

# North Branford Center

## Redevelopment Concept

APRIL 17, 2015

*North Branford, Connecticut*

# North Branford Center Redevelopment Concept

A report prepared by the  
**Yale Urban Design Workshop**  
School of Architecture, Yale University  
New Haven, Connecticut



**Town of North Branford  
Economic Development Commission**



The Yale Urban Design Workshop is a community design center based at the Yale School of Architecture, providing urban design and planning assistance to communities in the region.

**Yale Urban Design Workshop**  
**Yale School of Architecture**  
Box 208242, 180 York Street  
New Haven, CT 06511

[architecture.yale.edu/udw](http://architecture.yale.edu/udw)

Copyright ©2015 Yale Urban Design Workshop / Yale School of Architecture, all rights reserved.

On the cover: 1850 Map of North Branford (University of Connecticut Historic Map Collection)

Above: Historic image of Center School (Totoket Historical Society)

**01 Introduction / 4**

**02 Understanding the Site / 10**

**03 Design Principles / 16**

**04 Next Steps/ 26**

**North Branford Center**

# Introduction

Between July 2014 and April 2015, the Yale Urban Design Workshop (YUDW) worked with the North Branford Economic Development Commission to prepare a community- and market-based redevelopment framework for the town-owned parcel at 1599 Foxon Road. For many years the parcel hosted an array of municipal and open space functions, but in recent years those uses have moved to other sites leaving the parcel vacant. Its key location adjacent to North Branford Center makes it an important site of opportunity for the town, where appropriate new development and new public open space can contribute to this area as one of the few walkable, pedestrian oriented areas of the town. This plan proposes guidelines for the redevelopment of the parcel by a private development entity.

## ***Public Planning Process***

This plan is based on consultation with the public and stakeholders, and reflects the general wishes and desires of residents of North Branford. Public consultation took the form of two major workshops—a design charrette held on January 25, 2014, and a workshop held on November 1, 2014.

On January 25, 2014, the North Branford Economic Development Commission hosted a charrette, facilitated by the Yale Urban Design Workshop, at the North Branford Intermediate School, to solicit general input and ideas for the future of the site. The Charrette began with a brief presentation by the YUDW, including an overview of the site's features, the regional context, and an analysis of the historical development of the area. The participants were asked to consider what they would like to see happen on this parcel. Using provided base maps, markers, and a set of building footprints, each group prepared an annotated plan sketch or list of ideas. At the end of the event, one person from each group presented these ideas, which were recorded by the YUDW.

There was a general sense among most participants that the site should have a public open space component that could be used for gatherings and passive recreation, as well as a mixed-use component of commercial and perhaps residential that would add to North Branford's tax roles



and pay for any public improvements to the site. Many felt the old Center School building should be preserved for a community use. Many participants also agreed that the site should be better connected both to North Branford Center, the historic center of town, and to Central Plaza to the north, with improved sidewalks and streetscape.

A limited number of vocal participants felt the site should be maintained exclusively as open space. While the site does have potential to again become an open space resource for the town, its key location adjacent to North Branford Center makes it an excellent site for a compact, pedestrian oriented development that extends and reinforces the center. In addition, other substantial recreational open spaces exist in other parts of North Branford.

Specific ideas about the site suggested by members of the public at the charrette included:

### Connectivity

- » Re-use the streetcar right-of-way as a recreational trail with pedestrian and cycle access. If possible connect all the way to Branford / Guilford
- » Pedestrian accessibility is very important. Provide continuous sidewalk access and safe crossings from historic center to Central Plaza retail area and along Route 139
- » Provide bicycle racks and access to safe bicycle routes
- » Provide connection to local bus service with a stop on the site
- » Reestablish entry from Route 139
- » Pedestrian tunnel connecting from Central Plaza
- » Traffic calming in the town center

### Site Concept

- » Mixed-use commercial / residential and town green
- » Models for mixed use town green: Audubon

Court, New Haven, Palmer Square, Princeton, Guilford Town Green

- » 100% open space

### Public Open Space

- » Town green
- » Space for the arts and to display art projects
- » Gazebo
- » Farmers market
- » Shade trees
- » Benches
- » Include space for youth activities
- » Band shell
- » Skate park
- » Bocce
- » Chess tables
- » Fountain
- » Passive recreation
- » Pond
- » Skating
- » Monument
- » Playground

### Existing Buildings

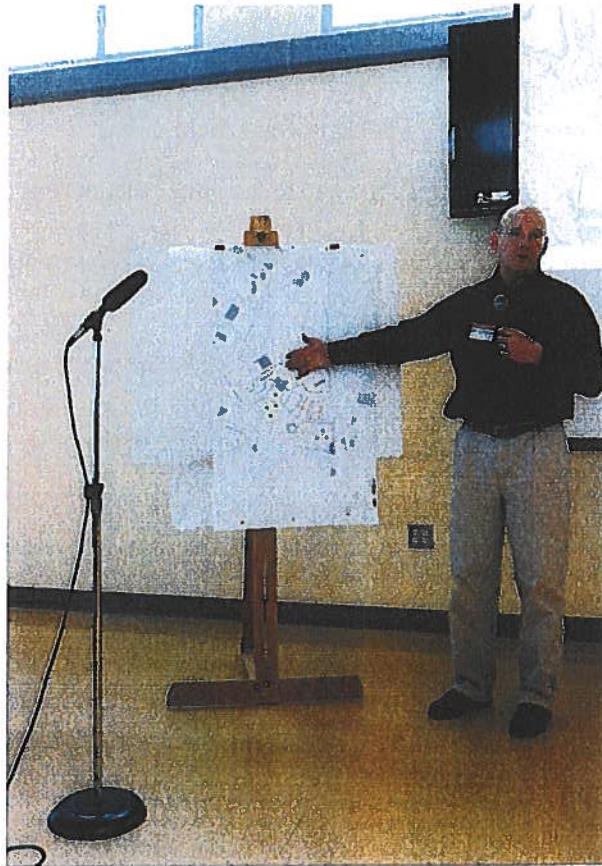
- » Reuse old school for cultural, artistic or historic use
- » Reuse old school as playhouse
- » Reuse old school as restaurant
- » Tear down recreation center

### Commercial Activity

- » Mixed use buildings with apartments above, office and retail 1st floor



**DESIGN CHARRETTE.** On January 24, 2014 in the North Branford Intermediate School, groups of participants discussed the future of the site, preparing and presenting their ideas to the group.



- » Coffee shop
- » Upscale restaurant
- » Rite Aid
- » Cigar shop
- » No box stores
- » Food trucks
- » Farmers market
- » Don't add any more empty commercial
- » Urgent care facility 24 hour with pediatric

- » Design buildings with "old town look"
- » Underground parking
- » Hide parking in rear
- » Classify the area as a historic district
- » Control runoff into Branford River
- » Provide tax incentives for new business

#### Residential

- » 55 or older housing
- » Apartments above commercial
- » No single family houses
- » No more apartments, need home ownership units not rentals

