

# Nashua Tree Streets Neighborhood



## Analysis and Overview

September 2012

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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*Special thanks to the many Nashua residents who gave their time and energy to this effort.*

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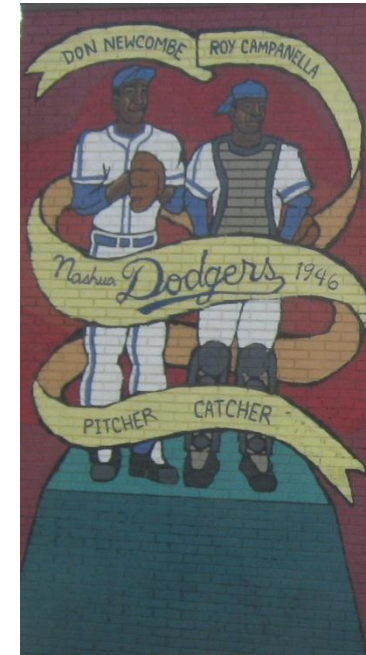
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Tree Streets Neighborhood Analysis and Overview is to identify what makes the Tree Streets a good neighborhood, to articulate the opportunities for improvement and to present a variety of ideas that can make the Tree Streets neighborhood a great place to live.

The Tree Streets Neighborhood Analysis and Overview is one of several area studies the City has completed in the past few years. The recommendations found in most area studies primarily focus on the physical attributes and deficiencies of an area, such as traffic circulation, open space, and land use. As part of the initial data collection for the Tree Streets Neighborhood Analysis and Overview, the 2010 Census data had just become available and was invaluable in understanding the demographic, social and economic issues in the neighborhood. Additional data was collected to better understand the physical condition of the public and private space, as well as availability of public amenities such as parks and public transportation. Surveys, public meetings, and one-on-one interactions with neighborhood residents added to the information documented as part of the analysis.

The data and public input for the Tree Streets Neighborhood Analysis and Overview highlights the complex social and economic issues impacting the quality of life in the neighborhood as a whole. In recognition of the unique dynamics present in the neighborhood, this analysis addresses more than the physical attributes of the area, and takes a holistic look at the neighborhood including social and community issues.

The Analysis and Overview begins by defining the characteristics of a great neighborhood in five broad categories: Mixed Uses, Mobility, Unique Character, Social Community and Safety. Examining the Tree Streets Neighborhood through this lens shows that the general physical characteristics of the neighborhood are fairly sound, and can be improved with targeted and routine maintenance. The other qualities of the neighborhood, particularly social community and safety, need significant assistance and should be considered priorities for this neighborhood to be considered a great place to live in the future.





*The Tree Streets Neighborhood is bounded by Kingsley Street on the south, Main Street on east, Woodlawn Cemetery on the west and Bronstein Apartments and the Millyard on the north.*

## **WHAT MAKES A GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD?**

There are many definitions of the qualities that make a great neighborhood, from Jane Jacobs in her influential book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) to the latest best practices encouraged by the American Planning Association. What they have in common are five main attributes: mixed uses, ease of mobility, unique character, social community and safety.

### **Mixed Uses**

Great neighborhoods have a mix of uses. Residential, entertainment, educational, commercial, employment and recreational activities are all available in the immediate vicinity -- preferably within walking distance. Mixed use neighborhoods have a diversity of types and sizes of residential uses, such as single family, duplex and multi-family. Buildings are a variety of ages, accommodating different people and businesses that can afford different levels of rent. The residents in a mixed use neighborhood are diverse in age, ethnicity and income.

### **Mobility**

Great neighborhoods offer mobility for all their residents and visitors. All modes of transportation are accommodated, including walking, biking, public transportation and individual transportation. Streets within the neighborhood form a connected network, which disperses traffic by providing a variety of pedestrian and vehicular routes to any destination. Sidewalks are available throughout the neighborhood; they are accessible, well maintained and wide enough for two people to comfortably walk side-by-side. Biking is accommodated on street and or on separate paths and is an accepted form of transportation in the neighborhood. Public transportation is proximate, frequent, dependable, clean and safe. People with cars have enough room to park without a hassle, roads are clearly marked and traffic moves along.

### **Unique Character**

Great neighborhoods have their own identity. They don't look like Anywhere, USA but instead have memorable features. Some neighborhoods are unique because of their architecture or their landscaping. Others are unique because of their history, their demographics or their social attributes. People who live in a great neighborhood recognize their uniqueness and have a sense of pride.





### **Social Community**

A great neighborhood is a place where people are connected to each other. People turn first to family, friends, and neighbors when problems arise in their lives. In a great neighborhood there are people to turn to when in need. Social capital is the collective or economic benefits that result when people work together as a group. Networks of civic engagement, such as neighborhood associations, are an essential form of social capital. Individuals who are strongly connected to their neighbors tend to play a more active role in shaping the destiny of their community. This increase in social capital will result in communities that are safer, healthier and more vital.

### **Safety**

Great neighborhoods are safe and are perceived to be safe. People of all walks of life need their home and neighborhood to be a haven, a place where they come to at the end of a long day, put their feet up and unwind; a place to relieve the stress of everyday and rejuvenate for tomorrow; a place where a knock on the door brings joy and not fear. People can go outside at all times of day or night in a safe neighborhood. It is a good place to raise children. Children can go out to play with other children without fear of predatory behavior.

Overall, a great neighborhood is a place residents are proud to come home to. People feel connected, build bonds and experience a true sense of place. Great neighborhoods do not form overnight, but instead are established slowly over time as community bonds are formed and a sense of pride evolves. Community results when the physical, social and economic needs of its people are successfully addressed.

**The Tree Streets Neighborhood Analysis and Overview** examines the five attributes of what makes a great neighborhood using data from the 2010 Census and a variety of other sources. In addition, perceptions of residents and leaders obtained through surveys and community meetings are included as a gauge for the qualities of the neighborhood. Taken together, the data and community input provide a picture of where the Tree Streets Neighborhood stands today.



## **WHAT MAKES A GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD: MIXED USES**

Great neighborhoods support a mix of housing and business activities all easily available within the area. Residential uses support a variety of small commercial enterprises, and there are opportunities for recreation and other activities. Diversity in housing type (single family, duplex and multi-family) and in ownership (owner-occupied or rental) is important. Buildings are a variety of ages, accommodating different people and businesses that can afford different levels of rent.

With respect to the Tree Streets neighborhood, the term mixed uses includes a mix of uses, diverse housing types, and varying housing sizes.

In this section we examine:

- HOUSING
- LAND USE
- A NEW DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY







### **MIXED USES: HOUSING**

An aging housing stock and a high number of rental properties and vacancies are just some of the observations that residents and community leaders have identified about housing in the Tree Streets neighborhood.

The Tree Streets neighborhood has some of the oldest housing stock in the City of Nashua. Most of the neighborhood was constructed before 1900. As shown in the map on the next page, the neighborhood is laid out in a grid pattern and houses are located on small lots averaging less than one-quarter acre. Houses are situated close to the street, most with no more than a ten foot setback.

The neighborhood includes close to 500 principal buildings (exclusive of garages and other outbuildings). Of these, approximately 55% were constructed as single family dwellings, 40% as multi-family and 5% of the structures were built for non-residential uses (commercial, institutional, etc.).

Of the roughly 280 single-family houses in the neighborhood, approximately 30% were constructed prior to 1880. The period from 1880 to 1900 saw the greatest amount of construction during which roughly 60% of the single-family homes were built. Construction in the area dropped off significantly after 1900 as fewer developable lots were available. Only about 10% of the single family homes are dated post-1900, most of this due to replacement of earlier structures.

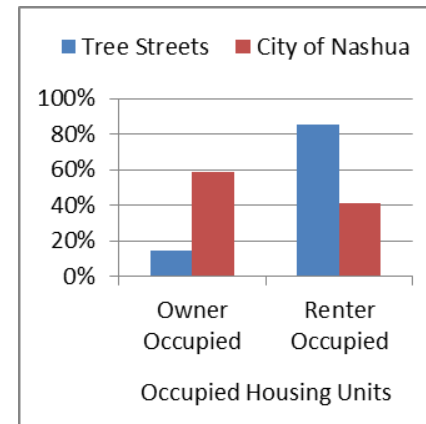
Perceptions from residents and community leaders regarding the housing stock range from an appreciation of the numerous historic homes, commercial buildings and old mill buildings that still remain intact and in adequate condition, to observations of vacant and run down properties that do not provide a welcoming sense of place.

Other factors, such as the impact of the economy, also contribute to perceptions about the neighborhood. Some of these include:

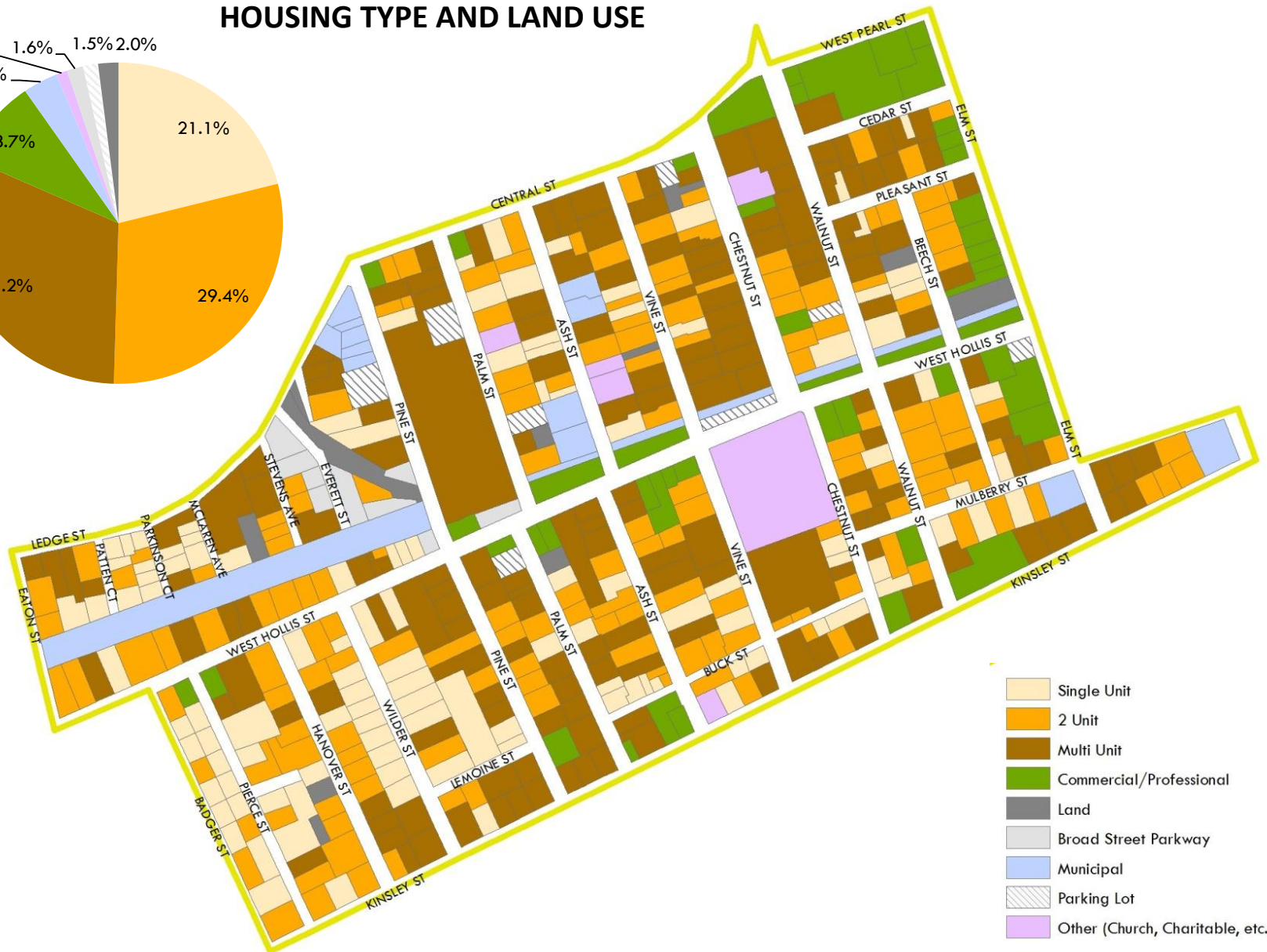
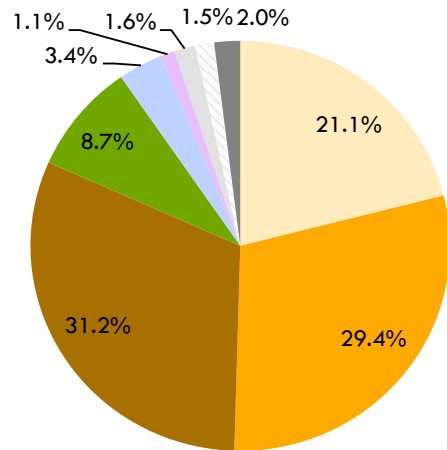
- Tenants are often underemployed or unemployed, and more people are living together to make ends meet.
- Reduced income results in less landlord investment.
- Illegal apartments are an ongoing issue.
- Bedbugs have become a huge issue in the past three years, which is challenging for both tenant and landlord due to the costs of properly addressing the issue.

