

C. NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY OF LIFE

Goal:

Protect and enhance the quality of life of Stamford's neighborhoods, addressing land use transitions, community resources, traffic, and environmental conditions.

TOPICS:

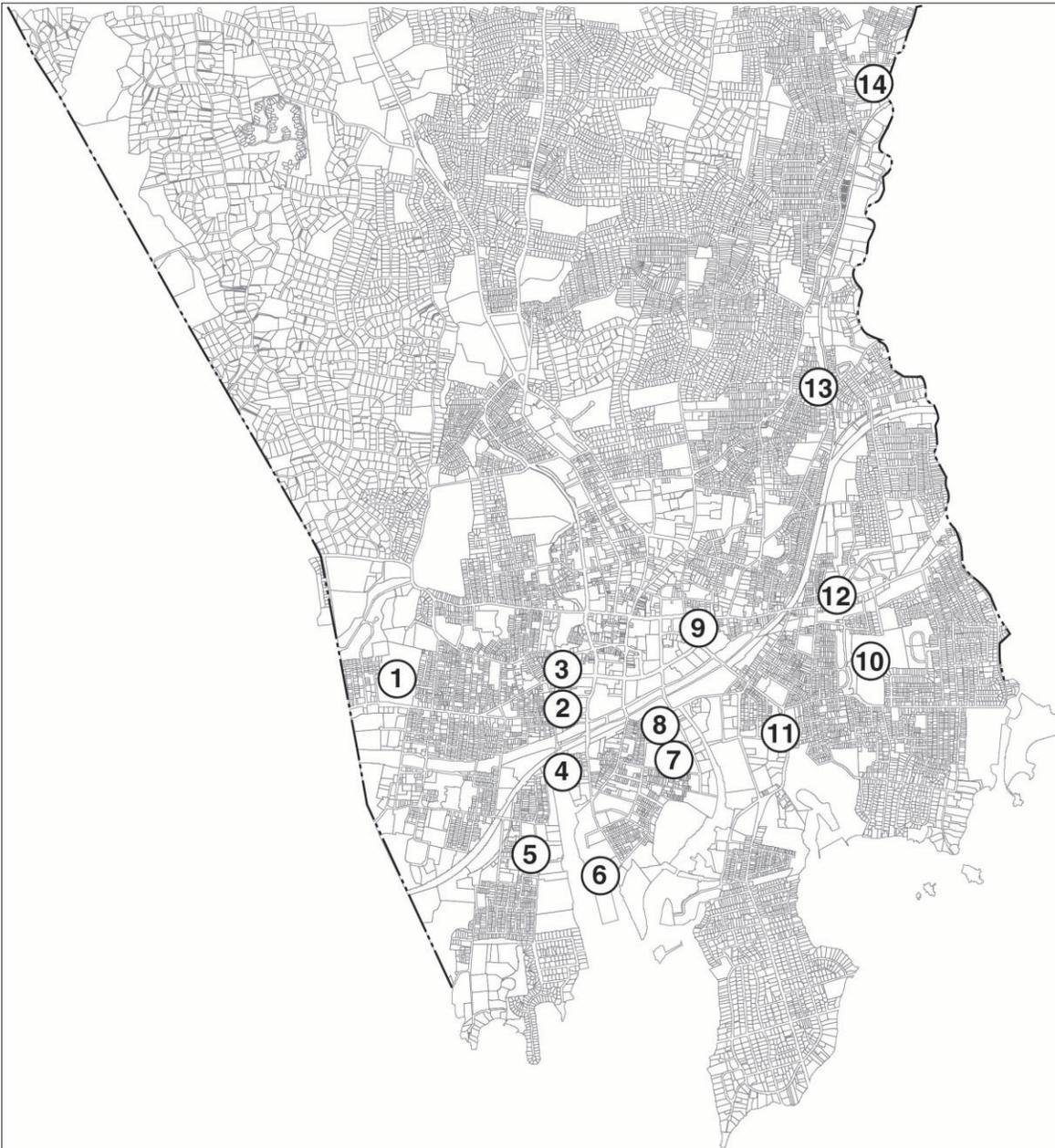
- Compatible Development
- Community Resources
- Traffic
- Natural Environment
- Community Involvement

OVERVIEW: COMPATIBLE DEVELOPMENT

Neighborhoods are first and foremost places to live. Stamford residents have a major stake in the stability of their neighborhoods. Not surprisingly, the fiercest discussions in the neighborhood workshops were about perceived or real land use conflicts: construction haulers in the South End, apartment buildings in Cove-East Side, and all manner of non-residential development in North Stamford.

These land use conflicts come into greater relief as the last remaining parcels are developed, as parcels are more intensely developed, and the familiar landscape changes. A centerpiece of growth management must be to both limit and manage the intensification of neighborhoods in terms of the amount, scale and character of new development, as well as traffic impacts. Public acceptance of future growth in Stamford—at any level—depends on creating confidence in the stability of the city's residential neighborhoods by assuring compatible development and better traffic management.

Some intensification of the neighborhoods may be welcomed, for example, where it is possible to reinforce neighborhood commercial areas as lively, mixed-use centers or reclaim underutilized land to expand and reinforce existing neighborhoods. In all cases, design controls, especially at the remaining large development sites, must assure that new development is contextual; and performance criteria must be used to insure that adjacent residential, commercial and industrial activities are compatible and complementary. An aggressive policy of addressing existing nonconforming



Possible MODs

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Cytex | 9. Eastern Gateway |
| 2. Mill River | 10. Clairol |
| 3. Mill River - North | 11. Shippan Avenue |
| 4. Mill River - South | 12. East Main |
| 5. Waterside Mixed Use Area | 13. Glenbrook |
| 6. Northeast Utilities | 14. Springdale |
| 7. Yale & Towne | |
| 8. Stamford Urban Transitway | |



Objective C1.

