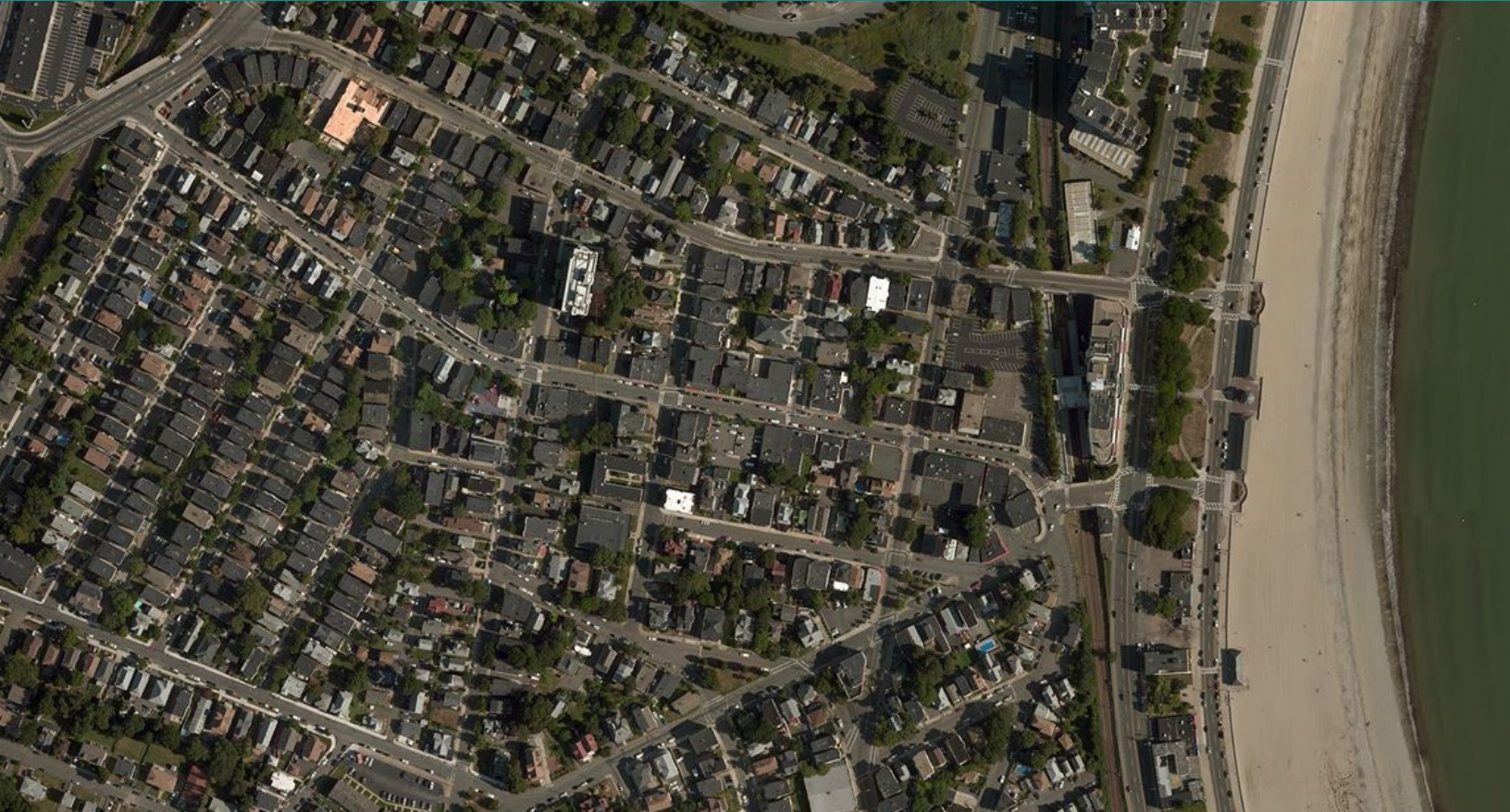


A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

City of Revere

Revere, MA



June 3, 2016



**Urban Land
Institute**

Boston/New England



MASSDEVELOPMENT

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Executive Summary

The Revere TAP convened on June 28 at the Garfield School in Revere under the direction of the Urban Land Institute's Boston/New England District Council. Over the course of the day, the TAP, made up of design, development, construction and planning professionals, met with city officials, developers, community activists, business owners and residents. Long a destination for immigrants attracted by its lower cost housing and less expensive storefronts, Shirley Avenue is on the cusp of some major changes as a luxury apartment development boom takes off on Revere Beach. Two themes emerged during interviews and discussions with various stakeholders. The panel clearly observed tremendous untapped potential in Shirley Avenue's array of ethnic markets and restaurants; the hundreds of new apartments taking shape along Revere Beach could very well provide a new customer base for local businesses. But TAP members also clearly heard the strong concerns of neighborhood residents and business owners that improvements, if not carefully thought out, could lead to gentrification.

