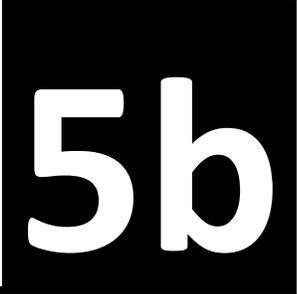


Booklet #5B
September 29, 2015

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES – ENHANCE DOWNTOWN



Overview

This booklet has been prepared *to help guide discussion* of possible strategies for Downtown Darien for the 2016 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

The following pages suggest strategies to be considered by the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC). Some of the strategies come from the 2006 POCD, some have been recommended by other boards and commissions in Darien and others have been suggested based on research and analysis conducted as part of this planning process.

It is intended that the PZC discussion of the strategies in this booklet will help to refine the overall vision for Downtown and lay groundwork for regulation changes and additional future planning.

“Create a compelling vision, one that takes people to a new place, and then translate that vision into a reality ...”

Warren Bennis
American scholar / author

PZC members should review this information and evaluate whether the strategy might be appropriate for the POCD.

Downtown



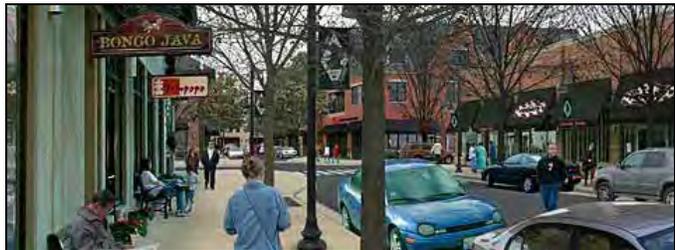
Downtown



Executive Summary

Downtown Darien already exhibits a village-type development pattern. As can be seen from the images below, such development patterns create a “sense of place” and this sense of place creates value because it attracts shoppers, workers, residents, and others.

**Strip-Type
Development Pattern**



**Village-Type
Development Pattern**

Natural Resources Defense Council / Urban Advantage

Overall, Darien has been doing a good job managing the form of development in the downtown area. However, the zoning regulations currently in place do not permit the existing village-type development pattern without waivers, modifications, overlay zones, or other discretionary approvals. Every development is a negotiated approval and property owners may not have any idea how they might be able to improve or enhance their property. If development were to occur in strict compliance with the existing regulations, the resulting development pattern would erode the village-type environment.

Darien residents are proud of the downtown. History shows that downtown has grown and changed over the years, particularly with several new buildings having been created in the last decade and with extension of downtown’s character and vibrancy to streets other than just the Post Road. This “resilient adaptation” of downtown should be encouraged and managed.



While increasing the vibrancy of the downtown will likely require allowing an increase in density / intensity / activity, Darien should strive to ensure that new development maintains an appropriate character and scale.

Key Opportunities

Some of the key opportunities for downtown include:

- Increasing the overall vibrancy of the downtown
- Providing locations for additional goods and services
- Enhancing the tax base
- Leveraging off the rail and bus services
- Providing housing options to meet changing housing needs
- Enhancing the overall quality of life in the community

Recommendations For Consideration

1. Establish a “village district”
2. Address parking
 - a. Reduce / modify parking requirements
 - b. Expand parking supply with parking structures
3. Consider revising development standards
 - a. Allow taller buildings
 - b. Maintain street façade relationship
 - c. Allow multi-story parking structures if shielded
4. Participate in “public realm” improvements.
5. Take greater advantage of downtown's attributes such the being a transit center and destination of shopping, services and eating.

Lessons Of History

Census information suggests that more than half of Darien residents may have lived here less than 10 years.

In other words, many residents may only be familiar with what downtown is today and not be aware of the changes which have occurred over the years.

Less than one in five residents has lived in Darien for more than 30 years.

Length of Residency	
Less than 10 years	52%
Less than 20 years	71%
Less than 30 years	83%

History

Change has been occurring in downtown Darien for centuries. Over the years, the overall transportation system has changed, new buildings have been built, existing buildings have been removed, and the overall role of downtown has changed in response to market opportunities and community desires.

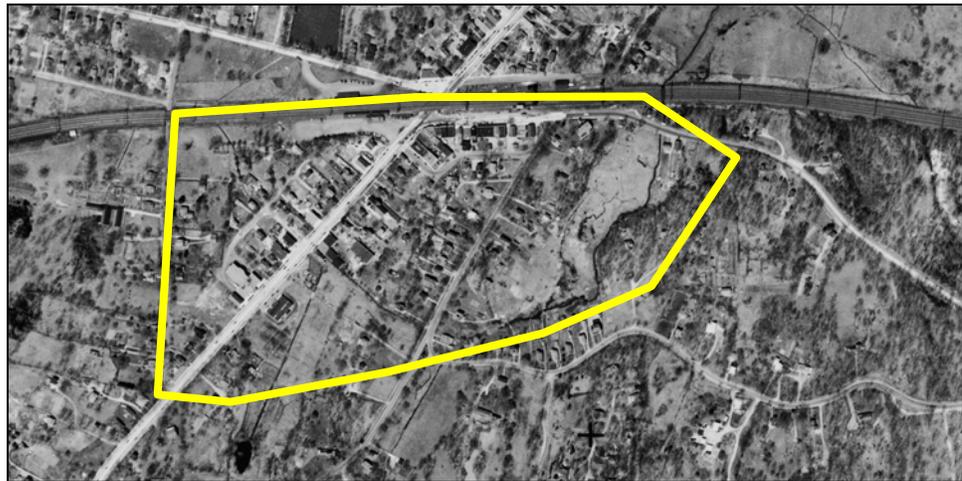
The best way to visualize such changes may be to look at aerial photographs taken over the years by the State of Connecticut. The first aerial photographs in the State collection date from 1934 (see below) and show a much lower intensity downtown area on both sides of the Post Road. Land uses on Leroy Avenue and Old Kings Highway South appear decidedly residential.

One generation later (in 1965), Interstate 95 had been built and there was a clear indication of larger buildings along the Post Road between Interstate 95 and the railroad tracks (see image on the facing page). The Howard Johnsons restaurant was built at the interchange and business uses appeared to be creeping back along Corbin Drive and Center Street.

