

DOWNTOWN AND NEIGHBORHOODS

POCD



"There is no doubt that our Downtown is the heart of Litchfield County. It is vital that we begin to restore and renew the vibrancy of Torrington's center. The City has the opportunity to redevelop the Downtown area and to capitalize on its growth and position as the regional destination for cultural and recreational purposes. The goal of our plan is to revitalize our Downtown to the energetic community center that we all know it can be."

Ryan J. Bingham, Mayor

Implement the Downtown Municipal Development Plan

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.

The following pages (7.2 through 7.5) are from the Downtown Municipal Development Plan (MDP) Executive Summary, prepared by the Torrington Development Corporation.

For more detailed information, please refer to that Plan.

Main Street



Downtown is the core for many activities (above), Newly renovated storefront on Main (below)



There will also be opportunities for in-fill private development directly supported by the infrastructure investments. Private investment in the renovation and occupancy of vacant space in existing structures will also be made in the Project Area.

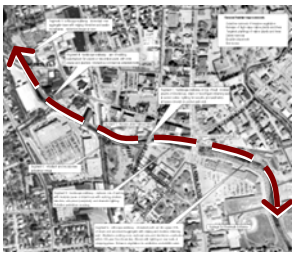
Torrington Development Corporation (TDC)

The goals of the TDC are:

- Promote economic development.
- Strengthen the existing mixed uses of Downtown.
- Promote local and regional arts, cultural interests, and tourism.
- Preserve Torrington's heritage and historic character.
- Improve pedestrian facilities, traffic circulation, parking and streetscape

www.torringtondevelopment.org

Riverwalk Concept (2005)



Municipal Development Plan First Priority

The first phase activities are programmed for an area generally bordered by Mason Street/City Hall Avenue, on the north, the East Branch of the Naugatuck River on the east, Torrington Plaza and the Library on the south and Prospect Street 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 Street and north of City Hall Avenue /Mason Street 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 Avenue to a point of intersection on East Main Street with a realigned Center Street;
- the expansion and reconfiguration of the parking area between the extended City Hall Avenue and the rear of properties fronting on Main Street. The design of this parking area will provide for continued service access to the rear of the Main Street properties;
- the creation of modest infill development opportunities on East Main Street to the west of the intersection with the City Hall Avenue extension to strengthen the East Main Street gateway;
- the expansion and reconfiguration of the parking area internal to the block bordered by East Main Street, Center Street, and Franklin Street;
- reconfiguration of the Main Street, East Main Street, Franklin Street, South Main Street, Water Street intersection to improve vehicular movement and create a more pedestrian friendly environment. When combined with the City Hall Avenue extension, the opportunity to make Main Street one-way in a northerly direction results;
- streetscape improvements on Main Street, East Main Street and South Main Street will be constructed to both enhance the aesthetic qualities of the area and support a pedestrian friendly environment; and
- a portion of the Greenway on the south side of the Naugatuck River between South Main Street and Prospect Street 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 Avenue 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.

