

TECHNICAL REPORT

**WESTPORT CENTER PLANNING DISTRICT
HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY UPDATE
AND
PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Westport, Connecticut

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

PAL (The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.) undertook this historic resources inventory update of Westport Center for the Town of Westport, Connecticut in 2011-2012. PAL of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, is a non-profit cultural resources management firm that specializes in archaeology, architectural history, research, documentation, and preservation planning throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic region. The inventory update was completed with grant assistance from the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (CTSHPO), Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, which is funded by the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Department of the Interior Certified Local Government program and the State of Connecticut. This inventory built upon several previous surveys conducted in Westport from the 1960s through 2008.

The purpose of the Westport survey is to establish, maintain, and update an inventory of historic resources in Westport that possess historic and/or architectural significance and to establish a historic context for evaluating these resources. It involved the update of previously surveyed properties and new survey. The survey provides a basis for identifying properties worthy of preservation and for preparing National Register of Historic Places (National Register) nominations. The results of the survey supply important information for local and state planning processes. In addition, individual property owners can use the information included in the survey to help make informed decisions about their historic properties.

Westport maintains a Historic Resources Inventory (HRI or Inventory) database and accompanying digital mapping, which are updated periodically. The most recent update of the Inventory occurred in 2008 (ACRC 2008). The Inventory is an integral component of Westport's planning program for historic resources in the town, as laid out in the *Westport Historic Districts & Properties Handbook* (Gibbs 1996), *Westport Historic Districts & Properties Handbook Part II* (PAL 1997) and *Westport Historic Districts & Properties Handbook Part III* (Gibbs 2009).

Copies of the final report, inventory forms, property list, and large-scale map are located at the Westport Historic District Commission (HDC) office in Town Hall, 110 Myrtle Avenue, Westport, CT 06880 and at the CTSHPO, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, One Constitution Plaza, Second Floor, Hartford, CT 06103.

The historic resources inventory survey update of Westport Center in Westport, Connecticut; was undertaken at PAL by Virginia H. Adams, Senior Architectural Historian; Jenny Fields Scofield, AICP, Architectural Historian/Preservation Planner; Quinn R. Stuart, Architectural Historian; and Blake McDonald, Assistant Architectural Historian.

CHAPTER TWO

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Survey Area and Property Selection Criteria

The project scope of work called for a survey of at least 70 historic properties within Westport Center, which encompasses the Town's historic commercial core. The completed survey includes 74 properties and comprises an updated inventory of historic resources in the Westport, Connecticut's historic downtown. The survey was conducted in accordance with the *Connecticut Historic Resource Survey Manual* (1990) and the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Identification and Evaluation* (1983).

Fieldwork and Research

Research, fieldwork, and photography for the survey were carried out in the fall of 2011. Initial fieldwork involved a review of all properties located within the Westport Center Planning Study area, an arbitrary, unofficial boundary used by the Town for planning purposes. The Westport HDC, the Department of Planning and Zoning, the staff of the CTSHPO, and the PAL survey team concurred on the study area boundary prior to the beginning of fieldwork. PAL identified approximately 125 properties within this study area that were 50 years old or older. General information about the existing conditions and architectural characteristics of each of these properties was recorded in the field. The properties were located on a base map generated using data layers from the Town's Geographic Information System (GIS) and photographed with a high-resolution digital camera. PAL staff used this field data to complete a review of the properties identified within the study area. Properties that appeared to lack historic or architectural significance or had lost architectural integrity were dropped from the survey. The HDC approved the list of properties selected for the completion of inventory forms.

Fieldwork consisted of a driving and walking survey to photograph buildings and their setting using high resolution digital cameras. The field team recorded observations about date, materials, alterations, and other characteristics and features.

PAL staff conducted research at the Westport Town Hall, Westport Public Library, and the Westport Historical Society, as well as on the internet. Historic fire insurance and atlas maps, and town directories were consulted for each surveyed property. Westport Property Record Cards and Building Permits provided information on building footprints, materials, past and present ownership, and approximated dates of building alterations. Previously completed survey reports, inventory forms and National Register nominations in Westport were reviewed for general contextual information, in addition to a variety of primary and secondary sources noted in the bibliography. Guidance from the CTSHPO and the NPS structured the survey and served as the basis for National Register evaluations (CTSHPO 1990; NPS 1983, 1991).

National Register Evaluation Criteria

The criteria for evaluating properties in Westport were based in the framework of the National Register eligibility evaluation criteria. The National Register is administered by the NPS under the supervision of the Secretary of the Interior (NPS 1983). Properties listed in the National Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archaeology,

engineering, and culture. These resources contribute to an understanding of the historic and cultural foundations of the states and the nation. Unless they meet specific requirements for possessing exceptional significance, properties must be at least 50 years old in order to be eligible for listing in the National Register. As of 2012, therefore, any property built in 1962 or earlier has the potential to be eligible for listing in the National Register if it meets the evaluation criteria.

The National Register criteria for evaluating the significance of properties were developed to recognize the accomplishments of all peoples who have made a contribution to our country's heritage. The criteria for evaluation state the following:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and:

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Integrity, as used in the National Register criteria, refers to physical characteristics and intangible qualities that define a property and its setting. Properties that are eligible for listing in the National Register will be essentially unchanged, or have changes that have gained significance in their own right, and clearly recognizable as an historic resource. Not all changes are negative, however; some may have gained significance in their own right and now contribute to the defining characteristics of the property.

National Register Evaluation Process

One historic district and six individual properties in Westport Center are recommended eligible for National Register listing. Under National Register Criterion A, these properties are associated with patterns of development or events important in Westport's history. Most properties also meet Criterion C for their representation of architectural styles or types that illustrate methods of design and/or construction important in Westport's history.

Survey Work Products

The inventory forms are the most basic and detailed documents of the survey work products. They provide information on individual historic properties and on Westport Center's history and architecture. The survey forms are the basis for the recommendations regarding additional National Register eligible individual properties and districts. Other sections that complete the survey component of the report include: a list of the 2012 inventoried (surveyed) buildings (Appendix A); the Town's 2008 (ACRC 2008) list of properties that have been previously surveyed or listed in the National Register, updated to include the properties in this survey and annotated (Appendix B); 74 Inventory forms (Appendix C); and a large scale base map (Appendix D). These properties retain architectural integrity of varying degrees. The planning recommendations for Westport Center are discussed in Chapter 3.

The Inventory Form

For every historic resource included in this survey, a standard CTSHPO Resource Inventory form was prepared according to CTSHPO guidelines (CTSHPO 1990). The forms are included in Appendix C. Fieldwork involved recordation of descriptive information in a matrix, mapping on a base map, and photography. The names and addresses of current property owners were included in the narrative, using the Westport Property Record Cards.

Although many items on the form are self-explanatory, several require further explanation:

NUMBER. Each site is assigned an inventory number that appears on the form, the map, and the slides. The inventory list is alphanumeric, based on street names and numbers as they appear in the town records.

HISTORIC NAME. The historic name is meant to serve as a meaningful source and for indicating the site's significance. Historic names usually refer to the original or earliest known owner. The sources for this information were the historic maps and directories.

INTERIOR ACCESSIBILITY. This was a survey of exterior features; no interiors were observed. Framing systems, where indicated, are based on the architectural knowledge of the survey staff.

STYLE. In determining styles of buildings, the survey staff followed the terminology used in *A Field Guide to American Houses* (Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester 1997). Buildings without any obvious stylistic reference are simply termed vernacular. The most frequently named styles are explained below, generally organized by the order in which they first appear. Many houses, however, display features of more than one of these styles, or are local, vernacular interpretations. Styles that were in use prior to the twentieth century are excluded from this listing. Dates following the style name indicate the approximate time frame of that style in Westport. A summary of prevalent architectural styles follows:

Georgian (1700-1780)

This style was the dominant style among the English colonies in the eighteenth century. Characteristics of the style include a rectangular plan, symmetrical fenestration, double-hung windows with small panes, panel wood doors, and a cornice with dentils or other decorative molding. Higher style buildings display elaborate door and window surrounds with entablatures, pediments and round-arch fanlights, two-story pilasters, roof balustrades, and dormers. Quoins and belt courses are typically found on masonry examples.

Federal (1780-1830)

The Federal style was popular during the period after the Revolutionary War in America and is reflective of ancient Roman prototypes. The style shares many characteristics with its predecessor, the Georgian style. The Federal style displays the same symmetry and focus on the Classical architectural features; however, Federal style buildings usually have a shallower pitch roof and a lighter application of detailing. Window and door details are also similar, but developed into elliptical-shape fanlights that incorporate side-lights and larger pane double-hung windows.

