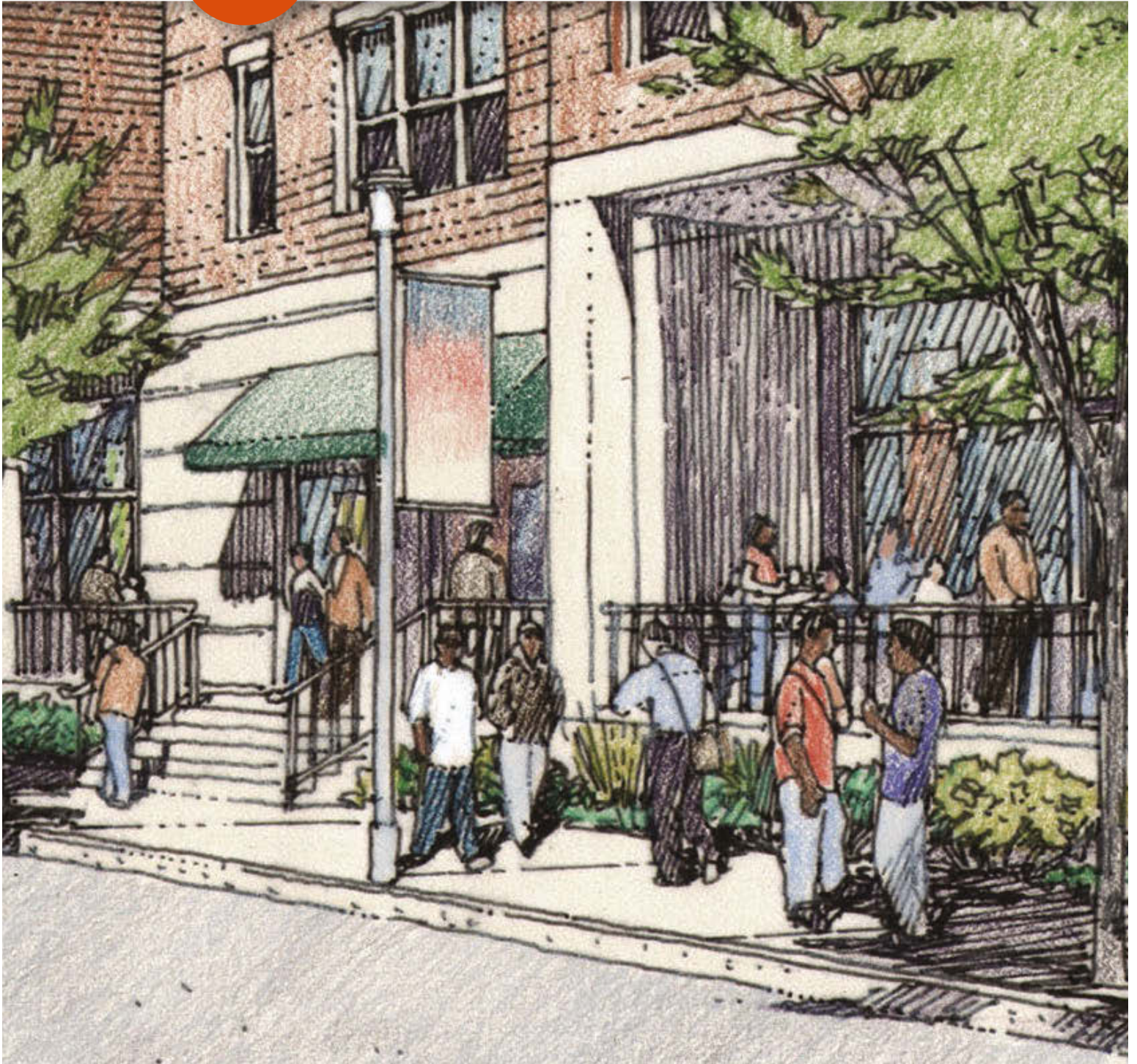




CHAPTER

IV

Neighborhood Strategy



Chapter IV

Neighborhood Strategy

Table of Contents

A. Overall Vision for Neighborhood	2
B. Priority Community Needs	2
C. Goals, Outcomes, Metrics, Strategies and Partners	3
• <i>Goal 1:</i> The neighborhood is storm resilient	
• <i>Goal 2:</i> South Norwalk is safe and attractive	
• <i>Goal 3:</i> A rich array of amenities that appeal to residents and visitors is found in the community	
• <i>Goal 4:</i> Residents with diverse socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds continue to call South Norwalk home.	
• <i>Goal 5:</i> The neighborhood is a walkable and bike-able community with a cohesive public transit network	
D. Alignment with Existing Efforts	12
• South Norwalk Railroad Station Area Transit-Oriented Development Strategy	
• Connectivity Plan for Downtown Norwalk	
• City Neighborhoods Program	
E. Consistency with Other Planning Documents	18
• Norwalk Housing Authority PHA Plan	
• City of Norwalk Consolidated Plan	
• Regional Sustainability Plan	
F. Neighborhood Implementation	19

Tables

Table IV-1. Goals, Outcomes and Metrics

Exhibits

Exhibit IV-1. Summary of Neighborhood Improvements

Exhibit IV-2. Conceptual Options for Ryan Park Improvements

Exhibit IV-3. Planned Connectivity Improvements Map

Chapter IV

Neighborhood Strategy

The neighborhood strategy for the Washington Village/South Norwalk Transformation Plan addresses the priority challenges identified through the community needs assessment and uses as a starting point the existing strong foundation of planning, investment, and commitment by the City. This includes the recently completed South Norwalk Railroad Station Area Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Strategy, which focuses on key blocks and streets near the station, and uses TOD as a catalyst for positive change.