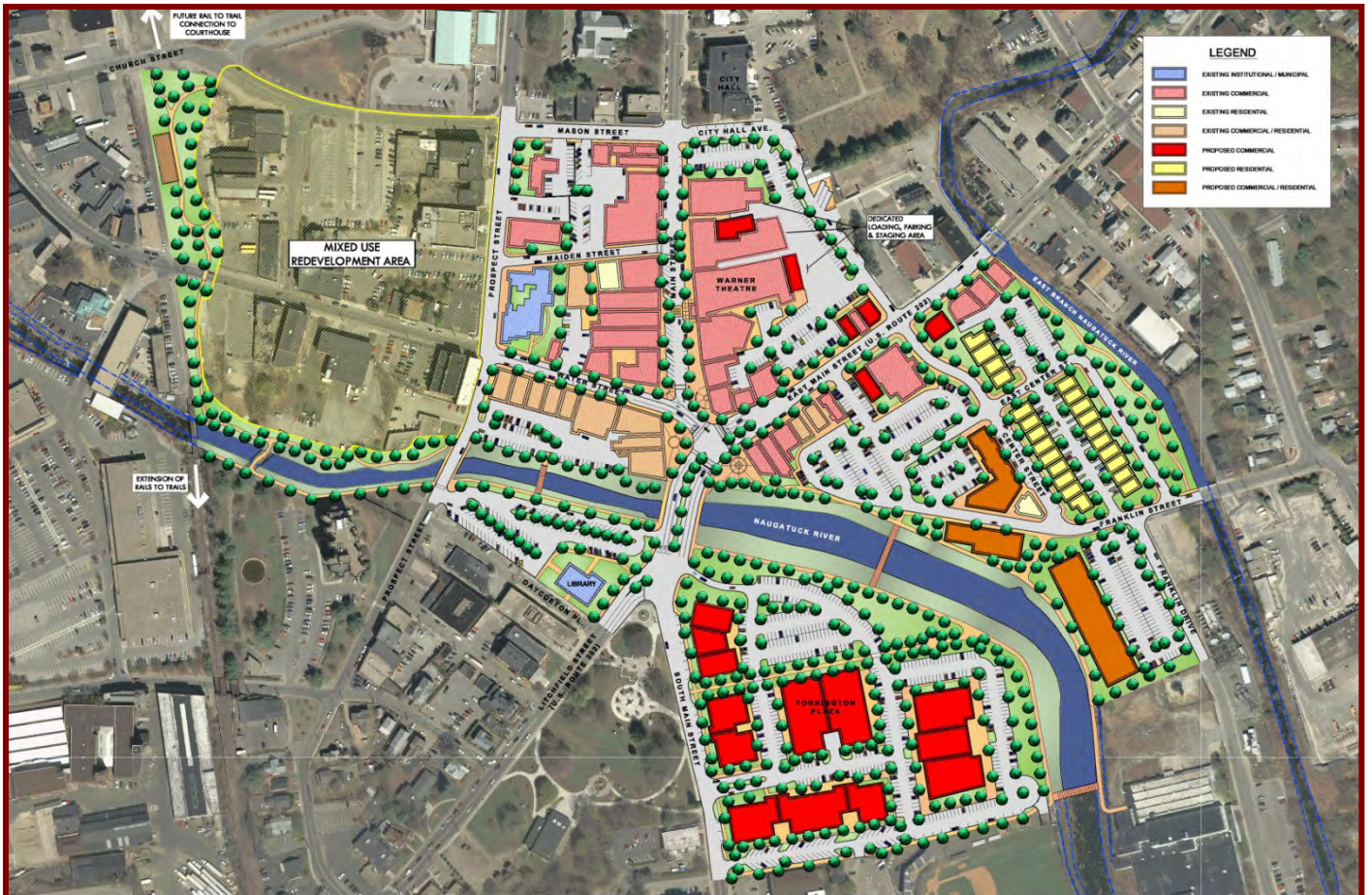
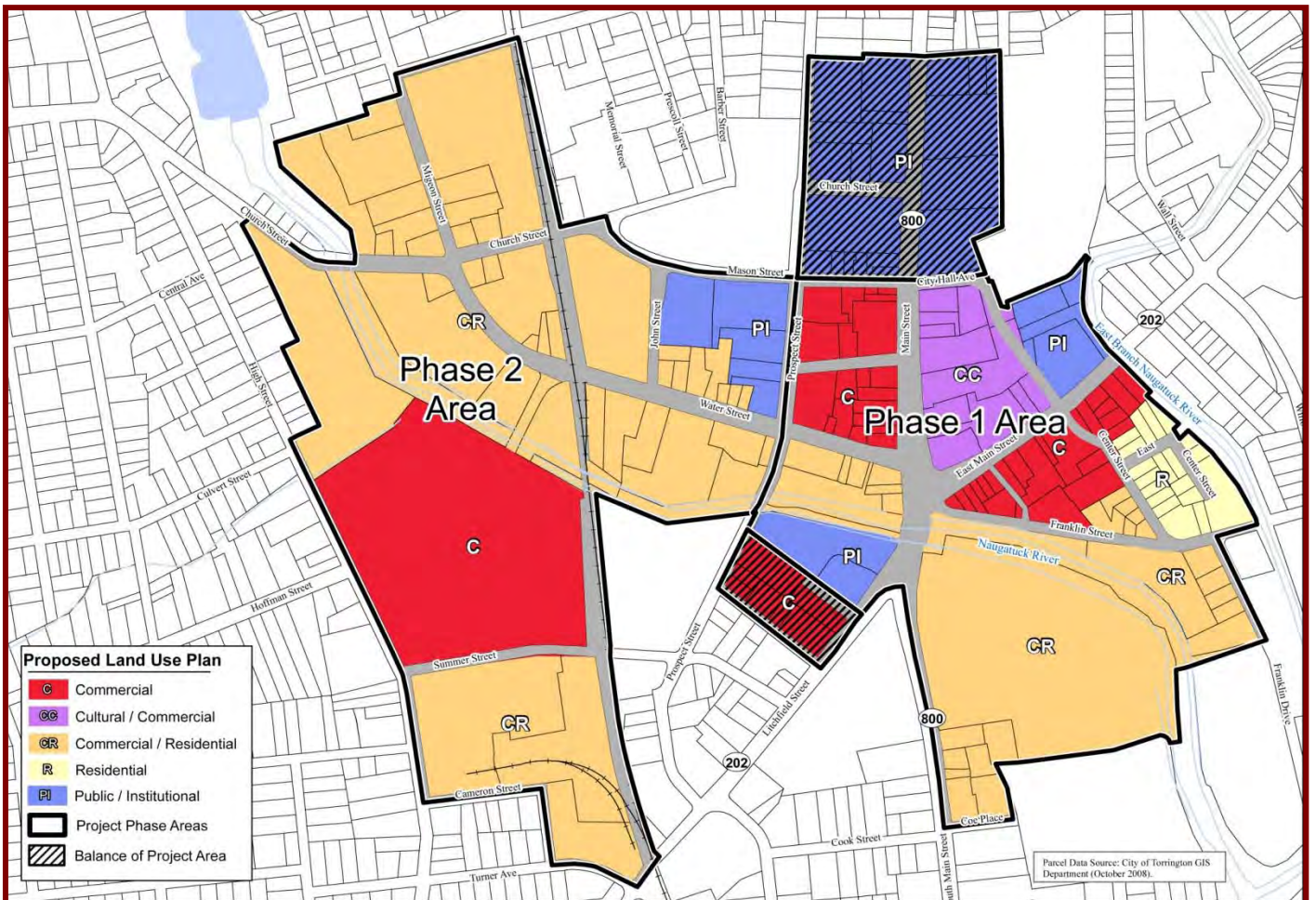
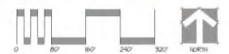


