

Study Report

# **Study of Location for New Salisbury Beach Comfort Station**

*Salisbury, MA*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Salisbury Beach State Reservation is a unique public resource, which includes 3.8 miles of sandy beaches. Residents from all over the Merrimack Valley, the Commonwealth and out-of-state tourists visit Salisbury Beach year-round. Multiple public restroom facilities are accessible to beachgoers visiting the State Reservation proper via car or camper. However, there is no public restroom for beachgoers who access Salisbury Beach via Salisbury Beach Center. The Salisbury Beach State Reservation Barrier Beach Management Plan of 2008, categorizes this section of Salisbury Beach as Beach Management Area 3 (BMA 3). BMA 3 is comprised of the commercial area along the beach between Access #4 and Access #5.

Presently, visitors to the beach at the Beach Center must travel away from the beach to use public restrooms located behind the Salisbury Police Station on Cable Avenue. Those public restrooms are inconveniently located, inconspicuous, small and deteriorated. Construction of a Comfort Station within Beach Management Area 3, with public restrooms, visitor/welcome information, a DCR substation/office, shaded seating and an abutting tot lot would be a significant public benefit in this popular section of Salisbury Beach.



### ***Public restrooms behind Police Station and alleyway to restroom***

This initiative for a Comfort Station at Salisbury's Beach Center has garnered community and municipal support, and the Town of Salisbury has offered to assume responsibility for maintaining the Comfort Station. The purpose of this study is to identify and assess potential locations for a Comfort Station at Salisbury Beach Center in order to determine an optimal site for a future facility.



***Hampton Beach Restroom Facilities Hampton, New Hampshire (photos courtesy of Samyn-D'Elia Architects, P.A.)***

Notably, Salisbury Beach abuts New Hampshire's Hampton Beach State Park. New facilities at Hampton Beach recently transformed Hampton Beach into an inviting coastal destination, with multiple new bathhouses and their Seashell Building hub, which includes park offices, visitor services, lifeguard facilities, a bandstand, restrooms and lockers. A Comfort Station at Salisbury Beach Center will benefit the Commonwealth by growing visitorship to Salisbury Beach—raising the profile of this area as a destination and providing positive visitor experiences for Massachusetts' residents and tourists alike.

## 2.0 Evaluation of Site Options

The following criteria were used in identifying and evaluating sites for a Comfort Station:

- ✓ Furtherance of the Department of Conservation and Recreation's mission
- ✓ Environmental conditions
- ✓ Proximity to the beach
- ✓ Safe access from the beach and Broadway Mall
- ✓ Visual connection to the beach and Broadway Mall
- ✓ Opportunity for piloting an environmentally sensitive coastal construction
- ✓ Proximity to pre-existing infrastructure for utilities
- ✓ Appropriateness of use and visual impact
- ✓ Adequate site area available for amenities
- ✓ Impact on abutters and current uses

Gienapp Design Associates (GD) examined the commercial district and beach area of Salisbury Beach to assess the existing public restroom location, and to evaluate the other sites for their conditions and ease of access. All sites considered for study were first required to be currently available, publicly-owned land in close proximity to the public beach and the commercial district of Salisbury Beach. The sites were also evaluated relative to their use as a Comfort Station within the context of long-standing physical improvements to the Salisbury Beach commercial area, which are still at the concept phase. Key improvement concepts include a future boardwalk along Ocean Front South, a bandstand situated at the head of a fishing pier, and landscaping improvements to the public spaces at the Broadway Mall.

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Plumbing Code, toilet facilities of approximately 1,500 square feet are capable of serving approximately 2,500 men and 2,500 women. The current fixture requirements for "Bathing-Public Beaches" stipulate the following capacities for beachfront toilet facilities:

- Men's Toilet Room (1 fixture per 500, 1 lavatory per 1000)
- Women's Toilet Room (1 fixture per 200, 1 lavatory per 1000)
- Water Fountains (1 per 1000)

A Comfort Station should provide facilities with at least the following quantity and type of fixtures:

- Men's Toilet Room: 4 water closets, 1 urinal (+3 extra urinals), 3 lavatories
- Women's Toilet Room: 12 water closets, 3 lavatories (+1 extra lavatory)
- Unisex/Family Toilet Room: 1 water closet, 1 urinal & 1 lavatory
- Water fountains: 5

All toilet rooms must comply with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and MAAB (Massachusetts Architectural Access Board) regulations for accessibility.

