



How Connecticut can enliven its Downtowns by redeveloping under-used buildings into a blend of housing and retail, entertainment or office space.



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Middletown

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COME HOME TO DOWNTOWN

HOW CONNECTICUT CAN ENLIVEN ITS DOWNTOWNS BY REDEVELOPING UNDER-USED BUILDINGS INTO A BLEND OF HOUSING AND RETAIL, ENTERTAINMENT OR OFFICE SPACE.

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COME HOME TO DOWNTOWN

A MIXED-USE REAL ESTATE PLANNING PILOT PROGRAM

Introduction

OVERVIEW

Connecticut’s downtowns have paid a price for the single-use zoning and high-volume sprawl that served as Connecticut’s default development option for the last several decades. Instead of bustling neighborhoods extending from Main Street hubs, irreplaceable historic buildings were demolished in favor of big box development resulting in an exodus of jobs, neighbors relocated to vast suburban lots, small businesses shuttered, and critical tax revenue lost.

Juxtaposed with this grim landscape is today’s challenging fiscal climate. Municipalities need to grow, but to grow sustainably. This means finding ways to both increase the tax base and reduce costs while ensuring our quality of life and preserving the environment for generations to come. Fortunately, most of Connecticut has potential solutions readily available to it downtown. That’s because focusing growth in our downtowns and town centers where the infrastructure is already in place and where development can enhance a walkable, mixed-use setting with housing choices for workers and families is generally more sustainable than low density development, generates revenue and saves money. In fact, according to a report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the infrastructure costs to service compact, dense development – like the mixed-use development found in most downtowns – is 32% to 47% less than for lower density suburban development (Ford 2009).

The return on investment for a municipality that directs its growth in its downtown is impressive. The City of Raleigh, NC, commissioned a study to compare compact, mixed-use development with big box development. The results demonstrated that on a per acre basis, mixed-use development provided a significantly better return to the municipality (Smart Growth America 2013):

Return on Investment Comparison		
Compact, Mixed-Use Development vs. Big Box Raleigh, North Carolina		
	<u>Big Box</u>	<u>Compact, Mixed-Use</u>
Property taxes/acre	\$2,837	\$110,461

A study commissioned by the downtown business improvement district in Asheville, NC (Minicozzi 2012) had similar results:

Return on Investment Comparison		
Downtown Development vs. Big Box Asheville, North Carolina		
	<u>Big Box</u>	<u>Downtown</u>
Property taxes/acre	\$6,500	\$365,000
Retail sales tax/acre	\$47,500	\$83,600
Jobs/acre	5.9	73.7
Residents/acre	0	90

Better still, demand for these types of multi-use neighborhoods – fueled mostly by Baby Boomers and their children – is strong and growing. More and more, people want to live in robust, vibrant settings with a range of housing choices where they can walk to shops, services and jobs. Moreover, for many living in a downtown is often more financially feasible than in a suburb because it is more densely developed and offers a variety of residential options and price points.

Luckily, many of Connecticut’s town centers still have good “bones,” providing us with exceptional foundations for mixed-use development. While some may be struggling with high vacancies, most of Connecticut’s downtowns are well-designed – compact, walkable, and often centered around town greens and/or waterfronts that provide development opportunity. A revitalization effort that takes advantage of these features is called “place-based development” and it creates authentic places of human scale in the historic hearts of our communities.

It is typical to find three- and four-story buildings that are family owned downtown, where the family business may be thriving on the ground floor but the upper floors remain vacant. These underutilized spaces can be converted to apartment homes to satisfy the demand for downtown housing that’s close to jobs, services and entertainment. Moreover, the redeveloped space can also provide the property owners with additional income while injecting increased spending into the local economy as residents take advantage of nearby shops and services.

More Downtown Housing = Increased Spending Downtown

A study recently completed for Main Street Iowa by economist Donovan Rypkema calculated that **every new unit of downtown housing spent \$20,000-\$39,000 in the downtown annually.**

Vacant First Floor Space = Negative Downtown Revenue

Conversely, **vacant first floor commercial space has a tremendous negative impact** on the community. Mr. Rypkema calculated a vacant storefront with a modest \$250,000 in lost annual sales costs the community over \$222,000 annually in terms of lost rents, property and sales tax, and utilities, supplies, services and salaries not paid (Rypkema 2012).
(Emphasis added.)

BACKGROUND

It was out of this context that the **Come Home to Downtown** pilot program was born in the spring of 2012. The culmination of a successful collaboration between Connecticut Main Street Center (CMSC) and the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA), Come Home to Downtown directly addresses a need plaguing many of Connecticut's underutilized Main Street districts.

As the statewide agency charged with alleviating the shortage of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families and individuals throughout Connecticut, CHFA knows that our downtowns and Main Street districts hold a wealth of opportunity for new mixed-use development – in other words, providing a blend of housing, retail and office space in one centrally located building.

At CMSC, our mission is to be the champion and leading resource for vibrant and sustainable downtowns as the foundation for healthy communities. We advocate for a return to the Main Street way of life, one with walkable neighborhoods, where housing, shops and restaurants share the same spaces, providing people with a range of housing and transportation choices. Working closely with our statewide network of over sixty member communities, we've seen firsthand the significant impact even a modest investment in our downtowns can make. That's because development in our downtowns, where the necessary infrastructure already exists, is cheaper, more environmentally friendly and sustainable. It also generates a greater positive economic investment, as additional monies from renters, visitors and downtown employees are poured back into the neighborhood economy. Our own Connecticut experience is evidence of this: during the height of the recession, when the rest of the state and nation were shedding jobs, our designated communities were *creating* jobs. In fact, from 2007 through 2012, CMSC's designated Main Street program communities saw a 29.6% net increase in jobs, a 22.8% net increase in new businesses and a 77% increase in private investment.

CHFA, knowing of our expertise in downtown revitalization and management, sought us out in a collaborative effort to bring more housing options to our downtowns. Although CHFA has been extremely successful in helping to alleviate the shortage of affordable housing, they understand there is a need for additional tools and resources to support smaller deals (typically less than 20 units of housing) than those it currently finances.

Created with the intention of facilitating viable, interesting housing opportunities while revitalizing downtown neighborhoods, this initiative was seeded by CHFA with an investment from Community Investment Act Funds. CMSC used this money to hire additional staff to implement the program, as well as engage consultants with expertise in the program components. Three pilot communities were then chosen from a pool of carefully vetted applicants.

COME HOME TO DOWNTOWN GOALS AND OUTCOMES

As a result of over sixty years of single-use, car-oriented sprawl, mixed-use development has become a lost art form. Despite the many potential benefits that come from focusing growth in a downtown, several pervasive impediments remain as barriers to a more sustainable mix of housing and uses, including:

- An unsupportive regulatory environment;
- Limited financing options; and
- The misguided perception that density leads to blight, congestion and loss of value.

This less-than-ideal environment is further complicated by the fact that although many downtown property owners may be experienced business people, they often lack redevelopment experience and/or may be wary of becoming landlords.

Furthermore, the varied nature of the downtown itself can also be obstacle. This is because multiple property owners and building uses all need to be coordinated and integrated. Just like a shopping mall (albeit with one property owner instead of several), town centers also need a management program to convene all interested parties, forge a consensus and create a vision for the downtown.

Come Home to Downtown was designed to address these impediments by providing community leaders with strategic tools to reverse the course of sprawl and focus growth downtown, thereby ensuring the successful continuation of a sustainable, managed downtown with expanded housing choices. Moreover, we chose buildings of a design typical throughout Connecticut so that the redevelopment process can be easily replicated in other communities. Along the way, we also made sure to note the obstacles emblematic of downtown mixed-use development. Our recommendations for easing this process, whether through policy, additional or enhanced financing mechanisms, regulatory changes, or education and technical assistance are detailed later in this report.

In order to achieve the successful completion of Year One of the Come Home to Downtown program, CMSC set forth the following goals:

- Recommend specific solutions for accommodating mixed-use development such as changes to zoning, streamlined permitting and other financial incentives.
- Grow the relationship between communities and property owners by educating them about the benefits of redeveloping vacant and underutilized space.
- Perform a Model Building Analysis and provide technical assistance to guide property owners (many of whom have little or no redevelopment experience) in the redevelopment of their properties.
- Provide the community with an increased understanding of the downtown's value and potential.

- Create or enhance the downtown management's function.
- Analyze lessons learned, and use them to inspire other property owners and municipalities.
- Have the respective pilot communities embrace mixed-use development in their downtowns and the municipalities support these types of property owners while understanding the inherent risk in this kind of redevelopment.

Program Overview

SELECTION PROCESS

In an effort to select pilot communities with the highest likelihood of success, CMSC created an extensive inventory of towns throughout Connecticut, looking especially at those with strong organizational capacity and a good working relationship between the municipality and the downtown. Communities with a history of active community engagement were also highly regarded.

Those towns that rose to the top were invited to an introductory meeting in late September 2012 in Middletown. Mayor Daniel Drew welcomed forty attendees who represented nineteen communities of varying size from across the State. Audience members included First Selectmen, economic development officials, town planners and town managers. CMSC presented them with an overview of Come Home to Downtown, some background on the partnership between CMSC and CHFA, and comparable success stories.

Communities interested in participating were then asked to submit letters of interest to CMSC: twelve communities responded. CMSC then evaluated the communities based on the following criteria:

- Likelihood of success
- Ability to leverage other resources
- Availability of market opportunity & local real estate development capacity
- Diversity of scale and location
- An appropriate building and a willing property owner(s).

Using a matrix of the criteria to rate and rank each community, CMSC narrowed the list of candidates to five. CMSC and the consultant team then visited each of the communities, taking a walking tour of the downtown, meeting with local officials and the downtown management function and finally, seeing a few prospective model buildings and meeting with some of the owners.

PILOT COMMUNITIES

After this extensive selection process, three pilot communities were chosen: Middletown, Torrington and Waterbury. Each represents a dynamic community with many positive aspects such as walkability, a range of services and amenities nearby and a rich culture of recreation and entertainment. All of them form the epicenter of their respective region, with each of their regions varying in size. While each faces individual challenges and successes, collectively they represent a fair sampling of the many types of Main Street districts, housing stock and downtown infrastructure typically found throughout Connecticut.

PROPERTY OWNERS & MODEL BUILDINGS

Just as important as the downtowns themselves are the individual property owners and their buildings. CMSC wanted owners who were engaged in Come Home to Downtown and its success, and who demonstrated a commitment to the neighborhoods where they are located. Those chosen for the program exemplify a strong desire to be a part of the local fabric and include property owners who also operate thriving businesses within the downtown's borders.

With regard to the buildings, CMSC felt it was critical to choose a variety of styles indicative of those commonly found throughout the State. This was of paramount importance because ideally we viewed this program as a learning process, and one from which we could take the lessons learned in order to more easily replicate and encourage mixed-use development in other Connecticut downtowns.

PROGRAM SERVICES

Come Home to Downtown is designed to provide selected communities with new tools and strategies to revitalize their downtowns through increased mixed-use development that includes a variety of housing choices for workers and families. The Come Home to Downtown pilot program is comprised of five individual components:

Downtown Development Audit – Addresses impediments and incentives to promoting redevelopment in a downtown.

Model Building Analysis – Focuses on redevelopment plans designed to bring housing back to the upper floors of the model building.

Project Financing & Assistance to Property Owners – Property owners received a financial pro forma identifying the shortfall between the rehabilitation costs and what traditional lenders will typically finance. This section includes potential funding sources to address those shortfalls, or “gaps”. Recommendations are also provided to the property owners, as needed, to assist with the building redevelopment and management.

Downtown Management Assistance – Strengthens the organizational capacity of the downtown management function to address the area's constantly evolving housing and economic needs.

Urban Design Audit – Uses a *Walkability, Accessibility, Livability Quotient (WALQ)* audit to identify needs and make recommendations for how the downtown could function better with regard to walkability and connectivity.

PROJECT TEAM

In order to address each of the above concerns, CMSC assembled an expert team of consultants through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

- William W. Crosskey II, AIA, LEED AP, Principal, Crosskey Architects LLC – Performed the model building analysis and provided development assistance.
- Lou Trajcevski, Principal, Newcastle Housing Ventures, LLC – Drafted pro forma reviews of the development in conjunction with the model building analysis.
- David Sousa, ASLA, AICP, Landscape Architect/Urban Planner, CDM Smith – Performed the Urban Design Audit, designing a program to measure the downtown area’s walkability and connectivity.

CMSC oversaw the work of the consultants while developing and coordinating the program. In addition, we also provided community engagement and downtown management advice, as well as an overall communications strategy for the program.

Findings & Recommendations

MIDDLETOWN FINDINGS

Overview

Downtown Middletown has many attractive attributes found in great cities all over the world. A walkable downtown in a picturesque setting near the Connecticut River, Middletown has most, if not all, of the building infrastructure already in place to increase its availability of housing with mixed-use development. Overall, Middletown has a huge amount of potential that the City is working hard to realize. Implementing the recommendations highlighted in this report will help the City, Downtown Business District and other stakeholders more fully integrate and utilize their many assets.

Middletown Model Building

Owner: The Amato Family

Location: 418-426 Main Street

Owned by the Amato family, this site actually consists of two adjacent buildings. It is located across the street from the owners' well-known and long-established shop, Amato's Toy and Hobby. The model buildings are three stories high, and are the only surviving examples of late 19th century commercial building on this block in the Middletown Central Business District.

Middletown residents will likely recognize the owners, Diane (Amato) and Joel Gervais, who are representing Phyllis Amato. Diane's father, Vincent (husband of Phyllis Amato), began Amato's Toy & Hobby Store on Main Street, which grew to five locations in Connecticut.

Today, his children continue to own and operate the retail stores in Middletown and New Britain. "Vinny" loved Main Street Middletown, and as a founding member of the Downtown Business District and an active member of the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce, he never tired of working with others to keep Main Street a center for commerce and community.



418-426 Main Street, Middletown

Findings

Come Home to Downtown identified issues and recommendations specific to each of the pilot communities. Middletown is already on the right path to revitalization of its downtown however there is still work to do. By implementing the recommendations below, Middletown will further ensure its success addressing the interests of downtown stakeholders, the larger community and the region.

Downtown Development Audit – One of the most significant impediments to redeveloping properties for residential use downtown is the parking requirement. To mitigate this we recommend eliminating the parking requirement for new uses in the conversions of upper floors of existing buildings in the B-1 Central Business Zone Urban Core. We recommend that the City work with the developer to identify parking alternatives and solutions that address the tenant’s needs. We also recommend the City consider developing a façade program to help property owners improve their buildings and storefronts and make the downtown more attractive to residents and customers.

Model Building Analysis – This analysis makes specific recommendations for improving the model building itself, such as repairing windows and siding, etc. It also provides a recommended floor plan designed to attract new residents and bring market rate housing downtown. Two options were presented: one with a total of eight apartments of varying size, while the other had a total of six units – four large loft-style apartments and two smaller apartments at the rear of the building. The latter option was selected as the working model.

Urban Design Audit – Although Middletown scored well overall in terms of walkability, we did find some areas for improvements. Recommendations include:

- Make the streets more welcoming to walkers and bicyclists by increasing connections to adjacent neighborhoods and the Connecticut River. Improve the safety of intersections through the use of traffic-calming techniques.
- Improve parking facilities and increase the use of wayfinding signs (signs that direct visitors to local attractions and amenities).
- Ensure new infill development fits with the downtown’s overall character and density.
- Create an inviting atmosphere by installing outdoor art.
- Improve personal security and the safety of the streets by providing adequate lighting, increased police presence, and other physical improvements.

OVERALL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Our work with the pilot communities led us to several conclusions we believe are relevant to most Connecticut downtowns. Chief among them is a lack of readily available financing for this type of mixed-use redevelopment. Unfortunately, there is also not much in the way of education or outreach to property owners, leaving them unprepared for the complex process of redeveloping their building or the potential benefit in doing so. Below are our aggregate findings after examining the three representative communities, their downtown management functions and the model buildings.

Project Financing & Assistance to Property Owners

One of the goals of Come Home to Downtown is to quantify and highlight the lack of traditional financial incentives available for mixed-use deals in order to then begin advocating for more resources for these important properties. Taken in aggregate, Connecticut's small downtown vacant and underutilized properties represent an enormous potential for accommodating growth where infrastructure already exists, thereby reducing the pressure to develop in open spaces and farmlands while creating healthier neighborhoods where people drive less and walk more.

The Come Home to Downtown properties represent a diverse mix and scale of the type of buildings that can be found in downtowns throughout Connecticut. Our work with Middletown, Torrington and Waterbury over the last year led us to several conclusions we believe are emblematic of most of the State's downtowns, namely that these types of projects are perhaps the hardest real estate deals to accomplish. This is because they are:

- Mixed-use.
- In older buildings in need of a gut rehabilitation (the most costly type).
- In a complex downtown setting.
- Owned by people with little to no mixed-use development experience, who may also be unprepared for the amount of debt needed to redevelop the buildings.
- In need of complex financing from multiple sources to close the gap between what traditional lenders will provide and the total construction costs.

Because these deals are so intricate and multi-faceted, financing for the total redevelopment cost does not exist from traditional sources. Also, there are very few municipal officials and experienced developers interested in small properties who know how to navigate the various funding streams, leaving the property owner – who most likely has no experience with any kind of real estate development – with scarce resources to bring a vacant building back to life.

A number of state and federal programs that incentivize housing development are only for affordable housing and only municipalities or non-profit entities are eligible, leaving projects like this one with private ownership out in the cold. CMSC wants to work with the municipality, property owners and other partners to advocate for more resources to be aggregated for

mixed-use development in our downtowns. In the vast majority of our downtowns, virtually all mixed-use development projects are high risk, even if privately owned, and deserve support as much as projects primarily targeted for affordable housing. Also, it is not unusual for market and affordable rental rates to be the same in downtowns, making market rate apartment financing just as difficult to pencil out. Still, this issue should be resolved as successful mixed-use development projects provide a greater return on investment to the state, municipality and local neighborhood, as indicated in the beginning of this report, and can provide the kind of housing in demand at various market rate price points to help rebalance downtowns that currently have either no housing or mostly subsidized housing.

It is clear that more educational resources are also needed to help property owners, municipalities, investors, lenders and State agencies understand how they can work together to facilitate this kind of mixed-use development. CMSC will be working with stakeholders from the pilot communities and appropriate State agencies to determine how more education and information can be developed and disseminated to the appropriate audiences. Municipalities should also encourage local lending institutions (i.e. community banks and foundations) to support more people living in downtown with increased or new lending for mixed-use development.

Doomed to Fail?

In his book, *The Option of Urbanism*, Chris Leinberger states there are 19 standard real estate product types with associated financing mechanisms. If even the most accomplished developer tries to stray from one of these, they will most likely fail because they will not find financing. (Leinberger 2008)

Mixed-use development with residential housing over first floor commercial space is nowhere on this list. Are our downtowns, ripe with historic infrastructure and available housing stock, doomed to fail simply because there's no streamlined financing mechanism in place?

Mixed-use development requires three distinct sets of expertise, which most property owners have no prior experience with:

- Project Financing
- Design and Construction
- Ongoing Property Management

CMSC will work with the property owners, municipality and downtown stakeholders to put together a team with real estate development, historic architectural and engineering and construction management expertise to demonstrate how the redevelopment of these properties can happen in a financially viable manner. This will require not only aggregating all existing potential financing resources but also advocating for new resources that can be applied to these kinds of projects.

Regulatory

Flexible zoning regulations and a streamlined approval process can go a long way toward encouraging downtown revitalization. Communities with regulations that are perceived as high-risk are not going to be viewed favorably nor sought out by developers. Mixed-use development, including housing, should be allowed as of right; however, regulations should encourage development that fits with the historic character of downtown.

No matter how large or small a building or its location, parking is almost always an issue. City planners should consider waiving parking requirements for developers of mixed-use buildings, especially if there is other adequate parking located nearby. A municipality can further incentivize downtown redevelopment by offering free or reduced fees for parking in municipal lots or structures. This requires municipalities to consider a new paradigm – that people who want to live downtown are not necessarily looking for a parking space on site of their residence.

