

Section 10

Proposed Land Use

RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

The projected residential densities are based upon two interrelated principles: Middlefield is not presently in any position to encourage the installation of public sewer or water systems and the soils characteristics will be used to determine on-site sewage capacities and, hence, population distribution.

For purposes of projecting residential densities, all soils and lands capable of being developed for residential use were simplified to density categories:

- Two families per acre
- One family per acre
- One family per two acres

The first category (two families per acre) is in recognition of existing development in the Rockfall and Lake Beseck areas. It is felt to be unwise to consider larger lot zoning in these areas since they predominantly consist of smaller parcels. Any new uses in these areas would still be subject to the Department of Health requirements for septic tank and leaching systems. Only very minimal residential expansion can occur in these areas.

The density of one (1) residential unit per acre is considered to be minimum for any new development, exclusive of the Rockfall and Lake Beseck areas. Basically, the soils in these areas exhibit little or no limitations for septic tanks, homesite basements, streets and parking lots. The soils associated with good development potential are Cheshire, Manchester, Merrimac, Branford and some Wethersfield classifications.

The sections of Middlefield identified on the Land Use Plan as exhibiting these soils are the Rockfall area, a band approximately 1,000 to 1,500 feet in width extending along Main Street in Middlefield center; some land south of Miller Road; and land south of Laurel Brook Road and west of the reservoir.

The density of 1.0 families per two acres reflects soils which have some developmental problems associated with them. Normally, these limitations can be dealt with through careful engineering. The soils which fall into these categories include Yalesville, some Wethersfield soils, Ludlow, Ellington, Hinkley, Manchester and Sudbury. They are shown as having severe limitations on the maps depicting soil characteristics.

These severe soils dominate the northern part of the town along Route 66 (east of Jackson Hill Road/Main Street) and Route 147/Powder Hill Road. Large sections of land north of Miller Road to Cider Mill Road and between Hubbard Street and Laurel Brook Road also are best suited to 1.0 families per two acres.

INDUSTRIAL AREAS

General Industrial

The current zoning generally reflects the existing extent of development and are areas where there is little or no expansion capability. The plan proposes to reduce the area between Cherry Hill Road and Cider Mill Road and west of the railroad to the Coginchaug River to reflect proposed buffers to the river and proposed open

space. One of the property owners in this area, Connwood Inc., has committed only a limited amount of its land to industrial purposes and does not plan future expansions.

Industrial Park, Old Indian Trail

Six industrial lots were created by the town as part of Phase III of this park which initially began in the 1970's. All of the previous phases have been built out except for one remaining lot. Two lots of Phase III have been sold and one has been developed. The second sold parcel has had Planning and Zoning Commission approvals and construction is expected to begin by this fall. It is expected that over the next two to three years, all of the lots will have been sold and the industrial park completed.

Phase III was part of the original Strickland farm acquisition, as was Phase II, of approximately 155 acres and the Commission has made a policy decision that this would be the last encroachment into this property for industrial park purposes. As a result, once the last four lots have been sold, this industrial park area will have reached full development.

Brookside Industrial Park

The plan calls for deletion of some of the areas currently zoned industrial that are designated as Inland Wetlands and to move the zone line to the north of the power lines. Zogo is the principal development in this park and the area is serviced by Middletown water and sewer.

There are three large vacant properties in this park fronting on Hubbard Street. The Commission proposes to create a 100-foot-plus buffer along Hubbard Street to protect the residential properties on the north side of the street and plans that long-term access be via Brookside Drive to Laurel Brook Road. It is possible that, until all of these properties are developed, some development will be required to use Hubbard Street.

This area has the advantage of sewer and water and will be the focal point for industrial park development over the foreseeable future, once phase III of the Old Indian Trail Industrial Park is completed.

COMMERCIAL AREAS

Planned Commercial

Most of the areas proposed as Planned Commercial are significantly developed, except for Route 66. The exception to this is the area behind the Middlefield Post Office on Main Street which could accommodate some commercial development, but there has not been sufficient market pressure to induce development.