In addition to aging housing stock, other issues in the Tree Streets neighborhood center on the number of rental properties and the vacancy rates. According to the 2010 US Census, only 15% of the housing units are owner-occupied compared with 59% in the rest of the City. With 85% of the housing units in the neighborhood available as rental units, the condition and quality of the housing stock often depends on property management and investment strategies. In order to prevent the issue of “absentee landlords” the City requires an owner to live no more than 25 miles from the property, or have a property manager that meets the requirement.

Along with a large percent of the housing stock as rental property, according to the 2010 Census, the area has a vacancy rate over twice as high in the Tree Streets (13.7%) as in the rest of the City (5.7%).



## HOUSING TYPE AND LAND USE



MIXED USES

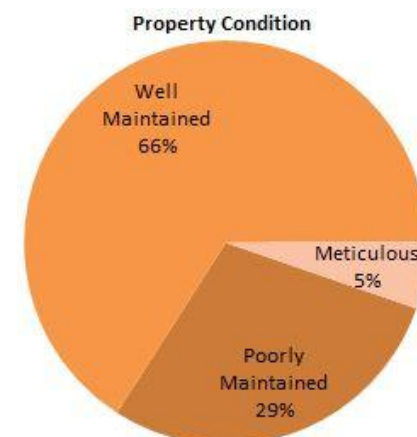
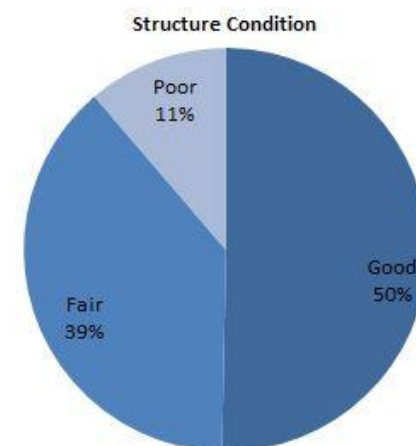
City of Nashua Department of Building Safety Inspectors assessed the general condition of structures and properties in March and April of 2011. Structures were rated as Good, Fair or Poor, based on obvious exterior defects, level of maintenance required, and whether the building appeared structurally sound. Properties were rated as Meticulous, Well-Maintained or Poorly Maintained based on visual inspection.

The charts below display the structure and property condition ratings for the properties assessed by City Inspectors.

Property Type	Structure Condition			Property Condition		
	Good	Fair	Poor	Meticulous	Well-Maintained	Poorly Maintained
Single Family Residential	60%	35%	5%	13%	68%	19%
Two Family Residential	51%	38%	11%	3%	71%	26%
Multi Family Residential	44%	41%	15%	3%	59%	37%
Non-Residential	50%	37%	13%	3%	67%	29%

Overall, the structures in the neighborhood are fairly good condition. Only 11% were rated as “Poor”. 95% of single family homes were rated as good or fair compared with 81% for multi-family structures.

Property conditions overall rated somewhat lower with 29% identified as “Poorly Maintained”. 19% of single family homes were rated as poorly maintained compared with 37% of multi-family homes.







There are many opportunities to improve the quality of the housing stock and help property managers to increase the variety and affordability of housing options through implementing programs that focus on property maintenance and education.

#### Property Maintenance:

- Work with landlords to maintain and enhance their properties.
- Work with Code Enforcement to educate landlords about code enforcement regulations to proactively address violations.
- Establish a relationship with home improvement retail stores to improve the neighborhood's appearance at discount prices.
- Establish a grant program for property owners to make improvements including painting, siding and roofing.

#### Education:

- Establish a program to coordinate hiring carpenters at reasonable rates to renovate houses while teaching a trade to teenagers who are not considering college.
- Educate residents about proper steps involved in removing lead from their property.
- Educate residents about their rights as renters to live in properly maintained rental units.
- Translate the current "Nashua Housing Authority Referral List" into Spanish and Portuguese and widely distribute this list.
- Establish a program to assist landlords and renters to deal with bedbugs to help prevent and resolve the problems.

## MIXED USES: LAND USE

The Tree Streets neighborhood contains a variety of land uses. While the neighborhood is primarily residential, it is dotted with non-residential uses such as churches, corner stores and nearby schools. The neighborhood is also within walking distance to downtown which includes amenities such as the library, restaurants, and the bus station. Commercial areas are also accessible by foot along West Hollis and Main Streets; companies such as Axsys and Resonetics on Simon Street are close by. The Millyard also has a variety of small businesses.

### **The Palm Square Example**

In 1886 the Moody, Estabrook & Anderson Shoe Company built a factory between Pine and Palm Streets that manufactured 2,000,000 shoes annually at its peak, the most productive under one roof in the country at that time. Along with the Nashua Manufacturing Company, it provided many jobs in particular for people who lived within walking distance throughout the Tree Streets neighborhood. The establishment of this massive shoe factory contributed to the formation of one of Nashua's and New Hampshire's most culturally rich and diverse neighborhoods. In more recent years, Batesville Casket, the largest U.S. casket maker, produced high-end burial caskets since the early 1970s at the Palm Street facility. In May 2005 Batesville announced plans to relocate all its Nashua facilities south and closed its doors in March 2006. Some 200 employees lost their jobs.

In 2006 the 177,000 square foot building was acquired by Palm Square, LLC. Palm Square is a prime example of a mixed use building. The first floor is public space, including an atrium with palm trees, waterfalls, and plantings, Estabrook Grill, with great food and atmosphere, and small retail spaces. The remainder of the building is 145 apartments above and 10,000 square feet of commercial space in the lower level.

Palm Square serves as a model for positive change in the Tree Streets neighborhood. Rents are affordable, people are drawn to Estabrook Grill from outside the neighborhood, and residents at Palm Square are proud of their new home and expect their neighborhood to be safe. The one issue still to be resolved is the limited parking for Estabrook Grill customers, which the City is interested in solving in collaboration with the new owner.



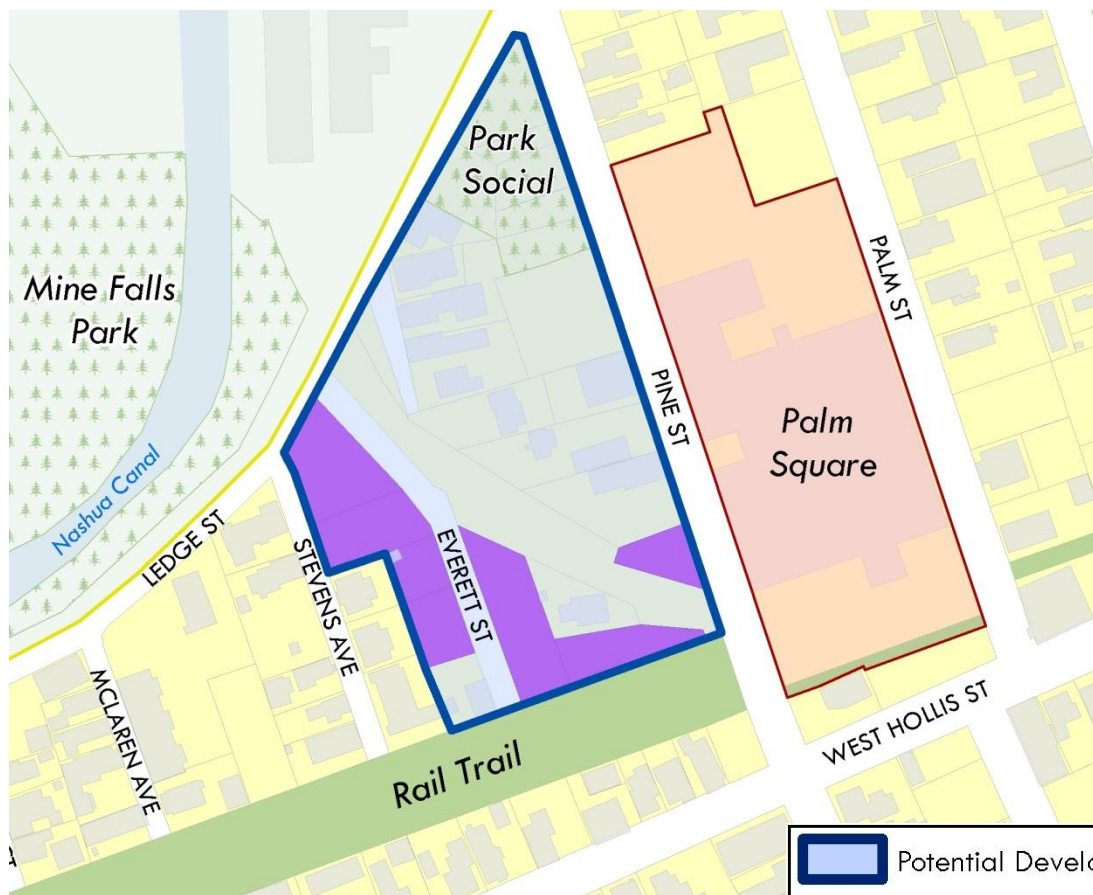


Park Social at Labine concept plan

### **MIXED USES: NEW DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY**

The Broad Street Parkway has been on the drawing board for many years and is finally coming to fruition. In the 1990s it was designed as a four lane road connecting Broad Street at exit 6 to Kinsley and West Hollis Streets. Once the City received federal approval for the road layout in 1997, acquisition of needed properties began. In 2002 the design was reconsidered and ultimately scaled down to one lane in each direction. A number of properties that were purchased in the Tree Streets neighborhood in anticipation of the four lane road are no longer needed for the two lane road.

In 2009 the City was successful in securing \$1.5 million from the HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) for investment in the Tree Streets neighborhood. In February 2010, a fire destroyed the Labine building, a once beautiful 1900 flat iron building at the corner of Ledge and Pine Streets. The City saw the opportunity to construct a park at that location and purchased the site with NSP funds. The Labine building was comprised of four properties, not all contiguous, so the City also acquired the two houses on Pine Street that practically touched each other and the Labine building. These properties, combined with the properties the City acquired for the four lane Broad Street Parkway, comprise a portion of the 4.5 acres (see map on the next page).



It is generally agreed that the best reuse of the 4.5 acres is a primarily residential neighborhood with a mix of commercial uses based on demand. Artists' lofts, home offices, and neighborhood scale shops are envisioned. Given that the Broad Street Parkway will triple the vehicular traffic on Pine Street between Ledge and West Hollis Streets, the interconnection between Pine Street and the 4.5 acres is critical. The Tree Streets Neighborhood Analysis and Overview is essential to identifying the attributes of this new block. The design of the new block needs to consider the demographics of the future residents the City wants to attract.

-  Potential Development Opportunity Area
-  City of Nashua Owned Property within Potential Development Opportunity Area
-  Palm Square Mixed-use Property





### **WHAT MAKES A GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD: MOBILITY**

Great neighborhoods offer mobility for residents and visitors. All modes of transportation are accommodated, including walking, biking, public transportation and individual transportation. Streets within the neighborhood form a connected network, which disperses traffic by providing a variety of pedestrian and vehicular routes to any destination. Sidewalks are available throughout the neighborhood; they are accessible, well maintained and wide enough for two people to comfortably walk side-by-side. Biking is accommodated on street and or on separate paths and is an accepted form of transportation in the neighborhood. Public transportation is proximate, frequent, dependable, clean and safe. People with cars have enough room to park without a hassle, roads are clearly marked and traffic moves along.

In this section, we examine:

- Streets and Sidewalks
- Heritage Rail Trail
- Parking
- Public Transportation

## MOBILITY: STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

### Streets

Community leaders, staff and residents identified the one-way street system as an issue that needs to be addressed. Many of the streets in Downtown Nashua were converted to one-way movement in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s as a means of moving higher volumes of traffic and relieving congestion through the downtown areas without incurring a large capital expense. Typically streets were converted in pairs, one in each direction (such as Kinsley and West Hollis Streets). Many side streets were converted to a one-way pattern in 1972.

In the 1990s, downtown advocates associated one-way streets with the decay of downtown retail. There are many pros and cons worth evaluating as these decisions are made. One-way streets allow for improved signal timing, on street parking, and fewer conflicts between people and cars. However, they also encourage faster speeds, higher traffic volumes, and decreased business exposure. The 2003 Nashua Downtown Master Plan recommended converting as many one-way streets to two-ways as possible using a tiered approach. While the Broad Street Parkway project will reconfigure the currently two-way Pine Street to be one-way southbound, it will also redirect traffic through the downtown area, providing an opportunity to convert some one-way streets without the fear of causing additional traffic congestion.

Traffic Volumes
Kinsley Street: 12,000
West Hollis Street: 11,000
Central Street: 7,700
Pine Street: 4,800 (south of West Hollis Street)
Palm Street (one-way NB): 400 (north of West Hollis Street)
Chestnut Street (one-way SB): 3,200 (north of West Hollis Street)



## Sidewalks

Residents are well-served by the number and generally good condition of sidewalks that run along almost every street throughout the neighborhood.

City of Nashua Department of Building Safety Inspectors assessed the general condition of sidewalks, structures and properties in March and April of 2011. Sidewalks were rated “Good”, “Fair” or “Poor” based on two factors: obstructions (utility poles, hydrants, overgrown vegetation, or snow) and general condition (smoothness, number and severity of cracks, and heaving/misalignment).

