



Acknowledgements

❖ City of Stamford

Hon. Dan Malloy, Mayor
Robin Stein, Land Use Bureau Chief
Thomas Bruccoleri, Transportation Planner
Michael Freimuth, Director – Office of
Economic Development

❖ Neighborhood Steering Committee

Jeanne Carillo
Janet Chukinas
Carmen Domonkos
James Grunberger
Diane O'Connor

❖ Prime Consultant

TPA Design Group
85 Willow Street
New Haven, CT 06511

❖ Subconsultants

AMS Consulting Services, LLC
FP Clark Associates, Inc.
Fuss & O'Neill

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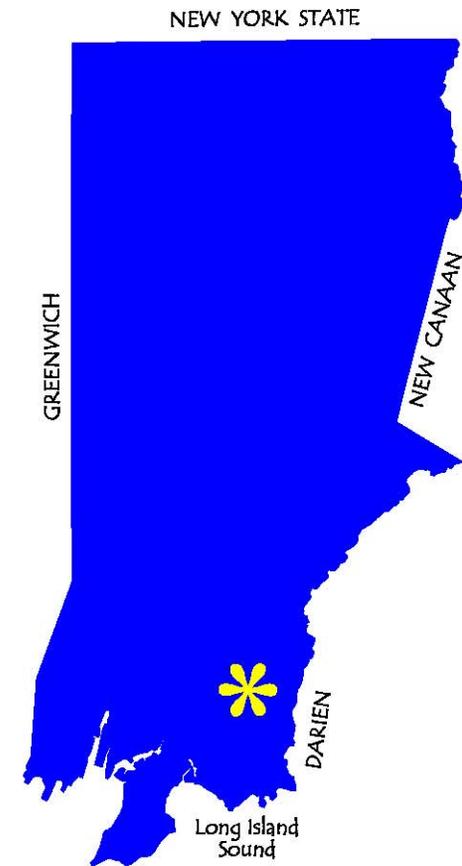
1. Overview

Thinking of East Main Street as U.S. Route 1 helps to put the corridor in perspective. Its physical location follows old 18th century mail routes and toll roads. It is still referred to in some communities as “the King’s Highway” or “the Boston Post Road.” Before I-95 was built (c. 1960), Route 1 was the State’s most critical highways.

Stamford’s growth can be traced by looking at the changes that have occurred along East Main Street, which grew from west to east. Little more than 100 years ago there was, by comparison to today, almost no development between Elm Street and the Noroton River. However, the east side – Glenbrook Road, Lafayette Street, Crystal Street, the railroad, Myrtle Avenue, Lockwood Avenue, Courtland Avenue, Seaside Avenue and Hamilton Avenue – are easily identifiable on turn of the century maps. Over the next 50 years development spread eastward from the City’s core, infilling and establishing the now familiar local street network and neighborhood development.

Because of its traditional traffic and commercial functions, East Main Street developed as a spine from which several of the city’s neighborhoods spread to the north and south. It has therefore been thought of as a corridor, somewhat distinct from the neighborhoods just a few feet away. But it is more appropriate to think of it as an integral part of several neighborhoods, forming a link and not just a border between the Belltown/Glenbrook/Springdale and Cove – East Side/Shippan areas.

Because of its location East Main Street serves several functions:



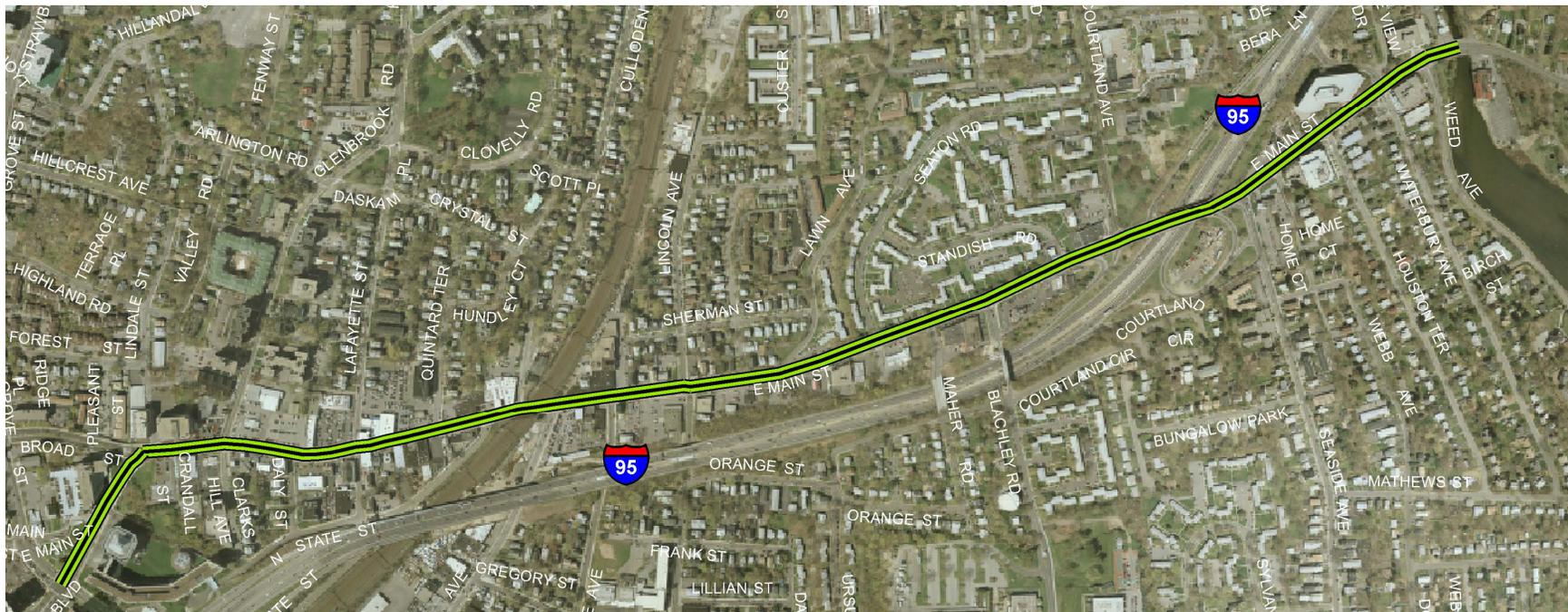
EAST MAIN STREET NEIGHBORHOOD CORRIDOR PLAN

- a gateway to downtown
- a commercial/retail hub for the neighborhood and commuters
- a regionally significant transportation corridor.

Its physical context constricts the area available for accommodating these essential uses and its most dominant feature has gradually become its transportation function, a double-edged sword for the

businesses located along its course and the residents who live in its surrounding neighborhoods.

Today East Main Street is in a period of transition, moving between Stamford's old and new patterns of development while struggling to deal with the traffic impacts imposed by our automobile oriented society. Is it possible to revitalize East Main Street in a way that strikes a balance among its often conflicting functions? The corridor's stakeholders and the City of Stamford think so. Given its strategic and visible location, there is compelling reason to proactively guide future development patterns rather than allow external forces to continue to define them.



A revitalization strategy should holistically set the groundwork for standards that would achieve compatible development while creating a human-scaled sense of place that largely defines a community. This requires an understanding of integrated function and a set of implementation actions that address private development as well as public investments. This study is intended to accomplish both.

This Plan presents the results of a series of interdisciplinary analyses of existing physical, traffic, land use and zoning, demographic, market and real estate conditions along the 1.5 mile stretch between the intersection of Elm Street and Tressor Boulevard and the Noroton River/Darien town line. Following the summaries of existing conditions, an overall vision of the corridor is presented accompanied by specific actions to achieve it. Two technical memoranda preceded this document: Economic & Market Assessment and Existing Traffic Conditions. Both are available under separate cover from the City.

Neighborhood Stakeholders

Many of the property owners in the corridor are long-standing, even multi-generational owners. They have a commitment to the neighborhood that goes beyond individual business interests. This is best exemplified in the East Side Partnership, a group of property owners, merchants and residents which was formed in 2002 as a neighborhood revitalization task force. With assistance from the Stamford Partnership, a parent organization with technical staff and know-how, the East Side Partnership has been active in addressing all aspects of life in the neighborhood from beautification projects to providing pedestrian lights at the railroad bridge and lobbying tirelessly to have the bridge painted, to working with the City on zoning, public improvements, maintenance and blight removal efforts, to attracting neighborhood retail businesses and services. They are working to coalesce a diverse neighborhood around shared

goals for improving the quality of life throughout the neighborhood. The Partnership has also taken a leadership role in addressing quality of life issues in the corridor.

The East Side Partnership's Beautification Committee has introduced greenspace into public spaces in the corridor and has lobbied for public space improvements such as painting traffic boxes and the railroad bridge, and for removal of the billboards at the railroad overpass. The Partnership has been awarded a small Community Development Block Grant allocation which will be used for neighborhood revitalization and business improvements. The Partnership also encourages business property owners and merchants to maintain and upgrade commercial properties through participation in the Clean Sweep Awards and joint planning for beautification projects.

The City has acknowledged that the role of the Partnership is critical to revitalization. Partnership representatives and City staff were present for the first site reconnaissance conducted by the consulting team. Participants provided insight and perspective on a broad range of issues and concerns. At the onset of the study, the Partnership also provided a well-organized summary of its concerns (See Appendix A). As the study progressed, presentations and informal contact with the Partnership provided on-going status reports. Copies of major technical submissions were also provided in advance of drafting a final report.

A series of one-on-one interviews was also conducted in the course of the study in an effort to learn more about the business climate and to gain a better sense of a few of the anticipated redevelopment initiatives. A summary of the interviews can be found in Appendix B.

2. Previous Studies

Several previous planning studies specifically address East Main Street. It was the City's intent to use these documents as a springboard for implementation.

Stamford's Master Plan 2002

As the document that will direct how the City will continue to develop, the Master Plan rests on four premises for shaping the future:

- Preserving Stamford's social and economic diversity
- Designing a "city beautiful"
- Enhancing neighborhood quality of life, and
- Promoting the vitality of Stamford's downtown.

An extensive planning process to gain community input formed the basis for preparing a City-wide Policies Report, which is accompanied by a land use map depicting future land use recommendations. Figure 1 shows recommendations for the East Main Street area. The report presents the recommendations generated over a two year period in connection with a series of research reports on Traffic and Transit, Urban Design, Economic Development and a Summary Report.

Policies

The Master Plan describes Stamford as "a collection of communities of varying character" with roots in villages connected to the center via radial roadways. East Main Street is one of these roadways. In the overall planning framework the East Main Street area eastward to approximately Lockwood Avenue is classified as one of the "Collar" areas around the Downtown Core. Development within the Collar is planned to be mixed use residential at an intensity that is less than that of the Downtown Core and thereby to provide stabilization for adjoining residential areas.

Many of the city-wide goals, objectives and strategies apply to the East Main Street area but three key issues that relate to compatible development sum up the direction for planning in the neighborhood:

- *Limit and manage the intensification of neighborhoods in terms of the amount, scale and character of new development, as well as traffic impacts.*
- *Intensification of the neighborhood should reinforce neighborhood commercial areas as lively, mixed-use centers or reclaim underutilized land to expand and reinforce existing neighborhoods.*
- *Design controls are needed to 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.*

The Master Plan recommends implementation of these objectives through preparation of a “Main Street” plan and zoning for the downtown Collar area that address issues such as infill and contextual development, eclectic signage, upstairs living, managing and increasing the supply of parking, enhancing the pedestrian experience and creating new blocks and development parcels. Creation of a new Mixed Use Overlay District (or MOD) that would provide the opportunity for higher densities and a wider range of uses tied to predetermined public enhancements and objectives (e.g. affordable housing, land for public facilities, greenspace, etc.) is envisioned for this area.

Urban Design

East Main Street serves a transitional function between the Downtown and the East Side neighborhoods, with the character of development changing east of the railroad overpass. Strategies, land use and design recommendations differ along the course of the corridor although a consistent 4-lane pavement width throughout the corridor is specified.

The Downtown Collar area (extending approximately to Lockwood Avenue) provides opportunities for redevelopment to introduce higher intensity (though not at the same levels as the Downtown Core or Downtown Corridor areas) mixed uses and commercial development. In addition to establishing a continuum of land uses redevelopment in this area could serve to create open space linkages, gateways, landscaped parking lots, pedestrian improvements and other “placemaking” elements.