Route 66 Corridor Design District

Route 66, as it passes through Middlefield, functions as a part of the regional highway network. In 2007, the State of Connecticut completed an extensive reconstruction of Route 66 within Middlefield. This reconstruction upgraded the vehicle carrying capacity which, going forward into the future, is expected to handle increased traffic volumes. The Middlefield Planning and Zoning Commission recognizes that this upgrade and anticipated increase in traffic volumes has the potential to impact the natural and built environment in the corridor.

In order to plan for future development in the corridor, the Commission undertook a Route 66 Corridor Land Use Study in 2007. The study was prepared by Harrall-Michalowski Associates, Land Use Planner and

Westcott and Mapes, Engineers. The study analyzed land use, ownership patterns, topography and soil conditions in the corridor. An analysis of the development potential for major parcels in the area based on on-site sewage treatment was completed. These development potential estimates were used to estimate increased property tax revenues for the Town.

For purposes of analysis, there were five subareas delineated within the overall study area containing significant amounts of vacant and/or underdeveloped land. These areas are shown on the map entitled "Potential Development Areas." These areas contain approximately 98 acres of the total of 192 acres in the study area. Assuming on-site sewage disposal at 650 gallons per day per acre, this 98 acres could support approximately 635,000 square feet of retail development. Based on the 2007-2008 mill rate, at full build-out, this level of development could generate approximately \$1,000,000 in annual real estate property taxes. In addition, there would be personal property tax revenue generated.

As a result of the study, the Commission established several planning criteria upon which to base land use policies for future development. The overall purpose of the policies is to encourage the orderly development of the corridor for primarily retail and office uses. This purpose recognizes that the Route 66 corridor is currently one of the centers of economic development in Middlefield and should continue to be an important part of the Town's economic base in the future. At the same time, the Commission recognizes the need to retain, to the greatest feasible extent, the rural community identity of a portion of the Route 66 corridor and Middlefield as a whole.

The specific criteria established for the Route 66 corridor include:

- Preserve and permanently protect natural features of land including views, vistas, terrain, geological features, indigenous vegetation, inland wetlands and watercourses;
- Achieve a design of structures which is sensitive to the architectural character of Middlefield in terms of the use of materials, massing and location of structures, landscaping and sign age;
- Allow for commercial development at a depth from the right-of-way which produces quality development;
- Limit the fragmentation of the corridor to provide for cohesive, well-planned development; and
- Control access to Route 66 for efficient and safe traffic flow.

In order to achieve this stated policy and criteria for development, the Planning and Zoning Commission adopted a Route 66 Design District as an amendment to the Middlefield Zoning Regulations. The boundaries of the district are shown generally on the map entitled Route 66 Design District. The area meets the criteria discussed above in that it contains the portion of the Route 66 corridor where most development exists currently. This area also includes several large parcels of land which are currently either undeveloped or underdeveloped. The area does not include the western portion of the corridor within which extensive natural resources including watershed land and water bodies are located.

Planned Office

Only one small area of 15 acres is zoned Planned Office. It is located in the most northwest corner of the community with its only access to a public road through other land in the same ownership within the City of

Meriden. Another 15 acres, under the same ownership, is zoned for office in Middletown. This parcel is Middlefield's only window on 1-91 via Preston Avenue in Meriden.

Until such time as there is an agreement with the City of Meriden that this area should be developed for office use, no development will be possible for reasons of access and utilities. Up to this point in time, Meriden has steadfastly resisted any office or commercial development of this property. Efforts to resolve this situation with the three affected municipalities should be initiated.

MIXED USE AREA

The Town of Middlefield Center Study Master Plan, prepared in October of 2015, proposes various strategies within the study area to enhance an existing mixed use area which has residential, commercial, recreational, governmental and other institutional uses within a relatively small geographic area. The strategies include(1) creating walking paths, (2) establishing standards for vertical elements, such as ornamental street signs, light poles, fences and street tree plantings, (3) developing new façade standards for commercial buildings, (4) preparing an overall Master Plan for the Center area to review additional land which could provide expanded development opportunities and allow for path and bike path access from Main Street to the park, (5) contacting the railroad to determine what options are available for a sidewalk/path across the tracks for pedestrian and bike access, (6) designing gateway signs and installing them at the Town Green and the intersection at Long Hill, (7) creating a town-wide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to increase accessibility and walkability, (8) consider creating a Village District for the Center area which would allow higher density mixed use with architectural standards and recommending a change to the State Plan of Conservation and Development to reclassify the Center Area as a Priority Investment Area.

