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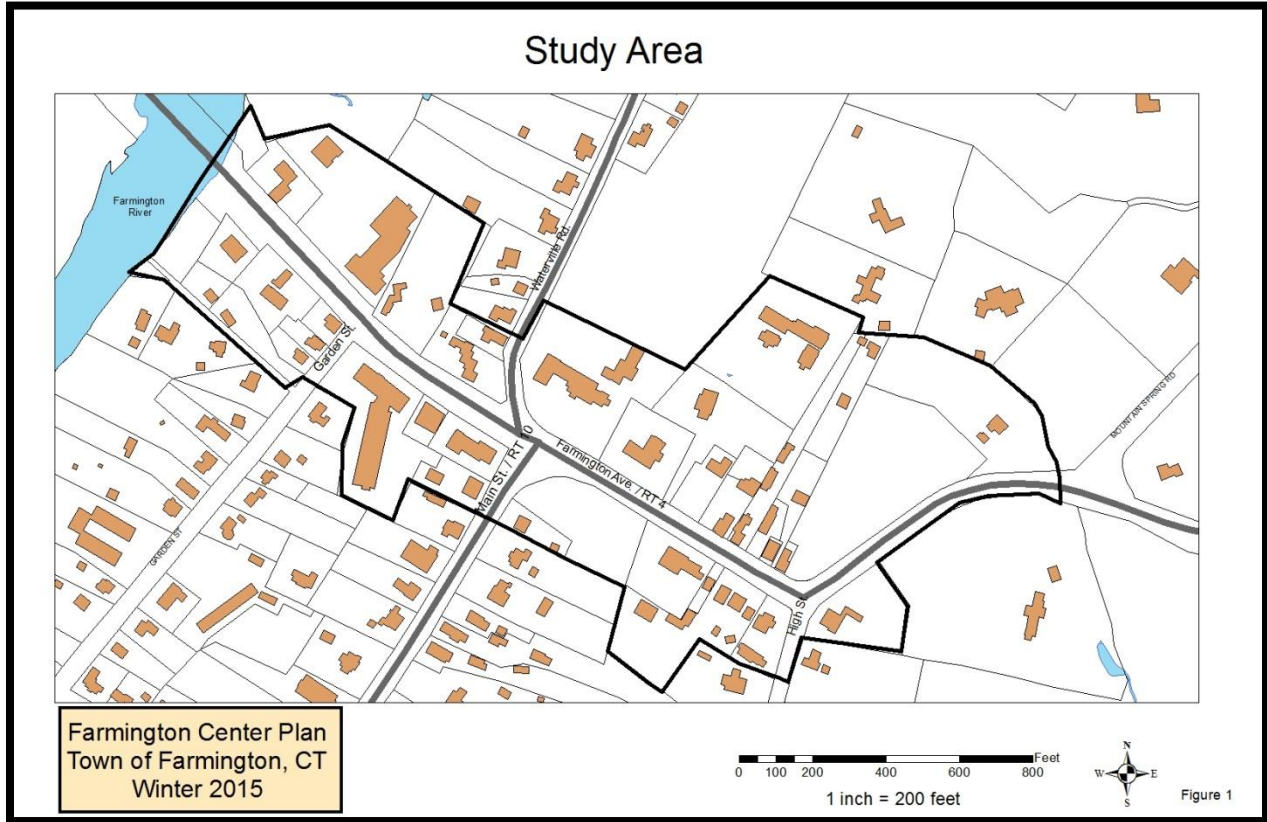
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A. Study Area

The study area is displayed on Figure 1. It is generally bounded by the parcels fronting on the north and south side of CT Rt. 4/ Farmington Ave between Mountain Spring Road on the east and the Farmington River on the west.



B. Introduction

The enhancement of the study area is an absolutely critical issue because it is the gateway to Farmington and the Farmington River Valley. The area is most recognized for its historic building stock. Farmington's historic character defines the town.

Most outside of Farmington think of Farmington as Farmington Center and Miss Porters School. The thoughts are strong and positive because of the significant number of historic buildings in the area. The area gives Farmington its stately reputation. It is quintessential Farmington.

Fortunately, the Farmington Center Historic District gives many of the buildings in that area a high level of protection. The majority of the properties on the south side of Farmington Ave., Main St., High St., Mountain Road, School St., Church St, Colton St. and Diamond Glen are protected. In the district, anything, other than color, which affects the view from the street, requires a public hearing and a certificate of appropriateness from the Farmington Center Historic District Commission.

The same cannot be said for the north side of Farmington Avenue. That area, with the exception of 2 properties, is not in the historic district and is the most susceptible to change. Two properties have secured Planning and Zoning approval to demolish historic structures and construct new bank/retail buildings. A developer is proposing a project which would demolish two (2) buildings and replace them with 2 new buildings. The State of Connecticut Department of Transportation is proposing a road project that will permanently alter the character and functionality of the study area.

Currently there is no plan in place for how the study area should be developed. The study area is the most important gateway into Farmington. A smattering of historic buildings mixed with unplanned and inappropriately designed and placed new buildings and a State DOT job with an “automobile only” orientation will quickly erode any historic character and/or sense of place.

If the Town fails to properly plan, it is highly likely the stately image of Farmington’s principle gateway, which portrays a town founded in 1640 on the banks of the Farmington River, will be lost forever.

C. Historical Significance of the Study Area

Farmington Center is one of the largest and most significant collections of historic homes in the entire state. The vast majority of the structures are located in the Farmington Center local historic district and on the Connecticut Register of Historic Buildings.

In her book *Farmington: New England Town Through Time* Barbara Donahue writes about the origins of Farmington Center as follows:

“On the east bank of the river in Farmington, the land terraces up rather sharply, and it was here the English settled shortly after 1640. Following European tradition, the settlers lived in the village and went out from it to work their corn and hayfields beyond the river and to pasture their animals in the hills. The houses they built reminded them of home, with massive timbers, steep roofs, and second stories that jutted out over the first.