In this report, the Revere TAP offers a series of recommendations aimed at helping Shirley Avenue survive and thrive without having to sacrifice its identity and neighborhood character. One common way cities have paid for improvements in struggling neighborhoods is by encouraging redevelopment, with developers on the hook for new sidewalks, greenspace and other amenities. The byproduct, though, can be major changes to a neighborhood's character. Instead, Revere should consider using linkage payments levied on new development in other areas, such as the former Wonderland racetrack, to help pay for streetscape upgrades and other improvements that will strengthen and broaden Shirley Avenue's core identity.

Shirley Avenue has tremendous upside. But any plan aimed at helping Shirley Avenue reach its full potential must be sensitive to the concerns and fears of neighborhood residents and businesses.

Chapter 1: ULI and the TAP Process offers an overview of the Urban Land Institute's Boston/New England District Council and its Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs), while also detailing the panel members and stakeholders who took part.

Chapter 2: Background and History Looks at Shirley Avenue's long history as an immigrant enclave.

Chapter 3: Assets and Opportunities Examines Shirley Avenue's many assets, including its diverse array of ethnic markets and restaurants

Chapter 4: Challenges Dirty streets, confusing storefronts, loitering, and a perception in the wider Revere community that Shirley Avenue is unsafe are obstacles holding the neighborhood back.

Chapter 5: Recommendations Rebranding Shirley Avenue as a multicultural district, beefing up community policing, spiffing up storefronts and making streetscape improvements are some of the Revere TAP's recommendations.

Chapter 6: Funding Outlines the array of state programs and funding sources that could be used to help pay for Shirley Avenue initiatives.

ULI and the TAP Process

Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the institute now has nearly 40,000 members worldwide representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service, including developers, architects, planners, lawyers, bankers, and economic development professionals, among others.

As the preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information, and experience among local, national, and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places. The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and to help sustain and create thriving communities. The Boston/New England District Council serves the six New England states and has over 1,000 members.

Technical Assistance Panels, or TAPs

The ULI Boston/New England Real Estate Advisory Committee convenes Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) at the request of public officials and local stakeholders of communities and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use challenges who benefit from planning and development professionals providing pro bono recommendations. At the TAP, a group of diverse professionals specially assembled with expertise in the issues posed typically spends one to two days visiting and analyzing existing conditions, identifying specific planning and development issues, and formulating realistic and actionable recommendations to move initiatives forward in a way consistent with the applicant's goals and objectives.

MassDevelopment Support

MassDevelopment is the state's economic

A ULI Boston/New England Technical Assistance Panel

development and finance authority. The authority works closely with state, local and federal officials to boost housing and create jobs. With the power to act as both a lender and developer, MassDevelopment also works to fill in gaps in infrastructure, transportation, energy and other areas that may be holding back economic growth. MassDevelopment has worked with ULI since 2011 to help sponsor and support the TAP process in cities and towns across the Commonwealth.



Panelists on the walking tour of Shirley Avenue

The Panel

ULI Boston/New England convened a volunteer panel of experts to examine the challenges and opportunities facing Provincetown:

Co-Chairs

Emily Keys Innes, Senior Urban Planner
The Cecil Group

Jason Denoncourt, Economic Development Director
Office of Congressman Seth Moulton

Panel

Dave Cameron, Analyst, Architect
CannonDesign

Fabio Duarte, Visiting Scholar
MIT Senseable City Lab

Chris Herlich, Urban Designer
NBBJ

Dick Lampman, Director of Business Development
ASCON Construction

Andrew Sutton, Associate
Riemer & Braunstein

MassDevelopment Staff

Victoria Maguire, SVP Real Estate Operations

ULI Boston/New England Staff

Ileana Tauscher, Senior Associate

Manikka Bowman, Manager, Policy & Outreach

Report Writer

Scott Van Voorhis
Natick, MA

Panelists have donated their time.

Stakeholders

Julie DeMauro, Active Living Coordinator, City of
Revere

Maria Peniche, Community Organizer, Women
Encouraging Empowerment

Cassie Mann, Associate Project Manager, The
Neighborhood Developers

Christine Pierannunzi, Volunteer, Revere
Beautification Committee

Dimple Rana, Manager, Healthy Community Initiative,
City of Revere

Vanny Huot, Community Engagement Manager, The
Neighborhood Developers

Michael Digangi, Director of Operations, Eurovest
Development

Antoinette Racco, Former Employee, Mediterranean
Cafe

George Tremblay, Architect, Arrowstreet for Eurovest

Tech Leng, Rappaport Fellow, Tufts University

Lor Holmes, Manager, CERO Cooperative

Michael Try, Youth Leadership Coordinator, City of
Revere

Kristen Janjar, Training Director, North Suffolk Mental
Health

Nancy Barile, Teacher, Revere Public Schools

Juan Jaramillo, Aide to Senator Joseph Boncore,
State House

TAP Process

The Revere TAP convened on June 28 at the Garfield School in Revere under the direction of the Urban Land Institute's Boston/New England District Council. Mayor Brian Arrigo led the panel of planning and design professionals on a walking tour of Revere's Shirley Avenue neighborhood. Over the course of the morning, panel members met and interviewed city officials, developers, community activists and residents. Following a brainstorming session during a working lunch, the TAP spent the afternoon debating and drafting a series of observations and recommendations. The panel presented its findings that evening at a public meeting at the Garfield School, followed by a question and answer session.

