

TO: NORWALK REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY COMMISSIONERS
FROM: TAMI STRAUSS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING
DATE: JANUARY 30, 2019
RE: WALL STREET-WEST AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

The public hearing on the Wall Street / West Avenue Redevelopment Plan held on January 8th evidenced the community's interest and desire to actively participate in the formulation of this important municipal planning document. Nearly 40 people attended the public hearing, with 17 offering public comment regarding the Plan. In addition to the 40 people attending, the Agency received written comments from another 11 people and there has been ongoing engagement with the public through the Norwalk Tomorrow Website.

As part of the public comment process there were some specific questions asked about the plan. Responses to these questions were provided to you on January 22nd. Further, specific public comments were made that sought consideration of some form of modification to the plan. These comments have been fully reviewed and I have addressed the specific areas of the plan which will be subject to review/modification below.

1. Public Meeting History regarding the Plan (To be inserted on Page 8):

In addition to the working group and stakeholder meetings, the Plan was reviewed at the publicly noticed agencies and commission meetings in:

Planning Committee

- February 1, 2018
- June 7, 2018
- November 1, 2018
- December 6, 2018
- January 3, 2019

Norwalk Redevelopment Agency

- January 16, 2018
- November 13, 2018
- January 8, 2019

Planning Commission

- June 19, 2018
- December 21, 2018

Zoning Commission

- January 2018

2. Consistency with the POCD (to be inserted after #1 above)

The POCD is a macro-level, citywide planning document that guides the overall vision, goals, and objectives of the City over the next 10 years. The POCD informs the needs of the overall City and advises for more detailed planning studies and implementation methods that should be completed within the City to lend guidance for the future. The Wall Street-West Avenue Neighborhood Plan, as well as any other redevelopment plan, is a micro-level study that explores and plans for specific improvements to a neighborhood. A Redevelopment Plan analyzes specific land use issues that are constraining the revitalization of a neighborhood, and provides recommendations for addressing those constraints.

As required by State Statute Chapter 130, Section 8-127 the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency requested the written opinion of the Planning Commission, including a determination that the Wall Street-West Avenue Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the adopted 2008 Plan of Conservation and Development and with the draft 2018 Plan of Conservation and Development. The resolution of the Planning Commission determining the Redevelopment Plan to be consistent with the adopted and draft POCDs is attached to this document.

3. Innovation District – we will remove any reference to the Innovation District

4. Eminent Domain (to be inserted on page 20)

As prescribed by the Common Council in 2007, eminent domain shall take place only through direct approval by the Norwalk Common Council, and only in connection with a Land Disposition and Development Agreement with a City designated preferred developer, each to be likewise approved by the Norwalk Common Council.

The Redevelopment Agency itself is directly prohibited from undertaking any direct property taking and, further, cannot make a request to the Common Council to consider such a taking on its own behalf even if such taking is deemed beneficial to the advancement of the stated objectives of the Redevelopment Plan. The Agency can only advance a taking request to the Common Council for its consideration at the behest of a Common Council approved Preferred Developer with a likewise approved Land Disposition Agreement and Conceptual Master Site Plan.

Should the Common Council be receptive to restoring the potential use of eminent domain by the Redevelopment Agency in order to advance the objectives of the Wall Street Redevelopment Plan, the Agency would request the Common Council approve a resolution approving the use of eminent domain under the Wall Street-West Avenue Redevelopment Plan to the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency.

The 2007 modification regarding eminent domain is attached to this Plan.

5. Previous Studies advanced by the City and or Redevelopment Agency (add to Reference Documents on page 37)

The findings and recommendations of all previous studies advanced by the City and/or the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency regarding public infrastructure (streets, sidewalks, and all related street amenities including street trees) should be cost estimated for implementation and be made part of the City's five-year Capital Plan as Urban Infrastructure. If said finding cannot be implemented because of a changed condition, law or other provision, it should be incumbent upon the implementing department to publicly post a written explanation of why the specific recommendation cannot be implemented.

