

Windsor Locks Plan of Conservation and Development Section VI: Economic Development



Economic Development

Introduction

Windsor Locks, which is located equidistant between Hartford, Connecticut and Springfield, Massachusetts, was originally built around the Connecticut River and has always had a strong connection to transportation and industry. The town is located along highway 91 which runs north and south through the state and is home to both the Bradley International Airport and an Amtrak rail stop. Additionally, the town is ideally located midway along the New York to Boston corridor. Windsor Locks is connected, convenient and competitive within the region and beyond.

Windsor Locks is the present location of many nationally and internationally recognized corporate and business entities. These include Collins Aerospace, formerly Hamilton Sunstrand, an innovative and leading supplier of design, products and services related to space flight and aviation, as well as Ahlstrom-Munksjö, formerly known as Dexter Corporation, one of the world's leading players in sustainable and innovative fiber solutions. Ahlstrom-Munksjö is the second oldest firm in continuous operation in the United States.

Industrial Sector Overview

Since 2007, when the last Plan was completed, the town has continued to see growth in its industrial sector. The following are some examples of such growth:

- UTC/Collins Engineering Lab
- Serta Simmons Bedding
- Mazak Corp
- Design Automation Associates
- Spectrum Machine & Design, located on Old County Circle, specializes in manufacturing of complex parts and tooling for the Aerospace and Defense Industries.

Photo: <https://www.collinsaerospace.com>



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- Permasteelisa, an international company with presence in 30 countries, specializing in design and manufacturing of architectural exterior and interior building systems, has expanded from their Windsor office to now utilize industrial space in Windsor Locks off of Route 75.

These are examples of the many companies that bring significant local investment. The community's location, proximity to ideal transportation and freight capabilities and attractive tax structure continue to appeal to such locally and internationally recognized companies. This section of the Plan will go on to further discuss what site selectors consider in their location decision making, including available land, available workforce, local permitting processes and nearness to other companies providing ancillary services and partnership opportunities.

Business Sector Overview

In addition to maintaining a strong Industrial sector, the Town's business sector is experiencing investment. Commercial properties that were vacant or blighted are seeing façade improvements, redevelopment and new development. This is primarily due to enforcement and economic development efforts along with proximity to the airport, high activity levels and traffic volumes.

The following are examples of such operations:

- Hothead Burritos
- Popeye's
- Pho 75
- Bobby V's
- Hungry Rhino
- Springhill Suites

While not yet constructed, the community continues to receive applications and inquiries for brewery, bakery, bistro, multi-family housing and mixed use development concepts.

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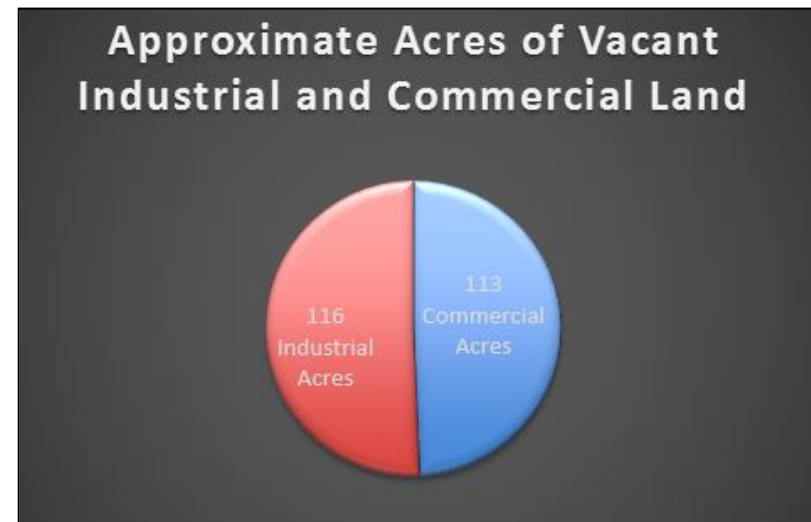
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Growth Opportunity and Trends

Conversations about Mixed-Use Development, Adaptive Reuse, Infill and Transit oriented Development (TOD) are prevalent among public officials, planners and communities nationwide. As industry changes we see more digital and robotic design, increased office space and less manufacturing floor space. Towns and cities are promoting creative reuse of industrial space to avoid vacancies and sometimes to preserve historic buildings. This can be a positive trend. Adaptive reuse is an alternative to sprawl and can create vibrant, more village-like residential neighborhoods in closer proximity to businesses, and perhaps even light industrial maker spaces. It becomes more difficult to talk about industrial, business and residential uses in their own silos. This Plan will describe development opportunity in each of the sectors, but will dive deeper into that Mixed-Use, Adaptive Reuse, Infill and TOD conversation as well.

Vacant Industrial and Commercial Land

While Windsor Locks is considered a small town by population, the community has denser and more urbanized characteristics than many small towns. One important reality is that the remaining vacant land is quite limited. As the following chart shows, there are approximately 117 acres of vacant industrially zoned land and 113 acres of vacant business zoned land. At the time of the 2007 Plan there were approximately 120 business acres available and 150 industrial acres available. This calls for an additional focus on redevelopment opportunities, filling vacant tenancies, infill, tourism and adaptive reuse to ensure economic sustainability.



Industrial Districts

Industrially zoned land is expected to decrease slightly from that which is currently indicated on the Official Zoning Map of the Town due to rezoning and flood resiliency efforts. Most of the town's industrially zoned land

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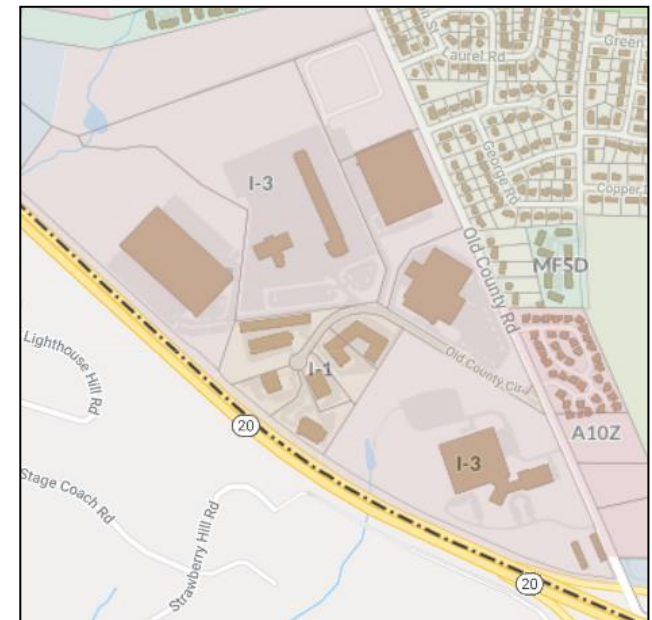
is developed, but there are still small pockets of undeveloped acreage available. As the amount of developable land decreases, the pressure increases to maximize existing land uses and obtain the greatest possible economic return. The community will need to balance the need for continued growth with the impacts to nearby residential neighborhoods. Some of the infill opportunities within the town are in close proximity to roads and lands that serve the town's residents. Adaptive Reuse regulations should continue to be utilized as trends in industry change, allowing for flexibility in use of industrial spaces and ensuring occupied industrial spaces.

