

Stamford West Side NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



PART I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

prepared for:
The Town of Stamford

prepared by:
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May 2013

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In addition to the individuals listed on this page, The West Side Neighborhood Plan and Zoning project has benefited from the information and ideas contributed by neighborhood residents and the representatives of area organizations and institutions who participated in meetings, discussions and reviews.

Stamford West Side NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

PART A: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

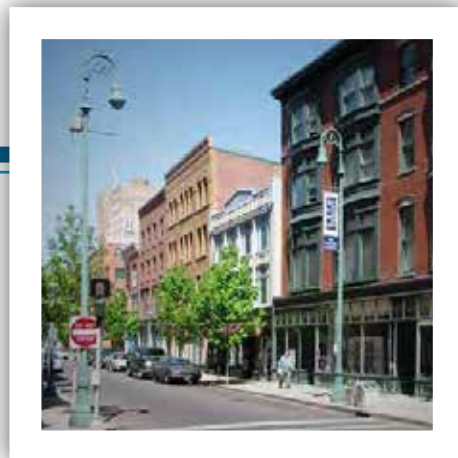
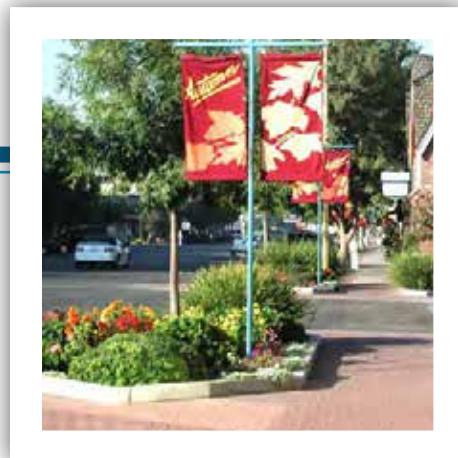
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PURPOSE

The West Side Neighborhood Plan has been prepared to articulate a coherent vision and then describe specific actions that will strengthen Stamford's West Side neighborhood. Building upon a series of other City plans and neighborhood initiatives, the Neighborhood Plan provides a vision for the future that will improve the quality of life and create a more sustainable neighborhood economy and environment that serves the residents and the City as a whole. The Neighborhood Plan provides guidance on future development and infrastructure improvements intended to create a more cohesive, attractive neighborhood where land uses are organized and designed to be compatible with one another, where traffic is calmed and where pedestrian and bicycle connections are safe and convenient. Importantly, this Neighborhood Plan is accompanied by an implementation strategy for the vision it describes. This includes a number of zoning tools that could assist in the steady improvement of the area by encouraging increasingly compatible development patterns, along with design guidelines to enhance the value and quality of the neighborhood as a whole.

The West Side Neighborhood Plan is needed to address a range of existing issues within the West Side of the city and anticipate problems that could arise if change is not appropriately managed. It focuses upon the residential and mixed-use blocks that flank West Main Street, starting from the downtown and proceeding to Harvard Street.

The planning concepts have been created with an inclusive process that reflects the input of citizens, stakeholders and the ongoing stewardship of the neighborhood by many organizations and institutions, including the West Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone and the City of Stamford.

PLANNING AREA

The Planning Area comprises substantial portions of the somewhat larger West Side neighborhood as defined by the City in its Master Plan (2002) and contained within the West Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (WSNRZ).

This Neighborhood Plan focuses on those portions of Stamford's West Side that have shared planning and development issues due to the existing character of the neighborhood and that are within well-defined edges. The Planning Area is depicted on the associated diagram. The area is bordered on east by the downtown and the Mill River and Greenwich Avenue. The southern edge is defined by the I-95 alignment, which separates the West Side from the neighborhoods and districts to the south. The western boundary is defined where there is an abrupt change in use and zoning, from mixed use/residential to large scale commercial and industrial use; Harvard Avenue forms part of this boundary. The northern boundary generally parallels Stillwater Avenue. This boundary was chosen because a similar planning and implementation study was recently completed for the Stillwater Avenue corridor along this edge. This West Side Neighborhood Master Plan is intended to complement that effort.

The land and uses within this area have many common issues. Largely residential in character, the district is centered along West Main Street where a collection of businesses and residences have clustered. But the resulting pattern is not a coherent corridor that is well suited to either use. Residential blocks are peppered with inconsistent commercial uses. Parking and open space are both scarce in a district that experiences extensive through traffic, which is a typical problem for urban neighborhoods next to a large downtown.

VISION

This portion of the West Side will be a compact city neighborhood that is largely residential in character, punctuated by an active and attractive mixed-use corridor centered along West Main Street that provides an economically diverse and compatible mix of retail, service, commercial and residential uses. It will be a well-connected neighborhood with a pleasant and safe pedestrian and bicycle network that provides convenient access to shops, services, community institutions and jobs within the neighborhood. As an urban neighborhood, it will enjoy the substantial advantages associated with its adjacency to the downtown and the Mill River corridor and its excellent connections to public transit, including the nearby rail station.

The neighborhood should continue to be composed of subareas of different scales and with different qualities that have emerged within the urban design fabric of varied streets and blocks. Small scale commercial and light industrial establishments that are now scattered through the area will have a designated place where their growth and expansion will be encouraged. Conflicts with less compatible uses on residential blocks will diminish over time, as commercial land converts to more compatible residential uses or is reorganized with site and operational changes to be better neighbors.

Traffic will be calmed along all of the side streets in the neighborhood, so that through-traffic is focused within the West Main Street and West Avenue corridors that are better organized to balance vehicles, pedestrians, parking and aesthetic enhancements. The gateways to the district along these corridors will be enhanced with streetscaping and signage, signalling the arrival into a residentially-oriented neighborhood setting. Jackie Robinson Park and the Yerwood Center will remain the most visible civic core of the community, offering community-oriented programs and recreational opportunities within an increasingly green, attractive setting geared to pedestrians.

As a compact neighborhood with the advantages of close proximity of housing, shops, services and jobs that can be easily reached by foot or by transit, the West Side will be a fundamental part of the City's sustainability strategy. In combination with emerging design, building and site management practices, the vision is of an increasingly environmentally healthy neighborhood.

OVERALL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This Neighborhood Plan seeks to fulfill community goals and objectives that emerged through the participatory process:

- *Present opportunities for a truly mixed use neighborhood* where good jobs and a full range of goods and services are within walking distance to quality homes and apartments, and where the *land use regulations and design standards address issues* when investment priorities for commercial and residential development conflict with adjacent property values and potential improvements.
- *Create an identifiable neighborhood center* that supports pedestrian-oriented commerce and civic activities, with a *character of design* that reflects the best of existing buildings yet also creates a unique statement that will help define the West Side as a valuable destination.
- *Improve safety and accessibility barriers caused by the volumes of traffic* on West Main Street and mitigate the related impacts on the connecting streets through the neighborhood, by *finding opportunities* to invest in roadway and sidewalk improvements to make the streets more attractive and add open space and neighborhood amenities.
- *Apply appropriate land use management approaches* that encourage the continuation of the mix of uses and reinvestment in the properties, without losing the unique character of the neighborhood, with *implementation through zoning and other land use powers* provided to the City, including the application of mixed use and design zoning districts, with the enforcement and incentives possible through the police powers granted to the City.

FIGURE 1 PROJECT AREA



GUIDE TO THE WEST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

This Master Plan has been organized to facilitate the understanding of neighborhood issues, concepts for improvement, and tools that could be used to accomplish both revitalization and sustainability goals. The organization of the documents and recommendations are compiled within four major categories:

- Neighborhood Character and the Quality of Life
- Land Use and Development
- Traffic, Circulation and Parking
- Neighborhood Environment

Part I: Executive Summary

This executive summary provides an overview of all of the principal elements of the master plan and the process that has been used to assemble it. In these pages you will find:

- The **Planning Area** which is the focus for study and recommendations
- **Vision, Goals and Objectives** that are this Plan's foundation
- A **Guide to Implementation** that lists the tools that can be assembled and employed to achieve the purposes of the plan, as a quick reference
- A summary of the **Planning Process** describing the steps undertaken and the participation of community members
- An overview of the **Planning Context**, organized into the four major topic areas that the Master Plan addresses
- The **Summary of Recommendations**, with information that links planning concepts with the methods that can be used to implement them. Particular emphasis is placed on land use and development patterns, open space and streetscape, zoning tools that could be applied, and observations about how design standards and guidelines could help.

Part II: Background and Analysis

Part II provides background information and analysis of key topics that are a focus of this Plan; it is provided as a useful reference document, with particular emphasis on the land use and development analysis and the concepts for design guidelines.

Part III: Appendices

The appendices consist of the draft language and mapping that could be used to translate the recommendations of this Master Plan into:

- Appendix A: Draft **Amendment to the City's Master Plan**
- Appendix B: **Draft Zoning Amendments**, including:
 - Map and Designation Changes to Certain Parcels
 - Designation of a **VC Zone for the West Main Street Corridor**, including refinements in the Site and Architectural Design Standards that would be applied
 - Designation of a **Urban Mixed Use Zone** to provide for moderate and small scale commercial and industrial uses in a limited area
 - Provision for a **Compatible Use Incentive** to be used within the West Side neighborhood to encourage the conversion of incompatible business and light industrial uses to more compatible residential or mixed-use development.

A GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

A major emphasis of this planning effort has been forging links between the community vision for the future and practical tools to achieve the related goals and objectives. This list compiles the actions that could be taken to revitalize the West Side where improvements are needed and sustain its best qualities in the years to come.

Neighborhood Character and the Quality of Life

- **Stewardship** – The neighborhood will benefit from the continued stewardship of several organizations through their direct engagement in implementing their missions to help accomplish this plan. A principal advocate and coordinating entity will be the WSNRZ through its board, committees and special projects. This Plan should be adopted as a guidance document by the WSNRZ. The Stamford Partnership has actively participated in planning and neighborhood enhancement in this portion of the city, and should be encouraged to continue as a community partner.
- **Code Enforcement** – Overcrowded housing or incompatible uses that have not been properly permitted to meet zoning or building code standards degrade the quality, value and safety of the neighborhood; the City should be a proactive participant in its role.
- **Entrepreneur and Local Business Support** – Stamford has placed an emphasis on supporting the growth and expansion of businesses in the City, and a range of programs and incentives could be tapped. This Master Plan suggests that the City extend its Enterprise Zone to include the cluster of business properties and blocks that are identified as a subarea of the neighborhood, generally along West Avenue between the highway and Annie Place. This could expand the range of opportunities, in addition to the programs and initiatives already available.
- **Social Programs** – The City has a network of social support programs in place that can support the community vision and neighborhood health. The WSNRZ should continue to provide information and advocacy to help ensure coordinated provision of services to reinforce neighborhood goals.
- **Design Reviews** – Design reviews for new projects and major renovations are recommended as part of new zoning measures and are discussed in the section on Land Use and Development. However, informal and advisory design reviews could be instituted for projects throughout the neighborhood, providing owners, architects and builders ideas about how designs can reinforce the character of the entire area, to their benefit. Such advisory design reviews could be provided as part of a City program, or by the WSNRZ through a special committee that would be a resource, rather than a regulatory requirement.
- **Awards Programs** – The City and/or the WSNRZ, perhaps in association with professional associations, could sponsor awards programs to acknowledge projects that contribute to the character and the quality of the neighborhood. Categories could include “compatibility” awards, site or building improvement awards, special community programs and the like.

Land Use and Development

- **Master Plan Amendment** – The City's current Master Plan should be amended to bring it into alignment with the land use and development recommendations provided in this document. Draft language and an associated map are contained in the Appendices.
- **Zoning Changes** – The City should refine the zoning for the area to promote redevelopment that increases compatibility and draws reinvestment that will encourage redevelopment of underutilized properties, in line with the overall qualities of this urban neighborhood. Several specific zoning changes are described in this part of the Master Plan, and specific zoning language and associated design guidelines and standards are provided in the Appendices.
- **Façade Improvement Program** – The City should consider applying for grant sources or allocating future CDBG funds towards façade improvements along West Main Street as a direct incentive for positive change.

Traffic, Circulation and Parking

- **Traffic Calming** – This area will benefit from the City’s established strategy to incrementally implement traffic calming on a neighborhood basis. This Master Plan should be consulted as specific plans are advanced because it suggests some refinements in the approach contained in the concepts prepared in 2004 for the City.
- **Main Street/Route 1 Improvement Strategy** – The planning for the traffic circulation, pedestrian and aesthetic improvements is being advanced with many participants, including recent studies and concepts provided in concert with the regional planning agency. The neighborhood advocates should work with the participating agencies to find locations for street trees and emphasize pedestrian safety and improvements, while preserving or expanding on-street parking where possible because of its critical importance to the businesses along Main Street.
- **Pedestrian Routes and Corridor** – The City’s infrastructure improvement programs should include enhanced pedestrian access along Richmond Hill Avenue, because of its direct connectivity with the regional transit station and the downtown.
- **Bicycle Access and Circulation** – The City’s bicycle circulation plan should also be refined to designate Richmond Hill Avenue as a key connector to this district.

Neighborhood Environment

- **Open Space Improvements** – Because existing public open space is so limited, the City should promote a combination of circulation and open space improvements around Jackie Robinson Park that will provide more open space and a better pedestrian and bicycle environment. At the “gateways to the neighborhoods,” green landscape enhancements should be incorporated. The City should opportunistically obtain small open spaces in the neighborhood for pocket parks and amenities over time.
- **Highway Sound/Visual Barriers** – The City should seek Federal and State funds to install sound and visual barriers to protect the neighborhood from the noise and disruption of the interstate highway.
- **Stamford Sustainable Practices and Policies** – Planning and development activities should comply with the City’s existing and emerging policies and programs that promote healthy neighborhoods and sustainable practices, reduce energy costs, promote alternate transportation modes and reduce hazardous materials.

PLANNING PROCESS

Analyses

The project started with a review of the history of planning and development in the district, including the evolution of zoning regulations and project approvals. A review was undertaken of the many related plans, initiatives and programs already underway to help reposition the West Side neighborhood to improve its economy, built conditions, transportation network and the quality of life in the neighborhood.

An analysis of the neighborhood by block and subarea was included using the City’s GIS database, which provided a comprehensive review of ownerships, values, and other relevant factors. Site visits were completed with photographic recording of many conditions and properties to confirm and illustrate the conditions determined from the data. The physical analyses included findings on development conditions, activities and relationships, and variations in urban design, open space, and streetscapes. These analyses were summarized and presented for continuous public dialogue during the planning stages.

Public Interaction

Participation from the public occurred in several sessions designed to elicit ideas and responses to information and concepts

presented by the consultant team. This participation also was used to identify the critical issues for the residents and business owners. Some property owners and contractors with businesses in the neighborhood participated in a focus group session to discuss issues associated with businesses, local jobs, operations and the neighborhood. The team also met with local high school students at the Yerwood Center to discuss their ideas for open space activities and design of Jackie Robinson Park. To extend additional opportunities for input, an online survey of preferences and posters of two alternative land use futures were used to attract comments and ratings of different development options within the commercial center and the overall vision for neighborhood preservation, adaptation and change.

Alternative Studies

The project designers completed studies of alternative development options within the commercial center and within the mixed use blocks as a way to test redevelopment potential and impacts. These studies also provided a means to determine measures that could be translated into zoning regulations through setback, buffer and building placement standards to preserve the adjacent land values and meet other community goals.

Planning for Regulatory Changes

Zoning regulations from other communities were reviewed to consider methods for managing land use and development in urban neighborhoods with similar issues, and then a unique strategy was crafted to fit within the structure of Stamford’s regulations and the specific needs of the West Side neighborhood.

PROCESS AND PRODUCTS CHART

TASK	Outreach	Deliverable
1 WORK PLAN	Internal Meeting	Protocols, Schedule, Logistics
2 REVIEW CONDITIONS AND CREATE THE BASE MAP	Public Meeting, Other Outreach	Updated Compilation Report and Base Map
3 EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES	Public Meeting, Other Outreach	Neighborhood Connectivity Commercial Corridor Revitalization Land Use Management
4 CONFIRM STRATEGIES	Public Meeting, Other Outreach	Recommended Land Use Plan, Zoning Strategies and Design Guidelines
5 DRAFT AND FINAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	Public Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master Plan • Zoning • Design Guidelines • Additional Strategies

PLANNING CONTEXT

Neighborhood Character and Quality of Life Today

The West Side neighborhood has a combination of strengths that can be built upon to create an economically diverse, walkable, mixed-use community with compact housing, local jobs and amenities. Factors influencing the ability to achieve this vision reflect the history, demographics, underlying conditions and perception of the area.

There has been a strong focus on the revitalization of this neighborhood over many years. The City of Stamford has commissioned or participated in multiple studies of the conditions of the area. Nonprofit organizations such as the WSNRZ and the Stamford Partnership have created a structure of assistance and commitment to this area.

According to census data, the population of the West Side Neighborhood is more likely to be non-white and/or foreign-born, have lower incomes and are significantly more likely to rent their homes than residents of the City of Stamford as a whole. The population is slightly younger than the City of Stamford as a whole and more people live in each dwelling, reflected in the higher number of people per unit.

The neighborhood residents are less likely to have a high school or other higher degree relative to the statistics for the entire Stamford population. The types of jobs that area residents hold are typically associated with low and moderate incomes – accommodations and food services, retail, construction and healthcare. The median household income in the neighborhood is about 63% of the median income for the City of Stamford as a whole. A majority of the residents work within 20 minutes of their homes; very few work more than forty-five minutes away. This suggests that most workers are employed within the neighborhood and surrounding areas, taking advantage of the convenient location and accessibility to major job centers.

This compact live/work neighborhood is supported by a mix of housing, commercial and light industrial uses. This mix has been present over many decades and is a result of both historical development patterns and changing zoning regulations. While the proximity of uses is advantageous for those who live and work in the area, that adjacency to the downtown and resulting through-traffic brings traffic congestion and pedestrian safety concerns.

Narrow neighborhood streets are congested with traffic travelling to the major roads – the east-west corridors of West Main Street/Route 1, Richmond Hill Avenue and Stillwater Avenue and the north-south corridors of Greenwich Avenue, Fairfield Avenue and West Avenue. On-street parking for the commercial corridor of West Main Street overflows into the residential side streets.

The mix of uses that has emerged includes patchwork patterns with abrupt changes from residential to light industrial or service companies. Zoning complaints are mostly a result of commercial and light industrial uses within residential neighborhoods but include reports of illegal rooming houses – an indicator of a demand for low-cost housing in this area and the potential overcrowding in some buildings. These zoning complaints are the result of improperly permitted uses that are incompatible with the neighborhood character.

The core of the neighborhood is the community center of Jackie Robinson Park, the Yerwood Center and Hatch Park. Additional open space is scarce. The relatively small Carwin Park is within the neighborhood, and Lione Park and the Mill River corridor, including Rotary Park, are within walking distance of the neighborhood.

Deteriorated properties create a strong negative effect on the fabric of a neighborhood. A few properties that are not maintained well or have an incompatible use can create a poor impression of an area, however, targeted improvements to those same properties can make visible and difference to the perception – and economic value – of the neighborhood.

Photos of Current Conditions: Neighborhood Fabric and Open Space



Photos of Current Conditions: Discontinuity in Use and Character



FIGURE 2 AERIAL OF PROJECT AREA



Land Use and Development Context

Land use in the West Side neighborhood has long been a mix of residential, commercial and light industrial uses that have opportunistically located here because of the convenient locations and proximity to employment, employees, transportation and the downtown. Six zoning districts – C-L, C-B, M-L, R-5, R-6 and R-MF – define the neighborhood by the type of use intended by regulation. However, the land uses are not entirely consistent with the zoning districts due to previous zoning and permitting decisions. This has resulted in numerous discontinuities in uses. This is very apparent where commercial and light industrial uses are found within residential zoning districts. These non-residential uses may have been “grandfathered” as an existing use prior to the past changes in zoning or permitting decisions. From a regulatory standpoint, such uses can persist indefinitely but cannot be substantially expanded or improved. As a result, they tend to persist. As noted in the prior section, these nonconforming uses lead to complaints where uses and operations are not good neighbors.

Along West Main Street, the mix of commercial uses is very diverse – automobile-related, retail, services and office – and some of these businesses and sites which are in poor condition or are unattractive. The appearance is somewhat deceiving relative to the economic activity and value as measured by the demand for retail uses and their associated rents, which are higher than might be expected from a casual inspection of the area.

The Harrell-Michalowski Associates report, *Findings and Strategy for the West Side Retail Corridors, Stamford, November 2007*, notes that the retail along the commercial corridors is supported locally by the compact residential neighborhoods on either side. This study notes that businesses that provide goods and services to the local population are able to sustain themselves through demand from the surrounding neighborhood. People who walk to work are more likely to shop at local businesses on their way home.

Other businesses, such as automobile-related uses or contractor yards, are unable to locate in areas with higher land costs or more restrictive zoning. These uses support higher land values in this neighborhood because of the scarcity of suitable land elsewhere.

This combination of locally-supported businesses and those that are unable to locate elsewhere sustains a relatively high land value for parcels in this area. The West Main Street/Route 1 corridor reinforces these uses by providing easy access to the businesses by non-residents. The neighborhood mix of commercial, residential and industrial is stable but not desirable.

The neighborhood can be broken into subareas – the West Main Street Corridor, incorporating all of West Main Street and Richmond Hill Avenue around Jackie Robinson Park; residential neighborhoods that are mostly single-family homes such as those in the northwest and south; residential neighborhoods that include multi-family developments in the east, southeast, northeast and north; and a strongly mixed-use area in the southwest corner that includes residential, commercial and light industrial uses.

Although all of these subareas have challenges related to deteriorated properties or inappropriate land uses, the southwest corner has the heaviest concentration of incompatible uses. As noted above, these properties can have a negative impact on the fabric of nearby residential blocks. Of particular concern are those uses that are not allowed by the current underlying zoning, such as contractors’ yards in residential areas where outdoor storage and repair or light industrial operations occur.

The owners of these non-conforming uses lack an incentive to invest in their properties given current City zoning regulations and processes. Owners might be willing to invest in upgrading the current use or changing the use to one that is more consistent with the surrounding residential uses, if the City were to provide regulatory incentives to do so.

The process of preparing this report included a study of those non-conforming or underutilized properties susceptible to change under a change in zoning and/or provision of incentives. The study considered whether owners or developers would convert properties to conform to the more desirable uses in the district if increased dimensional standards provided a profit incentive. The most likely properties to change were those along West Main Street where there are low-scale and non-compatible uses. Secondary areas of change included non-conforming parcels in the southwest mixed-use subdistrict, parcels in the M-L zone on the south side of West Main Street, and other parcels along West Main Street. The key to this analysis was allowing a developer to assemble parcels adjacent to a non-conforming use.

A “fit” study used six prototypes to estimate the type of development that would be compatible with existing residential and commercial uses. Prototypes along West Main Street included a commercial use on the first floor with residential uses above. Prototypes for residential districts did not include commercial. A common element to both types was the provision of on-site parking – both structured and open – and landscape buffers along property lines shared with residential uses. A financial analysis accompanied the fit studies, comparing current assessed values of the test parcels with the projected assessed values of the prototypes. In all cases, the projected assessed value after the change in use was substantially higher than the current assessed value of the test parcels.

Creating an incentive for a change in use from non-conforming to either mixed use or multi-family would increase the property values of the improved parcels, reinforce the residential fabric of the community, provide needed retail space for local businesses to meet the demand from the surrounding area and provide more housing for an area already experiencing overcrowding. Provision of on-site parking for business and residential use would relieve the residential streets of overflow commercial parking, while landscape buffers would provide relief to existing single-family dwellings. To meet these goals, an investor would need the ability to assemble adjacent parcels and relief from some of the current dimensional requirements.

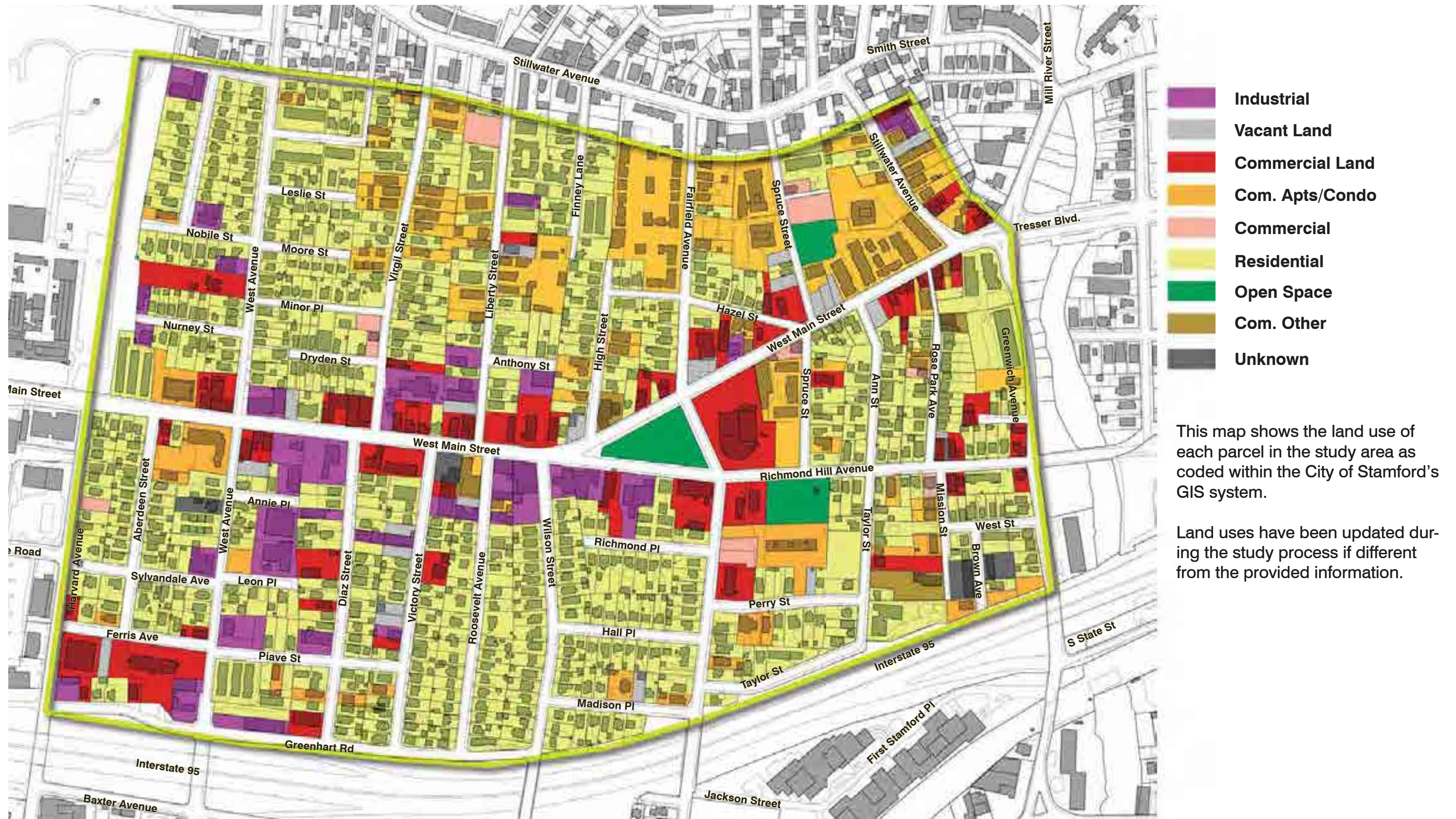
Sites Evaluated for Redevelopment Potential



Development Scenarios with Potential Prototypes



FIGURE 3 EXISTING LAND USE



Transportation, Circulation and Parking Context

The circulation patterns in the neighborhood reflect its location and history. This is a predominately residential district served by narrow and short streets, but it is crossed by several major arterials and secondary routes that carry significant through-traffic. The rights-of-way are generally narrow, and private development borders the tight streets and sidewalks, so significant widening or reorganization of intersections is difficult. West Main Street and Richmond Hill Avenue provide the only continuous east-west corridors for traffic. West Avenue is a major north/south vehicular route due to its intersection with I-95 and its connections to both West Main Street and Stillwater Avenue. Traffic also finds alternate north-south corridors to move through the neighborhood, particularly along Greenwich and Fairfield Avenue.

The City is participating in a regional effort with the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA) to structure improvements to the east-west West Main Street/Route 1 corridor through the West Side neighborhood. SWRPA has presented options for improving this area, but conclusions have not yet been reached about a preferred approach that would enable the corridor to serve its important role in moving traffic within the City and region, while being more responsive to the neighborhood needs for calmed traffic, a better pedestrian environment and a more attractive corridor.

The City has prepared comprehensive traffic calming for the area in concert with a city-wide initiative to better manage traffic, support residential neighborhoods and provide enhanced routes for walking and bicycling. The recommendations for the West Side are consistent with the vision of this Neighborhood Plan.

There are two major intersections along West Main Street where the existing geometry and design are problematic from a neighborhood perspective. West Main Street, Tresser Boulevard, Stillwater Avenue and Greenwich Avenue all intersect within a very tight area. It is difficult to navigate for vehicles and is not conducive to pedestrians or bicyclists. The intersection of West Main Street and Richmond Hill Avenue is also a problem, due to the odd geometry where the two streets merge.

In general, the neighborhood has excellent public transit access. The Stamford Rail Station is less than a mile from the intersection of Richmond Hill Avenue and West Main Street, and it is within a convenient walking and bicycling radius for many residents and businesses. Three bus routes link this neighborhood to downtown Stamford, Greenwich and the Stamford Rail Station. No bus shelters exist to provide protection in inclement weather or to advertise the location of the stops.

Parking tends to be in short supply throughout the neighborhood. Land is relatively valuable, and the pattern of small parcels has resulted in a pattern of small parking lots and tightly fitted spaces, often with wide curb cuts to accommodate as many spaces as possible. Neighborhood residents, establishments and institutions rely to a significant degree on the availability of curb-side, on-street parking, which is typical and appropriate for urban neighborhoods.

The Neighborhood Environment Today

In broad terms, the environmental conditions in the West Side are associated with the concept of a healthy neighborhood that supports a high quality of life for residents, employees and visitors. There are several environmental issues that can be beneficially addressed by this Neighborhood Plan.

For an area of this size and population density, there is a relative lack of public open space and recreational opportunities within the neighborhood. Two small parks and recreation lots on Spruce Street and along Richmond Hill Avenue provide opportunities for the areas around them. Jackie Robinson Park and the adjacent Yerwood Center represent the largest open

space and recreation facility in the neighborhood, and they also offer various civic programs to the community. The Park is separated from the Yerwood Center by a segment of Fairfield Avenue, which creates concerns about pedestrian safety for the types of activities that occur here.

