

CITY OF NORWALK, CT

South Norwalk TOD Redevelopment Plan



Prepared for the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
by THE CECIL GROUP • FXM ASSOCIATES

South Norwalk TOD Redevelopment Plan

Planning Commission Meeting

August 16, 2016

Agenda

- Statutory Responsibility of Planning Commission
- Changes to Proposed Zoning
 - Springwood-Whistleville Village District
 - TOD District
- Presenters
 - Tim Sheehan, Norwalk Redevelopment Authority
 - Emily Keys Innes, AICP LEED AP ND, The Cecil Group

What is the objective of TOD?

The question is not whether Norwalk wants to develop; it's how we want to develop. To strengthen Norwalk's urban economy and promote greater equity, we need to provide people of all incomes with more housing options in stable and growing urban neighborhoods. Neighborhoods that provide appropriately balanced commercial development, jobs and active livable environments which are centered around and build on our existing public transportation assets.

Partnership for Strong Communities



<http://www.pschoosing.org/>

Statutory Responsibility of Planning Commission

- **Sec. 8-127. Preparation and approval of redevelopment plan. Notice of approval. Review.**
 - The redevelopment agency shall request the written opinion of the planning agency on all redevelopment plans prior to approving such redevelopment plans.
 - Such written opinion shall include a determination on whether the plan is consistent with the plan of conservation and development of the municipality adopted under section 8-23.

Definition of a Redevelopment Plan

Chapter 130 Section 8-125 Definitions

A "redevelopment plan" means a plan that includes:

- (A)
 - (i) A description of the redevelopment area and the condition, type and use of the structures therein, and
 - (ii) specification of each parcel proposed to be acquired, including parcels to be acquired by eminent domain;
- (B) the location and extent of the land uses proposed for and within the redevelopment area, such as housing, recreation, business, industry, schools, civic activities, open spaces or other categories of public and private uses;
- (C) the location and extent of streets and other public utilities, facilities and works within the redevelopment area;

Definition of a Redevelopment Plan

Chapter 130 Section 8-125 Definitions

- (D) schedules showing the number of families displaced by the proposed improvement, the method of temporary relocation of such families and the availability of sufficient suitable living accommodations at prices and rentals within the financial reach of such families and located within a reasonable distance of the area from which such families are displaced;
- (E) present and proposed zoning regulations in the redevelopment area;
- (F) a description of how the redevelopment area is deteriorated, deteriorating, substandard or detrimental to the safety, health, morals or welfare of the community; and
- (G) any other detail including financial aspects of redevelopment which, in the judgment of the redevelopment agency authorized herein, is necessary to give it adequate information;

Transit-Oriented Development and the *TOD Strategy*

South Norwalk TOD Strategy

South Norwalk TOD Strategy

- *South Norwalk Railroad Station Area Transit Oriented Development Strategy*
 - The Cecil Group began work in 2010
 - Final report October 2011
 - Based on earlier studies and City policy for centering development around South Norwalk Rail Station



SOUTH NORWALK
RAILROAD STATION AREA TRANSIT
ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
FINAL REPORT

Prepared for:
The City of Norwalk

Prepared by:
The Cecil Group, Inc.

October 2011

South Norwalk TOD Strategy

South Norwalk TOD Strategy

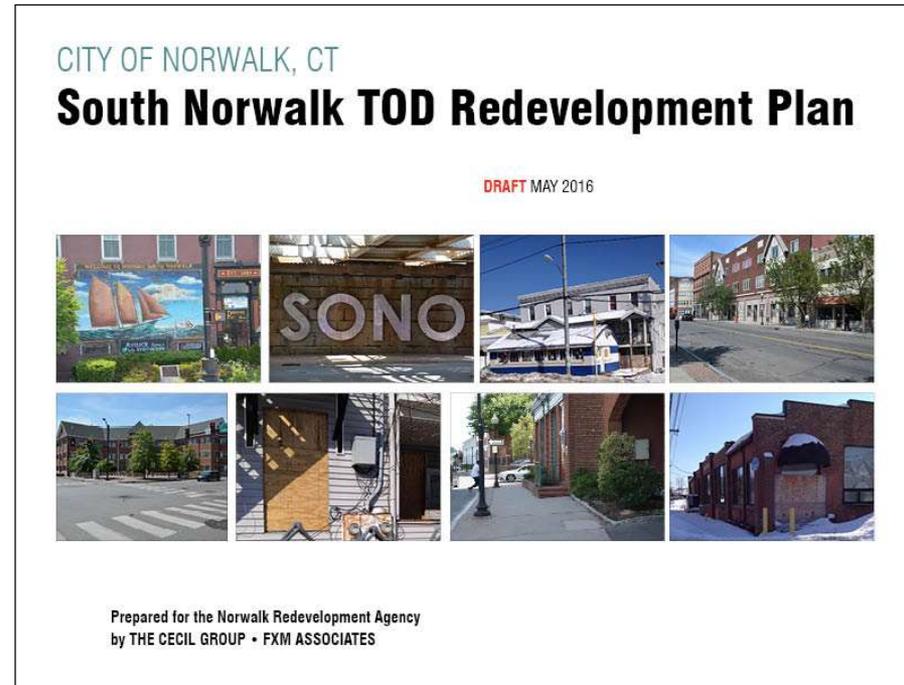
- Involved significant public participation
 - 2010 – 2011 Community Outreach:
 - 31 Community Interviews
 - 7 Stakeholder Meetings
 - 4 Planning Coordination Meetings
 - 4 Community workshops in English, Spanish and Creole
- Defined goals for:
 - Neighborhoods
 - Economics and Development
 - Urban Design Character and Qualities
 - Diversity
 - Circulation and Transportation
 - Community Security and Safety

