

Visioning Forum

Norwalk Tomorrow Citywide Plan (POCD)



Prepared for:
City of Norwalk, CT

Prepared by:



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www.tomorrow.norwalkct.org

December 18, 2017

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Appendix: Norwalk Visioning Presentation

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VISIONING FORUM

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1.0 THE COMMUNITY VISIONING PROCESS

During 2017-2018, the City of Norwalk will be updating its citywide plan, also known as the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), including an updated vision for the city's future. This vision will represent the community's hopes and aspirations for the next twenty years. The citywide plan (POCD) will be a ten-year plan designed to help the City move towards achieving the community vision.

On Saturday, November 18, 2017, more than 185 Norwalk residents from a broad range of backgrounds and neighborhoods spent the morning in a forum at the Community Room in the Center for Global Studies at Brien McMahon High School. They came to share their hopes and aspirations for the future of the City of Norwalk as part of the Norwalk Tomorrow Citywide Plan process.

Participants received a folder with an information sheet about the Citywide Plan process, a summary of existing conditions information ("Norwalk At A Glance"), a set of worksheets to complete for a series of exercises, an evaluation sheet, and a short survey on issues relevant to ongoing redevelopment area planning and parking studies.

The room was ringed with a set of exhibit boards with a variety of analytical maps of Norwalk. Participants were randomly seated at tables to maximize the opportunity for people who did not know each other to talk to one another. Each table had a base map of the city, pens and post-its, a worksheet for priority setting, and an envelope to capture the worksheet materials.

The workshop began with a welcome from Mayor Harry Rilling and Planning Director Steve Kleppin. The welcome remarks were followed by a brief presentation from consultant Larissa Brown of Stantec on existing conditions and trends in Norwalk, including information on demographics, housing, economic development, transportation, open space, land use and zoning, and resilience. The presentation can be found at the end of this report.



VISIONING FORUM

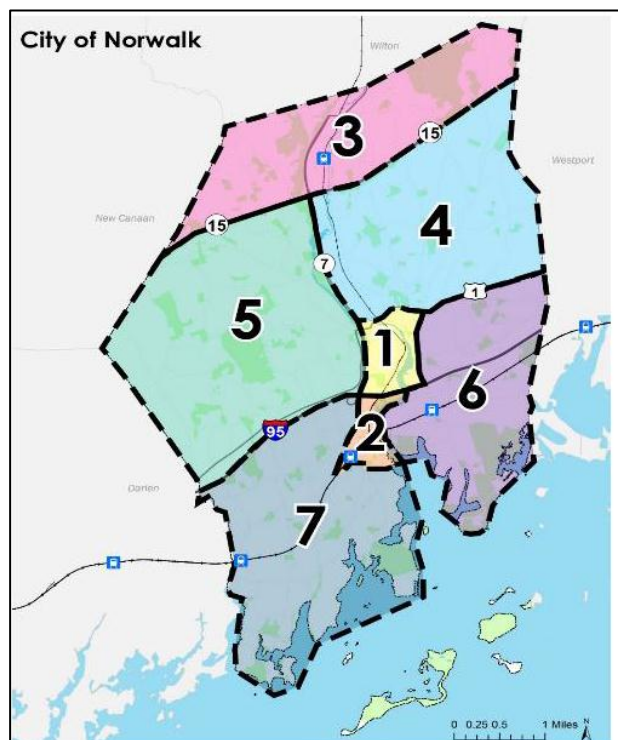
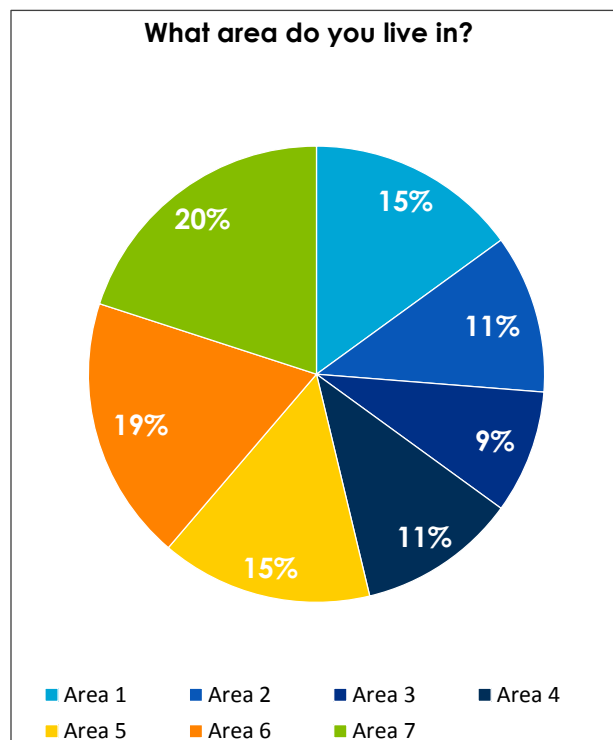
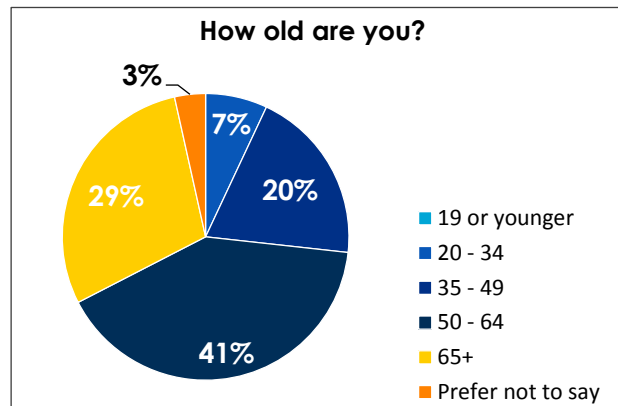
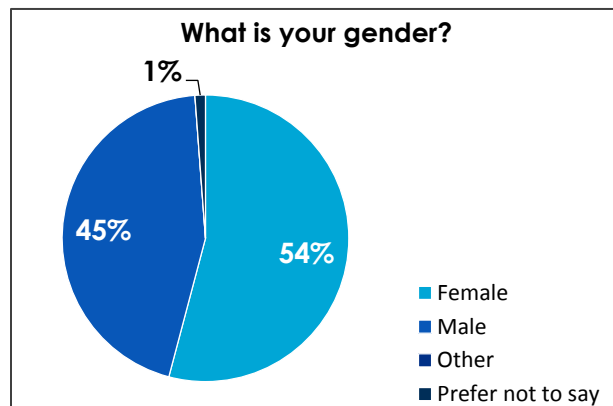
December 18, 2017

LIVE POLLING

After the presentation, participants did a smartphone, "live" polling survey. Hard copies were provided for those who preferred to fill out the survey by hand. The survey included questions about the demographic characteristics of participants in the room, as well as some general questions about Norwalk.

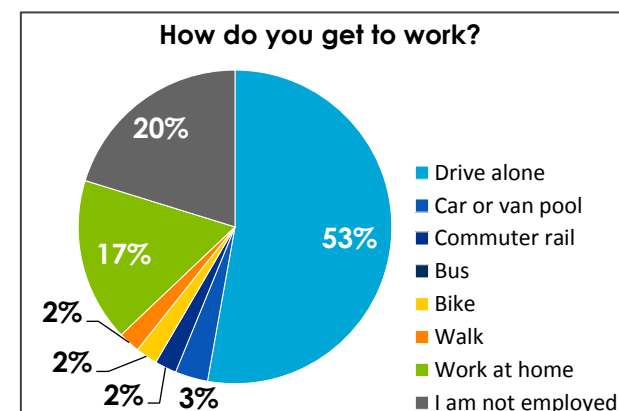
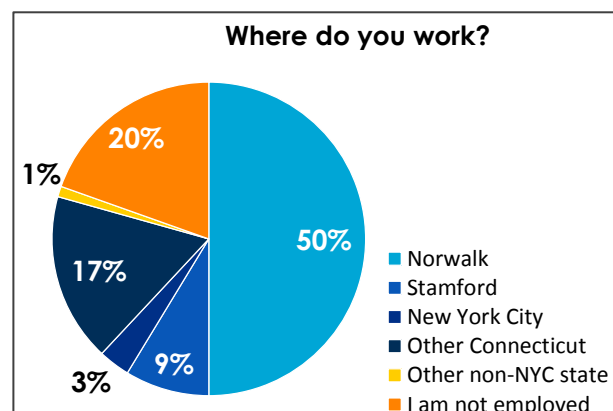
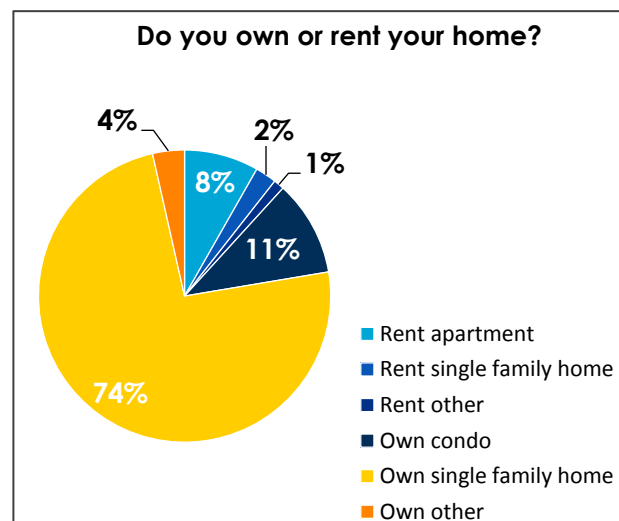
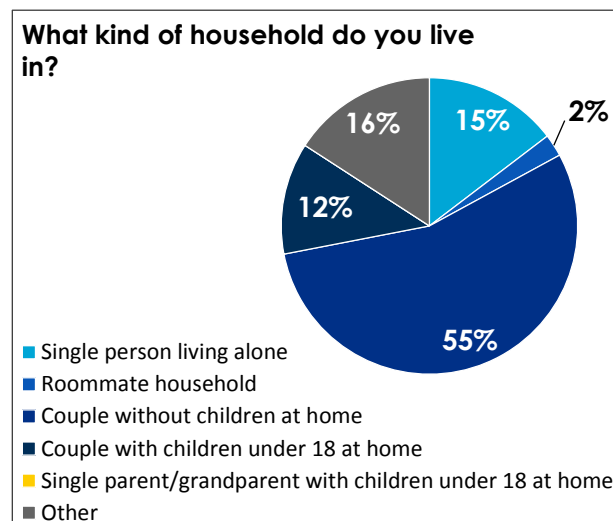
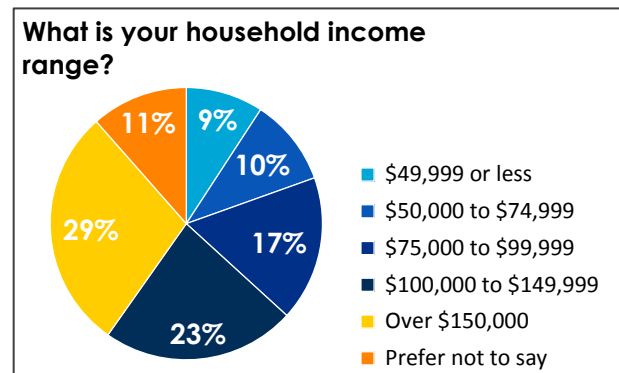
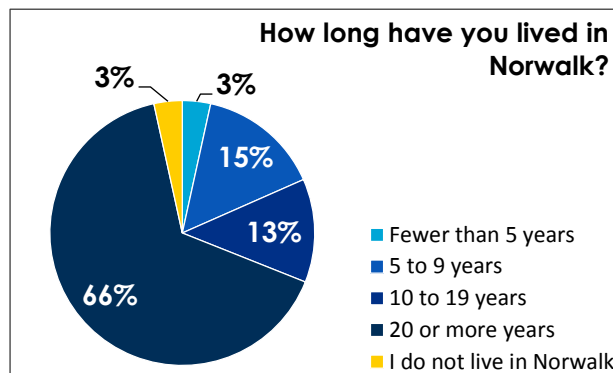
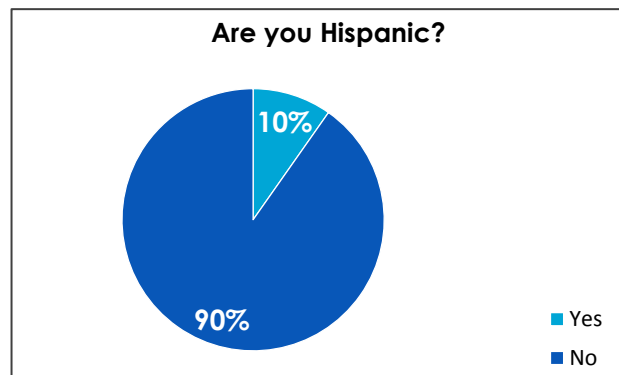
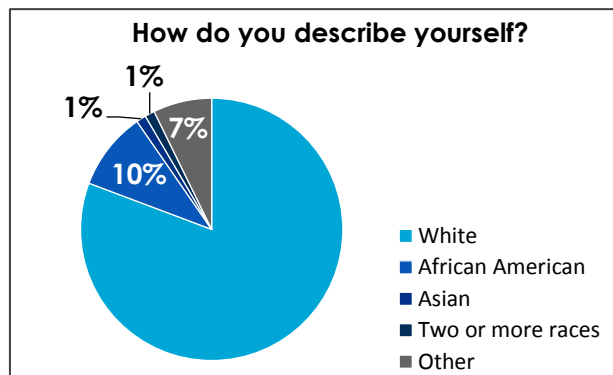
Of those who took the survey, 97% were residents of Norwalk, and just over half (54%) were female. There were people from many different age groups, and while the majority of attendees have lived in Norwalk for more than 20 years, there were some newer residents. Residents attended from many different areas of the city.

