

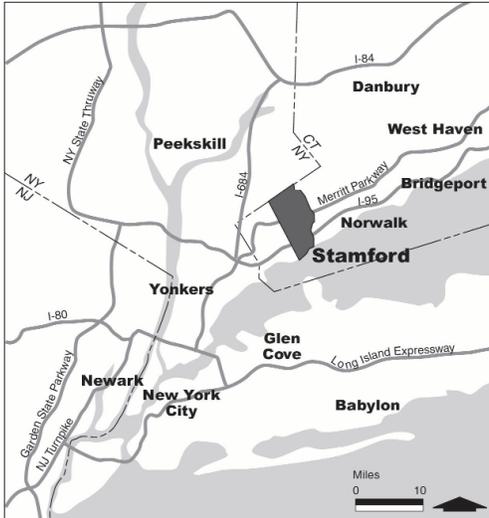
# S U M M A R Y

## Vision Statement:

*Use "growth management" tools to address development and change generated by both boom and recessionary economic circumstances, so as to preserve and enhance what is best about Stamford: its social diversity, its scenic qualities, its appealing neighborhoods, and its strong downtown.*

## **GOALS:**

- Maintain and celebrate the **diversity** of Stamford's population and employment.
- Pursue a new "**City Beautiful**" movement, celebrating and enhancing the city's main corridors, greenways, waterfront, hills, historic buildings, gateways, and especially the unique qualities of Stamford's neighborhoods.
- Protect and enhance the **quality of life** of Stamford's neighborhoods, addressing land use transitions, community resources, traffic, and environmental conditions.
- Create a vibrant, seven-days-a-week, pedestrian-friendly **Downtown** focused both on the Transportation Center and the historic core area to its immediate north.



Stamford's residents are the stewards of a regional resource.

## **GROWTH MANAGEMENT:**

Stamford is now the flagship of regional centers—a city that has prospered not just as a satellite of Manhattan, but as an important center in its own right; a center that plays a strategic role not only in the Fairfield County economy, but also in the larger economy of the Northeast corridor.

It was apparent from all of the community meetings that the residents of Stamford are challenged by their role as the stewards of a regional powerhouse. On the one hand, growth has supported the emergence of Downtown Stamford as a premier commercial and cultural center. On the other hand, there is universal and vocal concern for the most obvious manifestation of Stamford's role as a regional center—increased traffic. Concern over Stamford's growth furthermore underlies many of the other issues raised in the community outreach: concerns over the affordability of housing, over the scale and appearance of new developments in the neighborhoods, over inadequate access to quality parks and open spaces.

For this reason, the recommendations in the Master Plan are presented in the larger context of Growth Management Studies, outlining approaches to influence the

amount, character and impacts of future growth.

The Growth Management and related technical research coalesced around four sets of factors, each the subject of its own special report appended to this volume:

- Economic Development—how much employment and population growth there may be over the next twenty years
- Urban Design—where should Stamford grow and what should new development look like
- Traffic and Transit—how residents and workers will travel to and around Stamford
- Affordable Housing—how the city's inventory of housing can be kept diverse and in large measure affordable.

The Growth Management and technical studies produced a number of key findings that inform the recommendations encompassed in this Plan. For example:

- The Economic Development study showed that diversity—economic, social and physical—is essential to Stamford's future. Financial services will continue to be the engine of Stamford's prosperity. But Stamford must maintain the diversity of its economy to retain its resilience.
- The Urban Design study showed that there is no shortage of physical space for growth in Stamford. In fact, some development must go forward in order to complete the visions for both Downtown and neighborhood revitalization. The challenge is to direct development to the right places and then to design it properly.
- The Traffic and Transit study showed that there is no "magic bullet." Managing Stamford's traffic problems will require an aggressive mix of strategies, including (1) cooperation by employers, (2) more transit, and (3) strategic land use decisions—putting development where it is accessible by transit, especially Downtown.