This chapter presents the guiding vision for the neighborhood plan; highlights the current conditions within the community; outlines the goals, outcomes and metrics and then discusses the strategies and partners needed to carry out these activities; and concludes with the implementation framework to turn the South Norwalk target neighborhood into a community of choice.



A. Overall Vision

The guiding vision for the neighborhood plan is the transformation of this important South Norwalk area from an “underperforming asset” into a socially and economically diverse neighborhood of choice, improving the quality of life for existing residents and businesses, while maintaining housing affordability, and attracting new residents and businesses to the area.

The goals of the neighborhood plan are:

- The neighborhood is storm resilient.
- South Norwalk is safe and attractive.
- A rich array of amenities that appeal to residents and visitors is found in the community.
- Residents with diverse socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds continue to call South Norwalk home.
- The neighborhood is a walkable and bike-able community with a cohesive public transit network.

The realization of these goals will be accomplished by:

- Capitalizing upon existing and planned initiatives to create a shared synergy and alignment of investments and resources.
- Mobilizing both public and private partners and stakeholders to collectively share in the achievement of the common vision for the community.
- Establishing an implementation framework that empowers key partners and City departments to enact changes and improvements that address the challenges facing the South Norwalk neighborhood.

B. Priority Community Needs

The neighborhood plan for Washington Village/South Norwalk is based upon the key needs identified by both residents and community members through the resident survey, resident information fair, community open houses, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews; and an analysis of neighborhood data and physical conditions.

The primary challenges that the neighborhood strategy addresses are:

- *The vulnerability of the community to flooding.* Located within the 100-year flood plain, the occurrence of Super Storm Sandy in October 2012 only served to highlight the vulnerability of the area to storm surges. However, flooding is not limited to storm events; Water Street also floods when there is a full moon and high-tide.

- ***Lack of real or perceived safety in the neighborhood.*** The crime rate in the target neighborhood has been three to five times higher than the City of Norwalk for the last several years.¹ Village residents felt very unsafe, and only 7% felt there was frequent crime in the neighborhood. Residents felt most unsafe in the late evenings (95%).
- ***Presence of poorly maintained structures in highly visible locations negatively impacts neighborhood perceptions.*** While not numerous, the location of visibly distressed buildings in well-traveled areas like the train station and major thoroughfares, creates an impression of disinvestment. Coupled with a rate of housing violations double that of the City, current building conditions stymie reinvestment in the area.
- ***Ryan Park, the primary open space in the neighborhood, is underutilized.*** A lack of active programming and facilities, plus loitering by unsupervised teenagers and homeless persons, detracts from the value of the park to the community.
- ***Despite the strength of Washington and Main Streets as a dining and entertainment destination, the area struggles with storefront vacancies and lacks essential day-to-day community serving retail.*** With a weak residential base and regional competition, the business district continues to wrestle with its retail position within the larger Connecticut south shore area.
- ***With impending new investment in the community, current residents are concerned about being pushed out by escalating housing costs.*** Among Crime statistics for the “target neighborhood” encompass five reporting grids – 2002, 2003, 2012, 2030, and 2073 – which cover a geographic area larger than the boundaries for the Washington Village/South Norwalk target neighborhoods.
- ***Community does not fully leverage the opportunities presented by the South Norwalk Rail Station.*** With over 2,000 passengers passing through the rail station on a daily basis, several key investments in connectivity and changes in zoning are needed to maximize the positive impact of the station.



C. Goals, Outcomes, Metrics, Strategies and Partners

The City and its partners are strongly committed to transforming the Washington Village/South Norwalk target neighborhood into a more complete and vibrant neighborhood, building on its competitive advantages while at the same time retaining existing residents so that they can benefit from the new investments. Five overarching goals have been identified for the neighborhood plan, along with associated outcomes and metrics to track change over time.

The following table outlines the specific outcomes and metrics for each of the five goals:

¹ Crime statistics for the “target neighborhood” encompass five reporting grids – 2002, 2003, 2012, 2030, and 2073 – which cover a geographic area larger than the boundaries for the Washington Village/South Norwalk target neighborhoods.

Table IV-1 Goals, Outcomes, and Metrics

<p>GOAL 1</p>	<p>The neighborhood is storm resilient</p>	<p>OUTCOMES</p>	<p>Reduce the impact of flooding on neighborhood quality of life</p>	<p>METRICS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of residences negatively impacted by storm events • # of businesses negatively impacted by storm events
<p>GOAL 2</p>	<p>South Norwalk is safe and attractive</p>	<p>OUTCOMES</p>	<p>Decrease the number of crimes per 1,000 residents</p>	<p>METRICS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part I Violent Crime Rate per 1,000 residents • Part I Property Crime Rate per 1,000 residents • Part II Quality of Life Crime Rate per 1,000 residents • # of Washington Village residents reporting feeling safe in their neighborhood
			<p>Increase the percentage of residents feeling safe in the neighborhood</p>		
			<p>Buildings (residential and commercial) are well-maintained</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rate of housing violations per number of housing units • % of housing violations corrected within 30 days • #/% of buildings identified as being in poor to very poor condition
<p>GOAL 3</p>	<p>A rich array of amenities that appeal to residents and visitors is found in the community</p>	<p>OUTCOMES</p>	<p>Residents have greater access to open space</p>	<p>METRICS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # acres of open space within the target neighborhood • #/% of Washington Village residents reporting utilization of Ryan Park and other open spaces in the community
			<p>More retail opportunities for residents and employees in the neighborhood</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of business permits • % retail/commercial vacancy • Distance to closest full-service grocery store • Distance to nearest pharmacy • Distance to nearest clothing store • Distance to nearest bookstore
			<p>No net loss of affordable housing units in the neighborhood</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of deed-restricted affordable housing units • # of non-deed restricted affordable housing units
<p>GOAL 4</p>	<p>Residents with diverse socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds continue to call South Norwalk home</p>	<p>OUTCOMES</p>	<p>No net loss of affordable housing units in the neighborhood</p>	<p>METRICS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of deed-restricted affordable housing units • # of non-deed restricted affordable housing units
<p>GOAL 5</p>	<p>The neighborhood is a walkable and bike-able community with a cohesive public</p>	<p>OUTCOMES</p>	<p>Pedestrian and bicycle-friendly streets</p>	<p>METRICS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walkscore • % of roadways with dedicated bike lanes/"sharrows" • % of intersections with crosswalks and walk signals
			<p>Enhanced public transit stops</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of bus stops with signage, routes, schedules, shelters, and seating
			<p>More housing opportunities in close proximity to the rail station and other public transit</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total # of new housing units added