FIGURE 7-1a PHASE I CONCEPT PLAN
DOWNTOWN TORRINGTON MDP
 TORRINGTON, CONNECTICUT FEBRUARY 24, 2009

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Municipal Development Plan Second Priority

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



Beautification Committee maintains the Downtown islands (above), Street level view of the main intersection Downtown (below)

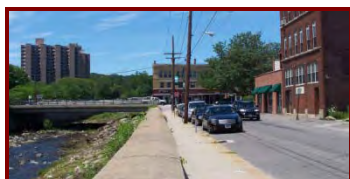


The 2nd Priority Area – Downtown Intersection

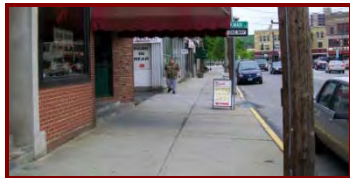
Municipal Development Plan Third Priority

The third priority area within Phase 1 is the area bordered by East Main Street, Center Street and Franklin Street. Activities proposed in this area include reconfiguration of the parking area internal to this block and the realignment of the Center Street /East Main Street 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.



Franklin Street (above), East Main Street sidewalk in need of improvements (below)



MDP 3rd Priority Area

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 Municipal Development Plan 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 Municipal Development Plan 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.

Coe Park



Coe Park flag plaza (above), Lincoln and Grant's visit to the Torrington Historical Society (below)



In conclusion, the revitalization strategy in the Municipal Development Plan 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.