There are 130 properties devoted to industrial uses, which amounts to approximately 770 acres, or 13% percent of the Town's land area of which the overwhelming majority are aerospace, design, training, precision manufacturing and freight oriented—such as Collins / UTC Aerospace, Mazak Corp, Spectrum Machine and Design and Multi-Mode Logistics.

Each of the industrial areas are described and discussed below.

I. Old County Road and Old County Circle

One of the major industrial areas in Town is along Old County Road. In the late 1990's, this area was identified as the area having the greatest potential for industrial development where four parcels contained over 160 acres of undeveloped property. These properties have since been developed and have become an important and successful Industrial District adjacent to Route 20 only minutes from Bradley International Airport. Uses include the Federal Express, Ford Motor Company, Mazak Corp. and American Wood Molding (now Serta Simmons Bedding). These parcels have been carefully developed to avoid any additional curb cuts onto Old County Road, direct all truck traffic to the south toward Route 20, and mandate significant landscaped buffers which, now mature, mitigate impacts onto the residential area on the east side of Old County Road. It is important that these mitigation measures are maintained.



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Compost Facility. The Town owned land which is currently permitted as a compost facility likely has greater potential for a future light industrial or other transitional use. Additionally, the existence of the compost facility may cause limitation on future development of the adjacent vacant parcels to the north and west of this property. The Town should investigate whether other less valuable land can be used for the compost operation to free this parcel for a higher value use and eliminate the chance of permitting and development conflicts.

Halfway House Road and Old County Road. The area near the intersection of Old County Road and Halfway House Road should be considered for rezoning. Industrial uses in such close proximity to residential neighborhoods is not ideal. The Commission rezoned a parcel north of the Fox Hollow residential community as Multi Family Special Development District (MFSD) to accommodate another cluster residential development. This left the Industrial Corridor divided into two sections and conflicting zones remain. The east side of Old County Road consists of long established residential neighborhoods. The rear portion of Concorde Way, known as Concorde Landing, is also residential. All industrially zoned land north of the MFSD zone on Old County Road should be considered for a zone change to encourage low intensity, optimal transitional uses that will support and connect the residential communities and business communities.



II. North Street

Another major Industrial area is located on North Street south of the Suffield town line. North Street has had an increase in single family homes, many of which were being constructed at the time of the last Plan in 2007. At this time, one of the largest available industrially zone parcels exists between current residential and industrial uses. While access to this parcel from King Spring Road would have been ideal, the community was not able to achieve this goal due to ownership



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patterns and other constraints. For this reason traffic will need to exit and enter from North Street. It is recommended that the Planning and Zoning Commission revise the permissible land uses for these parcels to those types of uses that do not generate large amounts of truck traffic, such as office, research and development, and light assembly uses. This will reduce the potential impacts on North Street. Sufficient buffers to the residential development to the east should be required in such revised zoning district.

III. River Road

As noted in Chapter III, the twelve properties on River Road are zoned industrial, yet those that are developed contain single or multifamily uses. Two of these properties are on the east side of the road, owned by the State of Connecticut and the Town of Windsor Locks. A survey was conducted of property owners and residents (2017) to see what uses the participants wanted on this road. Overwhelmingly the responses supported a zone change from industrial to residential. Some participants were open to using the vacant land for park space and access to the river. Participants did not support the addition of boutique shops, active recreation areas or other commercial uses. It should be noted that any substantial improvements to these properties must comply with flood zone regulations. It is recommended that a residential zone be applied to these properties, removing the



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Survey for Residents and Property Owners Land Use on River Road

Thank you for taking a moment to complete this survey. Currently all of River Road is zoned "industrial". Historically it has been a residential neighborhood. Industrial uses may not be the best fit for this location due to proximity to the CT River, flood hazard areas and regulated wetland soils, and due to the existence of an already established residential neighborhood. The Planning and Zoning Commission is updating the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (aka the POCD), an aspirational document which guides future community-wide decision making and policy/regulation changes. Prior to making recommendations in the POCD our office would like your feedback. Please check the circles next to the uses below that you would find appropriate on River Road:

- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Trucking
- ☐ Warehouse and Storage
- ☐ Boutique shops
- ☐ Office / Retail
- ☐ Restaurant
- ☐ Bed and Breakfast
- ☐ Banquet / Resort
- ☐ Residential
- ☐ Parks and Open Space
- ☐ Riverfront Public Access
- ☐ Comments/Other

Thank you!

Jen

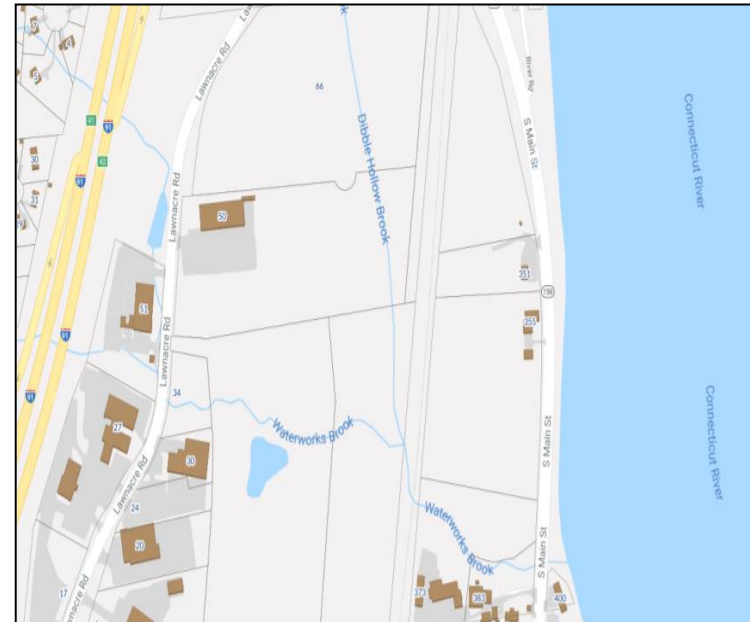
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non-conformity (residential in an industrial zone) and maintaining the single family / duplex development pattern that exists. The Town should explore opportunities for passive public recreation, particularly on the river side where the public land is located.

IV. Lawnacre Road

Lawnacre Road Industrial District is located in the southeast corner of town near the Connecticut River. It consists of Recreational Vehicle Sales, Construction Companies, Industrial Garages and similar uses. Isolated from residential neighborhoods and near highway 91, it is an ideal location for businesses to locate. However, most of the parcels on Lawnacre Road are in, or partially in, a flood zone and some contain portions of Dibble Hollow Brook and Waterworks Brook. Development on these parcels is more strictly regulated by the Flood Hazard section of the Zoning Regulations. It is recommended that the Town analyze this industrial district in regard to available land, development or preservation potential, zoning regulations, natural resource protection and resiliency planning.