Draft *South Norwalk TOD Redevelopment Plan*

South Norwalk TOD Redevelopment Plan

Draft Redevelopment Plan

- Meets requirements of Enabling legislation: CGS Chapter 130 Section 8-127
- Has been online and available for public comment
 - June 16
 - June 29
- Currently in public process for approval
 - Planning Commission (consistency with POCD)
 - Common Council (approval)



Plan Findings

- The Redevelopment Area is a blighted area under Chapter 130 of the Connecticut State Statutes
 - Presence of incompatible land uses
 - Presence of existing environmental conditions that cannot be addressed by the private market alone
 - Existing flood conditions that cannot be addressed by the private market alone
- The proposed Redevelopment Plan will materially improve conditions by providing development incentives to address existing conditions of blight over time:
 - Replace incompatible land uses with infill development
 - Replace existing older housing stock with infill development
 - Address flood conditions with appropriate building and site design guidelines for new development
 - Protect existing historic buildings

South Norwalk TOD Redevelopment Plan

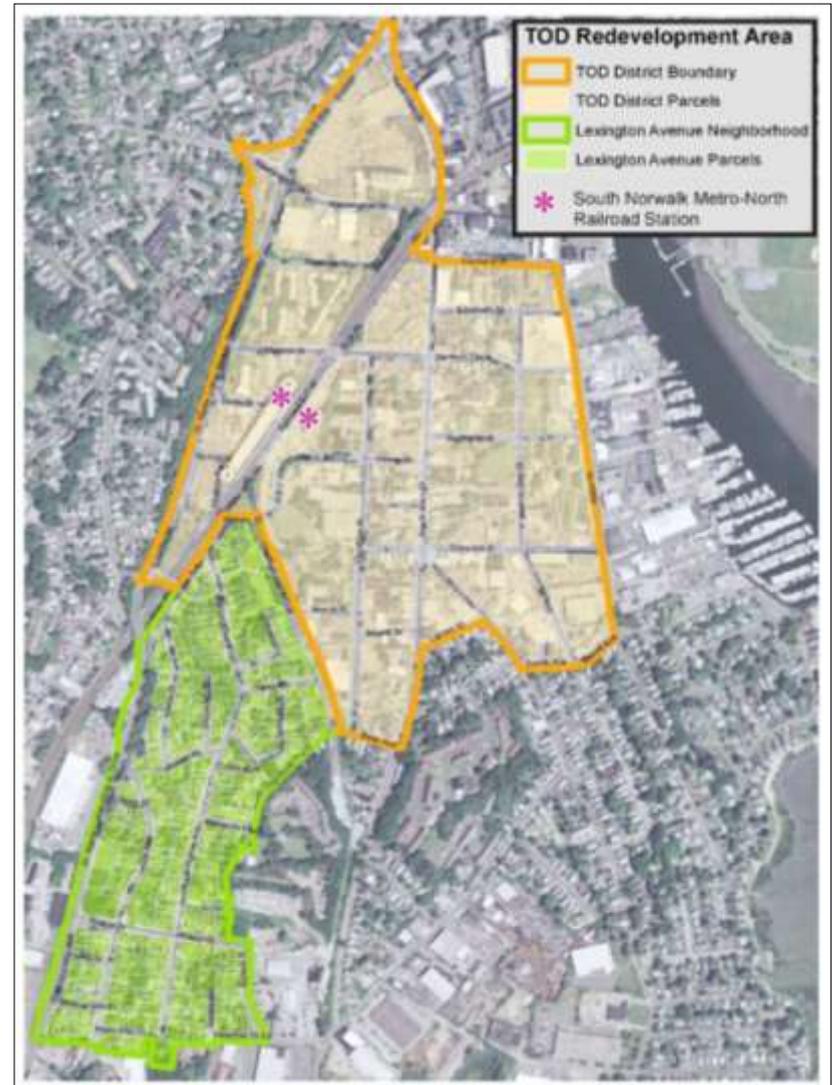
Plan Findings

- Sufficient Housing Exists for Relocation
 - Changes to the area are expected to take place over time – the Redevelopment Plan does not include a specific project that would require relocation
 - The proposed zoning for the TOD District requires the replacement of existing Workforce Housing (118-1050) in new development at 50% of the State Median Income as defined by CGS 8-30g-8
 - A bonus incentive is available to developers who replace existing de facto affordable housing at 80% of the State Median Income
- The proposed Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the City's POCD
 - Supports POCD goals for
 - Economic development
 - Affordable housing
 - Transportation improvements
 - Historic preservation
 - Urban design

South Norwalk TOD Redevelopment Area

Redevelopment Area

- Two Subareas
 - TOD District
 - Lexington Avenue Neighborhood
- Subareas have different zoning regulations and design guidelines
- Lexington Avenue Neighborhood added to the plan in response to community comments at June public meetings



Purpose and Goals

Purposes of this Redevelopment Plan

- Support the transition from the current conditions to a walkable, mixed-use district, centered on the South Norwalk Rail Station, and connected to the surrounding neighborhoods with safe access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor vehicles
- Support a range of housing options in terms of type and affordability that sustain a mix of incomes
- Accommodate existing businesses and residents
- Address current conditions of blight and prevent future blight

Implementation

Implementation

The Redevelopment Plan will...

