

South Norwalk

planning study

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South Norwalk Planning Study

Prepared for:
The City of Norwalk

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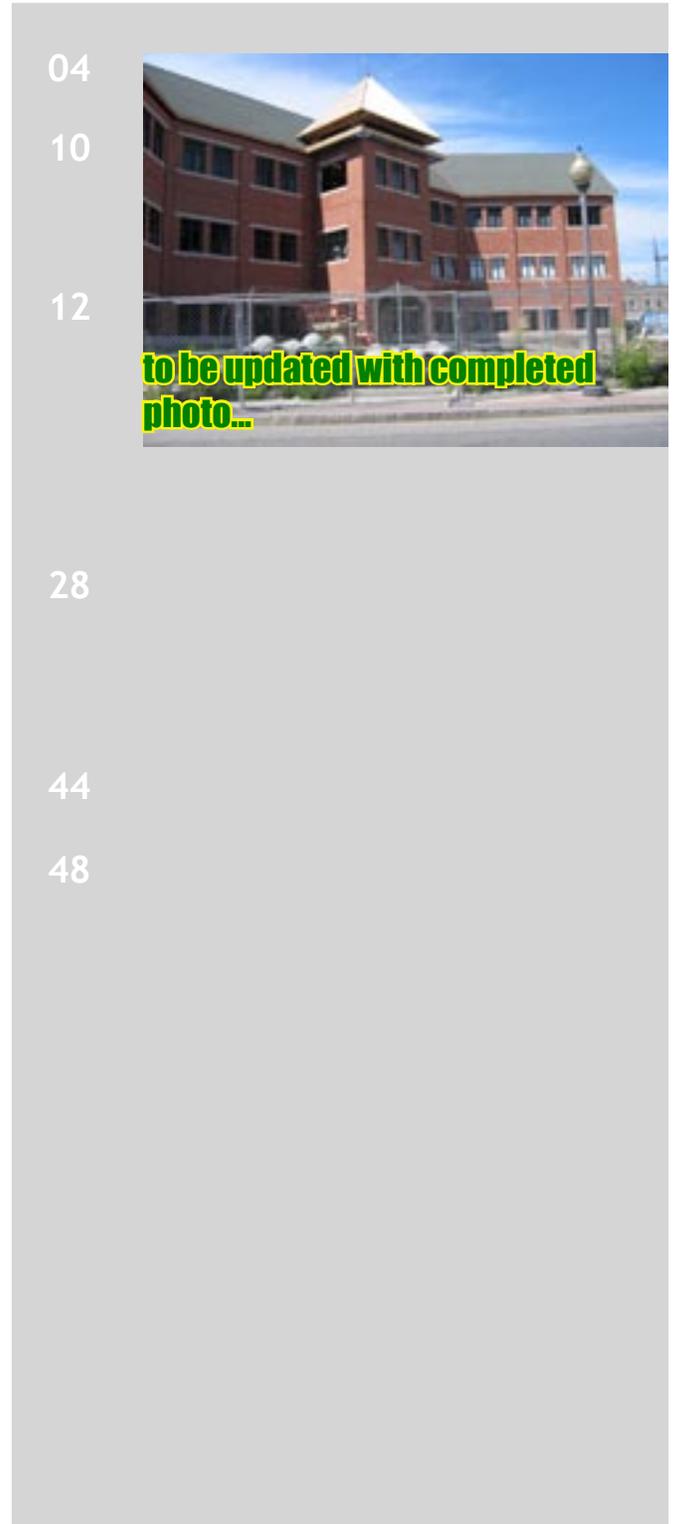
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Executive Summary



Between 1990 and 2000, the number of vacant housing units in Norwalk decreased by 37.4%

South Norwalk's Challenge in the 21st Century

South Norwalk is poised to see dramatic changes in the coming years. The area south of Washington Street, bounded by Water Street, Dr. Martin Luther King Drive, and Concord Avenue has historically been a mix of industry and working class neighborhoods. But with the success and popularity of in-town living—a national trend—and with nearby South Norwalk station providing viable alternatives to unbearable regional auto commutes, the neighborhood is squarely in the path of rising home prices, rental rates, and increased pressures from private developers. The district has among the highest proportion of rental units (and non-resident landlords) in the city, and has experienced dramatic increases in housing costs.

Housing

Although housing is a primary concern, existing residents are divided on the best course for the neighborhood in this regard. Many voiced concerns about affordability, particularly for renters, while an equal number expressed desire to prevent the concentration of lower-income developments. Many residents expressed a desire for a stable community that would allow current residents—many of whom are low and moderate income—to remain, even while conditions improve. Others expressed a wish for themselves and their neighbors to be able to capitalize on rising values and on an influx of higher-income residents. Finding a middle ground that allows for positive improvements while ensuring that existing residents are not priced-out is a challenge facing many communities across the country.

Affordable housing is an essential ingredient to a city's economic health. Working residents of all incomes need housing in neighborhoods that are healthy, safe, and that are located within commuting distance of jobs and services. In desirable communities, and those that are rapidly becoming more desirable such as South Norwalk, housing affordability has become an issue that requires a comprehensive response.

Open Space and Recreation

A scarcity of recreational opportunities was a common concern among residents who attended the four public gatherings during the planning process. Yet rather than a lack of open space—there are two open spaces in the study area, the school grounds at the Columbus Magnet School and Ryan Park—the condition of the spaces and the features within them proved to be hardships for residents. In a paper survey distributed in October 2004 to



South Norwalk
Planning Study
Area

SOUTH NORWALK STUDY AREA



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residents near Ryan Park—the only park open for general public use—fewer than half of the respondents had used the park in the last month, either out of concerns for safety, a lack of appropriate recreational equipment, or poor maintenance. Most cited concerns about the lack of appropriate facilities for children and teens. In public meetings, residents voiced an unmet need for supervised play opportunities for youth, and supported the development of pay-as-you-go recreational facilities that would be affordable to local residents.

Opportunities for Smart Growth

South Norwalk is ideally situated to take advantage of public transit. Like many older neighborhoods, it has local infrastructure—bus lines, trains and even highway access—superior to many other neighborhoods in the City. The study area is served by the Northeast’s premier rail corridor with commuter rail and service to major employment centers such as Stamford and New York City; the station is also the transfer point for the Danbury Line. Additionally, South Norwalk is served by three of the city’s bus (“Wheels”) routes. Yet despite these assets, current development patterns fail to support increased transit ridership. A combination of appropriate density and a better-designed intermodal transportation center has been shown in similar settings to increase ridership of public transit. Households within walking distance to transit can have lower levels of automobile ownership if a mix of shopping and services is nearby, and pedestrian-friendly streets encourage walking. Only a quarter of vehicle-trips are for work commutes; the long-term goal is to replace non-work trips with walking.

Summary of Key Recommendations

- Perform an intermodal feasibility study.
- Create an enhanced intermodal station at the South Norwalk Station.
- Plan for active around-the-clock uses at the South Norwalk Station.
- Ensure a quality public environment at South Norwalk Station.
- Encourage new station-area uses to share the current parking supply.
- Refurbish Ryan Park to suit residents needs and establish park constituency.
- Develop and encourage facilities for supervised recreation for young people.
- Encourage housing for a variety of income levels, tenure, and family sizes.
- Use publicly owned parcels to provide long-term affordability.
- Amend zoning to remove barriers to development types that fulfill planning goals on South Main Street.
- Explore shared parking options.
- Preserve architectural qualities of South Main Street; establish a Village District along South Main Street.

Key Recommendations

Perform an intermodal feasibility study. Determine in greater detail the constraints and opportunities for intermodal improvements at the South Norwalk Station: Make turning movement counts during the morning, midday, and afternoon peak periods at 10 intersections surrounding the station; Perform an Origin and Destination (O&D) Study of current users of the station including Kiss & Ride, Private van services, taxi, and bus patrons; Perform public outreach to determine need for expansion of existing bus service / new service; Determine current ridership levels and compare to capacity of the existing bus service at the train station; Canvas employers in the city regarding current employee usage of the station; Determine feasibility of expanding/re-routing bus service at the station; Determine the traffic impacts on the intersections surrounding the site; Identify off-site improvements, if any, needed to mitigate the impact of the enhanced station; Prepare schematic design of access drives; Perform a soils analysis of the area; Prepare a construction cost estimate. (SWRPA, the regional planning entity serving the southwestern portion of Connecticut, has approved \$250,000 for this study.)



Create an enhanced intermodal station at the South Norwalk Station. Local residents and commuters will use the South Norwalk Station in greater numbers in the future. The anticipated modest increase in Wheels buses and potential additional bus lines at the South Norwalk Station will increase the transit options for local residents. Added capacity on corporate and public commuter shuttle lines will serve the needs of businesses located at Merritt Seven and new office uses planned for Riverwalk and the Webster Block. To provide efficient service, South Norwalk station should act as a sub-hub. This means that each mode should be coordinated with others, and offer consistency in timing, stopping locations within the station, and service levels. Connections between modes should be well communicated and efficient to all users and potential users.

Plan for active around-the-clock uses at the South Norwalk Station. Private development around the South Norwalk Station can greatly affect the rider experience and safety of transit riders. Active ground level uses, such as retail stores and restaurants, provide pedestrian activity, thereby adding “eyes on the street” and enhancing informal security mechanisms. Any future modifications to zoning should further encourage these uses.

Ensure a quality public environment at South Norwalk Station. The public realm of the South Norwalk Station, including

Executive Summary



all boarding platforms and weather protection elements, should inspire confidence, comfort, and pride. Surrounding development should assist in the construction and upkeep of this environment as if it were a town square. One method would be to allow surrounding developments to gain open space credit for enhancements to the square. Instead of meeting the zoning code requirement for 30% open space, surrounding parcels could contribute to the town square in the form of funding or direct improvements. This would ensure a sizable, high-quality public realm in this important civic location, and encourage adjacent uses to remain engaged with it.



Encourage new station-area uses to share the current parking supply. At present, demand for commuter parking there seems to have been met by the 800-space garage. As the eastbound surface parking lots now used by daily commuters are redeveloped for housing and other uses, these public parking spaces should be replaced (and increased only a modest amount) on two below grade levels under an expanded bus turn-around. These spaces could be shared by commuters and a variety of non-peak uses that can be introduced as the area is redeveloped. Recreation, restaurants, and retail are good candidates for sharing parking with commuters. Housing near the station could also utilize commuter parking structures for overflow spaces on evenings and weekends.



Refurbish Ryan Park to suit residents needs and establish park constituency. Ryan Park requires refurbishment and new recreational uses that respond to resident needs. A process—with resident input through workshops and collaborative design methods—should be established to redesign the park. Local organizations and abutters must be identified that will oversee the design and implementation process and share support, supervision, and maintenance of the park with the City. Program components and operators should be identified that will activate the park to discourage unwanted activities. Public or private funds should be sought for an eventual complete reconstruction of the park beyond the more immediate installation of new trees.

Develop and encourage facilities for supervised recreation for young people. The City should recruit recreational facilities, either public or private, that provide affordable recreational opportunities for residents, particularly young teens. Supervised indoor facilities should be recruited to expand options in South Norwalk. Locations near public transit would be accessible to residents in South Norwalk and the surrounding city and region. An affordable pay-as-you-go facility should establish programs that will ensure

regular local access for families with limited incomes.

Encourage housing for a variety of income levels, tenure, and family sizes. Current zoning should be modified to encourage medium density housing in the study area. Barriers to housing should be removed while design standards increased to ensure high quality projects that include affordable units mixed with market rate units. The neighborhood should strive for a mix of rental and ownership options.

Use publicly owned parcels to provide long-term affordability. Publicly owned parcels at the intermodal South Norwalk Train Station and at Day Street should be developed with a mix of housing types that provide affordable options for South Norwalk residents. Public ownership allows the City to establish targets for affordability, ownership type, and unit mix on these parcels as part of a comprehensive affordable housing strategy.

Amend zoning to remove barriers to development types that fulfill planning goals on South Main Street. Neighborhood Business Zoning in this area should be extended to include parcels facing South Main Street on both sides, on the blocks between Monroe and Concord streets. On the eastern side, NB zoning should extend all the way to Water Street to allow multi-family residential without precluding small industrial businesses. Extend the height limit in NB from 2.5 stories to 45 feet to allow mixed use on South Main Street. Local merchants and small-scale retailers should be encouraged on South Main Street.

Explore shared parking options. Partnerships between retailers and civic institutions such as churches and schools should be established to better utilize existing parking resources along the street. Improved paving of parking areas and signage as well as increased on-street parking should be explored to increase parking options in anticipation of more active retail use on the street.

Preserve architectural qualities of South Main Street; establish a Village District along South Main Street. A standard front setback should be established for parcels facing both sides of South Main Street, to protect the historic and visual resources along this corridor. Design guidelines and/or the establishment of a Village District should be considered as a mechanism to implement stricter control over building massing and placement as well as landscape requirements. Either route would ensure more control and scrutiny of projects that encroach into historic building setbacks, and threaten to erode historic elements.



A. Introduction



The Planning Process

Gathered information: past plans and current proposals, historical information, GIS mapping and demographic data.

Conducted interviews with: environmental advocates, some members of City planning and zoning (staff and commissioners), City parks staff, SoNo Business Association, land owners, community residents, leaders of area institutions, and others.

Site reconnaissance: visited the site and documented land use, vehicular circulation, pedestrian circulation and access, open space.

Identification of opportunity areas: where changes are possible and desirable.

Refinement of proposals for opportunity areas:

- Reviewed by some members of the Planning Commission, South Norwalk Planning Committee, Norwalk Redevelopment Agency and others occurred at every stage of reporting.
- Public gatherings, open to all interested parties, were convened in the evenings in large indoor meeting spaces. These occurred at three different times: the 50%, 75%, and 90% levels of completion.

Purpose of the Study

Every ten years, the City of Norwalk updates its *Plan of Conservation and Development*. As part of the current effort, the City is conducting special community processes, with the help of consultants, to look closely at specific neighborhoods undergoing great changes due to external pressures.

South Norwalk is one of the areas experiencing significant change and pressure. The purpose of the *South Norwalk Planning Study* is to ensure that the City's updated *Plan*—the tool that guides private development, public investment, and zoning and other regulatory instruments—reflects present conditions as well as current community sentiment for the future of the neighborhood.

This planning process has been conducted cooperatively, through the work of a consultant team that has been guided by a variety of inputs (see sidebar at left). Leading the consultant group through the process was an Advisory Committee representative of all stakeholders, and large public gatherings held in the evenings and advertised and open to all interested parties gave the team the opportunity to hear from many residents.

The issues included within the scope of the *Plan of Conservation and Development* are primarily of a physical nature. Thus the consultant team has focused its analysis on existing land uses and transportation patterns, as well as the regulations that govern them.

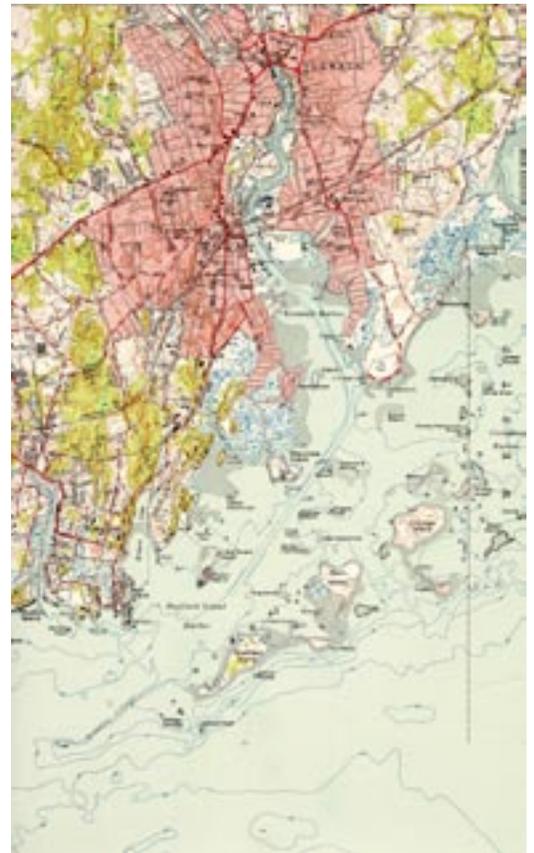
Challenges + Opportunities

Norwalk is extremely fortunate to contain a stop on two rail lines—the Metro North and Danbury lines—as well as a system of buses and shuttles that offer residents and workers a variety of options for travel to, from, and within the city. Exploring ways to maximize the benefits of the South Norwalk Train Station for the people of Norwalk was one mandate for the *South Norwalk Planning Study*. While currently a successful public facility, South Norwalk Station can in many ways increase its efficiency, attractiveness, security, and capacity to meet the demand increases imminent over coming years.

Just as the station area itself will certainly undergo transformation as demands upon it increase, the privately-held properties adjacent to it are increasingly coveted for redevelopment. With a community-led plan in place, proposals for these station-area properties can be influenced in such a way that they consider the neighborhood’s broader land use, density, and design goals.

Other elements of the South Norwalk neighborhood can be made to perform better with the guidance of a well-conceived land use and urban design plan. There is limited public open space in the immediate neighborhood, and collaboration between the City and community residents can determine how these places can be redesigned so that they serve existing needs. This plan has tried to begin that process. However, the need for recreational opportunities for youth is great, and it calls for a more comprehensive and creative exploration of the many available options for sport, leisure, cultural, and educational activities for younger residents.

Impacts upon the local housing market are being felt in South Norwalk. While some are reaping rewards from increased values and their effects upon the neighborhood, others are wondering where renters in search of affordable options will go for housing in Norwalk in the future. Countering the diminishing affordable housing stock in the face of rapid and widespread rise in privately owned units calls for strategies that consider the issue at a broader scale.





In many cities and towns, the blocks near a major train station are a center of activity for residents and workers.

