for the Rhode Island Scenic Roadways Board and the Town of Bristol by:

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# SCENIC ROADWAYS

## Roadways - a neglected asset

Highways and secondary roads are among Rhode Island's great scenic and historical treasures. They are also largely unrecognized, under-appreciated, unprotected, and therefore, fragile. Their natural beauty is easily destroyed or degraded by construction modifications, lighting, wrong guard-rails, careless trimming or removal of trees and plant materials, and sometimes, paving. Their history and historical importance is often unknown and unsung.

Our roads are everyday connections to the natural world. The appearance of each sets the tone for the areas through which they pass. The visual experience while travelling them is what becomes the remembered experience. Therefore, protecting all or parts of roads with special historical or scenic qualities is very important. Fortunately, public awareness and official activity on behalf of roadways is growing, and scenic roadways are gaining recognition among historic preservationists.

## The Rhode Island Scenic Roadways Program

The RI Scenic Roadways Program was established by the Rhode Island State Legislature in 1985

*“ . . . to create and preserve rustic and scenic highways for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian travel in unhurried, quiet, and leisurely enjoyment; to protect and preserve recreational driving, culture, beauty, trees, vegetation, shoreline, and wildlife by establishing protective standards of scenic highway design, speed, maintenance, and identification, which will promote a continuous system of scenic highways and scenic easements . . . ”*  
(*Scenic Highways, Section 24-15-1, Purpose*)

Nominations are voluntarily submitted by municipalities to the eleven-member Scenic Roadways Board for review and approval.

Designation as a Scenic Roadway gives local officials, in partnership with the Scenic Roadways Board, increased authority to create and/or impose performance standards for recurring activities such as tree trimming by RIDOT, municipalities or public utilities, or roadway and bridge modifications or construction; and enhances eligibility for certain federal and state grants.

## The Route 114 Scenic Roadway

In January 2000, the Bristol Town Council with the Bristol Tree Society submitted its nomination to the Scenic Roadways Board for Scenic Roadway designation of Route 114 from the Warren / Bristol Town Line to the Bristol / Portsmouth Town Line on the Mount Hope Bridge. High Street via Washington Street was included in the nomination. The designation was approved in August 2000.

## The Stewardship Plan

The Route 114 Scenic Roadway Stewardship Plan is intended to help the Town of Bristol protect and manage the designated Scenic Roadway Corridor in order to maintain those qualities that inspired its nomination.

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# The STEWARDSHIP PLAN

## Introduction

The Town of Bristol and the Bristol Tree Society submitted a first rate nomination document for the Route 114 Scenic Roadway. It clearly demonstrates - from the level of detail, meticulous documentation of assets, captioned photographs, and affectionate narrative - that Bristol knows and appreciates what it has, and has done much solid work to ensure its protection and preservation.

The Stewardship Plan for the Route 114 Scenic Roadway proposes the further protection, management, and enhancement of the roadway corridor so that future travelers will experience the historic and scenic qualities of Bristol that are evident today. It should be considered as a template with which to build on existing Town resources and regulatory mechanisms.

This Stewardship Plan recommends the establishment of a Scenic Roadway Corridor, proposes an Action Plan outlining tasks and roles for all involved (citizens, the Town and State Agencies), and presents suggestions for site specific landscape enhancements. The Town should tailor implementation of the Stewardship Plan to serve its needs through a public process involving all frontage property owners, the Tree Society, and all other interested citizens.

## RI DOT Role

The entire length of Hope Street and Ferry Road is a state roadway; as such, the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) has responsibility for review, permitting, and design/construction activities within the road's right-of-way.

As a Rhode Island Scenic Roadway, those responsibilities also require an additional layer of internal review by the Scenic Roadways Board (staffed by RIDOT's Supervising Landscape Architect) of all DOT work proposals to insure conformance with Scenic Roadway standards, including road maintenance, tree-trimming work, and curb-cut applications. Scenic Roadway designation also establishes design and construction constraints regarding changes in width and re-surfacing on the state road.

When it comes to concerns regarding local roads, the Town can request review and comment from the Scenic Roadway Board on any management issue, while maintaining the ability to act at its discretion.

## Scenic Roadway Corridor

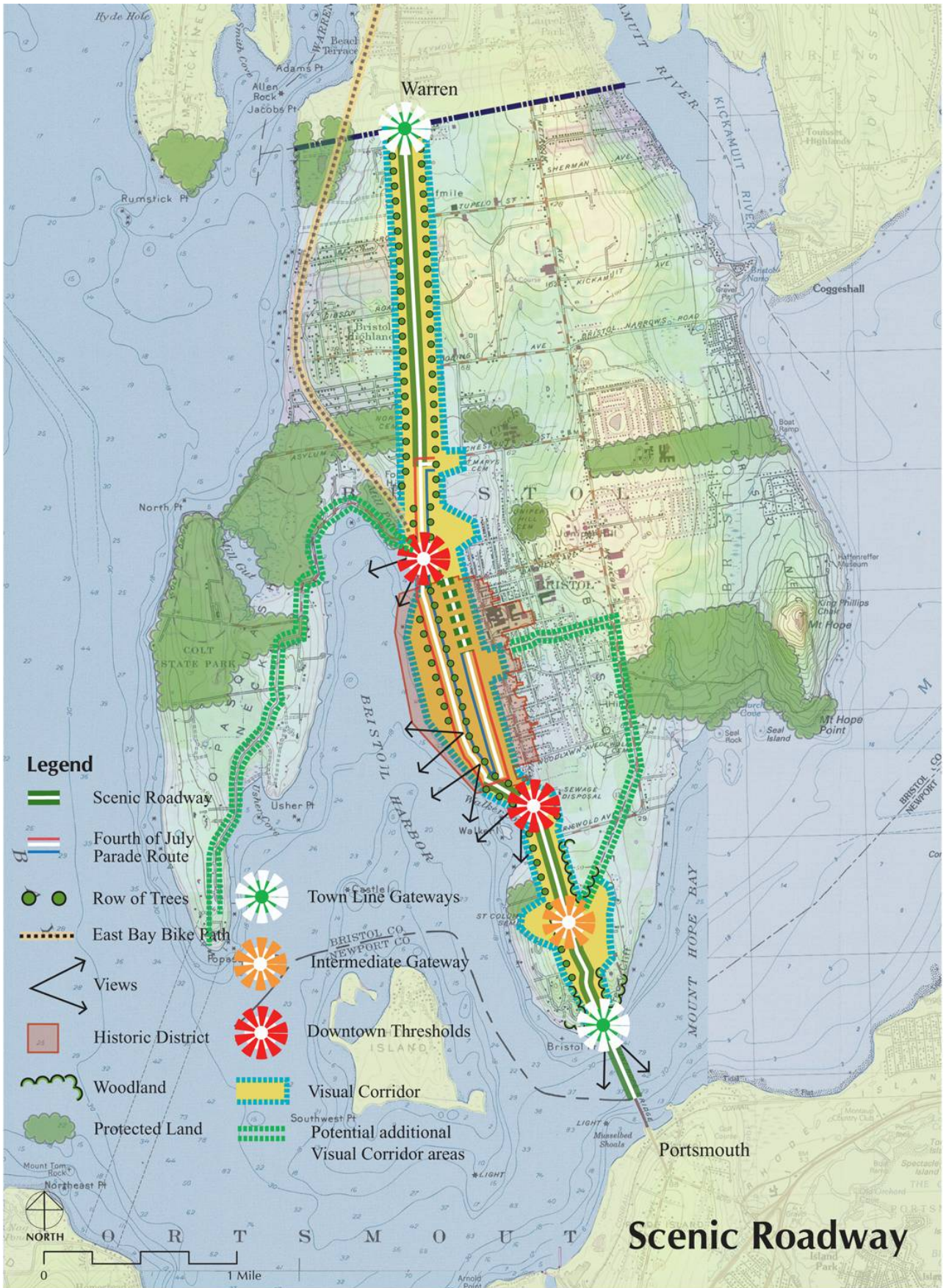
While the physical and visual qualities and overall character of the road within the right-of-way were important considerations by the Scenic Roadways Board, those same qualities of the landscape and buildings visible from it, on both sides of the road beyond the right-of-way (its viewshed), were and are perhaps more important in the roadway's nomination by the Town, and subsequent designation as a RI Scenic Roadway.

These views and viewsheds are mostly of private properties where change and development are controlled by the Town's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Anything that happens beyond the right-of-way is the responsibility of the Town of Bristol, not the Scenic Roadways Board, or RIDOT.

While current zoning, development plan review, and historic district regulations have helped to preserve the intrinsic character of Bristol's historic setting, the Town currently does not have viewshed regulations that will preserve those intrinsic landscape qualities that supported the roadway's nomination and designation.

To further protect these qualities, a Scenic Roadway Corridor is proposed within which specified development or improvements would be subject to review by the Planning Board to insure that those viewshed characteristics are not compromised.

High Street is a local Scenic Road. As such, controls within its Corridor, including the right-of-way and the viewshed beyond, lie within the Town's jurisdiction. The Town might consider extending similar controls to include Metacom Avenue, from Ferry Road to State Street, State Street from Metacom Avenue to Hope Street, and Popasquash Road to Popasquash Point.



# The ROAD and ITS CONTEXT

## Roadway Alignment

The modern alignment of Route 114 is that of the 1681 trade route between Newport and Boston via Swansea and Bristol. A ferry service, sailing from Bristol Point, the Town's southernmost tip, made the connection to Aquidneck Island, the final leg of the trade route to Newport. That ferry service was the genesis of Bristol's future commercial prosperity.

## Topography

From the Warren / Bristol Town Line, Hope Street gradually ascends Half-Mile hill. The aquamarine water tower marks the height of land here.

The road then descends slowly to the marshlands at the mouth of Silver Creek, and again gently climbs up toward the center of downtown Bristol.

At the intersection of Hope and Bradford Streets the topography levels off. Thames Street and Bristol Harbor, are lower than the level of the village streetscape, while Linden Place, the Andrews School, and historic buildings along High Street are slightly higher. Hope Street continues southward, on level ground, out of the downtown core.

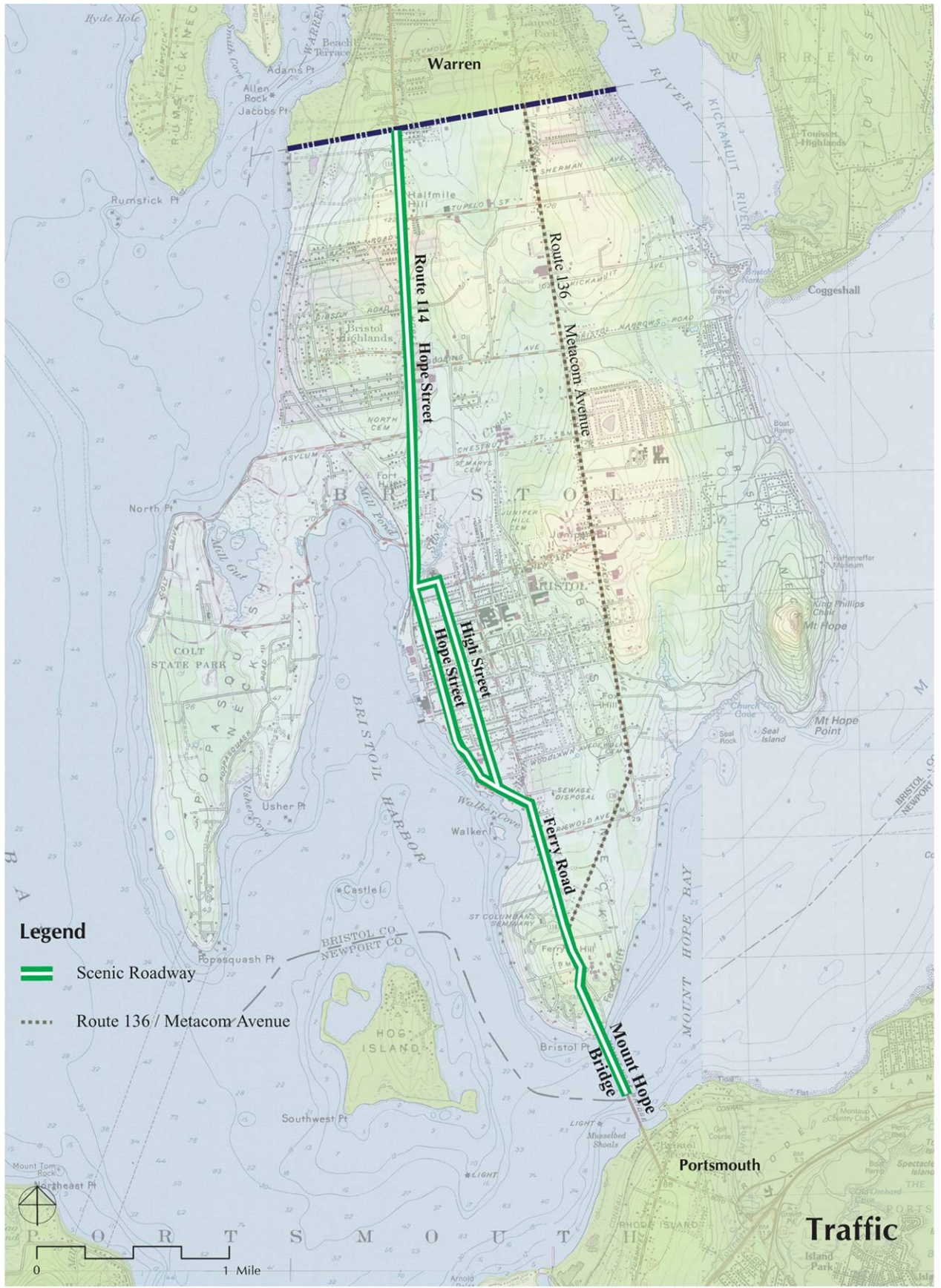
As the narrowing roadway winds along the shoreline of Walker Cove it descends slightly toward the mouth of Walker Creek, near the intersection of Wood Street where it then becomes Ferry Road.

