

## 2. EXISTING CONDITIONS



Location of the Reservation and significant features within and adjacent to it.

The Nantasket Beach Reservation, located on the Atlantic Ocean on the northern shore of southeastern Hull, MA, is owned and operated by the DCR. The 26-acre Reservation encompasses approximately 1.3 miles of beachfront (6,800 linear feet), and includes the beach and adjacent visitor amenities, associated parking areas, and an operations and maintenance facility. It is bounded approximately by:

- Phipps Street to the north
- Hull Shore Drive and Nantasket Avenue (Route 228) to the west
- The driveway from Nantasket Avenue to the southern end of the DCR parking lot to the south
- The Atlantic Ocean to the east.

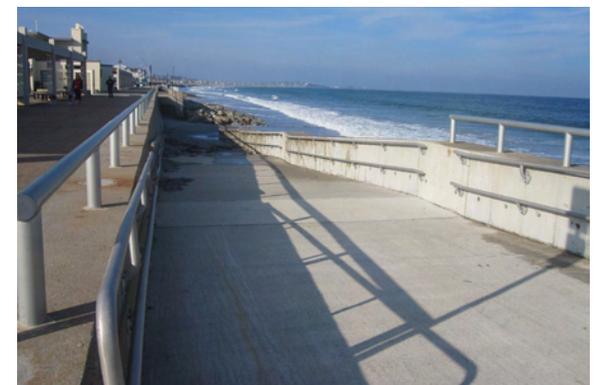
When the master plan was initiated, the Town of Hull had recently prepared the *2004 Nantasket Focused Area Study*, and the Hull Redevelopment Authority (HRA) was moving forward with a plan for residential development on their parcels across Hull Shore Drive from the northern end of the Reservation. More recently, the Town has constructed streetscape improvements along Nantasket Avenue, between Water Street and Bay Street, and prepared a new plan for the HRA property and the adjacent commercial area.

## The Beach & Promenade

The beach runs along a beautiful long and narrow strip of land (only 450 – 500 feet wide in some locations) that separates the Weir River and the Atlantic Ocean. At low tide the beach is a wide, expansive area that accommodates hundreds of beachgoers. At high tide much of the beach is under water.

A beachfront promenade, located adjacent to the seawall (or revetment), runs along the entire length of the Reservation and provides visitors physical and visual access to the beach, as well as passive and active recreation opportunities. The seawall serves as seating along the promenade.

The beach is accessible from the promenade via concrete stairs and ramps built into the seawall. New entry stairs, accessible ramps and railings were constructed to improve access as part of the 2007 seawall improvements.



*At right, from top: A busy beach at high tide; the beach at low tide; new ramps have improved beach accessibility.*

## Beachfront Buildings & Adjacent Amenities

Below are descriptions of buildings and adjacent amenities found within the Nantasket Beach Reservation. Recommendations for maintenance activities on individual buildings are included in the *Nantasket Beach Reservation Facilities Utilization Report*, prepared in 2014 by Louis Berger as part of this master plan project, and available under separate cover.

The buildings, which are open to the public, include three bath houses, one comfort station and an open-air pavilion. All three bath houses underwent renovation during spring and summer 2007.

### Mary Jeanette Murray Bath House

The Mary Jeanette Murray Bath House (MJM) is the centerpiece of the Reservation. Built in the Art Deco style, the MJM is one of the more architecturally significant buildings within the Reservation. The building has an area of approximately 3,640 square feet and currently is used as a bath house and community venue. It is in good condition overall, and was recently renovated.

The MJM Bath House is currently underutilized by the public as the main doors are locked when there are no scheduled events. The wings of the building,

which contain restrooms and changing rooms, are open to visitors regardless of event scheduling. Space within the bath house also is underutilized. In each of the two wings there is a large, empty open space reserved for gatherings and a utility room that is either largely empty or used for minimal storage. The manager's office on the beach side of the building is partially used for cleaning supplies and first aid supplies (including an automated external defibrillator [AED]).

