
Torrington Downtown Municipal Development Plan

Executive Summary

The Downtown Municipal Development Plan proposes to revitalize the Project Area in phases through a combination of public and private investment. Public investment will focus on infrastructure improvements including: street network modifications; expanded and consolidated off-street parking; and enhancements to the pedestrian environment in the downtown. There will also be opportunities for in-fill private development directly supported by the infrastructure investments. In addition to these in-fill development opportunities, private investment in the renovation and occupancy of vacant space in existing structures will be made in the Project Area.

The first phase activities are programmed for an area generally bordered by Mason St./City Hall Ave. on the north, the East Branch of the Naugatuck River on the east, Torrington Plaza and the library on the south and Prospect St. on the west. Activities in adjacent areas of the downtown will support activities within the Phase 1 area. For example, off-street parking available west of Prospect St. and north of City Hall Ave. /Mason St. will be available to support properties and uses within the Phase 1 area. In the longer term, it is anticipated that both public and private investment will occur in the balance of the Project Area. The timing and extent of this investment will build on Phase 1 successes as well as overall improvement of the economy. As proposed in the Conceptual Master Plan prepared in 2006, which was the subject of the Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE), it is anticipated that future phases will create mixed use development opportunities as an extension of the Phase 1 development patterns.

The specific activities included in Phase 1 include the following:

-Extension of City Hall Ave. to a point of intersection on East Main St. with a realigned Center St.
-The expansion and reconfiguration of the parking area between the extended City Hall Ave. and the rear of properties fronting on Main St. The design of this parking area will provide for continued service access to the rear of the Main St. properties.
-The creation of modest infill development opportunities on East Main St. to the west of the intersection with the City Hall Ave. extension to strengthen the East Main St. gateway.
-The expansion and reconfiguration of the parking area internal to the block bordered by East Main St., Center St., and Franklin St.
-Reconfiguration of the Main St., East Main St., Franklin St., South Main St., Water St. intersection to improve vehicular movement and create a more pedestrian friendly environment. When combined with the City Hall Ave. extension, the opportunity to make Main St. one-way in a northerly direction results.
-Streetscape improvements on Main St., East Main St. and South Main St. will be constructed to both enhance the aesthetic qualities of the area and support a pedestrian friendly environment.
-A portion of the Greenway on the south side of the Naugatuck River between South Main St. and Prospect St. will be constructed.

Phase 1 activities will be implemented in stages with the first priority being the extension of City Hall Avenue and the reconfiguration of the parking between the extended City Hall Ave. and the rear of properties fronting Main Street. It is the intention of the Torrington Development Corporation to provide the land needed for these activities through negotiations with property owners. The extent of land necessary to construct these improvements will be determined based on detailed design in consultation with property owners. Based upon conceptual designs completed to date, five parcels and portions of three parcels would be the maximum number of parcels needed to accommodate these activities. Based upon an inventory of current occupancy, it is estimated that seven businesses would potentially be displaced.

The second priority is the reconfiguration of the East Main St., South Main St., Water St., Main St. and Franklin St. intersection. In addition, streetscape improvements will be undertaken on Main St. and East Main St. as well as construction of the section of the greenway on the south side of the Naugatuck River between South Main St. and Prospect St.

The third priority area within Phase 1 is the area bordered by East Main St., Center St. and Franklin St. Activities proposed in this area include reconfiguration of the parking area internal to this block and the realignment of the Center St. /East Main St. intersection. Based upon anticipated funding availability, these activities will be implemented within a later timeframe than the first priority activities described above. The same design and consultation process as described above will be used to determine the amount of land necessary for these activities. Based upon conceptual designs completed to date, seven parcels and portions of three parcels would be the maximum number of parcels needed to accommodate these activities. Based upon an inventory of current occupancy, it is estimated that two businesses, one fraternal lodge and six households would potentially be displaced.

Any property acquisitions determined to be necessary will be acquired on a negotiated basis based on independent appraisals.

There is no intent to use the eminent domain powers. Such powers may be used if negotiations do not result in agreement.

Before eminent domain powers can be used, the properties to be acquired must be specified, a public hearing held and the City Council must approve use of the powers. Occupants of property to be acquired will receive relocation compensation in accordance with applicable law.

In addition to the proposed actions described above, the MDP contains a proposed zoning/land use controls section. This section proposes to create a new Downtown District (DD) zoning classification to cover the Project Area. This would replace the current zoning designation which is predominantly General Business (GB) with small areas classified as Industrial (I), Residential (R-6) and Local Business (LB). It is anticipated that the Planning and Zoning Commission will adopt this new zone to provide consistency between the MDP controls and the zoning regulations. In addition to land use controls, the new district incorporates

the Design Review Guidelines prepared by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Architecture Review Committee. The parking requirements have been reduced in the new district in recognition of how the downtown functions. This will be an incentive to investment in the renovation and occupancy of structures in the Project Area. These controls as well as the design guidelines will be applicable to the entire Project Area not just the Phase 1 area.

In conclusion, the revitalization strategy in the MDP builds on the strengths of the downtown represented by its historic architecture, diversity of uses, institutions, cultural attractions, human scale and opportunities for private investment supportive of public investment. The selection of the Phase 1 area and activities advances this strategy in that it encompasses the core of the downtown where these strengths are concentrated. The strategy recognizes that public action is necessary to enhance the competitiveness of the downtown and strengthen Torrington as a regional center.

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