A more detailed discussion of the Middlefield Center Study Master Plan follows the discussion of the RAD designation of Proposed Land Use.

OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION AREAS

The areas designated on the Plan of Conservation and Development include a variety of resources identified through the planning process. The following resources are generally included under this land use designation.

1. Inland wetlands and watercourses, along with a 100-foot buffer in areas. In water supply watershed areas, a 200-foot buffer is included.
2. Flood hazard areas – 500-year frequency storms.
3. Slope in excess of 15 percent adjacent to and/or abutting inland wetlands and watercourses.
4. Beseck Mountain easterly slope identified as having shallow to bedrock soils and/or slope in excess of 15 percent.
5. Existing open space owned in fee or less than fee (Conservation Agricultural Preservation easements) by the Town of Middlefield, State of Connecticut and Conservation Organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Rockfall Foundation, etc.
6. Existing private golf courses and major recreation areas.
7. Water company land owned by the City of Middletown.

8. Land adjacent to existing open space and recreation areas which would augment the existing resources.
9. Areas identified as being of special concern by the DEEP's natural diversity database.
10. Public and private cemeteries.
11. Areas identified as having high priority as a wildlife corridor.
12. Power line corridors and a 100-foot buffer to them, where possible.
13. Water supply watershed land not owned by the City of Middletown.
14. Lands that enhance public passive recreational use opportunities.
15. Vistas and views that define Middlefield's character.

RECREATION, AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT (RAD)

This proposed District encompasses approximately 1,500-plus acres and is, for the most part, contiguous. It includes the following properties:

1. Indian Springs Golf Course
2. John J. Herden Regional Training Camp
3. Powder Ridge/Whitewater Mountain Resorts of Connecticut, Inc. Recreation Area
4. Lyman Farm and Golf Courses, along with other property in their ownership
5. Nutmeg Beagle Club
6. Miscellaneous other properties

This area has developed as a unique blend of forest, agricultural, recreational, commercial and limited residential uses since the first Plan of Development was adopted in 1960. It has several enterprises in the list of the top 10 taxpayers and the uses generate limited cost to the town. As a whole, the various uses and activities reinforce each other and create a unique character that benefits all of them. This historical pattern has helped protect the rural, scenic and natural resource base of Middlefield and is considered as a model for the future. It is anticipated that the recreation component, along with related commercial elements including tourism, will continue to grow and should be encouraged.