Industrial District Conclusion

The Windsor Locks industrial areas may be close to build-out. The community is faced with ensuring that the existing buildings remain marketable. This will necessitate redevelopment. There can be unique barriers to redevelopment such as environmental contamination, the need for creative financing and increased costs. The town should work closely with property owners and state agencies to remove such barriers, and whenever possible, streamline permitting processes and encourage use of the Adaptive Reuse regulations. Reinvestment in these areas is critical or the industrial/commercial buildings will begin to deteriorate. Tax benefits or other types of economic support for rehabilitation of older commercial and industrial properties over fifty years old should be considered. Keeping older developed areas in acceptable and marketable condition will also require continued active enforcement under the blight and property maintenance codes.

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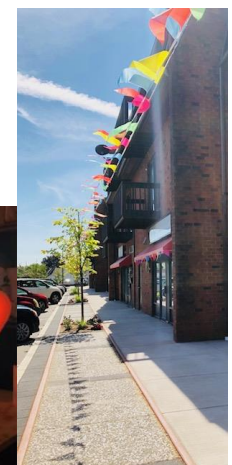
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Business Districts

Commercially zoned land is not expected to increase appreciably from that which is currently indicated on the Official Zoning Map of the Town. Most commercially zoned land is developed, but there are still small pockets of undeveloped acreage left adjacent to Ella Grasso Turnpike (Rt. 75) and throughout the community. As these pockets are in-filled pressure will increase to maximize existing land uses in order to obtain the greatest possible economic return. The Town has recently seen tear-downs and redevelopment of older previous developed commercial properties, as well as a number of façade improvements in 2017 and 2018 in particular. Two additional factors may come into play in the next decade, specifically a master redevelopment plan for the Bradley International Airport and Main Street revitalization efforts, which will result in redevelopment opportunities in each of these commercial districts. Any in-fill development and redevelopment needs to be carefully and thoughtfully managed to produce positive changes for the businesses, customers and the Town residents as a whole. Redevelopment throughout the community will offer opportunity for new commercial services, jobs, better circulation, connectivity, more aesthetic architecture and landscaping.

There are approximately 570 acres, or nearly 10% of the Town's land area, devoted to commercial uses of which the overwhelming majority are travel oriented—such as hotels, motels, car rentals, valet parking, auto service, and food service. With the planned growth of Bradley International Airport, and the downtown station relocation and planned Transit Oriented Development, these uses will intensify.

These commercial acres are divided among several distinct business districts that have unique roles, opportunities and challenges. Each of these areas are described and discussed on the pages to follow.



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I. Ella Grasso Turnpike Area

Since the 2007 Plan substantial commercial development has recently occurred within the business district along Ella Grasso Turnpike (Route 75). The majority of this commercial and retail development indirectly and directly correlates to the growing passenger and freight business associated with Bradley International Airport. As it was in the previous decade, growth has been particularly strong in the service oriented sector such as hotel rooms and restaurants. The trend of maximizing commercial sites and redeveloping commercial buildings is likely to continue as vacant sites are limited.

Hotel. The Planning and Zoning Commission should look very closely at any new proposals for hotels beyond those already approved. Windsor Locks has over 1300 constructed hotel rooms and more than 200 approved hotel rooms not yet constructed. Developers should provide the justification that additional hotel rooms are needed in the market as the reuse of current hotel buildings may be a challenge in the future.

Valet Parking. Valet parking lots have historically posed a unique problem for this area of Town. They occupy a significant percentage of valuable frontage on Route 75. The Planning and Zoning Commission should continue its effort to require these frontages to be developed more intensely with parking relegated to the rear of properties. It is possible that some of the valet parking sites that currently exist will be moved to the airport proper, freeing up valuable frontage along this corridor for new, private development. The town should keep regular communication with airport staff and business owners to understand and anticipate such opportunities.

Transportation. Section VI of the Plan discusses current challenges for Route 75 related to travel and traffic, though transportation efforts are equally applicable to this section. A safe and well-designed transportation system will greatly enhance the economic development opportunities in an area. It is imperative that the community continue to work with the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation, Bradley International Airport and adjacent property owners in order to redesign Route 75, building on the

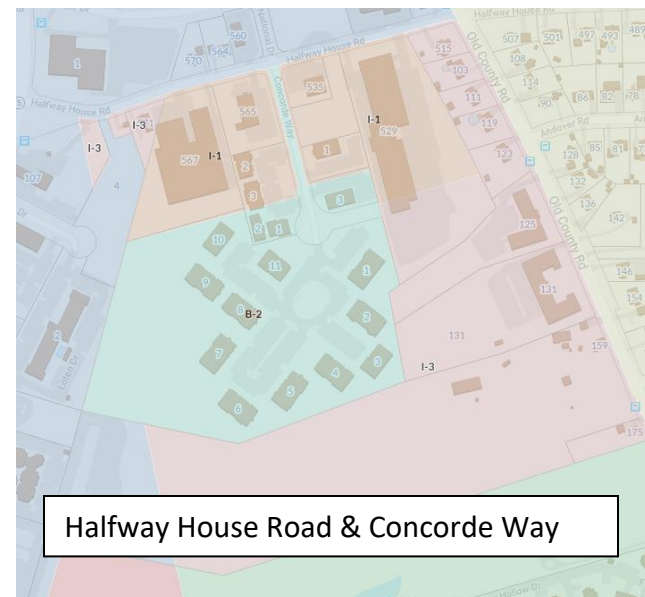
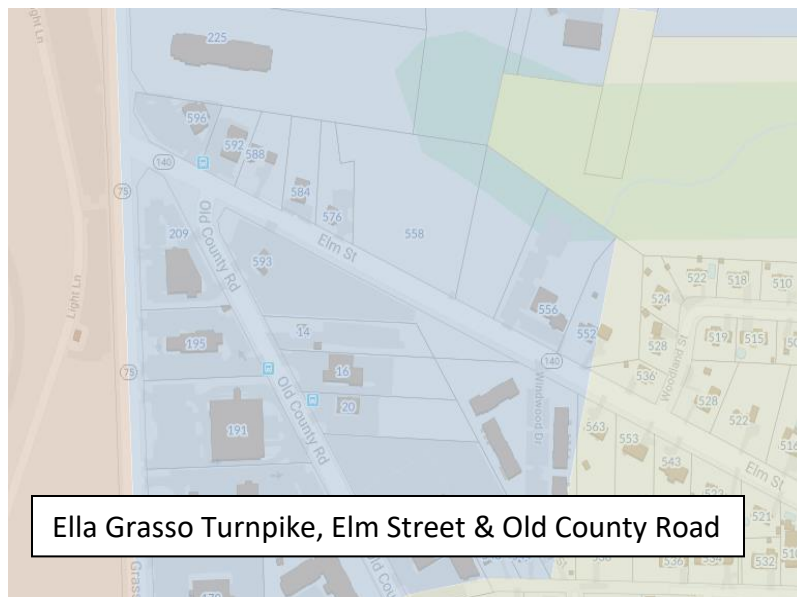


