

# Norwalk Innovation Places

Strategic Plan / March 2017



**NORTHEAST  
INNOVATION**  
Local Communities. Big Ideas.

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# Acknowledgments

## **Northeast Community Innovation Corp.**

**Barry Schwimmer**, President

**Peter Propp**, Managing Director

## **Regional Plan Association**

**Melissa Kaplan-Macey**, Connecticut Director

**Sarah Serpas**, Associate Planner

**Ben Oldenburg**, Senior Graphic Designer

**Kellan Cantrell**, Intern Planner

**Renae Widdison**, Intern Planner

## **Kevin Dwarka LLC, Land Use & Economic Consulting**

**Kevin Dwarka**, Managing Principal

**Natalie Quinn**, Associate

**Robert Joseph**, Planner

## **City of Norwalk**

**Mayor Harry Rilling**

**Laoise King**, Chief of Staff

## **Norwalk Redevelopment Agency**

**Tim Sheehan**, Executive Director

**Elizabeth Stocker**, Director of Economic Development

**Tami Strauss**, Director of Community Planning Development

## **Norwalk Community College**

**Ann Rogers**, Executive Director, Norwalk College Community Foundation

**Kathryn Senie**, Director of Institutional Advancement and Strategic Planning

## **Norwalk Public Library**

**Christine Bradley**, Director

## **Community Partners**

**CPTV**

**Fairfield County Makers Guild**

**Norwalk Chamber of Commerce**

**Norwalk Maritime Aquarium**

**Stepping Stones Museum for Children**

**Wall Street Theater**

# Vision Statement

*Inspired by the City of Norwalk's outstanding physical, economic, social and educational resources, the Norwalk Innovation District will support development of entrepreneurs, business start-ups, job training programs and creative projects in the food and beverage, digital marketing, media production, making/light manufacturing industries.*

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**Figure 1: SoNo Impact Area**

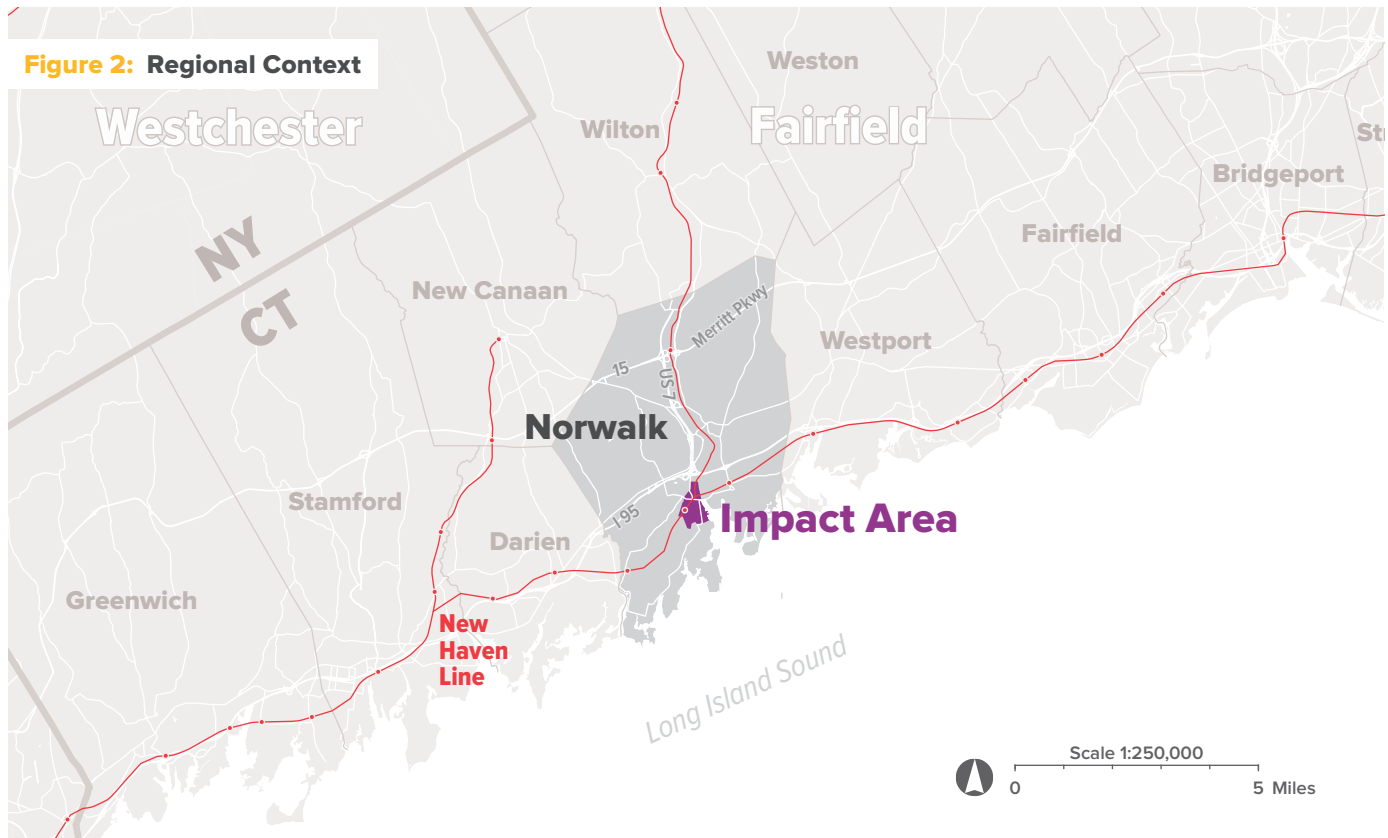
- Census Tract 441
- Impact Area





# Introduction

**Figure 2: Regional Context**



## Why SoNo? Why Now?

South Norwalk, also called SoNo, is Norwalk's largest and most diverse neighborhood. It is located within Census Tract 441 and is typically described as the area bounded by the intersection of West Avenue and North Main Street to the north, the Norwalk River to the east, Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard to the west and Burritt Avenue, Larsen Street and Belle Avenue to the south (see Figure 1). This area is characterized by a vibrant dining and entertainment district, an authentic architectural landscape, and a transit-oriented neighborhood that is connected to the broader region via the South Norwalk Railroad Station. SoNo is home to Norwalk's industrial past and boasts factories, mills and forges, many of which have been converted into housing and commercial space. A recent Wall Street Journal article described SoNo as "a mini version of Manhattan's trendy SoHo neighborhood."<sup>1</sup>

SoNo has been identified as Norwalk's Innovation Place Impact Area because it has the strongest combination of critical factors identified by CT Next as essential to an Innovation Place: proximity to transit, vibrant urban character, entrepreneurial culture and development opportunity. This location was selected based upon technical analysis and stakeholder input, as described in Appendix A- Opportunities Analysis, and discussed in this Strategic Plan.

Over the past two decades, there has been substantial public and private investment in this neighborhood. When the Norwalk Maritime Aquarium opened in South Norwalk in 1988, the area was home to many vacant warehouses and storefronts and there was little pedestrian activity. Over the last 18 years the Aquarium has been an important anchor for the revitalization of the area, bringing people and spurring redevelopment. It has been a somewhat unseen economic engine for the city and the state, infusing \$42 billion per year into Connecticut's economy.<sup>2</sup> Another key catalyst for revitalization has been the area's proximity to both transit and the waterfront. At its western bound-

<sup>1</sup> Lucadamo, Kathleen, *A Mini SoHo in Connecticut*, Wall Street Journal, June 10, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> [www.maritimeaquarium.org/about-us/economic-impact-report](http://www.maritimeaquarium.org/about-us/economic-impact-report)

**Figure 3: Choice Neighborhood**

- Impact Area
- - - Choice Neighborhood





Icon Washington Village rendering



ary, SoNo is served by the South Norwalk train station, which is the area's transit hub. The station provides access to Metro North's New Haven main line and to the Danbury branch line, which extends north and serves the city's larger office parks at the Merritt 7 station. On weekdays, Metro North operates 70 trains between South Norwalk and New York City and 53 trains between Norwalk and New Haven on the main line. On the branch line it operates 14 trains to Danbury and six trains to Waterbury.

On the eastern edge of the neighborhood is the Norwalk River, which provides the public with waterfront access at the Maritime Aquarium and Oyster Shell Park. Many commercial uses along Water Street benefit from access to the waterfront and water views from homes and venues in the neighborhood help to inspire a nautical feel within the neighborhood. Together, these amenities have spurred investment in new retail and restaurants and accompanying streetscape and storefront improvements along Washington and North Main Streets. This thriving district has attracted numerous startups in digital media, marketing and food, including eTouches, Gigmasters, LogicSource, Medi-aTavern, MediaStrom, SoBe Soda and Spiked Seltzer. And the area has seen significant investment in new residential and mixed use development, including the recently opened Iron Works on North Water Street and SoNo Pearl on Washington Street.

Perhaps the single most significant investment currently energizing the neighborhood is a \$30 million federal HUD grant recently awarded to the Norwalk Housing Authority in partner-

ship with the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency and the City of Norwalk through the Choice Neighborhoods program. The grant, which leverages a total of \$414 million in public and private investment, will transform the Washington Village public housing site in South Norwalk into a mixed income community. This project repositions the entire Choice Neighborhoods area<sup>3</sup> to provide a range of housing choice for existing and future residents and increases the area's residential density (see Figure 2). The multiphase project will replace 136 public housing units and create 67 new workforce units and 70 new market rate units on the site, increasing both the density and socio-economic diversity in the area. It also includes significant upgrades to infrastructure, including flood mitigation, pedestrian improvements, broadband infrastructure and a \$1 million community initiative to redesign and improve Ryan Park. In addition, the project is funding a cradle-to-career initiative in collaboration with Norwalk ACTS, a partnership of over 100 civic leaders, educators and organizations that is part of the national StriveTogether network. The first phase of this three-phase project broke ground this fall.

In tandem with this grant award, the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency and the City of Norwalk recently completed a South Norwalk TOD Redevelopment Plan, which provides a blueprint for comprehensive transit oriented development (TOD) across South Norwalk. Specifically, the plan calls for a pedestrian friendly, economically and socially vibrant neighborhood with housing choice and quality urban design that leverages proxim-

<sup>3</sup> Choice Neighborhoods includes the area bounded by Washington, Water and Concord Streets and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

**Table 1: Summary of Proposed Projects Across Project Areas**

Presented below is a summary of the Norwalk Innovation Plan budget, categorized by project area. This document has also been provided as a separate attachment in fulfillment of the application guidelines. The details of the projects within each project area are provided in the Catalytic Projects section of this report and in Appendix B: Catalytic Project Matrix.

Project Area	Annual Partner Contributions	Three Year Partner Contributions	Year 1 Request from CT Next	Year 2 Request from CT Next	Year 3 Request from CT Next	Total Requested from CT Next for Three Years	Total Project Cost
A: Business Attraction & Support		120,000	348,000	365,400	383,670	1,097,070	1,217,070
B: Workspace		224,000	360,000	339,000	354,450	1,053,450	1,322,250
C: Communications and Outreach		150,000	120,000	126,000	132,300	378,300	558,300
D: Placemaking		-	120,000	-	-	120,000	120,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>494,000</b>	<b>828,000</b>	<b>830,400</b>	<b>870,420</b>	<b>2,528,820</b>	<b>3,217,620</b>

ity to transit at the South Norwalk train station. A key element towards achieving this vision is the adoption new mixed use zoning for the entire neighborhood. While there are currently several zones within South Norwalk that allow for a mix of uses, the new proposed zoning will provide for one, unified mixed use zone for the district and includes urban design standards to enhance the quality and character of the neighborhood. This zoning is currently in the approvals process with Norwalk's Zoning Commission.

All these investments described above, which have created a vibrant, urban environment that continues to thrive, grow and build on itself, have focused primarily on strengthening the physical landscape of the neighborhood, taking advantage of proximity to the South Norwalk train station and improving quality of life for residents. An important piece of the puzzle that is still unfolding is the neighborhood's economic future. SoNo boasts a significant array of restaurants and retail uses and attracts large numbers of visitors to the Norwalk Maritime Aquarium, but it hasn't yet become a regional employment center. While successful startups such as Gigmasters, Mediatavern and eTouches call SoNo home, catalyzing more robust innovation and entrepreneurship activity in this neighborhood is an opportunity in waiting. With the other crucial elements of revitalization firmly in place, the time is right to turn attention towards the economy of this thriving neighborhood so that more people not only live and play in SoNo, but they work there too.

Today SoNo is a place where you can walk to the train station. It is a place where the sidewalks and cafes are full of conversation and where arts and cultural events provide opportunities for the chance interactions and conversations that fuel innovation. You can rent an electric bicycle from Pedego SoNo on Water Street and go on a guided mobile tour of the neighborhood or explore on your own. You can shop with a friend or meet a colleague for happy hour. Now is the time to capitalize on these assets and expand the scope of what SoNo can be- a place of innovation where brilliant people are solving big problems and inventing new technology. CT Next's Innovation Places program provides the crucial catalyst for SoNo for the next step in the evolution of this dynamic neighborhood. This Strategic Plan lays out an

action framework for creating the SoNo Innovation Place whose benefits will extend far beyond the neighborhood throughout the City of Norwalk and the region.

## CT Next Innovation Places

*CT Next describes its vision for an Innovation Place as "...an area you can walk to, bike to or take a train to where your mind comes alive with possibilities; where you run into brilliant people solving big problems and inventing new technology; where the sidewalks and cafes are full of conversation; where art events and music venues brim with people making new friends—a place full of ideas."*

The CT Next Innovation Places program is intended to build on the successes of entrepreneurs and innovators in Connecticut and support their work to grow the state's innovation economy. CT Next is part of Connecticut Innovations, a quasi-public entity that provides financing and support for Connecticut's innovative, growing companies. In Summer 2016 CT Next announced a statewide competitive grant program to encourage cities to plan for and implement innovation districts.

