



Town Center Master Plan: Centered & Strong

Town of Bloomfield, CT

February 2025

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Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

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Acknowledgments

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Acknowledgments

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The Assignment

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

The Town of Bloomfield retained Goman York Property Advisers LLC ("Goman+York") to assist the Town Center Economic Development Commission (TCEDC) in the creation of a Town Center Master Plan. The Master Plan is an Economic Development Strategy and CGS Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project Plan. This project aims to create a results-driven strategic plan that will guide Bloomfield through the process of (re)positioning the Town Center to compete for investment. To accomplish this, the process of creating the Town Center Strategy includes:

- Community Engagement – Informational, Open, Innovative, Accessible, & Inclusive
- Economic Development Goals & Strategies on how to Achieve those Goals
- Zoning Analysis
- Comprehensive Town Center Market Analysis
- Analysis of Past & Current Plans that will impact the Town Center District
- Business & Development Attraction
- Conceptual Plans & Designs focusing on the interconnection of the Town Center area
- Produce a reality-based Plan that is achievable and actionable, a Plan that meets the current and future needs of the community.

In creating this Town Center Master Plan, the Town of Bloomfield, with assistance from Goman+York, conducted a robust civic, community, and business engagement program that included community meetings, focus groups, TCEDC work sessions, and a community survey. In addition, Goman+York performed extensive demographic, socioeconomic, psychographic, market, and geofence analysis. This analysis and assessment were aimed at both establishing a baseline of existing conditions while developing a firm understanding of the Town Center market—*what is working and what is not working*. Furthermore, Goman+York evaluated existing policies, plans, regulations, infrastructures, and **capacities** to inform future potential. The end goal of this extensive planning process is to create a Town Center Master Plan (and Municipal Development Project Plan) that will "transform Bloomfield Town Center for generations to come."

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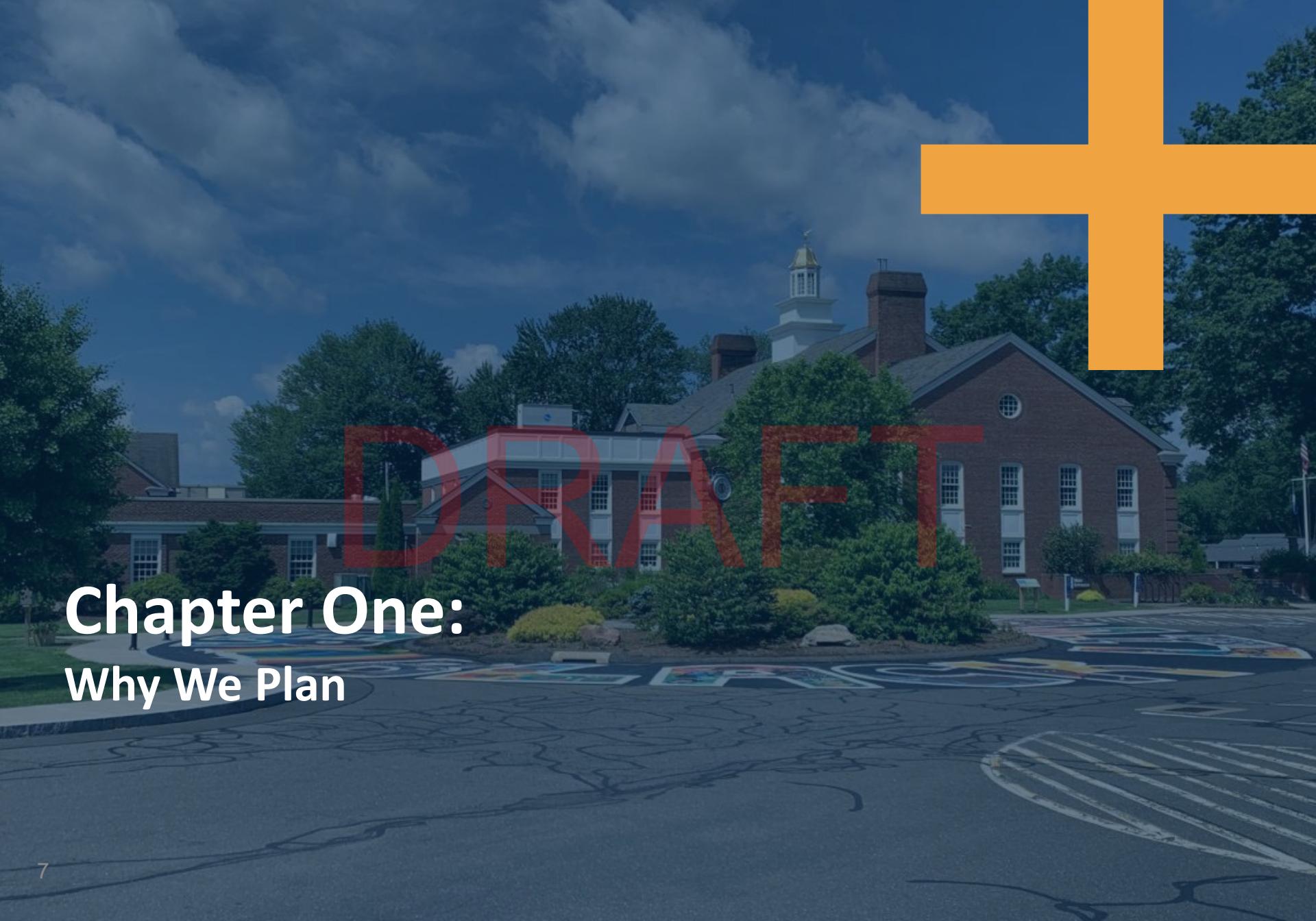
Executive Summary: Strategies for Improvement

Re-Positioning Bloomfield Center

Executive Summary

Executive Summary will be added after Public Hearing and Final Revisions

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Chapter One:

Why We Plan

Why We Plan

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

What is Planning?

Planning is a process and practice that can be formal or informal. When informal, it is something we often take for granted or do not notice. For example, we plan our everyday lives what we need to do, where we need to go, and when we must be there. Informal planning works well in the short term but does not work as well in the long term.

Long-term and strategic planning requires a more thoughtful and critical approach. In addition, planning for economic development, unlike planning for our doctor's appointment, requires a systematic approach that balances the needs, wants, *passions*, and *enthusiasms* of the community against social, demographic, economic, environmental, and property rights considerations. So, what is planning?

Planning is a:

- process of preparing for the future,
- systematic approach to *problem-solving*,
- strategy for *improvement*,
- *continuous learning* and adjustment, and
- prediction of the future with the *risk of being wrong*.

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"If a revitalization strategy does not take into account that any neighborhood [downtown] ... is subject to consumer decision making, then that strategy (no matter how good it looks on paper) will run into trouble when it encounters the realities of the ... marketplace."

David Boehlke, 'Great Neighborhoods, Great Cities' (2004: p. 5)

Why We Plan

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

The Process of Creating the Town Center Strategy and Plan

Motivated by decades of stagnation, Bloomfield's Town Council recognized the need to confront and (re)position Bloomfield Town Center to compete for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy. To accomplish this, Bloomfield retained Goman York Property Advisers LLC ("Goman+York") to assist the community with the creation of a Town Center Economic Development Strategy and Municipal Development Plan. To best facilitate the planning process, the Town Center Economic Development Commission (TCEDC) oversaw the creation of the Town Center Master Plan and Municipal Development Project Plan.

The research into existing conditions started in May 2024 and has continued throughout the planning process to February 2025. As demonstrated by the length and breadth of this document, the existing conditions analysis was extensive, covering macro- and micro-scale conditions, and community-wide and Town Center-scale conditions. The analysis of existing conditions began at a macro-level to understand the current and changing landscape of housing, housing structures, and individual real estate classes, as influenced by changing demographics and consumer demands. The analysis then focused on Bloomfield's demographics, with respect to the population's size, age, and socioeconomic trends. Building upon the social and demographic trends identified, the plan then looked toward microeconomics, considering state, regional, and town labor markets, employment, and real estate markets, the analysis zooming in as closely as visitations to individual shopping centers and restaurants in Bloomfield. The consultants reviewed the Town Center's land use, beginning with an analysis of

current and recommended zoning regulations as well as a property conditions survey of each building in the Town Center. The Center was then evaluated as a real estate site, considering factors such as its location, market trade area, and traffic counts.



Why We Plan

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

In addition to the TCEDC oversight and input, extensive community outreach to residents, businesses, and boards and commissions was conducted from September 2024 through November 2024.

The outreach began with a presence at a community event on the green, the Food Truck Festival. The consultants hosted a table at this event to inform the community on the process the Town was embarking on, the goals of the plan, future outreach events, and to begin gathering information from the community. This outreach was also used as an opportunity to promote the town-wide Kick-Off & community survey.

This project was kicked off publicly to residents and stakeholders in September through an informational session with activities to collect public opinions. The activities gauged perspectives on forward-thinking questions, asked participants to hypothetically allocate investment money toward projects and programs, rated community amenities and investments by their level of desire, identified sources of pride and sorrow in the Town Center, and asked participants to describe their Town Center both currently and in their ideal future.

The community survey was made available virtually for a month and produced over 800 responses. It worked to inform the plan on an array of topics such as desired development, areas for improvement, use types, and residents' relationship with the Town Center and Town Green. (The results of the Community Survey can be found in Appendix II)

The community outreach included focus groups with both small and large businesses; town staff, agency, board, and commission members; as well as focus group discussions with religious leaders, senior citizens,

residents of the Town Center, and high school students.

The public engagement was designed to gain insights from the participants while measuring the community's appetite for change, improvement, and willingness to implement a Town Center Master Plan and the Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project Plan.

The Town Center Economic Development Commission met monthly with the consultants during the planning process. These meetings generally consisted of a presentation of findings from the consultants' most recent engagements and analyses. The TCEDC members offered context and nuance to themes discovered in the analyses and outreach. They met the consultants with questions to expand the consultants' views and ideas, which identified areas where additional analysis was required. Ultimately, the TCEDC provided the guidance and insight that naturally directed and shaped the development of the Town Center Master Plan. As the plan began to progress, work sessions were held by the TCEDC to hear, discuss, and refine the consultant's recommendations, providing further and deeper insights into the community, business climate, and the Town Center.

Why We Plan

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

The Planning Process

The planning process, as a systematic approach, utilized for this Town Center Master Plan and Municipal Development Project Plan was a five-step process:

Step 1. Where Are We Today?

The assessment of existing conditions (social, demographic, economic, land use, and environmental) that influence Bloomfield. This is done to establish a baseline and to understand *what is working and what is not working* in the Town Center.

Step 2. Where Do We Want to Be in the Future?

The process of public outreach and input provides an understanding of what the community wants, needs, and is willing and capable of working to achieve. Accomplished through community meetings, focus groups, and an online survey, the community input is translated into the conceptual design of the Town Center—setting outcomes for what the Town Center can be in the future.

Step 3. How Will We Get There?

Determined and established policies and strategic interventions aimed at moving the Town Center toward the desired outcomes. This includes both public and private investment.

Step 4. How Will We Know We Are on the Right Course?

Considered the desired outcomes and strategic interventions to be deployed to achieve those outcomes and create measures to help inform

the community if what we are doing is working—a means of measuring the effectiveness of implementation.

Step 5. Implementation

Provides a road map to the future—an action agenda to guide the implementation of the Town Center Master Plan.

The Town Center Strategy and Plan

The Town Center Master Plan and Municipal Development Project Plan is a comprehensive study and analysis of Bloomfield's economic conditions and explores the *community* through the lens of spatial, social, economic, and demographic conditions. The analysis is designed to gain a firm understanding of the many variables and forces that influence Town Center—investment behavior.

The planning process is a thoughtful and engaging process of working through the unique community *needs and wants* as a means of determining how to best (re)position Bloomfield's Town Center to compete for investment (development and improvement), wealth (Grand List value), and vibrancy (socio-economic activity).

This Town Center Master Plan is a statement of policies and strategic interventions aimed at moving the market and (re)positioning Town Center to be a competitive, healthy, and vibrant place.

Chapter Two: The Changing Landscape

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Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Introduction

To best understand Bloomfield's Town Center, we need to understand *how and why* development patterns have changed. The form and function of settlement patterns are forever changing around technological and transportation innovations, economics, and our social-cultural ways of living in our environment—the built environments as our self-created human habitat (our ecosystem). For example, our first industrial mills and factories were located alongside rivers (their source of power) and towns and cities were constructed around them. Riverside locations were later abandoned once electricity was invented, and electric power sources were provided. The arrival of rail resulted in the abandonment of many ports, as manufacturing relocated along the rail lines. Later, interstate highways further transformed and reorganized the location and site of industry at interchanges and access ramps (i.e., the industrial park) and large single-story buildings that consolidated production, assembly, and distribution on a single floor.

The same is true of residential development—housing type and location. The location and space of residential uses have also changed and continue to change. The pre-World War I era was dominated by higher-density urban housing and street-car suburbs, while the post-World War II era was dominated by mass suburbanization, sprawling single-family detached homes, owner-occupancy, and auto-oriented development.

Today, the pendulum is swinging back toward centers, multi-family, and renter-occupied—walkable communities have become an *amenity* of housing and town centers. In part, this shift includes a move toward mixed-use developments and communities that offer housing,

commercial space, and other amenities—including spaces for social and recreational activities—in proximity. However, this shift is not only about the *new urbanism planning and design* movement but is more about the complexity of changes in demographics, household structure, generational preferences, and consumer behaviors. In short, new markets have emerged for mixed-use, multi-family, and compact communities that better suit the lifestyle needs of today's eclectic households. In addition, there is a symbiotic relationship between housing and commercial development—*housing is where jobs go at night* and where consumers of goods and services reside. Therefore, both housing developers and retail operators have realized the mutual benefits of housing proximate to retail—a lesson to be learned by the local government. *Planning for housing must be part of any economic development strategy.*

The Changing Landscape

With the form and function of settlement patterns forever shifting and changing around technological innovations, modes of transportation innovations, economics, and our social-cultural ways of living in our built environment, our demographics, socioeconomic, and consumer behaviors also shift and change. This creates new ways of working, socializing, and recreating. Many, if not most of these changes are the result of slow-moving variables, making it difficult to see and understand these shifts and changes in real time. Bloomfield and Bloomfield's Town Center, just like other communities and places, have been impacted by these shifts and changes.

Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

While slow-moving variables are gradual, change itself is not gradual or constant. *Change is episodic*. That means it takes time for the slow-moving variable to add up, to create a critical mass that results in the *crossing of threshold* or what is commonly known as a *tipping point*. For example, beginning in the early 2000s e-commerce and online retailing were growing and slowly capturing retail market share from bricks and mortar retail—a slow-moving variable. Given enough time, at some point online retail would capture enough market share, crossing a threshold, and disrupting brick-and-mortar retail. Pre-pandemic this was starting to occur, most notable was the disruption of large regional malls. A threshold was being crossed, malls were collapsing, and episodic change in brick-and-mortar retail was underway.

Shock and disturbance, accelerate phenomena and processes that create tipping points. For example, the pandemic accelerated the slow-moving shift to online retailing, crossing a threshold, creating disruption in retail, and resulting in the collapse of already weak and struggling retail stores.

Demographic Changes in Household Structure and Housing

As discussed earlier, Bloomfield's demographic structure is being transformed by an aging population. In addition, changes in demographics and socioeconomics have transformed household structures. For example, in 1960 only 13.0% of housing units in the United States were occupied by 1-person households. Today, 28% of our nation's housing stock is occupied by 1-person households. The same is true in Connecticut. Today, 29.9% of Connecticut's housing units are occupied by 1-person households and 46% of Connecticut's renter-occupied housing units are 1-person households. Bloomfield is not

immune to these changes. Today 30.2% of Bloomfield's housing stock is occupied by 1-person households and 46.2% of Bloomfield's renter-occupied housing units are 1-person households. These profound changes in household structure have meaningful consequences on household formation, population, income, and purchasing power.



Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Another important change can be seen in married-couple households with children (under the age of 18). In the United States, from 1970 to 2012, the percentage of married-couple households with children declined from 40.3% to 19.6%. Today, only 19% of households are married couples with children. These changes in household structure result from both an aging population and social-cultural trends. Compared to decades and generations before, we marry later, marry less, and have fewer children.

Demographic changes are driving shifts and changes in the housing market. Bloomfield has 9,717 housing units, of which 9,125 (93.9%) housing units are occupied. Bloomfield's housing stock is 68.1% owner-occupied, 67.4% single-family (detached units equal 60.5% and attached units equal 6.8%), and 61.2% of the housing stock has 3 or more bedrooms per unit. Like housing statewide, Bloomfield's existing housing stock was built for past generations with larger households and more children.

The New Housing Construction chart shows the changes in housing demand over the past six decades. Prior to 1990, Connecticut built a lot of housing to satisfy demand for growing jobs and populations. In addition, the newly constructed housing was balanced between single-family and multi-family. Post 1990, as job growth and population growth slowed, Connecticut's housing production also slowed. Most notably, the production of multi-family housing contracted to less than 10% of total new housing construction. However, as demographics and household size have changed, the housing market has shifted since 2012 and multi-family housing production has increased to over 40% of total new

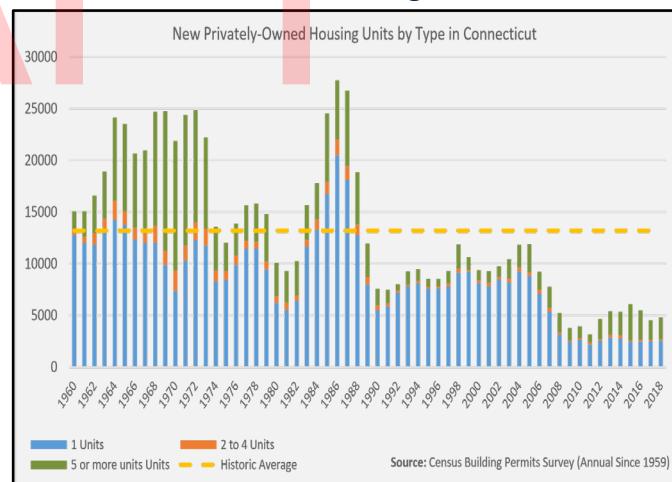
housing construction—satisfying the demand created by small households. This explains the increase in multi-family housing in Bloomfield and the Town Center over the last decade.

Bloomfield Housing – Number of Bedrooms

Bedrooms	Units	Percent
No bedrooms	107	1.1%
1 bedroom	1,022	11.0%
2 bedrooms	2,484	26.7%
3 bedrooms	3,749	40.3%
4 bedrooms	1,609	17.3%
5 or more bedrooms	336	3.6%

Source: U.S. Census, American Fact Finder 2020

Connecticut New Housing Construction



Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

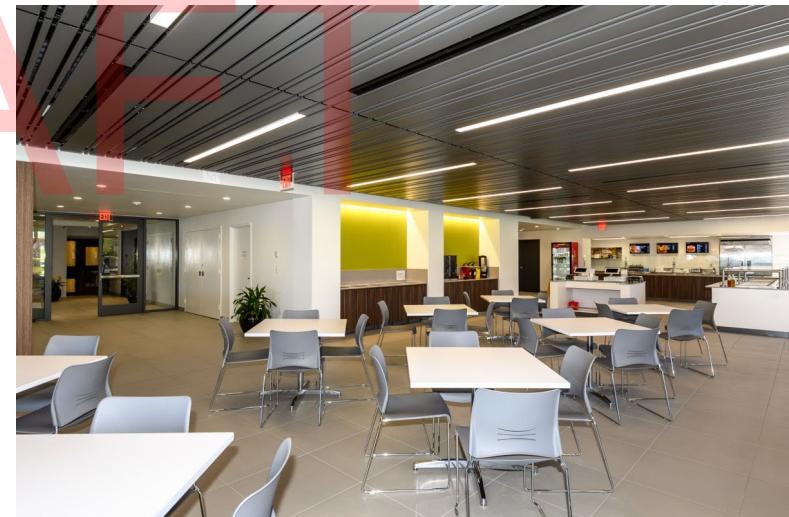
The shock and disturbance of the pandemic accelerated decades-long trends of stagnant and contracting office space needs, resulting in accelerated and persistent increases in office vacancy rates, and declining or stagnant rents that will likely result in decreased valuations and declining property tax revenues for local governments.

Unforeseen shock and disturbance typically harm the most vulnerable—this is true for businesses, communities, neighborhoods, and individuals. For example, young and marginal businesses, poorer communities or neighborhoods, and weak or struggling economic sectors are the most susceptible to shock and disturbance. Understanding this provides a resiliency framework for dealing with change and working toward improvement.

Commercial Office is an example of change, shock, and disturbance. For decades, the per square feet utilization of space per employee had slowly been declining. This was, in part, the result of digital technology reducing the need for filing space, smaller work areas, and the slow adaptation of telecommuting. Less space was needed to accommodate employees and conduct business. Slowly, over the past decade, companies started to adopt virtual meetings and other technologies to support activities spread over multiple locations, including remote work. Then the pandemic hit—shock and disturbance—with stay-at-home orders. Companies were forced into mass adaptation of virtual technologies to facilitate business activities. A threshold was crossed. Remote and hybrid were established as viable alternatives to on-site work and proved to be effective. Hybrid work is now established as a new norm, utilized in larger percentages of the workforce, and is here to stay.

The Changing Commercial Office Landscape

Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, the commercial office market has continuously grown, especially in growth markets. Starting in the early 1900s the primary location of commercial office was in the central city and downtown. Beginning in the 1950s a shift to suburban locations started to occur. In fact, CIGNA's move from Downtown Hartford to Bloomfield was one of the earliest corporate office moves to suburbia and the start of the creation of suburban office parks (IBM's move from NYC to Westchester County predated CIGNA).



Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

From the 1950s on, downtowns maintained their prominence while office parks proliferated in the suburban realm of metropolitan regions. In the 1990s, many downtowns started to struggle, and suburban office parks started showing signs of struggles in the mid-to late-2000s. Technological changes impacted the utilization of office space, driving down the space (square feet) needed per employee. This contraction in needed space resulted in increased vacancy rates and stagnant rents. By the late 2000s a slow adaptation of remote and hybrid work further resulted in space contraction, and in some instances, such as Aetna's 1.3 million square foot Middletown Campus, resulted in abandonment and demolition, while many downtown office buildings were being converted to residential space.

Today, because of the pandemic, remote work has become more common, and hybrid work is being established as a new norm. With the rise of hybrid work—employees in the office two to four days a week—commercial office vacancy rates are rising. In some of the worst-hit markets and office sectors, vacancy rates as high as 50% are being realized. While demand will also remain to some degree at certain locations or for owner/user-specific new office construction, the prospects of meaningful new office construction are unlikely, while re-occupancy of existing offices will also be a struggle.

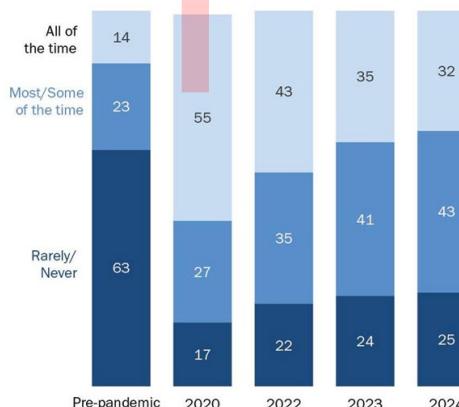
The fact is the commercial office landscape has been disrupted. With hybrid work established as a new norm and the rise of Artificial Intelligence which will likely result in further contracting office jobs, the commercial office market will likely not return to its pre-pandemic state, outside of select markets. Most importantly, softer and weaker office

markets, such as Connecticut, will likely experience contraction or stagnation, at best.

Bloomfield's Town Center is fortunate to not have a substantial commercial office market sector. However, the office product in the Center is older, dated, and verging on functional obsolescence. In addition, the limited commercial office space is focused on small community-scale office, not the large corporate office occupants.

Majority of workers whose jobs allow telecommuting continue to work from home at least some of the time

Among U.S. workers who say that, for the most part, the responsibilities of their job can be done from home, % saying they work from home ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.

Pew Research Center

Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

The Changing Retail Landscape

In the early to mid-1900s, the primary location of retail was in city centers (i.e., downtown, and main street) and multi-story department stores. Over time department stores (and other retailers) shifted outward to suburban centers and retail strips. Later, the enclosed American mall came into vogue, located miles outside the central city, downtowns, suburban centers, and beyond retail strip centers, at interstate highway interchanges and access ramps, and anchored by large single- and two-story department stores. Next, the big box discount department stores and specialty retailers (i.e., category-killers) emerged on the scene, often favoring locations proximate to retail malls and other large retail clusters. Last and most recently, lifestyle centers appeared in a variety of locations, providing walkable outdoor environments that are often paired with residential development. Just as mill towns and industrial cities struggled with the changing location of manufacturing, many downtowns, main streets, suburban centers, retail strips, regional malls, and lifestyle centers have struggled with the changing location of retailing.

Today, with the arrival of e-commerce, the retail sector continues to change. However, the arrival of e-commerce retailing is not simply a spatial shift in the physical location of retail. E-commerce has created a shift to a virtual space that has captured approximately 16% of the total retail market. This shift has rendered some physical locations and retail spaces functionally obsolete. For example, when retailing moved from main street to malls, new uses and certain forms of retailing, such as personal service and restaurants discovered new opportunities on main

street, backfilling into abandoned spaces, and creating new vitality on many main streets. With the shift to the virtual space of e-commerce, there has been a declining demand for physical space (bricks and mortar retail) to backfill in the abandoned physical space of retail—this is especially true for large regional malls.

This shift from the spatial location and physical space of past retail to the virtual space of e-commerce is at the core of media accounts of the *'retail apocalypse'* and *'dead and dying malls.'* While such accounts often over-dramatize the collapse of brick-and-mortar retail (and retailers), there are truths to the *apocalypse* and the struggles of the changing landscape of retailing—the pandemic further exposed the struggles of retail.

The fact is the retail landscape has changed and will continue to change. Retailing as we once knew it is being disrupted and transformed by technological and transportation innovations, economics, and the ever-changing behaviors of consumers. Simply put, consumers no longer shop and spend in the same ways as they did one or more decades ago. For example, not long ago, grocery shopping was a weekly activity of large food purchases for the week. Today grocery shopping has evolved into a form of foraging, multiple stops per week to pick up prepared foods for tonight's dinner or the ingredients needed for the next few meals.

Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

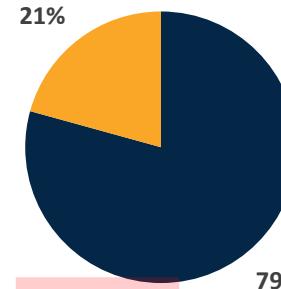
It is important to note that during this century-long change in the spatial location and organization of retailing, the retail sector itself was also transformed from tailor-made, local, and individualized products to off-the-rack mass-produced products provided by national and global chains.

The pandemic exposed the weaknesses that had been growing in many retail sectors. The slow and persistent increase in online shopping before the pandemic pushed many forms of brick-and-mortar retail across thresholds and into collapse—this is especially true for the large regional malls, such as Buckland Hills Mall.

From the perspective of town center redevelopment—repositioning Bloomfield's Town Center to compete for investment—Bloomfield's Town Center has become uncompetitive in much of the retail sector. That's not to say retail doesn't exist or can't exist in the Town Center, but rather to acknowledge that existing retail is limited and concentrated in specific segments. The community outreach and community survey confirmed this, and the fact that most residents leave Bloomfield for most of their retail needs. This is not surprising.

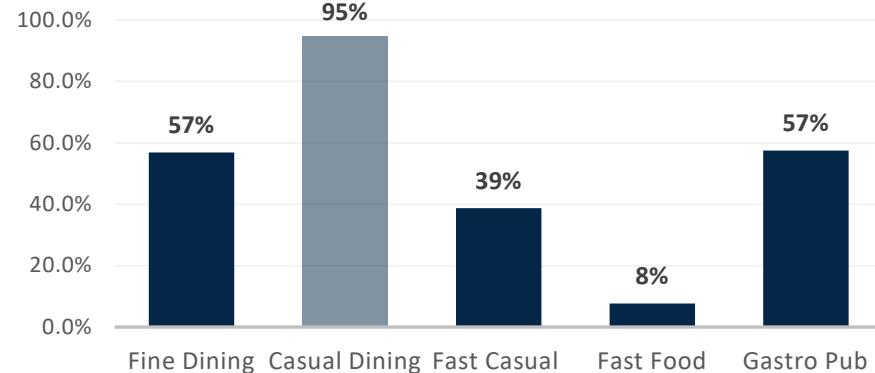
Retail in the Town Center is service, community, and food and beverage-oriented. It is light on national chains and mostly locally owned. What already exists in the Town Center retail segment informs us of what the market can and will support—the type of retail that can prosper in the Town Center. While Bloomfield's Town Center is limited in its ability to compete in the greater retail sector, it can be positioned to compete for greater community-scale retail amenities.

Where do you do most of your shopping?



■ Outside Bloomfield ■ Within Bloomfield

What types of retail would you like to see in the Town Center?
Select all that apply.



Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

The Changing Landscape of Hospitality

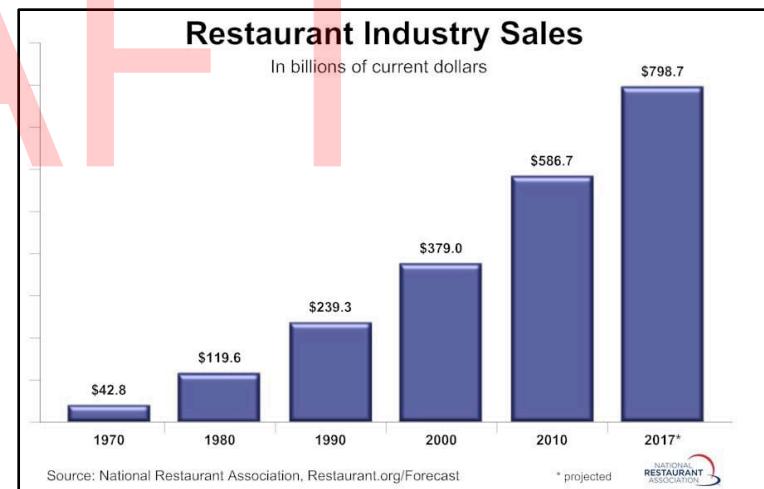
Hotels, like the other asset classes and use, have also changed. Hotels began as the large grand hotels in downtowns serving the business class travelers. The mid-1900s and the automobile ushered in the era of motels and motor lodges along state routes and commercial strips. The late 1900s gave rise to budget hotels and international chains catering to both business and leisure travel, while the early 2000s saw the rise of business-class and extended-stay hotels. Prior to the pandemic, business and leisure travel were growth industries and the various classes and brands of hotels were proliferating across the metropolitan landscape.

The hospitality and tourism industry were substantially harmed by the pandemic. Business and leisure travel all but ground to a halt in 2020 and recovery through 2021 was slow, at best. While leisure travel has recovered since 2021, business travel has been much slower to recover—virtual meetings and the associated cost savings have slowed the recovery of business travel.

Since 1970, the restaurant industry (food & beverage) has been a growth industry with nearly a twenty-fold increase in sales. The proliferation of national chains, the rise of fast-casual, and increases in specialty products such as coffee and ice cream have satisfied consumer needs and wants. Today, Americans consume more food outside the home, than at home—the result of changing demographics and lifestyles. Hard hit by the pandemic, the food and beverage industry has been disrupted. New forms of food production and delivery have emerged, national chains have adapted and are bouncing back, while many independents still struggle. That said, the restaurant industry will recover and continue to

grow as consumer demand for prepared foods and the social experience remains strong.

While Bloomfield's location within the region is not well suited for hotels (no direct interstate highway access), the Town Center is a suitable location for restaurants—the very reason many restaurants already exist in the Town Center. Today, the restaurants in the Town Center serve both the community and the region. The restaurants provide a mix of breakfast, lunch, dinner, and late-night service. The Town Center, once repositioned, can grow and capture market demand for more restaurants, especially cafes, casual dining, and fine dining.



Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

The Changing Residential Landscape

Housing and residential development have also been impacted by changes in the form and function of settlement patterns and by changes in demographics, economics, and our social-cultural ways of living in our environment. The location and space of residential uses continue to shift and change.

The pre-World War I era was dominated by higher-density urban housing and street-car suburbs, while the post-World War II era was dominated by mass suburbanization, sprawling single-family detached homes, owner-occupancy, and auto-oriented development—the era in which Bloomfield developed, in part. Today, the pendulum is swinging back toward centers, multi-family, and renter-occupied—walkability or walkable communities have become an amenity of housing development and town centers. In part, this shift includes a move toward mixed-use developments and communities that offer housing, shopping, office space, and amenities—spaces for social and recreational activities.

However, the shift toward higher density, mixed-use, and multi-family is not simply about *new urbanism planning and design*, it is more about the complexity of changes in demographics, household structure, generational preferences, and consumer behaviors. In short, new consumer markets have emerged for mixed-use, multi-family, and compact communities that better suit the lifestyle needs of today's eclectic households.

There is also a symbiotic relationship between housing and commercial development—*housing is where jobs go at night* and where consumers

of goods and services reside. Therefore, both housing developers and retail operators have realized the mutual benefits of housing proximate to retail. Housing provides discretionary income to be spent in retail establishments, while proximate retail and commercial uses provide convenient amenities to households.

From the perspective of repositioning Bloomfield's Town Center to compete for investment, multi-family, mixed-use, and higher-density walkable communities must be embraced. The Town Center can accommodate higher-density housing, and mixed-use (mixed-proximate) and multi-family development can and will likely be the most effective to reposition and redevelop commercial and institutional properties in the Town Center. The fact is, multi-family rental is the strongest commercial (income-producing) real estate asset class—this is why multi-family rental development has been the most notable and common form of development in the Town Center in recent years.



Chapter Three: Existing Conditions – Demographics, Economics, & Psychographics

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Demographics, Economics, & Psychographics

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Introduction

The Town Center Master Plan and Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project Plan are an investment strategy aimed at (re)positioning Bloomfield's Town Center to compete for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy. Investment, defined as time, effort, and money, and especially commercial investment, has stagnated in the Town Center. To best understand Bloomfield's Town Center, and to make informed decisions about the future of the Town Center and the policies that will attract and guide future investment, it is imperative to understand the existing conditions that influence the Town Center. By analyzing the demographics, socioeconomic, and other market forces, a deeper understanding is gained of Bloomfield's Town Center.

Comparing existing conditions to historical trends and future projections informs us about where Bloomfield and the Town Center have been, where they are likely heading, and what potential policies and strategies may be implemented to manage change and create meaningful improvement. The wealth of understanding gained from this analysis, when properly interpreted and translated, offers unique insights into the challenges Bloomfield's Town Center seeks to confront and mitigate, and the potential policy tools and approaches Bloomfield can employ to best attract and guide investment and development in the Town Center.

Understanding existing conditions provides context to the multiple and dynamic variables that influence the trajectory of the Town Center and inform us about future potential. Ultimately, understanding the existing conditions helps to inform us of what required and plausible approaches, strategies, and interventions can be employed by the Town.



Demographics, Economics, & Psychographics

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Bloomfield Town Center Master Plan and Municipal Development Plan Boundary



Demographics, Economics, & Psychographics

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

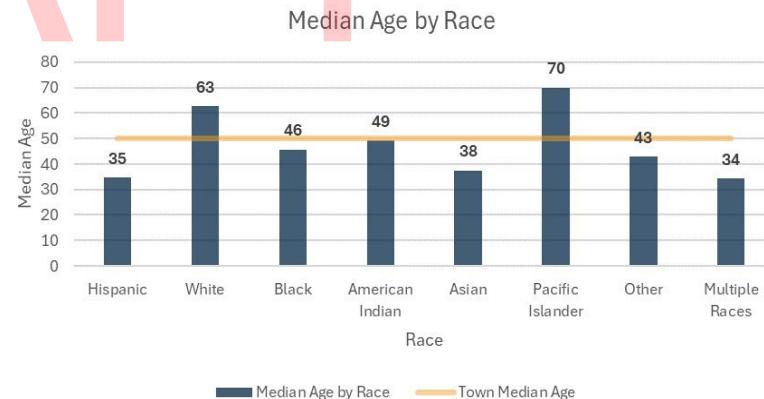
Population

Bloomfield's demographics have changed and will continue to change. From 2010 to 2020, Bloomfield's population increased by 5%, a rate faster than the state and all eight counties. The U.S. Census American Community Survey estimates that Bloomfield's population increased even further to 21,696 in 2022.

While Bloomfield's population growth is positive, Bloomfield is also aging. With a median age of 49.7, Bloomfield is substantially older than the United States (38.9) and Connecticut (41.2). An aging population is a sign of demographic stagnation, which can lead to economic stagnation.

Even though Bloomfield is aging, as seen in the top-heavy age pyramid on the following page, Bloomfield's Town Center population is trending younger, with a substantial 25- to 40-year-old population. Bloomfield's population growth between 2010 and 2020 can be attributed to new housing construction, primarily multi-family housing, including several developments in the Town Center. This growth in Town Center housing points to a strong and tested Town Center housing market and the ability of such housing to attract a younger demographic. Growing the housing stock in Town Center and attracting and retaining a younger demographic to Town Center, will improve the Town Center's economic position. However, a critical mass of housing is still needed in the Center.

Total Population	Population 2010	Population 2020	Population Change 2010-2020	% Change 2010-2020
Connecticut	3,574,097	3,605,944	31,847	1%
Bloomfield	20,486	21,535	1,049	5%
Fairfield County	916,829	957,419	40,590	4%
Hartford County	894,014	899,498	5,484	1%
Litchfield County	189,927	185,186	-4,741	-2%
Middlesex County	165,676	164,245	-1,431	-1%
New Haven County	862,477	864,835	2,358	0%
New London County	274,055	268,555	-5,500	-2%
Tolland County	152,691	149,788	-2,903	-2%
Windham County	118,428	116,418	-2,010	-2%

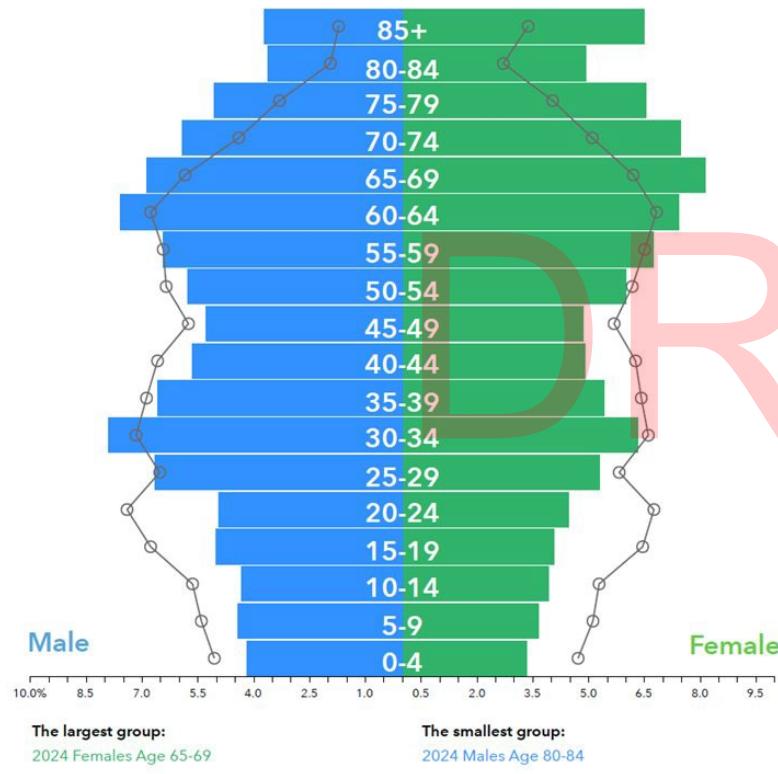


Demographics, Economics, & Psychographics

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

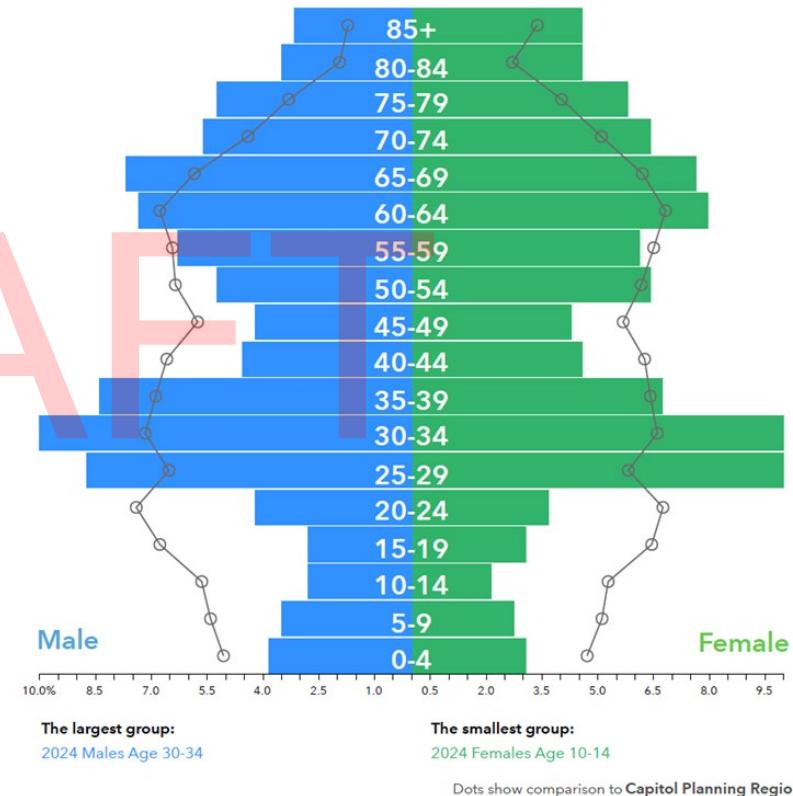
Bloomfield Age Pyramid

AGE PYRAMID - 2024



Town Center Age Pyramid

AGE PYRAMID - 2024



Demographics, Economics, & Psychographics

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Labor Market & Jobs

Connecticut has experienced stagnant job growth for the past 35 years. For example, from 1985 to 1989 (5 years), Connecticut added approximately 103,000 (non-farm employment) jobs and only 45,000 (non-farm employment) jobs from 1990 to 2020 (30 years). Jobs are the primary driver of demand for commercial real estate space and housing. Population is the secondary driver, while household formations (the creation of new households) are a key driver of housing demand. With stagnant job growth and anemic population growth, demand for commercial space has been marginal while demand for housing (residential space) has been modest—household formations being driven by the increase in one- and two-person households.