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pedestrian improvements to be installed in 2019. With safety and traffic calming improvements made, and with the corridor's location proximate to Route 20, the airport, rail and highway 91, this commercial area is sure to continue to be a sought-after location for new development. While it has been some time since the Bradley Area Transportation Study was completed, the document continues to provide several sound recommendations, one of which is to provide "back access" roads, to the extent possible, parallel to Route 75. This would provide new frontage, better circulation and access to the rear portions of existing properties and therefor expand development opportunities. This concept should continue to be explored. If, due to topographic, environmental or other constraints, this plan is not able to be achieved, the town should consider construction of an active travel trail for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Transitional Uses near Ella Grasso Turnpike Over time, a varied zoning pattern developed in the transition areas near Elm Street, Halfway House Road and Concorde Way. In all cases, single family residential properties exist very close to busy commercial and industrial areas. There are several vacant parcels that serve as transition areas between these zones. It is recommended that the community explore rezoning for these nodes to encourage village uses, carefully considering whether heavy industrial uses should continue to be permitted. Village-like transition areas could accommodate multi-family development, office, low impact commercial uses and light industrial uses.



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II. Town Center

This district encompasses the historic downtown area of Windsor Locks. Main Street experienced substantial urban renewal that removed much of the historic building forms that once stood there. Development that occurred in the 70's and 80's had a somewhat higher density, and a slightly higher mixture of uses than other business districts, but were built with a generally suburban, rather than downtown character.

The Downtown has a tremendous number of assets including, the Connecticut River, the Canal Trail, over seventy businesses, government center, ample housing and historic structures. The Planning and Zoning Commission and Economic and Industrial Development Commission, as recommended in the 2007 Plan, pushed for a Strategic Master Plan for Downtown that would analyze the relationship of buildings, public spaces, traffic, gateways, the pedestrian environment, lighting, signage and more. This resulted in the Downtown Master Plan 2008 prepared by Ferrero and Hixon.



Downtown Master Plan 2008. The most significant action item to result from this Plan was to pursue the relocation of the train station back to the downtown, promoting transit-oriented development. The town has made significant strides in gaining a commitment from the State and Amtrak to relocate the station. Other efforts underway include the use of middle school grounds and Town Hall slope for fairs and events, the redevelopment of the Montgomery Mill and the receipt of construction funding for Complete Streets adjacent to the new station location. The major policy recommendation was to adopt the Main Street Overlay Zone, which the Planning and Zoning Commission has since adopted. Here is a summary of recommendations, many of which have now been realized, while some are a work in progress:

- ✔ Pursue Train Station Relocation
- ✔ Promote Transit Oriented Development
- ✔ Petition State DEEP to reinitiate Canal State Park
- ✔ Develop Supportive Overlay District
- ✔ Encourage Mixed Uses and Higher Density
- ✔ Promote Ahlstrom / Industry as Unique to Center

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In Progress: Rail Crossing to Montgomery Mill Connectivity is essential to creating walkable communities. One important recommendation within the Main Street Study is to explore a crossing, vehicular and/or pedestrian, from Canal Bank to a newly constructed train stop. This would provide improved circulation, increased safety and direct access to the train by residents of the Montgomery Mill, and a connection to the 4.5 mile Canal Trail, the Canal Park and the Connecticut River itself. The Town should continue to work with all stakeholders to fully explore this opportunity.

Windsor Locks: Once and Future, Transit Oriented Development Study. As a follow up to the Downtown Master Plan, the town commissioned the Once and Future TOD Study, prepared by Fuss & O'Neil in 2013. The study provides a thorough assessment of the downtown area in Windsor Locks as it relates to the relocation of the rail platform from the current southern end of town back to Main Street. The purpose of the study was to identify and define opportunities associated with the passenger rail station's downtown location. The following were the guiding principles developed through such engagement:

"Windsor Locks is uniquely positioned in the region, is well connected to regional activity centers via highways and arterials, as well as by rail and bus transit. Relocation of the station brings many opportunities, including downtown's becoming a hub for commuter travel along the Hartford – Springfield line."
Windsor Locks: Once and Future
TOD Study Fuss & O'Neill

1. Rediscover a sense of community pride.
2. Create a vibrant walkable mixed use downtown community.
3. Capitalize on current and future reinvestment opportunities.
4. Institute a community of landscaped open spaces to extend and reknit the downtown.
5. Improve the perception and access to downtown through identity and signage.



Windsor Locks: ONCE AND FUTURE

Transit-Oriented Development Study

Volume 1 - Recommendations

A number of specific recommendations were made as a result of citizen, stakeholder and steering committee engagement, which are laid out in more detail on the following pages.

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Market Recommendations included:

1. a substantial increase in housing units within a ten minute walk to the station site
2. identify and aggressively seek development partners for the Montgomery Mill site (completed)

Over a dozen transportation, redevelopment, complete streets and economic development interventions were identified throughout the study process, as demonstrated in the Visioning Plan. The study recommendations were adopted by the community into the 2007 town Plan and much progress has been made to implement those recommendations. Windsor Locks should continue to refer to this study as a critical guiding document on transit-oriented development and a resource for market recommendations, mobility initiatives, redevelopment sequencing and prioritization of public capital improvements.

Visioning



Design Interventions Key Plan

ConnDOT TOD Desire and Readiness Workshop with residents and business members - 2017



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Hartford Springfield Line, New Rail Station. In an overall plan to revitalize downtown Windsor Locks and create a thriving and connected community, the construction of the new rail station is key. As a major recommendation of the Main Street Study and the TOD Once and Future Plan, ensuring that this project comes to fruition has been a priority for the town. Great progress has been made through coordination with Amtrak, the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation and Windsor Locks to further design both the adjacent complete streets and the station area. Continuing to work cooperatively with these departments, and pursuing opportunities for public private partnerships (a.k.a. P3) will be important in working toward construction of the relocated platform, “up and over” and double tracking.

Pictured here: ConnDOT public meeting 9.19.2019 photo (left) and depiction of a first phase of the station relocation (right).



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Historic Train Station. Historic structures are irreplaceable. They strengthen and diversify a community and enhance public spaces. Investment in public spaces can then be a catalyst for private investment and a growing grand list, which helps to pay for local services. In the Windsor Locks Transit-Oriented Development Study, Historic Station Restoration is identified in the Design Interventions Key Plan. Since the 2007 Plan, and due to efforts to relocate the station back to the center of town, the community explored the idea of using the historic station as the new station building. Feedback at this time indicates that it cannot serve as such.

In 2015 the town engaged Goman & York to conduct an Adaptive Reuse Study to explore modern, compatible uses for the space. The Reuse Study, which reviewed such uses as gallery, public meetings, bistro and co-work space, confirmed that the nearby market could support a mixture of private and public uses. The Study also provided a resource for market data and template business plans. The TOD Once and Future Study states, "Windsor Locks' downtown can compete for additional neighborhood shopping, eating, and drinking spending from a trade area within a 7 minute drive time (Trade Area)" when the active station is relocated, "capturing at least 15 percent of expenditure potential and by 2022 the downtown could support 8,000 square feet of additional eating and drinking space", much of which should be located on Main Street. With a historic and cultural component, this drive time would be increased, as people tend to travel farther and stay longer when a trip involves tourist attractions. Parking availability, local fundraising and grant opportunities must continue to be sought after as needed to support restoration and reuse.