### Historic Relevance

The Massachusetts Historic Commission (MHC) has determined that the building appears to be eligible for listing as a contributing structure within a potential Nantasket Beach Reservation Historic District. The building was constructed in 1935 and reconstructed in the late 1990s.

### Adjacent Amenities

Shade structures (pergolas) with benches are located on the north and south sides of the bath house. These are the primary shade structures for the Reservation and are heavily used by casual visitors and as gathering areas for large groups. A beach volleyball court is located directly north of the bath house and a small playground with a play structure is located directly to the south. The playground was expanded in 2008.



From top: View of Mary Jeanette Murray Bath House from Nantasket Avenue; pergolas adjacent to the MJM Bath House provide a popular semi-shaded gathering area; the playground to the south of the bath house.



### Bernie King Pavilion

Also on the oceanfront, south of the MJM Bath House, is the renovated Bernie King Pavilion. Originally built in the late nineteenth century, this 10,800 square foot open air facility is primarily used for seasonal concerts and dance events, and contains a privately-operated concession stand. The Pavilion is a popular spot to picnic during summer months, as it provides concession, seating and shade areas, and allows views to the beach and ocean. On Sunday afternoons visitors come to dance to live music.

In 1999, elevated levels of lead were identified on the Pavilion's exterior and interior. The facility subsequently underwent a \$940,000 reconstruction, which was completed in 2004.

### Adjacent Amenities

An open waterside plaza adjacent to the Pavilion has picnic tables and benches, although the lack of shade structures and plantings make this a somewhat inhospitable picnic area.



*At left, from top: View of the Bernie King Pavilion from Nantasket Avenue; Sunday afternoon dancing at the Pavilion.*

### Tivoli Bath House

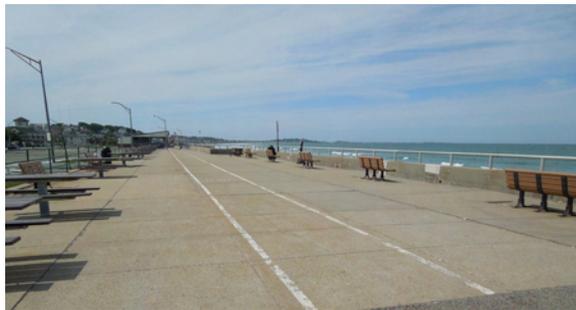
The Tivoli Bath House, located near the southern end of the Reservation, is a single story concrete structure built in 1981; it has an area of approximately 1,500 square feet and contains restroom and shower facilities. The building suffers from repeated storm and wave damage due to its unprotected location so close to the ocean.

### Adjacent Amenities

Just north of the Tivoli Bath House is a raised and widened portion of the promenade with a row of picnic tables and a row of benches with telescopes. The tables and benches are far apart and have no shade protection.

### Comfort Station (205 Nantasket Avenue)

The Comfort Station, located on Nantasket Avenue adjacent to the Clocktower Building, is across Nantasket Avenue from the beach and the Bernie King Pavilion. The structure has an area of approximately 1,500 square feet and is used as a public restroom facility. It is in good condition.