Limit and manage intensification of uses in neighborhoods; and aggressively address the negative impacts of non-conforming uses.

uses is a companion to these initiatives.

Strategies:

C1.1 Contain development outside of Downtown. In general, outside of Downtown: (1) the FAR (floor area ratio) for offices should be capped at 50 percent of FAR in industrial districts; and (2) multifamily and non-residential development should be generally subject to Zoning Board approvals and design guidelines.

C1.2 Make sure that future small-scale multifamily housing is compatible with its context. For multifamily housing in low-density zones, contextual zoning rules and design guidelines can be adopted that (1) reduce the number and size of curb cuts, (2) provide meaningful landscaping, (3) prohibit asphalt in front, (4) respect the setbacks and scale of adjoining development, etc. Parking is a particular problem. While no simple rule will work in all instances, a lower standard could be employed in high-density zones proximate to transit (like Downtown and in mixed-use areas where shared parking is possible), and a higher standard in low-density, residential-only zones.

C1.3 Make sure that future large-scale development complements its neighborhood context. Design principles for these developments should focus on neighborhood connections. These include: (1) alignment of new streets with existing streets, especially to reconnect portions of the adjoining neighborhood, (2) design of buildings—especially on the perimeter—so that the development appears to be part of the neighborhood, (3) new housing and development facing out to the street, not exclusively inward to courtyards, so as to enhance the quality of the public realm, (4) continuous sidewalks, with street trees, and ideally on-street parking and pedestrian-scaled lighting, (5) landscaped buffers (if appropriate) and landscaped off-street parking lots, (6) preservation of waterfront and other important view corridors, and (7) public access where greenways—including waterfront promenades—have been identified.

C1.4 Create a "Mixed-Use Overlay District" (MOD) for large targeted sites or areas under single or multiple ownership. MODs would provide the opportunity for higher densities and wider ranges of uses than otherwise permitted based on the underlying zoning for the site(s), tied to provision of predetermined public enhancements. The MOD designations should be limited to large (e.g., over 15 acres in size) sites and areas that are critical to the orderly development of their neighborhoods. Immediate opportunities include the Yale & Towne site, Mill River Corridor and Stamford Urban Transitway. Further possibilities include the Cytec and Clairol sites, should these become available for redevelopment. Each MOD would involve an up-front list of objectives to be met in exchange for any flexibility as to use

Opposite: Mixed Use Overlay Districts can be surgically used to promote better design and community amenities.

or density. These objectives could include, for instance: (1) providing land for needed schools or public facilities; (2) creating affordable housing; and (3) creating important linkages in greenways. In all events, the MOD objectives should preclude (1) significant commercial and other uses better targeted to Downtown, and (2) actions that significantly subvert planning objectives for Downtown.

C1.5 Employ a thorough City-led planning process for each MOD (Mixed-Use Overlay District). The Planning Board would map any MODs and oversee the MOD plans; the Zoning Board would be responsible for MOD and site plan approvals; the design guidelines would be prepared for all site and building designs. Each MOD plan could be drafted (as distinct from being approved) by the Land Use Bureau, community, property owner(s), etc., as appropriate; with a significant amount of public and property owner participation; under the overall direction of the Land Use Bureau and Planning Board.

C1.6 Revisit parking requirements for multifamily housing. The City should provide adequate parking requirements for multifamily development that is not immediately proximate to transit.

C1.7 Limit the expansion of pre-existing, non-conforming uses allowed under the variance procedure. Stamford was in large measure developed between 1850 and 1930, predating the current zoning ordinance. While most development nonetheless complies with the present zoning map and rules, there are exceptions, and many of these exceptions are nuisances. These pre-existing, non-conforming ("grandfathered") uses are, throughout America, legally allowed to remain and often expand. In Stamford, to promote more compatible if not fully complying development, the expansion of grandfathered uses should be subject to review by the Planning Board, advisory to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

C1.8 Carry on with improvements to enforcement of zoning. Staff and associated resources will need to be enlarged. The team strategy—involving hotlines and coordinated building, zoning and fire code enforcement—has met with success. It can be strengthened with advanced notice to property owners in neighborhood(s), alerting them to any future code enforcement blitz, and highlighting the most common code infringements. This will promote self-correction and reduce court caseloads.

C1.9 Increase the penalties charged in connection with non-compliance. Higher charges will discourage code infringements. They will also provide greater wherewithal to expand enforcement staff and resources.

C1.10 Consider tax incentives for the cost of bringing property into greater code compliance. This could, for example, involve a ten year graduated real estate tax abatement on the cost of improvements associated with greater code compliance.

OVERVIEW: COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Neighborhoods are more than residential districts. They include parks, schools, shopping districts, civic places and more. In fact, many people choose their school districts first, and then their neighborhoods; or will only move to neighborhoods that have certain recreational or shopping amenities.

Many of these community resources fall within the public purview: parks stand out. Others are semi-public: schools and school playgrounds, for example. Others are private but shaped by zoning: not just shopping, but also houses of worship, day care centers, medical facilities, community centers, etc. The City cannot dictate what most of these resources are or how they are run. But the City can—through its land use regulations—shape where they go, how large they are, and how they are designed.

The education system stands out as essential to both quality of life and residential values. One of the strengths of Stamford's public school system is its use of magnet schools to maintain both diversity and high standards. The magnet school system poses challenges in terms of how well specific neighborhoods are served, and, as school enrollment grows and needs change, how to provide adequate facilities.

Objective C2.

Support viable public schools, parks and other facilities; seek a fair distribution of community facilities and necessary services throughout the city; and explore linkages that make community facilities better neighbors in and anchors for their communities.

