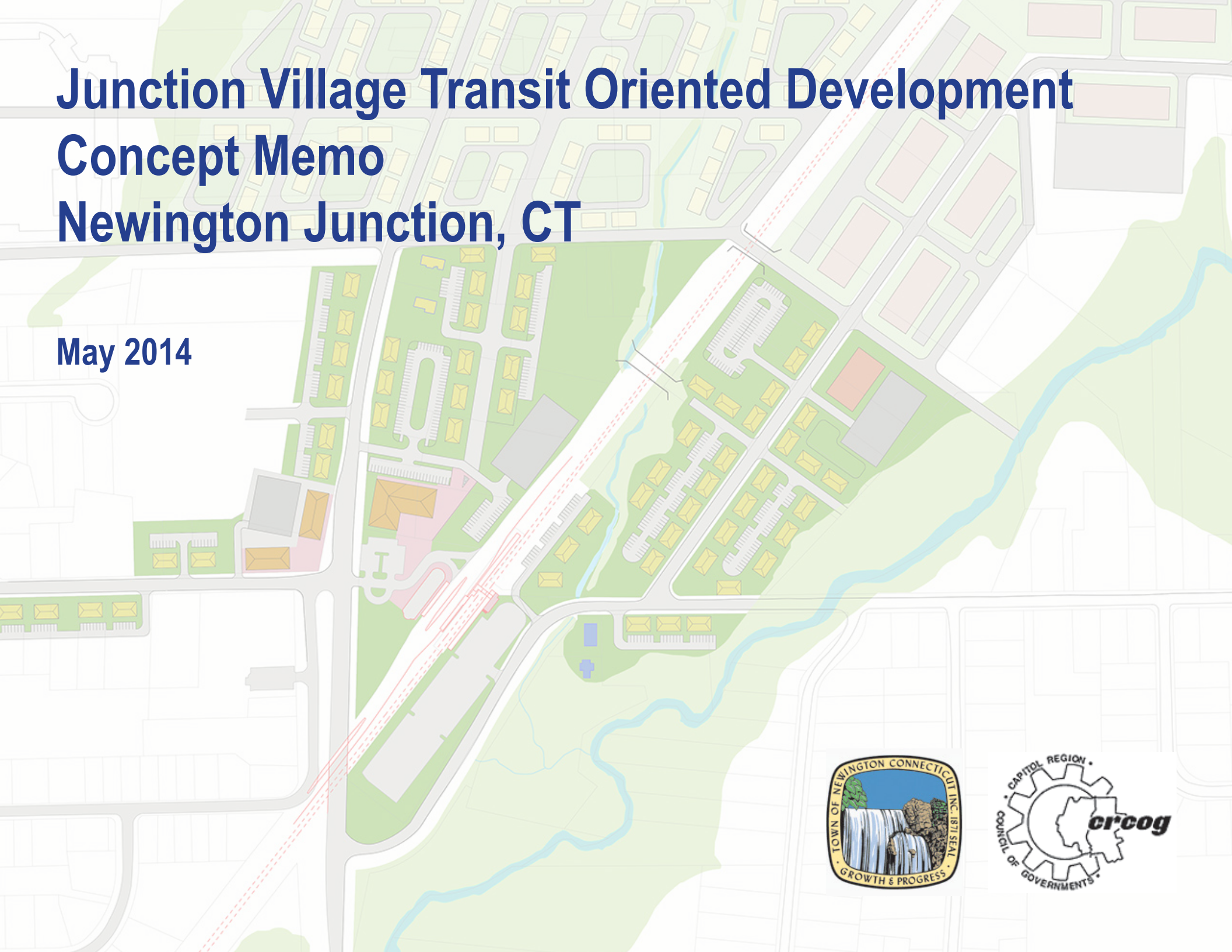
Junction Village Transit Oriented Development
Concept Memo
Newington Junction, CT

May 2014



Prepared for:

The Town of Newington, CT and The Capitol Region Council of Governments

by:

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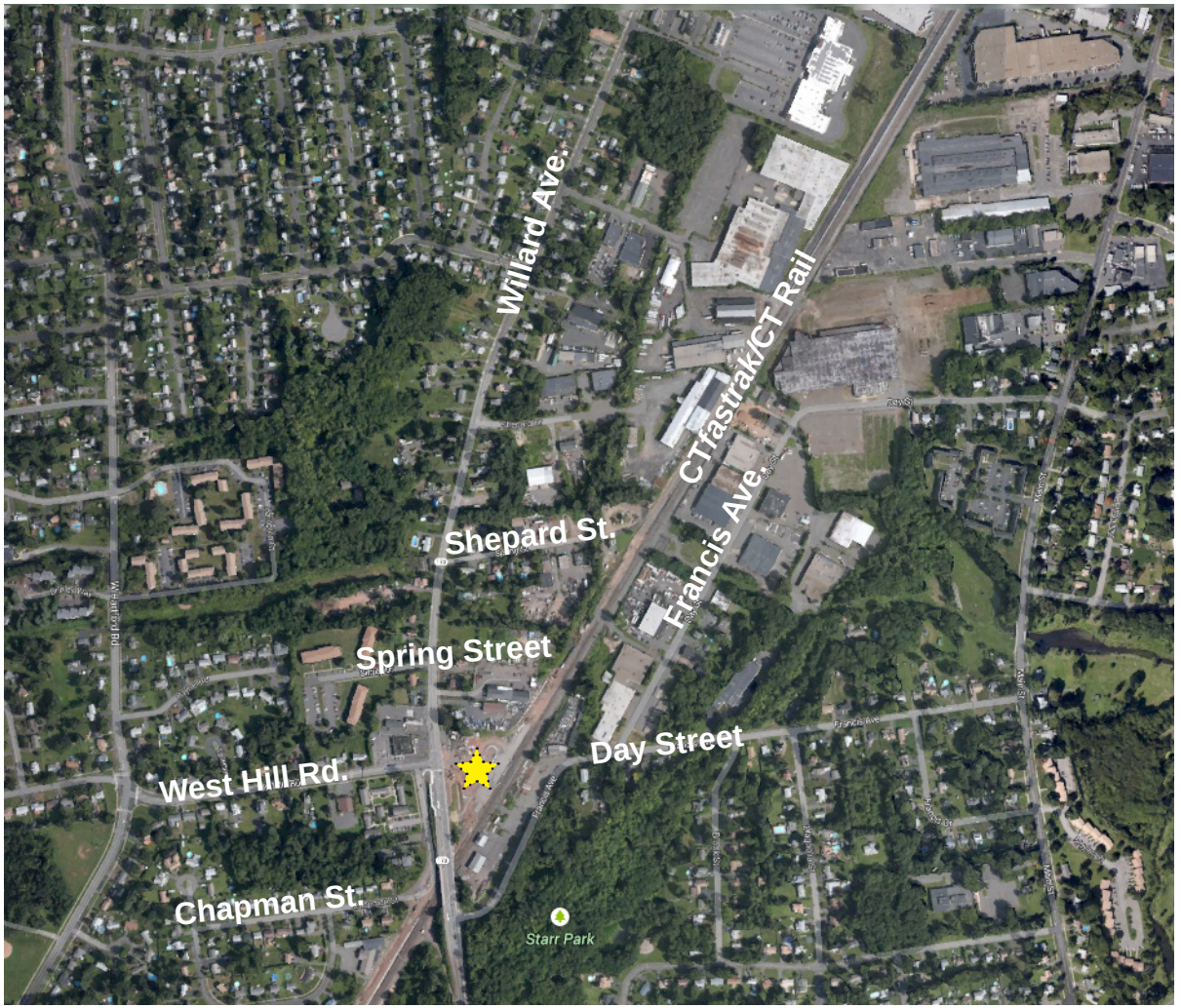
1. INTRODUCTION

Newington Junction will be one of 11 stations on the 9.4 mile CT***fastrak*** Busway, scheduled to open in 2015. In addition, Newington Junction also is slated to have a station on the New Haven Hartford Springfield (NHHS) CT Rail route running from New Haven, CT to Springfield MA, via Hartford. To capitalize on these transportation investments, and the new transportation services, the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and the Town of Newington undertook this study to assess the opportunities and potential site capacity for Transit Oriented Development around the station.

The Town of Newington convened a Steering Committee composed of Town officials and employees, as well as property owners, to provide guidance to the Study. The Steering Committee met with CRCOG and the consultant team three times over the course of the Study.



Newington Junction Station is shown as a yellow star above.

2. Existing Conditions

Location

The Study Area was roughly defined as the area within a ½ mile radius of the Newington Junction CT***fastrak*** station. Transit Oriented Development is often defined as higher-density mixed-use development within walking distance (or a half mile) of transit stations - *The Center for Transit Oriented Development*. The Project Area is bisected by the railroad tracks which run in a roughly north-south direction (from southwest to northeast). Major roadways through the Project Area include:

- Willard Avenue, which runs north/south to the west of the rail tracks
- Francis Avenue, which runs east/west and intersects with Willard Avenue just south of the station
- Day Street, which runs north/south parallel to the east side of the rail tracks, and then bends to the east
- Other streets include West Hill Road, which runs east/west on the west side of Willard Avenue, Spring Street - which runs east/west between Willard Avenue and the rail tracks, and Shepard Avenue – which runs east/west between Willard Avenue and the rail tracks.

The Study Area was defined as the 1/2 mile radius around the station (shown in red). The star indicates the station location.

Land Use

The land use within the ½ mile radius includes mostly residential uses along Willard Avenue and West Hill Road, and mostly industrial and commercial uses along Day Street and adjacent to the west side of the tracks. Industrial uses range from auto repair to steel fabrication to contractor storage and lay-down areas. The area also includes several large vacant formerly-industrial parcels and buildings.

The area south of the Francis Avenue/Willard Avenue intersection is, for the most part, a built-out single-family residential neighborhood separated from the station area by a large wetland; this area was not included in Transit Oriented Development (TOD) planning.

