



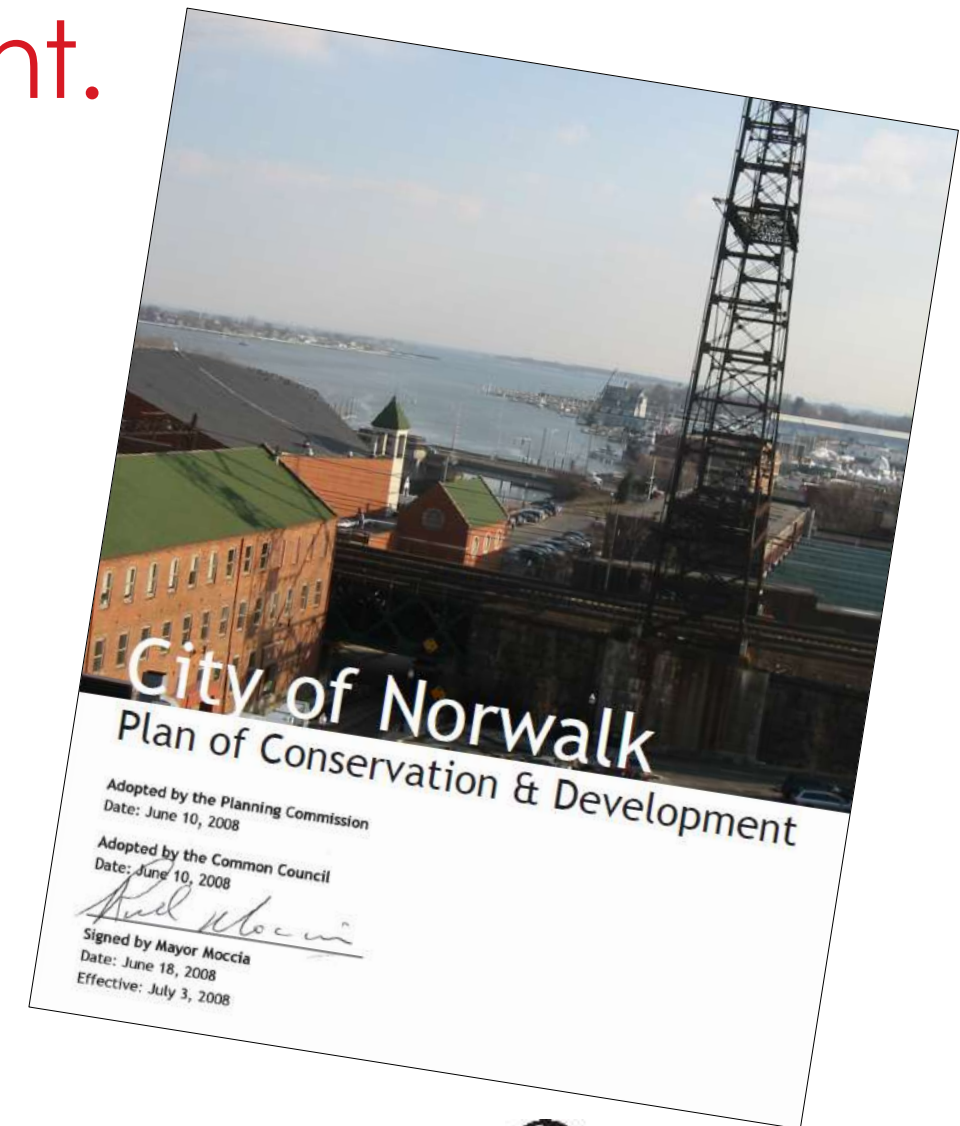
CITYWIDE PLAN
Topic Workshop | City Design
May 22, 2018
tomorrow.norwalkct.org

Tonight's agenda

- The planning process and the context of the plan
- Themes for discussion:
 - Elements of high-quality city design
 - Development patterns in Norwalk
 - Design strategies
- Questions and discussion
- Small group discussion

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



SURVEY: Who's in the room?

- Smartphone survey

Website: **stantec.cnf.io**

WiFi: Free-Wifi-3



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Poll: What is your gender?

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Poll: How old are you?

