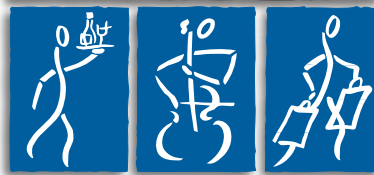


# THE STAMFORD Downtowner

Volume 1 • Number 16 • Winter 2001

Stamford Downtown



DINING • ENTERTAINMENT • SHOPPING



## Letter from the Chairman, Bob Kahn

During the past eight years the Downtown Special Service District has worked long and hard to enhance the quality of life and revitalize the downtown for its residents, employees, visitors as well as the entire population of Stamford. As part of the District's function, it regularly reviews development plans that are submitted for consideration and approval by the City.

Appropriate development that enhances the quality of life in a city and contributes to a strong economic base is a paramount means of ensuring a city's continued vitality. There are a number of development issues which arise during the course of the year which have far reaching consequences and effect every part of the city, most especially the downtown. Such a project is Admiral's Wharf, which is proposed in the Southend on the old Northeast Utilities site.

The District analyzed the project to determine its strengths as well as its challenges. The project requires major Master Plan and zoning changes that have impact on the community and therefore merit discussion in this issue of *The Downtowner*.

After considerable analysis the District determined that the project deserved the Downtown Special Services District's conditional support; primarily because this project will ensure that the Southend gains more

housing, a ferry terminal, a cleaned-up brown-field and ultimately additional home ownership and home rental opportunities. However, the District has strong concerns that the development could have a negative impact on the downtown because it could be precedent-setting for other Southend projects. Admiral's Wharf is far more intense than what normally would be allowed in an industrial zone. It further calls for changes in use, which directly impact the central business district. Such changes could set a precedent for further development of a similarly intense nature and for uses, which are inappropriate outside the downtown. It is important to understand the reasons why this amendment and resulting development should not be precedent-setting.

The first reason relates to increasing the amount and type of office space already allowable in industrial areas. According to the Master Plan, which has served as a guide to Stamford development for 25 years, the central business district (CBD) is set aside as "the most intensive development area of the city." Re-mapping an industrial site to allow development of hundreds of thousands of square feet of office space as a primary use is a direct conflict with this Master Plan provision. There are a number of properties in the Southend and other industrial areas, which, if developed, could create additional millions of square feet of office space. Permitting this type of development and increasing the allowable density of commercial development create the

risk that sites such as Yale & Towne, Clairol, Cytec, Pitney Bowes, etc. might petition to do similar development, each pointing out the unique configurations of their site as well as using the Admiral's Wharf project as their precedent. If the land use boards were to approve high density office development on the latter sites, it would disproportionately impact the downtown where intensive commercial development should occur based on forty years of Master Plan dictate.

Stamford's central business district is still emerging as a 24-hour city. The high vacancy rates in both office and retail have been slowly going down. It wasn't that long ago that the office vacancy rate within the CBD was in excess of 20% and almost every building downtown had ground floor vacancies. As the market caught up to our supply and as a result of a lot of hard work we now see some vitality. But the central business district is still fragile and needs further strengthening to withstand the unknown economic conditions of the future. Currently, there are several parcels in the CBD that are suitable for commercial office development. The lowering of the vacancy rate has finally produced an opportunity for new development in the CBD. This must not be dissipated because of development in industrial zones where land and rents are cheaper. There is the potential for the city to create an entirely new CBD in the Southend, which could completely

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## Moo-ny Happy Returns

The cows came home for Christmas bringing recipient charities the proceeds from the CowParade 2000 auction held in October. The auction raised \$291,725.00 and benefited 43 charities selected by the CowParade sponsors.

On Tuesday, December 19th, Mayor Dannel Malloy, Bob Kahn, Chairman of the District Board of Commissioners, his fellow Board members, numerous CowParade sponsors and artists joined the recipient charities in the presentation of funds at a private reception held at Stamford Downtown's office. The following charities received funds totaling \$291,725.00: Adopt-a-House; Alzheimer's Association, Fairfield County; American Cancer Society (CT); American Red Cross of Stamford; ARI of Connecticut, Inc.; The Bobby Fund; Boys And Girls Club of Stamford; Child Care Center of Stamford; Child Guidance Center; CTE, Inc.; Carl & Dorothy Bennett Cancer Center; CT Grand Opera & Orchestra; Cure for Lymphoma Foundation; Cystic Fibrosis Association of CT; Darien Lyons Club; Dental Clinic of Stamford;