Background and History

For well more than a century, Shirley Avenue has been a gateway for immigrants from around the world. From the late 19th century to the mid-20th century and beyond, Shirley Avenue was the center of one of Boston area's largest Jewish neighborhoods, with immigrants hailing from Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Ukraine. The Jewish population of Revere soared from 137 immigrants in 1885 to more than 5,000 families in 1920; by 1940, a quarter of Revere's population was Jewish, according to the Mystic River Jewish Communities Project.

With the rise of the suburbs, Shirley Avenue's Jewish identity went into a slow but steady decline as long-time residents moved out and new waves of immigrants from around the world arrived. Symbolic of this changing of the guard, Congregation Tifereth Israel on Shirley Avenue, once the largest synagogue in Revere, is slated to be torn down, with plans to build veterans housing at the site.

Shirley Avenue's newest residents hail from Southeast Asia and South America. But while national origins of Shirley Avenue's residents and businesses have changed, it remains a neighborhood of immigrants, with newcomers attracted by store leases and apartment rents that are still relatively affordable.

However, Shirley Avenue's newest immigrants face a somewhat unprecedented set of challenges compared to generations of newcomers. A wave of new luxury housing and gentrification is spreading out from Boston, with hundreds of new, upscale apartments planned for Revere Beach. The new development has the potential to generate new business for Shirley Avenue restaurant, shops, and markets, but it is also stirring fears of gentrification and rising rents that could drive out long-time businesses and residents.

Questions for Study

- 1. Mobility and Connectivity:** How can we better connect the Shirley Ave. business district to the surrounding area and planned development including Revere Beach, those coming to/from the MBTA T station at the end of Shirley Ave., and the residential development on the northside of Revere Beach? What is needed in terms of wayfinding and signage? Are there design elements that can be implemented to improve the pedestrian and traffic patterns along this commercial spine that will enhance connectivity accordingly?
- 2. Strategic Investments along Shirley Ave:** Are there strategic investments that could be made along Shirley Ave. that will catalyze revitalization? For instance, are there a few strategic storefront improvements that should be prioritized above others? Are there streetscape and signage improvements that the City should be investing in? It would be great to look at this from an urban design and placemaking perspective.
- 3. Visioning/Marketing/Branding:** The City and its partners would benefit from help understanding the identity of Shirley Ave. and how to leverage that identity into a marketing and branding campaign. For instance, what strategies should the City deploy to promote the diversity of the area, attract more businesses to the area, and lure existing residents and newcomers to the district?

3. Assets and Opportunities

Revere Beach is undergoing a development boom, with hundreds of new apartments and condos in construction or on the drawing boards. As housing costs soar across Greater Boston, young professionals are increasingly being drawn to Revere's waterfront. The new residents are lured by Revere Beach's spectacular views, proximity, and accessibility to Boston, all at a relative discount to Boston's sky-high rents. The surge in beachfront construction presents opportunities for the nearby Shirley Avenue neighborhood. Shirley Avenue has long been a haven for immigrants, with the latest wave of newcomers from South America and the Middle East putting their stamp on the neighborhood. The neighborhood boasts an eclectic mix of Columbian, Moroccan and Cambodian cafes, bakeries and restaurants. There is growing interest in popular culture in different culinary traditions and ethnic foods, fueled by cable channels devoted to "discovering" new restaurants and experimenting with and fusing culinary traditions from around the globe. While Shirley Avenue businesses primarily serve the neighborhood, there is a real opportunity to expand their appeal to their new neighbors on Revere Beach and beyond. At a time when authenticity is a considered a major asset, Shirley Avenue has the potential to become a multicultural district that attracts visitors well beyond its confines.

Revere Beach Waterfront Building Boom

More than 1,500 new luxury rental units are planned as part of the Waterfront Square, with a first phase of 900 apartments. The project is attracting young singles and childless couples in their 20s and 30s with incomes over \$70,000 for singles and \$100,000 for couples. It is the latest and largest of a series of residential projects along Revere Beach that are transforming the area. This influx of thousands of relatively well-paid new residents could provide an opportunity to shops, businesses and restaurants along Shirley Ave. The new residents could spur demand for a wider array of offerings, including coffee shops with Wi-Fi and restaurants and markets selling take-out or prepared foods. More importantly, it could also provide more potential diners and shoppers for

the neighborhood's unique array of ethnic restaurants and markets.