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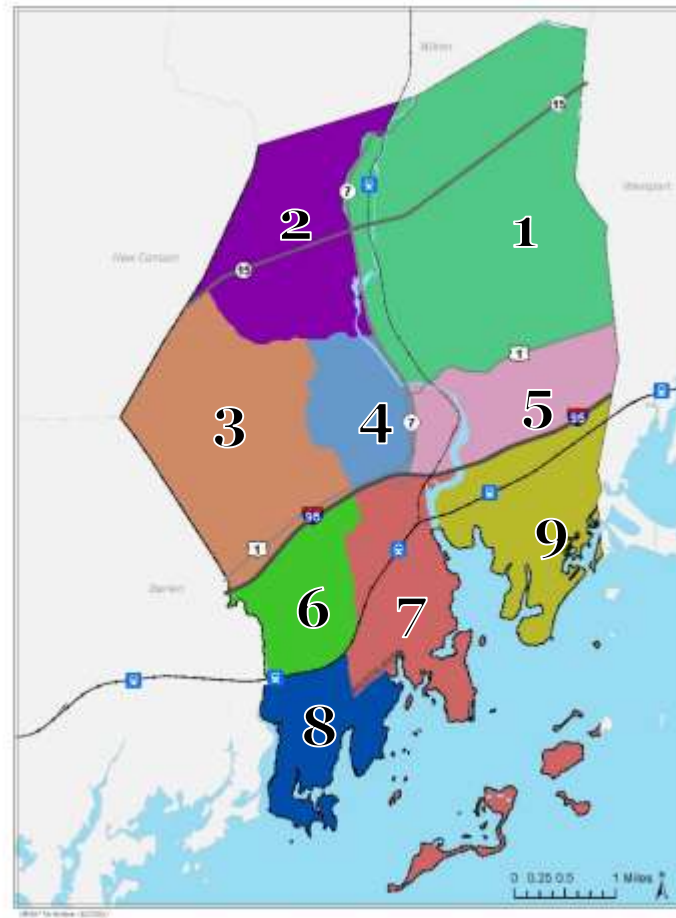
Poll: How do you describe yourself?

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Poll: Are you Hispanic/Latino?

What part of the City do you live in?



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Poll: What part of the city do you live in?