The majority of the sidewalks inspected during March and April were rated Good (70%), with 23% rated Fair and 7% rated Poor. Most of sidewalks are in fair or good condition; however they are interspersed with numerous telephone poles and trees making travel difficult. Residents note that improvements to amenities such as ramps at pedestrian crossings and improvements to sidewalks should be made to make the neighborhood more pedestrian friendly. Some sidewalks are completely obstructed on trash pick-up day. The highest priority areas are Central and Ledge Streets, followed by West Hollis, Pine and Palm Streets. Much of the highest priority areas will be addressed as part of the construction of the Broad Street Parkway.

Some opportunities to improve the sidewalks in the area include:

- Relocate poles and signs during reconstruction projects (such as the Broad Street Parkway).
- Replace sidewalks in poorest condition with ADA compliant sidewalks.
- Establish bulky-item pick up days for oversized items.





## SIDEWALK CONDITIONS



### **MOBILITY: HERITAGE RAIL TRAIL**

The Heritage Rail Trail traverses the Tree Streets and connects the neighborhood to the various on-and off-street trail systems maintained by the City. The impetus for the Heritage Rail Trail came in 1991 when the federal government passed the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), landmark transportation legislation that required the expenditure of public transportation funds on alternative transportation. The City of Nashua applied for the first round of Transportation Enhancements (TE) funds, and was awarded \$900,000 to acquire 1.3 miles of abandoned rail corridor, and to design and construct the Heritage Rail Trail. The City provided 20% of the funding, as is required for TE funds. The Heritage Rail Trail was completed in 1999, and now serves as a major non-motorized transportation corridor for the densest residential area of the City.

The existing corridor from Main Street to Pine Street is 16 feet wide. From Pine Street to George Street it averages 82 feet in width. The existing corridor is busy all the time, and provides an alternative for residents to travel to and from work, school, shopping, and the Nashua public bus system. Statistics indicate that 27% of most vehicular trips are less than 1 mile from origin, and 40% of vehicular trips are less than 2 miles from origin. The significant amount of use of the Heritage Rail Trail west of Main Street is indicative of the demand for such non-motorized corridors as an alternative to vehicular use.

Although the Heritage Rail Trail provides an excellent alternative east/west transportation route, it is perceived as dangerous, especially at night, and many residents do not allow their children to utilize it unsupervised. Specific concerns are that the area is overgrown, providing hiding places for criminal activity, and there is a lot of debris that needs to be cleaned up.

There are many opportunities to improve the real and perceived safety of the Heritage Rail Trail. These include adding lighting, increasing police presence, constructing community gardens along rail trail, and reactivating the “Adopt a Trail” program.



### **MOBILITY: PARKING**



The neighborhood currently faces significant parking challenges. The Tree Streets were designed and developed prior to the widespread use of automobiles, when building lots were not designed to accommodate parking. The City of Nashua does not permit overnight street parking, so consequently many home owners have paved over their existing small lawns and backyards to create parking spaces for their vehicles. This situation has been compounded by the fact that many homes have been converted into multi-family dwellings generating an even greater demand for parking on small lots.

Based on a standard of 2 spaces per unit for single unit residences and 1.5 spaces per unit for multi-unit residences, the neighborhood has:

- 2,315 spaces needed for residential parking
- 1,980 off-street spaces available
- 335 additional spaces needed
- 497 curbside spaces available for daytime parking

These figures do not include the needs of non-residential properties, and represent a scenario where all housing units are occupied. Census estimates of vehicle availability within this neighborhood show a higher percentage of housing units with no vehicle available (26%) as compared to city-wide (7%). In addition, only 15% of housing units in the neighborhood have 2 vehicles available as compared to a city-wide estimate of 40%.

A parking analysis has been completed based upon the number of housing units and required parking spaces on a block level. According to this analysis some blocks have a parking surplus and others have a significant deficit.

Many front yards have been paved over to accommodate additional parking spaces. However, some of the paved over front yards are not used for parking at all, but may have been converted because it is easier for landlords to maintain. This is most common at multi-family housing sites. Elected officials and staff have expressed concerns about the current lack of sufficient parking in this area. However, only 20% of respondents to the Consolidated Plan Survey indicated that parking is a significant problem.

There are limited opportunities for new parking sites and facilities within the neighborhood. However, some solutions include:

- The City could subsidize parking fees at the Elm Street Parking Garage for Tree Streets residents.
- Vacant parcels on some streets are already being used for parking; the City could purchase those properties to provide a public surface parking lot within the neighborhood.
- Work with landlords to monitor on-site parking spaces. Enforce illegal parking spaces on lots and removal of non-operating vehicles.
- Lift parking restrictions on weekends. Nashua City Ordinance prohibits overnight parking between the hours of 12 midnight to 6:00 a.m. except in 2-hour blocks on any city street.
- Work with City and Nashua Police Department to determine feasibility of an overnight parking program in the neighborhood. This could include parking stickers and require parking on alternate sides of the street based on odd and even days.

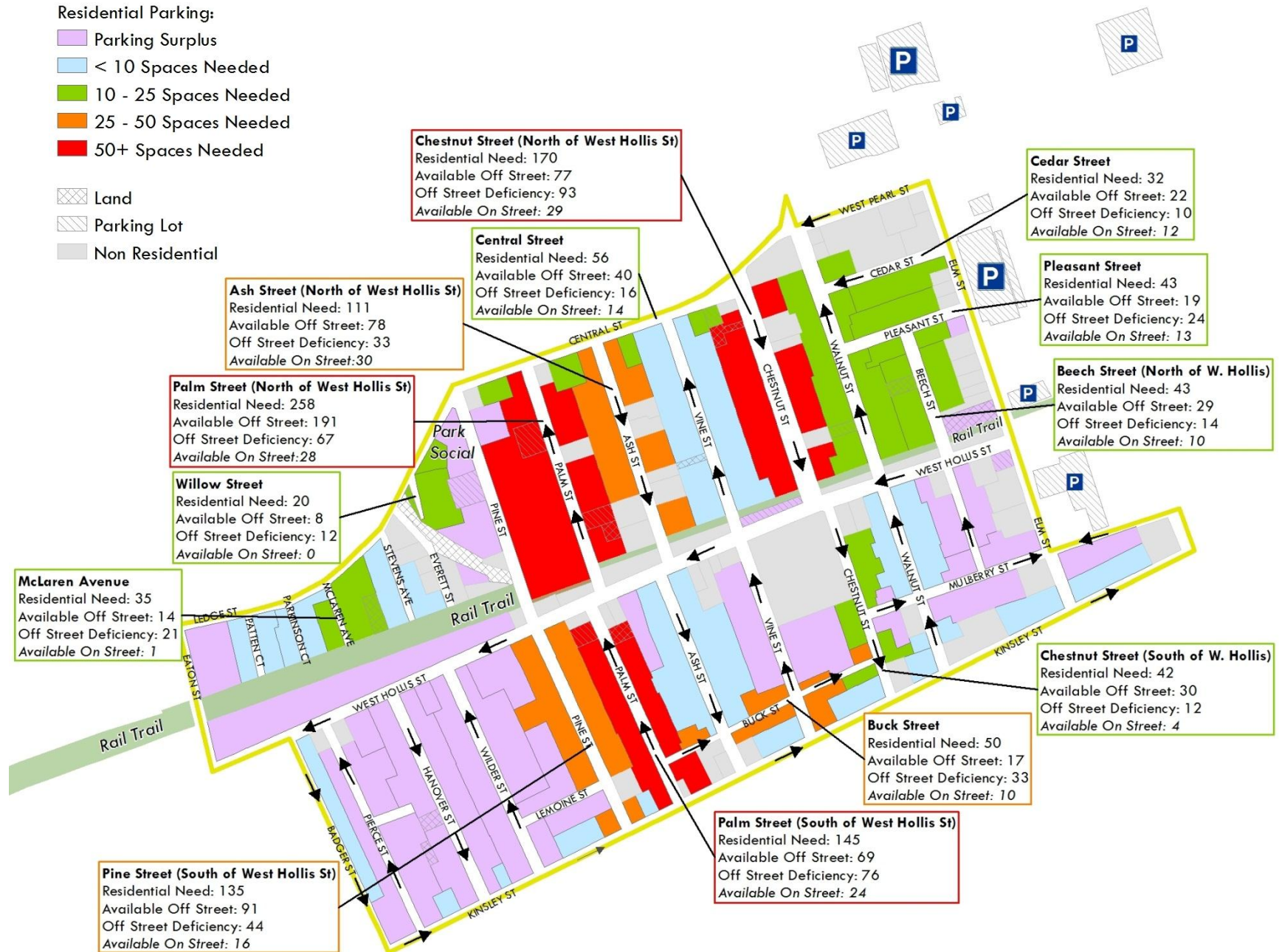




Residential Parking:

- Parking Surplus
- < 10 Spaces Needed
- 10 - 25 Spaces Needed
- 25 - 50 Spaces Needed
- 50+ Spaces Needed

- Land
- Parking Lot
- Non Residential



### **MOBILITY: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The neighborhood is well served by the Nashua Transit System, with 10 bus stops located throughout the area. In addition, the Transit Center is located just outside the neighborhood and provides wide access to the various services and commercial centers throughout Nashua.

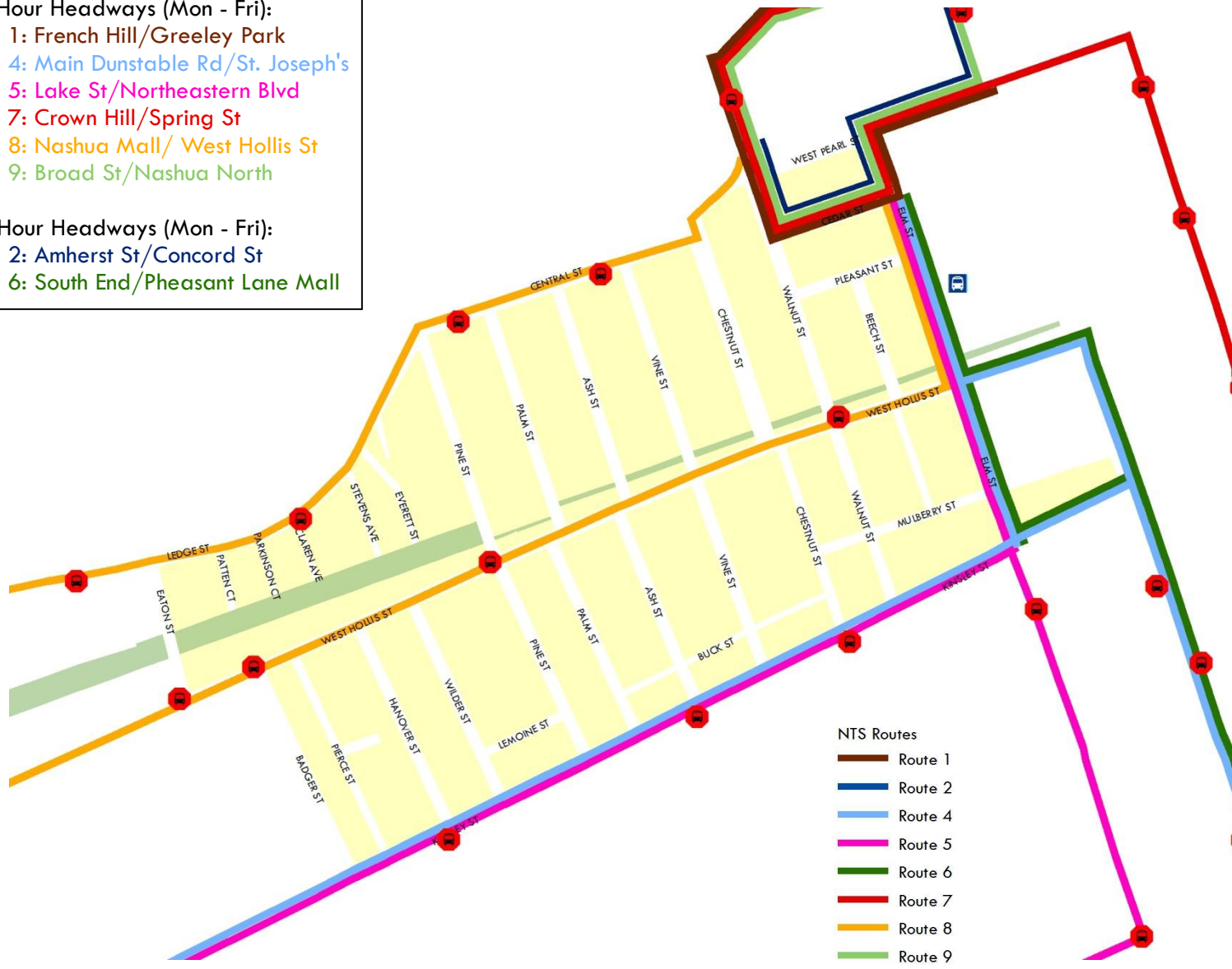
The NTS runs Monday through Saturday. During the weekdays, headways (the frequency at which the bus runs) are one hour on all routes except Route 2 (Amherst St/Concord St) and Route 6 (South End/Pheasant Lane Mall), which have half hour headways. All Saturday routes have one hour headways, and no routes run on Sunday.