Greek Revival (1825-1860)

Inspiration for this style stemmed from the ancient Greek democratic ideals admired by the newly formed American democracy. The style typically adhered to the Greek orders, proportions, and ornamentation. It was a popular style for civic and institutional building as well as residential architecture. Characteristic

of the style include gable or hip roofs and cornices with wide bands of trim or elaborate entablatures. Most examples have pedimented porches, either full-height or one-story, supported by prominent columns. Doors and windows typically have elaborate surrounds comprised of side-lights and transoms encompassed by pilasters and heavy lintels. Vernacular examples of this style usually turned the gable to the front with less elaborate detailing.

Gothic Revival (1840-1880)

The Gothic Revival style is rooted in the medieval architecture of Europe and the picturesque movement that developed as a reaction to the strict architectural constraints of its Classical Revival counterparts. It gained favor in England during the mid-eighteenth century and influenced American architecture through inclusion in nationally circulated pattern books targeted at rural architecture. Andrew Jackson Downing, who published *Cottage Residences* in 1842 and the *Architecture of Country Houses* in 1850, promoted the development of aesthetics more appropriate for domestic architecture than the formal Greek Revival style. He proliferated the Gothic Revival style in informal, picturesque residences set in scenic rural landscapes. Characteristics of the style include an emphasis on verticality through tall, narrow forms; steeply pitched roofs with cross gables; open rakes with vergeboard, trefoils or quatrefoils, crenellation/battlements; scroll-sawn ornament (gingerbread); shaped moldings; pointed-arch windows, and one-story porches. It also can be found with asymmetric plans, roof parapets and castellation, and bay windows. Two-over-two, double-hung windows, some with hoods, are the most common, but diamond pane casement windows were also used. The doors are similar to the windows frequently consisting of pointed arches, decorative hoods, or other Gothic motifs. Intricate panel doors are most common, but board-and-batten doors are also seen.

Italianate (1840-1885)

Andrew Jackson Downing also perpetuated the dispersion of the Italianate style, which gained favor in American architecture simultaneously to the Gothic Revival style. Interest in Italian ruins and late medieval country homes occurred during the Romantic era. The style was implemented in England by 1802 and appeared in Downing's *Country Residences*. It remained popular in the United States from approximately 1840 to 1885 and was frequently expressed with elements of other exotic revivals or contemporaneous architectural styles. Characteristic features of the Italianate style include rectangular or cubic proportions; an asymmetrical or L-shaped plan often with a prominent central tower; low-pitched or flat roof; deeply overhanging cornice with paired brackets; narrow double doors; narrow, single or paired round arched or rectangular windows, often heavy moldings and window crowns; belvederes; entrance or full-width bracketed porches; and balconies. Windows sash was typically two-over-two or one-over-one, double-hung.

Second Empire (1855-1885)

The French Second Empire style, which emerged in nineteenth-century Paris, shares many similar architectural features to Italianate architecture and became prominent in the United States from approximately 1855 to 1885. This style was first popular in America for civic and institutional buildings. Its characteristic features include a square shape with a mansard roof, abundant dormers, bracketed overhanging eaves, paired windows, prominent lintels, towers, cresting, and heavy ornament. Towers and elaborate front porches may be present on some examples of the style.

Queen Anne (1875-1925)

Based on English architecture from the late sixteenth century, this style actually is more a combination of Tudor and Classical architecture. In contrast to the earlier styles, which used simple box forms, the Queen Anne style is characterized by asymmetry and a complex massing of forms. Other characteristics include steeply pitched roofs, often with cross gables or irregular shapes; towers and porches; an L-shaped plan; and ornamentation such as spindlework, half-timbered surface treatments, patterned shingles or masonry, and finials. The walls of the gable peaks are also often sheathed with contrasting decorative wood shingles. In the Shingle style, a subtype of the Queen Anne style, shingles cover the entire wall surface. Another derivative is the Stick style, in which the structural elements of the building are replicated with exterior trim boards and a variety of wood siding is used for wall sheathing.

Shingle Style (1880–1900)

By the end of the late nineteenth century, American architects began creating uniquely American architectural styles, using inspiration from the various elements of earlier design trends. The Shingle Style, generally popular from 1880 to 1900, is the result of such efforts. Shingle Style design is known for its sprawling, free, asymmetrical forms. Emphasis is placed on informality and form, rather than ornament. Shingle Style buildings have irregular rooflines with cross gables or dormers that extend over porches and continuous shingle sheathing. They typically incorporate design ideas from the Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Romanesque Revival styles in unexpected patterns. Palladian windows, wide arches, window bands and eyebrow dormers are prevalent.

Colonial Revival/Dutch Colonial Revival (1890–1940)

The resurgence of interest in colonial culture after the American Centennial contributed to the development of the Colonial Revival style, popular from approximately 1880 well into the twentieth century. Colonial Revival design is considered one of the first distinctly American architectural styles and is based on Georgian and Federal aesthetics. It represents a return to simplicity and order in contrast to the overabundance of the preceding Queen Anne style. Characteristic features of the style include symmetrical elevations, a center hall plan, double-hung windows flanked by paneled shutters, and pedimented entrances with engaged pilasters and fanlight transoms. Buildings of this style come in many forms and utilize several roof types, including gable, gambrel, and hip. Although high-style houses of this type display Georgian or Federal architectural elements, a porch supported by single or double Doric columns is the identifying style feature, sometimes as an addition to a much older house. The Four Square, a cube-form building with a hip roof and one of several Colonial Revival sub-types, is a popular urban style of this period and often displays a Colonial Revival-style porch or portico. Another popular variation is the Dutch Colonial Revival, which features a gambrel roof.

English Revival (1890–1945)

The English Revival style is an eclectic, non-academic interpretation of late medieval English architecture. Characteristics include asymmetrical, often complex massing; second-story overhangs; broad, steeply pitched, expansive roofs; prominent chimneys constructed of stone or brick; weatherboard or masonry veneer walls (brick, stone); wood detailing; stone trim at entry surrounds, window surrounds, and corners of main block; corner quoins or quoin-like detailing around window and door openings; casement windows, frequently with diamond panes; grouped window openings, and the use of Tudor arches, especially around entrances.

Spanish Revival (1915–1940)

The Panama-California Exposition held in San Diego, California in 1915 and designed by nationally prominent architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue initiated the Spanish Revival (or Spanish Eclectic) style in the United States. Representation of Spanish Revival design in Hollywood movies and use of the style for tourist resorts in Florida after World War I catalyzed its popularity. Spanish Revival design demonstrated a break with the more rigid and formal Neoclassical style through an exuberant and creative blending of various historic design epochs. Spanish Revival style buildings incorporate Baroque, Renaissance, Byzantine, Gothic, and Neoclassical architectural elements from the Spanish Colonial period in Spain and its territories; Moorish design (traditional Spanish architecture mixed with oriental and Islamic features); and the California Mission style. Features such as asymmetrical facades, low-pitched roofs, focal windows, arched openings, ornate door surrounds, window grilles and balconies, decorative vents, decorative tile, and porches are characteristic of Spanish Revival style buildings.

Tudor Revival (1925–1940)

The Tudor Revival style, inspired by the vernacular architecture of England, is commonly identified through the presence of half-timbering, steeply pitched roofs, and a facade dominated by one or more cross gables. Other features include tall, narrow windows, often in mullioned groups with multi-pane glazing, and massive chimneys. Stone, stucco, and clapboard appear frequently as building materials.

Craftsman (1905–1930)

Houses of this style are commonly identified by low-pitched, gabled roofs (occasionally hipped) with wide, unenclosed eave overhangs; roof rafters usually are exposed; decorative beams or braces are commonly added under gables, porches either full-or partial-width, with roofs supported by tapered square columns; the columns or pedestals frequently extend to ground level.

Classical Revival (1875–1910) and Neoclassical (1895-1950)

Various Classical Revival styles in the United States developed partly in response to a desire for European cosmopolitanism and a display of permanence and order. These buildings express the pure classicism of ancient Greece and Rome, and can be identified by the predominance of classical motifs, most notable the use of a free-standing colonnaded entrance porch, evoking the image of a temple front. Classically inspired door and window surrounds, as well as correct use of the Orders of architecture (Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Tuscan, and Composite) are also present.

The Neoclassical style is a subtype of Classicism dominant in the United States from approximately 1895 to 1950, which developed after the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago, Illinois in 1893. Neoclassical design was popular for civic buildings because of its symbolization of order, harmony, and discipline through symmetry, Classic references, and monumentality. Buildings expressive of this style often incorporate double-height porticos, broken pediments, and surface ornament such as swags and urns.