Citywide Visioning Forum

November 18, 2017

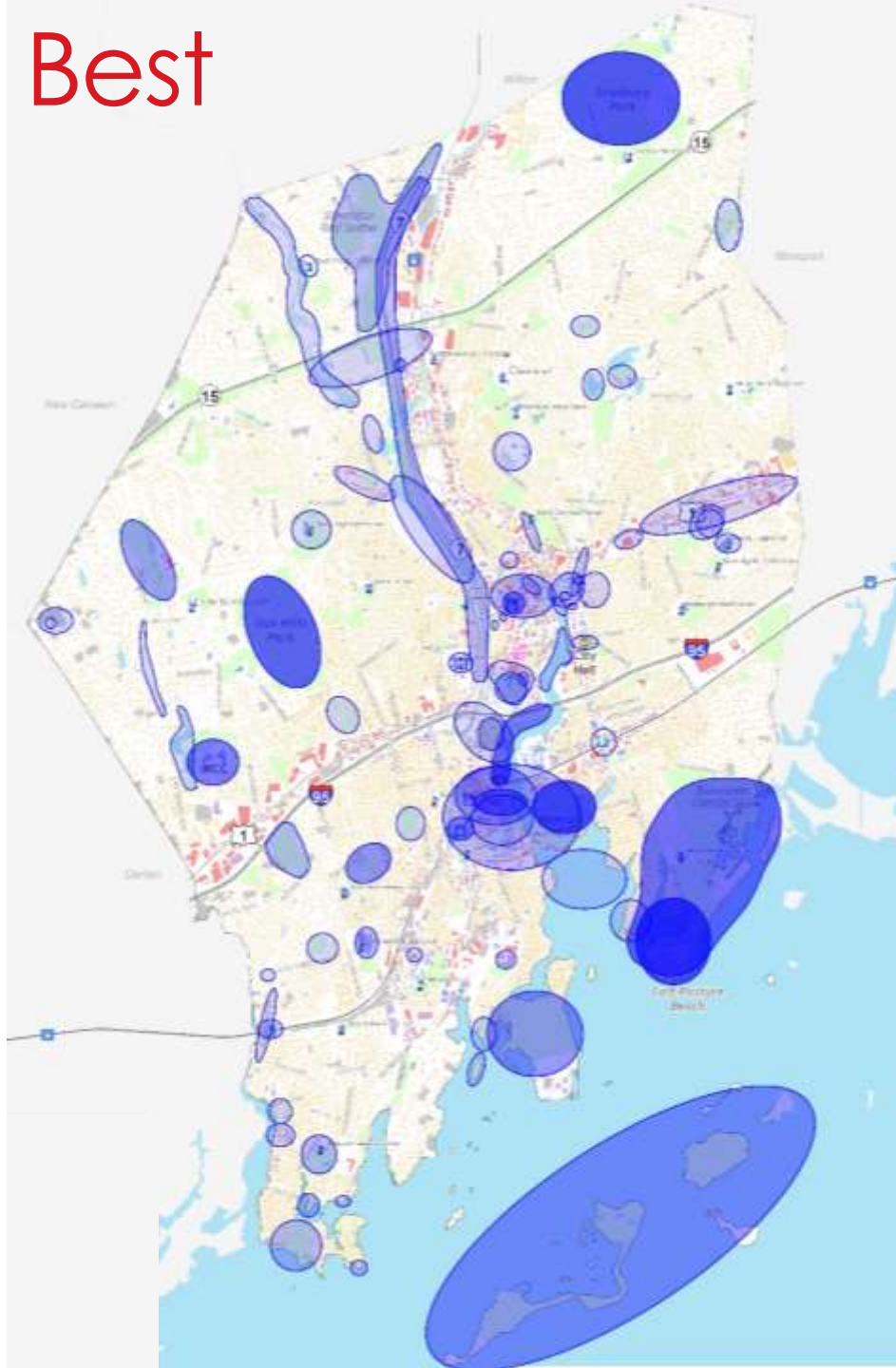


Neighborhood Meetings

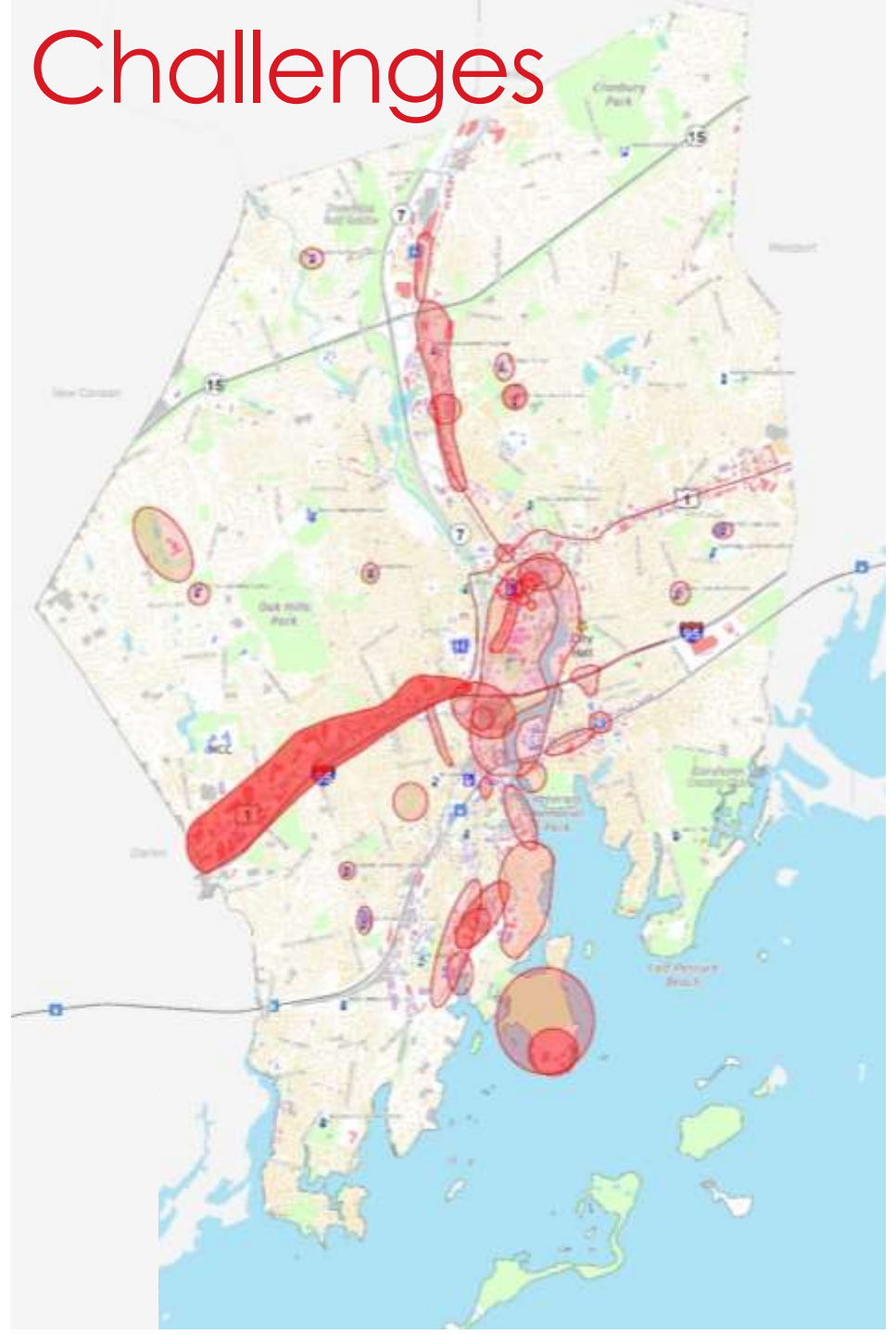
March 2018



Best



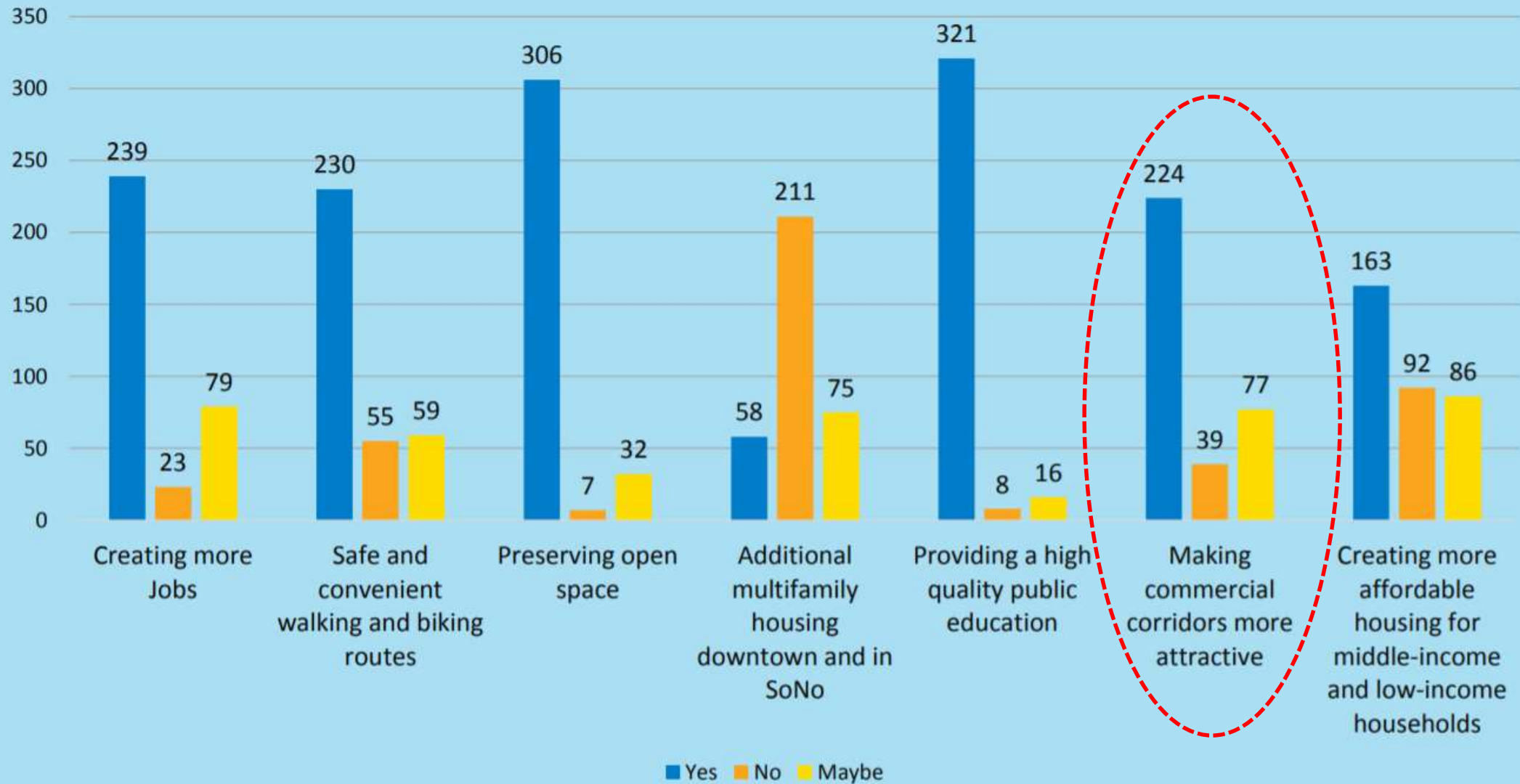
Challenges



What do you like most about Norwalk?

- Diversity
- Culture
- ★ Distinctive neighborhoods
- ★ The look feel of it – like a city
- History
- Beach and public parks
- Location
- Nightlife
- Local Business
- Safety
- Water access
- Train access
- Kid friendly activities
- ★ Urban feel with suburban comforts
- The community
- SoNo
- The schools
- ★ The improvement of Washington Street
- Food
- The people

Norwalk should be focusing on...



WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO HIGH-QUALITY CITY DESIGN?

Character of high-quality places

- People want to be there and do things there
- Welcoming and people-centered
- Safe and comfortable
- Accessible and connected
- Sociable and with active uses
- Human-scale environment
- Varied and interesting
- Walkable and bikeable



4 D's: Distance, Diversity, Density, and Design

Distance

- Small walkable blocks close to destinations

Diversity

- Mix of uses close together

Density

- Enough people to make a place look and feel busy
- Contextual – each place is unique

Design

- High-quality, pedestrian-oriented design



Key placemaking characteristics

- **Walkability**
- **Connectivity**
- **A multi-layered public realm**
- **A diverse mix of choices**
- **Authenticity**



What is urban design?

