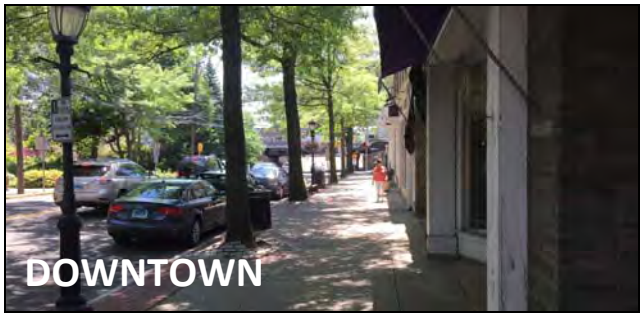
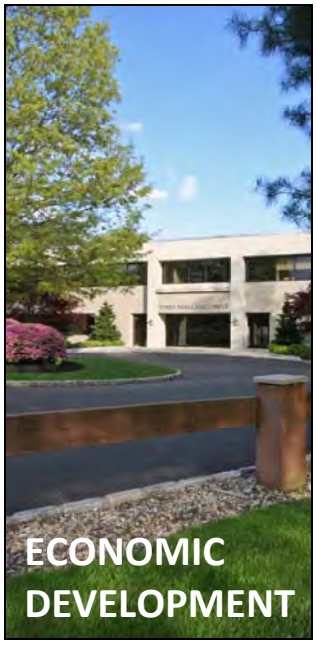
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES





MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE DOWNTOWN

8

"Create a compelling vision, one that takes people to a new place, and then translate that vision into a reality …"

Warren Bennis
American scholar / author

Overview

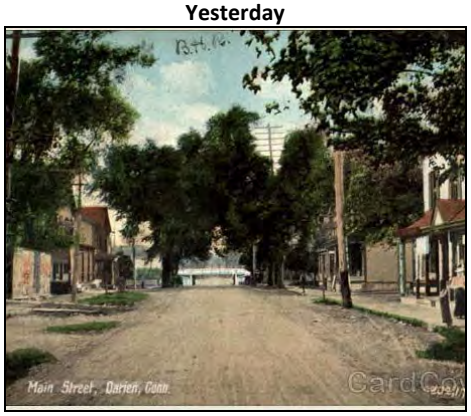
This section of the POCD suggests strategies for downtown Darien.

Darien residents are proud of the downtown. The pedestrian-oriented development patterns which exist in the downtown create a "sense of place" and this sense of place creates value because it attracts shoppers, workers, residents, and others. In addition, the downtown area supports many social activities (such as the farmer's market, dining, events, concerts, art shows, parades, fairs, etc.) which are part of the overall quality of life in the community.

Downtown

Downtown

Yesterday



Today

Downtown Extension

Over time, it may make sense to consider extension of the CBD zoning to the areas east of Old Kings Highway South (presently zoned for office).

In the meantime, any redevelopment of this area should consider the potential for first floor retail uses and moving these buildings closer to the street. This would create a street environment similar to that emerging on Grove Street where the downtown walking environment extends to streets other than the Post Road.

Encourage Appropriate Development

History shows that downtown has grown and changed over the years. Change has happened, new buildings have been built and the character and vibrancy of downtown has been extended to streets behind the Post Road. As a result, the downtown has "resiliently adapted" over time to the changing needs of the community and its residents.

Recent development has improved the appearance and function of downtown and has balanced an increase in floor area with improvements in walkability and overall character. Darien residents are appreciative of the improvements and enhancements. In addition, residents have expressed a willingness to consider more uses and intensity provided it results in an attractive and pedestrian-friendly environment that is attractive and desirable (see the sidebar on page 72 for a discussion of findings from the Route 1 Study).

The "resilient adaptation" of downtown should continue to be encouraged. Infrastructure improvements (roadway capacity, utility capacity, etc.) should occur before or with development proposals.

Encourage Appropriate Development		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to encourage the "resilient adaptation" of downtown as a vibrant and dynamic place with a "sense of place."	PZC	
2. Seek to be pro-active in terms of establishing and implementing an overall vison for downtown with particular sensitivity to scale and density.	PZC	
3. Ensure appropriate transitions from downtown to adjacent residential areas.	PZC	

Outdoor Dining Opportunity

Newer Building

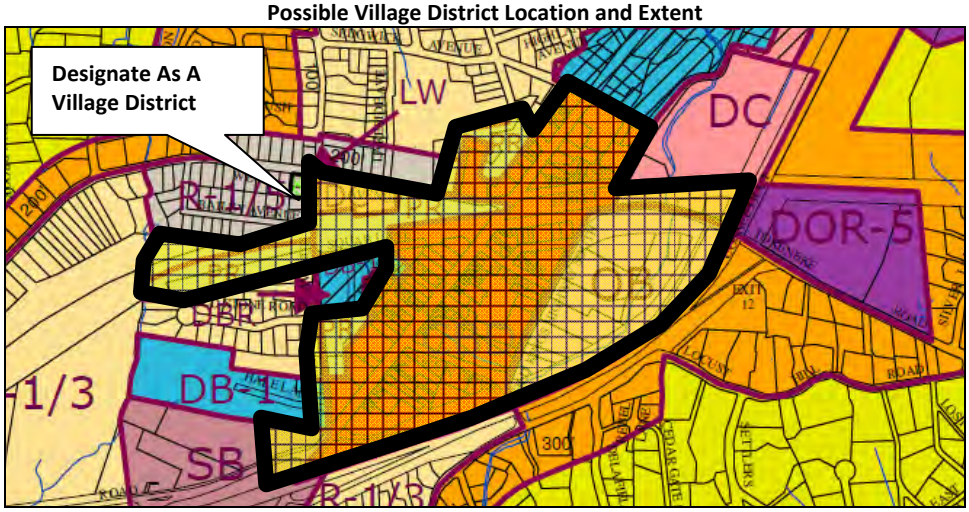
Maintain Character

While continued development and redevelopment of the downtown will occur, it is important that this be managed within overall performance parameters to maintain an appropriate character and scale.

The Architectural Review Board guides the design of new development in the downtown and elsewhere. These efforts will continue and should be enhanced. Another option would be to establish a "village district" as authorized by CGS Section 8-2j.

Enhance Downtown While Maintaining Character		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Guide future downtown development in ways consistent with Darien's New England character.	PZC	ARB
2. Maintain and enhance the design review process for downtown.	ARB	PZC
Action Steps		
3. Supplement the design guidelines with additional material relevant to downtown: • encourage / require "public art" • design guidelines for parking structures • location and design of service areas (mechanical equipment, transformers, meters, delivery, refuse, recycling) • indenting of doorways to avoid pedestrian conflicts	ARB	Staff
4. Consider establishing a "village district" overlay zone which extends out to include adjacent non-residential areas including parking lots (Town, private, State), when appropriate.	PZC	

Possible Village District Location and Extent



Character Preservation

As was stated in the 2006 POCD, the overall philosophy has been to keep development consistent with the small-town New England character of Darien.

This does not mean that change cannot or will not take place. Rather, it means that future growth and development should contribute to, and be in keeping with, the overall character of the downtown.

Village District

Section 8-2j of the Connecticut General Statutes allows for the establishment of a village district overseen by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Due to the "distinctive character, landscape and historic value" in the downtown area, the POCD specifically recommends the PZC consider establishment of a "village district" in the downtown area, when appropriate.

Tax Increment Financing

The State recently enacted legislation to enable the use of "tax increment financing" in Connecticut municipalities (Public Act 15-57).

Tax increment financing (TIF) is a public financing method that allocates the future property tax ***increase*** (or increment) from a project area to funds invested by the municipality (infrastructure improvements, financing, property assembly, professional services, maintenance and operations, and other costs) associated with the project.

Municipalities can establish their own tax increment districts to meet local needs provided it is in accordance with statutory requirements.

Since the legislation has not been extensively used, it remains to be seen if this approach might be useful in Darien. Nevertheless, it could be a powerful tool to help accomplish things important to Downtown, Noroton Heights, or other areas in the community.

Enhance The Downtown Street System

Downtown Darien is organized around a street system which supports:

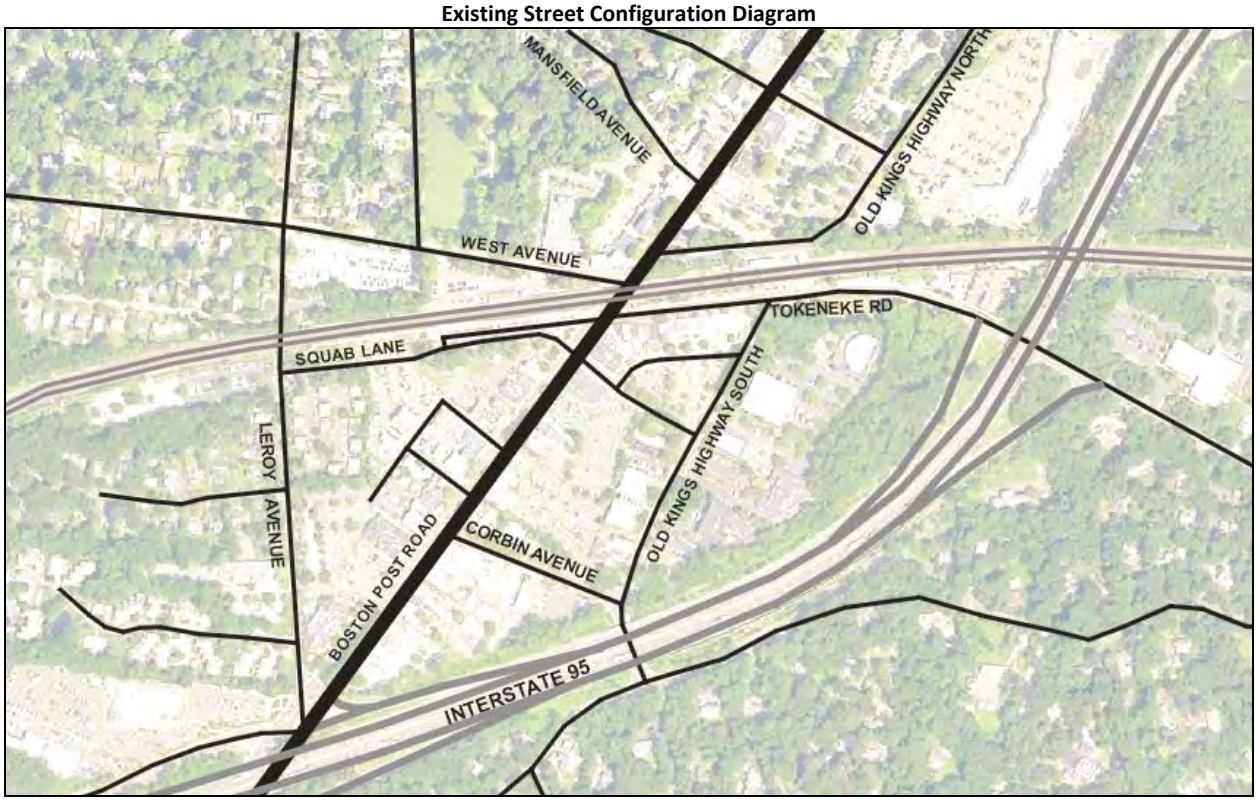
- visibility and access for buildings and uses,
- circulation of pedestrians, and
- circulation of vehicles.

However, the overall arrangement of the street system is not well configured to meet all of the needs of pedestrians, uses, and vehicles.

The POCD recommends that the street system of the downtown be enhanced as shown in the diagrams on the facing page. The establishment of additional road connections will enhance circulation for pedestrians and vehicles and provide additional opportunities for new uses in a "street grid" or block-type system. In addition, the street hierarchy can be used to vary street design (lane assemblies, sidewalk widths, parking arrangements, building setbacks, and/or building heights).