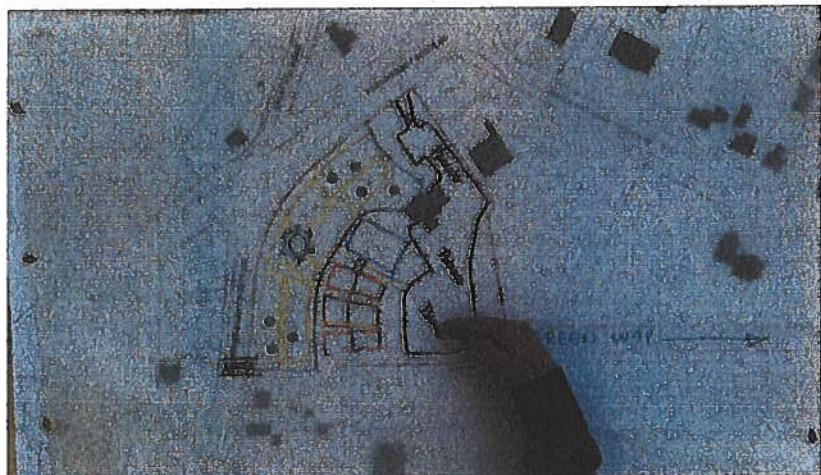
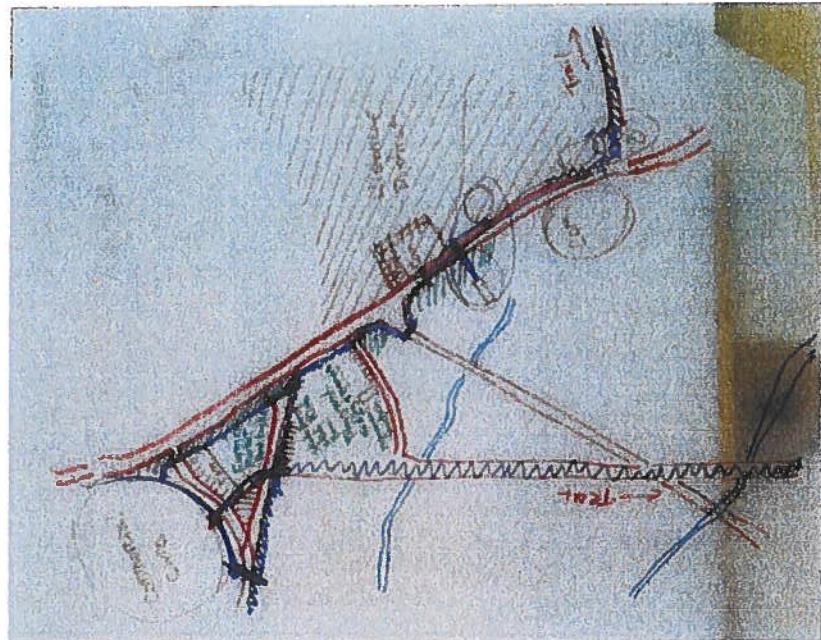
After reviewing the previous schemes developed in the first YUDW study of the 1599 Foxon Road site (dating from 2006), the YUDW developed several site plan and programmatic options for the site. These options were based on the preliminary market analysis developed by Lawrence Kenney of AMS Consulting (included as an appendix to this report), extensive discussions with the EDC, public input gathered at the design charrette, as well as an initial meeting with the Town Council. The site plan options were then reviewed and discussed with the EDC, as well as presented to the Connecticut DOT for their comments and suggestions. Based on that additional input, the YUDW developed a preferred scheme with several variations, which it presented at a public meeting on November 1, 2014 for discussion, and further refined and presented at a joint meeting of the Town Council, EDC and Planning and Zoning Commission on January 20, 2015. The initial draft of this report was issued to the EDC in early April, 2015.

#### Other

- » Improve the look of Central Plaza<sup>1</sup>
- » Sell Wall Field to make improvements to Central Plaza
- » Demolish Central Plaza and reconstruct with mixed use buildings
- » Include triangle area in the development plan
- » Purchase sites south of the parcel
- » Restrictive zoning

<sup>1</sup> There were a number of comments on the poor quality of the adjacent Central Plaza retail center. Central Plaza is a privately owned development and was not part of this study.

SITE SKETCHES prepared by participants in the design charrette in January, 2014.



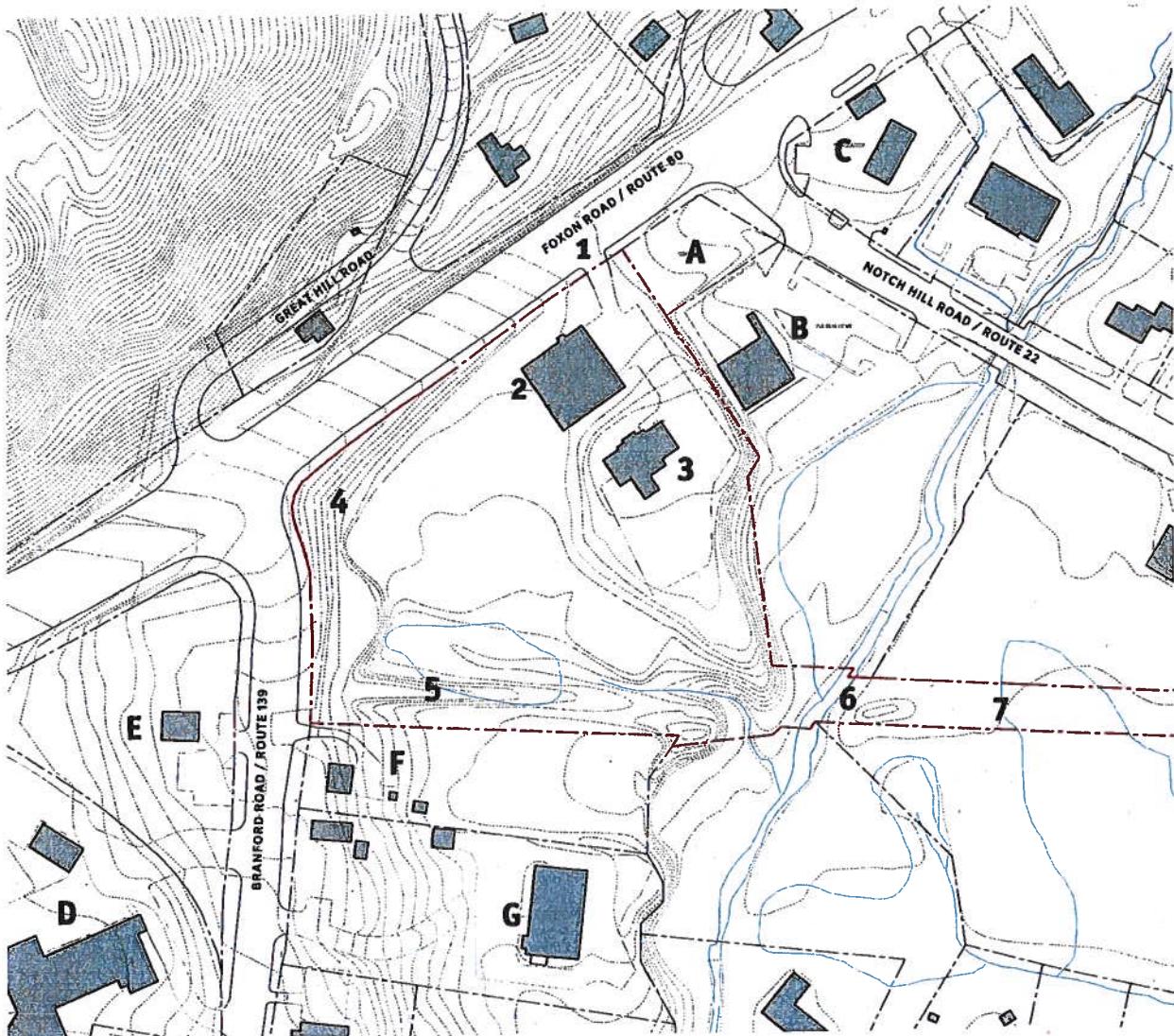
# Understanding the Site

1599 Foxon Road is a 5.95 acre parcel situated in North Branford on Route 80 between Branford Road / Route 139 and Notch Hill Road / Route 22. The parcel's approximately 450' of primary frontage is along Route 80, where access is provided by a single driveway, 150' southwest of Notch Hill Road.

The parcel has hosted a number of municipal buildings and functions over the last century. The earliest building on the site was the Center School, built circa 1920 as the town's first multi-room school building, and which became the town administration building in 1961. A later building on the site was the Town Hall for a time and was later converted to a recreation center. Most recently, the site was home to Wall Field, a public baseball diamond, as well as other active recreation facilities, including a basketball court and concessions. Reconstruction and widening of Route 80 necessitated the relocation of Wall Field in 2012, funded by a state STEAP grant.

The site features significant topography, with a high point near its east-center, and precipitous drops along the east and southeast edges. The recent relocation of Branford Road and its intersection with Foxon Road, and the consequent regrading of those state routes, has negatively impacted the northwest corner of the site which is now constrained by a steep bank and poor visibility from the street. This relocation and regrading also impacts the potential to create additional points of access to the site along either Branford Road or Foxon Road.

Two buildings currently stand on the site in the northeast quadrant: a one story, 2,797 square foot historic school building of some architectural quality built in 1920, and the former Town Hall, a one story, 7,024 square foot, built in 1979. While the latter building is in reasonably good repair, it is poorly sited and of low quality, and is considered to be of little use in the context of a new development. The former school building is attractive and dramatically sited at the top of a hill rising up from Route 80, but is in a poor state of repair and has been unoccupied for some time. Significant work would likely be required to reoccupy this building, but historic tax credits might be available to offset this cost.



#### EXISTING SITE PLAN

1. Driveway from Route 80
2. Former Town Hall / Recreation Center
3. Former Center School / town administration building
4. Former Wall Field diamond / steep gradient

#### gradient

5. ConnDOT drainage easement / swale
6. Wetland area
7. Former trolley right-of-way, connects to Notch Hill Road

A. Historic cemetery

B. Funeral home

C. Gas station  
 D. Central Plaza  
 E. ConnDOT-owned parcel  
 F. Residential parcel  
 G. Globe Electric

Along the southwest edge of the site is an intermittent stream and wetlands which appears to be a tributary of the Branford River. A drainage swale runs along the south edge of the site from Branford Road into the stream, and is protected by a ConnDOT drainage easement. Care will need to be taken with any design to mitigate the quantity and quality of new storm-water runoff which could affect water quality and volume downstream of the site.