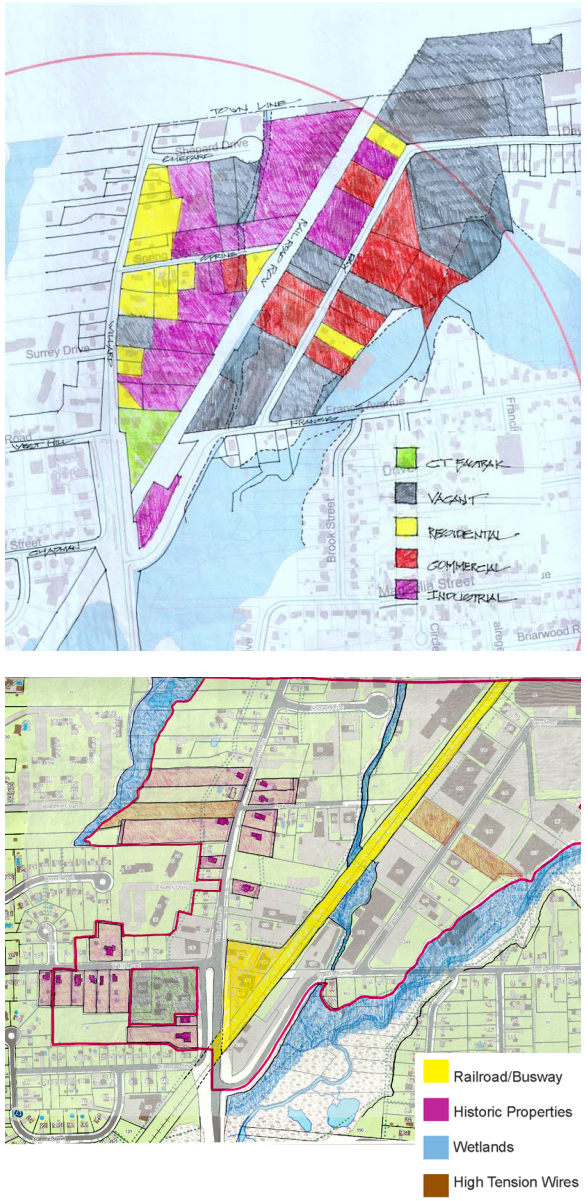
Development Constraints

Development opportunities within the Project Area are constrained by several factors (see Constraints Map at right):

- The Study Area includes large wetland areas along the eastern and western sides.
- The rail tracks bisect the Study Area.
- An overhead high tension electrical transmission line (transmission lines are operated at relatively high voltages, transmit large quantities of power and transmit the power over large distances) runs east/west through the Project Area, near Spring Street.

Historic Resources

The Study Area encompasses three National Register Historic Districts with a number of contributing buildings. Use of Federal or State Funds to change any of these buildings would necessitate compliance with Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, which requires proof that there is "No prudent or feasible alternative" which would avoid the impacts to the historic properties. The contributing buildings are shown on the Constraints Map. Because it is assumed that TOD will be conducted primarily by the private sector, and a private party is not subject to restrictions on the use of an historic building, a number of the historic structures were included within the proposed redevelopment zone, as shown on the Redevelopment Zone figure on Page 5. Impacts to historic resources/districts will have to be evaluated more thoroughly as specific development proposals are reviewed.



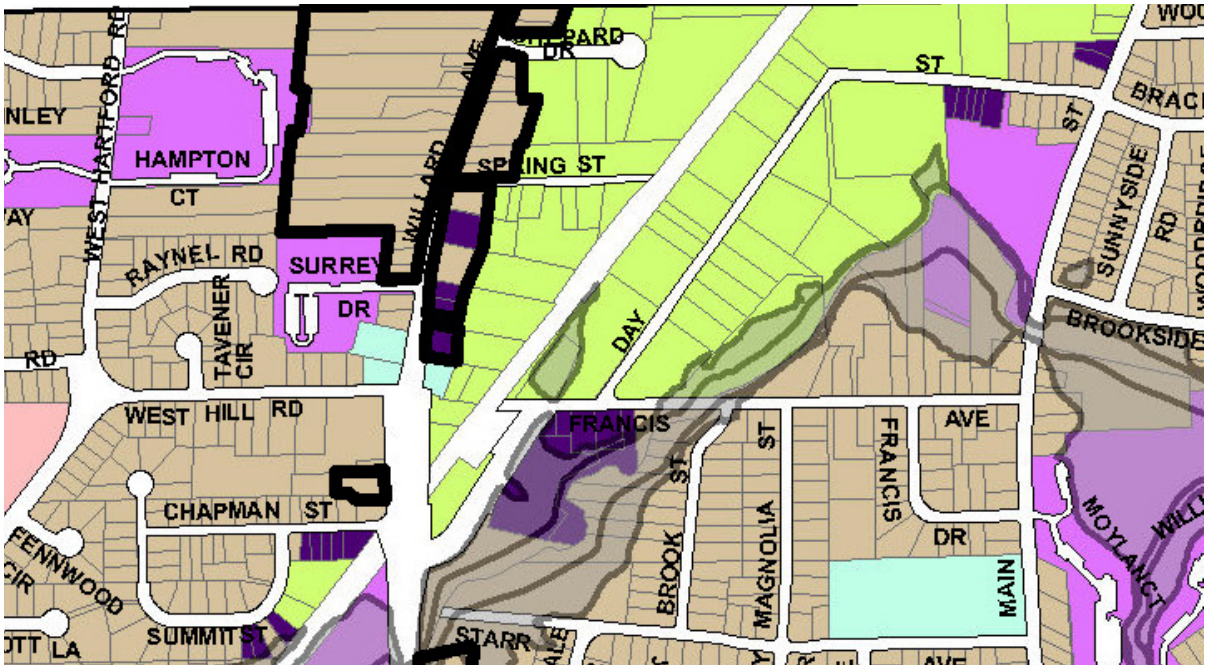
At right: (top) Existing land use; (bottom) Development Constraints.

