Towards a Livable Neighborhood

A Vision for a Walkable, Transit-Oriented, Vibrant, and Human-Scaled Stamford Downtown

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Acknowledgements

This report was created by David Kooris, Vice President and Connecticut Director, with Associate Planner Amanda Kennedy, Research Associate Andrew Turco, Research Associate Paolo Ikezoe, and Urban Design Intern Ted Brady.

The concepts herein were formulated in close consultation with a steering committee comprised of the boards of the Downtown Special Services District and the Urban Redevelopment Commission and additional staff of the city's land use Bureau. Several stakeholder workshops were held in 2009 and 2010 that provided additional opportunity for input, and the ideas raised at those events are included in this report.

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Stamford's Center City will be a neighborhood where we can live, work, shop, and play. It will be a neighborhood where urban amenities, vitality, and intensity are in balance with natural systems, features, and beauty. It will be a neighborhood where walking, biking, and transit are equally viable alternatives to the automobile.

Contents

Introduction

Stamford's Core has seen growth in mixed-use and transit-oriented development, which lays the foundation for sustainable prosperity

Arts and entertainment draw tens of thousands of people to the city's heart and activate the streets throughout the day

Stamford has undergone a significant transformation within the course of a single generation. As other local cities shrank, shedding industrial jobs and losing residents to smaller towns, Stamford grew steadily, adding to its workforce and to its employment base. Its schools are more highly respected than those of its peers, and it is among the safest cities of its size in all of the United States. It has become a global financial center while retaining elements of its industrial and corporate headquarters past. New jobs have drawn new residents. But something is missing.

Successful cities across the nation have capitalized on recent trends that are moving people and jobs back into our downtowns to create vibrant and mixed-use neighborhoods organized around sidewalks, transit, and green public spaces. New building designs enable density that is energy efficient and intensity that is in keeping with neighborhood character and context. While Stamford's development in the latter half of the 20th century enabled the prosperity we see today, much of the built fabric of downtown was constructed during a period that placed too great an emphasis on the automobile, separated land uses, and a division between urbanity and nature and that paid too little attention to the pedestrian, networked open spaces, connections to the waterfront, and transit.

A new vision and the necessary tools to achieve it are essential to stitching the various disconnected elements of downtown together into a neighborhood of choice for businesses and residents. We begin with several principles that will be reiterated throughout this report:

- **Stamford's *Center City* is a unique neighborhood where intense, high-rise residential and commercial development should be facilitated by city policies alongside entertainment uses and destination retail. Citywide policies should reinforce this unique role of the Center City within our community, building on the tradition exhibited in the 1984 and 2002 Master Plans.**
- **Infrastructure investments should strengthen the connections between the Center City and surrounding neighborhoods. The value of the Center City will grow with stronger connections to the Transportation Center, the waterfront, and complementary activity centers in other neighborhoods. Failure to strengthen these physical linkages will force competition between distinct activity centers.**
- **Improving the pedestrian experience is the most important aspect of achieving a high-value and attractive Center City comprised of both the public realm and the relationship between buildings and streetscape. All new buildings should include the highest quality public realm on-site, and public investment should be used to upgrade the public realm within the Center City and link it with adjacent neighborhoods.**
- **Private development is a powerful tool for implementing the vision for Stamford's Center City. Investment in new or rehabilitated buildings upgrades our public realm and brings residents and workers to shop, dine, and recreate in our community. Additional demands made on new development in the Center City should be limited and very carefully weighed against the fiscal impacts to each project.**

"Ensure buildings are sidewalk-oriented, human-scaled, and well-designed and that they contribute to the vibrancy...of the Center City"

The naturalization of the Mill River creates a spectacular anchor to the city's central park and primary ecological spine

Automobile-oriented office development can no longer act as a barrier to walkability in the Center City

The historic and pedestrian-oriented areas of Center City have become increasingly active as urbanity comes back into vogue

The zoning that governs downtown was largely created in the decades after the Second World War. It was designed to implement a future where downtown "blight" was cleared to make way for gleaming office towers, where the automobile was king, where parking was plentiful, where the pedestrian was relegated to a secondary system of elevated and interconnected walkways, and where economic growth was prioritized at the expense of nature in our cities. But zoning is not meant to be static.

Several master plans for the downtown have been completed over the past decades that each incrementally pointed towards a more human scaled and pedestrian-oriented vision. While each had corresponding recommendations to overhaul downtown zoning, no wholesale changes have been made for a generation. Incremental adjustment has been the preferred method of change. Many of the most outdated aspects of the zoning have been amended over the past two decades, but a complete revision, which would harness the power of zoning and the city's capital plan to achieve current goals for the downtown, has not taken place. The current economic downturn provides the ideal opportunity to articulate this vision and hone the regulatory framework of our city to ensure that all efforts are working towards our common goals. Every project in the coming years must bring us closer to a walkable, transit-oriented, vibrant, and human-scaled downtown. Alignment between the city's master plan, zoning, and capital planning is essential for enabling downtown to continue on its path towards revitalization.

This report is organized into three sections, which deal with the Master Plan, zoning, and capital improvements to the public realm.

- **REDEFINING DOWNTOWN** - Amend the Master Plan so that the definition and boundaries of the Center City focus mixed-use activity within walking distance of the historic core and break down the false dichotomy between the traditionally automobile-oriented blocks centered on Tresser Boulevard and the historically pedestrian-oriented blocks around Atlantic Street and Landmark Square.
- **HARNESSING PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT** - Re-calibrate zoning rules and incentives to create clear and certain requirements that ensure buildings are sidewalk-oriented, human-scaled, and well-designed and that they contribute to the vibrancy and level of activity on the street and throughout the public realm of the Center City.
- **INVESTING IN THE PUBLIC REALM** - Prioritize public capital spending on infrastructure within the Center City that creates a series of public spaces that can anchor nodes of private development and that link to one another through a network of bike lanes, wide sidewalks, and green streets, resulting in a robust and natural public realm that permeates adjacent neighborhoods.

Redefining Downtown

Master Plan Amendments

Stamford's Center City is evolving from an urban office park back into a diverse neighborhood with a strong residential population, a variety of activity centers, and round-the-clock activity. Achieving this ultimate evolution will be contingent on two complementary strategies concerning the location of land uses within the city: new residential development must continue to be built throughout the downtown and incorporated into what are now exclusively commercial areas; and new office and destination retail development must be limited outside the core in order to prevent a dispersion of focus that might sap the vitality of the heart of downtown.

The 2002 Master Plan divided the downtown into three categories: the **Downtown Core** covered the historic and mixed-use portions of the downtown centered around the retail and restaurant strips of Main and Bedford Streets; the **Downtown Corridor** stretched along Tresser Boulevard and covered the predominantly office district between the historic core and the highway and railroad rights-of-way; and the **Downtown Collar** governed an area of lower development intensity on downtown's fringes that entered the South End, spread east along Route 1, and headed north towards Bull's Head along Bedford and Summer Streets.

The Master Plan goals of ensuring walkability throughout the downtown and supporting the economic health of shops and restaurants within the primary retail district are as relevant today as they were ten years ago. Additionally, a transit-oriented downtown design will maximize bus and rail ridership while building the critical mass of riders needed to support future streetcar service. To these ends, high intensity office uses and retail attractors should be limited to a focused geographic definition of the mixed-use downtown that is more confined than the current geographically expansive concepts of **Core**, **Corridor**, and **Collar**.

- **The distinction between the *Corridor* and the *Core*** creates a false dichotomy between Tresser Boulevard and the pedestrian-oriented historic core. Intense redevelopment, in character with surroundings, should be encouraged throughout the Center City, with pedestrian and transit orientation the paramount design consideration.
- **A loose definition of the land uses and intensity** allowed in the Collar has resulted in dense office and retail developments beyond the walkable extent of the targeted area for revitalization. The Master Plan categories must specifically direct high-intensity mixed-use development to a targeted area while allowing supportive high intensity residential neighborhoods and corresponding amenities in close proximity.
- **The northern edge of downtown** located in the Core and Collar has evolved into a predominantly residential neighborhood with historic apartments and condos, retrofitted commercial buildings, and new residential infill.

New retail podiums can be attached to office buildings constructed in earlier periods - like those in the Downtown Corridor - to improve their relationship to the street and activate the public realm (Cambridge, MA)

Conversion of office buildings to residential uses has solidified the neighborhood to the northeast of Center City as almost exclusively residential

Cities as diverse as Portland and Atlanta are investing in new transit to link walkable neighborhoods with one another (Salt Lake City, UT)

Downtowns are best supported by a periphery of high density residential neighborhoods containing only supportive and amenity retail (Raleigh, NC)

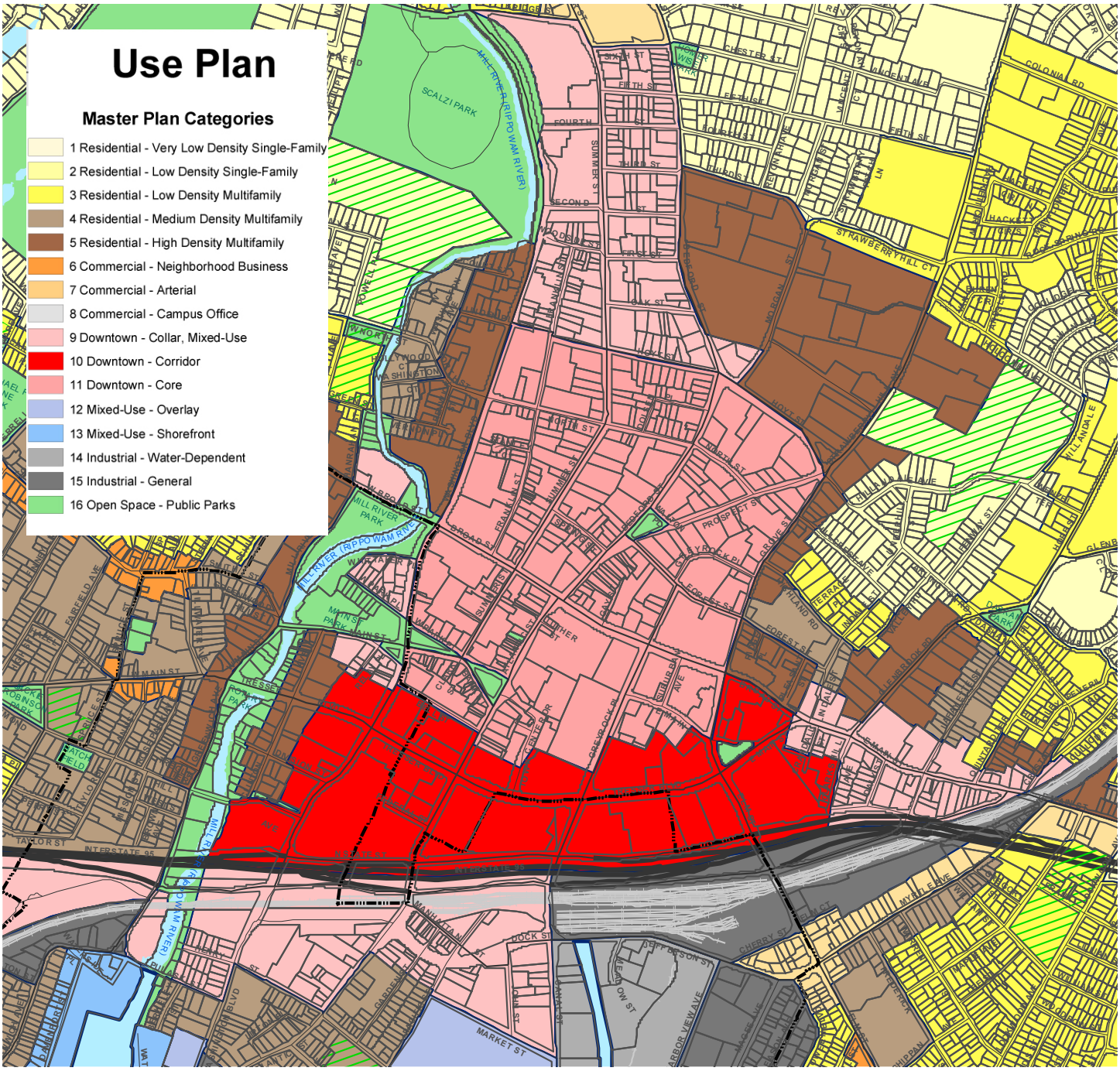
The following changes are recommended in order to realize the vision of a walkable, vibrant, and concentrated mixed-use core that transitions into urban residential neighborhoods at its edges:

- **The *Downtown Core* and *Downtown Corridor* Master Plan categories** are combined with one another and renamed Center City, creating a category that encourages high intensity mixed use development and that includes residential, office, retail, hotel, and institutional uses centered around the historic heart of downtown at the bowtie and Atlantic Square.
- **The portion of the South End** currently located in Downtown Collar west of Altlantic Street and north Henry Street is added to this Center City category.
- **The portion of the *Collar*** located between Relay Place and Washington Boulevard is added to this Center City category.
- **The northern portion of the *Core*,** along with the remaining portions of the Collar located west and north of the Core, are changed to High Density Multifamily Residential, and the area north of 2nd and 3rd Streets is changed to Medium Density Multifamily, given adjacency to existing Low Density Single Family neighborhoods. While these neighborhoods would allow for convenience retail and other amenities, they would be predominantly residential in their land use and character.
- **The intersection of Summer Street and Hoyt Street** is changed to Commercial Arterial in order to enable a mixture of uses and intensity appropriate for the first major transit node north of the Center City and thereby acknowledging existing land uses and the future potential for a streetcar station there.
- **The remaining *Downtown Collar* areas** located in the South End and along East Main Street maintain the Collar designation, but the planning board enacts category or text changes to ensure that high intensity commercial, retail, and entertainment uses are focused in the Center City rather than in these areas.

