Main Street - Preservation Planning Study

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(Cover Image) Main Street Oblique Aerial
Source: Bing.com
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A Market Context
Since its earliest settlement, the Town of South Windsor’s Main Street has played a significant role in the commerce, culture and history of the Town. The scenic roadway is bordered by the Connecticut and Scantic Rivers and includes rich low-lying land and lush pastures which have been used for grazing livestock and growing tobacco since the early seventeenth century. Originally settled on East Windsor Hill, near the landing point of the historic cross-river connection known as Bissell’s Ferry, the settlement spread north and south along Main Street, the “highway” of that time.

The population that settled along Main Street formed a concentration of wealth and influence in the early settlement of the area. This wealth and legacy grew primarily out of origins of tobacco farmers and merchants. This historic significance is evident today and recognized through an impressive historic record of Connecticut River Valley architecture and a historic and agricultural land use pattern that has remained intact. The historic and agricultural success of Main Street has been closely linked to the Connecticut River and the fertile and productive land that has been nurtured on its riverbanks. The land is a direct link between past heritage and legacy of Main Street and the choices that are being considered by the community regarding its future.

A reflection of its agricultural heritage, Main Street is composed of long narrow parcels that have divided the land for generations to provide productive agricultural plots that include property frontage of historic, stately and eclectic homes. Many of the historic homes on Main Street were constructed between eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries with many well-preserved structures that boast charming character and detail remaining today.

A reflection of its historic significance, portions of the Main Street corridor include two Nationally Registered Historic Districts and a local historic district. The districts are referred to as the East Windsor Hill Historic District and Windsor Farms Historic District.

**Significance of Main Street**

**What is at Risk?**

Over the past eras of change and evolution of generations on Main Street, the legacy of the historic context and continuity of the physical environment has remained remarkably intact. The residents and landowners, many of whom provide a direct link to the historic legacy of the area, have been excellent stewards and caretakers of what is known to be a special place. Many things about Main Street have changed over the years, but the continuity of things that have remained the same is strong enough to bring the sense of history and heritage straight into the present. This includes a continuity of historic homes, a continuity of agricultural land, a continuity of a rural road and a continuity of sweeping views and long-horizoned vistas.

In the context of this historic significance and an aptitude for positive and unobtrusive change, why worry about Main Street at all? The answer is straightforward - the dynamics of real estate, development and the valuation of unique and scenic places continues to evolve, and well-located and easily accessed historic places, such as South Windsor’s Main Street, are becoming more attractive for redevelopment and investment. Today, the risk is simply that the community and the Town have very little control over what may change in the future and how that change will be managed.

Accordingly, the risk that is being assessed and analyzed through this study can be summarized in one fundamental question: Are the current tools in place to effectively manage and direct change to ensure that the continuity and significance of Main Street is not lost for future generations? The primary current tool in place is the underlying zoning in effect on Main Street, the A-40 Residential District. Therefore, the fundamental question being addressed is even more focused: Is the current A-40 Residential Zoning District adequate for the protection of the unique residential and agricultural community on historic Main Street?
If change is inevitable, as it has been on Main Street in the past, and if unmanaged change is a continuing risk for the community, the focus of this study has been to explore approaches for managing change in a positive manner.

Each of the approaches are discussed and detailed within the Preservation Planning Study and are approaches for the Town of South Windsor and the Main Street community to consider. The approaches under consideration are focused on options that support the best future for Main Street and the community. Ultimately, actions must be taken to operationalize these approaches, so the approaches to managing change must reflect the community’s goals and sensitivities for this unique place.

The first approach is to widely discuss, promote and support landowner opportunities involving land conservation. The conservation of land is an individual landowner’s choice and can be voluntarily pursued by individuals through several methods at any time. Individual property owners cannot be compelled to participate in such activities. The Preservation Planning Study outlines several of the methods available for land conservation and discusses the relative advantages and disadvantages for each method relative to individual property owners. The methods include deed restrictions, covenants, conservation easements, agricultural preservation easements, agricultural deed restrictions, purchase of development rights, and land trusts.

Each of the individual methods focused on land conservation, would directly address the risk for Main Street that has been identified. From a community-wide Main Street perspective this would be a benefit and allow many of the fundamental characteristics of Main Street’s physical environment and scenic character to be retained for future generations. The issues with this set of methods is that they are undertaken and performed on a property-by-property basis, dependent on successful discussion and implementation with each land owner. This approach could leave important gaps in district-wide protection against unmanaged change and could be a laborious and time-intensive process.

The second approach to consider is a more holistic and district-wide method to enhancing the tools that are currently in place to manage change. The Town of South Windsor’s Zoning Ordinance, on its most basic level is an agreed-upon tool for the management of change. Today, Main Street is mostly located within a Zoning District referred to as A-40 Residential. However, the current zoning district for A-40 Residential offers little protection for the qualities and characteristics of the physical environment that make the place unique. These are the characteristics that have been highlighted as significant including continuity of historic homes, a continuity of agricultural land, a continuity of a rural road and a continuity of sweeping views and long-horizoned vistas.

Through this Preservation Planning Study, new zoning and design guidelines for Main Street have been explored. The new zoning would use the advantages of a Village District Zone. This type of zone provides an improved zoning tool that is well-suited to the type of concerns that have been raised for Main Street and offers the ability to provide Design Guidelines for the management of change in the district. The Village District is the only type of zoning district in Connecticut that allows for the integration of Design Guidelines.

Other considerations for the management of change and the preservation of Main Street include a coordinated and incrementally implemented Streetscape Master Plan that would allow public and private investments in the street environment to reinforce and support Main Street aesthetic, functional and safety concerns. Considerations explored, but not promoted as a recommendation include the introduction of new uses on Main Street to open new economic opportunities for larger historic properties, the expansion or creation of historic districts or the introduction of tax abatements for historic properties.
Findings and Recommendations

Of the approaches outlined for consideration, based on analysis of the consultant team, open discussion with the community, a coordinated set of findings and recommendations are outlined to provide Main Street with a varied and effective set of change management tools.

Discussions with the community have made clear that the most minimal, yet effective set of tools should be pursued and that overreaching in terms of regulation or control are not a desirable outcome. The consultant team has listened to that message and believes the simple recommendations outlined below are the least amount of regulatory or controls change necessary to be comfortable with the type of land or redevelopment change that could occur in the Main Street community.

Plan A - Land Conservation

The Town of South Windsor will support residents, land owners, farmers, advocates or others to promote, coordinate, and encourage conservation of land with individual property owners interested in doing so. Land conservation is a goal that is supported by the Town and the findings of this study. If all properties on Main Street were to seek and find resolution through the variety of land conservation mechanisms available, other actions to preserve the unique character of this place would not be necessary.

However, not every property owner is interested in land conservation, and not every opportunity for conservation will be appropriately funded. Plan A is an excellent approach to accomplish the goals of preserving the unique aspects of South Windsor’s Main Street, but it is imperfect. It does not mean it should not be applied where it can be, but it will leave gaps in the ability to manage change for the district effectively.

Plan B - Main Street Zoning

In the case of an imperfect application of Plan A, Plan B provides a more holistic ability to effectively manage change for the district. The proposed Main Street Zone is based on the current A-40 Residential Zoning District, it is intended to provide the same level of development rights as currently exists on Main Street properties, and provides more refined guidance and review of future investment in the community. If a property were to find success with Plan A, Plan B would have no effect on them. If a property owner would not pursue Plan A in order to preserve the ability to develop the property in the future, Plan B would not impact their ability to develop the property in the future, it would ensure that development of the property does not adversely impact the character of Main Street. A draft of a proposed Main Street Zone is provided in this Preservation Planning Study. The zoning will need to be further discussed and considered by the community and the Town of South Windsor prior to modification of the zoning. The design guidelines associated with the new zoning could be tested for the district as voluntary guidelines prior to formal adoption of the district.

Streetscape Improvements

The character of Main Street is impacted by the characteristics of the land, development patterns and architecture, but also by the landscape characteristics and the streetscape. A set of practical landscape guidelines have been prepared to guide both private and public investment in landscape on Main Street as street trees and other plantings are desired or necessary to be replaced. The overall approach to Main Street from a streetscape perspective is to retain the rural and scenic road character, as well as the historic heritage of the street. The landscape should be native to Connecticut and specifically to the Connecticut River valley.
Action Plan

The Action Plan includes implementation items that take into account all of the findings and recommendations of the Preservation Planning Study and outline a matrix of time frames and responsibilities for Town, community, resident or other stakeholder actions associated with stewardship of Main Street for future generations.

1. Partnership and communication with Owners
The conversation that has been occurring with the Main Street community through this process and previous efforts must continue in an open and transparent manner. If no other actions are taken, open, thoughtful and proactive community communication will ensure that approaches to the management of change are matched to the sensitivities and goals of the residents and landowners in the district.

2. Facilitate and Support Land Conservation
All resources, organizations, assistance and approaches to land conservation should be communicated, promoted and supported to Main Street landowners. Particular approaches that have resulted in successful conservation for Main Street landowners should be communicated to others who may be interested in securing a similar future for their land.

3. Finalize and Promote Design Guidelines
The design guidelines that have been prepared as part of the proposed Main Street Zone can be separated from the zoning and be placed into voluntary use for projects on Main Street. While the guidelines would not be obligatory or have any authority independent of a Village District, the design guidance could promote more thoughtful investments.

4. Changes in Current Zoning
The replacement of the A-40 Residential zone with a Main Street Village Zone is a straightforward and minimal modification that can be set up to allow the exact same development rights and use restrictions, while providing additional protection for the character of Main Street through design standards that are formalized as a part of the zoning district.

5. Project Review and Approval
Regardless of other actions, if new projects are proposed on Main Street the community and Town of South Windsor should carefully review potential investments for consistency and integration with the character of the district.

6. Continued Support for Historic Preservation
In the East Windsor Hill Historic District and throughout the remainder of Main Street, the preservation of historic homes should be a priority. The community, South Windsor and advocates should support preservation efforts and work to explore alternatives when preservation is not proposed as part of a project.

7. Exploration of Tax Incentives/Abatement
As part of the support for historic preservation, the feasibility of tax incentives, tax abatements or application of historic tax credits for historic preservation and maintenance of historic properties should be considered.

8. Street and infrastructure investments
As future street and infrastructure investments become necessary on Main Street, the desire to preserve a rural and scenic road should be respected, balancing safety and a community concern for over-improvement of the street.

