



Regional Plan Association

Wall Street-West Avenue Neighborhood Plan

Planning Committee of the Common Council
January 3, 2018

Wall Street & West Avenue Neighborhood Plan Boundary



Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction
3. Existing Conditions
4. Market and Financial Analysis
5. Vision for the Future & Guiding Policies
6. Implementation Actions
7. Design Guidelines and Neighborhood Improvements

Executive Summary and Introduction

- Stakeholder engagement
- Demographic analysis
- “Blight” finding

Existing Conditions

- Land Use
- Historic Inventory
- Flood Risk
- Existing Zoning
- Infrastructure

Market and Financial Analysis

CERC Market Study

- Reviewed at December Meeting

Conclusions

Vision

A **Healthy** and **Vibrant** Urban Core Neighborhood with a **strong economy** driven by **innovation and collaboration** that is **accessible, authentic, lively and affordable** for residents and businesses.

Goals

Innovative - center for entrepreneurs, innovators and creators attracting a dynamic workforce drawn to its lively walkable urban character, cultural and community resources and green spaces.

Accessible – easily accessible by transit, foot, bike and car. Well connected to other urban neighborhoods and to the region. Parking is easy to find and use. Waterfront is an asset for all.

Authentic – dynamic urban neighborhood with a thriving arts community, important cultural resources and strong business environment. Historic preservation and complementary new construction. Water dependent and water accessible uses.

Lively – active with people, businesses and civic life throughout the day. Sidewalks, storefronts, green spaces and arts & cultural venues are well connected and maintained. A culture of health extends across the neighborhood.

Affordable – affordable to existing and new residents, local businesses and the arts community.

Policies - Innovative

Goal 1: Innovative

The Wall Street-West Avenue neighborhood of the future is a center for entrepreneurs, innovators and creators attracting a dynamic workforce drawn to its lively walkable urban character, cultural and community resources and green spaces.

Policies

1. Incentivize & promote innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship
2. Foster collaboration with anchor institutions and area companies & businesses
3. Enhance partnerships between artists, residents & businesses
4. Preserve and enhance water-dependent uses
5. Support local businesses



Policies - Accessible

Goal 2: Accessible

The Wall Street-West Avenue neighborhood is easily accessible by transit, foot, bike and car. It is well-connected to the City's other urban core neighborhoods and to the region. Parking is easy to find and easy to use. The waterfront works for businesses and people, visually and physically accessible in a manner that respects the safety of all users.

Policies

1. Transit

- a. Create more reliable, faster and safer transit connections
- b. Create a direct transit link between the Wall Street-West Avenue neighborhood and the South Norwalk train station
- c. Improve aesthetics and operations of Pulse Point transit hub and explore site and operation alternatives
- d. Incorporate on-demand transportation into public transit systems

2. Pedestrians and Bikes

- a. Improve sidewalks and streetscapes
- b. Create bike paths that link the neighborhood to jobs and transit
- c. Improve connections between the neighborhood and its waterfront

3. Trails

- a. Capitalize on Norwalk River Valley Trail as a neighborhood and connectivity asset
- b. Complete, enhance and enliven the Harbor Loop Trail

4. Vehicles

- a. Create complete streets that balance the needs of vehicles, transit, bikes and pedestrians
- b. Improve vehicular flow for freight and deliveries
- c. Designate truck route connecting industrial waterfront to I-95 and designate loading zones for deliveries

5. Parking

- a. Make parking (on-street & off-street) more easily accessible and business friendly
- b. Make the Yankee Doodle easier to access and improve ingress/egress through wayfinding and signage

Policies - Authentic

Goal 3: Authentic

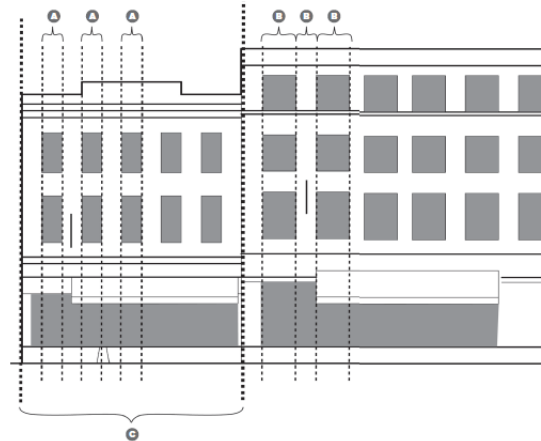
The Wall Street-West Avenue neighborhood is recognized as a dynamic urban neighborhood with a thriving arts community, important cultural resources and a strong local business community. Its historic character is recognized and celebrated through preservation of historic buildings and complementary new construction. Its working waterfront is preserved and enhanced and water-dependent and water accessible uses are prioritized along the river.