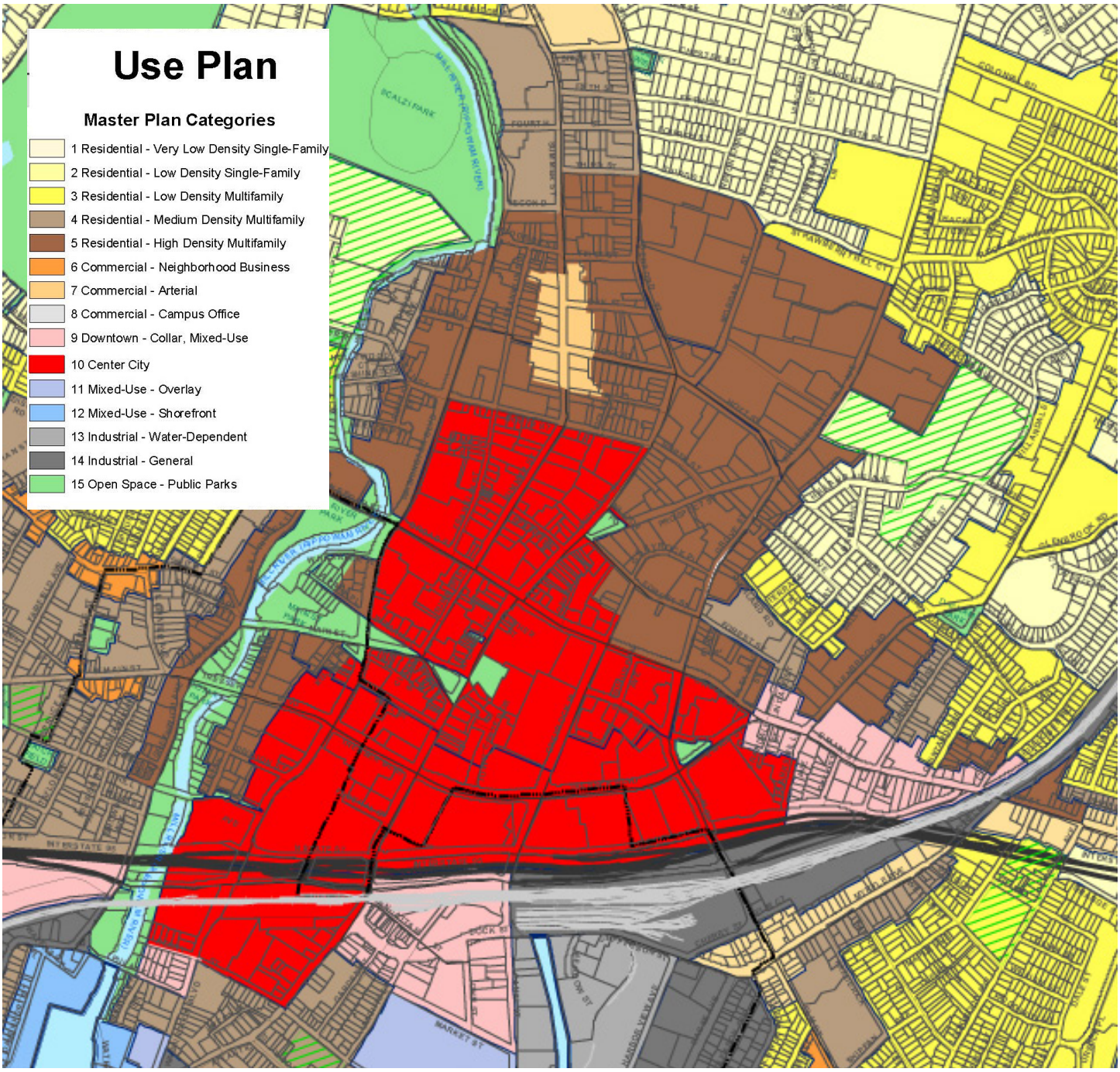
The next two pages include both existing and proposed master plan maps.

2002 Master Plan Use Map

From the 2002 Master Plan



Proposed Master Plan Use Map



Aligning Zoning with Goals

The Master Plan describes the overall vision for the redevelopment and revitalization of Stamford's Center City. Zoning implements the vision through detailed rules and regulations. After enacting the Master Plan recommendations described in section one of this report, the zoning that governs the redevelopment of parcels within the Center City will need to be amended. This section describes how zoning within the **Center City** category and the portions of the **High Density Multifamily Residential** located within the downtown could be changed to guarantee the private sector that buildings meeting the highest standards and contributing to the vitality and quality of the Center City will be allowed as of right. This section deals with the topics of Land use, Ground floor activity, Building form, On-site pedestrian infrastructure, Parking, and Incentive structure.

UBS phase IV site from Washington Boulevard, shown sandwiched between office and residential uses (B)

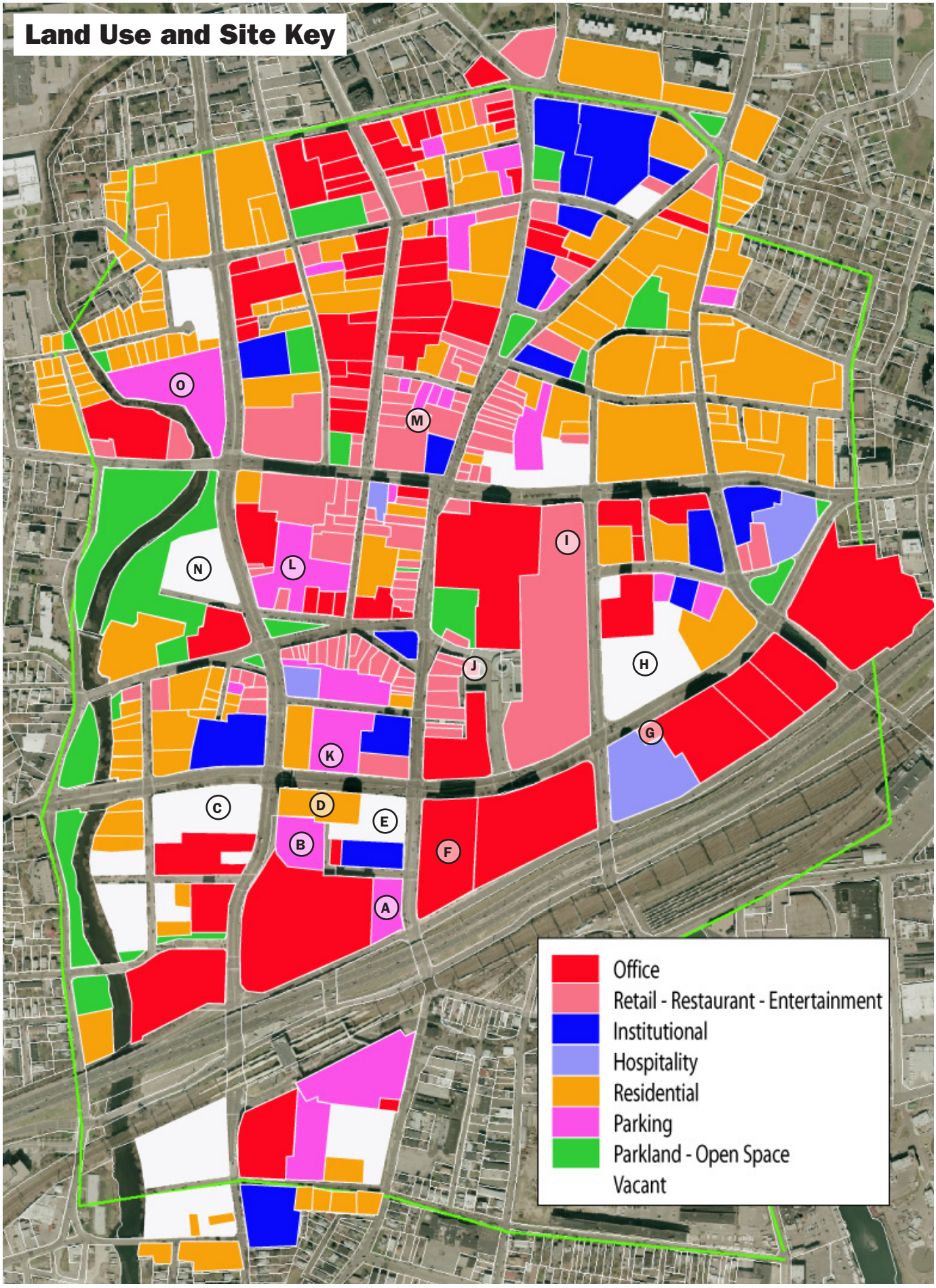
The former Advocate site is large, with potentially different characters at the major intersection of Washington and Tresser Boulevards on the east side and as it transitions to the Mill River Corridor on the west side (C)

Photo-simulation of a potential retail building sandwiched between the southern St. John's Towers along Tresser Boulevard (D)

Land Use

The Master Plan amendments described previously in this report would clarify the targeted area within which a wide array of residential and commercial uses would be targeted: the Center City. Beyond this district, both the intensity and range of uses would be more confined. It is recommended, therefore, that zones controlling development within the Center City all allow for the same wide range of land uses. Given the existing distribution of land uses throughout the downtown, however, the following guidelines identify potential priorities for different redevelopment sites:

- **Atlantic and North State Streets (A)** – Given this site's location in the Commercial Core and visibility from the highway, an office tower would be appropriate. Though retail is not required, activating this important stretch of Atlantic Street that links to the train station would require an active ground floor.
- **Washington Boulevard between St. John's Towers and UBS (B)** – Residential construction on this site would expand this use in an area of downtown dominated by office towers, would take advantage of easy train access, and would serve to activate the UBS park.
- **Former Advocate Site (C)** – The size of this site presents a broad range of opportunities. Residential use on this site provides a unique opportunity to change the character of this important stretch of Tresser Boulevard and bridge the gap between Mill River Park and the primary spine of downtown.
- **Parking lot between Southern St. John's Towers (D)** – There is ample space for a retail infill building here if parking for the towers can be incorporated into adjacent redevelopments, incorporated into the retail structure, and/or partially accommodated with on-street parking as a component of a Tresser


Land Use and Site Key
O
M
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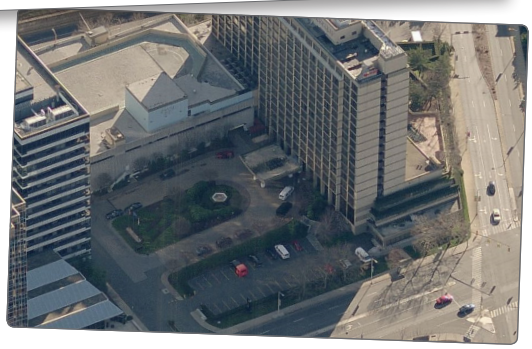
A
Office
Retail - Restaurant - Entertainment
Institutional
Hospitality
Residential
Parking
Parkland - Open Space
Vacant

Boulevard redesign. An ideal building for this site would mimic the recent reconstruction of 11 Forest Street.

- **Tresser Boulevard and Atlantic Street (E)** – A combination of uses is likely the best strategy for this site, given its scale and the opportunity to capitalize on a critical mass of offices at this intersection and the proximity to rail. It should include at least some residential uses to bring more housing to this portion of downtown.
- **400 Atlantic Street Plaza (F)** – The plaza located between the office building and its garage is too large to be active and is located in a section of the Center City where it adds little value to the public realm. The plaza is large enough to be developed while leaving some open space remaining. A residential building wrapping the garage and ringing the plaza, coupled with redevelopment across Atlantic Street and traffic calming improvements at the intersection of Atlantic and Federal, could dramatically change this primary gateway from I-95.
- **The Marriott Drop-Off and Lawn (G)** – There exists an opportunity to build a residential infill building along Tresser Boulevard between the Marriott and Stamford Plaza, which is the only chance to transform the southern side of the boulevard. Coupled with a new office building on the southwest corner of the site, the new mall expansion, the opening of the Marriott's meeting rooms to the street, and new ground-oriented development on Parcel 38, this intersection will evolve into a hub of sidewalk activity.
- **Parcel 38 (H)** – The massive scale of this site ensures that it could accommodate a multitude of different land uses. It should include at least some residential use to stitch together the office corridor with the historic core via a reconstituted Suburban Avenue and Main Street. The redevelopment of this parcel would provide a significant generator of foot traffic at the eastern edge of the Center City and would link the Center City to neighborhoods further east.
- **Macy's (I)** – Much as the Town Center's southern anchor eventually became obsolete, the Macy's site could at some point be converted to a more extroverted use. This site is large enough to accommodate multiple uses but should include at least some residential. It would serve to transition from an office and retail area to the residential neighborhood to the northeast.
- **Veterans Park (J)** – Enlivening this space requires lining it with additional development to activate its edges. A retail or restaurant base along its northern and eastern edge would shrink the park slightly but provide ample energy. An interesting opportunity exists for a residential tower at the surface parking lot along Edith Sherman Drive and behind the Fairfield County

The Ritz Carlton is proposed for one of the 100 percent corners in the Center City and presents the only opportunity to green, pedestrianize, and activate this automobile dominated area of the city (E)

This large plaza can be infilled with development to activate the open space and this important road currently lacking frontage (F)



Infill residential buildings can dramatically change the character of Tresser Boulevard (G)

The "Hole-in-the-Ground" is the largest redevelopment opportunity in the Center City and can be harnessed to reconfigure the road, pedestrian, and open space network on the eastern side of the Center City (H)

The parking lot between Bell St and Tresser Blvd presents the best opportunity to stitch together the historic core and station area (K)

Park Square West Phases III and IV will fill an important gap in the historic core (L)

The southern and western frontage of this block can be activated with more fine grained retail facades and restaurants and with housing or offices above. The northern frontage should respond to the scale and character of Spring Street (M)

Located within Mill River Park, the former Archstone site presents a unique opportunity to activate the park (N)

Bank building. The building's base would front the southern edge of the park.