The art of creating and shaping cities and towns

- The arrangement and design of buildings, public spaces, transport systems, services, and amenities
- Makes connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built environment
- Combines planning, transportation, architecture, engineering, development economics, landscape, public art



STREETS & CIRCULATION



PUBLIC / OPEN SPACE



BUILDINGS, USES, & ARCHITECTURE

What contributes to quality city design?

Hudson, NY



Housing above shops

Pedestrian lighting

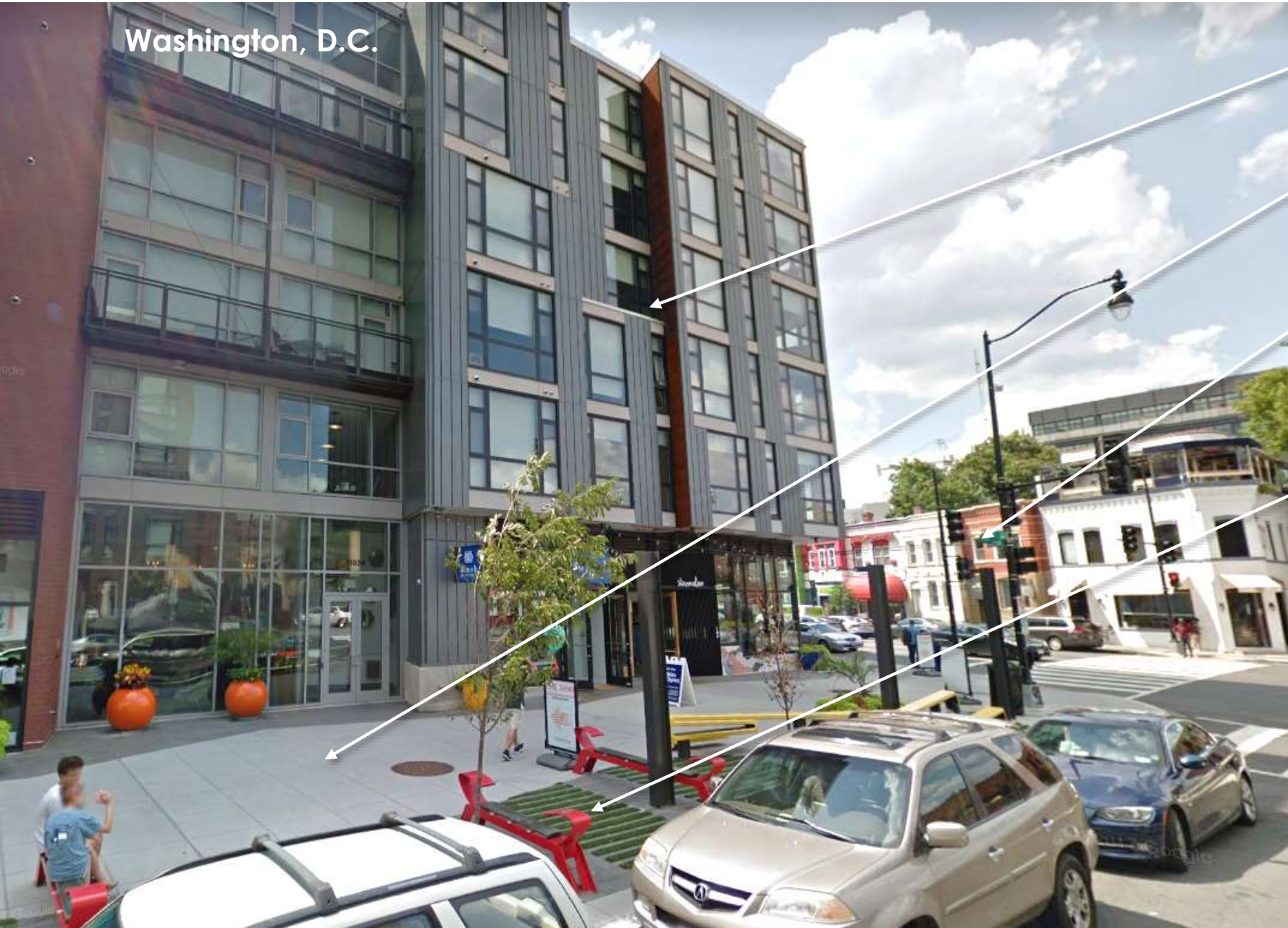
Unique storefronts

Big shop windows

On-street parking

What contributes to quality city design?

Washington, D.C.



Varied façade depth,
material, etc

Wide sidewalks

Mix of old and new
buildings

Creative streetscape

What about “placeless” locations?