Links to Reference Documents

All reference documents will be added into the plan with links and associated images. The titles will be accompanied by short descriptions explaining the applicability of each associated document.

Redevelopment Plan and POCD

Tomorrow.norwalkct.org

Roadway Standards

<https://www.norwalkct.org/DocumentCenter/View/11096/Final-Revised-City-of-Norwalk-Roadway-Standards--Combined---3-8-2017?bidId=>

Sign and Façade Review

<https://www.norwalkct.org/DocumentCenter/View/8969/Design-Review-Brochure-approved-2011?bidId=>

State Historic Preservation Standards

<https://www.norwalkct.org/DocumentCenter/View/9396/Resources-and-Guidelines-Historic-Preservation-in-Norwalk-July-1980?bidId=>

Sustainable Design Guidelines

<https://www.norwalkct.org/DocumentCenter/View/9172/Sustainable-Design-Guidelines-w-05-10-11-edits?bidId=>

2012 Connectivity Master Plan

<https://www.norwalkct.org/DocumentCenter/View/8920/Connectivity-Masterplan---approved-March-27-2012?bidId=>

<https://www.norwalkct.org/DocumentCenter/View/8901/Norwalk-Parking-Plan-Draft-Parking-Plan-Dec-2012?bidId=>

Norwalk Zoning Code

<https://www.norwalkct.org/203/Building-Zone-Regulations>

Transportation Management Plan

<https://www.ct.gov/dot/cwp/view.asp?A=3529&Q=542234>

Bike Safety and Engineering Study

<https://www.norwalkct.org/DocumentCenter/View/9139/Bicycle-Safety-and-Engineering-Study-to-and-through-South-Norwalk?bidId=>

Pedestrian and Bikeway Transportation Plan

<https://www.norwalkct.org/DocumentCenter/View/8483/Norwalk-Recommended-Improvement-Plan-2-3-2012?bidId=>

6. Historic District and Sites, Historic Tax Credits (page 12, make map larger)

The neighborhood contains the Wall Street Historic District, which runs along Wall Street and extends across the Norwalk River, as shown in Figure 6. The area was designated by the National Register of Historic Places in 2009 and is comprised of 42 buildings, including the old trolley barn, Lockwood-Mathews Mansion, an 1860 gothic revival church known as St. Mary's and an 1858 Italianate design church known as Cornerstone Community Church and Parish House. The Mill Hill Historic District and Norwalk Green Historic District are adjacent to the plan area but are not located within it.

In addition to the historic district, there are many historic structures located throughout the Wall Street-West Avenue neighborhood, including the Norwalk Public Library, Norwalk Post Office, Wall Street Theater, Fairfield County Savings Bank, St John Place, and Wall Street Bridge. Abutting the neighborhood is Mill Hill Historic Park, with historic structures including the Norwalk Historical Society as a monument to early Norwalk.

Properties within the historic district that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places include:

- 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 20, 26, 28, 32 Commerce Street
- 2 Knight Street
- 3-5, 7, 9, 10, 15, 17, 19, 21, 27-29, 33-39, 41-45, 47, 48, 49, 51, 53, 55, 61, 64, 65, 67, 69, 71, 77, 83 Wall Street
- 718, 724, 731 Wall Street

Any property that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places is eligible for State and/or Federal Historic Tax Credits to rehabilitate and re-use historic properties. The programs can be combined to claim a percentage of eligible improvement expenses against the developer's federal tax liability which makes rehabilitation and re-use of the properties more cost effective to encourage preservation.

Link to State Historic Tax Credits with information about Federal Historic Tax Credits: <https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Services/Historic-Preservation/Funding-Opportunities>

The City of Norwalk, the Agency, and the community have vested interest in maintaining and preserving the historic resources and atmosphere of the Wall Street-West Avenue neighborhood. Any development that may occur within the district should be designed sensitively and in accordance with existing structures within the neighborhood. Any proposed development or significant alteration to a historic property will be reviewed by the Agency with input from the Historical Commission.