Vernacular (up to present)

Vernacular buildings are those that represent a regionalized or local building form or type. These buildings are often developed in response to the local environment or culture and are constructed with local materials. They may incorporate or be updated with limited architectural ornament, but are generally not associated with a specific architectural style.

DATE. Dates of construction were estimated in the field based on architectural evidence and confirmed by map research, local directories, and/or the Westport Tax Assessor's records. Title searches in the land records were not carried out.

MATERIALS. Exterior materials were observed in the field and checked in the Tax Assessor's records.

DIMENSIONS. The width of the facade (facing the street) is given first, followed by the depth, and then by the dimensions of sizable additions. The source was the tax assessor's records.

CONDITION. Structural and exterior architectural conditions were based on observation. Most buildings were rated "good" in both categories. "Fair" was checked where there were minor maintenance problems, such as peeling paint, or deteriorated or missing items. "Deteriorated" was not used since buildings in this category were not surveyed because they would not have met the National Register requirements for structural and architectural integrity of contributing buildings in a district.

OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES. The description of the building is amplified in this section.

HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE. In this section the available information on the history of the building and its owners is presented, and the significance of the building in Westport is assessed. Research was required to determine historical importance. Typically, research included a review of historic maps and city directories, as well as narrative materials relating to the development of the area and to the individuals associated with the property.

CHAPTER THREE

WESTPORT CENTER PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are intended to provide for the protection of historic properties and support of managed growth in Westport Center. The recommendations were compiled after the completion of the Westport Center Historic Resources Inventory survey and a review of existing legislation regarding historic properties and zoning codes. Additional information was collected through communications with Town planning staff, the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, and professional planners from other Connecticut communities. The zoning overlay, design guidelines, and historic district regulations for nearby communities were also collected through internet research.

Recommendation 1. Establish a Village District

Establish a village district in order to better guide the design of buildings, streetscapes and sites in the commercial areas of downtown, while allowing compatible growth. Village districts are authorized by Connecticut General Statutes, enabled in 1998 under Public Act No. 98-116, Section 8-2j and amended in 2000 under Public Act 00-145. Copies of this legislation as it appears on the State of Connecticut's General Assembly website, is included in Appendix E (<http://search.cga.state.ct.us/adv/>).

Definition and Benefits

Village districts offer key benefits for Connecticut communities. It is a tool overseen by the Planning & Zoning Commission that allows for the protection of the distinctive character of a defined area without prohibiting growth. Village districts are enacted by the town as part of the local zoning code through a process that involves public input, but does not require review from any other municipal or state agency.

This designation benefits residents, property owners and visitors by promoting the retention of an area's valuable qualities. Characteristics such as scenic views, access to public spaces or other amenities, aesthetically pleasing streetscapes, and a collection of intact historic properties comprise distinct places that are attractive destinations. Such places are often a source of pride and identity for the local community. Historic properties are a tangible, physical expression of changes in cultural trends over time and are symbolic of significant historical events or patterns of development. The retention of historic properties reduces demand for land and materials through reuse and enhances the visual quality of an area through representation of a variety of architectural styles. Places with layers of historical development and a mixture of building types often have vibrant streetscapes.

Village districts benefit developers by providing an opportunity to locate a business in a historic area without requiring uniform design and by simplifying the process of zoning approvals. Village districts can be created as overlays or stand-alone zoning and can replace zoning regulations that are not compatible with existing conditions. Correction of unviable zoning can result in a decrease in the number of variances requested from the zoning board of appeals. By increasing collaboration between the zoning commission and advisory entities, the use of village districts may also shorten review timeframes.

The purpose of village district zoning is to preserve the features of a designated area that comprise its distinct qualities. Village district regulations are broader in scope than those of local historic districts and function to maintain the overall character of an area through the promotion of specific compatibility

objectives. These design criteria include considerations regarding landscaping, maintenance of public views, road layout, development patterns, buildings and structures. Village district zoning incorporates a flexible design framework, which enables continuing development within contextual reason and does not sacrifice the individuality of specific properties. Village districts allow for the historic district commission and architectural review board or other advisory entities to collaborate on the retention of character, but the districts are subject to regulation by the town's planning and zoning commission.

The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation explains the Village District Act and provides helpful background information at <http://www.cttrust.org/index.cgi/1057>. The Village District is a strong and effective "tool to help municipalities protect and preserve their community character and historic development patterns" (CTHP 2012).

Establishment Process

Village districts are created by a simple regulation change to the local zoning ordinance, without requiring any action by the state, the town's legislative body, or property owners. The establishment process involves the identification of the proposed district's character-defining features and incorporation of the local community's vision for that area. A list of steps describing this process is provided below and is summarized in Table 1.

1. Identify the boundaries of the potential village district.

Village Districts must be specifically identified and included in the town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). A village district for Westport Center was pre-identified in the *Westport 2007 Plan of Conservation and Development* and is generally described with potential boundaries in commercial areas along parts of Main Street and Post Road (Westport 2007:7-9). Inclusion of potential village districts in the POCD is a first step in educating citizens and building support for the designation. It is recommended that the Historic District Commission meet with the Architectural Review Board and Planning and Zoning Commission to organize a subcommittee with members from each group. These groups should begin to raise community support for the village district and seek out any other interested participants. The village district subcommittee should refine the boundaries of the proposed village district, and then meet with town planning staff to finalize it.

Recommended boundaries for the Westport Center Village District are shown in Figure 1 and encompass a continuous portion of the historic downtown core. The proposed village district consists of the existing BDC and BCD/H zoning districts as well as a portion of the RORD2 district along the south side of Church Lane. The property at 35 Church Lane would also be included. This area is bounded by Avery Place to the north, Elm Street and Imperial Avenue to the east, Jesup Road to the south and the Saugatuck River to the west. It excludes peripheral neighborhoods located at the gateways to downtown that have lower density development with a more residential character. It is intended that the village district zoning would supplant the requirements of the BCD, BCD/H and RORD2 districts in this location and aid in achieving greater cohesion of the town's goals as identified in the POCD.

2. Complete an inventory of historic and landscape resources in the proposed village district.

Prior to establishing a Village District, a full inventory of the properties, landscape elements and setting characteristics within the area should be completed. Issues concerning the retention of these key features should also be identified to inform the design phase of the establishment process. Most of this work has already been completed for Westport Center through the *Historic Resources Inventory* and the preparation of the *Westport 2007 Plan of Conservation and Development*. Limited, additional inventory work may be necessary prior to the drafting of design standards for the district. This work might include photography

Table 1. Village District Establishment Process for Westport Center, Westport, Connecticut.

Step	Action	Responsible Party	Suggested Schedule
1. Identify the village district boundaries	<p>a. Include the village district in the town's Plan of Conservation and Development.</p> <p>b. Organize a committee or group of people charged with defining the village district boundaries and overseeing the design phase of the process.</p> <p>c. Finalize the district boundaries.</p>	<p>a. Planning and Zoning Commission</p> <p>b. The HDC should meet with the ARB and Planning and Zoning Commission to organize a subcommittee with members from each group; seek participants interested in supporting the creation of a village district.</p> <p>c. The subcommittee should meet to discuss common goals for the village district and refine the district boundary proposed by PAL. The subcommittee should include members from the Planning and Zoning Commission and town planning staff.</p>	<p>a. Complete (Westport 2007 POCD)</p> <p>b. May 2012</p> <p>c. June 2012</p>
2. Complete an inventory of resources	<p>a. Complete a survey of historic properties within the village district.</p> <p>b. Complete an inventory of other features important to the character of the downtown, including landscape, views, development patterns and setting. Current photographs of these features as well as non-historic properties in the area may help inform the design phase of the process.</p>	<p>a. Historic District Commission with architectural historians</p> <p>b. Selected village district subcommittee, or members of the Historic District Commission or Architectural Review Board. Professional input could be sought at this stage if considered helpful to the Historic District Commission.</p>	<p>a. Will be completed in May 2012 upon receipt of the HRI update and associated survey/planning report.</p> <p>b. Most of this information is contained in the Plan of Conservation and Development. Any additional work deemed necessary should be completed in June 2012.</p>
3. Establish design standards	<p>a. Undertake a focused visioning process to determine what the village district should look like. Solicit input from the public, Town departments, and other Town committees early in the process.</p> <p>b. Contact the CT Trust for Historic Preservation circuit rider for technical assistance.</p>	<p>a. Selected village district subcommittee and other interested parties</p> <p>b. Historic District Commission</p>	<p>a. July 2012</p> <p>b. June-July 2012</p>

