

Summary Report

Village Center Revitalization Assessment

A Component of the U.S. EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant

East Hampton, Connecticut



TPA
DESIGN GROUP

 **AMS**
CONSULTING, LLC
Real Estate & Marketing Consultants

December 2006

**Summary Report
Village Center Revitalization Assessment
East Hampton, Connecticut**

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Summary Report

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INTRODUCTION

Decades ago, the Town identified East Hampton's Village Center as the area it wanted to focus on as its business and civic hub. Its 1968 Plan (coincidentally prepared by TPA) sums up the development philosophy which still holds relevance today:

There are substantial regional shopping centers now in Hartford and Middletown, within increasingly easy access of East Hampton, so the need for land for this type of facility is questionable. There is a need now, for retail and commercial facilities to serve the Town, and as the town grows, more space, as well as greater variety of goods and services will be needed. It is more convenient for shoppers, as well as more advantageous for the merchants, if expansion is concentrated in a planned center, rather than strung out along highways or spotted here and there over the town.

This commitment to create a vibrant, economically viable town center has been repeated in subsequent planning efforts including a 1990 East Hampton Village Center Revitalization Study prepared for the Economic Development Commission and the draft 2006 Plan of Conservation and Development. In spite of longstanding and widespread support for revitalization, implementation of targeted zoning provisions and town acquisition of several properties as a means for jumpstarting reinvestment, the Center has not yet achieved the hoped for goals in terms of economic revitalization.



The prominence of old mill stock and the stigma of unknown environmental conditions associated with the mill sites is currently a key issue needing to be addressed before the Town can realistically expect substantial private investment to flow into the Center. The Town acknowledged the importance of these issues, applied for and secured Federal Brownfields funding to begin investigating the environmental impacts related to our industrial past. The Town's Economic Development Commission (EDC) formed a

Brownfields Steering Sub-Committee to guide the efforts and the sub-committee began the process of managing The Village Center Brownfields Revitalization Initiative. It was hoped that a Brownfield Assessment Grant from the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency would not only identify environmental hurdles to redevelopment, but would provide strategies and an action plan to move redevelopment forward.

An interdisciplinary team of professionals was assembled under the Steering Sub-Committee to guide the implementation of the grant, to examine the initial redevelopment potential of the Village Center, and to develop realistic strategies for implementation. The Steering Sub-Committee assembled an inventory of potential brownfields in the Village Center (summarized in Table 1 and shown on Figure 1) and conducted Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments of Town-owned brownfields properties. Appendix A includes site information from public records on each of the properties. The Steering Sub-committee felt strongly about identifying sustainable uses that were consistent with the Town's overall goals for the Village Center. To aid the determination of practical, sustainable uses of potential brownfields properties, the Sub-committee commissioned an evaluation of market and real estate conditions. This report summarizes the analyses performed and presents recommendations to assist the Town in reaching its ultimate goal of revitalizing East Hampton's Village Center.

SETTING

East Hampton's Village Center is a mix of residential, commercial, industrial and civic uses. Its roots trace back to the mid 1700s when it was established as the town center by virtue of its selection as the location for the first Congregationalist Church. The Center grew rapidly after 1800 with the industrialization of the area as a nationally prominent bell manufacturing center. This compact pattern of development is still present today. The Belltown Historic District (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) was established in 1985 as a means of honoring the town's industrial past and preserving a remarkable example of a late nineteenth century New England mill town.

As depicted in the U.S Geological Survey topographic map (Plate 1), the Village Center is truly situated at the crossroads of town, undoubtedly a consequence of its early growth. Although most people traveling through town via the state owned Route 66 may find it a bit off the beaten path, the Village Center is only a short distance from what has evolved into the Town's major commercial corridor. Heading south through a number of well kept period homes, there is a rapid transition in land use and a noticeable change in topography as East Main Street meets Barton Hill Road from the west (originating from Route 66) and another state road, Route 196/Summit Street, (also originating from Route 66) coming in from the north east. A few yards further south, East Main meets Walnut Avenue from the east and then the continuation of Route 196 (becoming Skinner Street) breaking off in a southwest direction.

These various roads facilitate accessibility to the Center but do little to help with visibility. Furthermore, the two main intersections within the Village Center have

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TABLE 1

EAST HAMPTON BROWNFIELDS INVENTORY

extremely wide cross-sections—challenging safe pedestrian movement in an otherwise walkable area.

The Air Line Trail, a state multi-purpose trail, greenway and linear park, bisects the Village Center in an east-west direction. The trail is located in the former rail bed of the Air Line Railroad, which ran from New York City to Boston. Though sections of the rail line are still in use, the section between East Hampton and Thompson has been rehabilitated to provide public recreational opportunities. Currently the improved trail terminates at Smith Street. In 2002 the State DEP acquired an approximate 1.5 mile section of the former railroad bed to allow trail improvements further to the south, extending the greenway into the Village Center. The railroad line was an important factor in attracting and sustaining industrial development in the Village Center in the nineteenth century, and is yet another link to the Town's historic past. . A municipal parking lot has been built right in its path, on the east side of Main Street, presumably because of its central location. At present, a pedestrian crossing between the parking lot and the trail as it crosses Main Street has not been established.

The Town's Center also contains an enviable mix of institutional and civic uses—all contributing to a much needed critical mass if this area is to become the Town's hub (Figure 2). The Post Office, the Congregational Church, Center School and the new Chatham Historical Society building anchor the northeast corner of the Village Center while the restored Goff House, which now houses a museum and public meetings space and the fire station sit almost across from one another on Barton Hill Road. Further down, the Board of Education's main office sits atop the corner of Main and Skinner and the Library/Senior/Community Center is situated on the left just after Pocotopaug Creek.

PHYSICAL CONTEXT

Pocotopaug Creek flows directly from Lake Pocotopaug through the Village Center and eventually reaches Pine Brook, a tributary of the Salmon River. The availability of this resource was an important consideration for locating past industries. It provided a water source to generate electricity, cool industrial processes, and discharge waste. The natural location and flow of the Creek was altered by damming at several locations to create a series of impoundments. The largest currently existing impoundment is Bevin Pond at Bevin Brothers Manufacturing—just a short distance from Lake Pocotopaug. Another sits just north of Artistic Mills at 13 Summit Street, a third extends from an oxbow in the creek just north of Walnut Street on the former East Hampton Bell company and a fourth is immediately south of Brookside Industrial Park east of the creek. Other former impoundments have been filled in over time.

