Briefing Booklet #5B

January 24, 2018

ENHANCE BRANFORD CENTER



Overview

This "briefing booklet" has been prepared as part of the process of preparing an update to the 2008 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) for Branford. This booklet is intended to familiarize the members of the POCD Update Committee and others existing and potential future strategies related to Branford Center.

Streetscape



Streetscape



Activities And Events



Activities And Events



Background

Inventory

While there is no defined boundary of "Branford Center", the 2008 POCD considered it to be the area generally bounded as follows:

- East by properties fronting on Montowese Street
- West by Cherry Hill Road / North Harbor Street
- South by Branford River
- North by Main Street / North Main Street

In Branford, as in many communities, the Town Center is the <u>heart and soul</u> of the community. This area was the location first settled by Europeans almost 300 years ago and many of the major community and institutional uses are located here.

As stated in the 2008 POCD, "Branford's Town Center is a quintessential New England town green surrounded by commercial, residential, governmental and religious buildings. The Town Center is one of the region's most attractive retail and community center areas."

In years past, the Town Center also included industrial uses and maritime uses that took advantage of the rail line and Branford Harbor. With the recently completed "'transit-oriented development" (TOD) study, the prospects for the future include adopting regulations to enable such development near the train station.

Assessment

The map on the facing page shows that there are a number of zoning districts in the Branford Center area. Further some of these zoning districts may not relate well to the uses actually existing or to what people envision an appropriate future use might be for that area.

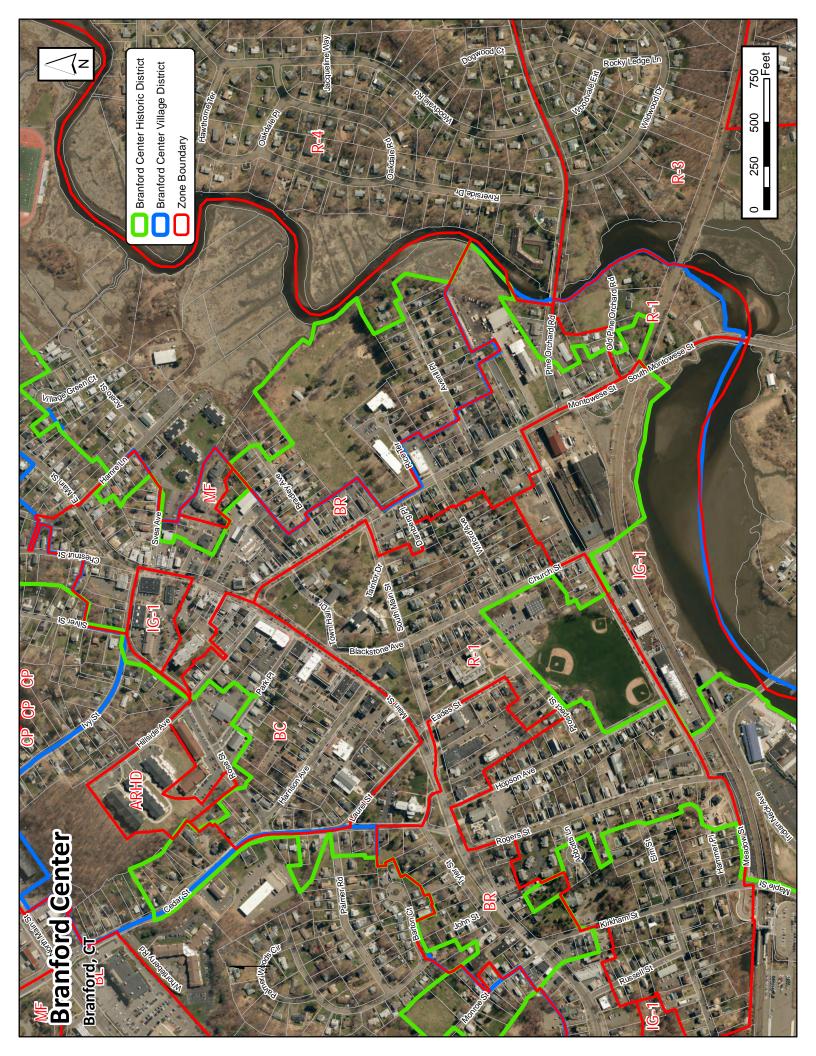
2008 POCD

GOAL Enhance the structural elements that make Branford a strong

community.