The proximity of I-95 to a residential neighborhood has significant environment impacts, including the noise and visual interruption that it causes.

There is a strong link between neighborhood health and the degree to which the environment promotes walking. There are a number of conditions today that discourage convenient and safe passage around the district. There is a lack of marked crosswalks and adequate sidewalks in many locations. Blank walls, empty lots and occupied areas can become practical barriers, creating unpleasant edges that do not have the benefit of “eyes on the street,” which promotes a sense of supervision and safety. This occurs in a number of locations, particularly when businesses are not active.

Issues in public safety and a lack of personal security are detrimental to the ability of residents, visitors and employees to move readily around the neighborhood. In this regard, social programs and community policing initiatives exist in the neighborhood to strengthen the sense of security and safety.

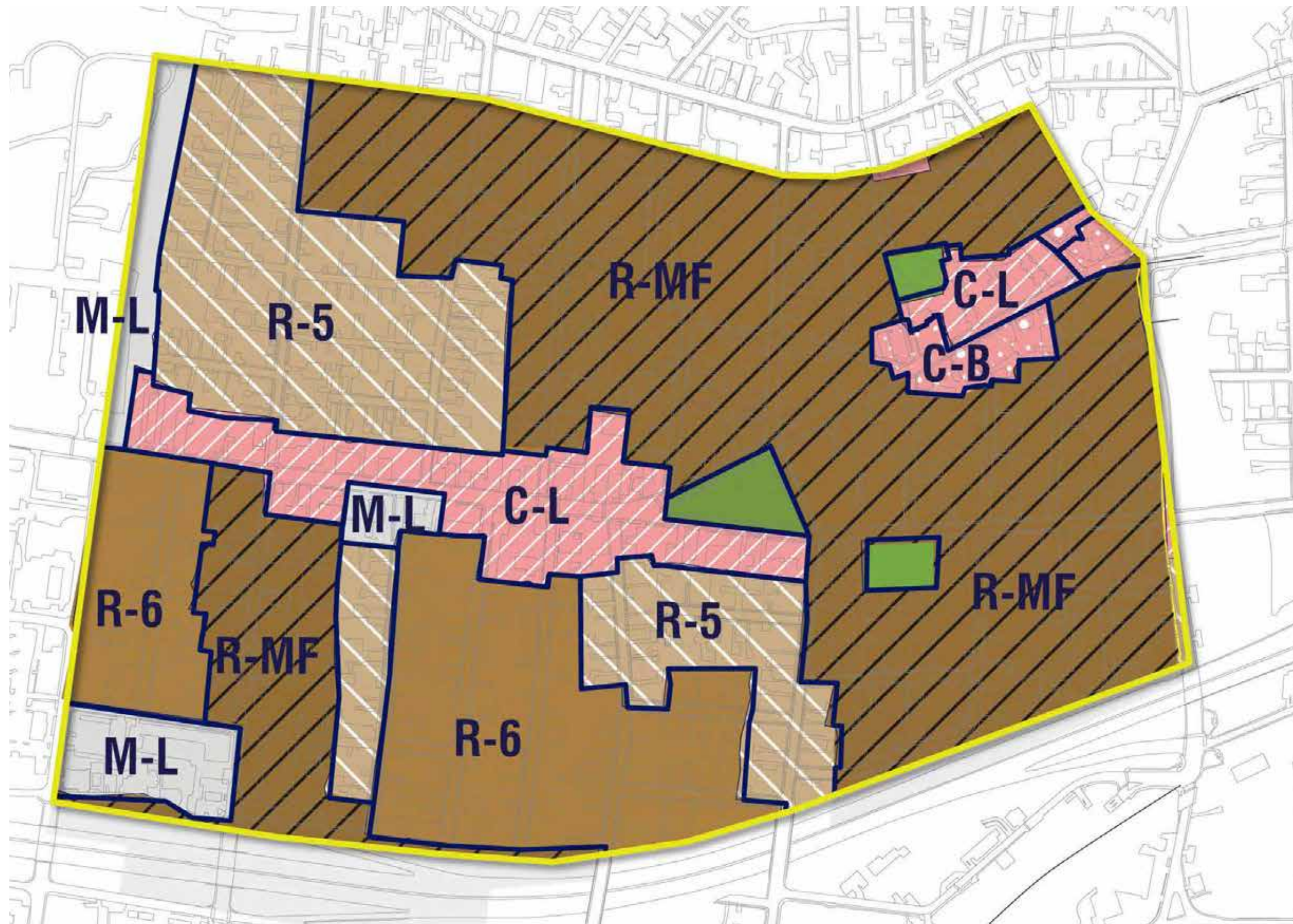
FRAMEWORK OF PLANS, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

This Neighborhood Plan is linked to a larger framework of initiatives that will help shape the future of the West Side neighborhood. This planning effort has benefited directly from other studies and plans, and has been tailored to complement other City programs, policies and regulations. Several resources and references should be emphasized:

- *Stamford Master Plan 2002* – This document provides the overall planning framework for the entire City and includes a relevant *Sustainability Amendment* adopted in December, 2010.
- *Zoning Regulations*, City of Stamford – These regulations govern most land use decisions and include important design standards and other dimensional standards that this Master Plan addresses.
- *West Side Story: West Side Vision Action Strategy 2000* – This document articulates important community revitalization goals.
- *Stamford Traffic Calming Study/Master Plan (2007-2009)* – The studies and maps associated with this initiative provide detailed recommendations for specific changes in circulation, parking, streetscape measures and other tools to reduce vehicular impacts within the West Side, as well as other locations in the City.
- *West Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Plan Vision and Goals (2008)* – This is a guidance document for the policies, programs and initiatives of the West Side NRZ.
- *Findings and Strategy for the West Side Retail Corridors (2007)* – This study was prepared for the City and provides a very useful profile of some of the market forces within the West Side.
- *Stillwater Avenue Corridor Study: Implementation Strategy (2010)* – This document recommends a program of actions to help implement many of the previous plans and visions for portions of the West Side centered along Stillwater Avenue and Smith Street.
- *US Route 1 Greenwich / Stamford Operational Improvements Study (2010 and 2011 presentations and reports)* – This recent effort, sponsored by the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA), is helping to define strategies to balance the circulation patterns and community needs along Route 1.

A more complete list of resources and referenced documents can be found in this Master Plan within *Part II* of this report.

FIGURE 4 EXISTING ZONING MAP



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Neighborhood Character and Quality of Life

Planners often use the term “neighborhood fabric” to describe the relationships among uses and users, buildings and their occupants, streets and sidewalks and the movement they support, and the open spaces that punctuate an area. There are both physical and social dimensions to this fabric. A number of the recommendations in this master plan focus on improving the physical fabric – repairing or replacing underutilized sites and buildings, and sorting out uses so that a more coherent pattern emerges that is better for the residents and businesses in the area. There should be a substantial emphasis on rebalancing the traffic and pedestrian environment, so that the West Side is increasingly walkable and car traffic is calmed. The invisible network of social services and support for the residents and businesses is a focus of other recommendations, so that the quality of life in the community is improved from this perspective.

The neighborhood character that is sought builds upon the component subareas within the West Side and defines better links to the adjacent districts. The diagram in Figure 5 expresses the concepts that have been assembled to strengthen the positive identity, character and quality of life.

West Main Street should be strengthened as the active urban spine linking the streets and blocks that spread out to the north and south. It will be bordered by a relatively dense mixture of shops, services and commercial establishments along with residential uses – sometimes in combination and sometimes in separate buildings. Pedestrians should move easily to and from the side streets, and the sidewalks and adjacent uses should create a higher quality environment for pedestrians than exists today. Significant volumes of “through traffic” will continue to find their way to and from the downtown along West Main Street, while by-pass and through traffic cannot be avoided between the I-95 highway ramps and the districts to the north. As a result, the intersection of West Main Street and West Avenue will remain the “Corners” in the neighborhood, and should have appropriate attention placed on the streetscape and pedestrian environment to balance the traffic here.

The civic identity of the neighborhood should be focused around an improved Jackie Robinson Park and adjacent Yerwood Center. Portions of Richmond Hill Avenue around the Park should have the same busy, mixed-use character as West Main Street. However, as it heads eastwards, Richmond Hill Avenue should be a calmer corridor, creating a key pedestrian and bicycle link to the transit station and the downtown.

The great majority of the neighborhood should continue to be composed of tightly-lined and varied residential streets and blocks, with a variety of housing types and qualities, small yards and pockets of green space, and facades that vary frequently. There should be limited changes in density and character associated with infill projects except where they replace less compatible uses. Problems of overcrowding or substandard housing, however, need to be consistently addressed when they are identified, and fair but focused code enforcement should be undertaken.

Design guidelines for the entire area – including the residential areas – can be very helpful in communicating the importance of the architecture, scale and other design qualities that make the neighborhood livable and valuable for everyone. Because of the potential role of design in strengthening the character of the area, separate discussions are provided within this Executive Summary and associated Report to expand on this idea.

The West Side neighborhood should be considered as a type of small business incubator, with the idea of finding appropriate locations and providing business support through programs already available within Stamford. An “in-town small business

park” should emerge within a set of blocks that flank West Avenue between the highway and Annie Place, for example.

The City and non-profit institutions should continue to recognize the value of coordinating programs that serve to reinforce a healthy social environment on a neighborhood scale to provide activities and events, promote public safety and help preserve a variety of housing opportunities for the varied incomes and family types that make urban neighborhoods like the West Side distinctive and desirable.

Land Use and Development

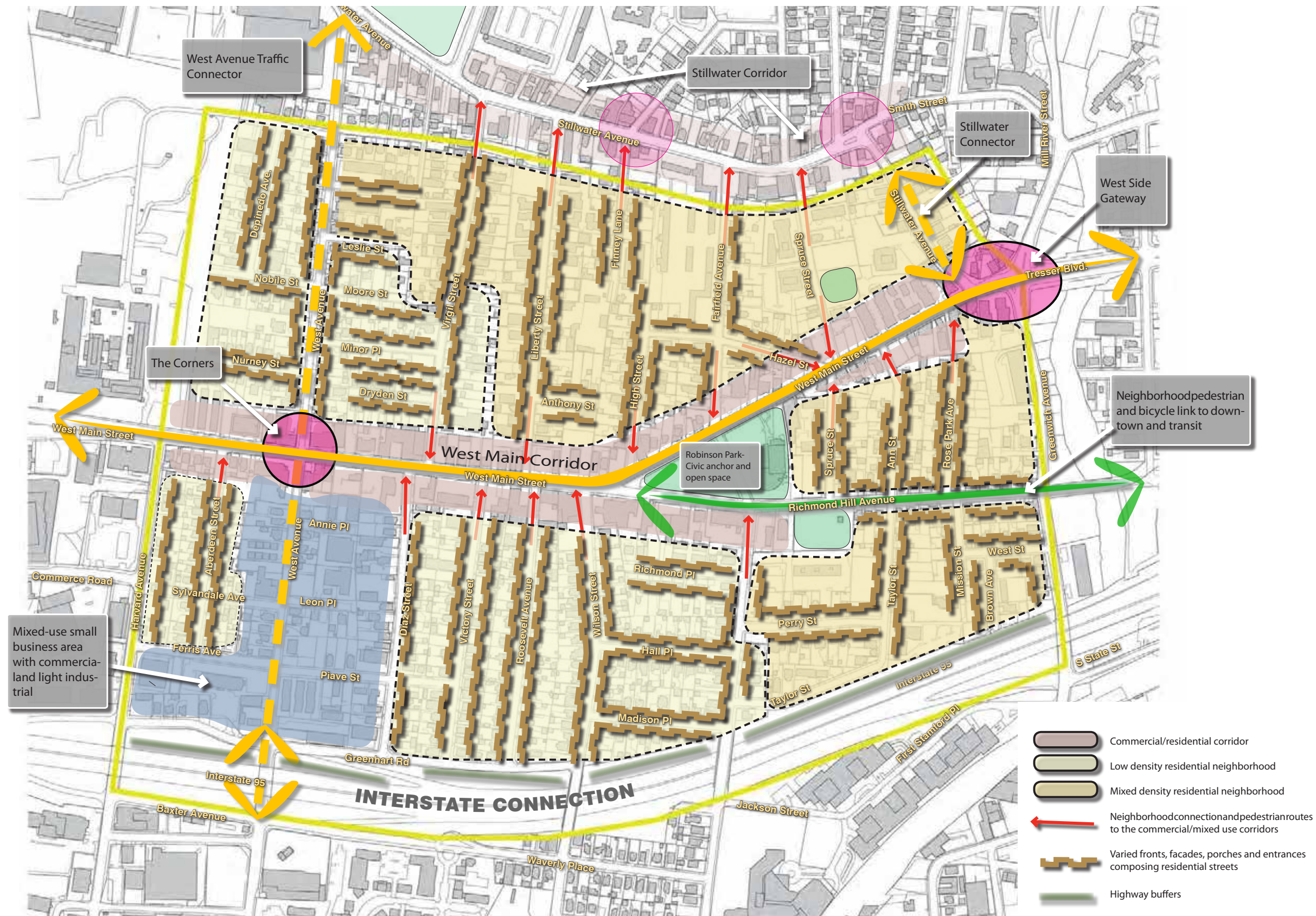
The land use and development recommendations promote reinvestment and new developments with the types of uses, building scales and location that are in keeping with the overall goals for the neighborhood character. The recommendations include preserving the lower scale neighborhood clusters and reducing the degree of non-conformity in areas where residential uses are – and should continue to be – predominant.

The corridor defined by West Main Street and the western portion of Richmond Hill Avenue is an excellent location for expanding neighborhood-serving shops and services, as well as for specialized businesses that can take advantage of the convenient highway and arterial access. Previous studies indicate positive market demand, but several barriers to expanding opportunities must be addressed. The parcels of land along this corridor are difficult to redevelop because they are typically shallow, and most are bordered by residential uses along the connecting side streets.

The corridor has become home to a checkerboard pattern of small shops, services, office and multi-family housing that have been permitted to locate here, in part because of the scarce options for similar uses in Stamford. Many of the owners and tenants can take advantage of existing buildings on small lots by adapting them and do not require high quality renovations for their needs. There is a very little space available for parking, and cars are crowded onto nearby lots, streets and in some cases, onto sidewalks. Property values and rents are high because of the advantages of the location for vehicle access, and there are few incentives to present a more attractive appearance because the district is not oriented towards pedestrian patrons. Façade and signage improvement programs should be focused along the corridor as a means to transform unattractive locations, but without additional incentives, more coherent, high quality redevelopment is very unlikely.

Under these circumstances, zoning can provide incentives to redevelop the land to create a higher value corridor that better serves the neighborhood. By providing opportunities for residential or commercial space above retail and service establishments, the business base along the corridor can be expanded, and the properties can be improved. But expanded use will also require expanded parking in the area, even with increased sharing of spaces that can accompany multiple use development. It is neither practical nor desirable to allow large surface parking lots to spread into the neighborhood, degrading the quality of predominately residential streets. This master plan recommends a balanced type of compact development that provides for four stories of uses, with very efficient parking partly below and next to the buildings. In order to test the viability of such development, prototype buildings and site improvements were fitted to various existing parcels and blocks. The results indicate that – if the right amount of development is allowed – property owners will be financially rewarded to convert underutilized land to this desirable pattern.

FIGURE 5 CONCEPT DIAGRAM



There is a concentration of commercial and light industrial uses within several blocks that are close to West Main Street, but which are not integral to the West Main Street Corridor. The uses gathered here have responded to past zoning designations and market advantages of their urban location and transportation access. These include all or portions of blocks along segments of West Avenue, Diaz Street, Sylvandale Avenue, Ferris Avenue, Annie Place, Piave Street and Greenhart Road.

This area provides an opportunity to support existing businesses and enable expansion and investment that will enhance employment opportunities and economic value for Stamford. Regulations should reinforce the future for commercial and light industrial uses within key blocks and parcels within this portion of the West Side for small business and light industrial establishments. Using this compact area that already has a significant concentration of buildings and sites used in this manner, the City should focus additional development towards these locations and provide business support through programs already available within Stamford. An “in-town small business park” should emerge within a set of blocks that flank West Avenue between the highway and Annie Place, for example.

As described in the discussion on existing conditions, the West Side has an unusually high collection of “non-conforming” uses within the residential zones. Two strategies are recommended to increase compatibility. Redevelopment incentives should be provided through zoning to convert the properties to conforming uses by allowing greater densities than would otherwise occur. The incentives should be available throughout the neighborhood except in the lowest density residential zones and in the new urban mixed use district. Incentives need to be paired with design standards and limits on the overall size of projects so that the results add to the neighborhood character and do not detract from it. An alternative approach to reducing use conflicts would be to allow limited expansion of non-conforming uses if the design and site planning improve the relationship with the surroundings.

The City’s most powerful tool for managing land use and development over time will be zoning, which in turn should be in alignment with the City’s comprehensive Master Plan. Because of the importance of these two mechanisms, expanded discussions are provided within this Executive Summary, and appendices contain specific proposals that would implement these land use regulations. Similarly, design standards and guidelines can play an important role in shaping future development; expanded discussions are provided in the Executive Summary and accompanying Report sections.

The City and non-profit institutions should continue to recognize the value of coordinating programs that serve to reinforce a healthy social environment on a neighborhood scale to provide activities and events, promote public safety and help preserve a variety of housing opportunities for the varied incomes and family types that make urban neighborhoods like the West Side distinctive and desirable.

Transportation, Circulation and Parking

The West Side neighborhood is composed of a network of streets and blocks that should be oriented towards the needs and quality of life of residents and pedestrians, with vehicle traffic de-emphasized except for a few clear exceptions. Traffic and transit must continue to flow east/west along West Main Street as part of the Route 1 system that links Stamford neighborhoods and the downtown to other communities. West Avenue must remain as a practical connecting corridor for north/south traffic and the I-95 interchange located at the southern edge of the neighborhood. Stillwater Avenue will also remain as a key local connection to and from the commercial uses along its length and Stamford Hospital, just to the north of the planning area.

The City is in the process of considering various approaches to re-organizing traffic circulation and parking along

West Main Street. This is being undertaken in conjunction with regional planners and in coordination with the many stakeholders along Route 1. Various options illustrate how the streetscape could be enhanced. Other studies considered methods to reduce turning conflicts by creating a middle “turn” lane in some areas, or to reserve more of the right-of-way for bicyclists rather than motorists. Decisions about possible changes involve complex traffic issues that are beyond the scope of this Master Plan. However, several considerations are recommended as neighborhood priorities along West Main Street/Route 1.

- Pedestrian crosswalks with streetscape enhancements should occur as frequently as practical, taking into account the paths both along and across the street.
- Safe and convenient pedestrian routes should be integral to the redesign of a more safe and functional set of intersections where West Main Street, Tresser Boulevard, Mill River Street, Stillwater and Greenwich Avenues all meet. The Tresser Boulevard bridge is a major pedestrian route to and from the downtown and can be expected to become even more so in the future.
- As described in the recommendations for land use and development, parking spaces along West Main Street are vitally important to the ability to support commercial uses and beneficial redevelopment. Solutions that increase parking by reducing curb cuts or re-organizing intersections should be encouraged, and streetscape solutions should be pursued that enhance aesthetics and safety but also value parking as a neighborhood-supporting resource, rather than forcing parking solutions on residential side streets.
- Where practical, solutions should expand the width of sidewalks; pedestrian routes along both sides of West Main Street should become far more attractive and well-used, over time.

The City established a traffic calming strategy for the West Side over the past few years; its implementation is an important component for achieving the vision contained in this Master Plan. Several additional and complementary concepts should be considered as improvements are designed:

- Enhanced and highly visible crosswalks at gateway locations to the district can serve to distinguish the transition to a neighborhood scale and identity. These should be considered across West Avenue at Greenhart Road, West Main Street at Harvard Avenue, and across Richmond Hill at Greenwich Avenue.
- Stamford’s rail transit station is only a short walk from many parts of the West Side, and it is within convenient bicycling distance. To enhance this area as a transit-oriented neighborhood, Richmond Hill Avenue should be improved with the specific purpose of creating a safe and pleasant walking and bicycling connection to a greater degree than had been identified in the City’s previous traffic calming strategy for the area.

Adequate parking is nearly always in short supply in mixed use urban neighborhoods at the scale of the West Side. The provision of large surface parking lots, however, tends to diminish the quality and value of the fabric of uses that they serve. As described in the zoning recommendations and discussions on land use and development, the City should support shared parking solutions and allow on-street parking wherever it is practical. Imaginative design solutions that provide on-site parking with aesthetic enhancements, screening and buffering should be supported, while removing through enforcement or redevelopment unsightly overcrowding and poorly located lots.

FIGURE 6 STREETScape, OPEN SPACE AND CONNECTIVITY



- 1 Harvard Street Gateway - Special crosswalk, signage and plantings.
- 2 West Avenue Gateway - Special crosswalk, signage and plantings.
- 3 Jackie Robinson Park Enhancements - Rerouting of Richmond Hill Ave, additional plantings, amenities and pedestrian enhancements.
- 4 Tresser Boulevard Gateway - Reorganize intersection to create significant increase in landscape and substantially improve pedestrian connections.

Neighborhood Environment

From an environmental perspective, the West Side neighborhood can be enhanced to provide improved conditions for its residents and to contribute to broader sustainable goals.

The most important contribution that the West Side neighborhood can make to regional and municipal sustainability is through the efficient use of land and resources associated with a compact, mixed use district. All of the recommendations in this Master Plan directly contribute to a fundamental strategy for sustainability that seeks to intensify compatible uses within a highly walkable neighborhood where residents can easily reach nearby jobs, shops and services. This approach leverages the existing infrastructure, including public transit, transportation and utilities.

Beyond this, development and infrastructure improvements in the district should conform to the sustainability principles and Best Management Practices as promoted or required by the City in line with community-wide public and municipal goals.

Public open space is very limited within the neighborhood as a proportion of the overall land area. As a result, the highly visible Jackie Robinson Park serves a very important role. A combination of street realignments, streetscape and park improvements can serve to strengthen its contributions as green space and a recreational asset. An illustration is included on the facing page to indicate a series of ideas. In this drawing, Richmond Hill Avenue would be re-routed to create a more regularly shaped intersection, aligning it with High Street. This idea has also emerged as part of the parallel planning studies being conducted for the Route 1 corridor. In addition to calming traffic, this arrangement creates an opportunity for enhanced open space that can convert asphalt to landscaping near Wilson Street. Enhanced perimeter sidewalks and tree plantings can be complemented with several areas for seating. The street surface and crosswalks could be reconfigured to be pedestrian friendly “tables” at both ends of Fairfield Avenue as it passes by the Park, providing safer and more attractive connections to the Yerwood Center.

Various strategies need to be used to provide more deciduous trees in the neighborhood. Deciduous trees provide a natural benefit of cooling in the summer, while allowing light to pass through in the dark winter months to adjacent buildings. The program of traffic calming improvements includes numerous sidewalk extensions; these can be used as landscaping opportunities for street tree plantings in some cases. Along West Main Street and Richmond Hill Avenue, additional street trees are highly desirable, but the public right-of-way is narrow, resulting in sidewalks that have inadequate width for healthy plantings. Extensive expansion of planters into the lanes along the street could diminish needed parking. To supplement available locations, the City should consider a program to plant selected species on private property in exchange for maintenance agreements. This approach is often used to complete publicly-used sidewalks where the pavement is partly on private property, and it seems very reasonable to use the same concept as a way to create a far more green edge to the streets. Design standards and guidelines for site improvements should call for attractively spaced trees to shade the asphalt lots and mitigate the visual impact of parked cars.

The City should also consider obtaining additional small lots or portions of land parcels when opportunities arise to create pocket parks and amenities for the neighborhood.

The City, in conjunction with other neighborhood stewards, should advocate for federal and state funding of sound and visual barriers between the West Side and I-95. Properly designed using contemporary technologies, such barriers can dramatically reduce impacts.

FIGURE 7 LANDSCAPE CONCEPTS – CROSSWALKS

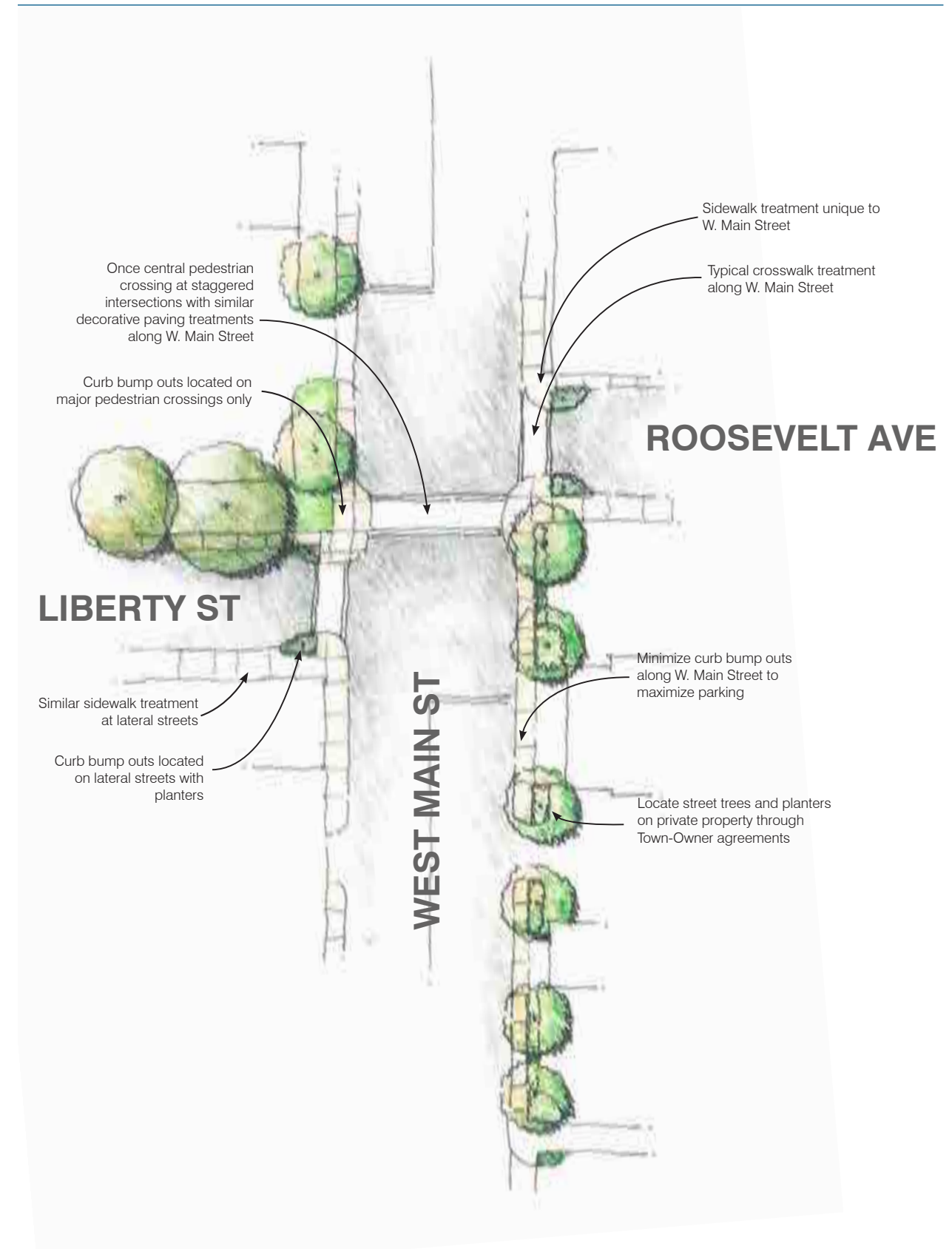


FIGURE 8 LANDSCAPE CONCEPTS – JACKIE ROBINSON PARK



MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

Implementing key recommendations of this Neighborhood Plan – including revised zoning – will require that the City first adopt changes to the city-wide Master Plan. A draft amendment and associated map are provided within the appendices to this Neighborhood Plan and the principal concepts are summarized below.

The Village Commercial District proposed for the West Main Street and Richmond Hill corridors requires the Master Plan Category #6 Commercial – Neighborhood, to be designated for the areas proposed for neighborhood retail and service uses. This would change areas currently designated as Category #7, Commercial – Arterial, and Category #4, Medium Density Multifamily and link to the existing Category #6 designations on West Main Street and Stillwater Avenue.

The Urban Mixed Use District (UMD) is proposed to provide options for commercial and industrial uses to expand and develop where commercial and industrial uses have remained regardless of the present residential zoning. The area proposed for this rezoning is currently Category #7, Category #4, and Category #3, Low Density Multifamily. The recommendation is to designate the area for this new zoning as Category #15, Industrial – General. This category permits the mixed type of uses proposed in the new district and specifies protection of industrial uses; two of the key goals of this plan.

The final proposed change affects a portion of the block west of West Avenue and north of West Main Street where the lots have been developed with multifamily projects. Currently designated as Category #7, Commercial – Arterial, a Category #4, Medium Density Multifamily is recommended for these parcels to reflect their existing and future use.

OVERVIEW OF POTENTIAL ZONING AMENDMENTS

Four zoning changes are contemplated by this Neighborhood Plan, each of which is described below and all of which are represented on the adjacent Proposed Zoning Map. Complete zoning amendments, map changes and associated site and design standards are provided in Part III of this report as appendices.

West Main Street Village Commercial District with Design Guidelines

A new Village Commercial (VC) District could be created along most of West Main Street and a connecting segment of Richmond Hill Avenue. This is an existing zoning category within the Stamford regulatory framework (Article III, Section 4-AA-11) that can be tailored to the mixed-use goals for the West Side neighborhood, providing incentives to attract new investment. The uses permitted in this new VC zone would be the same as those incorporated into the nearby VC zone along Stillwater Corridor. The VC zoning mechanism is accompanied by design standards and a design review process. The character and quality of West Main Street and Richmond Hill Avenue are directly related to the revitalization goals of the community and contribute to the economic value of the district as a whole.

This change would convert areas currently zoned as Commercial districts (C-L and C-B) as well as several segments of parcels that are zoned for Multi-Family Residential (R-MF). The envisioned development could not be accomplished with the existing zoning, and would not be accompanied with a mandatory design review and approval process. The new zoning would provide somewhat increased building dimensions and provide more flexible site and area requirements. The new zoning would encourage ground floor uses be composed of commercial or retail uses suited to this urban neighborhood. A detailed analysis of the differences between the existing zoning and the proposed VC provisions is provided in Part II of this Report.

