

Booklet 5: Development Topics

Overview

This booklet is the second in a series of Strategy Booklets. These strategy booklets will guide discussions with the Planning and Zoning Commission about goals and strategies for the Plan of Conservation and Development.

This Development Booklet will guide discussions at our June 26 meeting as we create **overall goals** for each topic and determine the general direction for types of **strategies** to achieve the goals. “Development” focuses on guiding and managing business and residential growth and change in South Windsor. “Development” topics include:

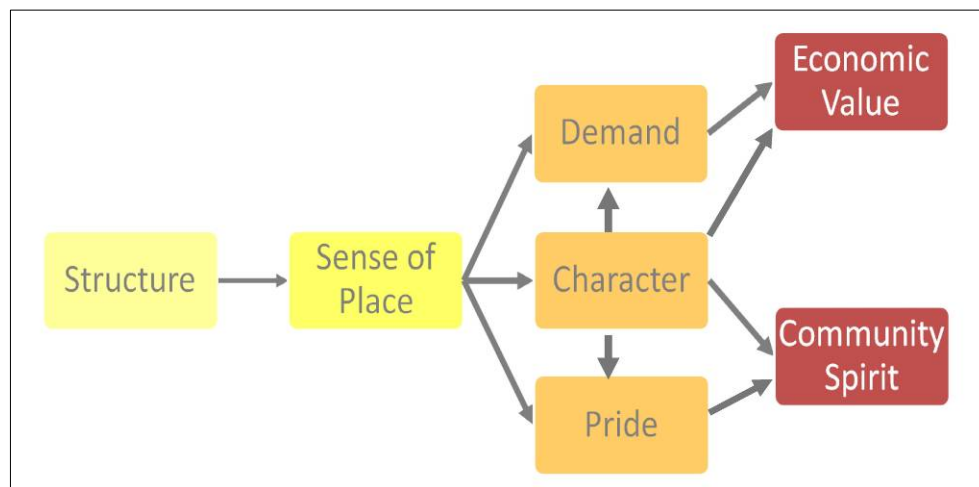
- “Community Structure”
- Residential Development and Housing Needs
- Business Development
- Town Center and Route 5 (our preliminary discussions in May about the Town Center and Route 5 are incorporated).

The dashed boxes indicate homework to fill in prior to our meeting.

Community Structure

South Windsor residents used the term “balanced” again and again when describing South Windsor. Many felt that there is a good balance of residential development, businesses, and open space. The concept of “community structure” can help guide development to locations that enhance our identity and sense of place.

“Community Structure” refers to the physical organization of a community. Community Structure influences how people perceive and understand the community by providing a “sense of place.” A distinct “sense of place” in turn enhances community character, can generate demand for people and business to locate in or visit the community, and instills pride. These factors help increase the economic value and community spirit within the community.

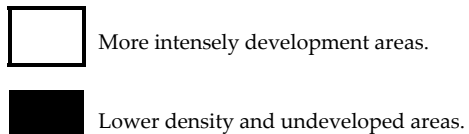
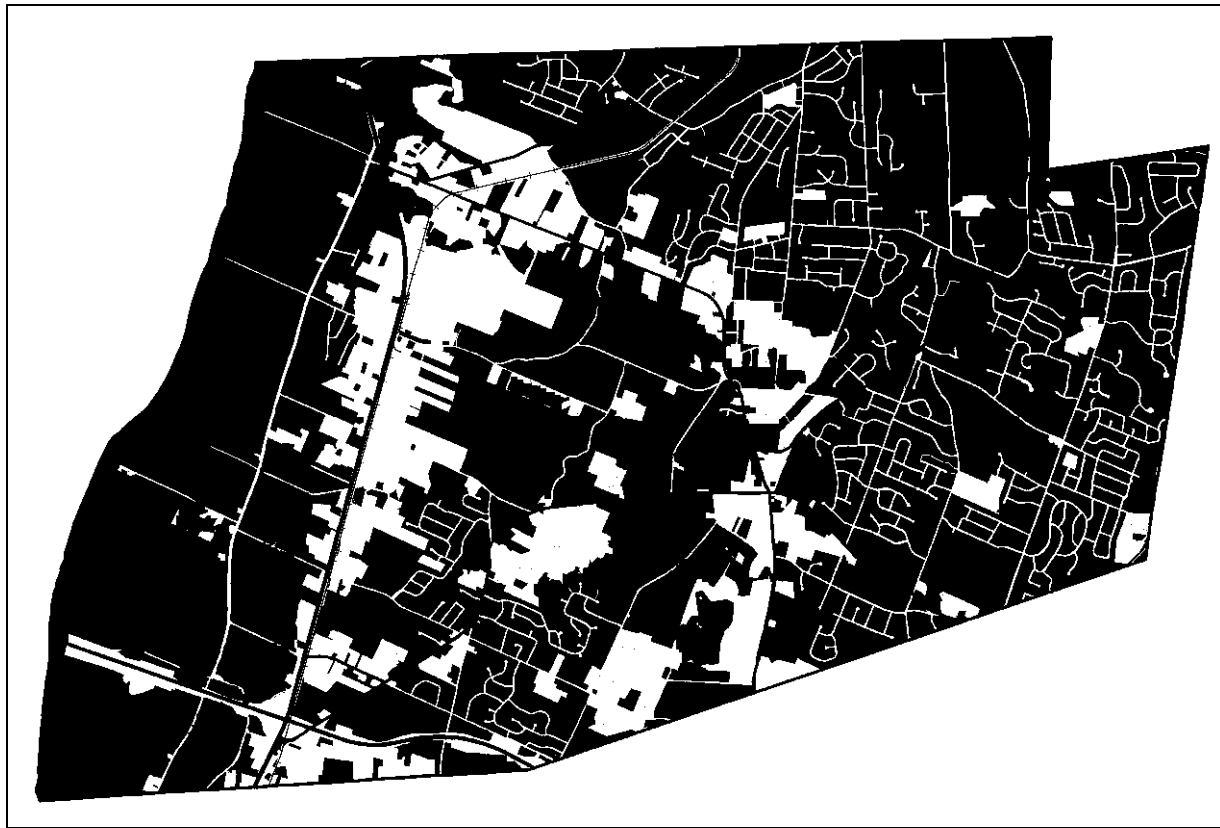


The following features can enhance community structure and sense of place:

Things that Enhance Community Structure	
Nodes	Community-size places with distinctive characters, usually human-scale
Campus / Cluster	Neighborhood size places identifiable by use, location, character or style. Usually with unifying features throughout. E.g., an office park, municipal campus
Community Icons	Site-size places of exceptional function, identify, character, or style (<i>refer back to Booklet 4</i>)
Gateways	Places providing a sense of entry or arrival (<i>refer back to Booklet 4</i>)
Scenic Areas and Roads	Places providing a sense of beauty, scale or perspective (<i>refer back to Booklet 4</i>)

