

Plan for Greenways & Cycling Systems

New Haven, Connecticut



City Plan Department
City Of New Haven, Connecticut
John DeStefano, Jr., Mayor

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Introduction

Greenways and Cycling Systems proposes a system of greenways and multi-purpose non-motorized trails in New Haven. The plan, which relies heavily on existing segments and assets, is prepared in response to and support of the new Comprehensive Plan of Development and various community initiatives. Recent community efforts include the International Festival of Arts and Ideas' Greenways program in 2002 and the Share the Streets Advisory Committee in 2003.

With these programs and plans in mind, a system of Greenways would link first and foremost the City's park system but also would enhance access between residences, schools and colleges, job sites, retail stores, cultural attractions, and City landmarks. Wherever possible, segments should be developed off-road, separate from auto traffic, with the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists the priority. In other areas, a share-the-streets system will be used to enhance access to destinations, to link greenway segments and to improve overall non motorized mobility.

A system of greenways and trails can also contribute to a greater awareness of New Haven's physical setting by allowing users access to some of the City's vital, but often marginalized resources like its waterways.

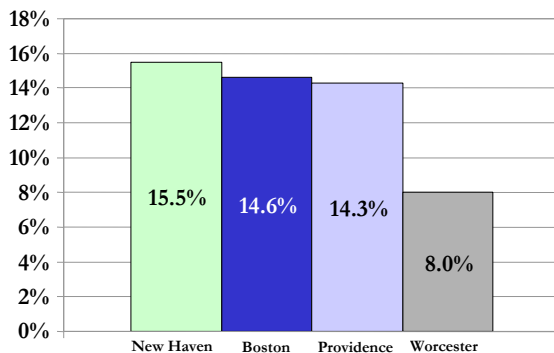
Why New Haven?

Greenways and cycling systems are proposed for New Haven for a variety of transportation, economic, environmental, public health and safety reasons. It would make available more opportunities for active recreation and enhance access to the City's existing extensive parks system. This is especially true in neighborhoods like Newhallville and Fair Haven where recreational opportunities are limited.

But perhaps what makes the system most enticing is the short distances between the existing segments. The program indeed responds to latent opportunities in many of the City's residential neighborhoods.

Transportation Benefits

From a transportation perspective, the program serves the large proportion of New Haven's population that travels to work by means other than private automobile. This means that the City can work to better accommodate the existing population to encourage more people to walk and bike to work. As shown in the table below, New Haven boasts the largest such percentage among New England cities.



New Haven has a higher proportion of journey to work by non-motorized transportation than other similar cities in New England. This includes Boston, which bills itself as "America's Walking City". (source: 2000 US Census data.)

Non-motorized transportation also helps to ease congestion in the City. In 1999, the South Central Regional Council of Governments measured congestion on highways and arterial roads across the region. Along arterial roads, seven of the 10 most significant delays in the region are found in New Haven. The most severe congestion is found in Westville and Amity, along Whalley Avenue, Amity Road and Ella T. Grasso Boulevard. Given that road widening efforts are generally not feasible nor recommended in New Haven, non-motorized solutions are extremely important.

Safety Benefits

Safety is not just important for journeys to work but also for children making their way to and from school. Twenty-four City schools are within 500 feet (roughly 2 minutes walking) of an existing or proposed trail and sixteen are within 250 feet (roughly 1 minute walking).

The Share the Streets Program has developed a series of appropriate design treatments to more safely accommodate bicyclists. It also helped develop the first dedicated bicycle lanes on City

streets. The Farmington Canal Greenway provides a safe alternative transportation choice in the Dixwell Avenue corridor where bus ridership is highest and where commuting by means other than a private automobile is a necessity.



(left) A crosswalk across a high-speed highway ramp on the Boulevard. No stop sign or warnings, just striping.

(right) A highly visible crosswalk on the Farmington Canal Greenway. Plenty of warnings for drivers and pedestrians.