The parcel includes a 50' wide strip extending to

Notch Hill Road, once a right-of way of the Branford Electric Railway. This approximately 1 acre strip is steeply graded and passes across wetlands. It is unlikely this area could be developed or used for vehicular access.

The site is abutted on the east by a historic cemetery and a funeral home, and on the west by Branford Road / Route 139. Across Branford road is a significant, if unattractive and disorganized, shopping center called Central Plaza. Facing the site across Route 80 is a steep bank which will not likely be developed in the future.



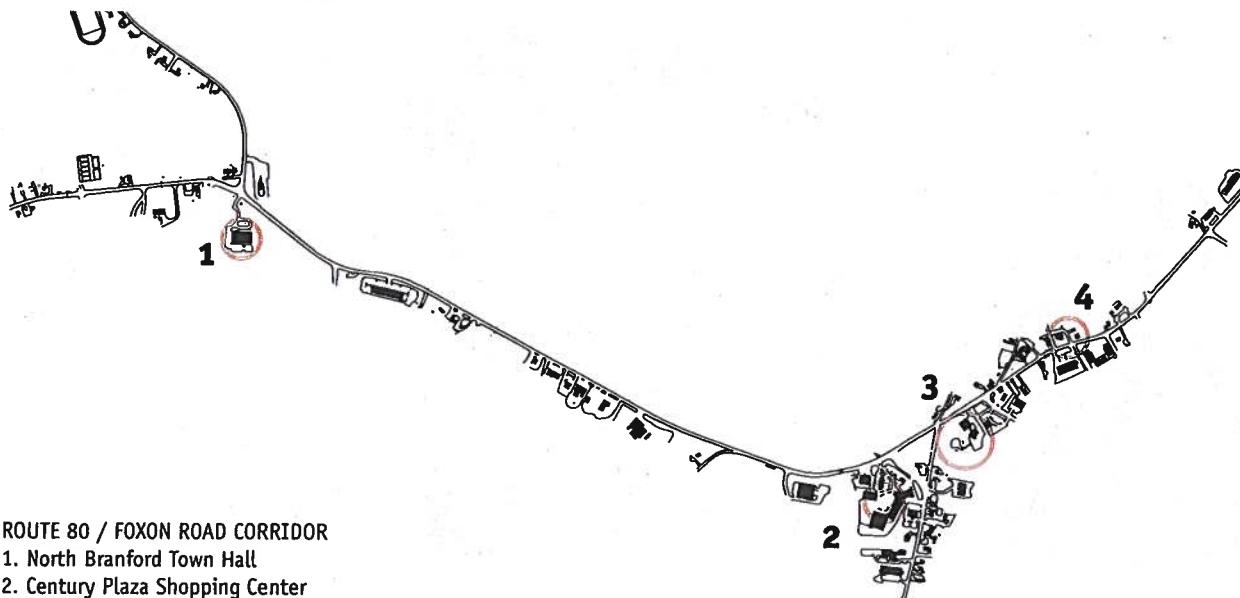
**EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS.** The northwest corner of the site is now constrained by a steep bank leading up to the relocated intersection of Branford Road and Foxon Road, reducing the site's visibility from the street and potential for additional vehicular and pedestrian connections.



The former Center School, built in 1920 as the town's first modern school building, was used later as the town's administrative offices, and then as the headquarters of the Totoket Historical Society. It has stood vacant for some years and is in need of renovation, but is an attractive building, well sited at the highest point of the site, and many in the community would like to see it reused as a restaurant or to house a community function, such as an arts center. Historic tax credits might offset some of the cost of rehabilitation.



The east and southeast part of the site abuts and contains a wetland and watercourse and that likely drains into the Branford River. Care will need to be taken to mitigate the effect of increased storm-water runoff on site.



#### ROUTE 80 / FOXON ROAD CORRIDOR

1. North Branford Town Hall
2. Century Plaza Shopping Center
3. 1599 Foxon Road Parcel
4. Atwater Memorial Library

#### *Local and Regional context*

Route 80 is an east-west, primarily suburban corridor which acts as the main local transportation spine for North Branford. It connects North Branford to Interstate 91 through East Haven and New Haven, approximately 6 miles to the west. To the east it roughly parallels Interstate 95, connecting to Route 9 just before the Connecticut River.

Route 139 & Route 22 are also important regional connectors in North Branford, running approximately 2.5 miles south from the site to connect with Route 1 and Interstate 95.

The local context for the site is defined by a section of Route 80 approximately 0.5 miles long, marked on the west by a railroad trestle that crosses Route 80, and anchored on the east by the historic village center known as North Branford Center. While greater North Branford is characterized by rural and suburban development patterns, North Branford Center, which includes a public library, churches, war monuments, and some modest retail has the potential to anchor this area as a special walkable mixed-use district. The site should be understood to be a logical extension of North Branford Center along Route 80, and a vital link between the Center and Central Plaza, a major shopping center west of the site.

#### **Site access**

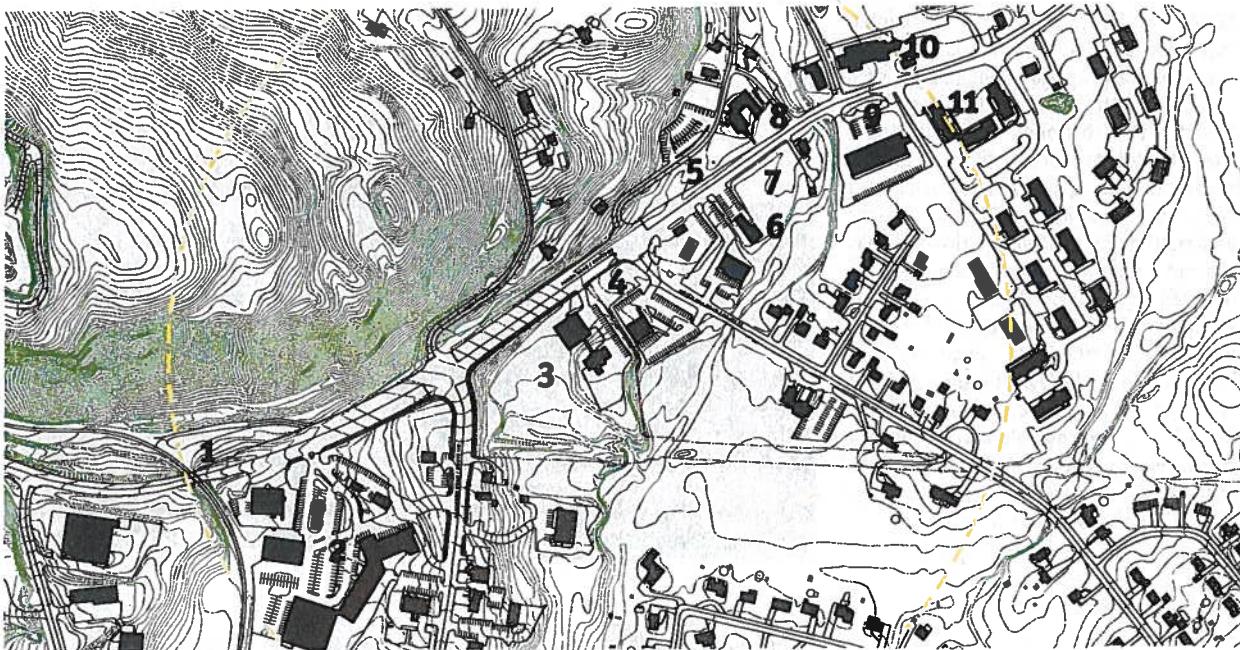
One of the challenges for this site will be providing

safe and efficient access. Currently the site is served by a single 2 lane driveway on Route 80, approximately 150' southwest of the signalized intersection with Notch Hill Road / Route 22. It is likely this entry will continue to serve as the main entry to the site despite a number of issues.

Since Route 80 was widened in 2014, right turn entry and left turn exit (both crossing 2 lanes of traffic) at this location has become more difficult and dangerous. While a new signal (synchronized with the adjacent signals) might improve this situation, initial discussions with ConnDOT suggest development at the level projected for this site would not trigger the requirement for a new signal. Moving this driveway west is also not a good option, as Route 80's elevation ascends to the west while the site's elevation descends.

An additional access to Branford Road / Route 139 at the southwest corner of the site would improve access. Because Branford Road is steeply graded north to its intersection with Route 139, any access would need to be as far south as possible. Grading and new underground storm water infrastructure will be required to accommodate an existing drainage swale at this edge of the site.