Compared to Norwalk's population, Hispanics/Latinos, African-Americans, Asians, and other non-white members of the community were under-represented. Long-time, older residents, and home owners were over-represented compared to their percentage of the overall population.



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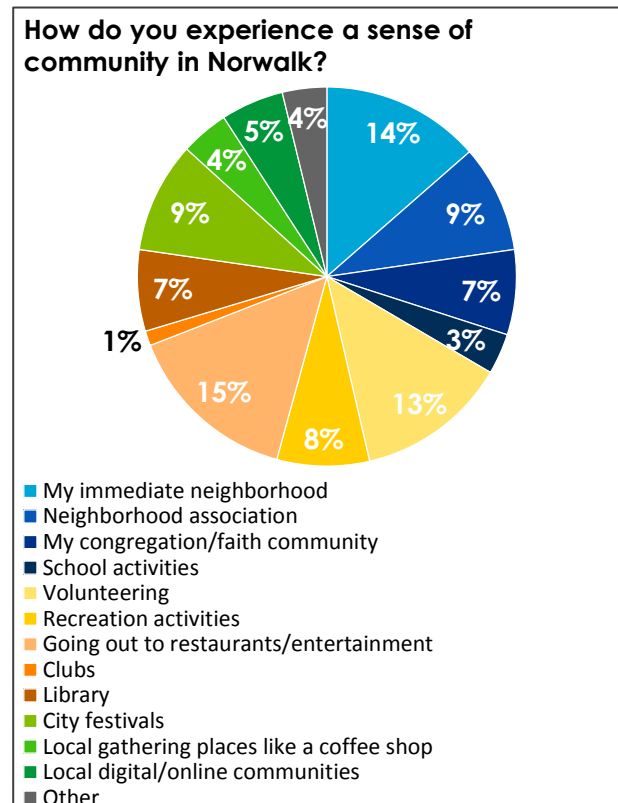
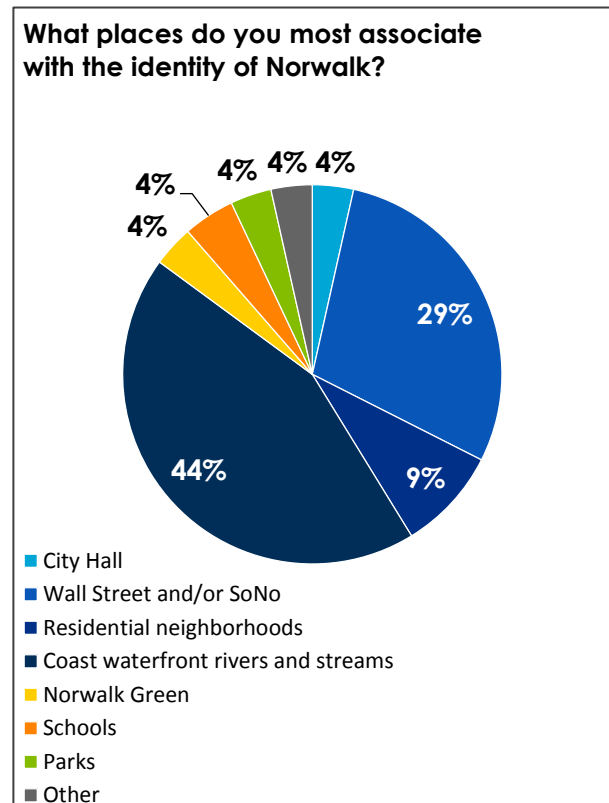
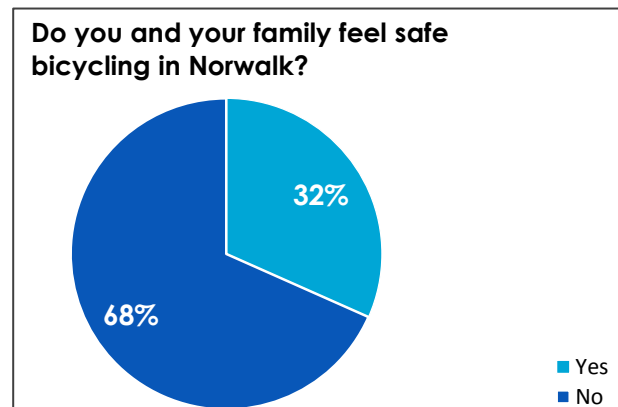
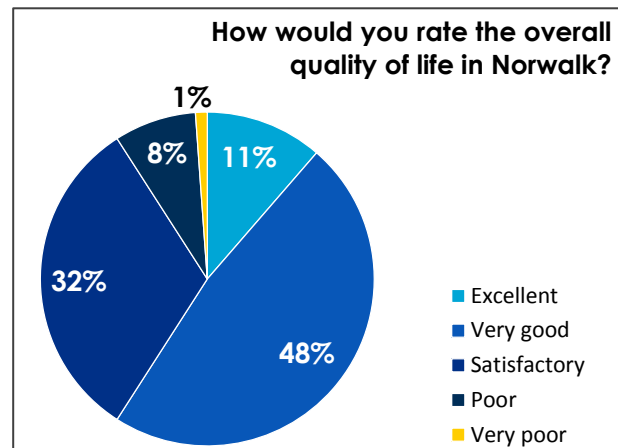


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After the demographic questions, the poll explored a few questions about quality of life in Norwalk. A majority (59%) rated overall quality of life as “excellent” or “very good.” About half can walk from their homes to a city destination but a significant majority do not feel safe bicycling in Norwalk.

The City's coastal waterfront, rivers and streams along with Wall Street/SoNo overwhelmingly represent Norwalk's identity to the forum participants and they experience a sense of community through a broad variety of experiences.



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This word cloud indicates, by the size of the words, what forum participants are most interested in changing for the future.

In one or two words - if you could change one thing in Norwalk, what would it be?



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INTERACTIVE EXERCISES

During the remainder of the workshop, a series of exercises guided participants through discussions in which they wrote down their individual ideas about Norwalk and its future, then shared those ideas with others around the table, identified places of particular interest on the map, and finally identified a set of priorities for the whole table. At the end of the meeting, a volunteer table leader from each table reported back to the entire group on their priorities for Norwalk's future. Many rich and thoughtful conversations took place. Through their discussions, participants revealed their hopes for the city and the values that are important to them.

The exercises included:

Best of the city and the city's challenges:

Each participant and then the group as a whole identified Norwalk's assets and the challenges that Norwalk faces, including identification on the table map of locations that fit those categories.

Personal vision statements: Each participant wrote a personal vision statement expressing his or her vision for Norwalk in 2038. Then they shared their visions around the table and discussed the common elements and values in the personal visions.

Table priorities: A volunteer table leader wrote down all the vision elements discussed at the table. Participants each had five dots to "vote" on the elements that they thought were most important, resulting in a list of five top elements at each table.

Reports from the tables. Each table leader reported to the whole group about their table's discussion and priorities.

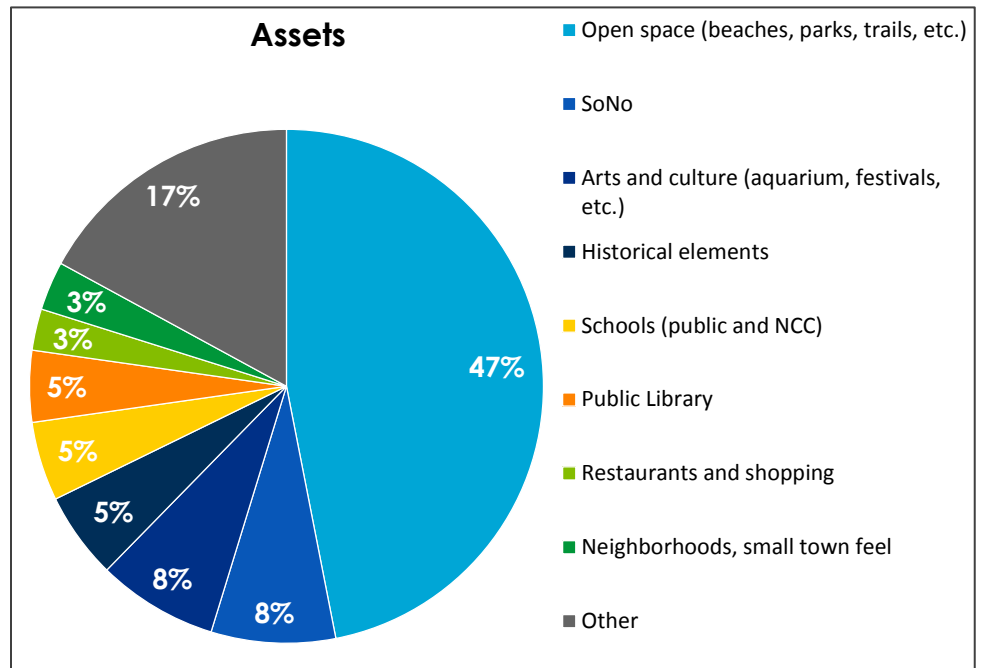


December 18, 2017

1.1 THE BEST AND THE CHALLENGES

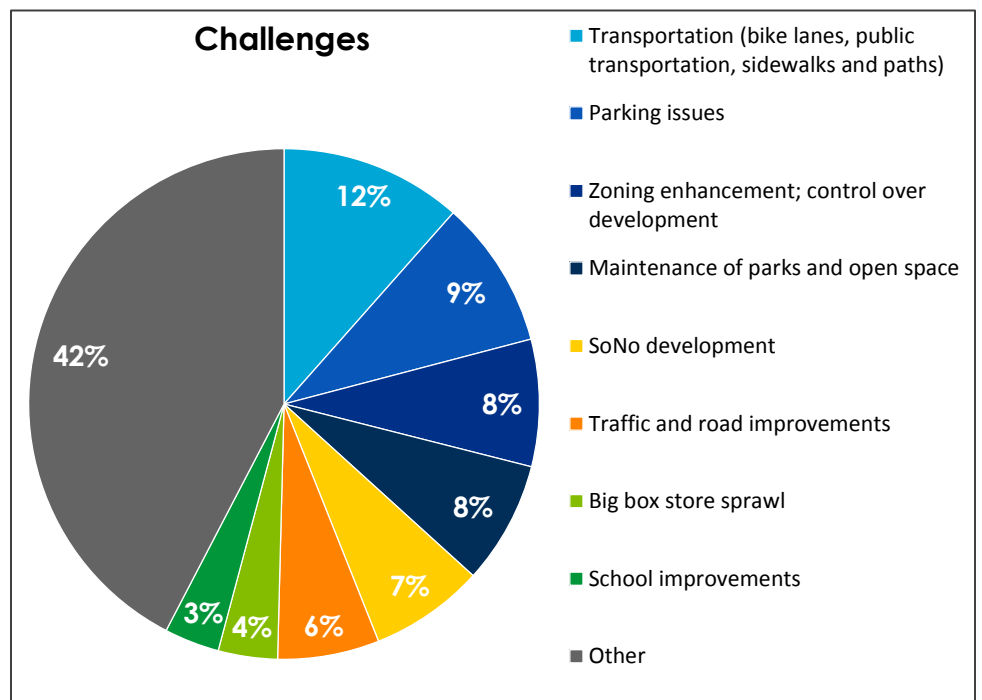
The Best:

Of the over 420 assets listed, nearly half related to Norwalk's parks, coastline, and beaches. The South Norwalk area, historical elements, arts and cultural opportunities, schools, and the library were also strongly valued by participants.