Policies

1. Draw on the neighborhood's people, places, open spaces and historic character
2. Identify appropriate scale and types of uses for infill development/redevelopment sites
3. Provide design guidelines for new development

Facade Variation

- Vertical Organization
- Vertical Organization
- ⊙ Maximum 50ft without variations



Policies - Lively

Goal 4: Lively

The Wall Street-West Avenue neighborhood is active with people, businesses and civic life throughout the day. Its side-walks, storefronts, green spaces, trails and arts & cultural venues are connected and well maintained. A culture of health extends across the neighborhood with physical spaces and programs that support resident and business health and well-being.

Policies

1. Activate ground floor and sidewalk spaces
2. Enhance and maintain streetscapes, parks and public spaces
3. Emphasize placemaking
4. Encourage walking & biking in the neighborhood
5. Incentivize investment in buildings, infrastructure and open/public space
6. Brand and promote the neighborhood



Policies - Affordable

Goal 5: Affordable

The Wall Street-West Avenue neighborhood is affordable to existing and new residents, local businesses and the arts community. Reliable funding allows neighborhood infrastructure and public spaces to be maintained and enhanced.

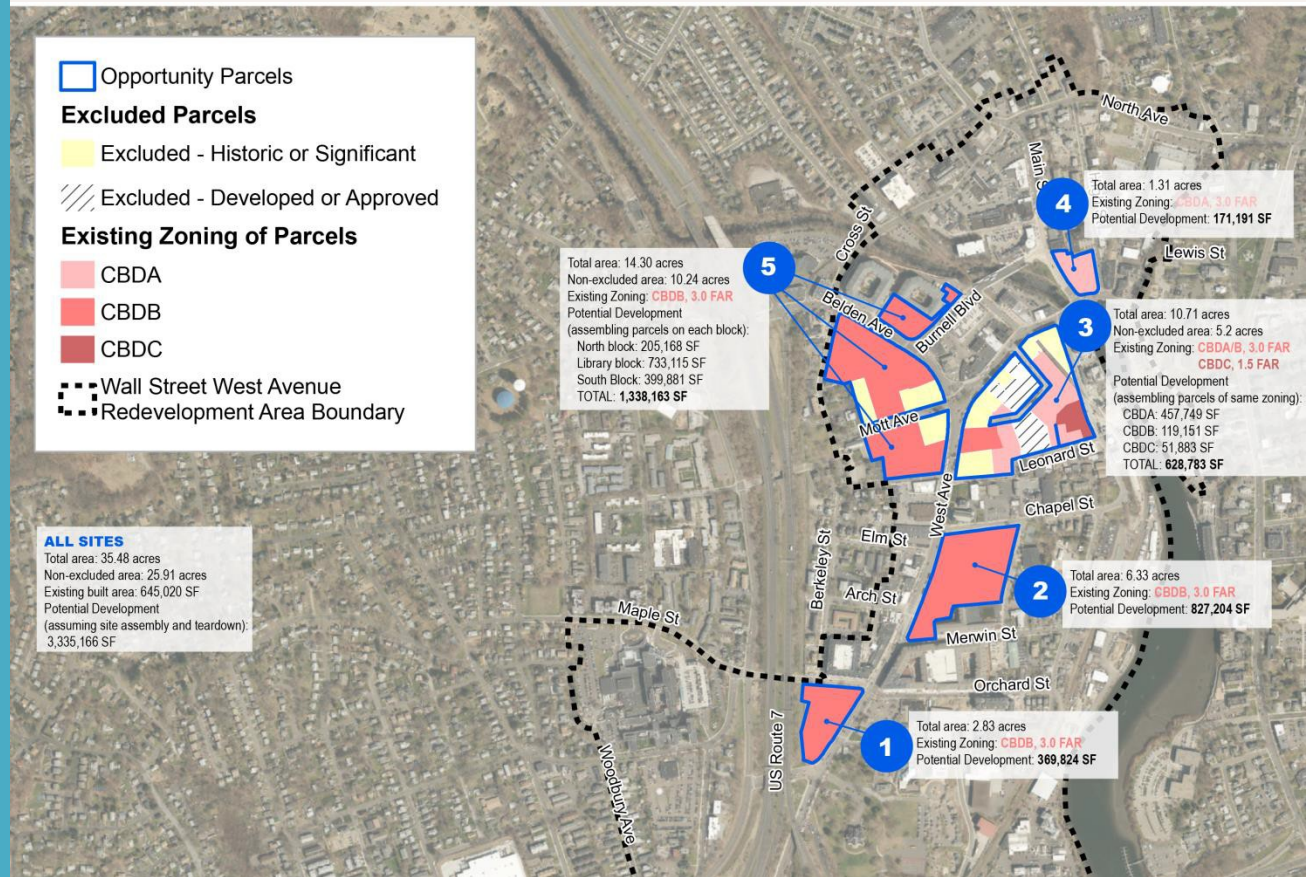
Policies

1. Develop strategies to protect existing neighborhood residents, businesses and artists from displacement
2. Make it easier and more affordable to maintain and upgrade buildings, infrastructure and public spaces
3. Make it easier for people to do business in the neighborhood
4. Make sure that local residents, businesses, and artists benefit from neighborhood improvements
5. Preserve live/work spaces
6. Require creation of permanently protected, affordable apartments as part of new multifamily developments



Implementation

Opportunity Sites for Redevelopment



370 West Avenue