In December 2016 Norwalk was awarded a CT Next Innovation Places planning grant to undertake a three-month planning process to develop this Innovation Places Strategic Plan. The planning grant has provided the city with the opportunity to discover and understand emerging conditions, risks and opportunities associated with advancing an innovation economy in Norwalk. It has provided the framework and resources necessary to identify and connect the ideas, missions and investments of the city's anchor institutions, business leaders, innovators and entrepreneurs. And it has allowed Norwalk to evaluate its





physical landscape through the lens of innovation to determine the optimal location within the city where this economy is best suited to grow.

To this end Northeast Community Innovation Corp. (NCIC), in partnership with Norwalk Redevelopment Agency, has created this Strategic Plan document, which identifies how the existing and future contemplated work of anchor institutions, business leaders, innovators, entrepreneurs, agencies, developers and residents in the city relate to and connect with one another around innovation. It provides a solid framework for coordinating and leveraging existing assets and creating new opportunities that build on the successes of all of these players.

For this planning effort, NCIC retained Regional Plan Association and Kevin Dwarka LLC Land Use and Economic Consulting to:

1. Document fiscal conditions, market trends and demographic composition and identify sectoral strengths and weaknesses, job flow patterns and business development entities at a local and regional scale;
2. Identify and evaluate the area's in the city with the strongest access to transit, walkability/pedestrian scale and presence of urban amenities that create the conditions necessary for people to casually interact with one another in an atmosphere that facilitates the generation of ideas;
3. Map underutilized properties that can serve as the building blocks of new economic clusters;
4. Identify growth sectors and catalytic projects; and

5. Recommend strategies for taking advantage of the synergies that exist among stakeholders to fully realize the potential of Norwalk's Innovation District to spark and grow new ideas, businesses and employment.

The details of this technical analysis are provided in Appendix A: Norwalk Innovation District Opportunities Analysis and findings are summarized in this Strategic Plan.

## Planning Process

While SoNo may seem like an intuitive choice for Norwalk's Innovation District given the attention and investment it has received over the past several decades, substantial technical analysis and soul searching went into the selection of this location. As discussed in the *Opportunity Analysis* section of this report, thorough assessment of the strengths, weakness and opportunities for fostering innovation and entrepreneurship within the four census tracts that comprise Norwalk's urban core was conducted to inform this decision. The planning process for Norwalk's Innovation District included documentation of fiscal conditions, market trends and demographic composition of all the neighborhoods within the city's core. It also included a land use and build out analysis to understand the physical and operational assets, opportunities and challenges associated with locating an innovation district within the city's different core neighborhoods. In addition to this neighborhood-level analysis, an economic baseline analysis was undertaken to identify sectoral strengths and weaknesses, job flow patterns and business

development entities at a local and regional scale to determine areas of focus for further developing an innovation economy in Norwalk.

In compliment with this technical analysis, the planning process included engagement of a wide range of stakeholders in numerous conversations across perspectives, organizations and sectors. The purpose of these conversations was to:

1. Develop a vision for innovation in Norwalk;
2. Identify the constellation of entrepreneurs, anchor institutions and community leaders positioned to advance that vision; and
3. Connect the dots between them to leverage existing assets and programs and create new opportunities to develop talent and fuel innovation.

This engagement included a community-wide “Idea Jam,” held on February 15, 2017 at Stepping Stones Museum for Children, roundtable conversations with business leaders and anchor institutions, and one-on-one meetings and calls with entrepreneurs and community leaders as outlined below.

### Idea Jam

At the Idea Jam nearly 70 people participated in three “jam sessions” designed to generate ideas, identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities around accelerating innovation in Norwalk and brainstorm project ideas. Key ideas that came out of this session were that Norwalk’s Innovation Place should:

#### Create:

- ▶ Beehive that fosters “collisions and fusions” among people
- ▶ A critical mass that is deep and diverse
- ▶ A foundational anchor to bring the community together
- ▶ An incubator for innovators with a purpose and mission and public/private partners
- ▶ Co-working spaces
- ▶ Clean manufacturing jobs

#### Connect:

- ▶ Norwalk’s innovators with one another
- ▶ Innovators and entrepreneurs with investors, tax benefits and the support and advice they need to thrive
- ▶ Innovation and education- link education (college and high school) to marine/bio/tech
- ▶ The city’s centers to one another with a more walkable, bikeable Norwalk

#### Enhance:

- ▶ Use of the coast for aquascience, working waterfront, conservation and tourism
- ▶ Food innovation culture

- ▶ Tourism/Norwalk’s role as a destination city
- ▶ Identity, branding and marketing
- ▶ Role of Norwalk Community College in advancing innovation

### Roundtable and Stakeholder Meetings

In addition to the large public Idea Jam, many small group and one-on-one meetings were held over the course of the planning grant period. The purpose of these meetings was to gain a better understanding of the mission, goals and programs of the many organizations, entities and private sector leaders actively engaged in and around Norwalk and the potential synergies between them that can be leveraged to create an Innovation Place. These meetings included:

- ▶ Choice Neighborhoods
- ▶ CPTV
- ▶ DayRiver LTD
- ▶ GGP/SONO Collection
- ▶ Factory Underground Records
- ▶ Greenwave
- ▶ Norm Bloom & Sons Copps Island Oysters
- ▶ Norwalk ACTS
- ▶ Norwalk Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Norwalk Community College
- ▶ Norwalk Maritime Aquarium
- ▶ Norwalk Parking Authority
- ▶ Norwalk Public Library
- ▶ Norwalk Transit District
- ▶ Stepping Stones Museum for Children
- ▶ MediaTavern
- ▶ Modern Media
- ▶ Select Plastics LLC
- ▶ SoNo 50
- ▶ Wall Street Theater

Through the economic baseline analysis and the stakeholder engagement outlined above, a vision for the Norwalk’s SoNo Innovation District emerged. This vision is for the development of entrepreneurs, business start-ups, job training programs and creative projects in tech and non-tech start up, food and beverage, digital marketing, media production and making/light manufacturing industries. Support for growth of innovation and entrepreneurship in these sectors is the basis of this Strategic Plan. The recommendations of this plan provide a roadmap for connecting the dots between Norwalk’s anchor institutions, local and regional innovators and entrepreneurs to realize CT Next’s vision for Innovation Places that will attract high talent growth to high opportunity areas like SoNo.

# Opportunity Analysis

## Overview

Strategically located on the banks of the Norwalk River and anchored by a refurbished Metro North Station, South Norwalk is well-positioned to serve as a regional hub for innovation and entrepreneurship. Economic and demographic trends reveal the potential for growing nascent industries including technology, digital marketing and media, lite industry, and urban farming. A rising culture of entrepreneurialism including new professional service firms and a thriving restaurant culture have helped foster a new spirit of optimism in the business community. An ample supply of historically significant buildings are ripe for adaptive reuse workspaces or housing for a diverse mix of new and existing residents. While SoNo’s train station enables strong regional connections along Metro North’s New Haven line, the district’s fine grain street network creates exactly the kind of pedestrian environment favored by creative businesses and collaborative sectors. Alongside investments in its broadband infrastructure, SoNo truly has the potential to capitalize on its existing assets and become the center of economic innovation not only for Norwalk but for the surrounding region as well.

SoNo is not the only economic opportunity site within Norwalk. North of SoNo, there are at least three other potential areas in Norwalk that could also attract new businesses. However, a careful comparative analysis of these areas concluded that SoNo stands out as the part of Norwalk that is best positioned to succeed as an innovation place because of the density of its various assets (see Appendix A for the Opportunities Analysis).

## Economic and Community Assets

### Economic Assets

Located within a ten minute walk of the SoNo train station, the intersection of Main and Washington Streets serves as the urban center of Norwalk’s vibrant downtown. The mixed use area around this intersection historically supported a wealth of thriving industrial businesses. But today, the area boasts a new generation of commercial establishments ranging from marketing agencies and consulting firms to collaborative work spaces and artisanal restaurants. Recent sectoral data shows that half of the jobs in SoNo fall within four industry sectors including Professional and Technology Services (20%); Accom-

modation and Food (13%); Retail (9%), and Health Care and Social Assistance (8.3%). This breakdown supports the notion that SoNo’s continuing renaissance can be fueled by a variety of businesses including technology and digital firms as well a more public oriented establishments that help to attract new workers and residents. An active commercial atmosphere of restaurants, shops, and entertainment is crucial to creating opportunities for social interaction and collaboration that are the drivers of ingenuity and creative engagement in any innovation district.

**Table 2: SoNo Area Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector**

Sector	Percent of Jobs
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	20.5%
Accommodation and Food Services	12.8%
Retail Trade	9.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	8.3%
Finance and Insurance	6.7%
Information	5.8%
Wholesale Trade	5.3%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	5.3%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	5.3%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	4.8%
Manufacturing	4.4%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	4.4%
Educational Services	1.5%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1.4%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	1.4%
Utilities	1.2%
Public Administration	1.0%
Construction	0.7%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics – Origin Destination Employment Statistics

Employment data shows that SoNo is experiencing a healthy growth in jobs that are concentrated within its higher density core. As of 2014, SoNo was home to just over 3,500 jobs, reflecting an 8.2% increase in jobs since 2002 as shown in Table 3. These jobs include a local workforce that travel into the community every week for work, and thus, play a significant role in the character and human capital of the neighborhood.



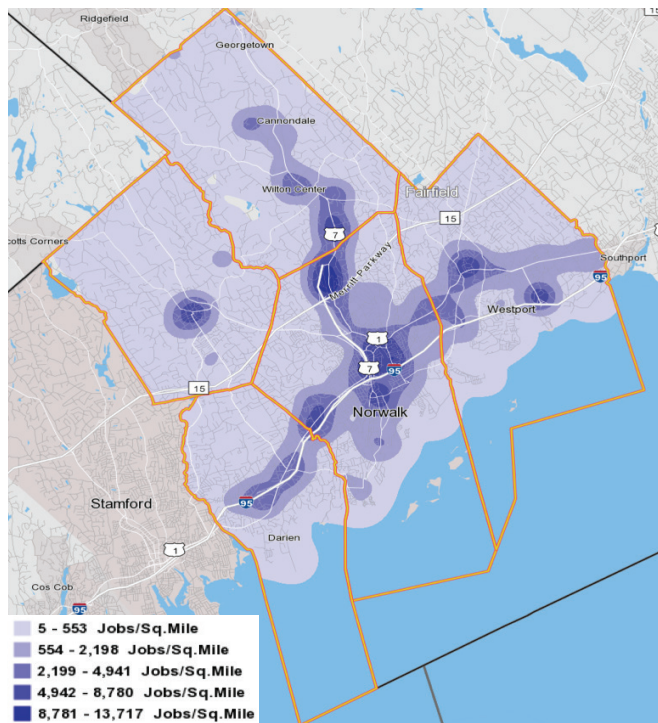
Also, as shown in Figure 4, the City of Norwalk maintains the highest density of jobs within the Norwalk Area Region, with a particularly large cluster of jobs located in SoNo surrounding the South Norwalk Metro-North Train Station.

**Table 3: Table: Total Number of Jobs**

Location	2002	2010/2014	Percentage Change 2000-2010/14
SoNo Candidate Area	3,246	3,513	8.20%
Norwalk Area Region	77,670	82,858	6.70%
City of Norwalk	41,276	41,130	-0.40%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics – Origin Destination Employment Statistics

**Figure 4: Density of Jobs in Norwalk Region**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics – Origin Destination Employment Statistics

## Community Assets

SoNo has a resident population of just over 3,000 people, accounting for just 4% of Norwalk's total population of 87,701 people in 2015. However, in spite of the seeming smallness of its residential population, it should be noted that SoNo's population density is actually double that of the rest of Norwalk, indicating the degree to which this area already serves as dense urban village. This density of people and activity within a concentrated area is one of the key components of a successful innovation place, creating an essential level of activity and opportunity for interaction between people within the district.

**Table 4: Population Density (persons per sq. mile) Between 2011-2015**

SoNo Candidate Area	8,316.20
City of Norwalk	3,836.44

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census and American Community Survey

As noted above, Norwalk supports 3500 workers. A quarter of these workers live within the City of Norwalk. Nearly 9% and 5% of SoNo workers commute in from nearby Stamford and Bridgeport respectively, which are conveniently connected via rail. The remaining 60% of workers commute from various localities across Connecticut and New York City. This level of commuting demonstrates the degree to which SoNo already functions as a regional hub, with a high ability to absorb the transportation needs of a growing workforce by mass transit.

**Table 5: Where SoNo Workers Live, 2014**

	Count	Share
Norwalk city, CT	894	25.4%
Stamford city, CT	314	8.9%
Bridgeport city, CT	171	4.9%
New York city, NY	144	4.1%
Stratford CDP, CT	105	3.0%
Westport CDP, CT	96	2.7%
Trumbull CDP, CT	79	2.2%
Shelton city, CT	67	1.9%
Milford city (balance), CT	64	1.8%
Darien CDP, CT	56	1.6%
All Other Locations	1,523	43.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics – Origin Destination Employment Statistics

The community is notably diverse in terms of its income levels and racial composition. Median income is more than 70K, but there is a tremendous variety in household wages. Meanwhile, more than 30% of the population is non-white. In addition to imbuing the area with a more complex cultural identity, Norwalk's diversity is also an economic asset. Through innovation placemaking, there is potential to support a wide range of businesses, promote global connections, and ensure an equitable approach to economic development. While a major element of the Strategic Plan focuses upon business development, the nurturing of a diverse work force is also a key component of the plan's inclusion of workforce development and skill training programs.

