Neighborhood Connectivity

Concerns were raised in the Steering Committee meeting about neighborhood connectivity. Landscape will play a role in enhancing connectivity by providing visual sequences along the streets and potentially in the rebuilding of some of the overpasses over I-84, which are scheduled for redesign. Married to the ideas of landscape connectivity will be the role that open space will play in the future development of NP.

Recommendations for Further Study

- → Based on market research, develop a palette of desired landscape types
- → Begin research and coordination on the I-84 initiative

Develop a district landscape strategy that will tie into initiatives underway. Such initiatives could include the Upper Albany CSO (Combined Sewer Overflow) separation or the I-84 renewal project and/or other Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) projects.

Riverside Park

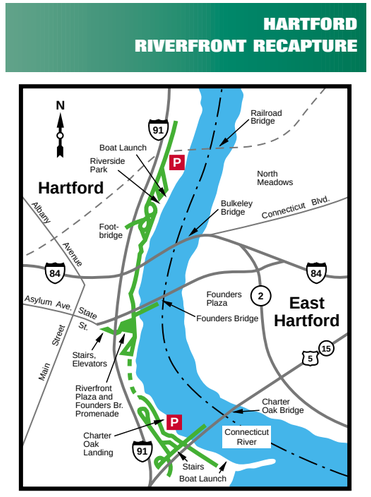
The park offers something unique in a northeastern city with its bucolic views and sweeping vistas of the Connecticut River and its adjacency to Downtown Hartford. It offers amenities like a boat launch and a river walk, as well as impressive groves of trees.

Access is a primary issue if Riverside Park is to be an amenity to the Downtown.There is one vehicular access point which is far north of the study area itself. The two other access points are the Downtown amphitheater connected by the Mortenson Riverfront Plaza and the pedestrian footbridge over I-91 at Pequot Street. Neither of these two points offers easy bike circulation because of steep grades and the presence of steps.

Access to the park for recreation and bike commuting should be a priority of the plan. Efforts by Riverfront Recapture (http://www.riverfront.org/) outline the current bike trail configuration.

Recommendations for Further Study:

- → Look at a topographic solution/amenity to retrofitting the footbridge for access to the river
- → Consider a new pedestrian/bike connections at I-84 crossing
- → Program river path for a more pleasant connection
- → Work with Riverfront Recapture for more information gathering and coordination



Green Infrastructure Opportunities

The MDC manages the water and sewer issues that are currently being monitored. Several actions and projects are relevant to the DN/DW work, such as the North Meadows CSO overflow basin north of Riverside Park. The other significant action is the separation of the CSO in Upper Albany northwest of the study area.

Future developments in DN/DW will have to manage stormwater in a way as to not impact current efforts and limits on discharges. Standard baseline issues such as highway runoff/air contamination are prevalent and should be part of an sustainable approach.

Recommendations for Further Study:

- → Consider how an intervention at the highway overpass could perform as green infrastructure (e.g. stormwater management, as well a particulate knockdown from car emissions next to the highway).
- → Further exploration of the North Meadows detention pond connections and opportunities
- → Investigate related MDC projects and their relationship to the project site
- → Investigate CSO/SWO existing and proposed locations and understand the potential/opportunities for natural stormwater attenuation interventions.

What is Combined Sewer Overflow? Combined sewer systems are sewers that are designed to collect rainwater runoff, domestic sewage, and industrial wastewater in the same pipe. Most of the time, combined sewer systems transport all of their wastewater to a sewage treatment plant, where it is treated and then discharged to a water body. During periods of heavy rainfall or snowmelt, however, the wastewater volume in a combined sewer system can exceed the capacity of the sewer system or treatment plant. Such systems can overflow occasionally and discharge excess wastewater directly to nearby streams, rivers, or other water bodies.