Along Ferry Road, the land rises slowly toward Bristol Point and the Mount Hope Bridge.

## Opportunities:

Scenic Roadway designation presents a number of opportunities for the Town of Bristol and existing town organizations to call on the assistance of State Agencies in working together to engage the community in discussions that will:

- 1) Encourage residents and the Bristol Tree Society to develop and implement strategies for protecting street trees and dealing with overhead utilities.
- 2) Consider adding utility poles to reduce the extent of catenary swing of the overhead utility lines that extend between them.
- 3) Eliminate cobra overhead street light fixtures mounted on utility poles and replace them with pedestrian-scaled light fixtures illuminating the sidewalks and walkways along Hope and High Streets and throughout the downtown.
- 4) Prepare master plans for specific site and roadway enhancements at Town Line Gateways and at downtown Thresholds that can be implemented as public and private funding become available.
- 5) Expand the Historic Building Identity Program. Houses within the historic districts participate in a labeling program. Providing the name and date for houses and other buildings within the Scenic Roadway Corridor but outside of these districts would be a valuable addition to the Town.
- 6) Maintain and reinforce the zoning and historic district regulations and requirements that respect and reinforce the vernacular historic character of Bristol. Expand the areas of coverage to enhance the Scenic Roadway and the visual experience along it from the Bull Gates at Colt State Park to the Mount Hope Bridge.
- 7) Develop coordinated Visitor maps and other graphic information for display at strategic locations and parking areas throughout downtown, including a guide to the architectural styles and history of Bristol buildings.
- 8) Expand the presentation and coverage of the species of trees found downtown in the "Bristol Tree Guide" to include those outside of the Historic District that line the Scenic Roadway north to Warren and south to the Mount Hope Bridge.
- 9) Implement the Action Plan recommendations of the Stewardship Plan presented on pages 30-31.



## Overview

The Route 114 Scenic Roadway consists of Hope Street and Ferry Road, and includes parallel High Street. Hope Street and Ferry Road are classified as minor collectors and are both local commercial and residential roadways with moderately high traffic volumes for their size. Together they form one of the two the main routes running north-south through the Town of Bristol and Bristol County. Route 136 is the other north-south route and serves as a relieving route for through truck traffic and other seasonally heavy travel.

Route 114 is a Rhode Island state road beginning at the Massachusetts state line in Woonsocket and ending in Newport. It is the only road that extends from Providence to Newport and is one of the few main roads whose traffic is considered to be moderate, according to data from 2000 provided by RIDOT. As High Street is not a state route, traffic-volume data is not available.

In general, the entirety of Route 114 has seen an overall increase in traffic of 17 percent between 1990 and 2000, and ranges in Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) from about 8,900 to 19,000 vehicles per day. The northern part has seen a small decrease in traffic while the southern part has seen an overall increase, as high as 33 percent.

Unlike many waterfront communities that experience great increases in traffic volume in the summer months, this Scenic Roadway has not recorded much seasonal change in traffic volumes. In the past, summer tourist traffic has been offset by a reduction in traffic during the summer break at Roger Williams University, resulting in somewhat evenly balanced traffic throughout the year. The University's extended academic calendar may change this condition in coming years.

As Bristol continues to grow in popularity as a destination, this added automobile traffic will impact the quality of the experience for visitors and residents. Presently, Route 114 carries a lot of traffic for its size.

Increases in vehicular, pedestrian, and bicyclist activity in the heart of the community will affect the capacity and operation of the roadways in the area.

Efforts should be made to encourage thru travelers to use alternative modes and routes, and visitor traffic levels should be carefully monitored annually on Hope and High Streets to keep on top of the potentially negative impacts of Bristol's popularity.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Hope Street, Ferry Road, and High Street all offer extraordinary experiences to those who choose alternative modes of transportation. In fact, the RIDOT map, "A Guide to Cycling in the Ocean State," lists Route 114 as a "suitable" bike route, the only road with such a designation in Warren and Bristol.

Similar to the character of the overall roadway, pedestrian and bicycle conditions vary throughout the study area. In the north, while sidewalks are relatively narrow, there is adequate shoulder space for bicycle and pedestrian use.

While there are minimal width sidewalks on Hope and High Streets, there is no shoulder. Pedestrian traffic is higher throughout this central section of the Scenic Roadway making for occasionally congested conditions.

Paved sidewalks stop before the intersection of Hope and High Streets and a worn footpath continues to the Wood Street / Ferry Road intersection. Cycling is constrained on this portion of the roadway due to a lack of shoulder and narrow sidewalks making for un-safe cycling.

Along Ferry Road, bicyclists ride in the street due to an inadequate shoulder, a less-than-ideal condition for the average cyclist; and pedestrians tread a dirt path or walk in the roadway.

## RIPTA

The RIPTA Route 60 Bus (Providence to Newport) runs on Route 114 approximately every 30 to 60 minutes. Service runs on the weekend and holidays and since the late 1990's, every RIPTA bus has a bike rack on the front accommodating up to two bicycles.

## Roadway Conditions

General roadway conditions are considered good and suitable for vehicular traffic. However, community comments about poor surface conditions along Hope Street have termed it a "natural traffic-calming device". Moreover, "irregularities" such as discontinuous sidewalks, lack of bicycle accommodation, and inconsistent on-street parking conditions could be more than challenging to the uninitiated visitor.

Since a goal of the Scenic Roadway Stewardship Plan is to promote tourism and encourage visitors to use local resources, the several potentially confusing, distracting, and alarming existing conditions that might discourage visitors from walking or cycling here should be corrected.

# The ROADWAY

## Traffic Calming

Some physical realities of Route 114 are de facto traffic calming elements. These include the dense residential character; the high volume of vehicles per day; the maximum posted speed of 35 mph; narrow roadway width; the occasionally irregular roadway surface; and, two lanes with one lane for each direction.

In spite of its straight alignment north of Washington Street, Route 114 is not a speedway or a passing opportunity because of its narrow width and a sufficiency of vehicles traveling in both directions to limit opportunities to speed or acquire the speed and opportunity to pass vehicles ahead.

The number of vehicles and pedestrians in the historic downtown spontaneously calms traffic. This is the first opportunity for on-street parking, with frequent cross streets, and a significant pedestrian presence. Motorists must slow down, and do.

However, south of downtown, the panoramic water views and the beauty of Ferry Road can easily cause a foot to lift from the accelerator with an accompanying “Wow”, further slowing traffic - and often to the consternation of other drivers.

## Accidents

Annual data for accidents along the Scenic Roadway Corridor consistently show that the significant majority of accidents occur at intersections. The intersections at Hope and Franklin Streets and at Hope and Bradford Streets on Route 114 are sites where ten or more accidents occur each year. Interestingly, those intersections roughly bracket the north and south ends of the historic downtown.

## Speed Limits - Enforcement

Posted speed limits are from 25 mph to 35 mph. Enforcement measures might include: an increase in police visibility; building a reputation for aggressive enforcement of moving violations within Town limits; the re-evaluation of existing speed limit sign locations, and their relocation for optimum placement including the addition of others if needed.

## Lane Markers

Roadway lane markers should be maintained so that intended boundaries are visible, especially at corners and intersections.

The special red-white-blue center stripe along Hope and High Streets was established through Federal legislation as a permanent marking condition for Bristol, honoring its 4th of July Parade Route.

## Sidewalks

Sidewalks and pedestrians are most visible within the downtown grid, and largely invisible elsewhere along the Scenic Roadway corridor. Exceptions include: along Ferry Road where Roger Williams students often walk - without a sidewalk; and from the Highlands to downtown along both sides of the roadway - where there are walks set back from the road edge.

Not all walkways must be paved to be adequate. However, all should be evaluated for physical condition and safety, and appropriate remedies scheduled.

## Cross Walks

Evaluate current crosswalks considering location, visibility, and effectiveness. Determine if more are needed. Maintain the striping so it is clean and visible.

## Public Transportation

RIPTA provides bus service through Bristol seven days a week. The number 60 bus goes from Providence to Newport via Bristol on Route 114, every 30 to 60 minutes. RIPTA's Rack n' Ride program has buses fitted with a rack on the front of the bus for two bicycles. There is no extra charge to the cyclist for the bike.

Bristol has agreed to have three RIPTA bus shelters within the Scenic Roadway corridor: one at Route 114 and Gooding Avenue, the other two on Ferry Road at Roger Williams University.

Additional public bus shelters will be placed by the Town in a design that is more suited to the historic setting.

## Parking

Parking is available at several locations along and within the Scenic Roadway Corridor. On-street parking is available throughout the historic downtown. There is a small off-street lot in Thompson Park at the East Coast Bike Path. Parking is available at designated locations within Colt State Park.

Although there is no on-street parking along the north segment of Route 114, parking is available at the shopping plaza at Gooding Avenue or on residential side streets if travelers wish to walk along this section. There are neither on-street parking nor public lots south of downtown or on Ferry Road.

If current public parking is insufficient, school parking lots may offer a backup option on weekends.

## Visitor Facilities

The new Bristol Visitor Center, with convenience facilities and visitor information, at the Burnside Building in downtown should be clearly marked.

In addition, the Scenic Roadway Action Plan recommends a Master Plan for the area at Silver Creek and the East Coast Bike Path junction as a logical orientation point with parking, bike racks and limited visitor services.

## Bristol & The Fourth of July

The Bristol Independence Day Celebration began in 1785, its origin first documented in an article in the Bristol Phoenix of March 11, 1871. “From the year 1785 to the present time, the anniversary of American Independence has been duly observed by military parades, orations, and public processions.” The original 1785 celebration was an observance of patriotic exercises – patriotic proclamations, prayers, music, and song. Since 1834, the Bristol Independence Day Celebration has included a parade.

The first official parade is documented from 1826, when a Chief Marshall of the Procession was appointed, suggesting that organized “processions” had been part of these celebrations in previous years. Such processions had included citizens walking to celebration destinations joining with marchers, the formal civic and military parade participants. Bristol has both the longest, continuously observed Independence Day Celebration in the United States, and the oldest parade route as well.

## Bicycle Use

The East Bay Bicycle Path is one of several Rhode Island segments of the proposed 2,500 mile East Coast Greenway, an on/off-road network of trails between Maine and Florida. Connecting Bristol and Providence, it occupies the roadbed alignment of the Providence & Worcester Railroad. Train service once terminated in Bristol, as the Bike Path does now.

The Bike Path begins at Fort Hill in East Providence at the confluence of the Seekonk and Providence Rivers, and extends for approximately 14.5 miles south through Barrington and Warren, ending in Bristol. The East Bay Bicycle Path is the most popular of the Rhode Island bikeways, and is heavily used by cyclists, in-line skaters, wheel chair users, and pedestrians.

“A Guide to Cycling in the Ocean State,” published by RIDOT, classifies Route 114 as a “Suitable Road”, shown on the map in red with the caution to “Share the Road” and advises that “on these roads, bicyclists will find less adequate or no shoulders.” For the Mount Hope Bridge crossing, cyclists are warned: “Experienced riders should use EXTREME CAUTION if cycling on the Mt. Hope Bridge . . . .”

Visitor information and limited services for people using the Bike Path can be provided at the Bike Path’s terminus at the proposed Northern Threshold, along with a street map of historic downtown and the Scenic Roadway noting local points of interest; rest rooms, bicycle racks, seating, and drinking fountain for people and pets; interpretative information about the Scenic Roadway, Bike Path, historical elements at this entry and beyond; and locations of public facilities and restaurants nearby.

The 2002 Bicycle Transportation User Survey results indicate that East Bay Bicycle Path users’ primary purpose is for health and secondarily for recreation. Users surveyed valued the natural surroundings, a majority spend money while on the path. The full report may be seen on the web at [www.dot.state.ri.us/bike](http://www.dot.state.ri.us/bike) or [www.uritc.uri.edu/media/finalreportspdf/536182](http://www.uritc.uri.edu/media/finalreportspdf/536182).



*East Bay Bike Path approaching Thomas Park / Route 114*

# ROADWAY CHARACTER

## Character

Hope Street, Ferry Road, and High Street are two-lane, residential scale roads lined with mature trees of great scale and beauty. Buildings from the 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries co-exist harmoniously along the roadway's length.