- Address existing conditions of blight
 - Suspected environmental contaminants (brownfields, lead paint)
 - Incompatible land uses
- Help prevent future conditions of blight
 - Damage from significant flood events
- Create incentives for changes in land use
 - Support mixed-use development and higher density around the train station
 - Allow uses as-of-right and limit discretionary decisions
 - Reduce number of zoning districts and simplify requirements
- Protect existing conditions which are of value to the community
 - Provide incentives to retain historic buildings
 - Preserve existing number of housing units at current affordability levels
 - Create additional Workforce Housing under Section 118-1050
 - Enforce design guidelines that reflect plan goals and community values

Implementation

Implementation Strategy

- Based on goals and related actions from *South Norwalk TOD Strategy*
- Actions include
 - Improvements to public infrastructure to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers throughout the area
 - Support for a diversity of housing types, including affordable housing
 - Support for mixed use development near the rail station
 - Protection of historic resources
 - Recognition of the diverse residential population and mix of businesses and how that diversity improves the strength of the area
- Includes expanded design guidelines
- Recommends consistent zoning for both subareas
- Infill will be incremental over time and based on market conditions

Proposed Design Guidelines

Design Guidelines

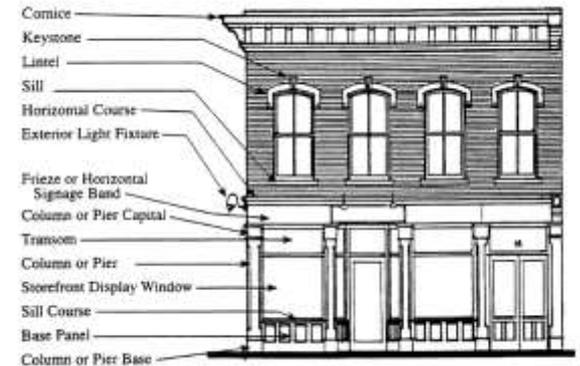
Purpose of Design Guidelines: TOD District

- The design of new development must support the overall goals of the Redevelopment Plan and of the TOD District
 - New or renovated buildings must be sensitive to the existing building context of the TOD District
 - Site improvements must reinforce an active public realm
 - Site improvements on private sites must connect to the public circulation system for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles
 - Public infrastructure changes must reinforce the pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular links between the train station and the neighborhoods
 - Within the flood plain, new development must respond appropriately to potential flood conditions
 - Signage and lighting must be appropriate for their purpose and the context of the area
 - Renovation of historic buildings must meet the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation*

Design Guidelines

Purpose of Design Guidelines: Springwood-Whistleville Village District

- The design guidelines:
 - Protect and enhance the distinctive historic design character, landscape, historic structures, density and development pattern within the Lexington Avenue historic neighborhood
 - Ensure that the unique character of this district is maintained for future generations
 - Recommend design principles, patterns and materials that will preserve and enhance the local historic character, based on the particular design features that distinguish the architecture of the existing historic buildings and the neighborhood landscape