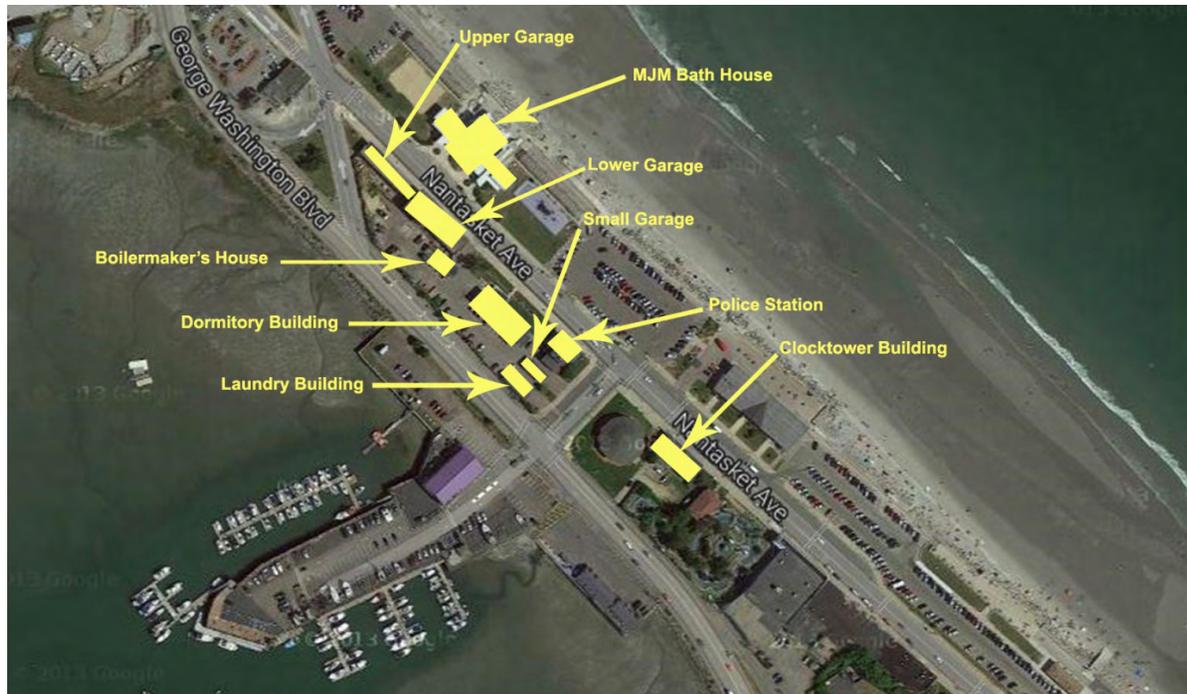
*From top: The beachfront plaza adjacent to the Bernie King Pavilion; view of the Tivoli Bath House from the south; view of the beachfront plaza north of the Tivoli Bath House.*



*From top: View of the Comfort Station from Nantasket Avenue; view of the David A. Cook Comfort Station from Hull Shore Drive.*

## David A. Cook Comfort Station

The David A. Cook Comfort Station is located at the northern end of the Reservation on Hull Shore Drive. The single-story red brick structure was built in 1953 and has an area of approximately 2,800 square feet. It contains public restroom and shower facilities and is in adequate condition. Additional space in the building is currently underutilized.



*Location of the buildings within the Operations and Maintenance Facility, and the nearby Clocktower Building.*

## Landside Operations / Maintenance Buildings

Other DCR-owned buildings are found on the 3.5-acre block bounded by Wharf Avenue, Nantasket Avenue and George Washington Boulevard. The block is across Nantasket Avenue from the MJM Bath House. Some of these buildings date back to 1898. The buildings, described below, are used primarily by DCR operations and maintenance staff. The site

also encompasses uncovered storage bins used for sand, salt and landscaping materials; two fuel pumps and a ramp used by trucks for unloading trash into an adjacent dumpster.

### Dormitory Building

The two-story Dormitory Building has an area of approximately 9,000 square feet and is in overall poor condition. It was originally built in 1898 and used



*View of the Dormitory Building from Nantasket Avenue.*

as a Metropolitan Police barracks. The main floor is currently used as the DCR's operations office building with some space available for dry and hazardous materials storage. The upper floor is largely vacant. During the summer, parking passes are sold from the building.

### Historic Relevance

Although the MHC has not undertaken any formal survey or analysis of historical relevance for the Dormitory Building, it is likely that it would be considered eligible for listing as a contributing structure within a potential Nantasket Beach Reservation Historic District.

## Police Station Building

The two-story former Police Station has an area of approximately 4,000 square feet and is in very poor condition. It was built in 1901 and used as a police station by the former Metropolitan District Commission (the predecessor agency to DCR). It is currently vacant and entry is prohibited due to high levels of asbestos. There is a crawl space, but no full basement, under the building.

Major rehabilitation work will be necessary for this building to be re-used.

## Historic Relevance

The MHC has determined that the building appears to be eligible for listing as a contributing structure within a potential Nantasket Beach Reservation Historic District.