The scenic corridor is studded with historic sites, historic landmarks, historic landscapes, historic buildings, historic trees, and gorgeous views. All these riches combine into a visual effect of dignified harmony.

## The Historic Alignment

The modern alignment of Route 114 is that of the original 1681 overland trade route between Newport and Boston via Swansea (Massachusetts) and Bristol.

The Scenic Roadway includes all of historic Route 114 through Bristol, from the Warren / Bristol Town Line to the Bristol / Portsmouth Town Line on the Mount Hope Bridge.

Route 114 / Hope Street runs from north to south in an uninterrupted straight line toward Bristol Harbor and the Washington Street intersection. Here it bends slightly eastward and immediately straightens to form the main street through the historic urban downtown.

At the southern outskirts of downtown, it curves along the outer harbor at Walker Cove until the intersection at Wood Street where it becomes Ferry Road and crosses over the Mount Hope Bridge.

The Scenic Roadway also includes High Street, connecting from Washington Street at the north to Hope Street at its southern end.

High Street is a boundary of the 1680 Town Common integral to the gridded Town Plan of that year.

## Topography

Elevation ranges from 6 feet to 114 feet above sea level along the Scenic Roadway's length through Town.

The highest point of land is at the water tower on Half-Mile Hill.

The lowest elevation along the Roadway Corridor is at Thames Street where it enters Bristol Harbor at the Town Landing.

## Circulation

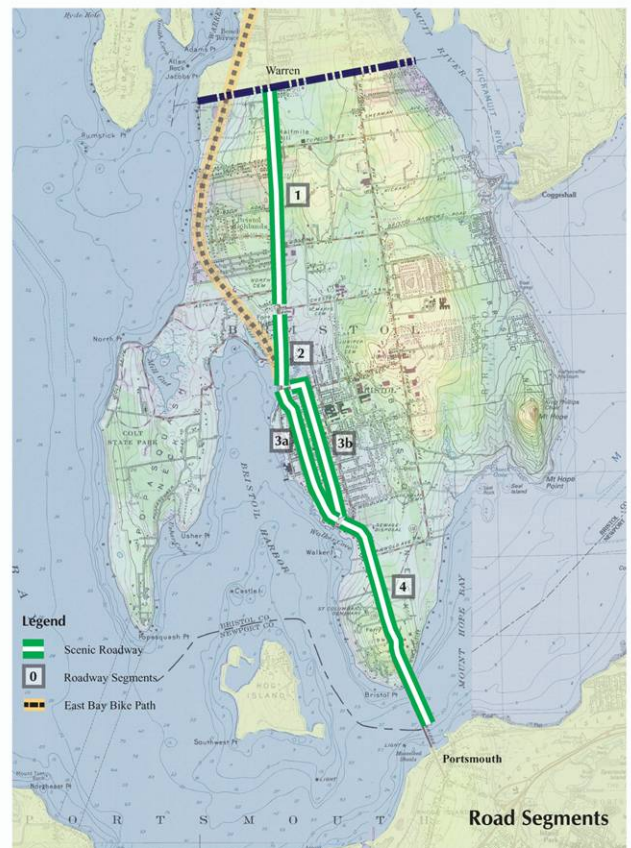
Rhode Island Route 114 originates in Woonsocket at the Massachusetts state line and ends in Newport. It is the only continuous road between Providence and Newport, and one of two north / south arterial routes through Bristol County, classified as a principal arterial.

It is an alternative to north-south RI Route 136 and east-west Interstate I-195 and the most direct connection to Warren and Barrington from Bristol.

Hope Street / Ferry Road and High Street are local thruways serving their commercial and residential constituencies.

## Road Segments

The Route 114 Scenic Roadway can be described as having four characters based on differing intrinsic qualities including topographic, natural, and man-made conditions. Each of these segments are presented in more detail on the following pages.



# INTRINSIC QUALITIES

Four naturally occurring changes in physical and man-made character along the roadway provide the logical basis for looking at the roadway in four segments. Segments 1 and 2 occur north of downtown, Segment 3 covers downtown Bristol and is divided into 3a and 3b so that Hope Street and High Street may be considered separately, and Segment 4 extends from downtown to the Mount Hope Bridge.

## Segment 1 1.75 miles

Hope Street from the Warren / Bristol Town Line to Chestnut Street.

The original Town Plan designated this area as small, scattered farms and farm lands. Stone walls along road frontage and occasional farm buildings from this area's agricultural past are still visible.

Houses from all historical periods animate the corridor, and mature trees form a canopy over the road for much of its length. This segment is predominantly residential. The exceptions being the shopping center at the Gooding Street intersection and a gas station at Beach Street.

From north to south, important sites are the RI Audubon Society Environmental Education Center, North Farm, the North Burial Ground, Coggeshall Farm Museum, and Colt State Park with its elegant entrance guarded by two bronze bulls on their heroic white marble bases.

## Segment 2 0.65 miles

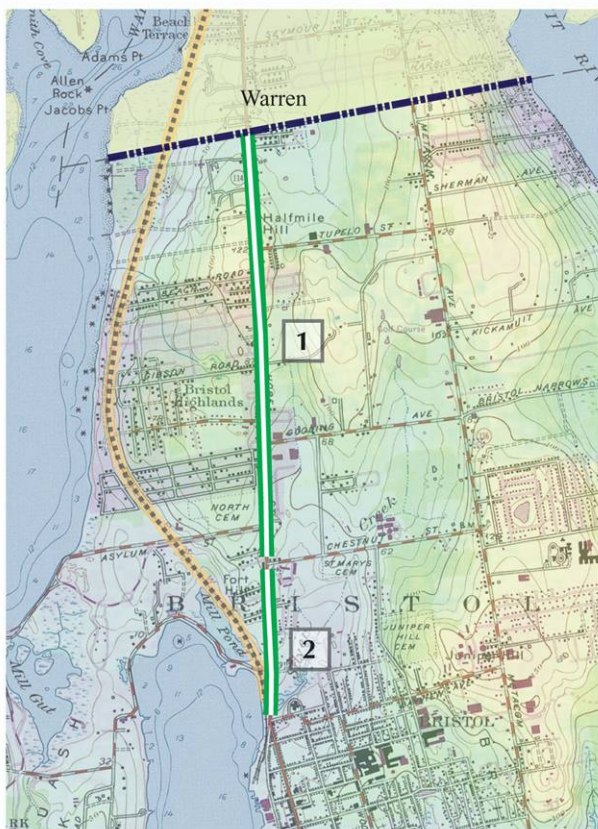
Hope Street from Chestnut Street to Washington and Thames Streets.

Segment 2 marks the transition from a suburban residential corridor of mixed architectural periods to a more urban neighborhood of some of Bristol's earliest settlements and surviving houses.

The Deacon Nathaniel Bosworth House (c.1683), at the salt marsh estuary of Silver Creek in front of the Guiteras School, is the oldest house in Bristol, and one among the many houses of architectural significance here.

Segment 2 ends at the north boundary of the Bristol Waterfront National Register Historic District. This point is the Northern Threshold to historic downtown, with a panoramic view of Bristol Harbor and Narragansett Bay and the terminus of the East Bay Bike Path at the edge of Thomas Park.

The 4th of July Parade route begins at the High School on Chestnut Street and ends at Bradford Street.



The entrance to Colt State Park



The roadside at Silver Creek

# INTRINSIC QUALITIES

## Segment 3a 1.20 miles

Bristol Waterfront National Register Historic District  
Hope Street from Washington Street to High Street.

Segment 3a passes thru the commercial center of the historic downtown. The Post Office, Town Hall, Public Library, public school, banks, shops, and restaurants are here. There is parallel parking on both sides of Hope Street and its many cross streets. A stand of 14 mature Linden trees are the most striking among the other trees in the downtown.

A dense juxtaposition of civic and residential properties, forming a spectacular display of architectural periods, with significant examples from each, are within the historic downtown core, all co-existing in harmonious dignity. The streetscape is carefully detailed with grass shoulders for trees at sidewalks, stairs with handrails from the road to sidewalks on the east side, plant materials, and lighting that complements the whole.

The result is a standard of civic aesthetic excellence all too scarce today; one that pays rich dividends in quality of public life to its residents. The downtown segment of the Fourth of July Parade Route is one of the parade's high points. There are views to the harbor and Poppasquash Point from practically all cross streets within the downtown, and sweeping views of Narragansett Bay from Hope Street as it approaches the High Street intersection, heading toward Ferry Road.



Hope Street



High Street

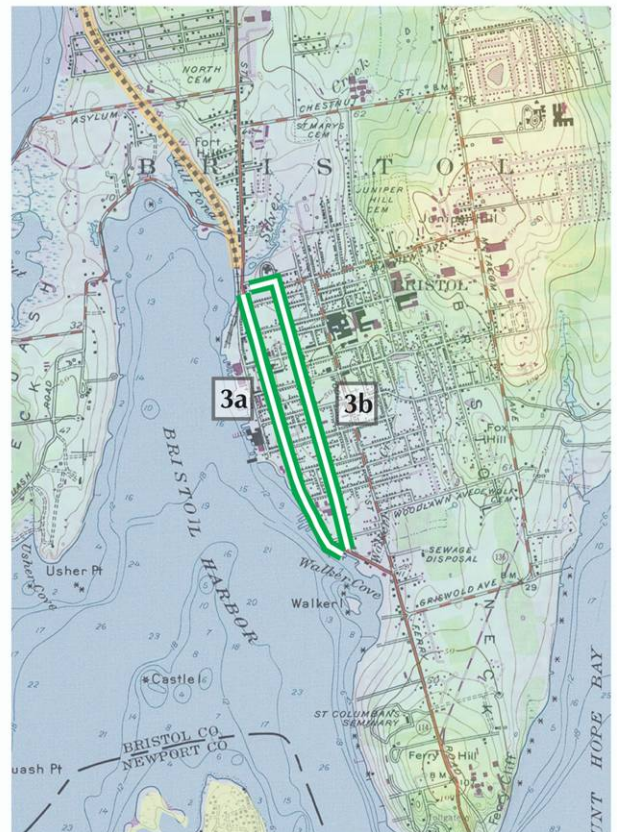
## Segment 3b 1.10 miles

Bristol Waterfront National Register Historic District  
High Street from Washington Street to Hope Street.

High Street runs parallel to Hope Street for its length. It forms one edge of the Town Common. The Town Plan of 1680 organized Bristol into north and south farmlands, and laid out the town grid in between. The Town Common is at the geographic center of the grid. Bristol's Town Common is the oldest common in Rhode Island, and the Town Plan the oldest in New England outside of New Haven, Connecticut.

High Street and Wood Street are the two main north / south thru streets within the inland grid, complementing Hope Street and waterside Thames Street. The High Street roadway is wide and elegant with sidewalks on both sides, on-street parking, and elegant street trees.

Along the Town Common and south, houses and house lots are generous, consistent with the dominant Victorian architectural style. Smaller scale houses are north of the Common. Trees on public and private properties are important in defining a special roadway character.



# INTRINSIC QUALITIES

## Segment 4 1.20 miles

Hope Street from High Street to Wood Street and Ferry Road from Hope Street to the Bristol / Portsmouth Town Line, just past the midpoint on the Mount Hope Bridge.

Ferry Road is a jewel among Rhode Island roads. The four original farm land grants were south of downtown. Some were gradually transformed in the late 19th century into large properties with grand-scale summer cottages for the rich.

Fortunately, some of these property owners were amateur horticulturalists interested in enhancing their natural settings with specimen trees, shrubs, and other selected plants to create carefully planned versions of nature. The nearly unbroken allee of 75 European Linden trees lining Ferry Road for 0.35 miles, is a superb legacy of this attitude. The trees themselves, and their lush canopy over the road, are spectacular.

Blithewold and the Blithewold Gardens & Arboretum (1898) are both open to the public and are additional legacies from this period.

Other important sites include Harbour Lawn (1865) designed by James Renwick, and the campus of Roger Williams University, built on a gift of original grant farmland.

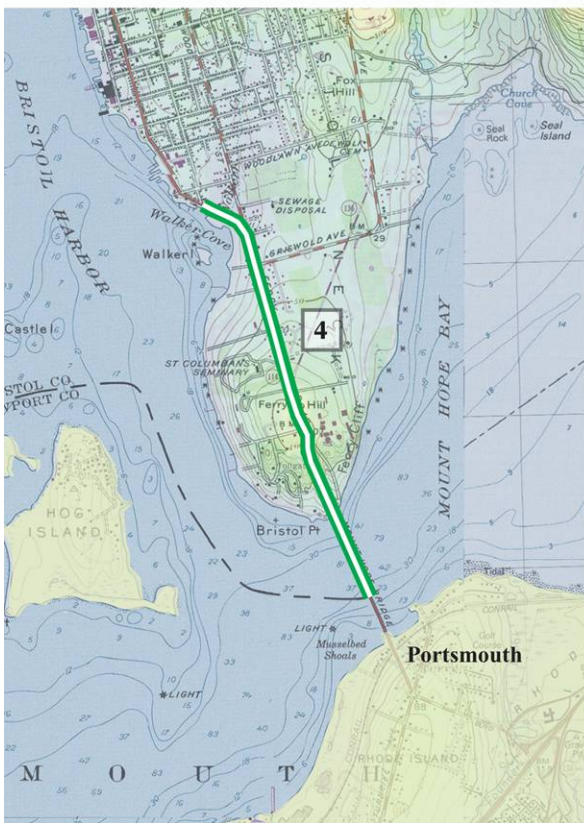
The Mount Hope Bridge is the oldest suspension bridge in New England. Built in 1927 with private funds and on the National Register of Historic Places, its main span is 1200 feet long and the deck is 135 feet above Mount Hope Bay at its highest point. The original toll booths were removed in the late 1990's.