The following four site locations were evaluated:

**SITE "A" Sidewalk Café**

(Sidewalk Café building foundation area at Ocean Front South)

**SITE "B" Broadway Mall**

(Easterly section of the pedestrian plaza)

**SITE "C" On-Street Parking Area**

(Existing on-street parking area between beach and Ocean Front South)

**SITE "D" Current Public Restroom Location**

(Behind Police Station on Cable Avenue)

**Site “A”: Sidewalk Café (Sidewalk Café building foundation area at Ocean Front South)**

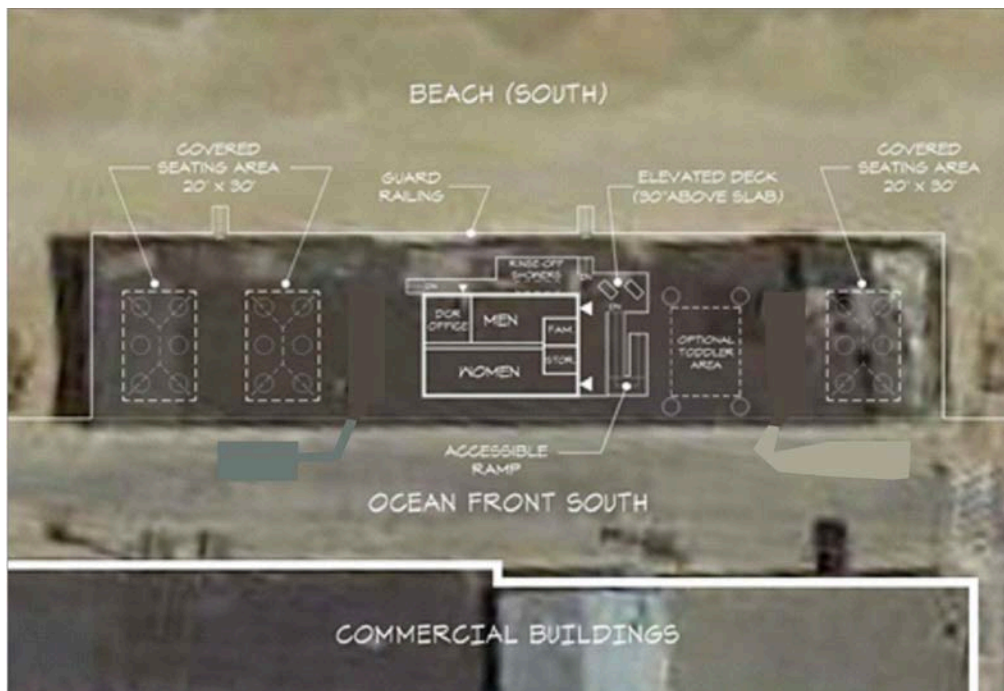


This site is located on the beach along Ocean Front South, about one block south of the Broadway Mall. It is an estimated two-minute walk from the east end of the Broadway Mall. It is less than a minute walk from many locations on the beach.

DCR recently demolished the one-story Sidewalk Café building, but the structure’s concrete pad and seaside foundation wall remain in place while a Comfort Station site is being determined. Utility services are capped-in-place, including water, sewer, and electrical power. The site has been secured by DCR with the provision of a fence. The concrete pad dimensions are approximately 50’ x 225’, or about 11,250 s.f. of surface area. This area is of sufficient area to accommodate a Comfort Station, as well as to provide for other passive and active needs such as shaded seating areas, safe child play areas, and a life guard substation. Key advantages of this site include:

- Excellent proximity and access to beachgoers and proximity to Broadway Mall
- Utility services readily accessible on Ocean Street
- Utilizes an existing, publicly-owned capital asset
- Natural resource conservation would be maintained with innovative design
- Proximate to future boardwalk and directs pedestrian travel along oceanside
- Construction process would have minimized impact and disruption on adjacent businesses and traffic
- Precedent exists for building location with previously obstructed views of ocean





