



# Downtown Plan and Strategy New Britain, Connecticut

January 2008

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New Britain, Connecticut

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## ***Credits***

*This Plan and Strategy has been prepared with the valuable input and guidance from the Mayor's Downtown Study Steering Committee.*

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## **Preface**

In July 2007, a Draft Downtown Plan and Strategy was approved by the Mayor's Downtown Study Steering Committee and referred to the Common Council for review. The Common Council discussed the Plan and Strategy and endorsed the Plan. The recommendation for the designation of a Master Developer was included in the Draft Plan. Concurrent with this review and endorsement, the Council considered a recommendation by Mayor Stewart to enter into a Preliminary Designation Agreement with Arete Development Group to implement the Plan. The authorization to execute the Agreement was approved by the Council. The Agreement was executed on September 19, 2007. The Agreement calls for Arete Development Group to complete a Development Plan within nine months.

During October and November 2007, Arete Development Group initiated a detailed planning process to produce the Development Plan. As part of this process, a recommendation as to the boundaries of the Development Plan emerged. The recommended area encompasses the area targeted for revitalization in the Draft Downtown Plan and Strategy as well as some surrounding areas. For the most part, these surrounding areas are within previously approved urban renewal projects - South Central Renewal Project and the LaFayette Street Project. This recommended boundary is shown on the aerial photo on the following page. By including this area in the Development Plan boundary, a comprehensive program of revitalization and investment can be implemented. In addition, the Development Plan Area will have controls which will provide for orderly, well designed development and protect future investments in the area.

The Steering Committee was also asked to give a final review of the Draft Plan and provide comments as to revisions as part of the final Plan. Most comments related to clarifications and emphasis within the text of the Plan. Several Committee members expressed concerns about the proposal to make Main Street south of Chestnut one way and to create angle on-street parking. Based upon these concerns, that proposal has been removed from the Plan. The Plan now proposes to retain Main Street as two way with parallel on-street parking. There is a proposal to better organize the off-street parking behind structures on the east side of Main Street as well as behind South Church. Streetscape improvements are recommended at the intersection of Main Street and Chestnut Street to enhance the pedestrian environment in that area.



# Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction .....	1
Opportunities Unique To The New Britain Downtown.....	2
Basic Themes.....	4
Market Conditions Supporting Investment In The Downtown.....	6
Supporting Infrastructure .....	8
Cultural Assets.....	10
The Plan And Strategy .....	11
Tax Revenue .....	24
Spin-Off Revenue .....	25
Financing.....	26
Implementation.....	27
Timing.....	30

APPENDIX A - Assessment Database

APPENDIX B - Revised B-4 District Regulations

## **Introduction**

Over the past 45 years, a range of plans impacting the New Britain Downtown have been commissioned, prepared and approved. In its own way, each plan is reflective of the situation in New Britain and cities in general at the time it was prepared. The Rotival Plan of the 60s, named for one of the leading planners of the era, reflects optimism for the future based on further industrial growth (a doubling of industrial space is projected) supported by the emerging automobile-based transportation system. The 1971 Plan begins to see the highway system as a challenge, notes how new regional highways will create retail centers outside of the Downtown and recognizes the decline of manufacturing. For the first time the classification of the New Britain Downtown as a sub-regional rather than regional center emerges. The Plan proposes to address this situation with an enclosed mall on Main Street as a response to West Farms Mall and Corbins Corner suburban model retail. The conclusion sets the framework for extensive urban renewal projects. By 1984, the need for focus on a core area in the Downtown and centralized management emerges as the central theme. Again, this is a response to the perceived advantages of malls and other suburban retail centers where such central management is prevalent. A focus on a pedestrian oriented downtown with

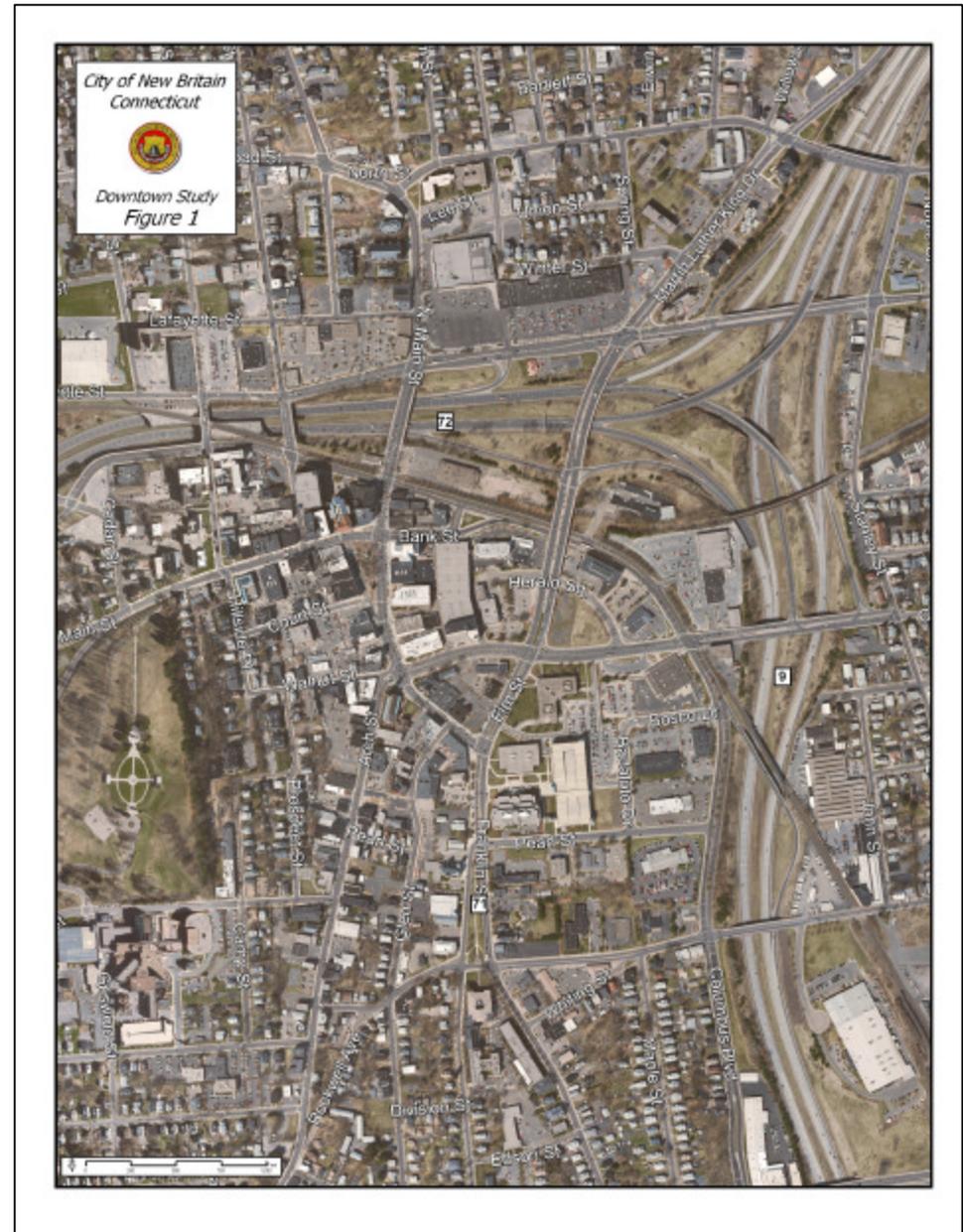
physical improvements was proposed. The 1994 Plan features the air rights concept to be built over Route 72, but takes it in the direction of an attraction/destination concept. For the first time a CCSU arena concept emerges. The recent 2004 studies prepared by the Capital Region Council of Governments build upon the New Britain to Hartford Busway proposal with discussion of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) inclusive of the CCSU arena concept. The corridor revitalization studies also completed in 2004 encompass a large geographic area with the premise that the success of the Downtown will flow from a comprehensive economic revitalization strategy.

Going forward, it is important to avoid the past approach of building a strategy on what is the current popular development form. Consideration of forecasted market forces, the private investment environment and public investment policy in areas such as transportation, education and facilities to serve the public must be part of any successful strategy. The plan and strategy presented herein is consistent with the dynamic nature of these factors. It is important to remember we are involved in a planning process rather than the goal of solely producing a plan. As Eisenhower said about D-Day, "A plan is useless, but planning is crucial". Planning must consider a range of actions as well as the ability to modify actions in response to unforeseen occurrences, circumstances and opportunities.

## **Opportunities Unique To The New Britain Downtown**

New Britain inclusive of the Downtown has many attributes which are unique to the City and responsive to emerging market conditions. The Busway provides the first real mass transit initiative in Connecticut in decades with the potential to build upon the changes in transportation choices as gasoline prices continue to climb. As shown in Figure 1 – Aerial Photograph, the scale of the Downtown makes it walkable and feasible for the new urbanism approach of mixed uses linked to the region by both the Busway and continued use of the highway system even with rising costs of automobile travel. It also supports a live/work environment which is returning as an urban form.