## Small Garage (Fire Safety Building)

The small wooden garage building, also known as the Fire Safety Building, has an area of approximately 1,000 square feet and is in overall poor condition. It is currently used for cold storage of parking supplies such as signs and posts.

## Historic Relevance

The MHC has not undertaken a formal survey or analysis of historical relevance for the Small Garage.

## Laundry Building

The Laundry Building is a World War II-era, single-story structure of approximately 900 square feet. It is in overall adequate condition. It is currently used for dry storage of lumber and is sometimes referred to as the "wood storage room".

## Historic Relevance

The MHC has not undertaken a formal survey or analysis of historical relevance for the Laundry Building. It was likely moved to the location and therefore would not be an original contributing element within a potential Nantasket Beach Reservation Historic District.



*At right, from top: View of the Police Station Building from Nantasket Avenue; view of the Small Garage/Fire Safety Building from Wharf Avenue; view of the Laundry Building from Wharf Avenue.*



### Lower Garage

The Lower Garage (with attached carpenter shop), built in 1903, is a single-story red brick structure composed of two attached building segments (a garage and a carpenter shop) and is approximately 5,000 square feet. It is in overall good condition. Its major use is vehicle and maintenance storage but the facility also provides heated storage and houses the carpentry shop. The building is not prone to flooding, making it ideal for storage of sensitive goods such as toilet paper and waste oil. There are two bathroom facilities and a shower in the building.

All available floor space for vehicle and maintenance storage is used to its fullest extent. There is currently no pedestrian door to access the main part of the garage; only overhead garage doors. This decreases the energy efficiency of the building and causes unnecessary wear and tear to the motorized overhead door equipment.

### Historic Relevance

The Lower Garage is included in the MHC Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth. MHC has determined that the building

*At left, from top: View of the Lower Garage from Nantasket Avenue and from the maintenance yard; view of the Upper Garage from the maintenance yard.*

appears to be eligible for listing as a contributing structure within a potential Nantasket Beach Reservation Historic District.

### Upper Garage

The Upper Garage is a single-story red brick structure built in 1900. It has an area of approximately 2,750 square feet and is in overall good condition. Its major use is vehicle and maintenance storage. Due to current space restrictions, the garage cannot accommodate a truck equipped with a plow and sander. The building is prone to flooding; during large storm events, up to 1.5 feet of water may be seen on the floor. This may be due to the overhead doors on the Nantasket Avenue side of the building that do not seal well with the concrete slab floor. There is no bathroom located in this building.

All available floor space for vehicle and maintenance storage is used to its fullest extent. The heated garage provides the best shelter for sensitive equipment. Desired improvements for this building include additional overhead doors on the George Washington Boulevard side of the building and expanded floor space.

Around 2007, the building's interior was temporarily divided to provide leased space, and the section of

the building fronting Nantasket Avenue was leased to an art studio (“Studio at the Beach”). DCR recently discontinued that lease and the entire building is once again used for vehicles and maintenance storage.

### Historic Relevance

Although the MHC has not undertaken any formal survey or analysis of historical relevance for the Upper Garage Building, it is likely that it would be considered eligible for listing as a contributing structure within a potential Nantasket Beach Reservation Historic District.

### Boilermaker’s House

The Boilermaker’s House has an area of approximately 780 square feet and is in overall poor condition. It is currently used as a break room for lifeguards and as office space for the lifeguard supervisor. There is a functioning bathroom in the building.

### Historic Relevance

The MHC has not undertaken a formal survey or analysis of historical relevance for the Boilermaker’s House. It was likely moved to the current location and would not be an original contributing element within a potential Nantasket Beach Reservation Historic District.



*From top: View of Upper Garage from Nantasket Avenue, with art studios opened to the sidewalk; view of the Boilermaker’s House.*



*From top: View of the Paragon Carousel and Clocktower Buildings; closeup of the Clocktower Building; fun on the carousel.*

## Other Reservation Structures

The Clocktower Building and Paragon Park Carousel are located within the Reservation on the south side of Wharf Avenue.