- “Anywhere USA” - standardized design could be anywhere
- Designed mainly for vehicles rather than people
- Land uses separated by curbs, walls, and by car trips
- Traffic congestion despite lower densities



Route 1, Norwalk

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS IN NORWALK

Norwalk development patterns

- Most **neighborhoods**: stable with relatively little change
- **Coastal areas**: adapt to climate change
- **SoNo and downtown**: ongoing investment and redevelopment, especially housing
- **Major corridors**: redevelopment potential over 10 years



Major corridors: Route 1 Westport Ave/Connecticut Ave

- Regional retail attraction
- Big box stores like Home Depot, WalMart, Bed Bath & Beyond, etc
- Direct access from I-95 to Connecticut Ave



Major corridors: Main St/Main Ave

- Retail primarily for local market
- Mix of retail, office, housing, auto repair, etc
- Connection between Rt 15 and Rt 7



Westport Ave

1,420' between crosswalks – more than a quarter-mile

- Existing sidewalk
- Driveways
- Missing sidewalk



Historic preservation

- Limited control of changes to historic structures or districts
- No local historic districts
- National Register designation does not provide protection from demolition or significant changes



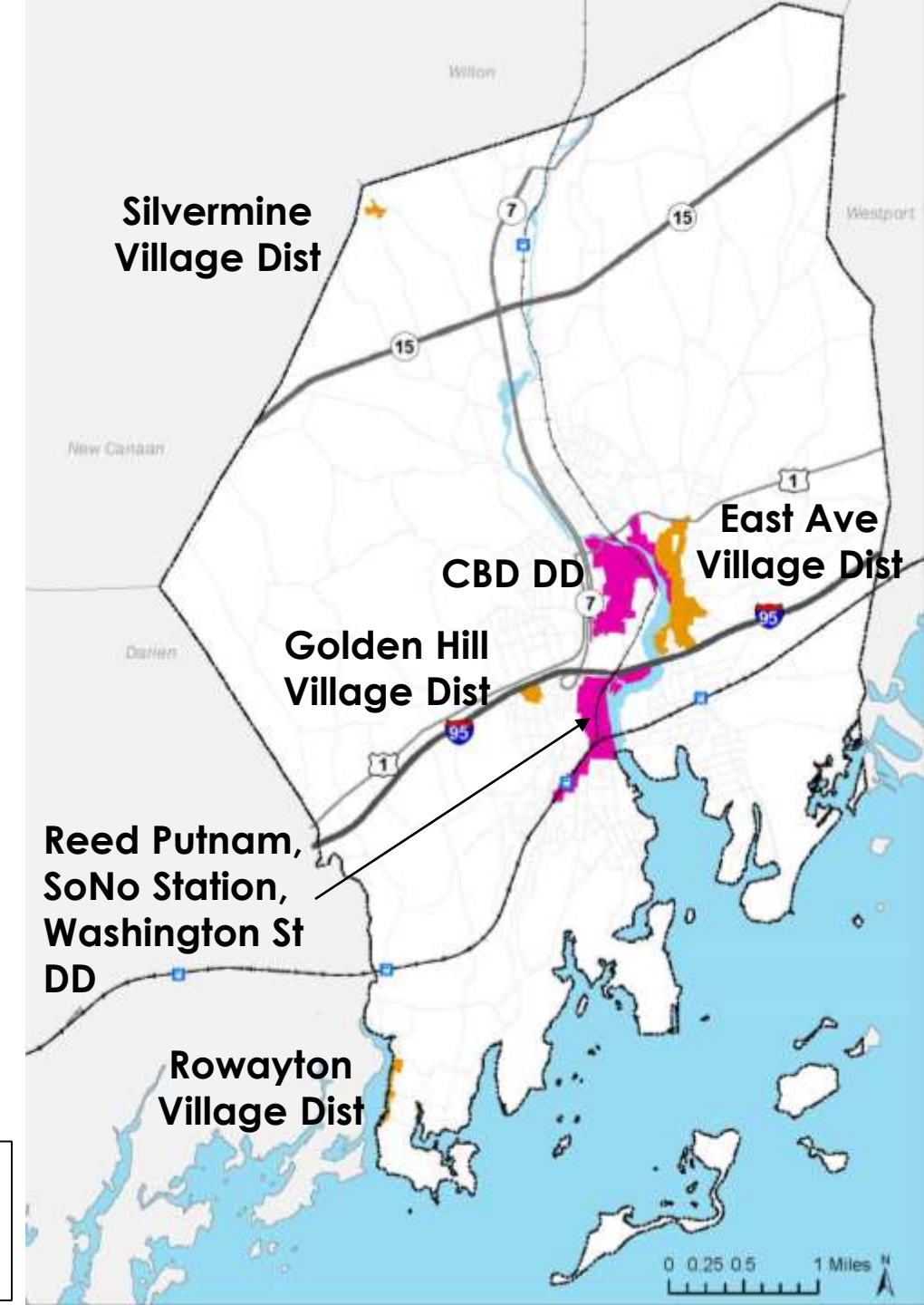
Design and Village Districts

Design Districts (4)

