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GLOSSARY

Adaptive Reuse: Using a building for an activity other than what it was designed for, often as a strategy for historic preservation. For example, the UCONN campus in the former Bloomingdale’s department store. Affordable Housing: Typically defined as housing affordable to a household earning eighty percent of the median income for the area. In Stamford’s case, because of high incomes in Fairfield County, affordable housing for a family of four approximates middle-income housing in the rest of the nation.

Community Facilities: Schools, libraries, day-care centers, and similar uses that residents rely upon.

Contextual Development: A requirement that housing cluster away from environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, steep slopes, floodplains, and greenways.

Corridor: A major roadway, such as Tresser Boulevard or the Ridge Roads, and the businesses, open spaces, and neighborhoods along it.

Infill Development: Development that takes place within an established neighborhood. For example, a “shared-parking” facility might serve office workers on weekdays, and residents at night.

Live–Work Space: Flexible space in which people both live and work. Artist lofts are one example.

MetroNorth: The branch of the Metropolitan Transit Authority responsible for commuter train service in Fairfield and Westchester counties.

In Stamford’s case, because of high incomes in Fairfield County, affordable housing for a family of four approximates middle-income housing in the rest of the nation.

Open Space Overlay District: A new land use category to protect open spaces for active and passive use, conservation of natural habitats and environmentally sensitive areas. Conservation subdivision shall be encouraged; however, uses and density shall be consistent with the underlying zoning.

Corridor: A major roadway, such as Tresser Boulevard or the Ridge Roads, and the businesses, open spaces, and neighborhoods along it.

MetroNorth: The branch of the Metropolitan Transit Authority responsible for commuter train service in Fairfield and Westchester counties.

Performance Standards: Regulatory requirements for industrial properties that address impacts such as off-site noise, traffic, emissions, and visual quality. The requirements overlay, or are in addition to, the existing zoning.

Performance Zones: Same as “Performance Standards.” Planning Board: An official City body, whose members are appointed by the Mayor and is responsible for setting land-use policy and adopting the Master Plan.

 Preservation and Design Council: APDZ: Zoning requirements that address visual impacts and opportunity. PCDZ is tied to specific plans and guidelines, to provide predictability. The provisions add to the generally less restrictive zoning for a site.

Shared Parking: Parking facilities that are shared by different uses that do not have the same demand periods, thereby reducing the overall amount of parking in an area.

Stamford Cultural Development Corporation: A non-profit corporation formed by the City to promote arts and culture.

Stamford Housing Authority: A non-profit corporation responsible for public housing.

Zoning Board: An official City body, appointed by the Mayor, responsible for adopting the zoning ordinance and zoning map, as well as making individual zoning approvals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>02-05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who We Are</td>
<td>06-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where We Stand</td>
<td>12-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Campaigns</td>
<td>22-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What We Can Be</td>
<td>36-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>48-49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**
ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is about the future of Stamford. It describes the Stamford Master Plan 2002, a set of principles and policies developed by citizens to guide the growth and development of the city over the next few decades.

The book tells several stories. The first part (“Who We Are”) describes the city as it is now, and the second part (“Where We Stand”) discusses the issues that are on everyone’s mind: growth, traffic, housing costs, and neighborhood character. The third part (“Four Campaigns”) presents a new vision for Stamford, and the fourth part (“What We Can Be”) describes how various neighborhoods might evolve in the coming years.

This book is a companion to a fuller set of research reports and recommendations, as well as the city’s general plan map, which are available from the Stamford Land Use Bureau. We hope you will read carefully, act thoughtfully, and recognize that Stamford’s future is in your hands.

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE OF STAMFORD

We are proud to present our city’s new Master Plan!

Stamford commissioned its first Master Plan, by Herbert S. Swan, in 1929. The vision of the “Swan Plan,” with its emphasis on the city’s scenic and natural diversity, still resonates in Stamford’s visual character and in our hopes for the future.

Now the recently adopted Stamford Master Plan 2002 offers a renewed vision for our city. This plan was not prepared for our city, it was prepared by our city, with the help of a team of professionals.

For three years, the Planning Board conducted an extensive planning process, involving hundreds of Stamfordites from all parts of the community and all walks of life:

• Fourteen neighborhood workshops, one citywide workshop and numerous other work sessions were held, bringing hundreds of people together.
• Students in four public schools carried out design and planning exercises.
• Quinnipiac College conducted a random survey of Stamford residents.
• An Advisory Committee comprised of representatives of civic and business groups met on more than a dozen occasions to hammer out recommendations.
• A public hearing on the draft plan was held in the summer of 2002.

This book showcases those Master Plan goals and objectives for which consensus is strongest and for which there is the greatest sense of urgency.

We pledge our commitment to pursuing the Master Plan recommendations. But just as a broad base of Stamfordites shaped the plan, we need widespread support to carry it through. Using this Master Plan, let’s work together to build a better and brighter Stamford for years to come.

Read on, and participate in building our future!

DANIEL P. MALLOY, MAYOR OF STAMFORD
DUANE E. HILL, CHAIRMAN, STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD
“What are the common spaces that belong to everyone?”

“After the infill sites are developed, does more growth make sense?”
Stamford is a small city whose current boundaries were created in 1949 when the historic city of Stamford consolidated with the town that surrounded it.

As such, Stamford is a collection of communities of varying character. Some grew up around passenger rail stations, some along the Long Island Sound, some along roads or rivers. Many of these communities still retain their identity: Glenbrook and Springdale are still centered around train stations; the Belltown and Shippan Avenue shopping areas continue to serve as neighborhood centers.

No area of Stamford is untouched by natural landscape, from Long Island Sound and its shoreline, to the Mianus, Rippowam/Mill, and Noroton River corridors, to the gently rolling hills and woodlands in the north. Landscape underpins the character of the city, in both subtle and dramatic ways.

Some of the most important physical elements in Stamford now are its major roadways. The most important are the original radial corridors that once connected the center of Stamford to surrounding villages and now link downtown to adjacent neighborhoods. Similarly, High Ridge and Long Ridge roads serve as spines for the neighborhoods between Bulls Head and the Merritt Parkway.

Today, Stamford’s location in the urbanized corridor between Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C., is key to its future. Transportation links such as Interstate 95, the Merritt Parkway, Amtrak, and MetroNorth integrate the city’s economy ever more closely with that of the Northeast region. They have also set the stage for recent development trends.

But the look and feel of recent development has not always reinforced Stamford’s best design qualities. The city needs better tools for reviewing the design of buildings that are filling the gaps in existing neighborhoods, and for preserving historic architectural and landscape features.

