



## CITY PLAN DEPARTMENT MEMO

**To:** Route 34 West MDP Advisory Committee Members (see list attached)  
**From:** Susmitha Attota  
**Date:** February 20, 2009  
**Subject:** Route 34 West MDP Second Stakeholder Meeting-Conducted on February 10, 2009- Summary

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### **List of Attendees**

Approximately 20 people attended the meeting including City and State officials, local institutions, community organizations, business owners and residents.

### **Format of the Meeting**

The Cecil Group and Stantec from the planning consultant team led the team's presentation and subsequent discussions. The meeting started with team introductions, an overview of current market conditions and a presentation of alternative planning concepts for the Rte. 34 Corridor parcels. After a brief round of general discussion and the distribution of a handout asking for comments and feedback from the audience, the presentation continued with a summary of proposed draft transportation and economic development recommendations. Then a general discussion took place, in which comments were taken from the attending meeting participants.

### **Summary of the Presentation**

Based on the feedback received on the third workshop, Alternative A has been eliminated from further discussion. Alternatives B and C have been further revised based on the input received and presented as Concept Study 1 and Concept Study 2 at the second stakeholder meeting. The City's proposed housing and economic development initiatives within the context area (neighboring area) of the corridor were also discussed, as indicated in the presentation material. The advantages of keeping both North Frontage Road and Legion Avenue as a one-way pair and the advantages and disadvantages of creating a Special Services District for the corridor were also discussed. They have also shared with the advisory committee members examples of various building types in New Haven that are similar to those recommended in Concept Studies 1 and 2.

### **Elements of Concept Study 1 and Concept Study 2:**

The proposed distribution of uses along the corridor varies from one concept study to the other, and among the specific segments of the corridor. One of the studies envisions the potential development of medical/commercial offices and health care services/research space on the blocks located closer to Howe Street (Concept Study 1), while the other study illustrates the potential development of a more diversified mix of uses such as mid-density housing and office buildings within the same area (Concept Study 2).

Both concept studies underscore the potential for residential development west of Orchard Street. However, one concept emphasizes a potential concentration of neighborhood scale retail uses and a small grocery store between Ella Grasso Boulevard and Sherman Avenue, while the other concept shows a lesser amount of retail uses in the same area. The concepts also differ in the type of residential buildings they show.

Concept Study 1 illustrates the potential development of several mixed use buildings along North Frontage Road, which would be characterized by the presence of retail uses at the ground floor

level and residential units on upper floors. Concept Study 2 shows a lesser concentration of mixed use buildings along North Frontage Road, with ground floor retail uses clustered around the intersections of Ella Grasso Boulevard and Sherman Avenue. Other residential buildings would include a variety of building types such as low-scale single- and two-family houses, townhouses and walk-up units; and mid-scale residential buildings generally four-story tall.

A common feature shared by the two concepts is a proposed community building to host a series of community development programs and cultural/civic activities, job training and adult education, recreation and other community services. The creation of this community building (or a substitute space in a new development) could be associated to a public open space, such as a neighborhood park or a public square. In both concept studies, a cluster of community services is proposed at the intersection of Legion Avenue and Orchard Street. It might even be possible to incorporate the adjacent elementary school building on Orchard Street and the neighboring high school into a larger civic/educational/recreational campus serving the adjacent communities of West River, Dwight and Hill near the point where the three neighborhoods converge.

The two concept studies also share a vision for the creation of a linear park along North Frontage Road, transforming its northern edge into a continuous green corridor that would provide for enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to West River. The development of neighborhood scale infill housing could serve to complement the residential character along both sides of Parmalee Avenue.

The diagrams attached in the following pages illustrate both concepts in terms of potential building types and distribution, including notes describing potential land use along different segments of the corridor (predominant, acceptable and undesirable uses). Additional diagrams represent the envisioned urban design character, vehicular circulation and parking, pedestrian circulation and open space for each concept study.