The educational attainment of residents 25 years or older has also improved substantially over the past decade. In the year 2000, 64% of SoNo residents age 25 and older had graduated from high school and only 19% received a bachelor's degree or higher education. According to the most recent data, 83% of SoNo residents now hold a high school diploma and 42% have received a bachelor's or advanced degree. Due to the doubling of SoNo residents with bachelor's degrees or higher over the identified time period, the area now has a slightly higher percentage than Norwalk as a whole (see Table 6).



**Table 6: Educational Attainment in SoNo and Surrounding Region, 2011/15**

Location	Less than High School	High school graduate (includes equivalency)	Some college or Associate's degree	Bachelor's or advanced degree
SoNO Candidate Area	17.10%	30.30%	10.10%	42.40%
Norwalk	11.50%	24.60%	23.00%	41.00%
Norwalk Area Region	7.00%	17.10%	17.90%	58.00%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics – Origin Destination Employment Statistics

In addition to increasing education levels and household incomes, SoNo is also showing itself as a magnet neighborhood for young working adults. As of 2015, more than a quarter of the residents living in SoNo are between the age of 25 and 34 years old. Research shows that this cohort of adults, known as millennials (ages 25-34), tends to favor innovation district characteristics, specifically walkable downtown areas with access to transit and multifamily housing as opposed to single-family suburban neighborhoods. Table 7 shows that SoNo not only has a greater proportion of millennials than Norwalk and the surrounding region, but also that this key population has been growing in SoNo while decreasing in surrounding areas.

**Table 7: Size of Millennial Population (Age 25-34)**

Location	2000	2011/15
SoNo Candidate Area	23.8%	25.8%
City of Norwalk	17.7%	14.7%
Norwalk Area Region	12.6%	9.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census and American Community Survey

## Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The City of Norwalk supports a diversified economic base with strong anchors in healthcare, education, technology, retail, and professional services. As noted in the table below, the City's largest employer is Norwalk Hospital followed by Cablevision and GE Capital. However, the greatest number of employers is found within the retail sector.

**Table 8: Norwalk's Largest Employers**

Rank	Employer	Industry
1	Norwalk Hospital	Healthcare
2	Cablevision	Cable and Internet Provider
3	GE Capital	Industrial and Energy Finance
4	Diageo	Beverage Production
5	Stew Leonard's	Grocery

Source: Connecticut Data Collaborative

**Table 9: Number of Firms within top Industries in Norwalk**

Industry	Number of Employers
Retail Trade	362
Health Care and Social Assistance	284
Construction	255
Finance and Insurance	198
Manufacturing	124
Government	46
Total (includes industries not shown above)	3,376

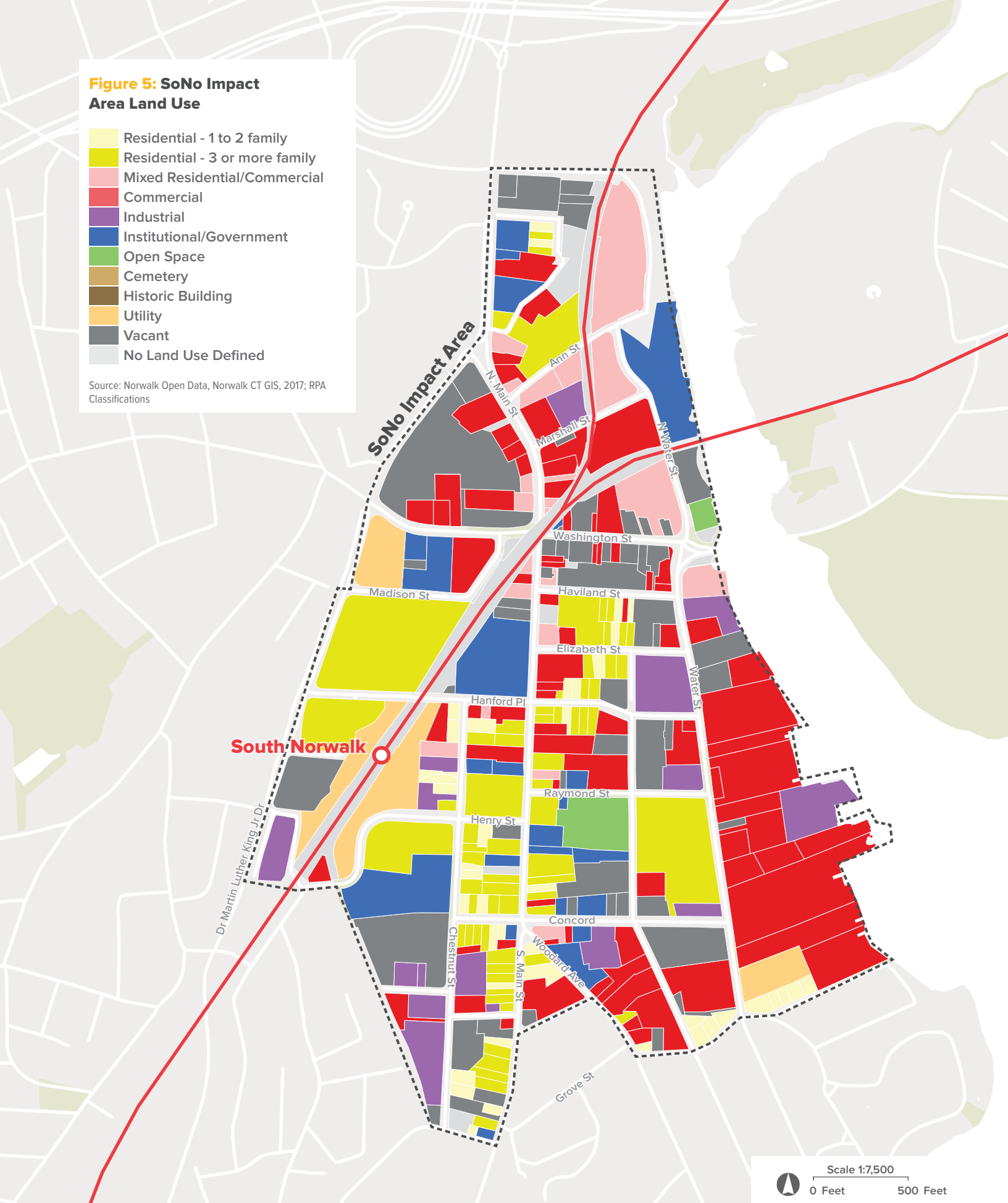
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics – Origin Destination Employment Statistics

Within SoNo itself, the retail sector also appears to be the primary engine of the neighborhood's local economy. Washington and Main Street are lined with an assortment of specialty retail establishments, restaurants, and bars. Although there are reports of high turnover among the restaurants, there are few visible retail vacancies in the SoNo's commercial core. What is not readily apparent, though, from SoNo's street frontage is the increasing attractiveness of SoNo as a place for start-up businesses. The arrival of SoNo spaces offers more affordable work space and flexible leasing arrangements for creative professional in design, advertising, marketing, interactive, publishing and technology. Also, there are also many underutilized buildings and lots that could be repurposed as workspaces for new businesses.

**Figure 5: SoNo Impact Area Land Use**

- Residential - 1 to 2 family
- Residential - 3 or more family
- Mixed Residential/Commercial
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional/Government
- Open Space
- Cemetery
- Historic Building
- Utility
- Vacant
- No Land Use Defined

Source: Norwalk Open Data, Norwalk CT GIS, 2017; RPA Classifications



Scale 1:7,500  
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# Land Use, Zoning & Development Potential

## Land Use

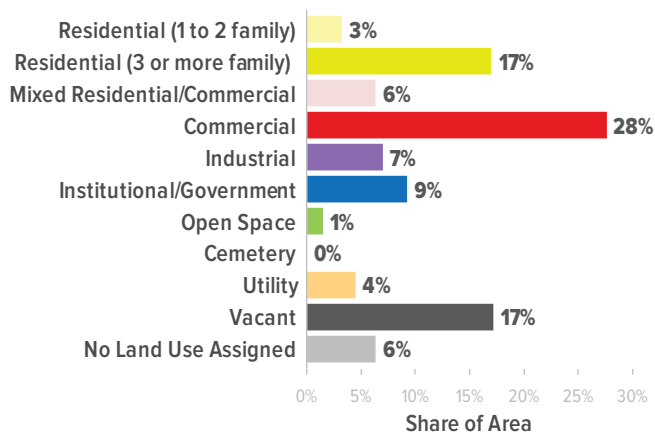
South Norwalk is largely comprised of a mix of residential and commercial uses (see Figure 6). Of the 212 acres that comprise the SoNo impact area, 20% are residential 28% are commercial, 6% are mixed use and 7% are industrial. 17% of the land in the impact area is vacant. Institutional uses and open space account for 9% and 1% of the land respectively. The remaining 4% of land area represents utility infrastructure. 80% of residential land contains higher density development of three or more units (see Table 10 and Figure 6).

**Table 10: SoNo Impact Area Land Use by Acreage**

Land Use	Acres	Share
Residential - 1 to 2 family	5.9	3%
Residential - 3 or more family	30.9	17%
Mixed Residential/Commercial	11.5	6%
Commercial	50.1	28%
Industrial	12.7	7%
Institutional/Government	16.8	9%
Open Space	2.7	1%
Cemetery	0.0	0%
Utility	8.2	4%
Vacant	31.2	17%
No Land Use Assigned	11.6	6%
Total	181.6	100%

Source: Norwalk Open Data, Norwalk CT GIS, 2017; RPA Classifications

**Figure 6: SoNo Impact Area, Share of Acreage by Land Use**



Source: Norwalk Open Data, Norwalk CT GIS, 2017; RPA Classifications

**Figure 7: Housing Development Sites**

- Completed
- Under Construction
- Planned



Commercial development in SoNo, including retail, restaurants and office space, is concentrated along North Main, Washington and Water Streets with an additional concentration of commercial uses at the southern end of the impact area between Woodward Avenue and Day Streets. Residential development is generally concentrated along South Main Street south of Haviland Street and between Ann and North Water Streets in the northern portion of the impact area. Development in this northern area has occurred primarily within the last ten years and includes 108 residential units at the Iron Works, 34 units and 2,600 square feet of commercial space at SoNo Lofts, 81 units at the Corset Factory and 197 units at The Sheffield SoNo, as shown on Table 11.

Reuse potential for the majority of the vacant parcels within the impact area has largely been identified by the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency. These sites include the Webster Street block at the northeastern corner of the impact area, several parcels within the Choice Neighborhoods project area and the former site of Penmar Industries, just south of the South Norwalk train station. The Webster Street block is a key gateway to South Norwalk and a potential mixed use transit-oriented development site. Several parcels within the Choice Neighborhoods area will be redeveloped with mixed income housing, including the existing Washington Village public housing site and 17 & 19 Day Street. 17 & 19 Day Street will be redeveloped as Maritime Village with 69 one- and two-bedroom apartments. An existing industrial building on the site that is used for manufacturing will also be renovated as part of the project. South of the train station the SoNo/One project on the Penmar site is proposed as a 40 unit, six story residential building.



Institutional uses in the impact area include the Norwalk Maritime Aquarium in the northeast corner adjacent to the Norwalk River; Norwalk Public Library's South Norwalk branch on Washington Street; a recently constructed Norwalk Police Department headquarters building on the corner of North Main Street and Hanford Place; and the Columbus Magnet School on Chestnut Street. Other institutions in the neighborhood include several neighborhood churches and a community center on Raymond Street at the northwest corner of Ryan Park. Public open space in the impact area is limited. The largest publicly accessible open space is Ryan Park, a 2.2-acre city-owned neighborhood park, which will receive \$1 million in improvements including landscaping, lighting and enhanced recreational spaces as part of the Choice Neighborhoods project.

**Table 11: Recent Projects in South Norwalk (as of June 2016)**

Name & Address	Project Type	Units of Housing	Status
The Pearl (99 Washington Street)	mixed use	66	Under Construction
The Avrick (14 and 16 North Main Street)	mixed use	8	Construction complete
Washington Village (13 & 20 Day Street)	multi-family	273	Pipeline
Maritime Village (17-19 Day Street)	mixed use	76	Pipeline
11 Chestnut Street	mixed use	17	Under Construction
Iron Works (1 N Water St)	mixed use	108	Completed
SoNo Lofts (10 Ann St	mixed use	34	Completed
Corset Factory (21 Ann St)	multi-family	81	Completed
The Sheffield SoNo (55 N Water St)	mixed use	197	Completed

Source: Norwalk Redevelopment Agency

**Figure 8 : Zoning Map**

-  Zoning Boundary
-  Mixed Use District



## Zoning

The South Norwalk impact area includes seven zoning districts, as shown on Figure 8:

- ▶ South Norwalk Business District
- ▶ SoNo Station Design District
- ▶ Washington Street Design District
- ▶ Neighborhood Business
- ▶ Residential D
- ▶ Industrial 1
- ▶ Marine Commercial

The majority of these districts, which represent 30% of the impact area, including the South Norwalk Business District, SoNo Station Design District, Washington Street Design District and Neighborhood Business District all allow for a mix of commercial and residential development. The Residential D District allows for high density residential development and the Industrial 1 District allows for industrial and commercial uses.