Stamford’s open spaces are diverse, from waterfronts and river corridors to urban parks and rural reserves. But its inventory is incomplete, unconnected, and insufficient to serve the needs of a growing population. And the city must connect its open spaces into a system that reaches every corner of the city and provides residents with unbounded opportunities for recreation and enjoyment.
WHO WE ARE

Stamford’s Master Plan is a key document in directing how the city will develop: the foundation for land use planning, zoning, and the capital budget. It also provides direction for numerous other city policies, such as affordable housing, urban design, transportation, and economic development.

Stamford’s last master plan was completed in 1977 and updated in 1984. It was based on the following premises: Residential development should keep pace with employment growth, to keep housing costs and traffic from becoming problems. Downtown and neighborhood centers should be compact and walkable. The natural and built qualities of the city’s neighborhoods should be conserved.

It’s time to update that plan. Stamford faces affordable housing and traffic congestion problems beyond what had been expected. New issues about open space, environmental quality, and development pressure in neighborhoods have emerged. And after a quarter century, new residents, businesses, and community leaders need an opportunity to debate and shape Stamford’s future.

The goals of this Master Plan are to review and extend the principles set forth twenty-five years ago; to update the understanding of growth in Stamford to help make better decisions about development and planning; and to make certain city plans and policies respond to the priorities of current resident, civic, and business communities.

This Master Plan has been more than two years in the making. It was initiated with public workshops—one for the city as a whole and five held in various neighborhoods—with special invitations to members of civic associations. All along, the Plan was reviewed by a Citizen Advisory Committee that included representatives of neighborhood, civic, and business groups, as well as representatives of planning, zoning, and other boards.

OUR PLAN

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OUR COMMUNITY

Stamford’s residents share the same public schools and parks, the same downtown and—as surveys and workshops during the master planning process revealed—many of the same priorities. Residents want to maintain the city’s social and economic diversity, neighborhood quality and scenic character, and strengthen downtown’s role as a focus of development and a lively, mixed-use area.

Economically, Stamford is an undisputed commercial powerhouse, the business center of Fairfield County and, arguably, the entire state. The city serves as a base for numerous U.S. and multinational corporations and retains a mix of retail, service, and industrial jobs. Its economic output is as large as Philadelphia’s, and ten times that of Hartford.

There is, however, cause for concern about the city’s social and economic future. While the number of jobs is growing, there is an increasing polarization of incomes in the city, with growing concentrations of rich and poor. To some degree this is a result of the rising cost of living, particularly housing costs, which are driving moderate- and middle-income residents away.

The industrial sector, which provides stable, modest paying jobs, is contracting and is further threatened by residential and office expansion into industrial areas. Stamford may not be able to rebuild its industrial base, but it should ensure that jobs aren’t pushed out.

Having a diverse employment base provides a rich range of opportunities for residents and helps insulate the city from sudden economic shifts. Having a diverse pool of workers means local businesses can adapt more easily to changing conditions. Social and economic diversity aren’t just laudable goals. They are critical elements in ensuring that Stamford remains dynamic, that it can thrive on all levels, respond to opportunities, and meet its challenges.

Today Stamford could be considered a model for a healthy urban community.

The city’s population is diverse and growing steadily. It is now home to 120,000 people, thirty five percent of whom are either African-American or Latino. An additional 60,000 people commute into the city every day to work.

Today Stamford could be considered a model for a healthy urban community.

The city’s population is diverse and growing steadily. It is now home to 120,000 people, thirty five percent of whom are either African-American or Latino. An additional 60,000 people commute into the city every day to work.
“I have to drive 1.5 miles to the bus stop, so I might as well drive to work.”

“The community needs parks. All I see are trucks and potholes.”

“People here want to see their neighborhoods preserved.”

WHERE WE STAND

Prospects for Growth
Getting Around Town
Places to Live
Community Character
PROSPECTS FOR GROWTH

For twenty years, Stamford has reaped the benefits of growth. The city’s economy is strong, with some 84,000 jobs distributed evenly among the finance/real estate, manufacturing/construction and retail/wholesale sectors. These jobs provide work at a diverse range of income levels.

But Stamford has borne the costs of growth as well. Residents have made it clear that traffic, the rising cost of living—particularly housing—and pressures on neighborhood character are damaging the quality of life they seek here.

What will the next twenty years bring? The reality is, Stamford’s population and employment base will almost certainly continue to expand.

However, it’s hard to predict how fast. Stamford’s strength as a financial center may continue to attract national and international corporations. Or the city may simply grow as existing businesses expand.

No question, continued growth will have costs and benefits for Stamford. If growth slows down, impacts on local traffic will be minimal, neighborhoods will not change much, and the city’s revenues will remain adequate. But Stamford won’t see the kind of development that can turn commercial strips into neighborhood centers, eliminate blight, and generate resources for housing, open space, transportation and community improvements that residents say are critical.

If growth remains steady, pressures on housing, open space, traffic, and economic diversity will increase. But the new development, along with the revenue it generates, can be shaped to help the city catch up with these problems. And Stamford workers will have more possibilities for better jobs and income.

The fact is, Stamford, like all cities, has little control over how fast it grows. Debates about “high growth” versus “low growth” polarize residents and distract from the business at hand: growth should be managed so that it benefits Stamford as much as possible.

What Stamford can control is the character of growth. The city can direct development to the right places, minimize its impact on neighborhood quality of life, and make certain it leaves the city better off in terms of affordable housing, open space, and traffic.

Does Stamford have the room to grow? Yes. The Master Plan shows where, and how, growth can occur in ways that are consistent with the community’s overall goals and avoid conflicts with existing neighborhoods.

Directing development downtown is the key to Stamford’s growth management policy. Downtown has excellent transit access and plenty of room for new development, and there is broad support for completing the vision of downtown as a vibrant, pedestrian friendly place. Much of the downtown’s commercial, retail and residential growth can be accommodated in the Core, including along the Mill River, with additional development in the South End and around the Transportation Center.

Industrial districts on the east and west side of the city will continue to evolve as Stamford’s manufacturing base changes. They are a natural place to consider growth, but it will have to be carefully managed. Though offices, shopping, and even housing might now be appropriate in these areas, space should be reserved for industry.

The ridge roads along the corporate campuses can accommodate the expansion of businesses that are already there—some of the city’s most important employers. But further subdivision for new businesses could undermine the city’s smart growth strategies. Portions of these campuses might be used for housing instead, or even open space.

Neighborhood centers along local main streets are among the few neighborhood-scaled places where infill development has public support. Carefully designed and smaller-scale office, retail, and residential projects can enhance community vitality and the quality of neighborhood life.