Overall, the land use program assumed for potential new development along the corridor includes the following estimates of building area:

- 790,000 square feet of residential uses (400- 600 units including a variety of unit types)
- Approximately 250,000 square feet of medical/office and research space
- 80,000 square feet of commercial/retail uses (neighborhood scale retail, possibly including a small grocery store)

The following chart summarizes the key characteristics of each alternative concept study with the intention of facilitating the comparison between the two:

<b>Planning Element</b>	<b>Concept Study 1</b>	<b>Concept Study 2</b>
Land use character between Ella Grasso Boulevard and Sherman Avenue	<p><u>Predominant:</u> Mixed use (ground floor retail and residential on upper floors)</p> <p><u>Acceptable:</u> Medium scale retail, small grocery store, low-density residential use, park</p>	<p><u>Predominant:</u> Low- and mid-density residential use (neighborhood scale infill housing, townhouses and four- to six-story buildings)</p> <p><u>Acceptable:</u> Mixed-use (ground floor retail and residential on upper floors), park</p>
Land use character between Sherman Avenue and Orchard Street	<p><u>Predominant:</u> Mixed use (ground floor retail and residential on upper floors)</p> <p><u>Acceptable:</u> Community services building, mixed use (ground floor retail and residential on upper floors), park</p> <p><u>Predominant:</u> Office/medical use (commercial, health care services, research)</p>	<p><u>Predominant:</u> Low- and mid-density residential use (neighborhood scale infill housing, townhouses and four- to six-story buildings)</p> <p><u>Acceptable:</u> Community services building, park</p> <p><u>Predominant:</u> Office/medical use (commercial, health care services, research)</p>
Land use character between Orchard Street and Howe Street	<u>Acceptable:</u> Mid-density residential, neighborhood scale retail)	<u>Acceptable:</u> Mid-density residential, neighborhood scale retail)
Urban design character	Continuous building edges along North Frontage Road (medium density residential and mixed use); softer porous edges along Legion Avenue (townhouses and walk-up residential buildings)	Continuous building edges along North Frontage Road (medium density residential and mixed use); softer porous edges along Legion Avenue (townhouses and walk-up residential buildings)
Vehicular circulation and parking	<p>Two-way circulation on both North Frontage Road and Legion Avenue</p> <p>New streets are proposed connecting Auburn and Greenwood across the corridor, and half way through the block located</p>	<p>North Frontage Road and Legion Avenue work as a pair, with traffic on North Frontage heading west and traffic on Legion Avenue heading east</p> <p>New streets are proposed connecting Greenwood</p>

	<p>between Sherman and Tyler</p> <p>A pedestrian/bicycle shared path will be provided in the linear park along North Frontage Road; a bicycle lane will be provided along the south edge of Legion Avenue</p> <p>Concentration of retail and commercial uses would require the development of parking structures at several locations along the corridor</p>	<p>and Vine across the corridor; half way through the block located between Sherman and Tyler, and half way between Tyler and Ella Grasso Boulevard</p> <p>Bicycle lanes will be provided along the north edge of North Frontage Road and the south edge of Legion Avenue</p> <p>Concentration of retail and commercial uses would require the development of parking structures on the blocks east of Orchard Street</p>
<p>Pedestrian circulation and open space</p>	<p>Pedestrian circulation is focused around the block perimeter with pedestrian crossings at signalized street intersections</p> <p>Neighborhood scale public spaces and outdoor seating areas at the intersections with Sherman Avenue and Orchard Street</p> <p>A linear park along the north edge of North Frontage Road will provide for enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to West River</p>	<p>Pedestrian circulation is available along the block perimeter; however, an internal pedestrian spine and open space is intended to interconnect the residential blocks west of Orchard Street</p> <p>Neighborhood park along Orchard Street, with an opportunity to integrate existing school facilities with recreational open space in a community oriented service campus</p>

**Comments**

- Of the two planning concepts presented, Concept Study 2 makes more emphasis on residential development than Concept Study 1, and seems to knit the two sides of the corridor together.
- In Concept Study 1, retail may set a “barrier” between the two neighborhoods located north and south of the corridor.
- In thinking about the design of housing along the corridor, it will be important to consider the kind of building materials that will be employed as part of the plan.
- Regarding use of materials, the plan will incorporate design standards that will possibly build upon the type of materials currently used in the surrounding built areas; design review will likely be a requirement of permit approvals.
- Concept Study 1 fits into what the neighborhood has been asking for – a mix of residential and neighborhood retail uses.
- As part of the preferred planning concept, some segment of the corridor should show retail/ commercial development.