Precedents



Trends in Planning

Transit-Oriented Development

Privately held properties around train stations are increasingly coveted for new development, and new ideas have emerged to suggest how these important places can be improved in a way that achieves multiple planning goals. Transit-oriented development, or “TOD,” is the idea that all building occurring around transit lines should be done in a way that improves the local station, augments local ridership, and puts greater flexibility in the daily lives of area residents and commuters. In the last half of the twentieth-century, development in this country largely abandoned the characteristics through which it responded to the needs of transit users before the second world war. TOD may have become a national movement in recent years in response to our growing weariness of the inefficiencies and inequities related to the dominance of development that is *not* transit-oriented. (Such frustrations include having to rely almost entirely on private automobiles, and living with public realms designed primarily to accommodate vehicles rather than individuals on foot or bike.) TOD comprises a number of strategies that shape development following the principles below, all of which aim to offer greater choice in how we live, work and conduct our free time:

- Make the most of every transit station, a community’s link to a broad system connecting jobs and homes.
- More and better options for walking and taking transit make a community more equitable by offering independent travel opportunities to all incomes, all abilities, and all ages.
- Location-efficient land use means increased housing around transit, for a variety of persons and a variety of households. This has several benefits: more of these residents’ trips can be made by combinations of walking and taking transit, creating a population that does not have to take a car out on the road in order to get to work. Less congestion and less demand for parking result.
- An improved public realm—including well-designed sidewalks, streets, and open spaces—should make walking easy and highly attractive. More residents out doing their business on foot helps keep streets safe, and makes for a better environment for smaller urban businesses.
- More variety in retail and services along pedestrian ways near the station helps commuters and residents *on foot* conduct their shopping and errands in fewer, shorter trips.

Intermodal Stations

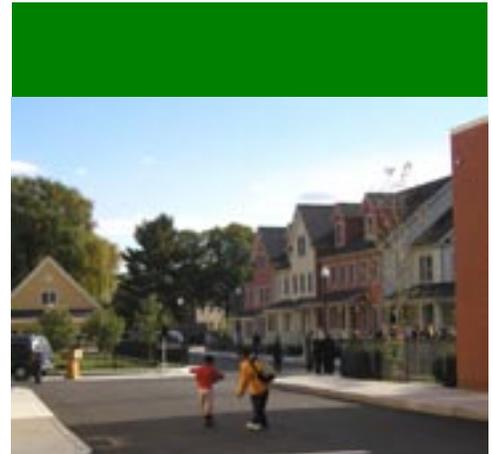
Emphasizing that good planning around public transit will enable us to meet multiple planning goals, the State of Connecticut is asking local land use planning in these areas—particularly where redevelopment is likely to occur—to help them capitalize on the tremendous public investment in these modes of travel. In fact, the regional planning group that helps direct transportation studies for Norwalk and nearby cities (the Metropolitan Planning Organization, or MPO) has approved \$250,000 in funding for an intermodal study for the South Norwalk station.

In order to increase public preference for it, transit usage must be a high-quality product/service. Connecticut's state-level and regional planning emphasizes the importance of making the best possible use of our train stations and the opportunities to connect them to surrounding local networks. By providing clear, reliable, efficient connections among our varied mass transportation options—which include water transport, trains, buses, shuttles, and others—we increase the performance, appeal, and overall value of each individual system. Transit becomes a more viable option for more people, more frequently.

How we conduct development around train stations, our ability to connect them to other services, and the heightened priority level stations are taking on government agendas are by no means exclusive to Connecticut or to this country. Indeed, the US is following the many examples of transit villages that for many years have been a key component of urban life in Europe and elsewhere.

Mixed-Income Housing

In many places around the country, communities are finding that mixed-income housing development is a successful and well-received solution to disagreements around the affordability of housing. In theory, mixed-income housing can offer the social advantages of inclusion among all economic groups, whereas prior generations of affordable housing strategy tended to isolate the poor. When management was not able to maintain these communities, an array of problems resulted, at times stigmatizing areas of concentrated subsidized housing. Today, there are many examples of developments that have found ways to provide for households of a variety of means while achieving economic success. In the tightest housing markets, cross-subsidization among the units within a mixed-income project is possible, reducing the need for public funding.



New mixed-income housing in Boston.

“Our market assessment shows that at least a quarter of all households that will be looking for housing in the next 20 years—14.6 million households—will be looking to rent or buy housing within a half mile of fixed-guideway transit stops.”

- From *“Hidden in Plain Sight: Capturing the Demand for Housing Near Transit,”* FTA report November 2004

B. Analysis



Neighborhood Institutions

- Many churches
- NEON
- Police Headquarters
- Side by Side and Columbus schools
- Housing Authority offices
- South Norwalk Library
- Norwalk Community Health Center
- South Norwalk Community Center
- [Community policing deleted]

Land Use

Mixed-Use Character

The 90-acre study area contains a broad variety of activities, a mixed-use characteristic now actively sought by communities across the nation where development has been overly segregated, with results that are inefficient and uninspired. Existing cheek by jowl just a few hundred yards from Norwalk's celebrated harbor one can find two schools, many pockets of retail, two parks, a number of churches, several small light industrial operations, a handful of office buildings, a major train station, and a few hundred units of housing, among other things. Such mixed-use areas are among the most livable kinds of neighborhoods: local residents can find convenient shopping and easy access to community support services, while area workers have the option of finding housing within walking distance to their office or the transit on which they commute every day. The close proximity of different uses is a feature of sensible land use planning, and South Norwalk's existing combination is making it an increasingly attractive place for living and working.

Civic and Cultural Institutions

At the center of the study area, the new location of the Norwalk Police Headquarters is an addition to public facilities in the area that is anticipated to strengthen neighborhood security.

The strong presence of other kinds of community facilities in South Norwalk is clear in the land use diagram shown on page 15. Job-readiness facilities, schools, churches, and other locations offer multiple support services and places for assembling used frequently by area residents.

Industry

Several active industrial uses operate in the study area. A boat building company occupies a new facility on the corner of Day and Hanford streets, demonstrating how light industrial uses can coexist in close proximity to residences and contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood. Other small, light industries continue to function economically along Water Street, and are somewhat concentrated south of Concord Street (outside the study area). Despite a large portion of the study area being zoned for industrial uses, these activities are not as widespread here as they once were. The Mid-Harbor Plan, with a study area stretching along the east side of Water Street to the Harbor, suggested maritime commercial uses along the first 100 feet from the water, but suggests that both edges of Water Street itself should contain retail uses. The City owns a site on Day Street between Raymond

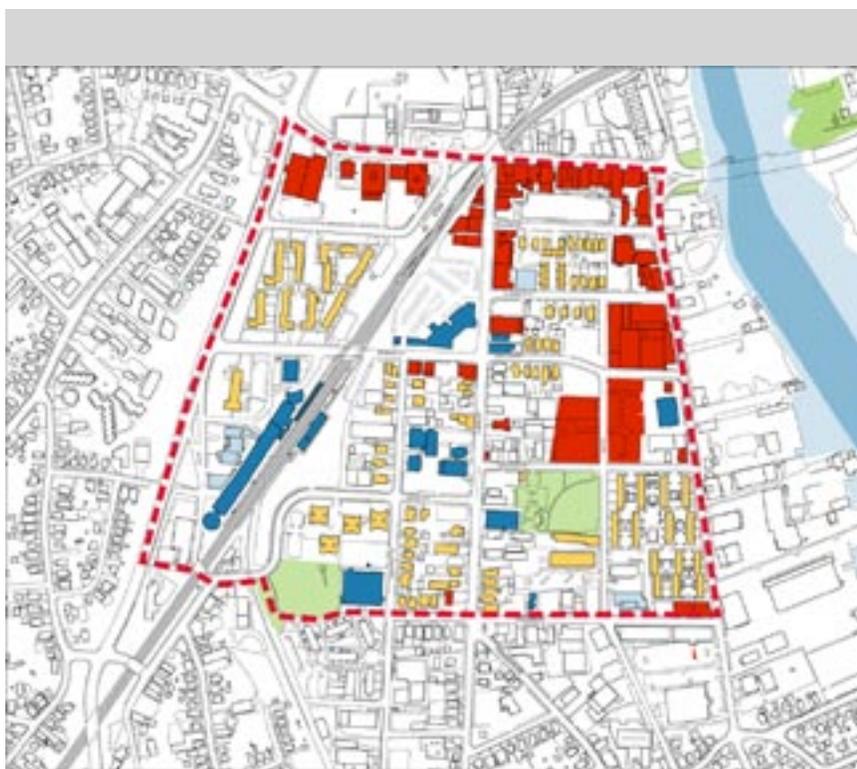
and Hanford streets that, because of prior agreements with other public entities, is restricted for industrial uses until 2008. However, the size of the parcel and the lack of direct interstate access may be prohibitive to today's industrial users. Escalated land values in South Norwalk will probably also deter additional industrial operations from relocating here.

Retail

Apart from the concentration of restaurants and boutiques on Washington Street and the upper blocks of South Main, remaining retail uses in the study area are somewhat scattered. Retail uses in one-story additions facing South Main Street on blocks farther south are relatively isolated, as are tenants on Water Street and streets running east-to-west. The Mid-Harbor Planning Study identified an interest among retail brokers for certain kinds of retail spaces in this area, particularly those requiring 8000-10000 s.f. floor plates. In addition, South Norwalk's neighborhood leaders and other residents have indicated in public gatherings that addi-



The boat building company at the corner of Day and Hanford streets demonstrates how light industrial uses can coexist with residences and add to the architectural character of the neighborhood.



SOUTH NORWALK STUDY AREA & LAND USE MAP



Land Use Diagram Key:

- Civic/Cultural
- Housing
- Commercial/Mixed-use
- Open Space
- Industrial



Land Use, continued

tional neighborhood retail, preferably along South Main Street, and ideally supportive of small and minority-owned businesses, is desired in the community. There is no grocery store in the neighborhood. While some residents suggested that parking requirements and low parking supply may be deterrents to small businesses interested in space on South Main, we observed high vacancy in a number of privately-owned lots as well as public spaces, which may suggest otherwise.

Housing

One of the most significant concerns to South Norwalk residents and other stakeholders is the need for additional housing. Yet while most parties agree that some additional housing is desirable, residents' opinions are much more varied regarding the appropriate amount, type, affordability level, and density.

For some time, housing values were low in this part of the city. While affordable residential opportunities were much-needed for renters within this expensive region of Connecticut, the substantial concentration of lower-income households compared to the rest of Norwalk has been a problem in the eyes of some residents, who point to the need for city-wide housing equity. Our focus area and adjacent neighborhoods contain many public housing units. With its low density and large amount of open space, Washington Village on Day Street is a particularly good place for households requiring public housing to live when small children are present.

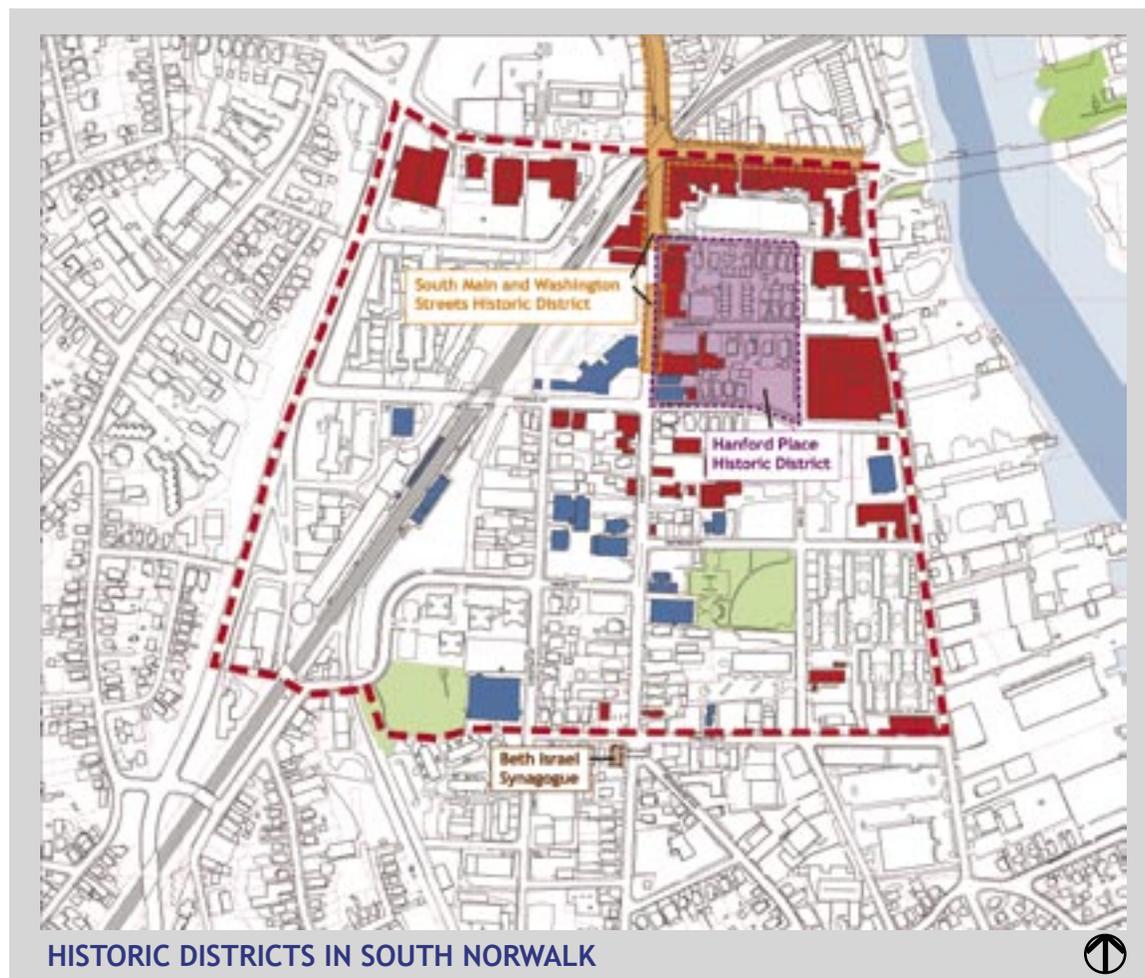
South Norwalk housing values have been rapidly increasing, however, as the City's other successes—including Washington Street retail—and the presence of the train station have made this neighborhood highly desirable to a broader range of incomes. Houses are being sold to entities from outside the community and city for prices that would have been unbelievable just a short while ago. While South Norwalk's current homeowners benefit, others are more adversely affected as rents skyrocket, forcing some to leave. The supply of affordable housing is diminishing.

This situation is common in cities around the country where the quality of life is increasing, and where there is population that is able to tap into the benefits. A tension arises among multiple viable housing goals: the rights of private owners to improve properties and realize the value increases, and the desire as a community to ensure that affordable housing is available to those who need it. The other issue here is the desire for neighborhoods across the

city to share the responsibility for affordable housing. Strategies that accommodate all of these goals simultaneously tend to hold the most promise for preventing widespread gentrification. Striving for a mixed-income approach, and for policies that address housing as a community concern, may be appropriate.

Historic Preservation

There are many properties in the study area that lie within historic districts listed on the National Register. The *Hanford Place Historic District* lies entirely within our study area, and the *South Main and Washington Streets Historic District* includes portions of those streets in our area, and also extends farther to the north. Other properties and structures not enjoying such formal recognition are yet examples of Norwalk's architectural heritage and character, and should be considered for appropriate recognition. A portion of these—and others that lack such significance—are visibly in need of rehabilitation. Preserving architecturally significant buildings is a significant and crucial component in perserving the residential character of a neighborhood.



Analysis



South Main Street is presently a dividing line between adjacent Neighborhood Business (NB) and Residential D zones.



Small, light industrial businesses can coexist within the neighborhood without negative effect.

Zoning

This planning study was in substantial part an attempt to determine what uses are desired and needed in South Norwalk. Once this has been established, zoning can be recalibrated to make such uses possible and probable as redevelopment occurs here.

In addition to controlling for a specific set of activities, zoning also regulates heights, setbacks, bulk and density, parameters that greatly influence the impact of new development of all kinds. Beyond recommending uses, this plan suggests how the form of new additions to the neighborhood can help improve the viability of development and bolster the livability of South Norwalk overall.

There are six different zoning designations—“districts”—present in the South Norwalk study area. This condition has evolved over many years and through multiple rezoning processes, as the City responded to changing physical, social, and economic conditions.

Does current zoning allow for desired uses?

Housing of various types and prices is desired throughout the study area, as are additional recreation opportunities for all ages. Neighborhood retail—especially locally owned businesses—are sought for South Main Street. Where more than one use is desired for the same area, a mixed-use arrangement is welcomed by the neighborhood.

Industrial-1 zones, which govern a large portion of South Norwalk, prohibit multifamily residential, despite the existence of such—as well as the desire for more—in the neighborhood. Similarly, the Residential-D zones covering a significant area do not allow retail uses, limiting the ability for mixed-use development to occur, even along South Main Street. (One side falls under this designation and the other lies in a Neighborhood Business zone. South Main Street should have the same rules for both sides of the street.)

Transit-oriented development calls for uses near to transit nodes that offer additional vehicle-free opportunities for neighborhood and commuter lifestyles; this includes housing, appropriate retail and commercial uses, and mixtures thereof. This plan suggests ways to remove obstacles in the zoning code to mixed-use development of appropriate scale throughout the study area.

Does current zoning allow for and encourage density around the train station?

The South Norwalk Station Design District zoning encourages both mixed-use and multifamily uses in a density higher than that of surrounding residential districts. However, the density is not equal to what is promoted in the Washington Street Design District, and principles for transit-oriented development describe the desirability of a higher housing density here (see pages 12-13), to encourage greater use of transit and to accommodate households requiring less use of cars and fewer parking spaces.