- **St. John's North and Parking Lot (K)** – Along with the site at the southwest corner of Tresser Boulevard and Atlantic Street, this is the most important site for stitching together the historic core and the station area with ground-oriented and mixed use development. The primary use here should be residential but, given its scale, could also include a commercial tower.
- **Park Square West (L)** – This is the optimal location for infill in the historic core with higher intensity residential development that would simultaneously provide patrons for downtown and seamlessly integrate Mill River Park and the Center City.
- **Burlington Coat Factory and Spring Street (M)** – The interior, as well as the northern and southern edges of the site bounded by Broad, Summer, Spring, and Bedford Streets could house a residential tower in the center. This building could abut Spring Street by incorporating townhouses that wrap an internal garage and could meet Broad and Summer Streets with retail.
- **North Side of Broad Street** – Residential development, along with some potential office or hotel uses, would dramatically change the character of this stretch of Broad Street by bridging the gap between the northern neighborhoods and the commercial core.

For sites within the **High Density Multifamily Residential** districts, residential is the fundamental land use priority. Expanding UConn into more of an anchor institution campus could complement both the Center City and residential neighborhoods:

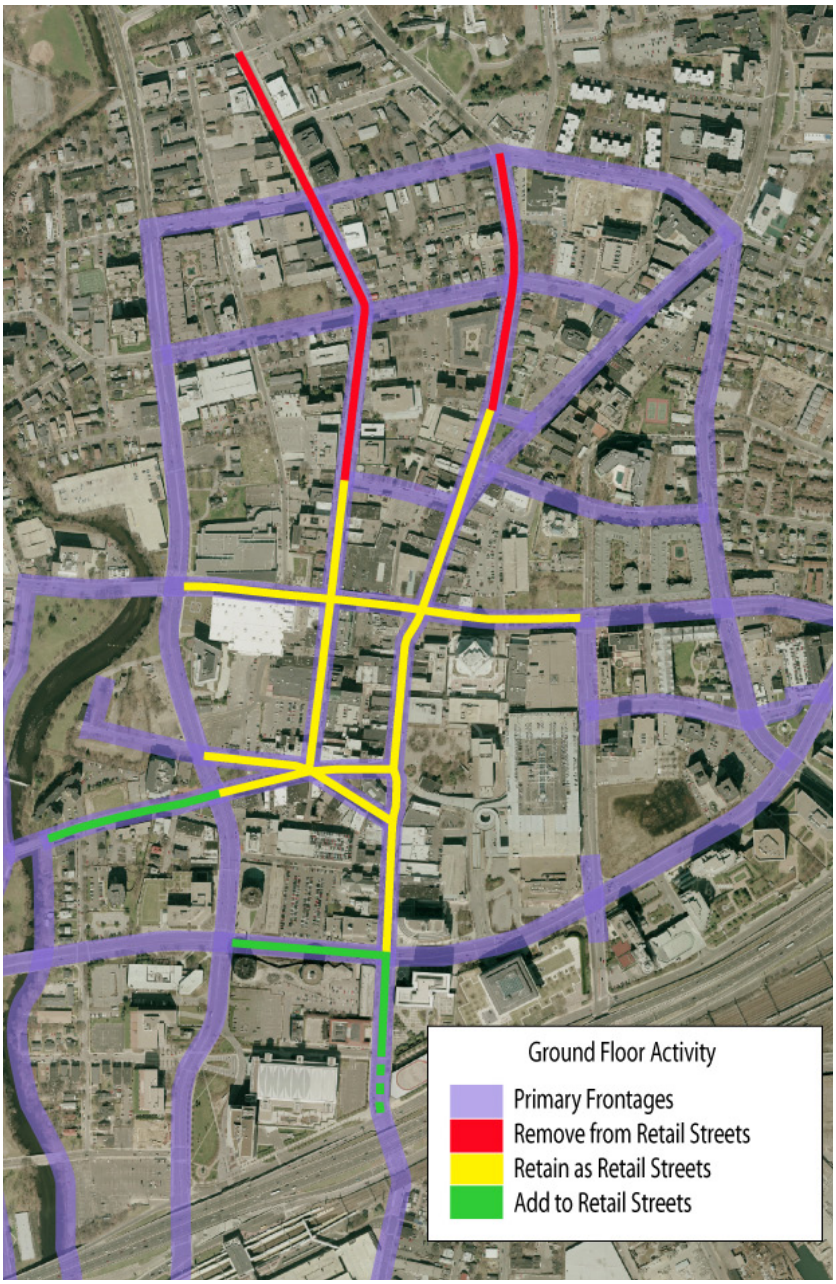
- **Archstone (N)** – The use here must be public in character, must activate the park edge, and must have a small enough footprint that it does not dominate the park. Some residential use could be appropriate, given the difficultly of bridging Washington Boulevard with activity. Uses that combine UConn events and dorms must be explored first.
- **UConn Garage (0)** – The ideal land use mix here is comparable to that for the Archstone site. Also similar is the need to incorporate Mill River Park and Greenway into the planning so that riverfront access is expanded and a visual connection between Washington Boulevard and the park corridor is amplified.
- **Summer Street and Bedford Street** – Opportunities exist along both these corridors for intensification. Declining demand for office parking may enable the conversion of some surface parking to infill residential development, thereby spurring a greater mix of uses in important transit corridors.

Ground Floor Uses and Design

As development frames the public realm, the way that buildings are oriented, their land use, their massing, and their design complete the urban room. These aspects of buildings influence the public experience, even if one does not enter a single structure. The ground floor use and building design has the most pronounced impact on the public realm in that it comprises the permeable transition between public and private space. Ground floor uses and building design make the fundamental difference between urban environments where people spend time and money and those environments where people pass through as quickly as possible to get to their destination.

Active ground floor does not inevitably mean retail. Office uses, institutional uses, and residential units can all be ground-oriented and active at street level. Requirements for pedestrian-oriented ground floors include minimum levels of transparency, a minimum number of entrances per linear foot of façade, and façade articulation and design that is human-scale. Within the heart of the Center City, however, retail should be encouraged, and the boundaries within which it is encouraged must evolve.

The current retail streets reflect the concept of shifting the activity of downtown north along Bedford Street and Summer Street and away from the train station. A reused retail street plan would refocus retail within the Center City, use it to stitch together the historic core and the station area and capitalize on pedestrian traffic existing between the historic and rail-oriented cores.



Retail priority areas are concentrated in the historic and pedestrian-oriented core of Center City

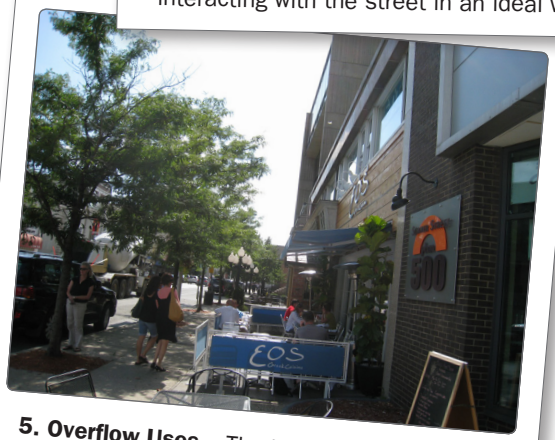
A building's relationship with the sidewalk and to the street is critical in making an area feel walkable. A full spectrum of examples currently exists in downtown Stamford's Center City. Some buildings employ best practices while others severely hinder the pedestrian experience. There are five façade types, ranging from the least ground-oriented to the most pedestrian-friendly.

1. Blank Wall or Garage – Along Tresser Boulevard and at other locations throughout the downtown, there are buildings whose primary relationship with the street is that of a blank brick or concrete wall or a garage façade that creates massive voids in the streetscape.

2. Small Windows, Screened Garages, or Blank Walls with Design Attributes– Some buildings have limited opportunities to see into their interior or for signage that gives passerbys a sense of what is going on inside. Screened parking mitigates some of the negative impacts of parking but certainly does not enhance the streetscape.

3. Decent Façade – Many buildings have ample windows, but a lack of transparency, poor quality building materials, overshadowing overhangs, overabundant landscaping, or other negative aspects prevent them from interacting with the street in an ideal way.

4. Active Façade – Good buildings in the downtown currently have ample and transparent windows that allow one to see in, have little barrier separating them from the public realm, and have quality building materials break down the barrier between interior and exterior space.



5. Overflow Uses – The best and most active facades spill out into the street, providing complete permeability between the public and private realms.

Façade type 1 should not be permitted within the Center City. Development along primary streets must have façade types 4 or 5. All other streets can contain façade types 2 through 5. Buildings with their facades fronting Mill River Park should be treated as facing primary streets. Loading docks and garage access driveways must not be allowed on primary streets unless no alternative is possible. In these cases, they should be limited in their width and sufficiently screened to limit their negative impact on the public realm.

Building Form

When designed well, the world's tallest building can feel appropriate to someone on the sidewalk; conversely, a three or four story building can feel overwhelming from the sidewalk if designed without the pedestrian experience in mind. Building form is governed by a set of zoning tools meant to control the relationship between buildings and between buildings and the pedestrian. Building massing is expressed in terms of setbacks (how close a building can be constructed to the property line, sidewalk, or curb line), step-backs (requirements that a building tapers as it increases in height), and height limits. Massing throughout Stamford's downtown should conform to the following general rules:

- **A block of buildings' mass should be broken up so that it has the general appearance of a series of towers sitting on a base that is built out to the sidewalk – distinct from one another by a step back,**
- **The height of a building's base should be directly related to right-of-way width,**
- **Towers should be located within the interiors of blocks where possible, and their footprints should be small to minimize shadow and light impact,**
- **Ultimate building height should be lower in the historic core than along wider boulevards and should decline as distance from transit access increases,**
- **A building's street wall façade should have vertical articulation to break up its mass, and**
- **On-site, aboveground structured parking should be masked with a façade design comparable to the rest of the building and ideally wrapped with building uses that mask it from the public realm.**

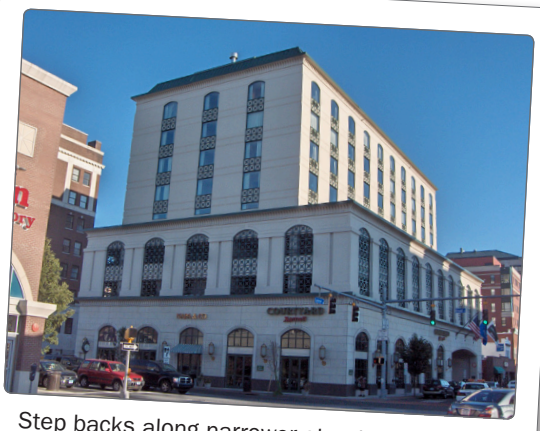
Tall buildings feel appropriate when the towers are slender, lower floors are human-scale, architectural details are thoughtful, and landscaping softens the public space (Vancouver)

Even when short, buildings without step backs and particularly those with overhangs overwhelm the sidewalk and detract from the pedestrian experience

The Base: Setbacks and Step Backs

People in a downtown experience the built environment as if it is an urban room. The public realm decorates it, while the adjacent buildings frame it. The public room can feel canyon-like if the building base height to right-of-way width ratio is too high, and it can feel uncomfortable and lack the necessary character of encapsulation if it is too low. An ideal urban room ratio falls somewhere between 0.5:1 and 1.5:1, depending on architecture, landscaping and design of the right-of-way, contextual buildings, and other factors. Building base facades should be built as close to the public right-of-way as possible while allowing for enough streetscape depth to provide the quality public realm described in the subsequent section (i.e. street trees and sidewalks of ample width). At that maximum setback, a building's base should continue upward, framing the public realm until a step back differentiates the building base from the tower.

