

# Downtown Fall River Walk Audit:

WalkBoston & MassINC  
August 2021



# Walk route details & participation

- **Section 1**

*S Main St → Columbia St*

- **Section 2**

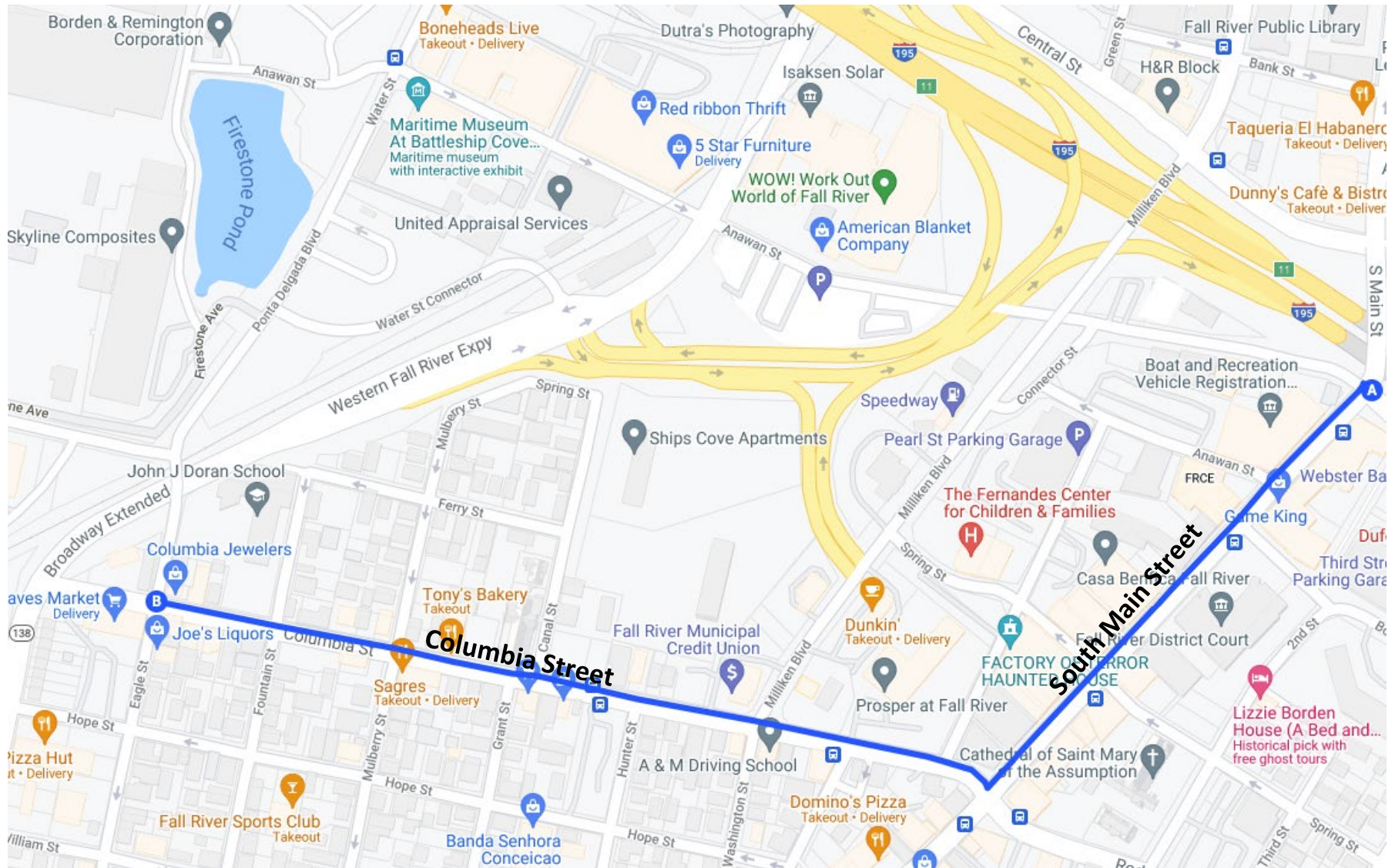
*Ponta Delgada Blvd → Water St → Anawan St → Pocasset St*

- **Participant number: 18**

- Everyone walked on Tuesday, some in the morning, most at 2pm, and a few at 9pm.

# Section 1

# Section 1 Walking Route



# Section 1: Features that support walking

## General

- So much potential!
- Architectural and historical character.
- Where there is shade, people are gathering and socializing.