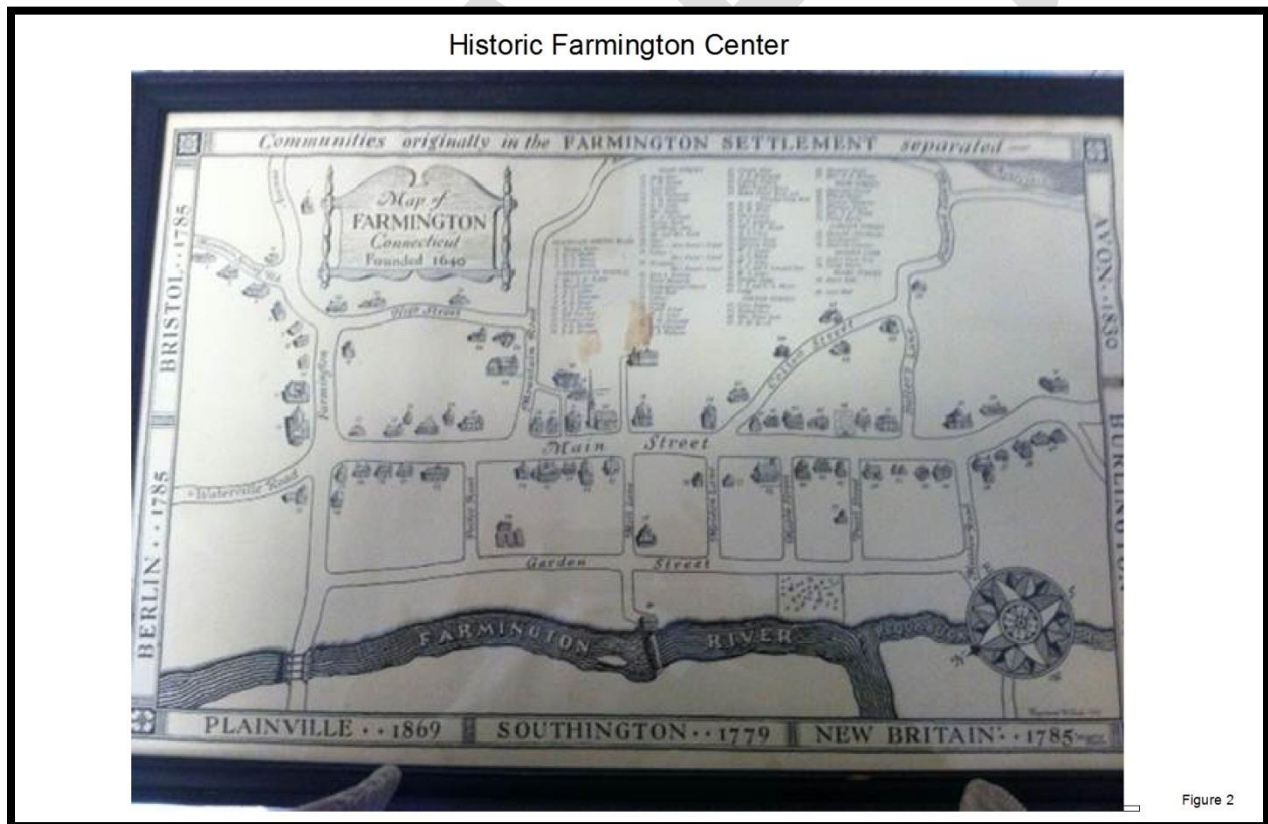
They built for protection, against the natives and against the overwhelming wilderness, and clustered their dwellings along the Town Path (now Main Street) and the track to the sawmill (now Colton Street and Diamond Glen). As late as 1704, houses which still exist, one as part of the Elm Tree Inn on Farmington Avenue and the other at the corner of Main Street and Tunxis Road, were considered the northern and southern limits of the village and were garrisoned against possible native attack.

Every Connecticut town centered on its church. Farmington's Congregationalists, who formed their own ecclesiastical society in 1652, built a meeting house soon after and replaced it with a larger one in 1709.

The town continued to grow, in number and wealth, and in 1769 residents voted to replace the second meeting house with a third. Architect/builder Judah Woodruff and merchant Fisher Gay were sent to Boston to select Maine timber and in 1771 construction began on the graceful building that is still in use.

In the American Revolution the town sided with the rebels, furnishing men, arms, and supplies to the cause. The war brought new prosperity to the town, as farmers sold provisions to the American and French armies, and perhaps to the British as well. No battles were fought here but a French army under Comte de Rochambeau came through Farmington twice, patronizing local taverns and camping in the meadows below town.

Figure 2 is a map depicting the historic Farmington Center.



D. Existing Conditions

The study area is approximately thirty nine (39) acres in size and has Farmington Ave. (RT 4) running through the middle. It also contains portions of High Street, Garden Street, Hobart Street, Main St. (RT 10) and Waterville Road. As displayed below, the public right of way and several of the properties are suffering from deferred maintenance and neglect. Cracked and broken sidewalks and curbs, weeds, an illogical, mix of bituminous and concrete sidewalks and curbs, vacant, overgrown structures and sign structures no longer in use.





The above conditions are not what represent an attractive gateway into a community.