Design considerations in the corridor east of the railroad include orienting new development toward the street with parking to the side or rear, consistent planting strips with street trees, defined curb cuts and landscaped parking lots and discreet service areas.

Growth Management

The Growth Management Report prepared in conjunction with the City’s Master Plan focused on the character of growth – where it goes, what it looks like and how equitable it is – rather than how much Stamford should grow. Policy recommendations were made for three potential futures:

- Trend Growth: a somewhat slower pace of growth than in the previous decade, yet maintaining the current share of regional growth.
- Low Growth: very slow rise in population and employment reflecting national and regional slow-downs as well as the result of policy constraints imposed by zoning and infrastructure.
- High-Growth: Stamford establishes an identity as a distinct financial center as the result of robust growth in global financial service; this scenario will require successful policies for managing housing and transportation constraints.

Examining growth in terms of these three scenarios results in a planning framework that has considered alternatives and is therefore better able to accommodate the swings in growth that may occur over an extended planning period.

Strategic land-use decisions based on Smart Growth policies that direct development to existing centers, to transit-accessible locations and to places where new development supports urban design goals are the cornerstones of future growth management. While a Low Growth scenario offers minimal change in the neighborhood and

local traffic, it also means that desirable redevelopment would not be occurring and highway traffic impacts would increase as workers commute to jobs outside of Stamford. In the event of Trend or High Growth scenarios, two specific land use recommendations are made. First it is recommended that a combined 80% of new housing be directed to the “Greater Downtown” (i.e. the combined Core, Corridor and Collar area, which includes the westerly section of East Main Street) and the South End. At the neighborhood level this should be done as targeted neighborhood revitalization. Secondly, it is recommended that 60% of new office development be directed to the Core and Corridor areas, with only 10% (as intermediate scale development) is recommended for the Collar (including East Main Street) and the South End in the train station area. These recommendations are consistent with the mixed-use policy articulated for the East Main Street corridor.

Traffic and Transit

The reciprocal issues of population growth and transportation have been identified as the biggest constraints on Stamford’s prosperity. Stamford needs workers to sustain its economic growth but where those workers live and how they travel to work impact how everyone travels around the City and on the highway network. To lessen traffic impacts, policy-makers have adopted a combination of strategies that include transportation demand management (TDM), significant transit improvements, and the introduction of substantial new housing in areas close to downtown. These policies have obvious implications for the East Main Street corridor.

The land use implications, particularly as they relate to Greater Downtown area locations for new housing, are discussed in the preceding section. They are the linchpin of the mitigation strategy. This policy is critical to the traffic mitigation strategy because it serves to control the amount of traffic on City streets and the

highway network. The TDM policies would be implemented by actively working with employers and organizations such as Metropool to create commuter choice programs, as well as through City-recommended zoning modifications to incorporate provisions such as lower parking ratios, differentiated parking ratios and floor area ratios that favor areas near transit, as well as transfer of development rights. The City also needs to partner with public transit providers to promote transit and to advocate for transit improvements.

Considerations relevant to the physical environment of the East Side include completion of the Urban Transitway through to East Main Street, placing priority on the provision of a consistent four-lane Route 1 traversing the City, re-design of the railroad trestle to eliminate physical and psychological barriers, investigation of an additional Metro North station or other new transit node in the vicinity of the overpass, establishing a comprehensive bike-way and trail network, and incorporating pedestrian improvements in new projects. The Neighborhood Plans Report document cites the need to balance the vehicular accommodation aspect of roadway improvements by incorporating safer crossings, street trees and other design elements that reflect equal priority on pedestrians. In areas designated for “Main Street” design treatment, it is recommended that pedestrian enhancements be designed to reduce curb cuts and similar conditions that contribute to congestion, pedestrian/vehicular conflicts and accidents.

Regional Plan of Conservation and Development 2005

The basic goals of the 2005 Plan for the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA) parallel those of Stamford: integrated

land use solutions, sustainability within these patterns, adequate infrastructure and an economically competitive position with neighboring regions. Policies to implement these goals include:

- *Plan for an aging and increasingly diverse population*
- *Start from the ground up with neighborhood revitalization*
- *Use resources effectively to assure sustainable economic development*
- *Invest in mass transportation and livable cities*
- *Intensify development where infrastructure exists or is planned*
- *Save open space and make it accessible for use*
- *Acknowledge that long-range transportation planning is the “driver of sustainability” and therefore vital to balanced growth*
- *Provide for a “sense of place” by respecting those characteristics that give individual communities identity and encouraging good urban design.*

The Plan advocates thinking regionally about problems that cross political boundaries (e.g. open space, infrastructure, congestion mitigation, water supply, power supply, and sewage treatment/avoidance) to avoid sprawl, balance conservation and development, support regional assets and control the future.

Regional Transportation Planning

The City of Stamford is an active participant in SWRPA’s extensive transportation planning activities, conducted under the auspices of the South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (SWRMPO) which coordinates the planning and programming for transportation improvements in this increasingly congested part of the State.

The region conducts many transportation studies on issues of interest to area commuters and businesses, as well as completing mandated plans linked to funding sources. These include a Long-Range Transportation Plan that is reviewed and updated every three years and a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that is a three year financial program for implementation of federally-funded projects.

East Main Street is included in the Long Range Transportation Plan (2004-2030) as part of the Route 1 corridor; because this is a state route, improvements are coordinated with the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT).

Specific recommendations include development of a corridor improvement plan for East Main Street, widening and increasing of the vertical clearance at the railroad and Myrtle Avenue, completion of Phase I of the Urban Transitway (fully funded) and implement Phase II of the Urban Transitway, Elm Street/Myrtle Avenue to Route 1 (fully funded). Another project that is included in the TIP and is in design is a CTDOT project involving major intersection improvements at Courtland Avenue (CT 106) and Route 1 to address safety and capacity concerns.

3. Existing Physical Context

The physical character of the East Main Street corridor moves quickly from the office and residential high rises of the Central Business District at its western edge into auto-related goods and services and neighborhood businesses for most of its length before returning quickly to high rise office development at its eastern edge (Figure 2). The area that is sandwiched between the scale of buildings that have come to represent “the new Stamford” are older low rise (one to three stories) commercial buildings most often in closely aligned individual structures creating a wall along the street space at the back of the sidewalk. A few renovated buildings and well maintained automobile dealerships present an improved, sometimes juxtaposed to tired facades and incompatible land uses.

Several buildings disrupt the street wall continuity by being set back from the street or configured as strip commercial centers, with front yard space often being used for parking. Routinely, this parking use occurs in an unorganized manner. Though the area is essentially built out and restricted to a linear configuration by I-95 and established residential neighborhoods, it remains a viable economic area, a desirable place to live and is home to small businesses as well as regional commercial enterprises such as car dealerships.

Although mostly commercial enterprises are visible from the roadway, there is a well established residential neighborhood immediately to the north.

Luxury condominiums and higher-end rentals are found along Glenbrook Road, Courtland Avenue and Hamilton Avenue. Single family homes are abundant between Pleasant and Culloden Streets and along Lincoln and Lawn Avenues.

East of Lawn Avenue, the major residential presence in the corridor is Fairlawn, a large low-rise condominium complex that runs for several blocks along the north side of East Main Street between Lawn Avenue and Courtland Avenue.

Land use south of I-95 is also predominantly residential. There are detached dwellings on small lots and several large multifamily complexes, including two Stamford Housing Authority complexes on Ursula Place. Non-residential uses predominate along Myrtle Avenue. The 45 acre Clairol complex is located on Blachley Road and a 660 student Magnet School (Pre-k to grade 6) is proposed on a 13 acre portion. Rogers Elementary School is located approximately 1000 feet south of East Main on Lockwood Avenue.

The Stamford Housing Authority owns a total of 494 units of housing on the East Side (374 moderate income, 60 low income and 60 elderly) and manages an additional 44 units of elderly housing in the area. The two moderate income facilities are configured in large complexes, both of which were constructed prior to 1970.

By designated category this inventory represents some 37% of the Authority’s total moderate rental, 26% of its total low-income, 21% of its total elderly and 25% of its total managed facilities. The Authority is in a maintenance mode and does not have any construction plans at present.

As shown in Figure 3 zoning is varied throughout the corridor with 5 commercial, 5 residential and 1 industrial districts occurring along its length. The C-N Neighborhood Business District is the most common commercial designation while the R-5 Multiple Family, Medium Density Design District between Lawn Avenue and Standish Road is the largest residentially zoned area. Areas of M-1

Light Industrial District zoning about the corridor at the railroad overpass.

Zoning related complaints received by the City's Zoning Enforcement Office have involved issues such as excessive signage, storage of overflow vehicles from auto-related uses on public streets, and verification of use and bulk requirements. Because of the age and mixed use nature of the corridor, several buildings are considered to be legal non-conforming uses and thereby grandfathered from applicability of current zoning requirements.

The East Main Street Partnership monitors quality of life issues such as illegal dumping, maintenance of public spaces, abandoned vehicles and health and safety issues associated with food service facilities in the corridor. Requests for services and investigations are filed with the Citizens Service Center in the Office of Operations. Of the 48 requests filed in the last year and one-half, 53% were for debris removal related to illegal dumping.

Utilities

The East Main Street corridor and its surrounding neighborhoods have full utility service. The sanitary and storm sewer systems are public utility systems maintained by the City of Stamford. Water service is provided by the Aquarion Water Company, gas service by Yankee Gas, electric service by the Connecticut Light and Power Company (CL&P), telephone and fiber optic networks by SBC Communications Inc. and cable TV, high-speed internet and voice service by Cablevision Systems.

None of the private utility companies has service or capacity issues in the area, and none have pre-determined plans for expansion or improvements. Each responds to project-specific requests for

service, designing specific improvements to incorporate new development into each utility's network. SBC facilities are located underground. CL&P facilities are primarily underground; Cablevision facilities are both under and above ground.

The Engineering Department reports some issues with drainage, particularly in the low areas around the railroad bridge and areas with steep inclines. Evidence of damage as the result of the combined effects of surface sheet flow, freeze-thaw conditions and topography are evident in the sidewalks between Lawn Avenue and Standish Road. The City has an on-going storm drainage improvements line item in its Capital Budget program through which repairs and improvements could be scheduled.

Day Laborers

A growing number of communities find themselves struggling with the question of day laborers. The seemingly simple fact of men seeking work and employers needing a flexible labor source actually involves complicated legal, social and quality of life issues that impact a cross-section of the community – not just workers and employers but also residents, businesspeople, civic leaders and social service providers.

This issue is manifesting itself in the East Main Street corridor. The neighborhood is working with the day laborers and the City to find a solution that balances needs and impacts. A location equipped with portable toilets has been designated on South State Street to provide an easy and safe "pick-up" zone for laborers and drivers outside the busy East Main Street corridor. In order to open dialogue with the day laborers and to give them a voice in the process, the East Side Partnership recently hired an outreach worker whose duties will include coordinating activities and information among workers,

residents and merchants, including serving as a community services resource for workers. The Partnership is also advocating on behalf of adoption of an ordinance that would impose fines on employers who pick up day laborers outside of the designated pick-up area.

Public Safety

Because the area lacks a cohesive image and there are a number of properties that convey disinvestment, the perception of crime within the neighborhood continues to fuel a negative image. Available crime records were obtained from the City of Stamford to determine the incidence of crime.

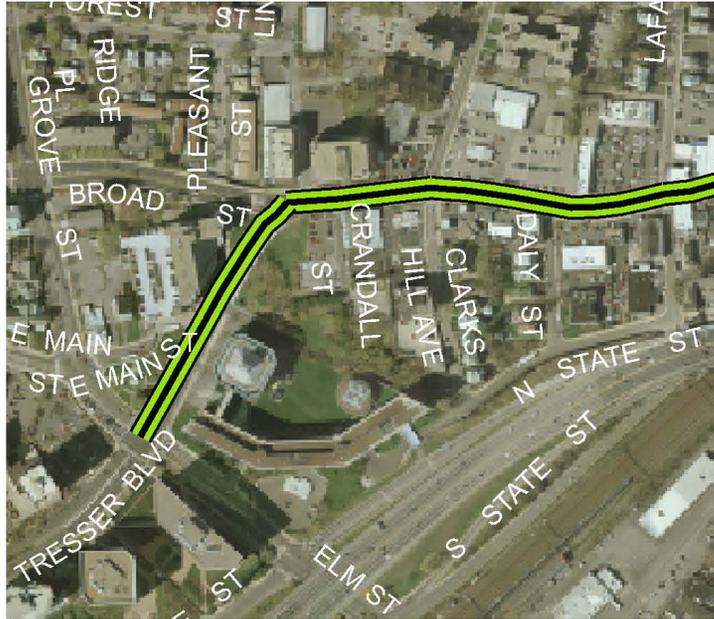
Between January 2004 and May 2005 a total of 137 crimes were reported along the East Main Street corridor. The crimes most frequently reported were primarily non-violent, quality of life crimes: theft, simple assault, burglary and narcotics offenses.