To realize these goals and outcomes, the community identified a set of strategies and partners required to carry out the actions. For many of these strategies, the City, through its various departments, is already actively working on different components. The neighborhood element of the Transformation Plan for Washington Village/South Norwalk is intended to reinforce this ongoing work, and where needed, highlight additional initiatives that will support the desired outcomes. Exhibit IV-1 provides a visual representation of the neighborhood improvements and activities proposed, in process, or completed.



The neighborhood is storm resilient.

Implement infrastructure improvements to enhance the area's storm resiliency.

The vulnerability of the eastern part of the target neighborhood to flooding is a serious problem that must be addressed prior to new investment, including the redevelopment of Washington Village. The City contracted with Tighe & Bond, environmental engineers, to review the infrastructure needs within the TOD area to accommodate the TOD plan's intended scale of development based upon what is known about the floodplain issues and increase the storm resiliency of the area. A draft report completed in November 2012 recommended three measures to enhance the storm resiliency of the area:

- Raise the intersection of Day Street and Raymond Street above the 100-year flood plain to provide dry egress to the area during periods of extreme flooding.
- Relocate existing overhead electrical, telecommunication and cable facilities to underground facilities.
- Relocate existing underground switchgear and transformers to above ground, pad-mounted applications above the base flood elevation (BFE).

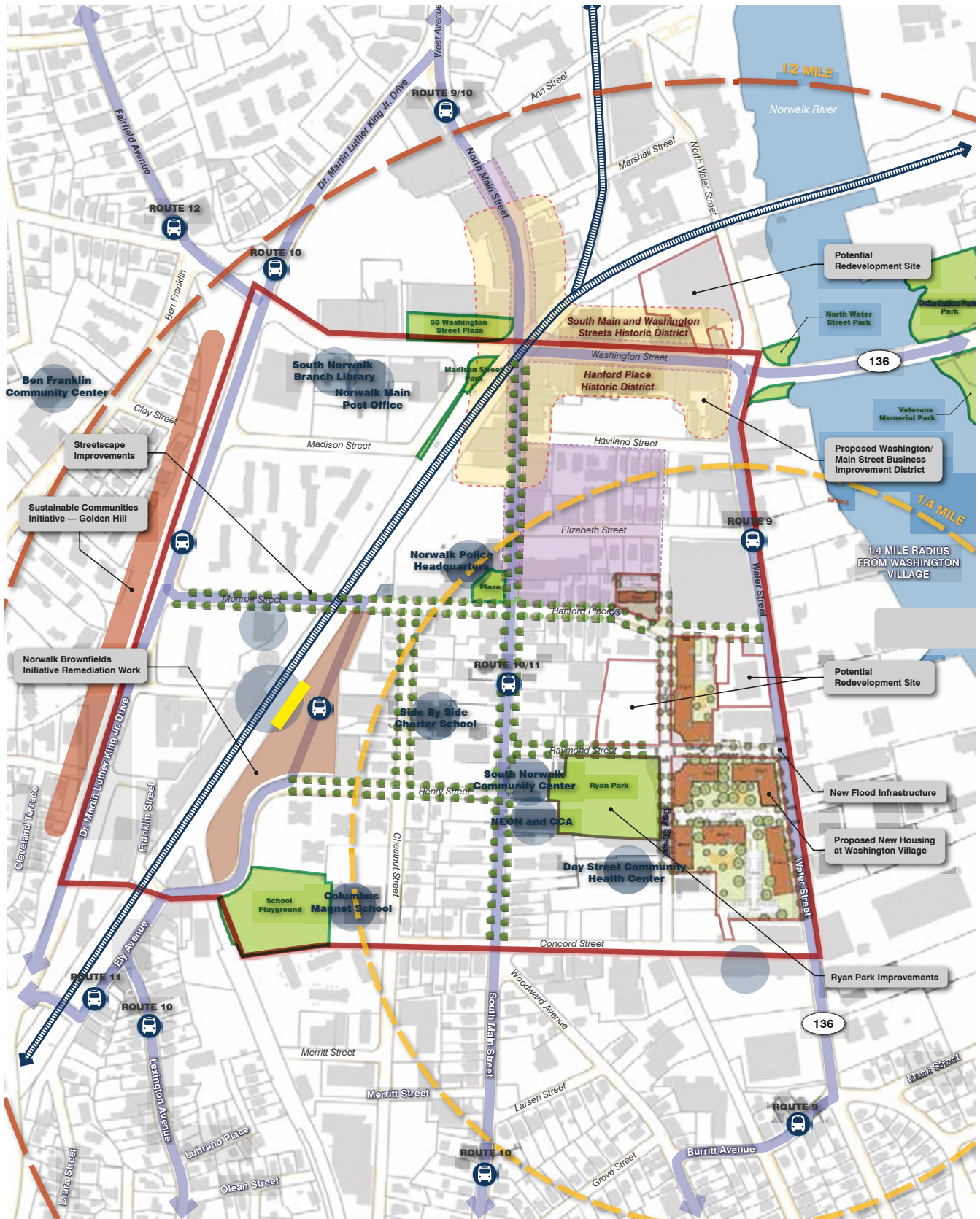
The City is already actively pursuing potential sources of funds to pay for the infrastructure work, including CDBG Disaster Recovery Assistance, and/or a Disaster Relief Opportunity Grant from the Economic Development Administration.