These overflows, called combined sewer overflows (CSOs), contain not only stormwater but also untreated human and industrial waste, toxic materials, and debris. They are a major water pollution concern for the approximately 772 cities in the U.S. that have combined sewer systems.*

*http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/home.cfm?program_id=5

Transportation Network

An improved street network—one that offers a seamless transition across the interstate—is necessary for the successful redevelopment of Downtown North/Downtown West.

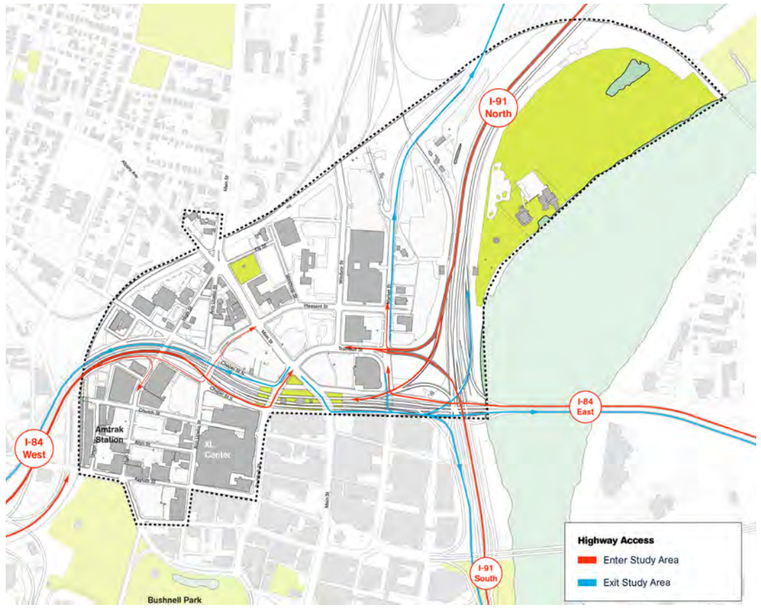
Transportation Network

Downtown North is easily accessible, yet its streets offer little to draw people. Improving streets is paramount.

Highway Access

Historically, the interstates have disrupted physical urban continuity of the City of Hartford. The study area was originally severed from the Connecticut River with the construction of I-91, and later the downtown was divided half with the addition of I-84. Despite the negative effects of the interstates, they have become crucial in providing access to and through the City of Hartford.

Our study area is fortunate to have immediate highway access as it sits at the intersection of the two major interstates. This should be considered a locational advantage for certain uses, such as large-scale retail or office. However, residential uses may need to be buffered between the interstate and alternative uses.



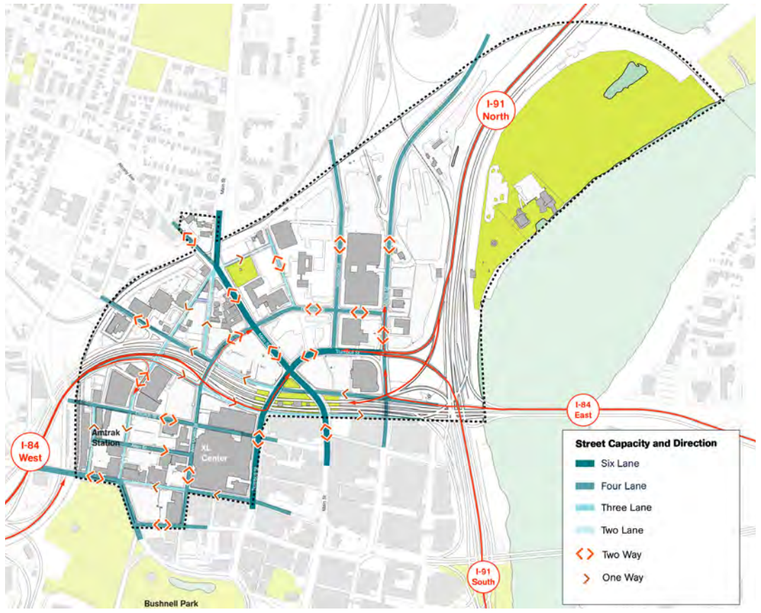
The diagram illustrates the access (both entering and exiting) to the city from the interstate system.

