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Westfield Downtown Plan Final Report

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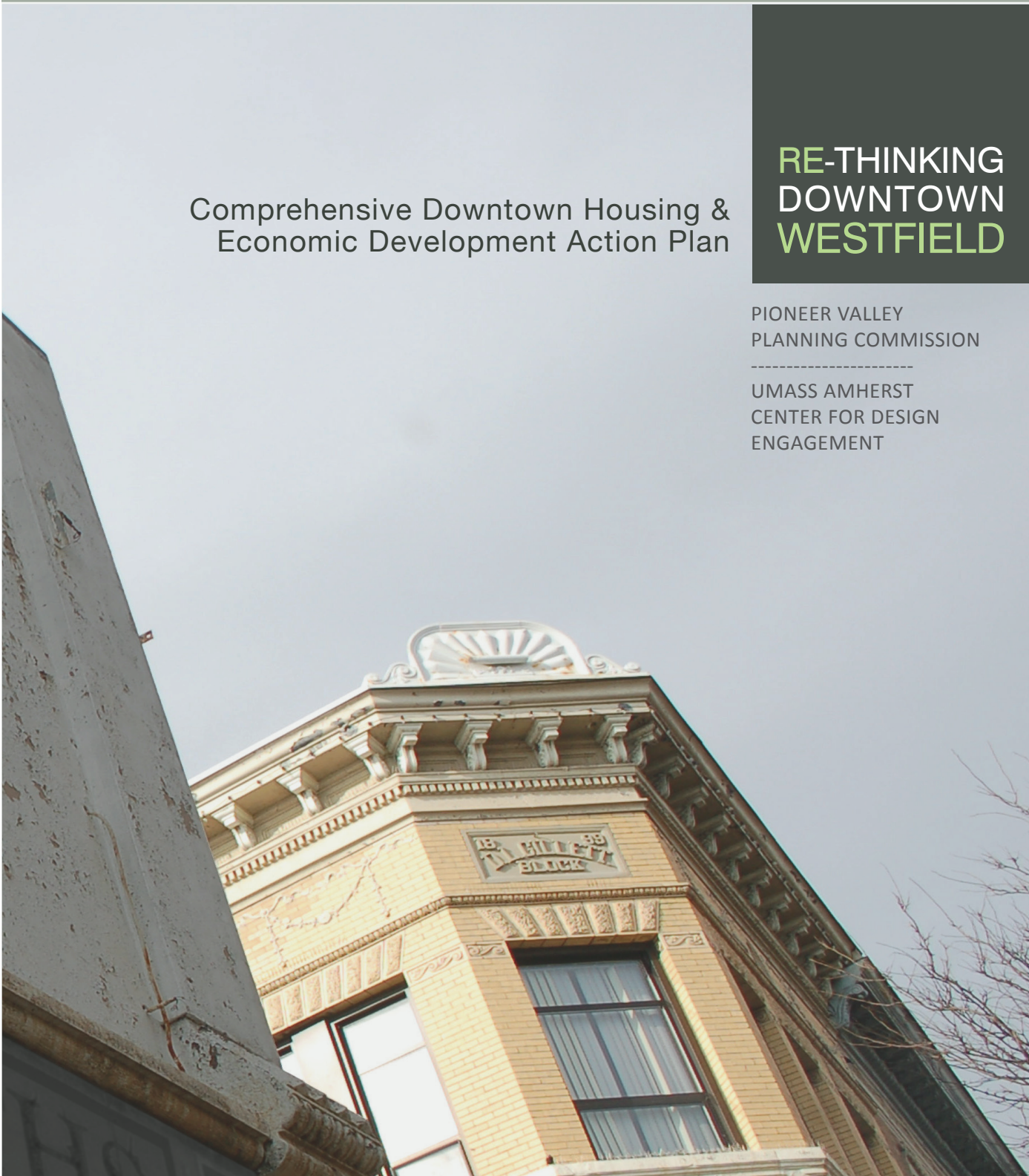
AUGUST 2009

Comprehensive Downtown Housing &
Economic Development Action Plan

RE-THINKING
DOWNTOWN
WESTFIELD

PIONEER VALLEY
PLANNING COMMISSION

UMASS AMHERST
CENTER FOR DESIGN
ENGAGEMENT





Catalyst for Regional Progress

PVPC

University of Massachusetts Amherst
Architecture+Design Program



the center for design engagement



AUGUST 2009

Comprehensive Downtown Housing &
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**RE-THINKING
DOWNTOWN
WESTFIELD**

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Acknowledgements

This plan would not have been developed without the active participation of Westfield residents, and people who live, work and play in the city.

Thanks to everyone who took the survey, participated in a stakeholder interview, and contributed to any of the interactive workshops, focus groups or other meetings and events.

Governor Deval Patrick's Gateway Plus Action Grant Program, administered by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, provided funding for this planning effort with some supplemental funding provided by the District Local Technical Assistance program, also administered by DHCD.

Mayor Michael Boulanger initiated this planning process and Larry Smith, City Planner and Director of Community Development and Mark Cressotti, City Engineer staffed it.

Lisa McMahon of the Westfield Business Improvement District went above and beyond the call of duty in providing assistance to the consultant team, literally opening many doors throughout this very participatory planning process.

The Advisory Committee performed a huge amount of work, and they were ably led by their co-chairs, Ann Lentini, Director DOMUS Inc. and Daniel Hitchcock, concerned resident.

Special Thanks to Rev. Linda Shaw and the staff at the Central Baptist Church on Elm Street for the use of their facilities for our public outreach events.

Advisory Committee

Mayor Michael Boulanger
Larry Smith, City Planner
Ann Lentini, Domus Inc. (Co-Chair)
Lisa McMahon, Business Improvement District
Agma Sweeney, Westfield Spanish American Association
Bob Plasse, Westfield-On-Weekends and Westfield State College
Mark Cressotti, City Engineer
Peter Miller, City Council
Matt VanHeynigen, Planning Board

Kathy Witalisz, Realtor
Hilda Colon, Westfield Spanish American Association
Officer Dickinson, Community Policing
Lynn Boscher, Chamber of Commerce & downtown property owner
Daniel Hitchcock, Resident (Co-Chair)
John Bonavita, Tavern Restaurant
Shanna Reed, Mayor's Office
Brent Bean, Westfield State College Government & Community Relations

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University of Massachusetts Amherst / Center for Design Engagement: Professor Joseph Krupczynski, Patricia Nobre, Caitlin McKee, Michael Luft-Weissberg
Westfield State College: Professor Marijoan Bull, Professor Stephanie Kelly, Adam Bozek, Tim Verrochi

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Even with the reality of our nation experiencing the worst housing and economic crisis since the Great Depression, work on Westfield's Downtown District Plan was an invigorating and rewarding process for all involved. Four conditions made this planning process, and the resulting plan, extremely useful for the City of Westfield.

- **The city was ready**—a new Mayor initiated the process, key staff were eager to participate, the City Council and key boards and commissions were enthusiastic and supportive, and exciting physical projects that had been talked about for years were finally underway.
- **The business community was ready**—businesses in Westfield's downtown had just completed their first year with a Business Improvement District (BID). BIDs are a nationally recognized tool for revitalizing downtowns and have had huge success in other states, but Massachusetts has lagged behind in BID development. Westfield is just the fourth city in the Commonwealth to create a BID.
- **The college was ready**—Westfield State College had a new President, a nationally recognized leader in building positive 'town-gown' relationships, who had just announced his intentions to house 1,000 students downtown and also to build a performing arts center and a bookstore downtown.

- **The residents were ready**— Citizen run groups, such as Westfield on Weekends (WOW) —which formed as a result of Westfield's last planning process from the year 2000—have successfully brought residents and visitors downtown for concerts on the green, dinner theatre and other exciting events. Resident involvement and passion during the community engagement events was high, and demonstrated the community's commitment to participate in downtown's revitalization.

Thousands of residents, workers, and students in Westfield participated in this very interactive and transparent collaborative planning process. Plan developers used eleven different means to involve and engage all elements of the Westfield community.

- Advisory Committee
- Community-wide survey
- Plan web-site
- Media releases and outreach
- Stakeholder interviews
- Focus groups
- Visioning workshop
- Design workshops
- Public lecture/discussion
- Presentations to Department heads-roundtable meeting
- Westfield State College coordinating committee

A Revitalized Downtown

As the project team worked together to chart Downtown Westfield’s future, an examination of existing conditions, under-utilized assets and creative potentials revealed the unique characteristics of three downtown districts:

Core Downtown District

Primary Characteristics: Arts, Culture and Entertainment

This core downtown area bounded by the Columbia Greenway bridge over Elm Street and the Town Green is characterized by its potential for Arts and Entertainment. Existing venues such as the Rinnova Gallery, Piccolo’s and other downtown restaurants in this area provide an excellent context for this downtown center to thrive with cultural activity. Westfield State College’s plan to invigorate the downtown with a focus on the arts is another initiative that will shape this district’s emerging identity.

Riverfront District

Primary Characteristics: Recreation and Neighborhood/Youth Culture

The Great River Bridge Project will provide renewed access to one of Downtown Westfield’s under-utilized assets, the Westfield River. With the Columbia Greenway’s future development, the opportunities for passive and active recreation in a context of commercial and residential riverfront activity will be enhanced. The southern section of this district (east of Elm Street) provides a perfect counterpart to river recreation with existing youth and neighborhood oriented restaurants and bars. Additionally, commercial and residential development opportunities within underutilized existing buildings offer potential for future growth and strengthening connections to adjacent neighborhoods.

Depot Square District

Primary Characteristics: Residential and Destination Commerce

With the completion of the Great River Bridge project, this district will have renewed visibility. Local landmarks such as Pilgrim Candle can provide a context for additional destination commerce within this historic and walkable area. The infrastructure improvements and available land also provide an excellent environment for townhomes and multi-family residential development.

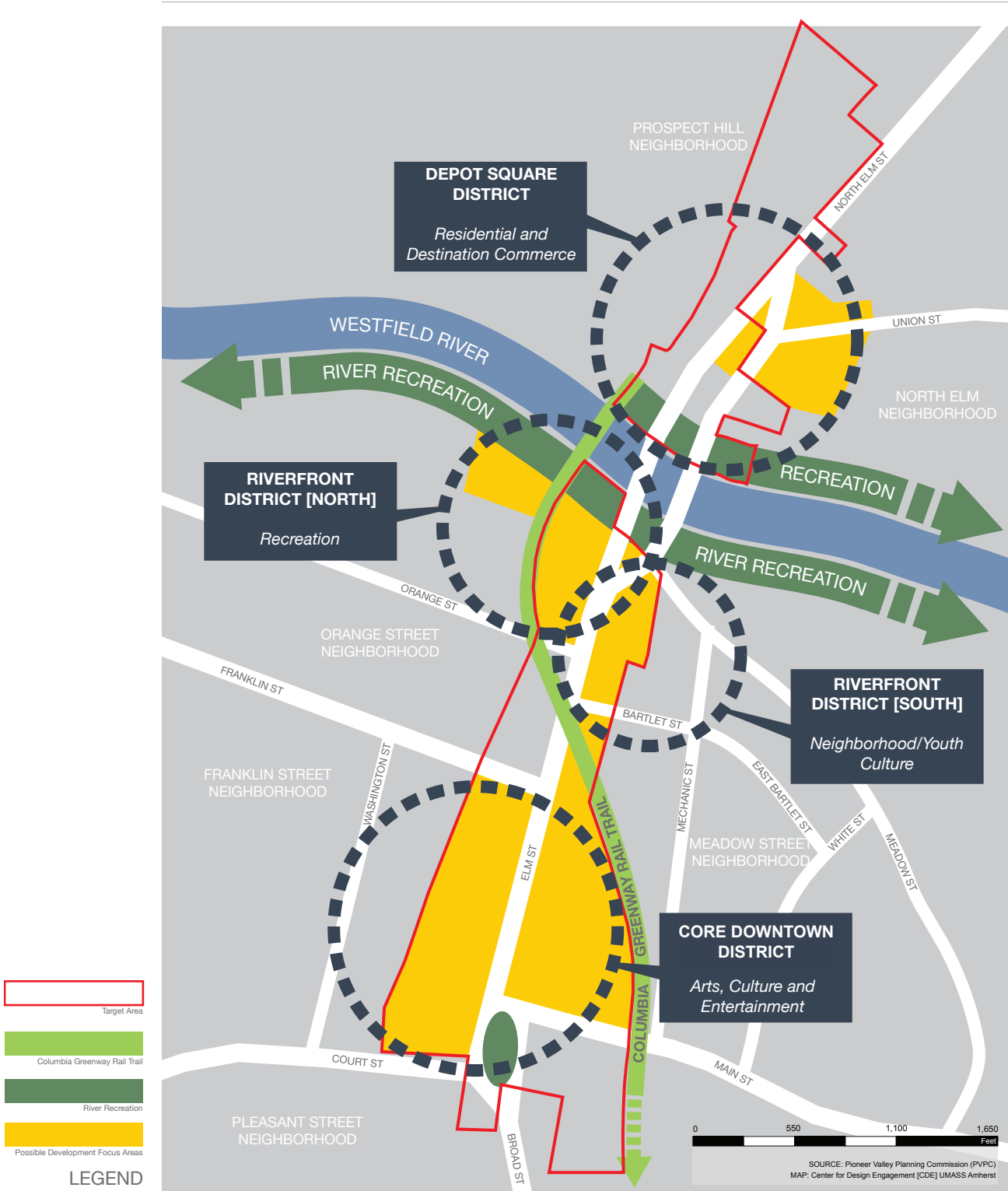
A Sustainable Model

As developers show renewed interest in the city, attracted by the walkable neighborhoods, access to active transportation (bicycling and walking), updated infrastructure and the “great bones” shining through the current under-utilized historic buildings, this plan will allow them to define their projects within these new distinct places: *Arts, Culture and Entertainment; Recreation and Neighborhood/Youth Culture; and New Residential and Destination Commerce.*

The objective of this planning process has been to rethink and re-imagine what a revitalized Downtown Westfield can be, and we offer this plan as a pathway towards that goal. All the pieces are in place for a downtown that is a model for sustainable development for Western Massachusetts and beyond.

DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS



Project Framework

Four thematic categories have played an important role in examining the various initiatives for a revitalized downtown: LIVE, WORK, PLAY and CONNECT. “Live” initiatives involve housing strategies and the quality of life downtown; “Work” projects involve downtown economic development; “Play” proposals include projects related to recreation, arts and entertainment; and “Connect” projects involve infrastructure. These themes evolved through an examination of key recurring issues, and developed as an important organizational tool for the community-engaged efforts and for the final recommendations.

These thematic categories are not meant to segregate these important issues for downtown Westfield’s restoration –and many of the recommended initiatives incorporate more than one theme. Instead, these themes offered a framework for our discussions and a means by which the key issues could be clearly presented and explored.

Recommendations

Key recommendations detailed in the plan are listed on pages 8 and 9. It is important to note that many of these recommendations can be implemented at little or no financial cost, but with the energy and enthusiasm of willing and motivated city officials, organization directors, business people, volunteers, community organizers and active residents. Recommendations are categorized as “Organizational,” “Policy” and “Investment” initiatives. The “Organizational” projects emphasize new or re-worked organizational structures within, or between, municipal, business and community groups, while the “Policy” recommendations require action by municipal and/or state government to enact zoning or other changes that support the action plan. “Policy” and “Organizational” projects require limited or no capital, but they will take time and effort. The “Investment” projects will require public and/or private investment and capital, but with some of these projects already underway, the intention is that new projects can leverage the success of these works for future funding.



Downtown Visioning Session at Central Baptist Church

DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

KEY PROPOSED PROJECTS

- 8. Promote New Construction in the Depot Square District
- 20. Create a Riverfront Park
- 7. Create a New Riverfront District
- 6. Support Reuse of Under-utilized Buildings and Property Along Elm Street
- 19. Continue Targeted and Consistent Work to Advance the Columbia Greenway
- 5. Encourage New Housing in the Core Downtown District
- 25. Streetscape and Sewer Improvements in the Gaslight District



LIVE AND WORK RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY

CATEGORY		INITIATED WITHIN:		
		1-2 YEARS	2-5 YEARS	+ 5 YEARS
	“LIVE” RECOMMENDATIONS			
Organizational	1. Promote Neighborhood Building Build on existing efforts initiated by a variety of city departments, including the Community Police Unit, the Business Improvement District (BID), Westfield State College (WSC) and others to promote “neighborhood building” to encourage and facilitate resident involvement in their neighborhoods	X		
Organizational	2. Annual Volunteer Cleanup Day Establish an annual city cleanup day.	X		
Organizational	3. Promote Housing Resources on City’s Website Reorganize the Department of Community Development and Planning website to more clearly profile existing housing resources.	X		
Policy	4. Preserve and Protect Downtown’s Walkable Neighborhoods In the neighborhoods within and adjacent to the downtown, retain existing housing stock and encourage additional infill housing where opportunities are available. Make infrastructure investments to improve and ensure walkability		X	
Policy Investment	5. Encourage New Housing in the Core Downtown District Encourage housing in commercial buildings that contain underutilized or vacant upper-story space as well as new housing through infill, including mixed-income and mixed-use, in the Core Downtown District.	X		
Policy Investment	6. Support Re-use of Under-utilized Buildings and Property Along Elm Street Support new housing along Elm Street in the area north of Bartlett Street and south of the Westfield River through adaptive re-use of existing under-utilized religious and institutional buildings, rehabilitation of underutilized or vacant upper story space in existing commercial buildings, and through infill development		X	
Policy Investment	7. Create a New Riverfront District Encourage new construction with mixed-income and mixed-use housing along the Westfield River west of Elm Street.			X
Policy Investment	8. Promote New Construction in the Depot Square District Encourage new mixed-income housing and mixed-use development through infill and adaptive reuse in the Depot Square District.			X
	“WORK” RECOMMENDATIONS			
Organizational	9. Establish a Downtown Westfield Economic Development Collaborative Build on existing efforts and establish a Downtown Westfield Economic Development Collaborative to combine the resources of key organizations committed to revitalizing downtown and to implement the shared vision for economic development for the downtown district that has emerged from this planning process.	X		
Organizational	10. Promote and “Brand” Downtown Westfield Create a campaign to promote and “brand” downtown Westfield.	X		
Organizational	11. Develop Downtown Permitting Guidebook Develop permitting guidebook and distribute to existing downtown property owners as well as make available on City website.	X		
Organizational Investment	12. Support Small Business and Entrepreneurial Development Encourage small business development in the downtown area through use of STCC Entrepreneurial Institute’s existing incubator space, technical assistance at WNEC’S Center for Advancing Entrepreneurship and emerging business support programs at Westfield State College.		X	
Policy	13. Create A Design Review Board and Ordinance Adopt Design Review zoning ordinance and standards and establish a Design Review Board to examine all new downtown commercial and large residential projects.	X		
Policy	14. Use Zoning to Encourage Downtown Growth and Development Enforce existing zoning in the Downtown target area, and through out the city to channel commercial growth and development downtown and to assure a diverse mix of housing available.	X		
Policy Investment	15. Promote Redevelopment of Historic Structures Promote adaptive reuse and restoration of historic buildings such as Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Rectory, Morgan-Way House, Foster House, Kellogg House and Whip Factory.	X		

PLAY AND CONNECT RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY

CATEGORY		INITIATED WITHIN:		
		1-2 YEARS	2-5 YEARS	+ 5 YEARS
	“PLAY” RECOMMENDATIONS			
Organizational	16. Increase Arts, Entertainment and Recreational Uses Downtown Continue to increase use of downtown venues and open spaces for arts, entertainment and recreational events. Coordinate with Westfield State College’s plans for relocating some of their arts and entertainment activities to the downtown.	X		
Organizational Investment	17. Promote Temporary Arts & Entertainment-Related Uses of Underutilized Downtown Spaces Develop organized programs to promote temporary arts and entertainment-related uses in vacant or underutilized lots and storefronts in the target area.	X		
Organizational	18. Coordinate and Disseminate Arts and Event Information Coordinate and disseminate information about all the great events and programs happening in Westfield’s Downtown.	X		
Organizational Policy Investment	19. Continue Targeted and Consistent Work to Advance the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail Continue to advance funding possibilities through MassHighway processes and use municipal ordinances to prevent actions that would make the proposed Rail Trail impassable/impracticable. Focus city and community efforts, and leverage community support by executing a public information campaign and creating a “Friends of the Greenway” community group.	X		
Investment	20. Create a Riverfront Park Create a riverfront park connecting Whitney Park and the new parks that are part of the Great River Bridge development on existing City-owned land along the southern side of the Westfield River.			X
Investment	21. Plan for Neighborhood Pocket Parks Pursue neighborhood pocket parks in the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.		X	
	“CONNECT” RECOMMENDATIONS			
Organizational Policy Investment	22. Address Traffic Congestion on Elm Street Assure a safe and comfortable environment for all modes of transportation, especially pedestrians, along Elm Street.	X		
Organizational Policy Investment	23. Address Downtown Parking Issues Use information collected in planning process to address downtown parking problems, possibly including a parking garage, production of parking maps/signs, parking demand reduction strategies, and a “park once” campaign. Improve lighting, surface, and entrance/exit conditions to existing parking lots as their current condition does not encourage people to park downtown.	X		
Policy Investment	24. Expand Transportation Options between WSC and the Downtown Expand transportation options on Western Avenue between WSC and the Downtown, including bicycle lane striping, additional signage, and continued sidewalk maintenance and construction. Increase shuttle van or bus service—perhaps in a “trolley format”—from WSC to and from the Downtown.	X		
Investment	25. Streetscape and Sewer Improvements in the Gaslight District Continue to work towards streetscape and sewer improvements in the Gaslight District (Franklin to Court, Elm to Washington). These planned (and partially funded) improvements will address the concerns regarding out of date infrastructure in the downtown.	X		
Investment	26. Improve Water Supply and Sewer Pipes in Downtown Strategize for the improvement and/or replacement of piping not addressed by the Gaslight District work described above—to assure that proposed new developments and re-developments can move ahead.		X	
Investment	27. Planning, Development and Construction of Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC) The City should continue to partner with the PVTA and Westfield Redevelopment Authority (WRA) on this important infrastructure project that will enhance alternative transportation options to and from the downtown.	X		
Investment	28. Continue “Old Towne” Sidewalk Improvements Continue to replace pavement, streetscape, and treebelt on Maple, Morris, Sibly, and Madison Streets to stabilize and beautify neighborhoods surrounding the downtown.	X		



A VISION OF THE FUTURE:
RECLAIMING THE WESTFIELD RIVERFRONT WITH
HOUSING, RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

DOWNTOWN VISIONS

Illustrative Examples of Select Downtown Recommendations and Improvements

How can these recommendations be realized and what is the impact on downtown's visual and built environment? This is often a common question within a community regarding any downtown design process. The following examples illustrate the impact these recommendations can have in four specific downtown locations and how these projects can have a lasting impact for residents and visitors who live, work, play and connect downtown. While the recommendations within this report are outlined as individual efforts, downtown projects will likely cross thematic boundaries and knit together ideas and initiatives for their success.

This project relates to the following Recommendations:
7. Create a New Riverfront District
20. Create a Riverfront Park

RECLAIM THE RIVERFRONT

One of the keys to Westfield’s downtown revitalization is to restore and build upon access to the Westfield River. Riverfront areas historically were prime locations for industrial uses. With the national decline in manufacturing in urban area, cities and towns nationwide are reclaiming riverfront areas for more people-oriented uses.

Once the Great River Bridge project is completed, land located on both sides of the Westfield River will offer substantial opportunity for the development of mixed income and mixed-use housing along with parks and other recreational facilities. This area offers direct access to the river, the Columbia Greenway and existing and proposed riverfront parks. In addition downtown amenities and major transportation routes into and out of the city are nearby. Residential, commercial and recreational riverfront development would allow one of Westfield’s under-utilized assets to be at the center of downtown’s renewal as a vibrant, sustainable and environmental-friendly destination.



Existing view at River



Proposed view at River

This project relates to following Recommendations:
 6. Support Reuse of Under-utilized Buildings and Property Along Elm Street
 14. Use Zoning to Encourage Downtown Growth and Development
 22. Address Traffic Congestion on Elm Street

ELM STREET REVITALIZATION

Elm Street is the lifeline of downtown. Throughout the design process residents expressed their concern, hopes and ideas regarding this central artery. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission is in the process of studying traffic on Elm street to identify solutions to traffic congestion and, if possible, use study results to perform ‘what if’ scenarios on ideas proposed to solve congestion, including but not limited to: traffic calming, “completing the street”, angle parking, making select streets one-way, and road “diets.”

It is also clear that a safe and comfortable environment for all modes of transportation, especially pedestrians, is a key to business and economic development in downtown. Many of this report’s recommendations seek to improve the economic conditions of the downtown district through business incubation, social programming, and community event planning that engages the street as an essential public space. In addition, encouraging the use of under-utilized buildings, adopting Design Review zoning and enforcing existing ordinances are all significant elements needed to restore Elm Street into a bustling and commercially successful “Main Street”.



Existing view at Elm and Orange St



Proposed view at Elm and Orange St

This project relates to following Recommendations:
10. Promote and “Brand” Downtown Westfield
16. Increase Arts, Entertainment and Recreational Uses Downtown
19. Continue Targeted and Consistent Work to Advance the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail

RAIL TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

The Columbia Greenway has a unique position within Westfield. This rail trail, being developed along an elevated abandoned railroad bed, will eventually become a major pedestrian and bicycle connector from the north to the south end of the downtown. While many rail trails bypass downtown cores, in Westfield the trail weaves its way through the center of the city and offers outstanding potential for passive and active recreation. This route will offer safe, speedy and convenient travel along a linear park spanning numerous roadways and the Westfield River, and connecting a number of destinations throughout the city. The realization of this important asset would move Westfield closer to its potential as a walkable, bike-friendly sustainable city.

This trail not only “knits” together the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods but also has great potential for economic development as businesses with roofs or second floors aligned with the rail trail find new and profitable uses for these spaces. These strategically placed economic stimuli would provide for new unique amenities, and increase the critical mass of people needed to support downtown economic activity.



Existing view at Rail Trail at Elm St Bridge



Proposed view at Rail Trail at Elm St Bridge

This project relates to following Recommendations:
 16. Increase Arts, Entertainment, and Recreational Uses Downtown
 17. Promote Temporary Arts and Entertainment Related Uses of Under-Utilized Downtown Spaces

REUSE UNDERUTILIZED SPACES FOR ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

A “playful” downtown is the cumulative result of viable businesses, welcoming public spaces, interesting architecture, recreational opportunities, planned and informal events, and an active arts, music and cultural scene. For the City of Westfield, achieving a playful downtown will be a multifaceted effort, and the city, local organizations, and residents are already working on many of the pieces that will help create this space.

Within the Downtown Design Workshops, using vacant storefronts and empty lots, such as the Newbury Department Store lot, played a prominent role in discussions regarding the potential for temporary recreational and arts events to activate these underutilized spaces. Such sites offer opportunities to hold arts and entertainment events, including but not limited to; outdoor theatrical productions, live concerts, movie screenings on the sides of buildings, community picnics, community art and landscape installations, and public murals. Many long-time residents remember the Newbury Department Store fondly and the current empty lot is locally known as the “Hole,” and desires to see something happen there --even if temporary-- were quite strong. Short-term use of this site is especially attractive in that it would allow for immediate change and can act as an active placeholder until a long-term profitable use is developed.



Existing view at Newbury Lot



Proposed view at Newbury Lot



INTRODUCTION

“The Commonwealth’s gateway cities serve as regional economic centers that enhance the entire state’s competitiveness and prosperity,”

said Governor Patrick on November 25, 2008, as he announced funding to the city of Westfield and 17 other cities across Massachusetts¹ as part of his administration’s Gateway Cities Action Grant program. “These grants will fuel new plans to improve downtowns and residential neighborhoods, helping to make our gateway cities more attractive places to live, work and do business.”

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) administered the \$2 million in funding to support local planning efforts to expand housing opportunities and revitalize targeted areas with the purpose of creating and restoring vibrant mixed-income neighborhoods. Eligible communities were able to apply to DHCD for planning assistance up to \$75,000. The City of Westfield applied for this grant to develop a housing and economic development plan for its downtown, and the City was awarded funding, in the full amount of \$75,000.

The focus of this exciting planning project is:

1. The State also awarded grants to the cities of Springfield, Holyoke, and Chicopee in the Pioneer Valley Region.

to expand and enhance housing opportunities in and around Westfield’s downtown; to improve commercial viability, further support economic development, and provide employment opportunities to neighboring residents; and increase and enhance recreational opportunities in the downtown. This planning initiative quickly became known as the “Re-Thinking Downtown Westfield” project: a moniker that both acknowledges the many previous downtown planning and development efforts while also promoting and envisioning new strategies and activities to revitalize the downtown.

The downtown target area (shown on page 23) conforms to the city’s existing C.O.R.E. zoning district, which extends from Court Street at its southern end up to Columbia Street at its northern end. This planning process engaged the whole city and especially the neighborhoods directly adjacent to this downtown target area as their quality of life affects and is affected by activities in the downtown.

The Need for a Downtown Plan

While creating more housing choices in the downtown and enhancing the downtown's commercial viability has been an often repeated goal of local officials, business leaders, housing advocates and residents alike, the City did not have a plan to prioritize goals, strategies, and actions to guide downtown revitalization activities. The success of the Westfield Business Improvement District's (BID) efforts to market downtown business space, clean the streets and bring people downtown for events; the heightened activity of community-based groups like Westfield on Weekends (WOW) with their downtown events and activities, and Westfield State College's announcement in late summer, 2008 to house 1,000 students downtown and build a new performing arts center made the need for a downtown plan ever more acute. A city-sponsored downtown planning process ensures that the needs and desires of all Westfield residents are considered as the revitalization of the city's center moves ahead.

The Planning Process

Mayor Boulanger launched Westfield's downtown housing and economic development planning process in February 2009 with the creation of a Downtown District Plan committee. The committee included representatives from: key city boards, commissions and departments; the business community; housing developers and advocates; Westfield State College; community groups, and residents. The committee met monthly, with a few ad hoc special meetings, to oversee the entire planning process, advising the consultants on all elements of civic engagement and reviewing draft materials including the strategic action plan and final project report. In addition, Larry Smith, City Planner and Mark Cressotti, City Engineer met regularly with the Consultant team.

The City hired the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, the regional planning agency for the Pioneer Valley, to facilitate development of the plan. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission engaged the Center for Design Engagement at the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Architecture + Design Program, Westfield State College Department of Geography and Regional Planning, and Northeastern University Center Urban and Regional Policy to assist with various components of the planning process. The University of Massachusetts team, under the direction of Architecture Professor Joseph Krupczynski, took the lead on citizen engagement and community outreach activities as well as the development of all visual materials. The Westfield State College team assisted in the development of the Downtown Westfield Survey and collected data for the development of maps and the future Downtown Action Plan. The Northeastern University Center for Urban & Regional Policy produced an economic development self-assessment survey the city used to evaluate how it compares to other communities across the Commonwealth. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission performed all other work in addition to preparing the strategic action plan and final report on the project.

The "Re-Thinking Downtown Westfield" planning project was a truly interactive and community-involved planning process. The planning process provided the Westfield community with several opportunities to offer input into the development of a final plan between February and August 2009 through the following community outreach events:

- Downtown survey
- Community / Stakeholder interviews
- Project website: www.westfielddowntownplan.com
- Focus group meetings
- Visioning Meeting
- Community Design Workshops (Charrette)
- Public comment period on draft plan

A detailed description of these engagement efforts and the subsequent findings can be found in Community Engagement section of this Report.

Based on the comments received through the above community outreach activities, the consultant team completed a draft Downtown Action Plan in July 2009 for the Downtown Advisory Committee's review and comment. In August 2009 the draft plan was posted on the plan website and on city and partner websites for public review and comment. The City and its consultants completed all planning activities and submitted a final report to the state at the end of August 2009 as required by the grant.

How to Read and Use This Plan

"Re-Thinking Downtown Westfield" is a plan with distinct, yet interrelated components, which are divided into 9 chapters to facilitate easy use. The report begins by acknowledging contributors to the planning process (*Acknowledgements*), highlighting key findings (*Executive Summary*) and describes the catalyst for this planning effort and need for a downtown plan (*Introduction*). The *Downtown Vision* chapter offers some illustrative examples of possible downtown projects. The *Community Context* chapter provides background information on the downtown and the City, including a description of recent and ongoing planning projects. This chapter is the 'problem statement' or 'description of existing conditions' element of the plan. The *Community Engagement* chapter provides detail on the different ways in which Westfield's diverse community were encouraged to participate in this very interactive planning process. The *Recommendations and Action Plan* chapter is the "heart" of this plan. Combined with the "Recommendation and Implementation Summary"

(in the *Executive Summary*), they provide the missing blueprint for how exactly the City of Westfield can revitalize its downtown. Divided into the themes of **Live, Work, Play**, and **Connect**, these sections present recommendations and corresponding action steps that the city and the Downtown Plan Advisory Committee determined to be priority steps for moving forward with the revitalization of Downtown Westfield. The *Agents of Change* chapter provides detailed information on organizations and agents capable of implementing this plan, while the *Funding Opportunities* chapter notes possible funding sources for projects. The Appendix, available on-line at the project website, includes background information and materials developed for the community engagement process.

Moving Forward with "Re-Thinking Downtown Westfield"

Even though this report and Action Plan was released in August 2009, it is the intention of the City that this plan continues to evolve with the ever changing Downtown.



Visioning Session



COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The City of Westfield is nestled at the foot of the picturesque Berkshire hills in Western Massachusetts. The city is bordered by West Springfield on the east, Southwick on the south, Granville on the southwest, Russell and Montgomery on the west, Southampton on the north and Holyoke on the northeast. Comprised of over 47 square miles, Westfield is just northwest of the metropolitan area of Springfield, as well as 99 miles from Boston, and 134 miles from New York City.

From the time of its founding in 1669 to 1725, Westfield was the most western town in the Massachusetts Colony. Town meetings were held in a church meeting house until 1839 when Town Hall was erected on Broad Street. This building served as a City Hall from 1920 to 1958. Due to its alluvial lands, the inhabitants of this area were entirely devoted to agricultural pursuits for about 150 years. Early in the 19th century the making of bricks, whips, and cigars became the principal occupations. Other firms engaged in the production of bicycles, paper products, boilers and radiators, textile machinery, abrasives, wood products and precision tools. The establishment of industry in the community changed its character from agricultural to a thriving industrial city during the latter part of the 19th century.

Today Westfield is a regional commercial and industrial center with a population of 42,000 residents. Over the past 25 years, the city's economic and employment growth have outpaced the population growth, an uncommon trend in the Pioneer Valley. Manufacturing, education, health and social services and retail trade are the largest sources of employment. Westfield State College is located in the city, as well as two health care facilities, the municipally-owned Barnes Airport, and Stanley Park – one of the region's most outstanding parks. Even with these urban characteristics, the City maintains its rural roots and some agricultural activity is still carried on in parts of Westfield.

The city is a mixture of residential neighborhoods, industrial development, and a commercial downtown, combining suburban and rural living with the services and amenities of a city. Three major north-south and east-west state and federal highways converge (U.S. Route 20, U.S. Route 202, and MA Route 10) in downtown Westfield and the Interstate 90 interchange is just one and one-half miles north of the downtown. Thousands of people cross through downtown Westfield each day on their way to live, work, shop, and play.

Downtown Characteristics, Issues and Development Conditions¹

Target Area

As the downtown map on the facing page shows, the historic commercial downtown is extremely long and narrow, stretching almost one mile from end to end along Elm Street. When this area was developed, the buildings shared a similar commercial character. Over time building infill and ongoing planning projects combined with geographic and physical features, such as railroad lines and the Westfield River, have evolved to suggest three distinct sub-districts along this one-mile corridor. See map in Executive Summary for detail on the three sub-districts.

The downtown contains many fine buildings such as the Rinnova Building and H.S. Eaton Building as well as many thriving businesses. But there are also a number of buildings containing storefronts that have been shuttered or are now occupied by non-commercial businesses. Some housing exists above some of the commercial buildings, but much of the existing commercial buildings contain underutilized, vacant upper-story space. The downtown has “good bones” and strategic efforts to build on this promising asset have significant potential to bear fruit in a revitalized downtown Westfield.

Downtown Zoning

Zoning in the target area is generally sound. The city has taken steps to use zoning, a powerful tool to create vital communities, in the past. The city rezoned the downtown to “Commercial Office Retail

¹ Two recent reports document current housing and demographic trends in the City of Westfield and identify priorities and strategies for action: Comprehensive Housing Plan and Housing Needs Assessment (2007) and Consolidated Plan (2005). These reports are available at the City Hall Planning Department.

Enterprise” (CORE) District in 1987 specifically to encourage housing and economic development. The CORE District is intended to accommodate high intensity business and residential uses with the following area and height regulations: 95% maximum lot coverage for business uses and 90% maximum lot coverage for residential uses, a minimum front yard setback of zero, a maximum front yard setback of 5 feet, a minimum building height of 35 feet and a maximum building height of 75 feet. The CORE District prohibits the construction of new single-family or duplex units. Multi-family units are allowed by special permit at a residential density of 150 units an acre.

Unfortunately the C.O.R.E district regulations have not produced the positive effects anticipated. Recognizing that the dimensional changes instituted as part of the creation of the CORE district did not produce the desired effects of spurring economic and housing development, the City has been working with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to develop a Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay district in the target area. The City of Westfield Planning Department began this work in January 2007 to identify possible locations for smart growth development districts throughout the city under a state funded grant.

This planning process identified several locations, including the former Waltham Grinding factory site located behind the Sanford Apartments and a parcel at One Hundred Acres Road and Southwick Road. The City Planner, in conjunction with the Westfield 40R Advisory Committee, decided to move forward with the development of a Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District (SGZOD) in the southern part of town at One Hundred Acres Road and Southwick Road. This area received state designation as a SGZOD in August 2008. Around this time, the Westfield 40R Advisory Committee turned their attention back to Elm Street and downtown Westfield and decided to pursue a second SGZOD in downtown Westfield.

DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD TARGET AREA



Chapter 40R of the Massachusetts General Laws, also known as the Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Act, is a zoning enabling act as well as a state program that encourages municipalities to create dense residential or mixed-use smart growth zoning districts in areas of concentrated development such as existing village and town centers and in other highly suitable locations such as existing highway commercial corridors. The goal is to have an optional zoning mechanism in place that promotes the production of a range of housing options in a sustainable, smart growth fashion for when the housing market picks up again.² By designating and adopting Smart Growth Zoning Districts, municipalities are eligible to receive special state funds. There is an initial incentive payment that ranges between \$10,000 and \$600,000, which is based on the number of projected housing units that will be constructed within the new Smart Growth Zoning District. These funds are unrestricted. Municipalities will also receive a bonus payment of \$3,000 for each new housing unit permitted and built within the new overlay district.

Development in smart growth zoning districts must meet the following requirements in order to be approved by the state.

1. Construction of new residential units must conform to minimum densities set by the Department of Housing and Community Development (shown at right).
2. At least 20% of the housing units created in the district need to be sold or rented to families who make approximately \$62,100 per household annually.
3. Projects must be allowed by-right or by a limited site review process consistent with community approved design standards.

² In May 2009, there were 27 Massachusetts municipalities that have SGZD's, including Northampton, Holyoke, and Westfield. Easthampton and Chicopee both have proposed districts under state review.

Required Minimum Densities	
Units/Acre	Property Type
8	Single family and townhomes
12	Two and three family
20	Multi family

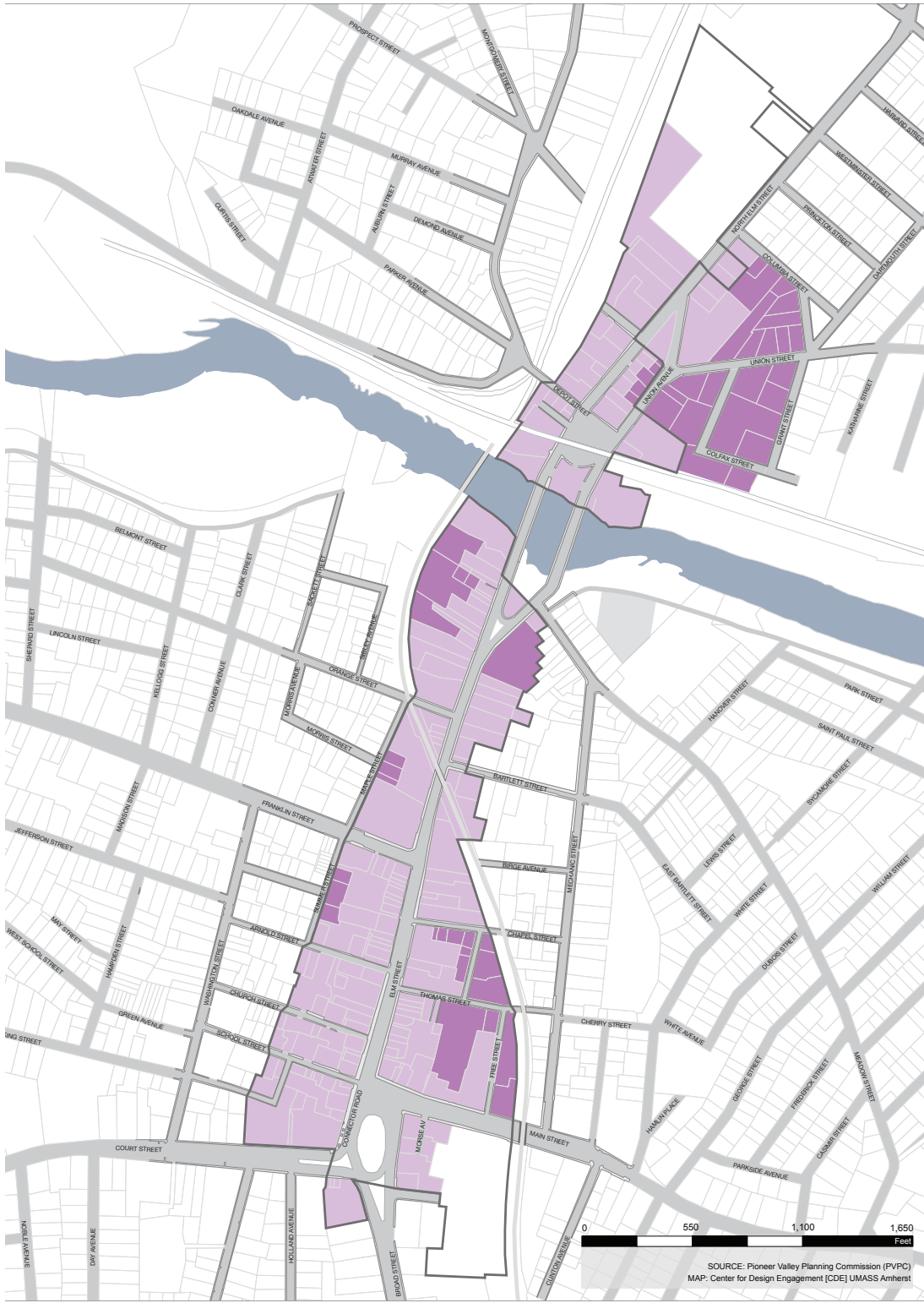
The proposed Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay district, shown on the map on the following page, mostly conforms to the existing C.O.R.E zoning district boundaries. This overlay district features two sub-districts: Downtown Mixed Use and Downtown Residential. The Downtown Mixed Use Sub-district restricts residential uses to the upper stories of a building while the Downtown Residential Sub-district prohibits commercial uses.

The City Planner hopes to bring the proposed Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay district forward to the Westfield City Council in the Fall of 2009 and submit an application to the state for official designation as a smart growth development district.


Zoning issues identified as concerns in the course of this planning process are: inconsistent application of zoning regulations; lack of design review; excessive parking requirements; lack of requirements for bicycle facilities in new developments, and a home-based business bylaw that may detract from downtown by de-centralizing commercial activity.

DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

PROPOSED 40R - SMART GROWTH OVERLAY DISTRICT



 Downtown Mixed Use Sub-District

 Downtown Residential Sub-District

LEGEND

Downtown Infrastructure

Given the national economic crisis and the horrible housing market, the best course of action for the city to take to advance redevelopment of Westfield's downtown is to invest in infrastructure improvements in and around these sites. This will set the stage for the market rate development and help instill a sense of investor confidence in the area.

Public Water Service

The Westfield Water Department had its beginnings in 1873 when the Massachusetts Legislature authorized the Town of Westfield to construct a reservoir in Montgomery. The City of Westfield now receives water from several different sources. The main source, the Granville Reservoir, supplies up to 4 million gallons per day of water to the city. The city also receives water from 6 active wells. Westfield is also authorized to withdraw up to 3.2 million gallons per day from the Springfield water system through an interconnection located off Shaker Road.

The distribution system loops around the city and includes over 200 miles of water mains. The system includes over 1,600 fire hydrants and 10,300 services, all of which are metered. The current potable water system in downtown Westfield is efficient and can accommodate a fair amount of population growth, so no capacity upgrades are planned at this time. The city administers ongoing projects to maintain pipes, and these projects, such as the proposed water pipe improvements in the Gaslight district, should move forward.

Sewer Service

Since 1973, the City has had its own Wastewater Treatment Plant. The plant was recently upgraded in 2005 to increase its hydraulic capacity from 4 four million gallons per day up to 6.1 million. The

plant serves about 75% of the Westfield area. The Wastewater Treatment Plant removes 95% to 99% of the pollutants before being discharged into the Westfield River. The city recently conducted an assessment of the sewage mains, finding that most lines are in good condition, though there are some segments in need of replacement, such as those identified for improvement in the Gaslight district. These segments will be upgraded as road resurfacing projects occur, allowing access to below-ground utilities.

Westfield regularly assesses its stormwater system, and there are currently no capacity shortages, though there are, as in all cities, some defects in outfalls and other components of the system. In addition, there are isolated areas in which cross connections between sanitary sewers and storm drains still exist. These connections, known as combined sewer overflows, are places where sewage and stormwater mix. The resulting mixed water is conveyed to the wastewater treatment plant. However, when the sewers get too full during significant storm events, they overflow into the stormwater system and discharge into the Westfield River. This overflow provides a "safety valve" that prevents backups of untreated wastewater into homes and businesses, flooding in city streets, and bursting of underground pipes.

The City of Westfield is gradually separating the sanitary sewers from the stormwater system in all locations where combined sewer overflows still exist. Like sewage main upgrades, these projects are undertaken in conjunction with roadway replacement projects. The City of Westfield is also currently moving forward with the institution of a stormwater utility, which will generate revenue based on a fee charged for the use of stormwater infrastructure. These funds will be used to help operate, maintain and upgrade the storm drain system.



PVTA bus

Public Transit

Two Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) bus lines run and connect in downtown Westfield: one provides weekday service from downtown Westfield to downtown Holyoke via Holyoke Community College from 5:35 am to 5:25 pm, the other provides daily service from Westfield State College to downtown Springfield via downtown Westfield and downtown West Springfield from 5:30 am to 9:50 pm (see map on the next page). These routes skirt the target area, making it difficult for people to use the bus to get downtown. In addition, there is only limited bus service to Westfield State College from the downtown. The PVTA, the city, and private developers have been working to bring an intermodal transit center to downtown Westfield for a number of years, and the proposal has been rejuvenated in recent months, and is now under design.

Roads, Highways, Sidewalks, Bicycle Facilities and Parking

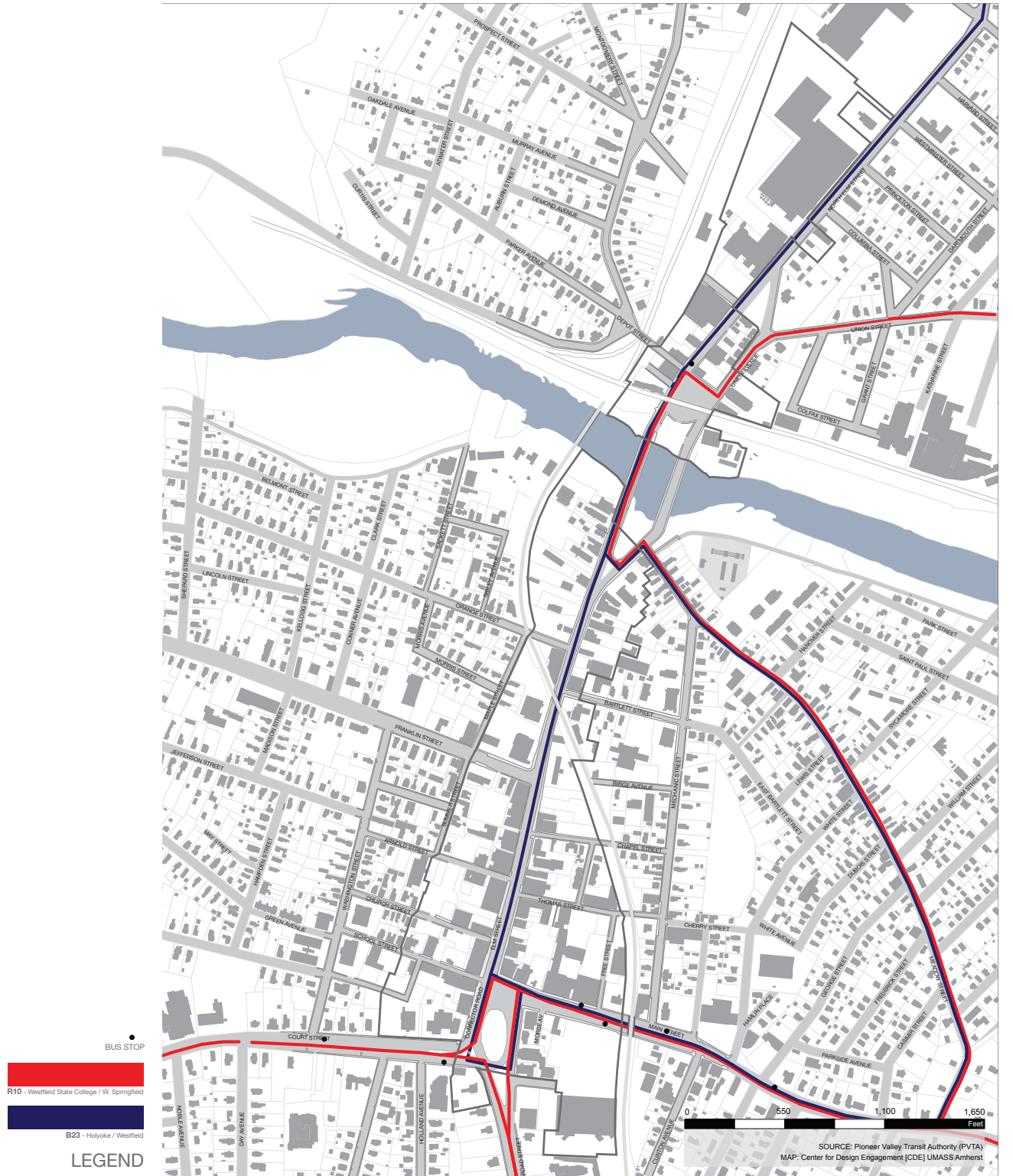
The Massachusetts Turnpike, Interstate 90, crosses Westfield just north of the central business district, providing excellent east-west access. Exit 3 is located a few minutes from downtown. Route 20 is the major east-west arterial of the city; routes 10 and 202 are the major north-south arterials. These three routes meet in downtown Westfield. As is the case in communities across the Commonwealth, Westfield's bridges have been in dis-repair and under capacity for many years. The Route 20 bridge was recently completed and work on the Elm Street/Route 10/202 Great River bridge began subsequently. Bridge work inevitably exacerbates traffic congestion. But even without the bridge work, residents have been consistently concerned about traffic congestion in the target area.

Roadway infrastructure in downtown Westfield also includes existing street trees and sidewalks, which are being maintained and replaced by the city as needed. The Community Survey showed strong support for bike lanes and racks, sidewalk and accessibility improvements, benches and seating, street trees, pocket parks, flowers, and public art. There continues to be tremendous support for the bike path through the downtown along the elevated railroad bed, for enhancing pedestrian and recreational access to the Westfield River, and for improving infrastructure to enhance the pedestrian environment.

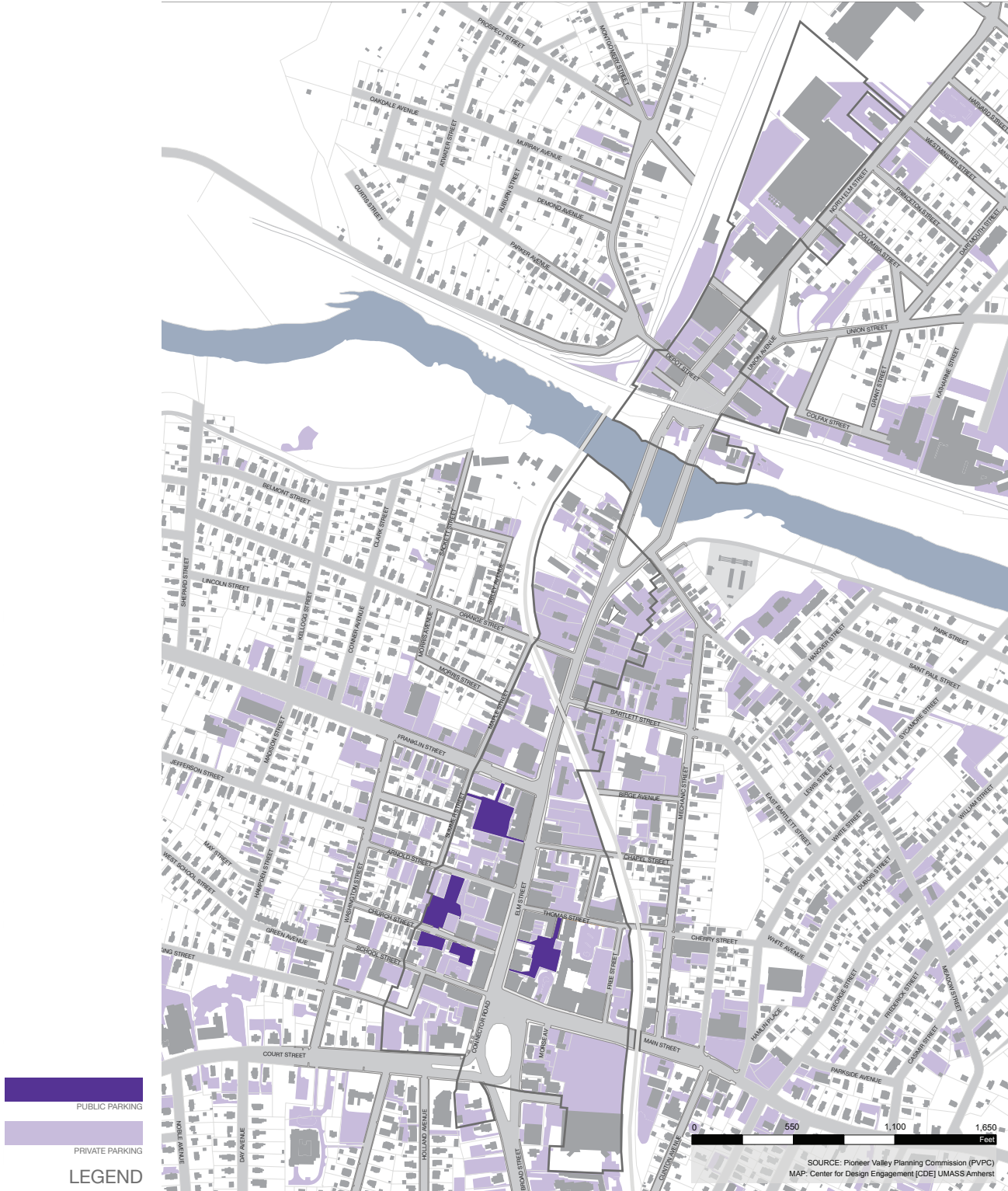
Once residents and visitors alike arrive in Westfield's downtown, they are faced with locating places to park their vehicles so they can avail themselves of the downtown's amenities. There is currently no parking map made available to the public. The city hosts numerous off street parking lots, but they are not well signed and their entrances are off-putting. In addition to city lots, there are a number of banks, churches and public buildings with large parking lots that could be made available to downtown visitors in the host institutions off-hours.

DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

BUS ROUTES



DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD PARKING MAP



Housing

Neighborhoods Surrounding The Downtown

Downtown Westfield is framed by historic residential neighborhoods on either side of Elm Street. Most of these neighborhoods are within Census Tracts 8127.01 and 8127.02, which are the two census tracts in the City that contain the majority of the city's older housing stock, the greatest amount of renter households, the city's poorest residents, and the largest concentration of non-english speaking residents. Residents within these neighborhoods strongly identify with their neighborhood. According to Police Department data the area is not experiencing disproportionately high crime rates, but both neighborhood residents and city officials expressed a need to improve neighborhood quality and reinforce neighborhood identity to ensure the quality of life in these neighborhoods in the future. Community survey responses and stakeholder interviews suggested considerable interest in improving the aesthetic quality of these neighborhoods through stronger and more consistent enforcement of city ordinances and through additional opportunities for social interaction and community building within neighborhood boundaries.

Downtown Neighborhoods

Orange Street Neighborhood
Meadow Street Neighborhood
Franklin Street Neighborhood
Pleasant Street Neighborhood
North Elm Street Neighborhood

Housing Stock within the Downtown Target Area

The target area contains approximately 36 predominantly commercial buildings with residential units located on the upper floors. The buildings range from one to four stories. There are



Buildings on Elm Street

also approximately 19 duplexes and multi-family buildings on Summer, Chapel and Thomas Streets (all rental).

The downtown contains numerous buildings that currently have underutilized, vacant space that could be converted to residential units as well as properties where it would be feasible to add additional stories to existing buildings.

Household Income & Housing

The general rule of thumb is that a household should be spending no more than 30% of its income on housing-related costs. U.S. Census 2000 estimates indicate that 27% of Westfield residents who own their own homes and 36% percent of Westfield residents who rent their homes pay 30% or more on housing related costs. Homeowner households in Census Tracts 8127.01 and 8127.02 are less housing cost-burdened when compared to all Westfield homeowners with 11% and 18%, respectively, paying more than 30% of their income in housing related-costs. Renter households in Census Tracts 8127.01 and 8127.02, however, are more housing cost-burdened when compared to all

Westfield renters with 36% and 43%, respectively, paying more than 30% of their income in housing related-costs. Renter households in Block Group 3 of Census Tract 8127.02, which is defined by the area north of Court Street, east of Washington Street, west of Elm Street, and south of the Westfield River, are severely housing-cost burdened with 59% paying more than 30% of their income in housing related-costs.

While Westfield does contain many well-off households, it is important to recognize that 32% of households make less than \$30,000/year. This fact supports the need for additional housing affordable to households of varying income levels in the city. The incomes of residents that live within or surrounding the downtown are very low in comparison to the City's median household income of \$45,339 in 2000. The median household income of residents within Block # 2 of Census Tract 8127.02 was \$15,258 and for Block #3 of Census Tract 8127.02 was \$20,573 in 2000. Other pertinent information relative to these two block groups include: 12.5% (out of 1,581 households) Hispanic households, 62.1% non-family households, and 11.5% of households speak a language within the Indo-European language family (most likely Russian). This information suggests that households immediately adjacent to the downtown have less disposable income to spend on goods and services in the downtown than other Westfield households.

Public & Subsidized Affordable Housing Units

Westfield had 1,092 subsidized housing units or 7.1% of its total housing stock as of June 2009.³ 226 of these subsidized housing units are located in the

³ 441 of the 1,092 units are public housing units administered by the Westfield Housing Authority. The remainder of the subsidized units are administered through private management companies, Domus Incorporated, and the Department of Mental Retardation and Department of Mental Health.

downtown target area and another 161 units are within a quarter mile of the downtown target area. The state encourages communities to make at least 10% of their year-round housing affordable to low and moderate income households through Chapter 40B, the Comprehensive Permit Law, which allows developers in communities that have not reached this 10% goal to override local zoning to build affordable housing that have long-term affordability restrictions. The City of Westfield is a proactive 40B community, meaning that it takes advantage of the Comprehensive Permit process to override restrictive zoning regulations for the production of affordable housing units, a policy that helps bring Westfield closer to its 10% affordable housing goal and provide housing units to needy residents.

The city has been actively working with its two local community development corporations, the Westfield CDC and Domus Inc., to increase its supply of subsidized affordable housing units. Two recent projects include Domus Inc.'s Sanford Apartments (21 units) and Prospect Hill Apartments (17 units). Since the mid 1990s, the city has also worked with these two organizations to create ten homeownership units affordable to households who earn up to 80% of the Area Median Income. Public and subsidized housing



Sanford Apartments

in Westfield offers some households access to decent rental housing and relief from the cost burden characteristic of housing in the private rental market.

Public and subsidized housing in Westfield is attractive, well managed and well maintained, and the Westfield Housing Authority has an active modernization program. As is the situation across the state, the supply of publicly assisted units is limited, especially for families, and waiting lists are extensive. In May 2009, the Westfield Housing Authority had a state waiting list of 2,078 for family units and 366 for elderly/disabled units. The average wait for an elderly household to receive assistance for state and federal programs is one year and over five years for families.

Of importance is the fact that the City is in danger of losing 107 subsidized units at the General Shepard Housing Complex at 25 Thomas Street in 2013 if action is not taken to work with the owners of this property to extend the affordability restriction. The City's recent Comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment and Plan listed re-negotiation with the management company of General Sheppard as a top priority.

The information above, combined with the findings from the Comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment completed in 2007, suggests a need to preserve and expand rental housing opportunities, especially for lower-income family households.

Foreclosures

Due to the recent collapse of the housing market, predatory lending practices, and job layoffs, households nationwide are close to defaulting on their mortgages or have mortgages that have already gone into foreclosure. In comparison to other Massachusetts municipalities, Westfield does not have a significant foreclosure problem. In FY 2008, the City, with 30 foreclosures, ranked 112

out of 351 municipalities in the state by number⁴ of foreclosures. It is for this reason that the City did not receive Neighborhood Stabilization Act funding from the state.

While the number of foreclosures in Westfield may not be as severe as elsewhere in the state, mortgage foreclosure is still a very real concern for financially distressed households. A total of sixty-two properties went into foreclosure between January 2008 and July 13, 2009. Most Westfield census block groups saw between zero to four foreclosures over this time period. Twenty-two of these foreclosures occurred in or near the downtown in census tract 82701 and 82702. The two areas with the highest concentration of foreclosures are the Orange Street/Jefferson Street neighborhood and the Meadow Street neighborhood.

Westfield residents who are having trouble making mortgage payments or are in danger of default can receive free and confidential counseling assistance by calling the agency. Nineteen Westfield residents received foreclosure counseling through HAP in 2008.

Addressing Homelessness

Westfield, as a member of the Three County Continuum of Care, has been successful in securing funds to address homelessness needs. The Reed House, housing for homeless people with mental illnesses; the Samaritan Inn Transitional Housing program; and the Salvation Army Tri-County Homeless Assistance Program are the main projects that have been funded to date. The City also refers low and very low income families as well as homeless families and individuals to HAP, Inc. for supported counseling housing assistance. The primary obstacle to meeting underserved needs

⁴ The following Western Massachusetts had more foreclosures in 2008 than Westfield: Palmer (33), Ware (36), Ludlow (38), East Longmeadow (41), Agawam (79), West Springfield (82), Holyoke (109), Chicopee (150), Springfield (1,221).

is lack of funding for program operations for the existing network of service organizations capable of delivering housing support services. Staffing is an additional ongoing challenge.

Housing Improvement Program (no longer operational)

The Westfield Community Development Corporation (CDC) administered the Westfield Housing Improvement Program (WHIP) between fiscal year 2001 and Fiscal year 2007. WHIP provided deferred payment loans (DPLs) or amortization loans for housing rehabilitation to income eligible residential property owners in Westfield. The CDC stopped administering this program in July 2008 because it was not cost effective.

First-Time Homebuyer Programs & Counseling

The City has supported efforts to provide low income families with 1st time homebuyer opportunities. The City and the CDC developed the Jefferson Street Project creating four 1st Time Homeownership units utilizing CDBG and HOME funds. In addition the City of Westfield works with HAP Inc., who administers the “American Dream Down payment/Closing Cost Assistance Program”. The major hurdle to increasing homeownership opportunities for low and moderate income households in Westfield is the affordability gap between annual median income and the median sale price of a single-family home.



Prospect Hill Neighborhood

Economic Development Self-Assessment

Overview

In 2003, Northeastern University's Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy (CURP) launched an Economic Development Partnership in collaboration with the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP), the NAIOP Foundation, various public interest groups, and a number of Massachusetts municipalities, to identify the "deal breakers" impeding private investment in local jurisdictions. Staff researched and identified what jurisdictions could do to respond to changing market forces, and highlighted strategic opportunities for other key actors including state government, the private sector, academic institutions, and regional agencies. Ultimately the Northeastern University Economic Development Partnership team developed a Self-Assessment Tool for municipalities, and created an analytical framework for providing feedback to municipalities as they complete their economic development self assessment.

The Self-Assessment Tool is the product of a rigorous and interactive process involving the research team, their partners in the development community, and the other partner communities in the study. That process generated a set of 36 broad themes – representing a total about 250 questions – relevant to economic growth and development. Surveys of a large group of NAIOP and CoreNet Global members resulted in the identification of broad themes – e.g., highway access, amenities, the timeliness of approvals and appeals, etc. – cited as most important to firms and their advisors when they make decisions about where to locate new businesses.

As part of Westfield's downtown revitalization planning effort, Consultant staff worked with Larry Smith, City Planner, to complete the Northeastern University Economic Development Partnership team

Self-Assessment Tool for Westfield

Complete answers to all self assessment questions are included in the Appendix to this plan, available on-line at www.westfielddowntownplan.com. For more information on the Northeastern University tool, go to: <http://www.economicdevelopment.neu.edu/>

Results

Northeastern University CURP staff analyzed Westfield's responses to the Economic Development Self Assessment Tool and produced the following summary of Westfield's Strengths and Concerns

Strengths

On factors deemed "very important" and "important" to developers and site location specialists, Westfield does very well, relative to participating communities, in the following areas.

- 1) Westfield scores fairly average concerning the availability of Public Transit services but because the city has committed to a transit-oriented development strategy, which many communities have not done, the city has a 'slight edge' with respect to transit planning. IN addition, the city is in sync with other participating communities in that it has more than 75% of available sites for retail trade within ¼ mile of public bus service.
- 2) The availability and cost of parking is among the most important development factors. Westfield has widely available parking around development sites. In addition parking costs are little to non-existent in the central business district which is a real advantage.
- 3) The ability of a community to control traffic is one of the very important factors concerning development. Traffic does not seem to be a problem overall for Westfield. A strong point in Westfield is that the community does not require developers to

provide traffic mitigation beyond streets adjacent to development sites. Many to most communities burden developers with this requirement.

4) Westfield has a full-time engineer who addresses transportation concerns and the city also hires transportation consultants, including the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, as needed.

5) Westfield is able to offer start-up business incubator/supportive space to businesses expanding or locating in town. This is a real asset to business growth. In addition, the city deems business services moderately capable of working with emerging technical and scientific firms. This is consistent with participating communities.

6) Westfield appears to be fairly aggressive concerning its policy to attract specific business types to the community. It is good to have a focused and clear development strategy; here Westfield appears more focused than many communities.

7) Westfield has a formal process for evaluating why firms choose to locate or not locate in the community. Many communities fail to understand this, so here Westfield has a real strength, especially in the long term.

8) Rental prices for commercial, industrial, and office space is a very important factor for development. Overall Westfield has very inexpensive space available. Square foot costs in the central business district are about half the price of peer communities on average.

9) Westfield has a significant amount of undeveloped open land, about 3 to 5 times as much as average. The city also has considerable experience redeveloping contaminated sites.

10) Workforce composition is another of the most important development factors. Westfield's workforce appears to be highly capable with

many technically skilled workers and managerial professionals.

11) Westfield is able to maintain a positive public image by having a procedure for handling negative press.

12) Westfield has a strategy for reclaiming delinquent or tax title properties, many communities do not have the ability to do this.

13) The timeliness and predictability of the permitting process is among the most important factors for economic development. Westfield appears to have a speedy permitting process, especially in the areas of Site Plan Reviews and Special Permits.

14) An additional factor that influences the timeliness of the permitting process is the ability of a community to market "fast-track" permitting. Currently Westfield is able to market a fast track permitting program.

15) Abutters can seriously hinder the ability of a development project to reach completion, this however does not appear to be a problem in Westfield. This may be because elected officials facilitate dialogue with community members and interested parties are given chances to review the development during stages of the process.

16) The amount of crime a community has present is a surprisingly important development factor. Generally Westfield has little crime to speak of compared to other communities. The auto theft rates, robbery, and homicide rates are all lower on average than in the other study communities.

17) The housing market of a community plays a big part in development. Not only does Westfield have a very affordable housing market but the rental market is quite robust as well, boasting a vacancy rate under 3%.

18) The experience a community has with utilizing special state business incentives can have a very big impact on development overall. Westfield appears to be very active in taking advantage of incentive programs that may be offered.

19) Alternative development financing mechanisms such as TIF's can really help spur development. Westfield has an advantage in that it has experience with granting TIF's.

20) The mix of tax rates Westfield offers is generally favorable to development. In Westfield residents carry less of the tax burden than in most communities while the commercial tax base shoulders slightly more than average.

21) Where tax delinquent and tax title properties serve as a problem for development Westfield has an active strategy for reclaiming them. Many communities simply ignore them in favor of new development.

In other factors, less important to market factors, Westfield also does very well, relative to participating communities, in the following areas.

1) Although a less important factor for development in the broader context airport proximity is generally an asset. Westfield has great access to local and international service.

2) Another less important factor is workforce training offered in the community. Westfield has an advantage in offering training at area high schools and career training centers. Simply because this factor itself is less important does not make it unimportant.

3) The chief executive officer of the city plays a significant role in ensuring the efficiency of the permitting process; this tends to be an advantage where it lends itself to a speedy permitting process. Since Westfield enjoys a relatively efficient

permitting process this relatively less important factor may play a significant role for the community.

4) A surprisingly less important development factor is the existence of a local website with good information available for developers. Westfield has good information available including: developments policies and procedures; pending applications; links to financing agencies, and local and regional business groups such as chambers of commerce.

Concerns

On factors deemed "very important" and "important" to developers and site location specialists, Westfield does not do very well, relative to participating communities, in the following areas.

1) The proximity of development sites to major limited access highways is among the most important development factors. Unfortunately Westfield has limited access to these roads near development sites. In addition weight restrictions are typically imposed on streets and access roads, further reducing access.

2) Although less important than highway access, access to public transportation near development sites is important. On average Westfield has slightly less public transit access near development sites.

3) It seems that the Westfield community does not have as strong a commitment to maintaining its public spaces as many other communities. In addition the amount of space reserved for parks in Westfield is less than average.

4) Having a capable set of business service firms available in a community is fairly important for development; Westfield assesses itself as moderately capable with respect to firms specializing in things such as business planning or venture capital. This is an area for improvement.

5) Although Westfield is part of a regional plan for development there is currently no specific local development strategy. Most communities pursuing development have a local plan as well as a regional strategy. Note: the existence of this new Comprehensive Downtown Housing and Economic Development Action Plan addresses this area of concern for the downtown, but the strategy needs to be expanded to include the whole community.

6) Infrastructure capability is just the about the most important development factor there is. For the most part Westfield has sufficient infrastructure to handle development. There does seem to be insufficient capacity in DSL services.

7) The availability of quality office rental space in Westfield is quite limited. To begin there is a lack of Class A space; Westfield office space consist of about 5% Class A where most communities are working with about 20%. In addition the square foot costs of Class A space in Westfield is between 3 to 4 dollars more per unit than other communities

8) Most communities own and market sites for development. Westfield is not currently marketing any municipally owned sites. It is generally better for development if it is possible to control some development by marketing sites in line with the development goals of the community.

9) To smooth out the permitting process most communities offer a permitting checklist to potential developers in order to avoid any problems. Westfield does not offer a checklist. Westfield does have the Department heads roundtable meeting for prospective developers which serves the same purpose as providing them with a check list, but developing a permitting check list would be a good idea.

10) Although crime rates overall were a good deal lower than in most communities the burglary rate was a bit higher than normal.

11) Fewer than 50% of high school seniors in Westfield go on to a four-year college. In most communities this number is between 50 and 75%.

12) Westfield does not currently have a mechanism for assisting businesses secure financing. Many communities pursuing development actively assist businesses with the commercial lending process and industrial finance.

13) Although the residential tax provides less of the local revenue than is normal the tax rate itself is about 3 dollars per thousand higher than average.

14) Westfield has a good deal more tax delinquent properties than average, about double what is normally seen.

In other factors, less important to market factors, Westfield also does not do very well, relative to participating communities, in the following areas.

1) Although a less important factor for development airport access is favorable. Unfortunately Westfield does not have public transportation available to its closest airports.

2) Westfield enjoys the benefit of having a four-year college located within the community. However most communities have more colleges located around their communities. Typically there are two four-year colleges located within 10 miles of a community; Westfield has no other four-year institutions this close. Although the many colleges in Springfield are just slightly over 10 miles away.

Section Analysis

Section 1. Access to Customers/Markets

Overall issues of access to customers and markets are fairly average in Westfield. Highway and public transit options around development sites may be limited in areas; for instance retail trade sites

have limited access to rapid transit or bus service, but with an active TOD strategy in the community these access issues could be addressed. Parking on the other hand is widely available in most areas at little to no cost to users and developers in need of parking access. Traffic does not seem to be a problem at this time but as development increases it may be an issue, especially since firms and developers are not required to provide mitigation beyond adjacent streets (to be sure it is generally better not to require the firms or developers to do this). Another issue of comparative less importance is the availability of airport and rail service which is above average in Westfield. The one weak spot is in the lack of public transportation to airports. How physically attractive a community is does have an effect on access; Westfield does not seem to have a very strong commitment to preserving and maintaining public spaces to the extent other communities do.

Section 2. Agglomeration

Agglomeration issues such as business services, sector targeting and clustering, and marketing play a fairly important role in development. In Westfield there is a lack of typical business development services such as venture capital or business planning, so developing these locally or creating a working relationship with firms nearby may be necessary. There is an incubator-type space for new business development which can be very helpful for getting new business firmly established in the community. Although in the course of completing the self assessment tool Westfield reported a lack of a local development strategy; clearly the existence of this new plan mitigates that concern, especially for the downtown—the focus of this plan. Westfield takes steps to understand local businesses that other participating communities do not take. The city has a process in place for conducting a marketing follow-up with both firms that both choose to locate in the city and those who choose not to. This is a good opportunity to understand

what makes the difference for firms with respect to locating in Westfield.

Section 3. Cost of Land (Implicit/Explicit)

It may seem obvious that the costs of land have just about the biggest impact on development. The biggest issues that add cost to development are when infrastructure capabilities can not handle new capacity. Currently Westfield's infrastructure can handle new development in most areas. However data/telecommunications capabilities in DSL can only service current needs. The other obvious issue is rental costs and availability of quality space. Here Westfield has mixed issues. Overall rental prices are quite low but there is also a considerable lack of good quality Class A office space, and where there is Class A space available it a bit more expensive than normal. On the plus side there is a good deal of open land, or greenfield space, available in Westfield, which many to most communities do not have the luxury of offering. Westfield also has considerable experience rehabilitating contaminated space.

Section 4. Labor

The cost, type, and quality of the workforce in a community can play a significant role in attracting new firms and growing existing ones. Westfield appears to be able to offer a capable and well educated workforce. Labor commands average wages and traditional blue collar manufacturers earn a very good wage. Westfield also has a strong workforce makeup, consisting of many technically skilled workers as well as many managerial professionals. Unions do not seem to be a problem in Westfield having not had an organized strike in years and limited negative presence. Westfield's labor force is as well educated as anywhere with between 21-35% of residents age 25 or older holding a bachelor's degree or more. There is also a good deal of workforce training available to residents at area high schools and non-profit training centers. Westfield's labor force appears to

be one of the strong points of the research with no obvious weak spots and much available strength.

Section 5. Municipal Process

Any municipality controls many factors that influence development. These municipal processes are one of the few things local government has near total control over. Negative stories about a municipality occur all the time and where they are true they must be addressed and where they are not true they must be addressed. To address these types of stories Westfield has a response team in order to address negative press, the team can also comment on positive stories. Along these same lines Westfield has a marketing plan based on existing strengths, a good example of a proactive municipal process. Westfield has an active policy for reclaiming tax delinquent properties, which is good; however the city is not currently marketing any sites for development. The municipal process that local government has perhaps the most control over is the timeliness of the permitting process and Westfield appears to have a very reliable and predictable permitting process. Westfield grants special permits and site plan reviews in a much timelier manner than most communities. Surprisingly Westfield does not offer a simple checklist of permitting requirements to developers; this one step alone could have a noticeable impact on the speed of permitting, although Westfield's permitting times are known throughout the country to be faster than many communities. The regular meeting so city department heads with developers serves the purpose of providing them with a permitting checklist, but developing a checklist is still a good idea. Westfield does market so-called "fast track" permitting, and for the most part does provide permits very quickly. Citizen participation in the review process exists enough to be fair to the community of interested citizens but does not slow down development. The level of interaction should be maintained as it is to be fair to residents but not to burden potential developers with too

much interaction. Overall municipal process seems to work quite well in Westfield. Some improvement in permitting is certainly possible even though it is already done quite well. Also providing more information to potential developers up front may be another way to improve an already strong system.

Section 6. Quality of Life (Community)

The quality of life in a community is a very important factor for attracting development. The different types of recreation available, the housing market, crime rates and good quality local schools all influence development. Westfield enjoys all the typical cultural and recreational activities that most communities offer. Crime appears to be exceptionally low in Westfield with very low rates of auto theft, robbery and homicide. However burglary does seem to be at a rate slightly higher than in most communities. Housing prices are quite affordable and home ownership rates are as high as anywhere. The rental market is strong as well with a very low vacancy rate. There is some concern that local schools do not perform as well as other in other communities. Westfield is required to offer many students free or reduced cost lunch, which little can be done about, but it is a cost that many other communities do not have at the same levels. The more troubling aspect of the school system in Westfield is in the relatively small amount of high school seniors moving on to four year colleges. Quality appears to be quite good overall in Westfield, but a concentrated effort to get more high school seniors access to a four year college education would be good for them and good for Westfield.

Section 7. Quality of Life (Site)

It turns out a different type of quality of life matters just as much for development as does the quality of life in a community. The quality of life around development sites matters a great deal. Potential developers and employers want to know that employees will have access to the

types of services that will make their working life enjoyable. The important types of services to have around development sites are generally basic fast-food restaurants, some fine dining options, a reliable day care, and some amount of retail. Right now Westfield is able to offer all these things around development sites, except for retail shops. Zoning some new retail around development or concentrating some new development around existing retail may be a good way to offer what developers are looking for.

Section 8. Business Incentives

The type of business incentives a community can offer and the type of incentives a community has experience in pursuing can greatly help aid development. Westfield seems to have more experience than most communities in pursuing any special incentives at the state level. Locally Westfield appears to be offering the types of business incentives that most communities offer, however, local business incentives are generally pretty weak everywhere. Very few communities, Westfield included, offer incentives such as revolving loans, loan guarantees, or designating an enterprise zone. Admittedly these types of things may be risky for a community to take on, so offering them is rarely done. Local incentives are sometimes enough for a community to gain an extra edge, sometimes they are not.

Section 9. Tax Rates

The tax situation in Westfield is interesting. An above average amount of local revenue is sourced from the commercial property in town and a below average amount is sourced from the residential property in town. This is generally considered a better way to fund local revenue such it diversifies the tax base. The interesting thing about this is that in Westfield both the commercial/industrial tax rates and the residential tax rates are considerably higher than normally seen in this study. Generally speaking slightly higher or lower tax rates have little

effect on development overall. So if this situation suits the community and works well enough to fund local government than perhaps it is wise to leave it as is despite whatever pressure may arise. On the other hand if a slightly higher tax rate is a sticking point for development than it may be wise to reconsider at some point. There is a fair amount tax delinquent property in Westfield, well above average. However Westfield does appear to be fairly aggressive in allowing liens to clear for new owners and giving special attention to properties that impede development. It is hard to say whether or not a higher than average tax rate has any correlation with the amount of delinquent property in town. The more important thing is that delinquent properties do not hold up development and this is not the case in Westfield.

Section 10. Access to Information

The information a community makes available to the development community is best done through a quality local website with information targeted to people in the development community. Most of the information that should be made available on the local website is made available including general development policy, permitting applications, and links to important local, regional and state agencies. However there are things that could be added to make the website friendlier to development. For instance currently it is not possible to file a permit electronically or obtain a list of sites that are available for development. Many communities are beginning to offer electronic permitting and listing all available sites for development in order to make the local website a one stop shop for potential developers. Overall the local website is good, but it could be better in terms of being targeted to provide useful information to potential developers. This resource will only become more important in the future and getting ahead of other communities in this area may make a big difference.

Retail Activity

Our inventory of the target area counted 24 specialty stores and businesses, including book stores, card shops, jewelers, import stores, and a florist . The downtown area contains a number of additional retail services, including a hardware store, two pharmacies, a supermarket, a number of grocery stores, a clothing store, and a music store. There are numerous service businesses in the downtown, including printers, banks, hair and nail salons, a number of lawyer’s offices, and specialty schools for children.

Business Type	# in target area
Restaurants	16
Grocery	5
Bar / Tavern	6
Coffee	2
Pharmacy	2
Clothing / Music	2
Printing	2
Bank	4
Tobacco / Liquor	1
Specialty Shops	24
Hair / Nails	16
Industry	8
Health / Fitness	5
Lawyer	8
Insurance	8
Club	3
Real Estate	2
Services	23
Library / Museum	2
Specialty School / Lessons	2

Source: Westfield BID, WalkScore.com, Google maps, and site verification

Food, Entertainment and Leisure Establishments

There are 16 restaurants in the target area, including a mix of high-end restaurants, pubs, and pizza parlors. There are also a couple of family restaurants, a deli, and a Chinese restaurant. There are six bars and taverns, and two coffee shops. Proposals put forth by Westfield State College for a performing arts center and a bookstore would be greatly supported by the public. There are several restaurants that feature live entertainment, as well as arts venues and organized events, such as the newly established summer Concerts on the Green, and throughout this planning process residents have indicated a clear desire for additional arts and entertainment opportunities.



Teapot Gallery

Recreation Facilities & Spaces

The main open recreational space in the target area is The Green, a town common at the south end of downtown that is being re-organized and re-developed as a space for outdoor venues sponsored by the B.I.D and other community organizations. There are public spaces in the downtown but they are not well developed for public use. The

downtown architecture and streetscape provide a sturdy backbone for developing a lively, walkable downtown. In addition, underutilized and empty lots provide opportunities for developing public spaces and pocket parks. There are several relatively underutilized recreational assets along the Westfield River, including Women’s Temperance Park, Whitney Park, and the Westfield River Trail. Riverfront recreation will be significantly enhanced as part of the ongoing Great River bridge project. Very few neighborhood pocket parks serve the downtown neighborhoods. The existing parks are associated with schools and many are locked when the schools are closed.

Public Community and Religious Facilities

The library, Westfield District Court and the Senior Center house are directly in the target area. City Hall, the Police Station, and Fire Station headquarters as well as the YMCA are a short two to three blocks away. The target area also contains several churches of various denominations. The populations who frequent these facilities and organizations should be considered an important group to conduct outreach toward as downtown revitalization efforts move

forward. In addition, the physical infrastructure of these institutions can be part of the downtown revitalization story through creative off-hour use of public assembly spaces and parking.

Historic Features in the Downtown

Seventeen properties—91-115 Elm Street & 100-174 Elm Street—became a designated National Register Historic District in June 2008 after several years of planning and work. The seventeen properties within the Westfield Center Commercial Historic District as well as the twelve properties individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places in and around the downtown are eligible to receive federal historic tax credits for rehabilitation work that adheres to Secretary of the Interior’s standards. These 29 properties are only the icing on the cake of Westfield’s historic homes and buildings. Facing the Green while standing on Elm Street, one only needs to glance to the right and left to see three centuries of architectural history. The Historical Commission has identified over 100 structures that meet the NRHD criteria and will continue to pursue local designation for additional buildings over time. The Historical Commission also has plans to expand the existing Westfield Center Commercial Historic District boundaries.



Historic Buildings on Elm Street

Revitalization & Redevelopment Opportunities

Downtown Building Vacancies

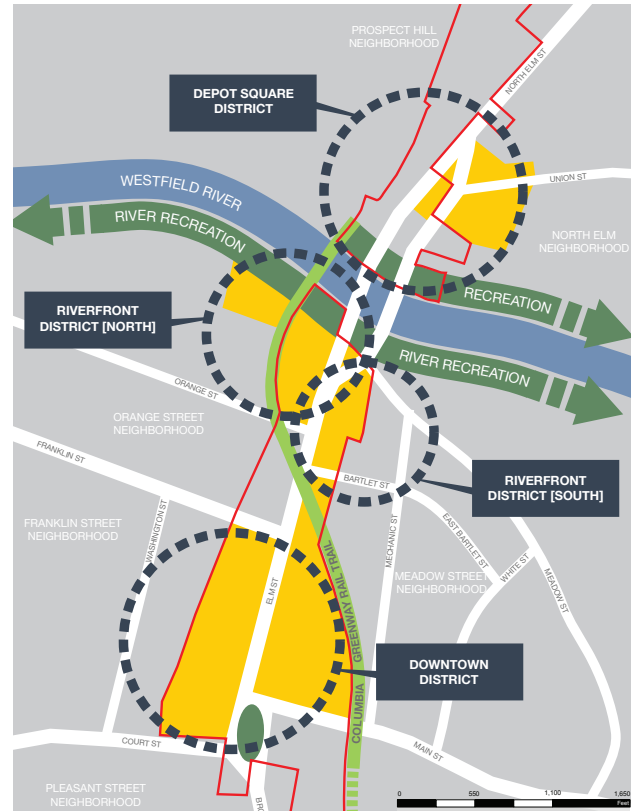
According to the B.I.D.'s and PVPC'S latest June 2009 inventory, approximately 24 properties contain building space for rent within the downtown target area. The BID'S website features current vacancies within member buildings. The City Planning Department and Westfield Chamber also actively work to promote existing vacancies to interested businesses.

Underutilized Buildings Potentially Available for Rehabilitation or Redevelopment

The downtown contains numerous buildings that currently have underutilized and in many cases vacant upper story space that could be converted to residential units. There are also a number of properties where it would be feasible to add additional stories to existing buildings to develop housing. According to a recent, preliminary, property inventory conducted by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 27 parcels were identified as containing land or buildings which were considered underutilized. The PVPC classified buildings as underutilized if the building contained vacant upper-story space or if the building's current use was no longer the most functional use of the land. An area with a considerable amount of underutilized space is the stretch of Elm Street between the rail line bridge and the Westfield River.

Land Suitable for Development/ Redevelopment

While most of land in the downtown area is currently developed, there are three prominent areas with redevelopment potential, which are highlighted on the adjacent map.



Redevelopment Opportunities in the Downtown Districts

The first area is located on the west side of Elm Street between Church and Arnold Streets. The City of Westfield foreclosed on the property at 88 Elm Street and the Hampden Bank foreclosed on the adjacent property at 80 Elm Street. Both of these new owners consider these properties to be teardown candidates. The two parcels adjacent to 80 Elm Street to the south no longer have buildings and therefore feature completely developable vacant land. This redevelopment area includes a vacant building at 11 Church Street that formerly housed a bowling alley as well as a municipal parking lot to the rear of all these aforementioned properties. All of the parcels collectively comprise approximately 2.5 acres. This development area holds strong interest from the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority and City as a site for an intermodal transportation center, and by Westfield State

College as part of their downtown college plan. Detailed discussion on both these plans can be found in the following section of this Chapter.

The second area is located on the west side of Elm Street, directly south and adjacent to the Westfield River. Once the Great River Bridge project is completed and access to the Westfield River and future Columbia Bikeway Trail accomplished, this area will offer substantial redevelopment potential for mixed use and housing. The City owns three parcels of land in this area, amounting to 2.27 acres. Two parcels consist of vacant developable land and the other contains a building which is slated for demolition. The Westfield Housing Authority owns an additional two parcels of land (0.63 acres), both of which contain housing authority units. This development area also includes several commercial buildings that are in poor condition, with vacant storefronts as well as three oddly located single-family rental properties. In total, this potential development area contains 3.54 acres.

The third redevelopment area is located along Union Street just east of Elm Street at the northern end of the downtown target area. This area is now open for redevelopment as a result of the Great River Bridge Road Realignment project and the resultant move of the Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Church and Rectory to property on Holyoke Road. The church has been demolished, with this property taken for the road realignment, but the former rectory, with its beautiful interior, offers excellent space for upscale offices, a small conference center, or bed & breakfast facility (2.73 acres). The former church parking lot, consisting of 1.02 acres, offers vacant developable land for mixed-use development. All three church properties are currently for sale by a large commercial real estate broker. This development area also includes a single-family home at 26 Union Street that is currently for-sale by the same commercial real-estate broker (0.30 acres).

Compliance with State Building Code Requirements

State building code requires Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance (elevators, etc) for rehabilitation or renovation projects that increase a building's assessed value by more than 30%. For downtown buildings with low assessed property values, this 30% compliancy requirement can be triggered quite easily for improvements that property owners classify as minor renovation projects. For example, a property owner with a building assessed at \$100,000 would only have to spend \$30,000 on renovations to trigger ADA compliancy requirements. Even applicable renovations that are less than 30% of the full and fair assessed value of the building are required to meet appropriate regulations (i.e. stair repair, door and/or door hardware replacement along an accessible route).

There are two tax incentives available to businesses to help cover the costs of making access improvements. The first is a tax credit that can be used for architectural adaptations, equipment acquisitions, and services such as sign language interpreters. The second is a tax deduction that can be used for architectural or transportation adaptations. The amount of the tax credits is equal to 50% of the eligible access expenditures in a year, up to a maximum tax credit of \$10,250. There is no credit for the first \$250 of expenditures. The maximum tax credit, therefore, is \$5000.

Information regarding these tax incentives for improving accessibility is available at: <http://www.ada.gov/taxpack.htm#anchor297649>

In addition, the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board rules and regulations provides opportunity for utilizing a wheelchair lift in lieu of an elevator under various circumstances.

Summary of Recent and Ongoing Downtown Initiatives

Downtown Westfield has a bright future ahead. In addition to the current downtown revitalization planning effort, a number of critical public and private initiatives are underway. Private projects include a low/moderate income residential development in the historic Rinnova, Lamberton-Loomis, and Marcoulier Buildings. Residential projects like this are critical to bringing new residents downtown. Major new organizations such as Westfield on Weekends (WOW) and the Business Improvement District (BID) are launching initiatives that will measurably increase downtown activity and the city is moving ahead with a number of large-scale infrastructure projects.

Great River Project

This major bridge construction project will add a second two-lane bridge over the Westfield River in order to alleviate stop and go traffic on Elm Street. This project employs state of the art traffic solutions and will greatly enhance the area's public spaces, adding several parks, as well as new landscaping and streetscaping. At the same time, this project will help revitalize the north end of downtown, catalyzing new business and housing development. It will create additional riverfront parks and improve the area's landscaping and public infrastructure.

Westfield River Trail

The Westfield River Trail, which currently runs along the Westfield River will take on new significance with the completion of the Great River Bridge project and associated parks. The Westfield River Trail will serve as an east-west connection between the new Great River Bridge Parks, Women's Temperance Park, and a new riverfront park connecting Whitney Park to the Great River Bridge parks. In addition, this bike path will eventually link to the north-south Columbia Greenway Rail Trail.

Columbia Greenway Rail Trail

This greenway, being developed along an elevated abandoned railroad bed, will eventually become a major pedestrian and bicycle connector from the north to the south end of the downtown. This route will offer safe, speedy and convenient travel along a linear park spanning numerous roadways and the Westfield River, and connecting a number of destinations throughout the city.

Westfield Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC)

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) is working with the City to develop an intermodal transportation center (ITC) that might be located at the intersection of Arnold and Elm Streets, in the Gas Light District. Passenger boarding areas could be along the eastbound (south) side of Arnold Street. The ITC would be strategically located to balance the availability of transit service for riders using PVTA Routes R10, B23 and OWL Shuttle lines, as well as future ridership demand at downtown business and residential destinations. The ITC might include the following components:

- Three pull-in bays for PVTA buses
- Two waiting spaces for on-demand paratransit vans and taxis
- Capability for regional bus service
- Bike racks and secure storage

The ITC will be easily accessible from the downtown sidewalk system, as well as the future Columbia Greenway recreation and bicycle trail some 250 yards to the east.

The ITC will include approximately 10,000 square feet of space on two levels for transit-supportive uses. These may include an adult learning and literacy center operated by Westfield State College in partnership with Holyoke Community College. Transit-supportive use space will be configured to provide maximum flexibility for classrooms, community and civic meetings, a commercial

storefront for a coffee shop or convenience store, and other uses geared toward the needs of transit users and the community.

Gas Light District

The City of Westfield is undertaking a major infrastructure upgrade of the historic downtown area known as the “Gas Light District.” This project includes sewer and utility infrastructure upgrades, as well as new public spaces, streetscaping, and pedestrian amenities. The Gas Light District has been proposed as a new downtown arts and entertainment district with a casual and welcoming feel, and it is hoped that the city’s upgrades will encourage private investment and help preserve the character of this important area. Eventually, residents envision new venues for art, music, theater, night life, food, group functions, children’s activities, fairs and other events, and perhaps even a farmer’s market and a first class hotel.

Park Square

At the heart of the city’s traditional cultural and economic center, this infrastructure project includes traffic improvements to the rotary, pedestrian amenities, and landscape improvements to the Town Green. In making these enhancements, traffic will be mitigated, the downtown will be more walkable, and the Town Green will be revitalized and redesigned to accommodate numerous events.

WSC Downtown Housing and Performing Arts Center Plan

Westfield State College (WSC) announced plans in Fall 2008 to increase housing opportunities for current and future students by leasing housing units in downtown Westfield. The State College, located approximately three miles from the downtown, experienced an enrollment increase and does not have enough space to provide student housing for all its current and expected students. College representatives note that 400 qualified students sat on a waiting list to get into the college and close to 100 current students lived in newly formed “triples” in existing dormitories due to the lack of student

housing, and many students are housed in area hotels.

Westfield State College commissioned Rawn Associates, of Boston, with input from Gideon Lester, of the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge to develop a WSC downtown housing and performing arts center plan to guide the College’s actions in the downtown. This plan, which was completed in early 2009, evaluated opportunities for student housing as well as College classroom, office, and performing arts space in the downtown. Westfield businesses and private investors contributed \$100,000 of private funding for the development of this plan.

Westfield State College intends to lease existing space versus building new student living spaces, hoping to ensure that tax dollars remain flowing to the city on downtown property. The College enlisted the expertise of the Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) to manage a development bid process for up to 1,000 beds of student housing in downtown Westfield. As of July 2009, DCAM has not released information relating to the submitted proposals, including who submitted and what sites were proposed. The City, Westfield businesses, and Westfield citizens anxiously await the results of this bid process as student housing in the downtown will bring the vitality needed to grow business, retail and entertainment opportunities in the downtown.

In addition, the college is planning on locating a 10,000 sq. ft. bookstore and a college radio station in prominent downtown locations within a year.

Elm Street Revitalization Plan

The Westfield Redevelopment Authority (WRA), in conjunction with its consultant Maureen Hayes, is in the process of completing its long-anticipated urban renewal plan—the Elm Street Revitalization Plan. The state requires redevelopment authorities to create urban renewal plans for designated target areas before an authority can move forward with redevelopment actions in that area. The WRA hopes to submit this plan to the state by the end of summer 2009.

DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

ONGOING PROJECTS & INITIATIVES



Columbia Rail Trail



Great River Bridge Project



Westfield State College Housing Plan

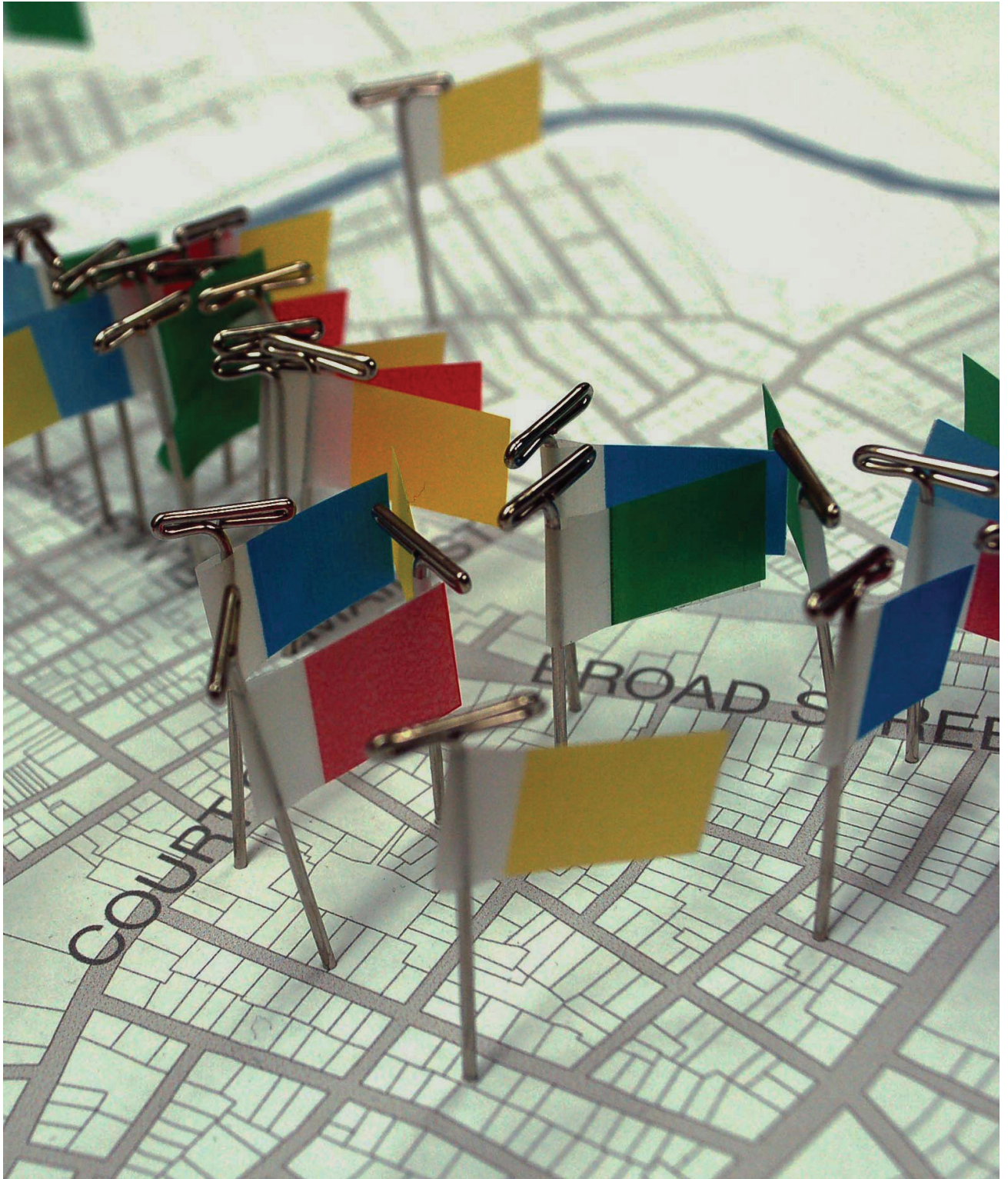


Gas Light District



Park Square

LEGEND



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was a consistent characteristic of the planning process that shaped this downtown district action plan. Through a dynamic planning process that began with a city-wide survey, included two weekends of downtown community design workshops, and continues with a monthly meeting of community leaders hosted by Westfield State College President Evan Dobbelle, the incorporation of meaningful public involvement was, and is, an important goal of the city's efforts to revitalize downtown.

The use of interactive events and reflective processes to engage residents, businesses, civic groups, community-based organizations, nonprofit entities, public officials, and institutions in Westfield allowed for an increased dialogue and transparency regarding the many issues and opportunities for revitalizing downtown. Through substantive public participation, the planning process provided a context for Westfield citizens active input, making them more likely to embrace the evolving plan with enthusiasm and optimism. Participants own the project, and have developed some capacity to monitor progress and work together with city officials toward implementation of the plans' key action recommendations.

Throughout the varied participatory exercises Westfield residents revealed themselves as pragmatic, critical and optimistic, with a deep connection to the history of their city and a strong desire to see its downtown revitalized by building on local interests and resources. While some were skeptical of (yet) another planning process, in the design workshops this concern translated into a persuasive focus on realizable projects and recognition that citizen's participation and action is an important factor in making any recommendations successful.

The following engagement efforts and events were a part of this project (February – May 2009):

- Downtown Advisory Committee
- Downtown Survey
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Focus Group Meetings
- Visioning Meeting
- Community Design Workshops (Charrette)
- City Departmental Roundtable
- Westfield State College Coordinating Committee
- Project website: www.westfielddowntownplan.com

Project Framework

Following the Downtown Survey and Stakeholder Interviews the project team developed four thematic categories to organize the community input they had thus far received: LIVE, WORK, PLAY and CONNECT. “Live” initiatives involved housing strategies and the quality of Life downtown; “Work” projects involved downtown economic development; “Play” proposals include projects related to recreation, arts and entertainment; and “Connect” projects involved infrastructure. These themes evolved through an examination of key recurring issues, and developed as an important organizational tool for the remaining community engaged efforts and for the final recommendations.

These thematic categories are not meant to segregate these important issues for downtown Westfield’s restoration –and many of the recommended initiatives incorporate more than one theme. Instead, these themes offered a framework for our discussions and a means by which the key issues could be clearly presented and explored.



Advisory Committee

Mayor Michael Boulanger convened a multi-disciplinary committee to oversee the development of Westfield’s downtown revitalization plan. The Committee members are:

- Mayor Michael Boulanger
- Larry Smith, City Planner
- Ann Lentini, Domus Inc.
- Lisa McMahon, Business Improvement District
- Agma Sweeney, Westfield Spanish American Association
- Bob Plasse, Westfield-On-Weekends and Westfield State College
- Mark Cressotti, City Engineer
- Peter Miller, City Council
- Matt VanHeynigen, Planning Board
- Kathy Witalisz, Realtor
- Hilda Colon, Westfield Spanish American Association
- Officer Dickinson, Community Policing
- Lynn Boscher, Chamber of Commerce & downtown property owner
- Daniel Hitchcock, Resident
- John Bonavita, Tavern Restaurant
- Shanna Reed, Mayor’s Office
- Brent Bean, Westfield State College Government & Community Relations

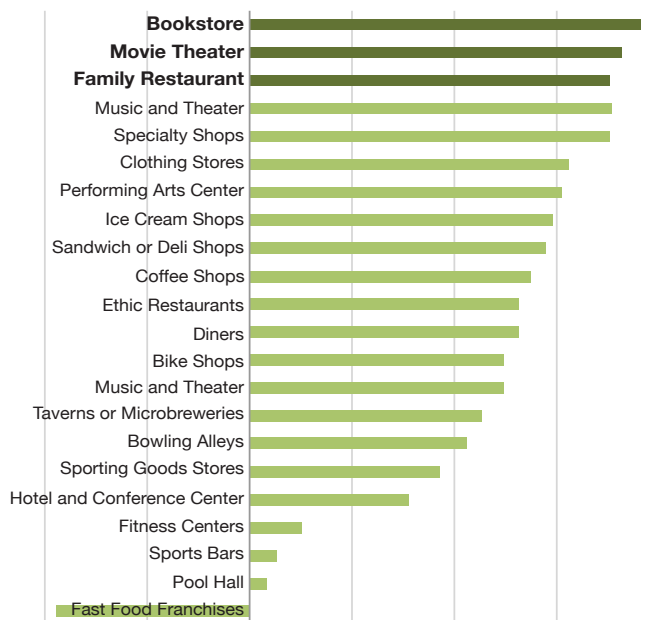
The committee met monthly from February, 2009 to August 2009. Meeting notes are posted on the plan website. Members played a significant role reviewing and revising the community survey, identifying stakeholders for interviews, reviewing and revising public outreach materials, promoting the planning process in local media, encouraging participation in the downtown planning process, assisting with charrette details and participating in the charrette activities, reviewing and commenting on draft elements of the plan, and finalizing the plan into a meaningful path to downtown Westfield’s chosen future.

Downtown Survey

Over two thousand Westfield residents completed the downtown survey, expressing their thoughts about what they would like to see in the downtown and how they think it can be revitalized. As was the case throughout this participatory planning process, people who responded to the survey expressed a deep and abiding love for their community and a powerful desire to make it better. A majority of respondents (53%) said they feel “a little sad” when they are in the downtown, because it doesn’t reflect how great their community is. A summary of all responses, with illustrative charts and graphs, is available in the Appendix and on the plan website. The survey was administered on-line, but paper copies were made available throughout the community. The benefit of the on-line survey is that it cuts costs on survey result analysis.

In Westfield’s revitalized downtown, respondents would like to see family restaurants, sandwich shops, ice cream parlors, ethnic restaurants and diners. They want more sidewalks, benches, flowers, street trees, bike racks and free wireless internet. They also want a movie theatre, a bookstore, music stores, more specialty shops and bike paths. Interestingly, the people who responded to the survey did not articulate any particularly pressing housing needs, and they support providing a variety of housing opportunities to downtown residents. Respondents are also supportive of both the city and other significant agents of change in the city taking pro-active steps to enhance economic development opportunities in the downtown.

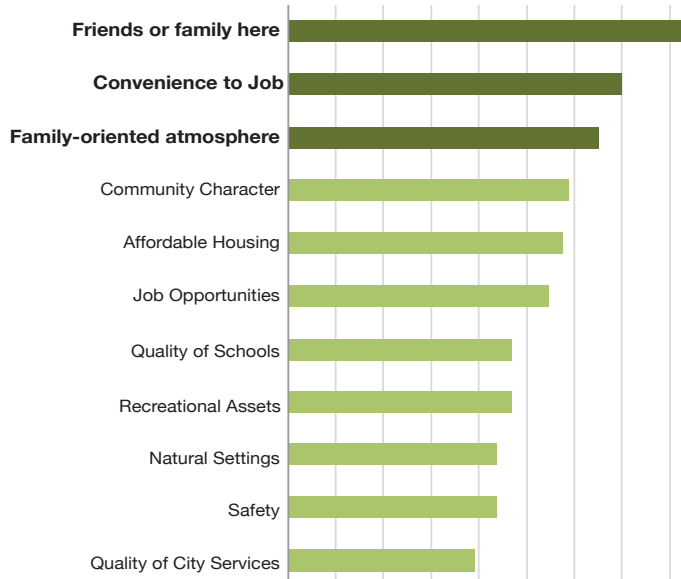
The survey was very successful in promoting awareness of the Revitalizing Downtown planning project and in furthering our understanding of issues and concerns of the citizenry.



WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF IN DOWNTOWN?

WORK

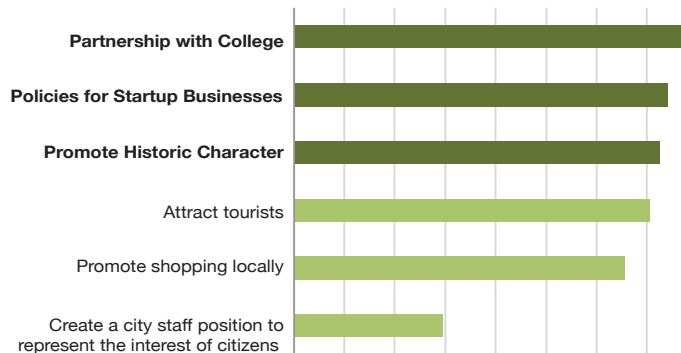
RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEYS



WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE REASONS YOU LIVE IN WESTFIELD?

LIVE

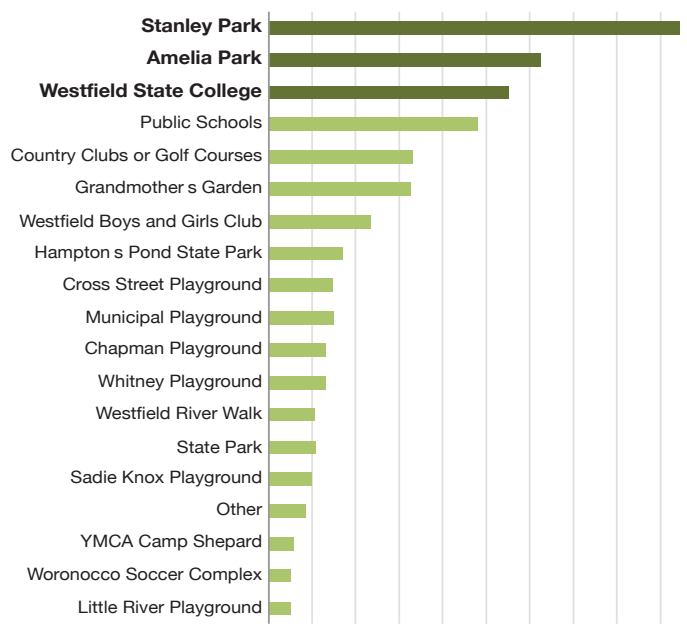
RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEYS



WHAT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES SHOULD BE INCLUDED?

WORK

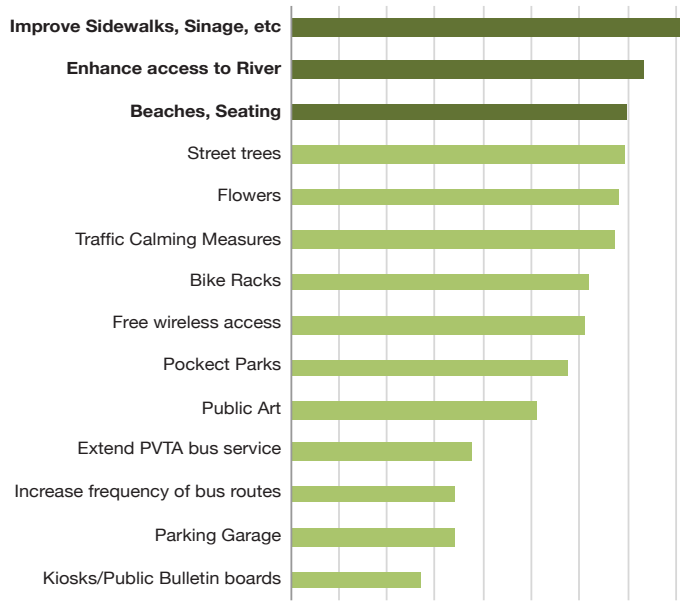
RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEYS



WHICH RECREATIONAL FACILITIES DO YOU OR YOUR FAMILY VISIT?

PLAY

RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEYS



WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF IN DOWNTOWN?

CONNECT

RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEYS

Stakeholder Interviews

Overview

Interviews with Westfield residents, business owners, city staff, and representatives of social and community organizations took place at the Rinnova Galley in Downtown Westfield from March 4th through March 6th 2009. The interviews revealed a wide range of issues as well as enthusiastic ideas and recommendations.

Concerns about traffic, pedestrian safety, infrastructure and city projects were clearly important to many interviewees. Participants expressed cautious optimism about Westfield State College's plans for the downtown. There were also enthusiastic ideas on how to re-vitalize the downtown. Interviewees suggested ways to support local businesses, attract new businesses, develop housing for a range of incomes, and create a welcoming, accessible and vibrant downtown.

In sum, Westfield residents are ready and excited to make the necessary changes to improve their downtown. It will be necessary for both local citizens and the government to communicate more effectively with one another. The City needs to highlight the success of projects that have grown out of previous planning initiatives and cultivate the "wow factor" that this current project can produce.

Predominant Themes

Housing

Most interviewees stressed the need for the development of a variety of housing options as the foundation for downtown revitalization. Participants identified that the downtown would benefit from the development of upscale housing and housing types attractive to young professionals.

Disagreement emerged over both the need and placement of additional low-income housing. Some interviewees believed that low-income housing would be detrimental to downtown. Others recognized that additional affordable units in downtown would serve a real social need and help to create a necessary, vibrant mix.

Key Points:

- Downtown buildings should have retail on the first floor and residential on the above floors.
- State building code sometimes stymies rehabilitation efforts in the downtown. Rehabilitation or renovation projects





that increase a building's assessed value by more than 30% triggers ADA compliancy requirements (elevators, etc). For downtown buildings with low assessed property values, this 30% compliancy requirement can be triggered quite easily for even minor renovation projects. For example, a property owner whose building has an assessed value of \$100,000 would only have to spend \$30,000 on renovations to trigger meeting the ADA requirements. Accessibility was acknowledged as an important goal for downtown (especially given Westfield's demographic profile) and creative strategies to overcome this obstacle are needed.

- Plans for additional housing downtown needs to be in coordination with a host of streetscape and infrastructure improvements as well as the development of more parking spaces.
- Desire for gentrification in the downtown and existing neighborhoods, but not too much. Again, interviewees expressed need for a balanced mix.
- Concern that WSC students will further disrupt adjacent downtown neighborhoods.

Economic and Business Development

Interviewees would like to see more locally owned businesses, interesting shops and an anchor store to help draw more shoppers downtown. Citizens recognize the need for increased foot traffic and streetscape improvements to help businesses thrive. There is a strong sense that the BID is helpful to attracting business to the downtown; however, the community would like to hear more about the BID's specific projects. The business community recognizes that more community support is necessary to put "Westfield First".

Key Points:

- Although most were not in favor of "big box" stores, they very much saw the need for an appropriate anchor store (like a Barnes and Noble).
- The area malls and big box stores along Route 20 were blamed for taking business out of downtown.
- Newbury's and other former businesses were repeatedly cited. How to capitalize on fond memories of the downtown's past while not wallowing in the past?
- There is a lack of community support for downtown businesses; the focus should be on supporting the many locally owned small businesses that exist.
- Residents should "Think Westfield First" when it comes to their personal shopping.
- Westfield is a relatively affluent community and therefore can afford to support locally owned businesses.
- Businesses need incentives to locate downtown.
- Rents are perceived to be high for downtown storefronts.

- The permitting process is perceived as friendly for businesses outside of downtown, but an obstacle for downtown businesses. Again, this has a lot to do with the perception that the 30% building renovation rule is a city and not a state requirement. Many believed there should be some sort of tax incentive available to existing owners to improve their shops and also to bring in new desirable shops.
- Need for boutiques and interesting shops to help Westfield shoppers stay put and out of town shoppers to come in. Promote and encourage “destination stores.”
- The Downtown contains a few nice restaurants; however more local patronage is needed.
- Need more restaurant variety in terms of cuisine and cost (but do not want “fast food”).
- Local residents, the city and the newspaper need to help and promote small businesses.
- Not enough stores are open early in the morning or on Sundays (“I can’t get a coffee anywhere before I go to work!”).
- The BID is doing great things for the downtown.
- Many people do not know what the BID really does. The BID should engage the press, etc to put the spotlight on its actions as well as to highlight local businesses.

Downtown Buildings

The downtown needs a “face-lift”. The downtown contains some beautiful historic buildings that need façade improvements to restore and enhance them. The downtown also contains some buildings that need to be demolished and new attractive buildings could take their place. Participants stated that too many buildings are suffering from neglect by absentee landlords. In addition, many participants felt that the city could be enforcing codes more strictly.

Key Points:

- Downtown buildings need a face-lift. The look of downtown keeps people away.
- Westfield has got some “good bones”, but some of the buildings need to go.
- The list of registered historic buildings in Westfield needs to be reevaluated.
- Better code-enforcement needed.
- Design standards for the downtown needed to enforce “the look” of the downtown.



Westfield State College Plans

Generally, excitement abounds for a greater Westfield State College presence downtown. Interviewees applaud plans to hold classes downtown, develop a college radio station downtown, and move certain WSC offices to the downtown. While the response to the college's plan for student housing downtown was generally positive, interviewees expressed concern about noise levels and destruction of property if students lived downtown.

Key Points:

- Many felt that downtown student housing needs to be developed in accordance with community needs and be integrated with other non-student housing types.
- Apartments should be built and buildings renovated to entice graduate students and faculty (not only undergraduates).
- Better transit route needed to adequately connect Westfield State to downtown (frequency, path of route, etc.)
- Downtown infrastructure needs to be updated before students move in en-mass.
- Existing public and private parking will not be able to accommodate a flood of students into downtown.
- A student presence will add life to the streets, but a larger police presence will be needed.
- Much discussion about which needs to come first: college students or downtown businesses and existing downtown residents?
- Westfield State should open its doors more to the community. Classes downtown are great but there needs to be greater communication with WSC and the Westfield community in general.

Traffic and Pedestrian Safety

Traffic was one of the major concerns highlighted during the interview process. In particular, interviewees expressed concern about downtown rush hour congestion, traffic bottle-necking around the bridge and the high speed of cars going through the downtown. Remediation ideas included re-directing traffic and developing and constructing traffic-calming methods to enhance pedestrian safety.

Key Points:

- Traffic moves way too fast through downtown and becomes congested during rush hour.
- Too many trucks moving through the downtown.
- Elm Street is hard to access from side streets.
- The Arnold-Thomas intersection is problematic.
- Downtown is not pedestrian friendly. Crosswalks and signage are not clearly marked, which endangers pedestrians. Snow is not cleared. Need for additional lighting, benches, signage, way finders, information kiosks, etc...
- Neighborhoods directly adjacent to the Elm Street corridor suffer from traffic congestion.
- Rerouting traffic from Elm Street as the city did during the Taste of Westfield was repeatedly brought up as a recommendation to encourage more pedestrians downtown.
- The rotary around the town green is dangerous for drivers and pedestrians.
- Re-designing the "jug handle" at the entrance to the Mass Pike could help alleviate traffic.

Parking

Varied views emerged about the existing downtown parking situation. Many participants believed that not enough parking exists. Some participants believe plenty of parking exists but people are not well-informed about the location of parking lots. All participants recognize the need for additional parking lots if more students and businesses are to be brought into the downtown. In addition all participants agreed that better signage, crosswalks, better lighting, parking lot surfaces, and connections from the lots to the streets are needed to encourage more people to come downtown. All future downtown investment done either privately or publicly should be in coordination with sidewalk and infrastructure improvements.

Key Points:

- People need to be aware of the parking that is available
- Need for more, clear signage for parking around downtown.
- Many existing parking lots are poorly lit, which makes people feel unsafe.
- Existing parking will not be enough when WSC students move downtown.
- A multi-level parking structure would be a great asset.
- Elm Street may benefit from diagonal parking.
- Limited parking makes it hard for landlords to rent stores and apartments.

Infrastructure and Transportation

Interviewees strongly believed that the condition of the streets, sidewalks, and infrastructure (sewers and water pipes) must be updated. Some of the sewer and water pipes are very old and have caused problems for some local businesses. This will need to be remedied before the college students move in (“God help us if they all flush at once”). Transportation options need to be further developed, especially to support any increase in downtown residential development.

Key Points:

- The sidewalks and streets are in bad shape, making it dangerous for elderly and physically challenged citizens to walk downtown.
- Sidewalks should be widened to allow for a more pedestrian friendly street.
- Improve connections to adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- The snow never gets properly plowed, which makes it difficult to cross the streets.
- Additional street lights and signage needed.
- Develop bike lanes on street as well as create an above-grade bike trail on the existing downtown rail corridor.
- Fares for PVRTA flex service still too high for seniors.
- Both the Westfield River bridge (Great River Bridge project) and the above-grade rail corridor (Columbia Greenway/bikeway) are some of Westfield’s best assets.
- Some applaud the Great River Bridge project, others think it is not going to really help alleviate traffic congestion.
- Concern over removal of trees and existing parking spaces on the town green.

- Hope that the town green project will ease traffic congestion.
- An intermodal center, with enhanced public transportation opportunities within Westfield and neighboring communities, is a good thing.



Community Support and Communication

The stakeholder interview process revealed that Westfield residents, employees, and business owners suffer from a lack of information and, in some cases, misinformation on important city projects and community initiatives. There is a need to improve communication between the community, visitors, business owners, city officials and the college. In addition, although there seems to be a number of active community leaders and organizations, support for community revitalization and development is not always coordinated.

Key Points:

- There needs to be much more transparency between the community, the city officials and Westfield State College.
- Better communication, advertising and presentations of proposed and planned projects are vital to increased community support.
- City pride needs to continually be fostered: a campaign for “Westfield First.”
- Develop public art projects.
- Many interviewees cited the farmers market as an example of an on-going event that has started to bring the community together.
- More activities for people of all ages (intergenerational events).
- Highlight and celebrate Westfield’s heritage: historic and ethnic.
- The Westfield Evening News is suffering and needs a comeback.
- Westfield is an affluent community. The business community and city need to find ways to keep that wealth local.
- Lack of information or misinformation on the following Projects:
 - Great River Bridge Project
 - Columbia Greenway Rail to Trail Conversion
 - Main St./Broad St./ Park Square Traffic Improvement (Town Green Project)
 - Gas Light District
 - Parking Garage
 - Inter-modal Center
 - Traffic Circulation Study
 - Westfield State College Student Housing Plan and Arts District

Towns/Cities mentioned as places Westfield could emulate:

Northampton MA, Brattleboro VT, Greenfield MA, Claremont CA, Saratoga Springs NY, Bennington VT, Colorado Springs CO, Burlington VT, Simsbury CT, West Hartford CT, Keene NH.

Focus Groups

In order to diversify the range of community members participating in this design process, the project team made specific efforts to reach out to residents who may have been under-represented in the more traditional community engagement venues of stakeholder interviews, community survey, and design workshops. Using the contacts made through the stakeholder Interviews, a series of additional Focus Group meetings were organized with; High School Students, Senior Citizens, Latino Residents and Downtown Renters. (Unfortunately, an effort to organize a meeting with Russian residents was not successful). Besides answering a series of broad questions regarding their experiences and hopes for downtown, group members participated in social and geographic mapping exercises and “Photovoice,” a visual documentation exercise.



High School Student Mapping Exercises

FOCUS GROUP: High School Students

Three groups of Westfield High School seniors shared their thoughts and comments on Downtown Westfield. The individual students lived throughout the city, as well as surrounding towns, and were just as diverse in their use, familiarity with and opinions of downtown.

With little to do downtown, most of these students tend to use Stanley Park and Amelia Park as places to hang out. Some of the students claim that since they live in a more suburban neighborhood the trip downtown just isn't worth it.

“I walk with my friends downtown a lot and it would be nice to have more to see.”

“There needs to be a place for us to go! An arcade, a movie theater, a pool hall, any of those things. All we can do is walk up and down the streets or go to friends houses.”

“I'd like an area downtown to use my skateboard.”

“Something like Bentley Billiards but for all ages.”

“More people!”

“My mom always yells at me to find something to do... but there isn't anything!”

Much of their shopping is done at the Holyoke Mall and sometimes Northampton, but most students said if there were stores they wanted to shop at in downtown they would go there instead.

“We need a skate shop downtown, with boards and clothes... the shops need to be for the teenagers too!”

“There are no good cheap places to eat that I want to hang out at.”

Some students suggested that more after-school programs other than sports would be a nice addition to the downtown. The students were positive about the idea of new and interesting programs and activities they could participate in downtown. Many were positive about the college students moving in downtown and would like to have more interaction with the college.

“I love Northampton and it’s lively because of the schools, it would be great to have more people downtown.”

“I think more programs at the college should be open to high school students and other people in town.”

“If the college has programs downtown they should be open to everyone.”



High School Students Focus Group Meeting

FOCUS GROUP: Seniors Citizens

The majority of Senior Citizens who shared their thoughts and comments on Downtown live within a 5-minute walk of Elm Street. A number of the individuals interviewed were lifelong residents of Westfield and were able to share a lifetime of perspectives.

There was universal nostalgia for the way Westfield “was”. An enormous pride and endearing affection for the bustling downtown of the 40’s and 50’s was unanimous.

“Newbury’s was the place to be!”

“You know it wasn’t always like this!”

“I remember when Downtown Westfield used to be like Boston.”

“Sundays people came out of the woodwork..everywhere Downtown people were walking, talking, shopping...”



Seniors Focus Group Meeting

Traffic and pedestrian accessibility was high on the list of concerns. Many senior citizens worried about safety as they walk downtown.

“People fly by in their cars like the Indy 500!”

“ I am not so steady these days and I worry about walking along with all of the cracks in the messy sidewalks.”

A movie theater was on the wish list of almost everyone interviewed.

“I’d love to have a theater downtown, like in the old days.”

“Even though a lot of the bang, bang shoot ‘em movies these days I don’t like to see, I would still like to be able to go to a movie theater now and again.”

Many were positive about the college students moving in downtown and would like to have more interaction with the college. Although there were some concerns as well.

“ My brother has been a landlord for years and he’s had more problems with those college student... he would never rent to college students again.”

“I think bringing the college students downtown would be a great thing! I’d love to have more youth around.”



“Photovoice” documentation by George Freeman

FOCUS GROUP: Renters

This small focus group of renters (from a single extended family) included lifelong residents of Westfield, with children and grandchildren of different ages. These renters all live about a block away from Elm Street and were able to share a number of different perspectives on downtown.

The need for recreational activities for the youth was a constant aspect brought up by the renters.

“There is absolutely nothing for them to do, especially in the winter months.”

“I tell them, go find something to do! But we don’t have money to put them in after-school sports, so they are kind of left roaming the streets. No good can come from that.”

“We don’t even have a playground downtown. Because we don’t have playgrounds around here so oftentimes the parking lots are our playgrounds! That is something that we, as a city, urgently need: a place for our children to use downtown too.”

Traffic and pedestrian accessibility were big concerns as well.

“My son was run over last year. He wasn’t badly hurt, but cars just don’t stop. I am afraid to let my kids go out, at the same time they are too old for me to supervise...”

“My second granddaughter was just born last week. Even with baby strollers, it seems drivers just don’t see pedestrians...”

“I don’t know if it is signs, raised crosswalks, police enforcement or what, but something has to be done.”

The idea of the college students coming downtown was received with mixed feelings.

“A few kids live across the street, I get that college is a time to have fun --my nephew is in college-- but their parties, drinking and shouting really do not make it a better place to raise my kids.”

“I think it could help shake some things up, but we have to be careful... this is our town, we have a history here, a past, a love and understanding of Westfield that is hard to pass on like that to people who will be in and out of here in a four-year time span.”



FOCUS GROUP: Latino Residents

This group of residents shared ethnicities that linked them primarily to Puerto Rico. Many of the residents in this group live in the Orange Street neighborhood and were able to share a number of different perspectives on downtown Westfield.

Jobs and economic development were an important part of the conversation. The need for a more vibrant downtown with economic opportunities for new businesses of various sizes and job opportunities for diverse groups from high school students to young professionals was a strong desire.

“If college students worked downtown in local restaurants, coffee shops and stores, that itself would start a process of integration.”

“People complain that there is nothing for teenagers to do, give them work downtown and everybody wins. The kids develop abilities and responsibilities; the community will start to support the businesses more since their kids work there. The economic problem would become not only the shop owner’s but the town’s.”



Latino Focus Group Meeting at Angelo’s

Similar to other groups, traffic congestion on Elm Street and its impact in the Orange Street neighborhood was a major concern, as well as pedestrian safety and parking needs. The residents were able to provide specific insight such as the difficulty in accessing Elm Street from Orange street and specific suggestions that would contribute in addressing the issues of traffic flow and parking by making some two way streets one way and inverting the direction of some streets in downtown Westfield.

“On Fridays you just can’t move. It takes longer to drive than to walk. The bridge is supposed to help, but I really don’t see that happening.”

“Traffic is horrible, too slow at rush hour, and way too fast the rest of the time. Drivers just zoom by. Crossing Elm is really taking a chance with your life!”

The desire for improved streetscape and sidewalks emerged as a strong recommendation, as did concerns for a “green” and more sustainable Westfield.

“We need trash bins, actually what we need are trash and recycle bins, every few yards.... People will not litter so much if they have a place to throw their trash, and the recycling bins would start changing the way people see trash. It is just something we need to do.”

“Benches. They took out all the benches because they don’t want homeless people on them. But that’s not the way to do it. If you want people on the street you have to give them places to just sit and be on the street.”

“Those parking lots just need to be lit. I am scared of parking in them after dark... Lighting is a simple and effective solution.”

The need for more recreational opportunities for children and teenagers was an important issue as well.

“There is not much for them to do that does not require us driving them up and down.”

“Neighborhood playgrounds that could function as places of recreation for different age groups would help neighborhoods, and get people to know each other better”

Neighborhood integration and cross-cultural dialogue was an important topic among this group. In a city where even a person who has lived in the city for twenty years might still not be seen as a “long-time” Westfield resident, the role of the newcomer is often a challenging one –and cultural differences further complicate this scenario and

sometimes lead to limited connection between various ethnic groups within the city. Among the residents present in the Latino focus group, the desire to bridge these gaps was a common one.

“People just don’t know each other. When we first moved in here, we used to be the rejected ones, now it is the Russians. People just don’t know each other and it sometimes seems they don’t really care to either.”

Activities and products that would integrate communities, neighborhoods and different age groups were among the various suggestions that came up during this focus group.

“Something like a mosaic could decorate the city. We have so many walls of buildings that could benefit from a face-lift. The mosaics could be a collaborative effort of schools, the senior center, the college...”



Focus Group Conversation

Visioning

Our first public meeting was a Downtown Visioning session held on April 4, 2009 at the Central Baptist Church on Elm Street. This meeting allowed the project team to introduce the Re-thinking Downtown Westfield process to the community at-large and to actively engage in discussions and exercises aimed at developing a shared community vision for downtown.

Successful visioning processes lead to broad agreement about a preferred future, which in turn leads to implementation strategies involving changes in public policy and actions.

Visioning exercises help communities begin to consciously create a future by advancing a shared sense of purpose while encouraging the leadership needed to fulfill that purpose.

One of the key elements of this session was to present the results of the city-wide downtown survey and stakeholder interviews, and to discuss the objectives that had emerged from those processes. These objectives were arranged under the four categories that became the organizing themes for all our community engaged activities: Live, Work, Play and Connect.

LIVE: Objectives regarding Housing and quality of life downtown	WORK: Objectives regarding downtown economic development	PLAY: Objectives regarding the arts, entertainment and recreation	CONNECT: Objectives regarding infrastructure and sustainability
Provide a variety of Housing Options: for young adults, seniors, fixed-income and students	Provide for a variety of specialty stores and restaurants to create a downtown destination	Create and support local entertainment and performance venues. Coordinate with WSC plans	Slow down traffic in downtown. Promote walk-ability, pedestrian safety, biking and re-think downtown traffic patterns
Develop mixed-use buildings with residential above retail	Encourage anchor store (such as Bookstore).	Enhance access to River	Publicize parking options and examine surplus needs
Promote and Protect Historic buildings	Support for locally owned businesses through strategic planning and ongoing technical assistance	Preserve and enhance downtown green spaces and neighborhood parks	Improve sewer Infrastructure
WSC housing plans should complement and integrate with city housing needs	Partner with area colleges and universities to encourage innovation, new businesses and workforce development	Promote Biking throughout downtown	Pursue alternative energy, green building incentives and public transportation projects

Primary Downtown Design Objectives (determined by Survey Results and Stakeholder Interviews)

After a short presentation on the context for the current planning effort, six groups of residents worked to develop a “Vision” statement for the objectives described above. They were asked to outline what visions and values are inherent in these intentions? How would they describe the city if these objectives were realized? Use of key words or slogans that might best represent the quality and characteristic of a re-vitalized downtown were encouraged.

VISIONING GROUP 1

Vision Statement:

“Downtown Westfield is connecting the community through culture, education, business, walkability, strengthened neighborhoods and schools and an ever increasing pride and awareness.”

Summary:

There was a large focus around connecting the neighborhoods to downtown and generating a sense of pride and activity in the downtown community. It was stated many times that a blend of arts, shops, culture, mixed housing and improved infrastructure need to happen at the same time for downtown to succeed. The river, the rail trail and the historic architecture were seen as assets that need to be valued. This group agreed that there is much potential in Westfield and that “OUTREACH, OUTREACH, OUTREACH” was necessary to promote downtown to its own residents as well as to visitors. Many thought that “Westfield FIRST!” is the attitude that is necessary to build a proud community. Short-term projects (that were part of a long-term strategy) that would increase investment in the cultural, educational, economic and infrastructural life of the city were seen as urgent.

VISIONING GROUP 2

Vision Statements / Mottos:

“Come for a short time, stay for a lifetime»

“Crossroads of commerce”

“We have WOW”

Summary:

This group’s discussions began by reviewing downtown’s assets and within the city in general. Many at the table were long time residents that have seen positive changes within the city as well as growing challenges in the downtown. The need to be responsive to change while maintaining Westfield’s distinct identity was debated, so the plan to bring WSC students downtown was seen as something important in changing the downtown’s image and being able to activate the downtown’s existing assets (great architecture, wide streets, cultural facilities, etc...). This group stressed the need for an integrated singular plan that would promote economic development of downtown, and that new shops, stores and businesses downtown was a key to its success. There was some pessimism about the ability to encourage downtown development given the current economic downturn, but many felt that using the college’s plans as a building block could help develop a successful long-term vision for downtown.

VISIONING GROUP 3

Vision Statement:

"To make Downtown Westfield, and all of Westfield, for all in Westfield... By creating a variety of 'getaways' that target the diverse people of Westfield."

Summary:

The connection between change in Westfield and the action of its residents was a key topic within this group. All agreed that Downtown Westfield is in need of change --big changes, small changes; long term and short term. For example, it was noted that simply painting the crosswalks would bring change. Drivers would see that they must stop, versus trying to guess if a pedestrian is trying to cross, and pedestrians would feel safer. Ticketing for speeding or ignoring the crosswalk would bring change as the word spreads that you have to slow down to cross downtown. But downtown also needs the people of Westfield. Many asked how do we start to implement ownership of a place, so that everyone regardless of age or occupation feels welcome downtown? In response, a number of ideas for activities and spaces for the diverse interests of Westfield residents were discussed; places for children and for parents, for teenagers, multi-use spaces that are used by different groups such as a theater used by Westfield State College students during the day and by the community at night as a movie theater. For all of this to happen there has to be not only actions taken by the city, but by residents as well. Westfield on Weekends, the Woman's Club, among others have started to create change from the bottom up and move closer to the downtown residents would like to have.

VISIONING GROUP 4

Vision statement:

"Downtown Westfield is... a people friendly, safe, appealing area with a diverse collection of shops, entertainment and recreation. The downtown area balances the needs of the residents, families, students and visitors alike. Inviting parks, art venues, walkable-sidewalks and great places to hang out create a vibrant downtown community."

Summary:

This group's primary focus was to achieve a balance between the different types of people who use downtown and the variety of activities necessary for a vibrant and safe downtown. While many wanted a variety of specialty stores downtown, they also want small shops that could provide regular items so residents would not have to drive to WalMart. This was especially important for the elderly population of downtown (i.e. clothes, shoes, pharmacy). Most supported the idea of a WSC performing arts center as long as there is space for community access as well. The same balance was desired between the needs of WSC students who may live in downtown and existing families and residents. Integration of the rail trail (not only for bikes, but for safe pedestrian movement through downtown), walkable streets and access to downtown green spaces was emphasized.

This group's vision statement was designated the most preferred statement through an informal voting process during the Design Workshops

VISIONING GROUP 5

Vision statement:

"Downtown Westfield provides an environment that promotes a variety of live, work and play opportunities for a diverse community in a way that builds on Westfield's unique local character."

Summary:

Providing for the diversity and variety of Westfield's residents and downtown settings was an important topic of conversation within this group. Creating a downtown that supports economic and housing diversity (places and homes for all levels of income) was discussed and endorsed. The proximity of many neighborhoods directly adjacent to downtown was noted and that the benefits of this proximity need to be promoted and emphasized (simultaneously addressing the inconveniences of downtown traffic and noise). The need for incremental strategic planning that would allow for small efforts to lead to larger initiatives would be the best way to "build for the future."

VISIONING GROUP 6

Vision statement:

Westfield is a Working, Educating, Sustaining, Tradition seeking, Fun loving, Imaginative, Entertaining, Livable Destination" (Acronym –Spells out "WESTFIELD")

Summary:

The vision of the downtown as a site of integrity, creativity, diversity and conversation was clearly established by this group. The downtown's existing assets –the library, walk-ability, quaintness, and historic character-- were seen as an excellent context to build a revitalized downtown where increased civic pride would anticipate and project a successful future. In this group's vision, downtown was seen as the heart of the community where the values and visions of Westfield residents could be highlighted and celebrated. In identifying those values, pride, health, unity, idealism, tradition and self-sustainability contributed to the most optimistic downtown vision.



Report Back Presentation at Visioning Session

Downtown Design Workshops

Re-Thinking Downtown Westfield Design Workshops were held on two consecutive weeks in late April and early May. The first weekend, “EXPLORE” (4/23 – 4/25), was dedicated to exploring downtown’s streets, buildings, green spaces and potential for development. Using maps, tours and residents’ knowledge participants identified the projects and initiatives that could build on downtown’s excellent assets. During the second week of design workshops, “DEVELOP” (4/30 – 5/2), participants examined concrete projects at a variety of scales within each of our downtown “themes” and identified the strengths and weakness inherent in each idea. In addition, the “who,” the “how” and the “when” of each project was established in order to address the evolving design objectives and develop a clear action plan for downtown’s revitalization.



Workshop Sign-In Tent

Highlights and Workshop Framework

Our opening event on Thursday, April 23 included a public conversation with Dan Pitera of the Detroit Collaborative Design Center. Pitera presented community engaged design proposals that he had developed through his design center in Detroit, and drew parallels between that work and the potential in downtown Westfield. He noted that resident’s participation in this process should focus on downtown’s underutilized assets, identifying for the design team what needs to be “amplified” and encourage design choices that help define the underlying culture and character of the community. Pitera concluded his remarks by emphasizing Westfield’s strong history, “How do you pull that (history) to the surface and celebrate it? ...History and Culture –where are we coming from and where we are going. You are designing that now.”

Another highlight of the first weekend’s activities was the guided tour of “Ways You Haven’t Seen Downtown,” which took attendees behind the scenes of planned and successful downtown revitalization projects. Traveling along the abandoned rail line that weaves through downtown, and is to become the Columbia Rail Trail, the group visited many existing and proposed sites for development. From the Westfield Whip Factory, a historic and still operating successful business, to the untapped beauty of the Westfield River banks, and to the spectacular views from the rooftop of the Pilgrim Candle Factory, residents were surprised and enthused by the current and future prospects for downtown.

During the second week of workshops we developed a way of looking at projects with an emphasis on the time-frame in which they could be realized. Those Project Types are as follows:

Small Projects / Short Time-frame:

Includes proposed programs for new or existing city organizations (i.e., new initiatives for BID), social networking, community volunteer efforts and small projects. These initiatives may require small amounts of funding and (with strong community involvement) can be enacted within a few weeks to a year.

Medium Projects / Medium Time-frame:

Includes medium-scale construction projects (i.e., signage, landscape/streetscape improvements, pocket parks, etc...) and new policies or programs that may take longer to coordinate and realize (i.e., revised zoning, additional transportation routes, etc...). These initiatives will require funding and can take from one-five years to complete.

Large Projects / Long Time-frame:

Includes new construction of major parks, housing, community facilities, mixed-used and commercial projects. These initiatives require major funding from the public and/or private sector and can take from five-twenty years to complete.

Throughout the Design Workshops we used the categories of Live / Work / Play / Connect as a way to guide our work and help us shape the “goals” and “actions” that are necessary to revitalize downtown.

The workshops were designed around four workshop tables / stations:

- At the “Live” workshop table, residents were able to contribute ideas and observations regarding quality of life downtown, housing and historic preservation.
- At our “Play” workshop table residents were able to discuss arts & entertainment, open space and downtown recreation.
- At our “Work” station, retail and downtown shopping along with economic and workforce development was discussed.
- At the “Connect” table, infrastructure, sidewalks, traffic and parking was highlighted.

Participants could stay at one table, or travel across the room providing information/feedback for all the categories. We also had conversations across these themes and imaging ways in which all of these features can be woven into a coherent plan.



Viewing Presentation at Final Workshop

Workshop Summaries by Theme

LIVE

A wide gamut of ideas was sketched out in the first week regarding housing and general conditions of livability in downtown Westfield within the framework of long and short-term projects. It became evident throughout the workshop that in accommodating a variety of housing for different social classes and age groups, the downtown would necessarily become more attractive to the diversity that comprises Westfield.

The formation of new communities, and the strengthening of existing ones, was pinpointed as a key aspect for the success of any revitalization plan for downtown. Murals, community events and parties, church meetings among others were ideas that began to emerge on how to build these communities. Westfield State College's plan to bring 500 units of student housing downtown was met with mixed feelings. While most of the table participants saw that their coming would bring great potential for economic development and for improving the conditions of downtown as a whole; concerns about safety, vandalism, and noise levels were also present.

It was noted in the early conversations that improving the livability of downtown is not solely in the hands of the city or of organizations such as Domus (a local non-profit developer), but that it lies in the hands of the residents of Westfield as well.

During the second weekend of workshops concrete proposals for neighborhood promotions and possible locations for new residential development were fully discussed. In recognition that strong adjacent residential neighborhoods (that are within walking distance of downtown) are a key to any successful downtown, proposals for block parties, tag sales, clean-ups and other participatory events were outlined. Community police officers, community leaders and local city councilors were identified as key agents for these initiatives.

Engaging Westfield State College students in community service and strategies to preserve historic structures were also proposed.

In the final days of the workshop the discussion shifted to new housing development. Market rate, mixed income and affordable units were all considered in the mix of new possibilities. Proposals were made for each of the distinct downtown districts. In the core downtown area completing the affordable housing development within existing buildings (previously started by Westfield CDC) was prioritized. Strategies to coordinate additional adaptive reuse by private developers and Westfield State College were also encouraged. The potential for new housing along the riverfront and in the Depot Square district were discussed as long-term possibilities.



Watching Workshop Presentation

WORK

The WORK table was frequented by residents who had particular influence or insight regarding the subject. The directors of the Business Improvement District and the Chamber of Commerce, some young entrepreneurs, and the City Planner were regular participants at the table and so the conversation was very grounded and productive. Most projects dealt with the role of the BID, and other downtown organizations in promoting business growth, fostering new opportunities for prospective renters of downtown storefronts, and facilitating entrepreneurship in the city through small business cooperatives and incubators. The fundamental belief was that Downtown Westfield has yet to provide the services and atmosphere desired by those who will fuel the economy and bring the critical mass of people needed to power a successful downtown.

The first weekend, following the theme of EXPLORE, mainly focused around the needs and available downtown resources for different groups of people.

The group discussed the downtown businesses that would serve teens, seniors, downtown office workers and college students. Through brainstorming ideas for WORK in the downtown, a BID wish list emerged, which proposed actions including taking down old signs, sweeping streets, window art, bridge baskets with flowers, incubator businesses, benches and general façade beautification.

The DEVELOP weekend was quite productive in evaluating potential projects and the group was fortunate enough to have the same highly motivated, and knowledgeable group members through which we discussed a number of ideas. The general consensus was that if the BID and the Chamber of Commerce had additional support and offered more services, those services might help get people to bring their business downtown. There were various ideas for what the organizations should do, including mapping the parking lots and business locations, hosting beautification projects, coordination with other groups to combine resources and to creating a downtown wireless internet network.

Many of the projects dealt with small interventions, which could grow over time into larger projects. For example, a wireless network could establish the infrastructure for growing businesses and a more digitally oriented consumer population. Other projects like a larger farmers market or small market locations on the rail trail would support other endeavors by providing a draw, or strategically placed economic stimuli, which would increase the number of people using new amenities, and increase the critical mass needed to support downtown. Enforcing existing zoning throughout the city was identified as a key initiative to channel commercial growth in the downtown.



Priority Voting at Final Workshop

PLAY

Play is a theme that inspired great excitement and enthusiasm among the group participants. With a strong presence of long time residents, senior citizens and recreation enthusiasts, ideas varied from the most feasible to the most creative. During the first weekend discussions the Columbia Rail Trail and renewed access to the Westfield River were recognized as important parts of the recreation potential for downtown. In identifying downtown's arts and entertainment assets, participants spoke of Westfield State College plans for an arts district and the many existing venues that promote arts and performance downtown (W.O.W, BID, etc...). In all the discussions, coordination with existing and new plans--especially between the college and local organizations--was emphasized.

Given the temporal nature of recreational and arts events, this group had a great interest in ways in which temporary events and usages could activate empty lots and vacant storefronts. Ranging from picnic tables and benches sponsored by local restaurants in the Newbury lot and the "451" lot

on Elm street to carousels, water elements with lights, and climbing walls; ideas were varied in their feasibility and scope. It was a major concern of the citizens to provide entertainment possibilities for the children and youth and to stimulate the growth of local businesses through the presence of leisure activities downtown. In their assessment, other than Stanley Park, which provides recreational activities for the youth in the summer months, Westfield is in need of leisure activities for this age group. Therefore, this group embraced the development of neighborhood "pocket" parks and a new Riverfront Park. Furthermore, it was a prevailing thought that the lack of awareness of local businesses is a strong determinant in the lack of foot traffic downtown. A focus of many discussions was that leisure activities that highlighted these businesses could help this situation.

The temporary use on the Newbury site played a prominent role in addressing a myriad of issues. Many long-time residents remember the Newbury Department Store fondly and saw it as the heart of downtown. The current empty lot is locally known as the "Hole," and desires to see something happen there—even if temporary—were quite strong. Short-term use of this site is especially captivating in that it would allow for immediate change and can act as an active placeholder until a long term profitable use is developed. In this realm the group explored feasibility issues in detail, and that framework carried into many other projects.



Discussion at "PLAY" Table

CONNECT

A dedicated group of community members enlivened the connect table for both weeks of workshops. There were advocates of the rail trail, transportation specialists, as well as community members that saw the value of the improved walk-ability and public transit downtown. Overall themes that were stressed were making Westfield a walkable and sustainable city.

Major concerns addressed by the community were traffic issues and speeding on Elm, safe biking, confusion regarding public parking, streetscape improvements and a lack of public transportation. Residents discussed the need for both short and long term solutions, and the need for infrastructure improvements to happen before major development projects. For instance, the needs of Westfield State College students for alternative modes of transportation (shuttle buses and designated bike lanes) will benefit residents as well as students, improving the quality of life downtown for all.

Neighborhoods were identified, and needs for neighborhood identity, increased safety and clear connections to downtown were key points of discussion. The Rail Trail was seen as a project of utmost importance, and its creation would address many of the themes talked about throughout the course of the weekend. It was coined as “the zipper” of Westfield, sewing the neighborhoods together and galvanizing downtown.

The major themes found in the first week of workshops were molded into suggested project proposals that were discussed and improved on in week two. Short-term projects such as parking signage and community cleanups were created as well as longer term projects such as park and ride centers and additional bus routes to address long term transportation issues. Many of the projects, such as parking and the rail trail, had short, medium and long-term phases. Each project phase also

addressed who would be an important figure in making the project a success and how the project could actually happen (block parties, fundraising...)

The importance of the rail trail became more and more clear as it was the focal point of many conversations over the course of the weekend. While the actual rail trail is not set to break ground until 2014, there were many ideas generated as to how Westfield could celebrate it and generate greater pride within the community. Some of the ideas generated were “dressing” the rail trail bridges --the gateways to the communities-- with neighborhood banners, flowers and lights. Other ideas were to provide kiosks by the bridges, with trail maps and information proving the economic and social viability of a working trail. Overall the theme of Westfield as a walkable and sustainable city was paramount. It was also clear that the community should take a grass roots approach to getting the ball rolling on some of these projects.

(Note: Many systematic infrastructure projects were discussed at the City Departmental Roundtable, see below.)



Tour Along Future Columbia Greenway

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT SUMMARIES

	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	WHAT	WHO	HOW	NOTES
LIVE	Clean-up Programs	Organize volunteers from civic, community or youth organizations to clean-up rail-trail and alleys/passages to parking lots.	SHORT TERM (2010)	Create systematic and sustainable program (not one time effort)	-WSC students -High School Students -Residents and Community Organizations -BID (possible coordinator)	Student Service and Volunteer activity can be directed downtown	
LIVE	WSC student Engagement	Develop systematic program for community service for students living downtown	SHORT TERM (2010)	Create service and volunteer programs and projects throughout downtown (at Churches, Senior Center, Whitney and neighborhood parks).	WSC: -Ken Magarian, Director of Special Projects -Mary Ann Walsh, "College for Kids" Program -Michael Vorwerk, professor of Env. Science WSC Resident Assistants (RAs) in proposed downtown housing Westfield Park and Recreation	Projects could include student /community teaching, River cleanup, Street cleanup, Sports clinic for kids, etc...	Reciprocal teaching & learning: Students teach Computer skills, Language, Tutoring, Art Theater, etc... Community resident teach Local History Knitting, Crafts "ethnic" Cooking, etc...
LIVE	Neighborhood Promotions	Develop events and/or initiatives that promote the character and quality of downtown neighborhoods	SHORT TERM (2010)	Neighborhood Block Parties & organized events (tag sales, plant sale, etc...)	-Community Police Officer (Steve Dickinson) -Community Leader -Local City Councilor (PJ Miller, Dan Knapik) -WOW	-Organize first events(s) in Pleasant or Orange St. Neighborhoods -Contact Wyben neighborhood for how-to ideas.	Promote uniqueness of neighborhoods.
LIVE	Historic Preservation	Promote adaptive re-use and restoration of historic buildings	MEDIUM TERM (2015)	-Rectory Building on N. Elm St. -Morgan-Wey House -Kellogg House -Foster House	-WSC (alumni or student housing or downtown presence) -Local Businesses -Developer -Restaurateur -Mike Tierney (owner of Foster House)	-Possible CPA funded project for historic renovation. -Convert to non-damaging use: Alumni House, offices, visitors center, restaurant	Kellogg & Foster Houses possible Visitors Center (See WORK: "Visitors Center")
LIVE	Elm Street Apartments	Elm Street Housing Units (above storefronts)	SHORT TERM (2010-12)	Develop Affordable & Student Housing within existing buildings.	-WSC student housing plan -Domus affordable housing plan	Move forward on plans/projects already in progress	
			MEDIUM TERM (2015)	Develop Market Rate condos or 40R mixed-income project	Public/Private partnership: -City -Developers (For profit and, not for profit) -Domus		Use momentum of re-vitalized downtown to promote available properties to developers.

LIVE

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT SUMMARIES

	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	WHAT	WHO	HOW	NOTES
LIVE	New Housing at Riverfront District	Explore design and development options for new housing at Riverfront District & north end of Orange St. Identify sites and types of housing development possible (market-rate, mixed-income, affordable, etc...)	MEDIUM TERM (2015)	Develop Building w/ Housing and Mixed-Use @ parcels North and West of Whip Factory (site of building to be demolished)	Public/Private partnership: -City -Developers (For profit and, not for profit) -Domus	City creates RFP for 40 R or similar development	Strategize to use development to implement additional parking along East side of rail trail
			LONG TERM (2020)	Possible market rate, Home Ownership and/or mixed-income housing at city-owned parcels on the West side of Rail Trail & private-owned parcels on Elm Street	Public/Private partnership: -City -Developers (For profit and, not for profit) -Domus	City creates RFP for 40 R or similar development	Could be part of New Riverfront Park Development (see PLAY projects)
LIVE	East Side Elm St. Development	Identify specific sites and explore design options and potential for housing, community and commercial development.	SHORT TERM (2010-12)	Possible Student housing and Recreation uses (in Holy Trinity School property)	WSC	Move forward on Student Housing plans/projects already in progress	
			LONG TERM (2020)	Adaptive Re-use of Old Bowling Alley and Barlett & Elm St. properties. Consolidate public parking behind Trinity Church	-Private developer -WSC -City / DPW		
LIVE	New Housing at Depot Square District	Identify specific sites and explore design options and potential for housing development (market-rate and/or mixed-income housing, mixed-use)	LONG TERM	Urban "Infill," townhouse and/or home ownership development around Union Ave. and Union St. areas. Explore Parking Garage @ Westwood site	Public/Private partnership: -City -Developers (For profit and, not for profit) -Domus -City -Westwood Owners		Re-located parking on Colfax St. frees up space for possible development
LIVE	Re-Zone North Bank of River (East of New Bridge)	Appropriately Re-zone area currently zoned Industrial.		Re-zoning will allow for future green space expansion along river	-City -City Council		

WORK COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT SUMMARIES

	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	WHAT	WHO	HOW	NOTES	
WORK	Westfield Community Collaborative	Collaboration of Chamber, Historical Society, WOW, BID, CDC, Domus, City and WSC	Combining resources of Downtown organizations, this initiatives includes the three projects listed below:					
WORK	Downtown Branding	Create a campaign to promote and "brand" downtown	SHORT TERM	Develop a distinct downtown symbol. Gateway signage and/or banners on bridges	-BID -WOW -Chamber -Banks and other local Businesses			
			MEDIUM TERM	Ad campaign with Brochures and other printed material	Same as above			
WORK	Coordination with Downtown Groups	Facilitate coordination of downtown groups by examining current websites and exploring integration	SHORT TERM	Possibly create a single downtown website, with one paid webmaster to update and coordinate.	-City -BID -WOW -WAG -Local tech companies (Mobius, Net Logic) might do pro-bono work		Consider which other downtown and city groups might benefit from participating (Athenaeum, YMCA, Children's Musuem, etc..)	
WORK	Westfield Welcome & Visitors Center	Identify sites and explore design options for a Visitors Center within an existing historic building.	MEDIUM TERM	Create a Visitors Center that may include offices of BID, WOW, Chamber, WSC community engagement office.	-BID -WOW -Chamber -WSC	-Possible use of CPA funds (for Historic Preservation) -Possible service project for Carpenters Union with Vocational H.S. students	Possible locations: Kellogg House or Foster House (See LIVE, "Historic Preservation")	
WORK	Downtown Business Development	Incubators and business promotion strategies.	SHORT TERM	-Locate an incubator building or site (with capacity for shared tech & resources). -Identify prospective users of incubator.	BID Chamber Business Management programs at WSC & UMass	STCC Entrepenuearal program is a possible model.	Hold small business seminars for minority and women owned start-ups.	
WORK	Downtown Map	Map or maps, with businesses, hotspots, parking etc	SHORT TERM (2010)	Digital and hard copy map	-BID, -Chamber -City (GIS Office) -UMass			
WORK	Downtown Wifi	Establish a free downtown wireless network that would serve businesses and the public.	SHORT TERM (2010)		-Gas + Electric -City -Local businesses & organizations	-Grants -G+E funding -Research how Amherst did municipal Wifi.		

WORK

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT SUMMARIES

	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	WHAT	WHO	HOW	NOTES
WORK	Business Zoning	Develop necessary zoning to increase business density downtown.	SHORT TERM	Enforce existing and/or revise as necessary home business zoning in residential neighborhoods	-City -City Council		
WORK	Westfield Bucks	Create a local currency (like WSC "Owl" bucks)	MEDIUM TERM	Downtown Currency: 95 cents on the dollar.	-BID -Chamber -WSC -Businesses volunteer to be part of program	Place online, purchase through website	
WORK	Design Review	Establish Design Review Board for review of all new downtown projects.	MEDIUM TERM	Develop examples and guidelines for downtown signs, facades and historic renovations.	-City		
WORK	Bookstore	College bookstore downtown	SHORT TERM	Residents expressed an interest in Wi-fi, Coffee shop, Gathering place, Reading area, Outside area and Music	-WSC -Bookstore chain		Possibly located at Lampson Furniture
WORK	Bakery	Encourage and identify bakery to locate downtown.	LONG TERM	Similar to Farmer's Daughter			
WORK	Social Networking	Develop social network to connect businesses & residents interested in downtown	SHORT TERM (2009)	Create social networking website	Community (particularly participants in the Downtown Design Workshops)	Look at other models (Holyoke's "CRUSH" group)	
WORK	Larger Farmers Market	Find location and promote larger and more frequent farmers market	SHORT TERM	Include craft vendors, food vendors. Thursday 11-6 time.	-BID -Teapot -School St. Bistro	-Investigate School Street and Newbury sites.	-Canopy to link spaces together

PLAY

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT SUMMARIES

	PROJECT	GENERAL DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	WHAT	WHO	HOW	NOTES
PLAY	Arts / Culture Collaboration w/ WSC	Develop collaboration for arts and cultural events that builds on WSC plans for a downtown Arts presence.	SHORT TERM	Greater coordination with WSC for entertainment and educational opportunities for residents and students	-WSC -WOW -BID	Continuing education and arts programs geared to both students and residents	Coordinate with proposals outlined in WSC Downtown Arts District Report
PLAY	Ethnic Feasts	Create Events celebrating the diversity of Westfield	SHORT TERM	Celebration of Puerto-rican Russian Ukrainian Polish, etc. Heritage	-Churches -Community Leaders -WOW -BID	Block Park on Elm Street or Festival on the Green	
PLAY	Re-Use of Newbury Site	Develop recreation and entertainment uses at current vacant lot. Develop related event and maintenance programs.	SHORT TERM (2010)	-Outdoor movie theater -Community mural project	-WSC: Visual Arts Dept. and Community Media Program. -Neighborhood & Community organizations -Local businesses -WOW	-Throw "Revitalization Party" -Projector from WSC for film showings	
			MEDIUM TERM (2015)	-Landscaping & Community garden -Covered walkway -Picnic tables -Benches -Vendors -Bike racks -Downtown map -Trees -Playground -Performance space	-Local restaurants -Vocational High School and other local schools -WSC -4-H club -Local nurseries -BID -Albert Furst -Local businesses -Community Volunteers	-Develop identity as "heart" of the city through events and use.	
			LONG TERM (2020)	"In-fill" Building	-Private developer -City	Develop property perhaps in conjunction with Inter-modal Center.	
PLAY	Pocket Park at Lot 451	Develop pocket parks at current vacant lot. Develop event and maintenance programs for this spaces.	SHORT TERM (2010)	-Benches -Landscaping	-Local Businesses -Donations -Vocation High School		
			MEDIUM TERM (2015)	-Carousel -Aquarium -Fountain -Water with lights -Playground -Market -umbrellas -LED lighting	-Antique donation -BID -Local businesses -City		
			LONG TERM (2020)	"In-fill" Building	-Private developer -WSC -City	Develop property perhaps in conjunction with WSC	

PLAY

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT SUMMARIES

	PROJECT	GENERAL DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	WHAT	WHO	HOW	NOTES
PLAY	Riverfront Park	Develop Riverfront Park connecting Whitney Park and new parks at Bridges. Provide additional parking for river access. Explore design and development options around Whip Factory and existing affordable housing units in this area.	MEDIUM TERM (2015)	-Recycle bins -BBQ stands -Picnic tables -Ground cover -Seasonal Port-a-potty -Sun dial -Flea market	-DPW -Butcher Block -Local businesses and donations -Penny drive -DPW -Maureen Burne -WOW		
			LONG TERM (2020)	-Landscaping, trees & benches -Amphitheater -Ice Cream, Soda & convenience store -Permanent WC -Vendors -Lighting -Fireworks	-City -State (Parks funding) -WSC -Women's club -Local businesses -G&E -Fire Department		See LIVE, "New Housing at Riverside District" for related project
PLAY	Public Art Programs	Develop program for public art projects	MEDIUM TERM (2010-12)	Installations, Murals and/or Mosaics in empty storefronts and at select downtown locations	-Arts Council -WSC Art Dept. -UMass Art Dept. -BID / WOW -Community organizations		
PLAY	Recreation & Daycare Center	Develop a recreation center for children and teens	LONG TERM	Possible re-use of an existing building or construction of new facility.	-WSC -Boy's and Girl's Club -City	WSC students, Seniors & Retirees can provide support and volunteer.	Could be located near Senior center or Boys and Girls club.

CONNECT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT SUMMARIES

	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	WHAT	WHO	HOW	NOTES
CONNECT	Parking System	<p>Publicize the current parking rules and report any proposed revisions. Develop clear Parking Map.</p> <p>Develop way-finding Parking signage for vehicles and pedestrians.</p> <p>Create/Improve pathways to parking</p>	SHORT TERM (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Publicize current parking rules -Develop a clear parking map -Assess Parking Signage -Community Lot Clean-Up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parking Commission -City -BID (for Map) -Downtown Community Clean Up group (for clean-up) 		Parking Signage could be improved through long-term street improvements. (see "Street / Crosswalk Improvements" below)
			MEDIUM TERM (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model Parking Lot Renovation [Thomas Street Lot] Re-examine Downtown Parking Program (rules & regulations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City/BID/DPW Parking Commission & City Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore Adopt-a-lot program Possible senior volunteers to enforce rules. 	
			LONG TERM (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renovation of all downtown lots; drainage, lighting, permeable hardscapes, play areas 	BID/DPW/City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move forward on "Gaslight" district plan. 	
CONNECT	Rail Trail Development	<p>Celebrate the rail trail, promote its importance as a central city "spine," and advocate for its completion</p>	SHORT TERM (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rail trail clean ups Community outreach "Potting" parties (flowers around rail trail overpasses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Form "Friends of the Rail Trail" Group -Existing community groups -Friends of Westfield Riverside Trail -Donors: nurseries, Home Depot, 4-H club 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine liability and safety issues before moving forward 	
			MEDIUM TERM (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Banner across Elm Street Rail Bridge Neighborhood banners at Orange St., Chapel St. and Thomas St. Flags of Ethnicity Bridge Lighting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -BID -City -Contest for local artists, BID, Private donors -Community Organizations -DPW/City 		
			LONG TERM (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Rail Trail Develop Rail Trail info Kiosks with map, gateways and signage 			

CONNECT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT SUMMARIES

	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	WHAT	WHO	HOW	NOTES
CONNECT	Street / Crosswalk Improvement	Design street improvements to promote pedestrian safety.	SHORT TERM (2009)	Community clean-up Basic landscaping	Community members BID Private donors		
		Sidewalk Inventory by Seniors Develop designs for Elm Street traffic calming and streetscape improvements (benches, trees). Explore Parking options and traffic flow.	MEDIUM TERM (2012)	-Crosswalks -Traffic Signs (speed limit painted on streets) -Speed bumps (recessed)	-City -DPW	Develop unique crosswalk possibly related to adjacent neighborhoods	
			LONG TERM (2020)	-Review Traffic Study and Develop Traffic strategy. -Enlarge sidewalks and create bump-outs -New street furniture, lighting and unified signage - Explore One-way Traffic and closing off a section of Elm Street	City/DPW PVPC/PVTA City/DPW City/DPW/BID		
CONNECT	Encourage Bikes on Streets and Buses	Promote safe cycling within the city and advocate for "rack/roll" program for Westfield buses.	MEDIUM TERM (2012)	-Ask PVTA to install bike racks on local buses. -Install Bike Racks on street -Bike striping for lane sharing	-BID -City -Don Podolski -DPW -private donors	Creating a bike and pedestrian advocacy group	Columbia Bike-Shaped Racks were discussed.
CONNECT	Park/Ride	Develop Park/Ride lots at Stop&Shop parking lot and the Southwest Riverfront area to encourage alternative transportation.	MEDIUM TERM	Information Kiosks w/ map Bike Racks on street [Columbia Bike-Shaped Racks] Park/Ride Signage	BID / City DPW/private donors BID	Friends of the Rail Trail Community Transportation Committee (John Olver)	2011
			LONG TERM	-Photovoltaic Carports -Rent-a-bike program -Facility for WC/water and Showers -Information Center (maps, history...) -Specified Parking -Greenspace, benches and	-Donors -City -BID -Friends of the Rail Trail -DPW	Friends of the Rail Trail Fundraising Transportation Committee funding (John Olver)	2015

CONNECT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT SUMMARIES

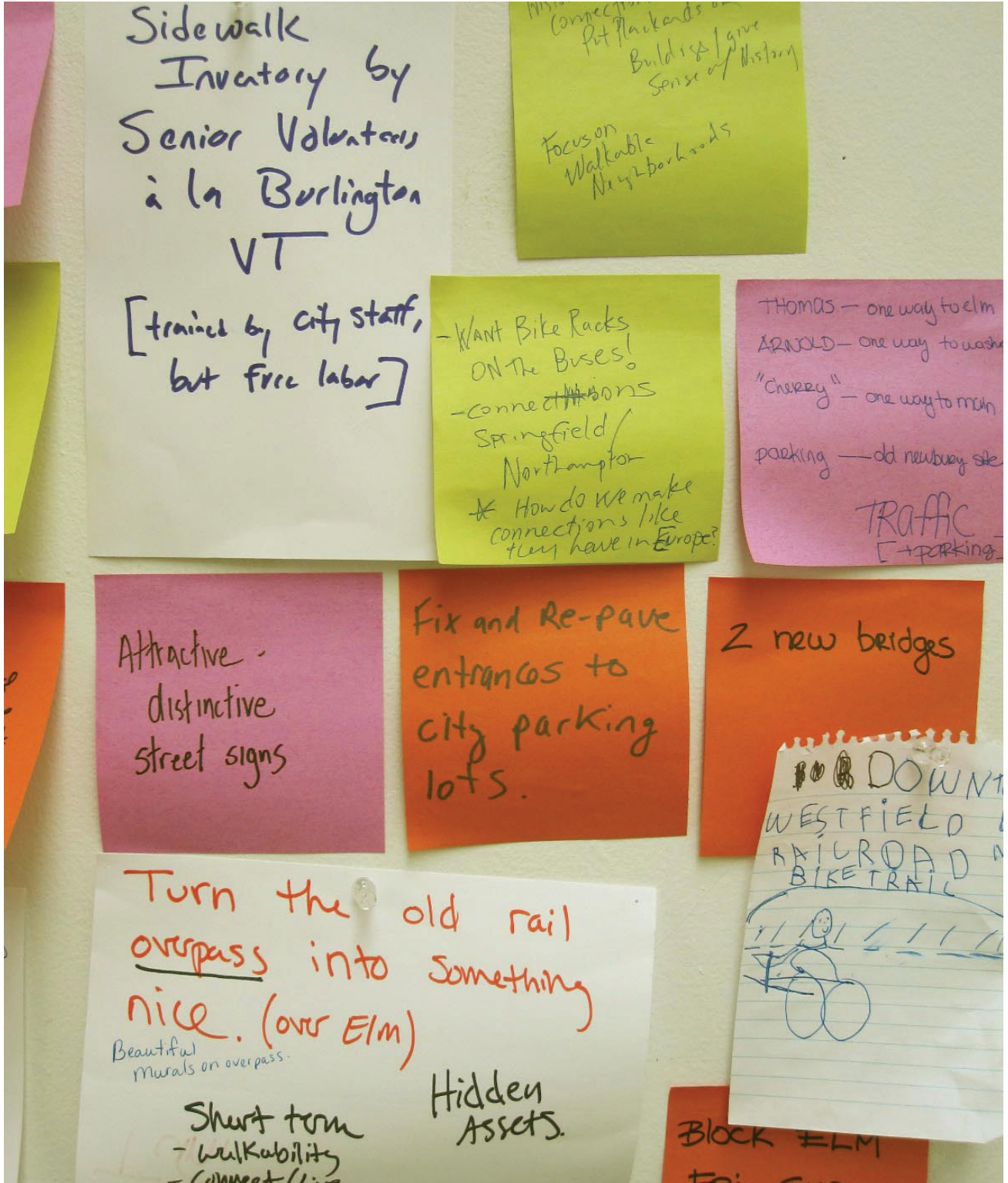
	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	WHAT	WHO	HOW	NOTES
CONNECT	Local Shuttle Bus	Explore possibilities/options of transit service to and from WSC and coordinate with needs of adjacent neighborhoods	SHORT TERM (2010)	-Shuttle bus to downtown and neighboring communities "Trolley" -Bus maps Information Kiosks w/ map	-WSC -BID -PVTA -Mr. Lechrensky (private business)		
			LONG TERM (2015)	-Bus ports [recycled materials] -Integrate service into possible Intermodal Center	-WSC -PVTA -City -BID		
CONNECT	Downtown Recycling & Trash Program	Develop downtown trash/recycling rules. Design and/or provide appropriate receptacles	MEDIUM TERM	-Install Prominently located Recycling bins throughout downtown -Increased maintenance of existing dumpsters	-BID -Health Dept		Develop programming to promote how recycling increases income for the city
CONNECT	Parking Garage	Locate potential sites and capacities	LONG TERM (2020)	Plan and construct Parking Garage to increase downtown Parking capacity	-City -Private Developer		Related to "Gas Light" District Plan and Intermodal Center Development
CONNECT	Intermodal Center	Locate potential sites and develop integrated mixed-use design.	LONG TERM	Plan and construct Transportation hub.	-City -State -PVTA -WSC		
CONNECT	Sustainable & Green Energy Strategies	Promote sustainable and green practices for city and downtown businesses	LONG TERM				

City Departmental Roundtable

The city of Westfield is often held up as a model by other municipalities and state government agencies for its practice of convening regular Department Heads meetings. These meetings are usually chaired by the Mayor, or his designee, and involve a round robin format of information sharing among and between the city's key departments. The Revitalizing Downtown planning process was discussed by this group before it started, during the process, and will be used to disseminate the plan to city staff. Having a regular meeting of city department heads is a significant asset to the city and was extremely helpful in this planning process to assure city leader's participation in the plan.

Westfield State College Coordinating Committee

In May 2009, the City of Westfield and Westfield State College invited key people to be a part of a monthly status update on Westfield downtown development. These monthly meetings are held at the college in the President's Board Room and are an opportunity to get information on various aspects of downtown development directly from sources. Meetings begin at 12:30pm and lunch is provided. Participants include the Mayor, Westfield State College President, Senator Knapik, Representative Humason, and other powerful people influencing the success of the city's downtown revitalization efforts. This group offers another great opportunity for plan implementation and oversight.



RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

Westfield's Downtown Revitalization plan focuses on housing and economic development, but it encompasses all aspects of life in the city's downtown. Four verbs characterize life in Westfield's downtown---people **live, work, play** and **connect**. This section of our plan summarizes priority recommendations that emerged from this collaborative community-based planning process.

The priority recommendations are divided into our organizing framework: Live, Work, Play, and Connect. Each recommendation is described in detail, and includes an explanation of the main and secondary agents of implementation, an outline of how the recommendation can be implemented, and a summary of the resources required and potential funding sources. A more thorough description of the potential funding sources can be found in the separate "Funding Opportunities" Chapter.

LIVE

Introduction

At the center of Westfield’s downtown revitalization effort is the development and re-development of housing, both affordable and market-rate, to enhance the quality of life in the existing neighborhoods in and around the downtown by providing high-quality, aesthetically pleasing and variably-priced housing options to Westfield residents.

Priority Recommendations

- 1. Promote Neighborhood Building:** Build on existing efforts initiated by a variety of city departments, including the Community Police Unit, the Business Improvement District (BID), Westfield State College (WSC) and others to promote “neighborhood building” to encourage and facilitate resident involvement in their neighborhoods.
- 2. Annual Volunteer Cleanup Day:** Establish an annual city cleanup day.
- 3. Promote Housing Resources on City’s Website:** Reorganize the Department of Community Development and Planning website to more clearly profile existing housing resources.
- 4. Preserve and Protect Downtown’s Walkable Neighborhoods:** In the neighborhoods within and adjacent to the downtown, retain existing housing stock and encourage additional infill housing where opportunities are available. Make infrastructure investments to improve and ensure walkability.
- 5. Encourage New Housing in the Core Downtown District:** Encourage housing in commercial buildings that contain underutilized or vacant upper-story space as well as new housing through infill, including mixed-income and mixed-use, in the Core Downtown District.
- 6. Support Reuse of Under-utilized Buildings and Property Along Elm Street:** Support new housing along Elm Street in the area north of Bartlett Street and south of the Westfield River through adaptive re-use of existing under-utilized religious and institutional buildings, rehabilitation of underutilized or vacant upper story space in existing commercial buildings, and through infill development.
- 7. Create a New Riverfront District:** Encourage new construction with mixed-income and mixed-use housing along the Westfield River west of Elm Street.
- 8. Promote New Construction in the Depot Square District:** Encourage new mixed-income housing and mixed-use development through infill and adaptive reuse in the Depot Square District.

Action Plan

1. Promote Neighborhood Building

Build on existing efforts initiated by a variety of city departments, including the Community Police Unit, the Business Improvement District (BID), Westfield State College (WSC) and others to promote “neighborhood building” to encourage and facilitate resident involvement in their neighborhoods.

What: Develop neighborhood events and initiatives that promote the character and enhance the quality of downtown neighborhoods such as a neighborhood block party and neighborhood clean-up day while also pursuing an organized and consistent effort to maintain and preserve the quality of housing available in neighborhoods surrounding the downtown.

Who: Neighborhood block parties and other community events: a three-fold effort involving the Community Police Officer assigned to the neighborhood, the City Councilor who represents the neighborhood, and an active community resident. These three will act as the steering committee for the development of neighborhood events and initiatives and will identify additional neighborhood residents to assist in the development of activities. This initiative should be based out of the Mayor's Office.

How:

- Assistant to the Mayor serves as lead city hall contact.
- Assistant to the Mayor in conjunction with the neighborhood Community Police Officer and neighborhood city council representative determines the neighborhood representative.
- Assistant to the Mayor forms steering committee.
- Steering committee decides date for neighborhood block party and neighborhood cleanup event (clean-up event should correspond with city-wide cleanup day). The committee try to focus on just two events (block party and clean-up) the first year to build support.
- Steering committee identifies neighborhood residents to serve on a coordinating committee for that specific event.
- Plan neighborhood event (During the Design Workshops, Orange Street or Pleasant Street neighborhoods were identified

as having the community infrastructure necessary for a first event).

- Hold neighborhood event.

Funding & Resources Required: Staff time of Assistant to the Mayor, Community Police Officer; volunteer time to serve on steering committee and coordinating committee; funding to hold event, possible funding sources include: Westfield Arts Council grants, Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts grants, and private donations.

2. Annual Volunteer Cleanup Day

Establish an annual city cleanup day

What: Create a systematic and sustainable program (not a one-time effort) that utilizes volunteers from civic, community, and youth organizations to clean-up downtown neighborhoods, alleyways, parking lots, and proposed rail trail.

Who: Westfield Mayor's Office, Community Police, Business Improvement District, Westfield State College, City Council Members, Department of Public Works, Conservation Administrator, and other non-city staff entities such as Boy Scouts, and proposed rail trail committee.

How:

- Assistant to the Mayor serves as lead city hall contact.
- Assistant to the Mayor in conjunction with a Community Police Officer, City Council members, and Neighborhood groups identify neighborhood priorities for clean up and coordinate the formation of a "city-cleanup day" steering committee comprised of city hall and non-city hall staff.
- Steering committee decides date for city cleanup day.
- Promote event through existing community organizations.

- Solicit equipment donations from local landscaping firms.
- Solicit food donations for free breakfast or lunch from local businesses
- Mayoral send-off

Funding & Resources Required: Staff time of Assistant to the Mayor, Community Police Officer, and other city and non-city staff; volunteer time to serve on steering committee and coordinating committee; funding to hold event, possible funding sources include: Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts grants and private donations.

3. Promote Housing Resources on City's Website

Reorganize the Department of Community Development and Planning website to more clearly profile existing housing resources.

What: Westfield residents in need of housing assistance would benefit from a reorganization of the Department of Community Development & Planning's website, one which can clearly direct residents to existing housing resources, regardless of whether they are provided by the city, state, non-profit or private entity.

Who: Department of Community Development & Planning, City Hall webmaster, Westfield State College intern.

How:

- Within the existing "Living In Westfield" webpage, create a "Resources" or "Housing Resources" link, which will bring visitors to a "Housing" section on the Department of Community Development & Planning's newly reorganized website.

- Within the new "Housing Resources" page, provide web links to the following information:
 - o Foreclosure counseling
 - o First-Time Homebuyer information
 - o Transitional Housing Assistance and Homelessness Assistance
 - o Homeowner Assistance
- Additional housing resources and programs as they become available or active.

Funding & Resources Required: City Planner staff time coordinate website enhancements, possibly working with outside consultant and Westfield State College intern. Potential funding sources include Local Technical Assistance from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

4. Preserve and Protect Downtown's Walkable Neighborhoods

In the neighborhoods within and adjacent to the downtown, retain existing housing stock and encourage additional infill housing where opportunities are available. Make infrastructure investments to improve and ensure walkability.

What: Use zoning and other regulatory tools to preserve, protect and enhance compact, walkable neighborhoods in and around the downtown target area. Particularly, the City should maintain existing provisions within the Court Street and Broad Street Mixed Residence Business Districts that limit commercial uses to the first floors. The City should also work to protect the residential nature of Washington Street thereby helping to retain affordable, market-rate housing options in the neighborhoods closest to the downtown. The city should encourage businesses to locate within the historic downtown. The City should continue to make streetscape and other infrastructure improvements in these neighborhoods to enhance walkability.

Who: Westfield City Council, Planning Board, Department of Community Development and Planning, Engineering Department, Department of Public Works, Westfield residents

How:

- Resist zoning amendments that would allow existing buildings to convert completely to commercial use in the Court Street and Broad Street Mixed Residence Business Districts.
- Resist changing residential zoning along Washington Street to allow commercial uses.
- Continue to make streetscape and other infrastructure improvements in these neighborhoods to enhance walkability by coordinating with Department of Engineering and Public Works.
- Dedicate a portion of the City's annual Community Development Block Grant Funding to one priority neighborhood per year.

Funding & Resources Required: City Hall staff time work with planning board, city council, and Department of Public Works & Engineering. Local Technical Assistance funds from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission available for outreach and technical assistance. CDBG funds for implementation of infrastructure projects.

5. Encourage New Housing in the Core Downtown District

Encourage housing in commercial buildings that contain underutilized or vacant upper-story space as well as new housing through infill, including mixed-income and mixed-use, in the Core Downtown District.

What: Continue city and citizen support for Elm Street affordable housing project sponsored by Domus Incorporated and student housing project sponsored by Westfield State College. Successful completion of these two projects/initiatives will work to generate additional developer interest for market-rate and mixed-use housing in the downtown.

Who: Westfield City Council, Westfield City Hall Staff, Westfield Citizens, Westfield State College, Domus Inc., and BID

How:

- City of Westfield Engineering and Public Works departments: The City needs to continue infrastructure and streetscape investments in this target area to instill investor confidence in the downtown.
- Westfield Planning Department: Market this target area with the district map and district profile generated from this downtown planning process.
- Westfield City Council: Continue financial support of infrastructure and streetscape investments in this target area. Continue financial support of Domus Inc. through Community Development Block Grant funds, HOME funds, and Community Preservation Act Housing funds to assist in the creation of affordable housing units.
- City Council: Downtown Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Ordinance to encourage denser residential and mixed-use development. Adoption will provide developers and the city with financial incentives.
- Westfield Citizens: Support housing projects and zoning amendments by attendance at public meetings in the advent that public opposition poses a threat to project approval.

Funding & Resources Required: City Hall staff time to coordinate infrastructure projects and development interest; CDBG funds for the implementation of infrastructure improvements; New Market Tax Credits, Federal and State Historic Tax Credits for building improvements; Urban Centers Housing Tax-Increment Financing for property tax relief for redeveloped/rehabilitated property; and Community Preservation Act funds for façade improvements (historic preservation funds) and affordable housing development assistance (housing funds).

6. Support Reuse of Under-utilized Buildings and Property Along Elm Street

Support new housing along Elm Street in the area north of Bartlett Street and south of the Westfield River through adaptive re-use of existing under-utilized religious and institutional buildings, rehabilitation of underutilized or vacant upper story space in existing commercial buildings, and through infill development.

What: The area south of the Westfield River and north of Bartlett Street is also an area in transition. It contains a few small but thriving businesses such as Tommy D's and Angelo's, but it also has several vacant storefronts, vacant upper stories and wholly underutilized spaces such as the Getty Gas Station, property surrounding Pasquinelli's Restaurant and the former Holy Trinity School. Once the Great River Bridge transportation project is completed, this area will be an opportunity area for additional commercial investment as well as the development of new mixed income and mixed-use housing. This area will tie seamlessly with future residences and parks located on the southern banks of the Westfield River. This area also provides good access to downtown amenities as well as to the major transportation routes into and out of the city, features of which are important to working residents and students at Westfield State College.

Who: Westfield City Council, Westfield City Hall Staff, BID, Westfield Citizens, Westfield Housing Authority, Roman Catholic Church, Private Developers, Local property owners.

How:

- City of Westfield Engineering and Public Works departments. The city needs to continue infrastructure and streetscape improvements in and around this target area to instill a sense of investor confidence in the area and therefore set the stage for future market-rate housing and mixed-use development.
- Westfield City Council. Continue financial support of infrastructure and streetscape investments in this target area. Continue financial support of Domus Inc. through Community Development Block Grant funds, HOME funds, and Community Preservation Act Housing funds to assist in the creation of affordable housing units.
- Westfield City Council: Adopt Downtown Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Ordinance to encourage denser residential and mixed-use development. Adoption will provide developers and the city with financial incentives.
- Westfield City Council: Adopt an Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Finance District. State lawmakers passed legislation in 2003 to provide tax incentives to developers to construct new residential units on vacant land or rehabilitate existing buildings for new residential units. This area in the downtown has enough developable / redevelopable land to potentially make this program feasible.
- Westfield Redevelopment Authority. City assemblage of property in this target area.
- Westfield Planning Department. Market this target area with the district map and district profile generated from this downtown

planning process.

- Westfield Citizens. Support housing projects by attendance at public meetings in the advent that public opposition poses a threat to project approval.
- Archdiocese of Springfield. Work with for-profit or non-profit developer to rehabilitate this large school building for residential or community use. Revitalization of this large, seemingly dormant building is a key component of the overall redevelopment effort for this entire target area.

Funding & Resources Required: City Hall staff time to coordinate infrastructure projects and development interest; CDBG funds for the implementation of infrastructure improvements; New Market Tax Credits, Federal and State Historic Tax Credits for building improvements; Urban Centers Housing Tax-Increment Financing for property tax relief for redeveloped/rehabilitated property; and Community Preservation Act funds for façade improvements (historic preservation funds) and affordable housing development assistance (housing funds).

7. Create a New Riverfront District

Encourage new construction with mixed-income and mixed-use housing along the Westfield River west of Elm Street.

What: Riverfront areas historically were prime locations for industrial uses. With the national decline in manufacturing in urban area, cities and towns nationwide are reclaiming riverfront areas for more people-oriented uses. Land located on both sides of the Westfield River will offer substantial opportunity for the development of mixed income and mixed-use housing along with parks and other

recreational facilities once the Great River Bridge project is completed. This area offers direct access to the river and several parks and good access to downtown amenities as well as to the major transportation routes into and out of the city. These features would be important to a working resident or a student attending Westfield State College.

Who: Westfield City Council, Westfield City Hall Staff, Westfield Citizens, Westfield Housing Authority, Private Developers, Westfield Citizens

How:

- City of Westfield Engineering and Public Works departments. The city needs to continue infrastructure and streetscape improvements in and around this target area to instill a sense of investor confidence in the area and therefore set the stage for future market-rate housing and mixed-use development.
- Westfield City Council. Continue financial support of infrastructure and streetscape investments in this target area. Continue financial support of Domus Inc. through Community Development Block Grant funds, HOME funds, and Community Preservation Act Housing funds to assist in the creation of affordable housing units.
- Westfield City Council: Adopt Downtown Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Ordinance to encourage denser residential and mixed-use development. Adoption will provide developers and the city with financial incentives.
- Westfield City Council: Adopt an Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Finance District. State lawmakers passed legislation in 2003 to provide tax incentives to developers to construct new residential units on vacant land or rehabilitate existing

buildings for new residential units. This area in the downtown has enough developable / redevelopable land to potentially make this program feasible.

- Westfield Redevelopment Authority. City assemblage of property in this target area.
- Westfield Planning Department. Market this target area with the district map and district profile generated from this downtown planning process.
- Westfield Citizens. Support housing projects by attendance at public meetings in the advent that public opposition poses a threat to project approval.
- Private or Non-profit Developer: Replace the Westfield Housing Authority units with a large mixed-income residential project. Reintegrate the same number (or more) of housing authority units back into this site.

Funding & Resources Required: City Hall staff time to coordinate infrastructure projects and development interest; CDBG funds for the implementation of infrastructure improvements; New Market Tax Credits, Federal and State Historic Tax Credits for building improvements; Urban Centers Housing Tax-Increment Financing for property tax relief for redeveloped/rehabilitated property; and Community Preservation Act funds for façade improvements (historic preservation funds) and affordable housing development assistance (housing funds).

8. Promote New Construction in the Depot Square District

Encourage new mixed-income housing and mixed-use development through infill and adaptive reuse in the Depot Square District.

What: The “Depot Square District” (the area located south of Columbia Street and north of the Westfield River) is in transition. It contains thriving businesses such as the Pilgrim Candle shop and Butcher Block, but also several underutilized buildings. Once the Great River Bridge transportation project is completed, this area offers a substantial opportunity for additional commercial investment as well as the development of new mixed income and mixed-use housing. This area will tie seamlessly with future residences and parks located on the northern banks of the Westfield River. This area also provides good access to downtown amenities as well as to the major transportation routes into and out of the city, features of which are important to working residents and students at Westfield State College.

Who: Westfield City Council, Westfield City Hall Staff, Westfield Citizens, Westfield Housing Authority, Private Developers, BID

How:

- City of Westfield Engineering and Public Works departments. The city needs to continue infrastructure and streetscape improvements in and around this target area to instill a sense of investor confidence in the area and therefore set the stage for future market-rate housing and mixed-use development.
- Westfield City Council. Continue financial support of infrastructure and streetscape investments in this target area. Continue financial support of Domus Inc. through Community Development Block Grant funds, HOME funds, and Community

Preservation Act Housing funds to assist in the creation of affordable housing units.

- Westfield City Council: Adopt Downtown Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Ordinance to encourage denser residential and mixed-use development. Adoption will provide developers and the city with financial incentives.
- Westfield City Council: Adopt an Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Finance District. State lawmakers passed legislation in 2003 to provide tax incentives to developers to construct new residential units on vacant land or rehabilitate existing buildings for new residential units. This area in the downtown has enough developable / redevelopable land to potentially make this program feasible.
- Westfield Redevelopment Authority. City assemblage of property in this target area.
- Westfield Planning Department. Market this target area with the district map and district profile generated from this downtown planning process.
- Westfield Citizens. Support housing projects by attendance at public meetings in the advent that public opposition poses a threat to project approval.

Funding & Resources Required: City Hall staff time to coordinate infrastructure projects and development interest; CDBG funds for the implementation of infrastructure improvements; New Market Tax Credits, Federal and State Historic Tax Credits for building improvements; Urban Centers Housing Tax-Increment Financing for property tax relief for redeveloped/rehabilitated property; and Community Preservation Act funds for façade improvements (historic preservation funds) and affordable housing development assistance (housing funds).

WORK

Introduction

Business and economic development has been a primary focus of downtown revitalizations efforts for the city of Westfield for many years. Many community organizations and city hall staff are working to improve the economic conditions of the downtown district, through business improvements, social programming, and community event planning. While the effects of these efforts are evident in the downtown, additional strategies must be undertaken to promote and encourage future business development in Westfield’s downtown.

Priority Recommendations

- 9. Establish Downtown Westfield Economic Development Collaborative:** Build on existing efforts and establish a Downtown Westfield Economic Development Collaborative to combine the resources of key organizations committed to revitalizing downtown and to implement the shared vision for economic development for the downtown district that has emerged from this planning process.
- 10. Promote and Brand Downtown Westfield:** Create a campaign to promote and “brand” downtown Westfield.
- 11. Develop Downtown Permitting Guidebook:** Develop permitting guidebook and distribute to existing downtown property owners as well as make available on City website.
- 12. Support Small Business and Entrepreneurial Development:** Encourage small business development in the downtown area through use of STCC Entrepreneurial Institute’s existing incubator space and technical assistance and WNEC’S Center for Advancing Entrepreneurship’s technical assistance instead of “reinventing the wheel” and trying to create incubator space in downtown.
- 13. Create a Design Review Board and Ordinance:** Adopt Design Review zoning ordinance and standards and establish a Design Review Board to examine all new downtown commercial and large residential projects.
- 14. Use Zoning to Encourage Downtown Growth and Development:** Enforce existing zoning in the Downtown target area, and through out the city to channel commercial growth and development downtown and to assure a diverse mix of housing available.
- 15. Promote Redevelopment of Historic Structures:** Promote adaptive reuse and restoration of historic buildings such as Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Rectory, Morgan-Way House, Foster House, Kellogg House.

Action Plan

9. Establish Downtown Westfield Economic Development Collaborative

Build on existing efforts and establish a Downtown Westfield Economic Development Collaborative to combine the resources of key organizations committed to revitalizing downtown and to implement the shared vision for economic development for the downtown district that has emerged from this planning process.

What: To create a unified voice on downtown issues and promote an economic and political environment favorable to business, while striving to encourage the exchange of ideas among Collaborative members and support activities which further the success of downtown.

Who: City Officials, Business Improvement District, Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce, Westfield on Weekends, Westfield Arts on the Green, Domus Incorporated, Historical Society, and Westfield State College. Other possible groups include the Athenaeum, YMCA, Children's Museum, etc.

How:

- Determine which organization will take the lead to organize initial meeting.
- Find appropriate meeting location and invite key members to the initial meeting.
- Establish board members and determine board membership responsibilities.
- Determine the mission of the Collaborative.
- Develop project ideas for implementation (refer to this plan for project ideas and suggestions).
- Create a single, downtown website with one volunteer or paid webmaster to update and integrate with Collaborative members existing websites. Ensure continued updates and maintenance of the website.

- Create a fee schedule (annual or monthly) for members to pay for the cost of the website hosting, webmaster, and any other direct costs needed by the Collaborative.

Funding & Resources Required: Staff and volunteer time to coordinate formation of group; funds for website site development and maintenance and any other direct costs needed by the Collaborative, possibly through membership fees. The Community Endowment Foundation of Western Massachusetts also offers funding that may pay for website development.

10. Promote and Brand Downtown Westfield

Create a campaign to promote and “brand” downtown Westfield.

What: To create a distinct, downtown symbol, font and color scheme that defines the downtown area, integrates with adjacent residential neighborhoods, and markets downtown Westfield as a place to live, work, and shop. This initiative should strongly consider building upon Westfield's unique, industrial history, incorporating both the whip and bicycle.

Who: Downtown Westfield Economic Development Collaborative, Historical Commission, professional or volunteer marketing / branding consultant

How:

- Hire a consultant that specializes in Community Branding.
Online research found Arnett Muldrow & Associates (www.arnettmuldrow.com), based in South Carolina. This nationally recognized planning firm has developed branding for over 100 communities in 14 states. Contact Ben Muldrow at 1-864-275-5892 or ben@arnettmuldrow.com

Consultants work in community for 2-3 days with design workshops and technical assistance

Cost for service ranges \$6,000-\$8,000, plus expenses. Expense costs are negotiable.

Products include:

- o Five (5) versions of final logo and tag line, provided in all electronic formats (JPG, illustrator, eps) for production / implementation
- o Style guide for distribution to business community
- o Comprehensive report
- Involve the Westfield Historical Commission
- Determine the community's graphic identity.
- Develop a brand concept.
 - o Provide a font, symbol, and color scheme for the community.
 - o Use traditional colors for community.
 - o Create a symbol that implies forward movement.
 - o Create a tagline that claims community's legacy and reinforces hometown feel.
- Use this brand concept at the main gateways into the downtown, downtown signage, brochures and other printed materials, t-shirts, tote bags, letterhead, etc.

Funding & Resources Required: Funding to be provided by financial contributions by all members of the newly established Downtown Westfield Economic Development Collaborative. A contribution of \$500-\$2000 by all members will cover the cost of hiring a professional consultant. Or, the Collaborative can seek Community Preservation Act funds to hire a professional consultant, provided that the funding proposal meets CPA program criteria. The Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts and the Westfield Arts Council may be able to offer assistance towards a community kick-off event.

11. Develop Downtown Permitting Guidebook

Develop permitting guidebook and distribute to existing downtown property owners as well as make available on City website.

What: Municipalities across the state have found permitting guidebooks to be very helpful for walking applicants through the permitting process. These guidebooks outline the permitting steps a property owner would need to follow in order to develop, redevelop, renovate, or rehabilitate their property.

Who: City Planner, Planning Board, third-party consultant

How:

- City planner works with planning board to select a 3rd party consultant to develop the permitting guidebook.
- 3rd party consultant works with city hall staff to document the permitting process in Westfield.
- 3rd-party consultant provides copies of permitting guidebook to city hall departments.
- Department of Community Development & Planning posts permitting guidebook on Planning Department website. Building and Engineering departments should provide links to the guidebook on their webpages.
- City hall or consultant distributes flyers to downtown property owners that publicize the availability of the permitting guidebook on the city's website.

Funding and Resources Required: Staff time of city planner to coordinate development of permitting guidebook. Printing costs for distribution of flyers.

12. Support Small Business and Entrepreneurial Development

Encourage small business development in the downtown area through use of STCC Entrepreneurial Institute's existing incubator space, technical assistance from WNEC'S Center for Advancing Entrepreneurship's and emerging business support programs at Westfield State College.

What: Utilize the existing business development resources at the region's institutions of higher education, particularly WSC, the Springfield Technical Community College's Entrepreneurial Institute's and the Western New England College School of Law's Center for Advancing Entrepreneurship's.

Who: Downtown Westfield Economic Development Collaborative, City, BID, and Chamber

How:

- Develop a partnership with the Scibelli Enterprise Center at Springfield Technical Community Collage. STCC offers shared technology and incubator space. Resources are available to all residents in the region. At this time, the STCC program does not directly work with communities to place entrepreneurs who have outgrown their incubator space to large locations within the region; however, the office is in the process of re-organizing itself, and this may be a possibility in the future. Once the STCC program has completed reorganization, the City, BID, Chamber, and Downtown Westfield Economic Development Collaborative should continually inquire with STCC to see if any small businesses have outgrown their space and would like to bring their business to downtown Westfield. Contact Gayle Hsiao, Coordinator of the Entrepreneurial Institute, 413-755-6143 or ghsiao@stcc.edu
 - o Springfield Business Incubator: Provide incubator space for any adults in the region, with shared resources. Rent is \$600 / month.
 - o Student Business Incubation: Provides incubator space for any enrolled students (elementary-college) in the region. Low rents.
 - o "Virtual Incubator" space: STCC is in the process of developing a "Virtual Incubator" space for virtual businesses (software designers, web designers). Provides meeting space, shared resources at an hourly rate.
 - o SCORE: a federal agency that provides free counseling for small businesses. Office located at STCC.
 - o Small Business Administration: a federal agency that provides free counseling on business planning and assistance with financing. Provides guaranteed bank loans. Office located at STCC.
 - o Western Mass Small Business Development Center: a federal agency that is staffed with graduates from the UMass business program. Provides free mentoring on business plan development. Office located at STCC.
- Develop a partnership with the Law and Business Center for Advancing Entrepreneurship at Western New England College School of Law. The Center is very interested in developing a relationship with the City of Westfield. Contact Aimee Griffin Munnings, Director, at 413-796-2030 amunnings@law.wnec.edu. Website for more information is www1.law.wnec.edu/lawandbusiness
 - o Provides free legal and business assistance for entrepreneur services to 24 clients a year (12 per semester).
 - o Provides workshops focused on entrepreneurship and economic development during the academic year.

Funding & Resources Required: No funding required. Downtown organizations should direct residents interested in incubator space and business technical assistance to the existing space at STCC.

13. Create a Design Review Board and Ordinance

Adopt Design Review zoning ordinance and standards and establish a Design Review Board to examine all new downtown commercial and large residential projects.

What: The purpose of a Design Review Board is to preserve and enhance the Town’s cultural, economic and historical resources and to increase the open space and recreation opportunities by providing for a detailed review of all changes in land use, the appearance of structures and the appearance of sites which may affect these resources. Consider how downtown developments can help contribute to downtown open space and passive recreation. Ensure that downtown developments are designed to physically and visually connect to buildings as well as to the Elm Street corridor and Columbia Greenway Rail Trail. Ensure that any proposed developments maintain the integrity of the Columbia Greenway rail trail.

Who: Planning Department, Planning Board, City Council

How:

- Determine overlay district where the Design Review standards would apply.
- Establish ad-hoc committee to draft design standards. Representatives of the committee should include an architect, landscape architect, historic preservationist, and commercial property owners.
- Draft design standards.

- Design standards should consider the following:
 - o Provisions regarding building height; proportions; relation to adjacent structures; shape of roofs, windows, doors and other architectural details; landscape; signage; lighting; and scale.
 - o Provisions for open space and passive recreation.
 - ◇ This may include public space adjacent to Elm Street or the Columbia Greenway.
 - ◇ It may also include linear parks that connect Elm Street to the Columbia Greenway, with the goal of providing multiple access points for users to enter and leave the greenway throughout the downtown.
 - o Provisions for streetscape improvements that will enhance public use.
 - o Physical and visual connections to existing buildings as well as to Elm Street to the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail.
 - o Maintaining the integrity of the Columbia Greenway rail trail path
- Draft Design Review ordinance. Ordinance should include information on the ordinance purpose; review board structure and membership; reviewable actions; review procedures; and design standards.
- Hold public hearing on the proposed ordinance and design standards through the planning board and city council process.
- Adopt proposed ordinance.

- Develop Design Guidebook that provides visual reference to the design standards. The guidebook would be made available on the web, as well in a printed format, for future applicants.
- Make all information regarding the board (meeting dates, membership, review process) available on the web, as well as the guidebook.
- Integrate LEED certification into process
- Use the Design Review process described in the “Work” Chapter to develop design criteria for pathways that connect to the greenway, as well as open space

Funding & Resources Required: Volunteer time from interested Board members, and guidance from the City Planning Department. If a consultant is wanted / needed, apply for state technical assistance planning grants and Local Technical Assistance through the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

14. Use Zoning to Encourage Downtown Growth and Development

Enforce existing zoning in the Downtown target area, and through out the city to channel commercial growth and development downtown and to assure a diverse mix of housing available.

What: To ensure Westfield’s Zoning Ordinance channels economic development to the downtown and not to residential areas. Review Zoning Ordinance to ensure that the densities, uses, dimensional standards for commercial development in the Commercial Office Retail Enterprise (CORE) zoning district are consistent with the strategies identified in this plan.

Who: Planning Department, Planning Board, City

Council, Zoning Consultant

How:

- Identify enforcement issues within the current zoning structure of the CORE, Court Street, Broad Street zoning districts. Work with the City Council and Building Inspector / Zoning Enforcement Officer to ensure consistency.
 - o Maintain residential zoning along Washington Street to channel business development to the downtown.
 - o Maintain mixed-use zoning requirements within the Broad Street and Court Street Mixed Residence Business Districts to preserve residential character of these areas and to channel business development to the downtown.
 - o Enforce existing home based business bylaw and revise and amend as necessary to assure vital business development downtown.
 - o Identify additional key concerns for commercial zoning in the downtown area.
- Make proposed amendments to the zoning language.
- Hold public hearing by planning board.
- Hold joint public hearing with planning board / ordinance sub-committee of city council.
- Hold public hearing of city council.
- City council vote.
- Amendments to zoning map, if necessary.

Funding & Resources Required: City Hall staff time work with planning board and city council. Local Technical Assistance funds from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission available for outreach and technical assistance.

15. Promote Redevelopment of Historic Structures

Promote adaptive reuse and restoration of historic buildings such as Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Rectory, Morgan-Way House, Foster House, Kellogg House.

What: To preserve and enhance the City’s cultural, economic and historical resources by adaptive reuse and restoration of historic buildings, namely Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Rectory (Atwater Mansion), Morgan-Way House, Foster House, and Kellogg House, by identifying compatible uses for these buildings and seeking tenants to fill these spaces.

Who: Westfield Historical Commission, Western Hampden Historical Society, Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce and Westfield Planning Department, Westfield State College.

How:

- Historical Commission places Our Lady of Blessed Sacrament Rectory (Atwater Mansion), Morgan-Way House, Foster House, and Kellogg House on National Register.
- The Westfield Planning Department works with the Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce and other appropriate organizations to identify compatible uses for the Blessed Sacrament Rectory, Morgan-Way House, Foster House, and Kellogg House.
- Once compatible uses for these properties are identified, the Westfield Planning Department, in conjunction with the Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce and Westfield Business Improvement District, seeks tenants to fill these spaces.
 - o Westfield State College’s downtown expansion plans should be considered and, as a result, the

Westfield State College Alumni Office and other appropriate College offices should be contacted.

- o The Downtown Community Workshop series identified the Blessed Sacrament Rectory building as a potential location for a bed and breakfast / small conference center facility for the state college.
- Use Community Preservation Act Funds to complete façade work.
- Use National Historic Tax Credits to renovate building.

Funding and Resources Required: Volunteer time of Historical Commission and others to nominate properties to National Register; Community Preservation Act Funds, State Historic Tax credits (as available), and Federal Historic Tax credits for building renovation.

PLAY

Introduction

Play refers to recreation, arts and entertainment. It also refers to a more passive type of recreation in which people seek to experience downtown by walking around, people-watching, window shopping, or simply lingering in public spaces. In many ways, a successful downtown is a playful downtown, full of a diverse variety of people who feel comfortable taking ownership of their space by using it--that is, by playing in it.

A playful downtown is the cumulative result of viable businesses, welcoming public spaces, interesting architecture, recreational opportunities, planned and informal events, and an active arts, music and cultural scene. Most importantly, perhaps, playful downtowns are walkable, inclusive spaces that are full of all sorts of people... residents and visitors, artists and businesspeople, workers and loiterers, walkers and bikers, eaters and entertainers, and so on. For the City of Westfield, achieving a playful downtown will be a multifaceted effort, and the city, local organizations, and residents are already working on many of the pieces that will help create this space. Residents envision the future downtown as a playground for adults, teenagers, seniors and children. By combining arts and entertainment with exciting and welcoming public and recreational spaces, people will have more reasons both to come downtown and to stay a while. At the same time, the recommendations detailed in this chapter will work together with the *housing*, *work* and *connect* recommendations to help create a truly playful downtown that better serves existing and new residents, workers and visitors.

Recommendations

- 16. Increase Arts, Entertainment, and Recreational Uses Downtown.** Continue to increase use of downtown venues and open spaces for arts, entertainment and recreational events. Coordinate with Westfield State College's plans for relocating some of their arts and entertainment activities to the downtown.
- 17. Promote Temporary Arts and Entertainment Related Uses of Under-Utilized Downtown Spaces:** Develop organized programs to promote temporary arts and entertainment-related uses in vacant or underutilized lots and storefronts in the target area.
- 18. Coordinate and Disseminate Arts & Event Information:** Coordinate and disseminate information about all the great things happening in Westfield's Downtown.
- 19. Continue Targeted and Consistent Work to Advance the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail:** Continue to advance funding possibilities through MassHighway processes and use municipal ordinances to prevent actions that would make the proposed Rail Trail impassable/impracticable. Focus city and community efforts, and leverage community support by executing a public information campaign and creating a "Friends of the Greenway" community group.
- 20. Create a Riverfront Park:** Create a riverfront park connecting Whitney Park and the new parks that are part of the Great River Bridge development on existing City-owned land along the southern side of the Westfield River.
- 21. Plan for Neighborhood Pocket Parks:** Pursue neighborhood pocket parks in the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.

Action Plan

16. Increase Arts, Entertainment and Recreational Uses Downtown.

Continue to increase use of downtown venues and open spaces for arts, entertainment and recreational events. Coordinate with Westfield State College's plans for relocating some of their arts and entertainment activities to the downtown.

What: Increase the number of free and ticketed events that take place in downtown venues, which include the Green, existing restaurants and art galleries, and existing vacant and under-utilized spaces as discussed in Action Step # 17. This will increase foot traffic and enhance street life in the downtown district. This strategy should build on current Westfield on Weekends (WOW) events, Westfield State College plans for a downtown arts presence, and the efforts of the newly formed committee that is discussed in Action Step # 17 who will be organizing use of vacant and underutilized space within the downtown.

Who: City of Westfield Office of the Mayor, City of Westfield Parks and Recreation Department, Business Improvement District, Westfield State College, Westfield on Weekends, Westfield Arts Council, the newly formed Westfield Community Collaborative, community organizations, local music and theater organizations and venues, churches, community leaders

How:

- The Westfield Office of the Mayor should initiate a meeting that includes staff from Westfield Parks and Recreation Department, representatives from the Westfield Arts Council, representatives from Westfield on Weekends, representatives from the Business Improvement District, and

representatives from the newly formed Westfield Community Collaborative to determine an existing organization to spearhead this initiative or to confirm the formation of a new committee or organization to take on this responsibility.

- Establish regular meetings with interested organizations (see "Who" above) to generate new ideas for use of downtown venues for the arts, and to encourage collaboration between existing organizations.
- Encourage ethnic feasts that celebrate the diversity of Westfield by sharing foods from Puerto Rico, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, etc.

Funding and Resources Required: Staff time of the Westfield Assistant to the Mayor to coordinate initial meeting. Volunteer/Staff time from lead entity to organize meetings and events. In-kind contributions from local organizations and businesses can help to organize and promote this initiative. Funding for various activities/events may be available from the following organizations:

- Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts
- Westfield Arts Council Grants
- National Endowment for the Arts Grants
- New England Foundation for the Arts
- Massachusetts Cultural Council Grants

17. Promote Temporary Arts and Entertainment Related Uses of Under-Utilized Downtown Spaces

Develop organized programs to promote temporary arts and entertainment-related uses in vacant or underutilized lots and storefronts in the target area.

What: Existing vacant or underutilized spaces within the downtown, such as the Newbury Department Store lot, offer opportunity sites to hold events geared toward arts and entertainment, including but not limited to outdoor theatrical productions,

live concerts, movie screenings on the sides of buildings, community picnics, community art and landscape installations, and public murals. These uses will bring activity to the downtown and will hopefully lead to permanent productive uses within these spaces.

Who: City of Westfield Office of the Mayor, Westfield on Weekends (WOW), Business Improvement District (BID), Westfield Arts Council.

How:

- The Westfield Office of the Mayor should initiate the formation of a committee, recruiting members from or collaborating with the Westfield Arts Council and Westfield on Weekends, to serve as the lead organizer and facilitator and hold kick-off meeting.
- Committee identifies and selects appropriate sites in conjunction with current property owner approval.
- Committee becomes the scheduling organization for temporary use of these spaces.
- Committee develops a maintenance program that relies on community volunteers.
- Committee organizes a “revitalization party” that includes volunteers working cleanup and landscaping in preparation for event/activity.
- Committee contacts the following groups and schedules an informational meeting (and disseminates informational flyer) that explains the program to encourage these groups to hold events in downtown Westfield.
 - Westfield State College (WSC) Art, Communication, English, and Music Departments, University of Massachusetts art, media, theater, and music-related programs, local businesses, neighborhood and community organizations.
- Event organizer, in conjunction with Committee, secures liability insurance to hold event/activity.
- Marketing for individual events, at least initially, will be the responsibility of the organization hosting the event or activity. The Committee, however, should provide the organization with distribution lists and recommend contacts.
- Hold events/activities!
- After the event, evaluate the event.

Funding and Resources Required: Staff time of the Westfield Assistant to the Mayor to coordinate initial committee formation meetings. Volunteer time from members of the Westfield Arts Council and Westfield on Weekends (and volunteers from other entities). In-kind contributions from local organizations and businesses can help to organize and promote this program. Funding for various activities/events may be available from the following sources/organizations:

- Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts
- Westfield Arts Council Grants
- National Endowment for the Arts Grants
- New England Foundation for the Arts
- Massachusetts Cultural Council Grants

18. Coordinate and Disseminate Arts & Event Information

Coordinate and disseminate information about all the great things happening in Westfield’s Downtown.

What: Capitalize on the terrific work of Westfield on Weekends, the BID, and others to create mechanisms and opportunities for the dissemination of information about all the events, happenings, and opportunities available in Westfield’s revitalized downtown.

Who: In collaboration with the newly expanded “Westfield Community Collaborative” (a priority recommendation in the “Work” chapter), the BID, WSC, WOW, the City and others.

How:

- Determine outreach strategy.
 - Start small using existing means available—City, BID and WOW websites, posters on utility poles, downtown business bulletin boards, and window displays. Use a logo of the newly formed Westfield Community Collaborative to imprint in viewers subconscious the fact that the city’s downtown activities and events are organized and coordinated;
 - Recruit a WSC student to research the availability of funds to develop electronic (or manual) information kiosks that could be strategically located in the downtown target area;
 - Determine whether it makes sense to create another downtown Westfield website—and either develop it, or if it is determined that a new website does not make sense, ensure that all existing downtown Westfield websites are updated regularly with consistent and accurate information about downtown events, activities, and opportunities.
- Westfield Arts Council Grants
 - Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts Grants
 - Massachusetts Cultural Council Grants
 - In-Kind Contributions by local organizations and residents

19. Continue Targeted and Consistent Work to Advance the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail

Continue to advance funding possibilities through MassHighway processes and use municipal ordinances to prevent actions that would make the proposed Rail Trail impassable/impracticable. Focus city and community efforts, and leverage community support by executing a public information campaign and creating a “Friends of the Greenway” community group.

What: Pursue phased development of the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail in order to build this critical pedestrian and bicycle connection from the Southwick border to the downtown and then to the Westfield River, where it will connect to the Westfield River Trail. This critical project will form the spine of a non-motorized transportation and recreation network through downtown Westfield. The economic development impact of bike and pedestrian infrastructure improvement projects are well documented and a variety of reports are available at: <http://www.greenway.org/benefits.php> After each segment is complete, the City and the newly formed Friends of the Greenway community group can organize a trail cleanup and hold a “grand opening” event.

Who: City of Westfield Engineering and Planning Departments, Westfield City Council, Westfield Planning Board, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), MassHighway, and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation,

Funding and Resources Required: Volunteer and/or staff time of above entities to coordinate and disseminate information about the downtown. Work with a professor in the Communications Department at Westfield State College to establish an annual internship program, during which the student(s) earn class credit, to provide assistance with the development and maintenance of a website as well as research and promotional assistance. Apply for funding from the sources for public outreach activities and events:

Westfield Business Improvement District (BID), Westfield Chamber of Commerce, Westfield State College, Westfield on Weekends (WOW), YMCA, community and neighborhood groups, trail advocates, and downtown businesses (especially bicycle shops and other sports stores), and city residents.

How:

- Existing trail/bike advocates and concerned citizens: Form a “Friends of the Greenway” organization to spearhead public information campaign on the trail project and function as an advocacy group to ensure the project moves forward. This group should include members of the inactive Columbia Greenway Rail Trail Advisory Committee.
- City of Westfield Engineering Department: Continue to participate actively in the PVPC Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) to assure that funding for the project remains on the region’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
- City of Westfield Engineering Department: Continue to participate actively in the bike/ped sub-committee of the JTC—the entity that advises the JTC on bike/ped projects.
- “Friends of the Greenway;” Organize citizens groups to perform trail clean up and to help make the rail trail route known to the public so residents will support greenway projects over time at public hearings and through tax dollar allocations.
- “Friends of the Greenway” in conjunction with above listed entities: Develop an outreach component to the Columbia Greenway development that would educate the public on the benefits of the rail trail project.
- “Friends of the Greenway:” Launch an organized public information and education campaign, including public events on the Greenway route, to show residents how

this former rail line is an outstanding City resource with enormous potential.

- “Friends of the Greenway:” Organize a community cleanup day followed by an opening event when segments of the Greenway are completed. Hold a large celebration when the entire trail is completed, including a community bicycle loop ride up the entire greenway and then back down along Elm Street.
- All Above Entities: Ensure that any proposed developments maintain the integrity of the Columbia Greenway rail trail path, and work to ensure that downtown developments are designed to physically and visually connect buildings and Elm Street to the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail through the Design Review process described in the “Work” Chapter.

Funding and Resources Required: Staff and volunteer time from above named groups. Funding for this multi-year project may be available from the following sources:

- Community Preservation Act funds
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts Gateway Parks Program
- Conservation Partnership Grant, for potential non-profit involvement in land acquisition
- Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Federal Stimulus Funding as available
- In-Kind Contributions: Friends of the Greenway group, greenway cleanups, etc.
- LAND – Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity
- PARC – Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities
- Recreational Trails Program
- State transportation funding as available
- *Active Transportation Investment Fund* (if approved --currently being discussed by Congress as part of transportation legislation)

20. Create a Riverfront Park

Create a riverfront park connecting Whitney Park and the new parks that are part of the Great River Bridge development on existing City-owned land along the southern side of the Westfield River.

What: This new park would improve connectivity along the river and provide additional parking for river access. Explore design and development options around the Whip Factory and existing affordable housing units in the area.

Who: City of Westfield Parks and Recreation Department in collaboration with the Westfield Department of Public Works, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, local businesses, and other community groups

How:

- Seek funds for park development from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs; seek donations from local businesses and residents, and allocate funds from the City.
- In the medium term, Parks and Recreation Department and the Department of Public Works should work to provide low-cost infrastructure such as garbage and recycling bins, barbeque stands, picnic tables, a seasonal port-a-potty, and a sun dial.
- To generate greater use of the park, a community group (such as WOW) should organize an event such as a flea market.
- In the long term, Parks and Recreation Department and the Department of Public Works could complete the park by installing landscaping, lighting, and benches. Parks and Recreation Dept. should also consider developing an amphitheater, as well as adding an ice cream and snack vendor.

Funding and Resources Required: Staff and volunteer time from above named groups. Funding may be available from the following sources to assist in the development of the park:

- Commonwealth of Massachusetts Gateway Parks Program
- Community Preservation Act Funds
- Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Federal Stimulus Funding as available
- PARC – Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities
- In-Kind contributions in the form of design development and construction from local professionals/contractors/vocational programs and donations from local businesses and residents.

21. Plan for Neighborhood Pocket Parks

Pursue neighborhood pocket parks in the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.

What: Identify and pursue opportunities for neighborhood pocket parks in the downtown neighborhoods, including the Orange Street Neighborhood, the Mechanic Street Neighborhood, Meadow Street Neighborhood, Downtown District, and the Pleasant Street Neighborhood. Seek sites that will be available to the general public (in addition to playgrounds attached to schools, which provide facilities mainly for people with children). Seek sites that are centrally located, offer the potential to connect different neighborhood areas to each other, and/or are well-located for attracting greater use and promoting a greater sense of neighborhood community

Who: Westfield Planning Department, Office of the Westfield City Solicitor, Westfield Parks and Recreation Department, supported by the Westfield Department of Public Works, neighborhood and

community groups, vocational programs (i.e. Westfield Vocational Technical High School), architecture and landscape design programs (i.e. UMass Architecture + Design Program, UMass Landscape Architecture, Conway School of Landscape Design), and planning programs (i.e. UMass Regional Planning, Westfield State College Regional Planning)

How:

- City Solicitor work with Planning Department and Parks and Recreation Department to alert them to potential sites in the downtown and downtown neighborhoods as they become available through tax-title takings.
 - Planning Department and Parks and Recreation Department work with local neighborhood groups to determine underutilized properties. This work may be supported by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's Local Technical Assistance Program, as well by local student assistance through one of the above mentioned College/University programs.
 - Use Community Preservation Act Funding or other available funds as necessary.
 - The Parks and Recreation Department should involve neighborhood and community groups and nearby residents to envision what these spaces will include and how they will function. This outreach effort may be work may be supported by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Local Technical Assistance Program, as well as local student assistance through one of the above mentioned College/University programs.
 - Parks and Recreation Department should develop a maintenance program that includes neighborhood volunteers. Once established, a neighborhood group would operate the maintenance program with city oversight.
- Funding and Resources Required:** Staff and volunteer time from above named groups. Funding may be available from the following sources to assist in the development of neighborhood parks:
- Community Development Block Grant Funding
 - Community Preservation Act Funds
 - Commonwealth of Massachusetts Gateway Parks Program
 - Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts
 - Conservation Partnership Grant
 - Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund
 - In-Kind Contributions: GIS analysis and community workshops by local academic programs (i.e. Westfield State College Urban Planning, UMass Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning), design development and construction by local academic or vocational programs, community participation in design and build events.
 - LAND – Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (formerly the Self Help Program)
 - PARC – Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities
 - Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Local Technical Assistance: GIS analysis and site selection, community workshops

CONNECT

Introduction

In this exciting planning process the notion of connecting people with people and with other resources emerged as a way to conceptualize the downtown target area's infrastructure needs. This section highlights key recommendations pertaining to transportation and also to the city's water and sewer infrastructure.

Transportation infrastructure functions to bring people downtown safely and efficiently and it includes:

- roads;
- transit and the proposed Intermodal Transit Center (ITC) and bus stops;
- bike lanes/parking/signage;
- sidewalks;
- streetscape improvements: planters, trees, lighting, surfacing, landscaping, benches and other street furniture;
- and parking: garage, signage, on-street, inventory, agreements with churches and other institutions with large lots, 'park-once' education and outreach campaign, regulations, maps, parking demand reduction strategies.

Because the proposed Columbia Greenway is primarily a recreational facility—it is addressed in the "Play" section.

Priority Recommendations

- 22. Address Traffic Congestion on Elm Street:** Assure a safe and comfortable environment for all modes of transportation, especially pedestrians, along Elm Street.
- 23. Address Downtown Parking Issues:** Use information collected in planning process to address downtown parking problems, possibly including a parking garage, production of parking maps/signs, parking

demand reduction strategies, and a "park once" campaign. Improve lighting, surface, and entrance/exit conditions to existing parking lots as their current condition does not encourage people to park downtown.

- 24. Expand Transportation Options Between Westfield State College and the Downtown:** Expand transportation options on Western Avenue between WSC and the Downtown, including bicycle lane striping, additional signage, and continued sidewalk maintenance and construction. Increase shuttle van or bus service—perhaps in a "trolley format"—from WSC to and from the Downtown.
- 25. Streetscape and Sewer Improvements in the Gaslight District:** Continue to work towards streetscape and sewer improvements in the Gaslight District (Franklin to Court, Elm to Washington). These planned (and partially funded) improvements will address the concerns regarding out of date infrastructure in the downtown.
- 26. Improve Water Supply and Sewer Pipes in Downtown:** Strategize for the improvement and or replacement of piping not addressed in the Gaslight District work described above, to assure that proposed new developments/redevelopments can move ahead.
- 27. Planning, Development and Construction of an Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC):** The City should continue to partner with the PVTA and Westfield Redevelopment Authority(WRA) on this important infrastructure project that will enhance alternative transportation options to and from the downtown.
- 28. Continue "Old Towne" Sidewalk Improvements:** Continue to replace pavement, streetscape, and treebelt on Maple, Morris, Sibley, Madison to stabilize neighborhoods surrounding the downtown.

Action Plan

22. Address Traffic Congestion on Elm Street

Assure a safe and comfortable environment for all modes of transportation, especially pedestrians, along Elm Street.

What: PVPC is in the process of studying traffic on Elm street—determine utility of this study to identify solutions to traffic congestion on Elm Street and if possible use study results to perform ‘what if’ scenarios on ideas proposed to solve traffic congestion on Elm Street, including but not limited to: traffic calming, “completing the street”, angle parking, making select streets one-way, and road diets.

Who: DPW, Engineering, PVPC, Mayor’s Office, Police Department, Planning and Economic Development

How:

- Analyze results of PVPC Traffic study
- Commission additional work as necessary
- Run “what-if” scenarios
- Discuss results of “what-if” scenarios at Roundtable and with Downtown Revitalization plan implementation committee and select preferred congestion mitigation approach
- Implement
- Evaluate
- Revise as necessary

Funding and Resources Required: City of Westfield will need to continue traffic and infrastructure investments and continue to seek appropriate transportation funding from MassHighway, Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (PVPC).

23. Address Downtown Parking Issues

Use information collected in planning process to address downtown parking problems, possibly including a parking garage, production of parking maps/signs, parking demand reduction strategies, and a “park once” campaign. Improve lighting, surface, and entrance/exit conditions to existing parking lots as their current condition does not encourage people to park downtown.

What: There is no agreement about the availability of parking in Westfield’s downtown target area. But there is a strongly expressed perception that there is inadequate parking available, which may be due to the conditions of the existing parking lots, a lack of awareness of available parking options, and poor visibility of parking lots locations. A map of city-owned lots does not exist on the City’s website. To provide access to downtown without necessitating driving while at the same time making it possible for people to drive downtown and “park once” to fulfill business as well as entertainment needs, the city may be ready for a downtown parking garage. WSC may identify a need for secure parking for their students living downtown, and a reliable base of long-term parking users could make a parking garage more viable. However, parking garages are large-scale projects and the city needs to make sure there really is demand for, interest in, and support for a parking garage from key stakeholders. Thus it is vital that the city thoroughly investigate and exhaustively implement parking demand reduction strategies before committing to an expensive and complicated parking garage project.

Who: Off-street Parking Commission, DPW, Engineering, WRA, PVPC, BID, Chamber, WSC, City Council, Planning Board, Planning and Development staff, MassHighway

How:

- PVPC, City Planning/Development staff, and/or WSC assure validity of parking study conducted as part of Re-Thinking Downtown Westfield planning process and publicize results, or perform additional study as necessary, and then publicize results.
- Identify the anticipated parking requirements of proposed future development projects (and if it's not already required—make sure that all new developments include this information);
- A Westfield College intern at PVPC should research and develop a comprehensive list of parking demand reduction strategies and the City should work to implement top-rated strategies;
- Publicize existing parking options and research by posting maps on the City's, BID's, Chamber's and Westfield State College's websites as well as creating parking maps to be distributed at downtown events, placed on the new information kiosks and posted at every City-owned parking lot.
- As appropriate conduct a "Park Once" campaign in the downtown.
- If parking garage is warranted, the City should collaborate with BID, Chamber, WSC and other business owners to assure appropriate location for parking garage, and support for its development.
- Improve lighting, surface, and entrance/exit conditions of existing parking lots through city funds and developer contributions.

Funding and Resources Required: City of Westfield will need to continue infrastructure investments in existing and future parking lots as well as continue to seek appropriate transportation funding from MassHighway, Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (PVPC). Developers or property owners

who add new residential units within the downtown will need to dedicate money to a parking fund to assist with the improvement of existing parking lots and the construction of new lots and parking garage.

24. Expand Transportation Options Between Westfield State College and the Downtown

Expand transportation options on Western Avenue between WSC and the Downtown, including bicycle lane striping, additional signage, and continued sidewalk maintenance and construction. Increase shuttle van or bus service—perhaps in a "trolley format"—from WSC to and from the Downtown.

What: While not in target area—Western Avenue is a key connection between Downtown and the College. Participants in the Re-Thinking Downtown Westfield's planning process said they felt unsafe bicycling on Western Avenue. If the road accommodated multiple users, it could become much more appealing to students, faculty, staff and visitors to the College to not have to drive back and forth.

Who: DPW, WSC, Don Podolski—Bike Shop Owner, BID, Chamber, Other downtown business owners, PVTA, Westfield on Weekends

How:

- DPW starts by simply striping a bike lane on the road, adding "Share the Road" signs and installing bicycle racks where appropriate and available.
- Work with PVTA to bring bike racks to R-10 buses on Western Avenue.
- Investigate the possibility of funding for expanded bus service, using the bus that looks like an old-fashioned trolley (used to go from Northampton to Williamsburg).
- WSC collaborates with Don Podolski to create a bike share program on the campus,

- making low cost rent-to-own bicycles available to all students, faculty and staff.
- DPW develops long-term plan to convert Western Avenue to a “complete street”, one that equitably meets the needs of a variety of users.
- DPW, in collaboration with PVTA and PVPC secures funding to implement “Complete Streets” plan for Western Avenue.

Funding and Resources Required: City of Westfield will need to continue traffic and infrastructure improvements/investments between the College and Downtown as well as continue to seek appropriate transportation funding from MassHighway, Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (PVPC). The PVTA will need to allocate money for the installation of bike racks on R-10 buses. All parties should seek funding through the EOT’s Transportation Demand Management Program, which seeks to create transportation alternatives.

25. Streetscape and Sewer Improvements in the Gaslight District

Continue to work towards streetscape and sewer improvements in the Gaslight District (Franklin to Court, Elm to Washington). These planned (and partially funded) improvements will address the concerns regarding out of date infrastructure in the downtown.

What: The City of Westfield has committed to improving the “Gaslight district” for a number of years. A strong and capable infrastructure is key to a thriving downtown. In the stakeholder interviews conducted as part of this planning effort, business owners in the downtown expressed frustration at the decaying sewer infrastructure in the downtown. They city can address these concerns by continuing to implement the planned improvements in the

Gaslight district while at the same time creating a much more friendly, welcoming and comfortable pedestrian environment.

Who: The Department of Public Works has plans underway to complete these infrastructure improvements. It will be important for residents and especially business owners, both within the Business Improvement District (BID) and in other areas (as represented by the Chamber of Commerce) to support these efforts at public meetings and in the local media, so that all residents and visitors to Westfield understand the importance of making these investments in Westfield’s future. Westfield State College also has a stake in making sure these vitally important infrastructure improvements happen as the College has significant plans to extend their presence in the downtown with student housing, a bookstore, a possible radio station and a planned performing arts presence.

How:

- The DPW should continue with planned improvements, making sure they have all the information in place to secure municipal, state and federal funds as available.
- The BID, the Chamber, and WSC should participate actively in public meetings on these projects.
- The City Council, the Planning Board and the Board of Public Works should educate its members about the importance of these projects to assure constituents of their significance to Westfield’s future.
- The City should assure transparency in the use of all funds, and especially ARRA funds as transparency is required, so that residents know how their federal dollars are being spent through information on the City’s website, public meetings, planned information kiosks (as described in Play Recommendation # 18) and through regular media releases.

Funding and Resources Required: City of Westfield will need to continue infrastructure investments and continue to seek appropriate transportation funding from MassHighway, Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (PVPC).

Funding and Resources Required: City of Westfield will need to continue infrastructure improvements investments and continue to seek appropriate funding from MassHighway, Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (PVPC), Commonwealth Office of Economic Development, and DHCD.

26. Improve Water Supply and Sewer Pipes in Downtown

Strategize for the improvement and or replacement of piping not addressed in the Gaslight District work described above, to assure that proposed new developments/redevelopments can move ahead.

What: Basic infrastructure is essential to the success of any thriving downtown. It is the invisible backbone that makes for a strong city. Westfield has a proud history of hundreds of years of thriving activity. But the downside of a long life, is decaying “bones” and “varicose veins”—in this case, under-sized water pipes. Westfield needs to lay new water pipes down in the Downtown not covered by the Gaslight district.

Who: Water Department, Engineering Department, DPW, City Council, Mayor, Planning and Development, BID, Chamber, ARRA, Commonwealth, PVPC, etc.

How:

- Work to position project for ARRA monies if they are still available in coming years; DPW and other city departments perform pre-requisite actions, i.e. site plan, cost estimates, etc.
- Work with Commonwealth to secure other funds if ARRA no longer available: Public Works Economic Development (PWED) grants, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds.

27. Planning, Development and Construction of an Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC)

The City should continue to partner with the PVTA and Westfield Redevelopment Authority(WRA) on this important infrastructure project that will enhance alternative transportation options to and from the downtown.

What: To enhance access to the downtown without driving. Safe, reliable and frequent bus service has been raised as a pressing need by participants in the Re-Thinking Downtown Westfield planning process. The City has been working to create the ITC in the Downtown for a number of years. Many cities in the Commonwealth have had success using such centers as an element of downtown revitalization, including Pittsfield, Greenfield and Holyoke in western Massachusetts. Combining the ITC with a rental fleet of bicycles, protected bicycle parking, lockers, and showers would expand the interest and appeal of the transportation center, making it more feasible and likely that people would arrive downtown via bus and bicycle instead of by car. The addition of meeting space and shower facilities could add value to area businesses whose employees could bicycle to work.

Who: DPW, Engineering, WRA, PVTA, PVPC, BID, Chamber, WSC, City Council, Planning Board, Planning and Development staff. State Senator Michael Knapik and Representative Donald Humason and Federal Representative John Olvers, who through their positions can lobby for and secure funding for this important project.

How:

- The City should continue ongoing collaboration with WRA and PVTA to develop the ITC, including the assemblage of property in this target area..
- Continue to use EPA Brownfields Assessment funding through the PVPC to assess possible pollution problems on the property where the center is proposed.
- City collaborate with BID, Chamber, WSC and other business owners to assure support for ITC development.
- Hold public meetings to educate residents and stakeholders about the benefits of an ITC.

Funding and Resources Required: City of Westfield will need to continue infrastructure investments in this targeted area and continue to seek appropriate transportation funding from MassHighway, Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (PVPC). The PVTA should continue to dedicate and seek funding from the Federal Transit Administration for this project when it becomes available. Westfield State College will need to support this project through public statements.

28. Continue “Old Towne” Sidewalk Improvements

Continue to replace pavement, streetscape, and treebelt on Maple, Morris, Sibley, Madison to stabilize neighborhoods surrounding the downtown.

What: As noted by the importance of recommendation #1 above, and as echoed in study after study of successful downtowns, “Successful downtowns are walkable. They possess street level pedestrian scale and are well used.” The city DPW clearly understands the need for walkability and the commitment to the “Old Towne” pedestrian environment improvements must be maintained and supported by the rest of the city.

Who: DPW, Planning and Development, Police, Mayor, City Council, BID, Chamber, other business owners, WOW, and neighborhood groups/ associations.

How:

- DPW should maintain ongoing communication and collaboration with Planning and Economic Development department to assure ongoing CDBG funding for these projects.
- City Council and Planning Board should maintain their support for these projects and educate the public, both at regular meetings and possibly through letters to the editor and other public information and education opportunities, about the need for these seemingly mundane ongoing improvement projects.

Funding and Resources Required: City of Westfield will need to continue traffic and infrastructure improvements/investments in this target area as well as continue to seek appropriate transportation funding from MassHighway, Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (PVPC).



AGENTS OF CHANGE

There are a number of groups working to improve conditions in Westfield's downtown area. Many of these groups have emerged as community leaders in promoting downtown revitalization. This section lists and describes the key entities involved in downtown revitalization efforts, as well as the downtown venues that currently host live entertainment. If you know of an organization left out of the plan, please contact City Planner Larry Smith at the city of Westfield as this plan is a document that will be updated and improved over time.

Agents of Change

City of Westfield

Building Department: Staff within this Department enforce the provisions of the building code and local zoning laws. Staff examine and approve plans for new buildings, repairs, and alterations. In addition, staff enforce safety conditions in existing buildings.

City Council: The Westfield City Council has broad legislative powers and must approve all city ordinances, all financial appropriations, and some permits.

Community Development & Planning Department: This Department is responsible for policy direction and coordination of the city's activities in economic development, planning, human services, housing and renewal. Its activities include administration of the City's Community Development Block Grant Program, economic development planning assistance, and downtown revitalization planning.

Community Preservation Committee: The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) was established by city Ordinance in 2003. The charge of the Committee is to administer the city's Community Preservation Act program, adopted by public referendum in 2002. The CPC is tasked with: studying the needs, possibilities and resources of the City regarding community preservation; making recommendations to the City Council for the acquisition, creation and preservation of open space, for the acquisition, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic resources, for the acquisition, creation and preservation of land for recreational use, for the creation, preservation and support of community housing and for rehabilitation or restoration of such open space, historic resources, land for recreational use and community housing that is acquired or created; and allocating revenues generated from the CPA.

Conservation Commission: This seven member commission is charged with assisting in the development and implementation of a five year Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP). The Commission is also charged with maintaining and managing Westfield's Trail System with the help of the Westfield River Watershed Association, a local nonprofit organization.

Engineering Department & Department of Public Works: The Engineering Department oversees infrastructure improvements within the city and provides technical assistance to the Mayor and City Council, as well as to other Boards and Commissions of the City. The Engineering Department is also responsible for the City's Geographic Information System (GIS).

Historical Commission: The Westfield Historical Commission (WHC) was established in 1963 and membership is by mayoral appointment. The powers and duties of the WHC per city ordinance include are as follows: preservation, protection and development of historical assets; conducting research on places of historic value; coordinating the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes; and make recommendations to the city council on matters related to the above. At this time, Westfield has 12 individual listings and one district listing on the National Historic Register of Historic Places. Projects currently being worked on by the Westfield Historical Commission include:

- the placement of an Historical Marker on the site of the Historic New Haven and Northampton Canal and H.B. Smith.
- the development of a walking tour publication directing visitors to locations prominent in Westfield's past.
- the acquisition of a suitable property in which to establish a Westfield Museum.
- the installation of a prominent sign identifying the Revolutionary War era cemetery, The Old Burying Ground on Mechanic Street

Mayor’s Office: The Mayor represents the City to developers, legislators and the public at large, oversees and launches city-wide initiatives and plans, appoints residents to various city committees and councils, and partners with local organizations to carry out community events.

Off-Street Parking Commission: The Commission oversees planning, acquisition, and leasing of off-street public parking facilities, as well as maintenance and operations.

Parks and Recreation: The Parks and Recreation Department is committed to enriching quality of life through the promotion, development, and maintenance of public recreation and enrichment opportunities, park lands and related facilities. The department maintains several downtown facilities including Park Square “The Green”, River Park “Women’s Temperance Park” and Whitney Playground, which offers lighted fields for night men’s and women’s softball games.

Police Department-Community Police Unit: The Community Police Unit of the Westfield Police Department was established in the early 1990s under a federal grant initiative. The Community Police Unit is comprised of five full-time police officers who each monitor specific areas in the City. They function as a liaison to City Hall in responding to community concerns and issues. The Unit removes persistent disturbances in the downtown, works with the State College and local property owners to minimize noise related complaints and disturbances, and works with local landlords and property managers to proactively reduce problems. The Unit’s Westfield Crime-Free Multi-Housing Program works with approximately 350 local property owners and managers on a monthly basis. The Community Police Unit programs and efforts have made a positive influence on the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods since the Unit came into existence.



Domus Incorporated

Domus Incorporated is a local non-profit housing developer and property management entity. It was established in 1982 with the mission of providing for the needs of persons with mental illness and other developmental disabilities. Its mission has since expanded to providing safe, affordable, decent, and sanitary housing for the homeless, low-to-moderate income persons and persons with special needs. Domus Inc. currently manages the following properties:

- **Reed House:** A single-family home renovated into nine single-room apartments for individuals who were formerly homeless with disabilities. Plans for a matching nine-room home, known as the “Annex,” are in development, with expected completion in two years. The annex will house a resident manager to oversee group activities. The Reed House is located approximately one mile from the downtown on Main Street.
- **The Meadows:** Formerly the Westfield Hotel, this three-story brick building provides 24 units of permanent housing for individuals with low-to-moderate incomes. The first floor houses the local soup kitchen and the Westfield Food Pantry. In addition, the building contains a meeting room for social service groups, a community police sub-station, and an office for a part-time site coordinator who conducts tenant forums, social/game nights and schedules meetings and other life skills workshops. The Meadows is located 0.5 miles from the downtown on Meadow Street.
- **Prospect Hill Apartments:** A former school that was redeveloped into seventeen two and three bedroom apartments for low-to-moderate income families. Amenities include off-street parking, on-site laundry, an elevator, a community police sub-station, a management office and a tenant meeting room. The Prospect Hill Apartments opened in 2008. It is located

on Montgomery Road ¼ mile from Elm Street, north of the bridge in the downtown.

- **Sanford Apartments:** Formerly the Sanford Whip Factory, this three-story mill building was redeveloped into fifteen studio apartments and six one-bedroom apartments for homeless, disabled and low-income individuals. Amenities include community and educational rooms. The Sanford Apartments are located on Elm Street on the northern end of the Central Business District.

Domus Inc. is currently working on a low/moderate income residential development in the historic Rinnova, Lamberton-Loomis, and Marcoulier Buildings. Domus plans to develop a home for homeless teenagers and is currently working with guidance counselors at Westfield High School and other partners to outline this program and identify a location. In addition, Domus Inc. hopes to develop another DMR home in the next five years.

Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce

Established in 1959, the Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce serves businesses in Westfield, Southwick, Russell, Granville, Blandford, Chester, Huntington, Montgomery, Tolland and Woronoco. The Chamber works to promote business throughout their service area, and holds various events, such as member breakfasts and golf tournaments for networking opportunities. The City Planner regularly refers interested businesses to the Chamber’s Executive Director, Lynn Boscher, to discuss business opportunities in Westfield. For more information, visit their website, www.westfieldbiz.org, or call 413-568-1618.

HAP Housing Partnership

HAP is a housing partnership for Hampden and Hampshire Counties in Western Massachusetts. HAP provides a wide range of services to tenants, homebuyers, homeowners, and rental property owners. In addition, HAP is lead affordable housing developer in the Pioneer Valley region. The following are a list of housing-related services HAP can provide to Westfield residents. Specific details on their programs and services can be found on their website: www.haphousing.org.

First-Time Homebuyer Education and Assistance:

HAP offers several comprehensive homebuyer education workshops per month that are open to any individual or household, regardless of town. These workshops currently cost ten dollars. They educate prospective homeowners about the process of buying a house, including how to choose a house and how to successfully apply for a mortgage that meets individual needs. Graduates of the program have access to special mortgage products such as the Massachusetts Housing Partnership's Soft Second Loan Program and down payment assistance programs. The workshops are taught in Spanish as well as in English. Seventeen Westfield residents attended a workshop and twenty-seven Westfield residents received home purchase assistance in 2008.

Post-Purchase Workshops for Homeowners:

HAP provides a series of workshops that cover such topics as protecting your investment, home maintenance, financing home repairs or improvements, budgeting and managing credit, insurance, home safety, record keeping, and tax planning. HAP believes that through good financial planning and sound budgeting, families can avoid the dangers of default and foreclosure.

Foreclosure Prevention Counseling: HAP is one of the 15 nonprofit agencies in Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire Counties working

together to help homeowners avoid mortgage foreclosure through the newly established Western Massachusetts Foreclosure Prevention Center. Westfield residents having trouble making mortgage payments or in danger of default can receive free and confidential counseling assistance by calling the agency. Nineteen Westfield residents received foreclosure counseling through HAP in 2008.

Housing Consumer Education: HAP is the region's Housing Consumer Education Center. Renters, homebuyers, homeowners, and landlords can come to HAP for the latest information about housing opportunities, housing-related problems and questions, access to a wide variety of housing resources, and education about their rights and responsibilities. Counselors are available to meet or talk on the phone. Additionally HAP has a resource room containing a wide variety of written materials and computers that will provide users with Internet access to apartment listings and a wide variety of housing information. HAP's philosophy is that given good information, people can make good decisions about their housing.

Emergency Shelter and Transitional Assistance:

HAP often has available limited, short-term financial or other assistance for families who are homeless, highly at-risk of homelessness, or in shelter. This assistance is targeted to families on a priority basis, not first come, first served. HAP also operates Prospect House, an emergency shelter for homeless families. In 2009, HAP expanded its capacity to help homeless families, leasing 47 apartments in various locations. Families must be homeless and must first contact the Department of Transitional Assistance. HAP's Safe Step Program provides transitional housing and supportive services to victims of domestic violence. Finally, HAP's Turning Point Program has nine units of transitional housing for pregnant and parenting teens. Eligibility requirements vary by program.

Rental Assistance Programs: HAP Housing Partnership administers the regional Section 8 and MRVP programs. HAP subsidy holders may move from one community to another, and there is no set amount of units assigned to Westfield, but, on average, there are generally about 150 HAP units under lease in the City. Eligible households and individuals must be on the state’s waiting list to obtain a voucher. The statewide waiting list is quite long, however it is still open.

Affordable Housing Development: HAP has participated in the development of thirty-nine projects, amounting to nearly 900 units, including: elderly housing units, affordable rental units for families, a limited equity cooperative that has units for people with developmental disabilities, permanent housing for those who have experienced homelessness, single person occupancy units, group homes for clients of the Department of Mental Retardation, and the rehabilitation or new construction of more than 80 one and two-family homes for sale to low and moderate-income first time homebuyers. HAP’s affordable housing development activities are undertaken in partnership with other community-based organizations or service providers. Westfield does not have any affordable housing units developed by HAP.

Westfield Arts Council

The Westfield Arts Council, also known as the Westfield Cultural Council, functions as the local subset of the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Each year the Westfield Arts Council offers small local grants to support programs in the arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences in Westfield. For more information visit the Mass Cultural Council website: www.massculturalcouncil.org

Westfield Business Improvement District (WBID)



A Business Improvement District, or BID, provides supplemental services such as marketing, business retention and recruitment, and improved maintenance services beyond those generally provided by the municipality. Improvements are funded by an assessment levied on property within the delineated district, and these funds are utilized solely within the district for these efforts. The city of Westfield also provides some funding to the Westfield BID to support administrative costs.

The Westfield BID allows property owners located within downtown Westfield to contribute additional tax revenue in order to purchase supplemental services beyond than the basic services supplied by the city. It is one of only four such districts in the Commonwealth. The BID has become the catalyst for funding and marketing large events such as the Summer Concert Series on the Green.

Established in 2006, the WBID currently represents 190 properties owned by 126 property owners. One of only three BIDs in the Commonwealth, in its first year of existence the WBID focused the majority of its work on maintenance / beautification efforts and marketing / promotion. The BID also took some first steps towards district business development activities. The BID is currently updating its three-year plan and hopes to incorporate some of the elements of this downtown plan into its three-year plan. <http://www.thedistrictwestfield.com/>

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) is the designated regional planning agency for the Western Massachusetts Pioneer Valley Region, which includes the 43 cities and towns in Hampshire and Hampden Counties. PVPC's Land Use Department offers technical assistance to its member communities for comprehensive planning and report writing, as well as zoning bylaw research, preparation and community outreach. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's other departments offer assistance with transportation, economic development, and community development planning. 413/781-6045 www.pvpc.org

MassHighway Department

MassHighway is the primary organization responsible for the design and construction of the Great River Bridge Reconstruction. This project, which was requested by the City of Westfield in order to alleviate traffic along Route 10/202, includes reconstruction and widening of the existing bridge, addition of a sister bridge to the east, redesign of the roadways to the north, and development of new parks and streetscaping. Eighty percent of the project is funded through the Federal Highway Administration, and twenty percent is funded through MassHighway. The project is expected to be completed in 2010.

Westfield Arts on the Green

Westfield Arts on the Green formed in 2008 as a non-profit organization to promote the arts on the city's historic green. The organization concentrates on two programs that occur during the summer months. The first is the "Live on the Green" Concert series, which occurs on Saturday mornings. The second is "Talented Tots & Teens," which showcases multi-talented children. The founder of this organization also owns the Teapot Gallery and Café, which sits across from the city green.

Westfield Athenaeum Library



Located in the heart of downtown Westfield at the corner of Elm Street and Court Street, the Athenaeum's mission is to "enrich the diverse community of Westfield by providing open access to educational, cultural, recreational and informational resources and programs." The library regularly offers a wide range of events and activities including concerts, lecture series and a variety of children's programs. The library also features a history museum and an art museum. www.westath.org

Westfield on Weekends (WOW)



Organized as a non-profit organization in 2005, Westfield on Weekends is a local organization focused on the production, promotion, and creation of community events for the city. WOW promotes seasonal events throughout downtown Westfield, including Dickens Days, Colonial Harvest Day, Vintage Baseball Classic Tournament, summer concerts on the town green, theater productions, and garden tours. The organization also offers an online event calendar now seen as the primary community calendar for events and activities: www.westfieldonweekends.org. WOW is funded by community supporters and fees / ticket sales from events.

Westfield Community Development Corporation

In the past, the Westfield Community Development Corporation (CDC) administered the city's WHIP and other housing programs, as well as acted as a housing developer. The CDC helped the City create homeownership units for first-time homebuyers. The CDC no longer administers these programs and its director left in the fall of 2008, leaving the organization without any staff. The CDC Board of Directors is working to get the organization fully functioning again.

The President of the CDC indicated that the CDC intends revitalize and expand its program offerings in the future by adding first-time homebuyer workshops and counseling, foreclosure prevention workshops and counseling, and financial literacy programs. The CDC also aims to sponsor workshops geared toward small business development and management. Finally, the CDC plans to continue its housing development work. <http://westfieldcdc.org/> (413) 562-7221.

Westfield Theatre Group



This group is a department of the Westfield Woman's Club. Located at 28 Court Street in Westfield, the theater group has been in existence for over 70 years. The primary goals of the group are to provide live theatre to the community, to encourage members of the community to participate in our productions, to learn more about the theatre, and to provide theatre education to local students. For more information, check out their website, www.westfieldtheatregroup.com, or call them at 413-572-6838.

Westfield Housing Authority

The Westfield Housing Authority (WHA) operates 441 units of state funded conventional public housing. Most of the units are located within a half mile of the downtown. The WHA also administers approximately 380 rental assistance units through the Section 8 Housing Voucher Program and Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP).

The WHA's current focus is modernization of its 441 housing units, and the WHA has several ongoing and planned projects. In addition, the WHA continues to work toward increasing the city's supply of Section 8 and MRVP vouchers. Over the years, the WHA has increased its Section 8 units by applying for and receiving vouchers for a Mainstream program and Single Room Occupancy (SROs) program, which assists additional homeless or disabled tenants.

In the future, the WHA would like to increase its supply of housing units, but has no plans in the works. The Director of the WHA believes the current state and federal fiscal situation will limit funding opportunities for new housing unit production. The WHA Director indicated that the WHA does have the capacity to manage and acquire more units, but would need additional staff (and funding) to do so. The WHA currently has thirteen full-time staff and two part-time staff.

Westfield State College (WSC)

Westfield State College publicly announced in the fall of 2008 its intention to place students, faculty, and staff downtown in order to alleviate housing, classroom, and programming space constraints on the main campus. WSC's downtown plans will have a direct impact on economic development opportunities in this area.

Westfield Redevelopment Authority

The Westfield Redevelopment Authority is a quasi-governmental entity that was created in 1956 (pursuant to Massachusetts General laws, Chapter 121B), to address issues of urban blight, decadence and redevelopment in Westfield. Under its authorizing statute, the Authority has broad powers to acquire deteriorated structures and/or open blighted land, including the power of eminent domain as well as the ability to conduct site preparation work and dispose of acquired property for redevelopment. The WRA is a separate and independent legal entity from the City of Westfield. The Westfield Redevelopment Authority is governed by a five (5) member board. Four of the members are appointed by the Mayor with a fifth member appointed by the Governor.

From the 1980s onward, the WRA focused solely on the assemblage of properties for the planned intermodal center-hotel project between Arnold and Church. When that project fell apart in late 2007, the WRA became inactive. An urban renewal plan, a state requirement for redevelopment actions through a redevelopment authority, was approximately 75% complete when the project became inactive.

The City recently (Spring 2009) reactivated the WRA and hired a local consultant to complete the plan. The target area continues to be the previously identified intermodal center site. The WRA is in the process of completing an Elm Street Revitalization Plan that will focus on the area along Elm Street between Arnold and Church Streets. The Community Design Workshops that occurred in April/May 2009 as part of the Downtown Westfield Planning process also identified other potential target areas for the WRA. These areas can be found on District Map in the Executive Summary.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

How are these recommendations to be funded and implemented? This section describes the funding sources identified in the Implementation Chapter that may be available to bring downtown revitalization to fruition. The sources are grouped by type, starting with local resources and ending with in-kind support. Please note that the funding program, availability, and eligibility criteria may change from year to year. Since this plan is a document that will be up-dated and improved over time, If you know of a funding source that becomes available please contact City Planner Larry Smith at the city of Westfield.

Funding Types

Local Resources

Community Development Block Grant Funding
Community Preservation Act Funding
General Obligation Bonds
Westfield Arts Council Grants

State Resources

Affordable Housing Funding Sources
Commercial Area Transit Node Housing Program (CATNHP)
Commonwealth of Massachusetts Gateway Parks program
Conservation Partnership Grant
Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund
LAND - Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (formerly the Self Help Program)
Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Program
Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund
Massachusetts Public Works and Economic Development (PWED)
MassHighway--Planning, Funding, Building and Maintaining Walkways
PARC – Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities
Recreational Trails Program
Safe Routes to School Program
State Historic Tax Credits
Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Bond Program
Transportation Demand Management (TDM)
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
Urban Housing TIF

Federal Resources

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Funds
Federal Historic Tax Credits
Federal Stimulus Funding
New Market Tax Credits
Small Business Administration 504 Loan Program
Small Business Administration
Transportation Enhancement Program (TE)

Private & Non-Profit Resources

Adams Arts Program (Massachusetts Cultural Council)
Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts
Cultural Facilities Fund (Massachusetts Cultural Council)
Massachusetts Business Development Corporation
MassDevelopment Corporation
Massachusetts Economic Stabilization Trust
New England Foundation for the Arts
National Endowment for the Arts Grants
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Local Technical Assistance
Revolving Loan Funds
The Property and Casualty Initiative
Western Massachusetts Enterprise Fund, Inc.
Women Business Owners Alliance
YouthReach (Massachusetts Cultural Council)

In-Kind Support

Local Resources

Community Development Block Grant Funding

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds are federal dollars that are distributed annually by the state. Westfield is an entitlement community, which means that it receives an annual allocation of funds and does not have to competitively apply to the state for funding (however, the City does need to submit a Annual Action Plan as well as a Five Year Consolidated Plan in order to receive funding). Westfield's CDBG program is administered through the Department of Community Development and Planning. Since July 2008, the city has hired a consultant to help the City Planner administer the program.

The City was awarded \$442,511 in Community Development Block Grant Funding (CDBG) for FY 2009-2010. A large portion of Westfield's annual allocation goes toward repaying a non-performing Section 108 loan. Funding priorities for FY 2009-2010 include urban renewal activities in the downtown and direct assistance to small businesses as well as public service activities for frail elders, youth living in poverty, and homeless and at-risk households. Forty-percent of program funds will be targeted to the census tracts in and surrounding the downtown.

Some communities have improved the look and feel of their downtowns using façade improvement programs funded with Community Development Block Grants and other local sources. Once the City has finished repaying its non-performing Section 108 loan (which will not be for several more years), the City will be in a position to seriously consider the creation of such a program.

Applications and additional information can be found on the city's website: <http://www.cityofwestfield.org/detpages/departments58.html> Or, contact Lawrence B. Smith, Director of Community Development, at 413-572-6246.

Community Preservation Act Funding

In November 2002, Westfield voters adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA). Money raised is used to acquire, create and preserve open space; acquire and preserve historic resources; acquire, create and preserve land for recreation use; create, preserve and support community housing; and rehabilitate or restore these acquisitions / developments.

Since Westfield's adoption in 2002, the City has actively used its community housing funds to support affordable housing production through Domus and the Westfield CDC. Given Westfield's community goals and community character, the town should strongly consider using CPA funds from the other two categories to create and preserve land for recreational use and preserve historic buildings in tandem with creating affordable housing. The City has not yet allocated funds from the open space/recreation category toward downtown projects. Funding from this category could be used to preserve and create parks and open space in the downtown, including assistance toward the development of the Columbia Bikeway.

Community Preservation Act historic preservation funds could be utilized to enhance the aesthetics of historic buildings and to develop materials and products that will result in an increased awareness of the downtown's historic features. The City of Cambridge provides grants for façade restoration work on significant buildings. However, it should be noted that receipt of these funds requires a permanent deed restriction on the property to prevent incompatible changes in the future. The Town of Amherst uses CPA funds to finance the design and installation of signs signaling vehicular entrances to one of its National Register Historic Districts as well as for pedestrian signs interpreting a few selected buildings and sites within the district. Amherst has also funded appraisals

and surveys associated with acquiring historic preservation restrictions and the publication of the Amherst Historical Commission's guidebook to the downtown's Central Business District (CBD) National Register Historic District.

The Westfield Community Preservation Committee encourages entities with eligible project ideas to apply for this funding. Otherwise, funding remains unspent. Applications and additional information can be found on the city's website:

<http://www.cityofwestfield.org/detpages/departments624.html>.

General Obligation Bonds

A GO bond is a type of municipal bond that is used to finance the development of facilities that serve "essential government function." Just about every year the City of Westfield bonds for a project or projects that the City has designated as a priority.

Westfield Arts Council

The Westfield Arts Council, also known as the Westfield Cultural Council, functions as the local subset of the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Each year the Westfield Arts Council offers small local grants to support programs in the arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences in Westfield. The Council received \$19,200 in funding to award locally in FY 2009 and, with this funding, the Council awarded sixteen grants to local organizations ranging in funding from \$400 to \$4,200. The Council noted that getting the word out about this funding source is regularly a challenge, but that those who obtain the funding are able to make a small amount go very far. Massachusetts Cultural Council grant applications can be found at www.massculturalcouncil.org. To apply directly to the Westfield Cultural Council, forms and guidelines are available at www.mass-culture.org/Westfield. The local chapter can also be reached by phone, at 413-568-2003.

State Resources

Affordable Housing Funding Sources

State and Federal funding and financing sources to assist with the development of affordable housing do exist and experienced affordable housing developers know these funding sources well. Affordable housing developers often cobble together several (8+) funding sources in order to move affordable housing projects forward. Funding sources are typically very competitive and can be limited depending on the state of the country's economy. Once the city or a private building owner identifies a potential property, developers with affordable housing development experience can guide the town or property owner through the development process.

Commercial Area Transit Node Housing Program (CATNHP)

A state funded bond program that supports first-time homebuyer housing through new construction or acquisition and rehabilitation of housing developments, of 24 units or less, within neighborhood commercial areas and in proximity to public transit nodes. Not less than 51% of the units assisted by the program must benefit persons earning not more than 80% of the area median income. The total amount of CATNHP funds requested per eligible project may not exceed \$750,000 or \$50,000 per unit. The Valley Community Development Corporation obtained CATNHP funds to rehabilitate a multifamily home into eight housing units. Visit DHCD's website to learn more CATNHP Program or call (617) 573-1300.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Gateway Parks Program

This is a new funding program out of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) for the purpose of creating and restoring parks and recreational facilities in underserved urban neighborhoods within the Commonwealth's Gateway Cities. The state allocated \$4,000,000 for Fiscal Year 2009 and intends to make grant awards in the amount of approximately \$400,000 per community. The City of Westfield submitted an application to be considered an "eligible community" for this funding program and hopes to use available funding in the downtown. As of July 2009, the state has not awarded the City for any particular project. Questions about this program should be directed to the state: Kurt Gaertner, 617-626-1154 kurt.gaertner@state.ma.us

Conservation Partnership Grant

This grant program, out of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), provides funding to assist non-public, not-for-profit corporations in acquiring interests in lands suitable for conservation or recreation purposes. Potential projects fall into one of two categories: (1) land or a conservation restriction purchased by an eligible applicant or (2) land or a conservation restriction gift donated to an eligible applicant. All selected applicants must convey an appropriate perpetual conservation restriction to either the city or town in which the selected project is located, to be managed by either its conservation or recreation commission, or a state agency, or both. The program also requires that all projects provide appropriate public access.

The state spent \$873,495 in fiscal year 2008 on this program and the state has \$1,500,000 for fiscal year 2009. The average grant size is \$75,000 and the state typically awards grants to around eight communities. During the second round of funding

in Fiscal Year 2009, the state awarded nine out of eleven applicants. Questions about this program should be directed to the state: Celia Riechel, 617-626-1187, celia.riechel@state.ma.us

Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund
This funding program, out of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs provides up to 50% of the total project cost for the acquisition, development and renovation of park, recreation or conservation areas. Municipalities must have a current open space and recreation plan to apply, and the land must be open to the general public. The average grant size is \$424,000 (minimum \$250,000, maximum \$500,000). The state typically awards five grants per year; however the state only spent \$470,000 on this program in fiscal year 2008. Questions about this program should be directed to the state: Melissa Cryan, 617-626-1171, melissa.cryan@state.ma.us

LAND - Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (formerly the Self Help Program)

This funding program, out of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) provides grant assistance to city and town conservation commissions for the acquisition of open space for conservation and passive recreation purposes (formerly the Self-Help Program). Municipalities must have a current open space and recreation plan to apply, the land must be open to the general public; communities with any outstanding conversion issues ("Article 97") are not eligible. The average grant size is \$345,000 (minimum \$75,000; maximum \$500,000). The state typically awards twenty grants per year. The state spent \$6,748,560 on this program in Fiscal Year 2008 and allocated \$5,000,000 for Fiscal Year 2009. During Fiscal Year 2009, the state funded approximately 50% of applicants. Questions about this program should be directed to the state: Celia Riechel, 617-626-1187, celia.riechel@state.ma.us

Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Program

The Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Program is a federally funded, reimbursable, 60/40 matching grant program to support historic preservation planning activities in communities throughout the state. For Fiscal Year 2009, qualified applicants include all local historical commissions and local historic district commissions, Certified Local Governments (CLGs), municipal planning and community development offices, regional planning agencies, state agencies, educational institutions, and private non-profit organizations.

This grant program is highly competitive. For Fiscal Year 2009, MHC anticipates awarding five project grants to qualified CLG applicants and five project grants to non-CLG applicants. Eligible Activities include:

- Completion of cultural resource inventories;
- Nomination of significant properties to the National Register of Historic Places;
- Completion of community-wide preservation plans; and
- Other types of studies, reports, publications and projects that relate to the identification and protection of significant historic properties and sites.

For application instructions and additional information, visit MHC's website <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhchpp/Surveyandplanning.htm>

Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund

The Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) is a state-funded 50% reimbursable matching grant program to support the preservation of properties, landscapes, and sites (cultural resources) listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Applicants must be a municipality or nonprofit organization.

Eligible activities include pre-development projects, development projects and acquisition projects. Specific criteria can be found on the Massachusetts Historical Commission's website. The owner of a property funded for a development or acquisition project must enter into and record a preservation restriction and maintenance agreement in perpetuity. Owners of properties funded for pre-development projects shall enter into a preservation restriction for a term of years, depending on the grant amount awarded.

This project funding program is highly competitive with the last two funding rounds allocating \$750,000 and \$800,000, respectively. Grant disbursement is subject to reauthorization of the capital accounts and the availability of sufficient allocated funds.

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcmppf/mppfidx.htm>

Massachusetts Public Works and Economic Development (PWED)

The Public Works Economic Development (PWED) Program provides grants to communities (cities and towns) in Massachusetts to pay for the design and construction of roads and other transportation related projects that support economic development. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation administers the program. The Secretary of Transportation typically makes the awards. The program process starts with a local community filling out an application for funding infrastructure projects that may include local roads as well as associated lighting, landscaping, utilities and public sewer/water/waste facilities.

The application form requests information about the size of (a) the requested public investment, (b) the planned private investment, and (c) the number of jobs to be created or retained as a direct result of the proposed projects. The requested grant

amount is normally limited to \$1 million on a given project unless it demonstrates significant regional benefits. The PWED Program was funded by the state legislature under the biannual transportation bond bill. However, starting in 2004, program funding was moved to be under the umbrella of the Commonwealth Capital bond fund, as discussed below. In recent years, program funding has been the range of \$12 to \$20 million per year. In a typical year, there are around 65 applicants and around 15 are funded. More information and application guidelines can be found on the website of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation. Questions about this program should be directed to the state: Pam Russell, PWED Program Manager <http://www.eot.state.ma.us/pwed>

MassHighway--Planning, Funding, Building and Maintaining Walkways

MassHighway, together with the 13 Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs)/ Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), including the PVPC in Westfield's region, plans, coordinates and prioritizes all types of federally and state funded transportation projects, including pedestrian improvements. The state funds municipal roadway and walkway capital projects through Chapter 90, which distributes funds from the State Transportation Bond. The state also provides maintenance, snow removal, and policing funds through Chapter 81.

Cities and towns can use this money to build sidewalks on local roads, upgrade existing sidewalks, and do maintenance. It is up to the municipality to prioritize the use of this funding. Municipal public works and traffic departments construct and maintain most sidewalks. Cities and towns initiate most projects that serve pedestrians. The City of Westfield annually submits projects to be funded to MassHighway.

PARC – Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities

This funding program, out of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) provides grant assistance to cities and towns to acquire parkland, develop new parks, or renovate existing outdoor public recreation facilities (formerly the Urban Self-Help Program). Municipalities must have an authorized park/recreation commission and conservation commission, as well as a current open space and recreation plan. In addition, the land must be open to the general public. Only projects that are to be developed for suitable outdoor recreation purposes, whether active or passive in nature, are considered for funding.

Grants are available for the acquisition of land and the construction, or renovation of park and outdoor recreation facilities, such as swimming pools, zoos, athletic play fields, playgrounds and game courts. Access by the general public is required. The average grant awards range from \$50,000 to \$500,000 and the state typically awards twenty-five grants per year. The state allocated \$8,000,000 for Fiscal Year 2009. Questions about this program should be directed to the state: [Melissa Cryan](mailto:melissa.cryan@state.ma.us), 617-626-1187, melissa.cryan@state.ma.us

Recreational Trails Grant Program

This funding program provides support for a variety of motorized and non-motorized trail development and trail maintenance projects. Funds are administered by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), in partnership with the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Board. Grants range from \$2,000 to \$50,000 on a reimbursement basis for a variety of trail protection, construction, and stewardship projects throughout Massachusetts. Recreational Trails grants are 80-20 challenge grants. In other words, 80% of the project costs are reimbursed to grantees, but at least 20% of the total project value must come from other

sources. The state spent \$550,000 on the program in Fiscal Year 2008. The number of grants awarded varies year to year, but the state awarded grants towards twenty-six projects in 2009. Questions about this program should be directed to the state: Amanda Lewis, 413-586-8706 x19, amanda.lewis@state.ma.us

Safe Routes to School Program

The Massachusetts Safe Routes to School Program (SRS) promotes healthy alternatives for children and parents in their travel to and from school. A number of communities in the Pioneer Valley are participating actively in the program administered by MassRIDES. For more information, call 1-888-4COMMUTE.

State Historic Tax Credits

Owners of properties listed in the National Register are eligible for tax credits through the Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program. These tax credits are not automatic and are awarded competitively to projects that provide the most public benefit. This historic tax credit program does not require that the units be made affordable to income eligible households. However, affordable housing developers commonly use this historic tax credit program as a funding source for affordable housing developments. Guidelines and applications are available through the Massachusetts Historical Commissions website, at www.sec.state.ma.us/MHC/mhctax/taxidx.htm

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Bond Program

The Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Bond Program is intended to increase compact, mixed-use, walkable development close to transit stations. To accomplish this objective, the Program authorization (Chapter 291 of the Acts of 2004)

provides financing for pedestrian improvements, bicycle facilities, housing projects, and parking facilities within .25 (1/4) miles of a commuter rail station, subway station, bus station, bus rapid transit station, or ferry terminal.

The Program is part of an integrated, multi-agency strategy to promote Smart Growth and Smart Energy development in the Commonwealth. Smart Growth – Smart Energy prompts growth where it makes the most sense: in and around central business districts or traditional city or town centers, near transit stations, or in areas that have been previously developed for commercial, industrial or institutional use. The Commonwealth’s Smart Growth – Smart Energy initiatives are intended to shape policies involving housing, transportation, capital and economic development, and the preservation of natural resources. Applications and additional information can be located on the state’s website.

<http://www.eot.state.ma.us/todbond/>

Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs provide an incentive for businesses to develop alternatives for employees who drive alone to work. The TDM policies can reduce the number of commuter trips by implementing subsidies for transit fares, shuttles, carpools, and vanpools, reducing the space required for parking, and creating facilities for bicyclists. MassRIDES, of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation, provides free assistance to businesses to implement the program. MassCommute is an organization of Transportation Management Associations (TMA) using the program.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is managed by the Pioneer Valley Planning

Commission. The TIP lists all transportation projects programmed to receive federal funds over a four-year horizon and all projects programmed with federal and state highway funds that are expected to be available. Eligible project categories are: bridges, roads, bicycle facilities, and pedestrian and streetscape improvements. The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has defined the overall framework for TIP programming and created project selection criteria. Criteria are used on existing conditions, safety, mobility, cost effectiveness, economic development, land use, and community impact. A detailed description of the TIP and individual projects funded is available from PVPC at www.pvpc.org. Westfield has a number of projects that are or may be included in the TIP. One future possibility may be funding for Gas Light District improvements that complement the adjacent Intermodal Transit Center.

Urban Housing TIF

The state created the UCH-TIF Program in 2003 to promote the enhanced viability of commercial centers by authorizing cities and towns to permit tax increment financing (“TIF”) in other than purely commercial use districts and sites. TIF provides a real estate tax exemption on all or part of the increased value (the “Increment”) of improved real property. Consistent with this goal, the area that benefits from the TIF must be primarily a commercial district, new development shall be primarily residential, and such housing shall be appropriate to a commercial center, e.g., multi-unit. Single family housing is prohibited. New development may consist of new construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation or renovation. The UCH-TIF Program requires that 25% of new housing be affordable, although DHCD may approve a lesser percentage where necessary for the financial feasibility of a housing development. Tax increment financing may be combined with grants and loans from local, state and federal development programs in order to make a project feasible.

Participation in the UCH-TIF Program requires that a city or town adopt a detailed urban center housing tax increment financing plan (“UCH-TIF Plan”) for a designated commercial area (the “UCH-TIF Zone”). The UCH-TIF Plan must demonstrate the need for multi-unit housing in the UCH-TIF Zone and contain detailed development plans for the UCH-TIF Zone, including negotiated/executed agreements with property Owners undertaking new development who will be receiving tax increment exemptions (“UCH-TIF Agreements”) on these projects. DHCD must approve each UCH-TIF Zone, UCH-TIF Plan, and UCH-TIF Agreement in order to ensure compliance with statutory and program requirements.

Although the state adopted the program in 2003, only one municipality (Quincy) has adopted the program. Three other municipalities (Worcester, Pittsfield, and Lawrence) are in various stages of the application process. According to the Department of Housing and Community Development, limited adoption statewide may be due to a lack of awareness of the program, lack of developer interest due to their inability to secure other financing sources, and lack of municipal interest due to amount of paperwork required for local adoption. Nevertheless, adoption of this type of program may make sense for the city as it provides developers a source of financing especially when other traditional financing sources have dried up during these economic times. Contact John Fitzgerald at the Department of Housing and Community Development for more information. (617) 573-1400 or visit the Department’s website <http://www.mass.gov/dhcd/uchtif>

Federal Resources

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

The ARRA allocates \$48 billion for investment in transportation infrastructure, facilities, and equipment. The \$48 billion of ARRA money allocated to transportation is divided among the federal transportation agencies.

- *Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST)* - \$1.52 billion of the ARRA money set aside for transportation will go to a competitive surface transportation grant program, including public transportation projects under two programs:
 - *Grants for National Surface Transport* - \$1.5 billion in grants will be awarded for transportation projects (including highway, transit, rail, and ports) that will contribute to near-term economic recovery and job creation, maximization of long-term benefits, and assistance for those most affected by the current economic downturn.
 - *Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Bonding Assistance Program* – This program is allocated \$20 million to assist Disadvantage Business Enterprises (DBEs) to obtain bid, payment, and performance bonds in a timely and efficient manner. This will enable DBEs to compete for and perform projects receiving ARRA transportation funding. As defined by the Small Business Administration and the DOT, a DBE is a company which is at least 51% owned by women, Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian-Pacific Americans, Subcontinent Asian-Pacific Americans, or other racial minorities. Other companies and individuals may prove they are disadvantage if they meet certain criteria.
- *The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)* - \$27.5 billion will go to fund projects eligible under their Highways and Bridges program, including public transportation. FHWA funds can be used to support public transportation projects consistent with the Flexible Funding procedures under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA–LU).
- *Transit Capital Assistance* – This program, through the Federal Transit Administration, creates \$6.9 billion in grants to assist urban and rural localities, states and Indian tribes to fund transit capital needs such as engineering design, investments in buses, crime prevention and security equipment, maintenance and passenger facilities and new and existing fixed guideway systems including overhaul, rebuilding of vehicles, tracks, signals, communications, and commuter programs.

Federal Historic Tax Credits

Owners of properties listed in the National Register are automatically eligible for a 20% investment tax credit from the federal government for the certified rehabilitation of income-producing certified historic structures such as commercial, industrial, or rental residential buildings. This historic tax credit program does not require that the units be made affordable to income eligible households. However, affordable housing developers commonly use this historic tax credit program as a funding source for affordable housing developments. The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Initiatives program is administered by the National Park Service and the Internal Revenue Service, in partnership with State Historic Preservation Offices. More information can be found through the NPS website, at www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/.

Federal Stimulus Funding

Major public infrastructure projects such as the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail, Gaslight District improvements, development of public amenities in a new Riverfront District along the Westfield River, and improvements to the downtown streetscape may be attractive projects for federal stimulus funding. Because the City will soon be able to show significant progress on the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail, it may be possible to pursue stimulus funding for the next phase, extending the trail across the river along the existing rail bridge. This bridge redevelopment will provide a significant pedestrian and bicycle connection from the Riverfront District and downtown on the south side of the Westfield River to the Northside District on the other side of the river.

New Market Tax Credits

The NMTC Program was enacted in December of 2000 through the federal Community Renewal and Tax Relief Act of 2000 to encourage investment in low-income urban and rural areas. The New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program permits taxpayers to receive a credit against Federal income taxes for making qualified equity investments in designated Community Development Entities (Entity). These qualified equity investments must in turn be used by the Entity to provide investments in low-income communities. Qualified Low-Income Community Investments include, among other things, investments in businesses and real estate projects in low-income communities. The credit provided to the investor totals 39 percent of the cost of the investment and is claimed over a seven-year credit allowance period. Investors may not redeem their investments in CDEs prior to the conclusion of the seven-year period.

Projects must be located in census tracts where the median family income does not exceed 80% of the Springfield area median family income or serve low-income residents and be located in a census tract

with a median family income at or below 120% of the Springfield Area Median Family Income (AMI). Westfield census tracts 812701 and 812702 are qualifying census tracts.

Property owners within downtown Greenfield had recent success with the New Market Tax Credit program. Through the organizing efforts of a consultant from the Concord Square Planning and Development Group, who was hired by the city in 2008 to move the downtown's upper-floor redevelopment project forward, five building owners found out in June 2009 that they were awarded New Market Tax Credits, State Historic Tax Credits, and Federal Historic Tax Credits. These five property owners, who own eight buildings in the downtown, will use the money to install elevators, new stairways, and sprinkler systems as well as restore facades as part of an overall \$20 million downtown revitalization project. According to their consultant, all of the credits, when combined, should pay for about 50% of each project.

The Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation is one of the leading entities in the state that allocates NMTC's. Contact the Corporation to learn more about specific details and investment possibilities. <http://www.mhic.com/> Or, call (617) 850-1000.

Small Business Administration

The United States Small Business Administration (SBA) offers financing for small and medium sized businesses. SBA loans are usually structured as a guarantee of a commercial loan through a local bank. SBA offers several options for loan guarantees up to 90% of the loan value for micro and small businesses. The 504 Program provides growing businesses with long-term, fixed-rate financing for major fixed assets, such as land and buildings. Additional loan guarantee funding is available through the 2009 Economic Stimulus and Recovery Act. The Western MA regional office is located at STCC Technology Park and can be reached at 413- 785-0484. Further information and eligibility requirements can be found through the SBA's website, at

<http://www.sba.gov/services/financialassistance/sbaloantopics/cdc504/index.html>

Transportation Enhancement Program (TE)

The Transportation Enhancements (TE) Program administers federal funds for projects to preserve, restore, or enhance components of the multi-modal transportation system that have not traditionally been funded by the Federal Highway Administration. This includes development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, educational programs, landscaping, acquisition of scenic easements, historic preservation, restoration of buildings and structures, removal of outdoor advertising, archaeological research, environmental mitigation of stormwater pollution, and establishment of transportation museums. Applications are submitted by a municipality or public agency to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation. Application and additional information can be located at the following website: Executive Office of Transportation TE Program

Private & Non-Profit Resources

Adams Arts Program (Massachusetts Cultural Council)

The John and Abigail Adams Arts Program fosters and promotes the use of cultural assets as an economic development tool. The goal of the program is to maximize the economic impact of the cultural sector in Massachusetts by funding initiatives that connect artists and cultural organizations to local and state economic development efforts, nurture new arts and cultural enterprise development, raise awareness of the Commonwealth's cultural products, and increase arts and cultural visitors to the state.

This grant program is open to not-for-profits and public sector entities. There are two grant categories: planning and implementation. Applicants can seek up to \$10,000 for planning grants and up to \$100,000 for implementation grants per year. There is a 1:4 cash match for receipt of a planning grant. That is, for every MCC dollar, the applicant must raise \$0.25. The match must be secured by the time of application. There is a 1:1 match for receipt of an implementation grants. 80 percent of the match must be in cash and 20 percent may be in-kind support. Matching funds must be secured by the end of the funding period.

Several projects in western Massachusetts communities have been funded through this program, including a \$30,000 grant to the Easthampton City Arts organization in 2009. For applications and additional information, visit the program's website.

<http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/programs/adamsarts.html>

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Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts

The Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, through a volunteer driven process, offers funding to nonprofits to support a broad range of projects addressing the needs of residents in Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties. A listing of available funding opportunities is located at: <http://www.communityfoundation.org/nonprofits/>. The foundation has supported various arts and recreation initiatives. Past awards have funded recreation programs for people with disabilities; music, theater, dance, and arts programs for youth; renovations and upgrades to arts, theater and music facilities and resource centers; artists in residence; theater productions; and park developments, among many others. Their average grant size is \$9,000 (minimum \$1,000; maximum \$20,000, \$50,000 for capital campaigns). Many Westfield organizations have received grants from the Community Foundation. In 2008, the foundation funded interactive exhibits at the Amelia Park Children's Museum. Grant selection criteria are very broad, but the proposed project must have a clear community impact. The foundation does not fund projects retroactively, and it does not fund planning projects. Contact: Sheila Toto, 413-732-2858x105, stoto@communityfoundation.org

Cultural Facilities Fund (Massachusetts Cultural Council)

The Cultural Facilities Fund provides Capital Grants, Feasibility & Technical Assistance Grants and System Replacement Plan Grants to promote the acquisition, design, repair, rehabilitation renovation, expansion, or construction of nonprofit cultural facilities in Massachusetts. All grants from the Fund must be matched with cash contributions from the private or public sector. Eligible applicants include nonprofit cultural organizations and (subject to some limitations) municipalities and institutions of higher education that own cultural facilities.

A Northampton organization, Available Potential Enterprises, Ltd., recently received a Feasibility & Technical Assistance grant of \$15,000 towards the second phase of their capital fundraising feasibility study to develop an arts center in downtown Northampton. For applications and additional information please contact Jay Paget at 617-727-3668 (x263), Program Director, or visit their website: <http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/facilities/facilities.htm>

Massachusetts Business Development Corporation

MassBusiness (affiliate of The Business Development Corporation of New England) provides financing and investment capital for growing companies in Massachusetts and partners with local banks to assemble financing packages beyond the scope of conventional financing. The organization routinely works with growing Western Massachusetts businesses. Financing programs include:

- Direct Loans
- Community Loans for minority and women-owned businesses and non-profits in economically disadvantaged areas.
- SBA504 Fixed Asset Loans For Small Businesses
- Mezzanine & Private Equity Capital (gap financing)
- Direct loans to recycling or re-use businesses
- Small business loan guarantees through participating banks
- Low-cost environmental insurance

<http://www.bdcnewengland.com/site/content/index.asp> Contact: Carol C. Brennan, Director of Business Development at 413-237-6648

MassDevelopment

MassDevelopment, the state's finance and development authority, works with businesses, financial institutions and local officials to stimulate economic growth across the Commonwealth. MassDevelopment can help secure funding to get housing and mixed use developments off the ground with tax-exempt and conventional bond financing, low closing costs, flexible terms, loans, and 4% federal tax credits. They also offer financing to businesses, real estate developers, and non-profits. Provision of financing for housing development typically requires that the project includes an affordability component.

MassDevelopment routinely works with Western Massachusetts businesses, developers, and non-profits communities to advance projects or business plans. For example, MassDevelopment provided The Pro's Choice, Inc. of Ludlow with a low-cost Real Estate Loan in the amount of \$350,000 in January 2009. Additional information can be found on their website, <http://www.massdevelopment.com/> or contact Sean Calnan, Development Programs Manager at (413) 755-1331

Massachusetts Economic Stabilization Trust

The Trust lends working capital to small and medium sized, value-added businesses in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Loans are considered when and if they lead to the financial stability and improvement of the business. The Trust typically awards loans in the amount of \$400,000. By providing loans where traditional financing is not available or where credit is no longer extended, companies are able to implement restructuring plans to create a stable financial future for the company and its employees. An example of the Trusts work in western Massachusetts is the \$150,000 loan they provided to the Production Tool and Grinding Incorporation in Orange. Contact: Rich Alley, Western MA Loan Officer at 413-884-1048 <http://www.commcorp.org/trust/index.html>.

National Endowment for the Arts Grants (NEA)

The National Endowment for the Arts offers a number of grants annually to arts councils, arts organizations, arts agencies, departments of cultural affairs, or arts commissions. Available grants vary from year to year. Refer to the NEA's website for the latest available grants and applications. <http://arts.endow.gov/grants/apply/Locals.html>. Additional grants open to many arts organizations are described at: <http://www.nea.gov/grants/index.html>

New England Foundation for the Arts

A number of grant opportunities are offered by the New England Foundation for the Arts. One Public Art grant supports public art projects through planning or implementation grants awarded to community-based nonprofit organizations for engagement with individual artists. Organizations funded through NEFA's public art programs represent a broad array of nonprofits, including the arts, the environment, community development, youth, and education. Full descriptions available at: <http://www.nefa.org/grantprog/index.html>.

Nonprofit Finance Fund

The New England Office of NFF provides advisory and financial services to nonprofits of all types in Massachusetts. Services include: nonprofit business analysis, planning for managing assets, workshops and planning guides on facility and financial planning. NFF also offers facilities loans. The organization recently provided a \$1.625 million loan commitment to the Holyoke Health Center (HHC) to help the hospital complete the La Plaza de Salud—a full-service, 108,000 square-foot medical center—when faced with construction cost overruns. For more information, contact 617-204-9772 or visit their website. <http://www.nonprofitfinancefund.org/>

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Local Technical Assistance

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) provides planning, zoning, GIS and other local technical assistance to member communities through the PVPC's Local Technical Assistance Program. Under this program, Westfield is eligible for two free days of assistance per request. PVPC routinely receives additional funding from the state that enables the PVPC to expand technical assistance; however, availability varies depending on the state fiscal situation. For more information on the Local Technical Assistance Program, contact Christopher Curtis or Jessica Allan, 413-781-6045, or visit PVPC's website:

<http://www.pvpc.org/activities/localtech.shtml>

Revolving Loan Funds

Revolving Loan Funds (RFL) are used primarily for developing and expanding small businesses. RFLs are a self-replenishing pool of money, using interest and principal payments on old loans to issue new ones. Often, RFL is a bridge between the amount the borrower can obtain on the private market and the amount needed to start or sustain a business. For example, a borrower may obtain 60 to 80 percent of project financing from other sources. Therefore, this fund can be extremely successful in providing assistance to borrowers who are unable to access traditional sources. Eligible uses include operating capital, acquisition of land and buildings, new construction, facade and building renovation, landscape and property improvements, and machinery and equipment. Typically non-profits, private agencies and government agencies offer revolving loan fund programs. Currently, there are not any locally-based revolving loan fund programs in the Westfield area.

The Property and Casualty Initiative

In 1999, as the result of state legislation, thirteen Massachusetts-based property and casualty insurance companies established the Property and Casualty Initiative, LLC (PCI) as a state wide community loan fund. PCI's economic development mission is to promote development in economic target areas and to create employment opportunities through direct loans to small and mid-sized businesses and non-profits. The organization also provides financing for affordable housing projects and community services. PCI provides flexible business loans for working capital, acquisition or renovation of real estate, business acquisition, and purchase of equipment. Loan sizes range from a minimum of \$250,000 up to \$5,000,000. In the Pioneer Valley Region, PCI provided a \$1,000,000 loan to the Western Massachusetts Enterprise Fund, Inc. (WMEF)—a certified community development financial institution serving small and micro businesses in the urban and rural communities of western Massachusetts—to allow WMEF to continue serving the small businesses of the region. For more information about lending opportunities, contact Paula Alves Zaiken, Vice President of Business Lending at 617-723-7878, or view the organization's website <http://www.pcifund.com/content>.

Western Massachusetts Enterprise Fund, Inc.

The Western Massachusetts Enterprise Fund, Inc. is a nonprofit community loan fund that provides financing and technical assistance for businesses and nonprofits that may not qualify for traditional funding. WMEF offers lines of credit up to \$20,000 and term loans ranging in size from \$500 to \$250,000, which can be combined with other financing on larger projects. In addition, WMEF offers businesses assistance with business plans, marketing products or services, tracking and understanding business finances, streamlining operations, managing risk, obtaining legal counsel,

or managing growth. For more information, call (413) 420-0183 or visit the organization's website <http://www.wmef.org/>.

Women Business Owners Alliance

The Women Business Owners Alliance of the Pioneer Valley sponsors the Cheryl Reed Memorial Loan Fund. The loan fund is a revolving fund open to women owned businesses in the Pioneer Valley that are members of WBOA. For more information, contact: Linda McDonald, President at 413-527-2178 or view the organization's website <http://www.wboa.org/>.

YouthReach (Massachusetts Cultural Council)

The YouthReach Initiative promotes out-of-school arts, humanities and science opportunities that nurture the spirit of creative inquiry in young people. Eligible applicants include nonprofit cultural organizations or organizations with a strong history in the arts, humanities, or interpretive sciences. Schools are ineligible, and YouthReach funds cannot be used for programs that take place in a school during the school day. Typical YouthReach grant range from \$8,000-\$13,000 and must be matched. For applications and additional information please visit their website <http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/programs/youthreach.html>

In-Kind Support

Citizens groups, local organizations, and businesses can provide in-kind support to forward many of the recommendations in this plan.



APPENDIX

APPENDIX MATERIALS ARE AVAILABLE ON-LINE AT:
WWW.WESTFIELDDOWNTOWNPLAN.COM

ON-LINE CONTENTS INCLUDE:

- Survey Results
- Northeastern University Economic Development Self-Assessment Results
- Workshop Documents
- Engagement Material
- Downtown Maps
 - Age of Buildings
 - BID - Business Improvement District
 - Business by Type
 - Land Use
 - Recreation and Protected Open Space
 - Zoning