9. Shared community vision and support
In all future efforts, the legacy, heritage and continuity of Main Street should be considered among individual decision and should be the focus of collective actions.
View of the Wood Memorial Library

Source: The Cecil Group
South Windsor’s Main Street is recognized as an impressive historic record of Connecticut River Valley architecture and an intact historic land use pattern that have preserved a charming character that offers a glimpse into a vibrant past. In addition to the historic structures, dating from 1700 to 1857, the overall collection of long narrow lots, agricultural land and a traditional disposition toward the main road are all preserved and offer a unique opportunity to continue the legacy of this historically significant environment.

The significance of Main Street is well-known in South Windsor and preservation of this unique and historic place has been expressed as a goal for the community. Currently, a portion of the Main Street corridor is included in the East Windsor Hill Historic District. It is a benefit to the street to be listed on the State and National Historic registers to promote visibility and recognition of the historic resources, but the Historic District does not include all of Main Street and doesn’t offer specific tools for the future enhancement of the district.

In an effort to explore other tools that could assist in the preservation of Main Street, the Town of South Windsor applied for a Vibrant Communities Initiative grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and was selected due to the unique nature of the Main Street legacy and environment.

As a result of the Vibrant Communities Initiative funding, the Town of South Windsor solicited proposals to identify a consultant to assist in undertaking a preservation planning study to identify implementation actions that could be put in place to better protect and enhance the Main Street district in the future. The study included three areas of focus to explore options that could enhance the potential to preserve Main Street:

- Main Street Zoning and Design Standards
- Streetscape Concept Master Planning
- Redevelopment Feasibility Evaluations

The Town of South Windsor Planning Department has facilitated this planning study with guidance from a Steering Committee comprised of residents, land owners, design professionals and historic advocates. The professional consultant team, was led by the multidisciplinary planning and design firm, The Cecil Group, with support from FXM Associates, a real estate economist. In addition to meetings with the Town and Steering Committee, the consultant team engaged the community to better understand the issues and opportunities of the Main Street study area to help shape preservation planning strategies. This public outreach included stakeholder interviews, a community survey and three public meetings during key milestones in the planning process.
The Study Area for the Main Street Preservation Planning Study focuses on Main Street. The Study Area includes properties with frontage on Main Street generally between a northern boundary of Route 5, running south along Main Street, to a southern boundary just south of the Interstate 291 overpass. The western boundary of the Study Area is the Connecticut River and the eastern boundary is formed by Route 5 or the rear of parcels with frontage on Route 5. In total, the Study Area is approximately 4 miles in length from north to south and about one 1/2 mile in width.

The extent of the Study Area is shown on the diagram to the right. The Study Area includes approximately 932 parcels with a land area totaling approximately 3,900 acres. The average (mean) parcel area is 4.2 acres in the Study Area. The largest parcel is 194 acres. The approximate built area within the Study Area is 5.3M square feet. This is primarily in the form of residential homes, but does also include office, religious, institutional and agricultural structures. The Study Area includes many historically significant structures, but added uniqueness for the district is added through the continuity of the historic development patterns over a majority of the expansive Study Area.

In the Study Area, major landmarks or public amenities include the following, listed from north to south along Main Street:

- Old Post Office near Sullivan Avenue
- Ellsworth School (current Board of Education offices)
- First Congregational Church
- Wood Memorial Library
- Union School (owned by Historical Society)
- Post Office near Pleasant Valley
- Paradigm Health Care
Community Process

The Preservation Planning Study findings are intended to benefit the Main Street community. The recommendations and implementation actions of this Study will need the support and effort of the community to advance. Main Street residents and landowners have been the stewards of the historic legacy and will continue to be in the future. Accordingly, as part of this planning process, the Main Street community has been engaged in an open discussion that has occurred throughout this process.

The consultant team engaged local residents, landowners, Planning and Zoning Commission members and Historical Society members in stakeholder interviews over the phone and in person. The team also met regularly with the Steering Committee, coordinated a paper and online community survey and worked with and presented to the general public at (3) community workshops including presentations in April, June and September of 2015.

As part of that community process, Community members were asked to respond to the following question at the First Community Workshop, Main Street Makes Me Think Of...?

The responses were collected on the form shown to the right and were compiled to form the word cloud diagram below. The size of the word in the word cloud indicates the frequency of that word as a response to that simple question. For example larger words, like “history”, “neighborhood” and “community” were among the most frequently given responses. The word cloud is an interesting representation of what may be important to place focus upon in the management of future change.
Significance of Main Street

Since its earliest settlement, the Town of South Windsor’s Main Street has played a significant role in the commerce, culture and history of the Town. The scenic roadway is bordered by the Connecticut and Scantic Rivers and includes rich low-lying land and lush pastures which have been used for grazing livestock and growing tobacco since the early seventeenth century. Originally settled on East Windsor Hill, near the landing point of the historic cross-river connection known as Bissell’s Ferry, the settlement spread north and south along Main Street, the “highway” of that time.

The population that settled along Main Street formed a concentration of wealth and influence in the early settlement of the area. This wealth and legacy grew primarily out of origins of tobacco farmers and merchants. This historic significance is evident today and recognized through an impressive historic record of Connecticut River Valley architecture and a historic and agricultural land use pattern that has remained intact. The historic and agricultural success of Main Street has been closely linked to the Connecticut River and the fertile and productive land that has been nurtured on its riverbanks. The land is a direct link between past heritage and legacy of Main Street and the choices that are being considered by the community regarding its future.

A reflection of its agricultural heritage, Main Street is composed of long narrow parcels that have divided the land for generations to provide productive agricultural plots that include property frontage of historic, stately and eclectic homes. Many of the historic homes on Main Street were constructed between eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries with many well-preserved structures that boast charming character and detail remaining today.

A reflection of its historic significance, a portion of the Main Street corridor is a Nationally Registered Historic District, referred to as the East Windsor Hill Historic District.
**Study Area Context**

**Typical Parcel and Building Configuration**

The parcels along Main Street have historically been divided into long and narrow plots that lead from the Main Street frontage east toward Route 5 and from the Main Street frontage west toward the Connecticut River. In some locations this typical land division pattern has been modified through assembly of several of the long and narrow parcels into a larger lot or subdivision into smaller parcels near the frontage of Main Street. This pattern is illustrated in the diagram below. This parcels configuration has served the historic function and use of land along Main Street well.

The homes of the historic settlement have been placed near Main Street addressing the main access and circulation while keeping clear the long interior area of the parcels. The length of each parcel allowed for farming to occur to the rear of each of the Main Street houses. Today this configuration has been retained to a large extent intact on Main Street. A substantial portion of the district remains as undeveloped agricultural land that is taking full advantage of the fertile soils of the Connecticut River Valley. As discussed in greater detail in later sections of this study, the land configuration is also susceptible to future subdivision and redevelopment for new residential uses.

This general pattern does not apply to every parcel along Main Street, a good number of parcels on Main Street do not have these characteristics today. However, it remains a prevalent enough pattern to be a typical condition and focus of attention on Main Street. If a majority of these type of parcels were to experience change it would have a dramatic impact on the look and feel of Main Street. Similarly, a solution that helps this type of parcel to preserve its fundamental characteristics will retain much of the sense of continuity on Main Street.

- **840 Main Street**
  - Approx. **23.64** total acres
  - Approx. **16,300** SF of building area
Typical Parcel and Building Configuration

District Characteristics
Land Use

The most predominant use of land, particularly as measured by acreage, in the Study Area is agriculture. Most of the agricultural use is occurring several hundred feet to the east and west of Main street. On the west side, agricultural uses occur nearly continuously from the northern end of the Study Area to the southern end. This is both a reflection of the very fertile and productive soils that are directly adjacent to the river and the fact that other uses are made difficult by the nature of flooding and the river’s floodplain.

The second most predominant use of land, particularly in terms of occupation of Main Street frontage, in the Study Area is residential. The residential uses are disposed along Main Street and address the street frontage, sited prominently in generous front yards. The residential uses combined with agricultural uses form the vast majority of land use in the Study Area. This is clearly evident on the attached land use map as prepared for the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Other land uses within the Study Area do occur, but are mostly single parcels located by relative happenstance over the evolution of Main Street. This includes community facilities such as the Post Offices, the Wood Memorial Library, or the Union School. This type of use also includes institutional uses such as the First Congregational Church. The two other uses that occur in the Study Area include commercial use at Paradigm Health Care and utility use at the South Windsor Waste Water Treatment Plant.
Topography and Wetlands

The topography, floodplain and wetland conditions in the Study Area have several characteristics that should be noted. In respect to land conservation and preservation of the current use of land on Main Street, many of these conditions are actually benefits. As can be seen on the diagram to the right, the floodplain conditions associated with the Connecticut River extend from the river’s edge to the east nearly to Main Street. Portions of the land to the east of Main Street include wetland areas and floodplains associated with the streams and tributaries. The topography also increases east from the river toward Route 5 as the land transitions from the river’s lowlands. This condition creates some locations along Main Street parcels where drainage from Route 5 properties is occurring to the rear of deep and long Main Street properties.

Street Network

The Study Area street network is a reflection of why it has been preserved in its historic condition to the present. The location for Route 5 was first proposed along Main Street and the local community opposed that proposal. The relocation of Route 5 to the east of Main Street has isolated it from the vehicular traffic, connecting circulation and commercial activity that has developed along the highway. The Connecticut River is also a natural feature that limits street network connectivity to the west. Regional connections to Main Street include Route 5, Route 194, Route 30 and Interstate 291. Six cross connections on local streets occur between Main Street and Route 5 as depicted to the right, including:

- Sullivan Avenue
- Strong Road
- Governors Highway
- Newberry Road
- Pleasant Valley Road
- Chapel Road

One aspect relative to the street network and preservation is significant, Main Street is officially designated as a historic “Scenic Road”. This designation is associated with consideration to preserve scenic areas as open space, ensure new development and road improvements enhance the value of the district, discourage development that would block scenic views and bury utilities.
Current Zoning

The Main Street Study Area includes three underlying zoning districts. The vast majority of Main Street is located within the A-40 Residential zoning district. A small portion of the district south of the I-291 overpass is located in the Rural Residential zoning district. A small portion of the Study Area is in the A-20 Residential zoning district. Due to the substantial portion of the Study Area in the A-40 Residential zoning district, it is the focus of the current zoning review. Zoning district boundaries are shown in the illustration to the right.

The A-40 Residential zoning district includes the following categorization of Permitted Uses.

- **Permitted Uses (P):** Household pets, Horses and Ponies (3 or fewer), In-Law Apartment, Single-family Dwelling, Farms, Home Occupation (Major, Minor)
- **Special Exception Uses (SE):** Accessory Apartments, Assisted Living, Bed and Breakfast, Elderly Housing, Horses and Ponies (4 or more), Senior Residence Development, Two-family Dwelling, For Profit Educational, Non-Profit Educational, Essential Community Services, Municipal Facilities, Public Utility Buildings, Town Recreation Areas or Parks, For Profit Recreation Facilities, Religious Institutions, Farm Stands, Barns, Riding Academies
- **Blank (Not Permitted):** Multifamily Dwelling, Cemeteries, Day Care Centers, Golf Courses, Hospitals, Agriculture, Forestry, Nursery Gardening

The A-40 Residential zoning district includes the following Density and Dimensional Requirements.