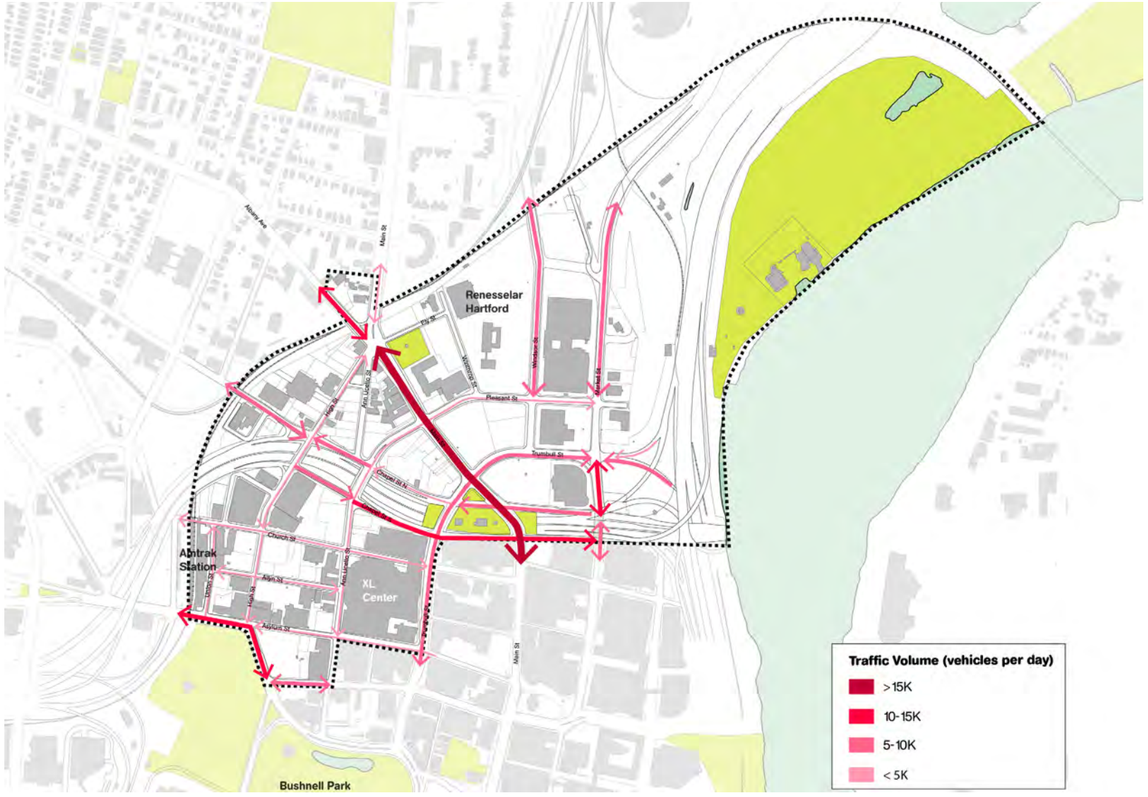
Street Capacity

Many of the streets in the study area are oversized for the level of traffic that they carry, in particular streets such as Market, Pleasant, and Trumbull. These oversized streets have the potential to be retrofitted to either shrink the curb-to-curb distance by widening sidewalks or by implementing bike lanes or on-street parking where possible.

Most streets are two-way with the exception of the highway access roads, High Street, and Asylum Street in Downtown West. The difficulty of circulation lies less in the presence of one-way streets and more due to the condition of "superblocks" in Downtown North.

Market Street provides direct access to the study area. The 2010 Downtown Circulation study proposed alternatives to alleviate the congestion at the Market Street and Morgan Street intersection.





Traffic Volume

Traffic volume in the study area is moderately heavy; the majority of that traffic is limited to a few select streets, largely Main Street (the primary north-south connection) and the highway access roads (N. Chapel and S. Chapel streets).

