

Bloomfield Town Center Economic Development Commission Town Center Economic Development Strategy

Summary Findings

March 10, 2025

Findings:

- Macro and micro economic forces beyond Bloomfield's control contributed to the decline of the Town Center.
- Decades of change in retail, demographics (household structure), consumer behavior, and the rise of other locations resulted in a weaker Bloomfield Town Center.
- Today, Bloomfield Town Center struggles to compete for commercial investment (time, energy, and money), prosperity, and vibrancy.
- The soft- to weak-market conditions have resulted in varying degrees of disinvestment, vacancy, deferred maintenance, and properties that are functionally obsolete—this is especially true for Wintonbury Mall.
- (Re)positioning Bloomfield Town Center to compete (for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy) is as much about a '*psychology of place*' and '*placemaking*', as it about real estate investment and (re)development.
 - *Placemaking*: planning, designment, development, and management of public (and quasi-public) places that are functional and meaningful to the community.
- Bloomfield's Town Center needs to be an amenity, a space that functions as a focal point for the community—a central gathering space.
- For Bloomfield to successfully reposition the Town Center to compete for investment—reposition the Town Center as a vibrant and prosperous place—it must inspire pride, build confidence, and grow market demand.
- To accomplish this, the Town of Bloomfield must be willing to invest and to partner with the private sector in the (re)positioning of the Town Center. This requires:
 - Attention to detail, doing the little things well.
 - Work to make the Town Center the focal point of the community.
 - Activate the Town Center (especially the Town Green) with events and activities.
 - Investment in the public realm.
 - Investment in the private realm.
 - Public private partnerships.

Bloomfield Town Center Economic Development Commission
Town Center Economic Development Strategy
Summary of Investment Strategy

March 10, 2025

Investment Strategy:

- Enhancing parking and accessibility, implementing public infrastructure improvements, providing financial incentives for private investment, redeveloping property within the districts, and organizing new promotional activities/events and branding and marketing materials.
- Specific goals and tasks include:
 - High level of attention to site and building design to promote attractive and functional development that is compatible with the existing areas.
 - Landscape public spaces visible and accessible from the public right-of-way, appropriate night lighting, sidewalks, and landscaped walkways through parking areas.
 - Promote a mix of uses within single or multiple use sites or buildings including a mix of retail, office, institutional and residential uses in predominately multi-story buildings.
 - Encourage multi-family residential development in and near the Town Center with the aim of increasing population density and creating a critical mass of residents.
 - Provide incentives to encourage investment in properties, especially the exterior appearance of properties.
 - Implement flexible zoning regulations to encourage the (re)development of properties.
 - Provide public and shared off-street and on-street parking.
 - Create unique and identifiable spaces, landmarks, and destinations for residents and visitors.
 - Program the Town Green with events and activities aimed at attracting residents and visitors to the Town Center
 - Include design elements supporting pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular accessibility, connecting the Town Center to surrounding neighborhoods.
 - Implement a branding and wayfinding program with well-defined gateways—defining the image and physical location of the Town Center.

Bloomfield Town Center Economic Development Commission
Town Center Economic Development Strategy
Public Realm Investments
March 10, 2025

Public Realm Investment:

To successfully reposition the Town Center to compete for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy, the Town of Bloomfield (the community) must invest in itself—invest in the Town Center. The following recommended improvements (public investments) are aimed at creating new investments in the public realm and elevating the standards for property maintenance—the Town leading by example, while engaging property owners in the importance of investment. The public realm must be well-designed and ornamented to convey a message to the market of pride and confidence.

Most importantly, many of these improvements have been conceptualized and discussed in various forms and to various degrees since the adoption of the Bloomfield Center Plan (2013). The estimated costs are provided for general planning purposes and are estimated at \$5,515,575. For planning purposes, conduct an engineering study of the recommended improvements and develop a 3-to-5-year implementation strategy funded by CIP.

Improvement Recommendations on Following Page

Town Center Public Improvements

Improvements	Location	Description	Units & Cost	Estimated Costs
Sidewalks, Driveway Aprons	Various	Sidewalk installation to improve walkability.	Approx. 700 linear feet or 3,500 square feet. Cost Est. = \$20/sq. ft.	\$70,000
Sidewalks, New	Tunxis Avenue	New sidewalks are to be installed along the west side of Tunxis Avenue, south from the entrance of <i>Alexandria Manor</i> .	Approx. 1,000 linear feet or 5,000 square feet. Cost Est. = \$25/sq. ft	\$125,000
Sidewalks, New	Tunxis Avenue	New sidewalks are to be installed along the east side of Tunxis Avenue, south from Geissler's to just north of Wintonbury Ave.	Approx. 1,350 linear feet or 6,750 square feet. Cost Est. = \$25/sq. ft	\$168,750
Bus Shelters	Various	Install high-quality bus shelters.	7 Shelters at \$22,000 each.	\$154,000
Decorative Lighting	Park & Jerome	Decorative lighting is to be installed along Park and Jerome Avenues. The area extends east of Tunis Ave to the Silas Deane Pawn Plaza and south of Park Avenue to the driveway of 37 Jerome Ave and north to Wintonbury.	Space at 50 apart on each side of the road, approx. 106 lights at \$25,000 each.	\$2,650,000
Town Hall Paving	Front Circle	Realign and surface entrance and front circle of the Town Hall Parking lot.	Approx. 22,000 sq. ft. at \$25/sq. ft.	\$550,000
Shared Parking Connections	Town Hall	Connect the parking lots of Town Hall, Walgreens, Milano Salon, and Republic with driveway connections and shared parking agreements.	Approx. 60 linear feet of 24-foot-wide pavement at \$500 per foot.	\$30,000
Jerome Ave – North Parking	Republic	Widen the west side of Jerome along the Wintonbury site (like the section at Heirloom Apts.) to accommodate 28 on-street parking spaces.	Approx. 625 linear feet of road widening at \$600/linear foot.	\$375,000
Jerome Ave – South Parking	Republic	Widen the west-side of Jerome in front of Republic and 37 Jerome (like the section at Heirloom Apts.) to accommodate 10 on-street parking spaces.	Approx. 200 linear feet of road widening at \$600/linear foot.	\$120,000
Sub-Total				\$4,242,750
Design & Legal		Design and legal service fees (10%).		\$424,275
Contingency		Inflation and over-runs.	20% of project	\$848,550
Total				\$5,515,575

Bloomfield Town Center Economic Development Commission

Town Center Economic Development Strategy

Private Property Investment Strategies

March 10, 2025

Private Property Investment Strategies

The key to repositioning the Town Center to compete for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy will be to engage property owners (and developers) in the Town's desire to create meaningful improvement and investment in the Town Center. The aim is to create confidence, build community pride, and grow demand. The foundation of this strategy will be the Town of Bloomfield's commitment to public investment, and willingness to partner in private investment. The following is a preliminary step-by-step strategy for engaging property owners with the aim of creating improvement and investment.

1. Identify opportunities for potential private property improvements and investment.
2. Develop public incentive packages for each of the 'opportunity' properties.
3. Engage Town Center property owners, collectively, in a discussion of Town's Plan and commitment to public investments for the Town Center.
 - a. These discussions should seek to leverage public investment to encourage private investment and emphasize the Town's willingness to partner with incentives.
4. Engage 'opportunity' property owners individually in discussion about improvements and investments in their property and the Town's willingness to partner with public incentives.
5. If 'opportunity' properties improvements require more than basic rehabilitation, engage the development community (developers) in discussions of potential uses and incentives with the aim of connecting developers with property owners.
6. If 'opportunity' property improvements go beyond rehabilitation and require more direct public involvement, execute the Chapter 132 provisions for property acquisition and follow the steps below:
 - a. Get two appraisals as required by Chapter 132.
 - b. Based on appraisals, make a fair market value offer to purchase property. Per Chapter 132, the fair market value is 125% of appraised value.
 - c. If the offer is not accepted by the property owner, execute Chapter 132 authority for government acquisition of those properties.

Bloomfield Town Center Economic Development Commission

Town Center Economic Development Strategy

Private Investment Opportunities

March 10, 2025

Private Investment Opportunities:

The list of seventeen properties below includes properties that have been determined to exhibit market weaknesses, most notably conditions of deferred maintenance and functional obsolescence. Therefore, improvement to these properties is critical to the (re)positioning of Bloomfield Town Center to compete for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy. The fact is these properties are the result of weakened commercial real estate markets, and their weakened conditions create a drag on the overall Town Center market.

Address	Year Built	Appraised Value	Assessed Value	SF	Acres
756 PARK AVE	1946	\$204,000	\$142,800	2,524	0.77
836 PARK AVE	1971	\$1,393,500	\$975,450	6,522	0.92
836M PARK AVE	1970	\$7,686,700	\$5,361,090	38,879	8.54
64 JEROME AVE	N/A	\$228,900	\$160,230	N/A	1.33
29 WINTONBURY AVE	1956	\$474,600	\$332,220	4,770	0.51
47 JEROME AVE	1971	\$792,900	\$555,030	1,711	0.21
45 WINTONBURY AVE	1988	\$894,800	\$626,360	28,800	2.46
34 JEROME AVE	1972	\$2,225,100	\$1,557,570	12,880	3.72
37 JEROME AVE	1971	\$537,000	\$375,900	7,432	0.53
785 PARK AVE	1991	\$4,129,100	\$2,890,370	20,917	2.26
705 BLOOMFIELD AVE	1978	\$923,700	\$646,590	16,800	1.21
707 BLOOMFIELD AVE	1974	\$773,800	\$541,660	11,216	1.22
2 BARNARD LN	1976	\$742,600	\$519,820	14,271	1.06
4 BARNARD LN	1976	\$965,500	\$668,850	17,253	1.53
3 BARNARD LN	1980	\$1,028,900	\$720,230	18,084	1.60
1 BARNARD LN	1977	\$764,000	\$534,800	13,334	0.96

The Town of Bloomfield cannot require property owners to invest in their property. To successfully reposition the Town Center to compete for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy, the Town of Bloomfield (the community) must invest in itself—invest in the Town Center beyond the public realm. To accomplish this, the Town of Bloomfield will need to be a partner in the (re)positioning of private property.

Being a partner—engaging in a public private partnership—means the Town of Bloomfield will need to come to the table with public incentives aimed at overcoming soft- to weak-market conditions and encouraging the property owners to invest in their properties. The primary tools (incentives) the Town of Bloomfield can provide to encourage improvement and investment, are Tax Abatements, Tax Fixing Agreements, Tax Increment Financing (TIF), and Credit Enhancement Agreements.

- *Tax Abatements:* As authorized by CGS 12-65b and the Town of Bloomfield may enter into tax fixing agreements with property owners. Therefore, in the case of the Town Center, especially the properties listed above as opportunities, the Town can offer Tax Abatements and Fixing Agreements as incentives to property owners willing or wanting to invest in their properties.
- *Tax Increment Financing:* With the establishment of tax increment financing districts (Sec. 18-10 of the Town Code), the Town of Bloomfield can enter TIF agreements with property owners to encourage investment in those properties. While best suited for large projects, the TIF Plan authorized up to 70% of the increase in the assessed value of the TIF District (or property) to be captured to fund investments in public infrastructure and private development—typically public bonds are issued to fund the investments and the TIF capture funds are used to pay the bonds.
- *Credit Enhancement Agreements (CEA):* Authorized through the TIF authority, the Town may enter CEA with property owners. The CEA allows the Town to capture up to 70% of the increase in the assessed value to reimburse the developer/owner for public and private investments.

The type of improvement, the amount of investment, or the pre- and post-development needs for each of the opportunity properties (or other properties in the Town Center), will determine which incentive approach (abatement, TIF, or CEA) is best. For example, facade improvements may be suitable for incentivizing through a tax abatement designed to reimburse the improvement costs in part or in full depending on the need, while TIF or CEA may be best suited for large (re)development projects that include public infrastructure and substantial private investment. Other incentives, such as permit fee reductions or waivers, flexible zoning, and as-of-right land use permits can also be used to encourage investment and improvement.

Bloomfield Town Center Economic Development Commission
Town Center Economic Development Strategy
Chapter 132 Municipal Development Plan
 March 10, 2025

Private Investment Opportunities:

The area bound by Tunxis Avenue to the west, Wintonbury Avenue to the north, Park Avenue to the south, and Jerome Avenue to the east—north to Seneca Road—and the railroad tracks—from Seneca Road to Wintonbury Avenue—also to the east, is identified as a Chapter 132 site for a Municipal Development Plan. This area is dominated by the functionally obsolete Wintonbury Mall property which has been mostly vacant for more than a decade and the vacant parcel on Jerome Avenue known as the Depot Lot. This study found that without public intervention, through a public-private partnership, that market conditions are too weak to facilitate repositioning or redevelopment of this area to compete for investment. Therefore, the Town of Bloomfield, through the Town Center Economic Development Commission (the Town’s Municipal Development Authority, as established through Chapter 130 and Chapter 132 of the Connecticut General Statutes), is creating a Municipal Development Plan as the mechanism to engage is a public-private partnership with the properties and property owners within this area to pursue the redevelopment of this area. The aim of this Municipal Development Plan, based on the findings of this planning process, is to improve the public use of land within the area, address the weak-market conditions, functional obsolescence, and deteriorated conditions of properties, while repositioning and redeveloping the area to attract private investment, while creating vibrant, prosperous, and aesthetically pleasing Town Center. The properties, including in this Municipal Development Plan area are identified in the following table.

Address	Year Built	Appraised Value	Assessed Value	SF	Acres
2 Tunxis AVE		\$125,900	\$88,130	0	0.30
836 PARK AVE	1971	\$1,393,500	\$975,450	6,522	0.92
836M PARK AVE	1970	\$7,686,700	\$5,361,090	38,879	8.54
64 JEROME AVE	N/A	\$228,900	\$160,230	N/A	1.33
29 WINTONBURY AVE	1956	\$474,600	\$332,220	4,770	0.51
47 JEROME AVE	1971	\$792,900	\$555,030	1,711	0.21

Based on the aim of this Municipal Development Plan to improve public use, address the weak-market conditions, functional obsolescence, and deteriorated conditions, the following are the key objectives of the Municipal Development Plan:

- *Public Use – Town Green:* Expand the Town Green (also known as 2 Tunxis Avenue). As part of the extensive public outreach and engagement portion of this planning process, the Bloomfield community repeatedly and consistently emphasized the importance of the Town Green as a public space and community gathering place. In addition, the community emphasized the importance and value of community events hosted on the Town Green. At only 0.30 acres, the Town Green is undersized for its purpose and limited in its capacity to facilitate placemaking objectives as the central gathering place for the community. Expanding the Town Green will allow this larger public space to anchor the repositioning and redevelopment of the Municipal Plan area and to create a more vibrant, prosperous, and aesthetically pleasing Town Center. The municipal Development conceptualizes the expansion of the Town Green to the north and east, requiring the utilization of existing public and private land.
- *Public Use – Public Infrastructure:* To facilitate the expansion of the Town Green to the north, while improving the flow of traffic through the Town Center (especially the five-way intersection at Wintonbury Avenue, Tunxis Avenue, Mountain Avenue, Bloomfield Avenue, and Park Avenue), the Municipal Development Plan conceptualizes the termination (closing) of Wintonbury Avenue in front of the Congregational Church, allowing the Wintonbury Avenue right-of-way to be incorporated into the Town Green. Doing so would also eliminate the intersection of Wintonbury Avenue and Tunxis Avenue, reducing the 5-way intersection to a safer and more effective 4-way intersection and better facilitating the flow of traffic through the intersection and Town Center.
- *Public Use – Public Infrastructure:* To better facilitate the flow of traffic through the Town Center and the Municipal Development Plan area, based in part on the closure of Wintonbury Avenue at Tunxis Avenue, the realignment of Jerome Avenue is conceptualized. This realignment will shift the intersection of Jerome Avenue and Wintonbury Avenue approximately 250 feet to the west. The other part of this roadway realignment is intended to better facilitate the development potential of the Depot Lot, an undersized shallow strip of land (1.33 acres) between Jerome Avenue and the railroad tracks. This will create a large development site with greater development potential.
- *Public Use – Economic Development:* In accordance with the intent and authority Chapter 132, the expansion of the Town Green to facilitate placemaking and the Town Green's role as a community gathering space and anchor, the Municipal Development Plan believes new demand can be created for commercial and residential development in the Plan Area—affording an opportunity to overcome the weak-market conditions, functional obsolescence, and deteriorated conditions that dominate the Plan Area.
- *Public Use – Economic Development:* As conceptualized, the Municipal Development Plan envisions the acquisition and demolition of properties in this area. More importantly, the Municipal Development Plan conceptualizes this area to be redeveloped as mixed-use community-oriented Town Center development anchored by the Town Green. This mixed-use development is conceptualized to include 50,000 to 85,000 square feet of commercial space and between 140 and 200 units of multi-family residential space—all of the space being income producing properties.

Bloomfield Town Center Economic Development Commission
Town Center Economic Development Strategy
Preliminary Chapter 132 Redevelopment Financials
 March 10, 2025

Preliminary Redevelopment Financials:

The following are preliminary financials for the redevelopment costs of the Municipal Development Plan Area presented in two scenarios based on the density of development.

Scenario One

Low Cost Scenario	
Project Returns assume the Town purchases parcels at a 25% premium of Appraised Value and hands the property over to the developer. Acquisition & Site Costs are split between Res & Comm based on a 73%/ 27% Ratio of Total SF.	

Residential	179 Units
Commercial	65KSF

Project Costs	Res	Comm	Overall
Land/ Site/ Infrastructure Costs	\$22,058,034	\$6,677,249	\$28,735,282
Construction Costs	\$37,877,490	\$15,356,250	\$53,233,740
Soft Costs	\$3,854,888	\$1,546,288	\$5,401,176
Financing & Leasing Costs	\$4,308,131	\$4,918,073	\$9,226,204
Developer Fees	\$3,193,996	\$1,341,489	\$4,535,485
Total Development Cost	\$71,292,538	\$29,839,349	\$101,131,887

Return Metrics	Res	Comm	Overall
Return on Costs	6.58%	4.44%	5.65%
Project IRR	5.16%	2.76%	4.48%
Equity IRR	4.10%	-0.11%	2.76%
Stabilized Valuation	\$53,311,292	\$16,420,236	\$69,731,527

Scenario Two

High Costs Scenario	
Project Returns assume the Town purchases parcels at a 25% premium of Appraised Value and hands the property over to the developer. Acquisition & Site Costs are split between Res & Comm based on a 80%/ 20% Ratio of Total SF.	

Residential	230 Units
Commercial	65KSF

Project Costs	Res	Comm	Overall
Land/ Site/ Infrastructure Costs	\$23,054,861	\$5,680,421	\$28,735,282
Construction Costs	\$46,536,525	\$15,356,250	\$61,892,775
Soft Costs	\$4,706,573	\$1,539,003	\$6,245,576
Financing & Leasing Costs	\$4,883,088	\$4,819,263	\$9,702,352
Developer Fees	\$3,720,648	\$1,291,284	\$5,011,932
Total Development Cost	\$82,901,696	\$28,686,221	\$111,587,917

Return Metrics	Res	Comm	Overall
Return on Costs	6.97%	4.31%	6.09%
Project IRR	6.29%	2.99%	5.49%
Equity IRR	6.64%	0.26%	4.85%
Stabilized Valuation	\$68,861,743	\$16,420,236	\$85,281,979

The estimated TIF Funding for Scenario One, depending on the type of bond ranges from \$14,200,000 to \$17,400,000. For Scenario Two the TIF Funding ranges from \$17,900,000 to \$ 22,000,000.

Bloomfield Town Center Economic Development Commission
Town Center Economic Development Strategy
Municipal Development Agency – Chapter 132 Development Plan Process
March 10, 2025

Municipal Development Plan Process:

2. **Adoption – Development Plan:** In accordance with CGS Section 8-191, “Before the development agency adopts a plan for a development project,
 - a. the planning commission of the municipality shall find that the plan is in accord with the plan of development for the municipality; and
 - b. the regional council of governments for the region [CRCOG] ... shall find that such plan is in accord with the plan of development for such region, or if such council fails to make a finding concerning the plan within thirty-five days of receipt of the plan by such council, it shall be presumed that such council does not disapprove of the plan; and
 - c. the development agency shall hold at least one public hearing on the plan. At least thirty-five days prior to any public hearing, the development agency shall post the plan on the Internet web site of the development agency, if any.
 - d. Upon approval by the development agency, the agency shall submit the plan to the legislative body [Bloomfield Town Council] which shall vote to approve or disapprove the plan.
3. **Property Acquisition:** In accordance with CGS Section 8-193, “After approval of the development plan...the development agency may proceed by purchase, lease, exchange or gift with the acquisition or rental of real property within the project area and real property and interests therein for rights-of-way and other easements to and from the project area.

The development agency may, with the approval of the legislative body...and in the name of the municipality, acquire by eminent domain real property located within the project area...in the same manner that a redevelopment agency may acquire real property under sections 8-128 to 8-133...except that no real property may be acquired by eminent domain pursuant to this subsection for the primary purpose of increasing local tax revenue.

- **Public Hearing:** The development agency shall conduct a public hearing on any proposed acquisition of real property by eminent domain. The development agency shall cause notice of the time, place and subject of the hearing to be published in a newspaper...not more than ten days before the date set for the hearing. Not less than ten days before the date of the hearing, the development agency shall send, by first class mail, notice of the time, place and subject of the hearing to the owners of record of the real property and to all owners of real

property within one hundred feet of the real property to be acquired by eminent domain. [The development agency shall approve the acquisition by eminent domain by vote of a majority of the members.]

- **Town Council:** No parcel of real property may be acquired by eminent domain under this section except by approval by vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the legislative body of the municipality... Such approval shall be by separate vote on each parcel of real property to be acquired... The legislative body...shall not approve the use of eminent domain by the development agency unless the legislative body...has:
 - considered the benefits to the public and any private entity that will result from the development project and determined that the public benefits outweigh any private benefits,
 - determined that the current use of the real property cannot be feasibly integrated into the overall development plan, and
 - determined that the acquisition of the real property by eminent domain is reasonably necessary to successfully achieve the objectives of the development plan.

The municipality shall cause notice of any approved acquisition by eminent domain under this subdivision to be published in a newspaper...not more than ten days after such approval.

The owner-occupant of property acquired by eminent domain under this section may file an application in the superior court for the judicial district in which the municipality is located to enjoin the acquisition of such property. The court may issue such injunction if the court finds that the development agency or municipality failed to comply with the requirements of this chapter.

4. **Once Real Property is Acquired:** In accordance with CGS Section 8-193, “The development agency may, with the approval of the legislative body...and in the name of such municipality, transfer by sale or lease at fair market value or fair rental value, as the case may be, the whole or any part of the real property in the project area to any person, in accordance with the project plan and such disposition plans....

A development agency shall have all the powers necessary or convenient to undertake and carry out development plans and development projects, including the power to clear, demolish, repair, rehabilitate, operate, or insure real property while it is in its possession, to make site improvements essential to the preparation of land for its use in accordance with the development plan, to install, construct or reconstruct streets, utilities and other improvements necessary for carrying out the objectives of the development project...