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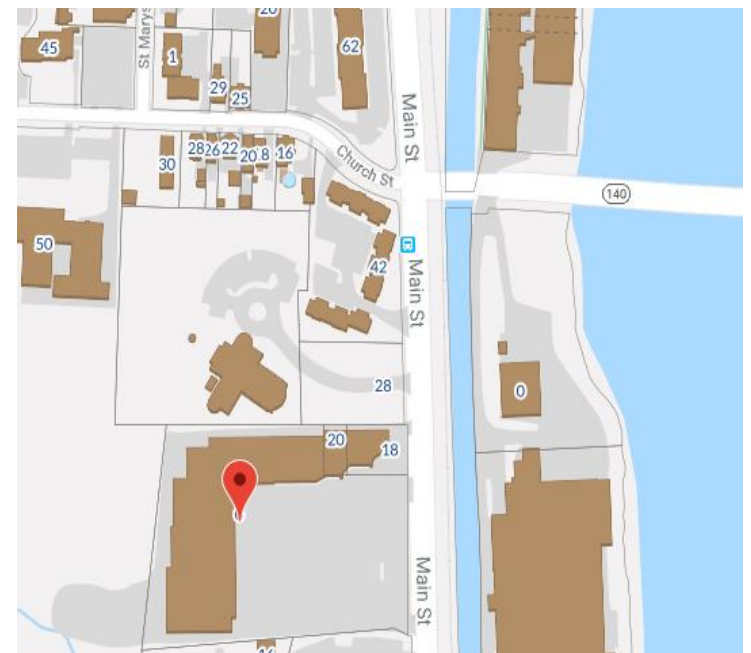
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Each year for the past few years, the Windsor Locks Middle School has hosted “Heritage Day”, a fundraising fair which has raised thousands of dollars toward this initiative. The ad hoc “Save the Train Station Committee” should work with other boards, commissions, staff, state agencies and other volunteers to increase outreach and fundraising efforts and finalize restoration. Historic Restoration project concepts, coupled with an operational use, give small town residents a reason to stay, and tourists a reason to visit. A local business partnered with a historic space offer a unique built environment that communities embrace which cannot be replicated, adding value to the neighborhood and town altogether. The Windsor Locks Train Station once restored will highlight the importance that local businesses have in place-making. Directly adjacent to the new station “to-be”, this project should be prioritized.

Needed Restoration includes windows, doors, exterior finish work and interior fit-out.

18 – 20 Main Street aka Dexter Plaza. Dexter Plaza, due to its acreage and the amount of retail space, is a significant parcel on Main Street. The site is developed in a suburban form rather than a traditional downtown development pattern. While this is an historically underperforming plaza in terms of vacancies and relative to redevelopment potential, several new businesses filled vacancies between 2018 and 2019 adding a great deal of vibrancy. Business owners have communicated that this surge is in large part due to local revitalization efforts, local economic development potential, including the commitment to relocate the station downtown. The Town should continue to work with the property owner to consider creative ways to enhance the property, encourage upkeep an explore rethinking and redevelopment of this parcel in the future. This exploration should include breaking up pavement in favor of green space, additional landscaping and an eventual reconfiguration of building placement that places new buildings at the street line in a traditional multi-use and multi-story downtown pattern.

Increased public realm such as a parklet, interior landscaping, outdoor seating and other bike / pedestrian amenities would also be welcome. Lastly, the perimeter of the property should be considered for shared



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private/public pathways, greenway access or additional public parking, in particular that portion of the property which borders the Middle School and leads to Kettle Brook.

11 Grove Street aka Windsor Locks Housing Authority. The Windsor Locks Housing Authority has shown interest in pursuing new, additional, mixed use development along the street line at their Main Street property. This property has one of the largest amounts of available frontage along Main Street and is located across the street from the future station site, an ideal site for additional housing units, retail and other public amenities. Stakeholders should continue to explore such development opportunities.



255 Main Street aka Windsor Locks Commons. With an option to purchase the parcel, the community issued an RFQ for the Windsor Lock Commons property in 2019 and a mixed use developer was selected. The Evaluation Committee and other stakeholders should continue to work together bring this most proximate TOD redevelopment project to fruition, in harmony with this Plan, previous planning study recommendations and the Purpose Statement in the Main Street Overlay Zone regulations. This project will need to be carefully coordinated with the construction of the train station and associated parking in order to maximize redevelopment potential and recreate a wall of Main Street buildings along the property's frontage.

Chestnut and Main Street. The community has been working alongside property owners to provide a plan of consolidated parcels with the ultimate goal of developing new mixed use (housing over retail) construction directly across the street from the new train station. Windsor Locks has been successful at this intersection, with the help of property owners and State of CT funding sources, in demolition of blighted buildings, site preparation work, remediation, clearing, legal work and design. The work and coordination between all parties should continue in order to remove barriers to and incentivize redevelopment.

Montgomery Building and Canal State Park Trail. The “Montgomery Building”, which was long vacant, has now been converted to stunning apartments overlooking town center, the canal and the Connecticut River. This

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has been made possible through a strong, persistent and creative team of developers, professionals, Town and State agencies and many other stakeholders. Along with building restoration, the developer has worked with the Town, State of CT DEEP and others in order to create a trailhead park on the south side of the 4.5 mile State Park Trail. This will be an additional waterside amenity for the public. The community should continue to work together to realize a pedestrian access between the canal bank and the train station, along with additional efforts to increase safety, connectivity, river access and public amenities. As mentioned in other sections of this Plan, the Towns of Windsor Locks and Suffield, along with the Friends of the Canal and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection should partner to have the trail resurfaced. Trails, when connected to an overall transportation system and when maintained, can increase property values, boost spending at local businesses, make communities more attractive places to live, encourage healthy activity and can be a tool in revitalizing depressed areas.

The “Locks”. A Canal Study. The Towns of Suffield and Windsor Locks recognize the historical significance of the canal which runs parallel to the Connecticut River, Canal Bank and Main Street / Route 159 and in 2019 completed a study which begins to explore 1. the status of the canal from an integrity and maintenance perspective, 2. it's historic context and 3. the potential for future uses. In fact, the series of locks along with the canal which were constructed in order to bypass the Enfield Rapids, gave Windsor Locks it's name. The canal is a special asset for the community's residents and provide an attraction for tourists, in addition to providing water for use in cooling equipment and papermaking at the existing mill on the south side of Bridge Street. The recommendations from this study should be further reviewed and considered for implementation through stakeholder partnership. The canal and locks are symbols of Windsor Locks history, provide interest, beauty, and enhance the Connecticut River experience and they must be preserved.