A new connection to Notch Hill Road is unlikely. The long narrow part of the site which connects to Notch Hill, formerly a trolley right of way, crosses a watercourse and wetlands, and would need to be



#### LOCAL SITE CONTEXT

1. Railroad bridge	5. War monuments	9. Shopping center
2. Central Plaza retail center	6. North Branford Hall	10. Atwater Memorial Library
3. 1599 Foxon Road	7. Historic cemetery	11. Marshfield Apartments
4. Historic cemetery	8. North Branford Congregational Church	

extensively graded to meet current site elevations. Another possible point of access to Notch Hill Road, through the parking lot of the funeral home to the east of the site, is also unlikely due to the dramatic grade change at the east edge of the site. The funeral home is privately owned and coordination would be required with the owners of the property and business.

Pedestrian access to the site will be primarily along Foxon Road from the historic town center to the east. Sidewalks and streetscape along this corridor are fragmented and should be improved. In addition, pedestrian access west along Route 80 to the major shopping center at Central Plaza should be improved.

#### ***Market factors and program***

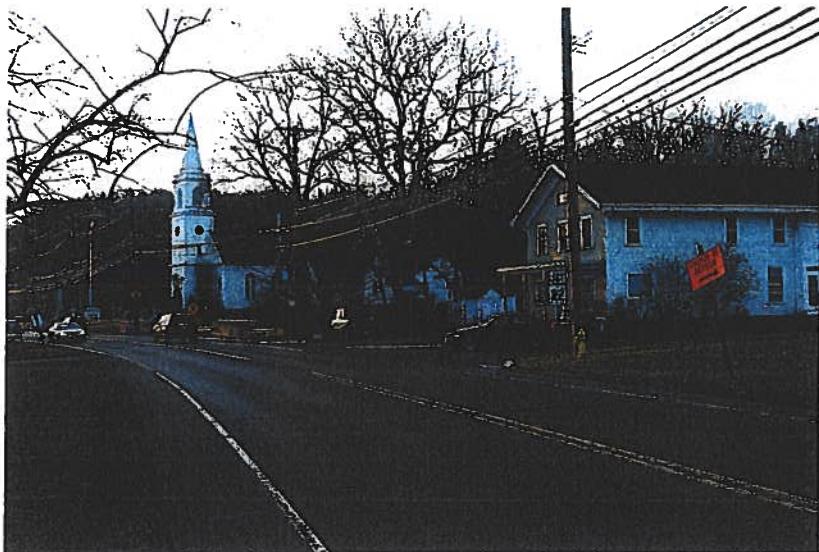
As part of this planning process, *Market Analysis of Development Potential, Old Town Hall Site, North Branford, CT* dated February 2014 was prepared by AMS Consulting, LLC of Bridgeport, CT to examine what kinds of uses might be feasible on this site. After reviewing demographic, economic, real estate and development conditions and trends, AMS

recommended the following potential program ranges on the site which are reflected in this plan:

Office	10,000 - 15,000 SF
Retail	15,000 - 30,000 SF
Residential	25 - 75 dwelling units

The AMS report further identifies what specific types of uses might be feasible in each of these general categories, based on market conditions. For office, AMS suggests that space might be likely filled by professional & technical services as well as medical office tenants. In the retail category, the report suggests uses might include specialty food stores, restaurants/cafes/coffee shops, personal services, health and personal care, niche retail (specialty items and services), and miscellaneous retail (office supplies, gift and card shops, and florists), and banking and financial services. Finally, in the residential category, the report suggests that rental housing as part of a mixed use commercial and civic project might hold the most promise for this site.

**LOCAL CONTEXT.** North Branford Center, just east of 1599 Foxon Road features attractive and historic buildings such as the North Branford Congregational Church, two historic cemeteries, and the Atwater Memorial Library, recently renovated and expanded, in addition to a collection of war memorials, modest retail and multifamily residential. This area has the potential to develop as a pedestrian oriented zone within North Branford, but today there are no sidewalks, and walking between buildings is dangerous and uncomfortable. Redevelopment of 1599 Foxon Road should be connected to North Branford Center through new pedestrian sidewalks, improved streetscape, coordinated signage and bicycle lanes to give this area a sense of cohesion.



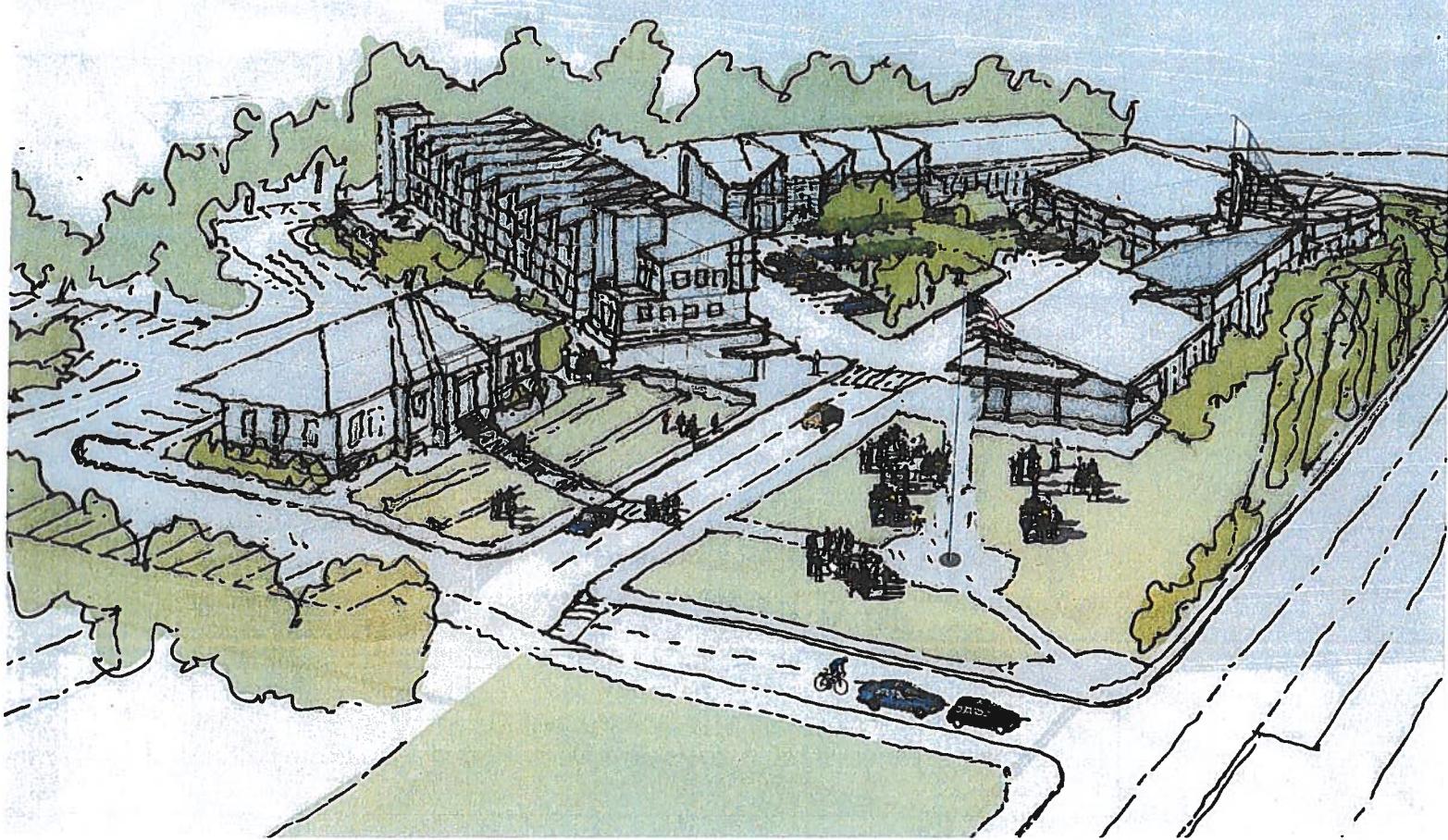
# Design Principles

## *Overall Site Strategy*

Based on community feedback from the design charrette held in North Branford in January, 2014, a series of meetings and discussions with the Economic Development Commission, and the results of AMS Consulting's market study, the YUDW explored a number of design options combining a major, new public open space for North Branford with a mix of commercial, residential and community programs. The following design principles were identified as important aspects of the project.

- » Develop an architecturally distinctive combination of public open space, commercial and residential buildings to create a mixed-use "village center" as an extension of North Branford Center
- » Establish a public space on site of sufficient size to hold small events, a farmers market, a concert or festival, related and connected to the historic North Branford Center to the north
- » Program buildings adjacent to the public space with uses that might activate that space, like a cafe, restaurant or ice-cream shop.
- » If feasible, retain the existing Center School building and convert it to commercial or community use
  - » Given its poor location and quality, demolish the former Town Hall/ Recreation Center building
  - » Take advantage of the site topography and minimize site grading
  - » Include a mix of residential and commercial functions
  - » Create an on-site pedestrian network of sidewalks that connect buildings to each other and to Foxon Road
  - » Connect the development to North Branford Center with continuous sidewalks, crosswalks and coordinated streetscape
  - » Provide coordinated signage and graphics throughout the development

While developed specifically for 1599 Foxon Road, these design principles should be applied to any new or redevelopment project within the local North Branford Center area.