Within the Village Center area, virtually every one of the brownfield sites has some extent of floodplain associated with them (Plate 2). The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) classifies flood zones for flood insurance and floodplain management

purposes, and publishes Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) that identify flood zones in each community. The FIRMs classify areas according to the frequency of flooding. An area within the 100-year flood designation (Zone A) is expected to flood on average once every 100 years. This translates to a 1% probability of flooding in areas considered to be within a 100-year flood zone. The lighter shaded areas labeled Zone B fall between the limits of the 100-year flood and the 500-year flood.

Any development proposed within the 100-year floodplain requires the creation of compensatory storage so that overall flood storage capacity is maintained. Furthermore, any residential development within a floodplain must be placed at an elevation no less than 1 foot above the base flood elevation for the site.

Properties with the highest probability of floodplain involvement include Site No. 4 (Nesci Enterprises, 12 Summit Street) which is bisected by Pocotopaug Creek, Site No. 12 (101 Main Street) due to the configuration of the property as well as its low and flat character and then all of the properties east of Main and east of Skinner (Site Nos. 17, 18, 20 and 21) due to low elevations. See Figure 3 Properties Affected by 100-year Flood Zone.

Wetland mapping available for the Town is based on a federal database of wetland soil types. At the local level, wetlands are regulated by established wetland soil types while the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulates wetlands based on soil, hydrologic characteristics and vegetative indicators. According to East Hampton's Inland Wetlands Map, wetland systems are confined to the banks of Pocotopaug Creek and associated human-made impoundments. As stipulated by the Town's local regulations, an on-site delineation by a certified soil scientist is the only accurate way to determine the development constraints due to wetlands.

LAND USE AND ZONING

The mixed use nature of the historic land use pattern in the Village Center is regulated today via four zoning districts as shown in Figure 4:

Village Center District

The core area is zoned as a Village Center district, the stated purpose of which is to "encourage a more viable Village Commercial area by providing for a mixture of compatible public and private uses, stressing pedestrian circulation and amenities". Uses permitted by right include a range of non-residential uses: retail stores, professional and business offices, personal services, financial institutions, restaurants (not drive-in), fraternal organizations and clubs, day care, churches, business schools, corporate offices, shops for custom and craft work, and wholesale sales. This list is more inclusive than the list of uses permitted by right in the town's commercial zone.

All uses require site plan review and are governed by special provisions pertaining to considerations such as first floor uses, yard requirements, landscape and pedestrian provisions, access, historic buildings and compatibility with existing Village Center character. The regulations include a section with special provisions for residential uses that establishes conditions under which apartments are allowed on the second and third floors of buildings in the Center. Special Permit uses (requiring a public hearing) include hotels, inns, theaters, cinemas, places of assembly for recreation, entertainment or amusement and essential community service uses. The minimum required lot area in the Village Center Zone is 20,000 SF because the area has public sewer service.

The Town is currently evaluating the possible formation of a Village Business District that would encompass the “triangle” formed by Summit/Lakeview Street, Route 66, and Main Street.

Lakeside/Village Residential

The areas to the north, east and southwest of the Village Center are zoned Lakeside and Village Residential, a district that allows residential uses (single family detached and two family dwellings) and agricultural uses by right, and special permit uses that include essential community services, active adult and senior housing, commercial recreation and conversion of single family dwellings to two family dwellings. With sewers, a minimum lot area of 20,000 SF is allowed. Without sewers, the minimum lot area is 60,000 SF.

Single Family Residential

The area to the northwest of the Village Center is zoned Single Family Residential, which allows single family dwellings by right, and essential community services and commercial recreation by Special Permit. This zone is intended to provide for a transition area between the more densely developed Village Center and areas to remain rural in nature. Lots with sewer service may be a minimum of 40,000 SF; without sewers a minimum lot area of 60,000 SF is required.

Industrial

Two areas zoned Industrial abut the Village Center zone: on the north side of Summit Street adjacent to Center School, and along both sides of Skinner Street to Route 16. The latter is part of a large area of industrial zoning that extends to the west. Site plan review and approval is required for permitted uses, which include warehousing, machine and tool shops, wholesale sales rooms, equipment and motor vehicle rental, lumber yards, printing establishments and research facilities. Special Permit uses include several types of manufacturing and bulk storage uses, public utility power plants, commercial kennels and motor vehicle storage. The minimum required lot size in this zone is 40,000 SF. Sewers are available to serve these areas.

The town's commercial focus has shifted away from the Village Center to the Route 66 corridor where visibility and traffic volumes have attracted retail development to support the goods and service needs of a growing local and sub-regional population. Thus, commercial zoning brackets the Village Center on the north and south, along Routes 66 and 16 respectively.

The scale and nature of the commercial uses in the Village Center cannot and should not compete with Route 66. However, commercial uses in the Village Center would benefit from increased traffic via linkages with surrounding uses and other local commercial enterprises.

UTILITIES

The use of solvents and other chemicals have left fingerprints throughout the Center as evidence of its industrial heritage. As a result, the Town operates a small water supply and groundwater treatment system to serve customers in the Village Center. The system is inadequate and the Town has signed a Consent Order with the Department of Public Health to address the inadequacies of the supply system. At the present time, the Town is considering a referendum for the construction of a town-wide municipal water supply system to take advantage of up to \$32 million in low-cost federal loans. The lack of an adequate municipal water supply system is a severe hindrance to the revitalization and redevelopment of the Village Center.

A municipal sewer system was put in place in 1983. Plans for upgrading sewer facilities, now part of a 7-town system, were proposed in 2005 and included areas of known and potential health concerns as well as expansion of the Town's service area.

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT PROPERTIES

In 1985 the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust completed the necessary documentation to have the Belltown Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The district, which is roughly bounded by West High and Main Streets, Bevin Court, Skinner, Crescent, Barton Hill and Maple Streets, encompasses the Village Center area.