STRATEGIES Enhance the Town Center

Enhance Gateways At Key Entry Points Consider Transit-Oriented Development



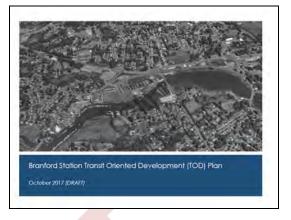
Key Principles

Based on public input, the TOD Study Steering Committee developed key principles to guide development and redevelopment in the Branford TOD area:

- Encourage contextual development of key opportunity sites
- Incorporate land uses that are complimentary and do not compete with Branford's Town Center
- Improve connections to Town Center, the waterfront and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Encourage sustainable and resilient development

Transit-Oriented Development" Study

In 2017, with funding from a grant from the State of Connecticut, the Town undertook a study of the potential for "transit-oriented development" (TOD) near the train station. The study, conducted by a team led by BFJ Planning, looked at areas generally located within one-half mile of the train station.



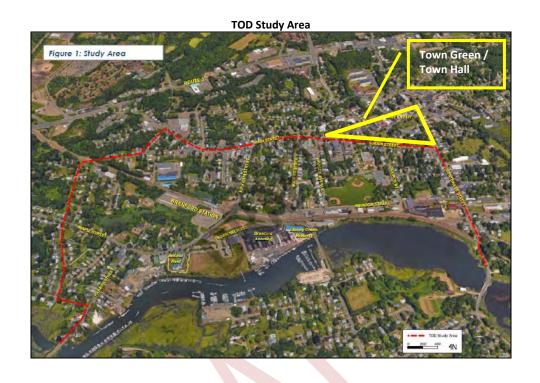
The study identified four different "opportunity areas" (see map on facing page) and made recommendations related to:

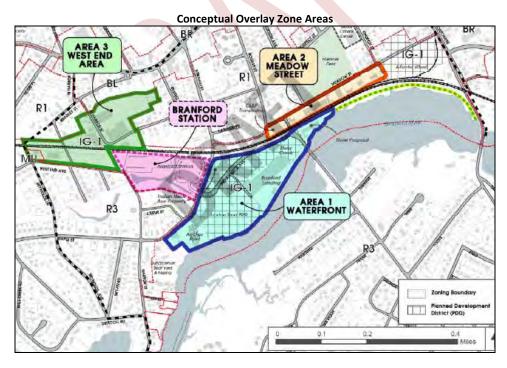
- Planning and Design Concepts
- Zoning Recommendations & Design Standards
- Streetscape and Open Space
- Wayfinding Recommendations
- Coastal Resiliency and Flood Preparedness

The key element of the recommended approach is to adopt "overlay zones" in the opportunity areas to allow property owners to "opt in" to the TOD opportunity (more floor area in exchange for public amenities and appropriate design) if they wish. In other words, the proposed approach is intended to entice property owners to participate.

In terms of implementation, the Study recommends:

- 1. Adoption / endorsement of the TOD Study as a guide to the future development of this area.
- 2. Incorporation of the TOD Study in the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).
- 3. Adoption of text changes to the Zoning Regulations to establish some or all of the overlay zoning approaches and/or implement other recommendations.
- 4. Funding of specific projects (through operating budgets, capital budgets, grants, partnerships, etc.), perhaps including
 - Dredging of the Branford River.
 - Raising the level of key evacuation routes for storm floods.
 - Local Flood Protection
 - Roadway and Streetscape Improvements.