(former YMCA site)



370 West Avenue

(former YMCA site)

- **Health and wellness focused mixed use development** serving hospital's operational and programmatic needs and the local community
- New building(s) **fronting on West Avenue**
- Ground floor design and uses that **activate the street**
- Enhance Maple Street to **encourage people to walk between Norwalk Hospital and West Avenue**
- **Create a strong gateway** at the intersection of **Maple Street**, West Avenue and the Norwalk River Valley Trail celebrating health and wellness at this important neighborhood entrance

370 West Avenue

(former YMCA site)



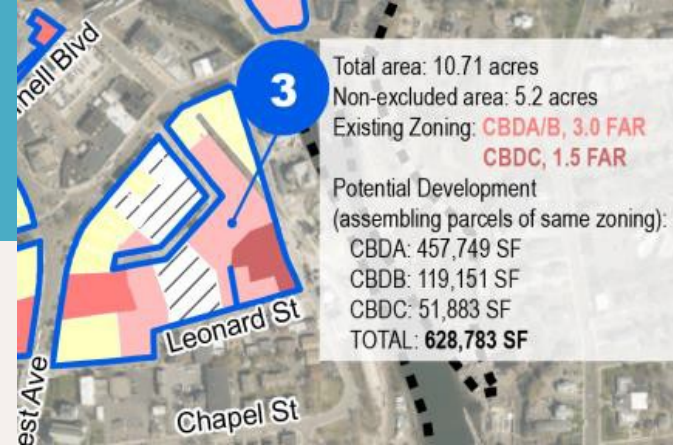
West Avenue between Merwin Street & Chapel Street



West Avenue between Merwin Street & Chapel Street

- **Infill development** on the auto sales and repair sites
- Provide for a **continuous street frontage** along West Avenue
- Require **active ground floor uses** that generate pedestrian activity
- Given existing uses, redevelopment of these sites is likely to require environmental remediation

Wall Street, West Avenue, Leonard Street & Commerce Street



Wall Street, West Avenue, Leonard Street & Commerce Street

- **Cohesive redevelopment strategy** to rationalize disparate character of existing buildings
- **Mixed use development** with a variety of residential, commercial, restaurant uses, live/work spaces, and light and/or boutique manufacturing
- For properties fronting on Wall Street, new development should **respect and incorporate existing designated historic structures**
- **Building facades consistent with the existing streetscape** and stepping back at, or above four stories
- **Active and pedestrian-oriented ground floor uses** on Wall Street & West Avenue
- Streetscapes with **welcoming sidewalks, landscaping and lighting**
- For **interior suburban scale properties, orient buildings to face the street** and introduce sidewalk, landscaping and lighting treatments