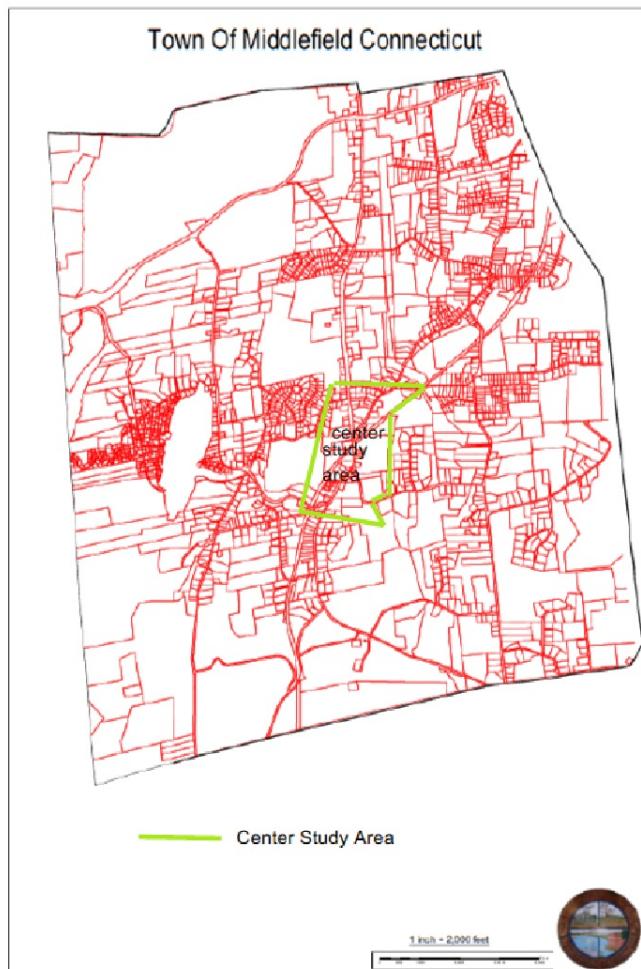
MIDDLEFIELD CENTER STUDY

The Economic Development Commission of the Town of Middlefield retained LADA, P.C. Land Planners to coordinate a visioning workshop to look at the Middlefield Town Center and recommend ways that the center could be improved. The initial discussions focused on expanding the visual identity of the Center to encourage economic growth and civic pride.

LADA, P.C. Land Planners (LADA) of Simsbury, CT was retained to facilitate the workshop and start the process to develop a Middlefield Center Master Plan for potential use by the town for grant applications to identify improvements to be funded in the town budget or by grants.

The LADA team consisted of Principal Terri-Ann Hahn, members of the LADA staff and students from the University of Hartford Architecture Department.

Middlefield Center was defined by the EDC as the properties along Jackson Hill Road from the Town Hall to the intersection with Main Street, along Main Street from the cemetery to the intersection with Long Hill Road at Peckham Park as shown on the map.



As noted by the Project for Public Spaces, in the book entitled, *How to Turn a Place Around*, (2001), the town center provides a critical social and economic role in our communities. It provides the location for much of our lives and consists of a variety of public places.

"Public places are a stage for our public lives. They are parks where celebrations are held, where marathons end, where children learn the skills of a sport, where the seasons are marked and where cultures mix. They are the streets and sidewalks in front of homes and businesses where friends run into each other and where exchanges both social and economic take place. They are the 'front porches' of our public institutions, city halls, libraries and post offices where we interact with each other and with government. When towns (paraphrased) have thriving public spaces, residents have a strong sense of community; conversely, when they are lacking, they may feel less connected to each other."

The Middlefield Center area contains all of the four critical elements of a successful center area:

- Institutional/Municipal Uses – Town Hall, Community Center, Library, church and firehouse
- Public Space/Recreation – Peckham Park
- Commercial Uses – pizza, offices, post office, barber shop, etc.
- Residential – single-family homes, some rental units