Looking toward Walker Cove from Hope Street



The remarkable trees of Ferry Road



Ferry Road and the edge of the Roger Williams University campus



The Bristol end of the Mount Hope bridge (less the original toll booths)



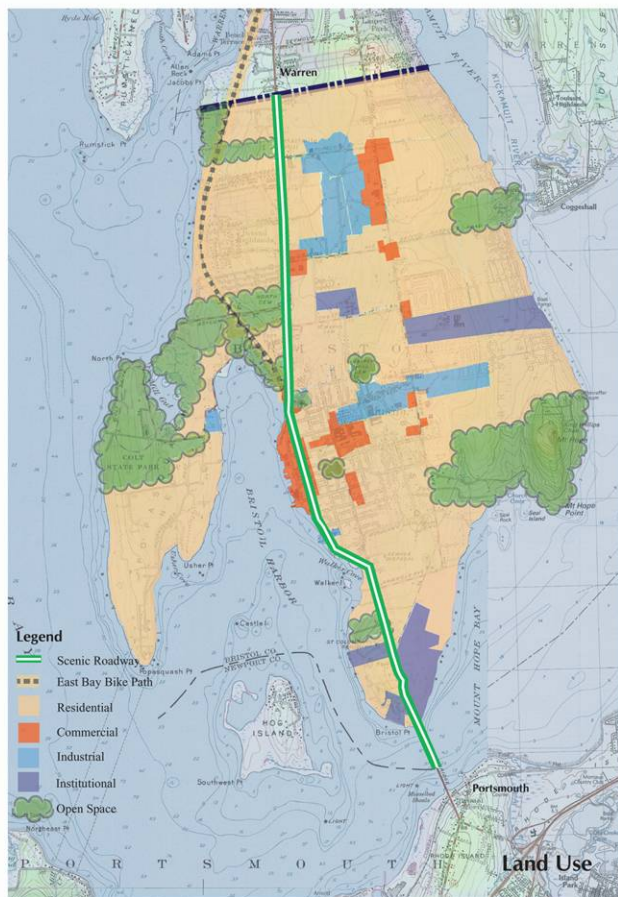
## The Town Plan

The Bristol town plan consists of a compact grid pattern laid out in the late 17th Century, with an eight acre Common at the geographical center. The grid created large eight-acre blocks of land, divided into four house lots of two acres each. One-acre waterfront lots were for businesses and warehouses.

Four major north/south thru streets define downtown commercial and residential districts: Thames Street, Hope Street, High Street, and Wood Street. Historically, Thames Street separated waterfront commercial lots from “inland” residential parcels.

Nine cross streets run east to west: Oliver, Franklin, Bradford, State, Church, Constitution, Union, Burton, and Walley Streets.

Outside of downtown, land in western, central, and northern Bristol was divided into 100-acre farms, and the fertile lands southeast of the downtown were divided into four 366 acre parcels, one for each of the original Proprietors of Bristol. Poppasquash Neck was divided into east-west strips to maximize the number of owners.



## Density

Along Hope Street north of Silver Creek lot sizes range between one-half and one-quarter acre.

In the downtown historic district, with tighter setbacks and two to three story buildings, lots are one-eighth acre, or less. Along Walker’s Cove, boat building and light industry are concentrated on one-half and one-quarter acre lots.

Residential lots along Ferry Road are generally 1 acre, or more in size, including large estates on the water side of the Scenic Roadway where houses and large trees are set back beyond scenic stone wall.

## Land Uses

**Residential:** Bristol continues as a predominantly residential East Bay community. A tour of Hope Street, High Street and Ferry Road, presents a cross-section of Bristol’s social, architectural, economic, and horticultural history.

**Commercial:** Commercial development has been historically concentrated along Hope Street in the downtown. In recent years, less historic commercial clusters have grown along Metacom Avenue.

**Industrial:** A variety of Industrial uses have evolved in Bristol. Shipbuilding and related support industries continue with the Herreshoff Marine & America’s Cup Museum fronting directly on the Scenic Roadway.

**Institutional:** Important Institutions in Bristol include: Roger Williams University, the Rhode Island Veterans Home, and the High School - where the Bristol 4th of July Parade begins.

**Open Space:** The Audubon Society’s Environmental Education Center at the Warren / Bristol Town Line introduces Bristol’s Open Space offerings from both the Scenic Roadway and the Bike Way. The Coggeshall Farm Museum and Colt State Park, with entry portals on the Scenic Roadway and straddling the Bike Way, are among the more well-known of Bristol’s recreational open spaces. Although not on the Scenic Roadway, Camp Crosby, Mount Hope Farm, and the neighboring lands of Brown University represent other important and historic Bristol open spaces.

Since World War II, as the housing base expands, open farmland and forest within the town continues to decrease to make way for yet more housing.

# PUBLIC and PROTECTED LANDS



The Bull Gates at the entrance to Colt State Park and the Coggeshall Farm Museum



Linden Place



The decorative stone walls that mark the Ferry Road edge of Blithewold invite discovery

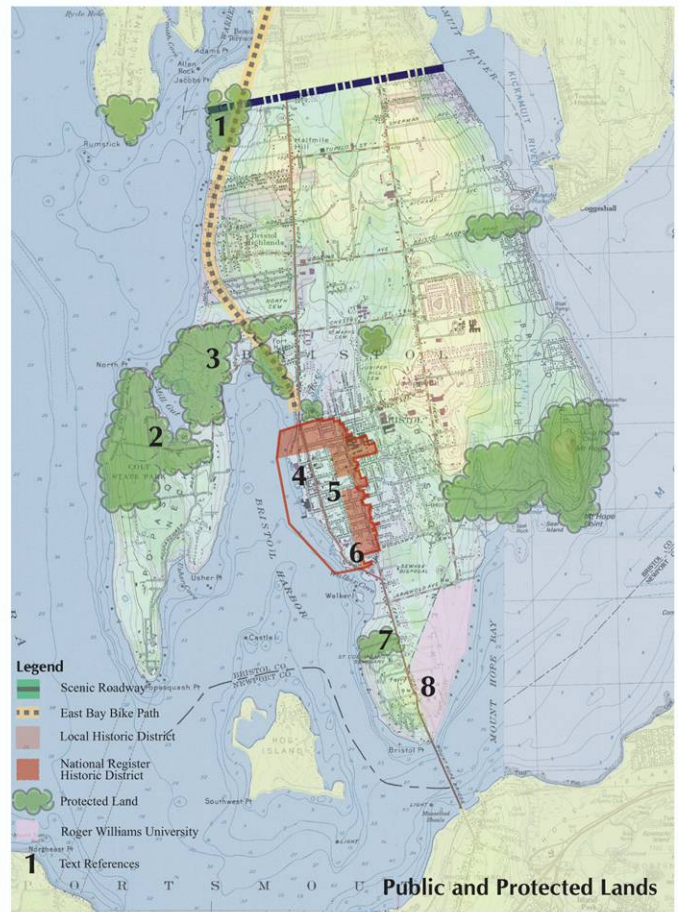


The open fields of the Roger Williams University campus

Within the larger context of a town that has made a serious effort to set aside and protect many impressive landscapes, Bristol possesses a number of remarkable Public and Protected lands which have frontage on the Scenic Roadway and/or straddle the East Bay Bike Path. These landscapes and building sites include:

1. The Audubon Society of RI Environmental Education Center at the Warren / Bristol Town Line
2. Coggeshall Farm Museum
3. Colt State Park
4. The Bristol Waterfront Historic District
5. Linden Place and the Bristol Historical & Preservation Society Museum and Library
6. Herreshoff Marine & America's Cup Museum
7. Blithewold Mansion, Gardens & Arboretum
8. The Roger Williams University campus

These destinations are well-known and much appreciated by residents and visitors and add to the scenic, recreational, and cultural appeal that the Scenic Roadway presents.



Downtown Bristol is bounded by important wetland areas and their landscapes.

## Silver Creek:

Silver Creek drains the watershed to the north and east of downtown. Its open water, abundant grasses and wetland plants, and views across them inland toward the Guiteras School and west to the water, define the Northern Threshold to the historic downtown.

## Walker Creek:

The Walker Creek experience is in sharp contrast at the Southern Threshold inasmuch as few can tell that this area contains the drainage channel for a major watershed that includes the southern half of the downtown. The creek is virtually hidden from view in a wooded lot and then partially obscured by being in a pipe, underground.

The Scenic Roadway crosses over both of these wetland areas and the visual experience is quite different at each.



*Looking across the open water at Silver Creek toward Route 114*



*Looking inland at Silver Creek toward the watershed beyond*

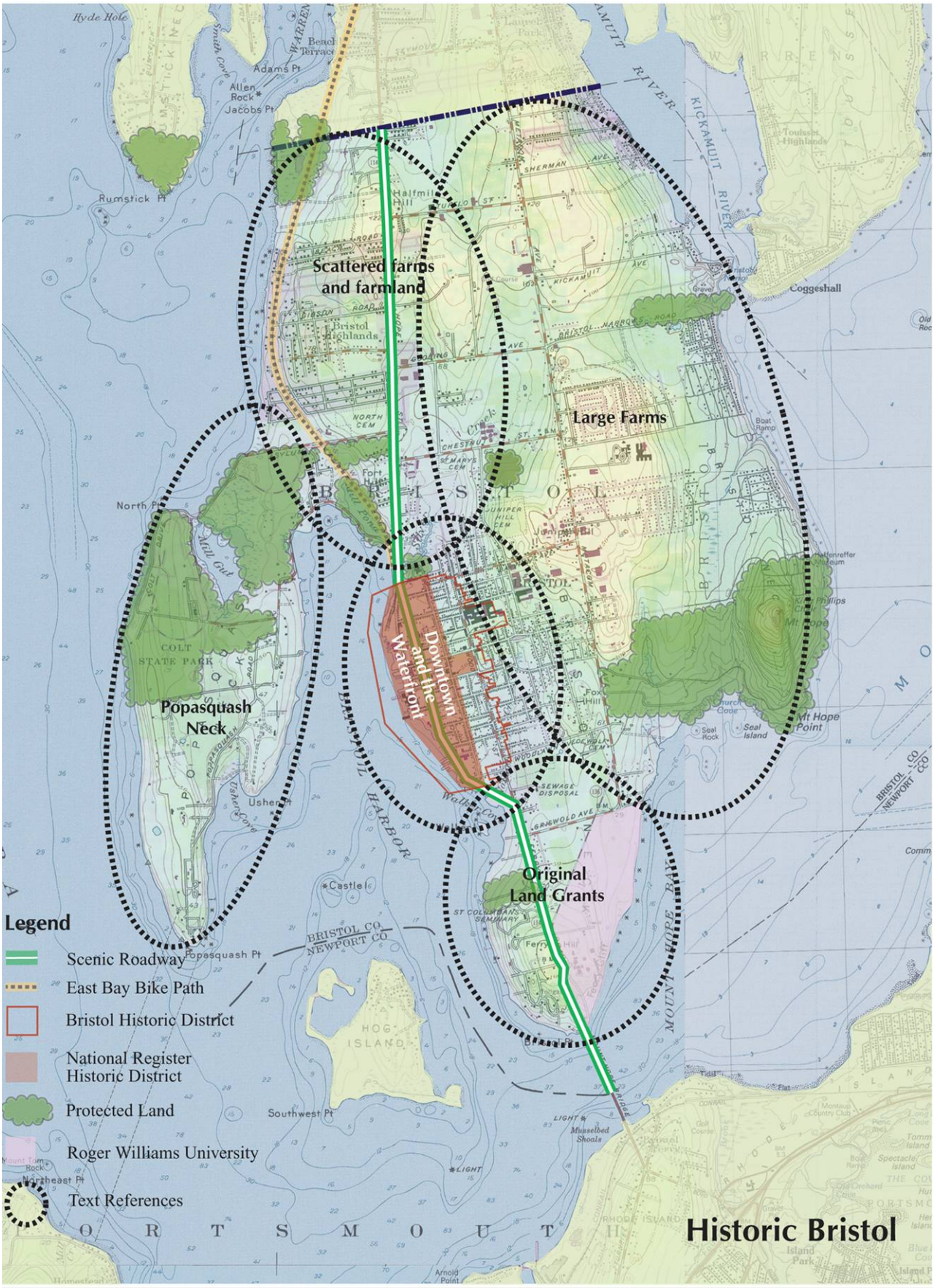


*Looking across the open water at Silver Creek toward the Guiteras School*



*The intersection of Wood and Hope Streets - Walker Creek hides in the wooded lot to the right*





# CULTURAL and HISTORIC LANDMARKS

## Historic Districts

Downtown Bristol boasts the rare distinction of being home to two overlapping historic districts: the Bristol Waterfront Historic District and the Town of Bristol Historic District. These special overlay zoning areas were established to preserve and safeguard areas of historical and architectural value. They establish an important level of protection to the Scenic Roadway.