Existing Zoning

The Study Area falls within five zoning subdistricts and one overlay zone. The location of these zones is described below:

- I (Industrial): the parcels on the west side of the rail tracks and along the east and west sides of Day Street north of Francis Avenue.
- R-12 (Residential): parcels along the west side of Willard Avenue, with the exception of the northwest corner of Willard Avenue and West Hill Road; a number of parcels along the east side of Willard Avenue.
- B (Business): The northwest corner of the intersection of West Hill Road and Willard Avenue and the parcels directly across Willard Avenue from that corner.
- R-7 (Residential): Several parcels on the west side of Willard Avenue, just south of Spring Street and parcels on the southeast corner of the intersection of Day Street and Francis Avenue.
- Willard Avenue Development District (overlay zone): A number of parcels on both the east and west sides of Willard Avenue.

The existing regulations for these districts discourage mixed-use and restrict building height to 2 or 3 floors, depending on the district. The regulations require two parking spaces per residential unit, six spaces per 1,000 square feet of office space and seven spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail and medical office space. These parking ratios are significantly higher than desirable/typical TOD ratios.



Existing Zoning

Traffic Circulation

The intersection of Willard and Francis Avenues is the main access point into the Study Area east of the rail tracks, with no other road crossing the tracks until much further north in West Hartford. The stop-controlled intersection has significant traffic congestion and left turns on and off Willard Avenue are difficult.

3. Development Concepts

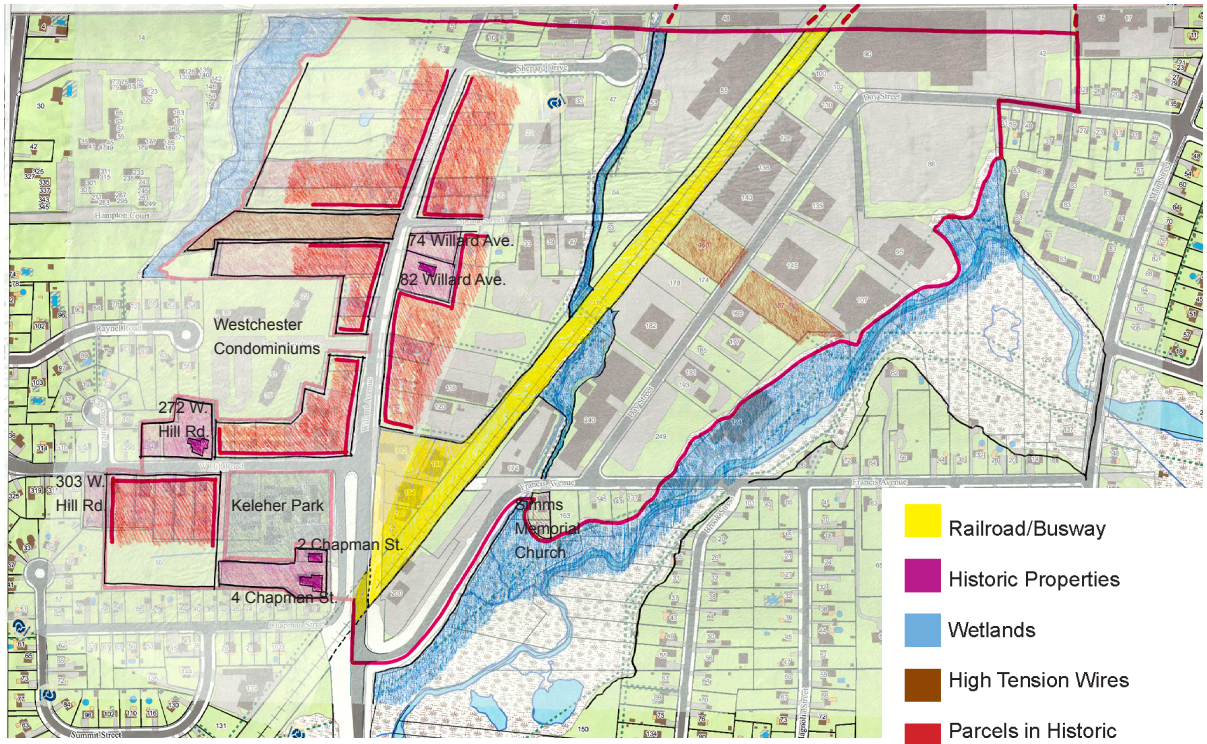
Boundaries

Following the analysis of existing conditions described previously, the Consultant Team met with the Steering Committee to discuss parameters for potential development scenarios. The Committee requested that the project boundaries be Chapman Street to the south, the backs of parcels on Tavener Circle to the west, the Town Line to the north, and the stream running parallel to Day Street to the east. These boundaries exclude the major wetland areas.

The boundaries were drawn to avoid several historic properties, as shown at right. These properties include:

- 2 Chapman Street – 1922 Colonial Revival firehouse
- 4 Chapman Street – 1860 Greek Revival/ Italianate residence
- 272 West Hill Road – 1770 Colonial residence
- 303 West Hill Road – 1710 Colonial residence
- 74 Willard Avenue – 1904 Queen Anne residence
- 82 Willard Avenue – 1860 Italianate residence

These buildings were selected to illustrate the integration of existing historic architecture with new buildings.



Proposed Development Area

The boundaries also exclude the Keleher Park senior residential development at the southwest corner of Willard Avenue and West Hill Road, the Westchester Condominiums on Surrey Drive, and the Simms Memorial Church on Francis Avenue.