***Existing Sidewalk Café Site with overlaid Comfort Station program***

Complications for this site include:

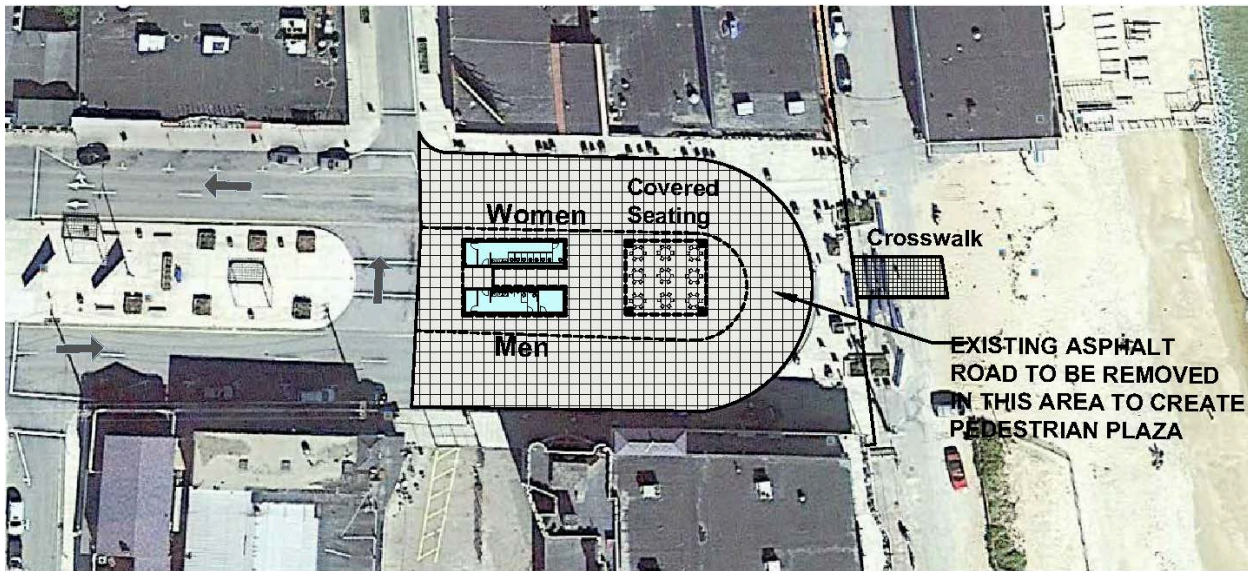
- DCR presently plans to develop a sacrificial dune at this location, extending the entire length of the beach.

Selection of Site "A," could provide a unique opportunity for a project comprised of environmentally innovative design and construction, responsive to coastal conditions and storm surge vulnerabilities.



***Illustration of potential Comfort Station constructed on pilings***

**Site “B”: Broadway Mall (easterly section of pedestrian plaza)**



**Existing Broadway Mall Site with Comfort Station Plan Overlay**

This site is located on the east island of the Broadway Mall pedestrian plaza and is only a one-minute walk from the proposed bandstand location at the eastern end of the Broadway Mall. This concrete, paved area currently contains seating, planters, a naval memorial, community display walls, and trellises. Any portion of this area could be used as the site for the Comfort Station.



**Existing Broadway Mall (western section of pedestrian plaza)**

A Comfort Station at this site should be constructed with sensitivity to maintaining the public views to the ocean. Architecture for a Comfort Station here would necessitate a welcoming façade, standing as a signature, distinctive

structure and hub at the Beach Center. Additionally, siting a Comfort Station at site “B” on the Mall will require reconfiguration of the Mall area so a Comfort Station is accessible to pedestrians without crossing streets open to vehicular traffic. Such reconfiguration would increase the pedestrian travel area in the easterly section the Beach Center with a pedestrian plaza area. As well, the traditional and popular, vehicular “loop” at the Mall would be reduced, but maintained.

