

SOUTH END

NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY



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VISION AND PRIORITIES

The aim of the City of Stamford’s South End Neighborhood Study is to ensure that the long-time communities of the South End are a part of the success story of reinvestment and revitalization in the neighborhood. This interdisciplinary study facilitated an inclusive conversation about development scenarios and public priorities that would balance new ideas and innovation with the history, character and human capital of the South End. The study team worked with stakeholders and participants in a series of public forums and interviews to explore the potential for a shared vision and priorities for the future of the neighborhood, and to develop an action plan for the next steps toward implementation.

Many residents express the greatest interest in cultivating a shared commitment to an equitable future and the tools to realize it—strategies to navigate market forces, to promote genuine affordability, and to reduce displacement of low and middle income residents. A sense of urgency to establish new zoning code, supports for affordability and home ownership, protections for historic buildings and neighborhood fabric, and thoughtful limits on the growth of the South End—*before it is too late*—is widespread.

The physical improvements that are most important to a majority of residents, workers, business owners and stakeholders participating in the South End Neighborhood Study meetings are upgrades to transportation infrastructure and management to improve traffic and parking, and make streets safe and walkable, and investment in the creation of a new K-8 public school and civic campus. New and old residents, workers, business owners, and developers are also united in their support for measures to improve the retail environment.

Other elements of a transformative vision for the South End connected with its heritage are also of interest to a significant number of participants in the process, including water access, greenways, transit and amenities that create a “water city,” bikeways, park improvements, sustainability, and green industry. But some residents and stakeholders worry that making the South End more attractive to new, high income people would simply speed up rent increases and displacement of long-time residents and business owners, important to the fabric of the community.

Overall, beyond major street upgrades and community facilities like the school, public realm improvements seem to be a lower priority among all groups. Given limited

resources, these ideas (outlined at right) might follow behind the priorities—phased in as part of a 25-year vision, once equity and other values are secured.

Our recommendations build on and update a number of existing policies and plans, including the 2015-2025 Stamford Master Plan, historic building inventory, Stamford Transportation Center Plan, General Development Plans, the Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan, the Sustainability Plan, Harbor Management Plan, and others. Our action plans in each chapter of the report recommend the steps needed to achieve full integration of all plans for the South End.

SEVEN WIDELY SHARED PRIORITIES

Across all groups of participants in the South End Neighborhood Study—new and long-term residents, workers, business people, government leaders, non-profit advocates and other stakeholders—seven widely shared and linked priorities emerged.

1. Funds and strategies to support affordability, including affordable home ownership, to keep low and middle income families in the neighborhood.
2. Protection of and reinvestment in the remaining historic district buildings to avoid permanent erasure of character, community culture, and affordable homes and retail spaces.
3. Immediate revision of zoning codes, through inclusive processes, to define an acceptable level of growth, better integrate new development with the neighborhood, and reduce uncertainty.
4. Creation of a new public elementary and middle school and civic campus on public land adjacent to the Lathon Wider Community Center to build a stable, intergenerational and kid-friendly community.
5. Investment in strategic upgrades to transportation infrastructure and management to improve traffic congestion and parking, and better accommodate the growing number of residents and workers.
6. Upgrades to streetscape and lighting to improve safety, bring people out, connect the different districts of the South End, and create lively commercial areas.
7. Zoning and historic preservation measures to create a real neighborhood “Main Street” for the South End that supports significant growth of small businesses and affordable retail.

OTHER POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

In addition to the seven priorities that resonate with the broadest group of participants in the South End Neighborhood Study process, we identified other improvements that found good levels of support and are worth considering in future community conversations and development efforts, once the priorities have been addressed. Some of these ideas may well be folded into priority transportation upgrades, following additional analysis of traffic and allocation of the street space.

- Creation of a new train station that improves flow between train, bus, car, bike and foot travel, and replacement of State garages with structured parking that is wrapped by offices, commercial and apartments, so it doesn’t create a dead zone around the train station.
- Redesign of gateways to the community to integrate a more inclusive, historically rich, and dynamic sense of place with road and other mobility improvements.
- Ample bike lanes, phased in over time, to reduce traffic and create a sustainable transit-oriented community that relies more on trains, bikes and walking, and less on cars. (Some participants see bike infrastructure as an intrinsic element of transportation priorities, but others do not.)
- Waterfront greenway to open up 3 miles of South End shoreline for public enjoyment, and link the 64 acres of South End green space to Mill River Park downtown.
- A pedestrian and cycle bridge at the east end of Ludlow Street to link the South End to Cummings Park and the beach in Shippan.
- Community boating, amenities and transportation that get people out on the water and reconnect the community with the Sound, and with the South End’s watery nature and history.
- Improvements to Kosciuszko Park and Commons Park to make more of these public spaces, increase use and common ground for new and long-time residents.
- Sustainable architecture and urban design that includes green infrastructure, in order to make the water visible, reduce the carbon footprint of the South End, and enhance human comfort and the environment.
- Zoning, development incentives and infrastructure to promote the development of new light industry and an innovation district that includes businesses that create good jobs for lower skilled workers.

PUBLIC CONVERSATION

The South End neighborhood has been reshaped by several planning and redevelopment studies, from the framework plans of the mid-1990s to the Stamford Master Plan adopted in 2014 that prepared the way for a series of large residential and office development projects. The 2017 / 2018 South End Neighborhood Study allows residents, stakeholders, developers and the City to take stock of rapid change over the last 5 years, adjust the trajectory of development and preservation, and renew focus on equity, affordability, diversity, and neighborhood character in the South End.

The study builds a community planning process to foster trust and “no regrets” decision making in a place of many, sometimes conflicting, interests. The scope of this study is broad, and the consulting team brings diverse kinds of professional expertise to the questions of the South End: community engagement, planning, landscape architecture, urban design, historic preservation analysis, infrastructure planning, engineering, and retail analysis.

To gather knowledge and ideas, the Collective consulting team met with local stakeholders, including resident leaders of the South End Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee (NRZ) and other South End residents,



PHOTO: NYDAILYNEWS.COM

VISION AND PRIORITIES

small business owners, developers and property managers, people who work in the South End, advocates, service providers, preservationists, heads and staff of City agencies, and members of the Stamford Planning Board who offered their knowledge over a 10-month period. We learned from 124 people who came to public meetings held in the South End in November 2017, and March and June 2018, and a series of affordability focus groups in January and retail focus groups in May 2018. We held a broad range of stakeholder interviews in October 2017, and a meeting with service providers in February 2018. We presented to the Stamford Planning Board and a project steering committee advising the City’s Land Use Bureau.

We used design and planning techniques to visualize possible development and zoning scenarios, and building massing strategies to open a community dialogue about how much growth people want, where they want to see growth, and how best to organize it. Where demographic and land use data, traffic counts, and other information was thin, we used our experience to identify and analyze options, tools, and unifying ideas. This approach sped up the problem-solving and planning process, allowing us to make progress on big picture decisions even before all the data is available on the fine grain.

We created a project website as a medium of communication about the project with a broad audience. We used digital outreach tools and social media to increase awareness of opportunities for input at public forums and via email. We received written comments on our team’s draft work posted online after the public meetings.

We produced meeting notices and materials in English and Spanish, offered Spanish and American Sign Language translation at public forums, and connected with organizations that represent or work with recent immigrants, but we did not succeed in bringing the lowest income residents in the neighborhood out to our public meetings. A large number of low income tenants, in buildings at risk of demolition, disinvestment or neglect, appear to be relatively recent immigrants whose views and interests may not be fully accounted for in this study. To increase their voice in the process, we recommend interviews in Spanish at events and locations frequented by residents who primarily speak Spanish, such as the Pacific Street laundromat and churches with services in Spanish.

At the final public meeting for the study in June 2018, and in writing afterward, we received strong responses to our draft vision and recommendations from residents. This feedback helped us pare down the long-term vision to a more focused list of priority projects. The major difference between the draft and final recommendations is that we reduced the emphasis on the public realm improvements that some people fear will accelerate displacement of low and middle income residents.

This report summarizes the team’s analysis and recommended action plan for the seven most widely and energetically supported priorities—next steps to move forward with planning and implementation. There are still many open questions in each priority area, and more public conversation is needed to confirm priorities and develop zoning codes and other tools. How much growth do people want? How do they want to allocate investment among the major priorities? What are the best ways to raise and combine funds from public and private sources to achieve the greatest impact? And at the finer grain, for any given level of investment in affordability, do people want a larger number of affordable housing units, or fewer units with deeper levels of affordability?

This report makes recommendations based on available information to support further conversation, debate, and planning. More work is needed to develop some of the recommendations, and to advance plans far enough to be able to estimate the cost of improvements. In some cases, particularly traffic management, more data and analysis is needed to make decisions. Action plans for each priority area outline the steps the team recommends to push these goals forward.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- The analysis behind each of the major recommendations summarized below follows in the chapters of the report, organized around the seven shared priorities.
- Create an equitable development plan for the South End with specific goals, strategies and target numbers.
 - Increase the proportion of below market rate units that developers are required to provide from 10% of the total number of units to 20% of the total, and make these units available to households at a wider range of incomes.
 - Establish an affordable housing fund to receive and distribute public and private support for affordable



View of South End construction from Waterside

housing on a competitive basis. Allow developers to satisfy the below market rate requirement, in part, by paying a fee to the South End affordable housing fund for the value of up to 10% of the total number of units in the development.

- Create a community land trust to secure underutilized or vacant properties in the South End and actively support increased ownership of homes and apartments to ensure permanent affordability for low and moderate income households.
- Keep all the National Register Historic District buildings that are still standing, and integrate them into a concerted effort to preserve affordability and increase ownership of apartments and houses.
- Give high priority to preservation and reinvestment in the Historic District buildings on the two blocks between Atlantic, Pacific, Henry and Dock, east and west of Garden Street. This area connects the two remaining clusters of historic homes and apartments, and links the northern gateways to the South End and the center of the neighborhood, and contains the largest concentration of neighborhood-serving retail on Pacific Street.
- Explore a revolving loan fund, able to target financing and technical assistance to the kinds of rehabilitation and repair most appropriate to the historic building stock of the South End (both residential and mixed-use/commercial).
- Speed up public conversation about desired growth levels, including costs and benefits of growth in terms of the funds and demand for other South End priorities.

- Modify existing zoning regulations in the South End over the next six months. Align them more closely with the goals of the Stamford Master Plan to achieve a defined, mutually agreeable level of growth, to better integrate new development with the neighborhood, and to reduce uncertainty. Ensure transparency and public participation throughout this process. (See specific zoning recommendations on pages 33-35.)
- Create a K-8 public magnet school to build a stable, intergenerational community and give 10 busloads of South End kids back the 2 hours of their day they spend on the bus, for after-school sports, homework and enrichment.
- Analyze and invest in strategic upgrades to transportation infrastructure and management to improve traffic congestion and parking, and to accommodate the growing number of residents and workers with infrastructure that supports walking, biking, buses and autonomous vehicle shuttles.
- Upgrade South End streetscape design and lighting to improve safety, bring people out, connect the different districts of the South End, create lively commercial areas, and increase the percentage of trips people make on foot, on bike and transit. Prioritize streetscape improvements on Pacific Street.
- Create a Commercial District Zoning Overlay to strengthen the Pacific Street retail cluster and support that district with historic preservation protections, a small business toolkit, development of new affordable retail spaces, and streetscape and park improvements.

AFFORDABILITY STRATEGY

Redevelopment of the South End has been swift. Since the Stamford Master Plan was adopted in December 2014, thousands of units have been built, and many more will come online over the next several years. The Stamford Land Use Bureau estimates that, in June 2018, 7,500 people live in the South End, and an additional 2,500 work here. The level of growth that the City and developers expect under the master plan would roughly double both numbers. And if upzonings are allowed, the Land Use Bureau says the number of residents could grow to as many as 18,500 people, and the number of workers to 8,500.

If no new policies and tools are developed, the vast majority of this growth will be in high amenity, high rent units. Most will be built by Building and Land Technology (BLT) developers, but a number of other developers are also at work in the South End. The City currently requires that developers offer 10% of the units in new construction at rents that are affordable to families who earn up to 50% of the area median income (AMI) for Fairfield County. The AMI for a four-person household is \$134,900 in this area, which includes many affluent communities.

“Every single property on Garden Street is owned by an LLC. Developers own a lot of buildings with tenants in them.”

Ellen Bromley, Director of Social Services, City of Stamford

OWNERSHIP LEGEND

- BLT OR BLT MANAGED LLC HOLDINGS**
- LLC OR PARTNERSHIP HOLDINGS**
- INDIVIDUAL OR TRUST OWNERSHIP**
- NON-PROFIT, RELIGIOUS, OR INSTITUTIONAL OWNERSHIP**
- STATE OR CITY OWNED**
- PARCEL ASSEMBLIES**



\$134,900 is substantially higher than the \$96,300 median family income for Connecticut as a whole and more than twice the median household income in the South End. A four-person family earning 50% of AMI could afford to pay a monthly rent of approximately \$1,700. While these units are below market rate, they are not affordable to many working families in the South End, who require more deeply affordable apartments.

Our mapping of tax records (below) suggests that BLT and other real estate developers are continuing to purchase property and assemble sites for large footprint developments that would likely tear down and replace existing buildings. Developers now own many historic district and other multi-family buildings with a lot of low and middle income tenants in them. Additionally, some landlords are renting very small units in poor condition. If these overcrowded buildings are improved and brought up to code, the number of people housed in them will go down and the rents will go up, unless some form of subsidy is provided to maintain their affordability.

RISK OF DISPLACEMENT

As development pressure and property values rise, and the supply of affordable units declines, the risk of displacement of residents and small businesses is particularly high in the South End. This is because over 95% of residents are renters, median income is low, and income inequality is high. We can see that displacement is already occurring through rent increases and evictions—with 166 eviction filings, and 103 evictions, recorded in the South End since 2014. When South End residents are displaced, they may not find housing elsewhere in Stamford, because affordable units are in short supply citywide.

Fast action is needed to prevent impending displacements by preserving existing affordable dwellings, and creating more new units in new buildings and in historic buildings currently in disrepair. To serve the current low and middle income residents, the South End will need subsidies that make new and preserved rental units affordable to more people, along with tools to increase home ownership.

“Deeply affordable housing—at 20-30% of area median income—is needed city-wide for the long term economic viability and diversity of Stamford.”

Ted Jankowski, Director of Public Safety, City of Stamford

“Real estate people are knocking on the door asking owners if they want to sell. And also contacting owners by mail and on the phone.”

NRZ member



AFFORDABILITY STRATEGY

AFFORDABILITY VISION

In the March 2018 public forum for the South End Neighborhood Study, residents and stakeholders from all sectors of the neighborhood, including developers, agreed that if the City and developers could preserve space for the large low and middle income community of the South End, it would be a remarkable achievement. Stamford could serve as a powerful example for the northeast corridor, by enabling low and middle income residents to enjoy quality-of-life improvements and increasing the value of new developments in the neighborhood at the same time.

“A lot of young people in the South End have lived in cities. We want a walkable neighborhood with a lot going on. We don’t want all the buildings to look the same. We don’t want to displace people.”

Resident of Harbor Point

In the October 2017 public forum—the first for the study—participants were asked to talk about their hope or prediction for the South End by completing the sentence: “In 10 years, the South End will be...”

Many responses to this prompt focused on aspirations for who would live there.

“In 10 years, the South End will be a flourishing, self-sufficient, diverse neighborhood with a stable, expanded base of co-op, condo, and homeownership in a variety of housing options, including mixed-income housing, and a neighborhood elementary school.”

“In 10 years, the South End will be a cohesive community, focused on in-scale preservation of buildings and people and affordable housing.”

“In 10 years, the South End will be diverse in both architecture and people, a mix of old and new, diversity of scales, with old buildings reoccupied.”

“If things continue on the current trend, in 10 years, only high rises will dominate the South End and nothing small will remain. The neighborhood will be only expensive stores and restaurants.”

When participants talk about a neighborhood that is “diverse in people,” they seem to mean a mix of income levels and backgrounds, intergenerational and kid-friendly, with a mix of price points, including many affordable homes, apartments and retail spaces.

The affordability objectives of greatest interest to the community are to:

- Minimize displacement of low and middle income residents;
- Preserve existing affordable housing units;
- Promote asset creation and longer tenure of residents by increasing the rate of home ownership, especially among low and middle income families;
- Create additional affordable rental units in new developments and reduce rents in those units; and
- Create and improve affordable units in historic buildings in disrepair and in accessory dwelling units in the preservation district.

POLICY, TOOLS AND MONEY

Recommendation: Create an equitable development plan for the South End with specific goals, strategies and target numbers.

A multi-faceted equitable development plan will minimize displacement of low and middle-income residents. Such plans take a comprehensive approach that includes strategies to develop new and preserve existing affordable housing, reduce speculation, increase tenant protections, and property tax credits for preservation of existing units. A plan can develop strategies to increase home ownership. A detailed outline of the exemplary Anacostia Equitable Development Plan follows on page 12. An equitable development plan for the South End will fine tune and integrate the targets and tools we propose in the affordability recommendations below.

Recommendation: Increase the proportion of below market rate units that developers are required to provide from 10% of the total number of units to 20% of the total, and make these units available to households at a wider range of incomes.

As noted, the current below market rate requirement is that 10% of the total number of units in new developments should be affordable to households making 50% of area median income (AMI). The current requirement is inadequate for the South End. The area median income used to calculate income limits for below market rate units does not reflect the income of longstanding residents of the South End.

The eligible family income limit for below market rate units in the South End—50% of AMI—translates to \$67,450 for a four-person family in 2018. This addresses a small portion of the need for affordable housing. It does not serve the low income population making less than \$35,000 a year (approximately 25% of AMI). It excludes middle income families that earn more than 50% of AMI, yet cannot afford prevailing market rents.

Current developer requirement for 10% below market rate units at 50% of AMI does not reflect the substantial returns on investment that result from rezoning, nor does it take into account the dramatic rise in housing cost for low and middle income residents caused by the wave of development.

Recommendation: Establish an affordable housing fund to receive and distribute public and private support for affordable housing on a competitive basis. Allow developers to satisfy the below market rate requirement, in part, by paying a fee to the South End affordable housing fund for the value of up to 10% of the total number of units in the development.

A South End affordable housing fund can pool support for affordability from a variety of sources, and distribute it to the projects that will yield the best results for residents. Developer fees (often called “fee in lieu” because they are paid *instead of* building below market rate units on site) could be a major source of support for affordability measures. Resources from the City of Stamford as well as Federal and State historic preservation tax credits for rehabilitation of historic buildings (which can also preserve affordable housing and commercial and manufacturing space) can be invested. Revolving loan funds for preservation are outlined on page 19.

Money from the fund will be used for renovating older multi-family buildings in exchange for keeping the rental units in them affordable, as in the Preservation of Affordable Housing example on page 23. An affordable housing fund can also provide gap-financing for new affordable housing developments, as in the case of Metro Green, a large affordable development in the South End.

“Tax credits are harder and harder to get. We started off with 9% tax credits to build affordable housing... Now it's down to 4% tax credits in the third phase of the development. We were able to obtain more funds from fee-in-lieu.”

Caroline Vary, Metro Green

AFFORDABILITY STRATEGY

EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Equitable development plans are a tool of thoughtful planning efforts to reduce displacement. The Equitable Development Plan for the Anacostia neighborhood in Washington, DC, is an example of the kind of community-based planning for equity that would be responsive to the interests of long-time residents in the South End. (Full text of the plan is available at <https://www.bridgepark.org>)

The need for Anacostia's plan was generated by the 11th Street Bridge Park project, which will convert an abandoned freeway bridge into a public greenway and multi-use park across the Anacostia River. An economic impact forecast for Bridge Park, prepared by HR&A, found that property values adjacent to comparable park projects increased by 5 to 40%.

Anticipating displacement, a neighborhood non-profit called Building Bridges Across the River (BBAR) worked with community leaders, the Local Initiative Support Corporation, and the park project team to create an Equitable Development Task Force to develop the Equitable Development Plan while park design and construction were underway.

The plan the Task Force created responds to four major community goals:

1. Permanently affordable housing,
2. Home ownership,
3. Small business protection and development,
4. Workforce development and local hiring.

The plan established clear strategies, budgets, timelines, and partners for each of the four goals, as well as the data to be collected to measure the plan's impact.

The aim of the plan's housing strategies is to ensure that long-time Anacostia residents can afford to remain in their neighborhood after the construction of the park and the wave of redevelopment it will stimulate. The Anacostia plan preserves existing dwellings, and leverages public and private resources to build new affordable housing. Some mechanisms and sources of funding are specific to Washington, DC, but could be adapted to Stamford and Connecticut's affordability needs and resource base.

- Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF) is the major tool used to produce and preserve affordable housing in DC—a special revenue fund administered by the

Department of Housing and Community Development that provides gap financing for projects that are affordable to low and moderate income households. By design, at least 40% of HPTF spending serves households with incomes below 30% of the area median income (AMI), another 40% of expenditures serve households with incomes between 30 and 50% AMI; with the balance of funds serving households with incomes of 50 to 80% AMI. Half of the Trust Fund is dedicated to rental housing stock; half to ownership.