The Project Area was divided into three subdistricts:

I. Willard Avenue East Sector – between Willard Ave. and the CT Fastrak/CT Rail right-of-way

II. Willard Avenue West Sector

III. Day Street Sector - East of the CT Fastrak/CT Rail right-of-way

Potential Land Uses

The development plans included a mix of residential, retail, and office/research & development space. The Town expressed a desire for some development that would create jobs and increase the tax base. Office uses were envisioned as three to five story buildings; close to the station, and on major roadways. The buildings adjacent to the station included ground floor retail space. Residential development was envisioned as three to five story double-loaded corridor buildings, with some townhouse development. Retail uses were located where visible from major roadways to attract patrons.

Top: Development Subdistricts; Bottom: Initial land use concept

Potential Zoning Changes

The development concepts assume that the zoning within the TOD Study Area will be modified to support TOD. Specifically, three key changes are recommended:

- Allowing a mix of multi-family residential, office and retail use.
- Reducing parking requirements to one space per residential unit and three spaces per 1000 square feet of office or retail use.
- Increasing allowable heights to three to five stories.

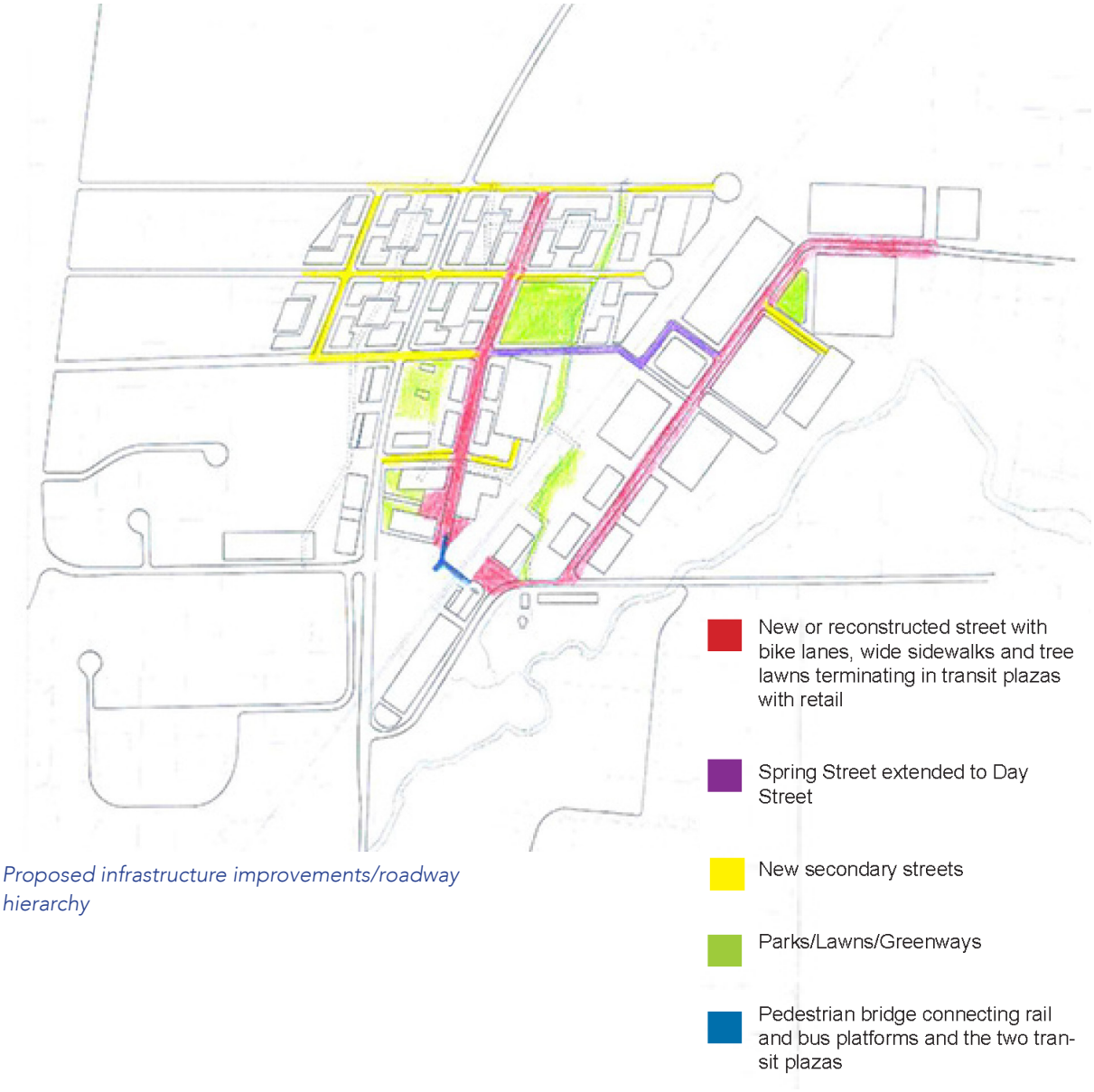
Potential Infrastructure Improvements

As a first step, a plan of conceptual infrastructure/circulation improvements was prepared to create a framework for development concepts. New and extended streets and pedestrian routes break up the subdistricts into more traditional block sizes, and provide connections across Willard Avenue, to the station and across the CT***fastrak***/CT Rail right-of-way to the Day Street Sector. Specifically, these connections (shown on the facing page) include:

- Shepard Drive extended both west of Willard Avenue and further east to the CT***fastrak***/CT

Rail right-of-way. Shepard Drive could eventually be extended east across the right-of-way to connect to Day Boulevard and the large industrial parcels to the north.