Key Partners:

*Norwalk Redevelopment Agency,
Norwalk Housing Authority, Trinity
Financial*

Exhibit IV-1

Summary of Neighborhood Improvements





South Norwalk is safe and attractive.

Institute a new community policing model.

The Norwalk Police Department (NPD) is committed to organizational changes that will foster a safer environment within the community. Under the new Chief of Police, Thomas Kulhawik, who was elevated to Chief from Deputy Chief in July 2012, the NPD is in the process of changing its current patrol structure to strengthen its community policing program. The new community policing approach includes establishing better relationships between police officers and the community, enhanced public relations, and strong community outreach.

Under the new approach, each police officer assigned to the South Norwalk community will have a redesigned beat plan with a smaller focus area. While the officers will still be responsible for patrolling the entire community, each officer will be assigned a specific geographic area within the community for which they will be responsible and accountable for building relations and communicating with residents and businesses owners. With this heightened outreach and community building protocol, the assigned police officer to that area will be intimately familiar with the specific dynamics and stakeholders, and can readily facilitate proactive measures to address concerns and incidences. Full implementation of this initiative is expected to be completed by September 2013.

Utilize Project Safe Neighborhoods as a tool to combat gun violence.

The City of Norwalk is one of nine partner cities in Connecticut participating in the U.S. Department of Justice's Project Safe Neighborhoods. Led by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Connecticut, Project Safe Neighborhoods is a comprehensive, strategic approach to reducing gun violence and promoting safe communities. A local task force comprised of local and state law enforcement officers along with special agents from Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), and a state and federal prosecutor, meet regularly to discuss ongoing investigations, recent shooting incidents, pending gun cases, and overall strategies to address gang violence.

A multi-faceted strategy is implemented to deter and punish gun violence through an emphasis on prevention, tactical intelligence gathering, more aggressive prosecutions, and enhanced accountability through performance measures. The local Project Safe Neighborhoods task force for Norwalk is now fully functional and provides the NPD with the tools and resources to more effectively pursue and prosecute criminal activity involving guns and gang violence, both of which are considered to be significant issues in the larger South Norwalk community.

Key Partners:

Norwalk Police Department, Norwalk Redevelopment Agency, Trinity Management Company, SONO Alliance, SONO Business Alliance, Black Ministerial Alliance, local churches, Norwalk Building Code Enforcement, Norwalk Health Department, Norwalk Planning and Zoning, Norwalk Common Council

Establish a Neighborhood Watch Program.

To address safety concerns and at the behest of the community, Trinity Management Company, the eventual property managers of the mixed-income and mixed-use properties to be developed at Washington Village and adjacent vacant lots, will convene a neighborhood watch among the residents of the revitalized Washington Village and involving the broader community in the effort. Trinity Management will actively conduct outreach to other stakeholders in the community, such as the SONO Alliance, the SONO Business Alliance, the Black Ministerial Alliance, and local churches to involve them in the effort. Trinity Management will be responsible for scheduling and hosting neighborhood watch meetings and coordinating with the NPD to provide and obtain information. Trinity Management will also work on the long-term sustainability of this effort.

Continue working on a blight ordinance.

The State of Connecticut allows municipalities to adopt ordinances to prevent housing blight as well as related powers, including the imposition of fines, placement of liens against properties, and the ability to take ownership of a property in the event of non-responsiveness in addressing the blighting condition. The City of Norwalk has attempted to develop a blight ordinance for several years with no success. Understanding the importance of having such an ordinance in combatting blighted properties, not only in South Norwalk, but also across the municipality, the City is committed to continue working on this initiative. This may ultimately include the adoption of separate blight ordinances for commercial and residential properties.



Increase collaboration and communication on code enforcement issues between City departments.

Three different City departments are currently involved with building violations: Building Code Enforcement Department inspects and processes all complaints of building code violations; Health Department is responsible only for housing code enforcement to ensure safe and sanitary housing; and Planning and Zoning Department compiles its own list of complaints and violations that covers everything from housing to lot conditions. Greater collaboration and communication between these departments will eliminate duplicative work as well as provide residents and businesses with a clearer understanding of the structure and process for reporting and handling substandard conditions.

Create a pathway to assist property owners with violations.

In addition to dealing proactively with violations and making it easier for residents and businesses to report them, the City will facilitate connecting violators to resources to address the violation(s). This includes providing information on existing City programs that offer help with improving physical conditions and making referrals for owners of properties that have been cited for violations. For example, the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency's Residential Rehabilitation Program provides low-interest loans for rehabilitation to both rental property owners serving low-income households and low-income homeowners. Another possible resource is the Weatherization and Energy Program, which is similar to

the Residential Rehabilitation Program, and provides small, low-interest loans to both homeowners and investors for weatherization/energy improvements, which includes new windows and exterior doors.

The City of Norwalk is also committed to exploring other options such as restarting the award-winning Façade Improvement Program that grants ranging from \$6,500 to \$75,000 for exterior improvements with property owners putting up a minimum of 35% of the total rehabilitation cost; creating a pilot home improvement training program to provide homeowners with hands-on experience making small physical improvements (e.g. fixing a broken screen, rehangng a gutter); and/or establishing a community “tool box” that loans out the tools needed to fix a property (e.g. ladder, power tools, power washers, small tools).



A rich array of amenities that appeal to residents and visitors is found in the community.

Make improvements to existing open spaces.