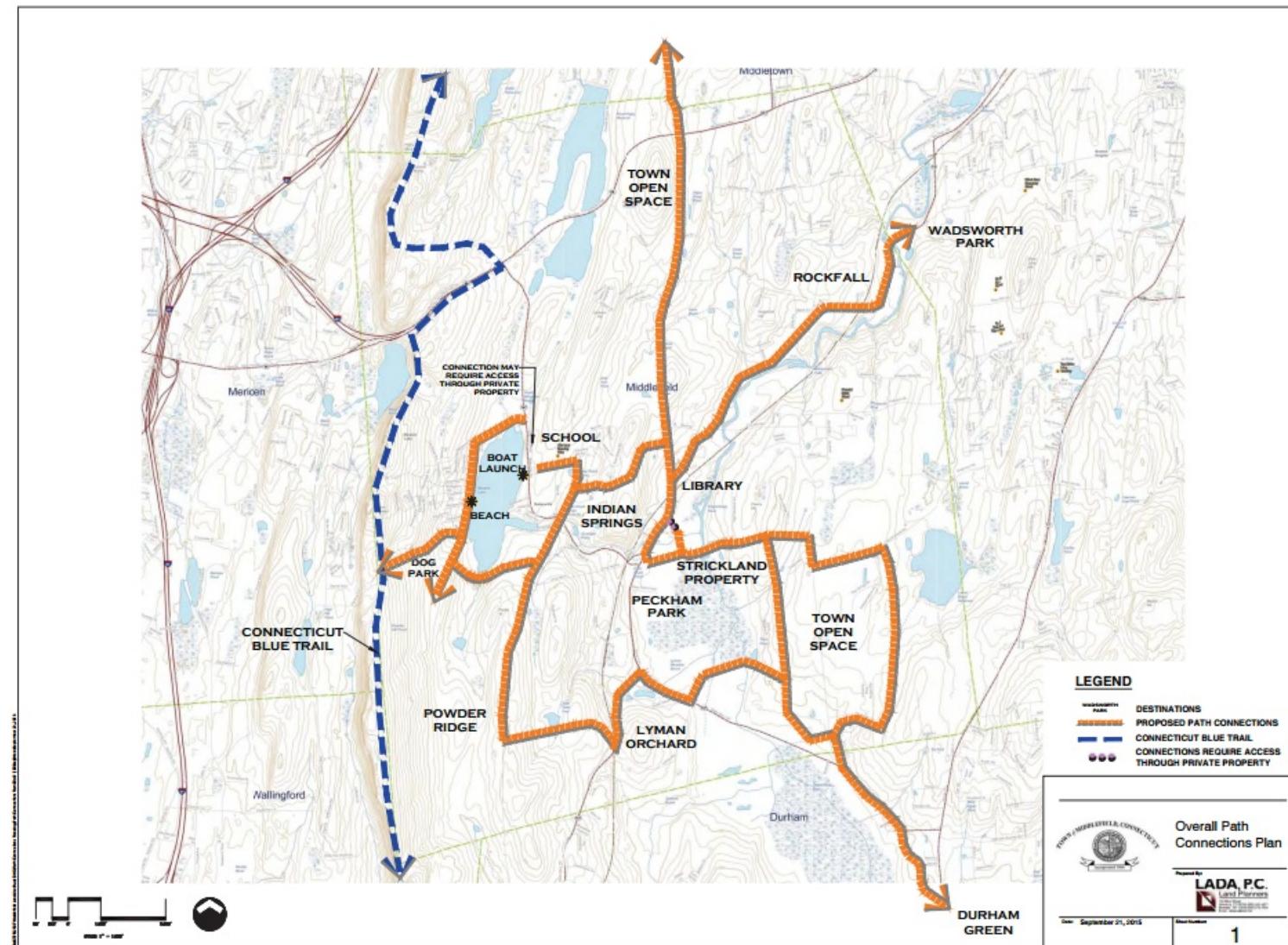
The existence of these elements establishes a fine and vibrant mix of uses where, in another community, they might contribute to a center with significant visual cohesion and vibrancy. However, in Middlefield, these uses are far from one another, are not within sight of each other due to the road configuration, are not walkable due to the lack of walking paths and are not visually connected by color, style or vertical elements. The visual environment of the center, while not problematic as it may be in some communities, simply lacks a sense of identity and visual resonance one would hope for in a community. The visual environment is a critical component to the sense of place for the center and its economic success. As noted by the Urban Land Institute, there are seven Principles of Place-Making noted in the book, *Creating a Vibrant City Center*, of which five apply here. Each one needs reinforcement in Middlefield Center.

Foster a distinctive identity
Encourage variety and interest
Ensure visual and functional continuity
Emphasize high quality
Provide for comfort

The Public Workshop was held on April 1, 2015 at the Community Center. The workshop was noticed in the paper and letters were sent to the various town Boards and Commissions. The Economic Development Commission (EDC) was the sponsor of the workshop. After signing in, participants visited a series of stations set up around the room where they were asked a variety of questions. Mr. William Warner, Chairman of the EDC, led the workshop with opening remarks. Terri Hahn, principal of LADA, P.C. Land Planners, then led the discussion using a Powerpoint presentation and instant results rating system.

As a result of the survey questions and working with the Middlefield EDC, the following town center plans were developed that detail an overall path connection plan, a center circulation plan, town green walking paths and improvements and a concept plan for the redevelopment opportunity for mixed use development at 444 Main Street.

Overall Path Connection Plan



Middlefield Center is envisioned to have a defined walking and bike path system which provides a safe and attractive path system to connect the municipal, institutional, commercial and recreational uses in the center. The path would include a defined ground plane surface, such as stone dust or other surface depending on budget, and periodic ornamental lights in a traditional fixture to reflect input from the workshop and path signage. The center system is part of an Overall Path Connections Plan which connects all the parts of town and various uses, such as schools, town open space, other uses such as Lyman Orchards and Powder Ridge.

Center Circulation Plan



This plan highlights the recommended locations for a walking path to connect the various town buildings and area around the green as well as extensions to Route 66, Rockfall, Peckham Park, Strickland and toward Lyman Orchards. Gateway signs are also noted as well as preferred spacing for ornamental light poles.

Town Green-Walking Paths and Improvements



This plan highlights a loop system around and through the green, connecting the municipal buildings and crosswalks and paths to the library and church. The connections across to the latter two uses across Main Street and into the property will require additional design to deal with a lack of sidewalks within those properties. Views 1 and 2 show what the potential walking path, light fixtures and gateway signage on the green could look like. View 4 shows the extension of the path across the railroad tracks and heading toward the commercial core at Strickland Road.

Potential Development Option for 444 Main Street



The property at 444 Main Street was evaluated for potential as a mixed use commercial development. The EDC considered soils maps, flood maps, wetlands maps and other data available from the CTECO website. Using an aerial from that website, options were considered regarding the size and configuration of buildings as well as potential uses. The Site Plan, shown on Sheet 4 and in Views 5 and 6, illustrates one potential development option. In this option, a loop system is created to link the parking areas and provide multiple points of access. A number of smaller (1,800 to 4,000 square foot) footprints are shown to create an expansion of commercial uses. These uses could include office or retail on the first floor and office above. Two larger buildings are also shown, one is a two- to three-story 8,400 square foot footprint building intended to be residential units to help increase the population living in the center. The final building is a 6,000 square foot footprint building which could be commercial below and residential above or allow for larger office use. The parking shown is based on site conditions and does not reflect the current zoning. One important aspect should also be noted – the new development includes walkways which connect from the street in multiple locations and walkways are provided throughout the parking areas connecting to each building and to the overall path system heading toward Strickland Road. These interconnections reflect the high level of importance that the EDC felt would be required to create a walkable center. The buildings would be consistent with the residential architecture in the center with peaked roofs, porches and dormers to reduce the sense of building height. A focal building element or natural tree grouping should be provided to terminate the view down the new parking lot drive as shown.

Recommendations

The following recommendations and next steps for implementation were prepared based on the study and workshop that was conducted.

1. The existing pre-1950's single-family home architecture is considered to be visually attractive and should be used as style precedents for future architectural guidelines. Architectural guidelines should be developed for both commercial and residential new construction. These guidelines should also include elements which address additions and rehabilitation of existing buildings.
2. The use of period-appropriate ornaments (materials, shutters, gingerbread, colors, etc.) is preferred to a plain façade. White paint/siding is considered to be consistent with the New England look preferred by the participants. Other colors may be appropriate, but limited use is preferred.
3. Roof line changes, gable ends facing the street, dormers and other period-appropriate methods to reduce the view of the roof from the street are preferred.
4. Walking paths should be provided to connect the Town Hall with the Community Center and the Town Green and then connect the church and library with the south side from the Town Green to Peckham Park.
5. Standards for vertical elements, such as ornamental street signs, light poles, fences and street tree plantings, should be defined and set in place as funding allows. Solar-powered light poles are available in most styles.
6. New façade standards for commercial buildings should be developed. A façade improvement program can be developed on the Hebron model to provide updates to materials, parking and landscaping.
7. Prepare an overall Master Plan for the Center area to review additional land which could provide expanded development opportunities and allow for path and bike path access from Main Street to the park.
8. Contact the railroad to determine what options are available for a sidewalk/path across the tracks for pedestrian and bike access.
9. Gateway signs should be designed and installed at the Town Green and the intersection at Long Hill. Other signs to consider would be to enhance the visual presence of Peckham Park, connections to other parts of town and bike paths and for the municipal buildings.
10. Create a town-wide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to increase accessibility and walkability within the whole town.
11. Consider creating a Village District for the center area which would allow higher-density mixed use with architectural standards.
12. Update the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development to include this study and recommend a change to the State Plan of Conservation and Development to reclassify the Center Area as a Priority Investment Area.