## Paragon Carousel

Built in 1928, the Paragon Carousel was part of Paragon Park, an amusement park that opened in 1905. It is a local landmark and tourist attraction, moved to its current location following the 1985 closing of Paragon Park. The Carousel is privately owned by the non-profit Friends of the Paragon Carousel, although it is located on DCR land.

## Clocktower Building

The Clocktower Building and the adjacent land for the Carousel have been leased to the “Friends of the Paragon Carousel”. The long-term lease expired on June 30, 2016. The basement currently houses the mechanical equipment for the Carousel and a workshop where the Carousel horses are maintained. The first floor houses a museum focused on Paragon Park and an ice cream parlor. The upstairs is used for storage but has no electricity, heat or plumbing.

The expiration of the lease in 2016 provides an opportunity for DCR to find alternative and/or additional uses for the building. Regardless of the uses on the first and second floor, DCR would like to allow the mechanical equipment for the Carousel to remain in the basement and the Carousel itself to remain on the adjacent land. This building is currently an important part of the funding and operation of the Carousel. However, the Clocktower Building itself continues to fall into disrepair. It is important that the funds required for much needed maintenance improvements and ongoing maintenance and operations of the building be generated by revenues from the lease of this building, or that an additional source of funding be identified (i.e., a capital campaign by the “Friends of the Carousel” to raise funds to fully rehabilitate the building).

## Historic Relevance

The building is included in the MHC’s Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth. MHC has determined that the building appears to be eligible for listing as a contributing structure within a potential Nantasket Beach Reservation Historic District. It was constructed in 1903 as a restaurant and waiting area for the ferry and train to Boston.

## Pedestrian & Vehicular Access

Contributing to the beach's appeal is its high level of pedestrian and vehicular accessibility from adjacent, largely residential areas, and its proximity to the Boston metropolitan area. Based on a 2006 Visitor Survey (see page 13), 91 percent of the visitors come by car. That number may have decreased to some extent since the introduction of the Greenbush Line Commuter Rail Service from Boston, but the reduction is likely small because of the lack of weekend service.

There are 26 crosswalks linking pedestrians to the Reservation beachfront (see page 19). The crosswalks are fairly evenly distributed at intersection and mid-block locations along Nantasket Avenue and Hull Shore Drive and connect to bath houses and other public facilities. Many of the crosswalks, however, are not at stop signs, limiting the degree to which pedestrians are protected.

Sidewalks along both sides of Nantasket Avenue in the Reservation are generally in good condition. Sidewalks on the western side of Hull Shore Drive (abutting vacant Hull Redevelopment Authority property) are deteriorating and in need of improvement. The sidewalk on the eastern side of Hull Shore Drive in this location was recently reconstructed.

## Transit

Transit access to the Reservation is somewhat limited. Bus Route 714 runs from Pemberton Point to Hingham Center, with stops on Nantasket Avenue. It connects to the Greenbush Commuter Rail Line at Nantasket Junction; however, there is no commuter rail service on weekends, and bus and train schedules are not coordinated. The bus provides access to the ferry terminal at Pemberton Point, which has ferry service from Long Wharf in Boston.

The 220 bus route connects the Quincy Center Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) station to Nantasket Junction. A passenger could take the MBTA Red Line or Old Colony Commuter Rail to Quincy Center, then take the 220 bus to Nantasket Junction and transfer to the 714 bus to Nantasket Beach, but this three-seat journey would be lengthy and difficult to coordinate.

## Bicycles

Bicycle racks are located in several locations throughout the Reservation. The Town of Hull's Bicycle Plan was adopted in 2007 and proposes an extensive network of bike routes throughout the Town (see illustration on page 14); most of the plan has not been implemented to date. An existing bike path

along the southwest side of George Washington Boulevard connects to Hingham. DCR also intends to stripe bike lanes on Wharf Avenue to connect cyclists from George Washington Avenue to the beach. At this time of this report, a MassDOT study of a more formalized bikepath on both sides of George Washington Boulevard from Hull to Hingham is underway.

