

# Appendix C Community Engagement

## East Norwalk Neighborhood TOD Plan

June 2020

Prepared for the City of Norwalk

Prepared by Harriman | RKG | NV5





# Community Engagement

Community engagement was a key aspect of the planning process for the East Avenue Neighborhood Transit Oriented Development Plan (the Plan). This chapter of the report provides an overview of the methods used and results gathered from public workshops, online surveys, and stakeholder interviews.

An appointed Oversight Committee of critical stakeholders guided the process and provided input. Members of this Oversight Committee included representatives from the Planning Commission, the Zoning Commission, the Third Taxing District, the Finance and Claims Committee, the Planning Committee, the Norwalk Harbor Management Committee, and the Department of Public Works.

### *Oversight Committee*

- Brian Baxendale, Planning Commission
- Deb Goldstein, Zoning Commission / Third Taxing District until 11/19
- Diane Cece, East Norwalk Neighborhood Association (ENNA)
- Pam Parkington, Third Taxing District as of 11/19.
- Stephanie Thomas, Zoning Commission
- John Kydes, Common Council
- Judith Dominguez, East Norwalk Business Association (ENBA)
- Vanessa Valadares, Department of Public Works

The planning team reviewed feedback from the community process with the City Planning Department and the Oversight Committee. Input from the City Planning Department and the Oversight Committee on the community input and the analyses conducted by the planning team allowed the team to draw out feasible TOD recommendations that are in line with the community’s vision for the future of East Norwalk. The Plan is therefore the result of close collaboration among the community, the Oversight Committee, the City, and the planning team.

### Process and Participation

The planning process included the following:

- Fourteen Meetings with the City Planner and Oversight Committee
  - December 3, 2019
  - February 5, 2019
  - April 30, 2019
  - June 20, 2019
  - July 11, 2019
  - September 12, 2019
  - October 17, 2019
  - January 23, 2020
  - February 3, 2020
  - March 3, 2020

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April 16, 2020

May 6, 2020

May 18, 2020

May 28, 2020

- Stakeholder interviews
- Three public workshops
- Two online surveys

Stakeholder interviews early in the process established themes and focus areas for the planning team’s research and analysis and the public workshops.

The time and day of the week of each workshop was varied in an effort to make the workshops more accessible to community members with conflicting schedules, and all workshops were centrally located in City Hall. The March workshop was held on a Saturday morning, the July workshop on a Thursday evening, and the final open house was on a Monday evening. In addition, two online surveys were distributed to extend the reach of the public workshops to those who were unable to attend in person.

The planning team analyzed data gathered from the public, who translated that data into findings and graphics which it then presented at the following workshop. This iterative process allowed for each public meeting to build off of the input from the previous one, creating a transparent planning process where participants were continually shown the results of previous engagement and able to provide input on the analysis, conclusions, and implications. The Oversight Committee and public participants provided feedback on progress as well as input on next steps.

The planning process saw a high level of participation from the community:

March visioning workshop	3/23/19	77 attendees
July choices workshop	7/25/19)	73 attendees
November open house	11/9/19	50 attendees
Online visual preference survey	7/30/19 – 9/6/19	121 respondents
Online commuter survey	7/31/19 – 10/15/19	61 respondents
Stakeholder interviewees	4/29/19	15 participants

**Outreach Tools**

In order to raise awareness of this process in the community and promote participation, the planning team and the City coordinated the distribution of information in English and Spanish via flyers, postcards, digital roadside signage, online, and social media. A Spanish translator was also available at public workshops. The planning team sought to ensure that this planning process was as transparent and accessible to as much of the population as possible.



## Workshop Results

### **March: Visioning Workshop**

The first public visioning workshop was held on the morning of Saturday, March 23, 2019 at City Hall. Harriman, RKG, and NV5 facilitated three exercises with 77 attendees. The exercises engaged the audience to think about their perceptions of East Norwalk's identity, the navigational and accessible challenges of their daily lives, and their aspirations for the future of their neighborhood.

The data taken from these exercises revealed patterns of the challenges that East Norwalk residents face on a daily basis, as well as the opportunities to strengthen the identity and resiliency of the community. This chapter summarizes the data gathered and the key sentiments expressed at this workshop.

#### *Comment Cards*

At the first public visioning workshop on the morning of Saturday, March 23, 77 participants signed in and 50 turned in comment cards. Of the participants who filled out comment cards, 40 checked off that they are a resident of East Norwalk, 20 checked off that they are a business or property owner in East Norwalk, 11 said they commute from East Norwalk, 18 work in East Norwalk or patronize East Norwalk retail and restaurants, and 12 checked off that they are a resident, business, or property owner in Norwalk or the surrounding region with an interest in East Norwalk.

The comment cards asked four questions:

1. What does the area have now that you want to keep?
2. What does the area have now that you don't want to keep?
3. What would you add to the area that it doesn't have now?
4. What would you not add to the area that it doesn't have now?

The responses were evaluated through the creation of word clouds. Phrases and text were pulled out and entered into a word cloud generator for each question. Phrases or words that only showed up once or twice in the comments are expressed as small text in the cloud; the more frequently a phrase or word was used, the larger it appears in the cloud.

#### *1. What does the area have now that you want to keep?*

When asked what the area has now that community members would like to keep, the phrases that appeared the most were "small businesses" which appeared 15 times, "parks" which appeared 14 times, "restaurants" which appeared 13 times, and "beach" which appeared 12 times. This tells us how much the community cherishes open space and small businesses. This sentiment is reiterated when asked what they don't want added to the area – "chain retail" and "box stores" were the most frequent responses. The next tier of phrases that commonly came up reveals a lot about how community members perceive the identity of their neighborhood. "Village feel," "community," and "neighborhood" each appeared 7 times, often with descriptors such as "small," or "family-friendly."



## *2. What does the area have now that you don't want to keep?*

The next question asked what the area has that the community does not want to keep. There was less consensus among these responses, but a few clear issues rose to the top. The word “blight” appeared 11 times, “traffic” came up 10 times, “excess gas stations,” “broken sidewalks,” and “litter” each appeared 5 times.

## *3. What would you add to the area that it doesn't have now?*

When asked what they would like added to the East Norwalk Village, participants had a lot of responses. While there were many calls for a grocery store, most of the requests were for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements. The most common responses were as follows:

- Improved sidewalks (21 responses)
- Bike lanes/paths (14)
- Grocery store (13)
- Safe pedestrian access to the train (10)
- Small businesses (8)
- Traffic control (8)

## *4. What would you not add to the area that it doesn't have now?*

The final question asked participants to state what the area does not currently have that they don't want added. The following responses appeared most frequently:

- Apartments (17 responses)
- High-rises (3-4+ stories) (11)
- Chain retail (6)
- Box stores (6)
- More traffic (6)

The back of the comment card offered an opportunity for participants to leave more in-depth comments. Here is a selection of what some community members had to say:

- “We need smart development at the train station that improves walkability and encourages small businesses (café at train, small market). We need a small park in the center of East Norwalk you shouldn't have to go to the beach or the Green to enjoy public space.”
- “Thank-you for a great working program, please listen to East Norwalk residents when you plan for this area. Keep the area a beach/maritime community. Add more walkable retail/restaurants/small office space. Zoning changes to fit vision.”

### *Mapping and Perceptions*

The first facilitated exercise was a quick 10-minute warm-up which asked participants to draw a map of their neighborhood from memory in the space provided on a given worksheet. This activity was



inspired by Kevin Lynch’s approach to mapping neighborhood character. When drawn from memory, the maps reveal the elements and landmarks that stand out and become icons or way-finding devices, and everything that is not significant is left off the map all together. After completing their maps, participants were asked to draw a happy face and a sad face on the locations that they enjoyed the most and the least. This set the groundwork for the next exercise, which looked more deeply at why those specific locations elicited such strong emotions.

### *Routes*

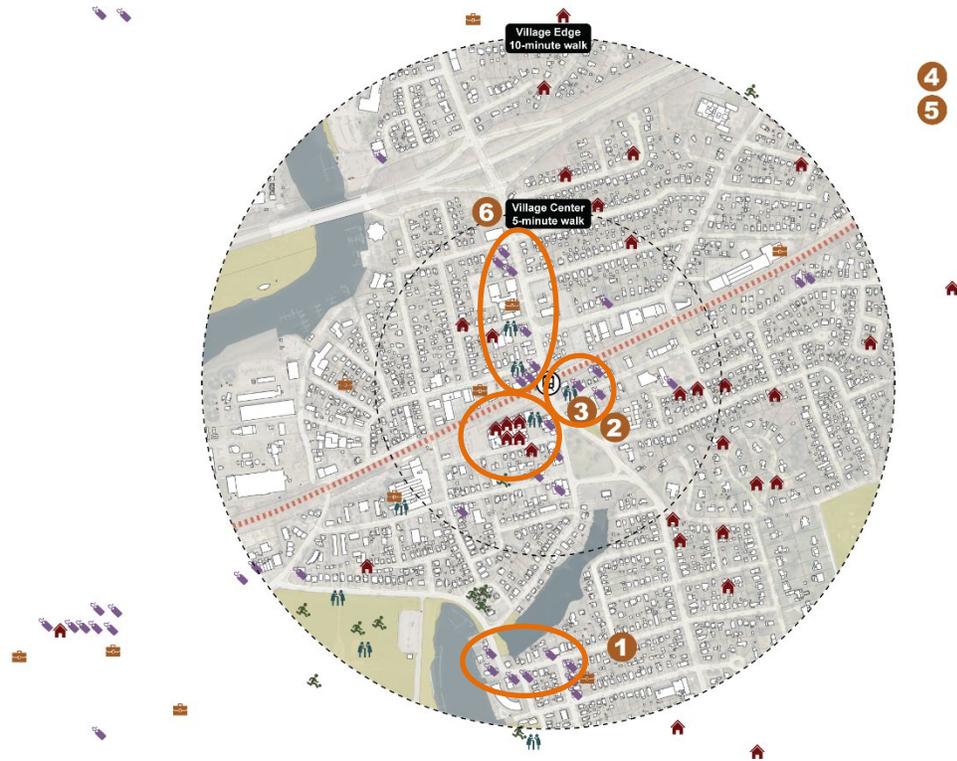
The second exercise revealed opportunities and challenges related to mobility. In this group mapping exercise, participants were asked to locate the places that they lived, worked, shopped or dined out, played, or ran into neighbors. This began to reveal clusters of destinations. Next, participants were asked to describe how they move between these destinations – identifying the route and the mode of transportation.

1. Walking – Participants were asked to identify where they like to walk, where they don’t like to walk, and where they would like to walk if improvements were made. Facilitators marked these routes with a blue pen using three different line types for differentiation.
2. Biking – in the second step, participants identified where they like to bike, don’t like to bike, and would like to bike. These routes were marked in orange.
3. Driving – Finally, the groups discussed driving. Here, the questions had a different focus: “Where do you experience the worst traffic?” and “What are your best shortcuts for avoiding it?” These routes were mapped in red.

### *Results*

#### Destinations

The map below overlays the responses from all of the groups. The clusters of significant destinations (outlined) include East Avenue, the commercial areas around the train station, Liberty Square, and the Mill Pond/Cove Avenue commercial area. This starts to reveal patterns of opportunity, prioritizing which key connections should be improved within this area of study. The two areas of focus that come to the surface are along East Avenue and along Seaview Avenue/Route 136. These two corridors should be high priorities for connectivity and infrastructure improvements. The numbers on the map below represent where comments were made (comments are listed after the map.)

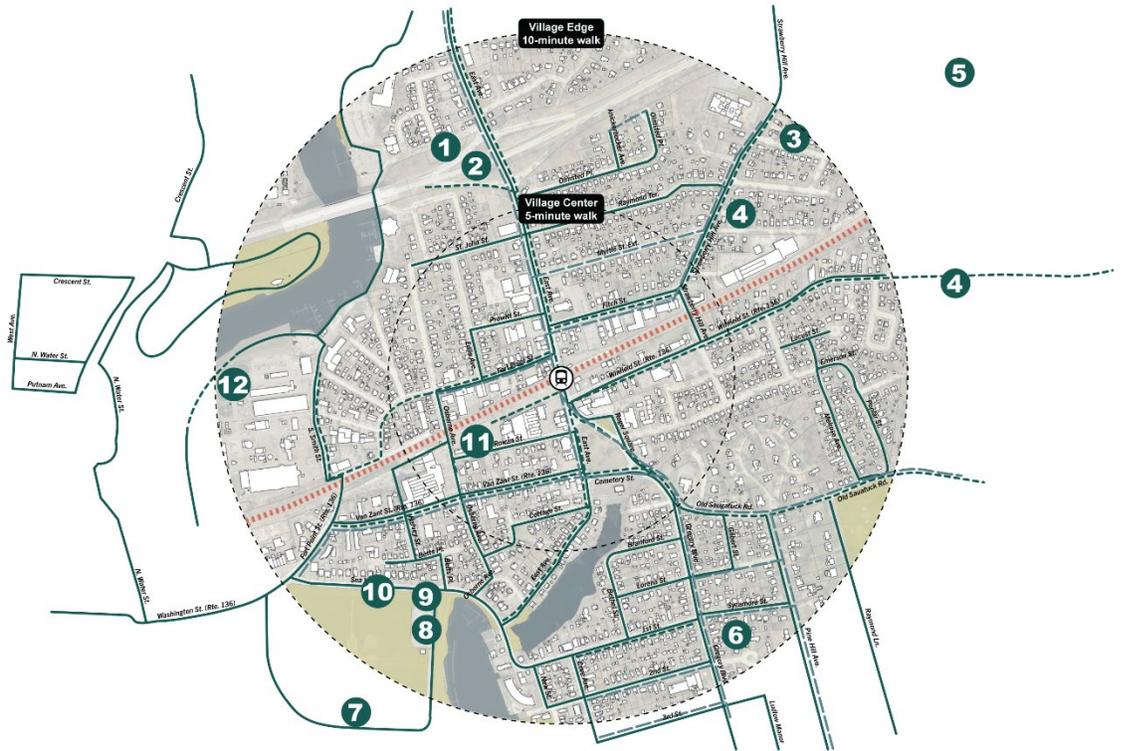


#### Comments:

1. Harbor Harvest Offers a 5% discount to customers who walk or bike to the store
2. Blight – Construction is taking way too long
3. Stores that face the opposite way
4. What will be the impact of tech in the future?
5. Will East Norwalk be developed as part of the City of Norwalk? Or as a separate village?
6. Blight

#### Walking

This exercise revealed that East Norwalk is a very active community, using most of the neighborhood sidewalks, especially those between the train station and the harbor, clearly an important connection. There are four primary streets that people don't like to walk due to broken or missing sidewalks or fear for safety due to traffic control problems, blighted parcels, and lack of security. These are East Avenue, Route 136 (including Van Zant Street and Winfield Street), Old Saugatuck Road, and the Fort Point Street-Fitch Street-Strawberry Hill Avenue Corridor. All of these reappeared as streets that people would like to walk on if improvements were made, as well as Gregory Boulevard and Pine Hill Avenue which provide critical connections to the beach and parks to the south. Research has shown that neighborhoods that have "eyes on the street" (more people and businesses) feel safer and are more desirable.



#### Comments:

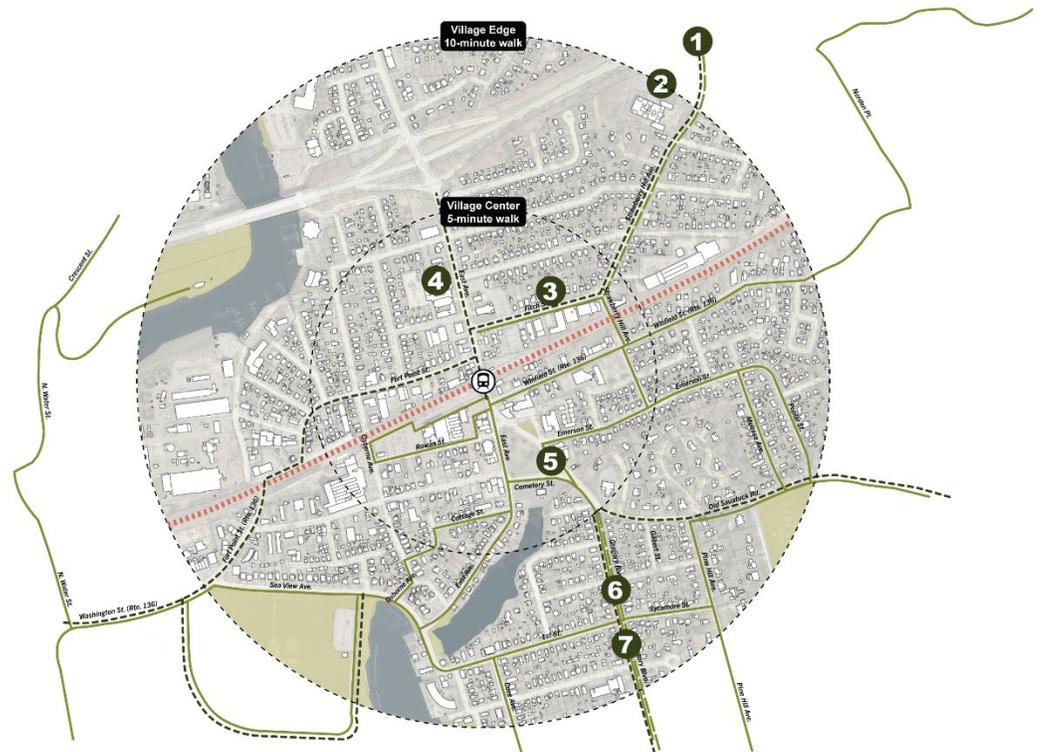
1. Parking
2. Dangerous Crossing
3. Inconsistent sidewalks
4. Bad Sidewalk
5. There's nothing we would walk to
6. Need more sidewalks; difficult because streets are so narrow
7. Security camera
8. Keep open for bikes and pedestrians
9. Blocked
10. Sidewalks flood often
11. No sidewalk
12. Bad sidewalk and bad smell

#### Biking

Many participants expressed that they enjoy biking, but lack safe opportunities to do so. Some favorite biking destinations include the train station, parks like Veteran's Park, the paths along the waterfront, and the streets that connect to the beach and parks to the south. However, many of these same areas are also where they don't enjoy biking because the infrastructure is inadequate, particularly along the



Fort Point Street-Fitch Street-Strawberry Hill Avenue Corridor. Many community members expressed frustrations about the bike infrastructure, pointing out where bike lanes are missing, disconnected, or improperly enforced. While there are currently bike lanes which have been recently updated per the *Norwalk Pedestrian & Bikeway Transportation Plan*, community members pointed out that the bike lane on Strawberry Hill Avenue dead-ends, creating a dangerous situation. Furthermore, in the summer, many beach-goers park on the bike lane along Gregory Boulevard, rendering it useless. The lack of connections coupled with the lack of physical protection and enforcement leaves bicyclists feeling unsafe and therefore less likely to use the infrastructure. Two streets were identified as priorities for improvement: Gregory Boulevard and Strawberry Hill Avenue.



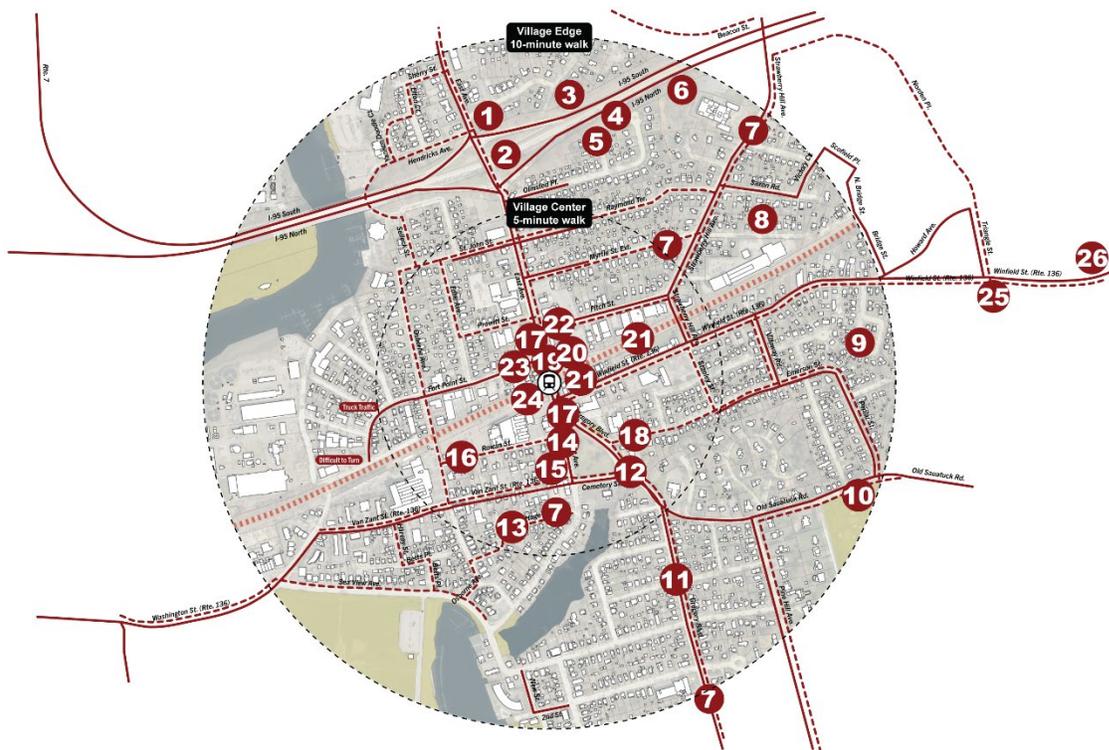
Comments:

1. Bike lane ends – death trap!
2. Bike lane is not safe
3. Bike lane
4. East Ave. should not have a bike lane
5. Don't go near the cemetery on my bike
6. Cars park on bike lane
7. No separate bike path



## Driving

The numbers on the composite map below correlate to participant comments made during this activity. Each participant had stories of fright and frustration in trying to navigate their own neighborhood. One key issue identified was truck traffic. Because the center of the East Norwalk village contains four gas stations, many trucks use Exit 16 off I-95 to East Avenue to refuel, contributing significantly to non-local congestion. Compounding this issue is the bottleneck that occurs as East Avenue transitions from four lanes to two under the railroad bridge. Because this bridge is low, the large trucks are forced to turn onto Fort Point Street to connect back to Route 136. Other traffic issues include the frequency and timing of traffic lights along East Avenue, and speeding, particularly on Gregory Boulevard, Cottage Street, and Strawberry Hill Avenue. Participants noted that congestion along Gregory Boulevard worsens exponentially in the summer with beach traffic. Another issue contributing to traffic problems is the flooding that occurs at the underpass. Many of the “best shortcuts” can also be some of the “worst traffic” depending on the day and time. In all three snapshots – walking, biking, and driving, participants identified the intersection at the train station as highly problematic, making life dangerous and difficult for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers alike.



### Comments:

1. Avoid exit 16 – go to 15 or 17!
2. Problem!
3. There is a sound barrier here
4. No sound barrier



5. Impact quality of life
6. Blockage on I-95 causes congestion
7. Speeding
8. Roads are too narrow
9. Speeding on residential streets is a problem
10. Good traffic! (“Insider shortcut”)
11. Beach traffic in summer
12. “No Man’s Land”
13. Snow plow always buries cars on Cottage Street. Snow should be plowed to opposite side.
14. Major evacuation route
15. Stop sign
16. Better route for trucks
17. Dangerous intersection
18. Wrong-way traffic
19. Bottleneck
20. Trucks
21. Flooding
22. Accidents occur weekly
23. Person was killed here about 10 years ago
24. Bridge too low, should be 4 lanes
25. Key shortcut
26. Exit 17

### *Summary of Challenges and Opportunities*

#### Places – Challenges

Neglected vacant parcels are the primary place-based challenge in East Norwalk. Workshop participants identified two locations within the study area that need attention. One is the vacant lot next to Rite Aid near the interchange of East Avenue and I-95. The other is the construction site across from the cemetery (Roger Square) which residents are eager to see completed as it has been ongoing since a fire at the Ludlow Shopping Center in 2015 displaced five businesses.

#### Places – Opportunities

The clustering of destinations presents a strong opportunity to reinforce and strengthen connections between them, particularly along East Avenue and Seaview Avenue/Route 136. Participants also pointed out an opportunity to reorient the storefronts at the former Ludlow Shopping Center to face Winfield Street to attract more business and be part of the village center identity. One of the participants at the March 23 workshop was the owner of Harbor Harvest, who stated that he offers a 5% discount to anyone who walks or bikes to his store in an effort to cut down on vehicular traffic and alleviate parking pressure. There could be an opportunity to create incentives for other businesses to do something similar as part of a community-wide initiative.



### Walking – Challenges

The primary challenge to those navigating East Norwalk on foot is missing and broken sidewalks throughout the area. The intersections at the train station and I-95 pose particularly dangerous situations to pedestrians needing to cross. Participants expressed a desire for increased security in certain areas, such as Veteran’s Park. It was noted that the sidewalk along Sea View Avenue (adjacent to Veteran’s Park) floods frequently. The Harbor Walk is very popular, but participants identified the section that passes in front of the Waste Water Treatment plant as particularly unpleasant due to the smell.

### Walking – Opportunities

Improving existing sidewalks and adding new sidewalks where needed would address concerns about walkability in East Norwalk. A priority should be the connections between the train station and the harbor. East Norwalk is home to several open spaces, such as Veteran’s Park and Oyster Park, and is close in proximity to Taylor Farm Park and Calf Pasture Beach to the south. This presents an opportunity to create pedestrian connections among these destinations, transforming the isolated parks into an open space network. The waterfront is another underutilized opportunity that could solidify East Norwalk’s identity with the right improvements. There are also opportunities to connect to and expand upon the Norwalk River Valley Trail, as identified in the Opportunities Map. Many participants expressed a desire for improved pedestrian access to the train station by means of a pedestrian bridge to solve major accessibility problems and create an icon at the village center.

### Biking – Challenges

Many of the challenges that bicyclists face are a direct result of some of the traffic issues addressed in the discussion of Driving – Challenges below. Congestion and speeding make it difficult for cyclists to navigate the unprotected bike lanes. Some participants pointed out that the lane on Strawberry Hill dead-ends, creating a dangerous condition. Others expressed that they would “never go near the cemetery” on their bike for fear of their own safety. Another major issue brought up is that cars park on the bike line on Gregory Boulevard, especially in summer when beach traffic increases. In general, more and better (protected) bike lanes are needed.

### Biking – Opportunities

East Norwalk offers many great destinations that could be more easily accessible by bike if infrastructure improvements are made. Gregory Boulevard to Calf Pasture Beach is probably one of the most heavily used bike routes and would benefit from the addition of protective bollards on the existing bike line to prevent cars driving or parking on it. Protected bike lanes where feasible would help improve the overall sense of security for cyclists and ensuring the continuity of bike lanes on all streets (no dead-ends) would be create complete connectivity. As with walking, there are opportunities to connect bike lanes and paths to the existing Norwalk River Valley Trail System.



## Driving - Challenges

The key challenges that came up during this second mapping exercise highlight several issues. One is the intersection around the train station. It is dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists to cross safely in any direction. Cars are forced to bottleneck from four lanes to two under the railroad bridge, contributing heavily to traffic. Because of the low height of the bridge, trucks (attracted to the four gas stations on East Ave. from I-95) are forced to turn onto Fort Point Street, creating a ripple effect of traffic problems. Traffic light frequency and timing along East Avenue contribute further to these problems, and in the areas where traffic flow decreases, speeding becomes a problem. Traffic is heaviest during the summer when tourists and locals alike flock to the beach in southern Norwalk.

## Driving - Opportunities

The opportunities for driving lie in resolving the traffic problems by reconfiguring roads, traffic signals, and other infrastructure needed to relieve car-dependency and congestion. I-95 offers convenient regional access and could present even greater opportunities for drivers if infrastructure in East Norwalk had greater capacity to support daily traffic flows. The objective is to make roads safer for locals to navigate and less enticing to cut-through traffic from the highway.

## *Aspirations*

For the third and final exercise, each participant was given one sheet of stickers corresponding to land uses in the categories of open space, commerce, civic/institutional, and housing. Facilitators asked which uses they would support adding to the village center (within a 5-minute walk of the train station), the village edge (within a 10-minute walk of the train station), or beyond the area of study (more than a 10-minute walk of the train station) and participants placed their stickers in the appropriate location on the provided boards.

The table below reveals community aspirations. Open space and commerce come forward as priorities, while housing is less desirable, with many participants expressing a strong aversion to adding more housing, particularly anything taller than 3-4 stories. A grocery store in the village center is the most desired amenity within the village center and a community garden is the most desired amenity within the village edge.





36-45	7%	4
46-55	26%	14
56-65	33%	18
66-80	15%	8
80+	4%	2
<b>EAST NORWALK AFFILIATION</b>		
resident of East Norwalk	70%	38
business or property owner in East Norwalk	48%	26
commute from East Norwalk	26%	14
an employee in East Norwalk or a patron of East Norwalk retail and restaurants	35%	19
a resident, business, or property owner in Norwalk or the surrounding region	31%	17

*Exercise 1: Visual Preference Survey Results*

A Visual Preference Survey (VPS) was issued to attendees of the public meeting on the East Norwalk TOD Plan on July 25, 2019 at Norwalk City Hall. The VPS was later posted online so that community members unable to attend the meeting could share their opinion. The results captured in this memo reflect only the responses from the public forum.

For the VPS, attendees were invited to evaluate images within four categories: Built Environment – Housing, Built Environment – Commercial and Mixed Uses, Connectivity and Access, and Public Space. For housing, participants were asked to consider the height and massing of the building. For commercial and mixed uses, participants were asked to consider the same as well as their preference toward the uses shown. For connectivity and access and public space, participants were asked to evaluate the images based on the aesthetic contribution of the elements shown to the streetscape and/or public realm environment, and the suitability of its function. Participants were asked to rank their enthusiasm toward each image based on its suitability to the context and character of East Norwalk according to the following scale:



2: Highly Desirable

1: Desirable

0: Neutral

-1: Undesirable

-2: Highly Undesirable

**Built Environment - Housing**

Displayed are images of various commercial and mixed-use buildings. Please rank these on a scale of -2 to 2 based on how suited to East Norwalk you feel that type of building would be.

Consider the height and massing of the building as well your preference toward the uses shown.

- 2 Highly Desirable
- 1 Desirable
- 0 Neutral
- 1 Undesirable
- 2 Highly Undesirable

HARRIMAN | NV5 | RKG Associates

East Norwalk Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Plan - Choices Workshop | July 25, 2019

*Visual Preference Survey: Housing Images.*



### 🏢 Built Environment - Commercial and Mixed Uses



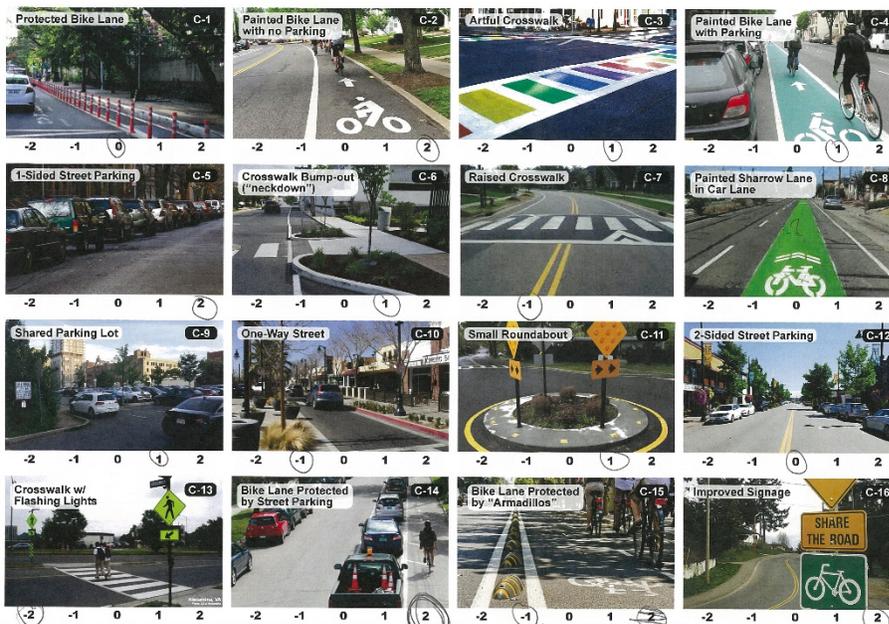
Displayed are images of various commercial and mixed-use buildings. Please rank these on a scale of -2 to 2 based on how suited to East Norwalk you feel that type of building would be.

Consider the height and massing of the building as well your preference toward the uses shown.

- 2 Highly Desirable
- 1 Desirable
- 0 Neutral
- 1 Undesirable
- 2 Highly Undesirable

### Visual Preference Survey: Commercial and mixed-use Images.

### 🚶 Connectivity and Access



Displayed are images of various elements pertaining to connectivity and access in the public realm. Please rank these on a scale of -2 to 2 based on how suited to East Norwalk you feel that element would be.

Consider the aesthetic contribution of each element to the streetscape and/or public realm environment, and the suitability of its function.

- 2 Highly Desirable
- 1 Desirable
- 0 Neutral
- 1 Undesirable
- 2 Highly Undesirable



**Public Space**

Displayed are images of various types and elements of public spaces. Please rank these on a scale of -2 to 2 based on how suited to East Norwalk you feel that element would be.

Consider the aesthetic contribution of each element to the public realm environment, and the suitability of its function.

- 2 Highly Desirable
- 1 Desirable
- 0 Neutral
- 1 Undesirable
- 2 Highly Undesirable

HARRIMAN | NV5 | RKG Associates

East Norwalk Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Plan - Choices Workshop | July 25, 2019

Visual Preference Survey: Public Space Images.

Built Environment - Housing

Most Preferred Image



The highest scoring image was A-3, which was selected to represent a 2-story residential building type. The standard deviation, which indicates the consensus around the average score (whether most answers were close to that average or if there was a wide range of reactions) for this image is 1.4, suggesting that there was less consensus compared to other images. Overall, the highest standard deviation (low consensus) is 1.5 and the lowest standard deviation (high consensus) is 0.4.



## Most Disliked Image



Image A-16, a 4-floor residential building, was the least popular image with an average score of -1.9 and the lowest standard deviation of all the images in the housing category (0.4), signifying a high consensus of dislike for this type of building.

## General Trends

Only three images received positive feedback: A-2 (2.5 floors), A-3 (2 floors), and A-9 (2 floors). Anything taller than those received a negative score. In general, the taller the building in the image, the less desirable that image was to participants at the workshop. Of the images that received a positive score, there was generally less consensus among participants than the images that received the lowest scores which had low standard deviations/high consensus.

## *Built Environment – Commercial and Mixed Uses*

### Most Preferred Image



For commercial and mixed uses, there was a tie for preferred image between B-1 (ground-floor retail plus one floor of office space above) and image B-10 (a simple 1-story retail building.) Both received an average rating of 1.2. Both images had a relatively average consensus (not particularly low or high) with B-1 receiving a standard deviation of 1 and B-10 receiving a standard deviation of 0.9.



## Most Disliked Image



The lowest-scoring image for commercial and mixed uses was image B-8, a building with ground-floor retail and three floors of residential units above, with an average rating of -1.5. Again, consensus was in the average range with a standard deviation of 0.9.

## General Trends

Commercial and mixed-use images generally received a less negative response than housing images, with seven of the 16 images having a positive rating; however, most of those scores were closer to the neutral/0 mark rather than soliciting strong opinions for or against. It is significant to note that neither of the two most preferred images indicate residential use. Again, any image showing a building taller than two stories was disliked by most participants.

## Connectivity and Access

### Most Preferred Image



Image C-13, a crosswalk with flashing lights, and image C-16, improved signage, both received an average rating of 1.0, with standard deviations of 1.2 and 1.4 respectively, indicating a slightly lower consensus than usual.



## Most Disliked Image



The least favorite connectivity and access image is C-8, a painted sharrow lane within a car lane, which received an average score of -0.7, but with relatively low consensus at a standard deviation of 1.4.

## General Trends

Overall, responses in this category were much more positive. The two most preferred images are interesting because they are two of the most minor interventions shown for the connectivity and access category. East Norwalk has already recently implemented sharrow lanes for bikes and cars to share, so the intention of image C-8 is to increase the visibility of this type of shared lane by painting the bicyclist's right-of-way bright green, but feedback indicates that participants don't feel this would do enough to improve the safety of bicyclists and motorists who must share the road. Only three out of the 16 connectivity and access images received an average negative score, but overall consensus was lower in this category with most images receiving a relatively high standard deviation.

## *Public Space*

### Most Preferred Image



D-8, an image of a retail-oriented sidewalk, was the most popular image with an average rating of 1.5 and fairly high consensus with a standard deviation of 0.7



## Most Disliked Image



Image D-9 was one of only two images which received a negative average rating for the category of public space. It shows a residential sidewalk with no plantings. Consensus was average to low for this image with a standard deviation of 1.3.

### General Trends

Overall, most public space images were positively rated. Images of active sidewalk/streetscapes were found to be especially desirable, and consensus remained in the average to low range. The two negatively scored images were both of sidewalks with no planting or active uses.

### *Conclusions*

At the public workshop, the community expressed a fairly strong adverse reaction to adding new housing. At both the March and July workshops, participants conveyed that any new development should max out at 2.5-3 stories. Results from the workshop indicate a preference for retail and restaurant spaces rather than office space. For connectivity and access, results indicate a preference for smaller-scale, more localized interventions rather than any major or sweeping changes. Results indicate community enthusiasm for enhancing and expanding East Norwalk's open space network, especially the opportunity to create more active and lively streetscape environments with added greenspace and vegetation. Whether discussing housing, commerce, connectivity, or public space, it is clear that there is no one-size-fits-all approach for all of East Norwalk. The TOD Plan should be strategic in locating any interventions and careful not to create new problems by solving existing ones, especially when it comes to traffic and parking. Overall, the community seems to be wary of this planning process and measures should be taken to ensure that development will be contextually appropriate in enhancing East Norwalk's identity as a coastal New England village.

### Exercise 2: Concept Comparisons Results

The second exercise required participants to work in small focus groups of about five to ten people. Each group had a board which illustrated the three proposed approaches to planning: 1: East Avenue as a Main Street, 2: Side Street Villages, and 3: Community of Nodes, and listed some of the pros and cons of each option. The options were described in more detail with accompanying imagery in Harriman's presentation at the start of the meeting, and facilitators at each table helped to answer any



remaining questions about the options to ensure participant understanding. Focus groups discussed the opportunities and challenges that they felt each option presented while facilitators took notes on the conversation. Participants were guided to consider the following prompts:

- **OPPORTUNITIES:** What opportunities does this option present? You can use the numbered images from the visual preference survey to elaborate.
- **CHALLENGES:** What do you see as potential limitations with this option?

3 Concepts for East Norwalk					
1: East Avenue Main Street		2: Side Street Villages		3: Community of Nodes	
<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>	<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>	<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to develop a "Main Street" for East Norwalk</li> <li>• Already existing residents of homes, businesses and schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic concerns</li> <li>• Pedestrian safety</li> <li>• Narrow and steep streets on one side</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concentrated public land uses or uses already in place focused a well established</li> <li>• Access to neighborhood amenities like schools or transit will be accessible via 95%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some air quality issues</li> <li>• Transit oriented, limited parking for use for the road, etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active land uses around entire length of walk paths in the neighborhood</li> <li>• Allow for increased green land use at all of the nodes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable street width</li> <li>• Potential parking restrictions may be required</li> </ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>CHALLENGES</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>CHALLENGES</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>CHALLENGES</b>
<p>What opportunities does this option present? Use the numbered images from the visual preference survey to elaborate.</p>	<p>What do you see as potential limitations with this option?</p>	<p>What opportunities does this option present? Use the numbered images from the visual preference survey to elaborate.</p>	<p>What do you see as potential limitations with this option?</p>	<p>What opportunities does this option present? Use the numbered images from the visual preference survey to elaborate.</p>	<p>What do you see as potential limitations with this option?</p>

### East Avenue Main Street – Opportunities

The East Avenue Main Street option proposed concentrating mixed-use development along the East Avenue corridor between the I-95 exit 16 ramp to the north and the cemetery to the south. Workshop participants recognized this approach as an opportunity to solve East Avenue’s severe traffic problems and improve the pedestrian realm by fixing broken sidewalks and adding more vegetation. Some participants also pointed out the opportunities for the revitalization of East Avenue to develop into a thriving economic corridor in a way that is contextually appropriate and provides amenities that benefit all community members. Many participants expressed a sentiment that since East Avenue is already partially developed to be commercially oriented, it makes the most sense to further develop and build on what is already there, thus preserving the fabric of the surrounding residential neighborhoods. One focus group also suggested the East Avenue would be a great place to implement a trolley to aid in relief of vehicular congestion. Another group suggested enhanced ride shares and supporting light industrial and adaptive re-use with a historic/cultural focus.

Participants identified images D-11 and B-12 from the Visual Preference Survey as appropriate for the East Avenue Main Street option.



### *East Avenue Main Street – Challenges*

While participants saw opportunities in developing East Avenue as a mixed-use Main Street, they also expressed concerns about the feasibility of this option. Some participants felt that while it would be nice to improve the East Avenue conditions and environment, achieving this vision could be impossible given the nature of its proximity to the highway and its attraction as a convenient route to the beach which will always force East Avenue to serve as a thoroughfare for cut-through traffic. Some felt that the traffic issues further compound the existing parking problems and participants expressed concerns that attracting more residents and businesses to this area will only make these problems exponentially worse. Participants also identified potential infrastructural limitations with sewage and trash removal if this area were to be further developed.

### *Side Street Villages – Opportunities*

Participants viewed the Side Street Villages option as more practical than enhancing the treatment of East Avenue as a Main Street. Participants liked that this option allowed for concentrated development to retain the existing fabric of the residential neighborhoods, but didn't concentrate it all in one location, inundating that one area with all the challenges that an increased development brings. Participants felt that this would lead to fewer traffic and parking issues. Other participants expressed concerns that the village approach would be commercially over-developed with limited parking and inadequate traffic relief measures on East Avenue. To address the parking issues that would inevitably arise, one focus group proposed that parking requirements be mandated based on business type – such as 20-minute parking at the deli versus 2-hour parking outside a restaurant. Another group brought up shared parking lots as a response. Some participants recognized the opportunity to leverage existing developments underway, such as developing across the street from the 230 East Avenue development on the other side of Rowan Street to complete a village there. Other groups expressed this option as an opportunity to enhance the public realm and streetscape environment while enhancing the character and identities of the distinct-sub areas within the East Norwalk neighborhood. Overall, there was a strong sentiment that this option would best support the small-town feel and sense of community in East Norwalk.

Participants identified images B-1 (“ground-floor retail is nice”), B-9, B-10, B-13 (“cutsie”), B-14 (“not bad depending on the space”), and B-15 from the Visual Preference Survey as appropriate for the Side Street Villages option.

### *Side Street Villages – Challenges*

Participants identified several potential challenges and limitations with the Side Street Villages option including parking enforcement, lighting, proximity to residential homes and the traffic impacts on residents and commuters alike. Traffic was a particular concern among attendees, especially along Fort Point Street which was identified as a major cut-through route for trucks who can not fit under the low rail road bridge. Participants feel that unless an alternate route is provided, this issue cannot be solved. Walkability and Safety are also considerable concerns in concert with the worries about traffic issues.



Participants identified images B-3 and B-15 from the Visual Preference Survey as *inappropriate* for the Side Street Villages option.

### *Community of Nodes – Opportunities*

The third option proposes a de-concentrated, smaller scale approach to planning. Overall, there was a preference toward a hybrid between options 2 and 3. Participants expressed enthusiasm that the Community of Nodes option would more comfortably spread people out, while maintaining walkability between the proposed enhanced destinations and, like option 2, would support a friendlier community environment. Participants felt that this option was more traditional and therefore more suitable to East Norwalk's identity as a small New England coastal village. Many participants liked the idea of small neighborhood pockets with amenities, perhaps a community garden with a farmer's market to benefit residents. Some participants also appreciated that this option could be implemented incrementally and not bring sweeping change to the neighborhood all at once. Another opportunity with this option identified by participants is to enhance the affordability and mixed-income character of the neighborhood, which is something past participants have also expressed an appreciation for. Overall, there seems to be a good amount of consensus that this option is the most status quo for East Norwalk and if executed appropriately could lead to a vibrant, yet contextually adherent plan for the neighborhood.

Participants identified images B-7 ("maybe Rowan or Van Zant"), C-14 ("would be beautiful"), A-2, and B-12 from the Visual Preference Survey as appropriate for the Community of Nodes option.

### *Community of Nodes – Challenges*

Participants expressed concerns that businesses may find it difficult to thrive in this type of sprawling approach to planning. They also worry that mixed-use zoning will lead to undesired results and that rules and incentives will be too complicated. They feel that this approach to development might have a snowball effect and lead to more development, yielding undesirable results. While many felt that this option would fit with the neighborhood character, others are concerned that by spreading the change out, the look and feel of East Norwalk will be drastically changed. Traffic again becomes a concern, this time with fears that the traffic will be spread around to all of East Norwalk rather than remaining on a few challenging roads. All in all, participants expressed that this approach may work, if the right balance and scale is achieved.

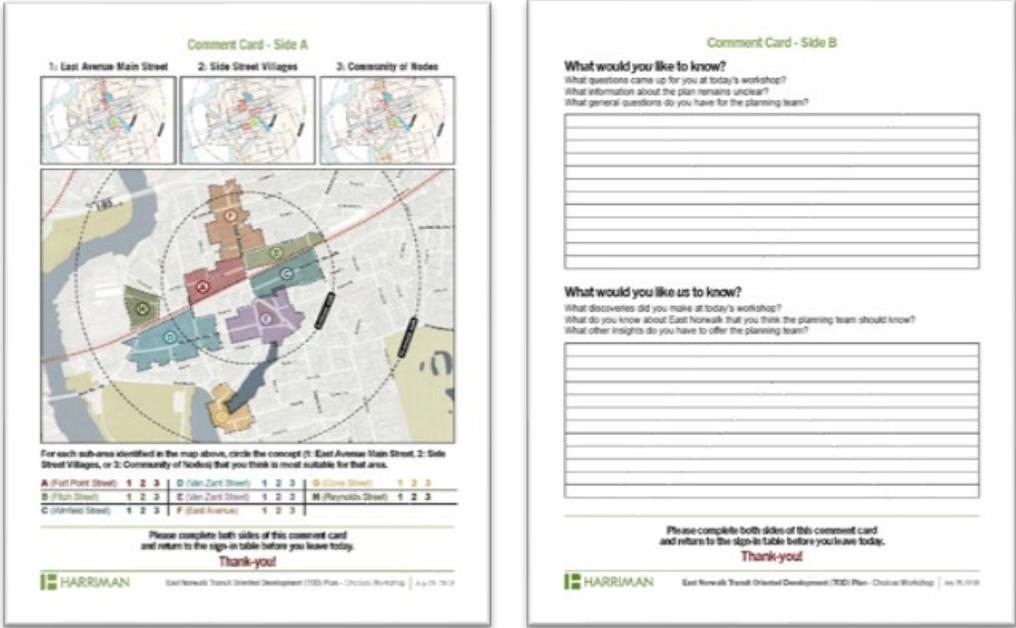
Participants identified images B-8 ("too high, bump-outs completely counteract bike lanes; not a good idea at all, especially on streets with bike lanes"), C-14 ("we don't have any 4-lane 1-way streets in East Norwalk"), and C-15 ("don't like armadillos for bike protection") from the Visual Preference Survey as *inappropriate* for the Community of Nodes option.

### Exercise 3: Comment Cards

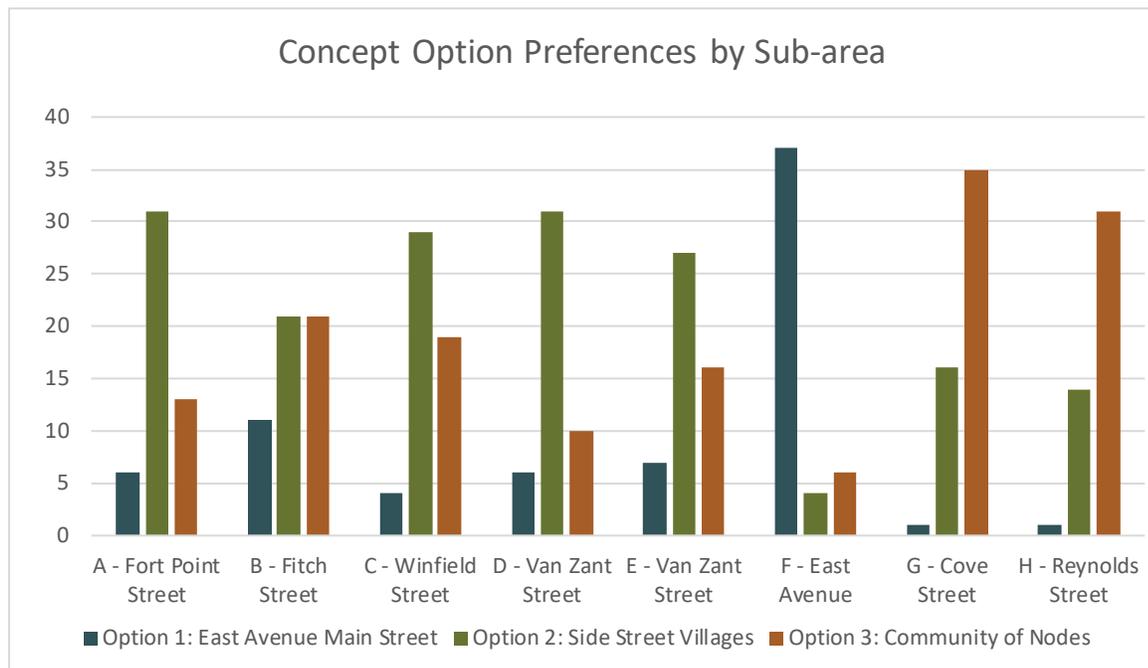
After completing the visual preference surveys, participants at the July 25 workshop worked in small focus groups to explore the opportunities and challenges they foresee with each of the three options (1: East Avenue Main Street, 2: Side Street Villages, and 3: Community of Nodes) for development of the



East Norwalk TOD study area proposed by the planning team. The presentation and workshop facilitators elaborated on these concepts to aid participants in gaining a better understanding of what they might mean for the neighborhood. After engaging in these discussions, facilitators asked participants to fill out comment cards. Side A of the cards identified each of the sub-areas within the TOD study area and asked participants to identify which of the three proposed options is most suited to each of these sub-areas.



The results were fairly consistent with a general preference toward Option 2, Side Street Villages, with the exception of Option 1, Main Street, being preferred along East Avenue, and the approach of Option 3, Community of Nodes in the Cove Street and Reynolds Street areas. These results, as illustrated by the graph below, provide a clear direction for moving forward with a hybrid of the three plan options.



Side B of the comment cards provided participants an opportunity to both ask questions of and answer questions for the planning team.

*What would you like us to know?*

- What questions came up for you at today’s workshop?
- What information about the plan remains unclear?
- What general questions do you have for the planning team?

Most of the questions asked pertain to details of the plan; what zoning allows, what analysis has been completed to support the proposed options, when and how the plan will be implemented, and most significantly, what would be the impacts on the neighborhood of increasing the density and population around the train station, particularly the impact on current traffic and parking issues.

*What would you like us to know?*

- What discoveries did you make at today’s workshop?
- What do you know about East Norwalk that you think the planning team should know?
- What other insights do you have to offer the planning team?

Many participants offered valuable insights about the condition of roads and sidewalks, and the challenges they face with traffic and parking. They also expressed concerns about adding more housing and developing East Norwalk in a way which might completely change the character and identity of the neighborhood. Many participants also took this opportunity to reiterate their desires for a new grocery store, enhanced and expanded open spaces, and an overall improved public realm. Several comments encourage the planning team to think outside the box to meet the community’s needs.



## November: Open House

The open house took place on Monday, November 9, 2019 at Norwalk City Hall from 6:30-8:30pm to share progress and gather feedback on the Plan. The meeting began with a presentation led by Harriman and RKG which provided an overview of the project, summarized the community engagement process, identified opportunities and challenges, discussed criteria for planning, described the “keys to success” and recommendations for TOD in East Norwalk, and shared next steps in the process. Fifty attendees signed in at the meeting. The presentation was followed by about 20 minutes of questions from the audience answered by members of the planning team.

There were a lot of questions about “removing” particular businesses: the planning team defined what a susceptibility to change analysis is and explained that the analysis looked at which sites might be re-developed as a result of a confluence of conditions. The team noted that eminent domain had not been considered for this study, and that the primary recommendation is to use zoning as a tool to incentivize mixed-use redevelopment, a process which has stagnated under current zoning regulations. Some attendees raised concerns about adding housing or increasing the population and stated that apartments are not needed. The planning team explained that the market analysis showed that Norwalk is a highly desirable place to live and without inviting additional residential uses, there will not be enough population to support future economic growth. In response to traffic concerns, the planning team noted that the City of Norwalk is working closely with CTDOT on current roadway improvements. This was met with cheering from the audience. Several attendees asked if the intention of the TOD Plan was to turn East Norwalk into a “destination” and attract outsiders, to which the planning team assured the intention was to improve the quality of life for those who live there now. Some participants raised concerns about who would pay for the recommendations. The response was that any changes on private property would be implemented by private owners at their discretion. The planning team’s job was/is to provide an opportunity to offer input on what the community wants (streetscape, bike lanes, etc.) to be prioritized in the city’s infrastructure budget.

At this time, the question-and-answer portion of the meeting was put on hold until the end of the meeting, when the floor was re-opened for final questions and comments.

Following the first round of questions and answers, participants were then provided the opportunity to circulate the room to review the boards on display. The boards offered a more detailed overview of the TOD planning process to date and addressed the following topics (1 board per topic):

- What is a Typical Transit Oriented Development Plan?
- What is the East Norwalk TOD Plan?
- Three Concepts for the East Norwalk TOD Area
- March Visioning Workshop – What We Heard
- July Choices Workshop – What We Heard
- Appropriate Strategies Based on Community Preferences
- Summary of Recommendations



RKG Associates provided two additional boards covering the market analysis aspects of the project:

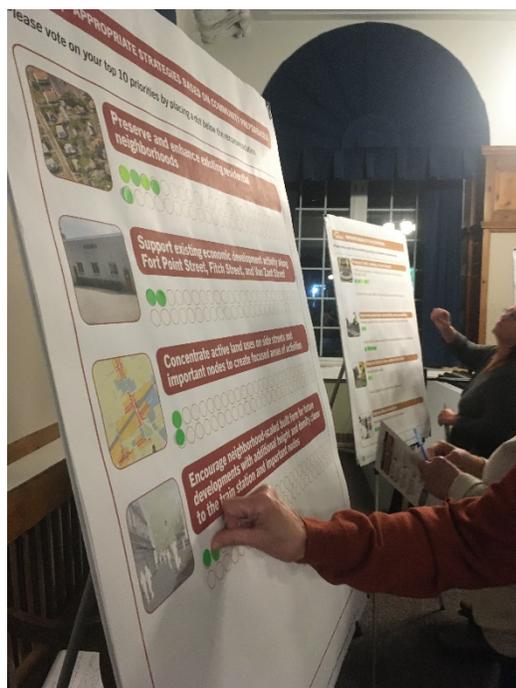
- Development Feasibility in East Norwalk
- Norwalk’s Market for Development

Four interactive boards provided participants an opportunity to vote on the prioritization of recommendations. Each participant was given a set of 10 sticker dots to vote with. The results of the voting are as follows:

<b>Appropriate Strategies Based on Community Preferences</b>	
<i>Preserve and enhance existing residential neighborhoods</i>	<b>29</b>
<i>Support existing economic development activity along Fort Point Street, Fitch Street, and Van Zant Street</i>	<b>14</b>
<i>Concentrate active land uses on side streets and important nodes to create focused areas of activities</i>	<b>4</b>
<i>Encourage neighborhood-scaled built form for future developments with additional height and density closer to the train station and important nodes</i>	<b>5</b>
<b>Improve Mobility for Everyone</b>	
<i>Promote traffic calming on local streets</i>	
Traffic calming tools and methods to slow traffic and discourage cut-through traffic	<b>29</b>
Examine two-way traffic circulation options around the cemetery	<b>0</b>
<i>Improved pedestrian connectivity and accessibility</i>	
Reduce asphalt area, reclaim excess asphalt area for pedestrians	<b>12</b>
Accessibility improvements with sidewalk extensions, new sidewalks	<b>10</b>
<i>Improve bicycle rider comfort and safety</i>	
Connect bike routes	<b>11</b>
Road signage to increase driver awareness	<b>0</b>
<i>Improve bicycle facilities</i>	
Reconfigured bike lane to improve safety	<b>11</b>



<b>Manage Parking on City Streets and Lots</b>	
<i>Reduce parking conflicts</i>	
Explore the potential for residential/business permit parking program	<b>4</b>
Parking management and enforcement of on-street parking	<b>9</b>
<i>Manage Parking Supply</i>	
Shared parking and shared curb cuts to manage supply and increase pedestrian safety	<b>4</b>
Convenient payment systems, wayfinding, and signage	<b>2</b>
<i>Reduce parking demand</i>	
Promote walking and bicycle use	<b>18</b>
Unbundle parking spaces from future mixed-use developments	<b>1</b>
Increase turn-over of prime on-street parking	<b>0</b>
<b>Enhance Leisure Opportunities</b>	
<i>Create active and connected pedestrian realm and open spaces</i>	
Wider sidewalks, mid-block crossings, pocket parks, plazas, community gardens, and publicly accessible open spaces	<b>30</b>
Restore ground level activity to create attractive street fronts	<b>5</b>
<i>Enhance access to water</i>	
Connected trail system, improved sidewalks, and wayfinding	<b>14</b>
<i>Promote new open spaces</i>	
Seaview Avenue as pedestrian promenade for the entire City of Norwalk	<b>16</b>
East Norwalk Historical Cemetery as a respectful open space	<b>1</b>



### Highest Priority Recommendations:

- Wider sidewalks, mid-block crossings, pocket parks, plazas, community gardens, and publicly accessible open spaces
- Traffic calming tools and methods to slow traffic and discourage cut-through traffic
- Preserve and enhance existing residential neighborhoods

### Lowest Priority Recommendations:

- Examine two-way traffic circulation options around the cemetery
- Road signage to increase driver awareness
- Increase turn-over of prime on-street parking

Toward the end of the meeting, once all participants had the chance to circulate the room and view the boards and recommendations more closely and vote on their priorities, the floor was opened back up for a second round of questions and answers, which lasted until about 9pm.

In the second round of questions and answers, concerns were raised again about the proposed 3-3.5 story building height, with stated concerns that such a height would lead to way too many people, huge buildings, and increased traffic problems. The planning team again tried to address these concerns explaining that development must achieve the right balance; that if no change takes place, parts of the neighborhood may risk falling into a state of neglect. This discussion was followed by a dialogue pertaining to the details of how a parking permit program might work, followed by a discussion of open space and leisure opportunities which circled back to the Seaview Avenue promenade concept. Someone asked where the parking would go if the sidewalk was widened. The planning team explained that the sidewalk would be widened without changing the street configuration as there is ample room between the road and Veteran's Park. One participant asked for clarification on the meaning of "support existing economic development." The planning team responded that there are several businesses doing well in East Norwalk, and the goal is to implement zoning that would support and grow these existing businesses; the City may need to provide more incentives through increased floor area ratio (FAR) and reduced parking requirements. This was followed by a lengthy discussion of the implementation process following the finalization of the TOD Plan, including the nuances of the special permit process. The cost concern was raised again when one attendee asked if changes to zoning could increase taxes, to which the planning team responded that it could; tax assessment is very complicated, but in simple terms, zoning incentives could lead to re-development, which could lead to increased land values, which could lead to increased property taxes.



Overall, the Q and A portions of the meeting were productive and answered many questions and concerns circulating through the community. Apart from the concerns raised, there was also a lot of praise for the comprehensiveness of the approach taken by the planning team to address all aspects of life in East Norwalk that might be affected by the implementation of transit-oriented development.

Lastly, participants were encouraged to provide the planning team with additional comments by filling out the provided comment cards, 10 participants turned these in. The comment cards had a summary of the recommendations on one side, and on the other asked:

1. **Which recommendations did we miss?** Is there anything that you feel should be considered as a recommendation that you didn't see on today's materials?
2. **Which recommendations resonate with you?** Which aspects of the East Norwalk TOD Plan align with your values and vision for the neighborhood?

In response to the first question, most comments pertained to traffic/truck traffic and parking considerations, or specific desires for uses they would like to see stay and those they want to remove. One participant reiterated the sentiment that there are an excessive number of gas stations but advocated for small businesses like "Sweet Ashley's" as well as public amenities such as open space and public transit. Another participant felt that the recommendations did not adequately address pedestrian accessibility and safety around the train station. Comments also restated concerns that increased density will lead to even worse traffic and parking conditions which already present a serious challenge to the community. One participant expressed, "let the developers cut their profit to provide adequate parking for their development. If the profit is not there, let them go elsewhere." To address traffic issues, another participant suggested closing Exit 16 all together to re-route beach traffic to Exit 18. They also suggested that some of the business vacancies are intentional in order to avoid competing with Penny's Diner. One commenter had a long list of concerns about the plan, including improper metrics for measuring successful implementation. This person felt that community desires had been disrespected and ignored due to the continued recommendations to build 3-3.5 stories. They also felt that the recommendation for a promenade along Seaview Avenue came from the top-down and would not be the best use of resources to serve the existing community. Another commenter brought up concerns about ambulance access, particularly during construction or periods of increased traffic and made the point that there are two senior centers in East Norwalk. A final commenter cited environmental concerns and requested consideration be given to implementing green infrastructure with native plants, trees, shrubs, and flowers, as well as measures to mitigate sea level rise and the impacts of climate change, particularly as part of new developments.

Comments responding to the second question were far less lengthy. Most comments responded favorably to improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (bike lanes and sidewalks) and enhancing leisure opportunities and open spaces. While one commenter responded negatively to the Seaview Avenue proposal, another was in favor of the concept. Positive comments were made pertaining to preserving and enhancing residential character, maintaining low-rise buildings, improving retail opportunities, and the proposed parking solutions.



## Online Surveys

### "Visioning Workshop – Community Feedback Questionnaire 4/2/2019 – 6/1/2019"

The first online survey was a digital version of the comment card that was handed out at the first community visioning workshop. Sixty-one community members responded to this survey. The following lists summarize the online feedback to the comment card questions:

#### *What does the area have now that you don't want to keep?*

- Tax increase without reasonable cause
- Traffic in Winfield Street – No speed limit signs or patrolling
- Industrial businesses
- Lack of neighborhood character/appeal: underutilized open parking lots, vacant parcels and buildings, too many gas stations
- Walkability on East Avenue
- Complicated roads on East Avenue/Traffic gridlock
- Congestion on I-95 entrance and exits
- Too much road constructions
- Lack of truck access on East Avenue to Route 136
- Gentrification
- Crime
- Lack of priority resident parking

#### *What would you not add to the area that it doesn't have now?*

- Narrow driving lanes – increasing traffic
- New infrastructure – existing infrastructure should be used for new businesses and structures
- Addition of apartments without addition of other types of growth
- Commercial strip malls/ Big box retail, national chain restaurants, multi-level apartment complexes
- Multi-family housing/high rise apartments
- Creating more traffic
- Developments not built up to the sidewalks
- Public housing
- New developments to be no more than 3-stories
- Way for trucks to access East Norwalk
- Truck access under the railroad
- Gas stations
- Additional rental apartments

*Tell us where in the East Norwalk Station area you would like to walk and/or bike if improvements are made.*



- Well maintained and safe 36' minimum sidewalks in the entire area adjacent to the train station
- Winfield Street to Westport town line
- Corridor of Strawberry Hill and Winfield Street
- Stew Leonard area, and Raymond Terrace
- Veterans Park
- Under the train pass
- Waterfront area/Beach area
- Near the cemetery
- Access from the street to the train platform
- Mr. Frosty's area, Ft. Point, Van Zant, Osborne, Seaview, Fitch, and Myrtle Street

*Tell us where the worst car traffic problems are in East Norwalk and if you have any favorite shortcuts that you take to avoid them.*

- Between the cemetery roundabout and Fort Point Street
- I-95 overpass/Exit 16
- Near the railroad station
- Beach
- Underpass of the railroad area
- Strawberry Hill
- Difficulty getting on to I-95/ramps overload
- Corner of East Avenue and Fort Point
- Olmstead Place
- St. John/East Avenue intersection
- Shortcut: Rite-aid pharmacy parking lot
- Raymond Terrace
- St. Johns, Myrtle, and Fitch Street
- Traffic – Worst in the morning commute hours
- Bad timing of traffic lights

*Please share any additional comments you have:*

- Beach does not need improvements and should remain the way it is currently
- Wasted spaces should be used
- Connectivity through - Walkability/Biking
- Revamping the shopping plaza by Rio appliance and local businesses to be brought into the neighborhood to clean up the space
- Developments should be thought out and carefully designed to not overcrowd and congest the area further more
- Transportation alternatives – should not be for cars only
- Solutions to I-95 intersection congestions while keeping pedestrian access in mind



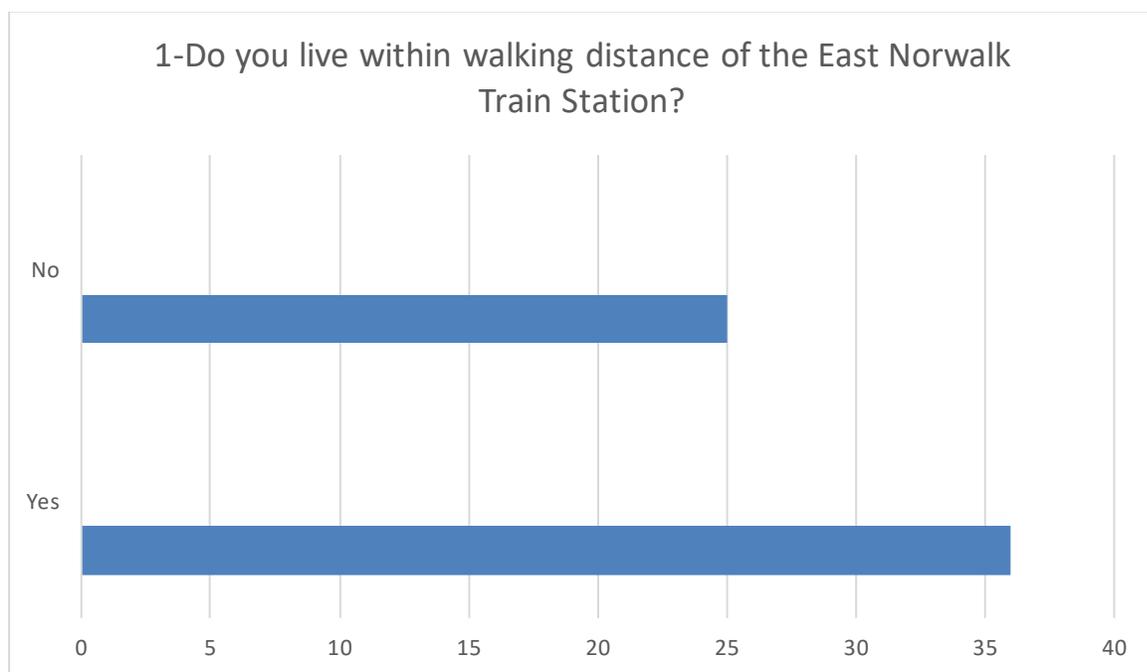
- Share ideas and plans with residents
- Improvement of sidewalks
- Overdevelopment of this area can take away from the identity of the neighborhood
- Waterfront/Beach developments to include outdoor restaurants and walking trails

#### “East Norwalk TOD Choices – Community Feedback Questionnaire 7/30/2019 – 9/6/2019

A second survey was open from the end of July through early September to expand the scope of participation in the July choices workshop. The same visual preference survey that was provided at the July Workshop was made available online via SurveyMonkey from the end of July through the beginning of September. 121 community members responded. The VPS showed sixteen images for each of the categories *Housing, Commercial and Mixed Uses, Connectivity and Access, and Public Space*, and asked respondents to rank each image on a scale from -2 (least preferred) to 2 (most preferred.) For each image an average score and standard deviation was calculated based on the data received. This was calculated for the workshop and the online survey separately, and then combined. The standard deviation offered an indication of consensus around the preference toward each image. The results of this online survey were added to the results from the in-person workshop and analyzed collectively (see the previous section of this memo on the *July Workshop.*)

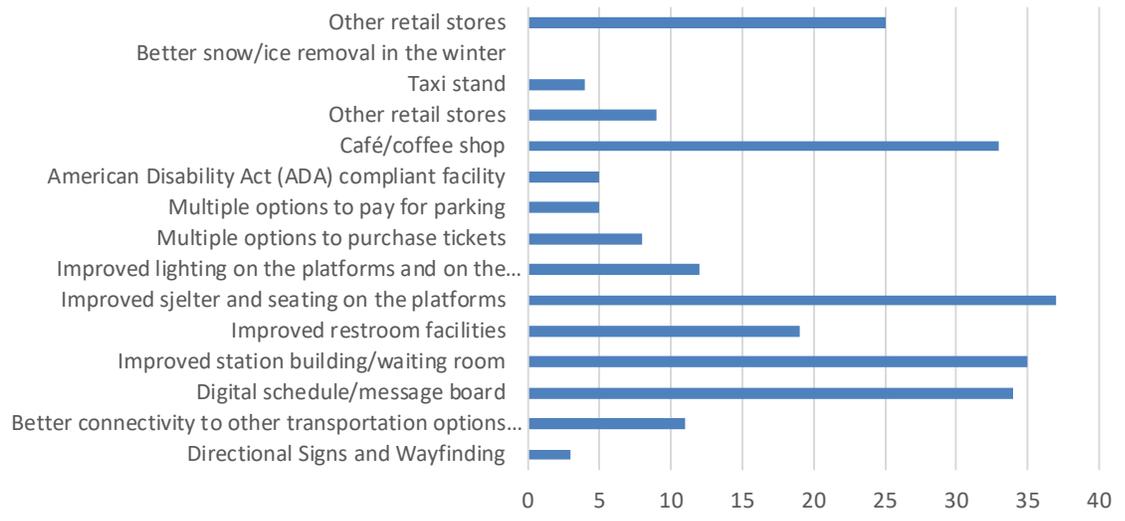
#### Commuter Survey 8/1/2019 – 8/22/2019

In late August, NV5 conducted a survey targeted toward commuters which informed their analysis of the transportation conditions in East Norwalk. 61 commuters responded. The following charts capture the results of this survey.

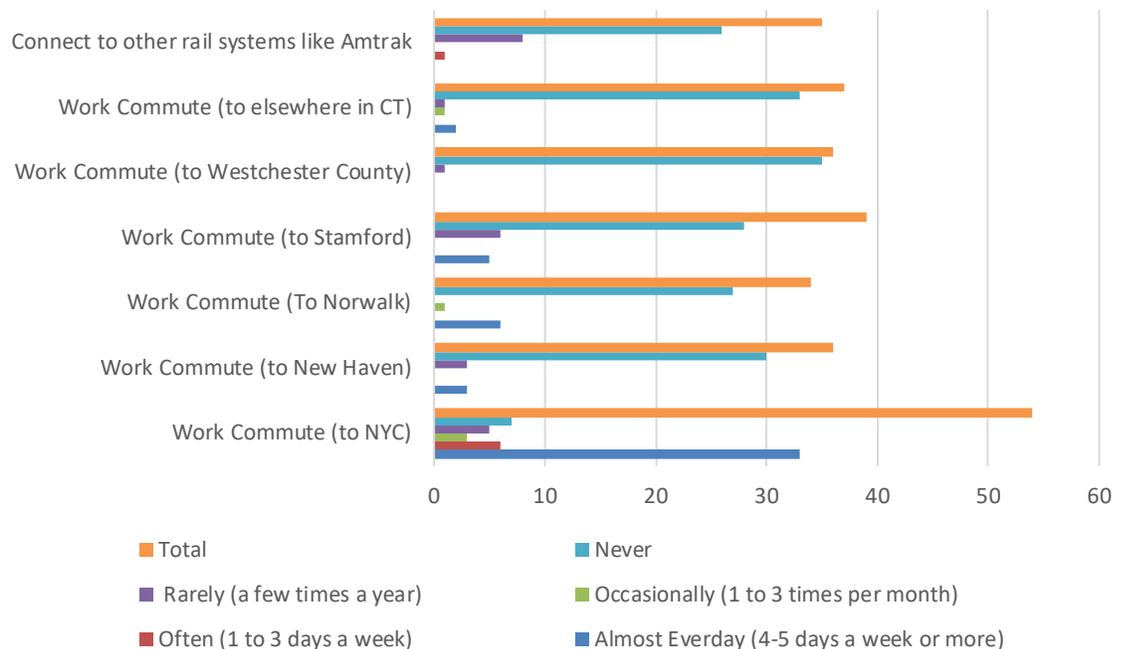




## 2-What new or improved amenities or facilities would you like to see at the East Norwalk Train Station?

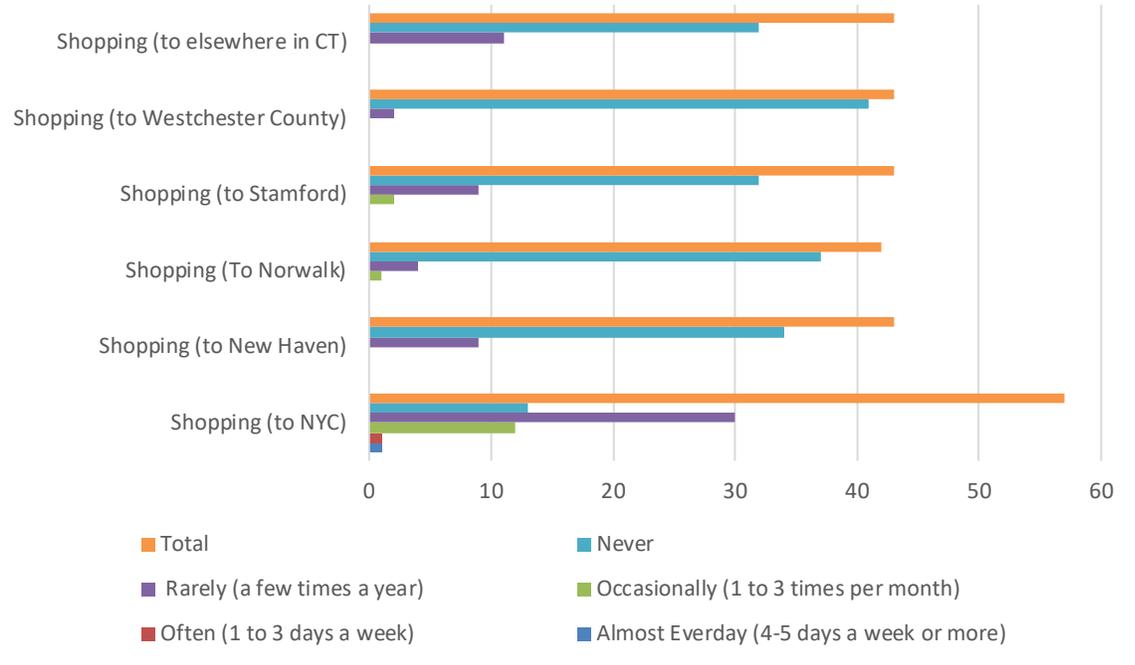


## 3-When you use the East Norwalk Train Station to commute for work, where are you going to/coming from? (Select a frequency of commute) (Mark never if you do not use this station or do not take the train)



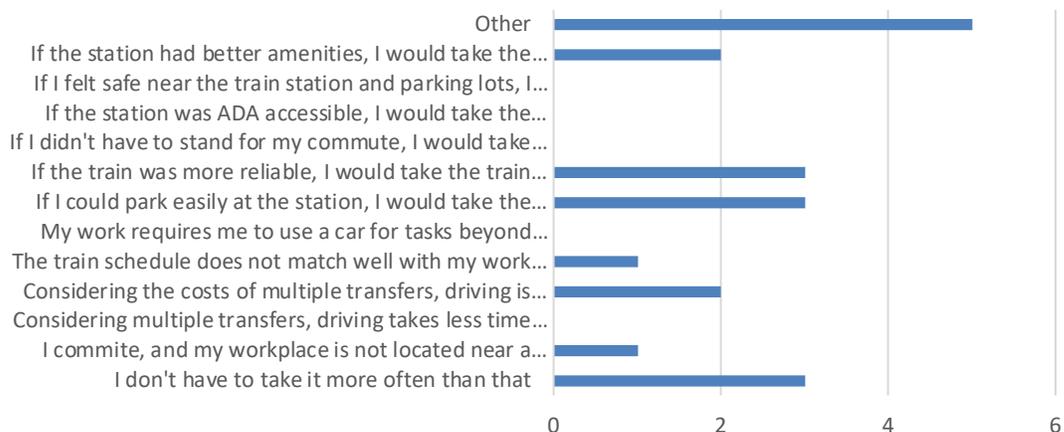


4-When you use the East Norwalk Train Station to commute for shopping or leisure/entertainment, where are you going to/coming from? (Select a frequency of commute) (Mark never if you do not use this station or do not take the train)

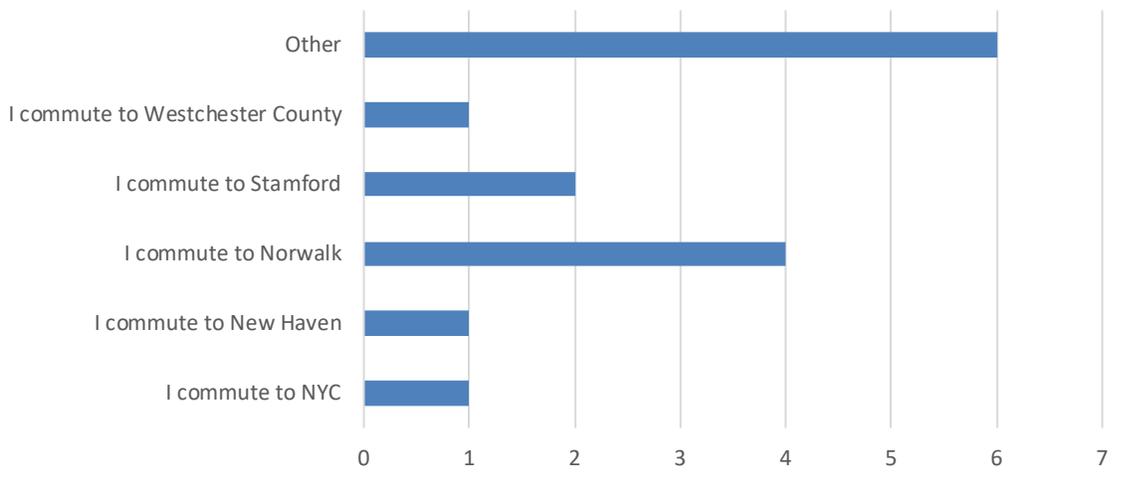




5-If you take the train from East Norwalk occasionally, rarely, or never, please let us know why by selecting the statement that applies to you most of the time. (Skip this question if you take the train from East Norwalk almost every day or aftone)

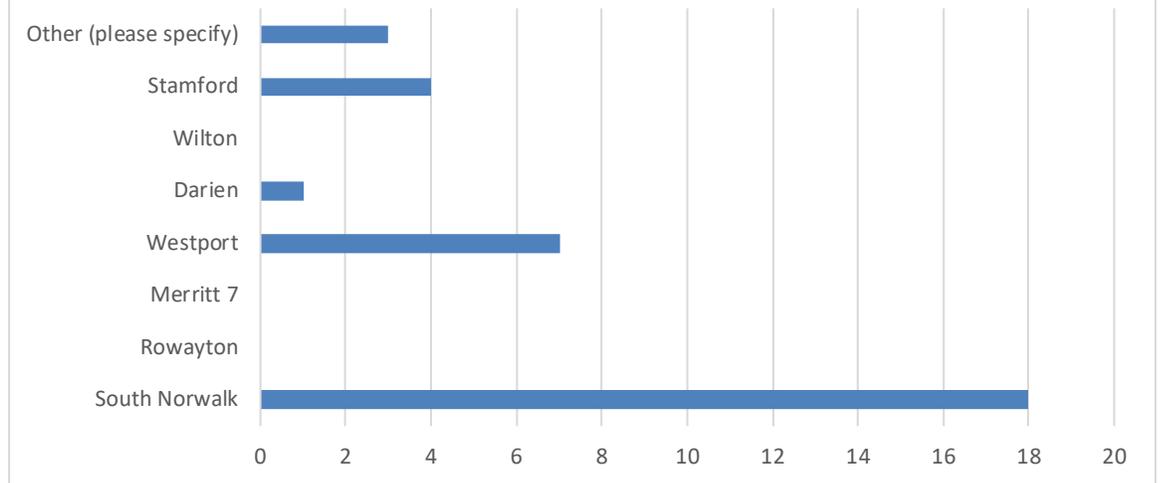


6-If you commute by car, where are you travelling to? (Skip this question if you take the train from East Norwalk almost every day or often.)

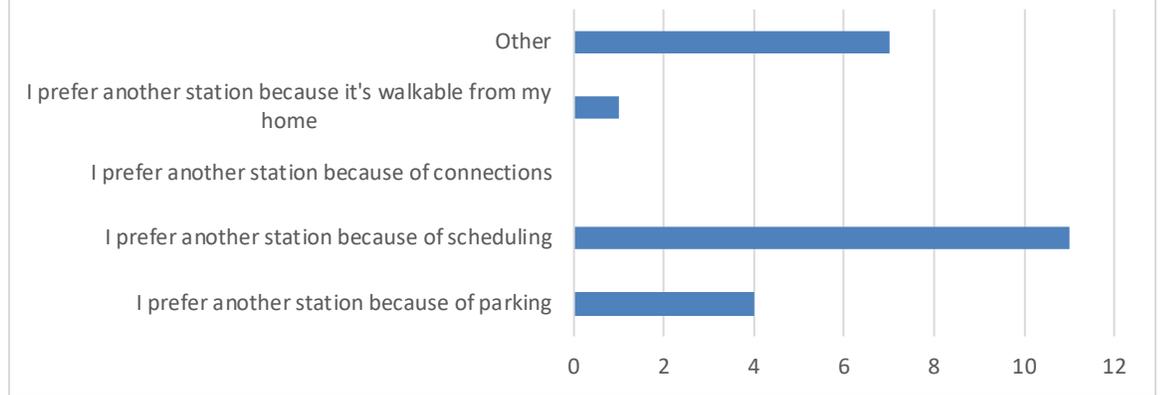


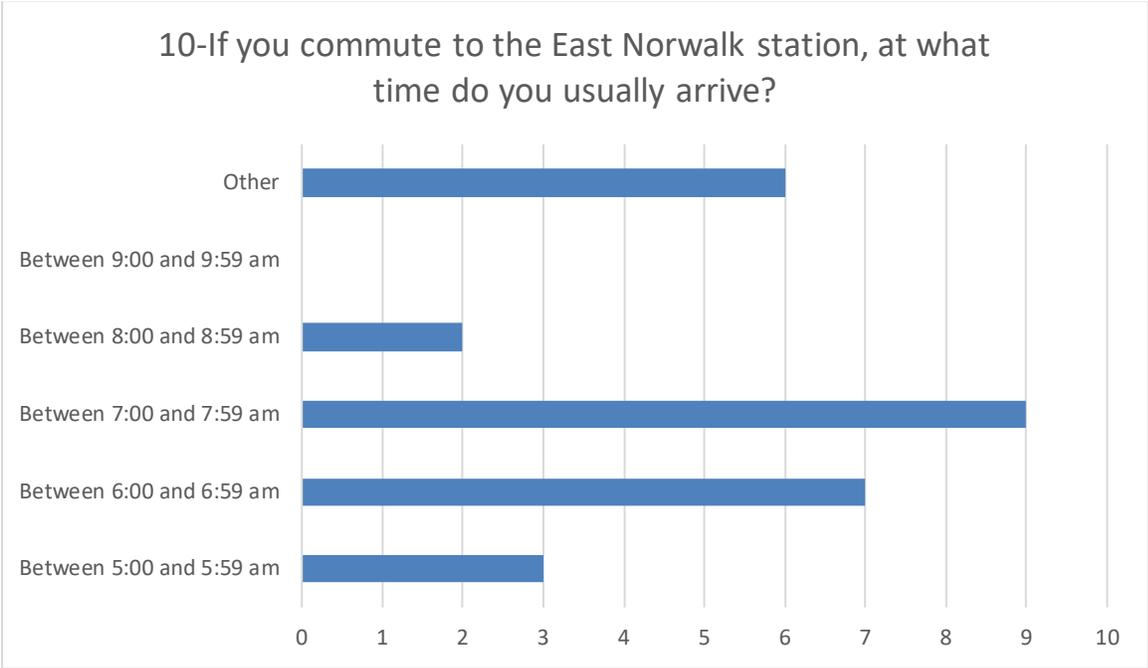
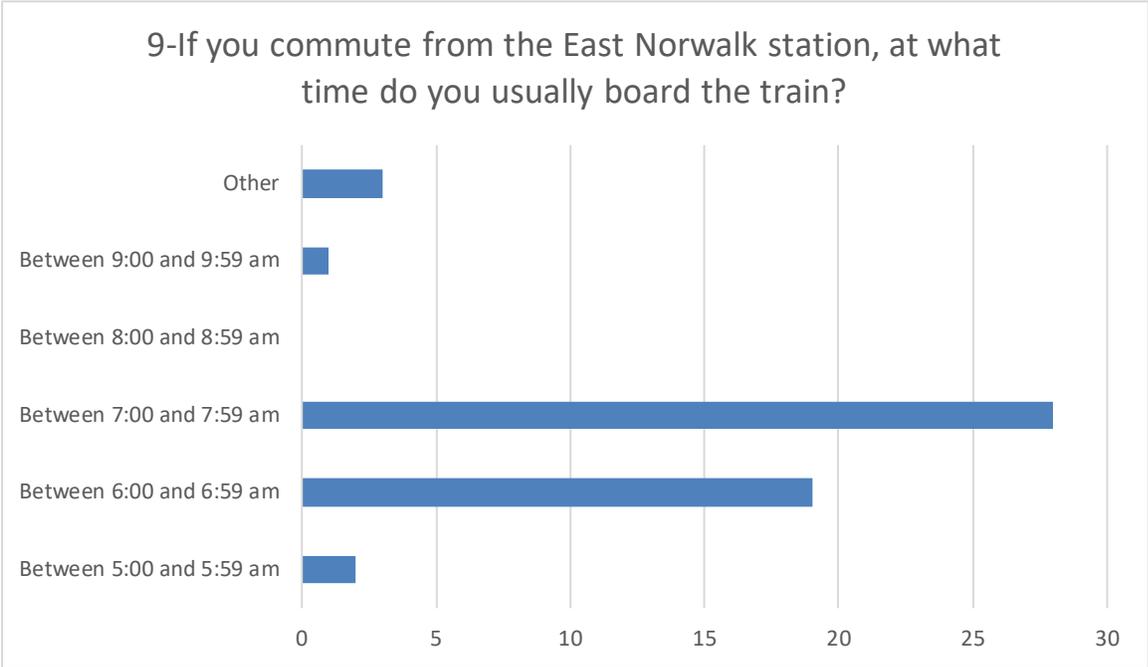


7-What station do you frequently use instead of the East Norwalk Station? (If you do not take the train, skip this question.)



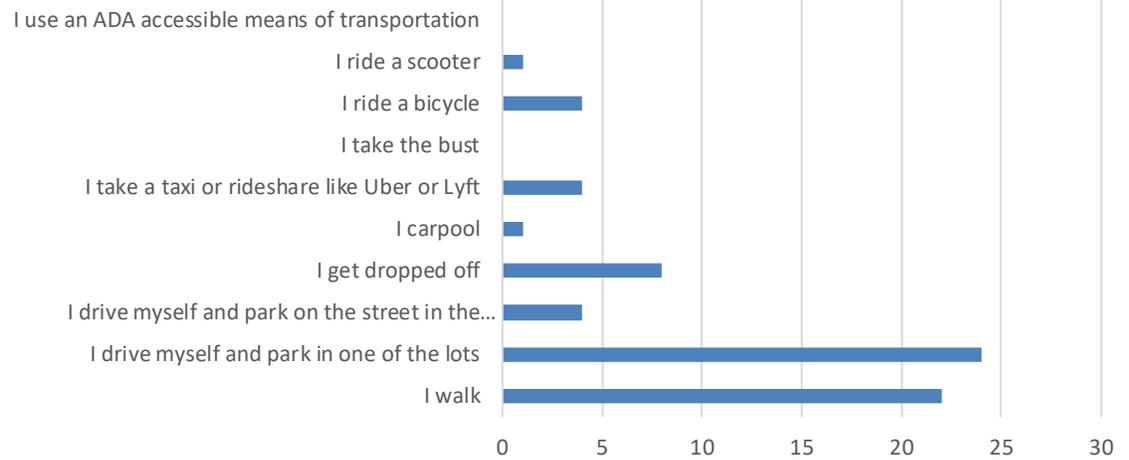
8-If you frequently use other stations instead of the East Norwalk Station, please let us know why by selecting the statement that applies to you most of the time. (Skip this question if you take the train from East Norwalk almost every day or often.)



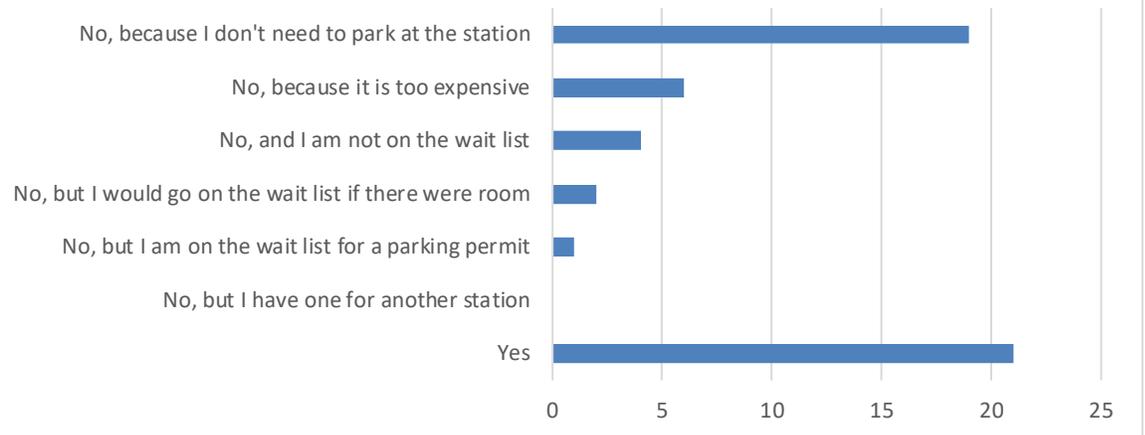




11-If you commute from the East Norwalk station, how do you get to the station? (Skip if you do not use this station or do not take the train.)

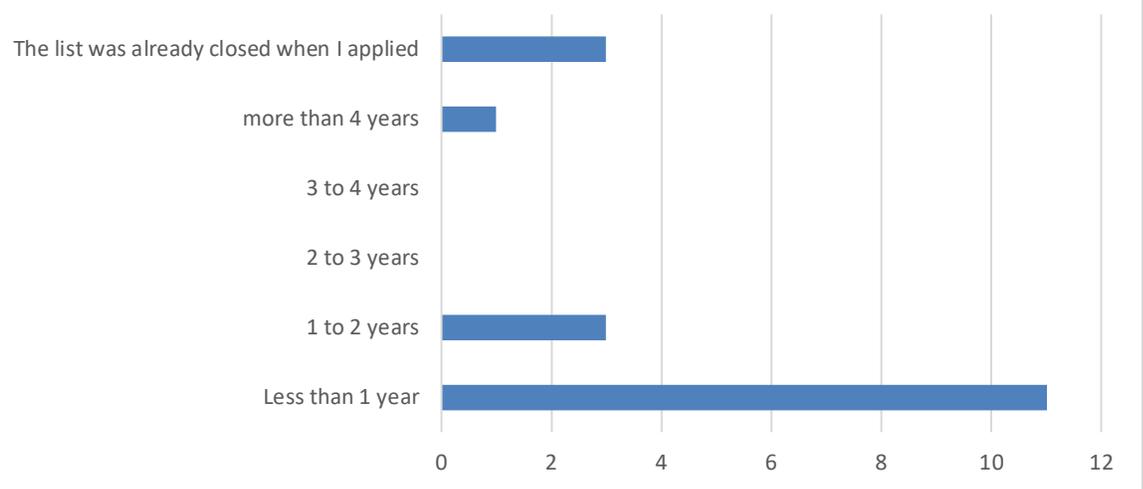


12-If you commute from the East Norwalk station, do you currently have an annual rail parking permit to park near the East Norwalk station? (Skip if you do not use this station or do not take the train.)



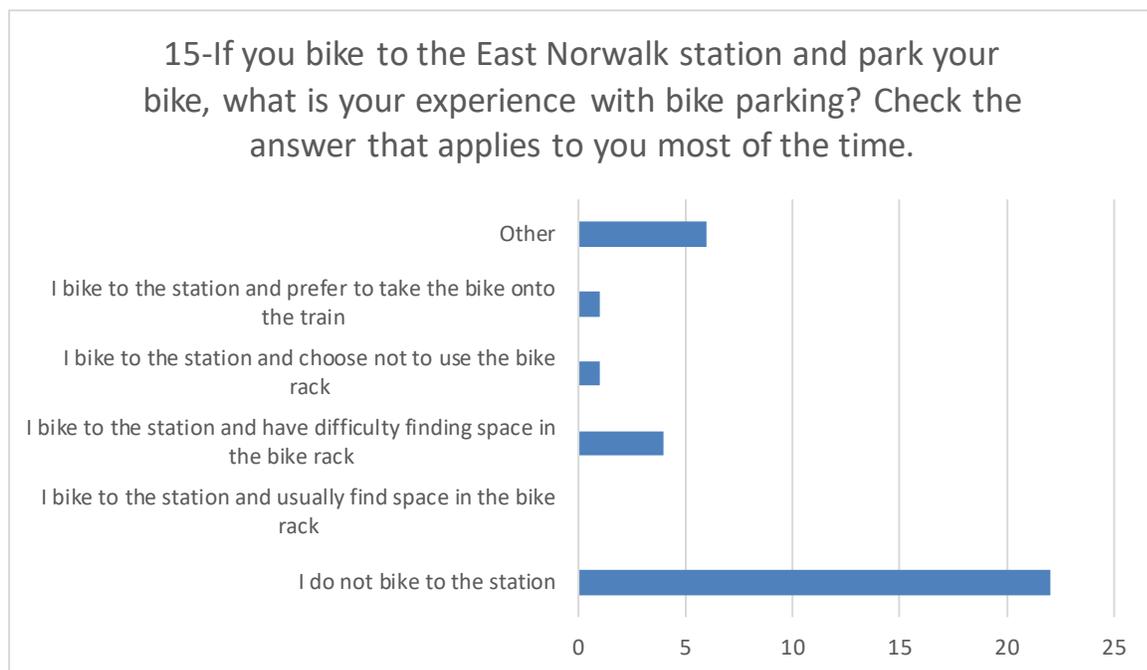


### 13-How long have you been on the wait list for a parking permit? (Skip if you do not need to park near the East Norwalk train station.)



### 14-If you drive to the East Norwalk station and park, what is your experience of parking availability? Check the answer that applies to you most of the time.





## Stakeholder Interviews

### Methods

Stakeholder interviews were conducted with small groups and individuals offering critical perspectives and insights on existing conditions and trends in East Norwalk. The interviews were conducted in person, facilitated by members of the planning team, on April 29, 2019. The following questions were used to guide the conversations:

- What are the challenges in this area in your opinion?
- What are the assets or opportunities that think we should definitely consider while planning?
- What are the plans of the organization you represent?
- What do you see as the challenges for development/parking/walking/biking/recreation?
- Tell us what you think can spur reinvestment in this area?
- What do you think are the market conditions?

### Interviewees

- Kim Morton, Norwalk Transit District, and Britt Liotta
- Michael DiScala, developer
- Pam Parkington and Kevin Barber, 3rd Taxing District
- Nancy Rosett, Chair of the Norwalk Walk/Bike Commission
- East Norwalk Neighborhood Association (ENNA)  
Mark Albertson  
Jan Nelson Broome



Diane Cece  
Roberta DiBisceglie  
Sarah Hunter  
Marrienne Johansson  
Megan McNeill

- East Norwalk Business Association (ENBA)
  - Judith Dominguez, ENBA President
  - Marc Nieto, Nieto Properties
  - Vincent Scicchitano, Fitch Street (Accurate Auto Repair)
  - Winthrop Baum, ENBA President (WEB Realty Company)
  - Jason Minoff, 19 Fort point Street (Perfect Plantings LLC.)
  - Ray Schaer, 74 Fort Point Street (Hanes Precision Industries)
  - Norma Zukim, 215 Liberty Square (Rowlinson Agency Inc.)
  - Jim Blair, 215 Liberty Square (Rowlinson Agency Inc.)
  - Richard Tavella, Rick's Main Roofing
  - Robert Kunkel, Harbor Harvest

### Themes

The themes and related feedback listed in this section emerged from the conversations had with stakeholders at these interviews. These comments have been edited for the purposes of maintaining language consistency, but the intent of each remains intact. These comments reflect individual perceptions and opinions.

### *Transit*

- Service to East Norwalk Train Station is limited, a comprehensive transit operations analysis is in the works and will evaluate opportunities to connect the East Norwalk Station to the South Norwalk Station to provide commuters with more options and better access to frequent rail service.
- The planned development at 230 East Avenue may be an ideal location for a local transit connection.
- People from East Norwalk are more likely to go to Saugatuck Station because there is more parking and more service available.

### *Connectivity*

- It is critical to make East Norwalk more walkable and bikeable. East Avenue is especially challenging.
- Improving the conditions of sidewalks is vital, especially within the five to ten minute walk radii of the station to reduce car-dependence which exacerbates traffic and parking challenges.
- Sidewalk repair is currently the responsibility of property-owners, which has led to a high level of neglect and disrepair.



- Crossing East Avenue is a challenge because of the heavy traffic and lack of adequate pedestrian infrastructure.
- Some businesses offer discounts to customers who walk or bike to their business.
- The Norwalk Bike and Pedestrian Plan aims to connect public amenities such as Cow Pasture Park and incorporate the East Coast Greenway in connecting to larger citywide bicycle infrastructure networks as part of the Norwalk River Valley Trail.

### *Traffic*

- Cut through traffic from I-95 causes issues for the community.
- Truck traffic is a major challenge for the East Norwalk community contributing to severe congestion problems.
- Events such as the Boat Show or Taste of Norwalk create immense traffic challenges.
- Streets are too narrow to handle the traffic flow. Widening East Avenue may help, but would require the City to take some private property.
- There are concerns of the SoNo Mall development causing even worse traffic challenges.

### *Parking*

- There is a lack of adequate parking at the station. Conflicts continually arise between commuters, residents, and business owners all competing for limited parking space and access.
- The current parking situation surrounding East Norwalk Station is an assembly of multiple owners and arrangements.
- The 2 main goals related to parking should be to improve safety and convenience.
- The City should streamline mechanisms for parking permitting and paying for parking.
- Saint Thomas's Church heavily utilizes its parking lots with the exception of Saturday mornings.
- The 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist Church does not have an adequate supply of parking to support its diverse congregation of primarily French and Creole-speaking members of the community, member of whom carpool to services at the church. There is an informal agreement with the neighboring bank to allow church parking to overflow onto their lot.
- There needs to be better parking enforcement.

### *Development*

- Two parcels on Fort Point Street currently offering around 100 parking spaces will be removed with the implementation of the Walk-Bridge program and the undergrounding of utilities.
- There is a trend for older and 2-3-family homes to be converted into multifamily rentals which do not comply with code and are not adequately invested in by property owners, resulting in overall lower property values.
- Saint Thomas Church may consider selling their property if zoning conditions were modified to incentivize redevelopment.
- The DiScala property between the cemetery and Mill Pond is interested in redeveloping, but current zoning limits any building height to 35' and demands a maximum floor-to-area-ratio



(FAR) of 1 unit per 1,650 square feet of land. If zoning could accommodate an FAR of 1 unit per 800 square feet and a parking requirement of 1.3 spaces per unit, redevelopment would be far more feasible. This particular site has added constraints with drainage easements and flooding issues. The owner is willing to open to negotiating a public amenity, such as access to the water through their site, in exchange for these added development incentives.

- A pilot bike-share program is in the works.

#### *Market Conditions*

- There is no market for office space in East Norwalk.
- Condos are taxed the same as single-family dwelling units, making them extremely expensive and difficult to sell. The market only supports rentals as a result, limiting access to home ownership and opportunities for desired mixed-use development in East Norwalk.
- A low population density contributes to low rents.
- The construction of the new SoNo Mall will have a major impact on retail and will likely cause Westport Center to “empty out.” Westport Center is offering free parking as an incentive to generate more foot traffic.
- The City should focus on supporting small and local businesses, who are struggling to combat the Amazon effect.
- The City should develop programming to attract, support, and retain younger demographics who currently have limited opportunities to live and or work in East Norwalk.

#### *Urban Design*

- East Norwalk should promote “live, work, shop.”
- There is a desire for a variety of retail spaces with indoor and outdoor green spaces and common areas.
- The City should prioritize the redevelopment of blighted parcels.

#### *Open Space/Environment*

- Flooding is a major issue for East Norwalk during heavy storm events.
- The Third Taxing District can acquire property and park land.
- There are potential industrial brownfield sites north-west of the train station.

#### *Identity/Character*

- The City should strive to maintain East Norwalk’s “New England character” and “neighborhood feel.” This character in itself actually increases property value, how can the City allow for more density while preserving and enhancing the value of East Norwalk’s coastal identity.
- East Norwalk is nothing like South Norwalk and a far cry from Wall Street, a more parallel comparison would be with Old Greenwich, CT, or Port Chester or Port Jefferson.
- East Norwalk is a residential area in a big city, with many distinct sub-identities within the multiple East Norwalk neighborhoods.



- Destinations such as Marvin Beach, Calf Pasture Beach, and the Parks lend themselves to enhancing East Norwalk's character.

#### *Communications*

- Road construction and infrastructure improvements need to be better communicated and coordinated with business and property owners to minimize disruption to business operations and patronage.
- There is lack of coordination or communication between businesses, utility companies, law enforcement and the City. Business owners suffer when there is work in front of their business without them knowing about it. Many times, they cannot run their businesses and are forced to send employees and customers away because there was no communication about the work and police/utility company have shut them down for a day. Road closures and diversions need to be coordinated to minimize disruption to businesses and services, and need to be communicated in advance. We strongly recommend coming up with a clear line of communication to convey utility work and construction plans to residents and business owners who will be impacted.
- There needs to be a long-term strategy and coordinated effort among all the many construction projects planned to take place in the next five years. There needs to be a clear implementation plan to minimize disruption to the way of life for East Norwalk residents and businesses. 350-500 businesses could be impacted and may choose to relocate if years of construction is going to make running a profitable business highly challenging.
- No one knows the current status of the East Avenue reconstruction project.