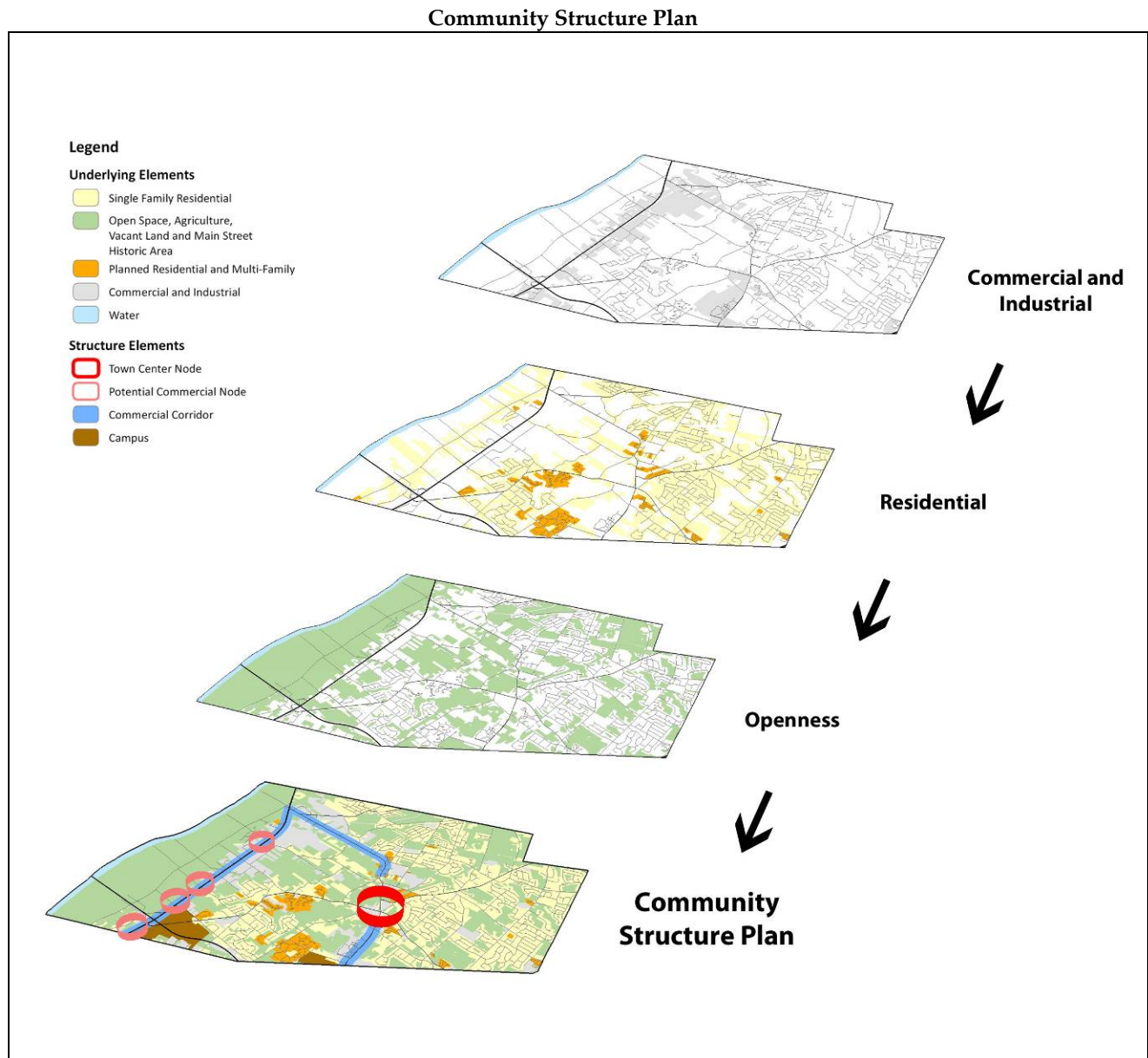
The concept of Community Structure presents a framework to help understand what type of development patterns work best where and can be used to guide future development in a predictable, sensible way.

South Windsor's Existing Community Structure Snapshot



A quick snap-shot shows where more intense development is located in South Windsor (white). The snap-shot indicates that development has occurred in a ring around the main commercial corridors. A clear focal point (such as downtown or town center) is not evident from this graphic.

The following graphic takes another approach at depicting South Windsor's existing community structure and highlighting ways to enhance structure. This approach accounts for the established suburban residential and commercial corridor patterns, but also recognizes existing and potential nodes and campus-style development. The Town may wish to allow greater intensity of development in defined nodes or campuses if more intense development will help create a sense of place that benefits the whole community. This notion of Community Structure should be kept in mind when reviewing the next sections on residential and business development.

