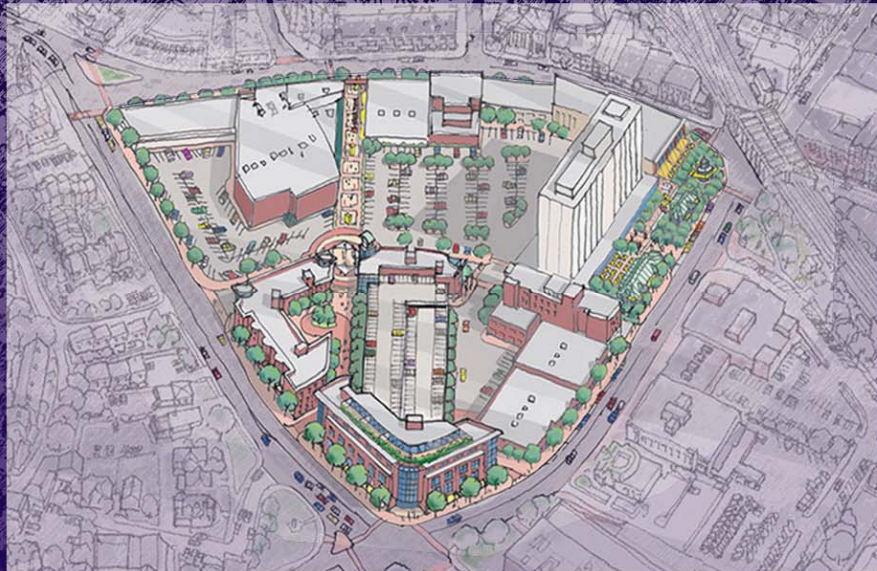


# **Webster Block Planning & Urban Design Study**

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**City of Norwalk, Connecticut  
Norwalk Redevelopment Agency**

**February, 2004**

**Final Report**

**SEA Consultants, Inc.  
Desman Associates  
Bonz & Company, Inc.**

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**City of Norwalk****Alex A. Knopp, Mayor**

Edmund Schmidt, Assistant to the Mayor

Alanna Kabel, Mayor's Director of Marketing &amp; Business Development

**Norwalk Redevelopment Agency****Paul L. Jones, Chairman**

Timothy Sheehan, Executive Director

John L. Burritt, Assistant Director

**Webster Street Development Committee****Alex A. Knopp, Co-Chair****Paul L. Jones, Co-Chair**

Jose Bermudez, Norwalk Planning &amp; Zoning Commission

Keith Brown, Condron-Brown Builders

Sander Davies, Norwalk Maritime Aquarium

Amy Jimenez, Norwalk Parking Authority

Jack Miller, City of Norwalk

Bruce Morris, Norwalk Board of Education

Nicolas Pacella, South Norwalk Business Association

Christopher R. Perone, Norwalk Common Council

Judith Rivas, Norwalk Common Council

Burton Shatz, Norwalk Parking Authority

**Staff to the Webster Street Development Committee**

Michael B. Greene, Director of Planning &amp; Zoning

Kathryn Hebert, Norwalk Department of Public Works

Alanna Kabel, Mayor's Director of Marketing &amp; Business Development

Edmund Schmidt, Assistant to the Mayor

Timothy Sheehan, Norwalk Redevelopment Agency

**Consultants****SEA Consultants, Inc., Prime Consultant**

Thomas Huf, Principal-in-Charge

Oliver Gillham, Project Director

Al Bisacky, Project Manager

Kevin Corcino, Design &amp; Drafting

**Desman Associates**

Norm Goldman, Principal

Brian J. Bartholomew, Director of Parking Planning Services

Michael C. Connor, Associate

**Bonz & Company, Inc.**

Richard E. Bonz, President

Richard A. Paik, Senior Associate

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# 1. Overview & Summary

## 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of a feasibility study of improvements to the Webster “Superblock” and its immediate surroundings (see Map 1.1). Improvements examined include expanding the existing parking supply, the creation of supporting housing and retail development, improvements to the “image” of the block and its connection to its historic surroundings, and public environment improvements to the block as a whole.

## 1.2 History

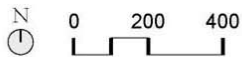
South Norwalk is well known as one of the major success stories in American downtown revitalization. What was once a deteriorating commercial center has become an award-winning waterfront district called SoNo. With its unique blend of historic buildings, cultural attractions and restaurants, SoNo draws visitors from across Connecticut and the New York Metropolitan Region.

Keeping the momentum going is vitally important to the continued success of this vibrant neighborhood. Because Norwalk is keenly aware of this fact, it is moving ahead on a series of different fronts including developing a new master plan for the Wall Street Area, planning for the Mid-Harbor District, and planning the redevelopment of the Webster Street Block. All of these diverse efforts form interlinked parts of a larger, comprehensive plan for the City of Norwalk that is being spearheaded by the Mayor’s Office, The Norwalk Redevelopment Agency and the Norwalk Planning Commission.

### ***The Webster Street Block Study Area***

The Webster Street Block Study Area (see Map 1.1) is a critically important part of SoNo. Created through a 1960’s urban renewal plan, the blocks within the Study Area provide a major source of parking for the district. As SoNo has experienced increasing success, vacancies in the area have declined, and new projects have been built. The result is that parking in the area is now experiencing strain.

In addition to being crucial to parking supply, the Study Area is also a heavy contributor South Norwalk’s image. The office tower at 50 Washington Street, on the south side of the Webster Block, is a highly visible landmark in the community. This building, together with the smaller retail structures that line the North Main Street portion of the block, are among



**Map 1.1 Air Photo of Study Area**  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study

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*Norwalk*<sub>CT</sub>  
THE RIGHT PLACE & THE RIGHT TIME





**Figure 1.1 View of Webster Lot from Martin Luther King Drive**

the first things a visitor sees when traveling down West Avenue from I-95 or Route 7.

Entering the district from Fairfield Avenue or Martin Luther King Drive, the visitor is greeted by the Webster Block's 612-space surface parking lot. While being greeted by parking can be helpful, this large parking lot and the 1960's era appearance of Study Area buildings create a somewhat suburban intervention in an otherwise harmonious historic urban area. Yet the reservoir of parking that the Study Area provides, together with its development potential, are essential to the success of business in SoNo. Furthermore, the office, retail and cinema uses that the block contains are also vital to the well being of the district.

### ***Opportunities***

Given these conditions, the City of Norwalk decided to undertake a feasibility study of the potential to revitalize the Study Area with a combination of parking and residential development combined with reinvestment in existing buildings in the Webster Block. Adding housing to the Study Area along Martin Luther King Drive will improve the use mix, particularly in this heavily commercial area. New housing will bring an around-the clock population, enhancing security and creating community. This is a district where people could walk to work, shopping and entertainment.

The opportunities for walking to work will be dramatically increased when the Reed/Putnam office project comes on line in the future. Residents of the Webster Block would also be within walking distance of metropolitan train service. Including affordable housing in the program expands housing opportunities in an increasingly expensive housing region. At the same time, additional parking in the Study Area will clearly help to support the continuing revitalization of the SoNo district and leverage potential improvements to existing properties.

Residential development along Martin Luther King Drive can also help to create a new image for the visually critical Webster Street “superblock” – one that is more in harmony with surrounding historic buildings. This new development could act to screen the parking use of the site while presenting a fresh new image to this gateway area. Additionally, structured parking on this block offers the potential to free up space for landscaping, pedestrian plazas and other amenities – improving the public environment surrounding existing uses on the site, and upgrading the pedestrian experience from parking to neighboring destination areas within the SoNo district.

New residential development on the Webster Street Block, together with leveraged development of other existing properties in the Study Area may also help to address the financial requirements of providing a new parking structure in this location. New parking facilities generally charge higher rates than those currently prevailing on the Webster Lot. Rates charged at some other lots in the district are closer to what may be needed to finance a new parking garage. If a new garage on the Webster Lot is unable to charge the rates required to support its construction and operation, it is possible that there will be a gap in the revenues needed to finance a new parking structure. New residential development may help to fill this gap by realizing the value of the City-owned land in the Webster Lot.

If properly planned, the redevelopment of the Webster Street Block will help SoNo to continue to compete successfully with the suburbs that surround it by reinforcing the ongoing development of a vibrant, walkable, transit-friendly, mixed-use urban center with an attractive scale and historic character. South Norwalk offers a clear and compelling alternative to the traditional suburban model, potentially helping to cope with the ongoing regional problems of suburban sprawl, including traffic congestion, air pollution and disappearing countryside.

### ***Planning Process***

The planning process initiated by the City of Norwalk has been designed to maximize public participation in building a consensus-view master plan for the Webster Block area that will be founded on sound planning and

financial principles. The planning process has consisted of three phases as described in Figure 1.2: Existing Conditions, Preliminary Concepts and Proposed Plan. This report completes Phase III of the process. Throughout the process the consulting team has worked with the Webster Street Block Development Committee – a project specific task force established by the City of Norwalk. The consulting team has held four workshops with the committee and three public gatherings to discuss the findings of the study and to get input from the Norwalk community about the direction of the study.

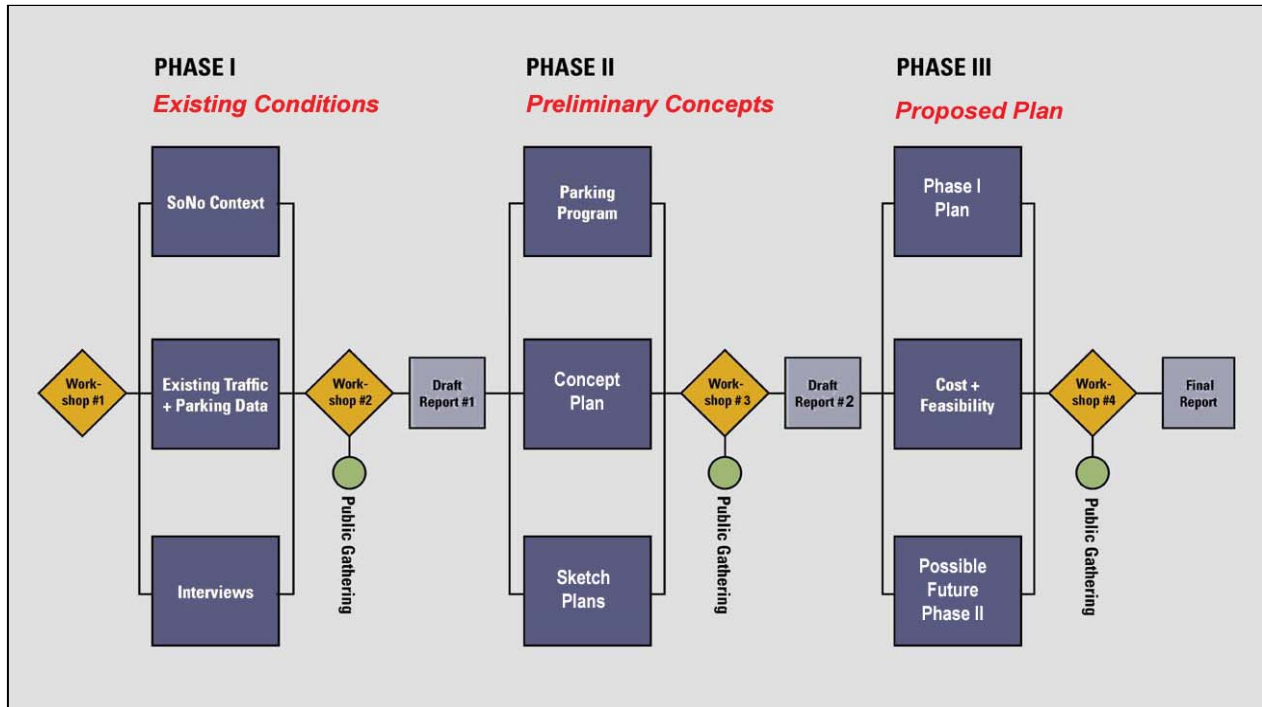


Figure 1.2 Planning Process

### 1.3 Summary of Findings

Phase I of the planning process has resulted in the following preliminary findings:

#### Existing Conditions

##### Project Context:

**Location:** The Study Area is located at the gateway to South Norwalk, forming a critical juncture between the SoNo historic district and major urban revitalization zones to the north and south. The study area is made up of three blocks created by the 1960’s *South Norwalk Urban Renewal Plan*. These include the Webster Street Superblock, the Madison Block

immediately to the south, and the Clay Block, across Martin Luther King Drive from the Madison Block. Together the three blocks form a predominantly commercial seam between the mixed-use waterfront district containing SoNo to the east, and a series of residential neighborhoods to the west.

**Constraints:** The Webster Block is crossed by a major sanitary sewer and an active telephone duct bank. These utilities will have to be accommodated or relocated. Property ownership patterns together with obligations created by the South Norwalk Urban Renewal Plan and subsequent agreements will also affect plans for the site.

**Other Issues:** No unified parking or pedestrian signage system was observed either in the Study Area or in surrounding districts. The user experience of the existing Webster Lot is confusing, feels “unsafe” in places, presents pedestrian and auto conflicts, has a generally poor image and provides uneven access to the surrounding district.

**Historic Context:** Future development in the Study Area should seek to extend the pattern of the nearby waterfront historic district, gradually working to ease the discontinuity presented by the Webster Superblock and its immediate neighbors to the south and west.

## Parking

**Existing Conditions & Previous Studies:** An inventory of existing parking performed by SEA on July 29, 2003 counted 612 parking spaces in the Webster Lot. *The South Norwalk Parking Study* identified a need for at least an additional 200 spaces to be added to the Webster Street Lot.

**Existing Parking Supply & Demand:** Using previous studies as a baseline, together with additional data collection, the SEA team developed a computer model to analyze present parking supply and demand. Results of this analysis show that an additional 162 spaces are needed on the Webster Street Lot, or a baseline of 774 spaces that must be provided on or near the lot prior to meeting the demands of any additional development

## Market Conditions

**Economic Context:** Given Norwalk’s strategic location for business and transportation, new development properties in the City and the Study Area offer opportunities to capture significant shares of the region’s employment and potentially exceed projected demographic growth.

**Market-Rate Housing:** In general, the Study Area offers viable opportunities for the development of new high-end apartments as well as condominiums in mid-rise, multi-family configurations. Overall, the local apartment and condominium market benefits from the Study Area’s strategic location, the

South Norwalk environment, and a market characterized by price appreciation and a growing number of affluent empty nester households.

**Affordable Housing:** In Norwalk, median income levels for a two-person household is currently \$88,600. Given this relatively high level, provision of affordable housing is critical in order for the community to accommodate large segments of the local labor force. Such projects have proven beneficial to virtually all parties, including: low- and moderate-income residents, market-rate residents, developers and communities.

**Commercial Market:** Well-situated spaces with high visibility, convenient access to parking and attractive floor plates should be able to support a variety of different retail tenancies. However, given the volume of likely competition (50 Washington Street and Reed/Putnam), large-scale office development does not offer a likely development opportunity for the Study Area.

### ***Development Concept***

Map 1.2 shows the proposed Development Concept for the Webster Block. The concept plan proposes several major actions. These include the following:

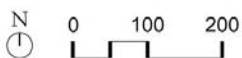
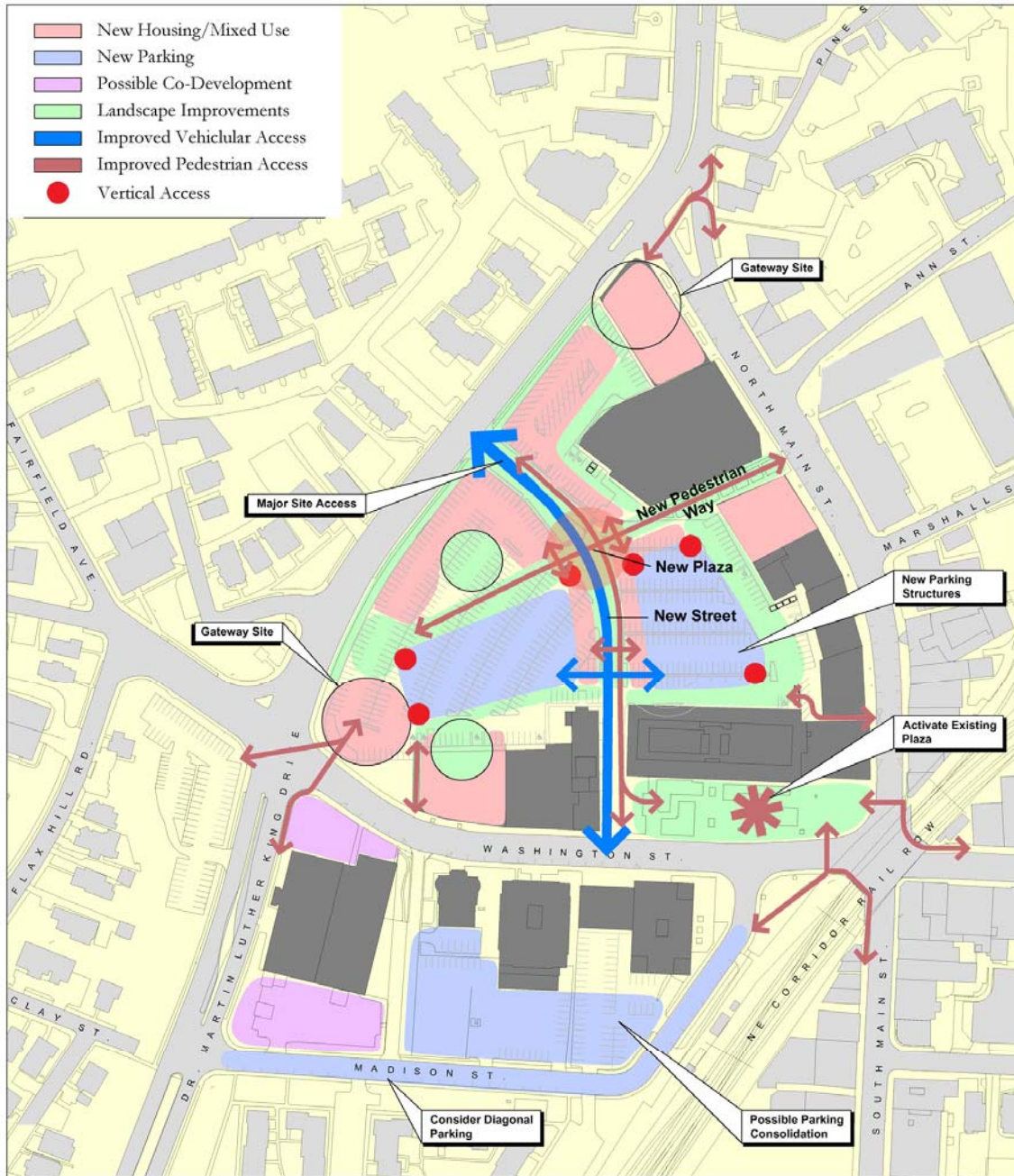
- A new through “street” from Washington Street to MLK Drive for both vehicles and pedestrians
- Two parking garage sites east and west of the new “street.”
- Continuing the existing pedestrian way next to the Crown Regent Cinema through to Martin Luther King Drive
- A new public plaza at the juncture of the new “street” and the pedestrian way.
- New housing development along Martin Luther King Drive and new housing and retail development masking the new garages along the new “street.”

This plan essentially breaks the Webster Block into three smaller blocks separated by the new “street” and the pedestrian way. The concept plan shown in the accompanying map is essentially a framework for possible long-term development of the Webster Block and the surrounding Study Area. The proposed plan will be carried out in a series of smaller phases.

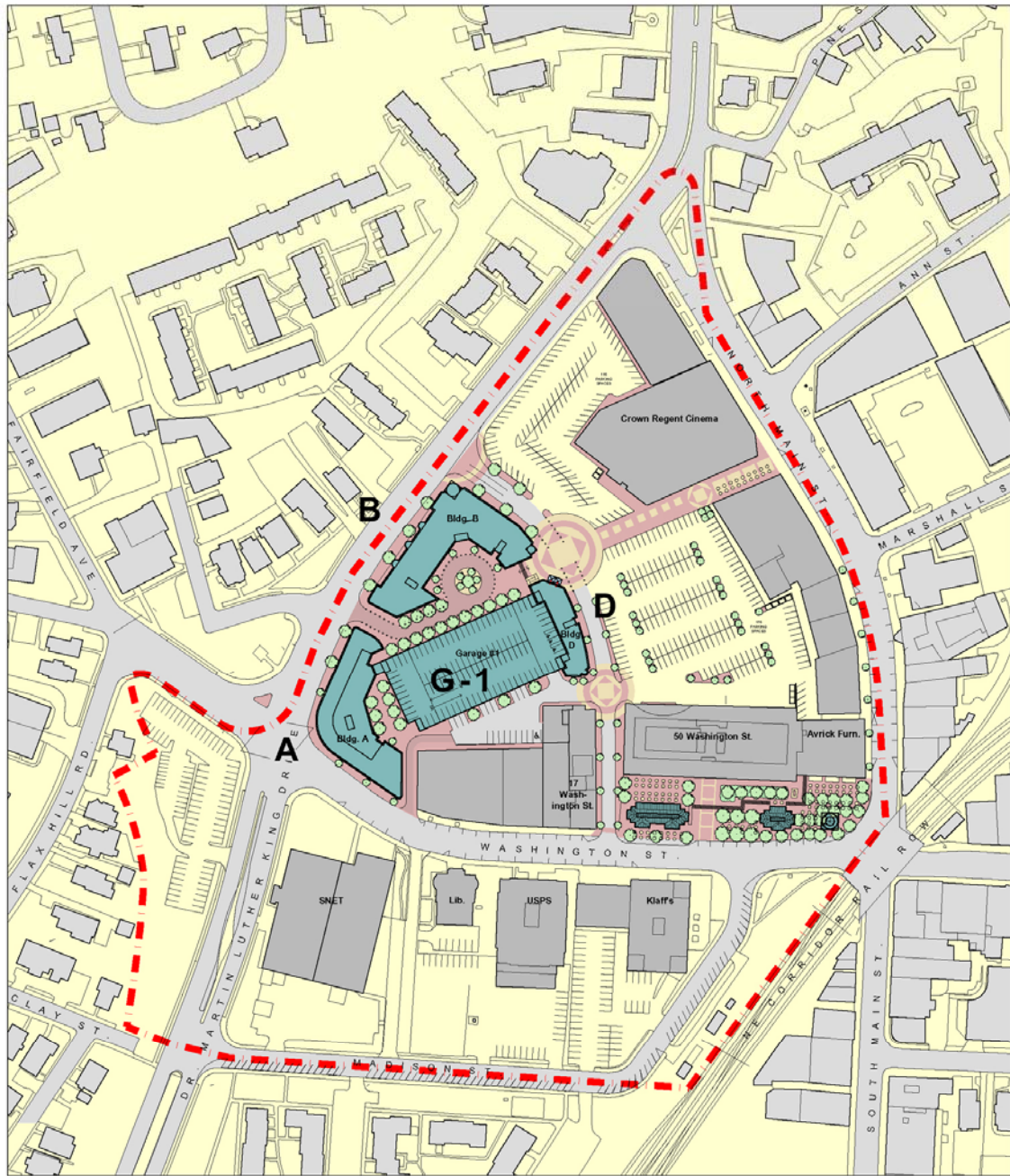
### ***Proposed Plan***

#### **Phase I Plan & Program**

Map 1.3 shows the proposed Phase I plan for the Webster Block. Phase I is all that the City of Norwalk is considering at this time. Table 1.1 presents the total development proposed for Phase I and Table 1.2 shows



**Map 1.2 - Development Concept**  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study



Map 1.3 – Phase I Plan

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the relationship of parking supply and demand for Phase I. Figure 1.3 is an aerial view of the Webster Block today, while Figure 1.4 shows how the block might appear at the conclusion of Phase I.

**Table 1.1 – Phase I – Proposed New Development**

Land Use	Units	Existing	Proposed New	Total	Percent Increase
Office	SF/GSF	231,000	0	231,000	0%
Retail	SF/GSF	178,209	1,000	179,209	1%
Restaurant	SF/GSF	58,292	6,000	64,292	10%
Residential	DU's	46	162	208	352%
Cinema/Theater	Seats	2,200	0	2,200	0%
Gov't Institutional	SF/GSF	21,972	0	21,972	0%
Museum	SF/GSF	11,768	0	11,768	0%

Note: existing conditions and parking demand figures in the above table are for the Webster Block Service Area. Please see Chapter 2, Section 2, Parking, for a definition of the service area.

**Table 1.2 Phase I Parking Demand & Supply**

New Land Use	Unit Type	Net Units	Demand Factor	Parking Demand
Office	SF/GLA	0	2.85	0
Retail	SF/GLA	3,550	2.2	8
Restaurant	SF/GLA	5,100	1.42	7
Residential	Units	162	1.5	243
Cinema/Theater	Seats	0	0.16	0
Gov't Institutional	SF/GLA	0	2.85	0
Museum	SF/GLA	0	0.8	0
<b>Total New Demand</b>		--	--	<b>258</b>
<b>Existing Baseline Demand</b>				<b>774</b>
<b>Total Combined Demand</b>				<b>1,032</b>
Garage 1	5 levels plus basement			750
Garage 2	0			0
Surface				309
On Street - West Washington/Madison				78
<b>Total</b>				<b>1,137</b>
<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>				<b>105</b>

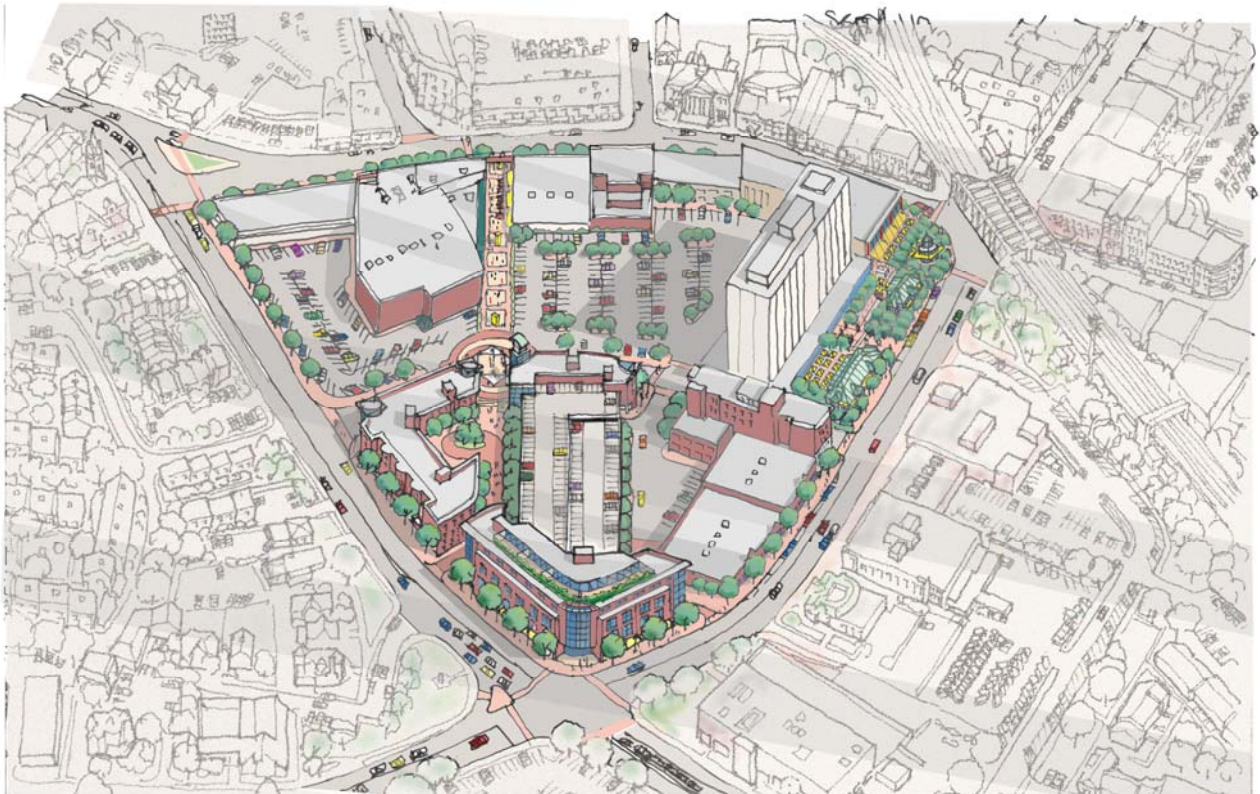
Note: existing conditions and parking demand figures in the above table are for the Webster Block Service Area. Please see Chapter 2, Section 2, Parking, for a definition of the service area.



**Figure 1.3 Aerial View of the Existing Webster Block**



**Figure 1.4 – Aerial View of Phase I**



Phase I consists of Garage No. 1 (labeled G-1 on Map 1.3) and housing/retail developments A, B and D also shown on Map 1.3. Garage No.1 is planned to house 750 parking spaces of which 162 will be dedicated for use by supporting housing developments. Developments A and E are residential condominium buildings with ground floor retail/restaurant use. Development A is proposed to be 6-7 stories with approximately 80 units of housing and ground floor retail or restaurant use. Development E is four-stories with 10 dwelling units and ground floor retail. Development B is a four-story 72-unit rental-housing complex. Over all, the project would contain about 162 dwelling units, about 10 percent of which would be affordable.

As can be seen from the maps, tables and figures, completion of the Phase I plan would leave a significant portion of the site remaining as surface parking (over 300 spaces). The plan is designed so that this condition could persist indefinitely if no further action was to be desired. Almost all of these spaces could be dedicated to short-term transient parking for people visiting shops, restaurants and entertainment destinations in the area. Permit, long-term and dedicated residential spaces could be in the new garage.

As can be seen from Table 1.1, with the exception of housing, Phase I adds only incremental development to the service area of the Webster Block. Table 1.2 shows reveals a possible parking surplus of about 100 spaces when Phase I is complete. However, this surplus depends on the success of all proposed parking expansion projects (including diagonal parking on Madison Street). It is possible that some of these actions may not take place. In any case, any surplus should be regarded as temporary. In order to allow for future development on the Webster Block.

### **Financial Summary**

Table 1.3 summarizes the anticipated residual value of proposed Phase I developments that can be applied to the capital cost of Garage No.1 and associated public improvements. Table 1.4 summarizes projected capital and operations costs for Garage No.1. The Estimated Total Public Cost shown in the table includes the projected capital cost of the garage at \$13.4 million plus associated roadway, site and utilities costs. The application of the \$8.1 million residual development values shown should allow for a significant reduction in capital cost per space as compared with an unsupported stand-alone garage. In order to fully test this hypothesis, an analytic comparison was made between Garage No.1 and a comparable stand-alone facility. The results of this analysis are displayed in Tables 1.5 and 1.6.

Without the need to supply supporting development, a stand-alone garage would be smaller than the 750-car facility proposed for Phase I. To meet

the parking requirements described in Table 1.2 while replacing spaces lost to construction would require a stand-alone garage of 400 spaces. However, as with the proposed Phase I facility, a series of other associated public improvements would still be required. These would include parking reconfiguration, circulation improvements, utility relocations, and other actions.

As can be seen from Tables 1.4 and 1.5, both the capital and operations costs per space of the stand-alone facility would be significantly higher than proposed Garage No.1, even though it would be a smaller structure. This is because the residual value of proposed Phase I developments considerably reduces the capital cost of Garage No.1, while spreading both capital and operating costs over a larger number of users.

**Table 1.3 – Estimated Residual Value of Phase I Development**

<b>Properties</b>	<b>A, B &amp; D</b>
Ownership:	Public
Primary Use	Residential
Type	Condo & Rental
Floors	4 to 7
Total Units	162
Affordable Units	16
Other Use	1st-Flr Retail
Retail Sq. Ft.	9,000
Bldg Size (approx. - may vary)	205,000
<b>Project Value</b>	<b>\$43,967,619</b>
Less Development Cost	(\$35,817,969)
Less Private Land Acquisition	\$0
<b>Residual Value (Avail. for Public Costs)</b>	<b>\$8,151,181</b>
Potential Contribution/Dwelling Unit	\$50,316

**Table 1.4 – Garage No.1 Projected Development Cost**

<b>Development Cost</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Total Public Cost	\$18,323,670
Contribution of A,B & D	(\$8,149,650)
Other Non-Municipal Public	(\$2,500,000)
Net Amount to be Financed	\$7,674,020
Annual Debt Service	\$538,344
Annual Operating Cost (Year 3)	\$388,492
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>	<b>\$926,836</b>

**Table 1.5 – Capital Cost Comparison: Phase I vs. Stand-Alone Facility**

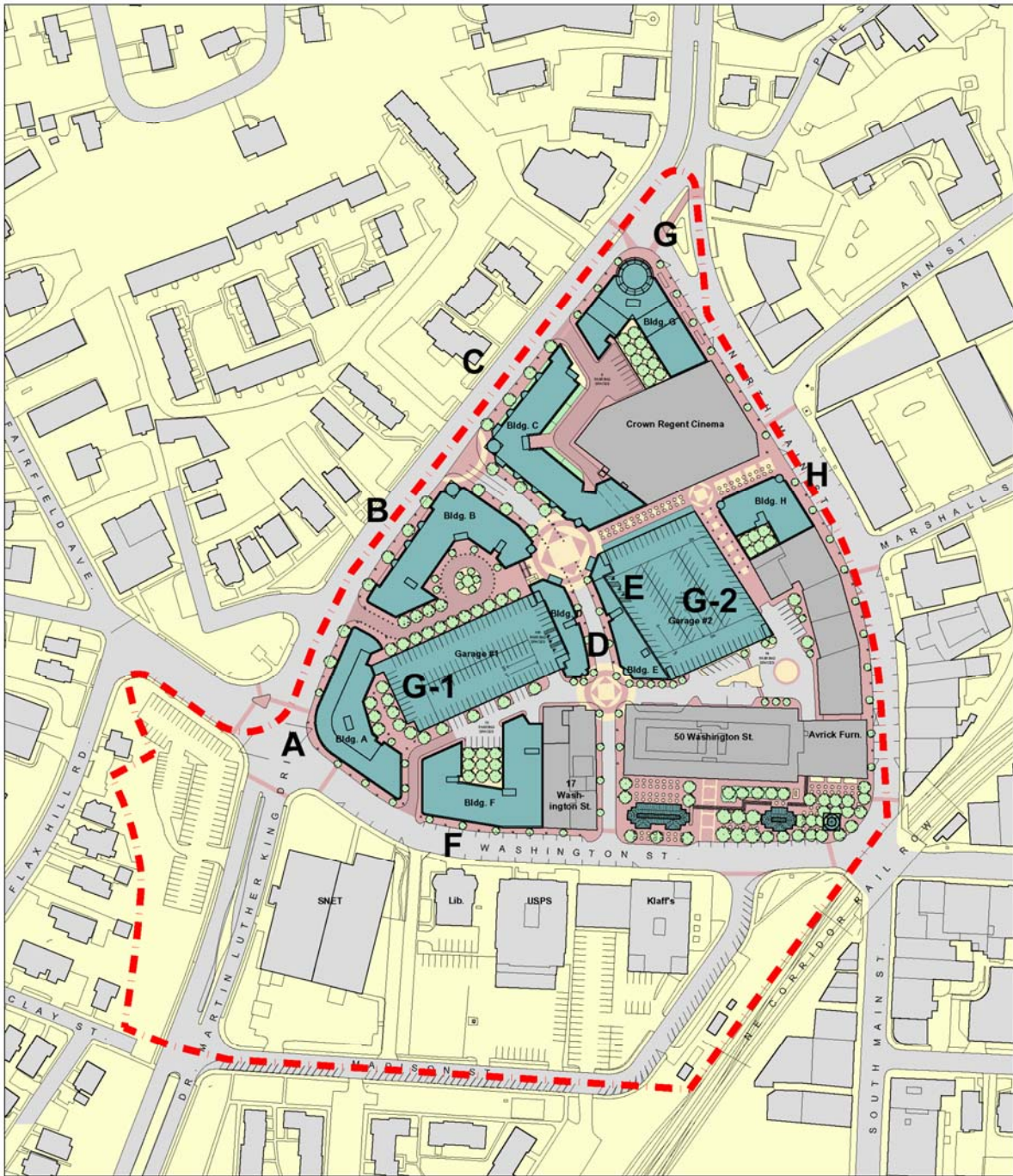
Capital Cost			
Item	Cost		
	Phase I	400 Car Garage	% Difference
Garage	\$13,440,000	\$6,400,000	
Site Improvements	\$4,883,670	\$3,186,504	65%
Total Capital Cost	\$18,323,670	\$9,586,504	52%
Contribution of Private Development	(\$8,149,650)	\$0	
Non-Municipal Public Funds	(\$2,500,000)	(\$2,500,000)	
Net Cost	\$7,674,020	\$7,086,504	92%
Total Number of Spaces	750	400	
Dedicated Residential Spaces	(162)	0	
Net Total Spaces	588	400	68%
<b>Capital Cost/Net Space</b>	<b>\$13,051</b>	<b>\$17,716</b>	<b>136%</b>

**Table 1.6 – Operations Cost Comparison: Phase I vs. Stand-Alone Facility**

Operations Cost			
Item	Cost		
	Phase I	400 Car Garage	% Difference
Annual Estimated Operations Cost (year 3)	\$388,492	\$372,897	96%
Contribution of Dedicated Residential Spaces	(\$38,880)	\$0	
Net Estimated Annual Operations Cost	\$349,612	\$372,897	107%
Total Spaces	750	400	
Dedicated Residential Spaces	(162)	0	
Net Spaces	588	400	68%
<b>Operations Cost/Net Space</b>	<b>\$595</b>	<b>\$932</b>	<b>157%</b>

**Future Development**

Map 1.4 illustrates what a possible Phase II might look like. This phase would include a second parking garage, two more housing and retail developments on City-owned land and one or more developments on privately owned land. Phase II is viewed as primarily private sector driven, and will require development of one or more of the privately owned properties shown, or a commitment in the form of a long term lease (ten years or more) for a significant portion of the spaces in the second garage. Figure 1.5 is an illustration of how the Webster block might appear at the end of Phase II. Other possible private developments are also illustrated in the figure.



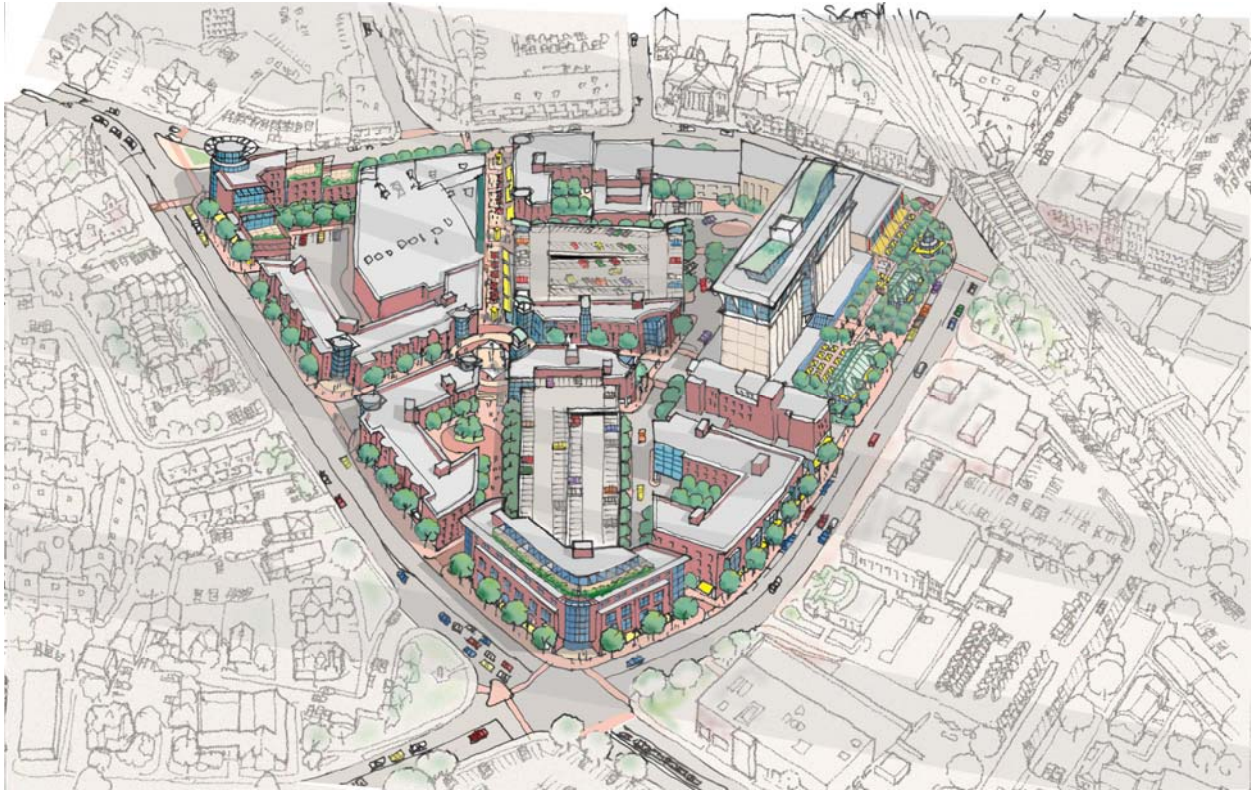
**Map 1.4 – Phase II Plan**  
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**Figure 1.5 Illustrative Aerial View of Possible Phase II**



**Conclusion**

The conclusion of this study is that, at a planning level, the proposed plan represents a feasible approach for expanding parking and improving the image, function and scale of the Webster Superblock. The scale of the superblock is broken down, and circulation improved by the introduction of the new “street” and pedestrian way. Garage No. 1 rationally expands parking supply, while supportive housing and retail development reduces parking revenue requirements while masking the garage from view and providing a vital residential population to the heavily commercial SoNo district. The plan can be phased such that surface parking can remain permanently on the site, or further mixed-use development can be pursued at a later date.

In short, the plan invokes the best principles of “smart growth,” paving the way for the creation of a walkable mixed-use district that is amenable to transit and rail ridership. It will be a valuable contribution to other efforts aimed at helping to reduce the local and regional problems of traffic congestion, air pollution, energy consumption and vanishing open space.

## 2. Existing Conditions

### 2.1 Project Context

#### *Project Location*

Map 2.1 shows the location of the Webster Street Block Study Area in South Norwalk. As can be seen from the figure, the Study Area is sited at the juncture of West Avenue, Martin Luther King (MLK) Drive and North Main Street. This is the northern gateway to the SoNo District from I-95 westbound and Route 7. Similarly, SoNo visitors using I-95 eastbound may travel via Fairfield Avenue to the intersection of Washington Street and MLK Drive, the eastern gateway to the district. Finally, many SoNo visitors park in the Webster Street Lot, making it the functional, as well as visual entrance to South Norwalk.

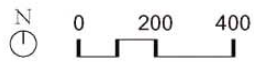
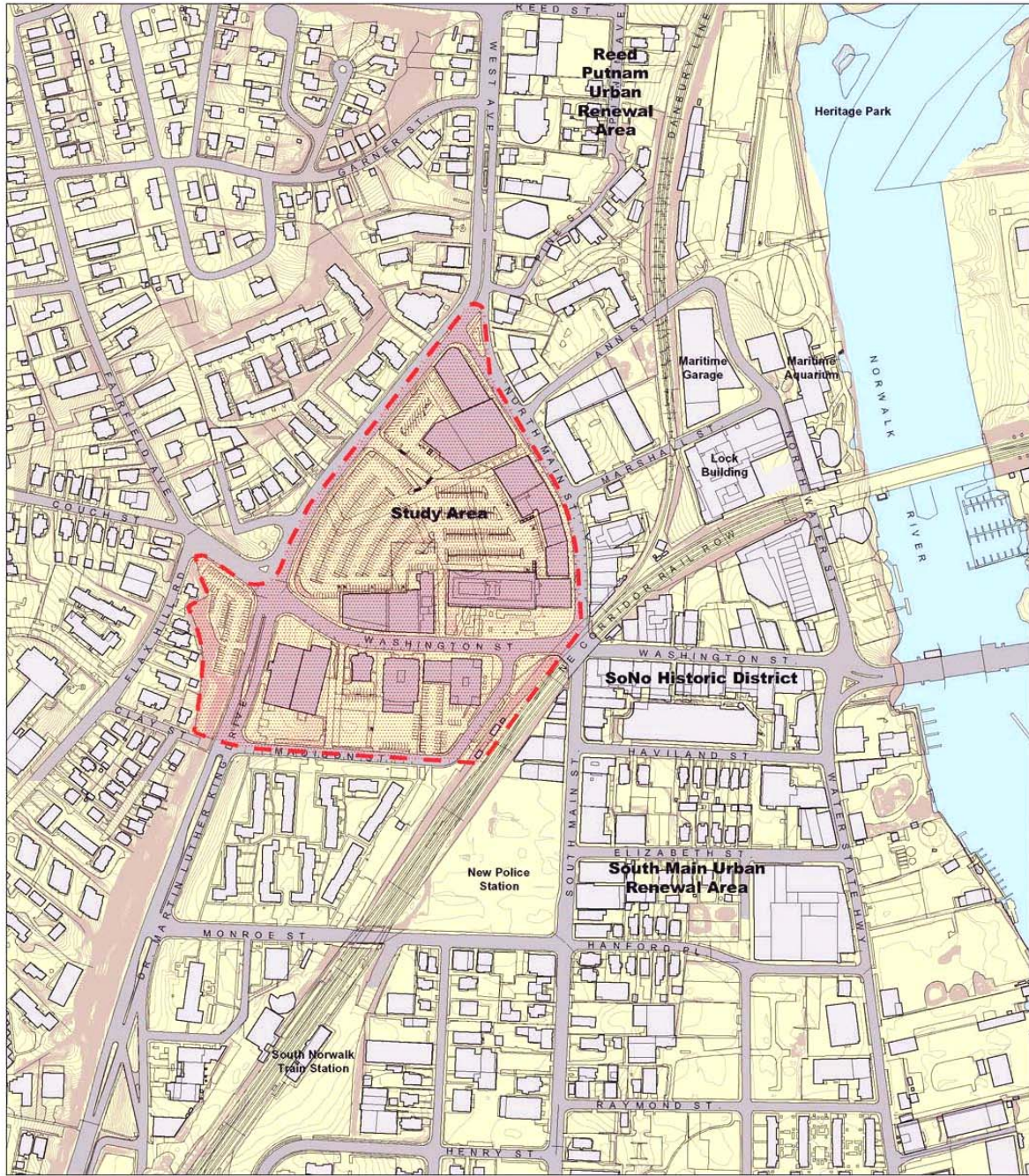
The Washington Street Historic District, the traditional heart of SoNo, is situated immediately to the east of the study area, on the opposite side of the Northeast Corridor rail right-of-way (ROW). To the north and east are the Maritime Aquarium, the waterfront Norwalk Heritage Park and the Reed/Putnam Urban Renewal Area. The Reed/Putnam Urban Renewal Area includes the 766-car Maritime Garage (currently nearing completion) and the recently renovated Norwalk Lock Company Building, which contains 100,000 square feet of new office space. Reed/Putnam also incorporates four parcels to the north of the Maritime Aquarium that are earmarked for up to 1.1 million square feet of new office space and 250 units of housing. This landmark development next to I-95 and the Norwalk River is intended to support the continuing revitalization of SoNo and the City of Norwalk as a whole.

South and west of the Study Area lies the South Main Corridor Urban Renewal Area. This area includes the recently reconstructed South Norwalk train station together with its 725-space parking garage. Nearby, a new 58,000 square foot police station is starting construction at the corner of South Main and Monroe Streets.

In summary, the Study Area is sited at the gateway to South Norwalk, forming a critical juncture between the SoNo historic district and major urban revitalization zones to the north and south.