The documentation required by the U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service for designation of a national historic district is extensive in terms of research required and material produced. The information compiled includes data such as inventory forms and photos for each property, narrative descriptions of the area's present and original physical appearance, and narratives describing the historic and architectural

significance of the district. This information provided an important resource for establishing the historic context of East Hampton’s Village Center.

Seven of the 23 identified Brownfield sites were identified in the 1985 historic district survey as being “contributing properties”, that is properties that are considered to be an integral part of the historic context and character of the district. These 7 properties are summarized in the table below.

**Belltown Historic District
Study Area Contributing Properties**

Map Number	Current Site Name	Address	Historic Context
1	Bevin Brothers Manufacturing	Bevin Boulevard/ Bevin Court	19 th century mill complex and dam
2	Summit Thread Company	13 Summit Street	c. 1880 Merrick and Conant Silk Manufacturing Company
4	Nesci Enterprises	12 Summit Street	Together with 10 Summit street, was the Veazey and White Bell Company c.1865, Starr Brothers (bell makers) c. 1882
6	Former Metal Allied Finishing	10 Summit Street	Together with 12 Summit Street, was the Veazey and White Bell Company c.1865, Starr Brothers (bell makers) c. 1882
12	GMA3, LLC	101 Main Street	19 th century industrial building, property formerly part of the Gong Bell Manufacturing Company
13	Bell Town Cleaners and Laundry	97 Main Street	Siebert’s Opera House, location adjacent to the Gong Bell Manufacturing Company
21	25, 29 Skinner Street	25, 29 Skinner Street	19th century industrial complex, former site of N. N. Hill Brass Company c. 1890

In addition, the National Register Inventory of sites indicates that in 1985 there were standing ruins at three of the study sites:

Site No. 3 The Clark and Watrous Company at 1 Watrous Street had standing ruins of a brownstone dam, a small foundation and an earth dike for a pond (then drained). Prior to use by Clark and Watrous for the manufacture of bells and coffin trimmings, the site was used as a scythe factory and a hoe factory.

Site No. 23 The Historic Survey data indicate standing remains of a dam, stone foundations, remnants of structures and a sluiceway on the property located on Map 20 Block 50 Lot 23. Site No. 23 as referenced in this

study is located on Assessor's Map 20 Block 50 Lot 23-1 and is known as the Skinner Sawmill. The ruins in the historic survey are identified as possibly being associated with the W. E. Barton Bell Manufacturing Company (c. 1860-1880), the Patent Bell Manufactory (1850-1920), and the Skinner Sawmill dam (1800-1900).

Site No. 15 A discrepancy was noted between the Historic Survey and current conditions with regard to Site No. 15 included in the Brownfields Assessment Grant. Located at 5 Barton Hill Road, this site is listed in the Historic Survey Inventory as being the location of the East Hampton Firehouse (c. 1970). At present, the assessor information indicates that 5 Barton Hill Road is the location of Train Station Motors, located in a building built c. 1902 and previously used as a train station.

ECONOMIC AND MARKET ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Market forces play an integral role in successful brownfields redevelopment. Given the vision for the Village Center, the Steering Sub-committee was committed to providing technically-defensible and realistic approaches to revitalization. Therefore, an independent assessment of market conditions was carried out to assist the Sub-committee in identifying those sites with a higher probability of redevelopment. The full report prepared by AMS Consulting, LLC, entitled "Market Assessment & Real Estate Analysis—East Hampton, CT May 2006", is available for review in the Town Manager's Office. A summary of findings is presented below:

Demographics

- East Hampton has witnessed rapid population growth in past five years (10.8%) representing the fastest growing community in the immediate region and far exceeding the 5% increase of last decade.
- Projections through 2010 indicate some moderation in growth but still above the rate of growth for Middlesex County and State.
- Household expansion has increased at an even faster rate of 12.5%
- According to ESRI, median household income (\$78,236) in 2005 continues to rise and remains substantially higher than the Middlesex County benchmark (\$69,127).
- There has been a significant jump in housing production/permits in last five years—averaging 107/year compared to 70/year in the previous four years.
- Virtually all production has been associated with single family homes since 1999.
- Employment opportunities within town are concentrated in the construction, trade and services sectors.

Industrial Market Trends

- Industrial market has been improving over last three years in the region and state.
- Industrial vacancy rates in Hartford region *south submarket* (including the East Hampton Village Center) is under 11% compared to 15% a year ago.
- Wholesaling, distribution, and flex office space usages are driving most of the demand.
- Little industrial supply can be found in the immediate region and there are very few established industrial parks in the region.
- Limited transportation access and labor force constrain local industrial growth.
- Low market rents and activity discourage investment.
- Future industrial growth demand for East Hampton likely to evolve from existing base with construction & trades playing an important role.
- Most existing space is functionally obsolete; inexpensive single story incubator-flex space in most demand.

Office Market Trends

- In region, demand for office space has been flat due to lack of growth in white collar jobs last three years.
- East Hampton's office market considered small and largely confined to professional and business services driven by local demand.
- Present demand for office space in East Hampton estimated at over 50,000 square feet is met comfortably with existing supply.
- Future office opportunities linked with service based demand associated with population growth.
- Medical services & education are potential niche markets. Some opportunity seen for local home-based businesses outgrowing existing space

Retail Trends

- Dramatic shifts in the region and expansions in retail occurring in East of the River communities. Retail following population growth.
- 73 retail and service businesses identified in a 3 mile radius to the Village Center (19 food & drink); 121 businesses in a 5 mile radius. Rental rates are competitive and few vacancies noted.
- Substantial unmet demand found at neighborhood level for most goods & services in East Hampton (\$76 billion). Unmet demand translates into capacity for an additional 100,000 to 150,000 SF based on 50% capture.
- Within the 3 mile radius, undersupply of furniture, home furnishings, specialty food, clothing stores, automotive dealers and parts, electronics and general merchandise
- Within the 5 mile radius (includes Marlborough) there is less opportunity for home furnishings and furniture but more demand for lawn and garden equipment, books and periodicals, sporting goods and building supplies.

- Strongest retail potential linked to Route 66 with its good access, traffic counts, and visibility.
- Less opportunity for chains/larger stores in Village Center due to lower traffic counts but could support smaller, unique, independent-owned establishments if critical mass achieved.
- Traffic counts on Route 66 range from 13,000 cars (west of Route 96 intersection) to 19,100 (at the Portland line) while intersection of Main/Summit/Barton Hill is 7,700.