# Section 1: Improvement opportunities

## General

- Litter.
- Cracked and uneven sidewalks and bricks/cobblestone.
- Overgrown vegetation and weeds.
- Lack of evening activity.
- Missing banners on light posts.
- No bike infrastructure.
- Winter sidewalk maintenance.
- Inconsistent design elements take away from the historical appeal of this area.



# Section 1: Recommendations

## General

- Conduct regular clean ups to keep sidewalks and drains free of debris. Partner with local businesses to maintain the sidewalk in front of their properties. If planters or other containers are not being used for their intended purpose, remove them so that they do not get used for litter.
- Provide more trash receptacles where needed and provide regular clearance schedules.



# Section 1: Recommendations

## General

- Create a sidewalk inventory of Downtown Fall River and begin repairing and replacing damaged sidewalks.
- Conduct regular maintenance of vegetation on City-owned land and work with private property owners to ensure plantings do not extend onto the sidewalk.
- Add in commemorative banners on lampposts where they are missing to create a continuous line of festive decoration.

# Section 1: Recommendations

## General

- Partner with property owners to create short-term programming in under-used lots and in vacant properties and consider programming that keeps the space active through the evening. Hosting evening performing arts events, dance nights, music performances and recreational days are all ways to draw activity in so that people feel safe and comfortable walking through this area in the evening knowing that there are many other people doing the same.



*In Downtown Fitchburg, an underutilized lot next to a parking garage was converted into a public space for seating, games, food vending, and occasional music performances.*

# Section 1: Recommendations

## General

- Add in bike lanes (and at least sharrows) where they are missing and provide bike parking at convenient locations throughout downtown.
- Work with businesses and property owners to clear sidewalks and crosswalks of snow and ice within 24 hours of snowfall.
- Standardize streetscape elements like streetlight fixtures, curbstones and awnings.

# Section 1: Features that support walking

## South Main Street

- Wide sidewalks.
- Some stores with creative storefront appeal.
- Outside the senior facility, people gathered in the open space area.
- Gerald Lawton park has a lot of potential.
- Viva Fall River mural.



# Section 1: Improvement opportunities

## South Main Street

- Lots of tripping hazards.
- Despite availability of trash receptacles, litter lined the sidewalks, drains and empty planters.
- The old payphone booth doesn't work.
- Missing benches/seating.
- Trees are young and not many awnings to provide shade.
- Little storefront appeal because of many empty storefronts and service-oriented businesses.
- Loud traffic.
- Risky crossings between crosswalks.



# Section 1: Recommendations

## South Main Street

- Create a sidewalk inventory noting uneven and cracked sidewalks, metal post stumps, and loose pavers and use this inventory to begin replacing worn stretches of sidewalk and filing down stumps and other tripping hazards.
- Add in seating along the sidewalk where space permits, especially near bus stops.
- Add in flexible seating in Gerald Lawton park so that people can make use of this park and rest in the shade, and so that the park is better equipped to host small events that may require differing space and seating options.

# Section 1: Recommendations

## South Main Street

- Use placemaking strategies to enhance vacant storefronts. Install window art installations, historical photography, lighting, etc. to make the facades seem more welcoming to people walking.
- Consider using empty ground floor retail spaces for business incubator programs so that aspiring entrepreneurs can pilot their business ideas downtown without having to commit to a long-term lease. Publicity about pop-up businesses running in these spaces may also help attract more foot traffic, which would serve all downtown businesses.

# Section 1: Recommendations

## South Main Street

- During the summer months, provide shade canopies along heavily paved and poorly shaded sidewalks. This is also an opportunity to work with local artists to employ creative installations that provide protection from the sun and make for interesting and attractive displays that help draw people downtown.
- Either remove the defunct payphone booth or convert it into a flyering booth for public events and other announcements.



# Section 1: Recommendations

## South Main Street

- Add inexpensive buffers like large planters between the walking path and moving traffic to create a better sense of protection from moving traffic. In the long run, add more trees where possible to support noise and physical buffering between walkers and moving traffic.
- Add traffic calming mechanisms like speed cushions/bumps, raised crossings, speed signage and pedestrian signage approaching crosswalks.

