

# I. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

[Sec. 8-125(c)(1) A description of the redevelopment area and the condition, type and use of the structures therein]

## Site Boundary

The Redevelopment Area (the "area") is as described in "Map 1," and "Appendix A: Description of Area," as attached. Generally, the boundary of the area begins at the intersection of Byington Place, Cross Street and Belden Avenue and runs northeast along Cross Street; it then extends south along Main Street before moving east to High Street then south to its intersection with Wall Street where it moves east to and along East Wall Street then south on Hubbell's Lane before crossing the Norwalk River and moving west along Chapel Street, then north along West Avenue, then west on Mott Avenue and then north on Cross Street to its point of origin. Where streets make up the Plan's boundary, it runs along their centerline.

The Redevelopment Plan (the "Plan") encompasses five Redevelopment Parcels, numbered 1, 2a, 2b, 3, and 4. These parcels are also shown in "Map 1." and are generally bounded as follows:

Redevelopment Parcel 1. Byington Place to the west, Mott Avenue to the south, and Belden Avenue to the north and east;

Redevelopment Parcel 2a. Wall Street to the north, West Avenue to the west, the southern boundary of property formally occupied by a national chain pharmacy and four north-facing parcels on Leonard Street to the south, and Commerce Street to the east;

Redevelopment Parcel 2b. Burnell Boulevard to the north, River Street to the east, Wall Street to the south and Belden Avenue to the west.

Redevelopment Parcel 3. The parcel formally known as Cottage Street (a paper street) to the north, High Street and Smith Street to the east, the southern boundary of the property identified in the Norwalk Tax Assessor's maps as parcel 1-59-8-0 and the Norwalk River and Main Street to the east;

Redevelopment Parcel 4. Cross Street to the north, Main Street to the east, and Hoyt Street to the south and west.

## Prevailing Types and Uses of Structures

The buildings in the area are reflective of the definitions of a redevelopment area as outlined under Connecticut Statutes (§8-125b and §8-141). The conditions are also consistent with US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definitions of blighted areas (24CFR570.208b1), insofar as over one-quarter (25%) of the buildings in the area are in deteriorated or deteriorating condition and the municipality has designated the area as blighted, deteriorated, or deteriorating in its resolution (see Attachment B).

As the city's historical downtown, 19th and early 20th century commercial buildings predominate, with a lesser presence of aged industrial buildings, and modern structures built subsequent to the 1955 flood. The types and uses of structures in the area are widely varied, being



Figure 10: Wall Street streetscape

best described as comprising a "mixed use area". Parcel sizes are small and generally insufficient to form an adequate unit of development in the current real estate market. A land use map included in Part II. "Land Use" shows the types of uses for each structure in the area.