The Challenges:

Of the over 370 challenges listed, there was an emphasis on multi-modal transportation options, particularly bike lanes and parking issues, zoning and development enhancements, park maintenance, development in SoNo, traffic and road improvements, and big box store sprawl).

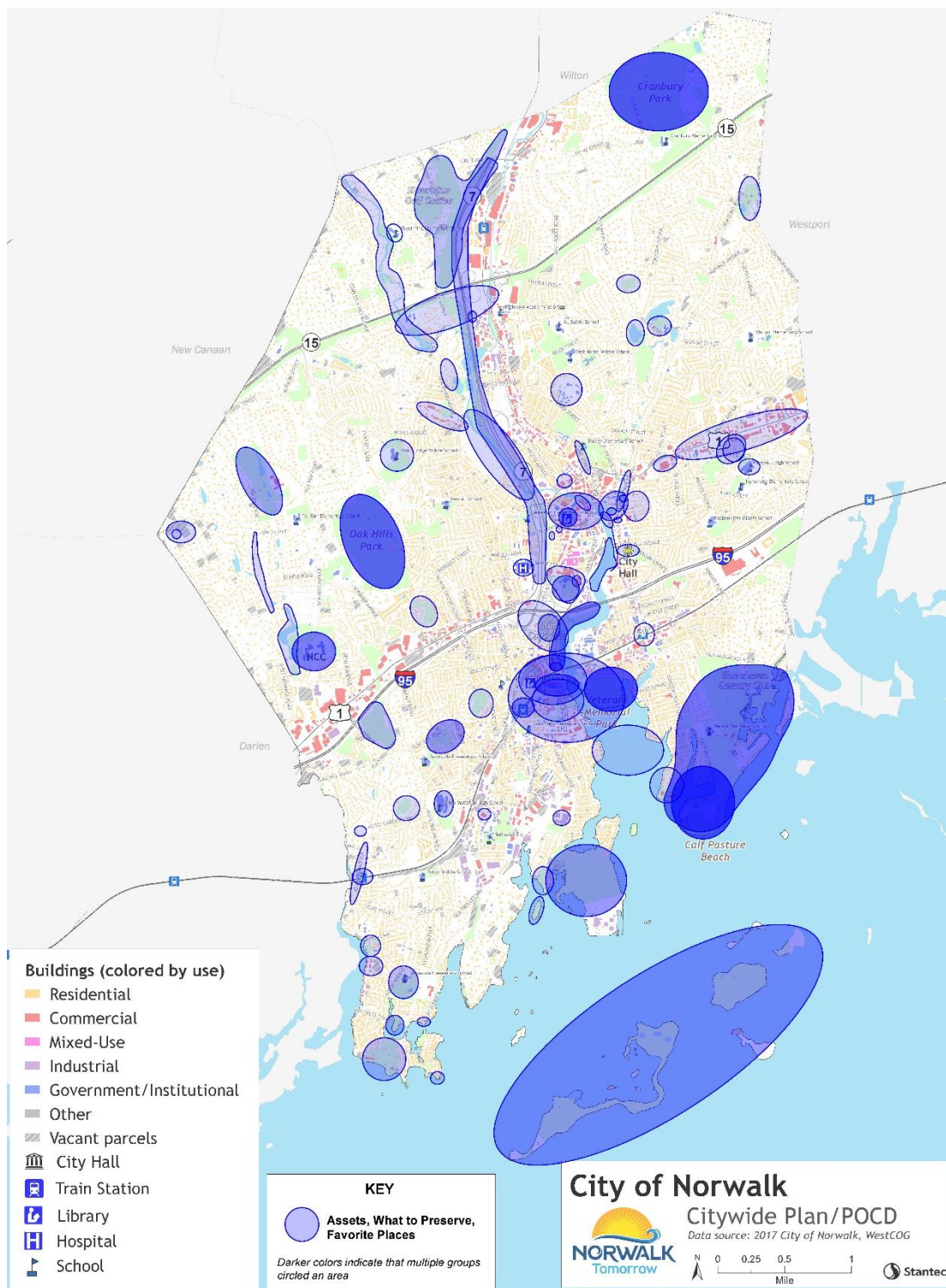


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Best and Challenges Maps. Participants were asked to review a map of Norwalk as a group and circle or label their favorite places and City assets with a blue pen and circle or label their least favorite places and challenged areas with a red pen. In some cases, participants identified places as being assets to the city but also as places that face challenges and need improvements.

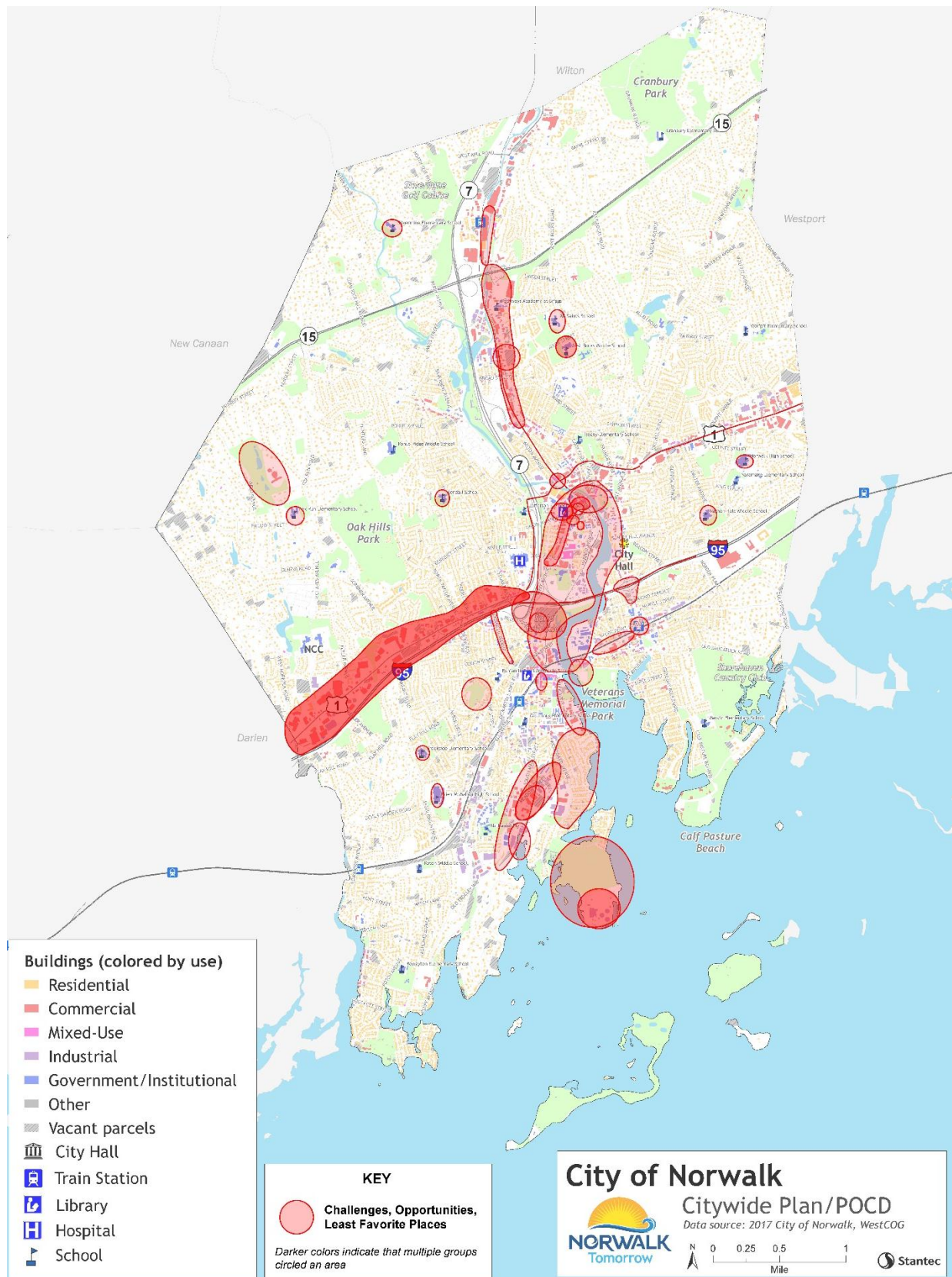
Figure 1 The Best of the City



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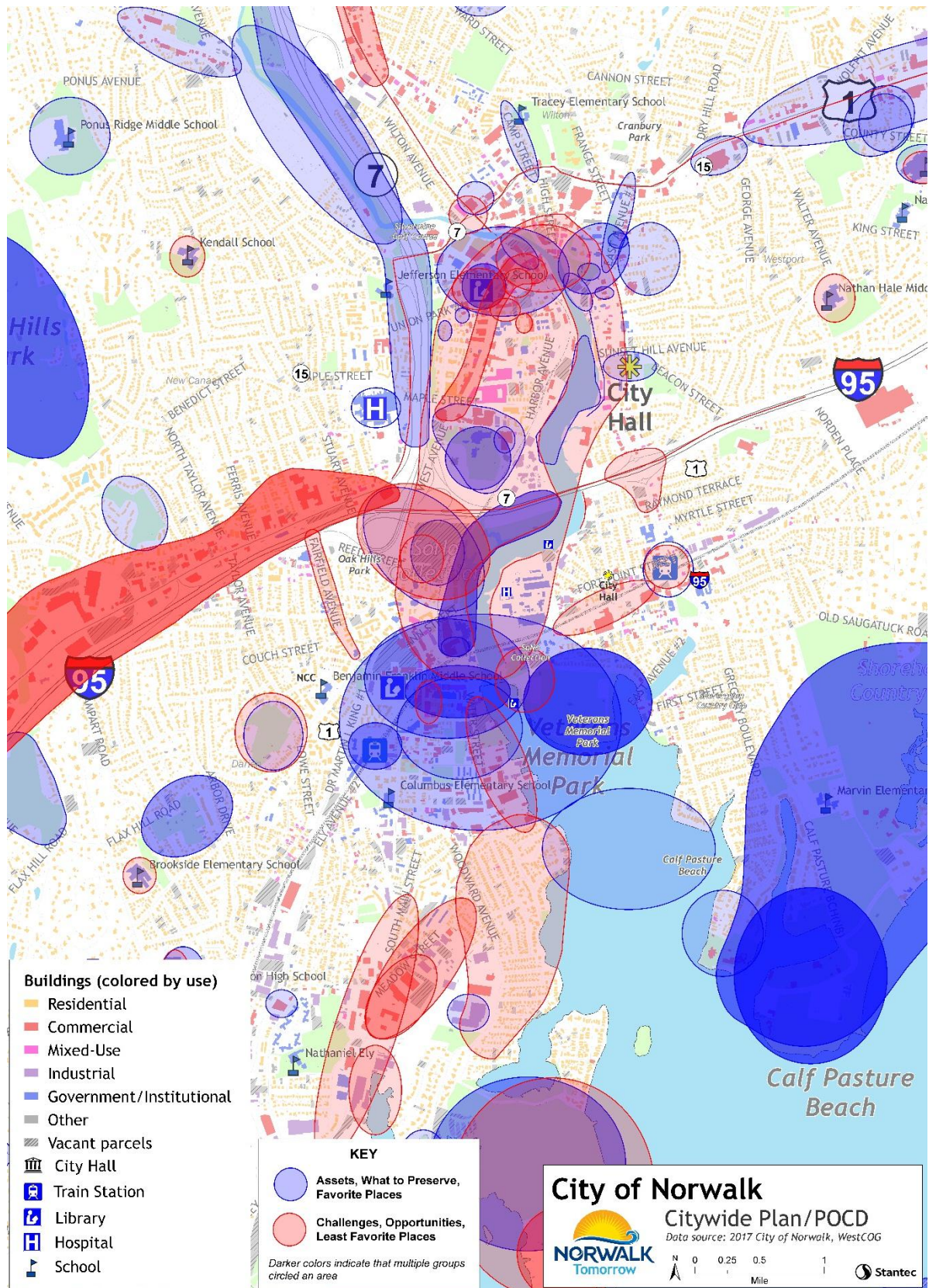
Figure 2 Challenges Facing the City



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Figure 3 Best and Challenges of Central Norwalk



December 18, 2017

1.2 PERSONAL VISION STATEMENTS

The personal vision statements in many respects reflected the preferences and concerns expressed in the lists of the best things about Norwalk and the challenges facing the city. The most commonly mentioned desires were for economic growth downtown, employment, new restaurants, retail, and entertainment areas, park improvements, roadway improvements, and sustainability. All the personal vision statements are posted in the "Resources" section of the Norwalk Tomorrow website: www.tomorrow.norwalkct.org.