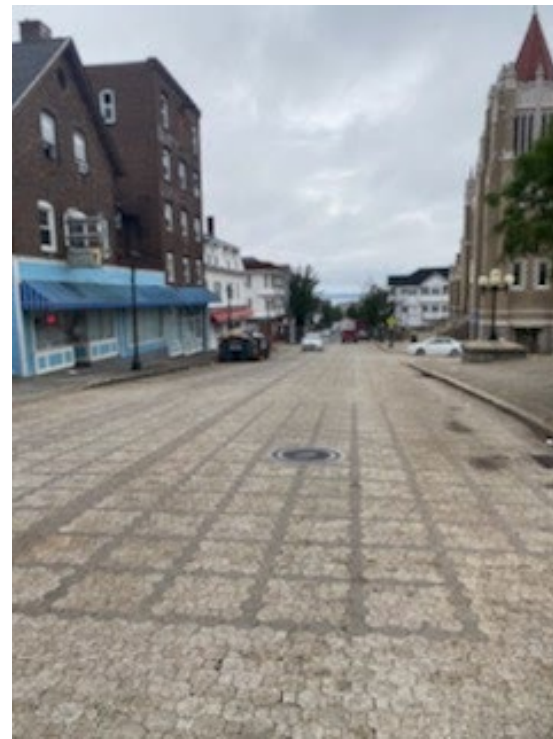


*In Downtown Haverhill, large planters with trees and flowers provide a decorative element to the main street as well as a sense of protection from moving vehicles for pedestrians.*

# Section 1: Features that support walking

## Columbia Street

- Church park is a large, shaded gathering space with a lot of potential.
- Well lit at night.
- Cobblestones (though need repair).



# Section 1: Improvement opportunities

## Columbia Street

- Park needs renovation.
- Overgrown weeds, litter.
- Sidewalks are narrow, especially on trash pickup day.
- Accessibility: obstructions at crosswalks and sidewalks; lack of curb ramps.
- No evening activity.



# Section 1: Recommendations

## Columbia Street

- Work with the church that owns this plaza and other interested community partners to organize funding and make necessary repairs, including of the paving, vegetation and seating areas.
- Seek permission to use this space to host public events (like music and theater performances, market days with local businesses, and other public forums). Creating programming for this space will help draw people there and foster a greater sense of activity and community.



# Section 1: Recommendations

## Columbia Street

- Conduct regular maintenance of vegetation and litter on public lots, sidewalks, tree pits and drains. Encourage private property owners to keep the edges of their properties well-maintained as well.
- Create a sidewalk and crosswalk inventory to note where sidewalk obstructions exist and where ADA compliant crossings are needed so that these changes can begin being made.



# Section 1: Recommendations

## Columbia Street

- Keep the walking path as clear of obstructions as possible; for example, move trash receptacles to the edge of the sidewalk so that they do not constrain the walking path excessively. On trash day, encourage people to keep trash and recycling bins as close to the curb as possible.
- Where space permits, widen the sidewalk.