Introduction

Description of Area

Land Use

Streets and Utilities

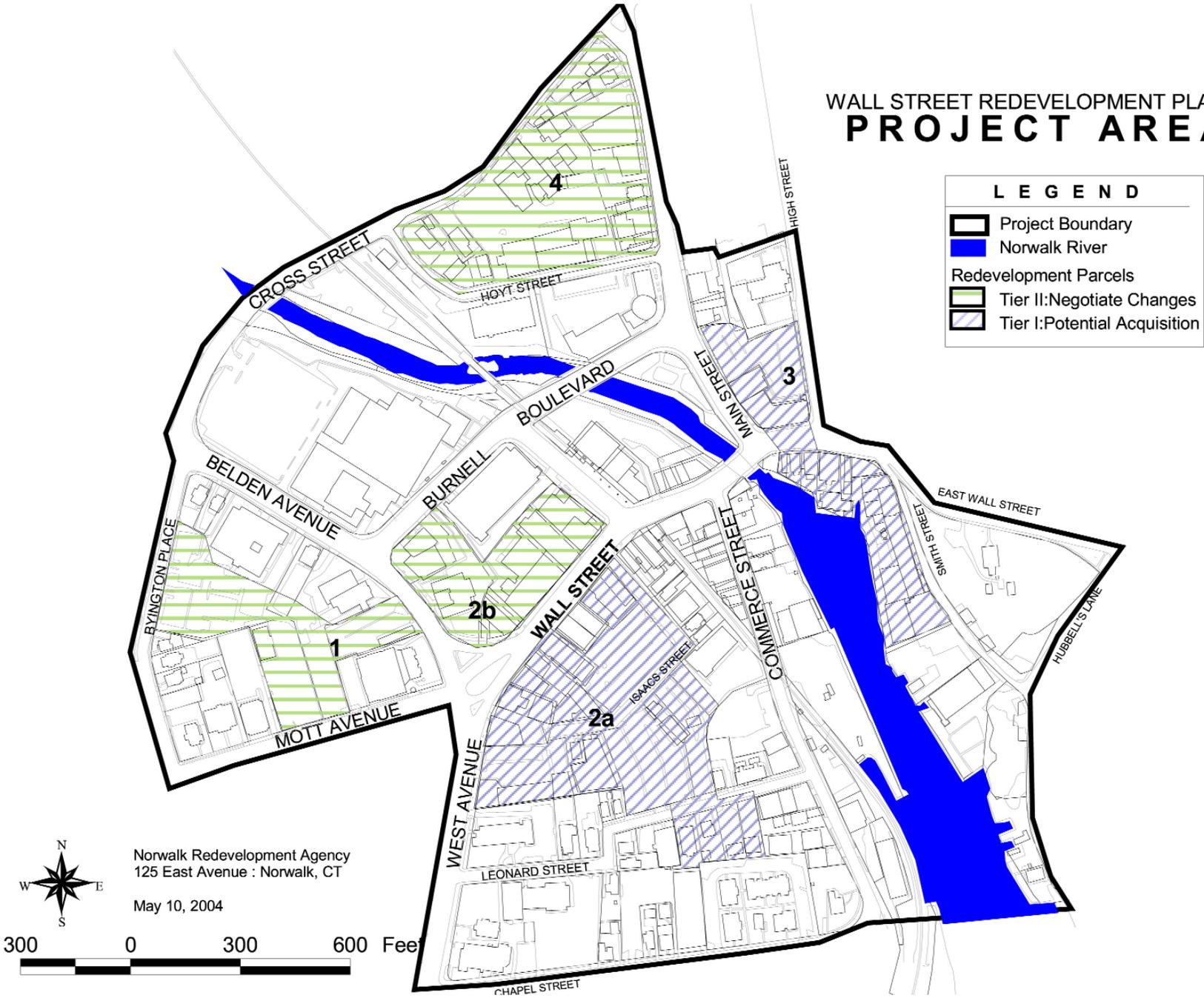
Displacement and Relocation

Zoning

Financials

Appendices

# WALL STREET REDEVELOPMENT PLAN PROJECT AREA



Norwalk Redevelopment Agency  
 125 East Avenue : Norwalk, CT  
 May 10, 2004

300 0 300 600 Feet

Map 1: Project area with Redevelopment Parcels 1-4

### Prevailing Conditions

The area falls wholly within census tract 437 and is a Low-Moderate Income Area ("LMI Area"), with 64% of residents at or below HUD's definition of low or moderate income



Figure 11: Wall Street storefront

status. Prevailing conditions in the area include substandard residential and commercial structures, with elevated rates of vacancy, and deteriorated or deteriorating conditions. There is little evidence of recent investment in the area, and the condition of the real estate is substandard relative to the rest of Norwalk. The Wall Street Update (2003) notes that the Wall Street area "...has lagged behind its potential for several reasons. There has been a persistent mismatch between the land use patterns, parcel configurations, and contemporary market needs for retail, commercial and housing uses." (page 5)