- **Minimum Lot Area (SF):** 40,000
- **Minimum Frontage (FT):** 150
- **Minimum Lot Depth (FT):** 200
- **Minimum Front Yard (FT):** 50
- **Minimum Rear Yard (FT):** 50
- **Minimum Side Yard (FT):** 20
- **Maximum Stories:** 2 1/2
- **Maximum Height (FT):** 30
- **Maximum Lot Coverage:** 15%
- **Impervious Coverage:** no maximum listed

Historic Districts

The only Historic District in the Town of South Windsor is the East Windsor Hill Historic District. The district is located within the Study Area with portions including the northern section of Main Street extending south to about Oxbow Lane and a portion land on the Connecticut River at the end of Ferry Lane. This includes some of the earliest settlements and historic homes of Main Street. The Historic District is listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places and is a Local Historic District. It includes (39) historic homes on the National Register and (56) historic homes in the Local Historic District with structures dating from 1694 to 1941. No single architectural style is representative of the historic homes in the district, but instead it is an eclectic mix of colonial, Greek revival, Georgian and federal architectural styles.

A second district, the Windsor Farms Historic District, exists south of the East Windsor Hill Historic District. It has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1986 and includes approximately 2 1/2 square miles of area on the east bank of the Connecticut River centered on Main Street.

The National and State Registers provide recognition and limited protection from Federal or State funded activity including additional review of projects that may impact the district and potential prevention of unreasonable destruction. The Local Historic District provides the ability for the Historic District Commission to review construction and demolition of structures and review alteration of architectural features in the district.

The Town also has a Demolition Delay ordinance to which historic properties may be subject.
Zoning Regulatory Framework - Zoning
Architectural Heritage

The historic architecture on Main Street is significant. The architectural styles are varied, but each home reflects a relatively formal placement of the homes on the land in a manner that addresses Main Street. As can be seen in photographs of Main Street buildings, as taken from Main Street, the front doors or each of the structures address the street. Significant homes include the John Watson House, Jonathan Cogswell House, and Ebenezer Grant House. In addition to the residential structures, several other structures have historic significance including the Ellsworth School, First Congregational Church, Old Post Office, Wood Memorial Library and Union School.

Preservation of the architecture is an important aspect of maintaining the character of Main Street. Equally as important is ensuring that new investment or development contributes to the Main Street environment by providing simple and varied building forms that address the street and frame a front yard with active use of lands for agricultural purposes at the rear of properties.

The images below reflect the diversity of architectural styles and influences that are part of the historic heritage of Main Street.

Source: Historic Buildings of Connecticut
Community Context

Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)

The Town of South Windsor updated its Plan of Conservation and Development in 2013. As part of that town-wide community planning process, Main Street was a topic that was addressed and several important considerations highlighted in the POCD document are worth highlighting in the context of this study.

In regard to community character, the POCD states the following Goals:

- We actively preserve and enhance landscapes and traditions that remind us of our heritage.
- New development continues to fit with our character.

In regard to community character, the POCD identifies the following Strategies:

- Encourage the preservation of scenic resources. (It should be noted that Main Street is the only locally-designated “Scenic Road” in South Windsor)
- Preserve historic buildings, structures and landscapes
- Preserve the character of Main Street
- Maintain a high design standard for new development

Under a discussion of the strategy, “Preserve the Character of Main Street”, in the POCD, the risk for Main Street is framed as follows: “Residents and local officials have expressed concern that farmland, which contributes to the local economy and provides scenic landscapes, could eventually be developed. Development of flat open fields and farmland would have the greatest impact on Main Street’s character.”

The POCD commentary continues to discuss protection against this risk: “Most of Main Street is designated as a National Historic District, but only a very small section is a Local Historic District. A National Designation does not afford much protection, leaving most of the historic assets on Main Street vulnerable.

As part of the POCD, build-out analyses were performed to estimate the amount of and possible pattern of future residential development in residentially-zoned areas on Main Street. This includes nearly all portions of Main Street that fall within the A-40 Residential zone. The conclusions of this study, included as a diagram to the right, showed that under current zoning, over 250 new housing units might be possible.

In order to manage the risk identified for Main Street, the Plan of Conservation and Development suggested four basic approaches to address the future of Main Street. These approaches are summarized below along with the percentage of residents that agreed with each strategy according to the 2012 Community Survey:

- Do nothing to change the current zoning requirements and depend on property owners and market forces to determine the disposition of future development (approx. 33%)
- Reduce the allowable density to increase the amount of open space that would be conserved and reduce the number of houses that could be built (approx. 11%)
- Allow the same number of houses under current zoning, but require houses to be clustered to preserve scenic areas (approx. 8%)
- Purchase the land (approx. 7%) or development rights (approx. 28%) to prevent residential development if the owner wishes to sell the land or rights.

Based on the POCD process and analysis, the document states that two assumptions can be made. First, residents are sensitive to possible impacts to land owners if zoning is changed to substantially reduce the development potential on their property. Second, residents do not want to lose the open, agrarian landscape that
characterizes most of Main Street. The POCD continues and identifies that the most equitable way to preserve land is to compensate landowners and suggests the Town might set up a funding source so that the Town can act quickly to purchase development rights.

The POCD suggest that the creation of rear lots should continue to only be allowed by Special Exception as is currently required in the Zoning regulations. The POCD also identified two additional preservation tools that could be evaluated for Main Street including extension of the Local Historic District and adoption of a Village District.

The POCD identifies agriculture as a viable component of the local economy and local source of food. Agricultural strategies listed include maintaining open communication with farmers, adopting provisions that protect the right to farm, supporting and expanding the market for locally-grown products and continue to preserve farmland. The POCD identifies the South Windsor Agricultural Land Preservation Committee (SWALPAC) to spearhead farmland preservation efforts and supporting the agricultural community. They can play a lead role in implementing many of the strategies outlined.
Other Previous Studies/Relevant Documents

Many previous reports and documents are available and relevant to the Study Area and were reviewed as part of this process. The most significant resources include the:

- Zoning Regulations (2014)
- Subdivision Regulations (2012)
- Walk and Wheel Ways Master Plan (2010)
- Inland Wetland/Watercourse and Conservation Regulations (2000)
- Historic Resources Survey of Main Street (2007)
- *A Country Mile* by Doris Burgdorf
- National Register of Historic Places Nomination
- *The History of Ancient Windsor* by Janice Cunningham
- *A Thousand Years at Podunk* by Barney Daley
- *God's Acre* by Barney Daley
- *Tobacco Parish* by Barney Daley

Community Survey (2012)

As part of the Plan of Conservation and Development process in 2012, a community survey was performed. The survey showed a strong support for preserving Main Street’s character, with 77% indicating that it is important that the character of Main Street is preserved.

Community Survey (2015)

As part of this 2015 Preservation Planning Study, at request of the community at the second community meeting, a community survey was created to gather feedback on specific approaches to change management on Main Street. The community survey was created by The Cecil Group with the intention of getting direct feedback on specific zoning modifications under consideration. The survey was available online from the middle of August to the beginning of September and available as paper copies at the Main Street Post Offices and the Town libraries.

A total 76 survey responses were received. No demographic or other identifying information was collected from the respondents.

The survey was introduced with the following statement:

*In order to protect and preserve the unique historic environment of South Windsor’s Main Street, a new Village District Zone is being considered. The Village District Zone would replace the existing A-40 zone currently in place on Main Street and would use its characteristics as a starting point for the new zoning. The major difference between the A-40 zone and a new Village District Zone is the ability to create design guidelines that are part of the zoning district. The survey below outlines the potential components of the Main Street Village District Zone and Design Guidelines and asks if you agree or disagree with the statements that would comprise the new district zone. Also, please add your own comments if needed. Additional Information is available at the Town’s webpage for the project: http://www.southwindsor.org/main-street-preservation-planning-study.*

A full summary of all survey responses, along with all comments received is available at the project webpage. The responses to the survey are included in this report as part of the next section “Preservation Planning” to illustrate the community’s feedback and to show how options that have been explored are being reconsidered based on the discussion with the community. It should also be noted that many comments were also received as part of the survey forms. The comments would best be summarized as generally negative in tone, but across such a spectrum of issues and positions that discerning a clear consensus or community-based direction from the collection of statements is difficult.
View of the Main Street agricultural setting

Source: The Cecil Group
3 PRESERVATION PLANNING
What is at Risk?

Over the past eras of change and evolution of generations on Main Street, the legacy of the historic context and continuity of the physical environment has remained remarkably intact. The residents and landowners, many of whom provide a direct link to the historic legacy of the area, have been excellent stewards and caretakers of what is known to be a special place. Many things about Main Street have changed over the years, but the continuity of things that have remained the same is strong enough to bring the sense of history and heritage straight into the present. This includes a continuity of historic homes, a continuity of agricultural land, a continuity of a rural road and a continuity of sweeping views and long-horizoned vistas.

In the context of this historic significance and an aptitude for positive and unobtrusive change, why worry about Main Street at all? The answer is straightforward - the dynamics of real estate, development and the valuation of unique and scenic places continues to evolve, and well-located and easily accessed historic places, such as South Windsor’s Main Street, are becoming more attractive for redevelopment and investment. Today, the risk is simply that the community and the Town have very little control over what may change in the future and how that change will be managed.

Accordingly, the risk that is being assessed and analyzed through this study can be summarized in one fundamental question: **Are the current tools in place to effectively manage and direct change to ensure that the continuity and significance of Main Street is not lost for future generations?** The primary current tool in place is the underlying zoning in effect on Main Street, the A-40 Residential District. Therefore, the fundamental question being addressed is even more focused: **Is the current A-40 Residential Zoning District adequate for the protection of the unique residential and agricultural community on historic Main Street?**

Exploration of the risk of change has been explored on a typical parcel on Main Street as highlighted to the right. This parcel has been selected for the purpose of creating hypothetical diagrams to illustrate what is currently possible for residential development under the current A-40 Residential zoning district. The typical parcel is representative of similar redevelopment opportunities for a substantial portion of land on the east side of Main Street as illustrated in yellow below. Most of that land area today is occupied by agricultural uses.
Existing Condition: Parcel A (rendering)

Potential for Change and Redevelopment

Detailed Discussion of Issues and Solutions
If the long and narrow parcels that have been discussed as a typical parcel configuration for Main Street, were subdivided and redeveloped for residential uses. The results may look like the upper diagram shown on the page to the right. If that pattern were to be repeated or expanded to adjacent parcels of a similar configuration the interior of the properties could be converted from agricultural uses to residential uses. This is all possible under the current A-40 zoning. The parcel areas, dimensions and residential homes shown would all comply with the existing dimensional requirements of the A-40 zoning. The impact of this hypothetical redevelopment on views from Main Street are shown on the two illustrations below. The top diagram shows the current view corridors between homes that have vistas back to open fields and barns. The bottom view shows a potential residence impeding that view if developed.
Potential Development: Parcel A (rendering)
+/- (20) 40,000 SF Single-family Lots
Preservation Choices

The goals of the community are clearly established with a focus on the preservation of the character of Main Street. Several overall approaches for preservation are available to the community including community stewardship, land conservation, preservation, zoning and other regulations and economic development and investment. As part of each overall approach, several more detailed strategies are outlined as potential preservation choices. Each of the choices were discussed as part of this process and considered for the preservation of Main Street. The approaches are not mutually exclusive and several could be pursued as a collection of complimentary preservation strategies.