#### *Project Site*

Map 2.2 is a close up of the Study Area. The Study Area, or Project Site, is comprised of three blocks that are interdependent in terms of parking supply and demand. The three blocks include:

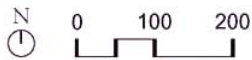
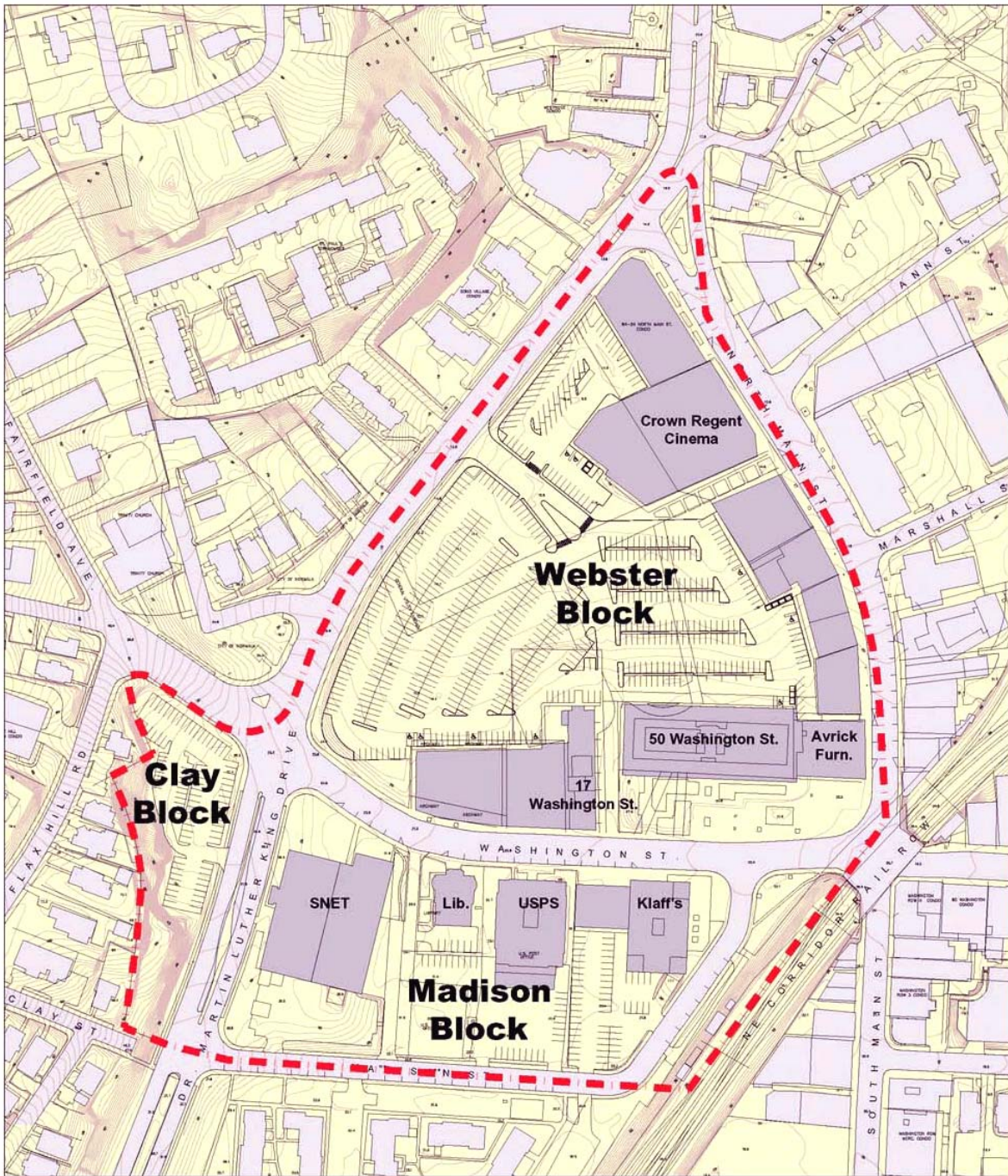


Map 2.1 - Project Context  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study

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Desman Associates  
Bonz & Company Inc.







Map 2.2 - Project Site  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study



SEA Consultants Inc.  
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- The Webster Street Superblock (or Webster Block).
- The Madison Block to the south, bounded by Washington Street, MLK Drive and Madison Street.
- A portion of the Clay Block directly across MLK Drive from the Madison Block and bounded by MLK Drive, Fairfield Avenue, Clay Street and Flax Hill Road.

### Webster Street Superblock

The Webster Street Superblock was formed by the consolidation of several smaller blocks into one as part of the *South Norwalk Urban Renewal Plan* carried out in the late 1960's (see the section on Urban Renewal below). The resulting "superblock" is named for a street that was vacated in the process.



**Figure 2.1 - Aerial View of the Webster Superblock**

The majority of the buildings in the superblock post-date the urban renewal plan. The superblock is comprised of a combination of restaurant, retail, office and entertainment (cinema) uses. The most prominent structure on the block is the twelve story, 170,000 square foot 50 Washington Street, the district's tallest building. Constructed in 1970 as part of the urban renewal plan, 50 Washington Street fronts on an expansive landscaped public plaza that is city-owned.

Other buildings on the block vary from one story to four stories in height. The Crown Regent Cinema is a relatively recent arrival, having expanded the footprint of a former supermarket into an eight-screen, 1,700-seat cinema complex that provides a needed complement to the district's other uses.

The preponderance of the superblock is devoted to surface parking, containing a total of 612 spaces divided between metered, permit, reserved and privately-owned spaces (see the Parking section below). These spaces are accessed principally from MLK Drive and serve mainly the buildings in the superblock together with other destinations on North Main Street and Washington Street, and the Madison Block to the south.

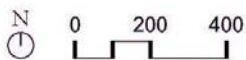
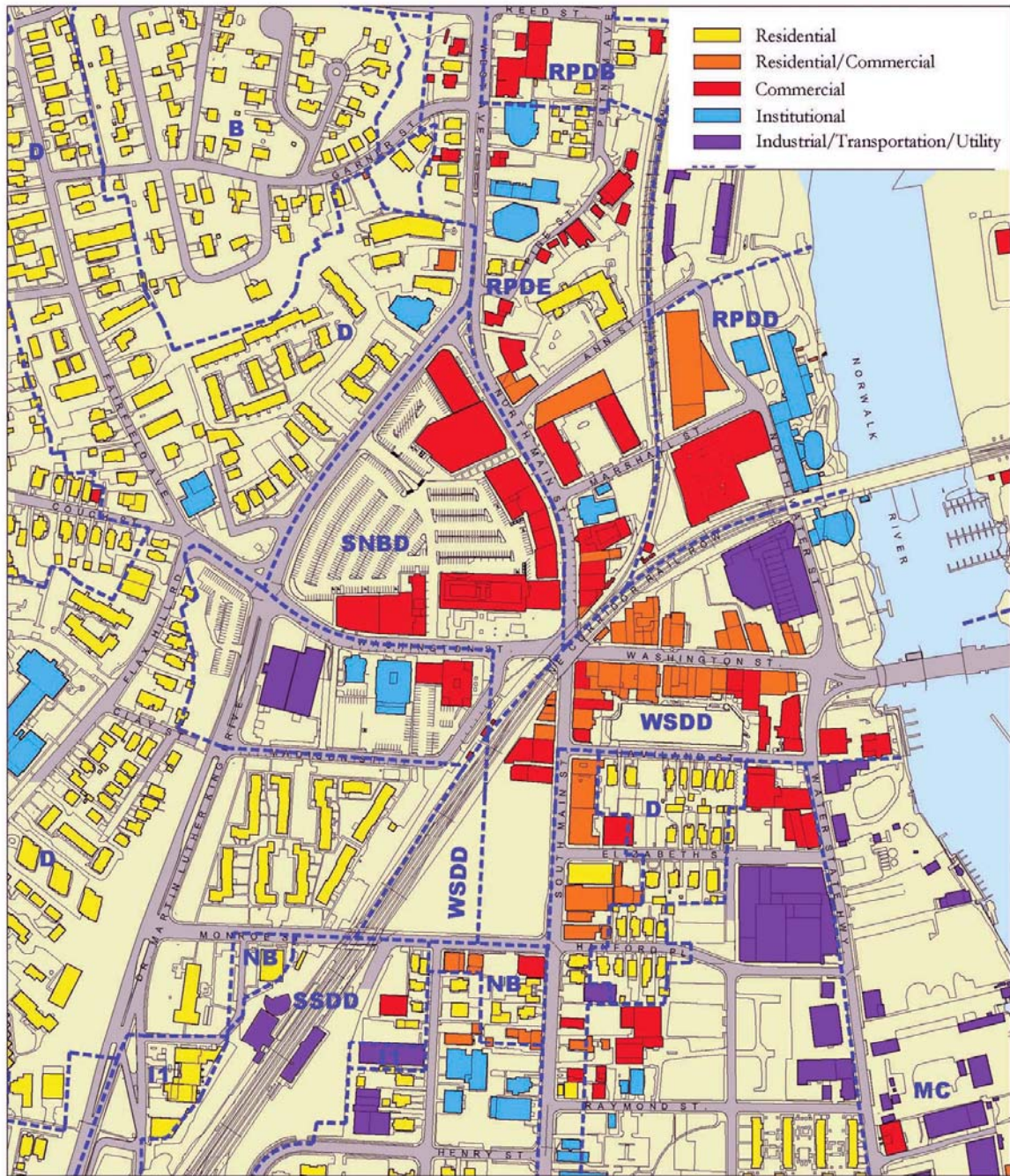
### **Madison Block**

The Madison Block contains primarily utility, institutional, and commercial uses. From west to east the buildings contained on the block are: an SNET switching and maintenance facility, the South Norwalk Branch Library, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) facility and Klaff's, a major regional home design store. Only the Library and the USPS building predate urban renewal. To varying degrees, each of the uses on the Madison Block draws upon the parking supply on the Webster Block. This is particularly true of Klaff's, which leases 94 spaces in the Webster Lot.

Klaff's may be considering expanding, although they are also consolidating employee parking on a remote site. There have been discussions about combining parking supply on the Madison Block to better serve the uses on that block while also addressing the expansion of the branch library and Klaff's. Ideally, such a scenario could even result in reduced parking demand on the Webster Lot, but it would require the cooperation of the USPS in relocating of part of the postal facility to another site in Norwalk. Currently the USPS has no such plans.

### **Clay Block**

This is a predominantly residential block with a series of older Victorian houses along Flax Hill Road and Clay Street, and a surface parking lot along MLK Drive. Only the property containing the parking lot is actually within the Study Area. This property is a former urban renewal parcel that is now owned by 50 Washington Street. It is currently leased to the City to add to the supply of permit spaces in the Study Area. There is a significant and steep grade change of about 30 feet between Flax Hill Road and the surface parking lot on this site.



Map 2.3 - Land Use & Zoning  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study



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**Land Use and Zoning**

Map 2.3 describes predominant land use patterns surrounding the Study Area together with current zoning. As can be seen from the map, most of the land west of the Study Area is residential, while the land to the east contains the mix of commercial, residential, institutional and industrial properties that make up SoNo. The Study Area itself is predominantly commercial with utility and institutional uses mixed in. Residential, transportation and industrial uses tend to prevail south of the Study Area.

All of the land within the Study Area is currently zoned South Norwalk Business District (SNBD). According to the Norwalk zoning regulations the SNBD designation permits “retail stores, service shops, offices, multi-family dwellings, mixed-use development and other compatible uses at a scale consistent with the urban location of this district.” Off-street parking facilities are allowed by special permit. Multifamily dwellings require 1,650 square feet (SF) of lot area per unit, which may pose a constraint upon housing development on this block, depending on the scenario envisioned and how the land area is defined. Off street parking structures require a setback of 50 feet from any property line. This regulation may also impose certain constraints on the location and configuration of any parking garage on the Webster Street Block, and on any proposals for subdividing the lot for development.

According to the zoning regulations the parking requirements for the principal uses in the Study Area are as follows:

Multifamily Housing:	1.5-2 parking spaces per dwelling unit
Office:	1 space per 334 SF (or 3spaces/1,000 SF)
Retail:	1 space per 200 SF of active floor area
Retail Furniture:	1 space per 400 SF of active floor area.
Restaurant:	1 space per 45 SF of active floor area
Cinema:	1 space per 5 seats

These regulations will have to be taken into account in the permitting of final plans for the Study Area. Under current zoning regulations, the total number of parking spaces actually provided in the Webster Street Lot is less than half the number required to serve the combined total of office, retail, restaurant and cinema uses that presently exist on the block.

It is important to note, however, that current zoning regulations do not reflect shared use of parking spaces (i.e., weekday versus evening and weekend use), the surrounding urban environment, parking “capture,” and/or other factors that may reduce the total number of spaces actually needed to serve the existing uses on the block. The analysis presented in Section 2.2 of this chapter takes these factors into account.

### ***The South Norwalk Urban Renewal Plan***

Map 2.4 shows the street and block pattern that existed prior to the 1960’s together with the present-day configuration that resulted from the South Norwalk Urban Renewal Plan. As can be seen from the map, the Webster Superblock was formed by joining three smaller blocks while vacating Webster Street and Franklin Street. The Madison Block was similarly formed from two smaller blocks through the elimination of Franklin Street. The Clay Block was formed by the realignment of Flax Hill Road and Spring Streets. Spring Street was later renamed Martin Luther King Drive.

Uses proposed for the blocks in *The South Norwalk Renewal Plan* were parking, commercial and open space for the Webster Block, commercial and parking for the Madison Block and moderate income housing and open space for the Clay Block. The footprint of the buildings presently existing on the Webster Block generally follows the original urban renewal land use plan. Map 2.4 also shows the properties that were not acquired in the Urban renewal program, and that, for the most part, remain in the Study Area today. These are:

- 17 Washington Street (the former SNET building)
- 16 North Main Street (now Avrnick Furniture)
- The lot behind 16 North Main Street (now part of 50 Washington Street)
- 38 and 50 North Main Street
- Part of the building now housing Klaff’s
- The South Norwalk Branch Library
- The U.S. Postal Service Facility



**Map 2.4 Urban Renewal Plan**  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study



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Desman Associates  
Bonz & Company Inc.



## Site Considerations

*The South Norwalk Urban Renewal Plan*, remaining utilities and easements and subsequent lease and use agreements and easements place a number of constraints on any proposed redevelopment in the Study Area. Map 2.5 shows some of the key considerations that will have to be taken into account by any development plan for the site.

### Utilities

Some of the major utilities remaining on the Webster Block have easements that generally follow the paths of former Webster and Franklin Streets with some branching. Major utilities include a 45" city-owned sewer line and a several SNET owned telephone duct banks. According to SNET only the duct banks on the westerly part of the site are active. There is also an 8-inch high-pressure gas main in this area that, according to Yankee Gas, is abandoned. An 8-inch intermediate pressure gas line is located in the sidewalk along the MLK Drive edge of the site. Portions of the sewer, the intermediate pressure gas line and the active telephone duct bank will have to be relocated and/or rebuilt as part of the proposed project. SNET also has certain rights with regard to its easements on the Webster Block, and negotiations may be needed to vacate easements where ducts are currently abandoned. The same may be true for Yankee Gas.

### Remaining Properties

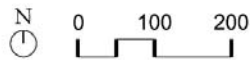
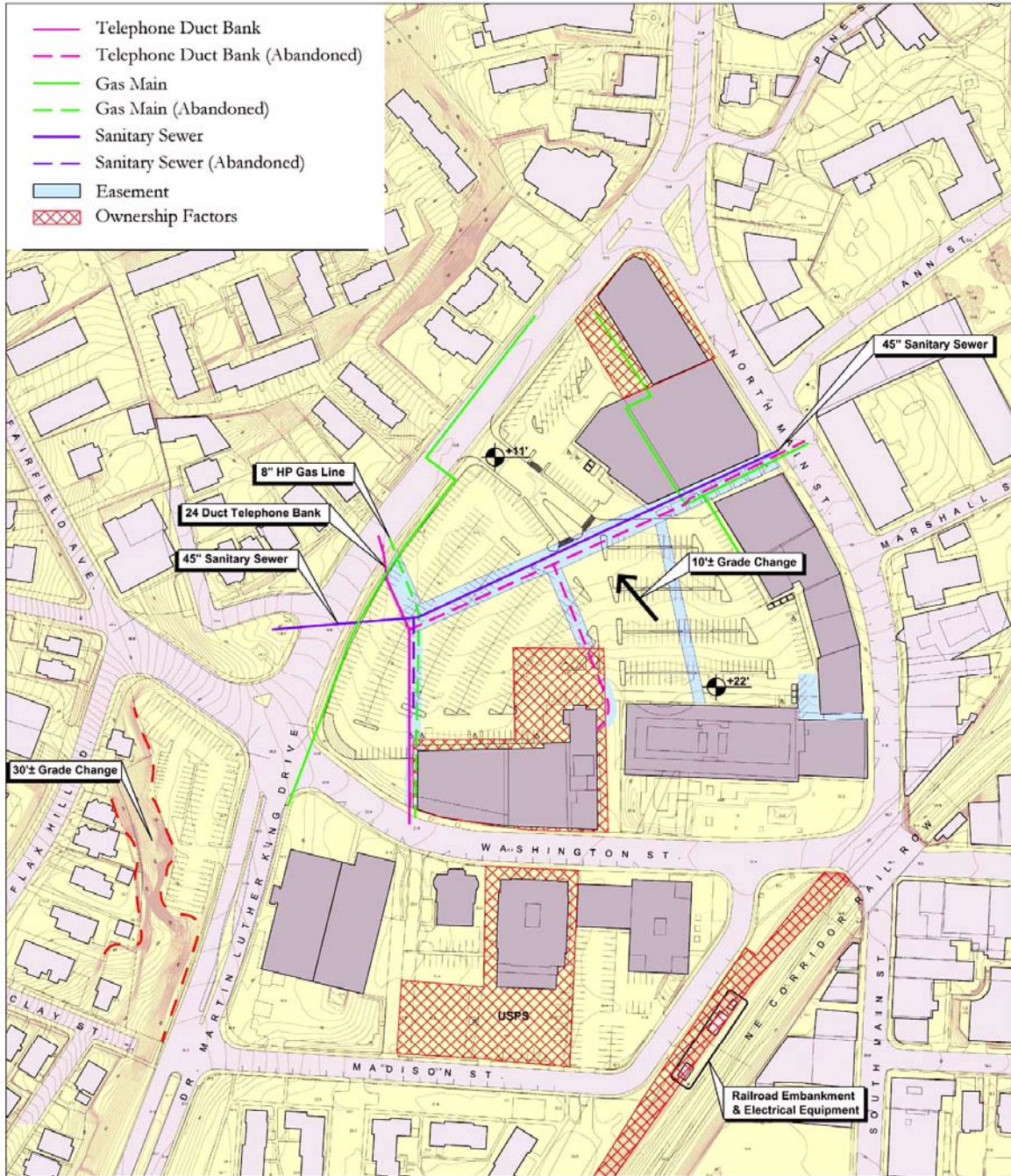
Like the utilities that were left behind, some of the properties in the Study Area that were not taken in the urban renewal process may also pose constraints. In particular:

- The rear lot of 17 Washington Street place will have to be taken into account in plans for the location and design of any parking garage on the Webster Block.
- The existing rear and side lots of 17 Washington Street limit future plans for expanding pedestrian and vehicular access to the Webster Lot from Washington Street. Portions of this land will be required to provide a two-way access route with adequate sidewalks.
- The USPS sorting and distribution facility represents an incompatible use that is a potential obstacle to any strategy aimed at consolidating parking on the Madison Block.

### Private Parking and Lease/Use Agreements on the Webster Block

The lot directly behind the retail condominiums at 64-84 North Main Street is privately owned. The condominium has allowed the City to re-configure the lot and maintain it. There is no barrier dividing their portion





**Map 2.5 - Site Considerations**  
 Webster Street Block Planning and Urban Design Study

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*Norwalk*<sub>CT</sub>  
 THE RIGHT PLACE • THE RIGHT TIME

from the rest of the lot, but the spaces are marked for their use only. Parking is for customers, not employees.

A disposition agreement between the City of Norwalk and the William R. Finger Company deems that 280 parking spaces in the Webster Lot shall be available for cinema use after 6:00 PM, but does not grant any exclusive rights to any specific spaces in the Lot.

Avrick Furniture is understood to have the use rights to four spaces near the loading dock of their building, which they are reported to have gained in exchange for a public access easement in their alleyway. They lease a fifth space in the same area. This agreement may need to be reviewed when the master plan is completed.

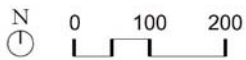
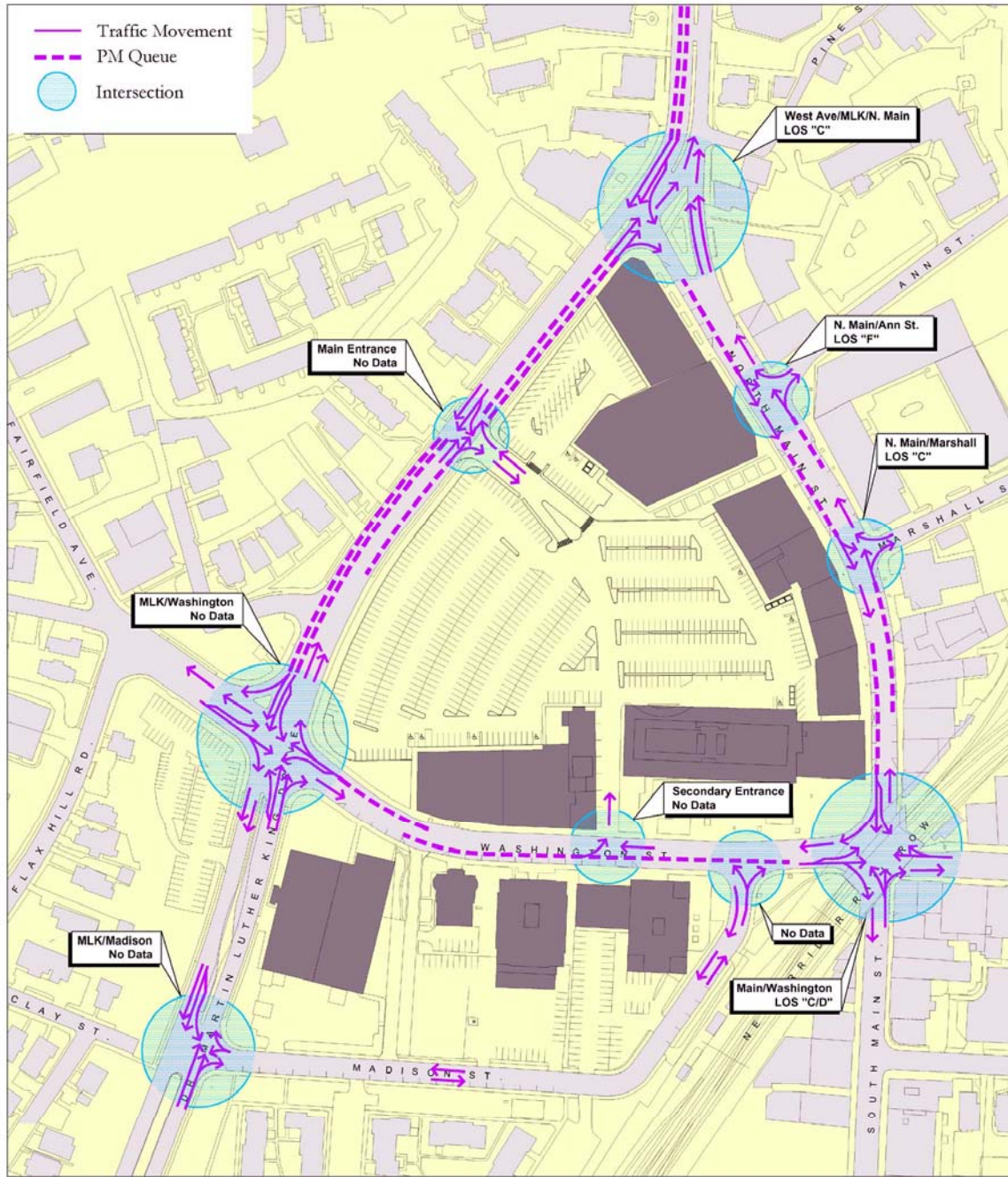
As part of a lease agreement in which Bedin Realty Associates leased approximately 10,000 square feet of the back lot area of 17 Washington Street to the City of Norwalk, Bedin Realty has the rights to the free use of 39 parking passes in the Webster Lot. This agreement may require review when the master plan is completed.

Klaff's currently pays for 94 "first-come/first serve" permit spaces in the Webster Lot, and 50 Washington Street reports that its tenants pay for a combination of 406 "first come/first serve" permit and 38 fully reserved parking spaces in the Study Area. According to the City of Norwalk, the permit spaces are oversold by 25 percent. It is partly for this reason that the City maintains the overflow permit parking lot on the Clay Block.

*The South Norwalk Urban Renewal Plan* and related land disposition agreements may have created other obligations relative to parking for some of the properties on the Webster Block as well as those immediately surrounding it. Subsequent agreements negotiated between the City and property owners in the district may have further modified some of these obligations. These agreements and obligations will have to be thoroughly researched following plan completion.

### ***Vehicular Access***

Map 2.6 shows vehicular access patterns on the streets within and immediately adjoining the Study Area. The main access to the Webster Street Lot is provided from MLK Drive at a signalized mid-block entrance with a left-hand turn phase on MLK Drive southbound. MLK Drive is a four-lane bi-directional arterial road connecting West Avenue to points south. There is a secondary entrance-only access between 50 Washington Street and 17 Washington Street.



**Map 2.6 – Vehicular Access**  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study



**SEA Consultants Inc.**  
Desman Associates  
Bonz & Company Inc.



Vehicular access to parking lots on the Madison Block is principally via Madison Street to individual parking access points to parking lots behind and along side of Klaff’s, the Post Office and SNET. The one exception to this is the parking lot behind the library, which is reached via Washington Street. People stopping at the post office use the short-term on-street parking spaces in front of the Post Office on Washington Street. The portion of the Clay Block in the Study Area is currently accessed via MLK Drive.



**Figure 2.2 - PM Peak Traffic Queue** on MLK Drive at the Webster Lot Entrance

According to the 2001 *Reed Putnam Development Traffic Report* by Allan Davis Associates, peak hour traffic volumes tend to be relatively heavy on North Main Street, Washington Street and MLK Drive – typically 1,000 to 1,500 cars an hour in both directions on these streets. Madison Street typically has lower volumes. North Main Street carries the highest PM peak hour volumes, at nearly 1,700 cars per hour in the vicinity of West Avenue. MLK Drive carries between 1,300 and 1,500 cars per hour in the PM Peak, while Washington Street carries about 900 cars in the PM Peak hour. On North Main Street, West Avenue and Washington Street, on street parking and loading contribute side-friction to the traffic flow, adding to the congestion.

The *Reed Putnam Development Traffic Report* indicates that intersections in the Study Area present relatively low peak-hour levels of service. West Avenue/MLK Drive/North Main operates at Level of Service (LOS) “C”

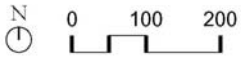
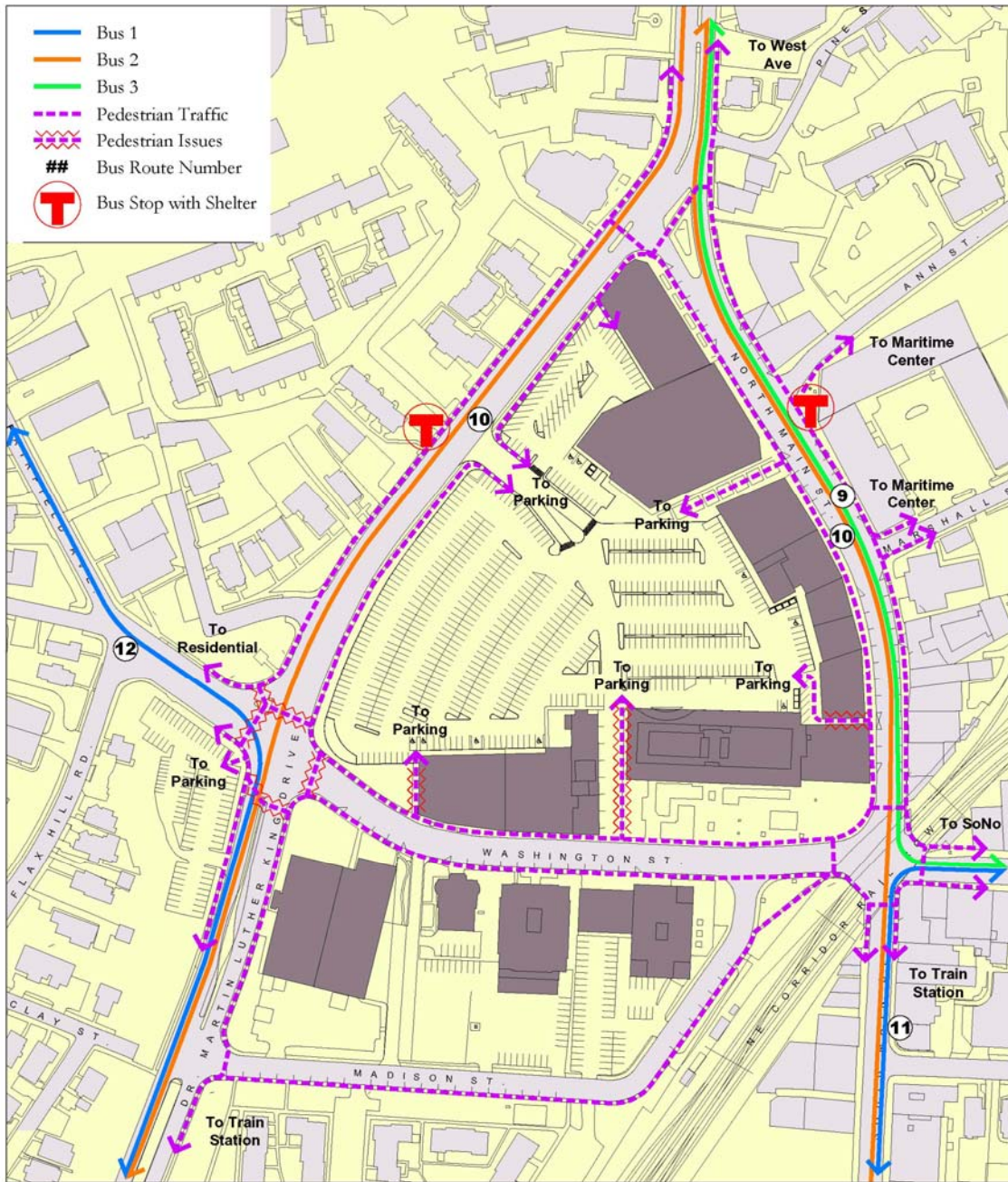
(25 seconds average delay, 48 seconds maximum). North Main also has two intersections at Ann and Marshall Streets, with Marshall Street showing LOS “C” (23 seconds average delay, 36 seconds maximum) and Ann Street reaching LOS “F” (failure – 84 seconds of average delay, 133 seconds maximum). Allan Davis Associates recommend installing a left-hand turn lane at Ann Street to improve conditions there. The intersection at North Main and Washington Street was observed to operate at LOS “C/D” (30-37 seconds average delay). Vision is partially obscured by a low railroad bridge at Washington and Main Streets, and traffic queues can become extreme along Washington Street when the Stroffolino Drawbridge is open to passing boats.

As a modern four-lane arterial road with no parking, MLK drive should present generally more free flowing conditions. However, significant queues have been observed to develop in the PM Peak at both the Washington Street and West Avenue intersections. Left-hand turn lanes and separate signal phases have been provided in an attempt to alleviate congestion at the Washington Street intersection of MLK Drive. Southbound traffic on West Avenue can become backed up at the left hand turn to North Main Street, while northbound traffic on MLK Drive can develop queues back into and through the parking intersection. No data was found to exist for the intersection of MLK Drive and Washington Street. However, this is a complex intersection with considerable reported delay and long observed PM Peak queues back into and beyond the Webster Lot intersection (see Figure 2.2). Significant PM Peak queues were observed on North Main and Washington Streets as well.

In summary, the Study Area is marked by heavy peak hour traffic volumes and average to low levels of service at major intersections. No data is presently available for several key intersections in the Study Area (see Map 2.6). A detailed traffic analysis of streets and intersections in the Study Area will be required at some point. The City will need to carry out this work if it is decided to proceed with the plan presented in this report (see Chapter 5 - Implementation).

***Pedestrian and Transit Access***

Map 2.7 shows pedestrian and transit access patterns in the Study Area. All three blocks within the Study Area are surrounded by sidewalks, providing pedestrian access along each side of each block. Pedestrian access is provided across all major intersections in the Study Area. At West Avenue, a generous island eases the crossing. At Washington and North Main, street widths are relatively narrow. By contrast, pedestrian access across the intersection at MLK Drive and Washington Street is hindered by very long wait times, wide streets and heavy vehicular traffic. This fact poses an obstacle to pedestrians crossing to reach the parking lot on the



**Map 2.7 - Pedestrian and Transit Access**  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study

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Clay Block, and those walking to and from the train station along MLK Drive.

Pedestrian access to and from the Webster Street Lot is of variable quality. The pedestrian way between the lot and North Main Street via the old Webster Street alignment has been recently improved and presents an inviting public environment. The alleyway next to Avrck Furniture has also been partially improved, but it is narrow, dark and encumbered by fire escapes. It is also difficult to see from the Webster Lot or from Main Street. Signs have been posted to help counter this problem.



**Figure 2.3 - Improved Webster Street Pedestrian Way**

There is also a pedestrian way to Washington Street in the alley between 50 and 17 Washington Street. This is a narrow walkway with a railing elevated several feet above grade. Most people ignore this walkway and use the road surface of the alley, resulting in serious pedestrian and vehicular conflicts. This problem is exacerbated by the narrowness of the City-owned right-of-way (17 Washington Street owns nearly half of the alley and uses it for parking), and by an above-grade electrical transformer in the middle of the alleyway.

Map 2.7 also shows transit access in the Study Area. The Study Area is served by Wheels, Norwalk's bus transit system. This is a hub and spoke system with the main hub or "pulse point" of the system situated uptown in the Wall Street area of Norwalk. The Study Area is served principally by Routes 9 and 10 of the Wheels System. Route 10 southbound has a shelter on MLK Drive, and northbound on North Main Street. Route 9

travels north and southbound along North Main Street. Routes 11 and 12 also pass through or near the Study Area. Route 11 travels along Fairfield Avenue and turns south on MLK Drive at the Washington/MLK intersection. Route 12 travels along Washington Street, turning onto South Main Street. All routes provide connections to the entire Wheels network via the hub near Wall Street.

Bus shelters are provided on North Main Street and at MLK Drive. The bus shelter on North Main Street is easily accessed by a crosswalk at Ann Street. The bus shelter at MLK Drive is located at mid-block, with no mid-block pedestrian crossing. Bus patrons coming from the Webster Block area have to walk up to West Avenue or down to Washington Street to cross. Relocation of this bus stop may be examined in this study.

The South Norwalk train station, providing direct Metro North rail service connections is about a five to ten-minute walk from the center of the Study Area, traveling via MLK Drive, Madison Street or South Main Street. Connections to Amtrak service are available via Metro North at Bridgeport and Stamford.

### **Wayfinding**

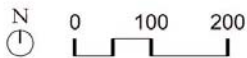
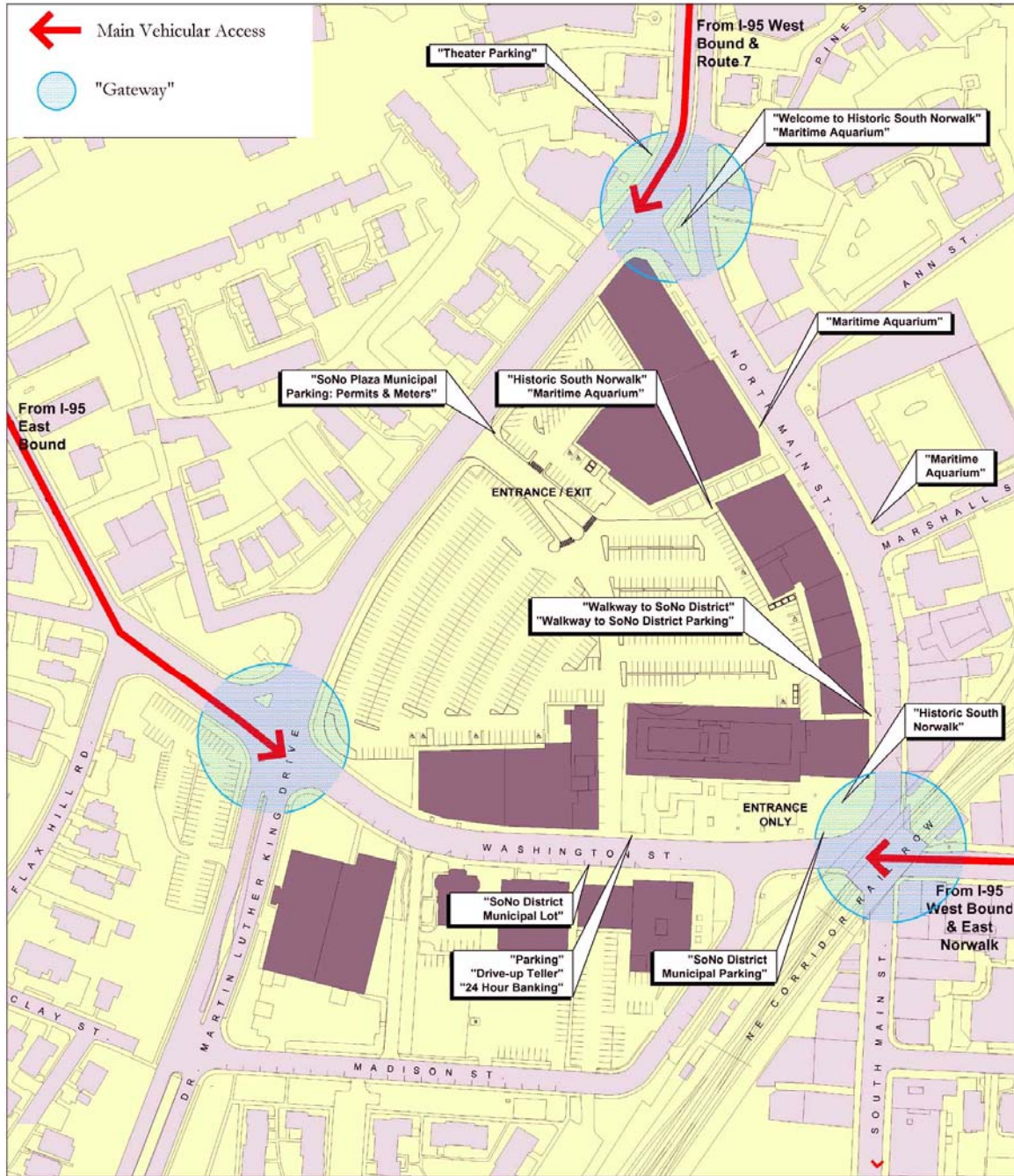
Map 2.8 shows signage in the Study Area, both for people in cars looking for parking, and for people on foot accessing the Webster Lot.

### **Driver Directional Signs**

A sign at the end of the ramp at Exit 14 of I-95 eastbound directs visitors bound for SoNo down Fairfield Avenue to Washington Street and MLK Drive. There are no signs along this route pertaining to parking. There is a small sign for the “SoNo District Municipal Lot” on Washington Street in front of Klaff’s, which directs visitors to enter via the alleyway adjacent to 17 Washington Street. There is another small directional sign for parking and banking services at the entrance to the alleyway. There are no signs for other parking lots in the area along this route.

Visitors coming from I-95 westbound or from Route 7 use West Avenue. No signs were observed along West Avenue directing visitors to parking except for a small sign at the MLK Drive intersection, which directs drivers to “Theater Parking.” Signage at the entrance to the Webster Lot on MLK Drive welcomes visitors to “SoNo Plaza.” Underneath the welcome sign is a small band reading “Municipal Parking: Permits and Meters” and a larger directory identifying the cinema and some of the retail outlets and restaurants on the block. A sign directing drivers to the “SoNo District





Map 2.8 - Signs  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study



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Municipal Lot” is located at the intersection of Washington and North Main Streets. This sign directs visitors to the alleyway at 17 Washington Street.



**Figure 2.4 - Webster Lot Parking and Pedestrian Signs**

No unified parking signage system was observed either in the SoNo district or its approaches that directs visitors to the Webster Lot or to any of the other municipal parking facilities in the area. However, there is a thoroughly developed sign system directing visitors to the Maritime Aquarium.

**Pedestrian Signs**

Two different sign types direct pedestrians from the Webster Lot to the surrounding district. One is a green trailblazer sign marking “Historic South Norwalk” and showing a running pedestrian (see Figure 2.4). This sign is used at the Webster Street walkway and at the plaza in front of 50 Washington Street. The second type of sign directs pedestrians to use the alleyway at Avrick Furniture. These signs read “Walkway to SoNo District” or “Walkway to SoNo District Parking Lot” depending on the direction of travel (see Figure 2.4). No other signs were observed in the Study Area directing pedestrians either to SoNo or to other parking destinations in the area. Good signage is provided for the Maritime Aquarium throughout the Study Area.

As with driver directional signage, there is no unified pedestrian sign system directing visitors between parking and SoNo destinations.

**User Experience**

Map 2.9 is a diagram of the user experience of the Webster Street Lot. Despite tree planting and landscaping, the MLK Drive edge of the Webster Block greets the eye with sea of parking and the backs of commercial buildings. This is the introduction that most visitors receive when coming to park in the Webster Lot. Furthermore, the division of the lot into permit, metered and reserved spaces is extremely confusing to the visitor. Once parked, the visitor is confronted with views of dumpsters, air conditioning equipment, loading areas, litter and large expanses of asphalt. Views from the parking lot to MLK Drive, on the other hand, encompass an expanse of landscaping and a mix of older Victorian houses and newer multifamily residential structures.

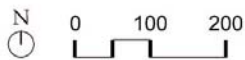
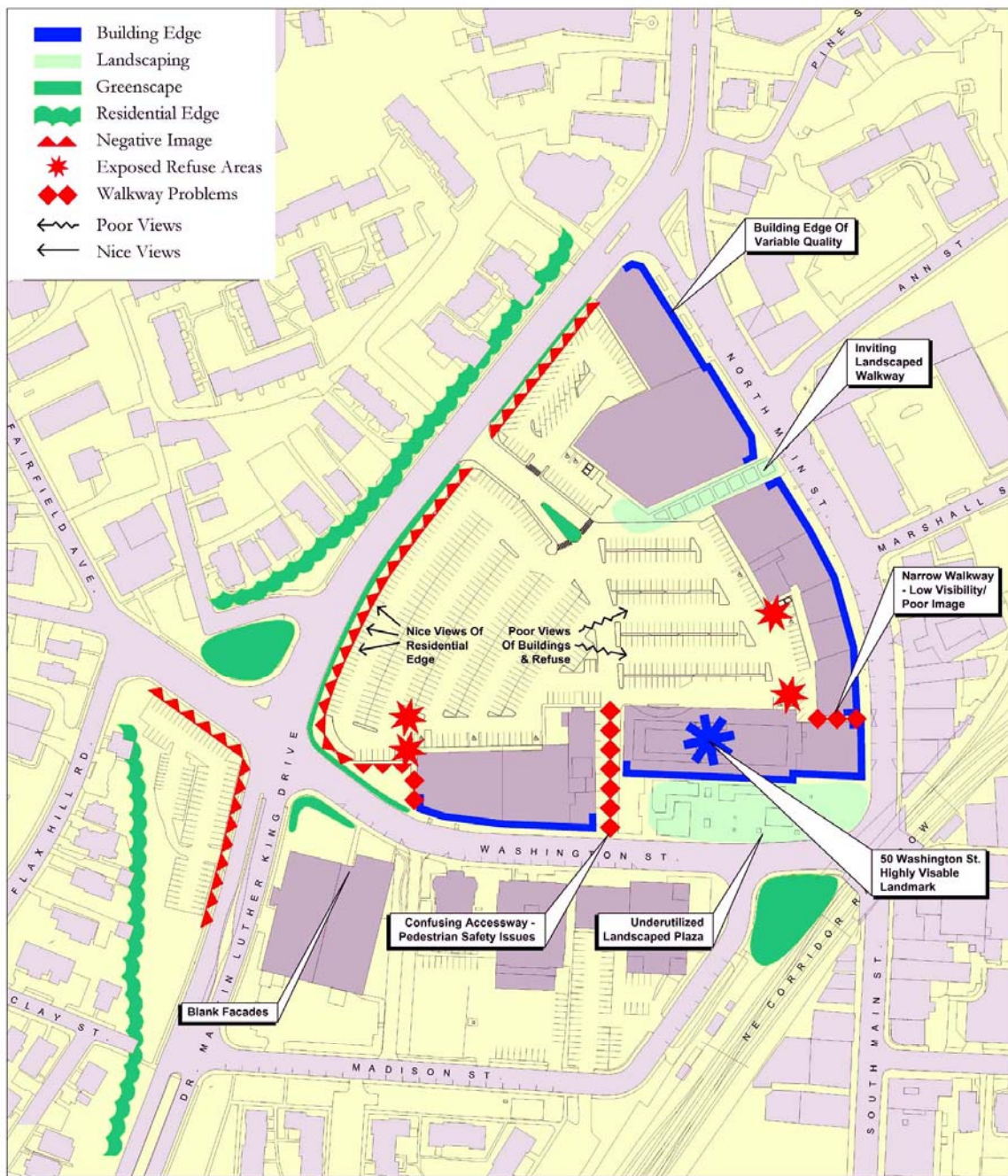


**Figure 2.5 – Views of the Webster Lot**

Lack of residential uses around the parking lot make it feel somewhat “deserted” at night, even if it is full of cars. Both day and night, the main connecting driveway between Washington Street and MLK Drive can pose safety issues for crossing pedestrians.

**Walkways**

Traveling out from the lot on foot, the pedestrian way next to the Crown Regent Cinema is generally the most visible and most inviting walkway out of the lot (see Figure 2.3). A restaurant opening on one side makes the walkway feel “safe.” However, this route leads mostly to destinations along North Main Street. To get to Washington Street, the most direct



**Map 2.9 - User Experience**  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study



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routes are either the alleyway next to Avrck Furniture, or the parking entrance alley next to 17 Washington Street. The alleyway next to Avrck Furniture has very low visibility from the lot. It also feels dark and “unsafe.” The driveway next to 17 Washington Street is visible from the lot, but presents safety issues as pedestrians dodge electrical transformers and entering cars. Another pedestrian way to the west end of Washington Street is provided adjacent to the retail building at 9 Washington Street. This path can be used by Post Office customers, people destined for the branch library or the stores at this end of the block. This otherwise pleasant walkway is marred by a frequently overflowing dumpster at the parking lot end.



**Figure 2.6 – Webster Lot Pedestrian Ways** (clockwise from left: the alleyway at Avrck Furniture, the alleyway at 17 Washington Street and the pathway next to 9 Washington Street).

### The Washington Street Public Plaza

The large publicly owned plaza at the corner of Washington and North Main Streets is an important resource for South Norwalk. Stretching from the corner of North Main Street and Washington Streets to the alleyway at 17 Washington Street, this generous, landscaped plaza could be regarded as a pleasant urban amenity, but it lacks the activity necessary to make it a part of the vibrant street life of the neighboring historic district. As a largely vacant space, it acts in concert with the railroad bridge to sever the western part of Washington Street from the eastern part – making the western end of the street seem dead by comparison. The blank wall presented by Avrck Furniture on this side adds to the sense of lifelessness, as does the reflective glazing of the passport office at 50 Washington Street. Revitalizing this key public space, possibly with new restaurant or retail

uses and/or programmed activities, will be an important focus of the *Webster Street Block Planning and Urban Design Study*.