- The Affordable Housing study showed that Stamford is already unique in Fairfield County and proactively dealing with what is a regional affordable

<b>HIGH GROWTH</b>		
<b>GOOD NEWS</b>	<b>BAD NEWS</b>	<b>POLICY</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stamford is wealthier</li> <li>▪ Personal income rises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Income polarization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Diversify economy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Resources are available for public initiatives                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Schools</li> <li>- Open space</li> <li>- Affordable housing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pressure on:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Neighborhood quality</li> <li>- Open space</li> <li>- Housing affordability</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Purchase open space: citywide greenway</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complete downtown and neighborhood centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Traffic problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aggressive:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carpooling, flex-time</li> <li>- Regional transportation</li> <li>- Housing in Stamford near transit</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>LOW GROWTH</b>		
<b>GOOD NEWS</b>	<b>BAD NEWS</b>	<b>POLICY</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local revenues exceed expenditures</li> <li>▪ Personal income rises somewhat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No resources to make up deficit in open space and affordable housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maximize access to state and federal sources</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Neighborhoods do not change much</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No significant redevelopment downtown or in neighborhood centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consolidation of growth in downtown and centers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local traffic increases minimized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regional traffic impacts from highways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote flex-time, carpooling, etc., and regional transportation initiative</li> </ul>

The Growth Management Studies considered the implications of different levels of growth.

housing crisis. The challenge is how to best mobilize existing and prospective resources.

The Growth Management studies also addressed the basic question of "why does Stamford have to grow at all?" The answer is that some growth is necessary—to keep Stamford's employment and population diverse, to carry out the urban design improvements expressed in the plan, to pay for quality of life enhancements, and to complete the vision of a walkable and vibrant downtown.

In fact, a "slow-growth" scenario is described in the Growth Management studies, because it represents what Stamford will face in times of recession. While this "slow-growth" condition can be managed, and even has the benefits of less traffic and less pressure on the neighborhoods, it presents enormous challenges to the goals expressed in the Master Plan. Stamford will not have the resources to maintain public services and facilities, improve neighborhoods, complete a vision for the Downtown, purchase badly-needed parks and open space, and diversify its economy and housing stock—without unprecedented and unlikely support from outside the city. Nearly half of Stamford's working population find their employment in Stamford. According to a Chamber of Commerce survey, two-thirds of Stamford's businesses are owned by Stamford residents. The city's fiscal health depends upon its commercial and industrial sectors. Stamford cannot afford to choke off development and changes.

For contrast, a "high-growth" scenario is described in the Growth Management studies, because it represents what Stamford could expect if boom times remain sustained; and a more realistic "trend-growth" scenario is employed based on past growth after accounting for short-term changes in the marketplace.

The key insight of this cross-comparison is that Stamford can meet the expectations of its citizens and communities as to social and economic diversity, an attractive built and natural environment, high neighborhood quality of life, and a prosperous Downtown. But it will have to do so by being proactive with regard to planning and land use policies. This is apparent in the goals and objectives itemized above.



Transportation objectives emphasize transit improvements, transit-friendly development and traffic demand management.

## **GROWTH MANAGEMENT TARGETS:**

### **Traffic and Transit:**

As noted, there is no simple solution for Stamford's existing and potential traffic problems: a variety of strategies need to be combined. Some of the essential objectives include the following:

- Approximately 80 percent of new housing in Stamford should be directed to Downtown and the South End.
- Half of all businesses with 100 or more employees should institute "first level" Traffic Demand Management (TDM) measures such as telecommuting, guaranteed ride home or carpooling.
- All new office development in Downtown should institute "second level" Traffic Demand Management measures, such as lower parking ratios and higher densities near transit.

The region must acknowledge Stamford's strategic role in the Fairfield County and regional economies. Stamford must leverage its actions—traffic demand measures and land-use related actions—into cooperation by other entities to address issues beyond Stamford's local control—such as regional transit improvements. Transit objectives include the following:

- There should be no more than a 20-minute gap in rush hour train service in either direction; and there should be no more than a 30-minute gap in evening train service.
- More than 75 percent of all bus to train connections should be coordinated to take place within a two- to nine-minute window.
- Parking along the New Haven line should, in aggregate, be increased by at least 20 percent.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

The Growth Management studies show that even if Stamford has only limited control over how much and how fast it grows, Stamford has a good deal of control over what its future may look like, how it impacts the neighborhoods, and how equitable it will be. The economic development study suggested several specific objectives:

- Ten (10) percent of future office growth should be directed to "flex industrial" and high value added production activities.
- Retail and office encroachment in the industrial growth districts should be halved from the levels suggested by the build out analysis conducted in connection with the Growth Management studies—to no more than 5 percent of the total growth in these sectors.
- As noted, 80 percent of new housing should be directed to Downtown and the South End. Most of the remainder should go to neighborhood centers. Undirected neighborhood intensification should be avoided in favor of targeted revitalization.
- Approximately 70 percent of new office development should be directed to



Economic Development objectives emphasize directing development to Downtown.

Downtown, mainly in the pedestrian-friendly "Core" area bounded by Grove Street, Hoyt Street and Washington Boulevard and along the Tresser Boulevard "Corridor" area; 10 percent of new office development should be directed as intermediate scale development to the surrounding "Collar" area—which includes portions of the South End immediately proximate to the train station.

**URBAN DESIGN:**

The Urban Design study shows that how something is designed can be as important as what it is. Key design objectives are summarized below.

- The design and identity of Downtown should be reinforced, recognizing the essential difference between the scale of the pedestrian-friendly Core and the Tresser Boulevard Corridor. Other initiatives include managing transitions in scale between new and existing buildings; promoting attractive gateways; creating more and better open space and pedestrian amenities; and linking open and public spaces with an aggressive and comprehensive landscaping plan.
- The role that Long Ridge Road, High Ridge Road and the other major roadway corridors play in organizing the city should be highlighted—using streetscape, landscape, and building placement guidelines.
- Neighborhood centers—such as Belltown, Glenbrook, Springdale and Shippan—should be reinforced with new, contextual infill development, complementary streetscape improvements, and landscape, façade and signage guidelines, and creative parking solutions.
  - The industrial districts should be designed as places that not only support industry, but also create vital mixed-use areas that are compatible with their surroundings.
  - A continuous network of open spaces and greenway connections should be created. These include public parks, school grounds, selected large private open spaces, and much of the waterfront. These also include access easement agreements on strategic private parcels (such as the corporate campuses along Long Ridge Road); and linkages to the larger Statewide greenway network (such as the Merritt Parkway trail).



Urban design objectives emphasize responding to each neighborhood's design priorities – including open space, corridors and neighborhood centers.



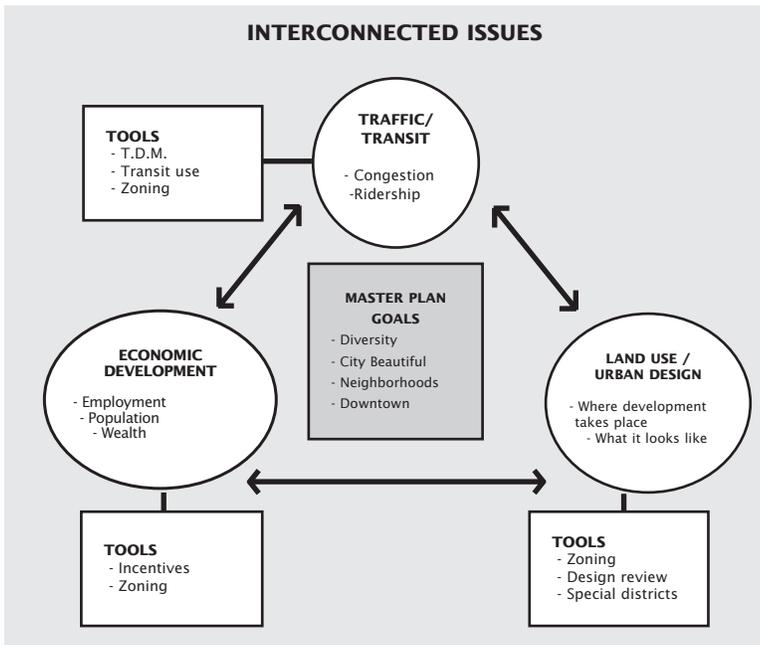
Affordable housing objectives involve a mix of publicly supported, mixed-income and home-ownership housing.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING:**

The Affordable Housing technical study indicated that the City has been a leader in Fairfield County in terms of providing affordable housing. Yet, building upon or even maintaining the City's track record will require considerable political will and effort. Objectives

include the following:

- The City should set its goals mindful that the affordable housing need approximates 9,000 households.
- There should be no net loss in the number of publicly supported housing units.
- The City should work to create a pipeline of sites targeted for affordable housing.
- A variety of tools should be employed in combination: zoning, a Housing Trust Fund, a pre-development loan pool, and partnerships with non-profit organizations.
- Homeownership should be the principal vehicle for addressing the needs of households earning between 50 and 80 percent of area median income.
- Communities should be involved in siting and design issues, to ensure contextual development and integrated neighborhoods.

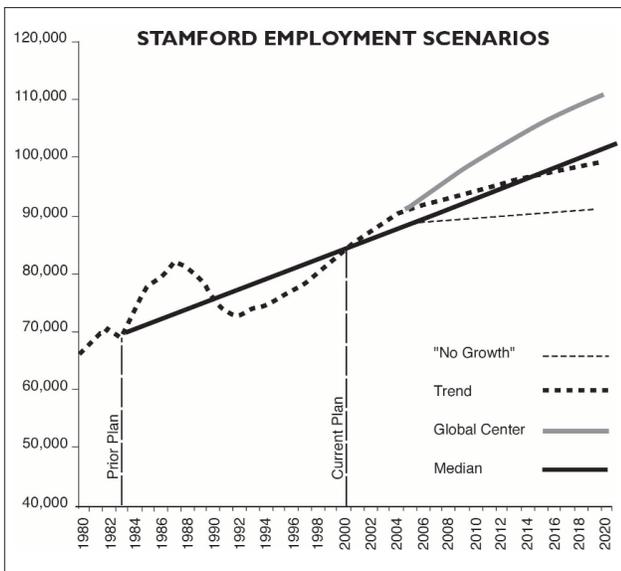


The Master Plan integrates goals identified through grass roots planning, the Growth Management Studies and implementation tools.

**A COMPREHENSIVE VISION:**

A complex set of interactions are constantly at play between the four goals and the Growth Management analyses. Neighborhood Quality of Life cannot be sustained without a set of complementary City Beautiful initiatives; the City Beautiful initiatives, in turn, rely on the central role that the Downtown must play as the focus for future development; and, finally, all three rely on maintaining Stamford's social, physical and economic Diversity. Consider the following set of related propositions:

- Stamford will not be able to build its way out of its traffic problems—widening roads, reconfiguring intersections—without destroying the quality of life that is ultimately the foundation of Stamford's prosperity. Therefore, in order to stem the tide of commuters driving in from farther and farther away, Stamford must accommodate more housing for workers at all levels and make new housing and new employment centers accessible to transit.
- Affordable housing and economic development are closely linked. Businesses and their advocates indicate that the biggest impediment to corporate and other site locations in Stamford and its environs is the lack of local housing for its workers, and therefore long commutes. (To quote one *Advocate* headline: "Region's workers are tops; too bad there's not enough of them.") Conversely, a variety of blue-collar as well as white-collar jobs assure that Stamford's working class population does not slip into poverty.
- In order to successfully provide more housing and employment in Stamford, a *City Beautiful* initiative must permeate the design of new residential and commercial developments so that they reinforce and improve the physical quality of the neighborhoods, help complete the Downtown, and support transit.
- Good urban design will not be enough to protect the neighborhoods from unattractive intensification. *Downtown* must become the focus for new development because there is both the physical capacity and the political will to put new development where it is most accessible to transit.



"Smart growth" must respond to varying development pressures.

- For Stamford to pursue a policy of economic and social Diversity, Stamford must offer a variety of sites for different kinds of housing—from contextual infill informed by the design guidelines of the *City Beautiful* initiative, to apartment buildings in locations and configurations outlined in the *Downtown* initiative. Stamford must also offer a diverse range of sites for different kinds of commercial development—not only sites for office buildings as described in the *Downtown* initiative, but also for the small-scale infill buildings in neighborhood commercial centers as described in the initiative.

Stamford's future is, in part, tied to forces beyond its control. Ultimately, the "low-growth," "trend-growth" and "high-growth" scenarios have as much to do with market forces as with government intervention and regulation.

Nevertheless, the Growth Management studies show that even if

Stamford has only limited control over how much it grows, Stamford has a good deal of control over what its future may look like, how it impacts the neighborhoods, and how equitable it will be. No city in the region is better poised than Stamford to tackle this challenge, by virtue of its strong track record of public-private partnership as well as a diverse, well-informed and sophisticated citizenry. The details of this plan strive to achieve the same goals—with regard to diversity, City Beautiful, quality of life and Downtown—regardless of the growth management/market context.