A comprehensive list of the choices explored is presented in this section. Through discussion with the community, the Steering Committee and the Town of South Windsor the comprehensive list of choices has been narrowed to the Findings and Recommendations of the following section. Ultimately, actions must be taken to operationalize these approaches, so the approaches to managing change must reflect the community’s goals and sensitivities for this unique place.

Community Stewardship

A reasonable starting point for the continued care of any significant district or environment is stewardship for that place by the community. The presence of a desire and willingness to steward the care of a place is a prerequisite for many of the other strategies. As evident by the passion and active involvement of the Main Street community, the dedication to stewardship is present.

In fact, throughout many of the community conversations, a recurring theme has been the proven ability of Main Street residents and landowners to take care of the street on their own and to know, respect and cultivate the heritage that they are all a part. Main Street residents view themselves as the present caretakers of the legacy of the place and look to pass that legacy on to future generations. In light of this strong community stewardship, many in the community advocate for relying on the strength of this self-governance for future preservation and to do nothing more from a formal or district-wide perspective.

From the perspective of this study, the strong presence of community stewardship and advocacy should be applauded and strongly supported. It is the starting point for the care of Main Street. However, that stewardship is not complemented by much today in terms of meaningful assistance or tools and leaves much to potentially be determined by market forces to determine disposition of future development.

Land Conservation

The next approach is to widely discuss, promote and support landowner opportunities involving land conservation. The conservation of land is an individual landowner’s choice and can be voluntarily pursued by individuals through several methods at any time. Individual property owners cannot be compelled to participate in such activities, but the with the expressed desires of the community, many property owners are interested in voluntarily exploring this solution. The Preservation Planning Study outlines several of the methods available for land conservation and discusses the relative advantages and disadvantages for each method relative to individual property owners. The methods include deed restrictions, covenants, conservation easements, agricultural preservation easements, agricultural deed restrictions, purchase of development rights, and land trusts.

• **Deed restrictions, covenants and easements** - This approach can be applied by landowners through legal amendments to deeds or the creation of legal restrictions on the future use or modification of property. Conservation restrictions can be placed on land to preserve things like view sheds. Easements can allow continued use of land within a restricted set of uses that can be recorded on the property deed at the Registry of Deeds and that would exist in perpetuity.
Some advantages of this approach include future owners bound by a deed restriction, conservation easements may qualify for tax reductions, a tool that can be applied to both buildings and land. Some disadvantages of this approach include the need to monitor the deed restriction over time and that simple deed restrictions may come at risk by challenge on transfer.

- **Agricultural preservation easements** - Similarly, an agricultural preservation easement could be placed on a property to specifically restrict a use of the land or a portion of the land for agricultural use. This restriction would be recorded on the property deed at the Registry of Deeds and would exist in perpetuity. Advantages of this approach include preservation of land for agricultural uses and preservation of character of Main Street. Disadvantages of this approach include a voluntary action by a landowner that is not likely to be monetarily compensated and a restriction to agricultural land even if agricultural use become infeasible in the future.

- **Purchase land** - Purchase of land or portions of agricultural land is a possible land conservation approach that could be facilitated through organizations such as the South Windsor Agricultural Preservation Advisory Committee (SWALPAC). An organization or entity would purchase the land for the purpose of preserving the agricultural use of the land as described above as an Agricultural Preservation Easement. Advantages include that an open space funding mechanism is already in place for an organization such as SWALPAC and the desire for such actions is present. The disadvantages are that it depends on sufficient funding to purchase and protect properties and prioritizing funding for such purposes is sometimes difficult. It is also an approach to conservation that is limited to preservation of farmland, not other components of Main Street.

- **Purchase of development rights** - Purchase development rights of land or portions of agricultural land that could be implemented through organizations such as the South Windsor Agricultural Preservation Advisory Committee (SWALPAC). Advantages include that the pressure of development would be alleviated in locations in which the purchase of rights occurs, preserving the ability to use land for agricultural purposes. The advantage over purchasing the land is that the ownership, maintenance and responsibility for the land remains with the land owner. The disadvantages, similar to land purchase, are that it depends on sufficient funding to purchase and protect properties and an owner’s willingness to sell.

- **Land trust** - The land desired for conservation could be placed in a land trust by the landowner. Several land trusts exists that would be relevant to Main Street including the South Windsor Land Conservation Trust, Inc. and the Connecticut Farmland Trust, other land trusts may be available or could be established. The land trusts can accept donations of land or conservation easements or can fund purchase agreements with landowners. Other transfer mechanisms may include the option to purchase or the right of first refusal. Advantages include placing the land in a trust to oversee it use and preserve it as an agricultural or open space asset. The disadvantages include potential limitations due to the funding available for purchase of land.

This approach could leave important gaps in district-wide protection against unmanaged change and could be a laborious and time-intensive process. From a community-wide Main Street perspective this would be a benefit and allow many of the fundamental characteristics of Main Street’s physical environment and scenic character to be retained for future generations. The issues with this set of methods is that they are undertaken and performed on a property-by-property basis, dependent on successful discussion and implementation with each land owner.
Preservation

Several strategies that focus more on the preservation of historic structures are available to provide a complement to the land conservation approaches for Main Street. Since preservation of the historic assets of Main Street has been a priority expressed by the community, several direct preservation tools would have applicability and relevance to the district.

- Historic preservation commission - A local historic district, the East Windsor Hill Historic District is already present on Main Street. The local historic district is associated with the Historic District Commission and is one of the best and strongest tools available for the preservation of historic structures and resources. It provides the ability to protect properties listed as part of the district and perform project review for alterations and improvements based on a set of design standards. The advantage is that it promotes thoughtful preservation and reuse of historic assets. The disadvantage is that it creates an additional level of review and scrutiny of projects that may require additional time or resources for owners desiring to invest in their property.

- Deed restrictions, covenants and easements - This approach can be applied by landowners through legal amendments to deeds or the creation of legal restrictions on the future use or modification of historic structures. Easements on the exterior of buildings, facade easements, can be used to protect historical and architectural character. Easements can allow continued use of land within a restricted set of uses that can be recorded on the property deed at the Registry of Deeds and that would exist in perpetuity. Some advantages of this approach include future owners bound by a deed restriction, conservation easements may qualify for tax reductions, a tool that can be applied to both buildings and land. Some disadvantages of this approach include the need to monitor the deed restriction over time and that simple deed restrictions may come at risk by challenge on transfer.

- Historic home tax credit - A local historic district provides an opportunity for the application of historic tax credits for owner-occupiers of homes who complete rehabilitation of a property to historic standards. The advantages are providing an incentive for improvement or relief from required construction costs. The disadvantage is that the application and pursuit of the tax credit would require additional effort to achieve, certain restrictions may apply and it is the owners decision as to whether to pursue improvements or the tax credit.

- State and Federal historic tax credits - Additionally, a local historic district provides an opportunity for State and Federal historic tax credits. The State offers up to 25% tax credit on eligible costs and 30% tax credit for a project with affordable housing. The Federal tax credit offers up to 20% of eligible costs. The advantages are that the tax credits are providing another potential incentive for improvement or relief from required construction costs. The disadvantages are that the tax credits are only available for income-producing properties, that they will not cover the full cost of the improvements, and that restrictions on the methods and extent of restoration or rehabilitation will apply. Additionally, the historic tax credits are competitive and subject to annual funding limitations.

- Grants and loans - Grants and loans specifically targeted to assist historic preservation projects are available from resources, such as the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. The assistance is usually provided in the form of bridge loans and grants designed to help close the gap that may exist in feasibility for preservation projects. The advantages are that it is another source of potential incentive for improvement or relief from required construction costs. The disadvantages include that they are competitive and subject to annual funding limitations and available to nonprofit or for-profit developers, but not to individual homeowners.
• **Tax abatements** - The preservation and maintenance of historic homes and properties comes at a higher cost relative to more contemporary homes. Additionally, the historic homes tend to be larger than contemporary homes. Both facts result in property taxes that place an additional burden on homeowners and the ability to maintain or improve properties. In such circumstances, where preservation is desirable the municipality can either reduce or abate the property tax based on historic significance or some other qualifying factor. The advantage would be to reduce homeowner costs and improve the likelihood that historic homes will be preserved and cared for. The disadvantage would be the reduction of municipal property taxes and how to create a fair and equitable qualification for application across the municipality.

**Zoning or Other Regulations**

The next set of strategies to consider is a more holistic and district--wide approach to enhancing the tools that are currently in place to manage change. The Town of South Windsor’s Zoning Ordinance, on its most basic level is an agreed-upon tool for the management of change. Today, Main Street is mostly located within a Zoning District referred to as A-40 Residential. However, the current zoning district for A-40 Residential offers little protection for the qualities and characteristics of the physical environment that make the Main Street unique. These are the characteristics that have been highlighted as significant including continuity of historic homes, a continuity of agricultural land, a continuity of a rural road and a continuity of sweeping views and long-horizoned vistas. The following regulatory approaches may have applicability and relevance to the district.

• **Revisions to A-40 Residential Zoning** - As part of this process, a review of the current zoning has been performed as well as a review of the past Zoning Board of Appeal applications that have included request for a variance or exception (133 applications since 1959 out of a total of 2,642 applications). Based on that review and comparison of the dimensional regulations relative to parcel patterns on Main Street, A-40 appears relatively well-matched to the district with its current requirements. Advantages to modifying A-40 would be a simplicity to making zoning amendments and correction of any discrepancies that exist. The disadvantage is being limited as to the range of possible regulatory considerations by this standard zoning district.