Select Personal Vision Statements

"I would like to see the city have more high pay jobs, a walkable city with food trucks, street festivals, concerts, activities for families. Better public transit system with a new and improved school system to get kids ready to succeed in life..."

"A city that will be easy to get around without a car. No blighted properties. Cultural, recreational opportunities accessible to all residents. Schools that prepare students for the world they will live in as adults."

"'Small' seaside New England town with excellent schools, preserved open spaces, and historical preservation of buildings. Cohesive development plan with uniformity of design. Ample parking, sidewalks, and bike paths. Excellent city services with parks, beaches, library, museum, transportation supported by affordable taxes."

"Controlled development to provide 'walkable' density to support local restaurants and businesses. Improved transportation to provide affordable and convenient access to business areas and recreational or historic sites and commuter trains (flexibility). School reputation to continue to improve."

"Efficient transportation to and from amenities and errands, well promoted activities. Planning and zoning that is driven by a cohesive vision. Budgeting and taxation that supports the implementation of the plan. Transparent decision making. Excellent communications, attractive, accessible neighborhoods that are safe with convenient local markets and services. More community gatherings spaces. Police precincts throughout the city."

"I would like all areas of Norwalk to shine, both with historic character and newness where appropriate. Eliminate excess asphalt and ugly businesses. See people walking and biking around town. Work to make zoning serve the city better with a more "big vision" picture rather than "one project at a time" approach. Keep our taxes low. No more big box stores or cheap chains. Preserve and enhance waterfront with only water dependent use."

"Celebrate Norwalk as a collection of villages and business types. Regulate to encourage this."

1.3 TOP PRIORITIES

After sharing their personal visions and discussing common elements, the participants around each table then focused on identifying their top five priorities for the city. The priorities generally fell into 11 different categories:

- **Open space and historical elements:** protect/preserve/maintain natural resources, open space, coastline, history, and historic buildings

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- **Community:** enhance civic pride; maintain communities and small-town feel; community engagement
- **Schools:** strong school system; incorporate vocational training in schools
- **Connections and mobility:** traffic reduction; public transportation; better connections; adequate parking
- **Affordable housing**
- **Jobs and training:** job and vocational training, high paying jobs
- **Bike/walking friendly:** bike lanes; well-maintained sidewalks; bike and walk-ability
- **Zoning and development:** enforcement; zoning revisions; smart development; controlled development; limit big box stores
- **Diversity:** of populations and businesses
- **Sustainability:** renewable energy incentives
- **Arts and culture**
- Other:
 - Strategic plan and input
 - Transparency/communication in City Hall/government
 - Continue Mayor's emergency contact
 - Economic strength- taxes, common sense

2.0 EVALUATION

Participants were asked to evaluate the Visioning Forum before leaving. Ninety percent rated the overall program as either good or excellent, 84% rated the information and materials as good or excellent, and 96% rated the table discussions as good or excellent.

Comments:

- "I learned a lot about demographics, plans for future, and what is informing decisions."
- "It was great to get together with fellow Norwalkers from all parts for the City to plan Norwalk's future and direction."
- "A good meeting. Need more participation from community."
- "It was an informative presentation of City information with an exchange of ideas."
- "Very happy I came."
- "This was an excellent forum for residents to voice their opinions and learn what is important to others. Please continue the conversation."

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CITYWIDE PLAN
Visioning Forum | November 18, 2017
tomorrow.norwalkct.org



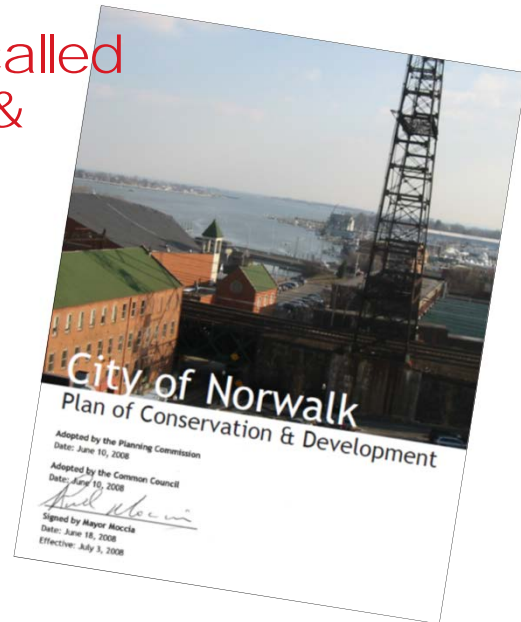
Norwalk Today

November 18, 2017



The Citywide Plan is also called the Plan of Conservation & Development.

- The **only** plan that covers **the entire city**
- State-required update every ten years for eligibility for discretionary state funding
- Under the jurisdiction of the Planning Commission
- The last plan was adopted in 2008.



State-required consideration of...

- *Physical, social, economic and governmental conditions, needs, and trends*
- *Affordable housing and economic diversity*
- *Drinking water supply protections*
- *Energy efficient development patterns*
- *Renewable energy*
- *Sea level rise scenarios*
- *Land use and density*
- *State and regional Plans of Conservation & Development*
- *Consistency with the municipal coastal program to restore, protect, and reduce pollution in Long Island Sound*

CGS Ch. 126, sec. 8-23



When will the Citywide Plan be finished?

Winter-Spring 2018

- Workshops:
 - Community/neighborhoods and organizations
 - Topics/themes
- Open Houses

Summer-Fall 2018

- Public review
- Public hearings

CITYWIDE PLAN/POCD SCHEDULE

Existing Conditions
August - November 2017

Community Visioning
October 2017 - January 2018

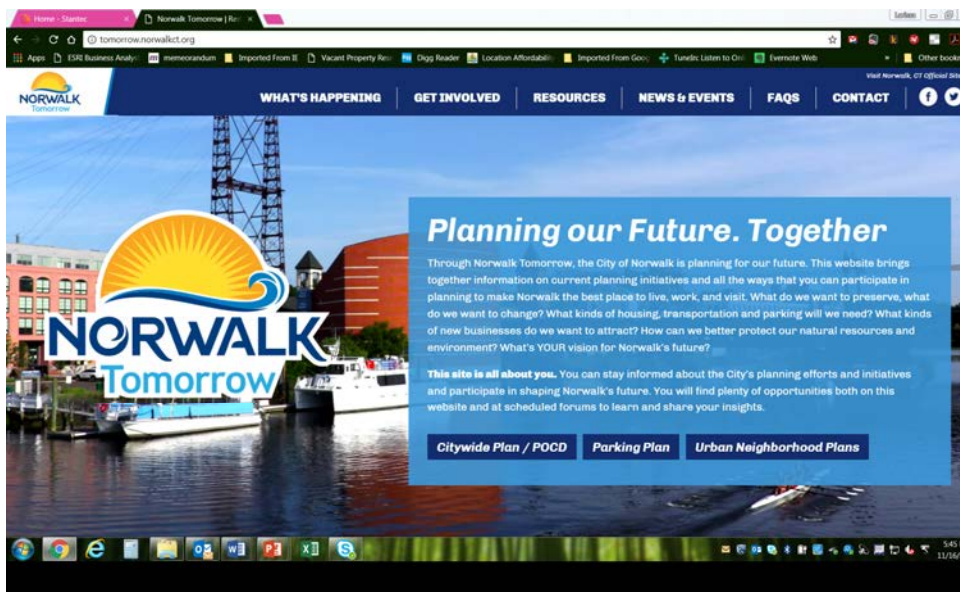
Plan Development
January - May 2018

Draft Plan and Review
May - September 2018

**Plan Presentation/
Final Plan**
September - November 2018



Planning website: tomorrow.norwalkct.org



The Citywide Plan will be based on a community vision.

IMAGINE

- 20 Year Vision – what's our shared vision for the entire city?

PLAN

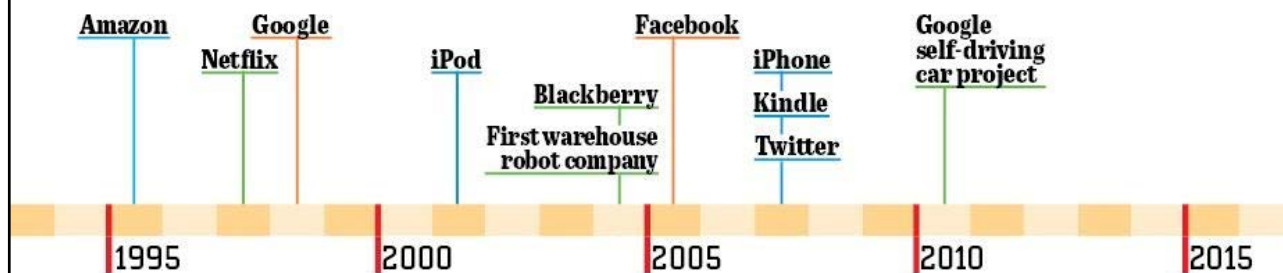
- Goals to make the vision real
- Strategies to achieve the goals

ACT

- Ten year set of actions implement the strategies

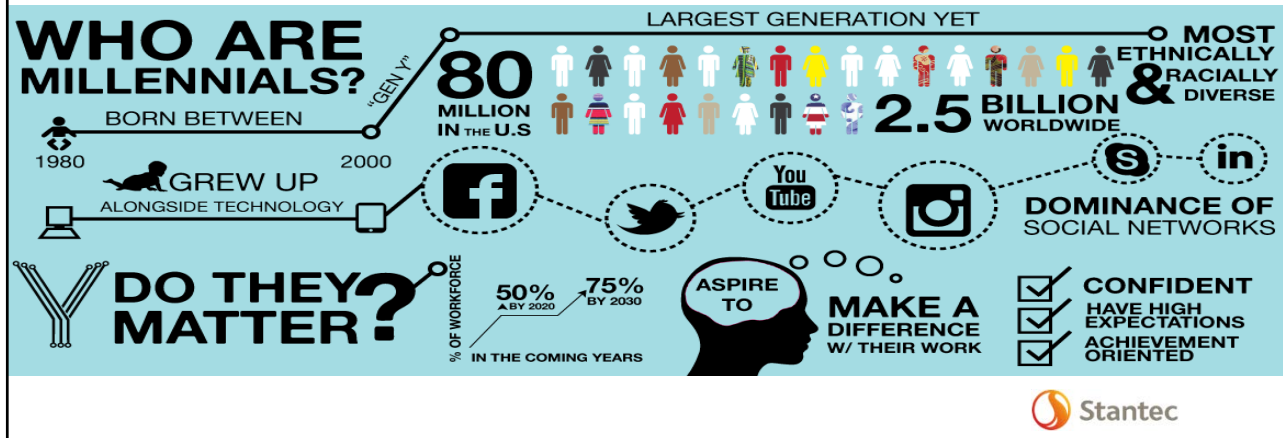


The Big Picture: the pace of 21st-century change...



The Big Picture: millennials in charge...

- 75% of the workforce by 2025
- Looking for choices in living, working, mobility, entertainment

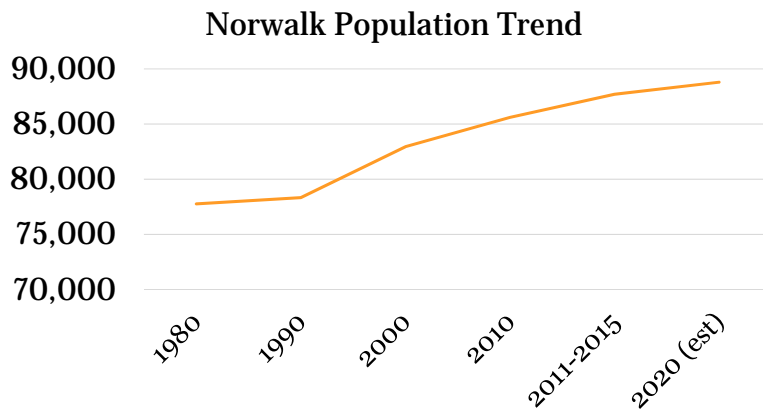


WHO WE ARE

Growing
Aging...but in transition
Diverse

Norwalk's population is growing.