Possible Strategies For 2018 POCD

NEW STRATEGY

Keep Branford Center Vibrant

Five-Year Update

- New Mixed Use regulations were adopted by the PZC to encourage transit-oriented development.
- The Chamber of Commerce, Center Merchants and Branford
 Festival Committee continue to sponsor a variety of events on and around the Green;

A.	Zon	es A	And Uses	Comments
	1.		intain and expand the uses that make Brand Center vibrant and attract people: restaurants and small retail shops, small service and office uses, community facilities (such as Town Hall, post office, library, etc.), diverse types of housing (including apartments over businesses), institutional uses (such as churches).	
	2.	act	ek to encourage an "active streetscape" with ive uses at street level, both inside and out- e buildings.	
		a.	Consider modifying regulations to allow / encourage outside dining, sidewalk displays, and other strategies to activate the street.	
		b.	Consider modifying regulations to discourage ""passive uses" such as offices, banks, real estate, insurance, and similar uses at street level.	
		C.	Consider modifying the zoning designations in the Town Center to identify streets where pas- sive uses are discouraged and/or active uses are required.	

В.	Act	ivitio	es And Events	Comments
	1.		ntinue to sponsor special events in the Town nter.	
		a.	Develop a management plan for the Town Green in order to balance the desire for more events and activities with the natural capacity of the Green.	
	2.		k to preserve and enhance the special quali- of the Town Green and its environs.	

Enhance Access And Parking

NEW STRATEGY

A. Er	hance Access To Branford Center	Comments
1.	Continue to implement the Town Center Parking and Circulation Study.	Is this still relevant or should this be updated?
2.	Establish/enhance "gateway" features at key entrance points to Branford Center.	
3.	Use "wayfinding signage" to help non-residents find their way to Branford Center.	
4.	Create additional linkages to Branford center from the Branford River, Shoreline Greenway, and open space areas.	

В.	. Enł	nance Parking In Branford Center	Comments
	1.	Explore opportunities to create additional parking in the Town Center area.	

c.	. Enl	nance Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities	Comments
	1.	Continue to promote pedestrian amenities (e.g. sidewalks, benches, etc.) from the adjacent neighborhoods into the center.	
	2.	Work to find ways to provide bicycle lanes and racks to encourage other non-motorized trips to the Town Center.	

Conceptual Roundabout / Gateway Feature

Wells Fargo
Bank

Blackstone
Memorial
Library

Capital One
Bank

Five-Year Update

- Funding for the "Town Center Parking and Circulation Study" was included in the CIP.
- New parking regulations encourage locating parking to the rear of commercial buildings;
- The Town paved and landscaped the South Main St. public parking lot

NEW	
STRA	TEGY

Retain and Enhance The "Sense of Place"

Five-Year Update

- Village district regulations with design guidelines were adopted
- The Town obtained a grant to enhance lighting and brick sidewalk around the Green
- The TCRRB continues to provide design guidance for development in the Town Center

A.	Coi	ontinue To Require Attractive Design	Comments
	 Maintain the "village district" designation to help ensure that new development in the Town Center enhances the overall appearance and character of the area. 		
		a. As necessary, review the village district boundary and/or the village district regulations (design parameters).	
	2.	Continue the work of the Town Center Revitalization Review Board.	
3. Support building impr		Support building improvements.	
		a. Create a façade improvement program using revolving loans, grants, and other approaches.	
		b. Work with property owners to identify cost- effective façade improvements that could be made.	