Downtown Management Capacity

Management is critical to the success of any downtown. The form of a community's management function will vary from informal to more structured. Any community interested in promoting revitalization should consider enhancing its management function by becoming a resource center for downtown mixed-use development. Additional roles for a downtown management function to employ are:

- Convener of key stakeholders to build consensus and implement initiatives
- Education and public relations
- Data collector and information center
- Coordinator of development incentives.

Over time, as the downtown management function grows in experience and capacity related to mixed-use development, it may become more involved in the real estate development process by:

- Assembling land to draw in developers
- Finding local investors and/or institutions to provide gap financing
- Taking on projects, possibly with a private developer partner, in the early stages to prove there is a market and to serve as case study of how it can be done.

CONCLUSION

Connecticut's downtowns can once again become thriving centers where people come home to streets brimming with pleasant chatter as families stroll along the sidewalks, bikers zip from shop to shop, and neighbors catch up on the bus as they commute from work. The infrastructure is already in place, providing a ready, sustainable stock of buildings capable of supporting first floor commercial space with upper level housing. Not only has this type of mixed-use development been shown to both save and generate monies when situated in compact downtowns, it also promotes a healthier lifestyle.

However, our experience with the Come Home to Downtown pilot program has demonstrated that if Connecticut is to encourage and promote mix-used development, we must develop a manageable, if multi-layered, financing mechanism available to the owners of small downtown properties. Education and technical assistance programs specifically designed for the owners of these small properties will help ensure they are prepared for both the financial and landlord responsibilities they face. Although it will admittedly be difficult at the outset, it is imperative that these efforts begin now if we are to have fully integrated, vibrant downtowns that sustain us today and into the future.

Community Engagement

TOWN-WIDE CONSENSUS

Community Engagement is a critical element of any planning process. CMSC understood that a consensus building process, reaching out to downtown stakeholders, would be essential. CMSC worked with the pilot communities to engage residents and others to form a broad-based consensus and achieve buy-in around a vision for downtown Middletown.

In Middletown, residents have come to expect this type of community engagement since the City has invited the public to participate in planning the future of their downtown in conjunction with several prior planning efforts. The most recent occurred in 2011, when a Downtown Gateway Study looked at brownfield redevelopment potential in the North End and Southern Gateways. Charrette-style workshops were held to gain community input around redevelopment plans for each of these gateways (Milone & MacBroom 2011). Prior to that, the community was engaged in updating Middletown's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). It's worth noting that Come Home to Downtown aligns perfectly with the POCD's Guiding Principles of encouraging walkability, a mix of uses to ensure neighborhood vitality, and encouraging compact development in places already served by sewer and water infrastructure (Middletown Planning and Zoning Commission 2010). The City also sought the public's input during a housing charrette and visual preference survey as part of an Incentive Housing Zone analysis in 2010.

Come Home to Downtown sought to build on this strong relationship between local officials and residents, reaching out to the community in multiple ways. In Middletown, a Project Liaison and Advisory Team were convened. Bill Warner and Michiel Wackers from the City's Department of Planning, Conservation and Development and Quentin Phipps from the Downtown Business District were designated as Project Liaisons. The liaisons served as designated community point people for the Come Home to Downtown project, as well as the press and community stakeholders.

The Advisory Team, on the other hand, consisted of a broad base of stakeholders, including town staff and elected officials, business and property owners, institutional leaders and other interested citizens. The Advisory Team's job was to guide the project by providing local input and direction, and to serve as ambassadors for the project to the larger community.

Community Commitment

Middletown already had a commitment to revitalizing its downtown through various efforts and understood the need and value of bringing a broader mix of residential units back to the upper floors. Middletown convened an enthusiastic and committed group of downtown stakeholders:

Project Liaisons

- Bill Warner, Director, Middletown Dept. of Planning, Conservation & Development
- Michiel Wackers, Deputy Director, Middletown Dept. of Planning, Conservation & Development
- Quentin Phipps, Executive Director, Middletown Downtown Business District

Advisory Team

- Jennifer Alexander, Director, Kidcity Children's Museum
- Jeff Bianco, Northeast Collaborative Architects and Design Review Committee
- Trevor Davis, Owner, Trevor Davis Realty
- Diane and Joel Gervais, Amato's Toy and Hobby (Model Building Owners)
- Izzy Greenburg, Executive Director, North End Action Team
- Peter Harding, Owner, Harding Development Group
- Mike Johnson, Middletown Planning & Zoning Commissioner
- Rick Kearney, Economic Development Specialist, Middletown Dept. of Planning, Conservation & Development
- Stephen Kovach, Design and Review Committee
- Jeff Pugliese, Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce
- Mike Stone, Owner, Main Street Market

Public Outreach

Extensive outreach was undertaken by CMSC and the Project Liaisons to educate the public on this program and elicit feedback. In addition to traditional media, CMSC also promoted the program through its newsletter, *Downtown Update*, which is issued to approximately 3,000 contacts monthly. CMSC also engaged Facebook and Twitter to celebrate program successes, update industry colleagues and others, as well as invite the public to the community meeting.

Public Outreach

CMSC issued several press releases, utilized social media, devoted space on our homepage and created individual webpages for the program and pilot communities, and started a blog cataloging our progress.

The Come Home to Downtown program was featured in the following media:

- *Hartford Courant*
- *Middletown Press*
- *Middletown Eye*
- *Republican American*
- *Register Citizen*
- *Face CT, WTIC 1080*
- NBC News Channel 30

Community Meetings

Beyond reaching out to the media CMSC also engaged the public by holding Community Meetings in each of the pilot communities. The Community Health Center on Main Street hosted the Middletown gathering. This event was designed to share preliminary project results and gather feedback from residents and those interested in living downtown. The public was encouraged to participate, provide feedback and to inform the team of any questions or issues they had about downtown and the Come Home to Downtown team's work. Approximately fifty people representing a broad base of constituents turned out for the Middletown event. Representatives from various educational institutions including Wesleyan University and Middlesex Community College were in attendance, as were city representatives from Youth Services, the Planning and Zoning Commission and a City Councilor. There were also representatives from the North End Action Team and Citizen's Advisory Committee, and downtown residents and business owners.

The audience was quite engaged, asking several questions about the redevelopment of the model building. They were particularly interested in the energy efficiency, affordability and accessibility of the building. The attendees also commented on the different building plans that were presented for possible residential use of the upper floors. Many of them felt the option with the larger loft style apartments would do well because there is nothing similar currently available in Middletown. Others noted that the smaller units might be more attractive to younger residents, especially if they had lower rents. One attendee, a university employee, commented there is great demand among students and recent graduates for smaller (approximately 600 sq. foot) units.

In addition to specific comments about the apartment options, there were several interesting suggestions made about the rest of the building, such as a roof top garden and windows at the back overlooking the river. There was a lively discussion on parking in the downtown and suggestions for how parking might be approached for this project. It was generally agreed that

having parking available at the municipal lot located just behind the model building would be sufficient (as opposed to requiring spaces at the building site). There was also a discussion about the potential rents. It was agreed that more research was needed on this topic.

Recommendations

Community engagement is a continuous and continually evolving process. Although Middletown has reached out to its citizenry over the last few years, and although Come Home to Downtown provides another opportunity for Middletown to engage the community, the City would do well to continue seeking resident input in order to engage the public around an overarching vision for the future of downtown Middletown. Doing so will help inform the community about the importance of mixed-use development and the role residential development plays in a robust downtown.

Recommendations

Middletown does a good job reaching out to its residents, but could increase that engagement through new activities including the following:

- Increase use of social media.
- Couple outreach efforts with current and upcoming community events.
- Create a town-wide poll on downtown development with questionnaire boxes located at Main Street crosswalk light posts. Have a number where people can text their suggestions.
- Engage the local schools, especially Wesleyan University and Middletown Adult Education Center (both of which are located downtown), nearby Middlesex Community College and even local high schools, in downtown recruitment efforts - both in terms of volunteers for the Downtown Business District and as future young professional residents.
- Reach out to targeted demographics like young professionals and active seniors through a mix of traditional and innovative marketing techniques.

Downtown Development Audit

The purpose of the Downtown Development Audit is to identify the assets, challenges, opportunities, and impediments to redevelopment in Middletown in order to develop strategies to attract development that adds economic value consistent with the community's values. The audit is intended to provide guidance to enhance a municipality's ability to organize and to seek out growth potential, especially regarding mixed-use development.

During the audit process, we examined Middletown's regulations for land use and its development tools and incentives. The following is a discussion of our findings.

REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE CONTROLS

It's critical to revitalization efforts that plans and regulations support downtown development. Creating a mixed-income housing stock in the downtown area is an important objective of the 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan (Middletown 2010), as well as aligning with the City's Plan of Conservation and Development which encourages walkability and a mix of uses (Middletown Planning and Zoning Commission 2010). Middletown has also streamlined its zoning process as noted below.

Zoning

Middletown's zoning regulations require planning and zoning approval for new buildings, additions, and changes of uses to existing buildings. The application process varies depending on the extent of the proposed project, and falls into four categories. "Category (1) includes alterations which do not change the size of the footprint or use of a building or structure or the site...Examples include re-roofing or re-siding a building or interior renovations. Proposals in this category shall be approved by the Building Inspector without an actual site plan being presented" (Middletown Planning and Zoning Commission 2009). Projects like this one, involving building out the upper floors of an existing building for a permitted use, will only require staff approval as part of the building permit application process. Since this decreases the amount of time and effort necessary to complete the approval process, it is an excellent strategy for promoting downtown revitalization.

The properties located at 418-420 and 424-426 Main Street are designated as 'Class A Structures' within the B-1 Central Business Zone. The proposed upper-story multi-family residential use is designated as 'Urban Core Living Units', a permitted use in the B-1 Zone under the Zoning Regulations (Middletown Planning & Zoning Commission 2009). Lot, yard and building height standards for the Central Business Zone are reflective of the existing conditions in the downtown area, and the existing properties are in conformance with the regulations. Middletown should be commended for removing many zoning impediments to mixed-use development.

The proposed redevelopment conforms to the zoning requirements with the exception of parking. One of the most significant impediments to redeveloping properties for residential use downtown is the parking requirement.

There are currently no exemptions from the provision of off-street parking and loading space requirements under the Zoning Regulations. At the scheduled rates listed in the regulations, the proposed residential use would require a total of ten parking spaces for six units, which cannot be provided given existing conditions. Up to five on-site spaces may be achievable with the demolition of the rear portions of the building at 418-420 Main Street. An alternate approach, as stated in the City's Plan of Conservation and Development (Middletown Planning and Zoning Commission 2010), would be to develop a resident permit and long term parking lease program at municipal lots. The Melilli Plaza Lot is located directly behind the properties in close proximity

to the rear building entrance. Current regulations do not allow overnight parking on Main Street, and parking management policies in place do not address residential uses.

Recommendations

We recommend that the zoning regulations be modified to eliminate the parking requirement for new uses in the conversions of upper floors of existing buildings in the B-1 Central Business Zone Urban Core, as many cities are now doing. The resolution of adequate parking then becomes a developer's responsibility to make sure he provides enough onsite or there is adequate parking nearby to make the units marketable. We recommend that the City work with the developer to identify parking alternatives and solutions that address the tenant's needs.

Building & Fire Code

As in most states, buildings built or renovated in Connecticut are regulated by the International Building Code or the International Existing Building Code, respectively, as modified by the State of Connecticut, and become the State of Connecticut Building Code. The governing fire code is the Connecticut Fire Safety Code. Local officials are tasked with enforcing the codes and cannot modify them. Modifications to the code or interpretations of the code can only be provided by the State of Connecticut Building Official's Office and/or the State of Connecticut Fire Marshal's Office.

Based on the schematic design for this building, we have reviewed the building code requirements to determine compliance. The building needs to comply with the International Existing Building Code (International Code Council 2012) as a Level 3 Alteration (i.e. a project with a work area that exceeds 50% of the aggregate area of the building). As with many older structures, this building does not meet the requirements of today's building and fire safety codes. Compliance with all codes should be strived for during renovation, but due to the construction and the configuration of the existing building it may not be possible to comply with some requirements. The code allows, through Article 12 Compliance Alternatives, some of these existing non-compliant items to remain non-compliant by providing additional safety features. If the mandatory safety scores can be met, it is not necessary to comply with all the code requirements.

We have evaluated the proposed renovated building's safety using Article 12's compliance chart, Figure 1 shown below, from the International Building Code. In order to meet the minimum safety scores, the building will need a new central alarm system that includes voice/alarm with fire command station, an automatic sprinkler system, smoke detectors, and emergency lighting.

Chapter 12 - International Existing Building Code

Table 1201.7
SUMMARY SHEET - BUILDING SCORE

Proposed occupancy: <u>B, M, R-2</u>	Existing occupancy: <u>B & M</u>
Year building was constructed: <u>c. 1890</u>	No. of Stories: <u>3</u> Height: <u>44'-0" +/-</u>
Type of construction: <u>3B</u>	Area per floor: <u>5,270 SF.</u>
Percent of frontage increase: <u>0%</u>	Percent of height reduction: <u>0%</u>
Completely suppressed: Yes: <u>X</u> No: <u> </u>	Corridor wall rating: <u>1 Hr</u>
Compartmentation: Yes: <u> </u> No: <u>X</u>	Required door closers: Yes: <u>X</u> No: <u> </u>
Fire-resistance rating of vertical opening opening enclosures: <u>1-Hr</u>	
Type of HVAC system: <u>Central Boiler</u>	serving number of floors: <u>3</u>
Automatic fire detection: Yes: <u>X</u> No: <u> </u>	type and location: <u>Heat & smoke</u>
Fire alarm system: Yes: <u>X</u> No: <u> </u>	type: <u>Fully addressible</u>
Smoke control: Yes: <u> </u> No: <u>X</u>	type: <u>N/A</u>
Adequate exit routes: Yes: <u>X</u> No: <u> </u>	Dead ends: Yes: <u> </u> No: <u>X</u>
Max. exit access travel distance: <u>88'</u>	Elevator controls: Yes: <u> </u> No: <u>X</u>
Means-of-egress emergency lights: Yes: <u>X</u> No: <u> </u>	Mixed occupancies: Yes: <u>X</u> No: <u> </u>
Provided with battery backup	

Safety parameters	Fire Safety (FS)	Means of Egress (ME)	General Safety (GS)
1201.6.1 Building height	88	88	88
1201.6.2 Building area	6	6	6
1201.6.3 Compartmentation	0	0	0
1201.6.4 Tenant & Dwelling Unit Separations	0	0	0
1201.6.5 Corridor walls	0	0	0
1201.6.6 Vertical openings	3.5	3.5	3.5
1201.6.7 HVAC systems	5	5	5
1201.6.8 Automatic Fire detection	6	6	6
1201.6.9 Fire alarm system	5	5	5
1201.6.10 Smoke control	****	0	0
1201.6.11 Means-of-egress capacity	****	0	0
1201.6.12 Dead ends	****	2	2
1201.6.13 Max Exit Access Travel Distance	****	12.96	12.96
1201.6.14 Elevator control	0	0	0
1201.6.15 Means-of-Egress Emergency Lighting	****	4	4
1201.6.16 Mixed Occupancies	0	****	0
1201.6.17 Automatic Sprinklers	2	2	2
1201.6.18 Standpipes	0	0	0
1201.6.19 Incidental Use Area Protection	0	0	0
Building score- total value	28.38	47.34	47.34

**** = No applicable value to be inserted.

MANDATORY SAFETY SCORES

Use Group	Fire Safety (FS)	Means of Egress (ME)	General Safety (GS)
M (Most Restrictive)	23	40	40

EVALUATION FORMULAS

Formula	Score	Pass	Fail
FS-MFS ≥ 0	$\frac{28.38}{23} (FS) - \frac{23}{40} (MFS) =$	5.38	X
ME-MME ≥ 0	$\frac{47.34}{40} (ME) - \frac{40}{40} (MME) =$	7.34	X
GS-MGS ≥ 0	$\frac{47.34}{40} (GS) - \frac{40}{40} (MGS) =$	7.34	X

FS = Fire Safety
ME = Means of Egress
GS = General Safety
MFS = Mandatory Fire Safety
MME = Mandatory Means of Egress
MGS = Mandatory General Safety

Figure 1

ADA Compliance

The Connecticut building code does not require apartments on the upper floors of buildings to be accessible unless the building has an elevator, which is not being proposed for these buildings. There is no requirement for a multifamily building to have an elevator, but if it does, then all units must be Type A or B accessible (Type A units are completely accessible, Type B units are adaptable for handicap use).

Often in apartment buildings with four stories or more or with large floor areas, an elevator is deemed necessary in order to market the apartment units. However, these buildings are only three stories, therefore an elevator is not required.

Fair Housing Act

Handicap accessibility requirements are not applicable for buildings built prior to 1991.

Other Development Tools and Incentives

We have reviewed all of Middletown's tools and incentives to determine which restrict or facilitate development. They include design guidelines, incentive housing zones and tax incentives. In general, these tools and incentives are useful and have a positive impact on the proposed project. They all support multi-family residential use in the B-1 Central Business Zone Urban Core, which include the renovation/conversion of the upper floors of downtown buildings into multi-family housing.

We do recommend the City consider developing a façade program to help property owners improve their buildings and storefronts and make the downtown more attractive to residents and customers.

Model Building Analysis

OVERVIEW

The model buildings in downtown Middletown, 418-426 Main Street have redevelopment potential and represent a good example of typical buildings found in Connecticut's downtowns.

The Model Building Analysis conceptually demonstrates how the model buildings can be redeveloped to accommodate housing on the upper floors and commercial uses on the ground floors. Our approach identifies the most practical and least expensive options to meet all code requirements. The report is intended to be useful to property owners in any town with a similar building type. Every effort has been made to keep the costs of renovation down. Criteria for selection of the model building into the Come Home to Downtown program are as follows:

- Must be mixed use
- Location - Main Street/pedestrian oriented area with ground floor commercial uses
- Upper floors currently underutilized
- Strong likelihood of being redeveloped
- Motivated and committed building owner
- Obstacles/challenges that make it difficult for current owners to develop the upper floors
- Represents a good example of a typical building found in Connecticut's downtowns

418-420 Main Street is located on the east side of Main Street in downtown Middletown, south of the intersection with Washington Street. The 1866 commercial style brick building was historically known as the Sheldon Building. It underwent a major remodeling in 1895, including the brick façade, brownstone lintels and sills, and the cornice shared with 424-426 Main Street. A small two-story red brick structure (with siding applied at the Melilli Place elevation) is located at the rear of the site. It is connected to the Main Street section with a wood-framed building, making the building footprint a very long, narrow rectangle. The building directly abuts 424-426 Main Street on the north side and another building on the south side, with both red brick side walls built as firewalls between the adjacent buildings. There is a vacant commercial tenant space on the first floor, previously occupied by Amato's Toy Store (420 Main St.) and the upper floors (418 Main St.), previously used as office space by Amato's, are also vacant.

424-426 Main Street is a Victorian Italianate brick building, completed in 1868, historically known as Fagan's Block. The building directly abuts 418-420 to the south side and another building to the north, with both side walls built as firewalls between the adjacent buildings. There is a commercial tenant on the first floor (424 Main St.) and the residential upper floors (426 Main St.) are currently vacant.

The backs of both buildings are accessible from Melilli Place from a narrow alley. Both buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Main Street Historic District. As a result, these buildings are eligible for historic tax credits (See the Project Financing section).

For a detailed Model Building Conditions Assessment see the Appendix.

BUILDING PLANS

Existing

The following plans showing the existing footprints of the buildings.