Shirley Avenue has many diverse restaurants.

Diverse Restaurants and Markets

The markets and restaurants along Shirley Avenue have attracted and have the potential to attract more customers from well beyond the neighborhood. Shirley Avenue could become a multicultural district and showcase, not just for Revere, but with regional appeal as well. The breadth of the neighborhood's offerings can be seen in the names of its markets and restaurants, such as the Las Delicas Colombianas, the Cinco de Mayo Mexican Restaurant and Cantina and the Angkor Thom and Battambang markets. There is a substantial market of potential customers among the various ethnic groups that Shirley Avenue's markets and restaurants currently cater to. There are 57,000 Hispanic/Latino residents, as well as more than 10,000 residents with roots in Asia or the Middle East within a 10-minute drive of Shirley Avenue, according to an analysis conducted for The Shirley Avenue Task Force. There is also potential to broaden Shirley Avenue's appeal even more to include foodies drawn to the diverse culinary offerings to be found in the neighborhood. Altogether 144,000 residents live within a 10-minute drive of Shirley Avenue, spending an estimated \$215 million a year at restaurants, bars, coffee shops and taverns.

Affordable Housing

Rents and home prices are soaring across Greater Boston. Shirley Avenue remains a pocket of affordability that is also just a short commute via the Blue Line and Revere Beach station to downtown Boston. The Neighborhood Developers, a nonprofit builder, played a big role in building affordable rentals in the Shirley Avenue area. TND in 2015 opened 30 new affordable units for low income families and individuals at 525 Beach Street, replacing what had been a decrepit warehouse with a modern, four story apartment building. In the spring of 2016, TND opened One Beach, a four-story building with 39 affordable apartments for seniors. There are also additional housing development opportunities in the neighborhood, with a former synagogue now being eyed for veterans housing.



New affordable housing development on Beach Street.

Proximity to Boston

Shirley Avenue and Revere Beach benefit from their ease of access to Boston. The Revere Beach Blue Line station is located right at the base of the Shirley Avenue neighborhood and just off Revere Beach and its growing cluster of new apartments and year-round residents. The Revere Beach station is serviced by three MBTA bus lines and the neighborhood is a short drive from downtown Boston as well.

Small Business Opportunities

There is tremendous untapped potential in the Shirley Avenue business district. Neighborhood businesses include: 10 restaurants, from bakeries to full-service dining; 25 retail businesses, from nail and hair salons to dry cleaners and an auto parts store; and 32 service establishments, from insurance agents to doctors and lawyers. More than a few of the neighborhoods restaurants and retail shops are diamonds in the rough, with the potential to draw a wider clientele with what amounts to cosmetic changes. These include things like removing signs from windows so customers can look in as well as murals and streetscape improvements.

Parking Lots and New Uses

The neighborhood has a couple parking lots that would be perfect places for the festival and other placemaking events, with one next to the MGH building and the Revere Beach subway stop. The lots could be used to stage a multicultural festival showcasing the neighborhoods attractions or for other placemaking events as well.

Support from the City

City Hall and the administration of Mayor Brian Arrigo are committed to finding ways to provide a boost to Shirley Avenue businesses, with a focus on leveraging existing city services.

Chance to Funnel the Fruits from Other Developments into the Neighborhood

Revere is in the middle of a master planning process aimed at redeveloping the old Wonderland dog track a short drive away from Shirley Avenue. There is also the potential for new development on the site of the Suffolk Downs racetrack as well. The new development could provide city officials with the opportunity to raise funds for projects in other neighborhoods, such as Shirley Avenue, through development linkage programs.

4. Challenges

Shirley Avenue has great potential but it also faces many challenges as well. While the area boasts a diverse array of restaurants and small markets that could very well have broader appeal, the neighborhood's rundown appearance can be a turnoff to potential visitors. Restaurant and market owners, in turn, are hampered in their ability to spiff up their premises by short-term leases and concern that any upgrades will only encourage their building owners to hike rents. There is also a larger concern about potential gentrification of the neighborhood as new luxury housing takes shape nearby on Revere Beach.

Reputation and Lingering Perception as Unsafe

Shirley Avenue residents interviewed by the TAP panel argued that the neighborhood is much safer today than it was in the past. Drug dealing and other illegal activity was conducted openly on the street in earlier years. While that activity has not gone away, it has largely gone underground and off the street. As a result, Shirley Avenue has retained a reputation as a crime troubled neighborhood within the larger Revere community, with city residents outside the neighborhood unlikely to visit. One big reason this reputation has been hard to shake is the neighborhood's downtrodden appearance. Dingy storefronts, dirty streets, and routine loitering near the base of Shirley Avenue reinforce a long-held perception the area is not safe to visit.



Sign in parking lot.