## Parking

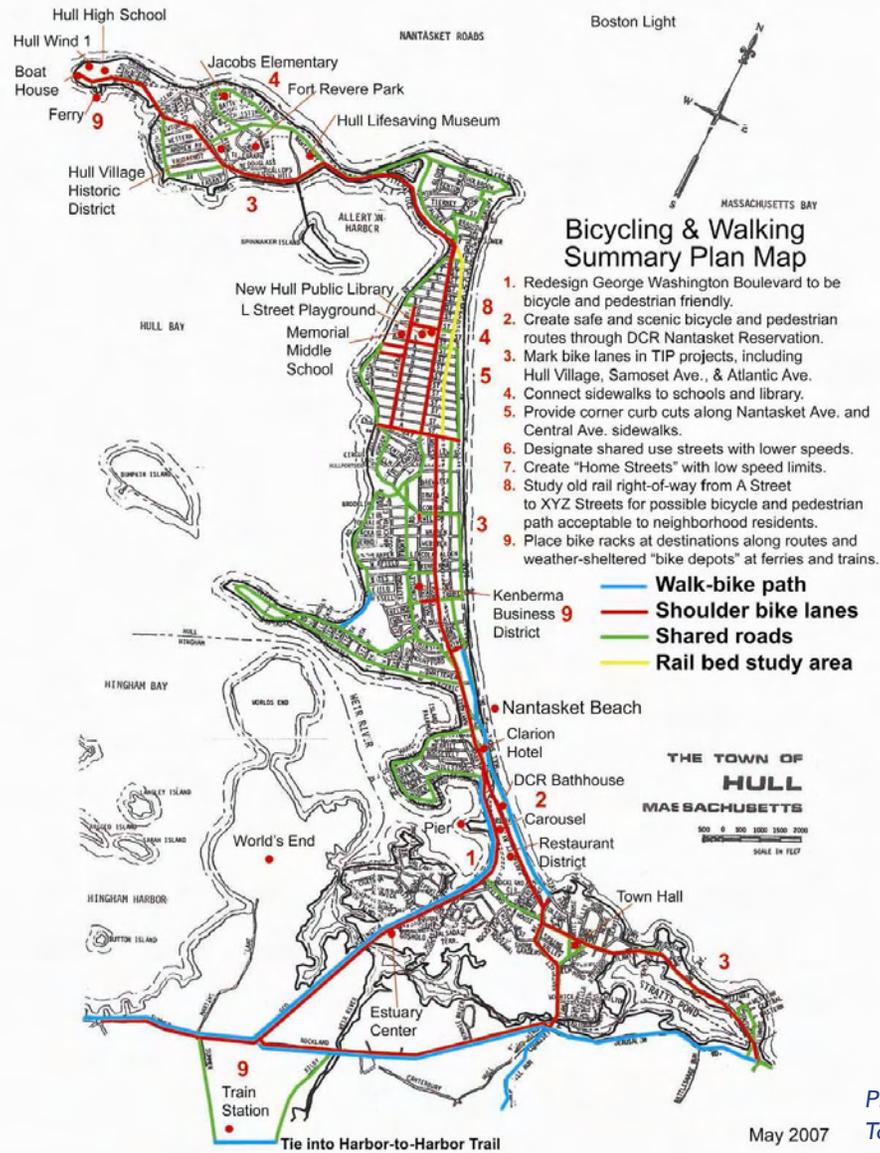
There are approximately 1,203 existing public parking spaces within the Reservation, including both on and off-street parking (see aerial photo on p. 3), plus an additional 900 spaces on vacant lots owned by the Hull Redevelopment Authority.

Most of the surface parking areas are adjacent to the beachfront, with the highest concentration of public parking found at the southern end of the Reservation. Two large overflow lots are located on George Washington Boulevard near the southern end of the Reservation.

These lots are separated from Nantasket Avenue by a large condominium development (Horizons Condominiums). Pursuant to a Massachusetts Public Waterfront Act Chapter 91 License, a path adjacent to the north edge of the Horizons Condominiums parking lot was constructed to provide a more direct link from



From top: Existing promenade and parking lots have minimal amenities; view of skating rink in the overflow lot on George Washington Boulevard.