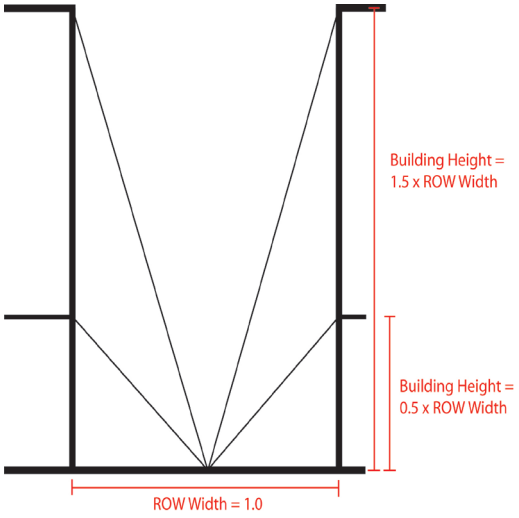
It is recommended that step backs be made a standard requirement throughout the Center City at the height at which the building's base ensures the upper floors of a building have a limited presence on the public realm. The height at which this step back occurs would vary depending on the width of the right-of-way. The height of a building's base could be up to 1.5 times the width of the right of way. For example, a step back should be required at a maximum height of 150 feet for rights-of-way of 100-foot width, or a step back should be required at a maximum height of 60 feet for rights-of-way of 40-foot width. The step back should occur to a depth equivalent of 20 percent of right-of-way width for rights-of-way of less than



Step backs along narrower streets reduce the impact of taller buildings and towers on light and air access to the sidewalk

Articulated facades and masses feel smaller

Monotonous slabs feel larger



Building height to street width ratios must be properly managed to create an urban room that avoids the feel of a canyon

75 feet and 10 percent of right-of-way width for rights-of-way of greater than 75 feet.

If a proposed building's ultimate height would be taller than the allowable maximum height of the base, the base need not be required to reach its maximum height but rather need only be a minimum height of 25 feet. If a proposed building's ultimate height will not be taller than the allowable height of the base, the base (entire building in this case) must be a minimum height equal to the greater of either 25 feet or 0.3 times the width of the right-of-way it fronts. These requirements would ensure that buildings would be human-scaled in their relation with the public realm.

The design of the floors located below the step back should be of similar quality to the ground floor, accounting for the street type along which the building is located. In no instance should the building overhang the sidewalk or reverse taper, even if the outermost floor of the overhang is located within the desired setback line. Architectural details that serve to break up a building's façade are essential in minimizing the perception of mass. Buildings that have a solid façade can feel like an overwhelming slab looming over the sidewalk, whereas a well-articulated building façade can feel like a series of smaller buildings. All buildings should have some vertical articulation, which can take the form of a line of balconies, an inset portion, or any other differentiation.

The Tower: Height and Footprint

When controlling for the massing of a building's base and its interaction with the public realm to ensure that it is human-scaled, ultimate building height becomes less important. Other building tower characteristics, however, such as tower footprint remain important to ensure that light and air are maximized throughout the Center City.

Currently, the building heights allowed in zones within the Center City echo of master plan concepts laid out in the 1970s and 1980s: there exists a core of tall buildings bound by a ring of arterial streets, and heights drop off significantly outside of that ring. The concept of an island of towers separated from adjacent districts and neighborhoods by wide streets is no longer how the heart of Stamford functions, nor does it embody our vision for the future. Some areas outside of the current CC-N zone boundaries should allow taller buildings than are currently allowed. This would provide a smoother transition between the tallest urban core and the lower neighborhoods. Specifically, the west side of Washington Boulevard, the north side of Broad Street, and the interior of the lot bounded by Spring Street to the north are all appropriate locations for taller towers, as long as their overall building massing corresponds to the principles set forth in this section.

The portion of a building located above the step back separating the tower from the base should be limited in its footprint so as to avoid large slabs that negatively impact the public realm. Building height has two important impacts: towers can alter views from key public locations; and tower shadows can impact the ability of housing to take advantage of passive solar energy, of trees and gardens to grow, and of people to enjoy open spaces and piazzas. Key public vantage points from which views need to be protected should be identified, and new development should produce simulations to demonstrate the impact of new development on those views. Key open spaces and aspects of the public realm for which sun access needs to be protected should be identified, and development should simulate the impact of new structures on those locations. Above the step back, towers should be limited in their footprint to a maximum of 30,000 square feet and have a maximum linear length of 250 feet on any one side. There should be a minimum distance of 100 feet between any two towers above a height of 200 feet.

On-Site Pedestrian Infrastructure

Each new development in the Center City must incrementally heal and expand the pedestrian environment, connecting districts of the Center City to one another and to surrounding neighborhoods. Required setbacks from the streetside parcel line should be ample enough to allow for a sufficient sidewalk with landscaping and street trees that buffer pedestrians from traffic.

Too often, ample space between a building facade and a sidewalk is squandered. Sidewalks can be both too narrow and too wide. Landscaping is well used throughout Stamford's Center City to buffer pedestrians from inactive building facades but is less well utilized to buffer pedestrians from fast flowing cars and trucks.

At a minimum, every property fronting a primary street should be lined with five foot wide sidewalks, a row of street trees, and pedestrian-scaled lighting. The width of the tree row may vary depending on lot depth and existing conditions. Where a street is lined with on-street parking, the tree pits should be located within a brick verge to enable water infiltration while providing a stable support for people getting out of their vehicles and onto the sidewalk. Where there is no on-street parking, the tree pits should be located in a grass median to enable the trees to grow significant canopies that shade the downtown. Buildings should be required to maintain those street trees installed during development.

Buildings that do not have multiple entrances along a single facade and will not likely be changed over time should be framed by linear greenways linking them to other parts of downtown. For example, the majority of the built fabric along Tresser Boulevard will not change dramatically over time because of the embodied investment in each building. They will likely continue to be office buildings with single entrances. While there are opportunities to wrap some of them with bases of retail or other active use (as happened at 400 Atlantic Street), each should at least be framed by double tree allees in a similar style to those that line the southern edge of the UBS complex along North State Street.

Any development that has frontage on multiple streets (excluding corner lots) and is located on a square block of greater than 200,000 square feet should provide a pedestrian cut-through to enable walkers to bisect these super blocks. These alleys and pedestrian connections will enable shorter walking distances throughout the downtown and have become some of the most interesting aspects of urban living in other cities. The alleys of Melbourne, Australia are lined with cafes and bars and filled with pedestrian activity throughout the day.

New Pedestrian Links

Redevelopment dramatically changed the street and block pattern of downtown. In some places, this reconfiguration has resulted in blocks that are significantly larger than people feel comfortable walking around and some direct walking routes require cutting across private property. Recent

Minimum standard streetscape must include sidewalks of ample width, street trees that can mature to have a canopy, and amenities such as trash cans and benches

Too often, the sidewalk is an afterthought tacked onto the property's edge and teetering on the edge of the roadbed

Even when a sidewalk is ample, landscaping too often shields the pedestrian from buildings and activities within the buildings rather than from adjacent high-speed traffic and trucks

A double row of trees creates an allee for walking, frames the linear public space, and buffers walkers from the street. It is the preferred option where buildings do not have multiple entrances

The streets of southern downtown can easily be retrofitted to be more green and walkable

Existing midblock cut-throughs are well utilized and support adjacent restaurants

developments, such as UBS, Canterbury Green, and Park Square West, have mitigated this condition through targeted access improvements, but some challenges still remain.

In some locations, existing connections need to be enhanced so that pedestrians recognize them as elements of the public realm. This includes obvious connections such as Old Main Street (to be addressed later) but also includes Edith Sherman Drive and Gay Street, which offer opportunities for shorter pedestrian trips if ample sidewalks and landscaping are provided. In other locations, new connections will be necessary as redevelopment takes place. There are three prime areas where desired connections should be incorporated into the master plan and required of future development.

- **New Link: Summer Street South** – Currently, Summer Street becomes Clark Street after it crosses the intersection of Main Street, West Park Place, and Bank Street. Park Street then dead-ends at the Bell Street Garage. If a pedestrian could continue south as the crow flies, they would end up at the train via Federal Street and the UBS walkway. In addition to some improvement to the Bell Street Garage, which would facilitate walking across the ground floor from Summer Street to Bell Street, this path could be completed via a through-block connection to Tresser Boulevard, a mid-block crossing of Tresser Boulevard, a through-block connection in between the southern St. John's Towers where the elevated plaza was recently removed, and a connection to Federal Street. The two through-block connections could be required easements for new development, and improvements would be provided by new development on those sites.
- **New Link: Parcel 38** – This parcel is located on the southwest corner of one of the largest blocks in downtown. Any redevelopment of this site should include through-block connections that break up the scale of the block, enable a potential extension northward to Suburban Avenue, and provide a public framework that breaks up the massing of any development that takes place there.
- **New Link: Franklin Street** – The two blocks that straddle Franklin Street between Broad and North Streets are very long from north to south. A new East-West connection aligned with Spring Street would create a new level of pedestrian connectivity in the northern section of downtown. Bridging from Washington Boulevard to Franklin Street could be achieved when the St. Andrew's parcel is developed, and the section from Franklin Street to Summer Street could be completed at the same time that redevelopment occurs within that block. A path is currently possible through existing surface parking lots, and it is utilized by walkers in the downtown. Facilitating this movement would be essential to any intensification of the area.

Parking

While parking is a necessary component of any successful downtown, its provision is costly and an over-supply can result in incentivizing automobile trips and traffic when alternatives exist. Paramount to the continued revitalization of Stamford's Center City is effective utilization of existing parking resources coupled with precise requirements that ensure parking demand is met without providing oversupply and adding additional costs to redevelopment.

There are three primary components of parking within zoning that combine to form a comprehensive strategy: the base ratio (matching supply with demand), transportation demand management (reducing demand), and providing supply.

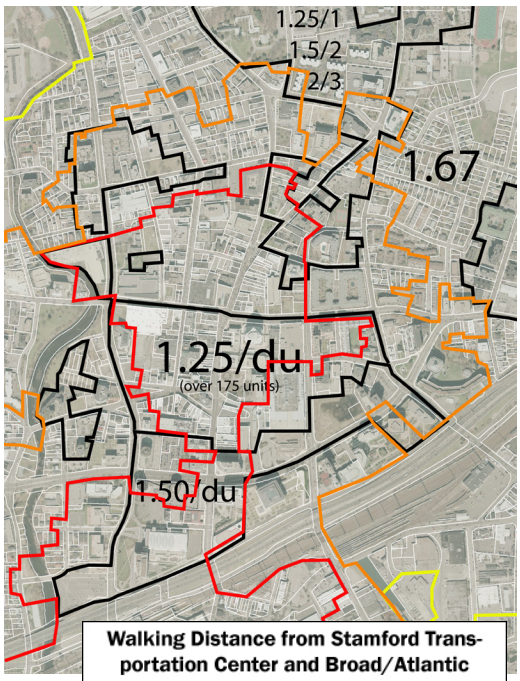
Parking Ratios to Meet Current Demand

Demand for parking is not equal across a community but rather varies significantly based on a variety of factors ranging from local car ownership to land use mix, transit accessibility, and walkability. Even within Stamford's Center City, the factors that influence demand for parking are not consistent. Based on census data released in December of 2010, the share of both Stamford residents and workers driving alone to work decreased since 2000, as they shifted to other modes. Stamford residents driving to work alone decreased from 70 to 68 percent while workers driving alone to jobs in Stamford decreased from 77 to 73 percent. As the Center City becomes increasingly transit-oriented and walkable, the need for parking will continue to decline relative to growth. Taking car ownership, land use mix, residential and employment density, and transit access in the Center City into consideration, it is recommended that the required residential parking ratio be 0.75 spaces per unit for parcels within approximately ¼ mile of the transportation center (as measured from the nearest entrance), 1.0 spaces per unit for parcels within approximately ¾ mile of the station, and 1.25 spaces per unit throughout the remainder of downtown.

Reducing Future Demand for Parking

The demand for automobile use and parking is not inevitable. Demand can be curbed through a variety of transportation demand management strategies implemented by both the public and the private sector. While developers and building management can make a variety of decisions to help enable alternatives to the automobile, viable transportation alternatives begin with the public sector. While each site can incrementally work towards a walkable and transit-oriented downtown, much of the downtown's built environment already exists, and the public sector will have to play an important role in balancing the playing field between transit, walking, biking, and driving.

With the best transit access in the state of Connecticut, residents, workers and shoppers in downtown have greater options to the automobile and, therefore, require less parking



Bike parking facilitates an additional mode of transportation and reduces the need for driving and the space required to store and move automobiles

Since Philly Carshare began in Philadelphia in the early 2000s, surface and structured parking spaces throughout the downtown have been shifting steadily from storing private vehicles to housing short term shared cars

A wide variety of transportation demand management strategies exist. As the public sector works to increase transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access to and within the downtown, development projects can include design elements and programs to further incentivize a shift away from automobile dependence. Private sector transportation management strategies that can be reflected in zoning include but are not limited to on-site shared cars, improved pedestrian conditions, and transit subsidies. The reduction in parking demand from each approach varies, but potential ranges have been established based on experience in cities from across the country. The following is a list of some of the more commonly used strategies and the reductions they achieved.

- **Car Sharing**
  Reduces 5-10% or 4-8 spaces per on-site car
- **Mobility Management**
  Reduces 10-40% for companies with effective programs
- **Contingency Plan**
  Reduces 10-30% if a comprehensive plan is in place
- **Bicycle Facilities**
  Reduce 5-15%
- **Pricing**
  Reduces 10-30% for cost recovery pricing
- **Unbundled: Selling or Leasing Parking Separately from Commercial/Residential Space**
  Reduces 10-30%
- **Financial Incentives for Mode Shift**
  Reduces 10-30%
- **Parking Maximums (contingent on high quality intra-city transit)**
  Reduce 10-30%
- **Improved User Information**
  Reduces 5-15%

Given the uncertainty surrounding the reductions in demand that will result from some of these measures, it is recommended that low-end reductions be offered until their full impact can be demonstrated in Stamford. On-site bike facilities should be required of all developments, and improved user information should be mandatory aspects of each development that contains publicly accessible parking. If other demand management strategies are being proposed in exchange for reductions, the request should be accompanied by a report prepared by a transportation planner and judged by the reviewing boards.