• **Reduce the allowable density to increase the amount of open space** - Similar to the objective of land conservation on a voluntary basis, the zoning characteristics could be modified to obligate conservation of land. One such modification would be to increase the required minimum lot size from 40,000 square feet as exists today. This would result in more open space preserved with each new house that is built. It would also decrease the number of houses that could be built in the future in the district. One consideration voiced strongly from the community is to not reduce the existing development rights of the properties on Main Street. That is the main disadvantage of this type of approach.

• **Allow the same amount of density, but cluster housing** - Another approach to retaining open space in the Main Street district is to allow the same amount of development density, but to create additional guidance as to where the development could be placed. Generally, clustering development in locations that will have less impact on the character of Main Street and preserving areas with the most impact on Main Street as open space or agricultural land. This approach is similar to the Open Space Subdivision Regulation currently in place in the South Windsor Zoning Regulations.

• **Zoning overlay district** - A zoning overlay district could be created to identify additional requirements for properties that meet certain characteristics or to add additional open space or preservation language. Overlay districts are already in use in the South Windsor Zoning Regulations. The disadvantage of
the overlay district is that the underlying zoning would remain intact leaving the risks associated with that underlying zone in place in the future.

- **Village District zoning** - Through this Preservation Planning Study a Village District Zone for Main Street has been explored. The new Village District Zone offers an improved zoning tool that is well-suited to the type of concerns that have been raised for Main Street and offers additional tools, such as Design Guidelines, for the management of change that are not currently available to the district. The Village District is the only type of zoning district in Connecticut that allows the integration of Design Guidelines as part of zoning. The zone could be set up to retain the same characteristics of A-40 and retain the same development rights. The disadvantages of this type of zoning would be the requirement of the creation of a new zoning district and the creation of a new level of review and oversight that may be undesirable to some owners.

- **Historic Districts** - Another useful approach to preservation and review of change in the Main Street district would be the extension of the local historic district that already exists in the Study Area. The East Windsor Hill Historic District could be expanded to include more of Main Street south to about the I-291 overpass. This would allow the Historic District Commission and Historic District Guidelines to apply to the review of proposed physical changes to the exterior of buildings in the Study Area visible from a public way. The advantage is that it provides the strongest form of preservation and review of projects for historic buildings and is a proven tool to protect community history and culture. The disadvantages include that the guidelines and review can be viewed as costly or time consuming and individual property owners would need to agree to create the district.

- Prepare design guidelines for Main Street - A final consideration within the other regulations category is to consider the preparation of design guidelines for Main Street independent of any other regulatory change. This would create a framework for discussion and community stewardship as the opportunities for changes develop in the future. The advantage would be the ability to create a common vision and guidance document for how Main Street should evolve over time. The disadvantage is that the guidelines would be completely voluntary and without authority if they are not associated with a legal mechanism such as the Village District zone.

### Economic Development and Investment

In addition to the conservation, preservation and regulatory considerations explored. Opportunities for continued support and maintenance of property on Main Street were explored through considering the economic development potential. This included a general assessment of the market conditions around South Windsor to understand the potential market considerations for adaptive reuse of historic properties. The full Market Report can be found as part of the Appendix.

As many of the other considerations explored in this section, these ideas were analyzed for feasibility, but are not promoted as a recommendation at this time based on review and discussion with the Steering Committee and Main Street community.

- **Adaptive reuse** - Many of the older homes on Main Street are quite large and require more investment for general maintenance and upkeep as compared to contemporary homes with modern materials and more modest building footprints. The maintenance and preservation of such large homes may become too much for an individual homeowner to bear in the future resulting in homes potentially slipping into disrepair.

One economic development possibility is the exploration of new uses that would provide greater financial support for the buildings while having the least negative impact on the district. The most likely and feasible from a market perspective is allowing multifamily conversion and use of larger
historic homes. If a large home is converted to 4-6 apartments, the conversion can support renovation and upkeep of the property. The market assessment shows that asking rents possible for such units could be an economically viable alternative. A historic building may also be productively converted for use as an home or professional office space with minimal exterior impact.

This type of reuse could also be integrated into the existing building with little to no impact on the exterior preservation of the structure, for example, the Watson House could accommodate this type of conversion. Encouraging this type of solution for Main Street was not seen as desirable based on community discussions, so it is not promoted as a recommendation. If the economic dynamics on Main Street were to present an issue in the future, this may be a long term solution and alternative to the destruction of historic properties.

**New use options** - More generally opening new use options along Main Street were considered both in terms of economic feasibility and impact on the district. The introduction of new uses, commercial, retail, light industrial or others, could harm the character and conditions of Main Street that are seeking active preservation. It is not recommended new permitted uses be introduced through modifications to zoning or future project approvals.
View of the Main Street streetscape conditions
Source: The Cecil Group
STREETScape Planning
Streetscape Issues

Purpose
An important aspect of the character of Main Street is formed by the characteristics and conditions of the public realm. The maintenance of public roads, lighting, utilities and landscape occurs as needs arise. One approach to proactively managing investments and directing the addressing of needs is to create a Streetscape Master Plan. Change along the Main street public right-of-way has occurred and will continue to occur. This process has provided an important forum for streetscape issues to be raised, option and ideas to be considered and to set a general direction for how future municipal investments and improvements are applied to Main Street.

Circulation Issues
The following circulation issues were identified as part of the streetscape analysis of existing conditions on Main Street.

• **Variable roadway width** - the existing roadway conditions vary in width from between 28’ to 34’. Either width is generous for Main Street which includes one 11’ travel lane in each direction and a modest shoulder on each side.

• **Missing striping** - aside from a double-yellow center line, no other lane markings (such as outside lane markings) exist on Main Street. This is a reflection of the rural character of the road, but may also present road safety issues for multi-modal road users that may not perceive travel lane widths.

• **Multi-modal roadway use** - all modes of transportation use the paved surface of the roadway including pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders and vehicles. No other continuous or parallel paths exist for use by pedestrians or cyclists.

• **Large right-of-way** - in addition to the paved areas, the public right-of-way from the roadway center line extends 50’ on either side for a total of 100’. While not practical or available in many locations, a wide public right-of-way offers flexibility for potential future improvements.

Landscape Issues
The following landscape issues were identified as part of the landscape analysis of existing conditions on Main Street.

• **Aging Street Trees** - the Main Street context includes many mature and well-defined street trees, portions of a well-developed street tree canopy and the character of a heritage street landscape. As such, it also includes many aging street trees that are healthy for the most part, but are susceptible to limb failures and other structural issues. A proactive maintenance and tree replacement program would enhance Main Street and prevent major street tree issues.

• **Utility Conflicts** - one particular area of concern with aging trees on Main Street is potential conflicts with the utility lines and poles on the west side of Main Street. Several locations exist where existing trees require pruning or maintenance to remove overhanging limbs or other potential issues with utility lines.

Amenity Issues
Overall the amenities on Main Street are limited, but also are appropriate to the rural character and use of the roadway. The following issues with amenities have been identified as part of the existing conditions analysis on Main Street. Three areas of concern have been identified through this process as amenity considerations.
• **Lighting** - Lighting on Main Street is relatively utilitarian and includes cobra head street light fixtures that are attached to utility poles along the west side of Main Street. Town-wide, South Windsor is considering conversion to LED street light fixtures. This type of conversion should be considered in context of the character of Main Street and the desired goals for the street environment.

• **Bus stops** - Several bus stops do exist along Main Street and are currently marked by a simple sign. Certain bus stop locations may provide an opportunity to create a seating, lighting or sheltering amenity that can contribute to the overall character of Main Street.

• **Street parking** - Several locations along Main Street have included on-street parking for the Post Offices, churches, or library. The areas of parking have occurred relatively informally and result in dirt patches or worn grass. One consideration may be to provide a simple on-street parking treatment at areas where needed to integrate parking into the surrounding landscape and to add pockets of additional paving for that purpose.

• **Detached path** - A detached path exists on the west side of Main Street at the northern end of the Study Area, in the Historic District. The existing path is in general disrepair and may pose safety issues for path users. The detached path should be improved for safety purposes, potential expansion of a path is discussed as part of the circulation choices.
Streetscape Ideas

Circulation Choices

• **Improve current roadway conditions** - maintain the roadway in its current condition, but improve safety through simple improvement to roadway width, striping and regularized on-street parking

• **On-street multi-modal improvements** - improve the safety and convenience of multi-modal street use by widening shoulders and adding dedicated bike lanes that can be used by roadway cyclists and provide additional space for pedestrians using the roadway

• **New detached pathway** - improve the safety and convenience of multi-modal travel on Main Street by providing a shared-use path that is detached from the roadway and integrated with a landscape buffer. The new shared-use path would be best integrated on the west side of the street and coordinated with public utility locations.

Landscape Choices

• **Opportunistic tree and shrub infill** - infill vegetation strategically in areas where trees have recently died or are very mature. This approach is appropriate adjacent to open farmlands and existing wooded areas. Trees should be a mix of native species.

• **Continuous canopy** - infill with trees spaced in a consistent pattern. This approach is appropriate adjacent to residential areas. Trees can be a singular species or a coordinated mix of several species.

• **Heritage landscape preservation and restoration** - reinforce a heritage landscape of native tree species that restore the Connecticut River valley to a more natural state over time.

• **Underground utilities** - the placement of utilities below grade would benefit both the character of Main Street, but also reduce the potential for landscape conflicts. While a costly undertaking, future utility improvements should consider this option if associated with other work.
Amenities Choices

- **Street lighting** - the existing street lighting conditions are visible in the image to the right with a cobra head street light attached to an existing utility pole on the west side of Main Street. Street lighting is becoming more energy efficient with a Town-wide conversion to LED fixtures. This provides an opportunity to consider the approach to street lighting on Main Street. A simple approach to lighting for safety that is unobtrusive and generally unnoticed is likely the best approach to lighting for Main Street.

- **Fencing and guardrails** - fencing or walls should be used where appropriate to demarcate property boundaries or the edges of fields. Guardrails and fences used should be of a traditional character that blends in with the surrounding Main Street context. Metal guardrails should be avoided wherever possible.

- **Mile markers** - markers made of stone or other appropriate materials can serve as beacons in the landscape to highlight historically significant information, driveway entries, or way-finding information, this subtle feature of the landscape should be used where it may have utility.

- **Bus stops** - seating areas for bus stops should be included occasionally where appropriate, paving material and bench should fit the pastoral context of the area and contribute to the Main Street character. It also adds an opportunity for lighting.

Diagrams below are associated with the circulation, landscape and amenities choices. The existing roadway conditions are depicted on the top image. The addition of a simple multi-use path on the west side of the road are shown with fence and landscape improvements in the middle diagram. The bottom diagram shows underground utilities and added landscape improvements.
Streetscape Conclusions

Considering the range of choices for streetscape improvements to Main Street and the discussions with the Main Street community and Steering Committee, the streetscape recommendations and conclusions have been kept simple and relatively minimal to retain the rural and scenic character of the roadway.