Step	Action	Responsible Party	Suggested Schedule
4. Adopt zoning regulations	c. Apply for a CT Trust HPTAG grant or other community initiatives grants for funding assistance during the design phase.	c. Historic District Commission	c. TBD- fall grant deadline
	d. If desired, seek assistance from an architect, landscape architect, certified planner or associated professional firm to facilitate public workshops and a public design charrette. Draft design standards.	d. Town of Westport and village district subcommittee	d. October 2012
	e. Write final design standards/regulations.	e. Selected village district subcommittee with consultant (if desired) and input from the Planning and Zoning Commission	e. TBD
	a. Bring the village district zoning amendment to the Planning and Zoning Commission for a work session.	a. Village district subcommittee	a. TBD (allow 6 to 10 months for zoning amendment adoption process)
	b. Enter referral process by sending village district amendment to all town agencies and Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for comment.	b. Planning and Zoning Commission	b. TBD
	c. Conduct public planning and zoning commission hearings in accordance with CGS Sec. 8-3 and receive public comment.	c. Planning and Zoning Commission	c. TBD
	d. Adopt the zoning amendment to create a village district.	d. Planning and Zoning Commission	d. TBD

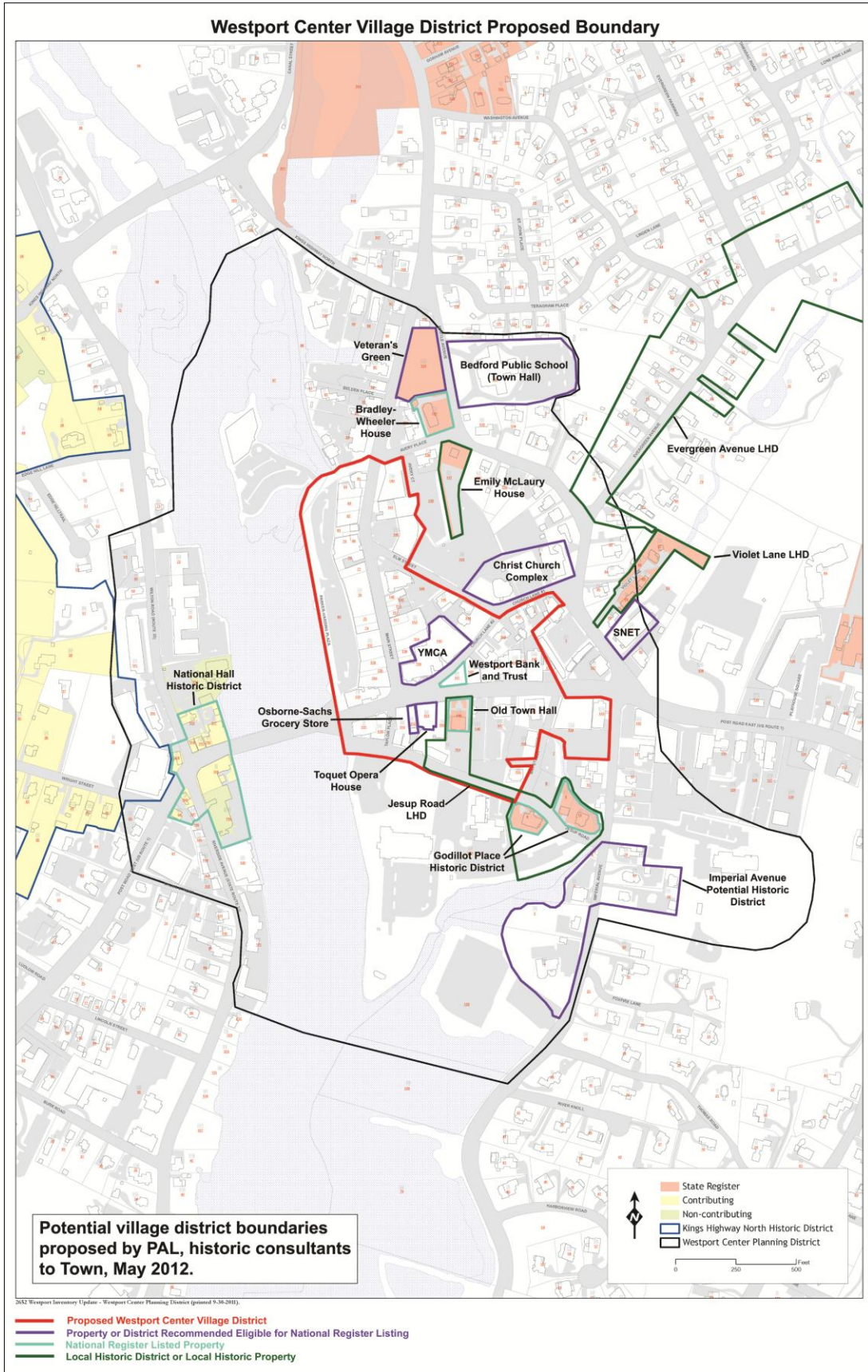


Figure 1. Westport Center Village District Proposed Boundary.

of the streetscapes and non-historic properties within the area, important views, significant architectural details and pedestrian amenities or public spaces.

3. Establish design standards.

A key step in establishing a village district is to undertake a focused visioning process to determine what the specific designated area should look like, based on its distinctive historic characteristics. Members of the Historic District Commission, Architectural Review Board or a subcommittee formed to oversee the establishment of the village district should first prepare a model village district ordinance and define preliminary design criteria. The final regulations recorded with the town must establish criteria from which a property owner and the zoning commission may make a reasonable determination of what is permitted within the district.

It is recommended that the town request technical assistance from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation's circuit rider during the design phase of the village district establishment process. After the model ordinance, proposed district boundaries, and preliminary design criteria are prepared, the town should solicit public input in the design plans. Town departments, committees, and organizations should be invited to participate, along with residents and other interest parties. A public discussion of the benefits of the village district and public participation in the drafting of the design standards can be accommodated through a professionally facilitated design charrette. It is recommended (but not required) that a registered architect, landscape architect, certified planner or associated professional firm be consulted to assist in the design process. Illustrations that aid in the understanding of the model ordinance and proposed design criteria should be prepared prior to the design charrette or other community meeting and should depict the area to be included in the village district. Such illustrations may include videos, photographs, printed or digital drawings, or other visual aids.

In developing design guidelines specific to the village district, the town should consider massing/scale, contextual compatibility, the public viewshed, streetscape appearance, and other aesthetic aspects that define the distinctive character of the area. Authors need to ensure that the aesthetics regulations are enforceable. Careful thought regarding the level of detail included in the guidelines is necessary to ensure that decisions can be made about whether a proposed project will "fit in" to the village district. A framework that focuses on the overall compatibility of proposed construction, rehabilitations or substantial alterations to the village district, rather than minor details of proposed changes, is inherently flexible. This type of framework is beneficial to applicants, review agents and the community. Design parameters can be included in the new zoning regulations. Some communities have established separate design guidelines, but this is not required.

Design criteria for the proposed village district should be finalized following the incorporation of public input and can be completed by a professional consultant, the historic district commission, architectural review board, town planning staff or other designated committee. The Planning and Zoning Commission will be responsible for updating the existing zoning ordinance with the village district regulations. The Westport Center village district boundaries as proposed in this document encompass areas that are currently included in the Business Center District (BCD), Business Center District/Historic (BCD/H) and Restricted Office–Retail District (RORD2) zoning districts. As a group, these regulations are intended to allow for commercial and office development, while preserving historic buildings and limiting the intensity of the development through mechanisms such as parking restrictions. It is anticipated that the village district regulations will build upon portions of the existing ordinance, but incorporate new language regarding design compatibility objectives and revisions to regulations that are inconsistent with common existing conditions. Village district regulations could be applied as a zoning overlay, but may be more efficiently used in Westport Center as a replacement to the zoning ordinance, which maintains a portion of the existing regulations that are functioning well.

Sections of the existing zoning ordinance that do not match current conditions within the proposed village district include regulations regarding setbacks, lot coverage, Floor to Area Ratio (FAR), and height limits. The historic development pattern along Main Street and Post Road East consists of narrow, 1-story buildings that cover close to 100% of their lots and wider 1.5 to 3-story buildings with approximately 50% to 80% lot coverage. The densest portion of the area was along the west side of Main Street, particularly at its south end where Main Street intersects with Post Road. These buildings, such as the Belden Block (27 Main Street) were originally designed with multiple stories and extended the full length of their lots from Main Street west to the riverfront. As Westport expanded by land-filling at the edges of the river, lower height rear additions were constructed. All of the buildings on Main Street and Post Road were sited without front setbacks and most were oriented perpendicularly to the street.

