NEIGHBORHOOD RECOMMENDATIONS
(Derived from public hearings and survey results)

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

WILLARD BEACH
Because so much public access to Maine's coast appears to be vanishing and because Willard Beach is such an extremely valuable natural resource and place of beauty, we strongly support the continued preservation and beautification of this treasured space. We support the recommendations and endorsed changes in the 2003 Willard Beach Report adopted by the South Portland City Council. Specifically, attention should be paid to the maintenance of the dunes, the cleaning of the beach (including trash removal), and the continuous upgrading of plantings, entrances, benches, beach house, playground, fishing shacks, and parking lot, as well as clear and attractive signage. In addition, provision should be made for local boaters to store punts on the beach. Above all, the committee strongly recommends that Willard Beach remain in the public domain in perpetuity, with total and free public access and parking.

SPRING POINT SHOREWAY
In the late 1970’s, when the Spring Point Shoreway was created, the City of South Portland took a major step in the direction of paying homage to the jewel of Willard Beach, its magnificent accompanying shoreline and the lovely campus of SMCC (at that time SMTC). What is now needed are the energy and resources to keep that vision alive. In particular, paths, stairways, arboretum, playground, and picnic areas need to be continuously upgraded and maintained. The important historic sites, such as the Old Settlers cemetery and Fort Preble, should be preserved and maintained in their original form. Attention also should be paid to having clear and attractive markers for these sites.

PRESERVE EXISTING OPEN SPACE
Because South Portland is an urban area and the Willard neighborhood has so little open space, it is urgent that the City develops and acts upon a plan to preserve whatever open space is available. We recommend the Council adopt the Open Space Plan and urge continued work with the South Portland Land Trust in aggressively seeking parcels of land to purchase. In addition, we recommend that the Council stay informed of SMCC's development plans and jointly create guidelines for the acquisition, development, and use of open spaces in the Willard neighborhood. Concluding the theme of public open space, it is critical to upgrade and maintain those places that already exist, such as Willard School Park, which is in a state of disrepair and neglect.
Neighborhood Streetscapes

Preserve Dead End Streets
Neighborhood dead end streets were considered by many residents as an asset to the Willard Neighborhood. Residents were adamantly against extending dead end streets. Many believe these streets add to the character and the appealing “quirkiness” of the neighborhood. The Willard Neighborhood is aware that their wish and desire goes against urban planning principles of extending streets so that they intersect with one another, providing and enhancing the neighborhood street grid. Extension of the street grid could create new shortcuts through the neighborhood and remove the quiet tranquil setting that many of the residents have come to enjoy. In some cases, providing extensions of these dead end streets could encourage development, placing a further burden on the neighborhood street grid.

Sidewalks / Esplanades / Street Trees / and Crosswalks
The Willard Neighborhood is extremely fortunate to have the “classic” style of streetscape design. Many of the streets within the neighborhood have a curb-grass esplanade-sidewalk design. Many of the main arteries and residential side streets provide sidewalks on both sides of the roadway. However, many of the existing concrete sidewalks are past their prime and need attention. These concrete sidewalks have cracked or heaved over time leaving an obstacle for pedestrians.

The Neighborhood felt that the City should pay closer attention to the upkeep and maintenance of the sidewalks. The City should inventory areas not connected by sidewalks and explore the feasibility of providing sidewalks on at least one side of those streets. New sidewalks should carry the same street pattern and design when constructed. Inventory and replacement of the sidewalks should be done annually/bi-annually. The replacement material should be concrete sidewalk panels rather than the inexpensive bituminous surface. The use of bituminous pavement within an existing concrete sidewalk is aesthetically not pleasing and takes away from the neighborhood streetscape design. At minimum, the construction of the sidewalk should include a five-foot wide esplanade to allow the placement of street trees. This width of esplanade not only provides a vegetated area, but also offers a safety-zone buffer between motorized vehicles and pedestrians.

Intersection Enhancements
Essential intersection enhancements were brought up during the committee’s public process. Four intersections were mentioned as possible candidates for review for capacity/safety issues. The intersections are: the Pillsbury Street and Preble Street intersection (Willard Square), Pillsbury Street and Cottage Road intersection, Woodbury Street and Preble Street intersection, and the Cottage Road and Sawyer Street intersection.

Recently, Willard Square has been reviewed for geometric traffic alternatives. Designs for a new Willard Square have varied from the re-creation of a roundabout intersection, the ninety-degree connection of Preble Street into Pillsbury Street, or the ninety-degree connection of Pillsbury Street into Preble Street. The City and the Neighborhood Association are working
together to determine whether any of the three proposed designs would benefit the Square. Any intersection improvement in the Square should incorporate the use of greenspace, park benches, and public art as well as preserving current residential/business on-street parking.

The Pillsbury Street and Cottage Road intersection is a very tight and dangerous intersection during certain times of the day. Having a number of commercial uses adjacent to the intersection with associated on-street parking has provided a tight travel corridor in Cottage Road. Additionally, the intersection has become increasingly busier over the past decade because of growth in the abutting community of Cape Elizabeth. The Neighborhood recommends that the intersection be studied to determine what design alternatives could be implemented to create a safer intersection for both vehicles and pedestrians.