Opportunities to enhance services include reducing headways during peak hours and adding Sunday routes. Amenities, such as covered shelters should be considered for select locations, such as in front of Palm Square. That location would also benefit from having the ability for the bus to pull out of traffic.



**One Hour Headways (Mon - Fri):**  
 Route 1: French Hill/Greeley Park  
 Route 4: Main Dunstable Rd/St. Joseph's  
 Route 5: Lake St/Northeastern Blvd  
 Route 7: Crown Hill/Spring St  
 Route 8: Nashua Mall/ West Hollis St  
 Route 9: Broad St/Nashua North

**Half Hour Headways (Mon - Fri):**  
 Route 2: Amherst St/Concord St  
 Route 6: South End/Pheasant Lane Mall



NTS Routes

- Route 1
- Route 2
- Route 4
- Route 5
- Route 6
- Route 7
- Route 8
- Route 9

NTS Facilities

- Bus Stop
- Transit Center



## **WHAT MAKES A GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD: UNIQUE CHARACTER**

Great neighborhoods have their own identity. They don't look like Anywhere, USA but instead have memorable features. Some neighborhoods are unique because of their architecture or their landscaping. Others are unique because of their history, their demographics or their social attributes. People who live in a great neighborhood recognize their uniqueness and have a sense of pride.

The Tree Streets Neighborhood is founded on its rich history and distinctive architecture, as well as the unique characteristics of the people who live there. Current residents say that the Tree Streets have a unique neighborhood feel and a diverse ethnic history. Community leaders recognize that the unique culture and ethnic diversity present in the neighborhood are important aspects of the neighborhood to preserve. There are pockets where neighbors express familiarity and comfort with at least one of their neighbors. In speaking with residents they tended to be most familiar with other residents on their block.

In this section, we examine:

- History
- Architecture
- Demographics







## **UNIQUE CHARACTER: HISTORY**

### **1800s to WWII**

The Tree Streets neighborhood is one of most historically rich and diverse areas within the City of Nashua. This area initially took shape in the early half of the nineteenth century during the height of the Industrial Revolution. Local textile prospectors from the Village of Nashua within the Town of Dunstable, NH sought to capitalize on their close proximity to the Nashua and Merrimack Rivers by establishing textile mills. One of the most notable textile mills established within this era was the Nashua Manufacturing Company (NMC). Soon after its inauguration in 1823, people far and near descended upon the City hoping for a better life. During the middle of the nineteenth century, the area experienced its first massive wave of foreign immigration from Ireland and Quebec, Canada.

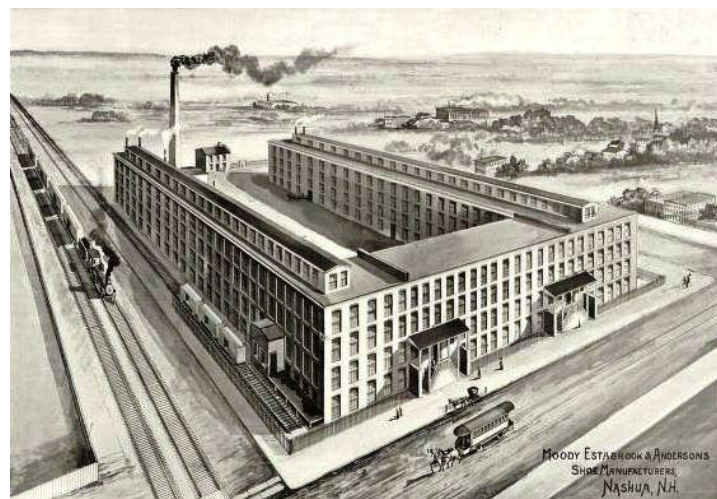
In order to accommodate the influx of new workers, NMC devised a complex plan for their immense tract of land that helped lay the foundation for the Tree Streets neighborhood. NMC began designing road networks and public parks as well as subdividing plots of land in a grid like pattern. The company opted to orient these features toward their structure as a means to increase accessibility. Some of the roadways laid out within this era include Elm, Walnut, Chestnut, and West Hollis Streets. A majority of the early workers residing in the tenement style housing constructed by NMC were young single women from farms across the northeastern United States. Along with these structures, NMC also established churches, libraries, schools, and boarding houses to help create both a healthy and happy community. To further increase profitability and access to their business, NMC began a financial partnership with the Nashua and Lowell Railroad company to transport passengers and freight to the area. This line was completed in the 1830s. The area also received another critical transportation route when the Worcester and Nashua Line was constructed along West Hollis Street in 1845.

The rapid population increase was sustained via the construction of new workforce boarding houses as well as an adequate amount of jobs attributed to the heightened success of the textile industry. The Irish immigrants primarily settled within the High Rock area of Nashua (near High Street) and by 1856 represented roughly 20% of the City's population. The French Canadian immigrants mainly settled just south of NMC and soon found employment as more and more industrial development began to open up on the south side of the Nashua River.

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, a vibrant French Canadian community commonly known as "French Village" appeared within this area. The historic St. Louis de Gonzague Church located on the southern end of West Hollis Street is just one reminder of the impact this population had on the City.

The manufacturing industry continued to rise after the Civil War which led to the development of further housing stock to accommodate the already densely populated area and the next wave of immigrants. Along with nearby Manchester, NH and Lowell, Massachusetts, Nashua became a major destination for Greek immigrants.

This new wave of Greek immigrants primarily settled within Myrtle Street and West Pearl Street just south of the mills and continued to migrate into surrounding areas as the years passed. The late nineteenth and twentieth century brought further European immigration to the Tree Streets. People primarily from Eastern Europe settled in the small High Rock neighborhood and sought work at the nearby mills. However, the textile industry that had virtually sustained the City over the past century would soon be in a state of decline and in turn impact the social and economic composition of the City.





### WWII to 1970

Despite the fact that NMC diversified their product line toward the end of World War II, the company fell into disarray due to competition with the southern United States and overseas markets. By the time the company folded in 1949, nearly a quarter of the City's industrial workforce lost their jobs. The Nashua, NH Foundation acquired the building soon after the company closed and subsequently leased and sold the facilities within the mill to a number of industries. During the latter half of the twentieth century, an urban renewal project razed several of the tenement style buildings adjacent to the mill which once housed thousands of workers. This area was replaced with a large scale public housing project, now known as the Bronstein Apartments.

### 1970s to Today

Today much of the French Canadian and Greek population has relocated to other areas and over the last 40 years has been replaced by an Hispanic population. Several Hispanic specialty shops are present in the area including convenience stores, restaurants, and barber shops. The evolution of the neighborhood continues today as it did in the 1800s.

There are opportunities to promote and enhance the historic and current diversity of the neighborhood and strengthen the social connections within the neighborhood. Some of these ideas include:

- Utilize the Rail Trail to display the cultural history of the area. Utilize the Heritage Rail Trail to depict a timeline showing the waves of ethnic groups who moved to the Tree Streets. National colors, flags and symbols of each group could be incorporated into lighting, signage and designs along the trail.
- Promote the concentration of ethnic diversity in the neighborhood.
- Promote the ethnically diverse restaurants in the neighborhood.
- Locate historic markers noting key buildings, ethnic groups, employers and events.
- Locate statues, landmarks, murals or artwork to commemorate key leaders, ethnic groups, employers, laborers and events.
- Encourage the establishment of mobile food trucks providing a variety of ethnic food options at a designated location along West Hollis Street.

## UNIQUE CHARACTER: ARCHITECTURE

The Tree Streets neighborhood includes just over 500 principal buildings (exclusive of garages and other outbuildings). Of these, approximately 58% were constructed as single family dwellings, roughly 40% were built as multi-family (primarily two-families), and about 5% were erected for other uses (commercial, institutional, etc.). A large brick manufacturing building, the former Moody, Estabrook & Anderson Shoe and Boot Factory near the center of the neighborhood, was the only major industrial building within the neighborhood.

There is little stylistic variation among the single family houses. Italianate style elements are by far the most common architectural detailing found here, typically in the form of bay windows, door hoods, cornice brackets, and shallow window hoods. A small number of houses exhibit limited Greek Revival style detailing, primarily in the form of a full pedimented gable at the façade. There are also scattered examples of Second Empire style houses with the characteristic mansard roof, modest Queen Anne style dwellings with patterned shingles, and houses with Colonial Revival style gambrel roofs. There are several single family houses within the neighborhood that are atypical, generally larger and more high style than most of the workers' housing, but these are rare.

Alteration within the neighborhood has been significant. Many of the older single family homes throughout the neighborhood were converted to multi-family and/or commercial use, primarily after 1955. Large numbers of homes were enlarged with the construction of side and rear additions or by enclosing front and side porches. Other common modifications include new siding, replacement doors and windows, and added porches.

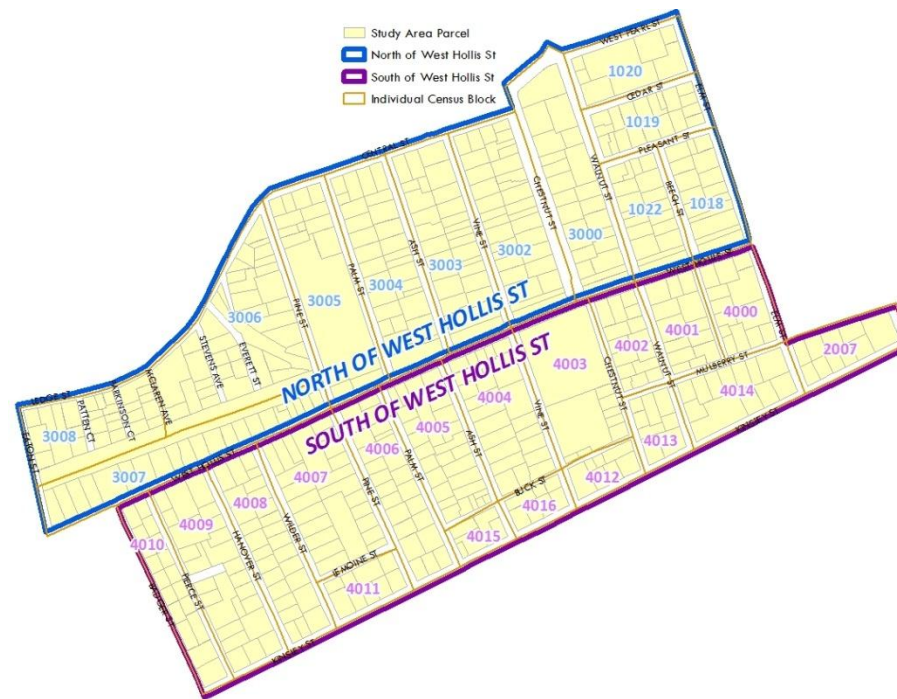




## UNIQUE CHARACTER: DEMOGRAPHICS

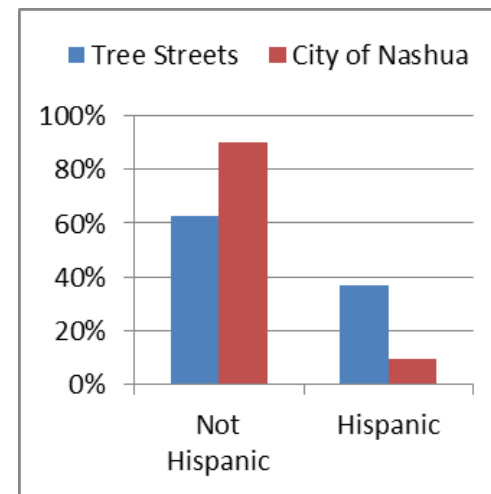
One way to understand who lives in a neighborhood is to examine the demographic data from the US Census. A general snapshot of the population can be developed by looking at race, age, households, education and income data. For the purposes of this snapshot, the data was looked at in two main areas: North and South of West Hollis Street.

The data from the 2010 US Census shows that the Tree Streets neighborhood is both a distinct and diverse population within the City of Nashua. On average, the neighborhood is younger, more racially diverse, and has more households living below the poverty level than the rest of the City. Other general characteristics of the population show low educational attainment and that nearly half of all of the households with children are headed by a female. All of this data tells us that this is a unique population within the City that requires a variety of different solutions to the challenges presented.