Can Stamford grow in ways that make the city a better place to live and work? Yes. The Master Plan is based on a “smart growth” strategy, which seeks to direct growth to existing centers, where the possibility of transit use and walking will reduce traffic impacts. The Plan describes how growth can be shaped to support broader goals for community design and neighborhood stability.

In downtown, for example, infill projects can strengthen the pedestrian network and public spaces. Neighborhood centers can be strengthened by contextual infill development, streetscape and landscape improvements, and façade and signage guidelines.

Industrial areas can be strengthened by mixed-use development, even housing, that makes them more attractive and lively. Performance zoning and “eco-industrial” standards can help minimize conflicts between land uses and promote sound environmental development and industrial practices.

The Plan is clear, as well, that continued growth in Stamford must be coupled with efforts to promote neighborhood stability, purchase badly needed parks and open space, upgrade the visual character of major roads, and improve community facilities and services. Stamford can continue to grow and meet the expectations of its citizens and communities. Indeed, growth is important to Stamford because it offers the best hope for generating the resources the city needs to address the challenges it faces.

How would you spend an annual surplus of:

- $2 Million (if Stamford experiences low growth)
- $10 Million (if present trends continue)
- $30 Million (if Stamford’s growth is higher)

Affordable Housing
$1.5 million/year for ten years to create 1,000 units ($15M total)

Open Space
$4 million to clean up existing parks
$3 million/year to acquire another 200 acres, the minimum required for high growth ($64M total)

Schools
$2-$15 million to build new school additions

Public Works
$15 million to renovate Old Town Hall

Traffic Mitigation
$3.5 million/year for intersection improvements with low growth
$5.5 million/year for intersection improvements with high growth
Anyone who lives or works in Stamford knows one thing for sure: Getting around the city has become harder than ever. Perennial backups on Interstate 95 and the Merritt Parkway are just the tip of the iceberg. Spillover commuter traffic cuts through otherwise quiet neighborhoods. Streets are busier and intersections are more congested.

In fact, transportation issues are one of the biggest constraints on Stamford’s prosperity. How has this happened? Quite simply, Stamford and the region have spread themselves out too thinly. The places where people live, work, and shop are farther apart, so people have to make more trips, and longer trips, in their cars. Walking and taking transit just don’t make sense most of the time, and no amount of road or intersection improvements can keep up. And the prognosis is not good. Even if growth slows dramatically, streets and intersections in Stamford will only get more congested since car ownership and use are increasing.

The truth is, there is no easy answer to Stamford’s traffic problems. Stamford can’t build its way out of traffic problems. Adding new roads and widening existing ones only encourages more and faster traffic, which erodes neighborhood quality of life.

Instead, Stamford needs to develop in patterns that make walking, biking, and transit realistic options for getting around. That means working on several fronts: making better land-use and urban design decisions, designing streets and paths that are safe for pedestrians and bicyclists, expanding transit service and access, and helping businesses manage the traffic they generate.

And it means keeping focus. No one project will solve the city’s traffic problems alone, but every decision about development projects and public improvements can help reinforce these strategies for making it easier to get around town.

- Better land-use and design decisions mean that Stamford should add housing as fast as it adds jobs, and should provide housing for people of all incomes. Development should be focused in places that offer people the choice of getting around by transit, bicycling, or walking.
- Better transit, and better access to transit, means more parking at MetroNorth stations east of Stamford, more bus service to the Stamford Transportation Center, additional train service in off-peak hours, and perhaps even a new station on East Main Street.
- Better pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure means creating an integrated network of places for walking and biking in the design of streets and private development.
- Innovative traffic demand strategies mean working with employers to institute policies such as flex time and staggered work hours, telecommuting, guaranteed rides home for employees who unexpectedly must work late or leave early, tax-free transit discounts, and carpool and vanpool matching programs.

Traffic congestion frustrates the daily lives of Stamford residents, damages neighborhood quality of life, and threatens Stamford’s economic future. The problem is obvious and urgent, but the solutions depend on a coordinated, long-term commitment to changing the pattern of development in the city and giving people better choices for getting around town.
STAMFORD'S GREATEST STRENGTH IS ITS DIVERSE POPULATION. GOOD SCHOOLS, A VARIETY OF NEIGHBORHOOD CHOICES, AND A RANGE OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES ARE MAJOR REASONS WHY STAMFORD IS REGARDED BY SO MANY PEOPLE AS A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE.

BUT STAMFORD IS FACING A HOUSING CRISIS, ONE THAT'S MAKING IT HARDER FOR PEOPLE TO FIND AN AFFORDABLE PLACE TO LIVE. THE CRISIS SEEMED TO COME ON SUDDENLY, AS THE ECONOMY STRENGTHENED OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS. BUT IT HAS ACTUALLY BEEN BUILDING FOR A LONG TIME, BECAUSE MORE JOBS HAVE BEEN CREATED IN THE CITY AND REGION THAN PLACES TO LIVE. ONE ESTIMATE IS THAT STAMFORD HAS A SHORTFALL OF 9,000 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS.

AS A RESULT, HOUSING PRICES HAVE GONE UP AND EMPLOYEES HAVE TO SEARCH MORE WIDELY FOR AFFORDABLE PLACES TO LIVE. THIS HAS CONTRIBUTED TO TRAFFIC PROBLEMS, AS EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN FORCED INTO LONGER COMMUTES. THIS MAY UNDERMINE STAMFORD'S ECONOMIC SUCCESS: BUSINESSES SAY THE BIGGEST IMPEDIMENT TO LOCATING IN STAMFORD IS THE LACK OF LOCAL HOUSING FOR EMPLOYEES.

THIS IMBALANCE WON'T GO AWAY BY ITSELF. BUT STAMFORD CAN MOVE TOWARDS A BETTER BALANCE OF JOBS AND HOUSING BY ADHERING TO A FEW BASIC PRINCIPLES.

FIRST, HOUSING AVAILABILITY AND COSTS ARE CLEARLY REGIONAL PROBLEMS. BUT STAMFORD MUST DO WHAT IT CAN TO RETAIN AND UPGRADE EXISTING HOUSING, AND TO DEVELOP NEW HOUSING, ON ITS OWN. STAMFORD ALREADY HAS AN ENVIOUS TRACK RECORD IN THIS REGARD, WITH INCLUSIONARY ZONING AND A SUCCESSFUL GROUP OF NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED, NON-PROFIT HOUSING SPONSORS.

SECOND, THE CITY SHOULD MAKE SURE THERE IS NO NET LOSS IN THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING THAT ALREADY EXISTS. THIS MEANS ENCOURAGING THE REHABILITATION AND SOUND MANAGEMENT OF SMALL APARTMENT BUILDINGS, REPLACING ANY HOUSING AUTHORITY UNITS THAT ARE DEMOLISHED, AND TRACKING PRIVATE PROJECTS WHERE AFFORDABILITY CONTROLS ARE ABOUT TO EXPIRE.