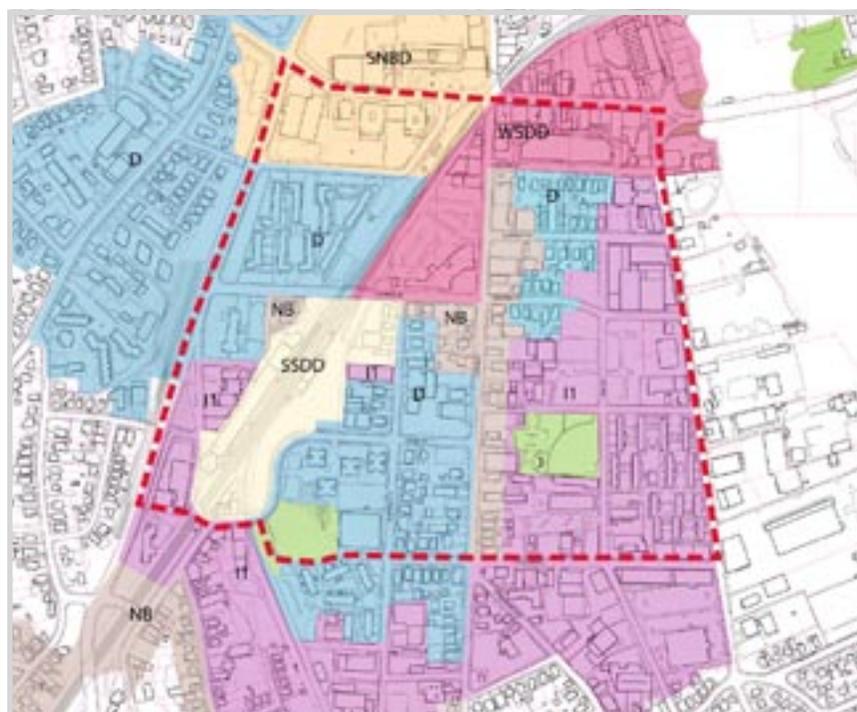
In addition, the open space requirement around the station may be excessive. It might be better to think about ways to encourage proponents to contribute to the creation of a significant new public open space in place of requiring them to provide space on site. This could help achieve desired density around the station, with the added benefit of introducing truly public spaces in an important civic location, rather than a series of privatized ones.

Does current zoning preclude inappropriate uses?

The public process for South Norwalk did not identify any type of use that is both a likely addition and a perceived threat to the neighborhood. Zoning currently prohibits heavy industry, however the small lot sizes and transportation issues may already prove prohibitive to today's heavy industrial needs.



Day Street contains many different kinds of uses, including housing, office, and community facilities as shown in this photograph looking north from Concord Street.



Zoning Diagram Key:	
Study Area boundary	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Residential D	□
Neighborhood Business	□
Industrial 1	□
South Norwalk Station Design District	□
Washington Street Design District	□
Open Spaces	□

ZONING MAP





Around the station facilities, safety and comfort for pedestrians should be improved.



Transportation

Public Transportation In Norwalk

Transportation that is operated by the Norwalk Transit District includes Wheels buses and shuttles, offering connections at a “hub” facility at Burnell Boulevard in the Wall Street area. Because there is only one place to make bus connections in the city, South Norwalk residents, where the percentage of commuters taking public transit is twice the Norwalk average, at times must travel a great distance from their eventual destinations to make a bus connection. Also, there is a desire for additional service on Sundays, when residents might reach additional work shifts if the necessary transportation was available. Such “community-oriented transportation planning” could increase the importance of the station in the lives of its nearest neighbors.

At South Norwalk Station, riders have the opportunity to embark on one of several types of transportation options, or to switch from one kind of travel to another (see sidebar p. 21). Thus it is already functioning as an “intermodal” facility to some extent, and a key node in a circulation system that serves an entire region and helps reduce private auto use on already congested highway networks.

South Norwalk Station

An enhanced intermodal station has been suggested as a future direction for the South Norwalk Train Station on the New Haven, or south, side. Access to the train station occurs on both sides of the tracks with the New York (north) side accommodating the majority of the commuter parking, the kiss-and-ride (dropoff/pickup area), Wheels shuttles, and private van services for the major employers in the area. Currently the activity on the New Haven (south) side of the station includes parking for commuters, taxi pickup and dropoff, and the Norwalk Transit District buses (see diagram page 23). Wheels currently has 3 bus routes that service the station: Route 10—including Special 10—Route 11, and Route 12. (While not nearing the station, Route 9 buses do skirt the edge of our study area, along Washington and Water streets.) The present schedules for the various routes generally clusters the buses at the top and bottom of each hour, although they are not timed to connect with the arrival of trains.

Norwalk Taxi attempts to have at least four taxis waiting for each train that arrives at the station. During busy times they may have as many as 8 to 10 waiting at the station at once. During the peak commuter hours the private van services have as many as 8 vans servicing South Norwalk station. It assumed that the kiss-and-ride area would remain on the New York side of the station so that private vehicles can be separated from the public and professional vehicles.

Connecticut Limo carries travelers between the South Norwalk



BUS ROUTES AND ONE-WAY STREET NETWORKS



station and JFK, LaGuardia and Newark airports, having on average one or two vehicles at the South Norwalk station every hour. (Vehicles headed to JFK and LaGuardia leave the station on the hour, every hour, from 5:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and the limos make the return trip at about the same frequency. There are five trips to and from the Newark airport each day). The service's Suburban-type vehicles pick up and drop off travelers on the east side of the station, toward the northern end. The frequency of this service is not anticipated to change in the near term, and the shuttles can continue to share spaces with buses.

This information describes minimum space requirements for meeting existing needs. However, additional space will be needed to meet future demands as more commuters wish to use the public/private mass transportation systems. The Norwalk Transit District has expressed a desire to create a secondary hub—a sub-hub—at the South Norwalk Station, if an enhanced intermodal station is built. If this were to happen, there could be twice the number of bus drop-off spaces required, and possibly more. As new commercial developments such as Riverwalk (a 1 million square foot Class A office complex) are constructed, there will be an even greater pressure on the bus and private shuttle operations to service the South Norwalk Train Station. It is likely that private shuttles will experience significant growth in the future, possibly tripling the number of vehicles using the station. The sidebar at right lists projected increases in service for each type of vehicle.

Due to the limited sight distance along Monroe Street between

Intermodal Demand at South Norwalk Station

	Current	Future
Wheels Buses	4	5-6*
Public Shuttles	6	12
Private Shuttles	5	10
Connecticut Limousine	2	2
Taxis	15	15-20

**Plus better connections between lines*



Analysis



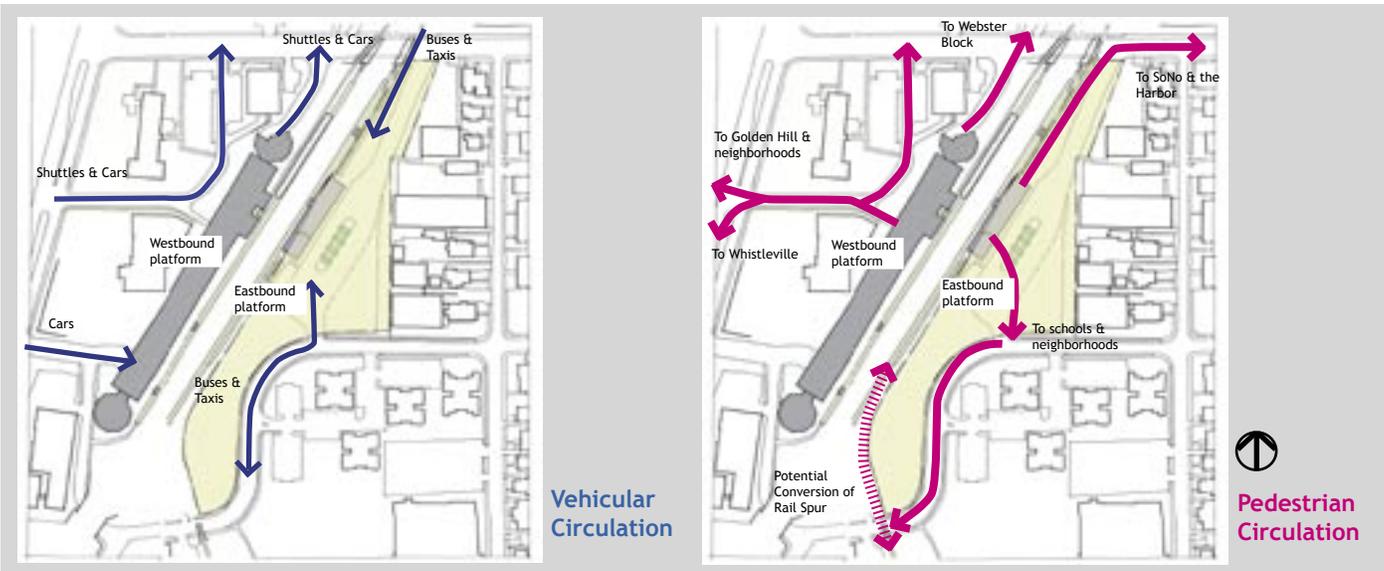
The drivers of buses and other vehicles turning onto Monroe Street from the station have difficulty seeing oncoming traffic from the west.

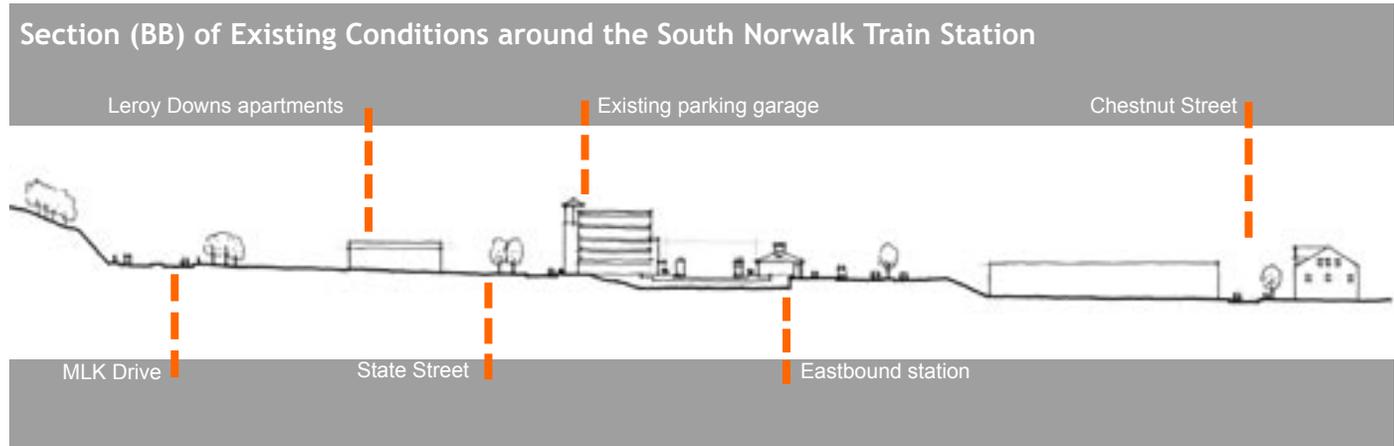
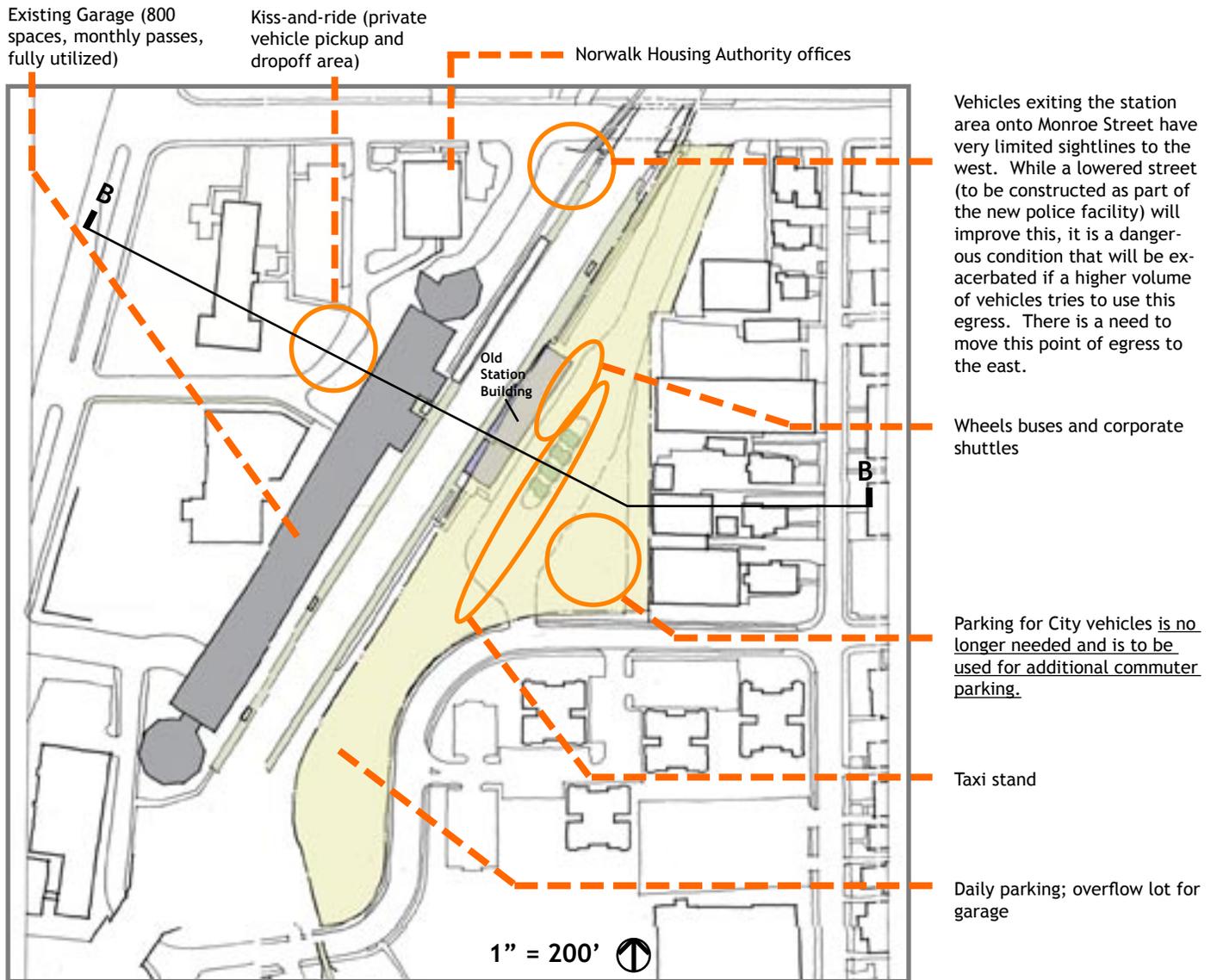
the railroad bridge and Chestnut Street, locating an access point to the enhanced intermodal station along Monroe Street would be difficult. Constructing the access to the station from Chestnut Street represents another option. Locating an entrance-only point along Monroe Street while placing an exit along Chestnut Street is also feasible, if the internal layout can accommodate the resulting circulation patterns. With the completion of the Norwalk Police Headquarters at the northwest corner of Monroe and South Main streets, the total traffic volumes along Monroe are anticipated to be 559 vehicles during the morning peak hour and 589 vehicles during the afternoon peak hour. While the parking is fully utilized at present, a long-standing waiting list was recently fully accommodated and therefore no longer exists.

Train Station Environment

The South Norwalk Station is set back from major roads on all sides. There are few public uses on these streets near the station, and little pedestrian activity occurs there. On the east side, surface parking areas for the public and for municipal vehicles form much of the front yard for the attractive and low-scaled eastbound station building. A stand for taxis contains a long train of yellow vehicles at the busiest times of day as well.

Pedestrian ways at the station are present in the form of sidewalks in some areas, although clear, exclusive connections to surrounding areas are not offered in many of the directions where significant foot traffic occurs. Chain link fences are common, often right up against the places where pedestrians walk. There is a perception that the area is at times unsafe. Unkempt private properties abutting the station property also serve to detract from pedestrian comfort here. Providing better pedestrian—and bicycle—connections to the station from the immediate neighborhood will help enhance its effect upon and service to nearby residents.





Analysis



Although it is one of only two green open spaces in South Norwalk, Ryan Park is not widely used or programmed.



There is a need for supervised recreation for all ages of youth in South Norwalk. There are very few options for indoor recreation at present.



Although some enhancements are needed (as outlined in the recently completed Mid-Harbor Plan), Veterans Park is well-used as a large-field recreation and sport destination.

Public Open Spaces + Recreation

Despite the presence of many kinds of uses in the study area, there is still a major deficit in recreational opportunities, especially for children and teenagers. The need and desire for additional recreation, both indoor and outdoor, both free and “pay-as-you-go,” was often mentioned as a high priority among South Norwalk’s neighborhood goals.

Proximity to the Harbor and Veterans Park

South Norwalk is, all along its eastern edge, no more than a few hundred yards from the Mid-Harbor. Planning for that area emphasized the need for neighborhood connections and maintaining public uses and access at the water’s edge. If they are achieved, all of these goals will help South Norwalk residents make use of this tremendous local resource. Currently small boat rentals are available to the public there, and SoNo Seafood is a relatively affordable waterside dining experience. Yet given the extensive length of the Harbor here, many more such facilities, at a range of prices, will be necessary to make it feel like a truly public, active place.

There are six east-west streets that connect South Main Street—the central spine of South Norwalk—to Water Street, which runs parallel and adjacent to the water. When successful, such cross streets serve as excellent connections between neighborhoods and their waterfronts. While east-west streets in the northern portion of our study area (Haviland and Elizabeth, for example) have become steadily more active as strengthening retail and residential projects have occurred, those farther south have fewer public uses and more empty lots, which do not serve to draw people along them, and therefore do not encourage local residents to traverse the neighborhood and access their waterfront.

The large recreational area of Veterans Park is within a short walk or driving distance to the neighborhood for able-bodied residents, and it contains many fields for active recreation. As decisions begin to be made among the many possible futures for the much smaller Ryan Park, it should be considered that the proximity of Veterans Park diminishes the need for large sports fields to be duplicated in the immediate neighborhood.