Domestic Violence Crisis Center; Domus Foundation; Ferguson Library; Food Bank of Lower Fairfield County; Jackie Robinson Park of Fame; Jewish Community Center; K2C Collaborators; Kids in Crisis, Inc.; Laurel House; Liberation Meridian Guenster; Literacy Volunteers of America - Stamford/Greenwich; Muscular Dystrophy Association; Native American Rights Fund; Project Rainbow; Sexual Assault Crisis Center Inc.; Shelter for the Homeless, Inc.; South End Neighborhood Revitalization Zone; St. Luke's Lifeworks; Stamford Center for the Arts; Stamford Cultural Development Corp.; Stamford Head Start Program; Stamford Health Foundation - Neonatal Unit and Mobile Mammography; Stamford Health Foundation; Stamford Sailing Foundation; The Kids Our Future Trust Fund; The Stamford Partnership; Urban League; Wakeman Boys and Girls Club; The World is Our Neighborhood and Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital's Department of Pediatrics . ▾

## The Parade was Spectacular!

The 2000 Cablevision Parade Spectacular sponsored by Stamford Town Center in partnership with The Advocate/Greenwich Time and produced by the Downtown Special Services District brought smiles and excitement to the cheering crowds, which lined the mile and a half parade route. The event's success is a story of planning, teamwork and dynamic parade participants. More than 1500 volunteers donated their time, energy and good-will to handling balloons, monitoring parade operations and regulating

participant parking. Thirty-five local and regional balloon and band sponsors generously contributed to make this the largest, colossal balloon parade in the nation, according to Toni McKay, President of Starbound Entertainment. Much credit for the opportunity to put on the event goes to our name sponsors, Cablevision, Stamford Town Center, The Advocate/Greenwich Time and the City of Stamford, who provided the means to create this spectacular happening.

As you can imagine, the operations and logistics of putting on a parade of such proportions require concentrated teamwork from the City of Stamford and the District. Countless problems were addressed and averted due to advance planning. The Stamford Police Department, under the direction of Chief Dean Esserman, Deputy Chief Richard Priolo, Captain William Mullin and Lt. Thomas Wuennemann, ensured that there would be a minimum of traffic disruption (all parade related traffic was cleared within an hour following the parade) and that a safe environment would be provided for the fun loving throngs.

Thanks to Ernie Orgera and his traffic operations crew, 2 miles of crowd control barricades were erected by 7:00a.m., directional signs were posted throughout the city and obstructions were removed from the parade route. Ralph Tedesco, Lou David and their operations crews attended to dozens of crucial



*Whiskers, the City of Stamford balloon, entertains the crowd.*

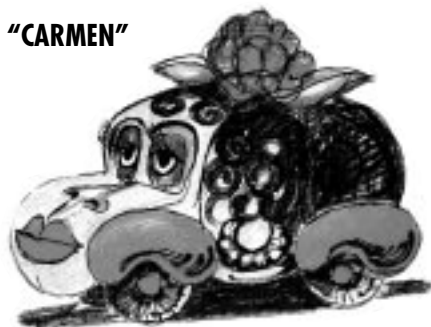
*Parade continued on page 4*

# Vrooom.....

Look for lots of extra car traffic on the SIDEWALKS of downtown this summer. 2001's outdoor art exhibit will feature "folk art" cars displayed on every downtown street, as well as, in Stamford Town Center.

The Downtown's sculpture exhibit will include approximately 60 fiberglass cars. As

"CARMEN"



© Gordon Micunis 12/09/00

One of the many proposed car design ideas for this year's sculpture exhibit.

with the CowParade 2000 event, each car will be designed and painted by local and regional artists to create a caravan of whimsical and artistic art throughout the city.

"Last summer's exhibit was successful on many levels, not the least of which was that it included local and regional artists' works. The District has been organizing sculpture exhibits for seven years. Last summer was the first "folk art" exhibit. It was also the first time that we asked 60+ artists to create something for the downtown," said Sandy Goldstein, Executive Director.

Because of the format's success, the District will use a similar formula in the summer of 2001 including an event-ending auction to help raise money for local charities. The exhibit is scheduled to arrive in Stamford Downtown in mid-June. If anyone is interested in participating as an artist or a sponsor, please call Sandy Goldstein or Lynne Colatrella at 348-5285. ▽

# Ho Ho Hoo!

Kids of all ages anxiously awaited Santa's annual descent into Stamford Downtown. On Thursday, December 7th Santa once again made a grand entrance down the side of the Landmark Building for *Reckson Associates' Rappelling Santa*. Santa's busy holiday schedule then took him straight up Bedford Street to Latham Park where he joined the Stamford community in the lighting of the spectacular 40



Larry Hoff, correspondent from WB 11 Morning News, tests the route for Santa.



Sandy Goldstein, District Executive Director; Rick Rich, Immediate Past Chairman; Dick Taber, Vice Chairman; and Bob Kahn, Chairman, enjoy the lighting.

foot holiday tree at *First County Bank's Colossal Tree Lighting Ceremony*.