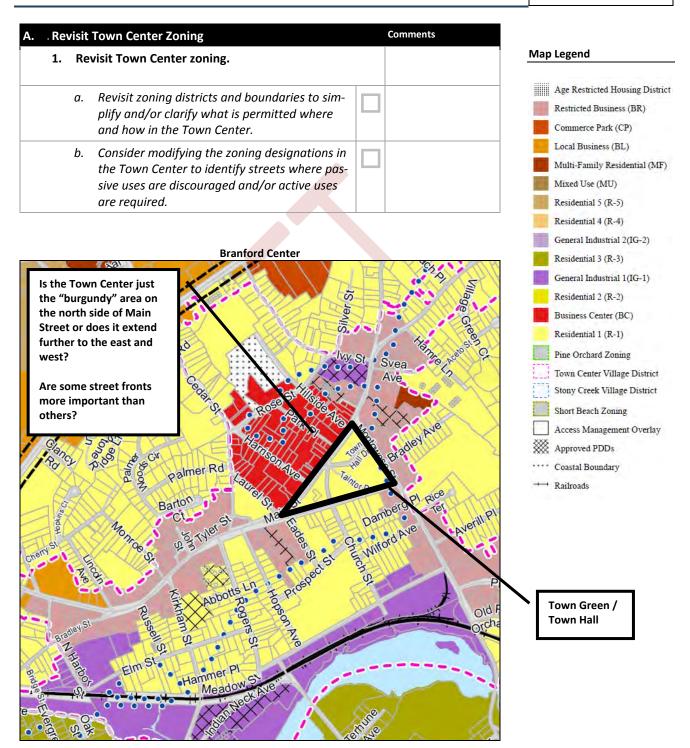
NEW STRATEGY

Coordinate Public And Private Efforts

A.			Comments
	1.	Continue to coordinate public and private efforts to maintain and enhance Branford Center.	
		 Investigate participating in the Connecticut Main Street Program to get technical assistance for efforts to maintain and enhance Branford Center. 	
	2.	Seek to consolidate responsibility for use and maintenance of the Town Green.	
	3.	If needed or desired in the future, consider creating a Special Services District to improve management of the Town Center area.	

Revisit Zoning Boundaries And Districts

NEW STRATEGY



SECONDARY STRATEGY

Promote Transit-Oriented Development

Strategies

The TOD Study also made recommendations with regard to:

- Road improvements (travel lane definition, on-street parking, traffic calming, etc.)
- Pedestrian improvements (sidewalk connections, greenway trail pedestrian loop, etc.)
- Bicycle improvements (shared roadways, etc.)
- Other streetscape improvements
- Potential Shuttle Route
- Flood Control
- Wayfinding

A.	، Inc	orporate TOD Study	Comments
	1.	The 2017 TOD Study is hereby incorporated as an appendix to the 2018 POCD so that its recommendations can be considered by the Planning and Zoning and others when discussing future development, projects, and activities in the TOD study area.	

В.	. Consider Zoning Recommendations	Comments
	 The POCD recommends that some or all of the zoning recommendations contained in the 2017 TOD Study, as may be amended by the Commis- sion, be considered for adoption. 	

C I	mplement Supportive Projects	Comments
1	Using the overlay zone approach, require public improvements and amenities as part of the de- velopment requirements for using the greater density and intensity envisioned by the overlay zone concept.	
2	(parking, sidewalks, street trees, "traffic calming", etc.) on streets connecting the TOD areas to the Town Center and other areas where new development may not provide such improvements.	
3	 To support implementation of streetscape improvements and other recommendations from the TOD study, seek funding for projects from: The Town of Branford, The State of Connecticut, Private foundations and organizations, An assessment of benefits, Tax increment financing, Special services district, Property owners and developers, and/or Other approaches. 	

Possible Overlay Zone Area 1 - Waterfront



Possible Overlay Zone Area 2 – Meadow Street

- Across from park, new community center
- Industrial uses currently allowed
- 100 feet wide
- Floodplain
- Streetscape Improvements?







Possible Overlay Zone Area 3 – West End

- R-1 density (10 units/acre)
- Height: 35 feet and 3 stories
- Small blocks
- Street connectivity









Are there any other policies or action steps you believe should be included in Branford Center's enhancement strategies?

If so, please make notes below.

Reference Materials

- 1. Branford Plan of Conservation and Development (2008)
- 2. Branford Transit-Oriented Development Study (2017)
- 3. Branford Main Street Gateway Project (2017)
- 4. SCRCOG Regional Transit-Oriented Development Study (2015)
- 5. Zoning Regulations

Notes & Comments	