Ryan Park

Ryan Park is a City park of about 2.5 acres at the southwest corner of the Day and Raymond streets intersection. Occupying this site since the 1980s, the park is the location of large events in the neighborhood, such as Family Day. The park contains a baseball diamond that is infrequently used but at present is being used as a

soccer field, a small amphitheater that appears rarely used, a basketball court with a cracking ground surface, and surface parking that is shared with abutting properties including NEON (Norwalk Employment Opportunities Now). There are a few benches and walkways in the park, but there is relatively little use of these as well.

The presence of groups of unsupervised teenagers seems to affect the comfort of parents with younger children in the park. There seems to be little demand for a baseball diamond in the immediate neighborhood. Homeless persons are also among the more frequent users of the park, often finding themselves able to be alone there.

Apart from Ryan Park, the grounds at the Columbus Magnet School offer the only open green spaces located within a neighborhood with many very young residents. In October 2004, the City conducted a survey of adults and kids living nearby to try to gain a better understanding of what is desired locally for the future of this important but underutilized neighborhood park. (See box on next page.)

Indoor & Supervised Recreation

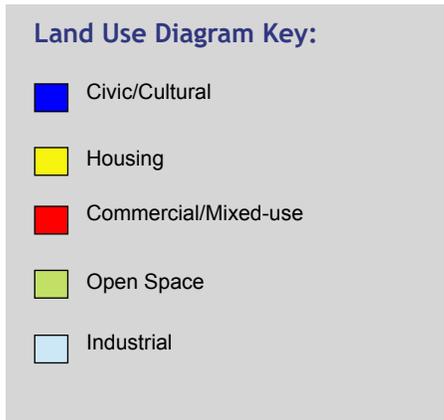
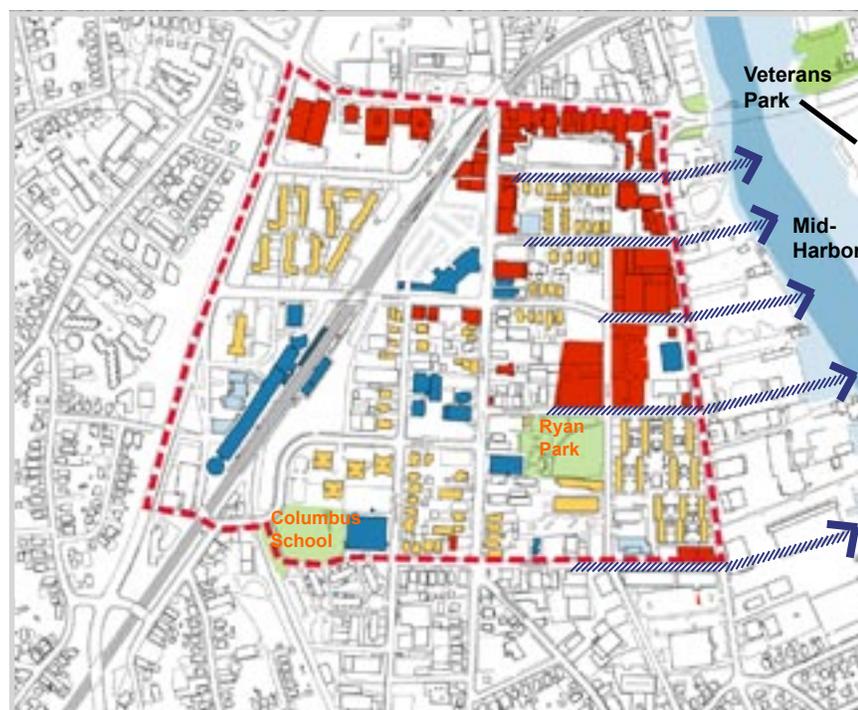
Norwalk has significant populations of children and teenagers. At present, there is little within the neighborhood for teenagers to do for recreation, and parents are not taking their children to existing



Neighborhood schools do not use Ryan Park for organized, daytime recreational pursuits. Due to real and perceived safety issues, fences line school grounds to keep anyone without school business well away from education facilities.



The grounds of the Columbus Magnet School offer students recreational opportunities, but are not open for general neighborhood use during school hours.



PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

Possible Pay-As-You-Go Recreational Facilities

- Bowling Alley: possibly in combination with evening entertainment
- “Mini” Chelsea Piers: batting cages, indoor driving range, games, etc.
- Health Clubs
- Ice Rinks



Two of the many activities at Chelsea Piers (NYC)

Public Open Spaces + Recreation, continued

open spaces due to unsupervised teenagers and the presence of adults; these groups are perceived not to use these places for the activities for which they were intended.

There has been considerable discussion of limited recreational opportunities at advisory committee and public meetings. While improvements and increased stewardship of Ryan Park can go a long way toward alleviating problems there, additional facilities will be necessary in the neighborhood. There is some consensus that indoor facilities, which might offer multiple options for low-cost, “pay-as-you-go” activities and pricing, would be welcome additions to the neighborhood.

Summary of Ryan Park Survey Results

In October 2004, the City of Norwalk administered a paper survey to solicit neighborhood opinion regarding current and desired conditions at Ryan Park. Conducted as part of the South Norwalk Planning Study, this survey aimed to hear from as many park users—and would-be park users—as possible about what would make it a more usable, comfortable place that makes positive contributions to the community. One hundred and thirty-seven individuals returned the 2-page survey, which is copied in its original form in the Appendices of this report. (The complete tabulated results of the returned surveys can also be found there.)

Many interesting and useful ideas appeared in the answers to the survey questions. More than half of the respondents had not been to the park in the last month or so, and about half indicated that they live within a five or ten minute walk of the park. Almost twice as many people walk to the park as drive to it, yet few people appear to ride bicycles to get there. Many respondents told us there are children in their households ranging in age from toddlers to teens, although most adults said they do not take children to Ryan Park. The basketball court seems to be the most widely used feature among both teenagers and younger children, with the outdoor performance space at NEON and park benches also being notably mentioned as features that are somewhat frequently used.

The hesitations and objections that many feel toward the park include fear about crime, a desire for better lighting, an opinion that the park is in poor condition, and a desire for other types of facilities or equipment than those that are currently available. There is interest in new park features such as areas for families with young children to play (including playground or jungle gym equipment), quiet places to sit and relax (including improved benches and tables), athletic fields and/or courts, and a water feature. Interestingly, most respondents find themselves regularly in the vicinity of Ryan Park when they make trips to other nearby institutions, especially places of worship.

The results of the survey echo what residents articulated at public gatherings. Without doubt, current activity in Ryan Park—and the perceptions that result from it—strongly influence the decision of many others to avoid going there. It is also clear that there needs to be more recreation opportunities for people in the neighborhood under the age of eighteen. Perhaps most importantly, the level of response to the survey effectively demonstrates that South Norwalk residents are highly interested and concerned in what happens at Ryan Park, regardless of whether they presently make frequent recreational visits there. (This survey was informal and not intended to be scientific, but rather to gain a preliminary idea of the kinds of community sentiments that exist about Ryan Park. A community-based design process will have to occur if the park is to become successful.)

South Norwalk Planning Principles

*Based on initial site analysis, interviews, and review of existing data and policy, the team developed the following **principles** for guiding planning in South Norwalk:*

- 1 Redesign open spaces to serve the recreational needs of all residents of the surrounding community. Provide additional supervised sports and recreation opportunities for youth.
- 2 Maintain a diverse residential population in South Norwalk by increasing the amount and variety of housing—including ownership options—for all income levels and many different sizes of families and households.
- 3 Remove barriers to new uses—including mixed-use—along South Main Street to enable development that fulfills planning goals.
- 4 Increase transit use at South Norwalk Station. Provide efficient, convenient, and safe transitions for travelers and commuters, and expand mass transit options for the neighborhood, thereby expanding the station as a true “sub hub” for transportation in Norwalk.
- 5 Encourage improvements to the public realm—including streets, sidewalks, open spaces, and neighborhood retail and neighborhood services—as well as new uses and appropriate density so that pedestrians are comfortable and secure, and find it desirable to reach some or all of their destinations by foot.
- 6 Preserve architecturally significant buildings.



C. The Plan



Introduction

Finding Opportunity Areas

At specific locations within the study area, coordinated changes to both public and privately-held sites can make substantial improvements to the neighborhood. With guidance from the principles established through this planning process, and with leadership and action from the City, these “opportunity areas” can bring beneficial changes to South Norwalk.

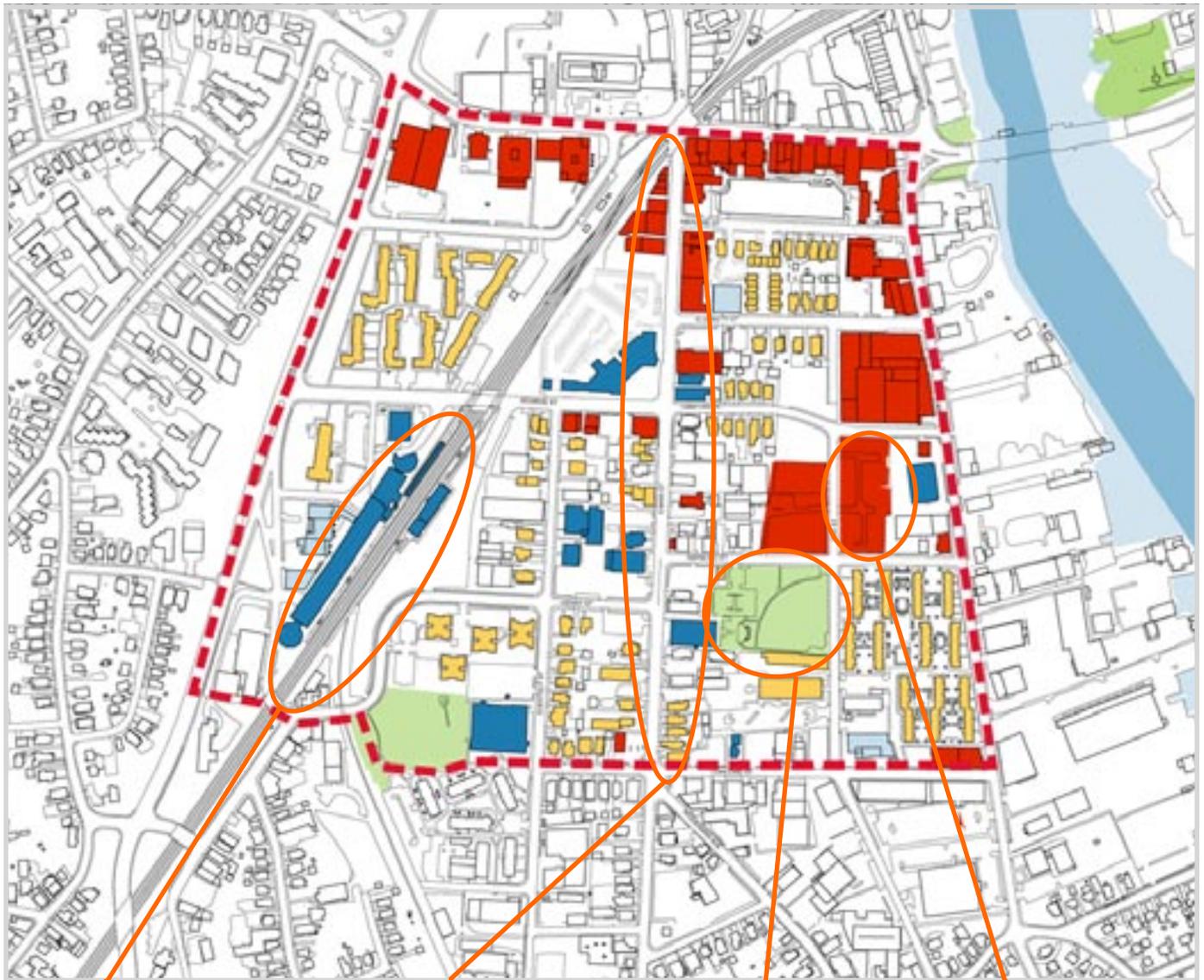
I. Studying the potential for enhancements to both the station itself and the uses around it was a clear mandate for this planning study. Therefore the vicinity of **South Norwalk station**, which abuts multiple properties that are likely to be redeveloped by private entities in the near future, was studied in detail as an Opportunity Area.

II. The centrally located **South Main Street** is positioned to act as a “spine” within South Norwalk. However the condition of certain properties, several remaining vacancies within the 5-block stretch between Washington and Concord streets, and a lack of consistency in building setbacks and other urban design features are preventing it from acting as a true Main Street. With a set of specific regulatory changes, South Main can once again act as a center of neighborhood activities.

III. This planning study was also asked to look at **Ryan Park**. Embedded at the geographic center of the South Norwalk neighborhood, this single City-owned park space must be more attractive and more usable for persons living in the neighborhood. This study begins an analysis of the current physical conditions, an examination of the design and programming, and relays initial feedback from neighborhood residents about the park and potential improvements there.

IV. **Day Street** between Hanford Place and Raymond Street is the site of a city-owned parcel currently leased to a private company for sale and storage of natural landscaping materials. This large parcel, which backs up to the parking lot for the Norwalk Community Health Center, may be ideal for development as both housing for the neighborhood as well as for some additional public parking serving harbor-related uses along Water Street, as identified in the Mid-Harbor planning study.

Opportunity Areas



I

South Norwalk Station:
To capitalize on this regional link and tremendous local resource, development and public investment can focus on improving the public realm, introducing uses that will share existing parking, bringing desirable new activity to the vicinity, and increasing mass transit options for the neighborhood.

II

South Main Street:
Sparse retail offerings may not fully meet the needs of local residents, and additional controls could bring a more consistent urban design character and other improvements to the pedestrian realm on this important neighborhood street.

III

Ryan Park & Vicinity:
The presence of an underutilized park in a neighborhood wanting for recreational options presents an opportunity for redesigning an open space with today's users and the neighborhood in mind.

IV

Day Street:
The city-owned parcel on Day Street can add to the supply of housing in the neighborhood while also providing additional public parking for patrons of businesses along Water Street and elsewhere in South Norwalk.



I. South Norwalk Train Station

Becoming a formal “sub-hub”

In Norwalk, the Burnell Boulevard Pulse Point is the main hub, and as such it is the one place where one can make a connection to all other lines in the Wheels bus system. There is no formal sub-hub in Norwalk at present, although South Norwalk station already has some characteristics of such a node, as it is where one switches between train, bus, and shuttle services. With a number of enhancements, the station could bring the system a valuable secondary connecting point:

- All vehicles entering and leaving the station should have designated, well-marked spaces at the station so a rider always knows where and when to go. Right now, all buses just pull up to the curb at any spot along it where there is space. In a true sub-hub, users know exactly how to make a specific connection; sleuthing and guessing are eliminated. Additionally, a canopy or shelter would be provided to not only shelter the people but also act as a way to identify each line through its unique color and letter code.
- The range of possible connections at the station should be better known among the community served by the station. Users need to know how many connections can be made, where to get each connection, and when each connection is possible. (This is in part a marketing issue.)
- As a sub-hub, the transit system could also provide a place where people could pick up bus schedules, route maps, and possibly ask questions (either of a person stationed there or through a dedicated phone/intercom line).
- The Danbury Branch connects to the New Haven Line at the South Norwalk Station, making it an even more important point of transfer in the region. Greater use of the Danbury Branch line is viewed as a possible key to relieving congestion on major regional highways, and SWRPA and ConnDOT have been studying the costs and benefits of improvements (including electrification) that are anticipated to decrease travel time and enable increased frequency. Norwalk should seek to enhance the ability of all modes of transportation to connect to this important rail line at the South Norwalk Station.
- Also, the Shore Line East commuter rail, which currently stops in Bridgeport and Stanford among other stations, should have at least one of the daily trains stop at the South Norwalk station.

Appropriate Uses

Uses needed in the neighborhood, and which support TOD principles such as adding transit riders and sharing existing parking supply (by demanding spaces at times outside the traditional workweek) should be located in this area. Such uses include housing, recreational uses, and retail that supports both neighborhood needs and commuters needs, such as restaurants. While the following pages specifically describe how publicly-owned land should be developed, abutting privately owned lands should be guided by similar considerations. It should be noted that many participants in the South Norwalk Planning process expressed that there is a strong need for a supermarket in this area.

Using the Topography to Accommodate Intermodal Program

There is a drop in grade between the eastbound station and Chestnut Street. Utilizing only the city-owned land east of the station, current surface parking spaces for private and municipal vehicles could be placed underground and slightly augmented. This would free a great deal of land around the station for accommodating future intermodal demand as well as the introduction of new uses. Future demand for buses and taxis—circulation as well as waiting spaces—could be accommodated in a surface loop in front of the eastbound station. (Please refer to the diagram on page 33.) The intermodal program could be further enhanced by a modest amount of public/private land swapping which would improve the efficiency of the site.

New housing around the station

Housing might be located on City-owned land on the Henry Street side of the station, making this a two-sided residential street as it was historically. This would appeal to those who wish to commute by train and bus, and the number of parking spaces per unit should be less here than in housing developments without such direct access to transit. Station-adjacent housing has proved viable in many cities, even those where the market is not as tight as in Norwalk.

In their November 2004 study, “Hidden in Plain Sight: Capturing the Demand for Housing Near Transit,” the Federal Transit Administration reported that demand for housing within walking distance of transit stops over the next twenty years would be equivalent to “at least a quarter of all households that will be looking for housing.” This important market assessment offers compelling evidence that preferences for housing supports the creation of transit-oriented development.



The Plan



Much of the retail on Monroe Street (above) appears to be undergoing improvement. As station use increases, blocks falling within a few minutes walk could meet the demand for services and eateries. Below, a successful commercial block in Boston provides a post office, eateries, and convenience shopping for the mixed-income community in which it is located.