Bridge Street, Church Street, Route 140. The intersection of Bridge Street, Church Street and Route 140 acts as a gateway to the Town. In the 2008 and 2013 downtown studies, this area is identified as one that could provide for beautification, traffic improvements, public amenities and art. The State of Connecticut Department of Transportation has been working with the community on a new roadway design which begins to address some of the traffic issues, and provides opportunity to move some of these efforts along. All stakeholders should continue to work together to provide these improvements and enhance this important gateway.

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East Windsor: Main Street and Warehouse Point.

Transit Oriented Development opportunities associated with the Windsor Locks passenger rail station's proposed downtown location, within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile or within a 5 to 10 minute walk, extend into the Main Street and Warehouse Point areas of East Windsor. The two communities should continue to work closely together on planning efforts related to transportation (both auto related and active), beautification, bridge/Connecticut River, food resource, housing, workforce and other planning or economic development efforts.



What is Tax Increment Financing (TIF)? Tax Increment Financing is a local economic development tool, permitted under Connecticut law, allowing municipalities to use all, or a portion of the tax revenues generated from new capital investment to assist in project financing. TIF permits a municipality to fund efforts such as beautification, economic development activities and public infrastructure improvements by using some of the new (increased) property taxes generated from new development within the geographic district. TIF can encourage industrial, commercial, retail or mixed-use development; increase employment opportunities; and broaden the tax base of the Town of Windsor Locks. Applications for Tax Increment Financing (whether initiated by the Town, a developer or business) are considered by Town staff and the Economic and Industrial Development Commission (EIDC), with all final approvals vested with the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting.

The Town Center / Main Street, and the land along Route 20 together represent the largest combination of vacant and underutilized properties in the community and also the biggest opportunity. Factors such as urban renewal, market trends, traffic access issues, potentially deficient public utility capacity and gaps in initial financing have all been identified as barriers to the success of adaptive reuse, revitalization and previous development proposals.

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The TIF looks to reduce gaps in financing for developers, removing some of the financial burden for properties where there are difficult or unusual barriers to development. The Town should continue to utilize this tool in order to incentivize wanted development in the downtown TIF district and the TIF districts along Route 20.

Food Resources / Public Market. In 2017 the Windsor Locks community began exploring the concept of a Public Market, conceived as a vehicle for increasing availability of food, especially locally produced agricultural products, reinvigorating the town center and the supporting the region's agricultural base. While there are supermarkets nearby, there are none in Windsor Locks. Many local residents have limited access to fresh, locally produced foods. The town envisions a year-round, new facility adjacent to the commuter rail station.

A lengthy Feasibility Study and Site Analysis was completed in 2017 that strongly concludes a public market will be successful if it were developed as an integral part of the downtown station location.

Next Steps:

1. Develop a Business Plan.
2. Form necessary partnerships.
3. Obtain technical assistance and marketing support.

Airport Interchange Overlay Zone (AIOZ). Several years ago the Planning and Zoning Commission took the initiative in creating a new mixed use business district. The Airport Interchange Overlay Zone was established at the northeast corner of the Bradley Field Connector (Route 20) and Old County Road. This land was previously zoned residential; and, the Commission recognized that there was a greater potential for this land than single family homes that would be more compatible to surrounding uses and offer a higher tax return to the community. This is particularly important as other Business Districts are getting closer to full build out. This District is unique in that it permits a mix of business and residential uses controlled by an overall Master Plan. This mixture of uses allow a transition of higher density uses near Route 20, and across from the Old County Circle industrial park and cluster residential uses at the northern end of the District where it abuts existing residential neighborhoods. The residential portion of this District has already been developed. It is important to the integrity of the District to encourage and ensure the business development of the remainder of the District is consistent the approved master concept plan.

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Route 20 Corridor and Old County Road

Route 20 Corridor At its eastern terminus, Rt. 20 spurs off of highway I-91 providing excellent and convenient access to both the Hartford and Springfield metropolitan areas. At the western end of the corridor in Windsor Locks, the Connecticut Airport Authority is implementing their plans to improve the roadway, terminal and ground transportation facilities and increase both passenger and cargo traffic at Bradley International Airport. There are several existing industrial buildings along the Route 20 corridor and a few large vacant parcels of land well positioned for development. These include the most significant of these parcels, mentioned below; a 17-acre parcel at RT 20 and RT 75, and approximately 50 acres of land at the Collins/UTC property at RT 20 and Hamilton Rd. The Town should encourage appropriate development here as Connecticut and the Region continue to climb out of the slow growth period between 2008 and 2018.

Old County Road. There is a large undeveloped business-zoned parcel consisting of about 76 acres of land bordered by the Bradley Field Connector (Route 20) and Old County Road. This property was most recently used for growing tobacco and is bordered on the north by the Waterworks Brook Park preservation area. The property is accessed from Old County Road and it might be possible to provide a second access to South Center Street at the I-91 off-ramp. Although this highly visible undeveloped property is the largest business-zoned property left in Town, serious consideration as to its potential use under present zoning needs to be addressed since the ultimate development could be a significant asset to Windsor Locks. Mixed use, corporate office or high-end industrial uses, not to include trucking or distribution, should be encouraged. Buildings should be of high quality design.



The combination of visibility, accessibility and connectivity to multi-modal transportation gives the properties in this corridor high potential for diverse, intensive development with a complementary mix of residential, business and high-end industrial uses. The right development can substantially increase real and personal property grand list growth, providing significant additional revenue to support municipal services for the entire

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community. The AIOZ zone provides a good foundation for the type of master planning approach that is needed for this property and corridor. If this property and others along Rt. 20 continue to remain vacant at the time of this Plan's implementation, the Town should consider conducting a corridor study to explore possible development scenarios, active transportation improvements such as a multi-use trail, utility needs and broadband services.

Spring Street The west end of Spring Street is a unique business district, with a significant amount of auto repair related businesses, that services both the surrounding Windsor Locks residential neighborhoods as well as some of the regional business district needs more centered along Ella Grasso Turnpike. The Windsor Locks Zoning Regulations do not permit auto related businesses in this district (within the Business 1 zone) however several auto repair businesses are legally there and were before the regulations changed. As new businesses consider moving to town, they often request approvals in this district, as it has become, in a sense, an auto repair ecosystem. In the Summer of 2018 the community conducted an analysis of the Spring Street district in order to get a better idea of the existing conditions in the area and to explore whether or not a regulation change might be recommended. The analysis included Interviews with businesses and property owners, a land use inventory and zoning review. The following is a summary of this work with suggested future actions for consideration:

Listening Tour and Information Gathering

Six business interviews were conducted, with a landowner, a restaurateur, two car repair businesses, a trucking service, and a financial institution. Generally, all participants agreed the business district leaned towards auto service, light industrial and convenience retail with some limited office and personal and professional services. Most business are locally owned and operated. The business mix was well established and described as stable. No one who was interviewed thought subsurface environmental conditions posed a particular problem for or obstacle to development, land sales, or investment. Admittedly those interviewed were long time business or property owners. Environmental obstacles may not arise until a land sale is being negotiated, or building or expansion plans require private financing, which may trigger a demand for an environmental assessment of properties.