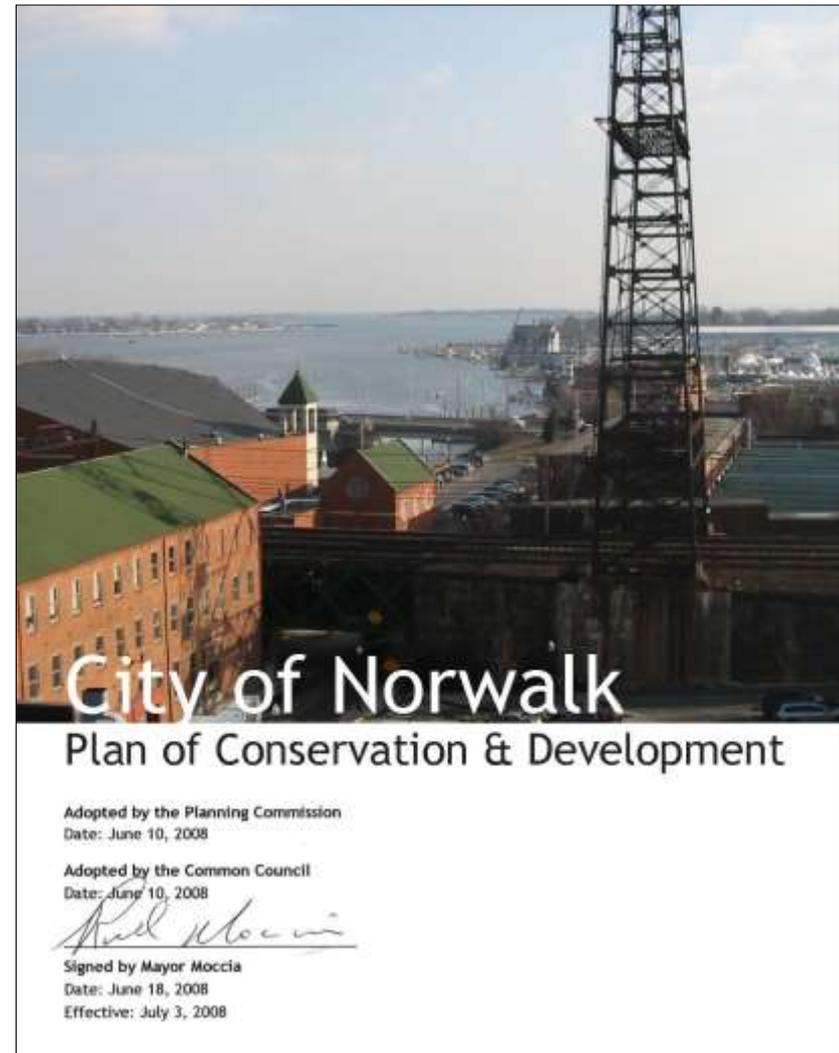


Consistency with POCD

Consistency with POCD

Consistency with 2008 POCD

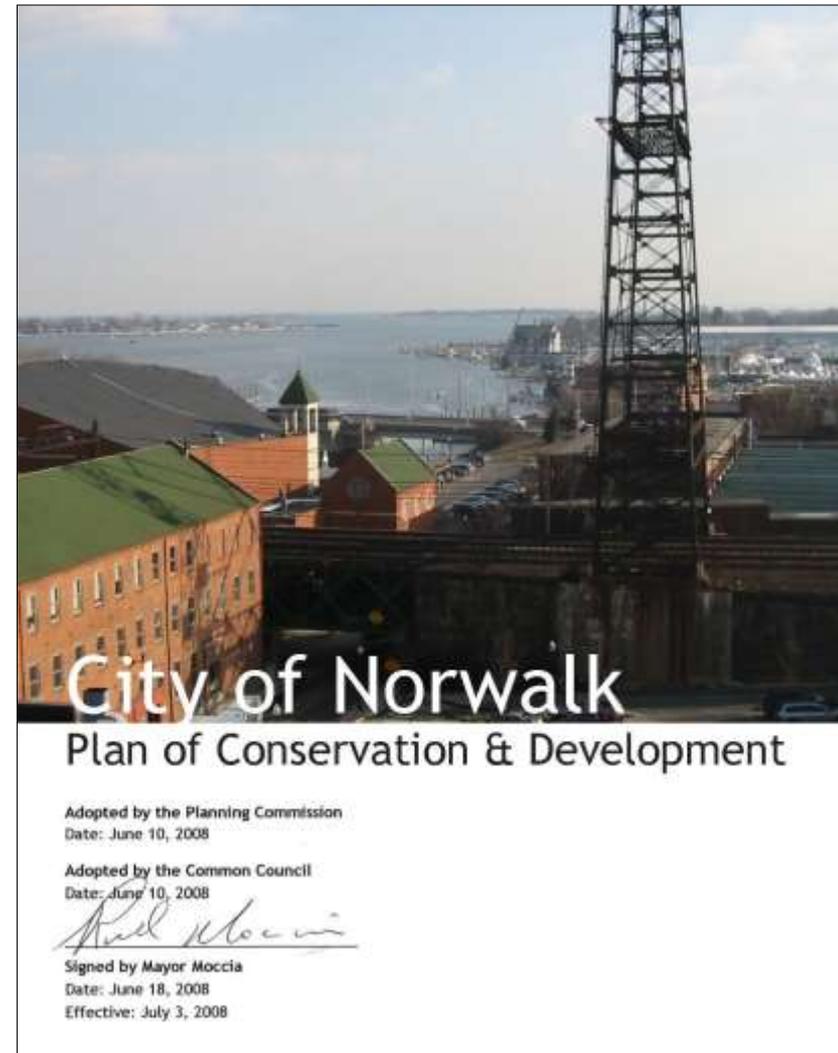
- The proposed Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the City's 2008 POCD
 - Supports POCD goals for
 - Economic development
 - Affordable housing
 - Transportation improvements
 - Historic preservation
 - Urban design



Consistency with POCD

Consistency with Other Plans

- The proposed Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the City's 2008 POCD
 - Supports POCD goals for
 - Economic development
 - Affordable housing
 - Transportation improvements
 - Historic preservation
 - Urban design
- The proposed Redevelopment Plan is also consistent with the recommendations of the *TOD Strategy* (2011) and the *2015 Springwood-Whistleville/Lexington Avenue Historic Preservation Strategy* (2015)



Consistency with POCD

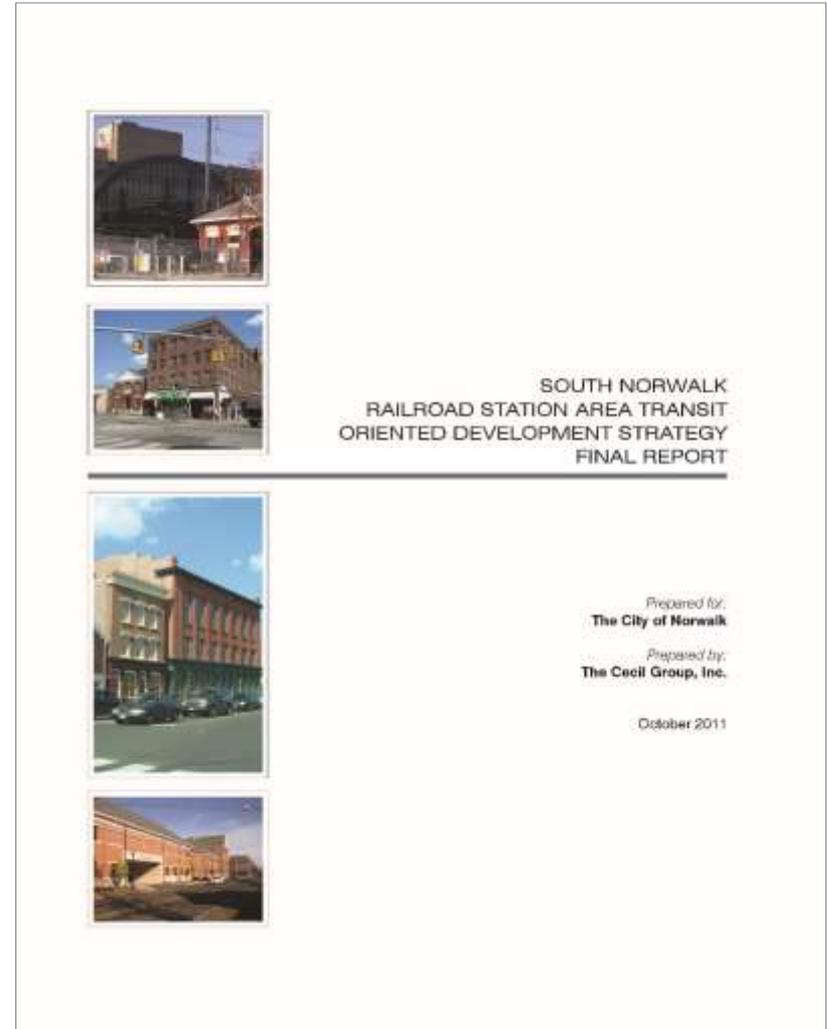
TOD District

- E.2.2.5 Consider designating a redevelopment area at the South Norwalk Station to help achieve goals for transit enhancements and transit-oriented development here
- F.2.1 Examine and modify existing zoning where necessary to achieve the goals of this plan
- F.3.2.1 Conduct an intermodal study for South Norwalk Station; explore creation of a redevelopment area