- Spring Street extended both west of Willard Avenue and to the east as a bridge crossing the CT***fastrak***/CT Rail right-of-way and connecting to Day Street.
- A new north-south Street between Willard Avenue and the CT***fastrak***/CT Rail right-of-way from Shepard Drive south to the CT***fastrak*** Station plaza. The street could be extended north of Shepard Drive into the adjacent large industrial district in West Hartford. This New Street, and Day Street, are shown with bike lanes, wide sidewalks and tree lawns terminating in transit plazas
- Two new east-west streets: one between Shepard Drive and Spring Street, running from west of Willard Avenue to the CT***fastrak***/CT Rail right-of-way, and one south of Spring Street, extending from the east side of Willard Avenue to the CT***fastrak***/CT Rail right-of-way.
- A new pedestrian bridge connecting the proposed plaza adjacent to the CT***fastrak*** Station across the CT***fastrak***/CT Rail right-of-way to the new rail station.



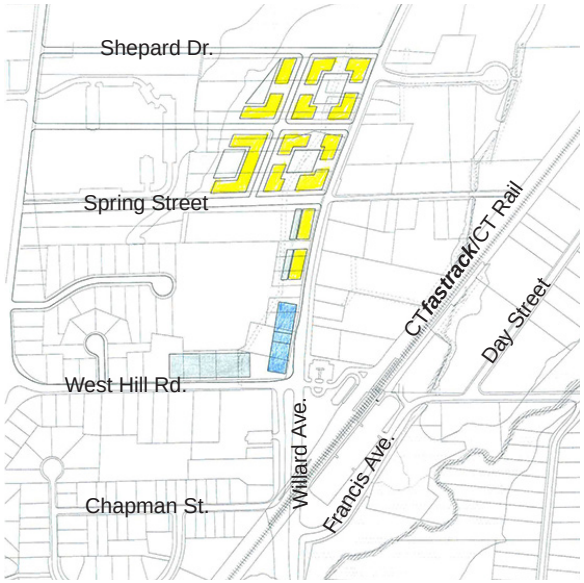
Proposed infrastructure improvements/roadway hierarchy

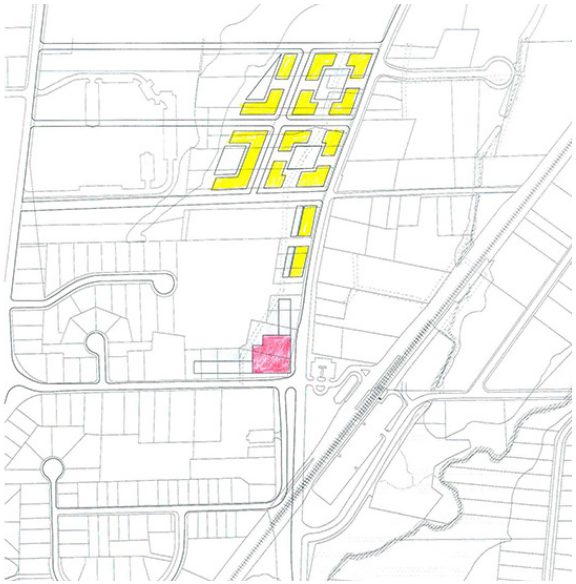
Alternative Concepts

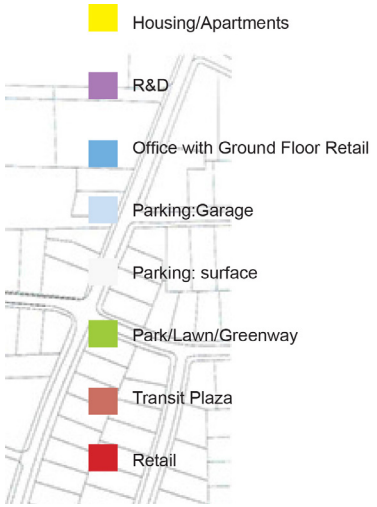
A number of conceptual alternatives were developed for the three subdistricts, with various land uses and development densities. The alternatives are described below and on the following pages.

I. Willard Avenue West

West of Willard Avenue, the conceptual alternatives focused on residential development. The buildings are shown as three to five story double-loaded corridor buildings with surface parking behind the buildings. At the northwest corner of Willard Avenue and West Hill Road, options included residential use, a single story retail building, or an office building with ground floor retail facing Willard Avenue with a parking garage facing West Hill Road.