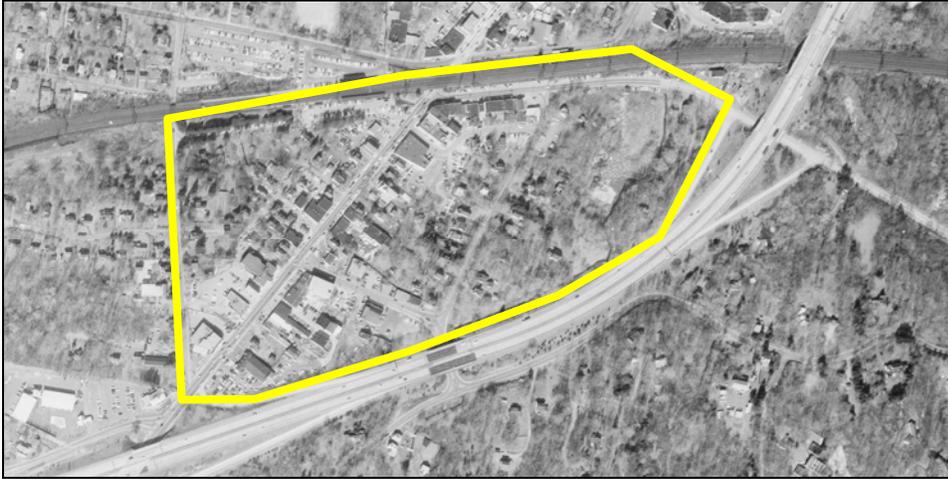
Then, by 1996, there had been significant construction to the rear of uses along the Post Road, the addition of significant parking areas, and the establishment of office buildings along Old Kings Highway South.

By the next generation (in 2025), what will downtown Darien be like? While it is not possible to say with certainty, history suggests that downtown Darien will be different than it has been in the past since the forces at work (physical, economic, social) will continue to shape its form and function. The key role for the POCD is to suggest how to guide future growth and change so that it accomplishes community desires.

1934 Aerial



1965 Aerial



1996 Aerial



2015 Aerial



Floor Area Ratio

The aerial photograph sequence demonstrates that Downtown Darien has changed over time.

Since the physical boundary of downtown has not changed, the key difference is that more buildings and larger buildings have been established on the same area of land.

One way to describe this is to say that the “floor-area ratio” (the comparison of building floor area to land area) has grown.

Examples of FAR = 1.0



1 storey
(100% lot coverage)



2 storeys
(50% lot coverage)



4 storeys
(25% lot coverage)

Walk Score

A “walk score” is a measure of walkability and is based on a “web app” methodology available at walkscore.com. The walk score reflects the diversity of uses and destinations in an area and the provisions for pedestrians.

According to the Walk Score website, research related to walk scores has found that walkable places perform better economically. Studies have found that residential and commercial rents and sale prices are higher in more walkable areas.

Town-wide, Darien receives a walk score of 25. In the Downtown area, the walk score is about 71 (it varies by street).

Walk scores for some communities are as follows:

Downtowns	Score
Princeton, NJ	95
Newport, RI	94
Greenwich	93
New Canaan	89
Fairfield	84
Ridgefield	81
Darien	71
Westport	69
Mystic, CT	69
Madison, CT	61
Wilton	55

Existing Conditions

The following table summarizes some of the key parameters of downtown:

Metric	Developed Sites	CBD Zone (including streets)
Land Area	1,084,383 SF	2,144,023
Gross Floor Area	760,192 SF	760,192 SF
Floor Area Ratio	0.70	0.35
Parking Spaces	1,225	2,258
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,225 private off-street • 816 public off-street • 217 public on-street (approximate count from aerial photo)		
Parking Ratio (spaces per 1,000 SF of GFA)	1.61	2.97
Walk Score	71	
Average Daily Traffic	14,000 under I-95 18,800 S of Leroy 12,600 at BOA 14,900 N of Center 16,900 S of Mansfield 13,300 N of Mansfield 5,000 on Corbin 5,300 on Center 4,900 on Tokeneke 2,100 on Mechanic 5,100 on Mansfield	

Overall Built Form



Specific Area Built Form



Assessment

Downtown Embodies Many, But Not All, Attributes Of Villages ...

Downtown Darien exhibits many of the attributes of a village-type environment. Numerous studies over the years have identified these attributes as contributing to a strong “sense of place” and a physical environment that is attractive to people. This attraction creates economic value (property values, rents, tax base, spending, etc.).

Still, there are some ways that Downtown could be enhanced. In the following chart (assigning 1-5 points), Downtown scored 57 out of a possible 70 points.

Village Attributes	Stronger	Weaker	Comments	
1. Appropriate Configuration				
a. Appropriate Location	●		Train station, vehicular crossroads	
b. Appropriate Size	●		Walkable distance from edge to edge	
c. Suitable Structure (Core / Edges)	●		Identifiable core, identifiable edges	
d. Organizing Scheme / Street Hierarchy		●	Organization could be strengthened	
2. Appropriate Role / Function				
a. Critical Mass of Activity		●	Has critical mass, could accommodate more	
b. Complementary Mix of Uses		●	Housing is only a modest component	
c. Appropriate Role / Function		●	Some drive-thru uses	
3. Appropriate Design				
a. Pedestrian-Focused Environment	●		Strong but could be strengthened	
b. Appropriate Building Scale / Design		●	Could accommodate more height / intensity	
c. Active Streetscape / Street-level Uses	●		Streetscape is active	
4. Systematic Parking Approach				
a. Appropriate Number of Spaces / Ratio		●	Parking ratios are higher than necessary	
b. Appropriate Type / Location		●	Maintain reasonable parking distribution	
5. Coordinated Management				
a. Area-wide Management			●	Common management not yet apparent
b. Shared Marketing / Promotion / Events		●	Common marketing not yet apparent	

Planimetrics

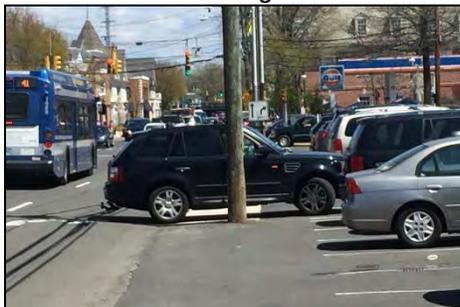
Downtown Has Some Challenges ...

1. **Linear Focus** - Downtown evolved in a linear fashion and has not extended to side streets and parallel streets
2. **Traffic Flow** - I-95 and railroad force traffic to a limited number of locations and the resulting traffic movements create a feeling of congestion and lead to the impression that new development will worsen the situation
3. **Block Lengths** - Some block lengths are very long which impair pedestrian-friendliness
4. **Auto-Orientation** - Some intersections / driveways / road configurations are auto-oriented which impair pedestrian-friendliness
5. **Parking** - Some parking conflicts between commuter use and shopper use
6. **Regulations** - Some regulations inhibit development of a village-type environment

And Some Opportunities ...