Consistency with POCD

TOD District

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Consistency with POCD

Lexington Avenue Neighborhood

- F.2.1 Examine and modify existing zoning where necessary to achieve the goals of this plan
- F.2.1.1 Create new Village Districts, Conservation Districts, and Historic Districts where appropriate
- F.3.2.3 Create and implement a Historic Preservation Plan to encourage retention and rehabilitation of architecturally and historically important structures and districts

Consistency with POCD

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Springwood-Whistleville / Lexington Avenue Historic Preservation Strategy

Prepared by The Cecil Group for the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
City of Norwalk, Connecticut
September 17, 2015



Bird's-eye-view of Norwalk, 1899 (Cropped)

Consistency with POCD

Consistency with POCD

- A. Balanced Economic Growth
- B. Environment & Infrastructure
- C. Open Space & Recreation Systems
- D. Community and Cultural Facilities
- E. Transportation
- F. Governance, Zoning, and Urban Design
- Implementation

Consistency with POCD

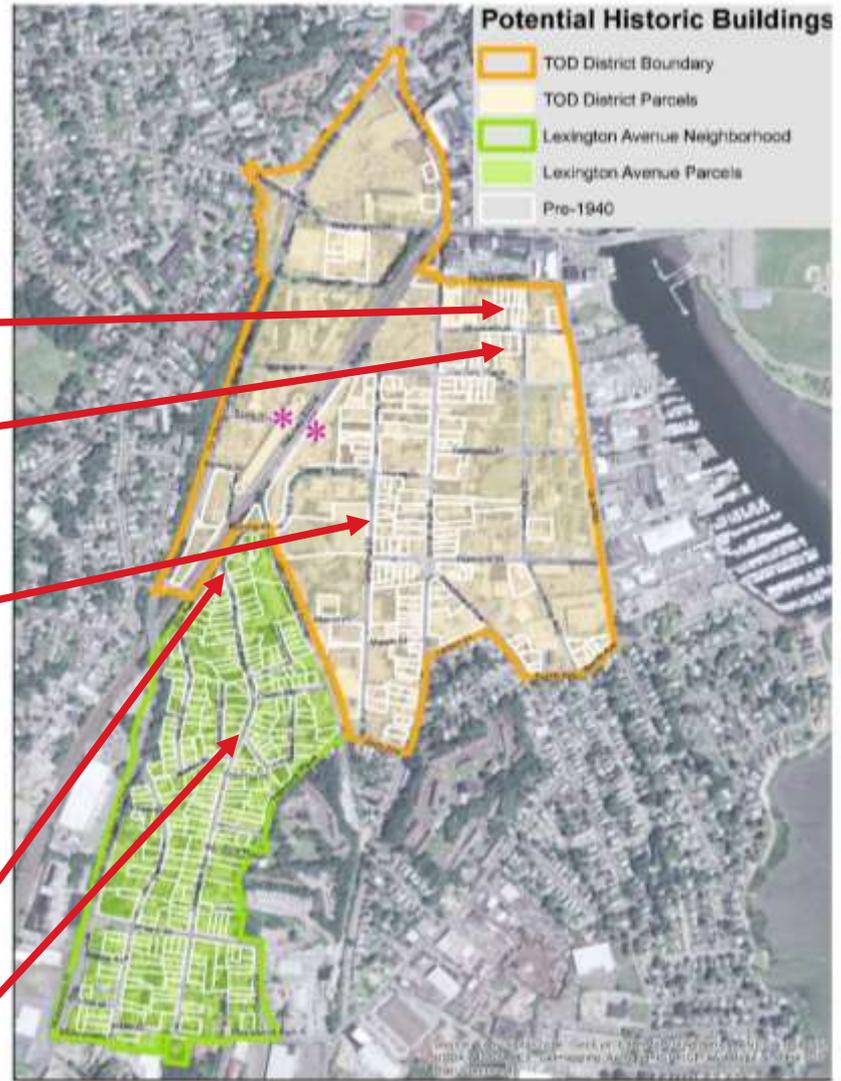
Concerns Raised by Land Use Committee

- POCD Recommendations
 - A.1.1.4 Preserve and enhance the character of Norwalk
 - A.1.1.6 Protect residential neighborhoods from incompatible development
 - A.6.3.4 Identify parcels suitable for redevelopment while encouraging compatibility with neighborhoods and sensitivity to environmental areas in proximity to Norwalk Harbor
- Concern
 - Proposed changes from C and D Residence to the new TOD District will not preserve existing neighborhood character or protect from incompatible development; the TOD District will add development pressure to stable multifamily neighborhoods particularly on Lexington Avenue, Ely Avenue, Chestnut Street, Elizabeth Street, Haviland Street

Consistency with POCD

Response

- TOD District
 - Haviland Street (incentives to keep historic buildings)
 - Elizabeth Street (incentives to keep historic buildings)
 - Chestnut Street (height restriction on buildings on Chestnut Street south of Henry Street)
- Springwood-Whistleville Village District
 - Ely Avenue (preservation of existing residential and neighborhood business)
 - Lexington Avenue (preservation of existing residential)



Consistency with POCD

Concerns Raised by Land Use Committee

- POCD Recommendation

- A.5.1.1 Update Restricted Industrial Zones, Industrial 1 Zones, and Industrial 2 Zones, to allow on a case-by-case basis certain types of office and multifamily residential uses, to reflect current economic trends in Norwalk provided they are compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods.