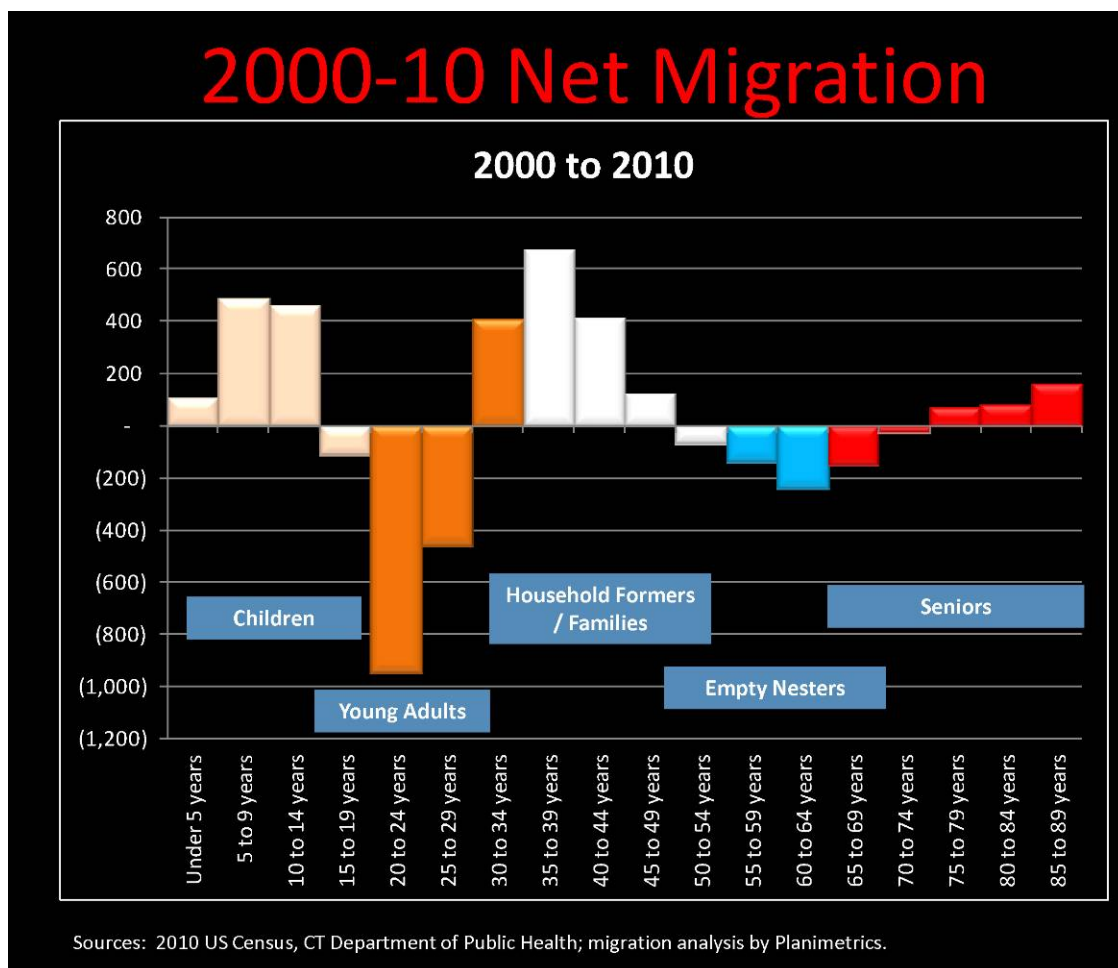


Residential Development and Housing Needs

Background

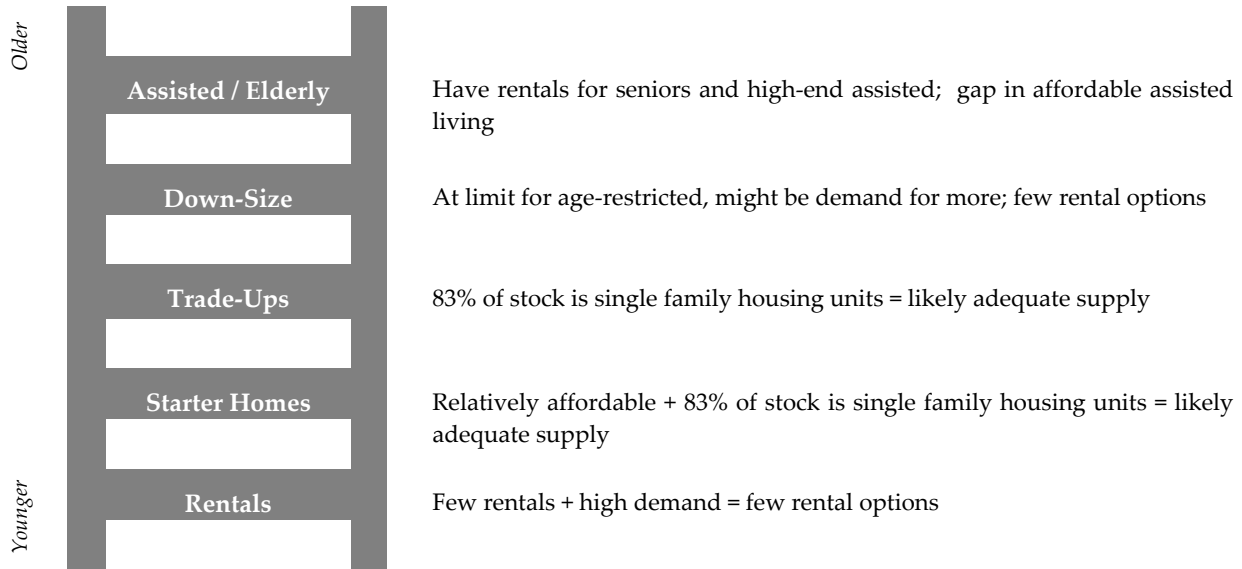
As a refresher, the Conditions and Trends review noted that:

- Fewer than half of South Windsor's households are "traditional" family households - 57% are one- or two- person households.
- While housing prices have increased over the last decade, housing prices are perceived as still relatively affordable in South Windsor and the median sales price is only slightly greater than that of the state overall. Though only roughly 7% of South Windsor's housing units meet the state's definition of "affordable".
- South Windsor is seeing an out-migration of young adults (ages 20 to 29) and empty nesters (ages 50 to 74). This demographic may be looking for smaller, easy-to-maintain housing units including rental units.



Issues Discussion

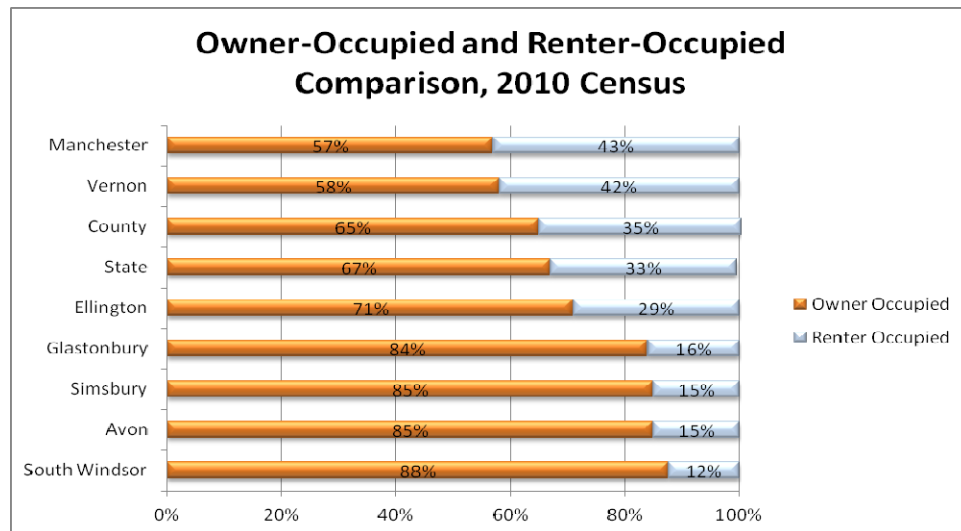
Housing needs and preferences change for each stage of life – for many, it is a climb up the “housing ladder”. The following graphic generally assesses how South Windsor’s current housing stock meets the needs for each step on the ladder.



Detailed Discussion

- **Affordable Units for Elderly.** South Windsor has two assisted living complexes, private elderly housing developments and affordable independent senior units (provided by the Housing Authority). The gap, identified by the Housing Authority, is affordable living for seniors that need some level of assistance – the existing assisted living facilities are expensive. The Housing Authority will be building 40 units of congregate senior housing next to its Flax Hill property. While this development will help meet this need, more options may be needed in South Windsor. Residents of assisted living are much less likely to walk to neighboring commercial areas; therefore proximity to businesses is less important when considering appropriate locations for this type of housing (though visitors and employees might value proximity to services).

- **Rental Housing.** Reviewing rental websites and a talking with a local realtor indicate that there may be few rental opportunities in South Windsor. Census data confirms that South Windsor has a much lower percentage of renter-occupied units compared to nearby communities and other similar suburban towns (Note that the chart would include units rented by the Housing Authority which are restricted for elderly and disabled. So the actual percentage of rental units available to the general population is much smaller).



A lack of rentals may contribute to the loss of young adults and older adults looking to downsize. It also has implications for the South Windsor Volunteer Fire Department. According to fire officials, they have seen a surge in volunteers in their 20s. However, many live at home with their parents and may likely leave South Windsor when they are ready to move out on their own, due to the small stock of rental units. The Town loses the volunteers and essentially the dollars invested in training them.

Higher end rentals, such as those proposed at Evergreen Walk may help draw some young adults and empty nesters. Other opportunities could be explored, especially in strategic locations that enhance a sense of place ("community structure"). For example, new rentals within walking distance or as mixed use within the Town Center could help draw new businesses there and add more energy and vitality to the Town Center.

- **Senior Residences.** The Town responded to the demand for age-restricted (over age 55) opportunities by adopting regulations for Senior Residence Developments. The regulation sets a cap of 250 total units in Town. This limit has been met and inquiries by land owners / developers indicate that the market might be there for more developments.

Other towns in the eastern Connecticut have seen a drop in demand for senior housing and eliminated the age restrictions after the developments were built. It is uncertain if this was due to high asking prices, units not designed well for the target demographic, or other factors. South Windsor has not seen a drop in popularity. The success of such developments in South Windsor combined with the fact that the state's over-55 population is growing, it is possible that demand will grow.

The goal might be to balance the following factors:

- Allow additional Senior Residence Developments if the market deems there is demand in South Windsor.
- Avoid over-saturating the market (and thereby avoid the elimination of age-restrictions once built).
- Maintain a healthy balance of all age groups.

A simple analysis looks at what the demand might be for age-restricted units in South Windsor.

Assumptions and Calculations

Assume target age of 55 to 79 for senior residences:

- 6,210 South Windsor residents in this age group in 2010

Assume 1.5 persons per household in this age range:

- 6,210 residents ages 55 to 79 / 1.5 per household = 4,140 households for age group

Per AARP research, 90% of seniors want to age in their current home, so assume 10% will want to downsize:

- 10% of households with residents ages 55 to 79: $4,140 * 10\% = 414$ units

Based on these assumptions, there might be a demand for just over 400 age-restricted units for South Windsor's existing senior population. If the cap were increased to 400 units and all were built, South Windsor's overall housing stock would remain well balanced overall since these units would comprise well below 10% of the Town's overall housing stock.

It is important to note that this analysis does not account for demand from residents of other communities nor does it subtract out a percentage that might leave South Windsor or move into assisted living or other types of senior housing.

- **Overall Affordability.** Affordability in South Windsor and surrounding communities does not yet appear to be an issue to the same extent in many Connecticut communities. The Town should monitor trends in sales prices and need and be ready to implement appropriate approaches when action is warranted.

The Town did have a program where developments were required to set aside units to be sold at affordable prices to qualifying households. The program was eliminated since those that met the income guidelines had challenges obtaining mortgages and other housing units in town were naturally affordable to moderate income households.

The following matrix provides a range of approaches to consider.