Those interviewed saw no specific threats to the business district, however it was noted that some of the properties used a well and were not along a water line which could be a barrier to business expansion.

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As for opportunities, all thought airport related development opportunities should be sought out for the Spring Street district. Ideas included hotels, cargo related businesses and truck rest stop areas. There was no significant support for a change to the status quo business mix or character of the area but it was agreed that the general appearance of the district could improve.

Spring Street's easy access relative to the airport, RT. 75, and most of the residential neighborhoods in Windsor Locks were seen as an advantage. Business owners noted that most customers to the area are Windsor Locks residents or those who need the specific services of the various auto related services (auto repair, auto body work, oil changes, auto parts, etc.), the restaurants and personal service businesses (e.g. credit union, hair and nail salons, and medical services) or the services of other businesses (e.g. truck servicing, livery).

Spring Street Land Use Inventory

Except for a nine-acre (519 Spring St.) and an approximately nine acre parcel at the southeast corner of Ella Grasso Turnpike and Spring St., most properties are developed and occupied. There are only a few vacant commercial buildings or storefronts. Those businesses interviewed felt that overall the street was in good condition, although cosmetic upgrades to some properties and more enforcement of zoning regulations which seem to be operating contrary to zoning would be helpful.

A land use inventory was conducted in July 2018.

The list of business by broad category are:
Service/ light industry/ contracting etc. - 13
Auto/Truck related service - 10
Personal Service - 7
Restaurant/Food - 5
Retail - 4
Professional Service - 3
Transportation - 3
Finance/Banking - 1
Funeral Home - 1
Hotel - 1

The land use inventory list (above, right) supports the overall impression of the business district as predominantly auto service, light industrial and service businesses as opposed to a predominantly retail, office and personal and professional services.

Zoning Analysis

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The Spring Street commercial area is zoned Business 1. The businesses in the land use inventory were cross referenced to the land use categories in the B-1 zone. The largest number of business that are non-conforming uses as far as the zoning regulations are concerned are the auto repair businesses. As non-conforming uses they are permitted to continue even though they are not allowed in the B1 zone because they were present before the B1 zone was established. However, they cannot be expanded, intensified or changed to a different non-conforming use unless a variance is obtained from the zoning board of appeals. In order for a new business, buyer, or investor to change these nonconforming properties to permitted uses the cost of acquiring the property and converting the buildings to serve a permitted use must be economically feasible.

Spring Street Recommendations

1. The Windsor Locks PZC and EIDC may want to consider the following and discuss whether a rezoning or a zoning regulation revision is warranted within the district:
 - a. Leave the zoning regulations and uses as they are.
 - b. Change the auto repair uses to permitted as opposed to prohibited uses, eliminating their non-conforming status.
 - c. Define personal services and “other” services (e.g. landscaping, contracting, etc.) for clarity and consistent interpretation and to ensure the zone is creating the predominant business district desired by the community in B-1 zones.
 - d. Add some retail or service uses to the Industrial zones
 - e. Create a unique new business or industrial zone that incorporates the mix of uses seen on Spring Street as permitted.
2. Investigate the cost of extending the water line to serve the section of Spring Street that does not currently have water service.

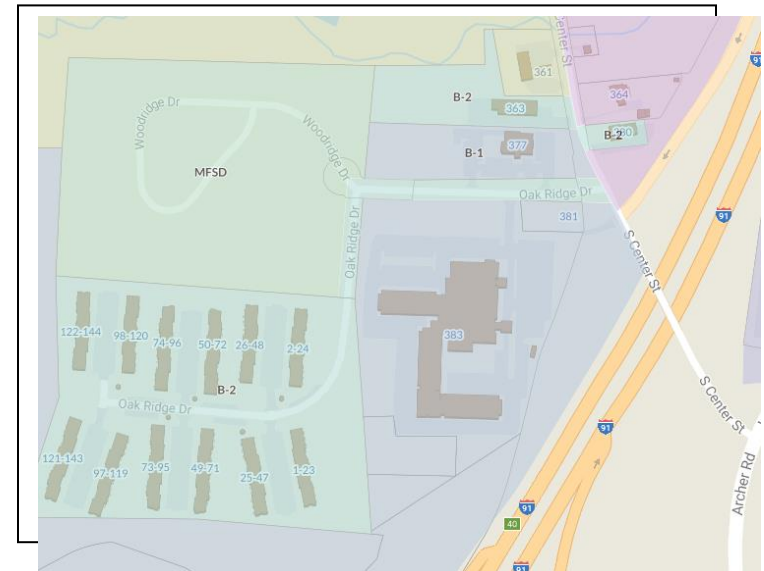
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3. Consider ways to encourage businesses to improve their property including landscaping, signage, new building facade treatments etc. The Planning and Zoning Commission could consider amending the regulations to incorporate design standards for such improvements.

The Planning and Zoning Commission should support the district by creating clarified language in the zoning regulations, considering a rezone of the district, using economic development tools to improve aesthetics and character and discussing avenues for upgraded infrastructure to preserve Spring Street as a unique and viable business district.

South Center and Oakridge Drive. Zoning patterns on the southern portion of South Center Street near where it intersects with Oakridge Drive are varied. The Oakridge Condominiums lie on a Business 2 property, an auto related use is in a residential zone, and other properties are in the Business 1 zone. In some cases these are legal non-conforming uses. The commercial uses are typically one story suburban style. With both established and new condominium neighborhoods at the end of Oakridge Drive, the adjacent Waterworks Brook preservation area, a mix of uses and the need for some sprucing up, this entry way at South Center Street could become an attractive gateway. The area might benefit from an overall zone change and master plan. The area transitions from single family neighborhoods to multifamily, and could become a charming village area, embracing low impact supportive commercial or office, redevelopment of the hotel property, inclusion of a parklet, new pedestrian connections and mixed use 2 story development out at the street to include scaled infill housing at 4 to 7 units per acre.



Architectural Guidelines and Site Design. Architectural character, building location and parking lot design are as significant an issue as any other site design criteria that are regulated by the Planning and Zoning Commission during review and approval of new land uses. The Town and its residents have a right to expect that new building construction is compatible with the community's vision and not simply a cheap out-of-the-box product from a national or international corporation. Quality commercial and industrial construction tends

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to yield a higher value product that increases the value of building construction, increases the grand list and encourages equal quality construction on nearby sites.

Since the 2007 Plan, the Planning and Zoning Commission adopted new architectural standards for the downtown area. The Commission should consider adopting similar standards for all business and industrial districts. The Town should then decide whether to establish a formal Design Review Commission that would be comprised of design professionals that would serve to advise both applicants and the Commission.

Goals and Objectives:

Goal: Utilize economic development tools and Smart Growth practices to support a strong, diverse and connected Business and Industrial sector of the Windsor Locks economy which provides job creation, needed local services and tax revenues to the community.