The Agency will mainly focus its redevelopment efforts on five (5) Redevelopment Parcels within the area. Detailed descriptions of those parcels, their conditions, and the types and uses

of structures to be found in each are provided below, together with the general program of proposed development. Inclusion in a Redevelopment Parcel means that a property has been identified as critical for meeting the goals of the Plan. Acquisition may or may not be a means by which the Agency and a designated developer address a property's role in the Plan. The Agency will acquire and offer for redevelopment those properties whose condition warrants clearance or whose acquisition is necessary to provide an adequate unit of development. Those buildings compatible with the overall goals and objectives of the Plan are designated not to be acquired, and are slated for preservation. Other tools and strategies included in the Plan - such as facade improvement, historic preservation, design standards, community policing, and a micro-loan program - are by no means premised on ownership transfers of property. Properties located within those Redevelopment Parcels identified as Tier II - Parcels 1, 2b and 4 - are not subject to acquisition via eminent domain under this Plan. Note: for Redevelopment Parcels whose area crosses a public street, no street abandonment or transfer of property is intended nor should be inferred by maps and figures in the Plan.

#### Redevelopment Parcel 1

This site includes the central branch of the Norwalk Public Library, the parking lot for the Connecticut Superior Courthouse on Belden

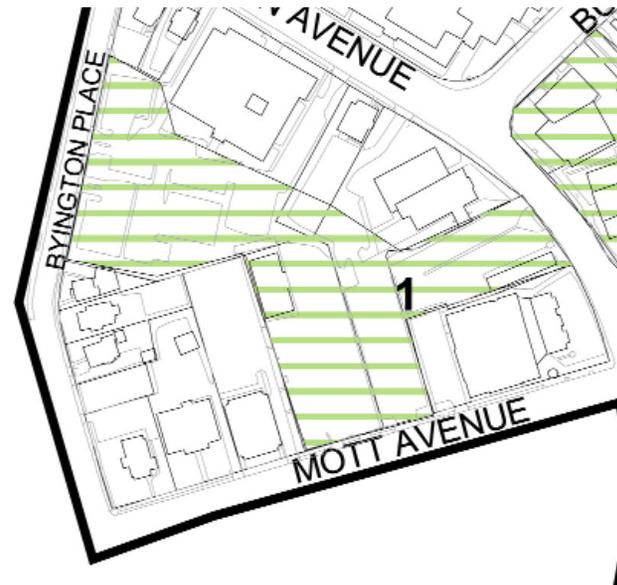


Figure 12: Redevelopment Parcel 1



Figure 13: Courthouse parking lot



Figure 14: Redevelopment Parcel 2a



Figure 15: Area theaters, The Roxy and Garden Cinemas

Avenue, and two private buildings, including a financial services firm and a private social club.

This 1.3 acre redevelopment area contains approximately 100 parking spaces distributed among several property owners. As shown in Figure 13, taken on a regular business day in the mid-afternoon, the fractured nature of ownership creates inefficient use of available parking spaces. The focus of the proposed redevelopment on this site is the reconfiguration of existing parking spaces through negotiated

agreements with property owners to support the planned expansion of the Norwalk Public

Library. (Although the library serves the City's approximately 83,000 residents, the approximately 46,000 square foot facility claims only 12

parking spaces, severely hampering its convenient use by Norwalk residents.) Redevelopment at the site should also reflect its role in the area as a civic hub, creating in conjunction with Redevelopment Parcel 2b, a landscaped 'common,' as a landmark and gathering place.

Redevelopment Parcel 2a

A publicly-owned and administered parking area with 248 spaces is located at the center of

this 6.3 acre parcel which is accessible from both Isaacs Street and Leonard Street.

Among the most prominent cultural uses in the area are its theaters. The Globe Theater (now called "The Roxy") has a long and distinguished history and should be renovated and preserved. Located along Isaacs Street, the Garden Cinema Theater, of more recent vintage, has gained success by featuring limited-release movies.

A variety of retail, commercial and entertainment businesses line Isaacs Street, surround the



Figure 16: Isaac Street parking lot

parking area, and encompass a small portion of Leonard Street as illustrated on Map 1. Additional residential, office and retail uses front West Avenue and Wall Street. Nearly all of the uses are housed in single-story, low-rise buildings. With the clear exception of the Globe Theater and its two neighboring structures to the north, most of the structures in this Redevelopment Parcel were built after the 1955 flood and are of little historical significance. Proposed redevelopment for Redevelopment

Parcel 2a is residential mixed-use development in keeping with the scale and density of the area, supplemented with structured parking.