Detailed strategies for preserving the integrity and character of historic structures are detailed in the draft 2018 Plan of Conservation and Development.

7. Norwalk River as a Scenic River

The Norwalk River is a prominent asset to the Wall-West neighborhood. While the river does not have a Scenic River destination the Plan puts forward ways to enhance the rivers presence and promotes increased public access. The Agency will investigate the feasibility of achieving the Wild & Scenic River Designation.

Add as implementation measure*

8. Best practices for green building design and rehab

Add this to Design Guidelines 3. Sustainability/Green Infrastructure

As the effects of climate change become more prevalent in communities it becomes increasingly important to plan for development and communities that are resilient. This plan supports and promotes resiliency by including sustainable design principles by requiring sustainability review. These include standards that reduce the urban heat island effect such as color and materials, increasing and requiring green spaces, further integration of the

natural and urban environments, and sustainable practices including, but not limited to, alternative energy sources and coastal resiliency measures in new construction and rehabilitation projects.

9. Train Station as a potential opportunity

The Agency supports the State's initiative of assessing the feasibility of a Wall Street Train Station. Regardless of the outcomes of the study the Agency recognizes the need for transportation improvements within the neighborhood and its connections to other areas of the City. The Plan addresses and supports these improvements.

10. Deteriorated/Deteriorating Conditions

The Norwalk Tax Assessment database is the most comprehensive, up-to-date source of real estate information in the City. Utilizing data from the most current revaluation (October 2018), the analysis of deteriorated/deteriorating conditions in the Redevelopment Area is being amended to a property-by-property analysis of parcel and building conditions in the area (depreciation, economic obsolescence, functional obsolescence, building condition, etc.) and supplemented with on-site visits. A final document will be included in the Plan document.

11. Financial Resources

State and Federal Historic Tax Credits

<https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Services/Historic-Preservation/Funding-Opportunities>

Small Business Loans

https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Business-Development/01_Type_of_Business/Small-Businesses

State of CT Small Business Express

https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Business-Development/05_Funding_Opportunities/Small-Business-Express

Housing Development Financing

Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit

<https://www.chfa.org/developers/tax-credit-program/lihtc/>

State Housing Tax Credit Contribution Program

<https://www.chfa.org/developers/tax-credit-program/htcc/>

Housing Developer Financing Products

<https://www.chfa.org/developers/financing-products/>

CHFA / DOH Consolidated Application

<http://www.chfa.org/developers/consolidated-application/>

New Market Tax Credit Program

<https://www.cdfifund.gov/programs-training/Programs/new-markets-tax-credit/Pages/default.aspx>

[Add language with short descriptions*](#)

12. Flood Risk

Uses along the Wall Street-West Avenue neighborhood's waterfront are subject to flooding. As shown on Figure 7, properties within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designated 100-year and 500-year flood zone include industrial uses and the Head of the Harbor residential development. With industrial uses in this floodplain, there is a significant risk for environmental contamination entering the Norwalk River during flood events. Many historic properties within the Wall Street Historic District are also at risk for flooding.

As the frequency of flooding events increases, as has been true for the past decade both nationally and locally, new construction, as well as rehabilitation, should be considerate of the 100-Year flood plain level and construct at or above it. Where this is not possible or feasible, developers and property owners should consider alternative flood controls and mitigation measures for properties as these events reoccur more often in the future. This should also include emergency evacuation plans and procedures for residents and other tenants. Adequately planning for such events can greatly reduce the impacts and associated costs of flood-related impacts.

13. Public Art

On page 41 (design guidelines)

The draft POCD recommends Norwalk creating a Norwalk Arts and Culture Plan, with the Norwalk Arts Commission being the policy-making entity regarding arts and culture in the city.

Public art including sculptures, murals, statues, and any other visual art accessible to the public: located in prominent spaces; work with Norwalk Arts Commission to select artists and place art.