## National Register Historic District

The Bristol Waterfront Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Sites and Places. It includes the Town Common, the area west from High Street to Bristol Harbor and from the south side of Franklin Street in the north to the intersection of Hope and High Streets at the south end of town.

## Town of Bristol Historic District

The Town of Bristol Historic District includes the National Register District with extended coverage to the east side of Wood Street and north to Washington Street.

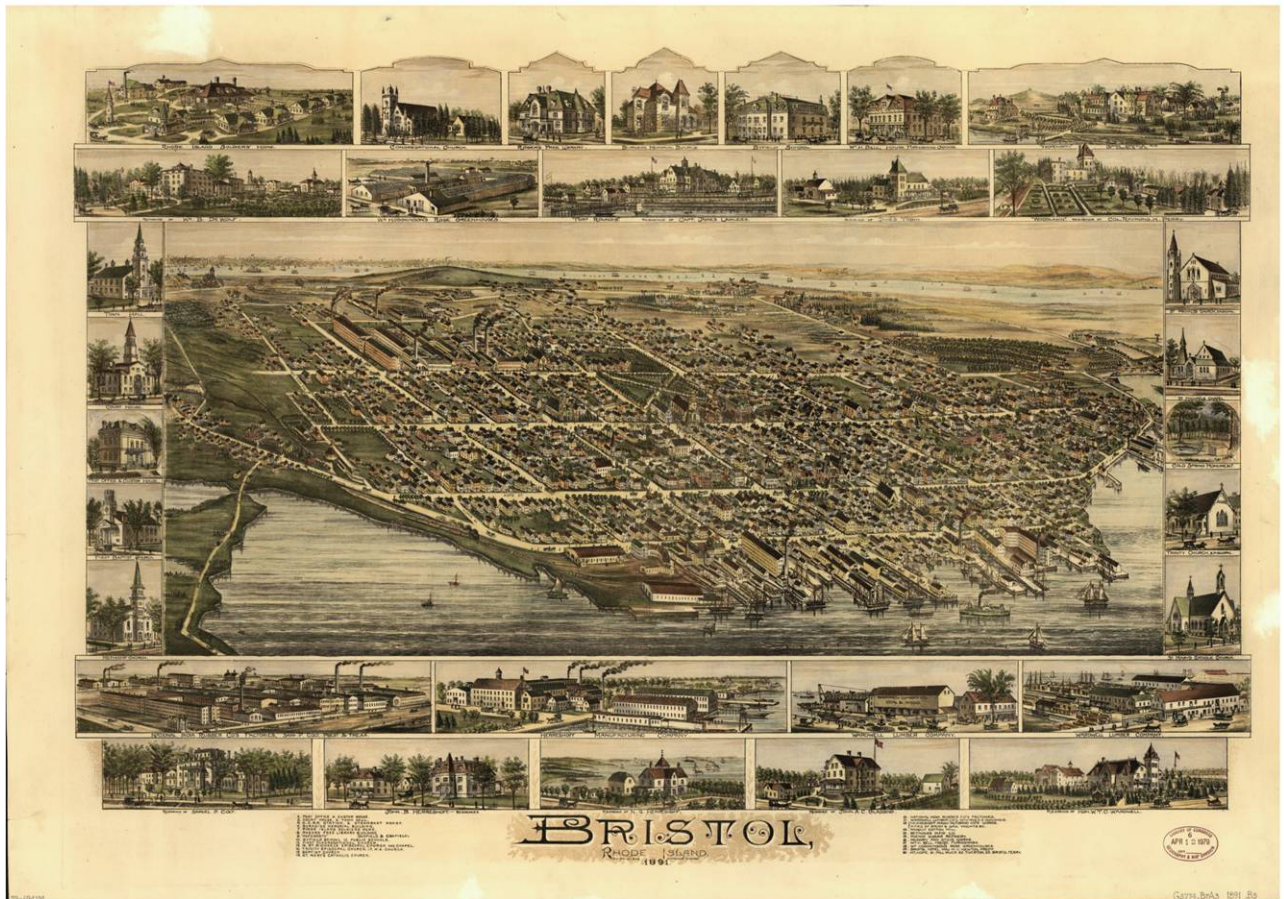
## Historic District Management

The Bristol Historic District Commission was established in 1987 to protect the town's architectural character and carry out the provisions of Bristol's historic district zoning.

The Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission is responsible for recognizing historic buildings and sites, and administering tax credit, loan, and easement programs available for use in the preservation of these buildings and sites.

The remarkable unified, historic, architectural quality of downtown Bristol establishes the Route 114 Scenic Roadway as an unparalleled experience. It invites visitors to stop, get out of their vehicles, and explore the town on foot, as there is much to see.

More evident off-street visitor parking lots and both a centralized information site and carefully sited display maps would expand the quality of the experience. The new downtown Visitor Center is an important step in this direction.



Bristol, 1891, Library of Congress

# CULTURAL and HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

## 1680 to 1700 Beginnings

Bristol (originally, Mount Hope) and the surrounding lands were firmly controlled by European settlers by 1680, following their victory over the Wampanoag Indian Tribe in King Phillip's War. Immediately after, King Charles II granted the Mount Hope lands to the Plymouth Bay Colony in Massachusetts. Strapped for cash after the rigors of fighting King Phillip's War, the Plymouth Colony then sold "Mount Hope Neck and Poppasquash Neck" to four Boston merchants, who became the new Proprietors of Bristol.

Bristol's mercantile potential lay in its deep water harbor and favorable location between the trading ports of Boston and Newport. The overland trade route between Boston and Newport, (now the designated Scenic Roadway), had been laid prior to King Phillip's War, and the Bristol ferry service was established in 1681 by the four Bristol Proprietors. With local conflicts ended, Bristol was poised for demographic and economic growth.

By 1690 there were 70 families living on most of the available farmland. Farming, and the trade route/ferry service formed the economic core during this period. Only three houses survive from the earliest period: the Reynolds House (1698) at 956 Hope Street; the Bosworth Homestead at Silver Creek (1683) 814 Hope Street; and Elm Farm (1687) at 1382 Hope Street.

## 1700 to 1780 Before the Revolution

The maritime and agrarian economies brought prosperity and attracted new residents. By 1775, there were 150 residences, built for farmers and tradespeople. Today, fifty of these 18th century houses remain. The balanced distribution of rural and in-town locations, visible today, reflects the balance of the two sustaining economies of that time.

Seven pre-Revolutionary-era houses are on Hope and High Streets: the Peck Farmhouse (1765) 1258 Hope Street; the Jonathan Peck house at 1237 Hope Street, originally a 600 acre farm; the John Philips House (1740) 720 Hope Street; the Samuel Norris House 1013 Hope Street; the Jeremiah Wilson House, 675 Hope Street; Ferncliffe, 1303 Hope Street; the Levi DeWolf House, 996 Hope Street; the Nemiah Cole House, 184 High Street; and the Nathaniel Smith House at 160 High Street.

During the Revolution, British troops occupied the Harbor and nearby Hope Street. They successfully interrupted the shipping economy of Narragansett Bay ports and the Bristol ferry service, crippling local trade and transportation. Hungry British troops confiscated local agricultural products. Residents either fled or moved to the outlying rural areas. Nevertheless, refugees from British-occupied Newport still came to Bristol in search of better circumstances.

In May 1778 the British staged a devastating raid from their fortified positions on Aquidneck Island. About 500 soldiers landed at Bristol Neck, marched north to Warren, and then turned south setting fire to buildings in both Warren and Bristol as they proceeded toward Bristol Ferry. The immediate post-Revolutionary years was a time of re-establishing commerce and trade, restoring agricultural production, and rebuilding after the fires of 1778.



Town of Bristol

# CULTURAL and HISTORIC LANDMARKS

## 1780 to 1825 The New Prosperity

With the resumption of trade to near pre-Revolution volumes, Bristol once again was a flourishing seaport. Consequently, its population nearly doubled from 1780 to 1820. Between 1801 and 1825, an average of 50 trading ships a year put in at Bristol Harbor. The maritime economy employed clerks, coopers, shipwrights, financiers, and teamsters. Stores, warehouses and businesses serving the sea trade developed rapidly. Six banks were chartered from 1797 to 1823, including the Commercial Bank (1809) at 565 Hope Street.

The Federal and Greek Revival architecture of this era reflected the new national identity, local prosperity, and expanded tastes. Houses became expansive; square or rectangular, with a central entrance facing the street, a wide entrance hall, and two chimneys at each end. Rooms and windows were large, and elegantly detailed both inside and out.



*Linden Place*

There are forty-three houses along the Scenic Roadway from this period. Linden Place (1810) at 500 Hope Street, is the most elaborate and perhaps the most conspicuous, being on the uphill and inland side of the street, in the center of the historic downtown.

Others include the Foster House, 693 Hope Street; the George Coggeshall Farmhouse, 1343 Hope Street; the Caleb Littlefield House, 721 Hope Street; the Lemuel Clark House, 142 Hope Street; and the William Bradford House, 154 Hope Street.

The Norris House, 474 Hope Street, the Devol House, 132 High Street; the Fales House, 139 High Street, the James DeWolf House & Barn, 281 High Street; the Francis Dimond House, 647 Hope Street; the Gardner Bosworth House, 658 Hope Street; and the Benjamin Tilley House, 328 High Street are the work of builder-architect Russell Warren.

Isaac Borden, another Bristol architect-builder, built 159 High Street for himself along with three others at 259, 843, and 617 Hope Street, the latter being considered one of the best translations of the Greek form in Bristol.

Residential buildings from this period are significant for their architectural quality and aesthetic impact on the visual character in Bristol. These gracious houses with front, side and rear yards enclosed by fancy iron and wood fences, flower and vegetable gardens festooned with new plant species from overseas, and specimen shade trees create a distinctive sense of place. Some of Bristol's oldest tree stock dates from this era.

# CULTURAL and HISTORIC LANDMARKS

## 1825 to 1880 The Industrial Economy

The maritime economy peaked in 1825. The maritime waterfront became the industrial waterfront. The Bristol Steam Mill Company built two large mills along the waterfront in the late 1830's, and produced cotton cloth for the next twenty-five years. Other manufacturing facilities followed.

In 1865, the National Rubber Company located its factory on a 19 acre site on Wood Street, employing 600-700 people. In 1888, Samuel Pomeroy Colt bought the business and its buildings and formed the United States Rubber Company. By 1901, there were 37 buildings and 1500 employees, growing to over 4000 during the first World War.

Ship building became an important and enduring industry, beginning around 1863, employing 300 people by 1900. There are 46 residential buildings along the Scenic Roadway built during this period. The cluster of houses at 96 High Street were built for tradespeople, as were the 27 houses on the subdivided Noyes Plat, developed in 1870.

Longfield, the DeWolf Gibson House at 1200 Hope Street, and the Susan Gorham House, 281 Hope Street, are examples of merchant tastes for Gothic Revival. Seven Oaks (1870) at 136 Hope Street, is a Gothic cottage, designed by James Renwick. The Lemuel Richmond House (1855) at 41 High Street is Bristol's only octagonal house. The Codman house at 42 High Street is considered among the finest of the late Victorian houses, complete with its original landscaping.

The addition of important civic, commercial and religious buildings solidified the appearance of the Historic Downtown and Harbor District into much of what we see today. The William Bell Block, 361 Hope Street; the Post Office, 440 Hope Street and the Rogers Free Library (1877) at 525 Hope Street, were significant civic and commercial amenities added to downtown.

The Middle District School, 1030 Hope Street; the Burton Primary School, 140 High Street; and the Byfield School, 207 High Street, are heavy brick and wood construction typical of Victorian public buildings. St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 375 Hope Street, and the First Congregational Church, 300 High Street, are also heavy stone construction.

Agriculture continued as an important part of the local economy alongside industrialization, with cash crops the main focus of farm production. After the Civil War, farms became dairy operations. Livestock barns and equipment sheds were built alongside existing farmhouses. Usher Farm at 1240 Hope Street exemplifies this agricultural shift.

In 1873, the Rhode Island Legislature relocated the boundary between Warren and Bristol approximately 1 mile south, transferring approximately 400 acres of farmland to Warren. Farmers in this northern section of Bristol requested the change as they were closer to downtown Warren than to downtown Bristol.

Conversion of the traditional farms along Ferry Road and northern Hope Street into lavish gentlemen's farms began around 1870. These were large waterfront properties with luxurious residences, sumptuous grounds, and multiple outbuildings to support agriculture, horticulture, livestock, equipment and staff. An early prototype was North Farm at 1392 Hope Street.