Circulation

The majority of the community believe the use of the roadway and circulation for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles function appropriately for level of use needed. A modest improvement to the delineation of circulation on the roadway would be striping the fog line, the outside lane line of the roadway as depicted below. Striping the fog line improves safety of the roadway, has a minimal impact on the character of the roadway and allows vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians to better share the road.

Striping the outside of the lane line would not require a change in the roadway paving and would provide guidance for keeping the roadway a more consistent width in future resurfacing improvements. It would also address an incremental erosion that is occurring with vehicular travel over the edge of the roadway on the unstriped shoulder, which then results in additional paving over time.

Another simple circulation improvement could provide both a landscape opportunity and a safety enhancement at the north end of Main Street where it dead ends into Sullivan Avenue. As evident by the worn shoulder of Main Street, many vehicles get to this point and turn around, not realizing it was a dead-end to the street. At night, this may present a safety issue. A small center of the roadway landscape island could be used to alert
driver’s to the dead-end and reinforce the turn-around movement that is prevalent in that location. A diagram of this type of improvement is shown below.

**Landscape**

Consistent with the modest and minimal circulation conclusions, the landscape recommendations are also modest and incremental. The approach should be opportunistic throughout the district and avoid any district-wide planting program. Landscape improvements will be made property-by-property as they have been for generations. However, each landscape improvement should follow a simple set of guidelines that will reinforce the heritage Connecticut River environment.

Planting should reinforce a balance in diversity of tree species. Planting should proactively replace roadside trees as they age and conditions degrade. The number of trees with branches in or above utility wires should be decreased over time. In locations near utilities, street trees with a high top canopy and thin branch should be selected for growth over the utility lines. For growth under, low mature height shrubs should be selected. To minimize street tree maintenance, the optimal distance between a tree and a utility pole should exceed the tree’s maximum mature height. The number of trees advanced through their natural life cycle and at increased risk of structural failure should decrease over time. Invasive species (such as Norway Maples) should be replaced over time.

The following planting guidelines are appropriate for Main Street and would reinforce the landscape character of the street environment. The following list includes native species that have short mature heights that would be appropriate planted near utilities: Common Serviceberry, Allegheny Serviceberry, American Hornbeam, Eastern Redbud, Flowering Dogwood, American Smoketree, Hawthorn Hybrids, American Holly, Long Stalk Holly, Sweetbay Magnolia, Hophornbeam, Sourwood, American Red Plum, Pussy Willow and Arborvitae.

The following list includes native species shrubs with short mature heights that would be appropriate planted under utilities: Canadian Serviceberry, Red Chokeberry, Black Chokeberry, Carolina Allspice, White Fringetree, Alternate-leaved Dogwood, American Hazelnut, Witchhazel, Winterberry, Beach Plum, Winged Sumac, Smooth Sumac, Arrowwood, Nannyberry, Withe-rod, Blackhaw Viburnum, Cranberry Viburnum.

The following list includes native species for full street trees away from utilities: White Oak, Charter Oak, Liberty Elm, American Elm, Silver Maple, Red Maple, American Beech.
Plant list resources include the “Connecticut Native Tree and Shrub Availability List” by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and the “Right Tree, Right Place Standards” by Glenn Dreyer and Jeff Ward, for placement of plantings near utilities.

Where a landscape features would reduce the impact of erosion or correct an overly steep lawn area, that feature should be integrated with the character of the surrounding landscape and property features. For example, a stone wall may help resolve some issues with erosion in a front yard and reinforce the character of the district.

Amenities

Finally, remaining consistent with the simple and minimal approach to streetscape in keeping with the rural character of Main Street, the approach to amenities on Main Street is also relatively modest. Where the needed for individual improvements or needs of a particular property, amenities near the street should be contributing to the overall character of a scenic and rural roadway.

One approach that could be applied more consistently across the district is on-street parking. In areas of Main Street where additional parking is necessary for events or use of a property, a more formal integration of on-street parking and landscape features should be explored to provide a better definition of appropriate parking areas and to enhance the maintenance of landscape areas.
Detailed Discussion of Issues and Solutions

Existing Condition

Potential Issue

Proposed Solution

ISSUE – Unstriped shoulder

ISSUE – Shoulder erodes over time

ISSUE – Eroded areas are sometimes paved

Streetscape to Reinforce Character

 Issue: Evolution of roadway variation
View of the Main Street agricultural setting

Source: The Cecil Group
MAIN STREET PRESERVATION PLANNING STUDY

5 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Plan A and Plan B

In light of the ongoing community discussions and discourse, it appears that at least two options need to be pursued to ensure effective management of change on Main Street. The legacy of Main Street is strong and the presence of that legacy has been strongly felt through this process. That strength lies in the heritage of families, the properties and liberties that follow their origins back to the settlement of Main Street. Those dynamics come together and show a clear community preference for preservation of Main Street through the individual choices and decisions of residents and land owners.

In this context, land conservation as a choice of individual land owners is the primary option, Plan A in terms of its alignment with the desired and expressed balance between the protection of Main Street and the protection of property rights and value. The opportunities for land conservation through options such as land trusts and purchasing of development rights should be Plan A for Main Street. It is the first option, and most everyone agrees it is how it should be done. The findings of this study also agree with that approach. However, the findings of this study also show that approach is not reliable and will leave Main Street vulnerable to undesirable change in the future.

It is for that reason that a Plan B is also recommended. Plan B is focused on the introduction of design guidelines for Main Street that will provide an additional level of protection for Main Street. Even when faced with a clearly defined risk, the community has clearly been resistant to any modification to existing regulations that would result in decreasing development opportunity that may impact the value of property. Therefore, Plan B is a balance between allowing what could occur as-of-right with zoning today, with new guidelines that detail how that development should integrate with the heritage of Main Street.

Plan A - Conservation

It is not an exaggeration to state that every member of the Main Street community that is interested in preserving their land should either begin or continue to have conversations about protecting and conserving their land, particularly the portions of land that are actively farmed. If Plan A, the conservation of land by individual landowners, is successful, Plan B would remain largely unused. That would be ideal for the future preservation of Main Street.

Plan B, a new Main Street Zone, is both focused on the interim time period between initiating conservation discussion and implementing it and the possibility that not all who seek conservation of land will be successful. Plan A is focused on the conservation of land, such as the typical parcel that has been highlighted to the right. That parcel can be restricted for agricultural use in the future through the use of a deed restriction, land trust or easement. In this regard, one very useful reference document is the “Conservation Options for Connecticut Farmland: A Guide for Landowners, Land Trusts & Municipalities” published by the American Farmland Trust and the Connecticut Farmland Trust.

From a landowner’s perspective review of this document and consideration of conservation options relative to individual circumstances should be undertaken. If one of the suggested paths to conservation aligns with individual circumstances it should be pursued and discussed with the appropriate resources and contacts that are highlighted in the reference guide.

From a municipality perspective, the Town of South Windsor should also support residents, land owners, farmers, advocates to promote, coordinate, and encourage conservation of land with individual property owners interested in doing so. The South Windsor Agricultural Preservation Advisory Committee (SWALPAC) should continue outreach to landowners in the Study Area.
to gauge individual interest and to offer support. An inventory of South Windsor farmland can be used to advance a strategic plan and prioritization of assistance for agricultural conservation in the Main Street Study Area. Farmland may be evaluated by quality of soils, current crop and farming use, threat of development, proximity to other farmland, and crops currently grown and acreage currently farmed.

One of the examples given for the protection of Farmland in Simsbury through the Simsbury Land Trust suggest that discussions regarding land protection with the trust lasted several years before proceeding and being finalized. It is unlikely that any of the land conservation discussions for Main Street would proceed any quicker. It is this time period that remains exposed and unaccounted for if no Plan B is pursued.

Concurrent with the processes and recommendations of Plan A, Plan B with a focus on Zoning and Design Guidelines should be undertaken to provide both information and protection for Main Street properties. In the case of an imperfect application of Plan A, Plan B provides a more holistic ability to effectively manage change for the district. The proposed Main Street Zone is based on the current A-40 Residential Zoning District, it is intended to provide the same level of development rights as currently exists on Main Street properties, and provide more refined guidance and review of future investment in the community.

If a property were to find success with Plan A, Plan B would have no effect on them. If a property owner would not pursue Plan A in order to preserve the ability
to develop the property in the future, Plan B would not impact their ability to develop the property in the future, it would ensure that development of the property does not adversely impact the character of Main Street. A draft of a proposed Main Street Zone is provided in this section of the Preservation Planning Study. The zoning will need to be further discussed and considered by the community and the Town of South Windsor prior to modification of the zoning. The design guidelines associated with the new zoning could be tested for the district as voluntary guidelines prior to formal adoption of the district.

One option considered for the Main Street Zone is worthy of description here. As the Plan of Conservation and Development had described, one of the promising zoning modifications for addressing the unique characteristics of Main Street was the application of cluster zoning. In this study that idea was explored further and illustrated on below and on the diagrams to the right. The cluster zoning would be applied to parcels meeting certain size and depth criteria within the Main Street Zone. For such parcels, the development of land within approximately 950 feet of Main Street would be restricted for use as open space or agricultural land. The remaining portion of the parcel at least 950 feet away from Main Street could be used for redevelopment consistent with the Permitted uses of the zone. In many cases, likely to be the subdivision of land for residential use. Because a smaller area on these parcels would be devoted to development, that development could occur with smaller lot sizes. The lot sizes would be adjusted such that the calculated development yield of the entire property would not be reduced by this clustering restriction. For example, if (20) 40,000 square foot lots were allowed by-right under current zoning, (20) 20,000 square foot lots may be allowed under the clustered provision.
Potential Development: Parcel A (rendering)

Potential for Change and Redevelopment

Detailed Discussion of Issues and Solutions
Main Street Zoning

A Main Street Zone could function exactly as the current A-40 Residential Zone with the same district boundary, the same allowable uses, the same dimensional requirements. The value in recreating those characteristics in the form of a new Main Street Zone would be to create the otherwise unavailable option of attaching design guidelines to zoning district. The new zone would be composed of the same components of the existing zone. An outline of the entire zoning district is included below for consideration by the community and the Town of South Windsor.

Zone Boundary

The Zone boundary of a new Main Street Zone is proposed to be the same as the current A-40 Residential Zone to allow for a clear and focused revision to the Zoning Ordinance that is isolated to one zone and a simple change on the zoning map. It is also an area that adequately covers the areas of focus and concern along Main Street. The zone boundary is highlighted in the illustration.