Future Parking Supply

After determining the appropriate amount of parking for each development calibrated to meet the projected demand (based on location and demand management strategies employed), there should be a reasonable amount of flexibility as to how these parking needs are met. Parking can be provided on-site as a component of the development project or off-site at other locations through long-term leases, or payments can be made in lieu of parking (PILOP).

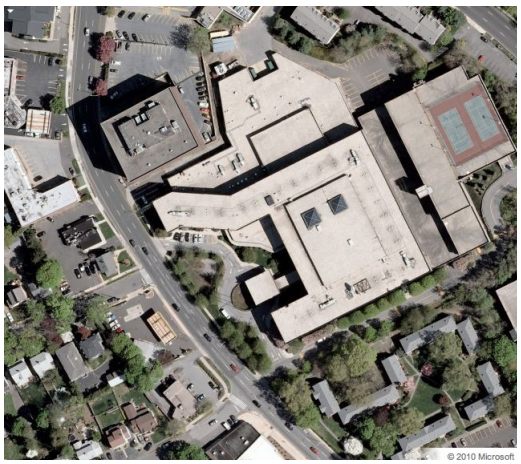
First and foremost, there was consensus among the stakeholders involved in this process that the existing reservoirs of public parking garages and on-street spaces should be better utilized to increase the efficiency of these investments and reduce some of the burden placed on private development. It is recommended that private development within 500 feet or 1/8 mile of a public garage be given the opportunity to enter into long-term leases that secure spaces within those garages in order to meet development parking requirements. A more organic process that relies on market-based leasing to tenants on a space by space basis may be even more effective.

For parking that will be provided on-site, a variety of strategies exist for accommodating parking that utilize current technologies that have been proven in projects around the country, including but not limited to elevators and lifts. Great amounts of flexibility should be afforded to developers as to how they choose to meet their requirements on site. Projects across the country are limiting the costs associated with on-site structured parking through valet parking, stacking systems, car elevators, and special spaces for compact cars. As long as these strategies do not negatively impact mobility in the Center City with off-site impacts, developers should be free to determine those strategies that are marketable and meet their program needs.

Parking revenues (from long-term leases, daily space usage, and PILOPs) should be put into Center City investments that both increase the utilization of existing parking resources and enhance the pedestrian realm of the downtown. Several of the current parking resources are poorly lit, feel unsafe, and are disconnected for the retail strips and public spaces that they are meant to serve. Small design interventions can vastly improve people's comfort in these garages and their willingness to park on the upper floors. Signage can significantly enhance users' knowledge of the location of parking resources and of space availability. Enhanced pedestrian connections between parking resources and Center City destinations will shift the neighborhood further toward a park-once strategy – increasing the quality of the pedestrian environment and reducing the need for additional parking now and into the future.

Well designed public spaces and greenways can extend the walkshed from amenities and further reduce the demand for parking

Many bonused plazas are no longer significantly landscaped and have been all but abandoned by the buildings that benefited from additional development rights



Plazas like this one in front of a hotel on Summer Street provide little public benefit because they are located where open space does not add value to the pedestrian realm

Leveraging Private Development: Public Amenities and Off-Site Improvements

Two processes currently exist whereby private development is leveraged to achieve public objectives: amenity bonuses and negotiations with city departments for off-site improvements. The combination of these processes neither achieves the most beneficial enhancements nor does it effectively balance public benefits with private costs. The following principles should govern the zoning incentive process and be taken into consideration when negotiating additional off-site improvements:

- Intense redevelopment in Stamford's Center City is in itself a public benefit, given the additional activity on the street, market for local retail, and tax revenue, and the costs of providing other benefits should not be too large as to discourage achieving this primary goal of redevelopment
- On-site pedestrian improvements are an essential component of quality development and should be required through zoning rather than negotiated or incentivized through bonuses
- Off-site road and traffic improvements should not be borne exclusively or disproportionately by Center City development adjacent to it – given the walkability and transit-orientation of Stamford's core, traffic impacts on local roads are more likely the result of development patterns elsewhere in the city or the region since Center City development has been proven to shift people out of their cars and reduce, rather than cause, congestion on local roads
- Off-site public realm improvements, including streetscape, parkland, and plaza enhancements could be achieved through a series of Center City tax increment financing districts (TIFs) including the existing Mill River Corridor TIF and a parallel urban TIF designed to improve additional existing public spaces (e.g. Veterans' Park)
- Residential FAR exemption should continue to be used as a strategy to achieve more residential development in the Center City
- A limited number of targeted bonuses should remain that are well calibrated with the economics of redevelopment and retain the city's ability to leverage development in strong market cycles to achieve a short list of public objectives

The incentive program in Stamford is long overdue for a thorough re-tooling. Zoning incentives in the current regulations grant developers additional development capacity in the form of additional floor area in exchange for amenities such as water features, day care facilities, and public plazas. Many of Stamford's existing zoning incentives were originally created under Stamford's 1978 master plan and have been modified over the years.

At a roundtable in September 2009, DSSD members, URC Commissioners, and city staff met with other Center City stakeholders to discuss the history, use, and intent of zoning incentives in Stamford. Workshop partici-

pants expressed concern that the current incentives are not building on the city's and DSSD's efforts to improve the aesthetic qualities of development, provide affordable housing, enhance the pedestrian realm, and add targeted public spaces to the existing network. Based on feedback from the amenities workshop, research on bonus programs in other communities, and Stamford's history with zoning incentives and amenity programs, four issue areas emerge as target improvements for well-calibrated zoning incentives: diversity of uses, pedestrian conditions and the public realm, green buildings, and multi-modal transportation.

Those plazas that are best maintained are often located high above the sidewalk, beyond the reach of the typical pedestrian and serve as hidden enclaves for the workers of companies whose buildings frame them as a publicly bonused amenity

Diversity of uses

A primary mechanism for shifting the Center City land uses away from predominantly office and retail use and to more mixed use has been the FAR exemption for residential development. Although FAR is a wholly ineffective mechanism for controlling building form, it is recommended that this bonus be maintained, along with more tightly controlled building mass and form requirements through set back, building height and step back requirements (as outlined in the Building Form section of this report).

Regardless of upper floor uses, ground floor use has a direct impact on the public's experience of a place. There has been a concerted effort over the years to incentivize ground floor retail, and the current presence of these uses in the appropriate locations, despite the challenges associated with the regional shopping mall, attest to their success. It is recommended that the ground floor retail bonus remain but be modified to eliminate second floor uses, to create a hierarchy of retail zones dependent on distance from core streets, and to incentivize quality signage, awnings, and architectural style.

The Mill River Greenway and Park are successful strategies to incrementally create public amenities with private development

Pedestrian Conditions and Public Realm

Throughout this planning effort, the importance of a high quality public realm and pedestrian-friendly design has been emphasized time and again. Cities across the country that are committed to encouraging walking in their centers do not compromise on public realm, streetscape, and the interaction between buildings and the public realm. They do not leave these crucial aspects of private development to chance. For this reason, all on-site aspects essential to a quality pedestrian environment are recommended to be mandatory requirements through zoning of all development in the Center City. These include ample and comfortable sidewalks, street trees and landscaping, shortened crossing distances and walking paths, buildings that relate to the streetscape, and thru-block connections that break up "super blocks." Similarly, building massing that negatively impacts the public realm should be disallowed in zoning envelopes and should not be left to chance.

The softening and greening of the Center City will occur through a well-designed network of public open spaces and through thoughtfully constructed streets and private areas. Rather than providing new plazas, of greater importance is the evolution of existing public spaces to active, green spaces with connecting corridors stitching them together into a comprehensive system. The Mill River Greenbelt program should continue to provide

Veterans Park could benefit from value capture of nearby development

Private development can be leveraged to bolster local transit service by providing on-site amenities or by paying into funds that support local operating costs - transit investments can often be less than the cost of providing offset parking over the life of a development

Green buildings are energy-efficient and contain renewable generation, progressive stormwater treatment, and sustainable materials

Residential constrution should continue to be incentivized in currently commercial areas

Recent retail has created a destination in the city center while providing basic amenities to the growing downtown population - it should continue to be incentivized in areas within walking distance of the historic core or in local, neighborhood establishments

supplemental investment in that focal open space. A comparable urban parallel should be created that benefits the existing open spaces (e.g. Veterans Park) and funds pedestrian, streetscape, and greening improvements off-site from new development in the Center City. This program would need to be developed in conjunction with a pedestrianization and greening prioritization plan so that investments are compounded to achieve the greatest positive results.

Green Buildings

Stamford has been a regional and national leader on sustainability through its transit-oriented development program, green roofs, and green buildings. Stakeholders throughout this process have reiterated a widely-held desire to continue on this trend, which was recently institutionalized through the Planning Board's adoption of the Master Plan Sustainability Amendment. Higher than average levels of building efficiency should be incentivized through density bonuses or permitting expediency.

Multi-Modal Transportation

Depending on its location in relation to the Stamford Transportation Center, bus routes, and the proposed streetcar line, private development could be incentivized to bolster the transit infrastructure. Specifically, development located adjacent to a bus stop or a proposed trolley station could be incentivized to provide more robust station facilities, waiting areas within building lobbies, or other amenities that enhance the transit system.

Acknowledging that automobiles will continue to be a strong component of the Center City's transportation system into the future, of utmost importance is ensuring that automobile infrastructure does not detract from the ability of people to walk, bike, or take transit. Specifically, parking in the Center City needs to be located and designed in a way that does not degrade the public realm. A significant amount of parking already exists within the Center City, and new development should be used to capitalize on this existing resource or supplement it where necessary. Pedestrian connections to existing and publicly accessible garages should be a component of the improvements made through an urban pedestrian improvement fund in parallel to the Mill River Greenbelt program. New development should be enabled to utilize existing parking where appropriate through the zoning parking requirements.

Capital Planning

Improvements to the Public Realm

A walk around the Center City on a sunny afternoon makes it readily apparent which aspects of the public realm are working and which are not. People walk quickly along some blocks, rushing to move through the space. People linger along others, spending money at cafes and engaging in spontaneous interactions with fellow residents and workers. All future investment should work to create streets and spaces that people want to spend time in.

A people-friendly neighborhood needs a pedestrian network that is extensive, coherent, and attractive and that is framed by a built environment that is human-scaled and pedestrian-oriented. This section will describe the additions and improvements to the Center City's pedestrian network needed to make it more walkable. Some of these improvements can be incrementally implemented in conjunction with private development, and others will require capital spending by the city.

First and foremost, the false dichotomy between the historic core and the new office developments must cease, as the entire Center City should be pedestrian-friendly. This section focuses on improvements outside of the building envelope. Achieving results in the public realm will require new and enhanced public spaces, traffic calming measures, shortened crossing distances, ample and continuous sidewalks, a landscaped and pedestrian-friendly streetscape, and a park-once environment.

Veterans Plaza could evolve into an urban parallel to Mill River Park with targeted investments, bookending the bowtie and framing the Center City's core public space

The Mill River Park Greenway will be the anchor of the City Center's public realm and will need to be connected to other enhanced parks with a network of green streets to truly permeate the neighborhood

Design doesn't currently emphasize the east-west connectivity through the site or into the mall

Minor interventions could activate the back corner of the park and advertise the latent connectivity

New and Enhanced Public Spaces

Stamford's heart is getting a tremendously significant new open space along its western edge with the removal of the Mill River dam and the creation of a new river meandering through a large park. Other pocket parks, plazas, and raised open spaces dot the downtown but are not stitched together into a coherent pattern or linked by a network of green streets. This recommended open space strategy has two primary aspects: the evolution of Veterans Park (including Old Main Street) into an urban complement to Mill River Park and the creation of a series of piazzas around which development is organized and which form the focal public spaces at transit nodes for the bus network and potential streetcar line.

Veterans Park and Old Main Street

When the mall was built in the heart of the city, its physical form significantly hindered east-west vehicle and pedestrian travel. Along with Landmark Square, the mall forms a consolidated super block structure with a footprint of nearly 16 acres and a linear frontage of greater than one mile. In addition to efforts to incorporate more ground-oriented retail along this block's periphery through several interventions, the activation of Veterans Park and Old Main Street are paramount to stitching together the Center City neighborhood. A stronger east-west link will also better connect the block's vast parking reservoir with Center City amenities and activities ensuring better utilization of this resource.