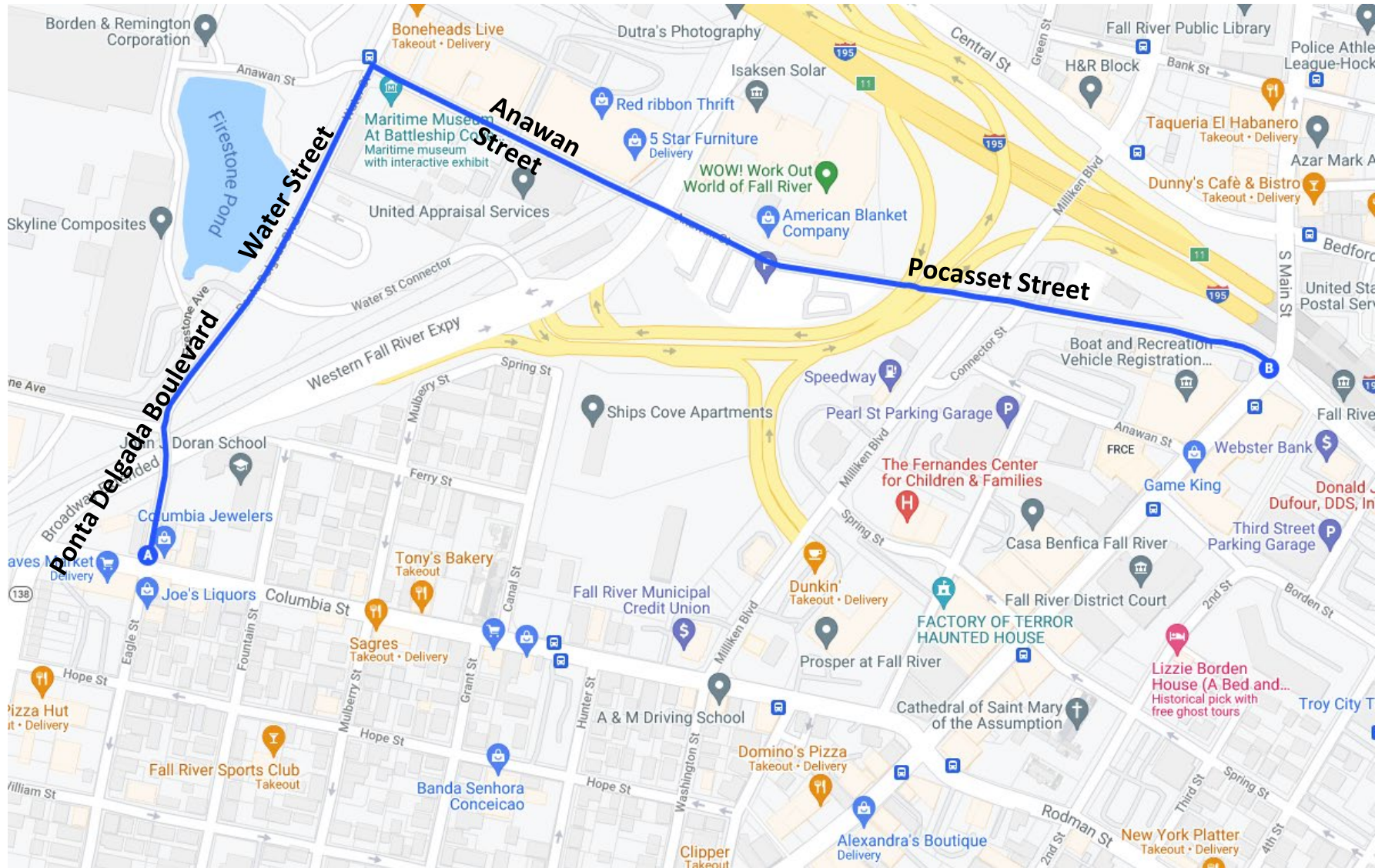
# Section 1: Recommendations

## Columbia Street

- Host year-round evening programming on Columbia Street as well as through the rest of downtown: Columbia Street serves as an important connection from Main Street towards the waterfront. Consider pedestrianizing the street on some evenings so that it can host performances and night markets. While these events may be more attractive through the summer, winter night markets and festivals would bring welcome activity to the downtown area. Other recommended improvements, such as increasing crosswalk accessibility and plaza renovations, will support these efforts.

# Section 2

# Section 2 Walking Route



# Section 2: Features that support walking

## General

- Lots of destinations:
  - Gates of the City
  - Battleship Cove
  - Maritime Museum
  - The Narrows
  - Great local restaurants and pubs
- Signage to advertise tourist destinations.
- Activities on Ponta Delgada.
- Views of the pond.
- Takes you by the repurposed mill buildings.
- Bike lanes and signage.



# Section 2: Improvement opportunities

## General

- Safety: though many destinations for pedestrians, there are no clear ways to get to them safely.
  - Without pedestrian wayfinding, pedestrians feel isolated and trapped in web of highways.
- Apart from Gates of the City, no comfortable places to sit.
- Lack of bike parking.



# Section 2: Recommendations

## General

- Install low-cost buffers between walkers and fast traffic, including trash receptacles, bike parking, flower planters and other plantings. Also stripe traffic lanes to 10' or 11' where they are wider, as this helps to slow speeds.
- Consider partnering with artists to paint interesting designs on the streets (for instance, painting fish swimming along the path to the Maritime Museum) leading to important destinations to help people navigate to these destinations and help the streets feel more human-scale, which encourages walking and discourages drivers from speeding.
- Build bump outs to reduce pedestrian crossing times at wide and fast-moving intersections. Also consider raised crosswalks to slow traffic speeds and increase pedestrian visibility.

# Section 2: Recommendations

## General

- Add in wayfinding signage alerting walkers to the museums, historical sites, scenic views, parks and other noteworthy destinations. Wayfinding signage should indicate distances in time to destination rather than mileage, as this is easier to interpret for most people.
- Make the known underground railway stops in Fall River marked points of interest with signage leading there and informative markers at each site. This not only has value in highlighting the many points of interest near Downtown Fall River, but also recognizes some of the history of the Black community in Fall River.
- Add benches along the sidewalk where space permits and in open spaces so that there is some seating available for walkers to stop and rest.
- Add bike parking near the destinations along this route.

# Section 2: Improvement opportunities

## Ponta Delgada Blvd + Water St

- Poison ivy overgrowing on the bridge.
- Dangerous crossing: Missing sidewalk with no crosswalk on the bridge.
- Fast traffic with little protection means that this stretch is uninviting for pedestrians.