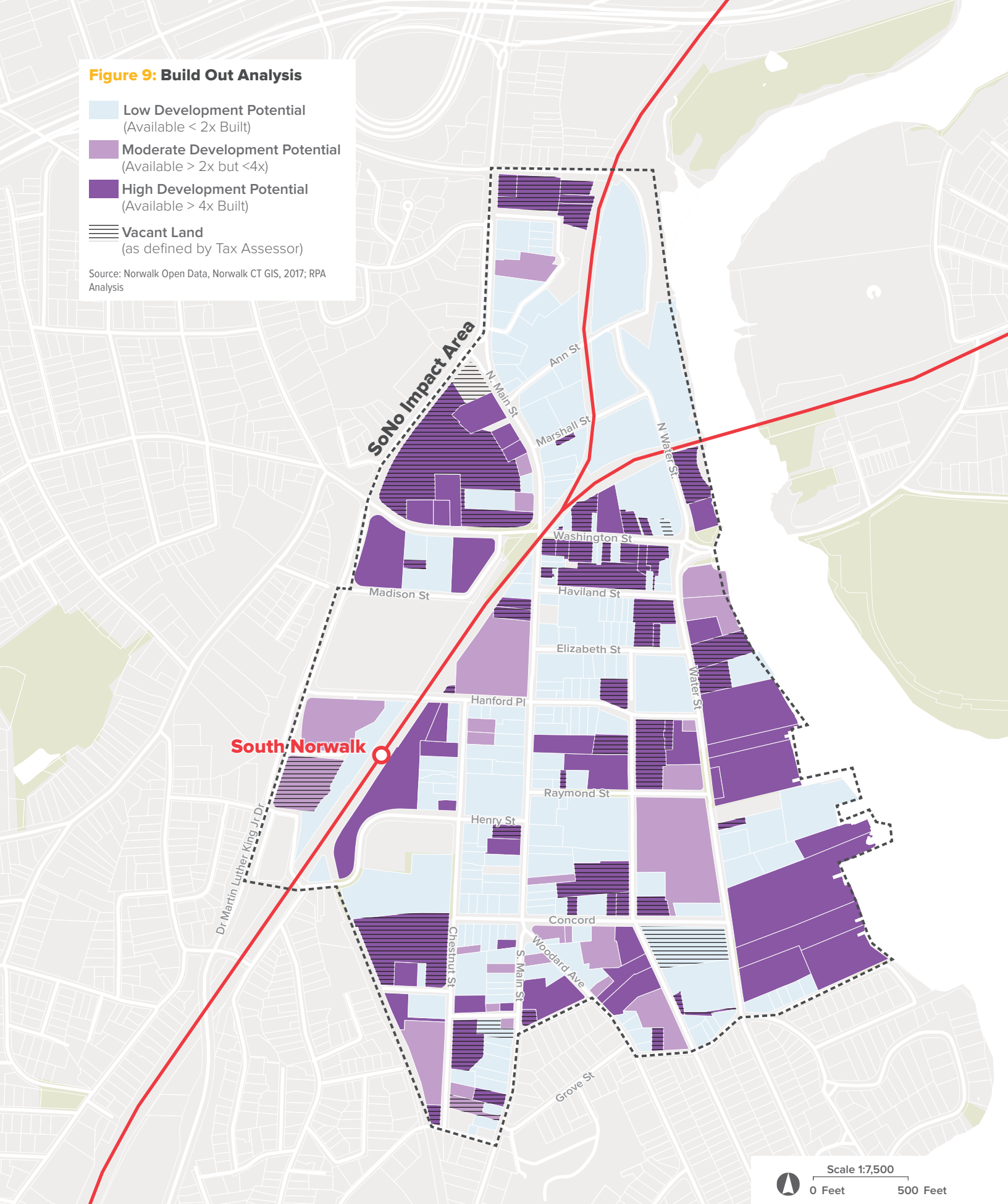
The City's recently adopted South Norwalk TOD Plan recommends establishing a new unified zoning district within the impact area to replace these existing zones. The purpose of this new district is to encourage a mix of uses around the South Norwalk train station that would benefit from location near a rail line and reinforce this area's identity as a walkable district with both residential and commercial uses. The proposed regulations for the TOD District, which are currently under review by the City of Norwalk Zoning Commission, include zoning changes and design guidelines to allow a mix of uses and provide a set of dimensional standards that will encourage pedestrian friendly mixed use development. Under these new regulations all the developable square footage within the impact area will be zoned for mixed use development.



**Figure 9: Build Out Analysis**

- Low Development Potential**  
(Available < 2x Built)
- Moderate Development Potential**  
(Available > 2x but < 4x)
- High Development Potential**  
(Available > 4x Built)
- Vacant Land**  
(as defined by Tax Assessor)

Source: Norwalk Open Data, Norwalk CT GIS, 2017; RPA Analysis





## Build-Out Analysis

While the City is in the process of updating its zoning for the impact area, because this zoning has not yet been adopted, for the purposes of this Strategic Plan a build-out analysis of potential future development in the impact area was conducted based on existing zoning. The current size and use of existing parcels and structures was compared to their maximum potential size and use under current zoning. For this analysis, a ratio of the size of the lot to the largest building allowed on the lot was developed for each lot. This ratio was then compared to the existing size of the building(s) on the lot. This is expressed as the ratio of square feet of the existing building compared to square feet of the largest potential building allowed under current zoning.

In assessing whether a lot had additional development potential not currently being realized, three categories were created:

- ▶ **Low development potential:** Allowable building size is less than twice the size of the existing building. These sites are unlikely to be redeveloped, due to demolition and construction expenses outweighing the marginal economic value of the larger building.
- ▶ **Moderate development potential:** Allowable building size is between twice and four times the size of the existing building. Because of the larger allowable building envelope, the economic potential of these sites is greater, and development potential more likely.

**High development potential:** Allowable building size is more than four times the size of the existing building. Absent major environmental or other issues which may add significant additional costs to development, these sites have a great deal of unrecognized potential and are very likely to be developed.

Excluded from this analysis were lots that contain uses unsuitable for development, including schools, parks, cemeteries, and single-family homes. Currently vacant lots were overlaid onto this analysis as the most likely candidates for development (see Figure 9).

This analysis shows that there are significant redevelopment opportunities within the impact area with 1/3 of the lots having moderate or high development potential and the most significant redevelopment opportunities available on a small number of large lots (see Table 12).

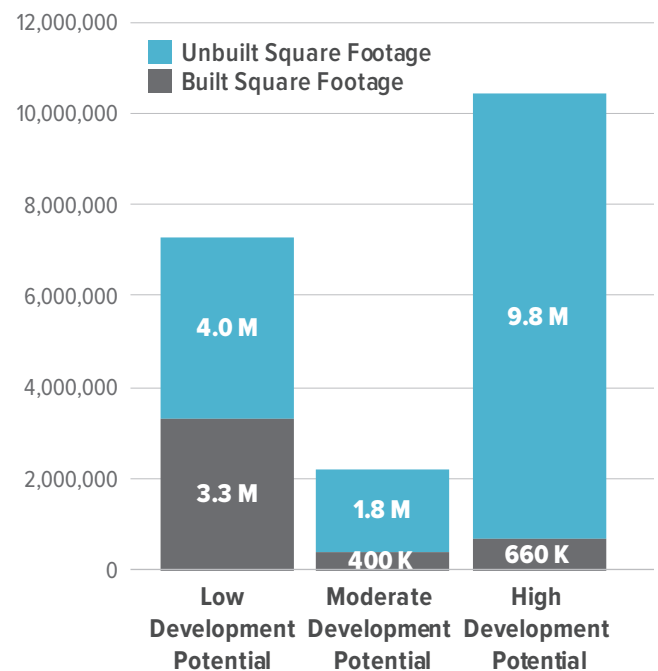
**Table 12: SoNo Impact Area Build Out Analysis**

Development Potential	Parcels	Area (in Acres)	Built Square Footage	Unbuilt Square Footage
Low Development Potential	191	72.5	3,321,860	3,957,037
Moderate Development Potential	27	21.3	400,070	1,814,520
High Development Potential	87	64.8	656,032	9,788,807
Unknown/Excluded	21	23.1	0	0
All Parcels	326	181.6	4,377,962	15,560,364

Source: Norwalk Open Data, Norwalk CT GIS, 2017; RPA Analysis

In terms of potential buildable square feet, the analysis found that nearly 9.8 million additional square feet could be built on “high development potential” lots in the SoNo impact area (see Figure 10). It should be noted that some of this development potential is already accounted for within currently planned projects, including Choice Neighborhoods, SoNo/One and Maritime Village. To create a more refined analysis of development potential in the impact area, each category was assigned a certain amount of its potential as likely to be developed. For low development potential lots, it was assumed that an aggregate of 10% of their unbuilt floor area would potentially be built. For moderate development potential lots, an aggregate of 50% of their unbuilt floor area potential was assumed. And for high development potential lots, an aggregate of 90% of their unbuilt floor area was assumed. Using this formula, build out for the SoNo impact area is estimated to be approximately 10.1 million square feet.

**Figure 10: SoNo Impact Area Development Potential**



Source: Norwalk Open Data, Norwalk CT GIS, 2017; RPA Analysis

**Figure 11: Transportation and Amenities**

- Amenities**
- Institutional/Government
  - Parks
  - Arts and Culture
  - Transportation (Rail Stations and Bus Hub)
- Housing Development Sites**
- Completed
  - Under Construction
  - Planned
- Quarter-Mile Buffer from Transportation
- Choice Neighborhood



Scale 1:7,500  
0 Feet 500 Feet

# Mobility, Urban Amenities & Anchor Institutions

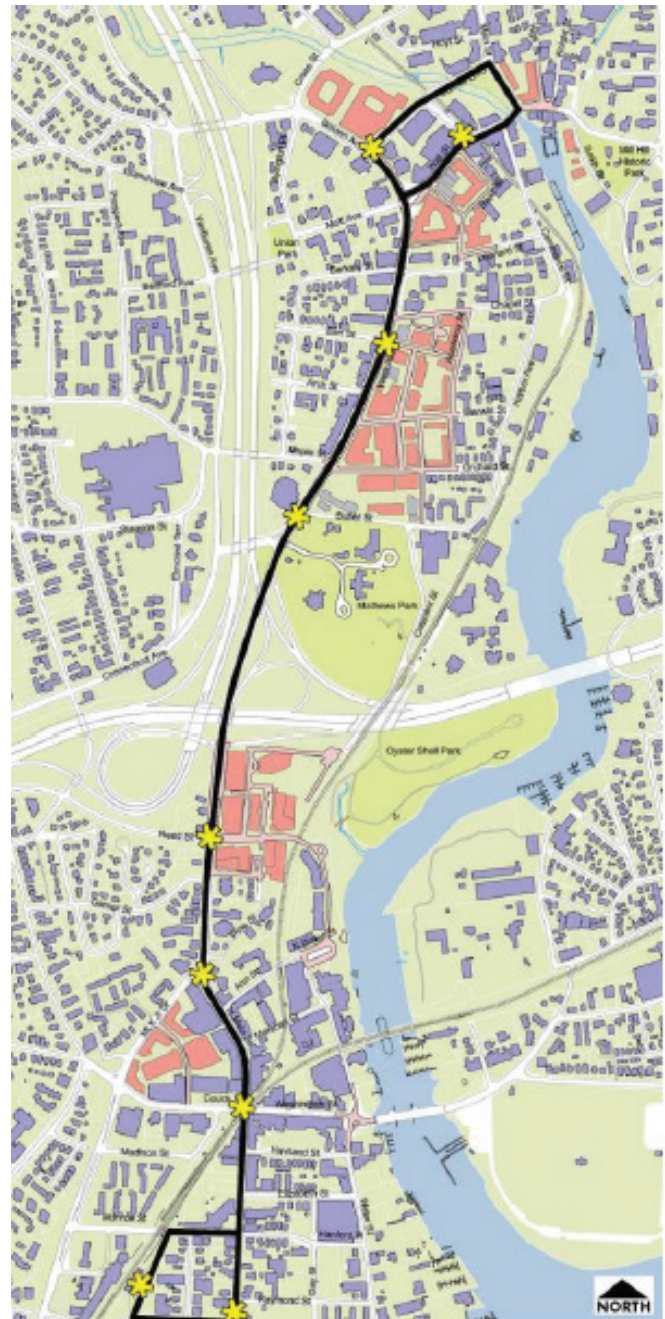
## Public Transit

The proximity of a vibrant mix of uses to the South Norwalk train station was key to Norwalk's selection of SoNo as its Innovation Place. This neighborhood represents the most diverse and dense mix of uses of Norwalk's walkable, urban neighborhoods. The South Norwalk station provides access to both Metro North's New Haven main line and the Danbury branch line. The main line connects SoNo to New York City and New Haven and regional centers in between including Stamford and Bridgeport. It also provides connection to Amtrak's Northeast Corridor between Boston and Washington with transfers to regional rail accessible at New Haven, Bridgeport and Stamford. Travel time between South Norwalk and New York City by train is 70 minutes; travel to Stamford is 16 minutes. **On weekdays Metro North operates 70 trains from Norwalk to New York City and 53 to New Haven. On weekends and holiday there are 45 trains to New York City and 34 to New Haven.** The Danbury branch line provides local access to SoNo from points north to Danbury, connecting SoNo with Merritt 7, Norwalk's corporate office park hub, which includes 1.4 million square feet of Class A office space occupied by companies including Diageo, FactSet and Frontier Communications. On weekdays there are 14 trains from South Norwalk to Danbury and six to Waterbury. On weekends and holidays, there are six trains to Waterbury and six to Danbury.

SoNo is also served by public bus operated by the Norwalk Transit District. The Transit District's WHEELS Routes 10, 11 and 12 serve South Norwalk and the railroad station directly. Route 9 serves South Norwalk, passing along North Main Street and Water Street. The Connecticut Avenue shuttle serves the South Norwalk train station on weekday evenings, Saturday evenings and throughout the day on Sundays. The Norwalk Transit District also operates commuter shuttles that are scheduled to coincide with the arrivals and departures of Metro North AM and PM peak commuter trains. These shuttles include the Merritt 7/Glover Avenue shuttle, the Norwalk Hospital/Belden Avenue shuttle, and the 10/20 Westport Road shuttle to Wilton.