THIRD, STAMFORD MUST MAKE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF HOUSING. THIS INCLUDES CONTEXTUAL INFILL INFORMED BY CAREFUL DESIGN GUIDELINES, APARTMENT BUILDINGS DOWNTOWN, AND INCLUSIONARY UNITS IN LARGE SUBDIVISIONS.

FORTH, THE CITY SHOULD ENSURE THAT IN ADDRESSING ITS AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROBLEMS, OTHER PLANNING PRINCIPLES ARE NOT ABANDONED. NEW HOUSING SHOULD ENHANCE THE PHYSICAL QUALITY AND VISUAL APPEARANCE OF THE NEIGHBORHOODS IN WHICH IT IS LOCATED. IT COULD BE COUPLED WITH EFFORTS TO FILL IN DOWNTOWN AND NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS, ELIMINATE BLIGHTING INFLUENCES, OR REUSE BROWNFIELD AND GREYFIELD SITES. NEW HOUSING SHOULD ALSO BE LOCATED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TRANSIT AND PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE, THEREBY MINIMIZING TRAFFIC IMPACTS.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE MASTER PLANNING PROCESS EMPHASIZED THAT THEY WERE CONCERNED NOT ABOUT HOUSING FOR ITS OWN SAKE, BUT ABOUT MAINTAINING THE CITY'S SOCIAL DIVERSITY. CREATING PLACES TO LIVE MEANS ENSURING THAT PEOPLE FROM A VARIETY OF BACKGROUNDS, WITH A VARIETY OF INCOMES, CAN CALL STAMFORD HOME.
Stamford residents have a major stake in the stability of their neighborhoods. The fiercest discussions in the neighborhood workshops held as part of the master planning process were about conflicts in land use—construction haulers in the South End, apartment buildings in Cove–East Side, non-residential development in North Stamford.

The plan’s proposals for growth management, public improvements, design controls on private development, and neighborhood stabilization strategies are all crafted with attention to the importance of conserving the places and qualities that make Stamford a desirable place to live.

Reinforcing community character means limiting the intensification of neighborhoods and giving close scrutiny to the amount, scale and character of new development. Design controls must assure that new development fits in, and performance controls must assure that residential uses and other activities are compatible with each other.

At the same time, communities should be involved in the process of determining what kind of development is appropriate. The community-based process that generated neighborhood-specific plans for Glenbrook and Springdale demonstrated that neighborhoods are willing to talk about new development if residents themselves have shaped the vision and if new development supports their goals for revitalization.

To accommodate these policies, the bulk of Stamford’s growth should be directed downtown. In outlying neighborhoods, the city should look toward incremental, carefully designed infill projects in areas with pedestrian and transportation infrastructure, such as main streets and neighborhood centers, or to places where new projects can bring abandoned or blighted properties back to life.

Development in these areas should be coupled with public improvements that create a safe and coherent pedestrian experience—amenities such as street furniture, lighting and benches; traffic calming at crosswalks; ground-floor shops with window displays and frequent entries; prohibitions against ground-floor garages; and pedestrian links to transit facilities and nearby neighborhoods.

Reinforcing community character means strengthening existing neighborhoods. It means understanding neighborhoods as more than residential districts, as places that include parks, schools, neighborhood main streets, and civic places as well. The city, through land-use regulation, open space acquisition, public space management, and capital investment, can make certain each area has access to the facilities that sustain a strong neighborhood quality of life.

Reinforcing community character means protecting the visual qualities of the city’s neighborhoods and its landscape—its natural and manmade resources, from old-growth trees to natural watercourses, from stone walls to historic buildings. It means creating a greenway network, improving the design of arterial roads, and providing waterfront access and views. It means establishing focused design review through “Preservation and Design Districts” and new historic preservation policies. And it means expanding the program of providing neighborhood beautification grants to community associations.
Stamford’s Master Plan is organized around four campaigns, or groups of recommendations, for shaping the city’s future. They are based on a careful consideration of Stamford’s history, its economic prospects, and the concerns citizens expressed as the Plan was being developed.

Preserving Stamford’s social and economic diversity means providing for a full range of residential choices, workplaces, and development opportunities—which will help support a diverse population and economy.

Designing a “city beautiful” means celebrating and enhancing Stamford’s waterfront, rivers, greenways, hills, and forests; its main roads and gateways; its unique neighborhoods, historic buildings, and pedestrian areas.

Enhancing neighborhood quality of life means monitoring the amount, scale and character of development; providing services and amenities that support community life; protecting environmental resources; and untangling traffic problems.

Promoting the vitality of Stamford’s downtown means recognizing the critical role downtown will play in accommodating future growth.

Each campaign is essential to fulfilling the Master Plan’s vision; none can stand alone. Consider these propositions:

• Widening roads and reconfiguring intersections, in hopes of stemming traffic problems, will destroy the quality of life in the areas the roads pass through.

• Stemming the tide of commuters driving to jobs in Stamford will require fitting more housing into the city, and concentrating new housing and workplaces around transit.

• Fitting more housing into the city will depend on taking “city beautiful” design concerns into account, so that new projects improve the physical character of neighborhoods, and sustaining neighborhood quality of life by providing adequate public facilities and open space.

• “City beautiful” design policies alone won’t protect neighborhoods from the impacts of intensification. Downtown must become the focal point for growth because that is where there is space for development, pedestrian and transit infrastructure, and the political will to follow through.

• To maintain its diversity, Stamford must allow different kinds of housing, for all income groups, to be built on a range of sites throughout the city.

Stamford is well positioned to meet the challenge of accommodating growth while conserving the city’s character. Its record of public-private partnership is strong. Its citizenry is diverse, well-informed, and sophisticated. These four campaigns provide a solid blueprint for helping Stamford ensure that the growth it experiences, no matter what the rate, satisfies a wide range of community objectives.
Stamford’s community is strong because its population is diverse—more so than that of the state or the region as a whole, both in terms of ethnic background and income range. Residents have the skills, talents, and ideas that allow the city to thrive, culturally, and economically.

Stamford is also strong because its employment base is diverse, not overly dependent on any one economic sector. About the same number of people work in finance and real estate, manufacturing and construction, and retail and wholesale trade. As a result, Stamford’s economy is positioned to ride out any one economic sector. About the same number of people work in finance and real estate, manufacturing and construction, and retail and wholesale trade. As a result, Stamford’s economy is positioned to ride out any one economic sector.