**BIRDS EYE VIEW** of what Scheme 'D' might look like on the site, including a new public space on Foxon Road, renovation of the old Center School, and new mixed use buildings organized around a parking court.

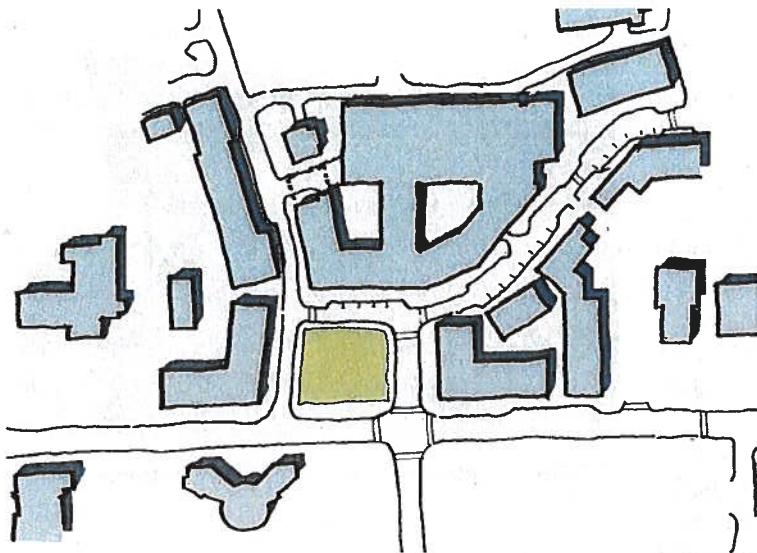
### ***Building Use and Organization***

Most existing developments along Foxon Road take the form of a linear "strip" parallel to the road and with front yard parking. Often, they are of low architectural quality, auto-dominated and lack the sense of place required to attract higher-end tenants. In order to reinforce this site as an extension of North Branford Center, and to differentiate it from other Foxon Road developments, the project should be organized as a village center for North Branford—to produce a sense of density and vitality lacking elsewhere in the town. In addition to a public open space, a mix of complementary uses should activate the development, potentially including things like specialty retail, a restaurant, cafe or ice cream parlor, dance studio, professional offices, and apartments. Ground level spaces should be reserved for commercial tenants, preferably retail and restaurants, while upper levels could contain

apartments or offices. Cars should be appropriately accommodated but not made the centerpiece of the design.

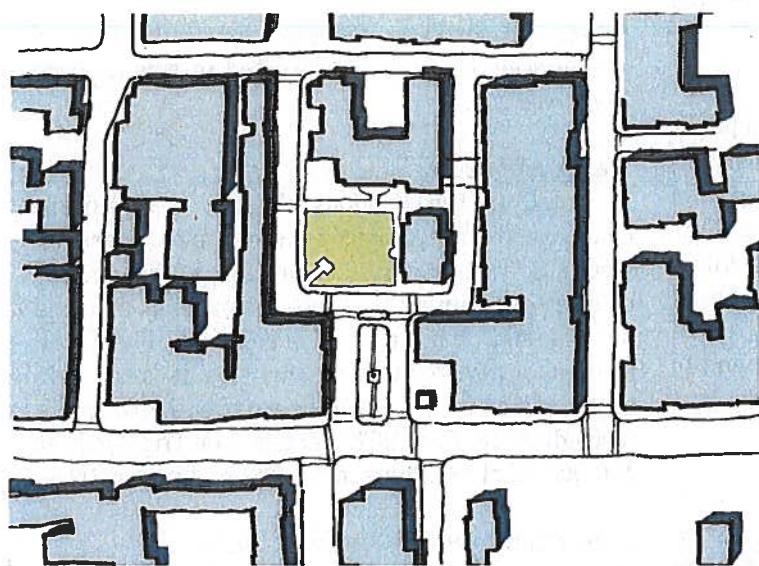
### ***Public Open Space***

One consistent community desire is to see some kind of public open space on the site. An outdoor space of approximately 25,000-30,000 SF would be of sufficient size to hold small events, concerts, picnics, or a farmers market, and could provide the development with a distinctive identity. Attractive public spaces of similar size can be found at Palmer Square, in Princeton, NJ as well as at the new Mansfield Center Town Square in Storrs, CT, where they anchor mixed-use developments of retail, residential and institutional uses. For maximum flexibility, any new public space in North Branford should consist largely of open lawn area, with appropriate and attractive perimeter landscaping,



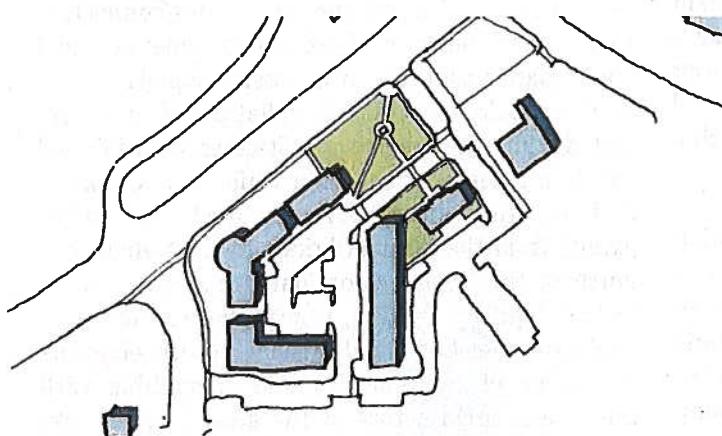
**Mansfield Center Town Square**  
Storrs, CT

Public Space Area: 21,000 SF



**Palmer Square**  
Princeton, NJ

Public Space Area: 27,000 SF



**North Branford Center**  
North Branford, CT

Public Space Area: 27,250 SF  
(proposed)

including trees, shrubs and flowers, but might also integrate new or relocated town monuments or memorials. A food or beverage establishment if located adjacent to the public space, might play a role in activating parts of that space with outdoor cafe seating.

Who will establish, own and manage the public open space should be considered by the Town as it looks to redevelop this parcel. While the Town could simply retain an area of the site, splitting it off as a separate parcel, construct the open space, and maintain it as a municipal property, this strategy would likely lead to it being poorly integrated into the development.

An alternative strategy would be to include a public open space specification in the RFP for development, and require the developer to construct it as part of his work. Once constructed, the public space could be controlled by the Town through an easement or indenture, and it could be maintained through an agreement between the Town and developer. Given that it is likely to be in a prominent location on the site, a developer will probably want to control how this space is maintained.

#### ***Reuse of the Center School building***

Though the old Center School building is in poor condition, it is an attractive, well sited and historic building for North Branford, and could lend an immediate sense of character and quality to the project. Potential reuses might include a restaurant with catering facilities or a semi-public use like a community arts center. It could also provide uses that support the residential development proposed for the upper level of the site, such as a health club or community room.

Sited as it is, in a prominent location at the high point of the site, the building might be used as a dramatic visual anchor for a new public space in the northeast corner of the site. State historic preservation tax credits may be available to offset the cost of renovation, but in the event the building



OUTDOOR SEATING adjacent to a small market in Montrose, TX.

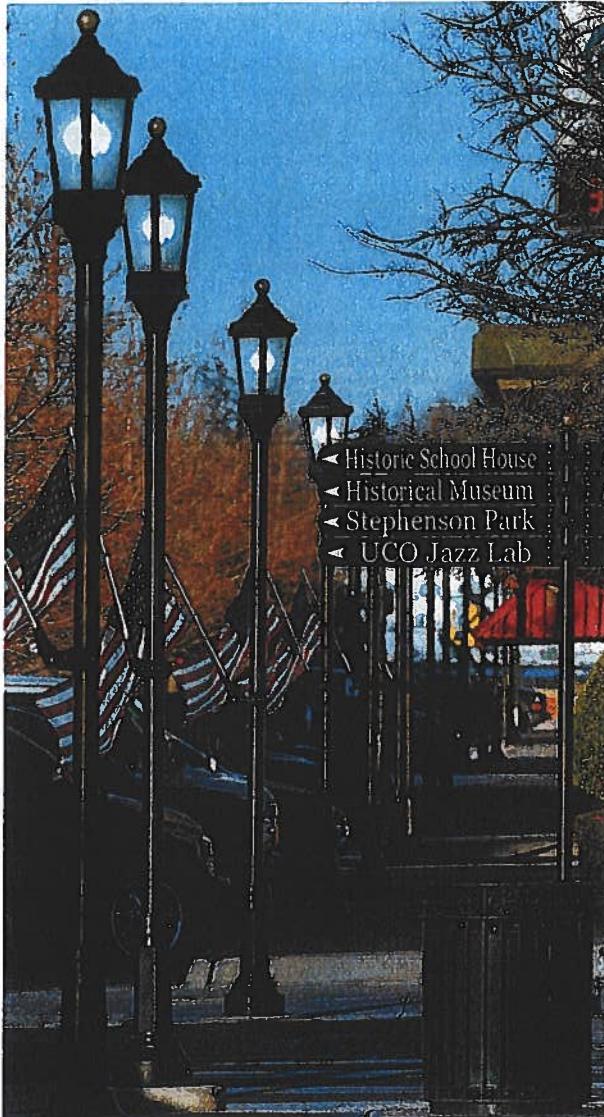
proves too costly to renovate, a new building of similar scale might be constructed in this location to replace it.