- Concern

- Proposed change to TOD District will expand TOD area; this will increase pressure on existing industrial uses that the Commission has sought to protect and will make many existing industrial uses nonconforming

Consistency with POCD

Response: Industrial Zones

- In 2006 an Industrial Zones Committee made specific recommendations regarding the I1 Zones
- Specifically the Committee found that “It is clear that today, given the changing nature of the economy, there is little reason to prohibit office and similar commercial uses in these areas”
- The report further recommended that multi-family housing be allowed at a B residence density on a case by case basis
- The TOD Plan further advances the Committee’s “belief that residential development will complement the City’s on-going commercial development in a mutually beneficial manner”

Consistency with POCD

Response: Industrial Zones

- The TOD Plan logically advances housing as of right use in the TOD Plan Area
- The TOD Plan also seeks to increase the allowable density of housing in the Plan Area
- The TOD Plan also seeks to contain the expansion of conflicting industrial uses in or directly adjacent to established residential neighborhoods as directed by the Planning Committee of the Common Council in response to significant neighborhood comment

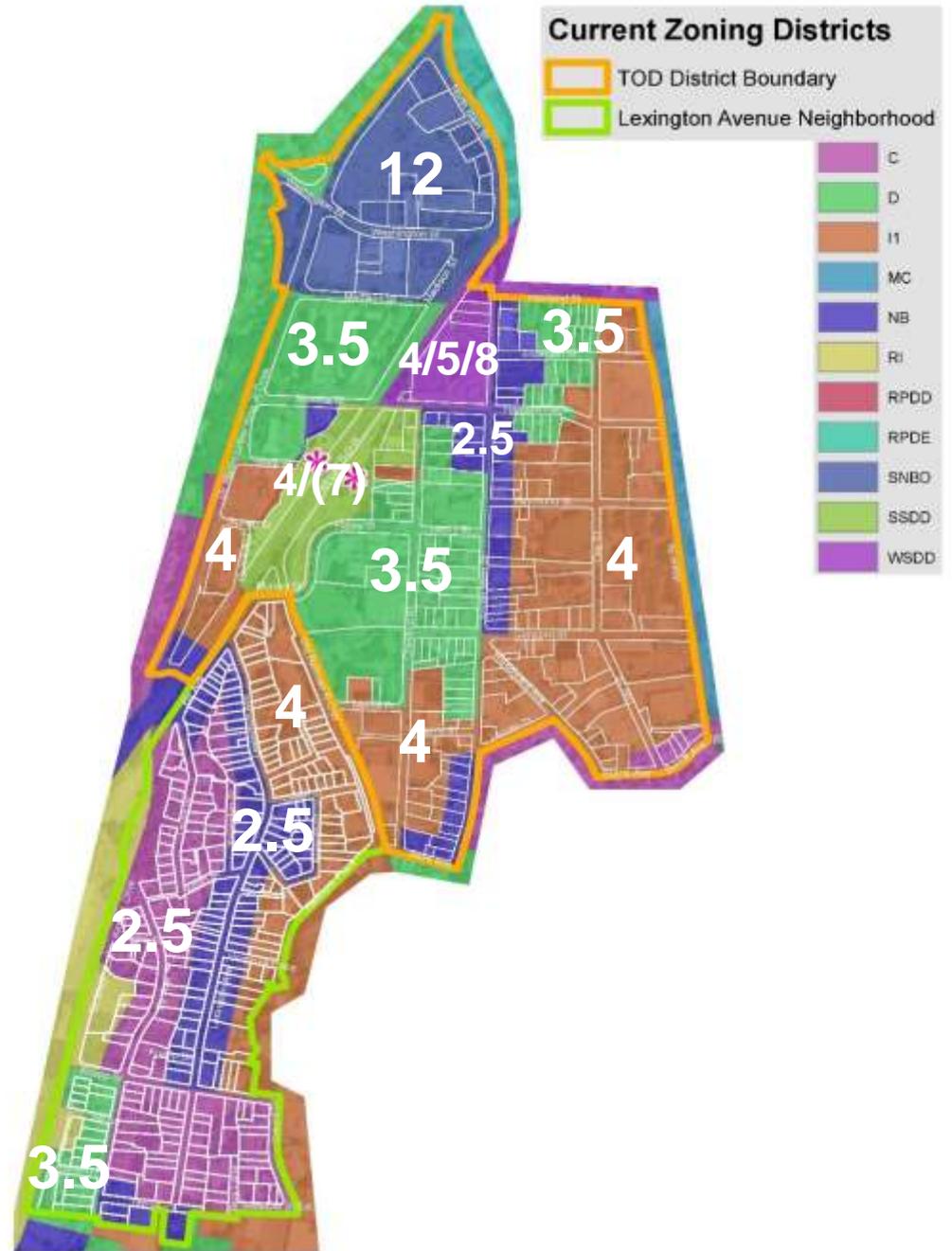
Consistency with POCD

Concerns Raised by Land Use Committee

- POCD Recommendations
 - F.5.1.11 Preserve architectural qualities of South Main Street and Washington Street
 - A.4.1.4 Preserve the character of neighborhood businesses and neighborhood businesses districts
- Concern
 - Proposed zone change to TOD District would revise zoning on South Main Street increasing height, coverage and density of development permitted not consistent with preserving its existing character

