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Regional <sup>CT
NJ
NY</sup>Plan Association



Design Prospective:

The **March 2006** Connecticut Mayors' Institute on Community Design

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Regional Plan Association

Regional Plan Association (RPA) is an independent, not-for-profit regional planning organization that improves the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the 31-county New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region through research, planning, and advocacy. For more than 80 years, RPA has been shaping transportation systems, protecting open spaces, and promoting better community design for the region's continued growth. We anticipate the challenges the region will face in the years to come, and we mobilize the region's civic, business, and government sectors to take action.

The nation's most influential independent regional planning organization since 1922, RPA has a storied history but is more relevant than ever in the 21st Century. RPA's First Plan in 1929 provided the blueprint for the transportation and open space networks that we take for granted today. The Second Plan, completed in 1968, was instrumental in restoring our deteriorated mass transit system, preserving threatened natural resources and revitalizing our urban centers. Released in 1996, RPA's Third Regional Plan, "A Region at Risk," warned that new global trends had fundamentally altered New York's national and global position. The plan called for building a seamless 21st century mass transit system, creating a three-million acre Greensward network of protected natural resource systems, maintaining half the region's employment in urban centers, and assisting minority and immigrant communities to fully participate in the economic mainstream.

RPA's current work is aimed largely at implementing the ideas put forth in the Third Regional Plan, with efforts focused in five project areas: community design, open space, transportation, workforce and the economy, and housing.

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The **Connecticut Mayors' Institute on Community Design** The Connecticut Mayors' Institute on Community Design is a program organized by RPA in cooperation with the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and the Yale Schools of Architecture and Management. The March 2006 Connecticut Mayors' Institute was made possible by the participation and support of a number of individuals.

Special thanks to the mayors, first selectmen and first selectwomen and their staffs for their time, interest and enthusiasm; Joel Cogen and Jim Finley at the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities for their support of this program; Dean Robert Stern and Professor Alan Plattus and their staffs at the Yale School of Architecture for their support and cooperation.

Special thanks go to the Resource Team members at the March 2006 Mayors' Institute, and to Mayor Joseph Riley of Charleston South Carolina for his inspiring and moving keynote address.

March 2006 Connecticut Mayors' Institute Resource Team

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PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Modeled on the national Mayors' Institute on City Design, the Connecticut Institute provides a multi-day retreat for six mayors, first selectmen and first selectwomen and a resource team of design and planning professionals. The town chief elected officials (CEOs) present planning and design issues that each community is facing, and then participate in a wide-ranging discussion. While addressing specific concerns raised by the mayors, the resource team members also describe in broader terms how they have approached similar problems. Using examples from other communities, the mayors and resource team members learn from each other.

The Mayors' Institute offers public officials the rare opportunity to discuss a planning issue facing their community with a group of peers and some of the most respected designers and planners in the country. These Institutes focus particular attention on how better design and development can create healthy, livable communities. Experts in urban design and planning, landscape architecture, real estate development and transportation planning participate in the Institute discussions, providing presentations and

analyses of how alternative development patterns impact the health and vitality of communities.

The March 2006 Connecticut Mayors' Institute, held at Yale University, focused particular attention on how better design can employ smart growth techniques. For those municipalities with downtowns, or village centers, the Institute emphasized the opportunities for redevelopment as well as a more active lifestyle. For those with a more rural atmosphere, the Institute emphasized ways to encourage healthy development practices. Specific strategies were transfer of development rights, tax increment financing, performance-based zoning, build-out analyses, and traffic calming. Walkability and pedestrian plans and community visioning were also discussed at the Institute to enhance the quality of life in the specific community and in Connecticut and to help combat sprawl. The March 2006 Institute was the first Connecticut Institute and brought six Mayors, First Selectmen and First Selectwomen to the table who represented the diverse geographies, citizenries, politics and issues facing towns and cities of Connecticut.

March 2006 Mayoral Participants

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield, Portland

First Selectman Rudy Marconi, Ridgefield

First Selectman Michael Pace, Old Saybrook

First Selectwoman Linda Roberts, East Windsor

First Selectman Herb Rosenthal, Newtown

Mayor Timothy Stewart, New Britain

Case Studies

The design issues covered in the six case studies were as diverse as the type, size and geography of cities and towns at the Institute. While the case study issues covered brownfields, downtowns, main streets, village parking, open space, and gateways and corridors, the case studies could be organized into the following three categories:

- envisioning centers
- revitalizing corridors
- linking parcels

The most basic lesson for the mayors is to think beyond the confines of their problem, beyond the boundaries of the individual development sites or problem areas to the larger neighborhood or community planning framework. This emphasis on making connections – physical and programmatic – to the larger context is also a fundamental precept of healthy community designs.

Resource Team Presentations

Each Institute includes a series of presentations by members of the resource team. These presentations introduce the mayors to the concepts of community design, educate them in the tools employed by professional planners, and frame the subsequent discussions in different subject areas. The presenters and their presentations were:

Jane Thompson, a principal in The Thompson Design Group, began the Institute with a lecture on urban design principles and best practices for designing public spaces. Using some of the larger projects she has worked on such as Quincy Market in Boston, Grand Central Terminal in New York City, Long Branch, NJ, and others as examples, Ms. Thompson showed the Town CEOs how good design could inspire a sense of community, health and vitality while also fueling the economy of an area.

Glenn Chalder, a principal at Planimetrics, presented eight key needs for village centers: appropriate structure, appropriate density, appropriate design, appropriate buildings (primarily for pedestrians—vehicles are secondary), appro-

priate parking, and appropriate utilities. Through images and guidelines, he then informed the mayors of ways to measure parking needs while maintaining a pedestrian atmosphere in village centers.

Jonathan Rose, President of Jonathan Rose Companies, spoke to the elected officials about housing. As a professional real estate developer of primarily mixed-use, mixed-income developments, Mr. Rose provided examples of how communities have benefited from incorporating these elements into their urban fabric.

Margaret Welch, Landscape Stewardship Coordinator with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, spoke about the DEP's Landscape Stewardship Initiative and the ways in which town leaders could promote stewardship through design standards.

Keynote Addresses

The keynote address at the Institute is a highlight of the program and is delivered by a distinguished figure in the field of planning and design. Open to the public, it draws a wide audience of elected officials, business leaders, civic activists, experts and the media, in addition to the Institute's participants and resource team. Its goal is to introduce the mayors to the best community design practices in the world. The Keynote Address for the first Connecticut Institute was delivered by the Honorable Joseph Riley, Mayor of Charleston, South Carolina. Mayor Riley is founder of the National Mayors' Institute for City Design and a noted expert on livability and urban design issues. Named by *Newsweek* one of the twenty-five most dynamic mayors in America, he has spent years dedicated to the beautification of the City of Charleston and has made it his mission to create inspiring, beautiful places for all citizens of the city. A mayor in his eighth term, Mayor Riley has made an incredible mark on his city evident in a number of ways. During his time in office, the city has seen and benefited from a dramatic reduction in crime, the impressive revitalization of downtown, the vibrancy of a new waterfront park, the Spoleto Festival U.S.A., a nationally acclaimed affordable housing program and significant population growth. Among his many honors and distinctions is the Urban Land Institute's J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionary Urban Development. Mayor Riley speaks frequently across the country on the topics of urban design and livability. His experience, national recognition and dedication to supporting mayors across America is what RPA sought in a keynote speaker for the inaugural Connecticut Mayors' Institute.

CASE STUDIES:

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The six case studies represented a wide range of urban design issues such as brown-fields, downtowns, main streets, parking, open space. While these issues covered a broad spectrum, the case studies themselves could be organized into three categories: envisioning centers, revitalizing corridors and linking parcels. The most important lesson for the mayors was to think beyond the confines of the specific case study, or even their own specific town, to the larger principles and frameworks of neighborhood and community planning.

Envisioning Centers

A large part of the design process is visioning, where a community defines the future it wants. Visioning engages the citizens by asking them to identify their community's purpose, core values and vision for the future. The visioning process can be small-scale defining the community as the citizens of a block, neighborhood or district. Visioning can also be large-scale where a community is defined as the citizens of a town, a state or even an entire region. New Britain and Ridgefield will benefit from the process of visioning in their respective downtown districts. New Britain has an urban downtown, and Ridgefield has a village downtown; both of these areas are the hub of community activity and should be the center of economic activity as well. Strengthening the center of a community will inherently encourage healthy development town- or city-wide.

New Britain, Mayor Tim Stewart

The Mayor would like to explore relocating the city police station to a site on Main Street in downtown New Britain where there are unused, existing buildings. The site has previously housed a number of different functions including offices, retail and a theater. Across and diagonal from the site are two churches and a community center. The Mayor has expressed interest in incorporating a restaurant or some other public function into the design of the police station in order to use it as a catalyst for development downtown and for "re-peopling" Main Street. (A great example in Connecticut is in Middletown where its Police Station was moved downtown in a mixed use building).

Ridgefield, First Selectman Rudy Marconi

An increasing problem in the Main Street and village center of Ridgefield is parking. The First Selectman would like to look at existing parking, both public and private, in this area and explore options for reorganizing or increasing the amount of parking in the center of town while maintaining and enhancing the village center/pedestrian-friendly atmosphere that already exists.

Revitalizing Corridors:

Many major corridors across the country, both traditional Main Streets and newer commercial roads have become more and more automobile oriented and less geared toward the pedestrian. Furthermore, many of these corridors are the central location of day-to-day economic activity, but do little to preserve and boost the character of the towns they exist in. Additionally, in many instances these corridors are state highways with a lot of pass-through traffic. Some have become so spread out that they do not capture nearly as much tax revenue considering the corridor's length. Portland and Old Saybrook represent two different types of corridors. While Portland's case study is a site that sits near its historic Main Street, the development that happens here could serve as a gateway to Main Street and as the catalyst for the Main Street corridor development process. Old Saybrook's corridor is a light industrial portion of Route 1, which runs parallel to Interstate 95, and if redeveloped properly could also become an economic engine and gateway for the Town of Old Saybrook.

Portland, First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield

A property on the corner of Marlborough (Rte. 66) and Main Streets, which previously housed a hospital and other institutional uses, is the target area of Selectwoman Bransfield's project. The soon to be adopted

Plan of Conservation and Development suggests exploring this area for opportunities to create a retail and mixed-use development. The First Selectwoman would like to launch a visioning process for this site and find ways to link the future of this site with the Main Street corridor.

Old Saybrook, First Selectman Michael Pace

The First Selectman has identified a corridor (a portion of Route 1) which is approximately one half-mile from Main Street where there exists a mix of uses including homes, car dealerships, light industrial uses, etc. It sits between Interstate 95, to which it has great access, and the Metro-North rail line. It is also approximately one half-mile to a rail station which serves both the Shoreline East line of Metro-North and Amtrak's Northeast corridor service. The First Selectman would like to see this corridor develop an identity through revitalization, possibly as a corridor for marine businesses, as it is one of the town's access roads to the waterfront.

Linking Parcels:

When exploring new uses for either an undeveloped or redevelopment parcel, the challenge is to find a use which both correlates to and enhances the uses surrounding it. Examining the overall pattern of uses around the parcel is necessary to find the appropriate features to link together an entire area. For example, in East Windsor, the undeveloped 151-acre parcel surrounded by the town's current public outdoor recreational facility, residential lots and several of the town's municipal buildings could link up with these uses to create a real town center or a village center for the Broadbrook section of town. In Newtown, the redevelopment plan for a brownfield site where an old smelting plant once operated should consider sharing some features with the industrial site next door as well as the possibility of opening onto an access road taking advantage of its proximity to a major interstate highway.

East Windsor, First Selectwoman Linda Roberts

The town has recently bought a 151 acre parcel which is totally undeveloped and currently has no development restrictions. It is adjacent to some residences and by the town's major park and recreation area. The town is in need of new civic buildings, schools, town hall, etc., and is considering that this site might lend itself to this type of improvement.

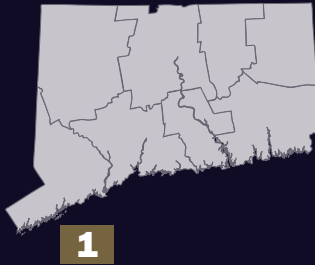
Newtown, First Selectman Herbert Rosenthal

The First Selectman would like to revitalize the industrial site of an old smelting plant which sits in between current industrial uses and a neighborhood residential area. He has in mind another light industrial use for the site, but also wants to incorporate the nature trail that runs alongside it. The site is next to an active freight rail line which also services the other industrial sites in the area. A rail spur runs onto this particular site which can be reactivated.



CASE STUDIES

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



CITY OF NEW BRITAIN

Mayor Tim Stewart

Square Miles
Population

13
72,395

KEY ISSUES

- Promote cohesion with the adjacent and modern Institute for Technology and Business Development building for Central Connecticut State University.
- Explore possible interaction with the New Britain Cultural Center which is directly across the street from the site.
- Maintain sensitivity to an 1800's stone church recently converted to a community center.
- Employ traffic calming and pedestrian-oriented techniques at the four-way intersection facing the site.
- Make use of the site's location which is 300 yards down Main Street from New Britain City Hall and Central Park.
- Maximize the use of adjacent parking garage for Police functions as well as public use.

PROBLEM STATEMENT: Relocate the New Britain Police Department headquarters to a downtown location, directly on Main Street, as a mixed-use facility allowing it to enhance the feeling of safety and quality of life for pedestrians, businesses and other institutions downtown and to act as a catalyst for future redevelopment downtown.

TOWN BACKGROUND:

New Britain's eleven square miles holds a population of just over 72,000 people. Ethnically diverse, New Britain is known for its strong ethnic enclaves, particularly its Polish community. The city houses some of Connecticut's best cultural resources such as the New Britain Museum of American Art and is home to one of the State's three minor league baseball teams, the New Britain Rock Cats. The city also boasts excellent outdoor recreational opportunities with its 1200 acres of parkland. Amidst all of these wonderful amenities, New Britain's downtown still struggles to gain economic strength and social vitality. With excellent historic architecture still remaining downtown, and several recent development projects in the area, the city is hopeful that a downtown redevelopment study a proposed new stadium project near Interstate 91 will help to reinvigorate the downtown economy. Among the city's needs is a new Police Headquarters. Mayor Stewart sees an opportunity on Main Street just next to Central Connecticut State University's new downtown building where CCSU holds night classes. This opportunity, in combination with other Main Street renovation projects such as the renovation of a theater across the street, are hoped to spur a downtown night-life. Additionally, the Capitol Region Council of Governments proposes a busway to originate in New Britain and run to Hartford. The future development of the busway, which has been supported by recent state legislation, will incorporate some form of transit-oriented development, possibly in the downtown area, which could also be a catalyst for a downtown New Britain renaissance.

RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

This case study site on the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets has historically been an important location, critical to the life of downtown. Longtime residents of New Britain remember the vitality that this site brought to downtown in the early twentieth century when the Strand Theater occupied this location. Based upon the city's need for a new police headquarters, and upon the recent success that the central Connecticut City of Middletown has had with utilizing a new police headquarters as a catalyst for downtown development, the Mayor suggests that this site be explored for that purpose.

The resource team recognizes the importance of this site as a possible hub of downtown activity and realizes

that what happens at this site could greatly influence the movement of pedestrians throughout the downtown area. At an important intersection of streets, and at the center of the elegant and idiosyncratic pattern of the main arterial streets of the downtown, this site is at the midpoint of a critical path for future commercial, residential and pedestrian-friendly development. The corridor begins at City Hall and runs down Main Street as it bends into Martin Luther King Drive. All of the uses that sit on this intersection should encourage and bring life to the street. Because this site is so central and so critical to the revitalization of downtown, its future use should be a part of a larger community vision to revitalize the entire downtown area.

For downtown New Britain to become a vibrant area, visioning should keep in mind current urban design standards which say that one-quarter mile is an easy and realistic walking distance to conduct daily activities. This case study site can be used as the central point for determining a one-quarter mile radius in which to focus visioning and planning efforts. A coordinated pedestrian and traffic system should incorporate ample room for foot traffic as well as parking to accommodate visitors from outside the downtown area.

Specific resource team recommendations include widening existing pedestrian routes and minimizing the amount of room for vehicular traffic along this corridor. The corridor should also be linked by extending street landscaping as well as creating a common theme to development. If a police station is pursued on this specific site at the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets, ground floor retail development must be utilized to generate foot traffic and to fulfill the main objective of bringing people to downtown. At the police station, the symbolic presence of a "front desk" with police staff present on the ground floor will add to a perception and reality of safety. It was also suggested that incorporating a "visitor" or "tourist" information center in this location would lend to the welcoming atmosphere of the downtown district.

The City of New Britain is looking into the development of a stadium to the north of this downtown district. The suggestion of the resource team concerning the arena is to focus efforts on re-peopling this section of downtown and then look ahead toward connecting larger scale development on the outskirts of this downtown network. If the city is to return to its "old time" mid-20th century atmosphere with nighttime activities, the first floors of buildings must entice nightlife as well as have second floor activities. It is critical that an emphasis should be placed at this time on second floor loft housing, and if current zoning does not allow loft spaces, they should be revised to enable housing incentives. The city could target Community Development Block Grants, among other funding sources for rehabilitation assistance.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

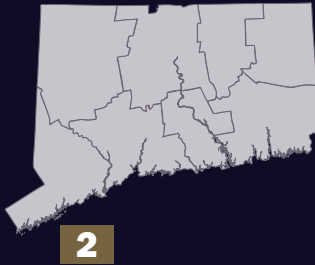
Open a new road in between the new Police Headquarters and parking structure as access for loading area and sally port.

Utilize existing parking structure for both police station parking and public parking for the downtown area.

Create a public information center and police presence on corner of Main Street to create a sense of security and positive connection between police presence and the public.

Connect/Link main corridors through a unified green streetscape plan.





TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD

First Selectman Rudy Marconi

Square Miles 34
Population 24,251

KEY ISSUES

- Keep changes consistent with “village district” zoning.
- Explore the possibility of parking fees.
- Consider reconfiguration of the loading zone area on Main Street across from Town Hall.
- Incorporate a signage scheme as a means of way-finding.
- A parking structure could be considered, but only as a last resort.

PROBLEM STATEMENT: Examine the existing parking scheme in the Main Street and downtown area and come up with ways to ease the parking burden while maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for pedestrians.

TOWN BACKGROUND:

The town of Ridgefield is a 34-square-mile town on the very western edge of Connecticut bordering New York State, and has a population of just over 24,000. Established in 1709 as a colonial settlement, Ridgefield has a heritage that lives on today in the town’s village center district. While development starting in the 1960s began to change the face of Ridgefield’s village center, a walk down Main Street still inspires the idea of a colonial village as many original buildings historic artifacts remain. The preservation of the town center is extremely important to residents, as is the preservation of the town’s unique character. Like many suburban towns in Connecticut with excellent school systems, Ridgefield has seen increasing population growth since 1950. The town Plan of Conservation and Development (PCD) notes that the town grew from 4,000 residents in 1950 to 24,000 in 2000. In order to encourage positive growth and land use strategies, the town has most recently focused on a Community Character Study recommended in the PCD, which will identify the key characteristics that the community wants to preserve. The Study will inform the PCD and future local regulations. In addition to the Community Character Study, the town is trying to come up with ways to improve parking in the village center without disrupting the current atmosphere and walkability of the area. Many surrounding towns’ parking strategies have been studied and presented to the public in Ridgefield. A solution to the problem has not yet been determined, although options discussed have included building and installing a parking meter system or building a parking structure.

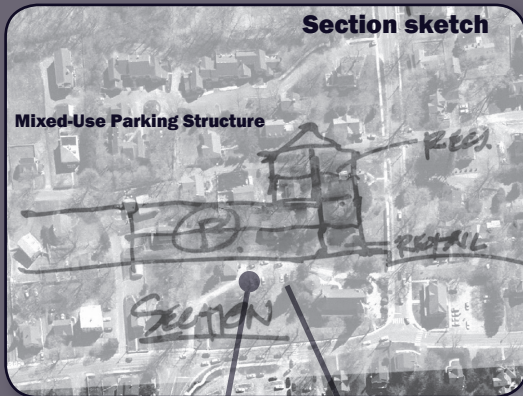
RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based upon recent analyses and the overall assessment of the Mayors Institute Resource Team, the parking shortage in Downtown Ridgefield may be more one of perception than reality, and may best be solved through visioning. With a vision for a more pedestrian friendly village center public perceptions on parking will change dramatically, and hopefully lessen the urgency for more physical parking spots. The section of Bailey Avenue that runs parallel to the east of Main Street is an area to encourage pedestrian friendly infill. The town could work toward shaping the future of this street as a secondary commercial corridor with street parking. It would even be possible to extend Bailey Avenue through to Governor Street. Ridgefield should explore new regulations, programs and facial improvements in the downtown area. For example, along Main, Street large SUV parking could be restricted

to provide more space for a compact car parking scheme. In this area, fees could also be implemented to encourage turnover. By encouraging discussion between merchants and other business owners, a plan for shared parking might also be worked out, particularly for the lots behind the shops on the north side of Main Street where there is ample room for parking after business hours. Other options are a “Transfer of Parking Rights” system where parking could be concentrated in areas where there is already existing parking. Whichever program is implemented, new zoning regulations should always favor the pedestrian in the downtown village area. Pedestrians should reclaim the streets and even the parking lots through a clear set of design guidelines, traffic-calming and safety measures. Increasing the amount of angled parking will actually add to the pedestrian experience downtown; parked cars can act as a buffer between the pedestrian and the street.

A second approach is to incorporate a two- to three-story parking garage downtown. Although a parking structure should probably be a last resort, there are ways to build a structure that can exist as an economically and socially positive force in a village center. With strong design and siting guidelines set in place, a two- to three-story garage can be “wrapped” with a building for other uses such as having first floor retail or civic uses drawing pedestrian activity. An ideal location for such a structure in downtown Ridgefield would be at the Public Library where retail or even an expansion of the existing facility could front Prospect Street. A garage accessible from Prospect or Main could then exist behind the library and retail area.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS



Provide additional parking opportunities at Town Library by creating a mixed-use parking structure with both parking and retail. (See section sketch)

Create new road as a secondary commercial corridor to Main Street to extend economic development opportunities and open up more parking options.

Implement a coordinated system of way-finding to existing parking areas to change the perception of limited parking in the downtown.

Create greenway to public open space to further enhance the bucolic quality of life that characterizes Ridgefield.



TOWN OF PORTLAND

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield

Square Miles 23
Population 9,076

KEY ISSUES

- Sensitivity to historical buildings on the site is important.
- Future redevelopment may take advantage of already existing campus-like setting of the Elmcrest Facility.
- Existing zoning may need revision (Existing industrial zone on the south and residential on the east).
- Well planned circulation (ingress/egress) at the site is critical – there is a high daily average of trips in this area – where Route 66 meets Routes 17 and 17 A.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Explore opportunities for the infill and redevelopment of the historic Elmcrest site which sits at the entrance to Route 66 (Marlborough Street), a main thoroughfare in Portland, and adjacent to the entrance to Main Street. Also, through redevelopment, enhance this site's potential as a gateway to downtown Portland and as a mixed-use area that would compliment a pedestrian-friendly Main Street village center.

TOWN BACKGROUND:

The town of Portland is in central Connecticut with a land area of 23 square miles and a population of just over 9,000. Bordered on the west by the Connecticut River, the town of Portland owns approximately 42 acres of riverfront property. A long-time major contributor to the economy of Portland is mining in the quarries alongside the Connecticut River. Portland views the quarries not only as an economic and scenic asset, but also as an opportunity for a potential tourist destination. Originally, the land of the town of Portland belonged to a Native American tribe, the Wangunk. The town was inhabited by the first European settlers in the 1650s and was first known as East Middletown as it sits east of the City of Middletown directly across the river. A bridge connects the two municipalities today and links Portland to Route 9, a major north-south roadway connecting to Interstate 95 to the south and to Interstate 91 to the north. The southerly direction allows access to the coastal communities on the shore of Long Island Sound and the northern connection to Interstate 91 toward Hartford. While the majority of the town's population works in town, a good portion of the town's population commutes to Hartford as well as to East Hartford and Glastonbury and neighboring Middletown. Having become a commuting suburb of Hartford, Portland should be poised to reap the economic benefits of new development. The town has recently been focused on developing its tourist industry through creating recreational opportunities at its quarries and along the riverfront. It has also recently begun the process of re-invigorating its Main Street area. With the Elmcrest property for sale, a key property at the gateway to Main Street from Middletown and Route 9, the town has a tremendous opportunity to create a true town or village center near the riverfront, the quarries, and the existing Main Street.

RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

The town of Portland's Master Plan suggests exploring redevelopment opportunities at the campus-like former Elmcrest site. Given the current focus on redeveloping Main Street, the resource team sees a major opportunity for these two projects to coincide and spur Portland's economic development. Additionally, the redevelopment of this site as a new

mixed-use pedestrian-oriented complex will create a new focal point as the town center of Portland.

The site is perfectly situated to capitalize upon the traffic coming into town off of the bridge, nearly 40,000 cars a day, from Middletown and Route 9, the major mid-state artery described previously. To capture this potential, as much as 60-70,000 square feet of new retail space could be created at this site. Currently, Routes 17, 17A (Main Street) and 66 are the major arteries through this section of town. From a design perspective, Route 17A, now a major road (Main Street) through the center of Portland will become secondary to the new suggested "town center." Since this site is of historical significance in town, the redevelopment must be sensitive to historic preservation. Zoning changes may be needed to specifically aid the redevelopment and infill of the new Elmcrest Site.

To create this site as the new "town center," traffic coming off the bridge should first be allowed to flow easily into a system that not only prevents back-ups and delays, but also efficiently directs traffic toward its destination. To accomplish these goals, the town should consider creating a new road that would allow traffic to flow from the bridge right into the site the new town center and connect with Marlborough Road (Route 66). Not only would this street provide vehicular access to the site, but it could also become the main retail corridor through the site. A traffic circle instead of a system of lights would improve flow off the bridge and the town should consider placing a circle at the present junction of Routes 17 and 66.

On the site itself, a mix of commercial, residential, civic and green space would come together to create a pedestrian-friendly center of activity and gateway for the town.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Plan Detail of Traffic Roundabout



Implementing a traffic roundabout will improve traffic flow and create a focal point and gateway not only for the new town center development, but also for Portland's existing Main Street.

Extend road through the site from Main Street off the bridge. New road will become the site's main street with a mixed-use village feel and will also connect traffic to Route 66.

Construct structured parking to serve new shops and residences.



Create lanes to ease congestion coming off bridge and redirect traffic into new the site or easily onto Main Street.



TOWN OF OLD SAYBROOK

First Selectman Michael Pace

Square Miles 15
Population 10,823

4

KEY ISSUES

- Frame buildings and site layout to create an appropriate gateway to the town.
- Provide a transition from corridor's commercial uses to residential uses.
- Keep identity separate and distinct from Main Street and the Route 1 corridor west of town.
- Promote existing area for marine light industrial and commercial development.

PROBLEM STATEMENT: Revitalize this section of Route 1 (a section approximately one-half mile east of town) to create a productive marine-commercial gateway corridor to the Town of Old Saybrook and the waters of the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound.

TOWN BACKGROUND:

Old Saybrook is a southern Connecticut coastal town which is equidistant from New York and Boston and 45 miles south of Hartford. The town was settled as a Plantation in 1635. It was not until 1854 that Old Saybrook was incorporated as a town. Much of the border of Old Saybrook lies on Long Island Sound which has defined the community and its economy for centuries. Today nearly 30 percent of the town's economy is composed of trade business and there are several well established light marine-industrial businesses in town. In the summer, the population of Old Saybrook increases dramatically as it is a popular vacation and boating town.

Served equally well by both train and major roadways, the town has Interstate 95 and Amtrak and Shoreline East rail lines running through the heart of town near Main Street. Old Saybrook has a village center running along Main Street and has recently begun several projects to make the area more viable for new small businesses and to create a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. Another planning initiative has recently been undertaken in the area near the case study site on Route 1. The area just east of the case study corridor is called "Between the Bridges," and the planning and land use department has initiated an economic development process there.

RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

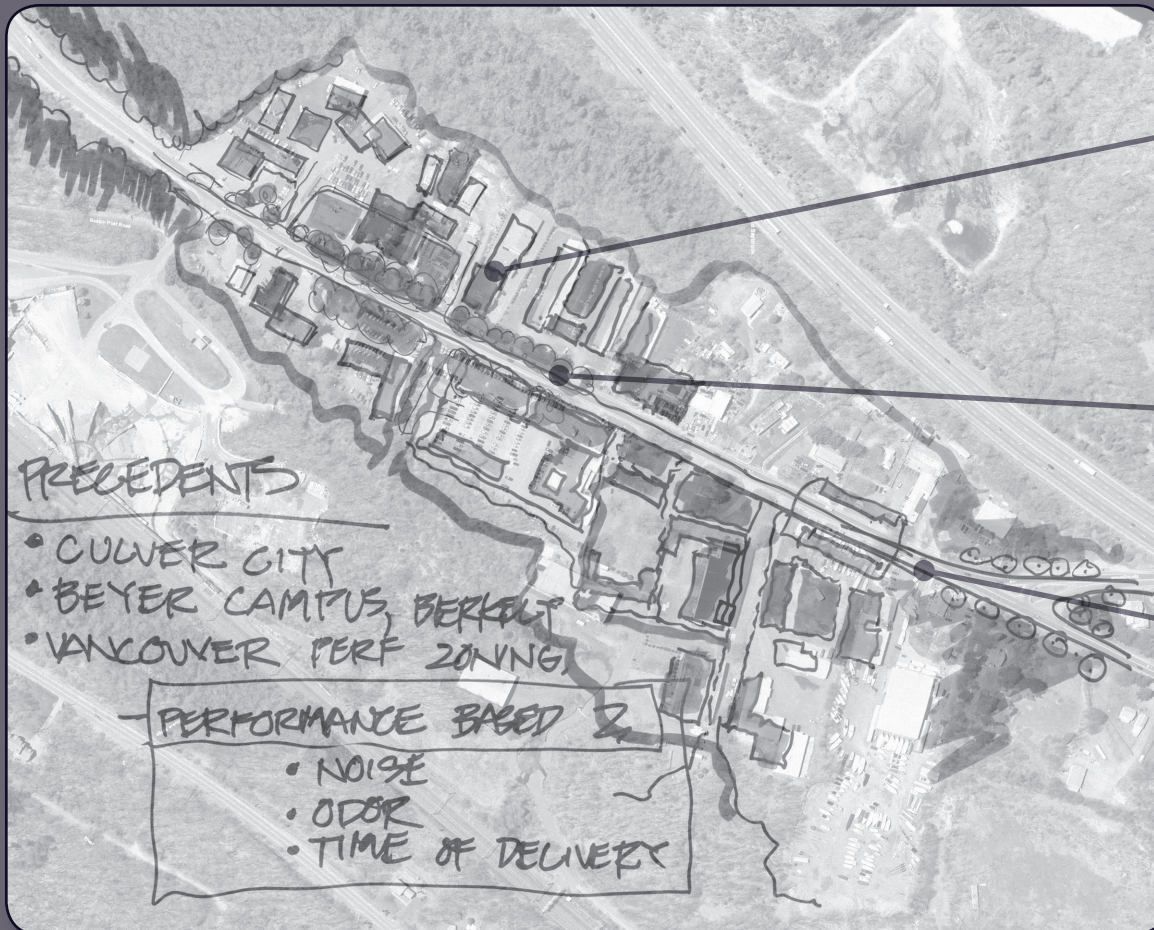
A stretch of Route 1 (Boston Post Road) already acts as a gateway to Old Saybrook from the east. The entrance to Old Saybrook from Interstate 95 is on this stretch and it is also the main roadway to a key riparian access point for the town, "Between the Bridges," which houses many marinas, restaurants and other tourist amenities. This corridor acts as a gateway to the water. A successful model for infill and redevelopment along this stretch of the Boston Post Road would serve as both a welcome and a destination. There should be some unique approach here that lends this corridor some significance.

One of the design strategies set forth by the resource team is to create a neo-traditional neighborhood and industrial design along both sides of the corridor. The residential development could act as workers' housing for the industries located here. The housing would surround and coordinate with a pattern of industrial boxes. Careful design guidelines would need to be set in place to allow industrial and residential development to coincide. There would need to be an overarching landscape plan to add lots of green to the public right-of-way and make the street friendly to both pedestrians and automobiles. One

of the most important assets of the town is its natural beauty and a gateway full of green will give this impression to first-time visitors.

The success of this design would depend upon the strict use of Performance Based Zoning. Through this method, rather than regulating the uses that can go in a particular area, the development of an area is set by gauging the impacts that its future uses will have on one another. While allowing more flexibility in what uses get put where, this type of zoning still achieves the harmony between uses that it seeks to accomplish. In this case, to minimize the impacts that the industries would have on the residences, the industries would need to follow guidelines on noise, odor and the times that they receive deliveries. Taking the performance-based approach would also more easily allow for the development of industrial tourism. Outlet shopping was also discussed as an option somewhere along the corridor. Eventually adding that element to this corridor would secure its identity as a marine-industrial corridor making it not only a destination, but also allowing it to become a true gateway to Old Saybrook and to this portion of the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS



Encourage residential density alongside existing and new industries within the context of performance based zoning.

Make streetscape improvements including a network of green to enhance the pedestrian experience.

Create green gateway to major corridor.



EAST WINDSOR

First Selectwoman Linda Roberts

Square Miles 26
Population 10,322

KEY ISSUES

- Link the development on this parcel with the existing school and town offices situated to the southeast of the site to create a cohesive municipal campus.
- Development should be sensitive to, and possibly connect with, surrounding uses, such as the town park and recreation center which border the eastern edge of the site and the existing residential parcels.

PROBLEM STATEMENT: Explore the possibilities for developing this 151-acre parcel into a new municipal campus that could potentially house the main town offices, a new school, police headquarters and/or other similar municipal and public uses.

TOWN BACKGROUND:

Like many towns in Connecticut, East Windsor was settled by farmers in the 17th century. Today, the town remains largely rural and still has many agricultural lands that are farmed by local families. Both the town's land area and population are small, approximately 10,000 residents on 26 square miles of land. Almost equidistant between Hartford, Connecticut, and Springfield, Massachusetts, the town is convenient to both Interstate 91 and Bradley International Airport, making it a convenient place for both new residential as well as commercial and business development. However, the town is in need of a new Municipal Facilities Program, not only to provide for future citizens and business, but also to provide for current town residents and merchants. The Connecticut State Legislature recently approved funding for the creation of a new commuter rail line between New Haven and Springfield which will certainly increase the possibilities for East Windsor to attract new economic activity. While a community like East Windsor can look forward to new growth, it must develop a plan that guides and directs development, that encourages good design and that preserves its valued agriculture land and open space. The newly revised Plan of Conservation and Development begins to anticipate the ways in which East Windsor will feel development pressure within the next ten years and begins to lay out these types of guidelines. While East Windsor has one governing body for the town with a First Selectwoman leading a Board of Selectman decision making structure, the town has five distinct villages. A main concern for the future of the town is preserving the unique character of each of its five villages, Broad Brook, Melrose, Scantic, Warehouse Point and Windsorville.

RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

Taking into account the flexibility of this site, the needs of the town, the development pressure that the town faces, as well as the site's proximity to several existing key components of the Broad Brook section of East Windsor, this problem calls for a community-wide visioning study. The town should consider engaging the public in a visioning process for the Broad Brook district to come up with a program list of elements to include at the site. After the program list is established, the town can develop alternatives for this site, also through community visioning. The theory behind community visioning is one of give and take: the citizenry provides personal knowledge of the needs and day-to-day workings of their neighborhoods and they gain a sense of ownership of the plans for their community's future by working with professionals to

come up with plans that work. Based on its assessment, the Mayors' Institute Resource Team recommends three options for the development of this 151 acre parcel, all of which could be brought to the community at the start of a visioning process. The first option is to create a campus composed entirely of new municipal buildings that the town needs, such as a new Town Hall, Police Station, Senior Center, and School. The second option is to create an entirely new residential development and the third option is to combine options one and two. Whichever option is chosen, the Town of East Windsor would benefit from exploring and implementing a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. TDR is a land preservation technique that allows municipalities to exchange zoning privileges from areas with limited population needs, such as farmland or open space, to areas of high population needs, such as denser downtown centers. Recognizing that East Windsor has a great deal of farmland and open space and understanding increasing development pressures, a TDR program would help to guide future growth to areas that need it and steer it away from areas that the town would like to preserve. The neighboring residential developments currently enjoy views across this partially forested, partially open area; future development on the site should allow for those vistas to remain. One specific design feature which the resource team highly recommended is a continuous greenway that runs through the site linking the conserved areas, such as the town recreation center, to the location of the existing "Main Street," which is called Rye Street, and the school. Creating space for a park somewhere along the greenway would be particularly important if there is residential development on the project parcel. If homes were somewhat densely placed along major roads, much of the open space at the site could be preserved to save the natural views. If some new residential development occurs on the site, a few new residential roads may need to be cut into the site in coordination with the greenway, preserved land and possible park.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

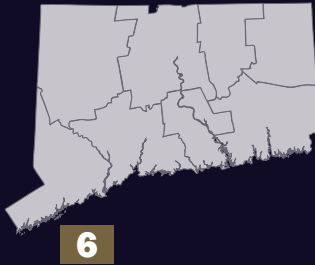
Cluster any residential development so as to preserve open space and create village center feeling.

Create central node for municipal functions and needs including community center, police headquarters and seat of town government.

Connect new development on site to existing village center and existing recreational space via a greenway.

Preserve open space to maintain existing view and current quality of life. Particularly if residential development is implemented, set aside open space for a community park which connects to the greenway.





NEWTOWN

First Selectman Herb Rosenthal

Square Miles 58
Population 26,191

KEY QUESTIONS

- Consider the redevelopment potential 100,000 sf +.
- Bond - for deed.
- Light-industrial use could be considered to increase job creation and the local tax base.
- Maintain existing zoning.
- Make use of onsite rail service for freight.
- Grant easement for parking for hikers' access to Rails-to-Trails trail.
- Connecticut Brownfields Redevelopment Authority (CBRA) incentives available

PROBLEM STATEMENT: Remediate the contamination and redevelop this brownfield property into a viable light-industrial site which harmonizes with nearby industrial and residential properties as well as a Rails-to-Trails corridor. Clean 30 acre site appropriately and preserve adjacent wetlands.

TOWN BACKGROUND:

Ranked the second largest town in the state by land area with 58 square miles, Newtown sits about fifteen miles east of the New York State border and has a population just over 26,000. Newtown has one of Connecticut's nine boroughs, the Borough of Newtown which is a square mile area incorporated in 1824 by the Connecticut General Assembly. The town of Newtown was established in 1711 and is composed of several sections: Sandy Hook, Hawleyville, Botsford and Dodgingtown as well as the Borough. Today the town has a limited Town Meeting form of government with a Board of Selectmen and Legislative Council, as well as a Board of Finance. The key landmark in town is the 110-foot flagpole in the center of Main Street which holds the American flag in the winter and ceremoniously holds a 20x30-foot summer flag once spring begins. Newtown adopted its most recent Plan of Conservation and Development in 2004. The Plan calls for the continued protection and enhancement of natural resources and notes that Newtown will achieve or exceed the State's goal for 21% open space. The Plan additionally calls for the preservation of mixed use on the town's commercial corridors and the preservation of historic sites. The Plan notes that the town should strive toward a more balanced supply of all types of housing and that it would like to see its commercial property tax base equal its residential tax base. In terms of future growth, Newtown would like to inventory and market as many of its developable sites as possible including the brownfield sites that need remediation.

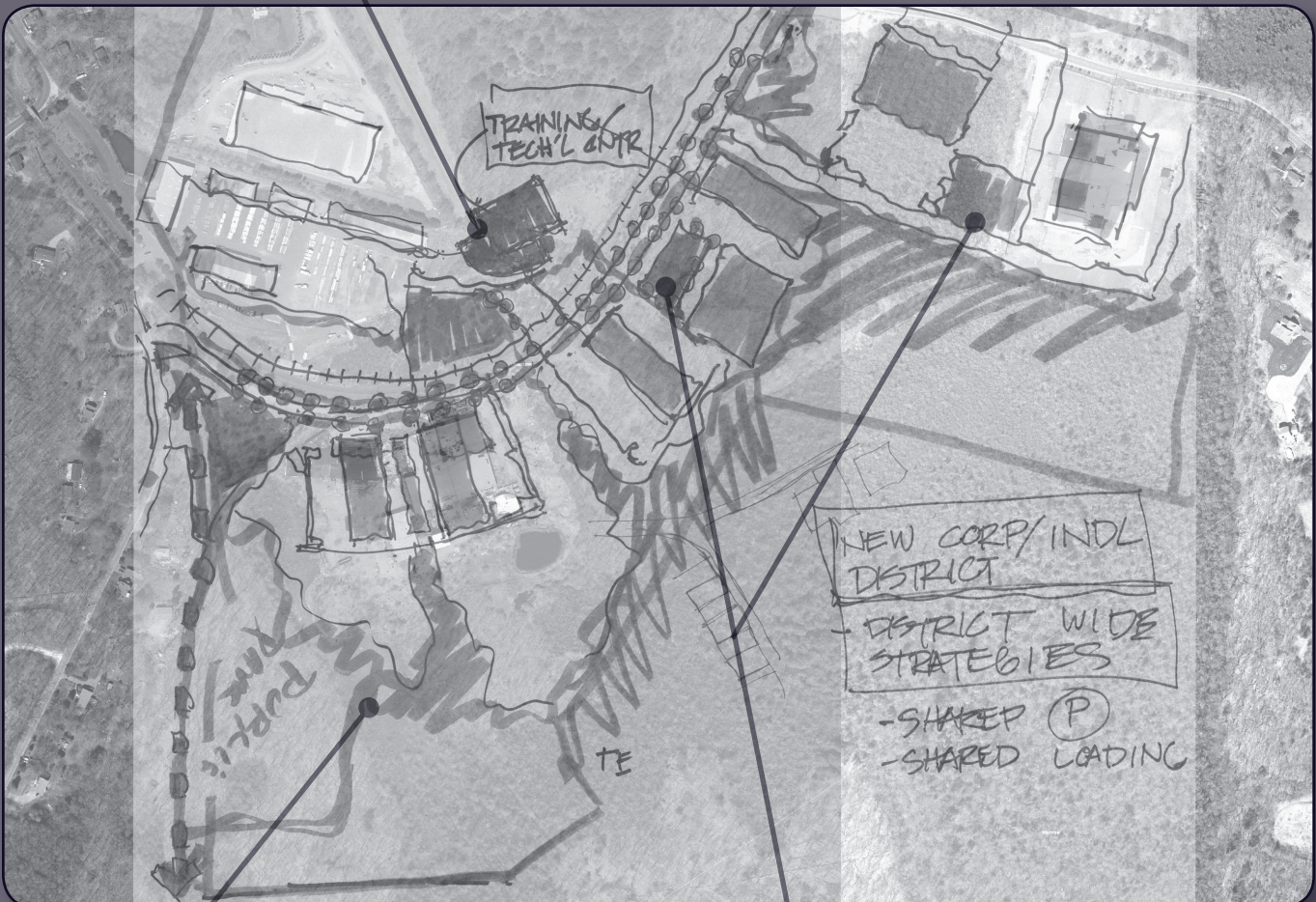
RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based upon his assessment of the needs of the Town of Newtown, the First Selectman would like to keep this site as an industrial site. Housing for this site was one of the first alternatives raised at the Institute as a viable redevelopment alternative, with the options of a new residential area or elderly housing both discussed. The First Selectman said that housing is not the preferred use for this site due to the fact that more housing in this area is not needed and that creating and keeping this entire area as a light-industrial park would be ideal. The Team recognized that whatever type of redevelopment is chosen for this property, the key first step is remediation. The Resource Team recognized that the Town of Newtown

has already done considerable research, including a State Department of Environmental Protection remediation study, to determine the remediation needs of this site. Based upon the study's findings and other economic analyses, it is clear that the town may be able to make use of a funding strategy called Tax Increment Financing or TIF. Through this process, the town would borrow against expected future revenues to fund improvements. The town has already seen significant investment by private industries in beautifully designed and landscaped campuses, and this site raises another opportunity to accomplish something similar. Of particular interest to the town is a neighboring industrial campus and it is clear that a TIF could help the town to guide this brownfield remediation project in a similar direction. TIF has aided in the success of many development projects including Denver's Highlands' Garden Village, winner of the 2005 National Award for Smart Growth Achievement, and Pittsburgh's Brentwood Town Square. The case study parcel is in an industrial zone and sits next to an already existing industrial property. These properties abut an active freight rail line and a spur which runs onto the case study site is currently inactive, but available for reactivation. If this site is redeveloped as an industrial campus, there are several elements and techniques that should be included to maximize the site's potential. Future development on this site should coordinate with the adjacent industrial parcel on a shared parking/shared loading system near the training/technical center. The placement of the technical center should allow it to be easily accessible to Exit 10 off nearby Interstate 84 in Newtown. While the rail line onsite is currently inactive, a Rails-to-Trails pathway has been created in Newtown which runs through the site. In keeping with the theme for the site's design integrity, a network of green and pocket parks should go hand-in-hand with the placement of buildings along the curvilinear entry road from Swamp Road. This green will not only provide natural areas for workers to utilize during the day, but will also act as a buffer between the industrial activities and the Rails to Trails pathway.

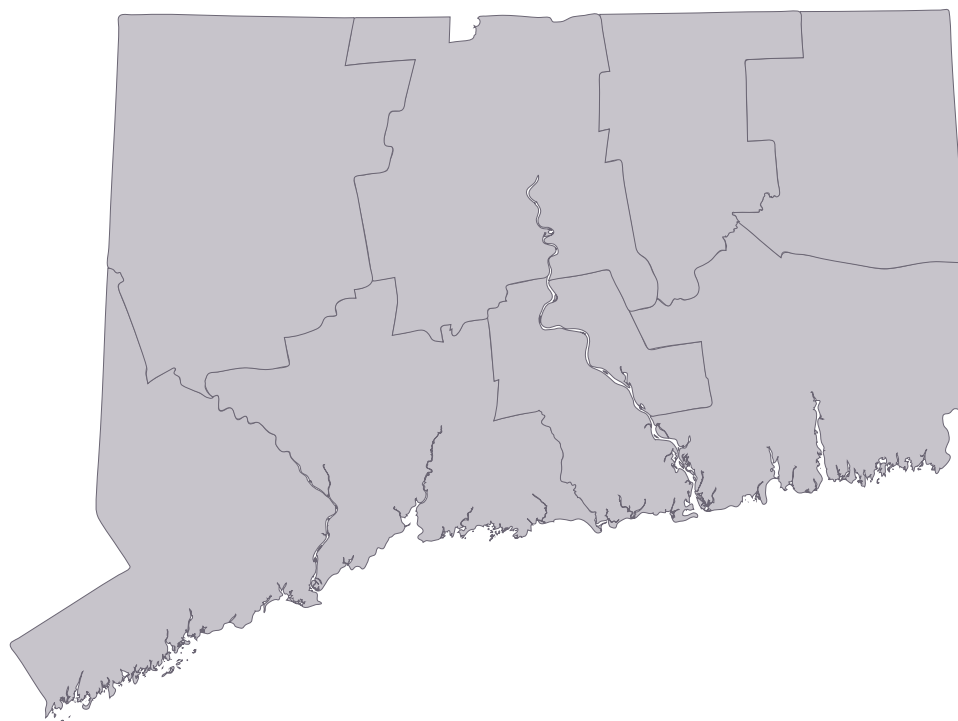
SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Place training center near access to both sites for shared use as well as near access road to major Interstate.



Preserve open space to enhance Rails to Trails pathway.

Green industrial park as much as possible with a network of common outdoor open spaces.



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Regional Plan Association (RPA) is an independent regional planning organization that improves the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the 31-county, New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region through research, planning, and advocacy. Since 1922, RPA has been shaping transportation systems, protecting open spaces, and promoting better community design for the region's continued growth. We anticipate the challenges the region will face in the years to come, and we mobilize the region's civic, business, and government sectors to take action.

RPA's current work is aimed largely at implementing the ideas put forth in the Third Regional Plan, with efforts focused in five project areas: community design, open space, transportation, workforce and the economy, and housing. For more information about Regional Plan Association, please visit our website, www.rpa.org.

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