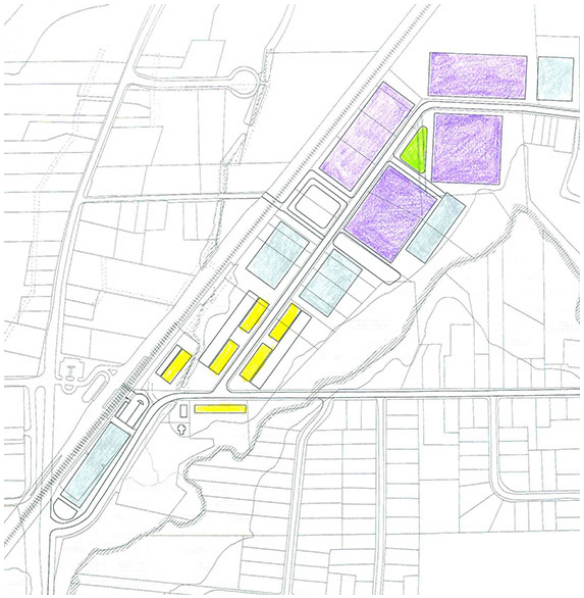


II. Willard Avenue East

Only one conceptual alternative was developed for the Willard Avenue East Sector. Key elements of the concept include a new plaza north of the CT***fastrak*** station, flanked by office buildings with ground floor retail; New Street running from Shepard Drive south to the station plaza; the extension of Spring Street to the east and the new pedestrian bridge across the tracks. The remainder of the subdistrict is shown as residential with a large new central park and two parking garages serving both the office and residential development. Proposed buildings are in the range of three to five stories.

III. Day Street

This sector provides a unique opportunity for a large office or research & development (R&D) campus convenient to transit. Conceptual alternatives for the Day Street sector focused on office and research & development uses. All of the alternatives included a small residential development on the south side of Francis Avenue adjacent to Simms Memorial Church; two of the alternatives included residential clusters around the intersection of Day Street and Francis Avenue, adjacent to the proposed new rail station.



A consolidated plan of the three subdistricts.

Consolidated Plan

The consolidated plan for the three districts includes:

- 1773 Housing Units
- 890,000 square feet of Office Space
- 1.1 mil square feet of Research & Development Space
- 33,000 square feet of Retail Space

Preferred Potential Alternative

Based on discussions with the Steering Committee and CRCOG, CSS developed a Preferred Potential Alternative, incorporating elements from several of the conceptual alternatives. Because of the scale of the Study Area and the ability of the parcels to accommodate more development than may be supported by market conditions and the transportation infrastructure, the Committee decided to reduce the scale of development, and to initially focus on a mix of uses in the area south of Spring Street.

Residential buildings are shown as 3-story townhouse buildings, each with six 1-bedroom and two 2 or 3-bedroom units. Five-story buildings would require structured parking (No five-story buildings are included in the Preferred Potential Alternative.

The Preferred Potential Alternative includes all of the infrastructure improvements described previously. The Alternative was based on the following organizing principles:

- Pedestrian and bicycle friendly streets lead directly to the station.
- Active plazas at the CT***fastrack*** station are visible from both bus and train platforms, as well as from Willard Avenue.
- The Multi-Use Trail extension is integrated with the station and leads people through the plaza, by the retail uses.

Other key components include:

- A park (+/- 2 acres) south of Spring Street
- An office building with ground floor retail on the north side of the station plaza
- A plaza on the northwest corner of West Hill Road and Willard Avenue flanked by two residential buildings with ground floor retail and a garage in back. Alternatively, the two residential floors could be office.
- A parking garage between New Street and the Busway, immediately north of the station.
- A three-story office building north of the station with ground floor retail fronting on a new plaza.
- An extension of the Multi-Use Trail from its end point at Chapman Street, continuing on the existing sidewalk to West Hill Road, crossing Willard Avenue, continuing east through the station plaza and a new plaza north of the station, through the new park, to connect to the brook that parallels the busway northward. A branch of the Trail is shown crossing the busway on a new pedestrian bridge and following the brook south to Francis Ave. across from the Simms Memorial Church. This greenway could eventually connect to the Trout Brook Greenway in West Hartford.
- An office building at the southeast corner of Day and Spring Streets with a garage to serve both office uses and the adjacent residential development.
- Residential development on the remainder of the parcels south of Spring Street, with buildings in the range of 3 to five stories, and at grade parking.

The development shown includes:

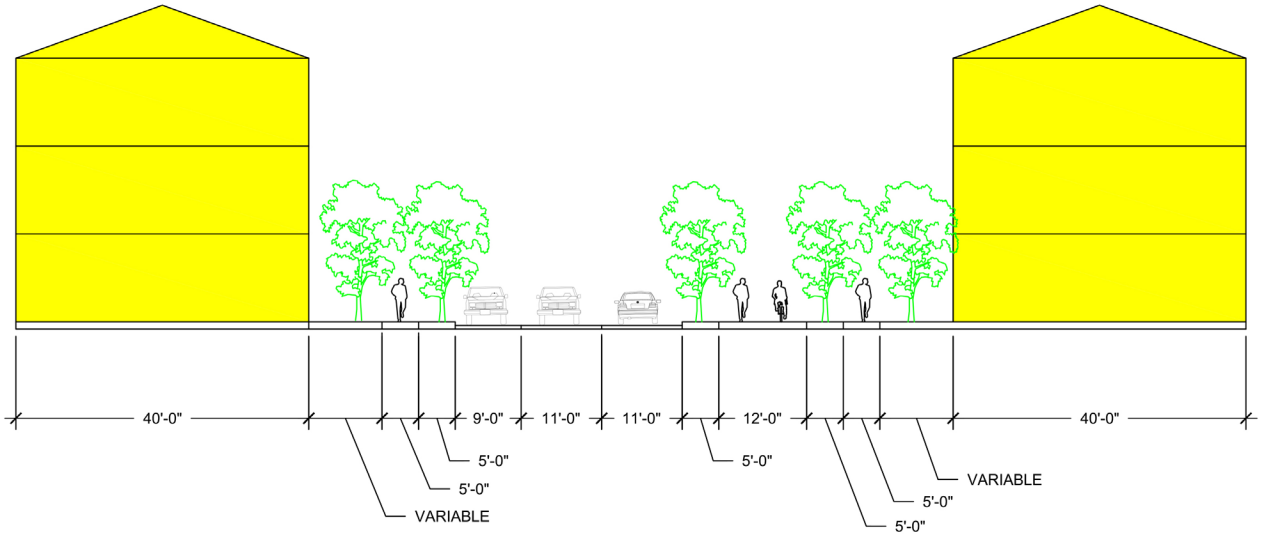
- 494 residential units (378 1-bedroom and 116 2 and 3-bedroom units)
- 76,300 square feet of office space
- 32,500 square feet of retail space