*Lemuel Richmond House*



*Codman House*

# CULTURAL and HISTORIC LANDMARKS

## 1880 - 1945 Into the Modern Era

Between 1900 and 1920, new groups of immigrants were attracted to jobs in Bristol's mills. By 1920, the population was almost twice that of 1900, with immigrants approximately 50% of the population and housing density within the commercial district three times that of 1870. Development was largely within the planned grid established in the original Town Plan.

After 1880, east-west roads through the town center were extended east of Wood Street. By 1920, there were as many buildings east of Wood Street as had been west of Wood Street in the previous two centuries.

Vernacular houses built to accommodate population growth include the Edwin Middleton House, 384 High Street; the Connery House, 123 High Street; the Darling House, 111 High Street; the Douglas House, 119 High Street; and the Pearse House, 115 High Street. All have side or rear yards. The Colt Apartment Block, 1918, at 262 Hope Street, was built to provide affordable housing for National Rubber Company employees.

Improvements to the historic downtown - paved roads and sidewalks and shade trees planted along main thoroughfares and side streets - improved the appearance of streets already picturesque with their abundance of fine residential architecture and displayed an enlightened attitude toward the quality of public life and the preservation of historic assets. The "improved" village benefited the rich, the poor, and the hard working.

New facilities responded to needs for social services, education, and commercial activity. The Benjamin Church Home for Aged Men (1908) at 1014 Hope Street; Colt Memorial High School (1906) at 500 Hope Street; the Walley School, 207 High Street; the Andrews Memorial School (1938) at 574 Hope Street; and the Young Men's Christian Association (1899) at 442 Hope Street.

Other civic buildings within the historic downtown include the United Brothers Synagogue, 207 High Street, the Easterbrooks Block, 461 Hope Street, the Belvedere Hotel, 423 Hope Street, the Guiteras Memorial Building, 736 Hope Street, and Burnside Memorial Hall, 400 Hope Street.

Behind the high stone wall at 2 High Street are gardens designed by landscape architect, Fletcher Steele: including a Japanese garden, a rose garden, tea house, swimming pool and pool house. The William Chesire House, 1223 Hope Street, is a Sears Roebuck mail order house - the Americus model, an arts and crafts bungalow style popular in the 1920's - ordered from the Sears catalogue and shipped by railroad car.

Beyond downtown, gentlemen's farms continued to evolve. In 1902, Samuel Colt consolidated several small farms on Poppasquash Point into his own estate farm. Today the property is Colt State Park.

Ferrycliffe Farm, a 120 acre cattle and turkey farm, originally stretched from Ferry Road eastward to Mount Hope Bay. In 1965 the southernmost 63 acres were deeded to Roger Williams College. The buildings of its campus today fill most of those acres.

Lands along the west side of Ferry Road attracted the first summer colony. Harbour Lawn was the first of the great Victorian estates built along Ferry Road, designed by James Renwick, in the Gothic Cottage style, with heavily landscaped gardens and grounds and views to the shores of Narragansett Bay.

Blithewold, at 500 Ferry Road, exemplifies an ideal summer estate setting, with rolling lawns and expansive water views. Most of its 35 acres are dedicated to ornamental gardens and grounds, and supporting structures.



The Andrews School



Garden Gate at 2 High Street



Garden wall at Blithewold

# GATEWAYS and THRESHOLDS

A drive along the Scenic Roadway into, through, and from Bristol engages a number of locations where the visual and landscape character change dramatically. They include:

## Gateways

1. Northern Gateway at the Bristol / Warren Town Line.
2. Intermediate / Southern Gateway at the Metacom Avenue and Ferry Road intersection.
3. Southern Gateway at the Mount Hope Bridge.

## Downtown Thresholds

4. Northern Threshold at the intersection of Hope, Thames and Washington Streets at Bristol Harbor and Silver Creek Marsh.
5. Southern Threshold at the intersection of Hope Street and Ferry Road at Wood Street.



Northern Gateway: Bristol / Warren Town Line



Northern Threshold: Hope, Thames and Washington Street



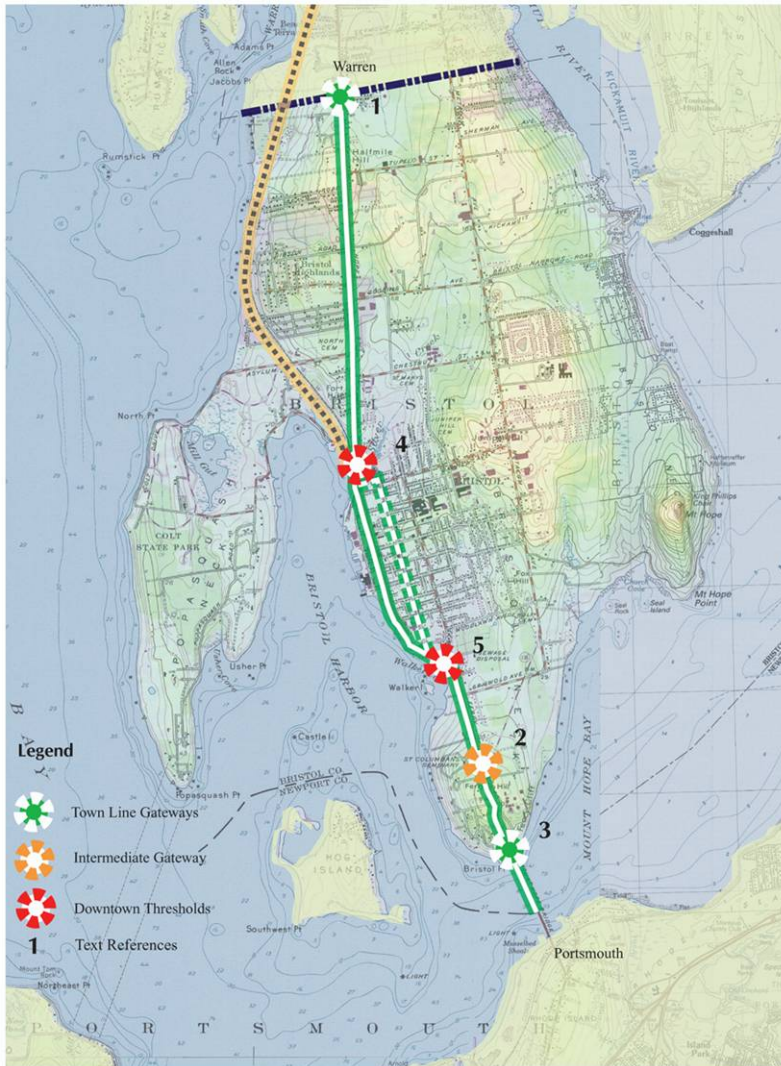
Southern Threshold: Hope Street and Ferry Road at Wood Street



Intermediate Gateway: Ferry Road and Metacom Avenue



Southern Gateway: Mount Hope Bridge



## Views and Viewsheds



Bristol Harbor near the Northern Threshold



Bristol Harbor looking west from Hope Street



View to the water along High Street



Walker Cove and Island near the Southern Threshold



Mount Hope Bridge

While views within the tree-lined portions of the Scenic Roadway are impressive, the most dramatic and memorable Views and Viewsheds along the roadway corridor are tree-lined, water-related, and focus on Bristol Harbor and Narragansett Bay.

These views begin at the intersection of Hope, Thames and Washington Streets, continue down State Street toward the water from Hope Street, provide a dramatic view of Narragansett Bay from Hope Street, and culminate with broad vistas of Mount Hope Bay, Narragansett Bay, Patience and Prudence Islands, the Sakonnet River Bridge, the Pell Bridge and Aquidneck Island from the Mount Hope Bridge.

The buildings that border the roadway present the range of Bristol's residential and civic architecture.

The Roger Williams University campus present a welcoming image of open space and newer buildings.



# TREES

Bristol's trees, particularly those along Hope and High Streets and on Ferry Road, are considered by many to be among the most memorable in Rhode Island. There are relatively young street trees along Hope Street north of the historic downtown; mature trees characterize the 4th of July parade route and historic downtown; and, there is a mature specimen tree canopy along Ferry Road.

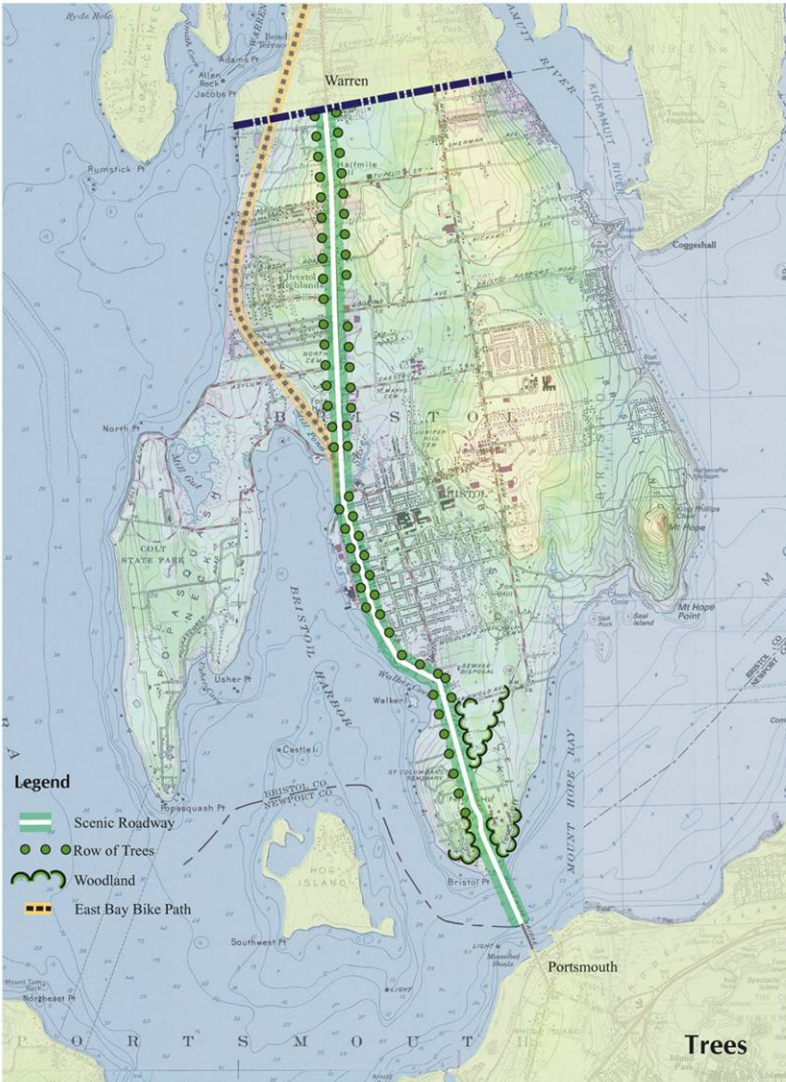
Their protection, maintenance, and eventual replacement must continue to be among the important subjects for discussion in town. Through the Bristol Tree Society, it is clear that town residents are committed to preserving their trees, providing education about them, and working to protect them from mutilation by utility companies.

Bristol's street trees are recognized by RIDOT as being extremely important, and have been the subject of a special Route 114 survey, study, and report that recorded existing conditions and analyzed maintenance needs.

The dramatic and historic quality of the roadside experience in Bristol is a fragile condition as the continuing battle with utility maintenance needs attests.

Many of Bristol's great trees are past their prime and, regardless of the quality of their maintenance and dedication of their protectors, some day they they will die or have to be removed due to storm damage.

The town's plans for timely replacement through the introduction of younger trees to take their places must proceed with care and dedication.



*A variety of species shade streets and sidewalks*



*Hope Street trees are part of the pedestrian experience*



*High Street canopy*

As a general rule, overhead utility lines and trees do not get along.

Electric power, telephone, and cable carriers all require unobstructed clearances around their overhead lines in order to insure un-interrupted service to their subscribers. Tree branches that encroach on the clearances for these lines, as they drape from pole to pole, represent potential threats to service due to storms, old age, or both.

As a result older trees are frequently disfigured and damaged by utility crews more anxious to get on with their work than with the preservation of the roadway aesthetic to which these much-loved trees contribute.

Service continues and trees suffer.

North of downtown, overhead utilities are found on both sides of Hope Street; and, on one side of the roadway along Hope and High Streets in downtown and on Hope Street and Ferry Road south of downtown. The last utility line tree trimming was in Spring 2004; the next will occur in 2008.

In preparation for the next trimming and prior to granting approval, the Town and the Tree Society should re-assess the current trimming standards, permit review process, and nature of supervision during the work.

Alternative considerations to reduce utility line clearance needs should include: (1) requiring an increase in the number / frequency of bundling clips that cluster like-lines together, and (2) requiring an increase in the number and frequency in the spacing of utility poles (closer together) to reduce the distance between poles and extent of the catenary swing between them.



Trees on Hope Street in downtown



Trees on Hope Street - overhead utilities on both sides



Trees vs. utilities: trees 0, utilities 2+



# VISUAL CORRIDOR

The Route 114 Scenic Roadway is an urban roadway passing through a range of residential densities.