Uninviting Appearance

Shirley Avenue is a much more vibrant neighborhood than casual observers or visitors would know from its outward appearance. Litter is a problem in the neighborhood, with a dearth of trash bins. Storefront facades are dingy and windows are cluttered with signs, making it hard for would-be shoppers or passersby to see what's inside. During off hours, grim security gates are rolled down in front of a number of shops, further adding to the erroneous impression that Shirley Avenue is a high-crime neighborhood.



Entrance to Shirley Avenue near MBTA station

Loitering

A large group of people were observed by panel members loitering near a rooming house at the entrance to the neighborhood not far from Revere Beach station. As it turns out, this is a regular occurrence and a major deterrent for anyone unfamiliar with the neighborhood interested in walking farther up Shirley Avenue where most of the shops and restaurants are located.

Community Center Needed

Shirley Avenue does not have any dedicated meeting space. This makes it difficult to hold neighborhood gatherings of residents and business owner, which in turn makes it harder to get buy-in for new improvements and ideas.

Short-Term Leases and Absentee Landlords

Business owners on Shirley Avenue face two very big obstacles when it comes to making façade improvements and other renovations. First, most business owners are tenants leasing their space, rather than owning it. Second, most don't have long-term leases and are forced to re-up every year. This lack of longer-term security makes it difficult for business owners to invest significant dollars to improve space that could easily end up getting leased to someone else. In addition, business owners are also concerned that any improvements they make may simply encourage their landlords to raise rents.



Metal security gates.

Potential Gentrification

Any proposed improvements to Shirley Avenue and its businesses must be weighed against the threat of potential gentrification. While neighborhood's outward appearance is rough around the edges, Shirley Avenue provides both hard-to-find affordable housing and affordable leasing opportunities for business owners. The development boom taking place around the corner along Revere Beach is expected bring hundreds of relatively well-paid singles and couples to the area who can afford rents starting at \$2,800 a month in the new Waterfront Square development. Revere Beach's prime location both near downtown Boston and right on the Blue Line has makes it magnet for new development at a time when the Boston area is starved for both new housing and land to build it on. Longer-term, regional housing trends are expected to spur additional residential housing development in the Revere Beach area, much of it upscale. If not managed correctly, this wave of new development could wind up overwhelming and gentrifying the Shirley Avenue neighborhood given its proximity to Revere's fast-developing waterfront.

5. Recommendations

Shirley Avenue has great potential. But to reach that potential, city officials, business owners and neighborhood residents need to consider a number of changes and improvements. Some of these ideas could be implemented fairly quickly, from rolling out more trash barrels to beefing up community policing. Others, involving infrastructure improvements, could take longer. The TAP heard very clearly from residents and other stakeholders that Shirley Avenue does not want or need to be transformed into something different. Rather, improvements should be designed with the neighborhood in mind, with a focus on the immediate needs of its residents. By embracing its authentic character, the district and its businesses have the potential to become a regional draw.

Getting Started and Shorter-Term Projects

Fostering Business Leadership Shirley Avenue business owners need a voice to advocate for their interests. Shirley Avenue business owners currently lack an association to represent their interests. A Shirley Avenue Partnership could become an advocate for business owners at City Hall and beyond. Such a business group is also essential if plans for improvements like storefront facades are to have a chance of moving forward. City officials should also consider hiring a small business or community liaison to work with the neighborhood.

Review Previous Plans There have been a number of valuable studies and surveys conducted over the past few years that have examined conditions on Shirley Avenue and recommended various changes and improvements. These include: the “Shirley Avenue Housing & Economic Development Analysis by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council”; the “Shirley Avenue Community Action Plan”; and the “Shirley Avenue Business District,” written for The Shirley Avenue Task Force by The Neighborhood Developers and FinePoint Associates. These reports and others include many valuable observations and recommendations as well as reams of helpful data. City officials and neighborhood leaders should review

these past plans and select and prioritize ideas for funding and implementation.

These previous studies have offered recommendations that in a number of cases echo those found in this report. The “Shirley Avenue Action Plan,” published in 2014, calls for an emphasis on celebrating the neighborhood’s cultural diversity and efforts to support “the high quality growth of local businesses.” The report also puts a stress on ensuring “a welcoming, clean, and safe neighborhood” and improvements to the “pedestrian environment in the neighborhood.” The “Shirley Avenue Task Force” analyzed the market for Shirley Avenue’s restaurants and markets in Revere and beyond and finds the potential for a much wider appeal, especially among foodies. And the “Shirley Avenue Business District” cites unclear signage and “less than appealing storefronts” as barriers to success.



Painted benches off of Shirley Avenue

Cleaning Up Shirley Avenue residents are clearly frustrated with the amount of trash that mars the neighborhood’s street and sidewalks. Some have resorted to collecting litter on their own. Tidier sidewalks and streets would provide an immediate boost to Shirley Avenue. City officials should consider more frequent street cleaning and installing solar-

powered trash barrels throughout the district.