To augment existing transit service to, from and around the South Norwalk Train Station, the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency is actively seeking funding to support a Circulator, which would provide additional bus service within the urban corridor. The Circulator's high-frequency transit service would link the two-mile route from the South Norwalk Rail Station to the Burnell Boulevard Wheels Bus Hub and make stops at each major development and activity area from SoNo to Wall Street. Applications were submitted to the State's TIGER grant in 2012, 2014, 2015 and 2016 for funding. Each time, the application made it to the final round of review before being turned down. The Agency will continue to pursue a funding source for this critical project.

Figure 12: Potential Circulator Route



Source: City of Norwalk 2016 TIGER grant application



**Pedego**



**Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk**

Photo: Megan Maloy



**Ryan Park Proposed Site Plan**



## Walkability

Linking transit resources to SoNo's residential, retail and commercial spaces is critical to leveraging the economic advantages of the train station to support an innovative and entrepreneurial environment in the impact area. Pedestrian activity is crucial to creating the dynamic and vital atmosphere necessary for people to be inspired by, connect with and learn from others. In SoNo many thoroughfares have sidewalks and strong pedestrian infrastructure. Areas with the strongest pedestrian amenities include North Main Street and Washington Street. Washington Street, in particular, has wide brick sidewalks, pedestrian-scale lighting, street trees, benches, trash cans and other pedestrian amenities.

To address gaps in SoNo's pedestrian infrastructure and strengthen the vitality of its street life, the City of Norwalk is currently pursuing a TOD initiative for public Complete Streets infrastructure improvements targeted for the half-mile radius surrounding the SoNo railroad station. The goal is to foster a walkable and bikeable environment that offers a wide range of urban amenities within a few blocks of transit, making this neighborhood an easy and appealing place to live, work, and visit. Major public investments are being made by the City of Norwalk and the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency to achieve this vision. The City was awarded a state LOTCIP (Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program) grant for over \$2 million to implement multiple infrastructure improvement projects. Major enhancements will be installed on Washington Street, between North Main Street and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive. The Washington Street project will include ornamental street lights, bicycle sharrows, a speed table crosswalk with curb extension, a second crosswalk with curb extensions, designated street parking and tree plantings. Also funded by the LOTCIP grant is the elevation of the intersection of Monroe Street/Hanford Place and South Main Street, which will assist with traffic calming. These investments are critical to enhancing the pedestrian environment and improving safety for people walking to and from the South Norwalk train station. Along with these public investments, there has been private sector interest in supporting a more diverse transit network in SoNo. Pedego SoNo, an electric bike rental company at 50 Water Street provides bike rentals by the hour and by the day and promotes electric bikes as "the *very best* way to experience South Norwalk and beyond."<sup>1</sup>

## Urban Amenities

Strengthening walkability and bikeability in an already walkable neighborhood with access to transit supports a virtuous cycle in SoNo. The stronger the streetscape and the more connected the pedestrian network to transit, residential and retail/restaurants, the more vital the area becomes and the more opportunities there are for the kind of casual interactions that fuel innovation. Under these conditions, SoNo's urban fabric continues to grow. Today there are over 30 restaurants and entertainment venues and 10 cultural attractions along SoNo's primary corridors of Washington and North Main Streets. In the evenings bars and restaurants are full and the streets are active.

In the fall the Norwalk Seaport Association's annual Oyster Festival features oysters, boat tours and over 100 arts and crafts vendors, attracting residents and visitors to the area. In the summer the Norwalk International Cultural Exchange (NICE) Festival attracts 4,000 people to Oyster Shell Park to celebrate multiculturalism through music, food, art and talent. And throughout the year, the Norwalk Maritime Aquarium, a long-time neighborhood anchor, attracts visitors from throughout the region. With 10,000 member families and Connecticut's largest IMAX theater, the Aquarium offers visitors both entertainment and an opportunity to learn about the Norwalk River's vital natural resources that are in SoNo's backyard. And perhaps less obvious, but critically important, the Norwalk Public Library's South Norwalk branch on Washington Street is an important anchor for the local community in SoNo, serving 130,000 patrons per year and providing programming and educational opportunities that enhance the vitality of the neighborhood. Finally, Ryan Park, located at the southwest corner of Day Street and Raymond Street is set to become a significant neighborhood amenity. The park is being redesigned with a \$1 million grant through the Choice Neighborhoods program with new recreation facilities, landscaping and lighting to serve the planned 273 unit mixed-income Choice Neighborhoods community and the entire South Norwalk community.

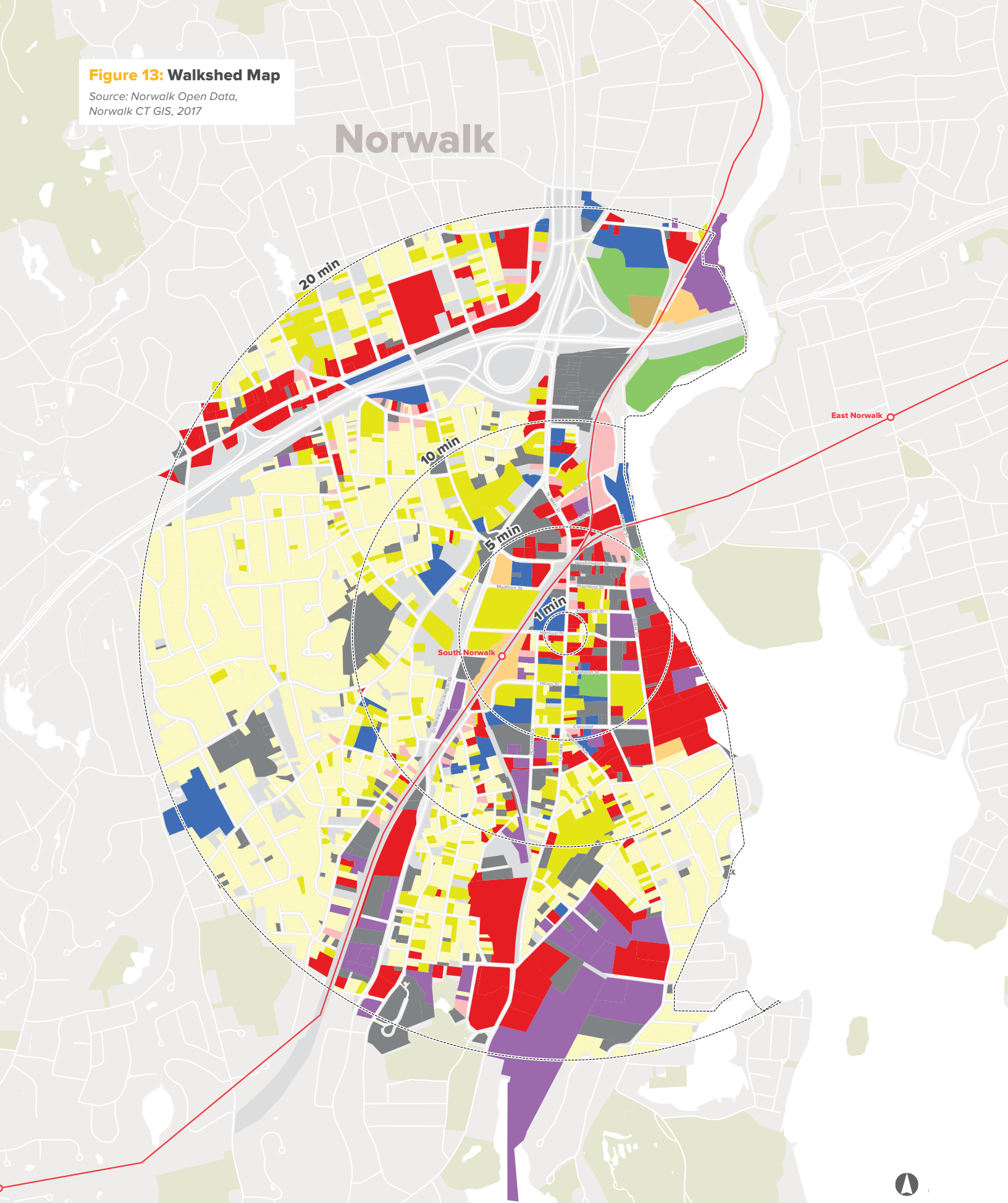
A primary driver of the market for restaurants, retail and culture in SoNo is its residential population. As discussed in the previous, over the past fifteen years, SoNo has evolved into a vibrant urban neighborhood attracting new residential development on formerly vacant sites. New developments have added over 400 market rate units to SoNo and planned development, including Choice Neighborhoods, will add an additional 225 units to the area's housing stock.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pedegolectricbikes.com/dealers/norwalk/>



**Figure 13: Walkshed Map**

Source: Norwalk Open Data,  
Norwalk CT GIS, 2017



Residences within a five to ten-minute walk of employment and transit are central to a local innovation economy. Being able to walk to work within the neighborhood or being able to walk from home to the train to get to work somewhere else is attractive to people who appreciate the vitality and chance interactions that occur in a dynamic urban environment. And conversely, the ability to walk to a thriving employment district from the South Norwalk train station can also play an important role in driving an innovation economy.

The ability of people who work in the Innovation Place to live nearby is an important aspect of an innovation place. Within a ¼ mile (5-minute walk) from the center of the SoNo impact area there are over 85 lots containing residential units. These lots include a multitude of housing types from single family residences to apartments and represent over 725 rental units, as shown on Table 13. Within a 10 minute (1/2 mile walk) from the center of the district, the number of residential lots increases to over 670, representing over 1,600 rental units; and within a 20 minute walk the number of residential lots increases to over 2,500, representing over 3,600 rental units. According to Norwalk’s TOD Plan, adopted in 2016, the average price for rental units in South Norwalk ranges from \$1,600/month for a studio unit to \$3,300/month for a three-bedroom unit (see Table 14).

**Table 13: Parcels within a 1, 5, 10 & 20 minute walk**

Type of housing	1 Min (1/20 mile)	5 Min (1/4 mile)	10 Min (1/2 mile)	20 Min (1 mile)
5-8 Unit Apartments	1	4	26	49
Apartment Complex	0	4	16	41
Duplex	0	1	17	128
Mixed Commercial/Residential	2	25	42	74
Multifamily	1	6	15	45
Single Family	8	62	582	2,296
Total	12	102	698	2,633

Source: Norwalk Open Data, Norwalk CT GIS, 2017

**Table 14: SoNo Average Monthly Rents  
(Apartments & Condos), June 2015**

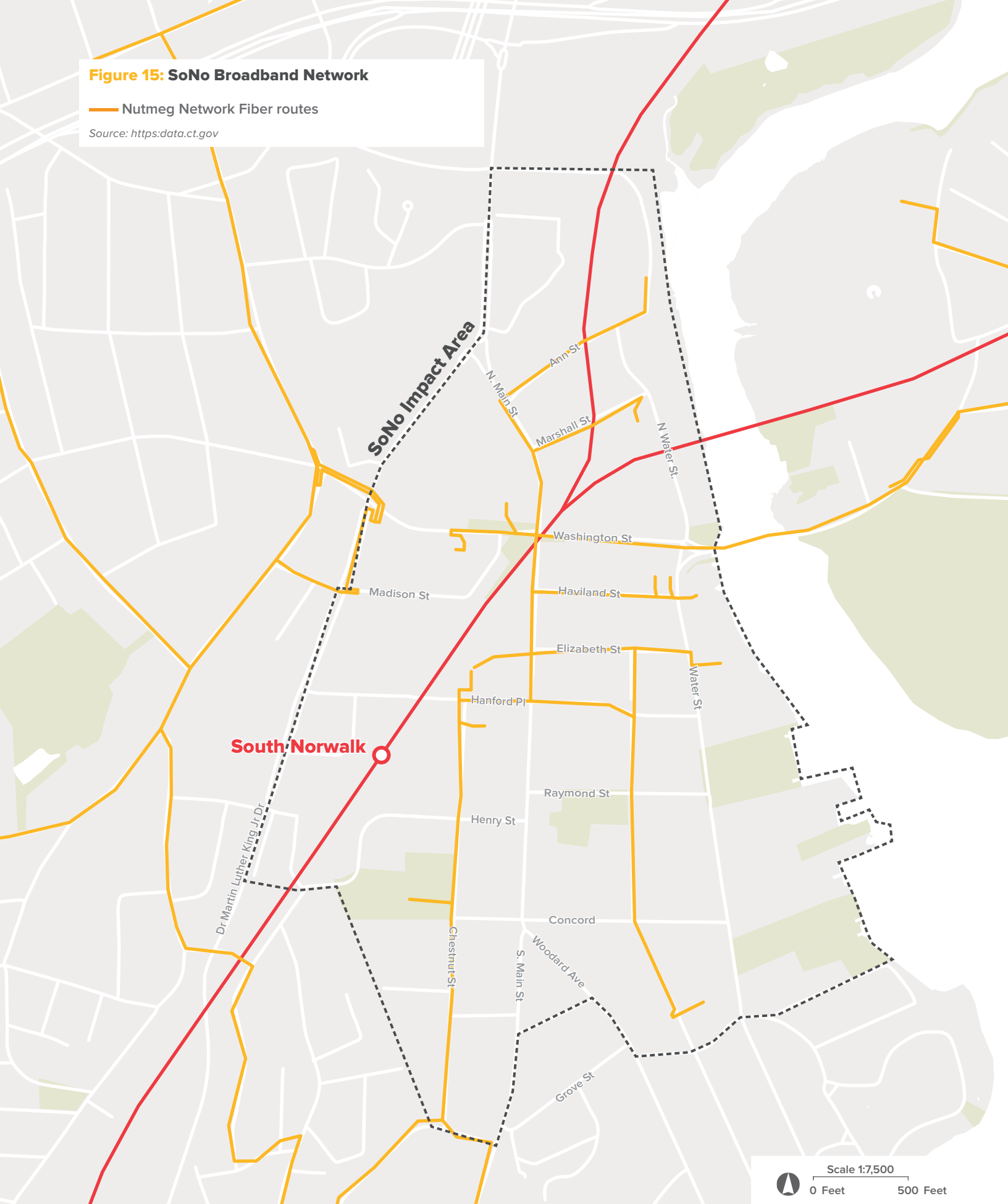
	Monthly Rent	Square Feet
Studio	\$1,600	600
1-bedroom	\$1,600	657
2-bedroom	\$2,400	974
3-bedroom	\$3,300	1,580