Economic Benefits

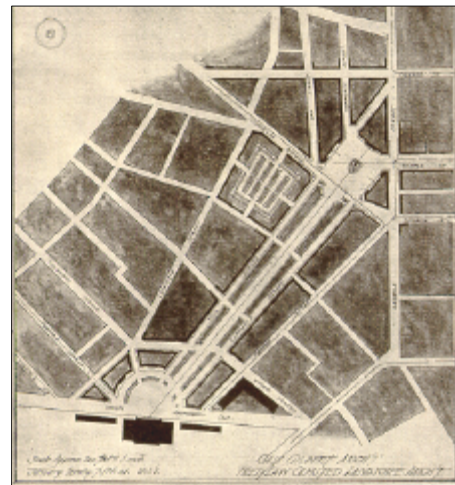
Greenways and cycling systems can provide economic benefits to the neighborhoods in which they exist. Proximity to these facilities is often cited as a desirable amenity by realtors. National studies indicate that homeowners have a higher value because of proximity to a greenway or trail. In the case of New Haven, many of the proposed facilities represent adaptive reuse of land that has been marginalized, abused or abandoned. In many instances, abandoned lands have a negative, blighting influence on their surrounding neighborhood.

Redeveloping these kinds of lands as greenways and trails, as neighborhood amenities, will improve neighborhood aesthetics and will likely have a positive influence on property values. This is examined in more detail by Lisa Fernandez in her 2003 report, *Making the Economic Case for Greenways in New Haven* (see appendix).

Historical Underpinning of Greenways

A system of greenways linking New Haven's parks is by no means a new concept. It was proposed a century ago by Cass Gilbert and Fredrick Law Olmsted, Jr. in their Report to the New Haven Civic Improvement Commission. At that time, Gilbert and Olmsted spoke in terms of parkways and on a regional basis. These concepts remain opportunities for regional cooperation to this day.

Parkways will produce the effect of extending the parks over a much greater area and will provide approaches through which people may pass from their houses to the parks and from one reservation to another, without long tedious journeys through ordinary city conditions.
- Gilbert / Olmsted Plan, 1910



Environmental Benefits

Greenways and cycling systems can also help to enhance appreciation of and foster awareness for the environment. This is especially true for those trails which follow a river. People are more likely to be conscious of environmental degradation if they can see it with their own eyes. Greenways can open those pockets of the City, which not many people see now.

More than simply reducing traffic, walk and bike commuters do not need car parking spaces at their place of work. This is important in dense neighborhoods like Downtown where parking cost and availability are major concerns. In this way, walkers and bikers can improve the City's sidewalk vitality without the correspondingly negative aesthetics of parking.

Air quality benefits are clear, but difficult to quantify. Particulates, both PM 10 and PM 2.5, encompass a number of airborne substances which originate from mobile and stationary sources. Of the 14 air quality monitoring stations in Connecticut, of which there are two in New Haven, only the Stiles Street station has recorded PM 2.5 at levels in excess of the annual standard (1999).

Particulate matter and ground level ozone – both resulting from automobile use and congestion – have been linked to numerous health effects, primarily associated with the aggravation of asthma. With asthma rates of nearly 25% among school-age children and susceptible elderly populations living in areas of compromised air quality, increased use of non-motorized transportation is one way to address the issue.



Environmental awareness of both deteriorating conditions (left) and natural landscapes (right) contributes to a citywide appreciation for the natural environment.

Public Health Benefits

Americans, increasingly conscious of the consequences of a sedentary lifestyle, are turning to walking to get their exercise. Walking not only contributes to better physical fitness, but also to emotional well-being, stress reduction, and improved self esteem. Further, *almost* everyone can walk. A club membership, expensive exercise equipment, or professional training is not required to walk around your block or through a park. Public Health officials have increasingly been joining the walking bandwagon and now actively promote walking. Based on its research, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has scientifically shown that providing access to places for physical activity increases the level of physical activity in a community. Fulfilling this pent up demand for walking and making places for walking attractive and safe are an integral part of greenways and trails planning in New Haven.