Stamford’s success will depend on its ability to recognize and cultivate its diversity of population and employment. This means enhancing its strong education system, offering a wide choice of options in housing and neighborhoods, providing development opportunities for expanding or new businesses, and attending to quality of life issues that make the city an attractive place to locate.

The threat Stamford faces is economic and social polarization, accelerated in recent years by rising housing costs and the declining number of industrial jobs. But there are clear steps the city can take to prevent this from happening.

Maintain a range of residential choices. Participants in the Master Plan process emphasized that their concern is not providing affordable housing per se, but maintaining social diversity. The goal is not to build housing for its own sake, but to keep Stamford a place that people from a variety of backgrounds and incomes can call home.

The first priority is to maintain the stock of affordable and publicly assisted housing Stamford already has. This could occur through one-for-one replacement policies, inclusionary requirements for new multi-family buildings or large subdivisions, and programs that encourage the renovation and upkeep of older, affordable units.

The city must also offer a variety of sites for different kinds of housing development, from contextual infill informed by careful design guidelines, to apartment buildings downtown.

Affordable housing is really a regional problem, and Stamford has an exemplary record of local initiative. Nevertheless, further progress will require even greater public support. The city can set overall goals, and each neighborhood must help in its own way—undertaking neighborhood-generated revitalization plans, generating lists of potential sites for new housing, and helping to establish sensitive design and development criteria.

Encourage a diversity of employment settings. Financial services will remain the engine of the city’s prosperity, but Stamford must continue to develop a diverse economy. In particular, the city will need to shift growth in office employment toward technology-based manufacturing and research and development activities.

Maintaining economic diversity requires careful finesse. There must be flexibility for innovation in the marketplace. Yet there must also be enough incentives to channel development where it will have the greatest opportunity for synergy and longevity.

A key goal is to preserve the industrial base that exists already. This will require the city to strengthen its current policy of discouraging retail and office development in industrial districts. That could include capping development rights there, creating urban design standards for industrial zones, and improving financial and technical assistance programs for industry.

It will also be important to ensure that there are opportunities for developing the variety of spaces that businesses are seeking—including downtown office buildings, flex structures in industrial districts, small-scale infill buildings in neighborhood commercial centers, and campus-style offices. Developers should be able to take advantage of market and technological changes that are reshaping the landscape of work and production space, such as flex space, live–work arrangements, mixed-use development, and “eco-industrial” standards.

Promote a waterfront of diverse activities. Stamford owes its original prosperity and much of its abiding character to its harbor and waterfront. Today, it should seek to make the waterfront a living part of the city. There should be room for water-dependent businesses and recreation, as well as a new commitment to public access, waterborne transportation, housing, and commercial development. Waterfronts are powerfully attractive places and can spark significant community renewal. Stamford’s shoreline and riverfronts are a resource of rich potential.

“We need manufacturing jobs, industrial zoning should be kept to enhance diversity.”
Stamford residents chose to live in the city because of its scenic qualities and the character of its natural landscape and built areas. Residents are intent on protecting these features and the value they add to homes and communities.

Efforts to protect the city’s visual character—what the Master Plan calls a new “City Beautiful” movement—will embrace several initiatives. These include expanding the city’s greenways, enhancing its street corridors, preserving historic buildings and landscape features, assuring new development fits its context, and reconnecting to the waterfront.

Expand Stamford’s “green infrastructure” by creating a continuous network of open spaces and greenway connections. Stamford’s high quality of life depends on residents having access to a variety of open spaces—neighborhood parks, places for quiet walks, places for outdoor recreation, the coast, gardens, forests, and meadows.

The perception is that Stamford could use more open space, a greater variety of spaces, and better connections between what it already has. That perception is likely to intensify as the city’s population increases.

The basic framework of the greenway system would be the Mianus, Mill/Rippowan, and Noroton River corridors, which should be augmented with trails. From those corridors, connections should be made along other features, such as the Merritt Parkway, Poor House Brook, and the waterfront. Access to the waterfront should be virtually mandatory in new development.

Stamford’s traditional parks will need to be augmented with creative, innovative strategies for assembling open space. Non-traditional spaces such as the lawns of corporate campuses, properties held by quasi-public entities like the water company, boulevards, and green streets can help fill in missing links.

Creating a network of green space is more than an aesthetic priority, or a strategy for increasing usable recreation space. It can be linked to alternative forms of getting around the city, such as bicycling and walking, and can play a stronger role in establishing and protecting habitat.

Reinforce the role major roadway corridors play in creating a sense of a well-organized, well-designed city. In Stamford, major roads help tie together a complex and geographically diverse city.

The most important are the original radial corridors that extend from downtown out into the neighborhoods. There are also corridors along the edges of downtown, along connectors like Tresser Boulevard and Washington Boulevard. And there are the Long Ridge Road and High Ridge Road corridors, both of which organize the neighborhoods between Bulls Head and the Merritt Parkway and beyond, but each of which has its own character.

Along roads like these, “Preservation and Design Districts” could set out guidelines for streetscape, landscape, and building placement, reinforcing the particular character and function of each corridor. Major intersections, nodes, and gateways into adjacent neighborhoods should be identified and upgraded.

Safeguard the design character of Stamford’s neighborhoods and small districts, and their essential qualities of place. Zoning cannot accomplish this alone. Stamford needs to develop supplemental tools, such as design guidelines, design review, and historic and landmark regulations.
Unique neighborhoods can be preserved with “Preservation and Design Districts,” whose design guidelines would emphasize the best features about the area. These guidelines could be developed with community input, would focus on the most important design issues, and could be organized to allow for design reviews timely and predictable. Other types of projects with significant design impacts, such as multifamily housing and high-rise parking garages, should also be subject to review wherever they are proposed in the city.

Urban design considerations are important because they ensure that new development will reinforce and improve the physical quality of neighborhoods. They also show how a complete range of development opportunities can occur in downtown and industrial districts.

Significant historic resources, as well as ordinary elements of Stamford’s traditional character, deserve protection. Though most of the city’s historic fabric has been lost, some remains, such as retail buildings on Main and Atlantic streets downtown, nineteenth-century mill buildings in the South End and Waterside, and the Old Long Ridge Road district in North Stamford, should be inventoried and preserved to maintain community identity.

Stamford’s historic buildings and landscape elements should be inventoried and preserved to maintain community identity.

Roadway corridor design should focus on improving the pedestrian experience and give each road a distinctive character.
Before historic Stamford and the surrounding town merged in 1949, the area was a collection of neighborhoods, and that strong sense of local identity persists today. An important thrust of the Master Plan is to protect and enhance the quality of life in Stamford’s neighborhoods, by focusing on development controls, incompatible land uses, community resources, traffic, and environmental conditions.