Appropriate amendments to the existing Design Guidelines that accompany the City's VC zoning have been prepared to reflect the particular conditions along West Main Street and Richmond Avenue. These amendments are further described in the discussion on Design Guidelines in this document, and in an extended discussion in Part II of this report.

Zoning: New Urban Mixed Use Zone (UMD)

A new zoning category would be created to support an array of small commercial, industrial, service and retail establishments. The area contemplated lies along both sides of West Avenue from Greenhart Road to just north of Annie Place, along western edges of Diaz Street, and within two blocks between Ferris Avenue, Piave Street and Greenhart Road. Called an Urban Mixed Use district, (UMD) this area contains a significant concentration of diverse commercial and light industrial enterprises but is zoned multi-family residential (R-MF) and low density residential (R-5). The existing RMF zoning was created in 1984, replacing previous industrial zoning that had permitted the type of light industrial and commercial uses that have persisted. The residential zoning did not provide adequate incentive for the area to convert to residential uses, resulting in an area that is permeated by uses that remain a valuable employment and economic resource. This condition makes many of the establishments and the businesses they contain non-conforming relative to zoning, and difficult to expand or alter.

To support new businesses and support the ability of existing businesses to expand and improve their properties, this new zoning approach is recommended. There are many other areas in the West Side – including properties within the proposed VC zone – that are more suitable to residential uses. In the interest of expanding employment and the commercial tax base, this new zone is configured to provide an in-town, small business park environment. The proposed zoning includes density and site standards that provide for landscaped buffers and setbacks and other measures to help ensure that the area becomes more attractive, more productive, and more compatible with nearby residential areas.

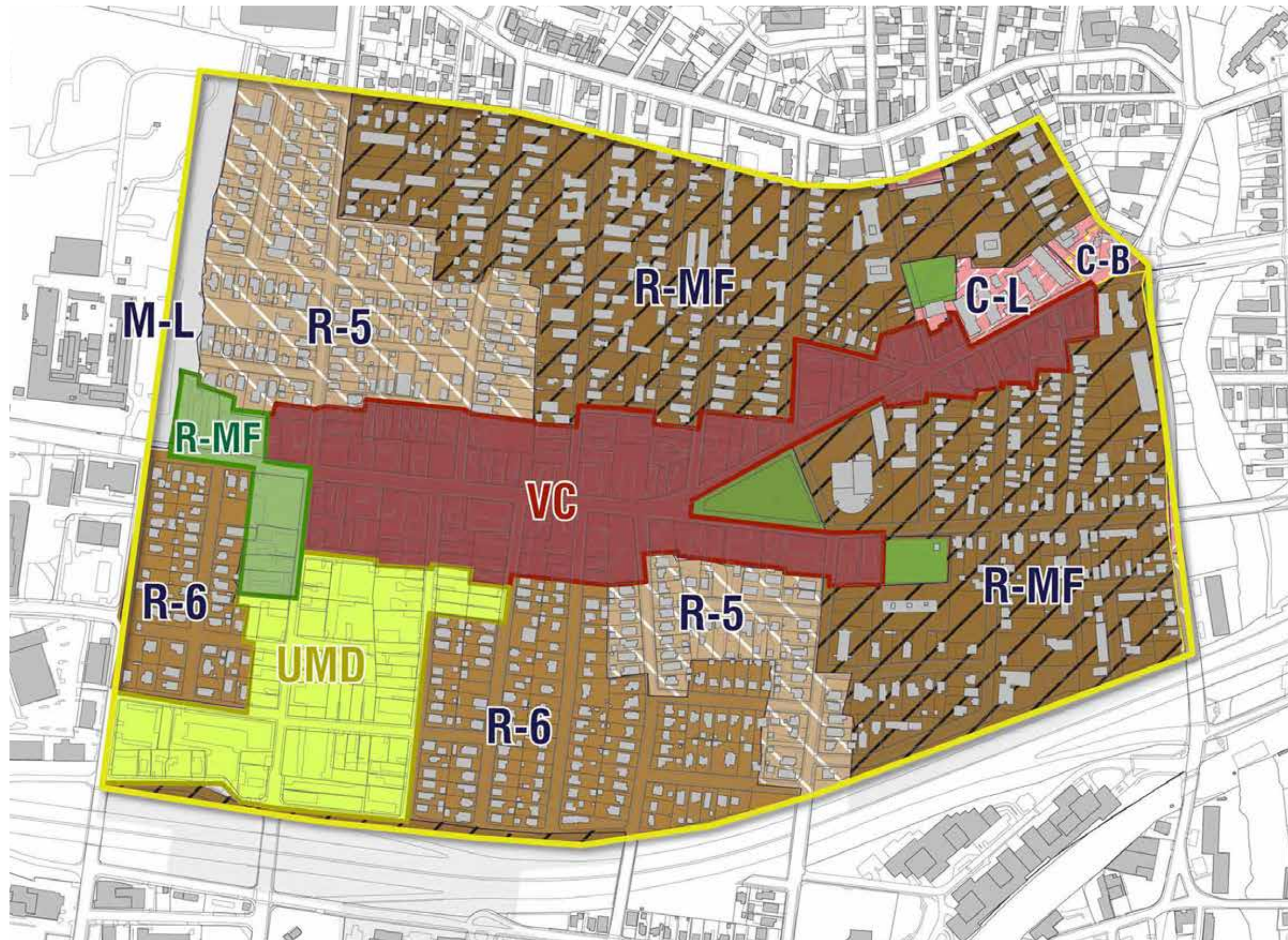
Incentive Provisions to Improve Compatibility

The zoning recommendations also seek to increase the compatibility within the area for uses that are not conducive to the predominately residential or mixed-use village commercial districts proposed. These would be implemented through amendments to the non-conforming use section of the Zoning Regulations under Article IV, Special Regulations, Section 10. Two new subsections are recommended. One would be Special Exception Approval option for certain non-residential uses that are likely to conflict with neighboring residential properties, because they are typically operated with outdoor storage of construction materials. These businesses would be allowed to invest in expansion and other property improvements, when the site design reduces impacts to adjacent properties by way of buffers and setbacks, and conformance with state health and safety regulations. The other measure would be a Use Compatibility Incentive. This provision would allow more intensive redevelopment of a site if it is currently non-conforming in use within categories that are particularly incompatible with residential uses, as long as the resulting project meets the desired use and special site design provisions to ensure that it is compatible with its neighbors. This incentive would not be available in either R-5 districts or within a new UMD district. Analysis of the existing uses, parcels and prospective development suggest that moderately scaled development, could emerge on a handful of sites that meet these criteria. The analysis is described in detail in Part II of this report.

Map Change from C-L to RMF

As a relatively minor adjustment to the existing zoning, several parcels should be changed from a commercial designation (C-L) to multi-family residential (R-MF) on the northern side of West Main Street and west of West Avenue. This change recognizes that the actual land use and development pattern conforms more closely with the R-MF designation.

FIGURE 9 PROPOSED ZONING MAP



The proposed new Village Commercial (VC) District will overlay much of the current C-B and C-L Districts. One exception is the recent multi-family housing development in the north-eastern section of this map, currently in the C-L District.

The new VC District also includes the M-L District along West Main Street.

LEGEND

- █ New District (VC)
- █ New District (UMD)
- █ New District (to R-MF)
- █ Existing Districts

DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Design standards and guidelines can serve the public purposes for the neighborhood and help increase the value and marketability of the private properties that compose it. A comprehensive approach has been taken within this Neighborhood Plan to describe how the character of development could be directed to create a more compatible, attractive and valuable district. Ideas have been provided for the corridor along West Main Street and portions of Richmond Hill Avenue; these would be implemented through their incorporation in the proposed VC zone. Design concepts have been organized as site planning and site review standards for implementation in the proposed Urban Mixed Use (UMD) zone, to help shape an appropriate and compatible subarea. Similar suggestions are provided for those properties that would be eligible for Compatible Use Incentives, as described in the discussion on Zoning. Finally, recommendations for design within residential districts are provided to provide ideas and guidance on an advisory level within the residential zones in the neighborhood.

Design guidelines should also be developed in the future for the area that extend from the intersection of Tresser Boulevard and West Main Street along Stillwater Avenue as it climbs the hillside towards Boxer Square. The future character of this corridor will be influenced by many factors that extend beyond the confines of this Neighborhood Plan, because it lies at the intersection of multiple adjacent districts that remain under study – the Mill River edge, the downtown, and the upper Stillwater corridor.

Design Guidelines and the VC District

Development in Village Commercial Districts are governed by existing Site Design and Architectural Criteria. As part of this planning effort for the West Side Neighborhood, these guidelines have been reviewed as they relate to the West Main Street Corridor. Several suggestions have been made to clarify or strengthen the language of these existing guidelines, along with additional illustrations that may be helpful in all VC zones. These recommendations are found in both Part II and Part III of this report.

Additionally, several design principles that would specifically apply to the West Main Street Corridor have been prepared and provided in both Part II and in the proposed zoning provisions in Part III of this report. These supplemental design guidelines include criteria to define the relationship to parking and West Main Street or Richmond Hill frontage, landscape buffers, building massing, depth of development from the street and ground floor transparency and entrances. The intention of this set of guidelines is to ensure that the type of desirable mixed use redevelopment that would reinforce an active commercial corridor at West Main Street with strengthened street frontage that would minimize negative impacts to the surrounding neighborhoods and abutting residential parcels.

Site Standards for the UMD District

The design intent for the proposed new Urban Mixed Use District (UMD) is to create a low density commercial and industrial park character compatible with the context and fabric of the nearby residential and mixed use neighborhood. Balancing the commercial and residential edges of this district, particularly at Diaz Street, is a challenge. In terms of neighborhood fabric, the most disruptive aspects of the commercial and industrial uses are scale of the buildings, lack of landscaping, and parking. The design guidelines call for an articulation of building masses along public streets and adjacent to residential zones, so that there is variation and an architectural scale that is attractive and related to the nearby residential areas. The guidelines describe the potential to orient building fronts and entrances towards streets, if this is a practical choice consistent with the intended use. They also direct the placement of parking, service and loading areas and provide for screening,

buffers or sheltering.

Site Standards and Compatible Use Incentives

Design guidelines are suggested as a means to manage projects that are eligible for special zoning provisions intended to increase compatibility within certain areas of the neighborhood. The guidelines would be implemented as site plan review criteria, and are described in both Part II and Part III of this report. The guidelines seek to reduce potential impacts of parking areas, reinforce the pedestrian characteristics of the surrounding streets, and provide for an urban design character along the street frontages consistent with the desirable, existing characteristics.

Design Guidelines for Residential Areas

Infill development in the existing residential zones can strengthen the neighborhood's quality and value if it reinforces a varied character along the street, avoids shifting the apparent scale of development, and provides for landscaping, buffering and well-site parking solutions. Various ideas for accomplishing these goals are included in the expanded discussion and illustrations of design guidelines in Part II of this report, but are not proposed as part of any zoning change.

Selected Design Standards and Guidelines Diagrams

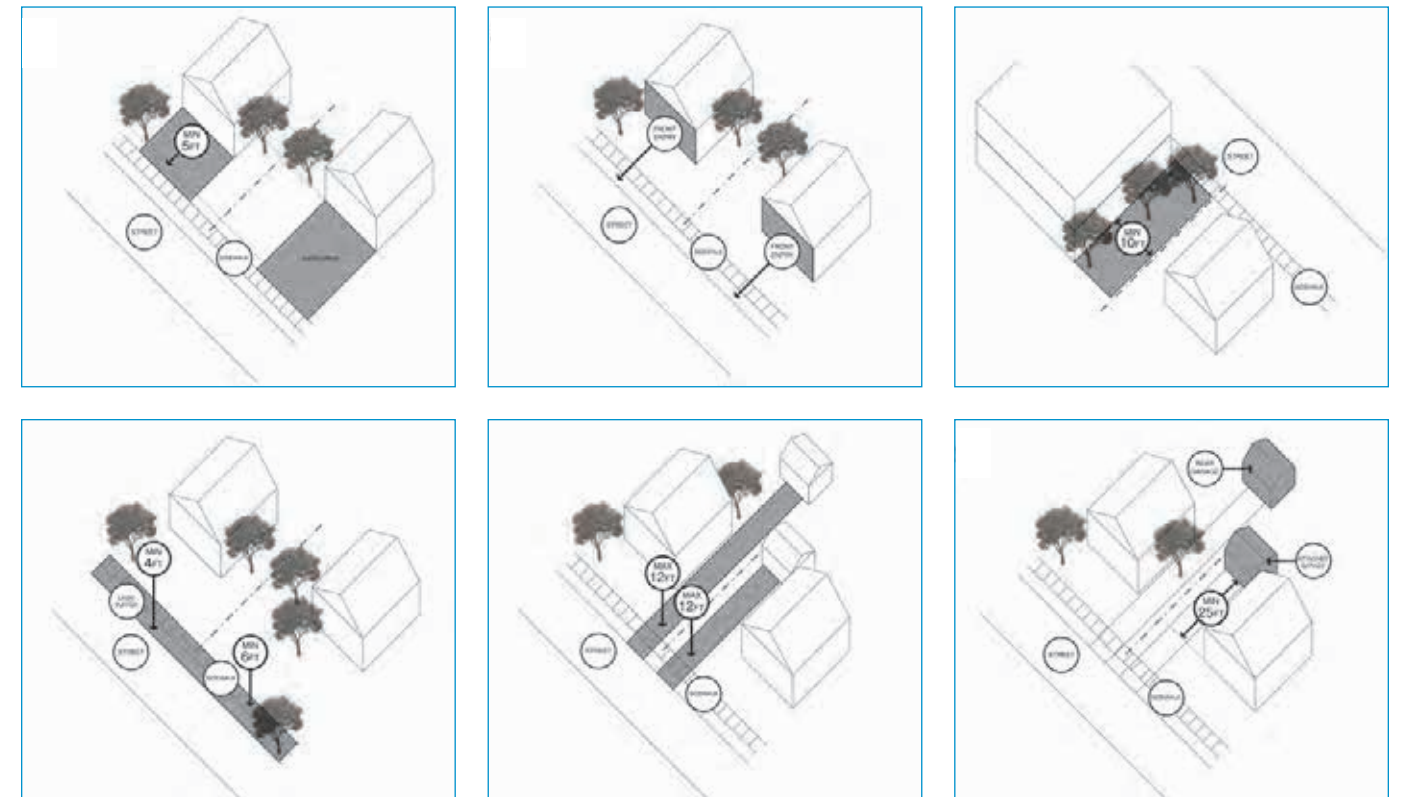
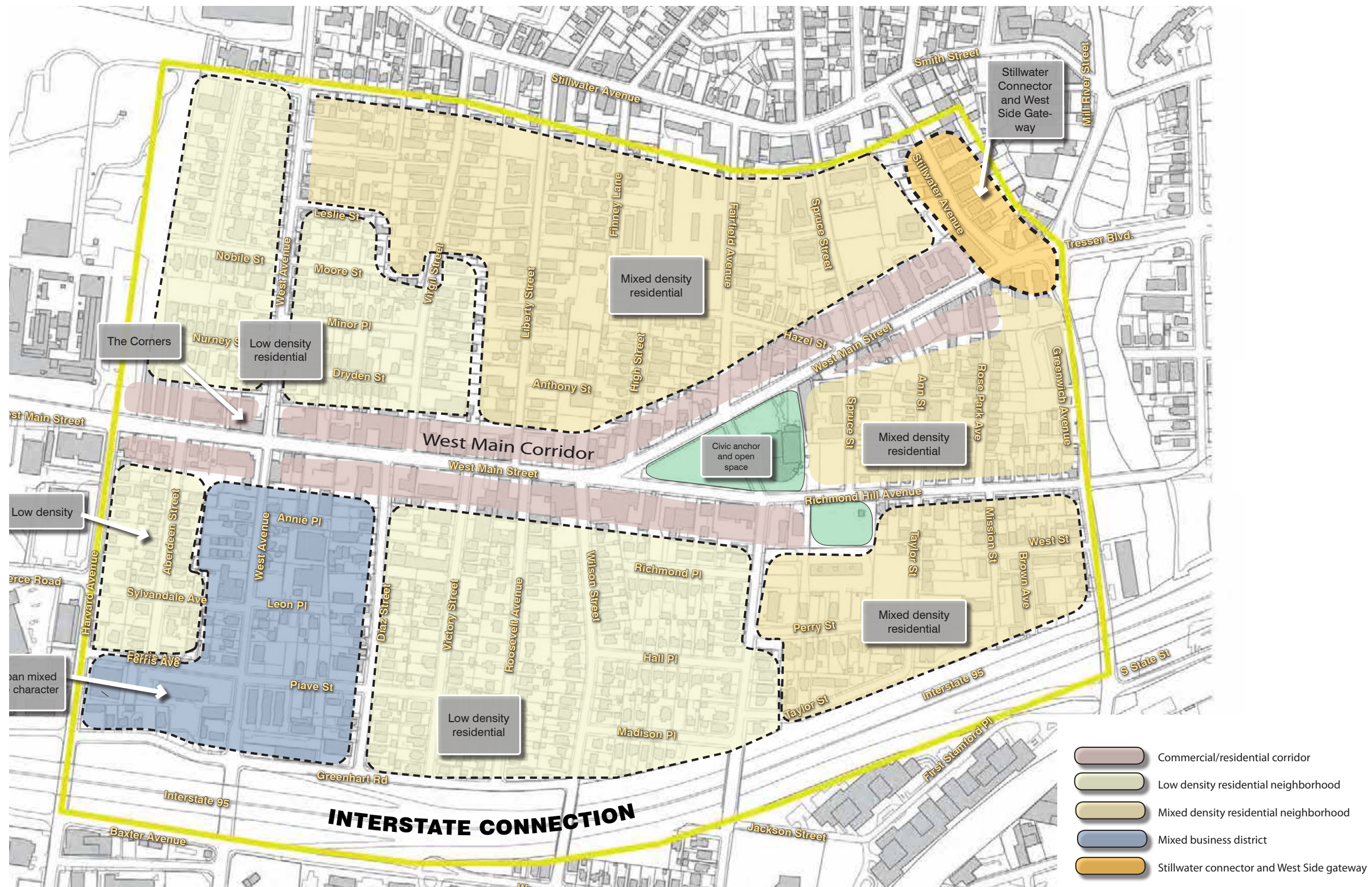
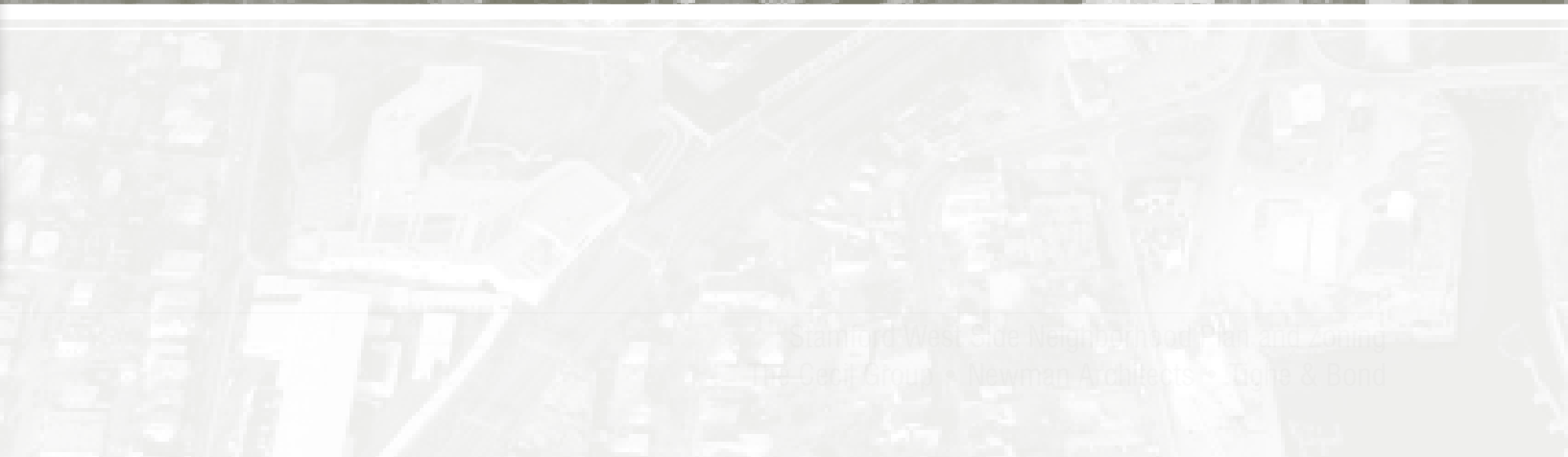
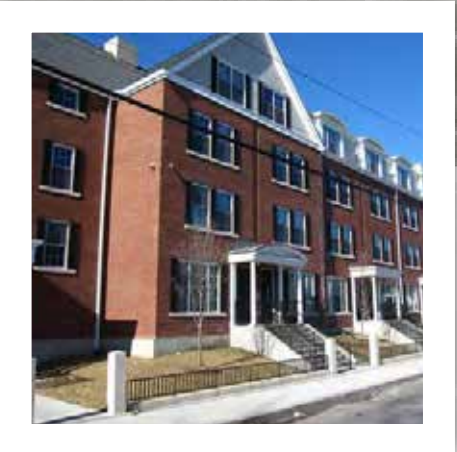
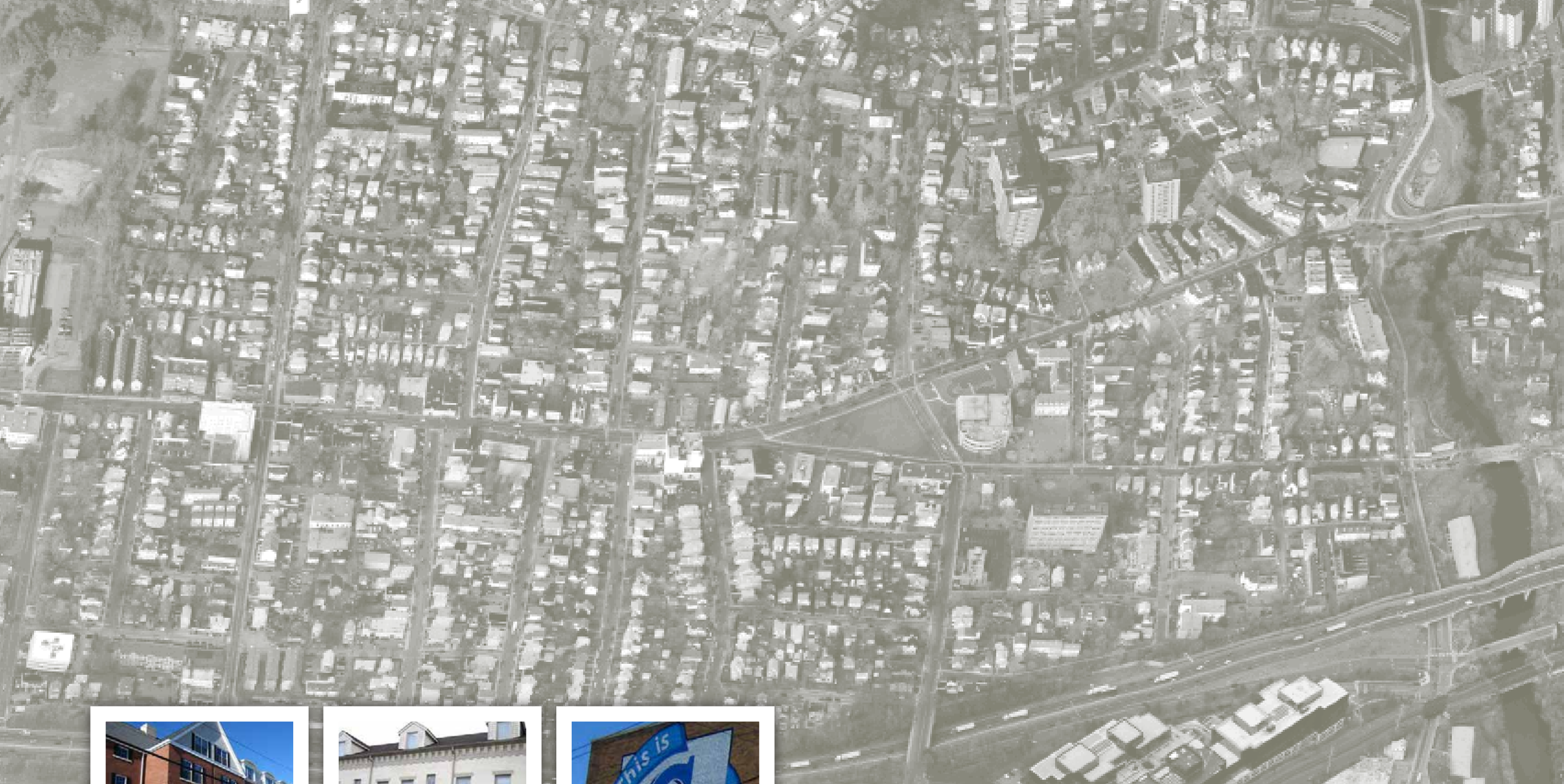


FIGURE 10 DESIGN GUIDELINE DISTRICTS







Stamford West Side

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

PART II: *BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS*



prepared for:

The Town of Stamford

prepared by:

The Cecil Group
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Tighe & Bond

May 2013

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The purpose of *Part II: Background and Analysis* is to provide a sense of the background research that informs the recommendations and implementation steps detailed in *Part I: Executive Summary*. *Part III: Appendices* provides the Master Plan and Zoning changes to be implemented.

This report is divided into four categories which follow this introduction: Neighborhood Character and Quality of Life; Land Use and Development; Transportation, Circulation and Parking; and Neighborhood Environment. Each of these sections provides information on the existing conditions of the neighborhood relative to the category and analysis of those conditions.

Section 2.0 Neighborhood Character and Quality of Life looks at the demographics, the history of the neighborhood, and the characteristics of the built environment, including average assessed value by type of property, and the conflicts from current conditions.

Section 3.0 Land Use and Development discusses the current zoning, non-conforming properties and the prototype study and analysis.

Section 4.0 Transportation, Circulation and Parking provides information about challenges to all users – vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists and users of public transport.

Section 5.0 Neighborhood Environment looks at the open space, public and cultural resources of the neighborhood and examines how those can be preserved and enhanced.

Section 6.0 Design Guidelines provides a set of written and graphic design guidelines that may be used in this neighborhood.

Section 7.0 Reference Documents provides a list of documents used in this study.

Diagrams that accompany these sections were used at public meetings and/or as part of the study process to analyze the existing conditions, reflect questions that had been raised at the meetings, and make recommendations for solving some of the underlying conflicts.

2.1 NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY AND CHARACTER

Historic maps from 1899, 1947 and 1951 show the creation of the West Side neighborhood and provide important information relative to the development of this neighborhood.

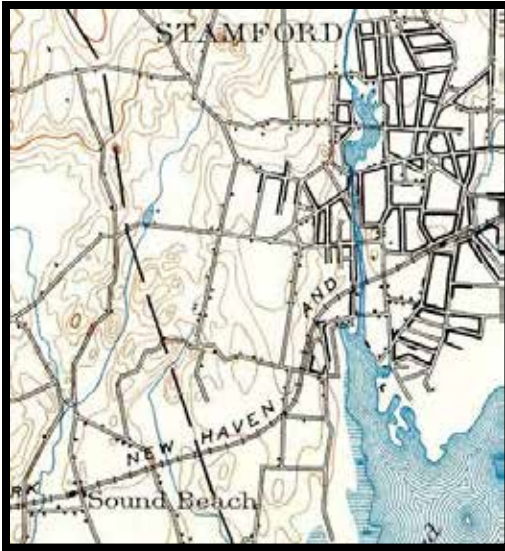
By 1899 the West Side's main roads were in place: West Main Street, Richmond Hill Avenue, Fairfield Avenue, Virgil Street and West Avenue. The 1947 map indicates the growth of institutional buildings, including Stevens School where the Yerwood Center now sits and the Stamford Hospital property. The map also indicates large commercial and industrial buildings and smaller residential buildings mixed together in the neighborhood blocks, a situation that is still in evidence today.

The 1951 map predates the construction of Interstate 95 and of course the downtown renewal area, but suggests a complete urbanization of the neighborhood and downtown (rose coloring) at that time. The main travel roads are indicated as West Main Street (U.S. 1), which was a four lane highway up to Jackie Robinson Park, West Avenue, and Greenwich Avenue. The neighborhood extended less dramatically south towards the railroad tracks.

The construction of I-95 separated the lower third of the original neighborhood. The right of way for the interstate also resulted in revised platting of lots and the creation of parcels that were developed with commercial uses adjacent to the right of way. Just as significant was the Downtown urban renewal that set a boundary at the Mill River resulting in the dense urban character of the Downtown distinctly different from the West Side neighborhood which, as noted, was previously an extension of the downtown's older urban fabric.

The history of development in this area has an impact on the neighborhood today and the possible changes to improve the experience for residents and visitors. Although the historic road system remains essentially as originally laid out, the means and intensity of travel has changed. Narrow neighborhood streets are congested with traffic travelling to the major roads – the east-west corridors of West Main Street/Route 1, Richmond Hill Avenue and Stillwater Avenue and the north-south corridors of Greenwich Avenue, Fairfield Avenue and West Avenue. On-street parking for the commercial corridor of West Main Street overflows into the residential side streets.

The four maps on the facing page give a visual idea of the development of the area. Of these maps, the most relevant to today's land use conflicts is the 1980 Zoning Map because the change in zoning districts from this map to the present day has created some of the current difficult conditions within the neighborhood.