In summary, the user experience of the existing Webster Lot is confusing, feels “unsafe” in places, presents pedestrian and auto conflicts, has a generally poor image and provides uneven access to the surrounding district. The underutilized public plaza at the corner of North Main and Washington Streets represents an important opportunity for improving the user experience of the Study Area.



**Figure 2.7a**

*The public plaza in front of 50 Washington Street is landscaped but underutilized.*

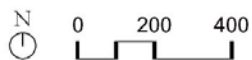
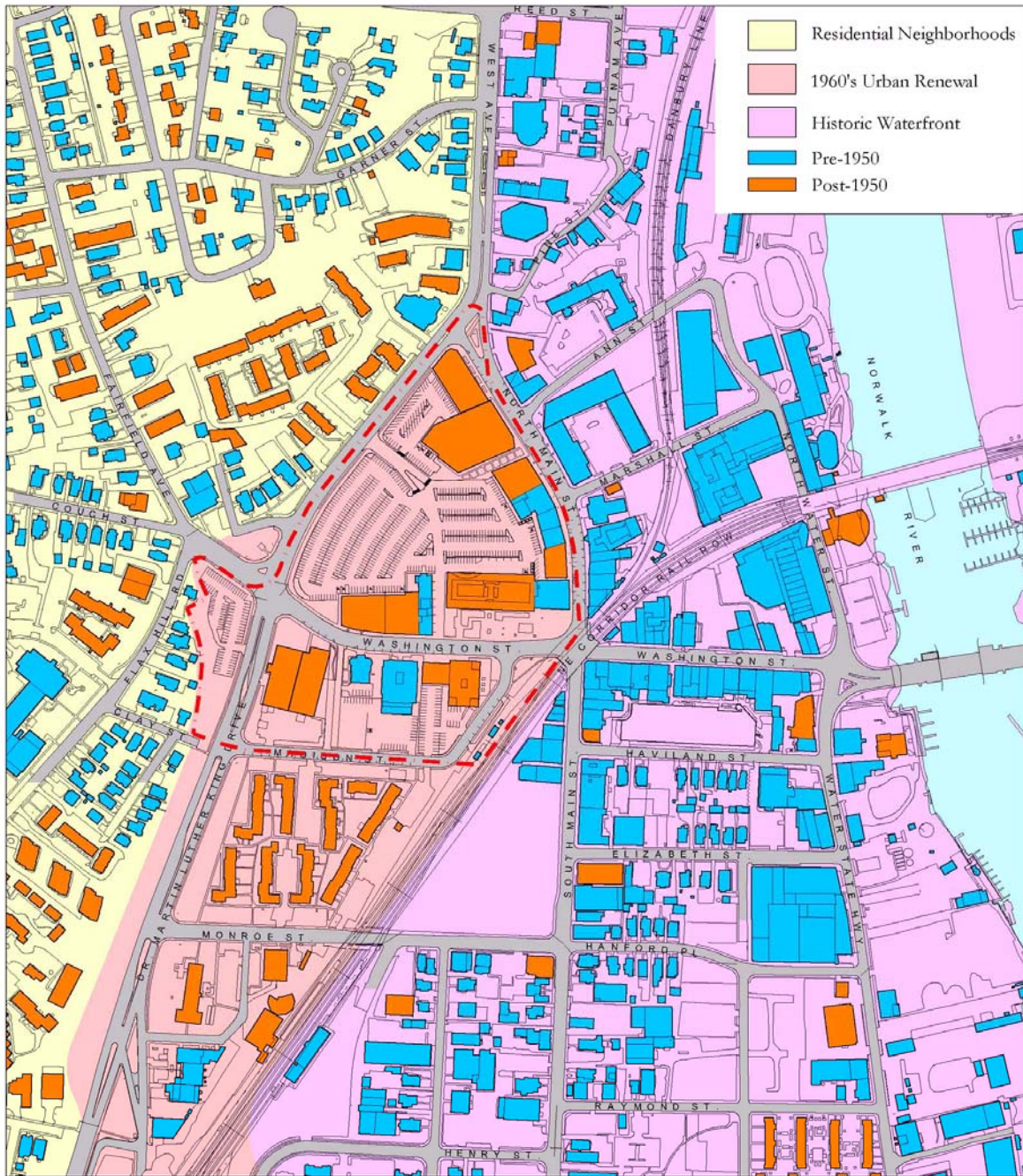


**Figure 2.7b**

*The public plaza faces a blank wall at the corner of Washington and North Main Streets.*

### **Historic Context**

Map 2.10 is a diagram presenting the historic architectural context of the Webster Street Block Study Area. As can be seen from the diagram, the Study Area occupies a critical seam between a largely residential fabric to the west comprised of a mix of older and newer buildings and the historic SoNo mixed-use waterfront district to the east along the Norwalk River.



**Map 2.10 - Historic Context**  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study

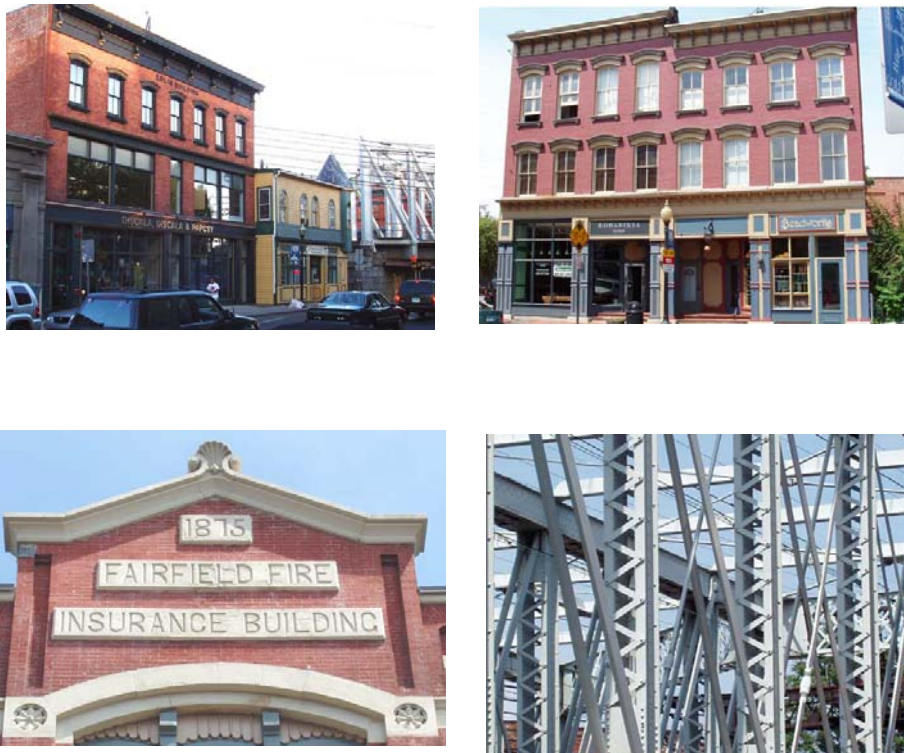


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**The SoNo District**

The waterfront area that surrounds and includes SoNo is comprised mostly of pre-1950 industrial, commercial and residential buildings. Industrial and commercial buildings are predominantly masonry with pronounced cornices and punched window openings marked by decorative sills and lintels. The Italianate style is widespread throughout SoNo in both Renaissance and High Victorian variants. Many of the buildings, especially those in the Washington Street Historic District, feature cast iron trim and corbelled brick work. One structure (the former Rogers and Stevens Building) has a complete cast-iron façade, which is rare in Connecticut. Some commercial buildings now contain upper floor residential uses.



**Figure 2.8 Historic Structures in the SoNo District**

Detached housing in the SoNo area is mostly comprised of 19<sup>th</sup> century wooden frame buildings with clapboard siding. Like the commercial structures, many of the houses are also Italianate in style. Others are typical examples of Victorian and Second Empire Mansard styles. The district is also dominated by early twentieth century railroad structures including large steel truss bridges and catenary towers.



## Residential District

The residential district to the east of the Study Area includes single and multifamily housing in a mix of styles dating from before and after 1950. Older residential structures tend to be Victorian wood-frame buildings originally constructed to house one to three families. Some now contain a greater number of units. These buildings are primarily located along the major older thoroughfares such as Fairfield Avenue, Flax Hill Road, West Avenue and Couch Street. Roads like West Avenue were once the routes of streetcar lines, which helped to determine the pattern of development in that era.

Housing from the 1920's to 1950 creates part of the infill between some of the major older streets, exhibiting the beginnings of modern suburban residential patterns including winding streets and cul-de-sacs designed for automobile traffic. The area just north of Garner Street is typical of this pattern. Post-1950 multifamily housing has been constructed in ad hoc pattern along some of the major older streets, and has also filled-in a significant portion of the block directly across MLK Drive from the Webster Block.



**Figure 2.9**

*Residential Buildings Across MLK Drive from the Webster Block*

## Urban Renewal District – Present and Future

With the few exceptions noted previously, the buildings in the Study Area and the housing projects to the south all postdate *The South Norwalk Urban Renewal Plan*. Many of these buildings do not seem compatible with the waterfront and residential districts to either side. Building styles tend to be “modernist,” and the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century pattern of densely developed blocks with strong building edges is severely disrupted in parts of the Study Area, particularly along the edge of MLK Drive. Furthermore, the fairly uniform height of buildings in the SoNo district is clearly broken by the 12-story 50 Washington Street with its sheer white facade.

Since the late 1970's, the principal thrust of revitalization efforts in South Norwalk has been to capitalize on the district's historic architecture. Newer and reconstructed buildings such as the Maritime Aquarium, the new building behind the Norwalk Museum, Klaff's, the Crown Regent Cinema, the new loft residence complex being built at the corner of Ann and North Main Streets and the new building at the corner of South Main and Haviland Streets have all attempted to compliment the surrounding historic context – often with successful results. Those which do not fully succeed generally do not severely detract from the district.



**Figure 2.10**

*Urban Renewal Era Buildings in the Study Area can seem incompatible with the waterfront and residential districts to either side.*

Future development in the Study Area should seek to continue this pattern, gradually working to ease the discontinuity between the Webster Superblock and the SoNo Historic District. In keeping with this guideline, new buildings in the Study Area as well as remodeling and reconstruction efforts should aim to extend the building massing pattern and palette of materials used in the historic waterfront district, possibly incorporating references to the steel and wire latticework of surrounding transportation structures.

## **2.2 Parking**

This chapter examines existing parking conditions in the Study Area, discusses previous studies and presents an analysis of parking demand and supply in the Webster Lot service area.

### ***Existing Conditions***

#### **Number and Type of Parking Spaces in the Study Area**

An inventory of existing parking was performed by SEA on July 29, 2003. This inventory enumerated both on-street and off-street parking resources contained within the Study Area boundary. The results of this inventory

are presented in Map 2.11 and Table 2.1. As can be seen from the Map and the tables, there are 867 total spaces in the Study Area, with 612 of those located on the Webster Street lot. The majority of parking spaces in the Study Area are either private, reserved or permit spaces. Only about 25 percent of the parking spaces in the Study Area are free or metered spaces available to the general public.

According to the Norwalk DPW, permit spaces are “first come/first serve” or “non-reserved” that are typically oversold by about 25 percent, a standard practice in the parking industry. Reserved spaces cannot be oversold, since they are not available to users other than the holder of the reserved permit. Tenants in 50 Washington Street hold passes for 38 of the 81 reserved spaces in the lot. Other tenants in the same building hold passes for 406 permit spaces. Eighty-Eight spaces on the Clay Block are leased by the City to serve as overflow permit spaces for the Webster Block.

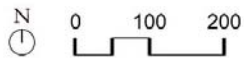
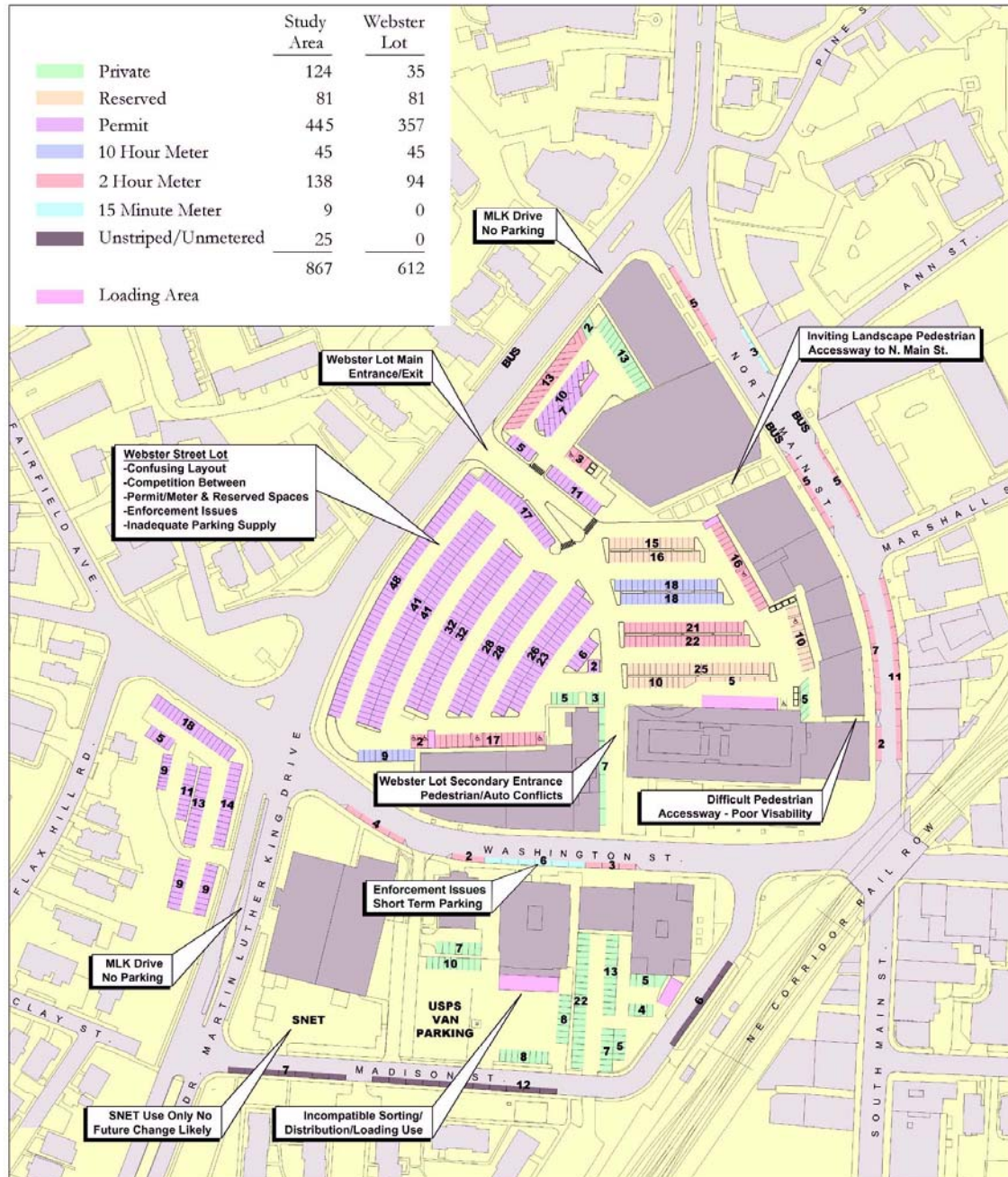
**Table 2.1 Existing Parking in the Study Area**

Type of Space	Webster Lot	Other Off-Street Spaces	On Street Spaces	Total Study Area
Private	35	89	0	124
Reserved	81	0	0	81
Permit	357	88	0	445
10 Hour Meter	45	0	0	45
2 Hour Meter	94	0	44	138
15 Minute Unmetered	0	0	9	9
Unstriped/Unmetered	0	0	25	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>867</b>

The numbers of permit and reserved spaces held by 50 Washington Street (444 total), together with the total square footage of the building (approximately 170,000 SF) make this property by far the largest current factor in weekday parking demand in the Webster Lot service area. Future development on the Webster Block may change this pattern to some degree in the future.

**Existing Parking Rates**

Metered parking spaces in the Webster Lot and in the surrounding SoNo district are charged at a rate of \$0.25 per hour. Meters operate from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM Monday through Saturday. Permit spaces are charged \$240 per year, and reserved spaces cost \$480 per year. The rates on meters are unchanged since 1999. Rates for permit and reserved spaces have doubled in cost.



**Map 2.11 - Existing Parking**  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study

## **Enforcement**

According to business owners in the district, enforcement of parking regulations can be uneven. The two-hour time limit is not always rigidly enforced while illegal parking in permit and reserved spaces has caused some concern.

## ***Previous Studies – The South Norwalk Parking Study***

In 1999, Allan Davis Associates conducted *The South Norwalk Parking Study*, a comprehensive study of off-street parking resources in the SoNo district including the present Study Area. That analysis did not address on-street parking resources. Based principally on vacancies thought to exist at that time in the Webster Block, Allan Davis Associates recommended adding 100 parking spaces in the Webster Lot through construction of a 300-car garage. The same study also recommended that the 88-space lot on the Clay Block be converted from postal employee spaces to permit spaces related to the Webster Lot. That conversion was achieved following the conclusion of the study.

An update of *The South Norwalk Parking Study* was conducted in 2002 by VHB, Inc. and published in their *Proposed Maritime Aquarium Parking Garage Financial Feasibility Evaluation*. According to VHB, Inc. the overall parking occupancies observed in *The South Norwalk Parking Study* “were similar to those observed [by VHB, Inc.] in 2002.” As a result, *The South Norwalk Parking Study* has been used as the primary modeling input for the parking component of the current *Webster Street Planning and Urban Design Study*.

## ***Parking Supply and Demand Analysis***

In order to correctly analyze the current demand for parking in the Webster Street Lot, the consulting team developed a map of the service area of the facility using a 300-foot walking radius from the principal pedestrian access points to and from the lot (see Map 2.12). Although employees may walk up to 1,200 feet from parking to an employment destination, the main employment center in the Webster Area is 50 Washington Street – within the 300-foot radius. Other centers like the Lock Building and the future Reed/Putnam Developments have their own parking supplies. Thus 300-feet, the measure commonly used for retail and restaurant patrons, was selected for the parking supply and demand analysis.

The consulting team then used Norwalk Assessor’s data combined with field observations and the inventory presented in *The South Norwalk Parking Study* to establish the gross leasable area of all the uses within the ser-

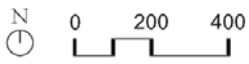
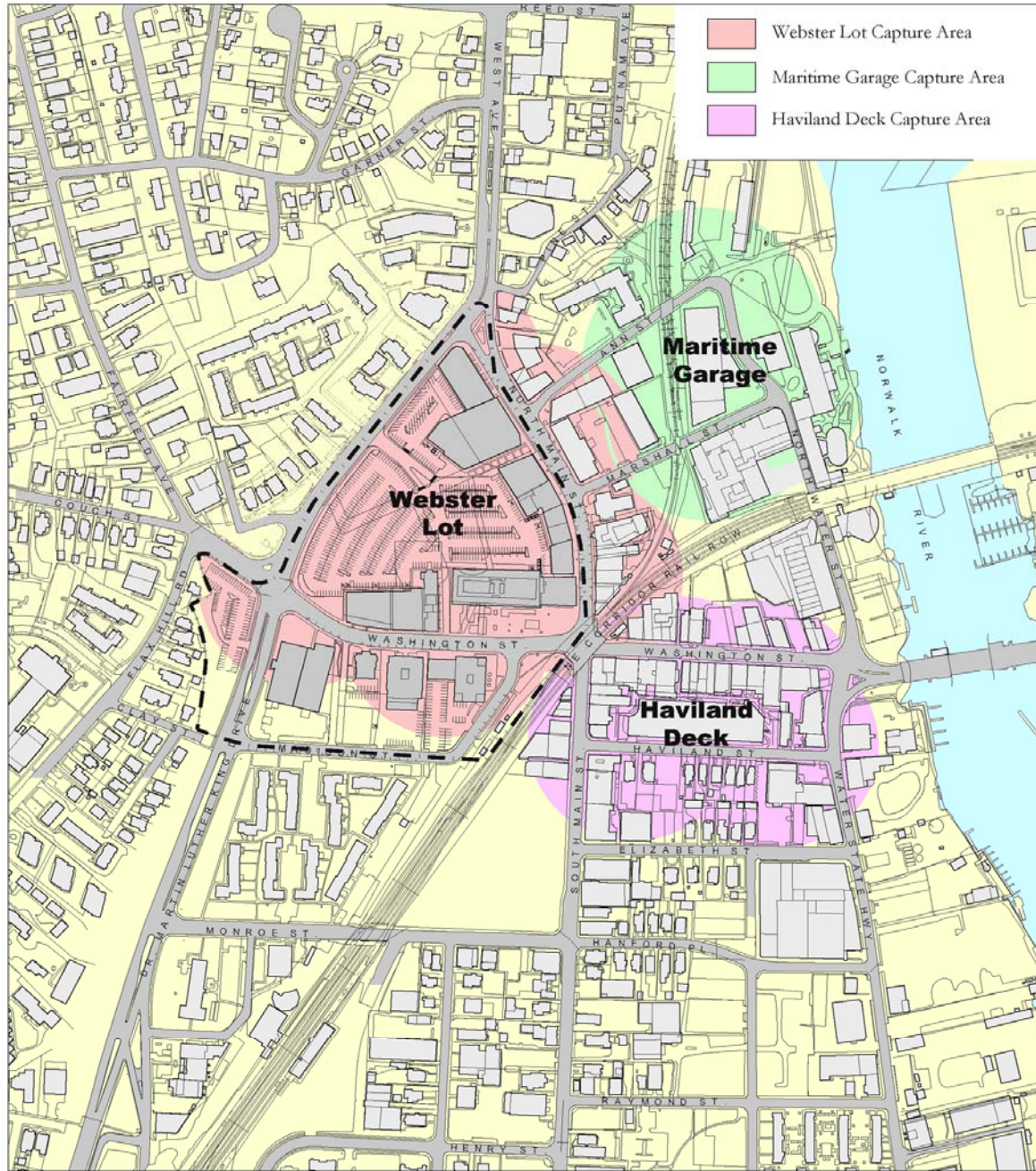
vice area and the total supply of existing on and off street parking. This data was then compared to known vacancy rates for the Webster Lot service area as they existed in 1999 and currently.

A computer spreadsheet model was then developed and calibrated against the observed parking occupancy and vacancy rate data in *The South Norwalk Parking Study*. A series of land-use parking factors were derived from a review of various sources including the Institute of Transportation Engineers, the Urban Land Institute, the American Planning Association and a substantial proprietary data base of parking factors from a wide array of previous downtown parking studies conducted by Desman Associates throughout the United States. Various factor combinations were iteratively run through the modeling process until the predictive results matched the observations of *The South Norwalk Parking Study* with reasonable accuracy. Observations by VHB, Inc. were also utilized in the process. The results are shown in Tables 2.2 and 2.3, and Figures 2.11 and 2.12.

Both weekday and weekend evening peak periods were analyzed at projected full occupancy rates to choose the target peak for the study. These peaks were averaged over a spread of about three hours near noon on a typical summer weekday, and a similar spread for a typical Saturday Evening. In the end the weekday peak was found to govern with a maximum demand for parking in the Webster Street Lot of about 774 spaces, or about 162 spaces more than currently exist in the lot. This number was somewhat lower than the 200-space figure predicted in *The South Norwalk Parking Study*. One possible reason for this is that the 88-space Clay Block lot was made available for public parking after the completion of *The South Norwalk Parking Study*. Without this added reservoir, the excess demand for spaces in the Webster Lot would be higher – in the vicinity of 250 spaces.

It is important to note that, in the foregoing analyses, the total number of parking spaces in the service area (1,031) exceed the number in the Study Area (867). This is because the service area is larger than the Study Area, including within it the eastern side of North Main Street (see Map 2.12).

As a result of the parking supply and demand analysis, 774 parking spaces were assigned as the baseline number to be accommodated in the Webster Lot in all future development scenarios. In other words, all parking and development solutions must supply the 774-space number needed to serve existing uses in the service area at full occupancy, before spaces are added to accommodate any other planned development. The 774-space number also assumes that the 88 spaces on the Clay Block will remain available to serve as public parking.



Map 2.12 - Parking Capture  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study

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Bonz & Company Inc.

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**Table 2.2 Webster Street Lot – Existing Peak Weekday Parking Demand**
**Existing Parking Demand by Land Use**

Land Use	Unit Type	Net Units	Demand Factor *	Parking Demand
Office	SF/GLA	196,435	2.85	560
Retail	SF/GLA	151,478	2.2	333
Restaurant	SF/GLA	49,548	1.42	70
Residential	Units	46	0.89	41
Cinema/Theater	Seats	850	0.15	128
Gov't Institutional	SF/GLA	18,676	2.85	53
Museum	SF/GLA	10,003	0.8	8
<b>Total Demand</b>	--	--	--	<b>1,193</b>
<b>Existing Parking Supply</b>				
Block	Off Street	On Street	Other	Total Supply
Webster Block	612	19	0	631
Madison Block	89	40	0	129
Clay Block	88	0	0	88
N. Main (East Side)	164	19	0	183
<b>Total Supply</b>	<b>953</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,031</b>
<b>Existing Unmet Demand</b>				<b>162</b>
Additional Spaces Needed on Webster Lot to Meet Demand				162
Existing Webster Lot Supply				612
<b>Total Baseline Weekday for Webster Lot</b>				<b>774</b>

\* Demand Factor = Parking Space /000GSF

**Table 2.3 Webster Street Lot – Existing Peak Weekend Parking Demand**
**Existing Parking Demand by Land Use**

Land Use	Unit Type	Net Units	Demand Factor *	Parking Demand
Office	SF/GLA	196,435	0.3	59
Retail	SF/GLA	151,478	3.3	500
Restaurant	SF/GLA	49,548	4.5	223
Residential	Units	46	0.9	41
Cinema/Theater	Seats	1,139	0.25	285
Gov't Institutional	SF/GLA	18,676	2	37
Museum	SF/GLA	10,003	0.85	9
<b>Total Demand</b>	--	--	--	<b>1,154</b>
<b>Existing Parking Supply</b>				
Block	Off Street	On Street	Other	Total Supply
Webster Block	612	19	0	631
Madison Block	89	40	0	129
Clay Block	88	0	0	88
N. Main (East Side)	164	19	0	183
<b>Total Supply</b>				<b>1,031</b>
<b>Existing Unmet Demand</b>				<b>123</b>
Additional Spaces Needed on Webster Lot to Meet Demand				123
Existing Webster Lot Supply				612
<b>Total Baseline Weekend for Webster Lot</b>				<b>735</b>



Figure 2.11 Webster Street Lot – Existing Peak Weekday Parking Demand

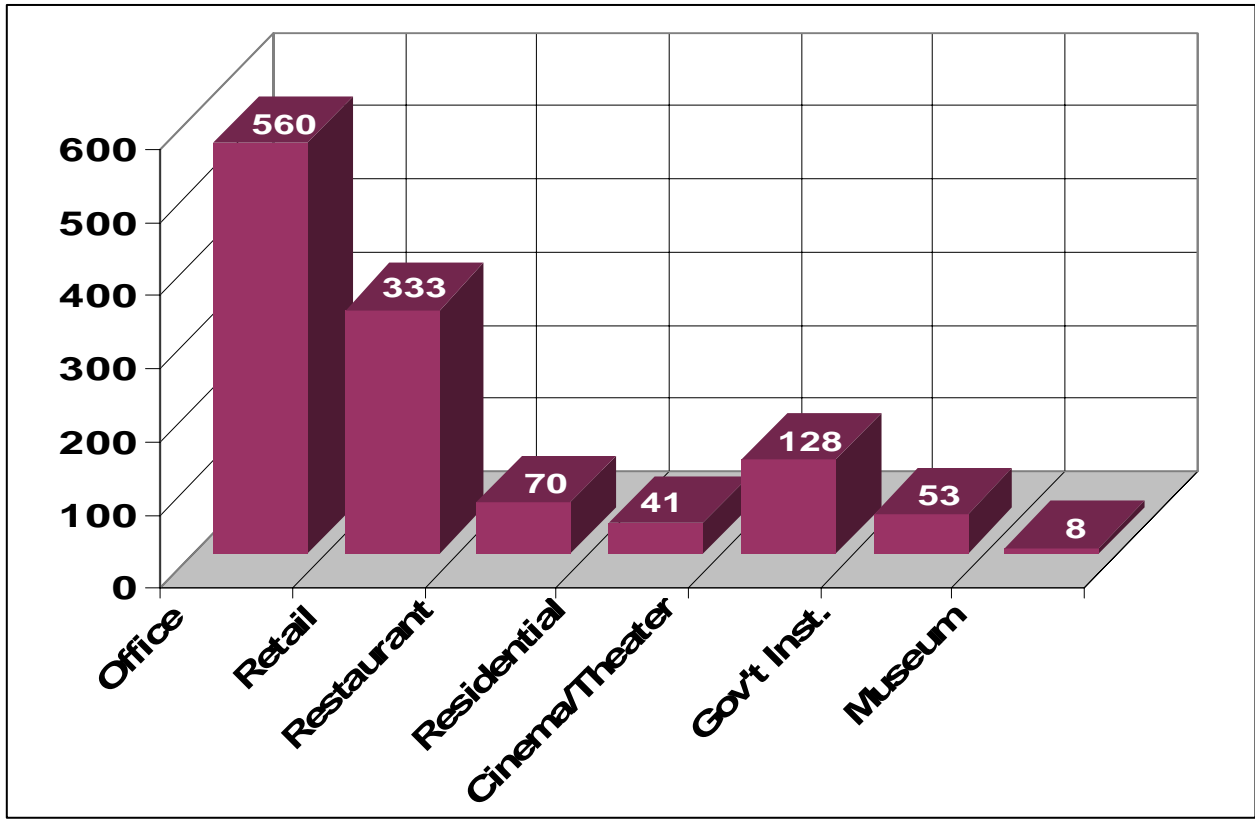
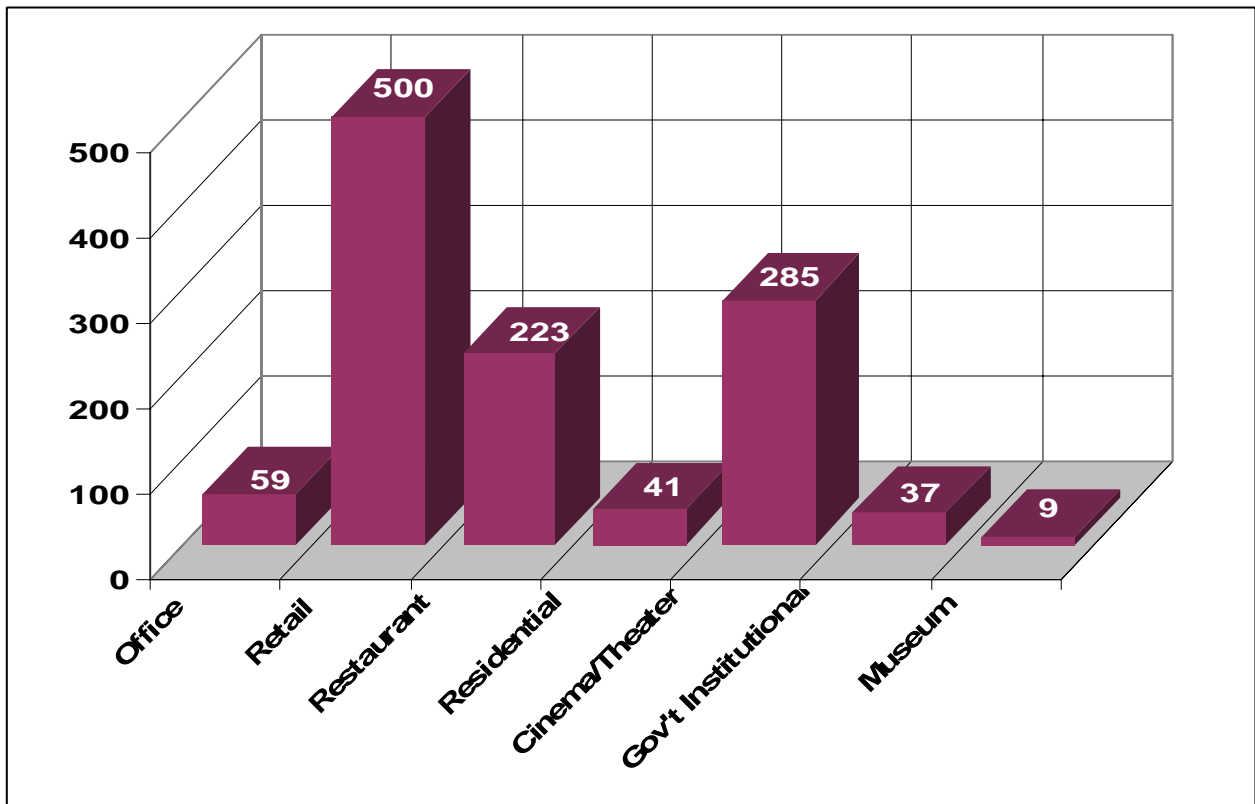


Figure 2.11 Webster Street Lot – Existing Peak Weekend Parking Demand



## 2.3 Real Estate Market Summary

The following section summarizes key findings regarding Study Area market conditions, potential development programs, and the area's general prospects for revitalization. The full market analysis report appears in Appendix A to this report.

*Market Context:* The Study Area occupies a central location in an affluent market. While the area does not anticipate rapid overall demographic growth, its affluence, accessibility to key business locations, and the generally positive outlooks for Fairfield County's economy provide strong assets for new development potential.

*Demographic Growth:* Demographic projections show moderate overall population and household gains over the next five years. Such forecasts also show that households in higher-income brackets are expected to grow at relatively rapid rates, offset by declines among households with incomes below \$100,000. This growth among affluent households offers support for upscale new development.

*Residential Market Opportunities:* Rental apartment and condominium housing offer strong opportunities for new development in the Study Area. Such residential developments will derive support from ongoing growth in the region's high-income groups. In addition, there are opportunities to provide housing for low- and moderate-income families who face limited choices in the region's housing market.

- The market has demonstrated its acceptance of such housing in the Study Area and throughout coastal Fairfield County. Market demand for market-rate rental units continues to grow, and notwithstanding weak economic conditions, the market has successfully absorbed new inventory of approximately 1,600 new high-end units in the last three years. Given projected demographic growth, the Study Area should be able to support more than 300 new market-rate rental units over the next five years.
- Condominium development activity has been limited in recent years, but strong growth among upper-income empty nesters, along with rapid price appreciation in the local market, indicate that this market niche also offers potential.
- Mixed-income projects should prove viable and suitable for new residential developments in the area. Affordable housing units play a valuable role in redevelopment as they provide housing for a

diverse labor force essential to Norwalk's continued growth and meet a regional housing need.

Commercial development opportunities in the Study Area will reflect the vitality of South Norwalk and provide opportunities for restaurants, specialty retailers, and businesses in niches such as home furnishings. Space for such businesses will be situated in strategically located ground-floor spaces in the Study Area.

Potential Development Programs: Over the next five years, the Study Area can offer potentially feasible development opportunities. In a short-term time frame, the strongest opportunities would involve residential projects including:

- Luxury rental apartments are proposed in low- to midrise (3- to 4-story) buildings. Such buildings are expected to feature extensive amenities -- including ground-floor retail space in appropriate locations -- and would charge high-end rents approximating an average of roughly \$2.00 to \$2.30 per square foot (2003 dollars). Most projects would offer mostly one- and two-bedroom configurations (including units with den or loft areas). Buildings are expected to provide covered parking in public garages. Typical development densities would approximate 60 units per acre.
- Luxury condominiums would also be located in low- to midrise (3- to 8-story) buildings. Most condominium projects would seek waterfront settings or other locations adjacent to desirable amenities. Projects would emphasize two- and three-bedroom units; prices would approximate roughly \$250 to \$300 per square foot initially. Buildings would also offer covered parking, typically situated below the building footprint.
- Retail components would be located in ground-floor spaces facing strategic points of access linking the Study Area with other destinations in the South Norwalk area.

## 3. Development Concept

### 3.1 Development Concept

Map 3.1 shows the proposed development concept for the Webster Street Block. Major goals of the development concept are to:

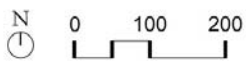
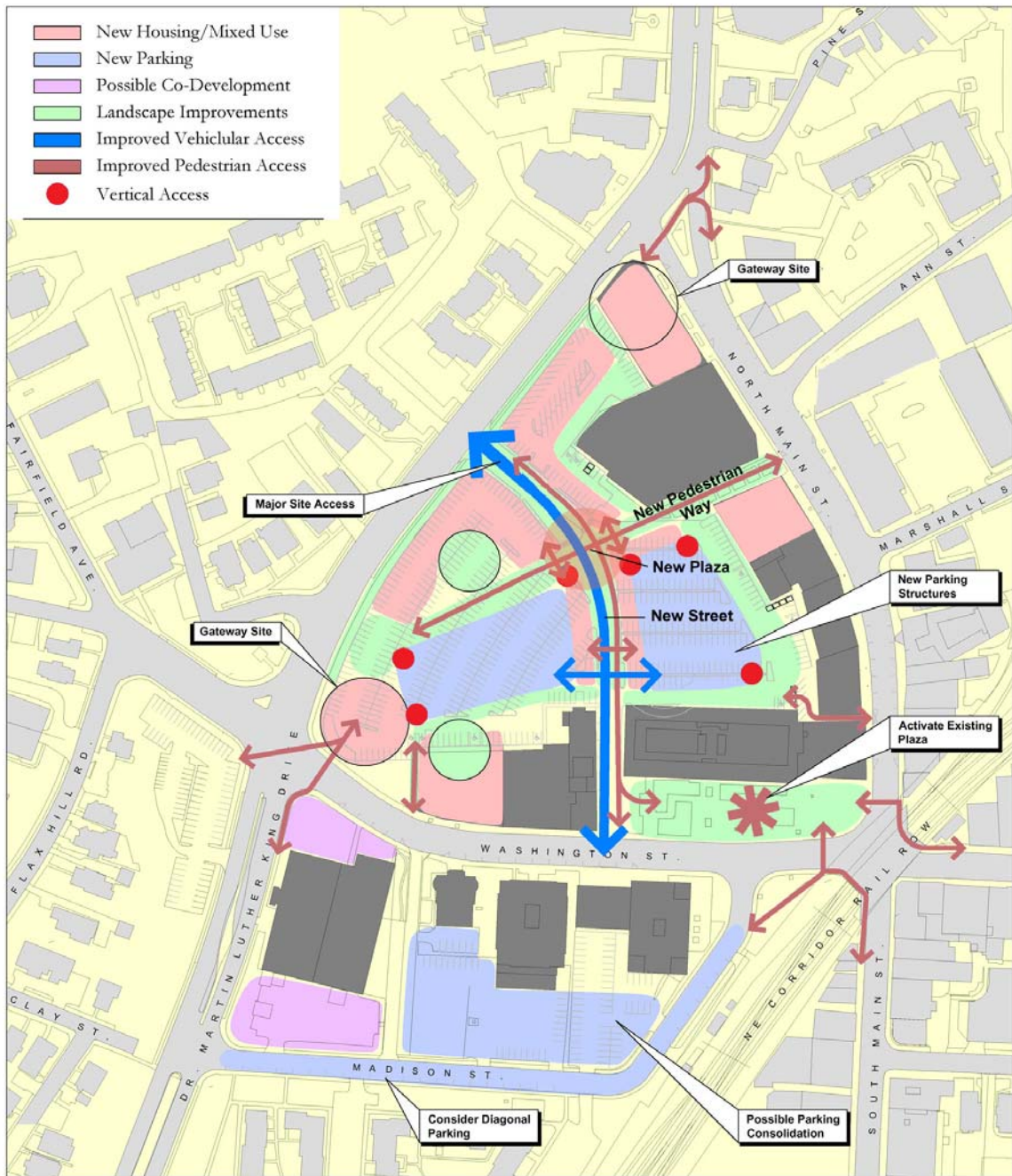
- Address parking supply issues
- Improve circulation
- Create a plan that can be carried out in phases
- Improve the image of the study area
- Strategically locate new housing and retail uses to support other goals
- Break down the scale of the superblock and reconnect it to the fabric of historic SoNo.

To achieve these goals, the concept plan proposes several major actions including the following:

- A new through “street” from Washington Street to MLK Drive for both vehicles and pedestrians
- Two parking garage sites east and west of the new “street.”
- Continuing the existing pedestrian way next to the Crown Regent Cinema through to MLK Drive
- A new public plaza at the juncture of the new street and the new pedestrian way.
- New housing development along MLK Drive and new housing and retail development masking the new garages along the new “street.”

Also shown on Map 3.1 are the possibility of creating diagonal parking on Madison Street, the possible long-term consolidation of parking on the Madison Block through utilization of the USPS facility, and the possibility of eventual future development along the facades of the SNET Building.

However, the main focus of the plan is on the Webster Block, where it recommends breaking the superblock into three smaller blocks separated by the new “street” (which it has been suggested be called Franklin Place in honor of the former street which ran near this alignment prior to urban renewal) and the pedestrian way (which it has been suggested be called Webster Way in honor of the former street that existed along the alignment of the proposed pedestrian way).



**Map 3.1 - Development Concept**  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study

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Desman Associates  
Bonz & Company Inc.



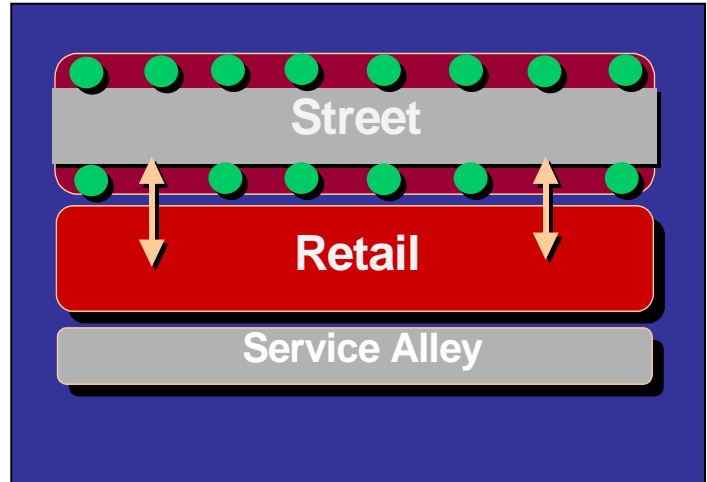
Franklin Place is intended to serve as the main vehicular access to the garages and to building service areas around the block. Webster Way will connect garage pedestrian access points to surrounding SoNo.

### 3.2 Circulation

Underlying the plan is significant proposed change in Webster Block access patterns. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 compare typical access patterns for a

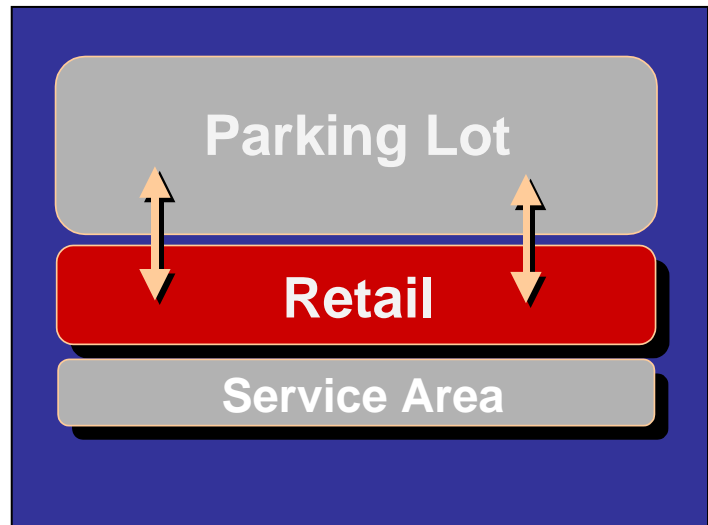
**Figure 3.1 Downtown Street**

*Buildings front on a main street with the service area (often an alley) located behind. Parking is usually on street and access is oriented toward pedestrian traffic.*



**Figure 3.2 Suburban Strip Mall**

*Buildings are oriented toward the parking lot and the automobile. Pedestrians are not a main consideration. Service areas are behind the strip, and are rarely seen by the customer.*



traditional downtown shopping area and a typical suburban strip shopping mall. As can be seen from Figure 3.1, the traditional downtown relied on the street to provide access to local stores, businesses and residences. Parking was typically on street, and the back area of the buildings fronting

on the street was relegated to service and some additional parking (often employee).

Things changed significantly after World War II with the rise of the automobile as the dominant transportation mode, and the typical strip shopping mall became the retail and business paradigm. Figure 3.2 shows the circulation pattern for a typical suburban strip shopping mall. Businesses now front on a generous parking lot that connects the street to the building strip.

Access to businesses is from the parking space, across the lot to the destination. The street as a pedestrian access way to stores and businesses has disappeared. The back of the strip is relegated to service and is rarely seen by the customer, except for the occasional pick up of purchased goods.

During the urban renewal years of the 1960's and 1970's many cities tried to transplant this successful suburban model into struggling downtown areas that had been vacated by suburbanization. The Webster superblock is one such attempt. The result appears in Figure 3.3. While the buildings on the block still face traditional streets, their main access is from the parking lot. This creates a confused situation in which it is difficult for businesses to decide which side to address – the front or the back. Furthermore, building services must still be accommodated, in this case along the parking lot edge of the site. This means customers accessing businesses from the parking lot must pass through the service zone, encountering dumpsters and loading activities. This is a less than ideal compromise and it is the source of many of the Webster Block's problems.

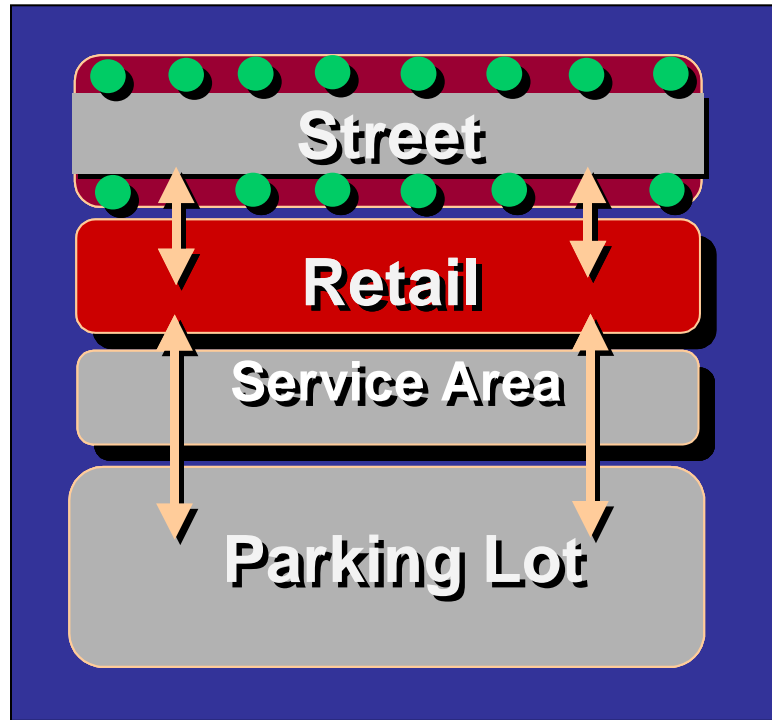
The proposed development concept would dramatically alter this situation by returning the street to the preeminent position it still holds in historic SoNo. By structuring parking, customers can be directed to streets and dedicated pedestrian ways that are all fronted by retail and building addresses. The back areas of the buildings on the Webster Block can be turned over to their service function through well-landscaped service ways. Figure 3.4 is a diagram that shows how this would work. Figure 3.5 is an example of a well-landscaped service way that is also a pedestrian way.

Map 3.1 shows the principal pedestrian and vehicular circulation patterns of the plan.