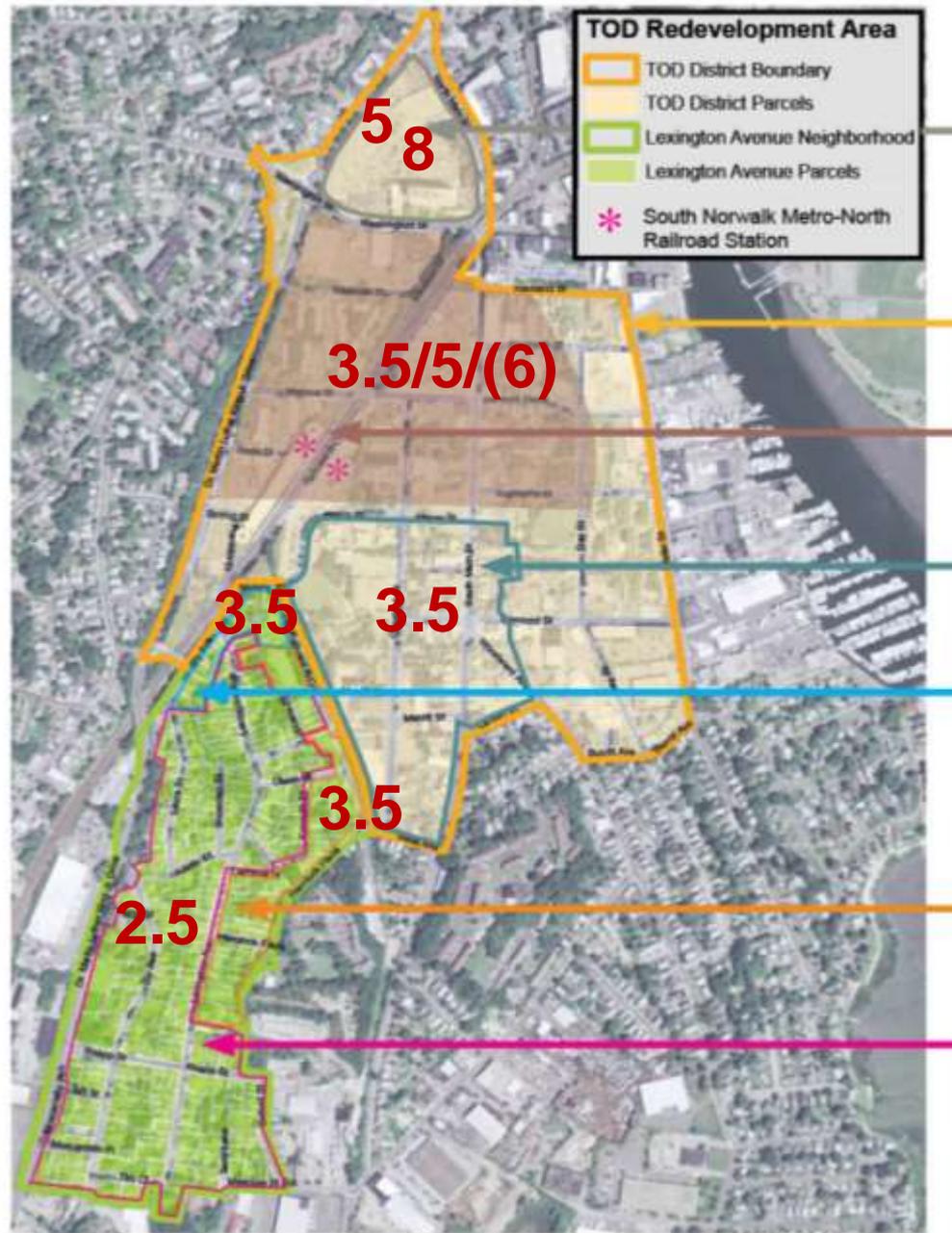
Consistency with POCD Response

- Current height in stories
 - C: 2.5
 - D: 2.5
 - NB: 2.5
 - SSDD: 4 (garage 7)
 - WSDD: 4 (5 with bonus; 8 for hotel)
 - I-1: 4
 - SNBD: 12



Consistency with POCD Response

- Proposed height in stories
 - TOD District
 - 3.5 on Chestnut and South Main south of Henry Street
 - 5 on the perimeter and 8 within core of Webster Street Block
 - 6 for commuter parking garage within 1/4 mile of the South Norwalk Rail Station
 - 3.5 by right/5 with height bonus everywhere else
 - Village District
 - Subarea A: 2.5
 - Subarea B: 3.5
 - Subarea C: 3.5



Consistency with POCD

Response

- Existing Zoning: Maximum Building Coverage
 - C: 25-35% building
 - D: 25-60% buildings and parking (depending on number of units)
 - NB: 35% buildings/80% buildings and parking
 - SSDD: 50% buildings/90% buildings and parking
 - WSDD: Coverage: 90% buildings
 - I-1: Coverage: 50% buildings/90% buildings and parking
 - SNBD: Coverage: None

Consistency with POCD

Response

- Existing Zoning: Density
 - C: Single-family
 - D: Multi-family allowed; no residential density defined
 - NB: 1 dwelling unit per 1,650 of lot area
 - SSDD: 1 dwelling unit per 1,000 of land area
 - WSDD: 1 dwelling unit per 600 gross square feet of building area
 - I-1: 1 dwelling unit per 1,650 of lot area
 - SNBD: 1 dwelling unit per 1,650 of lot area

Consistency with POCD

Response

- Proposed Zoning: TOD District
 - Coverage
 - 50% Maximum Building Coverage
 - 90% Maximum Building and Parking Coverage
 - Density
 - 500 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit

Consistency with POCD

Concerns Raised by Land Use Committee

- POCD Recommendation

- E.5.1.1 Expand the public parking supply, including the building of new parking garages in Norwalk's downtowns including Main and High Streets, Isaac's Street (mixed-use), Webster Street, Washington Street, and on public land off Water Street in South Norwalk