#### ***Traffic and Access***

As noted in the previous chapter, a significant challenge for the project is automobile access. In meetings with ConnDOT, providing two points of entry and egress, one off Foxon Road and one on Branford Road was recommended. Given the amount of development on this site, it is unlikely that signalized entries will be required by the state (according to ConnDOT, signals are triggered at 100,000 SF of development or 200 parking spots).

#### ***Connection to North Branford Center***

The project, and especially its public open space, should be connected to the North Branford Center area to begin to establish a walkable and bike-able pedestrian zone around the center. This connection should take the form of continuous sidewalks and appropriate crosswalks with crossing signals, as well as the development and installation of attractive and distinctive streetscape. Streetscape will lend the area a sense of cohesion while differentiating it from other areas of Foxon Road, and might extend from the railroad bridge to somewhere just north of the library. Coordinated elements should include lighting, seating, transit shelters, repeated landscape elements, and signage. These elements should be of high quality and compatible with the diverse architecture of the area. Bicycle racks



**COORDINATED STREETSCAPE.** Continuous sidewalks and attractive, coordinated streetscape can help give North Branford Center a more distinct identity from other sections of Foxon Road, while also better connecting the site to the Center. Streetscape in Osseo, MN (top left) utilizes special paving, bollards, benches and landscaping to add texture to the public realm. Ecological features such as bioswales in Seattle, Washington (bottom, left) can be incorporated to manage storm-water runoff in an attractive way, while flags hung from light standards add a festive sense to streetscape in Edmund, OK (right).

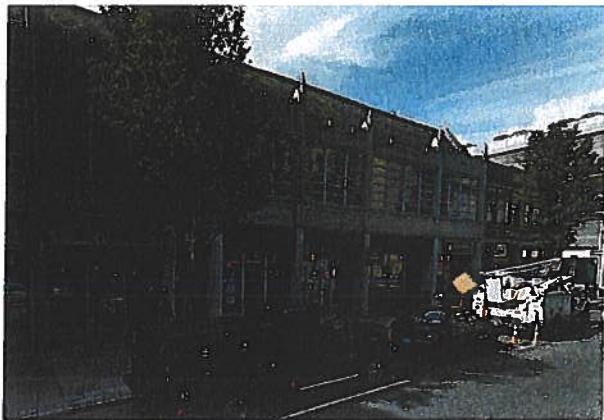
should also be provided at appropriate locations throughout the Center.

#### ***Architectural qualities***

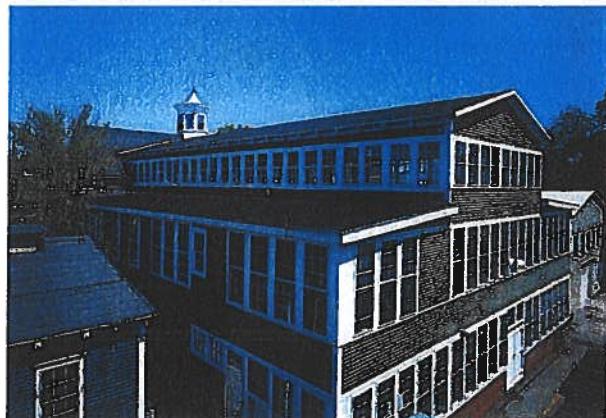
The architectural design of buildings on this site should produce an imagable, comfortable and desirable place that reflects the values and history of the North Branford community while appropriately accommodating modern uses and automobiles. New buildings on the site may remember their roots in the vernacular architectural landscape of the region, but should also be modern and forward

looking, setting an example and precedent for a new quality of development on Foxon Road and in North Branford.

As a historically rural community, many of the vernacular buildings of this area are not urban, but instead include industrial and farm buildings, as well as churches and houses. Design of this project may begin to draw inspiration from these vernacular building types, but reinterpret them in modern ways. Historic materials like clapboard, timber framing, and metal roofing might be combined with modern



**MIXED-USE BUILDINGS.** A small scale, traditional mixed use building on Chapel Street in New Haven (above, left) houses retail on the ground level and loft-style office or residential use above. Large areas of glazing are combined with more detailed and traditional construction. In a more modern mixed use building in Vancouver, BC (top, right) two stories of residential apartments are stacked on top of sidewalk-oriented retail.



**RURAL VERNACULAR BUILDINGS.** Buildings like tobacco barns (top row, right), mills (bottom row, left) and factories (bottom row, right) are a historic part of the rural Connecticut and New England landscape. Characterized by simple, bold forms and modest materials, these kinds of buildings are of an appropriate scale and massing to inspire the design of new buildings on the site, connecting them to North Branford's rural history while

complementing buildings in North Branford Center. For example, this public building by Miller Hull architects in Seattle, WA (top row, right) features traditional vertical siding and a form strikingly agricultural, but combines these with large areas of glazing and exposed timber framing to produce something modern but with a connection to history.

storefront glazing and other elements to produce a new signature architecture for this project.

Whatever the style of the new buildings, relationships between elements on the site should be carefully choreographed to produce desirable public spaces. Parking should be placed behind or between buildings in attractively landscaped areas, and space between buildings should feature sidewalk seating areas or landscaping to activate the project.

#### ***Design Options***

The YUDW prepared four distinct design options for the site to illustrate different organizational strategies, illustrated here as schemes A-D.

Scheme A illustrates how, with significant site work, a mid-sized box store of 40,000 SF could be accommodated. In this option, other community goals of the project would not be met, and community and EDC members generally agreed that this was not a desirable outcome.

In Scheme B, a substantial public space runs along the full length of the Foxon Road frontage of the site, with a U-shaped auto-court to the south. Building B1 takes advantage of the change in elevation across the site—its lower level contains retail facing out towards the auto-court to the west, while the upper levels contain residential with doors on grade facing east, where the ground is 10' higher.

Scheme C organized buildings to create two kinds of outdoors space, a formal green in the northeast corner adjacent to the Foxon Road entry, anchored by new buildings along Foxon Road, and a naturalized park area at the south edge of the site, including a retaining pond landscaped as a lake and hiking trails to the east along the old trolley right-of-way. Also examined was the potential to connect with future development on sites south of the parcel.

The final option, Scheme D, combined elements of Scheme B and C to create a more closed auto-court surrounded by commercial and residential,