Stamford residents have a major stake in the stability of their neighborhoods. The fiercest discussions that occurred during discussions about the Master Plan involved land-use conflicts, such as apartment buildings in Cove-East Side and non-residential development in North Stamford.

Enhancing neighborhood quality of life means, first and foremost, taking a deliberate approach to the amount, scale, and character of new development. There should be clear objectives about what development is desirable, and what is not. Development should be welcomed if it can help local shopping areas evolve into mixed-use centers, improve under-used or blighted parcels, provide for more housing opportunities, or take advantage of neglected resources, such as the waterfront. But neighborhoods should not be expected to bear the brunt of new growth. Development that is too intense should be directed downtown.

There should be clear standards for what designs are appropriate and what are not. “Mixed-Use Overlay Districts” would couple, on large development sites, public improvements with higher densities and wider ranges of uses than normally allowed by zoning. Design controls would ensure that new development is contextual, and performance criteria would ensure that residential, commercial, and industrial activities are compatible with each other.

Enhancing neighborhood quality also means there should be a clear commitment to providing services and amenities that support community life. This includes transit and street improvements, open spaces and parks, schools and day-care centers, local shopping, services, and small-scale workplaces—the kinds of places that make people feel as if they belong to a community. Public facilities and services should be distributed fairly throughout the city, and they should be grouped in order to provide anchors for their communities.

Enhancing neighborhood quality also means looking after Stamford’s environmental resources. Stamford, though largely developed, encompasses a number of terrains that must be protected—wetlands, slopes, wooded areas, coastal wetlands, rivers, and floodplains. These environments are being encroached on, not only from development pressures, but also from local sources of pollution. The Master Plan recommends creating “conservation subdivisions” that leave environmentally sensitive land free of development, establish performance standards to control noxious activities, and protect public and private open space through “open space overlays.”

Finally, enhancing neighborhood quality means creating a more robust transportation network. This means making vehicular circulation, traffic calming, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements that promote attractive alternatives to driving. This includes promoting housing within walking distance of transit, job locations, and shopping.

Public acceptance of future growth in Stamford depends on creating confidence that the city’s neighborhoods will be stable and that traffic and environmental matters will be managed more wisely. Questions about what kinds of development and what design standards are appropriate should be addressed with the full involvement of the community. The community-based planning process that generated neighborhood-specific plans for Glenbrook and Springdale demonstrated that neighborhoods are willing to talk about new development if residents themselves have shaped the vision and if new development supports their goals for neighborhood and community revitalization.

“The character of this community, the result of mixed uses and good design, must be maintained.”
There is broad consensus that future growth in Stamford should be directed mainly to downtown. And there is the capacity for accommodating large amounts of new development there, both through filling in underused sites and by expanding out from the core. There are many possibilities for development that provide an opportunity to manage future growth and bolster the area’s significant social, economic, and cultural resources. New development can strengthen downtown’s formidable assets, such as its accessibility for pedestrians and transit, and extend the vision for an area that is vibrant around the clock and throughout the week.

Create a pedestrian place. Downtown should be a place where people want to stroll and linger, with opportunities for dining, shopping, living, and walking, as well as special public places. Imagine a green refuge at Mill River Central Park, a public market space with cafes and restaurants at the “bow-tie” crossing at Main and Bank Streets, and a lively public arcade through the Stamford Town Center.

Everywhere downtown, there would be continuous sidewalks lined with ground-floor activity, on-street parking, and amenities such as trees, pedestrian-scaled lighting, and bus shelters. Conversely, there should be prohibitions against elements that discourage walking, such as skywalks and ground-floor garages. The pedestrian network should focus especially on linking different parts of downtown with the Transportation Center and with adjacent neighborhoods. The program of offering developers zoning “bonuses” in exchange for public amenities could be refined to act as a greater incentive for these kinds of improvements.

Create a center for arts and entertainment. Arts and entertainment comes in all shapes, sizes, and forms—ranging from an artist live–work space to a museum gallery, from a jazz concert to a film festival, from a health club to a bowling alley. Building on the success of the Stamford Cultural Development Corporation, the city’s “percent for art” program could be expanded, more efficient use of existing spaces should be promoted, and more affordable spaces for the arts and entertainment should be created. Activities that complement arts and entertainment and which benefit from downtown’s extraordinary accessibility, such as shopping, dining, and hotels, should also be encouraged.

Create a residential neighborhood. The city should not only encourage housing development but also foster the emergence of a new downtown neighborhood. It should intervene to promote parks, a downtown supermarket and pharmacy, and other amenities that will make living in the center of the city a desirable option.

Create a place for large retail operations. Stamford already discourages large retail enterprises, including entertainment complexes, from locating outside downtown. These activities should continue to be directed downtown.
WHAT WE CAN BE

Blueprints for Stamford’s Neighborhoods

Downtown

Belltown
Glenbrook
Springdale

South End
Waterside
West Side

Cove-East Side
Shippan

North Stamford

Newfield
Turn of River
Westover
DOWNTOWN

Downtown is the centerpiece of any growth management strategy for Stamford. It is a place that can capture a significant amount of the city’s growth while evolving a stronger role as a residential district, a place for arts and culture, and a location for large-scale retail. Above all, downtown should be a lively, people-oriented place, a shared resource for everyone in Stamford. The question is how downtown should expand over time.

It’s useful to remember that downtown has evolved with two centers of gravity. One is the original pedestrian-oriented Core focused around the intersection of Broad Street, Main Street and Atlantic Avenue. The other is the more recently built highway-scale developments along the Connecticut Turnpike-Tresser Boulevard Corridor. Surrounding these is a “Collar” area of intermediate-scale development that creates a transition to surrounding neighborhoods.

Each of the areas can accommodate growth, albeit of a differing urban character. The Turnpike-Tresser Corridor and the area near the Transportation Center can accommodate the largest commercial developments, similar to the UBS Warburg project. The Core can accommodate large development as well, but with special attention to the scale and character of the existing buildings and the pedestrian environment. For the most part, the Collar should reinforce the transition in scale and density to adjacent neighborhoods.

An urban design plan can establish design guidelines for potential development sites, help pull the city’s green infrastructure into downtown, strengthen the relationship between buildings and pedestrian spaces, and create clear edges.

The city will need to take additional steps to promote the orderly infill and expansion of downtown. One challenge is overcoming obstacles such as land assembly and access. Approaches could include areawide parking strategies or density bonuses that make hard-to-develop sites more attractive, or using the city’s redevelopment powers to catalyze projects.

Downtown owes much of its success to its accessibility for people throughout the city and the region. It will remain prosperous only as long as it remains easy to reach by transit and car, and easy to get around. This means the city should consider design improvements to the Transportation Center, a downtown shuttle network, better transit between downtown and other areas of Stamford, and ferry service to LaGuardia Airport, Manhattan, and Long Island.