PASSIVE APPROACHES	INTERMEDIATE APPROACHES	MORE ACTIVE APPROACHES
<p><u>Free Market Approach</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wait to see if market forces provide housing alternatives. 2. Wait to see if developers propose using the Affordable Housing Appeals procedure (CGS 8-30g) to provide housing alternatives <i>[refer to slide 28 from Conditions and Trends presentation]</i>. <p><u>Education Approach</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Educate property owners, developers, institutions, and others about housing needs and desired alternatives. 4. Identify other organizations that might help address housing needs and encourage and assist them with this effort. 	<p><u>Helping</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Provide services to help age in place if they so choose (home maintenance, transport, etc.). 6. Encourage preservation of existing housing that sells or rents at affordable prices. 7. Promote housing that is configured to meet needs of aging population (naturally occurring retirement communities). 8. Encourage preservation of existing units that are counted as affordable housing. <p><u>Encouraging / Enabling</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Promote adaptive reuse of structures, accessory apartments, etc. 10. Encourage creation of additional housing types on "housing ladder". 11. Provide density bonus or other incentives for providing for housing diversity. 	<p><u>Requiring</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Require that all new development make provision for housing diversity (set-aside units, fee payment, etc.). <p><u>Providing</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Develop housing that sells or rents at affordable prices (including deed-restricted). 14. Develop housing that is configured to meet the needs of an aging population. 15. Develop assisted housing. 16. Buy existing units and resell as deed-restricted units. 17. Provide mortgage financing or interest rate subsidies. 18. Provide down payment assistance in exchange for shared equity. 19. Obtain state/federal funding to provide housing that will meet local needs.

HOMEWORK: Which affordability approaches should we consider / do more of?

- **Flexibility and Choice.** Demographics in South Windsor, the State and the country are changing in ways we have never seen before. As the baby boom generation ages, we have the largest over 55 population ever. We also see smaller household sizes, more people living alone, and families that, due to divorce, now take up two houses rather than one. In other words, we need more housing units to per person than in the past.

It is reasonable to expect that housing needs and preferences will change, possibly in ways that we cannot imagine today. The traditional approach of single-family neighborhoods might not meet future needs. In fact, South Windsor is already seeing interest in ways to “repurpose” existing single family houses to meet emerging needs. The Commission has had inquiries to convert single family houses in established neighborhoods into a sort of congregate housing where seniors can live together and benefit from mutual on-site assistance. The Town also has seen the creation of in-law and accessory apartments within existing single family units.

The Town’s zoning regulations provide flexibility by allowing for some repurposing of single family houses (in-law and accessory apartments) and for alternatives to single-family living, such as:

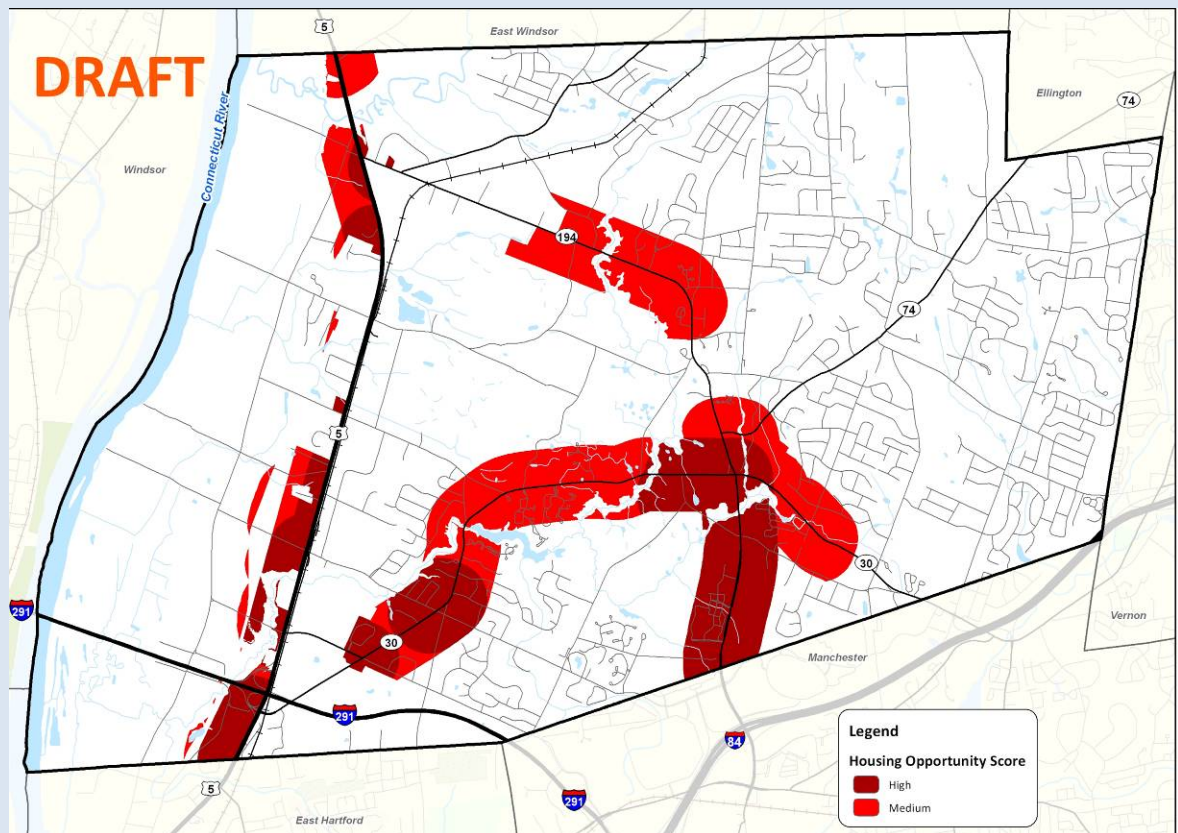
- Duplexes in “transition” areas
- Multi-family development (in proximity to shopping and services)
- Mixed uses (housing mixed in with business uses) in certain zones

The Town should continue to allow these housing choices, and as appropriate, add more flexibility to some provisions. It will be important to remain open to new ideas and provide flexibility in zoning regulations to new allow new approaches, provided such new approaches are compatible with its surrounding neighborhood and by guiding new housing to locations that are appropriate and help meet other community goals (see Housing Opportunity map).

- **Housing as Economic Development.** A housing strategy can also help achieve economic development goals. From a tax base perspective multi-family housing, elderly housing, and assisted living developments often pay more in taxes than they use in services. They build the tax base. Housing placed within or adjacent to retail, service, and dining/food establishments provides customers to such businesses. The type of and location of housing should be carefully guided so that it helps the Town accomplish economic development goals. The following draft map identifies areas where the addition of housing opportunities could also support business development goals by putting residents within walking distance to commercial areas, along bus routes, and along arterial roads. In some cases, a mixed use setting would be more appropriate so that the land still provides business uses.

This is a preliminary analysis which should be refined after discussions.

Housing Opportunities Analysis (draft for discussion purposes)