- Community land trusts (CLT) are non-profit organizations—governed by a board of CLT residents, community members, and public representatives—that create permanent community assets and affordable housing opportunities. Permanently affordable homeownership programs invest public funding into a property in order to make home purchases affordable for a family of modest means. The CLT helps residents attain and sustain homeownership. In return, the homeowner agrees to sell the home at a resale-restricted and affordable price to another lower income homebuyer in the future, preserving the public investment to help future families.
- Homestead Deduction is a benefit that reduces the assessed value of an owner's primary residence by \$73,350 prior to computing the yearly tax liability
- Home Purchase Assistance Program (HPAP) provides interest-free loans and closing-cost assistance to qualified applicants to purchase single family houses, condominiums, or cooperative units.
- Down Payment Assistance Program, which is supported by philanthropic funders, provides grants to help families to make down payments in specific impact locations. These grants can be layered on top of other programs, such as HPAP awards.
- Home Buyers Clubs and Homeownership Resource Centers prepare low- and moderate-income renters within a targeted area to become homeowners.

To support small businesses, the Anacostia Equitable Development Plan creates business mentoring, entrepreneurship training, and partnerships to increase long-term opportunities for local businesses. It advocates for adaptive reuse of vacant properties that could host local small business tenants, and street improvements for walkability to strengthen business corridors.

Recommendation: Create a community land trust to secure underutilized or vacant properties in the South End and actively support increased ownership of homes to ensure permanent affordability for low and moderate-income households.

There is virtually no city-owned land available for affordable housing development in the South End, and site acquisition is likely to be expensive, especially with increasing property values. BLT and other developers have bought a number of properties in the South End and created large assemblages for market rate residential development. At the same time, developers may own several smaller properties, including vacant or occupied housing, and land in the preservation districts of the neighborhood.

Permitting developers to partially fulfill their below market rate obligation by giving, or rehabilitating and giving, small residential buildings they have acquired in the South End to a community land trust will help secure the stock of affordable housing in the form of rentals or co-ops.

Recommendation: Encourage the preservation and creation of affordable homeownership opportunities.

All of the housing recently developed and planned for the South End is rental housing. The most recent ownership development was Elmcroft Townhouse Condominiums, a 12-unit complex built in 1983 by New Neighborhoods, Inc. for first time, low and middle income homebuyers. Affordability clauses ensure that if these units are sold, they remain within reach of other low and middle income first time buyers.

Many participants in the public forums and stakeholder meetings for the South End Study expressed the desire for more homeownership in the South End in order to create more long-term investment by residents who feel they have a stake in the community.

Developers should be encouraged to develop cooperatives, condominiums and townhouses in addition to rentals, with the same below market rate requirements as rental developments, in accordance with the Zoning Regulations. BMR units offered for sale would be limited to a selling price that is affordable to a purchaser within the prescribed income limits.

In addition to being used for rental housing, affordable housing funds resulting from developers' fee-in-lieu payments should be directed to preserving existing owner-occupied housing, through rehabilitation loans and mortgage assistance, and applied to the development of limited equity co-ops or condominiums, in combination with federal, state and local subsidies.

“It is hard to watch your family community turn into a transient community. For many people, this will just be a pit stop...Families like mine may soon be unable to afford to live on South End. Many have already moved... Affordability, stability and character of a neighborhood should be of equal importance...This new, though revitalized, community has become more exclusive than inclusive... The future of the South End greatly relies on its inclusion and consideration of the people who've been here, and desire to remain, as well as those who would desire to come and raise their families here. More options to buy, must be included in this plan.”

Gina Smith, a South End apartment owner at Marshall Commons, an affordable co-op owned and operated by the non-profit New Neighborhoods Inc.

An anti-speculation transfer tax, as proposed in Richmond, California and in New York City, would discourage speculative investment or “house flipping.” Anti-harassment legislation, now in effect in NYC, requires owners of multi-family buildings to apply for a certificate of no harassment before seeking approval of construction or demolition permits, and so increases oversight and provides greater protection to existing tenants.

AFFORDABILITY STRATEGY

ACTION PLAN FOR AFFORDABILITY

- Convene a task force of community leaders and stakeholders, affordable development experts, and city managers to create a South End equitable development plan to establish objectives, feasibility, action steps, partners, resources, and timeline for implementation of affordability measures.
 - Inventory and analyze types of existing affordable housing in the South End to create a baseline against which to measure impacts of each measure in the equitable development plan. Engage lowest income residents, including recent immigrants, to learn more about their housing situations.
 - Increase funding for City management and oversight of the below market rate housing program.
 - Improve coordination with the City's Social services Commission, community organizations, service providers and immigrant services to identify and support low income residents facing eviction.
- Coordinate efforts by relevant City departments to develop tax proposals and consult with state and local governments that have implemented tax-based and legislative measures to maintain affordability, rehabilitate historic buildings, and reduce displacement.
 - Initiate an immediate feasibility study to define a South End affordable housing fund with capacity. Identify and select an affordable housing fund manager.
 - Consult with experts to create enabling language for a community land trust and identify potential partner organizations, board members, and representatives to oversee its operation.
 - Negotiate with developers to rehabilitate small residential buildings they have acquired and turn the buildings over to the community land trust.



PRESERVATION PLANNING

Heritage buildings with character have been torn down at a rate that alarms many residents, and there is broad support for preservation of the historic fabric. People are interested in preserving the diversity of building types, districts, and uses for a variety of reasons, including neighborhood character and sense of place, heritage, human scale of the older buildings and fabric, the architectural appeal of the diverse building stock, and the connection between old buildings and affordability.

HERITAGE QUALITIES OF THE SOUTH END

A large portion of Stamford's South End is a National Register Historic District. The text that made the case for the Historic District in 1986 identified three areas of significance—architecture, industry, and ethnic history—and highlighted the quality of the urban fabric (or the places in between buildings) as much as specific buildings. Whole blocks and clusters of historic fabric remain in the South End, despite the demolition that has taken place over the past 30 years. The street grid, cemetery and shorelines also contribute to the South End's historic landscape. And the Lathon Wider Community Center building, churches and small commercial and manufacturing buildings also contribute greatly to the neighborhood's historic character, scale and memories.

The nomination narrative developed several themes, including the South End as a “walking city” of mixed uses and the convergence of “the city's greatest variety of ethnic groups,” who were drawn to the South End's thriving and innovative manufacturing sector. The concentration of building styles and types in the South End offers a timeline of architectural history that tracks the neighborhood's rise and decline, and recent revival of industry and wealth, creating a distinct sense of place as a maritime industrial Connecticut community.

From the earliest days of Stamford, the South End and the city center were completely intertwined. The South End was the principal platform for Stamford to commune with the Sound, and to send and receive goods and people—the confluence of rivers, sea and many peoples and histories. The South End was a place imbued with maritime-industrial character, at once productive, social, domestic and ecological.

FUTURE THAT IS DIVERSE IN ARCHITECTURE AND PEOPLE

Future development should extend these themes, continuing the centuries-long legacy of diversity that fueled the South End's industry and community, the mix of scales, uses, eras, and styles of architecture, and the lively urbanism of a walking city. These historic buildings offer “naturally occurring” affordable dwellings and retail spaces—less expensive than any we can build new. When the City, landlords, developers, and non-profits act to preserve the diversity of architecture, they also preserve the diversity of people and jobs.

Recommendation: Keep all the National Register Historic District buildings that are still standing. Give priority to preservation and reinvestment in the Lathon Wider Community Center and historic buildings on the two blocks between Atlantic, Pacific, Henry and Dock Streets.

At the second public meeting for this study, held in March 2018, the team made a strong recommendation that all of the historic buildings that are still standing should be preserved. We recommended that the City, State, property owners and developers prioritize preservation and reinvestment in the Historic District buildings on these blocks (diagram on page 19), which are an important link between the remaining clusters of historic homes and local retail on Pacific Street, and between the gateways to the South End and the neighborhood.

To stimulate discussion, we introduced a planning and design analysis that demonstrated that preservation of all of the remaining historic buildings would not limit growth (and would indeed enhance the area's value by maintaining variety of the building stock). This study showed that it was possible to get many more units than the Stamford Master Plan called for without tearing down a single building. The exercise also demonstrated that the new development could be organized in a variety of building types that integrate the historic low-rise buildings with new development without towering over the long-time neighborhood residents' homes, churches and community center. (This work is shown on pages 24-31.)

The response to the recommendation to preserve buildings on these two blocks was very positive, not only among preservation advocates and long-time residents, but also among residents of the new buildings who said they wanted to maintain the interesting mix of building types and time periods that give the South End personality. This is an important area of consensus.



PRESERVATION PLANNING

PRESERVATION PRIORITIES

The two long blocks between Atlantic, Pacific, Henry and Dock Streets, east and west of Garden Street, are an important link between areas of remaining historic housing and commercial / industrial fabric. Including preservation prominently in the redevelopment of this central area will retain a strong sense of identity close to the train station and main gateways to the peninsula. It will also signal commitment to preservation as part of the future vision, and stop the erosion of surrounding historic areas (which have already seen substantial loss since 1986).¹ Retaining and reinvesting in the historic buildings and urban pattern in these blocks will knit together new and old, maintain affordable housing that cannot easily be replaced, and keep the identity of this corridor diverse.

As we outline in the zoning recommendations and the discussion of development scenarios on pages 24-31, the team recommends the use of Transfers of Development Rights (TDRs) to preserve existing building stock and mix. TDRs would transfer potential development to areas better suited to large footprint development, as shown on pages 20-21. We also recommend the development of zoning code and design guidelines that organize density and increase compatibility of new buildings and old throughout the South End.

Two historic buildings and their settings in the neighborhood fabric are so important to the identity of the South End that we propose specific strategies for them: Lathon Wider Community Center and the Blickensderfer Typewriter building. These two buildings have the potential to become outstanding examples of adaptive reuse of historic buildings and community anchors to enhance quality of place. They would broaden the strong set of examples of adaptive reuse for power of place in the South End, which includes: the Yale & Towne Lock building (now residences), the Plumbing Supply building (now Rhone), the Yale & Towne Employment Office (now Kayak), St. Luke's Episcopal Chapel and Parish House (now Inspirica), and 660 Atlantic Street (now Atlantic Park Apartments by Inspirica).

1 PennPraxis' maps of the National Register Historic District, including the buildings that have been lost, is in Appendix D. Our mapping of the use and condition of those standing, is available online at PlanSouthEnd.com.

We have heard from many members of the community that they value the Lathon Wider Community Center enormously. The site of Lathon Wider was a community school site since at least 1892, and the location effectively connects the two concentrations of long-time, low and middle income residents designated as preservation areas in the Stamford Master Plan, and creates an important bridge and a civic "anchor tenant" on Henry Street in the heart of the historic district.

We propose to build on this civic center of the neighborhood by retaining the original portion of the Lathon Wider building built in 1911, which includes the symmetrical façade on Henry Street and the main character-defining elements of the building. We recommend the addition of new buildings on the underutilized public land around the Lathon Wider building to create a civic campus for a new public K-8 school and other public facilities that will build on the history of public use of this site and benefit the entire neighborhood. The public school recommendation on page 36 outlines the community interest and educational rationale for the creation of a South End elementary and middle school.

The second major landmark is the Blickensderfer typewriter factory building, constructed in 1895. This building is well positioned as a landmark that gives texture and identity that is much needed in the placeless area of the train station and State parking structures. Its location, scale and character suggest it could succeed as a lively and iconic food hall with outdoor space for eating, drinking and events in a spot where lush gardens once occupied the factory grounds. The more recent addition to the building that was constructed in the 1930s could be adaptively reused as loft workspace or dwellings.

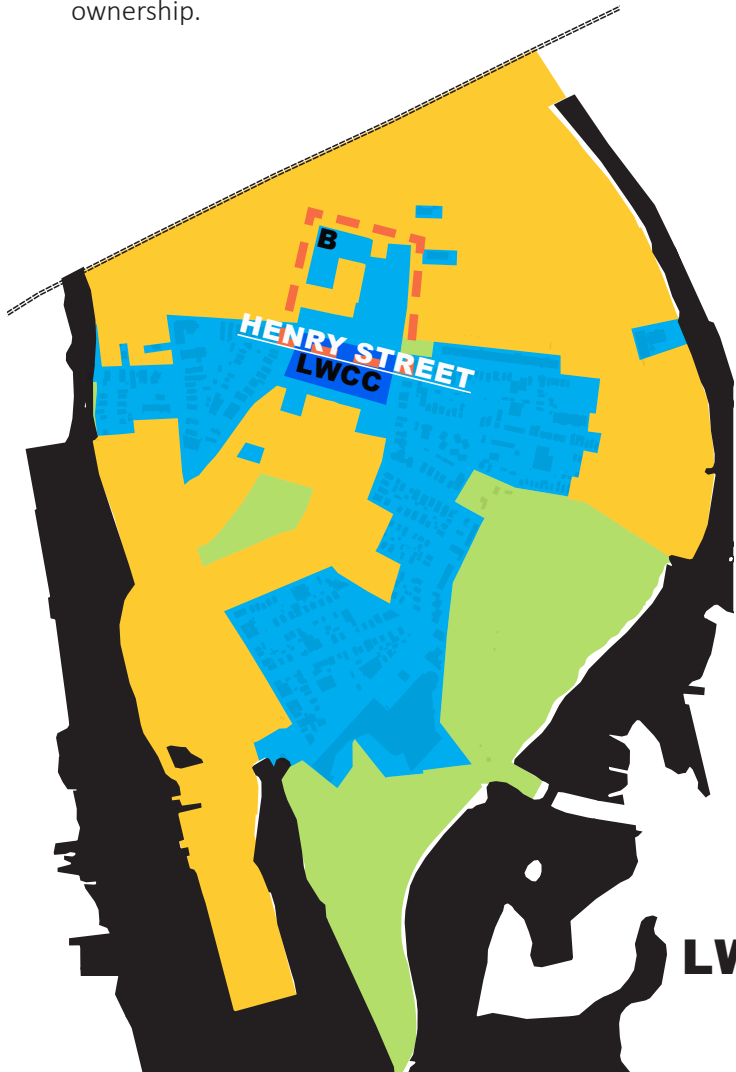
A food hall or other commercial use in this location would strengthen the formation of a walkable and safe commercial district between the train station and the cluster of affordable retail emerging on Pacific Street. The retail recommendations beginning on page 54 outline the community interest in affordable and diverse retail options, and the business rationale for maintaining historic buildings as retail spaces with rents that allow a wide range of businesses to thrive.

AFFORDABLE DWELLINGS AND RETAIL SPACES IN HISTORIC BUILDING STOCK

Recommendation: Explore a revolving loan fund, able to target financing and technical assistance to the kinds of rehabilitation and repair most appropriate to the historic building stock of the South End.

The key to generating resources to maintain and upgrade older buildings with character is to link investment in affordable housing and retail space with investment in historic preservation and adaptive reuse. Likely the best way to do this is to create a revolving loan fund for the preservation of affordable housing and retail. A revolving loan fund can receive and direct fees paid by developers in lieu of creating new affordable housing, and it can receive funds from the City and state. When paired with the 25% Connecticut Historic Homes Rehabilitation Tax Credit, a revolving loan fund can direct substantial revenue to preserve and upgrade buildings, create more affordable rental units, and encourage home and apartment ownership.

The Providence Revolving Fund (PRF) is one of the leading examples of a non-profit organization that provides capital and technical assistance to preserve and create affordable housing in low and moderate income, historic neighborhoods.² The Providence Revolving Fund has a strong record of success as a community-based, non-profit development and lending corporation that manages a \$12 million fund. Led by a board of community members with expertise in banking, real estate development, law, historic preservation, architecture and social services, PRF has invested \$7.4 million in low and moderate income neighborhoods. Since 1982, PRF has supported 460 building restorations, including the renovation of 46 previously abandoned buildings. The Fund has leveraged over \$23.75 million in additional financing, and created a significant stock of affordable housing and retail.



Lathon Wider Community Center

- TWO PRIORITY BLOCKS**
- DEVELOPMENT AREAS**
- HISTORIC DISTRICT BUILDINGS**
- OPEN SPACE**
- BLICKENSDERFER TYPEWRITER FACTORY**
- LATHON WIDER COMMUNITY CENTER**

PRESERVATION PLANNING

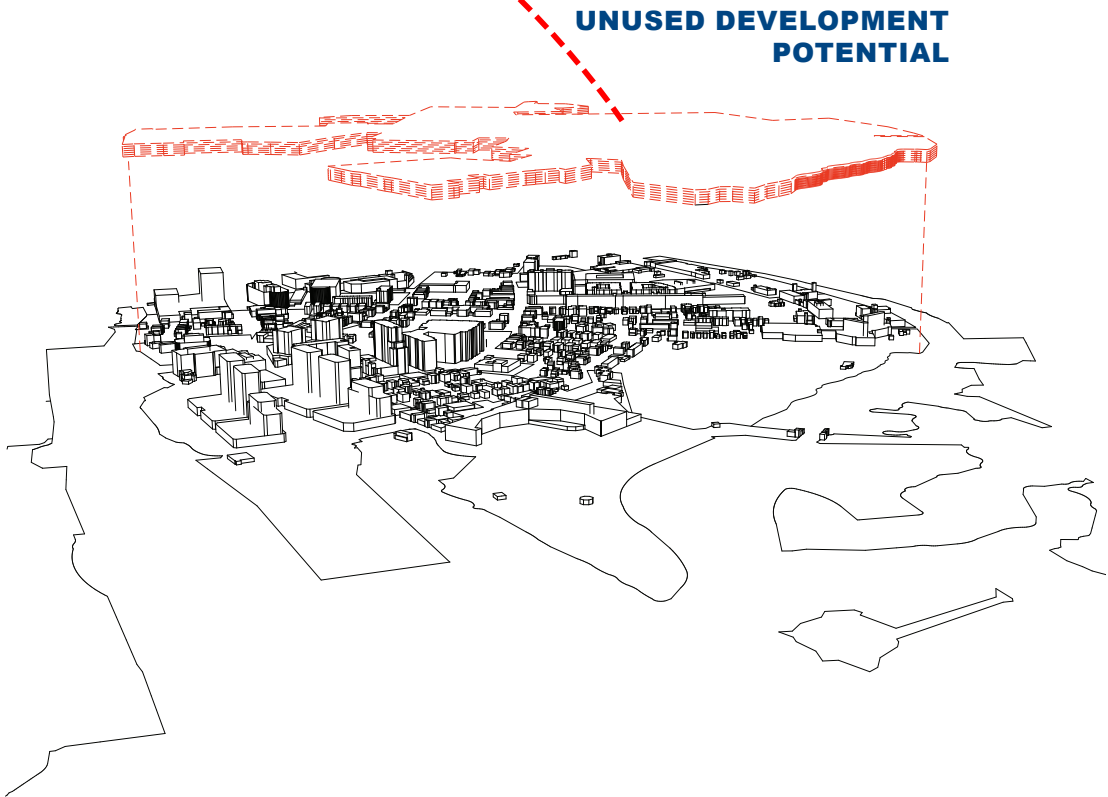
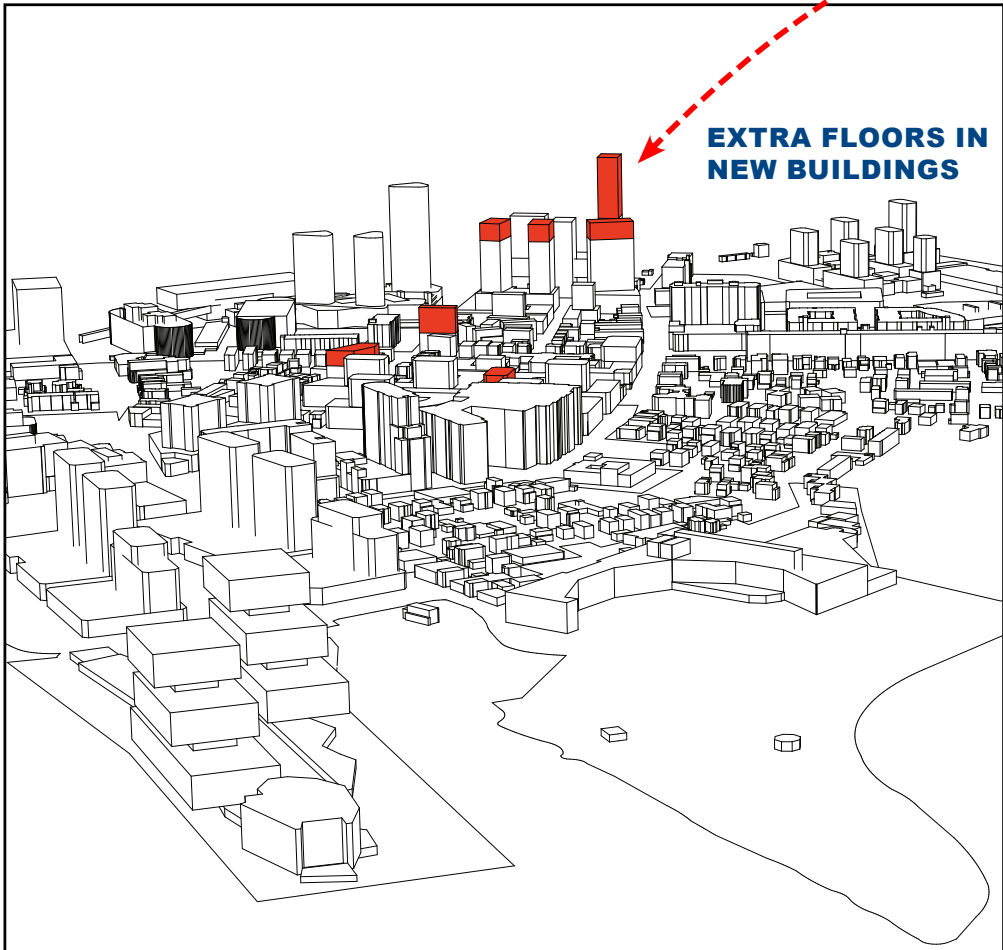
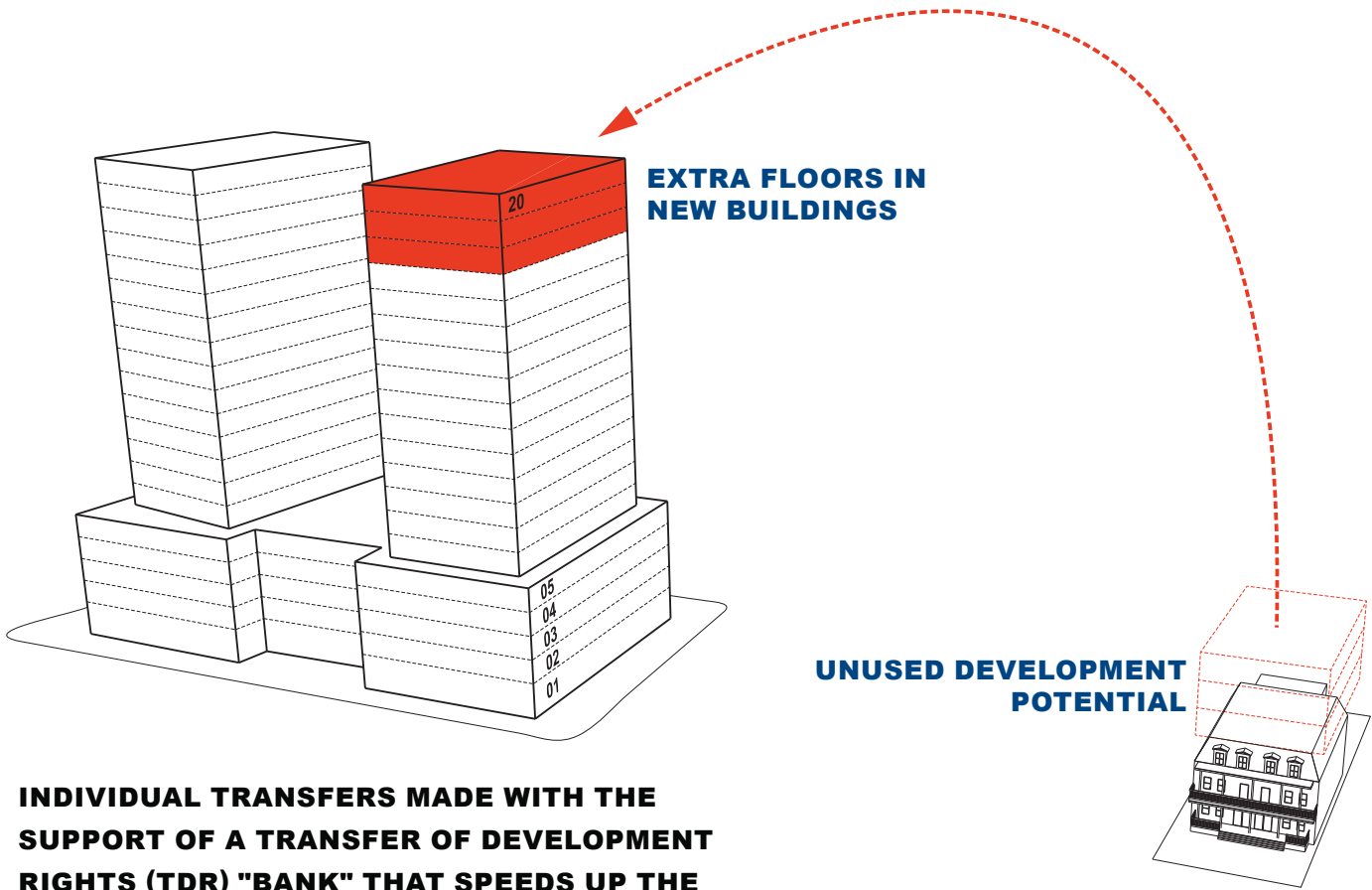
TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