The Hartford Labor Market has underperformed the state, losing 23,300 jobs from 1990 to 2023. While the pandemic contributed to recent job loss, recovery is occurring. However, overall, the state and regional labor markets are mostly stagnant with marginal losses and increases as the economy fluctuates. Bloomfield's labor force and unemployment mostly mirrors the state and regional labor market.

Stagnant, slow, and little growth have consequences—populations age, consumer spending patterns change, and real estate products also age. For example, households over the age of 65 spend 50% less than households in their 30s and 40s. These demographic and economic changes are some of the many factors impacting Bloomfield's Town Center—marginal demand resulting in marginal investment.

Bloomfield	Aug-23	Aug-24	% Change
Labor Force	11,736	11,708	-0.2%
Unemployed Persons	467	438	-6.2%
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.0%	3.7%	-0.2%

Connecticut	Aug-23	Aug-24	% Change
Labor Force	1,896,800	1,902,500	0.3%
Unemployed Persons	71,600	65,500	-8.5%
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.8%	3.4%	-0.3%

Hartford LMA	Aug-23	Aug-24	% Change
Labor Force	618,508.00	616,120.00	-0.4%
Unemployed Persons	23,699.00	21,257.00	-10.3%
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.8%	3.5%	-0.4%

NONFARM EMPLOYMENT (Seasonally Adjusted)						
	1985	1990	2000	2010	2020	2023
CT LMA	1,549,800	1,653,200	1,689,800	1,601,000	1,698,000	1,681,900
Hartford LMA	---	603,400	568,900	545,100	575,000	580,100
Connecticut Department of Labor - Office of Research						

Demographics, Economics, & Psychographics

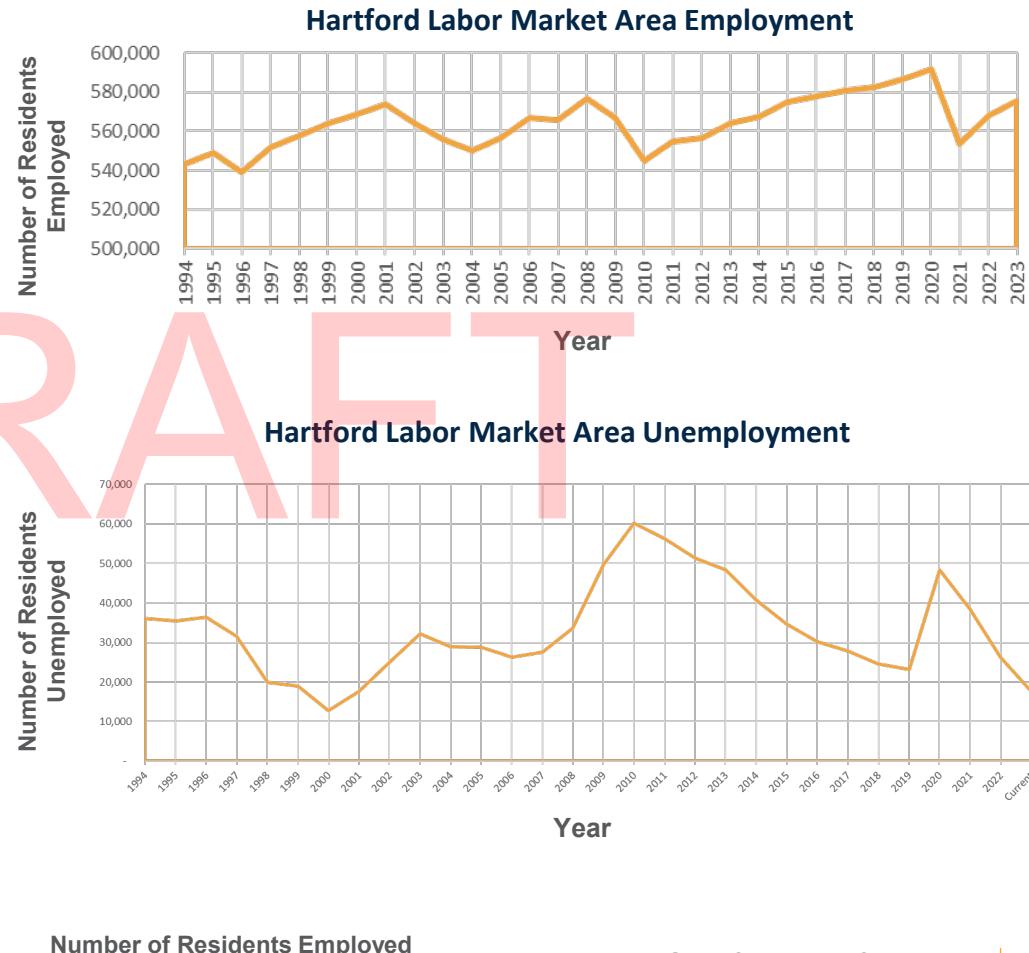
Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Employment & Unemployment

The graphs on the right show both employment and unemployment trends in the Hartford Labor Market. Less the impacts of the pandemic around 2020 and 2021, both trends show positive outcomes over the past decade or more. That is to say, the total number of persons employed has been rising and the total number of persons unemployed has been decreasing.

When considering the context of long-term declines in the number of jobs in the Hartford Labor Market—as shown on the prior page—the trends more likely show economic stagnation overall. That is while jobs have contracted compared to past highs, the labor market stagnated, resulting in near full employment and low unemployment, a condition that mirrors anemic population growth and a mostly stagnant job market. The end outcome is economic stagnation—in the Hartford Labor Market and statewide.

Bloomfield has a Labor Force of **11,708** as of August 2024. Bloomfield's decrease in Labor Force over the last 12 months is fewer than the Hartford LMA and the State. Bloomfield has an unemployment rate of **3.7%** as of August 2024, a decrease of **0.2%** over the last year but remains between **0.2-0.3%** higher than the Hartford LMA and the State.



Demographics, Economics, & Psychographics

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Bloomfield town, CT
Geography: County Subdivision

21,679 0.16% 2.26 64.9 49.7 \$93,164 \$307,490

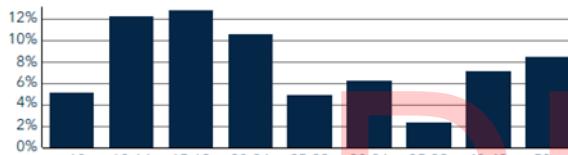
Population Total Population Growth Average HH Size Diversity Index Median Age Median HH Income Median Home Value

\$385,301 14.6% 55.7% 29.7%

Median Net Worth Age <18 Age 18-64 Age 65+



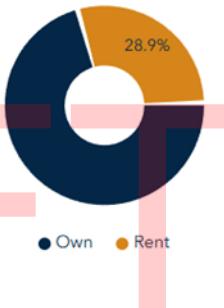
Mortgage as Percent of Salary



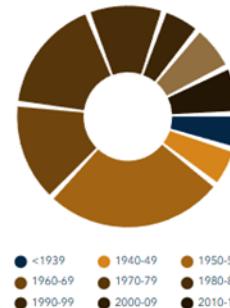
Age Profile: 5 Year Increments



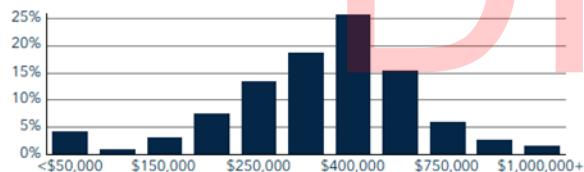
Home Ownership



Housing: Year Built



Home Value



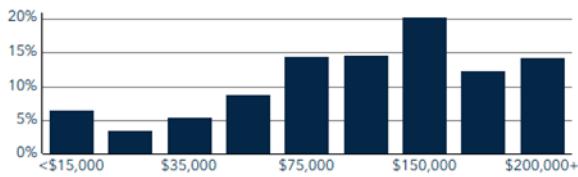
Educational Attainment



Commute Time: Minutes



Household Income



Dots show comparison to Capitol Plann...

Source: Esri, ACS. Esri forecasts for 2024, 2018-2022, 2029.

© 2024 Esri

Demographics, Economics, & Psychographics

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Community Profile & Socioeconomics

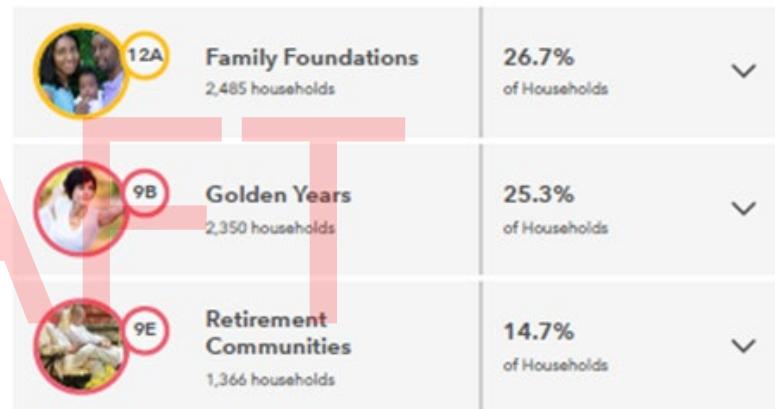
The Community Profile on the prior page depicts Bloomfield as a mostly middle-market community in the context of Connecticut and the Hartford Region. By middle-market, we mean that Bloomfield is neither a poor distressed community nor a wealthy, strong-market community. It is middling, showing characteristics of a middle-class community with many strengths and some weaknesses. For example, Bloomfield's income and home values are similar to the area median, while educational attainment is a bit lower than the area.

Psychographics & Consumer Segmentation

Goman+York performed an in-depth analysis of Bloomfield's consumer segmentation using ESRI's Tapestry Segmentation. In addition, the analysis included specific Segmentation for the Town Center and 5, 15, and 24-minute drive times. Tapestry combines demographics with consumer spending habits and psychographic behaviors to segment the population and neighborhoods. This Segmentation provides a detailed mosaic of socioeconomics and demographics. Tapestry Segmentation includes a broad spectrum of 14 LifeMode groups and 67 distinct market segments. The three most prevalent Segments in Bloomfield are Family Foundations, Golden Years, and Retirement Communities, which are summarized on the following slide. Most notable about these segments, which reinforce the demographics of Bloomfield discussed above, are they are aging segments of the population, with limited household budgets, that make for modest consumer spending. Stated another way, these populations and households are not typically big spenders, and as a result, constrain overall market demand for retail in

Town Center—likely contributing to high vacancy in Town Center retail. That is not to say demand does not exist, but simply that there are limits to Bloomfield's internal demand.

Town of Bloomfield – Top Tapestries



Demographics, Economics, & Psychographics

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

- 2,485 Households
- 26.7% of Households
- Median Age: 40
- Average Income: \$47,600
- Top Employments:
Serving Industry, Professional Services, Management, Administrative

- 2,350 Households
- 25.3% of Households
- Median Age: 54
- Average Income: \$80,200
- Top Employments:
Professional Services, Service Occupations

- 1,366 Households
- 14.7% of Households
- Median Age: 55
- Average Income: \$47,400
- Top Employments:
Retired, Professional Services

Family Foundations: Family and faith are the cornerstones of life in these communities. Older children, still living at home, working toward financial independence, are common within these households. Neighborhoods are stable: little household growth has occurred for more than a decade. Many residents work in the health-care industry or public administration across all levels of government. Style is important to these consumers, who spend on clothing for themselves and their children as well as on smartphones.

Golden Years: Independent, active seniors nearing the end of their careers or already in retirement best describes Golden Years residents. This market is primarily singles living alone or empty nesters. Those still active in the labor force are employed in professional occupations; however, these consumers are actively pursuing a variety of leisure interests—travel, sports, dining out, museums, and concerts. They are involved, focused on physical fitness, and enjoying their lives. This market is smaller, but growing, and financially secure.

Retirement Communities Single-family homes and independent living with apartments, assisted living, and continuous care nursing facilities. Over half of the housing units are in multi-unit structures, and the majority of residents have a lease. This group enjoys watching cable TV and stays up-to-date with newspapers and magazines. Residents take pride in fiscal responsibility and keep a close eye on their finances. Although income and net worth are below national averages, residents enjoy going to the movies, fishing, and taking vacations. While some residents enjoy cooking, many would rather dine out.

Demographics, Economics, & Psychographics

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Conclusions

Bloomfield is a middle-market suburban community in a soft-market region and state. Connecticut's and the Hartford Region's population growth is anemic, and job growth has been mostly stagnant. When economies and populations stagnate, the population ages. Bloomfield's population, along with the state and region, is aging. The consumer spending of older households is less than that of younger households. Therefore, Bloomfield and the Town Center are not only confronted with shifts in the retail and commercial space markets but it is also confronted with an aging population that will spend less at local businesses. This softens the demand for commercial space, especially in the Town Center, which is already oversupplied with commercial space, specifically retail space. These changes in demographics are contributing to the functional obsolescence in Town Center and will continue to do so as these demographic and economic trends are unlike to change anytime soon.

While the message above is a bit harsh and may appear negative based on these existing demographic and economic trends, all is not lost. While Bloomfield's Town Center is a soft- to weak-market location with functionally obsolete properties, Bloomfield's Town Center is not distressed. In addition, Bloomfield's population is growing, and the Town Center does have strengths. Most notable is the recent investments in multi-family residential apartments that have drawn a younger demographic to Bloomfield and the Town Center. Furthermore, there are many well-maintained properties in the Town Center and new public investment in the Library further contributes to the Town Center. Most importantly, there are solutions to the Town Center's weaknesses.

Strategies and strategic interventions can be designed and employed to (re)position the Town Center to better compete for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy—to better attract a younger demographic.

That is the aim and challenge of this Town Center Master Plan and Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project Plan—repositioning the Town Center to compete for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy. To create social, economic, and property value. To accomplish this, the Town Center must build from strengths, grow demand, and create amenities.





Chapter Four:

Existing Conditions – Physical Conditions & Market Analysis

Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Introduction

The Town Center analysis is aimed at understanding the site (location and conditions), situation (relative location), and physical character of the Town Center. The primary aim of this analysis is to best understand *why* and *how* the flow of investment (or not), and the potential to attract investment into Town Center. The Town Center analysis included several variables and conditions to best understand *what is working* and *what is not working* in the Town Center. This analysis included:

- The demographics and socioeconomic conditions discussed above,
- A survey of physical property conditions to best understand investment behaviors, property maintenance—including deferred maintenance, and the overall image of Town Center,
- Real estate asset classes and market conditions,
- Site selection criteria to understand the strengths and weaknesses of Bloomfield's Town Center in the context of attracting investment, especially retail and restaurants,
- Traffic counts and comparative shopping center analysis.

This analysis was conducted through geographic analysis, visual surveys, site walks, data analysis, and a physical property survey.

Town Center as a Site

The site of Bloomfield's Town Center is basically a near geographic center of the community at the intersection of State Routes 178 and 189. It is characterized by decades of developed styles and patterns, with

variations in density. Much of the development is pre-1980 and the density is suburban. Due to the Town Center being older, the physical structure of the Town Center is well established by infrastructure and existing development. That means the roads and sidewalk locations are established, the building setbacks are established but vary, and the space for parking is mostly established, although some opportunities for improvements exist. One of the most notable characteristics of the Town Center is the Town Green as a focal point of the community. Most of the lots in the Town Center are small, creating a constraint to redevelopment without multiple lots being assembled.

Town Center's Situation

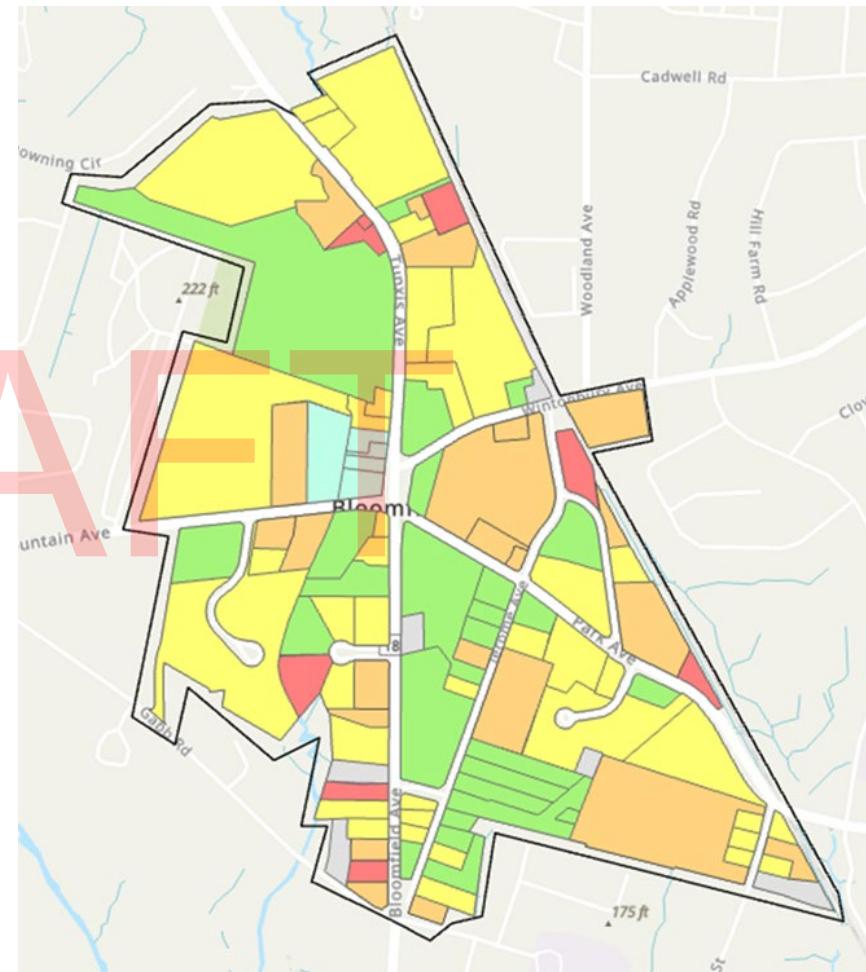
The Town Center's situation, its relative location in the greater metropolitan region, is that it is a first-tier suburban center, located near the urban core and large employment centers. The Town Center has good access to the greater region as a whole, even though Bloomfield does not have direct access to the Interstate Highway System. The Town Center is proximate to Downtown Hartford and West Hartford Center, while it is also proximate to the surrounding second-tier suburbs. Based on its situation, Town Center has accessibility to populations in the metropolitan region.

Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Property Condition Survey

Goman+York conducted a visual survey of the physical conditions of properties and buildings within the Town Center. The Property Conditions Survey revealed that many properties and buildings in the Town Center are in poor or fair condition, confirming the soft-to-weak market conditions. It is important to note that all the properties in the Municipal Development Plan area are in poor or fair condition, with no properties rated as good or great. Furthermore, the Property Condition Visual Survey focuses on the physical appearance, condition, and maintenance of the property, it does not account for interior, structure, mechanical systems, and or other conditions—such as functional obsolescence.



Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Commercial Real Estate Market

Goman+York also performed an analysis of the local and regional commercial real estate market by industrial, office, and retail asset classes. In the context of the Town Center, the office and retail asset classes are of the greatest interest, as industrial properties do not exist today, nor are they anticipated in the future. Asking rents for commercial office in Bloomfield at \$21.08 per square foot are \$0.84 cents higher than the regional market at \$20.24 per square foot. However, commercial retail rents in Bloomfield at \$16.43 per square foot are \$1.77 lower per square foot than the regional asking rent of \$18.20 per square foot. In addition, the market asking rents are well below the minimum of \$30 per square foot that is often required for new construction. Combined, the low asking rents and the asking rents being below the \$30 per square foot required for new construction highlights the soft-to-weak retail market in Bloomfield, especially Bloomfield's Town Center—recognizing that rents are lower on in the Town Center than on Cottage Grove Road.

Comparative Analysis – Traffic Count

Goman+York performed a comparative analysis of Average Daily Traffic Counts in Bloomfield Town Center to Cottage Grove Road near the Copaco Shopping Center. This analysis, as shown on the following page, reveals that traffic counts in the core of Bloomfield's Town Center are approximately 5,000 less per day than on Cottage Grove Road. While such findings are not surprising knowing that Cottage Grove Road is a major arterial, the findings demonstrate that that Town Center is a weaker retail location.

Bloomfield – Submarket

Asset Class	# of Buildings	Vacancy %	Asking Rent/SF	Sale Price/SF	Cap Rate
Industrial	249	5.0%	\$7.78	\$75.00	8.4%
Office	73	16.9%	\$21.08	\$95.00	12.0%
Retail	117	2.9%	\$16.43	\$152.00	7.4%

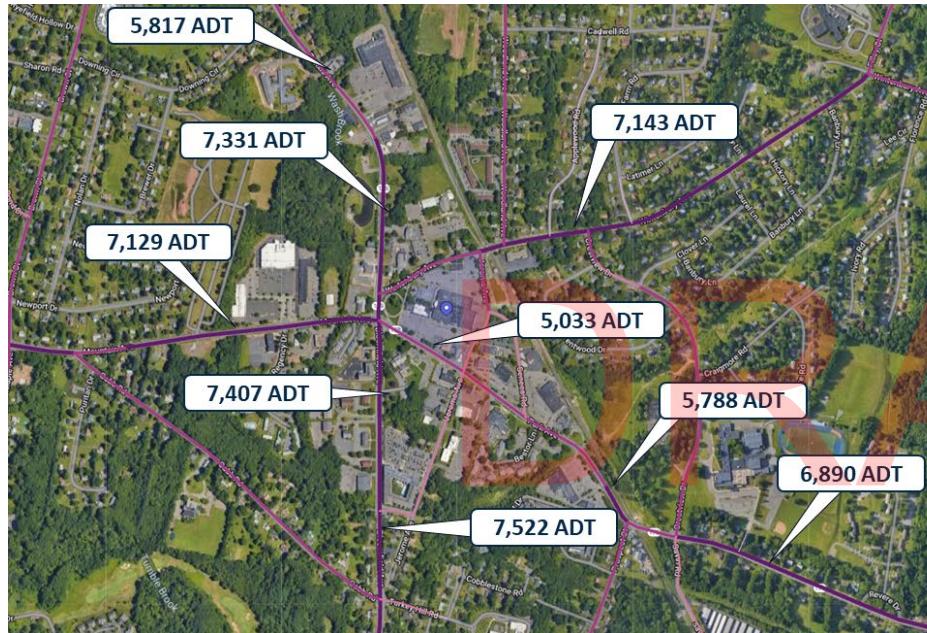
Hartford – Greater Market

Asset Class	# of Buildings	Vacancy %	Asking Rent/SF	Sale Price/SF	Cap Rate
Industrial	4,278	4.6%	\$8.89	\$70.00	8.5%
Office	3,575	10.5%	\$20.24	\$95.00	11.8%
Retail	7,455	4.0%	\$18.20	\$151.00	7.9%

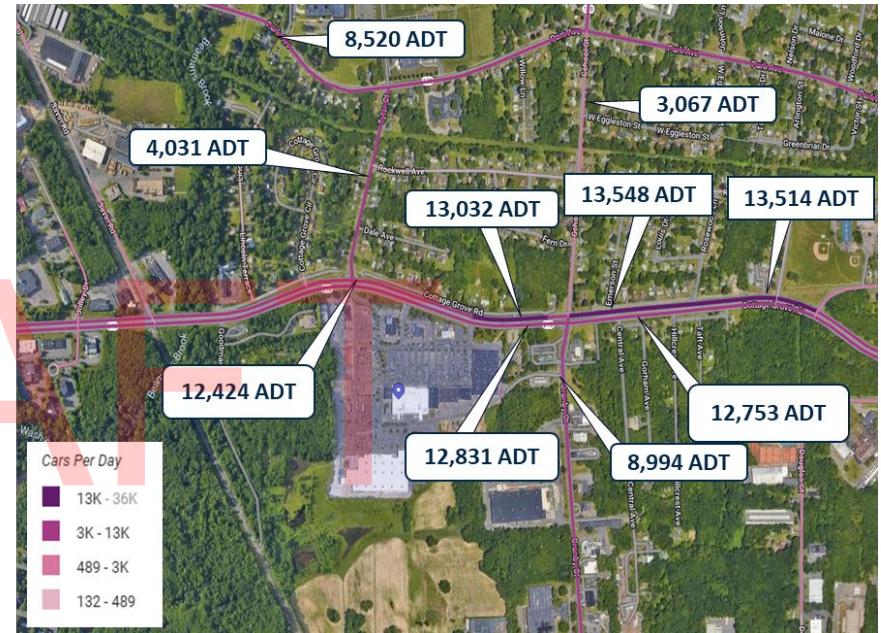
Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Town Center Traffic Counts



Cottage Grove Traffic Counts



Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Site Selection Process

To best understand how the Town Center is competing and to determine its overall potential to better compete as a location of business (and residences), the site selection process is used to frame and evaluate the Town Center as a site for commercial activity. Site selection is a process of *decision-making of new business location*—how retailers and other businesses select a location and site. The site selection process typically follows the following 10 steps:

- Visibility Market Area Analysis
- Viable Submarket Analysis
- Trade Area Definition
- Demographics and Psychographic Analysis
- Competitor Identification and Analysis
- Trip Generator Identification and Analysis (office parks, industrial developments, central business districts, multi-family development, etc.)
- Traffic Counts and Traffic Pattern Analysis
- Area (location) Selection (multiple possible sites)
- Site Selection (specific location)
- Financial Analysis (projected sales, site development cost, return on investment, etc.)



Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Site Selection Location and Site Considerations

Much of the site selection analysis is covered by the demographic, socio-economic, and psychographic analysis elsewhere in this Plan. Therefore, what is of greatest interest regarding the Town Center in the context of site selection, are the site location and site considerations. The location and site considerations include:

- Visibility
- Accessibility
- Regional Exposure
- Population Density
- Population Growth
- Operational Convenience
- Safety & Security
- Adequate Parking
- Adequate Signage

DRAFT

Based on these considerations, it was determined that the Town Center has good local visibility, accessibility, safety, and security. Regional exposure, operational convenience, population density, parking, and signage are fair. Population growth is strong. Therefore, there is moderate strength in terms of site selection for Town Center, which is positive and indicates both underperformance today and greater potential in the future.

In the context of market analysis, four key criteria that are considered for retail locations are total population, total number of households, median household income, and average daily traffic counts. The trade area for the Town Center, in terms of the drive-time analysis conducted, reveals strong market thresholds for population, households, and median household income. Bloomfield's median household income (\$93,164) is well above the United States median of \$67,521 and just above Connecticut's median household income of \$90,213.

For retail locations, average daily traffic counts are typically considered above and below the traffic count threshold of 15,000 vehicles per day. The higher the 15,000 vehicles per day, the stronger the site is for retail—the lower the counts are below 15,000, the weaker the site. Bloomfield's Town Center average daily traffic counts are soft, well below the 15,000 threshold with a high of 7,500 for any road segment. Combined, the traffic counts likely average approximately 12,000 to 13,000 vehicles per day—below the 15,000 vehicles per day threshold. While the likelihood of attracting national chains is slim, the Town Center, with the right tenant mix of community-oriented retail, service, and restaurants can work in this location.

Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Comparative Analysis – Geofencing

Goman+York performed a comparative geofence analysis of the Wintonbury Mall and the Copaco Shopping Center to gain insights into visitation and vibrancy—Copaco being a strip center on a major arterial and Wintonbury being a Town Center Mall. While the findings are not surprising, the contrast in the level of visitation is shocking. Total annual visits for Copaco are 3,609,100 compared to Wintonbury with 641,100, or only 18% of Copaco's visitation. The difference highlights the importance of traffic counts and the poor performance (vacancy) of the Wintonbury Mall—a functionally obsolete property in a softer market location.

Annual Visits by Day of Week

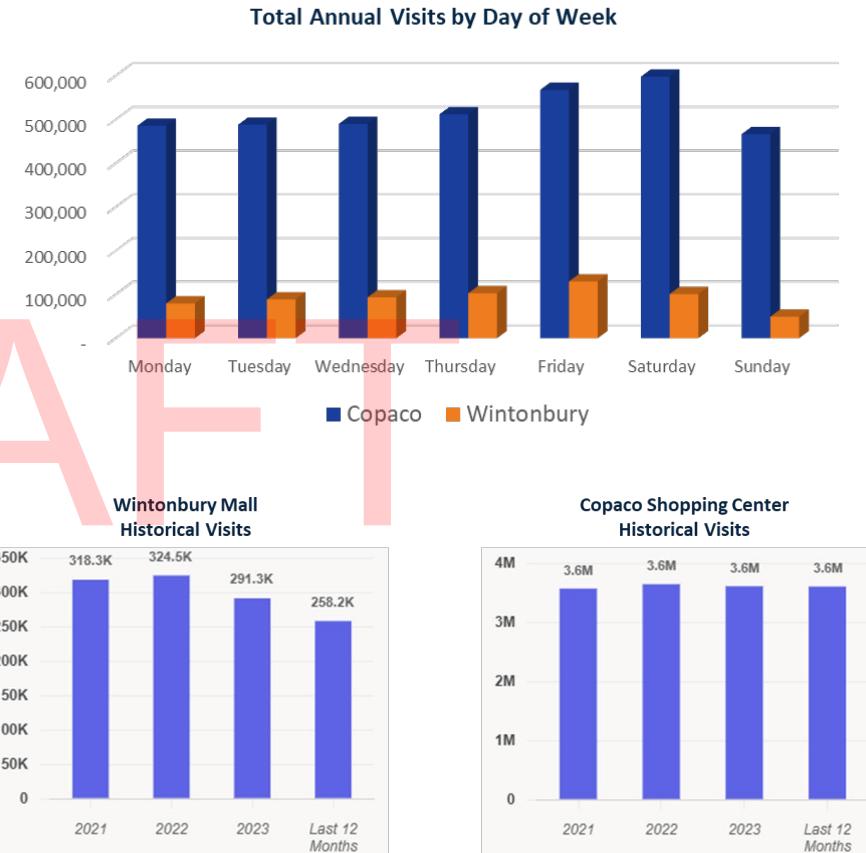
The total number of visits within the past year to the property broken down by each day throughout the week

Copaco Shopping Center

- Average Annual Visits: 3,609,100
- Peak Day, Saturday: 598,200 (16.6% of Total Visits)
- Average Daily Visits: 9,900

Wintonbury Mall

- Estimated Annual Visits: 641,100
- Peak Day, Friday: 129,800 (20.2% of Total Visits)
- Average Daily Visits: 1,800



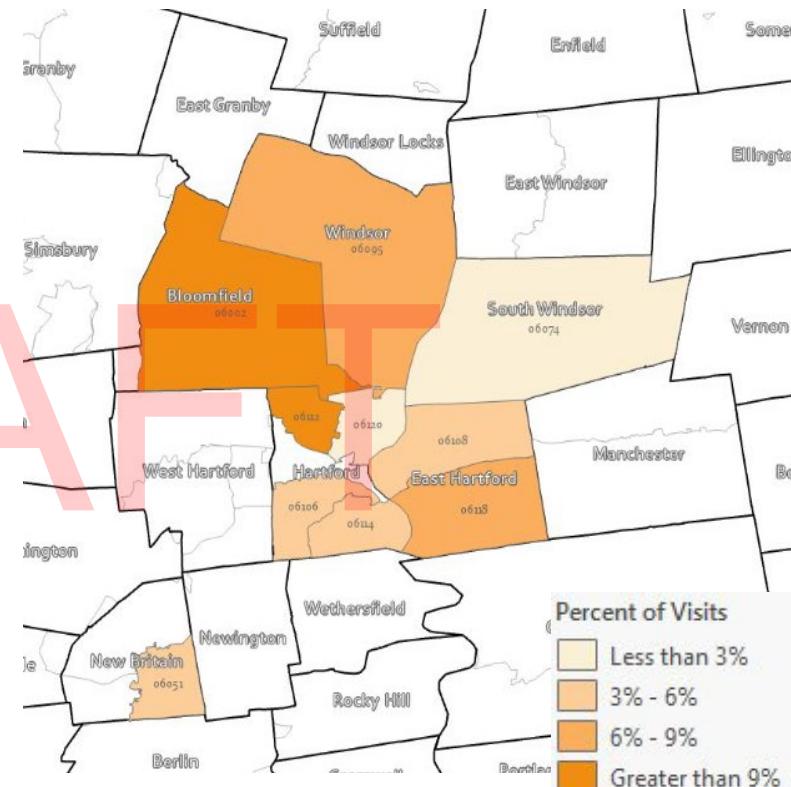
Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

To better understand the trade market area of the Town Center, Goman+York performed a comparative geofence analysis of three full-service restaurants in the Town Center. This included Elizabeth's, a community-oriented establishment, as well as Republic and Carbon's, both with a more regional orientation. The summary results for Elizabeth's and Republic are presented here, and the detailed results for all three restaurants are provided in the appendix. The findings of the geofence analysis inform us that these restaurants all have a regional trade area that stretches well beyond Bloomfield. This is important to understanding the potential for the Town Center, in that, certain types of businesses with quality products can overcome weaknesses in the Town Center location, such as low traffic counts. Therefore, with improved physical conditions, modern commercial space, and placemaking strategies aimed at improving the Town Center experience, we find that it is probable that Bloomfield's Town Center can compete in the market.

Summary of Elizabeth's Visitor Origins

- 65% of Visitors originate from the Top 10 Zip Codes
- Top Tapestries reflect high probabilities of Visitors being Black, High School-Educated Singles that live in Single Family Homes
- Weighted Median Age: 39.4
- Weighted Median Income: \$59,200
- The Top Tapestries are diverse with 6 different Tapestries



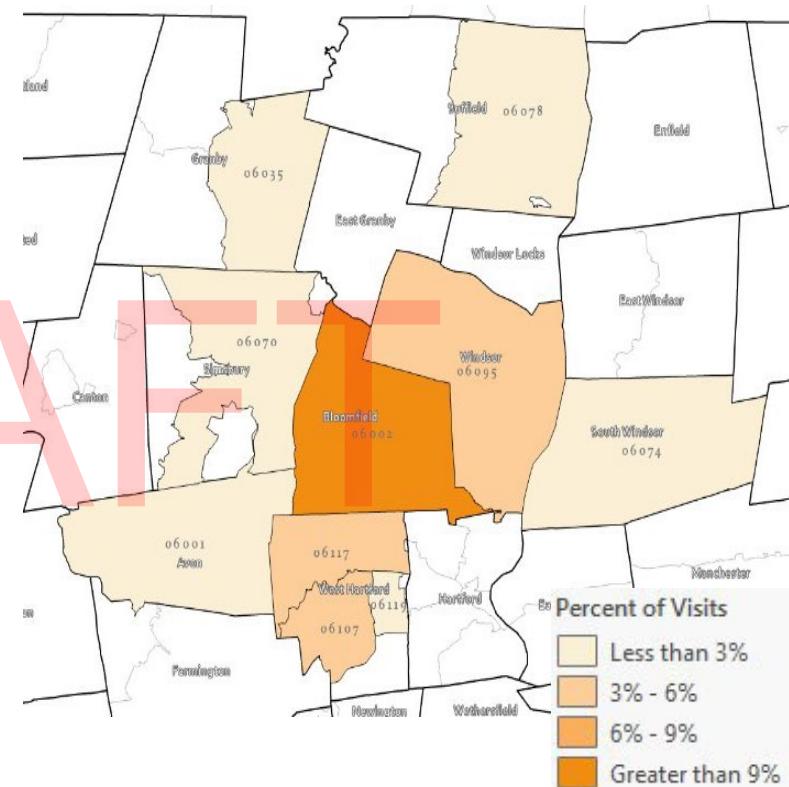
Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Summary of Republic Visitor Origins

- 45% of Visitors originate from the Top 10 Zip Codes
- Top Tapestries reflect high probabilities of visitors being White, College-Educated Married Couples that live in Single Family Homes
- Weighted Median Age: 44.6
- Weighted Median Income: \$108,969
- 5/10 of the Top Zip Codes' Top Tapestry is Savvy Suburbanites

*A very close second Tapestry within Bloomfield is "Golden Years" which is also likely represented in Republic's Top Visitors



Town Center Analysis

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Conclusion

Much of the site selection-related analysis, in the context of the Town Center's physical condition and market strength discussed above, reveals that Bloomfield's Town Center conveys a mix of messages to the market. By some metrics, the site location considerations, the Town Center has some meaningful strengths that suggest it can perform better than it does. For example, trade area income, population, and households all indicate that there is a viable market for the Town Center. In addition, the Town Center has fair to good visibility, accessibility, safety, and security that further demonstrate market potential. However, on the negative side of the mixed messages, the marginal physical conditions, age of commercial buildings, deferred maintenance, and functional obsolescence hinder the Town Center's ability to compete for investment.

Unfortunately, the Town Center's weaknesses are negatively impacting its market performance. For example, deferred maintenance, high vacancy, deteriorated conditions, and functional obsolescence weaken the Town Center's position in the market. Most notable and constraining is the Wintonbury Mall—the largest retail building and commercial property in the Town Center—which suffers from deferred maintenance, high vacancy, deteriorated conditions, and functional obsolescence. This becomes further problematic since the Wintonbury Mall property occupies the most central and visible location in the Town Center and is adjacent to the Town Green. The challenges of the Wintonbury Mall and the negative impact of the property on the Town Center, were well-known by the Town of Bloomfield over a decade ago, under its prior

ownership. The Wintonbury Mall today, remains detrimental to the Town Center, negatively impacting the Town Center's image, market, and physical conditions.