Positive aspects of this site are summarized as follows:

- Excellent proximity and access to Broadway Mall
- Sufficient area available to meet amenity needs
- Advances DCR mission to protect, promote and enhance the state’s natural, cultural and recreational resources for the public’s well-being

Complications for this site include:

- Construction could have an impact and disruption on adjacent businesses and traffic
- Requisite traffic and pedestrian reconfigurations
- Comfort Station location requires design sensitive to visual impact



**Site “C”: Parking Area (Between beach and Ocean Front South)****Existing On-Street Parking Site (delineated parking area only)****Existing On-Street Parking Site with Comfort Station Plan Overlay**

This site is located on Ocean Front South along the beach, approximately two blocks south of the Broadway Mall, and in front of residential properties that currently have views of the ocean. It is approximately a three-minute walk from the proposed bandstand location at the east end of the Broadway Mall. It is less than a minute walk from many locations on the beach. Notably, Site “C”, the On-Street Parking Area, although adjacent to the beach, does not have adequate square footage to accommodate the structure needed for minimum amenities. Due to the narrowness of the site (20’ max.) it would constrain and limit any layout of facilities.

And, any use of this existing paved area will reduce what is already very limited public parking. Although this site is only a short, additional distance from the head of the beach, it is less visible and less convenient for visitors. As well, constructing the Comfort Station in this location will also introduce a new structure in front of existing residential properties that currently have unobstructed views of the beach. The available area is approximately 20’ x 225’, or about 4,500 s.f. of surface area.

Positive aspects of this site are summarized as follows:

- Good proximity and access to beachgoers
- Fair proximity and access to Broadway Mall patrons
- Would not adversely affect the adjacent sacrificial dune

Complications at this site are summarized as follows:

- Construction would have an impact and disruption on adjacent businesses, residents and traffic
- Permanent loss of public parking near beach
- Creates new obstruction of beach and water views from residential development. This will likely result in abutter opposition.
- Would likely not be physically connected to the boardwalk due to conflicts with the intersection of Ocean Street.

**Site "D": Existing Public Restrooms (Existing building on Cable Ave.)**



***View of Existing Public Restrooms Site & Building***



***View of Police Station with Restroom Directional Signage and Restroom area at back of Station***

The existing public restroom is located on Cable Avenue behind the Police Station. There is no existing comfort station. Currently there is only public rest rooms. It is about one block south of the Broadway Mall and three blocks from the beach. It is more than a five-minute walk from locations on the beach. It occupies a portion of a one-story masonry building. An overhead blade sign, suspended from roof-supported metal framing, identifies the public toilet facilities. The interiors consist of separate Men's and Women's multi-use toilet rooms, each side accessed directly from Cable Avenue.

Site “D,” is a problematic site for a future Comfort Station on account of falling short on two important criteria. First, this site is not proximate to the beach and would not improve convenience for beachgoers. Second, the long-term use of the existing public restrooms site on Cable Avenue is uncertain and limited because the Town of Salisbury is planning to relocate the Police Station to a new location closer to the commercial town center. The long-term development plans for the Police Station site have not been determined. These factors make Site “D” a much less desirable location for the long-term investment of designing, constructing and maintaining a Comfort Station. The existing public restrooms does not meet current public needs for several reasons. These include long travel distances from the beach, no visibility from the beach, and potentially unsafe access, including the need to cross busy streets. The existing facilities are not a usable capital asset as they would require a complete renovation due to an inadequate quantity of fixtures, damaged and worn finishes, non-compliance with current handicap requirements, and security and safety concerns. Improvements on this site would likely require demolition and construction of a new facility.

Complications for this site are summarized as follows:

- Poor proximity and access to beachgoers. Need to cross several streets.
- No visibility from the beach, making usability highly dependent upon signage.
- Fair proximity and access to Broadway Mall for patrons; but still highly dependent upon way-finding signage.
- Current area available in building is insufficient to meet new program space needs.
- The new police station will lead to redevelopment of this building and site, making this location unavailable for re-use.

### **3.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the evaluation of the four sites, two of the options, **Site A, the Sidewalk Café, and Site B, Broadway Mall are viable sites for the location of a Comfort Station.** These two sites rank high in most evaluation categories and have multiple advantages over other potential sites. Most importantly, they are closer to the intended users and will be well integrated into visitor activities. Conversely, sites C and D have important shortcomings, including excessive distance for intended users, negative impacts on abutters, inadequate buildable areas, and inconvenience.