1899 Survey of Stamford



1947 Survey of Stamford



1951 Survey of Stamford

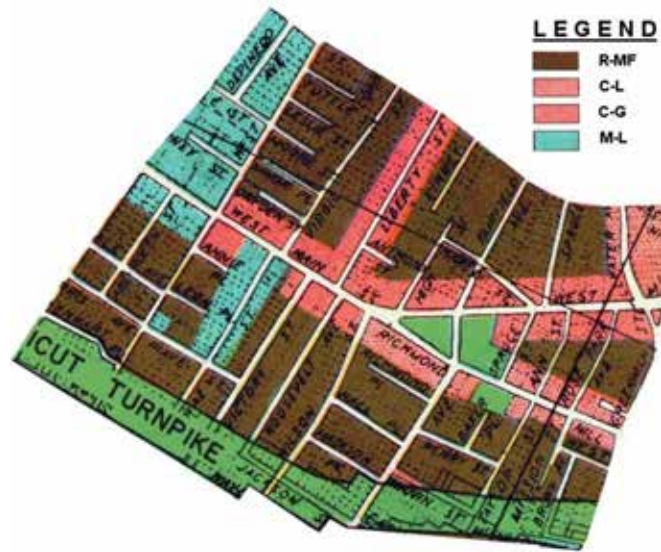


This 1980 Zoning Map clearly shows Jackie Robinson Park, and other civic spaces (in green), the R-MF District in brown, the Design Business District along West Main Street (in pink dots) and the Limited Business District along Richmond Hill Avenue (pink). The bright blue is the light Industrial District – comparing this map to the map of non-conforming uses in *Section 3.1 Existing Land Use and Land Use Conflicts* shows that many of these uses were acceptable under the zoning in 1980 and became non-conforming after the subsequent zoning change to add the R-5 and R-6 residential districts to the neighborhood. It is difficult to distinguish the boundaries of some zones from this map because the green color for public use and the green color for R-5 are very similar, but there appears to be no R-5 zoning in the West Side neighborhood. R-6 was not a zoning district in 1980.

1980 Zoning Map

2.2 ZONING HISTORY

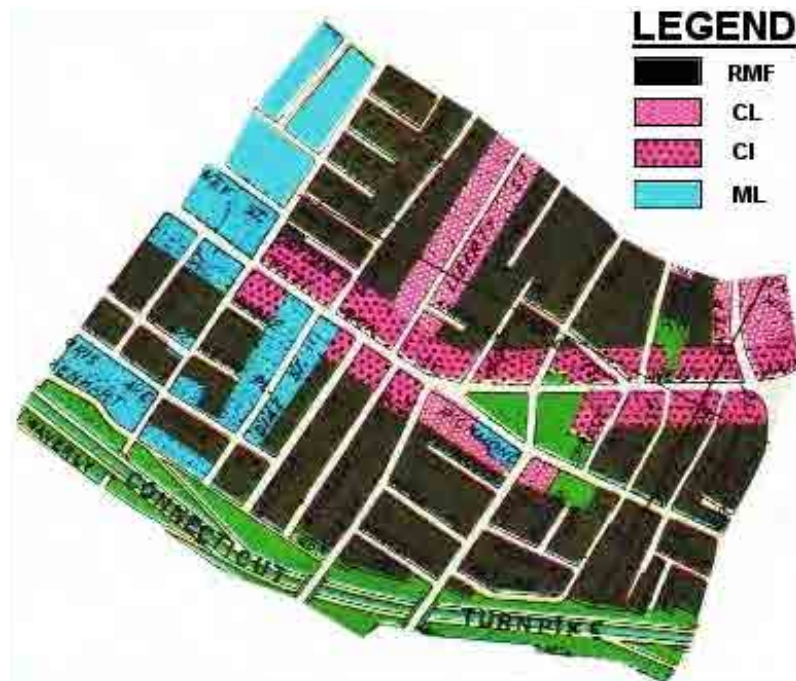
Limited information is available regarding zoning and development prior to the merger of City and Town zoning in 1951. The 1951 draft Zoning Regulations proposed an “amortization” rule to try to eliminate conflicts with non-conforming commercial uses in residential neighborhoods – an intractable problem that continues to impact the project area. This provision was not adopted, and by 1954 Diaz Street and most properties west of West Avenue were zoned industrial (ML/MG), and the principal arteries of West Main Street, Richmond Hill Avenue and Liberty Street were zoned commercial (CG/CL). In 1954, non-residential zones comprised 37% of the 202 acre project area and permitted a number of industrial/heavy commercial uses, which may explain many of the non-conforming commercial uses that persist today. The remaining area was zoned R-MF, Multiple Family Residential District, and permitted six story residential buildings at 43 units per acre.



1954 Zoning Map

1954 Selected Permitted Uses			
	CL	CG	ML
Garage, Public	no	yes	yes
Auto Sales/Service	no	yes	yes
Food Processing	no	yes	yes
Sand & Gravel	yes	yes	yes
Building Materials	no	no	yes
Residential (350 sf/family)	yes	yes	yes

Over the next three decades, additional properties were rezoned industrial along West Avenue and at the corner of Fairfield and Richmond Hill, and arterial commercial zones were revised to CI/CL. The 1980 Zoning Map represents the high water mark for industrial/commercial zoning.



1980 Zoning Map

In 1982 the industrial zoning trend reversed and 55 properties (13 Acres) on the west side of West Avenue were rezoned from M-L to R-5, and in 1984 another 27 properties (5.4 Acres) on Diaz Street were also rezoned from M-L to R-5. The Planning Board noted at the time that these zone changes would implement the objective of the Master Plan to prevent the further intrusion of industrial uses into predominantly residential streets.

Comprehensive Rezoning, conducted in 1984-85, eliminated most of the remaining industrial zoning and changed Liberty Street from C-L to R-MF. Portions of West Main Street were changed from C-I to R-MF and remaining C-I zoned properties were changed to the more restrictive C-L. Similar sweeping changes were made to R-MF zoned areas through a combination of rezoning to R-5 and R-6 and lowering R-MF density to 29 units/acre, and restricting R-MF lots smaller than 20,000 square feet to only 22 units/acre. As a result, residential densities were effectively halved throughout the project area and the majority of residential properties were made non-conforming.

2.3 DEVELOPMENT TRENDS (1967 TO PRESENT)

Based on a sampling of tax assessment and zoning records, development activity within the project area has been dominated by new residential construction and has occurred in three distinct phases. From 1967 to 1981, a wave of public assisted housing construction produced 346 units of housing while private market rate development generated 50 housing units. Signature developments during this period include Friendship House, Martin Luther King Apartments, Trinity Park and Coleman Towers. The next development cycle, from 1982 to 1989, was dominated by private residential investment. This period of intense construction activity produced 346 market rate units compared to 43 assisted housing units. During the most recent period from 1990 to the present, assisted housing has once again dominated, producing 245 housing units typically in a lower density townhouse style exemplified by Fairgate, a Charter Oak Communities development of 90 mixed income units. Market rate housing construction during this same period produced 113 units, generated largely by a single project on Liberty Street and by the market rate units within the mixed income Fairgate development.

Commercial/industrial construction during this same time period has been comparatively limited, concentrated in the West Avenue corridor north of I-95. Two manufacturing/warehouse buildings were constructed in 1981, totaling 22,000 square feet, and a 99 room hotel and 26,000 sq. ft. office building were completed in 1985 and 1987 respectively. Another 11,000 square foot manufacturing building was erected in 1994 and a 20,000 square foot manufacturing addition started construction in 2012.

2.4 THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The built environment within the West Main Street neighborhood includes the buildings and site improvements within the parcels that compose the district.

Building and Site Conditions

As a general observation, the conditions of the existing buildings and sites within the West Main Street neighborhood vary considerably. This variety of conditions is apparent from the perspective of pedestrians and motorists moving along the streets and sidewalks, and was noted as part of the site visits, photographs and discussions with neighborhood residents and stakeholders during the course of the planning studies. There are a number of factors which are likely to be contributors to the instances where maintenance has been deferred or where there is evident deterioration or apparent neglect, resulting in disinvestment in individual properties that negatively impact neighboring sites and areas within the neighborhood:

- Non-conforming existing uses – Under standard zoning provisions as typically applied, uses that do not conform to the zoning for their location cannot expand their buildings or add additional land as part of an improvement project. Such conditions are termed “non-conforming existing uses.” These uses can persist within their existing sites and buildings indefinitely as “grandfathered uses.” As has been described, for example, there are a number of light industrial or commercial uses in the West Main Neighborhood whose sites were rezoned as multi-family residential, which reduced the ability to improve or expand. Buildings and sites can stagnate under these circumstances.
- Lack of an adequately competitive market providing choices with higher quality conditions – The range of choices for rent or purchase of higher quality buildings or spaces may be limited by the structure of the local real estate market. If the residents and business have a strong preference to locate in an area, landlords or property sellers may not need to improve their buildings or land to attract renters or buyers, particularly if there is a limit on the supply of new or renovated space due to the lack of sites or zoning limitations.
- Low income or revenue potential to support maintenance or reinvestment – Rents or sale prices must be adequately high to justify reinvestment in sites and buildings, and may not be sufficient for certain types of buildings or uses in the current market conditions within the neighborhood.

- Mismatch between site size, building size, configuration and contemporary needs – In some cases, the size or configuration of sites or buildings may not be conducive to economically profitable use that would justify reinvestment. So, for example, sites and uses that do not have adequate parking either on-site or nearby may have difficulty renting or selling space, or achieving adequate sales to justify reinvestment. In other cases, the layout and size of the floors of buildings may not match current commercial, retail, light industrial or housing needs efficiently.
- Lack of enforcement – In some cases, building codes or other municipal standards either are not or cannot be practically enforced. This can result in unsightly deterioration of basic building structural integrity or other problems.
- Lack of effective regulations to incentivize or require building and site condition design quality – Under the right circumstances, design standards and other regulations can attract and target reinvestment that will improve the exterior visual character and quality of deteriorated or neglected buildings when they are improved.

The factors that result in poor building or property conditions can be addressed through a variety of methods. This planning study is specifically focused on proving zoning and other regulatory measures to help reverse disinvestment where it is occurring in the neighborhood. The strategies and recommendations described in this Report include:

- Changing zoning to address key non-conforming existing uses – New zoning measures are recommended in this report to allow certain non-conforming existing uses to improve and expand. In some cases, this would be accomplished through new zoning district designations that would allow “grandfathered” uses to become conforming. In other cases, non-conforming uses might improve and expand their uses, if they provide visually attractive design solutions so that they will become more compatible with neighboring sites and properties.
- Providing appropriate opportunities for site redevelopment – The recommendations in this report targeted opportunities to replace poorly configured sites and uses with somewhat higher densities that better match contemporary needs, and which provide an economic incentive for reinvestment.

- Design standards and guidelines to improve quality – This report includes a series of design standards and guidelines that can be used to ensure that building and site developments or improvements result in higher quality results that reinforce the value and investment in the neighborhood as a whole.

In addition to the regulatory recommendations that are the focus of this Report, other complementary programs and initiatives can be used, over time, to address deteriorate buildings and sites. The City and other stakeholders in the future of the neighborhoods can help advocate and implement programs over time that include:

- Grant and loan programs – There are a wide variety of programs that have been used or may become available to provide incentive resources to building and property owners to improve facades, provide landscaping, improve signage or make repairs and renovate historic buildings and properties.
- Housing investment initiatives – Public/private housing reinvestment initiatives have proved to be very effective methods to replace or redevelop underutilized or deteriorate properties.
- Building code and other legal enforcement programs – Building condition violations can be very complicated to enforce, but the City can seek innovative methods, over time, to enhance compliance within the district.

Valuation of Land, Buildings and Improvements

Understanding the valuation of land and improvements and the relationship to uses and densities provides an important basis for understanding the conditions and dynamics of the real estate market and redevelopment potential. The following table has been assembled from relevant data drawn from the Stamford Assessor’s database, using 2010 as the basis for assessment and property information.

- With regard to residential uses, the lot sizes for small scale, one and 2 family homes are relatively small, averaging about 6,000 square feet per lot. The average lot size for apartment buildings averages twice that area, due to the fact that larger, assembled parcels are needed to support larger buildings and associated parking. However, the overall value of the property on a per square foot basis is worth nearly twice as much. In this context, the conversion of small parcels into multi-family rental housing can be expected if market demand for multi-family housing remains strong.

- The value of improved land with either commercial or industrial uses are relatively comparable (\$66 and \$69/square foot respectively) and occupy similarly-sized lots (about 11,000 to 12,000 square feet). The market values are somewhat less than for multi-family rental housing on an improved square foot basis, but they are competitive. This indicates that there is a demand for these types of use, and the land cannot be classified as “underutilized” or “underperforming.”
- The Floor Area Ratio (FAR) measures the density of different uses, and is calculated by dividing the gross area of buildings by the land area on which they are placed. The densities for the single commercial and industrial development range from about 0.4 to 0.5, which are at the upper end of densities that are accompanied by surface parking, rather than structured parking which is expensive and typically not feasible within the market conditions associated with the scale of development and underlying land values. As a result, there is a reliance on vacant commercial land to provide off-site parking. The FAR for apartments is relatively high, and could normally be supported only if there is structured parking, parking on the ground floor of multi-story buildings, or rental types such as senior housing where there are few drivers. This high density is supported, in part, by off-site parking, some of which is located on vacant residential land.

Category	Number	Total Value (Appraisal)	Land Area	Building Area	Value/SF Improved Land	Value/SF Unimproved Land	Average Floor Area Ratio	Average Lot Size (SF)
Residential Dwellings (1 and 2 family)	543	\$ 150,509,860	3,312,072	1,726,904	45		0.52	6,100
Apartments	69	\$ 71,955,790	883,887	827,286	81		0.94	12,810
Commercial	60	\$ 43,367,426	655,056	262,799	66		0.40	10,918
Industrial	42	\$ 34,603,470	500,626	262,799	69		0.52	11,920
Vacant Residential Land	34	\$ 8,173,270	198,312	0		41	0.00	5,833
Vacant Commercial Land	26	\$ 10,073,690	154,236	0		65	0.00	5,932

Land Development Patterns

The development pattern is not uniformly distributed across the neighborhood. In order to categorize and characterize these patterns, the Planning Study recognizes that the neighborhood has distinctive subareas with important use and density characteristics that have been taken into account. The following graphic groups these patterns which are a consequence of market forces and zoning rules over many decades.



Development Patterns

Snapshot of West Side Census Demographics

		West Side	Stamford	Fairfield County
Total Population		4,629	122,643	916,829
Race	White alone or in combination	36%	67%	77%
	Black alone or in combination	35%	15%	12%
	Other alone or in combination	33%	21%	14%
	Foreign-born	52%	38%	20%
Age	Under 18 years	21%	13%	10%
	65 years and over	14%	8%	6%
Households	Family households	74%	64%	69%
	Nonfamily households	26%	36%	31%
Industry of work	Scientific, management, administrative	19%	19%	15%
	Educational, health care, social assistance	18%	18%	21%
	Accommodation and food services	13%	9%	7%
	Construction	9%	8%	7%
Travel to work	Drove alone	49%	67%	74%
	Carpooled	21%	11%	8%
	Public transportation	18%	12%	9%
	Walked	8%	6%	3%
	Other means	1%	1%	1%
Employment	Worked at home	2%	4%	5%
	In labor force	70%	73%	68%
Education	Employed	59%	66%	62%
	Unemployed	11%	7%	6%
	High school graduate or higher	73%	86%	88%
	Bachelor's degree or higher	20%	44%	44%
Household Income	Less than \$10,000	5%	5%	5%
	\$200,000 or more	3%	15%	17%
	2009 HUD AMI (3 person household)		\$ 110,166.67	
Housing	Housing units	1,599	50,573	361,221
	Occupied	92%	94%	93%
	Owner occupied	27%	55%	69%
	Renter occupied	73%	45%	31%

2.5 DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographics of the West Side Neighborhood are significantly different from those of the City of Stamford as a whole.¹ In general, the population of the West Side Neighborhood is more likely to be non-white and/or foreign-born, have a lower income and to significantly more likely to rent their homes.

The population is slightly younger than the City of Stamford as a whole and more people live in each dwelling, reflected in the higher number of people per unit.

The overall population is much less likely to have a high school degree, and this is reflected in the industries that are represented – accommodations and food services, retail, construction and healthcare – and fewer citizens with high incomes than in the City of Stamford as a whole. Compared to the region, more citizens get to work by carpooling, public transportation, and walking, suggesting that most workers are employed within the neighborhood and surrounding areas or do not have a private vehicle.

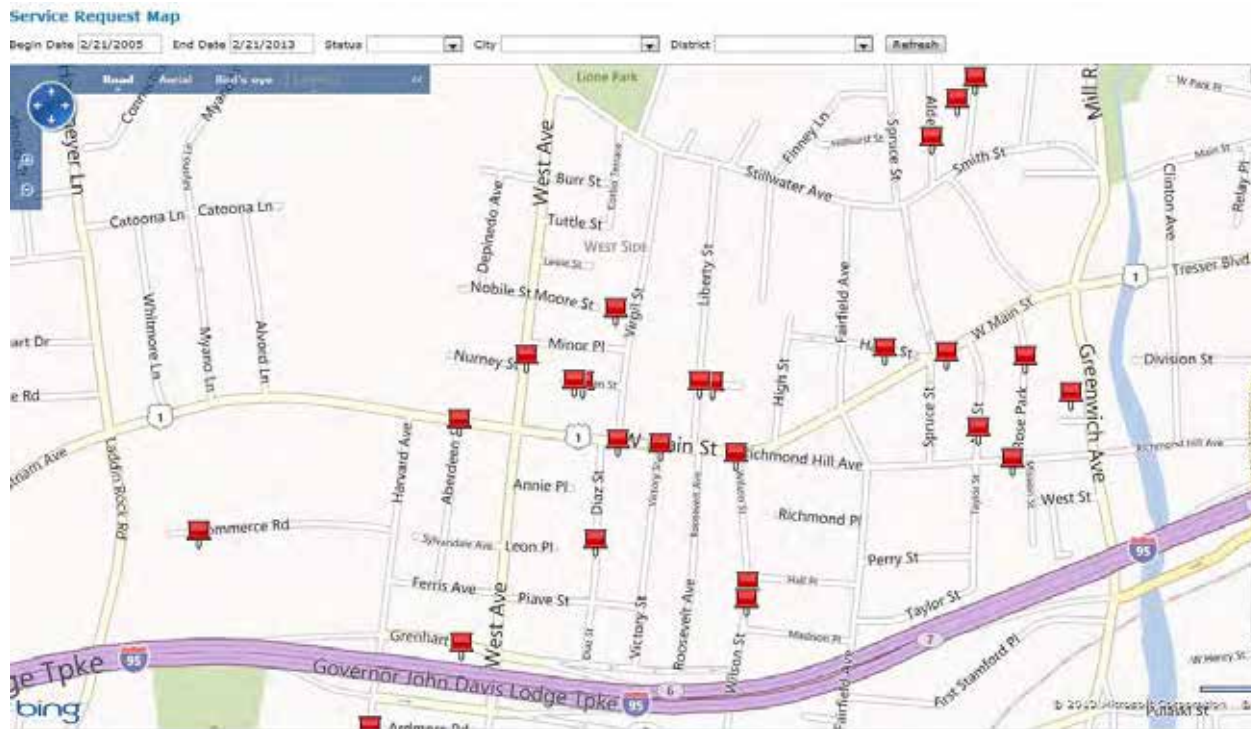
Recommended changes must take into account this combination of residents who work so close to their homes. Strategies for change should seek to improve both commercial and residential properties without privileging one use over the other within the overall neighborhood.

¹ The following data is from the 2010 U.S. Census. The census tracts identified as “West Side” are predominantly the eastern and southern blocks, Census Tract 214, Block Group 3 and Census Tract 215, Block Groups 2 and 3. When data was not available on the Block Group scale, percentages were used from the Tracts.

2.6 ZONING COMPLAINTS

A neighborhood perception of a lack of public safety is reinforced by both the volume of complaints about zoning and the lack of support for pedestrians and bicyclists in the neighborhood.

The mix of uses can lead to conflicts which are indicated by the number of complaints registered. The City has a Complaint System that includes a searchable database. City staff searched back to 2005 for Zoning Related Complaints in the general Study Area and retrieved the map inset which shows all of the complaints in the Study Area. The search results include 20 complaints, 5 for illegal rooming houses and 15 for illegal commercial businesses; mostly contractors' storage and landscapers' yards. It is estimated that for every reported complaint in the system there are at least 2 that are left unreported because people are unwilling, afraid or unaware of the reporting process.



Map of Zoning Complaints, 2005 to 2012

The concentration of complaints concerning commercial businesses reinforces the observation that there is market demand for small commercial businesses in the area. Providing appropriate locations for commercial uses within the West Main Neighborhood – with design controls to ensure compatibility with residential uses – are key recommendations of this study.

3.1 EXISTING LAND USE AND LAND USE CONFLICTS

The majority of the Study Area is currently zoned for single and multi-family residential uses, which is consistent with the Master Plan designations for the neighborhood. However, when compared with the actual land uses as determined from the City Assessor's records as they have been incorporated into the City GIS system, a different picture emerges of fairly significant inclusions of properties and uses classified as non-residential.

The land use in the district is predominantly residential, with a variety of housing types ranging from single family dwellings to row houses, condos, multifamily units and apartments. The planning area subdistricts indicate the wide variety of block-level development created by historic conditions. This variety creates an interesting and diverse residential neighborhood that is valuable for the options it provides for City living. Based in part on the community meetings and discussions with stakeholders, the Planning Study proceeded to consider protection, enhancement and stabilization of these residential neighborhoods.

Past zoning decisions have led to a mingling of uses, found particularly in the blocks south of West Main Street generally between Harvard Avenue and Diaz Street. The mix of uses is traditionally separated by zoning, and includes heavy industrial uses such as light manufacturing and yards for landscape/construction equipment and materials next to residential properties. Because the zoning designations do not relate clearly to the use, improving properties is difficult – there is little incentive or public support to invest in change and the process is difficult.

The notion of non-conforming uses is complex. An individual lot may be owned or leased for the purpose of supporting parking for an adjacent or nearby use, consistent with the purposes of the zoning. In addition, some uses are non-permitted violations of the zoning regulations. As a result, it is important that the zoning rules anticipate the ability to apply and enforce practical standards.

The map on the facing page shows several commercial and light industrial uses that are located within areas that are zoned for residential uses. Without buffers or proper maintenance, these non-residential uses can be noxious to the residents and affect both assessed property values and quality of life.



Map of Non-conforming Uses

3.2 PROTOTYPE STUDIES, METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

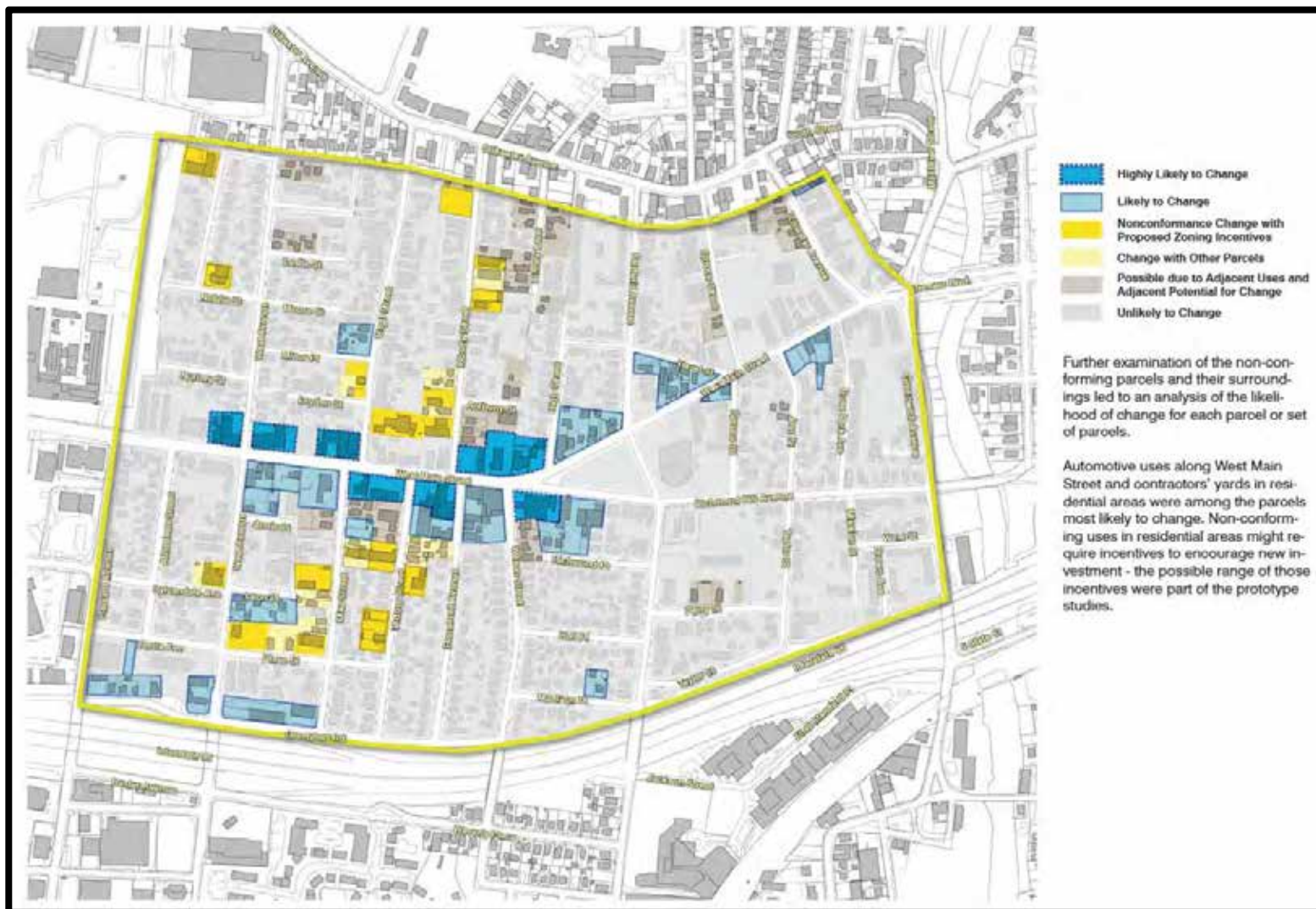
As shown on the previous map, the current six zoning districts are C-L, C-B, M-L, R-5, R-6 and R-MF. M-L, which allows industrial uses, is the remainder of a larger district whose use was changed to R-MF (which is a residential zone allowing multifamily dwellings). C-L and C-B are commercial districts. R-5 and R-6 allows one and two family homes on lots of 5,000 and 6,000 square feet, respectively. R-5 also allows multi-family dwellings, but at a lower density than R-MF.

A prototype study and analysis examined the current land use and the non-conforming parcels. These parcels are non-conforming either because the use had been grandfathered after past zoning changes or because the use is illegal and unpermitted. The goal of this study and analysis was to determine which parcels would be most susceptible to a change in use and under what conditions, to determine any zoning changes that might be needed to encourage such change and to estimate the increase or decrease in property values as a result.

A prototype study is not a financial feasibility study of individual parcels. Rather, it is a method of looking at the scale and proportion of existing uses and what would be required to provide additional density or changes in use. This analysis leads to an understanding of whether significantly more efficient use of land could be achieved. There are many factors that would affect the development of a specific parcel. A prototype analysis aids in developing the zoning regulations with general applicability within a zoning district. These zoning regulations affect capacity of a parcel or parcels to support reinvestment – investors will not undertake development or redevelopment without increased density to support the cost of investment.

This prototype study looked at both current non-conforming properties and those that would become non-conforming under the proposed VC (Village Commercial) District. These uses would include many of the automotive uses along West Main Street that are allowed under current zoning. Parcels that are vacant and those used for parking were also identified in order to see their relationships with the non-conforming uses and the rest of the neighborhood.

The graphic on the facing page shows the analysis of those parcels susceptible to change – i.e. which parcels, if the zoning conditions provided an incentive, would be more likely to change to a conforming use. Incentives to change could include a change to dimensional standards such as an increase in height and floor area ratio (FAR) or a decrease in required yard setbacks.

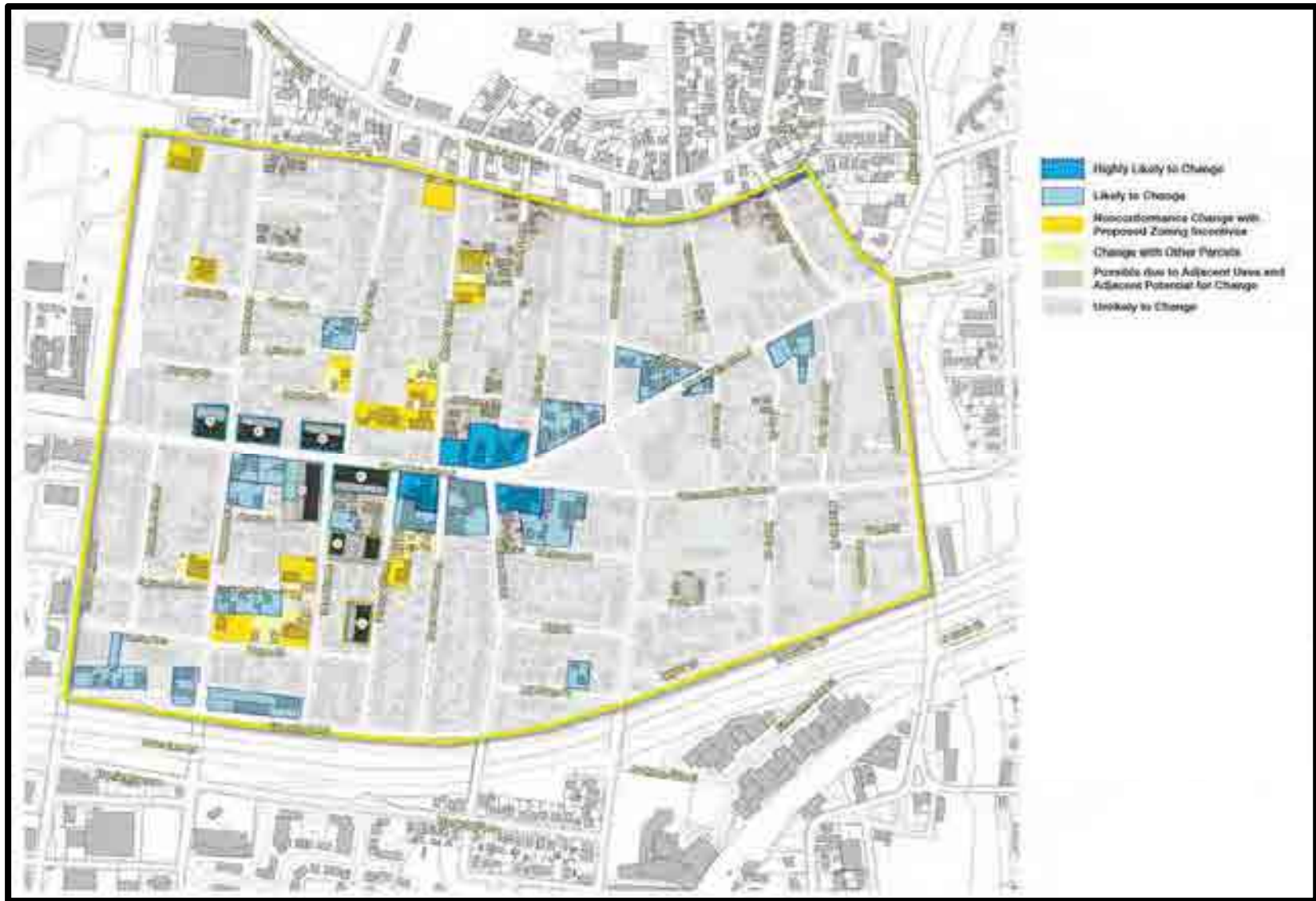


Susceptibility to Change

The next step was the development of building prototypes that could fit on selected parcels. Elements of the six prototypes are described in the table below. All six prototypes include a cantilevered parking structure over the first floor (behind the first floor commercial in A1-B; behind residential units in C and D) and surface parking. All prototypes include residential units on the second floor and above. Prototypes A1-B are intended for commercial zoning districts; prototypes C and D would be located in the R-MF and/or the R-5 districts.