The team recommends the use of Transfers of Development Rights (TDRs) to permit the exchange of unused development rights from parcels containing existing affordable housing and retail, and historically or architecturally significant buildings. This approach would preserve existing building stock and mix, and shift development away from the low-rise existing neighborhoods to areas better suited to higher-density, large-footprint development, especially along the I-95 and rail corridor, close to downtown. By selling unused rights to developers, a TDR program can also generate funds for building renovation. Zoning and design guidelines can control density and compatibility of new buildings.

TWO WAYS TO TRANSFER:

1 ONE BIG, NEGOTIATED "VIRTUAL" TRANSFER THAT DEFINES THE UNUSED DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF A PRESERVATION AREA, AND TRANSFERS THAT TO A DEVELOPMENT AREA BY SPECIFYING HEIGHTS OR UNITS ALLOWED IN ZONING CODE (BELOW)

2 INDIVIDUAL TRANSFERS MADE WITH THE SUPPORT OF A TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (TDR) "BANK" THAT SPEEDS UP THE DEAL-MAKING PROCESS (ABOVE)



PRESERVATION PLANNING

A Stamford institution similar to the Providence Revolving Loan Fund could create a bridge between preservation, affordability, and homeowner support. To explore the idea of creating a revolving loan organization appropriate to the challenges of the South End, the City of Stamford could seek support from the 1772 Foundation. This Rhode Island foundation funds feasibility studies that help cities across the country determine whether and how some combination of revolving loan and redevelopment funds should be pursued to meet community goals. Loan funds may be tailored to objectives: some acquire, redevelop, then resell/market properties; others finance owner-led rehabilitation. (See <http://www.revolvingfund.org/about.php> for additional information.)

FINE GRAIN

In various waves of South End redevelopment, many streets and lanes were lost. Reintroduction of streets with space for pedestrians and bikes in areas where new development is creating a fabric of “super blocks” will help reinvigorate the human-scaled walking city, and introduce more variety of experience. Strengthening the everyday public realm—beginning with well-traveled routes—by improving walkability with lighting, trees, and furniture will increase safety, build community among neighbors, and reanimate the South End’s past as a walkable urban village.

And at the smallest scale, on individual home lots, we recommend that the City encourage the development of accessory dwelling units or “granny flats” as a potentially significant contribution to the number of affordable units. This can be achieved through zoning, incentives, and active management of parking. Outbuildings and utility buildings have been typical of both the single- and multi-family house and lot configurations, and of the industrial complexes. In many ways, accessory dwelling units are in “the DNA” of the South End.

ACTION PLAN FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- Organize walks to build a common-ground conversation about shared heritage and character of the South End, so residents, developers and the Land Use Bureau can talk about options, uses and values.
- Apply for a grant from the 1772 Foundation to evaluate the usefulness of creating a revolving loan fund for preservation of affordable housing and local retail,
- Integrate heritage preservation and affordability strategies to pool resources and have bigger impact. Create synergy with a South End affordable housing fund (recommendation on page 11).
- Prevent further loss of district character by adding local historic preservation protections by ordinance that will minimize tear downs in the historic district. Frame the rationale for a local preservation commission.
- Develop framework for a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program to support preservation of existing building stock and mix.
- Engage affordable housing developers with adaptive reuse track records to increase competition for affordable housing funds and create great projects.



PRESERVATION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH) is a national non-profit developer, owner, and operator of more than 10,000 affordable rental apartments in twelve states including Connecticut, where POAH has projects in Hartford, Torrington, and Middletown. POAH partners with many cities to support their efforts to cultivate a network of high-quality non-profit housing partners to diversify the kinds of homes and apartments available to residents. Its projects are designed to ensure that rents will remain affordable for at least 30 years, and many projects focus on creating opportunities for long-time renters to become first-time homeowners.

POAH’s “Renew Woodlawn” partnership in Chicago—which quickly won awards and national recognition—demonstrates an approach to stabilizing a community, and supporting existing residents by integrating heritage preservation and affordability strategies. As of July 2017 (just one year into the program), 7 of the program’s 25 new homeowners had been long-term renters in the community, and 22 vacant buildings had been transformed into owner-occupied buildings that created 39 new affordable units in the community.

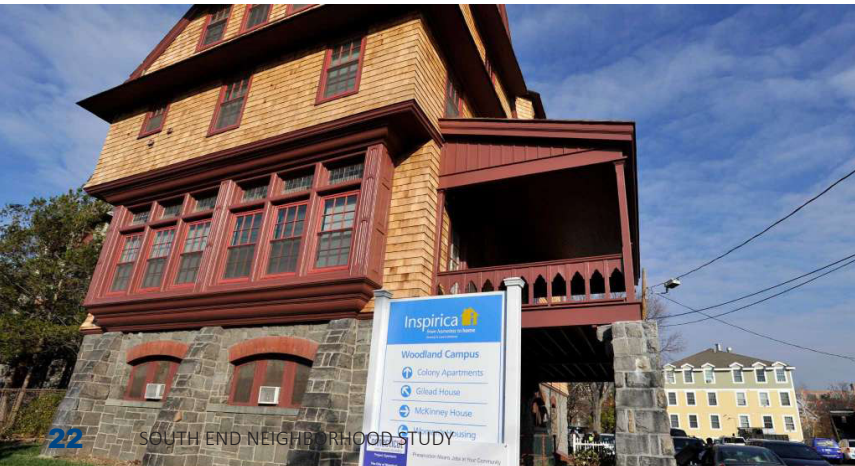
Where many affordable-housing programs focus on new construction, Renew Woodlawn concentrates on rehabilitation of older homes, and transformation of vacant buildings into owner-occupied homes—a model that might apply in the South End. The program identifies prospective buyers, and provides them with grants, forgivable loans for renovation, and a discounted purchase price, so they can purchase architecturally-significant neighborhood homes.

Prospective buyers working with Renew Woodlawn receive up to \$15,000 in subsidies toward home purchase, or up to \$50,000 toward home purchase and rehab, for any vacant property with one to four units located within a specified area. They must meet income requirements, and if they buy or rehab a multi-unit property, they must rent to income-qualified tenants. The approach invigorates the housing market, and strengthens cultural legacy.

Renew Woodlawn also offers technical assistance for those who DIY or manage their own property rehab. The Philadelphia Rowhouse Manual is another form of accessible technical assistance for property owners that supports the quality and diversity of the built environment. (See https://www.phila.gov/CityPlanning/resources/Publications/RowhouseManual_Final.pdf.)

“No one wants to live in a planned community.”

Ted Ferrarone, Chief Operating Officer, Building and Land Technology



LAND USE AND ZONING

“We are changing the look of the city without due consideration. We don’t want to change the South End Master Plan with spot rezonings.”

Terry Adams, NRZ Representative

“5,000 units are already in the pipeline in the South End and downtown. If all the sites currently under Planning Board review are approved, what is left to study?”

Jay Tepper, Stamford Planning Board

GROWTH

During the ten-month period of our engagement process, many residents, small business owners, and advocates for affordability and heritage preservation expressed frustration that they had so little information about individual redevelopment approvals, and no sense of the cumulative impact of all of the applications and approvals on the neighborhood. The zoning codes for the South End have not been updated to translate the 2015 Master Plan into clear rules and incentives to guide the wave of redevelopment. There is tremendous uncertainty among residents, property owners, and developers about what will be allowed.

At community and Planning Board meetings, people expressed concern about the capacity of infrastructure (especially roads) to serve the fast-growing community. Many argued that infrastructure capacity improvements were not being coordinated with development approvals. Others were concerned about the impact of rapid development on the character of the place, on market values, and on families.

These concerns are real in a small community that, based on estimates from the Stamford Land Use Bureau, is expected to, at least, double in size from 10,000 to 20,000 residents and workers, based on the level of growth that the City expects under the 2015 Master Plan.

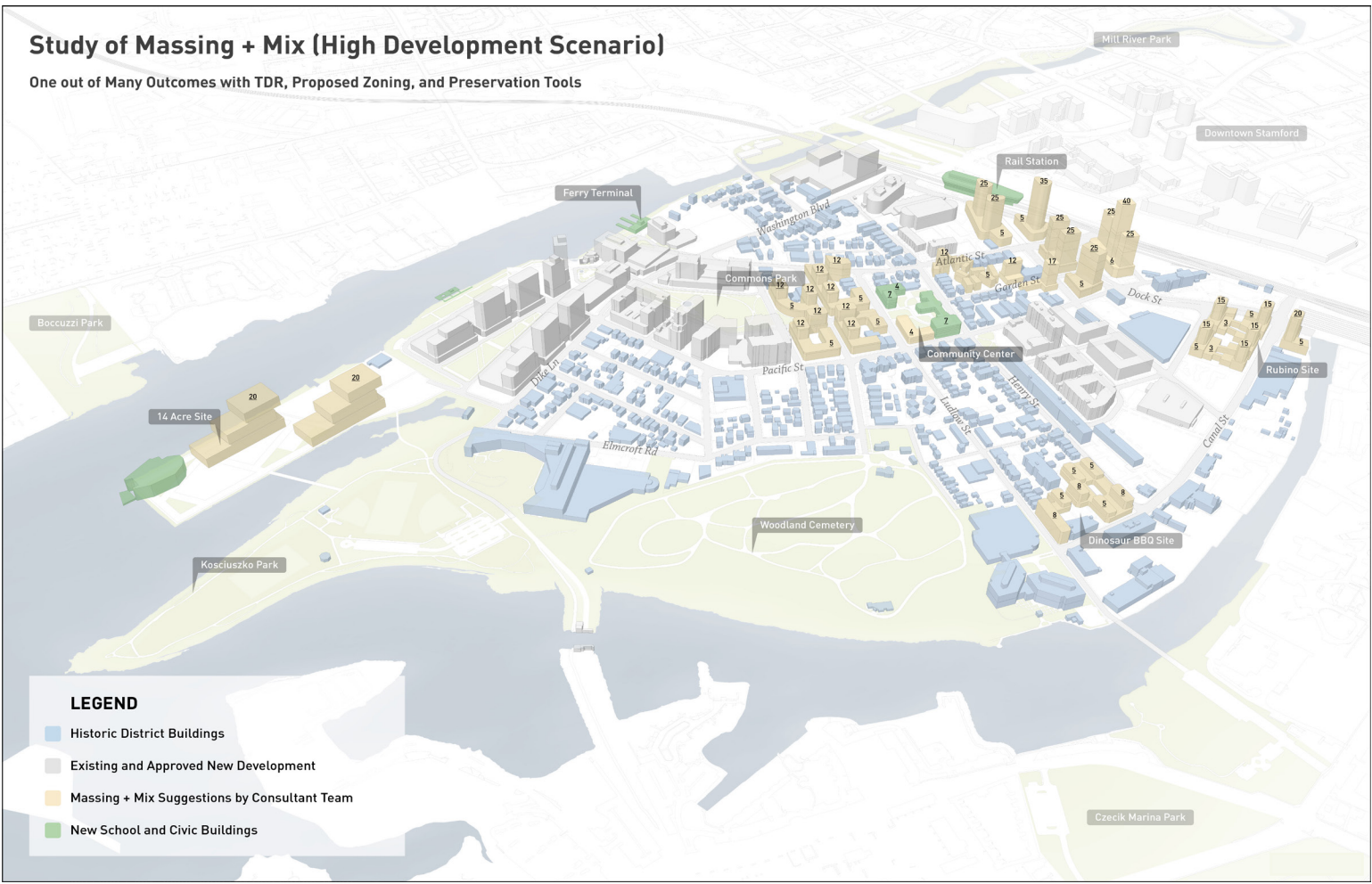
If the City approves increases to the heights and total square footage of development allowed in South End redevelopment areas, the number of residents could grow to as many as 18,500 people and the number of workers to 8,500, for a total of 27,000.

Recommendation: Speed up public conversation about desired growth levels, including costs and benefits of growth in terms of demand and funds for other priorities, including affordability, historic preservation, a public school, transportation and streetscape upgrades, and improvements to the retail environment.

To begin this process, the study team used design and planning techniques to visualize possible development scenarios and building massing strategies. These visualizations opened a community dialogue about how much growth people want, where it should go, and what kind of building forms it might take. Modeling the cumulative impact of a very large amount of development—some of it already approved by the Planning Board and in the works, and some of it purely speculative—was an effective tool for facilitating conversation about the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to organizing development. We explored the benefits of allowing Transfers of Development Rights (TDRs) in order to preserve more of the existing building stock and affordable dwellings and retail, and to steer the tall and dense development away from the low-rise community in the South End.

SCENARIO 1 First, we modeled a high growth scenario in which all of the remaining historic district buildings were preserved. Our high growth scenario is one of many possible growth and massing scenarios for the South End, not a proposal. Using average unit sizes, and allowing for significant structured parking in new buildings, this scenario showed that it was possible to get many more units than the 2015 Stamford Master Plan approved without tearing down any historic buildings.¹ In other words, historic preservation need not limit growth as long as there is flexibility to transfer development rights for

1 A single historic district building was moved to accommodate extension of Market Street in this scenario. All other historic buildings remain in place.



parcels with historic buildings on them, currently owned by developers, to other locations owned by developers, or between property owners.

Relatively tall buildings along the rail and I-95 corridor are needed to accommodate both growth and preservation. Placing the density close to the train station and downtown will reduce the number of trips people in those buildings will make by car, and relieve some pressure on access points to the South End.

The exercise also demonstrates that the new development can be organized in a variety of building types that integrate the historic low-rise buildings with new development without towering over the long-time neighborhood residents’ homes, churches and community center. The expanded range of building types we modeled is drawn from examples of profitable, livable, high quality development in other cities. These building types break down the bulk of development and broaden the mix of architecture, particularly in the “missing middle”—the middle scale of buildings that create an effective bridge between the existing small scale residential community and large new buildings. In a sense, the new development kneels down at the edges of the historic district to better integrate old and new.

Keeping the same total number of units, the heights and mass of the buildings in the high growth scenario can be reduced if current surface parking areas were developed, and the lost parking was replaced in the base of new buildings. The total number of units or square feet of development can also be reduced to set intermediate levels of growth.

The high growth scenario shows substantial office space and a major music venue on the 14-acre peninsula outside the hurricane barrier. The moderate scenario on page 29 shows a water-dependent light industrial use and a smaller office development. Although redevelopment of the 14-acre site is highly contested and unlikely to happen in the immediate future, we thought it was useful to illustrate two very different levels of development on that site to help people imagine and discuss a future that may have additional concentrations of activity. This kind of study—anticipating possible locations and types of growth—also helps model and manage traffic.

PRECEDENTS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Diversifying the mix, especially in the middle scale of new construction, will create a more effective bridge between the existing small scale residential community and large new buildings



LOW
ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT
PORTLAND, OREGON



MEDIUM-LOW
PASEO VERDE TOWNHOUSE
PHILADELPHIA



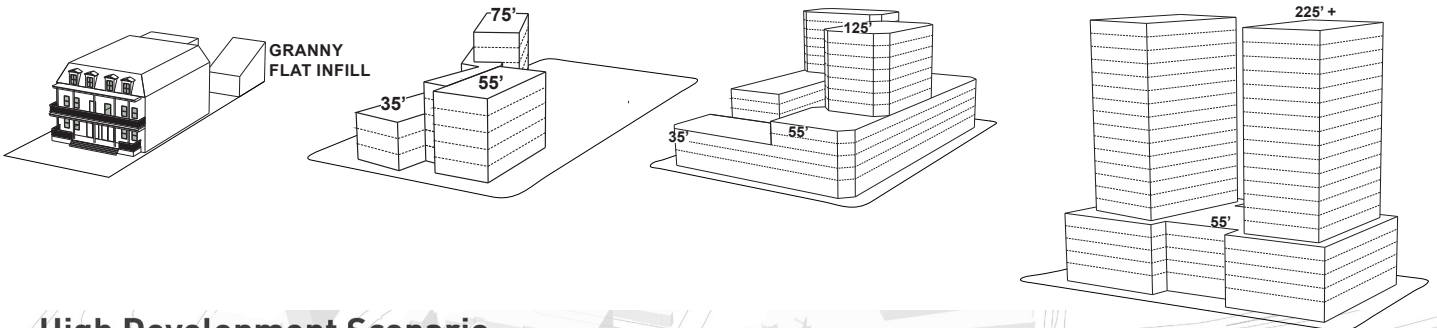
MEDIUM
PASEO VERDE MULTI-FAMILY
PHILADELPHIA



