

IV. CURRENT PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Although many buildings are now in need of rehabilitation, the neighborhood's fabric is basically well preserved. In some instances, incompatible land uses located within the residential area need to be moved. In addition, the repair or replacement of underground waterlines, the resetting of sidewalks and curbs and the repairing of streets are needed. Better landscaping—including tree planting, street furniture, signs and light fixtures—is also necessary, as are adequate facilities to alleviate traffic congestion caused by parking along the narrow streets.

Many of the buildings within the Thames Street business corridor have recently been renovated. Several buildings are still in need of sympathetic facade improvements and rehabilitation for retail or residential use. In addition, several unsuitable structures need to be replaced.

The waterfront commercial district, potentially a great asset to the city's revival, is generally in bad physical condition, underutilized and in need of redevelopment and rehabilitation. This section of the harborside is characterized by poorly aligned land uses. Traffic congestion and a lack of well planned parking facilities have prevented this district's optimal development. In addition, some of the existing waterfront-oriented businesses lack adequate dock space, structurally sound docks, accessibility and land for expansion.

As a result of Newport's participation in previous federal comprehensive planning and urban renewal programs, the city was allocated a block grant of \$5,000,000 through the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. In 1980 Newport will complete the final phase of this five-year program. The goal of Newport's Community Development Program is the creation of suitable living environments through public improvements, the rehabilitation of residential areas and business and commercial districts, the preservation and restoration of historic

sites and the beautification of open land. Since 1977, \$360,000 of rehabilitation work, including loans and grants, has taken place in the Southern Thames Street Neighborhood and a \$275,000 project to install new water lines is nearing completion. In addition to Community Development Act funds, Newport is entering the second year of a Small Cities program totalling \$1,170,000 with expectation of \$417,000 for the city in 1980.

Designation of the Southern Thames Street Neighborhood as one of Newport's two target areas for these funds designed to assist property owners make improvements has resulted in enlargement of the project area bisected by Southern Thames Street to include eight blocks bounded by Spring Street on the east, Norton Avenue and Connection Street on the south, Marchant Street to the west and Narragansett Avenue to the north.

In promoting revitalization, all participants must hold as a central objective the retention of the human as well as the architectural fabric of the Southern Thames Street Neighborhood. Displacement must be discouraged. Newport needs to retain low-cost housing for low-income residents. Neighborhood identity needs to be protected from the social and economic impact of the recent surge in condominium conversion of historic buildings and construction of new residential-commercial units along the waterfront which began in 1977 and has increased since.

Newport needs to retain its long-established Thames Street businesses and water-related, harborside industry. New life needs to be brought to this area within the existing social context.

The object of this report is not to make Southern Thames Street fashionable but to encourage its appreciation and physical improvement for the benefit of its residents. The opportunity exists now to reinforce the special character of this residential neighborhood, to protect the long-established commercial corridor and to enhance the historic Newport waterfront, ensuring their survival in the face of late twentieth-century demands.



Fig. 58: 16 Coddington Wharf (the last surviving portion of the Coddington Mill complex) before renovation.



Fig. 59: 16 Coddington Wharf after renovation and conversion into condominiums.