Strategies:

C2.1 Enhance existing parks and connections to neighborhoods and greenways. In 1997, the City completed a citywide parks plan. While overall the plan should be carried out, over time a few elements should be revisited. A particular priority should be placed on reconciling the balance of parking arrangements, access routes, etc. bearing on Stamford parks with citywide appeal. Further priorities should be placed on (1) bicycle and pedestrian access from adjacent neighborhoods, and (2) trails and greenway connections. Finally, the City should upgrade existing facilities. The 1997 plan puts particular priority on pedestrian, playground and athletic field safety features.

C2.2 Create new parks. In resident surveys conducted for the Master Plan, "lack of recreational activity" was the #2 response to the question, "What do you like least about living in Stamford?" The City must therefore be alert to new opportuni-

ties to create parks. This could include creating new parks in connection with MOD (Mixed-Use Overlay District) plans on large redevelopment sites, along the waterfront or other greenways, and in connection with new roadways. In the long term, particular priority should be placed on neighborhood parks in the South End, Water-side, and West Side, where there are few parks, yet the highest proportion of families without access to a car. Another priority should be placed on additional playgrounds and ball fields in the central portion of the city, so as to relieve pressure on Scalzi Park—perhaps the city’s most used park. "Out of the box" ideas will need to be surfaced in order to deal with the simple fact that the most heavily-used recreational facilities will be in the center of Stamford, where there is greater convenience to the greatest number of people.

C2.3 Provide an array of community services to meet the needs of a diverse population. Since government cannot be expected to furnish all facilities and services to all groups, a variety of providers should be encouraged to help meet these diverse needs. Programs and facilities in the areas of the arts and sports should be developed for all segments of the population. Though citywide facilities for culture and the arts should be concentrated in Downtown, smaller indigenous services and facilities should be fostered in the neighborhoods. A particular need identified by the youth of the city was for activity centers attractive to teens and pre-teens, in addition to organized sports and the mall.



Chestnut Hill Park provides an example of how a small park can still be a major asset.

C2.4 Seek a fair distribution of community facilities and necessary services, ranging from schools to community police substations to vehicle storage yards, throughout the city. A careful balancing act is needed. Public and private agencies will tend to site facilities based on land availability and other practical considerations. Some neighborhoods will feel chagrined by any intrusion of facilities viewed as nuisances. Other neighborhoods will feel aggrieved by the absence of desired uses, such as playgrounds, community centers, and elementary schools. Both opponents and proponents may miss the opportunity for creative linkages in the siting or design of community facilities. And in the absence of compelling arguments one way or another, inertia or the course of least resistance will dictate. An arbiter with a citywide perspective is needed. Thus, the Planning Board should be proactive in siting of community facilities.

C2.5 Identify potential school sites in the southern third of the city. It is reasonable to expect that the School Board will need additional school facilities at some time in the next twenty years, if in fact they don't need them now. Residents of the

South End and Waterside—where there are no schools at all—feel strongly that new schools should be built closer to them, since so many of their children are bused to faraway schools in Central and North Stamford. The Land Use Bureau and Board of Education should work to identify potential sites, as the need arises. To ease this process, the Board of Education should consider lower-grade elementary schools as a strategy for building smaller school buildings that can fit on smaller sites and possibly in the base of residential and office buildings. Potential sites should be weighed based on the following criteria: (1) no net loss and preferably a net gain in publicly-accessible parkland, (2) minimal negative traffic impacts on local neighborhoods, (3) improvements in neighborhood stability and quality of life, in addition to (4) cost and other concerns of the Board of Education.

C2.6 Promote community police substations. Existing community police substations should be supported; and new substations should be provided in more neighborhoods. The neighborhood business centers ("Main Streets") will often be the ideal location for such substations.

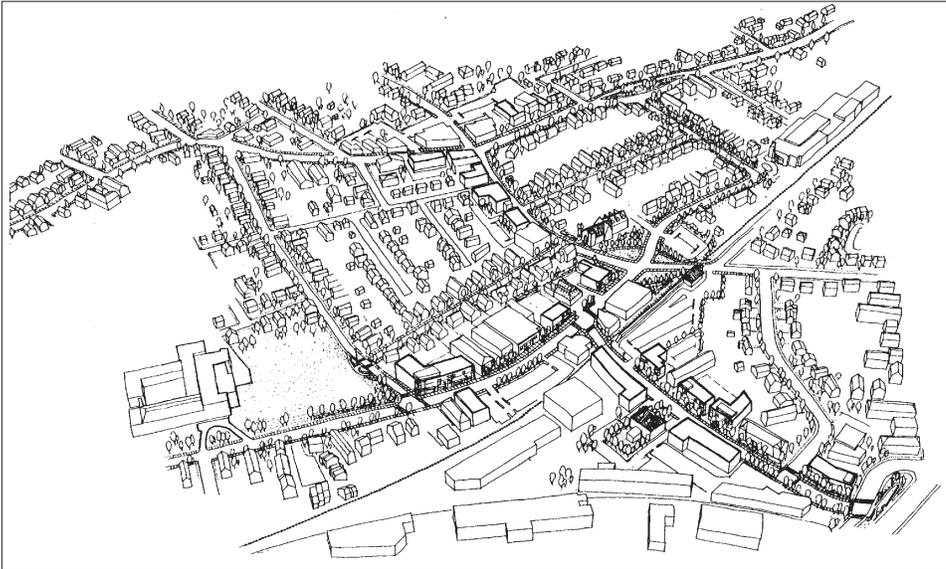
C2.7 Promote linkages that bolster community facilities and their neighborhoods. Site and facility linkages include neighborhood parks at schools, libraries that anchor neighborhood shopping, and community centers next to neighborhood parks. These include evening programs and adult education in schools, health mobiles at public libraries, community meetings in local institutions, and public art projects in parks. Communities, City Boards, public agencies and others should stay alert to such possibilities, especially in connection with new and expanded schools and other community facilities.