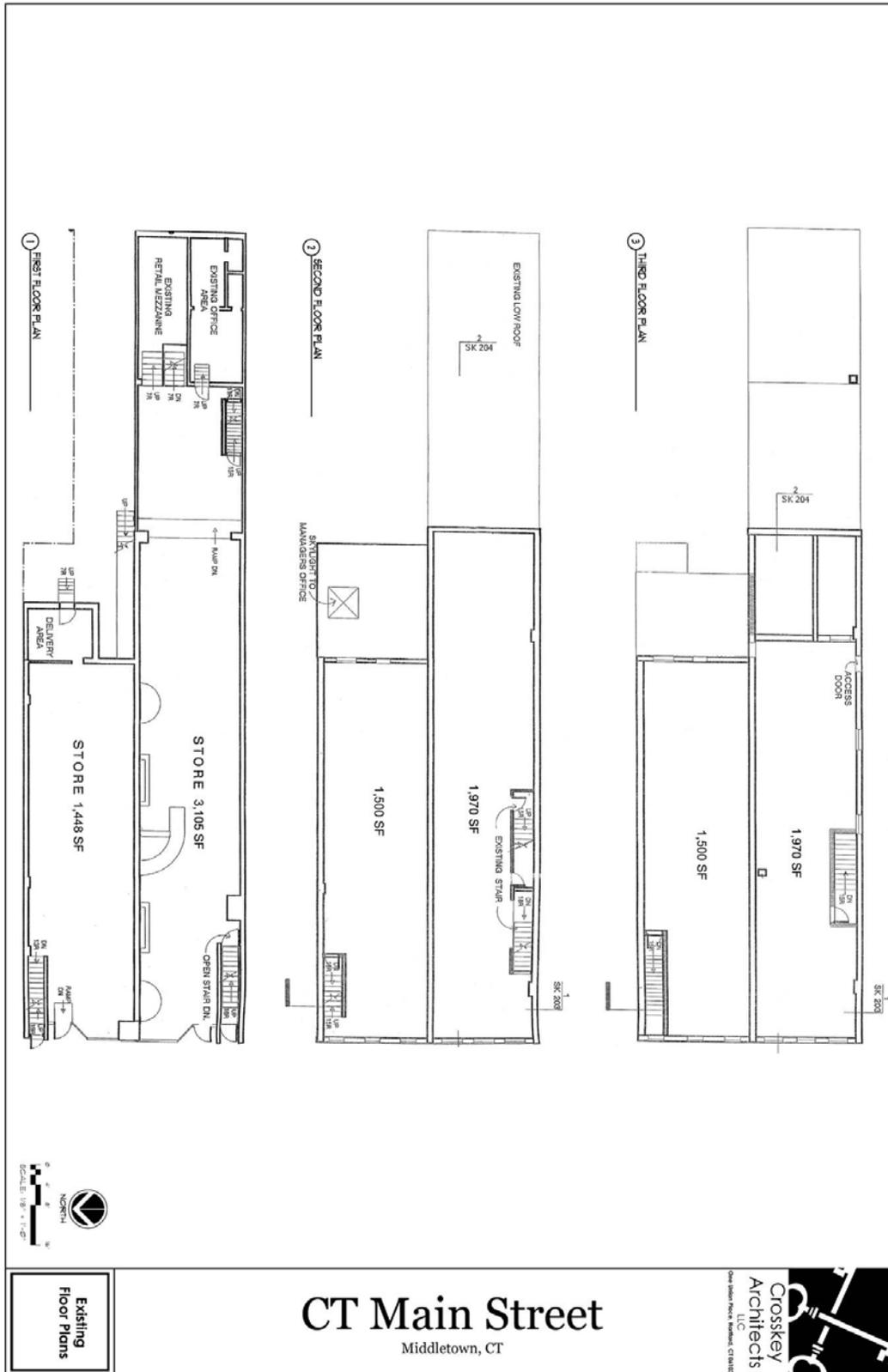


Figure 2

Schematic Design Plans

Based on existing building configuration, we initially developed two design schemes for the upper two floors of the buildings. The first scheme showed a total of eight apartments and maximized the building area for standard sized apartments. The second scheme, which has six units total, creates four large loft style units in the front portion of the two buildings and two conventional units at the rear. The loft style units allow open flexible space, which can be furnished in various ways by tenants. It also minimizes construction to central cores for kitchens and bathrooms, resulting in reduced construction costs. The six unit option was selected as the working solution for this project.

Access to the second and third floor remains through the existing front staircases entered from the street level between the storefronts. Both stairs provide remote access to either ends of the common hallway. Reconstruction of the rear exterior stair provides a convenience access to the public parking lot across the street.

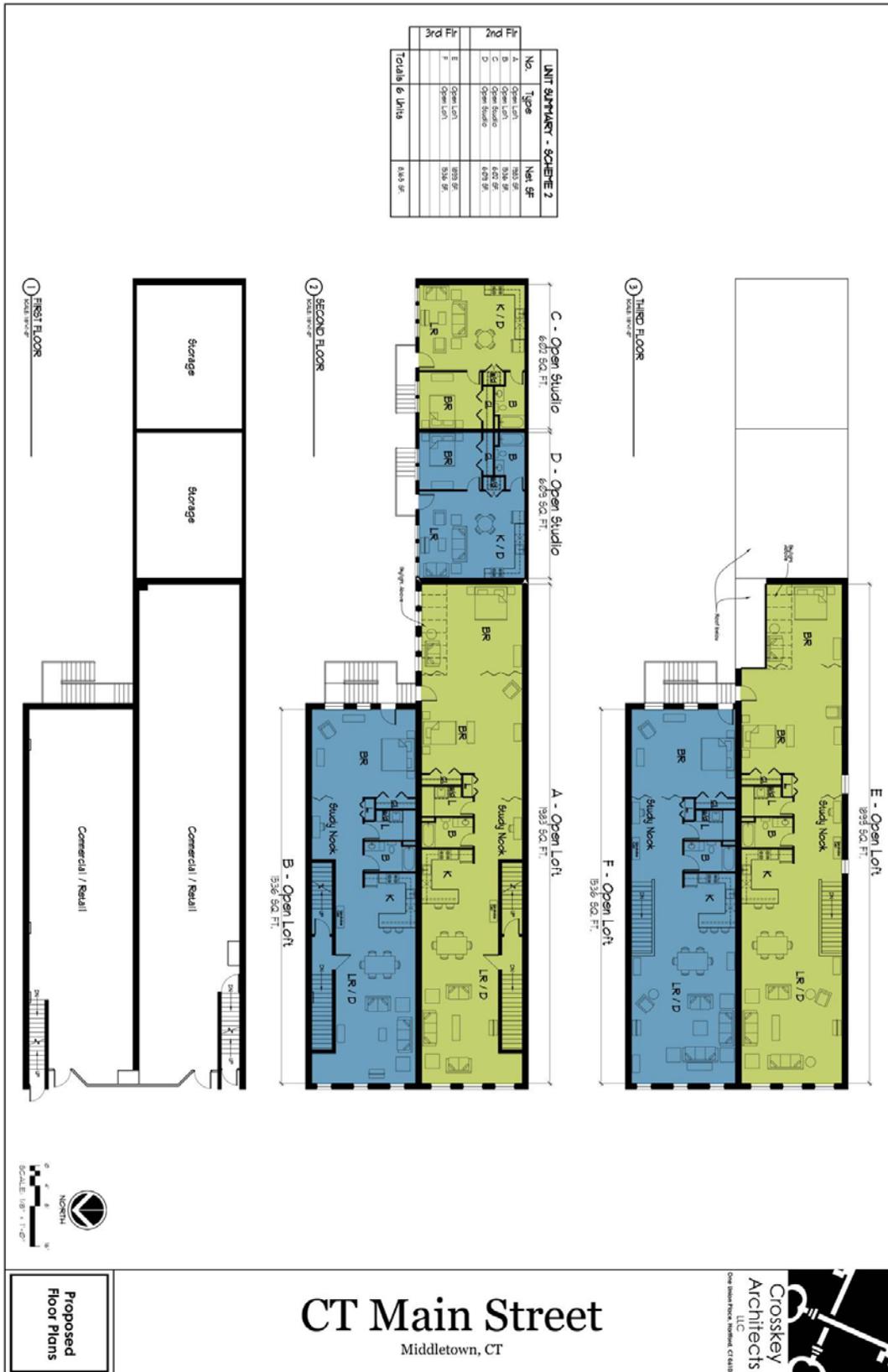


Figure 3

ARCHITECTURAL PROCESS

There are five steps involved in the building rehabilitation process, as outlined below. This study completes the first phase, Schematic Design, for 418-420 and 424-426 Main Street. The next step for these buildings is to assemble the project consultant team and continue with phases two through five.

1. Schematic Design

During this phase, the architect will evaluate the owner's program, schedule, and budget. The building's existing conditions will be documented with floor plans and exterior elevations. These drawings will form the basis for the new schematic site plans, building plans, and elevations. The architect will develop a preliminary code analysis of building and a statement of probable construction cost.

2. Design Development

The next design phase, Design Development, is a more in-depth study of the schematic design with respect to materials, construction, and detailing. The schematic design is refined and brought into focus in preparation for the Contract Document phase. During Design Development, the site plan, building plans, apartment unit plans, and exterior elevations are finalized, along with structural, mechanical & electrical concepts. The code evaluation and statement of probable cost are updated. We recommend contacting two contractors to verify the costs at the conclusion of Design Development. Local builders may be willing to provide this service pro bono.

3. Contract Documents

Once Design Development is complete, documentation of the project's design will be completed in the form of drawings and specifications: the Contract Documents. These documents, produced by the architect and engineers, are used to obtain competitive bids from contractors and necessary permits. The architect will assist the owner and contractor with submission of documents for approval to the Building Department, Fire Marshal, and Utility Companies.

4. Bidding

During the bidding phase, general contractors are invited to submit pricing for the project. The architect will prepare the invitation to bid, issue addenda and clarifications as required, and review bids with the owner. If necessary, the architect will meet with the bidder to discuss value-engineering items and prepare addenda modifying the scope of the contract documents. The architect will assist the owner with awarding of contract and will also assist the owner and the contractor with submission of documents for approval.

5. Construction

During construction, the architect will make visits to the site and meet with the contractor to review progress of the work on the owner's behalf. The architect's construction services generally include periodic site visits and job meetings, job meetings minutes, processing of shop drawings, submittals, change orders, application for payment, and preparation of the final punch list (list of tasks/items necessary for the completion of the project).

Project Financing & Assistance to Property Owners

Redeveloping older mixed-use buildings in a downtown is one of the hardest real estate deals to finance and accomplish. This is even truer for the buildings in this report which represent a pioneering effort for both the property owner and Middletown if successfully redeveloped.

This kind of development requires three distinct sets of expertise: project financing; design and construction; and ongoing property management. The property owner should begin the process by developing a team that includes:

- A real estate development consultant experienced with mixed-use development and financing, including historic tax credits and other financing available from state agencies.
- A preservation architect experienced with historic buildings, who may also be able to assemble other professionals including structural and mechanical engineers.
- A general contractor, if the owners do not feel capable of overseeing the ongoing construction themselves.
- A property management professional to help determine how to best manage the property once it is complete.
- A real estate professional to help market the apartments.

CMSC can provide advice on where to find the type of team members listed above.

PROJECT FINANCING

As referred to previously, the cost of rehabilitating the buildings will exceed what a traditional lender will be willing to provide in a mortgage – which is typically referred to as the “gap” that needs to be closed with additional equity and/or debt as well as potential reductions in construction or operating costs. Since it all starts with putting the financing in place, it is important to invest the time on the front end to develop a realistic budget.

In this case, the property owner was provided with a detailed analysis of where the sources of funds could come from to finance the total project costs, along with a detailed analysis of the total development costs.

The summary of Potential Sources of Funds & Projected Development Costs (Figure 4 below) indicates that the property is eligible for the State Historic Tax Credits which means that 25% of eligible rehabilitation costs can be taken as a tax credit. This could provide \$207,000 of equity for this project. Connecticut Light & Power (CL&P) has indicated that when the credits are issued, they will buy them at 100 cents on the dollar from the owners. CL&P is also willing to meet with the owners to see if they can take advantage of any of the company’s energy efficiency programs.

Potential Sources of Funds & Projected Development Costs

Sources of Funds	
Equity	
State Historic Tax Credits	\$207,700
Financing (Debt)	
First Mortgage Loan	\$400,000
Seller Financing	\$292,500
Additional Funds Needed	<u>\$396,600</u>
Total Sources	\$1,296,800
Development Costs	
Construction Hard Costs	\$830,900
Site Acquisition	\$325,000
Architectural/Engineering	\$54,000
Finance & Interim Costs	\$29,900
Fees & Expenses	<u>\$57,000</u>
Total Costs	\$1,296,800

Figure 4

This financial summary indicates that an additional \$396,600 of debt, equity and/or reduced expenses is needed to have a financially viable project. The size of the first mortgage loan (\$400,000) was estimated based on the projected net operating income that these buildings will produce once occupied for a stabilized full year less assumptions for vacancies. The detailed analysis includes rent structure assumptions, operating costs and long-term cash flow projections. The goal within the long-term cash flow projections is to produce long-term positive cash flow and sufficient debt service coverage (the ratio of net operating income over annual mortgage payment) to satisfy potential lender requirements.

The financing for this project needs to be planned for the construction period and for the long-term, starting when construction is complete and the units are fully rented. The cash flow projections and financing requirements for the construction period will need to take into account any funding sources that are not paid up front. This is the case with both federal and state historic tax credits: while the credit is confirmed prior to the start of construction, the actual vouchers and resulting cash are not provided until the construction is complete, deemed in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and a certificate of occupancy has been issued for the properties.

CMSC will help the property owners prepare to meet with lenders to discuss the terms for potential mortgages. CMSC will also work with the property owners and the town to assess all potential resources to make this project viable. The property owners, City of Middletown and the Downtown Business District should work collectively to implement this project. Potential resources may include:

- Federal historic tax credits – typically a project that is less than \$2 million in costs (such as this one) is too small-scale to utilize the federal historic tax credits. However, there are examples of local investors throughout the country who have benefited from these tax credits because they have a sufficient amount of taxable passive income, and who may be willing to consider a smaller project because of the benefits provided to downtown. CMSC can introduce property owners and interested community leaders to people who can provide more information on how this might work. The federal credits could be worth as much as \$187,000 - toward closing the project gap for this project.
- Subordinated loan provided by the municipality - Lynchburg, Virginia provided loans to support a mixed-use development project (although the project is not current with its loan payment). The City receives \$1.5 million in real estate, occupancy and sales tax revenues that it would otherwise not be collected if the building remained vacant (Dono 2013). This is often called “patient” capital – funding sources that are looking for a reasonable rate of return on their investment over a longer time horizon – examples not only include union pension funds but also community foundations and even groups of local investors.

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) - are a potential resource that deserves exploration. TIF are currently not utilized for these kinds of projects in this state. The Downtown Action Team can work with CMSC and others in the Main Street network to determine how this may become a useful tool for mixed-use development projects. TIF would allow the municipality to provide a loan or grant for the project - to be paid by the incremental amount of taxes collected as the property is redeveloped. A project would not use both TIF and tax abatements (discussed below) because if a tax abatement is given, the incremental taxes would not be paid to pay back the TIF. Most developers would prefer the TIF as the money would be upfront in a lump sum.
- State and federal financing programs - a word of caution regarding most of these programs, whether it is for historic tax credits or for projects that include affordable housing, they come with specific requirements that can often increase the cost and complexity of the project.

Note: A number of the above ideas came from the National Main Street Center's journal, *MAINSTREETNOW*, January/February 2013 and are posted on CMSC's website at www.ctmainst.org

A number of state and federal programs that incentivize housing development are only for affordable housing and only municipalities or non-profit entities are eligible, leaving projects like this one with private ownership out in the cold. CMSC wants to work with the municipality, property owners and other partners to advocate for more resources to be aggregated for mixed-use development in our downtowns. In the vast majority of our downtowns, virtually all mixed-use develop projects are high risk, even if privately owned, and deserve support as much as projects primarily targeted for affordable housing. Also, it is not unusual for market and affordable rental rates to be the same in downtowns, making market rate apartment financing just as difficult to pencil out. As indicated in the beginning of this report, successful mixed-use development projects provide a greater return on investment to the state, municipality and local neighborhood and can provide the kind of housing in demand at various market rate price points to help rebalance downtowns that currently have either no housing or mostly subsidized housing.

Other ideas to consider in Middletown that can help this project become more viable by helping to reduce costs and/or market the project include:

- Commercial and Industrial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) – is a program administered by the Connecticut Clean Energy Finance and Investment Authority allowing building owners to finance energy efficiency and clean energy projects by placing a voluntary assessment on their property tax bill. This program can provide 100% upfront financing for qualified energy upgrades. The financing is structured to be cash-flow positive, which means the monthly energy costs are reduced by more than the cost of financing the improvements. See also <http://www.c-pace.com/>

- The City of Middletown has a tax abatement program for downtown properties. This allows tax abatements for up to 11 years. Consider expanding this program, especially for difficult vacant properties, to up to 25 years as the Town of Vernon does.
- Rental rebates for downtown employees. Major employers in downtown Detroit have done this and have reversed that city's dramatic population loss leading to a 96% occupancy rate. This same concept can be instituted in Middletown.
- Municipalities in many states including Maryland, Massachusetts and New Jersey are providing incentives to city workers to live in the downtowns of the towns where they are employed. These incentives for living downtown can be one-time help with down payments to purchase a home or annual incentives to reduce rental costs. In a number of states, this program is called *Live Where You Work*.

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

Every effort has been made to keep the development cost estimate down while providing the most practical alternative with a level of quality that will be attractive to renters and long-lasting. The development team (suggested above) should be fully involved in this process, including the five steps of the Architectural Process (outlined above).

The detailed construction costs have been provided to the owners and every attempt has been made to provide realistic estimates including contingencies and set asides for replacement reserves. We recommend that the owners utilize the detailed designs and financial pro formas provided to ask two general contractors to provide their own detailed cost estimates to further confirm these numbers. Contractors, especially local ones, will often provide these estimates free of charge.

ONGOING PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

For property owners seeking assistance with marketing and managing the property, there are networks of property owners in Connecticut that can be of help. Some offer workshops on how to be a good landlord, screen tenants and manage property. The property owners might consider bartering reduced rent for property management for one of the smaller units. CMSC can provide contact information for these property owner networks and resources.

The property owners need to be part of a committed team of public and private partners all working together to bring these properties back to life. Although developing and financing a mixed use building is currently riskier than a single use building, it's a risk with great rewards for the entire community and therefore worth the community's investment of time and resources.

Downtown Management

BUILDING DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

Downtown management is critical to the success of any downtown. Connecticut Main Street Center works with communities to improve their downtown management function with a goal of creating vibrant and sustainable downtowns and Main Streets. The Middletown Downtown Business District (DBD) is a member of CMSC's member network.

Based on recommendations and a grant from CMSC in 2012, the DBD commissioned an *Organizational Development Strategy* study from Dan Carmody, a nationally-recognized downtown management consultant. CMSC supports the recommendations put forth in this study on how the DBD can strengthen its organizational capacity.



Downtown Middletown

The DBD's mission statement identified through this process is "to provide robust marketing of downtown, achieve higher clean, safe and civil standards for downtown, and serve as co-captain of the Downtown Action Team that will lead the community to achieve its downtown vision" (Carmody 2012). The *Organizational Development Strategy* suggests that in Middletown "the path from good to great is clear." Based on input from downtown stakeholders, three primary strategies were identified to move the downtown from good to great, including:

- Build a diverse downtown residential neighborhood.
- Strengthen the business mix.
- Improve connections between downtown, Wesleyan University, Middlesex Hospital, the riverfront and the North End.

The first strategy regarding a diverse residential downtown neighborhood is already well underway through the community's participation in Come Home to Downtown. Through this program, impediments to downtown residential development have been identified and solutions recommended. The lessons learned during this process and the model building analysis will be of use to other downtown property owners interested in redeveloping their upper floors for residential use. The current residential market in Middletown is skewed toward those of modest incomes and the community should balance that by promoting more market rate units, especially since with the hospital, university and other employers downtown there is a potential market already in place.

The Carmody report also suggests the downtown has a significant opportunity to grow by improving connections – both physical and programmatic. It recognizes the value of the surrounding neighborhoods, including the hospital, university and riverfront and the need for better connections amongst them.

Finally, the *Organizational Development Strategy* recognizes that to successfully implement the above strategies, greater organizational capacity is needed in downtown Middletown. The report recommends the development of a Downtown Action Team to bring together more formally the leadership of key interests already working downtown. These partners include the City, the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business District. The report also recommends expanding the DBD Board to include representation of key stakeholders from local institutions such as Middlesex Hospital and Wesleyan University. New members should be able to assist the downtown in acquiring the additional resources needed to expand the Team's work and implement priorities, such as growing the Executive Director position from part time to full time.