With limited open space opportunities in the neighborhood, the existing spaces must serve the recreational needs of the community. As the primary park within the neighborhood, improving Ryan Park is a high priority for the community. During the planning process, two conceptual drawings for the redesign of Ryan Park were developed based upon resident preferences, including features such as a sprayground, basketball court, playgrounds, community gardens, and barbeque grills. (See Exhibit IV-2. Conceptual Options for Ryan Park Improvements.) These early concepts were reviewed in separate meetings hosted by the Recreation and Parks Department. Plans for improvements to Ryan Park will continue to be further developed in concert with the City, Washington Village and South Norwalk residents, the Second Taxing District, the Friends of Ryan Park, and other stakeholders. Improvements to Ryan Park and to other smaller open spaces in the neighborhood, such as the area behind the South Norwalk Library, will be made as funding becomes available.

Key Partners:

Norwalk Redevelopment Agency, Norwalk Department of Parks and Recreation, Norwalk Housing Authority, SONO Business Alliance, South Norwalk business and property owners, Norwalk Parking Authority

Continue to create new open space associated with new developments.

Due to the lack of other open space and recreational opportunities in the target neighborhood, the City adopted recreational space requirements applicable to all new residential multi-family development in the TOD study area. A minimal recreation area of 150 square feet per dwelling unit was incorporated into the recent zoning amendment to I1 – Industrial No. 1, which could be met by providing balconies, courtyards, indoor recreational facilities, landscaped roofs, and/or outdoor recreation areas. The site plans for the revitalized Washington Village adhere to these requirements, and include tot lots, pocket parks, and sitting areas to meet the needs of all residents, from young families with children to the elderly. As additional new residential projects are developed, the City anticipates that the amount of open space in the community will continue to grow.

Exhibit IV-2

Conceptual Options for Ryan Park Improvements



eric rains landscape
ARCHITECTURE, LLC
33 W Water Street, Suite 204, Guilford CT 06434 203.230.0824 www.ericrains.com



RYAN PARK
WASHINGTON VILLAGE

OPTION 1
4 DECEMBER 2012



eric rains landscape
ARCHITECTURE, LLC
33 W Water Street, Suite 204, Guilford CT 06434 203.230.0824 www.ericrains.com



RYAN PARK
WASHINGTON VILLAGE

OPTION 2
4 DECEMBER 2012

Agree upon a retail positioning strategy.

A disconnect exists currently between what is desired for SoNo versus what is actually possible and viable for the area. Business owners and landlords need to arrive at a consensus as to the vision for the area, and work together to achieve that vision, with the shared understanding that the more vibrant and active the commercial district is, the more everyone benefits. The retail positioning strategy would include consensus on what types of retail businesses and consumer markets should be pursued and where these various retail uses should be located. Buy-in of SoNo property owners is critical, since their tenanting strategies directly impact the actual mix of businesses that will be located in the district.



Connect businesses to assistance programs.

There are two existing business-assistance programs available in the City of Norwalk that can help to nurture existing businesses or start new ones: the City's Enterprise Zone and Grow Norwalk Fund. These programs can be useful not only to help develop business establishments, but also support the retail positioning strategy as to business location.

- The City's Enterprise Zone provides tax abatement, low cost financing, state tax credits, loans, and job training assistance to businesses. For owners and landlords improving their properties, a graduated tax deferral on increased assessments is available.
- The Grow Norwalk Fund is a unique economic development partnership between the City of Norwalk and the National Development Council's Grow America Fund and provides working capital to established small businesses to help them grow. Currently, there are no additional loan funds available through this program, and it is likely to be several years before new loan funds are available.



Technical assistance to connect new and existing businesses to incentive benefits and resources such as loans and investment funds is provided by the NRA. The City will continue to seek other resources to increase the amount of business assistance loans that can be provided.

These programs will be linked with the Section 3 business development programs through the People element of the Transformation Plan and support Washington Village residents interested in starting their own business.

Address parking issues associated with retail.

Depending on the retail positioning strategy pursued, a compromise needs to be reached between the Norwalk Parking Authority and the SoNo businesses regarding parking costs. Non-competitive parking costs negatively impact both the Parking Authority's revenue as well as the viability of the SoNo business district.

Create a Neighborhood Improvement Corporation.

With the ongoing issues regarding neighborhood cleanliness, perception

of safety, and inconsistent image, the establishment of a Neighborhood Improvement Corporation with a mission of improving the living conditions in the South Norwalk community is under consideration. The scope of work for this neighborhood-based non-profit organization would be determined by its board, typically composed of at least one-third community residents, and could include the promotion of economic growth in the community, improvement of the physical and social infrastructure in the neighborhood, and housing, commercial, and retail development. One focus of the organization may be addressing neighborhood issues that fall outside of the purview of public agencies.

NEIGHBORHOOD
4

Residents with diverse socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds continue to call South Norwalk home.

Key Partners:

*Norwalk Redevelopment Agency,
Norwalk Housing Authority, Trinity
Financial, Norwalk Department of
Planning and Zoning*



Maintain or expand the number of affordable housing resources.

Without any deed restrictions as to use, the existing stock of small multi-family homes that currently provide affordable housing for many households in the community are at risk of being lost as the market improves. With the dual and sometimes competing goals of retaining housing affordability so that existing residents are not displaced, and improving the neighborhood by attracting a broader range of households across the socio-economic spectrum, balancing these two initiatives is critical. To achieve this balance, the City is committed to ensuring that the total number of affordable housing units in the target neighborhood does not decrease as the area transforms over time.