A comprehensive parking management plan, focusing on shared parking policies and reduced parking ratios for private development, will make it easier for visitors to find parking and generate new pedestrian activity. Unified parking signage will help drivers find parking areas; the most sophisticated of these can provide real-time information about where parking is available.
WHAT WE CAN BE

including Stamford’s sewage treatment plant and its largest public works yard. These uses are essential to the city’s economic vitality. They should remain, with the challenge of assuring that their potential negative impacts are mitigated.

The hodgepodge of industrial, office, and commercial uses overloads the main roads into and out of the area, particularly cross traffic. Traffic calming in neighborhoods should be coupled with improvements to arterials, intersections, and main roads.

Though much of Cove–East Side and Shippan is built out, significant development opportunities remain. These include waterfront parcels and, sometime in the future, the Clairol industrial site. The intensity of development in this area should be capped, mindful of the broad policy of promoting Downtown development. Targeted redevelopment can be accomplished in connection with the city’s waterfront policies and community priorities.

Neighborhood identity and passions run deep in the Cove–East Side and Shippan neighborhoods.

One reason is that these are places with clear-cut boundaries. Shippan is in many ways an island apart, surrounded by Long Island Sound, except for a narrow connection framed by parks. Cove–East Side is bounded on the north by Interstate 95 and the railroad, and elsewhere by bodies of water.

Another reason is that residents of these neighborhoods feel as if they are under siege. The few roads that provide access to the area are often choked with traffic. Industrial and office activities are thriving, but are often regarded as nuisances. Places important to local residents have become citywide attractions, creating tensions. The neighborhoods are tightly built, with the result that every new proposal is fraught with controversy.

Above all, the plan for Cove–East Side and Shippan must reflect these concerns. It must give residents the sense that they are in control of their destiny. It must respect the hope residents have of preserving a genuine suburban neighborhood despite constant pressures for a more urban atmosphere. At the same time, it must conserve the qualities that make the area distinctive: a diverse economic and residential base, waterfront parkland and maritime ecology, tree-lined residential streets.

The waterfront—a resource unique to both this area and the city—is of special concern. The first priority should be the protection of built and natural settings. In developed areas, water-dependent uses should be promoted. In undeveloped areas, the natural environment should be conserved: the bluffs on the east side of Shippan peninsula should be reserved from development; beaches should be enhanced; tidal wetland habitats should be restored; areas of shellfish concentration should be improved. The second priority is for new development that enhances public waterfront uses, especially views and access.

The area’s residential and economic diversity can be maintained by policies that support what exists and allow carefully calibrated new development. The city should maintain its current one-for-one replacement policy on publicly supported housing, and new transit friendly housing might be located in the Shippan Avenue business district. Industrial areas should be upgraded so they are more efficient and less of a nuisance, through policies for financial assistance, performance-based zoning, and physical improvements like shared parking. Design guidelines might be implemented for roads along the industrial zones, including the Magee Avenue corridor as a special case study for an industrial district.

Cove–East Side and Shippan also accommodate a significant amount of municipal government operations,
The neighborhoods south and west of downtown are among the most urban and mixed use in the city. Housing, shops, offices, and industries all sit next to each other, in a checkerboard pattern. Elegant waterfront housing contrasts with run-down triple-deckers; modern corporate headquarters contrast with traditional industrial plants.

There is significant development pressure in South End–Waterside–West Side, as well as a desire to revitalize and stabilize what exists. Neglected assets, such as the waterfront, offer tremendous opportunities while existing resources, such as the affordable housing stock and industrial facilities, should be conserved.

And the neighborhood is organized for action. Within the last few years, two coalitions of residents have sponsored planning initiatives for the area, and both remain involved.

The first challenge for South End–Waterside–West Side is conserving the residential and employment diversity that already exists. The inventory of publicly assisted affordable housing should be maintained; the owners of small, affordable, multi-family buildings should be offered resources for management and rehabilitation. Industries should be offered assistance with parking, access, and environmental quality issues.

New development should be targeted for blighted areas, with an aim towards strengthening the mix of activity. Sites could include small industrial properties that are incompatible with surrounding uses, sub-standard or obsolete residential or mixed-use buildings, vacant land, and brownfields. Large housing projects should include affordable units; artist live-work space could be fit into industrial areas; water-dependent uses should be given priority along the shoreline.

Urban design and open space improvements can help mitigate the rough juxtapositions of the intense mix of uses here, and create a new civic realm. Parking, storage areas, and unused slivers of land could be consolidated to create neighborhood open space; community center and park improvements should be grouped to create neighborhood anchors; the Central Park/Mill River Greenway could be extended south to the West Branch.

Development along the waterfront should enhance public access to the water’s edge; public and private improvements along major streets should provide better opportunities for transit, walking, and neighborhood retail. Development on large, assembled sites should be guided by special Mixed-Use Overlay Districts. Since the northern edge of the South End is so close to downtown, particularly the Transportation Center, it is a viable place for development that might otherwise be destined for downtown. Here a careful balance must be struck: Planning controls must ensure that development in this area does not rob from downtown, but encourage projects that lead to improvements such as affordable housing, waterfront promenades, pedestrian connections to downtown, and better parks and community facilities.
North Stamford, the most affluent and least densely developed area of the city, consists almost exclusively of single-family homes on large, wooded lots. A fifth of the land area is public or protected land, such as parks, campuses, reservoirs, and preserves, and there is a strong sense of the landscape, with rolling hills, rock outcroppings, and wetlands.

Residents want to preserve these qualities and features, protect wetlands and wooded lots, connect open spaces into greenbelts, and maintain the scenic qualities of roads. Threats to the rural and residential character of the neighborhood—such as cell phone towers and commercial expansion—elicit strong reactions.

There is not much expectation that affordable or multifamily housing will be built in North Stamford; high property values and the lack of sewers and infrastructure drive up housing costs. Still, the city and community should craft guidelines for incorporating affordable housing into any modest size or large new subdivisions.

Indeed, residents expressed more concern about the neighborhood’s scenery and natural environment than they did about the design of new houses, probably because the neighborhood’s topography, winding streets, large lots, and stone walls already afford significant visual privacy. Greenways should be extended along the Mianus and Rippowam Rivers and across Poor House Brook and the Merritt Parkway, and the city should explore stronger tools for tree preservation and subdivision patterns that leave environmentally sensitive land free of development.

Quality of life initiatives must be balanced against considerations of equity and fair share in locating public facilities. Town facilities should be kept in North Stamford, but they should become good neighbors. For example, the leaf mulching operation should be better landscaped and screened.

North Stamford can support downtown by continuing to eschew competitive retail development and by promoting stronger transit connections to downtown, both for commuters and youth, lessening traffic impact on other neighborhoods.

North Stamford’s natural beauty—found along its roads, in open spaces like the reservoir, arboretum, and nature center, and throughout its residential neighborhoods—must be preserved for all Stamford residents.
NEWFIELD, TURN OF RIVER, WESTOVER

The central part of Stamford—Newfield, Turn of River, and Westover—is composed mostly of suburban, single-family subdivisions, strip shopping districts, and office campuses, relatively modern developments built within the last few decades.

The area’s residential character is stable, and that must be respected. There are strong pressures for new commercial development, which must be tempered. The development pattern in Newfield-Turn of River-Westover seems fragmented with homes, shops, and workplaces isolated from each other, and no real civic center. As in other parts of the city, high traffic volume on through roads disrupts the quality of life.

The challenges are to find appropriate strategies for encouraging new housing, strengthening civic assets such as roadway and river corridors, and calibrating growth so existing businesses can thrive while new opportunities are directed downtown.

One defining characteristic of Newfield-Turn of River-Westover is that while there is a diversity of housing overall, neighborhoods are organized as uniform enclaves, often set apart from each other by streams, hills, roads, and other visual features. Within these areas, special effort is needed to design new housing that is compatible with the texture that already exists. Affordable housing must be approached sensitively, potentially through inclusionary requirements for new subdivisions.

Major corridors—High Ridge Road, Long Ridge Road, the Mianus River and the Rippowam/Mill River—should be regarded as major civic assets. Each road could be designated as a Preservation and Design District, allowing for guidelines that address the design of landscaping, streetscaping, neighborhood entries, and infrastructure like utility lines; designating them as scenic corridors would afford even more protection. Greenways should be organized along the rivers, with public access wherever practical and connections to the Merritt Parkway greenway and Scalzi Park.

Because of the large numbers of families and seniors in Newfield-Turn of River-Westover, parks, and community facilities are especially important. Existing parks should be upgraded, particularly with safety improvements for playgrounds, athletic fields and pedestrian walkways, and they should be connected better to neighborhoods. The city must work creatively to identify new park opportunities, perhaps by inserting playgrounds into passive woodlands, or by incorporating public-private facilities in large development projects.

There is significant market interest in office and retail development in this area, because of the accessibility afforded by the ridge roads and the Merritt Parkway. Significant commercial development should be rejected, though, because it would overwhelm this area and drain energy from downtown. Small infill office and retail development that allows existing campus users to expand, or helps improve the character of road corridors, could be considered. Deducting environmentally sensitive lands from density calculations would help reduce development pressure.
BELTTOWN, GLENBROOK, SPRINGDALE

The area northeast of downtown—the neighborhoods of Belltown, Glenbrook, and Springdale—is characteristic of an aging suburb. It is largely built out and demographically diverse. Its roads are strained by traffic, it is underserved by community facilities, and it is home to half the city’s industrial area.

The challenges facing this area are, in truth, a microcosm of those facing Stamford as a whole. The cornerstone of the strategy, however, is unique: guide the incremental evolution of Belltown-Glenbrook-Springdale neighborhood business districts into village centers.

Most of Belltown-Glenbrook-Springdale is built out. There is potential for redeveloping the industrial districts and along several major roads. Such development should be incremental in scale and density, so as not to compete with downtown.

The challenge here is to develop strategies for making affordable housing and industry compatible with the prevailing low-density residential character of the neighborhood. New, higher-density housing could be channeled to areas around the Glenbrook and Springdale train stations, or along major corridors such as Hope Street and Newfield/Strawberry Hill Avenue. The industrial district along the railroad could be upgraded through initiatives such as shared parking, environmentally sensitive improvements, and strict controls on heavy industry.

Main streets in Belltown-Glenbrook-Springdale suffer from heavy through traffic between downtown and communities to the north, as well as the increased use of cars for trips within the area. Not much can be done about through traffic, but careful, small-scale improvements could make walking and transit better options for local residents and reinforce the idea of village centers. These include adding bus stops, taxi zones, and bike storage at the Glenbrook and Springdale stations; building a new rail station at East Main Street; and making pedestrian improvements along main streets and in the areas surrounding train stations.

Parks are an issue because of the relatively high population density, the reliance on scattered school grounds, and the absence of major, multi-use and multi-age-group parks. There is no land for major new parks, so latent and existing resources must be maximized. For example, a greenway could be assembled along the Noroton River, and schoolyards could be designated for wider use as community recreation and open space.
A master planning process, such as that which led to this report, is often considered a moment when a city can challenge itself to think big and act boldly. But big ideas and bold initiatives do not have to mean that a city should undergo drastic change.

For Stamford, thinking big means re-discovering the qualities that make the city strong—its diverse social and economic base, its natural resources and beauty, its strong downtown and neighborhoods—and re-asserting them as the foundation of the city’s future.

Thinking big means looking at local problems in a larger context. Can the city create a connected open space system that links Long Island Sound to the hills of North Stamford and beyond, via rivers and main roads, across campuses and reserves? Can every neighborhood find a way to address the challenge of making room for more housing in Stamford? Can downtown be as important a residential community as it is a financial, retail, and cultural center?

And thinking big means addressing old challenges in new ways. The issues the city faces, as identified in citizen meetings and the research behind this plan, are connected to each other in complex ways. In the long run, solving the city's traffic problems will have more to do with its ability to create housing for all income groups than it will with engineering improvements. Protecting neighborhood quality will depend on finding ways to say “yes” to new development in and around downtown, and providing clearer guidance for development in outlying areas of the city.

For Stamford, acting boldly means having the confidence to work patiently and steadily. It means recognizing that just as the city’s problems weren’t created overnight, they won’t be solved by simple pronouncements. It means cultivating the city’s strengths, but having the courage to let places like downtown, industrial areas, the waterfront, neighborhood centers, and corporate campuses evolve in creative ways.

Acting boldly means asserting with clarity the public’s purpose and objectives: a diversity of housing and employment opportunities, access to resources like the waterfront and open space, better options for moving from place to place, and policies for ensuring the city's architectural and landscape heritage is protected. But it means recognizing that the details will appropriately be worked out neighborhood by neighborhood, project by project, place by place.

If Stamford is sometimes known as the “city that works,” then the Stamford Master Plan is a set of proposals for helping it work better. Once every few decades, a city has the opportunity to think big and act boldly. But in between those times, it is confronted with countless decisions that it also has to get right. The Stamford Master Plan presents a big-picture vision as well as strategies for the long haul. Above all it urges consistency and focus, patience and perseverance, and teamwork—hallmarks of any great city.