Boosting Police Presence City officials should also consider beefing up community policing in the neighborhood. Police officers walking the neighborhood will get to know the residents, shopkeepers, and visitors and would be a reassuring sight for Revere residents and others interested in visiting some of the neighborhood’s restaurants and markets but who remain concerned about whether the area is safe. An increased police presence might also be helpful in deterring some of the loitering near the base of Shirley Avenue that is a turnoff for those who might be interested in exploring the neighborhood.

Rebranding Shirley Avenue Shirley Avenue should be rebranded as a multicultural district, highlighting its vibrant mix of residents and businesses with roots in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. New signs highlighting Shirley Avenue and the new multicultural district should be placed at high-visibility locations such as the pavilion by Revere Beach at the T station. A destination map at the T station pointing out restaurants and other points of interest along Shirley Avenue would also help. Murals on the sides of buildings and banners could also help liven up the streetscape and help promote the neighborhood’s unique brand.



Wayfinding sign at entrance of Shirley Avenue

City and neighborhood leaders should also consider hosting a multicultural festival as well to give greater exposure to Shirley Avenue’s wide range of ethnic restaurants and businesses. The festival and other events could be promoted on the LED board at Wonderland. Social media could also be used to promote events and businesses in the area. The city should explore turning part of Shirley Avenue into a pedestrian only street during the popular annual Sandcastle contest on Revere Beach. This would help encourage beachgoers to explore Shirley Avenue while also providing the city and the neighborhood with valuable experience in making parts of the street pedestrian-only for special events. Generating foot traffic along Shirley Avenue during the Sandcastle contest would bring awareness to the neighborhood and therefore to placemaking events that happen throughout the year. As noted earlier, parking lots in the district, such as the one next to the MGH building by Revere Beach Station, could be used for events and festivals.

Longer-term Recommendations

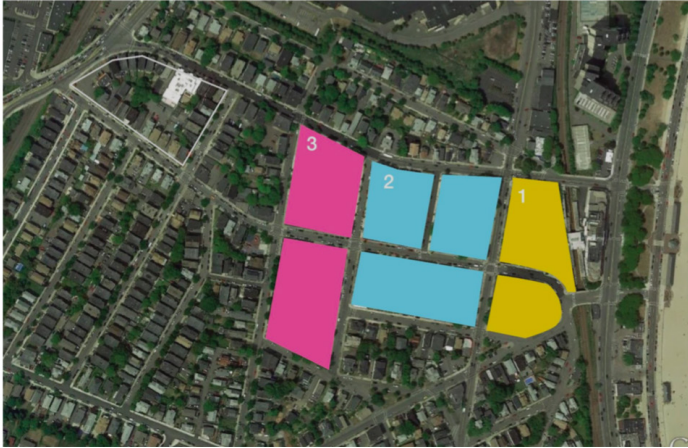
Shirley Avenue would also benefit from strategic infrastructure improvements and a strategic plan for bolstering the neighborhood’s retail offerings. Panel members took a block by block approach moving up Shirley Avenue from Revere Beach station in discussing its longer-term recommendations.

Block 1 –Ocean Ave to North Shore Road:

This first block might be an ideal spot for a community center, providing the neighborhood with badly needed meeting space. Outdoor seating and retail at the MGH building would help liven up this first block, which currently lacks the vibrancy of the blocks farther up Shirley, where most of the neighborhood’s restaurants, markets and shops are located.

City officials should develop options and plans for relocating and perhaps dispersing into the community the current residents of the SRO on the first block, which has become a magnet for loitering by large groups of people. The SRO and the activity it is drawing is a deterrent to potential visitors to the

neighborhood given its location at the gateway to Shirley.



A block-by-block strategy for improvements along Shirley Avenue

Fixing the curve at the bottom of Shirley, making it a two-way street to Thornton, should also be considered by city traffic and public works officials. That would help increase traffic through the heart of Shirley Avenue's restaurant and retail district. The amount of traffic – and potential customers – is currently restricted by the fact that Shirley Avenue is a one-way street headed towards Revere Beach. This makes it difficult for beachgoers driving through the neighborhood to stop at a restaurant or market that looks intriguing or to drop by on their way home.

Last, the city should consider adding an arch and signage at the neighborhood's entrance by the waterfront at Ocean Avenue as a way to alert passersby of Shirley Avenue. Right now, it is easy to pass by Shirley Avenue without knowing about the dining and retail options along the street. A clear sign could help to both draw awareness and brand the district.

Block 2 –North Shore Road to Walden Street

This block is where the district's retail is located and would benefit from façade improvements and murals illustrating and highlighting the various cultures that the community represents. As vacancies arise, consideration should be given to additional

restaurants or other community retail gaps or needs identified by the neighborhood. One approach would be to reach out to area culinary schools and alert their graduates to the potential and benefits of locating in the Shirley Avenue neighborhood.