Why Housing is Important in Downtown

People who live in downtowns typically spend 3 to 4 times the amount of people who work in a downtown.

They also have a greater positive economic impact on an annual basis than do visitors or destination shoppers.

Randall Gross of the consulting firm Randall Gross/Development Economics

Continue to Make Downtown The Priority Area in Torrington

The success of Downtown will be based on creating a density of people and diversity of uses. Torrington needs to develop a rich diversity of destinations that will attract a critical mass of people to live, work and shop. By encouraging mixed uses Downtown (with ground floor retail and services and upper floor offices and residential uses) parking is optimized and Downtown is in use 24 hours per day.

Provide Housing in Downtown

With the exception of single-use residential buildings located on non-residential streets, Downtown residences should exist on upper floors. Upper floors are quieter and safer for residents and allow more vibrant uses such as retail, restaurants and art galleries to be active on the street level.

Downtown residents provide a 24 hour atmosphere that transcends their purchasing power. Torrington needs to create an environment that feels safe and comfortable and where Downtown residents will help attract non-residential visitors who will shop, dine, attend cultural venues and otherwise enjoy Downtown.

Downtown housing also needs to meet a wide range of price points, as well as both rental and ownership options should exist to capture the greatest number of residents.

Make Downtown Pedestrian-Friendly

Making Downtown feel safe, comfortable, interesting and enjoyable for walking gives it a competitive advantage from suburban shopping areas. Pedestrians can provide for "impulse shopping" when shoppers make unplanned purchases. Pedestrian activity sends a message that the area is vibrant and worth visiting. Torrington needs to create pedestrian-friendly intersections Downtown to increase pedestrian safety. Including "pedestrian bulbs," improving crosswalks visibility and making sure walk signals have sufficient time for elderly residents to cross the road are ways to make this happen.

Promote Easy Downtown Parking

Give the Downtown parking areas a positive name such as, "Easy Downtown Torrington Park" with an identifiable logo. Provide small but noticeable signs to guide people to parking lots. Create and distribute a Downtown parking brochure to all the merchants who can then hand them out to customers. Provide Downtown parking information and options on the City's website.

Make Downtown Bicycle Friendly

Provide public bike racks. The updated City Hall should include a public bike rack along with other locations such as Coe Park and the Torrington Plaza.

Promote Special Events Downtown such as car shows as an effective means of bringing people Downtown who may otherwise never visit. While merchants may complain that few sales occur during special events, the long-term benefit of enhancing Downtown's image is more important. If people come Downtown and feel safe and have a positive experience, the odds are they will return at some point for dining, entertainment or shopping.



Continue to Develop Torrington as the Cultural Center for Litchfield County

The Warner Theater, Nutmeg Ballet and Artwell are regionally significant cultural venues that others can build upon to encourage Downtown as an arts and entertainment district. Artists bring performances and viewings but also bring complementary clusters of businesses that can contribute to economic vitality.

Torrington needs to encourage creative people to seek space in existing downtown historic buildings and adaptive reuse of Torrington's former manufacturing buildings in Downtown that can accommodate artist studios, live/work lofts, arts-based manufacturing, and creative businesses like architectural firms.

Promote Cultural Heritage Tourism

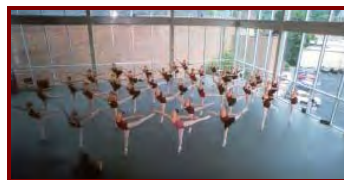
Work with the Torrington Historical Society to focus on the City's historic architecture and manufacturing heritage to engage "cultural heritage tourism" (see sidebar) as a mechanism for revitalization. Highlight the cultural assets of Torrington to appeal to a wide variety of visitors and residents.

Support Initiative to Enhance Education Opportunities in Downtown

Encourage higher education venues to offer classes Downtown. College students are often looking for unique dining and entertainment places to hang out and prefer urban to suburban locations. An undergraduate or masters program in arts and entertainment could represent another catalyst for redevelopment.