South Norwalk Train Station, continued

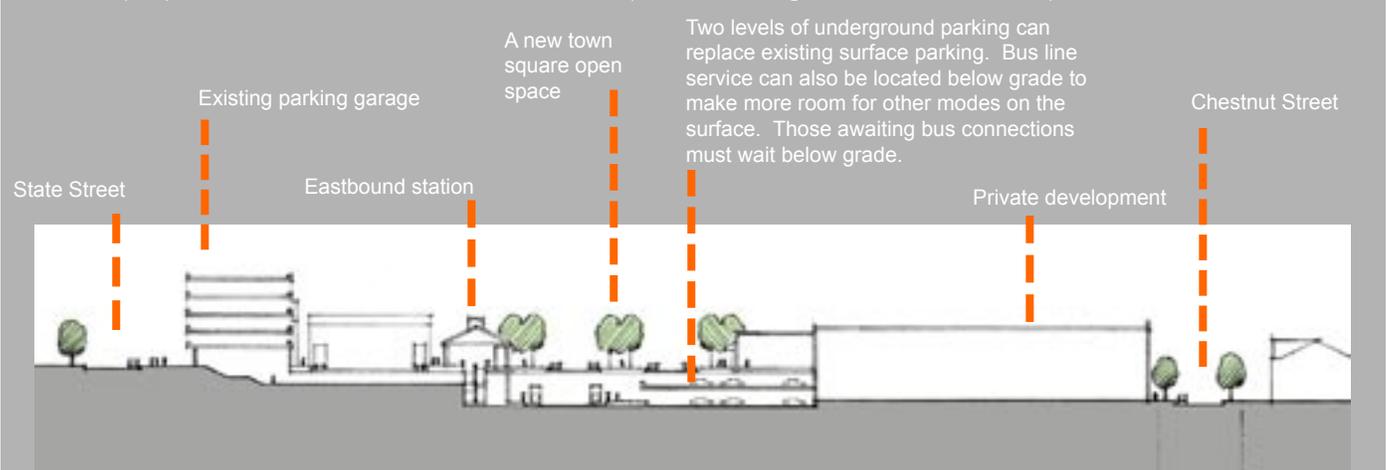
A Symbolic New Open Space: A New Town Square

Standing to the east of the old train station facility today, one can sense the tremendous potential for an improved outdoor public gathering space here. Train stations have long acted as natural crossroads within communities, and the design and maintenance of the public realm surrounding them should reflect this important role. The attractive architecture and low scale of the old station building make it a great backdrop for a new “town square.” With an enhanced facility and more residents using the station, the demand for spaces and services in the immediate vicinity will increase as well.

The circulation and access areas for current taxi, shuttle, and bus services already surround a small landscaped island. Private parcels abut this open area on the eastern edge. As station improvements and redevelopment occur here, this central open space should be redesigned as a comfortable place for people to meet, pass through, and await transfer onto a new mode of travel.

In place of individual open space requirements for surrounding private properties, the City should explore regulations that instead require developers of these parcels to contribute financial support or in-kind services for the construction and maintenance of this central space. (Alternatively, abutting properties could be encouraged to site their individual open spaces immediately adjacent to the town square, to expand the space. Land swapping might also be explored as a way of creating a single high-quality open space while meeting the needs of adjacent owners.)

Section (CC) of Enhanced Intermodal Station (with Underground Bus Service)





ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN at South Norwalk Station

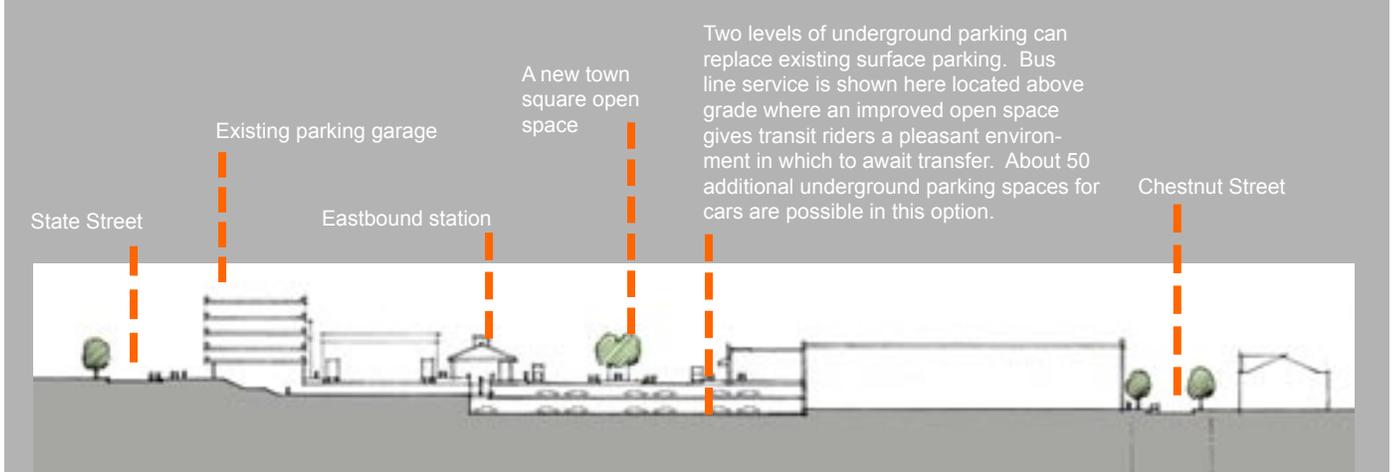
A new town square would provide a new civic gathering place, befitting the importance of an enhanced intermodal station, and providing a place to gather in this part of the neighborhood. Underground parking, on city-owned property, and with one or two decks, can replace existing surface units.

New apartment-style housing often provides residential options for singles, young couples, and older residents who rely on public transportation and enjoy the density of urban living. Retail on the ground floor helps activate the public space around the station.

Housing here would provide another residential face to Henry Street.

Development target:
Retail 5,000-10,000 square feet
Residential 60-80 units

Section (CC) of Enhanced Intermodal Station (with Above ground Bus Service)



Two levels of underground parking can replace existing surface parking. Bus line service is shown here located above grade where an improved open space gives transit riders a pleasant environment in which to await transfer. About 50 additional underground parking spaces for cars are possible in this option.

II. South Main Street



South Main Street, north of Monroe Street



South Main Street, south of Monroe Street

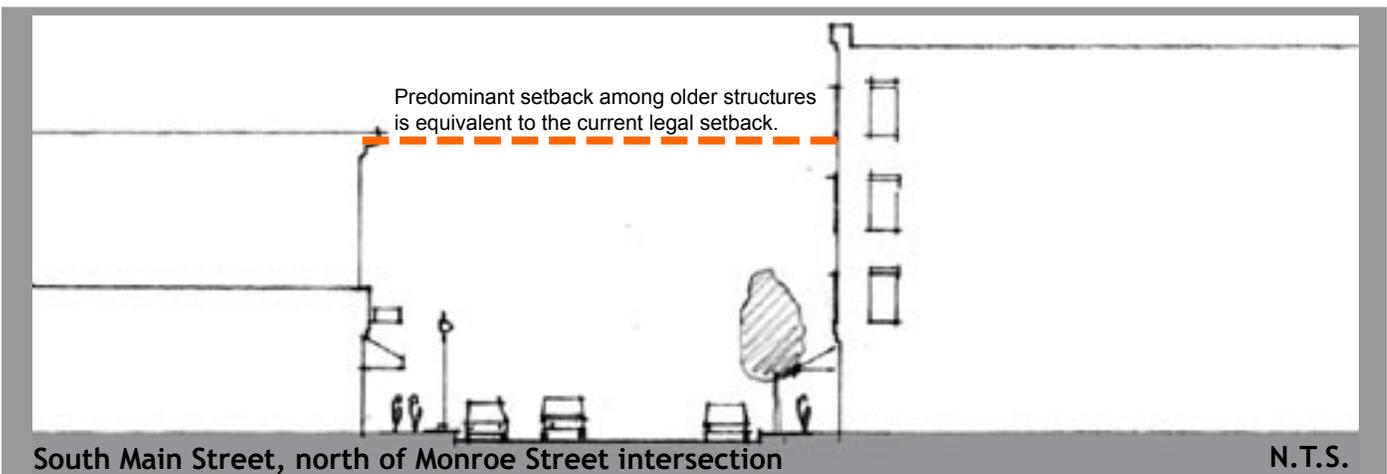
South Main Street traverses, from north to south, the full length of the study area. A significant arterial for this side of the harbor, the street connects South Norwalk to areas to the north and south. Historically, institutions as well as commercial uses and grand houses lined the street. Today, the type of uses and buildings changes abruptly from one side of the Monroe Street intersection to the other. The character of the street is quite different along those separate segments.

Northern End

Between Washington and Monroe streets, the buildings on South Main are similar in scale to those of Washington's retail and restaurant area. The eastern edge of the street lies partially within an historic district, and restored 19th century commercial buildings coexist with newer buildings of lesser architectural detail and significance. Structures are close to the sidewalk and occupied today by retail and mixed-use. On the western side, lower-scaled older buildings at the north give way to a new South Main Street public parking lot (63 spaces) and secure parking for the new Police Headquarters, an institution that is bringing a prominent public presence to the end of that block, at the intersection with Monroe.

Southern End

South of Monroe, the scale of the buildings decreases while setbacks and sideyards generally increase. Many stand-alone residential buildings and a few prominent institutions such as St. Joseph's Church sit back 50 feet from the centerline of the street—30 feet from the curb—setting a precedent for setbacks in this area. However, many parcels contain their own paved drives, fences all along the sidewalk, and even parking in some cases, all of which have a diminishing effect upon the streetscape. Also, a few one-story retail additions have been built under current zoning within what otherwise might be thought of as a "setback zone."



The prevalence of the relatively greater setbacks suggest a possible future standard for the street, accompanied by stricter controls for what can be contained within them.

New Uses

In general, regulatory mechanisms for this corridor should allow a variety of development types that fulfill planning goals. In addition to housing, participants expressed approval for housing-over-retail mixed-use models, as long as the scale of designs were appropriate to the surroundings. The feasibility of such models may in fact be increasing: new housing is augmenting the number of shoppers within walking distance of the corridor, and the opening of the new police headquarters and improvements to the station area will add activity and a greater sense of security to the area—changes which are likely to be attractive to retail providers. Adjustments to zoning designations may be necessary to allow for the heights and use combinations desired.

Regulatory Issues

The eastern side of the street is zoned for Neighborhood Business (NB), and the west side is in a Residential D zone. These different designations allow and encourage slightly different forms and uses, which may serve to prevent a more consistent and coherent street character from being established. (For example, retail is encouraged in NB but prohibited in D. Under these conditions, a two-sided retail street is impossible [which may actually deter new retail establishments from locating even on the side where they are permitted]. To become more of a “seam” within the neighborhood, and to help make neighborhood retail more viable here, both faces of South Main Street should allow retail.) Parcels lining the western side of South Main in the study area should be rezoned for NB to allow development beyond the purely residential to occur here. The NB zone would be consistent with existing land uses on the west side of the street. (Please see Appendix 7 for a map of proposed zoning.)

On the eastern side of South Main Street, the NB zone should be extended to Water Street, replacing the Industrial 1 district where it currently exists within the study area. This would enable multifamily residential (as well as mixed-use) to occur in South Norwalk while not prohibiting the kinds of light/small industrial businesses that have proven to be compatible with the neighborhood.

Current NB zoning allows a maximum of 2.5 stories; however, a viable mixed-use project will require at least 3.5 stories (one high-ceiling ground floor retail level, and 2.5 stories of residential or office above). Increasing the allowable height limit to 45 feet would alleviate this hindrance to mixed-use development while continuing to respect the scale of the neighborhood and its older structures. The existing maximum of 8,000 square feet for retail uses probably prohibits the kinds of larger stores that residents felt were not desir-



A one-story retail addition with no setback has been built onto a house set back from the sidewalk at a distance similar to other older structures on the street.



Shared parking opportunities

As development occurs and new uses come to South Norwalk, additional parking for public use will be needed on South Main Street, especially in service to those areas farthest away from the 63 spaces soon to be available adjacent to the police station.

Just as different uses around South Norwalk Station need parking at different times enabling them to share the same supply of spaces, the business patrons, congregants, park-goers, and others who spend time along South Main will require parking spaces at different hours and days of the week. Opportunities should be explored to forge partnerships between the uses that require parking on evenings and/or weekends (especially churches and schools) and those that need spaces during the workweek (commercial workers, for example).

See pages 40-45 for more discussion on this issue.



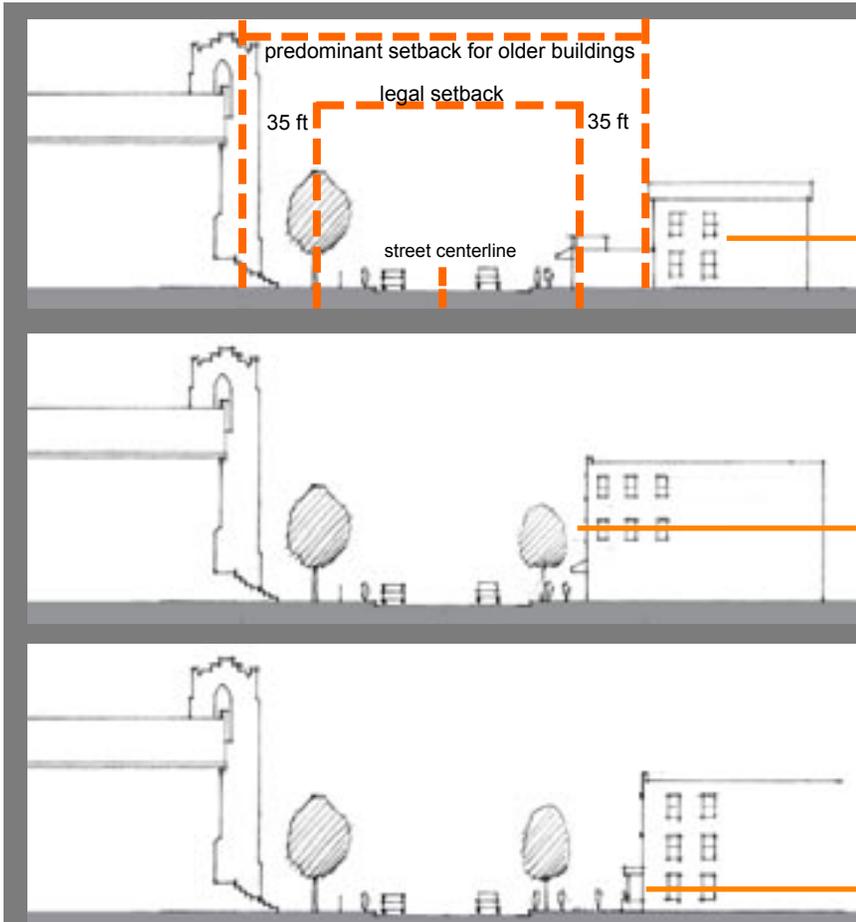
Two-and-a-half floors of housing over local retail on a neighborhood “main street” in Somerville, Massachusetts. The extension of a transit line to the area helped give impetus to many improvements to private properties.

South Main Street, continued

able on the street, and yet it is large enough to meet the needs of a variety of smaller retailers. (Please see Appendix 6 for more detailed information.)

Village District Zoning

Under state law, a village district zone offers more controls for the City and community over the design of new development. As an historic, neighborhood “main street” currently experiencing deterioration of its urban design qualities, the South Main corridor is a prime candidate for designation. Through its greater review capacity, the City can work to prevent demolition of older structures that are desirable for preservation due to their role in the architectural heritage of South Norwalk.



Existing Conditions: The predominant setback among older structures is 35 - 50 feet from the centerline of the street. A few new one-story retail additions in front of 2 or 3 story residential.

Allowable Under Current Zoning

A Possible Standard: Buildings could be required to “step back” completely to an established distance, allowing visibility for important landmarks such as St. Joseph’s Church. Zoning should allow heights of 45 feet here, to make mixed-use projects feasible (see page 35 and Appendix 6).

South Main Street, south of Monroe Street intersection



Along South Main Street, the areas that fall between the edge of the street and an imaginary 50 foot setback line (from centerline of street) are about 30% paved surfaces. If one replaced just the parking in this zone with landscaped areas, the amount of paved surfaces would decrease to 12%. Through the stronger review abilities under Village District zoning, questions of appropriate fencing, architectural style and landscaping can be addressed for the setback area. Greater consistency in respecting established setbacks and improved landscaping would have a dramatic effect upon the corridor.

50 feet from center line

50 feet from center line

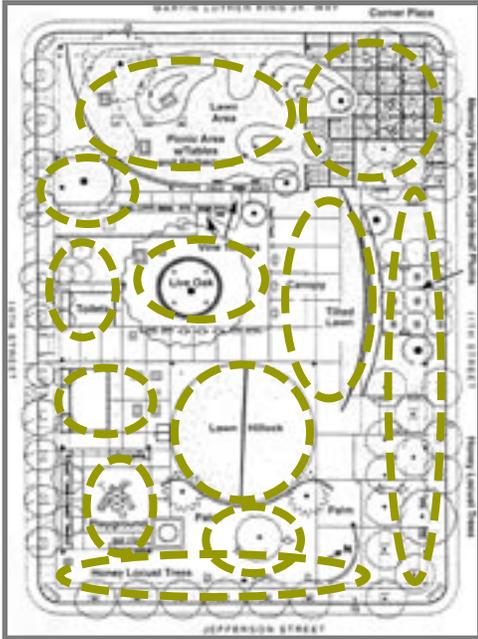
Parking for Mt. Zion

Parking for Ryan Park & NEON



Parking areas and fences along the sidewalk detract from the pedestrian-oriented qualities of the neighborhood.

The Plan



Successful small parks often serve multiple user groups by offering distinct “rooms,” differentiated by different paving and/or plantings, yet with strong visibility between them.



Another successful feature in urban parks is the inclusion of multiple paths; non-park-users will use them to get from one side to the other, and increase the informal supervision of the park.



III. Ryan Park & Vicinity

Precedents

We examined other neighborhood open spaces of similar size and setting to Ryan Park. We found interesting solutions in communities where varied user groups each placed unique expectations and demands on their local park.