Housing

- Housing market saw exceptional growth in last four years; projected to be more subdued over the near term.
- No signs of inventory overhang in the market despite slowdown; soft landing appears to have occurred.
- East Hampton's median sales price for Single Family homes jumped 57% from 2001 to 2005 (\$159,000 to \$250,000).
- SF Transactions in town averaged 220 a year since 2000 as compared to 146 sales annually between 1995 and 1999.
- Condo market experiencing a major revival regionally; East Hampton has modest market averaging 43 sales a year. Median condo price in town increased 75% between 2001-2005 (\$166,000).
- Regional rental market affected by rush to ownership and low employment growth 2000-2004, but now rebounding.
- East Hampton's rental market integral part of town housing supply with 20% share.
- Changing demographics and rising population east of the river will continue to exert pressures on housing in East Hampton region.
- Ownership housing will grow in demand but rising prices and growing interest rates may pinch capacity to purchase.
- Condominiums are an option in the Village Center but modest price thresholds impacts economics for multi-family ownership housing.
- Rental housing market is firming-up with improved economy and new demand from boomlet population.
- Mill conversions work best with rental housing versus ownership.

Market Summary

- East Hampton seeing positive demographic and economic trends.
- Locational, access and infrastructure issues – particularly the lack of a municipal water supply system for the Village Center - are impacting market options
- Industrial growth in immediate region is limited by low building supply providing opportunity for East Hampton (warehousing, contractors and trades). Overall market, however, is modest and demand is mostly for flex space.

- Office market is limited; mostly service based-demand (financial, business to business, healthcare, education services or residence-based businesses looking to expand).
- Retail market is healthy but mostly for Route 66. Market potential for Village Center seen for small, independent owned stores (Main Street theme) – but need critical mass and stronger identity for Village Center.
- Rising housing demand expected for both ownership and rental units with population growth. Rental housing possibly viable for mills as lofts (popular option), live-work space or mixed-use conversions.

Market Considerations

- East Hampton’s limited access to markets and major transportation corridors plus issues with providing public water are constraining elements to business growth.
- Population growth and income are expected to rise faster in East Hampton and many East of the River communities compared to region and state and this will directly impact the demand for retail, services and housing.
- Village Center lacks the critical mass and is not well defined in terms of function and identity but has great potential.
- Small business growth contributes to the bulk of job growth in region and state, representing an ideal opportunity for East Hampton.

SITE SCREENING

Initially, when the grant was being pursued, the Steering Sub-committee envisioned a process by which properties were prioritized using a ranking system. The idea was to pursue sites with the highest ranking. As strategic discussions regarding redevelopment goals ensued and the Sub-committee acquired more knowledge of the process of returning properties to productive use, a decision was made to perform an initial screening of all the sites based on pertinent criteria. Although certain properties could be targeted from this list, it was the Steering Sub-committee’s desire to place each property in the proper context of redevelopment. Given the close proximity of the properties in the Village Center and the obvious similarities, there was realization that an actual ranking process may not be as valuable. Ultimately the Steering Sub-committee decided to screen the sites using criteria pertinent to the overall vision with the realization that each site’s attributes and challenges would need to be considered on an individual basis in order to engage in redevelopment.

To reflect the interdisciplinary nature of redevelopment, the Steering Sub-committee applied four screening criteria as follows:

SUSTAINABILITY: *Existing use is sustainable and consistent with the goal of revitalizing the Village Center and would not have the potential to pollute or further contaminate.*

PUBLIC SPACE: *Creates or preserves a park, greenway or linkage to public or civic-related destination(s).*

WILLING OWNER: *Property owner is willing to participate in potential redevelopment planning or will allow the review of available environmental documentation.*

ECONOMIC POTENTIAL: *the property presents an opportunity to capture current or future market demand in a manner consistent with the vision of the future Village Center*

A simple system of assigning a value from 1 to 3 was used for each site with 1 representing the most positive condition. During the screening discussion, the Subcommittee also noted other considerations that may affect redevelopment. After the Subcommittee completed its assignment of values, each site was reviewed by Tighe & Bond and given a high, moderate or low assignment based on the site's potential for environmental risk.

The results are shown in Table 2.

ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

In the context of redevelopment, assessing an area's strengths and weaknesses provides a suitable basis for developing strategic directions.

Assets

Historic context
Physical configuration
Civic/institutional presence
Walkable human scale
Greenway
Neighborhood commercial opportunities
Strong demographics
Community support
Town ownership of several properties
Design Review

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TABLE 2

STEERING COMMITTEE SITE SCREENING RESULTS

Challenges

- Visible clutter/junk
- Functionally obsolete buildings
- Lack of definable boundaries
- Dominance of warehousing
- Site control/unwilling owners
- Lack of directional/way-finding system at town gateways and in the Center
- Lack of public water
- Lack of visibility
- Pedestrian friendly road crossings/human-scaled intersections
- Perception or presence of contamination
- Zoning compliance
- Need for funding

TEN STEPS TO REVITALIZATION

There is no question that this vision must be jumpstarted—and contamination is not necessarily the only hurdle. Outlined below are ten major actions to achieve sustainable redevelopment in a manner consistent with the physical realities of the area.

1. Find Water

Irrespective of market demand, environmental contamination or other issues, the lack of potable water in the Village Center is the primary road block for redevelopment. Whether or not the current water system proposal is acceptable, a workable water supply solution is the first critical step toward revitalization of the Village Center. The inability to deliver this basic service also carries negative perceptions that will weigh heavily against any positive momentum.

The Town has signed a consent order with the State to address the inadequacies of the current Village Center water system. By December 1, 2006, the Town must have assessed the existing system and developed concepts on how to address the system problems. The final compliance date for the existing Village Center water system to be fully addressed is 2008.

Revitalization needs of the Village Center will require that the existing system be expanded (or replaced) beyond the limited customer base that it serves such that potable water access is provided to every Village Center property. Otherwise, water supply will continue to hinder the revitalization of the Village Center.