The current regulations for BCD zones require a 20 to 30 ft front setback, 6 ft side setback, 2-story or 25-30 ft height limit, 75% coverage, and 0.25% FAR. The extant historic buildings in the area and historic map imagery indicate historic development patterns with greater density. However, an important historic characteristic of the proposed village district is the variation of building heights, overall mass, rooflines and architectural details. New village district zoning could eliminate front setbacks and expand the maximum FAR and lot coverage. Height limits could be controlled through consideration of the FAR; as an example, if the FAR was 1.0, a building constructed on 100% of the lot could only be one story. The average as-built FAR in the BCD is 0.87, but this calculation includes vacant parcels and parking lots. Extant buildings currently within the BCD range from 0.03 to 3.02 FAR and one to three stories. The existing BCD/H zoning is more flexible; allowing setbacks and lot coverage to be equivalent to existing conditions as of June 1, 2004, but the FAR is 0.25 to 0.35.

The south side of Church Lane and the property at 35 Church Lane are included within the proposed boundaries of the Westport Center village district because of their prime location in the downtown core. This portion of the street is a buffer between the central business district and residential neighborhoods to the east and is highly susceptible to development pressures. The existing RORD2 zoning at this location is aimed at preserving its former residential character. The regulations require 20-30 ft front setbacks, 15 ft side setbacks, 25 ft rear setbacks; and include restrictions such as a 2 ½ -story or 30 ft height limit, 20% lot coverage, an FAR of 0.25, and a 2,500 sq ft maximum building size. Additional protections could be achieved by incorporating this area within the village district. Inclusion in the village district could enhance the streetscape, but may require a separate set of regulations regarding building scale. Some village districts, such as New Canaan's downtown village district, are established with subset areas of zoning regulations.

Parameters to consider in the development of the design standards for the Westport Center Village District are listed below:

- Arrangement and orientation of buildings
- Road design and bike and vehicle circulation
- Massing and scale
- Setbacks (decrease and consider exemptions for parking space, ramps, decks etc.)
- FAR (increase)
- Views and access to the waterfront
- Public landscaping and screening
- Sidewalks, pedestrian amenities
- Signage and lighting
- Public spaces
- Location of parking
- Treatment of the village district periphery (boundaries with river and residential areas)

- Treatment of conjoined properties/buildings
- Additions and infill
- Materials and fenestration patterns
- Integration with flood zone requirements

Identification of those characteristics being preserved and guidance regarding what types of actions will be required in preserving those characteristics should be clearly explained in the zoning ordinance to avoid procedural due process challenges related to vagueness. The zoning text should include criteria for understanding what is permitted within the district and may be accompanied by graphic illustrations.

4. Adopt the necessary zoning regulations.

The final step in creating a village district is to adopt new zoning regulations. Under Connecticut General Statutes Public Amendment 98-116 (PA 98-116), zoning commissions can establish regulations to create village districts as part of the local zoning ordinance. The village district subcommittee should propose the village district as a zoning amendment to the Planning and Zoning Commission and request a working session to review the draft ordinance. The Planning and Zoning Commission will subsequently release the proposed zoning amendment for comment from all town agencies and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), which oversees regulations regarding land abutting waterways. Following receipt of DEEP and municipal comments, the Planning and Zoning Commission will begin holding public hearings regarding the amendment. Public hearings must be conducted before new regulations are adopted in accordance with CGS Section 8-3. Establishment of a village district requires a majority vote of Planning and Zoning Commission members. It also requires a two-thirds vote of Planning and Zoning Commission members, if 20% of the property owners affected (or all property owners within 500 feet of the property affected) protest the zoning change by the time the hearing is held. No actions or approvals from the state, the town's legislative body, or property owners are necessary to create a village district. However, in the Town of Westport, the municipal legislative body (known as the Representative Town Meeting or RTM) has the authority to overturn a zoning amendment decision made by the Planning and Zoning Commission, in the event of significant opposition. It is important to note that no village district zoning in Connecticut has ever been challenged in court. The village district amendment to the zoning ordinance may be adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission after the public hearings process is completed.

Implementation: Applications and Review Process

Once the village district is established, the Planning and Zoning Commission receives and reviews applications for changes within the district. Regulated changes to properties in the village district include at a minimum, new construction and substantial exterior reconstruction or rehabilitation visible from a public roadway. These changes will be subject to review of the design and placement of buildings; maintenance of public views; and the design, paving materials and placement of public roadways. Other alterations and improvements may be subject to review if they are incorporated into the village district ordinance accepted by the town. All regulated exterior changes to historic buildings within village districts must be consistent with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, as revised through 1990.

The Planning and Zoning Commission must seek recommendations from a designated advisory entity for all applications within the village district. This advisory entity can be a registered architect, landscape architect, certified planner, or a review board with at least one member who is a registered architect, landscape architect or certified planner. In Westport Center, it is recommended that this entity be a board comprised of members from the Historic District Commission, Architectural Review Board and planning staff. The designated advisory entity does not have to be the same group of people (or subcommittee) who

drafted the design standards for the proposed district. The selected village district advisory entity must submit a report to the Planning and Zoning Commission within 35 days of receipt of an application. The Planning and Zoning Commission must consider this report and enter it into the public hearing record before making a final decision regarding an application. The Planning and Zoning Commission may also seek recommendations from other bodies but all recommendations must be entered into public record. The final decision regarding each application must be recorded on town's land record before it goes into effect. Enforcement of village district zoning is through building permits and/or certificates of occupancy.

Role of the HDC

The Planning and Zoning Commission must consult with a designated advisory entity with experience in aesthetics and design, prior to making decisions regarding applications submitted under the village district regulations. The Historic District Commissions' expertise regarding historic resources in Westport and its responsibility for maintaining the Town's Historic Resources Inventory will be integral to the creation of a village district in Westport Center. The Historic District Commission's experience in developing the Town's local historic district guidelines and in reviewing proposals involving changes to historic buildings under those guidelines is highly applicable to the establishment and implementation of the village district, even though the village district would have its own design parameters. A collaborative board, that includes members of the Historic District Commission and the Architectural Review Board would be the logical and most effective body to fulfill the role of advisory body to the Planning and Zoning Commission for village districts, similar to the existing BCD/H review committee. No certificates of appropriateness would be required within the village district, unless work proposed is to a locally, state, or nationally designated "historic property". Village district zoning does not override any existing Historic Overlay Districts governing alterations to National and State Register-listed properties, or regulations concerning local historic districts and local historic properties that are overseen by the Historic District Commission.

Funding Sources

Historic Preservation Technical Assistant Grants (HPTAG) are available from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation (CTHP) multiple times each year. These grants can be used for technical historic preservation assistance or preservation planning by municipalities or 501 c (3) non-profits. HPTAG grants require a one-to-one match and matching funds cannot come from the State of Connecticut. Most grant awards are between \$2,500 and \$20,000, though smaller amounts are accepted. The Town of Westport could use an HPTAG grant during the village district establishment process to hire a charrette facilitator and/or a consultant to assist with the design standards.

The CTHP also provides grants for community and historic action plans, which are available through the Vibrant Communities Initiative. This program is funded through a grant from the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism and is especially well-suited to the Town's goals for Westport Center. The grants are intended to assist municipalities in producing a strategy for the use of the cultural, economic, and historic assets that comprise vibrant town or village centers, in an effort to encourage downtown revitalization. Grants are awarded in amounts up to \$50,000 and do not require matching funds. Recipients of Vibrant Communities Initiative grants will work closely with the CTHP and will be required to engage professional assistance for the development of the Town's downtown action plans.

Statewide Examples

There are approximately eight existing village districts in Connecticut. There is no specific model because each community established a village district for different reasons. The communities of Branford (in process), Brooklyn, East Haddam, Madison, New Canaan, Norwalk, Rowayton (Norwalk), Ridgefield

and Wilton are among those that have successfully created village districts. Regulations, application forms, FAQ sheets, and freestanding design guidelines exist online for most of these communities and are available for download via the town's website.

Madison, New Canaan, Ridgefield, and Wilton are a few illustrative examples of nearby towns that represent varied approaches. Ridgefield and Wilton have design parameters that are relatively general and are incorporated into the regulations. New Canaan was initially set up in a similar way, but subsequently established separate detailed design guidelines. The Madison design guidelines are codified and highly detailed. While detailed guidelines can be useful, more general parameters allow greater flexibility, yet still provide substantial benefits to the property owners and the community.

The Brooklyn village district includes a National Register-listed historic district within it; and regulations regarding lot and building dimensions, setbacks, parking requirements and lighting. Madison, Ridgefield and New Canaan have village districts that encompass a portion of their historic downtowns. The Madison village district is designed to help shape new growth in the commercial core along Boston Post Road and incorporates adjacent residential areas. The New Canaan village district encompasses five downtown business and retail zones and does not appear to be drawn as a zoning overlay.

Recommendation 2. Expand the Business Center District/Historic

An alternative to creating the Westport Center Village District is to expand the BCD/H zone into the two adjacent BCD zones. The BCD/H in Westport Center currently encompasses an area at the intersection of Main Street, Church Lane, Taylor Place and Post Road East. Its south edge extends to Jesup Road. The BCD/H has more flexible zoning regulations than the BCD, and all applications to the Planning and Zoning Commission for alterations are reviewed by a joint committee consisting of three members from the Historic District Commission and three members from the Architectural Review Board. This joint committee meets one time per month and submits a report of recommendations to the Planning and Zoning Commission regarding each application in the BCD/H.

Expansion of the BCD/H would amplify this existing effective review and protection tool in the heart of downtown. Amendments recommended for consideration include: both sides of Main Street between Post Road East and Avery Place; and the block bounded by Jesup Road, Post Road East, and Imperial Avenue. An expansion of the BCD/H requires an amendment to the zoning ordinance and would involve a similar process of public hearings as described above in the adoption of village districts section.

Recommendation 3. Revise Zoning Regulations

Many commercial properties in the BCD and BCD/H are currently non-conforming in terms of setbacks and building coverage, which often requires property owners to request variances in the zoning regulations from the Zoning Board of Appeals. The variance process can be timely for property owners, town planning staff and the Zoning Board of Appeals. Adoption of village district zoning in Westport Center could rectify many of the inconsistencies between the zoning ordinance and existing conditions in the downtown, significantly decreasing the number of variance applications. Amendments to the zoning ordinance would involve updating or replacing the text in Sections 29 and 29A. Expansion of the BCD/H into the adjacent BCD zones would involve a revision of the zoning map.

Recommendation 4. Streamline Approvals Process

Many projects in the downtown involve undergoing reviews from multiple boards and commissions. As mentioned above, the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) receives a high number of variance applications because the existing conditions of properties in Westport Center are inconsistent with the regulations for

the BCD and BCD/H zones. The Architectural Review Board (ARB) reviews all applications for new commercial construction, exterior alterations to commercial buildings, fixed awnings and free-standing signs throughout the Town of Westport, with the exception of Historic Design Districts (HDD). In the BCD/H, this design review is completed by a joint committee of Historic District Commission (HDC) and ARB members. The full HDC completes design reviews of changes proposed within the Historic Design Districts. A subcommittee of the ZBA, known as the Administrative Review Committee (ARC) also evaluates applications for facade alterations.

A property owner seeking to restore the facade of a building located on Main Street within the BCD would need to attend separate meetings of the ARB, ARC and ZBA to fulfill all of the requirements for administrative and design reviews as regulated in the zoning ordinance. This process is time consuming and can be redundant if each reviewing entity has similar recommendations. Streamlining and simplifying this process would be helpful for property owners and town representatives.

Opportunities for streamlining the approvals process include decreasing the number of variance applications to the ZBA by amending the existing BCD zoning regulations and eliminating review by the ARC. Creation of a village district could alleviate variances and eliminate ARB review in this location. Applications for changes in the BCD, BCD/H and HDDs all require at least one level of design review. Village district zoning would maintain this regulation, but replace the ARB or joint HDC/ARB committee review with design review by the designated village district advisory board. The HDC can support simplification of approvals by seeking ways applicants can be informed of the HDC review early in the process.

Recommendation 5. Ensure that Design Issues for Historic Buildings, Streetscapes, and Landscapes are Addressed

Any new zoning regulations, design guidelines, or other standards for development in Westport Center should take into account the historic development patterns, scale and peripheral characteristics of the area. Westport Center has dense, but pedestrian-scaled streetscapes comprised of a variety of building types, architectural styles, and building ages. Both residential-scaled buildings and larger commercial blocks or public buildings are important components of the downtown. Large retail complexes with long, unbroken facades or incompatible massing could overwhelm the streetscape. Retention of pedestrian features, amenities and public space is also important to the historic vibrancy of the downtown.

The existing zoning ordinance includes provisions for buffers between the commercial core of Westport Center and the residential neighborhoods adjacent to it, through the Restricted Office–Retail District (RORD) and Restricted–Professional Office District (RPOD) zones. Westport’s Town 2007 Plan indicates that retaining a distinction between commercial and residential areas is an important goal (Westport 2007:5-2, 5-6). The RORD2 and RPOD zones in Westport Center help achieve this goal, but also encourage alterations to historically residential buildings through the installation of storefronts and other fenestration or façade alterations. Additional guidelines for the boundaries of commercial clusters in the downtown with adjacent residential areas, significant gateways to Westport Center, public space and the riverfront could be incorporated into the zoning ordinance.

Recommendation 6. Enhance HDC Responsibility by Matching Specific Properties and Issues with Identified Potential Threats and Opportunities

The HDC reviews numerous proposals involving changes to historic buildings, including demolition. In executing its duties, the HDC can continue to work with the Town to identify underdeveloped parcels or threatened vacant historic properties and properties where visible alterations would significantly detract from the cohesion of the streetscape. The HDC should communicate any updates to the Town’s

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) layer for historic properties to the GIS specialist. GIS can be used as a tool to help identify these sites through a comparison of historic and current aerial imagery, the HDC's HRI data, zoning districts and parcel boundaries.

Underdeveloped parcels in Westport Center include the commercial buildings located at 22-47 Riverside Avenue, within the General Business District (GBD) zone. These properties are developed with one- to two-story commercial buildings constructed primarily in the early twentieth century. The GBD zone allows for commercial and office use, an FAR of 0.25, 30 ft front setbacks, 25 ft rear setbacks and a maximum height of two stories and 25-30 ft. These buildings form the west boundary of downtown and abut the riverfront. Buildings on the west side of the river are highly visible from the rest of Westport Center and contribute to its setting. The property at 41-49 Riverside Avenue included the Staples and Raymond Lumber and Building Materials constructed in 1891. It was expanded over time to include additional lumber yards, shed and office buildings. While larger buildings at or near this location would not necessarily be detrimental to the character of the downtown, all alterations and new construction should be carefully reviewed for contextual compatibility.

Existing residential zoning protects many small-scale buildings on the periphery of Westport Center, but development pressures are common along Church Lane. Expansion of the BCD/H zone or a village district in this location could increase review of proposed changes to these properties. Properties along Church Lane may require a subset of zoning regulations concerning scale if included in the BCD/H or village district, but would benefit from enhanced streetscape regulations.

The Town currently promotes parking on the street or on the rear portion of individual lots. The municipal parking lot on Elm Street and adjoining parking lot off of Avery Court comprise a large area in the historic downtown core and occupy a desirable location. Future plans to expand parking facilities could result in a proposal to construct a parking garage on this site. The HDC should consider this possibility and have a policy for compatible design in place.

Several important historic properties in Westport Center are vacant or in transition and could be adaptively reused. Examples of such properties include the YMCA (59 Post Road East), Queen Anne style house at 35 Church Lane (adjacent to the YMCA) and the Post Office (154 Post Road East). A portion of the former Westport Volunteer Fire Department Engine House (57 Main Street) is also partially vacant, with the upper floor available for lease. The original Tudor Revival design of the YMCA is substantially intact and the building occupies a highly visible, corner block in the downtown. The installation of commercial storefronts along its primary elevations or changes to its distinctive massing would be detrimental to its picturesque character. Reuse of this building as a hotel or offices, rather than retail space could limit such alterations. A hotel could be promoted through heritage tourism and the building's access to attractions in the downtown. The large, non-historic rear addition to YMCA could be altered without significantly affecting the historic portion of the building. Parking near the back of the building already exists along both sides of Elm Street.

The HDC can support adaptive reuse by providing technical support to potential owners or developers of these properties. The HDC should communicate with property owners and the community regarding its goals for downtown and intent to participate in the promotion of the area's economic vitality. Education about financial incentives for historically appropriate redevelopment may entice some investors to complete rehabilitation work. The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation provides grants for the rehabilitation of historic buildings converted into affordable housing through their Historic Building Financing Fund (HBFF), which uses Community Investment Act funds. The State of Connecticut offers Historic Restoration Fund (HRF) matching grants for the rehabilitation of State or National Register-listed properties that are visible to the public. Tax credits are also available for use on listed properties. The Federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit offers 20% of qualified rehabilitation costs for income-

producing, National Register-listed properties including commercial properties. The state maintains a rehabilitation tax credit program that applies to State or National Register-listed properties. It offers a 30% credit for owner-occupied residences, a 25% credit for the conversion of buildings into residential use or mixed use. Creative outreach to developers not interested in these incentives could involve an agreement to maintain or rehabilitate specific aspects of a historic property in return for other development allowances.

Key properties located at the gateways to downtown and properties in dense portions of Westport Center such as Main Street are integral to the area's historic character. The installation of incompatible storefronts and substantial changes to the massing or siting of these buildings would significantly detract from the cohesion of the streetscape. Important gateways into Westport Center are the intersection of Kings Highway North, Main Street and Myrtle Avenue; Imperial Avenue; Wilton Road/Riverside Avenue (Route 33); and portions of the Post Road. Prominent historic buildings occupying gateway locations include the National Hall (2 Post Road West), Westport Library (19 Post Road East), Old Post Office (Post Road East), Bedford Public School (Town Hall, 110 Myrtle Avenue), and the Westport Women's Club (44 Imperial Avenue). The Talbots building (165 Main Street) exemplifies an incompatible storefront that undermined the historic integrity of the property and the Gap building (125 Main Street) represents incompatible massing.

Recommendation 7. Methods for prioritizing HDC tasks and goals regarding streetscapes and historic resources

The HDC should identify the greatest threats to historic Westport Center properties in the upcoming year and focus on properties in those locations. Most of these issues are related to current development pressures and are mentioned above. In support of this task, the HDC can maintain an updated list of significant or key properties in the downtown and communicate with Town planning staff regarding proposals for new development.

The HDC could also consider prioritizing small or affordable projects with the greatest visual public impact first, while including other goals in long-range planning. Types of short-term projects that enhance downtown character and promote a community feeling of progress include streetscape beautification activities, minor façade improvements and the creation of pedestrian-friendly public spaces. The HDC can support these projects by providing guidance on compatible design and historic development patterns. HDC projects that are mutually beneficial to achieving other town goals should be assigned a high priority.

Recommendation 8. Strategy for implementing the HDC's advisory role to town planning agencies and effectively communicating HDC goals

The HDC should establish working committees with project-specific tasks to express their interest in holistic planning and balance competing interests. Professional relationships built through this work will foster a greater understanding of the value of historic resources and minimize the misconception that HDC goals are not compatible with growth. Partnerships can be formed with the Architectural Review Board, other streetscape or aesthetics committees, the Downtown 2020 Committee, Westport Downtown Merchants Association (WDMA), Westport Historical Society (WHS), Westport-Weston Chamber of Commerce, and the Westport Women's Club. The WDMA has a mission "to build on the illustrious history of Westport as a thriving artistic center with an involved and vibrant community to create a framework of activities and events that will showcase the town's energy and unique qualities" (<http://www.westportdma.com/wdma/merchant-about.php>). Streetscape beautification activities completed by the WDMA involve the placement of benches, planters, wayfinding signs and concealed trash cans downtown as well as the coordination of efficient trash pickup. The WDMA also organizes

special events such as downtown festivals and promotes commercial cross-marketing for businesses in Westport Center. Maintaining a balance of local or start-up businesses in Westport Center, as opposed to national chain retail establishments, can support the retention of historic buildings by increasing the demand for a variety of commercial space. Local or start-up businesses typically require less square footage than large retailers and may have more flexible parameters for what is needed in a space.

Recommendation 9. Techniques for raising awareness and public interest regarding the value of historic resources as an integral part of a vibrant community and avoiding common misconceptions

The Historic District Commission can reduce negative sentiment regarding the protection of historic resources by maintaining a high standard of public relations. Engagement of community opinion at the beginning of planning processes or projects helps make the community feel involved and welcome to participate. The distribution of public announcements in multiple formats (digital, newspaper, etc.) with several weeks notice of an event can often alleviate any public feeling of deception by a town agency. A program of public education can also substantially decrease misconceptions about specific preservation planning tools and raise awareness regarding the value of historic resources. The Historic District Commission can search for opportunities to be present at town events, particularly downtown, to promote historic resources and answer questions regarding review processes or historic designations. A school program based in downtown that is aimed at identifying building components and recognizing the characteristics of different building types and styles can also contribute to public enthusiasm for historic resources.

Recommendation 10. Maintain consistency with local, state, and regional preservation or revitalization plans

A substantial amount of planning work regarding historic preservation goals for the Town of Westport, Fairfield County, and the state has been completed. It is important that the Historic District Commission remain aware of and participate in these plans as well as other visions for the downtown.

The *Westport 2007 Plan* notes that the Town of Westport is approximately 97 percent developed, and future residential redevelopment will be within existing neighborhoods (Westport 2007:v, 2-4). Westport Center, as the Town's principle commercial hub, experiences pressure to alter, enlarge, or replace historic buildings for commercial use. The Plan contains a number of goals and data related to Westport Center. It identifies nine guiding principles, two of which apply to Westport Center, to "protect and manage residential neighborhoods" and "maintain distinctive centers with a strong sense of place" (Westport 2007:iii). As part of its principle to maintain a distinctive center, the town desires to "improve the appearance and functioning of all commercial areas and minimize negative influences on neighboring residential quality of life" (Westport 2007:7-1). These goals support the retention of historic development patterns as well as the historic and architectural character of the downtown. Strategies for minimizing the impact of new development and preserving character-defining features of Westport Center, recommended in the plan, include the creation of a village district and limitations on the maximum size of retail spaces (Westport 2007:7-2 to 7-10). Other identified issues for Westport Center were related to parking demand, aesthetics and the types of establishments allowed (Westport 2007:7-3).

The South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA) guides the growth and development of eight communities in Fairfield County, including Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Norwalk, Stamford, Weston, Westport, and Wilton. It considers the southwest region of Connecticut as an established, important gateway between the Mid-Atlantic region and New England. The SWRPA maintains the *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006-2015*. Goals discussed in the plan include the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic structures, protection of quality of life, and achieving an increase in open space. The SWRPA recognizes the development pressures on historic town centers and

transportation corridors, as well as the rising number of initiatives supporting downtown revitalization. The South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization oversees the federally mandated transportation planning processes for the area. It operates with a mission to promote integrated intermodal transportation, which includes increasing access to and improving facilities for bus, rail, bike, and pedestrian circulation networks.

The Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, housed within the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, is the statewide historic preservation agency. The *Investment in Connecticut: State Historic Preservation Plan 2011-2016* completed in 2011 includes a summary of the state's historic resources, preservation tools and objectives. Four primary goals discussed in the plan promote the 1) identification and recognition of the state's cultural resources; 2) implementation of programs and policies to protect cultural resources; 3) adoption of a statewide preservation ethic; and 4) support of heritage resource planning at the state and local government levels.

Recommendation 11. Consider National Register Nomination(s)

Nomination of areas and individual historic properties within Westport Center to the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) would recognize the area's historic and architectural significance. Individual property and/or historic district listing would provide financial opportunities for owners of commercial (depreciable) properties to take advantage of the federal (20 percent) and state (25 percent) Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit programs. Information on the programs can be found through these links:

- Federal program: <http://www.nps.gov/tps/>
- State program: <http://www.cultureandtourism.org/cct/cwp/view.asp?a=2127&q=331966>

As noted in a 2011 study of the economic benefits of historic preservation by the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, Connecticut's Historic Structures Rehabilitation Tax Credit and Historic Preservation Tax Credit are recently established programs with great potential as effective economic development and historic preservation tools, in conjunction with the federal credit (Rypkema 2011b). Owners of income-producing properties can receive the credit for completion of substantial rehabilitation that meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation on designated historic buildings. The State of Connecticut also offers Historic Restoration Fund (HRF) matching grants for the rehabilitation of State or National Register-listed properties that are visible to the public.

National Register listing is an honorary designation, but some protection for listed properties is afforded through state and federal laws concerning cultural resources. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires the consideration of historic properties that may be affected by a federal undertaking or federally funded project. Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act requires the avoidance or mitigation of affects on historic properties for work completed by a federal transportation agency. States have similar legislation regarding environmental and cultural resources. The Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) mandates the evaluation of impacts of an undertaking by a state agency or state funded project on historic properties under CGS 22a-1a through 22a-1h, as amended by PA 03-123. The Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (EPA) allows citizens to sue to prevent "the unreasonable destruction of National Register listed properties, under CGS 22a, Chapter 439, Section 22a-15 to 22a-19b. Projects undertaken by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) are regulated under a state Section 4(f) legislation. National Register listing is also a requirement for the creation of a historic preservation easement, which is held by a non-profit organization and prevents alterations that would destroy the historic or architectural character of a property.