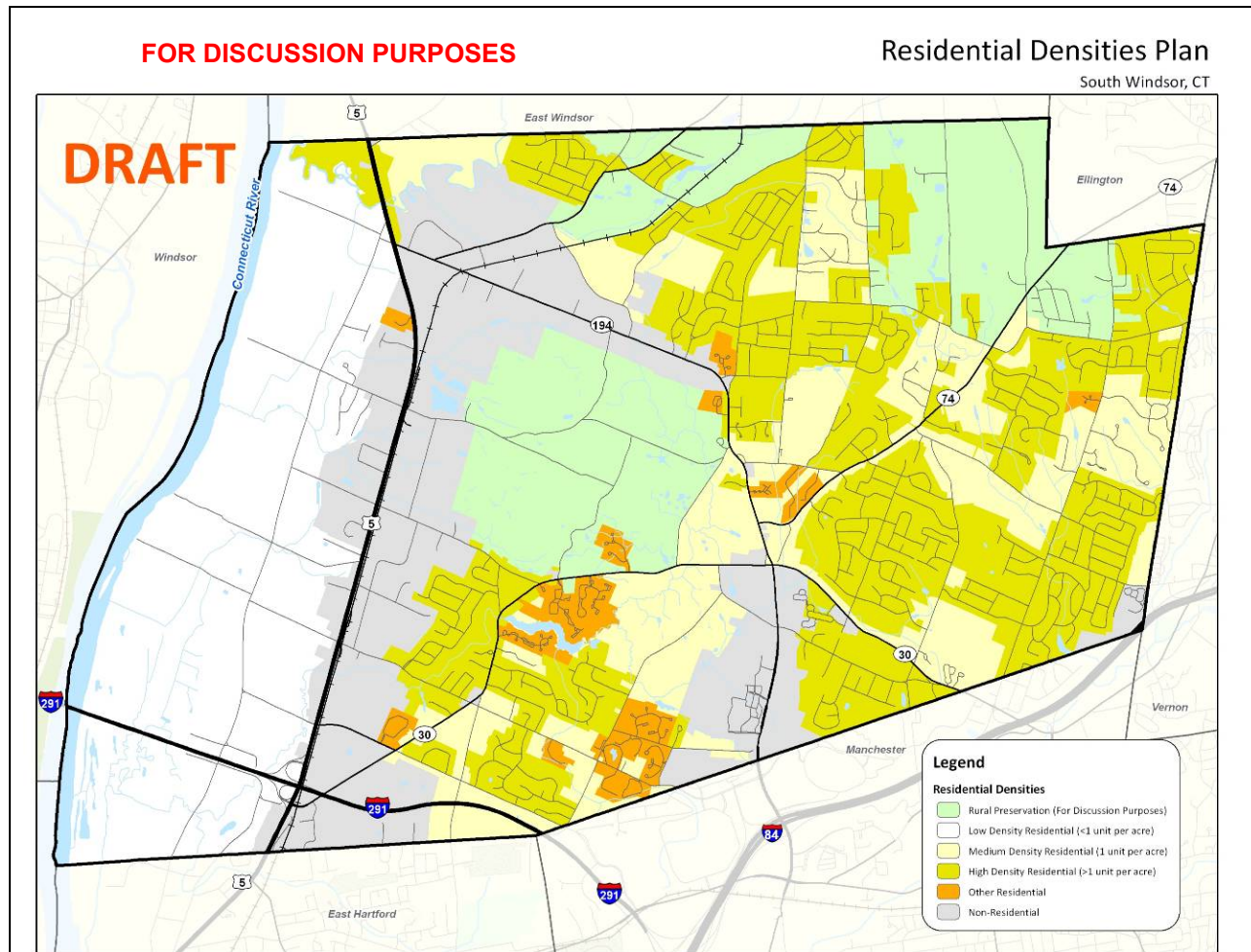
“High” are areas that are:

- within ¼ mile of a bus route,
- on an arterial road, and
- within ¼ mile of certain commercial zones (BGD, GC, RC) or within the Town Center.

“Medium” are areas that meet only 2 of these criteria. The analyses excludes land within Industrial zones, the I-291 Corridor Development Zone and areas within the 100 year floodplain.

Housing Densities. The following draft map, depicts future residential densities based upon existing zoning with two new policies (if the Commission decides to incorporate those policies):

- Increase the minimum lot size along Main Street to greater than one acre (see updated build-out analysis)
- Require mandatory open space subdivisions in green areas.



This map together with an updated Housing Opportunities map, can be considered a Housing Plan that guides the location and density of future housing while protecting the integrity of established neighborhoods.

Possible Overarching Goal for Residential Development and Housing Needs:

Preserve the integrity of existing neighborhoods and allow for a range of housing types in appropriate settings that can help meet the current and future needs of our community.

Strategies:

1. Protect established neighborhoods.
 - Generally maintain established residential densities and patterns.
 - Continue to protect from potential incompatible activities (such as traffic, noise, lights, etc.) through the zoning regulations and a careful review of proposed developments
2. Allow for flexibility in meeting emerging housing needs and preferences.
 - Continue to allow for alternative housing choices.
 - Consider new tools / approaches that emerge.
 - Increase the cap on Senior Residence Developments.
3. Encourage the creation of affordable elderly assisted housing.
4. Monitor housing affordability issues and determine tools that can help increase the affordable housing stock.
5. Support housing that can help achieve economic development and transportation goals.
 - Continue to encourage housing types that boost the tax base.
 - Guide new housing to locations that support business districts and are located along bus routes or within walking distance to businesses.

HOMEWORK: How would you edit / add to this goal?

What additional strategies do you recommend?

Business Development

Business development:

- Adds to tax base, helping to support community facilities and services which add to our quality of life
- Provides jobs to residents of South Windsor and the region
- Provides services and goods to residents and to other businesses

South Windsor is fortunate to have a large amount of land zoned for commercial and industrial uses and has a reputation as a business-friendly community. These are two key ingredients for achieving business development goals.

Issues Discussion

Business Zones

Twelve percent (12%) of land in South Windsor is zoned for commercial and industrial uses and there are large vacant parcels that present great economic development opportunities. Local officials assume that business development goals and objectives can be met with the existing supply of commercial and industrial zoned over the next ten years (the planning time-frame for the POCD).

The Community Structure Plan in conjunction with the Business Development Plan map (on the next page) provide indicate the business development areas in South Windsor.

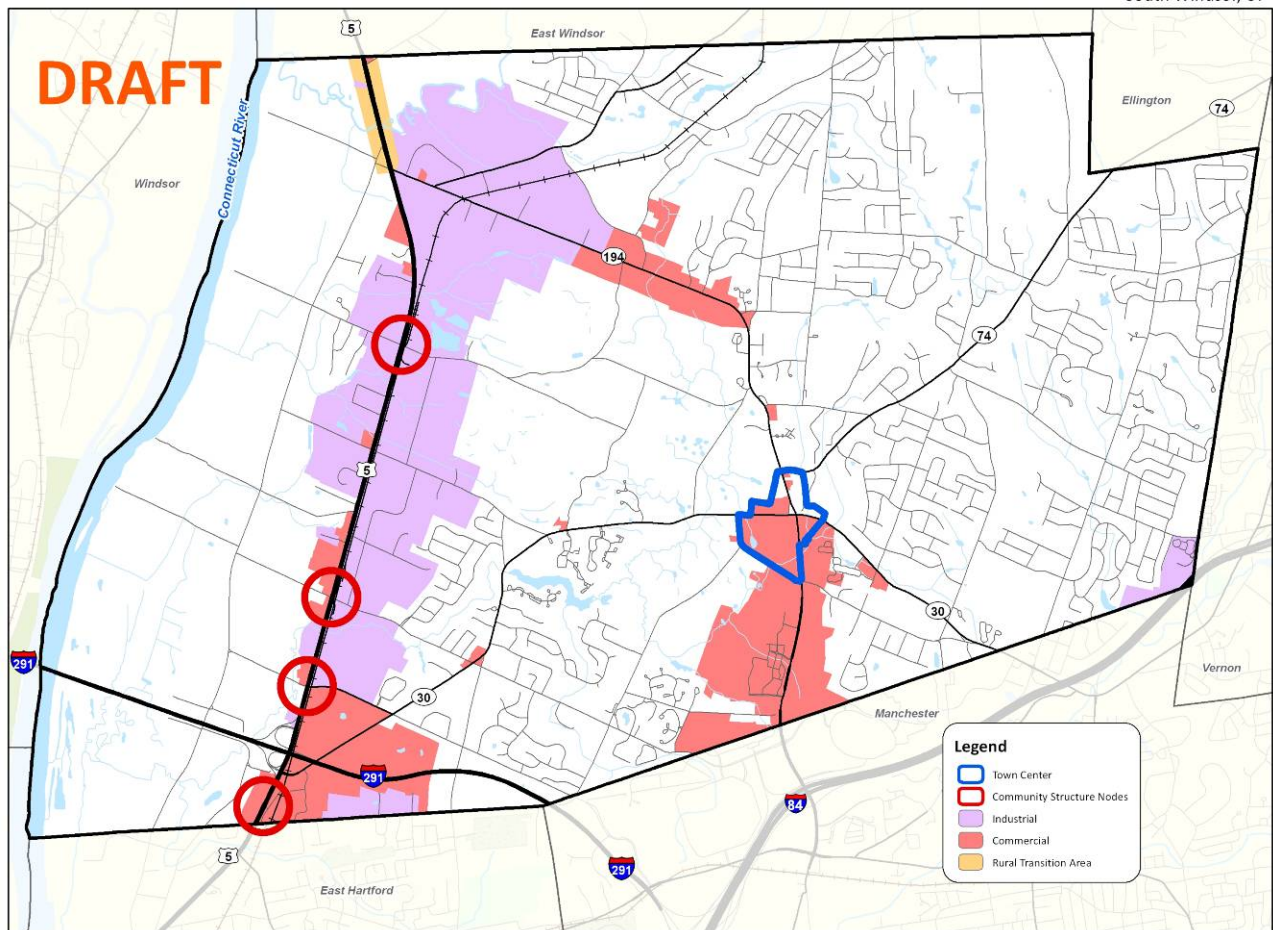
For the most part, the current business zoning designations should help the Town accomplish its business development goals. The Planning and Zoning Commission has adopted a number of new business zones to take advantage of opportunities, such as highway access. These newer zones include the Buckland Gateway District, the I-291 Corridor Development District and the Designed Commercial District. These zones set forth goals about specific types of development, their form, and design, and generally encourage lot owners to work together to create well-planned developments.