The core of educational and business technology training programs at ITBD provides a base to build on as an educational center. As an extension of this educational function a magnet Pre-K facility has potential to link educational, daycare, and busway components in a creative 21<sup>st</sup> Century model. Central Connecticut State University’s interest in the NewBrite Plaza area for an events center and proximity to the Busway offers the potential to further its



presence. Past urban renewal infrastructure investments provide the potential for increased intensity of development without major financial investment. The recent consolidation of regional medical facilities at the Hospital of Central Connecticut strengthens New Britain's role as the location of a cluster of medical activities.



**Institute of Technology & Business Dev. (ITBD)**



**New Britain General Hospital**



**ACMAT Building**

## **Basic Themes**

This plan and strategy is market based, builds upon existing strengths and proposes catalytic investments. In response to market trends, it marks the first time over the last four decades that a plan has a significant residential component. This residential component is supported by trends throughout Connecticut and nationally wherein urban residential development is experiencing dramatic growth. This can be attributed to conditions where a high barrier to multi-family residential has been created in many suburban communities as well as the formation of additional households within an environment of limited population growth. This market support for residential development is strengthened further by New Britain's central location and access to multiple employment centers which is attractive to today's mobile labor force. The plan incorporates proposed public initiatives including the New Britain-Hartford Busway; CCSU and other organizations potential interest in an events center facility in downtown; Charter Oak College's search for a new location and the need to replace the existing police station. While the surety of each of these initiatives varies, each can be accommodated within the plan, but the success of the plan does not rest solely on any one of them.

The plan and strategy addresses existing properties and activities as well as providing opportunities for new investment. In this regard, the plan has a focus on integrating all components and providing linkages. Linkage is particularly important when one considers the extent of physical and functional disconnect caused by the construction of the limited access highways and interchanges as well as urban renewal clearance and redevelopment activities. At the same time, the plan seizes upon opportunities created by these past landscape-altering events in terms of regional access and infrastructure capacity.

With regard to linkages, two approaches are used. One approach is to link sections of the downtown by enhancing and creating strong public spaces and pedestrian pathways. The other approach is to create destinations which present reasons to move within the downtown as well as to make it a destination within the region. The use of strong public spaces to connect areas has long been a feature of cities throughout the world. New Britain has a tradition of fine public spaces evidenced by Walnut Hill Park, Central Park, Stanley Quarter Park and others. The plan builds on this legacy.

**In summary, the underlying strengths of the New Britain Downtown to build upon are as follows:**

- **Downtowns in Connecticut and throughout the country are experiencing a dramatic resurgence and New Britain is well positioned for this wave of investment.**
- **Residential development as a strong market sector supports mixed use pedestrian scale development in the Downtown.**
- **The Downtown as an educational center ranging from Pre-K to post graduate technical training has potential for a unique character.**
- **This educational center and residential development relate well to the cultural scene already emerging in Downtown.**
- **Linkage between areas north and south of Route 72 will follow Transit Oriented Development (TOD) around the Busway as well as the event center and revitalization of NewBrite Plaza.**
- **Medical cluster activities support residential development in terms of housing for staff and the recent expansion to Arch Street will strengthen linkages with Downtown.**

- **There is an institutional infrastructure in place for implementation including Downtown District, MEDA, and the Chamber as well as governmental agencies.**

## Market Conditions Supporting Investment In The Downtown

### ✦ *Residential Market*

Residential market rate rental units should be the target for Downtown. All urban centers in Connecticut are experiencing growth in this market segment. This demand is being driven by the emergence of the Baby Boomer generation and young professionals with an interest in urban living. This attraction to urban locations is supported by a desire to be closer to one's place of employment. People employed at medical centers and educational facilities find this to be particularly attractive. New Britain offers this as well as the advantage of a central location within the region for two worker households. Downtown areas including W. Hartford, Hartford and New Haven are achieving rents in the \$1,500 to \$2,000 a month range. Newly constructed units with desired amenities can achieve these rents in the New Britain Downtown.

### ✦ *Non-Residential Market*

The non-residential office market in Connecticut continues to be weak with the exception of Fairfield County and selected end users primarily in insurance and finance.



**9<sup>th</sup> Square in New Haven**



Existing buildings in the Downtown have for the most part difficult floor plates to accommodate market demand.

The Busway has the potential for attraction of office users as a long-range goal. The recommended approach is to create a mixed-use environment which supports office location decisions based on: employees living downtown; educational and training opportunities and a supportive environment in terms of restaurants and service establishments as well as inexpensive parking.

The market for retail and service establishments will strengthen as residential development occurs. Currently, there is a low vacancy rate among street level locations in the Downtown. At the same time, there is a limited amount of such space and many of the existing businesses have limited attraction to draw people to the Downtown. A regional market change which has the potential to benefit the Downtown is the continued gentrification of West Hartford Center. Increasing rent levels are putting pressure on established businesses including restaurants and retailers. The New Britain Downtown offers the opportunity for some of these businesses to remain in the region and serve their customer base with a lower

overhead. In many ways, the locational advantages to these businesses are similar to the locational advantages for residential development.

## **Supporting Infrastructure**

A competitive advantage of the Downtown is the level of infrastructure in place to support new investment. Much of this infrastructure was put in place over the decades of the 1960's and 1970's to accommodate development for which there was little if any market demand.

Parking is available within the core of the Downtown. There are approximately 288 metered parking spaces within the downtown area. On an average weekday, 50% of the metered spaces are in use. However, meters with the highest use levels are in center of Downtown resulting in the perception of a lack of parking. There are two parking facilities with 1,700 spaces available in the heart of Downtown. On an average weekday approximately 400 or less than 25% of these spaces are in use as shown in Table 1.

As is the case with the parking inventory, the street network in the Downtown has the capacity to accommodate an appreciable increase in vehicles. As shown in Figure 2, the multiple lane configurations create a much more vehicle friendly than people friendly environment. As discussed later, a reversal of this relationship is proposed to make the Downtown more people

**TABLE 1**

Parking Garage Data				
Garage	Available Spaces	Type	Spaces in Use	
			AM	PM
Szczesney	1200	hourly	200	175
	80	metered	14	8
Badolato	130	monthly permits	96	80
	300	hourly	100	80