Residential properties were the most frequent locations (that is 10 or more incidents) of crime during this period. Other “hot spots” along the corridor tend to be locations where, due to proximity to residential areas or land use, people congregate. These locations, in descending order, are the public areas at and around Lockwood/Lincoln Avenues and the Holiday Inn/St. John’s Park area, and the Stamford Motor Inn, Dunkin’ Donuts and McDonalds.

The data suggests that while crime does occur along the corridor, it is non-violent in nature and largely confined to areas where defensible physical improvements could make a positive impact.

Specific Conditions

A more detailed assessment of the physical context of the corridor is summarized below. For discussion purposes, the corridor is broken into five sections with details on Land Use/Zoning, Traffic/Pedestrian Environment and Physical Context summarized for each. Photographs of many of the more prevalent physical characteristics appear after this summary.

Area A - Elm Street to Glenbrook Road/Clarks Hill Avenue**Land Use and Zoning**

- CBD edge with apartment and corporate office development at western gateway transitioning into commercial corridor uses
- Zoning on the south side of the street is C-G General Commercial District
- Zoning on the north side of the street is C-G General Commercial District to Broad Street and C-L Limited Business District to Glenbrook
- High rise development predominates

Traffic/Pedestrian Environment

- Concrete sidewalks in fair to poor condition
- Four travel lane road with narrow median from Elm Street to Glenbrook Road
- No shoulders
- Limited curb cuts due to large lots and high density of adjacent land uses
- Painted crosswalks with pedestrian-activated crossing signals at Elm Street, Broad Street and Glenbrook Road, all signalized intersections
- “Y” intersection and steep road gradient at Broad Street encourages speeding

Physical Context

- Park and private greenspaces at downtown gateway
- High and mid-rise buildings
- Minimal business signage
- Underground utilities except for signalized intersection
- Streetscape right-of-way is paved with no landscaping
- No decorative streetscape elements

Area B - Glenbrook Road to Crystal Street (Railroad Overpass)**Land Use and Zoning**

- Predominantly low-rise commercial structures
- Land uses range from beauty salons and restaurants to car dealerships and auto repair shops
- Six different zones in a 1/4 mile segment includes residential, several commercial districts and light industrial designation
- Day laborer pick up at State St./I-95 underpass

Traffic/Pedestrian Environment

- Concrete sidewalks in fair to poor condition

- Two wide travel lanes narrow down at the railroad overpass; constricts roadway capacity and impedes truck traffic
- On street parking with meters between Quintard and Crystal (no parking during rush hours)
- Multiple curb cuts associated with smaller lots and low density land uses
- Painted crosswalks with pedestrian-activated crossing signals at Lafayette and South State, both signalized intersections
- Front yard parking, multiple and wide curb cuts
- Two westbound bus stops with shelters

Physical Context

- Compact, walkable area
- Underground utilities except for signalized intersections
- Inconsistent building street wall
- Predominantly façade mounted business signage, isolated freestanding signs
- Gritty appearance of railroad bridge and intimidating underpass
- Overbearing billboards at the railroad bridge
- Non-cohesive streetscape elements
- Non-cohesive façade treatment
- Non-standardized front yard parking
- Mix of building styles and materials, predominantly low-rise
- Streetscape right-of-way is paved with no landscaping
- Community-sponsored greenspace at base of railroad bridge

Area C - Myrtle Avenue to Lawn Avenue



Land Use and Zoning

- Dense low-rise commercial development with the majority of the building street wall intact
- Detached residential on north side
- Commercial uses include national retailers such as Toyota and Blockbuster as well as local auto-related and service uses
- Zoning on the north side is R-6 One Family, Two Family Residence District, with M-L Light Industrial District, and a small area of C-B Community Business District zoning at Lawn Avenue. South side is C-N

Neighborhood Business District (to Lockwood Ave.) and C-B Community Business District

Traffic/Pedestrian Environment

- Four travel lanes with left turn lanes at Lockwood Avenue,
- Concrete, bituminous sidewalks in fair to poor condition; no sidewalk in some areas
- Wide, uncontrolled curb cuts at several businesses
- Painted crosswalks at Myrtle and Lockwood Avenue with pedestrian-activated crossing signal and signalized intersections
- Two westbound, one eastbound bus stops (no shelter at westbound stop at Grant Avenue)

Physical Context

- Gritty appearance of railroad bridge and intimidating underpass
- Overbearing billboards at the railroad bridge
- Somewhat consistent building street wall
- Underground utilities except for signalized intersections
- Varied architectural styles and materials
- Predominantly façade mounted business signage
- Streetscape right-of-way is predominately paved with minimal landscaping

Area D - Lawn Avenue to Courtland Avenue/I-95 Overpass



Land Use and Zoning

- North side predominantly attached townhouse scale residential uses with freestanding and strip commercial uses located between Standish Road and Courtland Avenue; south side mix of low-rise commercial, office and service uses.
- Zoning reflects current land use patterns: north side is R-5 Multiple Family, Medium Density Design District; C-N Neighborhood Business District and Park District; the south side is zoned C-B Community Business District and C-N Neighborhood Business District

Traffic/Pedestrian Environment

- Concrete, bituminous and some areas without sidewalks
- Four travel lanes with left turn lanes except at Lawn Avenue
- Residential parking is off-street behind the buildings
- Steep road gradient encourages speeding
- Painted crosswalk with pedestrian-activated signals at Blachley Road only; no pedestrian crossing at Lawn Avenue
- Excessive vehicle and truck traffic queuing at Courtland Avenue (Route 106)
- One westbound, one eastbound bus stop, both with shelters
- No crosswalks or pedestrian-activated crossing signal at I-95 ramps

Physical Context

- Consistent lawn strip between sidewalk and road on north side adjacent to residential complex
- Apartments are well-maintained and mature landscaping provides buffer
- Commercial properties on south side are buffered from I-95 by mature vegetation
- Unattractive commercial developments
- Overhead utilities
- Varied architectural styles and materials

Area E - I-95 Overpass/Seaside Avenue to the Darien Town Line



Land Use and Zoning

- High rise office building cluster west and east of Waterbury Avenue
- Motor lodge at I-95
- Low-rise commercial including converted residential structures, free-standing retail and restaurant uses
- Zoning at the I-95 interchange area is predominantly commercial surrounded by residential districts

Traffic/Pedestrian Environment

- Four lane travelway with left turn lanes
- Due to large lots and high density of uses, curb cuts are infrequent; those present are excessively wide and encourage uncontrolled front yard parking.
- Uncontrolled curb cuts and non-standardized front yard parking
- Concrete sidewalks
- One eastbound bus stop, no shelter
- Painted crosswalks with full pedestrian activated crossing signals at Hamilton and Weed Avenues, partial pedestrian activation at Seaside Avenue (on East Main Street only)

Physical Context

- Park and private green spaces at City gateway
- Art and pedestrian spaces at office land uses
- High rise buildings
- Streetscape right-of-way is paved with no landscaping
- Unattractive commercial facades and signage
- Overhead utilities
- Utility/light poles infringe on sidewalk area
- Attractive views of the Noroton River/Holly Pond

4. Transportation

East Main Street carries the designation of Route 1 throughout the 1.5 mile study area. It is directly linked to Interstate 95 at Interchange 9 and serves both local and regional transportation needs. The road is also a designated Incident Management route to accommodate traffic during emergencies and other incidents on I-95. Due to congestion on I-95, it appears that East Main Street also provides a “release valve” to commuters familiar with the local road network. When completed, Phase II of The Urban Transitway System is also expected to alleviate congestion.

Local streets and Route 106 (Courtland Avenue) funnel traffic from the east side of Stamford to I-95 as well as in to and out of the neighborhoods that immediately surround the corridor: the Belltown/Glenbrook/Springdale neighborhood to the north, and the Cove-East Side/Shippam neighborhood to the south. Both of these neighborhoods are densely developed and nearly built out. In the year 2000 the combined population of these two neighborhoods represented 35% of the City’s total population.

Though the corridor is located within the City’s boundaries, the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDot) has jurisdiction over it, ultimately deciding on how it functions and when it is maintained. This jurisdiction has significant implications in that ConnDot’s funding stream is invariably from federal sources and attached to these funds are a set of roadway standards that more often than not conflict with the local setting. In recent years, ConnDot has made a concerted effort to overcome this hurdle by committing to “context sensitive” design. Yet, maintaining standards for public safety often proves to be difficult under this approach. ConnDot’s jurisdiction goes beyond the roadway—it reviews any and all improvements within its right-of-way including

lighting, decorative pavement and other amenities. The width of this area can vary depending on the road’s function. Unlike most public rights-of way which grant a municipality the right to improve within the designated area even though the property itself may be held by a private owner, ConnDot actually owns its rights-of-way so the boundaries coincide with the adjacent property line.

East Main Street has a right-of-way that varies from 70 feet at either end of the corridor to 60 feet for most of its length. In the area between Glenbrook Road/Clarks Hill Avenue and Lincoln Avenue/Lockwood Avenue there are locations where the right-of-way is at the edge of the sidewalk or even along the fronts of buildings. Pavement width within this right-of-way is approximately 36 to 50 feet between Glenbrook Road and Lincoln Avenue and 50 to 60 feet east of Lincoln Avenue.

As shown in Figure 4, roadway characteristics vary. The section of East Main Street between Elm and Broad streets is a median divided multi lane roadway which was reconstructed several years ago as part of an urban renewal project. West of Maple Avenue four lanes with exclusive turn lanes are provided. Between these two sections, the road is striped as two lanes (due to not meeting ConnDot criteria) but it actually functions as four lanes during peak hours. On street parking in the westbound direction is prohibited from 7:00 to 9:30 AM and in the eastbound direction from 4:00 to 7:30 PM. Metered two hour parking was allowed by ConnDot only recently after local businesses with support from the City lobbied for the need to serve their patrons. At present, this two-lane transition is an effective mechanism for dealing with the constriction associated with the Metro North/Amtrak rail overpass.

Curb cuts are found extensively throughout the corridor, not a surprising condition given the adjacent land uses. The proximity of these in relation to the roadway alignment (affecting a driver’s sight

lines) and the width relative to the available frontage is exacerbating already poor traffic circulation

East Main Street's profile, as shown in Figure 5, indicates a generally straight horizontal alignment. There are a few variations, notably the bend at the western gateway. There is also a bend at Lawn Avenue accentuated by the steep down hill grade. This vertical alignment is the steepest moving eastward at Blachley. In the westerly section, the steepest grade is at the intersection of Glenbrook/Clarks Hill Avenue. Between Lafayette and Lockwood, the grade is consistently flat.

Traffic

Based on historical data from the last several decades, traffic volumes have steadily climbed in the East Main Street corridor. Hourly and directional traffic volumes recorded as part of this study confirm this trend. Peak traffic occurs from 7 AM through 10:00 AM and then from 12:00 noon to 6:00 PM. Traffic congestion is evident throughout the afternoon—traffic is often at a standstill. The highest volumes are east of Courtland, where the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) is 37,096 vehicles. Between Lafayette and Lockwood, the ADT is approximately 16,400 vehicles but the volumes recorded are believed to be much higher because severe congestion skews the counts.

As a comparison, historic traffic volumes west of Glenbrook ranged from 14,200 vehicles (ADT) in 1968 to 31,100 in 2002. At the southbound I-95 ramp, the 1974 ADT was 4,900 vehicles whereas in 2002 there were 10,400 vehicles.

Based on ConnDot accident data from January 1, 2001 to December 31, 2003 the highest number of accidents was at the intersection of

Glenbrook Road with 61 reported. The incidence drops to 38 and 31 at Courtland Avenue and Myrtle Avenue respectively.