This has resulted in the community and market losing confidence, pride, and predictability in the Town Center. In addition, this has allowed new norms to be established, low standards of property maintenance to be accepted, and deferred maintenance to become more common. These are signs of a weakened market condition, a place that struggles to attract investment. If few or any property owners are investing in buildings, how can it be expected that others (outside investors) will invest in the Town Center?

Another outcome of the Town Center's stagnation is that it has not modernized, it has not kept pace with changes in consumer behaviors—needs, wants, passions, and enthusiasms. Therefore, this points to the importance of the Town Center as an amenity, creating and establishing the amenities of place, so that the Town Center can compete with other places, places that have evolved, modernized, and become community amenities. This is what is required in an *experience economy* and points to the importance of and need for *placemaking*.

The good news is that Bloomfield's Town Center is not distressed and has not crossed a threshold into collapse and complete disinvestment. Therefore, the Town Center can be repositioned to attract investment and to become a vibrant and prosperous amenity to the community. However, repositioning the Town Center to compete will require hard work, intentionality in strategy, public intervention, public-private partnership, and efforts aimed at continuous improvement.



Chapter Five:

Public Outreach & Participation

Public Outreach and Participation

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Public Outreach and Participation

The Town Center Economic Development Commission, along with the assistance of their consultants (Goman+York) implemented an extensive public outreach and public participation process. This included a series of community meetings, participatory activities, focus groups, presentations, workshops, and an online community survey. The outreach started in September of 2024 and continued through a public hearing on April 29, 2025. The following is a list of some of the key outreach programs.

- Public Kick-Off Community Engagement Session (September 2024)
- Focus Groups (October 2024):
 - Small Business Breakfast with the Mayor
 - Major Employers Luncheon
 - Town Staff & Agencies
 - All Boards & Commissions
 - Senior Citizens
 - Religious Leaders
 - Town Center Residents
 - High School Students
- Seabury & Duncaster Residents (November 2024)
- Community Update Meeting (February 2025)
- Public Hearing (April 2025)



Public Outreach and Participation

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Public Participation Activities

As part of the public kick-off meeting in September 2024 and the All Board and Commission meeting in October 2024, the participants were encouraged to engage in interactive activities designed to gather input and insights from the community. These activities included:

- Continuums of Change
- Prouds & Sorrys
- Words Describing Town Center Today
- Words Describing Town Center in the Future
- Community Investment Opportunities Ranked
- Investing in the Town Center

The Prouds and Sorry Activity is open-ended, allowing participants to name three things they are proud of in the Town Center and three things they are sorry about in the Town Center. The Words Describing Town Center is also an open-ended format that allows the participants to choose any 3 words that they feel best describe the Town Center today and again in the future—once improved. Therefore, as open-ended activities, these provide the most honest perspective of the community participants as to how they think and feel about the Town Center.

The word clouds on the right show the findings of the Prouds and Sorrys activity—the larger and bolder the word, the more frequently it was used. Most telling is the community participants' displeasure with the Wintonbury Mall and affection for the Town Green.

DRAFT

Sorrys

LiquorStores Railroad
CopacoShoppingCenter NotBikeable
EmptyOfficeBuildings PlacesToGather
DeterioratedBuildings TooMuchBlackTop
NoBikePath PoorSelectionOfShops NotEncouraging
NoBikePaths NoMaintained NoNightActivites
NoArchitecturalDesign Traffic
LackOfRestaurants NotUsable
LackOfOutdoorDining Untidy
SlowGrowth LackOfFootTraffic
WintonburyMall PoorSchools
CarNoise
LackOfSidewalks
NoGriffinLineRR NeedMoreActivitesForKids HighTaxes
LackOfFixedUsc FragmentedStreetscape EyeSore
LackOfPublicArt EnoughLiquorStores PoorSelection
PoorCulturalActivites DollarStore
Unwelcoming NoVarietyInActivites BoxStores
NotWalkable WintonburyBlight
FilleyParkFilleyPondProject
TheMall EmptyStores

Prouds

BeautifulLocation Centered
MixtureOfOld&New Bakery
SafetyEnvironment
WelcomingBusinesses SchoolsAreGood
TownHall DutchPointCreditUnion FilleyPark
InvolvementOfCommunity Neighbroly
MixUpModernAndHistorical Peaceful
DiversePeople Parks Pastoria NoParkingMeter
TownGreen PressuringOpenLand
DiverseCommunity PublicLibrary SummerConcerts
NiceRestaurants PrivatelyOwned
LivedAllMyLife
Pastry&Coffee Businesses LowTaxes
TownGreenBeauty Geisler's
WelcomingPeople
Friendly TownGreenConcerts
SmallShops CommunityInvolvement
BrookThroughFilleyPark
NewLibrary MixOfPast&Present
CommitmentOfResidents CelebrateDiversity
NewApartments

Public Outreach and Participation

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Public Participation Activities

The word clouds below show the findings of the Existing Conditions and Future Outcomes activity—the larger and bolder the word, the more frequently it was used. Most telling is the community participants' recognition of the vacancy (Empty) and many other words and phrases that get deteriorated conditions (Run Down) and functional obsolescence (Uninviting). The Future Outcomes words and phrases are also telling; they want the Town Center to be Attractive, Fun, Interesting, Beautiful, and Entertaining, things that the Town Center lacks today.

Existing Conditions



ExpensiveBikes
NoAttraction
HistoricBoring
SpaciousNonEveningActivity
Speeding
PotHoles
Uninviting
Interesting
GreatBaker
Outdated
NotBikeable
Dilapidated
Stale
Unattractive
Bikes
Attraction
WeakDesign
GoodTenants
EveningActivity
NothingToAttractPeople
PeopleTrying
EmptySpaces
Plain
Old
SmallTownGreen
Sad
BeatUpParkingLots
Lonely
AntiSocial
EmptyParts
TrafficJam
Cheap
Disconnected
RunDown
PoorlyMaintained
SlowTraffic
Unattractive
Historic
Boring
Spacious
NonEvening
Activity
Speeding
PotHoles
Uninviting
Interesting
GreatBaker
Outdated
NotBikeable
Dilapidated
Stale
Unattractive
Bikes
Attraction
WeakDesign
GoodTenants
EveningActivity
NothingToAttractPeople
PeopleTrying
EmptySpaces
Plain
Old
SmallTownGreen
Sad
BeatUpParkingLots
Lonely
AntiSocial
EmptyParts
TrafficJam
Cheap
Disconnected
RunDown
PoorlyMaintained
SlowTraffic
Unattractive

Future Outcomes



CoffeeShop
Unique
Vibrant
PlaceToVisit
Profitable
Accessible
Restaurants
FilmCenter
LargerGreen
TownHistory
Convenient
Entertaining
YoungPeople
Events
NewConstruction
VariedRetail
SocialMedia
Socialization
NotACityLook
Relaxed
Relaxed
PeopleMagnet
SafeWalkingSpaces
FlowerPots
PlacesToGather
OpenSpace
Diversity
Clean Shopping
Active
GatheringPlaces
AffordableHousing
MultipleEconomies
Charming
Town
Walkable
WalkingEvents
Populated
HighActivityOnWeekend
YoungPeople
Events
NewConstruction
VariedRetail
SocialMedia
Socialization
NotACityLook
Relaxed
Relaxed
PeopleMagnet
SafeWalkingSpaces
FlowerPots
PlacesToGather
OpenSpace
AffordableDining
Diversity
Clean Shopping
Active
GatheringPlaces
AffordableHousing
MultipleEconomies
Charming
Town
Walkable
WalkingEvents
Populated
HighActivityOnWeekend
YoungPeople
Events
NewConstruction
VariedRetail
SocialMedia
Socialization
NotACityLook
Relaxed
Relaxed
PeopleMagnet
SafeWalkingSpaces
FlowerPots
PlacesToGather
OpenSpace
AffordableDining
Diversity
Clean Shopping

Public Outreach and Participation

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

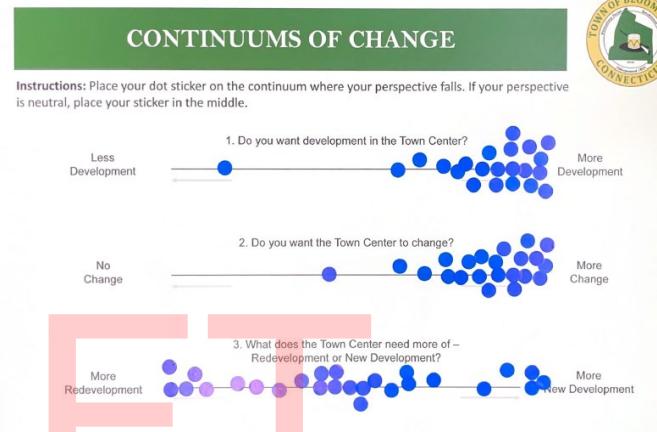
Public Participation Activities

The Continuums of Change activity allows participants to place their dots on a continuum between two statement outcomes. These allow us to take the community's temperature on issues and gauge their appetite. The most telling in the first two questions is the community's desire for more development and change.

The Investment Opportunities exercise allows participants to rank what they view as opportunities for investment in the Town Center. The activity provides them with a list of items that could be invested in and they rank those items. Most notably, the highest ranked item is the Redevelopment of Wintonbury Mall, followed by Walkability & Bikeability as second, and Community Events & Activities as third. The ranking of Redevelopment of Wintonbury Mall reinforces prior activity answers, the displeasure with the Wintonbury Mall, and the desire for change. The Walkability and Community Events reinforce the importance of amenities, activities, experiences, and the affection for the Town Green.

The final activity shown on the following page is Investing in Bloomfield. Participants are provided with \$100 in denominations of the following bills: 1 = \$50, 1 = \$20, 2 = \$10, and 2 = \$5. Therefore, the participants can only invest in six items but are confronted with 9 items. In addition, as the organizers, we know how many participants, how much money, and how many of each bill are taking part. This allows us to analyze the investments. Most notable in this activity is that events and walkability rank 1 and 2, respectively, and mixed-use development comes in third.

Existing Conditions

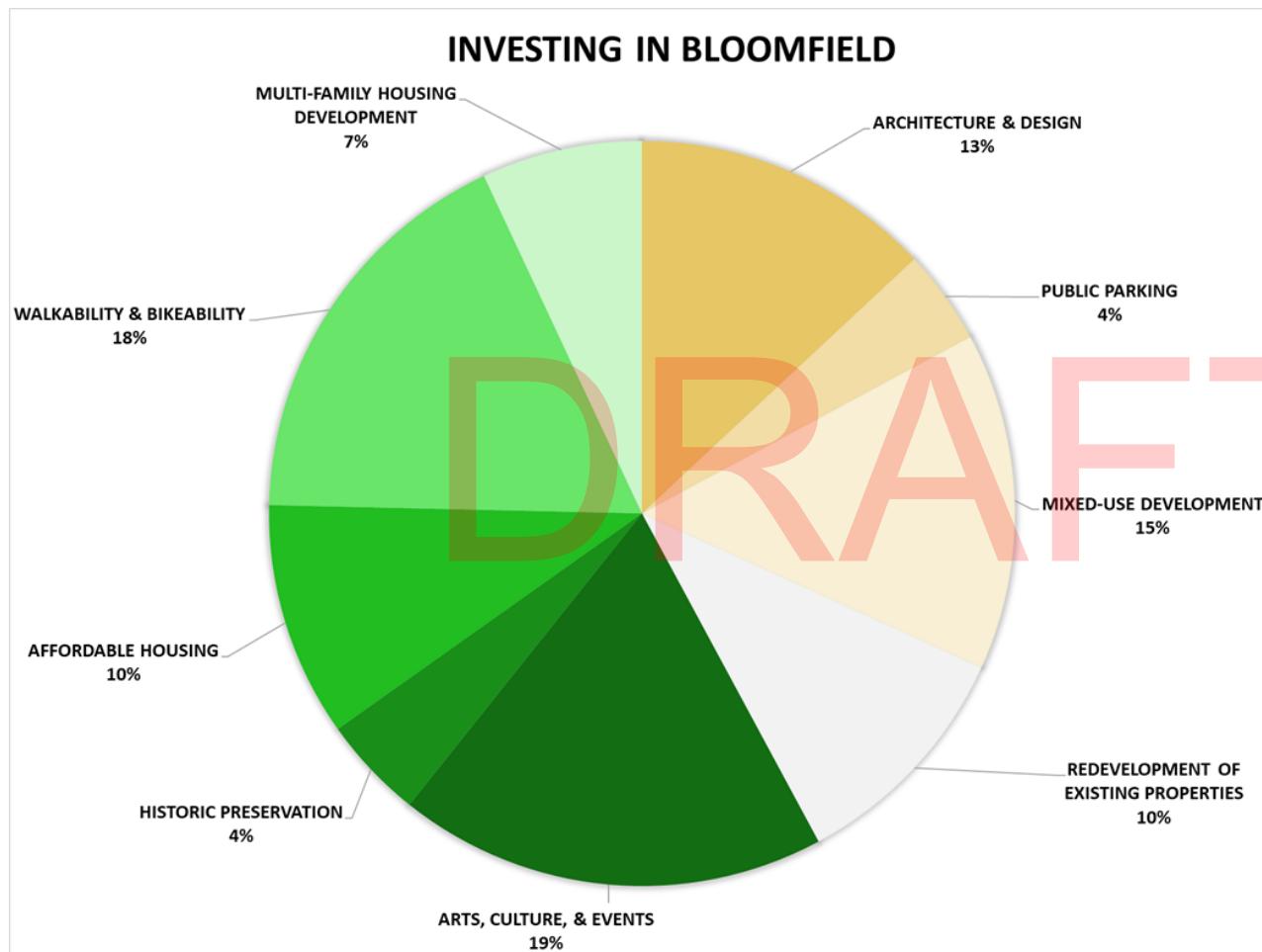


Investment Opportunities

Community Investment Opportunities	Average Ranking
Redevelopment of Wintonbury Mall	4.8
Walkability & Bikeability	4.5
Community Events & Activities	4.4
Arts & Culture	4.4
Parks & Recreation	4.3
Affordable Housing	4.0
Historic Preservation	3.4
Public Transportation	2.8
Signage & Wayfinding	2.7
Public Parking	2.6

Investing in the Town Center

Public Kick-Off Engagement Activities



Investments	Total
Arts, Culture, & Events	\$520.00
Walkability & Bikeability	\$495.00
Mixed-use Development	\$410.00
Architecture & Design	\$365.00
Redev of Existing Properties	\$290.00
Affordable Housing	\$285.00
Multi-family Housing Dev	\$195.00
Historic Preservation	\$125.00
Public Parking	\$115.00

Key Notes

- Arts, Culture, & Events:
6 - \$50 Bills
11 - \$10 Bills
- Walkability & Bikeability:
8 - \$20 Bills
- Mixed-Use Development:
10 - \$5 Bills

Public Outreach and Participation

Focus Group Discussions – What the Community Said

Focus Groups

The focus groups are run as semi-structured questions and discussions. While the facilitator asks some per-set questions, the conversation is allowed to wander and unplanned questions are asked based on what the participants say. The following are summaries of key perspectives the participants provided.

Small Business Breakfast

- The center of town is a symbol of the whole town so it's important that it's a beautiful place.
- Hearing of the Town's interest in purchasing Wintonbury Mall sounds like a very positive thing.
- When the mall came here it was beautiful and it was full, there were bushes and flowers with a real variety of things to do here.
- Tough to do outdoor dining without a street presence, and the view is an empty strip mall & a liquor store.

Major Employers Luncheon

- We're not trying to be any other town, we're just trying to be the best version of Bloomfield that we can be.
- Major Employers inform visitors about places to stay/eat/things to do, and they are often outside of Bloomfield. They would have a lot of demand for a hotel in town.

- Bloomfield can support Major Employers by streamlining the permitting process, updating Zoning Regulations, and adopting an Overlay District.

Town Staff & Agencies

- Where people, families, and children gather is what determines the Town Center. Without clear and frequented gathering spaces, there is a lack of identity around the Center.
- Residents here are proud to be from Bloomfield, how can we improve the Center in a way that portrays the residents' pride?
- Bloomfield being in growth mode is a net positive but many departments are at their workload capacity and maintaining Boards & Commissions membership has been a struggle.



Focus Group Discussions

Community Engagement Results

Senior Citizens

- There is a feeling of an East/West divide with the community center as the divider. The division is financial first and ethnic second.
- All have very positive memories of Bloomfield's past. Saw it as a great place to raise children, a quintessential New England town, and a place that used to feel safe, but doesn't anymore.
- The community doesn't gather like it used to; spoke of an all-churches Thanksgiving service, and neighbors being engaged in their lives and community.
- Placed emphasis on improving the school district.

Religious Leaders

- Churches have stopped measuring success by the number of members/attendees and the amount of money they receive and have begun measuring their success by how large of an impact they are able to have on the Community. Churches are able to lighten the load of public assistance required of the Town.
- Town Center Churches are happy to be involved in community activities, this planning process, and Town projects.
- Wintonbury Mall is the "elephant in the room" and it needs to go.

Town Center Residents

- Many residents downsized from homes into Heirloom Flats and chose Bloomfield for its diversity and cost. Specifically, many moved from West Hartford.
- Heirloom Flats Residents would like to feel more integrated into the community and Town Center, had discussions of starting a committee within Heirloom for outreach.
- Town Center Residents were the most positive group about the Town Center as it is today. Emphasized the strengths of the Center today that need to be built upon.
- Frequent visitors to many, if not most, Town Center businesses/restaurants, all of them walk the Town Center regularly and attended a Concert on the Green this year.

Focus Group Findings

The focus groups further explained the importance of the Town Center, the Wintonbury Mall as the "elephant in the room", and the importance of the Town Center as an amenity space, a focal point, and a public gathering space—with the Town Green at the critical focal point.

Public Outreach and Participation

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Public Outreach and Participation – Community Survey

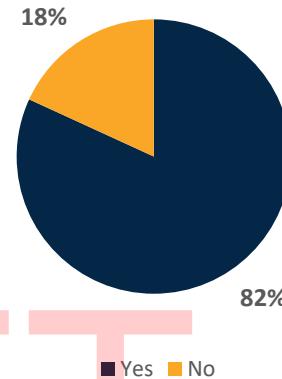
In November 2024, an online community survey was hosted by the Town Center Economic Development Commission and facilitated by their consultants (Goman+York). The survey results were similar to the findings of the public engagement sessions, activities, and focus groups.

For example, 82% of survey participants want the Town Center to change and 97% want Town Center to improve—further confirming the community's displeasure with the Town Center. Most notably, when asked "what needs to change or improve in the Town Center", the Wintonbury Mall stood out and the other answers reaffirmed the functional obsolescence, vacancy, and the need for amenities and inviting spaces and activities.

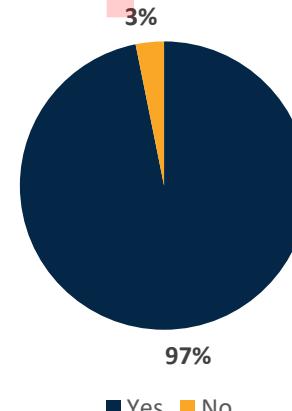
14. What needs to change or improve in the Town Center?

More Stores
Vacancies
More Retail
Increase Town Green
Public Art
Marketing
Entertainment
Everything
Walkable
Movie Theatre
More Restaurants
Retail Diversity
Traffic Flow
Building Facades
Reason To Stop
Affordable Housing
Greeneries
Affordable Plantings
Architectural Design
Family Activities

12. Do you want the Town Center to change?



13. Do you want the Town Center to improve?



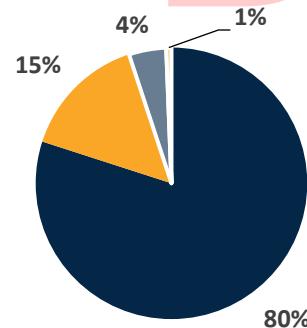
Community Survey Results

Bloomfield Town Center Plan

Public Outreach and Participation – Community Survey

Having already determined, from the public outreach programs, that the community has substantial concerns regarding the Wintonbury Mall, survey questions were developed specifically seeking further insights from the community regarding the Wintonbury Mall. Three of those questions, shown here, confirm the negative image the Wintonbury Mall is creating in the community and the Town Center. In addition, question 33 shows that 99% of the community believes it is important for the Wintonbury Mall to improve, 80% of whom believe it is very important. The full survey results and other public participation results are available in the Appendix.

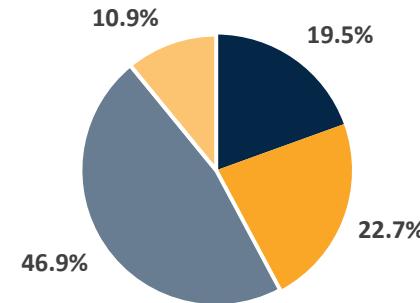
33. How important is it for the Wintonbury Mall to improve?



31. What are three words that best describe the Wintonbury Mall today?

Eyesore
Pavement
Old
Outdated
Struggling
Faded
Isolating
Empty
Central
Abandoned
Scary
Great Location
Potential
Sad
Dreary
Good Businesses
Vacant
Underutilized

32. How often do you visit the Wintonbury Mall?



■ Very Important ■ Important ■ Somewhat Important ■ Not Important

■ Weekly ■ Monthly ■ Rarely ■ Never

Public Outreach and Participation

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Public Participation Conclusions

The public participation program results provided important insights into how the community thinks and feels about the Town Center. More specifically, the findings confirmed what was already intuitively known, the Wintonbury Mall property is a detriment to the Town Center and the community. Over a decade of decline, high vacancy, and functional obsolescence have weighed heavily on the community and the community is ready for change and improvement. The community's negative perspective and image of the Wintonbury Mall also affirms the analysis of physical conditions, market conditions, and other trends in the prior chapters. Bloomfield Town Center needs to improve, and the Wintonbury Mall is a barrier to improvement—a barrier to investment.

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Eyesore
Old Pavement
Struggling Outdated Faded
Isolating Empty Central
Abandoned Scary Great Location
Potential Sad Dreary
Good Businesses Vacant
Underutilized





Chapter Six:

Positioning Markets to Compete for Investment

Creating Investment & Understanding Markets

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide both a theoretical and pragmatic framework and understanding of investment behaviors in Bloomfield's Town Center. As noted by David Boehlke (right), a neighborhood reinvestment expert, consumer or investor decision-making regarding investment is critical to understanding the market and prospects of a neighborhood or town center's future.

As discussed in the Town Center Analysis chapter, a visual survey of building conditions in the Town Center was conducted. The survey was aimed at better understanding how investment is flowing (or not flowing) into Bloomfield's Town Center. As part of that analysis, all the properties in Town Center were surveyed and rated on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 being the worst and 4 being the best) for the conditions of roofs, windows, façades, paint, and the overall condition of the property, including landscaping and parking areas.

The result, 22 properties were rated as Fair and 8 as Poor, highlighting the mixed message of investment. This demonstrates the marginal degree of deferred property maintenance. Deferred maintenance signifies that investment is limited or stagnant within the Town Center—when property owners are not confident in the market or confident in their return on investment, they slow or stop investing in their properties.

"If a revitalization strategy does not take into account that any neighborhood [or downtown]...is subject to consumer decision making, then that strategy (no matter how good it looks on paper) will run into trouble when it encounters the realities of the...marketplace."

David Boehlke, 'Great Neighborhoods, Great Cities' (2004: 5)

"Whether investments are financial or social, individual decisions are based on the issues of choice, competition, confidence, and predictability. Taken together, these aspects of any [property owner's] decision-making shape investment patterns that strongly influence a neighborhood's [or downtown's] prospects."

David Boehlke, 'Great Neighborhoods, Great Cities' (2004: 4)

Creating Investment & Understanding Markets

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Creating Investment

Bloomfield's Town Center, can be described as a soft- to weak-market suburban center, a place where supply exceeds demand and market forces, to some extent, have passed the Town Center by in recent decades. Therefore, to create improvement, Bloomfield must reposition the market to grow demand and attract investment. This means Bloomfield must work to ensure it remains a relevant location, an appealing community, and an inviting place for investment to flow. To accomplish this, Bloomfield must understand how choice, competition, confidence, and predictability influence the flow of investment.

Understanding Markets

Markets exist and function at multiple spatial and temporal scales. Therefore, to analyze and understand real property markets and to plan for improvement, it is imperative to understand how the markets organize and function. That is, how do the multiple sub-markets organize and function at the metropolitan scale? In metropolitan regions, sub-markets generally exist at the sub-regional, municipal, neighborhood, and block scale. These sub-markets compete for investment. The markets and sub-markets will display strength characteristics of being strong or soft (having varying degrees of demand), while others will be weak or distressed (having little or no demand). Market strength, the degree of demand, is critical to understand when developing strategies to create improvement. Strategies that work in strong markets typically will not be the same as strategies that work in weak or distressed markets. To better understand how markets and sub-markets compete,

that is, how residents, businesses, and investors behave and make investment decisions, it is important to consider and understand choice, competition, confidence, and predictability. The following table provides a summary of these market considerations.



Market Considerations

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Market Considerations	
Choice	People (residents, businesses, and investors) make choices about where to buy, what to buy, when to invest, and how much to invest. For a property or commercial district to compete—to attract investment—it must appeal to those making choices to invest. The greater the number of those who will choose to invest, the greater the demand that will be realized.
Competition	From other properties, commercial districts, and communities. It is not enough for a property/place to be a good place to live, work, or play; it must be able to attract investment (time, effort, and money) even as its competitors continually change.
Confidence	Investors (individuals, businesses, homeowners, and even renters) need to feel confident in their investments, today and tomorrow. Therefore, the property/place must signal confidence. Unfortunately, older properties or commercial districts often signal a confusing mixture of conditions that challenge investor confidence. <i>Confidence is the currency that markets trade in.</i>
Predictability	Investors want predictability. Predictability is the foundation that confidence is built on. If the market is not predictable (today or in the future), then the confidence to invest will be marginal.

Market Consideration

As explained by Boehlke, choice, competition, confidence, and predictability provide context and understanding, a framework for thinking critically about how communities (Bloomfield's Town Center) compete for investment. More importantly, choice, competition, confidence, and predictability highlight the challenge of competing for investment. Metropolitan markets are complex adaptive systems, urban-economic ecosystems that are constantly shifting and changing. Changes in technologies, innovations in transportation, cultural shifts in the place of work, and changes in consumer behaviors and preferences impact how markets organize and where investment flows. Yesterday's prosperous town center may become today's struggling Main Street. For Bloomfield, its location and age of the Town Center development challenge its economic competitiveness, putting the Town Center at further risk of functional obsolescence. In addition, competition from neighboring communities further challenges Bloomfield's Town Center market relevance. To better understand the complexity of markets—to best position the Town Center to remain relevant and competitive—it is important to understand investment behavior and the investment decision-making process—how predictability and confidence, discussed above, factor into investment decisions. The following table provides a summary of these market considerations.

Risk Appetite and Investment Behavior

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Risk Appetite and Investment Behavior	
What people (residents, visitors, workforce, businesses, and investors) like and want	<p>A market-based strategy for improvement begins with understanding the investor's decision-making process for investment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Predictability</i>. From predictability they are willing to invest; that is, to take a calculated risk that their investment will be worthwhile and profitable.• They determine the extent of how predictable a place is by reading certain signs.• The signs are always right. That's a key insight.• Then they act.
Important Investment Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Once they find what "fits" with their risk appetite, they invest not just their money but their time and energy, and more importantly, they then seek to protect those investments; that is, to maintain <i>predictability</i>.• They will pay attention to "clues" that those investment assumptions have changed—and change upsets predictability (confidence).• Risk appetite and how risk is determined and managed is the the key to understanding settlement.• <i>Neither use, form, density nor complexity impact predictability, however, all these elements contribute to risk appetite, risk signal definition, and risk management</i>. Therefore, the 'ingredients' of place that reflect and reward what makes people 'feel good' attract investment—<i>clean, safe, vibrant, and aesthetically pleasing</i>.

Signs, Signals, and Risk Appetite

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Signs, Signals, and Risk Appetite

The signs and signals that a market conveys are the qualities and characteristics of place and how we translate those characteristics into an understanding of market conditions—*predictability*. A simple way to think about this is to ask, “*Are the signs and signals that Town Center is conveying a message of a place that is clean, safe, vibrant, and aesthetically pleasing?*” While everyone has different degrees of risk appetite and tolerances to conditions, they deem acceptable, the degrees of difference are small in the context of the character of place regarding mainstream society—the middle-class aesthetic values.

The fact is, that most of society wants and seeks out places that are clean, safe, vibrant, and aesthetically pleasing. This is, in part, why Disney World is popular and prosperous. Disney World provides a place that is clean, safe, vibrant, and aesthetically pleasing to the masses. In addition, it provides a quality experience that is further enhanced by the character of the places.

For the Town Center to compete for wealth and investment (the work of economic development), the Town Center must be *predictable* and provide *confidence*. This is part of the challenge for Bloomfield’s Town Center. As explained by participants in the public outreach and engagement meetings, and the focus group meetings, Town Center does not convey confidence or provide predictability. For example, marginal degrees of property maintenance and functional obsolescence send mixed signals and messages to the market of deferred maintenance, minimal investment, and vacancy—messages that undermine market confidence and predictability.

Deferred Maintenance & Vacancy



Levers of Change

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Translating Market Considerations and the Levers of Change for Bloomfield's Town Center

When thinking carefully and critically about Bloomfield's Town Center and what has been learned through the existing conditions analysis and public engagement, in the context of Market Considerations and the Levers of Change, a preliminary framework for strategic interventions aimed at creating improvement emerges.

Market Considerations

Town Center is an older suburban town center commercial area with smaller parcels, and in some cases, shallower lots than are common today. In addition, the Town Center is showing its age, conveying mixed messages of investment behavior, and containing sites and buildings that were designed for past generations and commercial practices. The mixed messages and physical characteristics, especially the deferred maintenance, signal soft- to weak-market conditions with marginal investor confidence and predictability.

The Levers of Change

Our research and findings, and the community's participation in public outreach programs, have informed the planning process of issues that negatively impact image, market, condition, connections, and to some degree, capacity.

For example:

Image: Negative aesthetics along Park Avenue and Wintonbury Avenue, including the high vacancies at the Wintonbury Mall create a negative image that undermines pride, market confidence, predictability, and investment.

Market: Oversupply and under-demolished commercial buildings soften the commercial real estate market and contribute to the negative image of the Town Center.

Conditions: Older buildings, deferred property maintenance, and overgrown landscaping contribute to the negative image of the Town Center.

Connections: While Bloomfield has a strong sense of community and community connection, there appears to be limited community connections to the Town Center—other than nostalgic memories of the past Town Center and the programming of the Town Green.

Capacity: The lack of and need for intentional strategies and interventions to foster pride with the aim of moving the market.

Understanding *what is not working* in the context of market considerations and the levers of change will allow for the formulation of strategic interventions aimed at improving these conditions and levers.

Levers of Change

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Levers of Change

To strategically intervene in a market, to reposition the Town Center market to compete for and attract investment, it is imperative to work within the context of the Levers of Change—image, market, conditions, connections, and capacity. The Levers of Change provide a framework for thinking through and influencing change and improvement. They will allow Bloomfield to *intentionally target strategies and investments* to arrest marginal conditions, build from strengths, leverage assets, create amenities, activate place-making, and move the market toward the desired outcomes.

Understanding the Levers of Change allows us to think carefully about Bloomfield's Town Center in the context of a collective framework for repositioning the Town Center to compete for investment—creating strategies for improvement.

Levers of Change	
Image	What signals: Images are the signals a place sends to the market. Signals can be positive or negative. <i>Every property is a billboard</i> for the overall image. Signals inform us about predictability and confidence.
Market	Who is there and what is there: Who and what is there explains the market for a given place at that moment in time. We can read the market through signals. For example, who is there in terms of businesses and brands?
Condition	The way things look and feel to us and to others: Condition is the product on display. This is not simply the aesthetics of a place, but also the quality and level of investment. Is the place well maintained? Clean? Free of litter and graffiti? Are the sidewalks clean? Is the street free of potholes? Are buildings well maintained? Are property owners investing?
Connections	The connectivity of place: How people and businesses connect to the space or place—sense of place. How the space or place is connected to other spaces or places—its site, situation, and transportation connections.
Capacity	With what capabilities and behaviors: Capacity is the formal and informal governance structures (capabilities and behaviors) that manage the place (market). Capabilities may be organizations, government, management, or regulations. Behaviors may be relationships, practices, or leadership. How do these capabilities and behaviors inform us about a community's capacity to manage change, implementation, and improvement?

Levers of Change

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Levers of Change

Our research and findings, and the community's participation in public outreach programs, have informed the planning process of issues that negatively impact image, market, condition, connections, and to some degree, capacity. For example:



Image: Negative aesthetics in Town Center (i.e. deferred maintenance and vacancy) negatively impact image that undermines pride in place, market confidence, predictability, and investment.



Conditions: Older buildings, deferred property maintenance, and overgrown landscaping contribute to the negative image of Town Center.



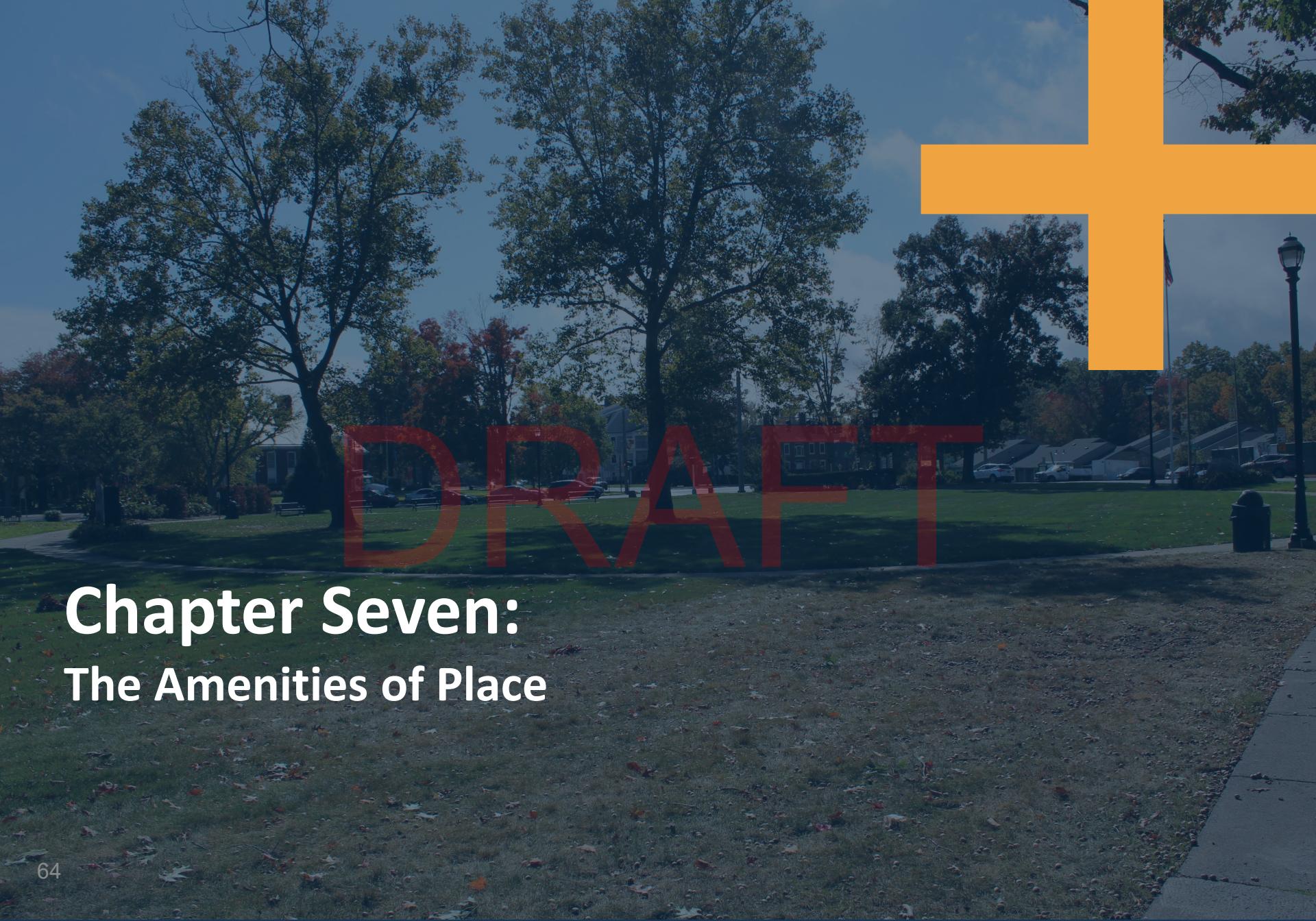
Connections: While Bloomfield has a strong sense of community and community connection, there appears to be limited community connections to the Town Center—other than strong passions for the Town Green and programming.



Market: Oversupply and under-demolished commercial buildings soften the commercial real estate market and contribute to the negative image of Town Center.



Capacity: The lack of and need for intentional strategies and interventions to foster pride and confidence with the aim of moving the market.



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Chapter Seven: The Amenities of Place

The Amenities of Place

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

The Amenities of Place and Place-Making

When thinking about a community and efforts to create improvements to Bloomfield's Town Center, it is important to consider the amenities of place and *place-making*. Society has changed. The way we live has changed, and as a result, communities need to adapt. This means that how we think about and *plan for place* like Bloomfield's Town Center also needs to change. Place-making—a process of strengthening connections between people and the places they share and communities they live in—is a phrase used in planning to describe the collaborative process of shaping the public realm. Another phrase, *third space*, describes all the places other than home (1st space) and work (2nd space) where we spend our free time. Bloomfield's Town Center is mostly a 2nd space and 3rd space. It can also be a place of 1st spaces—residential uses.

As discussed earlier, demographic changes are driving changes in the way we live, the way we work, and the way we consume (and socialize). As a result of technological and demographic changes, shifts have occurred across most consumer markets. How and where we shop, eat, recreate, socialize, and travel have changed over decades and across generations. One of the most notable changes across society is the rise of the *experience economy*, a society where consumers (residents) seek out, purchase, and engage in experiences—just as they purchase goods and services. This has elevated the importance, value, or status of *the experience*, in the context of place-making, *third space*, and planning for town center, and has given rise to what can be called the *amenities of place*.

It is no longer enough for a place to simply be clean, safe, vibrant, and aesthetically pleasing—even though these qualities of place remain critically important.



The Amenities of Place

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

The Amenities of Place and Place-Making

Today's consumers (residents and visitors) have greater and new expectations of place for town center districts. Consumers are not simply seeking out and buying goods and services, they are also seeking out and *buying into the experience* that the place offers. Typically, this includes aesthetics, emotions, experience, and even a sense of social status. It is as much about fulfilling their *passions and enthusiasms*, as it is about a need or want such as getting a meal in the local restaurant. They desire more from a place. *They want amenities and the experience of place.* The amenities of place are simultaneously tangible and abstract. For example, tangible amenities may be nice cafes, outdoor dining, and public spaces, while abstract amenities are the collective experiences that the place provides—how the place engages the senses and emotions of consumers and how the place offers a unique experience. The amenities of place have been elevated by the way we live and engage places. The amenities of place are critically important to creating and maintaining a vibrant and prosperous town center. It is no longer enough for Bloomfield to be a good place to live, work, or raise a family. Today, Bloomfield must also work to engage residents, visitors, and businesses in their *passions and enthusiasms* that provide the Bloomfield, the Town Center experience—whatever that experience may be.

This concept of the *amenities of place* is important to recognize, understand, and embrace in planning for improvement and investment. The amenities of place must be in focus when thinking through planning, policy, and decision-making on design, use, density, infrastructure, and civic space.