- Design review by Redevelopment Authority

Village Districts (4)

- Design review by village district consultant



Design and Village Districts

Design Districts (4)

- Refer to design guidelines/ neighborhood plans

Village Districts (4)

- Review standards are limited and general
 - “harmoniously relate”
 - “consistent with”



Rowayton VD

DESIGN GOALS FOR NORWALK

Goals – Strategies – Actions

- WHAT should be our goals?
- WHY these goals?
- HOW can we achieve them?

Public actions + private actions
City of Norwalk + property owners

Goal: Support local centers of activity in neighborhoods

WHY?

- Norwalk's unique neighborhoods and its small town feel are assets to preserve
- Support small, local businesses near where people live
- Make it easier and more inviting to walk or bike there (also improving health and reducing air pollution)
- Public actions like street and sidewalk improvements
- Private actions like façade improvements, redevelopment

Goal: Promote high-quality redevelopment along major corridors

WHY?

- Zoning and development controls, big box sprawl, and road improvements are challenges
- No “there” there along Route 1 and Main Street
- Retail is changing rapidly and redevelopment opportunities are likely in the next ten years

Goal: Promote high-quality redevelopment along major corridors

WHY?

- Public actions like zoning revisions, street and sidewalk improvements, corridor plans
- Private actions like building and site improvements, site assembly, redevelopment

Goal: Strengthen Village District design standards

WHY?

- Enhancing zoning regulations is important to the community
- Current zoning lacks clear design standards
- Public actions like zoning updates and revisions
- Private actions like façade improvements, infill development

Goal: Preserve historic and cultural character

WHY?

- Historic elements are community assets
- Few existing controls limit what can be done to historic buildings or areas
- Public art is one way of expressing local character and cultural identity
- Public actions like local historic districts, “1% for the Arts” funding
- Private actions like historic rehab, public art design

What do you think of these goals?

- Smartphone survey

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Poll: Support local centers of activity in neighborhoods

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**Poll: Promote high-quality redevelopment
along major corridors**

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Poll: Strengthen Village District design standards

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**Poll: Preserve historic and cultural
character**

DESIGN STRATEGIES FOR NORWALK

Neighborhoods, Corridors, and Historic Resources

What are desired outcomes?

- **Walkable mixed-use centers**, ranging in scale from small neighborhood centers to SoNo and downtown
- **High-quality redevelopment** responsive to existing or anticipated development patterns
- **Historic resources** that are preserved and enhanced

What are appropriate indicators?

Walkable mixed-use centers

- Safe, connected sidewalks
- Mix of complementary uses
- Buildings near sidewalk with parking behind

High-quality redevelopment

- Heights and setbacks transition to surrounding context
- Design and materials reflect existing character or support new identity

What are appropriate indicators?

High-quality redevelopment (con't)

- Articulated building facades
- Landscape areas designed as visual and environmental amenity
- Public art incorporated

Historic resources

- Historic structures and districts are preserved
- Well-maintained and actively used historic buildings
- Intact historic districts that connect people to history

Urban design tools

- **Zoning standards** must be met for project approval e.g. setback, height limit, etc
 - *Required*
 - *Can include design standards*
- **Design guidelines** describe desired outcome to help community and developer envision what is acceptable
 - *Advisory*
 - *Design-focused*

Tactical urbanism

- Temporary, short-term idea-testing to get feedback and build momentum for long-term transformation
 - *“Lighter, quicker, cheaper”*



Resources: Build a Better Block, Ioby (In Our Back Yard),
Project for Public Spaces

GOAL: Support local centers of activity in neighborhoods

Strategy: Designate informal “neighborhood centers” and/or additional village districts

Strategy: Improve public realm in existing centers of activity

- Sidewalks, street trees, signage/public art
- Basic design standards
- Façade grant program



Neighborhood centers – Cranbury Market



Neighborhood centers – Cranbury Market



Neighborhood centers – New Cannan Ave



Neighborhood centers – New Canaan Ave



Neighborhood centers – Main at Center



Neighborhood centers – Main at Center



Neighborhood centers – Stevens at Stuart



Neighborhood centers – Stevens at Stuart



Neighborhood centers – East Norwalk



Neighborhood centers – East Norwalk



Neighborhood centers – First at Cove



Neighborhood centers – First at Cove



GOAL: Promote high-quality redevelopment along major corridors

Strategy: Create zoning to achieve desired outcomes as redevelopment occurs

- Mixed-use design standards
- Sub-divide large blocks with internal street network
- Access management and consolidation of driveways