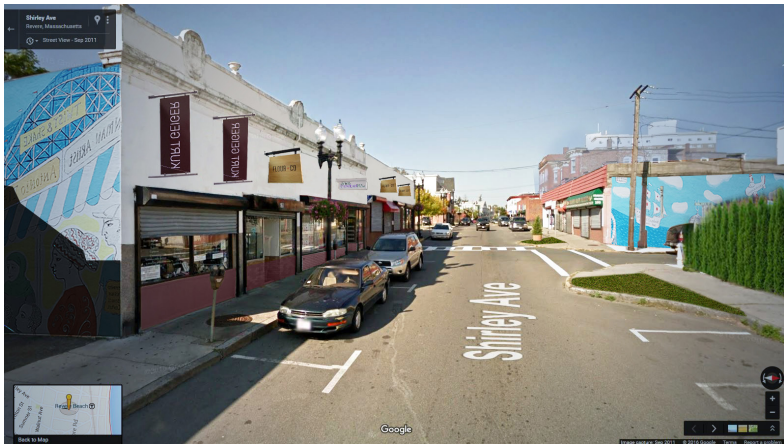
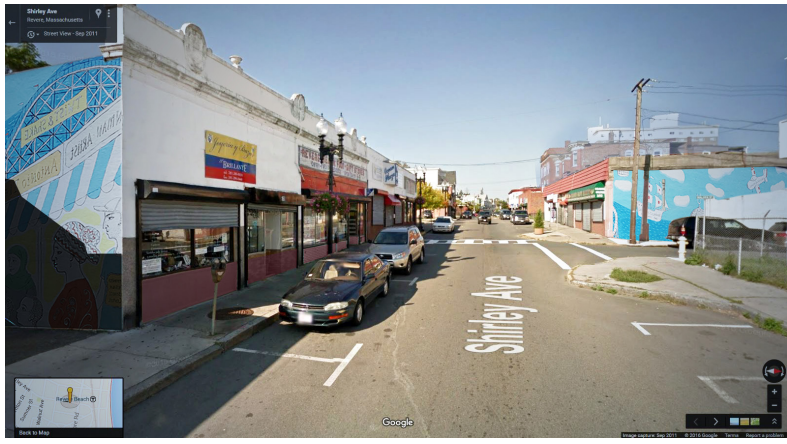
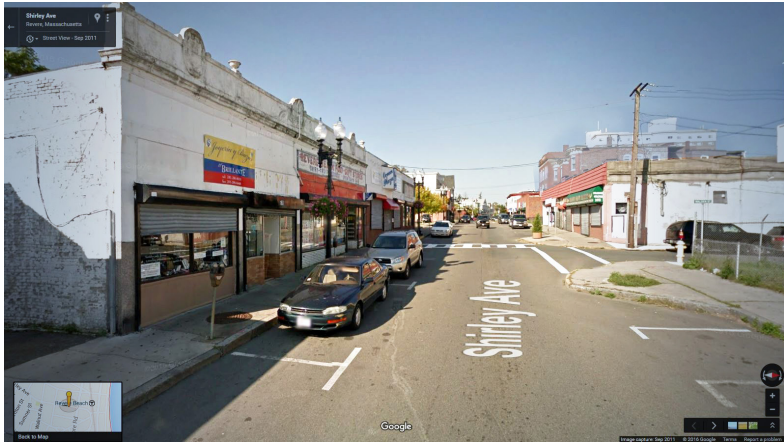
The city should investigate the use of internal security grates or other, less visible means of security to address business owners' concerns without giving the perception of a lack of safety. In the meantime, murals could be painted over the metal security gates.

Block 3 –Walden Street to Walnut Avenue

One aim of the proposed improvements to blocks one and two is to encourage visitors to the neighborhood to walk far enough up Shirley Avenue to reach some of its main attractions. Block three is where most of Shirley Avenue's restaurants and specialty markets are located. It should be promoted as a restaurant cluster or potential restaurant row. This is the epicenter of a neighborhood where you can find Cambodian, Thai, Vietnamese and Columbian dishes and foods all within a few doors of each other. There is a potential synergy between Shirley Avenue's restaurants and markets, all of whom would benefit from a joint marketing campaign to draw more shoppers and diners. Restaurants could steer diners to nearby markets to buy the ingredients needed to cook some of their favorite dishes at home. Markets could return the favor, offering a shout-out to restaurants offering various Cambodian, Thai or Columbian dishes, among others.

Transportation Improvements

The Shirley Avenue neighborhood is isolated by the combination of the waterfront on one end and the busy VFW Parkway on the other. City officials should consider improving pedestrian and bicycle connections between Shirley Avenue and the rest of the neighborhood. A trolley service that would shuttle make stops through the neighborhood and connect it with nearby Wonderland, where significant new mixed-used development is expected, would also be a valuable addition. A bike share program would also be a great add.



Improvements to Shirley Avenue can be made in increments.