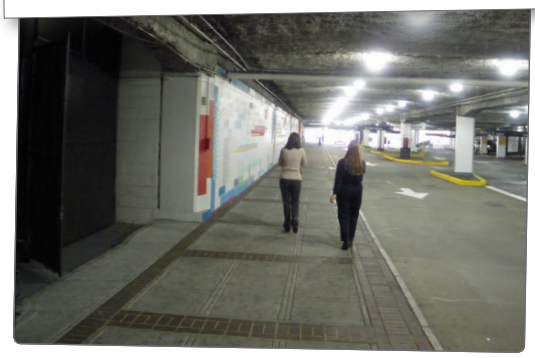
The public realm from Old Town Hall to Greyrock Place suffers from a series of compounding flaws that prevent it from meeting the needs of pedestrians and adding value to the Center City: the plaza is nebulous and ringed by predominantly blank walls; the western entrance to Old Main Street is hidden in a back corner; the hallway portion has poor ventilation, lighting, and decoration; the eastern portion of the right-of-way skirts a parking lot without any additional pedestrian-friendly designs; and the eastern entrance is sandwiched between the Macy's loading dock and mall driveways. Though the passageway is marked Old Main Street at either end, one would need to be familiar with the historic street pattern of Stamford to draw meaning from this sole label. The following simple and cost-effective enhancements to the park and passageway can be made in the short term and would greatly enhance the quality of these public spaces and the connectivity in the Center City. From the west:

1. A wayfinding post located at this key intersection of the Center City with a map of activity centers, parking resources, other attractions, and pedestrian routes would help visitors and people unfamiliar with the core of downtown orient themselves and learn that this passage exists.

2. The standard bus shelters should be removed and replaced with a larger, sculptural feature at the northwest corner of the park that combines weather protection, seating, and bus route information (including time of arrival countdown clocks).
3. A route marked with pavers that connects the intersection of Atlantic Street and Town Center Drive with the western entrance to this passageway would help people chart their course across Veterans Park and lead them towards this passageway. The route could be similar or identical to the imbedded white line pavers installed by UBS to help people navigate the open space located in front of their building along Washington Boulevard.
4. Signage at the portal itself that clearly describes where the passage connects to would calm weary pedestrians and could double as wayfinding assistance from Atlantic Street if it contains a design element that is visible from farther away. The portal is currently a wall of windows with doors located on either side. Entrance points that are centrally located would be more obvious.
5. The portion of the passageway located underneath the plaza that links Buildings 4 and 6 of Landmark Square needs air filtration to remove the remnants of people using this hallway to smoke during inclement weather. Though requiring more significant investment, skylights could be punched through the plaza above to again let daylight into this section of the passageway and provide a unique outdoor art element in the plaza.
6. In the garage, an overhead covering high above the sidewalk would eliminate the poor aesthetics of the exposed garage ceiling without making the space feel too constrained. A row of planters or artistic bollards could provide a buffer between the walkway and passing cars.
7. Leveling the sidewalk at the eastern entrance/exit to the passageway would make the corridor more user friendly for people with difficulty walking or in wheelchairs. New signage could make this passageway's destination clearer and could indicate that it is a gateway to downtown.

Though wide, a lack of natural light or informational signage reduce the utility and attractiveness of the passageway

Skylights can be functional and sculptural, letting light into Old Main Street (Philadelphia, PA)



This wide sidewalk could be made to feel more like a pedestrian zone through simple design and safety enhancements

A simple overhead canopy can frame a public corridor with an attractive design that improves safety and comfort (Stratford, CT)

Investing in Stamford Town Center and Landmark Square to reinforce the public realm

Interventions in the public realm will have a positive impact on improving connectivity across the mall super block, but a more pedestrian-oriented Center City will not be fully achieved without corresponding investments made to the Stamford Town Center. The following recommendations attempt to replicate the success of the replacement of the southern anchor at other entrance points that are more important for the integration of the mall into the Center City fabric.

➜ **Replicate Southern Entrance Aesthetic** – The new glass tower and branding located at the entrance to Barnes & Noble has created a new visual marker for the Town Center. A similar column could be constructed at the western entrance of the mall located off the raised plaza between Buildings 4 and 6 of Landmark Square (making this discreet entrance visible from the intersection of Main and Atlantic), at the eastern entrance to Old Main Street, and at the entrance to Building 5 of Landmark Square off of Broad Street. These would serve to draw pedestrians through the underutilized pedestrian connections by providing visual signals that people have comfortable associations with.

With the current design, one can only tell that parking lies beyond this blank wall

Targeted enhancements could signal this as the eastern gateway to the Town Center and would draw pedestrians into the Old Main Street passageway

The western and northern entranceways could be additionally enhanced by enclosing the raised plazas outside of each in a glass atrium, mimicking the high quality space at the mall's southern entrance.

- **Strengthen Old Main Street as Mall and Office Entrance** – In addition to the improvements for Old Main Street described above, some targeted pedestrian enhancements can seamlessly integrate this corridor into the Town Center. From the sidewalk that crosses the mall parking lot linking Greyrock Place to the Old Main Street passageway, there is no direct connection to the mall. A quality pedestrian walkway could link this sidewalk to the mall core located to the south. Additionally (or in lieu of), there is an existing service elevator located at the nexus of this sidewalk and the Old Main Street corridor that could be made accessible and incorporated into this revitalized passageway. If the existing Ann Taylor Loft location was demolished to make way for a hallway and replaced with a new retail space created where the current hallway links the mall and Landmark Square, this elevator would enter the mall within a new space that would directly align with Old Main Street, Veterans Park, and the Center City's primary east-west public thoroughfare.

- **Macy's and Saks Fifth Avenue** – Over the long term, the northern and western anchors may no longer be viable. The redevelopment of these sites will present a significant opportunity to extrovert the mall toward Bedford Street and the residential neighborhoods to the northeast and towards Main Street and the heart of the Center City. Redevelopment of the Macy's site was discussed in the previous section on land use. Should Saks Fifth Avenue be redeveloped, this site would likely retain a strong retail component but should be designed in a way that would activate Veterans Park and bring activity to the ground level.

- **Town Center Drive Western Ramp** – Entrances to the lower level parking at the mall exist from Atlantic Street, Tresser Boulevard, and Greyrock Place and entrances to the upper level parking exist from Main Street, Atlantic Street, and Tresser Boulevard. Removal of the western ramp would eliminate access to the upper levels from Main Street and Atlantic Street but would add access to the lower levels from Main Street. Enabling more efficient use of the garage through real-time information about the location of available spaces may negate the need for this ramp. The advantages would be significant: shifting the streetscape of the western side of the key intersection at Old Town Hall from its current highway character to one more appropriate for the historic core. With Old Town Hall recently renovated and Atlantic Square serving as Center City's primary bus hub, the pedestrian quality at this node is crucial to the future value of adjacent properties.

Pocket Park Piazzas

Currently, one of the most vibrant and successful locations within the Center City is the piazza located at the intersection of Bedford Street and Spring Street that provides space for outdoor seating for three separate restaurants. Two conditions exist here that provide the framework for this activity node, and they can be replicated elsewhere in the downtown:

- There is an excess of pedestrian space that results from an acutely angled intersection
- There is a generously landscaped buffer between the portion of the sidewalk adjacent to the roadway and the larger portion of the sidewalk adjacent to the storefronts.
- There are a half dozen locations throughout the urban core that can, through limited intervention, create the same conditions that foster this level of activity at Bedford and Spring Streets.

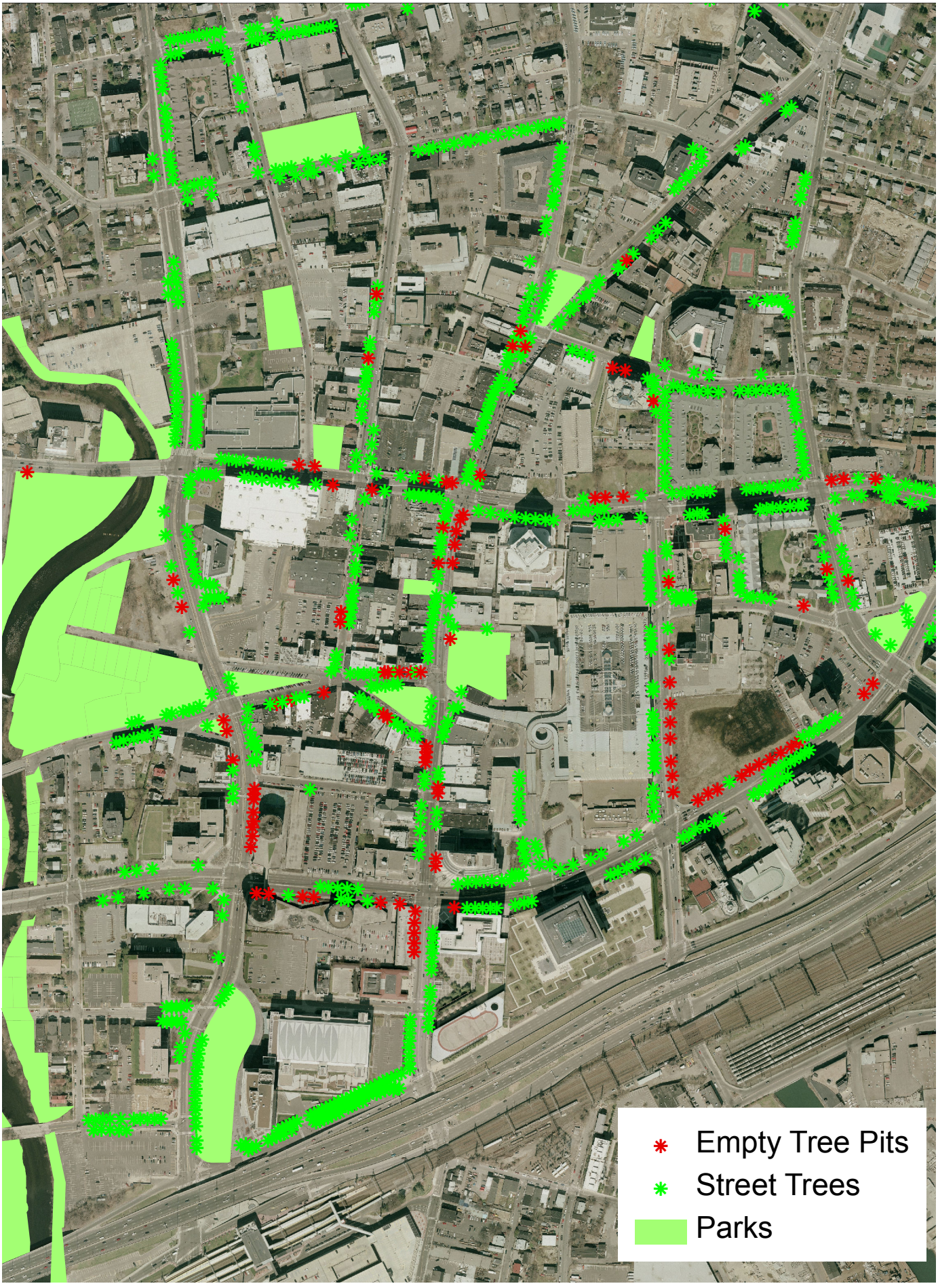
Many of the ingredients exist at the northwest corner of Atlantic and Main Streets, could easily be created on the northeast corner of Bedford and Hoyt Streets and on the southeast corner of Atlantic and Main Streets, and could be replicated in similar fashion under slightly different conditions adjacent to the southwest corner of the UBS building and adjacent to the southwest corner of the building on the southeast corner of Atlantic Street and Tresser Boulevard. Each of these is located at or very close to a major bus stop and/or a potential trolley stop and should be thought of as the conceptual framework for station area planning.

The Bedford Piazza is appropriately scaled and framed by active and well-designed buildings - conditions that can be replicated throughout downtown

Green Streets

To stitch together these downtown park and amenity assets into a cohesive whole that permeates the neighborhood, linking streets must be made as green as possible with street trees lining all roads. Trees provide canopy and a feeling of a green urban room and protect pedestrians from adjacent traffic in the absence of on-street parking. There currently exist nearly 1,000 tree pits throughout the entirety of the downtown. Fourteen percent of these are currently empty, thereby offering an easy opportunity to plant over 100 trees at key locations without infrastructure investment. Approximately 1,000 more locations for street trees would be necessary to complete the urban canopy and bring nature into the downtown. New development would incrementally increase the canopy by providing street trees every 20 feet along any street frontage bordering the property. To maximize the ability of the trees to shelter pedestrians on the walkway, they must be planted on the street side of the sidewalk. To maximize their ability to grow large and flourish, they should be planted in a grass strip rather than in a pit ringed by brick in any instance where there is not on-street parking. Trees should not be allowed to be cut down for development until a building is about to break ground.

Trees are perhaps the most important but not the sole landscaping element used to soften the urban public realm. Any plaza, piazza, or other open space should have a minimum area of permeable surface planted with native species of vegetation. Green walls (much like a vertical green roof) are an innovative strategy to mask existing blank facades with a material that brings color and nature to the downtown. One potential opportunity exists on the west facing wall of the parking deck located at the corner of Atlantic and North State Streets. This massive concrete wall would be less overbearing and hard if covered in vegetation – a modern version of ivy growing up a stone building's wall.


Empty Tree Pits
Street Trees
Parks

Ample, Continuous, and Comfortable Sidewalks

Though sidewalks exist throughout nearly the entirety of the Center City, there are instances where they are too narrow, are unnecessarily interrupted, are in poor condition, or are obstructed by obstacles. Within Stamford's Center City, however, examples exist of every type of best practice sidewalk network. They are just not uniformly implemented.

Throughout the majority of the Center City, sidewalks are of ample width to accommodate pedestrian volume. In some instances they are actually too wide, which makes the sidewalk seem empty despite healthy pedestrian flow. Primarily on radial streets leading to adjacent neighborhoods, sidewalks are too narrow. The pedestrian path portion of the sidewalk (excluding tree pits or other amenities) should be a minimum of five feet throughout the Center City.