Objectives - Industrial:

- 1. Maintain or increase mitigation measures on Old County Road to reduce impact of industrial uses or associated truck traffic.**
- 2. Investigate whether other less valuable land can be used for the compost operation, freeing this parcel for a higher value use and eliminating permitting or development conflicts.**
- 3. Review the zoning pattern along Old County Road from Halfway House Road south to encourage low intensity, optimal transitional uses that will support and connect the residential communities and business communities.**
- 4. As the King Spring Road extension, referred to in the 2007 Plan, does not seem feasible, the Planning and Zoning Commission should revise the permissible uses in the remaining industrial district on North Street to exclude high traffic, and heavy truck traffic, uses.**
- 5. Continue to utilize adaptive reuse regulations in order to provide flexibility in underutilized industrial buildings.**
- 6. Continue to provide outreach to industrial businesses in order to understand workforce, growth strategy and supply chain needs.**
- 7. Rezone River Road to permit residential uses and passive recreational uses.**

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8. Create a plan for future development or preservation for River Road and Lawnacre Road that incorporates resiliency planning and natural resource protection due to proximity to the Connecticut River and flood waters.

Objectives - Commercial:

1. Continue efforts to require frontages along Ella Grasso Turnpike to be used for more intense uses than valet parking. Additionally the town should work closely with the Connecticut Airport Authority to understand how much frontage could open up along Ella Grasso Turnpike if some parking uses are moved onto the airport proper.
2. Continue to work toward developing a back access road or multi-use trail parallel to Ella Grasso Turnpike from Route 20 to Loten Drive.
3. Evaluate a rezone for the intersections of Ella Grasso Turnpike, Elm Street and Old County Road as well as Halfway House Road and Concorde Way.
4. Consider public-private partnerships for redevelopment of the Windsor Locks Commons site and station site and continue to move the train station relocation project into a construction phase.
5. Continue to implement recommendations made in the Main Street Study and Once and Future TOD Study.
6. Pursue a rail crossing and bridge over the canal to connect Main Street to the canal bank, Montgomery Mill and Canal Trail.
7. Coordinate a plan with Ahlstrom Munksjo, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Friends of the Canal for resurfacing and enhancing the Canal Trail State Park.
8. Encourage development of new housing units within a 10 minute walk from the train station.
9. Seek funding to complete the Historic Station restoration, fit out and associated parking for future uses.
10. Work with property owner of Dexter Plaza to further enhance the site in the short-term and explore rethinking and reconfiguration of buildings on the parcel in the future.
11. Support the Windsor Locks Housing Authority as they explore new mixed use development along the frontage of 11 Grove Street that is connected and in harmony with the Main Street Overlay Zone and with adjacent parcels.
12. Continue to pursue excellence in coordination and site design for 255 Main Street, the relocated train station and the historic train station.

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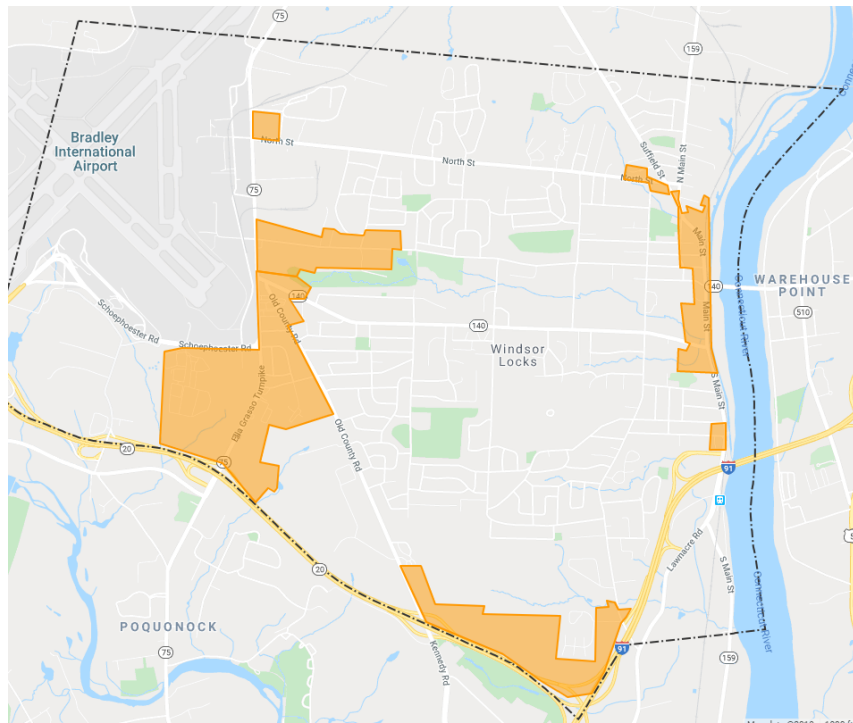
- 13. Encourage and support the successful reuse of the Historic Station as a Welcome Center, “grab and go” café, tourist destination and meeting house.**
- 14. Complete site preparation for the properties on the corner of Chestnut Street and Main Street and continue to incentivize mixed-use redevelopment.**
- 15. Work closely with the Town of East Windsor in a joint effort to enhance the bridge, gateways and active transportation amenities between the towns.**
- 16. Finalize and implement the Small Business Microloans Program as part of the Downtown TIF District.**
- 17. Continue to prioritize a food resource program, including farmers market, fruit trails, community gardens and a Public Market as part of an overall plan for sustainability, community wellness and economic strength.**
- 18. Continue to utilize the Airport Interchange Overlay Zone as plans are created for vacant properties along the Route 20 corridor.**
- 19. Conduct Corridor Studies for Route 20 and Ella Grasso Turnpike to understand development or redevelopment scenarios to include utility need, broadband, desired uses, function, shape and configuration of buildings as well as their relationship to streets, sidewalks, trails and open spaces.**
- 20. Establish clear policies on what improvements are expected for new commercial development and redevelopment of business districts town wide, similar to the applicability standards developed in the Main Street Overlay Zone.**
- 21. The Planning and Zoning Commission should review and upgrade standards for new hotel construction in Windsor Locks. The market need for additional hotel rooms should be studied prior to new hotel development so as to avoid over saturation of this use throughout Town but particularly in the Route 75 corridor.**
- 22. Consider a rezone for the western Section of Spring Street in order to accommodate desired uses, investigate the cost and benefit of extending the water line to properties that aren't connected, and encourage aesthetic improvements through enforcement and economic incentives.**
- 23. Analyze zoning patterns, host a community workshop and develop a master plan for South Center Street and Oakridge Drive in order to create an attractive, village like, mixed-use gateway to town and to the Woodridge and Oakridge condominium communities.**
- 24. Consider adopting similar standards for all business and industrial districts. The Town should then decide whether to establish a formal Design Review Commission that would be comprised of design professionals that would serve to advise both applicants and the Commission.**

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Economic Development Objective – Community Wide

Building off of the previous work done as part of the Main Street Study, develop a branding, marketing and wayfinding plan to communicate assets, boost economic development, tourism and create the sense of community that residents and visitors will enjoy.

Business Districts Map



Industrial Districts Map