1. **Transit-Oriented** - The availability of transit (bus and rail) provides an opportunity for higher intensity / density with lower parking
2. **Capacity** - Downtown has the capacity to accommodate more uses, mixed uses, and provide more for the community
 - Vibrancy / Activities / Goods / Services
 - Walkability
 - Housing options
 - Increase in property values / tax base
3. **Extension** – The best features of Downtown could be extended nearby areas and the separation from other areas (by I-95 and railroad tracks) limits impact on other areas
4. **Parking** – Public off-street parking areas could be expanded to support more activity within Downtown and any such structures could be shielded

Challenge



Opportunity



People Feel That Downtown Could Accommodate More ...

As part of the Route 1 Study, an analysis was done of the “floor area ratio” of different blocks in downtown Darien and of other areas. When asked to identify a desirable FAR for Downtown, the Route 1 Study indicated that participants felt that an FAR range of up to 0.9 (similar to downtown New Canaan) provided an attractive and pedestrian-friendly environment that people found attractive and desirable.

Goodwives Shopping Center
FAR = 0.25

Comparison of Downtown Densities
Precedent Small Town, Downtown Districts (2010)

Location:
Goodwives Shopping Center
Darien, CT



Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.):
0.25

Overall Parking Supply:
4.6 spaces per 1,000 g.s.f.



SWRPA   CHA

Darien - Model Block
FAR = 0.67

Location:
“Model Block”
Downtown Darien
Darien, CT



Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.):
0.67

Overall Parking Supply:
2.3 spaces per 1,000 gsf



SWRPA   CHA

New Canaan
FAR = 0.6 to 0.9

Location:
New Canaan Town Center
New Canaan, CT



Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.):
0.6 – 0.9

Overall Parking Supply:
4.0 +/- spaces per 1,000 gsf



SWRPA   CHA

Storrs Town Center
FAR = 1.0

Comparison of Downtown Densities
Precedent Small Town, Downtown Districts (2010)

Location:
Storrs Downtown
Mansfield, CT



Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.):
1.0

Overall Parking Supply:
1.6 spaces per 1,000 g.s.f.



SWRPA   CHA

But Some Zoning Standards May Be Holding Downtown Back ...

Building Height

At the present time, building heights in the CBD zone are limited to 2 stories and 28 feet (measured from average grade to the mid-point between the roof eave and the roof peak). An increase to 3 stories and 35 feet may be permitted if an area of at least 40 percent of the gross floor area of the building is set aside as open space and improved as a plaza or a mall.

If Darien is to expand the potential of downtown and capitalize on some of the potential opportunities, additional building height may be necessary (and desirable).

For example, if building height is not increased, it may not be possible to provide for residential units in a pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented location. These residential units will help put “feet on the street” and make downtown an active and vibrant place for more hours of the day and more days of the week. In addition, these housing units could help meet the housing needs of Darien “empty nesters” who wish to downsize but stay in Darien or the housing needs of other people (such as younger workers, separated/divorced couples, etc.).

Plaza Space At Darien Sport Shop



Plaza Space On Grove Street



Darien Sport Shop Plaza



Grove Street Plaza



Three-Story Buildings

Three-story buildings in the downtown area (and vicinity) include the following:

- Bank of America
- Darien Library
- 10 Corbin Avenue
- 798 Post Road (across from Starbucks)

Other buildings to consider include:

- Darien Sports Shop (unclear from outside but 3 stories inside)
- 895 Post Road (Subway)
- 30 Old Kings Highway South (two-story building elevated above surface parking)
- 36 Old Kings Highway South (three-story building with a half-story below grade)
- 19 Old Kings Highway South (three-story building)

Parking

The basic parking requirements in the zoning regulations are a major limitation to the desired development patterns in the downtown area. Overall, the parking regulations require many more spaces than are needed in a mixed-use downtown area.

In fact, there are very few properties in the downtown area that comply with the basic parking requirements. Any new uses must request a modification of the parking requirements in order to obtain zoning approval. In other words, the permitting process occurs on a case-by-case basis.

On a purely theoretical basis, the current parking ratio and number of stories limit the amount of floor area that can be built:

	Theoretical Maximum Floor-Area-Ratio
Surface building / surface parking	0.30
Elevated building / surface parking or surface building / underground parking or surface building / parking structure	0.44

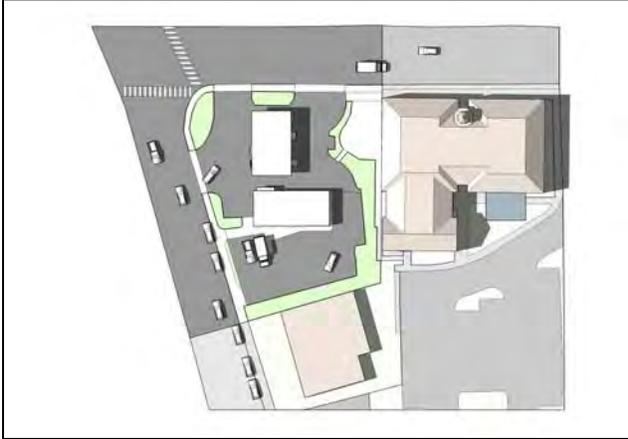
To put this into context, the floor area ratio which may be desired for the downtown in the future (0.9 FAR) is about three times what is attainable given the current zoning requirements (0.30 FAR) and about 50% greater than what exists on the ground today (0.60 FAR).

Simply speaking, Darien cannot get to the downtown people want with the current parking requirements. The graphics on the facing page look at the gas station site at the corner of Corbin Avenue and look at how the site could be developed in strict accordance with current parking regulations and how it might be designed with a lower parking requirement. If developed in strict accordance with parking requirements, most of the site is consumed by parking and the building makes a weak statement on a prominent corner in downtown. On the other hand, if less parking is provided, the building can contribute to strengthening and enhancing the streetscape.

Darien needs a paradigm shift in thinking about parking (parking structures, shared parking, “fee-in-lieu-of-parking, etc.) to become the downtown that residents have indicated they would be interested in.