Lafayette Square, Oakland California

Located in an area of Oakland in which young office workers, older unemployed men, and older women watching young children desire to use the same 1.5 acre space, Lafayette Square serves all existing populations in the same park. The designers achieved this by creating different “rooms” within the park, both along the edges near the street and on the interior, where there is more privacy. Individual settings are differentiated through the strategic use of paving and landscaped materials. Transparent edges and many points of entry welcome users from all sides.

Peters Park, Boston Massachusetts

Boston’s South End neighborhood discovered that one way to make a park safe is to make it a neighborhood crossroads (see aerial photo, bottom left). By allowing many walkways through the park that coincide with the many “desire lines” of local pedestrians, the park’s designers encouraged the neighborhood’s considerable foot traffic to make use of the park. Coupled with formal and informal recreational activities, the dozens of passersby bring watchful eyes to Peters Park at all hours of the day.

Existing Conditions

Ryan Park is directly abutted by three community institutions: Mt. Zion Baptist Church, NEON, and a new group which will occupy the ground floor of a mixed use building with residential units above. The parking spaces shared with NEON physically separate the park from that neighbor as well as Mt. Zion, which has its own parking area next to its buildings at the intersection of Raymond and South Main streets.

Despite the proximity of these important institutions, in the past there has been little joint programming activities between them and the City’s parks department. Recently, a new soccer league has been organized to serve the local community. The building used by NEON does not have good visibility toward the park and therefore cannot serve, even in an informal way, to monitor the

activity there. There is also no way to access the park from South Main Street, the most heavily trafficked nearby street. The majority of Ryan Park is not visible from the vantage points along South Main Street, either. Two full sides of the park do not border onto a street.

There are only two benches that offer a place to sit along the edges of the park that abut a street edge, and they are separated from the sidewalk by a fence. The Day Street edge is lined by a chain link fence, an almost continuous barrier to entry. A very large percentage of park acreage is devoted to a baseball diamond, which does not appear to be a popular attraction for neighborhood park users. Another significant portion of the overall park area is used for parking, which from our observation is substantially empty much of the day and week. Tucked in the corner of the park farthest from the streets is the amphitheater which appears to be used neither formally nor informally for the activities it was designed to accommodate.



While L&L Evergreen's stock of landscaping products is a relatively unobtrusive neighbor in South Norwalk, the City-owned site it occupies may contribute more to the neighborhood's needs by providing housing, and therefore more constituents and "eyes on the park," for area streets and open spaces.



EXISTING Ryan Park Layout

The Plan

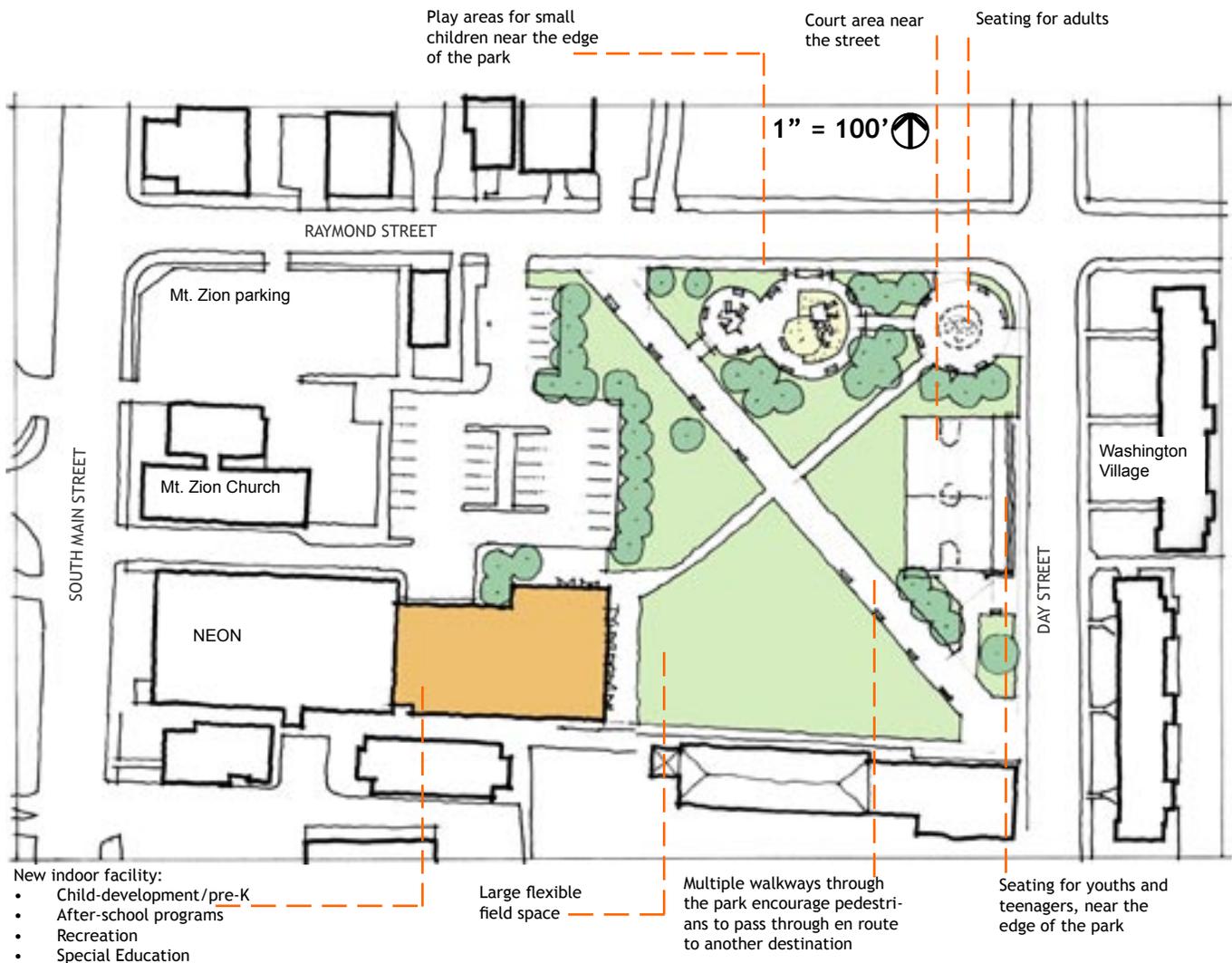
Some Principles for Successful Park Design

- Clear circulation that encourages walking through the park.
- Enclosed areas for children’s play with seating for adults.
- Separate areas for youth to play and socialize.
- Community involvement in design, programming, control, and maintenance.
- Identification of an entity with formal responsibility for park oversight.

Some Possible Reconfigurations for Ryan Park

Possibility A

This option shows how the park can become a crossroads for the neighborhood, providing walking paths from corner to corner. Chain link fences are removed and seating and play areas are located along the edges, so passersby can casually enter the park to sit without having to travel too far to find a bench. Adults supervising young children on play equipment may feel more secure by staying closer to the perimeter, within sight of passing cars and pedestrians. A new indoor facility for childhood development and enrichment programming is shown, as a potential new steward for the park.



Possibility B

This option creates a gateway to the park from South Main Street. A green walkway along the Raymond Street edge invites users from South Main to at least notice the park, if not enter it. This option also combines the parking areas for Mt. Zion and Ryan Park. The existing number of spaces is retained, although fewer may be adequate, since these institutions do not use parking at the same hours and days of the week.



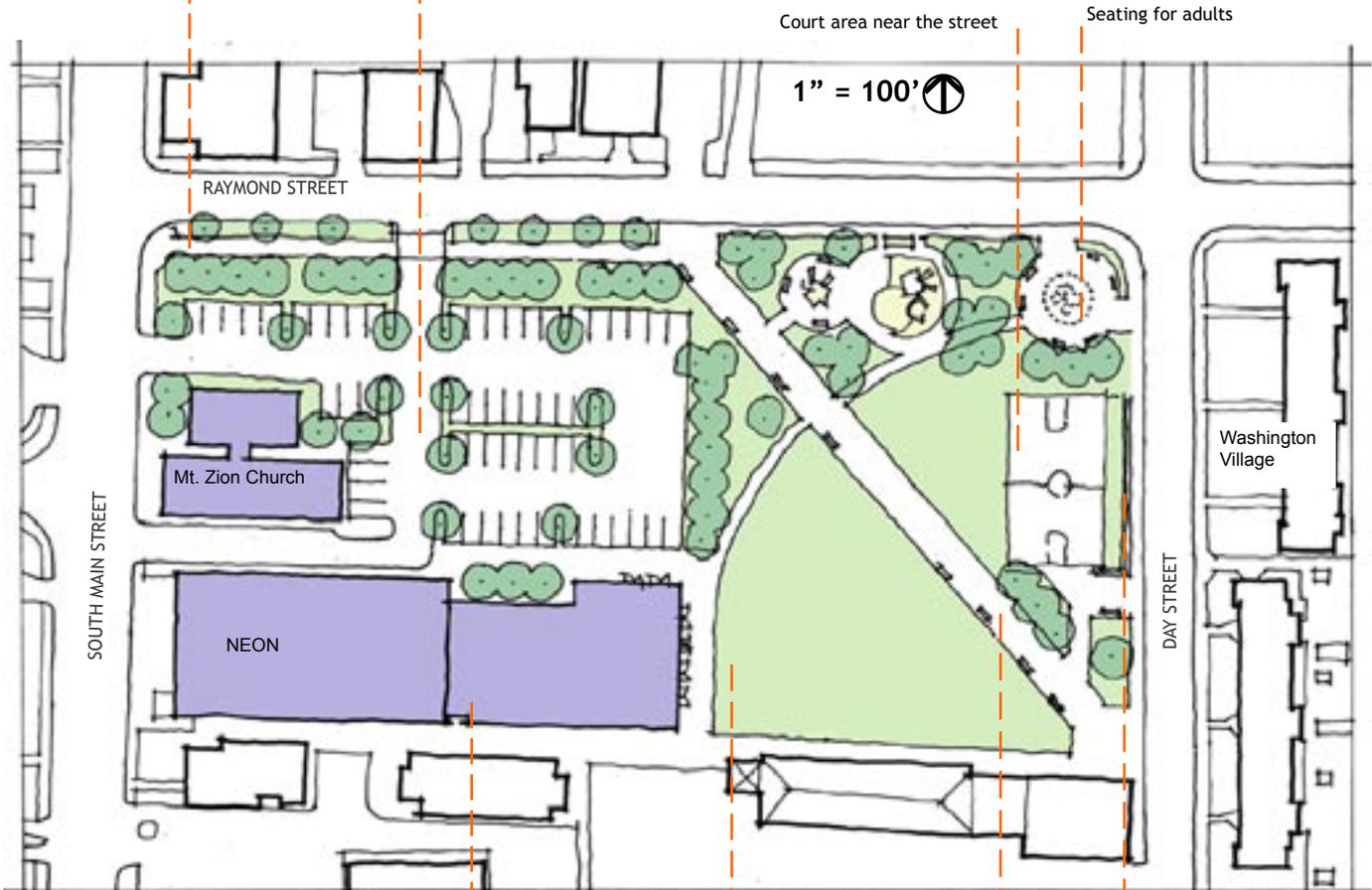
Existing parking at Ryan Park is used by NEON.



Mt. Zion Church on South Main Street

A green walkway connects South Main Street in terms of pedestrian access and visibility.

Day uses such as NEON can share the same parking supply with weekend and/or evening uses, such as Mt. Zion Church. In this drawing, parking is consolidated but the same total number of spaces remain for all of the uses.



- New indoor facility:
- Child-development/pre-K
 - After-school programs
 - Recreation
 - Special Education

Large flexible field space

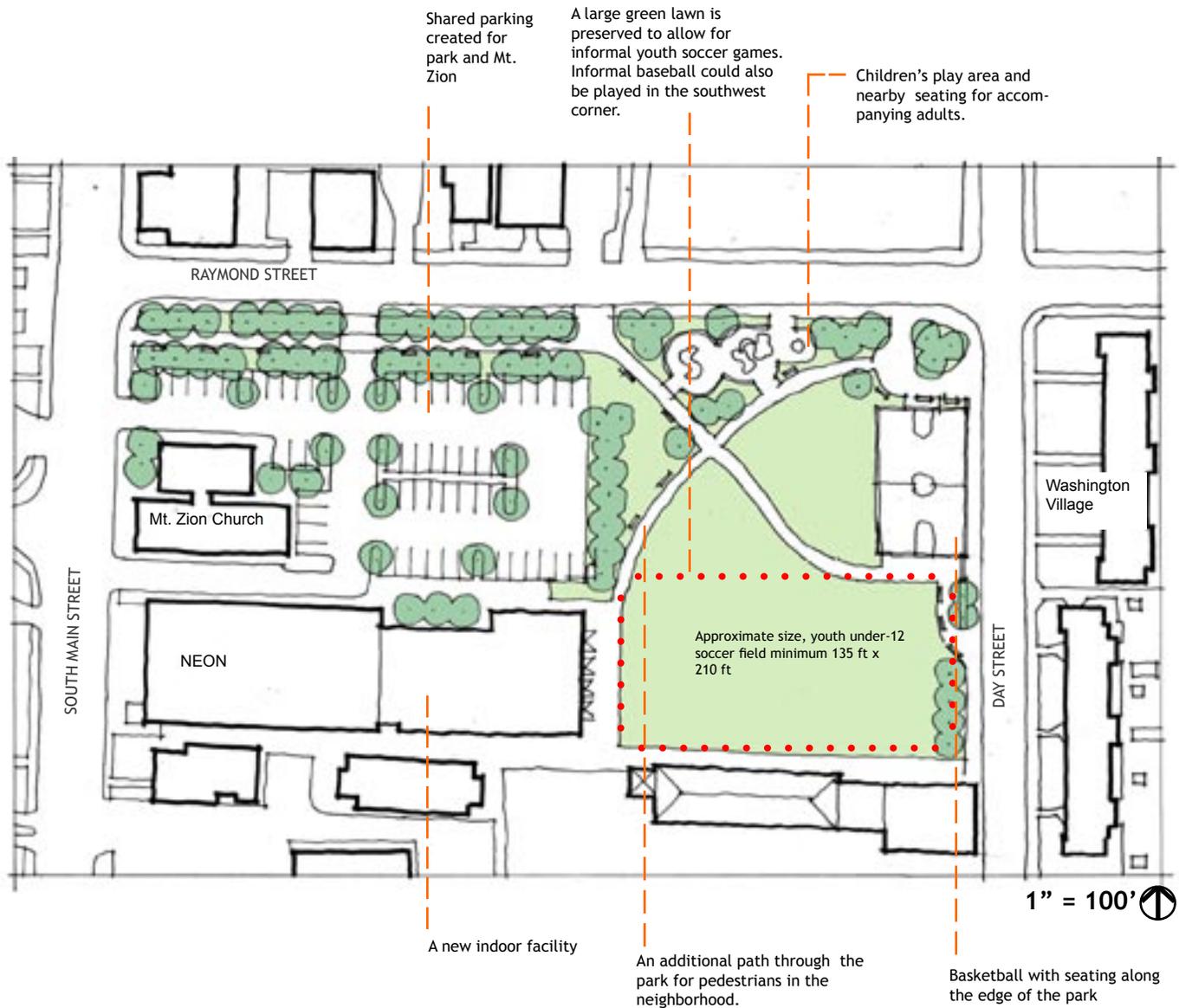
Multiple walkways through the park encourage pedestrians to pass through en route to another destination

Seating for youths and teenagers, near the edge of the park

Some Possible Reconfigurations for Ryan Park, continued

Possibility C

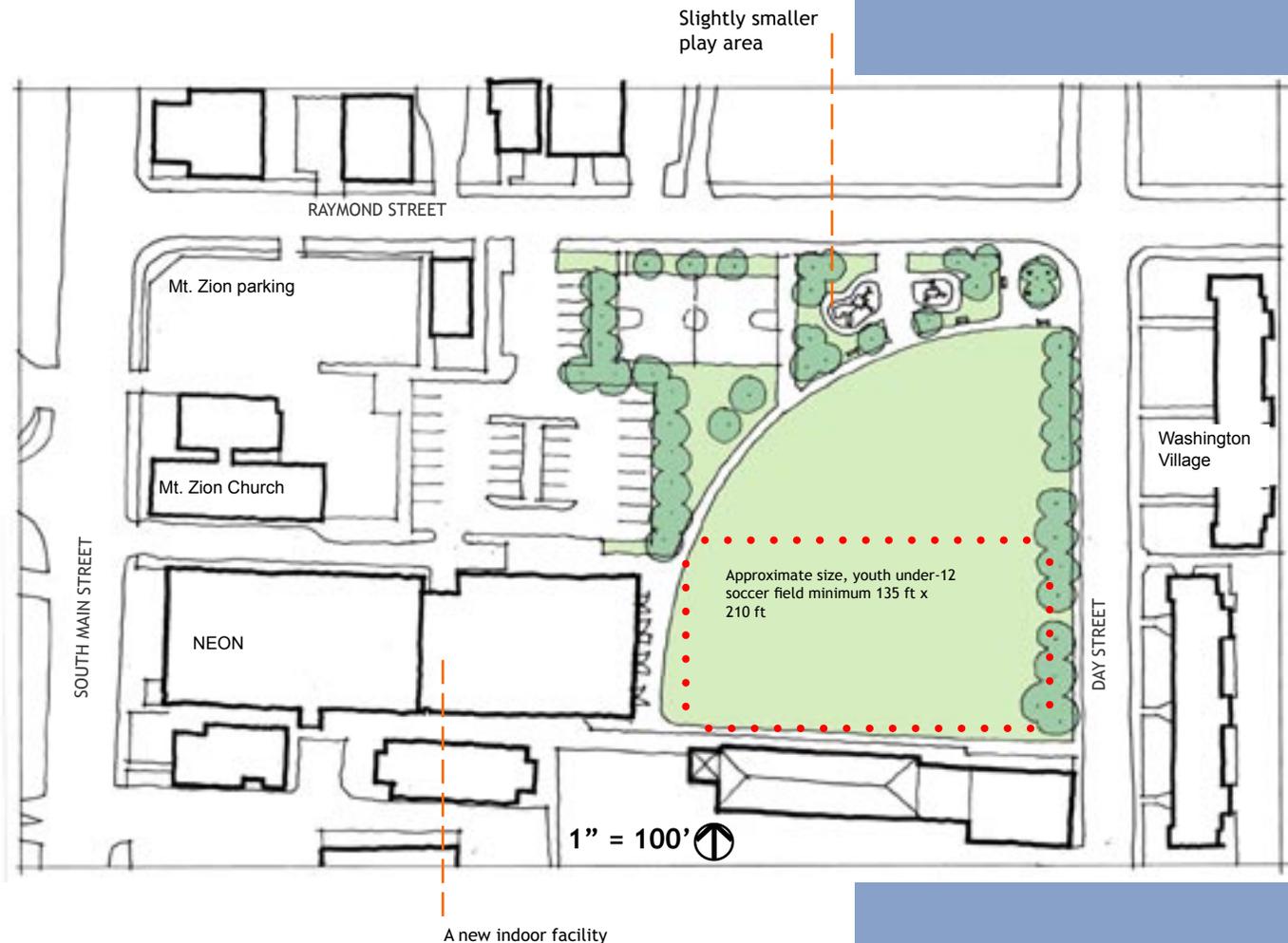
Features from the previous option remain including a green gateway to South Main Street, a new indoor facility, pedestrian paths through the space, and with shared parking, childrens play area, adult seating, basketball court and youth seating located along park edges near adjacent streets. Here a large green lawn is preserved to allow for youth soccer games.