Based upon an analysis completed by the NRA, of the 851 total housing units in the target neighborhood, 635 are assumed to be affordable. Of these 635, 399 are currently deed-restricted, meaning that there are 236 units “at-risk” of not being affordable in the future. Therefore, the goal is to add a minimum of 236 additional deed-restricted units in the target neighborhood over time, such that there will be no net loss of affordable housing. The 67 workforce housing units proposed as part of the Washington Village mixed-income redevelopment effort will be counted towards this goal as they will be deed-restricted.

Develop incentives or resources to encourage the on-site location of workforce housing in new residential and mixed-use developments.

The recent zoning amendment enacted by the City in August 2012 increased the potential for additional units of workforce housing by expanding the zones in which multi-family development is allowed by special permit. The current workforce housing regulation mandates that all multi-family developments of 20 or more units must provide a minimum of 10% of the units as workforce housing (targeted to households earning between 50-60% of the area median income). In specific zones, including the SoNo Station Design, South Norwalk Business, and Washington Street Design Districts, the City will allow an increase in the permitted number of units (up to 30%) if additional workforce housing units are provided.²

² Building Zone Regulations of the City of Norwalk, CT, Article 101 118-1050 Workforce Housing Regulations. www.norwalkct.org/index.aspx?NID=203.

To date, most developers have found meeting the workforce housing requirement to be very challenging financially. To meet the requirement, most have located the workforce housing units off-site in another part of the City where development costs are less expensive, which belies the intent of the regulation to create a mixed-income environment. To facilitate the retention of workforce housing in the TOD area, the City will work to identify potential resources to assist developers with meeting this requirement. Possible options that will be explored include project-based assistance, grants, lower cost financing, and tax abatements.



The neighborhood is a walkable and bike-able community with a cohesive public transit network.

Develop “Complete Streets”.

To maximize the TOD potential of the South Norwalk train station, it is critical to establish a network of connections that are safe, clear and convenient for everyone using them. Improvements to the existing circulation around the train station and improved access for pedestrians and bicycles throughout the community are necessary. The goal is to establish a continuous pedestrian network with all gaps in the current network addressed, including installing and improving sidewalks, enhancing crossings at key intersections, and improving streetscapes. Bicycle signage and designated routes will be linked to the regional bikeway system along the river valley, with bike lanes included when possible. For key routes, if a designated bike lane is not possible, “sharrows” (shared lane markings) will be marked to enhance the safety of bicycle travel. Automobile circulation around the train station will be redirected to funnel traffic via the main arterials versus neighborhood streets.

Information about and access to the public transit options available also needs improvement, including ensuring that bus stops provide shelter and seating plus clear signage as to route served, route map, and schedule information.

Headways, or frequency of service, for the WHEELS routes that serve the target neighborhood will be assessed by the Norwalk Transit District to determine if there is room for improvement to provide more ready access to services, shopping, and employment by community residents. Night and weekend service, especially, will be included in this evaluation.

The City of Norwalk is in the process of preparing bid documents for the development of “complete streets” on key thoroughfares and access points throughout the target neighborhood to address gaps in the pedestrian, bicycle and transportation network. (See Exhibit IV-3. Planned Connectivity Improvements Map). Implementation of these plans will occur as funding becomes available.

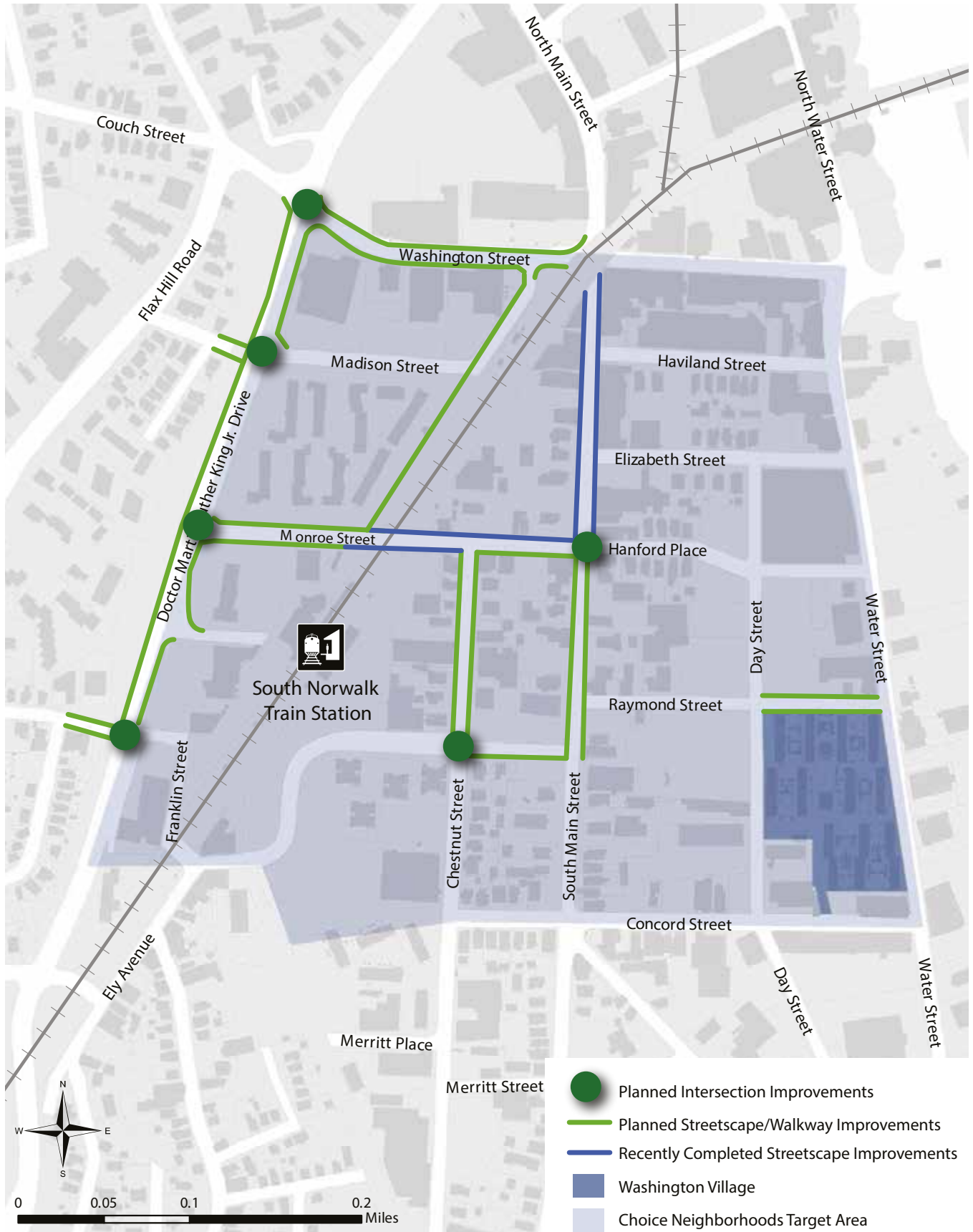
Key Partners:

*Norwalk Redevelopment Agency,
Norwalk Planning and Zoning,
Norwalk Transit District*



Exhibit IV-3

Planned Connectivity Improvements Map



Amend zoning districts within the TOD study area.

The existence of multiple zoning districts and non-conforming uses restricts the potential for reinvestment and economic development in the area. Adopting a mixed-use framework and reducing non-conforming uses will support development and investment in the area, and implementing appropriate zoning regulations and design guidelines will help to direct future development and investment to strengthen the area.

The City of Norwalk has already taken steps to address conflicting zoning and land uses, as evidenced by the recent zoning amendment enacted in August 2012 to modify the I1 – Industrial No. 1 zoning district to include multi-family housing as a special permit use in TOD areas adjacent to the South Norwalk Railroad Station. This change to the zoning district will increase the potential number of housing units in close proximity to the station and includes the workforce housing regulation and the 10% minimum workforce housing requirement for developments of 20 or more units. Currently, the City is undertaking a parking study to determine if further changes are needed to the I1 – Industrial No. 1 zoning district with respect to the required parking ratio.

D. Alignment with Existing Efforts

The City has targeted the Washington Village/South Norwalk neighborhood and its surroundings over a period of years, making it the focal point of numerous planning efforts, as described above, and investing significant time, energy and funds there, with a number of projects currently underway or recently completed. The neighborhood element for Washington Village/South Norwalk builds on the groundwork these previous planning efforts have laid, and is fully aligned with them.

South Norwalk Railroad Station Area Transit-Oriented Development Strategy

The TOD Strategy, completed in October 2011 and adopted by the City in March 2012, focused on the area surrounding the South Norwalk Train Station and included the target neighborhood in its entirety. The City undertook this initiative to develop a strategy that would allow it to capitalize on the economic advantages afforded to the area by the very existence of the rail station, while strengthening the economic and social fabric of the surrounding neighborhood.

Looking at land use, design guidelines, and economic development strategies, the City is in the process of carrying out various components of the plan, which includes zoning changes, infrastructure improvements along thoroughfares throughout the TOD district (sidewalks, lighting, crosswalks, pedestrian and cyclist accessibility and safety), and environmental remediation work on sites near the train station to support new development.

- ***TOD Pilot Program Grant*** – The City received funding from the Connecticut Department of Transportation in October 2011 for surveys, design and drawings to help link the South Norwalk Railroad Station and Intermodal Center to a multi-modal network of shuttles and city transit buses, and routes serving bicycles and pedestrians. The City is now in the process of procuring engineering and design services to develop “complete streets,” including sidewalks, landscaping, lighting and street furniture, along MLK and the Monroe Street Extension, Hanford to Water, and Washington Street to the train station, and possibly South Main Street, and also to finish streetscape work on the ends of Monroe Street. Once the bid documents are complete (slated to occur by October 2013), the City will seek funding to carry out these projects.
- ***Amendment to I1 – Industrial No. 1 Zoning District*** – As recommended in the TOD Strategy, the City has moved forward with revising the I1 – Industrial No. 1 zoning district within the TOD study area to better support and facilitate new investment. The zoning amendment has been adopted.

The City is currently undertaking a parking study to determine if the parking ratio for this zoning district should be modified to better support a TOD district.

- ***State Brownfields Pilot Program*** – Through this program, three parcels adjacent to the South Norwalk train station will be remediated and conveyed for future development. Work began in November 2012.
- ***Monroe Street Bridge Reconstruction (completed May 2012)*** – The Monroe Street Bridge was reconstructed as part of the Connecticut Department of Transportation’s New Haven Mainline Catenary & Bridge Replacement Program to upgrade and improve the infrastructure on the Metro-North New Haven Line. As part of the reconstruction, piers supporting the bridge were eliminated, and pedestrian and streetscape improvements were made to enhance the walkability and visual appeal of this thoroughfare. The project was funded through a combination of Federal Highway Administration and State DOT funds.

Connectivity Plan for Downtown Norwalk

Spanning the two-mile Downtown Corridor, of which South Norwalk is the southern terminus, this Connectivity Plan was initiated to connect and coordinate the various development activities happening along the West Avenue Corridor and to promote access to the various assets. The Plan looked at urban design and “wayfinding,” pedestrian/bicycle experience, public transit/circulator routes, and streets/traffic/parking. Enhancing these elements will help link South Norwalk and the rest of the Downtown Corridor both visually and physically.

The City is now implementing the “wayfinding” component of the plan around Waypointe, located just north of the Interstate 95/Route 7 interchange in the heart of Norwalk. While not located in the target neighborhood, this work will be used as the framework and model for the implementation of wayfinding components for the rest of Downtown Corridor.

