Stamford Transportation Center and Environs
The Stamford Transportation Center and Environs team is made up Hunter College urban planning graduate students. Under the guidance of Alex Sommer, our team was tasked with producing a long term vision for the Stamford Transportation Center and the surrounding neighborhoods for the City of Stamford Land Use Bureau.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary ........................................................................................................ 1
Introduction .................................................................................................................... 10
Context .......................................................................................................................... 12
History of Stamford ..................................................................................................... 12
Existing Conditions ..................................................................................................... 14
Key Findings ................................................................................................................ 28
Recommendations ........................................................................................................ 32
Transportation Framework ......................................................................................... 32
Land Use Framework ................................................................................................ 33
Land Use & Zoning ..................................................................................................... 34
Streetscape and Public Realm .................................................................................... 39
Atlantic Corridor Redesign ....................................................................................... 44
Transportation ............................................................................................................. 48
Major Projects............................................................................................................. 52
Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 61
Executive Summary

Stamford is experiencing notable population growth, particularly among its prime-age workforce as well as significant growth and diversification of its employment sectors. The Stamford Transportation Center and Environs vision is to activate the transportation center and surrounding area as a multi-modal gateway into Stamford to accommodate and guide these socio-economic changes. This report proposes to encourage a mix of uses, transit oriented development, and sustainable modes of transportation would strengthen Stamford’s role as a regional economic engine. To achieve this vision the following goals must be accomplished:

- Enhance Stamford’s existing transportation infrastructure and land use planning to facilitate continued economic and population growth.
- Transform the STC and the surrounding area into a world-class gateway.
- Strengthen Atlantic Street’s role as a connector between Downtown and the South End.

Stamford is one of the largest and fastest growing cities in the region with a growth rate of 8.8%. The City is expected to continue growing at this rate and reach a population of 133,000 by 2025. Comparatively, the State of Connecticut has experienced a population growth rate of 5.2%. With population growth outpacing both the State and comparable cities, Stamford is expected to remain an anchor for the region.

As a regional employment center, Stamford accounted for 10% of total job growth in Connecticut between 2010 and 2015. While the current workforce consists largely of finance and insurance jobs, most of Stamford’s job growth has occurred in other sectors, primarily in information, food service, management of companies, and retail trade.

Of the more than 71,000 people employed in Stamford, over two-thirds commute from outside of the City, and only 29% both live and work in Stamford. Additionally, 61% of Stamford residents work outside of the City, indicating that Stamford’s existing employment opportunities do not necessarily match residents’ skills or interests.

Land in the Study Area is generally underutilized given its proximity to excellent regional transit access. The large concentration of surface parking surrounding the STC discourages an active streetscape, favoring the use of personal vehicles over pedestrian activity. (1)
Proposed Land Use Changes
To facilitate continued economic and population growth, a comprehensive rezoning is proposed that leverages Stamford’s existing assets and allows for increased density and a mix of uses. Recommendations for four sub area districts have been identified:

Transit Oriented Development Zoning District should encourage economic growth and increase walkability around the STC.

Downtown Zoning District should promote increased residential and commercial activity by incentivizing redevelopment of small sites.

Arts Zoning District should preserve the existing character of the manufacturing district and create opportunities for affordable housing.

South End Zoning District should allow greater residential density with neighborhood-serving retail and services.

Near-Term

Pedestrian Experience
Update the 2013 City of Stamford Street Design Guidelines
Enhance sidewalk and wayfinding

Open Space
• Incorporate movable tables and chairs, local artwork, and planters into existing plaza spaces
• Design uniform Plaza Guidelines

Streetscape
• Re-paint pavement markings
• Upgrade and install pedestrian signal timing, and tackle
• Install temporary bulbouts, metered on street parking, and high visibility crosswalks

Underpass
• Improve overall safety
• Install guard rail or stormwater management landscaping
• Design local art installations

Long-Term

Pedestrian Experience
Codify transit-oriented street design guidelines

Open Space
Amend zoning code to permit outdoor plaza uses for arcade spaces

Streetscape
Install permanent bulbouts
Commission a traffic study

Underpass
Facilitate the continued upkeep of underpasses

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Streetscape & Public Realm

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Near-Term

**Parking**
The City should impose maximum parking requirements for new developments, and zoning should disincentivize surface parking lots.

**Outreach**
The City of Stamford should reach out to local businesses that operate shuttles in and around the STC to identify the barriers and costs of consolidating shuttle services.

**Real-time Arrival Technology**
Implement permitting system that controls the number of shuttles allowed to conduct pick-up and drop-off in the station should be implemented.

Long-Term

**Bicycle Study**
to determine how bicycle lanes can be better incorporated into Stamford’s street network.

**Shuttle Consolidation**
Connect should then put out a Request for Proposals to select a single operator to manage shuttle operations at the STC.

**Stamford Transportation Center (1)**

**Near-Term**
Improve STC user experience with better wayfinding signs and addition of new amenities. Facilitate bicycle network in Stamford with parking and pathways dedicated to bicycles.

**Long-Term**
Redevelop the STC with a full station redesign. Promote activity at the STC with a new public plaza. Accommodate parking needs with a new underground garage.

**400 Atlantic Street Garage and Plaza & 677 Washington Boulevard (Formerly UBS Building) (2)**

**400 Atlantic Street**
Develop a new residential/commercial tower with ground floor retail and off-street parking in order to promote an active streetscape that connects Downtown to South End.

**677 Washington Boulevard**
Demolish current UBS building trading floor structure and re-incorporate the remaining lot into Stamford’s streetscape to improve pedestrian infrastructure around the STC.

**Lathon Wider Community Center (3)**
Re-develop building to include an enhanced community center, ground floor retail, affordable housing, and improved public open spaces.
Introduction

The City of Stamford is experiencing both population and economic growth that outpaces the rest of the State of Connecticut. Stamford has grown by about 7,000 residents since 2010 and has added a similar number of jobs over that time. The Stamford Transportation Center (STC) is an important asset to the City, transporting approximately 30,000 commuters each day. However, the STC and surrounding area are not well-positioned to accommodate this growth, possibly limiting the City’s potential.

The City of Stamford’s Land Use Bureau requested Urban Planning master’s students from Hunter College to conduct a study of the STC and surrounding area. The students were tasked with forming recommendations to help Stamford create a vision for smart growth and transit-oriented development that could concentrate housing, office, retail, and neighborhood services around an improved transportation center.

Mission Statement

Activate the transportation center and surrounding area as a gateway to Stamford by encouraging mixed-use, transit-oriented development; prioritizing sustainable modes of transportation; and strengthening the City’s role as a regional economic engine.

Goals

1. Enhance Stamford’s existing transportation infrastructure and land use framework to guide continued economic and population growth.
2. Transform the STC into a world-class gateway. Establish the STC as a destination that contributes to Stamford’s public realm and integrates the station into the surrounding streetscape.
3. Strengthen Atlantic Street’s role as a connector between Downtown and the South End. As one of the few streets that links Downtown and the South End, Atlantic Street has the potential to unify two existing neighborhoods.
Stamford became an incorporated city in 1893, with a population of 10,300 residents. The early 1900s brought a population boom to the city, as immigrants and Black Southerners moved to Stamford to work in the growing industrial sector. Economic development was a boon for the city, fostering population growth and housing development in Stamford’s Downtown. Between the 1950s and the 1970s, Stamford’s population grew significantly, by nearly 45%.

During this period, Urban Renewal and highway construction had spread throughout the country as well as Stamford. Urban Renewal hoped to replace what was considered a blighted downtown with auto-oriented offices appealing to suburban residents, facilitated by the opening of Interstate 95 in 1958. Developer Robert N. Rich of F.D. Rich Company told the New York Times “The streets were never meant to be for pedestrians,” reflecting popular opinion at the time. Row houses, brownstone buildings, and tenements were demolished in Downtown and replaced with large-scale developments, surrounded by surface level parking lots. Roads were removed and scores of small lots were consolidated into superblocks, enabling large footprint office towers to be built in the place of a porous streetscape with small residential and commercial buildings.

The City of Stamford has begun to reverse this trend by incorporating pedestrian-scale development and land use policy, helping to correct the mistakes adopted under the policy of Urban Renewal in the 1950s through the 1970s. In 2015, Stamford implemented a new master plan, creating policies to incentivize the creation of residential, mixed-use development throughout the city.

The image above shows the small lot sizes of Stamford prior to Urban Renewal. The urban fabric of Stamford changed between 1950 and 1970, with Urban Renewal resulting in the bulldozing and assemblage of many small lots in Downtown, allowing for buildings with drastically larger floor plates.

The image above shows Stamford’s current street grid superimposed onto a pre-Urban Renewal land map. With the creation of large superblocks, many of Stamford’s Downtown streets were removed. The addition of Tresser Boulevard through Downtown helped form many of the superblocks that exist today.
Today, Stamford is experiencing rapid population growth. With a population of 127,410, Stamford is one of the largest cities in the region, surpassed only by Bridgeport. With a growth rate of 8.8%, Stamford's population increase is more comparable to a city such as White Plains, New York, than to similarly sized cities in Southwestern Connecticut. Stamford is expected to continue growing at this rate and reach a population of 133,000 by 2025. Comparatively, the State of Connecticut has experienced a population growth rate of 5.2%. With population growth outpacing both the State and comparable cities, Stamford is expected to remain an anchor for the region.

The Study Area area currently fails to provide an inviting pedestrian environment. The Downtown portion of the Study Area, north of the STC, is composed largely of Class A office buildings and large surface parking lots, with some smaller scaled buildings abutting the northern border. The South End portion of the Study Area south of the STC, consists primarily of multi-family housing units, with large amounts of vacant land in the eastern and southern portions of the neighborhood.
Demographics

Downtown and the South End are currently undergoing a demographic shift, coinciding with rapid development of housing in the area. This shift is reflected primarily in population changes of White and Hispanic/Latino residents. While the general population grew by 1,600 residents (22%) between 2010 and 2016, the Hispanic population only grew by about 300 people (10%). Conversely, the population of White residents has grown significantly, from 2,550 to 4,263 (63%), indicating that while most of the new housing developments in the area have been accommodating the rapid population growth, they are likely being occupied primarily by White residents.

Within the Study Area, those between 25 to 34 (prime-workforce group) represent the largest age group at 24% of the total population. At a median age of 31, those living in the South End are on average younger than in Downtown (37 years old), the City of Stamford (36 years old) and Connecticut as a whole (41 years old). This reflects a growing trend of younger, prime-workforce aged residents choosing to live within Stamford's city center.

Stamford's Workforce

As a regional employment center, Stamford accounted for 10% of total job growth in Connecticut between 2010 and 2015. During this same period, Stamford experienced an 11% increase in jobs, from 64,000 to 71,000. While the current workforce consists largely of finance and insurance jobs, those industries have not shown substantial growth, adding only 100 jobs during the same period. Most of Stamford's job growth has occurred in other sectors, primarily in information, food service, management of companies, and retail trade. While finance and insurance remain Stamford's anchor industries, the City's economy is rapidly diversifying.

Of the more than 71,000 people employed in Stamford, over two-thirds commute from outside of the City, and only 29% both live and work in Stamford. Additionally, 61% of Stamford residents work outside of the City, indicating that Stamford's existing employment opportunities do not necessarily match residents' skills or interests.

Workforce Inflow/Outflow

Source: U.S Census Bureau
Housing Market Analysis

Between 2010 and 2016, Stamford's housing growth has been concentrated in two neighborhoods, the South End and Downtown, which have grown by 91% and 15%, respectively. Combined, these areas have added approximately 1,300 new units, accounting for nearly all new housing production in the City of Stamford.

The Stamford Master Plan (updated 2015) identifies an affordability gap in Stamford's housing market. Rapid job growth has resulted in increased demand for housing, driving up prices and leaving few affordable options for low and middle-income Stamford residents. Since 2011, average rent has increased by 22%.12

With the goal of adding 8,000 additional affordable units, Stamford established Below Market Rate Dwelling Unit (BMR) regulations. Under these regulations, any proposed residential developments in certain districts with 10 or more units must reserve 10% of units for households than earn 50% or less of the area median income. Rent for these households is set at no more than 30% of monthly household income. The median household income for the Stamford-Norwalk Metropolitan Statistical Area is $134,942, and 50% median income would be $67,471.

Despite BMR housing regulations, Stamford's housing prices are still out of reach for many residents in Stamford's Downtown and South End, where median household incomes are $54,038 and $58,889 respectively. Half of Stamford's renters are rent-burdened, paying over 30% of their monthly income toward housing costs.13 Current BMR regulations are not creating enough affordable units at a low enough affordability to meet the needs of the population. As Stamford's economy and population continues to grow, so will demand on housing.

Real Estate Market Analysis

Stamford's commercial office stock consists mainly of large floor plate, Class A office space. Over 40% of commercial square footage is located in Stamford's Downtown Central Business District (CBD).

Stamford's commercial office space commands higher prices than neighboring cities at an average asking rent of $45 per square foot for 2017. However, net absorption in 2017 was negative at -0.75% for Downtown and -3.09% for the rest of the City. During the first quarter of 2018, absorption was negligible.

Office vacancy rates are high at around 27%. This may underscore the changing demands and tastes of commercial clients who are looking for more flexible office spaces in mixed-use areas. Stamford's primary office product of large floor plate designs located far from retail, food, drinks, and other neighborhood services may not reflect larger market trends and diversifying of employment sectors. Emblematic of this shift in market trends is the 712,000 square foot UBS property directly across North State Street from the Stamford Transportation Center, which has been vacant since 2016. The UBS property sold in April 2017 for $34 million, a $100 million loss for investors.14 The property was sold again in December 2017 for $33 million, at an additional $21 million loss.15 Conversely, online travel site, KAYAK, invested $5 million into renovating 7 Market Street in the South End for its new headquarters in 2013.16 The loft-style brick building provides flexible and amenity-rich space that Stamford's diversifying sectors desire.
Existing Conditions cont’d

Land Use
Land in the Study Area is generally underutilized given its proximity to excellent regional transit access. Due to low lot coverage, two thirds of the total lot area is vacant space, surface parking, or open space. The largest land uses by land area are:
- Commercial - 26%
- Vacant Land/Buildings - 24%
- Residential - 17%

Lot sizes for commercial land parcels are significantly larger than residential parcels, with an average size of 23,000 square feet for commercial and 11,000 square feet for residential.18

Zoning
Zoning in the Study Area varies widely with predominantly high density commercial and residential in Downtown and General Manufacturing and Multi Family Residential in the South End. Recent rezonings allow for higher densities and mixed-use development surrounding the STC and in the recent South End residential development.

The South End Redevelopment District South, the The Transit Center Design District, and the Central City North District allow for mixed-uses and heights up to 155 feet, 165 feet, and 350 feet respectively. However, the General Manufacturing and Multi Family Residential districts limit mixed-uses and have low maximum heights of 40 feet for Multi Family Residential, and 50 feet for General Manufacturing. These low density zoning districts prevent continuity between anchor destinations in the Study Area.

Source: Stamford Land Use Bureau
Parking Facilities

Parking facilities constitute a significant portion of land use in the study area. Over 26% of the Study Area’s land is dedicated to surface parking, with an additional 5% occupied by multi-story parking garages. The large concentration of surface parking surrounding the STC discourages an active streetscape, favoring the use of personal vehicles over pedestrian activity.

Source: Stamford Land Use Bureau
Existing Conditions cont’d

Approximately 30,000 passengers travel through the STC every day, the second-highest total ridership in the entire Metro-North system. This figure is anticipated to increase to approximately 31,100 riders per day by 2035.24

Stamford relies on the STC to support its economy. Originally planned to send residents out of Stamford, the STC’s existing design and layout disproportionately accommodates commuters driving to the station, while less than 40% of those accessing the station do so by personal vehicle.25

Confusing signage, inadequate integration with surrounding streets, lack of amenities, and a chaotic shuttle terminal contribute to the STC’s inadequacy as a gateway into Stamford.

Entrances to the STC do not integrate with the surrounding streetscape. Pedestrians exiting to the south or the north encounter large dead spaces in the form of parking garages or vacant large-scale office space.

Inadequate wayfinding and signage create a confusing and uninviting environment for users of the STC, leading to difficulties for those unfamiliar with the station as they attempt to locate platforms, exits, and amenities.

Approximately one-third of daily commuters to the STC transfer to a shuttle. All shuttles are privately operated, and arrivals and departures to and from the STC shuttle terminal are not coordinated, resulting in a confusing tangle of shuttles.

The STC has few in-station amenities to serve passengers, which prevents it from becoming a regional destination.
Atlantic Street is a major north-south corridor connecting Stamford’s Downtown and South End neighborhoods.

The corridor’s existing design prioritizes automobiles over all other modes of transportation. The corridor is characterized by wide streets with multiple traffic lanes, relatively small sidewalks, and lack of multi-modal infrastructure. Use of private vehicles in Stamford is indeed high: 75% of trips in Stamford are taken in cars, trucks, or vans, compared to 15% taken on public transportation.21

Atlantic Street’s land use and streetscape is not amenable to pedestrians. As the city’s economy diversifies and planned large-scale residential developments are built along the Atlantic Street corridor, the corridor itself is likely to encounter more intensive pedestrian use.

Downtown Stamford

Atlantic Street between Tresser Boulevard and North State Street is characterized by its generous roadbed, as wide as 60 feet, and is devoid of on-street parking. The buildings on this section of Atlantic Street lack ground-floor uses, discouraging pedestrian uses and creating a streetscape lined with parking lots, sterile public plazas, and set-back office lobbies that provide no street-level activity.

Underpasses

Pedestrians traveling from Downtown to the South End along Atlantic Street must pass under both Interstate 95 and the Metro North Railroad. These underpasses are forbidding for pedestrians: the sidewalks are underlit, poorly maintained, and immediately adjacent to automobile traffic. Additionally, the sidewalk underneath the Interstate 95 bridge is only a raised blacktop, and provides no physical or visual barrier between pedestrians and automobiles.

South End

Atlantic Street in the South End is characterized by narrower roadways than those in Downtown Stamford. The primarily medium-density residential nature of the South End does not leverage the neighborhood’s proximity to the STC, nor does it provide robust pedestrian amenities. Sidewalks often have physical obstructions to pedestrians, such as utility poles.
Key Findings

Diversifying Economy
Stamford’s employment sector is diversifying. While Finance, and Insurance remain anchor, Information Food Service, Management of Companies, and Retail Trade are growing. Commercial real estate stock is not meeting the needs of a diversified economy.

Growing Population
With a population set to reach 133,000 by 2025 and a growing and diversifying economy, the City of Stamford must adapt to these changes. Housing prices are out of reach for many residents in Downtown and the South End.
Key Findings

Underutilized Land
The City’s land use and transportation systems are not prepared to sustain Stamford’s growth. With over 22% of the study area as vacant lots or buildings, the overall land use fails to take advantage of Stamford’s economic potential. Its proportion of land dedicated to surface parking discourages multimodal transportation that helps cities sustain their economic growth.

Outdated Transit Station
Though it serves nearly 30,000 riders per day, the STC fails in its role as a dynamic access point due to its confusing signage, inadequate street connections, and lack of amenities. The streets surrounding the STC prioritize automobiles over all other modes of transportation.

Source: WNPR
Transportation Framework

As a regional employment center, over 50,000 people commute into Stamford daily. However, the existing transportation system is designed to serve commuters that drive to the Stamford Transportation Center (STC), park, and ride the Metro North Railroad out of Stamford. Little infrastructure exists to serve the thousands of commuters who arrive to Stamford by train and navigate the City without a personal vehicle. The private, employer-operated shuttles that serve the STC have emerged as a last mile solution in response to a lack of public transportation infrastructure and walkable streets. According to the 2016 Stamford Private Shuttle Study, nearly 90% of shuttles take passengers to destinations within two miles of the STC. With no centralized organization, shuttle service is redundant, congested, has negative impacts on the environment, and adds additional traffic to the surrounding street network.

In addition to employment growth, Stamford is experiencing rapid population growth and residential development. Hundreds of residential units have been added to the South End’s formerly industrial waterfront. As Stamford’s land use becomes increasingly “urban” in built form, its transportation infrastructure needs to adapt. Residents in the South End require better connections to both the STC and Stamford’s Central Business District.

The recommendations outlined in this report aim to transform Stamford’s transportation system to better connect STC users to the rest of the City and enable sustainable population growth through enhancements to the STC and the Atlantic Street Corridor. These recommendations focus on supporting pedestrian, bicycle, and other non-personal vehicle modes of transportation. Through streetscape, land use, and public transit improvements, the STC can meet the needs of this growing urban center.

Land Use Framework

Current land uses are inconsistent with zoning. Given the Study Area’s strong transit access, high-density, mixed-use development should be encouraged. This framework proposes four new zoning districts that encompass the Study Area and provide an opportunity for the redevelopment and infill of surface lots and vacant parcels. A redesigned STC also provides an opportunity to anchor the core of the Transit Oriented Development zone, proposed to be redeveloped with large format retail, office space, visitor services, and high density housing. BMR has not adequately addressed housing affordability needs. A further study to expand affordability regulations is recommended.

The following Zoning Districts are proposed:

- **Transit Oriented Development Zoning District** should encourage economic growth and increase walkability around the STC.
- **Downtown Zoning District** should promote increased residential and commercial activity by incentivizing redevelopment of small sites.
- **Arts Zoning District** should preserve the existing character of the manufacturing district and create opportunities for affordable housing.
- **South End Zoning District** should allow greater residential density with neighborhood-serving retail and services.
The proposed Downtown Zoning District should help spur residential and commercial development on lots that are currently out of context with the surrounding neighborhood. Much of the Downtown neighborhood has an active, engaging, and pedestrian-friendly design with mixed-use buildings and active ground floor uses. While older building stock on narrow streets encourages pedestrian activity, some areas are underutilized with only one- or two-story buildings. Current zoning in the area allows for maximum heights of 350 feet. Minimum lot square footage is 4,000 with building coverage of 90% for corner lots and 80% for interior lots, allowing for dense residential and commercial uses.

Proposed Zoning Policy

The proposed Downtown Zoning district focuses on encouraging infill and assemblages of small lots, while further developing and enhancing the pedestrian environment. Given its location within the Central Business District and its proximity to the Stamford Transportation Center, the Downtown Zoning District should promote increased residential and commercial activity, while remaining an active downtown and pedestrian-oriented destination. The proposed zoning will keep current maximum heights and lot coverage, but will provide assemblage bonuses. Active ground floor uses should be required for all new development, and permitted uses will include:

- Restaurants/Cafes/Eateries
- Commercial and Destination Retail
- Neighborhood Services
- Residential
- Hotels

The South End's current land use patterns reflect medium density residential buildings, large amounts of space dedicated to parking, low lot coverage, and scarce commercial uses. The recent flurry of development in portions of the South End has allowed greater residential and commercial land utilization, yet is limited in those areas closest to the STC. The South End Zoning District should promote increased residential density, as well as neighborhood-serving retail and services. Current zoning is predominantly Multi-Family Residential, with low maximum heights of 40 feet, and low lot coverage of 30%.

Proposed Zoning Policy

The proposed South End Zoning District would act as a transition area between the higher densities in the South End, lower-scale developments, and the proposed STC anchor development. Maximum building heights for the District will be 12 stories, with 15 foot setbacks after 65 feet. Permitted uses for the South End Zoning District would include the following:

- Residential
- Neighborhood Services
- General Commercial Retail
- Community Facilities
- Restaurants/Cafes/Eateries
- Community Facilities

Furthermore, developments should be required to include ground floor neighborhood serving retail and services in order to establish continuity along the pedestrian corridor. The removal of lot coverage restrictions will allow for maximized residential density in the district, and will incentivize the creation of mixed-use development. An additional requirement to build to lot lines will further improve the pedestrian environment by creating a continuous building wall.
The Transit Oriented Development (TOD) District should encourage economic growth and increased walkability around the Stamford Transportation Center (STC). Currently, the area north of the station and Interstate 95 is zoned for General Commercial uses, while the area south of Interstate 95 is zoned for General Manufacturing. Current zoning regulations require minimum lot coverage of 4,000 square feet for General Manufacturing, and up to 50-foot building heights and General Commercial uses require the minimum of 4,000 square feet, and up to 100 feet building heights.

Proposed Zoning Policy
The Transit Oriented Development District should allow high-density residential and commercial uses with maximum building heights up to 450 feet. New construction should require active ground floor uses such as:

- Commercial and Destination Retail
- Restaurants/Cafes/Eateries
- Neighborhood Services
- Residential

Also included in the Transit Oriented Development District is the STC, which is proposed to include destination retail, visitors’ services, and a multi-purpose event space.

The proposed increased densities for the Transit Oriented Development District would encourage growth around the STC, including portions of the Downtown Stamford and South End neighborhoods.

The City of Stamford’s proposed Light Industrial Mixed-Use Artist District has the potential to spur economic development and community revitalization by generating businesses, attracting tourists, providing affordable housing, stimulating cultural development, and fostering civic pride. Current zoning is partially General Manufacturing to the north, and Multiple Family Residences to the south. Both these zoning designations have relatively low maximum building heights of 40 ft (Multiple Family Residence) and 50 ft (General Manufacturing). Minimum lot square footage ranges from 4,000 to 20,000 with building areas of 30 - 35% for Multiple Family Residents, and 9080 (corner/interior) for General Manufacturing, creating large building footprints.

Proposed Zoning Policy
Establishment of a Light Industrial Mixed-Use Artist District would retain some of the existing character, preserve a building typology highly desired by new and growing commercial tenants, and create opportunities for affordable live/work space that retain and attract the artist community. The zoning within the proposed district would allow a building maximum height of 10 stories with a setback of 15 feet after 65 feet. An incentive for mixed light industrial business on lots of 25,000 sq ft or greater would allow for industrial uses on the ground floor and residential above. Permitted uses would include:

- Light manufacturing (for example - pottery, ornamental metal/wood work, commercial screen printing)
- Makerspaces
- Artist Work/ Affordable Living Space
- Art Sales Spaces and Galleries
- Commercial retail spaces ( ex. Coffee shop, bookstore, art supply shop)

Incentives for developers and property owners to develop arts-related uses should include a property tax incentive and a streamlined permitting, review, and approval process. By creating the Light Industrial Mixed-Use Artist District the City will provide new incentives for the creation of affordable space while protecting artists and creative uses.
The elements of Stamford’s public realm—the sidewalks, streets, plazas, and parks—could become high-quality public amenities that are vital for creating walkable transit-oriented communities. These spaces can be improved to help tackle both real and perceived safety issues, accessibility and mobility issues, the reduction of vehicle trips, the creation of a more enjoyable public realm for residents, workers, shoppers, and visitors.

Currently, the majority of streets in the Study Area are auto-oriented, with wide roadbeds, limited on-street parking, narrow sidewalks, and few streetscape amenities. Stamford’s streets lack engaging public space, pedestrian amenities, cyclist amenities, native landscaping, and stormwater management systems.

The following elements should be addressed to improve the City of Stamford’s public realm:

**Pedestrian experience:** creating walkable streetscapes that are unified, but not uniform, in appearance

**Streetscape:** adapting existing street network to multimodal uses

**Open Space:** creating new public spaces and integrating with improved adjacent private development

**Underpass:** creating a safe, inviting, space that encourages pedestrians’ presence
Near-Term

The following recommendations are designs and concepts that can feasibly be implemented within 2-4 years, and could generate an immediate positive impact on Stamford’s streetscape and public realm.

Pedestrian experience:
- Update the 2013 City of Stamford Street Design Guidelines, using zoning or building code to enforce implementation for new developments.
- Incentivize existing businesses and residences to adopt these guidelines through matching grants and tax credits.
- Enhance sidewalk to include street furniture, lighting, benches, trees, planting areas for stormwater management, and other landscaping.
- Install wayfinding to assist pedestrians in locating key destinations by foot.
- Ensure that signage makes use of meaningful distances, such as number of blocks or average walking time.

Open Space:
- Incorporate moveable tables and chairs, local artwork, and planters into existing plaza spaces.
- Design uniform Plaza Guidelines to direct all plaza design including 400 Atlantic Street and vacant UBS Building plaza spaces (see Major Projects section).
- Create a walking route around the Stamford, connecting key destinations with informational signs.

Streetscape:
- Re-paint stop lines, bike lanes, and sharrows to help position motorists while driving.
- Adjust signal timing to allow for pedestrian walking speeds of 2.8 to 3.5 feet per second.
- Upgrade and install pedestrian signals to pedestrian countdown signal.
- Update tactile paving at all arterials/arterial intersections, where they are lacking or in poor condition.
- Install and maintain high visibility crosswalks in high priority areas.
- Where appropriate, install temporary bulbouts to reduce pedestrian crossing distances and increase visibility.
- Install metered on-street parking and parking length indicators (20 to 24 feet) to maximize parking spaces.

Underpass:
- Improve overall safety and use by widening sidewalks, upgrading crosswalks to high visibility, and installing signals.
- Install guard rail or stormwater management landscaping, resistant to limited/low light exposure, to buffer pedestrians and vehicles.
- Design local art installations using murals and light fixtures to create a visually exciting and inviting atmosphere.
Long-term recommendations are those designs and concepts which have immense potential benefits to Stamford, but which may necessitate greater capital investment and detailed study, and therefore would likely take three or more years to implement. The below recommendations complement and work in conjunction with the proposed Land Use and Zoning changes, as well as the subsequent long-term recommendations for the STC.

**Pedestrian Experience**
- Codify transit-oriented street design guidelines to include minimum 20 foot wide sidewalks, planted medians, bulbouts, and pedestrian refuge islands, where appropriate, to promote safety and a long term shift to non-automobile modes of travel.

**Open Space**
- In tandem with the 400 Atlantic Street Plaza redesign (See Major Projects), amend zoning code to permit outdoor plaza uses for arcade spaces based on the model put forward in NYC’s Water Street POPS Plan.

**Streetscape**
- Where temporary bulbouts proved successful, install permanent bulbouts to increase visibility, calm traffic, and improve pedestrian safety
- Commission a traffic study to assess feasibility of converting outside moving lanes on Atlantic Street between Tresser Boulevard and North State Street into on-street parking to calm traffic, improve the pedestrian experience, and complement plaza space at 400 Atlantic Street (see Major Projects section), and help with replacing spaces lost during redevelopment of nearby garages
- Enhance on-street parking meters to allow for dynamic pricing and e-payment.

**Underpass**
- Facilitate the continued upkeep of underpasses through partnerships with local entities such as BIDs, artist co-ops, or future large-scale residential developments near the underpasses to ensure that they remain clean, safe, and pedestrian friendly.

**Open Space**
- Facilitate the continued upkeep of underpasses through partnerships with local entities such as BIDs, artist co-ops, or future large-scale residential developments near the underpasses to ensure that they remain clean, safe, and pedestrian friendly.
Proposed locations of Streetscape and Public Real recommendations.
| The intersection of Atlantic Street and Washington Boulevard will become an important pedestrian intersection, connecting the waterfront with STC and future commercial activity along Atlantic Street. An added plaza will provide improved pedestrian amenities and needed open space in the neighborhood. |
| The redesign of the STC will accommodate greater pedestrian activity, calm traffic and improve safety. The intersection will see improved signal timing for pedestrians curb bulb outs, and additional pedestrian refuge islands. |
| The Interstate 95 and Metro North underpasses will receive buffers between the street and pedestrian right of way, improved lighting, and incorporate local public art to create an inviting environment for pedestrians traveling between the South End and Downtown. |
| To increase pedestrian safety, Tresser Boulevard will see widened pedestrian refuge islands, curb bulb outs, helping to calm vehicular traffic. Traffic and crossing signals will also be reprogrammed to better prioritize pedestrians crossing Tresser Boulevard. |
| Atlantic Street will see an active commercial corridor with widened sidewalks, improved lighting, public furniture, as well as added street parking and commercial delivery space. |
| Atlantic Street between North State Street and Tresser Boulevard will see a road diet with added street parking and undergo major redevelopment with greater ground floor uses and a walkable corridor. |
| Office tower arcades will help activated Downtown Stamford by allowing outdoor plaza spaces, acting as privately owned public spaces, adding pedestrian activity to otherwise unused spaces. |
Near-Term

Stamford’s existing transportation network is ill-equipped to handle the needs of the City’s expanding population and economy. The lack of facilities for non-automobile uses in Stamford’s Central Business District (CBD) could limit its ability to fully maximize its status as a regional hub of economic activity. To facilitate continued growth, the City of Stamford should encourage a modal shift away from personal vehicles.

Parking

In order to encourage a mode shift away from private automobiles, Stamford should implement measures that limit the dominance of parking lots and garages in the City’s CBD.

The City should impose maximum parking requirements for new developments, and zoning should disincentivize surface parking lots. To prevent parking garages from dominating the streetscape, Stamford should require new parking garages be wrapped in active uses. Additionally, the City should explore amending the zoning code to allow accessory parking to be located off-site.

Private Shuttles

Outreach

The City of Stamford should reach out to local businesses that operate shuttles in and around the STC to identify the barriers and costs of consolidating shuttle services. At the same time, businesses should be made aware of the potential benefits of shuttle consolidation, such as reduced congestion, decreased commuter wait times, and more uniform standards of service.

Real-Time Arrival Technology

To promote consolidation, a permitting system that controls the number of shuttles allowed to conduct pick-up and drop-off in the station should be implemented. Such a system would facilitate the implementation of real-time arrival technology that can be used to notify riders of shuttle arrival and departure times.
Bicycle Study

Stamford currently lacks a robust bicycle infrastructure. The variation of street typologies and widths in the Study Area requires further analysis to find the optimal locations, design, and implementation of bike lanes and amenities. Therefore, the City of Stamford should undertake a comprehensive bicycle network study to determine how bicycle lanes can be better incorporated into Stamford’s street network. The study should prioritize finding suitable locations for fully protected bicycle lanes as well as locations for amenities such as bicycle repair stations, pumps, and parking. Additionally, the study should evaluate the potential for a bike share program integrated with the STC and Metro North Railroad. The study should also identify suitable intersection treatments to improve safety for cyclists. The plan should also include strategies for implementation.

Private Shuttles

Consolidation

To provide a long-term solution to congestion in and around the STC, the City of Stamford should coordinate with the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) to end its shuttle “open door” policy, which freely allows any business to operate shuttles, as long as they follow a set of rules (i.e., at station speed limit, at station time limit, listening to station staff orders, and more). ConnDOT should then put out a Request for Proposals to select a single operator to manage shuttle operations at the STC. The City of Stamford should collaborate with the operator to ensure passenger safety, efficient route design, and data sharing. In turn, the operator should work with businesses to establish routes that will best serve commuters and residents.

Relocating Shuttle Area to South State Street

Move Shuttle Area to South State Street

The existing shuttle terminal under Interstate 95 is confusing, chaotic, and inefficient. Only two to three shuttles are able to board passengers simultaneously, and the STC lacks a dedicated waiting area for shuttle passengers. In order to address these shortcomings, the shuttle staging area should be relocated to South State Street. As this staging area is larger than the current shuttle terminal, more shuttles will be able to board passengers at once, helping to reduce shuttle congestion. South State Street should be converted into a transit-only roadway, enforced with the real-time arrival permitting system.
Opportunity Areas

Major Project Sites

Stamford Transportation Center

Near-Term
Improve STC user experience with better wayfinding signs and addition of new amenities. Facilitate bicycle network in Stamford with parking and pathways dedicated to bicycles.

Long-Term
Redevelop the STC with a full station redesign. Promote activity at the STC with a new public plaza. Accommodate parking needs with a new underground garage.

400 Atlantic Street Garage and Plaza & 677 Washington Boulevard (Formerly UBS Building)

400 Atlantic Street
Develop a new residential/commercial tower with ground floor retail and off-street parking in order to promote an active streetscape that connects Downtown to South End.

677 Washington Boulevard
Demolish current UBS building trading floor structure and re-incorporate the remaining lot into Stamford’s streetscape to improve pedestrian infrastructure around the STC.

Lathon Wider Community Center
Re-develop building to include an enhanced community center, ground floor retail, affordable housing, and improved public open spaces.
STC Near-Term

The STC should incorporate elements that do not require long-term structural changes to the station and would greatly improve commuter experience.

**Improve Bike Access**
As 61% of STC users arrive using a mode of transportation other than personal vehicles, the STC and surrounding area should be safe and inviting for those arriving to the station by foot or bicycle. Recommendations made in the proposed Bicycle Study should have special focus on how the bicycle network integrates with the STC. This includes secure bike parking near key STC entrances on Station Place, South State Street, and North State Street, allowing commuters to safely store their bicycles in the station. The bicycle network should also seamlessly and safely lead cyclists to STC entrances with proper navigational signage and designated pathways.

**Provide Amenities**
As a major station for both the Metro North Railroad and Amtrak, the STC often has many passengers waiting inside the station for their train. The station should have improved retail for commuters—including “grab-and-go” style breakfast and lunch counters—and an improved waiting area. Small storefronts can be placed in the tunnel connecting the station with North State Street. Stores within the station should be required to stay open during the morning and evening peak, including the weekends.

**Improve Wayfinding**
Improved wayfinding both in and around the station will allow those unfamiliar with the station or with Stamford to comfortably find their way, whether to their train or into the City. Inside the station, there should be wayfinding signage at each entrance to direct travelers toward important locations like ticketing, platforms, and amenities. Streets in Downtown and the South End should have improved signage directing pedestrians and cyclists toward the STC. Wayfinding serves as a short-term method to improve flow within the station as well as to integrate the station with the greater urban fabric.
Already the busiest Metro North station outside New York City, redevelopment of the Stamford Transportation Center could further establish it as a gateway into Stamford. A redesign of the station—with cooperation from the City of Stamford, the State of Connecticut, and stakeholder groups—would help make the STC more than just a commuter station, but a mixed-use destination.

The following elements should be included in the STC redesign:

1) Covered Platform

The Stamford Transportation Center’s existing station platforms expose passengers to the outdoor elements. A covered structure protecting passengers from weather should be constructed to provide a better waiting experience. The structure should be made of glass, allowing an ample amount of sunlight to reach the waiting area while protecting passengers from the elements. The covering should extend from Washington Boulevard to Atlantic Street, and cover train platforms as well as the proposed South State Street shuttle area.

2) Station building

In order to truly establish the STC as a gateway into Stamford, the station building itself must become a multi-purpose hub of activity. The station should have retail space on the lower levels, including stores like pharmacies and counter-service dining for commuters as well as destination retail to attract visitors to the STC. The upper floors should house an anchor institution such as a convention center and/or hotel. This would help establish the station as a destination and integrate it into the urban environment. The inclusion of commercial space managed by the STC will not only establish the station as a gateway, but also allow the State to collect revenue from managing and leasing this commercial space. The proposed site plan would allow for about 90,000 square feet of retail on the lower levels of the station, while upper levels would allow for about 150,000 square feet of convention/hotel space.

3) Plaza and Underground Parking

To integrate the STC into Stamford’s urban fabric and establish it as a multimodal gateway, long-term redevelopment should include removal of the Station Place garage. This will allow Station Place to be re-routed to the south, creating an approximately 100,000 square foot plaza that would include amenities such as outdoor seating, kiosks for small retail shops and restaurants, space for outdoor entertainment, and green space. The plaza, coupled with the new station, will create space and encourage all-day activity in and around the STC. To help offset the approximately 700 removed parking spaces, an underground parking garage should be constructed beneath the new plaza. Additional parking would be available in existing, underutilized garages as well as on-street parking.
Opportunity Areas

677 Washington & 400 Atlantic

Opportunity Areas

677 Washington Boulevard, on the northwest corner of Atlantic Street and North State Street, contains the former UBS building. Once home to the world’s largest trading floor, this structure is now completely vacant since UBS moved to 600 Washington Boulevard. The former trading floor remains a 712,000-square-foot dead space directly adjacent to the primary exit from the STC on North State Street. The northeast corner of the same intersection is currently occupied by a 908-space parking structure, which serves the office tower at 400 Atlantic Street. This parking garage is located at what could be a vital Atlantic Street connection between Downtown Stamford, the STC, and the South End.

Two Opportunity Sites

677 Washington Boulevard and 400 Atlantic Street

Project sites - present day

677 Washington Blvd. 400 Atlantic Street

Guernsey Avenue

Federal Street

400 Atlantic Street

677 Washington Blvd.

Mapping a new public street through the 677 Washington Boulevard site could be accommodated through site redevelopment. The City of Stamford should offer additional floor area as an incentive to demolish the vacant trading floor. The new parcel of land between Atlantic Street and the newly extended Guernsey Avenue should be rezoned to allow for a significant increase in height and floor area available to any resulting infill development.

Connecting Downtown Streets

The City of Stamford should incentivize the removal of each of these structures and the re-incorporation of the lots into Stamford’s streetscape, improving the pedestrian experience along Atlantic Street. By connecting North State Street to Guernsey Avenue, the City of Stamford could break down existing block frontages, provide for a more lively, active pedestrian experience, reduce the city’s office vacancy rate, and provide for additional commercial space to meet the demands of growing employment sectors.

Incentivizing Redevelopment

To encourage redevelopment of the parking structure at 400 Atlantic Street, sufficient incentives - including separating the property to allow for development and allowing for additional floor space - should be explored. Active ground floor uses would be required by the area’s rezoning.

Incentives to enhance the remaining plaza space between the new structure(s) and 400 Atlantic Street should also be provided. A privately-owned public space in an area set to receive an influx of residents and pedestrian traffic would greatly benefit the neighborhood as well as complement the new development on the parcel, particularly potential ground floor retail space. Incorporating inviting design features to the plaza such as movable furniture and natural or manufactured shade - such as Worldwide Plaza in Midtown Manhattan (See Streetscape and Public Realm section) - would create an inviting public space in a neighborhood currently devoid of such an amenity.
Lathon Wider Community Center

Existing Conditions: Lathon Wider Community Center is a cornerstone of the South End neighborhood. Owned by the City of Stamford, it is home to a number of public and community-centered facilities including the Ferguson Library South End Branch, the Department of Health Clinic, the Department of Motor Vehicles and several non-profit organizations that provide social services to Stamford’s residents. The basketball courts and playground, some of the only open space in this neighborhood, are in need of renovation.

The lot adjacent to the parking lot and basketball courts, on the corner of Woodland Avenue and Pacific Street has been purchased by a developer and will likely be incorporated into a high rise residential development planned for the lot south of the Community Center between Woodland Avenue and Walter Wheeler Drive and Atlantic and Pacific Avenues. As private land in the South End is redeveloped primarily for housing and retail, the City should leverage publicly-controlled land to increase access to neighborhood services, community facilities, and increase the area’s affordable housing stock.

Vision: The City of Stamford should maximize the potential of this public facility by enhancing its open space resources and adding affordable housing units above first and second floor community facilities and commercial space. It is recommended that the City of Stamford redevelop the site to extend Garden Street, creating additional retail frontage. Consistent with the Arts District rezoning, buildings on site should be developed to 8-10 floors. The residential units could be sold or leased to a developer with a deed covenant for permanently affordable housing. The existing basketball courts should be relocated indoors along with additional recreation facilities. Two lots should be reserved for open space, which is lacking in this area.

Conclusion

The Stamford Transportation Center and Environs studio team believes that the interventions outlined in this report can help position Stamford for growth, guiding the City to denser, more sustainable development. Through the provision of transit-oriented design, an active streetscape, and multi-modal infrastructure, Stamford can maximize and sustain its continued growth.

We hope that this report will inspire forward-thinking planning in the City of Stamford to create vibrant, active spaces that prioritize people over cars.
Endnotes

7. U.S. Census Bureau (2016), Demographic and Housing Characteristics American Community Survey 2012-2016 5 year estimate
9. U.S. Census Bureau (2010-2016) Demographic and Housing Characteristics American Community Survey 2006-2016 5 year estimates
10. U.S. Census Bureau (2010-2016) ACS Demographic and Housing Characteristics American Community Survey 2006-2016 5 year estimates
11. U.S. Census Bureau (2010 & 2015) LEHD LODES
13. U.S. Census Bureau (2010-2016) Demographic and Housing Characteristics American Community Survey 2006-2016 5 year estimates
14. Schott, Paul, “Former Stamford UBS building’s mortgage sells at deep discount,” Stamford Advocate, Updated 5:24 pm, Wednesday, April 19, 2017
17. Cushman & Wakefield, Marketbeat Fairfield County, Q42017, Q12018
18. Stamford Land Use Bureau
20. Ibid.