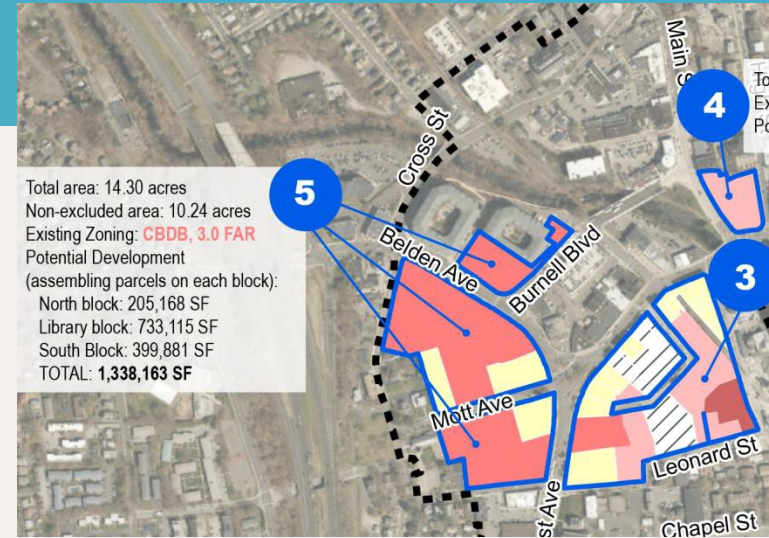
Wall Street between High Street & Main Street



Wall Street between High Street & Main Street

- Important **neighborhood gateway**
- Prime opportunity for development of a **4-6 story** building(s) with attractive, **pedestrian-oriented frontage** along Main, Wall & High Streets
- **Mix of uses**- residential, office and commercial, light & boutique manufacturing- and **replacement parking**
- **Activate streetscape** through building design & maximize relationship with Freese Park
- **Widen sidewalks** along Wall Street and provide **pedestrian amenities**
- Redesign roadway to better **balance pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular needs** and improve the look and feel of the street

Library & adjacent sites



Library & adjacent sites

- Create cohesive, **pedestrian-friendly environment** that **activates West Avenue** with-
 - ✓ A mix of community-oriented uses, including a new and/or expanded library
 - ✓ Strong **connections to open space at Union Park**
 - ✓ Strong connections to transit and parking on Burnell Boulevard
- **Library is central focus** of redevelopment, addressing
 - ✓ Growing demand for library services and programs
 - ✓ Need for more space for research, exhibitions and meeting rooms
 - ✓ Indoor and outdoor public gathering spaces and parking for patrons

Library & adjacent sites

- **Redevelop vacant office building site adjacent to Norwalk Transit District's Pulse Point** for mixed use development with ground floor uses that provide passenger amenities and services with residential, commercial and/or shared work space above
- **Make Burnell Boulevard two-way** to improve vehicular circulation to and from the Yankee Doodle garage
- Redevelopment of properties should strongly **emphasize pedestrian comfort** through building and streetscape design to encourage library patrons to walk between the library, Pulse Point and Yankee Doodle garage



Micro Units

The Redevelopment Plan recommends the consideration of micro-units in an accompanying zoning recommendation.

What is a micro unit?

- Small studio apartment
- Typically **less than 400 sf**, with a fully functioning and accessibility compliant kitchen and bathroom
- Lease at **20-30% lower monthly rent** than conventional units
- But at high value ratios (higher rent per square foot)



Micro unit considerations

The Macro View on Micro Units, ULI 2014

Micro-Unit over Conventional-Unit Trade-off

I would choose a micro unit over a conventional-size apartment unit in exchange for:

Ranking areas	1st- or 2nd-rank mentions	1st-rank mentions
Lower rent compared with conventional studios	73%	53%
Desired location/neighborhood	44%	23%
Reduced utility costs	35%	7%
Ability to live alone (i.e., without roommates)	28%	12%
Shorter commute to work	19%	8%
Minimal apartment upkeep, cleaning, etc.	10%	3%
Neighbors with a similar lifestyle	8%	3%
More community amenities/shared spaces	7%	2%
Proximity to public transportation	6%	3%