Six individual properties and one historic district in Westport Center are potentially eligible for National Register listing. These properties are discussed below.

Christ and Holy Trinity Church and Methodist Episcopal Church, 75 and 45 Church Lane

The Christ and Holy Trinity Church and Methodist Episcopal Church are part of a religious complex located in a residential zone on the north side of Church Lane. The complex forms a buffer between the single-family houses along Myrtle Avenue and Westport's commercial center. Historically domestic buildings on the south side of Church Lane have been modified with storefronts, but retain a residential scale. The Christ and Holy Trinity Church is a monumental building designed in the Gothic Revival style and has been a visual landmark in Westport Center since its construction in 1860-1862. The adjacent Methodist Episcopal Church constructed in 1907 is a high style example of Romanesque Revival design. Both churches have been continually used for religious activities since their completion and were joined as one complex owned by the Christ and Holy Trinity Church in 1966. The Methodist Episcopal Church functioned under that name from 1907 until 1948, when it became the Community Methodist Church. It currently functions as a preschool and the Seabury Center. The complex is eligible for National Register listing at the local level under Criterion C for its expression of the Gothic and Romanesque Revival styles and meets Criteria Consideration A as a religious property that derives its primary significance from its architecture.

Imperial Avenue Historic District

A potential historic district exists along both sides of Imperial Avenue at the southeast edge of Westport Center, within the RPOD zone. This district includes a cluster of large, late-nineteenth-century Queen Anne style residences south of Jesup Road. The Sidney Watts House, constructed in 1881 at 44 Imperial Avenue was purchased by the Westport Women's Club in 1950 and continues to function as their offices. Other notable houses include those at 25, 27 and 31 Imperial Avenue built in c. 1884, c. 1900, and c. 1892. Local businessmen and authors George E. and Flora Worts lived in the district. Many of the buildings have been converted into office or mixed use, but retain their overall massing and architectural design. The Imperial Avenue Historic District is eligible for National Register listing at the local level under Criteria A and C for its associations with the residential development of Westport and representation of late-nineteenth-century architecture.

Southern New England Telephone Company Station (SNET), 20 Myrtle Avenue

The SNET building is located within a residential zone at the edge of downtown and faces a commercial strip shopping mall complex. Following Alexander Graham Bell's invention of the telephone, the American Bell Telephone Company opened the nation's first telephone exchange in New Haven, Connecticut in 1877. One year later, SNET began operations, as exchange services became established throughout the United States. The American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T) Company took over the original Bell Company in 1899 and owns SNET, which continues to operate as an exchange. The SNET station in Westport was constructed c. 1931 as a branch office. It meets National Register Criteria A and C at the local level for its association with the early twentieth century development of Westport and its representation of the Classical Revival style.

Bedford Public School (Town Hall), 110 Myrtle Avenue

The Bedford Public School is located at the north end of Westport Center and forms a prominent community space along with the New Town Common and the historical society. The building functioned as an elementary school from its construction in 1923 to 1978 when it was converted into the current town hall. Several private and public schools operated in Westport during the nineteenth century. The Bedford

Public School was completed shortly after the town voted to consolidate its public district schools in 1914. Edward T. Bedford donated the funds for its construction and an addition in 1929, which included an auditorium. He also sponsored the construction of the Collegiate Gothic style Greens Farms elementary school in 1925 and Colonial Revival style Saugatuck elementary school in 1930. The Bedford Public School retains its original massing, materials and Neoclassical style design with a temple fronted portico. It is eligible for National Register listing under Criteria A and C at the local level for its association with the early twentieth century development of Westport and its representation of the Neoclassical style as expressed on a public building.

Westport YMCA, 59 Post Road East

The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) building occupies a prominent block located at the intersection of Main Street, Church Lane and Post Road, within the BCD/H zone. It was completed in 1924 with funds from local businessman, E.T. Bedford and functioned as the town's YMCA for more than one century. The YMCA is a worldwide organization founded in England in 1844, with a mission to provide moral recreational activities and spiritual guidance to young men in urban locations. The first YMCA in the United States opened in Boston, Massachusetts in 1851 and the construction of local facilities in suburban areas of the country boomed from the late nineteenth through early twentieth century. Westport's YMCA is a rare local example of a Tudor Revival style community building and retains the majority of its distinctive architectural details. William B. Tubby, who owned an architectural firm with his brother in New York, designed the YMCA and a fire station on the property. The YMCA building is in transition. It is currently maintained by the YMCA, which is moving to a new building in town. The Westport YMCA meets National Register Criteria A and C at the local level for its historical associations with recreation in the United States and its representation of Tudor Revival style architecture.

Osborne-Sachs Grocery Store, 46-48 Post Road East

The Osborne-Sachs Grocery Store is located across Post Road from the YMCA within the BCD/H zone, at a key intersection in the heart of downtown. It was constructed by 1855 and operated as grocery store for at least a century. The building is part of a commercial block of nineteenth century buildings with ground floor storefronts and is adjacent to a former dry goods store. Mixed retail and office use of the building has continued since the 1950s. The Osborne-Sachs Grocery Store retains its original plan, massing and architectural details. It meets National Register Criteria A and C at the local level for its association with the development of commerce in Westport Center and its representation of early to mid-nineteenth century construction.

Toquet Opera House, 54-60 Post Road East

The Toquet Opera House is located adjacent to the Osborne-Sachs Grocery Store across Post Road from the YMCA. It was constructed c. 1892 as a concert hall and included ground floor retail/office space by the early twentieth century. The opera house retains the majority of its original plan, massing, windows and architectural design, although some Queen Anne style details have been removed. It meets National Register Criteria A and C at the local level for its association with the commercial development of Westport Center and its representation of early to late-nineteenth century architecture.

CHAPTER FOUR

INVENTORY RECOMMENDATIONS

Properties Associated with Women's or Minority History

Two properties in Westport Center are known to be associated with notable local women's groups and are listed below:

- Sidney Watts House, 44 Imperial Avenue, 1881
This property was purchased by the Westport Women's Club in 1950.
- Westport YMCA, 59 Post Road East, 1924
The Westport Women's Club requested the allocation of space in this building at the time of its construction.

The research conducted for the 74 properties included in this survey did not reveal any other notable associations with women or minorities. However, it is possible that additional associations could be identified in the future.

National Register of Historic Places

One historic district and six individual properties in Westport Center are potentially eligible for listing in the National Register. These properties occupy key sites within the downtown and are an integral part of Westport Center's historic character. Each property is significant for its associations with the historic development of Westport and as a local representation of a notable building type or architectural style. These properties are described in Chapter 3 and are listed below:

- Imperial Avenue Historic District, c. 1880-1900
- Christ and Holy Trinity Church and Methodist Episcopal Church, 75 and 45 Church Lane, 1860-62, 1907
- Southern New England Telephone Company Station (SNET), 20 Myrtle Avenue, c. 1931
- Bedford Public School (Town Hall), 110 Myrtle Avenue, 1923
- Westport YMCA, 59 Post Road East, 1924
- Osborne-Sachs Grocery Store, 46-48 Post Road East, 1855
- Toquet Opera House, 54-60 Post Road East, c. 1892

Future Survey

The purpose of this survey was to provide a full and current inventory of all historic resources within Westport Center. The threshold for identifying a historic property was generally based on the National Register age criteria of 50 years and standards for architectural integrity, explained in Chapter 2. No properties in Westport Center were identified as meeting National Register Criteria Consideration G as a property that has achieved historical significance in less than 50 years. Additional properties may be considered for future survey as they reach the 50-year threshold. An update of select properties included in this survey may also be necessary in the future if those properties become substantially altered.

Select properties within the initial study area for this survey were excluded as the survey scope was refined. Most of these properties had either already lost integrity through alterations, lacked historic significance, or were presently well documented. These properties may warrant additional survey in the future.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF WESTPORT CENTER PROPERTIES SURVEYED IN 2012

APPENDIX B

**WESTPORT HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY 2012 UPDATED LIST
(NOT BOUND INTO REPORT; ELECTRONIC EXCEL FILE ON DVD)**

APPENDIX C

**WESTPORT CENTER INVENTORY FORMS
(NOT BOUND INTO REPORT; SEPARATE SUBMISSION AND PDF FILES ON DVD)**

APPENDIX D

**WESTPORT CENTER LARGE SCALE SURVEY BASE MAP
(BACK POCKET)**

APPENDIX E
VILLAGE DISTRICT ACT LEGISLATION