Proposed route map from the Town of Hull's 2007 Bicycle Plan.

the DCR parking lots on George Washington Boulevard to Nantasket Avenue and the beach. However, this path remains fenced off from public use because a short section is on property owned by others and the public is prevented from using this path. This path will increase the attractiveness of these underutilized lots. The DCR continues to negotiate with the property owner regarding the lease or acquisition of the necessary right of way. These negotiations are at an impasse as of this printing.

Most of the parking lots are to the south of the MJM Bath House and most of the on-street parking spaces are to the north.

## User Survey

An informal visitor survey was conducted to gain a better understanding of visitors' use and impressions of the Reservation. The responses provided valuable background information for development of the master plan.

Specifically, a total of 101 individual surveys were conducted on Monday, July 24; Sunday, July 30; and Wednesday, August 16, 2006. Although a few of the comments regarding facilities are now out of date, the majority of the responses are still relevant. The responses are summarized on the following pages.

## Visitors

Almost 90 percent of the visitors surveyed were from outside of Hull. It is assumed that many Hull residents use the Town portion of the beach, rather than the DCR portion of the beach. Respondents came from areas west and south of Hull, from up to 40 miles away.

Ninety-one percent of respondents came to the beach by car. This is consistent with the finding that most of the people on the DCR beach are not from Hull (transit connections to the beach were very limited – the Greenbush Line did not reopen until October 2007). Seven percent of respondents walked (Hull residents) and two percent drove a motorcycle.

Young crowds (13-25 years of age) tended to congregate at the southern end of the beach near the Tivoli Bath House, whereas families (adults with children under 18 years of age) tended to congregate at the northern end of the beach near the Cook Comfort Station. Approximately twenty-five percent of the respondents came with children under 18 years old.

## Beach Facilities, Maintenance & Security

Overall, beach users had relatively positive responses regarding DCR's operation of the beach and the

conditions at the Reservation. Forty four percent of respondents gave "cleanliness of facilities" the highest two scores (scoring was on a scale of 1 to 5) and 40 percent gave cleanliness the lowest two scores.

## Beach Experience

Seventy-two percent of the respondents reported swimming. Twenty-eight percent said they had not been in the water, but many of these respondents said they would be going in shortly.

## Beach Access

Seventy-six percent of the respondents thought there were enough beach access points. Many commented that existing access through the seawall would be adequate if ramps and stairs were improved, repaired, and cleared of large revetment boulders. Subsequent to the survey, the ramps and stairs were improved, and new ramps were added, as part of the seawall improvements. The ramps now meet ADA accessibility standards.

Eighty percent of respondents thought there was an adequate number of crosswalks on Nantasket Avenue and Hull Shore Drive.

## Parking

Parking was often described as being convenient. Sixty-six percent gave ease of parking either the highest or second highest rating. Respondents on the northern half of the beach reported more parking difficulty than those to the south. The most often cited problems with parking were “high prices” and lack of parking in lots near the Mary Jeanette Murray Bath House. Sixty-four percent of respondents said they would not consider using a remote parking lot with shuttle service, even if it meant more green space within the Reservation.

## Attraction to Local Restaurants & Shops

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents said they had been, or planned to go, to a restaurant, shop, museum or other business in town while at the beach. A third of the respondents who suggested improvement ideas for the Reservation wanted more food related facilities (more beach vendors, more convenient food).

## Beach Replenishment

Sixty six percent of the respondents said they would support beach replenishment with sand of another color. Seventy four percent of the respondents said they would like a wider beach at high tide.

## Suggestions for Additional Amenities

Respondents identified the need for the following additional amenities:

- Bath houses
- Shower related facilities
- Water fountains
- Park areas/picnic areas with benches
- Umbrella/chair rentals
- Recreational facilities
- Convenient food related facilities
- Trash cans
- Shops.



*The arcades across Nantasket Avenue from the Tivoli Bath House and Bernie King Pavilion.*