### **3.3 Land Use**

Map 3.2 shows the land use component of the concept plan. Here, the proposed uses are shown as specific parcels and labeled accordingly. The two garage parcels are shown in blue and labeled G-1 and G-2 for Garage 1 and Garage 2 respectively. Proposed housing sites are shown in yellow.

low. Mixed-use housing/retail sites are shown in orange and are arranged predominantly along MLK Drive and Franklin Place. The sites are differentiated by letter – ranging from A to H. The majority of proposed sites



**Figure 3.3 – Existing Webster Block Circulation**

The Webster Block mixes urban and suburban patterns creating confusion between front and back, while directing many customers through the service zone. Some front doors on Washington Street are used as back doors.

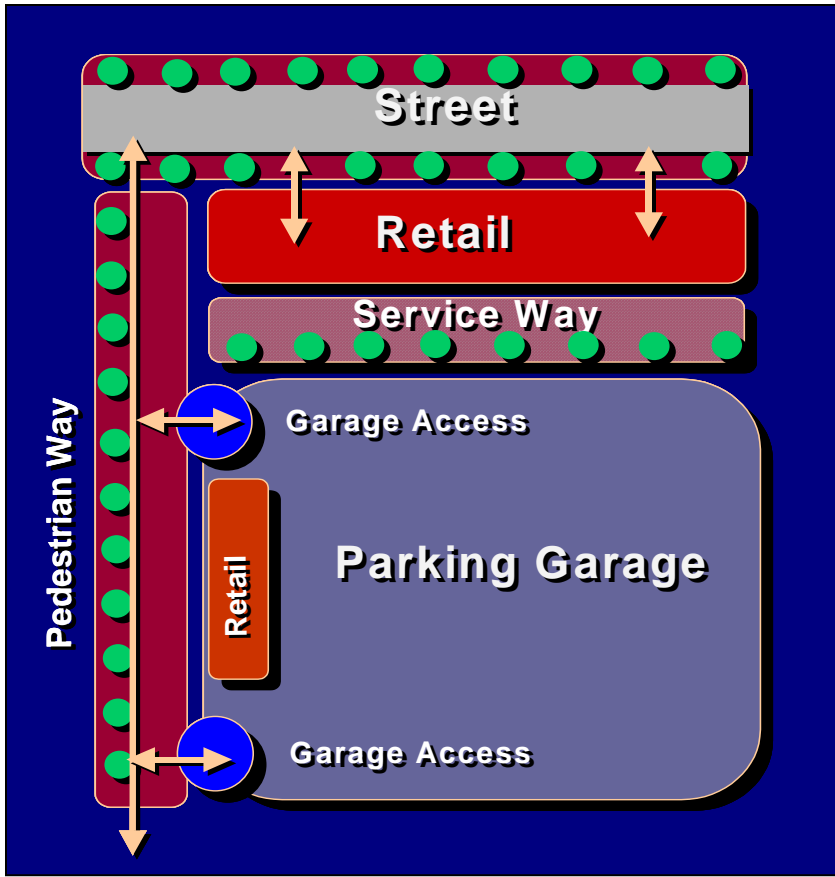


In this example, customers approaching stores on North Main Street from Webster Lot are confronted with service uses.



This store has chosen to fully address the parking lot, and a former front door on Washington Street has been converted to an emergency exit.





**Figure 3.4 – Webster Block - Proposed Circulation**

*In the proposed circulation pattern for the Webster Block, visitors will be directed principally to streets and pedestrian ways lined with building front doors, improving the walk experience and creating points of interest along the way.*



**Figure 3.5 – Newburyport, Massachusetts**

*Combined service and pedestrian way in historic Newburyport, MA. High-quality landscaping improves the walk experience and downplays the service function that is also provided by this walkway.*

(A-E) are on City-owned land. Others (sites F-H) illustrate the potential for future leveraged development over what are presently privately owned single-story retail buildings. Existing buildings with no change proposed are shown in gray. Note that both garages are generally concealed by existing buildings and proposed new development.

### **3.4 Public/Private**

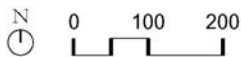
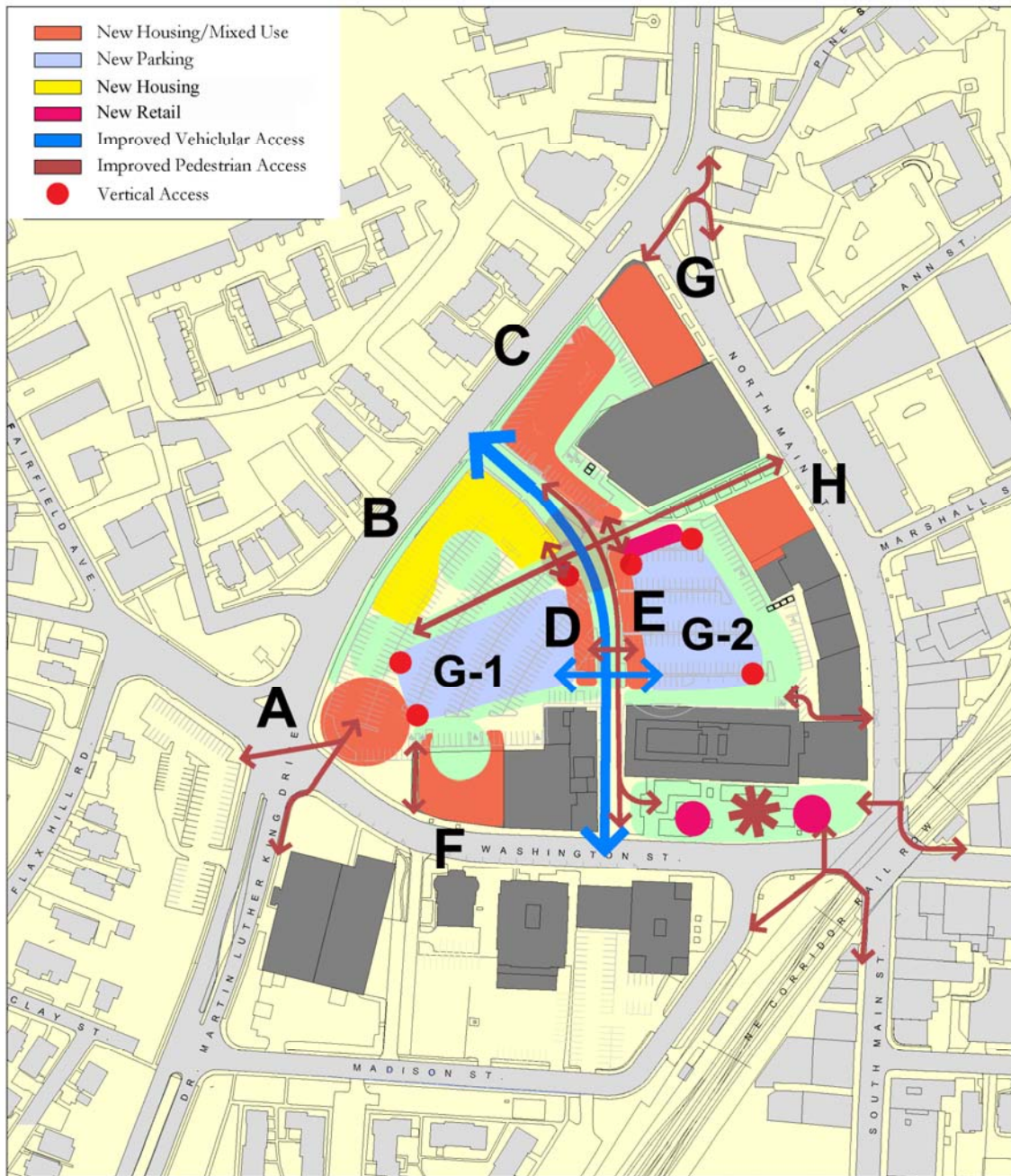
Map 3.3 differentiates the proposed actions of the plan that are on public land versus those on private land. As can be seen from the Map, both garages and parcels A through E are all on City-owned land on the Webster Lot. Parcels F-H are potential future developments on privately owned sites. Site G is a key visual gateway site from I-95 and Route 7 and will deserve special consideration in terms of massing and design if this site should become developed at a future date.

### **3.5 Phasing**

The concept plan shown in the accompanying maps is essentially a framework for possible long-term development of the Webster Block and the surrounding Study Area. Map 3.4 shows how the plan might be phased. Phase I could consist of Garage No. 1 plus Sites A, B and D – all on City-owned land. Initial financial analysis shows that this could be a viable package (See Chapter 4 – Proposed Plan). This approach would leave a considerable portion of the site as surface parking, which could remain in this condition indefinitely, provided that parking supply problems are fully satisfied by Garage No. 1 (which more detailed study indicates that they are – see Chapter 4). Phase II could then be a primarily private sector effort involving the participation of private property owners on the block with the potential to include City-owned sites C and E in the total package.

### **3.6 Urban Scale**

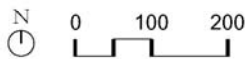
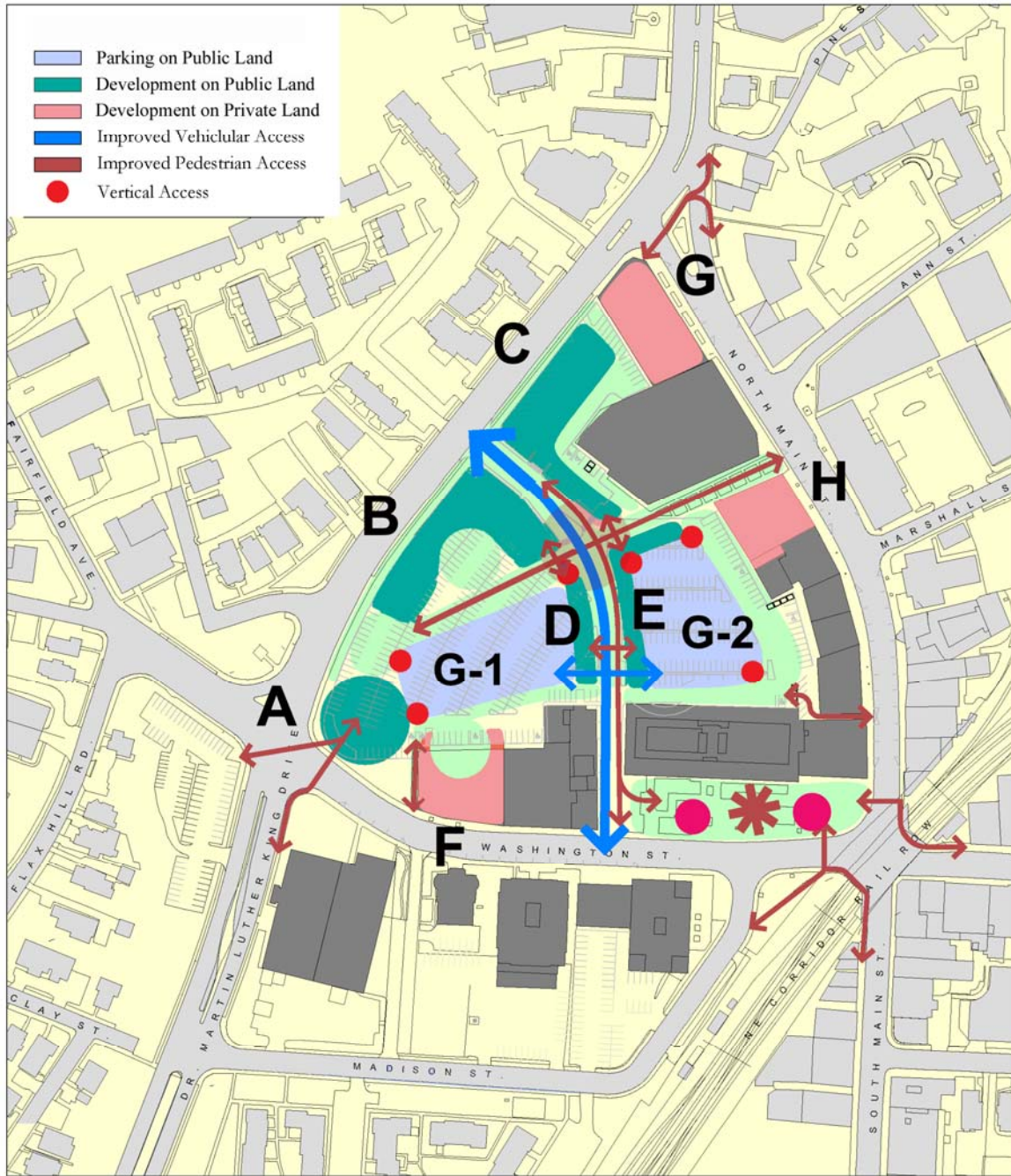
One key goal of redevelopment of the Webster Block is to try to bring the area into greater harmony with its neighbors. The superblock that was created in the 1960's is clearly out of scale with the finer grain its surroundings, especially the SoNo Historic District. At the time the plan was done, that was an accepted and widely applied planning approach. Since that time, thinking has changed. In the 1970's radical redevelopments like Newburyport and Lowell, Massachusetts were undertaken that featured



**Map 3.2 - Land Use Diagram**  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study

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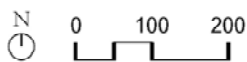
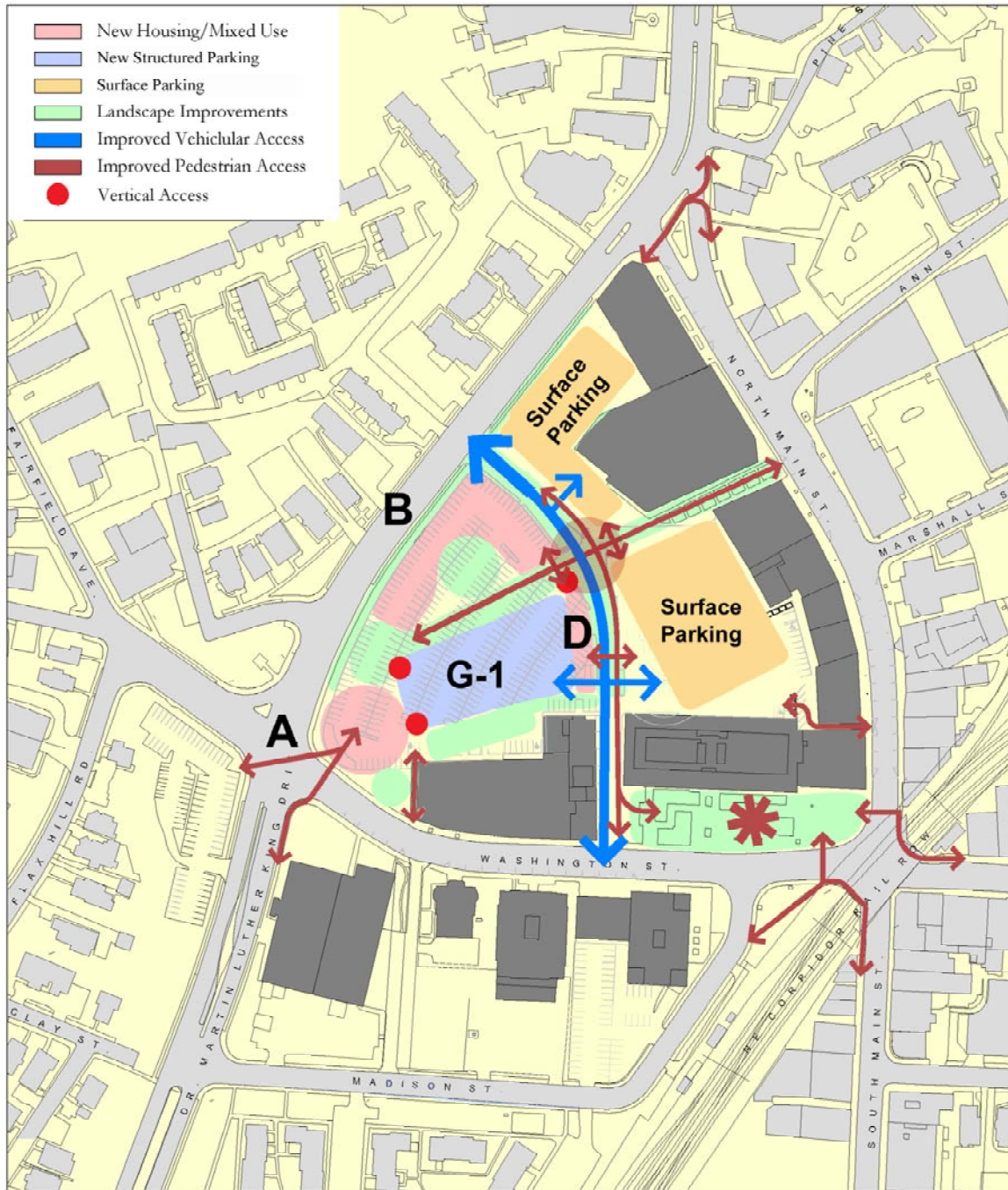
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**Map 3.3 - Public & Private Land**  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study

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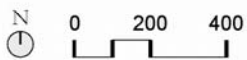




**Map 3.4 - Phase I Development**  
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Map 3.5 - Urban Scale  
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existing historic buildings rather than tearing them down. That same approach was subsequently used to great effect in successfully revitalizing the SoNo district.

When fully complete, the development concept presented here would essentially break the superblock down once again into three blocks with more or less continuous street fronts that are more in scale with their surroundings (see Map 3.5).

### **3.7 Financing Concept**

A major consideration in developing housing and retail on the Webster Block in conjunction with providing more parking has to do with finances. Building a stand-alone garage in today's market would require recouping the development cost by garage revenues alone. The required revenues would be significantly higher than the monthly and/or daily fees that are paid for parking on the Webster Block today. Folding parking and other public infrastructure improvements into a development package with other viable uses presents the possibility of unlocking the value of City-owned land to contribute toward the development cost of new parking. This means that required parking revenues may be significantly reduced from what might otherwise be necessary. Thus, expanded parking can be provided while minimizing the potential impact of higher pricing on surrounding business uses. Chapter 4 provides further detail on how this may be accomplished.

## 4. Proposed Plan

### 4.1 Overview

This chapter illustrates how the Development Concept described in Chapter 3 might translate into a feasibility plan. In this phase of the work effort, the development concept was refined into a series of viable schematic building and site improvement plans that could then be costed and analyzed financially. While the concept was worked out as a complete infill of the block, only the first phase of the development is being considered by the City. The plan was organized around a phasing scheme that would allow the first phase of the development to stand completely on its own indefinitely, with the possibility that a further Phase II development might or might not be approved in the future.

Because of this fact this Chapter concentrates on Phase I, with an illustrative Phase II that is presented at the end of the Chapter.

### 4.2 Phase I Plan & Program

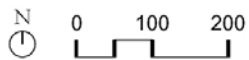
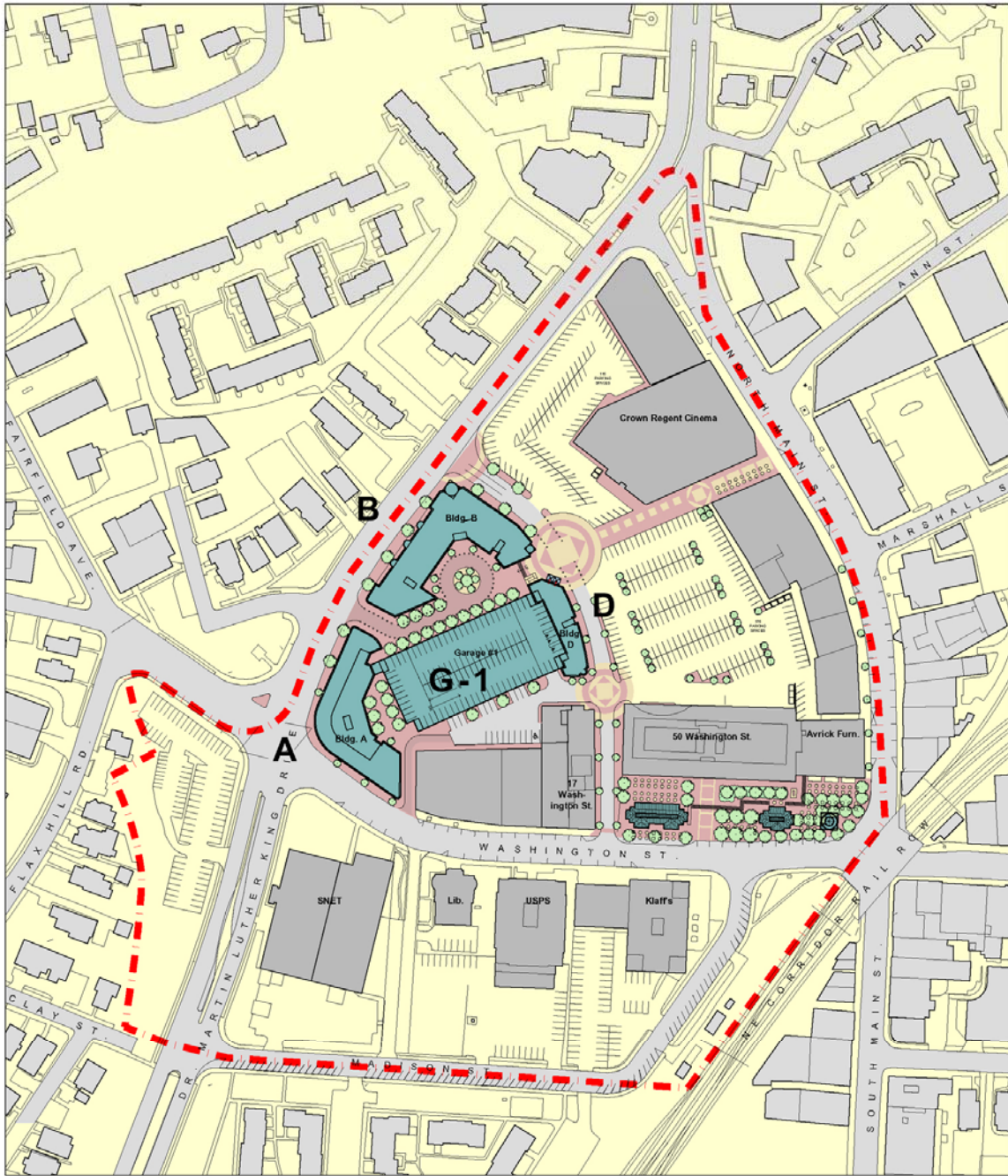
#### *Phase I Plan*

Map 4.1 shows a site plan of the proposed Phase I Plan. As can be seen from the map, the plan includes the following elements:

- Garage No. 1
- The new Franklin Place vehicular and pedestrian way
- The new Webster Way pedestrian way
- Webster Plaza
- Development of Sites A, B and D
- Reconfigured surface parking lots
- Redevelopment of the Washington Street Public Plaza
- Addition of new surface parking spaces along the North Side of Washington Street
- Conversion of Madison Street to a one-way street with diagonal parking.

Table 4.1 provides a breakdown of the Phase I program of development by site and program element. Table 4.2 summarizes the total development proposed for Phase I compared with development in the overall Webster Lot service area (i.e., the area served by the lot as opposed to the Study Area; the service area includes the east side of North Main Street). As can be seen from the table, with the exception of new residential development, the new uses proposed constitute only a slight percentage increase over





Map 4.1-Phase 1 - Roof Plan  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study



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**Table 4.1 – Phase I Development Program by Element**

Building	No. Stories	Dwelling Units			Retail	Restaurant
		Market Rate	Affordable	Total	GSF	GSF
Building A	7.5	80	0	80	0	6,000
Building B	4	57	15	72	0	0
Building D	4	10	0	10	3,000	0
Garage 1	5/bsmt	0	0	0	1,000	0
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>147</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>6,000</b>
Less Existing		0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>147</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>6,000</b>

**Table 4.2 – Phase I Development Summary**

Land Use	Units	Existing	Proposed New	Total	Percent Increase
Office	SF/GSF	231,000	0	231,000	0%
Retail	SF/GSF	178,209	4,000	182,209	2%
Restaurant	SF/GSF	58,292	6,000	64,292	10%
Residential	DU's	46	162	208	352%
Cinema/Theater	Seats	2,200	0	2,200	0%
Gov't Institutional	SF/GSF	21,972	0	21,972	0%
Museum	SF/GSF	11,768	0	11,768	0%

**Table 4.3 – Phase I Parking Demand & Supply**

New Land Use	Unit Type	Net Units	Demand Factor	Parking Demand
Office	SF/GLA	0	2.85	0
Retail	SF/GLA	3,550	2.2	8
Restaurant	SF/GLA	5,100	1.42	7
Residential	Units	162	1.5	243
Cinema/Theater	Seats	0	0.16	0
Gov't Institutional	SF/GLA	0	2.85	0
Museum	SF/GLA	0	0.8	0
<b>Total New Demand</b>		<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>258</b>
<b>Existing Baseline Demand</b>				<b>774</b>
<b>Total Combined Demand</b>				<b>1,032</b>
Garage 1	5 levels plus basement			750
Garage 2	0			0
Surface				309
On Street - West Washington/Madison				78
<b>Total</b>				<b>1,137</b>
<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>				<b>105</b>

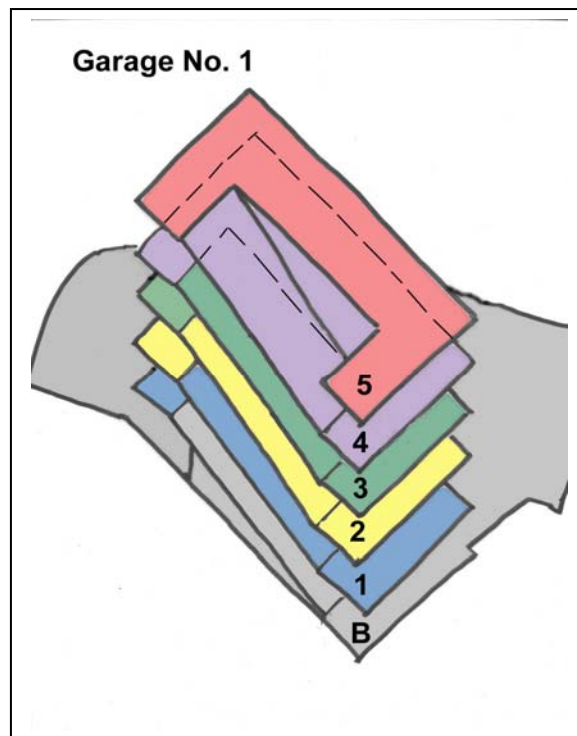
what exists in the service area today. Table 4.3 analyzes parking demand and supply for Phase I. As can be seen the Phase I plan results in an overall surplus of about 100 spaces in the service area. However, this surplus depends on making a permanent change to Madison Street, and any surplus that exists at the end of Phase I may not be permanent. If subsequent phases of the plan are developed demand may eventually match or slightly exceed supply (see Section 4.5).

**Phase I Program**

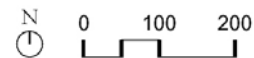
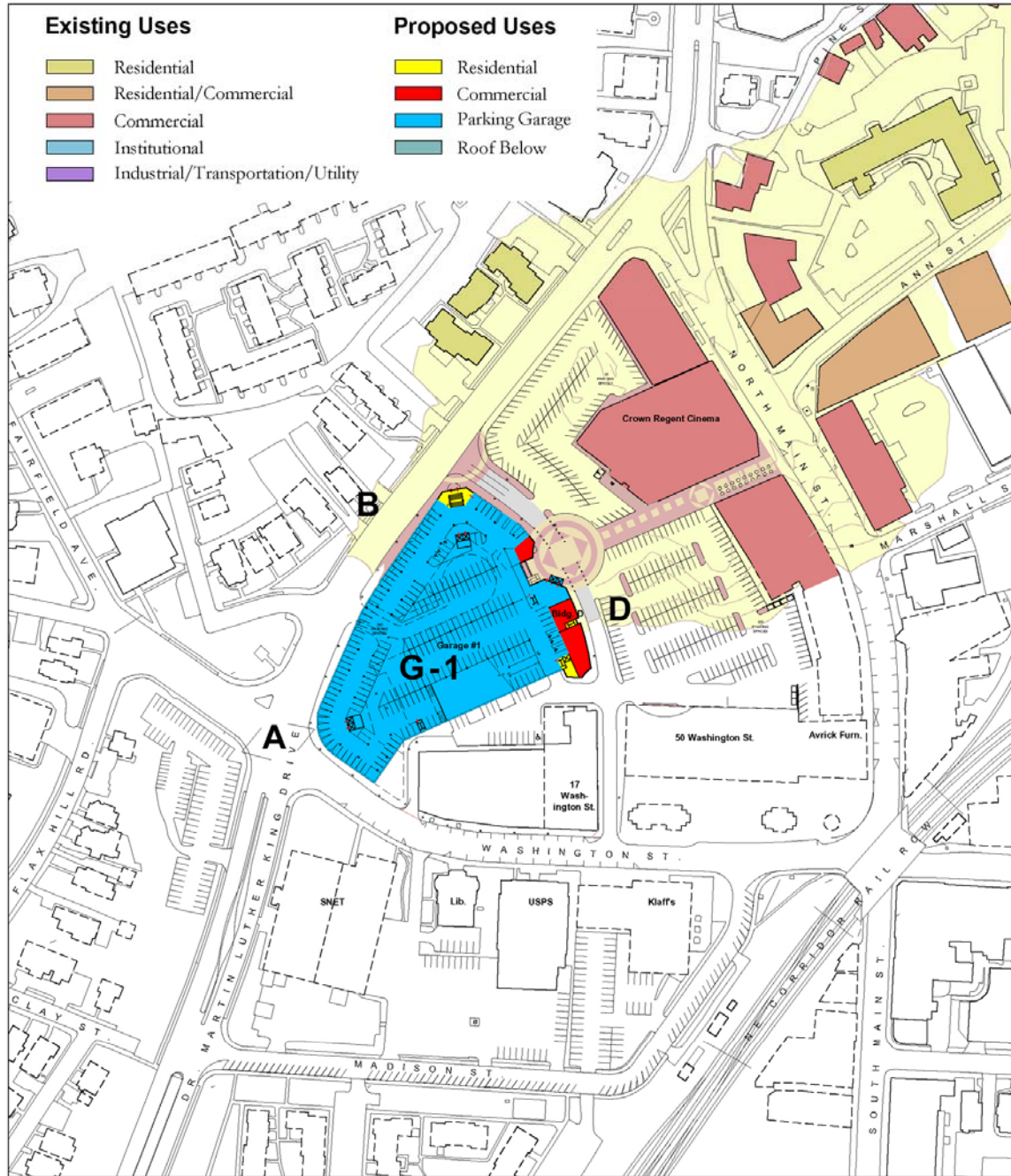
This section provides a summary description of each of the program elements contained in the plan. Maps 4.2 and 4.3 show illustrative grade level and typical floor plans of Phase I. Figure 4.2 presents proposed cross-sections through the plan. Figure 4.3 shows the Webster Block from the air as it appears to day, and figure 4.4 is a perspective sketch showing the same aerial view at the completion of Phase I.

**Garage No. 1**

Garage No. 1 is a 5 level facility with a partial basement containing approximately 750 proposed spaces. The 10-foot grade change across the site allows for an expanded ground floor footprint that is partially below grade – hence the partial basement (see Map 4.2). This level is below grade at Washington Street and at basically grade at Franklin Place. A narrower 120-foot wide ramped floor plan composes the above grade levels. Figure 4.1 is a diagram illustrating the conceptual layout of the garage. Buildings A, B and D buffer views of the garage from surrounding streets.

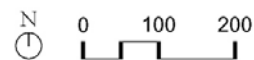
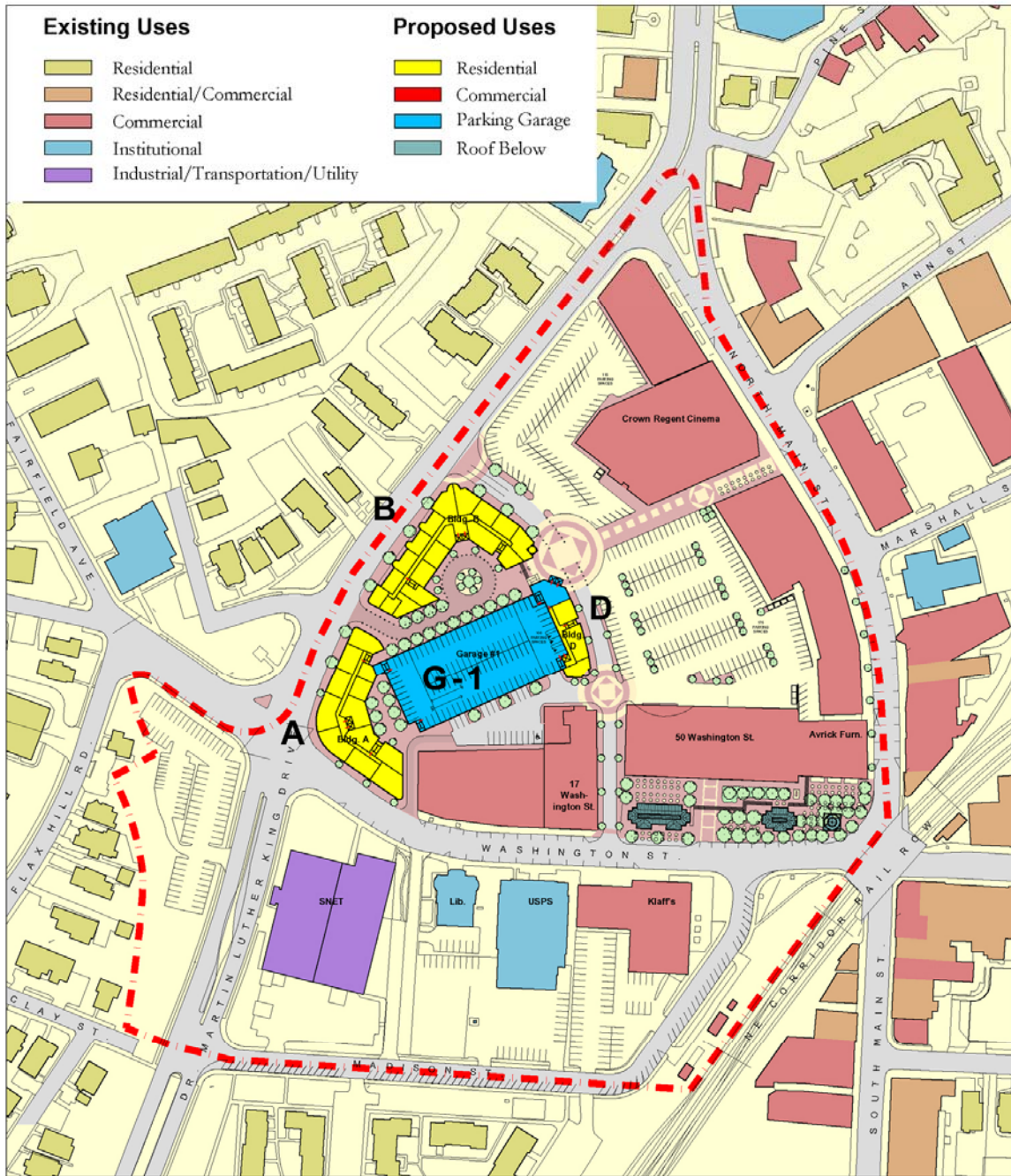


**Figure 4.1 – Diagram of Garage No.1**



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### **Franklin Place**

Franklin Place is essentially a new two-way street connecting MLK Drive to Washington Street. It curves in a gentle arc downhill from Washington Street and is composed of two moving traffic lanes with sidewalks on both sides. Access to Garage No. 1 is provided from Franklin Place at two locations north and south of Webster Way. Traffic signals would control traffic at the intersections of MLK Drive and Washington Street. Traffic calming devices would be used along the length of the new way, to reduce traffic speed and discourage use of the way as a cut-through. For example, a “raised table” would be provided at the intersection of Franklin Place with Webster Way. The raised table elevates the roadway to sidewalk level with ramped curbs, acting similarly to a very broad speed bump. Other measures might include the use of different paving materials at crosswalks and intermittent bands of granite block.

Franklin Place is envisioned as well-landscaped street with sidewalks of brick or concrete pavers, special lighting, bollards, benches and regularly spaced street trees.

### **Webster Way & Webster Plaza**

Webster Way would continue the treatment of the walkway adjacent to the Crown Regent Cinema down to Webster Plaza – a large, circular plaza at the juncture of Webster Way and Franklin Place. Figure 4.5 is a view of the pedestrian way today from North Main Street and Figure 4.6 is a perspective sketch of how it might appear at the completion of Phase I.

The main pedestrian entrance and elevator core for Garage No. 1 is shown located directly on the plaza. The elevator tower would be clearly visible from North Main Street, Washington Street and MLK Drive. Webster Way would be open only to pedestrian traffic, deliveries and emergency vehicles. Vehicular traffic on Franklin Place would bisect the plaza, separated from the pedestrian area by rows of bollards and differential paving treatment. Pedestrian right-of-way would also be clearly stated and marked by special signage at the intersection.

On the westerly side of the plaza, Webster Way would climb approximately five to eight feet via steps and a ramp, rising above the expanded first floor of Garage No. 1. From this point to MLK Drive, Webster Way would be a predominantly residential walkway running through the courtyard of Building B. It would also be used by service and emergency vehicles accessing Building B. The Way then connects at grade to MLK Drive near the intersection of Washington Street.

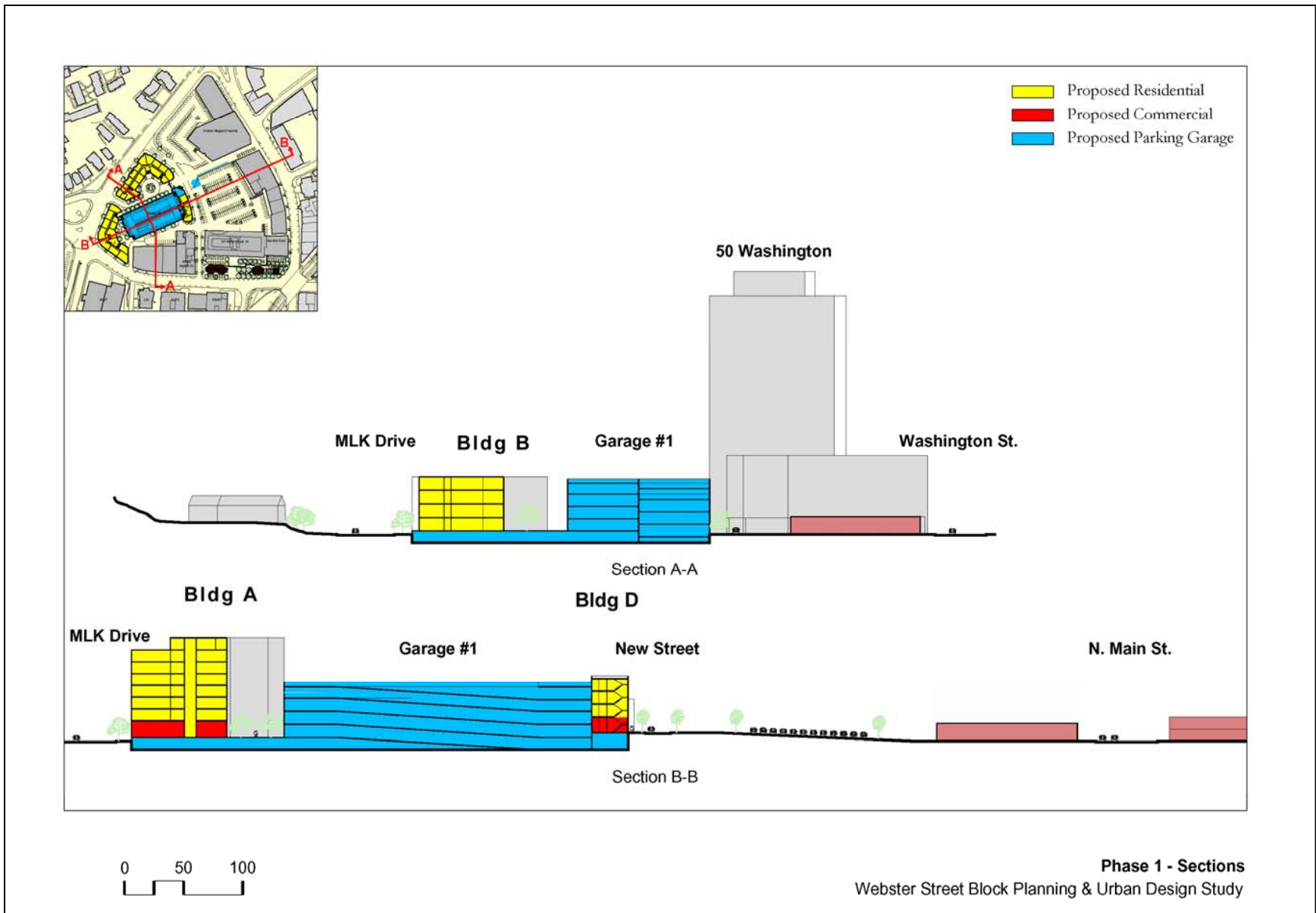
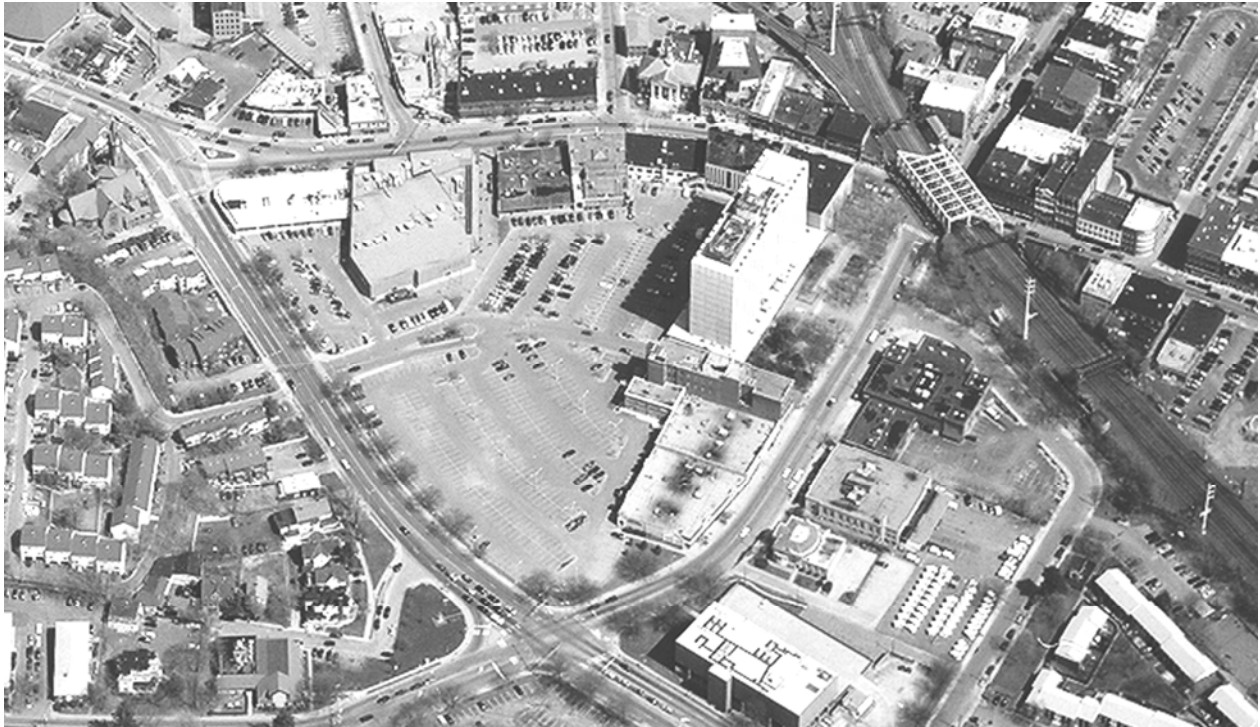
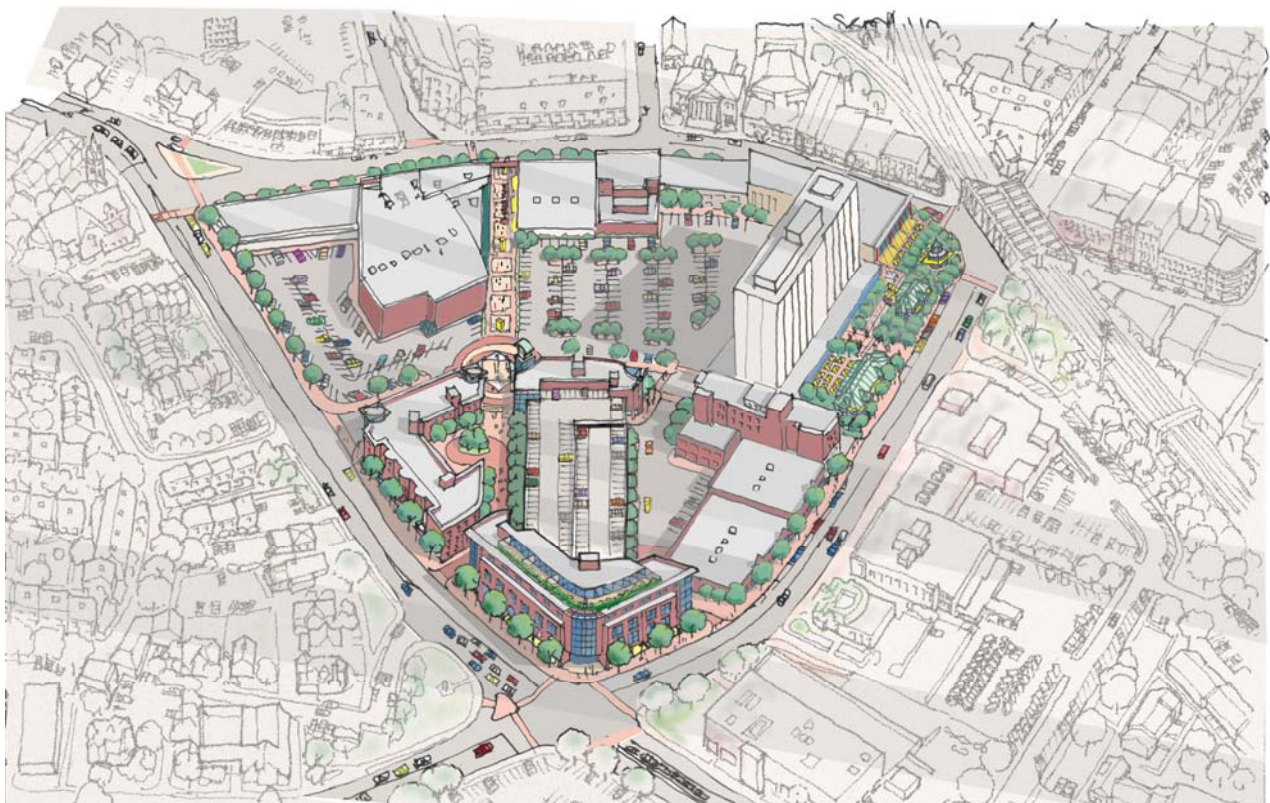


Figure 4.2 Phase I Cross-Sections

**Figure 4.3 Aerial View of the Existing Webster Block**



**Figure 4.4 Aerial View of Phase I**





**Figure 4.5 - View of Webster Way Today**



**Figure 4.6 – Webster Way – Possible Future**



### **Buildings A, B and D**

Buildings A, B and D are housing and retail sites that would be developed as part of Phase I. Building A is shown as a condominium complex of up to 7.5 stories and 80 dwelling units with ground floor restaurant or retail use located on the prominent gateway corner of MLK drive and Washington Street. Visitors to SoNo coming from I-95 via Fairfield Avenue have a clear view of this corner. Additional height is recommended here, to respond to this special location. Figures 4.7 and 4.8 are views of the corner of Washington Street and MLK Drive as it appears today, and how it might appear at the conclusion of Phase I.