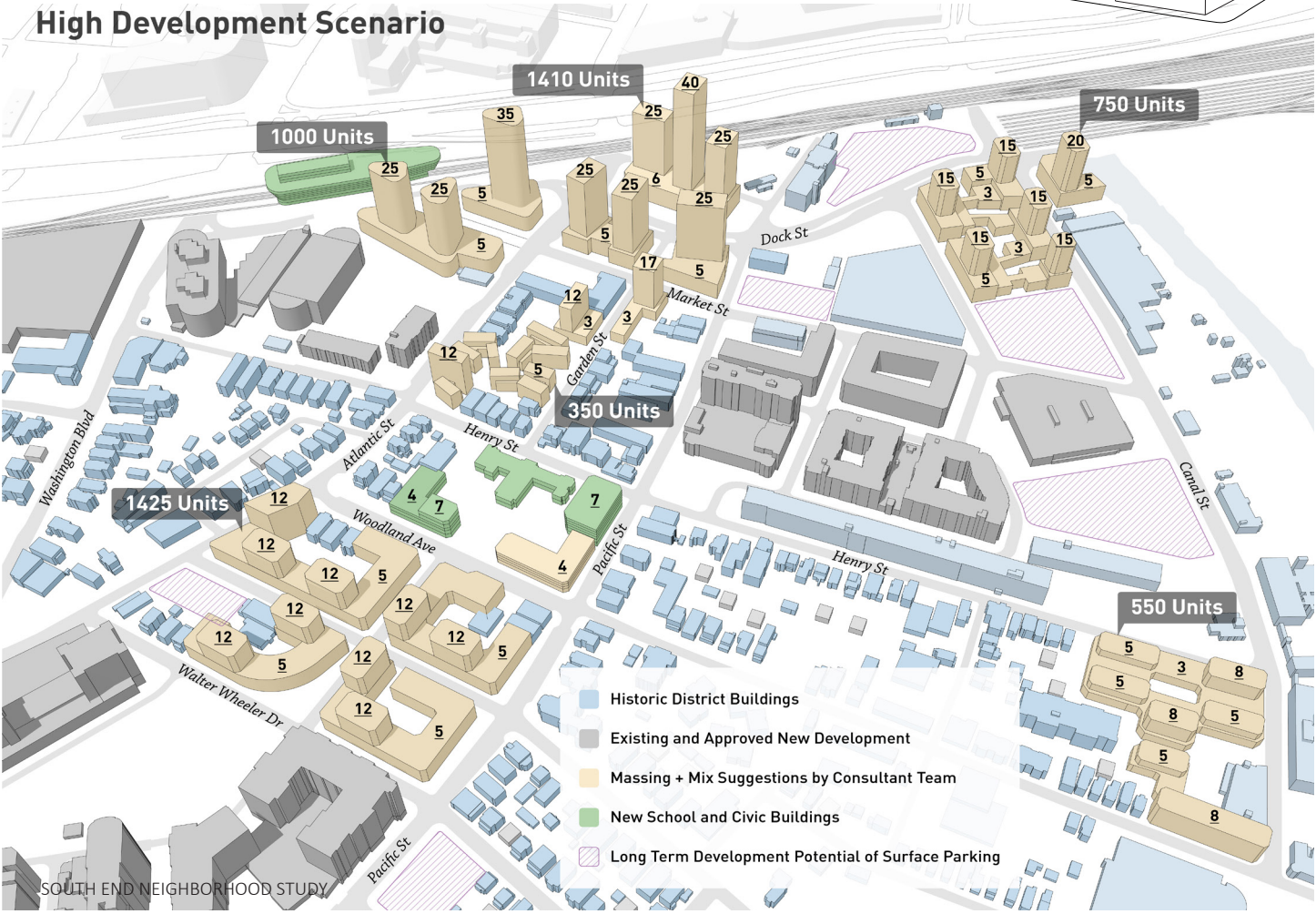
MEDIUM-HIGH
FRAMEWORK BUILDING
PORTLAND, OREGON



HIGH
HILTON TOWER
LONDON



High Development Scenario



High growth scenario rendering that includes preserved historic buildings, new developments that have already approved, and suggested building types that would help bridge the scales of old and new fabric

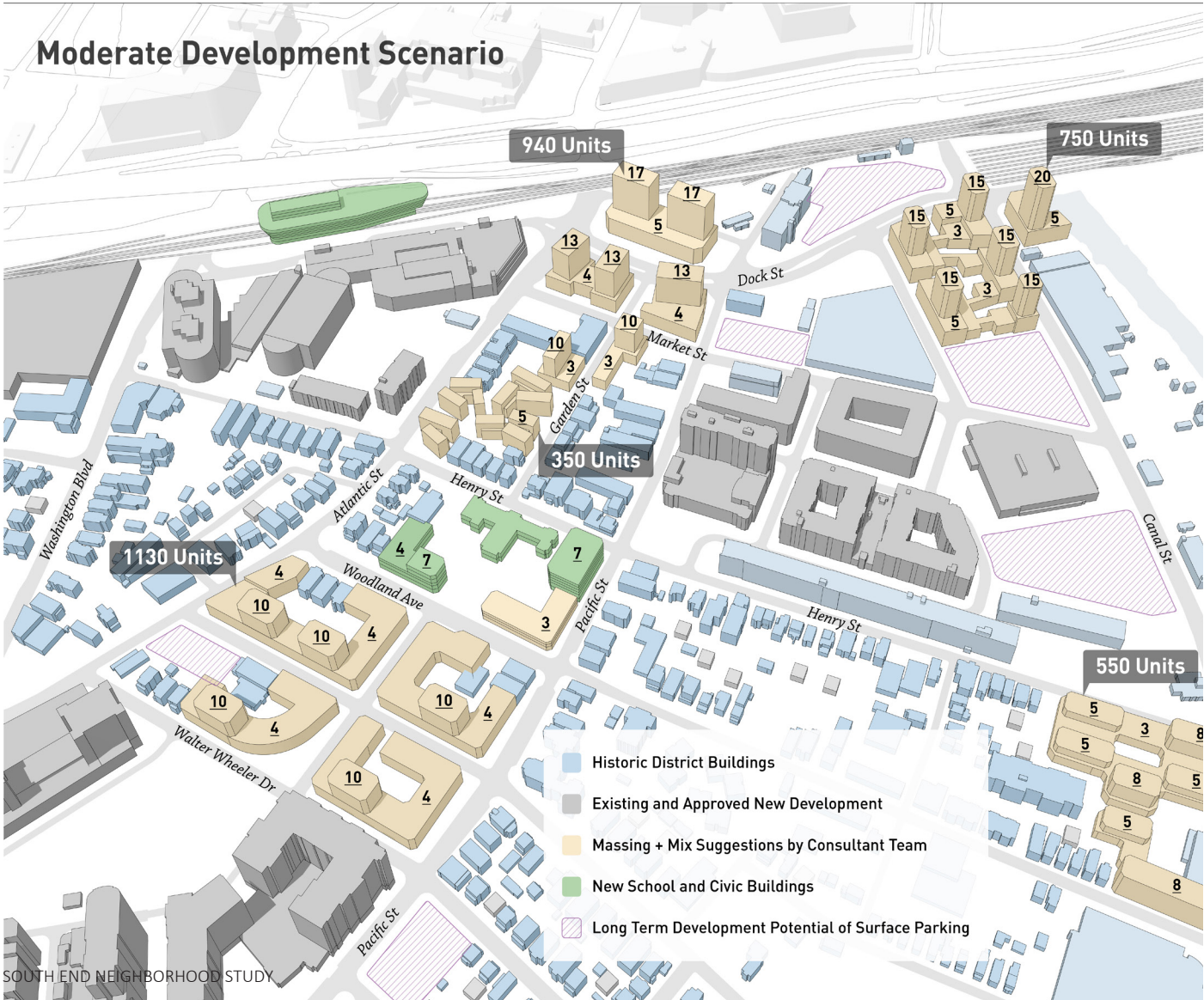


LAND USE AND ZONING

SCENARIO 2

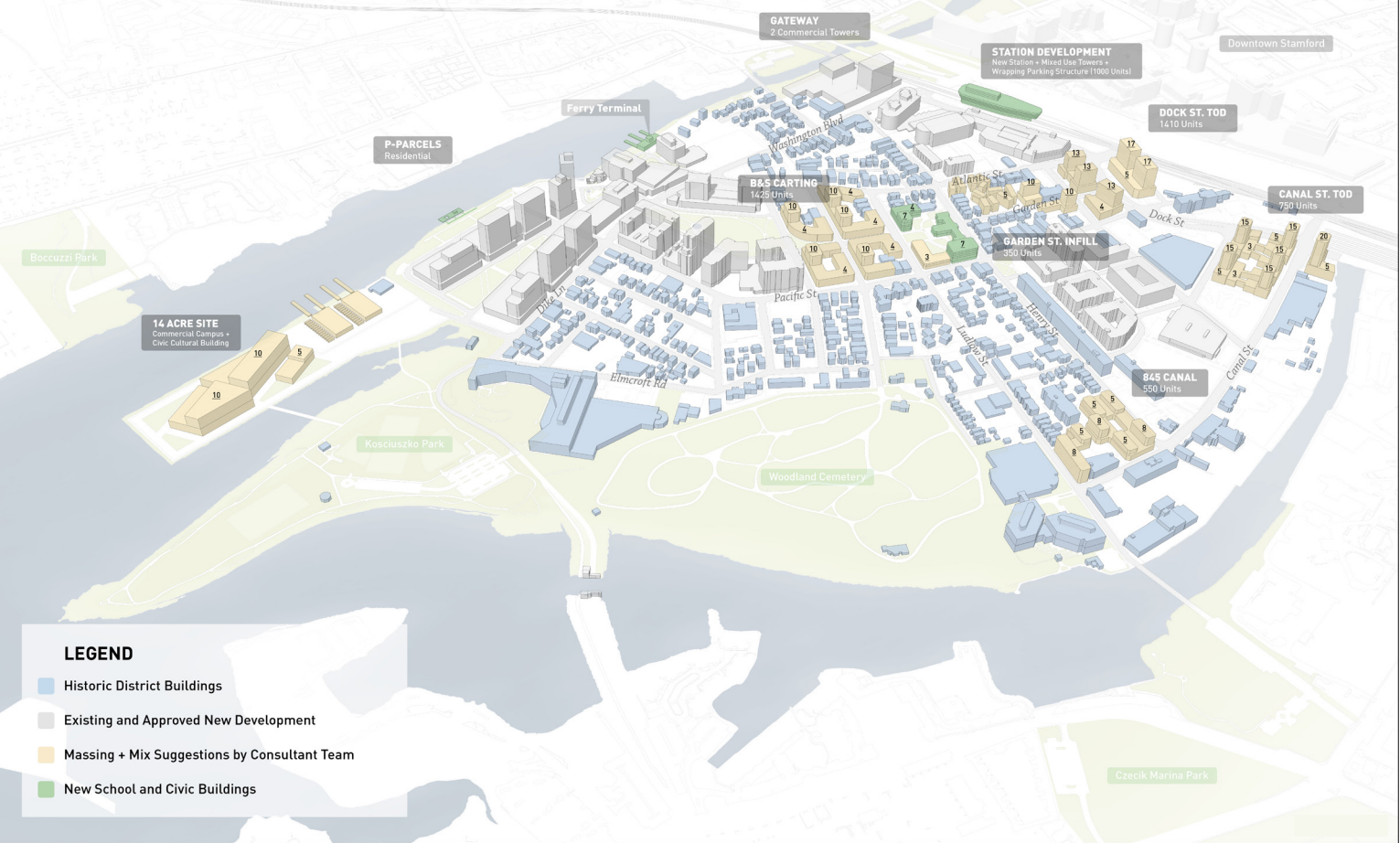
We next developed a more moderate growth scenario that approximates the total level of growth and density that property owners, developers, the community, and the City could reasonably have expected under the 2015 Master Plan. We again allowed for Transfer of Development Rights to protect the remaining historic district buildings. This scenario significantly reduces the heights of the tallest buildings, but keeps medium-tall buildings along the rail and I-95 corridor to accommodate both growth and preservation in the historic district.

To explore community and stakeholder evaluation of the two scenarios, and overall growth levels, the team presented the high and moderate scenarios at the June 2018 public forum. We also presented diagrams that outlined the upside of growth over and above what would be expected under the Master Plan. That upside could be increased profit for developers and tax revenue for the City that could be pooled to fund action on the seven priorities, including affordability, preservation, a new school, major infrastructure upgrades and retail stimulus.



Study of Massing + Mix (Moderate Development Scenario)

One out of Many Outcomes with TDR, Proposed Zoning, and Preservation Tools



Participants in that public meeting expressed a preference for the moderate scenario, which they saw as a very high level of development over a short period in a small, historic community. Residents of the South End were concerned about new buildings towering over the preservation district, and some asked for additional modeling of new development applications, including the B&S Carting site, to facilitate community and Planning Board review. The digital model of all existing and proposed buildings that the study team has created makes this kind of work to communicate spatial impact fast and easy.

Additional conversation between the City, developers and the public is needed to establish what level of funding can be generated for the priorities at different levels of growth. And as we outline in future chapters, more work is also required to assess the rough cost of intersection and streetscape upgrades that will be required to support various levels of growth. Because timing is critical to direct the wave of development now in motion on the two blocks between Atlantic, Pacific, Henry and Dock Streets, on the B&S carting site, and other large parcels, the team recommends quick action of these basic ingredients of an inclusive process that will take into consideration the interests of all stakeholders in setting the desired level of growth for the South End.

“The big opportunity for the South End plan is to re-assert an aesthetic vision for what the neighborhood wants to be and to fight the critique of Stamford as placeless.”

David Kooris, Stamford resident and Deputy Commissioner of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development

“The South End will define the Stamford skyline for decades to come. We want to get it right.”

Ralph Blessing, Director, Stamford Land Use Bureau



Moderate growth scenario rendering that includes preserved historic buildings, new developments that have already approved, and suggested building types that would help bridge the scales of old and new fabric

LAND USE AND ZONING

Recommendation: Modify existing zoning regulations in the South End over the next six months. Align zoning code more closely with the goals of the Stamford Master Plan to achieve a defined, mutually agreeable level of growth, to better integrate new development with the neighborhood, and to reduce uncertainty. Ensure transparency and public participation throughout this process and in all future development applications.

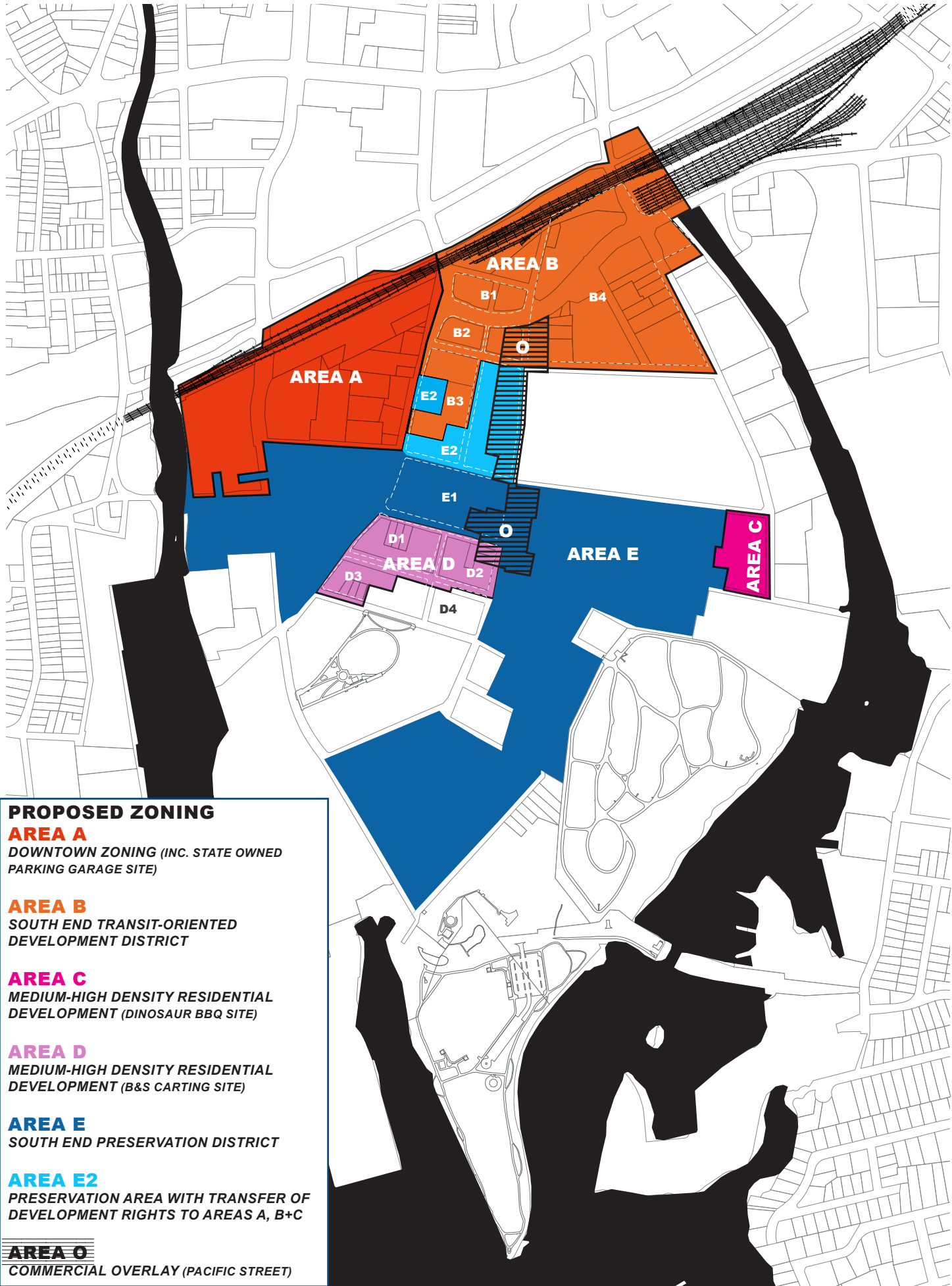
The 2015 Master Plan, adopted December 2014, describes a long-term vision for the city’s future and establishes goals, policy recommendations, and implementation strategies to guide growth and development. The Master Plan and the zoning code that directs development in the South End are not currently in agreement. (The Stamford Master Plan and current zoning are described in Appendix B and C.) Heightened development interest and discrepancies between zoning and the Master Plan have resulted in a large number of applications for zoning changes and Master Plan amendments. Lack of a clear and comprehensive zoning code has created an inefficient review process that leads to inconsistent “spot zoning.” It has also hampered transparency and diminished public trust in the process. The development areas defined in the Master Plan do not sufficiently value historic buildings as an essential ingredient of a future South End with character.

We recommend implementing a set of zoning changes that eliminates disparities between zoning and the Master Plan and creates a clear, transparent and consistent framework for future development. The goal of these code changes is to promote equitable development of the South End that balances preservation and development—strengthening the character of a legacy community while encouraging new development and reinvestment. The future under an intelligently shaped zoning framework will extend the centuries-long legacy of diversity that fueled South End industry and community, along with the lively urbanism of a walking city and the mix of scales, uses, eras and styles of architecture.

The recommended zoning changes on pages 34 and 35 are intended to address conditions, needs, and interests in several distinct areas within the South End. They align closely with the Master Plan. They also include the creation of two new special purpose zoning districts that employ additional controls and incentives, such as transferable development rights, to increase development opportunities in some areas in order to preserve historic buildings in areas that might otherwise be erased wholesale to achieve the highest returns on investment by developers.

To accomplish this, the team recommends the use of Transfers of Development Rights (TDRs) to permit the transfer of unused development rights from parcels containing existing affordable housing and historically or architecturally significant buildings. TDR will help preserve existing building stock and mix, and shift development potential to areas better suited to higher-density, large-footprint development, as suggested in the preservation chapter of the report.

To encourage the development of a stable community with residents who are invested in its future—a desire expressed clearly in the community forums—we recommend requiring a range of apartment sizes in new developments, including two- and three-bedroom units, to accommodate growing families and encourage long-term residency. We encourage the development of a range of kinds and scales of homeownership opportunities for the same reason.



LAND USE AND ZONING

PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

PROPOSED ZONING AREA A: Transportation Center Design District (TCDD)

- Expand the TCDD to include the state parking garage site. Promote high-density, mixed-use (commercial, residential, retail) development with commuter parking. This development should be linked to a new station, consistent with the Master Plan’s Downtown category (11).

PROPOSED ZONING AREA B: South End Transit Oriented Development District (SETODD)

- Rezone the General Industrial District (M-G) to a new special district to permit high-density, transit-oriented, mixed-use (residential, commercial and retail) development close to the Stamford Transportation Center, consistent with Master Plan Urban Mixed-Use Category 9.
- Permit increased density with the Transfer of Development Rights from historically significant buildings in Area E and other locations.
- Permit buildings up to 250 ft. (25 stories) north of Market Street, comparable to the Transportation Center Design District. Restrict heights to 5 to 10 stories south of Market in B3, depending on location, in order to integrate scales of new and historic buildings.

PROPOSED ZONING AREA C (DINOSAUR BBQ SITE): MEDIUM-HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Rezone the General Industrial District (M-G) to a new or modified High-Density Residential District to permit mixed-use (residential, commercial, retail), consistent with the Urban Mixed-Use Category 9.
- Permit increased density with the Transfer of Development Rights from historically significant buildings in other locations in the South End.
- Restrict building height to 100 ft. (10 stories) with a 40 ft. base height on Henry and Ludlow Streets.

PROPOSED ZONING AREA D (B&S CARTING SITE): MEDIUM-HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Retain the existing South End Redevelopment District, South (SRD-S).
- Rezone the General Industrial District (M-G) and Residential District (R-MF) to a new or modified High Density Residential District to permit residential development at a scale and density that bridges the high-density high-rise developments in Harbor Point (SRD-S) and the surrounding low-rise residential neighborhood.
- Retain the Community Business (C-B) district at the intersection of Pacific Street and Woodland Avenue.
- Permit increased density with the Transfer of Development Rights from historically significant buildings in Area E and other locations.
- Restrict building heights to 100 ft. (10 stories) with a lower base height of 40 ft. on neighborhood streets and up against existing homes, as suggested in the massing scenario models.
- Extend Woodland Place from Pacific Street to Atlantic Street.

PROPOSED ZONING AREA E: SOUTH END PRESERVATION DISTRICT (SEPD)

- Retain the Medium Density Residential district (R-MF).
- Retain the Community Business district (C-B) at the intersection of Pacific Street and Ludlow Street.
- Rezone the General Industrial district (M-G) to a Light Industrial district (M-L) with higher performance standards, to permit ongoing and new light industrial uses, including art-related and small-batch manufacturing businesses, to preserve industry compatible with surrounding residential uses.
- Provide for the development of accessory dwelling units on lots with unused development potential to enable the preservation and creation of affordable units on existing low-density housing lots.
- Restrict buildings heights to 40 ft. (4 residential stories) and 50 ft. (commercial), as required in the R-MF district.