Program Objectives

Given the exceptional opportunities and well-established benefits of greenways and cycling systems, the program is designed to meet a number of objectives. In keeping with the new comprehensive plan, these objectives enhance New Haven's sense of place and neighborhood identity. By building on segments of pathways that already exist, the plan is further designed:

- * to connect New Haven's extensive system of parks across the City, allowing easier access from all neighborhoods;
- * to provide additional circulation options between residences, schools and colleges, jobs, commercial areas, cultural attractions and City landmarks;
- * to offer routes for modes of transportation that are cleaner, cheaper and healthier than motorized vehicles including biking, skating, walking, horseback riding, etc.;
- * to contribute to a greater awareness and knowledge of New Haven's abundant natural resources and unique geographical features including coastal / harbor areas and traprock ridges; and
- * to provide access to scenic areas along the coastline and scenic landscapes across the region.

Proposed System

The trails and greenways system envisioned in this plan totals 35 miles. This includes on-road shared routes, waterside boardwalks along the harbor, hiking trails mounting the City's signature trap rock ridges and dedicated rights-of-way in park settings. Criteria used to determine the route included: (a) compatibility with existing systems; (b) feasibility of improvements; (c) community-identified proposals; and (c) potential transportation benefits.

Approximately 44% of the proposed greenway and trail network already exist. The proposed system consists of the following elements:

Farmington Canal Greenway and Vision Trail

Route: Long Wharf Pier – Downtown – Yale — Science Park — Hamden

Neighborhoods: Long Wharf, Hill, Downtown, Wooster Square, Dixwell, Newhallville

Opportunities: Vision Trail completed, Farmington Canal Greenway under development

Length: Total: 3.71mi Existing: 44% (1.64mi)

Harborside Trail

Route: City Point – Long Wharf – Belle Dock – East Shore Park – Lighthouse Point

Neighborhoods: Hill, Long Wharf, Hill, Annex, East Shore, Morris Cove

Opportunities: SCRCOG Plan, ConnDOT Harbor Access Plan. Upcoming Port Land Use Study

Length: Total: 8.31mi Existing: 26% (2.16mi)