- Estimated 88,438 people in 34,137 households
- Estimated average household size = 2.55
- 6th largest city in CT - growing faster than the state



Norwalk is aging...and making room for millennials.

- Median age
 - 2000: 37
 - 2016: 40
- Same as the county and the state
- Aging Baby Boomers
- Transition to millennials



Most Norwalk households have 1-2 people.

Households by Type (2011-2016)		
Total Households	34,137	100%
Total family households (related by blood, marriage, or adoption)	21,596	63%
--Married-couple family with own children	6,531	19%
Total non-family households	12,541	37%
Single person households	10,482	31%

- 63% have 1-2 people
- 25% include persons 65+
- 29% include persons under 18

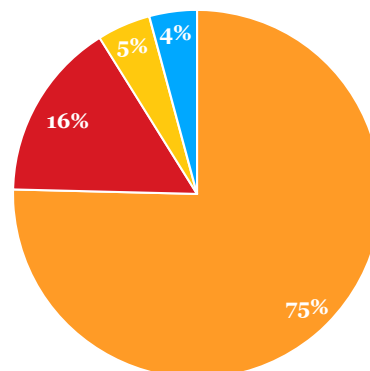


We are racially and ethnically diverse.



29% Hispanic/Latino
(any race)

Population by Race



White Black Asian Some other race



Immigrants account for most of the net gain in Fairfield County population in recent years.

In Norwalk

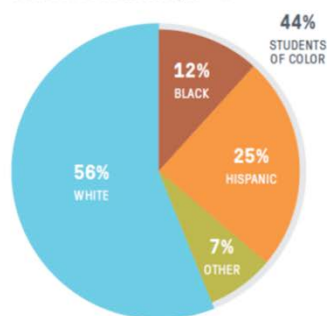
- 25% foreign born: about half are US citizens
- 85% are of prime working age (18-64)
- One-third have a BA or higher degree
- 35% (ages 5+) speak a language other than English at home
 - 21% of Norwalk residents are native speakers of Spanish
 - After Spanish, most common foreign languages are Creole, Italian, and Greek



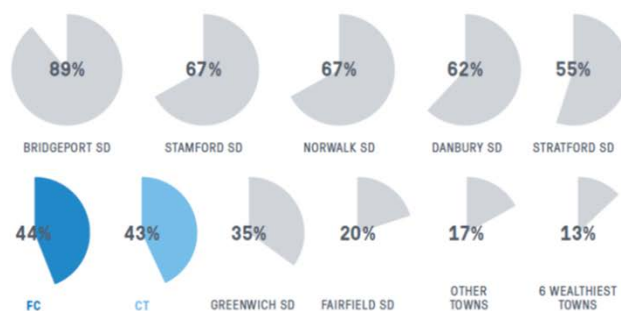
Norwalk school district

- 84% four-year graduation rate; 75% enroll in college
- 2% special education
- 14% English Language Learners
- 44% eligible for free and reduced-price lunch

FAIRFIELD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS, K-12



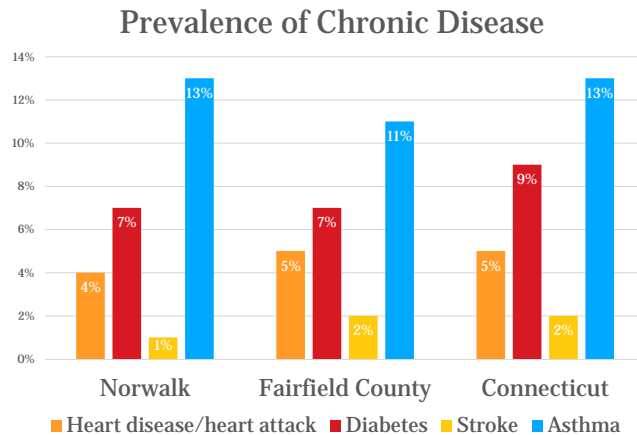
STUDENTS OF COLOR, BY DISTRICT



We are a little healthier than the state as a whole.

Health programs

- Healthy for Life
- NorWalker
- Fit Kids
- Growing Gardens, Growing Health
- Comenzando Bien (prenatal classes)



HOW WE LIVE

Housing types
 Owning and renting
 Housing values
 Housing growth
 Affordable housing



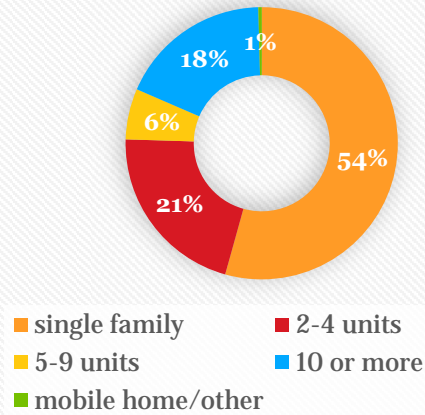
Over half of housing units are single family houses

Total 35,800 housing units

62% of all units are owner occupied

38% of all units are renter-occupied

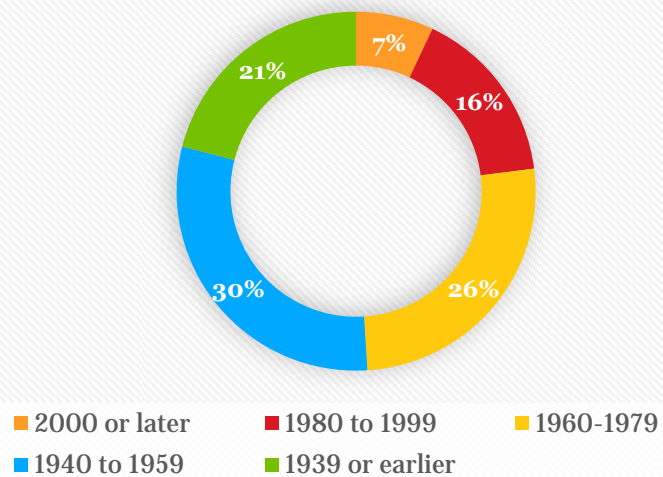
Housing Unit Types - Percent



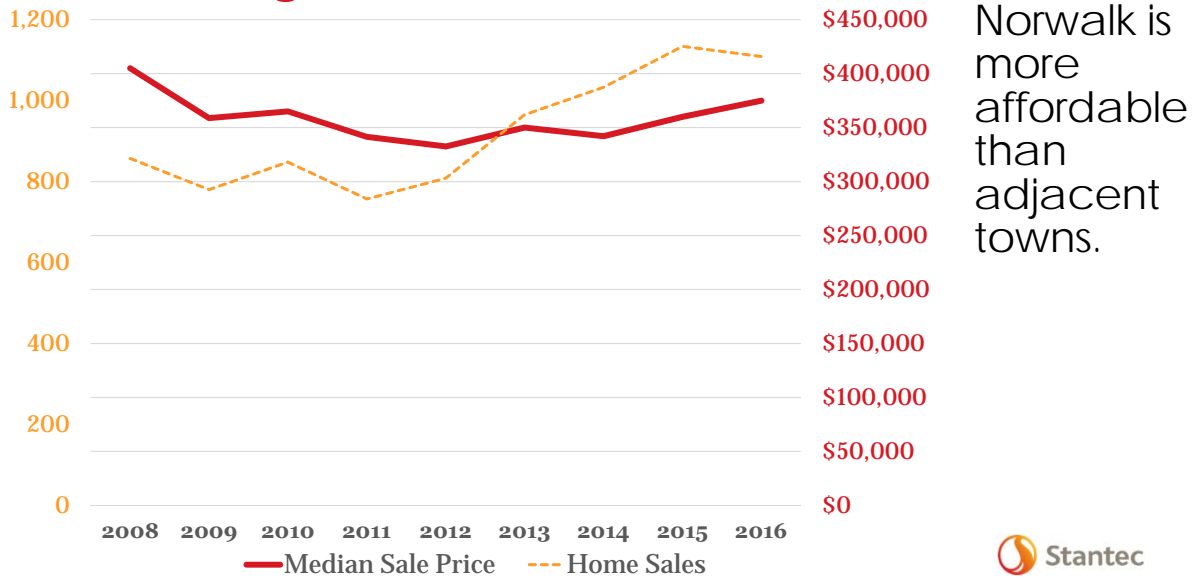
Half of all housing was built before 1960.

Median year structure built: 1960

Age of Housing - Percent

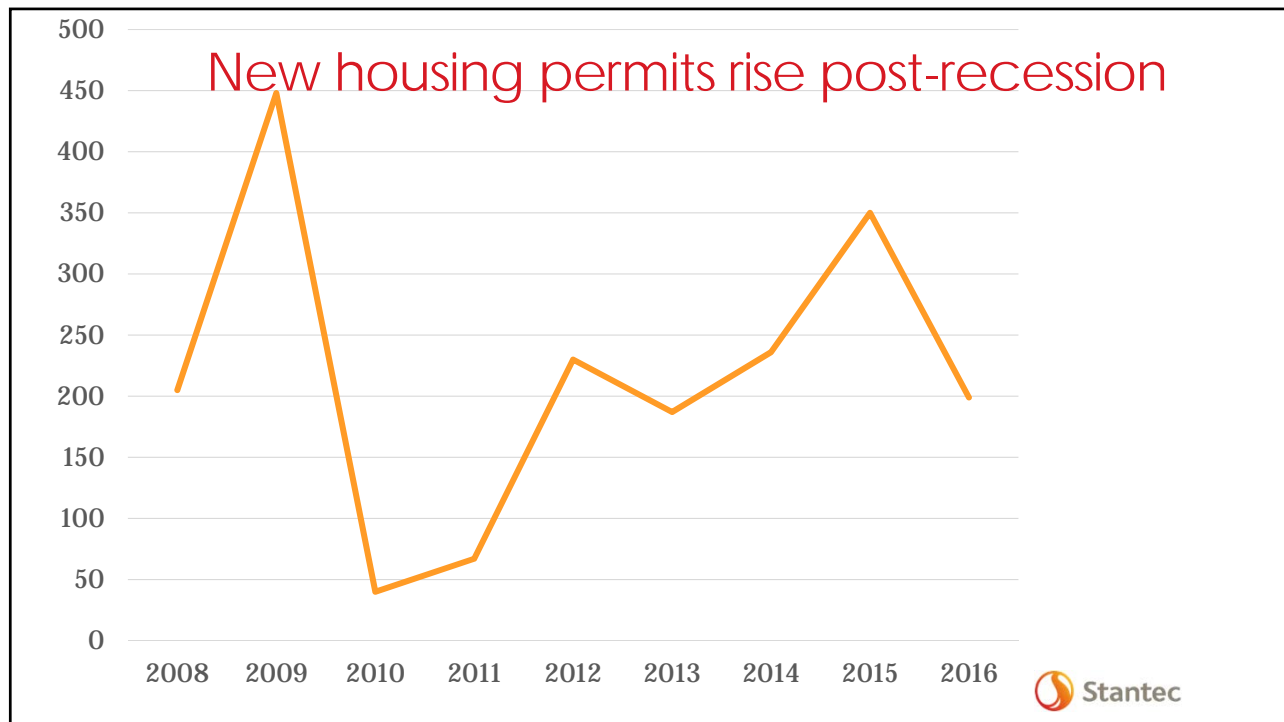


Housing sales and prices are rebounding(2008-2016)



Median housing value ~ \$410,000





Affordable housing in Norwalk

- 22% of households pay more than 50% of income in housing costs
- 12% of all housing units are below-market-rate (4,363 units)
- 18 public housing developments with 798 units for families and the elderly
- Workforce Housing ordinance: inclusionary zoning (10%)



Washington Village Transformation Plan: replacing 136 public housing units and adding 137 workforce and market rate units with federal funding

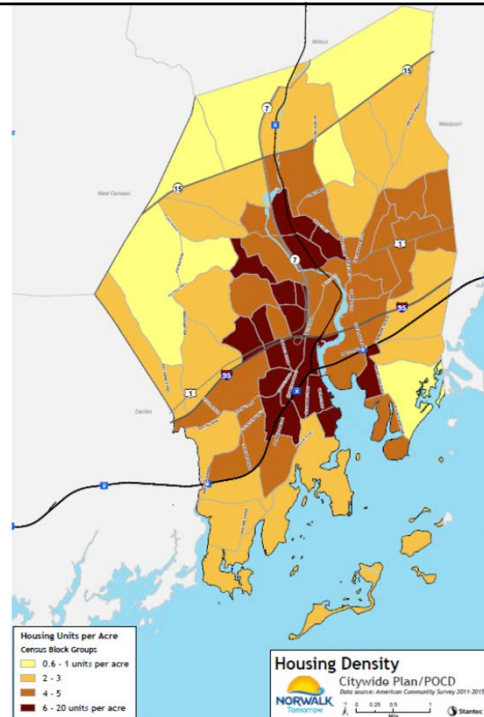
Development patterns and density follow history and infrastructure



Interconnected street grid and smaller lots closer to the center in sewered areas



Curved streets, cul-de-sacs, and larger lots at the city edges depending on septic systems



Norwalk has limited protections for its historic sites and no historic preservation plan.