Generally, views from the roadway can be categorized as (1) those from the road to and past houses and yards, fences and gardens, woods, streets and sidewalks, and the water; and (2) those of the road, contained within the road's right-of-way. These views combined are considered its **Visual Corridor**.

The Visual Corridor illustrated and proposed here is defined by the limit to which views are possible past the trees and buildings found along it. What is seen from the road becomes a part of the overall visual experience.

While seasonal changes in vegetation and light qualities modify visibility, trees and their overhead canopy and building facades and edges form the immediate visual corridor.

In non-foliage months, the absence of leaf canopy allows the sky to be more of a participant in the roadway visual experience. The importance of trees along Route 114 cannot be over-stated and the quality of their maintenance (and abuse) must continue to be of paramount concern to the town.

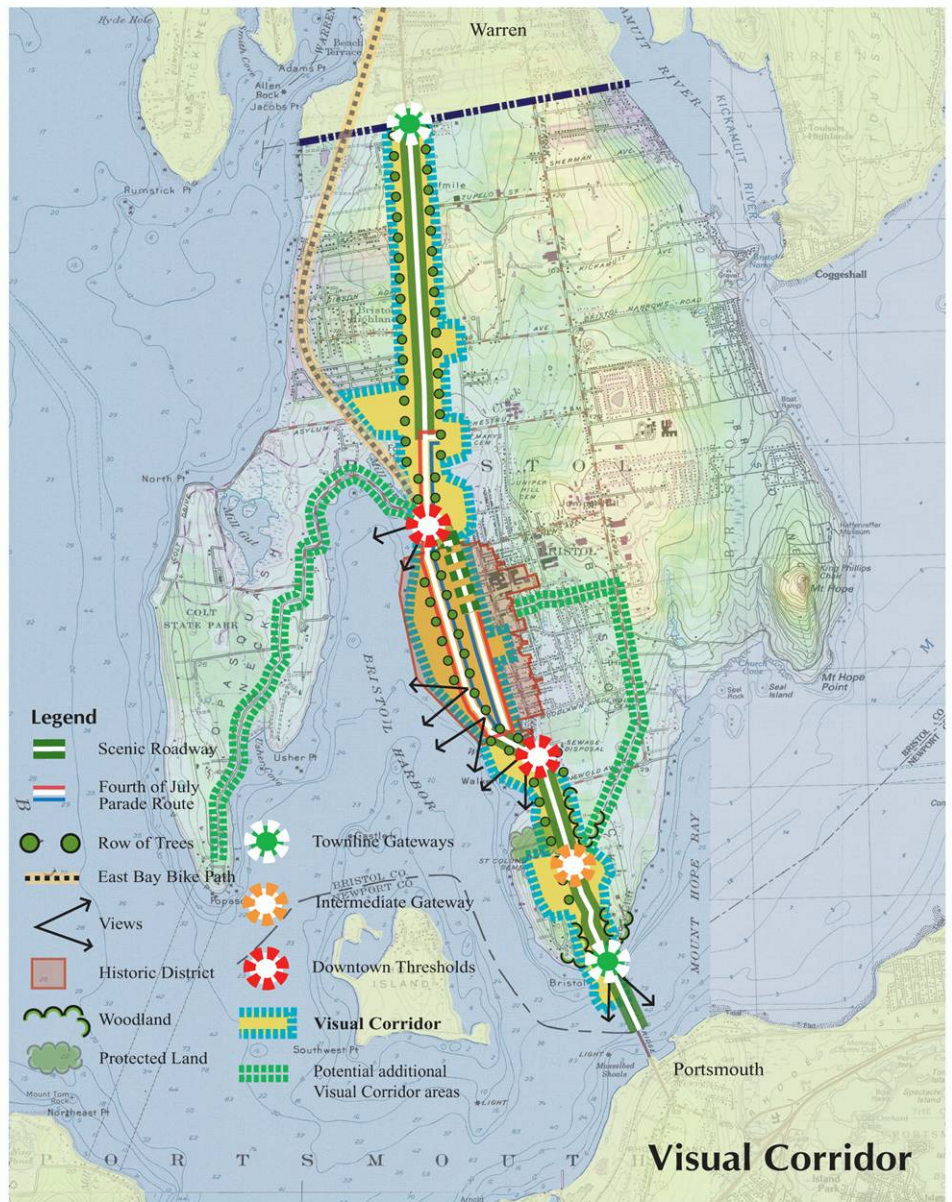
The aesthetic balance of the natural (tree) setting with Bristol's outstanding architecture sets this road apart from others in RI.

Existing historic district regulations must be carefully maintained to encourage compliance while inviting creativity.

Additional historic districts should be considered within the Visual Corridor as part of the protective devices to be set in place by the town.

And, several other beyond-the-right-of-way zones could be considered by the Town to increase the extent of Visual Corridor.

The actual definition and implementation of regulations regarding change within the Visual Corridor could be similar to the exercise of historic district regulations.



# CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT

## Stewardship Plan

The Stewardship Plan for Route 114 proposes an approach to the protection, management, and enhancement of this Rhode Island Scenic Roadway so that future travelers will experience the historic and scenic qualities of Bristol that are evident today. Since there are few aesthetic intrusions on its consistent and overall landscape beauty, maintaining the appearance of the road is the Plan's highest priority.

Key to achieving this goal is the implementation of a Corridor Management Plan by the Town that offers ways in which the roadway's intrinsic scenic qualities can be preserved. The collaboration of State Agencies and the Town of Bristol will be required to accomplish this.

The recommendations of this report include the establishment of a Scenic Roadway Corridor in which the Town will maintain review authority over development within the roadway's viewshed, an Action Plan outlining tasks and roles for all involved (citizens, the Town and State Agencies), and suggestions for site specific landscape enhancements.

## Views and Viewsheds

While the physical and visual qualities and character of the road within the right-of-way were important considerations in its designation by the Scenic Roadways Board, those same qualities of the landscape visible from it, on both sides of the road and beyond the right-of-way (its viewshed), were and are perhaps more important in the roadway's nomination by the Town, and subsequent designation, as a RI Scenic Roadway.

These views and viewsheds are mostly of private properties where change and development are controlled by the Town's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Anything that happens beyond these out of right-of-way areas is the responsibility of the Town of Bristol, not the Scenic Roadways Board.

While current zoning and development plan review have helped to preserve the historic landscape character, the Town currently does not have any viewshed regulations that will preserve those landscape qualities that supported the roadway's nomination and designation including consideration of buildings or towers that may be seen from a distance.

To protect these qualities, a Scenic Roadway Corridor is proposed as an overlay district within which any development or improvement would be subject to special review by the Planning Board to insure that those viewshed qualities are not compromised.

## Scenic Roadway Corridor

The entire length of Hope Street and Ferry Road are state roadways; and, as such, the Rhode Island Department of Transportation has responsibility for review, permitting, and design/construction activities within these rights-of-way.

High Street, a Town road, deserves the same sort of review, but at the Town level. At the Town's request, the Scenic Roadways Board will review and comment on projects or concerns brought to its attention by the Town. However, responsibility and action regarding these matters must be the Town's.

Additional opportunities for the Town to oversee beyond the right-of-way Scenic Corridor areas include the full length of Popasquash Road from Hope Street to Popasquash Point, along Metacom Avenue from Ferry Road to State Street, and along State Street from Metacom Avenue to Hope Street.

## Corridor Management Strategy - Action Plan

The Action Plan that follows on pages 30-31 outlines Stewardship tasks for the, citizens, the Town, and related State Agencies.

## Opportunity Areas

Suggestions for roadside enhancements at Gooding Avenue, Silver Creek, Walker Cove, and at Roger Williams University are presented on pages 32-35.

# The STEWARDSHIP PLAN

## Action Plan

The successful implementation of a Stewardship Plan can contribute to the further preservation of the Scenic Roadway so that its existing intrinsic scenic, historical, and cultural qualities will not be lost or compromised in the future. This will involve a number of steps and a variety of players. The Town of Bristol should take responsibility for coordinating both the steps and the players.

### 1. Establish a Scenic Roadway Corridor:

Establish a Scenic Roadway Corridor including the road right-of-way and its viewsheds as a planning overlay district and incorporate it in the Town's Comprehensive Plan

Develop criteria, design review standards, and administrative controls for review of private and public projects within the Corridor.

Consider extending Town Scenic Corridor criteria for the length of Popasquash Road, along Metacom Avenue to State Street, and along State Street from Metacom Avenue to Hope Street.

### 2. National Register & Town Historic Districts:

Continue the excellent work on District nominations and extending national and local districts.

### 3. Prepare a Landscape Management Plan:

Develop a list of native species of groundcovers, shrubs, and trees (evergreen and deciduous) appropriate for use within the right-of-way and in the Scenic Roadway Corridor. Consult with the Scenic Roadways Board for technical advice concerning appropriateness and non-invasive species.

### 4. Prepare a Tree Management Plan:

Prepare a Tree Management Plan that will include (a) Health Maintenance; (b) Trimming & Pruning Criteria; (c) Protection; (d) Remediation; (e) Removal; and (f) Replacement. The Tree Inventory Survey for trees within the Route 114 right-of-way in Warren and Bristol, commissioned by RIDOT (October 2003), tagged and located each tree and documented its condition. This valuable database is an excellent framework on which to formulate a Tree Management Plan.

### 5. Supplement the Tree Management Plan:

Plan for the eventual replacement of existing street trees with a Town Nursery.

Empower the Tree Warden to direct the Landscape and Tree Management Plans and the Town Nursery.

Establish planting criteria for new trees to minimize future utility conflicts while preserving the existing canopy character.

Establish a process so that public utilities will be required to give advance notice and receive a permit in order to trim trees within any right-of-way or on private property. Require documentation to show cause for the trimming request.

Require permits for limb or tree removal on private or institutional properties within the Scenic Roadway Corridor.

Require a Tree Warden site visit to confirm need and extent of any proposed intervention as part of the building permit process. Seek alternative solutions to trimming within the Scenic Roadway Corridor whenever possible. Impose penalties if requirements are ignored.

### 6. Gateway Planning & Enhancement:

Extend the Local Historic District north to include the Silver Creek marsh and the Deacon Nathaniel Bosworth House. This is a natural and important threshold to the downtown.

Prepare a Northern Threshold Master Plan to show how environmental protection, stone walls, trees and plant materials, informational and gateway signage, parking, interpretive markers, and visitor services, including drinking fountains for people and pets can best converge here. Facilities and services can be minimal now that the downtown Visitor Center is in operation.

Prepare a Southern Threshold Master Plan to show how similar elements can mark this important entrance to downtown Bristol.

Install Scenic Roadway signs at town Gateways.

### 7. Pedestrian Improvements:

Insure that future improvements for pedestrian use are universally accessible and in compliance with the Americans with Disability Act.

Develop and implement plans for sidewalk replacement and pedestrian-scaled streetlighting.

### 8. Signage & Interpretive Markers:

Prepare a comprehensive Interpretive Master Plan considering a coordinated historic and interpretive marker program.

Identify locations for each proposed marker.

In addition to the many historic properties and sites, include trees among elements to be identified.

Commission the design of a signage program and coordinated interpretive markers. Signs should indicate bicycle paths, parking areas, visitor facilities, information, and historic resources.

Minimize signage by consolidating messages.

## 9. Compliance with Outdoor Advertising Laws:

Rural or scenic areas are not protected under the Highway Beautification Act. Thus, Rhode Island billboard operators are allowed to clear-cut trees and vegetation within public rights-of-way to improve the view of billboards on private land. RIDOT and the Scenic Roadways Board are not empowered to make judgements on these matters.

By Rhode Island law, town and city councils have the power to regulate outdoor advertising in their city or town, as to where that advertising may be permitted, the size and kind of structures upon which it may be placed, and the subject matter.

## 10. Public Participation:

Encourage the continued participation of Town boards, commissions, volunteer organizations, preservation groups, and those with a demonstrated interest in the Scenic Roadway, its assets, and its preservation and protection.

Advise the general public about the Scenic Roadway to generate support and awareness of its history and importance.

Hold public meetings to implement recommendations of the Stewardship Plan.

Make periodic presentations to students and parent groups at local schools.

## 11. Open Space:

Review the Town's Open Space Plan strategy and policies to identify, prioritize, and preserve key farm and other open space parcels that contribute to the Scenic Roadway's intrinsic landscape qualities.

Modify the strategy and policies as appropriate, to plan for the permanent protection of these properties for the continued enjoyment of current and future generations.

## 12. Coordinate with Regional Tourism Programs:

Coordinate recently-initiated "Heritage Passage" program between Bristol and Newport with local interpretive programs and the new downtown Bristol Visitor Center.

Consider the implementation of a loop trolley for high tourism periods connecting remote parking lots at Colt State Park and at Roger Williams University through the downtown as a way to encourage visitor activity and reduce traffic.

## 13. Implementation & Agency Responsibilities:

State and Town agencies will be involved in the effective implementation of the Stewardship Plan. The Scenic Roadways Board and its Staff are always available to the Town to offer assistance or clarification in implementing the Stewardship Plan and will conduct a continuing assessment of its progress.