A standard approach has been established to determine the ability of intersections to accommodate traffic volumes. This is known as a capacity analysis and is expressed as Level of Service (LOS). Levels of Service from A to F have been established as measures of vehicle delay, with A representing the best operational conditions and F representing the worst. LOS for signalized intersections is defined in terms of average stopped delay per vehicle. LOS for unsignalized intersections is defined in terms of average total delay.

A capacity analysis of key intersections conducted as part of this study are summarized below:

- *East Main Street at Glenbrook Road/Clarks Hill Avenue*

Results of the analysis of this signalized intersection indicate it is currently operating at an overall Level of Service "D" and "C" during both the weekday morning and weekday afternoon peak hours, respectively. The westbound lane group is operating at Level of Service "D" during both peak hours.

Although the results of this analysis indicate this intersection is operating at an overall acceptable Level of Service during both the weekday morning and weekday afternoon peak hours; however, field observations indicate motorists experience short-term delays during peak periods due to site friction on East Main Street and the high volume of turning movements and pedestrian activity.

- East Main Street at Crystal Street

Results of this analysis, which is an unsignalized intersection, indicate the southbound right-turn movement, which this intersection approach is limited to, operates at Level of Service "B" during both the weekday morning and weekday afternoon peak hours. The eastbound left turn movement from East Main Street to Crystal Street operates at Level of Service "A". It is important to note the results of this analysis are impacted by the nearby traffic signals on East Main Street, which create vehicle gaps and assist motorists in completing turning movements.

- East Main Street at Myrtle Avenue

Results of the analysis of this signalized intersection indicate it is operating at an overall Level of Service "A" during the weekday morning peak hour and overall Level of Service "B" during the weekday afternoon peak hour. The analysis shows that the left turn movement on the northbound approach on Myrtle Avenue is operating at Level of Service "C" during both the weekday morning and weekday afternoon peak hours. Although this intersection indicates acceptable Levels of Service during both the weekday morning and weekday afternoon peak hours, field observations indicate motorists are experiencing traffic delays during peak periods, with typically the peak volume traveling westbound in the morning and eastbound in the afternoon. Due to traffic congestion in the East Main Street corridor and nearby signalized intersections, this analysis may not present actual conditions since traffic flow on East Main Street is congested and; therefore, the actual traffic demand is not being processed through the intersection. When the peak hour volume is spread over a longer period of

time, it actually improves the overall results of the capacity analysis.

- East Main Street at Courtland Avenue/I-95 Southbound On-Ramp

Results of the analysis of this signalized intersection, which also controls the overall operation of the adjacent signalized intersection at the Interstate 95 southbound off-ramp, indicates this intersection is operating at an overall Level of Service "F" during both the weekday morning and weekday afternoon peak hours. Results of this analysis, which are verified by field observations, indicate a high volume of traffic and a high level of traffic congestion and delays during peak periods.

- East Main Street at Interstate 95 Southbound Off-Ramp

Results of the analysis of this signalized intersection, which operates on the same controller as the Courtland Avenue intersection, operates at an overall Level of Service "D" during the weekday morning peak hour and "F" during the weekday afternoon peak hour. In both cases, results of the analysis indicate Levels of Service "F" on specific lane groups during both peak hours. This intersection operates with a high level of congestion and delays.

- East Main Street at Blachley Road

Results of this analysis show this intersection presently operates at an overall Level of Service "A" during both peak hours. A traffic impact study of the proposed magnet school utilizing part of the Clairol Campus anticipates a Level of Service "C", which is an acceptable level of operation.

- East Main Street at Waterbury Avenue/Hamilton Avenue

This intersection operates at an overall Level of Service “C” and “D” during peak hours.

- East Main Street at Weed Avenue – This intersection operates at an overall Level of Service “C” during both peak hours.

Based solely on the existing conditions analyzed, a number of improvements are indicated at several signalized intersections as depicted in Figure 6.

There are three major improvement projects affecting East Main Street at the present time. Phase II of the Stamford Urban Transitway is underway. These improvements include widening Myrtle and extending the 65 foot cross section onto East Main Street from Myrtle to Lockwood. Signals would be upgraded at both of these intersections. Within the cross section, 5 foot bike lanes in both directions are proposed. At Courtland Street and the I-95 southbound ramps, the intersection will be improved to provide right turn lanes in the southbound, eastbound and westbound directions. A minor intersection re-alignment with the I-95 south bound ramps is also planned and pavement markings will be modified to add a westbound left turn lane. Signalization also will be improved. At Weed Avenue, pavement marking modifications will add a west bound left turn lane and the signal equipment will be upgraded.

Pedestrian Activity

Sidewalks of widths varying between 6 and 8 feet are provided along both sides of East Main Street. Crosswalks are located at all

intersections and pedestrian activated signal controls are available at all signalized intersections. Painted but unsignalized crosswalks are located on the side streets. The condition of the sidewalks, curbs and painted crosswalks varies, with some areas in need of extensive repair.

Anecdotal observations as well as manual counts indicate that the greatest concentration of pedestrians occurs between Lafayette Street and Myrtle Avenue. This is the flattest section of the corridor and has the largest critical mass of neighborhood retail. Pedestrians were noted crossing side streets throughout this section as well as attempting to cross the width of East Main Street. The presence of multi-family complexes to the north and south of East Main and the proximity of Rogers Elementary School on Lockwood Avenue significantly contribute to pedestrian traffic throughout the corridor.

Therefore, pedestrian activated signal controls and highly visible crosswalks are critical to the overall safety of pedestrians. In areas where controls are not available, such as at the on- and off- ramps of I-95, the climate for pedestrians is dangerously hostile. Similarly, safe pedestrian movement is difficult to achieve in areas such as the westbound direction of East Main from the I-95 ramps due to the steep grade. The lack of an enclosed visual canopy lulls drivers into a sense of openness which translates into increased speeds.

Commuting Patterns

Journey to Work data from the 2000 Census indicate that “commuting” in Stamford covers a range of geographic locations in the surrounding region, the tri-state area and throughout the United States. The nature of some of Stamford’s major corporations also involves international travel. While many commuters, both Stamford residents and those traveling and commuting into the City,

may use more than one mode of travel in the course of their journey, the automobile is no less entrenched in Stamford than it is elsewhere. Overall, 80% of residents drove to work in 2000 while 11% used public transportation (53% of these used the railroad). Statistics for the 16,275 workers aged 16 years and over living in the census tracts abutting the corridor were comparable to city-wide statistics, though a lower percentage (43%) used public transportation. An additional 4% of corridor area residents used bikes or walked to work, also comparable to the city as a whole.

An on-going study being completed for the Connecticut Department of Transportation indicates that there is a strong commuter flow that enters the City daily from the east, originating in the Greater Bridgeport area. Based on data from the 2000 Census, this influx amounted to 11,200 commuters daily. Of these 90% used a personal vehicle and 88% of these were single occupant vehicles.

Transit

Stamford already has a strong rail commuter constituency and quality rail facilities. Train service is available in Stamford via the Metro-North mainline and the 8 mile long New Canaan branch line. Mainline departures/arrivals occur at the Stamford Railroad Station/Transportation Center (located immediately south of the railroad and I-95 between Atlantic and Canal Streets), providing access to a variety of local travel modes such as buses, taxis, shuttle vehicles, bicycles and pedestrian connections. A second phase of the Urban Transitway project will link East Main Street with the Transportation Center via Myrtle Avenue.

The New Canaan branch line, which leaves the main line just north of the study area, has two stations in Stamford: at Glenbrook (Glenbrook Road and Crescent Street) and Springdale (Hope Street

and Clearview Avenue). The City operates surface parking lots at each of the satellite stations, and CT Transit and taxi service is available at both. Neither branch line station has a staffed ticket office or ticket machines.

Morning rush hour departures from the Stamford Railroad Station/Transportation Center to Grand Central Terminal occur as frequently as 3 minutes and until 8 AM none exceeds 10 minutes. Until 9:15 AM, at least one of these trains per hour is a through train to Grand Central originating on the branch line. Travel time, depending on number of stops, range from 42 minutes to 74 minutes with an additional 5 and 8 minutes respectively if originating in Glenbrook or Springdale. The return schedule from Grand Central for the evening rush hour is similar, with an increased frequency of through trains traveling up the branch line. The last through train for the branch line leaves Grand Central around 8 PM. Weekend service is available at one-half hour frequencies from the main station (additional trains on Saturday only departing Stamford around 8 AM and noon, and Grand Central hourly) and hourly for branch line through trains on both Saturday and Sunday.

CT Transit (CTT) bus service in the corridor includes a through route to Norwalk (CTT Route 41), two routes to areas to the north (CTT Route 34 via Glenbrook Road/Hope Street and CTT Route 42 via Lawn Avenue) and a commuter connection with the railroad station serving the Clairrol complex and the offices east of Blachley Road.

The City of Stamford has received a federal grant to study the feasibility of establishing a transit station in the vicinity of the railroad overpass.

Railroad Overpass

The Northeast Corridor Railroad is carried over East Main Street on an overpass, just west of Myrtle Avenue. The railroad property and track system are owned by the State of Connecticut and utilized by Metro North Commuter Railroad, Amtrak (National Rail Passenger Corporation), Providence and Wooster Railroad, and CSX Corporation. Approximately 125 to 150 trains pass over East Main each day.

The bridge structure is a three-span plate girder system placed predominately under the tracks. The center span plate girders outside stringers extend beyond the tracks longitudinally and slightly above the tracks. The plate girders are riveted and made up of assembled shapes and not rolled sections. The center span and side spans are supported by steel columns and bracing placed at the location of the curbing of the East Main Street roadway beneath. The outside ends of the side spans over the East Main Street sidewalks are supported on masonry (cut stone) abutments at the back edge of the sidewalks. It appears that sheds over the walkways were part of the bridge structure. The bridge supports five tracks which rest directly on the plate girders by means of timber ties.

The dimension between the underside of the steel plate girders and the East Main Street roadway surface is signed as 13' – 1", which is less than the Connecticut standard major roadway clearance requirement. The rail is powered by an overhead catenary system with support power supply lines running above the tracks and across East Main Street.

5. Economic Profile

Demographic Trends

Knowing who is in the neighborhood is just as important as knowing what is in the corridor. Using U.S. Census data along with commercially available data bases, a demographic profile has been assembled to assist with identifying specific trends relative to predicting economic conditions. Census tracts 217, 218.01, 218.02, 219, 220 and 221 cover the neighborhood. Notable statistics include:

- Within the ½ mile radius of the East Main Street area, population growth is twice (16%) the City's growth rate.
- Within the ½ mile radius, 10% of the City's population can be found (12,200).
- Within a 1 mile radius, 74.5% of all households are without children compared to 71% city-wide.
- The median age within the 1 mile radius was 34.8 in 2000 and is expected to be 37.0 in 2010.
- Median income in the East Main area is 30% (\$52,119) below the City's (\$74,443).
- The poverty level in the area rose to 10.8 % up from 6.1% in 1990.
- Within the ½ mile radius, the ethnic/racial mix is: 46% white, 33% Latino, 28% Black and 5.3% Asian.
- The Latino population has doubled in size in the East Main area between 1990 and 2000 and will account for 36% of the population by 2010. Central Americans and Mexicans are a growing segment.
- In the City, 85% of the population growth in the last 10 years has been Latino.
- Over 20% of East Main Street households earn over \$100,000; over 50% earn \$50,000 or more.
- Within the 1 mile radius, 2,200 businesses employ over 25,600 people. There is a significant concentration of finance, insurance and real estate firms—nearly 300 firms and 4,700 employees. Other service businesses, including health and legal services represent 1,000 businesses and 10,500 employees.

Market Trends

More often than not, visions are created and strategies developed without acknowledging the sobering fact that most revitalization occurs through private investment and is thus intricately linked to the realities of the market. Results of a thorough evaluation of market conditions and the climate for growth provide a sound basis for land use decision-making.

Office, retail and housing submarkets were evaluated specifically in the East Main Street corridor and highlights are summarized below. Note that the ½ mile radius is centered at the railroad overpass.

Office

- City-wide, the office market is improving but vacancy stands at 20% and rental rates have remained flat in the last three years.
- Within the corridor, office vacancy is 16% which includes 750 East Main (Diagio).