23 sites on the National Register of Historic Places

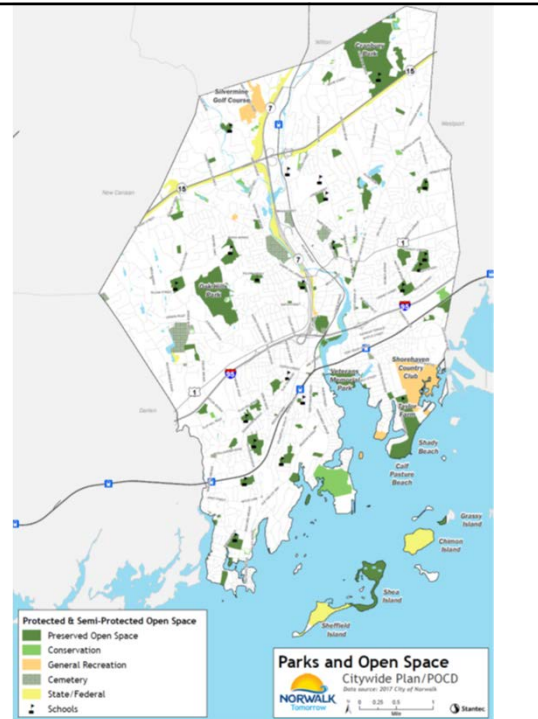
11 City-owned and managed historic properties

No local historic districts

Demolition delay ordinance for buildings at least 50 years old



A variety of parks and open spaces but no open space system plan



HOW WE PROSPER

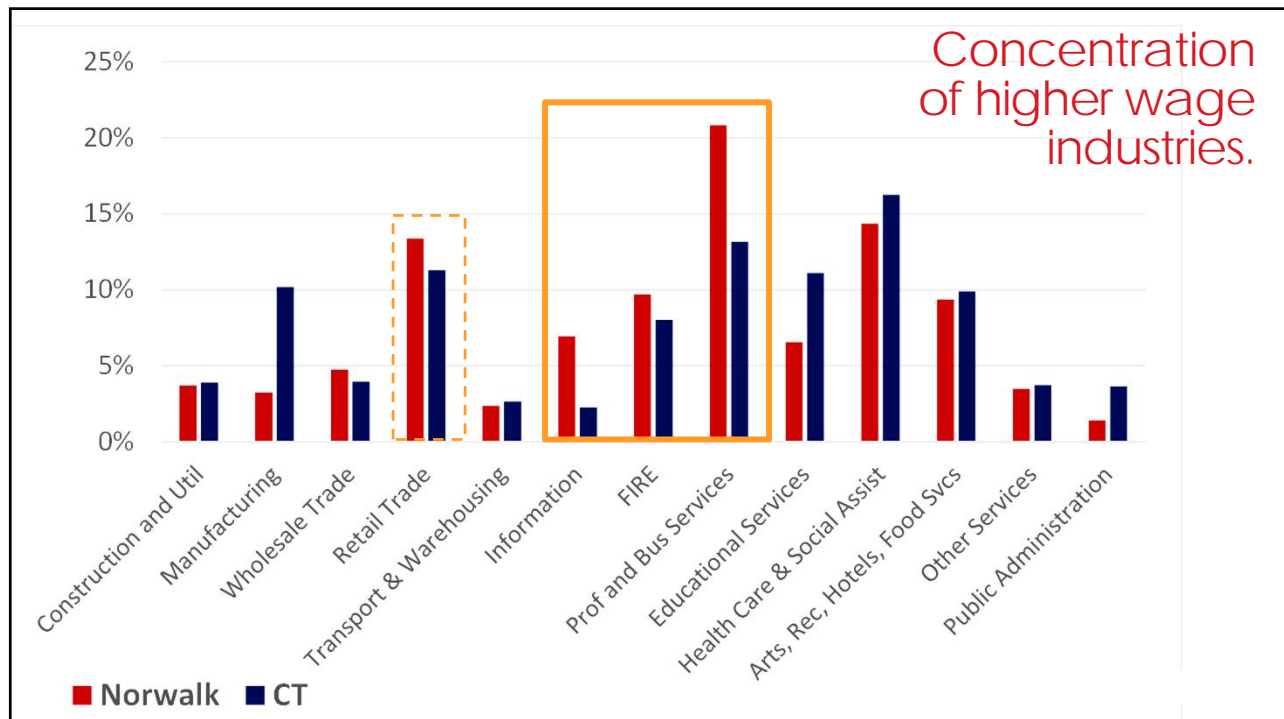
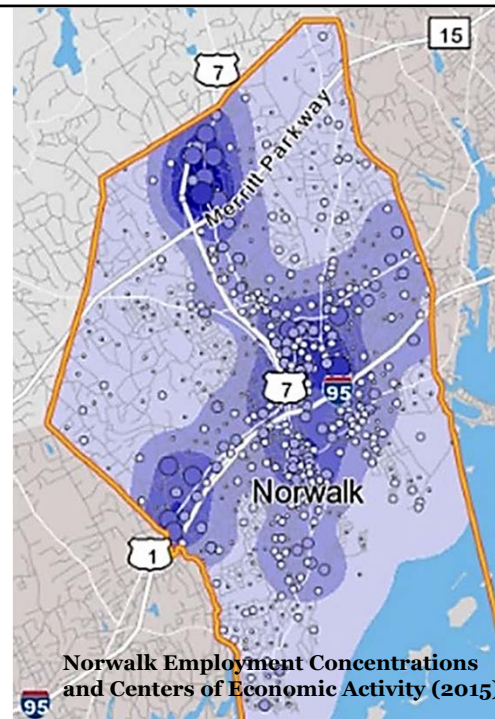
Incomes
Job types in Norwalk
Residents' job types
Poverty

Diversified economy and employment center

Approximately 45,000 jobs

No one employer accounts for more than 3.1% of jobs

Low unemployment rate
(3.8% in August 2017)

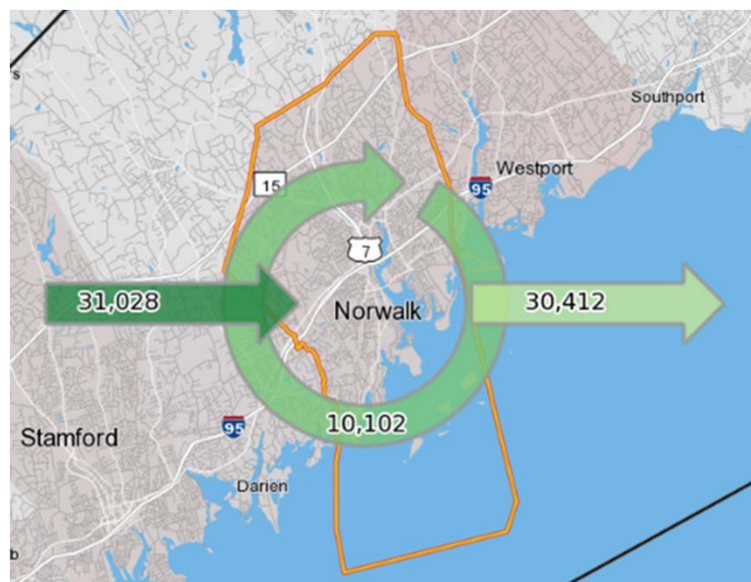


Top ten employers in diverse industries (2016).

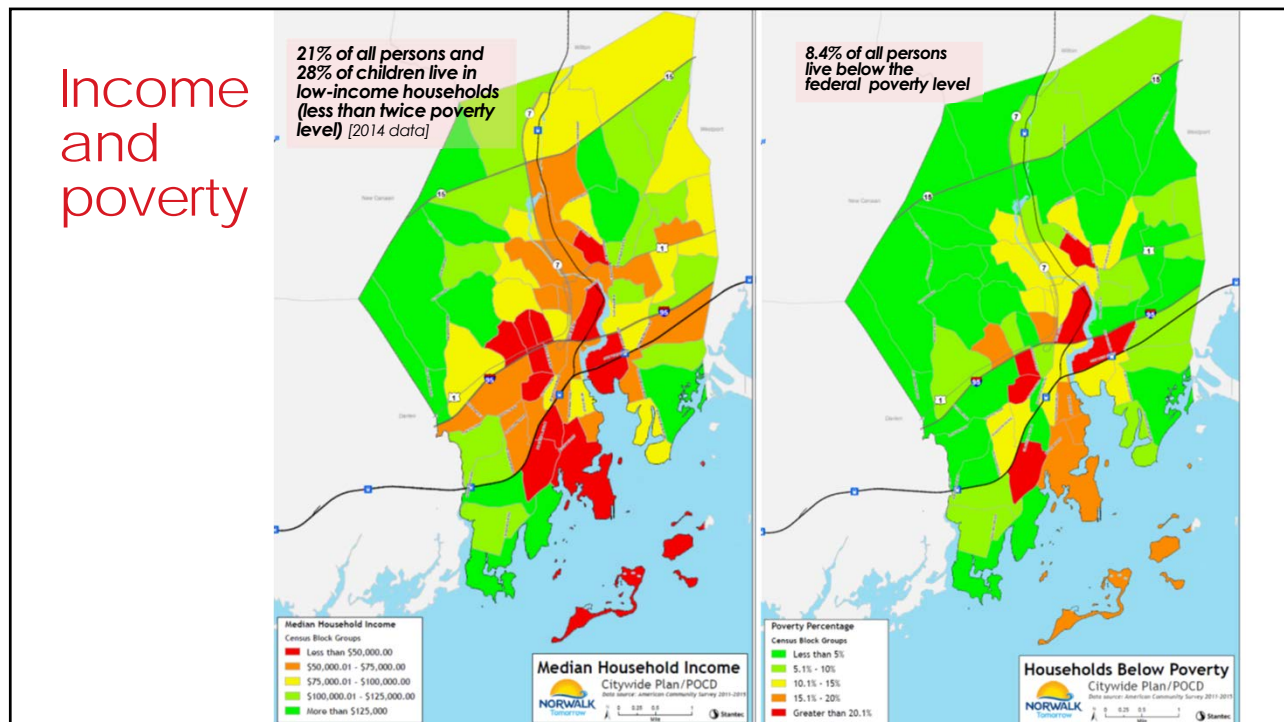
Employer	Type of Business	Employees
City of Norwalk	Municipality	1,830
Norwalk Hospital	Health Services	1,534
Cablevision of CT	Cable installation	1,200
General Electric	Diversified manufacturing	1,000
Stew Leonard's	Retail dairy/grocery	900
MBI	Direct Mail Marketing	800
Diageo	Beverage Manufacturing	700
Datto Inc.	Data Protection Services	650
Pepperidge Farm	Baked Goods	450



75% of Norwalk workers commute out of the city to work—Stamford, NYC, other CT



Income and poverty



GETTING AROUND THE CITY

Mobility
Multiple modes
Walking and Biking

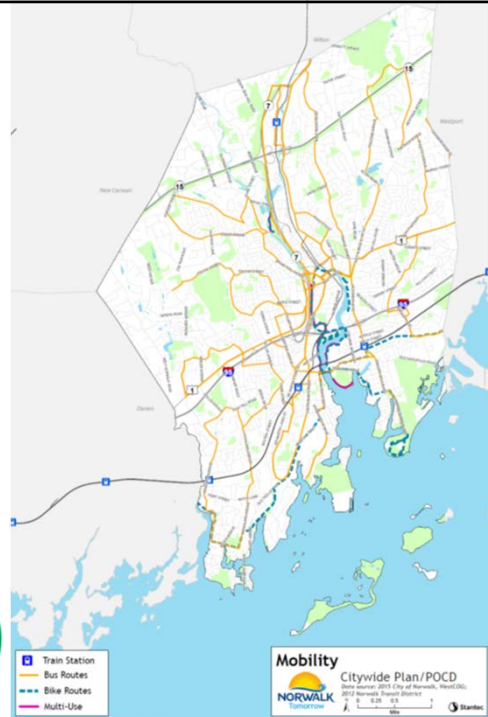
Transportation assets can also be barriers to connection.

