Fairfield TOD DRAFT Plan

TPZ BRIEFING | May 28, 2019
Fairfield TOD Study

CONTENTS

Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 1
  Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. 1
  TOD Study Purpose .............................................................................................................. 1
  Two Station Areas and Contexts .......................................................................................... 2

Critical Planning Questions and Answers ............................................................................ 5
  How much development of office space can we realistically expect in the station area in the near future? In the next five, ten, or twenty years? ............... 5
  What is the market opportunity for multifamily housing? .................................................. 6
  How can we most effectively encourage high-value real estate development around Fairfield Metro? ........................................................................................................ 7
  If more multifamily housing were developed, what would be the potential positive or negative impacts, in terms of potential for office or other commercial development, Town finances, community character, infrastructure capacity, or other measures? ................................................................................ 7
  Are there critical utility and transportation infrastructure thresholds that should inform the right land use mix and the amount and pacing of development at Fairfield Metro? How should Fairfield think about funding TOD-related infrastructure needs over time? .................................................................................................. 8
  Can we assure that new multifamily housing will have units priced at a range of levels accessible to a wide spectrum of households? Can we achieve a deeper level of affordability than required by current Town policy? How would this
affect Fairfield’s status with respect to the state’s 8-30(g) inclusionary housing policy? ................................................................. 8
What do development economics indicate about the feasibility of TOD development? ............................................................. 9
TOD Goals .............................................................................................................................................................................. 9
Fairfield Metro Station Area Study Vision and Priorities ........................................... 9
Downtown Station Area Vision and Priorities ......................................................... 12

Fairfield Metro Station Area Development Scenarios ........................................ 14
Scenario A—Continue current development policy approach ......................... 16
Scenario B—Mixed-Use Main Street ................................................................. 18
Scenario C—Public-Private Partnership for New District Center .................. 20
Scenario D—Public-Private Partnership for New District Center (Higher Density) ........................................................................................................... 22
Development Program Table ............................................................................. 24
Comparative Summary of Development Potential ............................................ 25
Net Fiscal Impact of Development Scenario After 20 Years ............................. 25

Fairfield Metro Station Land Use and Development Policy
Recommendations ........................................................................................... 27
Adjust TOD Overlay Boundaries and Minimum Parcel Size ....................... 27
Remap the TOD Park Overlay Boundary ....................................................... 27
Reduce the Minimum Parcel Size ................................................................... 29
Adjust TOD Height Limits ............................................................................. 29
Increase Residential Density ......................................................................... 29
TOD Affordability Requirements .................................................................... 30
  increase the Below Market Unit Requirement ............................................ 30
  increase Income Limits for For-Sale Below Market Units ....................... 30
Require Accessible Units .................................................................................. 31
Mixed-Use Urban Design and Building Scale ............................................... 32
  Right-Size the Maximum Residential Square Footage .......................... 32
  Focused TOD Nodes and Intersections ....................................................... 32
Require Residential Open Space ..................................................................... 35
Revise Commercial Parking Requirements ................................................... 35
  Equalize Dining and Retail Parking Requirements .................................. 35
  Encourage Shared Parking ........................................................................ 35
Parking Design and Function ......................................................................... 35
Enhanced Landscaping Buffers................................................................. 35
Parking Structure Buffers........................................................................ 36
Parking Requirement Alternatives ......................................................... 36
Car Sharing Services ................................................................................ 36
Electric Vehicle Charging ........................................................................ 36
Joint Parking Usage .................................................................................. 37
Further Parking Recommendations.......................................................... 37

Downtown Station Land Use and Development Policy Recommendations
.................................................................................................................. 38
Adjust Height Maximums and Floor-to-Floor Heights................................. 38
Require Ground-Floor Commercial or Public-Serving Uses ....................... 38
Revise Residential Floor Area and Ground-Floor Office Use...................... 38
Revise Floor Area Ratio.............................................................................. 39
Ensure Consistent Minimum Housing Unit Sizes....................................... 39
Parking Utilization and Performance ........................................................ 39
Consistent TOD Form Regulations and Policy Goals.................................. 40
Below Market Rate and Accessible Units.................................................. 40
Parking and Open Space Design ................................................................. 40

Appendices................................................................................................. 41
Real Estate Market Analysis: Office, Retail and Dining, and Residential ...... 41
Infrastructure Capacity Findings ............................................................... 41
Fiscal Impact Analysis Findings ................................................................. 41
Introduction

Executive Summary

The Town of Fairfield has significant opportunities to encourage transit-oriented development around both of its rail stations that will support Town goals and have economic benefits. At Fairfield Metro, transit-oriented development could transform the station area into a mixed-use neighborhood. Focused multifamily residential and mixed-use development can create a stronger district enhanced with adopting place-making design standards and development incentives, while expanding the Town’s tax base. At Fairfield Downtown, small-scale infill development supports the continued vitality of Fairfield’s beloved downtown shopping and dining district. The significant market demand for transit-oriented development in Fairfield means that minor revisions to land use and development regulations can unlock significant potential and economic development.

TOD Study Purpose

When the Fairfield Metro Metro-North station opened seven years ago, the Town of Fairfield had completed two years of planning for redevelopment of the land around the station area with the Regional Plan Association. The process established a vision for transit-oriented development that would include a mix of transit-supportive uses; encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use; and promote economic growth and a high density of jobs and residents near the station.

The Town updated its zoning in the area to allow for a higher density of commercial, residential, and mixed-uses to capitalize on the anticipated development interest that would accompany the new Fairfield Metro train station. A major development proposal for large-scale office development was approved for the immediate station area. Significant infrastructure and roadway improvements were completed in anticipation of this development, but the long-term effects of the Great Recession and the sluggish market for office development in intervening years have continued. To date, none of the proposed one million sf of office space in the Metro Center project has been developed.

Meanwhile, on other land close to the Fairfield Metro station, the Trademark I project—containing 101 apartments over 15,000 square feet neighborhood retail space—was completed in 2017, and the Trademark II project—containing 160 apartments in a new building, 85,000 square feet of office in an existing building, over 13,000 square feet of neighborhood retail in a new building, and 8,500 square feet of retail in existing buildings is under construction. Near the downtown station, several other multifamily housing development projects have been proposed and/or approved with increasing pressure to add additional residential units near both station areas in recent years.

It is clear in light of these new development proposals and the ongoing lack of large-scale office development interest reported by property owners and real estate professionals, that an updated vision of transit-oriented development is needed around the Fairfield Metro station to best achieve Town goals for a thriving, revenue-generating area. Simultaneously, thoughtful consideration of development opportunities around the Downtown Station that strengthen design considerations is warranted. Housing, office, and retail market studies were conducted to provide a baseline understanding of market potential around both stations. The results of these studies form the basis of the development scenarios that were studied to assess opportunities and challenges associated with different potential configurations and scales of development. Scenario analysis confirmed a preferred vision for comprehensive development in the Fairfield Metro station area that optimizes benefits for
Fairfield while thoughtful, context-specific infill is the focus for Downtown. This study’s recommendations aim to achieve this vision through refinements to Town land use and development regulations.

**Two Station Areas and Contexts**

Fairfield has two full-service train stations at Fairfield Downtown and Fairfield Metro. Southport Station has limited service and was not part of this study. Both full-service stations show consistent demand, with Metro-North reporting ridership between 2,000–2,200 per day at each station in the most recently-available data. Most of that ridership occurs in peak hours of travel for commuting, with over 70% of Downtown and 78% of Metro ridership occurring in peak commuting hours. There is also significant weekend ridership, with higher inbound flows to New York City on Saturday and most outbound returns occurring on Sunday.

This study’s primary focus was the area surrounding the Fairfield Metro station, including the significant areas of former heavy industrial land available for redevelopment along Ash Creek Boulevard. Some of these parcels are part of a prior Metro Center development approval that has not moved forward. The study also considered a broader range of potential redevelopment parcels along Commerce Drive and Black Rock Turnpike and how those areas might contribute to transit-oriented development around the station. This broader station area approximates a sensible walking distance from the Fairfield Metro station, an easy bicycling distance, and incorporates existing land use patterns and corridors.

In addition to the core focus on growth around the Fairfield Metro station, the study also looked at how transit-oriented development could proceed on a limited basis around the Fairfield Downtown station. The Downtown station area is part of a mature and well-loved downtown, so this effort looked at whether there were opportunities for small-scale, contextual infill development that would help serve Town goals for a walkable downtown area. It also examined key sites for significant redevelopment like the Exide property and potentially the Downtown station parking lot.
FIGURE 1: The Fairfield TOD Study considered the potential for transformative transit-oriented development at the Fairfield Metro station area, a major redevelopment area for the town.
FIGURE 2: The Fairfield TOD Study also considered opportunities for limited infill to support the existing character of the Fairfield Downtown station area, a mature New England town center.
Critical Planning Questions and Answers

How much development of office space can we realistically expect in the station area in the near future? In the next five, ten, or twenty years?

What office development potential is there over the next 5–10 years?

- Downtown is best positioned for professional and medical office demand in the near term, with potential for 10,000–20,000 square feet of development or tenanting of existing spaces.
- The Fairfield Metro station area is a good location in the regional market, with rail access as an important amenity for employees, but the station area needs a stronger mixed-use setting and greater walkability to be more competitive with other nearby TOD locations in Stamford and Norwalk. Larger scale development is only possible in the Fairfield Metro station area with the commitment of an anchor tenant seeking at least 15,000 square feet of space, but a development including such an anchor tenant could unlock opportunity for 80,000–150,000 square feet of new office development.
- The timing of larger-scale office development potential is uncertain and is ultimately dependent on securing an anchor tenant.
- The current demand for office space in Fairfield is for smaller tenants offering professional services, such as law, financial services, insurance, and real estate firms.

What qualities define Fairfield’s market position for office development?

- Fairfield is a more affordable location for office uses than nearby towns like Darien and Westport, but it also has less convenient access to New York City than those towns.
- Potential transit-oriented office locations in Stamford are comparably priced and have better access to New York City, so businesses that prize New York City access are more likely to locate in Stamford than Fairfield.
- Fairfield is a more expensive location than points east like Bridgeport and Shelton where New York City access is not the primary draw for transit-oriented development around rail stations. Fairfield will need to offer something more—in terms of quality of place and amenity base—than these locations to be competitive.
- Most likely, Fairfield’s train stations and Metro-North service will be an important employee amenity, but are not necessarily vital to business location. Highway access and parking will still be a significant part of office development in the station areas.

How is Fairfield’s office market performing currently?

- The market is performing well—better than other parts of Fairfield County—with opportunity for modest growth. Large-scale development depends on attracting a significant anchor tenant.
- Overall office vacancy in Fairfield County is 25%; preferably it should be under 15%. Rents across Fairfield County declined 13% over last 5 years, reflecting lack of demand and vacancy. There is a significant amount of vacant office space in Stamford near the train station that is available to potential tenants seeking transit-oriented locations.
- The Town of Fairfield is part of strongest regional submarket for office within Fairfield County—Central—with 13.5% vacancy. Rents have increased by over 10% over the last 5 years in the Central submarket.
• The Town of Fairfield has a current office vacancy rate of 6.5%. The largest space available is 14,000 square feet and the remainder is in small spaces.
• Consensus among commercial real estate brokers is that the Town of Fairfield is a small, stable office market with limited growth potential unless an anchor tenant (>15,000 square feet plus) appears.

What is the market opportunity for multifamily housing?
The analysis focuses specifically on housing types that particularly leverage and contribute to a walkable, mixed-use, and transit-served setting: multifamily housing for rent and sale, as well as attached townhomes for sale. The TOD market potential does not include households seeking single-family homes and does not include households earning below $45,000/year (80% Area Median Income for a single-person household), as these households are seeking a different or non-market rate product.

What multifamily residential development potential is there over the next 5–10 years?
• Overall, the market potential appears quite strong for multifamily housing in both station areas.
• The market study suggests market potential capture for up to 339–415 units annually between the two station areas if residential units matching the price points and other characteristics desired by potential households could be provided. This breaks down to approximately 115–151 units annually around Fairfield Downtown and 224–264 units annually around Fairfield Metro.
• Over 5 years, the market forecast supports construction and absorption of between 1,695–2,075 new dwelling units within the station areas.
• The relative scarcity, and high current occupancy, of existing multifamily housing in Fairfield means that development in the station areas may be able to capture a relatively high share of the overall market seeking TOD housing.

What are the characteristics of households interested in living in Fairfield’s station areas?
• About a quarter of the market potential comes from empty-nesters/retirees, a relatively high number compared to other communities in the region. This confirms what stakeholders expressed as part of the public meetings during the Fairfield TOD Study and some of the ideas of the strategic planning group, though also shows that this segment is still a minority of the overall demand.
• Just 8% of the demand comes from families, which should help provide evidence that TOD housing development has limited effect on school costs while increasing tax base for the Town.
• The 66% share of market potential from younger singles/couples shows Fairfield can be attractive for young professionals are a large part of the workforce for future office development.

What mix of housing units do these households seek?
Households seek a wide variety of multifamily housing units, including apartments, condominiums, and attached townhomes. The Fairfield Metro station area includes existing multifamily rental and multifamily condominium buildings. Attached townhomes or rowhouses may be particularly appropriate in the Downtown station area as part of a transition to surrounding neighborhoods.
• 68.2% multifamily rental in lofts/apartment buildings
• 12.5% multifamily for-sale in condominium buildings
• 19.3% attached townhome or rowhouses
How can we most effectively encourage high-value real estate development around Fairfield Metro?

One of the major findings of the office market study is that the Fairfield Metro station area needs a stronger mixed use setting and greater walkability to be a competitive location for TOD office development, particularly in comparison to competing TOD locations in Stamford and Norwalk that already have this amenity base. The retail market study found that significant multifamily residential development is needed in order to generate additional demand for eat/drink and retail development; without increased residential development in the Metro station area that increases the customer base, further retail and dining demand will be limited and the amenity base will be more stagnant.

The Fairfield Metro station area needs TOD development, particularly multifamily residential and mixed-use development, to build a stronger market demand for larger-scale office and commercial development. Residential development can create a stronger office market by supporting retail and dining uses that are an important amenity base, helping build a sense of place and improved walkability, and providing housing for the office workforce.

If more multifamily housing were developed, what would be the potential positive or negative impacts, in terms of potential for office or other commercial development, Town finances, community character, infrastructure capacity, or other measures?

If more multifamily housing were developed as part of transit-oriented development, it would create new revenues based on increased property values and property taxes. The current levy is 26.36 mills (0.02636) of the property value of transit-oriented development. The property tax rate is the same for multifamily development as for commercial property, so there is not a difference to the potential revenues to the Town from transit-oriented development from different uses. Development that occurs in earlier phases provides more tax revenue to the Town.

For example, the Trademark 1 development has a property assessment of $19.6 M and thus pays annual property taxes of $455,700. Prior to redevelopment the property was assessed at $2 M and paid only $49,580 of annual property taxes.

New expenses generated by transit-oriented development were determined by analyzing the Town’s budget to determine operating costs, factors driving changes to the budget, and variable cost categories that could change because of new development. Based on the proposed TOD development scenarios, the study determined potential increases in population, road-miles, workers, and others from new development. Based on those increases, the study then determined what the increased municipal cost burdens of new TOD development would be.

In the Town of Fairfield, the key variable cost categories that are affected by TOD development are public school costs and public safety costs. Based on the existing budget, the study calculated a fiscal impact per new resident, worker, and/or guest for public safety.

Currently, the housing stock of single-family homes in Fairfield contain an average of 0.59 public school students for every single-family home. Within Fairfield’s existing 1,600 multifamily residential units, this ratio is much lower. There are 210 public school students from 1,600 units, or an average of 0.13 students per unit. TOD
housing would be multifamily housing, so the Town should likely expect a similar ratio of public school students to multifamily units.

The high property value of multifamily residential and commercial development in Fairfield, as well as the comparatively low ratios of school children in multifamily development, mean that TOD development offers positive fiscal benefit to the Town. Further analysis can be found in Appendix: Fiscal Impact Findings.

**Are there critical utility and transportation infrastructure thresholds that should inform the right land use mix and the amount and pacing of development at Fairfield Metro? How should Fairfield think about funding TOD-related infrastructure needs over time?**

The development scenarios envisioned for Fairfield Metro are estimated to add approximately 250,000 gallons per day of sewer treatment need, or approximately 3.5% of the current flow at the Town’s sewage treatment plant and 6% of flow through the current conveyance system. Over the next decade, the system of pipes that serve as the conveyance system as well as the plant itself will be improved and upgraded as outdated infrastructure is replaced as part of ongoing maintenance. These improvements also will improve the capacity of the conveyance system.

The Town already charges connection fees to connect new development to the sewage treatment system and invests those funds into upgrades that improve capacity and function. The Town should continue to assess what funds are needed as part of a connection fee in order to continue to support plant capacity and operations funding, but current levels are estimated to be appropriate.

The Fairfield Metro station area is well-prepared for the scale of development envisioned in this study. Significant infrastructure and roadway improvements were completed in anticipation of development over the last decade, including 8 new traffic signals, 6 new dedicated turn lanes, 3 added lands, and multiple adjustments to existing signals, signal timing, and lane markings. The square footage envisioned as part of development scenarios in this study is similar to the overall square footage of development anticipated by these infrastructure improvements.

**Can we assure that new multifamily housing will have units priced at a range of levels accessible to a wide spectrum of households? Can we achieve a deeper level of affordability than required by current Town policy? How would this affect Fairfield’s status with respect to the state’s 8-30(g) inclusionary housing policy?**

There are a number of strategies to increase the production of affordable housing in the Fairfield Metro and Fairfield Downtown station areas. The first would be applying the Town’s existing requirements for below market housing to qualifying developments in the Downtown station area as well as the Fairfield Metro station area.

The second is to allow more housing development and increased density. Fairfield already requires 10% of housing units to be provided as affordable to households earning 80% or less of median household income for the Bridgeport, CT HUD Metro Fair Market Rent Area. Increasing overall housing development also increases the number of affordable units in the marketplace as more overall housing units are produced.

Lastly, the Town could also pursue targeted changes to land use regulation to: A) increase the percentage of Below Market Rate Housing required for multifamily development and B) allow smaller unit sizes below the current minimum of 750 square feet to provide greater affordability within market rate housing, particularly for studios and lofts.
What do development economics indicate about the feasibility of TOD development?

At approximately $2 million per acre, land cost is a significant cost driver of development. Sites without land acquisition costs—because of long-term ownership or land owner-developer partnerships—likely will redevelop as transit-oriented development earlier. High land prices also mean that increased density of development is more valuable for feasibility because the land cost is spread across more rentable square footage.

However, the cost of construction is still a significant factor, particularly as it relates to the cost of different types of parking. Surface, decked, and structured styles of parking increase costs and thus tend to come with increased density of development and increased rent per square foot of the feasible project type. There is also a significant cost premium in exceeding wood-framed construction types for buildings.

Matching the findings of the market study indicating high multifamily residential market potential, residential development has more favorable development economics. Rental rates per square foot are actually higher for multifamily residential uses than for office uses at the current time. Residential development is also more efficient in its use of land, creating more rentable square feet on a given parcel than office development because there is a lower parking demand per square foot of the use. On a given parcel this means multifamily residential can build less parking and a bigger building compared to office development.

Projects in the Fairfield Metro station area are financially more attractive from a development economics perspective without retail uses because rents for retail uses are lower than residential or office. Retail and dining uses also frequently demand more parking and thus increased costs, compared to residential uses. In the Fairfield Downtown station area, high retail and dining rental rates and a walkable environment mean that retail and dining uses are easily incorporated into new, mixed use development without affecting overall development feasibility.

TOD Goals

Goals for the station areas include:

- Enhance Fairfield Metro’s potential as a district to work, live, learn, and play.
- Encourage housing development that expands options for young professionals and seniors.
- Help Downtown thrive as a walkable community destination.
- Keep Fairfield’s finances and sense of community strong.
- Clearly express Fairfield’s standards for development and design.

Fairfield Metro Station Area Study Vision and Priorities

Many community members continue to express the need for development in the Fairfield Metro station area to provide positive tax revenues for the Town while avoiding significant capital outlays or increased operating costs. In order to evaluate these concerns, a fiscal impact analysis was developed for the potential development scenarios that were considered as a part of this study.

As part of the public engagement for the Fairfield TOD Study, planners clearly heard that the top priority for Fairfield Metro was to create a more walkable area with better public spaces, parks, and environment. Many participants were eager to capitalize on the potential for a public waterfront at the edge of the station area and prized uses that would provide recreation and entertainment options for town residents. Others saw the Fairfield Metro station area as strategically-important to the future of the town as a neighborhood and economic engine.
Other participants were concerned about overdevelopment and increased traffic and did not feel that changes to Town policy were desired at this time.
FIGURE 3: The vision diagram for the Fairfield Metro station area shows the vision for a mixed-use district around the station. Pedestrian-friendly uses are clustered along key corridors to provide active edges. Locations for public realm improvements, including public plazas and green spaces, are identified along the waterfront of Ash Creek and at the intersection of Kings Highway and Commerce Drive. Major routes for major pedestrian connections are identified to ensure a highly-walkable district.
Downtown Station Area Vision and Priorities

In Downtown, Fairfield community members wanted to ensure that any changes helped improve the station area’s already-prized walkable character and preserved the modest scale of downtown buildings.

FIGURE 4: The vision diagram for the Fairfield Downtown station area shows the vision for continued strengthening of the traditional downtown and “Main Street” character around the station. New development should reinforce the existing, pedestrian-friendly, active edge with new retail, dining, and other destination uses. Future pedestrian paths that emphasize connections to surrounding neighborhoods are also recommended.
Fairfield Metro Station Area Development Scenarios

A series of four real estate development scenarios were prepared for the Fairfield Metro station study area to explore potential outcomes, including any distinct positive or negative qualities. The scenarios made assumptions about where new development might be located, and the land use, physical form, and size of that new development, but were intended purely to illustrate possibilities, and not to compel development on any particular parcel. The scenarios begin with different assumptions around how and where development occurs over time and resulted in different quantities of developed floor area and different clustering of development around the station area. Analysis of the scenarios considered their potential character of buildings and public spaces, traffic impacts on area streets, wastewater discharge impacts on the town sewer system, fiscal impacts, and level of fit within current development regulations. This study’s policy recommendations aim to create conditions that best encourage the positive impacts and discourage the negative impacts observed in the development scenarios.

**Scenario building blocks.** The scenarios were created through consideration of several key “building blocks” that commonly influence how property owners, developers, and town development officials think about where, when, and what to develop.

- **Walkable mixed-use centers.** Anticipated new development is assumed to be of a type that benefits from and reinforces a walkable district or neighborhood served by rail transit. This assumption comes both from real estate market analysis that shows this type of development—whether commercial or residential—is the most valuable type of development attracted to the study area, and from town policy calling for a mix of commercial and residential uses in a walkable setting around transit stations. A “walkable mixed-use center” refers to a contiguous one- to two-block stretch of street frontage that provides consistent qualities of walkability and sense of place, contributing both to community identity and to the real estate marketability of adjoining parcels. The Fairfield Metro Station study area offers several potential walkable mixed-use centers around which new development could cluster. However, the rail corridor currently presents a barrier to connecting walkable mixed-use centers. The scenarios typically assume that one walkable mixed-use center will be focused along Ash Creek Boulevard, and another along Commerce Drive between Kings Highway and Black Rock Turnpike. These centers would begin as independent clusters of development around walkable streets, and grow together over time as additional development and infrastructure improvements occur.

- **Parcel size, availability, and context compatibility.** On some parcels, current property owners have expressed interest in redevelopment.
  
  - The Trademark II development is a previously approved mixed commercial and residential development under construction, incorporating existing and new buildings at the corner of Kings Highway and Commerce Drive. In the development scenarios, it is assumed as an existing condition; its development floor area is not included in scenario totals for future development, and its projected traffic generation is included in assumptions of existing traffic conditions.
  
  - The Black Rock Realty/Enclave Properties development is a previously approved commercial development flanking Ash Creek Boulevard south of Fairfield Metro station. Its originally planned development program of approximately one million square feet of office space has not yet been implemented due to market and economic feasibility challenges, and its owner has expressed interest in seeking approval of an alternative development program including a mix of commercial...
(hotel) and residential use. The study’s development scenarios explore different amounts and characteristics of potential development on this site as part of future development scenarios.

The scenarios also assume some redevelopment would occur on other parcels that are currently vacant or contain significantly less built area that might be possible under Fairfield’s TOD overlay zoning. The parcels considered are generally at least 1.5 acres in size, or could be aggregated to that size, to accommodate the scale of commercial or residential development common in high-value walkable areas. Some scenarios also depict new development on the existing commuter rail parking lot, with the assumption that any displaced parking spaces would be replaced in a parking structure with no net loss of parking capacity. The scenarios inherently have enough flexibility, however, that no one parcel is essential to an overall development concept, so individual property owners may pursue redevelopment or not per their preference.

- **Access and Utility Infrastructure.** The scenarios assume that existing streets will provide the primary access points and address locations for new development. Some potential new street segments are shown where they may be desirable for development of the interior of larger parcels south of the rail corridor. The scenarios assume some improvements and extensions of sidewalks and off-street paths to enhance pedestrian access among the rail station, redevelopment sites, and the broader neighborhood context. These include construction of the planned Ash Creek pedestrian bridge connecting to Fox Street in Bridgeport, and new or improved sidewalks on both sides of Black Rock Turnpike between Ash Creek Boulevard and Commerce Drive including at its bridge over the rail corridor.

- **Market position and timing.** The scenarios include assumed phasing of development over 5 to 20 years. The sizes and locations of incremental development projects reflect both the anticipated pace of market absorption for commercial and residential space, and settings that incorporate walkability, clustering of development, and distinct sense of place, in order to best leverage and strengthen market position. The development scenarios maximize opportunity to use surface parking (usually screened below buildings) and single-deck parking structures, as these are most economically feasible. Scenarios B and C introduce a limited amount of structured parking, and Scenario D introduces a significant amount of structured parking, assuming increased economic feasibility with higher density of development, and/or public investment in structured commuter parking.

- **Level of proactive investment and action by town and partners.** All scenarios anticipate some proactive effort by the town (or state as appropriate) to improve street and path infrastructure in stages around new development. These efforts may include connecting pedestrian infrastructure gaps, installing street trees, place-making tools and activities such as public art or district programming, and future limited way-finding or district identification tools or signage. They also anticipate potential refinements to development regulations, as proposed by this study, and rezoning of certain parcels (such as those in the DI zone) in response to appropriate redevelopment proposals. Scenarios C and D also assume proactive effort by the town and the Connecticut Department of Transportation to invite development on the commuter parking lot and accommodate relocation of commuter parking spaces as needed.

**Scenario descriptions.** The individual scenarios reflect the following assumptions and results.
Scenario A—Continue current development policy approach

- **Assumptions:**
  - Black Rock Realty/Enclave Properties parcels concept remains entirely commercial in use, with intent for approximately 1 million square feet of new office space.
  - All new housing development occurs on parcels currently zoned DCD; no rezoning of parcels in DI zone.
  - Parking primarily at surface level (Enclave parcel adjoining station includes deck parking per approved development plan).

- **Outcomes:**
  - Because of the ongoing challenges to market and economically build the current office-intensive development concept, little of this proposed development is actually built. Much of the office development shown occurs on other parcels where cheaper surface parking can be available. Even though current policies intend office development, this scenario yields less than half the office development projected in scenarios B, C, and D, where office and housing development are created in a coordinated manner makes the study area a more competitive office location.
  - Some residential development occurs at Kings Highway/Commerce Drive and Ash Creek Boulevard/Black Rock Turnpike, similar to format of recent Trademark developments.
  - Opportunity for small amount of new retail within development clusters, plus some auto-oriented retail.
  - Traffic generation comparable to levels anticipated from existing and approved development; within capacity of existing street network.
  - Relatively low wastewater discharge, within levels previously anticipated in Fairfield’s capital planning.
FIGURE 5: Scenario A demonstrates the scale and character of development possible if current trends and regulations continue.
Scenario B—Mixed-Use Main Street

- **Assumptions:**
  - Enclave Properties parcels developed with mix of commercial and residential.
  - Cluster of commercial and residential development around intersection of Ash Creek Boulevard and Black Rock Turnpike, including some rezoning of DI parcel area.
  - Parking at surface level and in single deck structures, some beneath building podiums.

- **Outcomes:**
  - Enclave parcels redeveloped with mix of office, hotel, residential, and retail uses—targeting a broader range of market opportunity and creating a mixed-use environment that enhances market position for office and hotel.
  - Over twice as much combined office and hotel development as Scenario A
  - Greater level of residential development than in Scenario A
  - Opportunity for modest amount of new retail within development clusters.
  - Traffic generation comparable to levels anticipated from existing and approved development; within capacity of existing street network.
  - Wastewater discharge approximately 20% higher than levels previously anticipated in Fairfield’s capital planning.
FIGURE 6: Scenario B demonstrates the scale and character of development possible with regulatory changes enabling a wider range of uses across the station area.
Scenario C—Public-Private Partnership for New District Center

- **Assumptions:**
  - Development land use mix and gross floor area match those in Scenario B, but location of development is more concentrated near rail station, on current commuter parking lot. Scenario assumes proactive town/state effort to build commuter parking structure and advertise parking lot for redevelopment.
  - Enclave Properties parcels developed with mix of commercial and residential.
  - Residential development and surface parking around intersection of Ash Creek Boulevard and Black Rock Turnpike, including some rezoning of DI parcel area.
  - Parking at surface level and in single deck structures, some beneath building podiums.

- **Outcomes:**
  - Stronger placemaking opportunity and market position compared to Scenarios A and B, owing to greater clustering of development at Ash Creek Boulevard and rail station.
  - Enclave parcels redeveloped with mix of office, hotel, residential, and retail uses—targeting a broader range of market opportunity and creating a mixed-use environment that enhances market position for office and hotel.
  - Over twice as much combined office and hotel development as Scenario A
  - Greater level of residential development than in Scenario A
  - Opportunity for modest amount of new retail within development clusters.
  - Traffic generation comparable to levels anticipated from existing and approved development; within capacity of existing street network.
  - Wastewater discharge approximately 20% higher than levels previously anticipated in Fairfield’s capital planning.
FIGURE 7: Scenario C produces the same amount of overall development as Scenario B, but more of it is clustered near the Fairfield Metro rail station because of a public-private partnership to develop the parking lots.
Scenario D—Public-Private Partnership for New District Center (Higher Density)

**Assumptions:**
- Development placement similar to Scenario C, with proactive town/state effort to build commuter parking structure and advertise parking lot for redevelopment. Increased building height and amount of structured parking relative to Scenarios B and C.
- Enclave Properties parcels developed with mix of commercial and residential.
- Clustered commercial and residential development around intersection of Ash Creek Boulevard and Black Rock Turnpike, including some rezoning of DI parcel area.
- Parking beneath building podiums and in multi-story structures.

**Outcomes:**
- Stronger placemaking opportunity and market position compared to Scenarios A and B, owing to greater clustering of development at Ash Creek Boulevard and rail station.
- Larger overall development potential, including approximately one million sf office space.
- Enclave parcels redeveloped with mix of office, hotel, residential, and retail uses—targeting a broader range of market opportunity, and creating a mixed-use environment that enhances market position for office and hotel.
- Four times as much combined office and hotel development as Scenario A
- Greater level of residential development than in Scenarios B and C.
- Opportunity for modest amount of new retail within development clusters.
- Traffic generation roughly twice the levels anticipated from existing and approved development. Upgrades to existing street network likely required.
- Wastewater discharge approximately twice the levels previously anticipated in Fairfield’s capital planning.
FIGURE 8: Scenario D includes higher-density development enabled by structured parking across multiple development sites, as well as a public-private partnership to redevelop the current station parking lot.
As a result of this evaluation, Scenarios B and C emerged as those that best exemplify Fairfield’s vision for the Fairfield Metro Station area. They can support public streets and spaces that are walkable and harbor a distinct sense of place, produce significant fiscal benefits, and offer an expanded range of mixed-income housing choices in line with anticipated demand. They achieve these benefits while requiring only modest levels of street and sewer infrastructure investment.

### Development Program Table

The table below quantifies the development assumed in each scenario. Land use mix is broken out in columns. Rows within each scenario quantify the incremental and cumulative amounts of development assumed five, ten, and twenty years into the future.

To be conservative, the analysis of traffic and wastewater impacts of Scenario A assumed full development of the currently approved amount of office space on the Enclave Properties parcels—982,000sf, or about four times the amount of office and/or hotel space listed below. The lower figure in the table reflects the amount that real estate market conditions are anticipated to support in a twenty-year timeframe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEVELOPMENT TIME PERIOD</th>
<th>SITE AREA (SF)</th>
<th>FLOOR AREA RATIO</th>
<th>TOTAL (SF)</th>
<th>OFFICE AND/OR HOTEL (SF)</th>
<th>RETAIL (SF)</th>
<th>HOUSING (SF)</th>
<th>HOUSING (# OF UNITS)</th>
<th>PARKING DEMAND (SPACES)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scenario A</strong> (Continue Current Development Policy Approach)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>365,000</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>308,000</td>
<td>152,000</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>143,000</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–10 years</td>
<td>84,000</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>93,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>88,000</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 year cumulative</td>
<td>449,000</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>401,000</td>
<td>152,000</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>231,000</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–20 years</td>
<td>69,000</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>104,000</td>
<td>83,000</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 year cumulative</td>
<td>518,000</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>505,000</td>
<td>235,000</td>
<td>39,000</td>
<td>231,000</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>1,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scenario B</strong> (Mixed-Use Main Street) and <strong>Scenario C</strong> (Public-Private Partnership for District Center)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>319,000</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>574,000</td>
<td>226,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>339,000</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>1,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–10 years</td>
<td>372,000</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>354,000</td>
<td>152,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>185,000</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 year cumulative</td>
<td>691,000</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>928,000</td>
<td>378,000</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>524,000</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>1,789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–20 years</td>
<td>266,000</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>380,000</td>
<td>195,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>170,000</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 year cumulative</td>
<td>957,000</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1,308,000</td>
<td>573,000</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>694,000</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>2,203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scenario D</strong> (Public-Private Partnership for District Center, Higher Density)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>413,000</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>675,000</td>
<td>226,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>443,000</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>1,183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–10 years</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>529,000</td>
<td>304,000</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>203,000</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>1,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 year cumulative</td>
<td>763,000</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1,204,000</td>
<td>530,000</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>646,000</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>2,385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–20 years</td>
<td>273,000</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>790,000</td>
<td>422,000</td>
<td>109,000</td>
<td>259,000</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>1,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 year cumulative</td>
<td>1,036,000</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1,994,000</td>
<td>952,000</td>
<td>137,000</td>
<td>905,000</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>4,265</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Housing units are assumed to be an average of 1,000 sf, reflecting a weighted average of different unit sizes.*
Comparative Summary of Development Potential

Net Fiscal Impact of Development Scenario After 20 Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCENARIOS</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>234,669</td>
<td>473,294</td>
<td>734,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>218,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>38,713</td>
<td>41,024</td>
<td>106,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident/Working Increase</td>
<td>1,532</td>
<td>3,644</td>
<td>5,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public School Students</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenues</td>
<td>$1,960,769</td>
<td>$5,177,648</td>
<td>$7,852,291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town (Non-education) Expenses</td>
<td>($425,424)</td>
<td>($1,012,362)</td>
<td>($1,556,321)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Education Expenses</td>
<td>($342,771)</td>
<td>($1,032,785)</td>
<td>($1,347,241)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Fiscal Impact</td>
<td>$1,192,573</td>
<td>$3,132,500</td>
<td>$4,948,729</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In considering these projected impacts, the following should be noted:

- Net impacts are positive for all Scenarios.
- Scenario A generates the lowest impact because it features the lowest volume of total development. At the same time, it reserves the most land for future development after Year 20, which may command value premiums at that time.
A key factor in the actual—versus projected—outcomes is the uncertainty regarding the timing and emerging strength of the office market. At this time, high-end residential development offers a relatively certain opportunity for profitable development; the high-end office market is not established and therefore uncertain. If the office market does not emerge and office development plans remain unchanged, Scenario C might not be able to realize the volumes or values of office development shown herein, and its fiscal impacts would be substantially lower. Scenarios A and B would also generate lower impacts in this case, but Scenario C would be most heavily affected.
Fairfield Metro Station Land Use and Development Policy Recommendations

The Fairfield TOD Study largely confirmed the Town’s vision and direction to support transit-oriented development in both station areas. The following recommendations reflect adjustments and refinements to existing land use and development policy in the Fairfield Metro and Fairfield Downtown station area that can more effectively clear and consistent standards and advance innovative strategies to meet Town goals for a wide variety of housing types and successful commercial development.

Adjust TOD Overlay Boundaries and Minimum Parcel Size

The Town has previously utilized a number of land use regulations to govern development in the Fairfield Metro Station Area. There are base underlying zoning districts for the station area, with many large parcels in the Designed Industrial (DI) District and key commercial corridors in the Designed Commercial District (DCD). Both underlying zoning districts incorporate some form requirements, but the DCD is envisioned as a mixed-use district with architectural standards.

The Fairfield Metro station area also includes a geographically-determined Commerce Drive Area Designed District (CDAD), an overlay that is mapped onto specific areas of DI and DCD parcels around the Commerce Drive commercial corridor. A second overlay, the TOD Park, may be applied only to parcels at least 35,000 sf in size within the CDAD area. The CDAD and TOD Park overlays together incorporate important changes from the base zoning to encourage transit-oriented development, including reducing parking requirements, allowing taller buildings, and ensuring pedestrian-friendly uses and architectural standards. Trademark I was the first development application approved under the TOD Park regulations as currently written.

REMAP THE TOD PARK OVERLAY BOUNDARY

In order to implement the TOD vision, encourage smaller-scale infill, and promote walkable development near the Fairfield Metro station area, the Town of Fairfield should reduce the minimum parcel size for the TOD Park overlay and establish a new geographic boundary so that the overlay no longer applies only to select larger parcels within the CDAD overlay area. Figure 9 shows a proposed map of where the TOD overlay could apply to best promote development near the station, reflecting walking routes, transit service, and existing land use patterns. The proposed TOD Park overlay encompasses properties on both sides of key corridors and gateways to the station—including Black Rock Turnpike, Commerce Drive, and King’s Highway near Route 1 and I-95. It also includes smaller properties bordering the station entrance near King’s Highway and Ash Creek Boulevard. The new TOD is largely contained within the CDAD overlay boundary, except for the properties east of Black Rock Turnpike from the railroad tracks to Ash Creek Boulevard and the area between Grasmere Avenue, King’s Highway Cut-off, and Meadow Street. It is recommended that these parcels could be incorporated into both the CDAD and TOD Park overlays. The areas within the proposed TOD Park overlay represent the best locations for future transit-oriented development.
FIGURE 9: Proposed boundary for the TOD Park overlay. The CDAD overlay boundary could also be adjusted to be concurrent with the TOD Park overlay to the east of Black Rock Turnpike from the railroad tracks to Ash Creek Boulevard. This boundary encompasses most parcels within an easy walking distance of the Fairfield Metro station, as well as key multi-modal gateways.
**REDUCE THE MINIMUM PARCEL SIZE**

Reducing the minimum lot size to apply the TOD Park overlay and its subsequent regulations from 35,000 square feet to 10,000 square feet would match the minimum lot size of the CDAD overlay, providing for consistency in development across all station-area parcels. It would also provide a finer-grain alternative to large-scale development sites around the Fairfield Metro station and anticipate transit-oriented development occurring across a range of project scales. Smaller-scale projects can help ensure continuity of buildings along the street, a variety of architectural expression, consistent streetscape, opportunities for more owners to invest in their properties, and accommodate a wider range of walkable uses. Smaller development sizes may also provide opportunities to meet the existing demand for smaller-scale office space indicated by the Fairfield market study.

**Adjust TOD Height Limits**

Within the TOD Park Overlay, the Town should balance the goal of encouraging higher floor-to-floor heights desired in modern construction and urban design with the desire to limit the overall scale of building in the station area. The Town can pursue a series of interrelated changes to regulating height in the TOD Park overlay to achieve this balance. First, the Town can establish a height limit of no more than five stories. Second, it can require a higher ground floor height of at least 15 feet in order to promote high-value retail, dining, entertainment, and even office uses in mixed-use construction. Third, it can establish a maximum height of 70 feet across the overlay, in addition to the five-story limit.

The demarcation of stories is one of the strongest visual components of height and building design, particularly in a low-rise environment like the Fairfield Metro station area where most existing buildings are equal to or less than five stories. Setting a five-story limit will ensure continuity throughout the district and maintain the existing low-rise character.

Higher ground floor heights, encouraged by modern construction techniques and ventilation requirements, support contemporary retail, dining, and even office uses. These uses are highly desired in the ground floor of buildings in the Fairfield station area to contribute to a lively sidewalk environment and walkable neighborhood with many destinations for shopping, entertainment, and services. Requiring a higher ground floor height in new construction will ensure that ground-level stories are well-suited for the desired commercial uses, even if these uses are not immediately present. The Town could consider a minimum ground floor height of 15 feet to ensure quality spaces and convertibility.

In mixed-use construction, upper floors with office or residential uses frequently have a floor-to-floor gross height of more than 10 feet. In order to allow for desirable, modern floor to floor heights the Town should raise the overall maximum building height to 70 feet while also limiting building height to 5 stories.

The Town can consider allowing taller buildings through a special permit process when they are of exceptional design quality, take advantage of unique site features, and fulfill long-term economic development goals to attract major employers and build the Town’s tax base.

**Increase Residential Density**

Fairfield has a density cap for residential development within the TOD Park overlay of 50 bedrooms per acre. This density cap is lower than the number of units that could feasibly be provided within the floor area and building envelope allowed under current regulations. Because developers typically aim to develop as much revenue-producing floor area as they are entitled to under regulations, a project developer will likely increase the size of units to fill the allowable floor area. This strategy encourages excessively large units, which are expensive and
serve only a segment of the market for TOD housing. The Fairfield market study indicated significant demand for TOD housing at lower prices—with more units, fewer bedrooms, and smaller unit sizes all important to fulfilling this market demand. Therefore, increasing the bedroom density cap to 75 bedrooms per acre can help fulfill that market demand. The TOD’s height restrictions and parking requirements will otherwise functionally limit the density on a given site. Increasing the bedroom density cap to 75 bedrooms per acre helps enable smaller footprints of development and helps compensate for the high cost of land in the Fairfield Metro station area.

As part of the TOD Study and other ongoing planning efforts in public works, the Town analyzed current and future projections for school enrollment, vehicle traffic, and sewer usage for fiscal impact. The analysis found that an increased level of multi-family residential development was unlikely to lead to significantly increased costs for the school system and that future sewer demand and vehicular traffic were within the range of existing planning. The Town can continue to require developers to contribute reasonable fees towards incremental sewer and street improvements to ensure that this remains true.

**TOD Affordability Requirements**

**INCREASE THE BELOW MARKET UNIT REQUIREMENT**

One strategy investigated as part of the Fairfield TOD Study was whether allowing densities over the current 50 bedrooms/acre would allow for a higher percentage of below market rate housing than the 10% of dwelling units currently required for developments within the TOD Park overlay.

As residential density approaches—or even exceeds—75 bedrooms/acre, structured parking is typically necessary as a part of the development type. Providing structured parking creates costs premiums that prevent market rate units from cross-subsidizing a larger share of affordable units, because all of the units and their associated parking become more expensive to build. In other words, as density increases, developers do not necessarily gain financial ability to create a larger share of affordable units. Ultimately, Fairfield would like to encourage structured parking as a part of developments in the station area. The minimum affordable unit share is best kept constant across different development densities.

It does appear economically feasible, under current land price, financing, and construction costs, to increase the minimum share of inclusionary units to 11–12% without discouraging housing production, representing a modest but valuable increase is absolute number of affordable housing units provided as a part of development. The Town should continue to monitor key drivers of cost and development feasibility, including land prices, construction costs, and financing. It is possible that a recession, increased construction costs, or other changes could require future adjustment of the inclusionary zoning policy at that time, or other subsidy in order to ensure continued feasibility of development.

**INCREASE INCOME LIMITS FOR FOR-SALE BELOW MARKET UNITS**

Additionally, the Town could consider setting the below market rate housing limit for for-sale products such as condominiums, townhouses, or attached or detached houses, such as at 100–120% of household median income for the Bridgeport, CT HUD Metro Fair Market Rent Area instead of the current requirement of 80%. This increased income limit reflects the need for owners of for-sale units to qualify for a mortgage and be responsible for maintenance and upkeep. At present, other for-sale affordable units at lower median income levels have not experienced long-term viability and have experienced high levels of foreclosure. Although higher income levels would result in more viable home-ownership opportunities, it should be noted that any income levels over 80% of median do not count as an affordable unit under the 8-30g state statute.
**Require Accessible Units**

A consistent theme from the public workshops conducted as part of the TOD planning study was the desire to provide senior-friendly housing options. These include both affordable and market-rate units that could accommodate seniors currently living in the Town who are ready to downsize as well as attract similar seniors from neighboring towns. The findings of the housing market study confirmed that seniors represent a significant amount of the market demand for TOD housing in the Fairfield Metro and Fairfield Downtown station areas. Providing accessible units is an important strategic goal to meet the housing needs of seniors, and new multifamily construction is frequently better able to meet these needs than existing housing stock. The station areas represent a strategic opportunity to increase Fairfield’s availability of senior and mobility-impaired-friendly housing.

Currently, Connecticut General Statutes ensure that the State Building Code is in substantial compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, and the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, as amended with respect to accessible units. The code references ICC/ANSI A117.1–2009 to define the different levels of accessible units, including fully-accessible units, Type A and B adaptable units, and Type C visitable units.

Accessible units provide full accessibility in accordance with building code. For example, grab bars are in place in the bathrooms, a clear floor space is provided for front approach at the kitchen sink and bathroom lavatories, 32-inch clear width doors with maneuvering clearances and lever hardware are provided, and so on. None of the elements in the unit are constructed for adaptability—they are in place and provide a higher level of accessibility than other units.

Type A units are adaptable at a higher level than Type B units and has some elements that are constructed as accessible, such as 32-inch clear width doors with maneuvering clearances and lever hardware, and some elements designed to be added or altered when needed, such as grab bars that can be easily added in bathrooms since blocking in the walls is in place. Type A units follow the technical criteria in Section 1003 of ICC A117.1. A Type B unit is constructed to a lower level of accessibility. While a person who uses a wheelchair could maneuver in a Type B unit, the technical requirements are geared more towards persons with lesser mobility impairments. Type B units follow the technical requirements in Section 1004 of ICC A117.1. Type C or visitable dwelling units are ones that a person with disabilities can enter, move around the primary (entrance) floor of, and use the bathroom of.

Currently, the State of Connecticut requires as part of the building code that apartment houses of over 20 units provide 10% of residential units as Type A units. Existing structures are not counted as part of the unit total, and there are provisions to reduce this requirement based on a lack of elevator service, site impracticality, and/or design flood elevation.

In order to promote a higher standard of accessible development in the station areas and help encourage more senior-friendly housing development, the Town could require both higher amounts and higher standards for unit accessibility, such as 5% fully-accessible units and 15% Type A adaptable units in projects with over 20 units. The Town could administer this program similarly to Below Market Rate Housing, with references to existing standards within the zoning regulations.
Mixed-Use Urban Design and Building Scale

RIGHT-SIZE THE MAXIMUM RESIDENTIAL SQUARE FOOTAGE

New development in the TOD Park overlay is currently limited to a maximum of 70% residential floor area per property. The remaining balance of 30% or more of the floor area within a development must be occupied by other permitted commercial uses such as office, retail, dining. While this ratio is likely an appropriate target across the cumulative sum of all development across the Fairfield Metro station area to ensure a vital mixed-use area, there is a mismatch between how this requirement is applied at the building scale versus the district scale.

In many circumstances, mixed-use buildings are most successful when retail, dining, and service uses are located on the first floor of the building, in dedicated spaces that have high visibility and easy access from the sidewalk. Residential development is well-suited to upper floors, where there is increased privacy. Thus, in a five-story mixed-use building, there would likely be one floor of sidewalk-facing commercial uses, and four floors of multifamily residential uses, including amenity spaces and circulation areas. This translates to approximately 80% residential floor area and 20% commercial or other uses.

This building type and mix of uses is particularly likely and desirable in the Fairfield Metro station area because of the high market demand for multifamily residential uses, particularly in comparison to retail or office uses. As discussed in the office and retail market study, significant multifamily residential development can help establish a walkable district character and customer or workforce base that then attracts further dining, service, and office development. Multifamily development will set the stage for a mixed-use station area. By increasing the maximum allowed residential floor area in a building within the TOD Overlay to 80%, the Town of Fairfield can accommodate common TOD building typology of four stories of residential over one story of commercial. This building type will help encourage walkable urban design and successful development in the station area. The subsequent requirement for 20% non-residential uses may also be reduced, at the Town Planning and Zoning Commission’s review, by any ground floor area required for residential access and circulation, such as lobbies and elevator banks, and residential use programs and amenities that are located in retail-type storefronts, such as fitness centers, leasing offices, or others that help ensure a successful building design and operation.

FOCUSED TOD NODES AND INTERSECTIONS

TOD Districts are high-activity, pedestrian-oriented centers comprised of a mix of retail, dining, and entertainment uses within individual buildings, parcels and blocks. However, rather than having retail and dining uses be required at every site with frontage along Black Rock Turnpike or Commerce Drive, they should be required at the corners of prominent intersections and areas with high levels of pedestrian activity, as shown in Figure ##(10?). The node located near the station parking lot anticipates a future pedestrian bridge across Ash Creek. This location would be a prime spot for dining or entertainment uses. Along Kings Highway and Ash Creek Boulevard, retail, dining, and other commercial uses should be required at key gateways to the Fairfield Metro station. The corners where Black Rock Turnpike crosses Commerce Drive and Ash Creek Boulevard and Black Rock Turnpike both serve as prominent gateways to the station area; these corners should also host commercial uses such as retail, dining, or entertainment. Many of these sites might also be appropriate for other commercial development, such as medical offices, service providers, and even office uses provided that buildings are designed with pedestrian-friendly design features including transparent windows and retail-ready features like higher ground floor heights.

In limited instances that are outside of the priority locations in Figure ## (10?), ground-floor residential units and an all-residential building may be appropriate. Higher ceiling heights should be encouraged to allow for future conversion to retail or services.
Throughout the station area, the Town of Fairfield should continue to encourage office uses, whether in mixed-use buildings or as part of a dedicated office development, provided that the building design and layout follow Fairfield's design guidelines for the station area and promote a walkable district. When multiple buildings are developed as part of the same project, commercial uses should form at least 30% of the total land use mix. The station parking lot and areas immediately adjacent to the station are top priorities for office development.
FIGURE 10: Map of preferred locations for focused retail, dining, and entertainment uses or other street-friendly non-residential uses.
Require Residential Open Space

Due to the increased density of development envisioned in the station area and the goal of creating a walkable, attractive district, projects that include residential units in the station area should include usable open space at a rate of at least 15% of the parcel area. Area within the required setbacks may contribute to this minimum if appropriate amenities are provided. Usable open space that meets this minimum requirement can be flexible, provided it meets a standard definition of area that is not enclosed in a structure and that is able to be occupied for recreation. Usable open space can include landscaped lawns and other green spaces or hardscapes, but can also include balconies, roof decks, or porches.

In order to promote a high-quality public realm and streetscape, the Town may request that a portion of this area be designated as public open space where the TOD area framework diagram indicates a priority location for public plazas, pedestrian connections, or green spaces.

Revise Commercial Parking Requirements

EQUALIZE DINING AND RETAIL PARKING REQUIREMENTS

As the market study indicated, encouraging additional dining, entertainment, and retail uses in the Fairfield Metro station area will help contribute to building an amenity base and a lively, mixed-use environment that can better attract and support major office development. Currently, the high parking requirements for dining uses as compared to office and retail uses is discouraging investment in this desired growth sector by complicating conversion or re-tenanting of spaces from retail to dining or vice versa and encouraging excessive amounts of off-street parking. By equalizing the dining parking requirement in the Fairfield Metro station area with the retail parking requirement at 1 parking space for every 250 square feet of the use, the Town could address these issues and allow for seamless adjustments to uses. Current office parking requirements are 1 space for every 333 square feet of the use.

ENCOURAGE SHARED PARKING

The Town could also consider going further when retail or dining uses are provided in the same building as other commercial or residential uses as part of a mixed-use development by allowing the parking requirement for all commercial uses to be 1 parking space for every 333 square feet of use. This would help account for the shared parking between different uses that happens as a part of mixed-use development and help encourage this desired building typology.

Parking Design and Function

ENHANCED LANDSCAPING BUFFERS

Fairfield has developed strong design standards within the TOD Park overlay to avoid the negative impacts parking has on the walkability and attractiveness of adjacent sidewalks. These include preventing off-street parking between a public street and the frontage of a building, locating off-street parking as much to the rear of buildings as possible, and providing at least a five-foot planting strip between public right-of-way or pedestrian walkways and parking areas. These design standards are all critical, but Fairfield can go further in the Fairfield Metro station area. When new surface parking lots are built in the TOD Park overlay, they should be landscaped and adequately screened so that they contribute to an attractive pedestrian environment in the station area and help promote sustainable stormwater management and a comfortable microclimate. The Town could add requirements to ensure trees are planted in the landscaped buffer between a parking area and public right-of-way at a rate of at least one tree for every 30 linear feet.
New surface parking lots could also be designed to comply with best practices in stormwater management by capturing the first inch of stormwater runoff on site and including features such as swales, rain gardens, or tree trenches. Design of stormwater capture could be subject to Commission approval, and could be waived in instances where the grade or site layout characteristics impose an undue burden.

Enhanced landscaping of parking lots through linear buffers, trees, and stormwater management features, could be applied to all surface parking lots over 75 spaces in size as well as all parking lots that abut a public right-of-way.

**PARKING STRUCTURE BUFFERS**

Similarly, the Town of Fairfield should ensure an active sidewalk and streetscape in the Fairfield Metro station area by ensuring that parking structures that abut a public street frontage with sidewalks contain active uses on the ground floor of the structure. These uses should provide a buffer along the public street and sidewalk by providing destinations for pedestrians and contributing to the mixed-use character of the station area. Active uses should be a permitted principal use in the district and be provided along the structure frontage, exclusive of circulation space, to a minimum depth of 20 feet.

**Parking Requirement Alternatives**

**CAR SHARING SERVICES**

New and evolving technologies for vehicles are likely to have significant effects on how parking performs in both the Fairfield Metro and Fairfield Downtown station areas, as well as how the Town can ensure that land use recommendations support walkable environments and multi-modal, sustainable transportation choices. One such technology is car sharing services like Zipcar that allow members to rent vehicles on a short-term basis for their personal use. Car sharing services are most successful when located in areas with high rates of walkability and transit service—areas just like the station areas. They are a significant amenity in TOD and can significantly reduce parking demand when provided as part of a development.

Currently, car share services exist in Fairfield on the campus of Fairfield University. The Town should encourage the expansion of car share services, potentially by offering low-cost spaces in Town-owned parking lots, such as at the Fairfield Downtown station, for car share to operate. The Town can also encourage car share services as part of new development by reducing overall parking requirements in return for providing car share spaces on-site. As an example, some other communities reduce the overall number of parking spaces required by a rate of 4 spaces for every 1 car share provided on-site.

**ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING**

Fairfield is also monitoring how electric vehicles, and the need to provide accommodations for charging electric vehicles, are likely to be a part of future parking needs for development in the station areas. While monitoring the market and technology for greater understanding of how electric vehicles and their charging needs are likely to evolve, the Town should be proactive about ensuring that new parking lots and structures incorporate electric vehicle charging stations and that more broadly, are electric vehicle ready by including electrical conduit. Parking structures are particularly important because of the cost of retrofitting with conduit and other necessary changing components; parking structures require a higher level of scrutiny at this time than parking lots or areas because of this challenge.

Peer communities are beginning to adopt requirements for Level 2 Electric Vehicle Service Equipment, based on industry standards, in parking structures for accessory parking and for commercial parking where parking is the
principal use. The Trademark I development already includes 4 electric vehicle charging stations. The Town of Fairfield should consider requirements that parking structures provide electrical capacity capable of supporting Level 2 Electric Vehicle Service Equipment to at least 20% of parking spaces, and that 5% of parking spaces in a parking structure have operational level Electric Vehicle Service Equipment installed. Beyond this minimum requirement and anticipating strong trends in the adoption of electric vehicles, the Town should encourage developments to include new parking structures to provide electrical capacity capable of supporting Level 2 Electric Vehicle Service Equipment in as many spaces as feasible.

**JOINT PARKING USAGE**

Currently, the underlying DCD zoning for the Fairfield Metro station area is not a district eligible for joint usage of parking. Joint usage, where required parking is provided on a nearby site an easy walk from a use but not on the same parcel as the use, is an important feature of transit-oriented development and promoting a cohesive district.

In addition to adding the DCD to the districts eligible for joint usage of parking, the Town should consider other reforms to allow this strategy to work for more properties. They include expanding the radius for joint usage of parking to 1000’, representing an easy walking distance of less than two blocks, and not requiring properties with joint usage of parking to be abutting provided they are within the maximum radius.

**FURTHER PARKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Town staff and the owner of the Trademark I mixed-use development in the Fairfield Metro station area have kept detailed records of parking utilization. The initial data from this project show that actual parking utilization is approximately one space per unit. The Town currently requires one parking space for every bedroom in a residential dwelling project, or 1.25 spaces per unit, whichever is less overall, more than Trademark I actually needs. The Town should continue to track the utilization of parking in TOD developments over time to determine whether reduced demand and shared parking opportunity merit reducing the overall parking requirement.

A related strategy would be to consider creating a second tier of parking requirements for large projects, where parking spaces below a designated threshold of 75 parking spaces for a residential use would be determined by the existing requirement, and any spaces after would be determined at a reduced rate of 1 parking space for every unit. This reduction would help allow for greater sharing of parking in larger projects, as well as reflect the fact that vacancy has a larger effect on parking demand in larger projects.

Similarly, Fairfield’s current bicycle parking requirement of one space per unit could be revised for larger projects. This could either take the form of a breakpoint, such as once a project has provided 50 bicycle parking spaces there would no longer be any requirement for further bicycle parking spaces, or could take the form of a tiered requirement, where 1 bicycle parking space per unit is required for the first 25 units, 1 space for every two units for the next 24 units, 1 space for every 3 units for the next 27 units, and 1 space for every 4 units thereafter.
Downtown Station Land Use and Development Policy Recommendations

Downtown Fairfield is the historic center of Town and location of its original train station. The area contains a mix of significant office buildings, civic institutions, and retail and dining destinations. The Post Road corridor carries significant vehicle traffic and is flanked by much of downtown’s retail. In recent years, downtown has emerged as a regional dining destination.

The existing character, walkability, and lively uses of downtown are prized by Fairfield residents. All of these characteristics are also the building blocks for transit-oriented development. The market study results found that downtown has a much stronger amenity base than Fairfield Metro for new development, and could continue to support additional retail and dining uses. However, downtown lacks significant sites within an easy walking radius of the station for large-scale development, particularly for major office uses.

The study looked at how transit-oriented development might proceed on a limited basis around the Fairfield Downtown station. It examined opportunities for infill development at a scale that fits well with the existing context and that serves Town goals for a walkable downtown area. It also looked at how, over the long-term, significant transit-oriented development might occur on large sites like the Exide property and potentially the Town-owned station parking lot. The public engagement process determined that community members are most interested in continuing to promote small-scale, infill development that would help downtown thrive as a walkable community destination.

Adjust Height Maximums and Floor-to-Floor Heights

Currently, the underlying CDBD zoning allows for up to 5-story buildings or a total building height of 50 feet, whichever is less. In practice, with modern construction techniques and the desirability of taller ground floor heights to accommodate retail and dining space, this means that buildings will not achieve 5 stories. Modifying the height limit to be capped at 4 stories, but allowing 52 feet in overall height, would allow for the tall floor to floor heights required for high-value spaces while maintaining the overall appearance of building massing and height to a limit that closely matches the existing context. The Town could also require a minimum height of 15 feet for the ground floor story to ensure that buildings are designed to best serve retail and dining uses as envisioned.

Require Ground-Floor Commercial or Public-Serving Uses

The Downtown station area currently contains areas of DI, CDBD, and DCD zoning districts. The CDBD, which covers the core of the downtown and is unique to that area, is part of a set of designed business districts that allow a mix of uses with strong form requirements.

REVISE RESIDENTIAL FLOOR AREA AND GROUND-FLOOR OFFICE USE

Currently, residential uses are allowed in the CDBD provided they are not located on a ground floor, do not exceed 50 percent of the floor area of the building, and occupy no more than two stories of a building. The public workshops that were part of the TOD planning process, as well as study analysis, confirmed that the first requirement is important to the downtown area. The Town should continue to require non-residential uses on the ground floor of buildings in the CDBD.
Similar to the Fairfield Metro station area, the other two restrictions on upper floor residential floor area inhibit the development of mixed-use buildings with retail, dining, or other permitted uses on the ground floor and three floors of residential uses above. Removing this restriction will enable more infill development in the Downtown station area and additional housing options serving town needs.

Another means of encouraging appropriate reinvestment would be to allow business and other professional offices on the ground floor of a building in the CDBD, provided that the building is not located on the Post Road and complies with the requirements for building form and transparency that are in the design guidelines of the district. This could allow more flexibility in attracting office users, particularly smaller office uses, to the district on side streets and other locations without frontage on the Post Road retail corridor.

**Revise Floor Area Ratio**

Floor area ratio, or FAR, is a measure of the gross floor area of a building in comparison to the size of its parcel of land. Currently, the CDBD has a FAR limit of 2, where the total building floor area may not exceed twice the size of the parcel. The CDBD currently has a maximum lot coverage of 90%, so this requirement functionally means that a building developed at the maximum lot coverage can be only 2 stories tall, rather than the 5 stories currently permitted in the district or the 4 stories recommended as a new maximum building height as part of this study.

The study recommends increasing the FAR limit to 3 to enable development of buildings in the 3- to 4-story range. This scale is fully consistent with existing building scale and the goals of a walkable, vital downtown.

**Ensure Consistent Minimum Housing Unit Sizes**

The Town should ensure that minimum housing unit sizes in underlying zoning districts, whether CDBD or DCD, are consistent across the Town of Fairfield and provide clear policy. The current accessory unit requirement sets the minimum unit size at 450 square feet, an appropriate and market-supported size for households seeking a compact, affordable dwelling. The minimum size should be modified in the DCBD and DCD to match this. The housing market study indicated significant demand for smaller unit sizes to serve single-person households, particularly those occupied by young adults where a smaller unit can offer more affordable housing options in a loft-style studio. Downtown has the excellent, varied amenity base to support such units as part of a walkable district.

**Parking Utilization and Performance**

The Town should continue to collect information on residential parking utilization and availability in the CDBD to determine whether it may be appropriate to adopt the TOD Park overlay requirement of 1 space per bedroom or 1.25 per unit, whichever is less for residential uses in downtown. The Downtown station area has the strongest walkable character of any area of Fairfield, with shopping, dining, community uses, schools, and workplaces all located in the area. It also has the same level of train service as the Fairfield Metro station and on-street parking is regulated. This enables more trips to be carried out without a car, or by parking a car in a single location and walking to multiple destinations. It thus may be appropriate to reduce commercial parking requirements to better represent this context in the future.
Consistent TOD Form Regulations and Policy Goals

BELOW MARKET RATE AND ACCESSIBLE UNITS

A number of recommendations to improve the form of development and meet larger Town policy goals for affordable housing could also be applied in the Downtown station area. The Town could consider including the CDBD as a district where the requirements for increased Below Market Rate units apply. Similarly, the Town could also require or encourage additional accessible units to be built as part of new development in the Downtown station area in the same ratio as the Fairfield Metro station area.

PARKING AND OPEN SPACE DESIGN

The earlier recommendations to improve the design and function of parking lots and structures are also all appropriate in the Downtown station area to continue to contribute to an active pedestrian environment in the station area and help promote sustainable stormwater management. These include:

- Requiring landscaped buffers around new surface parking lots that abut a public right-of-way to provide at least one tree for every 30 linear feet of buffer.
- Requiring new surface parking lots to capture the first inch of stormwater runoff on site through such features as swales, rain gardens, tree trenches, or others as appropriate.
- Requiring active uses along the ground floor of a parking structure that abut a public street frontage to a depth of at least 20 feet, excluding circulation

Other suggestions for parking regulations that could help fulfill the Town’s goals for the station area include promoting car-sharing services and accommodations for electric vehicle charging stations. While the smaller parcel sizes in the CDBD mean that new development will be smaller in scale than in Fairfield Metro, development in the downtown station area should similarly be eligible for reduced bicycle parking requirements for larger projects.

The Town may also consider amending the CDBD so that projects that include residential units provide usable open space equal to at least 15% of the parcel area.
Appendices

Real Estate Market Analysis: Office, Retail and Dining, and Residential

- Office and Retail Market Study.pdf
- An Analysis of Residential Market Potential.pdf
- Methodology Target Market Tables.pdf

Infrastructure Capacity Findings

- TripGenerationAnalysis.pdf
- TripGenerationAnalysis–Attachments.pdf

Fiscal Impact Analysis Findings

- Fiscal Impact Comparisons.pdf