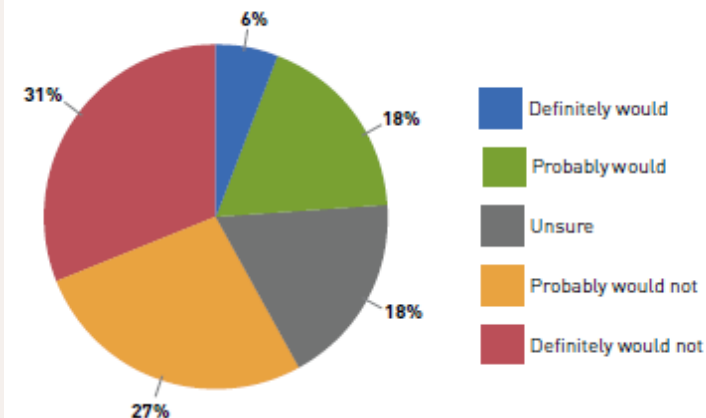
ULI's study included:

- 400 properties
- 90,000 units
- In 35 metropolitan areas

Importance of Amenities in Rental Consideration

Neighborhood amenities	Percent 4s and 5s
Grocery store	88%
Restaurants/bars	68%
Gym	56%
Entertainment	53%
Retail centers	52%
Cafés	49%
Recreation	46%
Public transit	41%

Conventional-Renter Interest in Renting a Micro Unit



ULI Study Findings

The Macro View on Micro Units, ULI 2014

- Target market for micro-units is **young professional singles**
 - Secondary segments include younger couples, older, downsizing singles, and pied-a-terre users
- Most important factors driving interest in micro-units:
 - Desire of younger residents to live in **walkable locations** in the urban core of relatively expensive apartment markets
 - Willingness to trade off a smaller unit for **lower absolute monthly rental payment** in a highly desirable location
 - Desire to live alone
- “Sweet spot” where renters seem to choose micro units over conventional studios or one-bedroom units, or roommates is when micro-unit rents are approx. **25-30% below conventional units**

Why Here?

- Increased density – more feet on the street
- Low impact on infrastructure
 - space, schools, etc.
- Additional housing options in a tight market
 - Allows for movement within the market and not out of the market
- Historic preservation
 - Can encourage historic preservations by incorporating into existing structures



DINING FOR TEN



SLEEPING FOR TWO



RELAX

Parks and Open Space

- Only **5%** of plan area is Open Space
 - Majority – Mathews Park
- Norwalk River Valley Trail Improvements
- Harbor Loop Trail Improvements
- Freese Park Master Plan
- Union Park Improvements

Freese Park Master Plan



Waterfront Improvements

Focus on **public access** and making better **physical and visual** connections to the waterfront



Innovation District as a Planning Concept

Industries focused on **health, science, design, and technology** consistent with the CERC market study and industry analysis

- Better connecting and supporting current **anchor institutions** and businesses within the area
- Promoting **growth in similar industries** to create synergies with anchor institutions



LILLIAN AUGUST
FINE FURNITURE



Yale
NewHaven
Health
Yale New Haven
Children's Hospital

**DEVINE
BROS.**
Mc
SINCE 1918

Implementation of Norwalk Connectivity Master Plan

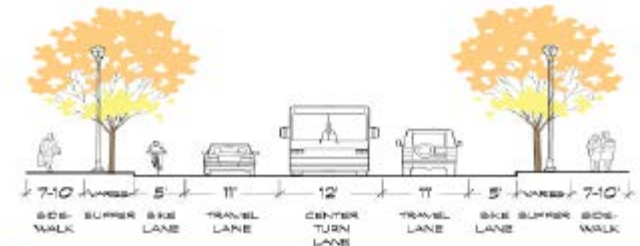
- West Avenue Complete Streets project
- Crescent Street and Science Road improvements
- West Avenue highway overpass barrier/gateway
- Cross Street – Belden Avenue safety improvements
- Wall Street pedestrian improvements

Proposed Bicycle Lanes along West Avenue



Source: Norwalk Connectivity Master Plan, 2012

Proposed West Avenue Lane dimensions between Orchard Street and Wall Street



Design Guidelines and Neighborhood Improvements

Site Design

Guidelines for site design that **apply to all development proposals within the Wall Street-West Avenue plan area.**

These specifications address building orientation, site access, parking, green infrastructure, sidewalks, street furniture, landscaping, open space, lighting and signage.