GOAL: Promote high-quality redevelopment along major corridors

Strategy: Identify priority centers along corridors

- Connections to neighborhoods
- Existing assets to build from
- Critical mass of redevelopment potential
- Corridor planning needed



GOAL: Promote high-quality redevelopment along major corridors

Strategy: Identify priority centers along corridors

- Main St at Center Ave (also local center)
- Westport Ave near Strawberry Hill Ave
- Connecticut Ave near Scribner Ave



Example retrofit of suburban corridor

Existing



Auto-scaled
street lights

Existing
businesses

Blank wall
along sidewalk

Wide curb cut
for parking

Vacant
property

Narrow sidewalk
next to road

Example retrofit of suburban corridor

Initial investment



Façade improvements, seating area

Public art

Temporary paint to test idea

Landscape improvements

Example retrofit of suburban corridor



Long-term investment

Pedestrian-scale
street lights

New buildings
along sidewalk

Widen sidewalks

GOAL: Strengthen Village District standards

Strategy: Improve design standards to better communicate desired character

- Building orientation
- Build-to lines
- Height and massing
- Parking placement
- Landscaping and screening
- Etc.

East Avenue VD



Silvermine VD



Source: graybarns.com

GOAL: Preserve historic and cultural character

Strategy: Explore establishment of local historic districts

- Historic district commission
- Certificate of appropriateness for exterior architectural features



Source: Norwalk Historical Society

GOAL: Preserve historic and cultural character

Strategy: Invest in public art as placemaking and value-creating asset

- '1% for the Arts' – private contributions
- Funds for creation and maintenance
- Public spaces
- Blank walls
- Traffic control boxes



Source: Norwalk Arts Commission

SURVEY: What do you think of these strategies?

- Smartphone survey

Website: **stantec.cnf.io**

WiFi:

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Poll: Designate informal “neighborhood centers” and/or additional village districts

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**Poll: Improve the public realm in existing
centers of activity**

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Poll: Create zoning to achieve desired outcomes as redevelopment occurs

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**Poll: Identify priority centers along
corridors**

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Poll: Improve Village District design standards to better communicate desired character

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Poll: Explore establishment of local historic districts

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**Poll: Invest in public art as placemaking
and value-creating asset**

WHAT DO YOU THINK
OF THESE PLACES?

Thinking about major corridors like Rt. 1 and Main Avenue...

- Smartphone poll

Website: **stantec.cnf.io**

WiFi:

- A. Really like
- B. Somewhat like
- C. Neither like or dislike
- D. Somewhat dislike
- E. Really dislike

Place #1

- A. Really like
- B. Somewhat like
- C. Neither like or dislike
- D. Somewhat dislike
- E. Really dislike



Live Content Slide

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Poll: What do you think of Place #1?

Place #2

- A. Really like
- B. Somewhat like
- C. Neither like or dislike
- D. Somewhat dislike
- E. Really dislike



Live Content Slide

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

Poll: What do you think of Place #2?

Place #3

- A. Really like
- B. Somewhat like
- C. Neither like or dislike
- D. Somewhat dislike
- E. Really dislike



Live Content Slide

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

Poll: What do you think of Place #3?

Place #4

- A. Really like
- B. Somewhat like
- C. Neither like or dislike
- D. Somewhat dislike
- E. Really dislike



Live Content Slide

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

Poll: What do you think of Place #4?

Place #5

- A. Really like
- B. Somewhat like
- C. Neither like or dislike
- D. Somewhat dislike
- E. Really dislike



Live Content Slide

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Poll: What do you think of Place #5?

Place #6

- A. Really like
- B. Somewhat like
- C. Neither like or dislike
- D. Somewhat dislike
- E. Really dislike



Live Content Slide

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

Poll: What do you think of Place #6?

Place #7

- A. Really like
- B. Somewhat like
- C. Neither like or dislike
- D. Somewhat dislike
- E. Really dislike



Live Content Slide

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

Poll: What do you think of Place #7?

Place #8

- A. Really like
- B. Somewhat like
- C. Neither like or dislike
- D. Somewhat dislike
- E. Really dislike



Live Content Slide

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

Poll: What do you think of Place #8?

Place #9

- A. Really like
- B. Somewhat like
- C. Neither like or dislike
- D. Somewhat dislike
- E. Really dislike



Live Content Slide

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

Poll: What do you think of Place #9?

Place #10

- A. Really like
- B. Somewhat like
- C. Neither like or dislike
- D. Somewhat dislike
- E. Really dislike



Live Content Slide

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

Poll: What do you think of Place #10?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

TABLE EXERCISE

Individual form and table discussions:

- **Goals and strategies for city design in Norwalk**
- **Priorities for city design in Norwalk**

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Planning website: tomorrow.norwalkct.org





NORWALK

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CITYWIDE PLAN

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