- **West Avenue Improvements** – Public infrastructure improvements along West Avenue Corridor around Waypointe, including electric, utilities, streetscape, and wayfinding. The first phase, consisting primarily of electrical work, is under contract and began in November 2012.
- **West Avenue Landscape Master Plan** – With the assistance of Milone & MacBroom, the City recently completed in April 2013 a landscape master plan for West Avenue that brings a consistent design and a comprehensive and coordinated approach to West Avenue from Wall Street down to South Norwalk. The plan calls for various improvements to the corridor that will dramatically improve the West Avenue experience for all users, whether by foot, bike, public transit or private vehicle.

City Neighborhoods Program

In 2010, the City established the City Neighborhoods Program, a major initiative focused on helping to make Norwalk's urban core a more viable, connected, and economically contributing urban neighborhood. Historically, the City has targeted 45% of its CDBG funding to the City Neighborhoods Program.

Targeted to three low and moderate income census tracts (Tracts 437, 440, and 441), the program is intended to create better housing choices, improve the physical environment, and foster social and economic opportunities for low and moderate income persons.

The four programmatic goals of the program are: maintaining and expanding the supply of safe, affordable housing; assisting businesses to grow in ways that create employment opportunities for residents living in the defined areas; expanding opportunities to promote neighborhood cohesion, stability, sustainability, and connectedness; and expanding opportunities for residents to access and enjoy public activities and open space in a friendly, safe, accessible, and well-maintained public environment. The Washington Village/ South Norwalk target neighborhood is wholly contained with Census Tracts 440 and 441, making it a direct beneficiary of the program.

Activities eligible for funding include public facility improvements, public services, housing rehabilitation, homeownership assistance, code enforcement, economic development, brownfield remediation, and planning. In addition to CDBG funding, the City and Redevelopment Agency are also committing other non-CDBG funds to carry out these activities, including City capital funds, state housing and economic development investments, federal and state transit and environmental remediation grants, and private sector commitments.

E. Consistency with Other Planning Documents

Norwalk Housing Authority PHA Plan

Washington Village is the oldest development in NHA's portfolio and redevelopment of the site is a top priority for the Authority, as delineated in its current PHA Plan. NHA has already started to pursue CDBG Disaster Recovery funding for Phase 1 of the housing plan and will apply for Choice Neighborhoods implementation funding in the future to carry out the identified strategies for Housing, People, Education, and Neighborhood.

City of Norwalk Consolidated Plan

The City of Norwalk's 2010-2014 Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development identifies three priorities for the five-year period, which are: (1) support efforts to stabilize or reduce housing costs (Housing Pathway); (2) support efforts to create income stability (Income Stability Pathway); and (3) support efforts to ameliorate the impacts of this economic depression on families (Household Stability Pathway). The City Neighborhoods Program and its four programmatic goals fall directly in line with the City's priorities, and has been consistently funded with CDBG dollars since its inception in 2010. For the current fiscal year, \$401,458 in CDBG funds were allocated to activities carried out through the City Neighborhoods Program.

Regional Sustainability Plan

The City of Norwalk is a part of the New York-Connecticut Sustainable Communities, a consortium of cities, counties, and regional planning organizations that was awarded a HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant to work on aligning policies and investments in the region with the federal Livability Principles. These principles include greater transportation choice, development of equitable affordable housing opportunities, increased economic competitiveness, supporting existing communities, coordination of policies and leveraging of investment, and valuing communities and neighborhoods. Each participating jurisdiction, while pursuing place-specific projects appropriate for their community, is actively creating a network of places engaged in sustainable planning.

Many of the consortium members in Connecticut (Bridgeport, New Haven, Stamford) are engaging in TOD studies or feasibility studies for new train stations under this grant program. With the TOD strategy already completed in Norwalk, the City is utilizing its \$186,117 portion of the grant to focus on improving pedestrian access to the South Norwalk area and rail station from the Golden Hill neighborhood, located to the west, to increase ridership at the station as well as increase the viability of additional retail businesses in South Norwalk.

F. Neighborhood Implementation

Neighborhood Implementation Lead

The span of needs in the Washington Village/South Norwalk community and the diversity of strategies to address these challenges require a broad-based collective effort across City departments as well as the private sector. Due to the need for extensive collaboration and coordination especially within the public sector, the recommended implementation entity is the creation of a Neighborhood Strategy Implementation Team that would report directly to the Planning Committee of the Common Council.

The Common Council as the City's legislative body has the authority to direct and mandate the involvement of the various entities necessary to achieve the neighborhood vision of the Transformation Plan. The Planning Committee, which is a subcommittee of the Common Council, would have a supervisory role over the neighborhood implementation activities.

The Neighborhood Strategy Implementation Team will be made up of all the boards, commissions, and departments that have assigned roles within the neighborhood section of the Transformation Plan. To assist with coordinating the services and activities of the implementation team, the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency (NRA) could step easily into this role given their long history of successful experience in working with diverse stakeholders and governmental entities to achieve redevelopment goals in the City.

For the past six decades, the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency (NRA) has played a pivotal role in coordinating strategies and plans in the City's redevelopment areas, which stretch from slightly north of Wall Street to south of the South Norwalk Railroad Station, and providing leadership in implementing the promulgated strategies.

The NRA has four focal areas -- preservation/mixed use, small business development, transit-oriented development, and affordable housing -- all of which are included in the Neighborhood element of the Transformation Plan.

Over the last 10 years, the NRA spearheaded a number of different planning efforts, including the Reed-Putnam Redevelopment Plan, Webster Block Planning & Urban Design Study, South Main Corridor Urban Renewal Area, and more recently, the Norwalk Connectivity Plan and the South Norwalk Railroad Station Area Transit Oriented Development Strategy.