Possibility D

Of all the possible options, this one leaves the park the least changed. A play area and additional seating have been added into a small lawn panel near Raymond Street, and the new indoor facility is shown next to NEON. The basketball court remains. However, no shared parking has been created, no new path crosses the space to encourage casual passing-through by area pedestrians. Additional trees are shown planted along the Day Street edge of the space; this may interfere with any baseball activity that may resume here.

Next Steps:
 More detailed recommendations for Ryan Park must follow this study and be done in conjunction with neighborhood residents and institutions.





The current parking lot behind the health center.

Between new housing and the existing health center, a for-pay parking structure can accommodate vehicles of those patronizing establishments on Water Street, visiting the center, or walking along the harborfront (see section on page 43). A shared parking facility could contain about 80 spaces on a single surface lot (about 60 exist at the center today) or up to approximately 240 in a three-level structure.

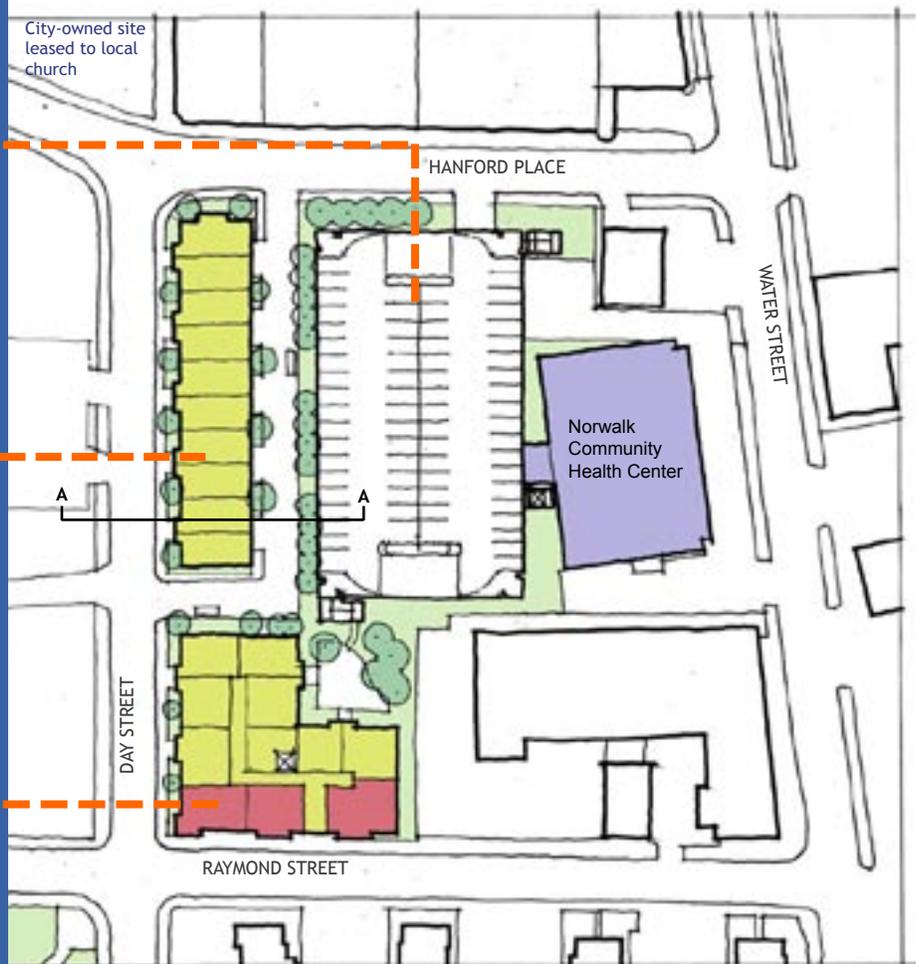
New townhouse development can line Day Street, introducing new housing units with front doors onto the street and an increased population for supporting Ryan Park.

At the corner of Day and Raymond streets, a building with additional housing on the upper floors might provide space on the ground floor for community facilities, community retail, or other publicly-accessible uses.

IV. Day Street Housing and Public Parking

The City of Norwalk owns a 1.26 acre parcel on the northeast corner of Day and Raymond streets, and a smaller lot on Hanford Street. The former is currently leased to L&L Evergreen (which also occupies property it owns directly across Day Street from the leased parcel). By prior agreement, it is slated for industrial uses through 2008. The latter—and smaller—City-owned site is leased to a local church for parking.

The larger city-owned parcel has a corner on the same intersection as Ryan Park. It is thought that the relatively low usage of the park may result in part from perceptions of security, excessive littering and other results that stem from antisocial behavior occurring there. The presence of these influences must be countered in several ways, one of which relies upon having a greater amount of positive activity occurring in *and around* the park, which would result upon increasing the residential population in the surrounding blocks. Ryan Park needs more constituents who regularly walk by



and through it, call the police when something seems wrong, and who petition public entities when improvements are necessary.

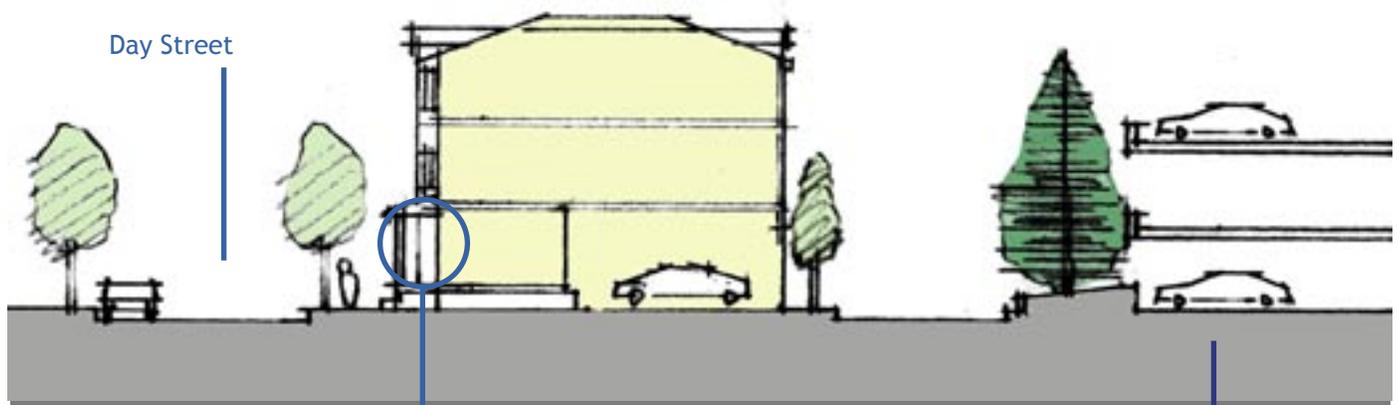
As such, the City-owned parcel on Day Street could be used for additional housing units. The site can accommodate 20 to 35 units in a townhouse style, with densities between 15 to 25 units per acre. In this housing model, doors to individual units face onto adjacent streets—either Day or Raymond—helping to activate neighborhood sidewalks.

Through a competitive selection process for either selling or granting development rights for the parcel, the City should prescribe a minimum for housing affordability to ensure that the site is developed according to the principles established through community planning processes such as this one.

This site was also identified in the Mid-Harbor Planning Study as a possible location for much needed public parking serving Water Street retail uses. The site is in fact big enough to accommodate the aforementioned housing development as well as parking, especially if an arrangement for shared parking can be established with the abutting Norwalk Community Health Center. (See sidebar on facing page.)

Shared parking arrangements accommodate parking needs while reducing the amount of South Norwalk land that must be devoted to this use. Such arrangements are possible wherever nearby uses require spaces at different hours and days of the week. For example, public parking could be used on weekdays for commercial uses and overflow parking for residential uses on weekends and evenings.

Section AA



Townhouse style residential development offers entrances to units from the street.

If the parking for the health center could become a shared facility for each of the uses on this block, there is enough site area to build townhouses as well as an expanded parking lot or deck.

1" = 20'

D. Implementation

Priority Implementation Projects

I. Zoning Changes

1. Expand Neighborhood Business (NB) along South Main Street to Water Street on the east, to allow mixed-use development and encourage as of right multi-family housing.
2. Expand NB to include the west face of South Main Street.
3. Preserve current zoning restrictions on retail store size (8,000 s.f.) to protect the street from over-scaled new development and support local smaller retailers. (Larger floor plates are allowed through the special permit process.)
4. Increase allowable heights to 45 feet to encourage mixed-use residential projects (2.5 stories) above one level of retail.
5. Establish Village District on South Main Street to control:
 - Building setbacks
 - Parking within setbacks
 - Landscaping
 - Fencing within setbacks
 - Protection of historic buildings
 - Signage
 - Architectural character of infill development

II. Transportation

1. Pursue an Intermodal Station Feasibility Study to determine demand for an intermodal center at the South Norwalk Station. Coordinate transit improvements with development controls that encourage density near the station and evening hour uses to improve station security.
2. Modestly expand commuter parking at South Norwalk Station that can be used as an incentive for appropriate adjacent commercial development with appropriate evening and weekend parking requirements. Reduce parking requirements for appropriate land use (uses that require evening and/or weekend parking).
3. In place of site-specific open space requirements around South Norwalk Station, require individual owners to contribute to a central, shared space. Decreasing the number of individual, private open spaces will help create desired densities in blocks around the station area, and concentrate public amenities of this kind in a

centralized space, such as the proposed town square.

III. South Main Street

1. Explore shared parking with churches and schools to better utilize parking areas during evenings, weekends and weekdays (depending upon primary demand hours). For example, allow weekday use of church parking or evening use of school parking areas by other users.
2. Explore shared revenue opportunities to fund capital improvements such as paving, screening and landscaping.
3. Recruit a full-size or reduced-size supermarket to South Norwalk to support the underserved population with quality, low cost food. The City should offer support, such as land assembly, for the purpose of attracting a national grocery chain to the neighborhood. This use should be located only along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard within 1/4 mile of the South Norwalk Intermodal Center to reduce traffic impacts on residential neighborhoods within South Norwalk.

IV. Ryan Park

1. Proceed with a community design process to redesign Ryan Park for the use of neighborhood residents. Use concept and design principles developed in this plan, and recruit private funds and volunteer efforts to re-construct and landscape the park.
2. Combine with parking strategies to increase visibility and access to the park from South Main Street to increase safety within the park.
3. Combine with a housing strategy to increase residents, park users, constituents and future stakeholders.
4. Recruit private, pay-as-you-go recreational facilities such as recreational skating rinks, swimming pools, or family recreation centers that will require minimal public subsidy. Operators should be encouraged to offer lower-cost opportunities for local families and youth such as during non-peak hours, special community appreciation days, or low-cost school programs.
5. Support public recreational programs, related to and located within or adjacent to Ryan Park. After-school or

educational program funding could be used to provide an indoor facility adjacent to Ryan Park that would provide supervision and oversight on park activities. Improvements to the park should be coordinated with the educational program requirements.

V. Day Street/South Water Street

1. Explore a shared parking structure between Day Street and S. Water Street that will provide parking for retail uses on S. Water Street. Public parking here can be used to reduce individual parking requirements for desired retail uses on S. Water Street, as per the Mid-Harbor Plan. A surface or multi-level parking structure (3 floors maximum) can support the Community Health Clinic with parking available for weekend and evening commercial uses.
2. Use publicly owned sites to encourage mixed-income housing within South Norwalk. Competitively offer publicly owned sites to developers at the South Norwalk Station and Day Street with specific targets for affordable housing.

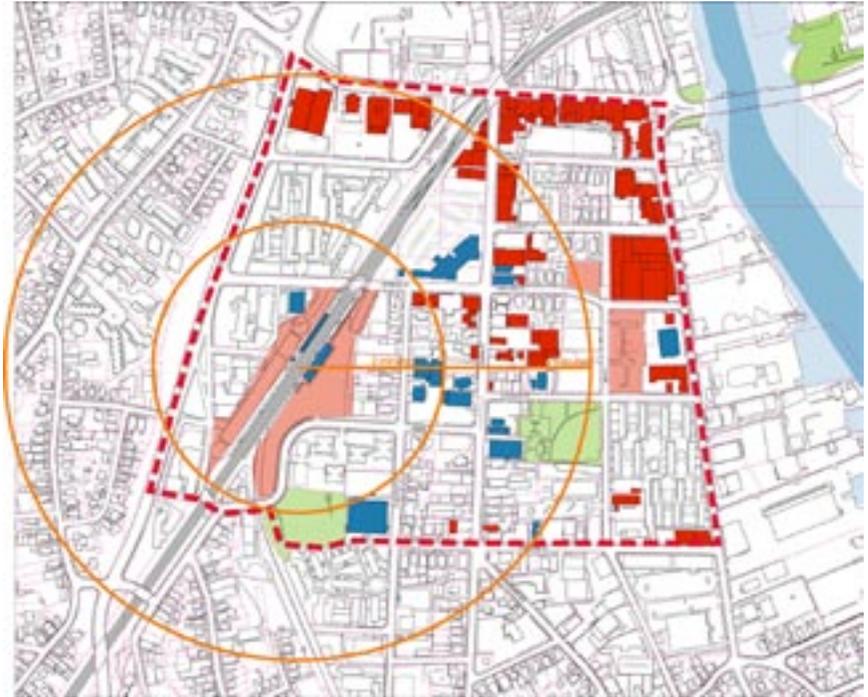


E. Appendices

Appendix Contents:

1. Walking Distances
2. Transit Map
3. Comments from Public Gatherings
4. Ryan Park Survey
5. Ryan Park Survey Results
6. Memo on Real Estate Development Issues
7. [Map of Proposed Zoning Changes](#)

1. Walking Distances



The inner circle on the diagram represents a 2 minute walking distance (about 1/8 mile) and the outer circle represents a 5 minute walking radius (about 1/4 mile).

2. Transit Map



Route 8 – This route travels from Burnell Street along Belden Street, Wall Street, East Avenue, Gregory Boulevard, and Calf Pasture Beach and back. Buses run several times an hour between 6:00 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. weekdays. On Saturday the buses run every 1/2 hour beginning at 7:20 a.m. through 6:20 p.m.

Route 9 – This route travels from Burnell Street along Belden Street, West Avenue, N. Main Street, Washington Street, Water Street, Burritt Avenue, Woodward Avenue, Dock Road, and back. Buses run several times an hour between 6:00 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. weekdays. On Saturday the buses run every 1/2 hour beginning at 7:20 a.m. through 6:20 p.m.

Route 10 – This route travels from Burnell Street along Belden Street, West Avenue, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Monroe Street, the Railroad Station, Henry Street, Mulvoy Street, Ely Avenue, Lexington Avenue, Knapp Street, back to Ely Avenue then looping back north along Wilson Avenue, South Main Street, and North Main Street. Buses run several times an hour between 6:00 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. weekdays. On Saturday the buses run every 1/2 hour beginning at 7:20 a.m. through 6:20 p.m.

Route 11 – This route travels from Burnell Street along Belden Street, Wall Street, East Avenue, Van Zant Street, Fort Point, Washington Avenue, South Main Street, Monroe Street, the Railroad Station, Henry Street, Ely Avenue, Lowe Street, Flax Hill Road, Taylor Avenue, Morton Street, Senga Road, Scribner Avenue, Connecticut Avenue, Richards Avenue, the Norwalk Community College and back. Buses run several times an hour between 6:00 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. weekdays. This route does not run on Saturdays.

Route 12 – Burnell, Belden, Van Buren, Grandview, Prospect, Maple, Stuart, Connecticut, Cedar, Fairfield, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Monroe, Railroad Station, Henry, Mulvoy, Ely, Lowe, Flax Hill, Soundview, Highland, Roton Middle School and return.

3. Comments from Public Gatherings

REGULATIONS

- Changes to zoning, implications for existing businesses
- Zoning enforcement

HOUSING

- Desire for diversity in new housing that would include housing affordable to current residents
- Assistance for current owners to renovate: historic preservation programs, tax abatements
- Desire for the Housing Authority to maintain affordable rents

TRAFFIC/TRANSPORTATION

- Improving the station itself
- A need for alleviating congestion on the roads
- How can transit become more attractive to more people?
- Look at the arteries that continue past the boundaries of the study area
- Determine appropriate parking ratios for new housing near the future intermodal station
- Potential bus service improvements

SAFETY/LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Make the area safer

LAND USE

- Can there be something like a family grocery store here?
- Possibility for retail tenants at or around the station
- Support small/local/minority businesses

RECREATION

- Would like to see something like a Boys & Girls Club, more kids activities

OTHER

- Creating jobs
- Development needs to benefit current residents
- Making Washington Street more welcoming to residents

4. Ryan Park Survey

The survey administered by the City in October 2004 regarding the use and conditions at Ryan Park is reproduced on the following two pages. The complete detailed responses to all of the returned surveys can be found in Appendix 5.