	Use	Parcel Size	Footprint	Number of Stories	Number of Units	Parking Required	Parking Deficit	FAR	Height (feet)	Building Coverage	Residential Units/Acres
A1	Commercial	24,257	8,192	1	NA	7	-2	1.8	51	49%	49
	Residential		8,497	3	27	40					
A2	Commercial	36,490	11,764	1	NA	14	2	1.3	39	47%	44
	Residential		17,188	2	37	54					
A3	Commercial	30,222	10,943	1	NA	13	-2	1.4	39	53%	49
	Residential		15,904	2	34	50					
B	Commercial	23,194	8,497	1	NA	10	-1	1.1	39	37%	34
	Residential		8,497	2	18	27					
C	Residential	21,197	5,495	1	6	9	-1	1.0	36	39%	49
	Residential		8,332	2	18	26					
D	Residential	33,124	10,240	1	11	16	2	0.9	36	37%	40
	Residential		12,359	2	20	29					

By inserting the prototypes on the parcels most susceptible to change, it was possible to evaluate how the various prototypes would fit on the sites and into the neighborhood. The facing page is a visual example of how the prototypes could fit onto the parcels in the neighborhood. More detail is provided in the map that follows which shows the parcels chosen as example sites and how the prototypes fit on those sites. Note that one prototype can fit multiple sites and that developers would have to be allowed to assemble several adjacent parcels for these prototypes.



Location of Prototype Studies



The map on the left identifies the parcels along West Main Street and in the neighborhood chosen for the fit studies. The map on the right shows how prototypes A1-D can fit on the sites chosen as examples. Note that these are tests to determine “fit” of development on the parcel – building footprint and height, density and required parking for the uses. This diagrammatic layout shows that there is an advantage to assembling and reorganizing parcels.

After determining the dimensional requirements of the prototypes and testing their fit on both the site and within the neighborhood, the next step was to examine the changes in dimensional requirements that would be needed to allow these prototypes to be built. In addition to the right to assemble multiple parcels, a developer would also need some relief from current zoning requirements. The tables below outline some of the current zoning requirements and the prototype dimensional standards.

Table of Dimensions: Existing Zoning Districts					
	R-5	R-MF	C-L	C-B	Village-Commercial
FAR			1	0.5	1.5-2.0
Maximum Height	30-40 feet	40 feet	45 feet	50 feet	35 -45 feet
Stories	2.5-3.0 stories	4 stories	4 stories	4 stories	3 – 4 stories
Set-backs					
Front yard	20 feet	15 feet	10 feet	10 feet	0
Side-yard	6 feet/12 feet	8 feet/18 feet	Not required but if provided must be at least 4 feet	6 feet/ 18 feet	Not required but if provided must be at least 4 feet
Rear yard	30 feet	30 feet	20 feet	20 feet	20 feet
Maximum Building Coverage	30%	30-35%		40%	50%-60%

Table of Dimensions: Prototype Studies						
	A1	A2	A3	B	C	D
FAR	1.8	1.3	1.4	1.1	1	0.4
Maximum Height	51 feet	39 feet			36 feet	
Maximum Stories	4	3				
Set-backs	No change					
Maximum Building Coverage	49%	47%	53%	37%	39%	37%

The final stage in this prototype study was to compare the current assessed value of the parcels to an estimated assessed value based on the prototype. This analysis produces a net change in value. The current assessed value is based on values from the City of Stamford's Assessors' Office, and is used to calculate the assessed dollar value per square foot. A construction value of \$125 per square foot for commercial and \$150 per square foot residential is used to calculate the assessed value of the prototypes. In all cases, the difference in assessed value after redevelopment was positive, as shown in the table below and on the facing page. This purpose of these calculations is to provide a sense of order of magnitude of development changes. The estimated values are not intended to reflect an individual financial feasibility analysis for a specific development proposal. However, the value of land is dependent upon the allowable improvements – this prototype study demonstrates an increase in value related to an increase in density.

NET CHANGE CALCULATIONS: Prototype Tests against Current Parcel Uses								
Prototype	Address	Use	Current		New		Difference in Value	
			Total Assessed Value	\$/s.f.	Use	Total Estimated Value		\$/s.f.
A1	467 West Main Street	Retail	\$814,770		Commercial Residential	\$1,024,000	\$125	\$3,144,580
	465 West Main Street	Industrial	\$444,150			\$3,823,650	\$150	
	461 West Main Street	Parking	\$444,150					
			\$1,703,070	\$113		\$4,847,650		
A1	449 West Main Street	Retail/Services	\$296,380		Commercial Residential	\$1,024,000	\$125	\$3,243,600
	445 West Main Street	Retail/Services	\$512,020			\$3,823,650	\$150	
	433 West Main Street	Multi-use	\$795,650					
			\$1,604,050	\$87		\$4,847,650		
A2	448 West Main Street	Automotive	\$632,230		Commercial Residential	\$1,470,500	\$125	\$5,529,570
	17 Diaz Street	Residential	\$232,470			\$5,156,400	\$150	
	19 Diaz Street	Residential	\$232,630					
			\$1,097,330	\$84		\$6,626,900		
A3	432 West Main Street	Retail/Services	\$574,810		Commercial Residential	\$1,367,875	\$125	\$4,449,545
	414 West Main Street	Retail/Services	\$1,114,720			\$4,771,200	\$150	
			\$1,689,530	\$201		\$6,139,075		

Prototype	Address	Use	Total Assessed		Use	Total Estimated		Difference in Value
			Value	\$/s.f.		Value	\$/s.f.	
B	483 West Main Street	Automotive	\$873,520		Commercial	\$1,062,125	\$125	
	497 West Main Street	Multi-use	\$602,790		Residential	\$2,549,100	\$150	
			\$1,476,310	\$126		\$3,611,225		\$2,134,915
C	0 Victory Street (3)	Parking	\$189,790		Residential	\$3,323,850	\$150	
	0 Victory Street (4)	Parking	\$187,790					
	0 Victory Street (5)	Contractor	\$283,970					
	63 Victory Street	Contractor	\$282,440					
			\$943,990	\$438		\$3,323,850		\$2,379,860
D	26 Diaz Street	Residential	\$191,280		Residential	\$4,316,850	\$150	
	30 Diaz Street	Automotive	\$296,200					
	34 Diaz Street	Vacant Residential	\$198,130					
	0 Victory Street (1)	Parking	\$202,580					
	31 Victory Street	Contractor	\$302,320					
	0 Victory Street (2)	Parking	\$197,890					
			\$1,388,400	\$123		\$4,316,850		\$2,928,450

4.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

The vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian connections link the residential blocks to the West Main Street Corridor, the Stillwater Avenue Corridor, Mill River and the parks, and the Downtown. Preceding studies that were reviewed include by a city-wide traffic calming study and a planning study by the South Western Regional Planning Agency for much of the U.S. 1 corridor.²



Major Connections



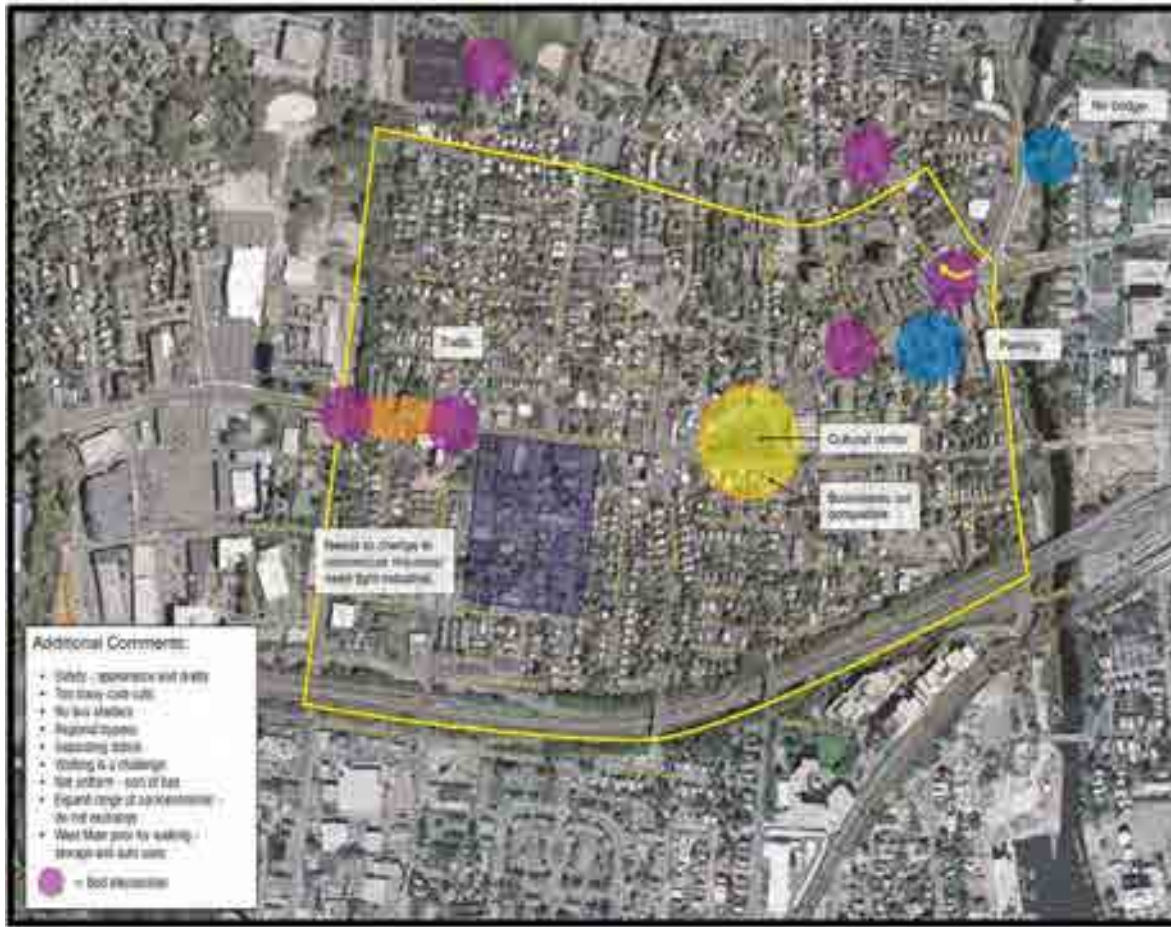
Neighborhood Connections

Major connections include West Main Street/Route 1 and Richmond Hill Avenue. Stillwater Avenue joins West Main Street and the other connecting streets of Tresser Boulevard, Mill River Street, and Greenwich Avenue in a challenging area for both vehicles and pedestrians. Other less-than-ideal conditions include businesses that are auto-oriented or have passive uses such as storage which are not conducive to an active streetscape that encourages pedestrians. The number of curb cuts and several bad intersections along West Main Street (see facing map) present difficulties for vehicular movement. Predicted traffic increases along West Main Street make finding solutions acceptable to drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists even more important.

On-street parking should be retained to support businesses, most of which do not have access to on-site parking. Vacant sites throughout the area have been paved for parking, but this is problematic both along the commercial

² SWRPA, US Route 1 Greenwich / Stamford Operational Improvements Study, draft recommendations, November 2010

corridor and within the residential neighborhoods because of a lack of buffers, problems with storm-water management, and safety problems from curb cuts and poor lighting.



Public transportation includes the Stamford Transportation Center, which is less than a mile from Jackie Robinson Park. The number 11 bus from CT Transit links the downtown with Greenwich along West Main Street. The number 14 bus also links this area to downtown along West Main Street. The number 21 bus links the Post Office to the south with Stillwater Avenue to the north along West Street. The number 24 bus connects the southern part of Fairfield and Richmond Avenue to the Stamford Rail Station. A lack of bus shelters may discourage the use of this system both from a lack of protection in inclement weather and because bus stops are not well-marked.

Traffic and Parking Conditions

5.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

The West Side neighborhood includes civic and open space uses along with the primary residential, commercial and light industrial uses. Non-profit organizations, including many religious groups, are scattered throughout the neighborhood providing important cultural links.

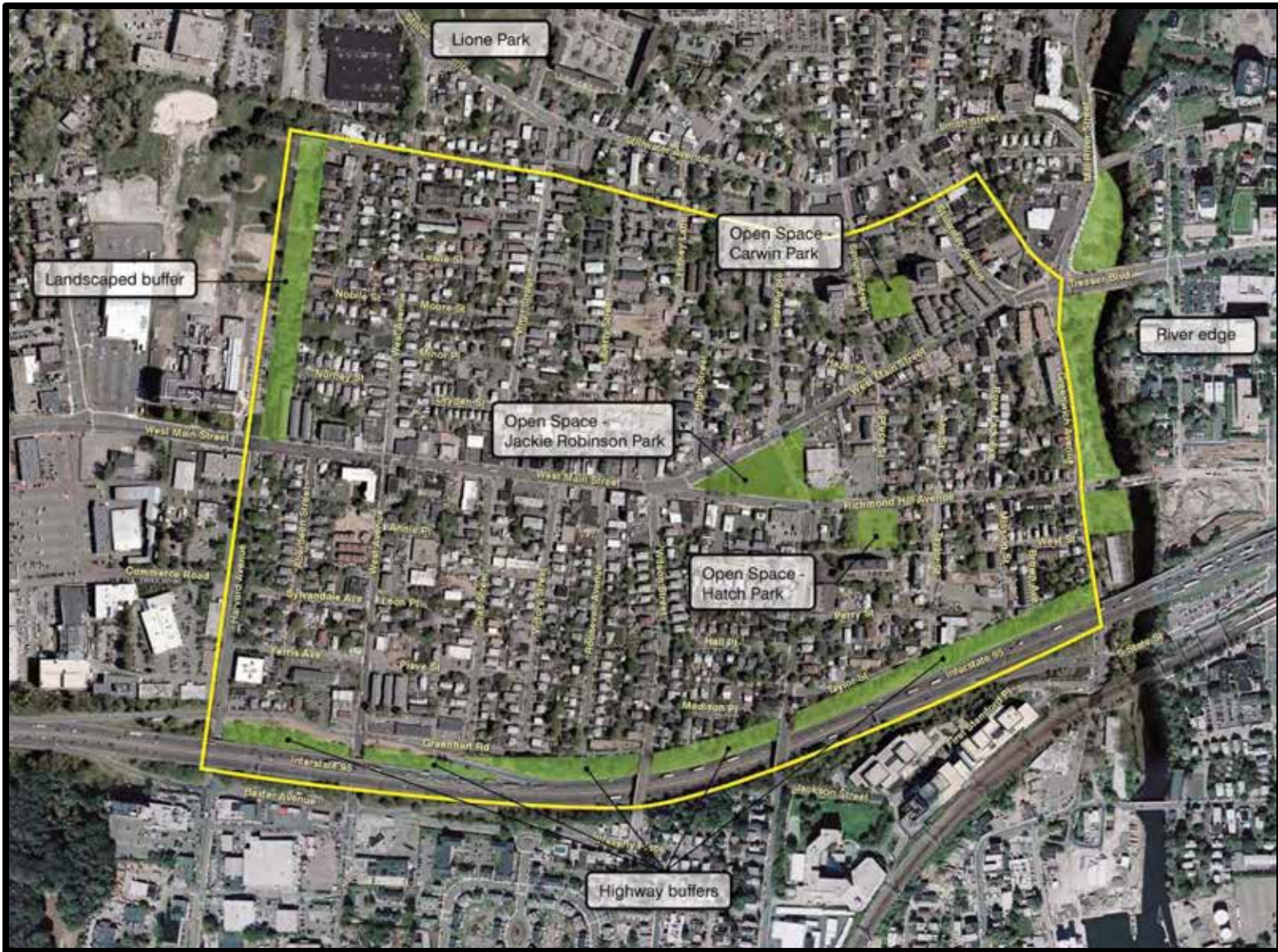
The civic uses are limited but important to the culture of the neighborhood. The Fire Station and the Yerwood Center are located within walking distance to each other and the Jackie Robinson Park – this triangle helps define a transition to the core neighborhood commercial area and is important in providing an area for congregation of neighborhood residents and relief to the street building lines.

The central open space at Jackie Robinson Park is an important gateway to and center of the West Side. The additional parks and playgrounds on Spruce Street and Richmond Hill and along the Mill River provide relief from the surrounding urban area. The community garden on Spruce Street is an active way for residents to experience green space and provide for increased community contact.

The mix of residential, commercial and light industrial uses lack landscape buffers that might make such a mix more attractive for the neighborhood. The non-residential uses in the neighborhood, such as contractors' yards, may be less likely to have a maintained landscape, free of weeds and debris, and may therefore create a perception of neglect and lack of safety around those properties. There are possible environmental hazards from both existing uses and sites that had previous industrial uses.

The traffic conditions and lack of alternative transportation also impact the community's environmental health both through pollution from vehicles and from the lack of accommodation for healthy alternatives such as walking or biking.

The map on the facing page notes the location of existing parks and open spaces and suggests the use of landscape buffers to mitigate noise and pollution from I-95. These buffers would also define and enhance the neighborhood edges along I-95 to the south, the river to the east and the more industrial area to the west.



Open Space and Proposed Buffers

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The design standards and guidelines in this section provide matrices and diagrams for all recommended changes. Individual zoning recommendations are presented in *Part III: Appendices* and the design standards and guidelines are integrated into the text of the recommended language.

The Design Guidelines that follow are broken into several sections:

District Design Criteria describes the four areas of design guidelines – the Village Commercial District, the Urban Mixed Use District, the Compatible Use Incentive Provision and the Neighborhood Residential District – and the accompanying criteria for each area.

Two diagrams, the *Neighborhood Character and Concept Diagram* and the *Design Districts* diagram, detail the neighborhood character and define the design districts.

Finally, a series of *matrices and accompanying diagrams* for each area follows the two diagrams. Each matrix is further subdivided into site design and architectural criteria, and defines the standards, provides the reasoning behind each standard, and links each standard to its respective diagram. The *Existing VC Zone Site Design and Architectural Criteria* matrix also provides a reference to the relevant current design guidelines within the existing zoning.

6.2 DISTRICT DESIGN CRITERIA

This section brings together each of the unique districts that comprise the West Side Neighborhood with the goal of providing a coherent understanding of all of the design principles that are important to each of these districts. Although the proposed zoning sets the standards for the density, height and size limitations of new development within the West Side Neighborhood, important design principles should also be considered to ensure that the desirable characteristics of the existing neighborhood are reinforced and amplified through new development and neighborhood improvements. The Design Guidelines add this level of design considerations to the district standards and provide illustrations that clarify the desirable configuration and orientation of redeveloped sites and buildings. The West Side neighborhood is composed of three distinct areas that have many some similarities, but that need to reinforce different qualities of site organization and building scale. The four distinct areas are the Village Commercial (VC) district that follows the West Main Street corridor, the Urban Mixed Use District (UMD) that is located south of Main Street along West Avenue between Diaz and Aberdeen Streets, the existing non-conforming uses, and the remaining portions of the neighborhood that are largely residential blocks.

The Village Commercial District is already associated with Site Design and Architectural Criteria that are a part of the existing zoning. As part of this planning effort for the West Side Neighborhood, these current guidelines have been reviewed as they relate to the West Main Corridor. Several suggestions that would clarify or strengthen the language of these existing guidelines have been made including additional illustrations that may help to clarify the design principles that are outlined. Additionally, several design principles that would apply to the West Main Corridor have been outlined in a matrix that follows with supplemental illustrations. These additional design guidelines include criteria that further define the relationship to parking and Main Street frontage, landscape buffers, building massing, depth of development from Main Street and ground floor transparency and entrances.

The intention of this set of guidelines is to strengthen the VC Zone and to further define it to ensure the type of desirable mixed use redevelopment that would reinforce an active commercial corridor at West Main Street with strengthened street frontage that would minimize negative impacts to the surrounding neighborhoods and abutting residential parcels. The intended model for this type of redevelopment would be mixed-use commercial and residential buildings that line West Main Street with an active and transparent ground floor with residential uses above and parking in the rear of the building and screened with landscape buffers or buildings at the side and rear. These standards would become a part of the zoning for the VC district.

The Urban Mixed Use District located south of West Main Street, approximately a block on either side of West Avenue, is a mid-density commercial and industrial park area set within the context and fabric of the surrounding residential neighborhood. Balancing the commercial and residential edges of this district, particularly at Diaz Street, is a challenge. In terms of neighborhood fabric, the most disruptive aspects of the commercial and industrial uses are scale of the buildings, inconsistent street frontage, and parking. The scale of commercial and light industrial buildings will differ from residential. However, the design guidelines call for an articulation of

CONTENTS

Design Standards Matrix

- *VC Zone Recommendations*
- *VC Zone Supplemental Guidelines*
- *Urban Mixed Use District (UMD) Guidelines*
- *Compatible Use Incentive Provision*
- *Residential Neighborhood Guidelines*

Figures:

- Figure: Neighborhood Character and Concept Diagram*
- Figure: Design Districts*
- Figure: Design Guideline illustrations*

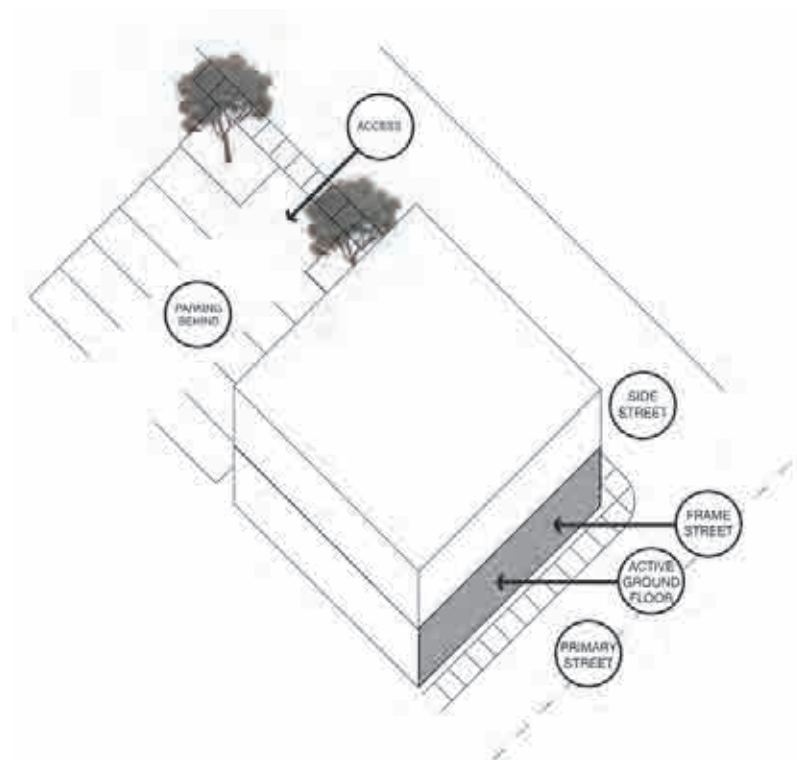
building masses every fifty feet to provide a building pattern more similar to the surrounding context. The guidelines also reinforce the importance of building frontage to frame primary streets and the placement of parking, service and loading areas to the interior of properties or to the rear and sides of buildings. These standards would become a part of the site review and dimension standards for the Urban Mixed Use District.

In several locations in the West Side Neighborhood there exists nonconforming uses that are currently unable to improve the conditions. The Compatible Use Incentive Provision section provides standards by which these properties could be improved and describes the types of improvements that would greatly benefit the surrounding neighborhood. Additionally, guidelines for the conversion of these types of properties to high-density residential use have been provided as well.

The remaining area, and the largest proportion of the Study Area, is the Neighborhood Residential District. The residential areas that surround West Main Street to the north and south are generally of two patterns, a mixed density residential neighborhood that contains formerly single family homes, and double and triple-decker multi-family homes. The other pattern is of larger, higher density multi-family developments. However, both of these residential neighborhood patterns are mixed and so have many similar characteristics. A single set of design guidelines reinforces the residential neighborhood pattern are found in the final section of this section. These guidelines encourage smaller scale, pitched roof structures that are oriented to the street with articulated building entries and garages or surface parking that are de-emphasized and placed to the rear of the site or interior of the block.

Each of the district conditions that are described is located on the Neighborhood Character and Concept Diagram and again on the Design Districts diagram. Each condition is relatively consistent and geographically well-defined, but each district does have an occasional anomaly, an idiosyncratic use or building that does fit with the patterns described. It is the intention that those elements

Example Design Standard Figure:



of the guidelines that are relevant to the unique conditions or circumstances of a particular parcel or development project would be applied.

FIGURE: NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AND CONCEPT DIAGRAM

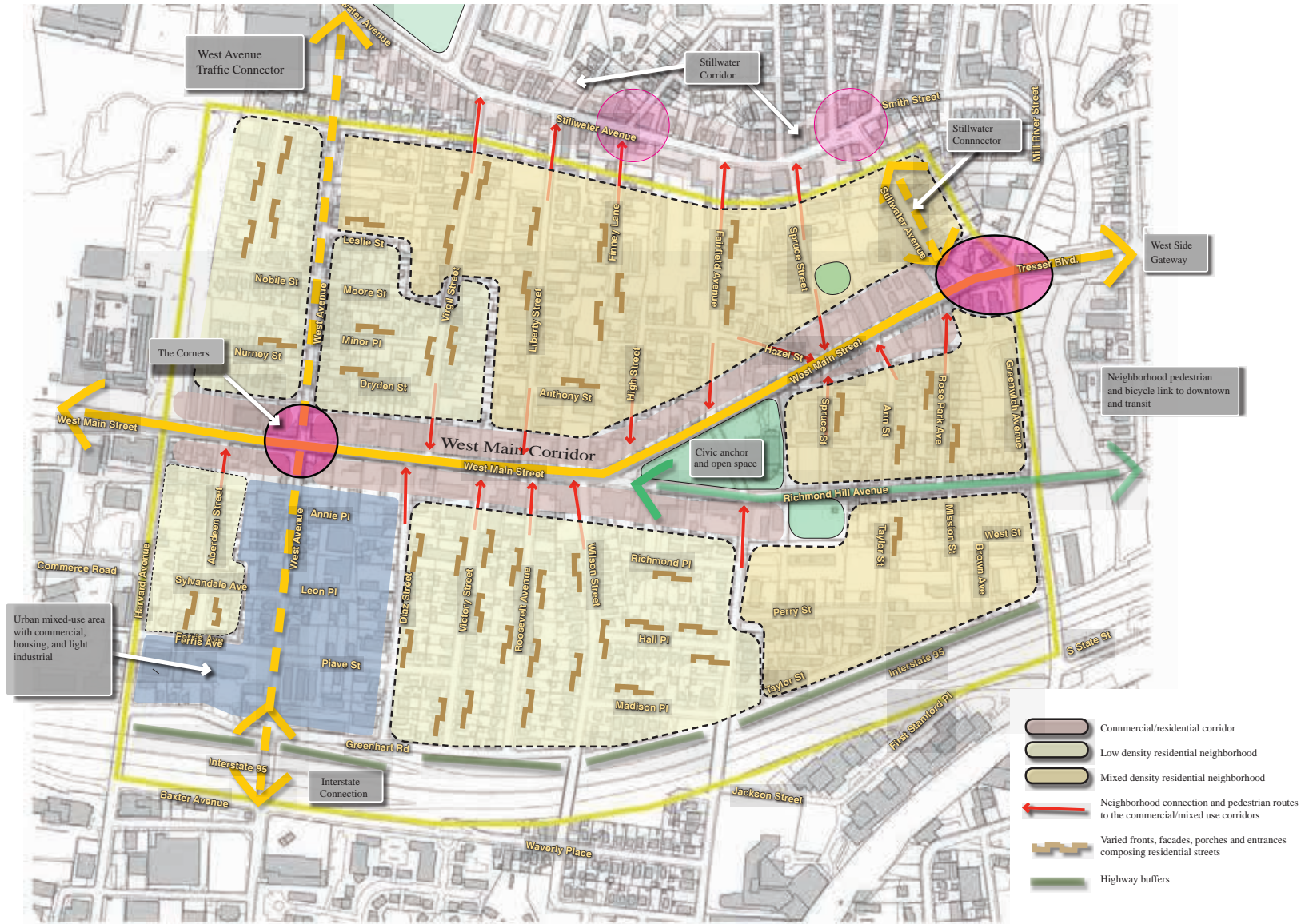
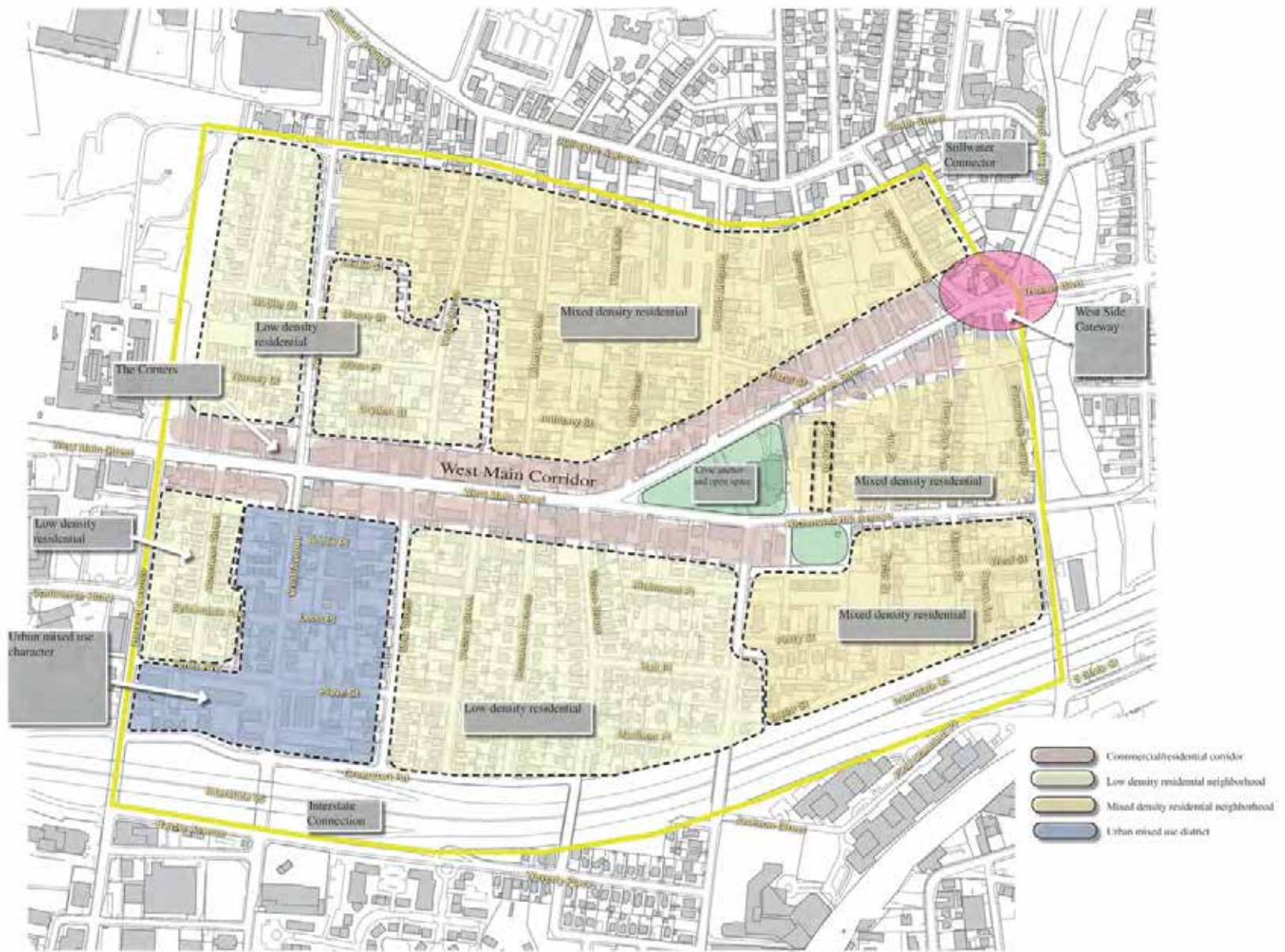