- The concept of incorporating a linear open space along the residential blocks is good, as well as the idea of incorporating parks.
- It will be important to make sure that parks and open space are lively and designed in an inviting way; people don't use "planned" open spaces.
- In planning for a preferred concept, does any of the alternative concept studies lend better to incremental development than the other?
- In the proposed street sections for North Frontage Rd. and Legion Ave., travel lanes should be kept at 11 feet wide, and the extra space that is generated from the existing cross section, should be used to provide a shoulder.
- Turn lanes should be kept at 10 feet wide, and any extra space should be used to add shoulders.
- In Britain, pedestrian bridges are added to places where bus stops are located. Perhaps some could be considered along the corridor.
- Has the traffic that will be added by the Yale New Haven Cancer Center and the Gateway projects been taken into consideration when drafting the corridor sections? [The team responded yes]
- Has the traffic that the City's garage generates (going to Temple then to North Frontage Rd.) has been taken into account?
- The MDP intends to set a standard that a minimum standard of intersection Level of Service operations (LOS) D be required at all intersections on the corridor.
- The planning consultant team will need to substantiate for the next meeting how the proposed shared bike path works, and how the bicycles cross Route 10.
- The shared bike path will need to be carefully separated from vehicular traffic by a tree line or streetscape.
- Current traffic signals are synchronized to favor east-west rather than north-south movement.
- The coordination of signal times could be programmed to adjust the speed along the corridor as the day progresses.

**CURRENT HOUSING PLANS WITHIN THE CONTEXT**  
**AREA FOR ROUTE 34 WEST**

**A. City of New Haven Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) Local Action Plan**

- The Hill, West River, and Dwight neighborhoods have been identified as targeted neighborhoods along with several other neighborhoods in the city under the City of New Haven Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) Local Action Plan. These targeted neighborhoods include the greatest percentage of home foreclosures; the highest percentages of homes funded by subprime mortgage related loans; and are likely to face a significant rise in foreclosures. However, these targeted neighborhoods are chosen not merely because of the risk they pose to neighborhood stabilization but also because of their ability to create greater chance for success if the NSP funds are invested in them because of on-going and previous City investments.
- The City of New Haven received \$3.2 million through HUD's Housing and Economic Recovery (HERA) Act of 2008 to implement the City of New Haven NSP Local Action Plan (hereafter called as the Local Action Plan) by addressing foreclosed and abandoned properties.
- With this funding, the City is planning to acquire foreclosed, vacant (bank-owned) homes and rehabilitate them to provide a mix of affordable and well-managed rental and homeownership housing units in the first phase.
- The timeline for the implementation of the funds in the first phase is 90 days from the date of receipt as established in the State's 2008 Action Plan Substantial Amendment for the NSP.
- For the next phase of implementing the Local Action Plan, the City intends to avail additional funding from HUD to more stringently enforce the Housing Code and create post-ownership counseling opportunities for the homeowners of the rehabilitated homes that would help in preventing further foreclosures that destabilize these neighborhoods.
- The City is also planning to acquire occupied foreclosed properties to create maximum impact in neighborhood stabilization efforts in the next phase.
- For code enforcement, the City has already re-examined the existing graffiti and anti-blight ordinances that is enforced through the Livable City's Initiative (LCI) Division as a first step. This has resulted in the development of new, improved ordinances approved by the Board of Aldermen and recommendations for changes to the enabling Connecticut General Statutes (CGS).
- The City has also already created an existing up-to-date database on foreclosed and abandoned properties city-wide through collaboration with the ROOF (Real Options for Overcoming Foreclosures) Team.
- The City also adopted a policy of no new construction projects with city funds within these neighborhoods, for up to one year, so that these NSP funds could be used effectively.

**B. Homeownership Counseling by ROOF:**

- The ROOF (Real Options Overcoming Foreclosure) team is a collaboration of non-profit and for-profit partners such as the Greater New Haven Community Loan Fund, Yale Law School Clinic, Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven and DataHaven.
- They are currently conducting extensive outreach and assistance activities as a response to overcome the foreclosure crisis. (One of the members of the ROOF Team was also present at our second workshop for Route 34 West MDP to discuss their on-going efforts on overcoming foreclosure crisis).

**C. Proposal for a New Form Based Zone on the Vacant Parcels and Amendments to the Existing Zoning in the Surrounding Area:**

- The City of New Haven has also applied for funding through the Home Connecticut (CT) Technical Assistance Grant Application to hire a planning and zoning consulting team to analyze the existing zoning and existing housing structures and development within the West River, Dwight, and Hill neighborhoods that surround the Route 34 West corridor.
- This funding will be utilized to primarily analyze the existing affordable housing structures and their current zoning requirements such as setbacks, maximum height allowed, densities, etc., which would then enable the consultant to propose any amendments to these zoning requirements to encourage the creation of a mix of uses within these structures, and develop zoning incentives to include affordable housing in future developments on the now-vacant parcels, as well as within the context area..