Existing Gas Station Site

Plan View



Oblique View



Potential Redevelopment Meeting Parking Requirements

Plan View

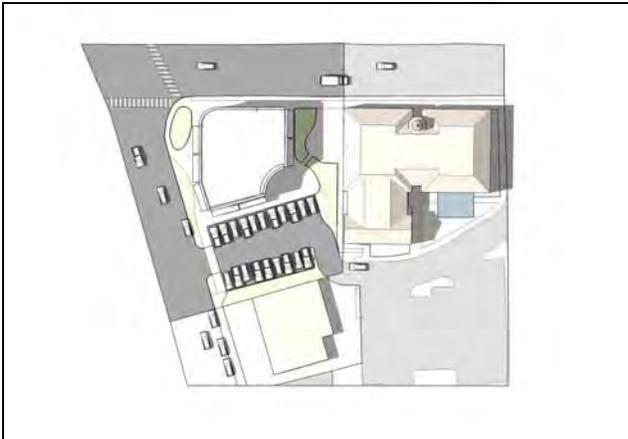


Oblique View



Potential Redevelopment With Parking Exception

Plan View



Oblique View



Recommended Strategies For Discussion

1. Pursue An Overall Approach

a. Continue To Support Downtown

- Continue to support downtown as a vibrant and dynamic place with a “sense of place”
- Continue to encourage “resilient adaptation” / evolution of downtown over time including increasing the overall level of activity in Downtown

b. Be Pro-Active

- Seek to be pro-active in terms of establishing and implementing the vision for downtown rather than simply be react to development applications

c. Focus On The Streetscape

- Focus on the streetscape (the “public realm”), not just private lands

2. Address The Road System

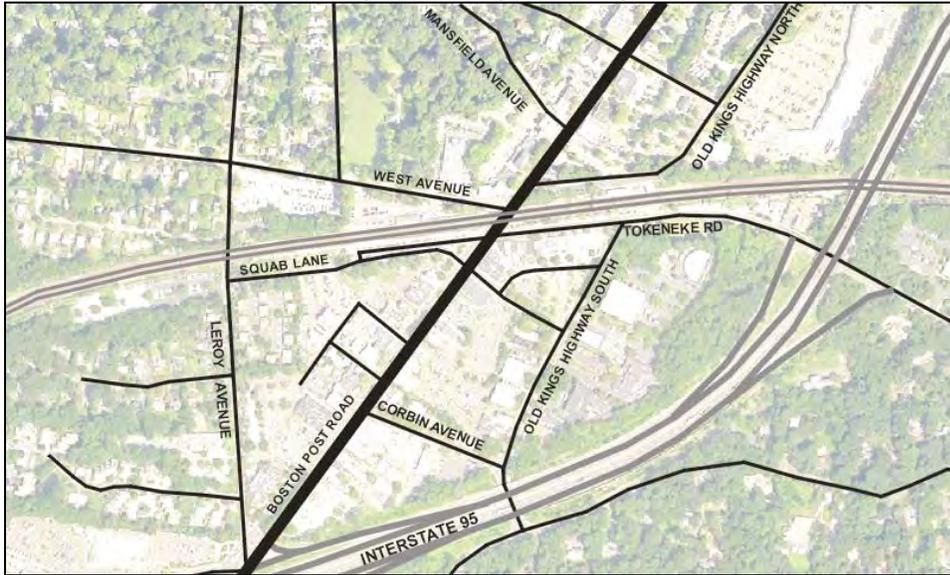
a. Implement The Types Of Recommendations Included In The Route 1 Study

- Signal locations (reduce signals, coordinate signal timing, etc.)
- Lane configurations / turning movements
- Revisit traffic flow at Train Station, Tokeneke Road and Center Street to reduce conflicts and congestion in this area
- Widen Leroy Avenue underpass
- Connect Old Kings Highway North and South
- Consider one-way streets (if necessary) to guide traffic to signalized locations

b. Create Shorter Blocks / Street Connections

- Extend Grove Street to Leroy Avenue and connect back to Route 1 (could be public or private)
- Parallel street on south side of Route 1 (could be public or private)
- Widen underpass at Leroy Avenue
- Tunnel to connect Old Kings Highway North and South

Existing Street Configuration Diagram

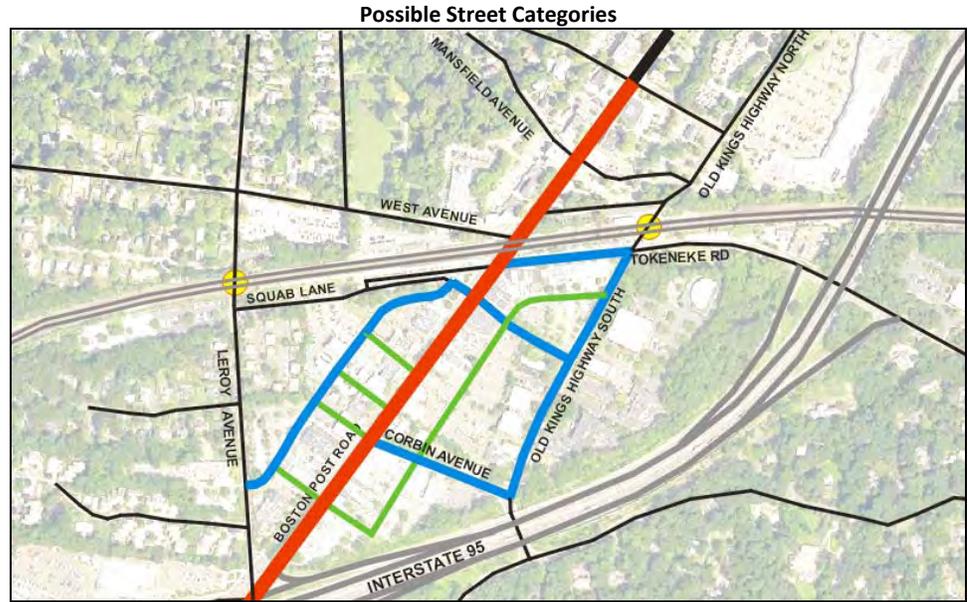


Possible Future Street Configuration Diagram



3. Organize The Space

a. Categorize Streets For Lane Assemblies / Hierarchy



b. Identify Locations For “Landmark” Features / Spaces

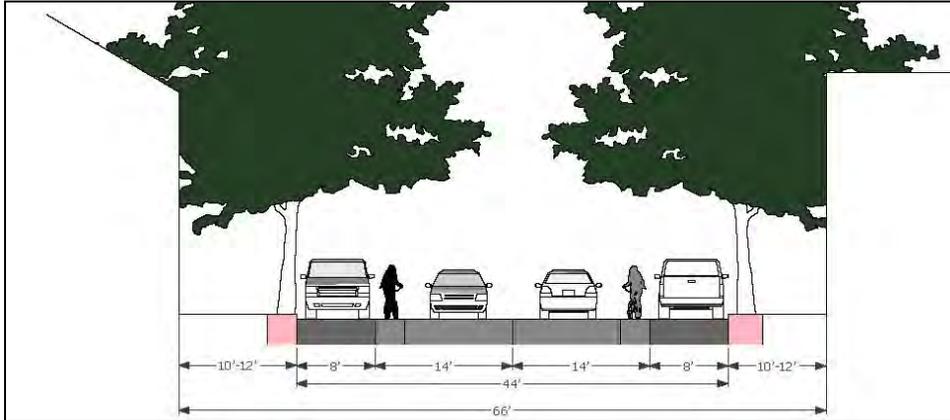
From a place-making perspective, signature buildings or elements help people understand an area and orient themselves within it. Design features (such as civic buildings, taller buildings, clock towers, open spaces, plazas, fountains, etc.) help create a sense of place.