The Amenities of Place

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Bloomfield's Amenities of Place

Bloomfield's Town Center has amenities and assets to be leveraged, and strengths to build from. These amenities must be nurtured, enhanced, invested in, preserved, and protected. They also need to be part of Bloomfield's Town Center narrative, marketed, and embraced as the core of the Town Center experience. The following are some of Bloomfield's Town Center amenities of place:

- Town Green
- Filley Park
- Prosser Library
- East Coast Greenway
- Town Hall Lawn

These amenities of places are assets to Bloomfield and the Town Center—they are qualities of place that make the Town Center unique and inviting. These amenities speak to and engage the needs, wants, passions, and enthusiasms of today's consumers (i.e., residents, visitors, entrepreneurs, and investors). These amenities are the ingredients of place and place-making, and they can be leveraged to *strengthen connections between people and the places they share and communities they live in*.

Bloomfield must continuously invest in the assets. Specifically, Bloomfield must invest in the public realm of these assets, paying close attention to detail, physical character, and maintenance. That means *doing the little things and doing them well* (e.g., cutting the grass,

sweeping the streets, painting the crosswalks, planting flowers, etc.). Make sure that the public realm of these places and the Town Center are the cleanest, safest, aesthetically pleasing, and inviting as they can be.

Most importantly, the Town Green is and must be treated as the crown jewel of the Town Center. Therefore, special attention must be given to design, detail, maintenance, and programming. The Town Green and its role in the community must be of the highest importance and the Town Green must be viewed as an anchor to the Town Center, a space that drives visitation to the Town Center. Therefore, the Town Green must be polished, accommodating, inviting, and activated with events and programs.

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The Amenities of Place

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

A Constancy of Purpose

The work of repositioning Bloomfield's Town Center to better compete for investment and to move the market in a positive direction is not easy, nor is it a one-time or short-term process. It requires a long-term commitment. There are no simple or quick fixes, no free rides, and there are no guarantees of improvement. The only guarantee is that doing nothing (or maintaining the status quo) is not a good option. Without intervention and public participation, the Town Center runs the risk of slipping further into functional obsolescence and deteriorated conditions.

For the Town Center to improve, for Bloomfield to *create wealth and attract investment*, Bloomfield must adopt a new philosophy, *a philosophy of continuous improvement*. Improvement must become Bloomfield's constancy of purpose. Improvement needs to become part of everything Bloomfield does—as a government, as businesses, as residents, and as property owners. The days of “avoiding issues”, “taking the easy path”, and believing “just good enough” will work are gone. If Bloomfield wants the Town Center to compete, Bloomfield must commit to working toward improvement. Bloomfield must be willing to invest in itself—to strategically invest its limited resources in those things that will create improvement and grow demand in the Town Center.

To accomplish this, improvement must become part of the culture of Bloomfield. Improvement must become a part of governing, living, working, doing business, and investing—a culture of investment and improvement. For example, when adopting a new budget or approving a new ordinance, the community and elected officials should be asking,

“Will this move us toward improvement in our Town Center?” To test these questions, the community and officials should be able to explain ‘why’ and ‘how’ such action will move the Town Center toward improvement.

Small, incremental investments, managing the mundane aspects of everyday life, and doing the little things well, are how Bloomfield's Town Center will improve. Small, continuous steps aimed at improvement are how the Town Center will become more competitive. The key is to not give up, but to remain focused on working toward improvement, to invest strategically, and to continually measure and adjust strategies as needed. If Bloomfield can do this, the Town Center will improve and better compete. The aim is to be in a perpetual state of improvement, continually striving to be better tomorrow than yesterday.

There are no pre-ordained or prescribed things Bloomfield should do that will create improvement. This Town Center Master Plan and Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project Plan is a starting point and a framework, but Bloomfield must continue to determine *what is working* and *what is not working*. Therefore, do not be distracted by the simplicity of *instant pudding approaches* and shiny new and cool things. Out-of-the-box plans, and flavor-of-the-day strategies rarely create meaningful improvement. Stay focused on improvement, be intentional in your work and actions, and continually question the status quo. Seek assistance and advice when needed, resist yes and no answers—favor ‘*how can we make this work*’ as the answer and starting point to new ideas and opportunities.



Chapter Eight: Town Center Economic Development Strategy

Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Introduction

The form and function of Bloomfield's settlement patterns are shifting and changing around technological innovations, modes of transportation, economics, and our social-cultural ways of living in our built environment. In addition, Bloomfield's demographics and consumer behaviors are shifting and changing, resulting in new ways of working, shopping, socializing, and recreating. Together, this means Bloomfield must embrace, nurture, and manage *change* to reposition the Town Center to compete for investment.

No one could have predicted, in the past, the impacts of technological innovations, transportation, economics, and our social-cultural ways of living in our built environment on the location of retail in the Town Center. The same is true of the impacts of the pandemic. No one could have predicted the pandemic and the long-term impacts of lockdowns and shifts to remote and hybrid work on commercial office space, shopping behaviors, or even home improvements. While Bloomfield's local real estate market is unique and dynamic, it is not immune to the large market trends discussed in the previous chapters. This chapter provides a macro-scale framework of strategies that (re) position Bloomfield's Town Center to be competitive and compete for investment and improvement in an ever-changing world.

Town Center's Problems to Solve

When planning for the future of place, specifically when seeking to (re)position a place or market (a commercial district) to compete for investment and to create vibrancy and prosperity, it is important to ask

the right questions and understand what it is that the community is trying to accomplish. For Bloomfield's Town Center, the question asked and answered is: *What problems are Bloomfield's Town Center trying to solve* through the creation and implementation of this Master Plan and Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project Plan? Based on what has been learned through this extensive planning process, there are three primary problems to solve: Physical Conditions, Market, and Image. To solve these problems, this strategy seeks to:

- 1. Physical Conditions:** Arrest stagnant and deteriorating conditions by improving the quality of the product (development/building/public spaces) on display to enhance the aesthetics and experience of Bloomfield's Town Center.
- 2. Market:** Mitigate functional obsolescence and grow market demand through strategic interventions aimed at right-sizing commercial space available and increasing the critical mass of population (households) within (and proximate to) the Town Center (i.e., multi-family housing and mixed-use development) by allowing greater diversity in use and higher density.
- 3. Image:** Improve the image of the Town Center by focusing on aesthetics, design, brand, public spaces, and activating spaces (especially the Town Green) to be inviting and vibrant. Create higher standards of property maintenance and aesthetic appeal.

While each solution to these problems is unique, they are also interconnected as integral components of the Town Center. Therefore, the strategies that follow are aimed at improving the physical conditions, market, and image of Bloomfield's Town Center.

Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Repositioning Town Center to Compete

The recommended strategies in the following pages are designed as a strategic intervention into the Town Center and the market. Throughout this planning process, we have been reading the market for *what is working* and *what is not working*, exploring outcomes, and considering strategies for improvement. The approach to repositioning the Town Center to compete for investment is, therefore, framed around the 8-step method described below. It builds upon the Levers of Change—image, market, conditions, connections, and capacity—and *intentionally targets strategies and investments* to arrest marginal conditions, build from strengths, leverage assets, and move the market toward the desired outcomes.

Reposition Bloomfield Town Center to Compete – A Strategic 8-Step Approach

Steps	The Process
Step 1. Read Market	Analyze the market to determine <i>what's working</i> and <i>what's not working</i> in terms of decisions to invest.
Step 2. Set Outcomes	Set <i>outcomes</i> for improvement—improving market. What will Town Center be when it is improved?
Step 3. Strategy and Tactics	Identify <i>strategies and tactics</i> that will best achieve the desired outcomes—create improvement.
Step 4. Establish Measures	Establish <i>measures</i> for improvement. How will we measure movement toward outcomes?
Step 5. Capacity Building	Assess and <i>strengthen capacity</i> to deliver revitalization strategies (i.e., governance, budgets, programs, etc.).
Step 6. Implement Strategy	Strategy <i>implementation</i> .
Step 7. Measurement	<i>Measure</i> progress toward outcomes. Is Town Center improving? Is Town Center more vibrant, more prosperous?
Step 8. Adjustment	<i>Adjust</i> strategies and tactics as needed. Develop new approaches to adapt to market improvement.

Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

The Work of Economic Development

The work of economic development, as defined by the International Economic Development Council is *the process of creating wealth and attracting investment through the mobilization of human, financial, social, physical, and natural resources to generate marketable goods and services*. While this definition provides good context, it narrowly defines the work of economic development as *marketable goods and services*. While this is understandable—that economic development regarding jobs (retention, attraction, and expansion) and commerce (commercial and industrial development and activity) is about marketable goods and services—the work of economic development in the context of Bloomfield’s Town Center needs to be defined more broadly.

Therefore, the purpose of this Town Center Economic Development Strategy, the definition of the work of economic development is simplified to *the practice and process of creating wealth and attracting investment*. Wealth can be created, and investment can be attracted in many ways and forms. For example, wealth can be created through property improvement, infrastructure investment, and new development. Therefore, to be successful in the work of economic development and (re)positioning Bloomfield’s Town Center, this broader understanding of economic development is to include all forms of wealth creation, and the attraction of all investment is required.

The Practice of Economic Development

The practice of economic development recognizes the *work of economic development* as a system, a complex adaptive system. Therefore, the practice of economic development focuses on tools and activities that Bloomfield can develop and employ to engage in the *practice and process of creating wealth and attracting investment* in the Town Center. The aim of this section of the Town Center Economic Development Strategy and Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project Plan is to offer a summary of macro-scale economic development tools and activities that can be utilized to (re)position Bloomfield’s Town Center and create improvement.



Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Town Center Economic Investment Strategy

Bloomfield Town Center is a middle-market suburban community that is challenged by commercial stagnation and functional obsolescence. To overcome these challenges, Bloomfield must work to create change, build confidence in the market, grow demand, and attract investment. To accomplish this, the Town Center Economic Development Strategy should include the following:

- Enhancing parking and pedestrian accessibility.
- Implement public infrastructure improvements to enhance livability.
- Offer financial incentives to encourage private investment.
- Work with property owners to renovate or redevelop property within the Town Center.
- Invest in and organize activities and events in the Town Center to attract residents and visitors.
- Development of a Town Center brand and marketing material.

In addition, the Town Center Economic Development Strategy must also include the following 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 development patterns and enhances a pedestrian scale Town Center.
- Landscape public spaces visible and accessible from the public right-of-way, install appropriate night lighting, improve sidewalks, and provide landscaped walkways through parking areas.

- Promote and allow (through zoning) 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 to support commercial activities.
- 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.
- Encourage and include site design elements that support 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.

Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Town Center Economic Development Strategy

Bloomfield has a robust and proactive economic development program that serves the community well and is already utilizing many tools and activities aimed at engaging businesses, creating wealth, and attracting investment. Therefore, the recommendations in this plan are intended to augment the existing economic development activities by providing more tactical, strategic, and targeted strategies aimed at (re)positioning the Town Center for (re)development, investment, and improvement—to cultivate an environment or economic-ecosystem where investment can and will occur.

(Re)positioning the Town Center to compete for investment is more challenging than attracting investment to new development areas (Greenfields). (Re)positioning the Town Center involves renovations, demolition, infill development, and the redevelopment of existing sites. This often means incompatible regulations—regulations designed for existing development, not redevelopment—and increased development costs (i.e., demolition, environmental, or infrastructure). Therefore, it is imperative for Bloomfield to confront these challenges and to have a toolbox tailored to address the challenges of redevelopment.

The following is a macro-scale framework to confront the repositioning and redevelopment of a Town Center mixed-use district:

Target investment in Town Center. Implement a program of continuous targeted investment in the Town Center with the objective of creating improvement. Utilize an incremental approach of intentional investment in well-defined and targeted locations over many years.

Improve the aesthetics of Town Center. Implement a beautification program focused on beautification, flowers, landscaping, public art, and aesthetics of public and private property.

Improve the standards of property maintenance. Encourage property owners to improve their standards of property maintenance.

Remediate conditions of blight. Utilizing code enforcement, tax foreclosure, and property acquisition to confront properties with deteriorated conditions or functional obsolescence, including demolition, when no alternative exists.

Remove barriers to investment. Update and modernize the Zoning Regulations with the goal of repositioning commercial properties to encourage investment and (re)development by removing impediments and creating greater flexibility for redeployment.

Encourage and allow greater density and diversity in land uses. Allow greater density and diversity of commercial uses—including mixed-use and standalone multi-family development.

Provide incentives to overcome the higher cost of redevelopment and infill development. Allowing greater or more flexible density in areas suitable for redevelopment is a start but often not enough to attract the investment required to reposition properties. Therefore, create incentives that assist with the financial feasibility of redevelopment. Such incentives include a tax abatement policy aimed at adaptive reuse and redevelopment of commercial sites and leverage the Tax Increment Financing District authorities for large investments, when appropriate.

Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Create a Town Center brand and image. The brand should elevate the image of the Town Center, build on unique strengths, and be incorporated into commercial districts, where appropriate.

Focus on the aesthetics and design of (re)development. The focus should be to improve the quality of commercial (and residential) products as to both the aesthetics of buildings and landscaping.

Remediate stagnant and functional obsolescent conditions. Bloomfield must confront deteriorated conditions, especially those that rise to the level of threats to public health, safety, and welfare—code violations. Addressing such conditions is not easy, and often it may feel that it is not productive—meaning it often feels like little, or no progress is being made. However, a lack of trying undermines confidence and pride in place. Therefore, all efforts must be made to confront and address such conditions. Bloomfield should implement the following:

- Increase code enforcement.
- Utilize tax foreclosures, when available, to acquire properties.
- Encourage the redevelopment of functionally obsolete property.
- Acquire (and demolish if needed) functionally obsolete property—reducing the total square feet of commercial space.
- Support code enforcement.

Improve the Aesthetics of Town Center. A key problem confronting the Town Center is its lackluster image. Most importantly, this lackluster image is being driven by deferred maintenance and lower standards of property maintenance. To begin overcoming this image, Bloomfield must begin by working to elevate the expectations and standards of property maintenance—improve the aesthetics of the Town Center to create pride and build confidence. Improving the aesthetics of the Town Center is a relatively low-cost tactic Bloomfield can implement, which will provide some of the greatest returns. To accomplish this, Bloomfield should implement a Town Center Beautification program that includes the following:

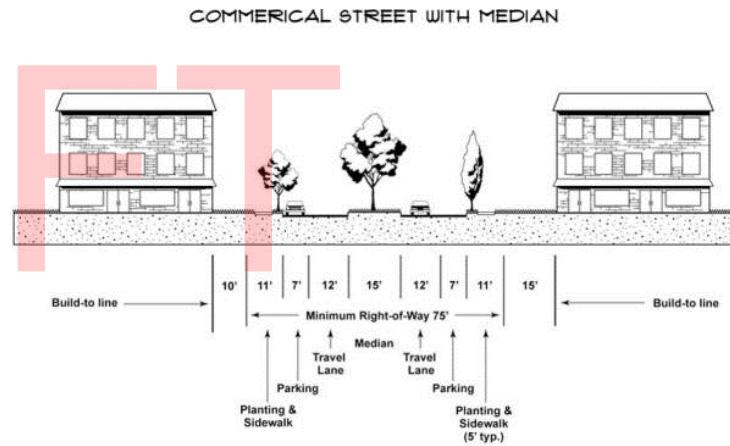
- Establish a yearly line-item budget for Town Center aesthetic improvements.
- Invest in flowers/plantings in the public realm—flowerbeds at gateways and on public lands.
- Lead by example and ensure that public properties maintain the highest quality of landscaping, lawn care, and building maintenance.
- Engage property owners to plant and display flowers, elevate their standards of lawncare, and invest in building maintenance, and exterior improvements. The Town Green and Filly Park should be maintained to the highest standards.
- Establish or work with a garden club to help with implementation and maintenance.

Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Remove Barriers to Investment – Zoning. To confront and remove barriers to investment, Bloomfield should perform a comprehensive review and update of the Zoning Regulations pertaining to the Town Center. This is not to say Bloomfield's Zoning Regulations are bad or wrong, they are not. However, just as patterns of development have shifted and changed, so has the role of zoning and expectation of zoning. Therefore, it is possible that Bloomfield's Zoning Regulations have become antiquated and need to be modernized. The Town Center Zoning Regulations would benefit from a comprehensive update focused on:

- Updating the names and definitions of uses.
- Modernizing the uses allowed in commercial districts and reducing the number of uses requiring Special Permits/public hearings.
- Review and update of dimensional requirements.
- Enhanced site design standards to elevate aesthetics.
- Reducing required parking requirements.
- Creating “*swift, simple, and certain*” permitting processes.
- Modernizing the sign regulations for compliance with constitutional requirements of content neutrality.
- Providing access management and consolidated parcel provisions.
- Establishing a master plan approach, preferably an overlay zone, for the Town Center.
- Encourage mixed-use and standalone multi-family housing.
- See additional recommendations in the Chapter 132 Municipal Development Plan below.



Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Public Private Partnerships and The Incentives Universe

In real estate development, especially redevelopment, public participation (or what is often called public-private partnerships) is often needed to assist the financial feasibility of the redevelopment. Redevelopment, as noted above, is often complex, costly, and timely. Therefore, when the desired outcomes of redevelopment projects align with the public interest—Bloomfield's desire and need to attract investment and create improvement—the local government can partner with property owners and developers to ensure the investments and improvements happen. There are many tools or strategic levers that local government can deploy to contribute to and optimize the financial feasibility of redevelopment projects.

The following is a summary list of incentives that can aid Bloomfield in attracting financially feasible development in Town Center:

DENSITY BONUSES: involves allowing or granting extra building (development) capacity aimed at creating greater financial opportunity for the property—in exchange for aligning private development with desired outcomes. This includes building height, allowing four- and five-story buildings.

LAND DONATION: the act of donating land (publicly owned land) to assist the financial feasibility of development. Typically, a government or public entity will donate land to a development project as an incentive strategy to align private development with public goals (i.e., attracting investment).

Direct Grant/Subsidy: Direct grants or subsidies to provide financial support directly to developers, property owners, or occupants. The aim is to lower costs, encourage specific types of development, and/or achieve desired outcomes. These are often federal and state programs and funds. Local government can create and administer local grant programs.

Permit Fee Reductions or Waivers: entails reducing or exempting fees associated with obtaining land use approvals and/or building permits—a means of reducing development soft costs when aligned with desired public outcomes.

Tax Incentives: often in the form of tax abatements, tax fixing agreements, tax increment financing, and credit enhancement agreements aimed at improving the financial feasibility of development.

Reimagine the land use application and permitting process: investment flows to demand and the location of least resistance. Creating a predictable land use application and permitting process—a process that is "*swift, simple, and certain*"—can go a long way to attracting investment. This requires a shift in culture from regulations and approvals that focus on yes and no answers, to regulations and approvals that ask, '*How can we make this work?*'.

Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Property Tax Abatement

Bloomfield should consider the utilization of its Tax Abatement Policy and Program in accordance with Section 12-65b (Agreements between municipality and owner...of real property...fixing the assessment of such property...) of the Connecticut General Statutes to provide tax fixing agreements (or tax abatements) for the renovation or redevelopment of commercial properties in the Town Center. Such a Town Center tax abatement program should include and encourage multi-family and mixed-use developments as qualified projects.

The following is a framework for thinking about the tax abatement policy and how to structure tax abatement incentives:

- The policy should be flexible in its structure and utilization to avoid binding the Town or applicants to abatements that may not work.
- Abatements should be structured to fix the current tax value for tax paid so that Bloomfield does not lose the existing taxes paid by the property.
- Consider a flexible sliding scale abatement structure that utilizes the number of years the abatement is available, and the percent value of abatements offered considered in the context of financial need (financial feasibility) of the proposed redevelopment and the desired public/community outcome of the proposed development.

- Consider using the tax abatement authority to fix taxes on commercial properties that perform renovations. For example, when an existing business or property performs substantial improvements—especially exterior renovations that improve the physical appearance of the property, provide a tax fixing agreement that abates the value of the new improvements for 5 years.

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Positioning Town Center for Improvement

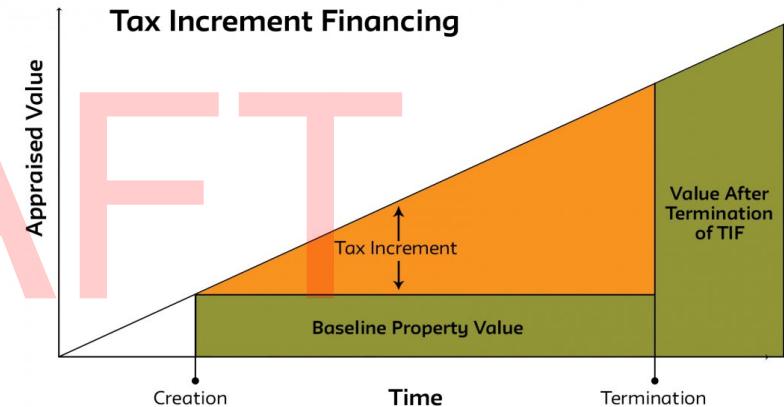
Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts

Bloomfield should leverage and utilize the Town Center Tax Increment Financing Districts to encourage redevelopment and investment in the Town Center. TIF utilizes the anticipated future increases in property taxes from (re)development of a property to pay for current and needed improvements (typically infrastructure and building improvements) or to repay debt issued for such improvements. TIF is also a powerful tool for improvements to the public realm aimed at placemaking. Connecticut state law (CGS Section 7-339cc – Section 7-339kk) authorized local municipalities to create Tax Increment Districts for the utilization of TIF in a manner that is geographically targeted.

- Bloomfield created a Town Center Tax Increment Financing District four years ago and now needs to activate the TIF District by establishing the TIF Advisory Board. Bloomfield should consider assigning the TIF Advisory Board authority for the Town Center to the Town Center Economic Development Commission, the Town's Redevelopment Authority. This would vest the Redevelopment Authority with jurisdiction over both the Chapter 132 Municipal Development Plan and the Town Center Tax Increment Financing District.
- The TIF can be used for infrastructure improvements and public spaces, or to assist with financing of redevelopment activities that need capital. The Credit Enhancement Agreement provision authorized by the TIF authority can also be an effective tool to assist with financing a redevelopment.

TIF Districts can and will be a powerful tool for overcoming market impediments to real estate development and financing. The TIF District is also a powerful policy tool for targeting investment in the Town Center while utilizing tax value from those areas to fund the investments.



Source: Planning Tank. *Tax Increment Financing (TIF) | Public Financing | Types of TIF*. <https://planningtank.com/finance/tax-increment-financing-tif-types-tif> (accessed 2018).

Positioning Bloomfield for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Creating a Town Center Brand

Recognizing that image, especially aesthetics, is a problem for the Town Center to solve, the development of a Town Center brand can go a long way to improve the community image, cultivate name recognition, and market the community, specifically the Town Center. Such a branding program could include a unified signage program, street banners, and wayfinding. The process involves:

- 1. Selecting a Brand and Marketing Team** – The team should be comprised of key stakeholders from Town Center - officials, volunteers, and business owners. This team should work with the staff or consultant to determine the “look” of Town Center and consider the various uses of the brand.
- 2. Developing a Marketing and Communications Plan** – The aim of such of Plan is to market the Town Center, and its businesses, and to foster economic development. This plan can be the roadmap to enhance the Town Center brand year-round and should:
 - Focus on the brand development, theme, and identity, developing the marketing strategies, and creating guidelines.
 - The plan should be developed as an ongoing and phased-in effort that will expand the efforts as conditions in the Town Center improve and the efforts be evaluated and adjusted yearly as new opportunities arise.
 - Incorporate how to communicate that “you are in Town Center”– i.e., develop hashtags for social media, possibly a

tagline, and determine what sources can be utilized for messaging for businesses, the public, and the surrounding communities.

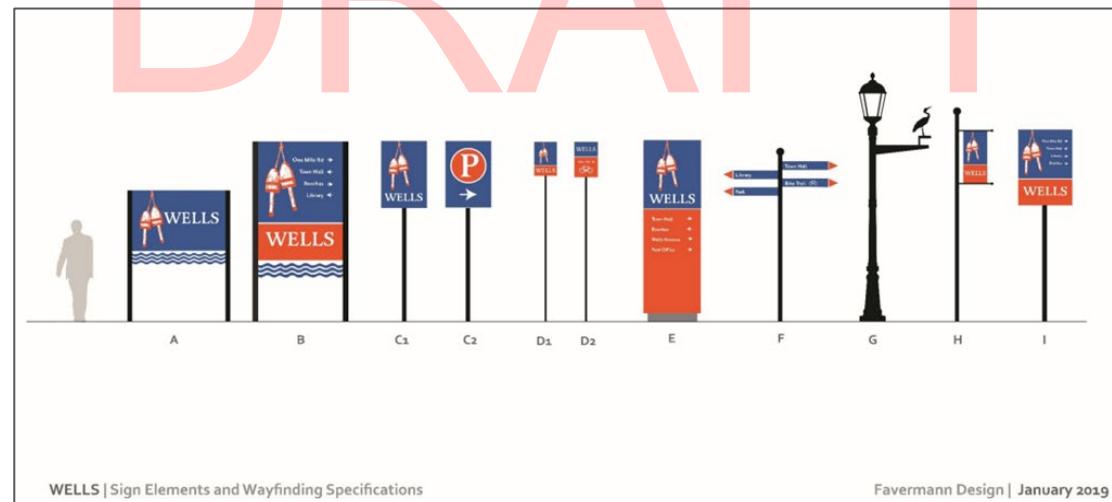
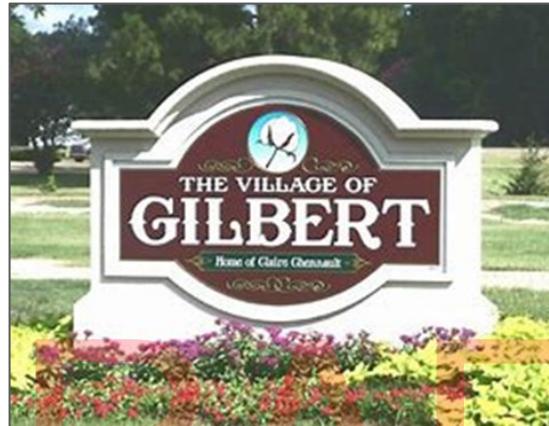
- Develop or build on signature town events that help to promote and reinforce the brand.

- 3. Engaging a Graphic Designer** – Consider using a local designer who knows the area and can reflect in the design that the Town Center is a special and unique area. The designer should also be able to apply this new look to your marketing efforts – for various applications as well as for use within the town, on the website, and by the businesses.
- 4. Utilizing the Brand to Create a Welcoming Atmosphere** – A banner program is one way to visually launch the new brand and market the Town Center. This can be done strategically throughout the Town Center – intersections, public spaces, and shopping plazas. The new brand should be able to be incorporated into signage or wayfinding improvements, including gateway signage.

The graphics on the following page provide examples of gateway signs and a collective sign (wayfinding) package for the Town Center.

Directional, Wayfinding, and Welcome Signage

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan



Positioning Bloomfield for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Governance Structures & Engagement: Bloomfield's Town Center would benefit from more formal structures of governance and community engagement to better cultivate relationships with stakeholders. Therefore, Bloomfield should proactively work to further engage Town Center stakeholders by doing the following:

- A simple and time/cost-effective way to engage businesses would be to host quarterly (or bi-annually) meet & greets at the town hall for the Town Center stakeholders (i.e., businesses, property owners, and residents).
- Consider a similar meeting as above to target and engage property owners in discussions about investment and (re)development.
- Host business owner meetings annually to listen to their needs and ideas.
- Engage in more frequent meetings with owners who are looking to invest in the near term. Discuss incentives that Bloomfield could provide to help facilitate investment.
- Evaluate and consider if it is worthwhile to create formal merchant/business and/or property owner associations to provide formal governance structures within the Town Center.

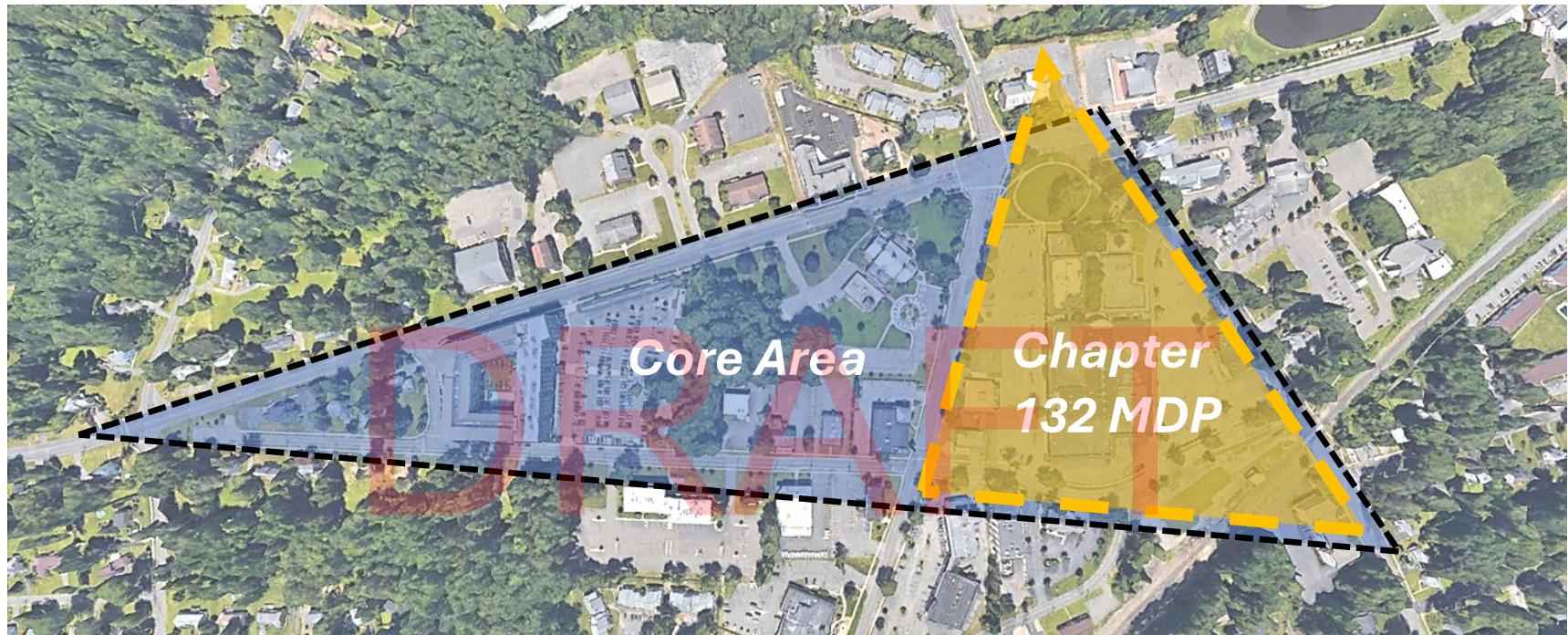
Celebrate Town Center Businesses: The Town Center Economic Development Commission, in association with the Mayor's Office, should consider celebrating Town Center businesses and their investment in the Town Center. Some simple ways of doing

this include the implementation of a 'ribbon cutting' program for new businesses and existing business expansions. The implementation of a yearly 'Business Investment' award program. The award categories could be Business Expansion, New Business, and Property Enhancements/Maintenance. An award for high-quality property maintenance would go a long way in encouraging and promoting higher standards of aesthetic improvements and pride in ownership.



Target Investment Core Area & Chapter 132 Municipal Development Plan Area

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan



Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Targeting Investment – Core Area & Opportunities

No community has the resources required to implement a comprehensive strategy that addresses all issues at once. Therefore, it is important to strategically invest limited resources in an intentional and targeted approach to maximize the return on investment. To accomplish this, the Town Center Economic Development Strategy and Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project Plan seek to target investment in specific areas of the Town Center.

The Town Center Economic Investment Strategy conceptualizes a core area (see map on prior page) for investment that runs from Gabb Road (to the south) to Wintonbury Avenue (to the north) and encompasses Bloomfield Avenue and Jerome Avenue as the spines. This core area is anchored by recent and substantial investments in Heirloom Flats and the Tellus One and Two Apartments. These investments in housing have tested the market and demonstrated both market demand and feasibility for not just housing but for investment in the Town Center.

As a result of this process, eighteen properties, 16 within this core area of the Town Center have been identified as Investment Opportunities. The eighteen properties (listed on the right), are 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	SF	Acres
756 PARK AVE	1946	2,524	0.77
836 PARK AVE	1971	6,522	0.92
836M PARK AVE	1970	38,879	8.54
64 JEROME AVE	N/A	N/A	1.33
29 WINTONBURY AVE	1956	4,770	0.51
47 JEROME AVE	1971	1,711	0.21
45 WINTONBURY AVE	1988	28,800	2.46
34 JEROME AVE	1972	12,880	3.72
37 JEROME AVE	1971	7,432	0.53
785 PARK AVE	1991	20,917	2.26
705 BLOOMFIELD AVE	1978	16,800	1.21
707 BLOOMFIELD AVE	1974	11,216	1.22
2 BARNARD LN	1976	14,271	1.06
4 BARNARD LN	1976	17,253	1.53
3 BARNARD LN	1980	18,084	1.60
1 BARNARD LN	1977	13,334	0.96
12 MOUNTAIN AVE	1974	25,200	2.62
22D MOUNTAIN AVE	1991	65,176	13.47

Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Targeting Investment – Core Area & Opportunities

Recognizing that the Town of Bloomfield cannot require property owners to invest in their property, this Plan recommends the following framework for the Town 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 that help to encourage 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/Fixing Agreements:* As authorized by CGS 12-65b the Town of Bloomfield may enter into tax fixing agreements with property owners. Therefore, in the case of the Town Center, especially the Opportunity Properties listed above, the Town can offer Tax Abatements and Fixing Agreements as incentives to property owners willing or wanting to invest in their properties—be it renovations or redevelopment.

- *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 Opportunity Properties. While best suited for large projects, the TIF Plan authorized up to 70% of the increase (or increment) 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.

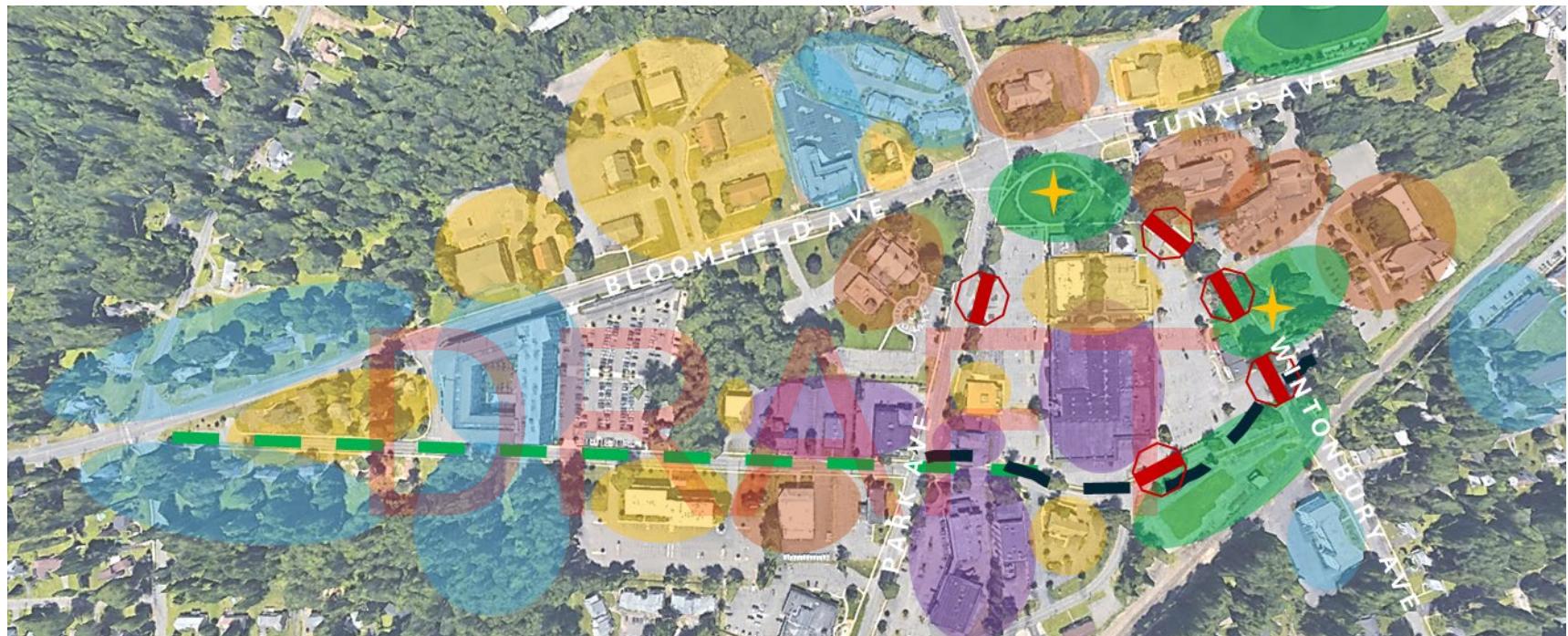
- *Credit Enhancement Agreements (CEA):* Authorized through the TIF District authority, the Town may enter CEAs with property owners. The CEA allows the Town to capture up to 70% of the increase in the assessed value to reimburse the developer/owner for public and private investments.

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 (tax fixing, TIF, or CEA) is best. For example, facade improvements may be suitable for incentivizing through a tax fixing agreement 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 should also be considered and used to encourage investment and improvement in the Town Center.

The following page provides a conceptual mapping of existing land uses in the Core Area.

Core Area Existing Land Use Map

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan



- Public building, service and/or facility
- Office, medical, bank
- Retail, restaurant, entertainment
- Multi and/or single family residential
- Open green space and/or park

- “blocking zone” (non-connectivity)
- Specialty accent or focus element
- Roadway to be adjusted
- Railroad
- Walkability opportunity



Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Core Area – Public Real Investments

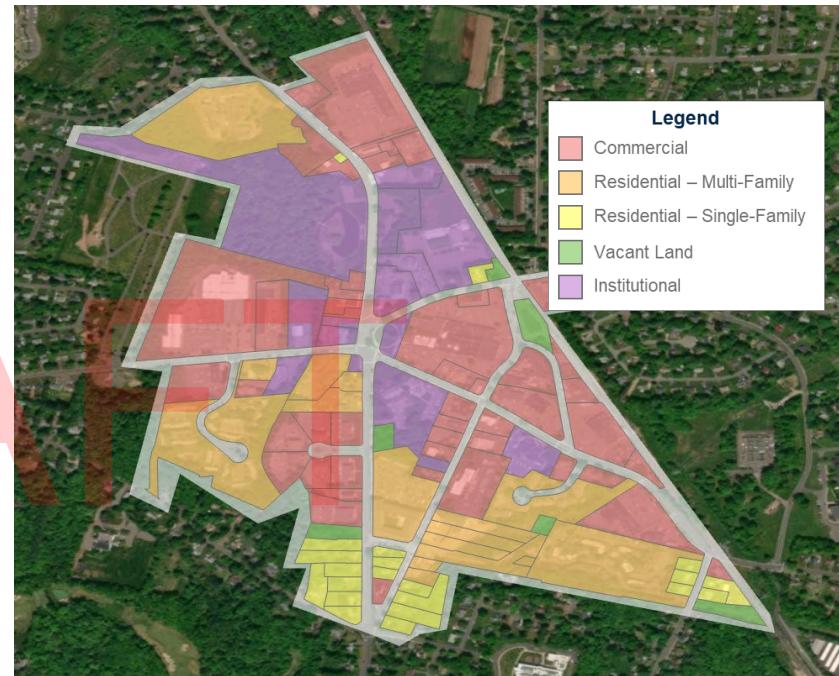
To successfully reposition the Town Center to compete for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy, the Town of Bloomfield (the community) must invest in itself—invest in the Town Center. The following are recommended improvements (public investments) aimed at creating new investments in the public realm 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 of these public investments were conceptualized and included in the 2021 TIF District Plan for the Town Center TIF District. The map on the following page is from the TIF District Plan and shows the public improvements and the focus on the core area of the Town Center. The map on the page after is a revised and updated version of the TIF District Map of public improvements to incorporate such improvements and the Town Center TIF District Recommendations into this Town Center Master Plan and Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project Plan.

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.