14. Affordable Housing

On page 28 under Zoning Changes

In order to help realize the goal of affordability in the Plan Area, proposed zoning for the area should include the City's Workforce Housing Regulation (Norwalk Zoning Code Article 101, Section 118-1050) that is in effect in the SoNo Station Design District be the regulation in effect in the Redevelopment Area.



PLANNING COMMISSION
125 East Avenue
Norwalk, Connecticut 06851

December 10, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission, Frances DiMeglio, Chair
FROM: Steve Kleppin, P&Z Director
RE: **West Ave./Wall St. Redevelopment Plan – Consistency with the 2008 Plan of Conservation and Development and Draft 2019 Citywide Plan**

We have received a request from the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency for a determination of whether the draft Wall Street-West Avenue Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the 2008 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

At your November 13, 2018 meeting, commissioners were given a draft copy of the plan. As part of the plan development, Commissioners King and Ferguson served on the working group and participated in the development of the plan and helped provide regular feedback to the Commission over the course of the last year.

As you are aware, staff has been working closely with Redevelopment, as well as with the Parking Authority on joint outreach and strategy as part of the redevelopment plan, the POCD update and the citywide parking study. This was done so the recommendations within these plans would be consistent with the overall city's policies and goals and provide a clear connection to the goals and recommendations of the draft Citywide Plan.

While the statute speaks to consistency with the current plan (2008 POCD), I feel it is important to consider the redevelopment plans consistency with the pending POCD as well.

The following resolution is offered:

RESOLUTIONS

BE IT RESOLVED by the Norwalk Planning Commission that the draft Wall Street - West Avenue Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the 2008 Plan of Conservation and Development.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the reasons for this action are:

- 1) To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development to "Allow a wide range of housing opportunities to ensure that the housing needs of all segments of the labor force are met" (A.1.2.3, p. 10); and
- 2) To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development to "Encourage quality housing for a variety of tenures, family sizes, incomes, the elderly, and persons with special needs" (A.2.1.1, p. 11); and
- 3) To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development to "Strengthen the revitalization of the West Avenue area by encouraging mixed-use development....." (A.3.1.2, p.12); and
- 4) To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development to "Enhance pedestrian experience to support related economic revitalization and encourage transit use" (F.4.2.1. p.42); and
- 5) To implement the Plan of Conservation and Development to "Allow for the future needs of Norwalk to be met as identified in this Plan (i.e. housing, economic growth, community facilities, etc.)" (F.1.1.6, p. 40).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Norwalk Planning Commission that the draft Wall Street - West Avenue Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the Draft 2019 Citywide Plan (POCD).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the following principles within the Draft Citywide Plan:

- 1) Chapter 3, Prosperity and Opportunity, Goal 3: Strengthen Norwalk's urban core with a mix of uses to attract residents, visitors and businesses.
- 2) Chapter 4, Housing Choice and Healthy Lifestyles, Goal 1: Norwalk has a neighborhood and housing strategy that maintains a variety of neighborhood types and housing choices through a variety of mechanisms.
- 3) Chapter 6, Preserving and Promoting our Historic Heritage, Arts and Culture, Goal 1: Norwalk protects its most important historic resources and encourages adaptive reuse of historic sites to maintain and enrich the City's character.
- 4) Chapter 7, Enhancing Open Space, Park, Trail and Recreation Systems, Goal 1: Norwalk has a connected green and blue network of parks, open space and trails.
- 5) Chapter 8, Coastal Resources and Resilience, Goal 1: Continue to support the implementation of Norwalk's Harbor Management Plan.
- 6) Chapters 10, Transportation and Mobility Networks, Goal 1: Norwalk has a comprehensive and balanced transportation system, with safety and multimodal accessibility the top priority of citywide transportation planning.
- 7) Chapter 11, Public Facilities, Services and Infrastructure, Goal 1: Norwalk's infrastructure and public facilities are resource-efficient, well-maintained, cost-effective, sustainable and resilient.
- 8) Chapter 12, Future Land Use, Zoning and Urban Design, Goal 2: Neighborhood and corridor activity enters have urban design standards that promote walkability.