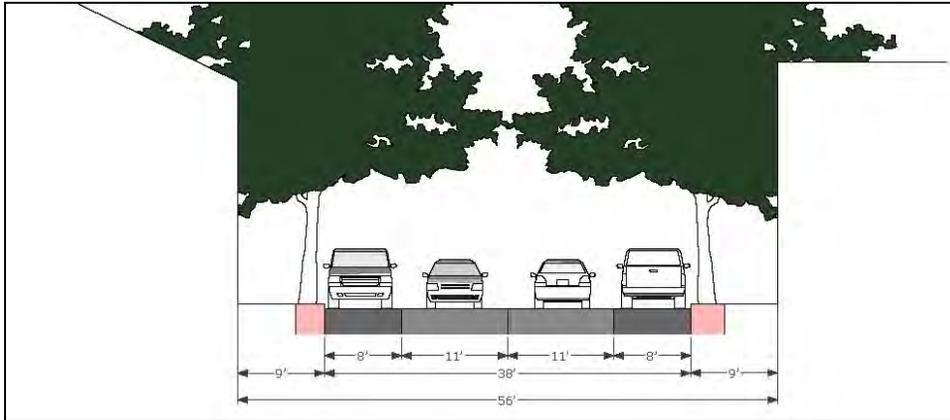
c. Consider Street Cross Sections

- A street hierarchy system could be used to vary lane assemblies, sidewalk widths, parking arrangements, setbacks and/or heights by street type

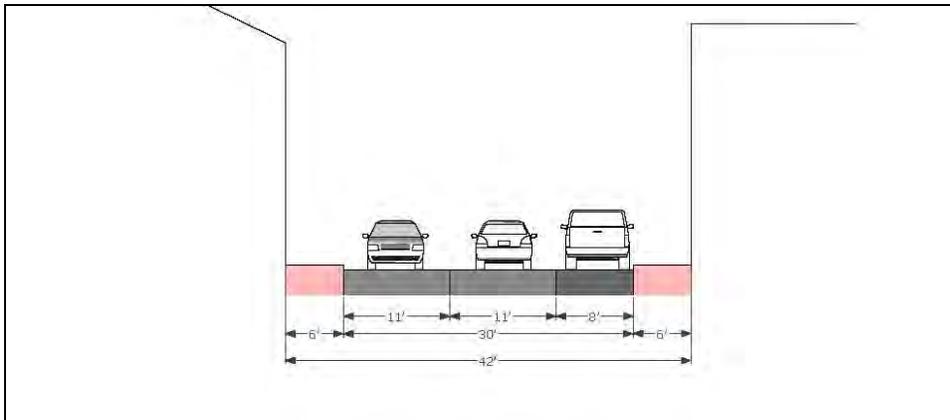
Possible Cross -Section



Possible Cross -Section



Possible Cross -Section



4. Enhance Pedestrian-Friendliness

a. Continue To Focus On Maintaining / Enhancing The Pedestrian Experience

- Providing for appropriate sidewalk widths
- Requiring buildings be brought to street
- Creating a continuous street façade (infill buildings) and eliminating gaps in pedestrian environment
- Requiring open storefronts at street level, requiring active first floor uses, and encouraging active outdoor areas (seating, dining, etc.)
- Making mid-block / off-street pedestrian connections
- Connecting to outlying areas / neighborhoods (especially under I-95 and the railroad tracks)
- Discourage curb cuts / consolidate access / move access points to secondary streets

b. Enhance Pedestrian Safety

- Neck down intersections to provide for pedestrians (such as Ledge Road, Leroy Avenue, Tokeneke Road, West Avenue / Mechanic Street)

Ledge Road



Leroy Avenue



Tokeneke Road



West Avenue / Mechanic Street



c. Provide And Standardize Pedestrian Accommodations

- Street Amenities
 - Benches / tables / garbage cans / street furniture
 - Street trees / planters / fountains
 - Continue sidewalks over driveways to make it clear that pedestrians have priority
- Intersection Facilities
 - Bulb-outs / bump-outs
 - Pedestrian signals / push buttons
 - High visibility pavement markings
 - Accessible ramps

d. Refine Model Block Specifications

Model Block Specifications (Downtown)



5. Manage Parking

a. Promote Park Once / Visit Many Destinations

b. Promote On-Street Parking

Visible on-street parking creates the perception of convenient parking, provides the potential of getting a convenient parking space, protects the pedestrian space on the sidewalk, and calms traffic.

Recommended

Not Recommended

Parallel Parking



No On-Street Parking



Favored Where
Less Space Available

Diagonal (Pull-In) Parking



Perpendicular (Pull-In) Parking



Diagonal (Back-In) Parking



Perpendicular (Back-In) Parking



Favored Where
More Space Available

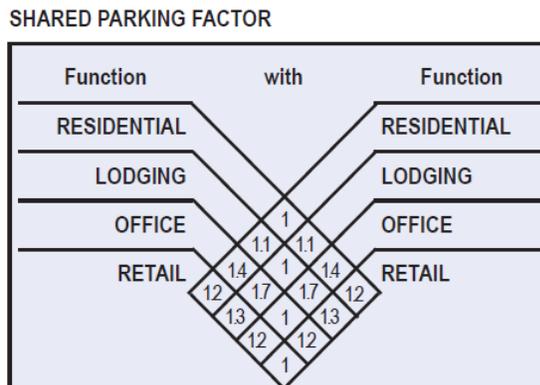
c. Revisit Parking Ratios

A recent study by the Transportation Research Board found that parking was over supplied in mixed use districts by an average of 65 percent. Due to on-street parking availability, Petaluma CA found that a one parking space per 300 SF of floor area met parking demands in their mixed use area. The parking study being conducted by Nelson/ Nygaard suggests similar ratios may be appropriate for Darien.