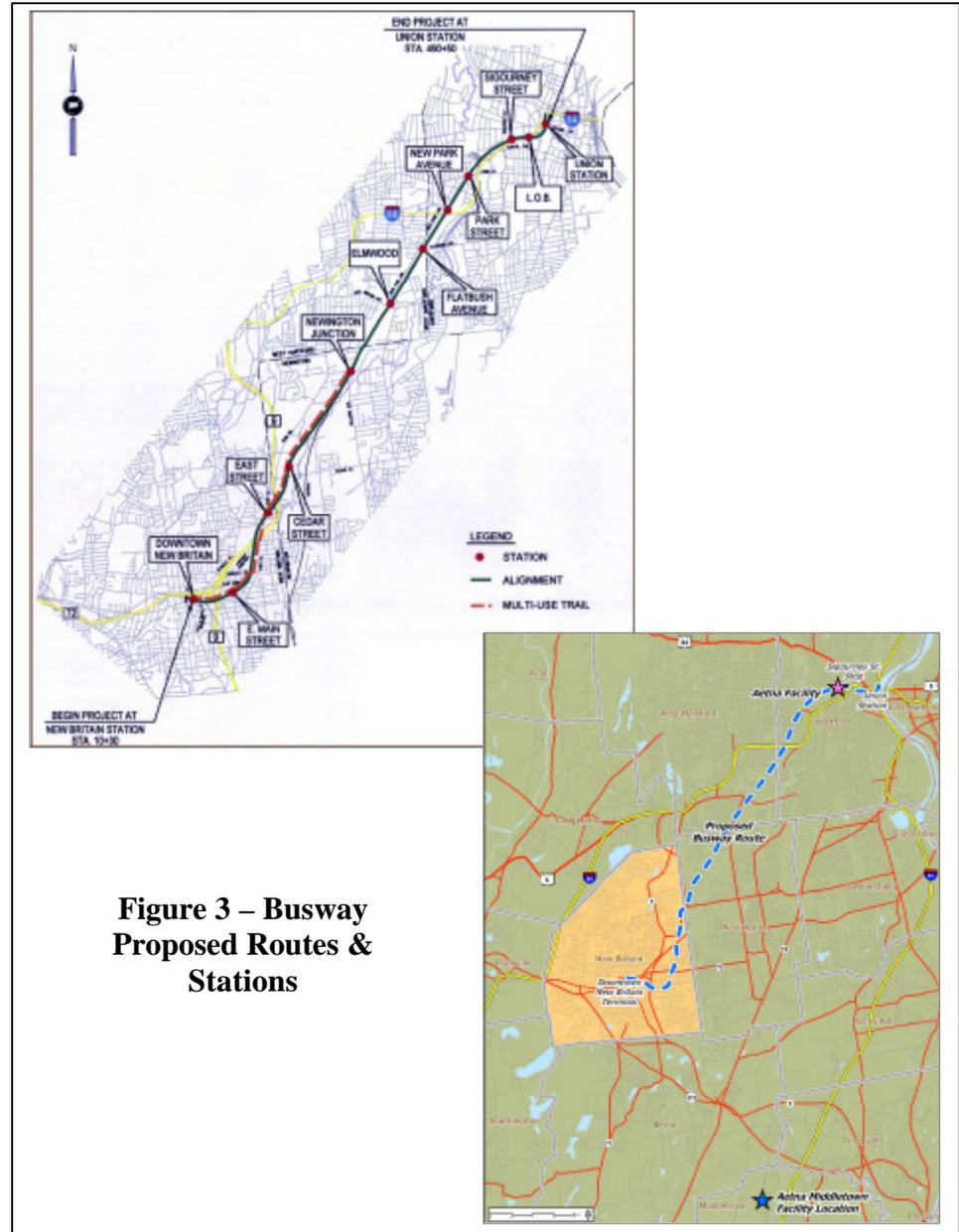
Source: Field Survey



**Figure 2 - Multiple Lane Configurations on Main Street**

friendly, but yet retain the capacity to accommodate an increase in traffic volumes.

A major infrastructure investment which will enhance development of the Downtown is the New Britain to Hartford Busway. New Britain is the starting point for busses originating locally and those entering the Busway from points to the west via a new off-ramp from Route 72. All buses will travel to Hartford within a dedicated right-of-way. Figure 3 shows the proposed routes and stations. It should be noted that the Sigourney Street stop is at the doorstep of the Aetna Headquarters. Coincidentally, Aetna has announced the transfer of over 3,500 employees from its facility adjacent to I-91 in Middletown to its headquarters. The completion of this process coincides with the projected opening of the Busway in 2012. This convenience for commuting by Aetna employees should result in usage of the Busway as well as an attraction to Aetna employees to reside in the downtown within walking distance of the terminal.



**Figure 3 – Busway Proposed Routes & Stations**

## **Cultural Assets**

New Britain is fortunate to have a strong cultural base upon which to revitalize the Downtown. This cultural base ranges from the internationally known New Britain Museum of American Art to the ethnic diversity of its neighborhoods. This base has been strengthened in recent years by a series of unrelated events which, when taken as a whole, enrich New Britain. These include:

- ✦ The expansion of the New Britain Museum of American Art as a result of its impressive renovation.
- ✦ The conversion of Trinity Church to Trinity-On-Main as a destination for the performing arts.
- ✦ The Hole In The Wall Theater, Trinity-On-Main and the South Church Music Series form an anchor at the southerly end of the Downtown.
- ✦ The revitalization of Broad Street as a destination for Polish culture, commerce and dining with Arch Street emerging as a similar center for Hispanic culture.

This mix of performing and visual arts combined with ethnic diversity bringing unique retail and dining experiences to a community is a common thread among thriving American cities. New Britain is on the cusp of experiencing the fruits of such diversity. These cultural assets will support Downtown residential development which is a key component of the Plan.

**Trinity on Main**



**Hole in the Wall Theater**

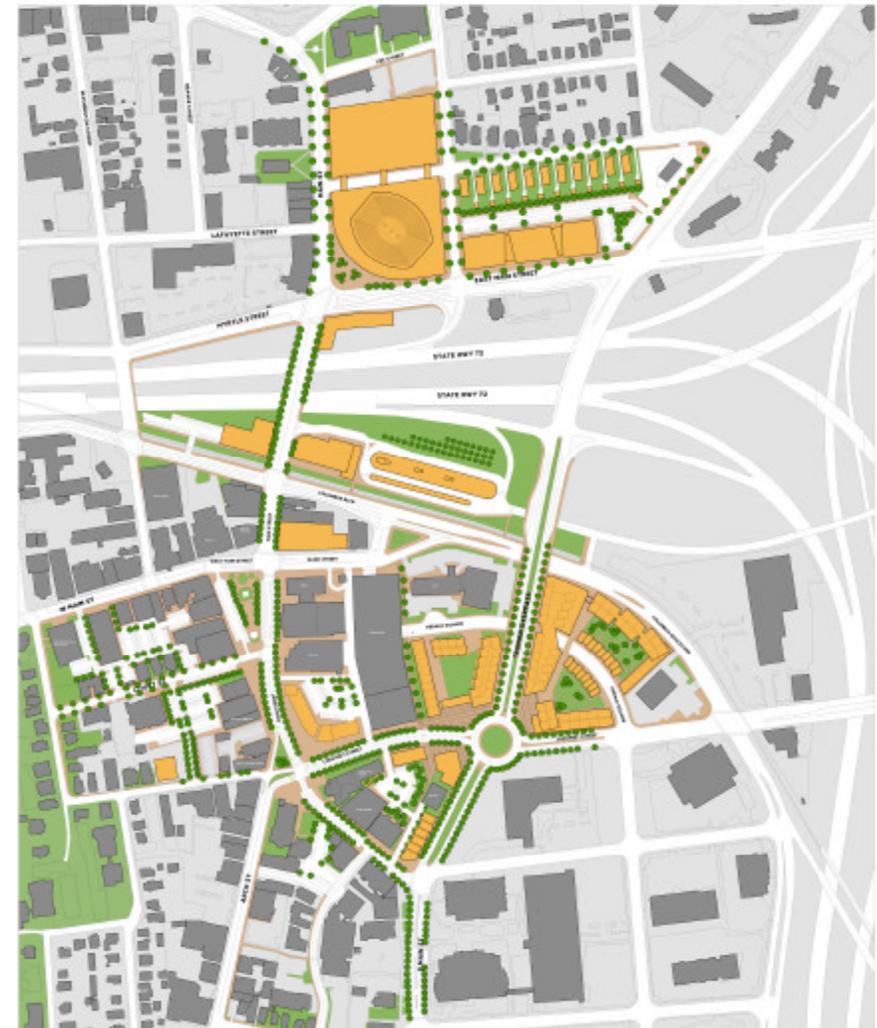
**New Britain Museum of American Art**



## **The Plan And Strategy**

The plan and strategy is comprised of a series of opportunities for catalytic investments connected to create the whole. These opportunity areas are linked by the “greening” of the Downtown including enhanced public areas as well as a network of parking opportunities including structured, surface and on-street parking. Within the overall development plan, a series of investment opportunity areas have been identified. The areas shown in orange represent new development opportunities. These areas share several common attributes:

- ✦ The site is currently vacant or underutilized.
- ✦ Several of the sites can be integrated with existing parking facilities.
- ✦ All sites are within easy walking distance of the Busway.
- ✦ Each site is large enough to accommodate significant development.
- ✦ Investment in the sites will cause minimum displacement of existing businesses and no residents will be displaced.



**Downtown Master Plan**

Each of the targeted investment areas will create a recognizable destination point within the Downtown. These destination points will build upon existing successful developments and attractions and in some cases such as the Busway area, take advantage of a major initiative to create a new destination. The strategy is to create a mix of uses which bring back the 24 hour life which characterized the New Britain Downtown in the past. This mix includes commerce, residential, culture and public/institutional uses and destinations.

While the exact quantity of development will evolve in the coming years, the Plan components have been designed to accommodate a range of development. This range of development is appropriate for the scale of targeted areas, can be supported by the infrastructure already in place or provided within specific development areas and is responsive to market conditions. Within the investment areas described on the following pages, the mix of uses includes a range of 650 to 950 new residential units as well as 350,000 to 400,000 square feet of non-residential use. This level of development has been used for planning purposes. It should be clearly stated that private sector investor interest may increase these amounts.

In addition to these developments, there will be supporting public investment in improvements to Liberty Square, Theater Square, Court Street and other selected public amenities to integrate the private investment areas into an exciting, vibrant urban experience.

✦ *Liberty Square*

This area of the Downtown is important for several reasons. The focus of urban renewal clearance and redevelopment initiated in the 1960's and 1970's, this area serves as the gateway to the Downtown from Route 9 from the south and east. Substantial investment has been made in the area including One Liberty Square, the courthouse and adjacent parking garage and the offices of the Department of Public Utility Control. The post office, CVS and a grouping of primarily auto related use line Columbus Boulevard to the east. One undeveloped parcel designated as "Parcel 9" in the urban renewal plan adjacent to the Truman Overpass and the police station remains vacant. The parcel is of a size which can accommodate significant development. The parcel provides a link between the center of the downtown and the urban renewal area to the east. The site has expansion possibilities in a future stage when the current police station site becomes available. The site is proposed for mid to high-rise residential development with some ground level non-residential use. Parking is provided on-site utilizing a platform design. This design raises the site above the elevated Truman Overpass as it borders the site.