Agencies and their responsibilities include:

### RIDOT (within the Route 114 right-of-way):

- Public signage improvements,
- Vegetation maintenance (tree trimming),
- Roadway construction projects including re-surfacing and curb replacement,
- Curb cut applications,
- Review of private construction, signage, landscape planting, and lighting.

### RIDEM / CRMC:

Review of projects that may impact upland wetlands and coastal areas within or adjacent to the right-of-way.

### RIHPHC:

The RI Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission may advise and review conservation or modifications to some historic properties, as well as providing information for the development and location of interpretive materials.

The RIHPHC is responsible for ensuring that the use of State or Federal funds within an historic district complies with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

**Town of Bristol** (Stewards of several properties along the Scenic Roadway, responsible for operation, maintenance, and improvements):

- Develop plans, studies, and recommendations discussed above.
- Re-assess permitting process and supervision needs prior to next tree-trimming cycle.
- Extend the Historic District north to the Bull Gates and south to the Mount Hope Bridge.
- Explore expansion of ferry service between Thames Streets in Bristol and Newport.

# OPPORTUNITY AREA

## Northern Threshold - Silver Creek and Hope Street



Road edge at the Northern Threshold

The commercial activities and open parking lots on the water side of Route 114 at Silver Creek present a stark landscape that contrasts with the roadway's predominantly residential and tree-lined character.

The large, open and un-landscaped parking lots, signage, bigger buildings, and poorly maintained edges should be transformed into a more respectful transition between the northern residential areas and the more dense and historic downtown.

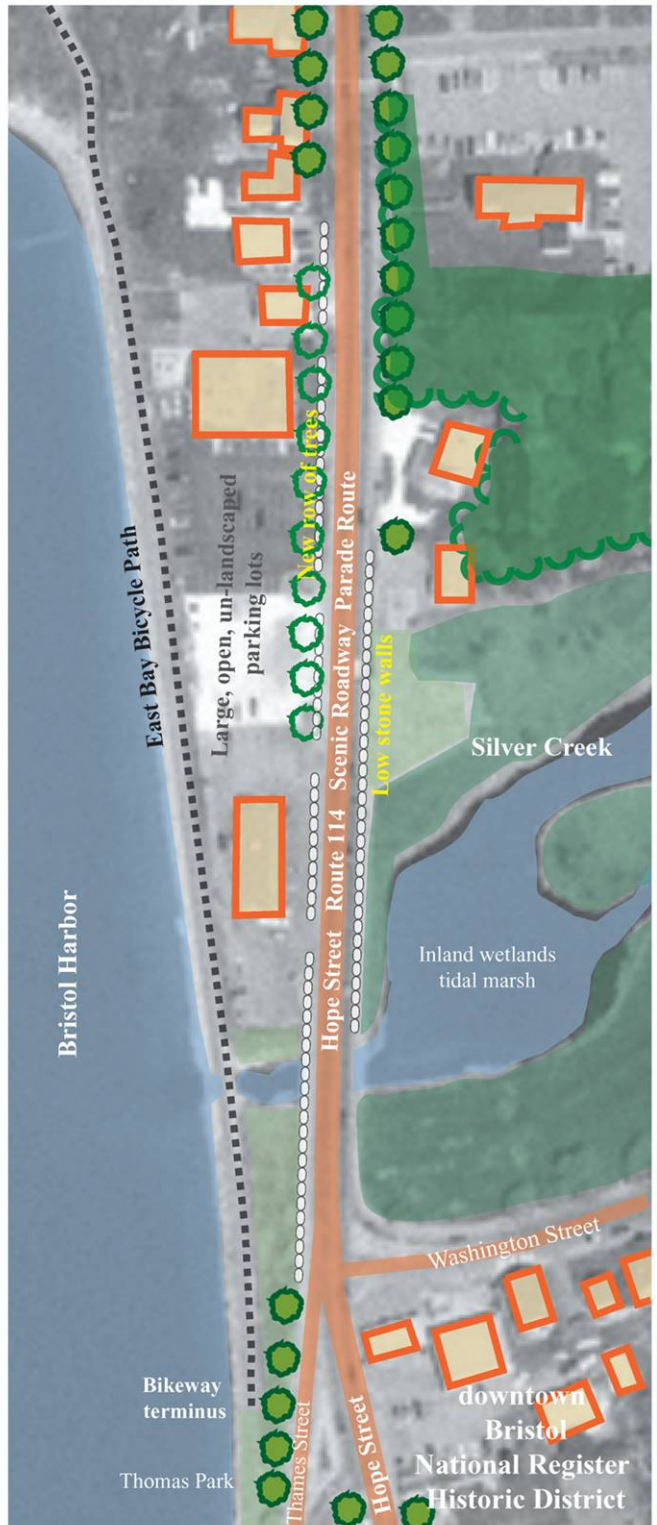
Enhancement of this Northern Threshold to the downtown should consider better edge definition of the parking lots with low stone walls, carefully selected trees, new signage, pedestrian-scaled lighting, and other streetscape improvements.

Facade improvements to existing buildings should reflect Bristol's distinctive architectural character.

The terminus of the East Bay Bicycle Path at Thomas Park should be celebrated with well-designed signage, visitor information, maps, and parking.



Northern Threshold, Silver Creek



# OPPORTUNITY AREA

the Southern Threshold to downtown  
Hope Street / Ferry Road / Wood Street  
at Walker Cove



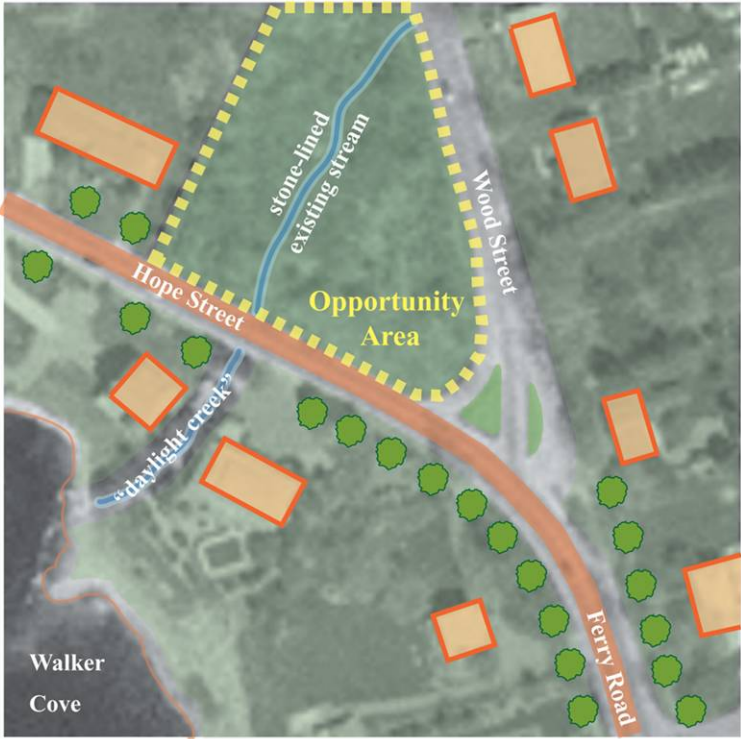
Hope Street approaching downtown with views to the water.

After crossing Mount Hope Bay with its grand water vistas, travelers proceed thru the over-branching and dramatic tree-tunnel of Ferry Road on their way to downtown Bristol.

Those leaving downtown experience the continuation of an urbane residential setting on the water's edge with grand and expansive water views of Bristol Harbor and Walker Cove.

In either direction, the two approaches to this intersection are dramatically different.

The Southern Threshold to downtown at the Ferry Road / Wood Street / Hope Street intersection is an experiential transition from the enclosed drive of Ferry Road to the openness presented at Walker Cove.



Ferry Road / Wood Street / Hope Street intersection looking north.



The dramatic trees of Ferry Road

The triangular, wooded parcel between Wood and Hope Streets at their intersection contains the open, stonewall-lined drainage stream of Walker Creek's inland wetlands that continues buried in a culvert under Hope Street emptying into Walker Cove beyond.

As noted above, this intersection is a special place and experiential transition along the Scenic Roadway, and the presence of the exposed stream gives it even more interest.

In conjunction with current plans to install a culvert, if some area of the brook was left exposed as a low-flow channel, this would create a more inviting natural habitat. As the southern of the two wetlands areas that border downtown, it presents a very different wooded, uplands wetland setting than at Silver Creek.

While it is understood that this area is being considered for development, it is hoped that all of this special area may be preserved and protected as a welcoming natural threshold to Bristol.

# OPPORTUNITY AREA

## Hope Street / Gooding Avenue Intersection



Looking north on Hope Street - trees on the residential side, none on the commercial



The commercial center at the Gooding Avenue intersection presents a significant break in the seemingly continuous border of roadside trees that are found the length of Hope Street from the Warren / Bristol Town Line to Silver Creek. The large parking lots on both sides of Gooding Avenue and the commercial buildings they serve represent a period of architecture and planning that does not balance well with the historic characteristics found along the rest of Hope Street and Bristol's historic downtown.

The paved and un-landscaped openness at these parking lots is in strong contrast with the rest of the Scenic Roadway, and their buildings are equally out of character.

The addition of a perimeter row of trees along the street edge of these commercial lots would help to maintain the character of Hope Street and improve the look and appeal of the overall shopping area. Architectural changes to the building facades that more accurately reflect the historic character of Bristol could transform this area from being a intrusive break in character to a welcome neighbor and valued aesthetic contributor to the roadside continuum.

Similar shopping areas on Route 114 in Barrington undertook a major transformation in recent years to the overall betterment of the community and the shopping experience.

This can happen here in Bristol as well.



Bus Shelter on Route 114 in Barrington



Route 114 shopping plaza in Barrington



Panoramic view of the treeless and open character of the Gooding Avenue intersection with Hope Street

# OPPORTUNITY AREA

## Ferry Road at Roger Williams University an Intermediate Gateway to downtown Bristol



Roger Williams University

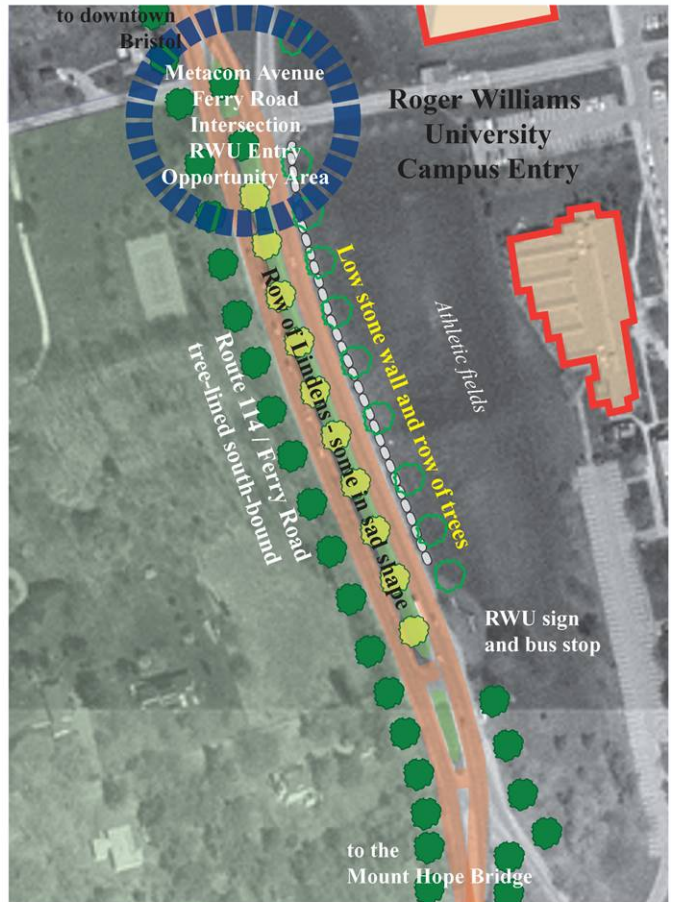
The south-bound experience on Ferry Road is one of low stone walls and over-arching tree branches. Mature trees line the west side of the road for most of its length. A row of trees in the median south of the Metacom Avenue intersection continues the tree-tunnel feeling, but they are in sad shape and deserve replacement.

The northbound lane bordering the Roger Williams University campus has only a few young trees and the land falls off toward the athletic fields and the School of Architecture building.

This lane lacks edge definition and the field's openness presents a view which could be considered a potential safety hazard for motorists and bicyclists on the road, and students on the playing field. This openness contrasts strongly with the predominantly inland tree-lined character of the Scenic Roadway.

Introducing a low stone wall that does not block the view to the playing fields and school buildings would provide a safety edge to the roadway. A row of shade trees would complement the roadway and give the university a more defined campus edge.

The Ferry Road / Metacom Avenue Intersection and the RWU Entry is a dangerous spot and the Town should work with the University and RIDOT on improvements to this challenging and important site; an opportunity to benefit both Town and Gown.



Ferry Road at Roger Williams University