6. Funding

The TAP's recommendations for ways to strengthen Shirley Avenue and help it reach its full potential will require financial support. Some proposals – such as increased community policing – may involve leveraging existing city resources. Others, however, such as streetscape improvements and infrastructure work, are likely to require additional state or possibly city funding through linkage payments levied on new development.

Linkage Cities often provide various incentives to spur new residential and commercial construction in neighborhoods that need a boost, with the developers in turn required to pay for various streetscape and public improvements. But that approach runs the risk of permanently altering the neighborhood's character and inviting gentrification. One way to raise that additional money while preserving Shirley Avenue's character would be to create a linkage program tying the new development planned for Wonderland and Suffolk Downs with infrastructure and streetscape improvements on Shirley Avenue. In Boston and other cities, developers pay a certain dollar amount, per square foot, when they build new commercial properties downtown or in other prime locations. The money is then used for public improvements in underserved neighborhoods. Through such a linkage program, Revere could pay for improvements to Shirley Avenue while also helping prevent displacement of local businesses and protect the neighborhood from gentrification.

Other Potential Funding Sources There are a range of state programs and initiatives Revere could potentially tap into to pay for streetscape and infrastructure work on Shirley Avenue.

Infrastructure

MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Cities and towns interested in creating “complete streets” that are safe and accessible for walking and biking as well as public transportation and cars may be eligible for financial assistance. MassDOT's Complete Streets program provides up to \$50,000 in technical

assistance and \$400,000 in construction funding for communities that meet a series of requirements. To qualify, a community must have a municipal employee attend a Complete Streets training; create a Complete Streets Policy that scores at least 80 on a scale of 100; and draft a “Complete Streets Prioritization Plan.”

City Funds Revere Mayor Brian Arrigo has expressed interest in using small but vital amounts of surplus city funds – or free cash – to help get the ball rolling with some starter initiatives.

Chapter 90 Program The Massachusetts Department of Transportation also reimburses communities for roadwork and related improvements under the Chapter 90 program. This can range from street repaving to sidewalks, intersections and traffic lights.

MassWorks Infrastructure Program MassWorks is designed as “a one-stop shop for municipalities and other eligible public entities seeking public infrastructure funding to support economic development and job creation.” The MassWorks umbrella now covers six former grant programs. The list below comes from the program's website.

- Public Works Economic Development (PWED)
- Community Development Action Grant (CDAG)
- Growth Districts Initiative (GDI) Grant Program
- Massachusetts Opportunity Relocation and Expansion Program (MORE)
- Small Town Rural Assistance Program (STRAP)
- Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Program”

MassWorks provides grants for the construction, reconstruction and expansion of publicly owned infrastructure, including, but not limited to sewers, utility extensions, streets, roads, traffic signalization, curb cuts, parking facilities ... and pedestrian and bicycle accommodation.” The emphasis is on infrastructure projects that support new multi-family housing in “walkable, mixed-use districts” or that support economic development in struggling areas or neighborhoods.

MassWorks funding can be also used to match other public and private money to build or renovate housing within a half mile of a subway stop or other public transit station.

Green Community Grants More than \$30 million in grants have been awarded under this state program, which helps cities and towns with everything from energy conservation projects to crafting renewable power purchasing agreements.

Branding

MassDevelopment TDI Technical Assistance MassDevelopment’s Transformative Development Initiative, or TDI, is designed to help Gateway Cities boost “public private engagement” and develop a stronger brand identity to spur new investment and economic activity. Through the Technical Assistance Program, Mass Development provides “scope-tailored third-party professional services ... community building placemaking projects called TDI Places, a “Fellows Programs” TDI Fellows, through which professional staff will be working for the TDI District local collaborative partnership.”

MAPC District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA)

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council provides planning assistance to local communities through its District Local Technical Assistance program.

Small Businesses Assistance

Main Streets Partners A nonprofit, Main Street Partners provides a team of 4-6 consultants to work with a small business owner for two-to-three months on ways to increase revenue and profits. The service is free to business owners, with the value of each project pegged at roughly \$25,000.

MassDevelopment TDI Equity Under this initiative, MassDevelopment invests in selected projects in TDI districts that have the potential to act as catalysts for additional development and investment.

In order to qualify, a community or developer must show the project will have a “significant economic development impact” and demonstrate feasibility, both in market demand and financing, among other criteria.

CDBG Grants First launched in the 1970s, the Community Development Block Grant Program funnels federal money for economic development to state governments. Communities often use CDBG money to rehab housing, revamp public infrastructure or build senior and community centers, all of which are major needs for the Shirley Avenue neighborhood.

7. Conclusion

With a vibrant immigrant population and restaurant and retail options that reflect that diversity, Shirley Avenue has ample opportunity to attract visitors, while still continuing to serve residents. The city should focus on addressing the needs of local business

owners and residents to strengthen and celebrate Shirley Avenue’s multiculturalism, and starting now will help the city get ahead of potential gentrification from nearby development.