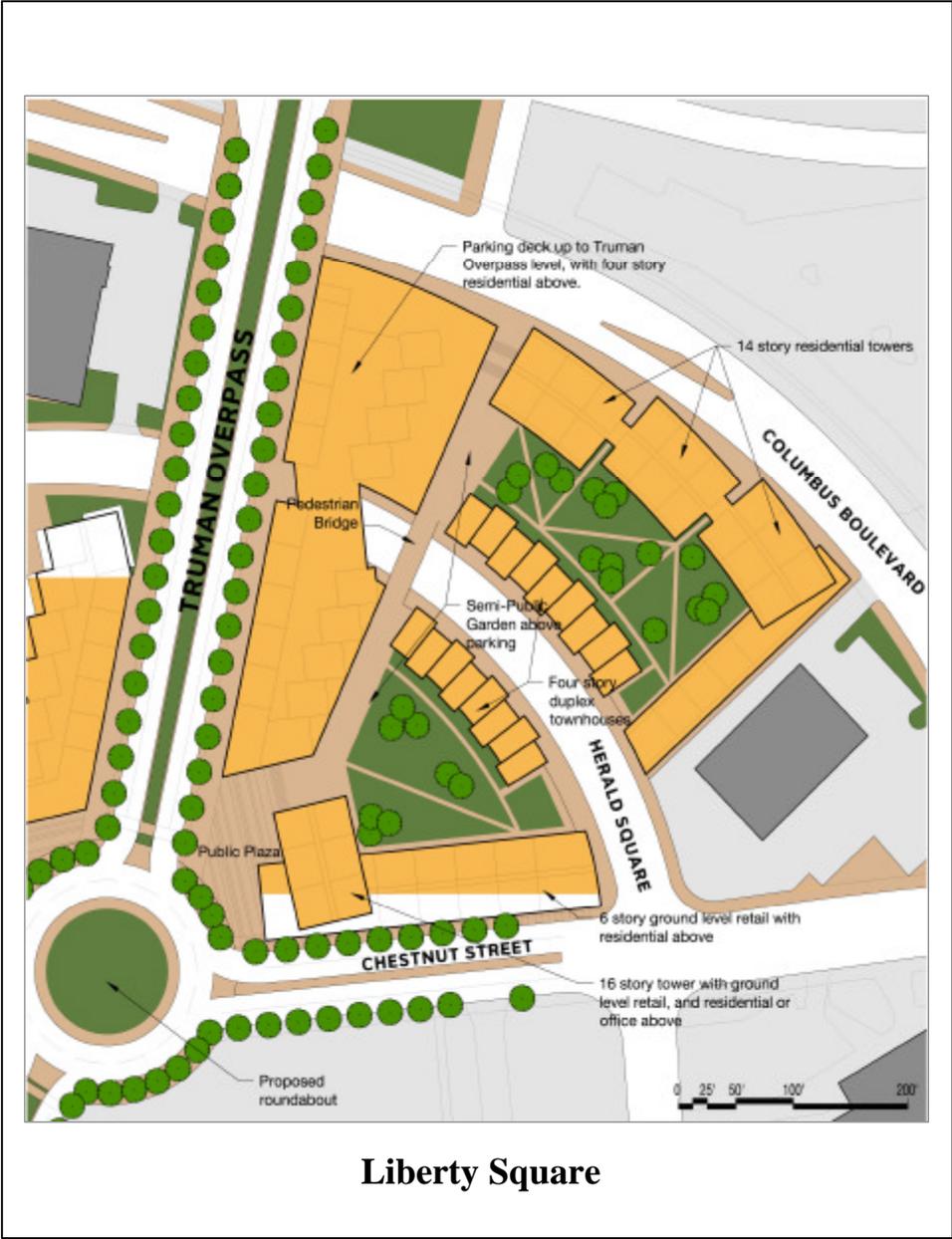
**Parcel 9**



**Liberty Square and Roundabout**

The plan envisions a mixed-use development of residential and supportive retail including parking which makes it visible from Route 9. The site will also have a public plaza and green space. The site is currently vacant and known as Parcel 9 which was cleared as part of the urban renewal program. This structure creates one segment of a crucial intersection of streets at an urban scale consistent with Liberty Square and the Courthouse development to the south. This development will create a major gateway statement as people enter the Downtown from the exit off Route 9. A future phase will be on the current police station site. This continues the mixed-use concept and extends development towards the Busway.

Another initiative proposed for this area is a traffic circle or roundabout. This feature is intended to both organize traffic movements as well as create a centerpiece and strengthen the sense of arrival in the Downtown.



**Liberty Square**

✦ *Herald Square*

This area offers the potential for major investment. The area is anchored by a parking structure with excess capacity as well as recent investments in the La Quinta Hotel and Famous Dave's restaurant. The area east of the parking garage is currently occupied by the New Britain Herald building and an underutilized surface parking lot in the shadow of the Truman Overpass. This site provides the opportunity to open up what is now the rear of the hotel and newly opened restaurant as well as access to the Szczesney Parking Garage. Based on the availability of the Herald building, a mixed-use development of this area combined with enhanced public/pedestrian connections is proposed. The conceptual plan for the area shows a grouping of buildings with a significant open space/plaza area which could be implemented over time based upon the availability of portions of the parcel. The mix of uses could include commercial/office as well as residential. Charter Oak College is in search of a new home and is considering this area as a possible location.



**Herald Square**



✦ *Main-Chestnut*

A new police station combined with accessory retail use at street level is proposed for this area. This concept is modeled on a similar approach successfully implemented on Main Street in Middletown, CT. This concept utilizes the excess capacity in the Szczesney Garage to support the police station and other uses. The existing alley between the garage and the site will facilitate access to the police station from the rear at ground level.

Development of this area also includes a public amenity in the form of a plaza at corner of Main and Chestnut. When combined with a reconfigured intersection of Chestnut, Walnut, Main, Arch and South Main, a dramatic public space and focal point is created.



✦ *Theater Square*

Trinity-on-Main has become a significant cultural attraction in the Downtown. Trinity-On-Main has purchased the small office building to the east of the former church structure. The balance of the block to the east and south is occupied by the Firestone Service Center, the Elks Club and a vacant parcel as well as mixed-use development on the South Main Street frontage. The interior of the block is a poorly organized surface parking area.

As a result of a re-design of the intersection, an additional public space will be created in front of Trinity-On-Main. This will strengthen the theater district identity and provide a focal point from Central Park to the north as well as Liberty Square to the east. Across from Trinity-On-Main, the Hole In The Wall Theater provides an anchor at the head of Arch Street. These two uses form a destination for performing arts patrons.

The proposal for this area in addition to the theaters is a mix of office at the easterly point with 2 to 3 story townhouse development on the Elm St. frontage. The residential units would have parking underneath the



**Theater Square**

structure. The office space would be served by parking available in the Szczesney Garage. In the Review Draft of the Plan for this area, the concept of making Main Street south of Chestnut one-way was proposed. Based upon discussion with the Steering Committee, this proposal has been removed from the Plan. Some treatment of the area where Chestnut and Main intersect is proposed to enhance the pedestrian environment. The interior of the block fronting the east side of Main Street would have surface parking to serve the businesses fronting on Main Street as well as Trinity-on-Main on a shared parking basis. Additional surface off-street parking could be provided through a reorganization of the parking behind South Church.



Theater Square

✦ *Arch Street*

A destination which strengthens the role of New Britain in the region is the medical activity related to the newly merged Hospital of Central Connecticut. While always a vital part of the community, the physical connection of the hospital with the Downtown has not been strong due to its location beyond a walking distance which supports pedestrian movement. Changes in this situation are emerging with the recent purchase by the hospital of the former Goldsmith Building on Arch Street. This will bring medical activity closer to the core of the Downtown.

As mentioned elsewhere, Broad Street has become an ethnic retail and cultural center reflecting the Polish heritage of New Britain. Arch Street is emerging as a similar destination for the Hispanic community. The investments proposed for the Downtown and the efforts of the Arch Street Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) will combine to increase the vitality of the area.



**New Britain General Hospital**



**Arch Street**

✦ *Court Street*

To support existing buildings in the Court Street/Central Park area, a reconfiguration of Court Street is proposed. The one-way pattern of Court St. will be reversed, the street widened and angle on-street parking added. The off-street parking on either side of Court St. will be re-organized. A new connection mid-block connecting Court St. and Walnut St. will be created. The possibility also exists to create additional on-street parking on Main Street to the east of Central Park. The Main Street block frontages in this area comprise a cluster of architecturally valuable period structures. This area should be targeted for investment in rehabilitation. Overall, these improvements will support the investment in existing properties, increase the availability of on-street parking and enhance both vehicular and pedestrian circulation.



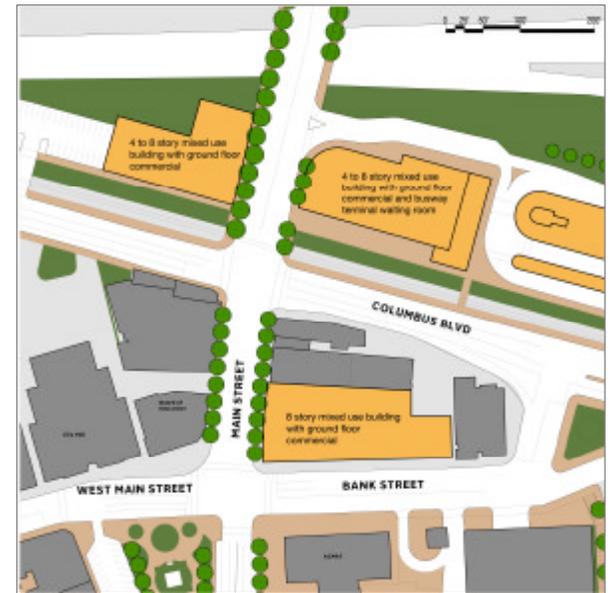
**Court Street**

✦ *Busway Terminal Area*

In the plans for the New Britain-Hartford Busway, the Main Street frontage is designated for development with the Busway platform located to the east. The site will accommodate a building with approximately a 25,000 square foot footprint. The ground level will contain retail and service areas as well as bus terminal functions. The upper floors will be for uses with a supportive relationship between the use and the availability of transit at the doorstep. Such uses might include daycare or pre-school activities wherein commuters could avail themselves of a combination of spaces in the parking garages, services for their children and use of mass transit for their journey to work. Another possible use for a portion of the development could be Charter Oak College as well as general office use.

Connections between this site and the balance of the Downtown will be strengthened by a new pedestrian accessway on Columbus Boulevard aligned with Bank Street. This will be an at-grade crossing, well marked by distinctive streetscaping and lighting. This connection will increase the convenience for bus passengers and occupants

**Busway  
Terminal  
Area**



**Rendering looking north along Main Street with Event Center in Background**

of the mixed-use development using the Szczesney Garage. The Main Street, Columbus Boulevard, Bank Street block is targeted for redevelopment focused on the vacant Burrit Bank building.

✦ *Events Center/ NewBrite Plaza*

This area is proposed for a major public/private investment. This investment includes an events center which would be a major public initiative involving CCSU, the City and other users. Currently, the New Britain Board of Education and CCSU host a wide variety of events which could provide a base to build upon at an events center. The primary venues used by the Board of Education are the New Britain High School Gymnasium and Auditorium. The gym has a seating capacity of 1000 and the auditorium can seat approximately 1800. At times, events are turned away due to the need for greater capacity or rescheduling conflicts. Information provided by the CCSU events coordinator estimates that in a typical year 125,000 people are accommodated at various venues on the campus. The activities at the events center will bring new visitors to New Britain to support service and retail businesses. The proximity to the Busway will provide a convenient

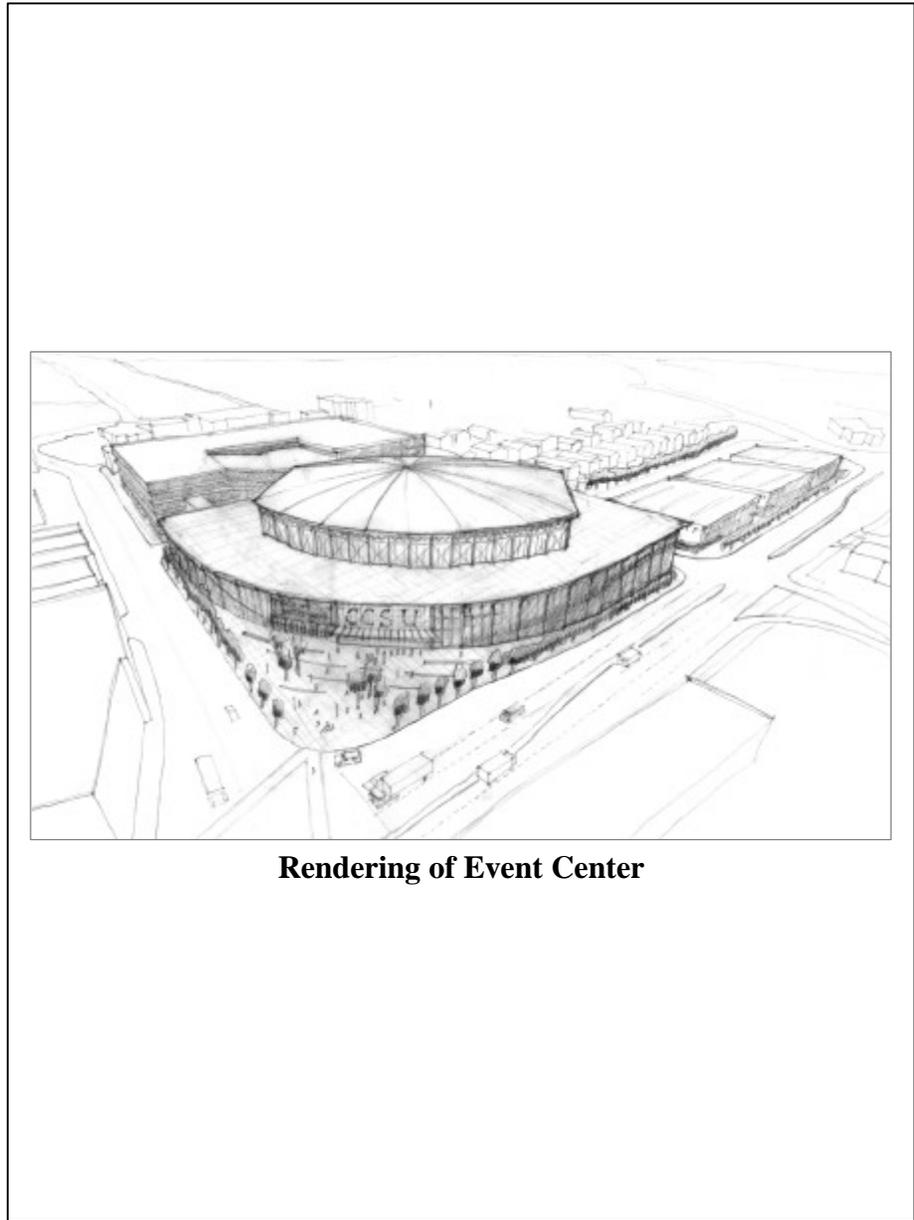


**Event Center / NewBrite Plaza**

connection with Hartford as well as other destinations via bus.

A second component is a revitalized NewBrite Plaza to serve the shopping and service needs of residents currently residing in the vicinity as well as occupants of future developments. The plan proposes new retail development on the southern portion of the parcel with parking to the north. This is a reverse of the existing development form. This would strengthen the site as a destination and encourage people to come across Route 72 from the Downtown core.

A third component in this area is the concept of a “front yard” plaza building linking the events center with Main Street as it passes over Route 72. This plaza could be combined with a widening of Main Street to accommodate commercial development. This will reconnect the Downtown severed by the construction of Route 72.



**Rendering of Event Center**

## **Tax Revenue**

Implementation of the proposed plan will result in a significant increase in tax revenues for the City. To quantify the extent of this increase, the current tax assessment for the Downtown has been compiled. Appendix A has a complete listing of properties in the study area and includes use, square footage and assessment information. The statistics have been further detailed for the proposed investment areas. Appendix A includes this information. Currently, the entire study area has a total assessed value of approximately \$170 million. Within this total, the assessed value of land is approximately \$19 million. Within the proposed investment areas, the total assessed value is approximately \$30 million with land assessed at approximately \$5 million. It is interesting that the ratio of total assessment to land for the entire area is 9 to 1 while it is 6 to 1 for the investment areas. This reflects the vacant and/or underdeveloped nature of the investment areas. A post development assessment has been calculated for each investment area based upon the amount of development and estimated construction cost. The total investment ranges in value between \$190 million and \$250 million based on the 650 to 950 residential units and 350,000 to 400,000 square feet of non-residential development. This does not include public infrastructure investments. At 70% of cost, the assessment ranges from \$130 million to \$175 million. The 2006-2007 tax

**Downtown Plan and Strategy  
New Britain, Connecticut**

rate of 45.88 per \$1,000 has then been applied to these assessments to arrive at the estimated real property tax revenue. Overall, the amount of real property revenue for the investment areas ranges from approximately \$6 million to \$8 million.

Interestingly, the amount of the projected assessment post investment ranges from 80 to 104 percent of the assessment for the entire study area at present. It is assumed that as the catalytic investments proposed in the plan occur, there will be investment in existing properties in the balance of the Downtown.

In addition to the real property tax revenue, there will be an increase in personal property tax revenue. The residential units will add to the revenue received from the tax on automobiles. Based on 950 units, \$30,000 to \$50,000 in annual personal property tax revenue is estimated.

## **Spin-Off Revenue**

The investment in mixed-use development in the Downtown will produce economic spin-offs to the benefit of existing businesses and attract new businesses. These spin-offs will be produced by people living in new residential units as well as people working in the Downtown on a daily basis. For purposes of analysis, the 650 to 950 new dwelling units are

assumed to be occupied by households earning \$52,371 which is the median household income for households currently residing within a 10 mile radius of the Downtown. In order to estimate the spending power of these households, *Consumer Spending Patterns* data were secured from Claritas Inc, a nationally recognized demographic source. The average household annual expenditure for various categories potentially to be expended in the Downtown are presented in Table 2.

## **Public Expenditures**

As discussed earlier in this report, significant public infrastructure expenditures have been made in the past in the Downtown as part of previous revitalization programs. Existing infrastructure capacity in terms of utilities, the street network and parking garages can accommodate significant new development. Some additional investment in support of specific development parcels may be identified as project implementation moves ahead. A public/private partnership in support of such investments would be expected.

In terms of operating budget expenses, the anticipated occupancy of the residential units should minimize such expenses. The market rate, urban environment housing proposed does not generate school age children. For this reason, such developments have been found to be tax positive for communities throughout the country.

## **Financing**

This Plan and Strategy is based on the concept of private catalytic investments in response to market driven opportunities. It is anticipated that these investments will include creative financing which has become the trademark of comprehensive urban revitalization efforts. The range of

**TABLE 2**  
**Spending Patterns**

<b>Expenditure Category</b>	<b>Average Household Expenditure</b>
Apparel	\$4,531
Food Away From Home	\$4,787
Food At Home	\$6,353
Personal Care Products and Services	\$988
Prescription Drugs	\$1,754
Medical Services	\$1,687
Sports and Recreation	\$1,485
Alcoholic Beverages At Home	\$910
Alcoholic Beverages Away From Home	\$415
Automobile Maintenance /Repair	\$1,582
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$24,492</b>

When one multiplies the total consumer expenditures per household by the number of new households, it results in \$16 million to \$23 million of annual expenditures. While it is obvious that all these expenditures will not be made in the Downtown, these levels of expenditure provide great potential for the expansion of the economic base in the Downtown and New Britain as a whole.

investment of \$190 million to \$248 million will be primarily made by private investors. Two development proposals, the new police station and the events center could be privately developed and leased to a public entity or might be publicly developed. The specific approach will emerge as the revitalization effort progresses. The public sector investments will include the Liberty Square roundabout, the Theater Square/South Main Street improvements, the Court Street improvements and overall streetscape improvements. The cost of these improvements will be detailed as design proceeds.

### **Implementation**

The vitality of any downtown is created by the cooperative interactions of all sectors: government, property owners, businesses, investors, institutions, residents and consumers. Similarly, the implementation of this plan and the future success of the New Britain Downtown will rely on these players. A summary of the respective roles follows:

#### *✦ Government*

The role of government in the future of the Downtown is multi-faceted. It is regulatory, organizational and financial.

It is also multi-level involving Downtown specific organizations such as the Downtown District as well as

City boards and commissions, the Mayor and Council. The

State of Connecticut is a player in terms of financing, infrastructure, (particularly the Busway) and potential occupancy of facilities in the area. Lastly, the federal government is a potential source of funding with again, the Busway as an example.

The regulatory actions within the control of local government are zoning and forms of revitalization plans authorized under state statutes. As discussed earlier, the City should work with other communities towards the revision of the State building code and to assist with the renovation and re-use of existing properties. Various aspects of the building code create cost burdens which discourage investment, re-use and occupancy of structures.

At present, the Downtown encompasses 5 different zoning districts:

- A-3 Residential – Multi-Family High Density
- OP Office and Public Buildings
- B-3 Secondary Businesses
- B-4 Central Businesses
- I-2 General Industry

This creates a mix of uses and intensities of development leading to a muddled picture. The zoning reflects past uses

rather than a vision for the future. To implement the plan it is proposed that the current B-4 Downtown District in the Zoning Regulations be expanded to create a unified district. Figure 4 shows this recommended district. Also, changes to the regulations within the B-4 District are proposed and included in Appendix B.

In terms of an official revitalization plan, it is recommended that a Chapter 132 Municipal Development Plan be adopted to encompass the Downtown. This will formalize the concepts, principles and actions contained in this Plan by providing a legislatively approved document. This Municipal Development Plan will provide assurance to the community at large as well as businesses, property owners and investors that the vision for the Downtown will be achieved and protected.

✦ *Local Agencies/Organizations*

The success of revitalization of the Downtown requires the on-going attention of organizations charged with that responsibility. The Chapter 132 regulations permit the designation of an existing agency to administer the plan. Currently, the Downtown District has the most targeted responsibilities in this regard. Other organizations including the Chamber of Commerce and Municipal

Economic Development Agency (MEDA) have strong interest in the Downtown as part of their overall economic development responsibilities. If a Municipal Development Plan is adopted, one of these organizations could be designated to administer it. Therefore, a new layer of bureaucracy would not be created. It is recommended an early action be determination as to the role of these organizations to move the Plan forward.

✦ *Institutions*

A strength of New Britain are the many institutions which have long been key players in the daily life of the city. These institutions include religious organizations, cultural organizations, charitable organizations, such as New Britain Foundation, educational institutions including the public school system and CCSU, medical institutions including the Hospital of Central Connecticut, the Hospital for Special Care and many other groups of various sizes, interests and clientele. There is a role for all of these groups in the future of the Downtown as occupants, program providers and funding sources.

✦ *Private Sector*

Central to the success of the Downtown is the private sector. This includes businesses, property owners,

investors, residents and consumers. Without activity in the Downtown provided by businesses and investors, there can be no revitalization. At the same time, without consumers and residents there is no incentive for businesses and investors to focus on the Downtown. In many ways it is the classic “chicken and egg” situation. The Plan presented in this report is based on the theory of catalytic investments at key locations to spur revitalization.

As described earlier, these investments are targeted at key locations which are presently underutilized. Many of these investments are interrelated. For example, the development of a new police station will free up the current site for development. The Busway creates opportunities for Transit Oriented Development over a 5-year development period. The events center at NewBrite Plaza as well as the revitalization of the retail portion of the center will require carefully programmed and timed development. For these reasons, it is strongly recommended that a master developer be designated to implement various aspects of the Plan. This will provide central planning, responsive timing and a critical mass of activities.

This approach to urban revitalization has become the accepted model in communities throughout the nation.

Here in Connecticut, several examples are currently underway including Blue Back Square in West Hartford, Renaissance Square in Naugatuck and Downtown Torrington. An early example of this approach was Downtown Stamford where F.D. Rich Company was a master developer.

Such an approach will also facilitate the sophisticated financial packaging needed to implement the Plan over the 5-year development period.

### **Continuity Is The Key To Success**

The ambitious revitalization strategy proposed in this Plan will require a number of years to implement. It is vital to its success that there be a continuity of City participation in this implementation. For this reason, it is extremely important that a local entity be designated to implement the Plan. This entity should not be subject to the local election process which happens every two years. Clearly, the designated entity will work with elected officials, boards, commissions and the community as a whole as the Plan advances. However, this entity must “stay the course” as the primary advocate for the Plan.

## **Timing**

As discussed earlier, a rigid plan with a prescribed schedule is not appropriate for the revitalization of a downtown. Just as New Britain's downtown has evolved over decades as commerce, technology, society and place making has changed, the revitalization of the area will evolve as opportunities are pursued and decisions are made in both the private and public sector. Some decisions will be logical extensions of the principles contained in the plan. Others will be variations on the core principles of the plan which will need to be accommodated for positive change for the downtown.

With this understanding of the process going forward, certain priority actions are recommended. These priorities build upon identified strengths, market acceptance and reasonable expectation of accomplishment. They are priorities more within local control and less dependent on public policy decisions by others. Lastly, the priorities while tied to a specific opportunity are also distributed throughout the study area on a geographic basis. The recommended priorities are:

### Near Term (12 months)

- Reorganization of parking and circulation in the Court Street Area to support investment in surrounding properties and existing businesses.
- Attraction of a master developer to implement various components of the Plan. (Preliminary Agreement In Place)
- Design of enhanced public space and “green” linkages.
- Active participation in the Charter Oak College facility site search to locate it in the downtown.
- Complete the design and any necessary acquisition for a new police station.
- Conduct a specific feasibility analysis as to the potential events center on the NewBrite Plaza site.
- Detailed examination of re-use potential of former Burritt Bank. If not feasible for re-use, designate as site for new development.
- Designate and/or create the entity responsible for implementation.
- Revise the zoning regulations impacting the area.

- Approve a Municipal Development Plan for the Downtown.

### Intermediate (36 months)

- Construct public space improvements and “green linkages”.
- Work with owners of existing buildings and new investors on a program of restoration of appropriate facades.
- Develop Parcel 9 as a mixed-use site with a focus on market rate residential development.
- Develop the Trinity-on-Main area with a mix of residential, office and internal shared parking.
- Begin development of the Main Street/Chestnut Street and Herald Square areas either with police station/mixed-use facility or mix of office/residential/public space.
- Prepare the current police station site for development assuming a new facility has been built.
- Initiate new development at the Busway terminal site.

- Based on the findings of the feasibility study, initiate the events center.

Long Term (60 months)

- Busway completed and operational.
- Mixed-use Transit Oriented Development (TOD) developing in Columbus Boulevard Corridor.
- NewBrite Plaza revitalized with potential mixed-use in addition to retail or CCSU arena in mix.
- Current police station site developed with residential use and some ground level retail.
- Herald area completed in conjunction with current police station site to reverse current isolated “back alley” environment.

APPENDIX A  
ASSESSMENT DATABASE

### New Britain Downtown Zone Parcel/Bldg Summary

STYLE	Parcels	Parcel SQF	Bldg. Gross SQF	Land Ass..	Out Bld. Ass.	Extra Feat. Value	Building Value	Total Ass. Value
Apartment Bldg	9	491,334	327,132	\$1,428,770	\$21,630	\$231,000	\$7,340,830	\$9,022,230
Auto Service	3	70,734	17,257	\$255,360	\$16,450	\$840	\$521,780	\$794,430
Bank	1	24,493	13,850	\$43,470	\$4,200	\$0	\$693,140	\$740,810
Churches	8	300,337	141,522	\$386,610	\$41,370	\$0	\$7,381,220	\$7,809,200
City Hall	1	89,511	107,377	\$108,710	\$1,400	\$655,410	\$15,136,450	\$15,901,970
Class A Office	3	422,924	251,906	\$1,908,480	\$33,880	\$1,006,670	\$52,901,380	\$55,850,410
Clubs/Lodges	2	53,629	27,803	\$83,510	\$18,620	\$8,610	\$275,310	\$386,050
Conventional	3	17,274	8,891	\$27,300	\$0	\$840	\$150,220	\$178,360
Discount Store	1	29,492	42,725	\$91,140	\$0	\$0	\$509,530	\$600,670
Exempt Bldg	1	51,863	62,544	\$40,250	\$20,160	\$99,120	\$3,158,470	\$3,318,000
Fast Food Rest	2	71,514	5,892	\$391,440	\$16,590	\$0	\$658,700	\$1,066,730
Four Family	2	16,599	9,777	\$16,730	\$7,070	\$0	\$96,250	\$120,050
Funeral Home	2	46,627	20,429	\$92,400	\$27,790	\$6,580	\$236,670	\$363,440
Heavy Indust.	1	49,385	80,091	\$61,880	\$2,520	\$10,500	\$100,100	\$175,000
High Rise Apt	4	216,285	251,537	\$1,045,030	\$23,240	\$531,230	\$5,447,470	\$7,046,970
Hotel	1	93,994	84,584	\$111,860	\$3,570	\$0	\$4,936,680	\$5,052,110
Industrial	2	19,728	19,906	\$37,380	\$0	\$3,710	\$137,620	\$178,710
Multi-Family	7	49,052	66,841	\$60,760	\$6,160	\$0	\$605,220	\$672,140
Nbhd Strip Ctr	2	461,751	83,252	\$2,520,490	\$76,370	\$0	\$2,805,250	\$5,402,110
Office	23	446,034	702,216	\$1,113,770	\$55,020	\$231,700	\$9,596,930	\$10,997,420
Office/Apt	3	22,975	81,573	\$205,730	\$630	\$0	\$1,790,320	\$1,996,680
Office/Retail	11	118,742	211,869	\$367,360	\$5,320	\$0	\$1,471,680	\$1,844,360
Old Style	1	4,740	1,707	\$6,020	\$0	\$0	\$26,810	\$32,830
Outbuildings	16	524,770	0	\$978,460	\$206,850	\$0	\$0	\$1,185,310
Parking Garage	1	107,523	511,991	\$246,750	\$0	\$268,100	\$11,066,440	\$11,581,290
Police Station	1	98,625	71,352	\$118,650	\$14,350	\$58,800	\$2,780,330	\$2,972,130
Post Office	1	186,179	73,692	\$903,000	\$29,890	\$0	\$1,994,300	\$2,927,190
Res Style Comm	7	57,675	39,788	\$156,870	\$2,030	\$0	\$697,130	\$856,030
Restaurant	2	36,797	6,355	\$60,270	\$4,480	\$840	\$349,370	\$414,960
Retail	12	247,857	216,148	\$1,375,430	\$47,180	\$105,350	\$2,870,560	\$4,398,520
Retail/Apt	12	121,895	271,491	\$384,720	\$0	\$27,090	\$1,696,940	\$2,108,750
Service Shop	2	27,751	3,766	\$43,820	\$1,050	\$0	\$112,980	\$157,850
Shop Center	1	545,378	98,222	\$3,157,560	\$179,200	\$0	\$4,444,230	\$7,780,990
Supermarket	1	21,371	27,186	\$84,000	\$0	\$0	\$640,290	\$724,290
Telephone Bldg	1	85,017	43,056	\$91,700	\$97,580	\$0	\$418,950	\$608,230
Three Family	11	68,174	58,206	\$80,500	\$35,910	\$0	\$694,540	\$810,950
Two Family	15	107,886	61,448	\$115,080	\$22,050	\$0	\$738,220	\$875,350
Vacant Land	14	225,085	0	\$470,820	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$470,820
Warehouse	2	67,524	49,632	\$64,960	\$25,200	\$0	\$178,010	\$268,170
<b>Proposed Downtown Zone:</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>5,698,523</b>	<b>4,153,014</b>	<b>\$18,737,040</b>	<b>\$1,047,760</b>	<b>\$3,246,390</b>	<b>\$144,660,320</b>	<b>\$167,691,510</b>

Source: City of New Britain Assessor Database

### New Britain Downtown Investment Areas

Investment Areas	Parcels	Parcel SQF	Bldg. Gross SQF	Land Ass. Value	Out Bld. Ass. Value	Extra Feat. Value	Building Value	Total Ass. Value
Main St/Busway	6	232,320	7,712	\$373,100	\$43,820	\$0	\$112,770	\$529,690
Event Center	1	545,378	98,222	\$3,157,560	\$179,200	\$0	\$4,444,230	\$7,780,990
Herald Square	3	187,764	133,372	\$231,700	\$24,990	\$0	\$5,911,290	\$6,167,980
Main & Chestnut	4	155,248	268,203	\$434,070	\$5,880	\$482,580	\$8,850,870	\$9,773,400
Liberty Square	3	227,096	82,862	\$696,150	\$28,630	\$58,800	\$3,514,840	\$4,298,420
Theater Square	6	137,123	96,095	\$346,220	\$12,180	\$0	\$1,679,720	\$2,038,120
<b>Total Investment Areas:</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1,484,930</b>	<b>686,466</b>	<b>\$5,238,800</b>	<b>\$294,700</b>	<b>\$541,380</b>	<b>\$24,513,720</b>	<b>\$30,588,600</b>

Source: City of New Britain Assessor Database

**APPENDIX B**  
**REVISED B-4 DISTRICT REGULATIONS**

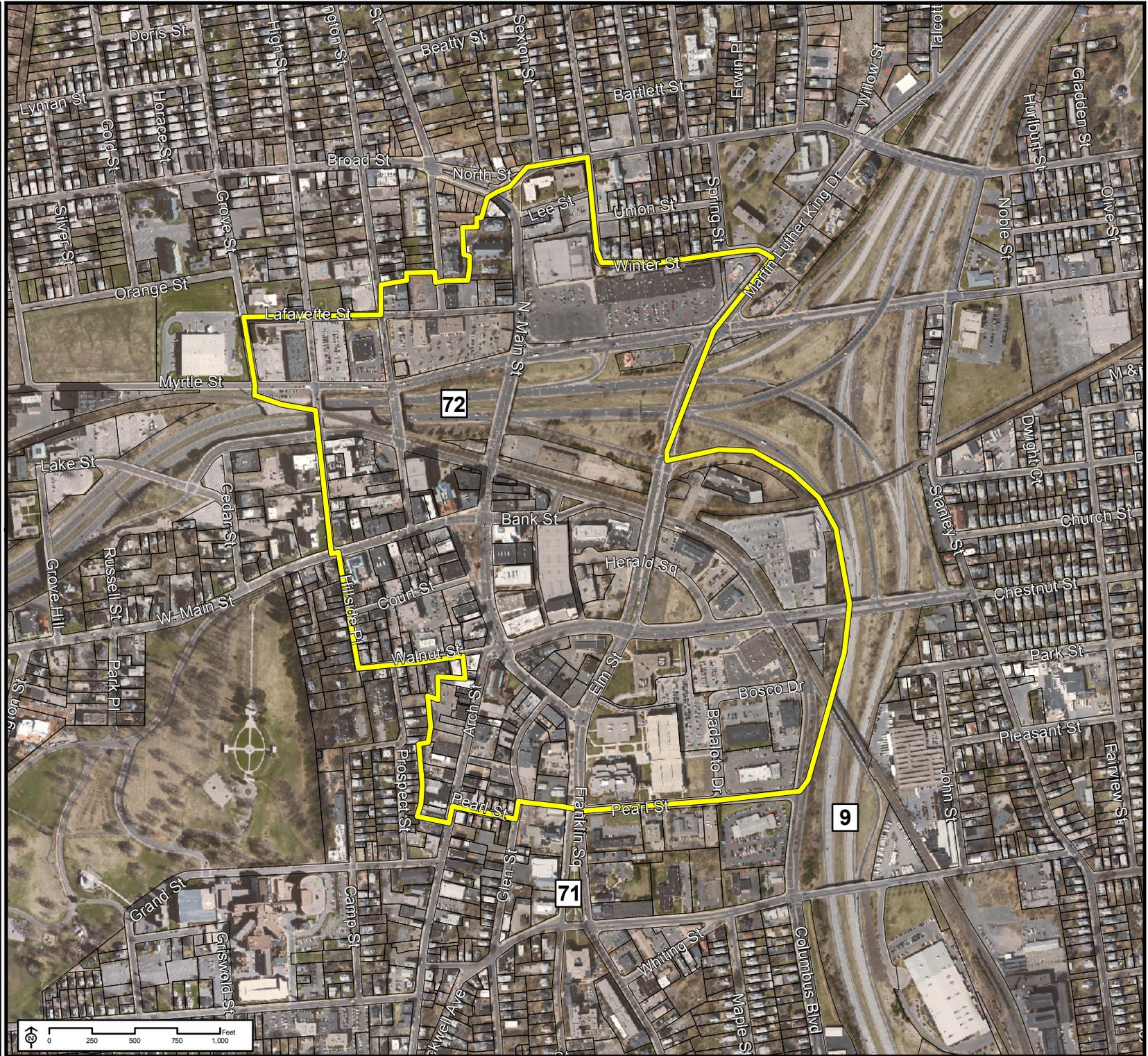
# City of New Britain Connecticut



## Downtown Study Proposed Zoning

### Legend

-  Zoning Boundary  
B-4 Central  
Business District



Source:  
GIS Parcel Basemap  
City of New Britain,  
Department of Public Works

Aerial Photograph:  
SBC/SNET - 2005.

**THIS MAP WAS DEVELOPED FOR USE AS  
A PLANNING DOCUMENT. DELINEATIONS  
MAY NOT BE EXACT.**

 HARRALL-MICHALOWSKI  
ASSOCIATES, INCORPORATED  
HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT January 2008

**PROPOSED**

**SECTION 170 B-4 DISTRICT (central business).**

**170-10 Permitted Uses.**

Within any B-4 District, a building, structure, or lot shall only be used for one or more of the following permitted uses, except as provided in Section 170-20 Special Exception Uses, Section 170-30 Accessory Uses, and Section 260 Nonconforming Uses and Nonconforming Buildings or Structures. For all listed uses, the site plan shall be submitted and reviewed pursuant to Section 280-60.

Community Facility Uses.

170-10-10 Church or similar place of worship, Sunday school, parish house, convent, monastery.

170-10-20 College, vocational school.

170-10-30 Park, playground or recreational area operated by the municipality.

170-10-40 Public or semi-public building for civic, political, social, or recreational purposes.

170-10-50 School, public elementary or high, or a private school having a curriculum equivalent to that ordinarily given in such a public school.

170-10-51 Public utility facility.

170-10-52 Bus Passenger Waiting Shelter. [Approved 10-22-81, Item #14771-1]

Business Uses.

170-10-60 [DELETED 11-21-86, Item #17459-1]

170-10-70 [DELETED 11-21-86, Item #17459-1]

170-10-80 Bank, savings and loan association.

170-10-100 [DELETED 11-21-86, Item #17459-1]

170-10-110 Hotel.

170-10-111 Motel.

170-10-120 Office or office building: Business, professional, utility, semi-public or government.

170-10-130 Personal service shop: barber shop, beauty parlor, pet shop, dry cleaner or laundry of not more than 4,000 sq.ft. including self-service establishment, and other similar services to the consumer.

170-10-140 Radio or television station and/or studio.

170-10-150 Restaurant.

170-10-160 Retail store not otherwise classified.

170-10-170 Shop for custom work, or for making articles to be sold only at retail on the premises.

170-10-180 Theater, motion picture theater.

Residential Uses. [Approved 3-17-77, Item #12386-1]

170-20-130 Multi family houses. [Approved 6-20-88, Item #18284-1] Parcels with frontage on Main Street and Chestnut Street shall not permit residential units on the street level. Access to lobbies may be permitted.

170-20-140 Apartments over first story, or first and second story, non-residential uses.

### **170-20 Special Exception Uses.**

Within any B-4 District, the following special exception uses shall be permitted, subject to approval by the Zoning Board of Appeals pursuant to Section 270-40, Special Exception Uses. For all listed special exception uses, the site plan shall be submitted and reviewed, pursuant to Section 280-60.

Community Facilities.

170-20-10 [DELETED 10-22-81, Item #14771-1]

170-20-20 Club--membership, non-profit.

170-20-30 Club--residence membership, non-profit.

170-20-40 Parking garage--public, or off street parking area--public.

170-20-50 Passenger transportation terminal.

170-20-60 Gas utility facility.

Business Uses.

170-20-70 Alcoholic liquor permit location in connection with a permitted use or a special exception use.

170-20-80 Arena, assembly hall.

170-20-90 Commercial public recreation use not otherwise classified.

**170-30 Accessory Uses.**

Within any B-4 District, the following accessory uses shall be permitted subject to the applicable provisions of Section 230:

170-30-10 Caretaker's dwelling unit.

170-30-20 Customary accessory uses, buildings or structures, exclusive of retail services and of industrial uses otherwise prohibited.

170-30-30 Parking garage or off street parking area, pursuant to Section 240.

170-30-40 Signs, pursuant to Section 250.

**170-40 Dimensional Regulations.**

Within any B-4 District, no building or structure shall be erected, nor any lot used, unless in conformity with the following schedule, except as modified by the provisions of Section 230. Supplemental Use and Dimensional Regulations, where applicable:

17040-10 Lot Area--Minimum--sq. ft. None required

17040-20 Lot Area--Minimum per dwelling unit--None required

17040-30 Floor Area Ratio--Maximum 8.0

17040-40 Lot Coverage--% of total lot area occupied by main and accessory buildings 100

17040-50 Lot--Width--Minimum--ft. None required

17040-60 Height--Maximum-ft. No maximum restrictions [Approved 5-21-81, Item #14684-1]

170-40-70 Yards--Minimum--ft.

170-40-70.01 Front None required

170-40-70.02 Side None required, but 10' if provided

170-40-70.03 Side--total for both on interior lot None required

170-40-70.04 Side--abutting side street on a corner lot None required

170-40-70.05 Rear None required

170-40-80 Accessory Buildings.

170-40-80.01 Coverage of required rear yard--Maximum--% No rear yard required

170-40-80.02 Height in required rear yard--Maximum--ft. No rear yard required

170-40-80.03 Setback from any lot line--Minimum--ft. 0

## **170-50 Design Guidelines.**

In order to achieve a high level of architectural and urban design, and to create strong linkages both visually and physically within the framework of a comprehensive plan, the following guidelines are established. These guidelines shall be applied to all applications for development within the district under both the site plan requirements (Section 280-60) and to special exception uses under Section 270-40.

### **170-50-10 Downtown Design District**

A Downtown Design District (DDD) should be established with a design review process, conducted by a sub-committee of Planning and Zoning, and with an appropriately qualified professional advisor.

### **170-50-20 Pedestrian Linkages**

All site plans shall provide for connections with public pedestrian through-ways within an integrated design by use of appropriate materials, lighting and landscaping. Particular attention shall be given to providing ease of access to public open spaces, parking structures and surface parking lots and transit facilities.

### **170-50-30 Street Level Appropriate Uses**

In order to create a vibrant urban environment, mixed-use developments shall be encouraged. Within such developments, the street level shall be retail and service uses, with front doors and fenestration facing the street and providing visibility to and from the street.

### **170-50-40 Exterior Facades**

Both the new construction and rehabilitation of structures shall use materials and architectural treatments which are complementary to the overall character and design vocabulary of the historic downtown fabric. Materials such as EIFS, metal or vinyl siding, or singles are discouraged.