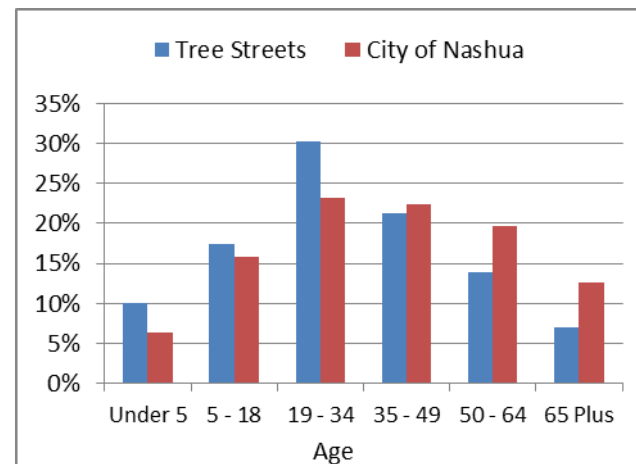
### Race and Ethnicity

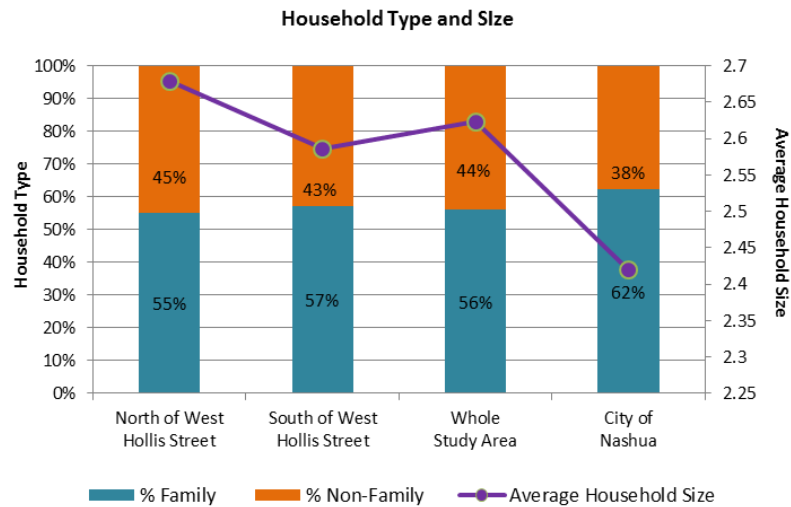
The 2010 US Census data show that the population in the Tree Streets neighborhood is 65% white and 35% non-white. Compared with the rest of the City, which is 83% white and 17% is non-white, the neighborhood is more racially diverse. The area is also more ethnically diverse with 37% of the population classifying themselves as Hispanic as compared to 10% in the rest of the City.



### Age

The Tree Streets neighborhood is home to a younger population than the rest of the City or the State. With a median age of around 30, the neighborhood is 8 years younger than the median age of City residents, which is 38.5, and eleven years younger than the median age for the State which is 41.1. One of the census blocks within the study area has a median age of 21 and nearly 45% of its residents are under the age of 19. It should also be noted that an adjacent census block has a much higher median age of 50.8, attributed to Palm Square, the 55+ apartment complex that comprises the majority of the land use within the block.





## Households

Household and family sizes are both 7.6% larger than in the City; when compared to the average family size in the State, the neighborhood's average family size is 9% larger. Nearly 50% of the neighborhood households with children under 18 are headed by a female and only 36% by a husband and wife; in the City, these percentages are 25% and 65% and in the State, they are 21% and 69%, respectively.

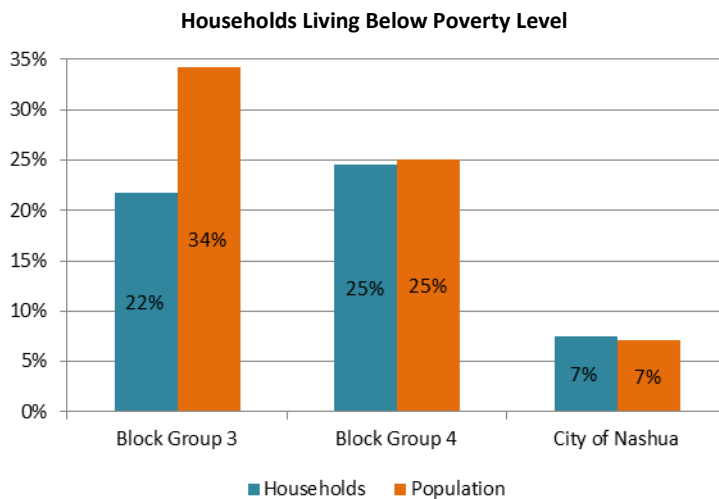
## Education

Estimates from the Census Bureau's 2005 – 2009 American Community Survey (ACS) show that about 11% percent of the Tree Streets neighborhood population 25 years and older has no high school diploma (9.7% of males and 12% of females); city-wide statistics are slightly lower, with 9.2% of that population group having no diploma (8.3% of males and 10.2% of females).

## Income

Estimates from the ACS indicate that the percent of households living below the poverty level is about 3 times higher in the Tree Streets than in the City. In the Block group 3 is north of West Hollis Street and Block Group 4 is south (see map on page 31).

There are economic challenges to the Tree Streets neighborhood residents. The data shows that this is a young population that needs assistance with safe and affordable childcare, education and jobs.



## WHAT MAKES A GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD: SOCIAL COMMUNITY

A great neighborhood is a place where people are connected to each other. Social capital is the collective or economic benefits that result when people work together as a group. Networks of civic engagement, such as neighborhood associations, are an essential form of social capital. Individuals who are strongly connected to their neighbors tend to play a more active role in shaping the destiny of their community. This increase in social capital will result in communities that are safer, healthier and more vital.

In this section, we examine:

- Parks, Open Space and Recreation
- Beautification
- Public and Private Institutions







## **SOCIAL COMMUNITY: PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION**

Part of a social community is having places where people can formally or informally connect with each other. Parks are important spaces for people with common interests to meet, like parents with young children, dog walkers, skaters, etc. Recreational opportunities, such as skate parks, ball fields, and places to fish provide opportunities for people to actively interact with each other.

Open space provides many benefits to the neighborhood. It provides a place for residents as a respite from their hectic daily lives, a place to observe nature, and an area for children to explore. Open space also provides the environmental benefits of cooling the urban environment, absorbing pollutants, and buffering noise.

The Tree Streets neighborhood has several popular parks that provide recreational opportunities. Neighborhood children report that they prefer to play ball, ride bikes, hang out, and skateboard. Many children, however, do not have access to a bicycle. Residents in the neighborhood like the easy access to parks such as Los Amigos Park and a skate park both located on Ash Street. Young people note that the skate park is used frequently and that some equipment should be replaced.

The Heritage Rail Trail starts at City Hall on Main Street and goes through the neighborhood, parallel to West Hollis Street. The Heritage Rail Trail comprises 2.5 acres of the total 3.7 acres of open space/recreational acreage in the neighborhood.

Park Social at Labine is the City's newest park, located at the former Labine Building site on the corner of Ledge and Pine Streets. This half-acre park features a plant and rock landscape and includes a large concrete play area that will be flooded in the winter for ice skating. It also includes large climbing rocks linked by sets of ropes, a lawn space and a large granite fountain. It serves as a gateway to the Tree Streets neighborhood from the Broad Street Parkway and will provide residents with much needed open space and activities for all ages of the community.

Residents hope that this new park will offer a wide range of recreational uses. In addition, there is an opportunity to pay homage to the ethnic groups who have resided in the neighborhood over the years. This can be done with plaques and monuments (e.g. Greeks, Lithuanians, French Canadians, and Hispanics), and may help stimulate community pride which in turn could reduce crime.

Although Mine Falls Park is adjacent to the study area, access is restricted due to the canal; the nearest access point to the neighborhood is located on N 7th Street near the Boys and Girls Club. A park entrance closer to the center of the neighborhood will facilitate resident access in the future.

Opportunities for enhancing the parks and recreational opportunities include:

- Look for opportunities to build and designate small pocket parks, playgrounds, appropriate street trees or edible trees and gardens.
- Seek neighborhood input to enhance existing “Opportunity Centers” as shown on the Open Space / Recreation Map including the Ash Street Skate Park, Los Amigos Park, the Heritage Rail Trail, the vacant lot on the NW corner of Pine and West Hollis Streets, the green space in front of Palm Square, and the benches along Ledge Street.
- Educate residents about additional recreational opportunities within easy access to the neighborhood including Mine Falls Park, Nashua Riverwalk, the Boys and Girls Club, Memorial Field and the Ledge Street School.
- Add signage throughout the neighborhood to nearby recreation sites.
- Community gardens are becoming increasingly popular in urban areas. They provide an opportunity for city dwellers to access fresh produce which they may not otherwise have access to.
- Create a program to provide bicycles helmets and locks to kids. Add bicycle racks at the school and in the neighborhood.









## **SOCIAL COMMUNITY: BEAUTIFICATION**

The neighborhood currently has many attractive features that could be enhanced through simple and relatively inexpensive beautification measures. The neighborhood's compact streets with short blocks facilitates pedestrian and bicycle travel. These travel modes could be enhanced with street furniture, attractive lighting, public art, plantings and landscaping. In addition, the priority corridor improvements map prioritizes such improvements to specific intersections and sections of roadways to enhance the experience of residents walking, bicycling and driving, as well as drivers traveling through the neighborhood, along the main thoroughfares and on the Broad Street Parkway.

Some opportunities for the priority corridors include:

- Establish a springtime program providing seeds, plants, soil, containers, window boxes, paint and tools to residents to spruce up entrances and windows with plants.
- Work with the Nashua Garden Club or NH Cooperative Extension to hold a plant sale where residents can purchase inexpensive or free plants and vegetables for yards, patios, front porches and decks.
- Encourage neighbors to call the City as needed to remove large debris, such as mattresses.
- Add attractive trash receptacles throughout the neighborhood.
- Establish a program to link senior property owners with local church groups, boy and girl scout troops and local schools to conduct spring and fall clean ups and limited maintenance.
- Establish a community pride week and organize interested residents or community groups to volunteer time and make improvements at a number of public or private sites.
- Draw residents to public spaces by creating a focal point such as a new mural; slides shown on a building; movie night, ice sculpture, or performer.
- Work with local businesses to sponsor annual flower baskets and seasonal banners.
- Utilize the Heritage Rail Trail right-of-way to create community gardens, fruit tree plantings or Christmas tree plantings.
- Work with the Nashua Sculpture Symposium to develop statues and sculptures highlighting the diverse history of the Tree Streets.





## PRIORITY CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS



## SOCIAL COMMUNITY: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

Schools, clubs, and workshops are all opportunities for people to get together socially. When people get together regularly, they are more likely to help each other out. They are more likely to care about their place. They also learn social skills that are important to the development of neighborhood leaders. The following organizations are primarily focused on children.

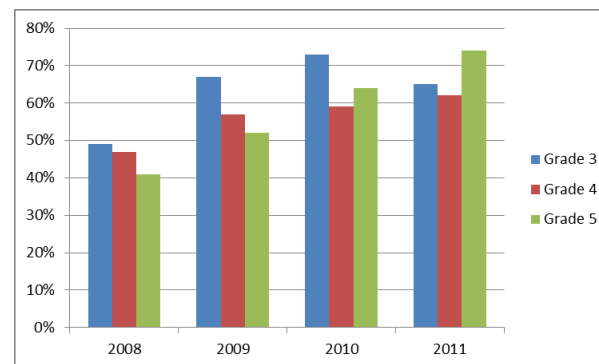
### **Ledge Street School**

Ledge Street Elementary School serves approximately 500 children in the Tree Streets neighborhood. Three out of every four students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, the second-highest percentage in the district behind only Dr. Crisp Elementary School.

The school's mission statement is: *Ledge Street School, in partnership with our families and community, pledges to build a foundation of respect and responsibility with high academic and social expectations that support individual growth in a safe learning environment.*

In 2010 the Ledge Street School implemented *The Leader in Me* program. *The Leader in Me* is an innovative, school wide model that emphasizes a culture of student empowerment and helps unleash each child's full potential. Applying *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*®, teachers and students internalize leadership principles that nurture the skills students need for success in the 21st century. The New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) scores were consistently higher in 2012 than previous years at the Ledge Street School, which was attributed by the school Principal to the implementation of *The Leader in Me* program.

Ledge Street School NECAP Reading Scores



Ledge Street School NECAP Math Scores





In early 2012 the school received \$150,000 from the New Hampshire Department of Education, which draws from a federal pool of money set aside for schools deemed “in need of improvement.” The funding was used to purchase 180 iPads, seven MacBook computers, five airprinters and software. The software included several Apple vouchers to purchase paid-applications and LinkIt, a web-based data management software system used to track reading and math scores and software. The funding also covered teacher development costs.

#### Opportunities:

Elementary schools are primarily educational institutions, but are also important social institutions as well. They offer opportunities for students to improve their social skills in daily activities and in programs such as the Century 21 after school program. They encourage parent participation in their children’s education and in PTO. They have the potential to broaden their role as a community center, when their facilities (gym, cafeteria, library, etc.) are made available to the neighborhood residents during off-school hours.

The Ledge Street School has expressed interest in coordinating with the neighborhood to establish community initiatives. Some ideas include establishing community gardens which are becoming increasingly more popular in urban areas. They provide an opportunity for city dwellers to access fresh produce which they may not have access to otherwise.

The energy and initiative at the Ledge Street School is exciting and an opportunity to generate further engagement within the neighborhood.

## Youth Organizations

Three organizations in particular focus some or all of their efforts on youth in the Tree Streets neighborhood: the Boys & Girls Club, the Police Athletic League (PAL), and the YMCA (Y). The Boys & Girls Club web site articulates the need, stating that “the hours between 3:00pm and 6:00pm are critical in the lives of kids. Increasingly, they are out of school and alone at home or on the streets of Nashua where they are left to find their own forms of recreation and companionship.”

**The Boys & Girls Club’s** mission is to inspire and enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Since 1971, the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Nashua has been helping youth to stay out of trouble, stay in school and succeed in life. The organization has 7 locations where kids can spend time after school. During the summer months, camp programs and the Grand Avenue drop-in program offer youth a place to learn, grow, and prosper. Club locations are not just hang-outs, but places where young people can learn, do homework, utilize technology, express themselves through the arts, play, develop social skills, participate in athletics, give back to the community and engage in meaningful conversations with caring adults.