Some zoning updates might be considered to further accomplish business development goals. These include:

- Minor adjustments to the Industrial Zone to minimize the conversion to non-industrial uses. On a well-traveled commuter corridor like Route 5, there can be pressure to allow non-industrial uses (such as services and retail) in industrial zones. Industrial uses are often attractive to communities because they often provide higher wages compared to retail and services and greater property taxes. Once industrial land is lost to other uses, it is difficult to find new suitable land for industrial uses (i.e., land along roads that can handle truck traffic and that is generally buffered from residences). Also, when non-industrial uses are located in an industrial area, the new uses might be inclined to oppose new or expanded industrial uses on neighboring properties. The Town should re-examine some of the commercial-like uses allowed in industrial zones and generally avoid rezoning industrial land.
- However, there might be limited exceptions, where other goals can be met. For example, the Community Structure Plan and Business Development Plan identify potential “crossroad” opportunities, where it might make sense to create nodes of services and retail that serve nearby neighborhoods and commuters along Route 5 and introduce more structure to the corridor (i.e., defined nodes).
- As discussed later, consider creating a Town Center overlay zone.
- Consider creating a Rural Transition Zone along the very northern stretch of Route 5 (see map). This rural residential area likely does (or will) feel the pressure to convert to commercial uses, similar to the rest of Route 5. However this area retains South Windsor’s rural roots and effectively creates a transition from the more rural surroundings to the more built-up Route 5. The goal should be to retain the rural flavor here, but recognize that land-owners might need some additional small-scale commercial

opportunities. One possibility is to keep this area residentially zoned, but allow for additional types of home based businesses that are not currently allowed (e.g., contractor storage, and other uses) provided there are standards to help minimize visual and other impacts.

Business Development Plan



Attracting and Retaining Businesses

Approaches to attract and retain businesses include:

- **Continue a business-friendly attitude.** South Windsor has a good reputation (as evidenced in news articles) as being business-friendly when it comes to the permitting process. This should remain an important component of Town's overall approach to delivering services. This includes ensuring that landowners and businesses clearly understand the permitting process (by keeping the permitting guide up-to-date and user-friendly) and ensuring a reasonable time-frame for land use approvals. Maintaining a business-friendly approach depends upon a number of local officials; many noted that the Town's earlier strategic planning process helped them work together on this and other staff-level initiatives.
- **Organizational capacity.** The Town does not currently have a staff person who is dedicated solely to economic development. The current approach of contracting with the Chamber of Commerce can help meet this need, but ultimately having someone who officially represents the town in its economic development efforts might be the best approach. Such a person could work with the Town Manager to:
 - Regularly meet with and survey business owners to discuss any issues or opportunities.
 - Represent South Windsor at trade shows or other events that draw entrepreneurs and businesses.
 - Actively pursue desirable businesses.
 - Cultivate local entrepreneurs / help home-based businesses grow.
 - Maintain a database of vacant space and properties and help landlords and property owners market their space.
 - Help businesses tap into state programs.
 - Initiate and manage economic development programs.
 - Provide support to the Economic Development Commission.
- **Tools to assist businesses.**
 - South Windsor has a tax incentive program to help attract new businesses or help existing businesses expand. The Town should continue to offer this program and ensure that it is only used for those businesses that meet the program's stated goals:

TYPES OF BUSINESS/INDUSTRY TARGETED

The Economic Development Incentive Program will be used to target the following types of quality businesses.

1. Corporate headquarters
2. Corporate satellite offices
3. Campus-style office development
4. Research and development facilities
5. Manufacturing facilities
6. Multi-use facilities

The Town is interested in attracting businesses that will:

1. Generate additional tax revenue through real estate and/or personal property taxes.
2. Provide employment opportunities.
3. Provide high quality goods and services.
4. Improve the aesthetics of the community or a particular area.

In addition to tax abatements the Town is also willing to cooperate in Tax Incremental Financing Options and infrastructure improvements and would also consider the waiver of local permitting fees.

- The tax incentive program is not available to existing businesses that are not expanding. Façade improvement programs have been very successful in other communities and can help existing businesses that might not have the resources to make physical improvements to their site and facilities (see detailed discussion in next section).
- Local officials have indicated that the former Post Office might be an opportunity to provide business incubator space (in combination with meeting town space needs). Such space can help support current home businesses that have outgrown their space at home and provide starter space for local entrepreneurs. It's location in the Town Center would also help support Town Center goals, outlined later.
- Other tools might include "buy local" programs.

Improve the Appearance of Business Zones

As noted in Booklet 4, zoning regulations have been updated to include landscaping and design standards and to require that new or expanded commercial buildings go through design review. Recent development under these provisions demonstrate that attractive design can be achieved and has a very positive impact on community appearance. These standards should be maintained, particularly for buildings and sites visible from arterial and collector roads.

The challenge lies with vacant buildings and older buildings. If the business is struggling or the building is vacant, the owner may not have the financial means to maintain it - let alone make upgrades, replace (or remove) signs, or improve parking areas and grounds. Therefore, a key strategy to improve the appearance of vacant buildings is to help to find a new tenant (see Organizational Capacity, above).

For existing businesses, there is little incentive to spend money on upgrades unless the business owner or landlord believes they will see economic value from an upgrade (e.g., attract more customers, be able to charge higher rent), or if there is a code or safety issue that must be addressed. If the community places high value on having more attractive buildings and commercial sites (which in turn can enhance the site's and possibly neighboring site's property values) then it might make sense to provide public funds to make improvements. One approach is through a façade improvement program. The Town could focus on (or develop a pilot program for) Route 5 since this is a well-travelled gateway and public sentiment expressed a strong desire to improve the appearance in this well-travelled gateway. Wethersfield has a very successful façade improvement program, which is highlighted in the box below.

A blight ordinance is an important tool to have in place, but should be used as a last resort. The initial goal should be to work with property owners to understand issues they are facing and help develop a workable program to address blight.

Façade Improvement Program - Wethersfield

Wethersfield established a Façade Improvement program, which provides a “forgivable” loan for up to 50% of the cost for improvements such as new signs, sign removal, landscaping, windows, awnings, siding, painting and other projects.

The Town set up the fund with an initial appropriation and has added to it with STEAP grants and additional town appropriations. The Town Planner and Town Attorney work with an economic development commission to review and approve the loans and the design review board reviews the planned improvements. They receive around 3 to 4 applications per year. Local officials consider the program to be a great success, with 20 projects undertaken to date.

Before:



After:



Photos from Town of Wethersfield website.

Possible Overarching Goals for Business Development

One goal in the current POCD is “Support business development that is consistent with the character and scale of the Town”. This could be modified to add “in order to build the tax base and provide jobs and services”.

Strategies:

1. Encourage business development in existing business zones (see Business Development Plan map).
2. Generally maintain current business zones with some updates (as discussed above).
3. Minimize the conversion of industrial zoned land to non-industrial uses.
4. Maintain a business-friendly approach.
5. Build the Town’s organizational capacity to attract and retain businesses.
6. Continue to offer tax incentive to new and expanding businesses that meet the program’s stated goals.
7. Investigate creating business incubator space, possibly in the former Post Office building.
8. Create a façade improvement program.
9. Work with landowners to address blight issues.
10. Explore other programs that aide local businesses.