In Figure 4.8, Building B appears immediately to the left of Building A. Building B is shown as a four-story rental complex of 72 dwelling units with bow-front bays and street front entrances. This building is U-shaped in plan, forming a courtyard with Garage No. 1. Both Buildings A and B are located on top of the expanded first floor of Garage No. 1. As a result, Building B will have a rusticated, landscaped base that will emerge gradually as MLK Drive slopes down to Franklin Place. Building B will have a public lobby at garage level on the corner of MLK Drive and Franklin Place (see Map 4.2). Building D is located across the front of Garage No. 1 along Franklin Place. This is shown as a four-story condominium building with ground floor retail containing up to 10 condominium units. Part of the building would be joined to the elevator tower and lobby for Garage No. 1. A view of how this building might look appears immediately to the left of Webster Way in Figure 4.6. Maps 4.2 and 4.3 show how the first floor and a typical floor of Building D might look.

### **Reconfigured Surface Lots**

Two major surface lots would remain following the completion of Phase I. These lots would be reconfigured to reflect changes brought about by Franklin Place, Webster Way and Webster Plaza. The layout of the two lots is shown on Map 4.1. The southerly lot would contain approximately 176 spaces, while the northerly lot would contain about 115 spaces. If desired, all spaces in the surface lots could be hourly spaces. Permit spaces could be confined to Garage No. 1 and the Clay Block lot.

The final actual configuration of these two lots will depend upon many factors including the management practices currently being put into effect by the City of Norwalk's parking management contractor.

### **Washington Street Public Plaza**

Figure 4.9 shows the proposed plan for improvements to the public plaza at the corner of North Main and Washington Streets (the Washington Street Public Plaza). In this plan, much of the existing landscaping is pre

**Figure 4.7 - View of MLK Drive & Washington Street Today**



**Figure 4.8 – MLK Drive & Washington Street – Possible Future**



served in tact and repaired where needed. The major changes include the following:

- A new restaurant opening on to the plaza from the ground floor of Avrick Furniture
- A cylindrical information, news or light food service kiosk at the corner of North Main and Washington Streets
- A larger (approximately 1,200 square feet) light food-service greenhouse café structure to the west of the kiosk.
- A restaurant-size (2,000-3,000 square feet) glass winter garden structure at the corner of Franklin Place and Washington Street.

The restaurant opening from Avrick Furniture, the kiosk and the two glass winter garden structures are envisioned as privately built and operated facilities that would provide and maintain moveable tables and seating on the plaza, and which would also be partially responsible for maintenance of the plaza. Existing fixed benches would be removed.

Figure 4.10 shows a view of the plaza as it exists today, and Figure 4.11 is a perspective sketch showing what the plaza might be like after improvements are put in place. Figures 4.12 and 4.13 show similar structures in the Boston area, and illustrate the effect of moveable tables and chairs in “populating” an otherwise empty-looking space.

Seasonal programming of the plaza should also be considered, including possible relocation of the Farmer’s Market that is currently held near the waterfront, as well as other special events programming.

The main concept is to create an active and inviting place beyond the bridge on Washington Street that beckons the visitor over to discover what is happening on the other side of the tracks. The City’s current plans for lighting the railroad bridge will help considerably in this aim. Because the space was originally build under certain commitments to the U.S. Park Service and the State of Connecticut, any land used by the proposed structures will have to be replaced as public plaza space elsewhere. New Webster Way and Webster Plaza should be able to fulfill this commitment.

**Washington Street and Madison Street**

In order to maximize parking opportunities and enliven the north side of Washington Street, the plan proposes adding on-street parking to the north side of Washington Street. Up to 21 new spaces might be created in this location (see Map 4.1).

Phase 1 of the plan also proposes the reorganization of Madison Street to maximize parking. Madison is shown redesignated as a one-way street westbound with diagonal parking provided along the left-hand side.

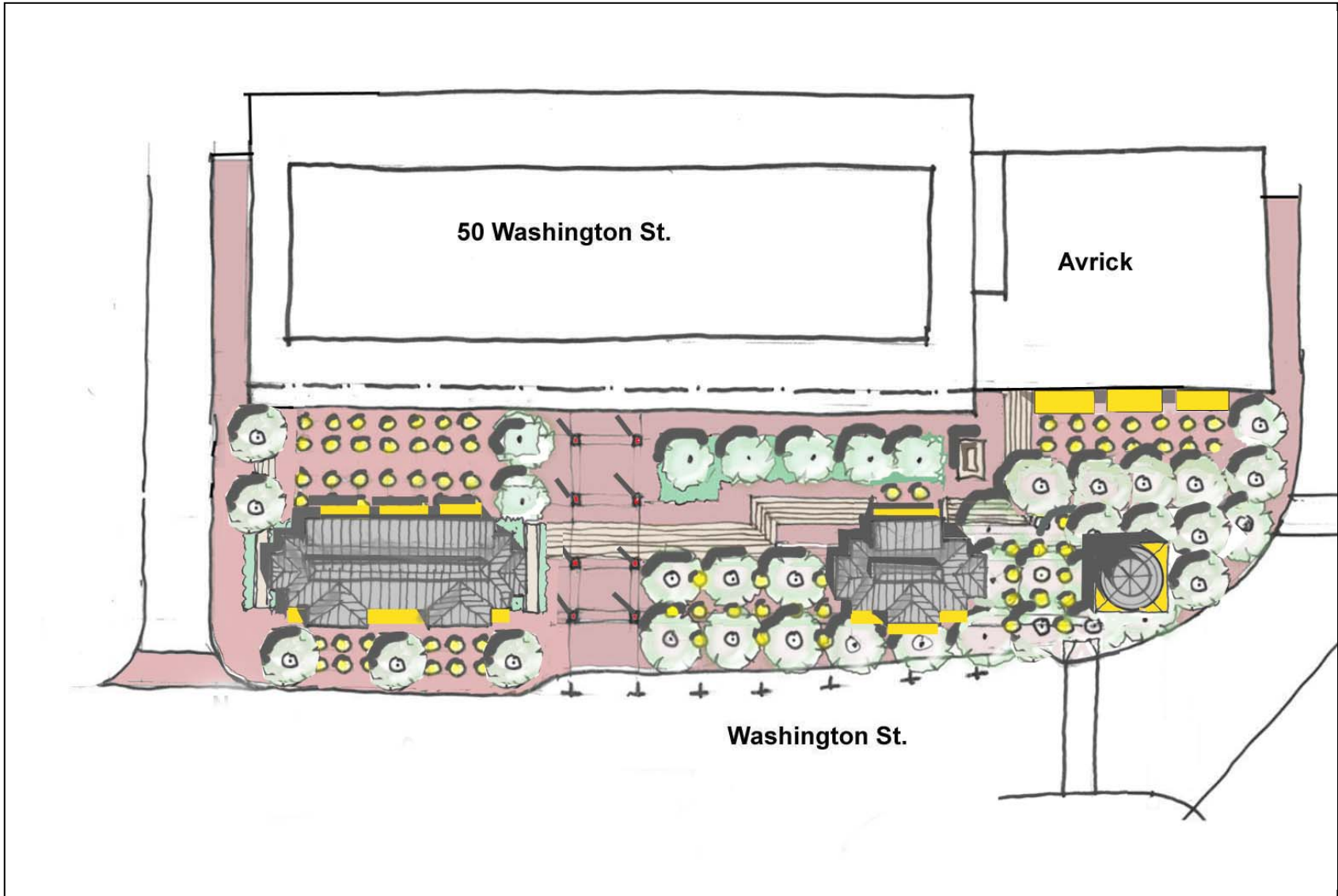


Figure 4.9 – Plan of Proposed Improvements to the Washington Street Public Plaza

**Figure 4.10 – View of Washington Street Public Plaza Today**



**Figure 4.11 – Washington Street Public Plaza – Possible Future**



**Figure 4.12 – Similar Structures**



**Figure 4.13 – Movable Tables & Chairs**

No structural changes are believed to be required at this scale, only signing and striping should be required. A detailed design at a larger scale will be needed to confirm this, however.

**Construction**

Table 4.4 presents the parking situation during construction of Phase I. During this period, there is estimated to be a shortfall of approximately 243 spaces that will have to be accommodated elsewhere. It is assumed that the facilities put in place prior to construction will include the north and south surface lots and the expanded parking on Washington and Madison Streets.

**Table 4.4 – Construction Phase Parking**

<b>Parking Area</b>	<b>No. of Spaces</b>
North Lot	115
South Lot	176
Washington Street	21
Madison Street	57
Total	369
Existing Webster Lot	612
<b>Total to be Replaced Off-Site</b>	<b>243</b>

Possibilities for accommodating the shortfall include the following:

**Washington & Madison Streets**

Implement on-street parking on the north side of Washington Street, re-designate Madison Street as one-way, and restripe to accommodate diagonal parking

**Webster Surface Lots.**

Valet parking or using “autolifts” or “stackers” (hydraulic devices that allow double stacking of cars) could provide additional spaces during weekday, evening and weekend peaks.

**Clay Block**

Valet parking and/or the use of stackers on the Clay block lot for permit spaces could add up to 20 permit spaces during weekday peaks. Use of this lot could also be considered for transient parking on weekends and evenings.

### **South Norwalk Railroad Station Parking Garage and Overflow Lot**

On weekday evenings and weekends, the parking garage at the South Norwalk Train Station could be used as an alternate parking location, provided adequate signage and an a good informational program are put into place prior to construction. A shuttle might also be considered.

### **Maritime Center Garage**

Depending on how this garage is observed to operate after it has opened, it may or may not be a possibility for accommodating some of the parking shortfall from the Webster Lot during construction.

### **Haviland Deck**

Consider adding permit spaces to upper level. Valet parking could be considered for the lower level during the day for additional permit spaces. The South Norwalk Parking Study showed that the upper level of this deck is underutilized on the surveyed weekday in 1999 (40-60% occupied). The lower level was observed to be 70-80% occupied during surveyed weekday. The upper level might accommodate up to 50 permit spaces. Valet parking on the lower level might achieve up to 24 spaces

### **Other Off-Site Lots**

A survey could be made of potential off site lots that might be made available for use by Webster Lot users in connection with a regular shuttle service.

## ***4.3 Phase I Parking & Development Financials***

This section provides an overview of the financial analysis supporting the Proposed Phase I plan, including the following:

- Parking Proforma
- Development Analysis
- Financial Summary

### ***Parking Garage Proforma***

In order to provide a baseline for determining the impact of supportive development, a preliminary proforma was run for Garage No. 1 as a 750-space stand-alone facility. This proforma is summarized in Tables 4.5 through 4.7. Only an abstract of the full proforma is contained in this section. The complete proforma can be found in Appendix B of this report.

The tables show projected operating expenses, financing costs and revenues for Garage No. 1 as if it were built as a stand-alone facility without



**Table 4.5 – Garage No. 1 – Stand Alone Cost Assumptions**

Parking Type	No. Spaces	Cost per Space	Total
Below Grade Structure	240	\$22,000	\$5,280,000
Above Grade Structure	510	\$16,000	\$8,160,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>750</b>		<b>\$13,440,000</b>

Note: Includes both hard and soft costs

**Table 4.6 – Garage No. 1 Stand Alone Estimate of Annual Operating Expenses**

Expense Category	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Salaries	\$225,000	\$231,750	\$238,703	\$245,864	\$253,239
Repair & Maintenance	\$78,200	\$79,496	\$80,831	\$82,206	\$83,622
Other Operational Expenses	\$65,000	\$66,950	\$68,959	\$71,027	\$73,158
<b>Grand Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$368,200</b>	<b>\$378,196</b>	<b>\$388,492</b>	<b>\$399,097</b>	<b>\$410,020</b>
Cost per space (750) per year	\$491	\$504	\$518	\$532	\$547

**Table 4.7 – Garage No. 1 Stand Alone Financial Summary**

Year of Operation	Estimated Income	Estimated Expense	Debt Service Payment	Profit or (Shortfall)
1	\$1,245,000	368,200	942,827	(66,027)
2	\$1,245,000	378,196	942,827	(76,023)
3	\$1,245,000	388,492	942,827	(86,319)
4	\$1,245,000	399,097	942,827	(96,924)
5	\$1,571,625	410,020	942,827	218,778

any supporting development. The effect of the supporting development is summarized in the following sections. The proforma analysis assumes a 750-car garage with 240 below-grade spaces. Table 4.5 shows the assumed development cost per spaces including both hard and soft costs.

Note that in the financial analyses contained in this section, debt service has been shown as a level annual payment over a twenty-five-year period assuming a 5 percent interest rate. In actuality, final bond financing may result in a stream of uneven payments. Any fluctuations in actual annual payment levels will depend on the final strategy adopted for financing the parking facilities analyzed in this section.

The fact of the matter is that debt service payments related to the development of parking garages can be structured many different ways. In the end, structuring debt service payments is usually driven by the financial needs and restrictions of the respective entity responsible for the debt service.

For example, some municipalities or authorities may not have the initial revenues required to make an annual interest and principal payment. In cases such as this you can structure the debt service so that over the first few years only interest payments on the money borrowed are made. As a result, when interest and principal payments are made they will be relatively larger since the period of time payment is applied to principal is less. This method is referred to as back-end loading the debt service.

Conversely, if a municipality, authority or other owner/operator is capable of making principal and interest payments from year one, they may want to front-end load the debt service so that more money is paid during the first years of the debt service resulting in lesser payments as the loan comes to an end, thus freeing up revenues to build additional facilities as time requires.

Since the precise strategy for the Webster Block parking facilities is as yet undecided, for purposes of illustration in this preliminary phase of this project, the debt service has been laid out as consistent annual principal and interest payments to show what the financing looks like generally. It is also important to remember that the longer payment is deferred, the more interest will be paid.

The stand-alone analysis for Garage No. 1 shows that annual revenues of between \$1.2 million and \$1.5 million would be required to support the construction and operation of such a garage if no supporting development were to be provided. Because of this expense, it is necessary to examine the potential ameliorating effect of using supportive development to re-

duce the required public charges needed to build and operate Garage No. 1.

### **Development Analysis**

The following section describes the analyses used to derive the residual value of housing and retail development associated with Phase I that can be applied to the capital cost of Garage No.1 and associated improvements. The analyses below demonstrate the programs' financial viability, as well as the level of potentially supportable contributions that they can make toward public improvements in the Study Area.

### **Market Support Issues**

The development programs contained in this section seek to capitalize on the development opportunities that have been found likely to prove viable from the perspective of the private development community.

Given the Study Area's characteristics and size, residential projects offer the strongest opportunities for new development. Where appropriately located, the ground-floor levels of residential buildings can also contain retail space.

Such projects will derive support from ongoing growth among high-income households in the Stamford/Norwalk PMSA, demonstrated success among recently built market-rate projects in the area, and the Study Area's highly competitive location convenient to highway and rail transportation, employment centers, and the urban amenities offered by the South Norwalk historic district.

Among different residential development niches, the apartment market has maintained high occupancy levels despite weak economic conditions and the introduction of approximately 1,500 new market-rate units over the last three years. Given the Study Area's strategic location and the area's favorable demographic growth patterns, this niche should offer a feasible development alternative.

The condominium market has been characterized by rapid price appreciation and the successful absorption of a limited number of recent projects. Given the strong growth among upper-income empty-nester households, the Study Area's strong location, and the scarcity of urban condominium options throughout Fairfield County, the Study Area should offer an attractive location for condominium development.

Affordable housing units will also prove viable while serving a city-wide need to provide housing affordable to residents and local workers engaged

in a variety of occupations. Such units would be incorporated as portions of market-rate projects.

**Summary of Financial Analyses**

Table 4.8 summarizes the prospective development programs for Phase I and the financial contributions that they can make toward the various public improvement costs (e.g., structured parking, landscaping, other infrastructure) that would be necessary to support this overall redevelopment effort.

In generating these figures, our methodology rests on the following processes and assumptions:

- *Lease rates and operating expenses* reflect findings regarding general prevailing market conditions, as well as adjustments to account for the character and quality of the envisioned buildings.
- *Cost estimates* are based on R. S. Means cost estimating models, adjusted to account for the character and features to be included in the envisioned buildings. “Soft” development cost estimates reflect reasonable assumptions based on our knowledge of generally applicable development costs and processes.
- In accounting for *land costs*, the assumption for buildings located on parcels owned by the City is that, while the developer bears no initial cost burden, the developer’s redevelopment on such parcels will generate increased “residual values” that the developer will make available to the City for reinvestment in public improvements. Where development programs are envisioned on privately owned properties, the value of the existing property has been deducted<sup>1</sup> from the generated project value, with the remaining value potentially available to offset public improvement costs.
- Public parking will be located in structured garages.

**Basic Process:**

In gauging residual values that can be applied to public improvements, for rental apartment buildings, the method adopted proceeds in three basic steps (see Figure 4.14):

---

<sup>1</sup> Private property costs are estimated at the City’s assessed values multiplied by 1.6 to account for likely sale values. Where no assessed building value is provided, as for Property E, our analysis assumes a reasonable retail space value of \$200/square foot.

- Step One involves the construction of a model reflecting achievable lease revenues and expenses, which are applied to calculate each project’s projected net operating income (NOI).
- Step Two capitalizes this income stream, applying capitalization rates that would be acceptable to most investors. Based on interviews, a knowledge of market transactions and survey findings prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers’ Korpacz and Real Estate Research Corporation, investors will generally seek returns in the range of 6.0 to 10.0 percent for institutional investment grade rental apartment properties, with an average return of approximately 8.0 percent. Allowing for this level of return to the developer, application of this rate to the projected net operating income provides an estimate of the project’s value to the developer.
- Step Three deducts projected development costs (and acquisition costs, where the development parcel must be acquired from a private entity) from the estimated project value; the difference, or “residual,” represents the amount available to pay for the costs of parking and other public improvements.

For condominium buildings, the method follows a somewhat simpler derivation of value (see Figure 4.15):

- Step One involves the construction of a model reflecting achievable sales prices and net proceeds from sales.
- Step Two deducts the projected development costs – including acceptable developer profits of 15 to 18 percent of net sales (depending on the project size) – from the net sales; the difference represents the estimated residual project value.

Affordable housing comprises approximately 10 percent of the dwelling units included in Phase I. For rental properties, such units are allocated among the various unit types (one-bedroom, two-bedroom, etc.) in proportion with the market-rate unit mix; rents are calculated as 30 percent of the gross income of a family making 80 percent of the statewide median income (adjusted for family size). Condominium properties built on publicly owned properties do not include affordable units; the 10 percent allocations are added to the affordable components required in the rental properties. Condominium properties built on privately owned properties include 10 percent affordable components. Unlike with rental properties, affordable units are all one-bedroom units; maximum prices are calculated as those affordable to households earning 80 percent of the statewide median income (adjusted for family size).

Figure 4.14 – Rental Project Flow Chart

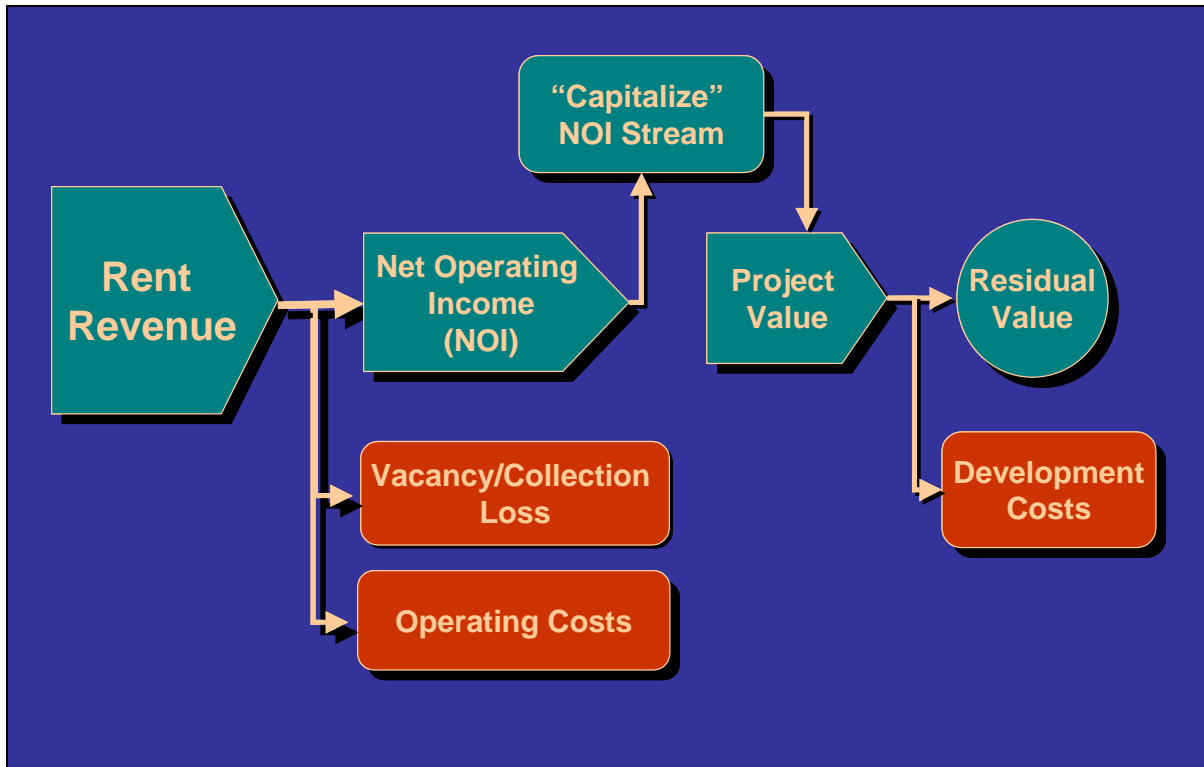
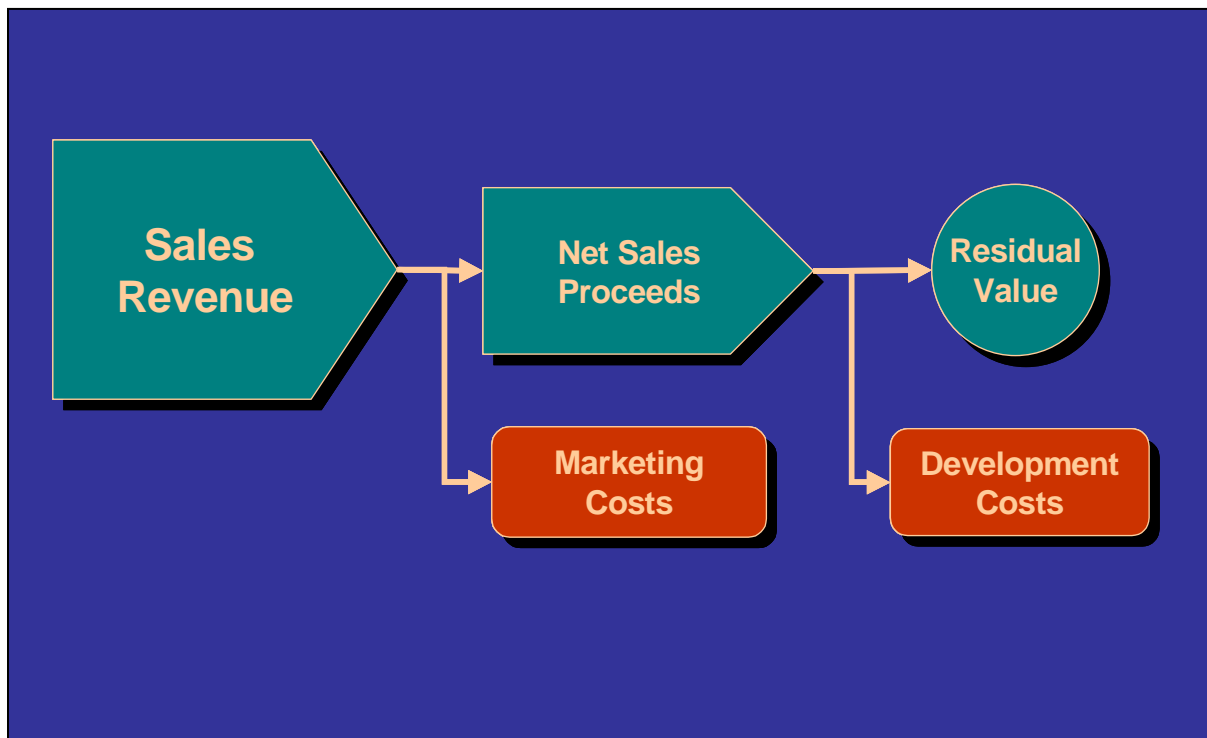


Figure 4.15 – Condominium Project Flow Chart



**Findings:**

As shown below, all of the envisioned development projects would generate positive values that can be available to fund public improvements.

**Table 4.8 - Summary of Phase I Developments and Residual Values**

<b>Properties</b>	<b>A, B &amp; D</b>
Ownership:	Public
Primary Use	Residential
Type	Condo & Rental
Floors	4 to 7
Total Units	162
Affordable Units	16
Other Use	1st-Flr Retail
Retail Sq. Ft.	9,000
Bldg Size (approx. - may vary)	205,000
<b>Project Value<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>\$43,967,619</b>
Less Development Cost <sup>2</sup>	(\$35,817,969)
Less Private Land Acquisition	\$0
<b>Residual Value (Avail. for Public Costs)</b>	<b>\$8,151,181</b>
Potential Contribution/Dwelling Unit	\$50,316

<sup>1</sup> based on annual developer return of 8 percent for rental apartment buildings, based on acceptable rates as of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2003.

<sup>2</sup> includes developer profit for condominium sales.

As shown, after allowing for acceptable developer returns, the proposed buildings would support potential financial contributions averaging roughly \$50,000 per residential dwelling unit. Differences among these supportable contributions are attributable to a broad range of factors, including the following:

- Property D is a relatively small condominium building that would generate per-unit contributions of roughly \$45,000 per unit. Given the relatively low heights of these buildings, they would feature relatively lower-cost wood-frame construction.
- Property B would also feature wood-frame construction, but this rental apartment property would feature affordable components that would slightly reduce the projects’ residual values.
- Property A would generate the highest per-unit contributions. The relatively high contribution generated by this project is the result of a number of factors, including its retail component and the lack of

value reductions attributable to private land costs, affordable units, etc.

- Retail Contributions: In addition to the residual values generated by proposed residential buildings, the retail space in the garage and on the Washington Street Public Plaza would generate additional funds toward public improvements.

**Table 4.9 - Residual Value of Washington Plaza Retail Structures**

Retail Space	Public Plaza
Space	4,500
Lease/sq. ft.	\$20.60
Gross Possible Revenue	\$92,700
Less Vacancy @ 10%	(\$9,270)
Reserve	
Mgt.	
Less Operating Expenses	(\$1,622)
NOI	\$81,808
Acceptable Capitalization Rate	11%
Value (rounded)	\$744,000
Less TI	\$524,000
soft costs	\$108,170
Less Development Costs (rounded)	(\$632,000)
Residual Value	\$112,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$112,000</b>

The residual value of the glass structures on the plaza would be used to offset the cost of public environment improvements on the plaza – an estimated total cost of approximately \$178,000.

At this time, it should be noted that all programs and calculations are ultimately subject to each developer’s preferred programs, and will be refined and adjusted accordingly. Nonetheless, in deriving these values, the prototypical proformas below (Tables 4.10 and 4.11) show in greater detail the general methodology used to generate the values, costs and residual values summarized above. Note that these proformas do not refer to any specific project contained in the plan, but are included for illustrative purposes only.



**Table 4.10 - Illustrative Rental project Proforma**

<b>Number of Units</b>	<b>50</b>
Unit Types	1 & 2 Bedroom
Average Size	950 Sq. Ft.
Average Monthly Rent	\$1,985
<b>Potential Gross Rental Income</b>	<b>\$1,191,000</b>
Other Revenue	\$15,000
<b>Potential Total Gross Income</b>	<b>\$1,206,000</b>
Vacancy & Collection Loss	(\$75,375)
Operating Expenses	(\$365,000)
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>\$765,625</b>
<b>Project Value (based on 8% Capitalization Rate)</b>	<b>\$9,570,313</b>
Development Cost	(\$7,468,750)
<b>Residual Value</b>	<b>\$2,101,563</b>
Per Unit	\$42,031

**Table 4.11 - Illustrative Condominium Project Proforma**

Unit Type	No. Units	Sq. Ft.	Price/Sq. Ft.	Unit Price	Total
1 Bedroom	10	875	\$270	\$236,250	\$2,362,500
1 Bedroom Plus Den	10	1,050	\$300	\$315,000	\$3,150,000
2 Bedroom	30	1,250	\$300	\$375,000	\$11,250,000
<b>Total/Avg.</b>	<b>50</b>			<b>\$335,250</b>	\$16,762,500
Marketing Costs (5%)					(\$838,150)
<b>Net Sales Proceeds</b>					<b>\$15,924,350</b>
Development Costs (including developer profits)					(\$13,500,000)
<b>Residual Value</b>					<b>\$2,424,350</b>
Per Unit					\$48,487

**Development Summary**

This section summarizes the impact of the residential and retail projects described above on the public infrastructure aspects of Phase I – in other words Garage No. 1 and associated public improvements.

**Public Cost**

Table 4.12 presents a cost summary of the public infrastructure improvements associated with Phase I. These costs include:

- Garage No. 1
- Franklin Place
- Webster Way, Webster Plaza and Other pedestrian plaza and service area improvements
- Surface parking and service ways
- Major utility relocations (45” sanitary sewer, 24-duct telephone bank and 8” intermediate pressure gas line, electrical transformer)
- Traffic Signals
- Signage
- Construction phase parking
- Other miscellaneous elements

As can be seen from the table, the total cost for these elements is more than \$18 million. Thus, not only the cost of the garage must be recouped, but also the cost of these other outlays. The Washington Street Public Plaza has been treated separately and the calculations for it appear in the immediately preceding section.

**Table 4.12 - Phase I Public Cost Summary**

Item	Cost
Parking Garage No. 1	\$13,440,000
New Roadway	\$962,644
Pedestrian Way & Plaza Areas	\$1,177,801
Surface Parking Reconfiguration	\$560,000
Service Roads	\$367,688
Utility Relocations	\$928,038
Traffic Signals	\$187,500
Signage	\$250,000
Construction Phase Parking	\$250,000
Miscellaneous	\$200,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$18,323,670</b>

It is proposed that the above costs be covered by a combination of the following methods:

- Bond financing backed by garage revenues
- Non-municipal public funding sources
- The residual value of Phase I developments

**Supportive Development**

The residual value of supportive development may be realized by selecting a developer for the entire Phase I package through a competitive process. The developer could then build the project through a developer agreement with the City and the Norwalk Parking Authority. Under the agreement, the developer may be able to make use of Parking Authority issued bond financing for part of the project, and will receive one dedicated parking space per dwelling unit of constructed housing when the project is finished. At completion the garage will be conveyed to the Norwalk Parking Authority while all or most of the public improvements on City-owned land (such as Webster Way, Webster Plaza, Franklin Place, etc.) will remain under City ownership. The Washington Street Public Plaza can be developed separately under an agreement with a separate developer selected in a separate process.

Table 4.13 summarizes the effect of supportive development on the projected total capital and operating costs associated with the Phase I parking structure and related public improvements. As can be seen from the table, applying the residual value of proposed developments A, B and D substantially reduces the total capital cost of parking and other public infrastructure improvements that will have to be recouped through parking fees. Note that the City of Norwalk is also pursuing other sources of public funds that might be applied toward the construction of Phase I. Reflecting this possibility, a projected figure of \$2.5 million in “other non-municipal public funding” has been applied against the total public cost of Phase I.

**Table 4.13 - Phase I Development Summary**

Development Cost	Amount
Total Public Cost	\$18,323,670
Contribution of A,B & D	(\$8,149,650)
Other Non-Municipal Public	(\$2,500,000)
Net Amount to be Financed	\$7,674,020
Annual Debt Service	\$538,344
Annual Operating Cost (Year 3)	\$388,492
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>	<b>\$926,836</b>

The projected total annual cost of \$926,836 that would have to be recaptured through parking fees compares favorably with the nearly \$1.3 million projected annual cost of a 750-car stand-alone facility displayed in Table 4.7.

**Alternative Scenario Testing**

During the public process several questions were raised concerning the validity of comparing the proposed development-supported Phase I garage with a 750-car stand-alone facility. Without the proposed additional development, a smaller, less expensive garage would be capable of satisfying the projected shortfall of parking on the Webster Lot. In theory, such a garage might be inexpensive enough to obviate the need for supportive development altogether.

To address this question, an alternative scenario with a smaller 400-space stand-alone parking garage was developed and tested. The 400-space figure meets the 774-space Webster Lot baseline and achieves the 100-car surplus provided by Phase I while replacing approximately 150 spaces that

**Table 4.14 – Capital Cost Comparison: Phase I vs. Stand-Alone Facility**

<b>Capital Cost</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>		
	<b>Phase I</b>	<b>400 Car Garage</b>	<b>% Difference</b>
Garage	\$13,440,000	\$6,400,000	
Site Improvements	\$4,883,670	\$3,186,504	65%
<b>Total Capital Cost</b>	<b>\$18,323,670</b>	<b>\$9,586,504</b>	<b>52%</b>
Contribution of Private Development	(\$8,149,650)	\$0	
Non-Municipal Public Funds	(\$2,500,000)	(\$2,500,000)	
<b>Net Cost</b>	<b>\$7,674,020</b>	<b>\$7,086,504</b>	<b>92%</b>
Total Number of Spaces	750	400	
Dedicated Residential Spaces	(162)	0	
<b>Net Total Spaces</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>Capital Cost/Net Space</b>	<b>\$13,051</b>	<b>\$17,716</b>	<b>136%</b>

**Table 4.15 – Operations Cost Comparison: Phase I vs. Stand-Alone Facility**

<b>Operations Cost</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>		
	<b>Phase I</b>	<b>400 Car Garage</b>	<b>% Difference</b>
Annual Estimated Operations Cost (year 3)	\$388,492	\$372,897	96%
Contribution of Dedicated Residential Spaces	(\$38,880)	\$0	
<b>Net Estimated Annual Operations Cost</b>	<b>\$349,612</b>	<b>\$372,897</b>	<b>107%</b>
Total Spaces	750	400	
Dedicated Residential Spaces	(162)	0	
<b>Net Spaces</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>Operations Cost/Net Space</b>	<b>\$595</b>	<b>\$932</b>	<b>157%</b>

would be lost to the footprint of the new garage. It was assumed that the same \$2.5 million in non-municipal public funds would also be available to the smaller garage. Additionally, a significant portion of the site costs associated with Phase I would also be applicable to the 400-car garage scenario. These would include: utility relocation/reconstruction, traffic signals, signage, surface parking reconfiguration, roadway improvements, landscaping, etc.

The results of this analysis are displayed in tables 4.14 and 4.15. Surprisingly, as the tables demonstrate, both the capital and operations cost per space are significantly higher for the smaller, unsupported garage. There are several reasons for this outcome. First, the smaller garage still has to carry the burden of almost two-thirds of the site improvement costs associated with Phase I. When those costs are taken into account, the contribution of supportive development to Phase I nearly equalizes the total capital cost of the two scenarios. Second, even after subtracting the dedicated residential spaces in Phase I, the total capital cost is spread over a larger number of spaces in Phase I than in the 400-car scenario – reducing the total capital cost to be borne by each space, and, hence the revenues required per space. Essentially, the added development creates a larger pool of spaces and a larger pool of paying users for those spaces, reducing the cost of an individual space.

Lastly, the operations costs of a 400-car garage are not significantly less than for a 750-car facility. Again, those costs are spread over a larger number of spaces, with the costs defrayed by a larger number of users. In this case, the dedicated residential spaces are also paying a part of the operations cost, thereby reducing the expense for other spaces in the garage.

### **Conclusion**

The above analyses have been conducted at a planning level only, and final results may vary. Because of this, the analysis contained in this report must be confirmed by more detailed engineering and cost estimating, leading to a formal financial study of the project as the plan moves forward.

However, it can be concluded that, at a planning level, and within the confines of the assumptions indicated, the proposed mixed-use Phase I plan presents a parking solution for the Webster Block that will be significantly less expensive for the user than any stand-alone facility. Furthermore, any proposed expansion of the parking supply in the Webster Lot will entail significant cost, and hence higher parking rates. However, the combined development approach recommended in this report will result in lower fees than any stand-alone approach that meets the same programmatic requirements.

Moreover, the introduction of new housing and retail elements into the Webster Block will have a far more beneficial effect on SoNo than the addition of parking alone. An expanded residential population in the district will make SoNo a safer and livelier neighborhood with an “around-the-clock” population. It will make SoNo more than just a retail or restaurant destination, it will make it a vital, living part of the City with a new community of people who will have a major stake in the future of this part of Norwalk.

## **4.4 Phase II – Possible Future Development**

While Phase I might be an end-state in itself, the plan allows for the possibility of further infill development in the future. Maps 4.4 –4.6 present illustrative plans of what a possible Phase II development of the Webster Block might look like, if Norwalk were to decide to proceed with further development. Figure 4.18 presents two hypothetical cross-sections through the project. Figure 4.19 shows the Webster Block as viewed from the air today, and Figure 4.20 shows how it might appear in the future after completion of a possible full-build Phase II development.

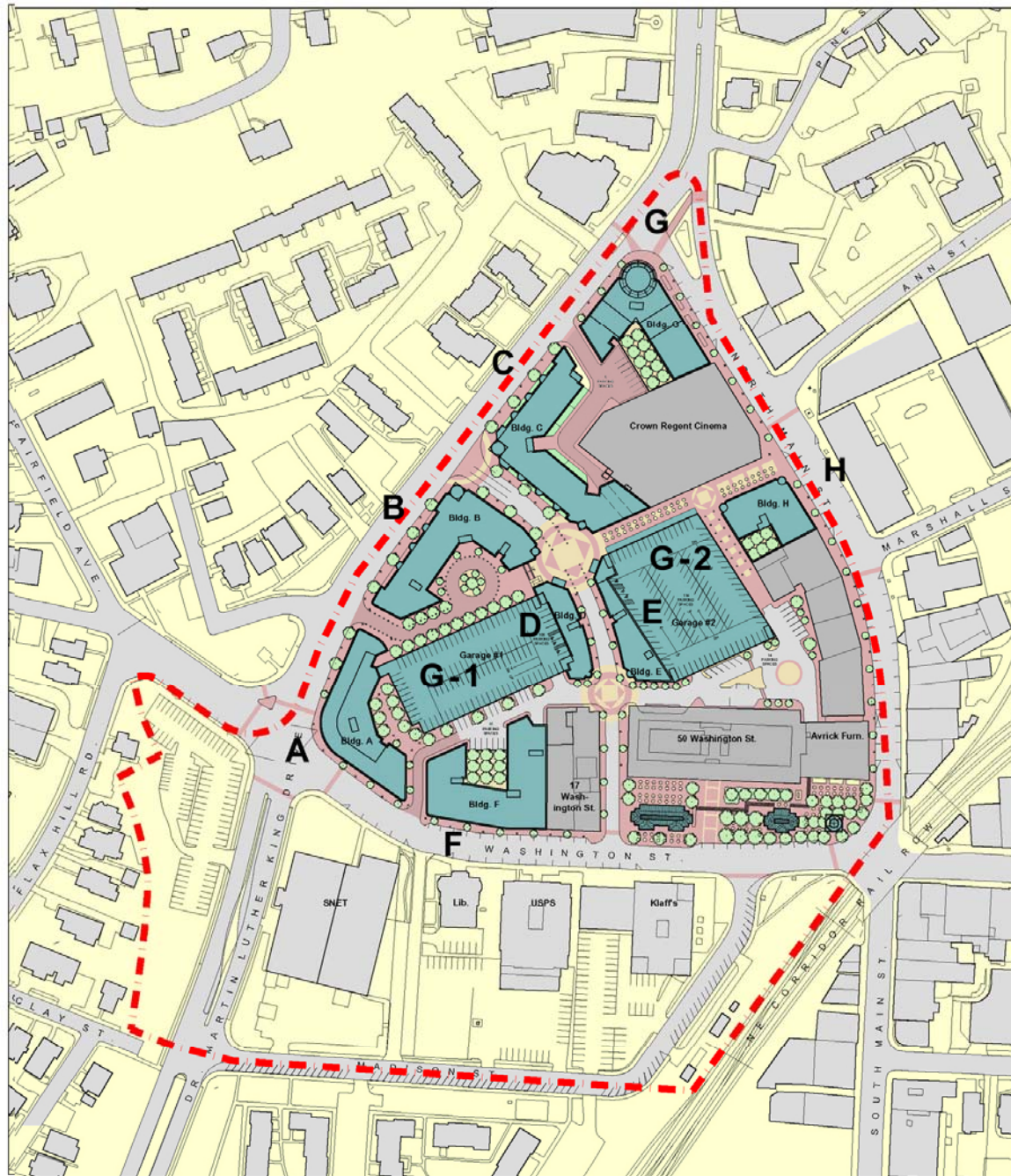
### **Phase II – Illustrative Plan**

Map 4.4 and the accompanying figures show the following possible program elements that might be included in a Phase II package:

- Garage No. 2 (G-2)
- Buildings C and E
- One or possibly more than one of Buildings F, G or H
- Service ways and courtyards as required to support the above

Phase II is envisioned as primarily driven by private sector investment. The package will include Garage No. 2 and Buildings C and E on City-owned land, but private investment in the form of the development and involvement of one or more of the privately owned sites described above, or a long term (10-year minimum) lease commitment for a significant portion of the spaces in the garage from the private sector will be required to complete the project.

Table 4.15 provides a breakdown of the illustrative Phase II program of development by site and program element. Table 4.16 summarizes the total development proposed for Phase II compared with development in the overall Webster Lot service area. Table 4.17 analyzes parking demand and supply for Phase II. As can be seen the Phase II plan that is illustrated here results in a slight overall surplus of about 18 spaces. This amount may be adjusted upward or downward by changes to the final development program and the size of the proposed parking garage.

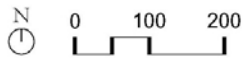
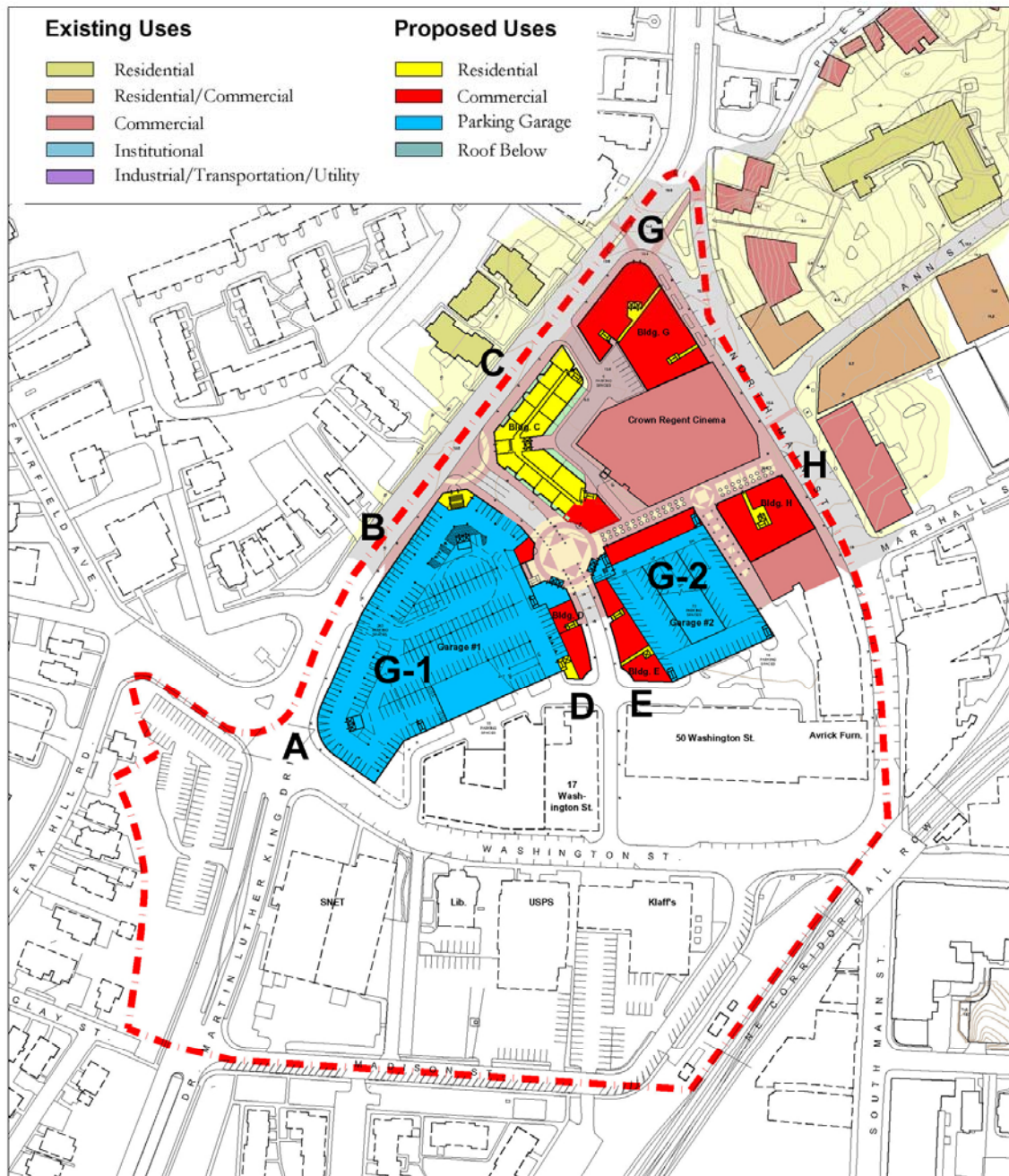


Map 4.4 - Phase 2 - Roof Plan  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study



SEA Consultants Inc.  
Desman Associates  
Bonz & Company Inc.