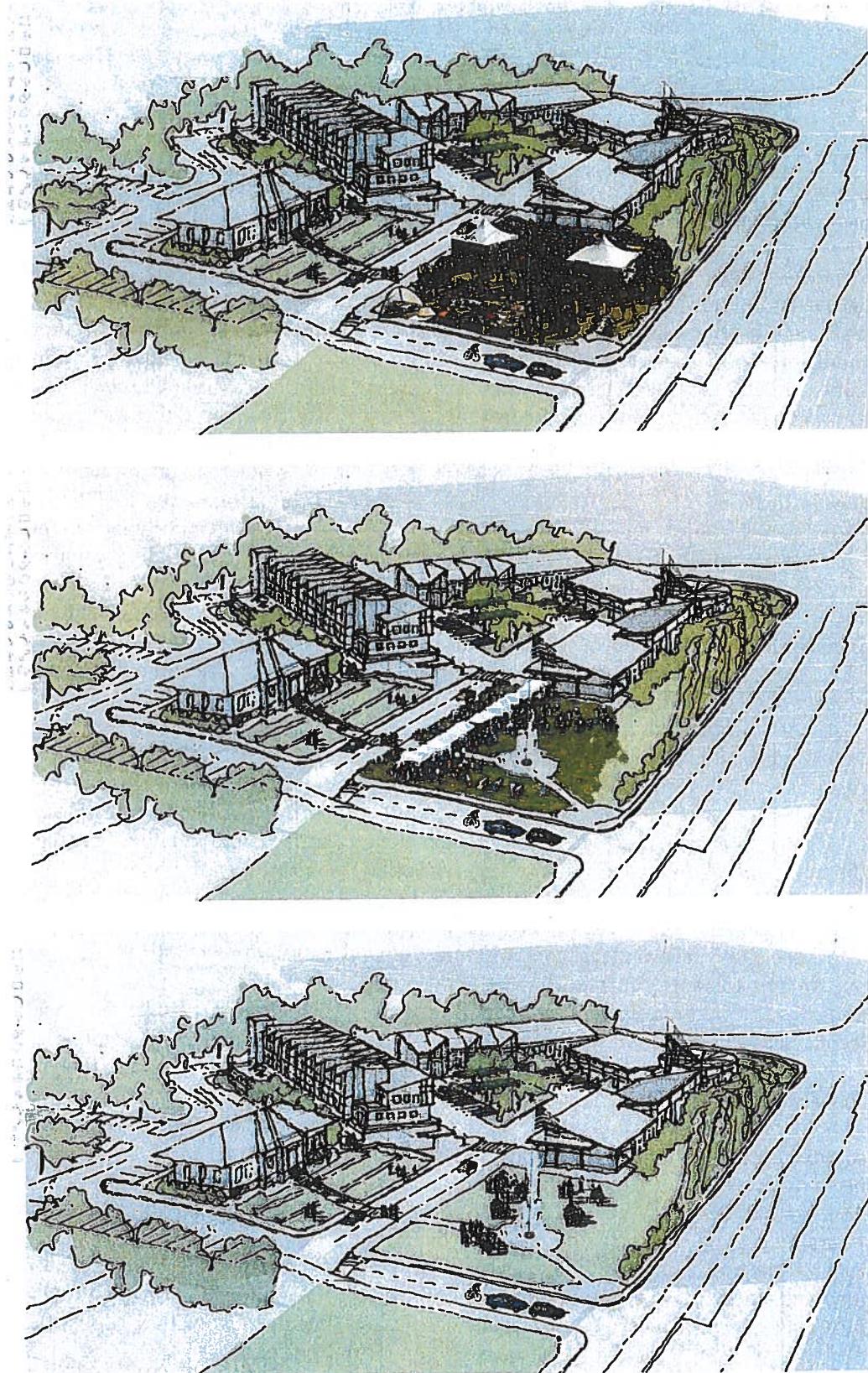
two automobile access points, from Foxon Road and Branford Road, and a formal public open space in the northeast corner of the site.

#### ***Preferred Option: Scheme D***

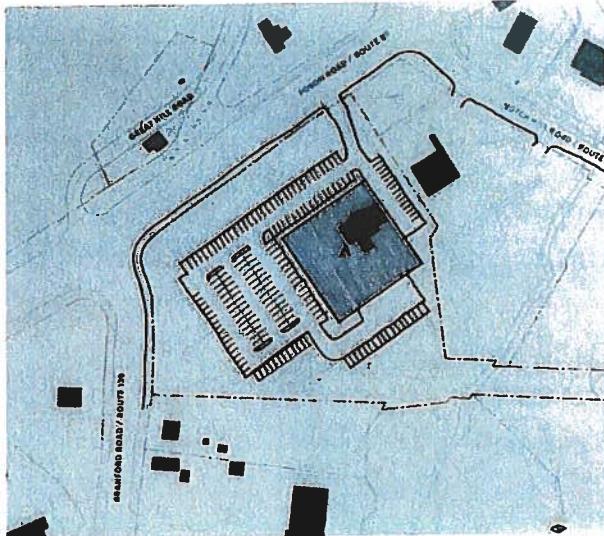
This scheme proposes a significant public green or open space across the front of the site, focused on the existing old school at the high point of the site, and continuing the open space of the adjacent cemetery. The old school would either be restored for community or commercial use, or if restoration is impractical, replaced by a new structure of a similar scale and character. The open space in front to the school building would be available for public use and events, perhaps provide a site for a focal monument or feature, and generally complement and enhance the character of the North Branford village center along Foxon road from this site east to the library.

The space would also connect to a commercial courtyard lined with one-story buildings on the north, west, and south sides, with roughly 18,000 sq ft of ground floor commercial space sheltered from the traffic and noise of Foxon and Branford Roads, and surrounding landscaped parking. The east side of the courtyard would be formed by a multi-story building with an additional 11,000 sq ft of ground floor commercial space, and with two stories of studio and one-bedroom apartments above, but accessed from the upper level of the site to the east, with their dedicated parking at that upper level, and good views over the lower commercial buildings of the hills to the north. The site could be developed all at once according to this plan, or specific components of the plan could be developed at different times.

Access and egress is provided from both Foxon and Branford Roads. The Branford Road egress has more queuing distance for cars exiting the site, and those cars could take advantage of the light at the corner to turn east or west on Foxon Road.



PUBLIC OPEN SPACE on site being used for a major event like a festival (top), a farmer's market (middle) or for small gatherings (bottom).

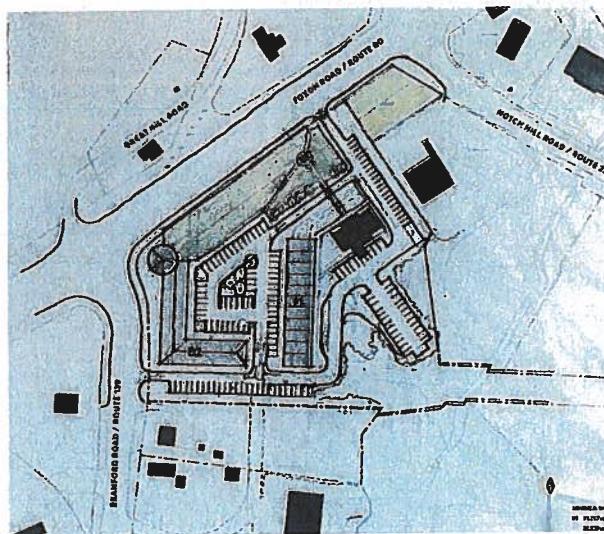


### **Scheme A: Mid Box**

A 40,000 square feet

**TOTAL COMMERCIAL: 40,000 SF**

**TOTAL PARKING: 194 CARS**



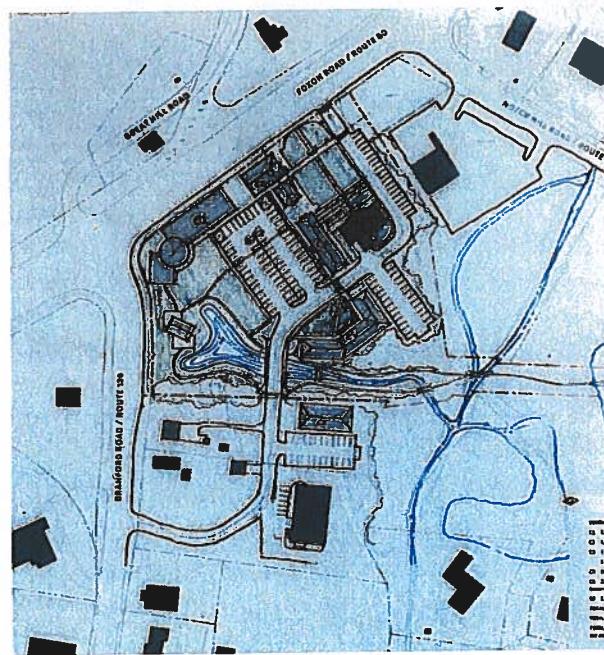
### **Scheme B: Mixed Use**

- B1 11,250 square feet commercial  
22,500 square feet residential  
(11 dwelling units, 2 story townhouses)
- B2 13,275 square feet commercial
- B3 2,800 square feet community use