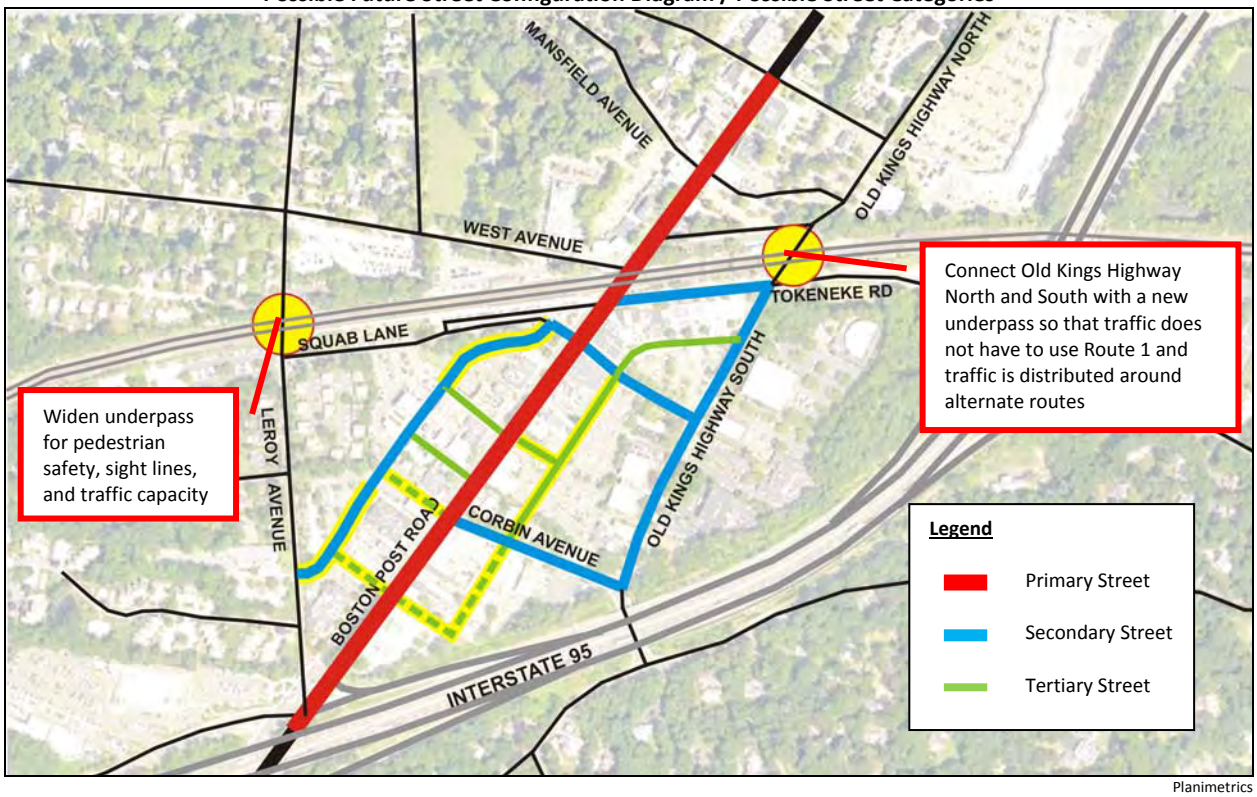
Enhance The Downtown Street System		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Ensure that traffic issues and improvements are addressed.	Town	PZC
2. Enhance circulation in the downtown: • Widen underpass at Leroy Avenue • Tunnel to connect Old Kings Highway North and South	Town	PW
3. Create shorter "street" blocks (could be public or private): • Extend Grove Street to Leroy Avenue with a connection back to Route 1 • Establish a parallel street on the south side of Route 1 (generally through part of the Center Street parking lot) • Make other street connections to shorten blocks	Town	PZC
Action Steps		
4. Implement the types of recommendations included in the Route 1 Study: • Connect Old Kings Highway North and South • Widen underpass at Leroy Avenue • Review signal locations and coordinate timing • Revise lane configurations / turning movements • Revisit traffic flow at Train Station, Tokeneke Road and Center Street to reduce conflicts and congestion • Consider one-way streets (if necessary) to guide traffic to signalized locations	Town	PZC PW

Existing Street Configuration Diagram



Planimetrics

Possible Future Street Configuration Diagram / Possible Street Categories



Planimetrics

Walk Score

A "walk score" is a measure of walkability and is based on a "web app" methodology available at walkscore.com. The walk score reflects the diversity of uses and destinations in an area and the provisions for pedestrians.

According to the Walk Score website, research related to walk scores has found that walkable places perform better economically. Studies have found that residential and commercial rents and sale prices are higher in more walkable areas.

Walk scores for some communities are as follows:

Downtowns	Score
Princeton, NJ	95
Newport, RI	94
Greenwich	93
New Canaan	89
Fairfield	84
Ridgefield	81
Downtown Darien	**71**
Westport	69
Mystic, CT	69
Madison, CT	61
Noroton Heights	**61**
Wilton	55

Enhance Pedestrian-Friendliness

Maintaining and enhancing the pedestrian-friendliness of downtown is a key recommendation of the POCD. Pedestrian-friendliness contributes to the overall experience and ambience in the downtown area and the overall "sense of place."

Enhance Pedestrian-Friendliness		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Focus on the quality of the streetscape (the "public realm") in downtown, not just development on private lands.	Town	PZC PW
2. Continue to focus on enhancing the pedestrian experience: • Crosswalks in appropriate locations with pedestrian signage, signals and call buttons • Appropriate sidewalk widths • Buildings brought close to or at the street • A continuous street façade • Active first floor uses / outdoor dining, etc.	Town	PZC PW
3. Enhance pedestrian connections: • Make mid-block / off-street pedestrian connections • Connect to outlying areas / neighborhoods • Discourage driveways that interrupt the sidewalk and/or continue sidewalks over driveways to make it clear that pedestrians have priority	Town	PZC PW
Action Steps		
4. Shorten crosswalks (Ledge Road, Leroy Avenue, Tokeneke Road, West Avenue / Mechanic Street) to enhance pedestrian safety.	Town	PZC PW
5. Continue to budget for and provide for pedestrian amenities (trees, benches, lighting, flowers, hanging baskets, fountains, etc.).	PW	BOS PZC BC
6. Refine the "Model Block" specifications (see possible refinements on the facing page).	ARB	PZC PW
7. Work with CT-DOT on improving crosswalks on Boston Post Road and connecting streets.	Staff	
8. Improve lighting and pedestrian-friendliness for areas under the railroad bridges on Boston Post Road and Leroy Avenue.	PW	CT-DOT MNRR

Possible Pedestrian Improvements
Ledge Road at Boston Post Road

Possible Pedestrian Improvements
Leroy Avenue at Boston Post Road

Model Block Specifications (Downtown)

Address facade design for various sidewalk widths to require inset doorways to prevent conflicts between opening doors and pedestrian movement.

Update light fixture specifications for conversion to LED light sources.

Provide more detailed standards for "complete streets," including details for curb extensions and cross walks, bike lanes, and universal design elements.

Create minimum standard for tree pits and planting strips to ensure compliance with James Urban's tree planting guidelines.

Allow modifications to concrete/brick materials and pattern to identify special places along the corridor and improve soil conditions for street trees.

Expand on standards for benches and trash receptacles to include guidance for sidewalk cafe layout and furnishings.

Dodson And Flinker

Parking Study

A parking study of downtown Darien was completed by Nelson-Nygaard in 2015. Many of the findings and recommendations in that study are relevant to the POCD.

Parking Ratios

Comparing the total number of parking spaces (on street and off street) to the floor area of buildings in the downtown area reveals a parking ratio of:

2.97 spaces per 1,000 square feet

This parking supply has proven to be adequate for the parking needs of downtown in most situations.

On the other hand, the zoning regulations require new buildings to provide:

6.67 spaces per 1,000 square feet

In other words, the regulations require double the number of parking spaces actually needed.

Manage Downtown Parking

Parking is an important element of downtown areas for the following reasons:

- there must be enough to support activity levels in the downtown on most occasions, and
- there cannot be so much such that it dominates the overall appearance of the downtown and prevents it from having a "sense of place."

Consolidating parking areas into parking structures can help free up land area for uses that will enhance the downtown. Of course, the provision of structured parking needs to consider the size of the structure, the number of spaces to be provided, and the overall traffic impacts. Any parking structure must be compatible with the overall character of the downtown and address the impacts of increased traffic and any roadway improvements.

To ensure that downtown has an appropriate parking environment, Darien should implement the policies and action steps identified below.

Manage Downtown Parking		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to promote a parking philosophy where people park once downtown and visit many destinations as a pedestrian.	Town	
2. Maintain and promote on-street parking wherever possible in the downtown.	Town	PZC PW
3. Seek to provide for distributed parking locations so that all areas benefit from public parking areas.	Town	PZC *PC*
4. Consider public / private partnerships to expand the parking supply in appropriate locations	Town	*PC*
Action Steps		
5. Consider creating a separate parking authority / department to manage parking in the downtown area.	BOS	RTM
6. Revisit parking requirements and establish standards appropriate for a mixed-use downtown area.	PZC	
7. Consider allowing multi-story parking structures (perhaps one-story below grade and two-stories or so above grade) in appropriate places (with an active street level use in front).	PZC	
8. Consider incorporating "fee-in-lieu-of-parking" provisions in the Zoning Regulations.	PZC	
9. Improve signage / wayfinding to parking areas.	Town	PW *PC*

Possible Parking Arrangements

Parallel On-Street Parking

Diagonal On-Street Parking (Pull-In)

Parking Structure With Liner Buildings (Parking Behind)

Parking Structure With Street Level Use (Parking Above)

Parking Arrangements – DISCOURAGED

No On-Street Parking

Diagonal On-Street Parking (Back-In)

Exposed Surface Parking Lot

Unshielded Parking Structure

Parking Arrangements – NOT RECOMMENDED

Parking Structure At Sidewalk

Perpendicular (Pull-In) On-Street Parking

Perpendicular (Back-In) On-Street Parking

Three-Story Buildings

Three-story buildings in the downtown area (and vicinity) include the following:

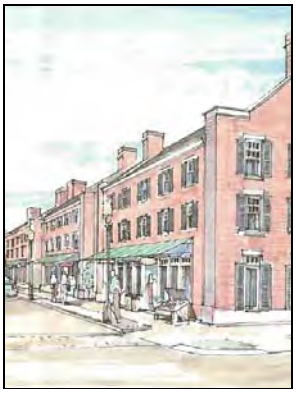
- Bank of America.
- 10 Corbin Avenue.
- 798 Post Road (across from Starbucks).

Other buildings to consider include:

- 895 Post Road (Subway)
- Darien Sports Shop.
- 30 Old Kings Highway South (two-story building elevated above surface parking).
- 36 Old Kings Highway South (three-story building with a half-story below grade).
- 19 Old Kings Highway South (three-story building).
- Darien Library.

Note that the "Golden" plan for the Noroton Heights business district showed three story buildings and it is a goal of this POCD for downtown to be a more "prominent" place in the overall structure of the community than the Noroton Heights business district.

Golden Plan



Modify Downtown Zoning Regulations

Building Height

At the present time, building heights in the CBD zone are limited to 2 stories and 28 feet (measured from average grade to the mid-point between the roof eave and the roof peak). An increase to 3 stories and 35 feet may be permitted if an open space plaza is provided. This has resulted in a number of gathering spaces which have enhanced downtown.

If Darien is to expand the potential of downtown and capitalize on some of the potential opportunities, additional building height may be necessary (and desirable). The Route 1 Study advocated for more height (such as a full third floor) if such a regulation change would help provide for housing. Any additional building height needs to complement the overall character of the community.

From a "place-making perspective", signature buildings or elements help people understand an area and orient themselves within it. Design features (such as civic buildings, taller buildings, clock towers, open spaces, plazas, fountains, etc.) help create a sense of place. Some potential "landmark structure" locations are shown below.