Permitted Uses

The Permitted uses of a new Main Street Zone are based on the current A-40 Residential Zone with expanded permitted uses only for consistency with existing agricultural uses in the district. The following are the proposed use categories.

• **Permitted Uses (P):** Household Pets, Horses and Ponies for Personal Use (3 or fewer), In-Law Apartment, Single-family Dwelling, Farms, Home Occupations, Home Office (Major, Minor), Agriculture, Forestry, Truck or Nursery Gardening including Greenhouses, Farm Stands, and Stables, Barns and Riding Academies, Assisted Living, Bed and Breakfast, Elderly Housing, Horses and Ponies (4 or more), Senior Residence Development, Two-family Dwelling, For Profit Educational, Non-Profit Educational, Essential Community Services, Municipal Facilities, Public Utility Buildings, Town Recreation Areas or Parks, For Profit Recreation Facilities, Religious Institutions, Office Professional. Day Care Centers

• **Special Exception Uses (SE):** Accessory Apartments, Cemeteries, Golf Courses, Hospitals

Area, Density and Dimensional Requirements

The Permitted uses of a new Main Street Zone are based on the current A-40 Residential Zone. The following are the proposed use categories.

• **Minimum Lot Area (SF):** 40,000
• **Minimum Frontage (FT):** 150
• **Minimum Lot Depth (FT):** 200
• **Minimum Front Yard (FT):** 50
• **Minimum Rear Yard (FT):** 50
• **Minimum Side Yard (FT):** 20
• **Maximum Stories:** 2 1/2
• **Maximum Height (FT):** 30
• **Maximum Lot Coverage:** 15%
• **Impervious Coverage:** no maximum listed

Design Standards and Guidelines

The benefit of this zone change is the ability to add this section to the regulations. It provides a more detailed and...
nuanced approach to how future development should be integrated with the history and heritage of Main Street.

**Purposes:** The preservation of South Windsor’s Main Street is a shared community goal to maintain the unique historic character and heritage of the street while connecting future generations to the legacy and continuity of this historic residential and agricultural district. The purpose of the Main Street Zone is to allow for residential development while maintaining open space and preserving the historic architecture of the district and the fertile land that thrives in support of agriculture. This Main Street Zone will ensure that the unique character of Main Street is maintained for future generations in accordance with the Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-2j Village Districts.

**Design Review:** Design Review shall be required for all new structures or buildings that require a building permit, or exterior additions or construction that will change the appearance of a structure visible from a public way. Design Review shall also be required for all new site improvements including parking areas.

Design Review shall not be required for maintenance, repair or replacement projects that do not alter the physical configuration of a structure or that are not visible from a public way. The Zoning Commission may exempt projects from Design Review at its discretion if it finds that proposed changes represent a minimal change that will not affect public interest as expressed in the purposes of this district.

A Design Review Committee shall be established and include a local registered architect, landscape architect or planner with experience in preservation, local residents, landowners and farmers.

**Design Principles:** The following design principles establish the most fundamental characteristics of the Main Street environment and should be reflected in the design, layout and disposition of new investment of development projects in the Main Street district.

- **Valued Historic Character:** Respect the genuine history and narrative of Main Street by restoring contributing resources, and creating compatible renovations, additions and new construction that integrates into that character, but that does not mimic it.

- **Balance of a Rural Agricultural Environment:** Patterns of use and development should respect neighboring properties, agricultural use, open space, access and views while contributing and blending into the overall character and patterns of land use of Main Street.

- **Value of a Varied and Historic Landscape:** Main Street has developed incrementally over time, future changes should promote incremental shifts that reinforce a varied and eclectic environment of fields, lawns, clustered trees, clearings and simple and prominent siting of buildings.

- **Diversity of Building Types and Eclectic Styles:** New construction and additions should contribute to a varied and eclectic architectural style for the district. Substantial development projects including multiple buildings should include the application of several styles to individual buildings with each fitting into the context of Main Street.

- **Simple and Rural Street Environment:** Each improvement should enhance safety, pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular circulation while retaining a simple and understated street character and design of amenities to reflect Main Street’s scenic and rural context.

**Site Layout and Organization:** The historic settlement of uses on Main Street has created a distinct pattern of site layout and organization characteristics reflected in
the following Design Guidelines:

- **Front Yard and Streetscape**: A landscape area between the street and buildings should be created at each property frontage, particularly on properties with frontage on Main Street. The landscape should be responsive to the surrounding street frontage context and serve as a foreground to the buildings on the site.

- **Site and Building Hierarchy**: Where multiple buildings or structures exist on a site, a hierarchy should be created in which the most primary building is placed prominently on the site and to address the street, particularly on Main Street frontage.

- **Address the Street**: Provide significant building facades oriented to the street, buildings within the district traditionally face Main Street with a significant façade, often including the main entry.

- **Minimize Support Structures**: Locate accessory structures, such as garages, to the rear of the main building.

- **Conceal Parking**: Locate parking and driveways in secondary locations to the side or rear of significant building facades and conceal with landscaping, fencing, or walls. Break large parking areas into smaller lots integrated with landscape.

- **Reinforce Parcel Lines**: Provide defined landscape areas between buildings, at edges of open fields and at adjacent parcels to reinforce parcel lines with simple landscape treatments demarcating the boundaries.

- **Respect Historic Structures**: Do not compete with adjacent historic structures by respecting the setback of adjacent buildings and providing complementary building siting and massing.

- **Respect Open Space and View Corridors**: Placement of building, site and landscape improvements should allow for views across open areas and agricultural land and be designed to frame views. Main Street has a distinct pattern of views opening onto large open fields behind buildings.

**Architecture and Building Design**: The historic architecture of Main Street has created a pattern of a mix of architectural styles and historic eras that are reflected in the following Design Guidelines:

- **Preserve Historic Structures**: To the greatest extent possible, the historic buildings in the district should be restored, rehabilitated, renovated or retained over time.

- **Respect the Heritage of Historic Structures**: When changes, alterations or additions to a historic structure do occur, they should respect the heritage and historic origins of the building and reflect the original conditions, intentions and style of the building, rather than creating an abrupt shift from the heritage.

- **Reinforce Eclectic Architectural Styles**
Sensitivity – The Main Street district includes a wide variety and diversity of architectural styles, new styles should choose an architectural style and approach that reinforces the diversity of the district while being sympathetic and compatible to the surrounding context.

- **Use Appropriate and Authentic Materials** – New construction should reinforce the historic material palette currently in use in the district. Use materials, details, colors and features appropriate to the chosen architectural style with a preference for natural and traditional materials of wood, brick and stone, over artificial materials including plastic, fiberglass or stucco.

- **Limit Blank Walls and Roofs Along Street** – Except for barns or other agricultural structures, blank walls, facades or roofs facing the street are discouraged and the length of unarticulated building façade facing the street should be limited.

- **Integrate Utilitarian Needs** – Utility needs, such as wall or roof-mounted mechanical equipment should be concealed from public view with architectural components that are consistent with the building style. This may include screens, low-walls, roof parapets, dormers, or other components to conceal equipment and integrate it with the architectural style.

**Site and Landscape Design:** The historic settlement of uses on Main Street has created a distinct pattern of landscape characteristics reflected in the following Design Guidelines:

- **Practical Landscape Features** – Use fences or walls for practical purposes such as separating parcels, enclosing special places or uses, or separating pedestrian and vehicles areas, fields or livestock areas.

- **Diverse Landscape** – Landscape plantings were not overly organized or formal in this environment historically. Except for agricultural plantings, variation should be part of the landscape to avoid repetitive patterns or symmetry, unless it is appropriate to a architectural tradition of the historic buildings on the site.

- **Layered Landscape** – Provide a layering of landscape features that reinforce distinct areas with landscape associated with the street landscape, in front of the building, landscape that anchors the building on the site and landscape that frames the edges of open spaces or agricultural fields. Tree lines at the edges of fields and open spaces provide a distinct backdrop and edge to open fields.

- **Frame Views** – Reinforce clearings and view corridors with landscape design by placing plantings at the edges of clearings and by avoiding blocking views into a clearing from the public way.

- **Landscape Parking Screening** – Use landscape plantings with trees and shrubs to screen parking areas using plant materials that complement the surrounding landscape, integrate the parking into the overall site design and minimize view of the
As highlighted through many of the discussions with the community, Main Street should remain a rural road. The character of Main Street is impacted by the characteristics of the land, development patterns and architecture, but also by the landscape characteristics and the streetscape. A set of practical landscape guidelines have been prepared to guide both private and public investment in landscape on Main Street as street trees and other plantings are desired or necessary to be replaced. The overall approach to Main Street from a streetscape perspective is to retain the rural and scenic road character, as well as the historic heritage of the street. The landscape should be native to Connecticut and specifically to the Connecticut River valley. Refer to the preceding Streetscape Conclusions Section.

### Streetscape

As highlighted through many of the discussions with the community, Main Street should remain a rural road. The character of Main Street is impacted by the characteristics of the land, development patterns and architecture, but also by the landscape characteristics and the streetscape. A set of practical landscape guidelines have been prepared to guide both private and public investment in landscape on Main Street as street trees and other plantings are desired or necessary to be replaced. The overall approach to Main Street from a streetscape perspective is to retain the rural and scenic road character, as well as the historic heritage of the street. The landscape should be native to Connecticut and specifically to the Connecticut River valley. Refer to the preceding Streetscape Conclusions Section.

- **Landscape Utility Screening** – Use landscape plantings to screen other utilitarian or service aspects of the site, such as screen mechanical equipment or storage yards using plant materials that complement the surrounding landscape.

**Signage Design**: Signage is not that frequent or the most prominent component of the Main Street environment, but where it does occur it should be integrated into the surroundings as reflected in the following Design Guidelines:

- **Minimize Signage** – The Main Street district is primarily residential and agricultural, small businesses or other uses that may require signage should limit the size and number of signs to respect the historic context.

- **Integrate Signage** – Locate and design signage to be integrated with and complementary to the architecture and site design. Signage should be placed in an appropriate location on the building façade and integrated with the style, material, and color of the building. Signage should be placed on site to be integrated with the surrounding landscape.

- **Reduce Signage Impact** – Signs should be placed as to reduce visual impact on the character of Main Street. Signage should be placed to avoid blocking views to historic buildings, features, or open spaces. Signs should not be located so that they significantly interfere with clear and desirable views.
The scenic environment of Main Street

Source: The Cecil Group
ACTION PLAN
Implementation

The Action Plan includes implementation items that take into account all of the findings and recommendations of the Preservation Planning Study and outline a matrix of time frames and responsibilities for Town, community, resident or other stakeholder actions associated with stewardship of Main Street for future generations.