Source: South Norwalk TOD  
Plan, 2016

**Figure 15: SoNo Broadband Network**

— Nutmeg Network Fiber routes

Source: <https://data.ct.gov>





## High Speed Internet/Broadband

The ability to connect to the internet at a higher speed is critical to both established and emerging businesses. From providers offering small business internet plans to enterprise providers specializing in IP transit and point-to-point, there are multiple providers offering business internet options in Norwalk including Optimum, Frontier Communications, MegaPath Telecommunications Company, Windstream Communications, Lighttower Fiber Networks, Global Capacity, Cogent Communications, Broadview Networks and Level 3 Communications. Connectivity options include cable, DSL, fiber and copper. Data transmission capacity in Norwalk ranges from 5 megabytes per second (mgps) to 1000 mgps, depending upon the type of connectivity and the service provider, as shown on Table 15. Prices for internet access also vary widely from \$50 per month to \$850 per month, depending upon the type of connectivity and the size of the company. The average price per megabyte per second is approximately \$140 per month. Broadview Networks offer the highest accessible data transmission capacity locally at 1000 megabytes per second (mgps) at a cost of approximately \$24 per employee. The existing broadband network in SoNo is shown in Figure 15.

Norwalk offers multiple access points for publicly accessible high-speed internet service. Public wifi is currently provided through the Connecticut Education Network (CEN)'s Nutmeg Network at Norwalk Community College, Norwalk Pub-

lic Schools and both Norwalk Public Library branches with capacity for 1 gigabit upload and download speeds. Publicly accessible wifi in SoNo is limited to the South Norwalk Public Library. The library is also rolling out a program to loan portable hotspots free of charge to library patrons. The availability of the Nutmeg Network at the South Norwalk Public Library offers an opportunity for expansion of public wifi to other public spaces in SoNo. The City is currently exploring the possibility of providing public wifi at Washington Plaza Park at the corner of Main and Washington Streets as part of its complete streets project.

Broadband access in South Norwalk is being expanded to new housing being developed as part of the Choice Neighborhoods project and public wifi could potentially be provided at Ryan Park. Building on this momentum, opportunities to expand broadband and wifi access should be further explored to enhance connectivity and speed throughout SoNo and provide the capacity and bandwidth necessary to support an innovation economy. Challenges to achieving this goal include state and local government capacity to proactively incentivize and support internet infrastructure and investment and access to the infrastructure below ground, on the streets and in buildings necessary to enable effective deployment. The State of Connecticut's CT Gig Project is working to establish an open-access internet to overcome these challenges. In partnership with UCONN and the Connecticut Technology Council, the CT Gig project is currently conducting a statewide survey to study options for increasing access to very high speed internet service to their communities, while also reducing costs.

**Table 15: Norwalk Broadband Internet Access**

Network	Business Size	Connectivity	Fastest MGPS	Total Price per Month	Dollars per megabyte	Access Covered?
Optimum	4	Cable	25	59.95	2.40	Norwalk
Optimum	10	Cable	60	79.95	1.33	Norwalk
Optimum	15	Cable	100	109.95	1.10	Norwalk
Optimum	20	Cable	250	159.95	0.64	Norwalk
Optimum	30	Cable	350	199.95	0.57	Norwalk
Frontier	1 to 2	DSL	7	49.99	7.14	06854
Frontier	2 to 3	DSL	15	79.99	5.33	06854
Frontier	3 to 5	DSL	20	109.99	5.50	06854
Frontier	5 to 10	DSL	40	139.99	3.50	06854
MegaPath	Small	DSL	5	60.00	12.00	06854
MegaPath	small to med.	DSL or Copper	10	90.00	9.00	06854
MegaPath	medium	Copper	20	120.00	6.00	06854
Windstream	3	DSL	10	50.00	5.00	06854
Windstream	8	DSL	25	70.00	2.80	06854
Windstream	17	Fiber	50	90.00	1.80	06854
Windstream	33	Fiber	100	110.00	1.10	06854
Lighttower	Large	Fiber	100	850.00	8.50	50 Day Street, 149 Water Street
Global Capacity	Varies	DSL or Copper	20	Varies		
Cogent	Varies by size	Fiber	100	Varies		Norwalk
Broadview Networks (Packaged deal that comes with phone service)	Varies-MGPS and pricing depends on business size	Copper	1000	23.95 per employee		50 Day Street, 149 Water Street
Level 3 Communications	More than 30	Fiber	Varies	500.00		Norwalk

Source: broadbandnow.com/Connecticut/Norwalk

# Partner Capabilities

*It's not about having a Silicon Valley attitude—it's about having an entrepreneurial attitude. It's about partnering with other organizations in and around your area. It's about thinking big with entrepreneurs that sit next to you in your coworking space. It's about collaborating with tech gurus, social media wizards and community leaders at cool business events. It's the people that make a community an entrepreneurial one and it's up to all of us to contribute.- Brad Feld*

One of the most significant opportunities afforded by the Innovation Places planning grant was the conversations that it sparked throughout Norwalk. It provided the opportunity and motivation for a wide range of community leaders across perspectives, sectors and organizations to get together with one another and talk about the exciting things that they are already doing or would like to be doing if only they had more resources and closer connections with other leaders. These conversations opened up further conversations and revealed synergies that were sitting right there in front of us, but hadn't yet been realized because there hadn't before been a venue for asking the critical question- What are you doing to foster innovation and entrepreneurship in Norwalk and how does that connect with what I'm doing? Through these conversations four key pillars around which institutions, innovators and entrepreneurs are actively engaged in Norwalk emerged-

- ▶ Digital marketing and media
- ▶ Food
- ▶ Making and light manufacturing
- ▶ Tech and non-tech start ups

These pillars form the foundation of Norwalk's emerging innovation economy. The Innovation Places planning process has provided a platform for linking the people engaged in these areas together and highlighted the potential of what can be achieved by aligning their interests and resources. The key organizations

and institutions that will be partnering to advance SoNo as Norwalk's Innovation Place and their capabilities with regard to Norwalk's four pillars of innovation are described below.

## Partners

The three central partners driving Norwalk's Innovation Place are Northeast Community Innovation Corp., the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency and Norwalk Community College. These three entities represent private sector investment, place-based development authority and the education, job training and entrepreneurship/mentorship programming necessary to connect and drive the local community towards an innovation economy.

### Private Sector Investment: Northeast Community Innovation Corporation (NCIC)

The Northeast Community Innovation Corp. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit with the charter of helping communities develop local talent and grow capabilities to support early stage organizations of all types. NCIC has a particular focus on underserved communities and believes that increased entrepreneurship can drive economic activity and job growth in the Northeastern United States. NCIC's leadership founded and ran the Stamford Innovation Center (SIC) from 2011 until 2016. During that time, SIC was host to more than 2000 events and more than 25,000 visitors who attended startup programming including classes, workshops 5 Startup Weekends and more than 450 "Innovation Roundtables," a weekly networking event. SIC partnered with many local, regional and national startup organizations and global technology firms including IBM, Google, Rackspace, Sikorsky, Pitney Bowes and Uber and generated more than a dozen profitable companies including 4 now operating in their own offices in Stamford and 1 with an office in Norwalk. All told, these companies raised more than \$15M in Venture Capital and now employ close to 100 employees.

In 2016, NCIC's principals were asked by Norwalk Mayor Harry Rilling to lead Norwalk's Innovation Places effort and have been delighted to develop strong partnerships with Norwalk Redevelopment Agency, Norwalk Community College, the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, Stepping Stones Museum for Children and the Norwalk Public Library. Within the context of the Norwalk Innovation Places Project, NCIC will

develop and manage programming geared towards the needs of entrepreneurs, technology companies, job seekers, with the goal of driving the creation of successful startups, increased local employment.

The primary programs NCIC is pursuing to support this goal is called SoNo Central. Program Details:

- ▶ Build on Grand Central Tech model will locate in a 5-8,000 sq ft facility to attract, fund and build new companies.
- ▶ SoNo Central will provide free, sponsored SONOprenuer grants to accepted applicants. Benefits to include free coworking for initial 12 month, trial period for accepted applicants and allocation of quarterly pitch competitions by operating partner/investor.
  - Applicants must get a “sponsor” to be admitted to free coworking space
  - Ability to locate in building at reduced rate upon “graduation”/funding
  - Expand local base of involved mentors, investors and attract same from New York, etc.

### **Place-Based Development Authority: Norwalk Redevelopment Agency**

The Norwalk Redevelopment Agency was established in 1950 under Chapter 130 of the Connecticut General Statutes by resolution of the Common Council, which authorized it to create redevelopment plans and take the necessary steps to implement these plans in accordance with local zoning provisions. The Redevelopment Agency is a quasi-governmental organization governed by a Board of Commissioners. The Agency’s five commissioners are appointed by the Mayor and approved by the Common Council. These Commissioners elect a Chairman, a Vice Chairman, a Secretary, and a Treasurer.

Redevelopment plans and implementation efforts are reviewed and approved by the citizen-elected Common Council. At the request of the Common Council, the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency serves as staff coordinating the monthly meetings of its Planning Committee. The Norwalk Redevelopment Agency’s work is concentrated within Norwalk’s Urban Core. This jurisdiction covers four redevelopment and urban renewal areas known locally as: Wall Street, West Avenue North, West Avenue South, and South Norwalk. The Agency is funded principally from state and federal grants and in part through the City operating budget.

By progressively planning, coordinating with City departments and procuring grant funding, the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency proactively works to preserve and improve existing neighborhoods and attract new development around several priority areas related to the SoNo Innovation Place:

### **Transit-Oriented Development**

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is an urban design approach that focuses on high density development with a mix of residential and commercial land uses situated around public transit stations. TOD creates neighborhoods with lifestyle amenities close to transit, making them convenient and appealing places to live, work, and visit. The neighborhood surrounding the South Norwalk Railroad Station is a major priority for TOD as the station sits just blocks from the heart of SoNo. This area already provides vital infrastructure for commuters, many of whom prefer to walk or bike to and from the station.

### **Connectivity**

The Norwalk Redevelopment Agency’s Connectivity Initiative is focused on weaving all developments from Wall Street to South Norwalk into an integrated urban fabric. Its Connectivity Master Plan provides a conceptual framework for a more walkable, bikable, and transit-friendly Urban Core. Implementation of the Master Plan is under way with a number of grants already secured and others being actively pursued. Progress to date includes planted medians north and south of the I-95 overpass, new bike racks throughout the corridor, and a dedicated bike lane in the Wall Street neighborhood.

### **Livability**

The Norwalk Redevelopment Agency believes that a community’s quality of life is the sum of many factors, especially attractive and welcoming public realm where residents may connect with each other and their community. To that end, the Agency is committed to creating a range of open spaces accessible from many neighborhoods and improving the open spaces that already exist. It organizes neighborhood cleanups, provides continual streetscape maintenance, and funds the planting and ongoing care of street medians, traffic islands, hanging baskets, flower urns, and holiday decorations such as flags and wreaths.

### **Education, Job Training and Entrepreneurship: Norwalk Community College (NCC)**

Norwalk Community College is a leader and partner in the academic, economic, cultural, and social well-being of Fairfield County, Connecticut and will serve as a key public sector player in the Norwalk Innovation Places plan. For more than 50 years the College has provided affordable education leading to degree completion, transfer, professional certifications, employment, and lifelong learning. Under the leadership of President David L. Levinson, Ph.D., the College has supported workforce development through partnerships with labor, business, industry, and government. President Levinson is a nationally recognized educator actively engaged in the Norwalk community. He was a founder of Norwalk ACTS and currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Greater Norwalk Chamber of Commerce, Norwalk Children’s Foundation, Family and Children’s Agency of Greater Norwalk, and the Norwalk Maritime Aquarium. Dr. Levinson has also played an integral part Norwalk Housing Authority’s Neighborhood Choice project. The role of the College within the Innovation Places program will be to build

upon these established relationships and, with the support and expertise of the Norwalk Community College Foundation, expand entrepreneurship initiatives in South Norwalk.

An important part of NCC's mission is to serve the greater southwestern Fairfield County community through continuing education, training and service programs. The College provides business and industry workforce training, professional development through credit and non-credit courses, on ground and on-line, certification and lifestyle classes to meet the needs of residents of all ages and interests through its Division of Extended Studies and Workforce Development. The programs offered through this division include are carried out primarily through the Workforce Education Institute and the Business and Professional Development Center, as described below.

**The Workforce Education Institute** offers employers and business associations customized training services from diagnosing their workers' needs to designing a curriculum, to delivering the required instruction. These services provide rapid on-demand solutions to training needs in the workplace. Instruction includes business writing and math, customer service, information and industrial technologies and performance management. Most training takes place on the job at times convenient to the employer and employees, Skill building occurs through practical exercises and interactive workshops geared toward adult learners. All instructors have extensive experience in business, industry or the public sector. The Institute provides specialized training classes in such areas as safe food handling and preparation, computer security and operating and growing small businesses. Program participants receive completion certificates. In some instances, continuing education units and credits can apply toward degree requirements. The Institute connects to the Business and Industry Services Network (BISN) based at Connecticut's 12 community colleges.