The Boys & Girls Club of Greater Nashua offers programs, activities, and services to more than 4,000 kids each year. Members pay nominal membership fees per year to use the facilities and participate in the programs. The Club provides members a place where they can be themselves while participating in meaningful and valuable programs.

**PAL** was founded in 1989 with the mission to create a positive attitude between the children of Nashua and the members of the Nashua Police Department through sponsored sports, activities and enrichment programs. Nashua PAL is a nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching youth the values and rewards that can be accomplished through self-determination, belief in one’s self, desire, teamwork, and respect for others. PAL programs target area youth who live in "at risk" neighborhoods. They work to build friendship and trust among police officers and city youth by providing opportunities to interact in positive environments such as sports, activities and enrichment programs. Programs include Youth Safe Haven, elementary and middle school football, cheerleading, cross country running and boxing.







The PAL Community Center, located at 52 Ash Street in the heart of Nashua's "at-risk" neighborhoods, is open to youth 7-18 years of age, serving an average of 30-40 youth daily. The Center includes an Olympic size boxing ring, game room, homework club, computer lab, library, programming, cooking class, craft room and organized field trips.

**The Y's** mission is to instill values and provide opportunities for lifelong personal growth and the development of a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all. The Y was officially founded on October 6, 1887 as the YMCA of Nashua. The newest Nashua facility opened in May 2011 and has exceeded its membership projections. The three areas of focus are youth development – nurturing the potential of children and teens, healthy living – promoting health and well-being, and social responsibility – fostering a sense of responsibility. The values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility are basic components for all Y operations, program development, and staff recruitment and training. In today's society, the essential job of the Y is to give youth and adults the experiences that help them develop a set of positive values, morals, and ethics that they will live by.

The YMCA of Greater Nashua offers over 325 different programs to serve our local communities. Its facilities, located in the center of Nashua, include a swimming pool, track, basketball courts, and many other resources.

**The Family Resource Center** is a collaboration of Child and Family Services, Adult Learning Center, Prevention Makes Cents, Southern NH Services, UNH Cooperative Extension and the Boys and Girls Club. It offers various workshops and activities focused on parenting at the Boys & Girls Club.

#### Opportunities:

The Boys & Girls Club, PAL, and the Y have been working together to identify ways to provide their services to as many youth as possible. They recognize that the more young people involved in any one of their programs, the better for everyone.

Other opportunities include promoting community activities such as:

- Establish a “Take Back the Streets” or “Summer in the Streets” program.
- Work with youth groups to set up weekly block parties with board games, street hockey, stickball and mobile basketball hoops.
- Allow for temporary street closures in the summer to facilitate gatherings, bike riding and festivals.
- Locate portable misters for cooling in the summer months.
- Establish a “Chains for Hoops” program and work with youth groups to provide portable basketball hoops in the evenings.
- Set up corner tents with board games and youth activities.
- Work with St. Louis de Gonzague Church to possibly locate additional basketball courts in the church parking lot.
- Hold a community swap day where residents can trade unwanted items.





## **SOCIAL COMMUNITY: EVENTS**

Cultural activities, street festivals, and other opportunities for social interaction help to foster a sense of identity, pride and belonging in a community.

### **Cultural Festival**

The City of Nashua in partnership with Nashua Livable Walkable Communities and AmeriCorps VISTA program organized two cultural festivals on Ash Street in 2007 and 2008. The 2007 festival was held from 12PM to 7PM on Ash Street between Central and West Hollis Streets and featured music, dance, crafts and food from vendors representing many of the cultures that make Nashua such a great place to live. Attendance was estimated around 3,000. Activities for the main stage included musician Cornell “Sugarfoot” Cooley, local step dancing groups, Ryan Thompson (Cajun and Celtic music) and “Tuti” Latin Dance Music. The stage at Los Amigos Park featured Quabbin Lake Native American Indians; the New Fellowship Church stage featured a harpist, children’s entertainer, folk tales and classic dances of India. The Police Athletic League featured activities for the children including a bounce house, dunking booth, fiddle workshop, a demonstration by Tokyo Joe’s Martial Arts and a belly dance demonstration. The festival included food from a variety of cultures including the Caribbean Café, Taco Nayarit, Rincon Columbia and the Brazilian BBQ & Restaurant among others. The 2008 festival was similar to the 2007 festival.

Opportunities for encouraging the social community in the Tree Streets neighborhood include:

- Provide social opportunities for all members of the community to cultivate neighborhood connections and social bonds.
- Provide afternoon and weekend programs to engage youth in positive activities.
- Increase awareness of and access to the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club and PAL.
- Design neighborhood events to engage all residents in the neighborhood.
- Establish a public meeting facility, possibly as part of a new public health and community center.
- Highlight seasons and cultural events using banners located on attractive human scale lighting that can highlight seasonal changes and market cultural and neighborhood events, or identify one street to decorate for each major holiday and cultural event.

### **WHAT MAKES A GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD: SAFETY**

Great neighborhoods are safe and are perceived to be safe. People of all walks of life need their home and neighborhood to be a haven. People can go outside at all times of day or night in a safe neighborhood. It is a good place to raise children.

Both residents and non-residents have strong safety concerns in the Tree Streets neighborhood. The perception is that crime such as stabbings, shootings, theft and drug related incidents are widespread in the neighborhood with a concentration of incidents along the Heritage Rail Trail.

In this section, we examine:

- Crime
- Traffic Accidents
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety







### **SAFETY: CRIME**

According to the 2010 Consolidated Plan Survey, 68% of respondents felt that public safety and police protection was not a problem. From speaking with residents, however, different age groups seem to have varying perspectives on safety in the Tree Streets neighborhood. Elderly residents expressed a fear of leaving their homes if they didn't have a yard. Other than caring for their plants or lawn, most elderly residents are hesitant to go outside, especially during the afternoon and evening. Most teenagers and children did not express any real fear of being outside during the evening but said that they feel less safe outside when it is dark. Parents in this neighborhood seem to fit into two categories: younger parents did not express significant safety concerns about the neighborhood; whereas older parents with school age children expressed more concerns about their child's safety.

Students at the Ledge Street School indicated they did not feel safe in places such as the Woodlawn Cemetery, Mine Falls Park, Bronstein Apartments, and the Heritage Rail Trail. In addition, some students felt that places normally free of crime and monitored by security personnel were still perceived as dangerous. These locations included Ledge Street Elementary School, The Boys and Girls Club, and the Nashua District Court.

In 2012, the Nashua Telegraph, working in partnership with the Nashua Police Department, launched a new crime and public safety page to their website. The goal is to offer more transparency to what and where crime and other public safety issues are happening in the Greater Nashua Area. The page includes an interactive map that plots all crimes reported to the Nashua Police Department using a web-based mapping service called CrimeMapping.com. The data goes back 180 days and offers many features including being able to zoom into a section of the City and derive data from it. Using the CrimeMapping.com service for the Tree Streets neighborhood from January 4, 2012 to July 2, 2012, there about 335 crimes reported within the vicinity of the neighborhood. The top three types of crime, making up about two-thirds of the total crime in the neighborhood, were Theft/Larceny, Vandalism, and Assault. The top spots for crimes in the Tree Streets neighborhood are on West Hollis Street, between Ash Street and Vine Street.

Gang related violence has been reported in the area and is a concern for the neighborhood. Gang activity can be attributed to drug, vandalism, and violent crimes. The City's first Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) program was introduced in late 2011 at the Elm Street Middle School, followed by one at the Pennichuck Middle School in early 2012. GREAT was founded nationally in 1991 and is taught by police officers in participating schools. It is a 13 week program designed to instill life skills in grade and middle school aged children.

It is aimed at preventing delinquency, youth violence, gang activity, cyber bullying, personal bullying and other adolescent problems. Abbreviated programs for third and fourth graders are currently being developed.





Another means of preventing crime is Crime Watch, which is an organized group of residents dedicated to improving the quality of life in their neighborhoods and work in partnership with the police and elected officials work to address the unique issues that concern the neighborhood. The Tree Streets neighborhood does have a Crime Watch group that meets quarterly, although they are not widely attended.

Opportunities to address perceptions of safety include actions such as:

- Strengthen the Crime Watch program.
- Add more streetlights throughout the neighborhood.
- Install non-breakable light fixtures along the along the Heritage Rail Trail and Los Amigos Park.
- Replace street and park lighting with non-breakable fixtures and brighter downcast lighting.
- Encourage renters and homeowners to leave outside lights on at night.
- Remove graffiti.
- Increase the police presence in the neighborhood and the Heritage Rail Trail.

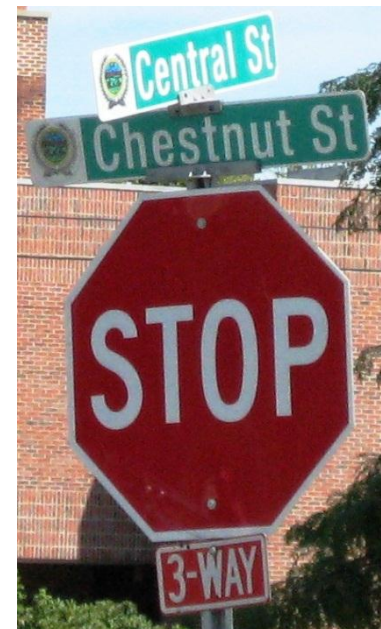
## **SAFETY: TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS**

West Hollis and Kinsley Streets provide a key east/west connection between one of only two Merrimack River crossings in the Nashua region and the F. E. Everett Turnpike. They also provide connections to and from downtown Nashua. Not surprisingly, the streets with the highest number of vehicles also experience the highest number of accidents; fortunately, with speed limits of 30 mph or less throughout the area, only a small percentage of accidents result in incapacitating injuries. In the 3 year period assessed, there were no accidents with pedestrians or bicyclists that resulted in incapacitating injuries, with one exception; a fatal accident in which a pedestrian was intentionally run down.

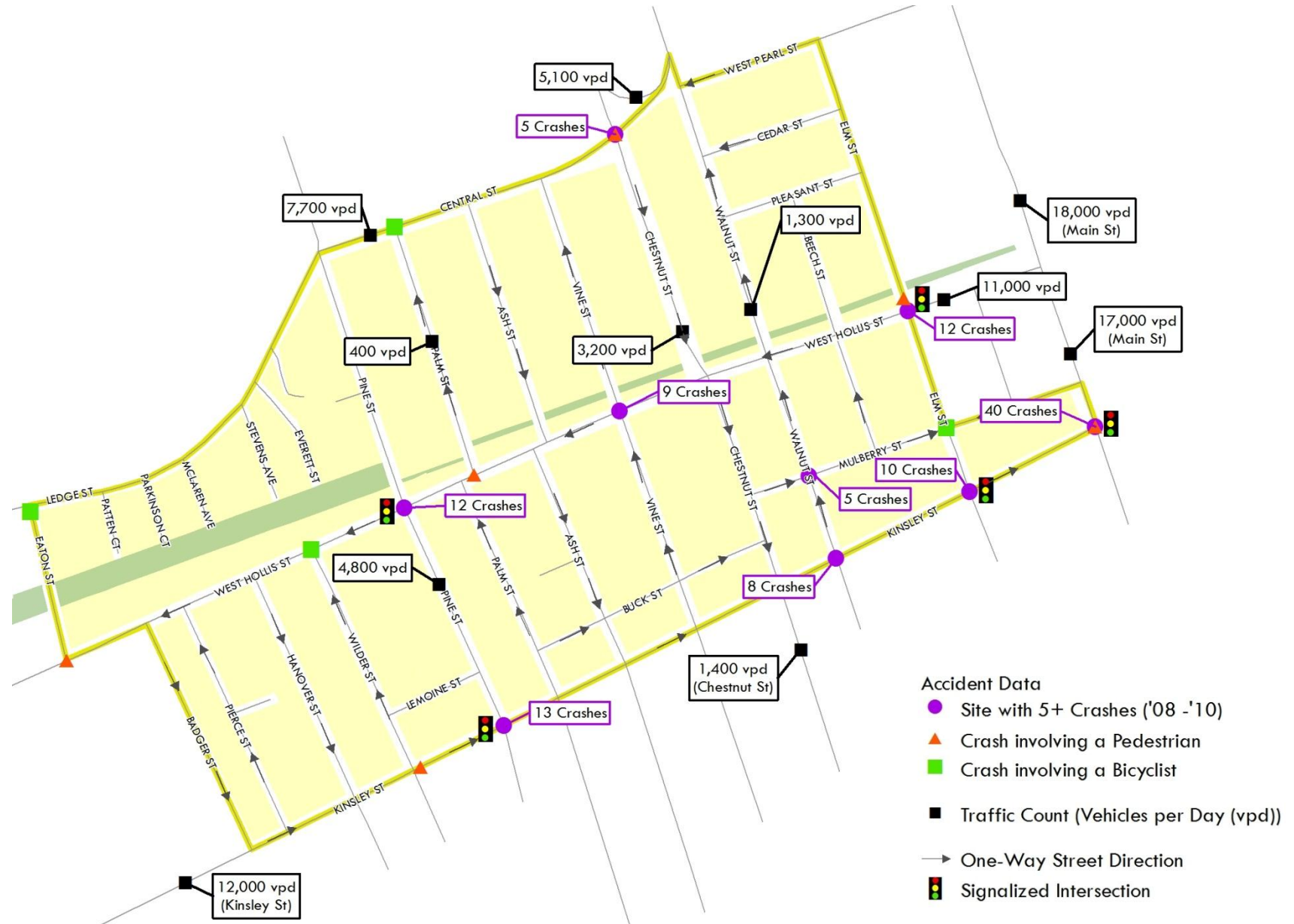
From 2008 to 2010, there were 40 accidents at the intersection of Kinsley and Main Streets, and 13 accidents at the intersection of Pine Street and Kinsley Streets. During the same time period, there were 6 accidents involving pedestrians on West Hollis and Kinsley Streets, and 4 accidents involving bicyclists, all with non-incapacitating injuries.