Connecticut Department of Transportation (CT DOT) 2012 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) counts reveal that the highest traffic volume is on Main Street between Morgan and Pleasant streets where an average of 17,000 vehicles travel per day. Additional streets that have high traffic volumes include

1. Asylum Street (15,200 ADT),
2. Morgan Street South (13,000 ADT),
3. Ford Street (12,800 ADT), and
4. Market Street (11,300 ADT).

Some of the assumptions and general observations of the existing conditions reveal that:

- → Main Street carries the highest traffic volume in the study area. At six lanes wide, it also has the most travel lanes.
- → Despite their size, some of the larger roads actually carry a relatively small number of vehicles per day, supporting the assumption that some of these roads are overbuilt and could go on a road diet.
- → There is a heavy volume of traffic at Market Street and Morgan Street. Previous recommendations from the Downtown Circulation study have identified this as a priority project.

Sidewalk Condition

The sidewalks in the study area vary greatly. Most sidewalks lack street tree presence; they are often undersized and in poor condition.

- → The smaller scale streets in Downtown West often have wider sidewalks to accommodate a higher number of pedestrians.
- → The small sidewalks in the area east of Main Street reflect a lack of prioritization for pedestrian activity. Their small scale combined with a lack of destinations are a deterrent to pedestrians.
- → Main Street has wide sidewalks; however, it is not an active pedestrian street per se. The exception to this is the area near Albany Avenue.

Main Street has broad sidewalks, but no street tree coverage. The sidewalks are often broken or in poor condition.

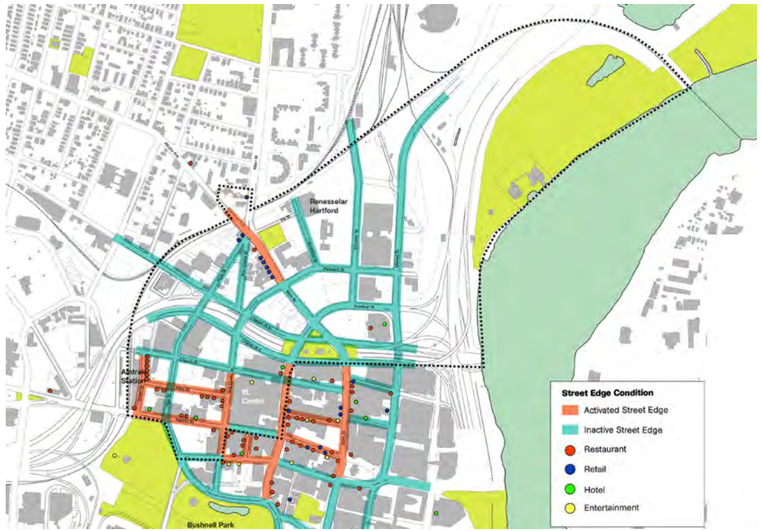
Market Street's sidewalks are narrow with a consistent tree lawn. They are more suburban in character.

Street Activity

Street activity has the ability to change one's perception of a place. Buildings that address the street and draw in the pedestrian with visual variety are immediately more engaging than those that lack a relationship with the street. Such environments fail to become destinations for residents and visitors.

The character of the streets in the study area vary greatly. Many of the streets in Downtown North function primarily as through streets, lacking any streetfront presence, and are generally void of an active street edge. This is largely the result of the presence of I-84 and the renewal of the area decades ago that removed, but never replaced the urban fabric. The only street that maintains a neighborhood character is Main Street, between Pleasant Street and Albany Avenue, which has a series of local retailers, and the Capital Preparatory Magnet School.

The majority of the activity along the streets in the study area occurs in Downtown West, particularly during the evening. The scale and concentration of uses along these streets inherently makes them more appealing.



The diagram shows the disparity of active uses between Downtown West and the rest of the study area.