HOMEWORK: How would you edit / add to this goal?

What additional strategies do you recommend?

Town Center (most key strategies are based on discussion at May 8 meeting)

Overarching Goal:

Having a recognizable, defined, and walkable Town Center that is a civic hub and a place where people and businesses want to be.

Strategies:

1. Reinforce a "Town Center" / "South Windsor Center" brand:

- The Town should refer to the area as the Town Center in its documents, including the webpage, when describing the location of Town Hall, Library, etc., in marketing materials, etc.
- Encourage businesses to refer to themselves as being in South Windsor Center on signs and in advertisements.
- Demarcate the Town Center with banners or other signage which lets people know when they've entered the Center.
- Consider a Town Center / South Windsor Center municipal kiosk at a prominent location.

2. Attract uses and activities that draw more people to the Town Center:

- Encourage a mix of uses that generate activity at different times. Avoid having an overconcentration of uses that are only active weekdays.
- It is recognized that there is limited land available to hold larger events in the Center. The Town should encourage the continued use of the green / gazebo area for smaller community events and for events that will help draw customers to businesses in the Center.
- Encourage retailers to have sidewalk sales and use their outdoor space in ways that create visible outdoor activity.
- Encourage property owners to provide outdoor furniture such as benches and picnic tables; especially along the brook and in other open areas.
- Encourage outdoor dining:

"Town Center"



- Promote the fact that zoning allows outdoor dining.
 - Update the zoning to eliminate the restriction against using Town owned land in the Town Center for outdoor dining (so long as the Town Council approves the use, do not zone against it).
 - Update the outdoor dining regulation to allow the conversion of parking spaces for dining space in the Town Center. If the applicant can demonstrate that the spaces are not necessary and the spaces can be used safely, allow them the opportunity to creatively use their outdoor space.
 - Allow trial-runs for outdoor dining without zoning approval – such as an outdoor dining weekend or some other temporary period that allows restaurants to try it on a trial basis without having to go through the approval process. Encourage social-media driven “pop-out seating” at Town Center restaurants (also referred to as “guerilla dining”). If these temporary events prove successful, restaurants might see the value in creating formal outdoor dining space.
 - Lastly, one very effective way to generate activity (and customers for businesses) is to encourage more housing in and around the Town Center. The recently approved mixed use proposal (though not built) is one example of the type of housing opportunities that can be integrated within the Town Center. The Town should encourage additional mixed use within the Town Center and residential developments adjacent to the Town Center. (See the earlier Housing Opportunity map).
3. Enhance the Town Center through physical improvements:
- A continued investment in physical improvements by the Town indicates the Town’s commitment to the Town Center as a community focal point and can make the Town Center a more attractive and comfortable destination. Perhaps the most critical physical improvements are those already underway – planning for additional sidewalks, crosswalks and pedestrian traffic signals. Other improvements could include street trees and landscaping.
 - Physical improvements by the private sector also play an important role in adding vitality to the Town Center. This might include new signs, awnings, walkways, landscaping and upgrades to facades.
4. Longer term, it can be expected that property owners will expand or redevelop their properties. Currently, the land in the Town Center falls into four very different zones. And provisions in some of those zones (such as setbacks, parking requirements, and coverage requirements) prevent landowners from developing their property in manner that enhances the Town Center (e.g., walkable, village type settings).

The Town should solidify its vision for the Town Center in terms of uses, densities, and important amenities. The vision can then guide a zoning update. A destination town center / village requires public amenities to be successful (places to sit, gather, etc.) and might warrant a new internal street network to create a cohesive “place.” Zoning should provide greater development intensity and / or loosen dimensional standards so that property owners have an incentive to redevelop in ways that can help achieve the community vision and the flexibility to address unique circumstances on each parcel.

An overlay zone, matching the Town Center boundary, is one zoning approach. The zone could be mandatory or optional. An optional approach would mean that property owners can choose whether they want to take advantage of the new zoning provisions (with greater development potential) or stay under the current zoning designation.

Route 5 Corridor (most key strategies based on discussion at May 8 meeting)

Overarching Goal:

Route 5 will remain a key economic development corridor and its overall appearance will improve over time so that this important gateway positively reflects South Windsor's image.

Strategies:

See Business Development discussion for strategies related to zoning districts. This section focuses on three physical aspects of Route 5:

1. **The Right of Way (ROW).** The ROW is owned by the state and managed by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT). It includes the paved roadway, median and land some extent of land along the roadway. Some utilities are also within the ROW. The width of the right of way varies. Strategies to improve this area requires coordination with ConnDOT:

- The number of traffic control signs creates a cluttered look and diverts attention from business signs. There should be a balance between de-cluttering and ensuring safety with appropriate traffic control signs. The Town could encourage ConnDOT to only provide the minimum signs necessary and remove the remaining signs. It should be noted that some of the additional traffic control signs were installed due to Town requests.
- Address illegal signs in the ROW. Town Zoning regulations do not allow for off-premise signs and ConnDOT requires proof that a sign meets zoning requirements before allowing someone to install a new sign. Any commercial sign located in the ROW is "off-premises" even if it is located right in front of the business. Some of the commercial signs in the ROW are grandfathered in and therefore legally exist. The Town should work with ConnDOT to eliminate illegal signs in the ROW. It is recognized that businesses may depend upon these illegal signs to draw business. Concurrent with stepping up enforcement, the Town can work with these business owners and their landlords to develop a solution that helps them advertise their presence, but in a way that is more appealing.
- Enforce the restriction on the number of cars for sale that can be displayed. At any given time, there are a number of vehicles displayed in the ROW, often on green areas.
- Encourage businesses and community groups to regularly hold litter clean-ups.



- Consolidate driveway curb cuts and narrow the overly-wide curb cuts. Some communities have (with funding from the Regional Planning Agency) created Access Management Plans for major corridors. An access management plan provides specific recommendations for access to properties along a corridor. Zoning regulations can then require compliance with the plan when properties are developed or redeveloped.
- Over time, as ConnDOT repairs or upgrades to the guard rails in the median, encourage them to use a more aesthetic type of guardrail. The look of the guardrail has a surprising impact on the overall appearance of the corridor, yet a guardrail is necessary due to the narrow width of the median and crash history. However, there are more attractive materials for guardrails.
- Long term, encourage overhead wires to be buried.



With overhead wires.



Without overhead wires.

2. **Land from the ROW to the buildings (front yards).** This is privately owned land – often comprised of parking, driveways, lawn and landscaping. This area is most visible to those travelling of Route 5 and therefore creates a strong impression of South Windsor. New development is subject to landscaping and design requirements. The following strategies can help improve the appearance of the front yards:

- Encourage property owners to landscape their front yards and add vegetation and trees, upgrade signs, and improve screening (such as for storage areas).
- To the extent possible, remove parking from the front yards. Where it is not possible, improve the appearance of parking areas with landscaping, etc.
- Establish a Façade Improvement Fund to help property owners with these upgrades.

NOTE: May wish to include photos of best practices today in the corridor and around town.