### Redevelopment Parcel 2b

Redevelopment Parcel 2b is characterized by its proximity to the bustling intersection of Wall Street, Belden Avenue and West Avenue, and also by the presence of the Norwalk Post



Figure 17: Pedestrian walkway from the garage



Figure 18: The Belden / Wall / West / Mott intersection.

Office. Although not part of Redevelopment Parcel 2b, the library is also located at this intersection, across Belden Avenue. The Post Office and library are both major nodes of activity, and critical elements of the area's civic hub. With their combined activity, this location is the focal point for the area's busiest vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Nevertheless, chronic vacancies, lagging property maintenance, and poorly organized rear parking create undesirable traffic conditions at the intersection and make this a substandard location in terms of convenience and safety. Plans for Redevelopment Parcel 2b entail the addition of commercial floors or reconstruction of existing one-story structures as multi-story commercial buildings in the block bordered by Wall Street, River Street, Burnell Boulevard and Belden Avenue. The redevelopment parcel should, in conjunction with Redevelopment Parcel 1, provide safe pedestrian

crossings, a landscaped area at its southern tip -- adding to the site's development as a 'common' -- and will also include a pedestrian walkway along the rear of those buildings that face upon Wall Street, thus offering a pleasing and convenient access to Yankee Doodle Garage.

Redevelopment Parcel 3

Redevelopment Parcel



Figure 19: Redevelopment Parcel 2b



Figure 20: Neglected improvements



Figure 21: Redevelopment Parcel 3 (north)

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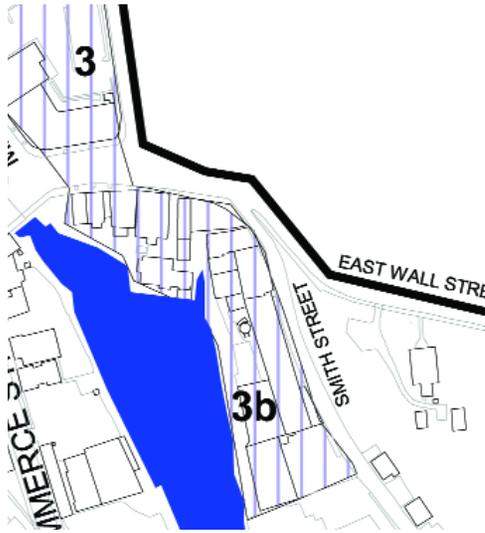


Figure 22: Redevelopment Parcel 3 (south)



Figure 23: Litter-strewn Wall St. sidewalk

3 encompasses 4.72 acres and is divided by Wall Street into two portions, one north of Wall Street, and one south of Wall Street.

Important characteristics distinguish the northern and southern portions of Redevelopment Parcel 3. One is to the north of Wall Street, one is to the south; one contains city-owned property, one does not; one is on Main Street, one is on the waterfront. Nevertheless, a review of the



Figure 24: Lower High St. pedestrian way

development potential of each portion suggests a natural symbiotic relationship for the two and their pairing as a single unit of development. For example, concentrating ample parking resources at the location of the current High Street lot could enrich enjoyment of the public access waterfront and esplanade planned along Smith Street by reducing vehicular traffic there. Therefore, the

Agency, in collaboration with a designated developer, will seek to take advantage of the attributes of both portions in order to unlock the maximum possible public benefit associated with Redevelopment Parcel 3.