Two commuter rail lines and four stations

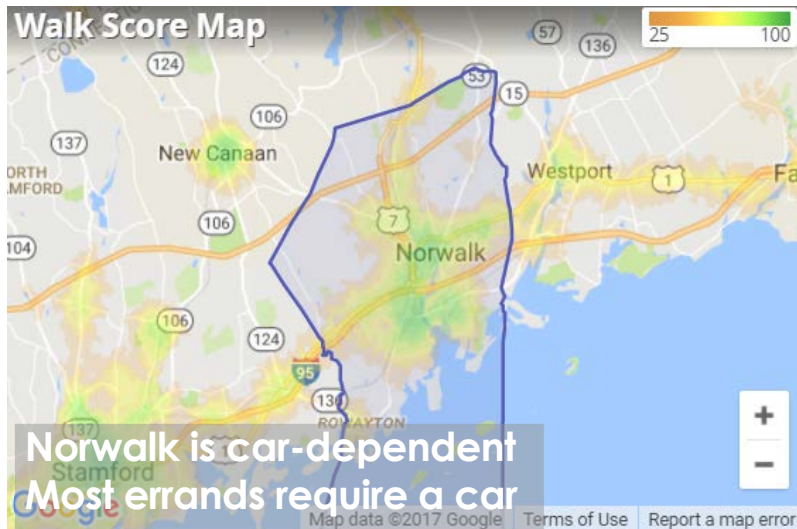
Arterials and regional, limited-access highways: I-95, Route 7, Merritt Parkway, Route 1

Limited bus network

2 cars per household average

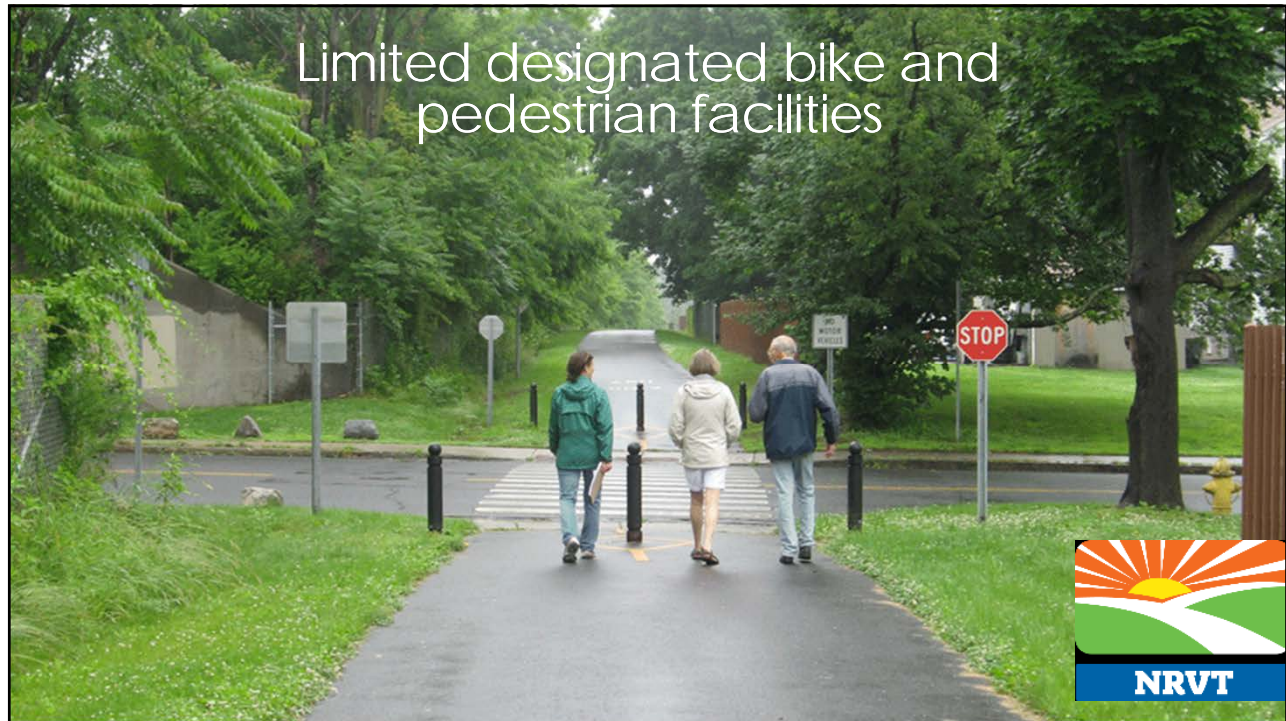


Norwalk Walk Score = 49 out of 100



Annual street and sidewalk spending:
\$6M on streets
\$1 M on sidewalks



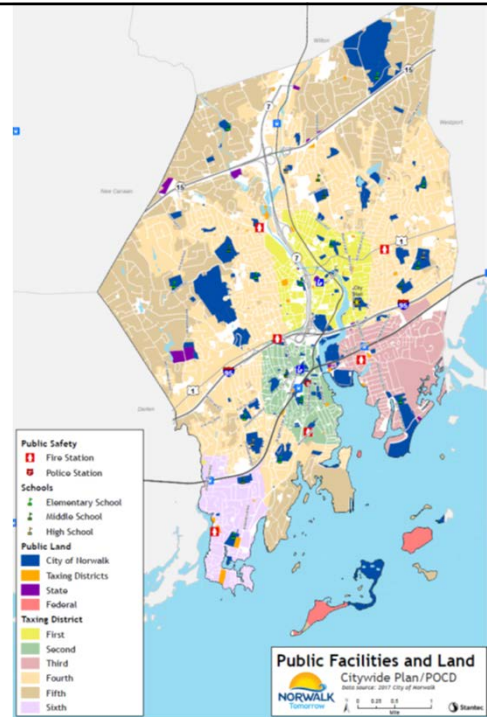


PUBLIC SERVICES AND SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS

Public facilities
Water systems
Energy and sustainability
Climate change and resilience

Public facilities serve all parts of the city.

- Parks
- Schools
- Fire stations
- Police Station
- City Hall
- Public libraries



There are many recreation services but no recreation system plan.

Recreation Department maintains 1,215 acres

- 32 parks, 19 school sites, and other city owned property

Recreation fees go back to the general fund, ~ \$1.3 M annually.

Special facilities and events include:

- Dog Park
- Leagues
- Docks and marina
- Concerts and events



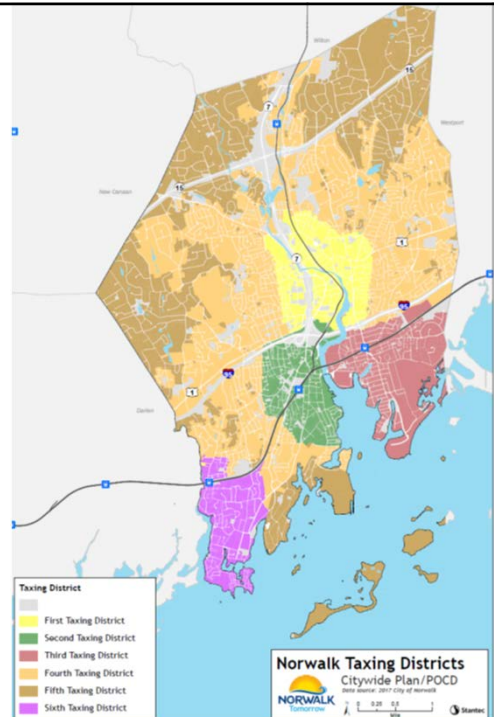
Separate taxing districts play different roles.

Separate political entities: First, Second, Third, Sixth

City entities: Fourth, Fifth

Property tax rates reflect mix of services from each district and the city

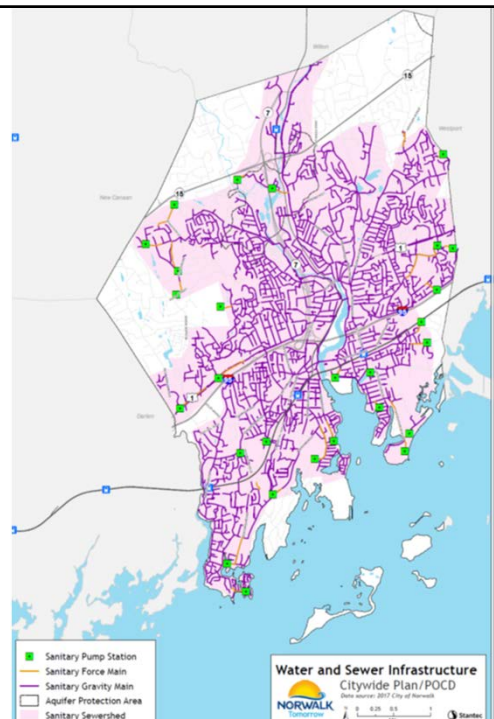
First, Second, Third TDs: operate utilities



Much of the city is sewerage.

Water Pollution Control Authority manages the wastewater system and stormwater management system.

- Plant located in flood and storm surge zones; recently upgraded
- 180 miles of pipeline
- 22 pumping stations
- More than adequate capacity for future development.



Multiple water supply and electric systems

Drinking water supply sources:

- Silvermine River watershed
- 4 reservoirs in Wilton and New Canaan

Electric energy group:

- Connecticut Municipal Electric Energy Cooperative
- Renewable energy: opt in
- First Taxing District: water to Third, Fourth and Fifth Districts
- Second Taxing District: South Norwalk Electric and Water for sections of South Norwalk, East Norwalk, West Norwalk, Rowayton, Silvermine
- Third Taxing District: electric power for East Norwalk
- Private wells in some areas



The risks of the future are not the risks of the past.

More extreme storm events and precipitation

More and longer heat waves

Summer droughts

Sea level rise

Higher temperatures



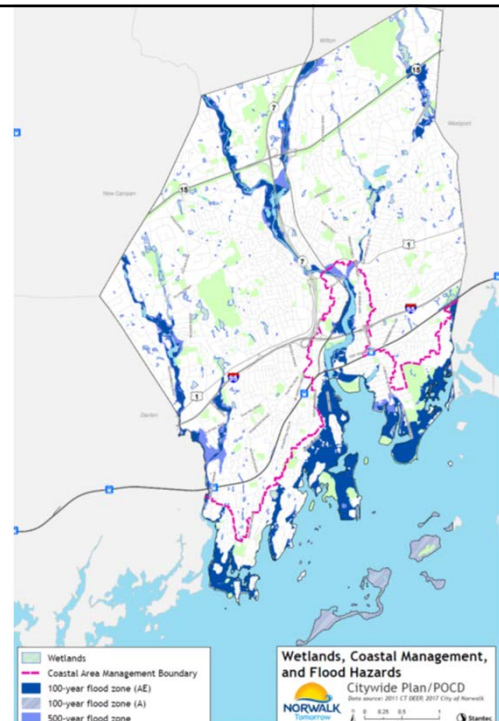
Flood vulnerability will increase.

FEMA flood zones are based on historical data.

Sea level rise and extreme storms will increase flood risk.

Existing 1% annual risk means 26% likelihood of flooding during a 30- year mortgage period.

Harbor Plan is in place for the Coastal Area Management district.



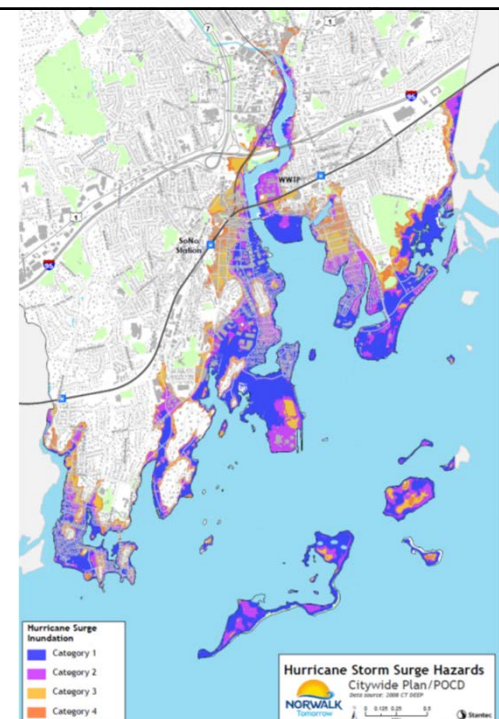
Sea level rise plus storm surge = more vulnerability.