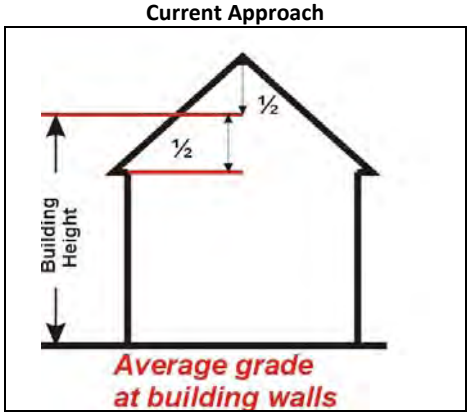
Possible Landmark Structure Locations

Planimetrics

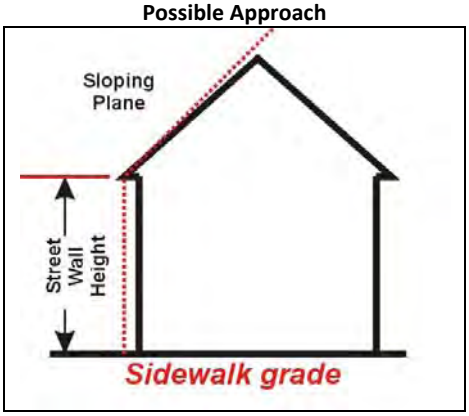
As shown below, Darien could increase the building height or change from an "average height" approach to a "street wall height" approach which will allow more street wall height provided the building is set back further. The regulations now allow additional height above the basic standard if an open space plaza is provided (sidewalks and walkways would not count) should be continued.

The chart on the bottom of the page might provide some guidance as to the appropriate "street wall height" to consider since it represents the relationship between wall height (to eave or parapet) for all buildings in the downtown relative to the gutter / curb edge in 2015.

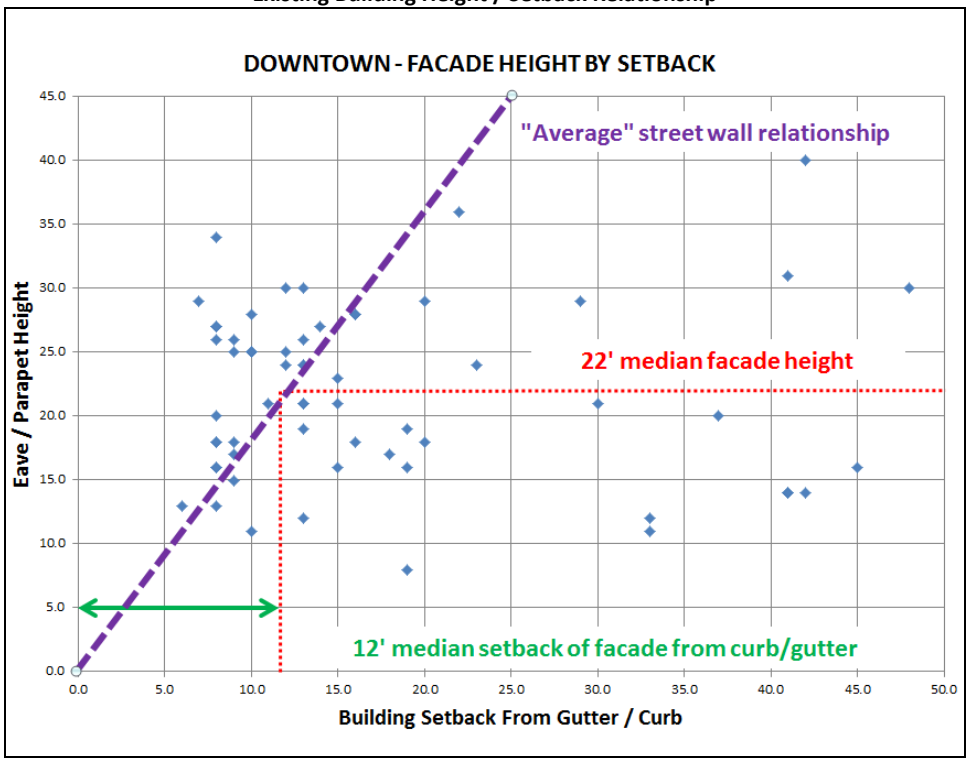
Current Approach



Possible Approach



Existing Building Height / Setback Relationship



Filed measurements By Planimetrics

Downtown Development

As part of the Route 1 Study, an analysis was done of the "floor area ratio" (FAR) of different blocks in downtown Darien and of other areas. FAR expresses floor area of building as a ratio of site area.

When asked to identify a desirable FAR for downtown Darien, the Route 1 Study participants indicated that participants felt that an FAR range of ***up to*** 0.9 FAR on a block area basis (downtown New Canaan was identified as having a range of 0.6 to 0.9 FAR on a block area basis) provided an attractive and pedestrian-friendly environment that people found attractive and desirable.

Examples of FAR = 1.0

One story at 100% coverage

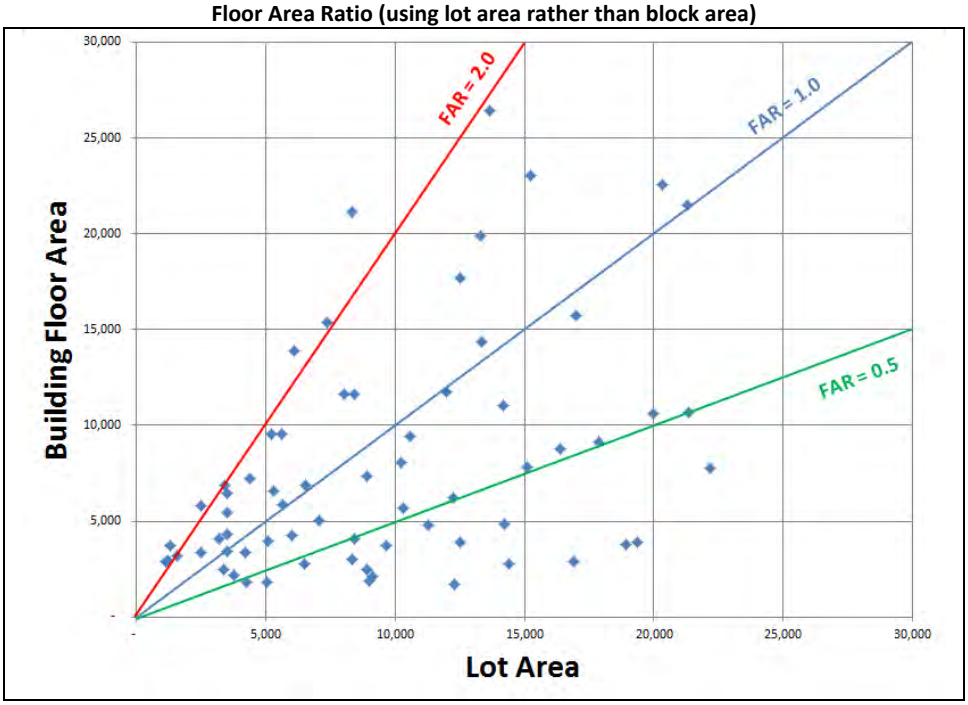
Two stories at 50% coverage

Four stories at 25% coverage

Floor-Area Ratio

Some communities regulate development by a maximum floor-area ratio. Darien may wish to consider a similar approach. This might allow for more flexibility in building height while ensuring that the overall amount of development is rationally related to the size of the parcel and the parking availability.

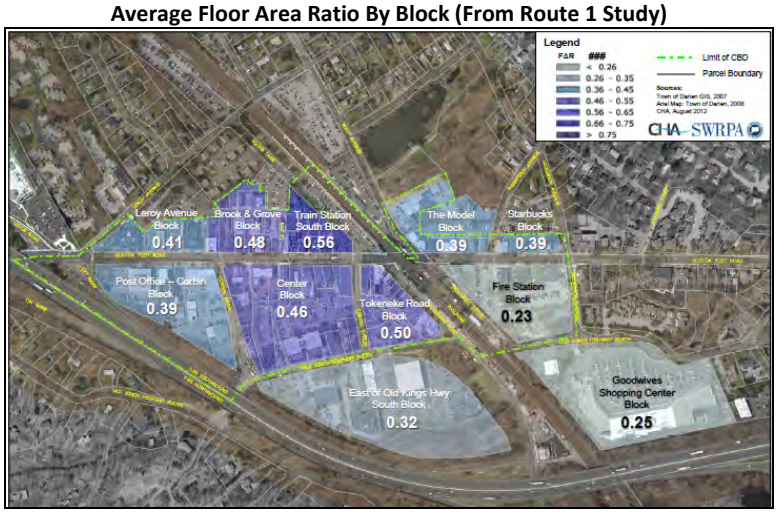
Floor Area Ratio (using lot area rather than block area)



Planimetrics based on Assessor database

The following graphic from the Route 1 Study compares the floor area on a block to the overall area of the block. This helps illustrate some of the variations in the downtown.

Average Floor Area Ratio By Block (From Route 1 Study)



Route 1 Study

Residential Provisions

Residential uses are important to a downtown area since they provide a baseline of activity that helps create a sense of place. Downtown areas can also be attractive residential locations (especially with the proximity of the train station) for empty nesters and young professionals.

To enable and manage residential development in the downtown area, the zoning regulations might be modified to:

- limit the overall density (maximum number of units per acre),
- allow larger units (currently capped at 1,000 SF per unit), and/or
- allow more flexibility in the number of bedrooms.

Modify Downtown Zoning Regulations		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Regularly review and update zoning regulations to allow for and encourage / require appropriate development in the downtown area.	PZC	
Action Steps		
2. Consider building height limitations and consider alternative approaches appropriate for the downtown, including allowing more building height in the downtown when: • Impacts on the character of the area are considered • Building walls are set back further from the curb • The overall floor-area ratio remains appropriate • A landmark feature is established in an appropriate location • An open space plaza or a mall is provided	PZC	
3. Consider regulating development in downtown with a maximum floor-area ratio to complement a more flexible height standard.	PZC	
4. Review the Zoning Regulations related to residential development in the downtown area.	PZC	

Public Space

Public Art On A Bridge

Common Arrangements

At some time in the future, businesses, property owners, residents, and the Town may want to consider the potential desirability of common arrangements for the downtown area.

Initially, this might consist of an informal coordinating committee for common branding / marketing. This committee might also coordinate the establishment of "pop-up parks" and other special events.

Over the longer term, this might evolve into establishment of a special services district as enabled by CGS Section 7-339m.

Special Street Event (Grove Street)

Address Other Downtown Issues

There are a number of other issues that affect the overall form and function of the downtown. To help address these situations, Darien should implement the policies and action steps identified below.

Address Other Downtown Issues		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Guide any changes on State highways to maximize "context sensitive" solutions to traffic issues.	Town	PW CT-DOT
2. Continue to encourage the creation of meaningful public spaces in the downtown area.	Town	PZC
3. Make appropriate accommodations in downtown for cyclists and provide amenities (bike racks/storage, etc.).	Town	PW
4. Enhance utility infrastructure in the downtown area: • Undergrounding of wired utilities. • Extend natural gas to support area development. • Upgrade / maintain water service (pressure). • Transition to LED lighting for area lighting. • Upgrade traffic signals and similar equipment.	Town	PW
5. Consider common arrangements among property owners, businesses, and residents if, as and when desired.	Town	
Action Steps		
6. If necessary, investigate "un-numbering" Route 1 in the downtown area to help accomplish local objectives and encourage "context-sensitive" results.	Town	PW CT-DOT
7. Consider reinforcing downtown's "edges", including establishing gateway elements, if appropriate.	BC	
8. Work with CT-DOT and Metro-North to improve / enhance the railroad bridges and the I-95 underpass (pedestrian-friendly lighting, public art, and impact warnings on the railroad bridge.	Town	PW ARB BC

For additional Information …

Discussion booklets prepared during the process of preparing this POCD may provide additional relevant information for consideration. These booklets are on file at Town Hall and the Library.

For additional Information …

Illustrations depicting possible concepts for downtown are contained in an Appendix . These drawings do not reflect the policy desires of the Commission and should not be construed as such.

TRANSFORM NOROTON HEIGHTS BUSINESS DISTRICT

9

"First comes thought; then organization of that thought into ideas and plans; then transformation of plans into reality …"

Napoleon Hill
American author

Overview

Development patterns in the Noroton Heights business district reflect the prevailing architectural and site layout trends at the time the area was developed.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, detached buildings with large parking areas were the normal approach to suburban development. There is little provision for pedestrian accessibility within the Noroton Heights business district and the area functions primarily based on single purpose trips (commuters to the train station, people shopping at stores, workers in the businesses). In addition, the Noroton Heights train station has not kept up with the times. The station has a number of inadequacies (building, platforms, parking, access, etc.) and has not been renovated or improved in some time.

The Noroton Heights business district has the potential to be so much more. The Noroton Heights business district can become a secondary village-type area in Darien and can become more of a pedestrian-oriented place with a broader variety of uses, including a residential component.

The POCD recommends that the eventual "transformation" of the Noroton Heights business district into a pedestrian-friendly village-type area be pursued.

Noroton Heights

Noroton Heights

Noroton Heights

Noroton Heights is different than the Noroton Heights business district.

According to the book "Noroton Heights – A Neighborhood For Generations" (1992) prepared by Ed Schmidt:

> *"The area of Darien north of the Boston Post Road, bounded on the east by the Stony Brook River on the west by the Noroton river, and on the north by what is today Middlesex Road, has been known as Noroton Heights since 1889."*

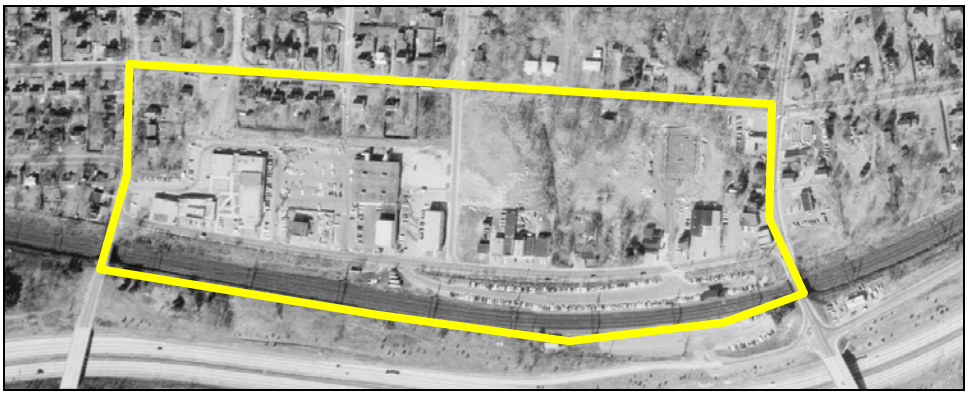
The Noroton Heights Business area refers to the area generally zoned for business uses bounded by West Avenue, Noroton Avenue, Interstate 95, and Hollow Tree Ridge Road.

Transform Noroton Heights Business Area

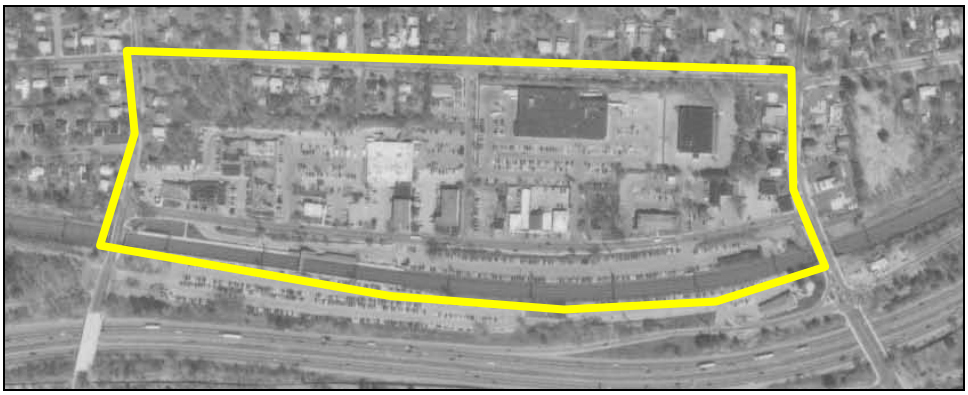
Change has been occurring in the Noroton Heights business district for some time. This business district was established in the 1950s in response to the construction of Interstate 95. Business uses which had been located on Noroton Avenue were displaced by the highway construction and a new commercial area was established nearby to accommodate those business uses. Over the years, additional business uses were established. As the pictures on this page show, change should be expected to continue over time.

1934 Aerial

1965 Aerial



1996 Aerial



The Noroton Heights business district currently exhibits elements of a strip-type development pattern. As can be seen from the images below, such development patterns often lack a strong "sense of place" and this can result in a utilitarian / automobile-oriented area which is comprised of individual uses / destinations. The POCD encourages the transformation of the Noroton Heights business district to a walkable, pedestrian-friendly, mixed use, village-type area.

Strip-Type Development Pattern

Noroton Heights Business Area At Present?

Village-Type Development Pattern

Noroton Heights Business Area In The Future?

Natural Resources Defense Council / Urban Advantage

Transform Noroton Heights Business Area		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Encourage the transformation of the Noroton Heights business district to a walkable, pedestrian-friendly, mixed use, village-type area including residential uses.	Town	PZC
2. Seek to make the Noroton Heights business district a vibrant and dynamic place with a "sense of place."	Town	PZC

Problematic Areas

Noroton Avenue

- At I-95
- At Ledge Road / station parking drive
- At railroad tracks
- At Heights Road
- At West Avenue

Hollow Tree Ridge Road

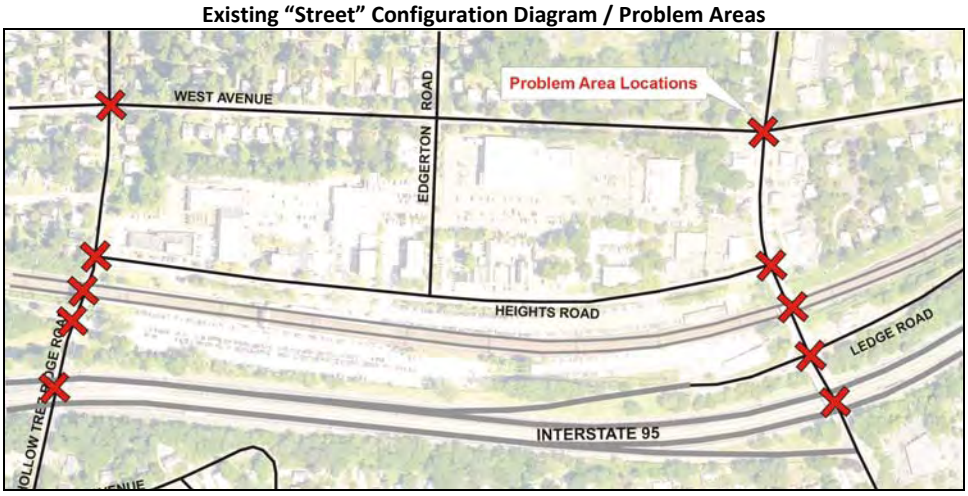
- At I-95
- At station parking driveway
- At railroad tracks
- At Heights Road
- At West Avenue

Address The Roadway System

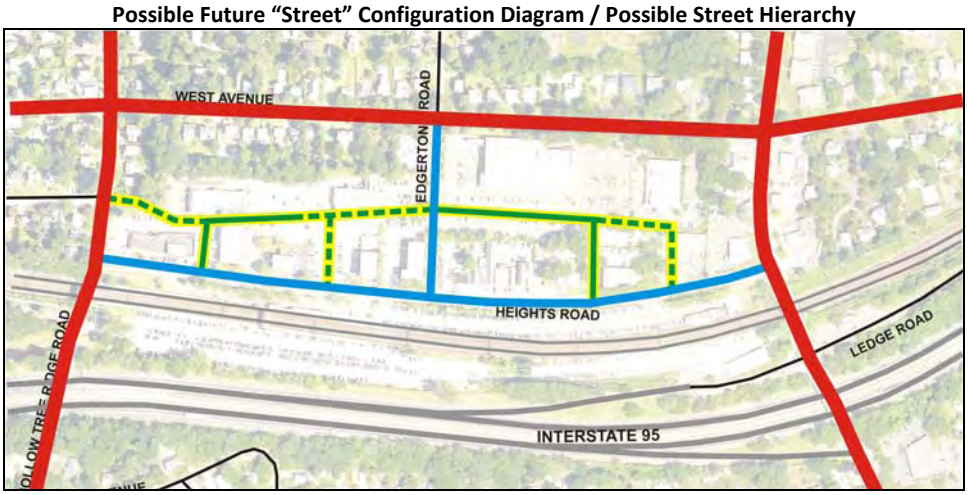
At the present time, there are a number of problematic traffic issues in the Noroton Heights business district due to the limited number of crossings over the railroad tracks and I-95, constrained intersections and bridges, and traffic heading to and through the area. The Town will attempt to work with property developers, WestCOG, CT-DOT, and Metro-North to see that problematic traffic issues get addressed. Any improvements should happen in a way that is sensitive to the context of Darien in general and Noroton Heights in particular. Improvements to these problem areas are also recommended in the Transportation section of the POCD (Chapter 13).

Infrastructure improvements (roadway capacity, utility capacity, etc.) should occur before or with development proposals. Traffic issues are a problem to be solved, not a reason not to do anything.

Existing "Street" Configuration Diagram / Problem Areas



Possible Future "Street" Configuration Diagram / Possible Street Hierarchy



Legend

- Primary Street
- Secondary Street
- Tertiary Street (may be an internal drive that functions like a street)

Also, to transform the Noroton Heights business district into a pedestrian-friendly village-type area, the establishment of an internal "street" network, where buildings frame the "street," will create the type of streetscape desired. It is envisioned that these internal "streets" will actually be private ways rather than public streets.

The street hierarchy system can be used to vary lane assemblies, sidewalk widths, parking arrangements, setbacks and/or heights by street type.

Address The Roadway System		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Work with property developers, WestCOG, CT-DOT, and Metro-North to address problematic crossings / intersections in the Noroton Heights business district.	Town	PW PZC CT-DOT MNRR
2. Seek to establish an internal road network where buildings frame the street and create a pedestrian-friendly environment.	PZC	
3. Use a street hierarchy system to vary lane assemblies, sidewalk widths, parking arrangements, setbacks and/or heights by street type.	PZC	

Potential Character

Potential Character

Enhance Pedestrian-Friendliness

To ensure the successful transformation of the Noroton Heights business district, the overall focus will be on the streetscape (the "public realm") and how development of private lands supports and reinforces the overall environment. Some of the elements to be considered for the Noroton Heights business district include:

- Establish an overall sidewalk network of appropriate width and connect sidewalks to outlying areas / neighborhoods.
- Require buildings be brought to the "street."
- Create as continuous a street façade as possible in order to avoid gaps in pedestrian environment.
- Require open storefronts and uses at street level and encourage active outdoor areas (seating, dining, etc.).
- Provide and standardize pedestrian accommodations (benches, street trees, pedestrian signals, etc.).
- Place crosswalks linking access points to the train station platform

Darien will consider establishing a "model block" specification for the Noroton Heights business district to enhance the pedestrian environment. This may or may not be the same as downtown Darien.

Pedestrian connections (sidewalks, stairways, etc.) to and from adjacent residential areas are imperative.

Enhance Pedestrian-Friendliness		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Focus on the streetscape and how development of private lands supports and reinforces the overall environment.	PZC	ARB
Action Steps		
2. Consider establishing a "model block" specification for the Noroton Heights business district.	PZC	ARB PW

Potential Character

Potential Character

Ensure Appropriate Character

To ensure that the desired ambience of a walkable, pedestrian-friendly, village-type area is created, the Commission will consider converting the Noroton Heights Development district (an overlay zone) to a "grounded" Noroton Heights District so that all new development will be in accordance with the overall Noroton Heights business district vision (under the current overlay zone approach, a development could choose to opt out of creating a village-type area).

The Architectural Review Board will continue guiding development activity and these efforts will continue for the Noroton Heights business district. The Architectural Review Board should consider adopting guidelines specific to the Noroton Heights business district.

Potential Character

Potential Character

Ensure Appropriate Character		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Guide development to ensure the desired ambience for the Noroton Heights business district is achieved.	PZC	ARB
2. Encourage or require undergrounding of wired utilities, especially any new utilities.	Town	PW
Action Steps		
3. Convert the Noroton Heights Development district (an overlay zone) to a "grounded" Noroton Heights District.	PZC	
4. Consider adopting design guidelines specific to Noroton Heights, if desired.	ARB	PZC

Guide Private Development

Due to the number of properties, redevelopment of the Noroton Heights business district will occur over time as a result of the actions of the property owners and market conditions. Those actions should be coordinated as much as possible to ensure a positive outcome.

Use And Dimensional Standards

To ensure that the desired ambience of a walkable, pedestrian-friendly, village-type area is created, the following zoning changes should be considered:

Performance Objective	Possible Approach(es)
Enhance the pedestrian environment	• Establish a "build-to" line or zone to require buildings be brought to the "street." • Require buildings have a minimum building height to establish a pedestrian friendly street enclosure. • Require active street front / street-level uses. • Discourage or prohibit drive-through facilities from locations visible from the street or which impact the street experience.
Ensure a continuous pedestrian experience	• Require a minimum building frontage (i.e. – percent of lot frontage) unless waived by the PZC to ensure a continuous building façade. • Minimize driveways that interrupt sidewalks and prioritize pedestrian crossings over driveways.
Ensure an appropriate transition to adjacent residential areas	• Clarify the language in Zoning Regulation Section 685.c regarding building height "where the zone abuts a residential zone" since most sites abut residential zones. • Require that the height of buildings across the street from a residential zone be evaluated in terms of the residential zone with more height only permitted if the building is set back further from the residential zone.
Maintain an appropriate scale	• Consider limiting the overall floor-area-ratio. • Consider establishing a residential density limit. • Maintain the current building height limitations and maintain the open space requirements for upper floors (sidewalks, walkways, areas shared with vehicles, and covered areas should not count).

Village-Type Scale / Pattern

Village-Type Scale / Pattern

Parking

It is envisioned that the parking needs of different activities in the Noroton Heights business district will be addressed primarily by private parking. This includes "on-street" parking within private development (which may be required in order to ensure an appropriate streetscape). Even if spaces are not available, visible on-street parking creates the perception of convenient parking for customers and visitors, provides the potential of getting a convenient parking space, protects the pedestrian space on the sidewalk, and calms traffic.

Parking structures will be considered and possibly encouraged on private property since surface parking lots consume land area without contributing to the desired ambience of a walkable, pedestrian-friendly, mixed use, village-type area. Any parking structure must be compatible with the overall character of the Noroton Heights business district and address the impacts of increased traffic and any roadway improvements. Since the level of intensity should be less than that allowed in the downtown area, private parking structures might be more limited in size.

The exceptions to the policy of private parking supporting private development include the following:

- parking at the train station for passengers, and
- "on-street" parking on public roadways (such as Heights Road and Edgerton Street), where considered appropriate.

On-street parking on Heights Road (on one or both sides) might be one way to enhance the village character of the Noroton Heights business district. Due to the proximity of such parking to the train station, some enforcement of parking time limits might be considered.

No On-Street Parking

Pedestrians can feel exposed to moving traffic.

Parallel On-Street Parking

Pedestrians feel buffered from moving traffic and spaces help support adjacent uses.

Walk Score

A "walk score" is a measure of walkability and is based on a "web app" methodology available at walkscore.com. The walk score reflects the diversity of uses and destinations in an area and the provisions for pedestrians.

According to the Walk Score website, research related to walk scores has found that walkable places perform better economically. Studies have found that residential and commercial rents and sale prices are higher in more walkable areas.

Walk scores for some communities are as follows:

Location	Score
Princeton, NJ	95
Newport, RI	94
Greenwich	93
New Canaan	89
Fairfield	84
Ridgefield	81
Downtown Darien	**71**
Westport	69
Mystic, CT	69
Madison, CT	61
Noroton Heights	**61**
Wilton	55

The parking graphics on page 69 (possible / discouraged / not recommended) are also relevant and applicable to the Noroton Heights business district. In addition, the Commission may consider:

- allowing parking structures provided that it significantly enhances the overall design of the Noroton Heights business district, helps contribute to a "sense of place," and addresses traffic issues, and
- requiring an active streetscape in front of any structured parking.

To "right-size" the provision of parking, the Commission will revisit overall parking ratio requirements and reductions for shared use of parking. The appropriate parking ratios in the Noroton Heights business district may be:

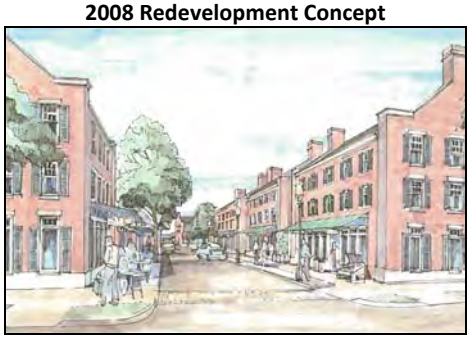
- lower than Route 1 due to the availability of transit in Noroton Heights, and
- higher than downtown since there is not as much mixed use in a compact area and there are no municipal parking lots in Noroton Heights.

Guide Private Development

Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Guide private development to ensure that the desired ambience of a walkable, pedestrian-friendly, village-type area is created.	PZC	ARB
2. Ensure that private developments provide adequate parking spaces for their needs.	PZC	
3. Encourage or require "on street" parking within private developments and on public roadways (such as Heights Road and Edgerton Street), where considered appropriate.	Town	PZC PW
Action Steps		
4. Revisit the use and dimensional standards for Norton Heights to provide appropriate guidance for development.	PZC	
5. Revisit the overall parking ratio requirements and reductions for shared use of parking in the Noroton Heights business district.	PZC	

Palmer's Market Area
2015 Redevelopment Concept

Stop and Shop Area
2008 Redevelopment Concept



Enhance The Train Station And Associated Areas

The current train station arrangements in Noroton Heights can only be described as functional at best. The station building is in fair condition, the platforms are in need of replacement (currently scheduled by CT-DOT), and the pedestrian bridge is in poor condition. Convenient parking (or lack thereof) is a continuing issue at the Noroton Heights train station. Parking is split between both sides of the tracks and the entrance/exit arrangements can be challenging at peak times. Improvements are sorely needed.

Relocate The Train Station Building

The current Noroton Heights train station building is inadequate for local needs and is in poor condition. The building needs to be renovated and improved. However, rather than simply rebuild it in its current location off by itself, a site should be selected that fits into the overall fabric of the Noroton Heights business district.

Relocating the station building opposite Edgerton Street would make a stronger connection to the overall village-form and create a focal point. This location is approximately at the point where the rail tracks straighten out and would be the eastern end of the westbound platform. A second pedestrian bridge would go over the rail tracks to the parking on the south side of the tracks.

Train Station

A renovated train station building could also support a café / restaurant and other uses if it is:

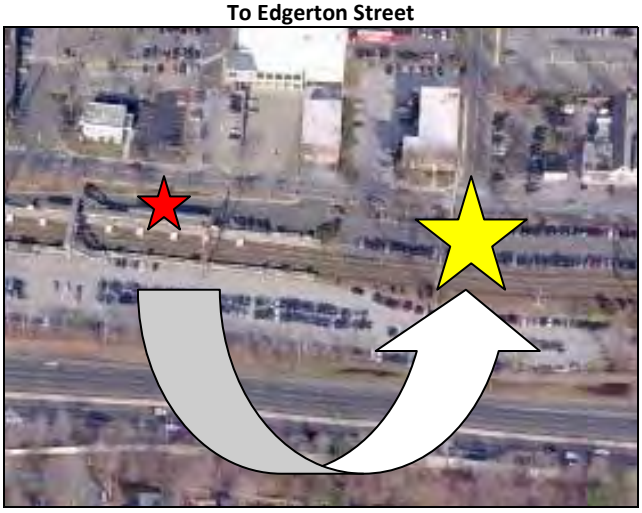
- located at an appropriate spot,
- well designed, and
- supported by surrounding uses

A renovated train station building should also make provision for convenient access and parking, pedestrian bridges, bathrooms, climate control, covered platforms, better lighting, enhanced security, and other amenities.

As an alternative, a private building could be constructed with an atrium or other feature that provided train station amenities.

Existing Noroton Heights Train Station Building

Relocate The Train Station Building To Edgerton Street



Parking Arrangements

Historically, the general arrangement in Darien and in other communities with train stations has been that CT-DOT leases its land around the train stations to the Town for parking.

The Town operates the parking facilities and retains the revenue in a dedicated account. The revenue is used to maintain the parking facilities and keep them in a "state of good repair." Revenues can also be used for capital improvements.

At the present time, however, the CT-DOT lease has expired and so it is not clear what the arrangement will be for future improvements:

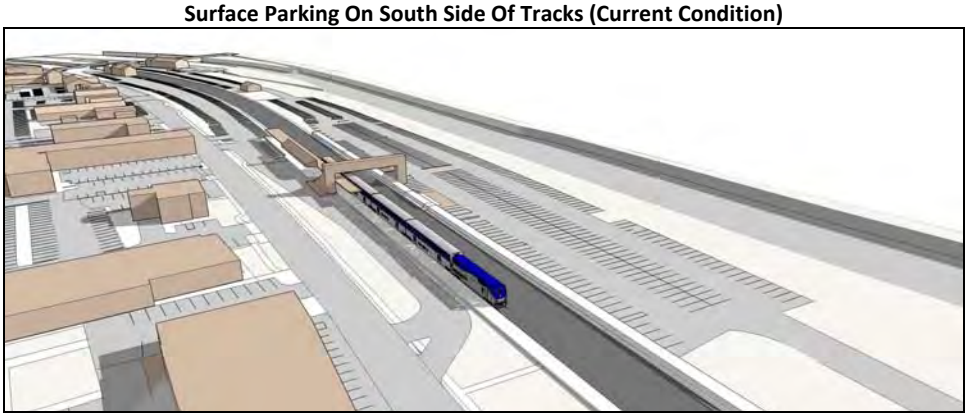
- With a lease, the Town will have the ability to plan for capital improvements in conjunction with the State and the ability to ascertain the funding sources needed.
- Without a lease, capital improvements may languish and CT-DOT may decide to implement their own program at the station.

Expand Train Station Parking Between The Tracks and I-95

Provided that traffic issues are addressed, a well-designed parking structure (perhaps two-story) could be built on the land between the railroad tracks and Interstate 95. Access would be from both Noroton Avenue and Hollow Tree Ridge Road. Due to the location of this site and its topography, the parking structure should not be particularly visible. The height, visibility, and design of any parking structure must be compatible with the overall character of the community and address the impacts of increased traffic and any roadway improvements.

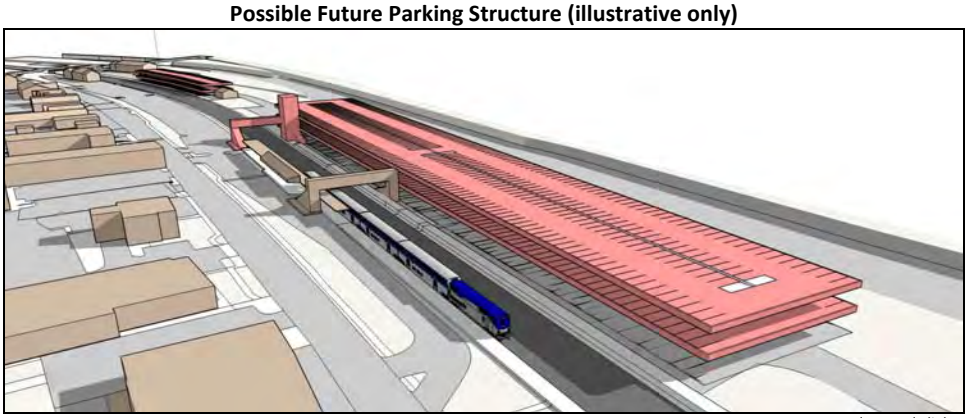
Once the parking structure is constructed, daily parking (presently on the north side of the tracks) could be relocated to this facility.

Surface Parking On South Side Of Tracks (Current Condition)



Dodson And Flinker

Possible Future Parking Structure (illustrative only)



Dodson And Flinker

Other DOT land near Noroton Avenue (and Post 53) would be retained for overflow parking. This site may also have long term utility for reconfiguration of the highway ramps. Any proposals must consider the impact on the ambulance facility located here (Post 53).

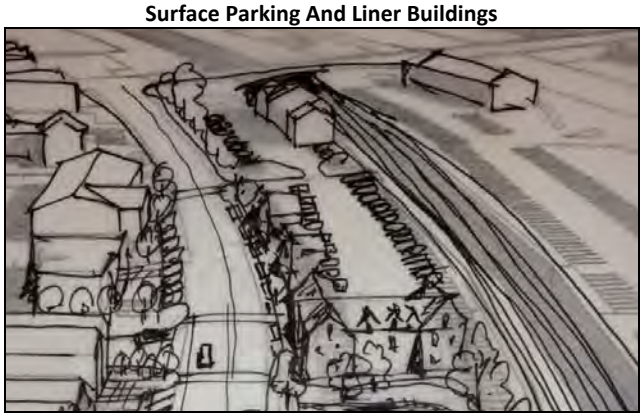
A retention basin could also be installed in the area between the parking areas to help relieve some of the drainage issues downstream.

Convert The Daily Parking Lot To Complementary Uses

The POCD recommends that part of the CT-DOT land between Heights Road and the railroad tracks (currently used for daily parking) be considered for transit-oriented development provided adequate parking is provided for commuters and traffic impacts are managed appropriately. This development would create a "two-sided" street and enhance the overall ambience of Heights Road and the Noroton Heights business district.

The POCD also recommends that other CT-DOT land be used to establish an open space / water retention area to enhance the Noroton Heights business district and help address some of the drainage problems (which are exacerbated by an under-sized culvert under the railroad tracks and Interstate 95).

Possible Transit-Oriented Development With Surface Parking And Liner Buildings



Dodson And Flinker

Possible Open Space / Retention Area (water feature and basin that retains water in storm events)

Dodson And Flinker

Enhance The Train Station And Parking Areas		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Encourage enhancement of the train station and CT-DOT parking areas in the Noroton Heights business district.	Town	
2. Work with CT-DOT to establish a new "train station" building at Edgerton Street.	Town	
3. Resolve the expired lease situation with CT-DOT.	BOS	
Action Steps		
4. Work with CT-DOT to build a well-designed parking structure between the tracks and I-95 (south side of tracks) to accommodate permit and daily parkers.	Town	
5. Work with CT-DOT to convert the daily parking lot (north side of tracks) to other uses such as: • Transit-oriented development • Open space / drainage feature	Town	

Drainage Issues

While much of the discussion in this section of the POCD has focused on transforming the overall character and function of the Noroton Heights business district, drainage is an important issue which must be addressed.

For many years, there have been flooding issues in the entire Stony Brook watershed. These have been caused by additional development, lack of retention or flood control, under-sized culverts, and a number of other reasons.

One of the biggest issues in the Noroton Heights business district is that an undersized culvert under the railroad tracks and Interstate 95 cause significant water backups in major storm events.

While the Town's drainage policy should help prevent this situation from worsening, it will not be enough to solve the flooding issues that already exist.

These drainage issues need to be addressed whether development occurs in the Noroton Heights business area or not.

Address Other Issues In Noroton Heights

There are a number of other issues that affect the overall form and function of the Noroton Heights business district. To help address these situations, Darien should implement the policies and action steps identified below.

Address Other Issues In Noroton Heights		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Coordinate with others to mitigate drainage / flooding issues both upstream and downstream of the railroad tracks and Interstate 95.	Town	PW
2. Enhance utility infrastructure including natural gas availability, water pressure, wireless services, etc.	Town	PW
3. Seek to make Noroton Heights a primary station for Metro-North (more frequent service, ADA accessibility, etc.).	Town	
4. Seek to enhance bus transit services (frequency / shelters / bus pull-off areas, etc.).	Town	
5. Provide amenities for cyclists (bike lanes, covered bike racks, signage, etc.) in the Noroton Heights business district.	PW	
6. At some time in the future, consider the potential desirability of common arrangements for the Noroton Heights business district (an informal Coordinating Committee or a more formal Special Services District).	Town	
Action Steps		
7. Take actions necessary to address other issues in the Noroton Heights business district.	Town	
8. Enhance street lights and pedestrian safety around the train station and in the Noroton Heights business district.	Town	

For additional Information …

Discussion booklets prepared during the process of preparing this POCD may provide additional relevant information for consideration. These booklets are on file at Town Hall and the Library.

For additional Information …

Illustrations depicting possible concepts for the Noroton Heights business district are contained in an Appendix . These drawings do not reflect the policy desires of the Commission and should not be construed as such.

MANAGE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

10

Overview

Preservation and enhancement of Darien's attractive living environment will continue to be a priority...

Darien has long seen itself as a residential community and most of the land area of Darien is zoned and used for residential purposes. Preservation and enhancement of an attractive living environment will continue to be a priority of the POCD.

Single-Family House

Single-Family House

Mixed Use (Grove Street)

Multi-Family Development (Avalon Darien)

Key Considerations

The following are key considerations in terms of evaluating the overall impact on character:

- Design
- Size / height / scale
- Density
- Traffic
- Parking
- Quality of Life

Maintain Residential Character

Maintaining the residential character of the community is a key element of the Plan. A corollary to this is maintaining the character of residential neighborhoods by continuing to seek a balance between people's desires to improve / expand their homes and the impacts on their neighbors and the community.

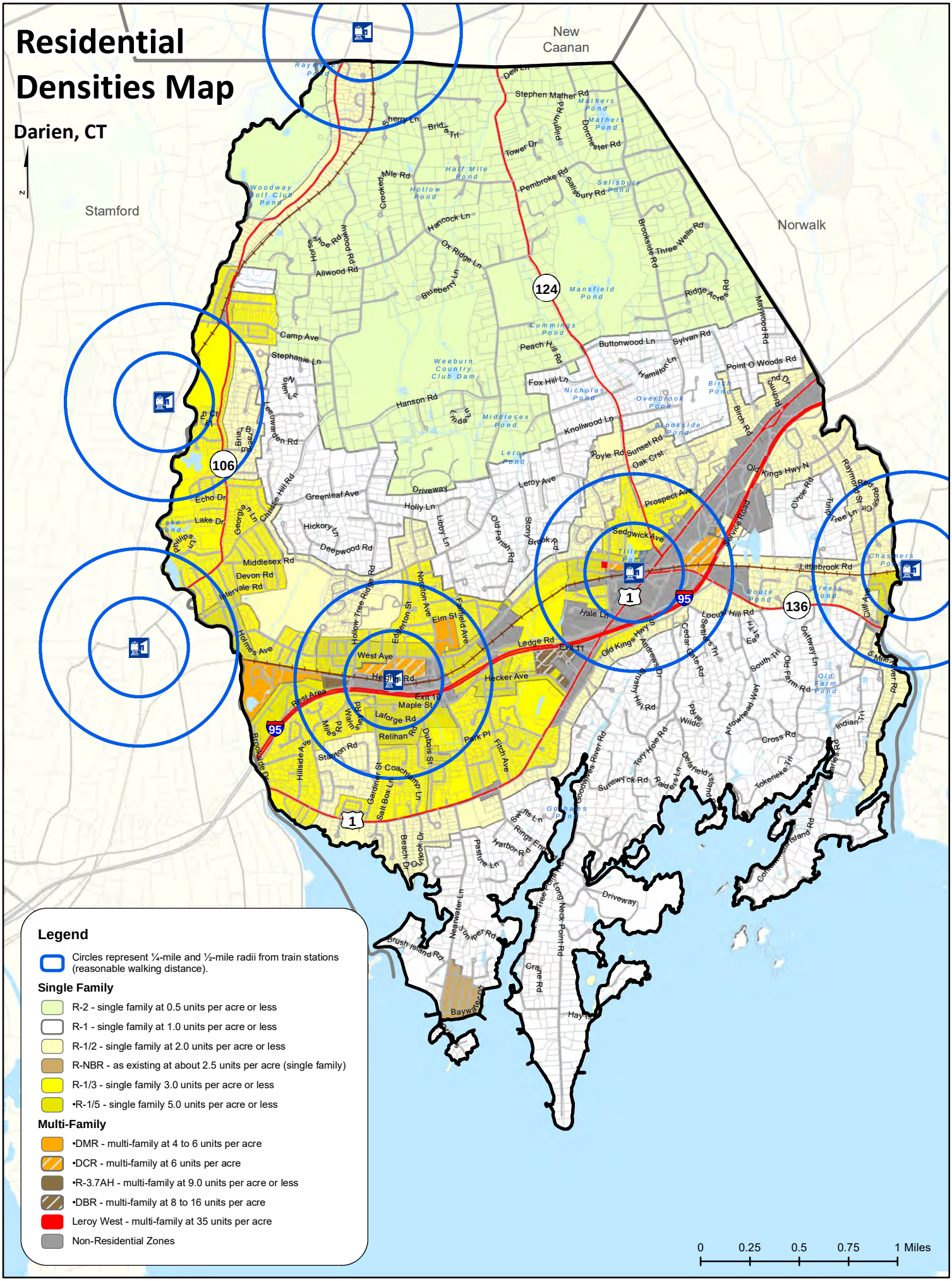
Darien's zoning approach will continue to recognize the prevailing development pattern of:

- predominantly single-family development;
- a range of housing types to meet a broad array of housing needs;
- higher densities in and near downtown Darien and around the train station in the Noroton Heights business district,
- moderate densities in areas with bus service, and
- a reduction in density as distance from these centers increase.

Maintain Residential Character		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to maintain the character of Darien as a residential community which is primarily comprised of lower-density single-family neighborhoods.	Town	PZC
2. Maintain the basic organizational pattern of higher densities in and near downtown Darien and the Noroton Heights business district and a reduction in density as distance from these centers increase.	PZC	
3. Within this overall framework, seek to provide for a range of housing types and densities to meet a broad array of housing needs.	PZC	HA
4. Continue careful monitoring of land uses in and near residential areas to minimize impact on surrounding residential neighborhoods.	PZC	

Residential Densities Map

Darien, CT



Legend

Circles represent ¼-mile and ½-mile radii from train stations (reasonable walking distance).

Single Family

- R-2 - single family at 0.5 units per acre or less
- R-1 - single family at 1.0 units per acre or less
- R-1/2 - single family at 2.0 units per acre or less
- R-NBR - as existing at about 2.5 units per acre (single family)
- R-1/3 - single family 3.0 units per acre or less
- •R-1/5 - single family 5.0 units per acre or less

Multi-Family

- •DMR - multi-family at 4 to 6 units per acre
- •DCR - multi-family at 6 units per acre
- •R-3.7AH - multi-family at 9.0 units per acre or less
- •DBR - multi-family at 8 to 16 units per acre
- Leroy West - multi-family at 35 units per acre
- Non-Residential Zones

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Split-Zone Lots

Section 315 of the Zoning Regulations states that:

> Where a lot in one ownership of record is divided by one or more zone boundary lines, regulations for the less restricted portion or portions of such lot ***shall not extend*** into the more restricted portion or portions. (emphasis added)

This means that there can be two separate set of dimensional or other requirements for the lot.

Review Residential Zoning Provisions

Zoning District Locations And Boundaries

An analysis of lot sizes and zoning districts in Darien indicated several areas where the prevailing lot sizes are smaller than the minimum lot size requirement in the zoning district. In such situations, the yard setbacks and other zoning requirements may reduce the usable area of the lot (since they may have been designed or intended for a larger lot).

While this might not be a consideration if the smaller lots were dispersed, there are concentrations of smaller lots in certain areas. The Commission may revisit the zoning of these areas in order to relate the zoning requirements to the prevailing lot sizes.

When zoning was instituted in Darien (1925), a number of zoning boundaries were established based on setbacks from road centerlines or other features. This was considered to be the best approach at that time since a town-wide property line base map was not available in sufficient detail for this purpose. However, some of these zoning boundaries bisect a number of properties and this can create dilemmas in terms of dimensional requirements, permitted uses, or other provisions (see sidebar).

The Planning and Zoning Commission may consider reviewing and amending the zoning map, where appropriate, to place properties into a single zoning district, where reasonable. Where there is a very deep lot however, placing the entire lot in one zoning district may not be as logical or as simple.

Any residential rezoning is intended to address issues of conformity (lot area, yards, etc.) and is not intended to result in more lots being created through subdivisions or lot splits.

Building Height

As part of the review of residential zoning districts and boundaries, the Commission may also review other regulatory provisions related to building height:

- use of highest ridge and highest eave to measure building height,
- making accommodations to allow cupolas, roof dormers, and other architectural features), and
- revisiting FEMA floor elevations to consider requiring an additional one- to two feet of elevation above flood levels

Bulk And Coverage

At the community workshop meetings, some people expressed concern that the size of some houses in the small-lot residential districts is "out-of-scale" with the character of the neighborhood and the community. The overall proportion of buildings to sites is something which has been talked about in Darien for some time. For example, the 2006 POCD made the following recommendations:

- Consider, review, or study amending the definition of Building Coverage to include all impervious surfaces, including all accessory buildings and impervious driveways, parking areas, walks, and terraces, or alternately create a maximum Developed Site Area within all residential zones.
- Continue to evaluate and consider amending the existing building coverage and height restrictions to maintain the character of the community.
- Consider establishing regulations regarding impervious surfaces coverage restrictions to maintain the character of the community.

At the present time, all residential zoning districts in Darien have the same maximum building coverage limitation of 20 percent. A number of communities vary the amount of building coverage depending on the zoning district. Darien may modify this standard.

Comparison Of Allowed Building Coverage

	Low				High
R-1/5 8,712 SF	12.6% Ridgefield	15% Westport	16.4% Madison	20% Darien	24% New Canaan
R-1/3 14,520 SF	10.9% Ridgefield	14.7% Madison	15% Westport	17% New Canaan %	20% Darien
R-1/2 21,780 SF	9.8% Ridgefield	12% New Canaan	13.7% Madison	15% Westport	20% Darien
NBR 25,000 SF	9.3% Ridgefield	11% New Canaan	13.4% Madison	15% Westport	20% Darien
R-1 43,560 SF	7.9% Ridgefield	8% New Canaan	10% Madison	20% Darien	Not regulated Westport
R-2 87,120 SF	5.9% Ridgefield	6% New Canaan	10% Madison	20% Darien	Not regulated Westport

Greenwich regulates floor area and not building coverage.

The Commission may also consider splitting "building coverage" (typically something which has three dimensions) from "impervious coverage or "developed site area" (typically something which has two dimensions).

Some communities limit the total amount of floor area that can be built on a residential parcel based on the size of the parcel. In other words, they use a "floor-area ratio" to maintain proportionality of the size of the house to the size of the lot. Darien may consider a similar standard in the future.

Coverage and Bulk

Darien experiences some number of "teardowns" each year as people replace houses they find to be functionally obsolete with new construction. In most every case, this results in a bigger house with more coverage and more floor area.

Year	Teardowns
1996	13
1997	9
1998	12
1999	25
2000	29
2001	31
2002	30
2003	27
2004	43
2005	33
2006	40
2007	54
2008	23
2009	14
2010	21
2011	16
2012	38
2013	57
2014	36
2015	36

Darien Building Department

Review Residential Zoning Provisions		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Seek to reduce the number of areas that are non-conforming as to the minimum lot size requirement.	PZC	
2. Seek to reduce the number of residential properties split into multiple zoning districts.	PZC	
3. Address building bulk and coverage in the residential zones.	PZC	
Action Steps		
4. Review and rezone residential neighborhoods, where appropriate, to make fewer lots non-conforming as to the minimum lot size requirement (and result in more appropriate yard setback requirements).	PZC	
5. Review and amend the zoning map, where appropriate, to reduce the number of residential properties split into multiple zoning districts.	PZC	
6. Consider reviewing other residential regulations such as building height, yard locations, and floor elevations in flood zones.	PZC	
7. Consider splitting "building coverage" (typically something which as three dimensions) from "impervious coverage" or "developed site area" (typically something which has two dimensions).	PZC	
8. To address building scale and massing, consider adopting floor area limitations in some or all residential zones.	PZC	
9. Consider adopting a building coverage limitation which varies by district.	PZC	
10. Consider adopting an impervious coverage limitation in some or all residential zones which varies by district.	PZC	
11. Re-examine home occupation regulations to ensure that they are consistent with changing times and community needs and desires.	PZC	

Continue To Diversify Darien's Housing Portfolio

It is anticipated that Darien will always be a community where owner-occupied, single-family detached houses predominate. For example, according to the Census:

- About 85 percent of all dwelling units in Darien in 2010 were owner-occupied.
- About 91 percent of all dwelling units in 2010 were single-family detached units.

While the 2020 Census will likely reflect a decrease in the percentage of owner-occupied units and a decrease in the percentage of single-family detached units (due to the redevelopment of Allen O'Neill into The Heights at Darien, and the construction of Kensett), Darien remains a predominantly single-family and owner occupied community.

However, Darien's population and housing needs have changed over the years and it is anticipated that these preferences will continue to change in the future. People have always sought housing that met their life-stage and lifestyle needs (location, cost, size, amenities, etc.) and Darien residents are no different. As the information on age composition and age-related migration in the "Conditions and Trends" section of the POCD indicates:

- Darien may not be "gaining" young people (ages 20 to 35) because they cannot find housing that is affordable and meets their needs.
- Darien may be "losing" older residents (ages 55 and over) because they also cannot find housing that meets their needs (fewer maintenance responsibilities and more amenities within walking distance).

The Planning and Zoning Commission generally views a variety of housing options as an enhancement to Darien. Darien should continue to encourage a broad range of housing in appropriate locations. In recent years, the Commission has taken steps to promote more housing diversity, including:

- "Knobel Hill" (larger age-restricted condominiums with two off-site affordable units required),
- "Kensett" (larger age-targeted condominiums with three off-site affordable units required),
- "The Heights at Darien" (106 affordable apartment units replacing 53 single-family affordable units),
- "Garden Homes" (a mixed-income housing development), and
- "The Cottage" (housing for developmentally disabled young adults).

Darien will always have a strong presence of single-family detached houses and will always strive to retain its single-family residential character. However, Darien can, at the same time, gradually diversify its housing portfolio to meet a broader range of housing needs of present and future residents.

Making Progress

Old Town Hall Homes is an excellent example of ways to help meet the housing needs of the community.

Originally developed in 1988 with 30 units, experience over time found that the outside access to units and the lack of elevators was not meeting community needs.

After redevelopment, there will be more units (55 units are being planned) with internal corridors and elevators to help meet the housing needs of older residents.

Housing Needs Of An Aging Population

Population projections indicate that Darien, like many other communities, will experience a marked rise in the number of older residents in the future. Since housing needs can change as people get older for health, economic, or lifestyle reasons, having a range of housing option can help ensure that residents will always be able to live in Darien if they so choose.

To accommodate future housing needs, Darien may consider allowing:

- modifications to existing homes to accommodate an aging population (handicapped ramps, caregiver services, first floor additions for one-floor living, energy efficiency, etc.),
- accessory housing units within or attached to homes,
- additional multi-family units in appropriate places and configurations to address potential future needs,
- more income-limited elderly housing units to meet present and future community needs, and/or
- congregate / independent living / assisted living / nursing / convalescent home in other zones as well.

Advocacy and Support

Housing That Is More Affordable

While about 3.4 percent of Darien's housing stock meets the State definition of affordable housing, Darien has made significant progress over the last decade or so in adding such housing. The units added were created by the Town (via the Housing Authority and by private developers. In fact, data reported by the Department of Housing indicates that Darien has at least 152 more affordable housing units than it did in 2002. Some of these units were created by the Town via the Housing Authority, and some were created by private developers.

As a result, Darien accumulated enough "housing unit equivalent points" to obtain a four-year moratorium from the Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure starting in October 2010. With the creation of additional affordable housing units since then, the Town will be in a position to apply for additional moratoria in the future.

Darien will seek to encourage both affordable rental units and affordable ownership units in appropriate locations at appropriate densities.

Other Housing Needs

Darien has participated in efforts via a public-private partnership to create supportive housing for developmentally disabled people in the past and will engage in such efforts in the future.

Affordable Housing
(The Heights At Darien)

Mixed Income Housing
(Garden Homes - 397 Post Road)

Affordable Housing Appeals

In 1989, Connecticut adopted the "Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure" (codified as Section 8-30g of the Connecticut General Statutes) which affects any municipality where less than ten percent of the housing stock is considered affordable (as defined in the statute).

As of 2014, about 3.4 percent of the housing stock in Darien (239 out of 7,074 units) met the State criteria and so Darien is subject to the statute.

Affordable Housing Stock

According to the State's Affordable Housing Appeals program, about 239 Darien housing units are considered "affordable":

Governmentally Assisted Units	136
Tenant Rental Assistance	7
CHFA/USDA Mortgages	1
Deed Restricted Units	95
Total Assisted Units	**239**

CT-Department of Housing (2014)

Continue To Diversify Darien's Housing Portfolio		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue efforts to diversify Darien's housing portfolio.	Town	PZC HA
2. Continue to consider ways to address the housing needs of an aging population.	Town	PZC HA AHID
3. Continue to consider ways to provide for housing that is more affordable.	Town	PZC HA
4. Seek to locate higher density housing near the train stations (Darien, Noroton Heights) or on or near a bus transit line.	PZC	Town HA
5. Work with the Darien Housing Authority to help meet local housing needs.	Town	PZC
6. Continue to participate in efforts to create supportive housing for developmentally disabled people.	Town	PZC
Action Steps		
7. Review zoning provisions and locations for multi-family housing to ensure they are appropriate for the future.	PZC	
8. Evaluate and consider eliminating size restrictions for multi-family units and rely instead on building size and bulk standards.	PZC	
9. When and where appropriate, seek to place deed restrictions on housing units that are accessory to Special Permit uses in order to count such units as "affordable housing" for as long as they exist.	Town	PZC

GUIDE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

11

Overview

Business and economic development in Darien provides key benefits to the community...

For the purpose of the POCD, economic development includes any use which produces more in tax revenue than it requires in service costs (i.e. – produces net tax revenue). By this definition, some non-residential uses and some residential uses result in economic development to Darien.

Business and economic development in Darien provides three key benefits to the community:

- jobs for residents of the community and the region,
- goods and services for residents of the community and the region, and
- net tax revenue which helps support community services.

It is the Town's goal, where appropriate, to:

- promote economic diversity,
- expand and diversify the non-residential tax base, and
- expand the employment base.

Local Retailer

Office Building

Promote Business / Economic Development

Business and economic development provide a number of advantages to the community and Darien should continue to promote and encourage appropriate business and economic development.

Darien has an excellent regional location, a number of areas zoned for business development, and benefits from having some key locational advantages within the town:

- two train stations (Darien and Norton Heights),
- Interstate 95 with 4 full or partial interchanges,
- Boston Post Road (US Route 1), and
- bus transit services.

The range of principal and accessory uses allowed in the business districts seems reasonable and appropriate. The uses which are only allowed by Special Use Permit could have impacts on other uses and so the level of review which occurs as part of the Special Use process is necessary and reasonable.

As noted in the 2006 POCD:

> *The amount of commercial property in Darien is quite limited, and as … there is a desire for the community to have a mix of zones, and not be entirely residentially zoned. While [Darien] is and should remain primarily a residential community …, the quality of residential life in such a community is enhanced by well-planned commercial and other "support" uses within the Town.*

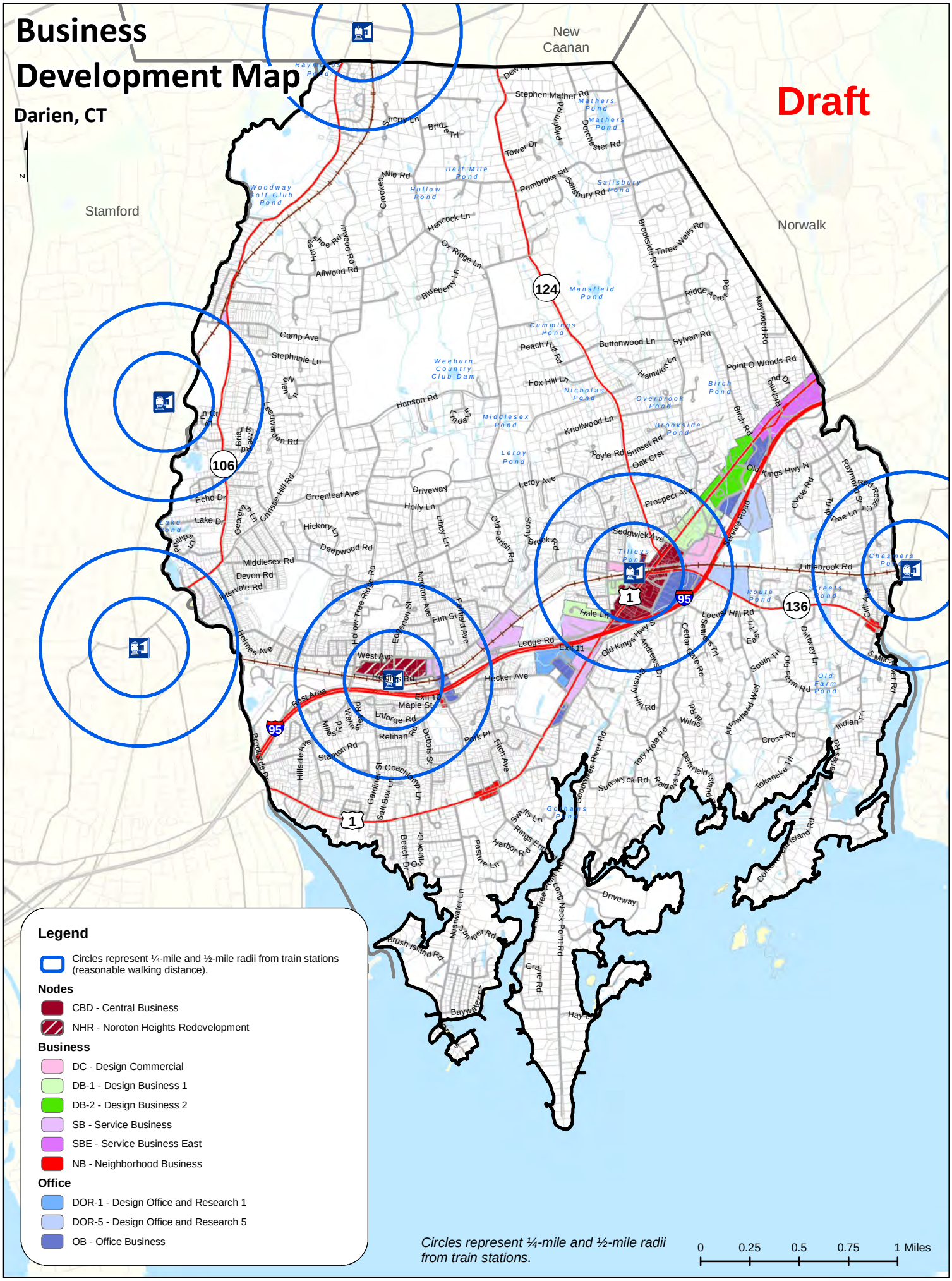
This philosophy remains relevant and is continued in this POCD.

Promote Business / Economic Development		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to encourage business and economic development to provide jobs, provide goods and services, and enhance the tax base.	Town	
2. Continue to work with the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations to promote economic growth of Darien.	Town	
3. Continue to encourage vibrant commercial areas.	Town	PZC
4. Carefully review any proposal to rezone existing commercial properties for other uses.	PZC	

Business Development Map

Darien, CT

Draft


New Caanan
Stamford
Norwalk
Stephen Mather Rd
Mathers Pond
Dorchester Rd
Tower Dr
Pembroke Rd
Salisbury Rd
Salisbury Pond
Half Mile Pond
Hollow Pond
Woodway Golf Club Pond
Crooked Mile Rd
Hancock Ln
Ox Ridge Ln
Allwood Rd
Blueberry Ln
Brookside Rd
Three Wells Rd
Mansfield Pond
Ridge Acres Rd
Maywood Rd
Cummings Pond
Camp Ave
Stephanie Ln
Peach Hill Rd
Buttonwood Ln
Sylvan Rd
Weeburn Country Club Dam
Fox Hill Ln
Hamilton Ln
Point O Woods Rd
Nicholas Pond
Overbrook Pond
Birch Pond
Hanson Rd
Middlesex Pond
Knollwood Ln
Brookside Pond
Leroy Pond
Royle Rd
Sunset Rd
Oak Crst
Leeuwarden Rd
Old Kings Hwy N
Raymond Rd
Rose Ln
Cycle Rd
Tree Ln
Echo Dr
Greenleaf Ave
Driveway
Leroy Ave
Prospect Ave
Holly Ln
Lake Dr
Hickory Ln
Libby Ln
Old Parish Rd
Stony Brook Rd
Sedgwick Ave
Tilleys Pond
Service Road
Deepwood Rd
Middlesex Rd
Devon Rd
Littlebrook Rd
Chasmers Pond
Streets Pond
Route Pond
Hollow Tree Ridge Rd
Norton Ave
Edgerton St
Elm St
Fairfield Ave
Hale Ln
Locust Hill Rd
Cliff Ave
Hawes Ave
Ledge Rd
Exit 11
Old Kings Hwy S
Andrews Dr
Cedar Gate Rd
Sentry Trl
Drifway Ln
South Trl
Old Farm Rd
Old Farm Pond
West Ave
Heights Rd
Hecker Ave
Rest Area
Exit 10
Maple St
Laforge Rd
Relihan Rd
Dubois St
Park Pl
Fitch Ave
Hillside Ave
Stanton Rd
Coachlamp Ln
Gardiner St
Salt Box Ln
Brookside Dr
Bushy Hill Rd
Wilde Rd
Arrowhead Way
Cross Rd
Indian Trl
Tory Hole Rd
Delafield Island Rd
Tokeneke Trl
Sunswick Rd
Raiders Ln
Goodwives River Rd
Gorhams Pond
Rings End Rd
Harbor Rd
Pasture Ln
Beach Dr
Neptune Dr
Neptune Ln
Neptune Rd
Brush Island Rd
Long Neck Point Rd
Crane Rd
Baywater Dr
Hay Ter
Cohanzie Island Rd
Charles Rd
S Mile River Rd
Rayhill Pond
Dell Ln
Cherry Ln
Bridle Trl
Half Mile Rd
Horse Shoe Rd
Allwood Rd
Lake Pond
Phillips Ln
Georgetown Ln
Christie Hill Rd
Brian Trl
Hollow Tree Ridge Rd
Hawes Ave
Brookside Dr
Hillside Ave
Stanton Rd
Mile Rd
Wanda Rd
Linda Ln
Tilleys Pond
Chasmers Pond
Streets Pond
Route Pond
Old Farm Pond
Weeburn Country Club Dam
Middlesex Pond
Leroy Pond
Nicholas Pond
Overbrook Pond
Brookside Pond
Birch Pond
Mansfield Pond
Cummings Pond
Half Mile Pond
Hollow Pond
Mathers Pond
Salisbury Pond
Woodway Golf Club Pond
Rayhill Pond
Gorhams Pond
Neptune Pond
Neptune Pond
Neptune

Development Opportunities

Since Darien is mostly built out, there are not a lot of opportunities for new business development.

On the other hand, there are opportunities for redevelopment of existing sites to better meet market conditions and opportunities:

- Downtown Darien
- The Noroton Heights business district
- Goodwives Shopping Center
- Parklands Office Park
- Old Kings Highway North / South
- Post Road East
- Post Road West
- Noroton Neighborhood Business Area

Manage Business Development

Overall Character

Architectural design influences the character of a community. Buildings that complement each other and are consistent with local architectural styles will enhance community character.

Darien has had an Architectural Review Board for some time. The Board reviews commercial developments and provides comments to the applicant and to the Planning and Zoning Commission. To aid in their work, they also prepared "Commercial Design Guidelines" in 2009 to help applicants in the formative stages of project design. These efforts to promote and encourage compatible design will continue.

Zones And Uses

Since Darien may have more business zoning districts than are useful and distinguishable, the Commission may undertake a review of the various zoning districts and their locations to determine if they are accomplishing what the community desires in an efficient way. The subtle distinctions between uses in some of the zoning districts and locations might be modified to better meet community goals and objectives. Over the long term, it may be more viable for Darien to think about its broad performance objectives for each of the main business areas in the community and how to get the best results from each.

This review should also look at the locations, boundaries, and provisions for:

- the Design Business zones (two zones / four locations),
- the Service Business zones (two zones / four locations),
- the various office zones (three zones / nine locations), and
- the Neighborhood Business zones (one zone / two locations).

Local Market

Restaurant

Access Management

Access management refers to strategies to maintain roadway capacity (and reduce congestion) by controlling and sharing driveway(s). This is particularly relevant on major roadways and in commercial areas where turning movements are greatest. Access management has been used on a number of roadways around Connecticut and has direct applicability to commercial roadways in Darien. The Commission will consider adding a special section into the regulations regarding access management principles.

Parking Requirements

The Commission will review the parking requirements in the Zoning Regulations to ensure they are appropriate for Darien. The parking requirements in the Zoning Regulations may be requiring more spaces than are actually needed for some of the business uses. At the same time, some parking requirements appear to require less parking than might be necessary. In addition, the parking stall size requirement (9 feet by 20 feet) should be re-evaluated.

Signage Regulations

As part of the review of business zoning regulations, the Commission will also review the signage regulations. The signage regulations will benefit from a comprehensive review and analysis to ensure they are meeting community needs and are consistent with the latest statutory requirements and legal decisions.

Local Office

Restaurant

Manage Business Development		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Keep future commercial development consistent with the existing small-town New England character of Darien.	PZC	ARB
2. Continue to enhance the design of buildings and sites through the design review process.	ARB	PZC
3. Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings and sites.	PZC	
4. Enhance the function of the roadway through access management in business areas.	PZC	TA
5. Encourage coordination between property owners/developers to minimize curb cuts and encourage cohesive development in all commercial zones.	PZC	TA
6. Seek to limit business impacts and intrusion on adjacent residential properties and streets.	PZC	
7. Encourage pedestrian access, continue to require sidewalks and pedestrian amenities (such as benches) in all commercial areas and in front of all commercial properties.	PZC	
Action Steps		
8. Review the various business zoning districts and their locations to determine if they are accomplishing what the community desires in an efficient way (such as the requirement that commercial sales and service in the Service Business zone *require* "external storage or activity").	PZC	
9. Establish an access management section in the zoning regulations applicable to development in all areas.	PZC	
10. Review the parking requirements in the zoning regulations.	PZC	
11. Review the parking stall size requirement in the zoning regulations.	PZC	
12. Undertake a comprehensive review and revision of the signage regulations.	PZC	