- Concern

- Plan contains no references to additional public parking facilities to accommodate new development nor any expansion of existing lots at SoNo Station, Webster Street, and Haviland Street

Consistency with POCD

Response

- The Redevelopment Plan does not contain a specific project of the Redevelopment Agency for public parking
 - The provisions of the plan do not preclude future construction by the City or by the Agency
 - The plan provides design guidelines for public and private parking – both surface and structured

- Parking is addressed in the accompanying zoning
 - Parking Management Plan is required for all projects
 - If a developer expects to use existing public parking, and agreement with the Norwalk Parking Authority must be submitted as part of the Parking Management Plan

- Haviland Street Parking lot is not within the TOD District
- Common Council voted as super majority against the need for parking on public land off Water Street in South Norwalk

Consistency with POCD

Concerns Raised by Land Use Committee

- POCD Recommendation
 - A.1.1.6 Protect residential neighborhoods from incompatible development

- Concern
 - Plan recommends removal of special permit uses which is not consistent with POCD recommendations

Consistency with POCD

Response

- Design guidelines for both the TOD District and for the Springwood-Whistleville Village District protect residential neighborhoods from incompatible development in terms of aesthetics
- Proposed zoning changes for TOD District and for the Springwood-Whistleville Village District protect residential neighborhoods from incompatible development in terms of dimensional standards and incompatible uses
 - Proposed zoning regulations provide incentives to encourage development consistent with neighborhood needs
 - Special permit uses still exist in the TOD District and in the Springwood-Whistleville Village District

Consistency with POCD

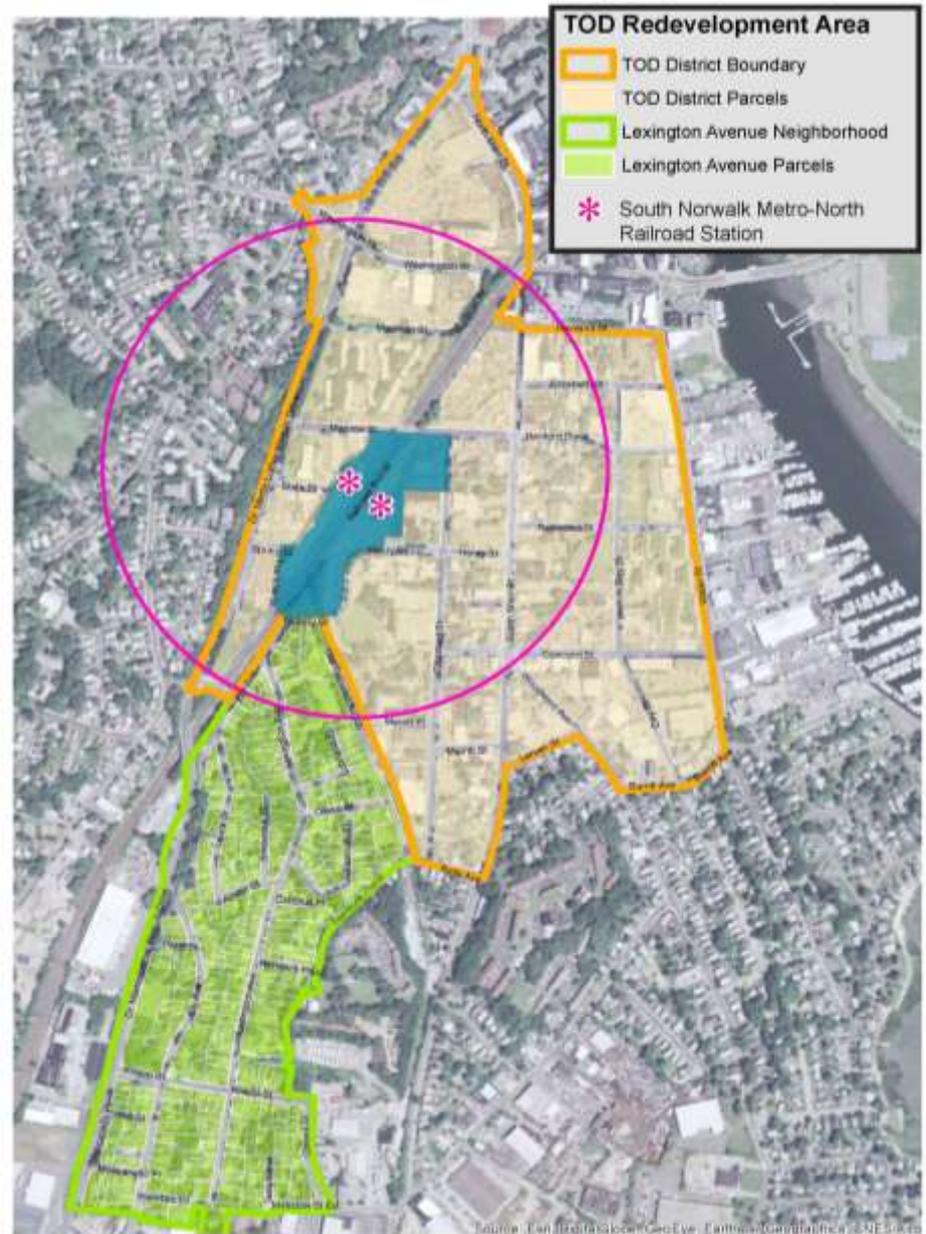
Concerns Raised by Land Use Committee

- POCD Recommendation
 - E.2.2.5 Consider designating a redevelopment area at the South Norwalk Station to help achieve goals for transit enhancements and transit-oriented development here

- Concern
 - Proposed zone change to TOD District greatly expands area originally envisioned for TOD

Consistency with POCD Response

- TOD typically extends to a quarter-mile radius of a transit station



Questions and Answers