The intersection of Woodbury Street and Preble Street has been a neighborhood concern for sometime now. This is a blind intersection due to the hill of Preble Street. Vehicle traffic on Preble Street exceeds the posted speed limited of 30 MPH, creating a dangerous situation in the intersection. The Neighborhood requested that City review the intersection and provide proper recommendations to MDOT (Preble Street is a State aided roadway) and the City Council. The City should explore the use of “stop signs” in the intersection and petition MDOT for the reduction of the speed limit on Preble Street. The conversion of the intersection into a three-way stop based intersection should be considered based on the following concerns: poor sight conditions at this intersection, density of the neighborhood, and relatively low speeds and traffic volumes. Any change to the intersection should be documented through the City’s traffic schedule.

In February 2004 this intersection was converted into a three-way stop. We appreciate the timely response to our concerns.

The last intersection, Cottage Road and Sawyer Street, has seen increasing delay time coming out of the Sawyer Street legs for a number of years now due to the increased traffic on Cottage Road. The Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System, the Maine Department of Transportation, and the City of South Portland have conducted studies to determine the need for improvements at the intersection. On January 2, 2004, a new four-way traffic control system was activated, providing safer opportunities for those who wanted to exit out of Sawyer Street north and southbound onto Cottage Road.

**NEIGHBORHOOD LIVABILITY**

**CREATE NEIGHBORHOOD CORE**

Great interest has been shown through the neighborhood survey and in workshops to create a central core in the Willard Neighborhood. This core would have small storefront businesses and a public seating area. Willard Square would be the most appropriate location, being central to all sections of the neighborhood. This area already has the beginnings of a village square with small businesses, bus stop, mailboxes and Limited Business LB District zoning. We would like to work with the City Staff and property owners to enhance this area with a traffic calming solution, public benches and pleasant landscaping. We need to ensure that the Limited Business
LB District zoning is adequate both to support existing businesses and to encourage new businesses to locate in this area.

**SOUND & RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT**
We wish to work with City Staff, property and small business owners, proactively, to ensure that our present Limited Business LB Districts support our existing businesses, encourage new businesses and reflect the wishes of residential property owners. We need to maintain and promote our existing business corridors along Pickett St., the Willard Square area and Cottage Rd. We are fortunate to have small cafes, bakeries, art galleries, a theater and retail businesses all within walking distance. These businesses are a major asset to our neighborhood. In addition, we need to ensure that our neighborhood infrastructure supports these businesses with well maintained sidewalks and roads, and adequate parking areas for residents and businesses. We would like to work with the City in developing, and periodically updating, a neighborhood master plan.

**RELATIONSHIP WITH SMCC**

**INCREASED COMMUNICATION**
SMCC serves as an anchor for Willard Beach and Willard Neighborhood. Formerly SMTC (until 7/1/03), SMCC is expected to expand its programs and its physical plant. In such expansion, there should be timely communication and consultation between SMCC and WNA

**WILLARD NEIGHBORHOOD AS A HOUSING RESOURCE**
As SMCC expands it will have increased needs for housing students, faculty, and staff. WN resources could include seasonal rental of single-family residences, single rooms, boarding arrangements, seasonal house-sitting, and accessory dwelling units. WNA, SMCC, and City Planning staff should review existing zoning and other regulations and recommend any appropriate changes to the Planning Board and City Council.

**OTHER COLLABORATION BETWEEN SMCC AND WILLARD NEIGHBORHOOD**
SMCC, WNA and City departments should continue and expand joint programs such as the Community Gallery Walk, beach clean-up, the Shakespeare presentations at The Stage at Spring Point, et al. The Willard Neighborhood should serve as a laboratory for SMCC academic programs. The Willard Neighborhood Association should support fund-raising efforts to provide an SMCC scholarship and/or a stipend to support student part-time staffing assistance for WNA officers and committees. We welcome the opportunity to explore additional collaborative programs with SMCC.
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

DEVELOP SOCIAL AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES
The development of diverse social and cultural opportunities within the Willard Neighborhood will enhance neighborhood livability. Maintaining open spaces for outdoor events and developing a Community Center for inside events are recommended.

MAINTAIN OPEN SPACE
We recommend maintaining open spaces within the community such as Fisherman's Point, the Greenbelt, parks, etc. to be used for compatible social and cultural events such as theater, art exhibits, small concerts, and family focused events. In addition, the neighborhood public open spaces and other gathering areas should be reviewed for their handicapped accessibility. Areas that are not accessible to all should be evaluated for ways to make them accessible.

ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY TO ALL SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EVENTS
We recommend that admission to all events held on public property be free and open to the public. We would like to assure that all in the neighborhood are able to participate. We recommend that the City make access to all public open spaces as accessible to the physically challenged as possible. This will also facilitate participation of the elderly within our neighborhood. We recommend that all walkways and stairways be maintained to assure safe access to the public. Weather and use take a toll on our walkways. We need to monitor their condition carefully.

PROMOTE THE USE OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS FOR COMMUNITY & SOCIAL EVENTS
We recommend that an existing public gathering facility in the neighborhood be used for recreational, cultural, and social functions. It would serve all ages, from young children and families to senior citizens. Collaboration among neighborhood groups, businesses, and the City will be necessary to facilitate the development of this gathering place.