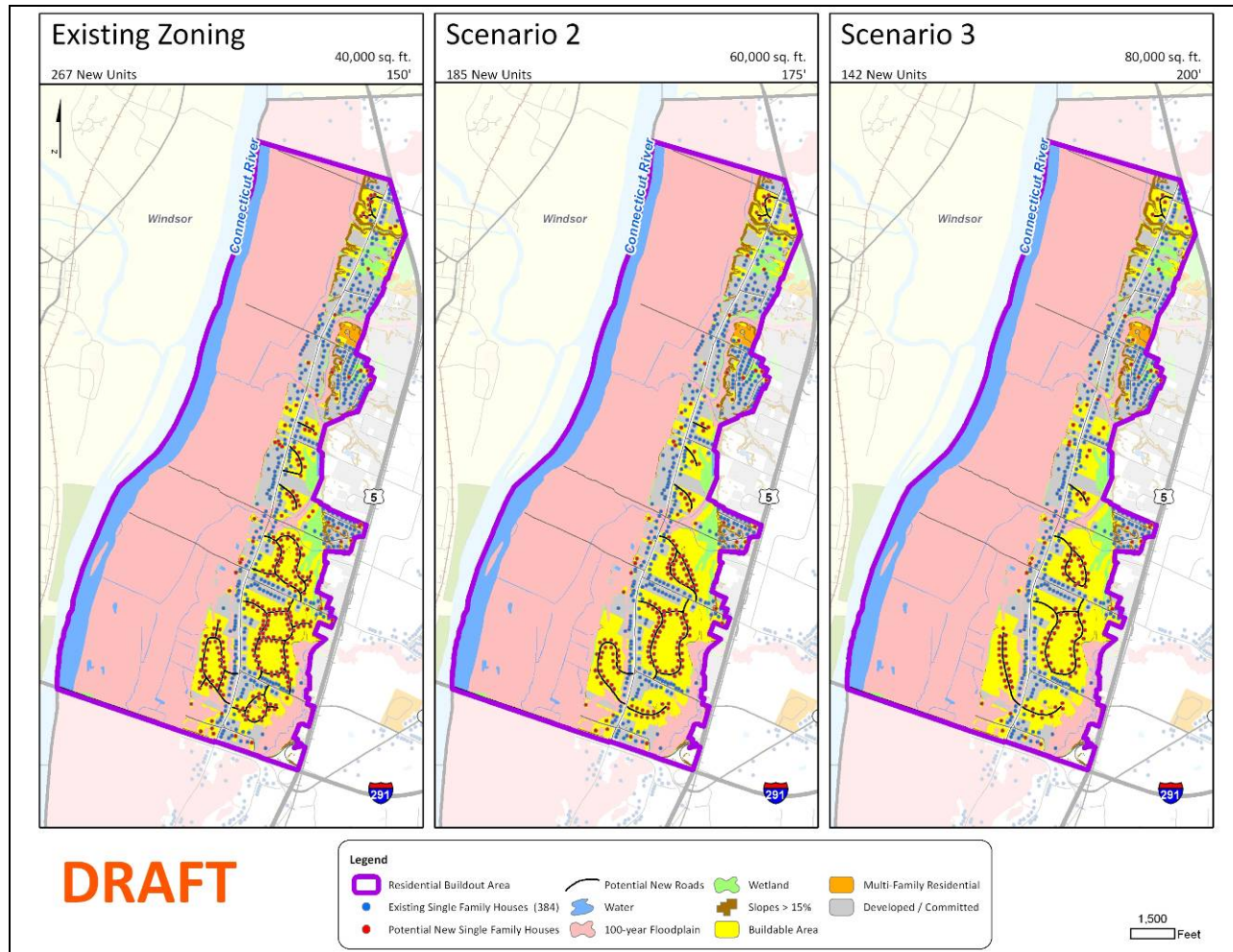
3. **The buildings / land use.** This is also privately owned land. It includes everything else visible from Route 5 – buildings, storage areas, etc. Strategies here include:
- Work with owners to enhance screening of storage areas (landscaping, fencing, berms, etc.)
 - Encourage upgrades to the buildings (Façade improvement program can help).
 - Work with the owners of blighted properties (see Business Development discussion earlier)
 - Continue to require design review for new buildings.

Background Information - Updated Main Street Build Out

Based on discussions at the past meetings, the residential build out analysis for Main Street was updated to present two include two additional scenarios.

- Scenario 2: Minimum lot size of 60,000 square feet and minimum frontage of 175 feet.
- Scenario 3: Minimum lot size of 80,000 square feet and minimum frontage of 200 feet of frontage.

This analyses also removed 10 acres that are subject to a preservation easement



NOTE: Based on discussions at the last meeting, there does not seem to be consensus on the best approach for Main Street. We should discuss how to proceed with addressing this issue.

Background Information - Current POCD

For your information, the following summarizes the goals and tasks related to development found in the current POCD. Note that some items are repeated multiple times because they apply to more than one topic. Some items have been implemented.

Community Structure

- Promote patterns of development that respect and reinforce the existing character of the Town.
- Future growth should be geared to the Town's infrastructure capacity; residents' ability to pay for existing and expanded infrastructure without creating an undue hardship; and maintaining the character of the Town deemed to be desirable.
- Retain natural and historic characteristics and scale while accommodating future growth through new or revised zoning regulations incorporating design standards, performance thresholds, aesthetic guidelines or other methods.
- For the Town Center:
 - The most appropriate uses in this area are a continuation of the existing pattern of mixed uses, without domination of any one type of use.
 - Preservation of historic structures should be emphasized.
 - Pedestrian accessibility needs to be strengthened.

Residential Development and Housing Needs

- Preserve the integrity of existing neighborhoods by protecting against physical and visual encroachment by incompatible types of development.
- Investigate residential subdivision regulations from other towns and conduct site visits to gain a first-hand understanding of how the regulations translate to actual physical development.
- Review the Town's specifications for public improvements. Using actual locations in town, compare the development under existing specifications with older subdivisions. Consider incentives for creative approaches
- Mixed Use Development of an acceptable mass and scale:
 - Research suburban/rural mixed-use development regulations and overlay zones then visit selected communities with built projects.
 - Develop a suitable vision for mixed-use development in South Windsor that stipulates location, acceptable land uses, densities, amenities, scale, and architectural style.
 - If warranted, prepare a draft regulation and evaluate the potential outcome through preparation of pilot site plans.
- Enhance Developers' Understanding of Town Development Goals
- Continue to pursue policies that accommodate a range of housing alternatives without sacrificing Town character.
- Be mindful of the need to maintain a cross-section of housing types and costs when investigating alternative approaches to residential development
- Address needs for moderately priced single family homes and housing for the Town's senior citizens, which may include non-profit, Town sponsored or co-ventures between the public and private sectors.

Business Development

- Sustain the Town's current land uses and provide pro-active assistance for retaining businesses.
- Support business development that is consistent with the character and scale of the Town.
- Encourage compatible development to maintain/expand the tax base while retaining and improving the Town's physical character.
- Conduct "pilot site plans" of properties in the Buckland/Sullivan Road corridor using the existing regulations to identify specific areas that are unclear or are unintentionally creating undesired outcomes.
- Encourage pre-application meetings and require a submission of an initial site concept for development exceeding a certain size or located in specific areas.
- Identify areas suitable for smaller, non-linear buildings arranged in "commercial pods" rather than strip configurations, amend the regulations appropriately.
- Retain Business on Route 5:
 - Arrange a forum with EDC/Redevelopment Agency/Chamber of Commerce and business and property owners throughout the corridors to identify specific concerns, assign responsibilities, and establish a sequence schedule.
 - Establish the South Windsor Industrial/Commercial Alliance and designate a responsible Town agency to foster collaborative efforts to improve the corridors and highlight business retention actions.
- Attract Business on Route 5:
 - Participate in a broad-based Working Group to be established by the EDC to conduct corridor analyses and develop redevelopment plans
 - Develop a Strategic Redevelopment Plan to identify appropriate state/regional contacts and programs and establish accountability for implementation.
- Enhance Developers' Understanding of Town Development Goals
- Continue dialogue with the EDC and the Redevelopment Agency to integrate planning and zoning parameters into the development of strategies for the redevelopment/revitalization of the Route 5/Sullivan Avenue corridor, the reuse of buildings/sites within existing commercial/industrial areas, and I-291 and Buckland Road/Gateway development initiatives.
- Mixed uses, designed to replicate a more traditional way of life, may be appropriate in some areas such as the Buckland Road Gateway Development Zone.
- Within existing industrial zones, limited commercial uses to serve the industrial uses (such as restaurants, banks) may be appropriate.
- Transitional uses are encouraged along zone boundaries.
- Encourage redevelopment or improvement of underutilized, blighted or aesthetically compromised commercial/ industrial areas.