UCONN Torrington Campus – University Drive



The internationally known Nutmeg Ballet (above),
The Warner Theater (below)



College students are an important retail market segment for many downtowns and represent a significant housing market as well. It could attract additional younger people to live Downtown.

The Nutmeg Conservatory for the Arts

Founded in 1969 by acclaimed ballet teacher, Sharon Dante, the Nutmeg Conservatory has continued the commitment to her original vision of providing professional-level ballet training to aspiring young dance artists.

The Nutmeg Conservatory is recognized as a leading professional ballet training organization in the United States and is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Dance.

www.nutmegballet.org

Cultural Heritage Tourism

Cultural heritage tourism involves traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic, cultural and natural attractions.

www.culturalheritagetourism.org/

The Concept of Community Structure

Community structure (the overall physical organization of Torrington) is an important consideration in the Plan.

Studies have found that the physical organization of a community enhances community character and quality of life and can help guide land-use regulations and decisions.

Torrington's structure can be traced back to its historical development and the influence of the hills in valleys in the community.

Community Structure Elements in Torrington

The main elements of Torrington's overall community structure consists of:

- a large core (Downtown Torrington);
- several mixed-use village centers,
- moderate to high intensity residential neighborhoods, and
- low density and rural residential development in outlying areas.

Neighborhood areas identified in this Plan

- Downtown
- North End
- East End
- West End
- South End
- Southwest
- Torrington
- West Torrington
- Drakeville
- Burrville

Evaluate Planning Issues in Torrington Neighborhoods

There are numerous villages and neighborhoods that make up the City of Torrington. Many residents closely associate to these places. Torrington should evaluate these areas and determine whether special neighborhood planning efforts should be undertaken.

North End



Police Station, Gateway to North End (above) North End neighborhood (below)



Route 4 and Main Street

East End



East End diner (above); East End neighborhood (below)



The Glass Building on Route 208/4

West End



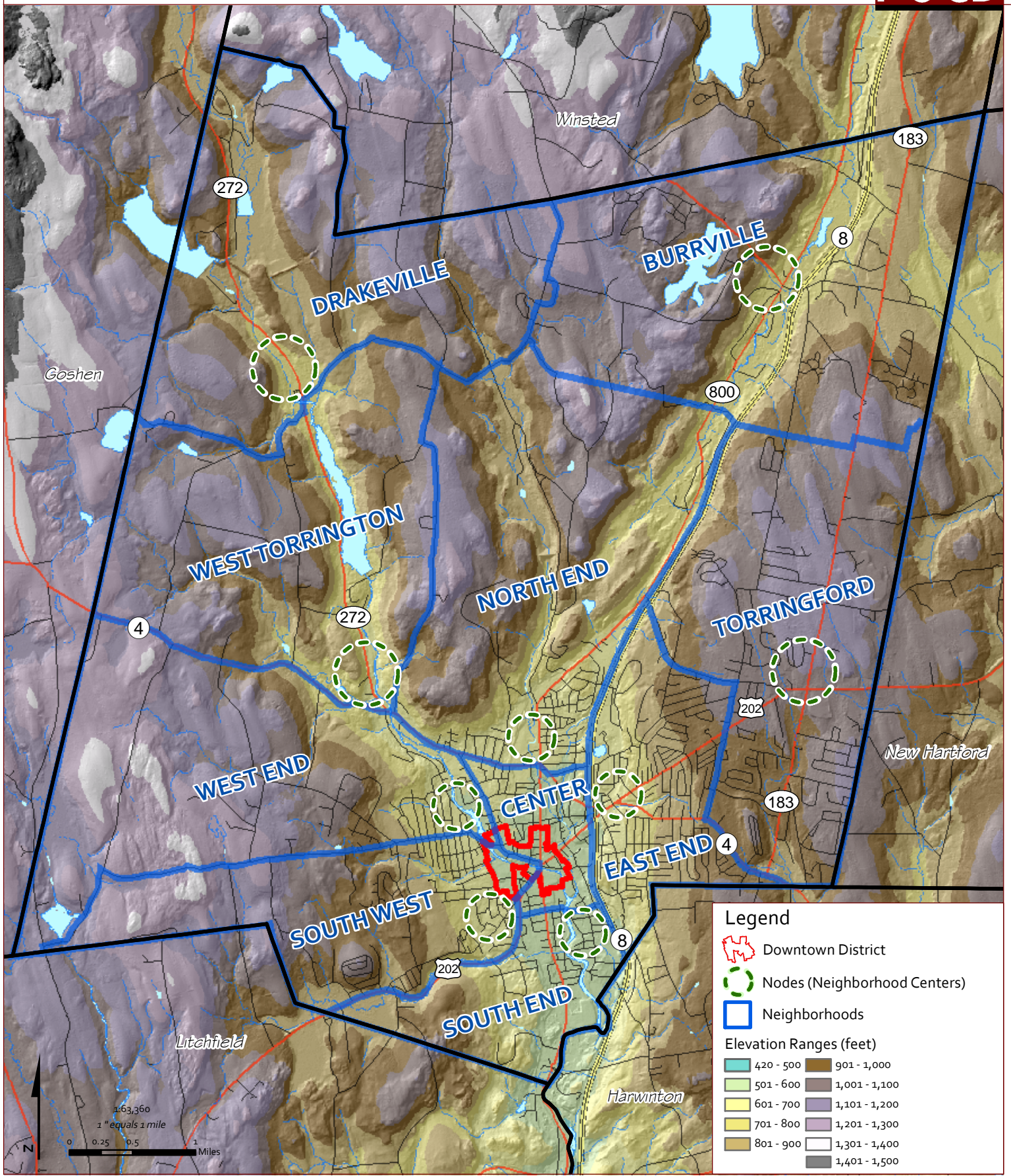
West End Neighborhood (above); West End businesses (below)



Riverside Avenue near West Branch

COMMUNITY STRUCTURE

NEIGHBORHOODS AND NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS



South End



South End market (above); South End neighborhood (below)



City garage and neighborhood

Southwest



Southwest neighborhood (above); Southwest School (below)



Southwest School and vicinity

Torrington

Encouraging commercial development that fits into the neighborhood

New commercial development



Existing residential development



Commercial development (above); Historic house in Torrington (below)



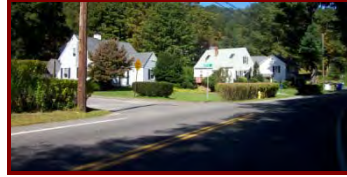
Intersection of Route 189 and Route 200

West Torrington

Intersection of Route 272 and Route 4



Congregation Church (above); Norfolk neighborhood (below)



Drakeville

Marshall Lake at Norfolk Road



The Hemlocks (above); Drakeville neighborhood (below)



Burrville



A Burrville quarry (above); Burrville neighborhood (below)



Neighborhood Planning

Neighborhood planning involves the Identification of neighborhood-specific problems and the development of strategies to solve these issues.

Neighborhood plans might include:

- streetscape designs,
- strategies to address blight,
- signage (commercial or interpretative),
- historic preservation,
- environmental protection,
- sidewalk improvement, or
- social service issues.

Locate Government Facilities Downtown When Possible

Public buildings hold a symbolic significance underscoring Torrington’s regional hub and generates downtown employees and visitors that are economically significant. Torrington should continue to consider Downtown locations as a higher priority when evaluating sites for new municipal facilities.

Downtown and Neighborhood Strategies

	TASK
7-1	Implement the Municipal Development Plan – First Priority
7-2	Implement the Municipal Development Plan – Second Priority
7-3	Implement the Municipal Development Plan – Third Priority
7-4	Continue to make Downtown the priority area
7-5	Provide housing in Downtown
7-6	Make Downtown pedestrian-friendly
7-7	Promote Downtown parking
7-8	Make Downtown bicycle friendly
7-9	Locate government facilities Downtown when possible
7-10	Continue to develop Torrington as the cultural center for Litchfield County
7-11	Promote cultural heritage tourism
7-12	Support initiative to enhance education opportunities in Downtown
7-13	Evaluate neighborhood areas and determine whether special neighborhood planning efforts should be undertaken.