**TOTAL COMMERCIAL: 24,525 SF**

**TOTAL RESIDENTIAL: 11 DWELLING UNITS**

**TOTAL PARKING: 132 CARS**



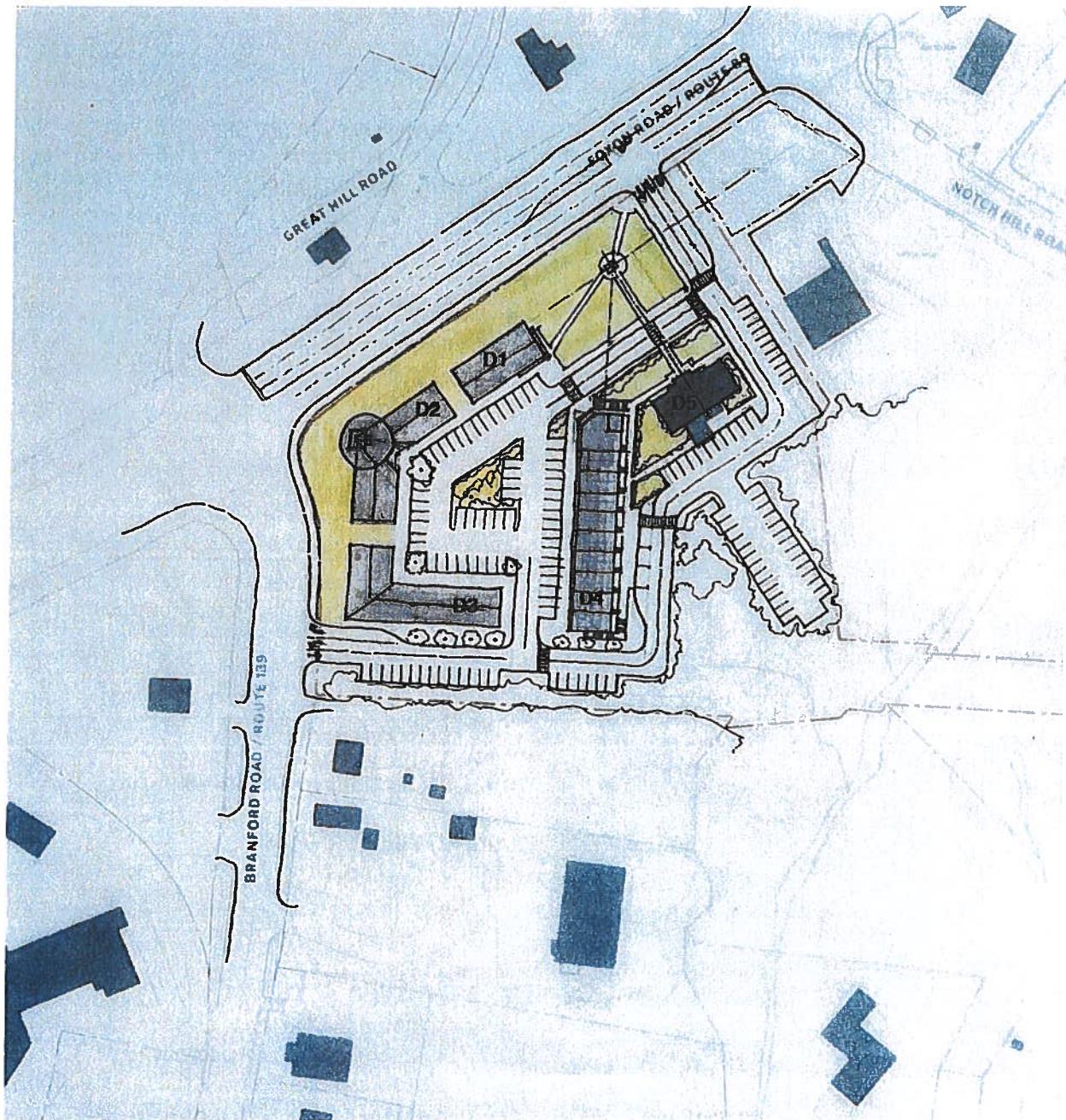
### **Scheme C: Mixed Use**

- C1 7,200 square feet commercial
- C2 4,425 square feet commercial
- C3 3,850 square feet commercial (ground floor)  
3 dwelling units (2nd floor)
- C4 10 dwelling units (2 stories)
- C6 2,800 community use

**TOTAL COMMERCIAL: 17,635 SF (includes C5)**

**TOTAL RESIDENTIAL: 13 dwelling units**

**TOTAL PARKING: 113 CARS PARKED**



**Scheme D: Mixed Use (Preferred Scheme)**

- D1 3,400 square feet commercial (1 story)
- D2 6,600 square feet commercial (1 story)
- D3 7,935 square feet commercial (1 story)
- D4 11,250 square feet commercial (ground floor)  
10-20 dwelling units (upper levels)
- D5 2,800 community use

**TOTAL COMMERCIAL: 29,185 SF**

**TOTAL RESIDENTIAL: 10-20 dwelling units**

**TOTAL PARKING: 125 CARS PARKED**

# Next Steps

To assure that the redevelopment of the 1599 Foxon Road parcel is carried out in keeping with the wishes and desires of North Branford residents and civic leaders as proposed in this plan, the Town will need to establish a process to identify a quality developer willing and able to take on the project, and to effectively communicate the core principles presented here while allowing the developer flexibility in execution of the project.

Under these circumstances, municipalities often opt to use a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to accomplish these goals. As opposed to a conventional property sale where the ultimate use, form, and timeline of redevelopment are unknown to the seller, an RFP process allows the Town to communicate and codify its expectations for the project while also signaling to potential developers its willingness to be responsive within the framework provided by the RFP.

Many of the guidelines and principles outlined in the previous chapter can and should be included directly in the RFP text, and selection of a developer can, in part, be based on the his willingness to address the concerns of this plan.

It is important that the RFP should establish a timeline for development to safeguard against inaction on the part of a selected developer. A clear procedure for reverting the land to the Town if the developer is unable to achieve the timeline should be included, as well as a procedure for extending the timeline if appropriate.

Once the RFP has been issued, responses should be reviewed by the Town and its professional advisors for conformance with the project framework. Selection of a developer should be made on the potential for the successful completion of the project, not merely on sales price. Sales price should be weighed against potential future tax revenues as well as other non-financial goals of the project, such as the inclusion of public space, rehabilitation of the old Center School, and the deployment of mixed uses on the site.

### **Recommended changes to zoning**

As part of this planning process, the YUDW reviewed the current zoning that is in place for the site. Most of the site is currently zoned B-2, Central Business, with a Design District I overlay.

As proposed, Scheme D, the preferred scheme presented in this report, complies with the B-2 bulk requirements, but not with the Special Use Permit requirements for multifamily residential.

Any of the schemes presented here would require zoning relief from current parking requirements. The current requirement of 2 parking spots per dwelling unit, regardless of number of bedrooms, and 1 parking spots per 150 square feet of commercial use is excessive. It is common to find commercial parking requirements of 1 per 200 SF or 250 SF in many Connecticut towns. Reductions to the total number are allowed based on non-simultaneous use through section zoning code sections 34.B.8.1 and 53.8, but the total amount of commercial development possible on the site will still be impacted by these requirements.

Uses suggested in this report are generally allowed in the B-2 district but require a Special Use Permit from the Planning and Zoning Commission, subject to Site Development Plan review and approval.

Given the number of zoning issues that will need to be resolved through special applications, variances or exceptions, it is worth considering developing a Planned Development District (PDD) zone to streamline the approval process & encourage mixed use development on the site. This type of zone would allow greater flexibility for both the developer and the town to approve an innovative projects that is in line with the town's goals.

### **Design Guidelines**

The site is also part of the North Branford Center Town Design District I, requiring Site Development Plan application and approval. Generally, the Design District requirements pertaining to materials and site standards are appropriate for the parcel, but the following changes are recommended (addition / change is indicated below in boldface type):

34B.5.2 Materials for new buildings/structures

**B. Windows, storefronts and curtain-walls shall be framed with wood, steel or aluminum. Vinyl windows shall not be allowed.**

**C. New buildings shall be high quality and architecturally compatible with the architectural styles of Connecticut and the New England region.**

**34B.6.5 All site plans shall provide for connections with public pedestrian sidewalks and walkways, using appropriate materials, lighting and landscaping. Particular attention shall be given to providing ease of access to public open spaces, parking areas and transit facilities.**

### **34B.10 Advisory Committee-Design Review Process**

The Planning and Zoning Commission **may** shall appoint an **design review** advisory committee, **including at least one appropriately qualified professional advisor from the region**, to assist the Commission in review and recommendations on all site development plans and may provide assistance to property owners and others. The Committee shall prepare and submit a report to the Commission stating all the recommendations on the pending application.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

***Economic Development Commission Members:***

Diane Pelliccio  
Jan Finch  
Joan Tutor  
Elisabeth Caplan

***Former Economic Development Commission Members:***

Dan Armin  
Eric Hodgson

Deputy Mayor Joanne Wentworth  
Michael T. Paulhus, Town Manager  
Carey Duques, Town Planner

Humbert V. Sacco, Jr., Special Consultant  
Carol Zebb, Former Town Planner  
Gina Cox, Secretary  
Mary Caruso, Secretary

## COLOPHON

This report was written and designed by the Yale Urban Design Workshop, a community design center based at the Yale University School of Architecture in New Haven, Connecticut.

The following individuals participated in the planning process and development of the report:

Alan J. Plattus, Director

Andrei Harwell, Project Manager

This book was created in Adobe InDesign CC, with illustrations developed in AutoCAD 2013, 3d modeling in Rhino 4.0 and rendering in V-Ray and Photoshop 6.0.

The fonts used in the book are ITC Officina Sans and Serif.



Yale Urban Design Workshop  
School of Architecture  
Yale University  
Box 208242  
New Haven, CT 06511  
203.764.5696

[architecture.yale.edu/udw](http://architecture.yale.edu/udw)