These guidelines **also apply to public infrastructure projects within the plan area.**

Site Design

A. Building Orientation

B. Site access, parking and loading

C. Green infrastructure

D. Sidewalks, Street Furniture and Landscaping

E. Open Space and Parklets

F. Lighting

G. Signage

Building/Architectural Design

Guidelines for building/architectural design that **apply to renovation of existing structures and construction of new buildings** within the Wall Street-West Avenue plan area.

These specifications address building massing, facades and roofs, as well as rehabilitation of historic structures and compatibility of new development with historic structures.

Building / Architectural Design

A. Building Massing

B. Rooflines

C. Building Facades

D. Historic Structures

Building Massing



Application to Typologies

Describes how the site design and building/architectural design specifications apply to:

- Primary, commercial corridors
- Secondary, connecting corridors

Application to Corridor Typologies

A. West Avenue

B. Wall Street

C. Route 1

D. Connecting Corridors

Commercial Corridors

- West Avenue
- Wall Street
- Belden Avenue
- Route 1 (Cross Street, Belden Avenue, North Street)

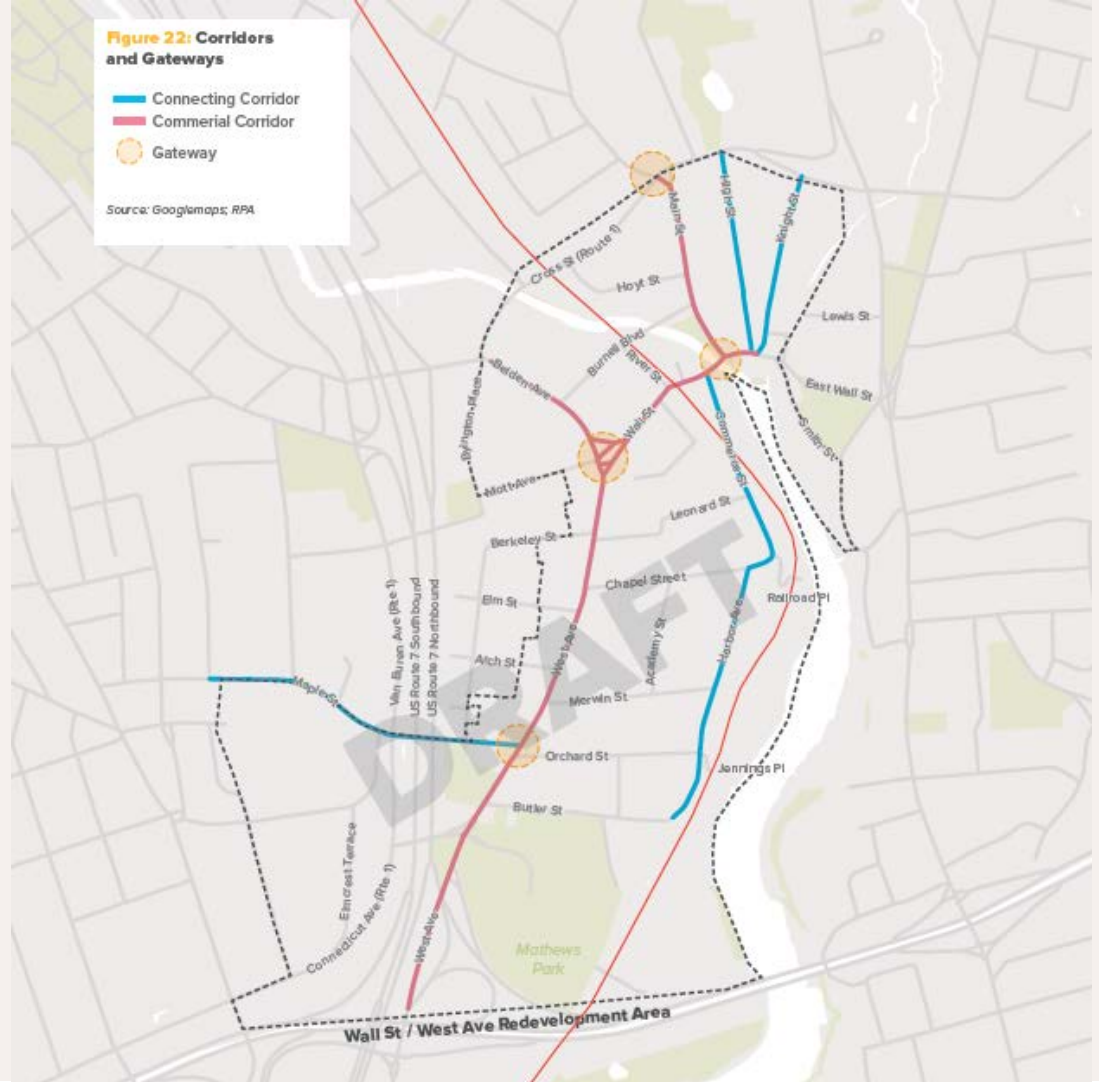
Connecting Corridors

- Maple Street
- Knight Street
- High Street
- Commerce Street