Objective C3.

Promote neighborhood-oriented, pedestrian-friendly retail districts that do not compete with Downtown; promote safe and attractive auto-oriented retail districts that do not compete with either the neighborhood centers or Downtown.

Strategies:

C3.1 Prepare plans for each "Main Street." The heart of a neighborhood is often its "Main Street." Stamford's traditional neighborhood shopping districts have the potential to play this role. Plans should be prepared for each "Main Street," modeled on the Regional Plan Association's work in Springdale and Glenbrook (which was conducted as case studies during the comprehensive planning process). Zoning should address (1) infill and contextual development, (2) eclectic signage, and (3) upstairs living. The plans should also address strategies to (1) better manage and increase the supply of existing parking, (2) enhance the pedestrian quality of each district, and (3) repair discontinuities in the street network to create new blocks and development parcels. Over time, each of these neighborhood "Main Streets" would ideally feature (1) continuous sidewalks, (2) shared off-street parking, (3) rationalized and interconnecting parking lots behind stores, (4) metered on-street parking, (5) night lighting of historic edifices, (6)



benches and other amenities, (7) pedestrian-scaled lighting, (8) easy crosswalks, (9) buried power lines, (10) bus shelters, and (11) connections to adjoining parks and school grounds.

C3.2 Prepare zoning and design guidelines for auto-oriented retail districts. Auto-oriented retail (shopping centers, strip development, gas stations, etc.) should not be allowed in the "Main Street" areas, where they break up the continuity of the district and its pedestrian-oriented quality. Alternative areas in which to concentrate these uses should be identified based on current land use patterns. Design guidelines should be adopted to promote landscaped frontages and parking lots, shared access and cross-access agreements, better traffic management, sidewalk connections, landscaped buffers to adjoining residences, etc.

C3.3 Create a commercial revitalization program within City government. This program might be housed in Community Development or in Economic Development. It would be responsible for fundraising, tenant recruitment, managing land use approvals, and directing capital expenditures to bolster the city's "Main Streets." Parking improvements and pedestrian-scaled lighting should generally be the top two priorities in the districts, as both are essential to making a shopping district convenient and safe.

C3.4 Promote façade and landscaping improvements. Typically, commercial revitalization programs include tax or financial incentives for façade improvements. As an alternative, the City should consider providing free technical assis-

Charettes for Springfield and Glenbrook illustrate what can be done to create "Main Streets" and upgrade commercial corridors.

tance for property owners and businesses, by contracting with designers expert in signage, window displays, parking lot layouts, landscaping, etc. Such designers, steeped in the City's design and review procedures, can speed approvals as well as improve site and building designs—without the red tape, competitive bidding requirements, or loss of control that puts off most merchants and property owners when it comes to traditional façade improvement programs. The City should also consider real estate tax incentives for improvements consistent with any PDD (Preservation and Design District) guidelines for the business districts.

OVERVIEW: TRAFFIC

Traffic congestion and safety were raised as key concerns in all of the neighborhood workshops. Residents surveyed in connection with the Master Plan most often answered "traffic" when asked "what do you like least about living in Stamford." Clearly, completion of the street network, strategic roadway improvements and improved transit are in order in all of the city's neighborhoods.

But the solutions go beyond transportation planning, per se. Zoning regulations should promote consolidated access/egress, shared parking, streetscape improvements, and transit-friendly development. Neighborhood quality of life will also depend on combinations of traffic calming, pedestrian and bicycle improvements, and improved transit pickup areas. In the Master Plan's resident surveys, while "traffic congestion" ranked second as a very serious problem, "difficulty getting places without your car" ranked fourth.

Objective C4.

Promote a new strategy that integrates selective vehicular circulation, traffic calming, pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

Strategies:

C4.1 Adopt roadway policies and classifications that put as much emphasis on pedestrian/bicyclist experience and safety as on moving vehicles. Stamford's roadway classifications are now modeled on those of the federal government, which in turn categorize roads in a hierarchy according to their ability to safely and speedily handle various volumes of cars. Stamford's roadways should be reclassified, to equally reflect pedestrian and bicycle usage. Its road and sidewalk specifications should also be reviewed, with further emphasis on bolstering pedestrian and bicycle usage and safety. The reclassification should be informed by the urban design goals of reinforcing the radial corridors which connect Downtown to the neighborhoods and the importance of High Ridge and Long Ridge Roads in linking the surrounding neighborhoods. An official road classification map should be adopted as part of the Master Plan.

C4.2 Identify through truck routes. Truck traffic should be directed to major

arterials and limited to local deliveries on neighborhood streets. A truck route study should be part of larger reexamination of the city's industrial districts, and integrated with the road classification map.

C4.3 Complete the street network and strategic roadway connections.

New road infrastructure, strategically located, can simultaneously reduce traffic, improve mobility and help complete neighborhoods. Particular priority should be placed on removing the bottlenecks under the Turnpike and the railroad, the Urban Transitway, an Omega Drive extension, a four-lane Route 1 traversing the city, and other roads that can better serve trucks and commuters and divert such traffic from residential roads. In some cases, new infrastructure should be part of a larger traffic calming strategy. For example, the roadway improvements (noted above) should involve pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and crossings. Pedestrian enhancements in the neighborhood "Main Streets" should be accompanied by reduced curb cuts and other design improvements that reduce the "friction" of many car movements, and therefore reduce congestion and accidents.



C4.4 Provide bicycle routes and paths throughout the city.

In a recent survey of residents in connection with the City's parks plan, bicycling was surprisingly listed as the top recreational priority for the City to pursue. The challenge is how to make bicycling ubiquitous and relatively safe. The City should adopt a citywide bicycle route map, and integrate it into the official road classification map. The routes should take advantage of physical resources; e.g., wide shoulders on some roads, and the opportunity for dedicated bike lanes through or on the edges of public parks and large development sites. The routes can also be created in conjunction with discretionary public approvals; e.g., for waterfront development, or for additional development within Long Ridge Road corporate campuses. They should also be linked to a proposed comprehensive greenway strategy proposed as part of the City Beautiful initiative. Boulevards with bicycle routes—like the proposed Urban Transitway—are also recommended.

Traffic calming tools include lane shifts, signage, on-street parking, landscaped medians, narrow tree-lined streets and bicycle lanes on over-wide streets.

C4.5 Use traffic calming to reduce traffic impacts on residential streets and traffic management for collector streets and Downtown.

The City should exploit the full kit of traffic calming tools available, including the use of street trees to reduce

the visual field, neck-downs at intersections, on-street parking and bicycle lanes to reduce the width of vehicular lanes, etc., in addition to the use of stop signs, speed humps, traffic lights and signs posting speed limits.

C4.6 Provide continuous sidewalks throughout the city (except in low-density, RA residential zones) and develop a Downtown pedestrian plan. This is a long-term objective that should be implemented as occasion and resources permit. As a start, the City should review the specifications for sidewalks under different circumstances, e.g., in Downtown and neighborhood shopping streets, along major arterials, etc. A design manual should be adopted, incorporating these specifications. As a priority, the City should conduct sidewalk surveys within one-half mile of the train stations and the neighborhood "Main Streets." These half-mile perimeters should generally be given priority in terms of discretionary public spending for new and improved sidewalks. So should opportunities to fill gaps in otherwise complete sidewalk networks. As a related priority, the City should develop a safe route-to-school program to encourage students to walk or bicycle.

Objective C5.

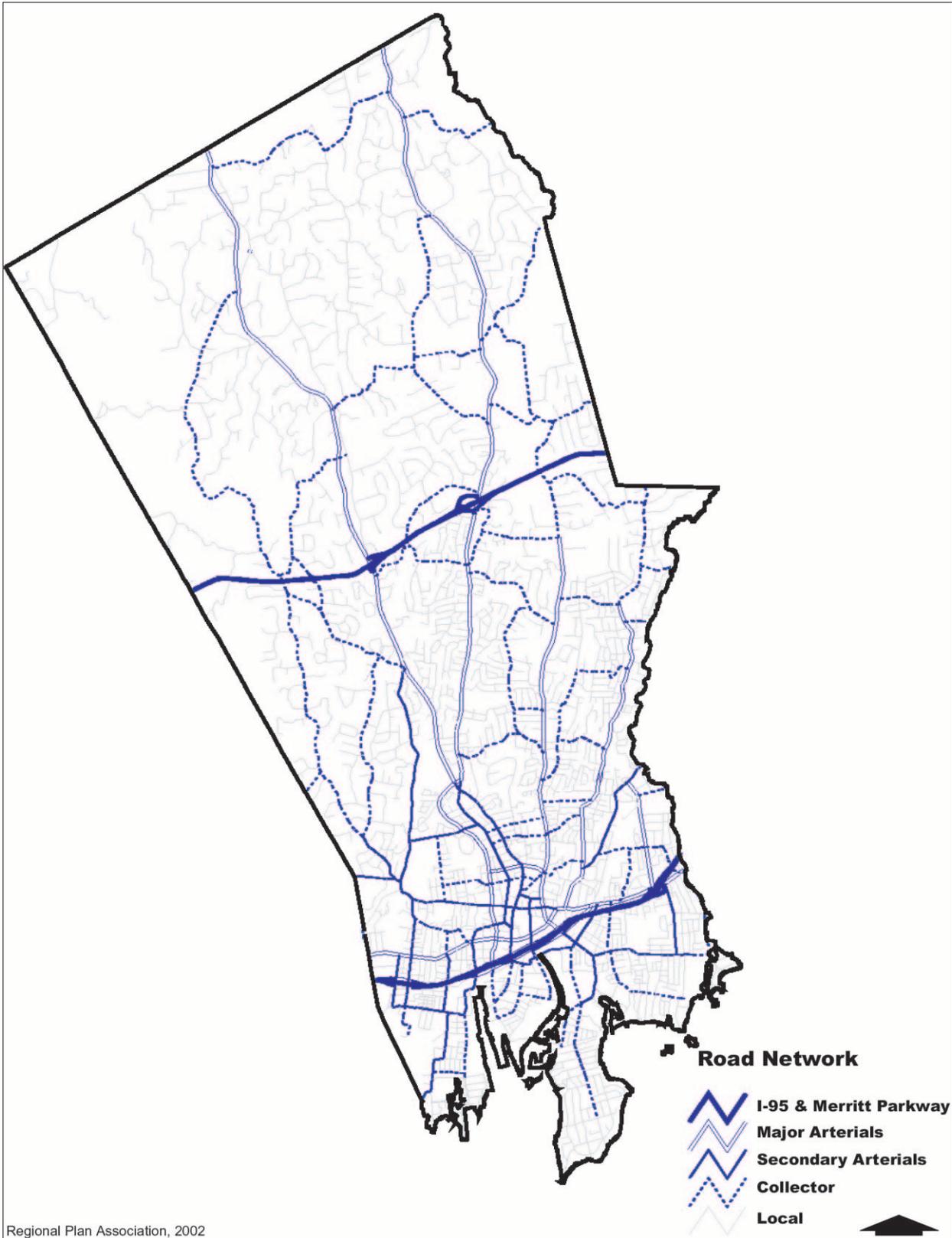
Promote attractive alternatives to driving – to relieve traffic congestion in residential neighborhoods and Downtown.

Strategies:

C5.1 Make transit service more realistic as an alternative to driving. Although the ridership potential precludes constructing a separate right-of-way for transit on Stamford streets, there are locations where buses can be given preferential treatment over other motor vehicles. Stamford should work with CT Transit to identify such locations in downtown Stamford. At present, according to resident surveys, only 6 percent of Stamford's residents travel by bus regularly. Yet buses could be part of the cure for residents' dissatisfaction (53 percent) with the parking conditions at the Transportation Center.

C5.2 Make transit stops more attractive and accessible. The walking environment in the vicinity of bus stops and rail stations should be upgraded by making walking easier, more interesting, and safer. The acceptable distance for walking to and from transit stops can be expanded if the walking experience is improved, thus enlarging the potential transit market. It is essential to make certain that sidewalks are in place, in good repair and well-lit, with no pedestrian safety hazards. Improvements at bus stops and at the two rail stations at Glenbrook and Springdale should be prioritized. Making the transit rider feel welcome to the transit system can encourage greater use. These locations can be made attractive, with non-obtrusive designs that provide shelter from the elements, seating, real-time schedule information, and adequate lighting.

C5.3 Explore opportunities to expand parking at the Glenbrook and



Regional Plan Association, 2002

Springdale MetroNorth train stations. These should not be at the expense of creating a pedestrian-friendly environment, since these stations should continue to serve local residents primarily.

C5.4 Explore the possibility of a MetroNorth rail station at East Main Street. This rail station would serve Downtown as well as south Glenbrook residents. It would also spur new development in the immediate area.



C5.5 Encourage employer-initiated programs to reduce single-occupant driving in peak periods. Stamford employers should be encouraged to institute a variety of programs that can reduce peak traffic volumes. Seven initiatives are recommended: (1) flex-time work schedules, with a shared core time for being at work, (2) staggered work hours, where different employees are assigned differing work hours, (3) schedules that allow for fewer, but longer work days, (4) telecommuting that allows employees to work from home at least some days, (5) a guaranteed ride

home, providing back-up transportation for employees who unexpectedly must work late or leave for home early in an emergency, (6) the "Commuter Choice Program," being marketed by the Stamford-based Metro-pool organization, permitting employers to provide tax-free benefits to employees in the form of transit fare discounts, and (7) carpool and vanpool matching programs, that



The transportation study calls for transit improvements, employer programs and transit- and Downtown-directed development.



keep track of work schedules for participating employees and help to create matches for commuting.

C5.6 Promote housing locations near transit and within walking distance of major job concentrations. The City should promote opportunities to increase housing density within easy walking distance (one-third mile) of existing bus stops, one-half mile of the two rail stations on the New Canaan line, and within a three-quarter mile walk of Downtown (defined later). This strategy can serve multiple purposes: (1) encourage those traveling to destinations along the bus route to use public transit; (2) strengthen the ridership at rail stations as well as the bus routes that serve as feeders to the three rail stations in the city; (3) promote walk-to-work opportunities in Downtown; and (4) redirect housing demand away from locations that cannot support public transit or walking and toward places that can.

Opposite: New classifications and designations can help shift the paradigm away from vehicles and toward pedestrians and bicyclists.

OVERVIEW: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Stamford—while largely developed—encompasses a number of terrains that must be protected. These include wetlands, reservoirs, steep slopes, and wooded areas in the northern half of the city; coastal wetlands and flood areas in the far south of the city; and rivers that traverse the entire city. These natural environments are being encroached upon, not only from development pressures, but also from "point sources" of pollution. The consideration of environmental criteria in land use decisions should therefore be strengthened, including applying "Conservation Subdivision" design principles and attacking sources of pollution.

The recognition of the coastal area as a special natural resource was duly noted in the 1977 Master Plan, and strengthened in 1984 with the adoption of the Master Plan Coastal Addendum, consistent with the Connecticut Coastal Management Act. The key goal in the Coastal Addendum was the recognition of the coastal area as a unique area providing special benefits from the inherent natural resources found there, together with opportunities for recreation, boating and development which realizes the advantage of siting on the waterfront. The City can now go further to recognize the importance of Long Island Sound to the health and welfare of the city's residents. The Sound provides commercial uses, opportunities for passive and active recreation and prime locations for homes and businesses. To maximize these values and others, the quality of the waters and natural habitats of Long Island Sound must continue to be restored to healthy levels and protected from further degradation.

Strategies:

C6.1 Encourage "Conservation Subdivisions" on all property with environmentally sensitive land. Conservation Subdivisions involve groupings of homes, leaving environmentally sensitive land free of development. Note that in very low-density areas without public water and sewage treatment, the groupings may in fact be at a low density, e.g., one-acre per unit, or may involve shared septic systems. Note that Conservation Subdivisions would entail site and area surveys to identify land to be protected.

C6.2 Deduct environmentally sensitive land (wetlands, very steep slopes, and most floodplains) from calculations of yield. For sound environmental and public safety reasons, these lands should remain natural and thus largely excluded from density calculations (except for floodplains in Downtown). As land becomes scarce and property values go up, the most difficult land to build on—even land that is best left natural for sound public safety and environmental reasons—will be eyed by developers. But that does not mean that such land is wisely developed. A limited

Objective C6.

Strengthen the consideration of environmental criteria in land use and design decisions.

(e.g., up to 50 percent) yield could be permitted by special permit for such environmentally sensitive land. These special permits would be predicated on trailway connections, greenway connections, public access to open space, wetland reclamation, clustering, and/or environmentally-sensitive buildings and site plans. The Planning Board should be charged with site plan reviews and determinations of yield in connection with such development. (Note that this and the prior two policies are consistent with policies laid out in the South Western Regional Planning Agency's 1995 *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development*.)

C6.3 Designate as Open Space Overlay key public, quasi-public, and other protected open space. The land to be targeted includes Water Company holdings, the arboretum, some public school grounds, land owned or protected by land trusts, cemeteries, land subject to tax relief under State Public Law 490, etc. The Open Space Overlay would involve preservation, mandatory cluster, easements and/or other tools to protect open space features, consistent with the fact that the overall density of the neighborhood is predicated on the continued dedication of these tracts primarily to open space and related low-impact uses. Note that the underlying zoning, including its Special Exception rules, would still apply. The City should also consider using the Open Space Overlay to protect water quality and reduce pollution in the catchment areas for its reservoirs and aquifers. This will require periodic updates of the mapping of Open Space Overlays.



New regulatory tools are now available to preserve open space.

C6.4 Aggressively address major polluters and nuisance uses. This policy should particularly address those polluters and nuisance uses that have a major dampening effect on investment and revitalization. This could involve stricter enforcement of strengthened performance standards for industrial uses adjoining residential districts, combined with incentives (e.g., industrial revenue bonds, tax incentives) to upgrade facilities or relocate to other more suitable sites. As proposals to move haulers out of the South End illustrate, this is a prime example of where various City agencies will have to work in concert.

C6.5 Protect the quantity and quality of the drinking water supply both for those on wells and those on the public supply. The Open Space Overlay impermeous materials ordinance and protection of environmentally sensitive land will help protect water quality and reduce pollution. However, Stamford cannot rely on land preservation alone to protect the quantity and the quality of the water supply for Stamford's citizens. Current economic realities, heightened security concerns and drought conditions underscore the need to find alternate methods to protect our drinking water supplies.

C6.6 Develop a stormwater ordinance that better protects watershed and

coastal resources from nonpoint source pollution. Phase II of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) stormwater program will be implemented in Connecticut in early 2003. As a result, the City will be responsible for issuing stormwater discharge permits for construction sites that disturb between one and five acres of land. Accordingly, it may make sense for the City to develop a stormwater ordinance that establishes many of the same requirements as will be included in the Phase II stormwater permit. In addition, developers, in meeting zoning standards, should submit plans that manage stormwater runoff through the use of good site design and stormwater "Best Management Practices". The policies within the Connecticut Coastal Management Area to mitigate potential adverse impacts from stormwater runoff should apply to the entire city.

C6.7 Prepare watershed management goals and plan. It may be possible to improve water quality by incorporating Best Management Practices into existing development and requiring such practices when land is newly developed or redeveloped.

Strategies:

C7.1 Protect and minimize danger to life and property from coastal flooding and the effects of wave impact in Westcott Cove, Shippan, Dolphin Cove, and other potentially hazardous areas. This will require rigorous application of the floodplain management guidelines of the National Flood Insurance Program to all new development. A four-part program is envisioned: (1) evaluation of the degree of risk associated with different types and intensities of development in flood-prone areas; (2) design of a comprehensive flood control program, incorporating structural and non-structural protection measures, (3) enforcement of existing flood-proofing regulations governing all new development, including alterations and reconstruction of existing structures, in flood-prone areas, and (4) incorporation of appropriate flood protection measures in siting requirements for storage or disposal of hazardous or other potentially polluting materials.

C7.2 Manage and enhance the natural and manmade beaches that exist throughout Stamford's shoreline in order to maximize recreational opportunities, protect natural views, and stabilize the beach system. This encompasses four actions: (1) developing a comprehensive beach management program that promotes public access, provides adequate and appropriate facilities and ensures the long-term, high-quality recreational use of Stamford's public beaches; (2) guiding development of land adjacent to private beaches in order to preserve and perpetuate their scenic and recreational value and use; (3) controlling activities on land adjacent to public and private beaches so as to retain, restore and enhance the form, volume

Objective C7.

Protect and enhance water-dependent uses while simultaneously attempting to mitigate adverse environmental, economic and social impacts which may be associated with any development.

and stability of the existing beach system; (4) strictly enforcing regulations governing the siting and construction of jetties, groins, breakwaters, seawalls, and other structural elements that affect natural accretion and depositional processes along the shore; (5) enforcing regulations relating to illegal structures that promote beach erosion; (6) educating property owners and the public as to the range of permissible and beneficial measures for controlling beach erosion; and (7) undertaking remedial programs for minimizing coastal erosion in Westcott Cove, the area east of Wallacks Point, and the Shippan Peninsula.

C7.3 Protect the high, unmodified bluffs on the eastern side of the Shippan Peninsula from any development that accelerates natural erosion processes.

This encompasses the following three directives: (1) establishing setback lines from edge of bluffs for siting of new development; (2) designating areas for the public acquisition of conservation easements; and (3) ensuring that building practices during the construction phase, as well as final structural and site designs, incorporate appropriate erosion control measures.

C7.4 Retain the freshwater wetlands in Cummings and Cove Island Parks in their undisturbed state; protect the Rippowam and Noroton Rivers flowing into Stamford Harbor; and protect Holly Pond from point and non-point pollution sources.

To meet these objectives, the City should regularly monitor water quality, identify violations, and enforce existing regulations, including National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits. Upland control measures include minimum setbacks, erosion and sedimentation controls, and vegetative buffering. These should be adopted and enforced for all new development adjacent to water-courses.

C7.5 Maintain tidal wetlands in their natural state; and emphasize the value of tidal wetlands in the Cove-East Side and West Branch areas.

Activities within State-mapped tidal wetlands, such as excavating, filling, and erecting structures in tidal wetlands, are regulated by the State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Activities and uses of land adjacent to tidal wetlands can also impact tidal wetlands and are typically subject to local review only. For example, discharge of freshwater runoff near coastal tidal wetlands can adversely impact tidal wetlands. The placement of new retaining walls or modifications to existing structures along the water can cut off the natural supply of sediments needed to sustain tidal wetland vegetation, particularly in areas exposed to erosion. These and similar actions can degrade tidal wetlands and therefore should be discouraged, if not prohibited. Regardless of which uses are permitted to be located adjacent to tidal wetlands, the zoning regulations should be amended to include a tidal wetlands setback. The City should prohibit uses adjacent to wetlands which degrade or imperil natural wetland

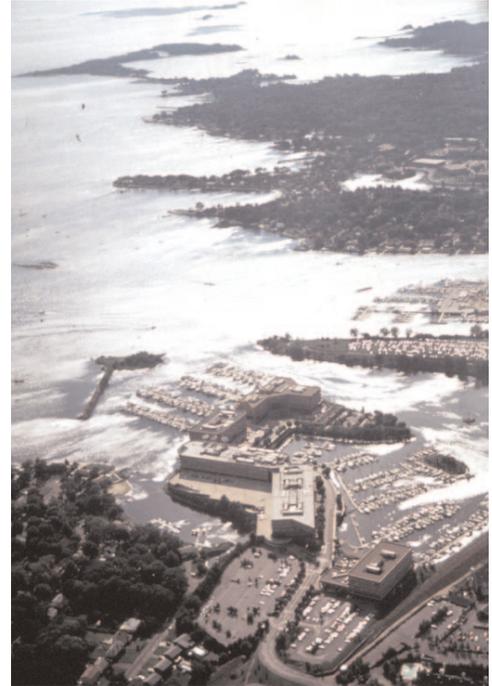
values and processes. The City should also require mitigation where the destruction of tidal wetland is unavoidable.

C7.6 Preserve and restore the major intertidal habitats in the East and West Branches for both their biological and aesthetic values; and develop, maintain and restore shellfish concentration areas in Stamford Harbor, Westcott Cove and Cove Harbor. The City should rigorously enforce National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits and other regulations prohibiting illegal pollutant discharges and debris disposal in intertidal areas. This policy also entails: (1) maintaining and rebuilding deteriorating bulkheads which allow debris to enter intertidal areas; (2) protecting all intertidal areas that are habitat for shellfish or other biological resources from adverse development activities; (3) developing a comprehensive shellfish management program to be incorporated into the Municipal Coastal Program; and (4) identifying non-point sources of water pollution affecting shellfish areas and developing mitigation programs.

C7.7 Maintain Jacks and Grass Islands as conservation and natural habitat areas with uses restricted to water-dependent activities; maintain Vincent Island as both a passive, marine-oriented recreational area and as a wildlife habitat area. In order to preserve Vincent Island for public open space use in its natural setting, the City could explore less than fee-simple acquisition (e.g., acquisition of development rights, or donation to a land trust).

C7.8 Maintain and improve coastal and embayment water quality. Priority attention should be paid to the waters of Stamford Harbor, Westcott Cove, Cove Harbor, and Holly Pond. The City should insure that the applicable water quality standards mandated by Federal and State statutes and regulations are achieved, and further carry out a water quality management program that contributes to an abundant and healthy marine resource base, as well as provides a broad spectrum of recreational opportunities. Specifically, the City should (1) develop a water quality monitoring and enforcement program which is legally sound, financially feasible, and administratively practical; (2) establish priorities and schedules for addressing known pollution problems; (3) prohibit the construction of facilities in open water bodies that impede tidal flushing; (4) strengthen harbor policing and the enforcement of regulations governing waste disposal associated with recreational boating activities; (5) develop a coordinated, intermunicipal program (with the Town of Darien) designed to improve water quality in Holly Pond; and (6) make every attempt to provide swimmable and fishable waters for the citizens of Stamford.

C7.9 Improve air resources. In support of Federal and State efforts to control and prohibit air pollution, the City should undertake all feasible means for reducing



Stamford's waterfront must be protected as a natural resource.

pollution and noxious odors in Stamford's coastal area. This entails: (1) evaluating feasibility of alternative solid waste disposal methods; (2) monitoring and evaluating automobile emissions on principal arterials south of I-95 during peak workday hours, and on principal access routes serving coastal recreational facilities during weekends; and (3) devising integrated traffic control and land use measures that address unacceptable high levels of pollutant emissions.



The neighborhood plans should be updated regularly.

OVERVIEW: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A number of recommendations already incorporate citizen outreach and participation into planning decisions. As noted earlier, the City should provide civic group notification of design reviews; involve local residents, business people, and property owners in the planning process for any PDD (Preservation and Design District) and MOD (Mixed-Use Overlay) plans targeted to critical, large sites and areas; and involve local residents and businesses in the planning process for traffic calming and other transportation improvements. A comprehensive approach is also needed.

In the final analysis, residents will judge the success of this and other plans on the basis of how it affected them; and they will judge the degree to which community involvement in decision-making was meaningful on the basis of whether they or others whom they trust had an opportunity to participate. The unprecedented amount of public participation in this Plan should therefore be carried forward, not put aside.

Objective C8.

Provide further opportunity for civic leaders, business people and residents to participate in the planning and improvement of their neighborhoods.

Strategy:

C8.1 Every five years, conduct a participatory review for each neighborhood grouping. The process could stagger neighborhoods, e.g., with one or two groupings each year. The purpose of the reviews is not to revisit the citywide goals and objectives, which should have staying power. Rather, their purpose is to air specific concerns and integrate the incremental planning and decision making that will have taken place in the interim. Once City agencies, officials and others weigh in with a citywide perspective, the neighborhood plans could be revised and, if the Planning Board finds it appropriate, the plans could be adopted as addenda to the Master Plan.