Interruptions

The only instances in which sidewalks should be interrupted or when their grade should be changed is when they cross public streets with through traffic. In all other instances, such as when a curb cut entrance to a garage or parking lot crosses the sidewalk, the sidewalk should remain level and the autos should be deflected vertically (i.e. over the hump). While there are several examples of this setup in the Center City, the majority sidewalks give precedence to the cars, despite low vehicle volume during most of the day.

When a sidewalk is interrupted because it crosses a public street with through traffic, the drop-down should be located in a way that does not push the pedestrian towards traffic. This is particularly important for people in wheelchairs and with strollers – the pedestrian infrastructure of the city must be designed for its most vulnerable users.

Conditions

Sidewalk improvements and replacement should be prioritized so that those locations with the worst quality surfaces are replaced prior to those that are in good or decent condition.

Obstructions

Despite the typically ample width of sidewalks in the downtown, there are several locations in which signs, bus stops, utility pole anchors, and other obstructions make it difficult for people to pass and potentially impossible for people in wheelchairs or with strollers to travel. There should be no instance in which an obstruction (amenity or not) is within the five-foot walking path.

Garage entrances often interrupt the sidewalk (Broad Street)

In addition to interruptions, drop-down ramps often lead pedestrians, strollers, and wheelchairs into the path of traffic (Tresser Boulevard)

Sidewalks are sometimes poorly maintained outside of the pedestrian core (Broad Street)

Auto and utility infrastructure often block pedestrian paths (Washington Boulevard on left and Forest Street on right)

Bumpouts shorten crossing distances and provide drivers with visual clues to slow down

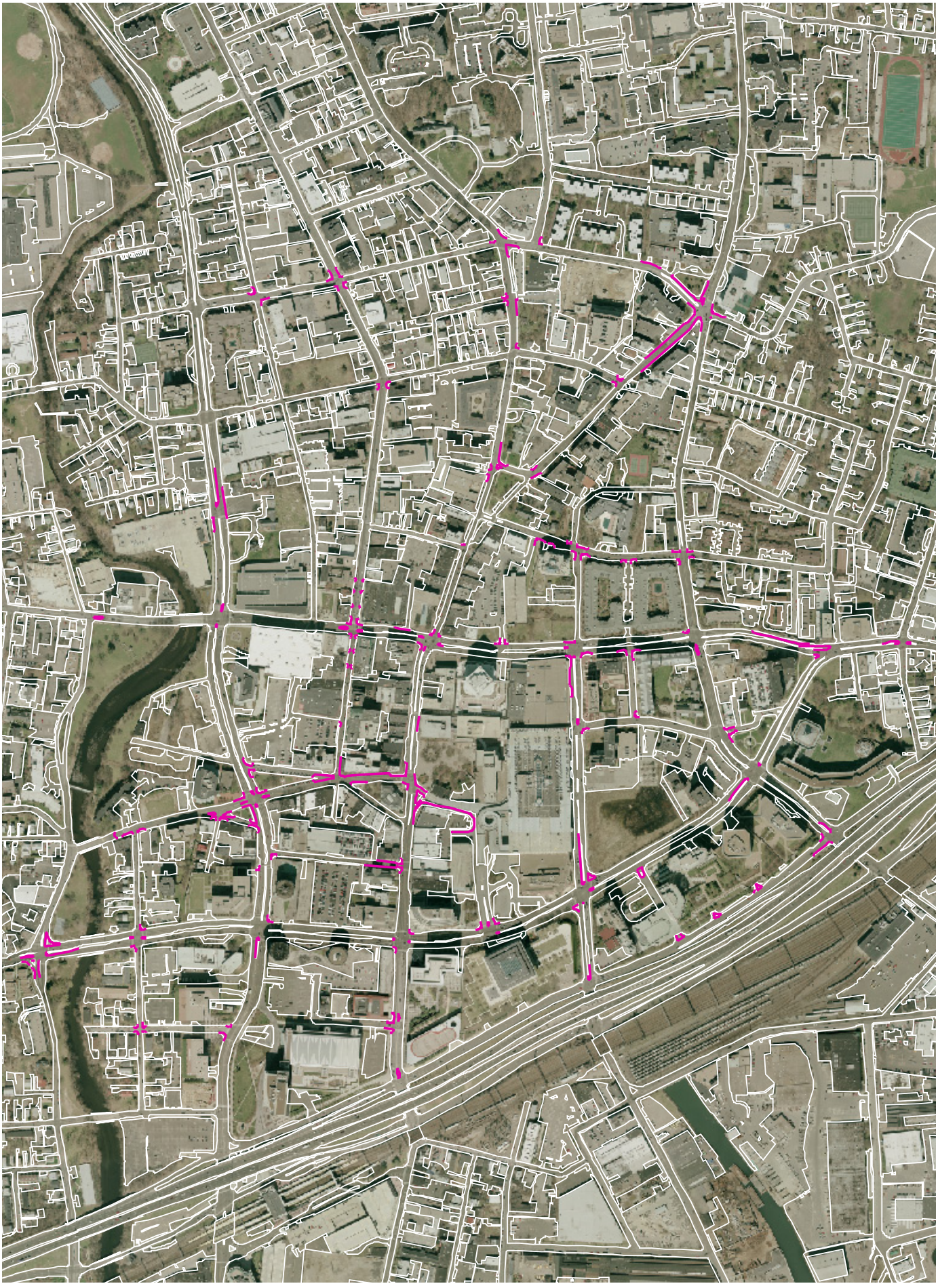
Horizontal and vertical deflections maintain pedestrian paths, create new open spaces and slow vehicles passing through

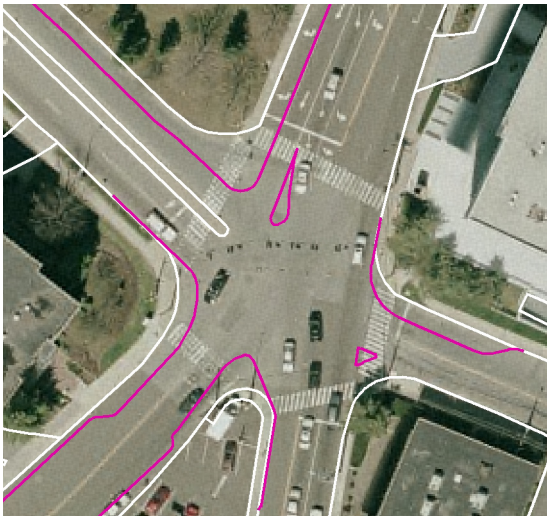
Traffic Calming on Existing Streets

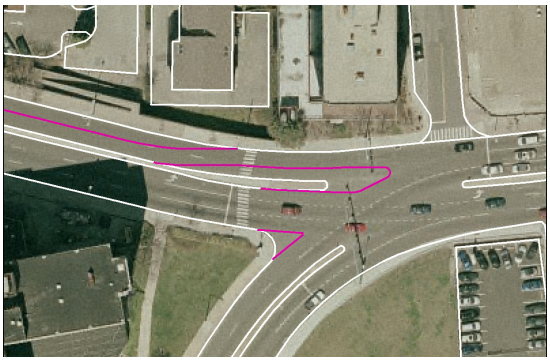
Breaking down the scale of downtown streets is essential for creating a walkable city. Addressing the distance across intersections is critical. Traffic calming measures and redesigned intersections create an atmosphere that makes pedestrians feel comfortable walking around the city where they interface with the automobile. Traffic calming is an established practice of using physical design elements, such as lane narrowing, curb extensions, chicanes, roundabouts, and other mechanisms to force traffic to drive the speed limit in neighborhoods and downtowns. The quality of the downtown pedestrian atmosphere is largely dependent on automobiles driving at appropriate speeds and on minimizing points of potential conflict between cars and pedestrians. Stamford's roads tend to widen as they enter the Center City, which signals to drivers to increase speed just as they enter a district in which low speeds are of paramount importance. While a recent traffic calming study was conducted for the city of Stamford, it wholly neglected opportunities in the downtown to signal to drivers that they are entering a walkable neighborhood.

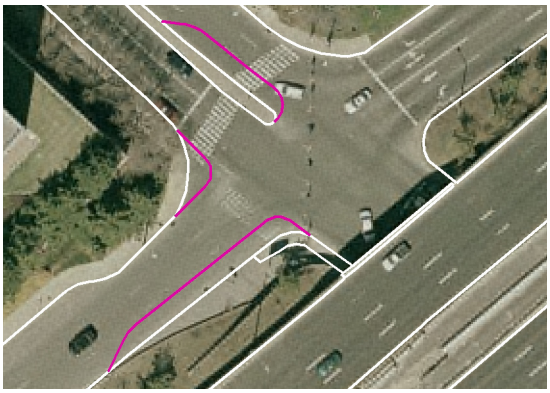
Gateways

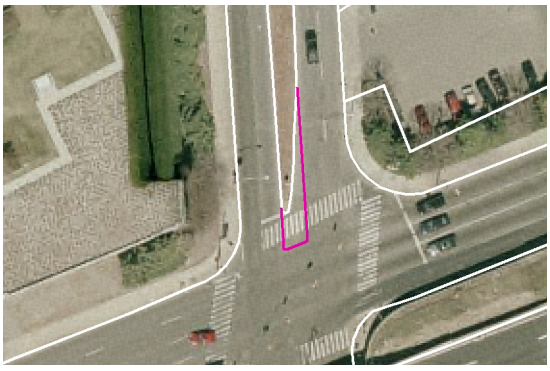
The gateways to downtown are the first and greatest opportunity to send signals to drivers that our community core is not a place for speeding and aggressive driving. Almost all of the gateways present an opportunity for narrowing the roadway, incorporating new landscaped pedestrian refuges, and displaying signage that welcomes drivers to downtown and lets them know that walking is taken seriously here. There is a theme common to most of the gateway intersections described below: roads leading into the downtown often get an extra lane after they cross a crucial intersection, but in order to avoid changing the number of lanes inside an intersection while providing for landscaping and pedestrian refuges, these widenings should occur on the downtown-side of the intersection rather than at the intersection's heart.











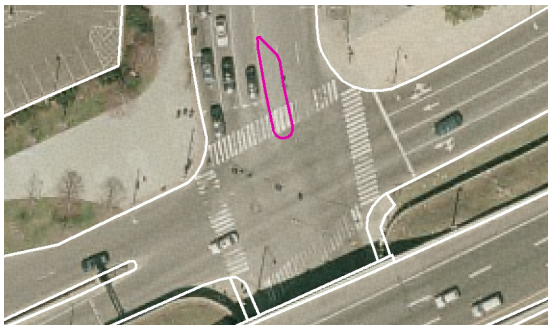
- **Strawberry Hill Avenue entering at Hoyt Street**: Strawberry Hill has one of the most concentrated residential populations in the city, and the likelihood of walking to transit, jobs, shops, and services would be increased if this intersection was more comfortable for pedestrians. The sea of asphalt presents several challenges because it is a five way intersection, but there is significant opportunity to reclaim impermeable surface for landscaping, shorten crossing distances at all five streets, create a new pedestrian refuge on Strawberry Hill, and install clear directional signals for motorists. Signage placed on the new island would clearly indicate the attractions reached via Prospect or Grove Streets. The right turn lane onto Hoyt Street from Strawberry Hill Avenue Southbound could be eliminated to expand the park, and it could include a new row of street trees. The turning movement would be accommodated by the Hoyt Street extension. Additionally, a traffic rotary could be explored for this intersection.

- **East Main Street entering from East and splitting into Tresser Boulevard and Broad Street**: Of the three westbound lanes on East Main Street, two are turning lanes onto Tresser Boulevard and only one lane is for through travel onto Broad Street. Since drivers cannot legally change lanes in the intersection and those taking a right onto Broad Street from Lindale Street have to stay in the lane closest to the north side curb, an expanded island that widens the pedestrian refuge and acts as a gateway to the downtown for eastbound travelers would not restrict any turning movements.

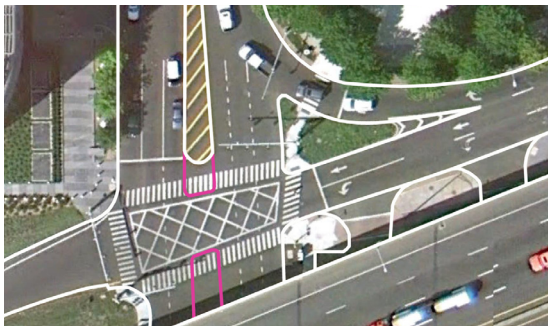
- **Elm Street entering at North State Street**: Two of the three northbound lanes of Elm Street that pass under the highway are through-lanes, and the left lane is a turn only lane. The two right-most lanes heading west on North State Street enable right turns. Expanding the island on the north side of the intersection widens the pedestrian refuge and provides a gateway without sacrificing turning movements. Similarly, only two of the four North State Street lanes allow for through-traffic, enabling a curb extension from the south side west of the intersection. This would create a gateway effect for those drivers continuing straight into downtown and shorten this dangerous crosswalk by one third.

- **Greyrock Place entering at North State Street**: The existing curve of the island on the north side of this intersection is designed to enable a northbound turn from an eastbound street, but this turn is not currently possible, given that North State Street is one-way westbound. This island can be squared off and made into a true refuge and gateway.