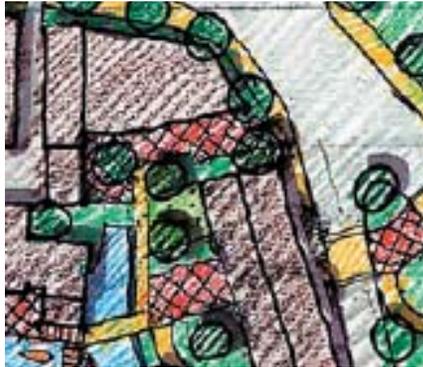
The northern portion is characterized by two prominent features. The first of these is a difficult traffic intersection created by the confluence of Wall, Main, Knight, and High Streets; the second is the city-owned and operated parking area located behind a row of buildings fronting on Wall and the lower tip of Main and High Streets. This lot presently contains 91 spaces. The group of structures on Wall Street is a short row of small commercial retail establishments, with few vacancies, in a low-rise building seemingly built subsequent to the 1955 flood. The building has a narrow arcade that incorporates a portion of the sidewalk. Sidewalk improvements are in a state of neg-



Figure 25: Deteriorating industrial building

\* The EPA defines brownfields as: abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination.

Figure 26: Redevelopment Parcel 3 waterfront access and public esplanade.



lect. The structure fronting on High Street was renovated as recently as the 1980s, and consists mainly of office uses. A multi-tiered parking structure is the centerpiece of the potential development program for the northern portion of Redevelopment Parcel 3. This parking structure will accommodate 255 spaces and provide vehicular access to and from Main and High Streets.

The southern portion of Redevelopment Parcel 3, of all the Redevelopment Parcels, has the largest number of designated and de facto historic structures. These structures are currently in poor condition (Ref. Figures 23, 25). This Redevelopment Parcel has the highest incidence of substandard buildings, with many in varying degrees of deterioration and vacancy. Many of the buildings have broken or boarded up windows, flaking paint, rotting molding, and eroding mortar. Little effort is being made to maintain the vacant storefronts, and trash often lies strewn on the sidewalk. The portion of the Redevelopment Parcel located on Wall Street is the site of a former pedestrian plaza known as St. John's Place. The multi-story buildings which face it retain the features of classic 19th century facades. Their backs face the Norwalk River and the Head of the Harbor. A private club featuring boat docks and a restaurant is

located on a rear lot at the Head of the Harbor.

A portion of the Redevelopment Parcel fronts on Smith Street, a narrow, one-way road that extends from Wall Street south along the Norwalk River. The buildings at the Smith Street intersection with Wall Street, historically the site of Smith & Day Pottery, appear to have been vacant for several years and are in a state of dangerous disrepair. Included among these is a dilapidated warehouse structure south of the intersection, which possesses the characteristics of an environmentally contaminated "brownfield" as defined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency.\*

The potential redevelopment program for Redevelopment Parcel 3 includes new residential units, artist or live/work space and water-oriented retail space along Smith Street. The rehabilitation and redevelopment of the river-front parcels along Smith Street should include restructuring the lower Mill Hill area to facilitate pedestrian connections to the waterfront. An essential purpose of this parcel will be the creation of public waterfront access to the Head of the Harbor and along the Norwalk River. This public space will provide a connection between the buildings on Wall Street and the waterfront. Accompanied by a public esplanade and pedestrian amenities such as urban greenery, park furniture and public lighting, this will provide a recreational outlet to the residents of the Wall Street area while animating the Norwalk waterfront.

#### Redevelopment Parcel 4

The intersection of Cross and Main Streets rep-



Figure 27: Redevelopment Parcel 4



Figure 28: NW corner of Hoyt and Main St.



Figure 29: Redevelopment Parcel 4 shopping center and parking lot

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resents the northern gateway into the project area. This parcel is the site of several small, yet active commercial enterprises most notably the automobile service businesses located near the corner of Hoyt and Cross Street and the corner of Cross and Main Streets. Within the center of the parcel is a multi-tenant, low-rise commercial development. The major uses within this commercial development include small businesses, a private community health center, a donation collection center for a prominent charitable organization and fast food restaurants. This development surrounds approximately 150 private parking spaces. The largest structure within the parcel is a recently renovated, brick-faced warehouse rental building. A bar/restaurant is located at the corner of Main and Hoyt Street and is adjacent to several storefronts that house retail uses.

The proposed redevelopment program for this parcel seems likely to include the creation of both residential and retail space fronting upon both Cross Street and Main Street. A structured parking facility should accompany and support this development, as should continued pursuit of the planned widening of Cross Street / Route 1 as an important gateway to the area.