Hurricane Category 1 or 2 storm impacts:

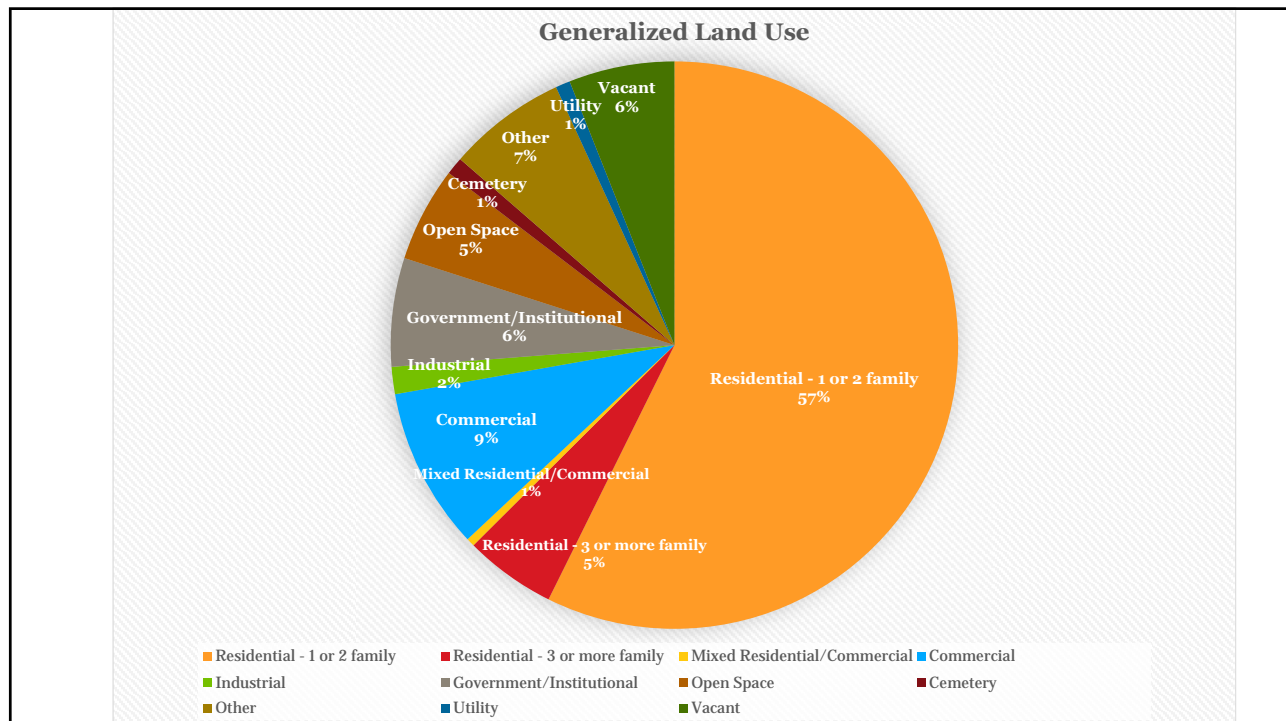
- 2,036 parcels (78% residential or mixed use)

Hurricane Category 4 storm impacts:

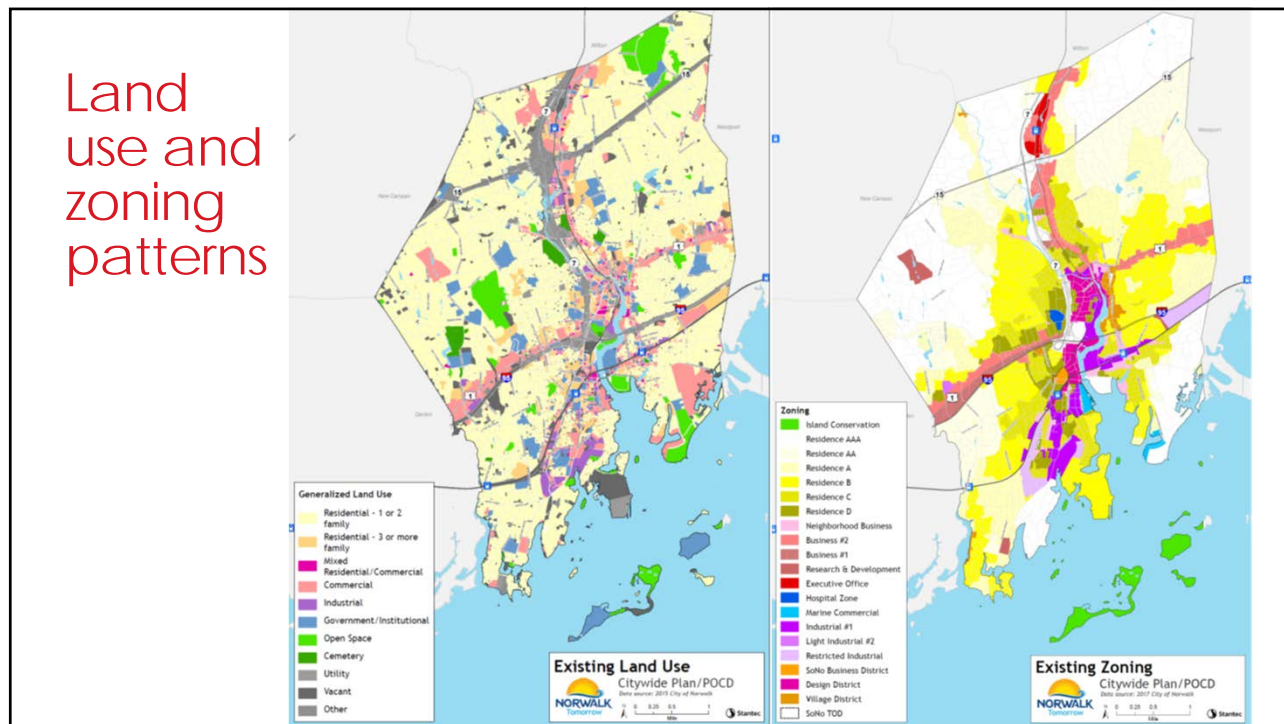
- 3,219 parcels (77% residential or mixed use)



LAND USE AND PLACEMAKING



Land use and zoning patterns



Urban design framework

In redevelopment districts: Redevelopment Agency design review for South Norwalk, West Avenue, Reed Putnam, Wall Street

Limited general design review in Village Districts

No design review elsewhere in the city, such as Route 1

Different design standards in different places for public realm/streetscape

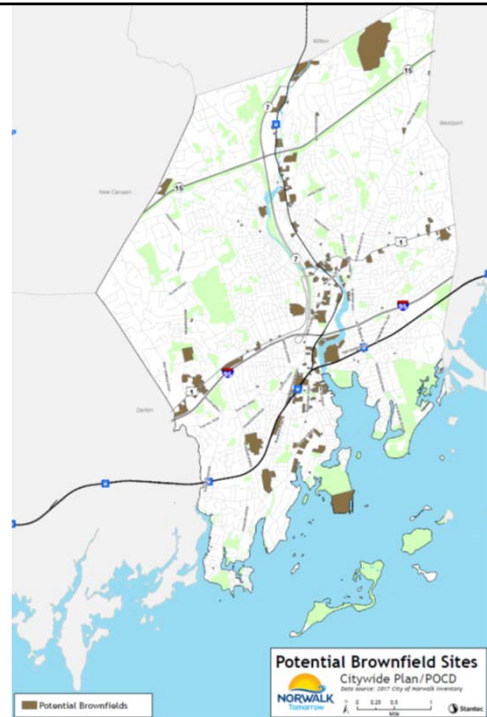
Brownfield sites

Redevelopment of older sites can involve environmental remediation.

The city has received EPA site assessment funding

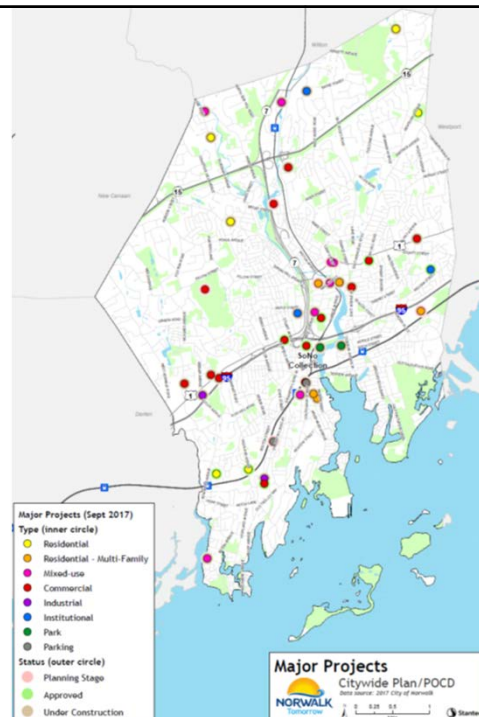
Kellogg-Deering Wellfield Superfund Site:

- 10-acre municipal well field and adjacent site
- Long term remedial actions: wellhead treatment, source control, aquifer management
- Ongoing groundwater treatment and monitoring underway (most recent EPA review September 2017)



Selected major development projects

- SoNo Collection – 12 acres; 700,000 sf
- Connecticut Ave commercial sites
- Washington Village
- Waypointe mixed use
- The Pearl mixed use
- Many renovations



Selected Norwalk city and community initiatives



- Redevelopment Agency plans for Wall Street/West Ave
- Parking study
- Norwalk Now marketing support for downtown businesses
- Norwalk Tomorrow joint public participation website and initiatives
- Performance dashboard under development
- Norwalk ACTS – focus on schools
- South Norwalk Community Conversation
- Innovative Places Group for Wall Street – incubator space; Makers' Guild
- Norwalk 2.0 – public art



The Norwalk Big Picture

Diverse....

- Population
- Economy
- Development patterns and neighborhoods
- Landscapes
- Something for everyone...

But fragmented....

- Urban and suburban
- Taxing district identities
- Strong neighborhood identities
- Weaker downtown
- Lack of system plans
- Economic divisions



SMARTPHONE POLL

1. Wifi access in the room: NPs-Guest
2. Use your device to go to: **stantec.cnf.io**
2. Select the Norwalk poll



Live Content Slide

When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content

Social Q&A

Live Content Slide

When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content

Poll: Test: Are you...

Live Content Slide

When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content

Poll: How old are you?

Live Content Slide

When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content

Poll: What is your gender?

Live Content Slide

When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content

Poll: How do you describe yourself?

Live Content Slide

When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content

Poll: Are you Hispanic/Latino?

Live Content Slide

When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content

Poll: How long have you lived in Norwalk?

*Live Content Slide**When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content*

Poll: What part of Norwalk do you live in?

*Live Content Slide**When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content*

Poll: What kind of household do you live in?

*Live Content Slide**When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content*

Poll: Do you rent or own your home?

*Live Content Slide**When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content*

Poll: What is your household income range?

Live Content Slide

When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content

Poll: Where do you work?

Live Content Slide

When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content

Poll: How do you get to work?

Live Content Slide

When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content

**Poll: How would you rate the overall
quality of life in Norwalk?**

Live Content Slide

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**Poll: What places do you most associate
with the identity of Norwalk?**

*Live Content Slide**When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content*

Poll: From your home, can you walk to a store, restaurant, service, school, park, or other city destination that you would like to go to?

*Live Content Slide**When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content*

Poll: Do you and your family feel safe bicycling in Norwalk?

Live Content Slide

When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content

Poll: How well do you know your neighbors?

Live Content Slide

When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content

Poll: How do you experience a sense of community in Norwalk?

*Live Content Slide**When playing as a slideshow, this slide will display live content*

Poll: In one or two words - if you could change one thing in Norwalk, what would it be?

Today's activities

Assets and opportunities discussion

- The best of the city/challenges facing the city

Visions, Values, Priorities

- Personal visions
- Share and discover commonalities
- Top five vision elements or values

Small Groups report to the whole

Redevelopment neighborhood plan and parking study survey

RAFFLE!!