FIGURE: DESIGN DISTRICTS



CRITIQUE OF EXISTING VC ZONE SITE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURAL CRITERIA

The following are observations on the Existing VC Zone Site Design and Architectural Criteria where revision or clarification may be appropriate for all VC Zones:

SECTION	TOPIC	POTENTIAL CHANGE/STANDARD	OBSERVATION	DIAGRAM
SITE DESIGN				
11.5.b.	Front yard setbacks	Change “authorized” to “authorize and require.”	The design review entity may reasonably require setbacks for many reasons. The language implies that the proponent would need to propose a change.	None
11.5.c.	Parking lot design	Provide a maximum of (12) adjacent parking spaces. A tree planting in a curbed divider at least 6 feet wide shall provide relief between adjacent parking spaces.	Breaking up the parking lot with trees provides significant visual and environmental benefits, and is standard in many communities	Figure 1
		Provide for retention of <u>existing</u> parking in front of buildings or on adjacent lots with design enhancements. Acceptable design enhancements may include pedestrian-friendly unit pavers, consolidation of curb cuts, definition of continuous sidewalk along the face of the property, provision of minimum width direct pedestrian path to doors, and landscape enhancements.	This is a realistic problem for establishments that have no other way to provide parking, but where enhancements can dramatically increase the visual quality and pedestrian environment.	None
		Provide a tree planting in a curbed divider at least 6 feet wide between parking bays. A parking bay is considered to be a maximum of a double-loaded parking bay (60 feet) that is 12 parking spaces wide.	In association with the first comment, the intention of the dividers between bays could be better defined.	Figure 2
		Allow relief from above standard if other mitigation is provided (enhanced buffers relative to neighboring properties, for example).	Some sites cannot achieve the 6 foot additional bay without dramatic decreases in parking provided.	None
		Remove the reference to “limited” side yard parking, but add a statement that side yard parking is not preferred and may not be permitted if rear-yard parking is feasible.	“Limited” is not a clear or enforceable standard.	None
		The 10 foot landscape setback for side yard parking shall be measured from the sidewalk if abutting a street or the property line if abutting another parcel.	In association with the other comments, this intention could be better defined.	Figure 3

CRITIQUE OF EXISTING VC ZONE SITE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURAL CRITERIA

The following are observations on the Existing VC Zone Site Design and Architectural Criteria where revision or clarification may be appropriate for all VC Zones:

SECTION	TOPIC	POTENTIAL CHANGE/STANDARD	OBSERVATION	DIAGRAM
		Replace reference to buffer landscaping with provision for landscaping, walls, berms or fencing with a height of 3 feet.	The standards should simply set a height, not a range, and allow for various methods.	None
		The figures that have been added with these changes provide examples of layouts.	Simple layout examples of the recommended or required approaches are helpful.	See other figures
11.5.e.	Lighting	Add that lighting levels shall also be evenly distributed to avoid both very bright or very dark locations.	This is a technical issue, but an average or 0.5 fc can be achieved with some very bright places and contrasting very dark spaces; lighting standards normally control both average and distribution ranges	None
11.5.g.	Fencing materials	Allow for a wider range of metal fencing but prohibit chain link or plastic materials. The intention is for durable, high quality fencing that is primarily decorative.	As a practical matter, there are many other types of fencing that are typical and appropriate, including stamped and formed aluminum, square section and flat bar steel.	None
ARCHITECTURAL CRITERIA				
11.5.h	Architectural design	Remove or redefine “compatible” and “complementary.”	This language is excessively vague and is an open door for requiring particular styles, details or elements determined by the reviewer. This concept is very subjective and tends to require a direct mimicry which may not be appropriate. The notion of compatibility should be with the purpose of the district orientation of detail and material expressions to reinforce a shopping and walking environment.	None
11.5.i	Composition	Remove the reference to “base, middle, top” and replace with a required emphasis on the ground level to reinforce active uses at the primary street frontage and a differentiation, architectural expression, change in materials, articulation or building elements to distinguish the ground floor from the façade above.	This provides for only a relatively constrained and classical range of styles; it is unnecessarily proscriptive unless that is what the community prefers. The concept is that the pedestrian environment is the key goal.	Figure 4

CRITIQUE OF EXISTING VC ZONE SITE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURAL CRITERIA

The following are observations on the Existing VC Zone Site Design and Architectural Criteria where revision or clarification may be appropriate for all VC Zones:

SECTION	TOPIC	POTENTIAL CHANGE/STANDARD	OBSERVATION	DIAGRAM
11.5.j	Coordination	Remove this criteria.	In fact, the variety of building relationships that don't align provides the very scale that is being sought.	None
11.5.k	Reduction in scale	Rephrase to provide for an emphasis on the ground level, and use of scaling elements such as separated materials, windows, bands, decoration, articulation, and the like.	These buildings are all small scale, and the provision of artificial reductions can result in a collage that reduces the integrity of the architecture. The contextual building design examples are not adequately instructive, and are not convincing.	None
11.5.m.	Multiple storefronts	Change the "30-foot width" to "60 feet."	This approach can produce a pastiche effect, with a diminutive scale and false front architecture. Storefronts that have false or fake portions often emphasize the scale of the building and do not provide for a genuine architecture. The scale concept can be achieved through a more clear discussion of articulation.	Figure 5
11.5.q.	Transparency	Change "75 percentage requirement" to façades of all uses must provide 40 percent transparency with the further provision of no interruption in transparency of more than 40 linear feet.	We have done detailed area take offs of actual store designs for thousands of linear feet of high quality shops. The 75 percentage requirement is excessive relative to actual shopping streets judged to be great places. About 50% is more realistic.	Figure 6
11.5.t.	Varied roof lines	A minimum façade width of 45 feet should be specified for this requirement.	Great village streets have small buildings with flat roofs. For narrow buildings, this may not be practical.	None

CRITIQUE OF VC ZONE AT WEST MAIN STREET SITE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURAL CRITERIA

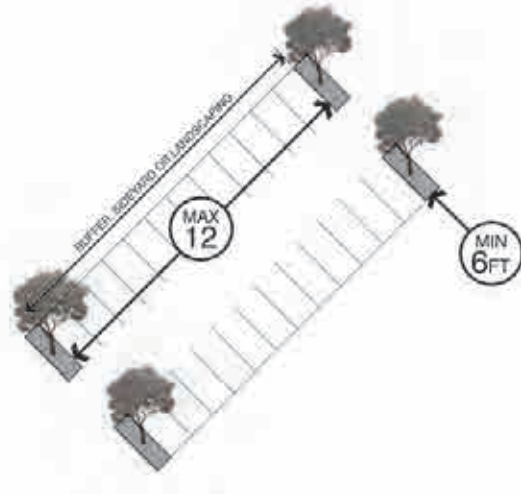
The following are recommendations to supplement the Existing VC Zone Site Design and Architectural Criteria at the location of West Main Street:

SECTION	TOPIC	POTENTIAL CHANGE/STANDARD	OBSERVATION	DIAGRAM
SITE DESIGN				
New Section	Parking Access	Parking access shall be oriented to occur on the side streets. The frontage along Main Street shall be reserved for active ground floor uses with curb cuts and access ways minimized. The side street access shall be limited to less than 60 feet of width.	This requirement is intended to limit the impacts of development or additions to the West Main Street corridor to the surrounding neighborhoods and parcels, while simultaneously reinforcing the ground floor commercial frontage of the corridor.	Figure 7
New Section	Buffers	Increase landscape buffers to at least 10 feet to all adjoining properties or sidewalks.	This will reduce negative impacts and views from adjacent residential properties and neighborhoods.	None
ARCHITECTURAL CRITERIA				
New Section	Frontages	For buildings with a length of 60 feet or more, as measured along West Main Street, the massing and articulation of the building frontage or façade shall be varied. Variation in façade may include architectural expression, change in materials, articulation or building elements, or variation in the building volume and massing.	This will help to ensure that new development that has a larger footprint will fit with the scale and pattern of the existing buildings.	Figure 5
New Section	Transparency	Allow reduced transparency and substitution with other features for residential uses. Residential lobbies and entrances in mixed-use buildings shall be located along the side streets to maintain an active and transparent commercial ground floor at the West Main Street frontage.	Recognizing that ground floor lobbies for upper floor residential uses will occur, this standard will allow the active ground floor uses to occur along West Main Street with less frequent interruptions.	None

CRITIQUE OF EXISTING VC ZONE SITE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURAL CRITERIA

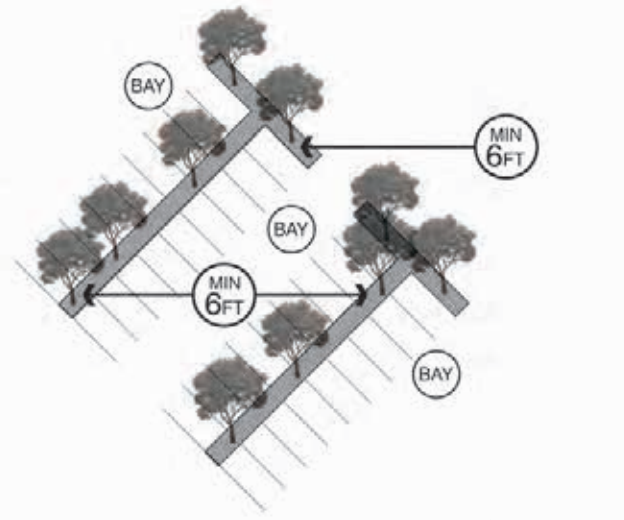
The following are observations on the Existing VC Zone Site Design and Architectural Criteria where revision or clarification may be appropriate for all VC Zones:

FIGURE 1



Parking Lot Design

FIGURE 2



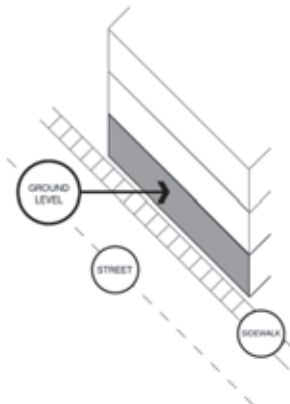
Parking Lot Design

FIGURE 3



Parking Lot Design

FIGURE 4



Composition

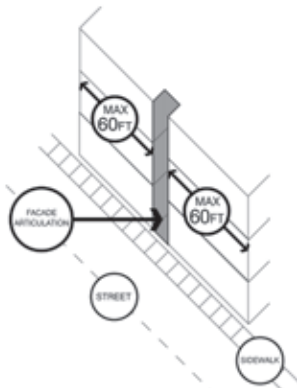
Provide differentiated architectural expression, materials, articulation or building elements that distinguish the ground floor frontage from the façade above.

CRITIQUE OF VC ZONE AT WEST MAIN STREET SITE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURAL CRITERIA

The following are recommendations to supplement the Existing VC Zone Site Design and Architectural Criteria at the location of West Main Street:

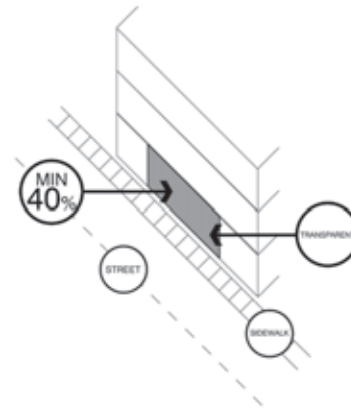
FIGURE 5

To diminish the horizontal scale of a long building façade.



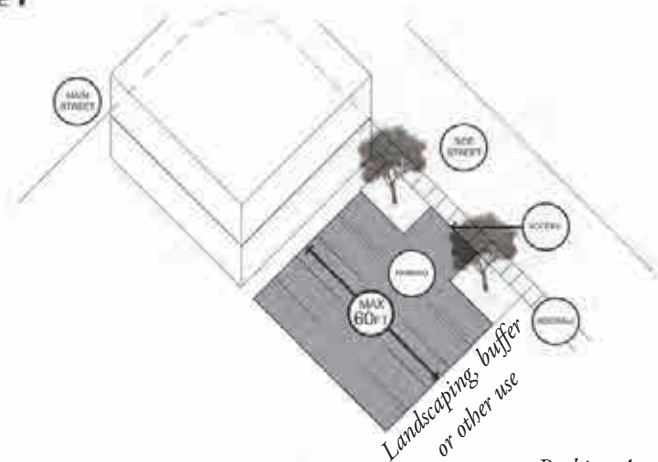
Multiple Storefronts and Frontages

FIGURE 6



Transparency

FIGURE 7



Parking Access

URBAN MIXED USE DISTRICT (UMD) DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following are recommendations for important concepts and principles for the site design and architectural criteria that should be associated with the Urban Mixed Use District (UMD):

SECTION	TOPIC	POTENTIAL CHANGE/STANDARD	OBSERVATION	DIAGRAM
	Building Orientation	To the extent practical and consistent with the operational requirements of the intended use, the ground floor use shall be commercial use that is oriented toward its primary street frontage. The building shall face the main street edge where it will include entrances, commercial storefronts, or lobbies.	This area is currently mixed-use as a district, but contain single-use parcels. Future development may include residential units above a commercial ground floor, in which case, the orientation of the ground floor and building entries becomes an important feature of the site and building configuration.	Figure 8
	Setbacks	The front setback shall be a minimum of 15 feet. No side-yard setback is required, but shall be no less than 4 feet if provided. Rear yard setbacks shall be a minimum of 15 feet. Where a lot line abuts a zoning boundary, a minimum setback of 10 feet shall be provided, but shall under no circumstances include the provision of parking in front of a building. Required buffer areas shall be maintained as unoccupied landscaped open space and shall not be used for parking, driveways, or accessory structures, other than required curb cuts necessary to access the site and pedestrian walkways and similar improvements as approved by the reviewing board.	The most disruptive element of this district today is the surface parking areas that are located in front of commercial buildings or that occupy large portions of commercial properties.	Figure 9
	Landscaping and Buffers	Commercial and industrial structures adjacent to residential zones shall provide a 10 foot landscaped buffer to the adjacent residentially-zoned parcels.	A more consistent application of streetscaping and landscape buffers will soften the edges between residential and commercial edges and add a sense of continuity to the district.	Figure 10
	Parking and Loading	Parking and loading shall satisfy the standards of Section 12 of these Zoning Regulations.	The most disruptive element of this district today is the surface parking areas that are located in front of commercial buildings or that occupy large portions of commercial properties.	Figure 11

URBAN MIXED USE DISTRICT (UMD) DESIGN GUIDELINES

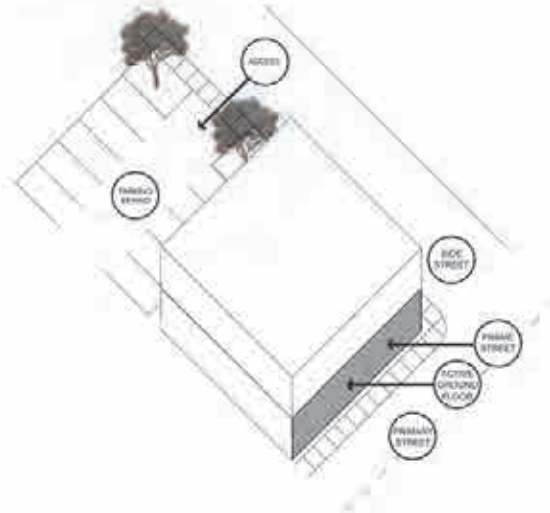
The following are recommendations for important concepts and principles for the site design and architectural criteria that should be associated with the Urban Mixed Use District (UMD):

SECTION	TOPIC	POTENTIAL CHANGE/STANDARD	OBSERVATION	DIAGRAM
	Street Edge, Sidewalks and Landscaping	Continuous sidewalks shall be provided along or parallel to street curbs where they are not provided within the public right-of way. Sidewalks shall have a minimum width of 6 feet.	Sidewalks within the district have been disrupted by access drives or are nonexistent along some side streets. Additionally, many of the sidewalks, roadway and surface parking lots have faded together in a number of locations and should be more clearly defined.	Figure 12
	Façade Length and Articulation	Buildings that have a façade length or width of more than 50 feet facing a public street or adjoining residential district shall be designed to break the façade design into smaller masses or length through the use changes in the plane of the elevation, articulated entries or window bays or other design features to reduce the scale and produce building masses. These changes in the plane of elevation or articulations shall have a depth of not less than 5 feet. The addition of building elements or features may be added to reduce the overall scale of an existing structure and shall be allowed if these changes result in reducing the overall scale of the structure. This may include façade articulation, architectural elements, entry vestibules or features, or other elements to reduce the overall visual scale of the industrial and commercial buildings.	The balance between residential and non-residential properties within this district is the most important physical feature to manage. The residential and non-residential uses generally result in buildings of different scales. Since the two have little in common in terms of style or building features, it is important to reduce the larger scale of the non-residential buildings to fit more seamlessly with the residential buildings as described.	Figure 13

URBAN MIXED USE DISTRICT (UMD) DESIGN GUIDELINES

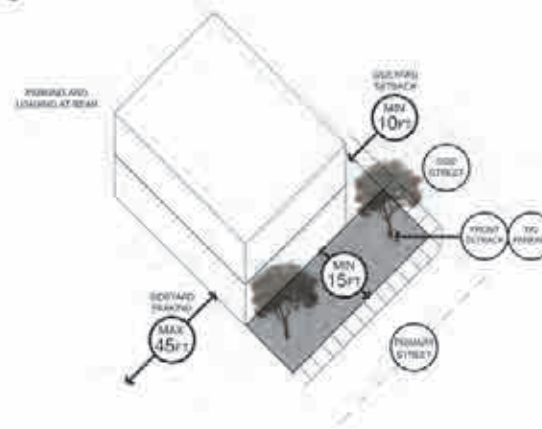
The following are recommendations for important concepts and principles for the site design and architectural criteria that should be associated with the Urban Mixed Use District (UMD):

FIGURE 8



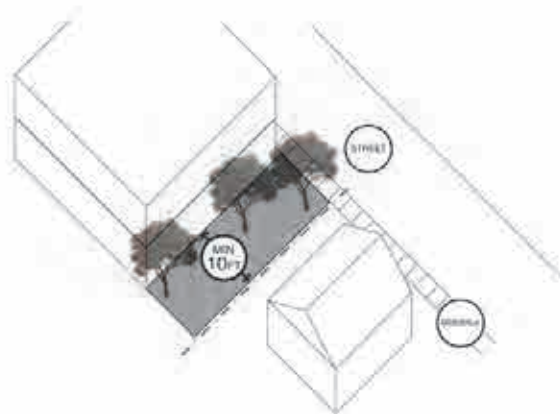
Building Orientation

FIGURE 9



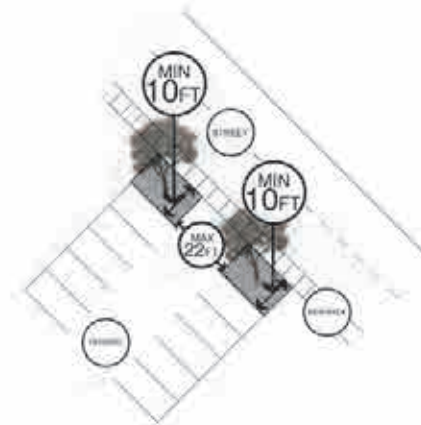
Front Setback

FIGURE 10



Landscaping and Buffers

FIGURE 11

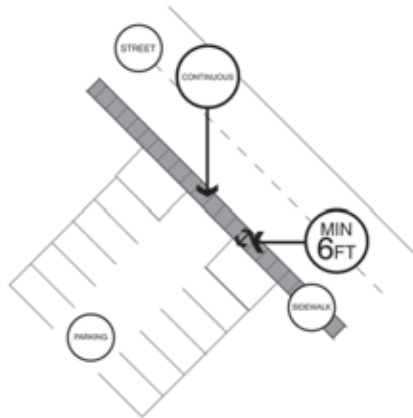


Parking

URBAN MIXED USE DISTRICT (UMD) DESIGN GUIDELINES

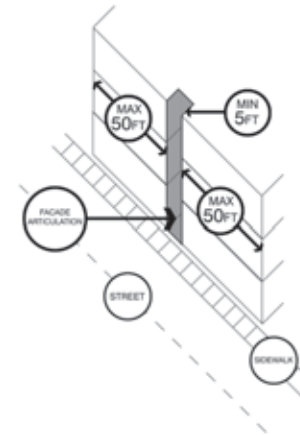
The following are recommendations for important concepts and principles for the site design and architectural criteria that should be associated with the Urban Mixed Use District (UMD):

FIGURE 12



Street Edge, Sidewalks and Landscaping

FIGURE 13



Facade Length and Articulation

COMPATIBLE USE INCENTIVE PROVISION

The following are recommendations for important concepts and principles for the site design and architectural criteria that should be associated with improvements to existing locations with non-conforming uses as part of the Compatible Use Incentive Provision:

SECTION	TOPIC	POTENTIAL CHANGE/STANDARD	OBSERVATION	DIAGRAM
IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING LIGHT INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL LOCATIONS				
	Site Buffers	For service areas or storage yards and adjacent parcels or the street, site improvements that add buffers between these uses and the adjacent uses or the street may be added. These buffers may include additional landscaping or fencing designed for the purpose of screening the industrial activities from adjacent views.	Adjacent views into parking, storage and service yards from neighboring properties and the street are disruptive to the character of the neighborhood. Elements that screen these areas would greatly improve the district.	None
	Delivery, Loading and Storage Buffers	Storage of vehicles and materials should be buffered, sheltered, or screened by buildings, fences and landscape treatments. Loading docks should similarly be located and treated for the minimum of visual access from adjoining properties.	Adjacent views into parking, storage and service yards from neighboring properties and the street are disruptive to the character of the neighborhood. Elements that screen these areas would greatly improve the district.	None
	Building Scale	The addition of building elements or features shall be allowed if these changes result in reducing the overall scale of the structure. This may include façade articulation, architectural elements, entry vestibules or features, or other elements to reduce the overall visual scale of the industrial and commercial buildings.	A minimum amount of space is needed for viable industrial use; e.g., small spaces will only be appropriate for boutique style businesses such as a jeweler. In addition, for industrial uses, yard and interior work spaces need to be large enough to allow for different activities as the business changes operations and the properties potentially change use.	None

COMPATIBLE USE INCENTIVE PROVISION

The following are recommendations for important concepts and principles for the site design and architectural criteria that should be associated with the a Compatible Use Incentive Provision:

SECTION	TOPIC	POTENTIAL CHANGE/STANDARD	OBSERVATION	DIAGRAM
CONVERSION TO HIGH-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL				
	Building Orientation	At conversions to multi-family residential, buildings should be oriented to address the residential street with main building entries, windows and design of the building façades. On corner sites, one primary street may be selected or prominence given to the corner. The orientation to the street is reinforced by the front lawn and by maintaining parking and service areas at the interior or rear of the parcel. The main front entry may be accessed by a path from an access drive or a path to the continuous and uninterrupted sidewalk at the street's edge.	The neighborhood pattern includes a front door/back door arrangement with an entry that is oriented to the rear of the building to the parking at the interior of the block and a more formal primary entrance at the front of the building that faces the street. The rhythm of front entries along the street is important to continuing the active and welcoming character of the streets; this is reinforced by building entry guidelines.	Figure 14
	Street Frontage	The building frontage should not exceed 60 feet to follow the residential pattern of relatively narrow, deep residential buildings. If a building footprint is parallel to the street and longer than 60 feet, the building façade shall be broken into 60-foot lengths and articulated with a change in the building elevation by a depth of at least 5 feet for a length of at least 10 feet.	The regular rhythm of building frontage, side yard and drive are a primary feature of the character of this neighborhood.	Figure 15
	Variation in Front Setback	The front setback shall be a minimum of 5 feet from the sidewalk and is allowed to vary beyond that requirement. The front setback from the street should be occupied by a lawn or landscape area with path to the front entry.	The variation in setback is an existing pattern of residential streets in the neighborhood.	Figure 16
	Landscape, Street Edge and Sidewalk	The street edge shall include a continuous 6 foot grass buffer and then a 4 foot concrete sidewalk to match existing street standards. The lawn buffer shall provide space for utility poles for overhead utilities and occasional street trees. Trees and plantings are not placed in a regular pattern and are managed by each property owner.	The continuous sidewalk and lawn buffer are important elements in creating a pedestrian friendly and walkable neighborhood environment.	Figure 17

COMPATIBLE USE INCENTIVE PROVISION

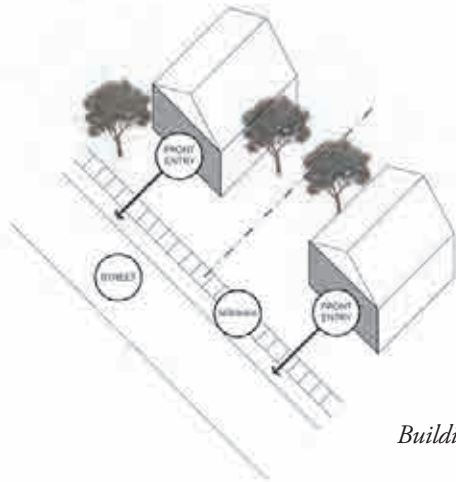
The following are recommendations for important concepts and principles for the site design and architectural criteria that should be associated with improvements to existing locations with non-conforming uses as part of the Compatible Use Incentive Provision:

SECTION	TOPIC	POTENTIAL CHANGE/STANDARD	OBSERVATION	DIAGRAM
	Parking	Driveways provided as part of the side yard set-back are not to be wider than 24 feet. Garages or surface parking areas shall be provided to the rear of the building or interior of the parcel and accessed by side yard driveways. Sidewalks shall be continuous and uninterrupted by drives and curb cuts.	This configuration of single lane access is based upon the existing patterns of use and character of the neighborhood.	Figure 18
	Building Entries	The building entries shall face the residential street and should be articulated with the following techniques: stairs and stoop covered by a roof, a building entry that is part of a larger covered porch, and/or a screened porch or enclosed balcony.	The neighborhood pattern includes a front door/back door arrangement with an entry that is oriented to the rear of the building to the parking at the interior of the block and a more formal primary entrance at the front of the building that faces the street. The rhythm of front entries along the street is important to continuing the active and welcoming character of the streets; this is reinforced by porches and stoops.	None
	Building Scale	Building massing shall be subdivided by building entries at the ground floor, regular patterns of fenestration on upper floors and roof form articulations such as dormers or gable ends.	The consistent scale and rhythm of the buildings is important to the structure and texture of the neighborhood. The combined effect of these building elements is a comfortable street with modestly scaled buildings.	None
	Building Roofs	The building roofs shall be pitched. Gable ends may be oriented either perpendicular or parallel to the street. Other roof styles and variations are acceptable, but shall be pitched.	Almost without exception, the building roofs throughout the neighborhood are pitched. The style of roof – gable, gambrel, or hip – varies throughout the neighborhood.	Figure 19

COMPATIBLE USE INCENTIVE PROVISION

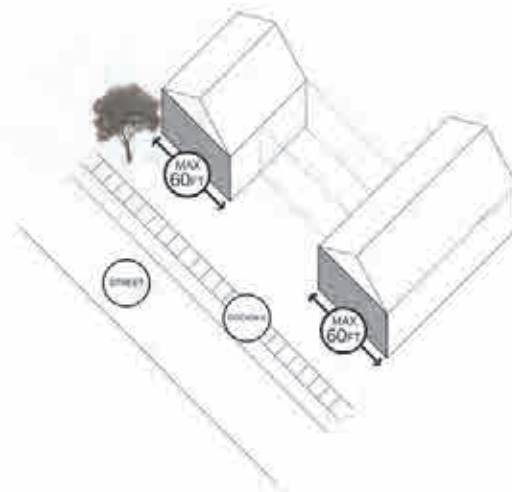
The following are recommendations for important concepts and principles for the site design and architectural criteria that should be associated with improvements to existing locations with non-conforming uses as part of the Compatible Use Incentive Provision:

FIGURE 14



Building Orientation

FIGURE 15



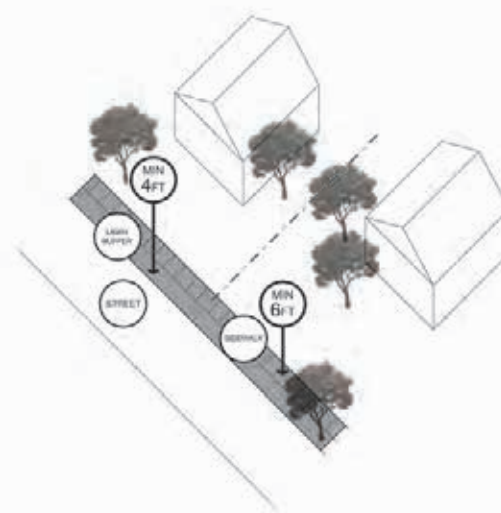
Street Frontage

FIGURE 16



Variation in Front Setback

FIGURE 17



Landscape, Street Edge and Sidewalk

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD ZONE SITE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURAL CRITERIA

The following are recommendations for important concepts and principles for the Site Design and Architectural Criteria that should be associated with the Residential Neighborhood Zone:

SECTION	TOPIC	POTENTIAL CHANGE/STANDARD	OBSERVATION	DIAGRAM
	Building Orientation	Buildings should be oriented to address the residential street with main building entries, windows and design of the building façades. On corner sites, one primary street may be selected or prominence given to the corner. The orientation to the street is reinforced by the front lawn and by maintaining parking and service areas at the interior or rear of the parcel. The main front entry may be accessed by a path from an access drive or a path to the continuous and uninterrupted sidewalk at the street's edge.	The neighborhood pattern includes a front door/back door arrangement with an entry that is oriented to the rear of the building to the parking at the interior of the block and a more formal primary entrance at the front of the building that faces the street. The rhythm of front entries along the street is important to continuing the active and welcoming character of the streets; this is reinforced by building entry guidelines.	Figure 14
	Street Frontage	The residential neighborhood is defined by a regular pattern of smaller scale residential structures with building frontage oriented to the residential street, side yards or side access, and front yards. The building frontage should not exceed 60 feet to follow this pattern of relatively narrow, deep residential buildings.	The regular rhythm of building frontage, side yard and drive are a primary feature of the character of this neighborhood.	Figure 15
	Variation in Front Setback	The front setback shall be a minimum of 5 feet from the sidewalk and is allowed to vary beyond that requirement. The front setback from the street should be occupied by a lawn or landscape area with path to the front entry.	The variation in setback is an existing pattern of residential streets in the neighborhood.	Figure 16
	Landscape, Street Edge and Sidewalk	The street edge shall include a continuous 6 foot grass buffer and then a 4 foot concrete sidewalk to match existing street standards. The lawn buffer shall provide space for utility poles for overhead utilities and occasional street trees. Trees and plantings are not placed in a regular pattern and are managed by each property owner.	The continuous sidewalk and lawn buffer are important elements in creating a pedestrian friendly and walkable neighborhood environment.	Figure 17

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD ZONE SITE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURAL CRITERIA

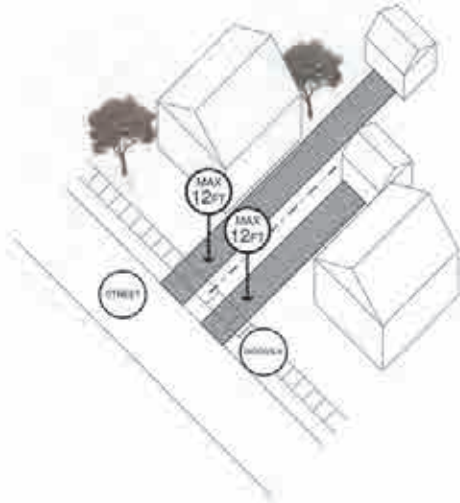
The following are recommendations for important concepts and principles for the Site Design and Architectural Criteria that should be associated with the Residential Neighborhood Zone:

SECTION	TOPIC	POTENTIAL CHANGE/STANDARD	OBSERVATION	DIAGRAM
	Parking	Driveways are provided as part of the side yard setback not to be wider than 12 feet. Garages or surface parking areas shall be provided to the rear of the house accessed by side yard driveways. Sidewalks shall be continuous and uninterrupted by drives and curb cuts.	This configuration and single lane access is based upon the existing patterns of use and character of the neighborhood.	Figure 18
	Building Entries	The building entries shall face the residential street and should be articulated with the following techniques: stairs and stoop covered by a roof, a building entry that is part of a larger covered porch, and/or a screened porch or enclosed balcony.	The neighborhood pattern includes a front door/back door arrangement with an entry that is oriented to the rear of the building to the parking at the interior of the block and a more formal primary entrance at the front of the building that faces the street. The rhythm of front entries along the street is important to continuing the active and welcoming character of the street; this is reinforced by porches and stoops.	None
	Building Scale	Building massing shall be subdivided by building entries at the ground floor, regular patterns of fenestration on upper floors and roof form articulations such as dormers or gable ends.	The consistent scale and rhythm of the buildings is important to the structure and texture of the neighborhood. The combined effect of these building elements is a comfortable street with modestly scaled buildings.	None
	Building Roofs	The building roofs shall be pitched. Gable ends may be oriented either perpendicular or parallel to the street. Other roof styles and variations are acceptable, but shall be pitched.	Almost without exception, the building roofs throughout the neighborhood are pitched. The style of roof – gable, gambrel, or hip – varies throughout the neighborhood.	Figure 19
	Building and Garages	Garages shall not be part of the primary building façade. Garages shall be recessed from the primary building façade by at least 25 feet if attached. Detached garages shall be placed to the rear or interior of the property and shall provide vehicular clearance between the garage and main building as needed for circulation.	Compared to more recently constructed residential neighborhoods, one of the more pleasing aspects of this district is the absence of prominent garages. By placing the small single stall detached garages or surface parking to the interior and rear of the properties, the residential buildings become the focus of this neighborhood.	Figure 20

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD ZONE SITE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURAL CRITERIA

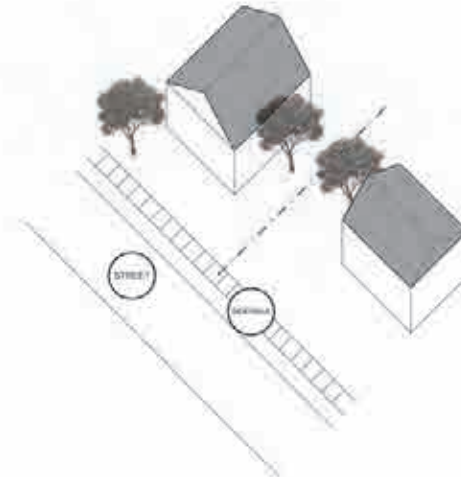
The following are recommendations for important concepts and principles for the Site Design and Architectural Criteria that should be associated with the Residential Neighborhood Zone:

FIGURE 18



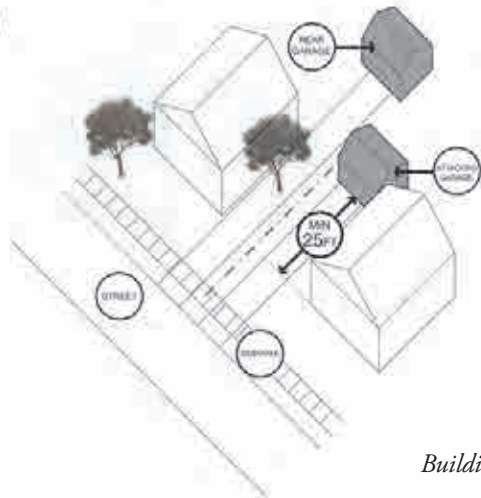
Parking

FIGURE 19



Building Roofs

FIGURE 20



Buildings and Garages

City of Stamford Master Plan 2002, prepared by The Stamford Land Use Bureau, Abeles Phillips Preiss Shapiro Inc, and The Regional Plan Association, 2002

City of Stamford Master Plan Sustainability Amendment, prepared by The Stamford Land Use Bureau December, 2010

City of Stamford Streetscape Guidelines, prepared by and for the City of Stamford, May, 2003

City of Stamford Zoning Regulations, as adopted November 30, 1951 with amendments through August 14, 2007

Citywide Policies Plan, prepared by The Stamford Land Use Bureau, Abeles Phillips Preiss Shapiro Inc, and The Regional Plan Association, October, 2002.

Findings and Strategy for the West Side Retail Corridors, Stamford, prepared by Harrall-Michalowski Associates, for Stamford Partnership. November, 2007.

Local Action Plan: Greenhouse Gas Emission Reductions, prepared by Kimberly Klunich, City of Stamford, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, February 2005.

Stillwater Corridor Implementation Plan, prepared by The Cecil Group Inc, with Newman Architects LLC for Charter Oak Communities, December, 2009.

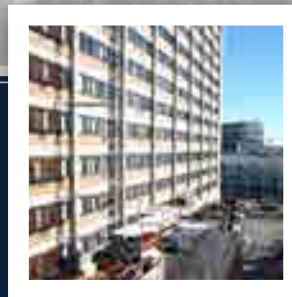
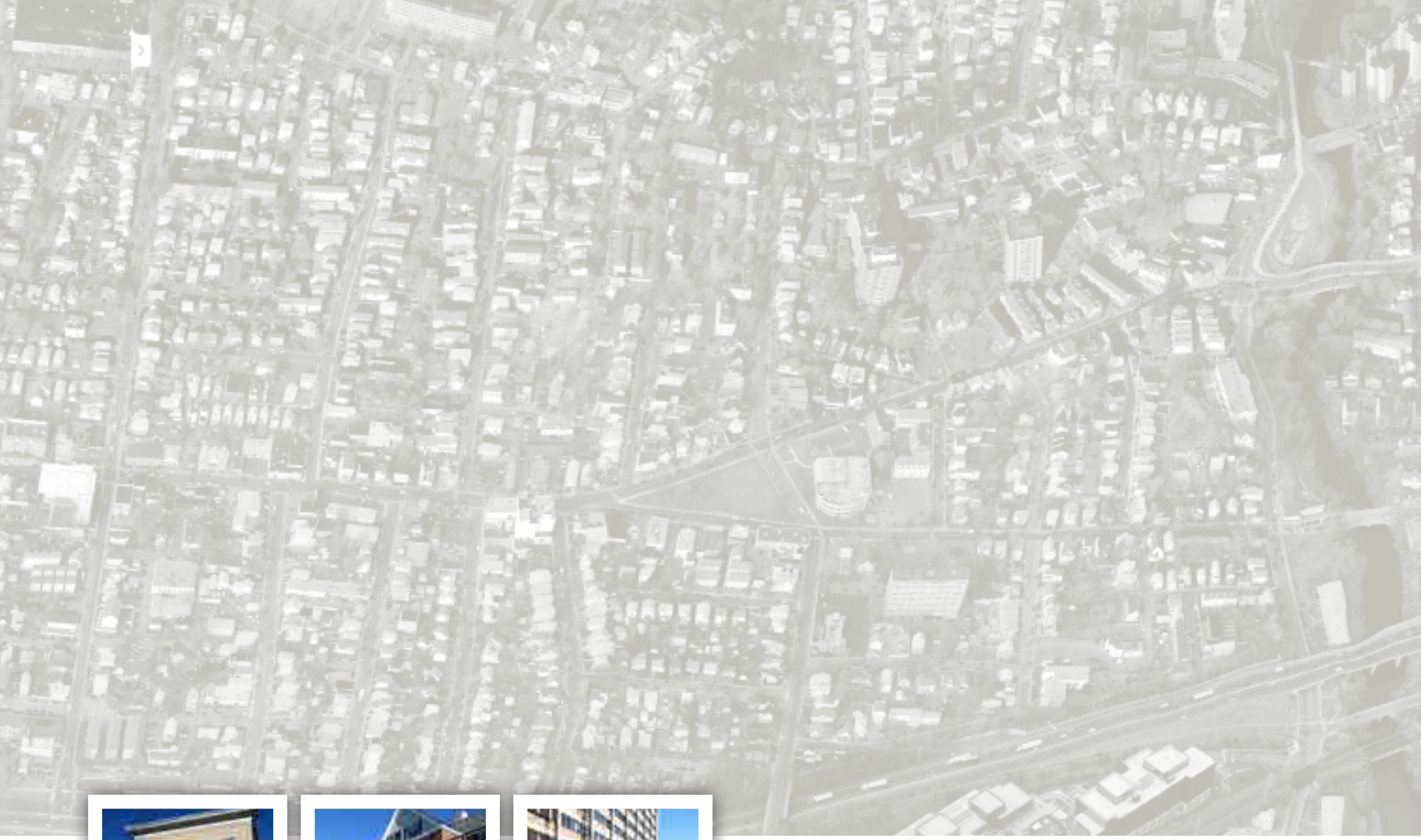
Stamford Master Plan 2000, Growth Management Plan, Traffic and Transit Report, prepared by Abeles Phillips Preiss Shapiro Inc, and The Regional Plan Association, 2003

Stamford Traffic Calming Plan, prepared by Urban Engineers, Inc. for the City of Stamford, June 2006

US Route 1 Greenwich/Stamford Operational Improvements Study, prepared by Urban Engineers for the Southwest Regional Planning Agency, 2010 - 2011

West Side Planning Studies Compilation Report, Newman Architects LLC for Charter Oak Communities. July, 2009

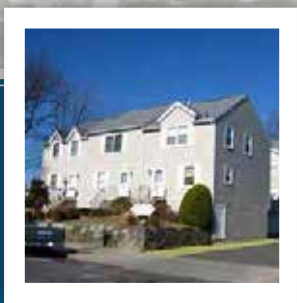
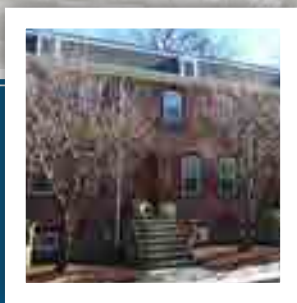
Zoning regulations and/or design guidelines: excerpts were collected from the following communities: New York, New York; San Francisco, California; and in Connecticut: Brooklyn, Darien, Farmington, Greenwich, Groton, Guilford, Hamden, Hartford Kent, Norwalk, Portland, Ridgefield, Simsbury and Storrs





Stamford West Side

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



PART III: *APPENDICES*

prepared for:
The Town of Stamford

prepared by:
The Cecil Group
Newman Architects
Tighe & Bond

May 2013

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There are important zoning approaches which the City could adopt to achieve the future vision for the West Side. These include a set of regulatory standards that improve both the opportunities for reinvestment and qualities of development in the neighborhood's commercial center along the West Main Street corridor, and the means to improve the quality of the mixed, commercial, industrial and residential blocks where land use conflicts are highest and new property investments have been limited.

Changes to the City regulations require amendments to the City Master Plan, the City Zoning Regulations, and the City Zoning Map.

A.1 MASTER PLAN AMENDMENTS

To implement the plan to establish new and revised zoning designations for the West Side Neighborhood requires that the City first adopt changes to the Master Plan that will support the recommended zoning amendments. The key changes are:

- The categorization of the West Main Street corridor as a neighborhood commercial area with the design and use standards that incentivize change and improvement. This will allow the zoning designation of the area as a Design District that under state law permits the application of Design Guidelines. A similar categorization of the Stillwater Avenue corridor was recently completed to create this specific type of change.
- The categorization of an area between Harvard Avenue and Victory Street that would allow redevelopment and improvement for commercial and industrial uses under a new zoning district designation. This would address the apparent land use conflicts that exist in this area, exacerbated by the changes of the Master Plan categories and subsequent rezoning of the area from commercial and industrial to residential in the mid 1980's.

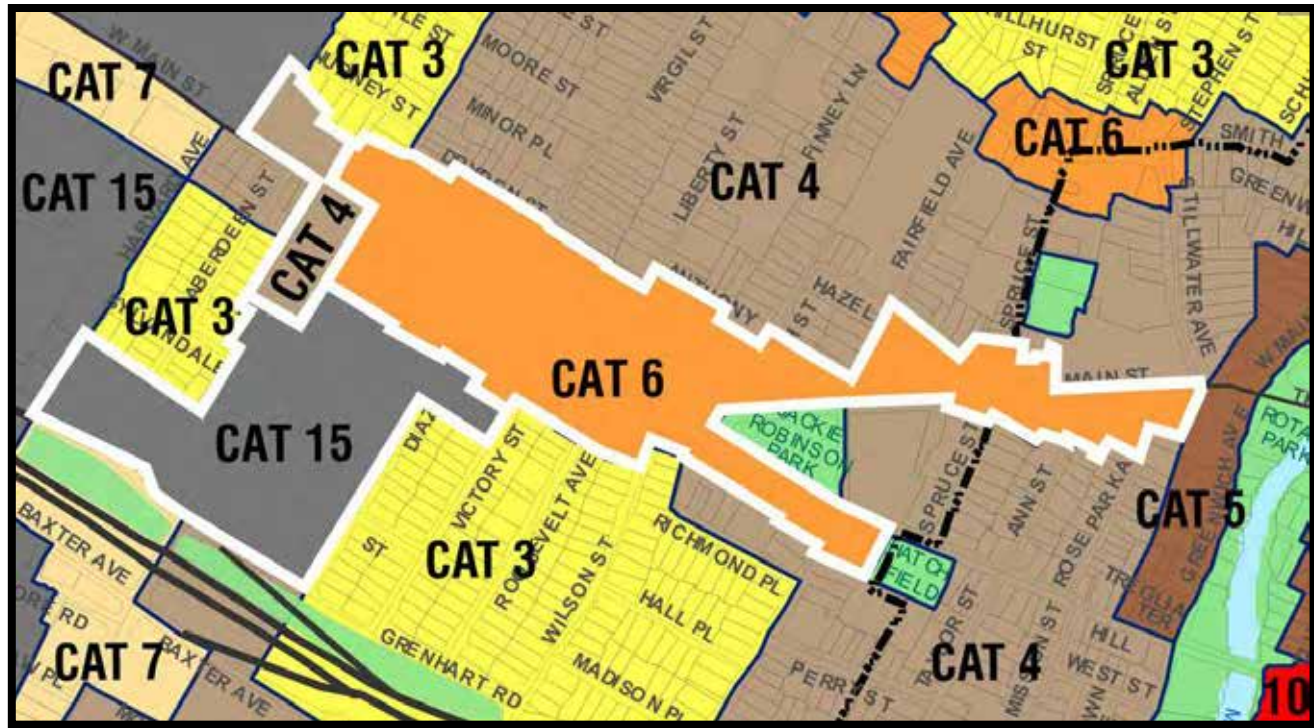
A. 2 MASTER PLAN CATEGORIES

The Village Commercial District proposed for the West Main Street and Richmond Hill Avenue corridors requires the Master Plan Category #6 Commercial – Neighborhood, to be designated for the areas proposed for neighborhood retail and service uses. This would change areas currently designated as Category #7, Commercial – Arterial, and Category #4, Medium Density Multifamily and link to the existing Category #6 designations on West Main Street and Stillwater Avenue.

The Urban Mixed Use District is proposed to provide options for commercial and industrial uses to expand and develop where commercial and industrial uses have remained regardless of the present residential zoning. The area proposed for this rezoning is currently Category #7, Category #4, and Category #3, Low Density Multifamily. The recommendation is to designate the area for this new zoning as Category #15, Industrial – General. This category permits the mixed type of uses proposed in the new district and specifies protection of industrial uses; two of the key goals of this plan.

Lastly, proposed is a change of a portion of the block west of West Avenue and north of West Main Street where the lots have been developed with multifamily projects. Currently designated as Category #7, Commercial – Arterial, a Category #4, Medium Density Multifamily is recommended for these parcels to reflect their existing and future use.

Amending zoning for non-conforming uses, as also proposed in this plan, would not require a Master Plan amendment.



Proposed Amendments to the Master Plan

Master Plan Categories

- | | |
|--|--|
|  3 Residential - Low Density Multifamily |  7 Commercial - Arterial |
|  4 Residential - Medium Density Multifamily |  10 Downtown - Corridor |
|  5 Residential - High Density Multifamily |  15 Industrial - General |
|  6 Commercial - Neighborhood Business |  16 Open Space - Public Parks |

B. 1 VILLAGE COMMERCIAL DESIGN DISTRICT

The Village Commercial Design District is proposed as a designation to improve the West Main Street corridor through the allowed uses, incentives to improve the district, and design standards to apply to the site and architectural design.

Proposed Amendments to Article III, Section 4-AA-11 VC Village Commercial District

Addition to 11.1 Purpose

The Village Commercial District (VC District) is adopted pursuant to Section 8-2 and 8-2j of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended, and is intended to implement the policies, goals and urban design principles articulated in the Master Plan of the City of Stamford, calling for preservation and development of a sustainable, transit oriented and pedestrian friendly “Main Street” character for the neighborhood centers of the West Main Street Neighborhood Center, West Side Stillwater Corridor, Glenbrook and Springdale, including the development of new structures and uses with appropriate architectural designs and the conservation and enhancement of the character of existing buildings, sites, streetscapes and pedestrian environments. These regulations serve to encourage development that reflects and/or retains valuable elements of the City’s cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history and the promotion of a vibrant commercial environment providing a broad array of amenities, services, and resources essential to the neighborhood and community shopping needs of the City of Stamford, with design controls to insure a compatible relationship to adjacent residential neighborhoods, and assurance that infrastructure impacts will be mitigated. This is accomplished by the establishment of design and use standards that apply to new and existing architectural façades, sites and buildings, and review procedures which serve to preserve, restore and enhance these resources, improve property values, promote and support a vibrant business and residential environment, and enhance the architectural character and amenity of these areas as the retailing, business, civic and cultural centers of the City’s neighborhoods.

Addition to 11.2 Authorized Uses

Because the authorized uses for the West Main Street Neighborhood Center would be the same as for the Stillwater Avenue Corridor, the only recommended change would be under the existing subsection b., so that the entire subsection reads as follows:

b. In addition to paragraph (a) above, the following uses may be allowed in the Stillwater Avenue neighborhood and West Main Street Neighborhood Center by special exception only:

Apartment Building for the Elderly; Café including Entertainment & Liquors; Clinic, Community Health Center; Colleges & Dormitories; Garages, Community; Hotel, Inn; Nursing Home; Surgery Center/Out Patient; Food Catering; Gymnasium or Physical Culture Establishment; Laboratories, Research; and Restaurant including Entertainment & Liquors.

“Pawn Shop, Second-Hand Store, Auction Store” shall not be allowed. (210-30)

Additions to 11.3 Development Standards or 11.4 Neighborhood Specific Standards

1. *New sentence at the end of subsection f. Maximum Building Coverage:* The West Main Street Neighborhood Center shall have a maximum building coverage not to exceed 60%.
2. *New sentence at the end of subsection g. Floor Area Ratio:* The West Main Street Neighborhood Center shall have a maximum building floor area not to exceed a ratio of 2.0.

Amendments and additions to 11.5 Design Guidelines

11.5 b. Frontyard Setbacks

Change “authorized” *to* “authorize and require.”

New Section – The front setback shall vary from 0 to 25 feet, but shall under no circumstances include the provision of parking in front of a building. The front setback shall be reserved for landscape or hardscape areas leading to building entries and for pedestrian or commercial use.

11.5 c. Parking Lot Design

Provide a maximum of twelve (12) adjacent parking spaces. A tree planting in a curbed divider at least 6 feet wide shall provide relief between adjacent parking spaces.

Refer to Figure 1

Provide for retention of existing parking in front of buildings or on adjacent lots with design enhancements. Acceptable design enhancements may include pedestrian-friendly unit pavers, consolidation of curb cuts, definition of continuous sidewalk along the face of the property, provision of minimum width direct pedestrian path to doors, and landscape enhancements.

Provide a tree planting in a curbed divider at least 6 feet wide between parking bays. A parking bay is considered to be a maximum of a double-loaded parking bay (60 feet) that is 12 parking spaces wide.

Refer to Figure 2

Add: Relief from above standard may be granted if other mitigation is provided (enhanced buffers relative to neighboring properties, for example).

Remove the reference to “limited” side yard parking, and add a statement that side yard parking is not preferred and may not be permitted if rear-yard parking is feasible.

Refer to Figure 3

New Section – Parking access shall be oriented to occur on the side streets. The frontage along Main Street reserved for active ground floor uses with curb cuts and access ways minimized. The side street access shall be limited to less than 60 feet of width.

Refer to Figure 7

New Section – Landscape buffers shall be at least 10 feet to all adjoining properties or sidewalks. The 10’ landscape setback for side yard parking shall be measured from the sidewalk if abutting a street or the property line if abutting another parcel.

New Section – Commercial structures adjacent to residential buildings shall provide a 10 foot landscaped buffer to the adjacent use.

New Section – Sidewalks shall be continuous and uninterrupted by driveways including crosswalks at roadway intersections. Sidewalks shall be at the street edge with no landscape buffer and shall have a minimum width of 6 feet.

Refer to Figures with examples of layouts

11.5. e. Lighting

Add: Lighting levels shall be evenly distributed to avoid either very bright or very dark locations.

11.5. g. Fencing Materials

Add: Metal fencing is acceptable but chain link or plastic materials are prohibited. The intention is for durable, high quality fencing that is primarily decorative.

11.5.h. Architectural Design

Remove “compatible” and “complementary.”

11.5.i. Composition

Remove the reference to “base, middle, top” *and replace with* a required emphasis on the ground level to reinforce active uses at the primary street frontage and a differentiation, architectural expression, change in materials, articulation or building elements to distinguish the ground floor from the façade above.

Refer to Figure 4

11.5. j. Coordination

Remove this section

11.5. k. Reduction in Scale

Rephrase to emphasize the ground level, and use of scaling elements such as separated materials, windows, bands, decoration, articulation, and the like.

11.5. m. Multiple Storefronts

Change the “30-foot width” *to* “60 feet.”

Refer to Figure 6

11.5. q. Transparency

Change “75 percentage requirement” to “façades of all uses must provide 40 percent transparency with the further provision that no interruption in transparency is more than 40 linear feet. Transparency is measured from 2 feet to 12 feet above grade.”

Refer to Figure 6

New Section – Allow reduced transparency and substitution with other features for residential uses. Residential lobbies and entrances in mixed-use buildings shall be located along the side streets to maintain an active and transparent commercial ground floor at the West Main Street frontage

11.5. t. Varied Rooflines

A minimum façade width of 45 feet is required.

Add New Section – Frontages

For buildings with a length of 60 feet or more, as measured along West Main Street, the massing and articulation of the building frontage or façade shall be varied. Variation in façade may include architectural expression, change in materials, articulation or building elements, or variation in the building volume and massing.

Refer to Figure 5

Add New Section – Building Orientation

The ground floor use should, if feasible, be commercial use that is oriented toward its primary street frontage. Residential uses on the ground floor shall provide entrances and ground floor common space to animate the street. The building and site shall be oriented to frame the street edge and to provide active building frontages at the ground floor that may included entrances, commercial storefronts, or lobbies.

Add New Section – Façade Length and Articulation

Buildings that have a façade length or width of more than 50 feet shall be broken into smaller masses or length through the use changes in the plane of the elevation, articulated entries or window bays or other design features to reduce the scale of lengthy façades, to produce building masses more in character with residential abutters. These changes in the plane of elevation or articulations shall have a depth of not less than 5 feet.

B.2 NEW URBAN MIXED USE DISTRICT

A new Urban Mixed Use District (UMD) is proposed as a means to re-accommodate commercial and industrial uses that were previously permitted in certain commercial and industrial districts. These districts existed earlier on the City's Zoning Map but were changed to residential zoning districts in the mid-1980's. "Mixed use" refers to a combination of uses on a single site. Because of the potential conflicts the current mix of uses poses in ways that could affect the quality of the area, a change back to business zoning would allow for reinvestment for the previously permitted commercial and industrial uses.

Proposed New District: Article III. Districts and District Regulations, Section 9. Designed Districts, Urban Mixed Use

1. Purpose:

- a. The Urban Mixed Use District (UMD) is designed to maintain and facilitate the growth and expansion of small-scale light industrial, home and business service, wholesale distribution, arts production and performance/exhibition activities, live/work use, and general commercial service activities while protecting existing housing and encouraging the development of new businesses at a scale and density compatible with the surrounding blocks.

2. Allowed Uses:

- a. Uses will be allowed within the UMD zoning district in accordance with the following table:

Urban Mixed Business District (UMD) Proposed Permitted Land Use Schedule

Permitted Uses		UM D
4.1	Auto Rental Service Facility (81)	B
11	Churches & Religious Institutions (23)	B
13.1	Clinics (231)	B
24	Garages, Private (42)	B
24.2	Historic Site (451)	B
30	Passenger Terminals & Stations (74)	B
30.2	Personal Wireless Service	B
31	Professional Offices, Accessory Use	B
32	Professional Offices, Medical (75)	B
33	Professional Offices, Principal Use	B
34	Professional Pharmacy (78)	B
37	Public Utility Buildings (80)	B
38	Public Utility Transformer & Pump Stations	B
39	Radio & Television Broadcasting Stations & Masts (82)	B
53	Auto Parking Area, Commercial & Municipal	B
54	Auto Sales Agency, New with Used,	B
55	Auto Sales Area, Used (110)	B
56	Auto Service Station (44) (See Section 11)	B
57	Auto Truck Storage Area	B
59	Automatic Car Wash Establishments Subject to Section 11	B
60	Automotive Equipment & Service (9) except in the CN Zone retail only and no automotive service shall be provided	B
65	Boat, Marine Accessories: Outboard Motor Sales & Repairs	B
65	Boat Storage & Repair	B

Permitted Uses		UM D
68	Bottling Plant	B
72	Building materials, Sales & Storage (17)	B
77	Canvas Products Mfg	B
78	Carpentry, Woodworking Shop	B
81	Christmas Trees, Holly Wreaths & Similar Christmas Decorations, the sale of	B
84	Color Scanning Shop (26) except no limits on employees in Industrial Districts	B
87	Contractor's Material & Equipment Storage Yard & Building	B
96	Electronics Scientific Instrument Mfg	B
97	Equipment Rental Store, General (352)	B
101	Food Catering, including preparation of all foods for off premises consumption	B
102	Food Processing, Live & Dressed Poultry	B
104	Food Processing, Wholesale, ex Meat Fish, Vinegar, Fat	B
109	Garages, Public (43)	B
110	Garages, Bus & Taxi Service (43) (See Section 11)	B
111	Gardening Supplies, retail	B
114	Glass Fabricators & Installation	B
117	Gymnasium or Physical Culture Establishment	B
118	Hardware Store	B
119	Ice Dispensing Service, Retail	B
126	Laboratories, Research (84)	B
127	Laundry, Cleaning & Dyeing Agency	B
128	Laundry, Cleaning & Dyeing Establishment	B
131	Machine Shop, Blacksmith Shop	B
133	Meat Processing excluding Slaughtering, Curing & Smoking	B
134	Metal Fabrication of Light Sheet Metal Ducts, Gutters, Leaders	B
134.5	Microwave Transmission Facilities, Commercial	B
135	Millwork, Cabinet Work	B

Permitted Uses		UM D
138	Offices, Business & Professional	B
140	Optical & Scientific Instrument Mfg	B
143	Paint Stores including Wholesale Paint Stores for Resale off premises	B
148	Photo Engraving	B
151	Plumbing & Heating Shop	B
152	Printing; Industrial; Wall paper	B
153	Printing; Job Shop, Publisher	B
155	Public Utilities Service Yards	B
157	Rag, Bag & Carpet Cleaning	B
167	Shoe Repair Shop	B
169	Sign Painting	B
172	Stone & Monument Works, Mfg, Display & Sale	B
177	Taxidermist	B
177.1	Tennis Courts, Indoor	B
180	Upholsterer (107)	B
181.1	Veterinary, Domestic Cats Only (1111)	B
184	Wearing Apparel Fabrication & Processing	B
185	Welding Supplies & Equipment Including Welding Gases, Storage and Sale	B
186	Wholesale, Closed Storage Bldg & Warehouses	B

NOTE: Figure in parenthesis "(" after Permitted Use refers to Definition in Section 3. Where such use is marked with a "B" it is subject to approval by the Zoning Board, in accordance with procedures and standards as set forth under Section 9 and Section 19 of these Regulations.