	Strip –Type Pattern	Hybrid Pattern	Village-Type Pattern
RESIDENTIAL	2.0 / dwelling	1.5 / dwelling	1.0 / dwelling
LODGING	1.0 / bedroom	1.0 / bedroom	1.0 / bedroom
OFFICE	3.0 / 1000 sq. ft.	3.0 / 1000 sq. ft.	2.0 / 1000 sq. ft.
RETAIL	4.0 / 1000 sq. ft.	4.0 / 1000 sq. ft.	3.0 / 1000 sq. ft.
CIVIC	To be determined by Warrant		
OTHER	To be determined by Warrant		

Adapted From Smart Code

The mix of uses on individual sites can create efficiency in terms of parking need. For example, a site containing office and lodging uses might be able to reduce the parking (by a factor of 1.7, or to 58%) to reflect that office users park during the day while lodging users park at night.



Smart Code

d. Change Parking Stall Size

Darien requires a 9’x20’ parking space while most areas required a 9’x18’ parking space. This additional 18 SF per parking space increases the area devoted to parking and increases the cost of parking development by at least 10 percent.

Underground Parking

Note that Section 685.c of the Zoning Regulations indicates that one level of underground parking in the Noroton Heights Redevelopment district shall not constitute a story.

Similar language might be considered for Downtown.

e. Accommodate Structured Parking

- Continue to allow parking structures by Special Permit (ZR Section 907) but modify criteria in the CBD district to allow multiple stories and to require an active streetscape in front of structured parking
- Consider limiting underground parking to one level or counting additional underground levels as a story
- Seek to provide for distributed parking locations so that all areas benefit from public parking areas

Parking Structure At Sidewalk



Unshielded Parking Structure



Liner Buildings with Parking Behind



Street Level Use With Parking Above



f. Consider “Fee-In-Lieu-Of-Parking” Provisions

- Incorporate “fee-in-lieu-of-parking: (FILOP)

g. Consider Encouraging Or Requiring Parking Arrangements That Balance A Site-Based With An Area-Based Approach:

- A minimum percentage of on-street parking with a “fee-in-lieu of parking”(FILOP) if the requirement is not met
- A minimum percentage of on-site surface parking with a FILOP if the requirement is not met
- A maximum percentage of on-site underground parking
- A bonus of some type (or receipt of a FILOP payment) if public parking is provided or a public parking structure established
- The possibility of paying a “fee-in-lieu of parking” for all parking requirements (i.e. – a site could rely entirely on public parking)

h. Consider Creating A Parking Authority / Department To Manage Parking In The Downtown Area

- Consider establishing or promoting public parking facilities, including garages
- Consider enhanced parking time enforcement (as needed)
- Delineate on-street parking stalls
- Consider the possibility of charging fees for on-street parking (in the future)

i. Improve Signage / Wayfinding To Parking Areas

Example of Coordinated Directional Signage



Parking Approaches

In communities like Darien, parking can be provided in a number of ways:

Site- Based

1. Surface parking on project site at time of development
2. Deferral of on-site installation at time of development (timing)
3. Off-setting peaks (fewer spaces needed at time of development)
4. Structured parking (underground or garage)

Area- Based

5. On-street parking (reduces on-site requirement)
6. Public parking facilities (reduces on-site requirement)
7. Fee-in-lieu-of parking (offsets timing of parking from time of development)
8. Structured parking (underground or in garage)

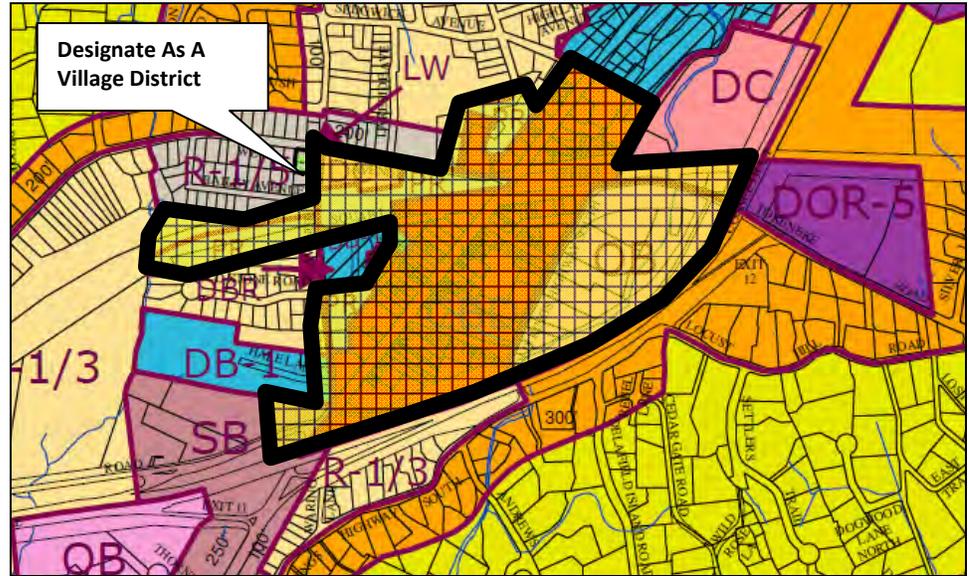
Other

9. No parking requirement (area is supported by public parking, transit, or pedestrians)

6. Modify Regulations

a. Establish A “Village District”

- Establish a village district overlay zone which extends out to include adjacent non-residential areas including parking lots (Town, private, State)



b. Consider Reviewing / Revising Permitted Uses

<p>Uses To Consider Requiring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active street front / street-level uses • Mixed use with residential uses on upper floors
<p>Uses To Consider Changing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-story above-ground parking structures by Special Permit (currently limited to one story) • Lodging • Restaurant / outdoor dining / food use by simpler permit process
<p>Uses To Consider Excluding (or discouraging from prime locations)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-story below-ground parking structures (allow one-story only) • Drive-through facilities from locations visible from the street or which impact the street experience • Less active uses such as banks, real estate offices, etc.

c. Consider Modifying Building Height Approach

Building height regulations are typically used to manage building size and bulk. In conjunction with building setbacks, building height regulations also establish the overall proportions and “sense of enclosure”

**1:1 Ratio with 66' ROW
(66' Facade Height)**



**2:1 Ratio with 66' ROW
(33' Facade Height)**



**3:1 Ratio with 66' ROW
(22' Facade Height)**



**4:1 Ratio with 66' ROW
(16.5' Facade Height)**



- The Route 1 Study advocated for more height (such as a full third floor) if it would provide for housing (third floor could be set back from the road)
- As shown on the following page, Darien consider increasing the building height or changing from an average height approach to a street wall / sloping plane approach which will allow more street wall height if the building is set back further
- Measure height from the street grade or sidewalk grade (to avoid the “building on a pedestal” like Bank of America)
- Maintain the open space requirement for additional height above the basic standard (sidewalks and walkways should not count)