2. Balance Uses

While neighborhood commercial uses would transform the Village Center into a small but bustling destination, the fact of the matter is that there are and will continue to be industrial uses throughout the area. Market demand for neighborhood retail indicates a healthy opportunity but given the prominence and accessibility of Route 66, a realistic vision of a revitalized Center must strive for a mix of uses. Creating housing opportunities is a perfect marriage with retail but care must be taken that there are appropriate buffers between this use and those more intense commercial uses.

The potential for relocating the Town Hall and/or other community-based facilities into the Village Center could swing more momentum toward neighborhood-level commercial revitalization and would contribute to what could be translated into substantial foot traffic.

3. Seek State Assistance

Within Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development, there is a mechanism whereby state assistance may be provided for projects related to redevelopment, job creation and related goals. Chapter 132 of the Connecticut General Statutes allows municipalities to prepare a Municipal Development Plan that provides the basis for requesting state assistance and also conveys certain condemnation powers. The Plan, once approved, remains in effect for 30 years. State funding is provided under CGS Chapter 558 (l) commonly referred to as the Manufacturer's Assistance Act. Public as well as private implementation activities may be funded, including infrastructure.

The first step in pursuing this program would be to engage the interest of DECD's Real Estate and Infrastructure Division. This could be done simply by arranging for a tour of the area and making a brief presentation of the accomplishments to date. DECD is committed to public outreach, therefore it is important to summarize workshops and public forums and demonstrate consistency with an approved Plan of Conservation and Development.

The Town has recently taken steps to involve DECD in the Village Center revitalization initiatives. A walking tour of the Village Center was held on September 21, 2006 with representatives of DECD Real Estate and Infrastructure Division, a State Representative, the Town Manager, and environmental consultants Tighe & Bond. The DECD has requested that the Town prioritize potential projects that could be considered for State assistance.

4. Nurture Small Businesses

The Village Center's smaller spaces, inexpensive leases and community support for revitalization provide an excellent climate for spawning a nurturing small business pod. This pod would provide several 1,000 to 2,000 SF spaces to accommodate expansions from home-based businesses, start-up entrepreneurs, and artistic/cultural endeavors. One building or a cluster of buildings could be used and a distinctive log/signage would help in marketing efforts.

One potential small business pod has recently come before Town officials. Butler Construction has come forward with a concept plan to develop a 12-lot industrial park at site located at the intersection of Route 16 and Route 196. The plan proposes development to accommodate small growing businesses such as carpenters, plumbers, etc. The Town should coordinate with the developer and evaluate how this development fits with the future market feasibility of the Village Center.

In addition to physically accommodating small businesses, the Town needs a cohesive implementation plan to retain existing businesses and attract new ventures whose functions and operations are consistent with the Village Center vision and the Town's economic development goals. Once a plan is put in place, a "point person" should be designated to carry out intended actions, maintain communications with existing businesses and recruit. Ensuring that suitable sites are placed on the Connecticut Economic Resource Center's *SiteFinder* is also recommended. East Hampton may want to consider funding a part-time or consulting Economic Development Coordinator to solidify its program.

Many on-going efforts in town can affect revitalization of the Village Center. A Town Economic Development Coordinator can also help the Town focus many on-going initiatives and ensure that those initiatives are complimentary to one another and help move Village Center revitalization forward. Examples of such programs include STEAP grants for various improvements (e.g. water tower removal), the Streetscape Initiative, coordination with the Town Facilities Committee and coordination with the plans for a water system.

On-going small business assistance including access to low cost loans, networking, organizing combined purchases, help with data management, etc. should be facilitated through the Small Business Association or other suitable agency.

5. Explore Non profit Status

Legislation at the state and federal levels has afforded greater protection for “innocent” landowners and has helped to remove at least some of the stigma associated with assuming ownership of potentially contaminated property. The most recent legislation passed in 2005 protects new owners of previously contaminated properties but only after the owner has conducted costly detailed environmental documentation. So there remain legal and functional benefits to establishing an entity with non-profit status. While, the transfer of property to a non-profit agency may offer additional protection from remediation liabilities, there may be other strategic benefits related to funding procurement as well as the assignment of implementation responsibility since the Town does not currently have a redevelopment authority or an economic development agency. The need for a non-profit should be considered along with a discussion of what role the Town wishes to play in brownfields redevelopment.

Manchester is one of the more successful municipalities using a non-profit for brownfields redevelopment. Mark Pellegrini, Director of Planning and Community Development (860/647-3044), would be an excellent person to call upon to learn more about this approach.

6. Examine Zoning

The Village Center District was put into place to provide a mix of uses and to encourage a walkable and human scale atmosphere. Given the strong housing market, this zone as currently written may not go far enough to allow marketable units in support of live/work arrangements, condominium conversions, studio lofts or other creative housing arrangements that are exclusively residential. Therefore, an analysis of the current zone should be conducted to ascertain suitable modifications. The Town EDC currently has limited funds to examine zoning as it affects the Village Center. This analysis should also identify if changes to the zone boundary are also warranted since many of the Brownfield sites fall within the Industrial Zone. Given redevelopment/reuse objectives, the industrial uses allowed in this zone may not provide the type of setting conducive to the vision for the Village Center. Mixed uses and residential development, in particular, may conflict with more intense uses.

In addition to analyzing zone modifications, the Town should also consider revising uses permitted by right and by special permit. Automotive-related operations and storage/warehousing currently dominate the Center and given the market demand and unimproved conditions of current industrial stock, now may be a good time to examine how, if and to what extent these uses fit into the Village Center.

Another useful tool is finding communities with similarly-scaled centers who have achieved the desired outcome and benchmark regulations. Particular attention should be paid to requirements for site plan submission, landscaping, lighting and other aesthetic elements in addition to uses permitted by right or through special permit.

7. Assemble Land

There is not a Brownfield site in East Hampton that is greater than 5 acres and most are less than 2 acres. Given that these sites are in close proximity to one another, assembling a number of strategic properties may enhance developability, particularly in terms of trying to attract mixed use developments. The concentration of properties found between Summit and Walnut streets offer the best opportunity.

A related strategy involves maintaining separate properties and uses while treating the site as if it was under one owner. By organizing access, circulation, parking and perhaps signage, each of these small properties benefits from strategic land planning to improve form, function and aesthetics.