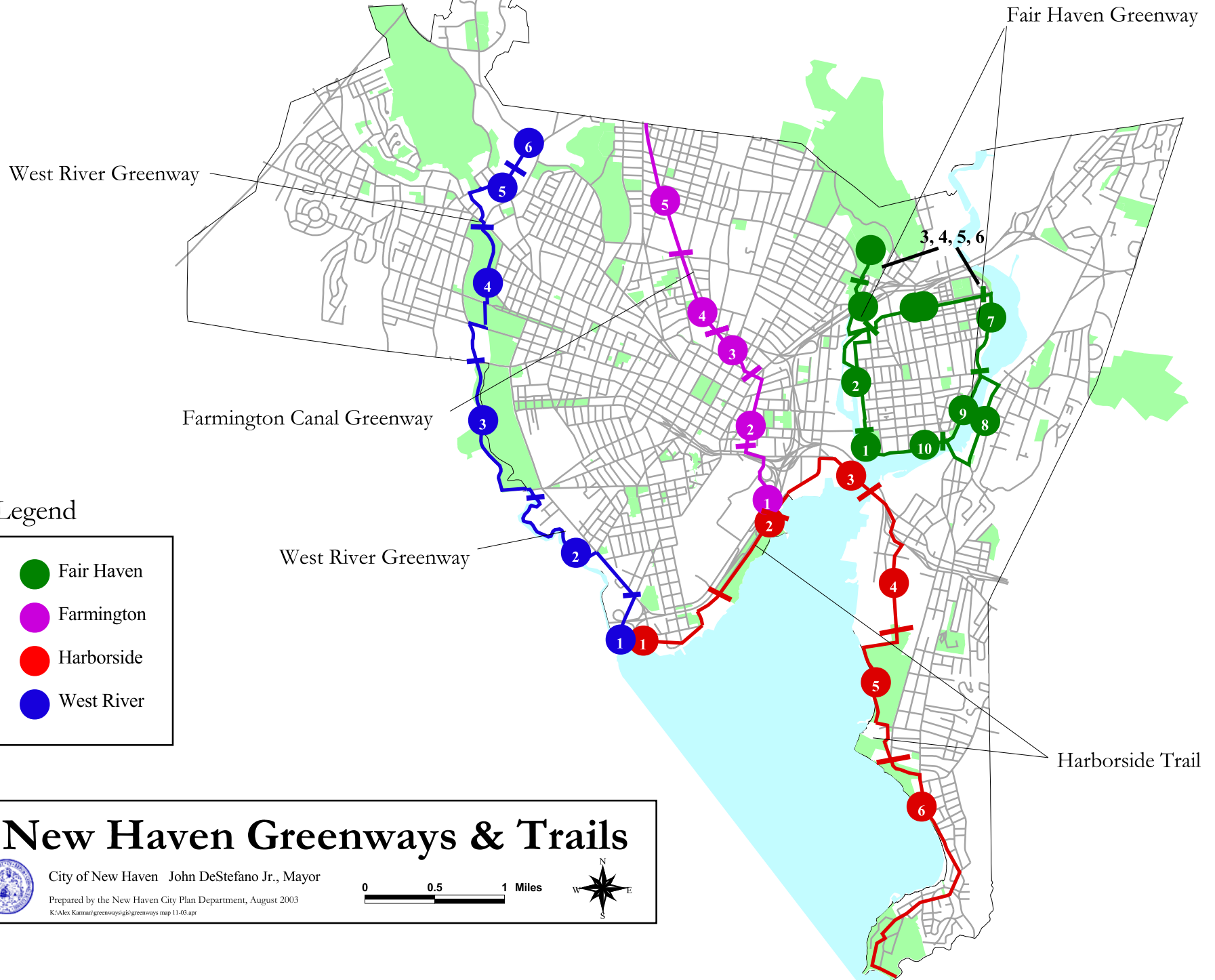
Fair Haven Greenway

Route: Criscuolo Park – East Rock Park – Dover Beach Park – Quinnipiac River Park –
Quinnipiac Avenue – Annex – Ferry Street Bridge

Neighborhoods: Fair Haven, East Rock, Fair Haven Heights, Annex

Opportunities: River Street MDP, Potential RR R.O.W. acquisition

Length: Total: 11.37mi Existing: 37% (4.25mi)



Legend

- Fair Haven
- Farmington
- Harborside
- West River

New Haven Greenways & Trails



City of New Haven John DeStefano Jr., Mayor

Prepared by the New Haven City Plan Department, August 2003

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West River Greenway

Route: City Point – West River Park – Edgewood Park – West Rock – SCSU
Neighborhoods: Hill, West River, Edgewood, Westville, West Rock
Opportunities: West River Memorial Park Master Plan, Proposed Boulevard MDP
Length: Total: 9.43mi Existing: 64% (6.29mi)

Benefits to a Comprehensive Approach

The economic and community benefits of each system would be furthered by a comprehensive approach to marketing and organization. The Farmington Canal Line is instructive. The significance and potential use of the New Haven segment is enhanced by the connection to Hamden, the cohesive signage system, improvements and general understanding of the entire system that spans two states. Likewise, the New Haven system is better seen as a citywide program than as a group of individual segments.

Connections and Share the Streets Improvements

In addition to the above, the City's "Share the Streets" program has pushed forward the development of the first dedicated bicycle lanes on City streets. The 1.95mi Orange Street Bike Route leads from the New Haven Green, by Yale University, across the Farmington Canal Greenway, and through the East Rock Neighborhood to East Rock Park. With Share the Streets, the City has proposed a series of design guidelines for bicycle facilities that can be applied to improve any of its streets. The priority streets are those which link to the greenways system and/or link destinations and commuting patterns.

The trails proposed, along with the Orange Street Bike Route, will create a network of 35 miles of pedestrian and biking trails that will not only enhance recreational activities but also improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists going to school and work.

East Rock – Downtown

Route: Orange Street – Humphrey Street – Whitney Avenue – Sachem Street –
Prospect Street – College Street
Total Length: 1.95 miles.