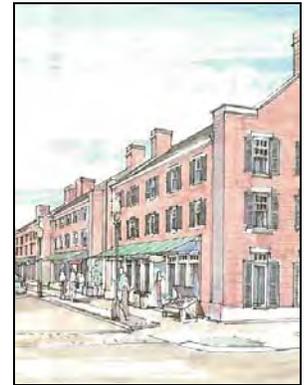
Building Height

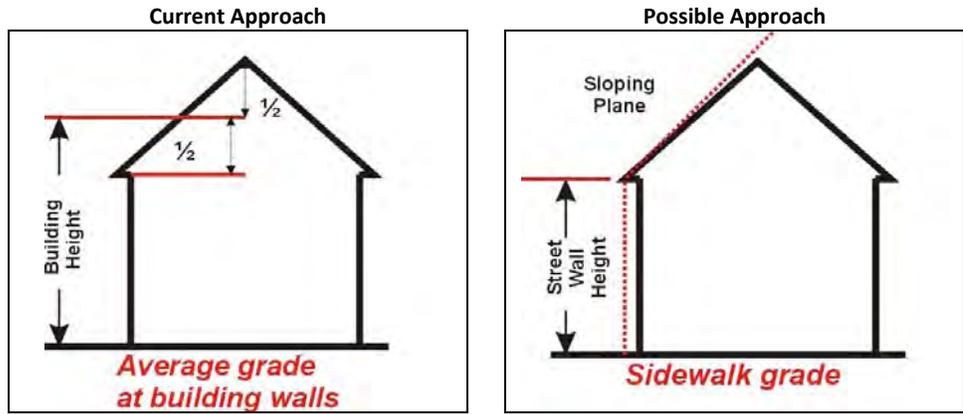
The Zoning Regulations currently allow more basic building height in Noroton Heights (2 stories and 30 feet) than is allowed in Downtown (2 stories and 28 feet).

In addition, more optional building height is allowed in Noroton Heights (3 stories and 40 feet) than is allowed in Downtown (3 stories and 35 feet).

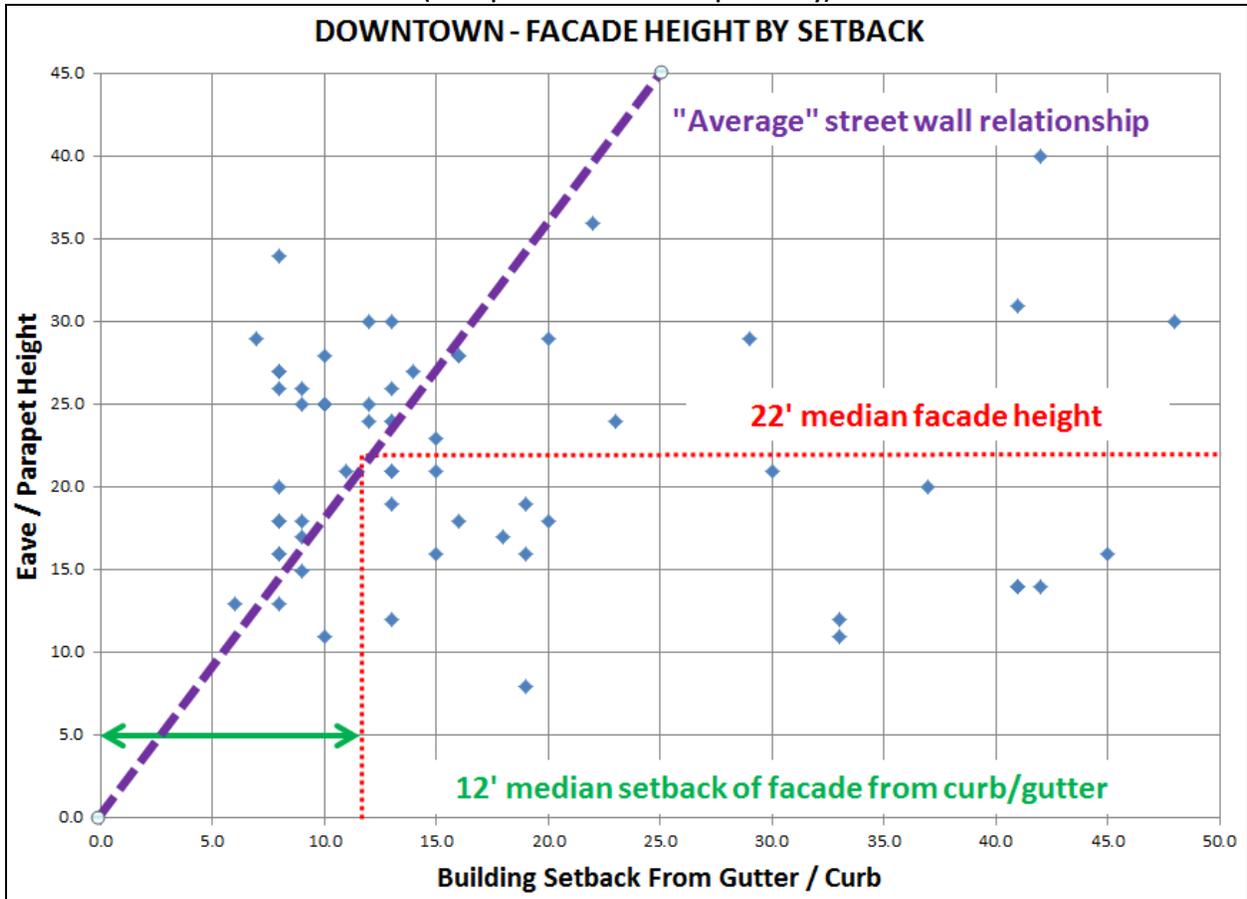
Note that the “Golden” plan for Noroton Heights showed three story buildings.