8. Engage Developers

There is no better way to test a vision than to let prospective developers do the testing. Obviously, site control or a cooperative land owner is necessary and the Town would need to iron out what role it wishes to play before trying to engage interest. Mechanisms to attract developers range from informally conducting one-on-one tours to issuing a formal solicitation for a Preferred Developer. Given the context and scale of the Village Center, national-level developers may not be as interested as some of the more experienced regional developers who seek engaging and challenging projects with the blessings of a town.

As a first step, East Hampton may want to consider “putting the word out” to a few developers with brownfields experience to gain an initial sense of interest, profitability and prospective uses. Environmental and market data are expensive components of due diligence, and so these function as “carrots” to the developer yet demonstrate the Town’s interest and preparedness to partner.

9. Get Cleaner—Get Greener

Small towns such as East Hampton often do not have the capacity to enforce zoning regulations on a full time basis and this commitment can often land the town in court to defend its actions. Nonetheless, consistent

enforcement sends a clear signal to would-be and habitual violators that the Town is no longer willing to accept actions that degrade its image, devalue property and impede sustainable development. Should the Town adopt a currently proposed anti-blight ordinance, this will be a first step to enforcing the zoning and improving the image of the Village Center.

The Town should consider committing to a 6-month “clean sweep” of the more apparent zoning violations within the Village Center, namely abandoned or illegally stored vehicles, trash and improper storage. There are certified zoning inspectors who are available to work on a contract basis thus avoiding animosity between violators and your full time staff. At first, the inspector(s) would simply identify violations and prepare letters of notifications. A 30-day grace period to allow the property to come into compliance is sufficient and the Town can always grant an extension if a good-faith effort is demonstrated. Beyond the 30 day period, the Town must follow through on its intended actions if any measurable improvement is to be realized.

If the Town finds that violations would not warrant this level of attention, then thought should be given to procuring a hauler that would remove junk and vehicles at a significantly reduced cost to the property owner by the Town’s defraying the full cost. This lessens the amount of administrative follow-through needed on an individual property basis and the effort itself is excellent publicity. Despite the fact that the Town has to proactively play a role in polishing up the Village Center’s image, consider recognizing each property owner who willingly participates in the program through a certificate or proclamation.

After the “sweep”, adding vegetative screening and buffers as well as more trees in strategic locations would effectively soften some of the starker land uses. Again, the Town could take a proactive role by purchasing bulk plant material, providing Town labor and offering landscape design services.

Figure 5 illustrates the benefits derived from “cleaning and greening” along with parking, circulation and loading improvements on certain individual properties.

10. Attract Attention

Though the Economic Development Commission has assembled a Visitor’s Guide and the Town is promoting events and assets via its web page, a promotions and branding campaign has yet to be launched specifically for the Village Center.

In the world of brownfields redevelopment, branding and promotions provides a much needed boost to an overall market strategy. East Hampton's unique bell manufacturing heritage is a perfect "hook". A distinctive logo and an established color palette for use on signs, collaterals and the web site would unify the image.

Some type of "kick-off" event to signify the town's intentions of revitalizing the Village Center should be organized first. Something as limited as a press conference would work although an event would make more of a splash.

An example of a special event that would raise the Village Center's visibility is a public art fundraiser planned for 2007-2008 and put together by the Goff House and the East Hampton Junior Women's Club. The event "A Parade of Bells" will feature thirty 6-ft tall fiberglass bells that will be painted by local artisans and put on display at outdoor locations around town between May and October 2008. Press releases and publicity surrounding this event could be a start to draw positive attention to the revitalization of the Village Center.

Other special events such as a Saturday farmer's market (organic produce and locally grown goods), an ice cream festival or a juried art show organized on a regular basis are just a few examples of promotions that would interest residents as well as visitors. The accomplishments of the Brownfields Assessment Grant and subsequent achievements could be showcased at each of these events.

Capturing the attention of a few of the thousands of cars passing through on Route 66 is another logical step in launching a promotions campaign. Other than the charming sign on Route 66 at East Main Street, nothing is in place to direct cars, cyclists or pedestrians to the Village Center. Signage could be included in the first phase of the Route 66 streetscape improvements intended to be put in place under a recently awarded STEAP grant from the State of Connecticut.

SITE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Site No. 1: 2 Bevin Boulevard

Current Use: Only the Bell manufacturing press process remains in addition to the manufacturing of high pressure canisters. Site is 100% occupied, although under utilized given the age and configuration of buildings and site. Employs an average of 32 people.

Recommendation: As potentially one of the last bell manufacturing firms in the United States, the Town should keep lines of communications open to ensure retention and to provide assistance with ongoing issues such as vandalism. Although there is intangible value in keeping the operation on this particular site, a retention strategy may include relocation to a smaller more efficient building. Under the State’s MDP program, this operation could benefit from a number of improvements to the access drive, parking, loading, and security lighting and arrival signage. Given the availability of space, a building utilization study may yield an opportunity for subdividing for lease-out. The proximity of the property to large tracts of land provides an opportunity for community open space linkages.

The Town’s Streetscape Initiative has envisioned a greenway walking path along Pocotopaug Creek from Route 66 to the Village Center. The greenway would pass through this site and should be contemplated in discussions with the owner about the future of the property.

Site No 2: 13 Summit Street – Artistic Mills

Current Use: Pyromania Pottery, Paws n’ Heil dog grooming, and J.H. & Co., and C.S. Corp. are listed as occupants. Appears to be 50% occupied.

Recommendation: Located in a strategic area, the building appears to be in average condition. The upper floors, although not inspected, could be converted to apartments with studios if the appropriate life code requirements could be met—lending an opportunity for live/work arrangements. The rear of building appears to have adequate parking and the pond could be an amenity. Site improvements could also be beneficial to 2 Bevin Boulevard.

Site No. 3: 1 Watrous Street-Former Clark and Watrous Company

Current Use: The property is currently under foreclosure and several parties have expressed interest. Current uses include a carpet warehouse and retail outlet – top floors appear to be vacant. Portions of the building are currently being used for non-conforming residential rental space. Appears to be 50% occupied. The building is in below average condition and parking is inadequate if the building was to be fully occupied.