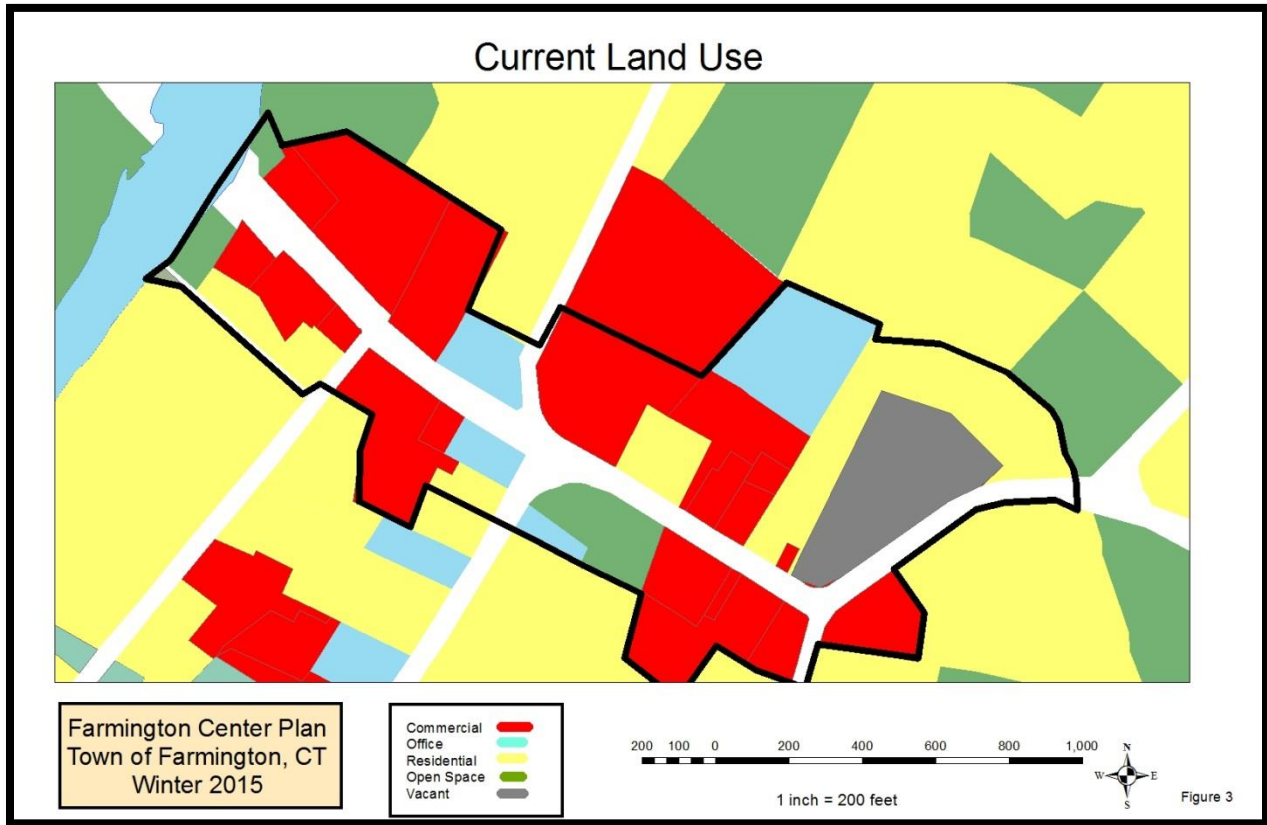
Below are photographs from other communities which are representative of the standards Farmington should strive for in this location.



OK

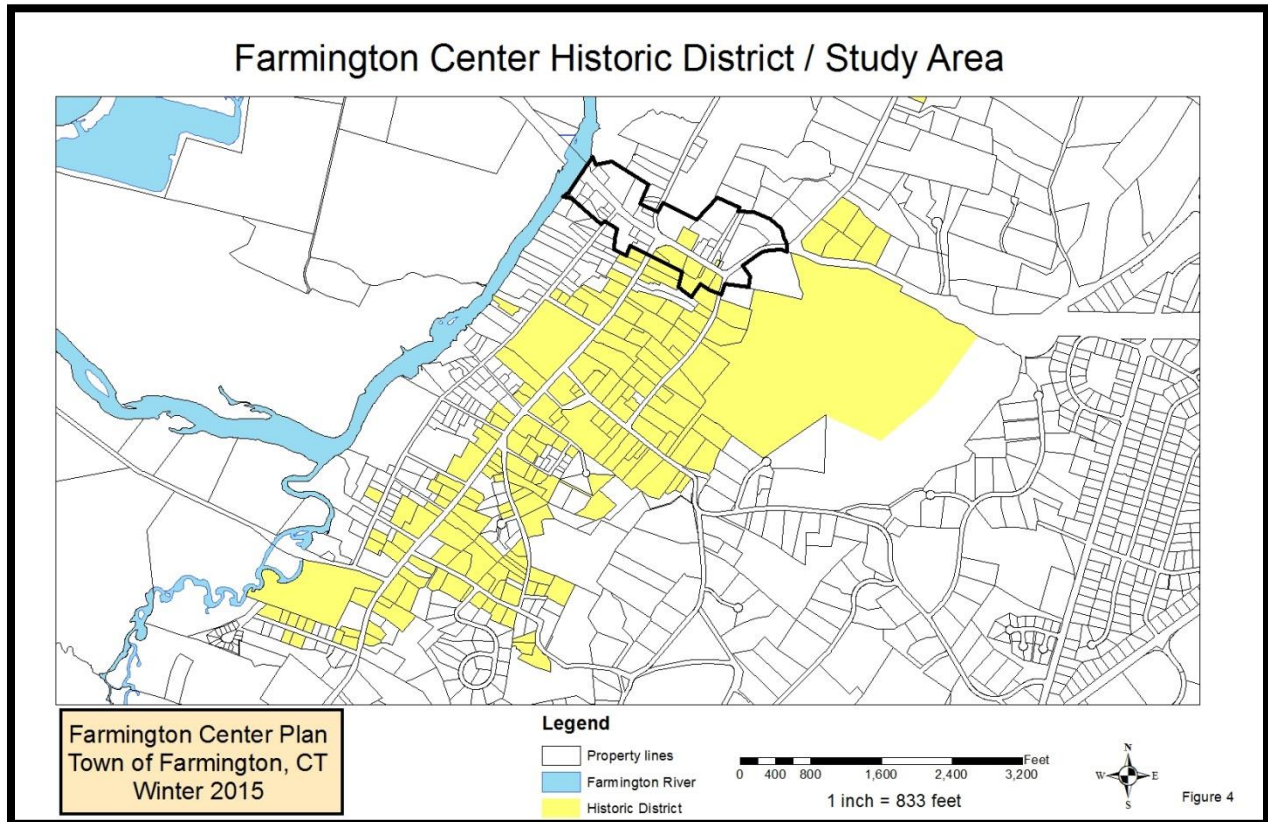
1. Land Use

The land uses are varied and are displayed on Figure 3. Land uses include vacant parcels, the town green, vacant buildings, general commercial/retail, office, banks, restaurants, and multi-family residential.



2. Historic Resources

The study area is the northern terminus of the historic Farmington Center. Figure 4 displays the Farmington Center Historic District in relation to the study area.



There are seven (7) buildings located within the study area that are surveyed in the 1985 "Town of Farmington Architecture and Historic Survey" and thus on the Connecticut Register of Historic Buildings.

Only two (2) of these buildings are located in the local historic district and protected by the Farmington Center Historic District Commission.

- 1.) 792 Farmington Ave. Elm Tree Inn, ca. 1655, ca. 1800 (building with a building)
- 2.) 772 Farmington Ave. North-Frost Blacksmith Shop ca. 1827

The five (5) historic buildings that are not located in the local historic district are as follows:

- 1.) 774 Farmington Ave. Charles Frost House, ca. 1826
- 2.) 776 Farmington Ave. John Norton House, ca. 1670
- 3.) 778 Farmington Ave. Daniel Buck House and Store, ca. 1845
- 4.) 806 Farmington Ave. Farmington Country Club, ca. 1901

5.) 820 Farmington Ave. Woodford-Newell-Strong House, ca.1807 ca. 1655

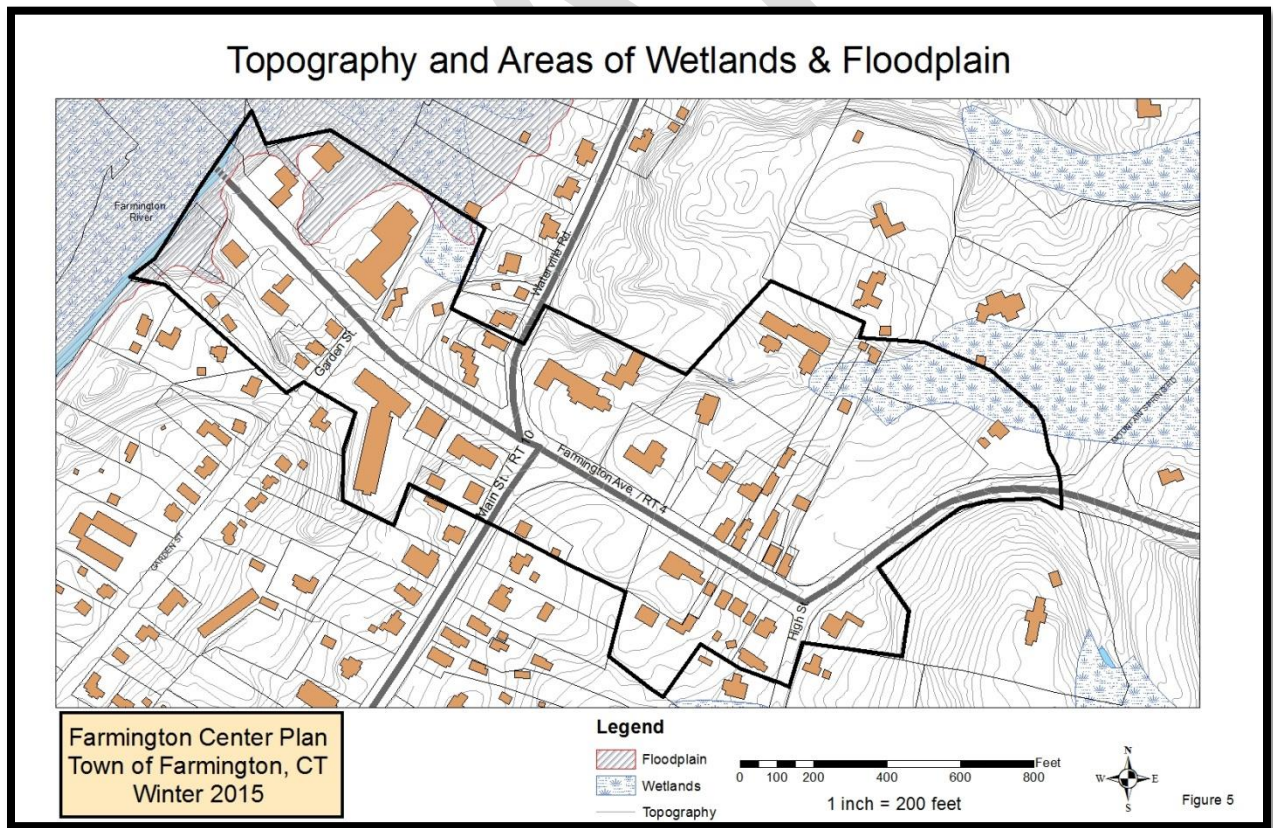
These remaining buildings are largely unprotected from demolition using private funds. There is a 90 day demolition delay ordinance in place but that rarely results in the preservation of a building. The purpose of identifying these buildings in this plan is to make it clear to future developers that the Town of Farmington considers these to be important resources within the town and should be strongly considered for preservation when a development is proposed.

3. Topography

The topography of the site slopes generally to the west towards the Farmington River. For the most part the topography is gently sloping and poses no constraints to future development. (Figure 5)

4. Wetlands and Watercourses & 100 year flood plain

There is a small area of wetlands in the north east corner of the study area with a small stream running east to west towards the Farmington River. There is flood plain along the Farmington River at the western extreme of the study area. (Figure 5)

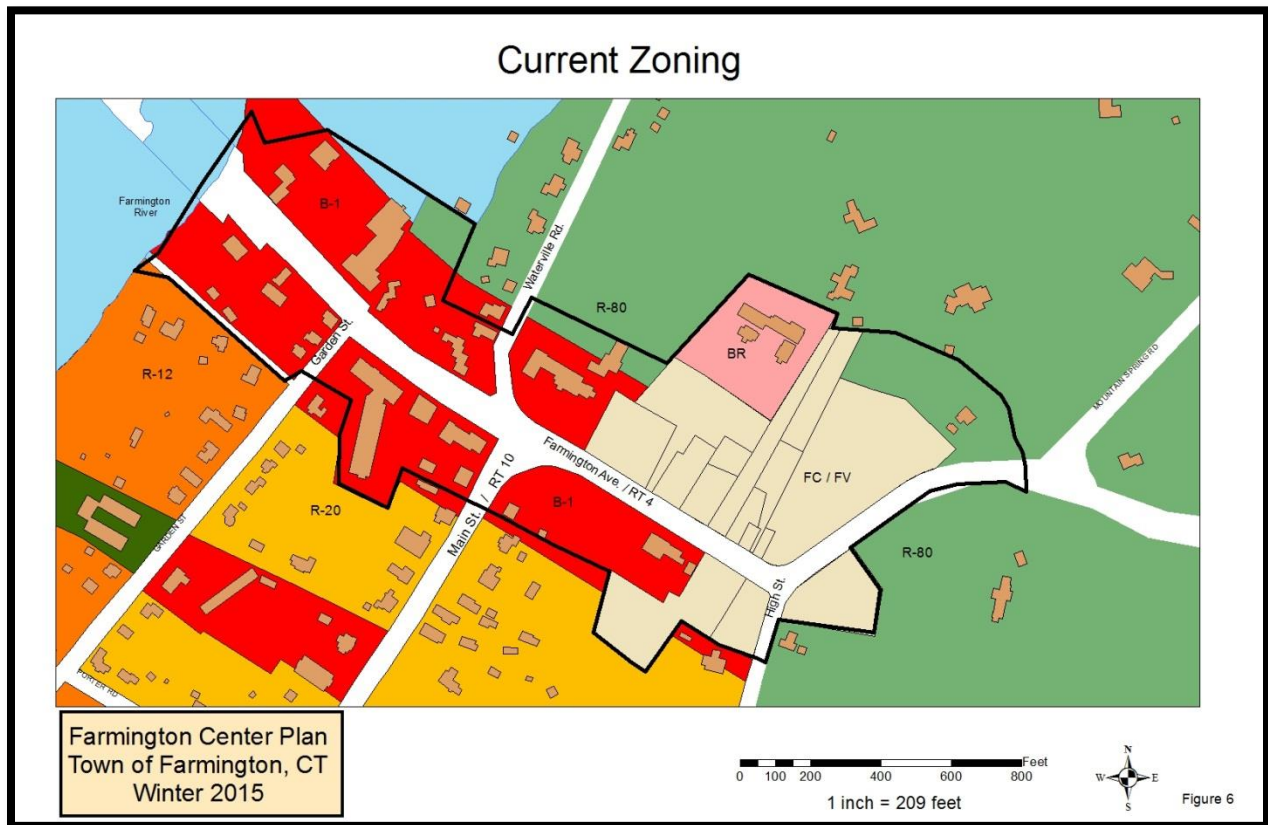


5. Utilities

All utilities are present. The area is serviced by sanitary sewer system, public water, natural gas and electricity. Figure 6 displays sewer, water and natural gas lines.

6. Existing Zoning

Figure 4 displays the existing zoning within the study area.



The majority of the study area is zoned Farmington Center/Farmington Village District zone. This zone was created specifically for this area. The purpose of this zone is as follows:

“To preserve and protect the existing historic landscape and structures within the zone as well as considering potential infill and redevelopment that will complement the same. The following design regulations shall guide mixed-use development; historic development patterns, view and vistas; a village streetscape; and pedestrian access and safety in concert with the objectives found in the Farmington Plan of Conservation and Development.”

Consideration should be given to also requiring that all parking shall be located behind buildings, there be no additional curb cuts on RT 4, there be a maximum parking requirement in addition to a minimum, there be a maximum front setback of five (5) feet

for buildings fronting on RT 4, specific allowance and encouragement of underground parking and parking structures to the rear of the study area, a mandatory residential component and a requirement that all first floor uses in buildings fronting on RT 4 be restricted to retail and personal service shops, fast food restaurants, dairy bar, grill, coffee shop, gallery, shop, retail bank and restaurant's.

With these revisions the Farmington Center zoning is ideal zoning to encourage a high density mixed use and pedestrian friendly development. The setbacks, lot coverage, parking requirements and uses will encourage appropriate development within that zone.

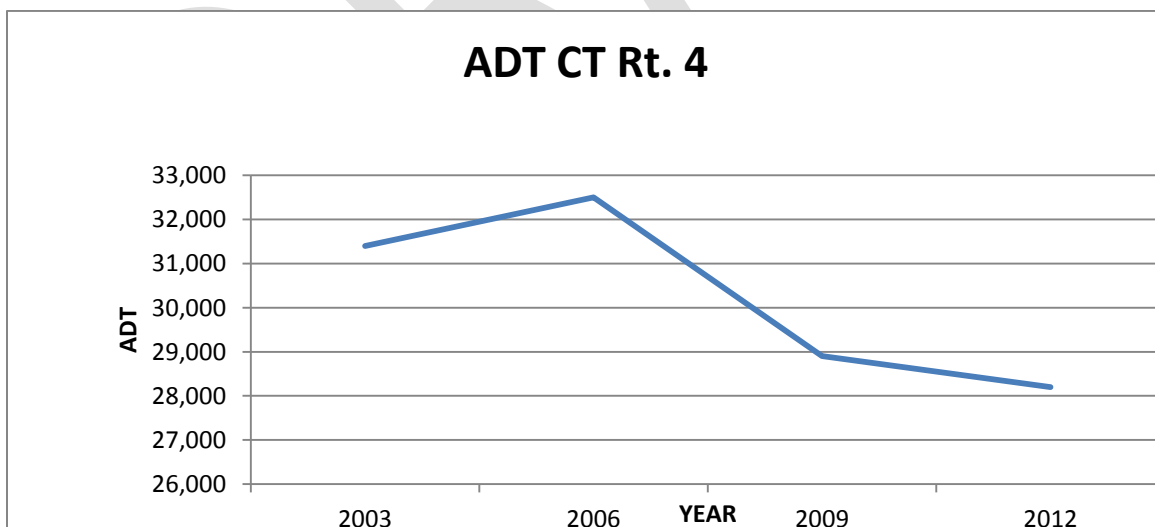
Other areas within the study area are zoned Business Restricted (BR) and Business (B1). These zones are more geared towards the creation of strip commercial development. The allowed uses, the setback areas, the lot coverage and parking requirements will not result in a development pattern conducive to Farmington Center.

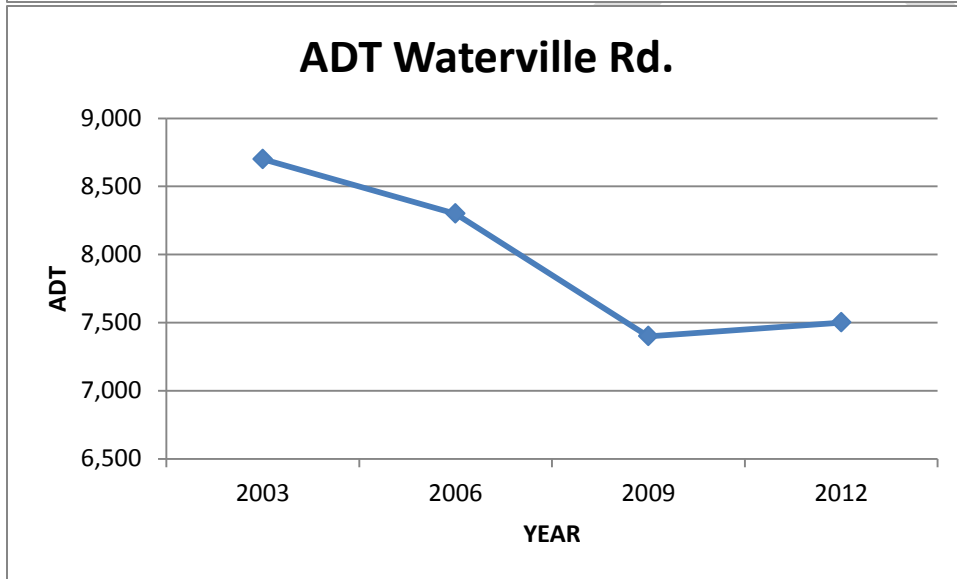
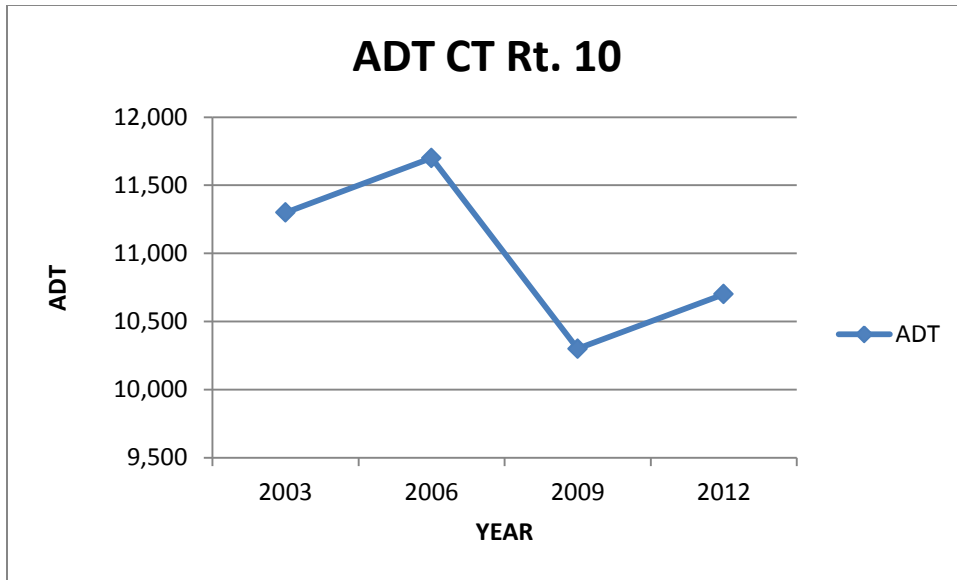
The entire study area should be zoned Farmington Center/Farmington Village District zone.

7. Traffic and Circulation

In 2012 CTDOT reported that CT RT 4 in the study area had an ADT of 28,200 cars per day. CT RT 10 had an ADT of approximately 10,700 cars per day and Waterville Road had an ADT of 7500 cars per day.

As shown below, traffic volumes have declined significantly since the start of the economic recession in 2008 and in 2012 still had not returned to previously highs in 2006.

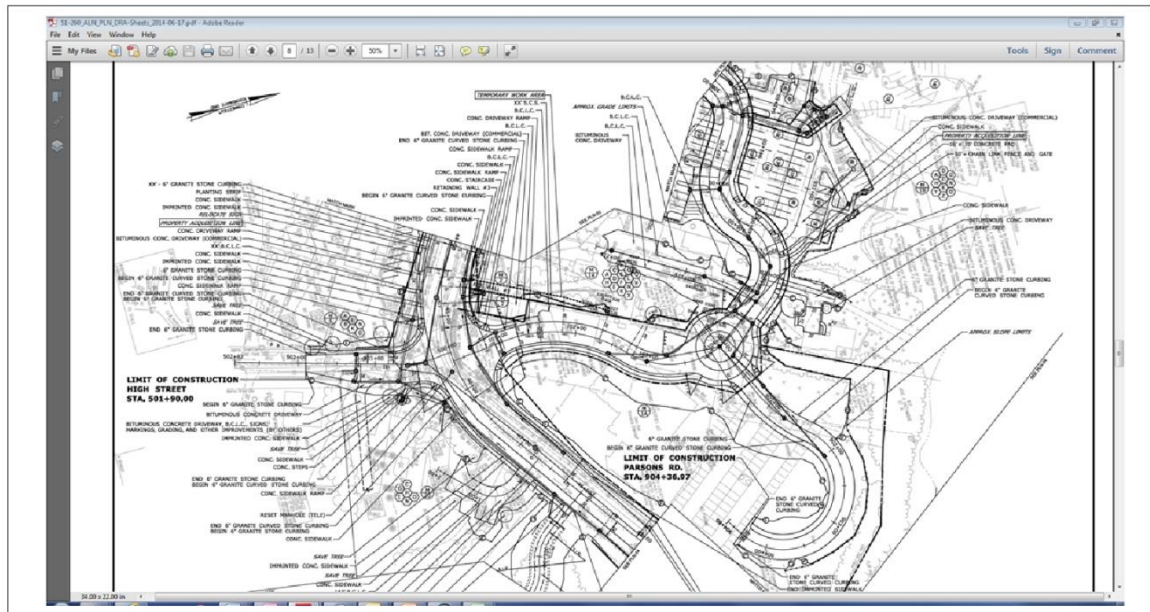




In addition to volume and capacity, one of the more significant issues on RT 4 is left turning cars into the establishments on both the north and south side of the roadway. There are 10 curb cuts within a relatively short distance on RT 4 within the study area. The State DOT project scheduled for 2017 will place a raised center island which is designed to eliminate left turning movements.

Sidewalks – there area is fairly well serviced with sidewalks, however they are of various materials and often cracked and in poor condition. The crosswalks are worn out and walk signals should be upgraded and focused on the pedestrian. The north and south sides of Route 4 are completely isolated from each other. The pedestrian must feel comfortable crossing Route 4 in order to unite the north and south side.

DOT Plan - Backage Road Entrance at High St.



Farmington Center Plan
Town of Farmington, CT
Winter 2015



Figure 8

F. Susceptibility to Change Analysis

Based on vacancy, potential environmental concerns, lack of maintenance, the states intervention, developer involvement, Planning and Zoning approvals and the lack of sufficient protections the properties displayed in Figure 9 have been determined to be highly susceptible to change.

This plan will coordinate the change in a comprehensive way to ensure use compatibility, architectural compatibility, shared parking and traffic circulation, the provision of public spaces, pedestrian and bicycle improvements and the more mundane issues of product deliveries to retail establishments, garbage pick-up and storm water management.

The properties displayed on Figure 9 include:

Susceptibility to Change



Farmington Center Plan
Town of Farmington, CT
Winter 2015

0 100 200 400 600 800 Feet
1 inch = 200 feet



1.) 763 Farmington Ave.

This property has been fully approved for a bank branch. The existing building will be demolished and a new architecturally appropriate building will be constructed in approximately the same location. One concern is with the buildings orientation to the street. The historic building was clearly built to look down RT 4 towards the river. Prior to a building permit being issued the Town should make sure the new building is realigned to maintain the same orientation as the original building.

2.) Parsons State of Connecticut DOT

The former Parsons car dealership was acquired by the State DOT for the RT 4 improvement project. The normal disposition of this property after the road job is complete is an offer to other state agencies and then an offer to the Town to acquire for fair market value. It is essential that the Town control the destiny of this parcel to insure compliance with this plan. Therefore, the Town's legislative delegation should be asked to submit a bill requiring that this parcel be sold directly to the Town of Farmington upon completion of the DOT project.

3.) Norton Lane Properties, Inc.

These properties appear underutilized and secluded. The State DOT project will split the property in half and drastically change its character by the new backage road which will run along its entire eastern border.

4.) Udolph Farmington, LLC

Again, with access to the new Backage Road, this property will have much more potential once the State project is complete.

5.) Farmington Country Club (Chucks parcel)

A developer currently has this property under contract and has begun the entitlement process. The developers plan for the property include the demolition of the former Chucks Restaurant and the Green Dog Market building and the construction of 12 high end condominium units at the Chucks site and a retail/service building along Farmington Ave. The initial concept plans are appropriate and will require Architectural Review Committee and Planning and Zoning Commission approval. During the approval process, it is essential that cross easements be secured to ensure shared use of parking areas, including public use, in accordance with this plan.

6.) Bank of America

This building is leased by Bank of America and is the most architecturally inconsistent building within the study area. Its modern façade does not contribute positively to the streetscape. The building is very large and inefficient for a branch bank. Its only access is from RT 4 and the state DOT project will install a center island along its entire frontage. This is designed to eliminate left turns in and out of the Bank of America property. This may have a major impact on their operation.

7.) 1 Waterville Road

Planning and Zoning approvals are in place for two retail buildings, including a bank with a remote drive up window. This approval is from 2010 and nothing has happened. The developer indicates that the bank tenant is no longer interested and the project, as approved, makes little financial sense. The developer is interested in taking advantage of the Farmington Center zone and is working with the Town on alternate development proposals which would need new approvals.

8.) Battisons Cleaners Property

This property is currently vacant and in the foreclosure process. The properties' small size (much of the front parking lot is in the State ROW), flood plain, and possible environmental contamination (former gas station) severely complicate the re-use of the property. Its adjacency to State property fronting the Farmington River may make it any interesting opportunity for a more public use connected to the river and Farmington Center.

DRAFT

Section II

A. Community Participation

The most critical component of any plan is the public participation component. To insure transparency the Town of Farmington conducted two, widely publicized, planning workshops. The workshops included a professional facilitator and occurred on ####, ## 2015 and ####, ## 2015. Over ### residents participated in the workshops and the minutes are included in the Appenix. These workshops were a critical step in gaining consensus from the Community and formulating a formal "Vision" for the Study Area.

B. Strengths, Weakness Opportunities and Threats

Below is a listing of the B. Strengths, Weakness Opportunities and Threats that were identified during the public planning workshops.

Strengths

The town

- A highly regarded community with strong management, low crime rate, one of lowest mill rates in Connecticut, an excellent public school system and an affluent and educated population.
- Desirable location in close proximity to Interstate 84 and Bradley International airport and within 2 hours of New York City and Boston.
- Rich in History - one of oldest communities in Connecticut.
- Over nine (9) miles of frontage on both sides of the Farmington River.
- Strong market which can support a mix of new development including retail, office and high end residential.
- Diverse Housing options ranging from affordable to very high end.
- One of only 4 Bicycle friendly communities in the State as designated by
- Thousands of acres of open space and beautiful multi-use trails along the Farmington River.
- Strong cultural institutions - Stanley Whitman House, Hillstead Museum, Unionville Museum and Day Lewis Museum.
- Internationally renowned - Miss Porters School
- Emerging Bio Science Corridor around the University of Connecticut's Medical School and Hospital.

Farmington Center and the Study Area

- Farmington Center, outside of the study area, is relatively compact and walkable.
- The presence of Miss Porters School adds a level of dignity and sophistication as well as a captive market for the area.
- Farmington Center has significant historic and cultural and institutional amenities that can be built on to strengthen its setting as a Town Center.
- Farmington Center contains a mix of land uses which is very desirable for a town center.
- With minor modifications, as discussed in this plan, the Farmington Center/Village District zoning is ideal for the study area and will allow a mix of uses and a level of density which will enhance and energize the study area.
- The zoning allows for a critical mass of attractive retail, restaurant, and service uses in properly placed buildings. Concentrated development within the study area is required in order to create a traditional village and strengthen the center.
- The study area has the infrastructure (water, sewer, gas) in place to allow for intensive development.
- The study area should be a smaller more attractive alternative to Blue Back Square for Farmington residents.
- The State of Connecticut has a major road improvement project planned which creates a tremendous opportunity for the Town to leverage that work to secure other improvements within the road right of way such as granite curbing throughout, new concrete sidewalks throughout, decorative crosswalks, pedestrian crossing signals, historic lighting and landscaped islands.
- Topographically, the study area is gently sloping and is ideal for new development and reasonably conducive to pedestrian and bicycle usage.
- There is a significant amount of traffic running through the study area on RT 4 which creates high visibility which is very desirable for retail/commercial uses.
- Miss Porters School and a number of residential uses are within walking distance to the study area which will contribute to the vitality of any new development.

Weaknesses

The Town

- Lack of a downtown core creating a true sense of place
- Lack of a community gathering place. Limited nightlife options, no theatre, cafes, coffee shop. Limited offerings that attract younger workforce.
- No strong and attractive gateway into town from Interstate 84
- Ineffective Signage and limited way finding system
- Morning and afternoon peak hour traffic on RT 4 often causes gridlock
- Curve at former Parsons property has a very negative reputation statewide.
- Very little vacant land remaining for new development to grow the grand list

Farmington Center and Study Area

- Farmington Center is not fully integrated with the study area as a traditional, cohesive New England Town Center.
- Route 4 creates a very imposing real and psychological barrier between the study area and the rest of Farmington Center and the historic district.
- Route 4 is controlled by state DOT and without significant and ongoing lobbying the proposed improvements could be detrimental to the area.
- The road, the sidewalks, the curbing, the crosswalks, various buildings and parking lots are in a severe state of disrepair.
- There is a lack of adequate sidewalks and crosswalks to encourage walking within the Center and into the study area.
- There is a lack of pedestrian connections to ease walking between the north and south side of Route 4 and the shops and services.
- There is a lack of theme elements such as lighting, sidewalks, crosswalks, benches, and trees that will help identify and unify the Center and, in particular, the study area.
- There must be retail and other services that fill a niche that the newer shopping Centers in surrounding towns fail to provide.
- Some historic buildings exist within the study area that are worthy of preservation and are not located within the Farmington Center Historic District.
- Traffic is currently traveling at speeds that are not considered to be appropriate for a Town Center.
- Although there is significant traffic within the study area on Route 4 and Route 10 very little is destined for shopping or services within the Center.

Section III

B. Recommendations

- 4. General Goals**
- 5. Policies**
- 6. Specific Recommendations**

Appendix

Public Right of Way Considerations, landscape, sidewalks, curbs, crosswalks, lighting