- Harbor Avenue

Figure 22: Corridors and Gateways

- Connecting Corridor
- Commercial Corridor
- Gateway

Source: Googlemaps; RPA



Plan Approval Timeline

12/11/2018: Planning Commission determined Plan is consistent with POCD

01/08/2019: Public Hearing at meeting of the Redevelopment Agency

02/07/2019: Planning Commission approval to advance to the Common Council

02/12/2019: Common Council approval

03/12/2019: Norwalk Redevelopment Agency approval

Zoning

Zoning Recommendation

(Separate from the Redevelopment Plan)

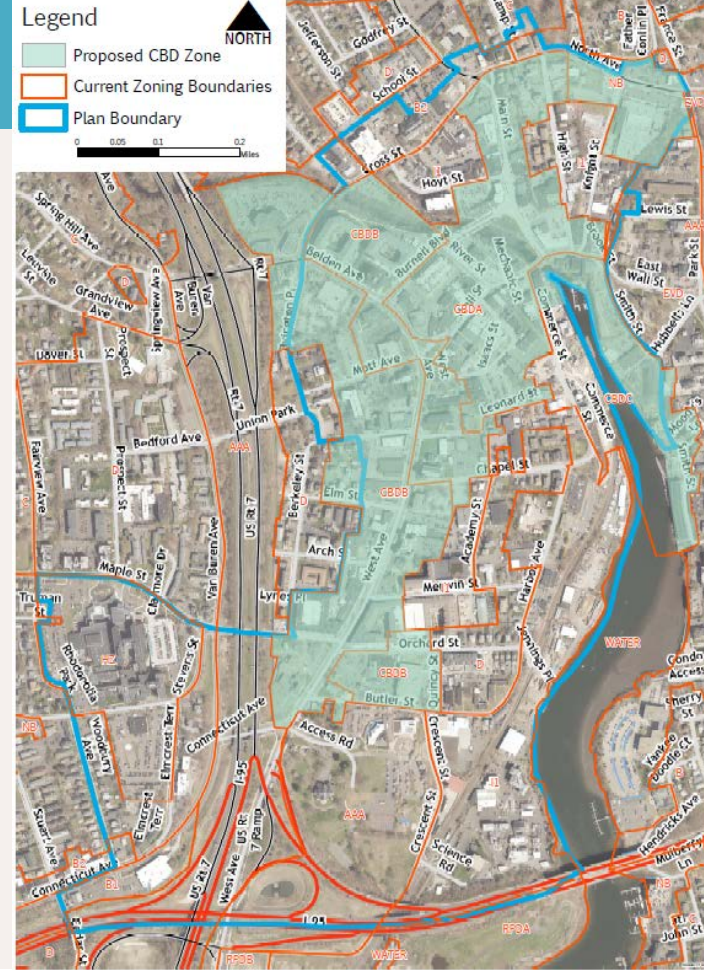
Currently **10** zoning districts in a **0.34** square mile area

- Combining **3 zoning districts into 1** (CBD A, B, C to CBD)

Notable changes:

- Broadens uses throughout the district
- Broadens allowable uses on the ground floor
- Incentivizes density to scale with the existing built environment
- Reduces parking (similar to SoNo TOD)
- Incentivizes accommodation of arts and artists
- Micro units

Wall Street - West Avenue Redevelopment Plan Proposed Zoning v Current Zoning



Zoning Approval Timeline

01/03/2019: Referral to Zoning Commission, approve to advance to public hearing on 2/25

02/25/2019: Public hearing

03/19/2019: Planning Commission to determine consistency with POCD (anticipated)

04/04/2019: Zoning Commission approval (anticipated)