Recommendation: Private sector investment for adaptive reuse will not achieve necessary rate of return. The site may be best utilized for inexpensive storage or small manufacturing firms until the market justifies the scale of investment necessary to reuse the site. This site is part of a larger section of the Village Center that requires a comprehensive land use and parking plan to achieve redevelopment and 100% occupancy.

Site No. 4: 12 Summit Street-Nesci Enterprises

Current Use: Retail and wholesale welding supplies, concrete saw manufacturing, lighting manufacturing, small engine repair, screw manufacturing, and machine shop. A number of firms have occupied the site for 30 to 40 years. The rental rates are low and the space found a “niche” for small manufacturing space in a convenient location with parking. The site is 80% occupied.

Recommendation: The site is strategically located and present uses are satisfying a market and generating taxes and jobs. This is the closest example of incubator space without a formal structured fit out. The building exterior could be improved and parking and circulation could be reorganized. .

Site No 5: 13 Watrous Street-Former Ghezzi Motors

Current Use: This is a Town-owned parcel that is being leased to J.C. Products. Under the terms of the lease, J.C. Products is to improve the property which may revert to the Town after a number of years. Recently, the Town discovered that the building was being subleased for auto repair related uses and that there had been subsequent contaminant releases. The Town immediately inspected the property and is pursuing appropriate action.

Recommendation: The Town should review its terms of the lease. This property is one of many in the immediate vicinity that requires substantial site improvements (parking, loading, lighting, organized trash receptacles, etc) to improve function and leasing potential and, in turn, improved rental rates. Because it is town owned, conducting a limited highest and best use analysis may prove useful in examining longer-term redevelopment strategies. Demolition should be one of the alternatives analyzed.

Site No. 6: 10 Summit Street-Former Metal Allied Finishing

Current Use: Presently vacant but owner attempting to lease for retail on first floor and residential on the second floor. The asking lease rate is \$8.00 SF triple net, which is high for “as is” space. The building is in above average condition but the roof requires repair.

Recommendation: This could be an ideal model for adaptive reuse given size, location and parking availability. The owner is also a willing participant. The Town should consider assisting the owner by conducting a reuse analysis to reveal the financial implications and examine the physical lay out of the structure. Transformed into housing, this site could be a much needed spring board for revitalization.

Site No. 7: 17 Watrous Street-J.C. Products

Current Use: Appears to be 100% occupied (without interior inspection) by a manufacturer of wire and wire products.

Recommendation: Similar to other sites within the Village Center, the building “as is” is providing use which satisfies a market segment for which new construction cannot. Until the market gains strength the current use provides a purpose which cannot be duplicated. This is another situation that needs monitoring and communication to retain the business or work with user if expansion is required. Limited site improvements could greatly enhance image and function.

Site No. 8: 8 Summit Street

Current Use: The site appears to be 50% occupied. Primarily first floor utilization. Second floor residential occupancy inconclusive.

Recommendation: The building appears to be in good condition but there is a question as to whether the non-conforming residential use limits full utilization. The town should ensure that the proper life code provisions are being met for the residential use. The building is another example of the demand for small space for industrial/commercial use with parking and low rental rates.

Site No. 9: 85 Main Street-EMS Mailing

Current Use: Despite having an active business, this site is under utilized given its location and proximity to other sites.

Recommendation: The Main Street/Summit area has the potential to be an economic hub. Sites 4, 6, 8 and 9 combined represents a sizable assemblage and should be planned as a cohesive development in order to take advantage of the locational asset. In the short-term, the Town could assist with operational planning to mutually assist the present businesses. For the long term, as the Village Center economy grows and matures, strategic improvements (parking, signage, centralized entrance, circulation and loading) would be beneficial to the long term sustainability of businesses.

Site No. 10: Walnut Avenue-Former East Hampton Bell Company

Current Use: Town owned property that provides fire suppression sprinkling in some of the neighboring buildings.

Recommendation: Fire suppression capability should be retained albeit in a new structure that is more compatible with the Village Center vision. Water tower may need to be demolished if deemed structurally unsound; other wise should be completely restored and possible used as a Village beacon. The site's proximity to the Pocotopaug Creek and the Airline Trail provides an ideal link to an expanded greenway system that would link destinations and points of interest.

Site No. 11: 8 Walnut Avenue-Carpenter Hayes Paperbox

Current Use: Partially rehabilitated (new siding along street side and roof) for industrial storage. The building is actually two separate structures connected by a walkway, the integrity of which is difficult to determine without entry. This site is also immediately adjacent to a residential enclave to the east.

Recommendation: While this site may continue to fill a short term need for small manufacturing or commercial space, the lack of parking and lack of front yard present hurdles for more intense uses although the rear of the lot is undeveloped. The owner should be contacted to determine long term development goals and to discuss the potential of including the property in a larger redevelopment area which would include 101 Main Street.

Site No. 12: 101 Main Street-GMA3

Current Use: Appears to be vacant. Several semi-truck trailers remain on site.

Recommendation: The site is at intersection of Main Street and Route 196 across from active full service gas station and there is significant unimproved frontage along Walnut Street. The location and land value probably exceeds the improvements. Given its location, this property may be suitable for retail but a full analysis is needed to determine the square footage that could be accommodated. The building appears to be supported by piles as an indication of flooding problems. The site abuts a Town-owned parcel to the south which in turn abuts the Library/Senior/Community Center. Excellent location for Town utilization if the need exists. The site is of sufficient size so that a compatible use will have a significant positive impact upon the Village Center. The Town should contact the owner to discuss mutually beneficial goals and determine if an acceptable mechanism for conducting environmental analyses can be developed.

Site No. 13: 97 Main Street-Bell Town Cleaners

Current Use: Vacant retail with apartment above. Apartment occupancy is underdetermined.

Recommendation: This building is one of the few remaining residential structures fronting Main Street in the commercialized portion of the Village Center. Its presence anchors the original street wall that has been virtually destroyed by subsequent development to the south. Small retail operations could be accommodated here to complement the other shops in the Village Center although cosmetic improvements are needed to increase retail appeal.

Site No. 14: 90 Main Street

Current Use: Vacant structure

Recommendation: There does not appear to be a designated curb cut from Main Street. Access is currently via the Board of Education's parking lot. This is a very viable location for commercial development if the existing structure is demolished. Although the elevation of the property does not lend well to "walkability", there may be community or public use benefits considering it abuts the Airline Trail at the rear and is also a short distance from the Fire Department. Available Assessor's information indicates there may be a sliver of the trail running between this site and the Board of Education property but this has yet been confirmed.

Site No. 15: 5 Barton Hill Road-Train Station Motors

Current Use: Use for auto repair utilizes the entire site. Original train station has been nicely renovated.

Recommendation: No action required at this time but is dependent upon Town's goals. The site contains a potentially historic structure and the location adjacent to the Airline Trail suggests there is substantial public benefit to reuse. The Town should maintain communications with the owner in the event his business plans change. Given the size and orientation of the site, improvements to parking and the addition of landscaping could further enhance the site. If the owner was looking to expand his operations, additional land assembly may be necessary and therefore the Town may consider assistance with relocation. Existing Assessor's records show that the building occupies most of the site but aerial photography shows use of adjacent parcels for access and parking. It is also difficult to distinguish if current operations are encroaching upon the Airline Trail. If this is the case, the owner should rectify the situation and the Town might consider requesting the installation of a vegetative buffer or decorative fencing.

Site No. 16: 103 Main Street

Current Use: Vacant

Recommendation: The Town's intention's of linking this to the existing library complex is laudable but possible physically challenging, particularly considering the populations to be served. Topographic changes and floodplains are the main issues. There is a need for additional parking for the complex but it appears that with a reconfiguration of the existing parking this demand may not be as compelling. As part of this redevelopment study, a master plan (Figure 6) has been developed to highlight a number of considerations to guide the Town's decisions on site utilization. By using the higher elevation near the frontage, a small parking area could be installed that would take advantage of the existing bridge crossing, thereby eliminating the cost of a pedestrian bridge. Remediation activities may not bring the elevation of the property up to the height needed for acceptable bridge construction and pedestrian crossing. The presence of floodplain and wetlands may dictate some level of compensatory mitigation if the back portion is improved.

Site No. 17: 100 Main Street-G & S Service Station

Current Use: Gas station and limited convenience store

Recommendation: This property occupies a prominent location. Although the extent of the Connecticut Department of Transportation public- right-of-way is not known at this time, installation of grass strips and low, maintenance vegetation would be a tremendous improvement. Installation of curbing would neck down access points and control vehicles. Follow-up with DOT could determine if the existing curb cuts have been permitted.

Site No. 18: 102 Main Street

Current Use: Vacant land used for car storage

Recommendation: Town should monitor land use activities to ensure zoning compliance and, if desired, should approach the owner with the idea of using a portion of the site as green space or a picnic grove adjacent to Pocotopaug Creek

Site No. 19: 115 Main Street-SNET

Current Use: Telecommunication Source Center fully utilizes this site.

Recommendation: No action required. The Town should consider removing this from the Brownfields Assessment grant database.

Site No. 20: 11 Skinner Street J.C. Barton Machine Shop

Current Use: Vacant industrial building

Recommendation: The site is actively for sale and represents a site and location which is ideal for the building's original design. The building could be subdivided by a new owner. Current owner does not desire to lease and wants a sale "as is". The asking price is \$750,000 discounted due to roof repair requirements. The sale price of \$25 per square foot is reasonable. The site has the potential to attract a firm which can generate taxes and jobs. If new buyer desires to purchase and lease, the lease rate would be \$5 to \$6 per square foot. It has been on the market for one year. The Town needs to monitor the activity and ensure the state has this site on its active listing system. As an alternative, this site would be ideal for a new Town Hall.

Site No. 21: 25-29 Skinner Street-Brookside Industrial Complex

Current Use: Multiple small businesses, although the number of vehicles observed parked in the lot suggests there are fewer firms than represented on the directory sign. Site appears to be 70% vacant.

Recommendation: There are essentially 3 main portions to this site. The northernmost building is the former Pressure Pak Container Company. This property was recently renovated to accommodate three storage bays. They are fully leased at \$1500 per month each. The middle portion of this site is occupied by a 3 story brick mill building and a number of one story additions. It appears as though the Pocotopaug Creek bisects this part of the site. The third portion represents vacant land although buildings may have previously occupied this portion.

This site would benefit from a full redevelopment analysis to determine building conditions, confirm easements and property boundaries and discuss redevelopment strategies. The site has been on the market for five years and the recent asking price is \$350,000. Burt Real Estate is handling the listing. The site is partially leased by Epoch Arts, Inc. Over a year ago Epoch Arts expressed its interest in converting the entire site into an arts and cultural education space. Although the philosophical goals of this project are consistent with the Town's revitalization goals and the

proposal would be a benefit for all parties involved, the transaction will be extremely complicated. The proposal would rely heavily on a plethora of public funding sources that may require non-profit status. Without a full building analysis, it is difficult to determine the anticipated costs of clean-up, renovation and bringing the structure into compliance with all life code provisions. If the Town was to consider Epoch's proposal, the first step would be to request a financial pro-forma and business plan from the entity to examine cash flow, capacity to sustain its operations and also confirm programmatic feasibility. This very same information is a requirement to access state funds. Once this information was reviewed by the Town, there would be a determination of financial feasibility followed by a physical analysis. Whether or not this particular proposal is feasible, if the Town partnered with the property owner in some capacity to ascertain its reuse or redevelopment potential, then many of the unknowns that stigmatize the property would be removed.

Site No. 22: 26 Skinner Road- The Lyon and Billiard Company

Current Use: Lloyd and Billard Lumber Co. is an active business and the site appears to be fully utilized.

Recommendation: No action necessary at this time.

Site No. 23: 65 Skinner Road-Former Skinner Grist and Sawmill

Current Use: Owner/operated by an equipment rental company for sales/rental of small maintenance equipment.

Recommendation: Good location at intersection of Routes 69 & 16. Building has curb appeal. Town should communicate with owner to ascertain redevelopment plans. Due to visibility, care should be taken with the design as well as the uses. There may be insufficient coverage, but this site could attract some type of "drive-through" retail. If the Town has other desires, it would be important to monitor the owner's intentions and review applicable zoning regulations.