# Section 2: Recommendations

## Ponta Delgada Blvd + Water St

- Remove all poison ivy from around the bridge and ensure that other vegetation continues to be maintained so as not to impede on the walking path.
- Add bollards or planters to make pedestrians feel better protected from moving traffic.
- Install bike lanes on both sides of the street, as intended through the Shared Winter Streets & Spaces funding. Narrowing driving lanes to accommodate bike lanes will slow traffic and make this road safer for pedestrians as well.

# Section 2: Recommendations

## Ponta Delgada Blvd + Water St

- Add signage to alert approaching drivers of pedestrians crossing on the bridge.
- Add a crosswalk at the intersection with Ferry Street when the western side sidewalk comes to an end.
- As intended through the Shared Winter Streets & Spaces grant, T up the Ferry Street approach to improve sightlines and help drivers slow down to see approaching cyclists and pedestrians.

# Section 2: Improvement opportunities

## Anawan St

- Not well lit at night.
- Brief 2-way portion causes confusion.
- Intersection is dangerous: not enough crossing time, fast traffic.
- Tree stumps, overgrown vegetation and metal tripping hazards.
- Buildings need to be repainted for wear.
- The street is uneventful and the side streets are underutilized.



# Section 2: Recommendations

## Anawan St

- Add lamp posts along Anawan Street to improve evening visibility.
- Create a sidewalk inventory to list all metal post stumps, grates, tree stumps, and overgrown vegetation. Use this inventory to start trimming back vegetation and filing down stumps and other tripping hazards.
- Encourage building owners to repaint facades or work with artists to create murals.
- Re-evaluate crossing times at the Route 138 intersection and consider implementing leading pedestrian intervals so that pedestrians can begin crossing before cars start turning.



# Section 2: Recommendations

## Anawan St

- Repaint the striping on the 2-way portion of the road to make clear that there are two lanes there, one moving in each direction.
- Consider making the 2-way block of Anawan Street 1-way as the rest of the street is. With only one 10' traffic lane, the rest of the roadway could be repurposed for parking or placemaking efforts outside the Narrows.
- Explore turning cobblestoned side streets into pedestrianized streets to maximize the use of the space behind the mill complexes to create spaces for gathering and activity.



# Section 2: Improvement opportunities

## Pocasset St

- Overgrown weeds, especially under the overpass.
- Need benches, shade and other comfortable elements for this uphill trek.
- Few trees or buffers from traffic.



# Section 2: Recommendations

## Pocasset St

- Conduct regular maintenance of vegetation and litter and ensure they do not impede the walking path.
- Add seating, trees, flower planters, trash receptacles and wayfinding signage throughout this stretch so that walkers have opportunities for rest and know how far they are from popular destinations as they walk.



# Additional improvement opportunities

## Central St

- The intersection of Central Street with Route 138 is wide, intimidating, and noisy for pedestrians. It feels dangerous to cross the street. Two highway overpasses loom above.
- Wide crossing at Green Street.
- The sidewalk along Central Street from Green to Durfee is narrow.
- The block of Bedford Street to Main Street has good street design but feels uninviting because of the lack of activity on the street and the low interactivity of the buildings.

# Additional improvement opportunities

## Central St

- Underutilized green space (owned by the Fall River Housing Authority) along an inactive and uninviting stretch of road that feels dangerous for pedestrians, especially children, older adults and people with disabilities. This area has a lot of potential, especially with its views of the Taunton River.



# Additional recommendations

## Central St - Rt 138 Intersection

- Increase walk signal lengths to give pedestrians ample time to cross the intersection safely.
- Paint a street mural or textured cross hatching on the intersection to indicate that it is a place of pedestrian priority.
- Work with artists and lighting experts to install creative lighting and public art, especially under the highway, which feels especially unsafe and uncomfortable to walk under.
- Narrow crossing distances at this intersection by extending the curb.



# Additional recommendations

## Central St

- Turn the green space owned by the Housing Authority into a park with equipment for young people and seniors, and benches and tables for everyone to use. In addition to being a benefit for the entire city, the upgradation of this park would directly benefit the low-income housing residents next door. There is enough of a footprint here to both create a major new public park as well as some new development that could create more stewardship of the park and that stretch of Central Street.



# Additional recommendations

## Central St

- Install bump outs to reduce the crossing length at the Green Street intersection.
- Consider widening the sidewalk between Green Street and Durfee Street to create enough space for pedestrians, especially those using mobility devices and strollers, to move comfortably.
- Utilize the plaza on the corner of Bedford Street and Main Street for public seating or small scale programming.