Priority should be given first to new sidewalks on Tunxis Avenue, second to New lighting, and third to bus shelters. The other items can wait or be done in connection with other development projects as they arise.

Master Plan & Municipal Development Plan Area Land Use



Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

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/SF	\$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/SF	\$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/SF	\$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 SF at \$25/SF	\$550,000
Shared Parking Connections	Town Hall	Connect the parking lots of Town Hall, Rite Aid, Funeral Home, 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	Project Plan	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

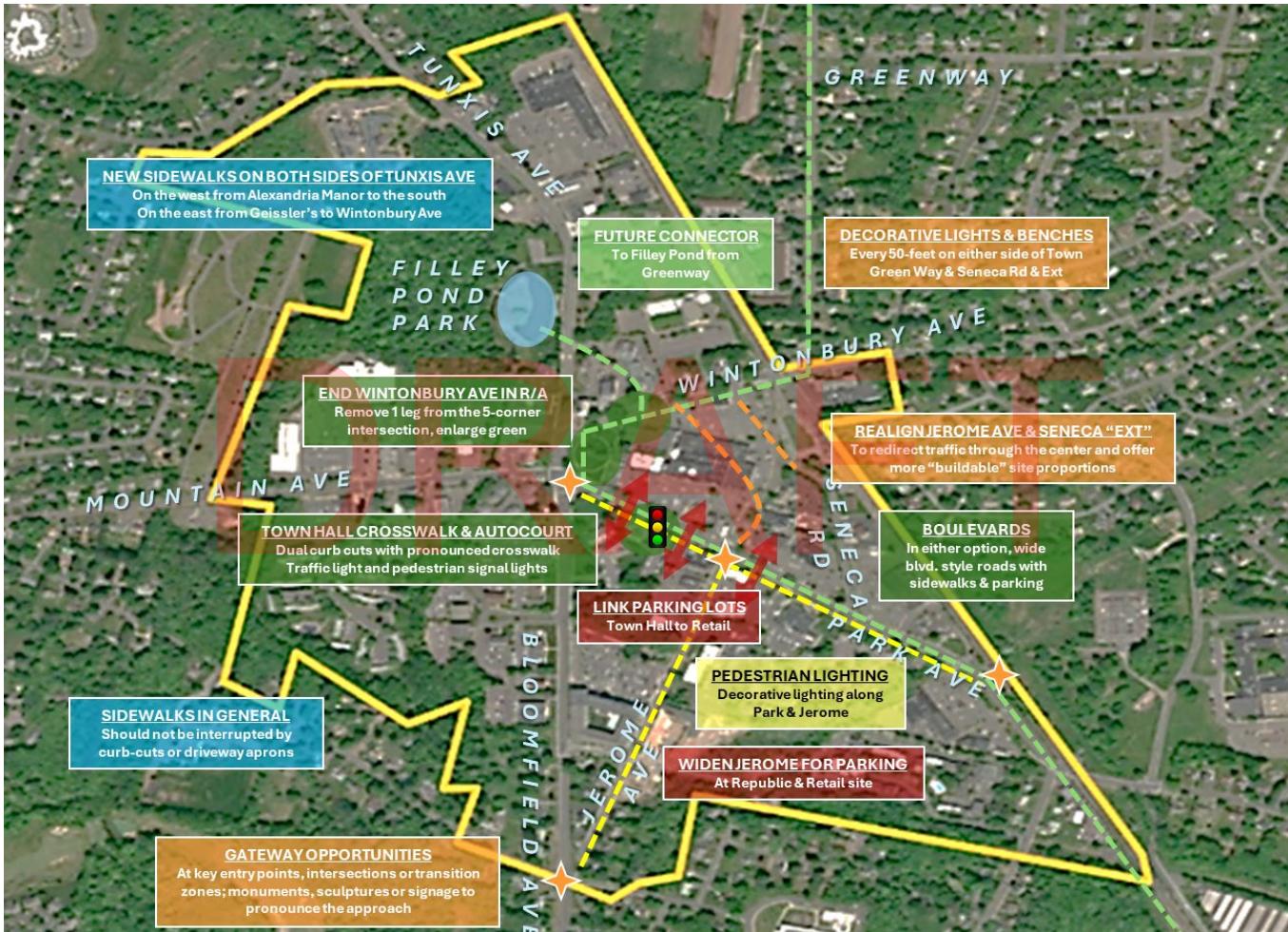
2020 Town Center TIF District Plan – Public Infrastructure Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan



Town Center Economic Development Strategy – Public Infrastructure Improvements

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan



Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Targeting Investment – Core Area & Opportunity Properties

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 (discussed above), and willingness to partner in private investment.

The following is a preliminary step-by-step framework for engaging the owners of Opportunity Properties with the aim of encouraging and creating improvement and investment.

- Identify opportunities for potential private property improvements and investment.
- Develop public incentive packages for each of the 'opportunity' properties.
- Engage Town Center property owners, collectively, in a discussion of the Town's plan and commitment to public investments for the Town Center.
 - These discussions should seek to leverage public investment to encourage private investment and emphasize the Town's willingness to partner with incentives.
- Engage 'opportunity' property owners individually in discussions about improvements and investments in their property and the Town's willingness to partner with public incentives.

- If 'opportunity' property improvements require more than basic rehabilitation, also engage the development community (developers) in discussions of potential uses and incentives with the aim of connecting developers with property owners.
- If 'opportunity' property improvements go beyond rehabilitation and require more direct public involvement, execute the Chapter 132 provisions for property acquisition.

The following pages provide conceptual examples of possible property improvements, and redevelopment concepts, for some of the key opportunity properties. These concepts are not intended to be concrete or final plans, but to inspire and start a conversation about possible redevelopment.

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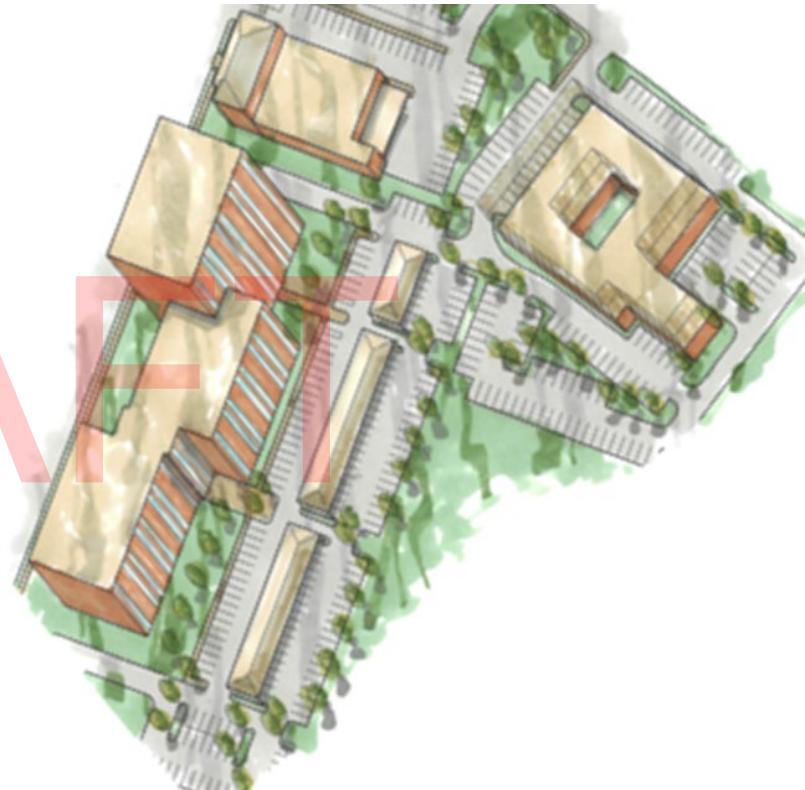
Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

34 Jerome Avenue – Residential Conversion

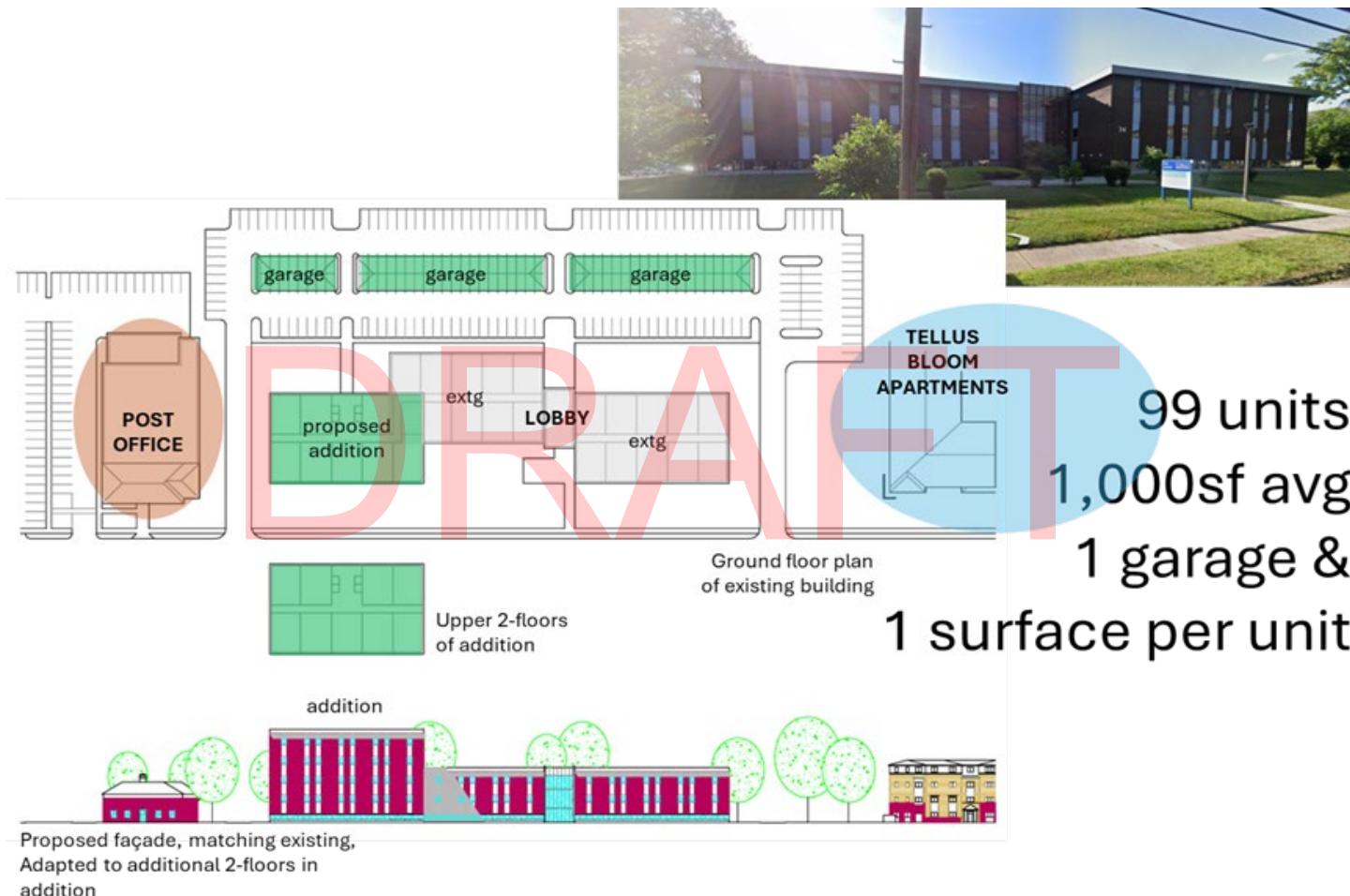
The office building at 34 Jerome Avenue, constructed in 1972, nearing the end of its useful life and verging on functional obsolescence. However, at three stories, 3.72 acres, and with ample on-site parking, the site is well-suited for redevelopment. In addition, based on the site's location on Jerome Avenue, next to Tellus II apartments, and near the Heirloom Flats, 34 Jerome Avenue is an ideal site for adding more density and residential units to the Town Center.

The conceptual plan shows a conversion of the building to residential, with an addition on the north side that is two stories taller. This configuration could yield approximately 99 residential units at an average of 1,000 square feet per unit. In addition, the parking area can accommodate these units, while providing one exposed and one garaged parking space per unit. Also shown on the conceptual rendering to the right is the inclusion of the Police Station site on Park Avenue. Since there are discussions of relocating the Police Station out of the Town Center, the Police Station becomes available as an Opportunity Property. 34 Jerome Avenue and the Police Station share a property line and could be developed individually or as a combined development. The Police Station could yield 20 units if simply converted. However, if a second and third floor were added, a total of 36 to 54 units could be achieved with up to 133 parking spaces on site.



Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan



Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

1, 2, 3, & 4 Barnard Lane – Residential Conversion

The office buildings on Barnard Lane were all constructed between 1976 and 1980. These buildings are nearing the end of their useful life and verging on functional obsolescence. Combined, the lots total 5.15 acres and good opportunity for residential conversion. While each building could be individually converted, the conceptual redevelopment (shown to the right) shows a three-story apartment building (131,199 SF) with 106 units and 241 parking spaces. Located next to Tellus and near Heirloom Flats, this location is ideal for adding more residential density to the Town Center and building the critical mass of households in the Town Center to support local businesses.

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Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

45 Wintonbury Avenue – Residential Conversion

The office building at 45 Wintonbury Avenue was constructed in 1988 and is nearing the end of its useful life and verging on functional obsolescence. At 2.45 acres, this property provides another opportunity for residential conversion. Pictured to the right, the conceptual design increases the approximately 35,500 SF to 42,849 SF and can yield approximately 45 apartments and 98 parking spaces. Located near the intersection of Jerome Avenue and Wintonbury Avenue, along with the proposed Municipal Development Plan which will be discussed later, this is another good opportunity site for adding to the critical mass of residential space needed in the Town Center.

Other Opportunity Properties

The three properties were selected for conceptual designs based on their location, weakness in the office market, age, and the opportunity they present for conversion to residential—the strongest real estate asset class, and the need to create a critical mass of households to support Town Center businesses. The conceptual designs show how a simple design exercise to show the possibility a site may have for adaptive reuse and development, can go a long way to inspire and provide a vehicle for discussion. It is recommended that the Town of Bloomfield consider the creation of similar concept designs for the other Opportunity Properties as a way of starting a discussion with the owners about investment and the potential that their properties may have. The image on the next page provides a view of the Town Center with these properties, and others, developed as conceptualized in this Plan.



Aerial View of Core Target Investment Area

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan



Positioning Town Center for Improvement

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Jerome Avenue – A Critical Spine to the Town Center

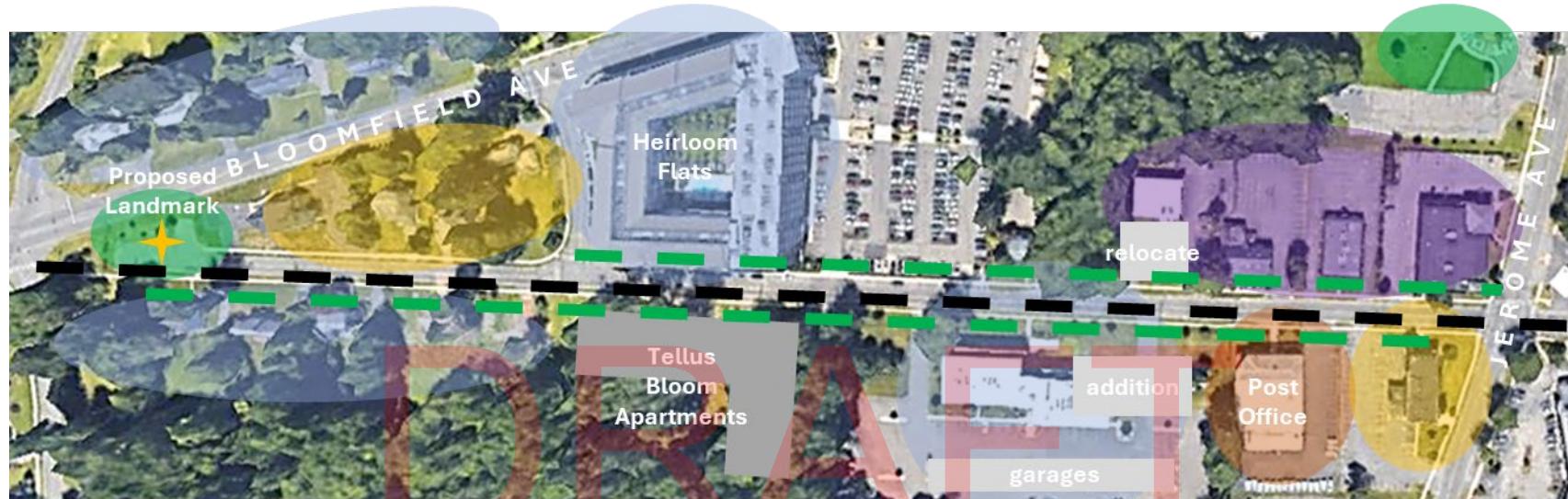
Jerome Avenue, both north and South of Park Avenue, is a critical spine to the Town Center and the repositioning of the Town Center to compete for investment. The investment in Heirloom Flats years ago has demonstrated that Bloomfield's Town Center can attract investment. The Tellus and Tellus II apartments further confirmed that the Town Center could attract investment. Today, an application on the horizon for the redevelopment of properties at the corner of Gabb Road and Bloomfield Avenue into additional apartments, further shows that this southern area of the Town Center is well-positioned to accommodate higher-density residential development. In fact, it is becoming the resident quarter of the Town Center. Therefore, pedestrian connections (walkability) between this southern core area along Jerome Avenue (and Bloomfield Avenue) are important to linking this residential area to the area of Jerome Avenue to the north of Park Avenue.

The images to the right provide examples of quality pedestrian (walkable) design that is engaging and aesthetically pleasing. The Republic, an existing example in Town Center, sets the bar for such design moving forward. The graphic on the following page provides an overview of south Jerome Avenue as a pedestrian spine and shows the established building lines and respecting those lines.



Core Target Investment Area – Jerome Avenue South Walkability

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan



- Public building, service and/or facility
- Office, medical, bank
- Retail, restaurant, entertainment
- Multi and/or single family residential
- Open green space and/or park

- “blocking zone” (non-connectivity)
- Specialty accent or focus element
- Roadway to be adjusted
- Railroad
- Walkability opportunity





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Chapter Nine: Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

C.G.S. Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Bloomfield's Town Center Economic Development Commission (Development Authority), with the assistance of their consultants (Goman+York) has engaged in a comprehensive analysis of the Municipal Development Planning area (Town Center), including a focused analysis, evaluation, and design exercise of the area identified as the Municipal Development Project Area. The project is proposed and conceptualized as 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 from Park Avenue to Seneca Road) and then along the railroad tracks to the east (north from Seneca Road to Wintonbury Avenue). The Municipal Development Project Area and parcels are shown on the map to the right.

Municipal Development Project Area Parcels



Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

The Project Area has been determined to be the area within the Town Center that is experiencing the greatest degrees of commercial functional obsolescence. Most notable, and the primary property in this area experiencing the greatest degree of functionally obsolete, is the Wintonbury Mall property. The property consists of 8.54 acres and 104,537 square feet of commercial retail space across five buildings in the form of a local strip shopping center. Constructed mostly in 1970, the buildings are configured as an open-air mall with exterior passages and a central courtyard. While Wintonbury Mall was once a successful retail site and place of pride in the community, since the Great Recession of 2009, the Wintonbury Mall struggled to attract and retain tenants, and investment. In 2014 the property went into foreclosure, and even with the efforts of the new owner who took over the property in 2015, little has changed, and the property continues to decline and deteriorate.

As discussed earlier, the retail sector has struggled since 2009 and was further disrupted by the 2020 pandemic. Malls across America have struggled, been foreclosed, and shuttered. In Connecticut, the Chrystal Mall, Enfield Square Mall, Meriden Mall, Waterbury Mall, and Buckland Hills Mall have all struggled, have high vacancies, and have experienced foreclosure—the Wintonbury Mall is no different and is not alone. Unfortunately, unlike these other malls that are at highway interchanges or on suburban strips, the Wintonbury Mall is in the Town Center and at the highly visibility intersection of Park Avenue, Bloomfield Avenue, Mountain Avenue, Tunxis Avenue, and Wintonbury Avenue. Furthermore, it abuts the Town Green and is across from the Town Hall. Therefore, the Town of Bloomfield has been subjected to this failing, deteriorating, and functionally obsolete retail center for over a decade.

Prior efforts to work with the owners of the property and to engage potential developers have fallen short, while code enforcement activities have persisted to address public health and safety issues. Unfortunately for the property owner and the Town, the private market does not have the capacity or capabilities to address this property. Debt on the property is high, while revenue is low. Most importantly, the retail market has changed, and this location can no longer compete.

Municipal Development Project Area



Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

As discussed in Chapter Four, the site selection criteria for the Wintonbury Mall property are too weak to attract quality tenants in the number of tenants needed. Visitation, as shown by the geofence analysis is low, especially when compared to the Copaco Shopping Center on Cottage Grove Road. Furthermore, rents in Bloomfield and the Town Center are too low to attract private investment in new commercial construction. Last, the cost of property acquisition and demolition costs to clear the site for new construction, further undermine the financial feasibility of the Wintonbury Mall property. With the private market unable to solve the Wintonbury Mall's functional obsolescence, the property will continue to decline and deteriorate.

The property at 64 Jerome Avenue, locally known as the Depot Site, is another site in the Project Area that is also of concern to the community, as it has been vacant for decades and has varying degrees of fair and poor property maintenance over the years. The Depot site is 1.33 acres, not too small for commercial development, however, the site is narrow and very shallow between the street (Jerome Avenue) and the railroad tracks. This limits the development potential of the Depot Site, along with its less visible location on Jerome Avenue, resulting in the Depot Site also being functionally obsolete. The Wintonbury Mall property and the Depot site property suffer from market conditions that the private market cannot solve. When the private market fails and the conditions of the property are negatively impacting the community—be it blight, deferred maintenance, deteriorating conditions, or functional obsolescence, then the government should explore its options to intervene and overcome the hurdles that the private market cannot.

The motivation behind this Town Center Master Plan and Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project Area Plan is the desire of the Town of Bloomfield to explore its options and to determine if it can intervene in the failing market and solve the problem of functional obsolescence, oversupply, deteriorated conditions, and attracting new investment to the Town Center. In addition, the Town of Bloomfield has a role and responsibility to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of the community, and to protect the economic vitality of the Town Center.

Based on the site development analysis of the Wintonbury Mall and Depot Lot, it was determined that the size and shape of both the Wintonbury Mall and Depot Lot parcels limit the scale of potential redevelopment. Most importantly, to overcome acquisition and demolition costs for the Wintonbury Mall, the scale of redevelopment must have critical mass. Furthermore, for the meaningful redevelopment of the Depot Lot, Jerome Avenue would need to be relocated to overcome the shallowness of the lot. These findings of size, shape, and configuration of possible redevelopment revealed that the other parcels within the Municipal Development Project Area are in need of redevelopment. This includes 29 Wintonbury Avenue (the liquor store building) to accommodate the relocation of Jerome Avenue, 836 Park Avenue (bank pad site owned by Wintonbury Mall), and 47 Jerome Avenue (gas station) to create a redevelopment site of adequate size, shape, and configuration. In total, the properties and buildings equal 11.5 acres and 117,540 square feet of commercial space. The Town Green (0.30) would also need to be incorporated into the redevelopment. The map on the following page shows the first attempt to re-imagine the redevelopment of this area.

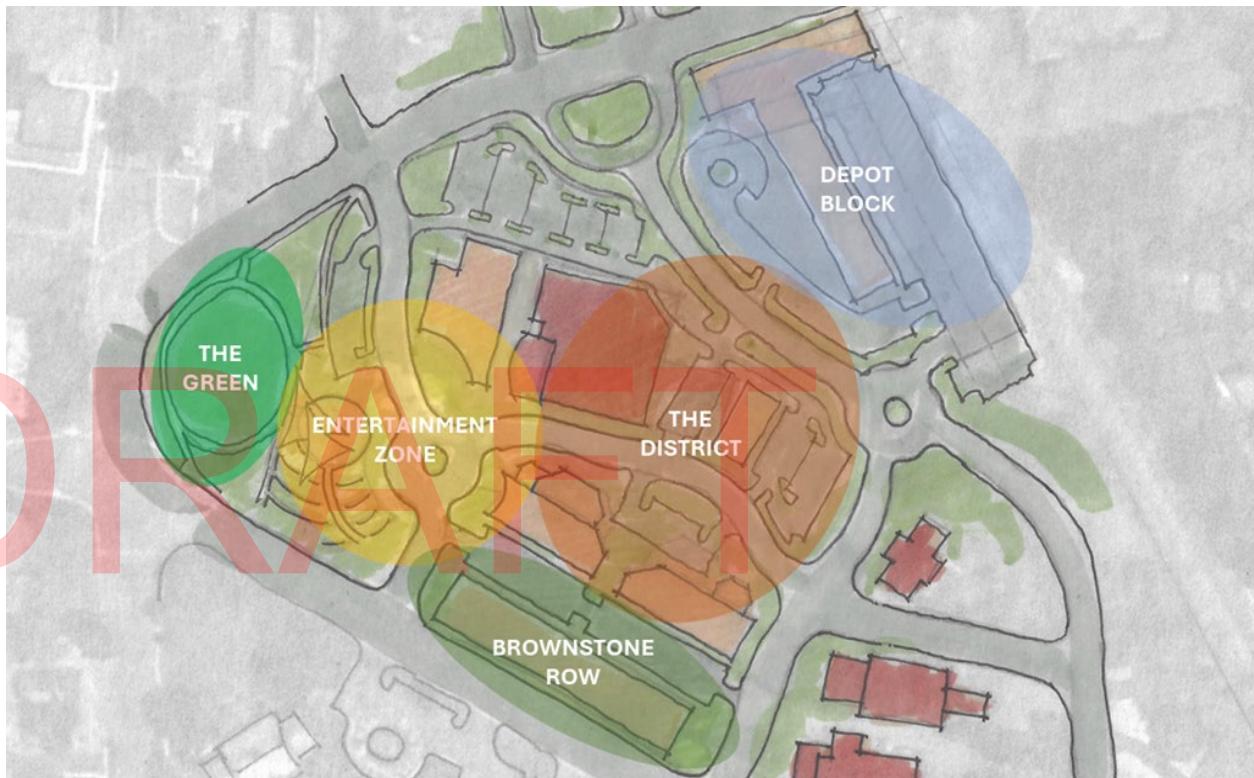
Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Early Conceptualization

The general concept was to leverage the Town Green as an asset and anchor to the redevelopment area, creating an entertainment zone linking the Town Green to retail (The District) and residential (the experience economy) and providing a critical mass of residential units on site to support the commercial space utilization.

While the conceptual integration worked in the early design (and still works in the final design) the configuration of the site was starved for parking and disconnected from Park Avenue. This resulted in a series of four additional redesigns and financial feasibility calculations to create a plausible design that has merit and could be shopped to the development community.



THE GREEN: The existing Green enhanced and reinforced

ENTERTAINMENT ZONE: Outdoor performance stage with amphitheater, surrounded by cafes & rooftop al-fresco

BROWNSTONE ROW: "Sesame Street" style brownstone stoops and townhouse facades (1 story glazing for 2)

THE DISTRICT: Retail, services, cafés, offices

DEPOT BLOCK: Heirloom Flats-esque housing with a parking lot (or possible deck) behind

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Town Green

Throughout the public engagement and outreach process, one of the strongest and most commonly referenced themes was the importance and value of the Town Green to the community and civic life. The residents of the Town Center and the community as a whole emphasized their affinity for the Town Green and the various events hosted at the Town Green.

As an amenity and as a placemaking opportunity, the Town Green became a focal point of the Municipal Development Project Area. Three key findings were that the Town Green **must** be well designed, actively programmed with concerts and events, and expanded to better meet the demands and needs of the community. The images to the right are a sample of images used in the planning process to discuss the importance of a well-designed, inviting, and active Town Green that is the central gathering place of the community. Incorporating the Town Green into the Municipal Development Project Area and Plan as a placemaking amenity that anchors and integrates with the redevelopment would be key to its future success. The community, Town Center residents, and future residents of the Town Center (including, the redevelopment), require a public gathering space—a space that will drive activity and vibrancy in the newly created commercial core of the Town Center. To accomplish this, the Town Green would need to be expanded and integrated into the redevelopment site.



Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

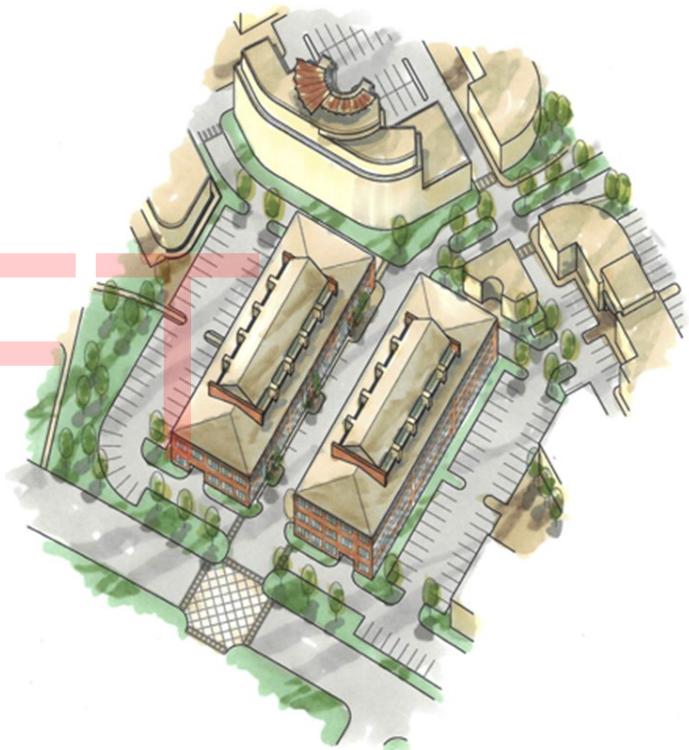
Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Development Density and Intensity

A critical factor in creating a market-feasible, functional, and financially feasible redevelopment of the Municipal Development Project Area is to determine the density and intensity of development—including the design size and massing—that can be accomplished on the redevelopment site. Not only will the site need to accommodate the commercial and residential buildings, but it will also need to accommodate adequate parking to service the commercial, residential, and public use associated with the Town Green.

Evidenced by the high vacancy of commercial space in the Wintonbury Mall, the market research analysis found that the Mall and Town Center are oversupplied with commercial retail space. Therefore, an objective of the redesign was to reduce or right-size the commercial space. Today, the Municipal Development Project Area has a total of 117,537 square feet of commercial space—of which 104,537 SF is the Wintonbury Mall. The need to reduce commercial space by approximately 45% was also balanced and tested against the need to maintain and provide a critical mass of commercial space that could still draw consumers to the site. As a result, it has been determined that 65,000 square feet of commercial space is likely ideal for the site, but as much as 85,000 square feet could be accommodated, and 50,000 square feet is the lower threshold of a minimum amount of square footage to maintain a critical mass of commercial activity.

Various designs and densities of residential development were also explored and tested on the site. It is estimated that the site could yield between 195 and 260 residential units across two locations. The first location is the expanded Depot Lot with between 120 and 160 units, depending on a 3- or 5-story building design. The second location (shown in the image on the right) is townhouses on Park Avenue that provide a gateway into the commercial development.



Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Development Density and Intensity

A critical factor in determining how much commercial and residential space can be accommodated on the site (the Municipal Development Project Area) is the parking required to support commercial, residential, and public uses. In addition to the total parking needed to support the uses, the location and distribution of parking across the development is also critical—making sure that there is adequate parking to support each building, business, residential unit, and public use of the Town Green.

The distribution of parking has been one of the most challenging design elements and has played a key role in the multiple redesigns of the Municipal Development Project Area. It has also required the creation of a **one-story parking deck**, containing approximately 300 parking spaces, half as surface spaces below the deck and half as structured spaces on the deck. The parking deck is pictured (at right) behind the **Depot Lot** residential building. It is conceptualized with direct access to the second floor of the apartment building and would be used primarily for resident parking, with some public use.

Additional structure parking for up to 150 spaces below the Brownstone apartment on Park Avenue would be provided. This will provide dedicated and secure parking for the Brownstone residents. The remainder of parking, approximately 365 surface spaces, is distributed across the redevelopment site and clustered around the commercial buildings, including approximately 50 spaces adjacent to the Town Green.

Based on typical parking industry and zoning parking requirements we assume 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet of commercial space and 1.5 spaces per residential unit. That equals 260 commercial spaces and between 293 and 390 residential spaces, for a total of 553 to 650 parking spaces. The final conceptual plan for the Municipal Development Project (shown on the next page) includes 815 parking spaces, more than enough to support the commercial, residential, and public uses conceptualized in the plan. In addition, designs with up to 899 parking spaces have been texted.



Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Conceptual Plan

The Municipal Development Project Plan (right) conceptualizes the redevelopment of the seven parcels (including the Town Green) into an approximately 13.5-acre site (approximately 1.68 acres are the public right of ways for Jerome Avenue and Wintonbury Avenue that are included in the redevelopment). The redevelopment will require the public acquisition of six parcels and 117,540 square feet of commercial space—and the subsequent demolition of that commercial space.

The proposed Municipal Development Project conceptualizes approximately 65,000 square feet of **modern commercial space** for retail, service, and office uses in approximately 11 buildings, some of which will be two stories. The proposed Project also conceptualizes between 195 and 260 residential apartment units (230 units for financial feasibility purposes) at two locations and across three buildings.

The proposed Project also includes public space (public use) in the form of an expanded Town Green as an amenity space and placemaking anchor to the redevelopment. Today, the Green is 0.30 acres and as proposed, the expanded Town Green will be approximately 1.50 acres.

The conceptual plan is designed with a total of 815 parking spaces, 300 of which are associated with the parking deck on the Depot Lot, 150 under the Brownstone apartments on Park Avenue, and 365 surface spaces distributed across the site for commercial and public use.

Municipal Development Project – Conceptual Plan



Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Municipal Development Project – Financial Plan

The table below provides a summary of the financial feasibility and financial plan for the Municipal Development Project Area Plan. The financial feasibility and plan assumes 65,000 square feet of commercial space, 230 residential units, and all the associated on- and off-site infrastructure and parking improvements. The construction costs also include tenant fit-out. The financial plan assumes a Total Development Cost of \$111,587,979 for the Municipal Development Project Plan and a Stabilized Valuation of \$85,281,979. The financial gap between the Total Development Cost and Stabilized Valuation identifies why the private market likely will not be able to accomplish this project or address the functional obsolescence of the Wintonbury Mall—the projected cost of redevelopment exceeds the value of the final development. In addition, with an estimated Project IRR of 5.49%, the redevelopment project would likely not secure the required debt or equity financing. Therefore, public intervention and public participation is likely required.

For this financial model, public participation is assumed in the form of Tax Increment Financing, municipal bonding, and possible intergovernmental funding sources. As presented below, the public equity sources are assumed for the land acquisition, site costs, and infrastructure costs. The land acquisition costs are based on the Town Appraised Value at 125% of market value, as required by Chapter 130 and Chapter 132 for municipal development projects that use eminent domain. While we are unsure if eminent domain will be required, it is assumed for general planning purposes.

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.	

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

Residential	230 Units
Commercial	65K SF

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

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

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The preliminary calculation for taxes and taxes available for TIF funds are provided in the table below. Based on the current market (\$10,548,600) and assessed value (\$7,384,020) of the six parcels in the Municipal Development Project Area, the current real property taxes paid are approximately \$271,584. As conceptualized in the prior pages, the Conceptual Plan for the Municipal Development Project Area is projected to have a future market value of \$85,281,979 and an Assessed Value of \$59,697,385. That means the conceptual development, once completed will pay approximately \$2,195,669 in real property taxes, or \$1,924,085 more than the current taxes. That results in approximately \$1,603,404 in real property taxes per year available for TIF or between approximately \$17,921,387 and \$22,049,734 over 20 years available for TIF, depending on bonding type and interest rates. Additional tax value could be captured from Town Center TIF District.

Existing TIF District		TIF Assessment	
Current Market Value of all Real Estate within TIF District		\$10,548,600.00	
Assessment (70% of Value)	70%	\$7,384,020.00	
New Project			
Projected Market Value of all Real Estate within New Project		\$85,281,979.14	
Assesment (70% of Value)	70%	\$59,697,385.40	
Real Estate Taxes			
Current Real Estate Taxes	36.78	\$271,584.26	
New Project Real Estate Taxes	36.78	\$2,195,669.83	
Net Increase in Real Estate Taxes			\$1,924,085.58
Real Estate Taxes Available for Debt Service	1.20	\$1,603,404.65	
Net Increase in Real Estate Taxes after Debt Service			\$320,680.93
Other Property Taxes			
Property Taxes - Personal Property (est. as % of Real Estate Taxes)	4.50%	\$86,583.85	
Property Taxes - Motor Vehicle (est. as % of Real Estate Taxes)	8.50%	\$163,547.27	
Total Net Increase in Property Taxes after Debt Service			\$570,812.06
Bonding Capacity Estimates			
Note: Assumes 20 year amortization, self liquidating bonds			
Real Estate Taxes Available for Debt Service	4.0%	\$1,603,404.65	
General Obligation Bond Amount (amount which can be serviced at interest rates shown)	4.0%	\$22,049,734.56	
Senior Revenue Bond Amount (amount which can be serviced at interest rates shown)	6.50%	\$17,921,387.96	

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Administrative Plan:

The purpose of the Administrative Plan is to establish the Town Center Economic Development Commission's policies for carrying out the Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project Area Plan. The Administrative Plan is based on the statutory requirements of Chapter 132 and is as follows:

Adoption – Development Project Plan: In accordance with CGS Section 8-191, "Before the development agency adopts a plan for a development project,

- the planning commission of the municipality shall find that the plan is in accord with the plan of development for the municipality; and
- 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
- 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 website of the development agency, if any.
- 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.

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 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.]

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

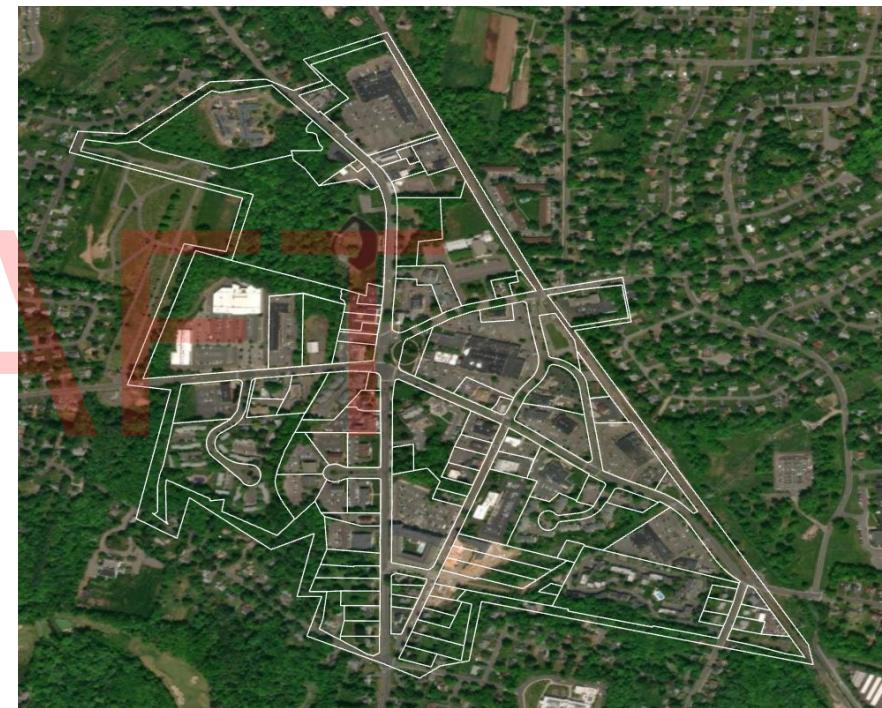
Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

- **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 an injunction if the court finds that the development agency or municipality failed to comply with the requirements of this chapter.