3. Dimensional and Design Standards:

- a. Coverage – Maximum building lot coverage shall be 50%
- b. Building Height – The maximum building height shall be 40 feet and 2 stories.
- c. Floor Area Ratio – The maximum building floor area ratio shall be 1.0.
- d. Building Use and Frontage – To the extent practical and consistent with the operational requirements of the intended use, the ground floor use shall be commercial use that is oriented toward its primary street frontage. The building shall face the main street edge where it will include entrances, commercial storefronts, or lobbies.

Refer to Figure 8

- e. Façade Length and Articulation – Buildings that have a façade length or width of more than 50 feet facing a public street or adjoining residential district shall be designed to break the façade design into smaller masses or length through the use changes in the plane of the elevation, articulated entries or window bays or other design features to reduce the scale and produce building masses. These changes in the plane of elevation or articulations shall have a depth of not less than 5 feet. The addition of building elements or features may be added to reduce the overall scale of an existing structure and shall be allowed if these changes result in reducing the overall scale of the structure. This may include façade articulation, architectural elements, entry vestibules or features, or other elements to reduce the overall visual scale of the industrial and commercial buildings.

Refer to Figure 13

- f. Setbacks – The front setback shall be a minimum of 15 feet. No sideyard setback is required, but shall be no less than 4 feet if provided. Rear yard setbacks shall be a minimum of 15 feet. Where a lot line abuts a zoning boundary, a minimum setback of 10 feet shall be provided, but shall under no circumstances include the provision of parking in front of a building. Required buffer areas shall be maintained as unoccupied landscaped open space and shall not be used for parking, driveways, or accessory structures, other than required curb cuts necessary to access the site and pedestrian walkways and similar improvements as approved by the reviewing board.

Refer to Figure 9

- g. Landscaping and Buffers – Commercial and industrial structures adjacent to residential zones shall provide a 10 foot landscaped buffer to the adjacent residentially-zoned parcels.

Refer to Figure 10

- h. Parking and Loading – Parking and loading shall satisfy the standards of Section 12 of these Zoning Regulations.

Refer to Figure 11

- i. Delivery and Storage Areas – Service areas or storage yards that are used for outside storage of materials, vehicles or equipment that are adjacent to other lots or a public street shall be buffered, sheltered, or screened by buildings, fences and landscape treatments from views from the ground level of adjacent parcels or from the street. Loading docks should similarly be located and treated for the minimum of visual access from adjoining properties.
- j. Street Edge, Sidewalks and Landscaping – Continuous sidewalks shall be provided along or parallel to street curbs where they are not provided within the public right-of-way. Sidewalks shall have a minimum width of 6 feet.

Refer to Figure 12

- k. Open Storage – All open storage areas shall require a Special Exception Approval from the Zoning Board. Open storage areas on site shall be specified in terms of maximum area and height of stored equipment and materials, and the type of stored materials. Maximum height of stored equipment and materials shall be 10 feet above grade, unless the Zoning Board determines that buffering, sheltering or screening provides sufficient visual mitigation from views from the ground level of adjacent parcels or from the street. In no case shall solid waste storage as defined by state and local law be permitted on site.
- l. Site Lighting – Site lighting shall be limited to cut-off fixtures that do not create glare or extend light onto adjacent residential properties.

- m. Hours of Operation – The hours of operation may be limited by the Zoning Board.
- n. Noise – The proposed use must be shown to be in compliance with the following laws: the Control of Noise [RCSA 22a-69-1 to 22a-69-7.4].
- o. Administrative Review Procedure – The administrative review procedure for projects within the UMD district will be the same for the VC district as described within these Zoning Regulations.

B.3 COMPATIBLE USE INCENTIVES: NON-CONFORMING USE ZONING AMENDMENTS

To encourage the reinvestment in and improvement of commercial and industrial properties within existing residential zoning districts, two new sections under the Section 10 Non-Conforming Uses regulations are proposed as Compatible Use Incentives.

These incentives take two different forms.

One incentive is to provide the potential for these uses to be replaced with new residential development at a high enough density and under specific design standards that would encourage improvement and ensure compatibility with surrounding properties. In this way the compatibility of the reuse is ensured by change in use and application of design standards.

The other incentive is the allowance for improvement of the uses which are considered most problematic in regard to being compatible with other uses. These are the construction and building yards where heavy equipment and construction materials are operated and stored on the site. By allowing these uses to improve, again under specific standards of design, the betterment of the properties would improve the quality of these and adjacent properties.

The following are the drafts of the proposed zoning amendment sections.

Proposed Zoning Amendments: Under Article IV, Special Regulations, Section 10. Non-Conforming Uses

Add a new section K:

K – Subject to Special Exception approval by the Zoning Board, any existing legal non-conforming use within a R-5 or R-MF zoning district and located within Census Tract 214 or 215 may be converted to residential use, subject to the following special standards:

- a. The non-conforming use shall be one of the following land uses:
 - Building Material, Sales & Storage
 - Contractor’s Material & Equipment Storage Yard & Building
 - Storage of Road Construction & Grading Equipment

- Auto Truck Storage Area
 - Garage, Public
 - Machine Shop, Blacksmith Shop
 - Metal Fabrication
 - Plumbing & Heating Shop
 - Wholesale, Closed Storage Bldg. & Warehouses
 - Other heavy commercial and/or industrial uses with substantial adverse impact on adjacent residential properties, in the sole judgment of the Zoning Board.
- b. The legal non-conforming status shall be established, to the satisfaction of the Zoning Board
- c. All non-conforming uses on the site shall be eliminated and the property shall be assembled and developed in common for multifamily residential purposes with adjacent residentially zoned property, subject to the following special standards:
1. Minimum Parcel Area: the assembled development site, including the converted non-conforming property, shall have an area of not less than 30,000 square feet.
 2. Maximum Building Height: 4 stories/40 feet in R-5, 5 stories/50 feet in R-MF.
 3. Maximum Building Coverage: 40%.
 4. Minimum Lot Area per Dwelling Unit – R-5:
 - Non-Conforming Use Parcel: 1,200 square feet
 - Balance of Land Assemblage: 2500 square feet
 5. Minimum Lot Area per Dwelling Unit – R-MF:
 - Non-Conforming Use Parcel: 1,200 square feet

Balance of Land Assemblage: 1,500 square feet

6. Front Setback from street center line may be reduced or waived.
7. Useable open space shall be provided on-site, with the amount, location and design of such open space subject to determination and approval of the Zoning Board.
8. The requirements of Article III, Section 7-K may be reduced or waived.
9. Residential parking shall be provided at the following minimum rates: one (1.0) space for every studio unit, one and one-quarter (1.25) spaces for every one-bedroom unit, one and one-half (1.5) spaces for every two-bedroom unit, and one and two-thirds (1 2/3) spaces for every three-bedroom unit.
10. The Zoning Board may reduce or waive the standards of Section 12-A, 12-B and 12-C of these Regulations regarding parking dimensional standards and the setback of parking from property lines and buildings.
11. Below Market Rate Requirement: Not less than ten percent (10%) of the total number of dwelling units, excluding the number of dwelling units calculated for the Non-Conforming Parcel, shall be offered for rent or sale as Below Market Rate (BMR) units. Bonus density as defined in Section 9-F-5(g) and Section 9-G-5(h) shall not be available.
12. All other zoning standards applicable to development in the R-5 and R-MF zoning districts shall continue to apply.

Proposed Zoning Amendments: Under Article IV, Special Regulations, Section 10. Non-Conforming Uses

Add a new section L:

L – Subject to Special Exception approval by the Zoning Board, any existing legal non-conforming use within a R-5 or R-MF zoning district and located within Census Tract 214 or 215 may be expanded, altered, improved or changed to an equally or less intense non-conforming use, subject to the following special standards:

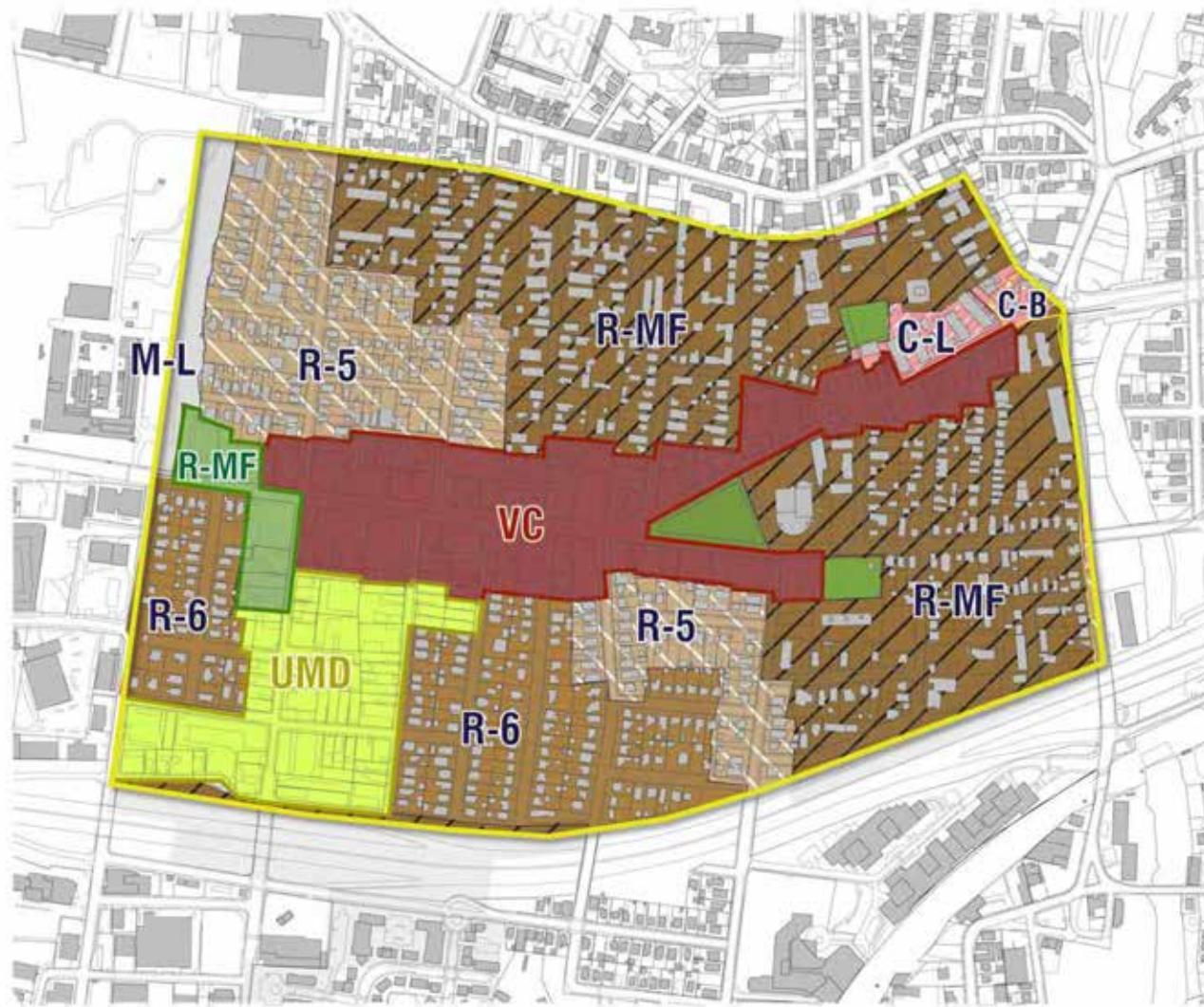
- a. The non-conforming use shall be one of the following land uses:
 - Building Material, Sales & Storage
 - Contractor’s Material & Equipment Storage Yard & Building
 - Storage of Road Construction & Grading Equipment
 - Auto Truck Storage Area
 - Garage, Public
 - Machine Shop, Blacksmith Shop
 - Metal Fabrication
 - Plumbing & Heating Shop
 - Wholesale, Closed Storage Bldg. & Warehouses
 - Other heavy commercial and/or industrial uses with substantial adverse impact on adjacent residential properties, in the sole judgment of the Zoning Board.
- b. The legal non-conforming status shall be established, to the satisfaction of the Zoning Board and any non-conforming structures and non-conforming uses on the site that cannot be legally established shall be eliminated.
- c. The requested change in use or expansion, alteration or improvement of buildings or property shall serve to reduce and mitigate adverse impacts on adjacent residential properties.

- d. Alterations and expansions of buildings and structures shall comply with the dimensional standards of Appendix B: Schedule of Requirements for Area, Height and Bulk of Buildings, provided that the total floor area occupied by legal non-conforming uses shall not be increased by more than 30%.
- e. The combined coverage of all buildings and outside materials storage areas shall not exceed forty percent (40%) of the lot area.
- f. Architectural facades shall incorporate elements or features to reduce the overall scale and visual impact of the building on adjacent residentially zoned properties through the incorporation of façade articulation, architectural elements, entry vestibules or features, or other elements to mitigate the scale and industrial character of the building.
- g. Buffers and setbacks shall be provided, with the amount, location and design of such open spaces and screening subject to determination and approval of the Zoning Board and when found in compliance with the following standards:
 - 1. Service areas, vehicles parking areas, storage yards and materials storage facilities shall be screened and/or buffered from the street and from adjacent residentially zoned properties with a combination of setbacks, landscaping and fencing designed to screen the commercial/industrial activities from public view.
 - 2. Open storage areas on-site shall be specified on the site plan in terms of location, maximum area, height and type of stored materials. In no case shall solid waste storage as defined by state and local law be permitted on site.
- h. Site lighting shall be limited to full cut-off fixtures with no objectionable trespass lighting onto adjacent residential properties.
- i. Hours of operation may be limited by the Zoning Board.

B.4 OFFICIAL ZONING MAP AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the City Zoning Map will be required to fully implement the recommended land use program. These changes include designations of:

- A Village Commercial Design District (VC) along the West Main Street corridor to overlay the current commercial and residential districts,
- The new Urban Mixed Use District (UMD) in the southwest portion of the study area to support industrial and commercial uses, and
- A Residential Multifamily District (R-MF) over the current Limited Commercial district (C-L) on the western end of the West Main Street corridor where it is currently developed with multifamily uses.



The proposed new Village Commercial (VC) District will overlay much of the current C-B and C-L Districts. One exception is the recent multi-family housing development in the north-eastern section of this map, currently in the C-L District.

The new VC District also includes the M-L District along West Main Street.

Legend

- █ New District (VC)
- █ New District (UMD)
- █ New District (to R-MF)
- █ Existing Districts

FIGURE 1

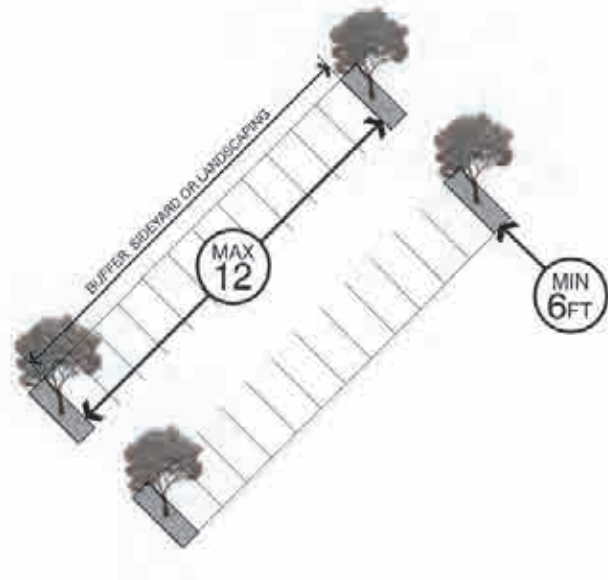


FIGURE 2

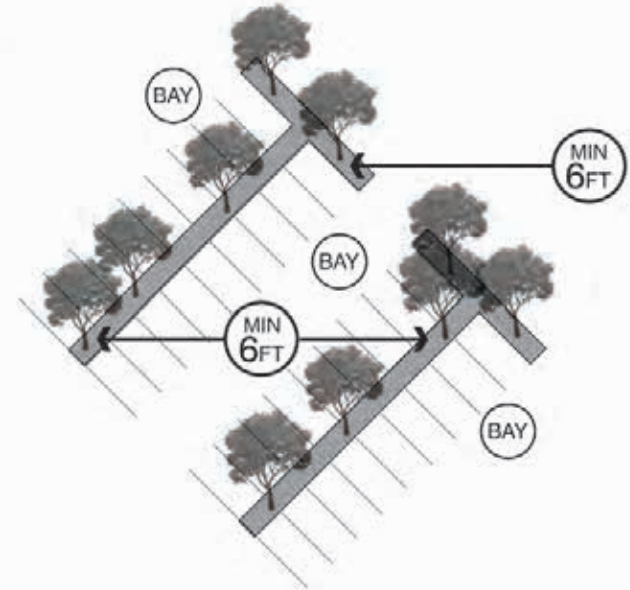


FIGURE 3

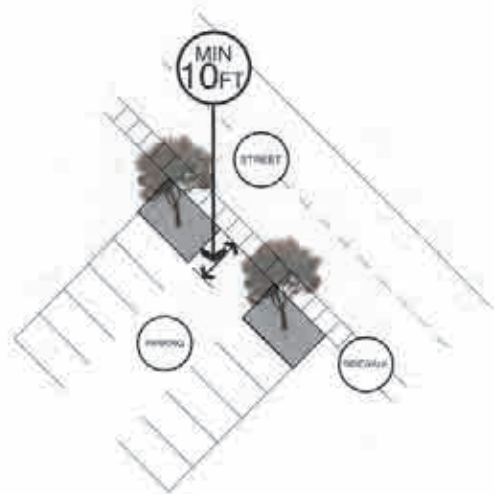


FIGURE 4

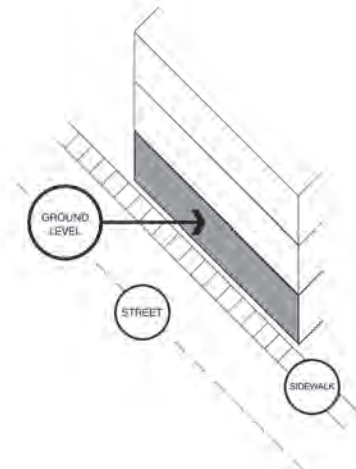


FIGURE 5

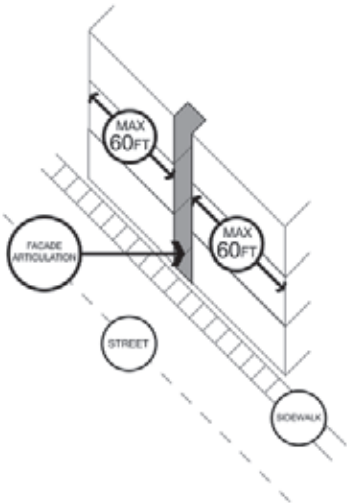


FIGURE 6

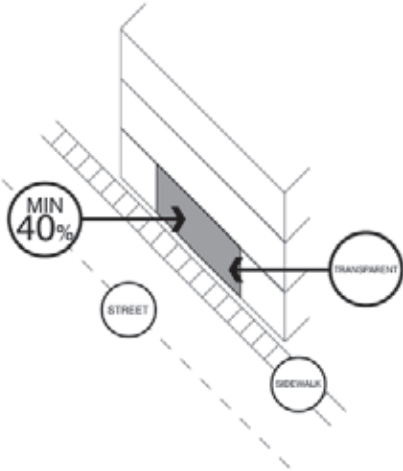


FIGURE 7

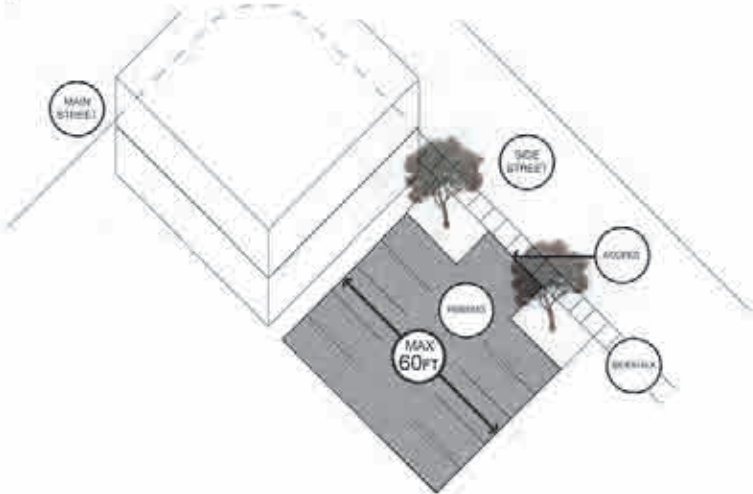


FIGURE 8

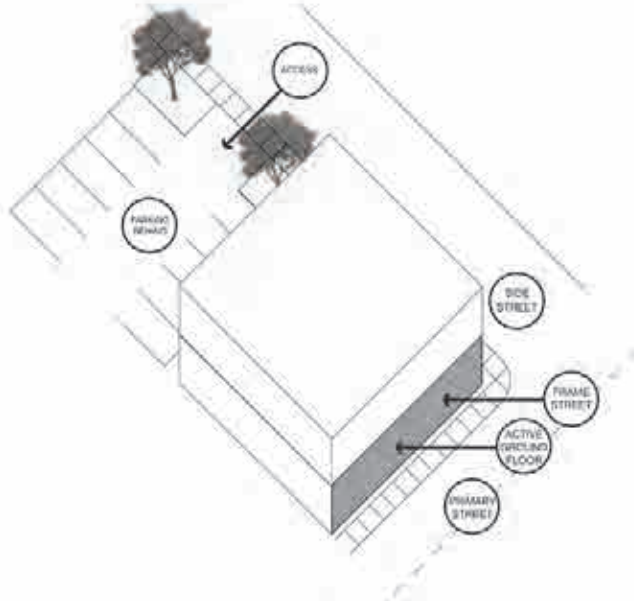


FIGURE 13

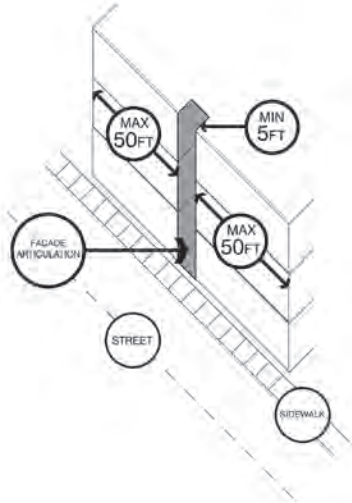


FIGURE 14

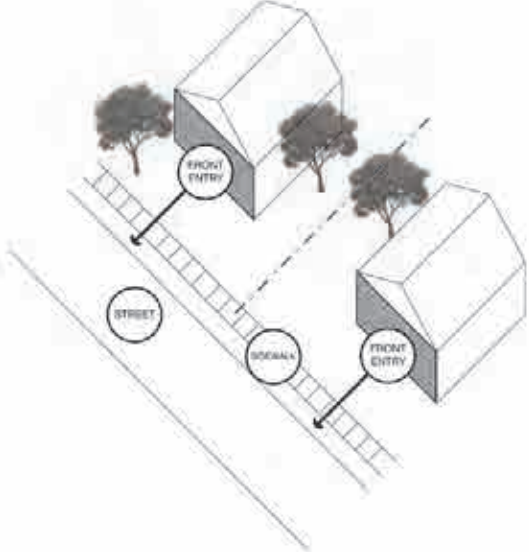


FIGURE 15

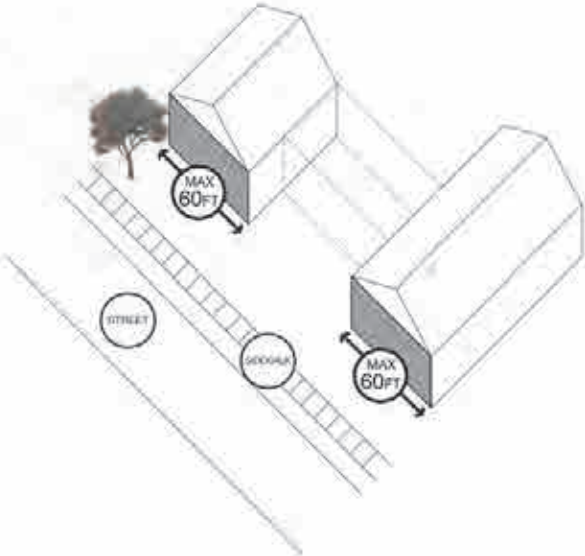


FIGURE 16

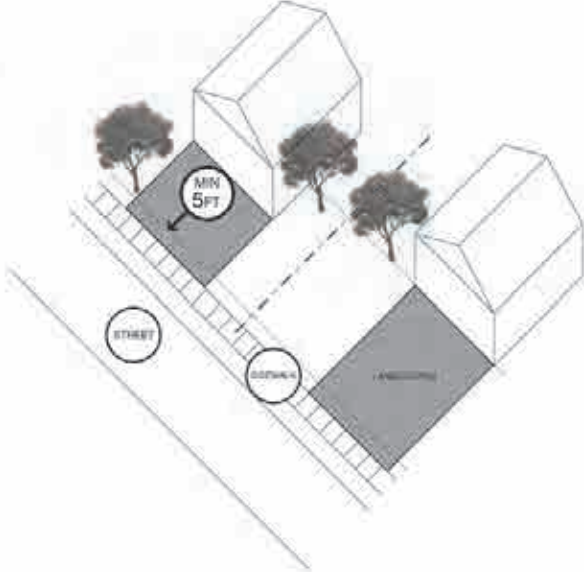


FIGURE 17

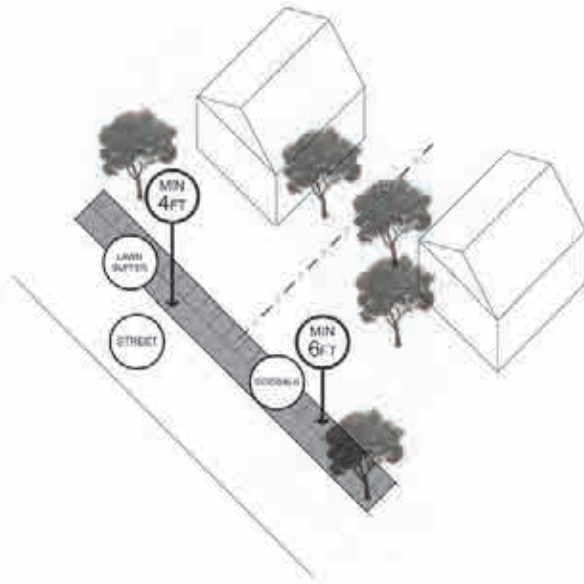


FIGURE 18

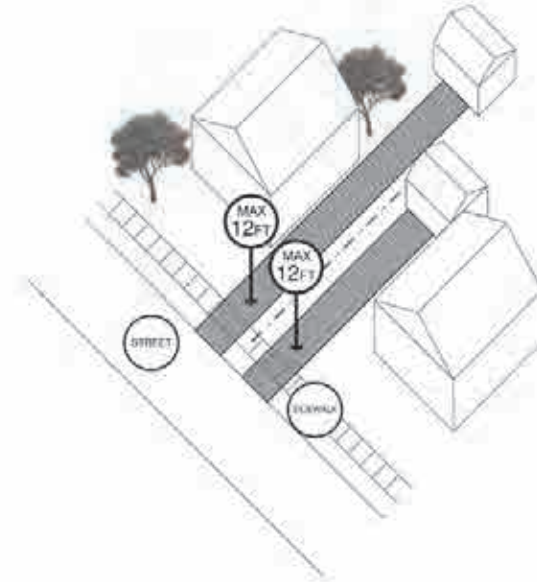


FIGURE 19

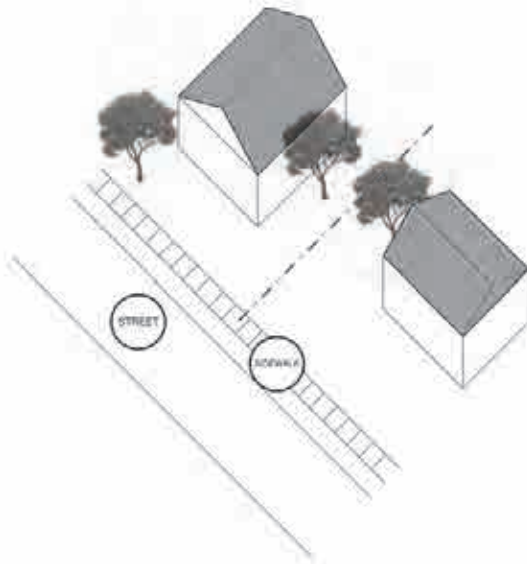


FIGURE 20