After Santa's gravity-defying descent down Landmark he arrived through a sparkle of fireworks and then led thousands of children through the streets of downtown to Latham Park to light the tree. Dick Taber, President of First County Bank helped countdown the annual lighting of Stamford's holiday tree. The perfectly shaped tree was donated to the Downtown by the Rizzi Family of Stamford for all to enjoy. The District combined both these popular events this year and enhanced them with the dynamic "emceeing" of Joe Avellar, reporter from NEWSCHANNEL 4. Jerry Pia's Activities for Kids chorus once again regaled the thousands of

spectators with Christmas songs.

At the tree lighting, John Harper from Star 99 engaged the children in pre-lighting festivities. The District's own Lynne Colatrella, Director of Special Events and Sharon Anderson, Special Events Coordinator, accompanied by Ralph Pastore, Dan Micchichi and Simon Deardsley regaled the audience with their exciting rendition of popular Christmas songs. ▽

*Reckson Associates, First County Bank, Baby & Toy Superstore, kid-e-sport.com, Gartner, Zurich Financial Services and the Stamford Fire and Rescue Team, sponsored Heights and Lights.*



First County Bank's tree lighting ceremony.

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# Neighborhood *Beautification* Grant

Planting flowers, enhancing neighborhood signs, and creating community gardens are planned for the new year throughout Stamford. In December, the District had the pleasure of assisting Mayor Malloy in distributing grant money to the many diverse neighborhoods of Stamford for their beautification efforts. In its second year, the Neighborhood Beautification Grant is a program conceived by the Mayor to enhance Stamford's neighborhoods by financially supporting their community beautifica-

tion projects. The City contracted with the Downtown Special Services District to administer the program because of its success in beautifying the downtown neighborhood.

The proposals submitted by neighborhood and community groups indicated a passion for beautifying the community. They ranged from planting bulbs, and enhancing road signage to creating gardens. The following neighborhood associations received grants for their beautification projects: Glenbrook Neighborhood Association,

Hubbard Heights Garden Club, Junior League of Stamford-Norwalk, Keep Stamford Beautiful, Lathon Wider Community, Northpointe Neighborhood Association, Rock Ridge Estates, Rogers Magnet School, Saw Mill Association, Inc., Scofieldtown Neighborhood Association, Springdale Neighborhood Association, Sylvan Knoll Section I, Inc., Westside Action Movement and Wildwood Association. ▽

## *Chairman's Letter continued from page 1*

weaken the existing CBD, and diminish an economic base, which contributes significantly to the city Grand List and tax base.

The second reason relates to the uses permitted within developments. As an example, the Admiral's Wharf's proposed development has a 200-room hotel. Hotels should be located in the center of the city where restaurants, theaters and shoppers can create appropriate synergies. Unfortunately, many of Stamford's hotels were built before land use officials realized the negative effects of not restricting them to the CBD. Think of how positive it would have been to have them built in the CBD within walking distance of restaurants, shopping, offices and theaters or even the transportation system. The policy regarding

hotel placement was changed, with great difficulty, after the market was already saturated. It would be unfortunate, now that the hotel market has been invigorated to once again permit hotels to locate outside of downtown. Hotels outside the CBD, even if specialized, can decrease the chances of new hotels locating within the downtown.

The third reason relates to the 1984 Master Plan's emphasis on growth management. Currently, Stamford's transportation infrastructure can only support a limited number of additional new vehicular trips. Before spreading projects outside of the CBD, solutions to infrastructure must be considered. If future office development is centralized in the CBD, the resulting traffic escalation can be mitigated by transit solutions to a designated area, which would not be feasible if development is

spread throughout the city.

It is important to note that the District perceives the housing and ferry terminal portion of the Admiral's Wharf project as the most crucial and desirable components. The approval process should include guarantees that both of those elements are built and built first.

In conclusion, the District believes that this particular project is beneficial because it is a first and as such will have maximum positive benefits to the Southend and minimum negative detraction to the downtown. But the City must be very cautious regarding the potential domino effect in other industrial areas in the Southend and other areas of the city.

The District will continue its efforts to make Stamford a wonderful city. On behalf of the District, I would like to wish you a healthy and happy New Year. ▽

## *Parade continued from page 2*

details throughout the process. Dan Colleluori, Operations Programs Specialist, orchestrated an efficient step off which ensured that the

parade operated effectively. Stamford Fire & Rescue and Stamford EMS made special preparations to cover both parade spectators and the entire city, in case of an emergency during the event (thankfully there were none).

Pat Battinelli and members of his Patriotic & Special Events Commission helped organize the participants. ▽



*Stamford High School band, one of the 16 spectacular bands.*