Town Center Parcel Map



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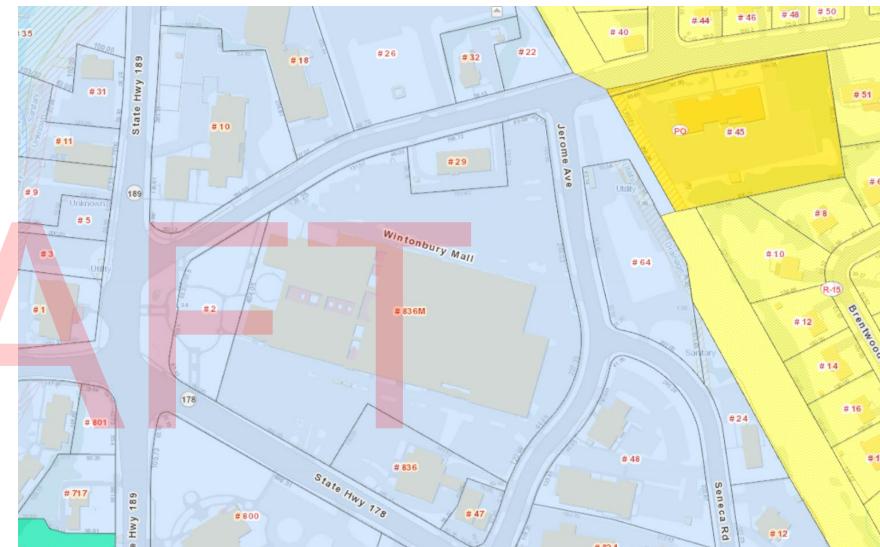
Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Town Center Zoning

The parcels within the Municipal Development Project Area (2 Tunxis Avenue, 29 Wintonbury Avenue, 836M Park Avenue, 836 Park Avenue, 47 Jerome Avenue, and 64 Jerome Avenue) are located entirely within the Bloomfield Center Zoning District (BCD), whose boundaries coincide with the Bloomfield Town Center Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District and the Town Center Economic Development Strategy study area. The properties to the north, west, and south of the subject area are all located within the same BCD Zone. One property, 45 Wintonbury Avenue, which abuts the Plan area, is zoned Professional Office District. Several properties to the east of the project area are within the R-15 Residential Zone. These residential parcels are separated from the project area by a railroad track/right-of-way. No rezoning is proposed as part of this Plan, however, text amendments to the zoning district are recommended. These text amendments would review and revise the approval processes for uses within the BCD Zone, with a focus on reducing the number of uses that require a Special Permit/public hearing.

No subdivisions are contemplated or proposed within the Municipal Development Plan. While several lots may be merged and combined, it is unnecessary to divide any lots or create any additional lots.

Municipal Development Project Area Zoning Map



Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Consistency with the Municipal Plan of Conservation and Development

The 2012 Bloomfield Plan of Conservation and Development, which remains in effect as of this writing, features an entire chapter declaring that the Bloomfield Town Center is a targeted area for growth and redevelopment (Chapter 4, beginning on page 49). The POCD notes that the “Bloomfield Town Center of the future will be the location where people choose to live, work, and play.” A major area of focus is noted as the redevelopment of Wintonbury Mall (page 52), stating that it is “perhaps the most important privately-owned property in the center, because of its proximity to the Green and community facilities.” This Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project Plan is intended to assist Bloomfield with accomplishing its goal of the redevelopment of the Center, and Wintonbury Mall.

The 2012 Bloomfield POCD provides a vision for the future of the Town Center and Wintonbury Mall, which is embodied in this Municipal Development Project Area Plan. The POCD notes that the future should include multi-story buildings closer to the road, which creates an enhanced sense of place and provides opportunities for residential density and improved commercial spaces. It notes that outdoor dining should be encouraged and that pedestrian access will be key to the success of the site in the future. These ideas directly informed the Municipal Development Project Plan, which includes multi-story residential buildings both along Park Avenue and within the central area of the proposed development, with the center area also including commercial and dining spaces with outdoor dining and specifically rooftop dining opportunities. The pedestrian accessibility of the Town Center area will also be greatly improved by the realization of this Plan.

Diversity...



Amenities...



Aesthetics...



Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Chapter 5 of the 2012 Bloomfield POCD, titled Business and Economic Development, discusses the importance of attracting a diversity of businesses to the Town of Bloomfield while ensuring that residents and visitors have more than adequate reason to spend their disposable income in the Town. This proposed redevelopment, by enhancing the Center with new businesses and amenities, new residential spaces, and a vastly improved sense of place, will help not only to attract new businesses to Bloomfield, but also give residents pride of place and encourage them to spend a greater amount of their resources (including both time and money), within the Town. In these ways, the 2012 POCD is well-represented within this Municipal Development Plan.

The 2012 POCD sparked the creation of the 2013 Bloomfield Town Center Plan, which adopted and expanded upon the ideas within the 2012 POCD. The Town Center Plan continues to note the importance of long-term redevelopment of the Town Center (page 24), which includes some design elements for potential redevelopment. The design elements noted, including ground floor retail below residential units, and buildings closer to the street, inspired this Municipal Development Project Plan.

In 2020, the Town of Bloomfield adopted its Tax Increment Financing Master Plan (which was most recently revised in 2021). The TIF Plan includes the creation of three districts, one of which is the Town Center. The TIF Plan, too, discusses the importance of the redevelopment of the Wintonbury Mall property, and addresses it bluntly: "Wintonbury Mall is the greatest challenge in Bloomfield Town Center. With a long history of deferred maintenance, disinvestment, and vacancy, Wintonbury Mall further undermines market confidence and the potential for meaningful

new investment." The TIF Plan discusses, in detail, the need for reinvestment at Wintonbury Mall for the Center as a whole to achieve its potential.

Prior Conceptual Design for Wintonbury Mall Site



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Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

The Town of Bloomfield is currently in the final stages of preparing its new Plan of Conservation and Development. The draft version of 2025 POCD, which is currently being reviewed by the Town Plan and Zoning Commission, also has an intense focus on the redevelopment of the Bloomfield Town Center. The Community Vision prepared for the updated POCD states that residents and visitors should be able to “cherish a lively town center with diverse retail, recreation, and entertainment options,” however it notes that “Bloomfield Center’s business environment needs investment; vacant shopping centers and struggling businesses are a concern.” This draft POCD notes the creation of the Town Center Master Plan, which was the genesis of this Municipal Development Project Plan. Strategy 5 within the draft POCD is to “continue to invest in Bloomfield Center and facilitate the redevelopment of properties and development of mixed-use commercial and residential projects,” while also “fully supporting the Bloomfield Center Plan, which is anticipated to be completed in 2025.”

This Municipal Development Project Area Plan is the result of over a decade of planning that notes the redevelopment of the Town Center, particularly as it relates to the Wintonbury Mall and neighboring sites. This Plan fully embraces the concepts of the 2012 and draft 2025 POCD, as well as the Town Center Plan and the Tax Increment Financing Master Plan. The Municipal Development Project Plan seeks to put into action the redevelopment that has been sought in the Bloomfield Town Center for years.

2013 Town Center Plan – A Redeveloped Wintonbury Mall



Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Consistency with the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development

The overarching goal of this Municipal Development Project Area Plan is to create a vibrant, economically successful, and municipally beneficial development on sites that are currently functionally obsolescent and underutilized. When fully realized, the development would contain a mix of uses including enhanced civic (public) spaces, new residential units, and a retail and entertainment environment that is designed to succeed. This outcome is directly in keeping with the 2024 Capitol Region Council of Governments Plan of Conservation and Development (CRCOG POCD).

The CRCOG POCD notes that a primary goal is to “*Reimagine underutilized commercial districts as vibrant destinations*,” with a strategy of “adaptively reus[ing] vacant or underutilized commercial spaces (page 141).” Indeed, CRCOG lists the “number of malls or commercial plazas redeveloped” as a potential metric to measure progress toward this goal. The Wintonbury Mall site and the surrounding properties have enormous potential for economic success. However, they have fallen into a pattern of high vacancy rates, low standards of property maintenance, and in general, an outdated appearance and layout which results in low utilization by the community—functional obsolescence. The adaptive redevelopment of these properties into a mixed-use center district, directly at the heart of the Town of Bloomfield, is directly in line with the vision of the CRCOG POCD and will result in a “vibrant destination” as imagined by that document.

The CRCOG POCD also notes that the region should “Capitalize on placemaking” (page 147). As part of that strategy, an action item is noted

as “support[ing] cultural and artist community spaces.” Throughout the process of creating this Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project Area Plan, it has become readily apparent that the Bloomfield Town Green, directly adjacent to Wintonbury Mall, is a community treasure. Residents enjoy the events held on the green, including a summer concert series, festivals, and vendor fairs. However, the Green is small for the events being held, has little to no infrastructure to facilitate the events, and is under-programmed based on the demand of the community. The redevelopment envisioned in this plan will expand the Green onto the property of Wintonbury Mall, provide staging and infrastructure for events, and critically, provide new commercial and entertainment spaces fronting the Green, where community members can enjoy performances and ensure that the Green is used to its fullest potential. In this way, the CRCOG POCD goal of the enhancement of community spaces and emphasis on placemaking will be met.

Chapter 9 of the CRCOG POCD is titled “Expand and Diversify the Region’s Housing Stock,” and notes that Connecticut lags behind the nation in housing construction (page 237). The Bloomfield Town Center has been fortunate with the number of housing developments that have occurred in recent years, however, demand remains high. The Wintonbury Mall site and Municipal Development Project Area are vastly underutilized for a location so central to the Town and currently contain no housing units. The redevelopment proposed in this plan would include hundreds of units of new housing, which would not only diversify the housing stock of the region (which is a goal of the CRCOG POCD) but would lend additional critical mass to Bloomfield Center to ensure that new commercial developments have a greater chance of success.

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Consistency with the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development

The redevelopment would be a true mix of uses, providing on-site amenities to the residents of the new apartment and townhouse units, creating an environment that is relatively uncommon throughout the region and the State of Connecticut as a whole.

Finally, the CRCOG POCD includes Municipal Focus Areas as part of Appendix C. The Plan notes that “Bloomfield Town Center is a major area of focus in Bloomfield. Numerous new apartment buildings have been constructed in the town center area, giving a critical mass of residents, however commercial and entertainment development has not developed as quickly...The Town would like to see a walkable, economically vibrant town center which is a draw for residents of Bloomfield and neighboring communities.” Execution of this Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project Area Plan will assist in accomplishing this critical goal of enhancing existing commercial spaces while also providing opportunities for additional commercial investment, which will result in a town center poised for future success and longevity.

Consistency with the State Plan of Conservation and Development

The currently active State of Connecticut Plan of Conservation and Development (*Conservation and Development Policies: The Plan for Connecticut 2018-2023*) focuses on six Growth Management Principles, several of which directly pertain to this Municipal Development Project Area Plan. Growth Management Principle #1, “Redevelop and Revitalize Regional Centers and Areas with Existing or Currently Planned Physical

Infrastructure,” directly relates to this Municipal Development Project Area Plan through several of the included policies. State Agency Policy 1.2 notes that the State should “Focus on infill development and redevelopment opportunities in areas with existing infrastructure, such as in cities or town centers, which are at an appropriate scale and density for the particular area.” The Municipal Development Project Area Plan for Bloomfield features full access to infrastructure, including utilities, state and local roadways, and bus lines, and is designed to be in harmony with the scale and density of the Town Center as a whole. Policy 1.10 “Encourage[s] local zoning that allows for a mix of uses “as-of-right” to create vibrant central places where residents can live, work, and meet their daily needs without having to rely on automobiles as the sole means of transport.” This too is accomplished in this Plan, by ensuring Bloomfield residents have access to residential options, employment opportunities, and critical ‘third places’ where residents can congregate and enjoy entertainment amenities.

Growth Management Principle #2, “Expand Housing Opportunities and Design Choices to Accommodate a Variety of Household Types and Needs,” also corresponds directly with this Municipal Development Project Area Plan. By incorporating a variety of housing types, including townhomes and apartment living, both as part of a true mixed-use development with commercial, entertainment, and civic opportunities on-site, Policy 2.1, “Enhance housing mobility and choice across income levels and promote vibrant, mixed-income neighborhoods through both ownership and rental opportunities” is embodied in this Municipal Development Project Area Plan. Housing opportunities and options will increase in Bloomfield while providing a critical mass of residents to support commercial development within the Town Center.

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

The draft 2025-2030 Connecticut Conservation and Development Policies Plan in many ways mirrors the goals of the 2018-2023 Plan. The draft notes that a thriving economy is a primary goal and lists “Encouraging development and redevelopment in areas with accessible and adequate transportation, sewer, and water infrastructure, and minimal flood or other natural hazards” as the first target. This Municipal Development Project Area Plan allows for the growth and enhancement of a municipal center in an area that is already well-served by infrastructure and has no floor or natural hazard concerns.

The second major goal of the draft is to create housing for current and future residents of Connecticut. A housing target is listed as “Increasing and diversifying Connecticut’s supply of rental and ownership, affordable and market-rate, and small and family-size housing units in a variety of medium- and high-density patterns.” The Bloomfield Municipal Development Plan will help the State of Connecticut to achieve this target by adding additional housing units of various types to a mixed-use development. This will expand housing opportunities for current residents of the Town, but also for future residents of the State.

The Bloomfield Municipal Development Project Area Plan will help the State of Connecticut achieve the goal of expanding and enhancing the economy and providing additional housing opportunities. The Town will be able to experience economic growth with the addition of new commercial and entertainment spaces, which will be enjoyed by local and regional residents. Housing shortages will be reduced through the addition of a variety of types of housing in Bloomfield Center. In these ways, the Municipal Development Project Area Plan is directly in keeping with the goals and visions of the Connecticut Conservation and Development Policies Plans.



Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Property Acquisition

While the intent of this Municipal Development Project Area Plan is for the Town of Bloomfield to intervene in the failed market that cannot solve the problems of stagnation, deferred maintenance, deteriorated conditions, and functional obsolescence, it is not the aim of this plan to simple utilize eminent domain to acquire the six parcels in the Municipal Development Plan Area. However, this Plan does recognize that eminent domain is a valuable and powerful tool for government intervention, where the acquisition of property cannot be agreed upon through a fair market transaction. Therefore, the use of eminent domain is conceptualized as the last resort.

The aim of this Plan for property acquisition is for the Town of Bloomfield, through the powers invested in the Town Center Economic Development Commission (the Development Authority under Chapter 132), to make fair market value offers to each of the six parcel/property owners in the Municipal Development Project Area. Recognizing the requirements of C.G.S. Chapter 130, Section 8-129 which states, "The amount of compensation for such real property shall be equal to the average of the amounts determined by the two independent appraisals, except that the compensation for any real property to be acquired by eminent domain pursuant to section 8-193 ... shall be one hundred twenty-five percent of such average amount", the Town of Bloomfield is prepared to offer 125% of fair market value based on the appraisals for each of the six parcels.

As required by statutory law, C.G.S. Section 8-129 and 8-193, the Town of Bloomfield will seek two appraisals for each of the six properties in the

Municipal Development Plan Area to determine fair market value and 125% of fair market value. Once determined formal offers will be made to the property owners of each of the parcels. If the 125% fair market offer is not accepted by one or more of the property owners, and a fair market transaction cannot be agreed on, then the Town Center Economic Development Committee and Town Council will explore their options to exercise the Chapter 132 powers of eminent domain.

No determination of fair market value or 125% fair market value has or can be made until the appraisals are received for each respective parcel. Therefore, the Bloomfield Town Assessor's Appraised Value was used in the financial plan above, for general planning purposes, and increased to 125% of appraised value to represent fair market value. Therefore, the financial plans are subject to change and will be updated, as needed.

If eminent domain is used, the Town Center Economic Development Commission and Town Council will follow the statutory procedure contained in Chapter 132. As part of the eminent domain proceedings, the financial plans will be updated and more detailed financial plans, including an operating pro forma for the proposed conceptual development.

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

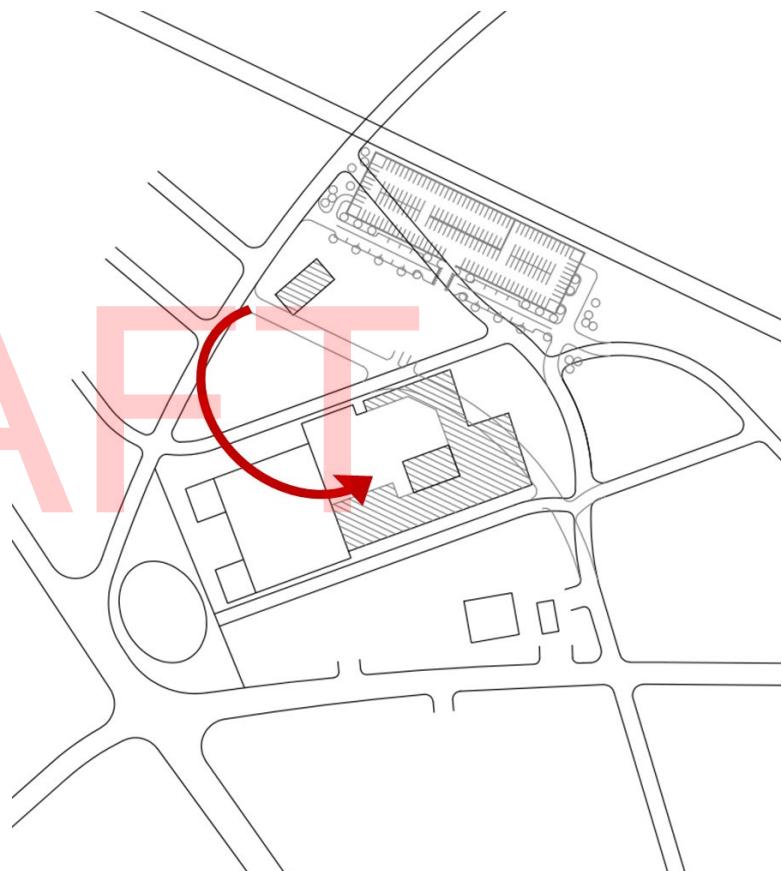
Project Area Occupant Relocation Plan

The Municipal Development Project Area is occupied by approximately two dozen businesses, the majority of which are in the Wintonbury Mall property. The Town of Bloomfield recognizes and accepts that when it acquires the properties and prepares to move forward with redevelopment, it will need to assist the existing tenants of these properties with relocation. Therefore, this Relocation Plan is aimed at demonstrating that due consideration has been given to the potential for business interruption and the need for business relocation. Therefore, the relocation plan is conceptualized as part of a Construction Phasing Plan. Since the Wintonbury Mall building is approximately 117,000 square feet with approximately 60,000 square feet that are vacant, it is likely possible to retain most of the businesses/tenants on-site through the construction phases and as tenants of the new commercial space.

Phase 1 – Public Infrastructure:

The first phase of construction will focus on public infrastructure, the relocation of Jerome Avenue, and the construction of the parking deck on the Depot Lot. No tenants need to be relocated from the Depot Lot (64 Jerome Avenue). However, this phase will require the demolition of the package store (29 Wintonbury Ave.) and partial demolition of the Mall. The Package Store offered and aided in relocating into the east wing of the Mall. Businesses in the portions of the Mall to be demolished will also be aided in relocating within the Mall or assisted with modifications to their existing space to accommodate the partial demolition.

Phase 1 Construction and Relocation



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Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Phase 2 – Depot Lot Apartments

The second phase of construction will be the Depot Lot apartments and associated parking.

During Phases 1 through 6, the bank at 836 Park Avenue can remain, as can the gas station at 47 Jerome Avenue.

Where possible, the existing parking lot pavement on the Wintonbury Mall site will remain throughout the early construction phases to ensure parking is available for the businesses.

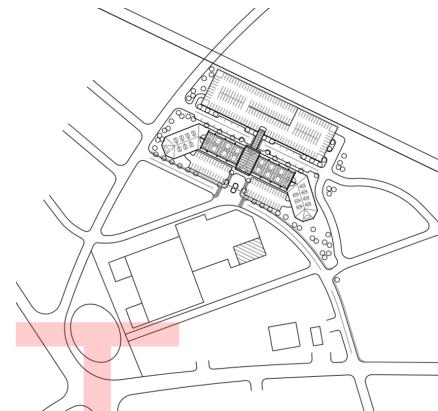
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Phase 3 – Town Green Expansion

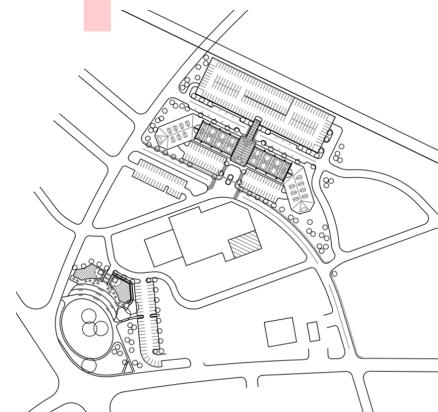
The third phase of construction will be the expansion of the Town Green with the amphitheater and the construction of the two commercial buildings fronting the Green and two parking lots. This will require the relocation of tenants in the west wing of the Mall to the east wing to accommodate the demolition of the east wing of the Mall. Upon completion, two restaurant tenants from the Mall could be relocated to the new commercial building overlooking the Town Green.

Depending on existing space and tenant relocation, one or more of the commercial buildings may need to be added to Phase Three to accommodate tenant relocations.

Phase 2 Depot Lot Apartments



Phase 3 Town Green Expansion



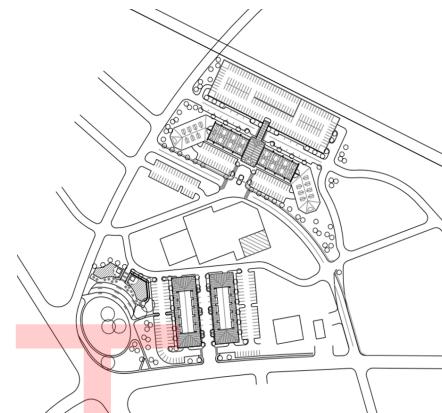
Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

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Phase 4 – Townhouse Apartments:

The fourth phase of construction will be the Townhouse Apartment and associated parking.

Phase 4 Townhouse Apartments



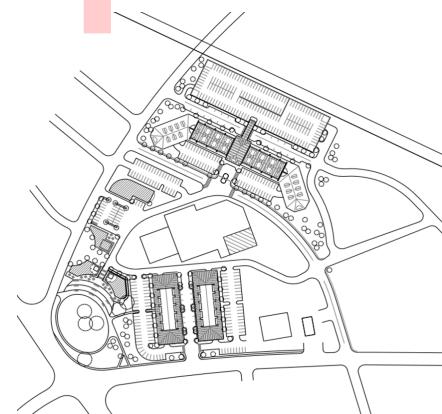
Phase 5 – Commercial Buildings:

The fifth phase of construction will be additional commercial buildings with associated parking.

Realignment of roads to connect with remaining 'ring road'.

As mentioned in the Phase 3 narrative, one or both, of these commercial buildings may not be constructed as part of Phase 3.

Phase 5 Commercial Building & Parking



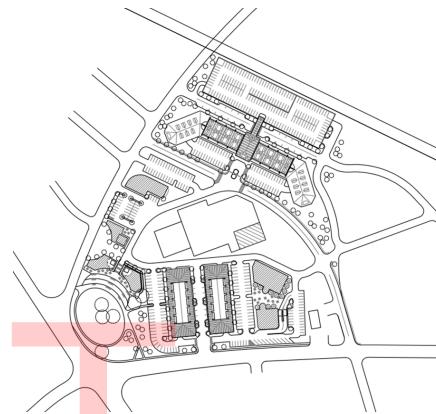
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Phase 6 – Commercial Buildings on Park Avenue:

The sixth phase of construction will be additional commercial buildings with associated parking on Park Avenue. The bank will need to be relocated during this time to the remaining Mall building or one of the commercial buildings from Phase 5. The existing bank building (836 Park Avenue) will be demolished, and two new commercial buildings will be constructed with associated parking. Once completed, the bank can be relocated to this location, if they desire.

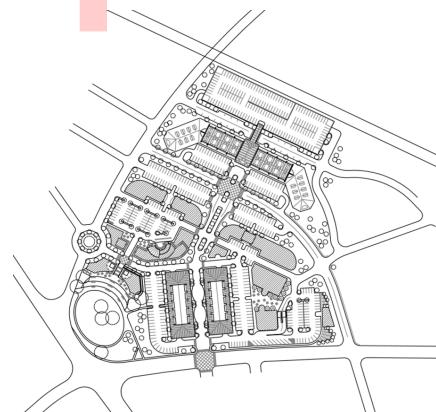
Phase 6 Commercial Building & Parking



Phase 7 – Wintonbury Demolition & Commercial Buildings:

The seventh phase of construction will include the demolition of the remaining portion of the Wintonbury Mall building and the construction of the final commercial buildings with associated parking. At or by this time, the gas station will need to be relocated.

Phase 7 Commercial Building & Parking



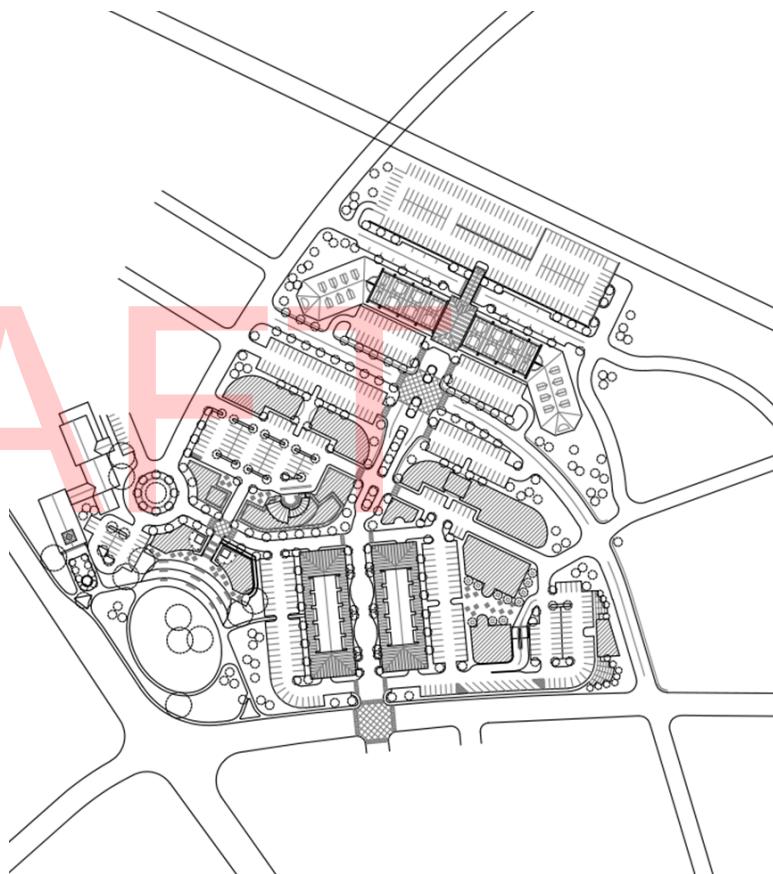
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Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Phase 8 – Closure of Wintonbury Avenue & Town Green

The eighth and final phase of construction will include the closure of Wintonbury Avenue at Tunxis. This includes the final improvements to the north-end expansion of Town Green with shared parking for the amphitheater and church. This includes improvements in front of the church and a “memorial” or rose garden at their entrance, the Town Green (including the amphitheater hardscape) would total approximately 1.5 acres—up from the existing Town Green of 0.30 acres.

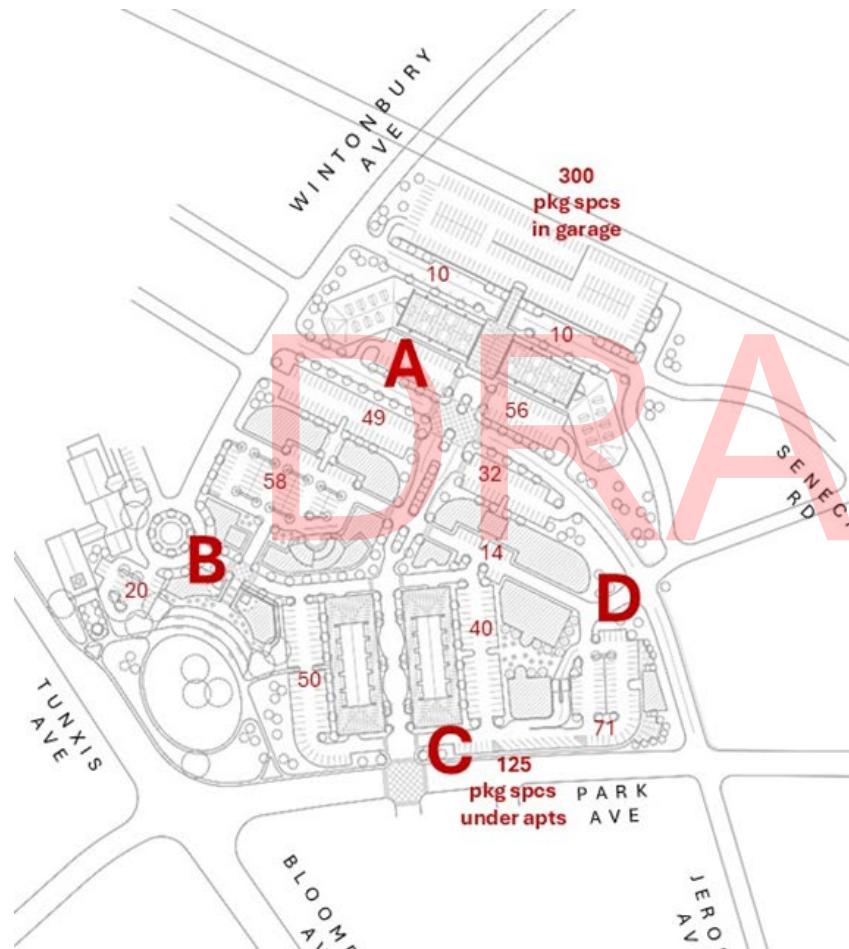
Phase 8 Close Road & Town Green



Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Municipal Development Project Plan Summary Details



A DEPOT BLOCK

120-160 units

B COMMERCIAL ON THE GREEN

(2 buildings)

Approximately 6,000 to 7,500sf total

C BROWNSTONE ROW

(2 buildings)

75 to 100 units

D BALANCE OF RETAIL

(9 buildings, some 2-story)

Approximately 65,000 to 75,000sf total

PARKING

300 at Depot Block garage

125 under Brownstone Row

400-plus surface parking spaces

825 approx total parking spaces

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Municipal Development Project Plan Rendering



Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Economic Impact

The aim of the economic impact assessment is to provide policymakers with a reasonable estimate of the overall economic impact of the proposed improvements as part of the Municipal Development Project Area Plan and other improvements in the Town Center. To accomplish this, for construction jobs related to the estimated \$23,000,000 in public infrastructure upgrades in the Town Center and the Master Development Project Area, we utilized economic development research studies and industry sources to develop multipliers, allowing Goman+York to estimate job creation. For job creation related to housing unit construction, Goman+York utilizes housing economic impact numbers from the National Association of Home Builders. For commercial construction and space, we utilize industry standards of employees per square foot to project the permanent job creation.

Permanent Jobs

To calculate the permanent jobs created for the 230 residential housing units, an NAHB study that found 100 newly constructed apartments create and sustain approximately 50 jobs in year two (and beyond). These jobs include facilities management and maintenance (e.g., landscaping, HVAC service, etc.) and the spillover of consumer spending into surrounding businesses from the new residents—that consumer spending creates (and/or sustains) jobs in the community. The NAHB findings when applied to the 230 proposed housing units estimate that 115 jobs will be created in the local community and region.

For the 65,000 square feet of commercial retail, restaurant, and office space, we assume 25,000 square feet of restaurants, 20,000 square feet

of service-oriented office, and 20,000 square feet of retail space. For the restaurants, we assume one employee per 200 square feet, for a total of 125 jobs created or sustained. For retail, we assume one employee per 400 square feet, for a total of 50 jobs created or sustained. For the service-oriented office, we assume one employee per 600 square feet, for a total of 33 jobs created or sustained. Combined the residential and commercial space job creation totals approximately 323 permanent jobs created or sustained

Table 2. Impacts on Government Revenue

Total government revenue generated	Per New Single-family Home:	Per New Multi-family Rental Unit:	Per \$100,000 Spent on Remodeling:
Federal			
Income taxes	\$86,759	\$37,363	\$21,796
Government social insurance*	\$44,081	\$18,928	\$10,931
Excise taxes and customs duties	\$41,270	\$17,849	\$10,512
	\$1,408	\$586	\$353
State and local			
Income taxes	\$42,888	\$18,546	\$8,001
Permit, hook-up, impact, etc. fees	\$12,444	\$5,344	\$3,086
Sales taxes	\$15,805	\$7,108	\$1,250
Other business taxes & license fees	\$5,458	\$2,272	\$1,367
	\$9,181	\$3,823	\$2,299

Source: NAHB estimates, as described in the text and appendix.

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Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Construction Jobs

To calculate the jobs created by the construction for public infrastructure improvements in both the Town Center (Economic Development Strategy) and as part of the Municipal Development Project Area Plan, we start by using a labor hour and construction cost multiplier to provide an estimate based on our experience. Per our estimates, the public infrastructure improvement costs are approximately \$22,000,000. The calculation, total construction costs of $\$22,000,000 \times 2.2$ (labor hour multiplier) = $\$48,400,000 / \$1,000$ (per \$1,000 of construction cost) = $48,400 \text{ hours} / 2,000$ (1-year full-time employment hours) = 24 full-time equivalent (FTE) construction jobs to be created and/or sustained during the construction period of infrastructure improvements. That said, it should be understood that many more construction workers will be employed to work on these public improvements, but the actual job creation will be 24 FTE construction jobs.

A 2020 report, How Home Building Can Lead a Recovery by Generating Jobs, by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), found that "building an average single-family home generates 2.90 jobs, measured in full-time equivalents" for one year and resulting in \$188,962 in wages and salaries or \$65,159 per job created. The same report shows that "building an average rental apartment generates 1.25 (full-time equivalent jobs; as well as ... \$55,909" in federal, (\$37,363) state, and local fees and taxes (\$18,546). The Municipal Development Project Area Plan, as conceptualized, is projected to generate \$2,195,669 per year in local real property taxes—as discussed above as part of the financial plan and TIF analysis.

NAHB Study Statistics

Table 1. Income/Employment Impacts of Residential Construction on the U.S. Economy

	Full Time Equivalent Jobs	Wages and Salaries	Profits Before Taxes Proprietors	Corpor- ations	Wages and Profits Combined
Per New Single-family Home:					
All industries	2.90	\$188,962	\$71,963	\$66,656	\$327,581
Construction	1.71	\$111,668	\$45,029	\$19,760	\$176,457
Manufacturing	0.36	\$22,197	\$1,955	\$18,259	\$42,411
Wholesale & retail trade, Transportation & warehousing	0.37	\$19,475	\$3,097	\$9,052	\$31,623
Finance and insurance	0.06	\$6,132	\$151	\$4,486	\$10,768
Real estate and rental and leasing	0.02	\$1,542	\$8,650	\$2,024	\$12,216
Professional, Management, Administrative services	0.21	\$16,585	\$4,711	\$3,148	\$24,445
Other	0.18	\$11,362	\$8,371	\$9,928	\$29,661
Per New Multifamily Rental Unit:					
All industries	1.25	\$80,334	\$32,189	\$29,619	\$142,141
Construction	0.75	\$48,660	\$23,685	\$10,393	\$82,739
Manufacturing	0.16	\$10,223	\$669	\$8,119	\$19,011
Wholesale & retail trade, Transportation & warehousing	0.19	\$9,671	\$1,555	\$4,403	\$15,629
Finance and insurance	0.01	\$1,583	\$43	\$1,197	\$2,822
Real estate and rental and leasing	0.01	\$516	\$1,759	\$894	\$3,169
Professional, Management, Administrative services	0.07	\$5,547	\$1,345	\$852	\$7,745
Other	0.06	\$4,135	\$3,132	\$3,761	\$11,027
Per \$100,000 Spent on Remodeling:					
All industries	0.75	\$48,212	\$17,975	\$17,215	\$83,402
Construction	0.46	\$29,975	\$12,833	\$5,631	\$48,439
Manufacturing	0.09	\$5,550	\$434	\$4,872	\$10,855
Wholesale & retail trade, Transportation & warehousing	0.10	\$5,371	\$629	\$2,432	\$8,632
Finance and insurance	0.01	\$990	\$24	\$577	\$1,591
Real estate and rental and leasing	0.00	\$308	\$759	\$602	\$1,668
Professional, Management, Administrative services	0.04	\$3,241	\$742	\$492	\$4,475
Other	0.04	\$2,779	\$2,354	\$2,610	\$7,743

Source: NAHB estimates, as described in the text and appendix.

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Municipal Development Project Area Plan – Macro Findings

As a result of the extensive demographic, socioeconomic, and market analysis, and the intensive community outreach, the planning process revealed the following findings:

- Macro and microeconomic forces beyond Bloomfield's control contributed to the decline of the Town Center and the functional obsolescence of the Wintonbury Mall.
- Decades of change in retail, demographics (household structure), consumer behavior, and the rise of other retail locations resulted in a weaker Bloomfield Town Center and functionally obsolescent Wintonbury Mall.
- Today, Bloomfield Town Center struggles to compete for commercial investment (time, energy, and money), prosperity, and vibrancy.
- The private market cannot solve the functional obsolescence of the Wintonbury Mall and Depot Lot.
- 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 is about real estate investment and (re)development. The psychology of the Town Center must be improved—pride and confidence restored—and the Town Green

must be leveraged as a community amenity and placemaking anchor to the economic development strategy and municipal development project area plan.

- Bloomfield's Town Center needs to be an amenity, a space that functions as a focal point for the community—a central gathering space that celebrates civic life.
- 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 invest in the Town Center and 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—hard and soft infrastructure.
- Investment in the private realm— incentivize private investment.
- Engage in Public-Private Partnerships.

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Municipal Development Project Area/Plan – Specific Findings

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 Project Area. 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, 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 Project Area Plan as the mechanism to engage 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.

Name	Address	PID	Year Built	Appraised \$	Assessed \$	SF	Acres
Town Green	2 TUNXIS AVE	7689	N/A	\$125,900	\$88,130	0	0.30
Bank	836 PARK AVE	7415	1971	\$1,393,500	\$975,450	6,522	0.92
Mall	836M PARK AVE	7414	1970	\$7,686,700	\$636,090	117,537	8.54
Depot Lot	64 JEROME AVE	642	N/A	\$228,900	\$160,230	0	1.33
Package Store	29 WINTONBURY AVE	6864	1956	\$474,600	\$332,220	4,770	0.51
Gas Station	47 JEROME AVE	138	1971	\$792,900	\$555,030	1,711	0.21

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Based on the aim of this Municipal Development Project Area 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 Project Area Plan:

- *Public Use – Town Green:* Expand the Town Green (aka. 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 – Economic Development:* In accordance with the intent and authority C.G.S. 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 Project Area Plan assumes (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.

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Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

- *Public Use – Economic Development:* As conceptualized, the Municipal Development Project Plan envisions the acquisition and demolition of properties in this area. More importantly, the Municipal Development Project Area Plan conceptualizes this area to be redeveloped as a mixed-use community-oriented Town Center development anchored by the Town Green. This mixed-use development is conceptualized to include approximately 65,000 square feet of commercial space and approximately 230 residential apartment units (income-producing property). Included in this Plan are infrastructure improvements that include the relocation of Jerome Avenue and the closure of Wintonbury Avenue at the intersection of Tunxis Avenue—to expand the Town Green and improve traffic flow through the Town Center. In addition, the Plan will include 815 structured and surface parking spaces for both public and private use.
- *Public Use – Economic Development:* As conceptualized, implementing the Municipal Development Project Area Plan will mitigate functional obsolescence, reduce vacancy and oversupply of commercial space, improve the design and aesthetics of the Town Center, and create a more vibrant and prosperous Town Center through improvements to the Town Green. Collectively, this stabilizes and improves the Town Center by growing pride and marking confidence, creating predictability and improvement—all of which will contribute to the economic well-being of the Town Center and forwarding the aim of economic development.