Fortunately, while there is still much work to be done, Middletown has a head start over many Connecticut downtowns. For example, the business district is viewed as up and coming with a core group of successful, stable enterprises and property owners vested in the community. Residents of the larger region see Middletown as a place to visit for shopping and dining. The development of a Downtown Action Team as recommended above would build on these accomplishments and move Middletown's revitalization to the next level by galvanizing stakeholders into action and implementing needed changes.

Recommendations

Dan Carmody's *Organizational Development Strategy* recommends a series of steps designed to first address existing conditions and then to bring attention to opportunities for residential living downtown. Although Middletown has achieved much success in reviving its downtown district in terms of retail and restaurant establishments, it has yet to fully integrate housing into its Main Street. Admittedly, it has many units of housing at the street's northern end, but a great majority of this is subsidized. In order to create a healthy range of housing options, Middletown would do well to take the necessary steps to encourage a greater mix of housing, aimed specifically at upper story redevelopment. This will increase activity on the streets, leading to additional patronage of local businesses. Additionally, the Downtown Business District, the City and other downtown stakeholders must continue to work together to creatively promote a wide variety of residential living options for a mix of families and individuals.

Organizational Development Strategy Report – Recommendations

Prepared by Dan Carmody

CMSC supports the following recommendations from Dan Carmody’s report prepared for the Downtown Business District in 2012. Implementing them will help Middletown build on its revitalization efforts and more fully integrate a range of housing options in the downtown area.

- **Inventory the downtown housing supply** including unit sizes, rents, conditions, and vacancy rates.
- **Convene a Downtown Housing Summit** that includes a:
 - *Downtown Housing Workshop*, an educational program designed to provide small property owners with information about the downtown market potential and financing options.
 - *Upper Floor Housing Design Competition* in conjunction with the American Institute of Architects.
- **Create an Upper Floor Task Force** to continue to promote downtown living.
- **Establish a Community Based Development Entity** to partner with for-profit or non-profit partners to access grants and loans that expand options for financing downtown housing projects.
- **Develop an Upper Floor Incentive Program** to move small property owners into action. (Carmody 2012)

DOWNTOWN ACTION TEAM

CMSC also identified other ways the DBD, Downtown Action Team, City of Middletown and others can help set the stage to attract more mixed-use development downtown.

Once established as an effective downtown management program, the Downtown Action Team should become a resource center for mixed-use development. The Downtown Action Team can then assume the roles of:

- Convener of key stakeholders to build consensus and implement priorities.
- Education and public relations.
- Data collector and information center.
- Coordinator of development incentives.

Convener of Key Stakeholders

Downtown stakeholders, agencies and commissions must work together to encourage and incentivize mixed-use development in Middletown. Many building owners do not have redevelopment experience and are in need assistance. For most lay people the permitting process to get the necessary approvals for a mixed-use project can be hard to understand, intimidating and costly.

The Downtown Action Team should act as a conduit between property and business owners and City officials, facilitating the growth of buildings with a mix of uses by relaying what is required for permitting approval. By doing so, property owners, residents and business leaders have a direct point of contact for their questions and concerns, and the City is able to focus on reviewing more complete and accurate permit requests.

The downtown development audit section of this report also provides a number of recommendations on how to make the redevelopment process more supportive of mixed-use development. The Downtown Action Team can also play a lead role in convening all the entities needed to implement these recommendations as well.

NCDC Strategy for Success

The Norwich Community Development Corporation (NCDC) is a great example of a downtown management function that acts as a conduit between property owners and the City, solving problems by translating regulations into lay language for residents while ensuring the City is provided with appropriate documentation. Jason Vincent, NCDC Vice President, reported these real-life instances of the NCDC creating win-win situations for both residents and the City.

- **Helping “unstuck” permits that have not been issued.** Sometimes all that’s needed is a call or email from NCDC staff to jumpstart the permit process or to help property owners implement guidance from city officials.
- **Aligning property owners with professionals to help them navigate the process efficiently.** Over time, NCDC staff developed a pool of experts and can direct property owners to the right professionals to quickly resolve issues.
- **Attend meetings with city staff and property owners to ask questions and provide post-meeting direction.** At times, NCDC is able to provide insight that inspires a local official to solve a problem less expensively.
- **Anxiety reduction.** Many people unfamiliar with the process are intimidated with presenting at a public meeting. Having a thorough understanding of the process enables NCDC staff to talk to the property owners about potential risks in the process. Just being coached on how to make the appropriate and succinct presentation can build confidence.
- **“You worry about the cheesesteaks and let us worry about the variance,”** NCDC staff told a local business man who needed a variance in order to expand his business. Both were able to do their respective jobs and now the business owner is making more of what the NCDC staff swear are the “state’s best cheesesteaks” in a larger facility (Vincent 2013).

Education and Public Relations

Property owners and developers are not going to risk investment in downtown unless they see an entire community working together to make this kind of development possible. Just like the old adage “it takes a village to raise a child”, it takes a town to re-purpose an older vacant building that is just beginning to turn the cycle of *dis*-investment into a cycle of *re*-investment. Investors want to see community planning, market potential and public leadership. The Downtown Action Team can help galvanize local leaders to meet with potential investors and property owners to build the trust and lines of communication that must come first.

Property owners, especially those whose upper floors have been vacant for a long time, may need help understanding there is a market for people wanting to live downtown. This may also be true for municipal leaders and potential lenders. To bolster confidence and educate the owners and city officials about the market’s true demand, the Downtown Action Team should hold workshops that present examples of successful mixed-use projects in similar communities. A range of speakers providing expertise from attorneys, lenders, developers and state and local officials can answer questions and dispel doubts about whether these types of initiatives can be successful and generate revenue. Tours of buildings with the potential to be successfully remodeled, or that have already been redesigned, provide concrete examples of what is possible.

Furthermore, the Downtown Action Team should begin to package downtown Middletown as a place where people interested in living downtown want to go. According to Chris Lee, president and CEO of the real estate consulting firm CEL & Associates, Inc., people who are considering living downtown are looking for more urban, walkable communities with multiple adjacent assets (e.g. hospitals, entertainment centers, retail and grocery stores, proximity to employment centers, dining facilities, transit centers, educational institutions and recreation areas) (Lee 2012). Downtown Middletown already has several of these attributes, and certainly far more than any other downtown in the region. Even more encouraging, Middletown has what is probably the number one attraction for downtown living – walkability. Implementing the recommendations listed in the Urban Design Audit section of this report will further enhance Middletown’s walkability and desirability as an urban living environment, an initiative the Downtown Action Team can spearhead.

Creating a list of potential developers interested in smaller downtown properties is another priority the Downtown Action Team should pursue. As a property owner looks to either sell or redevelop their property, the Downtown Action Team can then reach out and market the opportunity among the developer list. In the case of a property owner looking to redevelop their property but not sell, the Team can assist the property owner in drafting a Request for Proposals to send out to potential developers.

**Workshops that Work
Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance – Harrisonburg, VA**

In just ten years, Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR) went from zero to five hundred units of market rate housing (2003-2013) in their downtown. One of the keys to their success was creating a sense of optimism and inspiring local property owners through a series of workshops that described how mixed-use development was achieved in other communities. The HDR then brought in experts to explain how to complete these projects – attorneys, architects, bankers and city and state officials talked about what resources are available, how to use historic tax credits, apply for financing and address construction issues. They also hosted a downtown loft tour which got people excited about the unique spaces with high ceilings, exposed brick walls and other amenities of urban living already in place (Dono 2013).

Middletown, through a newly created Downtown Action Team, can host similar events, inviting the media and devoting online resources to promoting these activities. In the meantime, the Downtown Business District and City should begin marketing the downtown as a place people want to move to, emphasizing its many attributes – namely walkability and proximity to entertainment centers, shopping and dining, and services such as the nearby hospital and university.

Data Collector and Information Center

While the demand for downtown living has grown significantly, it still needs to be quantified. Who wants to live in downtown Middletown? What are they looking for? And what are they willing to pay? This can be done by a highly qualified market analysis consultant and/or it can be done through local networks. Especially at the beginning of the redevelopment process, when the focus is on a relatively small number of housing units and there may not be the need for a full blown market analysis. Rather, what is most essential is an understanding of who are the most likely to be the first to move downtown.

The Downtown Action Team can help define the market and its potential in a number of ways:

- Work with local colleges, universities and major employers to develop a well-crafted survey for downtown employees and young professional associations.
- Utilize these same groups to mine available data. For example, Nielsen Prizm data from Claritas.com can segment groups of people by demographics and behavioral traits and characteristics. The group labeled “Bohemian Mix” are early adopters likely to be the first pioneers moving into a downtown such as Middletown’s. From information like this a sense of potential market demand and price points can be built (Dono 2013).
- Engage local property owners and commercial realtors to build a database of current rents in downtown and adjacent neighborhoods and towns.
- Build a database of case studies from comparable downtowns to provide guidance and inspiration on what can happen in downtown Middletown.

- Inventory the upper floor space and determine the maximum potential for residential units in downtown if completely built out. This would provide a sense of what the ultimate goal could be for residents in the downtown core.

Coordinator of Development Incentives

In city and town centers throughout the country case study after case study demonstrates that financing this kind of mixed-use development is complicated and generally requires many layers of debt and equity. The Downtown Action Team can provide potential projects with information regarding resources that are currently or potentially available. Some of these incentives may require the municipality to adopt new ordinances and/or regulations - so a certain amount of advocacy may also be required. See also the Project Financing section above.

There is a complex array of incentives that can be applied to making these projects feasible. These options will likely increase as more mixed-use development is built. The Downtown Action Team can serve not only as the repository of this information, but also to help property owners learn what options are best for their projects and how to utilize these resources.

Urban Design Audit

PURPOSE AND NEED

The “Come Home to Downtown” pilot program aims to restore vitality and economic health of downtowns through the redevelopment and adaptive reuse of vacant and underutilized buildings with a mix of uses that include residences on upper floors. While it is important to understand how buildings can be designed, constructed or renovated to allow for multiple and diverse uses, it is equally important that the street, blocks and district within which the redeveloped property is situated possesses the characteristics and qualities that will support the new development and provide confidence to building owners, shopkeepers, investors and developers that their reinvestment in downtown will be successful.

The urban design audit was conducted in recognition of the need to understand and improve downtown streets, block, and districts to provide a supportive environment for reinvestment and to encourage people to once again shop, work, live and play downtown.

A key question prior to conducting an urban audit is “*What are the characteristics and qualities that will support the new development, attract people and provide investor confidence?*” We believe that the simple answer to that question is “*Walkability*”. Downtowns that are walkable are the places people prefer to shop in, to visit, to invest in and to live, work and play in. Conversely, places that are not walkable have empty streets at most hours of the day and experience disinvestment.

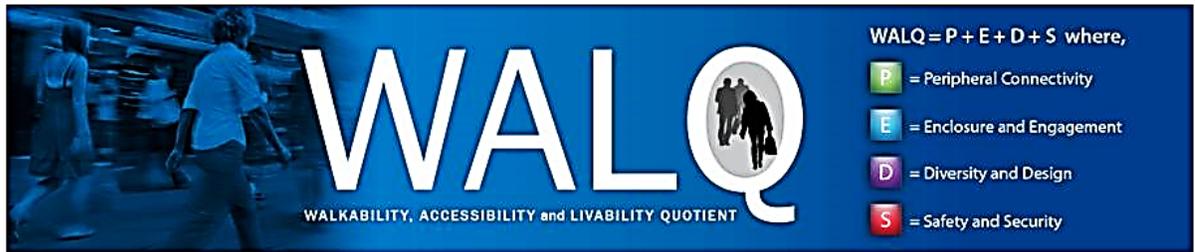
Walkability, therefore, is a crucial virtue of downtowns, but, as simple and intuitive as walkability may seem to the casual observer, paradoxically, it is not a simple concept to define and is quite elusive to attain. Complementary uses in the same building and throughout a downtown serve to create places of value and enhance economic activity because they help to make downtown more walkable; however, there are many other factors that contribute to walkability.

We broadly define walkability as a series of interrelated qualities and characteristics that make cities more livable. These include attractive and safe streets and sidewalks and compact development that not only promote pedestrianism, but also entice people to walk, stroll and wander.

A central business district (CBD) is truly walkable when its buildings, street trees, and other amenities offer beauty, provide comfort, and create enclosure; where pedestrians of all ages and abilities feel safe from traffic. The sidewalks are alive with people, colorful flowers and banners, artistic signs, impromptu art exhibits, alluring shop windows, sidewalk cafes, and pedestrian-level lighting. All of this richness and comfort combine to create urban environments that attract people and make them want to linger and enjoy their surroundings while they conduct everyday business, window-shop, or simply enjoy walking in a nice environment for health and recreation.

APPROACH and METHODOLOGY

The limits of study for this urban design audit encompass an area that is generally defined as downtown Middletown or the CBD. The study area is bounded on the north by Hartford Avenue and Spring Street (at St. John's Square), on the east by DeKoven Drive, on the south by Union Street and Pleasant Street (at Union Green and South Church) and on the west by Broad Street.



P = Peripheral Connectivity

Connectivity to Surrounding Districts: Logical and efficient traffic flow, linkages and supportive uses

Pedestrian and Bicycle Linkages: Non-motorized access to surrounding districts

Parking: Availability of on-street parking

Access to Transit: Trains, trolleys, buses and shared autos (e.g. taxis, Zip cars)

E = Enclosure and Engagement

Strong Edges: Strength and continuity of street wall

Density: Critical mass of buildings and people

Enclosure: Extent of canopy of street trees

Engagement: Community identity expressed through public art and monuments

D = Diversity and Design

Diversity: Mixed uses and mixed income development

Design Coherence: Human scale, architectural form, and style

Distinctive Buildings and Civic Spaces: Historic or civic architecture, public squares, and landmarks

Direct, Orient and Welcome Visitors: Wayfinding, gateways, and information centers

S = Safety and Security

Safe Street Crossings: Traffic calming, and accommodating of pedestrians of all ages

Sidewalks: Continuous, hazard-free and wide to create comfortable walking environment

Short Block Lengths: High intersection density

Security: Adequate lighting, active and natural surveillance

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Figure 5: The Four Categories and 16 Indicators of WALQ

To conduct the urban design audit for downtown Middletown, CDM Smith first identified the essential qualities common to successful downtowns that contribute to walkability. We categorized four qualities, or indicators, within each of four distinct categories (Refer to Figure 5):

Peripheral connectivity,

Enclosure and engagement,

Diversity and design, and

Safety and security.

To better define these 16 qualities or PEDS indicators (i.e. qualities essential to walkability, accessibility and livability), we prepared a photo board for each indicator. Each board is

comprised of photographs of other downtowns that provide examples or models of excellent place-making practices – techniques or strategies that all downtowns should strive for to make cities more walkable and more economically viable.

CDM Smith then developed a methodology to assess or quantify walkability. The process establishes a set of criteria for gauging each of the 16 indicators in a downtown and specific metrics by which to measure the degree to which a downtown, commercial block or “main street” meets the criteria. We term this methodology the *Walkability, Accessibility and Livability Quotient* (WALQ) (©2013 CDM Smith Inc. All rights reserved). The criteria define the desirable qualities and the metrics allow these indicators to be measured or scored on a street-by-street and block-by-block basis.

Each of the 16 PEDS indicators is assessed and scored on a three-point scale by codifying either empirical data or qualitative criteria. In effect, the process provides a framework for the evaluation of urban walkability by converting qualitative judgments into quantitative data. The resulting composite score provides a uniform method not only for comparing downtown Middletown with another, similar downtown, but also for tracking progress within downtown Middletown over time.

The scoring of downtown Middletown for each of the 16 indicators - further defined in the following section - was conducted using the metrics and locational parameters. The score sheet utilizes an Excel spreadsheet that was devised to tally scores for each street segment and for each indicator, convert or level composite scores to a three point scale and tabulate a total score for the entire downtown (also represented on a scale of 1 to 3).

Further, scores are color-coded on a chromatic scale where greenish hues indicate scores above the mean and reddish hues indicate scores below the mean. The color-coding allows a quick visual understanding of the scores which, when applied to corresponding street segments on a map of downtown (refer to Map 1: Walkability in the Appendix), also reveals patterns of walkability across blocks and throughout the downtown.

This assessment and scoring process, which we playfully call WALQ = PEDS, is intended to be accessible yet informative. We want to attract and involve townspeople in a methodical but engaging assessment of their city so that they can better relate to their city’s structure, understand its components, discover its deficiencies and then monitor it over time after the baseline condition has been established.

To enable townspeople to better understand how the WALQ scores for their downtown were derived, residents of downtown will be invited to walk the study area to apply the WALQ methodology themselves. This exercise will be conducted by an urban planner trained in the methodology and will not only allow townspeople to actively participate in the assessment and scoring process, but also to learn firsthand where and why downtown streets may be deficient or performing above the norm. They will also be encouraged to reassess their downtown streets

using the WALQ scorecard every few years to determine where the streets have improved; or, possibly, where conditions may have slipped. By revisiting the criteria and scoring metrics of WALQ, townspeople will be able to identify the specific reasons why a street may be underperforming and work with planners, policy boards and town officials to correct conditions that are likely contributing to that underperformance.

ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section presents the 16 indicators of WALQ (Walkability, Accessibility and Livability Quotient) and:

- The reasons why each indicator is important to downtown walkability and long-term viability;
- The criteria the design audit team used in assessing them;
- The score that Downtown Middletown received for each (on a three point scale); and,
- The team's recommendations on how Middletown can improve its downtown relative to each of the indicators.



Farmer's Market, North End

P1 Connectivity to Surrounding Districts

Why is this indicator important?

Connectivity provides for logical and efficient traffic flow, linkages between surrounding neighborhoods and downtown. For connectivity to succeed, the land uses on the periphery of downtown need to be supportive of downtown. Connections between downtown and valuable natural features also serve to attract people and provide recreational amenities for urban dwellers.

Criteria developed to assess connectivity:

- Access to the central business district (CBD) is convenient and free of barriers that restrict or inhibit mobility (e.g. limited access highways, excessive number of one-way streets, RR corridors, escarpments, and rivers)
- Walkable and attractive connections between downtown and significant natural features (e.g. rivers, shorelines, prominent hilltops)
- There are few one-way streets leading to the CBD or within the CBD.
- Surrounding land uses complement the CBD and support walkability.

See also Map 2: Connectivity & Key Views in the Appendix.



Union Green

Connectivity score for downtown Middletown:

2.0

Recommendations to improve connectivity in downtown Middletown:

Downtown Middletown scored relatively high on this indicator because the CBD is surrounded on three sides (the north, south and west) by dense, stable, attractive residential neighborhoods with a diversity of housing stock. The east side of Downtown is bound by State Route 9 and the Connecticut River.

The CBD also has few one-way streets leading to the CBD or within the CBD and most of the land uses surrounding downtown complement the CBD and support walkability.

The city should work to improve connectivity by:

- Improving pedestrian and bicycle access to its principal natural, scenic and recreational asset, the Connecticut River.

P2 Pedestrian and Bicycle Linkages

Why is this indicator important?

Pedestrian and bicycle transportation increase accessibility to the CBD and enhance commerce and social interaction. Cities that accommodate cycling and walking benefit in many aspects including reduced traffic congestion, reduced parking issues, and more importantly, improvement in the quality of life for its residents.

Criteria developed to assess pedestrian and bicycle linkages:

- Protected and continuous bicycle and pedestrian routes or on-street bike lanes are provided from the CBD to surrounding neighborhoods.
- The presence of off road shared use paths or greenways leading to the CBD, or in close proximity to downtown.

Pedestrian and bicycle linkages score for downtown Middletown:

1.5

Recommendations to improve pedestrian and bicycle linkages in downtown Middletown:

The ped-bike linkages score of 1.5 is low and reflects the lack of bicycle facilities both in Downtown Middletown and between the downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods.