Tell us what you think!

*If you could **improve Ryan Park**, what changes would you make?*

We want to find out what would help more people enjoy using Ryan Park! Please tell us what you think about the following questions.



Your answers will be kept confidential!

1. About how many times in the last month have you visited Ryan Park?

2. How did you get there?

Car Walking Bicycle Wheels bus

(If you went by car, where do you park? _____)

3. Do you live within a 5 to 10 minute walk of Ryan Park? YES NO

4. Which of the different sections of Ryan Park have you used in the past month:

- Baseball diamond
- Basketball court
- Outdoor performance area at NEON
- Benches
- Other: _____

5. If you have not been to Ryan Park in the past month or so, please tell us why not:
(Check as many answers as you like)

- Ryan Park is not conveniently located for me.
- I am concerned about crime.
- The park is not well-lit
- The park does not have equipment or facilities that I am interested in.
- The park needs to be repaired/better maintained.
- Other: _____

6. If there are people under 18-years-old in your household, please answer the following:

a) What ages are the children in your household? (Check as many as you need to.)

- Less than 1 year old – 3 years old
- 4 – 8 years old
- 9 – 12 years old
- There are no children in my household.

Turn over for more questions--

b) What ages are the teenagers in your household? (Check as many as you need to.)

- 13 – 16 years old
- 17 – 18 years old
- There are no teenagers in my household.

c) Does an adult in your home bring children or teenagers to Ryan Park?

If not, why not?

d) What parts of Ryan Park do the CHILDREN use?

- Baseball diamond
- Basketball courts
- Outdoor performance area at NEON
- Benches
- Other: _____

e) What parts of Ryan Park do the TEENAGERS use?

- Baseball diamond
- Basketball courts
- Outdoor performance area at NEON
- Benches
- Other: _____

f) If you are 18-years-old or younger, tell us what features you would use if they were located in Ryan Park: (Check as many as you like.)

- Soccer field
- Playground/"Jungle Gym"
- Improved benches & tables
- Water feature
- Other: _____
- I am over 18-years-old

7. How would you rate the condition and cleanliness of Ryan Park (1=Very Bad and 5=Very Good):

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

8. What kind of things would YOU like to use in a park in your neighborhood? (Check as many as you like.)

- Improved benches & tables
- Athletic fields and/or courts (please tell us what kind of field or court: _____)
- Quiet places to sit and relax
- Areas for families with young children to play
- Other: _____

9. How many times in the last month have you visited a community facility in South Norwalk (such as a place of worship, a health center, a school, or a job center)?
Please tell us which one(s): _____



Thank you for your time!

5. Ryan Park Survey Results

Survey questions	Responses	Other comments
1. How many times in the last month have you visited Ryan Park?	None=51	
	Can't recall=2	
	Never=4	
	Yes=2	
	One time=9	
	Two times=8	
	Three times=5	
	3 to 4=1	
	Four times=2	
	Five times=5	
	Seven times=1	
	Every day=2	
	Every other day=1	
	All times=1	
	Few times=1	
	Once in a while=1	
	Sixty times=1	
A lot=1		
Zero-five=2		
Question mark=2		
2. How did you get there?	Car=33	
	Walking=61	
	Bicycle=8	
	Wheels Bus=7	
	Other=1	

If you went by car, where do you park?

- Parking lot=7
- In the park=2
- Next to the park=1
- In front=2
- At my house=1
- In the back=3
- Didn't park=1
- Neon lot=1
- Raymond St=1
- South Main St=1
- Street=3
- Side walk=1
- Side of the fence=1
- Washington Village lot=2
- Church lot=1

3. Do you live within a 5 to 10 minute walk of Ryan Park?

- Yes=67
- No=63
- I don't know=2

4. Which sections of the park have you used in the past month:

- Baseball Diamond=22
- Basketball Court=42
- NEON performance area=36
- Benches=24
- None=2
- Other=8
- Playground=1*
- Parking=1*
- Sidewalk=2*
- Church=2*
- National Nite Out=1*
- Football field=4*
- Swings=1*
- Staircase=1*

Appendices

5. If you have not been to Ryan Park in the past month or so,

Not conveniently located for me=27

Concerned about crime=40

Not well lit=26

Park does not have equipment or facilities that I'm not interested in=37

Needs to repaired/better maintained=40

Other=4

Homeless=1

Drugs = 4

Don't go to parks=1

Not supervised enough=1

Never have time=3

Never heard of it=6

Engaged in other activities=1

Don't feel like going=1

Never been there=1

Don't know where it is=3

Better and different equipment for children=1

Needs nicer swings and playground=1

Smoke, drink, & glass everywhere=1

Boring=1

Stay at King Kennedy=1

6. If there are people under 18-years old in your household, please answer the following:

a) What ages are the children in your household?

3 and under=29

4-8 years old=44

9-12 years old=58

No children in household=28

b.) What ages are the teenagers?

13-16 years old=47

17-18 years old=17

No teenagers in household=36

c.) Does an adult in your home bring children or teenagers to Ryan Yes=20

No=41

Sometimes=1

If not, why not?

It's not a good environment=1

Nothing to do there=4

I don't know=2

Didn't know about it=4

Dangerous=2

Live elsewhere=3

Crime=3

Drugs=5

Drugs & gangs=1

Too far away=3

Don't want to=1

Don't like to go there=2

Nothing for them to do/not safe=1

We have a more convenient park=2

Not a popular place for young kids=1

Not the right place for my kids=1

Don't have time=1

d.) What parts of Ryan Park do the Children use? Baseball Diamond=20

Basketball Court=49

Outdoor performance area at NEON=35

Benches=25

Other=6

Field=8

Swings=4

Playground=6

None=11

Not sure=3

National Nite Out=1

Picnic area=1

Appendices

e.) What parts of Ryan Park do the teenagers use?

Baseball Diamond=13
Basketball Court=66
Outdoor performance area at NEON=15
Benches=30
None=7
Other=4
Don't know=4
Store=1
Fence=1
Field=1

f.) If you are 18-years old or younger, tell us what features you would use if they were located in Ryan Park:

Soccer field=18
Playground/"Jungle Gym"=54
Improved benches & tables=50
Water feature=50
Other=4
Twister ciro=1
Basketball court=1
Food=1
Skate park=3
Football field=3
Jump ropes=1
Batman=1
None=2
I don't know=2
I am over 18-years-old=22

7. How would you rate the condition and cleanliness of Ryan Park?

1 - Very bad=25

2=29

3=43

4=8

It varies from very good to very bad=1

Comments

Needs to be improved=1

Needs to be located in a different area=1

Concerned about glass & safety=3

Neon area frequented by drug & alcohol users=3

Only cleaned when an event occurs there=1

Needs to be supervised=2

Fix basketball & lighting=2

Bad things happen there=3

Repaint & repair=1

Drugs=1

Bird droppings=1

It isn't very attractive=1

Don't know=5

8. What kind of things would you like to use in a park in your neighborhood?

Improved benches & tables=70

Athletic fields and/or courts=40

Little league=1

Track & field=1

Soccer fields=1

Bigger basketball court=1

Volleyball=1

Tennis=3

Improve Basketball=7

Baseball=6

Football=11

Quiet places to sit and relax=76

Areas for families with young children to play=84

Appendices

other=2

Picnic area=3

Grill area=1

Food=1

Swings=4

Playground=2

Little things where kids can bounce around=1

Small enclosed area for very young children so they are separated from older children=1

Everything & cops to patrol=1

Everything any other park provides=1

New basketball court=1

Walking track=3

Water feature=1

Don't know=2

Safe place=1

None=3

9. How many times in the last month have you visited a community facility in South Norwalk?

Place of worship=21

Once=2

Every week=1

Three times=1

Eight times=1

1-10 times=1

Over 15 times=1

19 times=1

23 times=1

25 times=1

30 times=1

Unlimited 1-50=2

21 yrs=1

Health center=9	Once=1 0-5 times=1 4 times=2 Unlimited=1
School=7	Once=1 4 times=1 20 times=1 Everyday=1 Unlimited 1-50=2
Job Center=4	4 times=1
None=23	
Neon=6	Daily=1
Library=1	
Carver=1	
After school program=1	
Didn't specify what facility was visited?	Once=2 2 times=1 3 times=1 Weekly=1 5 times=1 6 or 7 times=1 8 times=1 10 times=1 4 times a week=1 16 times=2 20 times=1 Everyday=4

Total surveys calculated: 137

6. Memo on Real Estate Development Issues

Memorandum

To: Alan Mountjoy, Kimberly Jones
From: Drew M. Leff, GLC Development Resources
Date: 2 February 2005
Re: South Norwalk Planning Study

I've reviewed your draft report and the questions you raised relating to real estate development issues for South Norwalk. Based on both our previous investigations in Norwalk, near to and including sections of the South Norwalk neighborhood, and our own development experience, we thought it might be useful to provide the following comments:

1. Regarding mixed-income housing on the City-owned parcels, we feel that this approach could be successful on these sites. It would impact the price that the City received from a developer. The more affordable housing, the lower the land purchase or lease price. We would also recommend against exceeding 20-25% "affordable." If it is a modest element in the mix it will have limited impact on the sales or rental prices of the market rate units. But if it becomes a dominant element, it will reduce rents or sales prices from the market-rate units. This is particularly true given the presence of a totally subsidized development nearby. Also, the level of affordability will make a difference. If many of the units are affordable at 80% of median income as opposed to 50% median income, it's more likely to work in the long and short term.



2. Neighborhood retail is dependent on significant numbers of potential shoppers within an easy walk, a well-traveled/high-volume vehicular street with convenient parking for a quick stop to obtain daily needs and services, or establishment of a destination because of a critical mass and/or anchor stores that provide a unique shopping experience in their own right. On South Main Street, there are not large depths of residential area backing up retail, parking is not so convenient, and existing zoning and parcel depths limit the ability to accommodate modest size anchors (10-15,000 sf) that might provide more of a draw. (The latter is more likely on Water Street, where larger parcels accommodate larger footprint stores and parking.)



In terms of extending current walking patterns down South Main, one might have a better chance the closer one is to the heart of the SoNo retail district. Research regarding economic demand generators, conducted as part of the 2004 Mid-Harbor Planning Study, included the Washington, Water, and North Main Street corridors, which overlap with our current South Norwalk study area. The 2004 findings pointed to potential sources for additional retail demand in the area. (First, anticipated new office developments will create demand "for retail and dining located adjacent to or nearby the developments" [Mid-Harbor Appendix 1]; five thousand new workers who spend roughly \$5 per day on goods and services could translate to up to \$6 million per year in retail sales. Second, the spending habits of tenant groups being targeted by new and future residential projects in the area have discretionary income that supports higher-priced convenience items and services. The research suggested these new residents could generate up to \$9 million per year in dining sales and \$7 million for apparel and services.)



More of the many activities at Chelsea Piers (NYC)

3. It is difficult to determine the exact demand for neighborhood retail on South Main, given our scope and budget, but it is not necessary to determine this exactly. You can't force good retail and residential development; you can just set the conditions that allow and encourage it and remove any obstacles to it. Some of this is already

occurring: as residential projects are developed in the neighborhood, retail will be more desirable due to the increase in shoppers within walking distance. Also, workers and visitors at the new Police Headquarters add to the retail customer base, and foot traffic is likely to increase through the area as the intermodal capacities of the station are increased and other public improvements enhance one's sense of security and make walking more desirable. To further set the stage for and encourage retail, the City of Norwalk should diminish other lingering barriers: create zoning that will allow for retail on ground floors at an appropriate depth (80-100 ft.) and reasonable parking ratios (3 spaces/1000 s.f.) with provisions that the parking be created not in front but rather next to or behind it, and if alongside, that fencing and gate posts continue urban streetwall. (One wants to be careful in creating convenient parking that it doesn't break down the high quality physical environment one hopes to promote by creating large parking lots at the street that destroy the pedestrian shopping experience.)

4. Combining retail and housing is difficult at small scale. The parking requirements for both, while somewhat shared take up so much land that it is difficult to accommodate. If the development could be a bit higher/denser, a developer might be able to afford to park partially under the building. Allow for three stories over ground-floor retail.
5. Some possible pay-as-you go recreational facilities:
 - a. Bowling alleys, particularly ones that combine bowling with evening entertainment
 - b. Mini Chelsea Piers—batting cages, indoor driving range, games, etc.
 - c. Health clubs
 - d. Ice rinks
6. There may be shared parking opportunities with the transit station and housing in that vicinity.

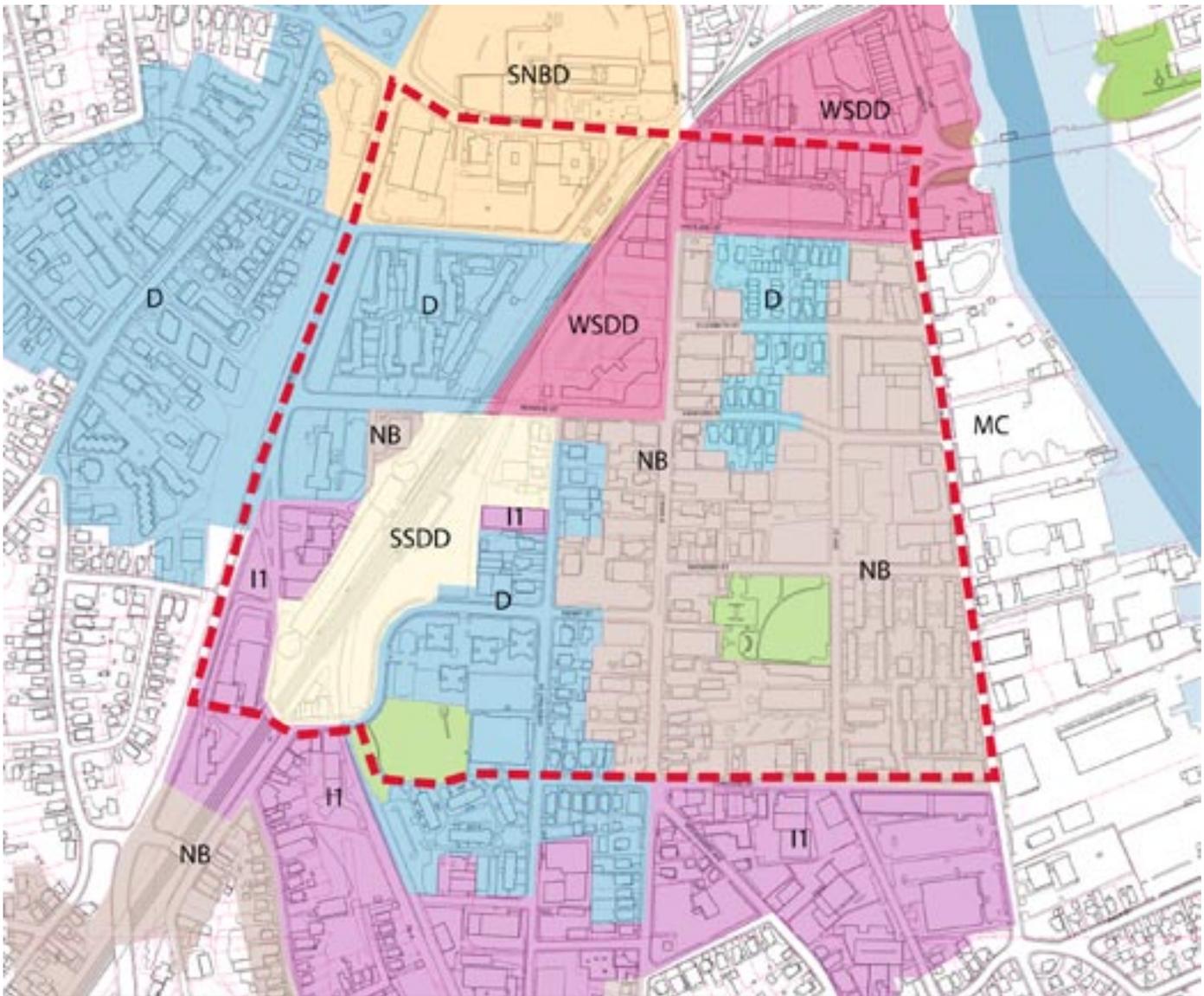
In summary, we know that in general, increases in nearby populations and in adjacent traffic levels are likely to positively influence retail demand, and with recent projects South Norwalk will experience increases in these aspects. Indeed, few people would disagree with the observations relayed during public gatherings that the South Norwalk neighborhood is already changing: new housing is being added and the cost of housing is escalating; the police headquarters will add activity and a greater sense of security to the area; and newer housing types in South Norwalk and the Mid-Harbor are attracting demographics with more discretionary income for goods and services, a retail sales factor previously absent in the area. While we have not been concerned here with catalyzing retail or measuring the exact demand, we have noted ongoing changes that tend to be attractive to retail providers and we have suggested modifications to zoning that allow the footprints and density required by the type of retail tenants the public has said they'd like and which we agree would be appropriate.

Thus if and when the market decides there is enough demand, the regulations are in place to allow it and to control it so that it conforms to the urban design qualities this plan has suggested for the South Main Street corridor. In general, the public sector should set the framework and example for quality development by creating great infrastructure, including parks and open spaces, and streetscape and street design.

Marina Towers "10 Pin"
Bowling and entertainment
facility (Chicago)



7. Map of Proposed Zoning Changes



Compare this map of **proposed** zoning to the map showing existing zoning on page 19. The entire west-ern side of South Main Street is shown here a Neighborhood Business (NB) District (representing a sug-gested change from Residential-D to NB zoning for some parcels). Also, while the eastern side of South Main Street is already zoned for NB, the recommendation shown here is that NB zoning be extended all the way to Water Street, replacing what is now an Industrial-1 district. For a more thorough discussion of the rational for these recommended changes, please see the Analysis section (pages 18-19) and in the Plan section (pages 34-37) of this report.