Chapter Ten: Chapter 132 Municipal Development Plan Requirements

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

C.G.S. Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project & Plan

Bloomfield's Town Center Economic Development Commission was established by the Bloomfield Town Council (legislative body) in accordance with C.G.S Chapter 130, Section 8-126 (Redevelopment Agency) as Bloomfield's Redevelopment Agency. In accordance with C.G.S. Chapter 132, Section 8-188 and the Bloomfield Town Council (legislative body), the Bloomfield Town Center Economic Development Commission is the designated Development Agency with the authorities granted under state law (Chapter 130 & Chapter 132) to engage in the creation of a Municipal Development Project and Plan. This document, the Bloomfield Town Center Master Plan, in its entirety, is the Municipal Development Project Plan for the proposed Municipal Development Project described in this chapter. This Town Center Master Plan meets the requirements of Chapter 132 for the Municipal Development Project and Plan.

The aim of this chapter is to specifically address the required items listed in C.G.S. Chapter 132, Section 8-189 (Project Plan. Approval. Notice Review.). In doing so, each item will be addressed in order as they appear in Section 8-189. Where specific items are addressed in detail in the prior chapters of this document, the answers will be in the form of summaries or references to prior sections of this document. Where the specific items have not been addressed in the prior sections of this document, detailed answers will be provided in this chapter. The statutory language of Section 8-189, (https://www.cga.ct.gov/2023/pub/chap_132.htm), is provided in its entirety below.

C.G.S. Chapter 132, Section 8-189

Sec. 8-189. Project plan. Approval. Notice. Review. (a) The development agency may initiate a development project by preparing a project plan in accordance with regulations adopted by the commissioner pursuant to section 8-198. The project plan shall meet an identified public need and include: (1) A legal description of the land within the project area; (2) a description of the present condition and uses of such land or building; (3) a description of the process utilized by the agency to prepare the plan and a description of alternative approaches considered to achieve project objectives; (4) a description of the types and locations of land uses or building uses proposed for the project area; (5) a description of the types and locations of present and proposed streets, sidewalks and sanitary, utility and other facilities and the types and locations of other proposed site improvements; (6) statements of the present and proposed zoning classification and subdivision status of the project area and the areas adjacent to the project area; (7) a plan for relocating project-area occupants; (8) a financing plan; (9) an administrative plan; (10) a marketability and proposed land-use study or building use study if required by the commissioner; (11) appraisal reports and title searches; (12) a description of the public benefits of the project including, but not limited to, (A) the number of jobs which the development agency anticipates would be created by the project; (B) the estimated property tax benefits; (C) the number and types of existing housing units in the municipality in which the project would be located, and in contiguous municipalities, which would be available to employees filling such jobs;

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Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

(D) a general description of infrastructure improvements, including public access, facilities or use, that the development agency anticipates may be needed to implement the development plan; (E) a general description of the development agency's goals for blight remediation or, if known, environmental remediation; (F) a general description of any aesthetic improvements that the development agency anticipates may be generated by the project; (G) a general description of the project's intended role in increasing or sustaining market value of land in the municipality; (H) a general description of the project's intended role in assisting residents of the municipality to improve their standard of living; and (I) a general statement of the project's role in maintaining or enhancing the competitiveness of the municipality; (13) findings that (A) the land and buildings within the project area will be used principally for industrial or business purposes; (B) the plan is in accordance with the plan of conservation and development for the municipality adopted by its planning commission under section 8-23, and the plan of development of the regional council of governments adopted under section 8-35a, if any, for the region within which the municipality is located; (C) the plan was prepared giving due consideration to the state plan of conservation and development adopted under chapter 297 and any other state-wide planning program objectives of the state or state agencies as coordinated by the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management; and (D) the project will contribute to the economic welfare of the municipality and the state; and that to carry out and administer the project, public action under this chapter is required; and (14) a preliminary statement describing the proposed process for acquiring each parcel of real property, including findings that (A) public

benefits resulting from the development plan will outweigh any private benefits; (B) existing use of the real property cannot be feasibly integrated into the overall development plan for the project; (C) acquisition by eminent domain is reasonably necessary to successfully achieve the objectives of such development plan; and (D) the development plan is not for the primary purpose of increasing local tax revenues. Any plan that has been prepared by a redevelopment agency under Chapter 130 may be submitted by the development agency to the legislative body and to the commissioner for approval in lieu of a plan initiated and prepared in accordance with this section, provided all other requirements of this chapter for obtaining the approval of the commissioner of the project plan are satisfied.

(b) (1) The approval of a development plan shall be given by the legislative body pursuant to section 8-191.

(2) The plan shall be effective for a period of ten years after the date of approval and may be amended in accordance with this section. The legislative body shall review the plan at least once every ten years after the initial approval and shall reapprove the plan or an amended plan at least once every ten years after the initial approval in accordance with this section in order for the plan or amended plan to remain in effect. With respect to a development plan for a project that is funded in whole or in part by federal funds, the provisions of this subdivision shall not apply to the extent that such provisions are prohibited by federal law.

(3) The development agency shall cause notice of the initial approval of the plan to be published in a newspaper having general circulation in the municipality.

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

C.G.S. Chapter 132, Section 8-189 Required Plan Items

(a) The development agency may initiate a development project by preparing a project plan in accordance with regulations adopted by the commissioner pursuant to section 8-198.

- This document, the Bloomfield Town Center Master, in its entirety, is the Municipal Development Project Plan for the proposed Municipal Development Project Area described in this chapter.

The project plan shall meet an identified public need and include:

(1) A legal description of the land within the project area;

- All the parcels (properties) inside of the Municipal Development Plan Boundary (on the following page) are legally identified and described on Page 130 by their Parcel ID number in the Town of Bloomfield Assessor records. All said properties are deemed to be included in, and part of, and subject to the statutory provisions of C.G.S. Chapter 132. However, at this time, the Municipal Development Project proposed and conceptualized in this document is limited to 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 from Park Avenue to Seneca Road, and then along the railroad tracks north from Seneca Road to Wintonbury Avenue to the east. The Municipal Development Project Area and parcels are shown on the parcel map.

Municipal Development Project Area



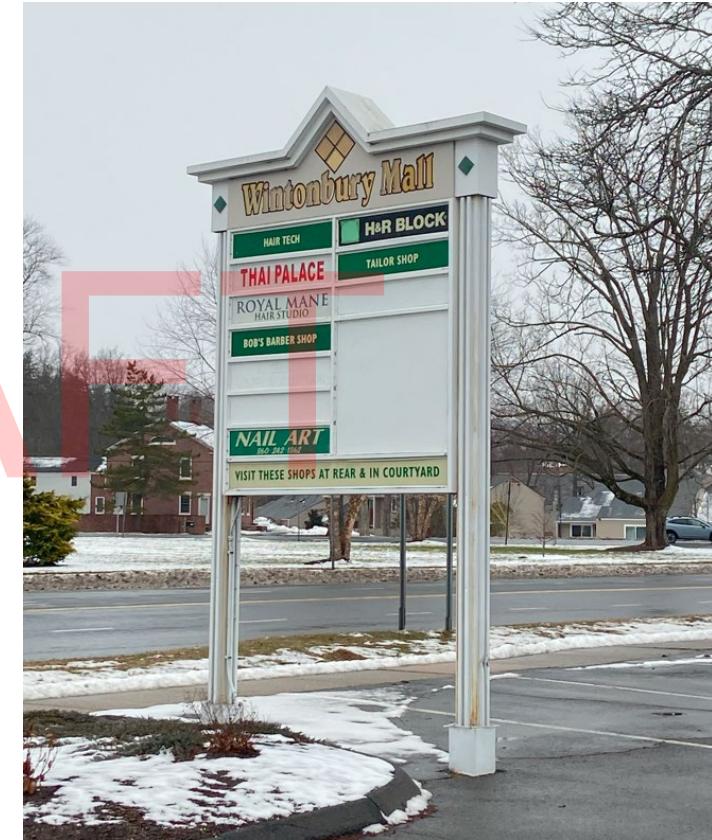
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(2) a description of the present condition and uses of such land or building;

- A Property Condition Survey was conducted of all properties in the Municipal Development Plan boundary and discussed on page 35 of this document. While the Property Condition Survey identifies a range of property conditions from "Poor" to 'Great', the Town Center's overall condition is best defined by deferred maintenance, high vacancy, deteriorated conditions, and functional obsolescence. These conditions are most notable at the *Wintonbury Mall* property (836M Park Avenue). The Wintonbury Mall is the largest building and property in the Town Center. Constructed in 1971, the property has become functionally obsolescent. The Wintonbury Mall's functional obsolescence is demonstrated by its high vacancies (approximately 50%) for more than a decade. The property went into foreclosure in 2014, and the property has not improved since it was purchased out of foreclosure in 2015. In addition, the property known as the Depot Site (64 Jerome Avenue) has been mostly vacant for decades.
- The Land Uses in Town Center are shown on the land use map on page 87 and the specific land uses within the Municipal Development Project Area are retail. The Wintonbury Mall is a mostly-vacant retail use, 836 Park Avenue is a bank, 64 Jerome Avenue is vacant, 29 Wintonbury Avenue is a liquor store, and 47 Jerome Avenue is a gas station. The one other property within the Municipal Development Area is 2 Tunxis Avenue, which is a public use, the Bloomfield Town Green.



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(3) a description of the process utilized by the agency to prepare the plan and a description of alternative approaches considered to achieve project objectives:

- The process utilized by the Town Center Economic Development Commission (the Development Agency) has been described throughout this document. For example, Chapter One explains the Why We Plan, Chapters Two - Four describe the existing conditions analysis, and Chapter Five explains the public outreach and participation. Chapter Eight, the Town Center Economic Development Strategy demonstrates the multiplicity of approaches, considerations, strategies, and alternatives considered in this Municipal Development Area Plan and Chapter Nine presents the Municipal Development Project Area Plan—a plan that has evolved through multiple drafts.

(4) a description of the types and locations of land uses or building uses proposed for the project area:

- Chapters 8 and 9 provide detailed descriptions of the types and locations of land uses and buildings and building uses.

(5) A description of the types and locations of present and proposed streets, sidewalks and sanitary, utility, and other facilities and the types and locations of other proposed site improvements:

- Chapter 9 (Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project) provides a mapping of existing and proposed public infrastructure. All properties and streets have public water and public sewer available. Therefore,

the public water and sewer were not specifically addressed but are included in the public infrastructure construction costs. The Municipal Development Project Area Plan specifically addressed the relocation of Jerome Avenue, including the sidewalks.

(6) statements of the present and proposed zoning classification and subdivision status of the project area and the areas adjacent to the project area:

- Chapter 9 (Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project) provides a detailed section on existing zoning and subdivision as it applies to Town Center and the Municipal Development Project Area and Plan.

(7) a plan for relocating project-area occupants:

- Chapter 9 (Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project) provides a detailed relocation plan and construction phasing plan that is integrated into the relocation plan.

(8) a financing plan;

- Chapter 9 (Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project) provides a detailed financial plan that includes a project budget with land acquisition, infrastructure, construction, soft costs, debt, and TIF funds that may be available.

(9) an administrative plan;

- Chapter 9 (Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project) provides an administrative plan discussing the Town's capacity to implement the Project Plan.

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(10) a marketability and proposed land-use study or building-use study if required by the commissioner:

- Throughout this document, demographics, socio-economics, psychographics, real estate market conditions, site selection consideration, and various other metrics of marketability have been explored and tested against the financial analysis for project construction. Bloomfield is confident there is a market for the proposed conceptual Municipal Development Project Plan.

(11) appraisal reports and title searches;

- Appraisal reports and title searches have been ordered for all the privately owned properties in the Municipal Development Project Area to be acquired and will be included in the formal process if eminent domain is required.

(12) a description of the public benefits of the project including, but not limited to, (A) the number of jobs that the development agency anticipates would be created by the project; (B) the estimated property tax benefits; © the number and types of existing housing units in the municipality in which the project would be located, and in contiguous municipalities, which would be available to employees filling such jobs:

- Based on industry standards and estimates, the proposed Municipal Development Project Plan and other improvements in the Town Center will result in 24 full-time equivalent construction jobs, 323 permanent jobs, and \$2,195,669 million yearly property tax revenue to the Town of Bloomfield. Knowing that the Municipal Development

Project Area Plan includes 230 housing units, and an additional 200 housing units are being proposed at the corner of Gabb Road and Bloomfield Avenue, we are confident that there is adequate housing for any new jobs created.

(D) A general description of infrastructure improvements, including public access, facilities, or use, that the development agency anticipates may be needed to implement the development plan:

- Both Chapter 8 (Town Center Economic Development Strategy) and Chapter 9 (Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project) address infrastructure improvements throughout the Town Center and within the Municipal Development Project Area and Plan. Most notable is the expansion and improvement of the Town Green as a community amenity and placemaking anchor to the redevelopment project.

(E) a general description of the development agency's goals for blight remediation or, if known, environmental remediation:

- The Town Center and Municipal Development Project Area do not suffer from but—they suffer from deferred maintenance, deteriorated conditions, and functional obsolescence. Such conditions are addressed in Chapter 3 (Physical Conditions & Market Analysis), Chapter 6 (Positioning Markets to Compete for Investment), Chapter 8 (Town Center Economic Development Strategy), and Chapter 9 (Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project). Assumptions were made in the demolition costs that environmental remediation would be required when demolishing buildings and an additional \$500,000 in construction costs were assumed for the gas station and environmental remediation costs.

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(F) a general description of any aesthetic improvements that the development agency anticipates may be generated by the project:

- General aesthetic improvements will include an upgrading of the Town Green and will overcome the functional obsolescence and dated design of the Wintonbury Mall.

(G) a general description of the project's intended role in increasing or sustaining the market value of land in the municipality;

- The role and importance of aesthetics were discussed throughout the Master Plan document and specifically addressed in detail in Chapter 6 (Positioning Markets to Compete for Investment). The Town of Bloomfield is confident there will be substantial aesthetic improvement from the implementation of the Municipal Development Project Arear Plan and the other recommendations for improvements in the Town Center.

(H) a general description of the project's intended role in assisting residents of the municipality to improve their standard of living:

- The Municipal Development Project Area Plan will create jobs, provide opportunities for local businesses, provide quality housing, and create and enhance community space and civic engagement. This is especially true of the Town Green amenity space and its programming with arts and cultural events. Collectively, this Project improves the standard of living for the residents of Bloomfield.

(I) a general statement of the project's role in maintaining or enhancing the competitiveness of the municipality:

- Creating and having a vibrant, prosperous, and aesthetically pleasing Town Center is critical to the competitiveness of Bloomfield. As was explained during the large employer focus group, Bloomfield lacks in image and a quality space/place to recommend to clients and employees—most explaining they recommend places outside of Bloomfield. The Project, once constructed will create that central gathering space, provide quality hospitality and entertainment, and improve the image of Bloomfield as a great place to live, work, and recreate.

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(13) findings that:

(A) the land and buildings within the project area will be used principally for industrial or business purposes:

- All the proposed land and buildings will be income-producing uses. As defined in Section 8-187 of Chapter 132 of the C.G.S., business purposes include "any commercial, financial or retail enterprise and includes any enterprise which promotes tourism and any property that produces income." The primary commercial uses in the Project Area will include retail, office, financial services, and restaurants, which are part of the tourism and hospitality sector. The multi-family residential uses will be in the form of rental apartments, which are properties "that produce income."

(B) the plan is in accordance with the plan of conservation and development for the municipality adopted by its planning commission under section 8-23, and the plan of development of the regional council of governments adopted under section 8-35a, if any, for the region within which the municipality is located:

- As explained in detail in Chapter 9 (Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project), the proposed Municipal Development Project Area and Plan are in accordance with the local Plan of Conservation and Development.

(C) the plan was prepared giving due consideration to the state plan of conservation and development adopted under Chapter 297 and any other state-wide planning program objectives of the state or state

agencies as coordinated by the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management:

- As explained in detail in Chapter 9 (Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project), the proposed Municipal Development Project Plan was prepared giving due consideration to the state Plan of Conservation and Development.

(D) the project will contribute to the economic welfare of the municipality and the state; and that to carry out and administer the project, public action under this chapter is required:

- As proposed and conceptualized, the Municipal Development Project will mitigate functional obsolescence and deteriorating conditions, while providing new and modern commercial space and multi-family rental housing—both of which will benefit the economic welfare of Bloomfield and the State. This is especially true regarding construction job creation and housing—providing much-needed housing and affordable housing.

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

C.G.S. Chapter 132, Section 8-189 Required Plan Items

(14) a preliminary statement describing the proposed process for acquiring each parcel of real property, including findings that:

- As explained in detail in Chapter 9 (Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project), specifically in the section on Property Acquisition, the Town of Bloomfield, acting through the authority of Chapter 132 and the Town Center Economic Development Commission (the Development Authority) will secure two appraisals for each privately owned parcel in the Municipal Development Project Area to determine fair market value. Furthermore, in accordance with C.G.S. Chapter 130, Section 8-129 which states, "The amount of compensation for such real property shall be equal to the average of the amounts determined by the two independent appraisals, except that the compensation for any real property to be acquired by eminent domain pursuant to section 8-193 ... shall be one hundred twenty-five percent of such average amount", the Town of Bloomfield is prepared to offer 125% of fair market value based on the appraisals for each of the six parcels. Therefore, the Town of Bloomfield will make fair market value offers, as defined above, to each of the property owners and work toward a fair market purchase and transaction. If, and only if, a fair market purchase and transaction cannot be achieved, will the Town of Bloomfield exercise the authorities granted by C.G.S. Chapter 132, Section 8-193 (Acquisition and Transfer of Real Property. Procedures. Powers of Agency. Limitation) and utilize eminent domain.

- (A) public benefits resulting from the development plan will outweigh any private benefits:
- As discussed in Chapter 9 (Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project), the private market has failed to address functional obsolescence in the Municipal Development Plan Area. In addition, without public intervention and public participation, the condition of functional obsolescence cannot and will not be overcome by the private market. Therefore, public intervention and participation are required. The public benefits of overcoming functional obsolescence outweigh if the Municipal Development Project Plan outweighs the private benefits, preventing functional obsolescence from becoming blight and abandonment—the government's authority and responsibility to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of the community.

(B) existing use of the real property cannot be feasibly integrated into the overall development plan for the project:

- The Wintonbury Mall property is functionally obsolete in the context of age, design, configuration, and maintenance. In addition, the size, shape, and configuration of the Wintonbury Mall property and the Depot Lot property limit the ability for the scale and density of development needed to overcome functional obsolescence. Therefore, all the properties identified in the Municipal Development Project Area need to create a development site that can be developed to the degree and density required to attract investment. Without the larger development area of all the parcels, the existing use of real property cannot be feasibly integrated into the overall development plan for the project.

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

C.G.S. Chapter 132, Section 8-189 Required Plan Items

(C) acquisition by eminent domain is reasonably necessary to successfully achieve the objectives of such a development plan:

- As discussed in Chapter 9 (Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project) and above in other answers, the Wintonbury Mall property is functionally obsolete in the context of age, design, configuration, and maintenance. In addition, the size, shape, and configuration of the Wintonbury Mall property and the Depot Lot property limit the ability for the scale and density of development needed to overcome the functional obsolescence of these properties. Therefore, to achieve the required critical mass of development needed to overcome the functional obsolescence and weak market conditions, all the properties identified in the Municipal Development Project Area need to be acquired. While it is the aim of the Town of Bloomfield, acting through the authority of Chapter 132 and the Town Center Economic Development Commission (the Development Authority) to secure the Municipal Development Plan Area properties by fair market offers and transactions at 125% of fair market value, the Town of Bloomfield recognizes that one or more property owners in the Project Area may reject such an offer and require the Town to exercise its eminent domain authority granted by C.G.S. Chapter 132, Section 8-193 (Acquisition and Transfer of Real Property. Procedures. Powers of Agency. Limitation). Furthermore, the public and economic development uses, as discussed in Chapter 9 (Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project) are legitimate uses of eminent domain. In addition, regardless of the powers to use eminent domain through

Chapter 132, the relocation of Jerome Avenue and the expansion of the Town Green are public uses that don't require Chapter 132. The objectives of the Municipal Development Project Plan cannot be successfully achieved if fair market offers are rejected, one eminent domain can overcome such a barrier and ensure that the objectives of the Project Plan are successfully achieved.

(D) the development plan is not for the primary purpose of increasing local tax revenues:

- The primary purpose of this Municipal Development Project Plan is to overcome functional obsolescence and deteriorating conditions in the Town Center—conditions that the private market has been unable to overcome and cannot overcome without government intervention and participation. Increasing local tax revenues is not an objective of this Project Plan, other than the recognition that the increase in property taxes generated by the Municipal Development Project Plan can be used in the form of Tax Increment Financing as part of the government intervention and participation in the Project Plan.

Chapter 132 Municipal Development Project

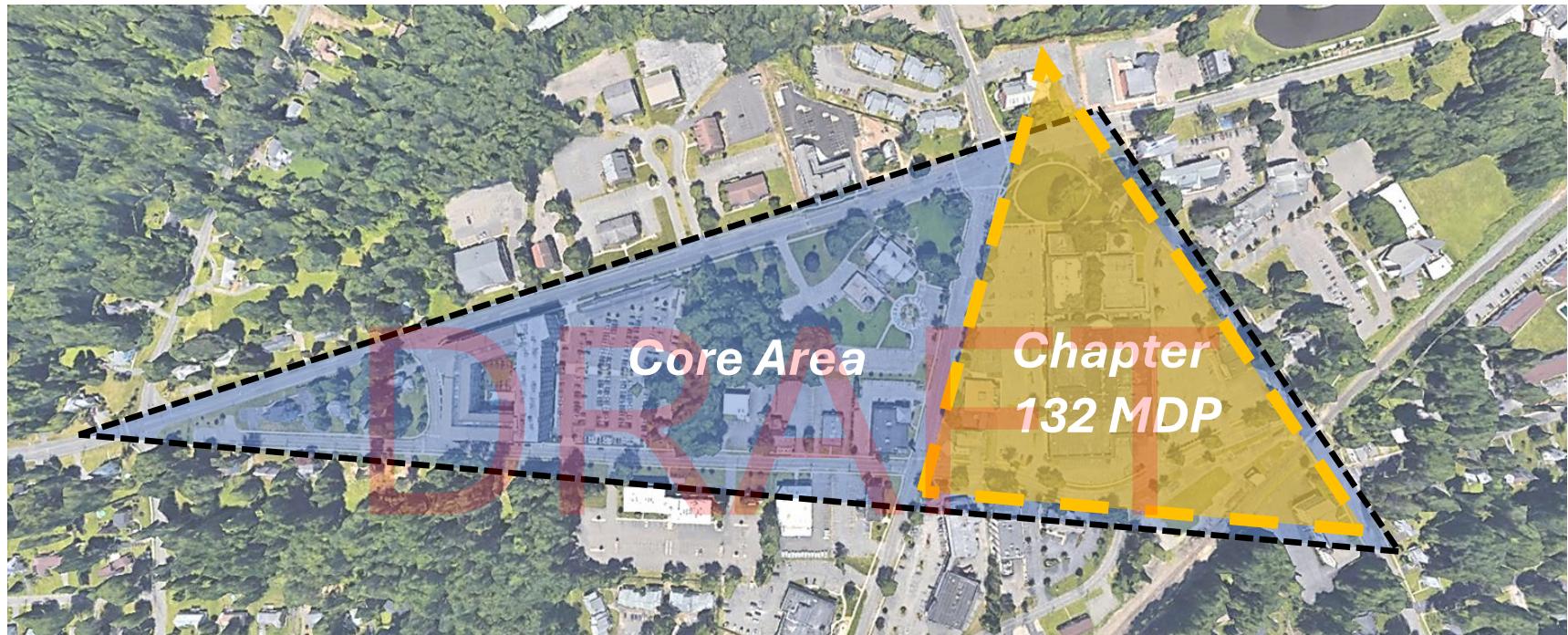
Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan

Bloomfield Town Center Municipal Development Plan Boundary



Target Investment Core Area & Chapter 132 Municipal Development Plan Area

Town Center Economic Development Strategy & Municipal Development Plan





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Appendix I: **Town Center Master Plan Parcel Identification**

Town Center Master Plan Parcel Identification

Appendix I

Town Center Parcels

Address	Year Built	Appraised Value	Assessed Value	Square Footage	Acres
756 PARK AVE	1946	\$245,600	\$171,920	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



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Appendix II: Community Engagement Results



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Public Kick-Off
Engagement Activities

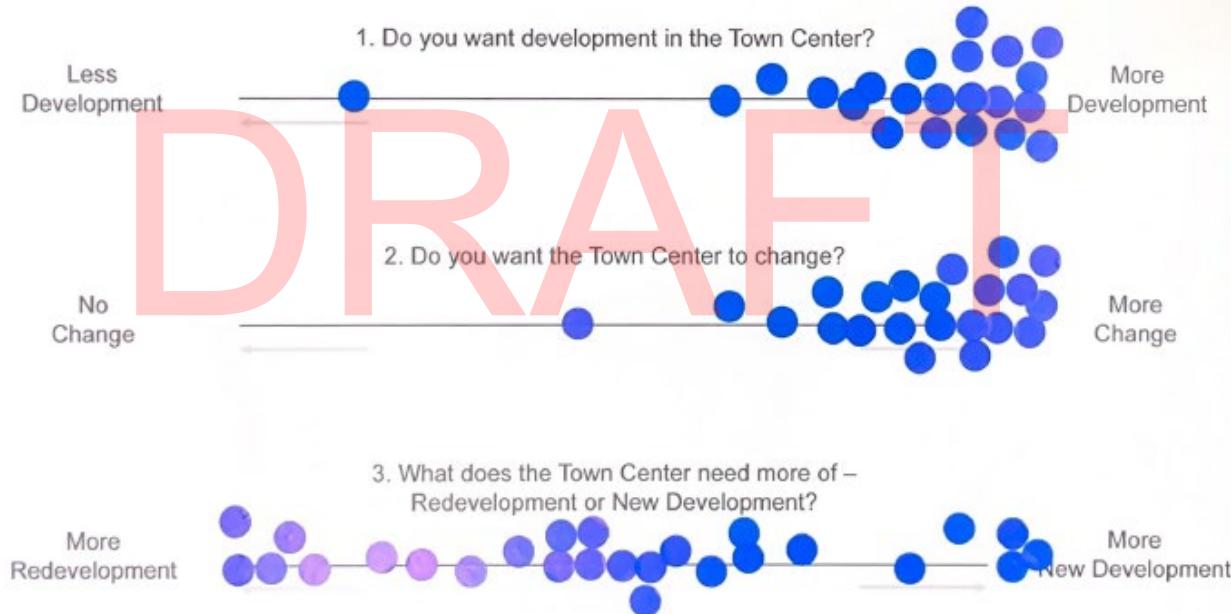
Continuums of Change

Public Kick-Off Engagement Activities

CONTINUUMS OF CHANGE



Instructions: Place your dot sticker on the continuum where your perspective falls. If your perspective is neutral, place your sticker in the middle.



GOMAN+YORK

GOMAN+YORK

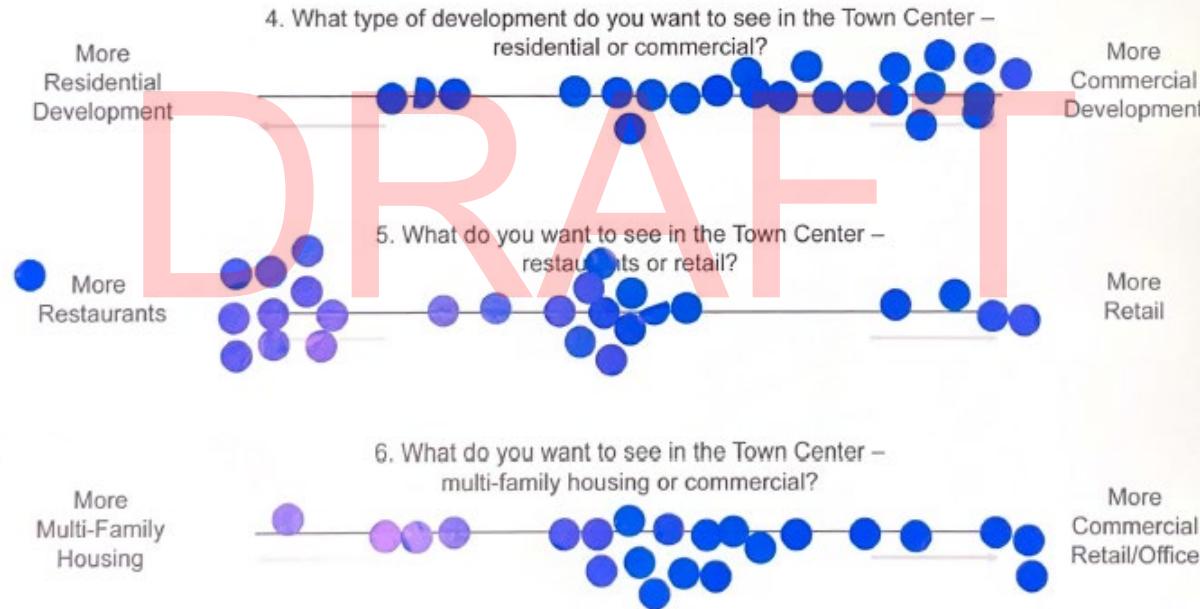
Continuums of Change

Public Kick-Off Engagement Activities

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Instructions: Place your dot sticker on the continuum where your perspective falls. If your perspective is neutral, place your sticker in the middle.



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Continuums of Change

Public Kick-Off Engagement Activities



CONTINUMS OF CHANGE

Instructions: Place your dot sticker on the continuum where your perspective falls. If your perspective is neutral, place your sticker in the middle.

7. What would you prefer, one & two-story buildings or three & four-story buildings in the Town Center?

One & Two Stories

Three & Four Stories

Within
Bloomfield

3. Where do you do most of your shopping, in Bloomfield or outside Bloomfield?

Outside
Bloomfield

Traditional Character

Economic Development

9. What is of more importance, preserving the character of Bloomfield or investment in economic development?

GOMAN+YORK

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Wants & Desires – Community Investment Opportunities

Public Kick-Off Engagement Activities

Community Investment Opportunities	Average Ranking
Redevelopment of Wintonbury Mall	4.8
Walkability & Bikeability	4.5
Community Events & Activities	4.4
Arts & Culture	4.4
Parks & Recreation	4.3
Affordable Housing	4.0
Historic Preservation	3.4
Public Transportation	2.8
Signage & Wayfinding	2.7
Public Parking	2.6

Wants & Desires – Town Center Amenities

Public Kick-Off Engagement Activities

Town Center Amenities	Average Ranking
Restaurants	4.8
Entertainment Venues (movie theatre, etc.)	4.6
Outdoor Dining	4.5
Coffee Shops	4.2
Retail Stores	4.1
Mixed-Use(commercial & residential)	3.9
Multi-Family Housing	3.0
Professional Offices	2.0
Medical Offices	1.8
Drive-Thru Restaurants	1.7

Prouds & Sorrys

Public Kick-Off Engagement Activities

Sorrys

Liquor Stores Railroad
Copaco Shopping Center
Empty Office Buildings
Deteriorated Buildings
No Bike Path
No Attractions
No Bike Paths
Lack Of Restaurants
Lack Of Outdoor Dining
Wintonbury Mall
Lack Of Sidewalks
No Griffin Line RR
Lack Of Mixed Use
Lack Of Public Art
Unwelcoming
Filley Park
The Mall
Empty Stores

Railroad
Not Bikeable
Places To Gather
Too Much Black Top
Not Encouraging
Not Maintained
No Architectural Design
No Night Activities
Traffic
Not Usable
Untidy
Slow Growth
Lack Of Foot Traffic
Car Noise
Need More Activities For Kids
Fragmented Streetscape
Eye Sore
Enough Liquor Stores
Poor Selection
Poor Cultural Activities
No Variety In Activities
Box Stores
Not Walkable
Wintonbury Blights
Filley Pond Project
Empty Stores

High Taxes
High Taxes
Eye Sore
Poor Schools
Lived All My Life
Pastry & Coffee
Town Green Beauty
Welcoming People
Small Shops
Community Involvement
Brook Through Filley Park
Mix Of Past & Present
Commitment Of Residents
Celebrate Diversity
New Apartments

Prouds

Beautiful Location
Mixture Of Old & New
Safety Environment
Welcoming Businesses
Town Hall
Involvement Of Community
Mix Up Modern And Historical
Diverse People
Town Green
Diverse Community
Town Green
Town Green Concerts
Small Shops
Community Involvement
Brook Through Filley Park
New Library
Mix Of Past & Present
Commitment Of Residents
Celebrate Diversity
New Apartments

Centered
Bakery
Neighborhood
Parks
Pasticceria
No Parking Meter
Pressuring Open Land
Public Library
Summer Concerts
Privately Owned Businesses
Low Taxes
Geisler's
Friendly
Town Green Concerts
Small Shops
Community Involvement
Brook Through Filley Park
Mix Of Past & Present
Commitment Of Residents
Celebrate Diversity
New Apartments

Good Schools
Filley Park
Neighborhood
Parks
Pasticceria
No Parking Meter
Pressuring Open Land
Public Library
Summer Concerts
Privately Owned Businesses
Low Taxes
Geisler's
Friendly
Town Green Concerts
Small Shops
Community Involvement
Brook Through Filley Park
Mix Of Past & Present
Commitment Of Residents
Celebrate Diversity
New Apartments

Existing Conditions & Future Outcomes

Public Kick-Off Engagement Activities

Existing Conditions

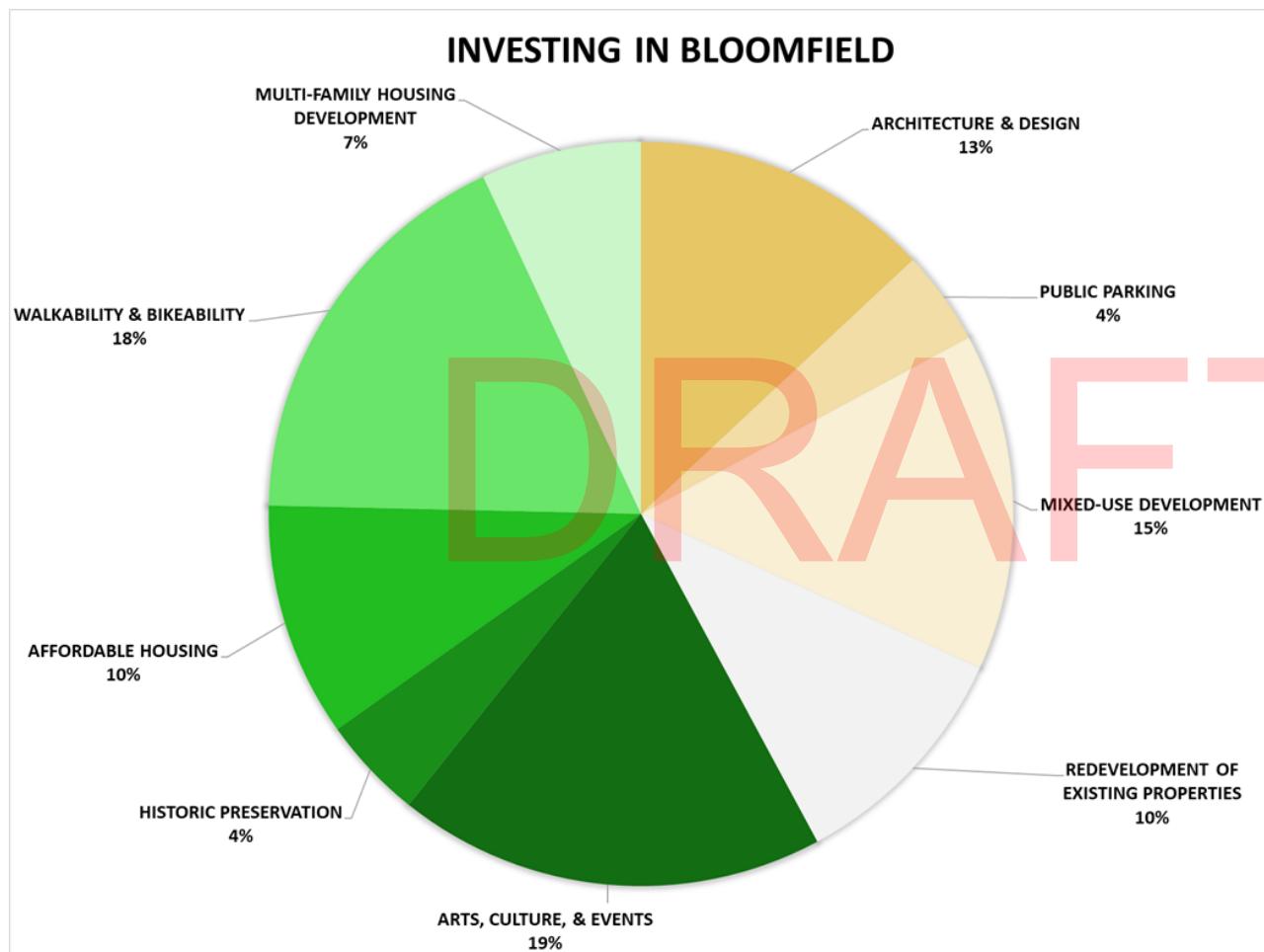
ExpensiveBikes
NoAttraction
Historic
Boring
GoodTenants
Spacious
NonEveningActivity
PastPrime
Quiet
NothingToAttractPeople
Trying
Speeding
EmptySpaces
Suffering
PotHoles
Plain
Old
SmallTownGreen
Uninviting
Lacking
BeatUpParkingLots
Lonely
Interesting
AntiSocial
EmptyParts
GreatBaker
TrafficJam
Outdated
Disconnected
Cheap
NotBikeable
RunDown
NoMovies
Dilapidated
PoorlyMaintained
Stale
SlowTraffic
Unattractive

Future Outcomes

CoffeeShop Active
Unique GatheringPlaces
Vibrant AffordableHousing Relaxing
MultipleEconomies Charming
PlaceToVisit NewEnglandTown
Profitable VariedArchitecture Walkable
Accessible Children'sPlayArea WalkingEvents
Restaurants Demo ObsoleteBuildings
FilmCenter HighActivityOnWeekend Populated
LargerGreen Entertaining YoungPeople
TownHistory Gardens Events
Convenient NewConstruction
Arts VariedRetail
WellMaintained Beautiful SocialMedia
Club Fitness Historical CharacterEngagement
Wealth OutstandingArchitecture Relaxed
PeopleMagnet Safe WalkingSpaces
FlowerPots PlacesToGather Thriving
OpenSpace AffordableDining
Diversity Adestination
Clean Shopping

Investing in the Town Center

Public Kick-Off Engagement Activities



Investments	Total
Arts, Culture, & Events	\$520.00
Walkability & Bikeability	\$495.00
Mixed-use Development	\$410.00
Architecture & Design	\$365.00
Redev of Existing Properties	\$290.00
Affordable Housing	\$285.00
Multi-family Housing Dev	\$195.00
Historic Preservation	\$125.00
Public Parking	\$115.00

Key Notes

- Arts, Culture, & Events:
6 - \$50 Bills
11 - \$10 Bills
- Walkability & Bikeability:
8 - \$20 Bills
- Mixed-Use Development:
10 - \$5 Dollar Bills



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Boards & Commissions

Engagement Activities

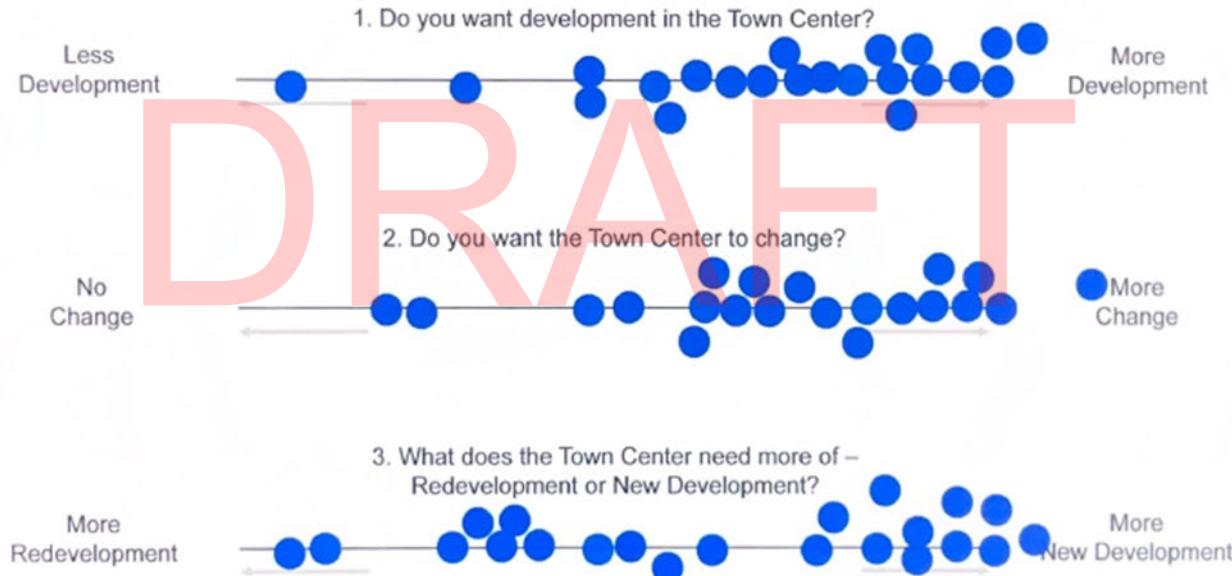
Continuums of Change

Boards & Commissions Engagement Activities



CONTINUUMS OF CHANGE

Instructions: Place your dot sticker on the continuum where your perspective falls. If your perspective is neutral, place your sticker in the middle.