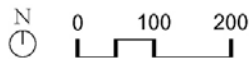
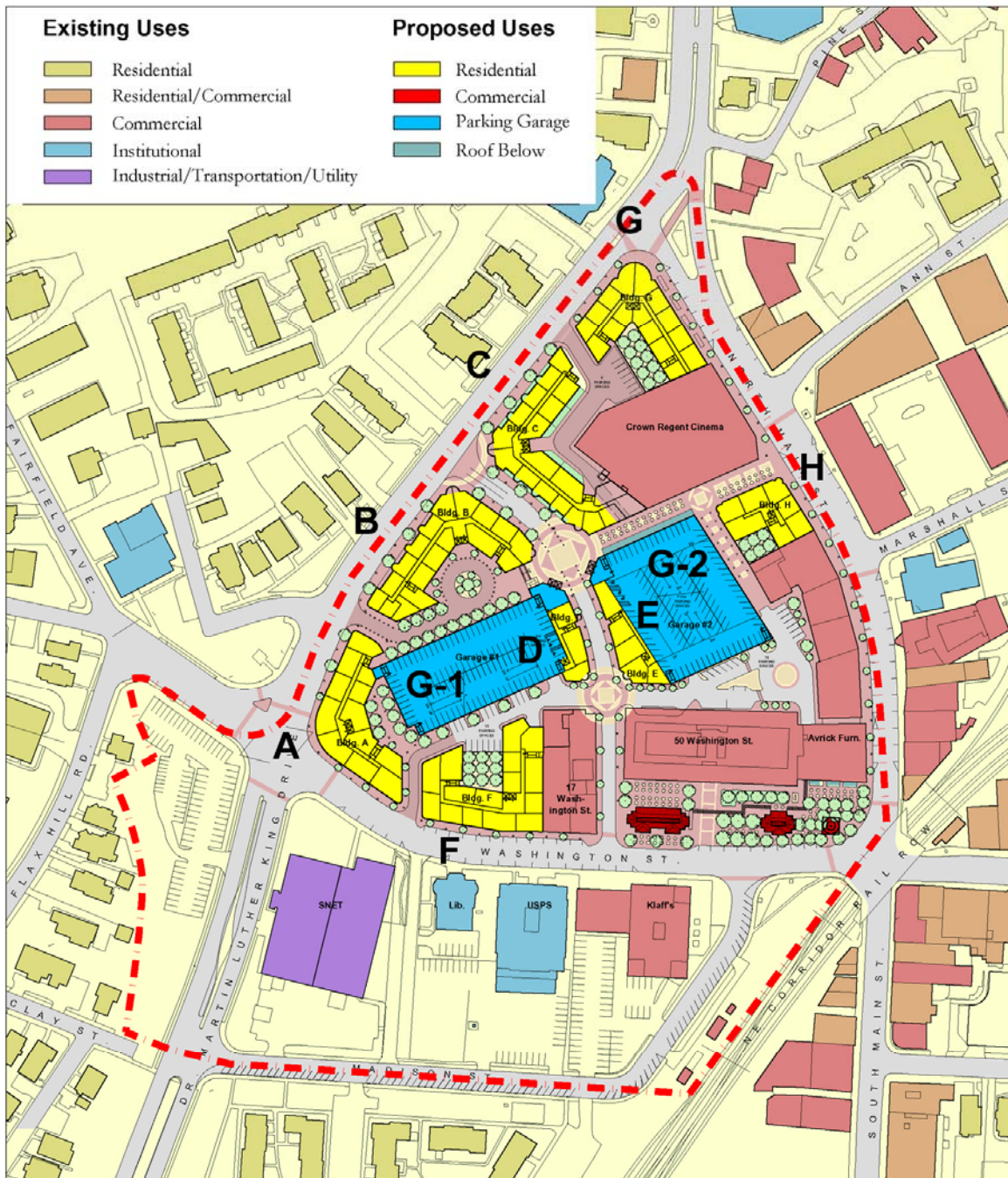
Map 4.5 - Phase 2 - Level 1  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study



SEA Consultants Inc.  
Desman Associates  
Bonz & Company Inc.







**Map 4.6 - Phase 2 - Typical Floor**  
Webster Street Block Planning & Urban Design Study

**SEA** S E A Consultants Inc.  
Desman Associates  
Bonz & Company Inc.

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**Table 4.16 – Possible Phase II Development Program by Element**

Building	No. Stories	Dwelling Units			Retail	Restaurant
		Market Rate	Affordable	Total	GSF	GSF
Building A	7.5	80	0	80	0	6,000
Building B	4	59	13	72	0	0
Building C	4	59	12	71	3,600	0
Building D	4	10	0	10	3,000	0
Building E	4	15	0	15	4,800	0
Building F	6	63	7	70	20,000	0
Building G	7.5	45	5	50	15,000	0
Building H	4	19	2	21	8,000	0
Garage 1	5/bsmt	0	0	0	1,000	0
Garage 2	4/bsmt	0	0	0	0	3,900
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>350</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>55,400</b>	<b>9,900</b>
Less Existing		0	0	0	42,000	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>350</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>13,400</b>	<b>9,900</b>

**Table 4.17 – Possible Phase II Development Summary**

Land Use	Units	Existing	Proposed New	Total	Percent Increase
Office	GSF	231,000	0	231,000	0%
Retail	GSF	178,209	13,400	191,609	8%
Restaurant	GSF	58,292	9,900	68,192	17%
Residential	DU's	46	389	435	846%
Cinema/Theater	Seats	2,200	0	2,200	0%
Gov't Institutional	GSF	21,972	0	21,972	0%
Museum	GSF	11,768	0	11,768	0%

**Table 4.18 – Possible Phase II Parking Demand & Supply**

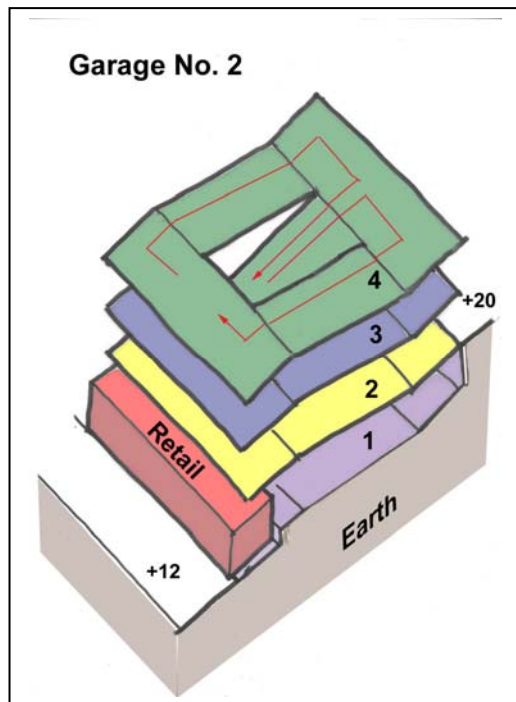
New Land Use	Unit Type	Net Units	Demand Factor	Parking Demand
Office	SF/GLA	0	2.85	0
Retail	SF/GLA	11,540	2.2	25
Restaurant	SF/GLA	8,415	1.42	12
Residential	Units	389	1.25	486
Cinema/Theater	Seats	0	0.16	0
Gov't Institutional	SF/GLA	0	2.85	0
Museum	SF/GLA	0	0.8	0
<b>Total New Demand</b>		--	--	<b>523</b>
<b>Existing Baseline Demand</b>				<b>774</b>
<b>Total Combined Demand</b>				<b>1,297</b>
Garage 1	5 levels plus basement			750
Garage 2	4 levels plus basement			425
Surface				35
On Street - West Washington/Madison				78
<b>Total</b>				<b>1,288</b>
<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>				<b>-9</b>

**Phase II Illustrative Program Description**

Because the plan is designed in such a way as to permit Phase I to stand-alone indefinitely, it is possible that Phase II may never be built, or that only some portions of what is described below will actually be completed. It is also possible that a substantially different plan for the subsequent phase of development may emerge in the future. Nonetheless it is useful to illustrate what might be possible in the future on the Webster Block.

**Garage No. 2**

This is shown as an approximately four-level structure containing approximately 425 parking spaces with the first level partially below grade, taking advantage of the 10-foot grade change across the site. Figure 4.16 is a schematic diagram of how the garage might work. The Garage would also include about 3,900 square feet of retail/restaurant spaces along Webster Way, creating a lively edge to this side of the way with awnings, exterior seating and umbrellas. Figure 4.17 shows what this environment might look like. Main vehicular access to the garage would be via Franklin Place and a new service drive beside 50 Washington Street (see Map 4.4). The elevator tower and main pedestrian access point would be located on Webster Plaza across from the entrance to Garage No. 1.



**Figure 4.16**  
Diagram of Garage No. 2

**Figure 4.17**  
Ground Floor Garage Restaurant



**Buildings C and E.**

Buildings C and E are on City-owned land. Building C is shown as a four-story rental apartment building similar to Building B containing approximately 71 dwelling units and about 3,600 square feet of retail space located on Webster Plaza. The building would front on MLK Drive, Franklin Street and Webster Way creating a well-landscaped service courtyard between the building and the Crown regent Cinema. Provision would be made for cinema service access and patron egress.

Building E would wrap the face of Garage No. 2 along Franklin Street. It would be a four-story masonry-clad residential condominium building with ground floor retail and 15 dwelling units.

**Buildings F, G and H**

Buildings F, G and H are illustrative private developments that could occur above what are currently single story privately owned retail buildings. All are assumed to be condominium buildings with affordable components as required by prevailing regulations.

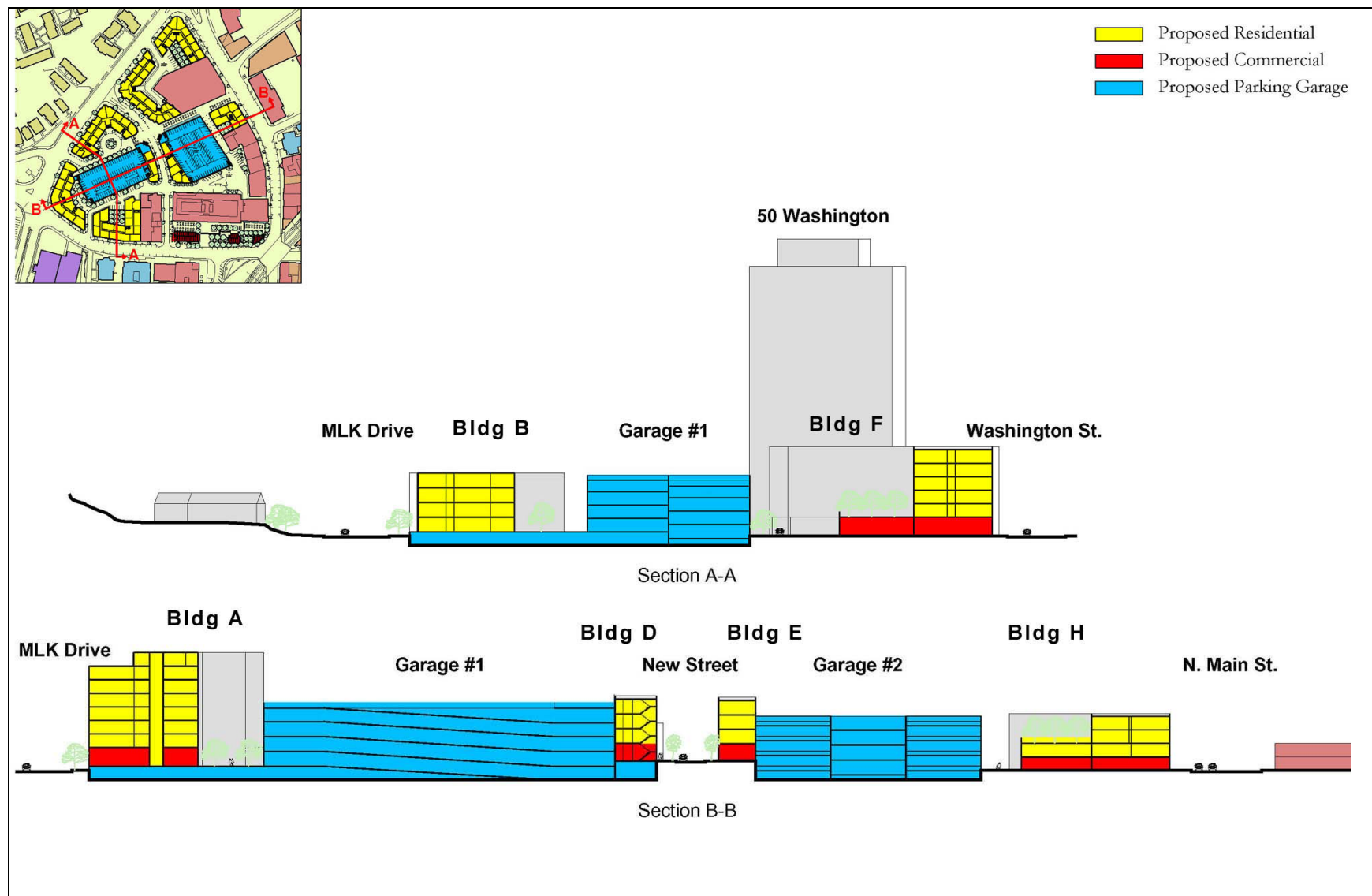
Building F is shown as a 6-story 70 unit building constructed on the site of 9-11 Washington Street that would replace the approximately 20,000 square feet of retail that is presently on the site. Due to the high floor-to-floor heights of 17 Washington Street, the new building should approximately match the height of 17 Washington even though 17 Washington is predominantly a 4-story building.

Building G is shown located on the site of the retail condominium building at 64-84 North Main Street. This is a very prominent gateway location and will be the first building visitors will see when entering SoNo from I-95, Route 7 and points North. Thus it is shown as a higher building stepping up to between 7 and 8-stories. It is shown as a condominium building that would replace the approximately 15,000-16,000 square feet of retail that presently exist in the building.

Building H could be a four-story building on the site of the building housing the Milano restaurant. It would contain approximately 21 condominium units and would replace the approximately 8-9,000 square feet of retail/restaurant use that presently exist on the site.

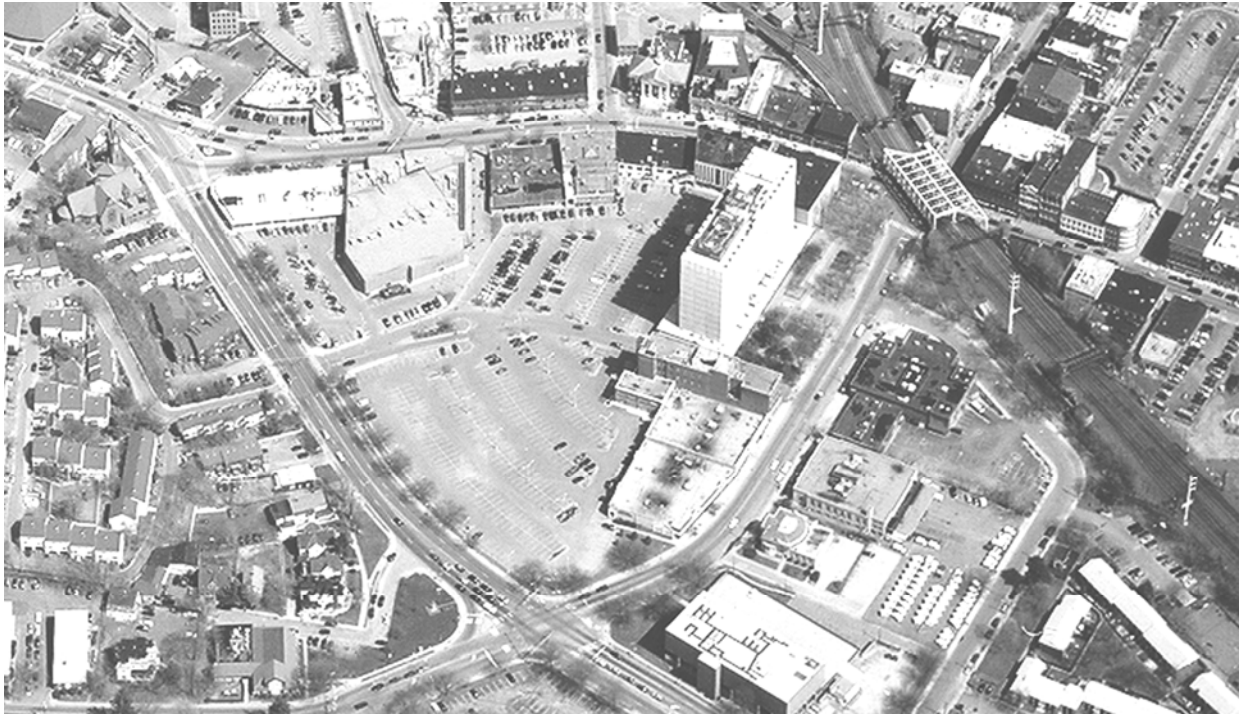
**Service Ways and Courtyards**

As shown on Maps 4.4 – 4.6, a new service-drive and turn-around would be created beside 50 Washington Street. This would serve also as the main vehicular access to the new garage. The ample turn-around space would be capable of handling service by semi-trailer.

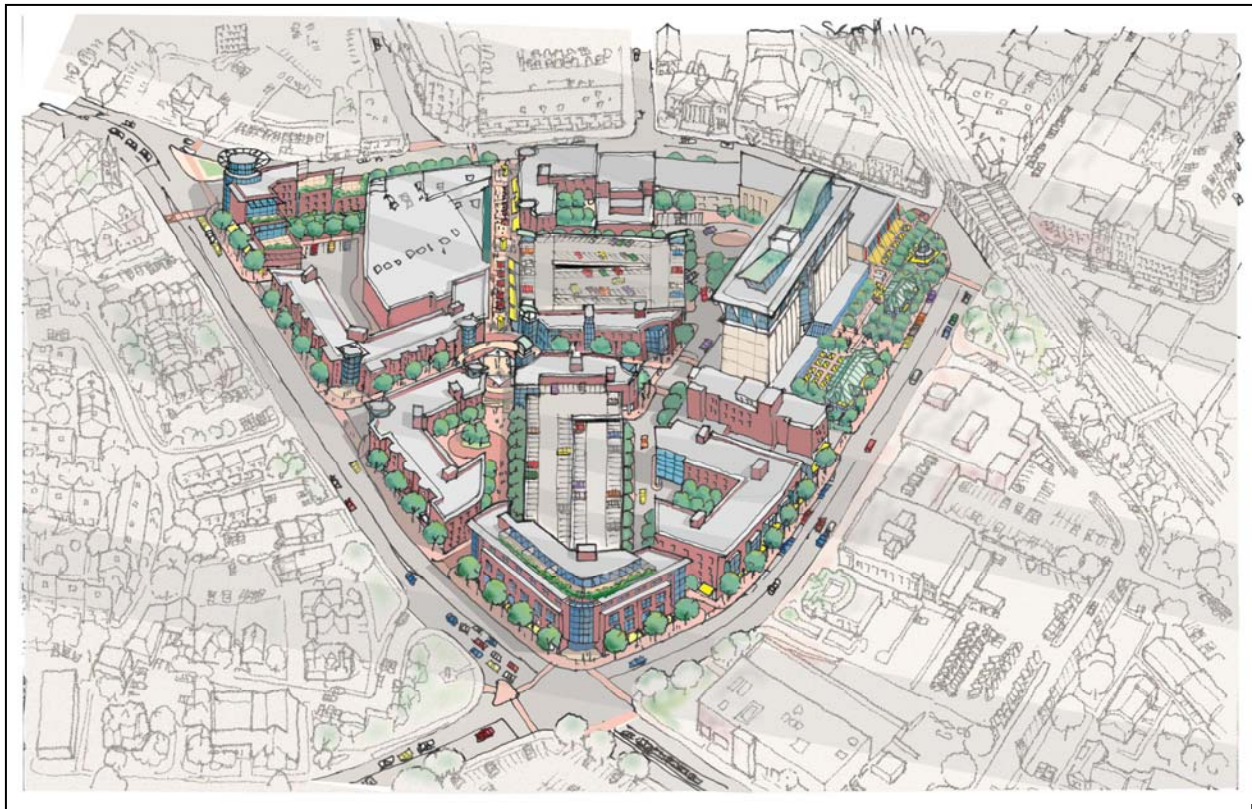


**Figure 4.18 – Possible Phase 2 Illustrative Cross Sections**

**Figure 4.19 Aerial View of the Existing Webster Block**



**Figure 4.20 Illustrative Aerial View of Possible Phase II Development**



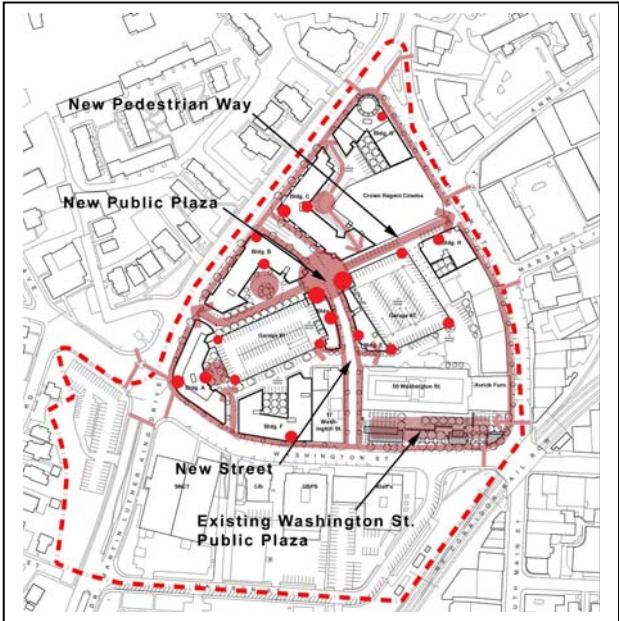
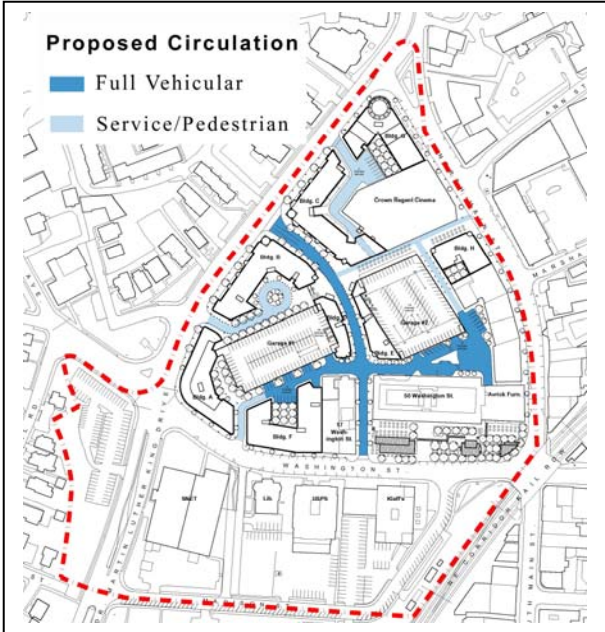
A new, well-landscaped service way with unit pavers would be created between the new garage and the buildings on North Main Street. The alleyway at Avrck Furniture would be abandoned as a pedestrian way with pedestrians encouraged to use Webster Way and Franklin Place as access ways to the surrounding district.

A well-landscaped courtyard that would also double as a service yard and short term parking area would be created between Building C and the Crown Regent Cinema. A tall passageway would be driven through Building C adjacent to the cinema allowing service and emergency access through the courtyard to MLK Drive as well as cinema patron access and egress.

Figures 4.21 and 4.22 are diagrams of vehicular and pedestrian access for Phase II.

**Figure 4.21 – Phase II Traffic Circulation**

**Figure 4.22 – Phase II Pedestrian Circulation**



## 4.5 Conclusion

The proposed plan described in this chapter achieves all of the major goals set forth for it in each of its development phases.

- The plan expands parking to meet current demand plus the demand imposed by additional supportive development.
- The plan improves the image of the Webster Lot, adding a new housing edge along MLK Drive and creating new, high-quality traffic and pedestrian ways through the block.
- The plan breaks down the scale of the “superblock” bringing it back into harmony with the surrounding district.
- New housing uses will bring added vitality to the district while also adding a new community with a stake in SoNo’s future.
- Housing and retail development of City-owned land helps to reduce the revenue required to support expanded parking, maintaining parking fees within acceptable levels.
- Both traffic and pedestrian circulation are dramatically improved.
- The phasing of the plan is designed to allow a significant portion of the lot to remain as surface parking for as long as may be desired – creating the possibility of a very gradual transition to higher density over a reasonable time frame.

Finally, redevelopment of the Webster Lot along the lines described above makes eminent good sense in today’s planning environment. In current planning terms, it is essentially an infill development of what might be called a “grayfield” site – often an outmoded suburban mall or a large tract of uncontaminated surplus government or institutional land. As a walkable, mixed-use district that will be friendly to mass-transit, the proposed project meets smart growth goals aimed at counteracting the ever-increasing problems of traffic congestion and vanishing open space brought about by continuing suburbanization.



## **5. Implementation**

### **5.1 Planning Level Study**

The proposed plan presented in this report is intended to be a planning level feasibility study of improvements to the Webster Block. The conclusion of this report is that, at a planning level, the proposed project appears feasible. On that basis a reasonable decision could be made to move forward with the plan. Ultimately, that decision is up to the City of Norwalk. If a positive decision is taken, there is additional work that will have to be done before the project can be advertised for development. Some of the steps that may have to be taken are outlined below.

### **5.2 Next Steps**

#### ***Board Approvals and Plan Acceptance***

If a positive decision is taken, the plan will have to be approved by various boards within the City of Norwalk. Among these are: The Norwalk Re-development Authority, Parking Authority, The Norwalk Planning and Zoning Commissions and the Norwalk Common Council.

#### ***Funding Sources***

Identification and pursuit of any non-municipal public funding sources that might be applied to the plan, including any state or federal funding sources that might be likely candidates for funding some portion of the project.

#### ***Additional Technical Studies***

Additional technical studies will be needed to fully complete the plan. Some of these may have to be performed even before board approvals can be sought. Among the studies that may be required are:

#### **Traffic**

A traffic study is needed to gather information where no data is currently available (e.g., at the intersection of MLK Drive and Washington Street). Additionally, the traffic study should fully examine the impact of the proposed plan on local traffic patterns by phase and recommend any mitigating measures that may have to be taken.

### **Permitting Survey**

A survey of all likely regulatory and environmental permits should be made and compiled into a list together with a time schedule that names responsible parties to carry out each filing. All major planning & zoning and environmental filings should be made and permits should be in hand prior to soliciting developer interest.

### **Zoning Survey**

A zoning survey of the project should be made to determine if any zoning permits or variances are required, or whether actual zoning changes may be needed to implement the plan. This should be carried out as part of the permitting survey above.

### **Legal Research**

A complete legal research effort (including a full title search of all properties on the Webster Block) should be conducted to insure that all agreements and commitments pertinent to the Urban Renewal Plan are clearly identified together with any previous and/or subsequent lease or other commitments, easements, liens or agreements of any kind that might affect the plan.

### **Site Survey**

A detailed topographic, property, structure and utility survey should be conducted of the entire site at a suitable to scale, identifying all above ground and underground structures, property lines, easements, etc. that may affect the plan.

### **Geotechnical Investigation**

A geotechnical investigation should be carried out based on existing soils data combined with new information gathered through a series of new soils borings to determine existing subsurface conditions. This investigation should also cover the existence of any subsurface foundation and/or other structures that may have remained underground after the Urban Renewal Plan was completed.

### **Hazardous Materials**

The geotechnical investigation should include a hazardous material component to determine the possible presence of any hazardous materials on the site.

### **Architectural & Engineering**

10 percent-level drawings, specifications and cost estimate for Phase I public infrastructure including Parking Garage No. 1 and all site and util-

ity work. This will be needed for formal financial studies, property negotiations and developer kits.

### **Formal Financial Study**

A final formal financial study of the project will have to be performed suitable to support bonding. This may occur after the developer is on board and a preliminary design has been developed.

### ***Property Negotiations***

Negotiations related to the acquisition of any privately owned parcels, easements, leases, liens, etc. necessary to prepare the site for development.

### ***Developer Kits***

Phase I should be repackaged into a developer kit or kits that can be issued to potential developers as part of the solicitation and selection process. Developer kits should clearly state whatever design guidelines are to be imposed upon the project, and should also present the findings of the other technical studies (survey, permitting, geotechnical, hazardous materials, engineering, etc.). If key permits are not already in hand, the permits required will have to be identified in the developer kits. Selected economic and financial data should be made available together with the technical studies. Required submittals from the developer should be clearly identified.

# ***Appendices***

## **Appendix A - Webster Block Development Potential**

The following market analysis presents basic findings regarding potentially feasible development forms in the Study Area.

### **A.1 - Summary Findings**

The following summarize key findings regarding Study Area market conditions, potential development programs, and the area's general prospects for revitalization:

#### **Market Context**

The Study Area occupies a central location in an affluent market. While the area does not anticipate rapid overall demographic growth, its affluence, accessibility to key business locations, and the generally positive outlooks for Fairfield County's economy provide strong assets for new development potential.

#### **Demographic Growth**

Demographic projections show moderate overall population and household gains over the next five years. Such forecasts also show that households in higher-income brackets are expected to grow at relatively rapid rates, offset by declines among households with incomes below \$100,000. This growth among affluent households offers support for upscale new development.

#### **Residential Market Opportunities**

Rental apartment and condominium housing offer strong opportunities for new development in the Study Area. Such residential developments will derive support from ongoing growth in the region's high-income groups. In addition, there are opportunities to provide housing for low- and moderate-income families who face limited choices in the region's housing market.

- The market has demonstrated its acceptance of such housing in the Study Area and throughout coastal Fairfield County. Market demand for market-rate rental units continues to grow, and notwithstanding weak economic conditions, the market has successfully absorbed new inventory of approximately 1,600 new high-end units in the last three years. Given projected demographic growth, the Study Area should be able to support more than 300 new market-rate rental units over the next five years.

- Condominium development activity has been limited in recent years, but strong growth among upper-income empty nesters, along with rapid price appreciation in the local market, indicate that this market niche also offers potential.
- Mixed-income projects should prove viable and suitable for new residential developments the area. Affordable housing units play a valuable role in redevelopment as they provide housing for a diverse labor force essential to Norwalk's continued growth and meet a regional housing need.

### ***Commercial Development Opportunities***

Commercial Development Opportunities in the Study Area will reflect the vitality of South Norwalk and provide opportunities for restaurants, specialty retailers, and businesses in niches such as home furnishings. Space for such businesses will be situated in strategically located ground-floor spaces in the Study Area.

### ***Potential Development Programs***

Over the next five years, the Study Area can offer potentially feasible development opportunities. In a short-term time frame, the strongest opportunities would involve residential projects including:

- Luxury rental apartments are proposed in low- to midrise (3- to 4-story) buildings. Such buildings are expected to feature extensive amenities -- including ground-floor retail space in appropriate locations -- and would charge high-end rents approximating an average of roughly \$2.00 to \$2.30 per square foot (2003 dollars). Most projects would offer mostly one- and two-bedroom configurations (including units with den or loft areas). Buildings are expected to provide covered parking in public garages. Typical development densities would approximate 60 units per acre.
- Luxury condominiums would also be located in low- to midrise (3- to 8-story) buildings. Most condominium projects would seek waterfront settings or other locations adjacent to desirable amenities. Projects would emphasize two- and three-bedroom units; prices would approximate roughly \$250 to \$300 per square foot initially. Buildings would also offer covered parking, typically situated below the building footprint.

- Retail components would be located in ground-floor spaces facing strategic points of access linking the Study Area with other destinations in the South Norwalk area.

## A.2 -Market Context

The Study Area occupies a central location in an affluent market, and offers convenient commuter access to employment concentrations throughout Fairfield County, parts of Westchester County (NY) and New York City. While the area does not anticipate rapid overall demographic growth, this masks underlying assets for potential growth. These assets include the community’s growth among affluent households, its anticipated employment growth, and its strategic location.

The discussions in this section present a general overview of community profiles, demographic trends and economic conditions in Norwalk and the broader context of Fairfield County; this regional context frames the general outlook for prospective developments in the Study Area.

### Demographic Trends And Projections

#### Population and Households

Norwalk and its surroundings are for the most part built-out. As a result, demographic forecasts do not project rapid growth. As shown in the exhibit below, both Norwalk and Fairfield are expected to continue their recent demographic growth rates of roughly 0.6 to 0.7 percent per year. Even at annual growth rates below 1 percent, the City of Norwalk is expected to grow by more than 1,000 households over the next five years. To the extent that the City can overcome its land limitations and create attractive new development properties, the City’s actual growth may exceed forecasted growth.

Exhibit 1 – Demographic Growth Trends and Projections Norwalk and Fairfield County: 1990-2007

	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1990-2000</u> Avg. Ann. <u>Growth</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2002-2007</u> Avg. Ann. <u>Growth</u>
<u>Population</u>						
Norwalk	78,331	82,951	0.6%	83,807	85,978	0.5%
Fairfield County	827,645	882,567	0.6%	894,032	922,213	0.6%
<u>Households:</u>						
Norwalk	30,560	32,711	0.7%	33,127	34,135	0.6%
Fairfield County	305,011	324,232	0.6%	328,434	338,747	0.6%

Source: Claritas, Inc.; U.S. Census Bureau.

**Household Income Characteristics**

Within the overall forecast for gradual household growth, growth rates differ sharply among the various household income cohorts. Substantial growth is forecasted among affluent households, offset by declines among more moderate-income households. As shown in Exhibit 2, all income groups with incomes below \$100,000 are expected to decline; households with incomes above \$100,000 are expected to increase, with the highest growth rates projected for households with incomes in excess of \$250,000. In general, this growth among affluent households offers evidence of likely support for additional upscale housing in the community.

*Exhibit 2 – Household Income Cohorts, Norwalk and Stamford-Norwalk PMSA: 2002-2007*

	Norwalk				Stamford/Norwalk PMSA			
	<u>2002</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>Ann. %</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>Ann. %</u>
Less than \$25,000	3,848	2,801	-1,047	-6.2%	12,621	9,697	-2,924	-5.1%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	1,876	1,839	-37	-0.4%	6,017	5,481	-536	-1.8%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	3,414	2,470	-944	-6.3%	10,442	8,267	-2,175	-4.6%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	6,044	5,394	-650	-2.2%	15,926	13,878	-2,048	-2.7%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	5,556	4,722	-834	-3.2%	13,881	12,398	-1,483	-2.2%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	6,159	7,136	977	3.0%	18,044	18,588	544	0.6%
\$150,000 - \$249,999	4,800	5,936	1,136	4.3%	20,271	20,852	581	0.6%
\$250,000 - \$499,999	1,090	3,065	1,975	23.0%	11,744	17,788	6,044	8.7%
\$500,000 +	340	772	432	17.8%	8,300	13,320	5,020	9.9%
Total	33,127	34,135	1,008	0.6%	117,246	120,269	3,023	0.5%

Source: Claritas, Inc.

**Economic Base**

Fairfield County’s economy rests on employment (compiled by place of work) in services, retail trade and manufacturing. Services represents the largest component of the economy, accounting for more than one-third of all jobs in 2002. Notwithstanding the current regional and national economic downturn, over the next five years, these sectors are expected to continue recent growth patterns. Over the next five years, the overall services sector is expected to grow by more than 17,000 jobs (3,520 per year, as shown in Exhibit 3).

Within the broadly defined services sector, employment is concentrated most heavily in professional sectors -- business services, health services, social services and engineering/management services – featuring highly skilled, highly compensated workers. These sectors are expected to achieve relatively high growth rates, with employment projected to grow at rates of 2.0 to 3.5 percent per year. Among other sectors, only the finance/real estate/insurance category -- which also emphasizes professional employment -- is projected to grow at comparable rates. Employment in



this category is projected at more than 6,000 jobs over the next five years (1,240 per year), achieving an annual increase of 2.7 percent per year.

During this same five-year time frame, other significant sectors such as retail trade and government are expected to maintain more modest growth trends, with retail trade increasing at a rate of 1.2 percent annually. The county’s manufacturing sector is expected to continue its recent pattern of decline, losing more than 3,000 jobs as manufacturing employment continues its decline from 98,000 in 1990 to roughly 59,000 in 2007.

*Exhibit 3 – Employment Trends and Projections (000s) for Fairfield County, 1990-2007*

Industry Group	1990	2000	1990-2000		Est. 2002	Proj. 2007	2002-2007	
			Avg. Ann. Growth #	%			Avg. Ann. Growth #	%
Mining	0.26	0.14	-0.01	-5.8%	0.09	0.14	0.01	10.1%
Construction	14.17	15.21	0.10	0.7%	14.82	14.26	-0.11	-0.8%
Manufacturing	97.71	69.47	-2.82	-3.4%	62.04	58.93	-0.62	-1.0%
Transport., Comm. & Public Utilities	18.67	18.85	0.02	0.1%	18.88	20.06	0.24	1.2%
Wholesale Trade	24.44	22.36	-0.21	-0.9%	21.04	22.17	0.23	1.1%
Retail Trade	70.47	73.23	0.28	0.4%	70.16	74.48	0.86	1.2%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	33.67	42.78	0.91	2.4%	43.19	49.41	1.24	2.7%
Services	112.40	145.62	3.32	2.6%	146.32	163.89	3.52	2.3%
Business services	22.66	38.75	1.61	5.5%	36.78	43.71	1.39	3.5%
Health services	30.97	37.26	0.63	1.9%	38.70	43.85	1.03	2.5%
Social services	7.03	11.32	0.43	4.9%	11.67	12.90	0.24	2.0%
Engineering & management services	14.14	15.76	0.16	1.1%	16.63	18.75	0.42	2.4%
Government	41.38	46.97	0.56	1.3%	47.07	46.78	-0.06	-0.1%
TOTAL NON-FARM	413.16	434.63	2.15	0.5%	423.60	450.12	5.30	1.2%

Source: *economy.com*

### **A.3 - Development Opportunities Analysis**

Household growth drives residential development. In the prospective market for residential development in South Norwalk, anticipated household growth (see Exhibits 1 & 2 above) reflects recent trends as well as the amount of land available for new development. To a large extent, these indicators reflect the limitations of Norwalk’s status as a mature, primarily built-out community. Where new land can be made available for new development, such development may surpass current projections for future household growth. This is particularly likely in light of the fact that Fair-

field County's forecasted employment growth of 1.2 percent per year – with considerably higher growth rates among high-compensation, professional service sectors -- far exceeds the currently forecasted demographic growth rates of 0.5 to 0.6 percent.

In general, market-rate residential development offers opportunities for the Study Area; this section presents discussions of the key factors and trends that will support and shape such opportunities.

## **Rental Apartment Market**

### **Regional Lifestyle Rental Market**

High-end apartment properties in the region extending from Stamford on the west to Wilton on the northeast will compete for householders commuting to employment destinations in New York, Stamford, Norwalk, and other coastal locations in Fairfield County. In Stamford, Norwalk, and other locations, luxury apartments serving this “lifestyle” renter niche (high-income households opting for the convenience of upscale rental living arrangements despite possessing the means for purchasing desirable homes) have been successfully absorbed with monthly rents approximating \$2/square foot/month. These successes, occurring during a period of economic weakness, indicate the local market's acceptance of such products.

### **Competitive Market**

The following exhibit identifies the luxury rental developments that may compete with new luxury apartments in the Study Area.

Over the last three years, seven new projects containing nearly approximately 1,600 units have opened in the area. In general these high-end apartment properties have been able to maintain an overall stabilized occupancy rate of 95.7 percent. When properties in their initial lease-up stages are included, at mid-year 2003 the overall occupancy rate stood at 94.5 percent.

In general, monthly rents at most of these apartment complexes range from roughly \$1,450 to \$2,000 for one-bedroom units and from \$1,700 to \$2,300 for two-bedroom units. On a per-square foot basis, monthly rents range from \$1.50 to \$2.25.

*Exhibit 4 – Competitive Luxury Apartment Complexes*

<u>Property</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Built</u>	<u>Total Units</u>	<u>Occupancy Rate</u>
Merritt River Apartments	Norwalk	2002	227	80%
Clocktower Close	Norwalk	1985	129	96%
Riverview	Norwalk	1991	92	100%
Corset Factory	Norwalk	1980s	81	90%
Trolley Barn	Norwalk	1988	24	92%
18 Ann Street	Norwalk	1999	12	100%
Avalon New Canaan	New Canaan	2002	104	92%
Avalon Springs	Wilton	1996	102	99%
Archstone Stamford	Stamford	2002	160	97%
The Fairfield	Stamford	1995	263	96%
Southwood Square	Stamford	2001	315	100%
Avalon Corners	Stamford	1999	195	96%
Avalon Glen	Stamford	1991	238	96%
Avalon Grove	Stamford	1996	402	91%
Avalon on Stamford Harbor	Stamford	2002	323	97%
Park Square West	Stamford	2001	143	98%
Avalon at Greyrock Place	Stamford	2001	306	97%
Avalon Bedford	Stamford	1960	388	92%
Total			3,504	94.5%
			Occupancy Among Stabilized Projects <sup>1</sup> :	95.7%

<sup>1</sup> Excludes units at Merritt River, Avalon New Canaan projects, which were in initial lease-up phases.

Source: Bonz and Company, Inc.

*Exhibit 5 -- Competitive Market-Rate Rent Ranges*

	<u>Unit Size</u>		<u>Monthly Rent</u>		<u>Rent/Sq. ft.</u>	
	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>
One-Bedroom Units	754	855	\$1,629	\$1,869	\$2.17	\$2.20
Two-Bedroom Units	1,051	1,301	\$2,133	\$2,535	\$2.02	\$1.97

Source: Bonz and Company, Inc.

Amid the national economic recession, absorption of these new properties has continued at healthy rates. While some properties have offered rent concessions and absorption has slowed somewhat, most stabilized properties have maintained high occupancy rates, and the Avalon/Stamford Harbor and Merritt River properties have continued to lease apartments at approximately 8 units and 18 units per month, respectively, over the last six months.

### **Market Demand**

In order to afford market-rate rental housing at a state-of-the-art apartment property, renters would need to maintain an annual household income of at least \$60,000; the largest portion of the market for a Norwalk market-rate apartment development would include one- and two-person households with annual household incomes of \$75,000 or more. This threshold reflects the accepted standards whereby housing expenditures account for no more than 30 percent of household incomes.

As shown previously in Exhibit 2, while lower and middle-income households are likely to decline in Norwalk and Fairfield County, households in the upper income tiers are expected to show substantial growth. This same pattern is projected for the Stamford-Norwalk PMSA (which incorporates the communities of Stamford, Norwalk, Greenwich, Darien, New Canaan, Fairfield, Wilton, Westport and Weston). Exhibit 6 shows that while the income groups below \$100,000 are expected to decline over the next five years, such declines will be offset by increases in the \$100,000+ income brackets for most age groups (excepting only the 35 to 44 age group).

In estimating demand for luxury rental apartments, this analysis builds on these demographic projections, refined to take into account household sizes and propensities to rent (based on 2000 Census data for Fairfield County). The first step is to estimate the number of income-qualified (minimum \$75,000) households in each age group. The next step applies renter/owner ratios (based on 2000 census data) specific to the various age groups. The third and final step applies additional factors (derived from census data) to adjust renter/owner ratios to account for the \$75,000+ income group.

As seen in the following exhibit, the target market of lifestyle renters in the Stamford/Norwalk PMSA is projected to increase from roughly 9,300 in 2002 to 10,400 in 2007. This represents a gain of 1,100 households, or 220 new income-qualified renter households per year.

Exhibit 6 -- Household Growth Projections by Selected Income Groups – Stamford-Norwalk PMSA: 2002-2007

Household Age	Annual Income	2002	2007	Change 2002-2007
25-34	\$50,000-\$74,999	3,075	2,377	(698)
	\$75,000-\$99,999	2,777	2,285	(492)
	\$100,000 and Over	6,835	8,666	1,831
Subtotal		12,687	13,328	641
35-44	\$50,000-\$74,999	3,439	2,507	(932)
	\$75,000-\$99,999	3,084	2,390	(694)
	\$100,000 and Over	15,984	16,556	572
Subtotal		22,507	21,453	(1,054)
45-54	\$50,000-\$74,999	2,702	2,353	(349)
	\$75,000-\$99,999	2,712	2,311	(401)
	\$100,000 and Over	16,131	19,249	3,118
Subtotal		21,545	23,913	2,368
55-64	\$50,000-\$74,999	2,098	1,991	(107)
	\$75,000-\$99,999	2,078	1,980	(98)
	\$100,000 and Over	10,796	14,676	3,880
Subtotal		14,972	18,647	3,675
65-75	\$50,000-\$74,999	1,855	1,799	(56)
	\$75,000-\$99,999	1,535	1,427	(108)
	\$100,000 and Over	4,887	6,243	1,356
Subtotal		8,277	9,469	1,192
Totals	\$50,000-\$74,999	13,169	11,027	(2,142)
	\$75,000-\$99,999	12,186	10,393	(1,793)
	\$100,000 and Over	54,633	65,390	10,757
Total		79,988	86,810	6,822

Source: Claritas, Inc.

Exhibit 7 – Potential Demand for Market-Rate Multi-Family Housing in Stamford-Norwalk PMSA, 2002-2007

	Estimated 2002 Demand		Estimated 2007 Demand		2002 to 2007 Change	
	Income Qualified <sup>1</sup>	Number of Renters <sup>2</sup>	Income Qualified <sup>1</sup>	Number of Renters <sup>2</sup>	Income Qualified <sup>1</sup>	Number of Renters <sup>2</sup>
<u>Primary Market Area<sup>4</sup></u>						
25 - 34	9,612	3,018	10,951	3,438	1,339	420
35 - 44	19,068	2,799	18,946	2,781	(122)	(18)
45 - 54	18,843	1,906	21,560	2,181	2,717	275
55 - 64	12,874	1,105	16,656	1,430	3,782	325
65 - 74	6,422	517	7,670	617	1,248	100
Total	66,819	9,345	75,783	10,447	8,964	1,102

Notes:

1. Households with annual incomes in excess of \$75,000 based on Claritas data.

2. Percentage of renter households by household age based upon 2000 Census data for Fairfield County, adjusted to apply to households with incomes over \$75,000

Source: U.S. Census; Claritas, Inc.; Bonz and Company, Inc.

These projections are conservative in that they do not anticipate additional housing demand induced as a result of new improvements and/or the availability of new developable land in the area. For perspective, it should be noted once again that, over the last three years, the market has absorbed roughly 1,600 luxury apartment units – or about 533 per year; this indicates that the creation of desirable housing alternatives induces additional households to move to the area. While such absorption may or may not continue, the concept of lifestyle rental units is based on an increasing propensity for higher-income householders to choose rental living arrangements in favor of home ownership.

In any event, within the overall envelope of market demand, the Study Area will offer one of the strongest locations in the region. The Study Area offers a central location with superior access to major highways, rail transit, future employment areas, and the urban amenities of South Norwalk. Few if any locations in the PMSA will be able to match this combination of advantages. Overall, over a five- to ten-year period of time, the Study Area should be able to capture substantial portions of the market-rate rental market and support approximately 300 or more new market-rate apartment units.

### ***Condominium Market***

Condominiums in townhouse and apartment configurations provide development opportunities in the Study Area. While the South Norwalk condominium market has experienced substantial price increases in recent years, new development has been limited by the scarcity of property available for development or conversion. Given the anticipated local growth among affluent one- and two-person households, along with the Study Area's competitive advantages, new condominium units should offer a viable development opportunity.

### **General Market Conditions**

Condominium projects in the City of Norwalk have included six projects since 1995. Most of these have offered two-bedroom units containing 1,000 to 1,300 square feet, ranging in price from roughly \$200,000 to \$300,000.

In general, Norwalk's condominium market has shown consistently positive trends over the past ten years. As shown in Exhibit 8, the volume of condominium sales in the City increased to a peak of 674 in 2000; while this volume has declined slightly, it has continued to exceed sales volumes achieved prior to 1999. In addition, during this ten-year period, median sale prices have consistently increased – even since 2000 – at an average

annual rate of 6.1 percent. These data reflect a generally healthy condominium market in the City.

*Exhibit 8 – Condominium Sales, City of Norwalk, 1993-2003*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Median Sale Price</u>
1993	338	\$123,000
1994	434	\$118,375
1995	464	\$112,000
1996	422	\$123,750
1997	463	\$130,000
1998	582	\$138,000
1999	672	\$148,000
2000	674	\$164,700
2001	607	\$185,000
2002	610	\$215,000
2003 (partial)	--	\$235,000
Avg. Annual Increase in Med. Price		6.1%

*Source: The Warren Group.*

**Condominium Sales**

In and around the Study Area, existing condominiums include upper-story spaces on Washington Street as well as buildings on Haviland and Water Streets. For the most part, these units were built during the 1980s; in contrast to the recently built projects featuring two-bedroom units, most of these are one-bedroom units containing 600 to 800 square feet.

While recent sales prices for such units range widely -- from \$120,000 to \$220,000 – interviews indicate that South Norwalk condominium prices have increased substantially; one broker estimates that values for comparable units in the area have increased by 30 percent over the last 18 months. Exhibit 9 compares average sales/square feet figures for a sample of nearby unit sales in 2002 and 2003. While these represent a somewhat limited sample, these figures indicate one-year price increases of roughly 20 percent for units at Washington Street and 32 Haviland Street. While price increases appear to be lower for units at 149 Water Street, it should be noted that these comparisons really represent a four-month (rather than one-year) increase; the building’s three sales in 2002 occurred in late October, while the single sale in 2003 occurred less than four months later, in mid-February.

Exhibit 9 -- One-Year Change in South Norwalk Condominium Sales Prices

<u>Property</u>	Average Price/sq. ft.		<u>Change</u>
	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	
Washington Street condos	\$227	\$279	22.9%
32 Haviland	\$235	\$279	18.7%
149 Water	\$214	\$225	5.3%

Source: William Pitt Real Estate; Bonz and Company, Inc.