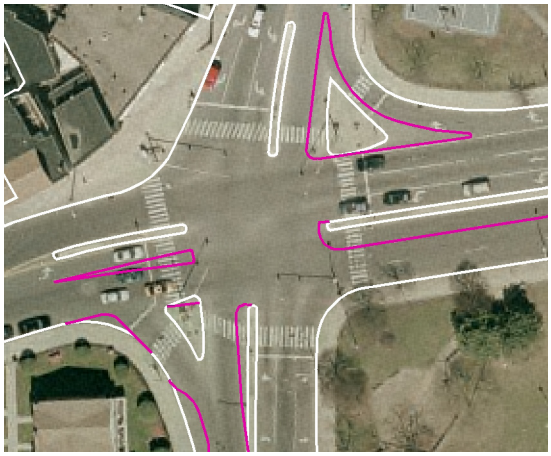
- **Atlantic Street entering at North State Street**: Similar to the condition at Elm Street and North State Street, there are only two northbound through travel lanes on Atlantic Street from south of the highway and, in this instance, only one turning lane from North State Street to northbound Atlantic Street. A new island created here would allow for pedestrian refuge, landscaping, and signage at this crucial gateway and important pedestrian corridor. The crossing distance would be reduced from six lanes to three and two with an island in between.



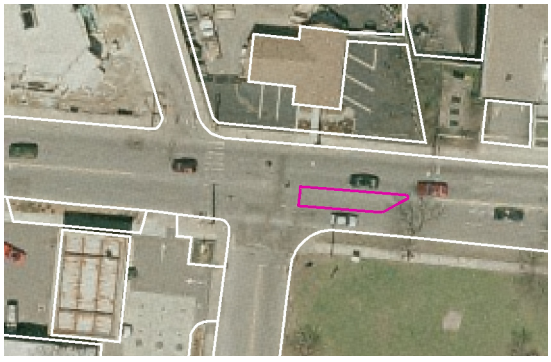
- **Washington Boulevard at North State Street**: Similar to the conditions where Elm and Atlantic intersect with North State Street, there is potential for a pedestrian refuge island in the center lane of Washington Boulevard north of the intersection. Interestingly here – as opposed to at the other two comparable intersections – a striped zone already exists, but this zone does not extend as far south as it could (protecting a portion of the crosswalk) and is less effective than a true island would be at calming traffic and serving as a pedestrian refuge.

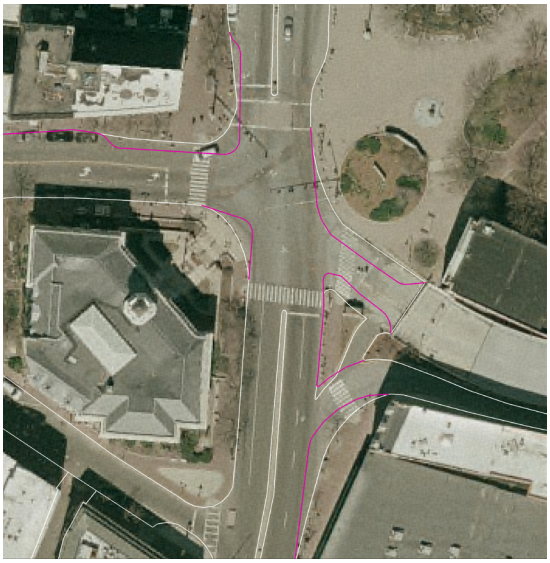


- **West Main Street entering at Greenwich Avenue / Mill River Street**: The eastbound bend of Mill River Street north of this intersection results in acute angles that complicate the turning movements at this intersection. In addition to lane narrowing throughout this intersection and more clear striping, the most significant positive impact could be achieved by widening and extending the median located on Tresser Boulevard just east of the intersection. There is only one striped through-lane from West Main Street to Tresser Boulevard, but this could be changed to two in order to facilitate through-traffic at this important entranceway to downtown and to facilitate north-south pedestrian crossings between these two sections of Mill River Park.



- **Broad Street entering at Greenwich Avenue**: Despite this intersections minor size and compact turning radii, the likely extension of the Mill River Greenway to the north will occur at this point so facilitated pedestrian and bike crossing will be crucial to this multi-modal corridor. Though it would restrict some turns related to the current commercial establishment's parking lots, it would still enable sufficient access, and this parcel will likely be redeveloped in the coming years and will not have a curb cut off of Broad Street.





Atlantic and Main Streets

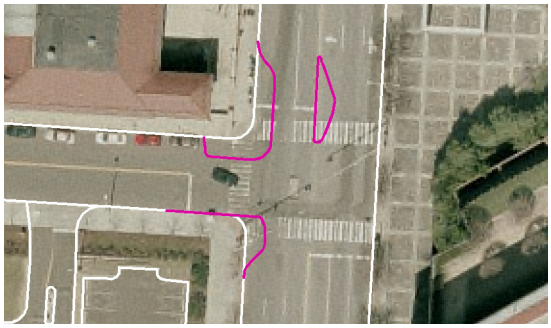
The distance between buildings is the same on lower Summer Street as it is on lower Bedford Street - replacing one lane with angled parking would provide new opportunities for street trees while adding parking, calming traffic, and humanizing this important block

Internal Intersections and Corridors

The second category of traffic calming measures focuses on intersections and streets throughout the downtown that provide connectivity within the Center City rather than between the center and the surrounding neighborhoods. Throughout the downtown neighborhood, there are opportunities to reclaim pedestrian space that is currently not used by automobiles, despite the fact that it is designed as part of the roadway. Predominantly consisting of curb extensions at intersections that would frame on-street parking, these interventions would shorten crossing distances throughout the downtown and tighten intersections to make them more human-scaled and pedestrian-friendly.

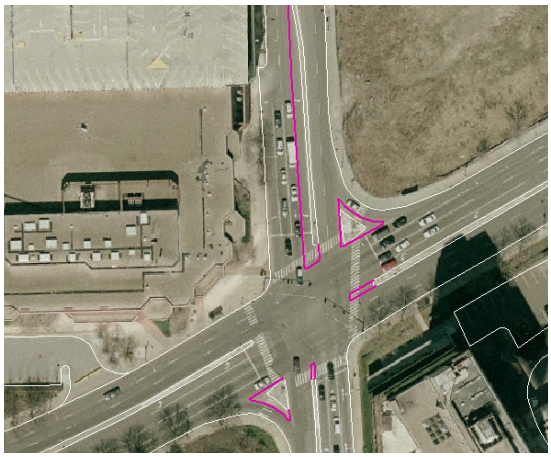
- **Atlantic/Bedford Streets**: The intersections with Federal Street, Tresser Boulevard, Bell Street, Broad Street, Spring Street, Walton Place, North Street, and Hoyt Street each have opportunities of varying levels for interventions that make crossing easier for the pedestrian. The greatest intervention could take place at the intersection of Main Street, Town Center Drive, and Edith Sherman Drive. On the east side of Atlantic Street, the approach to Edith Sherman Drive starts at Bank Street, allowing a fast approach to this turn. A cut-through from Edith Sherman Drive to Town Center Drive allows for last-minute decisions about whether to enter the upper, rather than the lower, level parking for the mall. The three lane width of Town Center Drive allows for a volume that does not materialize save the handful of highest shopping days of the year, yet it lengthens the cross unnecessarily for pedestrians on all other days. The turning radius to Edith Sherman Drive from Atlantic Street would be reduced, the ability to cut through to Town Center would be eliminated, and the entrance to the Town Center ramp would be necked-down to shorten the crossing distance from three wide lanes to two ample lanes.

- **Summer Street**: In contrast to the historic character and human scale of lower Summer Street between Broad Street and Main Street, upper Summer Street has all the design elements of a highway built for cars to speed safely through the city. Curb extensions could be constructed at all intersections similar to the ones currently at Spring Street and with a more robust set of bumpouts at the intersection with Broad Street. Summer Street's three existing travel lanes flare as they approach the intersection with Broad Street and as the on-street parking ends, requiring pedestrians to cross a distance equivalent to five lanes of traffic. South of the intersection, pedestrians must cross a distance equivalent to three lanes of traffic, despite the fact that there is only a single lane of through traffic. Despite a sole lane allowed to go through to lower Summer Street, the south side is three lanes wide because of surface parking that has not yet begun. The median on the east side begins too late to act as a pedestrian refuge and the opportunity exists to create a new median on the west side for the same purpose. All along upper Summer Street from Broad Street to Hoyt Street (and beyond), the lack of utilization of on-street parking outside of the working hours results in a five lane wide sea of asphalt that sends the wrong visual cues to drivers. Street tree pits installed within the boundaries of the parking bay every 75 feet (adjusted to accommodate curb cuts) would simultaneously calm traffic regardless of on-street parking utilization and make the character of the street more pedestrian friendly.



Atlantic and Federal Streets

- **Tresser Boulevard**: US-1 through downtown poses some of the most difficult challenges in facilitating pedestrian movement between the office developments and the retail/restaurant core and between the historic core/residential neighborhoods and the station area. Some minor interventions to turning radii and median lengths would improve conditions at key intersections – specifically at Greyrock Place. If Tresser Boulevard is to be truly "tamed" and made pedestrian-friendly, a more significant transformation will be necessary. The State of Connecticut recently amended their state highway lane width standards down to 11 feet to enable wider medians for use by bicyclists and pedestrians. Additionally, the volumes on Tresser Boulevard could be accommodated with a four-lane road plus turning lanes rather than with the current six lanes plus turning. A bike lane would be striped in both directions adjacent to the curb. On the street side of the bike lanes, tree pits would be installed, similar to those proposed for Summer Street, every 75 feet to enable on-street parking nested between them. The bike lanes would be protected from traffic by the parked cars and trees, and the entire character of Tresser Boulevard would be that of a true Boulevard with large canopy trees along both edges and within the median.



Greyrock Place and Tresser Boulevard

- **Washington Boulevard**: This is an interesting corridor in that it has some of the best examples in the downtown of pedestrian refuges and bumpouts despite its heavy truck volumes and auto traffic. At Bell Street and at Broad Street, bumpouts serve to slow traffic and limit crossing distances for pedestrians. Additionally, at Bell Street, a pedestrian refuge on the center median island provides shelter for people who can not cross within one traffic light cycle. Along the entire corridor, there are multiple opportunities to replicate these interventions in comparable conditions and to dramatically change the character of this road that, coupled with additional tree planting, would transform Washington Boulevard into a true boulevard.

A photo-simulation demonstrating the dramatic transformation that could occur along Tresser Boulevard if one travel lane in each direction is eliminated and replaced by a protected, Class I bike lane; on-street parking; and occasional street trees and rain gardens buffering the bike lane and pedestrian from traffic and providing valuable stormwater mangement functions

Seating provides a break from constant walking in the city (Charlotte)

Green walls soften urban spaces, mitigate the heat island effect, and can even provide local produce and flowers (Victoria, BC)

Good signage orients visitors to the Center City and directs people to quality public spaces and activity centers (Philadelphia)

Enabling a Park-Once Environment

Key to the greater utilization of existing parking resources in the Center City and to meeting the needs of visitors and new development will be the ability to link existing resources to surrounding land uses. Improvements that enhance the connectivity between the Town Center garage and surrounding properties was described in a previous section. Enhancing the utility of the Bedford Street and Bell Street garages can be achieved with minor investments.

The Bell Street Garage has decent linkage to the activity along Lower Summer Street and Main Street via Clark Street, but it could be enhanced with better signage and a change in character of Clark Street. Currently, there are very narrow sidewalks on both sides. There is a curb separating these small sidewalks from the roadway, despite the very low volume of traffic here. The entire right-of-way could be raised up to the level of the raised crosswalk at Main Street, which would transform this small street into a pedestrian-priority space. A clear pedestrian path through the bottom level of the garage and a mid-block crossing on Bell Street would connect this garage to existing and future activity locations to the south.

The Bedford Street garage has a direct sidewalk link to Broad Street but is cut off from both Forest Street and Bedford Street by automobile infrastructure. The connection to Forest Street would be greatly enhanced by raising the crosswalk heading north and by forcing traffic to slow where running stop signs are currently the norm. The connection to Bedford Street would be greatly improved by creating a direct, landscaped connection from the exit at the northwest corner of the garage to the Bedford Passage. A clearer connection here would immediately enhance utilization of the garage for patrons of Bedford Street restaurants.

Wayfinding

Encouraging walking in the downtown is as dependent on good information as it is on good infrastructure and environment. Current signage throughout the downtown is sparse and oriented toward the driver rather than the pedestrian. Though information kiosks exist at key locations (such as in front of Ferguson Library), they contain information for residents and are activity-based rather than information for visitors that provides wayfinding information. This is particularly important at the northern exit of the train station onto North State Street and at parking facilities so that people can navigate the downtown on first arrival. Locations around the country are implementing innovative 3-dimensional mapping kiosks that are simultaneously art and information and that can be attractive to children as well as adults.

Amenities

Finally, there are certain amenities that make walking in downtown easier for people at different stages of life and during different weather conditions. Two simple examples are benches and umbrellas. There are currently very few locations to sit in the downtown – many of those that do exist are informal (the edge of planters in Veterans Park). Making the public realm a place to stop and enjoy rather than just pass through will be essential. People are less likely to walk in inclement weather. The downtown could have umbrellas, plastered with logos for the neighborhood, that are available free to people at key locations like the train station exit, the Town Center exits facing downtown, and the Government Center. People could return them if they're able to at any location or keep using them (not encouraged) as they advertise our downtown.