Golden Plan



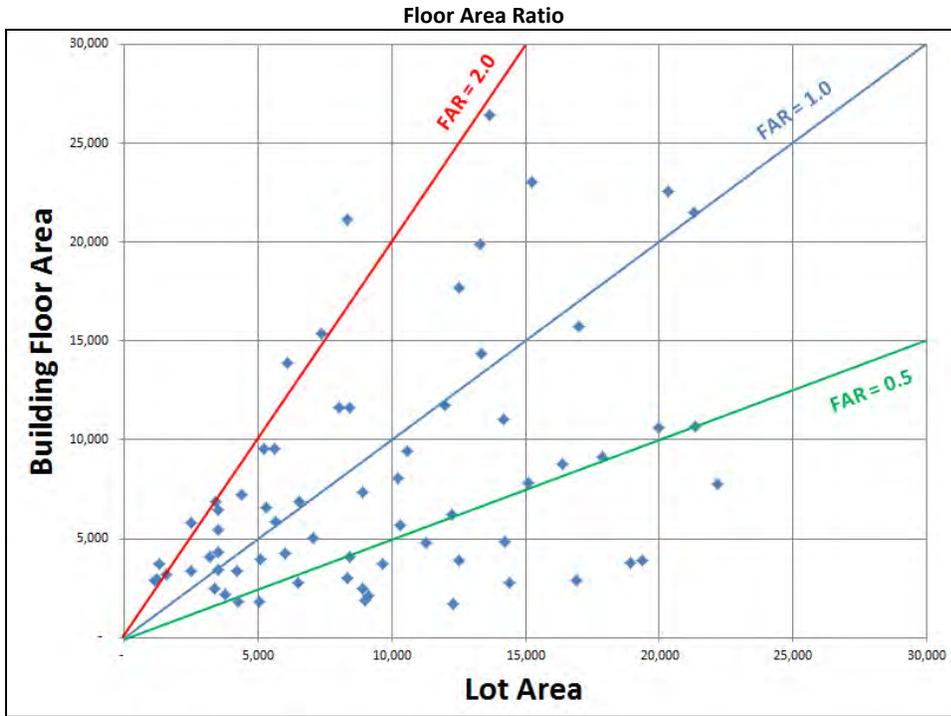


Existing Building Height / Setback Relationship
(Concept – For Discussion Purposes Only)



d. Consider Regulating Floor-Area Ratio

Some communities development by a maximum floor-area ratio. Darien may wish to consider a similar approach.



Floor Area Ratio By Block (From Route 1 Study)



e. Consider Reviewing / Revising Residential Provisions

- Consider establishing a residential density limit
- Consider increasing unit size limits (currently limited to 1,000 square feet per unit) or using an average floor area per unit (note that 1,,200 square foot units are allowed in the Noroton Heights Redevelopment overlay zone)
- Consider managing the number of bedrooms
 - Limit to 2 bedrooms/unit with 3+ bedrooms/unit allowed by special permit
 - Review provision that 30% of units be 1 BR (ZR 656)

f. Continue To Require / Provide For An Active Streetfront

- Encourage narrow storefronts / lots of visual interest
- Minimum window area requirement
- Establish a “build-to zone” which provides for a maximum front yard setback (minimum setback = 0 feet / maximum setback = XX feet)
- Require a minimum building frontage (i.e. – percent of lot frontage) unless waived by the PZC to ensure a continuous building wall

g. Over Time, Consider Extending The CBD Zone

- Extend the CBD zone to I-95 (i.e. – change the OB zone to CBD)

Outdoor Dining



Intriguing Passageway



7. Maintain / Enhance Design Guidelines

a. Maintain The Design Review Process

- Continue to be support the Architectural Review Board
- Continue to be sensitive to the historic context of Downtown
- Continue to encourage / require non-monolithic buildings (articulation, materials, roofing, eaves, finishes)

b. Over Time, Add In Additional Guidelines For Downtown

- Consider guidelines to encourage / require “public art”
- Parking structures (require liner buildings / ground floor retail)
- Mechanical areas
 - Location of service areas (transformers, meters, delivery, refuse, recycling) identified and screened
 - Screening of mechanical equipment (compressors, exhaust fans, etc.) especially from residential uses

Utility Meters



Transformer



Traffic Signal Box



- Inset doorways / features to avoid conflict with pedestrian space

Building Feature (Window)
Extending Into Pedestrian Space



Door Swinging Into Pedestrian Space



8. Enhance Transit

a. Enhance The Train Station

- Provide at least one (1) pedestrian bridge at the station to shorten the distance of pedestrian crossings and provide an alternative to the narrow underpass at Leroy Avenue
- Improve the train station building to provide a handicapped accessible waiting room / platform (the current building floor is several feet below the platform level)
- Provide a covered canopy for more of the train platform (or for the entire length of the platform)
- Provide better lighting (at the stations, in the parking areas, and between the station and parking areas)

Darien Station



Steps Between Station and Platform



Train Station



b. Expand Train Station Parking

- Continue to investigate ways to expand parking at the train stations in ways that are compatible with the overall community
 - Maintain and enhance municipal parking facilities
 - Work with the State to renew / extend the leases on State parking facilities in order to support local investment in these facilities (supported by parking revenues)
 - Consider ways to maintain the parking supply currently provided on private lands
- Consider that the lack of a lease extension for the State parking facilities leaves open the possibility that CT-DOT may be considering alternative arrangements which might not be aligned with local interests

Possible Train Station Parking Expansion Locations



c. Enhance Bus Services

- Support increased frequency of bus service
- Support establishment of shelters at bus stop locations
- Consider designated bus pull-off areas

9. Other Strategies

a. Context-Sensitive Roadway Design

- Ensure Route 1 continues to contribute to local character
- If necessary, investigate “un-numbering” the State highway to help accomplish local objectives and encourage “context-sensitive” results

b. Consider Reinforcing Edges / Gateways

Possible Gateway Element



Possible Gateway Element



c. Continue To Create Meaningful Public Spaces



Blue Back Square



Storrs Center



d. Improve / Enhance The Bridges

- Public art on the railroad bridge
- Pedestrian-friendly lighting for both underpasses
- Impact warnings on the railroad bridge

Public Art



Underpass Lighting



e. Provide Amenities For Cyclists

- Shared travel lane for bicycles on Route 1
- Add “sharrow” markings / signage
- Covered bicycle racks

f. Enhance Utility Infrastructure

- Require undergrounding of wired utilities
- Extend natural gas to support area development
- Upgrade / maintain water service (pressure)
- Seek to expand / enhance “wi-fi” service in the area
- Transition to LED lighting for area lighting



g. Consider Common Arrangements

- At some time in the future, consider the potential desirability of common arrangements for the Downtown area
 - Establishment of an informal coordinating committee for common branding / marketing
 - Establishment of a more formal special services district
 - Coordination of “pop-up parks” and other special events

**Stone Street
(New York City)**



**Block Party
(San Diego)**



h. Evaluate Ways To Retain Local Character

- Some communities have adopted regulations to retain local character and flavor (with non-chain retailers and restaurants) while also accommodating regional and national retailers / restaurants
 - West Concord, MA
 - Nantucket, MA
 - Newburyport, MA
- Some communities have adopted limitations on floor areas of retail tenants

Possible Vision

**For the Draft POCD,
a three-dimensional model
(similar to the graphic below)
can be prepared
to illustrate a possible vision
for Downtown
based on feedback and
direction from the Commission**

Possible Vision