Norwalk’s most recent condominium development is located close to the Study Area at 4 Lowe Street. The Harbour Heights project offers two-bedroom units with 1,100 to 1,350 square feet. Despite the project’s location in a transitional neighborhood, and despite opening immediately after September 11, 2001, these units sold out within approximately eight months. Initial prices ranged from \$240,000 to \$290,000, or \$180 to \$220 per square foot.

One other market-rate complex in the vicinity is the Atrium, located at 115 Flax Hill Road. This complex offers 16 relatively small (850 to 900 square feet) two-bedroom units. Three recent sales (in 2002) have ranged from \$210,000 to \$225,000, or roughly \$250 per square foot.

Despite the lack of recent supply, the entire Fairfield County market contains virtually no other condominiums set amid urban amenities comparable to South Norwalk’s. Given the recent price increases, combined with favorable demographic trends, the development community has shown an emerging interest in condominium projects in and around the Study Area. Prospective projects planned for development along Smith Street target upscale young professional as well as empty nester households, with prices generally targeting a \$250,000 to \$300,000 price range.

**Demand Growth**

While market-rate apartments face substantial competition from an ample supply of recently built projects in the Stamford-Norwalk PMSA, the primary market for market-rate condominiums will compete with a limited inventory of new projects in an area extending throughout Fairfield County. This broader market area is shaped by the lack of local competition among high-quality urban condominiums as well as the Study Area’s central location and accessibility to all parts of the County.

Given prevailing price points for new condominiums, most buyers of market-rate condominiums will need to maintain incomes of \$75,000 or more. As shown previously in Exhibits 2 and 6, household growth in the Stamford-Norwalk PMSA will occur mostly among higher-end income groups.



For the overall County, Exhibit 10 shows five-year projected growth among Fairfield County one- and two-person homeowner households with incomes of \$75,000 and higher.

In calculating these estimates and projections, this analysis follows a process similar to the renter demand analysis, starting with household age- and income estimates provided by Claritas, Inc., and then applying ratios derived from the 2000 U.S. Census for (1) household home ownership and (2) household sizes (the latter ratio is applied because, unlike upper-income renter households, upper-income homeowners include large components of families with children and other larger households).

Within the likely market the highest growth is expected in the 55 to 64-year old age group. This group comprises the largest component of the “empty nester” niche, which typically furnishes the strongest source of demand for upscale, urban condominium units. It should also be noted that in 2007, the 45 to 54-year-old age group will remain the largest cohort (28,300 households) in this prospective market, indicating that the growth in the 55-64 age group is likely to continue beyond the next five years.

*Exhibit 10 – Potential Condominium Demand: Fairfield County, 2002-07*

Age Group	Estimated 2002 Demand			Estimated 2007 Demand			2002 to 2007 Change		
	Income Qualified <sup>1</sup>	Number of Owners <sup>2</sup>	1- & 2- <sup>3</sup> Person/hhold	Income Qualified <sup>1</sup>	Number of Owners <sup>2</sup>	1- & 2- <sup>3</sup> Person/hhold	Income Qualified <sup>1</sup>	Number of Owners <sup>2</sup>	1- & 2- <sup>3</sup> Person/hhold
25 - 34	26,368	18,090	9,513	30,608	20,999	11,042	4,240	2,909	1,530
35 - 44	50,758	43,307	22,773	52,139	44,485	23,393	1,381	1,178	620
45 - 54	51,094	45,925	24,150	59,879	53,822	28,302	8,785	7,896	4,152
55 - 64	32,374	29,594	15,562	43,642	39,895	20,979	11,268	10,301	5,417
65 - 74	13,807	12,696	6,676	17,526	16,116	8,475	3,719	3,420	1,798
Total	174,401	149,613	78,674	203,794	175,316	92,191	29,393	25,704	13,516

*Notes:*

1. Households with annual incomes in excess of \$75,000 based on Claritas data.
2. Percentage of owner households by household age based upon 2000 Census data for Fairfield County, adjusted to apply to households with incomes over \$75,000
3. Percentage of 1- and 2-person households based upon 2000 Census data for Fairfield County.

Source: U.S. Census; Claritas, Inc.; Bonz and Company, Inc.

Given the amenities of a South Norwalk location, along with the recent trend toward increasing prices, the rapid growth in this age- and income-defined cohort signals a likely development opportunity for condominium units in the Study Area.

***Affordable Housing Issues and Opportunities***

Regional economic growth relies on an ample and diverse supply of labor. In addition to highly skilled and highly compensated professionals, labor must be available for service, administrative, educational, and entry-level

jobs which may not offer high-end compensation levels. Norwalk’s rising costs for rental and condominium housing may limit the availability of such labor. In order to sustain its growth, the community must address this issue by ensuring a supply of housing that can be affordable to the various components of its labor force.

**Need for Affordable Housing in Norwalk**

In quantifying the need for affordable housing in Norwalk, the following evaluates Norwalk’s unmet demand for affordable housing by calculating the number of households whose housing costs exceed 35 percent of their gross incomes.

As shown below, housing data from the US Census indicate that, in 2000 there were 7,252 households in Norwalk paying more than 35 percent of their gross household incomes for housing and thus enduring hardships due to housing cost burdens. It should be noted that these estimates are conservative, as they do not include additional demand resulting from households paying less than 35 percent of their household income for housing payments, but who are occupying sub-standard housing and would be attracted to units at the subject property. Additional demand would also increase due to mobility, and due to increases in the number of households in the area.

*Exhibit 11 – Households by Housing Cost Burdens: City of Norwalk, 2000*

	Paying <20%	20% to 24.9%	25% to 29.9%	30% to 34.9%	35% or More	Not Computed	Total
Less than \$10,000	44	75	87	70	1,224	257	1,757
\$10,000 - \$19,999	248	110	116	161	1,657	46	2,338
\$20,000 - \$34,999	491	433	550	557	2,046	129	4,206
\$35,000 - \$49,999	783	652	712	462	1,008	52	3,669
\$50,000 - \$74,999	2,282	853	679	703	934	32	5,483
\$75,000 - \$99,999	2,310	565	538	276	224	7	3,920
\$100,000+	5,023	983	404	189	159	39	6,797
Total	11,181	3,671	3,086	2,418	7,252	562	28,170

Source: U.S. Census.

**Development Opportunities and Programs**

While most developers seek to maximize financial returns, developers throughout the nation have found it profitable to build mixed-income housing combining market-rate with affordable components. Such projects have proven beneficial to virtually all parties, including:

- Low- and moderate-income residents, who gain affordable housing;

- Market-rate residents, to whom mixed-income communities have proven acceptable;
- Developers, who derive funding assistance that is often required to facilitate their projects' market-rate residential components; and
- Communities, who derive greater residential diversity and capacity to accommodate potential labor force growth.

In general, the product model for mixed-income projects would be dictated by the requirements and conditions of specific federal, state or local assistance programs. An anticipated Norwalk affordable housing program would require that developers allocate 10 percent of a project's dwelling units as affordable for households earning either 80 percent of the state-wide median household income (adjusted for family size). Under this program, developers could charge maximum monthly rents of \$1,450 for one-bedroom and \$1,670 for two-bedroom units.

Other federal, state or local programs similarly require various affordable housing products as conditions for tax credits, rent subsidies, assistance in land assembly (or cost), low-interest loans, grants, tax-exempt bond financing, and other incentives and forms of government assistance.

Overall, affordable housing components developed under the anticipated Norwalk program, as well as other programs, will prove appropriate and compatible within residential developments in the Study Area.

### **Retail Market**

The retail market offers distinct possibilities for new retail businesses in the Study Area. While some development opportunities may be limited by the Study Area's physical ability to accommodate major regional retail center developments, key opportunities are nonetheless available, as discussed below.

### **General Market Conditions**

The Study Area's location adjacent to South Norwalk's retail and entertainment core enhances its ability to capture certain potential retail business opportunities. The South Norwalk retail environment features a mix of restaurants, entertainment-related businesses (nightclubs, cinema, etc.) and specialty retail stores, with an emphasis on home furnishings stores. General market conditions in this area include the following:

- Lease rates range from approximately \$12 to \$26 per square foot on a triple-net basis. Higher-quality space occupying premium locations range from the low- to mid-\$20s, while older properties and properties at the fringes of the area occupy the lower rent ranges; most properties occupy a narrower range of \$18 to \$22.

- The area's premium retail locations are situated immediately east of the Study Area, including the east side of North Main Street and those segments of Washington, Marshall and Ann Streets lying directly east of North Main Street. Tenants feature high concentrations of restaurants, nightclubs and specialty retailers. Many of these properties occupy historic structures. On the west side of Main Street, historic building characteristics are relatively scarce, and tenants include a greater presence of lower-rent businesses such as second-hand goods dealers, personal services (cleaning, hair care, nail care, mailing, etc.) and fast food (rather than full-service) restaurants.
- With a few exceptions (e.g., Crown Theatres, Gold's Gym, Subway), most businesses in the South Norwalk area are independently owned and operated.
- Market draw area: While some businesses derive most of their sales from the local Norwalk market, many of SoNo's specialty retailers and restaurants serve a regional market trade area extending throughout western Fairfield County (extending east to communities such as Redding or Easton) and parts of Westchester County (NY).

### Market Opportunities

In evaluating the potential market support for additional retail space, the following tables and text focus on overall market demand, and the likely niches and locations suitable for the Study Area.

The following exhibits present the results of an "inflow/outflow" analysis. This analysis measures the local residents' retail spending against the sales captured by local retailers. Where the former (local spending) exceeds the latter (sales at local stores), this indicates that local residents spend more of their money outside the market area than the area's stores draw from non-local households; i.e., there is a net *outflow* of retail spending. Conversely, where local spending falls below local sales, this indicates that the area attracts a net *inflow* of spending from outside the local market.

As shown in Exhibit 12, Norwalk currently captures a net retail spending inflow, with its local stores capturing sales 47 percent in excess of local household spending (147% minus 100%). This net inflow exceeds those achieved by the Stamford-Norwalk PMSA as well as Fairfield County, reflecting the presence of regionally important retailers in Norwalk.

Exhibit 12 – Resident Non-Auto Retail Spending vs. Retail Sales (\$ millions) for Selected Trade Areas

	Norwalk City	Stamford PMSA	Fairfield County
Local Resident Retail Spending	\$715.8	\$3,111.9	\$7,424.5
Local Retail Sales	\$1,050.8	\$4,176.8	\$8,575.5
Market Capture	146.8%	134.2%	115.5%

Source: Claritas, Inc.; AGS; Bonz and Company, Inc.

Within this overall retail market, the Study Area’s strongest opportunities focus on stores in the eating and drinking, miscellaneous and home furnishings categories.

- Within the overall (non-auto) retail envelope, Norwalk achieves notable inflows in the home furnishings and miscellaneous (encompassing a broad range of specialty retail categories, including books, jewelry, flowers, cookware, etc.). These inflows reflect the concentration of businesses along Route 1 and parts of South Norwalk that serve regional clientele. These strong inflows do not necessarily indicate market oversupply or saturation. On the contrary, these inflows simply reflect a dominant regional position, and where – as here -- the market continues to support existing and new businesses, this indicates that other businesses in these categories may target Norwalk locations.
- While Norwalk’s outflows in the general merchandise and apparel categories reflect the City’s absence of major department stores and national clothing retailers, these types of retailers typically seek leased space in larger shopping centers containing at least 100,000 square feet in most cases. The Study Area may have difficulty accommodating this type of development without major changes to properties that have been able to maintain viable uses while contributing to the fabric of the South Norwalk community.
- In general, while major retail centers and the most visible portions of the Norwalk retail market are concentrated along Connecticut Avenue and Westport Avenue, South Norwalk plays a significant role as a destination location for independently operated specialty retail stores and restaurants.

*Exhibit 13 – Market Capture Rates for Selected Retail Categories*

	Norwalk <u>City</u>	Stamford <u>PMSA</u>	Fairfield <u>County</u>
Groceries	114.1%	105.3%	79.5%
General Merchandise	39.5%	39.9%	44.1%
Apparel	65.9%	80.9%	69.2%
Home Furnishings	438.4%	467.8%	376.6%
Eating & Drinking	104.7%	106.5%	101.2%
Miscellaneous	252.1%	207.5%	177.8%

*Source: Claritas, Inc.; AGS; Bonz and Company, Inc.*

### **Development Opportunities**

In identifying development opportunities for the Study Area, factors influencing the character of such opportunities include the Study Area’s:

- Limited physical capability to accommodate major retail activities and attendant parking;
- Opportunities for specialty retailers, restaurants, specialty foods and other goods and services providers, most likely occupying relatively small-scale spaces on the ground-floor levels of mixed-use buildings.
- New residential development in the Study Area will enhance retail demand while contributing to the area’s vitality and desirability for additional residents as well as retailers.

Overall, while the Study Area is not suitable for a conventional shopping center format -- which would typically feature roughly 100,000 square feet of leasable space with surface parking -- it should be able to provide appropriate spaces for smaller tenants that can complement and benefit from the nearby critical mass of restaurants, entertainment businesses, and specialty-oriented stores.

Within the Study Area, preferred retail locations would target ground-floor spaces at high (pedestrian and/or vehicular) traffic areas, either within newly configured structures or at strategic access points. In general, such locations should target the traffic ingress/egress points connecting the Webster Street block to Washington Street or Main Street; locations along Martin Luther King offer less desirable locations from a leasing perspective.

## Appendix B - Parking Proforma

This section contains a series of tables comprising proforma information for Parking Garage No.1. The tables show projected operating expenses, financing costs and revenues for the garage as if it were built as a stand-alone facility without any supporting development and/or any associated public improvements such as the new street and pedestrian way, etc. The effect of proposed supporting development is discussed in Chapter 4.

Note that in the financial analyses contained in this section, debt service has been shown as a level annual payment over a twenty-five-year period assuming a 5 percent interest rate. In actuality, final bond financing may result in a stream of uneven payments. Any fluctuations in actual annual payment levels will depend on the final strategy adopted for financing the parking facilities analyzed in this section.

The fact of the matter is that debt service payments related to the development of parking garages can be structured many different ways. In the end, structuring debt service payments is usually driven by the financial needs and restrictions of the respective entity responsible for the debt service.

For example, some municipalities or authorities may not have the initial revenues required to make an annual interest and principal payment. In cases such as this you can structure the debt service so that over the first few years only interest payments on the money borrowed are made. As a result, when interest and principal payments are made they will be relatively larger since the period of time payment is applied to principal is less. This method is referred to as back-end loading the debt service.

Conversely, if a municipality, authority or other owner/operator is capable of making principal and interest payments from year one, they may want to front-end load the debt service so that more money is paid during the first years of the debt service resulting in lesser payments as the loan comes to an end, thus freeing up revenues to build additional facilities as time requires.

Since the precise strategy for the Webster Block parking facilities is as yet undecided, for purposes of illustration in his preliminary phase of this project, Desman Associates has laid out debt service as consistent annual principal and interest payments to show what the financing looks like generally. It is also important to remember that the longer payment is deferred, the more interest will be paid.

**Table B.1 – Garage No. 1 – Stand Alone Cost Assumptions**

<b>Parking Type</b>	<b>No. Spaces</b>	<b>Cost per Space</b>	<b>Total</b>
Below Grade Structure	240	\$22,000	\$5,280,000
Above Grade Structure	510	\$16,000	\$8,160,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>750</b>		<b>\$13,440,000</b>

Note: Includes both hard and soft costs

**Table B.2 – Garage No. 1 – Estimated Debt Service**

<b>Year of Operation</b>	<b>Estimated Income</b>	<b>Estimated Expense</b>	<b>Debt Service Payment</b>	<b>Profit or (Shortfall)</b>
1	\$1,245,000	368,200	942,827	(66,027)
2	\$1,245,000	378,196	942,827	(76,023)
3	\$1,245,000	388,492	942,827	(86,319)
4	\$1,245,000	399,097	942,827	(96,924)
5	\$1,571,625	410,020	942,827	218,778
6	\$1,571,625	421,270	942,827	207,528
7	\$1,571,625	432,858	942,827	195,940
8	\$1,571,625	444,794	942,827	184,004
9	\$1,571,625	457,088	942,827	171,710
10	\$1,571,625	469,750	942,827	159,048
11	\$1,571,625	482,793	942,827	146,005
12	\$1,571,625	496,227	942,827	132,571
13	\$1,571,625	510,064	942,827	118,734
14	\$1,571,625	524,315	942,827	104,483
15	\$1,571,625	538,995	942,827	89,803
16	\$1,571,625	554,115	942,827	74,683
17	\$1,571,625	569,688	942,827	59,110
18	\$1,571,625	585,729	942,827	43,069
19	\$1,571,625	602,251	942,827	26,547
20	\$1,571,625	619,268	942,827	9,530
21	\$1,571,625	636,796	942,827	(7,998)
22	\$1,571,625	654,850	942,827	(26,052)
23	\$1,571,625	673,446	942,827	(44,648)
24	\$1,571,625	692,599	942,827	(63,801)
25	\$1,571,625	712,327	942,827	(83,529)



**Table B.3 – Garage No.1 - Estimated Annual Operations Costs**

Operating Expense  
(3% Increase Per Year Based on Congressional Budget Office CPI Data)

Estimate of Annual Operating Expense	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 7	Year 10
<b>SALARIES</b>							
(All Estimates Rounded to the Nearest Dollar)							
Security Service	150,000	154,500	159,135	163,909	168,826	179,108	195,716
Professional Services (Including Municipal Management Oversight)	75,000	77,250	79,568	81,955	84,413	89,554	97,858
Services Total	<b>225,000</b>	<b>231,750</b>	<b>238,703</b>	<b>245,864</b>	<b>253,239</b>	<b>268,662</b>	<b>293,574</b>
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS</b>							
**Payroll (Attendant Labor) (Included in Professional Services)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Payroll Total:	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>REPAIR &amp; MAINTENANCE</b>							
Snow Removal	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Repair & Maintenance	10,000	10,300	10,609	10,927	11,255	11,941	13,048
Maintenance Reserve (structural)	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
Equipment Maintenance	33,200	34,196	35,222	36,279	37,367	39,643	43,318
Repair & Maintenance Total:	<b>78,200</b>	<b>79,496</b>	<b>80,831</b>	<b>82,206</b>	<b>83,622</b>	<b>86,583</b>	<b>91,366</b>
<b>OTHER OPERATIONAL EXPENSES</b>							
Electric Service	22,000	22,660	23,340	24,040	24,761	26,269	28,705
Water Service	3,500	3,605	3,713	3,825	3,939	4,179	4,567
Sewer Service	2,000	2,060	2,122	2,185	2,251	2,388	2,610
Waste Disposal Service	3,500	3,605	3,713	3,825	3,939	4,179	4,567
Telephone Service	1,000	1,030	1,061	1,093	1,126	1,194	1,305
Insurance	12,000	12,360	12,731	13,113	13,506	14,329	15,657
Printing Services (Dispenser Tickets)	20,000	20,600	21,218	21,855	22,510	23,881	26,095
Office Supplies	1,000	1,030	1,061	1,093	1,126	1,194	1,305
Other Operational Expenses Total:	<b>65,000</b>	<b>66,950</b>	<b>68,959</b>	<b>71,027</b>	<b>73,158</b>	<b>77,613</b>	<b>84,810</b>
<b>Grand Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$368,200</b>	<b>\$378,196</b>	<b>\$388,492</b>	<b>\$399,097</b>	<b>\$410,020</b>	<b>\$432,858</b>	<b>\$469,750</b>
Cost per space (750) per year	<b>\$491</b>	<b>\$504</b>	<b>\$518</b>	<b>\$532</b>	<b>\$547</b>	<b>\$577</b>	<b>\$626</b>

\* Equipment Maintenance Includes:

*Elevator Maintenance Contract*

2 cars @ \$550.00 per car per month/\$13,200 annually

*Revenue Control Maintenance Contract*

5% X total initial installation cost/estimated at \$250,000 = \$12,500

\*\*Administrative Cost Includes:

N/A - Contracted management

**Table B.4 – Garage No.1 – Estimated Annual Revenues**

Year 1-4		Turnover	Spaces				
Parking User Group	No. of Spaces	Rate	Sold	Rate	Time		Gross Revenue
Monthly	525	0.0	525	\$125.00	12 months		\$787,500
Transients (weekdays)	225	2.5	506	\$3.00	250 days		\$379,500
Transients (Saturdays)	250	2.0	500	\$3.00	52 days		\$78,000
<b>Net Total Sum:</b>							<b>\$1,245,000</b>

Year 5-10 (10% Rate Increase in 5th Year)		Turnover	Spaces				
Parking User Group	No. of Spaces	Rate	Sold	Rate	Time		Gross Revenue
Commuters/Monthly	525	0.0	550	\$137.50	12 months		\$907,500
Transients (weekdays)	225	3.0	675	\$3.30	250 days		\$556,875
Transients (Saturdays)	250	2.5	625	\$3.30	52 days		\$107,250
<b>Net Total Sum:</b>							<b>\$1,571,625</b>

1. Transient turnover rates *do not* account for shared usage capability of monthly spaces during normal business hours only for turnover of spaces allocated for transient use
2. Monthly rate projections *do not* account for monthly oversell percentages that may be possible based on the unique characteristics of this user group
3. Weekday transient revenue based on \$1.00 per hour with a 3-hour average length of stay
4. Weekend transient revenue based on a \$1.00 per hour with \$10.00 maximum, Saturdays only and assumes on-street parking enforced from 8:00 AM to 10:00 PM. 3-hr average stay
5. No account (reduction) has been made for validated parking

## **Appendix C – Meeting Notes**

## *Development Committee Workshop No. 1 – Meeting Minutes*

**Date:** July 24, 2003

**Location:** Norwalk City Hall Community Room

**Present:**

Brian Bartholomew	Desman Associates
Keith Brown	Condron-Brown Builders
Jack Burritt	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
Oliver Gillham	SEA Consultants, Inc.
Kathryn Hebert	Norwalk DPW
Alanna Kabel	Norwalk Office of the Mayor
Nicolas Pacella	South Norwalk Business Association
Dick Paik	Bonz & Company, Inc.
Ed Schmidt	Norwalk Office of the Mayor
Timothy Sheehan	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
Burton Shatz	Norwalk Parking Authority
Michael Wrinn	Norwalk Planning and Zoning
Judith Rivas	Norwalk Common Council
Chris Perone	Norwalk Common Council
Amy Jimenez	Norwalk Parking Authority
Munro Johnson	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
Michael Moore	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
John Nickerson	The Advocate Newspapers
Robert Koch	The Hour Newspapers

**Subject:** Workshop No. 1 with Webster Street Block Development Committee and the SEA Consulting team.

### **1. Introductions**

Alanna Kabel opened the meeting, introduced the consulting team, the members of the Development Committee, and turned the meeting over to Oliver Gillham, the SEA team's Project Manager, for a presentation of consulting team's mission and their initial views on the project.

### **2. Study Area & Project Scope**

Oliver Gillham described study area and project scope.

Study area: The study area is bounded roughly by Madison Street, Martin Luther King (MLK) Drive, North Main Street, and the Northeast Corridor Rail right-of-way. The study area also includes a part of a block bounded by Flax Hill Road, West Washington Street, MLK Drive and Clay Street (see attached map). The principal focus of the study is the so-called Webster Street

Block – a “superblock” formed by the South Norwalk Urban Renewal Plan that consolidated three blocks formerly separated by Webster and Franklin Streets. Both streets were vacated in the process.

Scope of the study: Parking in the study area is presently inadequate. The SEA team is charged with studying the feasibility of developing a parking garage of approximately 800 spaces on the Webster Street Block. That number is based on a previous study by Allan Davis Associates completed in 2000, and may be modified by the work of the new study. The team is also to examine the feasibility of new mixed-use development along the MLK Drive edge of the Webster Block. This development is to be principally housing - including both market rate and affordable units - with some minor amounts of retail and, possibly, office use. It is intended by the City that the new development (through leveraging City-owned land) be capable of assisting in financials of building the new parking facility. The main mission of the consulting team is to create a consensus-based master plan for the study area that includes the above elements, and that is based on sound financials.

### **3. Planning Process**

Oliver Gillham presented the planning process that the team expects to undergo with the Development Committee and the public at large (see attached chart). The process is organized around four workshops with the Development Committee (of which this meeting is the first) and three public gatherings. The study effort is grouped basically into three phases as follows:

- Phase I – Data Gathering and Inventory - information gathering and interviews with key project stakeholders
- Phase II – Programming – work up of alternate parking and development programs for the site that meet preliminary urban planning and financial screening criteria.
- Phase III – Plan Alternatives - development and testing of three conceptual plans for the study area.

### **4. Project Schedule**

The project started July 21 and will end on December 30, with the delivery of a draft report. Development Committee Workshops are scheduled for July 24, September 4, October 9 and November 20. Public Gatherings are scheduled for September 11, October 16 and December 4. The attached Project Schedule provides a graphic description of study tasks and project timeline.

### **5. Site Issues**

Oliver Gillham presented a diagram of SEA’s current understanding of the site issues affecting the study area (see attached plan).

- The Webster Street lot is the main parking reservoir for SoNo.

- The Webster Block is SoNo's main visual gateway from I-95 and Route 7 via West and Fairfield Avenues. It is also the functional gateway to the district if you park there.
- The image of the block is not consistent with the neighboring historic district.
- All the principal visual corners of the Webster Block are underutilized or lack appropriate activity.
- The parking lot itself presents a bleak and littered introduction to SoNo.
- Parking is confusing with the present mix of metered, permit and reserved spaces
- The urban renewal Plan and subsequent leases and agreements cloud the Webster Block. Issues include parking commitments and rights of utility easements. The redevelopment Agency is working with their counsel to summarize these issues.
- Pedestrian access to and from the lot varies from good (old Webster Street) to poor (way next to Avrick's and the access way from Washington Street).
- The block immediately to the south of the Webster Block containing Klaff's, the Post Office, the Library and SNET may offer a solution for some of the parking demand if the Postal service site can be used for public parking.

## 6. Selected Questions to be Studied

Some of the key questions to be studied in the process will include the number and type of parking spaces to be provided and what they will cost to build and operate. This will affect what the customer or tenant must be charged. Currently, new parking garages must charge between \$1,300 and 1,500 per year per space to be feasible to construct. This is a considerable change from what is being charged at the Webster Street lot today. That raises the question as to whether the housing and mixed-use development, using the leverage provided by City-owned land, can help to subsidize parking construction, bringing costs down. These key questions and others are summarized in the attached figure "Selected Issues to be Studied."

## 7. Discussion

Following the presentation, the following points were raised and discussed:

- Will the SEA team be investigating possible pedestrian connections to the train station? The answer is yes, both along MLK Drive, Madison Street, Monroe/South Main and possibly making recommendations as to future access beside the rail right-of-way as well.
- The team should also be making recommendations about short-term quick fixes to the existing lot that might be made. Brian Bartholomew mentioned the idea of going to a gated system with magnetic cards for a designated permit holder area. Existing locations of short and long-term parking might also be investigated, as well as signage, identity, appearance, enforcement and security. The City has an RFP out for a consolidated parking operator, which may address some of these issues. The operator is expected to be on board in October.
- The number of metered, or public use spaces, versus leased or permit/reserved spaces needs to be investigated as part of the parking program for the site. A certain number of leased spaces may be necessary for bonding.

- The Library was discussed. It was agreed that the library is an important community center in this location, and will become only more so as new housing is built in the area. An addition is being considered.
- Could the SNET facility be addressed? Does it need to stay where it is? The answer is that their facility is a main switching operation and would be extremely costly to move – especially given all the lines feeding into that location. However, the team might explore whether it is possible to build something next to it, or around it. Any such recommendation would require negotiations with SNET.
- There is currently no convenient parking for the post office. There is a 15-minute zone right outside their building, but people are always double parking, or parking in illegal spaces.
- Back versus front entrances. U.S. Boat currently is closed to Washington Street and opens onto the parking lot. What should the future condition of retail on the block be? If the street is busy enough, than the shops facing it are likely to provide both front and back entrances for fear of losing traffic. Right now the west end of Washington (where U.S. Boat is) is not particularly busy. Perhaps parking could be put back on the north side of the street in this location.
- Public Space. Several people suggested that some sort of public square or plaza space in the middle of the block could make sense – especially with restaurants and stores opening onto it. This idea needs to be addressed in the context of how much can fit on the site, and which direction the retail faces. One idea that was suggested is to consider making a new public street between the Washington Street and MLK Drive entrances to the lot. This might be the public space with new retail fronting along the new street. Such an idea would help to break up the “superblock” and might hearken back to the old street pattern that existed before urban renewal.
- Emergency access will have to be accommodated in any case from Washington and North Main Streets and MLK Drive.
- The Washington Street access point is presently too narrow to permit two-way traffic and a sidewalk. That is because about half of the access way is owned by the building at 17 Washington Street. It is currently used for parking and may eventually be built upon.

**8. Amended Meeting Schedule**

Committee members present and voting approved an amended Webster Superblock Development Committee meeting schedule as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
September 4, 2003	5:30 pm	Norwalk City Hall, Room 231
September 11, 2003/Public Gathering	7:30 pm	Norwalk City Hall, Community Room
October 9, 2003	5:30 pm	Norwalk City Hall, Room 231

October 16, 2003/Public Gathering  
November 20, 2003  
December 4, 2003

7:30 pm  
5:30 pm  
7:30 pm

Norwalk City Hall, Community Room  
Norwalk City Hall, Room 231  
Norwalk City Hall, Common Council

## **9. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.



## *Development Committee Workshop No. 2 – Meeting Minutes*

**September 4, 2003**

**Location:** Norwalk City Hall – Room 231

**Present:**

Brian Bartholomew	Desman Associates
Keith Brown	Condron-Brown Builders
Jack Burritt	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
Oliver Gillham	SEA Consultants, Inc.
Michael Greene	Norwalk Planning and Zoning
Kathryn Hebert	Norwalk DPW
Alanna Kabel	Norwalk Office of the Mayor
Alex Knopp	Mayor of Norwalk
Nicolas Pacella	South Norwalk Business Association
Dick Paik	Bonz & Company, Inc.
Ed Schmidt	Norwalk Office of the Mayor
Timothy Sheehan	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
Burton Shatz	Norwalk Parking Authority
Judith Rivas	Norwalk Common Council
Robert Koch	The Hour Newspapers

**Subject:** Workshop No. 2 with Webster Street Block Development Committee and the SEA Consulting team.

### **1. Introduction**

Alanna Kabel opened the meeting, introduced the consulting team, the members of the Development Committee, and turned the meeting over to Oliver Gillham, the SEA team's Project Manager, for a presentation of the results of Phase I of the study effort.

### **2. Process and Schedule**

Oliver Gillham reviewed the planning process and the project schedule. The process and schedule have been revised so that draft reports will now be delivered after the Development Committee Workshops and the public gatherings in each phase. This has been done in order to allow incorporation of input from the Development Committee and the public into the reports.

### **3. Phase I Results**

Oliver Gillham presented the following preliminary findings from Phase I of the Webster Street Planning and Urban Design Study:

## A. Project Context

Project Location: The Study Area is located at the gateway to South Norwalk, forming a critical juncture between the SoNo historic district and major urban revitalization zones to the north and south.

Project Site: The study area is made up of three blocks created by the 1960's *South Norwalk Urban Renewal Plan*. These include the Webster Street Superblock, the Madison Block immediately to the south, and the Clay Block, across Martin Luther King Drive from the Madison Block.

Land Use and Zoning: The Study Area forms a predominantly commercial seam between the mixed-use waterfront district containing SoNo to the east, and a series of residential neighborhoods to the west. The Study Area is currently zoned SNBD (South Norwalk Business District).

Site Considerations: The Webster Block is crossed by a major sanitary sewer and an active telephone duct bank. These utilities will have to be accommodated or relocated. Property ownership patterns together with obligations created by the South Norwalk Urban Renewal Plan and subsequent agreements will also affect plans for the site. These obligations and agreements are currently under study.

Vehicular Access: The Study Area is marked by heavy peak hour traffic volumes and average to low levels of service at major intersections. No data is presently available for the intersection at Martin Luther King Drive and Washington Street. Existing entry/exit points to/from the Webster Lot are probably more or less fixed due to queuing at existing intersections. A detailed traffic analysis of streets and intersections in the Study Area will be needed at some point. The City may choose to do this work in parallel with or following the Webster Block study.

Pedestrian and Transit Access: The Study Area is served by the Wheels system and the South Norwalk Train Station. Pedestrian access problems exist in the alleyways next to 17 Washington Street and Avrick Furniture and at the intersection of Washington Street and Martin Luther King Drive.

Wayfinding: no unified parking or pedestrian signage system was observed either in the Study Area or in surrounding districts.

User Experience: the existing Webster Lot appears confusing, feels "unsafe" in places, presents pedestrian and auto conflicts, has a generally poor image and provides uneven access to the surrounding district.

Historic Context: the study area is bordered on the east by the Washington Street Historic District, which contains many fine examples of commercial and industrial architecture and transportation structures from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The aesthetics of this era are a strong influence throughout South Norwalk.

## ***B. Existing Parking***

Inventory: An inventory of existing parking in the Study Area performed by SEA on July 29, 2003 counted 612 parking spaces in the Webster Lot. Of these, 35 are private, 81 are reserved, 357 are permit, 94 are two-hour meter and 45 are 10-hour meter. Including other blocks in the Study Area and on street parking in the count yields a total of 867 total parking spaces. Of these, 124 are private, 81 are reserved, 445 are permit, 9 are 15 minute unmetered, 138 are two-hour meter, 45 are 10-hour meter, and 25 are unstriped and unmetered.

Existing Parking Rates: Meters currently charge \$0.25 per hour. Passes for permit spaces, which are “first come/first serve” can be purchased for \$240 per year. Passes for reserved spaces can be purchased for \$480 per year.

Phase II Analysis: Brian Bartholomew of Desman Associates summarized the work that will be carried out in the next phase of the study. *The South Norwalk Parking Study*, completed in 1999 by Allan Davis Associates, Inc. is being used as the principal source of information on parking for the *Webster Street Block Planning and Urban Design Study*. During Phase II of the current project, the SEA team will develop an update of *The South Norwalk Parking Study* that will revisit previous estimates of parking demand for the Study Area, analyze the potential for shared parking use on the Webster Block, and develop a range of parking programs to be based on future development scenarios for the Study Area.

## ***C. Market Conditions***

Dick Paik of Bonz & Company, Inc. summarized the results of market research conducted to date:

Economic Context: Given Norwalk’s strategic location for business and transportation, new development properties in the City and the Study Area offer opportunities to capture significant shares of the region’s employment and potentially exceed projected demographic growth.

Market-Rate Housing: In general, the Study Area offers potentially viable opportunities for the development of new market-rate apartments as well as condominiums in mid-rise, multi-family configurations. Overall, the local apartment and condominium market benefits from the Study Area’s strategic location, the South Norwalk environment, and a market characterized by price appreciation and a growing number of affluent empty nester households.

Affordable Housing: Relatively high median income levels combined with increasing home prices in the region makes provision of affordable housing a critical priority in Norwalk. Affordable housing is needed to accommodate large segments of the local labor force and key sectors of the Norwalk community that are being priced out of the local housing market. Mixed-income projects have proven beneficial to virtually all parties, including: low- and moderate-income residents, market-rate residents, developers and communities.

Retail Market: Overall, while the Study Area is not likely to support large-scale shopping-center-style retail development, well-situated spaces with high visibility and convenient access to parking should be able to support a general increase in the smaller-scale specialty retail tenancies that characterize SoNo.

Office Market: Given prevailing market weakness and the volume of likely competition from Reed/Putnam, large-scale office development does not offer a likely development opportunity for the Study Area. Smaller professional office and other types of similar space will continue to offer opportunities in the Webster Block area.

#### 4. Next Steps

During Phase II of *The Webster Street Block Planning and Urban Design Study*, the SEA team will prepare an update of Study Area parking demand using the findings of *The South Norwalk Parking Study* as a basis for new analysis. The consulting team will then work with the Development Committee and City Staff to determine the potential feasibility of a range of alternative parking, housing and mixed-use development scenarios for the Webster Block Study Area.

#### 5. Discussion

Following the presentation, the following points were raised and discussed:

- What types of financing mechanisms will be investigated? While it is still too early to tell at this stage, the basic thrust of the study is likely to focus on the development value of the City-owned land on the Webster Block. Sale or lease of the land along the edge of Martin Luther King (MLK) Drive to a housing developer could help to generate cash for the construction of parking on the site. This could reduce the amount of financing needed to build a garage, and, in turn, the amount of revenue required for debt service. Another approach might be a developer agreement, whereby a developer agrees to build the garage for the Parking Authority in return for securing needed parking spaces for new development. Other components may include securing commitments for leased spaces in the garage from adjoining property owners sufficient to guarantee a revenue stream adequate to finance the construction of the garage.
- Klaff's is an important magnet in the district, and could form the basis for attracting related home design stores in the area, if adequate floor plates (e.g., 20,000 square feet or higher) could be provided through new construction or combining existing smaller spaces. This might also be big enough to attract an apparel retailer like The Gap.
- 17 Washington Street, and the stores next to it were mentioned as possible candidates that could provide larger floor plates.
- Greater turnover is needed at existing metered spaces. This could be achieved through better enforcement. Central multi-space meters are another alternative to be investigated. Such an approach could also help with parking rates in the district. Central meters could

be programmed so that longer stays pay relatively higher hourly rates, while shorter stays pay less.

- How much of the existing parking in the Webster Lot is taken up by 50 Washington Street? The answer is not clear-cut. Tenants in 50 Washington Street currently pay for 444 passes including both permit and reserved spaces. However, passes are oversold (a standard industry practice). There are also the permit spaces on the Clay Block across the street from the Webster Lot. Because of the building’s relatively urban location, tenants at 50 Washington Street may also be more likely to use transit and/or walk to work than tenants at a more traditional suburban location like Merritt Seven.
- Are any special transit funds available that might help this project? TEA-21 funds may be available in some form, but transit funding in general appears to be diminishing rather than increasing. The current transportation reauthorization bill under consideration in Congress is called T-3. Action on that bill is expected to begin in September. Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding was one source that might have been useful under TEA-21. It is not presently clear what will happen to this program in T-3. Transportation enhancement funds, which might also play a role, have so far been retained. Enhancement funds have been used to help build new trails, sidewalks and bike paths, and to restore existing transportation facilities including historic railroad stations. Enhancement funds have also been used to finance significant community-oriented transportation projects that provide more travel options while helping to stimulate local economies.
- There should be a survey of passengers at the SoNo train station to see where they are coming from and going to. People are commuting between Stamford and Norwalk currently. Metro-North may have some information – at least on overall ridership at different stations.
- How should people get to and from the South Norwalk train station? The police station and other improvements will help the existing route along Monroe and South Main Streets. Is another route needed – for example beside the westerly track embankment? There are different opinions on this issue.

**6. Amended Meeting Schedule**

The Webster Superblock Development Committee meeting schedule remains as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
September 10, 2003/Public Gathering	7:30 pm	Norwalk City Hall, Community Room
October 9, 2003	5:30 pm	Norwalk City Hall, Room 231
October 16, 2003/Public Gathering	7:30 pm	Norwalk City Hall, Community Room
November 20, 2003	5:30 pm	Norwalk City Hall, Room 231
December 4, 2003/Public Gathering	7:30 pm	Norwalk City Hall, Common Council

**7. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

## ***Public Gathering No. 1 - Meeting Minutes***

**September 10, 2003**

**Location:** Norwalk City Hall Community Room

**Present:** Attendance list maintained at the Mayor's Office.

**Subject:** Public Gathering No. 1 - Presentation of Phase I results: Project Inventory and Analysis.

### **1. Introduction**

Mayor Alex Knopp opened the meeting with introductory remarks. The Mayor noted that South Norwalk has become nationally famous as a highly successful urban revitalization project that pioneered the use of historic resources as a foundation for rebirth. The process of revitalization in Norwalk is continuing with the recent Wall Street plan, the ongoing Reed/Putnam project, the planned Mid-Harbor study and the Webster Block project, which is just getting under way. All of these elements are planned to fit together into a new City wide master plan that will be a leading example of the legislation for community master-planning that he sponsored while in the State Legislature. Mayor Knopp emphasized the public nature of the Webster Block project. All meetings are open to the public, and no meetings will ever be held "behind closed doors" without the public and the press being invited to attend. Mayor Knopp then introduced the consulting team, and turned the presentation over to Oliver Gillham, SEA's Project Manager for the Webster Street Block feasibility study, for a presentation of the results of Phase I of the study effort.

### **2. Process and Schedule**

Oliver Gillham reviewed the planning process and the project schedule. The planning process is aimed at maximizing public participation through four workshops with a project-specific Development Committee chaired by the Mayor and the Chairman of the Redevelopment Agency and three public gatherings, of which this is the first. The study effort is grouped basically into three phases as follows:

- a. Phase I – Data Gathering, Inventory & Analysis - information gathering, analysis and interviews with key project stakeholders
- b. Phase II – Programming – generation of alternate parking and development programs for the site that meet preliminary urban planning and financial screening criteria.
- c. Phase III – Plan Alternatives - development and testing of up to three conceptual plans for the study area.

The project started July 21 and will end on December 30, with the delivery of a draft report. Development Committee Workshops are scheduled for July 24, September 4, October 9 and November 20. Public Gatherings are scheduled for September 10, October 16 and December 4. The attached Project Schedule provides a graphic description of study tasks and project timeline.

### 3. Phase I Results

Oliver Gillham presented the following preliminary findings from Phase I of the Webster Street Planning and Urban Design Study:

#### A. Project Context

Project Location: The Study Area is located at the gateway to South Norwalk, forming a critical juncture between the SoNo historic district and major urban revitalization zones to the north and south.

Project Site: The study area is made up of three blocks created by the 1960's *South Norwalk Urban Renewal Plan*. These include the Webster Street Superblock, the Madison Block immediately to the south, and the Clay Block, across Martin Luther King Drive from the Madison Block.

Land Use and Zoning: The Study Area forms a predominantly commercial seam between the mixed-use waterfront district containing SoNo to the east, and a series of residential neighborhoods to the west. The Study Area is currently zoned SNBD (South Norwalk Business District).

Site Considerations: The Webster Block is crossed by a major sanitary sewer and an active telephone duct bank. These utilities will have to be accommodated or relocated. Property ownership patterns together with obligations created by the South Norwalk Urban Renewal Plan and subsequent agreements will also affect plans for the site. These obligations and agreements are currently under study.

Vehicular Access: The Study Area is marked by heavy peak hour traffic volumes and average to low levels of service at major intersections. No data is presently available for the intersection at Martin Luther King Drive and Washington Street. Existing entry/exit points to/from the Webster Lot are probably more or less fixed due to queuing at existing intersections. A detailed traffic analysis of streets and intersections in the Study Area will be needed at some point. The City may choose to do this work in parallel with or following the Webster Block study.

Pedestrian and Transit Access: The Study Area is served by the Wheels system and the South Norwalk Train Station. Pedestrian access problems exist in the alleyways next to 17 Washington Street and Avrick Furniture and at the intersection of Washington Street and Martin Luther King Drive.

Wayfinding: no unified parking or pedestrian signage system was observed either in the Study Area or in surrounding districts.

User Experience: the existing Webster Lot appears confusing, feels “unsafe” in places, presents pedestrian and auto conflicts, has a generally poor image and provides uneven access to the surrounding district.

Historic Context: the study area is bordered on the east by the Washington Street Historic District, which contains many fine examples of commercial and industrial architecture and transportation structures from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The aesthetics of this era are a strong influence throughout South Norwalk.

## ***B. Existing Parking***

Inventory: An inventory of existing parking in the Study Area performed by SEA on July 29, 2003 counted 612 parking spaces in the Webster Lot. Of these, 35 are private, 81 are reserved, 357 are permit, 94 are two-hour meter and 45 are 10-hour meter. Including other blocks in the Study Area and on street parking in the count yields a total of 867 total parking spaces. Of these, 124 are private, 81 are reserved, 445 are permit, 9 are 15 minute unmetered, 138 are two-hour meter, 45 are 10-hour meter, and 25 are unstriped and unmetered.

Existing Parking Rates: Meters currently charge \$0.25 per hour. Passes for permit spaces, which are “first come/first serve” can be purchased for \$240 per year. Passes for reserved spaces can be purchased for \$480 per year.

Phase II Analysis: Brian Bartholomew of Desman Associates summarized the work that will be carried out in the next phase of the study. *The South Norwalk Parking Study*, completed in 1999 by Allan Davis Associates, Inc. is being used as the principal source of information on parking for the *Webster Street Block Planning and Urban Design Study*. During Phase II of the current project, the SEA team will develop an update of *The South Norwalk Parking Study* that will revisit previous estimates of parking demand for the Study Area, analyze the potential for shared parking use on the Webster Block, and develop a range of parking programs to be based on future development scenarios for the Study Area.

## ***C. Market Conditions***

Dick Paik of Bonz & Company, Inc. summarized the results of market research conducted to date:

Economic Context: Given Norwalk’s strategic location for business and transportation, new development properties in the City and the Study Area offer opportunities to capture significant shares of the region’s employment and potentially exceed projected demographic growth.

Market-Rate Housing: In general, the Study Area offers potentially viable opportunities for the development of new market-rate apartments as well as condominiums in mid-rise, multi-family configurations. Overall, the local apartment and condominium market benefits from the Study Area’s



strategic location, the South Norwalk environment, and a market characterized by price appreciation and a growing number of affluent empty nester households.

Affordable Housing: Relatively high median income levels combined with increasing home prices in the region makes provision of affordable housing a critical priority in Norwalk. Affordable housing is needed to accommodate large segments of the local labor force and key sectors of the Norwalk community that are being priced out of the local housing market. Mixed-income projects have proven beneficial to virtually all parties, including: low- and moderate-income residents, market-rate residents, developers and communities.

Retail Market: Overall, while the Study Area is not likely to support large-scale shopping-center-style retail development, well-situated spaces with high visibility and convenient access to parking should be able to support a general increase in the smaller-scale specialty retail tenancies that characterize SoNo.

Office Market: Given prevailing market weakness and the volume of likely competition from Reed/Putnam, large-scale office development does not offer a likely development opportunity for the Study Area. Smaller professional office and other types of similar space will continue to offer opportunities in the Webster Block area.

#### 4. Next Steps

During Phase II of *The Webster Street Block Planning and Urban Design Study*, the SEA team will prepare an update of Study Area parking demand using the findings of *The South Norwalk Parking Study* as a basis for new analysis. The consulting team will then work with the Development Committee and City Staff to determine the potential feasibility of a range of alternative parking, housing and mixed-use development scenarios for the Webster Block Study Area.

#### 5. Discussion

Following the presentation, the following points were raised and discussed:

- How much will parking costs go up in the Webster Lot in order finance a garage? How will poor people that have to park there be affected? Prices will go up, but it is too soon to tell by how much or for whom, should building a garage prove feasible. Prices will also be affected by the degree to which the garage can be subsidized by adjoining new development. A shared use analysis is also needed to determine how short-term and evening parking costs will be affected. Additionally, the City is in the process of hiring a parking operator for all City-owned parking, and the operator will be working with the City to set prices in the near term.
- Mayor Knopp added that there is currently a “buy-out” program whereby new businesses can pay the city cash in lieu of providing parking spaces. The Mayor believes the price

per space (currently \$15,000) may be too high, and may prevent some small businesses from being able to get a start in the City.