Main Street Preservation Plan

1. Partnership and communication with Owners

The conversation that has been occurring with the Main Street community through this process and previous efforts must continue in an open and transparent manner. If no other actions are taken, open, thoughtful and proactive community communication will ensure that approaches to the management of change are matched to the sensitivities and goals of the residents and landowners in the district.

_Time frame:_ Ongoing  
_Responsibility:_ Town of South Windsor, Residents and Landowners

2. Facilitate and Support Land Conservation

All resources, organizations, assistance and approaches to land conservation should be communicated, promoted and supported to Main Street landowners. Particular approaches that have resulted in successful conservation for Main Street landowners should be communicated to others who may be interested in securing a similar future for their land.

_Time frame:_ Ongoing  
_Responsibility:_ Town of South Windsor, State of Connecticut, Landowners

3. Finalize and Promote Design Guidelines

The design guidelines that have been prepared as part of the proposed Main Street Zone can be separated from the zoning and be placed into voluntary use for projects on Main Street. While the guidelines would not be obligatory or have any authority independent of the Village District, the design guidance could promote more thoughtful investments.

_Time frame:_ 1-2 years  
_Responsibility:_ Town of South Windsor, Residents, Landowners

4. Changes in Current Zoning

The replacement of the A-40 Residential zone with a Main Street Zone is a straightforward and minimal modification that can be set up to allow the exact same development rights and use restrictions, while providing additional protection for the character of Main Street through design standards that are formalized as a part of the zoning district.

_Time frame:_ 2-4 years  
_Responsibility:_ Town of South Windsor, Residents and Main Street community

5. Project Review and Approval

Regardless of other actions, if new projects are proposed on Main Street the community and Town of South Windsor should carefully review potential investments for consistency and integration with the character of the district.

_Time frame:_ Ongoing  
_Responsibility:_ Town of South Windsor, Residents and Main Street community
6. Continued Support for Historic Preservation

In the East Windsor Hill Historic District and throughout the remainder of Main Street, the preservation of historic homes should be a priority. The community, South Windsor and advocates should support preservation efforts and work to explore alternatives when preservation is not proposed as part of a project.

_Time frame:_ Ongoing  
_Responsibility:_ Town of South Windsor, Residents, Landowners

7. Exploration of Tax Incentives/Abatement

As part of the support for historic preservation, the feasibility of tax incentives, tax abatements or application of historic tax credits for historic preservation and maintenance of historic properties should be considered.

_Time frame:_ 2-4 years  
_Responsibility:_ Town of South Windsor

8. Street and infrastructure investments

As future street and infrastructure investments become necessary on Main Street, the desire to preserve a rural and scenic road should be respected, balancing safety and a community concern for over-improvement of the street.

_Time frame:_ 5 years+  
_Responsibility:_ Town of South Windsor

9. Shared community vision and support

In all future efforts, the legacy, heritage and continuity of Main Street should be considered among individual decision and should be the focus of collective actions.

_Time frame:_ Ongoing  
_Responsibility:_ Town of South Windsor, Residents, Landowners, Main Street community

Source: Jessica Glass/David Raymond
Many significant historic homes line Main Street

Source: The Cecil Group
MARKET CONTEXT
The Cecil Group worked with FXM Associates to better understand the market context for real estate redevelopment opportunities relative to Main Street. The purpose of this analysis and exploration was to consider alternative permitted uses that may create new economic development opportunities to enhance the potential for preservation on Main Street.
Rental housing is a potential reuse of existing large single-family homes in South Windsor. In recent years, demand for rental housing has increased in virtually all markets nationwide owing to several factors, including: pent-up demand from lack of rental housing construction over the past two decades; the lack of affordable single family homes for first time home buyers; and changing demographics where both millennials (under 35) and baby boomer households (over 55) show an increased propensity to rent compared to prior generations (see further analysis and discussion on pages 6 and 7). In South Windsor, there is a relatively high proportion of households over age 55 compared to the market area average, suggesting that households selling their current homes but desiring to maintain a local residence may be a target market.

FXM’s *Housing Demand Model* projects over the next five years the average annual demand for rental housing by age, income group, and affordable rental rates. The Housing Demand Model enables planners and developers to target types of rental units, in terms of cost and size and amenities, to various age groups of potential renters. For example, younger age groups tend to be more mobile (likely to move) and to rent than older householders, but they also tend to have lower incomes, increasing demand for lower priced units.

The map below shows the area defined by a 20-minute drive time from a central point in South Windsor. The 20-minute drive time is considered in this analysis to be the primary market area for households that might move to South Windsor.
20-Minute Drive Time Area

The table on the next page presents basic demographic information on the Town of South Windsor and on the market area used in the model.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Context</th>
<th>20 Min. Market Area</th>
<th>% South Windsor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>South Windsor</strong></td>
<td>25,842</td>
<td>568,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 21 to 34</td>
<td>3,505</td>
<td>105,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 55 to 74</td>
<td>6,186</td>
<td>119,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households 2014 est.</td>
<td>9,961</td>
<td>224,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Change 2000-2010</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Change 2014-2019</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>$85,670</td>
<td>$59,688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg hhld size</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied units</td>
<td>8,722</td>
<td>136,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter-occupied units</td>
<td>1,239</td>
<td>88,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median home value</td>
<td>$260,660</td>
<td>$243,877</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nielsen, Claritas Site Reports, 2014, and FXM Associates

South Windsor contains 4.5% of the market area’s population and 4.4% of its households. The populations and number of households in South Windsor and the market area overall increased over the decade between 2000 and 2010, but the pace of growth in number of households in both is projected to slow over the next five years. South Windsor’s renter-occupants represent 1.4% of all renters in the market area. (This proportion is applied later to the model outputs in order to estimate South Windsor’s potential capture rates for new rental housing.) South Windsor residents have a greater propensity to own their own homes than the residents of the market area as a whole. As shown in Table 1, households in South Windsor have a significantly higher median household income than those within the market area overall.

Figure 1 on the next page show the average annual demand for all rentals by all age groups in the South Windsor Market Area, taking into consideration affordability, propensity to move in any given year, and propensity to rent.
Figure 1

Average Annual Demand For Rentals: All Age Groups
South Windsor Market Area, 2014-2019

Source: FXM Associates, Housing Demand Model, June 2015

For example, according to the above figure, of the total number of households expected to move to rental housing each year within the 20-minute market area, 9,781 households, approximately 6,215 would be able to afford monthly rents up to $1,800. Based on South Windsor’s current share of rental housing in the market area, an estimated 90 households able to afford up to $1,800 a month rent might be absorbed by additional rental development in South Windsor each year. Table 2 presents these estimates for each of the rental points shown in Figure 1. (Note that the figures in the demand columns are not additive. They are cumulative, with the rentals at $900 per month figure representing total estimated average annual demand in both Figure 2 and Table 2.)
The information in Figure 1 can be further broken down into age groups, since rental housing developments often seek to attract households such as retirees and young singles, both of whom are less likely to have school age children. Figure 2 presents these data.

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Rent</th>
<th>Total Average Annual Demand in Market Area</th>
<th>Potential Average Annual Demand in South Windsor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$900</td>
<td>9,781</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td>8,546</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>7,302</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,800</td>
<td>6,215</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,100</td>
<td>5,160</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,400</td>
<td>3,460</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,700</td>
<td>2,273</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2

Average Annual Demand for Rentals by Affordable Rent and Age Group, South Windsor Market Area
2014-2019

The graph reflects the greater propensity of younger households to rent compared to older households, as well as the sensitivity of levels of demand to varying rental prices.

Figure 3 shows another dimension to the estimation of future rental demand: the changes projected over the next five years in numbers of households by age and income.

Source: FXM Associates, Housing Demand Model, June 2015
The projected changes in age cohorts in the market area over the next five years are striking: the greatest gains across all four income categories are estimated to be in the age 55 to 74 cohorts, though with some declines in affordability in the older cohorts. In the under-55 age groups, only the ages 35 to 44 group shows significant growth, while the age category 25 to 34 would experience only very small gains, and the age 45 to 54 group would actually lose households in the lower categories of income selected above. Also noteworthy is the indication that households in the income categories over $96,000 and over $108,000 maintain positive growth throughout the period, although their numbers are fairly small in the 25 to 34 and over 75 age ranges.

Some developers in recent years have targeted rental units, especially within urbanized areas, to households under age 35 and age 55 to 74, who actually mix well within the same developments. There are fewer school age children within both age categories than in those aged 36 to 54, and therefore less resistance to downtown locations. Both groups show a higher propensity to live within walking distance of retail stores, restaurants, and transit if possible. The households under age 35, though relatively fewer in numbers, are more mobile on average and more
likely to rent, so they comprise a relatively large share of potential demand. As shown by the data in Figure 3 above, the baby boom generation households are growing in number within the 55 and older age categories, and these households have shown an increasing propensity to rent in recent years as they become empty nesters and sell their single family homes for smaller, more manageable units. Others want to cash in on the equity of their former dwellings because they need liquid income in the absence of the pensions enjoyed by prior generations of retirees. Many also continue to work part time. Data in Figure 4 show the average annual demand by selected rental rates for the under 35 and 55 to 74 year old householders, and their combined demand.

**Figure 4**

![Average Annual Demand for Rental Housing](image)

**Source:** FXM Associates, *Housing Demand Model*, June 2015

**Prices of Currently Available Rentals**

A review of prices for a sample of available rentals in the South Windsor market area shows prices somewhat below the range of the rents estimated to be affordable by the Housing Demand Model. FXM examined apartment listings available on several dates in June and July 2015 in Windsor, South Windsor, Windsor Locks, East Windsor, Enfield, Suffield, Bloomfield, Manchester, and Vernon, as shown by three different sources. Most of these were in apartment or condo

*Source: ESRI*
complexes; houses for rent and units in identifiable smaller homes were not included in this sample.

The following shows a breakdown of average rents by number of units and average square footage, the great majority of which are 1- and 2-bedroom units.

**Average Monthly Rents in South Windsor 20-minute market area, June - July 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Average Rent</th>
<th>Square Footage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>$880</td>
<td>681 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-bedroom</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>743 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-bedroom</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
<td>1,120 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-bedroom</td>
<td>$1,700</td>
<td>1,300 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Zillow.com; trulia.com; rent.com; and FXM Associates*

When we compare the above averages to the affordability data shown in Figure 1, we can see that, broadly, the potential annual demand for rental units in the South Windsor market area could support the rental of 100 2-bedroom units priced somewhat above those recently on the market in the South Windsor market area.

At $1,300 per month rent, 2 bedrooms and 1,000 square feet, and allowing for typical operating costs per unit and conventional financing, supportable building renovation and site preparation costs would be about $130 per square foot ($130,000 per unit). This supportable SF or unit cost would include land and/or building acquisition costs (if more than $0, supportable building renovation costs would be less).