**The Business and Professional Development Center** offers courses and certificates in all aspects of business with an emphasis on computer software applications, computer installation, maintenance and repair, web design and internet technologies. A complete range of programs are offered each semester including: introductory to advanced computer software applications, word processing, spreadsheets, database techniques, networking, computer repair and graphics. Other programs include small business management and entrepreneurship, bookkeeping, non-profit management and a variety of medical technology and assistant certificate classes. Non-credit certificates allow people who would like to switch careers or enhance their skills to earn a certificate of study in a short time, giving them marketable skills in a rapidly changing economy. Courses are customized to meet the needs of the employer or customer and are offered on campus or off site. During the fall 2015-2016 academic year the Division served over 5,000 students with 600+ classes offered by 150 instructors, many of whom are practitioners in their field. Twenty-five workforce certificate programs and classes were available and more than 400 certificates were awarded.

## Norwalk Community College Foundation

The Norwalk Community College Foundation (NCCF) a separate 501(c)3 organization created to support the College. The NCCF seeks to expand access to affordable, quality higher education, support the development of a productive workforce, and contribute to the knowledge and well-being of our community. The NCCF mission is three-fold: 1) raise funds for NCC programs and scholarships, 2) invest, administer and distribute funds so that students of all ages continue to benefit from challenging opportunities for self-improvement and intellectual growth, and 3) inspire and engage our community to share talents and resources.

The NCCF has undertaken a number of initiatives to support entrepreneurship (Eship) among our students and the greater Fairfield County community. These include membership in the National Association of Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE), formation of an Eship Task Force of the NCC Foundation and NCC Idea Pitch Competitions.

The NCCF has awarded Eship scholarships for students to participate in a Summer Eship Institute utilizing the Kauffman FastTrak New Venture curriculum. This is a 30-hour certificate program where students translate their ideas into a business plan. Of the 15 students awarded full-year scholarships for the 2016-2017 academic year to plan their own business in the next 12-24 months, 3 are non-credit (two bookkeeping, one small business certificate) and 12 are pursuing their Associate Degree. The students also receive six coaching sessions per student per semester for academics and business start-up. Project evaluations include the following criteria:

- ▶ Dream
- ▶ Research if Idea can become a business
- ▶ Concrete business evaluation
- ▶ Business plan
- ▶ Executing the business plan

The NCCF has also supported the creation of a Fab Lab <sup>1</sup> to campus overseen by Assistant Professor Mobin Rasgar Agah, Coordinator of the NCC Engineering Program. A Fab Lab is a small-scale community workshop based on the idea of digital fabrication. It promotes STEAM education through hands-on and project-based learning and provide a tinkering space for entrepreneurs and businesses to work on new ideas and develop and test their prototypes and products. Fab Lab provides a user-friendly atmosphere for creation and innovation where people any level of technical knowledge, experience, and background can bring their ideas into reality. A Fab Lab is equipped with various computer-controlled tools with the goal of making "almost anything" possible. Dr. Mobin Rastgar Agah, the NCCF has launched the NCC Fab Lab using the MIT blueprint for developing a Fab Lab on campus. The Fab Lab can be the central hub for the following activities:

<sup>1</sup> <http://fab.cba.mit.edu/about/faq/>



Academia and Education: Fab Lab is the place for project-based student learning. Students use the facility to develop their hands-on skills and practice creativity and thinking out of the box, crucial skills for today's job market demand. Fab labs also generate interest among local high school students in the STEAM fields.

Workforce development and light manufacturing: Necessary training in light manufacturing with relation to certifications in technology fields such as Computer Aided Design, and 3D Printing and Additive Manufacturing use fab lab equipment and resources.

Entrepreneurship, Startups and Businesses: Fab labs provide a nexus for local entrepreneurs to test their ideas and build prototypes and increase the success rate of the startups. Local businesses use the facility, to create their marketing material.

## Anchor Institutions

The anchor institutions described below will play a key role in the SoNo Innovation Place through partnerships in research, programming and education and job training as outlined in the *Catalytic Projects* section of this report.

### Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk

Located in SoNo, the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk offers visitors of all ages the opportunity to learn about the vital natural resource of the Long Island Sound. Set in a refurbished 1860s factory at the mouth of the Norwalk River, the Aquarium building and its location reflect the region's industrial past and human uses of Long Island Sound for recreation and commerce.

The Aquarium includes 34 exhibits featuring more than 1,200 marine animals of 259 species. The Long Island Sound journey begins along a freshwater river and the shallow waters of the salt marsh, and then moves into deeper and deeper habitats out to the open ocean. These close encounters with animals, enhanced by friendly volunteer interpreters and informative display panels, educate visitors about the aquatic life of Long Island Sound and its watershed.

The Maritime Aquarium's mission is to inspire people of all ages to appreciate and protect the Long Island Sound ecosystem and the global environment through living exhibits, marine science, and environmental education. The Aquarium is the leading maritime and aquaculture education facility in the state. Research Scientist Dave Hudson and his peers are exploring the idea of an Aquaculture center and lab that could be helpful to potential aquaculture entrepreneurs. The Aquarium's current research program includes infield sampling, data collection, and data analysis related to environmental education and conservation projects, including the Long Island Sound Biodiversity Database, Project Limulus, MySound, NOAA Phytoplankton Monitoring Network, Trout in the Classroom, and Frog Watch

USA. The partnership between the Innovation District and the Aquarium will center on advancement of aquaculture, marine science and environmental education in SoNo.

### Norwalk Public Library- South Norwalk Branch

The Norwalk Public Library's mission is to be "the information and cultural center for Norwalk citizens and businesses." Each year the library system serves over 390,000 patrons with a variety of programs. The Library's South Norwalk branch is an important resource for the South Norwalk community serving 130,000 patrons per year and playing a critical role in providing educational enrichment to the local community. The library offers technology workshops, literacy programs for people of all ages to support the growth of the regional talent pool, providing services and programming to support residents who may have entrepreneurial or career aspirations, but are unsure how to advance those aspirations. As one of Norwalk's key educational and community institutions, Norwalk Public Library is actively working to help Norwalk attract young technology workers and entrepreneurs and prepare residents to participate in the innovation economy.

### Stepping Stones Museum for Children

Stepping Stones Museum for Children's mission is to broaden and enrich the educational opportunities for children ages ten and under and enhance their understanding of the world. The museum seeks to create an environment that inspires lifelong learning and supports parents, caregivers and educators as facilitators of children's explorations. The Museum is actively working to support the creation of an integrated eco-system of stakeholders, resources, and implementation strategies to advance equitable access to fresh and healthy food, education on general wellness and healthy nutrition, and the development of regional business modeling, physical sites and networks. The Museum is committed to collaborating with partners to grow a food innovation sector in South Norwalk across a number of areas share resources, develop quality interactive educational exhibits and programs for children and youth and undertake community assessments and pilot testing approaches.



# Catalytic Projects

## Overall Approach to Innovation Placemaking

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The Opportunities Analysis for the Norwalk Innovation Place revealed that there are multiple economic sectors ripe for business development within SoNo. We have classified these opportunities into four pillars: Technology, Digital Marketing and Media, Making & Light Manufacturing, and Food. Presented below is a brief description of each pillar. Please see the “Project Proposal” attached to the application for further elaboration on how each of these pillars represents a key piece of Norwalk’s innovation ecosystem and how the Strategic Plan will enhance this ecosystem.

### Technology

SoNo is an ideal place to promote the growth of technology startups and other companies with potential to scale and return 10:1 returns for investors. The type of companies that we expect to foster in SoNo include tech companies that develop cloud software, mobile apps, and cybersecurity. Given its proximity on the Norwalk River, SoNo also has the potential to nourish the development of water-based clean technologies.

### Digital Marketing & Media

SoNo already has a growing number of businesses in this area. SoNo is an ideal place to attract digital marketing agencies, package design firms, media production companies and recording artists.

### Making & Light Manufacturing

Like other cities, Norwalk has lost many of its manufacturing businesses as a result of economic restructuring and globalization. Nonetheless, Norwalk remains a city engaged in the production of goods and continues to draw creativity and talent into its industrial sector.

### Food

In recent years, Norwalk’s restaurant scenes has expanded and diversified. Meanwhile, entities like Norwalk Library and Stepping Stones have begun to explore opportunities for better integrating healthy eating and sustainable food production into their overall programming approach. Along with the aquarium’s

research into aquaculture and NCC’s interest in sustainable food education, there is a ripe opportunity for encouraging sustainable food production within SoNo.

## Structure of the Plan

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### A Holistic Cross-Sectoral Approach

Even though the four pillars each represent a distinct community and set of opportunities, we also believe that there are numerous opportunities for cross pollination between them, especially with regard to the facilitation of business development through shared work spaces and delivery of educational programming. To that end, we have organized our projects not in discrete silos but through four cross-sectoral project areas.

### Four Project Areas

Our project areas conform to the same project areas specified by CTNext’s guidance materials:

- ▶ **Business Attraction & Support:** programs and incentives that attract and direct support to businesses and attract anchor institutions.
- ▶ **Workspace:** programs and incentives that provide work space including business incubators, co-working space, business accelerators, or public meeting space.
- ▶ **Communications & Outreach:** programming that fosters connection within the business community including event programming, marketing, and outreach activities.
- ▶ **Placemaking:** projects that enhance the quality of SoNo’s urban life including open space improvements, housing development, transportation enhancements, and infrastructure upgrades.

### Implementation Details

In the next section, we offer detailed information for each of the four project areas. Specifically, we describe the projects and offer a simplified scope for each proposed project. Each project area concludes with a summary table that describes the overall costs of the project including the amount that would be provided by our project partners as well as the amount requested from CTNext.

Additional details, however, are provided in the attached Project Matrix. This document shows the pillars that are supported by each proposed project, identifies responsible parties, specifies unit costs, offers greater details on partner contributions, and notes the impact of the project on gaps in the ecosystem, assesses the difficulty of execution, and prioritizes the projects in terms of High, Medium, and Low. This matrix also provides further documentation on the various investments that have been made by the City in SoNo's overall infrastructure. And as noted above, greater detail about the Strategic Plan's overall vision and its expected impact on the innovation ecosystem is provided within the application's request for a two page "proposal".

## Proposed Projects

### Project Area A: Business Attraction & Support

This project area includes programs and incentives that attract and direct support to businesses and attract anchor institutions. Proposed projects and their proposed scopes of work are presented below.

#### Entrepreneur Grants

Each year, over three years, NCIC would award ten annual grants to start-up firms to help them launch their businesses in SoNo and attract further private capital. With grant support from CTNext, NCIC will be able to:

1. Develop grant application and screening process
2. Review and select applications for grants
3. Monitor outcomes of grant disbursements

### Training Programs (SoNo)

With support from the business community as well as NCC, NCIC would offer beginner and intermediate professional educational programs within SoNo at either SoNo Central or the Food Lab (see Workspace proposals below). With CT Next monies, NCIC will be able to:

1. Develop on-site curriculum for all four pillars
2. Hire Instructors
3. Roll out a basic & intermediate educational program for each of the four pillars

### Training Programs (NCC)

With support from NCC, NCIC would offer campus based professional development and credit programs to the SoNo business community in each of the four pillars. These courses would also be offered as part of broader certificate training programs targeting each of the four pillars. Whereas the SoNo programs would be offered only at the beginner or intermediate level, the courses offered at NCC would be at an advanced level. With funding from CTNext, NCC and NCIC would be able to:

1. Design curriculum and certificate programs
2. Create linkages between programs and business community
3. Offer Instruction

### Mentorship and Business Counseling

NCIC would organize a mentorship program that provides one-on-one guidance and support to start-up companies from established business owners, professors at NCC, and senior researchers at the Aquarium. With support from CT Next, NCIC would be able to:

1. Develop SoNo mentorship training program
2. Recruit mentors and business counselors
3. Implement counseling programs

**Table 16: Summary of Proposed Projects in Project Area A: Business Attraction & Support**

Project Name	Annual Partner Contributions	Three Year Partner Contributions	Year 1 Request from CT Next	Year 2 Request from CT Next	Year 3 Request from CT Next	Total Requested from CT Next for Three Years	Total Project Cost
Entrepreneur Grants	-	-	100,000	105,000	110,250	315,250	315,250
Training Programs (SoNo)	-	-	60,000	63,000	66,150	189,150	189,150
Training Programs (NCC)	40,000	120,000	120,000	126,000	132,300	378,300	498,300
Mentorship and Business Counseling	-	-	10,000	10,500	11,025	31,525	31,525
Program Costs		120,000	290,000	304,500	319,725	914,225	1,034,225
Administrative Oversight (20%)		-	58,000	60,900	63,945	182,845	182,845
Total Bundled Cost		120,000	348,000	365,400	383,670	1,097,070	1,217,070
			31,525				



## Project Area B: Workspace

This project area includes programs and incentives that provide work space including business incubators, co-working space, business accelerators, or public meeting space. Proposed projects and their proposed scopes of work are presented below.