Some opportunities to address the traffic safety concerns include:

- Improve safety for pedestrian crossings at intersections with a history of pedestrian injuries.
- Enhance existing crosswalks making them highly visible at Central and Chestnut Streets, West Hollis and Elm Streets, and Kinsley and Main Streets.







## **SAFETY: BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN**

No single issue was identified as needing immediate attention, but improvements can be made to increase bicycle and pedestrian travel through improved sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting and street amenities.

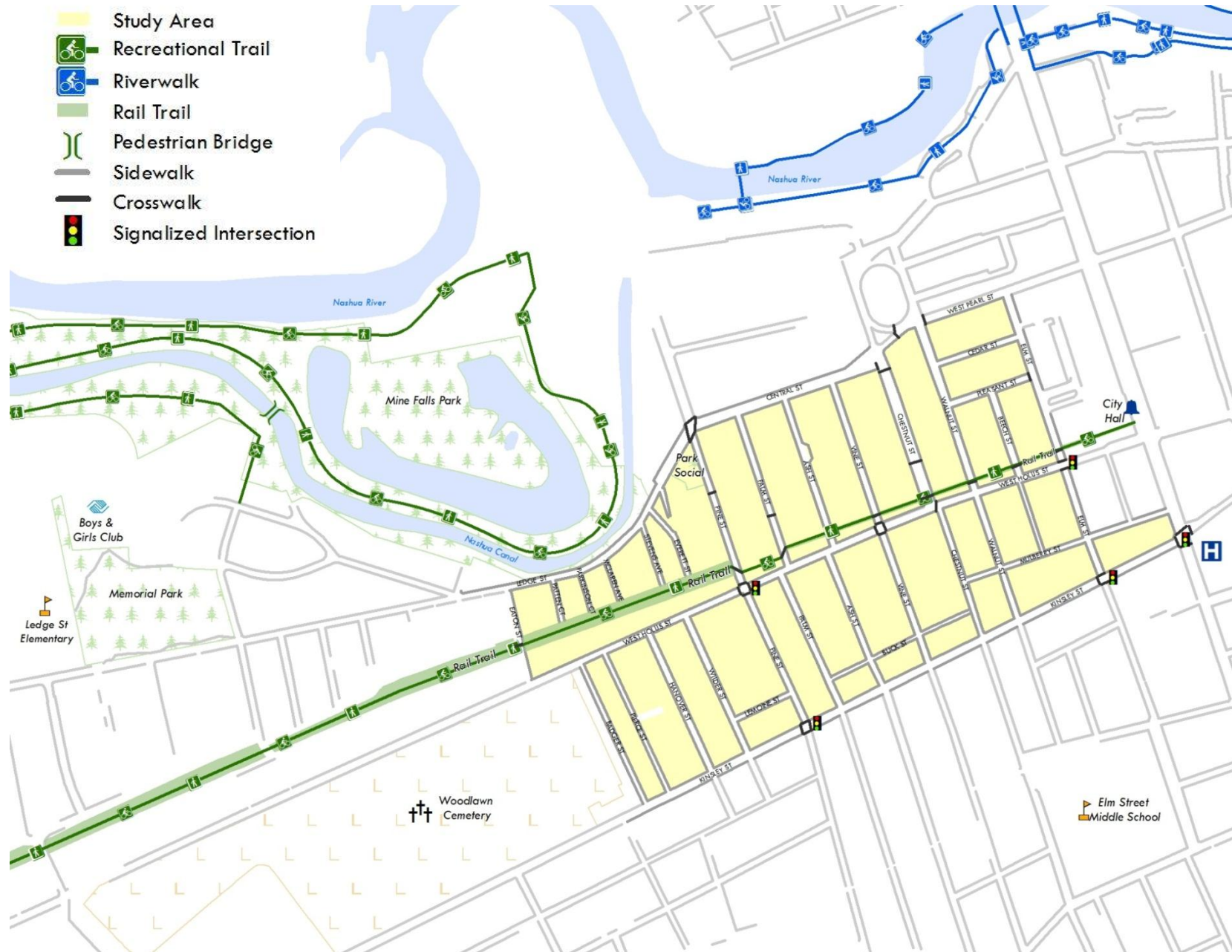
Low cost and short term solutions include:

- Paint pedestrian amenities on roads such as bike lanes and crosswalks.
- Improve crosswalks with pavement treatments such as paint and stamped asphalt.
- Add special painted markings near parks, stores and other key locations to increase safety; this could be a community effort that involves school kids, youth groups, etc.
- Post reduced speed limit signs along Ash Street to slow traffic near the parks.
- Work with the Streets Department to establish designated bicycle lanes.
- Establish designated bicycle lanes along primary paths to schools.
- Install unique bike racks throughout the neighborhood.
- Work with developers to install bike parking and develop bicycle and pedestrian amenity centers as new development or significant redevelopment occurs.

Other opportunities include:

- Develop a program to provide kids with new and used bicycles.
- Work with Ledge Street School to implement the Safe Routes to School Plan.





## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Tree Streets Neighborhood Analysis and Overview is an in depth look at the Tree Streets neighborhood from the perspective of mixed uses, ease of mobility, unique character, social community and safety - qualities of great neighborhoods.

### **Mixed Uses**

The Tree Streets neighborhood fares fairly well with respect to a mix of uses. The neighborhood is primarily residential with appropriate commercial and institutional uses within and adjacent to the neighborhood. However, it is limited in public parks and gathering places.

The housing stock is in relatively good condition, however, it is not diverse in age or type. Most of the housing stock is aging. It was built in between 1850 and 1910, and most that remains is single family, two family, or one of the two converted to additional units. A diversity of housing types and sizes attracts a diversity of people relative to family size, makeup and income. Addition of new more contemporary housing of varying sizes might attract new people to the neighborhood.

Although the housing stock is in fairly good condition, many properties, especially multi-family have been rated as in poor condition, and it is clear that assistance is needed with property maintenance.

### **Ease of Mobility**

The Tree Streets neighborhood scores well with respect to ease of mobility. The streets are close together with short blocks in between. Sidewalks are throughout the neighborhood, and are generally in good condition, although they are deficient in some places due to phone poles and other obstructions. The City bus system offers easily accessible public transportation; increased frequency would be an added benefit. The neighborhood is a short distance from the highway. The one major challenge is parking, since the neighborhood was built before cars and the City does not allow overnight on-street parking. Other challenges that need to be addressed include the one- way street system, and the safety concerns along the Heritage Rail Trail.

### **Unique Character**

The Tree Streets neighborhood scores well with respect to unique character. The history, architecture and demographics present have created a unique area in the City. Although the general public and the neighborhood residents probably do not recognize or appreciate it, the Tree Streets neighborhood is a very special place because of its unique history, and because so much of its historic character is still intact and in good condition.



Opportunities abound to educate about and celebrate this unique neighborhood through walks, festivals and other programming. It is also unique because it is an inner city neighborhood within walking distance of downtown amenities.

The challenges for this neighborhood are the need to address the unique needs of the younger, more racially diverse population, and the many households that live below the poverty level.

### **Social Community**

The Tree Streets neighborhood scores average with respect to social community. Social community is based more on people's perceptions and experiences and is not as easily measured as other characteristics such as mobility or housing. Not dissimilar to most neighborhoods, residents in the Tree Streets neighborhood seem to know and generally socialize at least informally with residents on their block.

St. Louis de Gonzague Church is well attended by residents in the neighborhood, where Masses are offered in English, Spanish and French. The Church offers a variety of activities to further involvement. Crime Watch, on the other hand, attracts limited attendance. Neighborhood meetings about the new park were lightly attended, despite significant publicity efforts by the City. The conclusion drawn is that residents do not think in terms of their role with respect to their neighborhood. Unacceptable activities, such as an old couch left at the curb for months or broken lights at the park, would generate many calls from other neighborhoods, but none from this neighborhood.

### **Safety**

The Tree Streets neighborhood scores low with respect to safety. Personal and property crime is higher in the Tree Streets neighborhood than any other neighborhood in Nashua. Locations, such as the Heritage Rail Trail, should be assets to the neighborhood, but instead are perceived to be unsafe, even during the day. Gang violence is a real concern for the neighborhood. Targeted police sweeps help, but neighborhood groups such as Crime Watch need to be encouraged and strengthened, and the physical environment improved through better lighting and other safety measures.

## **NEXT STEPS**

There are many opportunities for improving the Tree Streets neighborhood. What follows are some next steps that can be taken by the City, local organizations and residents to help grow the Tree Streets neighborhood into a truly great neighborhood.

- Form a neighborhood organization - *The most significant gap in the Tree Streets neighborhood to address challenges identified in the Analysis is a neighborhood organization. Together the residents of the neighborhood need to decide what is important to them, where the greatest opportunities lie, and what investment of time and resources would most benefit their neighborhood.*
  - Identify priority issues
  - Develop relationships with City and other organizations
  - Organize events, clean ups, etc.
- Address crime
  - Identify model programs to emulate
  - Increase police effectiveness
  - Provide residents with tools to be part of the solution
  - Increase youth education and recreation programs
- Invest in infrastructure
  - Address sidewalks as needed
    - Some sidewalks are currently being replaced as part of the Broad Street Parkway
  - Light rail trail
    - Funding has been identified and plan is being developed
  - Improve skate park
    - Plans are in place for improvements in 2012 or early 2013
  - Maintain rail trail and parks
  - Add housing as appropriate
  - Add park space
  - Improve West Hollis and Kinsley Streets' appearance
- Further study
  - Streets circulation (one way streets)
  - Overnight parking
  - Community gardens

## **APPENDIX – PUBLIC INPUT**

The Tree Streets Neighborhood Analysis and Overview contains references to perceptions from residents and community leaders that were collected from the following sources:

- September 29, 2010 facilitated session with members of the Board of Aldermen, the Business and Industrial Development Authority and the general public
- Survey results from approximately 210 residents of the Tree Streets as part of the City of Nashua 2010 Consolidated Plan Update
- Public meetings at Ledge Street School on June 1, 2011 and Palm Square on June 2, 2011
- November 2, 2011 facilitated session with the City of Nashua Community Development Staff
- Interviews with neighborhood residents in the summer and fall of 2011

**On September 29, 2010 Mayor Lozeau and staff updated members of the Board of Alderman, the Business and Industrial Development Authority, and the general public regarding the Broad Street Parkway and the tree streets neighborhood. Participants were asked to complete the sentence:**

**As one of Nashua’s leaders...when I think about the tree streets neighborhood I worry about...**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| ⇒ Dumping traffic in the neighborhood                  | ⇒ Zoning incompatible with future vision                      |
| ⇒ Vacant and run down properties                       | ⇒ Not a welcoming gateway                                     |
| ⇒ Pedestrian safety with more traffic                  | ⇒ Low land costs encourage unwanted land uses                 |
| ⇒ Lack of pedestrian infrastructure                    | ⇒ Impact on businesses  |
| ⇒ Losing parking! Parking is already a problem.        | ⇒ Heavy truck traffic—possible restrictions                   |
| ⇒ High unemployment                                    | ⇒ Crime   |
| ⇒ Tagging  | ⇒ Disruptions during construction of the Broad Street Parkway |
| ⇒ Overhead wires                                       | ⇒ Loss of historic buildings                                  |
| ⇒ Out of town landlords/lack of owner occupied housing | ⇒ Railroad land negotiations                                  |
| ⇒ Potential homelessness                               | ⇒ City needs to invest in parks and address crime             |
| ⇒ Code enforcement                                     | ⇒ Maintain existing density                                   |
| ⇒ Gentrification and the impacts to current residents  | ⇒ One-way streets   |
| ⇒ Limited recreation opportunities                     | ⇒ Mixed income  |
| ⇒ Childhood obesity                                    | ⇒ Safe place for children to play close to home               |



**As one of Nashua's leaders...  
when I think about the Tree Streets  
Neighborhood I see opportunities with . . .**

- ⇒ Community gardens
- ⇒ Social opportunities without having to drive
- ⇒ Need to inventory the neighborhood parcel by parcel
- ⇒ Walkability
- ⇒ Trees
- ⇒ Porches (front)
- ⇒ Connection to Mine Falls Park
- ⇒ Overnight parking (managed properly)
- ⇒ Cultural festival
- ⇒ Encourage smaller food venues (shopping)
- ⇒ Address parking
- ⇒ Campaign for home ownership
- ⇒ Promote area for investment
- ⇒ Support mixed use
- ⇒ Promote local job opportunities
- ⇒ Identify locations to convert for parking or open space
- ⇒ Use zoning to get results we want

