Broad River

Master Plan Recommendations

For the May 11, 2004 Workshop
held by
The Planning Commission for
the City of Norwalk

Preface

- The members of the Broad River Neighborhood Association conferred upon the recommendations attached for the consideration of the Planning Commission as the 2004 update of the Norwalk Plan of Conservation and Development (the "Master Plan") is prepared.

- The members hope that the Planning Commission will take a "bottom-up" approach as issues of concern to the Broad River neighborhood are evaluated. Membership in the Broad River Neighborhood Association is growing, and demonstration of concern for the ideas of our members will foster further civic involvement.
2,500 residents in two Census tracts.
2,100 live as part of a family unit.

A Rich Neighborhood

- Maintain and Enhance Existing Assets
  - Norwalk River
  - Historic Structures and Homes
  - John E. Yost Fire Station #1
  - Jesse T. Dunbar Field
  - Riverside Cemetery
  - Original Broad River School Building
  - Broad River School/Broad River Homes
  - Limited access to Route 7, Merritt Pkwy, I-95
  - NB-zoned Neighborhood Businesses
    - Quiet neighborhood streets, on-street parking
    - Ability to traverse Broad River on foot
□ Broad River was one of the original villages to join the city of Norwalk. Today, it maintains the delicate mix of commerce, residential life, religious institutions and civic spaces which maintain community feeling in our village neighborhood.

□ Residents often traverse the neighborhood on foot, finding stores and restaurants within a minute’s walk. The busy street pattern continually threatens this neighborhood feeling.

□ The closing of the Broad River School left our neighborhood without a community school, and the original Broad River schoolhouse and community center has been sold to Fairfield County Bank.

□ Dunbar Field is the only public recreational space in Broad River. Lack of crosswalks and sidewalks to reach the field from any distance, along with the single entrance on the north side of the park, limit the accessibility and utility of this park to our neighborhood’s children.

□ On a ten-year timeline, acquisition or construction of space for a community center is a high priority for Broad River residents. Land adjacent to the fire station at New Canaan Ave. & Silvermine Ave., the psychological heart of Broad River, is suggested.
New Canaan Ave. & Silvermine Ave.
Install Crosswalks
Residents fear the neighborhood is becoming a cut-through as commercial and residential development in New Canaan, the Norwalk Core and the Main Ave/Route 7 Corridor funnel traffic through our neighborhood, especially on New Canaan, Ponus and Silvermine Avenues.

- The lack of a Route 7 North to Merritt Parkway North connection funnels unnecessary traffic along Route 123 and through Broad River.

Commercial development is currently limited to zones along New Canaan Avenue, and no building in Broad River is taller than 4 stories. Retain commercial zones exclusively along New Canaan Avenue, and maintain as a maximum the current total commercial square footage and number of parking spaces. Commercial zoning in Broad River is exclusively NB-zoned.

A Busy Neighborhood, Cont.

- Enforce regulations and contracts requiring trees and walls be maintained between commercial zones and residential zones on Ponus Avenue (near Wendy’s/John’s Best) and Harris Street.

- Enforce signage restrictions on New Canaan Ave.

- Encourage New Canaan Avenue businesses through an engineering survey addressing parking, traffic ingress/egress, breaking large paving expanses, pedestrian-friendly orientation and appropriate signage.
- No commercial zoning exists in the City of Norwalk north of New Canaan Avenue and west of the Norwalk River. Streets in this zone, specifically Silvermine Avenue and Broad Street west of the river, should be re-engineered as residential streets.
- Surveys to narrow these streets (if only to match their width in the Silvermine Association) should be undertaken. The widening of sidewalks and planting of trees close to the roadside are requested by residents as traffic calming measures.
Sidewalk Access, Cont.

- Sidewalk upgrades along major roads are desperately needed in Broad River. Sidewalks should lead pedestrians safely to and from NB zones, Dunbar Field, the Merritt 7 rail station and intra-neighborhood points.

- Dunbar Field is currently only accessible from Harris Street. Build gates on New Canaan Avenue and Silvermine Avenue and mark crosswalks.

- We applaud the development of a playground at Dunbar Field and encourage construction of further assets, such as a basketball court, running track or tennis courts.
- A parking lot, shared by the Fire Department and Broad River Animal Hospital, overflows with cars daily. Expand this lot or provide alternative parking areas.
- Focused, medium-intensity lighting should be installed in this lot to discourage undesirable activity.

A River Neighborhood?

- Broad River is linked by name and spirit to the Norwalk River.
- However, the Norwalk River cannot be seen from Riverside Drive. The lake formed at Kellogg-Deering Wellfield cannot be seen from Lakeview Drive.
- No point of public access to the Norwalk River exists in Broad River.
• In the next ten years, the residents of Broad River would like to see public space constructed and maintained along the Norwalk River. Land immediately north of New Canaan Avenue at the river is suggested. Survey and develop a maintenance plan for public access and visual access that protects city liability while providing these important public goods.

• Broad River residents support development of walking or bicycle trails along the river to connect Broad River with Silvermine, the Wall Street development, City Hall and East Norwalk.

• A neighborhood park, incorporating a skating pond, was promised at the time of Route 7’s construction. Incorporating this and multiple uses into public access space is encouraged.

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**A Neighborhood of Homes**

• Broad River maintains a mix of single-family, multi-family, condominium and rental units. 70% of residents own their own homes.

• Residential zoning in Broad River is primarily B-zoned, with limited A, C and D zoning.

• The average 2003 Grand List appraisal in Broad River was $370,000; in line with the Brookside, Wolfpit and East Norwalk neighborhoods.

• New residential construction and teardown construction continues at a rapid pace in Broad River, including on a new street, Old Farm Place.

• The conversion of Broad River School to senior housing at Broad River Homes has been an asset to our neighborhood.
Broad River residents generally oppose the creation of an Architectural Review Board or Village Districts, and support working within existing Historic Preservation avenues, but oppose the creation of new Historic Preservation commissions.

"New Urbanism" design was not discussed, but could be agreeable if integrated with expanded river access and protection of "walkable" residential to NB-zones.

Further, oppose the downgrading of our B and C zoning to increase residential densities and oppose the expansion of accessory apartment deed restrictions, especially in B and C zones.
- Encourage planting of trees and shrubs to soften the impact of the power station’s metallic appearance.
- Encourage the burial of power lines. Overhead transmission lines dwarf the homes of Broad River and are an eyesore. No additional overhead lines should be erected (anywhere in the city) and all new development or redevelopment of lines should be done underground.
- Minimize traffic diversions, light pollution, and service interruptions during substation upgrades.

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**Future Development**

- Provide community groups with “early warning” of public hearings, including copies of agendas, invitees and engineering/architectural graphical support.
- Expand "bottom-up" planning, as many feel important issues in recent memory such as redevelopment of the former MBI headquarters on Fair Street (which could add 5-8% to the population of Broad River) and the power substation projects were handled in a top-down manner.
Future Development, Cont.

- Continue working with the residents of Broad River throughout the lifetime of this and future Master Plans as we protect and improve our village neighborhood.