Retail

- The corridor displays strong locational and market characteristics including good access, high traffic counts, good highway links and access to affluent markets.
- East Main Street contains eight centers and two freestanding buildings totaling 167,000 SF. Rental rates are competitive with few vacancies.
- Within the one-half mile radius, there are a total of 61 businesses generating \$122 million in sales. Motor vehicles and auto parts represent 78% of these expenditures.
- Residents within the half mile radius are estimated to spend \$30 million on automotive related goods and services. Therefore, East Main Street is a powerful draw beyond the immediate area.
- With the intensity of automotive uses in the corridor, some of the larger retailers typically found along a major neighborhood corridor such as East Main are missing. These include a supermarket, pharmacy and bank branches.

Housing

- Housing is expected to remain the strongest sector as it has for the last 5 years.
- Median home values within the ½ mile radius are 50 % of the median price of homes city-wide.
- Median home value is \$249, 272 within the ½ mile radius, representing a 71.7% increase from 2000. By 2010, this value is expected to increase to \$373,578.
- There are 4,710 housing units in the vicinity of East Main Street; only 14% are single family homes. Yet, 40% of the units are owner occupied.
- 2004 Stamford placed in the top five for new housing permits.
- The local condo market is experiencing a major revival with the median price increasing 67% from 2000-2004.
- East Main Street has generated 25% of all condo sales between \$100,000 and \$600,000.
- Few multi-family sales or listings appear in the corridor in contrast to other parts of the state
- Lack of job formation and hot ownership market weakens support for new market rate rental housing

Economic Opportunities

Office

For the foreseeable future, Stamford's current inventory of space of nearly 1.7 million square feet translating to a vacancy rate of 20% should be more than adequate to serve upcoming demand. The City is presently encouraging such growth within the core downtown where Floor Area Ratios (FARs) are more favorable to higher density development and consistent in scale with surrounding area.

While the downtown is the obvious focus and the City's goal for office development, potential interest for corporate or Class A office space could evolve within the corridor east of Courtland Avenue due to good access to I-95 and a well established corporate office presence with the World Wrestling Federation Corporate office and Soundview Plaza Office complex (180,000 square feet). The most desirable site is the location of the current Stamford Motor Inn at the intersection of Seaside Avenue and East Main. In the event this property becomes available, the City would need to strategically address this conversion. In the short term, upgrading the hotel without altering its mass and scale would complement its corporate neighbors.

A secondary location for office development within the corridor may emerge within walking distance of the transit station site if it is brought to fruition. However, very little interest in new office development over the near term for even choice sites is anticipated until market conditions improve dramatically.

For the present, Class "A" office opportunities on East Main Street already exist. The most obvious being the former Diagio space at 750 East Main (100,000 square feet and 300-car garage) and

approximately 50,000 square feet of vacant space associated with Soundview Plaza at the opposite end of the corridor. In the case of the Diagio space, if re-tenanting becomes a problem conversion to housing may turn out to be a more viable option.

There may be a limited market for smaller format space in sizes ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 square feet serving professional and service-based office demand which in many cases can be easily accommodated in mixed retail-commercial projects. Accounting and financial services, real estate firms, legal services, non-profit agencies, and related health services are a few examples of this type of office use that would fit well on East Main Street and fit into "B" type office space currently being marketed in the area.

Retail

Unlike office, the market for retail has been extraordinarily strong within the City and region over the last five years even in the face of recession, jobless recovery, flattened household incomes, to say nothing of frequent retail restructurings.

The net result of all this retail expansion, however, has been the near exhaustion of the easy developable retail sites and markets which has led to greater focus and attention on more challenging opportunities, including in-fill urban markets. Stamford is well positioned to capture this growing interest based on strong demographics and exceptional wealth city-wide and in the region. Moreover, from a regional basis, the area continues to be underserved by destination retail, including the ever popular power box, with options generally limited to Port Chester, NY to the west or Norwalk to the east. This has important implications for East Main Street which offers two separate, but strong retail opportunities: neighborhood convenience-oriented retail as well as destination retail. The latter is dependent on

a more regional market base and includes larger big-box national retailers.

On a neighborhood level, market demand and supply within a ½ mile radius from the center of the corridor (representing the most likely source of demand for neighborhood goods and services) reveals significant leakage of dollars outside the area particularly with regard to food and beverage stores, health and personal care, clothing, sporting goods, general merchandise, and all service levels of restaurants. While these needs are met, for the most part, with retail businesses located in the 1 mile radius, for most urban households, such distances fall outside the realm of convenient or neighborhood based. Even with the larger market area, the data indicates that the East Main Street corridor could support a quality supermarket, hardware store, pharmacy and additional restaurants.

In general, neighborhood retail will draw from a market that falls within a short drive or within manageable walking distance, although in the case of restaurants, drinking places and specialty food services, demand could include drive-by commuters and travelers, nearby office workers and consumers from a broader East Side resident base outside the ½ mile radius. From a land use and market perspective, consolidating these uses within easy walking distance of each other helps establish the critical mass necessary to define a center and allows for cross-retailing between stores and services.

In addition to neighborhood retail, East Main's strong locational and market characteristics that include good visibility, high traffic counts, good highway links, and access to an affluent regional market base indicates opportunities for larger format destination retail. Such retail comes in many shapes and sizes but generally incorporate footprints ranging from 10,000 SF to 60,000 SF. Within high cost urban areas they are more frequently associated with mixed-use developments (retail on bottom–housing above), but more

often than not function as stand alone retail or power center, or linked to traditional strip centers (often but not always anchored by grocery store).

Minimum land requirements for this type of development range from 2 to 5 acres for 20,000 to 60,000 square feet retail center, assuming surface parking. The prevalence of auto dealerships in the area which provide relatively large pre-assembled parcels containing low cost improvements present opportunity for attracting larger retail on East Main Street. To the extent these properties become available for development—something that is already reportedly occurring with the Cadillac dealership except that housing is the dominant land use—significant interest from national and regional retailers is anticipated.

Housing

The market for ownership housing in Stamford, the state and the nation has been nothing short of extraordinary for five years running and as it relates to East Main Street, represents the strongest market opportunity for future development.

Although some analysts have alluded to a possible housing bubble in the works similar to the dot-com bubble that burst in 2000, the general consensus among most housing experts is that with exception of overly heated markets (San Francisco and Las Vegas), the current ownership housing market should experience a soft landing from its current atmospheric level and ultimately be more stable and in better balance with present economic realities.

For the moment and at least for the foreseeable future, the ownership housing market City wide and locally is on firm ground, if not in fact flourishing. This is particularly the case for the condominium

market which remarkably is now selling at a rate equal to single family homes in the city of Stamford.

The implications of a healthy, stable ownership housing market for East Main Street, even in a more moderated state, are several. First, and foremost, the introduction of housing helps extend the level of activity along East Main Street as well as provide a market for goods and services targeted for the area. This in turn helps support the level of diversity and concentration of uses that begins to define a unique character to the corridor which ultimately leads to further pedestrian activity and a lively social environment that can sustain a mix of uses. Secondly, on a very pragmatic basis, the recent run-up in housing prices has vastly improved the economics of developing high density housing which have been squeezed by longer approval process, rising construction costs and escalating land costs. Thirdly, ownership housing has often represented a stabilizing influence in the community with households typically staying longer and highly motivated to creating an appealing, comfortable and secure neighborhood.

While the immediate environment is less than positive for new construction rental housing, over time, Stamford and East Main Street area should see growing improvement of this submarket. White collar jobs and associated support employment are expected to rebound in the next two years, infusing an important source of new renters into the area. Additionally, rising interest rates now being engineered by the Federal Reserve will ultimately drive up long term interest rates making home ownership more expensive and reducing the flight of renters to ownership housing. Finally, demographics are on the side of rental housing as the leading edge of the “boomlet” population now aged 15 to 25 moves into the housing market as it leaves the home and seeks independent housing which normally begins with rental. In terms of East Main Street, the addition of market rate rental housing can only be seen as a positive as it allows

for a diversity of housing and population profiles that makes for vibrant and interesting communities.

6. Development Activity

Physical and locational characteristics coupled with strong market forces are beginning to place the East Main Street corridor in a prime position. At the present time, there are a number of properties ripe for redevelopment and, in fact, some are being actively pursued. Below is a summary of the most apparent sites.

750 East Main Street (One Main Place)



Now 100% vacant after Diagio's exodus, this 11 story building has 100,000 SF above a five story, 300 space garage. It is available for lease as of August 2005. If a replacement office tenant or tenants are not secured, this property may represent a candidate for residential conversion. It is bordered by an office to residential conversion on the west (left structure above) and other residential uses along lower Glenbrook to the east.

Clark's Hill Plaza (Bev-Max Center)



Bev-Max is a nine store center, one of East Main Streets largest. The owners would like to add a small warehouse to the rear of the store.

Suburban Cadillac (Glenbrook Road and East Main)



EAST MAIN STREET NEIGHBORHOOD CORRIDOR PLAN

Redevelopment of this prime 2.4 acre corner lot is underway. The proposed Glenview House will include 144 residential condominiums above 15,000 SF of retail. The developer intends to utilize decorative lighting and pavers to accent a plaza area at the corner,

821 East Main Street (Mike's Laundry/Holly Press)



This site located at the southeast corner of East Main and Lafayette. With land assembly, this prominent corner would make an ideal location for a branch bank, much needed on East Main Street.

860 East Main Street (Dunkin Donuts)



Dunkin Donuts is moving from its present location to the current site of Manny's Market farther east on the south side opposite the intersection with Lawn Avenue. There has been discussion as to whether the vacated site would then be merged into the Chrysler Dealership property.

30 Crystal Street (rear of 892 East Main Firestone)



SMG Partners, which owns Firestone and the adjacent retail development to the west, is in the process of assembling property between Crystal and Quintard streets to accommodate a six-story building of approximately 78 units. Units would be moderately priced to target the local workforce. The complex would include 24 hour security, a gym and possibly a playground.

11 Crystal Street (Northeast Corner of East Main Street)



This long, triangular 0.58 acre parcel that fronts on Crystal Street just north of East Main is owned by Crystal Street Associates and is being considered for inclusion in a transit station site. It currently consists of two vacant buildings totaling 5,163 SF. The parcel is bordered to the east by the rail road. If not used for transit, this parcel would be suitable for community space and a pocket park.

901-907 East Main Street; 8-15 Myrtle Avenue (Toyota Dealership)



The long term Toyota dealership is an assemblage of six parcels at the southeast corner of East Main and Myrtle Streets plus 15 Maple Street in the next block east. Altogether, the parcels total 1.52 acres. Phase II of the Stamford Urban Transitway Improvements will take a triangular portion of the dealership's land at the East Main Street intersection resulting in a significant reduction in the parcel's size and also removing much needed on-street parking. The dealership is considering major upgrades to its showroom, now located at the southern border of the parcel or possibly a new showroom fronting the redesigned Myrtle-East Main intersection.

933 East Main Street (Blockbuster)



The 1.15 acre parcel last assessed at \$1.3 million contains 21,000 SF of retail space, including a deli and laundromat. It is owned by Frances Sessa, who has numerous investment properties in the area.

942 East Main Street (Oil Star Lube Center)



The owner of the Oil Star Lube Center, George Zupanotis, owns the 0.21 acre parcel plus an adjacent vacant lot just east at the corner of Lincoln Avenue and East Main Street. This vacant parcel is 0.11 acres or about 4,800 SF and zoned R-6, requiring a minimum of 5,000 SF for development of a single unit. It is being well maintained as a small lawn area with picnic table. About one block north of this property (40 & 46 Lincoln Avenue), a developer is considering assembling two twelve thousand square foot lots for multi-family housing which may require a zone change request to achieve the desired density.

1069 East Main Street (High Link Computer)



This property is unusual in that it consists of a 25,521 SF light industrial building on the southeast corner of Maher Road and East Main Street with associated parking across Maher Road on a lot of 0.36 acres, pictured above. The light industrial building shown to the left occupies 0.5 acres. It is attached on its east side to another brick building owned by a different entity and which is used as a dry cleaning establishment. Most recently the building shown was used by a computer repair business but is now believed to be vacant and for sale. Last appraised (full value) at \$1,587,300, the building and parking lot are for sale for \$3 million.

1110 East Main Street (Just Cats)



Located just east of the extensive Fairlawn condominium community, this 3,870 SF single user building is currently used as a veterinary office and boarding facility for cats. The owner is seeking a larger facility in the same area and a buyer or tenant for the present facility. A possible restaurant use has been suggested.

1120 East Main Street (Fairlawn Shopping Center)



Located at the corner of East Main and Courtland Avenue, this 15,300 SF strip retail center is slated for acquisition and demolition by ConnDOT to provide right turn lanes and realignment of the intersection.

7. Planning Considerations

Assets and Challenges

Through site reconnaissance and analyses of existing conditions, positive and negative characteristics of East Main Street become apparent. From these, a series of Assets and Challenges have been derived that should be taken into consideration as recommended actions are formulated.

Assets

- Prominent gateways
- Proximity to downtown
- Excellent access
- Walkable scale
- Community involvement
- Private re-investment
- Functional neighborhood
- Public transportation
- Strong residential component
- Corporate presence
- Neighborhood scale retail
- Varying elevations
- Socioeconomic diversity
- Ethnic diversity
- Neighborhood & commuting consumers
- Growing population
- Increasing property values
- High level of home ownership

Challenges

- Corporate scale vs. neighborhood scale
- Traffic volumes/speeds
- Inconsistent lane configurations
- Automobile dominance
- Roadway widths
- Poor sidewalk conditions
- Lack of safe and visible pedestrian crossings
- Conflicting land uses
- Lack of green space
- Inconsistent design vocabulary
- Inconsistent streetwall/setback
- Excessive/wide curb cuts
- Underutilized properties
- Zoning inconsistencies
- Property maintenance
- Visual clutter/lack of attractive streetscape
- Lack of public right-of-way
- Lack of cohesive community center and linkages to neighborhood
- Community service needs
- Negative land uses
- Perceptions of safety
- Unorganized or misappropriated off-street parking
- Railroad trestle constraints

Breaking the Congestion Cycle

East Main Street, like so many older commercial corridors, is trapped in a vicious cycle of congestion. Based on current traffic engineering practices and funding performance criteria, congestion is alleviated by road widening and straightening. Decades of empirical and anecdotal evidence shows that this invites more traffic and, in time, beckons another round of road improvements. The cycle seems endless.

Not all congestion is bad; “good” congestion keeps cars moving at a comfortable pace and allows drivers to notice the surroundings. Stamford has made a concerted effort to deal with congestion by recognizing the need to expand inter-modal connections and not rely solely on road improvements, although this will remain a necessary mechanism for improving traffic flow and circulation. Construction of Phase II of the Stamford Urban Transitway will bring some relief. From the Phase I terminus at Myrtle/Elm, Phase II extends up Myrtle then along East Main, terminating at the Lockwood/Lincoln intersection.

Figure 7 shows potential roadway improvements that achieve the City’s goal for establishing a consistent 4 lane corridor, linking with the Urban Transitway and strengthening the transit mode while improving pedestrian safety and enhancing compatible development opportunities in the neighborhood. By extending the SUT cross section from the Phase II terminus at Maple Avenue eastward to the Darien line, the widest existing portion of the corridor, and one that includes a direct I-95 connection, is utilized. This proposal is not expected to redirect all traffic from East Main westbound onto Myrtle but it may help congestion. The notion of traffic “dispersion” as opposed to “collection” is a re-emerging approach to alleviating congestion “hot spots”. The road width in this section would be widened in certain areas given that the typical SUT cross section is

85 feet, however, amenity zones and bike lanes would be included. Pedestrian safety is of utmost importance given the intended road widths. Visible crosswalks accentuated by pedestal mounted flashing yellow beacons may be warranted at critical intersections such as at Lawn Avenue.

At the corridor’s western terminus, no improvements are warranted from Elm to Glenbrook Street. At the Glenbrook intersection there is potential need for an additional left turn lane. East of this intersection, the road could taper into a widened cross section that would extend from Daly Street to Myrtle Avenue. This widening would only be to the extent necessary to meet ConnDOT’s criteria for lane widths so that a full four lane configuration is achieved for peak hour traffic. Off-peak parking as it currently exists would remain. Existing and proposed cross sections depicting this approach are contained in Appendix C.

Improving the railroad overpass remains the critical factor in alleviating a major source of traffic congestion. At present, ConnDOT considers the bridge to be in good structural condition and therefore the Department has no plans for replacement. Regardless of the source of funds or which entity takes the lead, ConnDOT has the authority to review and ultimately approve the improvements. At a meeting with ConnDOT in August 2005, City staff outlined intentions for improving the overpass and indicated that on-going dialogue will be maintained.

Revitalizing Through Redevelopment

East Main Street's locational and market characteristics play a key role in stimulating desirability in terms of living and doing business. The lack of land and the difficulty in assembling developable parcels is tempering this demand. Rising real estate values further complicate the equation, with the end result being that developers are seeking higher densities to reach the level of financial feasibility lenders require.

The City's desire to attract new residents, improve livability and expand the economic base of East Main Street may be considered by some to conflict with roadway improvements. By comparing potential existing building configurations with the proposed cross sections and known property impacts from the three current roadway projects, there will clearly be several areas potentially affected. The extent of impacts can only be determined after detailed property surveys and preliminary design are completed; however, for planning purposes, these properties are highlighted in red in Figure 8. This graphic also depicts properties that given existing physical conditions or level of utilization would lend themselves to redevelopment. Essentially, properties west of Lawn and Lockwood avenues offer the greatest opportunities. Collectively, these properties amount to 22 acres.

This analysis simply illustrates potential and by no means infers owner willingness or development feasibility. The analysis does suggest that the effort to improve the roadway and create a more livable atmosphere are inextricably linked. Policy decisions will need to be made in order for the City to launch a unified approach.

Market and physical characteristics of the corridor would also support mixed uses, in particular first floor retail with housing or small professional offices above. A few examples are shown in

Figure 9. The common feature to all of these is a reduced front yard setback to attract pedestrian interest at the street level and enclose the cross section to re-create a traditional downtown scale. The elevations of these developments tend to include attractive facades, larger windows and expression lines which further enhance street-level interest.

Transit Oriented Development

Many communities, including urban areas, are examining their growth trends in order to plan for a "smarter" way to grow – physically, fiscally and responsibly. Stamford has determined that it wants to grow in ways that make the City a better place in which to live and work. One of the tools increasingly being used by communities to manage growth while achieving urban revitalization is a category of Smart Growth called transit oriented development (TOD), a return to the mixed use, walkable areas served by public transportation that once marked the neighborhoods of urbanized areas. This approach is advocated by proponents of the New Urbanism or Neo-Traditional planning and architecture movements as a way to create dynamic yet livable communities

The key elements of TOD are density, a mix of land uses and a location within walking distance of transit service (5 to 10 minutes, ¼ to ½ mile). Accommodating the first two elements while meeting the goal of increased transit use (hence lowering the impacts from increased density) usually requires changes to local regulatory documents (e.g. lowering parking requirements) to be sure that the development is designed to fulfill reduced traffic generation and increased transit ridership goals and not just offering increased density. Based on available models of TOD, the design criteria cited below provide a comparison between the two most apparent locations.

TOD Design Criteria

	Urban TOD	Neighborhood TOD
Description	Located directly on main rail line transportation network with express service.	Located on branch line rail transportation network with local residential service.
Siting	2 miles or more	Bus, light rail or trolley service with stops ½ to 1 mile apart.
Density	Minimum: 12 du/net acre Average: 15 du/acre Max: Set by local plans	Minimum: 7 du/net acre Average: 10 du/net acre Max: Set by local plans
Focus	Job-creating centers and regionally important destinations.	Residential and local shopping
Mix of Uses	5-15% Public 30-70% Core/Employment 20-60% Housing	10-15% Public 10-40% Core/Employment 50-80% Housing
Type of Transit	Light Rail and Express Bus	Bus
Parking Standards		
Minimum Standards	Specialty Retail centers: 60,000 – 120,000 SF Community Centers: convenience shopping and department stores (>= 120,000 SF)	Convenience/shopping 10,000 – 25,000 SF Neighborhood Centers: Supermarket, drugstore, and supporting retail – 80,000 – 140,000 SF

Assuming a site in the vicinity of the railroad overpass/Myrtle Avenue as the location point for a potential transit stop, areas of ¼ mile and ½ mile were delineated (Figure 10). This location was selected because of its potential for access to rail as well as the potential opportunity to create a transit node in this area when Phase II of the Transitway is completed. As noted earlier the census tracts bordering the corridor are among the most densely developed census tracts in the City. Density data for the tracts that fall within the potential “pedshed” transit planning area are summarized in the table below.

Converting the Census figures for housing density to the familiar zoning standard of “units per acre” yields density levels that range from 18 units per acre to 5.4 units per acre, with the tracts immediately abutting the potential transit stop averaging a density of 10.5 units per acre. Although these existing density levels are consistent with the minimum levels recommended for neighborhood TODs, it is important to note that the entire corridor will not be residential. Therefore, higher densities must be achieved in appropriate areas to compensate for the lower densities in outlying areas. Densities to be achieved would most likely fall in the 15-25 range.

Density Per Square Mile

<u>Census Tract</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Housing</u>	<u>Units Per Acre</u>
217	19,964	11,524	18.0
218.01	11,185	4,828	7.5
218.02	10,405	3,894	6.1
220	9,481	3,966	6.2
221	9,113	3,432	5.4

Source: Census 2000

The TOD concept is an option for the East Side for several reasons:

- It is consistent with the City’s long-range goal for the western part of the corridor to be a mixed-use area,
- The census tracts bordering the corridor are among the most densely populated in the City providing a good population base,
- There is the possibility that transit opportunities in the vicinity of the railroad overpass could be expanded,

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- The “flats” portion of the corridor has the potential to be redeveloped as a pedestrian-friendly urban village,
- There is increasing developer interest (confirmed by market analysis) in residential redevelopment of properties west of the railroad overpass.

Since the objective of TOD development is to reduce the use of single occupant vehicles (SOVs) by increasing the number of “trips” made by walking, bicycling, car/van pool, bus or rail, the concept involves the following elements:

- Properly sited mixed use to create a sense of place and provide pedestrian-accessible goods and services,
- Higher residential density to support transit ridership
- Lower parking ratios to reflect reduced need for automobiles
- Small blocks with wide sidewalks to improve the pedestrian environment
- Frequent, reliable, comfortable transit service to minimize external SOV vehicle trips,
- Roadways designed to accommodate walkers and cyclists.

Given the size of the parcels available for development and the densities of housing needed to make projects economically feasible, it is prudent for the City and the neighborhood begin to think and plan in terms of TOD, even if the short-term net result on the transit

side is limited to enhanced bus service. In terms of land use and development patterns this planning should involve five key actions:

- Creating development patterns that support transit service through physical and visual connections
 - small development blocks
 - enhanced sidewalk areas
 - visually interesting pedestrian routes
 - use of visual focal points to create a sense of place
 - use of public open space areas to create focal points and activity centers
- Encouraging complementary land uses
 - preserve and protect existing stable neighborhoods
 - enhance existing uses to make them more pedestrian and transit friendly
 - plan for a mix of housing, entertainment, retail and services
 - discourage auto-dependent uses
 - encourage uses that generate pedestrian activity
 - permit both vertical and horizontal mixed-use
 - encourage a mix of housing types (owner, renter, affordable, market rate, senior, etc.)
- Developing design standards to improve the quality of the physical character of the area
 - encourage pedestrian generating uses at ground level
 - balance architectural variety with continuity
 - regulate building height and setbacks to reinforce a human-scale environment and relate to the context of the area

- upgrade streetscape treatments to create a lively and pleasant environment
- control the location and limit the size of parking lots and structures

- Identifying appropriate intensity of uses
 - require density minimums rather than maximums
 - minimum TOD residential densities (dwelling units per acre) established by communities across the country vary from 8 to 18 for neighborhood TODs to 25 to 30 for urban TODs
 - mixed use and non-residential buildings generally target a net floor-area ratio (FAR) of 0.75 within ¼ mile of the transit stop and 0.50 FAR between ¼ and ½ mile
 - reduce parking requirements and establish parking maximums

- Identifying key development opportunities
 - underutilized properties
 - public/private partnerships
 - special improvement districts
 - designating specific sites as TOD sites
 - public sector efforts in transportation demand policy/management

Clearly, embracing and then implementing the TOD concept takes time and interagency/interdisciplinary efforts. Carefully crafted design standards and regulations need to be developed; residents and property owners need to be involved in the planning so that they will understand the benefits that can be derived and support implementation efforts; interagency objectives, roles and responsibilities need to be defined; and a clear public/private line of communication needs to be established to assure smooth and efficient regulatory review and approval.

Bus Rapid Transit

While rail is an apparent mode of transit, bus rapid transit (BRT) is becoming a viable alternative and one that the City should explore. A bus rapid transit (BRT) system is defined as:

“A flexible, high performance rapid transit mode that combines a variety of physical, operating and system elements into a permanently integrated system with a quality image and unique identity.”¹

Flexibility derives from two key factors – BRT vehicles can travel anywhere there is pavement and they are relatively small compared to train-based modes. This flexibility allows the system to be tailored to service area conditions once system options have been evaluated and desirable alternatives developed.

Potential benefits that can be generated by a well-planned BRT system include:

- Ridership
- Transit-supportive land development
- Environmental quality
- Capital cost effectiveness
- Operating efficiency

Benefits derived are directly related to system performance, which in turn is dependent on the options selected in each of the major elements that comprise a BRT system: running way, stations, vehicles, fare structure and collection system, use of intelligent transportation systems, service and operating plans.

¹Levinson et al., Bus Rapid Transit – Implementation Guidelines, TCRP Report 90-Volume II

The optimum mix of elements is determined through an Alternatives Analysis that allows decision-makers to evaluate options for feasibility and cost-effectiveness as well as for options that best meet the community's specific transportation needs.

Planning is critical to decision-making about a BRT system, not only because of the financial commitment involved but in order to enhance the chances for bringing a successful system on-board and achieving the underlying benefits that such systems afford. Though several aspects of these systems have been in use for decades (e.g. dedicated transitways/busways, limited-stop and express services, and exclusive bus lanes), complex BRT systems are just beginning to come on-line in the United States. The East Main Street corridor should be evaluated and an Alternatives Analysis completed to determine the physical and fiscal feasibility of moving forward with a BRT system.

The Density Factor

Housing opportunities in the East Main Street area are influenced in large part by the insatiable demand for housing city-wide as witnessed over the last decade. Stamford has been a state-wide leader in housing production in three of the last seven years, averaging 280 units a year. Until recently, much of this new supply has come in the form of multi-family rentals with Avalon Bay alone adding 1,226 units to the overall supply since 1996. With the dramatic drop in interest rates that began in 2001, ownership housing has characterized much of Stamford's new housing activity, with condominiums representing a growing component of this market. Meanwhile Stamford has consistently led the state in sales volume in both single family sales and condominiums, averaging over 1,000 single family homes a year since 1996, while condominium sales volume has steadily grown from 642 in 1996 to 1,169 in 2004.

As a major corridor, East Main Street generally lends itself to a denser approach to housing as confirmed by the area's more concentrated population base and higher proportion of multifamily structures than the city-wide average. Although much of the housing is rental, it is also an area with a well established condominium base that accounted for 25% of the overall sales volume for condos over the last three years. Over the near term, demand for condo housing within the East Main Street area and the city is expected to remain healthy, benefiting from the combined effects of relatively low, albeit rising interest rates, continued economic growth and growing demand from aging empty nesters. Meanwhile, rental housing, which has been less of a factor in demand in recent years, could emerge from its past doldrums with the advent of rising interest rates and as the boomlet population now 15 to 25 comes of age for independent housing.

While demand for housing in the East Main Street study area is confirmed by sales volume and recent appreciation trends and generally firm rental rates, it is difficult to quantify the level of housing that might be accommodated given the need for land assembly. Indeed, the issue of housing capacity is less a market factor and more one of land use constraint driven by the difficulty and expense of assembling sites that are generally small and encumbered. The recent acquisition for housing and retail of the 2.5 acre Suburban Cadillac site at the corner of Glenbrook Road and East Main Street represents a rare example of a single, largely vacant parcel available for development.

Using the potential redevelopment opportunities shown in Figure 8, there are an estimated 22.0 acres potentially available. Assuming that these parcels could be targeted for housing either as a single use or in a mixed-use configuration, based on TOD densities ranging from 15 to 25 dwellings per acre, between 330 to 547 units of housing would be produced. This number could reasonably be absorbed in the five to seven year period either as ownership or

rental. At higher densities, parking ratios may require structured parking. Reducing parking and increasing transit usage will require a shift in attitude and this translates into an impact on short-term marketability.

Given the cost and availability of land, transit is a long term solution and one that could offer relief from the high cost of siting, constructing and maintaining structured parking. Although the concept of a transit station at East Main Street off Myrtle Avenue is only in preliminary stage of evaluation, it is not too early to recognize that promoting desired and ultimately successful transit related development around this area is predicated on the timely confluence of market growth and supportive public policies and actions that shape appropriate design, linkages, access and sense of place compatible to the immediate neighborhood. Properly designed and linked to the East Main Street corridor, the station can be a powerful stimulus to private re-investment, creating an impressive node of station-related activity and providing a logical focal point for a neighborhood center. Although only time will tell as to the viability of a station at this location and what market forces will be in play once built, it is imminently clear that the station and attendant development could lead to creation of a more livable, pedestrian friendly residential and workplace environment for East Main Street. This in turn will most certainly increase absorption.

8. Plan of Action: Recapture the Corridor

East Main Street's assets and challenges provide an appropriate foundation for framing a strategy to recapture the corridor and transform it into an urban village with multimodal opportunities. The linear context that has evolved and been sustained by its transportation function accommodating thousands of vehicles must give way to something new. A plausible and sustainable approach is to take advantage of its positive elements while recognizing the vital role of transportation.

Through its 2000 Master Plan, Stamford hopes to revitalize its neighborhoods and create walkable, human-scaled villages in which to live, work and play. Within a walkable atmosphere, a critical mix must be created – sufficient to occupy a visitor for a few hours or provide enough of life's daily needs to give people reason to establish a residence. This type of environment behaves like a magnet by attracting new urban professionals that support the “village” economy and do not rely on the automobile to reach their workplaces—a demographic shift that is crucial for a city to grow.

Land use characteristics that encourage spontaneous, informal connections to one another as well as to our environment foster a sense of community and impart a level of comfort and safety that simply cannot be imitated by a mall. These connections are inherent to a healthy neighborhood. Healthy neighborhoods offer choices of where to live, where to shop, where to meet friends and how to get around. Healthy neighborhoods have a center and clear edges that provide an identity. Corridors can function as a center for surrounding neighborhoods or can form an edge announcing the

arrival into another neighborhood. East Main Street has all the requisite ingredients for becoming an urban village. Its access, visibility and proximity to downtown make it best suited to serve as a comfortable transition between downtown and the neighborhoods beyond.

At present, East Main Street's various functions fight each other for dominance. Through thoughtful planning and guided development, a compromising balance can be achieved that blends these functions together to create a new role – one that recognizes the intricate link between land use and transportation. Recapturing the corridor will mean rebalancing the transportation aspects of the corridor, giving pedestrians increased access, higher visibility and an enhanced sense of safety and comfort to promote a walkable neighborhood.

Recapturing East Main Street, creating an urban village and getting people to and from work is no easy task. A multi-pronged approach is needed, one that encompasses the major elements of how we see East Main Street functioning in the future. Four major improvement categories have been identified based on this future vision as well as the baseline analyses that served as the technical foundation for recommended actions.

Pedestrian Accessibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish human-scale street with amenities ▪ Improve sidewalks ▪ Provide safe and visible crossings ▪ Connect to destinations beyond the corridor
Economic Vitality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capture commuters ▪ Diversify business mix ▪ Encourage mixed uses ▪ Provide flexible zoning to accommodate higher residential density and transit development ▪ Attract cultural/community facilities
Traffic and Parking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish a consistent four lane roadway throughout the corridor ▪ Develop way finding/directional signage ▪ Increase public parking ▪ Narrow the roadway viewshed to calm traffic ▪ Establish a transit node at the railroad crossing ▪ Employ access management strategies to reduce curb cuts and unsafe circulation ▪ Re-evaluate bus stop locations
Image and Aesthetics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain the street wall ▪ Limit drive-by architecture ▪ Provide green space/public space ▪ Consider a Special Services District ▪ Encourage cohesive signage & façades ▪ Develop promotional materials and organize events to increase patrons ▪ Develop design guidelines

These four categories can be interwoven so that common ground among the corridor’s current functions is achieved in the near term, while a longer term transformation is nurtured. Ultimately, an enviable transition into downtown will emerge and East Main Street will become in its own right, a destination.

Two strategic actions form the centerpiece of this approach: the creation of the East Main Street Village Center and corridor wide streetscape improvements. Traditionally, streetscape improvements are considered a publicly acceptable mechanism for making linear corridors such as this more inviting. While streetscape improvements will give a new face to East Main Street, compatible redevelopment to create a new mix of residential and commercial uses will bring economic sustainability to the corridor. Private reinvestment is necessary to shift to land uses that increase the area’s livability index—safe attractive residences, a retail mix to serve the population, green space, human-scaled pedestrian-friendly streets, community or cultural activities and transportation options.

The concept depicted in Figure 11 should be as much a mind set as a physical manifestation. The green line used to delineate the area is not intended as a boundary. Rather, it is a means of identifying the area with the highest probability of achieving the overall vision of the corridor.

The area between Glenbrook Road and Lawn Avenue, referred to as the “flats” has many of the prerequisites of an urban village. It capitalizes on present redevelopment activities which have created incredible momentum; this area is certainly the most walkable, the City’s potential transit site is at its epicenter and it already includes a small but expanding amount of neighborhood-level retail.

The five Recommended Actions focus attention on continued economic development within a framework compatible with the

surrounding neighborhood. The physical evolution of the Village Center will require a number of policy decisions that will guide form and function. Revising the current zoning regulations is the single-most important policy action associated with this initiative. A development pattern at a compatible scale with greater residential densities will encourage economic sustainability for existing and new businesses and will help to support future transit use while providing more opportunities to live near a thriving downtown.

Creating a Sense of Place

Placemaking is more an art form than an engineering exercise. Although a design template can be dropped into any physical setting to achieve visual cohesiveness, it is the melding of context, form and function that ultimately creates a sense of place. The Conceptual Master Plan outlined in Figures 12A and 12B is intended to establish a pedestrian friendly, human-scaled setting within the public right-of-way.

These streetscape improvements will recapture the area between the back of curb and the front of buildings as highlighted in Figure 13. As redevelopment advances, there will be more opportunity to link this area to pocket parks, greenways and new destinations. Included in the Master Plan are several elements which will establish a pedestrian friendly environment and “calm traffic”.

- Gateways – physical indications of an entry to (or exit from) a neighborhood or other destination; should trigger motorists to slow down, expect more pedestrians and notice visually interesting development.

- Sidewalks – exclusive pedestrian lanes that provide safe haven from roadway vehicles and connect work and home to commercial and institutional destinations.
- Crosswalk Enhancements – crosswalk marking patterns and when necessary, warning lights and signage, provide optimal designation of yielding the right-of-way to pedestrians. At intersections, tighter curb radii and shorter crossing distances, typically achieved by bump outs, are preferred but difficult to apply in high traffic areas.
- Lighting – good quality and properly placed lighting can enhance the human-scale, increase public safety and boost positive perceptions. Depending on the road width, if traditional street lights remain necessary, pedestrian level lighting may be placed over the sidewalk. Lighting should be designed to reduce upward scatter. This is especially a consideration when residential units occupy multi-storied buildings fronting the street.
- Street Amenities – benches, planters, fountains, landscaping, trash receptacles and other amenities are essential elements of successful place making. The design vocabulary for the amenities should complement surroundings. Locations of street furniture must be carefully placed in consideration of pedestrian flow and business activity. Maintenance, particularly snow removal, must be considered prior to finalizing the recommendations.

- Landscaping – properly placed and specified vegetation can “green-up” and break up the monotony of a corridor even when there is no opportunity to establish pocket parks. The establishment of street trees is particularly effective in reducing the sense of road width from the driver’s perspective and consequently provides visual clues to slow down. Sports utility vehicles the apparent vehicle-of-choice are higher than typical cars, so drivers are able to see farther down the road, while often ignoring closer field observations.

As the trees mature to form a closer canopy over the road, the traffic calming effect is maximized. With appropriate species selection and proper placement, trees can complement pedestrian and merchant activity without visually blocking store fronts.

Seasonal interest and color can be achieved with the use of hardy perennials. Lower growth vegetation can be used to screen parking lots along the roadway frontage.

- Signage – Consistent and thematic signage assists residents and visitors in clearly finding landmarks and attractions. Minimizing driver confusion reduces traffic congestion. At the pedestrian level, signage should reflect the neighborhood context and have visual consistency with the remaining streetscape template. Distinctions between gateways and other destinations can be achieved by varying the graphics but overall consistency should be achieved.

Design Template Recommendations

- Benches
 - Dense wood or powdered coated metal
 - Eight foot length suitable for streetscape scale
 - Specify armrests for comfort and to discourage skateboarders
 - Traditional design without ornate details works best
 - Plaques for donations, sponsorship or as memorials can generate revenue as well as community interest





- Trash/Ash Urns

- Traditional, yet simple clean lines blend well with various architectural styles
- Match downtown receptacle or similar version by same manufacturer with opportunity for place making signage
- Selected color of furniture should consider uniformity between manufacturers; black, bronze and silver being most uniform.



- Lights

- Utilize two levels of streetscape lights: roadway vehicular lights and sidewalk, pedestrian scale lights. Full cut off fixtures to eliminate scatter above the fixture is recommended.
- Pole options: logo, power receptacles, banners, street signs.



maintenance.



- Street Trees

- Specify vase shaped, drought tolerant shade tree. Vary the species depending on frontage and to avoid widespread disease/insect damage.
- Install within sidewalk amenity band.
- Locate within continuous lawn strips to maximize root zones in areas with residential frontage.
- 4' x 8' minimum ADA complaint (1/2" maximum size openings) cast iron, un-painted for durability and ease of



- Bus Shelter

- City standard could be utilized for ease of maintenance.
- Options exist that would complement a more residential scale.
- Consider limiting advertising panels



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- Crosswalks

- Decorative, colored concrete; either stenciled or full depth integral color to accentuate the pedestrian crossings.
- State ConnDOT District approval required.



- Signage

- Visually consistent directional, gateway and informational should reflect neighborhood context
- Overall image should complement overall City template



East Main Street Recaptured

To illustrate the positive effects that simple streetscape improvements can have, four distinct views of East Main Street were altered using computer software to insert site specific streetscape elements. The results are shown in Figures 14-17.

9. Jump Starting

Despite the energy and momentum that builds through a planning process, the transition from talking/thinking to doing/achieving can fizzle quickly if actions to be immediately carried out are not identified as springboards for implementation. To avoid this dilemma, these critical first steps can be identified as part of the planning process. This “jumpstart” can take many forms, not necessarily requiring money, construction or significant lengths of time.

The recapture of East Main Street will not materialize unless the City and the East Main Street Partnership continue open dialogue and share responsibility. The ten actions outlined below, in descending priority, will not only sustain momentum they will help galvanize the relationship.

Priority 1: Reach a policy consensus on traffic and pedestrians-Share The Road

In the past, projects devoted to improving Stamford’s transportation network have been managed by the City’s Operation’s Department. The vision intended for East Main is an interdisciplinary effort—the solution transcends traditional engineering applications. Thus, a shift in viewpoints will be needed.

Having all departments adopt the “Share The Road” principle will clearly establish a commitment to balance competing functions of roadways throughout the City and will bring about a fuller

appreciation of the role pedestrian-friendly environments play in sustainable revitalization.

The City should also consider adopting a crosswalk standard for City and State routes to assist with communicating the Share The Road principle.

Priority 2: Develop flexible zoning regulations to encourage mixed uses and higher residential densities

Lot sizes and configurations of existing development are limiting the types and densities of development that could be built under current zoning, particularly with regard to residential uses in the area west of the railroad. Given the strong market, identifying and promptly adopting suitable zoning regulations to clearly articulate the desired outcome will eliminate guesswork and contentiousness during the approval process. Realistic regulations are a welcome sight for prospective developers because the time needed to gain approvals is truly reduced when the typical back-and-forth with the local approval agencies is rendered unnecessary by well written regulations.

While common ground has been reached on the vision for land use and quality of life along East Main Street, the critical issue of the feasibility of enhanced transit service is yet to be determined. This factor has such significant land use and land use regulation implications that it really makes no sense to undertake a major revision of the Zoning Regulations until this issue is resolved. Yet the corridor is experiencing development pressures now, with no less than three proposals being brought forward during the development of this Plan. In that respect the City does not have the luxury of waiting for targeted studies to be completed. There must be an interim step that bridges existing zoning and any future revisions.

For the short-term it is recommended that the City adopt an East Main overlay zone for the area between Broad Street and Lawn Avenue. This overlay district should modify the provisions of the existing underlying zones to provide design guidelines, require design review and encourage mixed use development through a two-tiered residential density provision that establishes a maximum density for strictly residential development (e.g. 35 units/acre in the RH Zone) and a higher density (e.g. the current RH maximum of 60 units/acre) to be allowed only if a commercial component is included.

Priority 3: Review funding sources and earmarked funds to determine applicability

There are funds available or earmarked for specific elements of East Main Street. For example, construction of Phase II (Myrtle Avenue) of the Stamford Urban Transitway is expected to begin in Spring 2009. Earmarked funds for preliminary engineering to improve the railroad bridge are in place. Additional funding for improving traffic safety and operating conditions is currently being sought.

While the origins of these funds may restrict their use, applicability to streetscape improvements and pedestrian safety should be explored by the City and supported by the neighborhood. Furthermore, it will be incumbent upon the neighborhood to see to it that, despite the source of funds, pedestrian safety and neighborhood livability are emphasized.

Priority 4: Build neighborhood capacity

Significant public and private investment is needed to fully achieve the vision of recapturing East Main Street. As this goal evolves, the economic status of the area will rise. It is important for the East

Main Partnership to recognize early on that growing pains are part of the process.

Most likely, these pains will take the form of the following:

- increased need for merchant coordination
- demands for a long term solution to the growing day laborer population
- desire to create and package a unique “brand” for the corridor
- expanded need for communicating issues and concerns as the resident population increases
- on-going challenges of finding volunteers and securing operating funds

Presently the Partnership relies on the good will of a few generous donors for funds and mostly all volunteers to sustain itself. The Stamford Partnership assists with strategic support. Anticipated demands will give rise to the need for capacity building; a process which should be dovetailed with the physical improvement advances of the corridor.

The City should now assess the need for extending its role beyond the physical realm by providing assistance with neighborhood-level social service delivery. The City should also consider coordinating with the Partnership in developing a branding/promotions campaign that piggy-backs with a City-wide initiative. Consideration should be given to creation of a Business Improvement or Special Services District as redevelopment increases the number of merchants and expands the City’s tax base. Such a District will help stabilize the Partnership and would facilitate implementation of revitalization efforts.

In the short term, the Partnership's visibility will be necessary when dealing with individual property owners on issues ranging from zoning violations to the granting of easements to allow streetscape improvements. It may be easier to gain access to the owners through the Partnership but someone with the right mix of technical skills needs to be recruited.

Priority 5: Conduct a traffic/access management study of the East Main Village Center concept.

In order to quantitatively assess the impact of widening in the Village Center area, extending the SUT to the Darien line and closing a portion of State Street to facilitate redevelopment, a detailed traffic evaluation should be carried out. The assessment should also examine intersection capacity and the need for access management improvements. A portion of funds previously earmarked for the SUT may be able to be utilized for this investigation. Any traffic studies conducted should be carried out in a manner consistent with the goals and objectives of this Plan to enhance the pedestrian environment and place emphasis on the human scale.

Priority 6: "Sweep Up" the Corridor

Presently, the East Main Street Partnership's Beautification Coordinator carries the brunt of calling the City's attention to zoning and building code violations, health code issues, lapses in public services, through contact with the Citizen's Complaint Bureau. Repeated calls and incessant violators force City staff to make difficult decisions on priorities.

As part of the initial steps to jumpstarting revitalization the City should launch a multi-department "sweep" of the corridor, deploying

police, building, public health, public works, zoning and social service personnel. Partnership representatives should be included to help point out lingering issues. Following completion of the sweep, a matrix of issues and expected actions would be established along with an assignment of responsibility and deadline for results. Concerns raised but not addressed within a specified amount of time would be elevated to the Department level, then brought to the Mayor's attention after the second occurrence.

Subsequently, quarterly inspections should be scheduled. Interim actions would continue to be identified by the other affected parties with elevation to the necessary level if prompt action is not achieved. After a year, the normal process of contacting the Citizen's Complaint Bureau should be re-established.

Priority 7: Conduct a sidewalk inventory

There are several areas of sidewalk that need immediate repair. The City should conduct an inventory and then make a determination of who would be responsible for replacement—the City, State or property owner. Poor sidewalk conditions deter safe pedestrian movement and draw attention to disinvestment.

Although there may be developers willing to extend sidewalk improvements or replacement beyond the subject property, the City should take the lead. The desire for streetscape improvements complicates this matter somewhat. A determination of sidewalk and amenity zone width must precede sidewalk installation and this width is dependent on anticipated roadway improvements. Fortunately, ongoing development in the western section of the corridor may remedy this situation quicker than the City can and in this area the road cross section is expected to remain as is.

Making strategic repairs to sidewalks is a great vehicle for signaling the City's commitment to the neighborhood. A ribbon cutting ceremony or other means of recognition should be considered by the City to show support for the neighborhood.

Priority 8: Lend a hand to development pioneers

Private developers who are willing to work collaboratively with the City and the neighborhood to fulfill the vision of East Main Street should be supported. The City should consider prefacing applications for local approvals with a statement of consistency. The neighborhood, in turn, should mobilize its forces in support of compatible development. The City may also want to consider using the amenity bonus program currently available in the CBD zone or other similar incentives.

Priority 9: Begin planning for streetscape improvements

The recommended design template for streetscape improvements provides the City with the opportunity to re-assess its streetscape guidelines and decide on an overall policy for neighborhood-level improvements. Consideration of lights, bus shelters and other potential standard elements prior to commencing design would alleviate protracted discussion in the midst of this time-sensitive process.

Procuring a boundary and topographic survey in sufficient detail for construction drawings prior to the commencement of the design phase will identify the easements needed and the property owners affected. Starting this process early will give the City breathing room in the event that property owner negotiations become complicated. ConnDOT review must also be factored into the pre-construction timeline.

Also in advance of design, the City should give serious thought to how and who will manage the day-to-day demands of the project. An on-site inspector is advised. There is need for an additional person on an as-needed basis to help clarify design issues, file appropriate administrative records and provide conflict resolution on behalf of the City.

Priority 10: Assess transit feasibility

The addition of a transit node on East Main Street requires ConnDOT approval. Before granting approval of such a proposal, the Department must be convinced of need and feasible.

The City is already at an advantage because it has procured funds to conduct the necessary studies. It also met with the Department in August 2005 and has provided the Department with all the information available to date. Lead time is necessary to procure a consultant, develop a scope of services and conduct extensive data collection. ConnDOT has plans to evaluate the Metro-North area and the City is already looking to procure a consultant to examine ferry service, so it is prudent to begin evaluating the East Main transit link to take advantage of the information from these other two efforts. In fact, because of the interrelatedness of the three studies, the results of each should be factored into the others so data consistency is achieved.

**RECAPTURING EAST MAIN STREET
JUMPSTART ACTIONS**

PRIORITY	LEAD		DURATION ANTICIPATED	FUNDING	SIMULTANEOUS ACTIONS
	City	East Side Partnership/Other			
1. Policy consensus – Share The Road	X		30 Days	N/A	2, 3
2. Flexible zoning regulations	X		90 Days	N/A	1, 3
3. Review funding	X	X	60 Days	N/A	1, 2
4. Neighborhood capacity	X	X	N/A	Procure	N/A
5. Conduct a traffic/access management study - Village Center	X		6 Months	Earmarked	5,6
6. “SWEEP” the Corridor	X	X	90 Days	Staff Allocation	4, 6
7. Sidewalk inventory	X	X	30 Days	Procure	4, 5
8. Development pioneers	X		N/A	N/A	N/A
9. Streetscape	X		6 Months	Procure	N/A
10. Assess transit feasibility	X	X	6 Months	Earmarked	N/A