The housing shown ranges from 12-28 units per acre, with an average density of 17 units per acre.

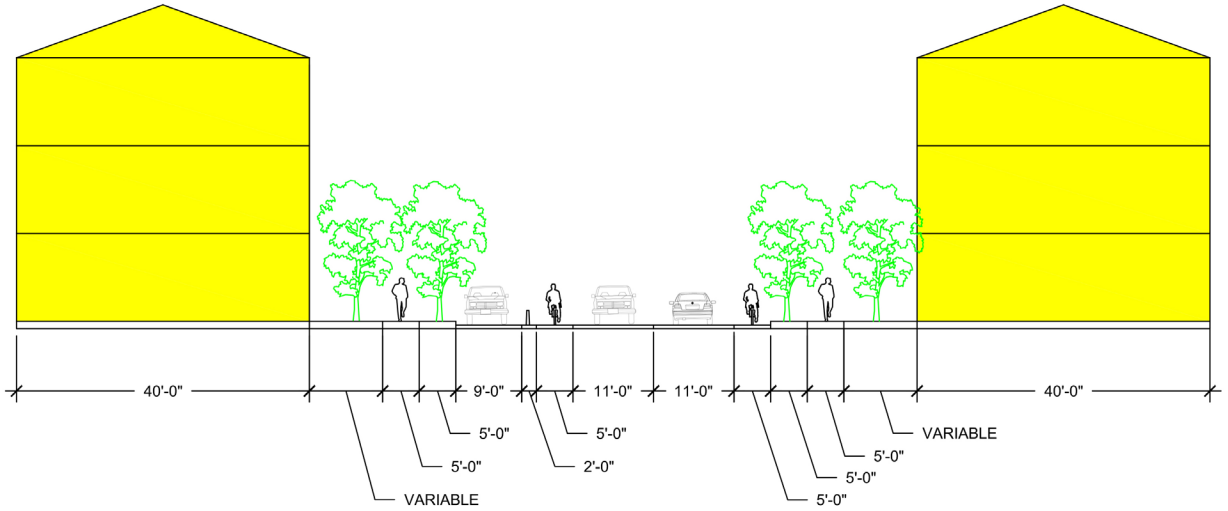
North of Spring Street, the plan includes residential development in the Willard Avenue East and West Sectors, similar to that described above for the area south of Spring Street. In the Day Street Sector, the plan shows a cluster of office buildings, also in the three to five story range. These buildings would be served by a mix of at-grade and structured parking.

Preferred Potential Alternative with Multi-Use Trail extension highlighted in red (see enlargement of the highlighted area on the following page).


Spring Street
Willard Ave.
New Street
CTfastrack/CT Rail
Day Street
West Hill Rd.
Francis Ave.
Chapman St.
Multi-Use Trail
2-Acre Park
New Street
Vehicular Bridge with Sidewalk
Pedestrian Bridge
Mixed Use
Plazas



Proposed section for New Street with Multi-Use Trail



Proposed section for New Street with 2 bike lanes

Precedent Images

The following images provide examples of the type and scale of mixed-use and residential development described for the Preferred Potential Alternative.

Above, from top: Mixed-use development in Lexington, MA and West Hartford, CT. At right, from top: Residential development in Cambridge and Arlington, MA and West Hartford, CT.

At left, from top: Plazas adjacent to mixed-use development, activating the sidewalk in Storrs, CT; Boston, MA; Cambridge, MA and Chapel Hill, NC.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

Phasing & Development Timeframe

The build-out illustrated is very conceptual. It is intended to provide the Town with an understanding of potential future development that cold be accommodated within the Study Area, and the infrastructure improvements to support that development. The scale of development is ambitious and is intended as a 20 to 30 year vision.

The most likely first phase would be the cluster around the Station Plaza in the Willard Avenue East sector.

Next Steps

As mentioned above, the build-out illustrated is very conceptual, and was created to provide a starting point for Town-wide discussions on the future of the Study Area. It is recommended that the Town undertake a market study and transportation study to gain a more thorough understanding of the market potential in the area, as well as the ability of the existing and proposed transportation system to accommodate new development.

Existing zoning regulations will have to be modified to accommodate the development described above. The Sustainable Land Use Code Project Draft Model Regulations: Mixed-Use Transit Oriented Development Districts developed by Clarion for the Capitol Region Council of Governments provides a good basis for revising the existing zoning regulations.

A public process will need to be initiated to provide an opportunity for public feedback to any proposed modification of the existing zoning and redevelopment of the area.