- Several questions were asked about the retail market. The size of and type of typical retail establishments that may be attracted to this area remains to be determined. However, it is the consultant's opinion that retail will not be the "driving" use on this site – that is, the site is not likely to become a major regional shopping center. It is considered more likely that housing will constitute the majority of new development in the study area.
- Mayor Knopp emphasized that "big box" retail would not be appropriate for the character of SoNo. People come to SoNo to seek an alternative to that type of suburban environment. That is part of the district's success.
- What will be the impact of plans for the Webster Block on South Main Street? In all likelihood, additional parking in the Webster Study Area should alleviate congestion and parking in the South Main area. While the South Main Corridor is not part of the Webster Study, it was emphasized that the overall citywide master plan, of which Webster will be a part, will be a plan for all of Norwalk, including the South Main area.
- What role will the public plaza in front of 50 Washington Street play in the study? When will it be addressed? The public plaza has a very important function in connecting the eastern and western ends of Washington Street. Right now, although well landscaped, it is inactive and framed by blank walls. The plaza needs activity or "buzz" to attract people across Main Street to the western end of Washington Street. The consulting team will be investigating long and short terms solutions for this space. Short-term solutions may include programming for the space – hosting special events on the plaza on a seasonal basis, for example. Long term, solutions which might be investigated include opening restaurant or café uses from adjoining buildings out onto the site, or free-standing kiosks that provide light food service and while providing and managing movable tables and seating on the plaza. News, information, ticket vending and/or flower kiosks are other possibilities.
- The issue of providing better connections to the SoNo train station was raised. The new police station on Monroe Street may help in this regard. Better signage and public environment improvements along sidewalks and streets leading to and from the station might also be considered. Signs and information for people arriving in the area by train could be especially important.
- The meeting concluded with a restatement of what the consulting team will be coming back to the public with in October: several alternative preliminary development and parking programs for the study area, together with preliminary pro forma analyses assessing the relative economic feasibility of different scenarios.

## 6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

## *Development Committee Meeting No. 3 – Meeting Minutes*

**October 9, 2003**

**Location:** Norwalk City Hall – Room 231

**Present:**

Jose Bermudez	UHAN
Albert Bisacky	SEA Consultants, Inc.
Keith Brown	Raymond Brown Associates
John Burritt	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
Armando Gallardo	South Norwalk Business Association
Oliver Gillham	SEA Consultants, Inc.
Michael Greene	Norwalk Planning and Zoning
Tom Hamilton	Norwalk Department of Finance
Kathryn Hebert	Norwalk DPW
Munro Johnson	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
Alanna Kabel	Norwalk Office of the Mayor
Alex Knopp	Mayor of Norwalk
Bruce Morris	Norwalk Board of Education
Edmund Schmidt	Norwalk Office of the Mayor
Burton Shatz	Norwalk Parking Authority
Timothy Sheehan	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
Robert Koch	The Hour Newspapers

**Subject:** Workshop No. 3 with Webster Street Block Development Committee and the SEA Consulting team.

### **1. Introduction**

Ed Schmidt opened the meeting and turned the floor over to Oliver Gillham, the SEA team's Project Manager, for a presentation of the results of Phase II of the study effort.

### **2. Process and Schedule**

Oliver Gillham reviewed the planning process and the project schedule. The team is concluding Phase II - Preliminary Concepts - and will proceed to Phase III - Proposed Plan - following the public gathering on October 16.

### **3. Phase II Results**

Oliver Gillham presented the following preliminary findings from Phase II of the Webster Street Block Planning and Urban Design Study:

### ***A. Parking Demand Analysis***

Analysis of existing weekday and weekend parking demand for the Webster Block carried out by SEA Consultants and Desman Associates shows that peak weekday demand governs, exceeding supply by 162 spaces. This means that 774 spaces are needed to satisfy existing demand on the Webster Lot, compared to the 612 spaces available on the lot today. This is less than the 200 spaces identified by the 1999 Allan Davis Associates Study. This may be due to the fact that 88 public permit spaces on the Clay Block were added to the total study area supply following the 1999 study.

### ***B. Preliminary Development Concepts***

Oliver Gillham presented the Phase II development concept diagram for the Webster Study Area:

- A new street for both automobiles and pedestrians will bisect the Webster Superblock. The new street will serve two new parking garages.
- The Webster Street pedestrian way will be extended all the way to Martin Luther King (MLK) Drive.
- New housing and retail development will be brought into the interior of the block along the new street.
- The new circulation system will restore the traditional downtown organization of buildings fronting on streets that predominates in the adjacent SoNo Historic District.
- The new circulation system will also break down the scale of the superblock – restoring a pattern that was abandoned in the 1960's.
- This new configuration will result in a more rational pedestrian and vehicular circulation hierarchy that carries the scale and pattern of SoNo into the Webster Block.
- It is recommended that these proposals be accompanied by a new, uniform vehicular and pedestrian sign and information system.
- New housing will be three to four stories in height, with possible higher elements at significant gateway sites such as at the corner of MLK Drive and Washington Street and the corner of MLK and West Avenue.
- The plan should also look to leverage new housing and retail development over existing one-story buildings sites.
- Finally, new glass kiosks with light food service and movable tables and chairs should be considered for the plaza at 50 Washington Street, possibly with new restaurant uses in part of

the first floor of Avrick Furniture. Seasonal programming should also be considered to activate this space.

### *C. Preliminary Sketch Plans*

Oliver Gillham presented two preliminary sketch plans for the Webster Street Block: Sketch Plan A and Sketch Plan B. The following elements are common to both schemes:

- A new two-way street with sidewalks on both sides running from MLK Drive through to Washington Street
- A new pedestrian walkway along old Webster Street alignment running from North Main Street to MLK Drive.
- Two parking garages of between 500 and 600 plus cars - one west of the new street and one to the west.
- The westerly garage has an expanded ground floor footprint, taking advantage of the 10-foot grade change across the site.
- Three housing sites along MLK Drive on City-owned land comprising over 200 units, including affordable housing.
- Retail on the ground floor of both garages.
- New housing development over one-story retail buildings at privately owned sites 9 and 11 Washington Street and at 64-84 North Main Street.
- Revitalization of the plaza at 50 Washington Street.
- A clear hierarchy of vehicular and pedestrian flows. Pedestrians are directed onto streets and pedestrian ways from parking garages.

The main differences between the two schemes are:

- One housing complex in Scheme A presents a courtyard to MLK Drive.
- In Scheme B the courtyard is turned toward the interior pedestrian way.
- Scheme B also has housing as well as retail along the edges of both garages where they front the new street.

Both Schemes have a proposed first phase that would build the three residential buildings on City-owned land together with the westerly garage (Garage No. 1). About 180 spaces would remain on the easterly surface lot, together with 50 new spaces that would be created along Wash-

ington Street and Madison Street. Development of the residential buildings would utilize the value of existing City-owned land to help finance the new parking garage.

#### 4. Next Steps

During Phase III of *The Webster Street Block Planning and Urban Design Study*, the SEA team will use input from the Phase II Development Committee Workshop and the following Public Gathering to prepare a final proposed plan. That plan will then be subjected to more detailed cost and feasibility analysis to be presented at the final Development Committee Workshop and at a final Public Gathering. Input from those meetings will then be used to prepare a final draft report for the project.

#### 5. Discussion

Following the presentation, the following points were raised and discussed:

- Committee members expressed excitement about the flexibility inherent in the proposed plan phasing.
- How many parking spaces will be in the two garages? The two garages will contain about 1,200 spaces total, with between 600 and 700 spaces in the westerly garage. These numbers are preliminary and subject to change.
- What will become of the pedestrian alleyway at Avrck Furniture? Under the current development concept, the passageway at Avrck Furniture might be abandoned as a pedestrian passageway. The fire escapes for the store will be difficult to reconfigure, and the new concept places emphasis on directing visitors from garages directly onto streets or major pedestrian ways – the superblock having been divided into smaller blocks with street fronts.
- What will be the character of the service areas behind 50 Washington Street and 17 Washington Street? This has not yet been established. These service areas are clearly needed to provide service to the buildings that front on Washington Street. However, since some pedestrians will also use them, they could have high quality landscaping and paving – like the alleyways in Newburyport, MA. The character of these ways may depend in part on cost and financing as well as on the needs and desires of abutting properties.
- Will the new street be windy or in shadow? The new street has a southerly axis for part of its length, which means that at least part of the street will receive sun during part of the day even in winter. Since most of the new buildings will be relatively low, there should be little wind generated by any of the new development.
- The team should consider making the garage entrances clearly visible from the street.

- Several committee members suggested that a plaza should be introduced at the intersection of the new street and the pedestrian way – perhaps the buildings could be cut back in this location to create a special place at this key crossing. People arriving at different times and parking in different garages could say they would “meet at the plaza.” Perhaps there should be retail/restaurant uses on all four corners of the plaza.
- Will the SEA team be conducting a traffic study? No. The City may elect to do a traffic study of the proposed plan beginning now or after the plan is completed.
- Will the existing retail buildings at 9 and 11 Washington Street or at 64-84 North Main be preserved? Possibly, but it is more likely that they would be demolished and rebuilt as part of a new complex, should they be redeveloped as shown in the sketch plans.
- How high are the buildings? The buildings shown along MLK Drive are four stories tall (excluding any parking levels). The buildings at the corners might be higher: in the six-story range – or possibly slightly higher. This issue will be studied in more detail in the next phase.
- The main width constraint for the new street is posed by property ownership at 17 Washington Street, where the property line extends into the travel way. If this strip of land is not acquired, then either a two-way street with no sidewalks could be built, or a one-way street with a sidewalk. The existing electrical equipment will have to be moved in any case.
- The new “street” may not actually be a formal City street.
- The team should consider breaking Phase 1 into additional phases: the first action might be the construction of Garage No. 1 together with the two buildings at the southerly end of the MLK Drive edge of the block. This would allow surface parking to remain behind the Crown Cinema until the first garage is completed.

## 6. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

## ***Public Gathering No. 2 - Meeting Minutes***

**October 16, 2003**

**Location:** Norwalk Museum Conference Room

**Present:** Attendance list maintained at the Mayor's Office

**Subject:** Public Gathering No. 2 - Presentation of Phase II results: Preliminary Concepts.

### **1. Introduction**

Alanna Kabel welcomed the public to the meeting and introduced the consulting team. Ms. Kabel then turned the presentation over to Oliver Gillham, SEA's Project Manager for the Webster Street Block feasibility study, for a presentation of the results of Phase II of the study effort.

### **2. Process and Schedule**

Oliver Gillham reviewed the planning process and the project schedule. The study effort is grouped basically into three phases as follows:

- d. Phase I – Existing Conditions - information gathering, analysis and interviews with key project stakeholders
- e. Phase II – Preliminary Concepts – generation of alternate development concepts for the site that meet preliminary urban planning and financial screening criteria.
- f. Phase III – Proposed Plan - development and testing of a final recommended conceptual for the study area.

Gillham then reviewed the project schedule and highlighted the importance of tonight's meeting, the second Public Gathering in the process, which is intended to present Phase II findings and receive commentary from the South Norwalk Community.

### **3. Phase II Results**

Oliver Gillham presented the following preliminary findings from Phase II of the Webster Street Planning and Urban Design Study:

#### ***A. Parking Demand Analysis***

Analysis of existing weekday and weekend parking demand for the Webster Block carried out by SEA Consultants and Desman Associates shows that peak weekday demand governs, exceeding supply by 162 spaces. This means that 774 spaces are needed to satisfy existing demand on the



Webster Lot, compared to the 612 spaces available on the lot today. This is less than the 200 spaces identified by the 1999 Allan Davis Associates Study. This may be due to the fact that 88 public permit spaces on the Clay Block were added to the total study area supply following the 1999 study.

### ***B. Preliminary Development Concepts***

Oliver Gillham presented the Phase II development concept diagram for the Webster Study Area:

- A new street for both automobiles and pedestrians will bisect the Webster Superblock. The new street will serve two new parking garages.
- The Webster Street pedestrian way will be extended all the way to Martin Luther King (MLK) Drive.
- New housing and retail development will be brought into the interior of the block along the new street.
- The new circulation system will restore the traditional downtown organization of buildings fronting on streets that predominates in the adjacent SoNo Historic District.
- The new circulation system will also break down the scale of the superblock – restoring a pattern that was abandoned in the 1960's.
- This new configuration will result in a more rational pedestrian and vehicular circulation hierarchy that carries the scale and pattern of SoNo into the Webster Block.
- It is recommended that these proposals be accompanied by a new, uniform vehicular and pedestrian sign and information system.
- New housing will be three to four stories in height, with possible higher elements at significant gateway sites such as at the corner of MLK Drive and Washington Street and the corner of MLK Drive and West Avenue.
- The plan also anticipates leveraging new housing and retail development over some of the existing one-story buildings sites in the Study Area.
- Finally, new glass kiosks with light food service and movable tables and chairs should be considered for the plaza at 50 Washington Street, possibly with new restaurant uses in part of the first floor of Avrick Furniture. Seasonal programming should also be considered to activate this space.

### ***C. Preliminary Sketch Plans***

Oliver Gillham presented two preliminary sketch plans for the Webster Street Block: Sketch Plan A and Sketch Plan B. The following elements are common to both schemes:

- A new two-way street with sidewalks on both sides running from MLK Drive through to Washington Street
- A new pedestrian walkway along old Webster Street alignment running from North Main Street to MLK Drive.
- Two parking garages of between 500 and 600 plus cars - one to the west of the new street (Parking Garage No. 1) and one to the east (Parking Garage No.2).
- Parking Garage No. 1 has an expanded ground floor footprint, taking advantage of the 10-foot grade change across the site.
- Three housing sites along MLK Drive on City-owned land comprising over 200 units, including affordable housing.
- Retail on the ground floor of both garages.
- New housing development over one-story retail buildings at privately owned sites 9 and 11 Washington Street and at 64-84 North Main Street.
- Revitalization of the plaza at 50 Washington Street.
- A clear hierarchy of vehicular and pedestrian flows. Pedestrians are directed onto streets and pedestrian ways from parking garages.

The main differences between the two schemes are:

- One housing complex in Scheme A presents a courtyard to MLK Drive.
- In Scheme B the courtyard is turned toward the interior pedestrian way.
- Scheme B also has housing as well as retail along the edges of both garages where they front the new street.

Both Schemes have a proposed first phase that would build the three residential buildings on City-owned land together with Garage No. 1. About 180 spaces would remain on the easterly surface lot, together with 50 new spaces that would be created along Washington Street and Madison Street. Development of the residential buildings would utilize the value of existing City-owned land to help finance the new parking garage.

#### **4. Next Steps**

During Phase III of *The Webster Street Block Planning and Urban Design Study*, the SEA team will use input from the Phase II Development Committee Workshop and the Public Gathering to prepare a final proposed plan. That plan will then be subjected to more detailed cost and feasibility

ity analysis to be presented at the final Development Committee Workshop and at a final Public Gathering. Input from those meetings will then be used to prepare a final draft report for the project.

## 5. Discussion

Following the presentation, the following points were raised and discussed:

- The parking demand analysis shows between 0.89 and 0.9 parking spaces per unit for residential uses. A number of people felt this factor should be higher. It was explained that this factor was based on existing observations combined with historical database information on similar downtown projects. The 0.89 and 0.9 factors were the result of iterative model calibrations aimed at replicating existing observed parking occupancy curves and are thought to be an accurate reflection of current use trends in the capture area of the Webster Lot – excluding the east side of MLK Drive. However, the consulting team will be carrying a higher factor of between 1 and 2 spaces per unit in programming for new development.
- Others voiced some concern about convenience and retail visibility. It was explained that a new circulation hierarchy is being proposed in which structured parking will reduce long walking distances and direct visitors to the street system, making store visibility from the street, not the parking lot, the primary concern. All stores should have good visibility from the street in each of the proposed sketch concepts. A comprehensive sign and information system will augment wayfinding.
- Has it been decided whether the new retail will be convenience or destination retail? This has not yet been decided, but it likely that it will be a mix of the two.
- Mr. Bedusa of Bedin Realty, owner of 9, 11 and 17 Washington Street, expressed interest in the proposal for new development above 9 and 11 Washington Street. He was assured that, since this is his property, he would of necessity be closely involved in any future development on that site. Bedusa stated that what is shown in the sketch plans is similar to a development he had himself proposed several years previously – and he would like to see it happen.
- Mr. Bedusa asked when the project might get started. It estimated that the project could get started within two to five years, if the community approves the plan.
- Where will all the parking spaces go while the project is being built? This issue is still under study, and a solution to this problem will be proposed in the next phase. This is clearly a very important question, and will not be ignored. Currently, it is believed that between 250 and 300 spaces can be provided on and near the site during the construction of Garage No. 1. A solution needs to be found for the remainder of the spaces displaced during construction.
- Mr. Finger expressed concern that the concepts and sketches all create too much intensification of the site – they raise too many “urban” issues. The circulation could become a “nightmare” of conflicts. What is really needed is simply more parking. Visitors, he feels,

like the openness of the existing lot. In response, the consulting team contended that it is in fact the “urban” quality of SoNo that is its main attraction – differentiating it from Westport and other competing centers. It is this same urban quality that gives SoNo its “sizzle.” In recent years, increasing numbers of Americans across the country have begun flocking to the attractions that denser, mixed-use downtown areas provide. This fact is intrinsic to the growing popularity of the Smart Growth and New Urbanism movements across the nation. Additionally, the circulation proposed should, in fact, be far better organized than what exists today – with clearly differentiated pedestrian, vehicular and service routes. Walking distances should be shorter, and will be covered for more of their length. Currently there is no clear differentiation between different types of circulation on the lot, leading to disorientation and safety issues.

- The Chamber of Commerce expressed strong support for the plan, stating that the plan added the missing critical mass that SoNo has long needed at just the right location. The plan expands the district, creating a strong positive synergy with Washington, North and South Main Streets. However, the Chamber would also like to see higher parking factors for residential uses than those presented in the demand analysis.
- Other members of the community also expressed support for the plan. Many view higher density and mixed-use as good things for the area and friendly to pedestrians as well, while potentially discouraging automobile use. More people living as well as working in South Norwalk will also add to the sense of community in the district. Newburyport, MA was specifically mentioned as a good model for SoNo.
- Richard Moccia (candidate for Mayor) asked how the value of City land contributed to the construction of the parking garages. This question will be addressed in more detail in Phase III. However, preliminary analysis indicates that building on the City owned land will essentially “unlock” the value of this land through the development process. A developer package that includes both the housing on City land as well as construction of the first garage could be a viable option for this site.
- Won’t all the new development fill up all the new parking? No, the point of the parking demand analysis was to establish a baseline demand that will have to be met in each case before any spaces are provided for new development.
- When the garages are built, will everyone have to pay to park? Yes, but the amount will vary by day of week, time or day and type of space.
- Is the density shown being driven by financial factors alone? Financial factors are a consideration, but urban design and planning concerns have been and continue to be the main factors in establishing the density level for this site.
- If financing considerations were not a factor why would housing be recommended for this site at all? Why not just have parking here? The Webster Block is actually an excellent site for housing in the Norwalk community, and should be considered for this use in any case. The site presents a housing location that is accessible to transit and is in a walkable mixed-

use district that can significantly benefit from more housing within its limits. More people living in SoNo will help make it a 24-hour activity area with a population of permanent residents who have a stake in the district and its future. With ready access to transit and many destinations (including employment, stores and restaurants) within walking distance, housing in this location will generate far fewer automobile trips than in other, more suburban locations. This type of solution is consistent with the Smart Growth approach that is being adopted across the country by groups as diverse as the Urban Land Institute, the American Planning Association, the American Institute of Architects, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Association of Homebuilders, and the National Association of Industrial and Office properties. Housing in this location will become even more important once the office development in the Reed-Putnam District gets underway.

- How will this plan work with Uptown and what is being proposed on West Avenue? This plan one segment of the comprehensive plan being put together by the Planning Commission. Eventually the plan for the Webster Block area will be integrated into the comprehensive plan for Norwalk. Just considering Reed-Putnam alone, it is clear that housing and mixed-use development on the Webster Block will help to support office development on the Reed-Putnam site, by providing a pool of housing within convenient walking distance of a major new employment center.
- Walter Briggs, Chairman of the Planning Commission expressed strong support for the plan, especially its mixed-use and higher density aspects, which he believes will provide a significant boost to the district.

## 6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

## *Development Committee Meeting No. 4 – Meeting Minutes*

**January 8, 2004**

**Location:** Norwalk City Hall – Room 231

**Present:**

Lloyd Amster	50 Washington Street
Albert Bisacky	SEA Consultants, Inc.
Fred Brown	CVB Properties
Keith Brown	Raymond Brown Associates
Jack Chiaramonte	3 Cricketwood Road, Norwalk
John Burritt	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
Sander Davies	Norwalk Maritime Aquarium
Mark Dwyer	Citizen News
William Finger	WRF SoNo Corporation
Oliver Gillham	SEA Consultants, Inc.
Michael Greene	Norwalk Planning and Zoning
Tom Hamilton	Norwalk Department of Finance
Kathryn Hebert	Norwalk DPW
Amy Jimenez	Norwalk Parking Authority
Paul L. Jones	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
Alanna Kabel	Norwalk Office of the Mayor
Peter Kassel	15 Richmond Road, Norwalk
Robert Koch	The Hour Newspapers
Alex Knopp	Mayor of Norwalk
Bruce Morris	Norwalk Board of Education
Michael Moore	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
John Nickerson	The Advocate
John Petito	Klaff's
Donna Schlegel	South Norwalk Business Association
Edmund Schmidt	Norwalk Office of the Mayor
Burton Shatz	Norwalk Parking Authority
Tom Smith	50 Washington Street
Dave Truedson	Norwalk Maritime Aquarium

**Subject:** Workshop No. 4 with Webster Street Block Development Committee and the SEA Consulting team.

### **1. Introduction**

Alanna Kabel opened the meeting and turned the floor over to Oliver Gillham, the SEA team's Project Manager, for a presentation of the results of Phase III of the study effort.

## 2. Process

Oliver Gillham reviewed the planning process. The team is concluding Phase III – Proposed Plan - and will proceed to summarize the work of the study in a final report - following the public gathering on January 15.

## 3. Phase III Results

Oliver Gillham presented the following preliminary findings from Phase III of the Webster Street Block Planning and Urban Design Study:

### *A. Parking Demand & Development Concept*

**A.1 Parking Demand:** Gillham reviewed the Phase II analysis of peak parking demand for the Webster Lot. Analysis of existing weekday and weekend parking demand for the Webster Block carried out by SEA Consultants and Desman Associates shows that peak weekday demand governs, exceeding supply by 162 spaces. This means that 774 spaces are needed to satisfy existing demand on the Webster Lot, compared to the 612 spaces available on the lot today. This is less than the 200 spaces identified by the 1999 Allan Davis Associates Study. This may be due to the fact that 88 public permit spaces on the Clay Block were added to the total study area supply following the 1999 study.

**A.2 Development Concept:** Oliver Gillham presented the Phase II development concept diagram for the Webster Study Area:

- A new street for both automobiles and pedestrians will bisect the Webster Superblock. The new street will serve two new parking garages. The street is tentatively called Franklin Place in honor of the street that existed nearby prior to urban renewal.
- The Webster Street pedestrian way will be extended all the way to Martin Luther King (MLK) Drive. This new way is tentatively called Webster Way in honor of the street that existed along the same alignment prior to urban renewal.
- New Plaza – a new pedestrian plaza called Webster Plaza will be located at the juncture of the Webster Way and Franklin Place
- New housing and retail development will be brought into the interior of the block along Franklin Place and Webster Way.
- The new circulation system will restore the traditional downtown organization of buildings fronting on streets that predominates in the adjacent SoNo Historic District.
- The new circulation system will also break down the scale of the superblock – restoring a pattern of continuous street fronts that was abandoned in the 1960's.
- This new configuration will result in a more rational pedestrian and vehicular circulation hierarchy that carries the scale and pattern of SoNo into the Webster Block.

- The concept plan is intended as a long-term framework for a series of development phases. Phase 1 is all the City is considering at this time, and it is designed to stand-alone indefinitely without the need for any further development. In Phase 1, two large surface lots would be left between Franklin Place and existing buildings along North Main Street.

### ***B. Proposed Final Plan & Program***

Oliver Gillham presented the final Phase 1 plan and program for the Webster Block including the following elements:

- New Franklin Place, Webster Way and Webster Plaza as noted above under A.2.
- Parking Garage No. 1 with approximately 750 cars located west of Franklin Place.
- Two surface lots north and south of Webster Way, providing approximately 291 surface parking spaces along with an additional 18 surface spaces next to Garage No.1. A total of 309 surface spaces would remain on the Webster Lot at the completion of Phase I.
- Parking Garage No.1 has an expanded ground floor footprint, taking advantage of the 10-foot grade change across the site.
- Phase I includes three housing sites (A, B and D) along MLK Drive and Franklin Place on City-owned land comprising 162 units, including 10 percent affordable housing.
- Housing site A would contain 80 condominium units in a 6-7-story building, if this additional height (2-3 stories above the 4-story limit) can be approved by the City. Site B would be a 4-story rental building with 72 units, and site D, would be a 4-story building built across the face of Garage No. 1, containing 10 condominium units.
- Retail or restaurant use on the ground floors of building sites A and D.
- Revitalization of the Washington Street Public Plaza – including temporary or permanent glass kiosks with light food service and outdoor seating and tables.
- A clear hierarchy of vehicular and pedestrian flows. Pedestrians are directed onto streets and pedestrian ways from parking areas to building front doors – not to the backs of buildings fronting on the lots.
- Diagonal parking on Madison Street and new on-street parking on the north side of West Washington Street amounting to approximately 78 new on-street spaces.
- The program for Phase I is projected to add about 162 new dwelling units and about 11,000 square feet of new restaurant/retail space while providing a parking surplus of slightly over 100 spaces.



- During construction, about 240 spaces would have to be replaced on or off the site. Possibilities include valet parking remaining surface lots including those on the Webster Block and the Clay Block, using the parking facilities around SoNo Station on weekends and evenings, and other measures.

### ***C. Parking & Development Economics***

**C.1 Parking Proforma:** Norm Goldman of Desman Associates presented a proforma for a stand-alone 750-space parking garage (without any supportive development). The total cost of the garage is estimated to be about \$13.4 million. Operating expenses would be in the vicinity of \$350-400,000/year while debt service was estimated at about \$943,000 per year to cover the capital cost of building the garage. Thus the stand-alone garage would have to recoup about \$1.3 million per year through revenues alone to break even. This is the reason that the City is considering supportive development – to bring down the cost that would have to be recouped from revenues alone.

**C.2 Development Analysis:** Dick Bonz of Bonz & Company presented the methodology used to derive the residual value of typical rental and condominium developments that are being proposed for Phase I. Projects for sites A, B and D are expected to yield about \$8 million in residual value that could be placed against the cost of Garage No.1 and other public infrastructure improvements.

**C.3 Phase I Analysis:** Oliver Gillham summarized the implications of the above for Phase I:

- In addition to the \$13.4 million cost of the garage, nearly \$5 million would be required to cover the cost of other public improvements associated with the garage and Phase I.
- These include: utility relocations, the new street, pedestrian area improvements, traffic signals and other elements.
- This brings the total public cost to over \$18 million.
- Subtracting the \$8 million in support from private development, and a projected \$2.5 million grant from other non-municipal public sources would bring the total cost down to about \$7.6 million.
- Including operations the total cost to be supported by revenues would be slightly over \$900,000 per year, more than 40 percent less than the stand-alone scenario, which was analyzed without the additional required public costs.
- Thus it can be seen that the addition of private development has a significant impact on lowering garage fees.

#### ***D. Potential Future Phase II***

- While Phase I could stand on its own for an indefinite period of time, Oliver Gillham also presented plans for a possible future Phase II, should Norwalk decide to pursue further development at a later date. He noted the following:
- The plans shown are illustrative. A final plan for Phase II could differ significantly from what is shown here.
- It is anticipated that Phase II would be primarily driven by the private sector.
- Phase II would include Garage No. 2 at approximately 425-spaces with ground floor retail, and buildings C and E on City-owned land.
- Building C would be a 71-unit rental apartment building similar to Building B, but with some ground floor retail adjacent to Webster Plaza.
- Building D would be a 4-story condominium building with ground floor retail, wrapping the Franklin Place face of Garage No. 2.
- An additional contributing development on private property adjoining the site and/or a ten-year lease commitment for a significant portion of Garage No.2 spaces would be needed to support Garage No.2 and realize the plan.
- A complete build-out of public and private sites in Phase II could yield a maximum of over 23,000 square feet of net new retail/restaurant space and approximately 389 new residential units. The program would also include reconstruction of about 42,000 square feet of retail/restaurant space currently on the block, allowing for a potential repositioning of this space to accommodate tenants requiring larger floor plates.
- Reviewing total new development together with new parking spaces created reveals a net deficit of about 9 spaces in a full build-out scenario. However, the full build-out illustrated might never be realized, and the plan for Phase II could be changed to provide additional parking.
- Important elements of Phase II include continuing the effort to break down the superblock into three smaller blocks with continuous building fronts on streets or pedestrian ways, as would be more in keeping with SoNo scale. Again, major circulation would be reorganized to address buildings fronts, while service access would be relegated to landscaped service ways and courtyards in mid-block areas.

#### ***E. Conclusions***

Gillham presented the following conclusions:

- Redevelopment of the Webster Block can significantly enhance the SoNo district.

- Existing parking demand can be met while accommodating new development
- The value of City land can effectively serve to reduce the cost of new parking facilities and other public improvements.
- New development can include a significant percentage of affordable housing.
- The plan can be phased to allow a significant amount of surface parking to remain indefinitely
- The plan for the Webster Block will reinforce future development of Reed/Putnam
- When fully developed, the proposed plan will further SoNo as a mixed-use, walkable district that is amenable to transit

#### **4. Next Steps**

Gillham concluded by presenting the next steps in the process, pending a decision by the City of Norwalk to move ahead with the plan. Selected next steps could include:

- Final Report
- Decision to Proceed
- Technical Studies
  - Permitting, traffic, site survey, geotechnical, engineering, legal, financial, other
- Board Approvals
- Securing of Funding Sources
- Property Negotiations
- Issuance of Developer Packages

#### **5. Discussion**

Following the presentation, a number of points were raised and discussed. It should be noted that the first three points – concerning the adequacy of parking and retail development - were introduced by representatives and colleagues of 50 Washington Street, who are not members of the Development Committee and who had not been in attendance at previous Development Committee meetings or Public Gatherings.

- *How were the parking figures arrived at? They seem too low. Do they conform to current zoning requirements?* Current zoning requirements do not take into account the shared parking and parking “capture” characteristics of Webster Lot operations. Zoning regulations would require more than twice the number of spaces currently on the lot just to serve existing built space on the block. The analysis conducted in this study used computer modeling based on updated previous studies and new inventories of parking and vacancy rates. The modeling showed two potential peaks: weekend and weekday. Weekday peaks were found to govern. The shared characteristics were clearly reflected in the modeling, which showed an exchange in the demand between office (weekday) and retail/restaurant (weekends and evenings). This analysis can be found in the Phase II Webster Block presentation posted on the City’s website. The team believes the modeling to be an accurate assessment of current and proposed conditions in the study area.
- *The plan was supposed to focus on new retail opportunities in the Study Area – particularly at the western end of Washington Street, not on housing. There isn’t enough parking for major new retail opportunities.* The actual mission statement contained in the Request for Proposals (RFP) stressed housing and parking, not retail. The possibility of additional retail was raised in early sessions with the Development Committee and the public. Bonz & Company’s opinion is that the Study Area does not provide a good site for a major retail center (of 100,000 square feet or more). There simply isn’t enough space, and the required space could not be created without seriously disturbing the fabric of the historic district. There are opportunities to consolidate existing floor plates to attract new and different tenants to the retail mix. The existing parking calculations take this into account. This possibility is especially the case in Phase II, where three major retail spaces might be rebuilt as mixed-use developments with larger retail floor plates.
- *The parking comparison between the 750-space stand-alone garage and Phase I is misleading. If you were to build just a garage to accommodate the shortfall in parking, it would be smaller, and you wouldn’t have to do all those extra improvements.* It is true that a garage providing simply for the shortfall would be smaller. However, some of the other public infrastructure, like utilities, traffic signals and improvements to pedestrian safety, wayfinding, traffic circulation and the user experience of the lot would still be needed. A case involving a 400-car stand-alone garage was analyzed. It would include about two-thirds of the public improvement costs associated with Phase I. Assuming that the same public grants were available, but that no supporting development was provided, it was found that the capital cost per space that would need to be amortized would be nearly 40% greater than in Phase I, while the share of operating costs born by each space would be nearly 60% greater. Clearly, it would cost the user more to park in such a garage.

*What would Martin Luther King Drive look like with just a garage and no housing?* It could potentially have a fairly brutal appearance. Many projects have been built that exemplify such a case. Among them are the City Hall Plaza Garage in Boston (which, although handsomely designed, is devoid of life and has been the subject of many attempts to add improvements), and the Worcester Common Outlet Mall in Worcester, Massachusetts, which city officials are said to

be considering demolishing. The wall of garage structures along I-95 in Stamford is another example.

- *What area the projected occupancy rates of the Phase I garage? According to Desman Associates, 90-95% can be expected after the first few years.*
- *Are the residual values higher for rental projects or for condominium developments? The residual values depend on a number of different factors, including construction type. The Building A condominium in Phase I is steel, whereas the others are wood-frame construction. A lot also depends on the capitalization rates. The rates estimated in the study are conservative. Higher capitalization rates could mean that the rental projects could show consistently higher residual values.*
- *If residual rates were higher for rental projects, would it make sense to build only rental projects? There is value to having a healthy number of condo units in the mix from a planning perspective. These units will have owners who will have a stake in the neighborhood. It is important to have actual homeowners to add stability, and to have a population of residents who are invested in, and care deeply about the future of the district.*
- *Would the operations cost of Garage No.1 go down if it were to be managed together with all the other Norwalk parking facilities? If that were to be the case, then the administration costs should go down.*
- *The analysis of the 400-car stand-alone garage should be put in the final report and included in the next public presentation. This will be done.*
- *The pedestrian and other public improvements in the plan that are associated with the new housing developments add value to the entire district. Agreed.*
- *50 Washington Street would like to see the parking lot on the Clay Block added as a potential housing opportunity. There was no response to this comment.*
- *Representatives of 50 Washington Street said that, while they liked the plan, they think that the increased parking rates will “put them out of business.” There was no response to this comment.*
- *Bruce Morris stated that having housing in the plan, and especially affordable housing adds significantly to the revitalization of the SoNo district. On the other hand, simply adding a garage alone would provide little or no added benefit to the area. Several members of the Development Committee expressed support of this statement.*

## 6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

## ***Public Gathering No. 3 – Meeting Minutes***

**January 15, 2004**

**Location:** Norwalk City Hall – Common Council Chambers

**Present:** Attendance List Maintained at the Mayor’s Office

**Subject:** Workshop No. 4 with Webster Street Block Development Committee and the SEA Consulting team.

### **1. Introduction**

Alanna Kabel opened the meeting and turned the floor over to Oliver Gillham, the SEA team’s Project Manager, for a presentation of the results of Phase III of the study effort.

### **2. Process**

Oliver Gillham reviewed the planning process. The team is concluding Phase III – Proposed Plan - and will proceed to summarize the work of the study in a final report following this public gathering.

### **3. Phase III Results**

Oliver Gillham presented the following preliminary findings from Phase III of the Webster Street Block Planning and Urban Design Study:

#### ***A. Parking Demand & Development Concept***

**A.1 Parking Demand:** Gillham reviewed the Phase II analysis of peak parking demand for the Webster Lot. Analysis of existing weekday and weekend parking demand for the Webster Block carried out by SEA Consultants and Desman Associates shows that peak weekday demand governs, exceeding supply by 162 spaces. This means that 774 spaces are needed to satisfy existing demand on the Webster Lot, compared to the 612 spaces available on the lot today. This is less than the 200 spaces identified by the 1999 Allan Davis Associates Study. This may be due to the fact that 88 public permit spaces on the Clay Block were added to the total study area supply following the 1999 study.

**A.2 Development Concept:** Oliver Gillham presented the Phase II development concept diagram for the Webster Study Area:

- A new street for both automobiles and pedestrians will bisect the Webster Superblock. The new street will serve two new parking garages. The street is tentatively called Franklin Place in honor of the street that existed nearby prior to urban renewal.

- The Webster Street pedestrian way will be extended all the way to Martin Luther King (MLK) Drive. This new way is tentatively called Webster Way in honor of the street that existed along the same alignment prior to urban renewal.
- New Plaza – a new pedestrian plaza called Webster Plaza will be located at the juncture of the Webster Way and Franklin Place
- New housing and retail development will be brought into the interior of the block along Franklin Place and Webster Way.
- The new circulation system will restore the traditional downtown organization of buildings fronting on streets that predominates in the adjacent SoNo Historic District.
- The new circulation system will also break down the scale of the superblock – restoring a pattern of continuous street fronts that was abandoned in the 1960's.
- This new configuration will result in a more rational pedestrian and vehicular circulation hierarchy that carries the scale and pattern of SoNo into the Webster Block.
- The concept plan is intended as a long-term framework for a series of development phases. Phase 1 is all the City is considering at this time, and it is designed to stand-alone indefinitely without the need for any further development. In Phase 1, two large surface lots would be left between Franklin Place and existing buildings along North Main Street.

### ***B. Proposed Final Plan & Program***

Oliver Gillham presented the final Phase 1 plan and program for the Webster Block including the following elements:

- New Franklin Place, Webster Way and Webster Plaza as noted above under A.2.
- Parking Garage No. 1 with approximately 750 cars located west of Franklin Place.
- Two surface lots north and south of Webster Way, providing approximately 291 surface parking spaces along with an additional 18 surface spaces next to Garage No.1. A total of 309 surface spaces would remain on the Webster Lot at the completion of Phase I.
- Parking Garage No.1 has an expanded ground floor footprint, taking advantage of the 10-foot grade change across the site.
- Phase I includes three housing sites (A, B and D) along MLK Drive and Franklin Place on City-owned land comprising 162 units, including 10 percent affordable housing.
- Housing site A would contain 80 condominium units in a 6-7-story building, if this additional height (2-3 stories above the 4-story limit) can be approved by the City. Site B would

be a 4-story rental building with 72 units, and site D, would be a 4-story building built across the face of Garage No. 1, containing 10 condominium units.

- Retail or restaurant use on the ground floors of building sites A and D.
- Revitalization of the Washington Street Public Plaza – including temporary or permanent glass kiosks with light food service and outdoor seating and tables.
- A clear hierarchy of vehicular and pedestrian flows. Pedestrians are directed onto streets and pedestrian ways from parking areas to building front doors – not to the backs of buildings fronting on the lots.
- Diagonal parking on Madison Street and new on-street parking on the north side of West Washington Street amounting to approximately 78 new on-street spaces.
- The program for Phase I is projected to add about 162 new dwelling units and about 11,000 square feet of new restaurant/retail space while providing a parking surplus of slightly over 100 spaces.
- During construction, about 240 spaces would have to be replaced on or off the site. Possibilities include valet parking remaining surface lots including those on the Webster Block and the Clay Block, using the parking facilities around SoNo Station on weekends and evenings, and other measures.

### ***C. Parking & Development Economics***

**C.1 Parking Proforma:** Norm Goldman of Desman Associates presented a proforma for a stand-alone 750-space parking garage (without any supportive development). The total cost of the garage is estimated to be about \$13.4 million. Operating expenses would be in the vicinity of \$350-400,000/year while debt service was estimated at about \$943,000 per year to cover the capital cost of building the garage. Thus the stand-alone garage would have to recoup about \$1.3 million per year through revenues alone to break even. This is the reason that the City is considering supportive development – to bring down the cost that would have to be recouped from revenues alone.

**C.2 Development Analysis:** Dick Bonz of Bonz & Company presented the methodology used to derive the residual value of typical rental and condominium developments that are being proposed for Phase I. Projects for sites A, B and D are expected to yield about \$8 million in residual value that could be placed against the cost of Garage No.1 and other public infrastructure improvements.

**C.3 Phase I Analysis:** Oliver Gillham summarized the implications of the above for Phase I:

- In addition to the \$13.4 million cost of the garage, nearly \$5 million would be required to cover the cost of other public improvements associated with the garage and Phase I.



- These include: utility relocations, the new street, pedestrian area improvements, traffic signals and other elements.
- This brings the total public cost to over \$18 million.
- Subtracting the \$8 million in support from private development, and a projected \$2.5 million grant from other non-municipal public sources would bring the total cost down to about \$7.6 million.
- Including operations the total cost to be supported by revenues would be slightly over \$900,000 per year, more than 40 percent less than the stand-alone scenario, which was analyzed without the additional required public costs.
- Thus it can be seen that the addition of private development has a significant impact on lowering garage fees.
- In response to questions raised at the preceding Development Committee Meeting, Gillham provided an analysis of a 400-car stand-alone parking garage (the number that would be needed to meet the existing shortfall without any additional development). Compared to the proposed Phase I garage, the 400-space stand-alone facility would entail a capital cost per space that would be 36% greater than the proposed Phase I facility, and an operations cost approximately 57% greater than the proposed Phase I facility. This is because both capital and operating costs are being spread over a larger number of revenue producing spaces in the Phase I scenario, while both costs are reduced by the participation of private development in the project.

#### ***D. Potential Future Phase II***

- While Phase I could stand on its own for an indefinite period of time, Gillham also presented plans for a possible future Phase II, should Norwalk decide to pursue further development at a later date. He noted the following:
- The plans shown are illustrative. A final plan for Phase II could differ significantly from what is shown here.
- It is anticipated that Phase II would be primarily driven by the private sector.
- Phase II would include Garage No. 2 at approximately 425-spaces with ground floor retail, and buildings C and E on City-owned land.
- Building C would be a 71-unit rental apartment building similar to Building B, but with some ground floor retail adjacent to Webster Plaza.
- Building D would be a 4-story condominium building with ground floor retail, wrapping the Franklin Place face of Garage No. 2.

- An additional contributing development on private property adjoining the site and/or a ten-year lease commitment for a significant portion of Garage No.2 spaces would be needed to support Garage No.2 and realize the plan.
- A complete build-out of public and private sites in Phase II could yield a maximum of over 23,000 square feet of net new retail/restaurant space and approximately 389 new residential units. The program would also include reconstruction of about 42,000 square feet of retail/restaurant space currently on the block, allowing for a potential repositioning of this space to accommodate tenants requiring larger floor plates.
- Reviewing total new development together with new parking spaces created reveals a net deficit of about 9 spaces in a full build-out scenario. However, the full build-out illustrated might never be realized, and the plan for Phase II could be changed to provide additional parking.
- Important elements of Phase II include continuing the effort to break down the superblock into three smaller blocks with continuous building fronts on streets or pedestrian ways, as would be more in keeping with SoNo scale. Again, major circulation would be reorganized to address buildings fronts, while service access would be relegated to landscaped service ways and courtyards in mid-block areas.

### ***E. Conclusions***

Gillham presented the following conclusions:

- Redevelopment of the Webster Block can significantly enhance the SoNo district.
- Existing parking demand can be met while accommodating new development
- The value of City land can effectively serve to reduce the cost of new parking facilities and other public improvements.
- New development can include a significant percentage of affordable housing.
- The plan can be phased to allow a significant amount of surface parking to remain indefinitely
- The plan for the Webster Block will reinforce future development of Reed/Putnam
- When fully developed, the proposed plan will further SoNo as a mixed-use, walkable district that is amenable to transit

### ***F. Next Steps***

Gillham summarized the next steps in the process, pending a decision by the City of Norwalk to move ahead with the plan. Selected next steps could include:

- Final Report
- Decision to Proceed
- Technical Studies
  - Permitting, traffic, site survey, geotechnical, engineering, legal, financial, other
- Board Approvals
- Securing of Funding Sources
- Property Negotiations
- Issuance of Developer Packages

### ***G. Smart Growth***

Gillham concluded the presentation by pointing out that what began as a parking study has evolved into a vibrant smart growth mixed-use infill development project that is walkable and amenable to transit use. As such, it will provide a vital contribution to SoNo while continuing a tradition of smart growth downtown revitalization projects in Norwalk, and it will join a movement that is sweeping the nation aimed at countering the ill effects of urban sprawl, including loss of open space, traffic congestion and air pollution. The plan will also support other ongoing initiatives in the City including the Wall Street area, Reed/Putnam and planning for the Mid Harbor District. Lastly, it is a plan that can be done in discreet stand-alone phases, allowing the community of Norwalk to decide the ultimate future of the block over an extended time period.

## **4. Discussion**

Following the presentation, several points were made and a number of questions asked. In general, the plan was very favorably received by those present.

- Several of those present commented that they felt strongly that the plan is visionary, well executed and, when implanted, will provide a highly positive contribution to the City of Norwalk and the surrounding region.
- The Chamber of Commerce complimented the plan, but asked if a specific monthly price had been established for permit parking. The answer is that it is too soon to give a specific price, as it will depend on a variety of factors, including development of a final pricing scheme for citywide facilities by the newly hired parking management firm.
- A representative of a local development company praised the plan – particularly its phasing aspects, and the involvement of the public in its formulation. He then asked when the devel-

oper RFP would be coming out. That is as yet unknown, and will depend on final acceptance of the plan by various agencies of the City and the Common Council.

- A representative of the 64-84 North Main Street retail condominium asked whether that building might be targeted for increased development. That building is shown as development site “G” in the plan. It is envisioned as an important “gateway” site and could include in the vicinity of 50 units above ground floor retail.
- Councilor Douglas Hempstead asked if any demographic analysis of the residents of the proposed dwelling units is planned. Will these new units place strains on city services? The answer is that no formal analysis is planned, but the market analysis that is part of the study states that the principal target markets for downtown residential projects like those being proposed are young professional singles and couples without children, and so-called “empty nesters” – older couples whose children have grown up. These groups typically are net payers into the tax pool, as they are not sending any children into the school system. Thus, for the taxes that they pay, they demand relatively few city services in return.
- Hempstead also asked whether, with all this new density, there would be enough green space in the City. Gillham suggested that the main green-space opportunity for the City is the Norwalk River – the Heritage Park, Mathews Park and future open space networks that may be identified by the new Mid-Harbor study. The Norwalk River could become a small-scale version of the Charles River Reservation in the Boston region.
- A local landscape architect noted that he thought the city had more than enough green space as it is, with Veterans’ Park and other park spaces in the City. He noted that he found them to be underutilized. His feeling is that what is needed is denser, mixed-use developments like that being proposed for the Webster Block, along with hard-surface urban plaza spaces and streetscapes as also proposed.
- A representative of 50 Washington Street asked why the Clay Block Lot was not included as a possible housing site. The reason for this is that, under the zoning approval for 50 Washington Street, that lot is required to serve as parking for that building.
- 50 Washington Street stated that monthly parking rates in the vicinity of \$80-\$100/month would not be viable for them. Gillham responded that rates had not yet been established, but that, in order to have any additional parking, either a structure would have to be built or more land acquired. Doing either of these things will be costly, and therefore parking rates will have to go up, unless things stay the way they are. Even then, parking rates may have to be raised for other reasons.
- The Chairman of the Planning Commission stated that he thought that the phased approach as currently envisioned makes good sense. It will allow the City to see how well the idea works without having to take the risk of developing the whole site and eliminating all of the existing surface parking. Depending on how things turn out, the City may or may not proceed with further development in the future, or the plan may be modified based on the results of the first phase.

- The question of affordable housing was raised. What criteria are to be used? Will the “affordable” housing really be affordable? It is understood that statewide, as opposed to Fairfield County average family income statistics will be used in the affordability index. The Fairfield County area has a higher average household income than the state as a whole.
- What types of rental units are planned? About half are one-bedroom units and half are two-bedroom units. About half of the one-bedroom units will be one-bedroom with den.
- Can all the housing being planned for the City be absorbed? Dick Bonz answered that all the projects aren’t planned to occur at once. He believes that, over the time frame expected, all the units should be able to be absorbed at current absorption rates.
- The Chairman of the Zoning Commission asked whether the left-hand turn movement might be put back at the intersection of West Avenue and MLK Drive. The answer to this question will have to await the upcoming traffic study.
- Will parking rates for commercial users be determined prior to issuing a developer RFP? It is likely that a probable range of target rates will be determined prior to issuing an RFP.

## **6. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.