### SoNo Central

Similar to other business incubator spaces from around the country, the proposed SoNo Central facility would be a 5000 SF co-working facility located near the SoNo rail station. Managed by NCIC, SoNo Central would offer free or discounted working space, conference rooms, and networking opportunities in order to seed companies across all four pillars. With money from CT Next, NCIC would be able to:

1. Locate space within short walking distance of the train station
2. Secure long term lease
3. Outfit space with necessary furniture and equipment
4. Market space to prospective businesses
5. Tenant space

### Food Lab

NCIC, in partnership with Stepping Stones and the Norwalk Library, would promote food production and delivery of the foodshed concept by enabling a “food lab” in SoNo. This 2,500 SF facility would enable a broad range of activities including rental kitchens, urban farming, and aquacultural research. With support from CTNext, NCIC will:

1. Locate space
2. Secure lease

3. Outfit space
4. Market space
5. Tenant the space

### Fab Lab

NCC has developed a concept for creating a laboratory for the design and manufacture of goods, parts, and appliances. This space, to be called a Fab Lab, would be located on the NCC campus. However, the Fab Lab would have strong linkages to SoNo through the delivery of introductory feeder classes within SoNo itself. Starter markers from SoNo would thereby become introduced to making and product design through extension programs within SoNo, but then proceed to NCC for more advanced coursework and certificate programs. With support from CT Next, NCC would be able to:

1. Locate Campus Space
2. Hire Staff
3. Acquire Equipment
4. Integrate into Curricular program

**Table 17: Summary of Proposed Projects in Project Area B: Workspace**

Project Name	Annual Partner Contributions	Three Year Partner Contributions	Year 1 Request from CT Next	Year 2 Request from CT Next	Year 3 Request from CT Next	Total Requested from CT Next for Three Years	Total Project Cost
SoNo Central	-	-	120,000	125,000	130,000	375,000	375,000
Food Lab	8,000 from Norwalk Library in in kind contributions	24,000	80,000	52,500	55,125	187,625	211,625
Fab Lab	50,000 in first year for equipment; 50,000 in kind contributions from NCC	200,000	100,000	105,000	110,250	315,250	515,250
Program Costs		224,000	300,000	282,500	295,375	877,875	1,101,875
Administrative Oversight (20%)		-	60,000	56,500	59,075	175,575	220,375
Total Bundled Cost		224,000	360,000	339,000	354,450	1,053,450	1,322,250

## Project Area C: Communications & Outreach

This project area includes programming that fosters connection within the business community including event programming, marketing, and outreach activities. Proposed projects and their proposed scopes of work are presented below.

### Events

NCIC would host events including CEO Roundtable, meetups, business pitches, and lectures at SoNo Central, Food Lab, the Maritime Aquarium, Stepping Stones, and NCC. The purpose of these events would be to facilitate connections between entrepreneurs, investors, residents, city representatives, and community organizations. NCIC would:

1. Plan events
2. Market events
3. Host Events

### Marketing

Through a combination of print and social media, NCIC would promote SoNo to prospective businesses, investors, residents, and visitors. Key tasks include:

1. Develop print and social media communication strategy
2. Implement marketing and communication strategy

**Table 18: Summary of Proposed Projects in Project Area C: Communications & Outreach**

Project Name	Annual Partner Contributions	Three Year Partner Contributions	Year 1 Request from CT Next	Year 2 Request from CT Next	Year 3 Request from CT Next	Total Requested from CT Next for Three Years	Total Project Cost
Events	25,000 from NCIC; 25,000 from Stepping Stones	150,000	50,000	52,500	55,125	157,625	307,625
Marketing	-	-	50,000	52,500	55,125	157,625	157,625
Program Costs		150,000	100,000	105,000	110,250	315,250	465,250
Administrative Oversight (20%)		-	20,000	21,000	22,050	63,050	93,050
Total Bundled Cost		150,000	120,000	126,000	132,300	378,300	558,300

## Project Area D: Placemaking

This project area includes projects that enhance the quality of SoNo's urban life including open space improvements, housing development, transportation enhancements, and infrastructure upgrades. Proposed projects and their proposed scopes of work are presented below.

### Transit Connectivity Plan

NCIC would engage a transit consultant to develop a transit plan that enhances connections between SoNo, the train station, NCC, and the Wall Street area. NCIC would:

1. Conduct research on existing network
2. Develop RFP for consultant
3. Engage transit consultant
4. Review consultant work product
5. Devise implementation and funding strategy.

### Wifi Connectivity Plan

NCIC would engage an information technology consultant to develop a Wifi plan that ensures public broadband access throughout key places within the impact area. With support from CT Next, NCIC would:

1. Conduct research on existing network
2. Develop RFP for consultant
3. Engage transit consultant
4. Review consultant work product
5. Devise implementation and funding strategy

**Table 19: Summary of Proposed Projects in Project Area D: Placemaking**

Project Name	Annual Partner Contributions	Three Year Partner Contributions	Year 1 Request from CT Next	Year 2 Request from CT Next	Year 3 Request from CT Next	Total Requested from CT Next for Three Years	Total Project Cost
Transit Connectivity Plan	-	-	50,000	-	-	50,000	50,000
Wifi Connectivity Plan	-	-	50,000	-	-	50,000	50,000
Program Costs		-	100,000	-	-	100,000	100,000
Administrative Oversight (20%)		-	20,000	-	-	20,000	20,000
Total Bundled Cost		-	120,000	-	-	120,000	120,000

## Summary

**Table 20: Summary of Proposed Projects Across Project Areas**

Project Area	Annual Partner Contributions	Three Year Partner Contributions	Year 1 Request from CT Next	Year 2 Request from CT Next	Year 3 Request from CT Next	Total Requested from CT Next for Three Years	Total Project Cost
A: Business Attraction & Support		120,000	348,000	365,400	383,670	1,097,070	1,217,070
B: Workspace		224,000	360,000	339,000	354,450	1,053,450	1,322,250
C: Communications and Outreach		150,000	120,000	126,000	132,300	378,300	558,300
D: Placemaking		-	120,000	-	-	120,000	120,000
Total		<b>494,000</b>	<b>828,000</b>	<b>830,400</b>	<b>870,420</b>	<b>2,528,820</b>	<b>3,217,620</b>

# Next Steps

## Governance

Key to advancing this strategic plan is establishing a governance structure for managing the Innovation Place grant, should Norwalk be successful in securing CT Next funding, and further developing the partnerships that have been launched through the Innovation Place planning process. Should CT Next fund the SoNo Innovation Place, the grant would be managed by Northeast Community Innovation Corp. (NCIC) with technical assistance provided by the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency. NCIC is licensed as 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. It has no private shareholders and is owned by and exists for the benefit of the community. NCIC's current board members include:

- ▶ Barry Schwimmer, President
- ▶ Ivy Eisenberg, Secretary
- ▶ Dr. David Levinson, President, Norwalk Community College
- ▶ Christine Bradley, Director, Norwalk Public Library
- ▶ Josh Fedele, Entrepreneur

## Biographies

### Barry Schwimmer, President

Barry Schwimmer is the founder of NCIC and the founder and managing partner of the Stamford Innovation Center (SIC). Over the past five years SIC has become a leading small business incubator whose mission is to create jobs and provide training while developing the entrepreneurial community throughout the State of CT. Utilizing funding from Connecticut Innovations to augment its private resources, it serves as a hub in the CTNext Innovation Ecosystem under the state's Department of Economic and Community Development. He also serves as Managing Director of the Petros CT Fund, Petros Partners' Stamford Connecticut based investment fund. The fund uses State issued insurance tax credits to invest in CT based companies with the goal of increasing job growth and economic development. He has served as an investor, director and operator of dozens of entrepreneurial companies over a 30 year career.

### Peter Propp, Chairman, Innovation Places Program

Peter Propp has spent his career helping consumer and b-b companies develop and execute marketing and business development strategies to address growth opportunities. At the Stamford Innovation Center, Peter leads marketing, strategy, business development and operations efforts to make SIC a world-class incubator in the Stamford region. He also coaches and mentors startups on a regular basis. Mr. Propp began his career in public relations and later worked in sports marketing. In 1995, he joined IBM as part of the company's earliest Internet solution sales groups. In 1997, Mr. Propp became business development manager on the team that would eventually produce IBM's WebSphere product family, eventually a multi-billion business. He helped define early WebSphere messaging, sold the first licenses, coached sellers and consultants from around the world on how to solve customer problems with WebSphere. He later led global marketing campaign teams for WebSphere and other IBM products.

NCIC's Board of Directors would be the fiduciary, responsible for managing and reporting on the grant and overseeing all related investments and activities in coordination with its partners, as described under *Catalytic Projects* in this strategic plan. Throughout the grant period, the Board will be responsible for coordinating and managing the SoNo Innovation Places Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee will be chaired by Peter Propp and will include:

- ▶ Mayor's appointed designee
- ▶ 2 Norwalk City Common Council members (to be selected in consultation with Mayor's Office)
- ▶ 1 Norwalk Community College representative
- ▶ 1 Maritime Aquarium of Norwalk representative
- ▶ 1 Stepping Stones Museum for Children representative
- ▶ 1 Choice Neighborhoods representative
- ▶ 4-5 local entrepreneurs on a 12-month rotating basis-initial nominees are:
  - Josh Newman-Founder, Managing Partner, Media Tavern



- Ron Reynolds-Chairman and Cofounder Green Collar Foods, Chairman and Managing Partner, Day River Ltd
- Vladimir Mariano-Cofounder Norwalk Maker Guild
- Suzanne Cahill, President, The Wall Street Theater
- Katia Garcon-Mistretta, Owner, Katia Boutique
- April Jackson, Entrepreneur
- Charlie Brilliant, Entrepreneur
- Judith Bacall, Designer and Educator
- Stephanie Bramlett, PhD, Diversity expert

The Innovation Places Steering Committee will be responsible for:

- ▶ Managing and administering the Innovation Places Strategic Plan and coordinating with partners to advance the projects outlined in the previous section;
- ▶ Hiring project management;
- ▶ Soliciting grants and operating funds;
- ▶ Managing disbursements;
- ▶ Conducting outreach to business and technology communities; and
- ▶ Reporting to CTNext and stakeholders.

## Required state and municipal actions

Implementation of this Strategic Plan is primarily reliant upon the partners tasked with implementing the projects outlined in previous section. Funding from the State of Connecticut through the CT Next program will be critical to their ability to pursue these projects and programs and develop stronger connections with one another to take advantage of synergies identified through the CT Next planning process.

In addition to funding, other necessary state actions relate to removing the most significant barriers to high-speed connectivity- access and affordability. Recognizing that the landscape for the next level of innovation – with ventures including software development, 3D printing, film and media production, and gaming – will require speeds beyond 1 gigabit, Norwalk Innovation Place partners anticipate collaborating with the State of Connecticut through the CT Gig project to build out, and offer access within, the Innovation Place to a world-class 10 gig fiber optic network.

The primary municipal action required to advance SoNo as Norwalk's Innovation Place is the adoption of a new, unified mixed-use zoning district covering the impact area to replace the six existing zones that cover the area. As previously discussed in this plan, the City of Norwalk's Zoning Commission is currently

proposed regulations for the district, which include both zoning changes and design guidelines to allow a mix of uses and provide a set of dimensional standards that will encourage pedestrian friendly, mixed use development.

## Measuring Performance

Baseline data and ongoing data collection are essential to monitoring progress and measuring SoNo's Innovation Place performance. Identification of specific goals by which success can be measured will allow the Steering Committee to measure progress and determine the value created in working towards achieving desired outcomes. In articulating these specific goals and defining performance measures, the Steering Committee will be guided by the five cross-cutting characteristics identified by the Brookings Institute<sup>1</sup> as contributing to an innovation ecosystem:

1. Critical mass
2. Competitive advantage
3. Quality of place
4. Diversity and inclusion
5. Culture and collaboration

Performance measures for the Innovation Place that can be utilized to track progress towards these goals will be determined by the Steering Committee, based on those outlined by the Brookings Institute as described below.

### 1. Critical mass

Density of assets that collectively begin to attract and retain people, stimulate a range of activities, and increase financing

#### Measures:

- ▶ Concentration of innovation assets (anchor institutions, co-working spaces, accelerators, etc)
- ▶ Concentration of research dollars
- ▶ Ratio of built to unbuilt space ("place assets")
- ▶ Employment & population density
- ▶ Data on human capital to determine concentration of talent
  - Number of employees with BA+
- ▶ Overall square footage of specific development types (research, office, retail, educational facilities)

### 2. Competitive advantage

Leveraging and aligning assets to grow firms and jobs in the district, city, and region.

#### Measures

- ▶ Industry-cluster strengths

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/metropolitan-revolution/2016/03/30/so-you-think-you-have-an-innovation-district/>

- ▶ Number of publications
- ▶ Rating of academic programs
- ▶ Number of research awards
- ▶ Data on commercialization, tech transfer practices, and models of research entrepreneurship

### 3. Quality of place

Strong quality of place that offers quality experiences that attract other assets, accelerate outcomes, and increase interactions.

#### Measures

- ▶ **Sociability:** Evening use; volunteerism; number of women, children and elderly; street life; social networks
- ▶ **Access & linkages:** Traffic data; mode splits; transit usage; pedestrian activity; parking usage patterns
- ▶ **Comfort & image:** Crime statistics; building conditions / code violations, environmental data, sanitation rating
- ▶ **Uses & Activities:** Property values, local business ownership, rent levels, retail sales and number, location, and quality of key gathering places

### 4. Diversity and inclusion

A diverse and inclusive place that provides broad opportunity for residents

#### Measures

- ▶ Demographic composition of residents and employees
- ▶ Existence of local procurement policies
- ▶ Employment by race, income, and educational attainment
- ▶ Level of education required for entry into district employment
- ▶ Access to healthy groceries, parks, pharmacies, etc.

### 5. Culture and collaboration

Connecting the dots between people, institutions, economic clusters, and place and creating synergies at multiple scales and platforms.

#### Measures

- ▶ Qualitative analysis of overall culture, risk-taking environment, and whether physical spaces and programs cultivate collaboration (use online surveys)