It is important that the City improve this score by:

- Improving safety for vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic throughout Downtown by providing better pedestrian and bicycle lanes and other bicycle facilities and utilizing appropriate traffic-calming techniques to reduce vehicular travel speeds. This can be accomplished by implementing 'Complete Streets' improvements on downtown streets when the opportunity arises to reconstruct or significantly repair streets. (Refer to recommendations under Indicator S1 – "Safe Street Crossings" for information about Complete Streets.)



Lack of Pedestrian Facilities

P3 Parking

Why is this indicator important?

On-street parking is valuable because it: a) supports commercial establishments; b) increases pedestrian comfort by providing a buffer from moving traffic; c) reduces need for off-street parking lots that require much more pavement per space and displace higher value development; d) facilitates safe and convenient curb-side drop-off of passengers; e) increases pedestrian activity on the street; (e.g. taxis, Zip cars); and, f) provides a cue to motorists that they are entering a low speed area.

The availability of parking is a key issue for most downtowns and main street business owners. Since land in older retail districts is often in short supply, and large surface parking areas are generally not conducive to a pedestrian environment, large parking lots are not good for Main Street retail districts. Surface parking lots often cover more ground than the commercial buildings they are intended to serve (U.S. EPA 2006). Communities often have to balance the need for parking and the inclination of businesses to provide parking to meet peak hour demand during the busiest shopping periods with the desire to have a compact, pedestrian-friendly, and aesthetically pleasing downtown or Main Street. Maximizing on-street parking is a smart way to meet parking demand in a downtown without destroying the essential qualities that contribute to walkability.

Criteria developed to assess parking:

- On-street parking should be provided along both sides of all streets, wherever possible
- CBD policies should encourage short-term parking and discourage long-term
- CBD parking policies should also recognize the traffic calming qualities that on-street parking provides (more on this topic is discussed under Indicator S1 'Complete Streets').
- Large off-street parking lots should be avoided especially if they are visible from the street or disrupt the "street wall" (refer to Indicator E1 – "Strong Edges). Small, discretely located off-street parking lots or well-designed parking structures are preferred.

Map 3: Traffic, Transit & Parking in the Appendix, provides a general overview of the availability and location of large surface or structure parking.

Parking score for downtown Middletown:

2.3



On-street Parking

Recommendations to improve parking in downtown Middletown:

Downtown Middletown scored a relatively high 2.3 for this indicator because the CBD has relatively few large, off-street parking lots that are visible from the street and a significant amount of on-street parking (refer to Map 3: Traffic, Transit & Parking in the Appendix).

Nonetheless, parking downtown could be improved by:

- Recognizing the value of on-street parking to local merchants and businesses by increasing the number of on-street parking spaces wherever possible.
- Providing better wayfinding signage to direct motorists to the several large municipal parking structures downtown.
- Enacting regulations or design standards that ensure that new parking structures are not visible from public streets. This can be accomplished through the construction of liner buildings that screen the parking structure from the street, provides uses and activities that engage the street and attract people.
- Screening surface parking lots to minimize a negative visual element of downtown. Landscaping, trees and low walls can mitigate the negative visual effects of parking lots and make a significant difference in the overall visual qualities of downtown.



Diagonal Parking on Main Street

P4 Access to Transit

Why is this indicator important?

Providing a variety of transportation options - such as safe and reliable public transportation, sidewalks, bike paths and walking trails - promotes and improves health, reduces time spent commuting, conserves energy and safeguards the environment. Furthermore, many community residents are unable to drive or do not have access to a car. Providing transportation options creates communities where all citizens have a real choice on how they get around and where seniors, young people and people with disabilities can live comfortably.

Criteria developed to assess transit:

Within one-half mile of the center of the CBD there is convenient, robust and frequent:

- Local bus service and intercity bus service
- Paratransit service
- Commuter train or trolley
- Taxi service and Zip Car (or other shared auto)

Transit score for downtown Middletown:

1.0



Local Buses – CT Transit

Recommendations to improve transit in Downtown Middletown:

Downtown Middletown scored poorly under this indicator because it is not well served by fixed local bus routes between Downtown and the various neighborhoods of the City. To improve the efficiency of the current transit network, the City should work with regional and state agencies to:

- Better accommodate the variety of transportation choices necessary to support downtown development.
- Improve access to and use of public transit and reduces dependence on the single-occupant auto by supporting transit as well as walking and biking.
- Minimize the amount of land required for automobile travel and storage
- Provide an interconnected transportation network
- Better connect people to jobs and thereby enable more people to live in Middletown and commute by transit to jobs in other cities.

E1 Strong Edges

Why is this indicator important?

A strong, continuous street wall provides enclosure and intimacy to the street; it also enlivens the street by virtue of ambient light from windows and the movement of people. Strong edges also change the psychological feel of the street, they send a clear reminder to motorists of the dual functions of the street - as both a movement corridor and as a place for social and cultural activity (Engwicht 1999). Consequently, the attention to detail of the design of the street edge and the creation of an interesting and continuous “street-wall” on private property also have a moderating influence on motor vehicle speeds and obligate motorists to drive slowly and attentively (Nozzi 2011). All of these visual cues impart a distinctly downtown character to the street that will remind motorists that they are in special district and are using streets that are designed for multiple users. People, not cars, are the priority.

Buildings in the CBD should be at least two stories; the optimal height and spacing of buildings varies by block depending on the width, rhythm and intensity of development on the street. Off-street parking downtown should be carefully designed to avoid disruption of the street wall and should be discretely located to the rear of buildings.

Criteria developed to assess strong edges:

- Buildings at least two stories tall (optimal height and spacing varies by block per buildings on street that have a scale or prominence that relate well to the street)
Avoid parking garages fronting on street (unless they have retail uses on ground floor)
- Avoid vacant sites or surface parking lots close to the street
- Buildings should abut each other or be very closely spaced; if a gap is typically provided between buildings, then it should be of consistent width to create a rhythm
- Buildings set at the back of walk or consistent setback - e.g. 10 feet from back of walk)

Note: Iconic, religious, or civic buildings may be exempted if they provide civic/cultural benefit.

Strong edges score for downtown Middletown:

1.9

Recommendations to improve strong edges in downtown Middletown:

While many streets at the core of downtown have impressive “street walls”, the presence of strong edges throughout peripheral areas of downtown is sporadic since many streets have gaps manifested as vacant lots or off-street parking. To improve its street wall the City should:

Review its zoning regulations to ensure that infill development is required to reinforce the street wall and that all buildings shall:

- Be located at the back of sidewalk;
- Be closely spaced;
- Have no off-street parking lots between the building and the street; and,
- Not have drive-through windows that disrupt the street wall and jeopardize pedestrian safety.

E2 Density

Why is this indicator important?

A critical mass of multi-story buildings on a downtown block adds great value to the economic vitality, social vitality and security by bringing people to downtown at many hours of the day or night.

Upper story residential space adds particular value since residents provide 24/7 activity and help to sustain retail commerce in the CBD. This high density of buildings contributes greatly to 'walkability' and allows people to visit multiple destinations without having to drive.



Middletown's Continuous "Street Wall"

The proximity and mix of uses also allow for shared parking and serve to reduce parking demand - in part because each use would have a different or complimentary peak hour and because the development would have a 'park once-and-walk' layout that would allow people to visit multiple destinations without having to drive. Less space devoted to parking means that more space can be allocated for taxable, people-generating buildings.

Criteria developed to assess density:

- Floor Area Ratio* is used to measure critical mass of buildings because it compares all floors of all buildings on a block to the total land area of the block. Streets that possess a high ratio will score well.

*Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.) is derived by dividing the number of square feet of land area of the block by the approximate total square footage of all floors of all buildings on the block.

See also Map 4: Building Density in the Appendix.

Density score for downtown Middletown:

2.4

Recommendations to improve density in downtown Middletown:

Downtown Middletown scored quite well under this density indicator category because many of its streets are fronted by tall and sizable buildings. However, there are many underutilized parcels, vacant lots or parking lots within downtown that could accommodate new development. The City can improve its density score by:

- Encouraging infill development that is planned, designed and constructed under the precepts of New Urbanism (or mimicking the old urbanism of historic downtown Middletown) would complement the density, height, scale, and character of the existing buildings that front on Main Street. Infill development would provide a critical mass of leasable space and retail services to improve the economic sustainability of downtown and support its long-term viability.
- Review zoning and parking regulations to ensure that a minimum density of 1.0 F.A.R. is enabled.

E3 Enclosure of street by canopy of street trees

Why is this indicator important?

A canopy of street trees can provide more than aesthetic enhancement. A healthy and continuous canopy of trees can: a) provide vertical and overhead enclosure to the street that results in a change of driver behavior (slows traffic); b) lowers the ambient temperature of sidewalks in the summer through shade and thereby improves the comfort of pedestrians; and, c) improve retail sales.

Criteria developed to assess the tree canopy:

- Street trees are spaced evenly along the edge of street at intervals that do not exceed 75 feet.
- Street trees are healthy, are of a species appropriate for downtown’s urban conditions and of sufficient size to create shade and an effective canopy while not obscuring business storefronts and signage.



Canopy of Street Trees

Enclosure score for downtown Middletown:

1.6

Recommendations to improve enclosure in downtown Middletown:

Downtown Middletown’s score for enclosure by street trees is quite low. The City should improve this score by:

- Revising municipal policies to require the planting of street trees when streets undergo significant reconstruction.
- Encouraging shopkeepers and building owners to plant and adopt a street tree. The City of New Haven has significantly increased the survival rate and improved the health of street trees through such a program.

E4 Engagement

Why is this indicator important?

Public art installations and monuments within the CBD express community identity, reflect community pride and reveal history and culture; where such features are frequently encountered in the CBD or are noted beyond the region for their iconic value, they can elevate the ability of the CBD to attract people and investments.

Criteria developed to assess engagement:

Public art and monuments should be:

- Unique and engaging
- Frequent and unexpected
- Allow people to associate a place with its culture and history
- Showcased in public and private sites
- Be welcoming to the pedestrians to touch or even sit or climb on

Engagement score for downtown Middletown:

2.0



Spear Park

Recommendations to improve engagement in downtown Middletown:

Downtown Middletown possesses several historic statues, monuments and fountains. However, more can be done to encourage activity on the street and to make downtown more attractive to strolling and shopping, including:

- Install outdoor art such as permanent and temporary art or sculpture displays and murals.
- Install unique or sculptural functional art in the form of seating, flower pots or custom-designed bus shelters.

D1 Diversity

(i.e. Mixed uses and mixed income development)

Why is this indicator important?

A diverse mix of uses that cater to or accommodate people from a diversity of incomes creates a more sustainable and stable CBD. A downtown commercial district should have retail and restaurants uses as the predominant ground floor use and offices or residential uses on upper floors. Uses must complement and support each other; for example industrial buildings, warehouses, drive-through restaurants, auto service or repair stations, windowless buildings are examples of buildings that do not complement or support the CBD or add value to the CBD.

Offering a range of housing choices downtown will spur new development. Not everyone has the same housing wants or needs. Some singles prefer to rent apartments, young couples may need starter homes and empty nesters often look for condominiums close to town. Most prefer to be within a short distance to their workplace or within a walking distance of a transit station.

Criteria developed to assess diversity:

Diverse, mixed-use CBDs should possess:

- Predominantly retail and restaurant uses on the ground floor
- Supportive office or residential uses on upper floors
- Housing should be the dominant land use and should be designed and priced for individuals and families across a wide range of incomes from those classified as affordable housing to market rate housing and even luxury housing.
- Few vacant buildings

Diversity score for downtown Middletown:

1.8



Diversity of Uses on Main Street

Recommendations to improve

diversity in downtown

Middletown:

Middletown possesses a traditional downtown with strong historic landmarks, majestic churches, stately civic and institutional buildings and many commercial properties within a 5 to 10 minute walk from the center of downtown adjacent at the intersection of Main and Washington Streets.

While many of downtown Middletown's buildings accommodate multiple uses and municipal regulations allow multiple uses in the CBD, downtown's score for diversity is marginal due to vacant or underutilized space in the CBD and a minimal amount of downtown housing. The City can improve diversity through the following:

- Enable construction of housing above retail uses to encourage people to work and shop close to where they live.
- Incentivize developers to provide a range of housing options for downtown living, including townhouses or condominiums, accommodations for dependent elders and homes that service-providers and Millennials can afford.
- Encourage infill development to match or complement the density, height, scale, and character of the existing buildings in downtown's core blocks.
- Identify underserved markets downtown and seek out businesses that can fill that void in order to reach a critical mass of retail space and services that will improve the economic sustainability of downtown and support its long-term viability.
- Identify niches of creative services or businesses that could compliment downtown businesses and attract a new demographic of downtown residents (such as artists, photographers, craftspeople, writers, musicians and other performers, computer technicians) and implement programs to attract and retain this creative class (e.g. live-work studios, tax incentives, partnerships with Wesleyan University and other institutions).



Sidewalk Cafes on Main Street

D2 Design Coherence

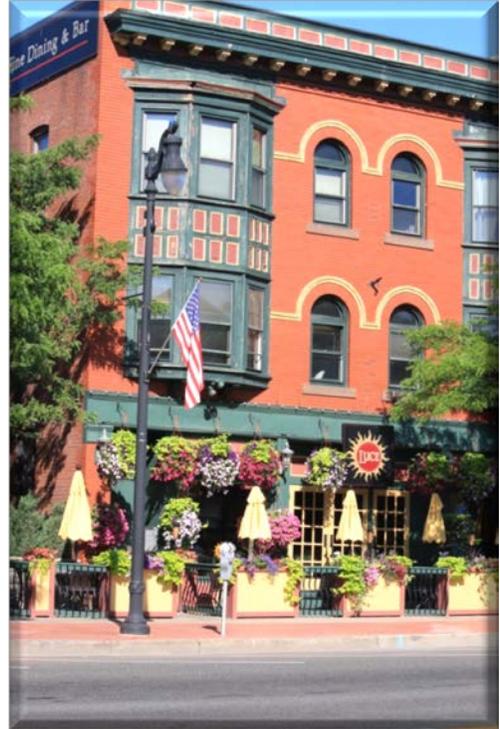
Why is this indicator important?

Buildings with good proportions (e.g. balanced ratio of windows to wall area), prominent and ornate entrances, warm, natural materials, well-scaled and tasteful signage, interesting and engaging adornments (e.g. awnings, lighting and banners), and possess an architectural design that is emblematic of the city or region represent the ultimate place-making features.

Criteria developed to assess design coherence:

Design coherence exists when buildings possess:

- Good proportions (e.g. ratio of windows to wall area)
- Prominent and ornate entrances
- Warm, natural materials
- Well-scaled and tasteful signage
- Interesting adornments (e.g. awnings, lighting)
- A regional architectural style



Well Designed Buildings Downtown

Design coherence score for downtown Middletown:

2.1

Recommendations to improve design coherence in downtown Middletown focus on the city's design guidelines (Middletown 2002):

Downtown Middletown scored relatively well in this category because residents value their downtown and understand the importance of design coherence and its roles in creating a beautiful cityscape and in place-making. City officials have created and codified a set of design standards or guidelines that require new construction to echo the above design principles. The City should further improve this score by:

- Reinforcing its commitment to the principles of its *Design Guidelines*.

D3 Distinctive Buildings and Civic Spaces

Why is this indicator important?

Historic or civic architecture, landmarks, public squares and other places of distinction convey community pride, provide forums for public gathering and offer respite from the busy urban environment. Examples include: 1) Historic structures; 2) iconic buildings of statewide import; 3) Notable landmarks, public squares or parks; 4) Prominent gateway buildings or those that attract through terminal views.

Criteria developed to assess distinctive buildings and civic spaces:

Landmarks include:

- Historic structures
- Iconic buildings of statewide import
- Public squares or parks
- Prominent gateway buildings (esp. those that provide a terminal view)

See also Map 5: Landmarks & Gateways and Map 6: Open Space & Civic Spaces in the Appendix.

Distinctive buildings and civic spaces score for downtown Middletown:

3.0

Recommendations to improve distinctive buildings and civic spaces in downtown Middletown:

Downtown Middletown received the best possible score for this indicator because it possesses an enviable inventory of distinctive landmark buildings and public spaces and is entrusted with the stewardship of numerous unique, historic and irreplaceable buildings.

- The City should continue to safeguard this treasured past and develop or refine policies that require new buildings in downtown to be designed and constructed in a manner that complements this rich and traditional architectural setting.



Prominent Landmarks – Middletown Police Station

D4 Direct, Orient and Welcome Visitors

Why is this indicator important?

Wayfinding, gateways, information centers and promotional efforts help make the CBD welcoming to visitors, convey hospitality, promote tourism and increase investor confidence that the CBD is stable and attentive to details.

Criteria developed to assess hospitality:

Welcoming details include:

- Directory maps and Directional signs (for every mode of travel: walking, biking, transit, and motor vehicle)
- Visitor info centers
- Attractive banners
- Attractive gateways
- Informative, current websites.

Hospitality score for downtown Middletown:

2.0

Recommendations to improve hospitality in downtown Middletown:

Downtown received a respectable score for this category because it provides modest levels of interesting and engaging features and promotional materials. However, more should be done to:

- Implement a program to create directory signs and way-finding signs throughout downtown.
- Coordinate Signage: Provide a coordinated, simple and visually unified system of directional signage to orient visitors to public parking, transit stations, parks and other points of interest should be established.
- Embrace Smart Phone technology: Implement program to orient visitors to services and activities using smart phone apps.
- Increase appreciation of downtown Middletown's history and architecture.

S1 Safe Street Crossings

Why is this indicator important?

Traffic calming and accommodating of pedestrians of all ages are important to walkability. Inadequate pedestrian signals, poor lighting, poorly marked crosswalks, long distances from curb to curb, long distances between crosswalks, and speeding vehicles are factors that contribute to a lack of safety.

Walkable Urbanism and Complete Streets (www.CompleteStreets.org) principles advocate more restrictive dimensional standards and traditional street design strategies to keep vehicles in check or calm traffic. Traffic calming reduces vehicle speeds, increases driver attentiveness, and heightens driver awareness of the need for safe driving. Traffic calming measures also serve to improve pedestrian crossing times, and in general emphasize the pedestrian over the passenger vehicle.

Benefits of a walkable downtown include: a) reduced energy consumption through reduced dependence on automobiles; b) greater pedestrian activity on downtown streets and livelier retail sales; and, c) healthier lifestyles (people can get their exercise by walking to school, work, friends' homes or nearby businesses).

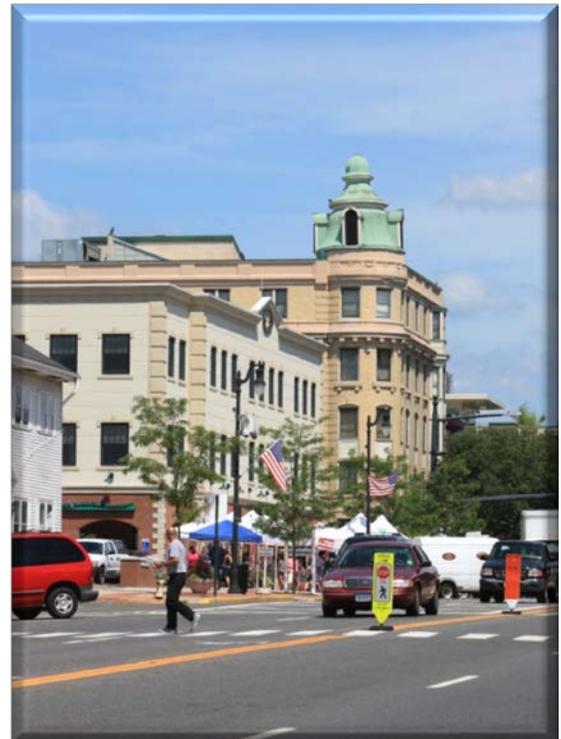
Criteria developed to assess safe street crossings:

Features that improve safety for pedestrians at urban intersections include:

- Highly visible crosswalks
- Pedestrian countdown signals
- Tight curb radii
- Narrow traffic lanes
- Pedestrian refuge islands (pedestrians should not have to travel more than 50 feet on any one crosswalk unless a pedestrian refuge island is provided)
- Curb extensions (or bulb-outs)
- Speed tables

Safe street crossings score for downtown Middletown:

1.2



Unsafe Street Crossings on Main Street

Recommendations to improve safe street crossings in downtown Middletown:

Downtown Middletown scored poorly in this very important category of indicator. Following are general recommendations to create safer and more people-friendly streets; however, implementation of the recommendations will require significant further analysis and design because traffic-calming improvements and Complete Streets solutions are very location-specific and require traffic engineers, urban planners and transportation planners to address the multi-dimensional aspects of balancing street networks for all users.