PROPOSED ZONING AREA E2: PRESERVATION AREA

- Retain the Medium Density Residential district (R-MF)
- Amend the Master Plan to better protect the National Register Historic District north of Henry Street.
- Permit the Transfer of Development Rights to Areas A, B, C and D.

PROPOSED ZONING AREA OVERLAY (O): PACIFIC STREET

- Create a commercial overlay along Pacific Street, extending from the commercial district at Ludlow Street/Woodland Avenue to Dock Street, as shown in the zoning map.
- Specify ground floor retail in the zoning text, in order to strengthen the retail corridor and increase public presence. (Section 7.4 of the Zoning Regulations)

PROVISIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL AREAS

Section 7.4 of the Zoning Regulations includes a number of general provisions that apply to all areas. These include:

- Increase requirement for below market rate (BMR) units in new residential developments from 10% of the total to 20%, with no less than 50% provided on-site.
- Broaden income limits to require that 5% of the total be affordable to households earning 25% of the Area Median Income (AMI); 10% affordable to households earning 50% of AMI; and 5% at 80% of AMI.
- Allow developers to satisfy the BMR requirement—in part—by making a cash contribution to a South End affordable housing fund for up to 10% of the total.
- Allow developers to satisfy the BMR requirement—in part—by dedicating land or units in the South End to a community land trust. The number of units may equal up to 10% of the total, "equal in value, quality and size" to on-site BMR units. (ZR, 7.4)
- Require a range of apartment sizes in new developments, including two- and three-bedroom apartments to accommodate larger families.
- Encourage creation of units for home ownership to promote long term residency and community stability.
- Require one-for-one replacement of existing affordable housing that is demolished for new development.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

Two sites warrant special zoning consideration. As noted elsewhere, the City should retain ownership of the entire Lathon Wider Community Center site and preserve the original historic structure. The community facility use should be retained and density on the site increased to permit the development of a school and other cultural and community facilities.

To preserve the unique asset integral to the 14-acre pier site, the Coastal Water Dependent zoning (CW-D) should be retained, as it permits water-dependent industrial and commercial uses and certain other uses by special exception, including limited retail, office, residential, and accessory uses that are “...subordinate, incidental and related to a water-dependent use.”

ACTION PLAN FOR ZONING AND LAND USE

- Organize public meetings in October and November 2018 to discuss the desired level of population growth for the South End, based on the rough costs and benefits of different development scenarios.
- Expedite revisions to zoning regulations, as outlined in our recommendations and developed through public process.
- Once revised codes are in place, establish a comprehensive environmental impact assessment process for any future large-scale land use and zoning actions. The assessment should consider a range of impacts, including cumulative impacts of proposed development, and potential mitigation.
- Prior to Planning Board review of development applications, insert proposed buildings into the three-dimensional digital model of the South End to allow the community and Planning Board to evaluate impacts of the proposal on existing and future neighbors, and to understand the cumulative effect of proposals on the organization of density and the overall fabric of the South End.

CIVIC CAMPUS

The idea of creating a local public school in the South End appeals to a very wide range of residents and stakeholders, and the educational rationale for the creation of a South End school is also strong. Ten busloads of South End kids in kindergarten through twelfth grade are bused to distant schools. A school in the South End would end the need to bus children to distant Springside and dramatically increase their opportunities for after-school sports, homework and enrichment. A public school in the South End would also attract and retain more families, including many of the newer families who move out of the neighborhood as their children approach kindergarten age. The South End location may also be appropriate for a magnet school serving a wider area.

“A new K-8 magnet school could work well in the South End, and we need a new one in the City.”

Earl Kim, Superintendent of Schools

Recommendation: Create a new public elementary and middle school on public land adjacent to the Lathon Wider Community Center to build a stable, intergenerational and kid-friendly community and give ten busloads of neighborhood youth back the 2 hours a day they now spend on a bus.

The Lathon Wider site was a community school site since at least 1892, and the location effectively connects the two concentrations of long-time, lower and middle-income residents designated as preservation areas in the South End Master Plan. The site is centrally located and accessible to all residential areas of the South End. We propose to build on this civic center of the neighborhood by retaining the original portion of the Lathon Wider building built in 1911, which includes the symmetrical façade on Henry Street and the main character-defining elements of the building.

We recommend the addition of new buildings on the underutilized public land around the Lathon Wider to create a civic campus for a new public K-8 school and other community facilities that will build on the long-standing public use of this site and benefit the entire neighborhood. The design of the school should incorporate a new civic campus for play, sports, civic gatherings and a farmer’s market to strengthen the heart of the neighborhood and the Pacific retail area.



Rendering of Lathon Wider civic campus and one of two new buildings to house K-8 school

Improved indoor facilities could be incorporated into the new school buildings and upgrades to the Lathon Wider Community Center, including library and clinic improvements, affordable retail space, community athletic facilities, after-school programming, offices for a South End business improvement district, or maker space. Structured parking could also be incorporated into the new buildings to make up for the conversion of the parking lot to a schoolyard and outdoor community center.

ACTION PLAN FOR THE SCHOOL

- Initiate process of evaluating the school, site, program and cost with Superintendent Earl Kim. Explore funding partnerships to create a first-rate school and civic campus at Lathon Wider.

Location of new school buildings and civic campus



TRANSPORTATION AND STREETScape

The City of Stamford asked our engineers, Level Infrastructure, to review available information on a wide variety of infrastructures to identify weaknesses and recommend an action plan for further engineering analysis needed to study and develop infrastructure upgrades. At public meetings for the study, we heard two questions about infrastructure from South Enders: 1) We already have traffic and parking problems. Can we really improve mobility infrastructure enough to accommodate growth? 2) Are there other infrastructure limits on growth? In this chapter, we outline our efforts to answer these questions.

“Flow is the main problem. The train station is an embarrassment. We need to force Stamford to build roads to accommodate growth.”

Jeff Newman, Empire State, commercial developer

GROWTH AND TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Residents expressed concerns about increasing traffic as the South End grows, as well as unsafe driving speeds on neighborhood streets. The location of Stamford’s South End on a peninsula south of the I-95 turnpike limits access to five streets: Washington Boulevard, Atlantic Street, and Canal Street running north-south, and Pulaski Street and Jefferson Street running east-west. Traffic and congestion in the South End is concentrated on these five streets during peak hours, particularly the three streets that pass under the I-95 corridor. Adding capacity by adding lanes to the I-95 highway and rail underpasses is a very expensive (if not impossible) endeavor.

Intersections are the choke points in any street network. Our infrastructure engineering team reviewed April 2017 City Department of Transportation vehicle counts at the five South End access intersections. For the current South End population of roughly 7,500 residents and a workforce of 2,500, traffic counts reveal a significant number of vehicles moving northbound on Washington Boulevard making left turns onto I-95. Based on estimates of intersection capacity, the left-turn movement is over capacity, with a vehicle-to-capacity (V/C) ratio of roughly 105%, which causes delays that residents of the South End know well. Other movements through potential pinch points, including Atlantic Street, Canal Street and through-

traffic on Washington Boulevard, are still operating under capacity and, based on the City’s counts, should not currently cause significant delays.

Next, we analyzed how growth in the South End will impact traffic at these locations. We looked at two growth scenarios—one with 20,000 residents and workers¹—to estimate future traffic at the key intersections. For the purpose of analyzing potential for growth impacts without infrastructure upgrades and traffic management, we assumed that the physical design of intersections, signal intervals, and vehicle stacking distances—all of which could be optimized to improve the flow through the intersections—remain the same as growth occurs. We also assumed that 68% of residents and workers in the South End would continue to rely on cars for their daily transportation needs and to drive alone, as they do now.²

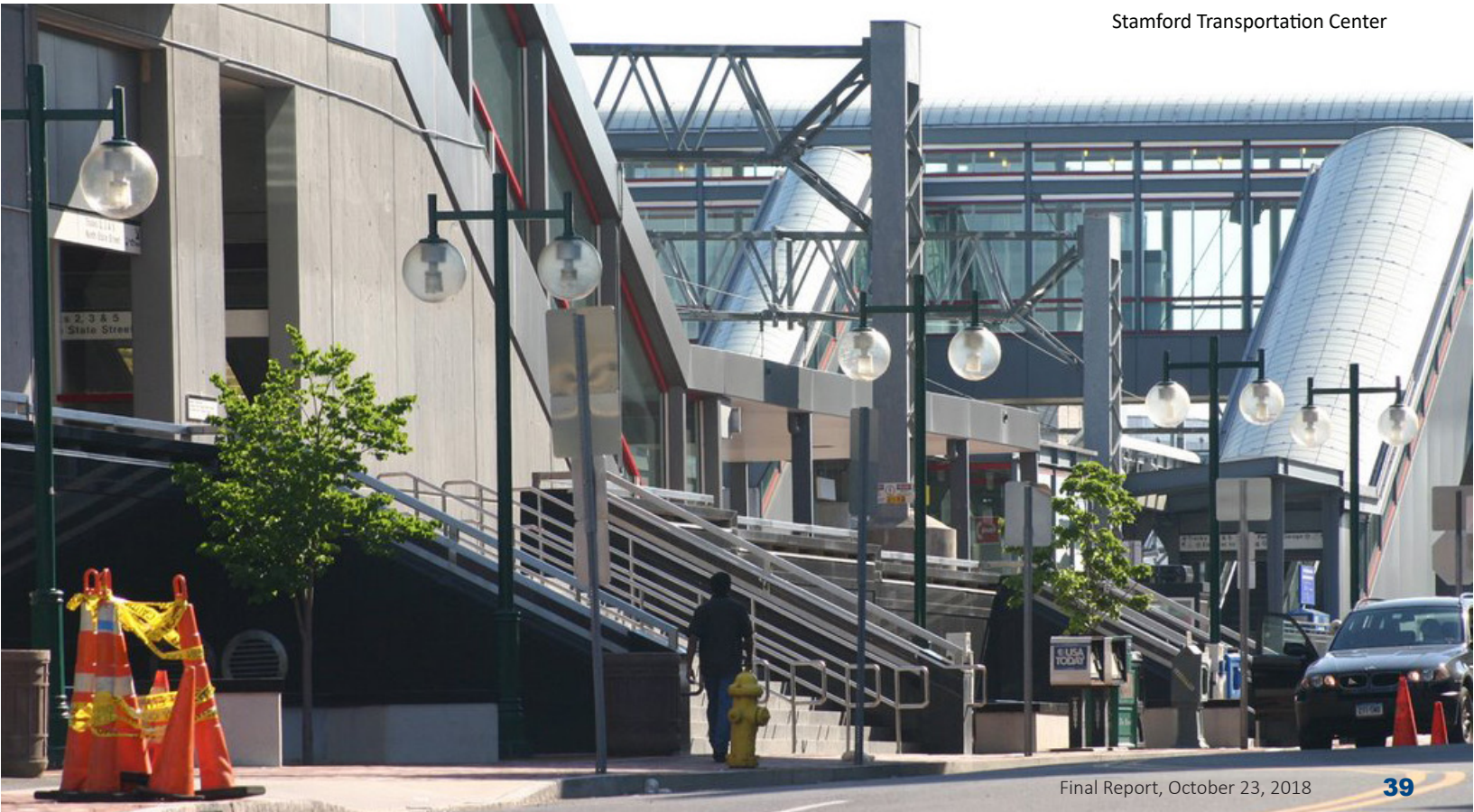
With these assumptions, the vehicle-to-capacity ratio for the left-turn movement from Washington Boulevard onto I-95, which is already at 105%, could increase to 130% in the moderate-growth scenario and to as much as 180% of capacity in the high-growth scenario. Northbound through-traffic and the northbound right-turn movement at Canal Street and South State Street are expected to reach 150% of capacity in the moderate growth scenario, and the vehicle-to-capacity ratio in this locations could increase to 180% in the high growth outlook. Other movements at the five key access point intersections would still provide an acceptable level of service in both growth scenarios, with vehicle-to-capacity ratios under 95%.

¹ The Stamford Land Use Bureau estimates that the current population of the South End is 7,500 residents and a workforce of 2,500. In a moderate growth scenario—the amount of growth anticipated under the South End Master Plan—the number of residents is expected to grow to 15,000 and the number of workers to 5,000. In a high growth scenario where the City upzones development areas in the South End, the total number of residents and workers could grow to as much as 27,000, the LUB suggests.

² A 2008 impact study for Harbor Point estimated that 68% of residents relied on single occupancy vehicles—a percentage that is likely still a good approximation of current patterns. This percentage may have increased in recent years with Uber and Lyft and the lack of good alternative options.



Dock Street



Stamford Transportation Center

TRANSPORTATION AND STREETScape

Recommendation: Analyze and invest in strategic upgrades to transportation infrastructure and management to 1) improve traffic congestion and parking and 2) accommodate the growing number of residents and workers with infrastructure that supports walking, biking, buses and autonomous vehicle shuttles.

MOBILITY ANALYSIS

Although people who participated in our public forums did not seem to consider bikeways and transit improvements to be major priorities, our engineers’ strong recommendation is that shifting from driving alone to other modes of movement (called the “mode split”) is the best solution to congestion problems. If the percentage of people who use sustainable modes of travel increases—including walking, biking, buses, rideshares, and autonomous vehicle shuttles—congestion can be reduced. The team analyzed three potential scenarios to evaluate the impact that shifting modes of travel could have on traffic in the South End. The graphic at right illustrates the existing mode split, and the splits in the three alternatives.

Our analysis indicates that shifting the mode split can reduce future traffic congestion and help lower vehicle-to-capacity ratios at South End access points. With the total number of residents and workers between 15,500 and 20,000, shifting the mode split is sufficient to maintain acceptable vehicle-to-capacity ratios at all access points, except the northbound left turn from Washington Boulevard onto I-95. With the total number of residents and workers between 20,000 and 27,000, as in the City’s moderate and high growth scenarios, mode shifting alone may not be sufficient to bring the vehicle-to-capacity ratio down to acceptable levels.

Our analyses show that some movements at the intersection of Canal Street and South State Street may be pushed over capacity in all mode split scenarios; however, there is a significant amount of excess capacity on Atlantic Street that could draw traffic away from Canal Street.

The Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) mode split scenario reduces single-occupancy vehicles to 50% of the total, doubles bus rides, and significantly increases walking and biking. This mode split would reduce traffic congestion significantly and comfortably accommodate moderate growth everywhere except Washington Boulevard. With high growth, the Canal Street and South State Street intersection will be at 130-140% of capacity with the TOD mode split.

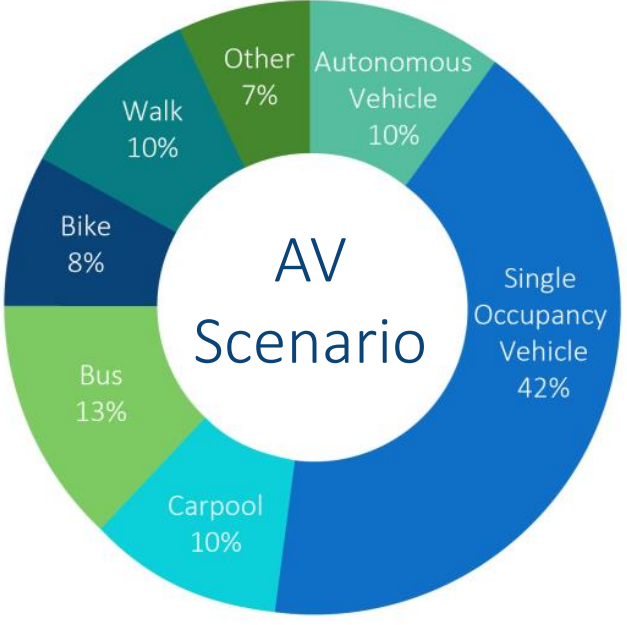
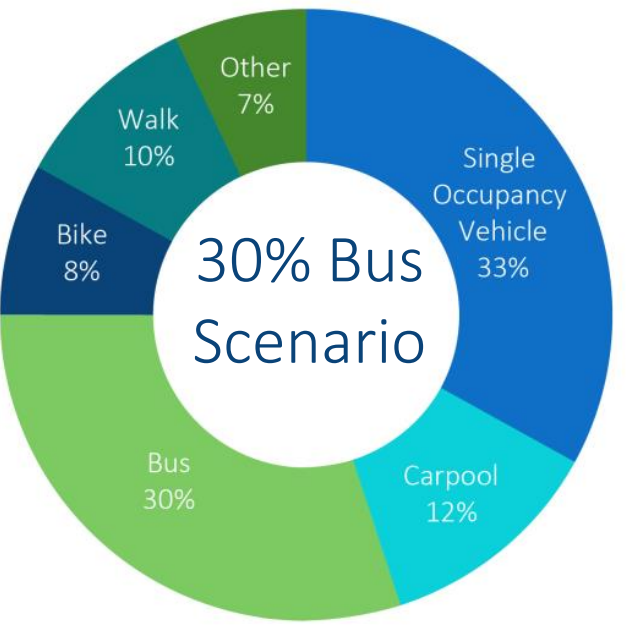
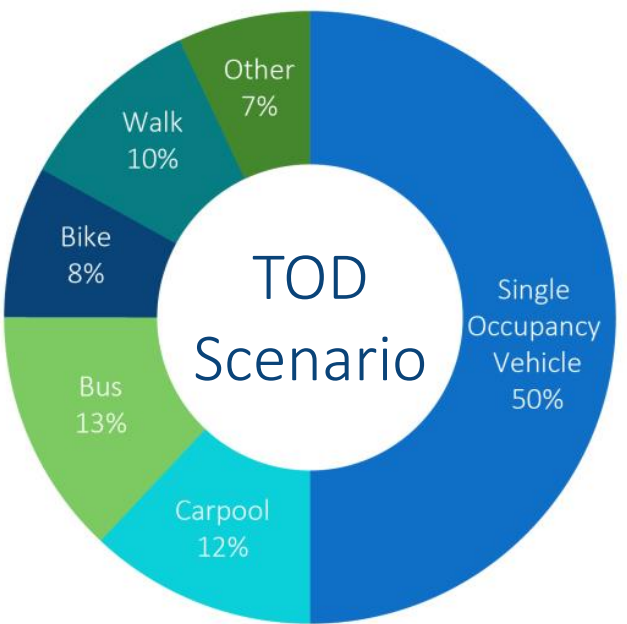
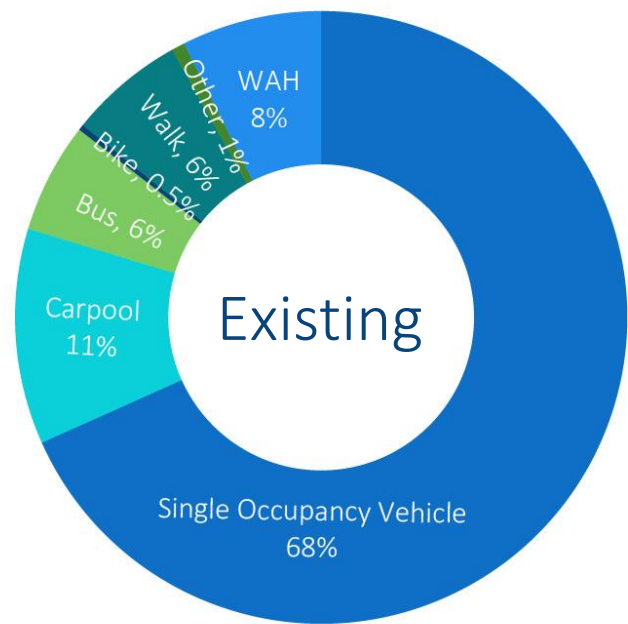
The other two scenarios we studied—one of which increases bus rides to 30% of trips, the other which introduces autonomous vehicle shuttles to serve 10% of trips—both push the Canal Street and South State Street intersection capacity down to 110% and 125%, respectively.³ Atlantic Street remains below capacity in both scenarios and could accommodate a significant amount of Canal Street overflow, but a detailed traffic study is needed to evaluate this closely.

Based on this analysis and their experience in other cities, Level Infrastructure believes the most effective strategy for mitigating congestion in the South End will include comprehensive mode shifting measures, alongside intersection optimization. Significant efforts to shift the means of travel will minimize traffic congestion everywhere except Washington Boulevard, where additional capacity improvements will be needed regardless of mode split.

In other words, shifting the mode split is necessary, but it may not be sufficient at the highest levels of growth. Either vehicle capacity will have to be increased, or growth levels will have to be set with access point capacity in mind. For this reason, a detailed traffic study that considers increasing capacity through signal optimization and other design strategies is necessary and pressing as part of setting a desirable level of overall growth.

Well-designed, safe and enjoyable street infrastructure is what is needed to “move the needle” toward new mode splits and congestion management.

³ When the Level used 15,500 residents and workers for the moderate scenario and 22,500 residents and workers for the high growth scenario, V/C performance was significantly better, with Canal at 80% and 90% respectively.



Pie graphs that illustrate the percentage of trips people take by different means currently, and in three alternative scenarios that Level Infrastructure modeled to estimate potential reductions of traffic these changes might bring

TRANSPORTATION AND STREETScape

Recommendation: Upgrade South End streetscape design and lighting to improve safety, bring people out, connect the different districts of the South End, create lively commercial areas, and increase the percentage of trips people make on foot, on bike and via transit.

STREETSCAPES THAT TAME TRAFFIC AND INCREASE COMMUNITY

It is well documented in the field of traffic engineering that adding lanes does not ease congestion, but actually increases traffic through a phenomenon called *induced demand*. And as outlined, the South End intersections that will be pushed to capacity by growth—Washington Boulevard, Atlantic Street and Canal Street—cannot be fixed easily by widening roads, due to the exorbitant cost and feasibility challenges of altering I-95 and rail underpasses. The engineers’ assessment is that a much more cost-effective and long-term solution to traffic congestion is shifting the balance of people’s modes of travel by investing in walkability, public transit and bike infrastructure, and reducing the percentage of trips in cars.

Many residents, property managers and developers see crime as a major problem in the South End. The perceived lack of safety kills street life, retail, community-building, length of tenure, and walkability. There is safety in numbers, and many other cities have found that streetscape and lighting improvements have a major deterrent effect on crime and many other neighborhood benefits. We outline our team’s detailed streetscape recommendations by mode of movement below.

Walkability

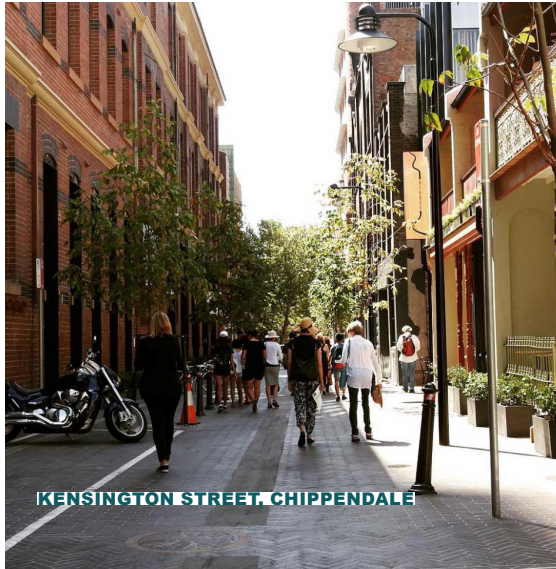
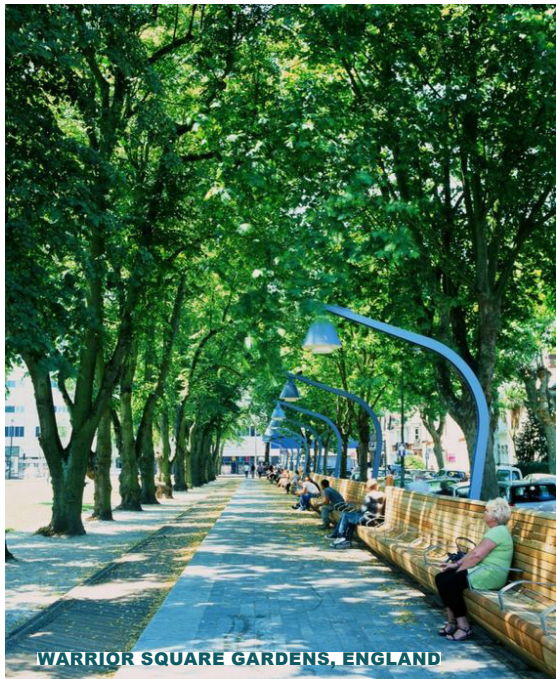
Distances in the South End are short. Many trips from home to commercial areas, the train station and downtown can be made in under 30 minutes on foot. The key to making the South End a truly walkable neighborhood is creating a safe and enjoyable experience.

Residents expressed concerns about people driving too fast on neighborhood streets. Many improvements that contribute to improved bus and bike service will calm traffic, and make street crossings safer, particularly for children, the elderly and people with disabilities.

Pedestrian safety improvements should focus on well-lit streets and well-marked crossings. Traffic calming measures, including reduced lane widths, raised pedestrian crossings, and pedestrian bump-outs, are typical mobility engineering strategies to improve both the real and perceived safety of walking and crossing the street. More ground-floor retail and a new school would play a significant role in making a street feel active and interesting. Shade trees, drainage improvements, and repaving will also make walking more enjoyable.

Walkability Design Recommendations:

- Ample lighting on streets and underpasses
- Reduced lane widths and other traffic calming tools to promote safety
- Active and engaging storefronts on commercial streets
- Trees, landscape design and public art to create visual interest
- Improved street furniture, resting places, pocket parks, places to take lunch or coffee outside, and garden streets to create an “everyday public realm” that gets people out and engaged with their neighbors



Examples of walkable, green streets with simple amenities

TRANSPORTATION AND STREETScape

Bike Network

The team invested substantial time developing a South End bike network that includes dedicated lanes, recreational paths, bike share program, stronger linkage to downtown and a new pedestrian and bike bridge to Shippan. We suggest better protection for cyclists on existing dedicated lanes. Connections between this bike network within the urban fabric and recreational greenways along the shoreline would significantly increase enjoyment of the water and Kosciusko Park.

A Zagster bike share system, currently limited to BLT employees, has stations at three locations in the South End: Harbor Point, the former Pitney Bowes / Silicon Harbor building, and the Gateway Garage near the Transit Center. The study team’s retail strategists heard from some residents that they were frustrated that the bike share was not available to them. These residents said they would use a bike share system, particularly if routes were upgraded.

Some residents expressed concern about dedicating more road right-of-way to bikes, fearing this would increase car congestion. The engineers’ preliminary study of the roadways suggests that the flow of cars is constrained by the five access intersections, not the width of roadway for cars within the peninsula. Preliminary engineering studies for bikeways on each street, like the one at right, as well as a number of relevant precedents for bikeways, are available on the PlanSouthEnd.com project website.

Several participants in the public forums for the study worried that money would be spent on bikeways and no one would use them. Several studies across small and mid-sized cities in the United States show, however, that the simple act of building protected bike infrastructure increases ridership.^{4,5} In some cases, the addition of protected bike lanes attracted many new riders (people who would have otherwise taken other modes, including driving), a group that was as much as 10% of the total riders using the protected bike lanes. In other words, if you build it, they will come.

4 Monsere, Christopher and Dill, Jennifer, “Highlights from the Green Lane: A Comprehensive Evaluation of Protected Cycling Facilities” (2014)

5 National Association of City Transportation Officials, “Equitable Bike Share Means Building Better Places for People to Ride” (2016).

While it is not expected that all long-time residents of the South End will shift to bikes for short trips, the investment required to provide protected bike lanes is relatively small compared to other traffic management measures and should be considered as a potentially integral part of solving the traffic puzzle in the neighborhood. A key component of this plan is creating a reliable network across Stamford, particularly in downtown, so that less confident riders feel safe for the entirety of their trip.

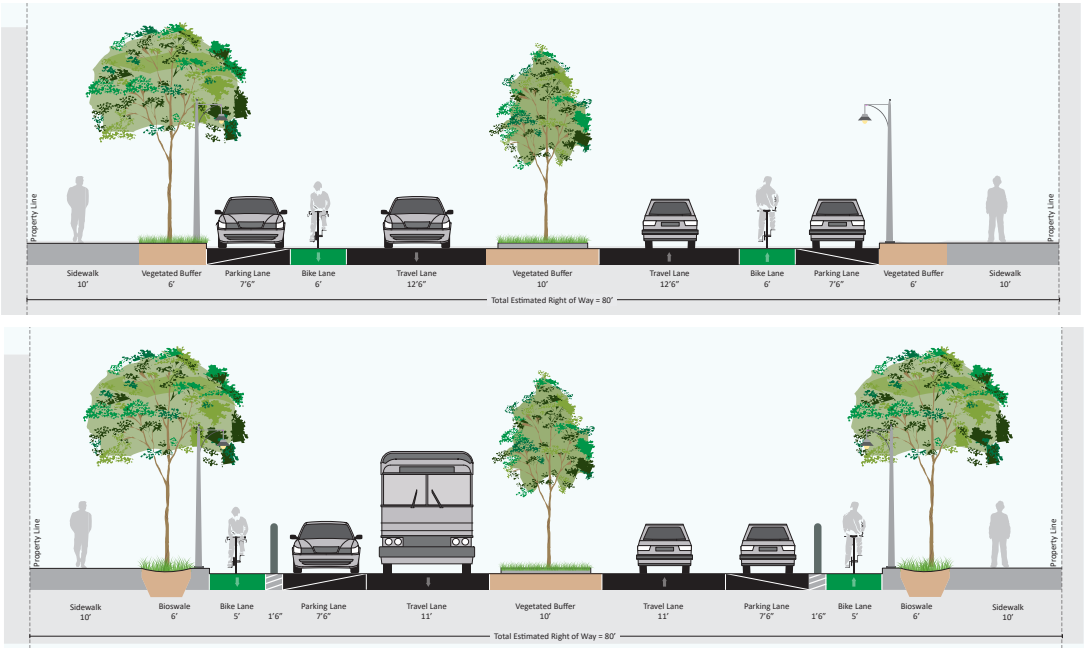
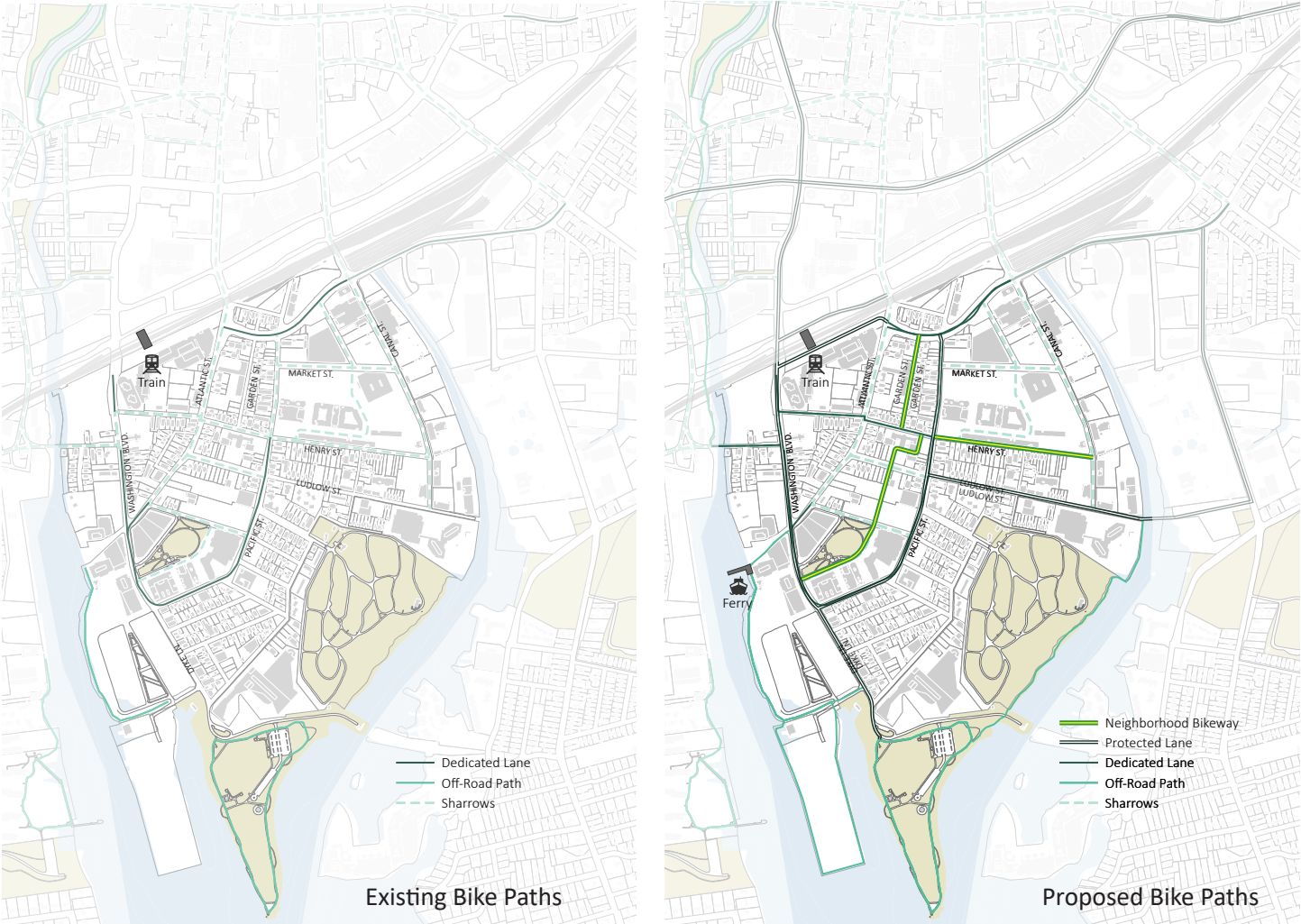
Bikeway Design Recommendations:

- Current dedicated lanes converted to bike lanes protected by parking lanes, bollards or planted medians
- Signage and street features that signal to drivers that cyclists and pedestrians are the primary mode on selected streets
- Expansion of downtown bike lanes to make the South End network more useful
- Bike share to make short trips to the train station and downtown convenient

Many of the recommendations above would be realized through street design. We developed typical street sections to illustrate how streetscape improvements can encourage cycling, walking, and transit, and make neighborhood street life safe, social, and lively. A list of recommendations and our engineers’ draft design of Atlantic, Pacific, and Washington are included in materials online at PlanSouthEnd.com.



Zagster bike share at Silicon Harbor.



Existing Pacific Street

Proposed Pacific Street with conversion of designated lanes to protected bike lanes

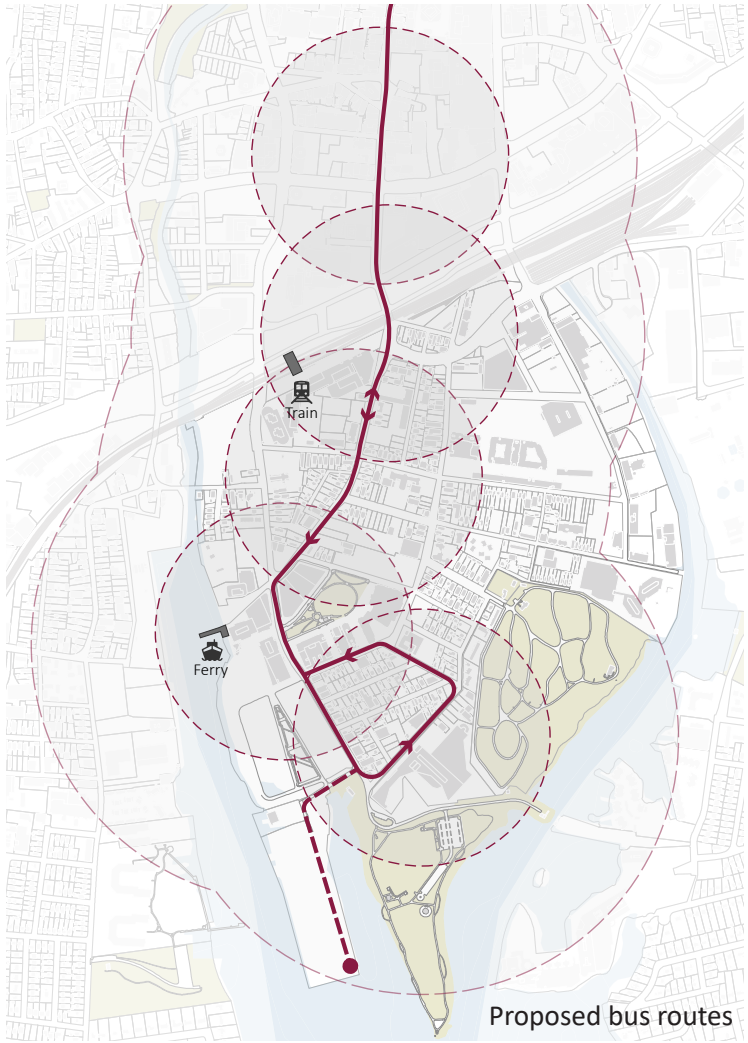
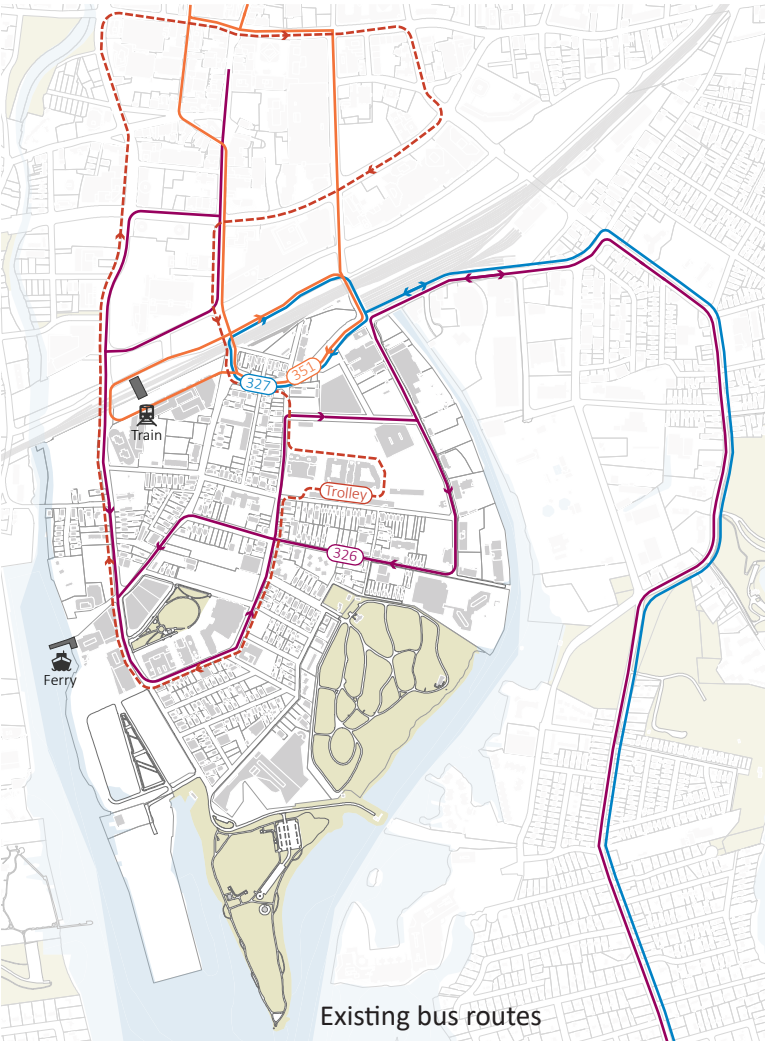
TRANSPORTATION AND STREETScape

Improved Bus Service

Current South End bus lines run roughly every 30 minutes, and the figure-eight route of bus 326 is confusing to riders and inefficient in moving people where they need to go. The team recommends eliminating the 326 figure-eight, and proposes a single route with more frequent service that runs within a ½-mile walk of 90% of current and future populations, and provides regular and reliable service to the Stamford Transportation Center and downtown Stamford. Converging bus lines downtown will allow passengers to transfer between buses if necessary.

Transit Design Recommendations:

- Fewer routes, increased frequency
- Bus stops convenient to trip origins and destinations, spaced 500 to 800 feet apart
- GPS-enabled buses that will let people know when the bus is coming via digital sign or smart phone
- Bus bump-outs to reduce time at stops, and increase safety by eliminating buses merging into traffic
- Traffic light prioritization for buses (lights stay green when buses are approaching)



Autonomous Vehicle Shuttle

Stamford’s Innovation District recently received funding to implement a number of transit improvements. Implementation of an autonomous vehicle shuttle is one of the key projects, and the City’s Economic Development office is developing plans for a pilot that is expected to launch in the near future. Similar projects are being piloted in other cities, including Las Vegas. The scale of the South End and its proximity to downtown make the peninsula an excellent pilot site. Pilot service could expand to regular service of every 5 minutes within a relatively short period, as the technology is improving quickly.

Autonomous Vehicle Design Recommendations:

- Higher frequency service than buses or private shuttles—one every 5 minutes
- Autonomous shuttles and regular traffic share the lanes
- Passengers get on and off at designated stops to keep this service moving
- Capacity of 10-20 passengers per shuttle



TRANSPORTATION AND STREETScape

Parking

Parking in the South End is currently free on both commercial and residential streets. Parking costs money in the structured parking in new developments and at the train station. With the neighborhood’s proximity to the train station and downtown, free parking allows and encourages drivers from outside the neighborhood (and sometimes outside Stamford) and many residents in new buildings to park on the street for long periods of time. This limits the availability of curb space for residents and increases the number of people circling for parking, contributing to congestion. Free parking on commercial streets also means there is low turnover on the curb, which is bad for many local businesses. Better parking regulations will help to shift the mode split, make parking better for existing residents, support local businesses, and support the creation of more affordable accessory dwelling units.

Furthermore, current zoning regulations require a minimum amount of parking for new development, including 1.25 spaces per residential dwelling unit and 1 space per 1,000 square feet of commercial gross floor area. Parking minimums at these levels encourage car ownership and use of vehicles for even small trips, thus contributing to congestion. Parking maximums for new developments, on the other hand, allow developers to integrate some level of parking consistent with actual demand while ensuring the development remains transit-oriented.

Key Recommendations:

- Parking meters on commercial streets
- Resident parking permits for people in the preservation district, not new buildings with structured parking
- Zoning for new development that includes parking maximums, not minimums
- Requirement that new structured parking that is “wrapped” by retail, offices, apartments and civic facilities to reduce the dead zone on the street created by large parking structures
- Replacement of the state parking structures at the train station with new development that incorporates parking while maintaining a lively face on the street



Parking meters for commercial streets



Street parking for residents with permits



TRANSPORTATION AND STREETScape

POTENTIAL MOBILITY IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE FUTURE

Below are the team’s ideas for mobility improvements that did not make it into the list of the community’s priorities or our team’s top recommendations. These ideas could certainly be folded into priority transportation upgrades, if additional analysis of traffic and allocation of the street space shows they have merit. Others might be made as independent investments down the line, once priorities are met.

- Creation of a new train station and replacement of State parking garages to improve flow between train, bus, car, bike and foot travel, and animate the dead zone around the train station
- Redesign of gateways to the community that integrate a more inclusive, historically rich and dynamic sense of place with road and other mobility improvements
- Waterfront greenway to open up 3 miles of South End waterfront for public enjoyment, and link the existing 64 acres of green space in the South End to Mill River Park downtown
- A green bike and pedestrian boulevard with light car traffic on Garden Street that makes a pleasure of walking, cycling and paseo (the name in Latin America for an evening or weekend social stroll where families run into their friends)
- A pedestrian and cycle bridge at the east end of Ludlow Street to link the South End to Cummings Park and the beach in Shippan
- Community boating, amenities and transportation that get people out on the water and reconnect the community with the Sound, and with the South End’s watery nature and history

A number of participants in our public forums see the potential of streetscape and other mobility improvements to create new kinds of amenity and a new experience of place.

In 10 years, the South End will be a “water city with ferry and bridge access to the Waterside and Shippan neighborhoods, and ferries to New York.”

“It will have a new shoreline for boaters, fishermen and non-boaters. There is great potential.”

“The South End will have more connective paths for pedestrians, well-maintained parks and playgrounds used by families, and adequate parking for residents.”

Responses from participants in the first public forum for the study



Rendering of a South End waterfront greenway and community boathouse



PHOTO: PETER NYLUND



TRANSPORTATION AND STREETScape

COASTAL FLOOD RISK

The South End’s coastal flood levy and tidal gate were constructed in the 1960s and have proven successful in reducing coastal flooding since. The top of the hurricane barrier was built to approximately elevation 15.8’ (NAVD88). A 2013 flood study by FEMA indicated that large storm events, with a 1% probability of occurring in any given year, would bring water up to 10.8’, which is still 5’ below the barrier. Mid-range projections of sea-level rise in an October 2017 climate risk study by the University of Connecticut show sea-level rise of approximately 1.0’ by 2040 and 2.0’ by 2070.

The team’s engineers judge that the existing hurricane barrier in the South End is sufficiently high and is extremely unlikely to be overtopped in the foreseeable future. Compared to some of the tangible challenges at hand in the South End, the team does not identify coastal flooding as a near-term challenge or priority for investment.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND FLOODING FROM RAIN STORMS

Our team was in Stamford on June 28, 2018, which serendipitously coincided with a significant storm that brought 2 inches of rain in less than an hour. Several streets quickly flooded, making much of the South End impassible. We observed several “sewer geysers”—jets of water spraying up through a manhole—often caused by a sewer blockage or backups within the sewer due to rapid filling of the pipe. On most streets, water receded within an hour.

A detailed study of the storm sewer network in the South End is needed to pinpoint and solve the trouble spots within the network. The frequency of this level of flooding during less intense storms should be studied further to determine where and how green infrastructure could help manage storm water. A proactive, landscape-based approach to storm water management will ease stress on the sewers, and green infrastructure such as bioswales and rain gardens can also be used to improve the walking experience and calm traffic.

GROWTH AND CARRYING CAPACITY OF OTHER INFRASTRUCTURES

Our analysis looked at energy, drinking water, sanitary sewers and sewage treatment plants, and telecommunication networks, and the engineering team did not identify infrastructure issues that constrain growth and require immediate attention. None of these seem to face unusual challenges accommodating future growth in the South End.

ACTION PLAN FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

- Study traffic and signalization at key intersections (Washington Boulevard at South State and North State Streets, Canal Street at South State and North State Streets)
- Study queuing at the train station to determine if better management of the many private shuttles, parking, and pick up and drop off points can alleviate congestion getting in and out of the South End. (A new train station design could significantly improve flow, but other cheaper and more immediate measures may also bring relief.)
- Develop parking management action plan that develops recommendations to locate parking meters and set rates, establish overnight parking regulations, incorporate improved parking rules into zoning, and create resident permits
- Adjust bus route and schedule frequency
- Continue public conversation about streetscape improvements and shifting the mode split once progress is made on traffic, queuing and parking studies. Develop streetscape and transit design to support walking, biking, autonomous vehicles, and bus transit, in coordination with retail corridor improvement projects
- Develop a detailed sewer survey and capacity study, and a green infrastructure master plan

Example of a vibrant walkable, social place, Pitt Street Mall, Sydney



AFFORDABLE RETAIL

Our public and stakeholder meetings for the South End Neighborhood Study identified the development of an active and diverse retail sector with more affordable shops and restaurants as a major aim of interest to the entire community and workforce. Many people’s visions of the South End as a place with character, community and jobs include vibrant retail.

“In 10 years, the South End will be a district with character—funky, artsy, and economically viable.”

“In 10 years, the South End will be a place with affordable retail, entertainment, and restaurants as common venues for the whole community.”

“In 10 years, the South End will have diverse retail and other businesses that employ residents.”

The South End’s remarkable pace and scale of development in recent years has created an influx of higher income residents and workers with different spending patterns than the low and middle income residents. It has also led to the formation of retail sub-districts serving different market groups within the South End. A growing number of restaurants, shops, and services are too expensive for many residents to use on a regular basis, and so our team gave special attention to analyzing the market for affordable retail (defined as retail establishments that meet the needs and price points of the South End’s existing low and middle income residents).

Our retail consultants, Larisa Ortiz Associates, evaluated current retail supply and demand, and estimated future demand. They conducted interviews and focus groups with residents, merchants, and office workers, and analyzed data from various sources.¹ Our retail consultants’ full

1 Demographic data from the United States Census, ESRI Business Analyst Online, Loopnet, the International Council of Shopping Centers’ U.S. Mall Performance Report.

analysis—available online at PlanSouthEnd.com—is summarized here. Within the limits of available data, we were able to examine the spending habits and preferences of discrete customer groups, and make recommendations to improve South End retail in the future.

Retail conclusions and our team’s recommendations in other areas are mutually reinforcing: clusters of active local retail will encourage pedestrian flow and activity on the street, increase safety and link the communities of the South End. In order for neighborhood retail to flourish, streetscape improvements, preservation planning, and zoning must be in place to support merchants.

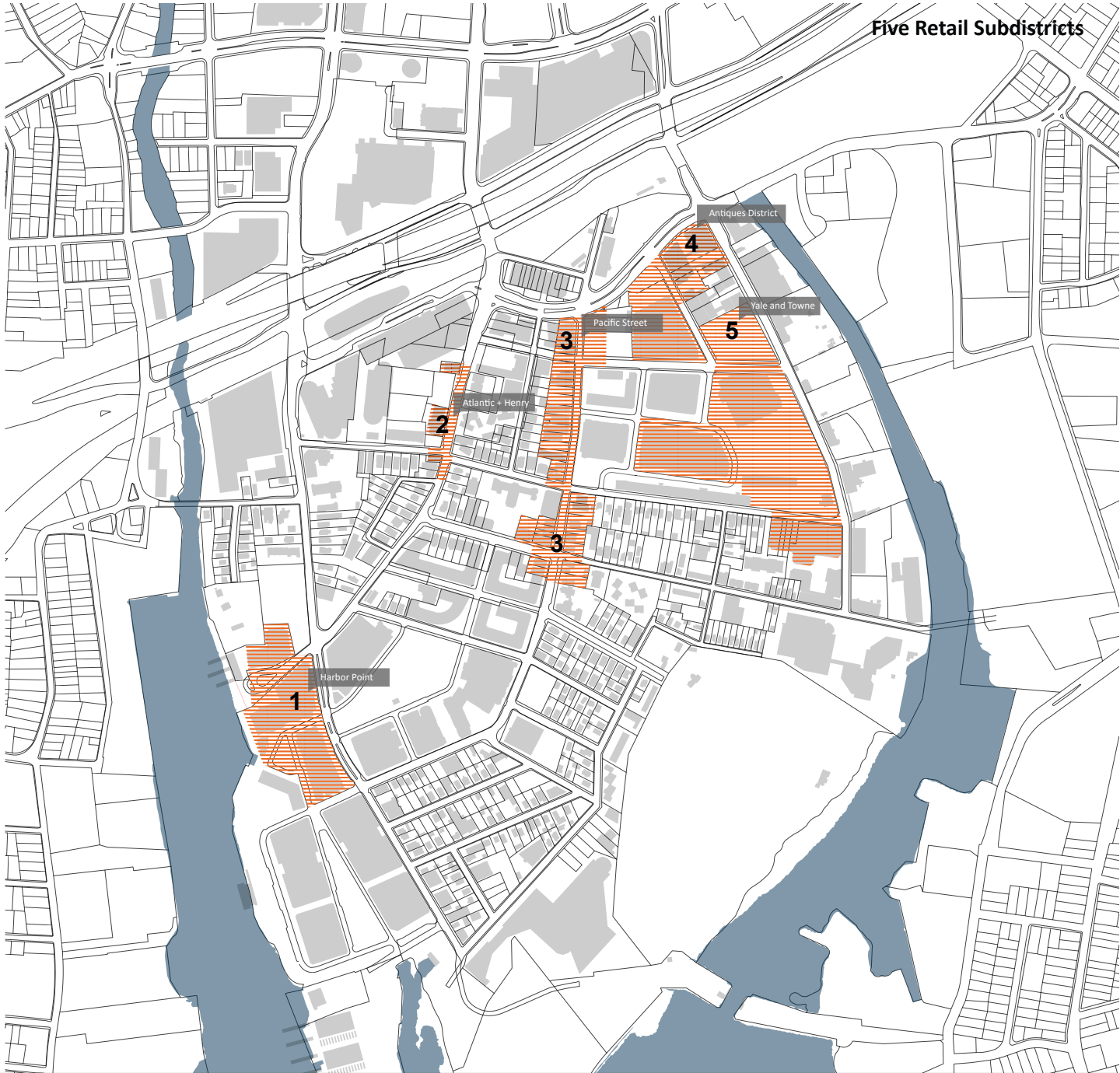
CURRENT RETAIL OFFERINGS—THE SUPPLY SIDE OF THE MARKET

A total of 67 businesses in the South End generate \$57.5M in annual sales. These businesses occupy a total of 369,042 square feet of retail space in five retail sub-districts, each of which has a distinct mix of businesses, activities, primary customer bases, trade areas, and physical conditions. Most people said they shopped in their own sub-district, but rarely outside of it. This seems to be partly because of safety and access barriers to movement, and partly because of limited retail offerings, limiting the draw for people to go beyond their own sub-district.

Although the South End is much more conducive to a walkable and concentrated retail environment than downtown Stamford, newer residents are reticent about shopping in sub-districts outside of their own area due to concerns about safety. Residents, workers, and merchants in the new developments consistently expressed concern about crime in the South End. Some said they were afraid to walk on certain streets during daylight hours.

Some said the lack of “curb appeal” of many existing neighborhood-oriented retail storefronts, especially along Pacific Street, may exacerbate safety concerns. Windows that are obscured by merchandise or posters reduce “eyes on the street” and sense of openness to potential customers. Poor lighting, loitering, and vacant lots also seem to contribute to fear.

Some long-time residents disputed the perceptions of areas of the South End as unsafe and expressed frustration that newer residents were afraid to walk on Pacific Street. And some of the residents and workers who expressed concerns over crime and safety acknowledged that very often these concerns stemmed more from perception



SOUTH END SUB-DISTRICT CLASSIFICATIONS					
SUB-DISTRICT	ICSC CLASSIFICATION	GLA RETAIL (SF)	ANCHOR TYPES	TRADE AREA	VACANCY RATE
Atlantic and Henry	Strip/Convenience	10,478	Stamford Transit Center	< 1 mi	40%
Pacific Street	Neighborhood Center	49,597	Lathon Wider Community Center	3 mi	8%
Harbor Point	Lifestyle (small)	55,003	Dining, retail, and service oriented offerings	8-12 mi	43%
Antiques Row	“Factory Outlet”	119,000	Antiques warehouses	25-75 mi	0%
Yale & Towne	Community Center	134,964	Fairway Grocery	3-6 mi	0%

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than reality. They see improvements happening around them and express optimism that capital investments and new development will create a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

Merchants in Harbor Point and Yale & Towne reported that their businesses were generally doing well, but that the winter months, when activity wanes, are tough. Merchants agreed that there would be benefits to having more food and beverage establishments in the area, but they also believe more types of retail—beyond eating, drinking, and exercising—are needed if customers are going to stay longer and spend more dollars in the South End.

Most residents currently depend on cars for shopping, and merchants see convenience parking as essential. But our retail consultants also found that in the current limited retail environment, once residents decide to use their cars for shopping, they are more likely to leave the South End. Promoting an environment that is pedestrian and bicycle-friendly will likely reinforce local support for small businesses.

Retail rents for newer retail spaces in the South End were estimated between \$40 and \$45 per square foot, which is comparable to similar spaces in downtown. At this rate, a hypothetical 4,000 square foot restaurant with annual sales of \$600 per square foot in annual sales would be paying 7.5% of their gross income to rent, which is not unreasonable for high-end restaurants.

Retail rents along Pacific Street and in the vicinity of Atlantic and Henry Streets were harder to assess given the lack of listings on commercial real estate databases and the fact that these property owners are mostly small and independent. A deeper investigation into rents for neighborhood retail on Pacific Street is needed to determine if policies or development agreements are required to ensure sufficient affordable space for merchants.

A number of stakeholders, including merchants, argue that restrictions set in a 2005-2006 development agreement between Building and Land Technology (BLT) developers and the Downtown Special Services District (DSSD) interfere with the evolution of a strong retail sector in the South End. As part of the agreement, the South End retail mix in the SRD-N and SRD-S zoning districts— Yale & Towne and Harbor Point—is limited to neighborhood-serving retail. Destination retail, including theaters and entertainment, and comparison retail, such as apparel and sporting goods, are prohibited out of concern from the DSSD that these would compete with downtown businesses and hurt the mall.

Our stakeholder outreach showed that there is limited demand for destination and comparison retail in the South End. Based on our analysis, it does not seem necessary at this time to explore removing these retail restrictions. Other retail issues are likely to have greater impact on the limited offerings. The retail use restrictions may need to be revisited in the future, if retail demand evolves in the neighborhood.

THE DEMAND SIDE OF THE RETAIL MARKET

The three major South End customer groups—the longstanding residents, newer residents, and workers—expressed differing consumer patterns and desires, but also a great deal of common interest.

Longstanding residents are likely to do their retail shopping in the sub-districts with neighborhood trade areas—Pacific Street and the small corner convenience stores that are scattered throughout the neighborhood—or use their cars to shop outside the South End. To a much lesser degree, they also patronize retail in Harbor Point and Yale & Towne. Compared with the newer residents, these residents have lower median disposable incomes (estimated at \$26,579 annually). This group is very interested in expanding the options for affordable, family-friendly retail, which is currently very limited in the South End. Newer residents of the high-rise multi-family buildings have higher median disposable incomes (\$44,172 annually) and are typically Millennials, empty nesters, or young families. Many of the new rental buildings have annual turnover rates of 50 percent or more, and lease terms of 1-2 years are common. This group is significantly more transient than the longstanding residents. Because they are so new, the residents in this group are not yet accounted for in the census or market databases.

In focus groups, the newer residents (particularly those near Harbor Point) expressed a desire for more food and beverage establishments, personal care services, convenience retail, and boutique or specialty retail for gifts, crafts, and other small items. Some described Harbor Point as a “compound” that felt like a “mini city,” and they



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said they felt the area lacked a sense of community and character due in part to limited programming and a lack of retail offerings.

Workers in the South End are predominantly office-based, and have higher incomes (more than \$3,333 per month) than longstanding residents. Only a small proportion of workers are local residents, and those are generally in lower-paid occupations that earn \$1,251-\$3,333 per month. The retail spending of workers is currently limited to food. Office workers near the Transit Center expressed a desire to see more neighborhood services and convenience offerings, preferably within the Stamford Transit Center itself. They emphasized an interest in prepared foods, personal care services, and some general merchandise options. Commercial office buildings in the South End tend to provide on-site amenities that discourage employees from going out.

GROWING AND SHARED DEMAND

All stakeholders—whether longstanding residents, newer residents, or workers—said that the current retail offerings in the South End were too limited and lacked a mix of price points, particularly affordable options. Many residents shared similar responses about what sort of retail is missing, emphasizing convenience and neighborhood-serving retail. Many felt they lacked a place to get a newspaper or casual dining places serving healthy and affordable food. Residents and workers participating in our focus groups indicate there is significant unmet local demand for:

- Bagels/bakery
- Bowling/bocce/recreation
- Coffee shop/café
- Diner
- Ethnic restaurants
- Farmer’s markets
- Fast casual options
- Food trucks
- Grocery basics (i.e. milk/bread)
- Healthy options
- Newspapers / news vendor
- Family-oriented establishments

Based on retail supply and demand, our retail consultants estimate the South End can currently support an additional 38,000 square feet of retail. With future development in keeping with the moderate growth scenario (a total of 15,000 residents and 5,000 workers), the South End could support an additional 96,000 square feet of retail.

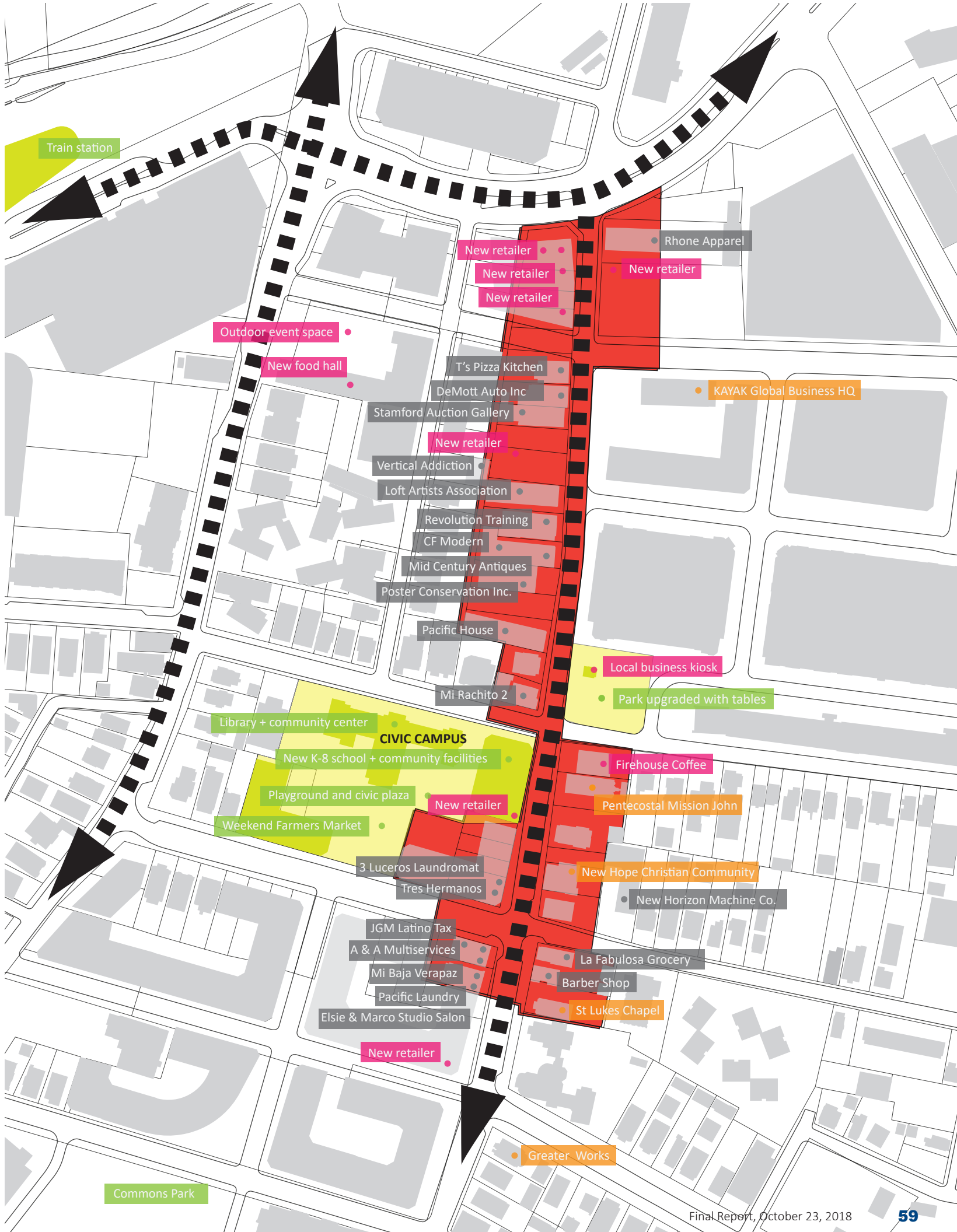
Recommendation: Create a Commercial District Zoning Overlay to strengthen the Pacific Street retail cluster and support that district with historic preservation protections, a small business toolkit, development of new affordable retail spaces, and streetscape and park improvements.

Pacific Street is located at the nexus of the neighborhood’s different sub-districts. The corridor is the most direct and natural pedestrian path between areas of concentrated new development and the historic neighborhood. Reinforcing this street as a walkable, comfortable connection between Harbor Point and Yale & Towne will further deepen residents’ patronage of those retail offerings and encourage residents to walk or bike. The nearby Lathon Wider Community Center, a critical community anchor, helps drive pedestrian traffic to the area, as do Waterside School, churches, parks, the historic residential areas, and potentially a new K-8 public school.

Pacific Street is the most substantial established commercial corridor serving residents in the South End, with 49,597 square feet of affordable retail and several businesses with cross-cutting appeal. The best strategy to produce a thriving retail “Main Street” in the South End that meets demand is to build on this node of existing affordable retail on Pacific Street. This strategy would rely on supporting small businesses that already serve the customer base, and fixing corridor weaknesses with targeted policy and investment.

Atlantic Street has also been suggested as a possible corridor for retail development because of its proximity to the train station and stronger pass-through traffic. Our retail consultants do not believe there is sufficient demand for two neighborhood-serving retail clusters (both Pacific and Atlantic Streets). With roughly 10,500 square feet of retail space and much of it vacant, Atlantic lacks a strong existing retail presence. It would therefore require the development of new retail space, which would have high rents without ongoing subsidy. Atlantic also does not function as the most direct pedestrian link between Yale & Towne and Harbor Point.

The challenges of Pacific Street as the shared “Main Street” are: negative perceptions by newer residents and workers regarding safety; some storefronts’ lack of curb appeal; zoning that varies widely and lacks a unifying framework to support retail growth; and an absence of administrative capacity and stewardship to promote long-



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term and sustainable improvements to the corridor. These challenges can be met with new zoning, strategic tools, and targeted investments.

A combination of industrial, residential, and neighborhood commercial zoning districts govern Pacific Street and undermine the development of a cohesive retail corridor. We propose a Commercial Overlay extending from Dock Street to the north to Woodland Place to the south, where Pacific Street retail is already well established. The Overlay would preserve existing historic buildings, which offer “naturally-occurring” affordable retail spaces for small businesses, and would require active ground-floor neighborhood-serving uses in all properties within the district boundaries.

While stakeholders expressed a desire for convenience retail, many also expressed trepidation about patronizing Pacific Street’s neighborhood bodegas. Our retail team sees these bodegas collectively as a key building block for the historic district’s retail environment, but they aren’t able to capture the local area’s unmet demand. Developing a small business toolkit to provide commercial lease assistance, attorney services/referrals, storefront façade improvements, and incentives for providing healthy and fresh products, would help existing merchants position themselves better to meet demand now and in the future.

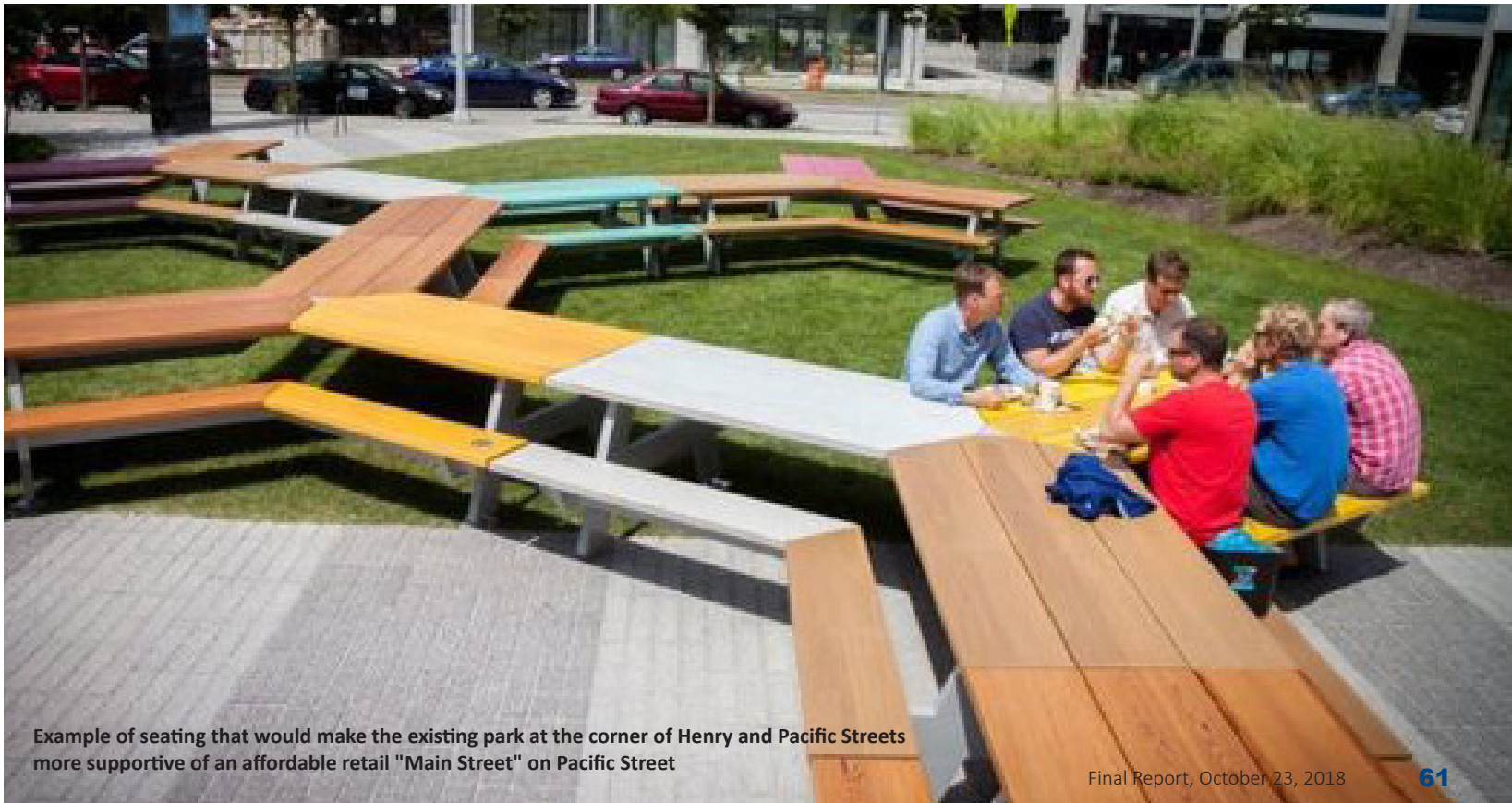
Our retail consultants recommend that the City prioritize streetscape and parking improvements on Pacific Street to reinforce walkability, neighborhood character, and safety. Additional seating, tables, shade, and programming to activate the park on the northeast corner of Pacific and Henry Streets will create a place for people to enjoy coffee and a meal with their neighbors or co-workers, and strengthen the business corridor.

A new school at Lathon Wider would drive additional foot traffic to area, and new campus buildings could include new affordable retail spaces, perhaps for micro-enterprises run by local entrepreneurs. The civic campus for the new school is also an excellent location for a farmers’ market and health/wellness activities that would bring more customers to the area. Rehabilitation and redevelopment of the fire house building would make an ideal location for a local community café / coffee shop tenant.

ACTION PLAN FOR AFFORDABLE RETAIL

- Engage retail consultants to work with Pacific Street merchants to assess their needs and investigate rents for neighborhood retail on Pacific to calibrate policies
- Develop a Neighborhood Commercial Zoning Overlay for Pacific Street
- Prioritize streetscape, parking, and park improvements in the Overlay District
- Consider targeted measures to strengthen other retail sub-districts, particularly at the train station and Harbor Point area, which were beyond the scope of the Study

	HARBOR POINT (SRD-S)	YALE & TOWN (SRD-N)	SOUTH END PRESERVATION AREA (R-MF)
RESTRICTED RETAIL DUE TO ZONING	• Destination/ comparison retail • Theaters/ movies & entertainment venues • Hotels (except boutique) • Uses not permitted in excess of 5,000 SF GFA: Bakeries, Barbers, Confectionery Store, Florist Shop, Hardware Store, Newsstand, Package Liquor Stores, Optician, Paint Stores, Photographic Studio, Sunglass Store, and Tailor shop • Uses not permitted in excess of 1,500 SF GFA: Camera Shop, Gift Shop, Jewelry Store, and Stationary Store	• Home furnishings less than 60,000 SF • Speciality retailers carrying more than 10% jewelry • Retail uses not permitted under 40,000 SF: Drug Store, Electrical Appliances, Feed Stores, Food shop, Gardening Supplies, Hardware Store, Home Center, Music Store, Office Supply Store, Pet Stores, and Sporting Goods Store	• All retail <u>unless</u> within a historic building that adjoins or is directly opposite from commercial and/or industrial zoned property, in which case the following uses <u>are</u> permitted: Bakeries, Art & Antiques, Book Stores, Florists, Food Retail, Gift Shops, Music Stores, Variety Stores, Frame Shops, and Galleries.
RESTRICTED RETAIL DUE TO LEASE EXCLUSIVITY	n/a	• Wine/liquor retail • Delis <i>Requires clarification</i>	n/a
RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES	<i>Requires primary data</i>	• Apparel • Coffee shops • Lunch options • Healthy eating options <i>Requires primary data</i>	<i>Requires primary data</i>



Example of seating that would make the existing park at the corner of Henry and Pacific Streets more supportive of an affordable retail "Main Street" on Pacific Street



Review all the work online at [PLANSOUTHEND.COM](https://plansouthend.com)

LET THE CITY KNOW WHAT YOU THINK:
David Woods, Land Use Bureau DWOODS@STAMFORDCT.GOV

SOUTH END

NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY

APPENDIX A: THE STAMFORD MASTER PLAN

The 2015-2025 Stamford Master Plan (SMP), adopted December 16, 2014, describes a long-term vision for the city’s future and establishes goals, policy recommendations and implementation strategies to guide the city’s growth and development in achieving this vision. It establishes a General Land Use Plan consisting of 15 land use categories to guide development, eight of which are found in the South End, and includes a chapter that focuses on Downtown and the South End, addressing synergies, relationships and connections between the two.

Despite the reminder in the Master Plan that “According to the City Charter, any proposed Zoning Code amendments or Zoning Map changes must be consistent with Master Plan polices and the Generalized Future Land Use Plan Map. Therefore, aligning zoning regulations with Plan policies is essential to achieving the vision outlined in this Master Plan.” (SMP, 201), there are some inconsistencies between the Master Plan and special designed districts that were designated prior to its adoption as well as key zoning recommendations in the Master Plan that have not yet been implemented.

Heightened development interest, especially in the area above Henry Street and discrepancies between zoning in this area and the Master Plan, have resulted in a number of applications for zoning changes and even Master Plan amendments. Lack of a clear and comprehensive directive has created an inefficient development application review process and led to “spot zoning” guided more by private development interests than city policy. It has also hampered transparency and diminished public trust in the process.

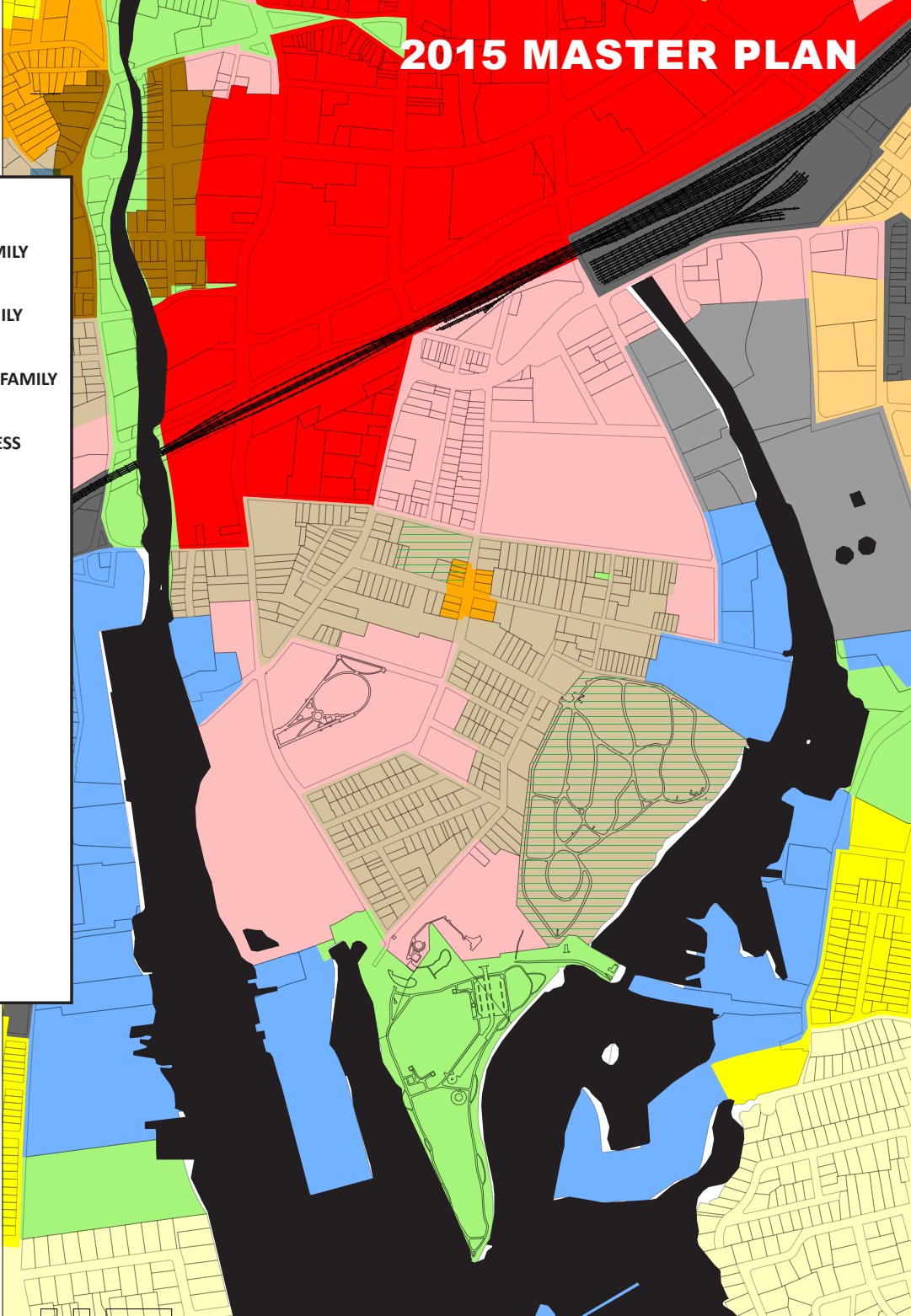
The Master Plan’s eight land use categories and their purposes that pertain to the South End are:

1. RESIDENTIAL - Medium Density Multifamily (Category 4) provides for and protects medium-density development. This category encompasses much of the National Register Historic District.
2. COMMERCIAL - Neighborhood Business (Category 6) provides for and promotes pedestrian-scaled “Main Street” environments.
3. URBAN MIXED-USE (Category 9)- Encourages redevelopment and an orderly transition from the more intensive Downtown area (Category 11) to adjoining neighborhoods, providing for a mix of uses complementary to and supportive of the Downtown.

- This category allows for high-density residential uses as the primary use, supported by a dynamic mix of neighborhood retail and service uses, office, and recreational uses serviced by mass transportation and quality streetscapes that enhance connections between Downtown and outlying neighborhoods of the City.
4. SHOREFRONT MIXED-USE (Category 10)- Provides for appropriate mixed-use development of the waterfront in a manner that (1) protects existing water-dependent uses and encourages new uses that depend upon marine access; (2) encourages the preservation and enhancement of public access to the waterfront areas and waterfront vistas; and (3) encourages a mix of compatible uses so designed and integrated as to achieve these objectives within the capacity of the infrastructure and complementary in scale to the general character of the area.
 5. DOWNTOWN (Category 11)- Provides for an intensive, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use district.
 6. INDUSTRIAL (Category 12)- Water-Dependent promotes and preserves water-dependent uses and facilities that require direct access to, or location in marine or tidal waters and which therefore cannot be located inland.
 7. OPEN SPACE (Category 14)- Public Parks provides for and protects lands dedicated for public park, recreation and passive open space uses.
 8. OPEN SPACE/CONSERVATION (Category 15)- Protects open spaces for active and passive use, conservation of natural habitats and environments, environmental protection and protection of scenic views.

STAMFORD ZONING REGULATIONS FOR EXISTING SPECIAL DISTRICTS

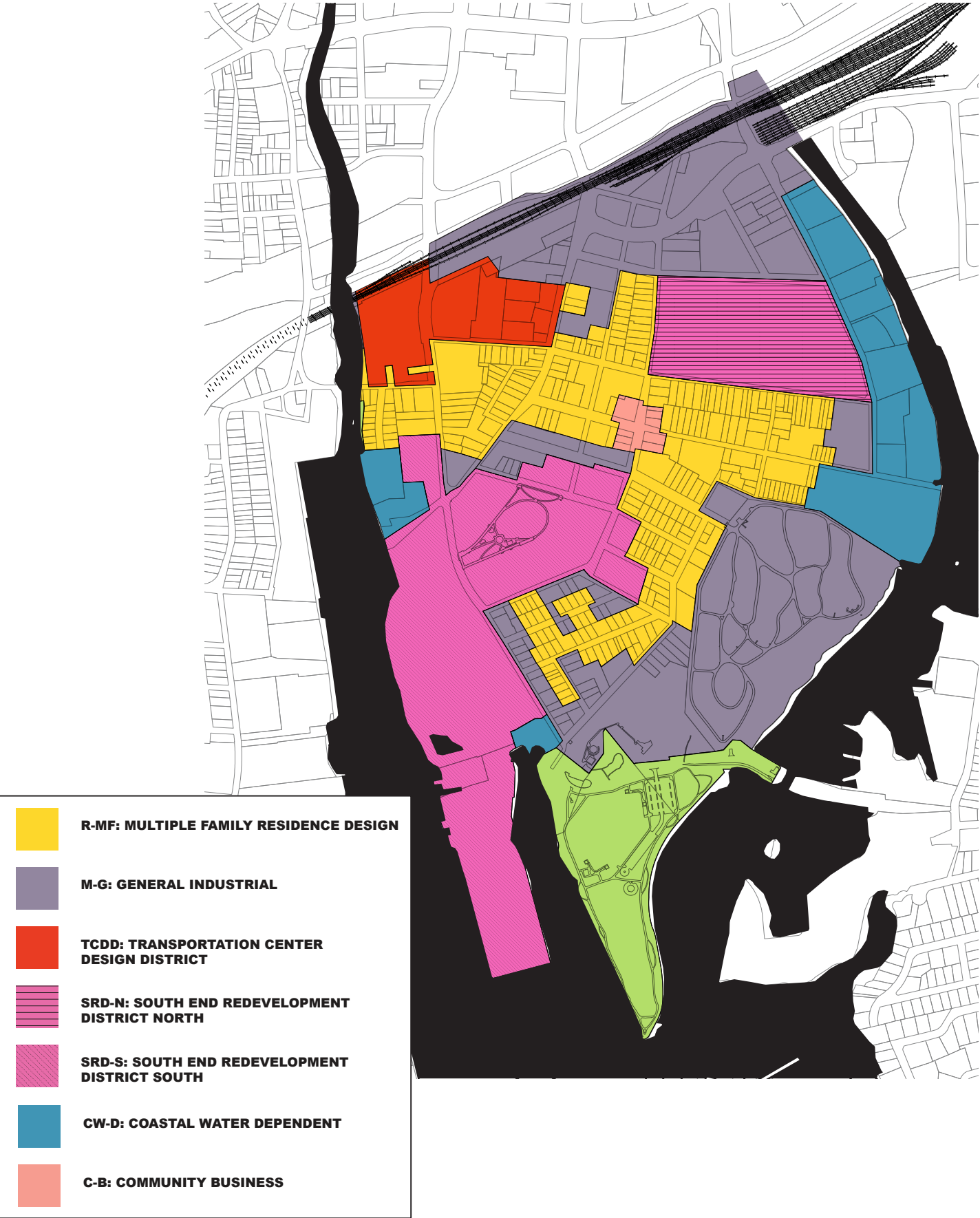
Since the 1950s, Stamford’s zoning regulations have included special designed districts that expand traditional zoning tools and provide regulatory controls and development incentives tailored to conditions in targeted areas to achieve specific goals. The South End currently includes four special designed districts: the Transportation Center Design District (TCDD); the Multiple Family Residence Design District (R-MF); the South End Redevelopment District, South (SRD-S); and the South End Redevelopment District, North (SRD-N). It also includes a General Industrial District (M-G); a Community Business District (C-B); a Coastal Water Dependent District (CW-D); and a Park District (P).



Most of the districts are generally in agreement with the 2015 -2025 Master Plan Categories and Map, though there are some exceptions. The General Industrial (M-G) district does not align with Urban Mixed Use (cat. 9) or Residential- Medium Density Multifamily (cat. 4) categories where it is mapped. And while the Multiple Family Residence Design (R-MF) district is consistent with the purpose, uses and recommended densities in the Residential – Medium Density Multifamily category, part of the district above Henry Street lies in an area designated for Urban Mixed Use, which prescribes much higher densities.

In addition to those inconsistencies, key zoning recommendations in the Master Plan have not yet been implemented. These include rezoning industrial properties in the South End from industrial (M-G) to medium-density multifamily (R-MF) and rezoning industrial properties in the northern portion of the South End from industrial (M-G) to mixed-use.

APPENDIX B: CURRENT ZONING MAP



APPENDIX C: HISTORIC DISTRICT DEMOLITION



PennPraxis compared the map from the 1986 South End National Register Historic District nomination to the current conditions, mapping which buildings have been demolished since the district was designated.

Black building footprints were extant in 1986 and remain standing as of 2017.

Red building footprints have been demolished since the 1986 nomination was submitted.

Orange building footprints cannot be confirmed: they are generally consistent with the existing building footprint, but further research is needed to confirm.

SOUTH END

NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY

