

## **PROJECT NARRATIVE**

### **Proposed Amendment to Section 9.F. TCD-D Transportation Center Design District and Addition of Transfer of Development Rights Provisions**

#### **A. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE TRANSPORTATION CENTER DESIGN DISTRICT (TCD-D) REGULATIONS**

##### **1. Planning Rationale**

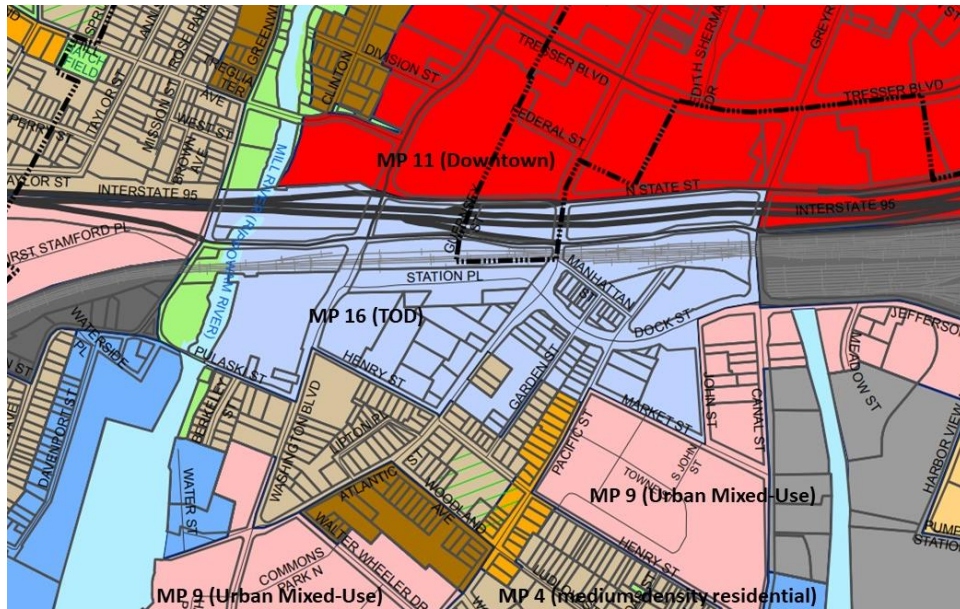
The area around the Stamford Transportation Center has been identified by various planning studies as a key strategic site for the future development of Stamford. Policy 4.E of the 2015-2025 Master Plan has called for “Transit-Oriented Development [...] encouraging desired growth with minimal impact on traffic congestion. By locating new, higher-density housing as well as office and retail uses near transit, the City can encourage pedestrian-friendly development, minimize traffic impacts and relieve development pressure on lower-density neighborhoods”<sup>1</sup>. The South End Neighborhood Study calls for development on the south side of the train station to be “consistent with the Master Plan’s Downtown category” and “high-density, transit-oriented, mixed-use (residential, commercial and retail) development close to the Stamford Transportation Center”<sup>2</sup>.

To implement these policies, the Stamford Planning Board, on May 26, 2020, approved Master Plan Amendment MP-436 to create new Master Plan Category 16 (Transit-Oriented Development District – see Map 1) with the intent “to support the development of high-density residential and office development within walking distance of the Stamford Transportation Center and to create a bridge between and support Downtown with its retail, entertainment, residential, hotel and other uses, and the predominantly residential South End. Densities could equal those of Downtown [...]” The proposed changes to the TCD District will help implement the goals of Master Plan Category 16 and various planning study efforts for the train station area.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Stamford Master Plan 2015-2025, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> South End Neighborhood Study (2018), p. 34.



1 Master Plan Category 16

**2. Affected Area**

Currently, the TCD-D is mapped south of the train tracks, west of Atlantic Street (with the exception of the State-owned Parking garages on Station Place, which are zoned M-G, see Map 2), north of Henry Street, north of Pulaski Street and east of the Mill (aka Rippowam) River. Future changes to the geographical boundaries of the TCD-D would require a separate Zoning Map amendment.



2 Zoning Map showing the TCD-District

### 3. Proposed changes

#### a. Zoning Tract

The new text specifies that only properties located in Master Plan Categories 11 (Downtown) and 16 (Transit-Oriented Development District) may be designated TCD-D. The minimum area eligible for rezoning is proposed to be 1 acre (reduced from current 1.5 acres).

#### b. Permitted Uses

Currently, the TCD-District allows for all uses permitted in the C-G District as well as “all restaurant uses, all amusement, entertainment and cultural uses, and colleges and dormitory uses”

Rather than having a blanket reference to uses permitted a different district, the proposed changes would define specific uses. The proposed uses generally would allow for large-scale residential (apartment buildings) and large-scale office development as well as neighborhood commercial and amenities serving both residents and the office population. In order to complement, and not compete with, Downtown, large-scale retail as well as entertainment and cultural uses would not be permitted.

#### c. Development Standards

The new text would introduce different development standards for lots smaller than one acre and one acre and up, as well as for Transit Center Access Streets and other streets within the district. Currently, there is only one set of standards for development in the TCD-D. The rationale for this differentiation is that development on smaller lots is, because of space limitations, less appropriate for taller buildings and expensive parking structures. The differentiation between Transit Center Access Streets and other streets is intended to create a clear hierarchy between streets that are pedestrian-friendly, high activity corridors with ground-floor activation and streets that are primarily for back-of-the-house functions. Proposed Transit Center Access Streets would be Atlantic Street, Washington Boulevard, Station Place and Dock Street (aka the Urban Transit Way).

Below is a comparison of the most important bulk parameters between the existing and proposed regulations:

	CURRENT	PROPOSED	
		Zoning Lots less than one acre	Zoning Lots one acre and more
Minimum Lot size	1.5 acres	n/a	43,560 sf

FAR Commercial only	3.0	3.0	6.0
FAR Residential and Mixed-Use	3.0	4.0 (Premium FAR 0.75)	7.5 (Premium FAR 1.5)
Building Coverage	80% (90% Corner Lots)	70% (80% Corner Lots) 50% above a height of the lesser of 8 stories or 85 feet	80% (90% Corner Lots) 65% above a height of the lesser of 8 stories or 85 feet
Max. Building Height	225 feet (275 with Bonus)	Lesser of 15 stories or 175 feet	Lesser of 15 stories or 175 feet, Towers permitted
Base Height	n/a	Minimum: The greater of 3 stories or 35 feet; Maximum: The lesser of 10 stories or 125 feet	Minimum: The greater of 5 stories or 75 feet; Maximum: The lesser of 12 stories or 150 feet
Front setback	10' from Street Line	Minimum: 10 feet from Curb Line (15 feet on Transit Center Access Streets)	Minimum: 10 feet from Curb Line (15 feet on Transit Center Access Streets)
Setbacks from Property Lines	None required	None required within 75 feet of Street Line; if provided, at least 15 feet Minimum 15 feet beyond 75 feet of the Street Line (30 feet beyond 75 feet of the Street Line above a height of the lesser of 8 stories or 85 feet)	None required within 75 feet of Street Line; if provided, at least 15 feet Minimum 15 feet beyond 75 feet of the Street Line (30 feet beyond 75 feet of the Street Line above a height of the lesser of 8 stories or 85 feet)
Pervious Surface	None required	Minimum 10%	Minimum 5%
Resident Amenity Space	None required	Minimum 25 sf / DU	Minimum 50 sf / DU
Public Amenity Space	5%	None required	5%

On lots one acre or larger, towers exceeding the maximum building height would be permitted. However, towers would have to be set back at least 30 feet from any interior property line and separated by at least 60 feet when on the same lot, they could not cover more than 30% of the lot area and the footprint of the tower would be limited to no more than 200' by 200'.

**d. Urban Design**

The proposed text would strengthen currently existing Urban Design Standards in the TCD-D. Among other requirements, ground floors on Transit Center Access Streets would require activation by non-residential uses (including residential amenity space) and all parking would have to be fully wrapped. Where possible, access to parking and loading would have to be provided on non-Transit Center Access Streets. In addition to the currently existing publicly accessible amenity space requirement of 5%, the new text would also provide for bonuses for additional public amenity space, including amenities for commuters. Also, the proposed text would allow for a buy-out option for amenity space. The buy-out funds would be dedicated to public realm improvements within the TCD-D.

In order to accommodate more innovative architecture form, the proposed text would allow for the Zoning Board to modify certain bulk requirements by Special Permit.

#### **e. Parking**

Parking requirements would remain largely unchanged and are governed by Section 12 of the Zoning Regulations. Due its proximity to the Stamford Transportation Center, parking requirements for small uses or on small parcels could be reduced by the Zoning Board by Special Permit. Current regulations require the provision of non-occupant or commuter parking. The proposed text would keep this requirement and would increase it to up to 20%, from the current 10%, with a new option for a buy out from this requirement.

#### **f. BMR requirement**

The proposed text would leave the current BMR requirement of 12% in place as well as the requirement to make a fee-in-lieu payment for affordable housing if the proposed use or development does not contain any residential floor area.

#### **g. Sustainability**

The current TCD-D contains a provision granting bonuses to buildings which achieve LEED silver certification (higher building height, less parking, etc.). The proposed text would require that all buildings, regardless of whether they receive bonuses or not, achieve at least a rating of 65 points on the Stamford Sustainability Scorecard. The TCD-District would be the first Zoning District that establishes a requirement to meet a certain number of points on the Scorecard.

### **A. Transfer of Development Rights**

The proposed text would introduce Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) as a new tool for zoning in Stamford. The use of TDR would be strictly limited to a few, high-density districts (CC, R-HD, SRD-S, SRD-N and TCD-D) and would only be permitted for historic buildings, publicly

accessible amenity space, houses of worship, schools or universities and permanently affordable housing. Unlike the recently approved text change permitting Zoning Lots, this Transfer of Development Rights would allow for the transfer of unused Density (either units per acres or floor area) within qualifying zoning districts, not just between parcels that are part of the same Zoning Lot.

In addition, to allow for a more efficient use of land, TDR can also support historic preservation and the creation of publicly accessible open space, as well as allow non-profit organizations to capitalize on unused development rights.