- Downtown Middletown has several intersections that are not pedestrian friendly because of high traffic volumes, numerous and wide vehicle lanes, high vehicle speeds, and minimal pedestrian countermeasures.
- The City should implement traffic calming measures by adopting a 'Complete Streets' policy and creating a 'Complete Streets' manual of standards and guidelines. A 'Complete Street' is a road that is designed and operated to enable safe access for all users: motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. The focus is on designing streets to balance safety and convenience for everyone - older individuals, children, and people with disabilities.
- There is no distinct way to define a 'Complete Street', each street type has different needs depending on its setting and traffic volumes. Based on the context and the modes expected, a combination of elements such as wide sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, median islands, curb extensions, and narrow travel lanes can be provided to moderate driver behavior and improve safety. The City of New Haven has developed a "toolbox" and other standards and guidelines to help promote and implement 'Complete Streets' improvements and traffic safety measures that Middletown could use as a model to improve its downtown street network.

Sources cited in above recommendations box: *City of New Haven, Complete Streets Design Manual* (DeStefano 2010) and definition of Complete Streets (LaPlante 2008).



Multi-use, Hazard-free Sidewalks Downtown

S2 Sidewalks

Why is this indicator important?

Sidewalks that are continuous, free of tripping hazards and wide enough to accommodate appropriate levels of pedestrian activity create a comfortable walking environment and are essential to a well-functioning downtown.

Criteria developed to assess sidewalks:

Sidewalks should be:

- Continuous with few disruptions by driveways or wide curb-cuts
- Hazard-free (free of cracks, heaves or potholes)
- Wide enough to permit three people to walk side-by-side

Sidewalks score for downtown Middletown:

2.5

Recommendations to improve sidewalks in downtown Middletown:

Downtown Middletown's sidewalks are quite functional and attractive, hence the very good score for this category. Recommendations to improve the pedestrian environment include:

- Provide better sidewalks between peripheral neighborhoods and downtown.
- Improve pedestrian access between store entrances and hidden parking structures to provide more direct and visually attractive pathways.
- Improve pedestrian connections and provide vehicular connections between rear parking lots to encourage the sharing of parking among multiple property owners or uses.



Middletown's Functional & Attractive Sidewalks

S3 Short Block Lengths (or high intersection density)

Why is this indicator important?

Short blocks result in a high density of intersections in a downtown district and thereby improve street connectivity. Street connectivity refers to the directness of links and the density of connections in the network. City streets (especially commercial streets) should be laid out as an interconnected network to improve traffic circulation and to improve walkability. A well-connected grid of streets has many short links, numerous intersections and minimal cul-de-sacs. To provide optimum circulation, access, and crossing opportunities, an ideal downtown block length is between 200 and 400 feet (Oregon Transportation and Growth Management Program 1999).

As connectivity increases, travel distances decrease and route options increase, creating a more accessible and flexible system for motorists and pedestrians. Short block lengths encourage walking and promotes safety and security while long block lengths stymie social interaction and inhibit pedestrianism.

A recent study found that the highest risk of fatal or severe crashes occurs in CBDs with very low street network density and that safety outcomes improve as the intersection density increases (Marshall and Garrick 2008). The study also found that cities with an intersection density of less than 80 intersections per square mile experience a much higher incidence of motor vehicle accidents than cities with more than 225 intersections per square mile.

Criteria developed to assess short block lengths:

- Maximum block length is 200 ft. by 400 ft.
- Optimal intersection density (which is a function of block length) is over 200 intersections per square mile.

Intersection density score for downtown Middletown:

2.5

Recommendations to improve intersection density in downtown Middletown:

The relatively high score of 2.5 for this indicator is due to the fact that the intersection density of downtown Middletown is 204 per square mile, which exceeds the optimal density of 200 intersections per square mile. City officials should maintain vigilance over the city's street network to maintain the functionality and safety of the street network; specifically, the city should:

- Avoid closing or cul-de-sac-ing downtown streets.
- Provide more street and pedestrian connections by improving undeveloped rights-of-way, improving alleys, and redeveloping larger blocks with new streets.
- Redevelop the street network to provide short street segments and walkable block sizes as much as possible.

S4 Security

Why is this indicator important?

The importance of personal security, improving the safety of streets, and reducing the incidence of crime cannot be understated. A sustainable CBD cannot be attained if people do not feel safe. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies can improve public safety through the provision of adequate lighting, by increasing levels of police surveillance, and through other physical improvements and community-building principles that deter criminal behavior (www.cpted.net). Natural surveillance can be established by taking steps to increase the perception that people can be seen. This can be accomplished by designing building and streets to maximize visibility, foster increased activity, encourage positive social interaction within private and public space, and provide a greater sense of community (Crowe). Through adequate lighting, active and natural surveillance, potential offenders feel increased scrutiny which is often enough of a deterrent to crime (Saville and Mangat 2008).

Criteria developed to assess security:

Each segment of the street should have:

- Adequate street lighting
- Frequent sources of ambient light from adjacent buildings
- No blind alleys or areas where criminals could lurk (e.g. walls, hedges)

Security score for Downtown Middletown:

1.7



Downtown Bicycle Patrol

Recommendations to improve security in Downtown Middletown:

Downtown Middletown's security score is relatively low. The following recommendations should be a priority for downtown:

- Conduct a street by street audit of lighting and natural surveillance using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.
- Improve personal security and the safety of the streets by providing adequate lighting, increased police presence, and other physical improvements and community building principles that deter criminal behavior and dispel any perceptions that streets are unsafe.

SUMMARY OF WALQ SCORES

As discussed above, CDM Smith assessed downtown Middletown for walkability, accessibility and livability under each of the 16 indicators. A score sheet was used, which tabulates and calculates the scores for each street segment and for each indicator.

The scores for each street segment area also presented visually on a map of downtown Middletown (refer to the Appendix, Map 1: Walkability). The visualization of “Walkability” is depicted as color-coded street segments utilizing a chromatic scale as shown in Figure 6. Greenish hues indicate scores above the mean and reddish hues indicate scores below the mean. The color-coded ‘Walkability Map’ reveals patterns of walkability across blocks and throughout the downtown. It is quite a telling map relative to the economic viability and livability of downtown because it factors all 16 indicators including pedestrian accessibility, connections to peripheral supportive uses or CBDs, completeness and distinctiveness of the street edge (street wall), diversity of land uses, desirability of destinations and safety of street crossings.

W.A.L.Q. Color Code		
Very Poor	1.3 or lower	Red
Poor	1.4	Orange
	1.5	
Below Average	1.6	Pink
	1.7	
Marginal	1.8	Light Green
	1.9	
Good	2.0	Green
	2.1	
Very Good	2.2 or higher	Dark Green

Figure 6
Color Key to Scoring System

Following is a summary of the WALQ scores for downtown Middletown (Note: references to scores are based on 3 point scale where 1.0 is the lowest score and 3.0 is the highest score):

- Highest scoring blocks are located along Main Street.
- WALQ score for the entire downtown (average of all indicators) = 2.0
- “Good” and “Very Good” ranges of the scoring system:
 - P1 - Connectivity to Adjacent Districts (2.0)
 - P3 - On-Street Parking (2.3)
 - E2 - Density (2.4)
 - E4 - Engagement through Community Identity (2.0)
 - D2 - Design Coherence (2.1)
 - D3 - Distinctive Buildings and Civic Spaces (3.0)
 - D4 - Direct, Orient and Welcome Visitors (2.0)
 - S2 - Sidewalks (2.5)
 - S3 - Short Block Lengths (2.5)
- “Marginal” or “Below Average” ranges of the scoring system:
 - E1 - Strong Edges (1.9)
 - E3 - Enclosure by tree canopy (1.6)
 - D1 - Diversity (1.8)
 - S4 – Security (1.7)
- “Poor” or “Very Poor” ranges of the scoring system:
 - P2 - Pedestrian and Bicycle Linkages (1.5)
 - P4 - Access to Transit (1.0)
 - S1 - Safe Street Crossings (1.2)

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Appendix

Documents

Model Building Conditions Assessment

Model Building Photos

WALQ Score Spreadsheet

Urban Design Audit Maps

Map 1: Walkability

Map2: Connectivity & Key Views

Map 3: Traffic, Transit & Parking

Map 4: Building Density

Map 5: Landmarks & Gateways

Map 6: Open Space & Civic Spaces

Middletown

MODEL BUILDING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

418-420 Main Street

The Main Street building section is four stories high and three bays wide (photo 1). The glass storefront and building entrances are twentieth-century replacements, in fair condition (photo 2). Painted plywood panels cover the signage area above the storefront. The upper floors have 1-over-1 wood double-hung windows that appear to be original and in fair condition. The brick façade has a large cornice with decorative console brackets (shared with 424-426 Main Street to the north) and metal panels at the top parapet wall. The brickwork appears to be in good to fair condition. The roofs of all three building sections are flat or almost flat, with several red brick chimneys. The roof was not accessible for assessment.

At the Melilli Place elevation, the building has a glass door and a large single pane window (photo 5). A asphalt shingled shed roof extends along the first floor level and across the alley (behind 424-426 Main Street) to an adjacent brick building. Above the shed roof is a single gable dormer. The south wall abuts the adjacent building. The north wall is blank red brick (photo 7). The taller wood-frame middle building section has a blank wall with siding (photos 7 & 8). The Main Street brick building section has a brownstone foundation (photo 14). Its first floor windows are in-filled with brick (photo 12). The wood stairway to the upper floors of 424-426 Main Street are attached to the building (photos 6-10, 12, 13). At the second story, two 4-over-4 double hung wood windows flank four tall, narrow fixed single-pane windows, all in fair condition (photos 9-11). Large skylight panels (in poor condition) are set into the roof at an angle above the windows (photo 11). At the roof, a stepped parapet wall in fair condition separates the rear brick building from the wood framed middle section. Metal panels cover the brick wall above the sloped roof (photo 10). All masonry is in good to fair condition and needs cleaning and selective re-pointing (photo 13). The siding is in good condition.

The basement under the Main Street brick building section has rubble stone walls and a concrete floor (photos 15, 16, 23). At the west wall (at Main Street) there is a small area of structural failure in the floor structure above, possibly beneath the sidewalk.

The first floor commercial space has a checkerboard terrazzo floor (in fair condition) at the Main Street end and a concrete floor beyond (photos 17, 18, 20, 21). Tin ceiling tiles are concealed above a suspended acoustical ceiling (photos 19 & 20). The floor levels drops at the rear brick building section (photos 21-22). Interior finishes in this area are in fair to poor condition.

At the second floor, the Main Street building section has linoleum in the front hallway and wood floors elsewhere. Original woodwork, doors, and windows are mostly intact and in good to fair condition (photos 24-28). Walls and ceilings are typically plaster in fair condition. Lighting is surface-mounted fluorescent. At the rear of the brick Main Street building is a large open space with wood floors, wood ceiling, the large skylight, and vintage schoolhouse light fixtures (photos 29-31). In the second floor spaces beyond, floor levels and interior finishes vary, including carpeting, ceramic tile, bead board paneling, and imitation wood paneling, all in fair to poor condition.

At the third floor level, the Main Street building's brick walls are exposed and painted (photos 32 & 33). The flooring is wood and the ceiling is covered with hardboard panels. The finishes are in fair condition. The fourth floor attic space, accessible by ladder, is unfinished (photos 34 & 35).

424-426 Main Street

The building is three stories high and three bays wide, a long, narrow rectangle in plan (photos 1-3). The façade, which is painted off-white, has a large cornice with decorative console brackets (shared with 418-420 Main Street to the south) and cast iron arched window hoods. The brickwork appears to be in good to fair condition. The glass storefront and building entrances are twentieth-century replacements, in fair condition; one original cast iron fluted pilaster remains intact. The second floor has 4-over-1 double hung wood windows and the third floor has 4-over-4 wood windows that appear to be original and in fair condition. The roof is flat, with two brick chimneys. It was not accessible for assessment.

The rear wall is unpainted red brick except at the first floor, which extends beyond the upper wall and is covered in stucco, with a flat roof. There are back entrances at all three levels, accessible from pressure-treated wood stairs with a landing on the first floor flat roof (photos 4-8, 10). The stairs are in fair condition. The basement is also accessible from the rear of the building with steps adjacent to the back door (photo 7). Rear windows are 6-over-6, wood double-hung, and there is a wood cornice (photos 9, 11). Most of the rear elevation, including the cornice, is heavily covered with vines. The masonry needs to be cleaned and selectively re-pointed. The cornice needs repair and repainting.

The first floor occupied commercial space was not accessible for survey. The upper floors are accessed from a wood paneled stairway with plaster upper walls and ceilings and surface-mounted fluorescent lighting (photos 13, 21). The stairs and apartment entrance doors all appear to be original and in good to fair condition.

The second floor space is open plan, with pine floors and plaster walls and ceilings (photo 14-18). An open stair to the third floor has been left in place but is sealed off at the ceiling. Portions

of the ceiling are covered with hardboard, such as Masonite (photo 16). There is one ornamental plaster ceiling medallion, in good condition (photo 20). The open kitchen and bathroom (only the toilet is enclosed) are in fair condition. Pipes and wiring are exposed and lighting is surface-mounted fluorescent. HVAC ducts are exposed in the center of the space at the floor level (photo 19).

The third floor apartment is also mostly open plan, with several storage rooms, an enclosed bathroom, and a few make-shift partitions. The floor is wood and the ceiling is plaster, in poor condition with evidence of water infiltration.

Cost Estimate

A preliminary statement of probable construction costs for the selected design scheme was provided to the property owners. This estimate is derived from our data base of costs for other projects of this type applied on a square footage basis. It is meant to provide a reasonably accurate estimate of costs for construction for purposes of creating the financial pro-forma. Costs are based on the project being bid and built by an independent general contractor. Confirming the estimate with local contractors is highly recommended.

The estimate includes the following interior finishes:

	<i>Floor</i>	<i>Wall</i>	<i>Ceiling</i>
Living/Dining	refinish wood	sheetrock/exposed brick	sheetrock/existing wood
Bedroom	refinish wood	sheetrock/exposed brick	sheetrock/existing wood
Bath	vinyl tile/ceramic	sheetrock	sheetrock
Kitchen	vinyl tile/ceramic	sheetrock	sheetrock
Lobby	ceramic tile	sheetrock/exposed brick	sheetrock
Hallway	carpet	sheetrock/exposed brick	sheetrock
Stairway	carpet	sheetrock/exposed brick	sheetrock

Interior trim – paint grade wood

Kitchen cabinets – wood or laminate

Counters – Plastic laminate

Doors – 6 panel embossed solid core hardboard

Recommendations

All masonry should be thoroughly cleaned and re-pointed as needed. The roofs should be replaced and chimneys should be re-pointed as necessary. A structural engineer should evaluate the failed structural floor condition at 418-420 Main Street basement wall. Consider replacing the storefronts with a more appropriate design for the historic character of the building. Repair and restore historic windows and consider installing interior storm windows and screens. Replace non-historic windows.

Install new siding on rear additions. Remove vines from the rear elevation and repair first floor stucco. Rebuild back entrance stairs. Clean up the rear yard, and provide attractive landscaping and new walkways to access new entrances. Provide new HVAC systems, electrical, sprinkler system and plumbing based on new residential tenancy. Restore/refinish and highlight existing interior wood floors and masonry walls.

BUILDING PHOTOS

The following are pictures of the buildings at 418-420 and 424-426 Main Street.

418-420 Main Street



1. 418-420 Main Street (four-story brown brick building).



2. 418-420 storefront.

418-420 Main Street



3. Main Street (west) elevation.



4. Upper west and south walls.

418-420 Main Street



5. Melilli Plaza (east) elevation.



6. North elevation.

418-420 Main Street



7. North elevation. Brick building at left was original carriage house. Behind is a later wood-frame infill building.

418-420 Main Street



8. North elevation.

418-420 Main Street



9. North elevation at second floor.



10. North elevation, with rusting metal panels and damaged skylight.

418-420 Main Street



11. North wall and roof of two-story section with skylights.



12. North wall with windows in-filled with brick.



13. Deteriorated brickwork at north wall.



14. North wall, brownstone foundation.



15. Basement, view toward Main Street.



16. Detail of view above, showing structural condition at Main Street wall.

418-420 Main Street



17. First floor, view of Main Street storefront.



18. First floor, view toward Main Street.



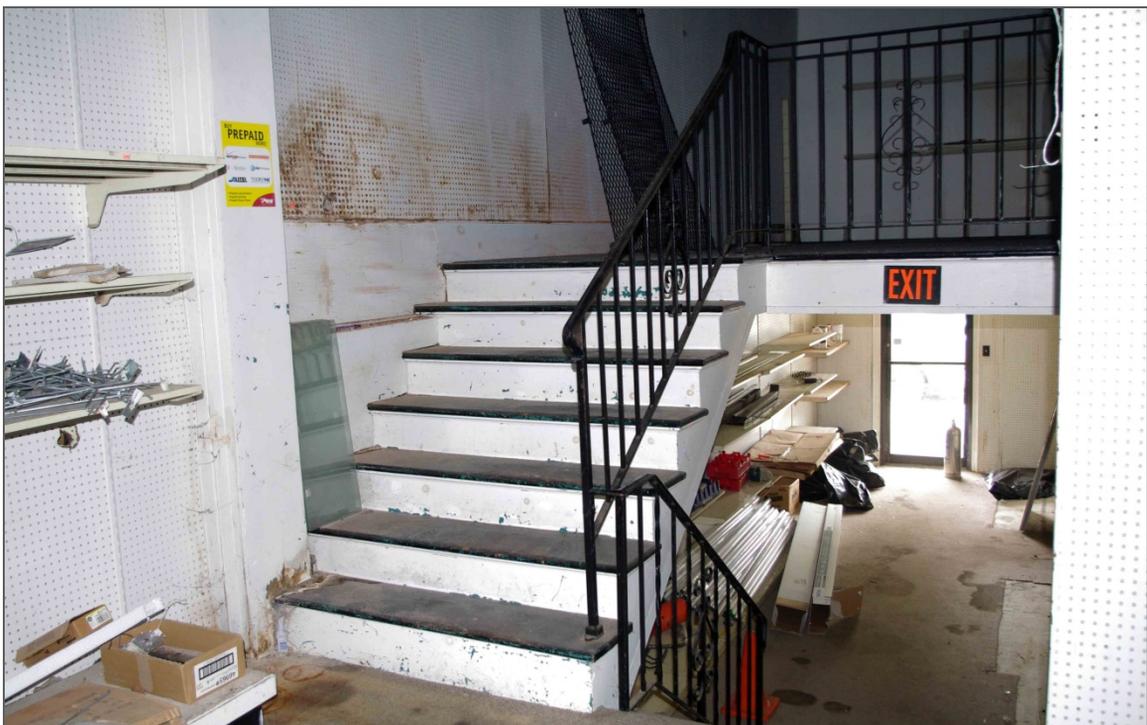
19. First floor, view of tin ceiling panels concealed above dropped ceiling.



20. First floor, view towards back of retail space. Floor is terrazzo.



21. First floor, view of back of retail space.



22. First floor, view toward Melilli Plaza entrance.



23. First floor, basement stairway.

418-420 Main Street



24. Second floor, view toward Main Street.



25. Second floor, view toward back of the building (Melilli Plaza).

418-420 Main Street

Middletown, Connecticut

Photos taken May

2

0

1

3



26. Second floor, view towards Main Street.

418-420 Main Street



27. Second floor stairway to first floor and Main Street entrance.



28. Second floor, view toward Main Street.

418-420 Main Street



29. Second floor, view towards Main Street.



30. Second floor, view towards rear of building (Melilli Plaza).



31. Second floor, view of skylights.

418-420 Main Street



32. Third floor, view towards Main Street.



33. Third floor, view from Main Street side.

418-420 Main Street



34. Attic.



35. Attic.

418-420 Main Street



36. Historic postcard of Main Street, no date.



X.



X.

418-420 Main Street

Middletown, Connecticut

Photos taken May

2

0

1

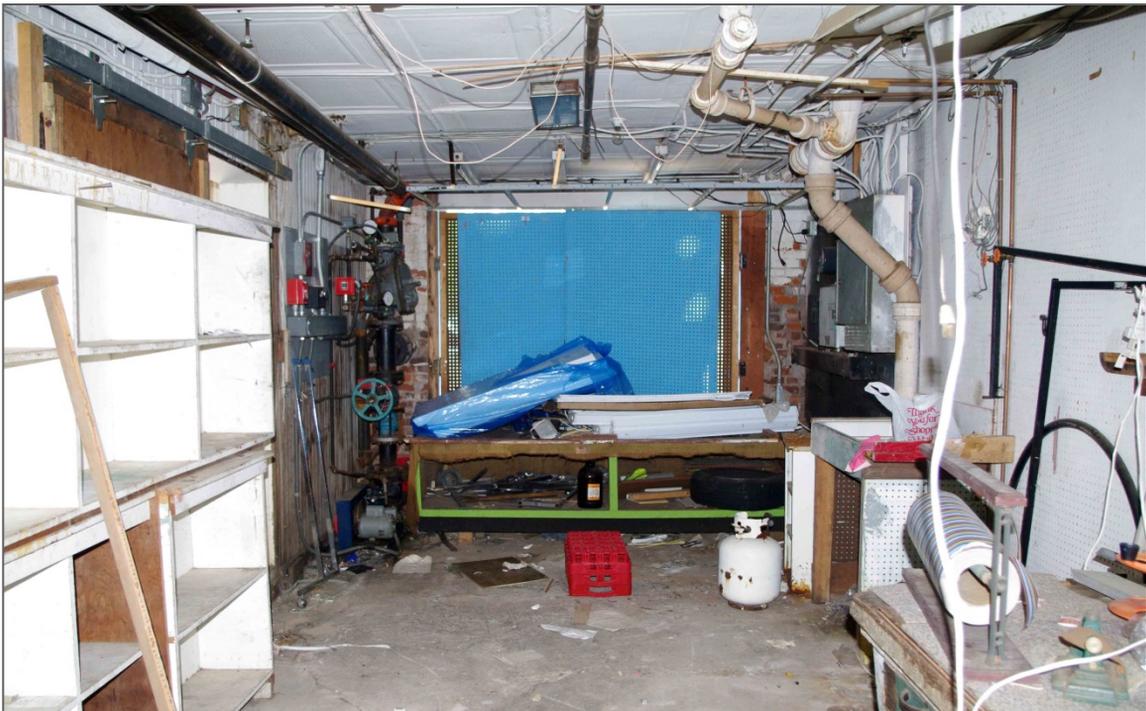
3



418-420 Main Street



X.



X.

418-420 Main Street

Middletown, Connecticut

Photos taken May

2

0

1

3

424-426 Main Street

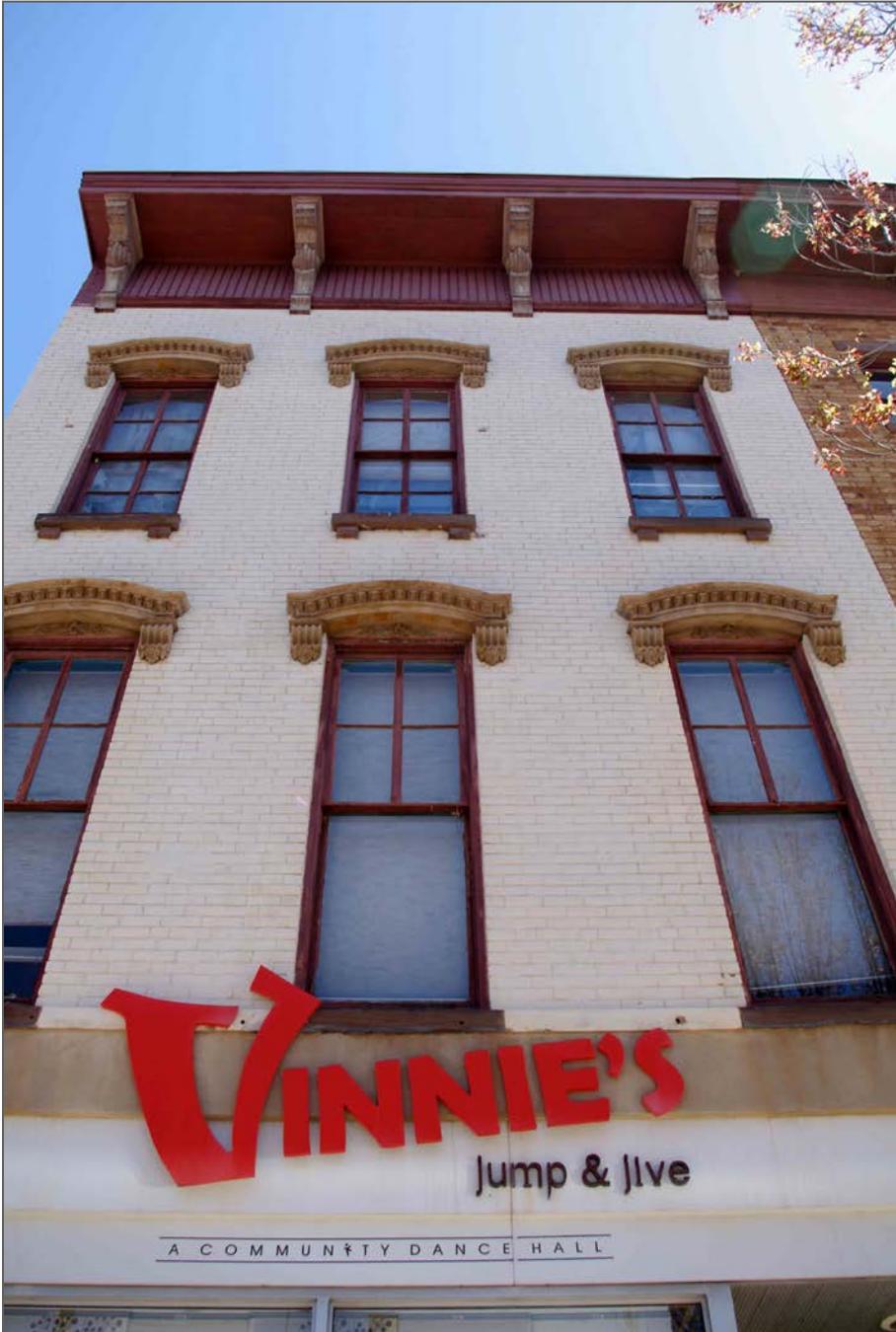


1. 424-426 Main Street (three-story white painted brick building).



2. 424-426 Main Street storefront.

424-426 Main Street

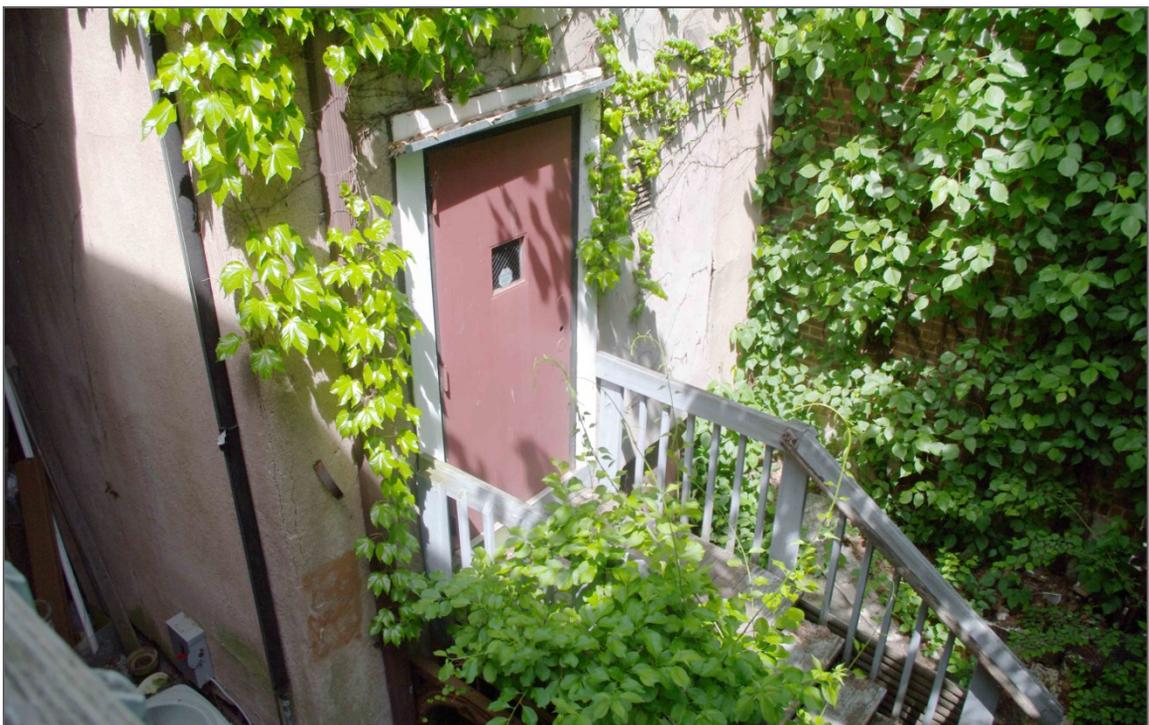


3. 424-426 Main Street (west) elevation.

424-426 Main Street



4. Second and third floors, rear elevation.



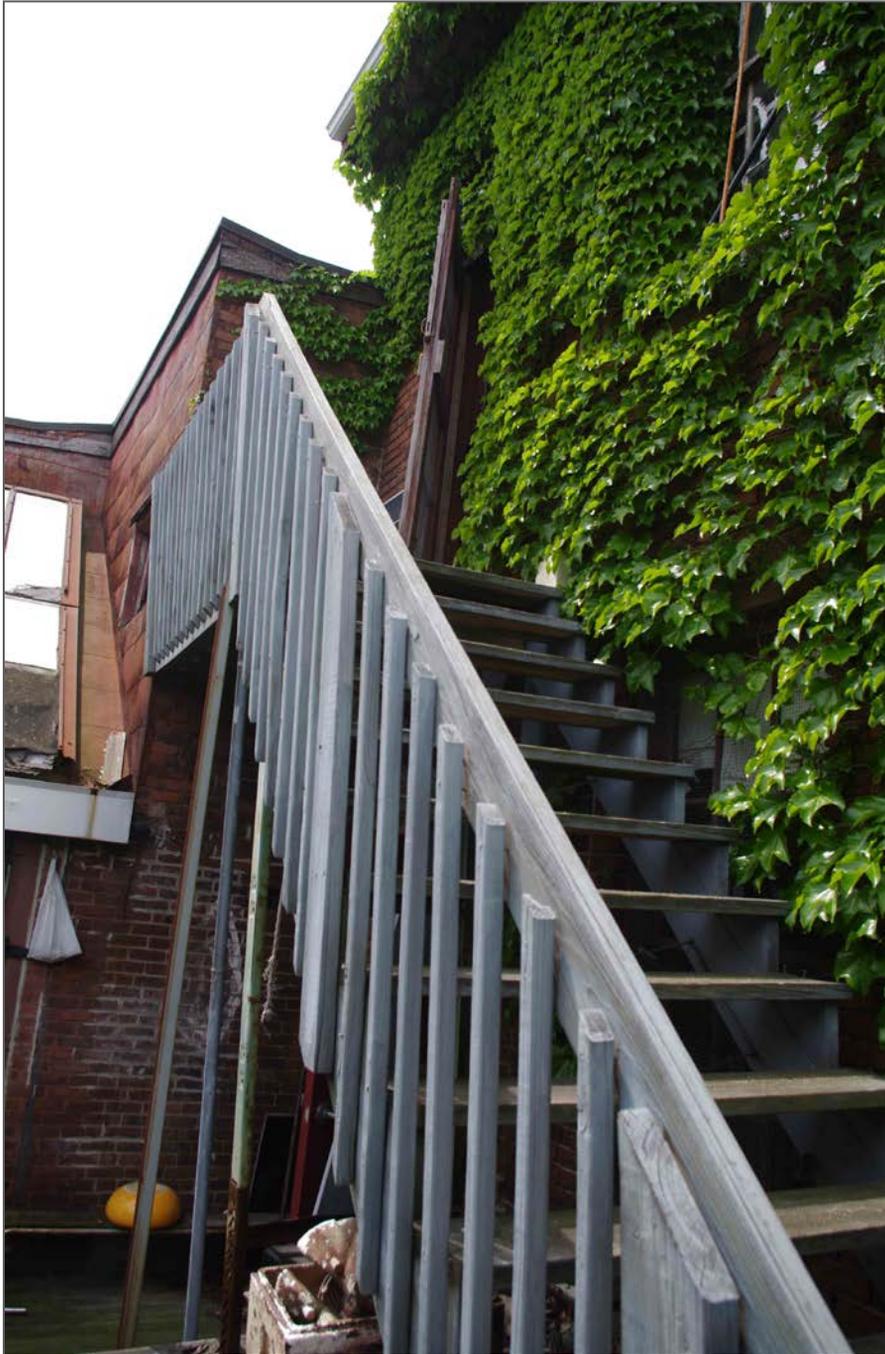
5. Entrance at the rear (east side) of the building, from Melilli Plaza.



6. Entrance at the rear (east side) of the building, from Melilli Plaza.



7. First floor back door and basement door.



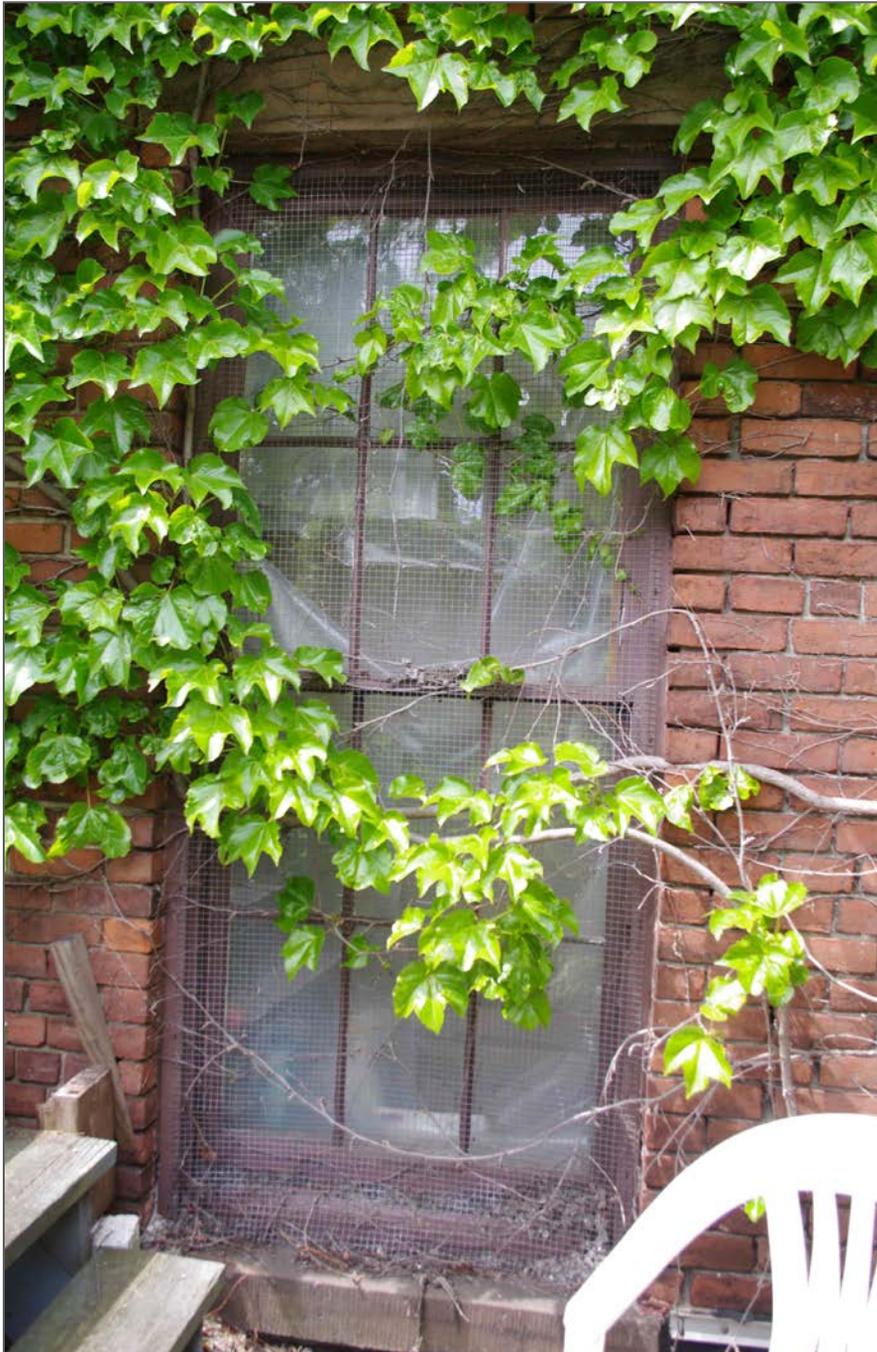
8. Stairs to third story back door.



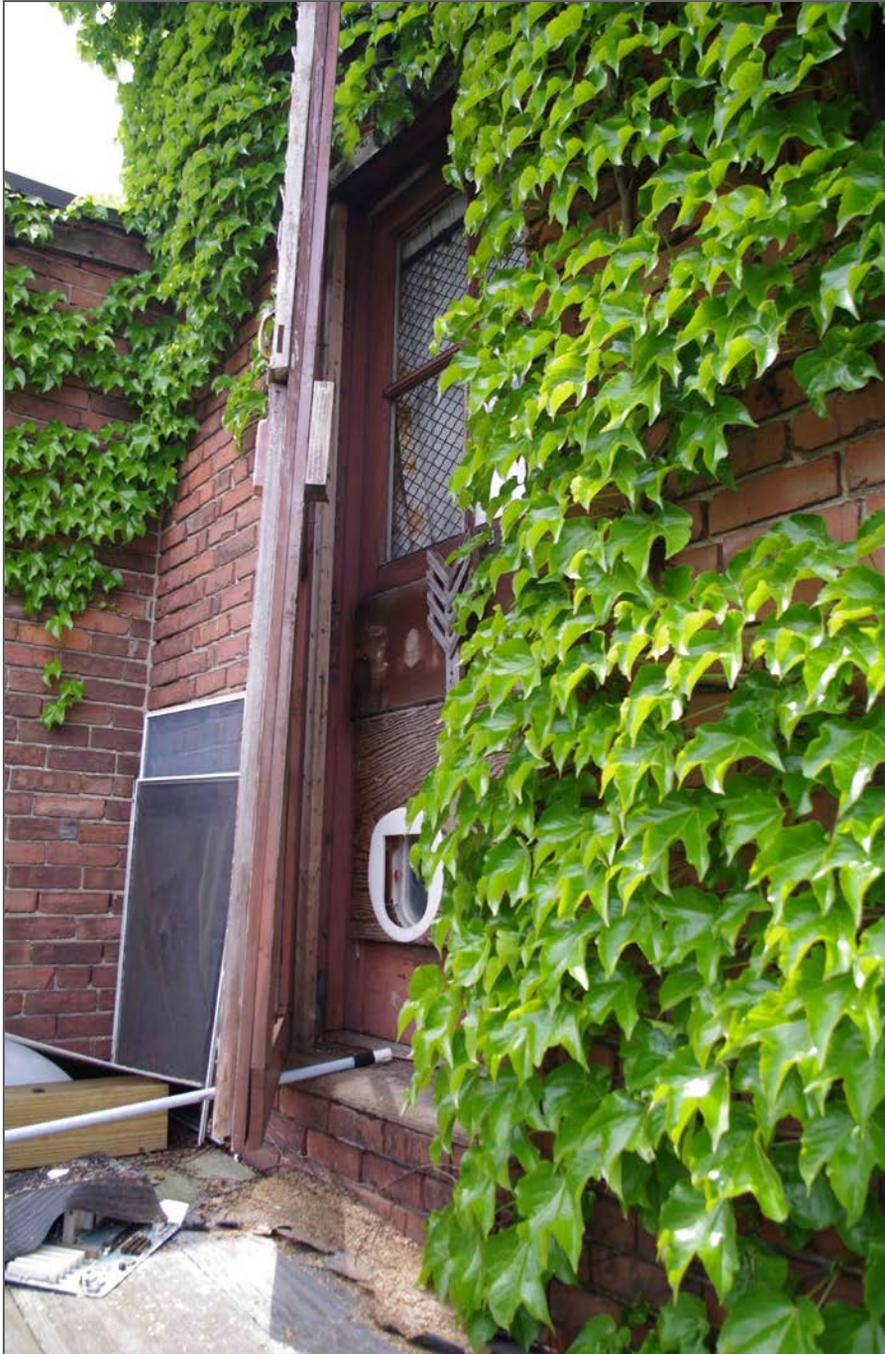
9. Cornice at rear (east) elevation.



10. Roof of rear single story section and stairs to third floor back door.



11. Second floor window on rear (east) elevation.



12. Third floor back door.



13. Second floor stairway to first floor.

424-426 Main Street



14. Second floor window at Main Street.

424-426 Main Street



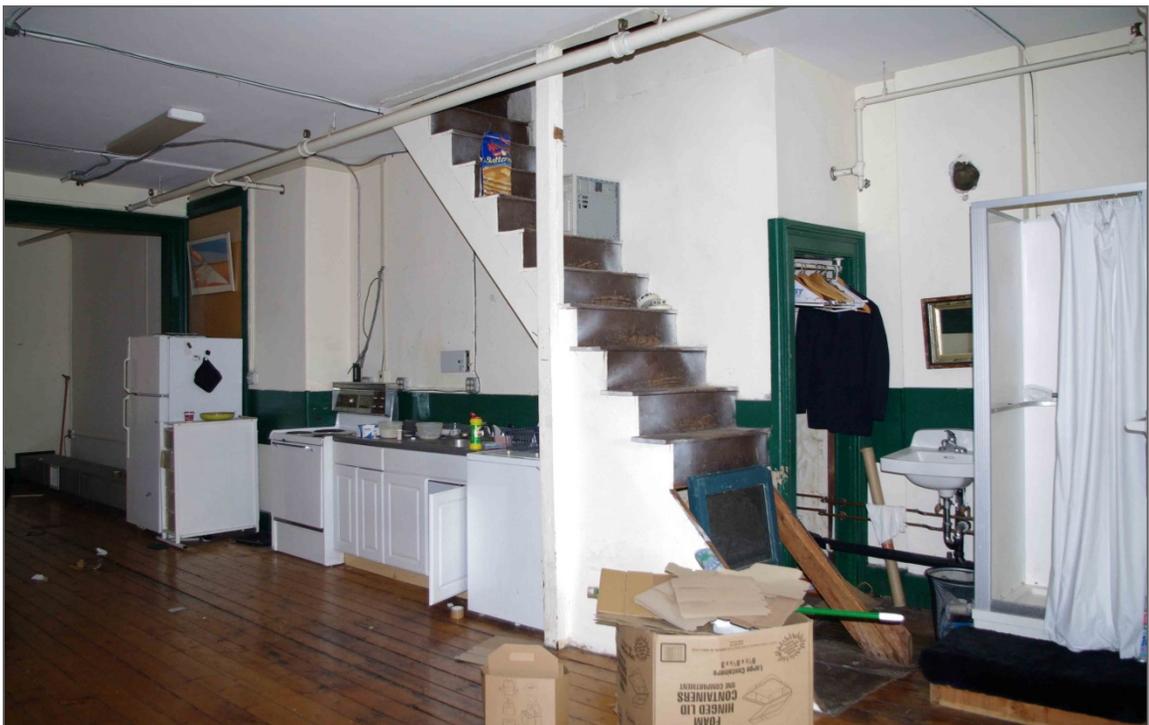
15. Second floor, view towards Main Street.



16. Second floor, view towards entrance at left and rear of building.



17. Kitchen, view towards rear of building.



18. Kitchen and abandoned stairs.



19. Second floor, HVAC ducts.



20. Second floor ceiling, with ornamental medallion and water damaged plaster.



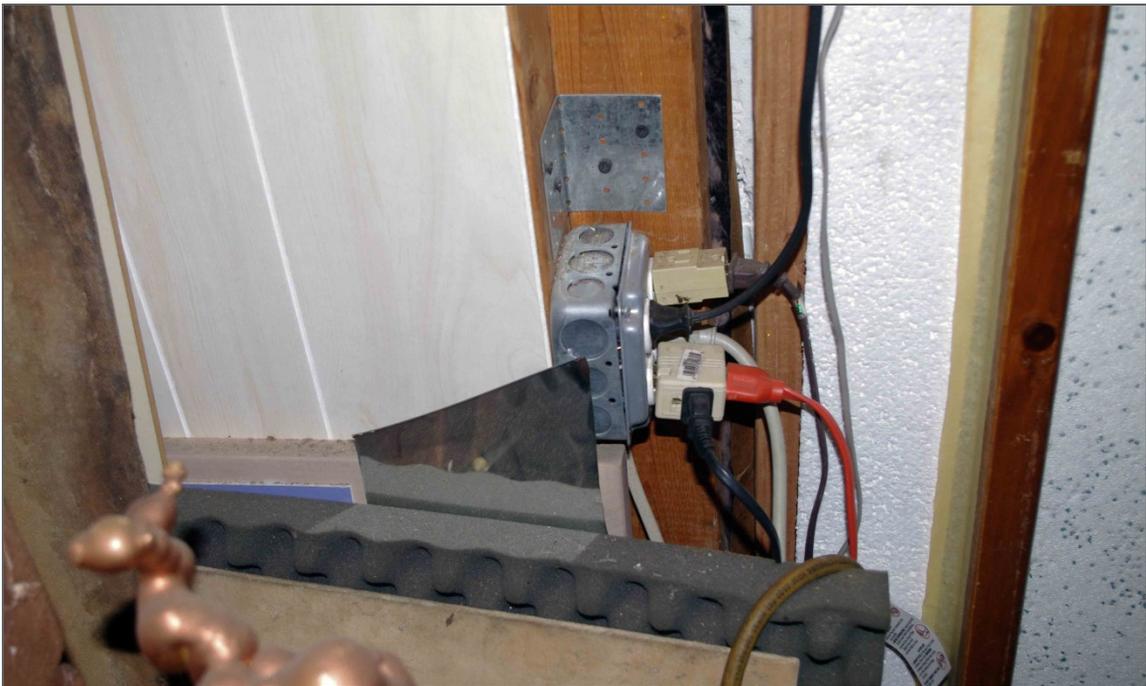
21. Second floor, stairway to third floor.



22. Second floor corridor, view towards Main Street.



23. Third floor, deteriorated ceiling.



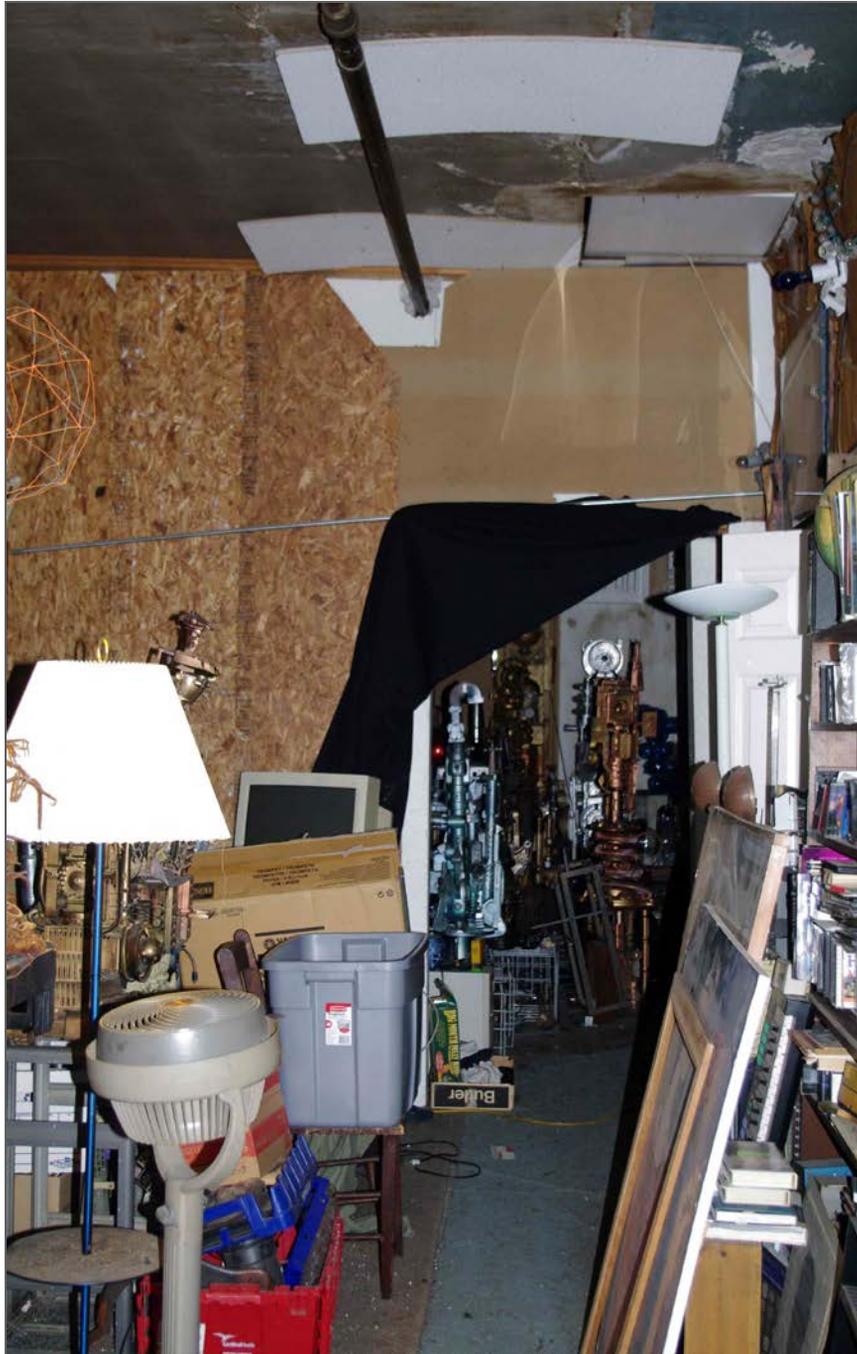
24. Third floor electrical receptacle.



25. Third floor ceiling with water damage.



26. Third floor window at Main Street.



27. Third floor with deteriorated ceiling.

424-426 Main Street



28. Historic postcard of Main Street, no date.

Come Home to Downtown - Summary Sheet of WALQ Scores - Downtown Middletown, CT

22-Jul-13

Measured once on the district level; all other indicators measured on the block or street level.

Indicator	Location	Block by Block Scores																				Total Block Scores	Number of Blocks	Ave. Score						
		A0	A1	A2	A3	B1	B2	C1	C2	D1	D2	E1	E2	F1	F2															
Peripheral Connectivity	P1. Connectivity to Surrounding Districts: Logical and efficient traffic flow, linkages and supportive uses	2.0																						2.0						
	P2. Pedestrian & Bicycle Linkages: Non-motorized access to surrounding districts	1.5																						1.5						
	P3. Parking: Availability of on-street parking	North	NA																											
		East	3.0	3.0	NA	2.3	NA	1.7	NA	2.0	NA	3.0	1.7	NA	2.3	NA	1.7	NA	2.3	2.5										
South		NA		3.0		3.0		1.0		1.0		3.0		1.0		3.0		1.0	3.0											
P4. Access to Transit: Trains, trolleys, buses and shared autos (e.g. taxis, Zip cars)	West	NA		NA		3.0		3.0		NA		3.0		NA		3.0		NA	3.0											
		1.0																						1.0						
Enclosure and Engagement	E1. Strong Edges: Strength and continuity of street wall	North	NA																											
		East	2.0	2.5	1.0	2.0	NA	1.7	NA	1.8	2.0	2.3	3.0	2.5	2.5	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.0	2.0										
		South	NA		2.5		2.5		1.0		1.0		2.0		2.5		3.0		2.0	1.0										
		West	NA		NA		2.5		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0	3.0										
E2. Density: Critical mass of buildings and people (e.g. high F.A.R.)	Actual F.A.R. of Block/Score	0.79	2.0	1.01	3.0	0.75	2.0	1.36	3.0	0.53	2.0	1.02	3.0	1.04	3.0	0.81	2.0	0.79	2.0	1.03	3.0	0.44	2.0	0.76	2.0	4.39	3.0	34.0	14	2.4
E3. Enclosure: Extent of canopy of street trees	North	NA																												
	East	1.0	1.0	NA	2.0	NA	1.3	2.5	1.8	NA	1.8	1.5	1.5	1.3	2.0	1.5	1.0	2.5	2.0	NA	1.0	1.7	3.0	2.3	2.5	2.2	23.1	14	1.6	
	South	NA		2.0		2.0		1.0		2.0		2.0		1.0		2.0		1.5		2.0	1.5	1.7	3.0	2.3	2.5	2.2	23.1	14	1.6	
	West	NA		NA		1.0		2.0		NA		1.5		1.5		NA		2.0		NA	2.5		NA		3.0		2.2	23.1	14	1.6
E4. Engagement: Community identity expressed through public art and monuments		2																						2.0						
Diversity and Design	D1. Diversity: Mixed uses and mixed income development	North	NA																											
		East	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	NA	1.7	3.0	2.0	NA	1.7	3.0	2.3	NA	2.3	2.0	1.5	3.0	1.8	NA	1.7	2.0	1.5	1.0	1.7	24.5	14	1.8	
		South	NA		1.0		1.0		1.0		1.0		1.0		3.0		1.0		1.0		1.0	1.0	1.7	1.5	1.0	1.0	1.7	24.5	14	1.8
		West	NA		NA		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0	3.0		NA		3.0		1.7	24.5	14
D2. Design Coherence: Human scale, architectural form, & style	North	NA																												
	East	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	NA	2.0	NA	2.3	2.5	1.8	NA	2.3	3.0	2.7	NA	2.2	3.0	1.8	NA	1.7	3.0	2.3	3.0	2.3	1.7	28.8	14	2.1	
	South	NA		NA		2.0		2.0		1.0		2.0		3.0		2.5		1.0		1.0	1.0	1.7	3.0	2.3	1.0	1.7	28.8	14	2.1	
	West	NA		NA		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0	3.0		NA		3.0		1.7	28.8	14	2.1
D3. Distinctive Buildings & Civic Spaces: Historic or civic architecture, public squares landmarks, & terminal views		3.0																						3.0						
D4. Direct, Orient and Welcome Visitors: Wayfinding, gateways, information centers & promotional efforts		2.0																						2.0						
Safety and Security	S1. Safe Street Crossings: Traffic calming and accommodating of pedestrians of all ages	North	NA																											
		East	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	NA	1.3	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.7	1.0	1.0	1.3	17.0	14	1.2	
		South	NA		NA		2.0		1.0		1.0		1.0		1.0		1.0		1.0		1.0	1.0	1.7	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.3	17.0	14	1.2
		West	NA		NA		1.0		1.0		NA		1.0		NA		1.0		1.0		NA	2.0		NA		2.0		1.3	17.0	14
S2. Sidewalks: Continuous, hazard-free and wide to create comfortable walking environment	North	NA																												
	East	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	NA	2.3	NA	2.3	3.0	2.5	NA	2.3	3.0	2.3	NA	2.3	3.0	2.3	NA	2.3	3.0	2.7	NA	2.3	2.3	34.5	14	2.5	
	South	NA		NA		2.0		2.0		2.0		2.0		2.0		2.0		2.0		2.0	2.0	1.7	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.3	34.5	14	2.5	
	West	NA		NA		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0		3.0	3.0		NA		3.0		2.3	34.5	14	2.5
S3. Short Block Lengths: High intersection density		2.5																						2.5						
S4. Security: Adequate lighting, active and natural surveillance.	North	NA																												
	East	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	NA	1.3	NA	1.7	3.0	2.0	NA	1.7	3.0	1.7	NA	1.7	3.0	1.7	NA	1.7	3.0	1.7	1.0	1.0	1.7	24.0	14	1.7	
	South	NA		NA		1.0		1.0		1.0		1.0		1.0		1.0		1.0		1.0	1.0	1.7	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.7	24.0	14	1.7	
	West	NA		NA		2.0		3.0		NA		3.0		NA		3.0		3.0		NA	3.0		NA		3.0		1.7	24.0	14	1.7
Block I.D.		A0	A1	A2	A3	B1	B2	C1	C2	D1	D2	E1	E2	F1	F2	Total all Indicators			31.5											
North Street Segment (Ave. of 9 indicators)		NA	NA	1.4	1.4	NA	1.9	1.8	1.3	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.2	1.3	1.5	No. of Indicators			16											
East Street Segment (Ave. of 9 indicators)		2.0	2.1	NA	NA	2.5	NA	2.6	NA	2.3	NA	2.6	NA	2.6	NA															
South Street Segment (Ave. of 9 indicators)		NA	NA	1.9	1.4	1.2	1.9	2.1	1.8	1.3	1.3	1.8	1.3	2.1	1.7															
West Street Segment (Ave. of 9 indicators)		NA	NA	2.3	2.7	NA	2.6	NA	2.5	NA	2.7	NA	2.7	NA	2.9															
Overall District Indicators (Ave. of 7)		2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0															
North Segment Overall Average		NA	NA	1.7	1.7	NA	1.9	1.9	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.7															
East Segment Overall Average		2.0	2.1	NA	NA	2.3	NA	2.3	NA	2.2	NA	2.3	NA	2.3	NA															
South Segment Overall Average		NA	NA	2.0	1.7	1.6	1.9	2.1	1.9	1.6	1.6	1.9	1.6	2.0	1.8															
West Segment Overall Average		NA	NA	2.1	2.4	NA	2.3	NA	2.3	NA	2.4	NA	2.4	NA	2.5															
Overall Score for District																Score for District			2.0											



W.A.L.Q. Color Code		
Very Poor	1.3 or lower	Red
	1.4	
Poor	1.5	Orange
	1.6	
Below Average	1.7	Pink
	1.8	
Marginal	1.9	Light Green
	2.0	
Good	2.1	Green
	2.2 or higher	
Very Good		



Urban Design Audit
Downtown Middletown, CT

Map 1:
 Walkability

Date: July, 2013
 Prepared for:
 The Connecticut
 Main Street Center



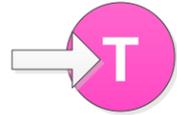
LEGEND



Barrier to Connectivity



Good Connectivity Between
CBD and Neighborhoods



Terminal View



Urban Design Audit
Downtown Middletown, CT

Map 2:
Connectivity & Key Views

Date: July, 2013

Prepared for:
The Connecticut
Main Street Center

Prepared by:





LEGEND

-  Bus Transit Hub
-  Large Surface Parking Lot
-  Parking Garage
-  Key Intersection



Urban Design Audit
Downtown Middletown, CT

Map 3:
 Traffic, Transit & Parking

Date: July, 2013
 Prepared for:
**The Connecticut
 Main Street Center**

Prepared by:

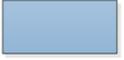



LEGEND

- 1.01 Block Density (expressed as floor area ratio)
- Existing Building



LEGEND

-  Gateway
-  Landmark Building
-  Civic Building
-  Religious Building or Institution



Urban Design Audit
Downtown Middletown, CT

Map 5:
 Landmarks & Gateways

Date: July, 2013
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LEGEND

-  Plaza or Monument
-  Municipal Park
-  Civic Building



Urban Design Audit
Downtown Middletown, CT

Map 6:
 Open Space & Civic Spaces

Date: July, 2013
 Prepared for:
 The Connecticut
 Main Street Center

Prepared by:
