

Route 34 Concept Plan

The City of New Haven recently completed a concept plan to revitalize the Route 34 corridor. In recent years, the City and State of Connecticut agreed to cancel highway construction projects along Route 34 in favor of an economic and community development program. These program goals are to expand the tax base, reconnect neighborhoods, create jobs, preserve open space and enhance pedestrian safety. In 2007 - 2008, the City continues to work with state and community partners to implement this new vision for the corridor.

Project History

Between 1966 and 1970, the State of Connecticut acquired 26 acres of land to build the Route 34 connection between downtown New Haven and the valley communities. In New Haven, the section connecting Interstates 95 and 91 was completed and operates in part as a limited access highway. West of the Air Rights Garage, approximately 600 families and 65 businesses were displaced to make room for future highway expansion. However, in the early 1970s, the Connecticut Department of Transportation did not build this second phase in part due to community opposition. In the 1980s, Legion Avenue and North Frontage Road (a pair of one-way streets) were developed as a transition between the highway and Route 10 (Ella Grasso Boulevard). In 2004, the State agreed not to further expand Route 34 and instead deeded the vacant land to the City for development purposes.



Route 34 Today

The Route 34 corridor is a long and narrow stretch of vacant land which separates the West River, Dwight and Hill neighborhoods. The connector and frontage roads carry approximately 30,000 vehicles per day. There are six parcels within the corridor, ranging from 2.4 to 6.3 acres. Surface parking lots and passive open spaces characterize much of the current landscape. Land use on the north side of the corridor is generally residential. On the south side of the corridor, there is a mix of parking, mixed residential uses and a cemetery. West River Memorial Park is located across Ella Grasso Boulevard and the City's Peace Garden frames the entrance to Route 34 from Route 10. Commercial activity adjacent to the corridor is limited, although the eastern end borders the City's medical district and offers many opportunities for new and compatible development.



Concept Plan & Implementation

The concept plan was developed over the course of 2005 and 2006 by the consultant team of RKG Associates, Svigals + Partners, LLP, Bartram and Cochran, Diversified Technology Consultants and Wilbur Smith Associates. The consultant team worked closely with City officials and concerned residents / neighborhood associations to develop a plan that is economically feasible and in keeping with the urban landscape of the surrounding neighborhoods. The plan calls for a mix of residential, retail/commercial and bio-medical uses, along with some structured parking.



As proposed, the development strategy includes a total of 1.1 million s.f. of new development comprised of 141 mid-rise units, 179 townhouse units, 164 loft units, 124 multi-family units, 12 cottages, 86,600 SF of commercial/retail, 229,000 SF of bio-medical space, and 1,958 structured parking spaces. When fully implemented, the project investment of is \$342 million is expected to generate over \$225 million in assessed value and over \$9.6 million in property taxes annually. In addition, an estimated 730 new permanent jobs will be created separate from the construction-related employment.

To implement this concept, the City is preparing a Municipal Development Plan (MDP). An MDP enables the City to address the corridor's infrastructure challenges and to introduce design and reuse controls in keeping with the overall concept. For example, new streets and traffic calming measures seek to restore a neighborhood scale to the corridor. Likewise, utility investments strive to equalize the development cost for Route 34 with other development opportunities in the state and region.

Community Outreach

The West River Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) was designated in 2000 with a specific emphasis on redevelopment of the Route 34 corridor. The City has worked closely with the NRZ and other community interests on development of the concept plan. In addition, the Dwight Community Management Team has participated in the planning process. The Board of Aldermen was briefed on the recommendations in October, 2006. In 2007, the City and a subcommittee of the NRZ have scheduled quarterly check-ins to review progress on the Municipal Development Plan.

Development Status

Since the highway project was cancelled, the City has worked to plan and develop the corridor in keeping with overall city policies. The following timeline highlights key milestones:

- 2004: City acquires Route 34 Corridor from the State of Connecticut
- 2004: The \$35 million Pfizer Clinical Research Facility (75,000 s.f.) opens at 1 Howe Street.
- 2005: City initiates concept planning project with consultant team headed by RKG Associates.
- 2006: Yale-New Haven Hospital and City sign Development Agreement which includes development of a new 170,000 s.f. research / office building adjacent to the Air Rights Garage and a new parking facility with retail, commercial and housing components at "Lot E" between Dwight and Howe Streets.
- 2006: Concept plan completed and presented to the Board of Aldermen.
- 2007: City initiates an effort to designate the area as a Municipal Development Plan

2008: Anticipated completion date for MDP Process, Issue Requests for Proposals

Documents

For more information on the Route 34 project, the following documents are available on-line:

Route 34 Corridor Reuse Project: General Community Meeting #2, October, 2005

Route 34 Project Planning: Presentation to the New Haven Board of Aldermen, October, 2006

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