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GOMAN+YORK

Continuums of Change

Boards & Commissions Engagement Activities



CONTINUUMS OF CHANGE

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Continuums of Change

Boards & Commissions Engagement Activities



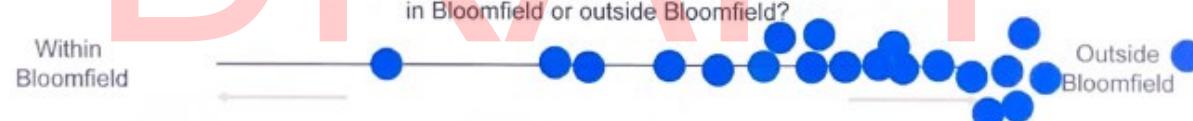
CONTINUUMS OF CHANGE

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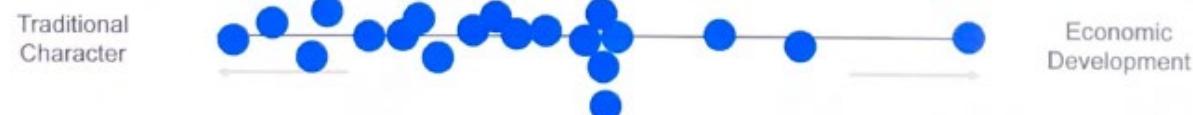
7. What would you prefer, one & two-story buildings or three & four-story buildings in the Town Center?



8. Where do you do most of your shopping, in Bloomfield or outside Bloomfield?



9. What is of more importance, preserving the character of Bloomfield or investment in economic development?



Wants & Desires – Community Investment Opportunities

Boards & Commissions Engagement Activities

Community Investment Opportunities	Average Ranking
Arts & Culture	4.4
Parks & Recreation	4.3
Walkability & Bikeability	4.3
Redevelopment of Wintonbury Mall	4.2
Community Events & Activities	4.1
Historic Preservation	3.8
Signage & Wayfinding	2.9
Affordable Housing	2.8
Public Parking	2.7
Public Transportation	2.6

Wants & Desires – Town Center Amenities

Boards & Commissions Engagement Activities

Town Center Amenities	Average Ranking
Entertainment Venues (movie theatre, etc.)	4.4
Restaurants	4.2
Outdoor Dining	4.1
Retail Stores	3.8
Coffee Shops	3.5
Mixed-Use(commercial & residential)	3.4
Professional Offices	2.4
Multi-Family Housing	1.6
Medical Offices	1.4
Drive-Thru Restaurants	0.9

Prouds & Sorrys

Boards & Commissions Engagement Activities

Sorrys

Architecture
LackOfSmallShops
UglyPoliceStation ParkingLots
WintonburyMall Landscaping
PropertyConditionsLacksConnectivity
NoPullLackOfGoodSidewalks ExteriorDesign
GhostTown Cinema Activity
LowParticipation
NoBicyclePaths LackOfActivites PedestrianActivity
Roofs NotPedestrianFriendly
Movie Theater
NoMovie LossOfMovieTheater TheLook
NoWhereToShop CrossingStreetsIsDangerous EmptyStores
TrafficFlow CrosswalkToWintonburyMall NowhereToGo
LackOfTheater LacksAttractionsForYoung Appearance
ParkingDeserts NoPedestrianConnectivity LowActivity
NewLibraryAppearance TheMall
NoWalking NoFamiliesHangingOut Energy
Mall LackofShade Trees Vacancies
LimitedRestaurants
LackOfEntertainment
NoMovies

Prouds

LotsOfParking
PedestrianBiking
HumanServiceBuilding
NiceGreen
Landscaping
EthnicDiversity
SmallTownFeel
NewLibrary AmpleParking
GoodRestaurants Church
Activists
AmountOfGreenSpace
NewDevelopment
BerkshireBicycle
Diversity
TownGreen
LocalRestaurants Park
OpenSpaces Republic
FreeParking LocalBusinesses DiverseShops
HistoricCongregationalChurch
LocalOwners Safety
NicelyLandscaped FilleyPark
NoBigBoxStores
StrongCommunity

Existing Conditions & Future Outcomes

Boards & Commissions Engagement Activities

Existing Conditions

Poor Traffic Flow
No Cohesive Look
Drab Nicely Landscaping
Dry Traffic Nightmare
Busy Lack Of Store Variety
Empty Not Walkable
More Cars Visible Than People
Desserts Stagnant
No Retail
Low Class
Non Thriving
More Parking
Inactive Grocery Desert
Little Retail
Lacks Vibrancy
Needing An Uplift
Local Businesses

Abandon
Depressing
Rundown
Hodge Podge
Vacant
Desserted
Parking
Decrepit
Several
Sidewalks
Good Restaurants
In Buildings
Ugly
Embarrassing
Unattractive

Dated
Tired

Future Outcomes

Safe Innovative Retail
Community Oriented Aesthetically
Property Well Maintained
Environmentally Responsible Visually Exciting
Active Throughout The Day
Actively Exciting

Unique
Walkable
Accessible
Environmentally Friendly
Interesting Things To Do
More Retail
Accessable
Young

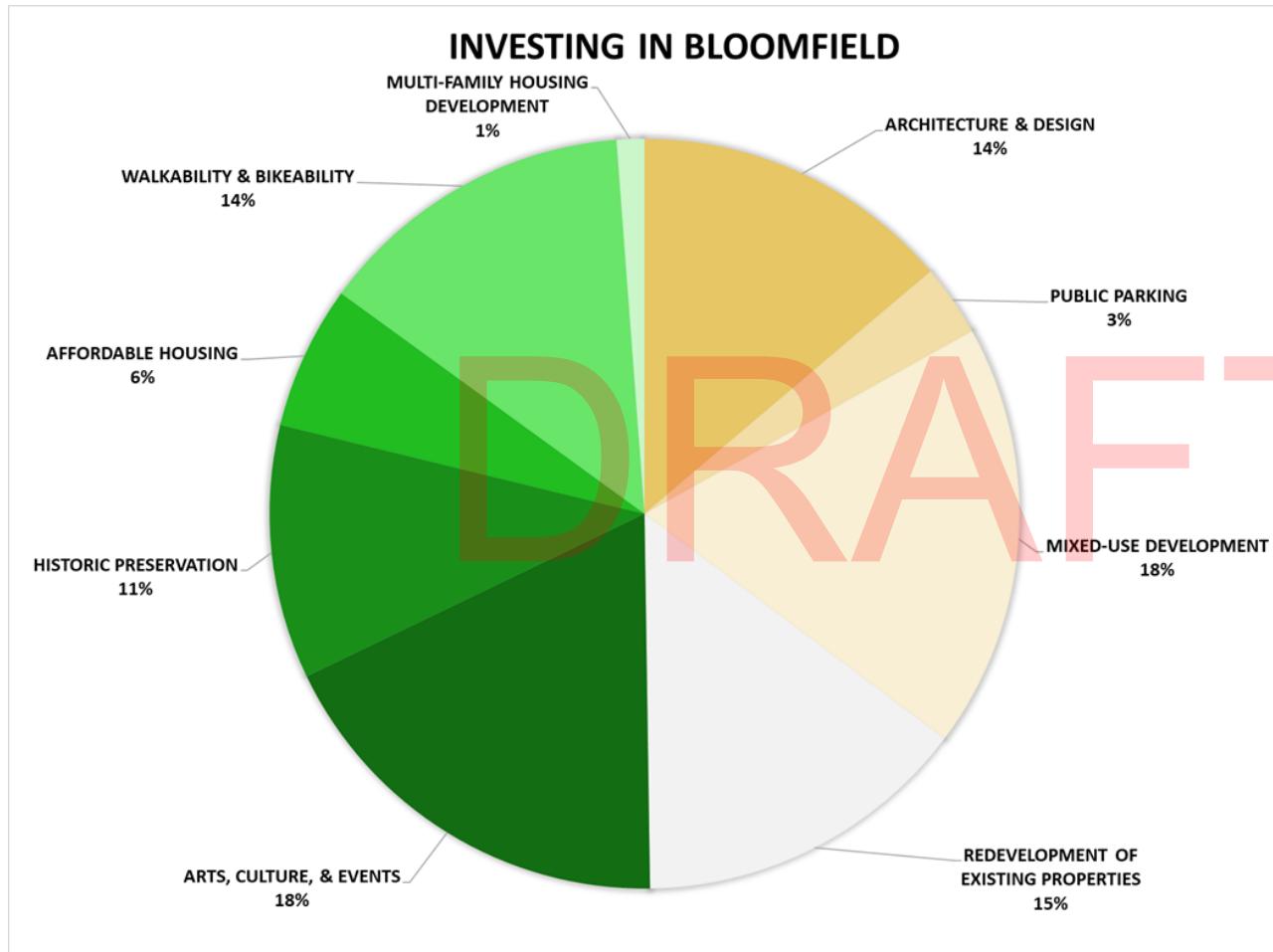
Attractive
Vibrant
Active
Beautiful

Building Connected
Pretty
Multi-Model
Aesthetically Appealing
Activated Housing
Occupied

Residential Commercial Mix
Creative Architecture
Unique Architecture
Family Friendly

Investing in the Town Center

Boards & Commissions Engagement Activities



Investments	Total
Mixed-use Development	\$385.00
Arts, Culture, & Events	\$380.00
Redev of Existing Properties	\$305.00
Architecture & Design	\$290.00
Walkability & Bikeability	\$290.00
Historic Preservation	\$230.00
Affordable Housing	\$130.00
Public Parking	\$65.00
Multi-family Housing Dev	\$25.00

Key Notes

- Redevelopment of Existing Properties: 6 - \$50 Bills
- Arts, Culture, & Events: 7 - \$20 Bills
- Architecture & Design: 11 - \$10 Bills



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Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions

Community Engagement Results

Small Business Breakfast

- The center of town is a symbol of the whole town so it's important that it's a beautiful place.
- Hearing of the Town's interest in purchasing Wintonbury Mall sounds like a very positive thing.
- When the mall came here it was beautiful and it was full, there were bushes and flowers with a real variety of things to do here.
- Tough to do outdoor dining without a street presence, and the view is an empty strip mall & a liquor store.

Major Employers Luncheon

- We're not trying to be any other town, we're just trying to be the best version of Bloomfield that we can be.
- Major Employers inform visitors on places to stay/eat/things to do, and they are often outside of Bloomfield. They would have a lot of demand for a hotel in town.
- Bloomfield can support Major Employers by streamlining the permitting process, updating Zoning Regulations, and adopting an Overlay District.

Town Staff & Agencies

- Where people, families, and children gather is what determines the Town Center. Without clear and frequented gathering spaces, there is a lack of identity around the Center.
- Residents here are proud to be from Bloomfield, how can we improve the Center in a way that portrays the residents' pride?
- Bloomfield being in growth mode is a net positive but many departments are at their workload capacity and maintaining Boards & Commissions membership has been a struggle.



Focus Group Discussions

Community Engagement Results

Senior Citizens

- There is a feeling of an East/West divide with the community center as the divider. The division is financial first and ethnic second.
- All have very positive memories of Bloomfield's past. Saw it as a great place to raise children, a quintessential New England town, and a place that used to feel safe, but doesn't anymore.
- The community doesn't gather like it used to; spoke of an all-churches Thanksgiving service, and neighbors being engaged in their lives and community.
- Placed emphasis on improving the school district.

Religious Leaders

- Churches have stopped measuring success by the number of members/attendees and the amount of money they receive and have begun measuring their success by how large of an impact they are able to have on the Community. Churches are able to lighten the load of public assistance required of the Town.
- Town Center Churches are happy to be involved in community activities, this planning process, and Town projects.
- Wintonbury Mall is the “elephant in the room” and it needs to go.

Town Center Residents

- Many residents downsized from homes into Heirloom Flats and chose Bloomfield for its diversity and cost. Specifically, many moved from West Hartford.
- Heirloom Flats Residents would like to feel more integrated into the community and Town Center, had discussions of starting a committee within Heirloom for outreach.
- Town Center Residents were the most positive group about the Town Center as it is today. Emphasized the strengths of the Center today that need to be built upon.
- Frequent visitors to many, if not most, Town Center businesses/restaurants, all of them walk the Town Center regularly and attended a Concert on the Green this year.





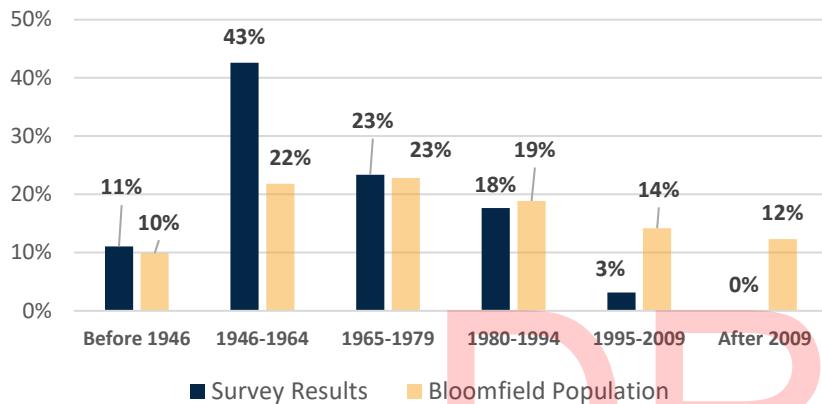
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Appendix III: Community Survey Results

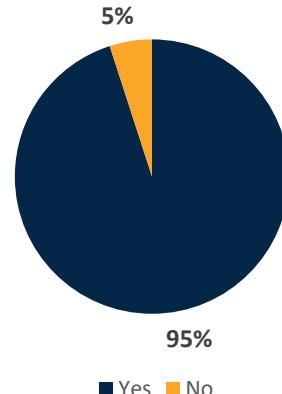
Community Survey Results

Bloomfield Town Center Plan

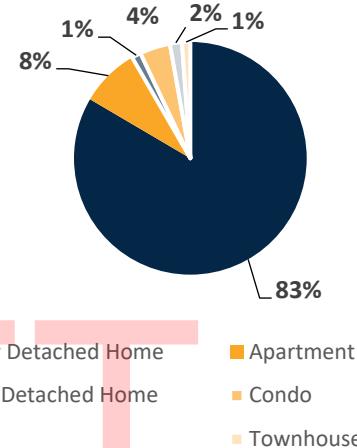
1. When were you born?



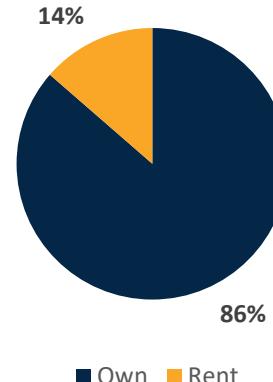
2. Are you currently a Bloomfield resident?



3. What style of home do you currently live in?



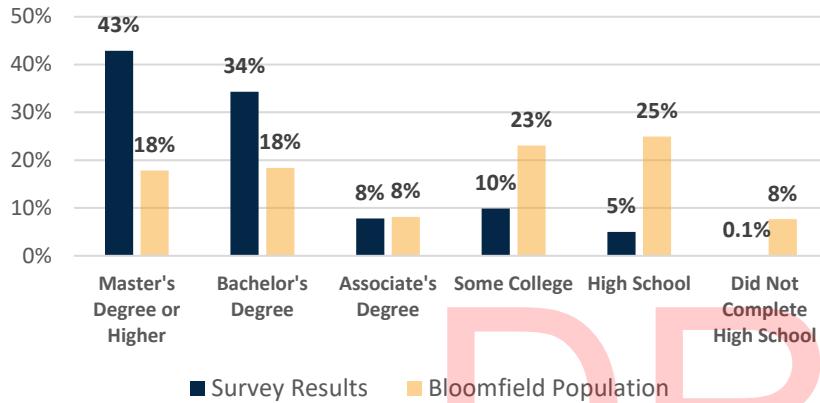
4. Do you rent or own your home?



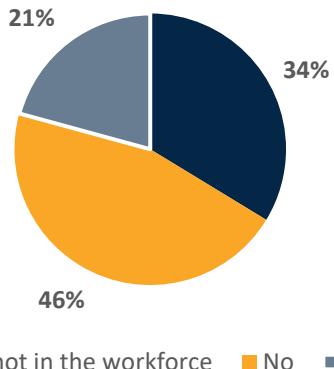
Community Survey Results

Bloomfield Town Center Plan

5. What is your highest level of education?

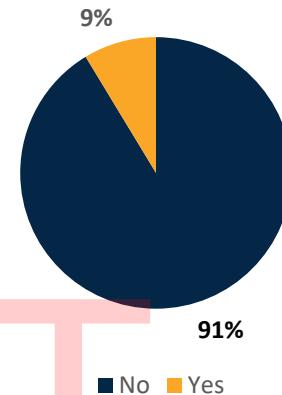


6. Do you currently work in Bloomfield?



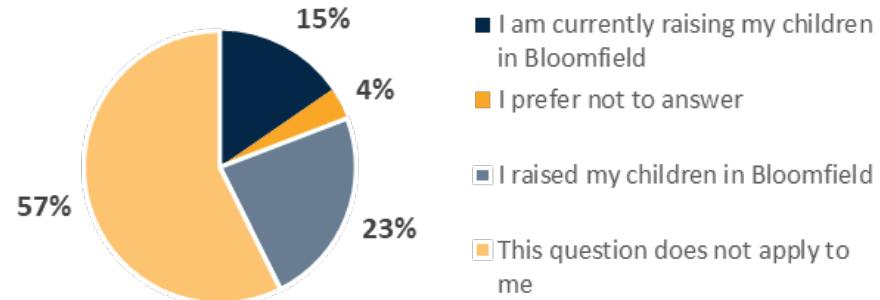
■ I'm not in the workforce ■ No ■ Yes

7. Do you own a business in Town?



■ No ■ Yes

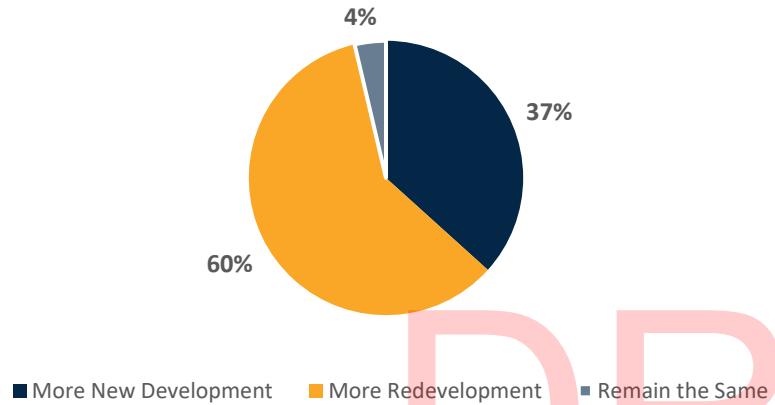
8. Do you have children in Bloomfield?



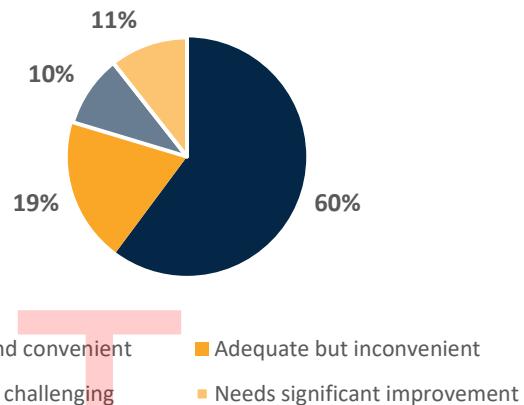
Community Survey Results

Bloomfield Town Center Plan

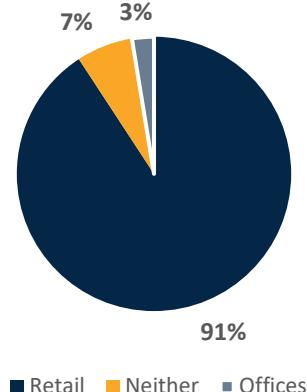
9. Would you like to see development in the Town Center?



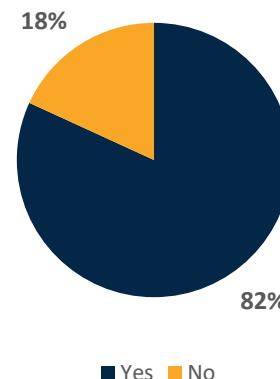
11. How would you describe the current parking situation in the Town Center?



10. Would you like to see more retail or more offices in the Town Center?



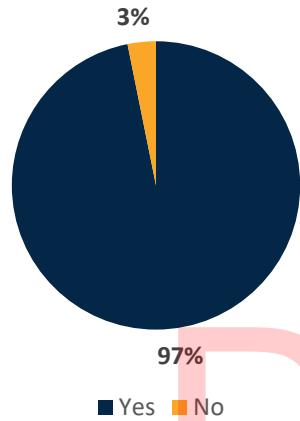
12. Do you want the Town Center to change?



Community Survey Results

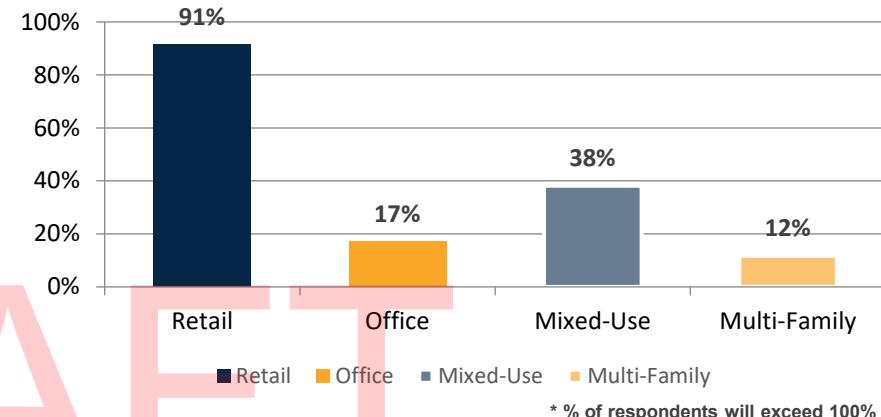
Bloomfield Town Center Plan

13. Do you want the Town Center to improve?

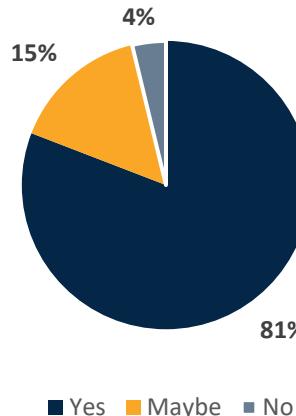


14. What needs to change or improve in the Town Center?

15. What type of development would you like to see in the Town Center? Select all that apply.



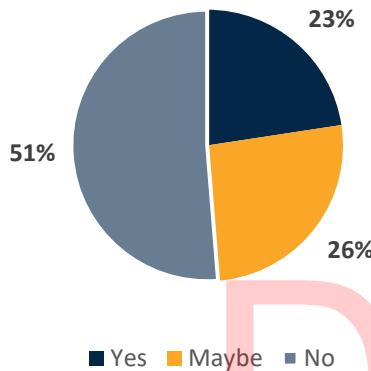
16. Should the Town encourage outdoor dining?



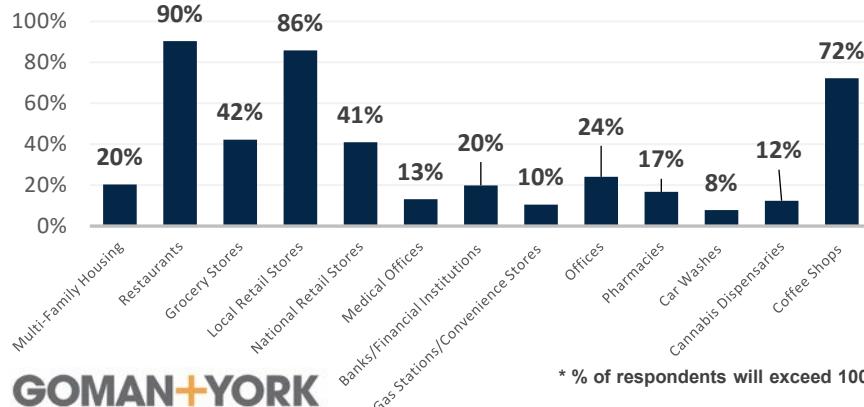
Community Survey Results

Bloomfield Town Center Plan

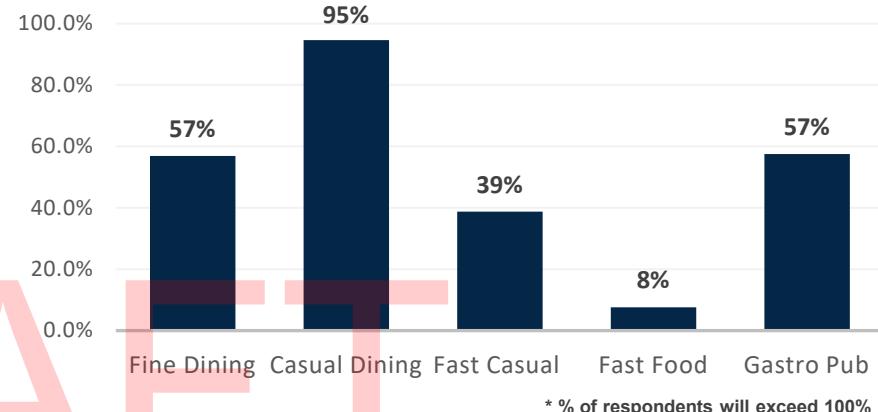
17. Should the Town allow more multi-family housing in the Town Center?



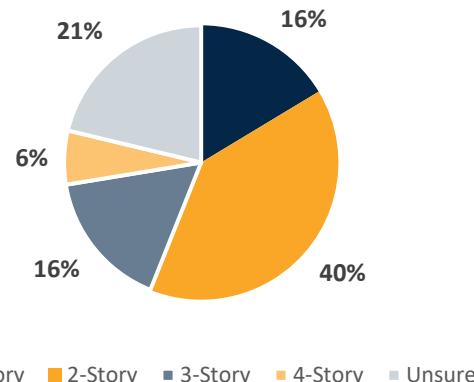
18. What types of uses would you like to see in the Town Center?
Select all that apply.



19. What types of restaurants would you like to see in the Town Center? Select all that apply.



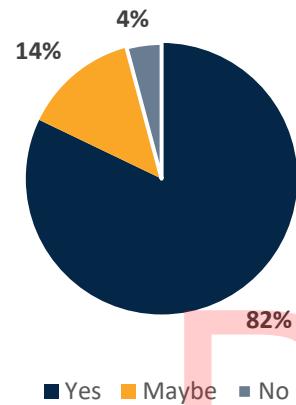
20. Which building height do you prefer in the Town Center?



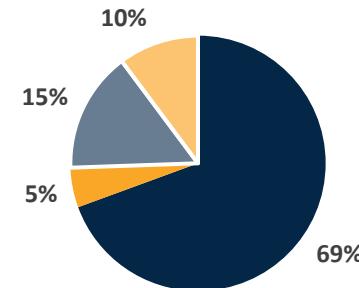
Community Survey Results

Bloomfield Town Center Plan

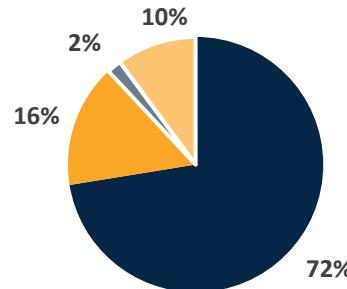
21. Is architectural design important in the Town Center?



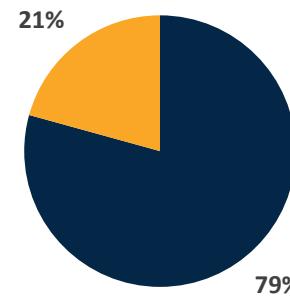
23. Which is more important in the Town Center?



22. Which is more important in the Town Center?



24. Where do you do most of your shopping?



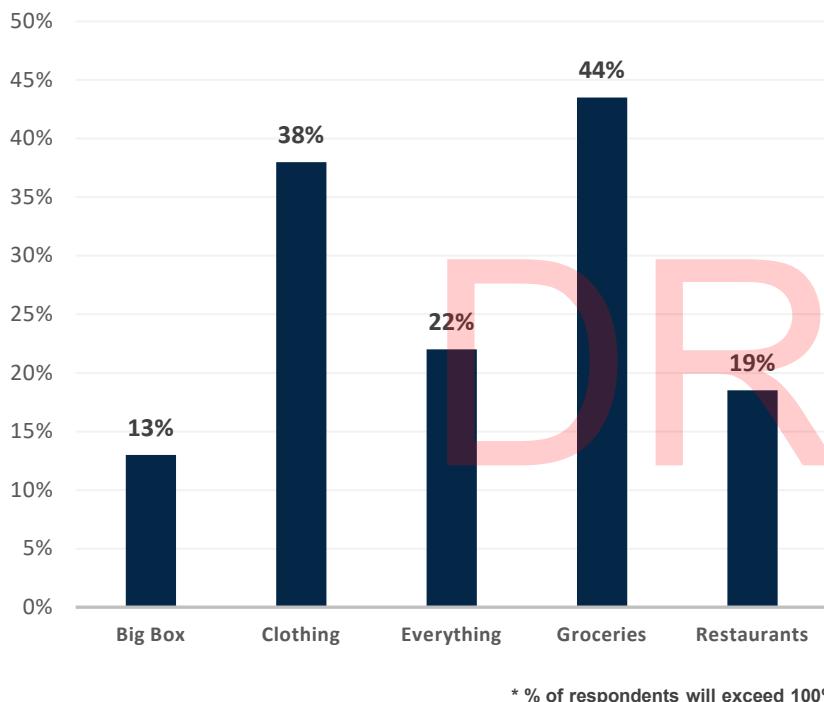
■ Both are equally important ■ Economic Development
■ I don't think either is important ■ Quality Architecture/Design

■ Outside Bloomfield ■ Within Bloomfield

Community Survey Results

Bloomfield Town Center Plan

25. What type of retail do you most often leave Bloomfield for? Name all that apply.



26. What makes Bloomfield unique?

A large red 'DRAFT' watermark is overlaid on the text. The text lists various unique qualities of Bloomfield, categorized into four groups: Business, Open Space, Nature, and Community. The words are colored in green, orange, and yellow.

- Business: Growth
- Open Space: Clean, Open Space, Nature
- Community: Convenience, Community
- Nature: Affordability, Diversity, Safe, Welcoming, Location
- Business: Parks, Not Much, Charm
- Community: Unused Potential, Multicultural
- Nature: Town Green, Friendly, New England Town

27. What makes the Bloomfield Town Center unique?

A large red 'DRAFT' watermark is overlaid on the text. The text lists various unique qualities of the Bloomfield Town Center, categorized into four groups: Community, Peaceful, Potential, and Progressive. The words are colored in green, orange, and yellow.

- Community: Events, Apartments
- Peaceful: Filley Pond, Ugly, Church
- Potential: Walkable, Town Hall, Progressive
- Progressive: New Library, Classic New England
- Community: Nothing, Small Businesses
- Peaceful: Traditional
- Potential: Accessible, Town Green
- Progressive: Central

Community Survey Results

Bloomfield Town Center Plan

28. What are three words that best describe the Town Center today?



A word cloud centered around the word 'Empty'. Other prominent words include 'Boring', 'Sad', 'AntiSocial', 'Disconnected', and 'RunDown'. The words are in various sizes and colors, including shades of brown, orange, and yellow.

ExpensiveBikes
NoAttraction
HistoricBoring
Spacious
GoodTenants
NonEvening
ActivityPastPrime
Quiet
NothingToAttractPeopleTrying
Speeding
EmptySpaces
Suffering
PotHoles
Plain
Old
SmallTownGreen
Uninviting
Lacking
BeatUpParkingLots
Lonely
Interesting
EmptyParts
GreatBaker
TrafficJam
Outdated
Cheap
Disconnected
NotBikeable
RunDown
NoMovies
Dilapidated
PoorlyMaintained
Stale
SlowTraffic
Unattractive

29. What are three words that will best describe the Town Center when it is improved?



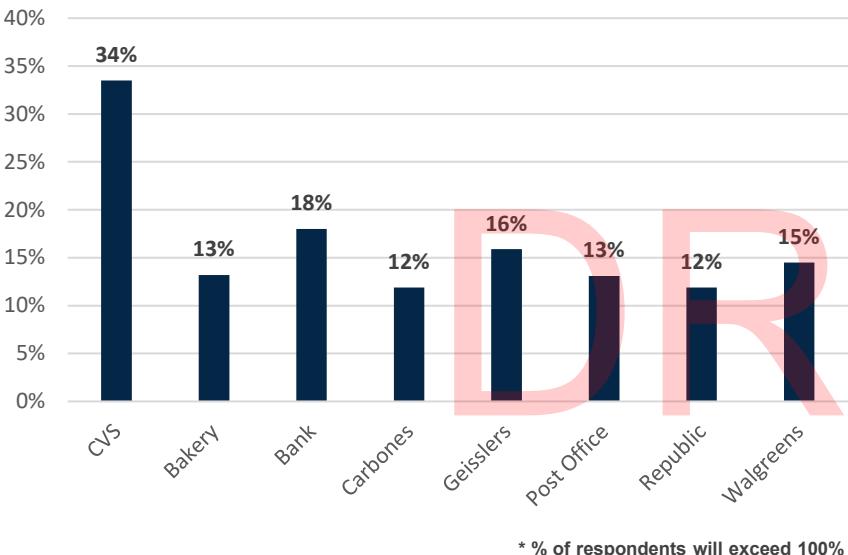
A word cloud centered around the word 'Attractive'. Other prominent words include 'Entertaining', 'Fun', 'Interesting', 'Beautiful', 'SocialMedia', 'Socialization', and 'Relaxed'. The words are in various sizes and colors, including shades of green, blue, and purple.

CoffeeShop Active
Unique GatheringPlaces
Vibrant Relaxing
MultipleEconomies Charming
PlaceToVisit NewEnglandTown
Profitable
AffordableHousing
VariedArchitecture Walkable
Accessible
Children's Play Area WalkingEvents
Restaurants DemoObsoleteBuildings
FilmCenter HighActivityOnWeekend
LargerGreen
Town history
Convenient
Gardens
YoungPeople
Events
NewConstruction
VariedRetail
Arts
Entertaining
HighActivityOnWeekend
WellMaintained
ClubFitness
HistoricalCharacter
Wealth OutstandingArchitecture
PeopleMagnet
SafeWalkingSpaces
Relaxed
FlowerPots
PlacesToGather
OpenSpace Thriving
AffordableDining
Diversity
Adestination
Clean Shopping

Community Survey Results

Bloomfield Town Center Plan

30. What three businesses in the Town Center do you visit most often?

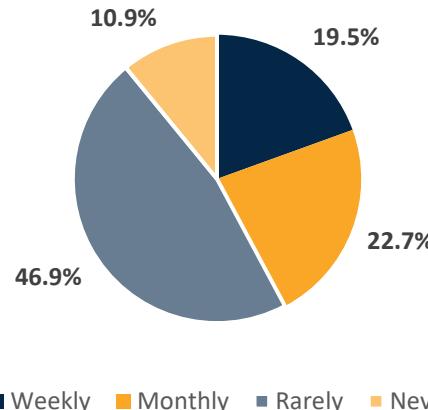


31. What are three words that best describe the Wintonbury Mall today?

DRAFT

Eyesore
Old Pavement
Struggling Outdated Faded
Isolating Empty Central
Abandoned Scary Great Location
Potential Sad Dreary
Good Businesses Vacant
Underutilized

32. How often do you visit the Wintonbury Mall?



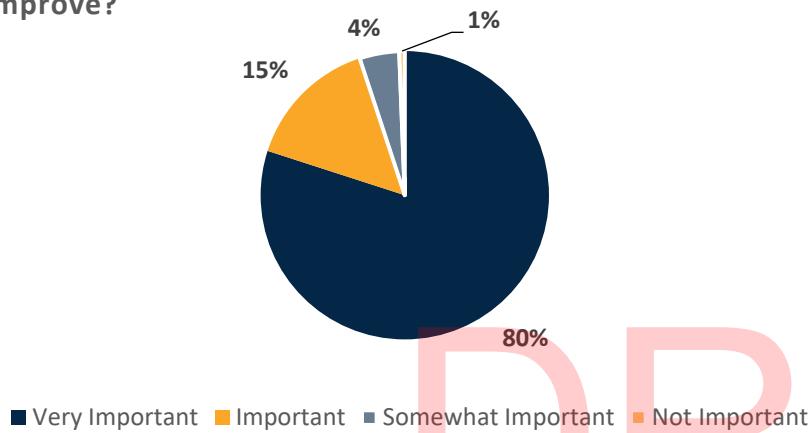
■ Weekly ■ Monthly ■ Rarely ■ Never

TOWN CENTER MASTER PLAN
TOWN OF BLOOMFIELD

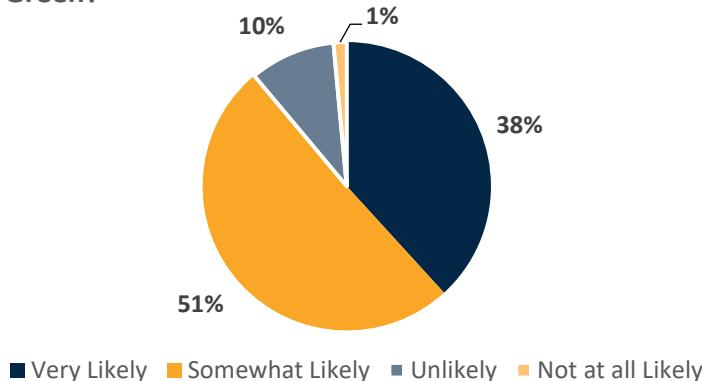
Community Survey Results

Bloomfield Town Center Plan

33. How important is it for the Wintonbury Mall to improve?



34. How likely are you to participate in community events on the Town Green?



35. Which community events would you most likely attend on the Town Green?