**As one of Nashua's leaders...  
when I think about the Tree Streets  
Neighborhood I want to preserve...**

- ⇒ Unique businesses
- ⇒ Restaurants
- ⇒ Historic buildings
- ⇒ Churches
- ⇒ Culture and ethnic diversity
- ⇒ "The neighborhood feel" and sense of community
- ⇒ Friendliness
- ⇒ Affordable housing stock
- ⇒ Home ownership
- ⇒ Existing parks
- ⇒ Walkability
- ⇒ Taco stand

## Comments from a facilitated session on November 2, 2011 with City of Nashua Community Development Staff

### Traffic, Crime and Safety Concerns

- ⇒ Crime-shootings, stabbings
- ⇒ New people to Nashua do not speak English and do not try to
- ⇒ Drugs (heroin, crack, and oxycontin)
- ⇒ Rail trail is sketchy any time of day
  - \* A lot of trash
  - \* Sketchy people just hanging out
  - \* Dirty
  - \* Good hiding spots
  - \* Overgrown
- ⇒ Lots of out of state cars
- ⇒ Gangs
- ⇒ Bronstein, and entire study area
- ⇒ Graffiti
- ⇒ Driving through area feels unsafe (lock doors)
- ⇒ People cross street without looking
- ⇒ Drugs and prostitution on Elm St. between Kinsley and West Hollis
- ⇒ Public Drinking

### Ideas for Improvement

- ⇒ Maintain Rail Trail; add lighting
- ⇒ More good jobs
- ⇒ Look at one-way streets
- ⇒ Parenting, nutrition education
- ⇒ Public support- laws need to be reviewed
- ⇒ Create pride in neighborhood
- ⇒ Incentives for landlords
- ⇒ Low interest loans
- ⇒ Neighborhood cleanup

### Beautification Ideas

- ⇒ Trash cans in public spaces
  - \* Solar compactors, Big Bellies
- ⇒ Address bulky items
- ⇒ Underground utilities including the boxes
- ⇒ More lighting

### **Overnight Parking for Residents**

- ⇒ Regular parking (24 hours a day) – one side only
  - \* Alternate each day
- ⇒ Lowell allows overnight parking
- ⇒ Snow is the big issue
- ⇒ Pilot on a couple streets

### **Commercial Centers**

#### **What works well?**

- ⇒ Local stores great for local neighborhood
- ⇒ Palm Square – it has good parking

#### **Ideas for Improvement**

- ⇒ No parking for Jack's Pizza, others
- ⇒ Saigon Market needs to offer Mac & Cheese
- ⇒ Smaller mini-marts are more expensive than Shaw's
- ⇒ Current establishments aren't focused on attracting business
  - \* Storefront improvements
  - \* Junky looking
  - \* Inconsistent hours
- ⇒ Best Retail Practices
  - \* OED is soliciting through church
- ⇒ Connect with church
- ⇒ The area has good ethnic food
- ⇒ Clean up the tires
- ⇒ Incentives to invest in properties

### **Community Pride/ Sense of Place**

- ⇒ Trees, flowers, garden spaces, green
- ⇒ Places for people to congregate – pocket parks
- ⇒ Well lit
- ⇒ Police presence
- ⇒ Chestnut St. improvements did not generate private investment
- ⇒ Maybe city should buy some buildings and make parking/green space
- ⇒ Community events
  - \* Multicultural festival
  - \* Churches sometimes hold them
- ⇒ Spring cleanup event
- ⇒ Bike rally – on rail trail
- ⇒ If you don't feel safe you don't want grass
- ⇒ Transient residents – don't meet neighbors
- ⇒ Block parties
- ⇒ Crime watch
- ⇒ Owners of buildings need to care
- ⇒ Need to find community leaders
- ⇒ Job fair
- ⇒ Neighborworks
- ⇒ Need Spanish speaking facilitators

## Interviews with Ash Street and other Neighborhood Residents – August 8, 2011

- ⇒ Park is well utilized by kids and adults. Neighbors all know each other well and all hang out in park. Adults string up a volley ball net. The parents sit on the chairs across the street to watch the kids and make sure they do not walk out the park.
- ⇒ Families have birthday parties in the park.
- ⇒ A gate on the fence would prevent small children from running out into the road.
- ⇒ A speed bump in front of the park would slow down traffic.
- ⇒ The park lights do not currently work – need to be repaired or replaced with light fixtures that can't be vandalized.
- ⇒ Teenagers dump the trash cans over – needs to be replaced with heavier fixtures and chained down.
- ⇒ Teenagers drink in the 'earth circle' and break beer bottle; the kids then clean up the glass before roller skating in the circle.
- ⇒ Park needs sprucing up / general maintenance.. Add swings.
- ⇒ The city provides a free meal to kids at 6:00 pm- good time to talk to residents.
- ⇒ Not safe for kids to walk along Ledge Street by the canal due to the narrow sidewalk and overgrown plants.
- ⇒ Walks to most destinations, also uses transit. Now has a vehicle. Goes to Shaw's on Main Street. Would like to have a cheap grocery store nearby. Saigon Market has some good choice, but not all of the basics her family needs.
- ⇒ From speaking with residents, different age groups seem to have differing perspectives of the neighborhood. Most of the elderly residents staff spoke with, expressed a fear of leaving their homes if they didn't have a yard. Other than caring for their plants or grass, most elderly residents don't seem to want to go outside, especially during the afternoon and evening.
- ⇒ Most teenagers and children staff spoke with did not express any real fear of being outside during the evening but said that they feel less safe outside when it is dark.
- ⇒ Parents on this street seem to fit into two categories. Younger parents did not express significant safety concerns about the neighborhood, however older parents with school age children expressed more concerns about their child's safety.
- ⇒ There seemed to be pockets where neighbors express familiarity and comfort with at least one of their neighbors. In speaking with residents they tended to be most familiar with other residents on their block, and not beyond this limited area.



Survey results from approximately 210 residents of the Tree Streets in 2010 (City of Nashua Consolidated Plan Update 2010).

Topic	Significant Problem	Somewhat of a Problem	Not a Problem
1. Finding a Job w/ Benefits	43%	34%	23%
2. Finding a Good Job	40%	36%	24%
3. Unemployment/Full Time Work	37%	36%	27%
4. Speeding	26%	47%	27%
5. Community events	21%	27%	53%
6. Parking	20%	36%	44%
7. Home Ownership Attainability	20%	34%	46%
8. Sale of illegal drugs	19%	31%	51%
9. Access to affordable health care	18%	44%	38%
10. Having Enough Money to Meet Everyday Expenses	17%	48%	35%
11. Rundown Properties	16%	47%	37%
12. Roads & sidewalks	14%	53%	34%
13. Homelessness	14%	21%	75%
14. Affordable medications	13%	45%	42%
15. Alcohol/drug abuse	13%	41%	47%
16. Vandalism	13%	39%	49%
17. Crimes committed by youth	13%	39%	49%
18. Alcohol/drug treatment assistance	13%	34%	53%
19. Parks & open spaces	12%	34%	53%
20. Violent crimes	11%	39%	50%
21. Vacant Properties	9%	44%	46%
22. Programs for youth	9%	39%	52%
23. Mental illness	9%	36%	50%

Survey results from approximately 210 residents of the Tree Streets in 2010 (City of Nashua Consolidated Plan Update 2010) - con't

Topic	Significant Problem	Somewhat of a Problem	Not a Problem
24. Gangs	9%	32%	59%
25. Affordable quality child care	8%	44%	47%
26. Public transportation	8%	24%	68%
27. Affordable Housing	7%	34%	59%
28. Public safety/police protection	6%	27%	68%
29. Public Education	6%	21%	73%
30. Ed. for non-English speaking individuals	5%	32%	63%
31. Lead Paint	4%	20%	75%
32. Overall physical condition of neighborhood	3%	53%	43%
33. Safe & Decent Housing	3%	34%	62%
34. Inoperable cars	3%	31%	66%
35. Access to Shopping	3%	14%	83%

## Input From a Public Meeting at Ledge Street School on June 1, 2011 and Palm Square on June 2, 2011

### 1). Open Space/Recreational Opportunities

- ⇒ Labine Park should offer a wide range of recreational uses such as a public pool.
- ⇒ Two individuals were particularly pleased with Sargent Avenue Park.
- ⇒ Several students noted that some of the equipment in the skate park should be replaced and trash always seems to accumulate within this area.
- ⇒ Some students are content playing in their backyards.
- ⇒ According to several accounts, Labine Park should pay homage to the ethnic groups who have resided in the neighborhood over the years. This can be done with plaques and monuments (e.g. Greeks, Lithuanians, French Canadians, and Hispanics). May help stimulate community pride which in turn could reduce crime.
- ⇒ Two survey respondents indicated that they can conveniently access parks and other forms of recreational opportunities via bicycling and walking.
- ⇒ One meeting attendee would like to see community gardens in the tree streets.
- ⇒ Some school children stated that they liked to swing, climb the jungle gym and play basketball in the park.
- ⇒ Some children ride bikes, but some have no access to them.
- ⇒ At least two children mentioned Greeley Park. They drive there, not walk. Not all the children knew about Mine Falls Park. One student did because he plays soccer there.
- ⇒ Most children noted that they do not play in the streets. Many children go to the skate park on ash street and noted that it needs improvements.
- ⇒ One participant suggested a minimum of a 4' wall and ideally 5' wall at the new park. He is also concerned about the need for a skating rink. Historic markers should be placed near the tables in the park. The bus parking along Central Street should have wider sidewalks to allow for events and vendors. Parking will be an issue at the park. Need lighting. Add a variety of trees to the area – it is the Tree Streets and ironically has very few trees.
- ⇒ Would like more parks, swing sets and a pet park.
- ⇒ One respondent indicated utilizing the Sargent Avenue Park, Mine Falls Park and Greeley Park.

## 2). Transportation

- ⇒ Several students stated that additional streetlights should be placed throughout the neighborhood to increase safety.
- ⇒ Many respondents indicated they felt safe bicycling around the tree streets, a few less indicated they felt safe walking and a few did not feel safe walking or bicycling.
- ⇒ Additional/improved crosswalks, improved sidewalks, and additional recreational paths were identified as a high priority transportation related improvements to encourage walking habits.
- ⇒ Designated bicycle lanes, increasing driver awareness, and establishing citywide bicycling programs were highlighted as the most important transportation related improvements to increase bicycling usage.
- ⇒ The survey respondents consider grocery stores, churches, restaurants, shopping, pharmacies and schools the most difficult services to reach in the tree streets via walking, bicycling, or motorized vehicles.
- ⇒ A bus shelter near Palm Square is desired.
- ⇒ Ramps are needed at pedestrian crossings and damaged sidewalks need to be repaired.

- ⇒ A few respondents indicated an excess of school bus traffic on Walnut Street between Kinsley and West Hollis Streets. It would be better for buses to travel on Elm Street as it is wider.
- ⇒ One person suggested more summer events and street festivals in the Tree Streets which may encourage more walking and biking.

## 3). Parking

- ⇒ One individual believes additional parking would attract more people to visit the downtown area
- ⇒ A few residents noted they have adequate parking at their place of residence
- ⇒ Two survey respondents believe parking is not a major issue within the tree streets while one individual believes just the opposite
- ⇒ Parking restrictions on Mulberry Street should be lifted on weekends
- ⇒ Need to allow overnight street parking.



#### 4). Housing and Crime

- ⇒ Need to reduce overall crime and increase the safety of the Tree Streets.
- ⇒ A number of individuals expressed interest in establishing a neighborhood watch program. Crime Watch meets quarterly in the neighborhood.
- ⇒ Crime and illegal activity is perceived to be most prevalent along the Heritage Rail Trail, although daytime use of the trail seems safe.
- ⇒ Several individuals think the city's police presence must be increased in order to reduce crime.
- ⇒ Possibly erect 5 foot wall along Heritage Rail Trail to deter crime.
- ⇒ All survey respondents desire home improvements but believe it would be too expensive to finance on their own.
- ⇒ Additional streetlights, improved traffic enforcement, and more police presence were highlighted as key changes to make residents feel safer.
- ⇒ Landlords often live out of state. Some housing is in disrepair and landlords are not selective in renting their properties.
- ⇒ Issues with noise, kids, too many kids on bikes, prostitution and crack houses were noted.
- ⇒ One respondent indicated they needed more affordable housing.

⇒ One respondent mentioned safety was a concern at the basketball courts.

⇒ Lights at Bronstein are often broken.

#### 5). Commercial and Economic Development

- ⇒ An abundance of funeral homes and barbershops were noted.
- ⇒ A few individuals believe that the tree streets already provide a wide range of services to the area.
- ⇒ Many respondents feel that grocery stores are not widely available in their neighborhood and would like more convenient access to supermarkets and less expensive groceries. Some residents currently go to Market Basket and Shaw's downtown.
- ⇒ Most respondents believe the commercial establishments in the tree streets serve their needs
- ⇒ Introducing additional medical facilities and restaurants into the tree streets were the highest priority of the survey respondents; one respondent suggested each of the following: a UPS/Shipping store, a gas station for inbound traffic and a copy place for the courthouse, an ice cream parlor, larger hardware store – Aubuchon is limited, Laundromat, a community center and place for kids.
- ⇒ Many respondents indicated it is very difficult to find jobs.