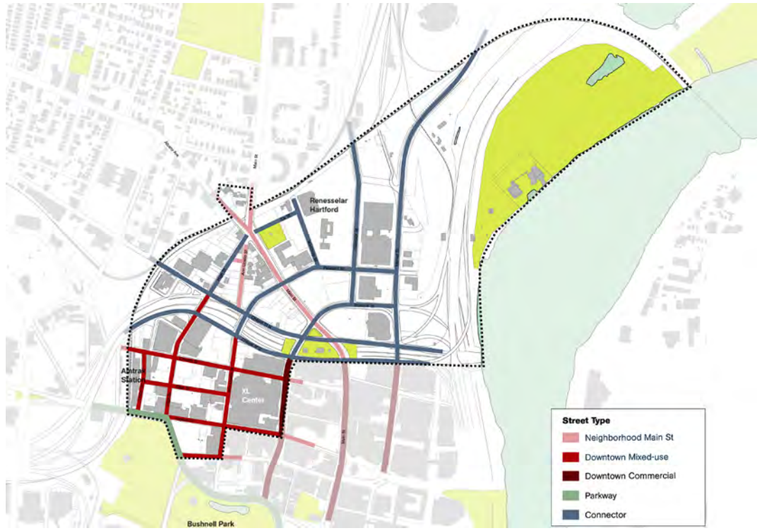
Asylum Street (pictured at right) in Downtown West has unique local shops and restaurants that create a lively street.

Street Character

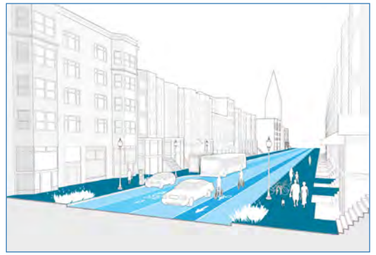
Due to the fragmented nature of the study area—largely the result of the divisive presence of the interstate and urban renewal—the character of the streets varies dramatically between the Downtown North and Downtown West.

As previously mentioned, Downtown North is characterized by oversized streets with an excess carrying capacity for the amount of traffic in that area. Downtown West, however, has a more traditional street network that remains active due to consistent streetfront presence and a mix of uses. A challenge for this project will be to make this disparity more seamless, where the transitions between the areas are subtle and a sense of continuity is apparent.

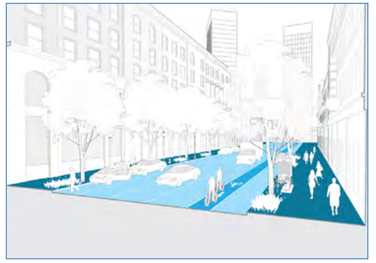
Street Typologies
The following street types (p. 31-32) can be used as prototypical streets for the master plan. They not only are able to characterize some of the existing streets, but present ambitions for the future street conditions in the study area. These typologies will be reintroduced in the future planning phases. Observations of the street character in the study area.



Downtown Commercial
Containing a mix of mid- and high-rise office buildings, the streets serve as cultural destinations and connect with highways and transit hubs that serve a metro region. These streets play a key role in the regional movement of people, and their designs must support high user volumes.

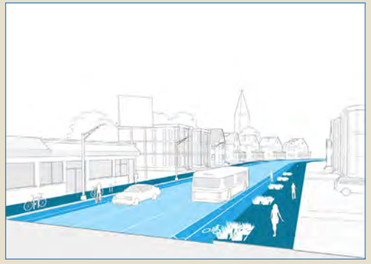


Downtown Mixed-use
Serving a more diverse mix of uses, these streets generally support a lively melange of retail, residential, office, and entertainment uses, creating many of a city's most dynamic public spaces. They also must support high levels of walking, bicycling, and transit, in addition to short-term vehicle parking.



Neighborhood Main Street
Neighborhood Main Streets are located in the heart of a residential part of the city. Characterized by dense single-floor commercial and retail use, they are often concentrated in an area only a few blocks long. They are the nucleus of the neighborhood economies, providing residents with daily essentials, locally owned shops, and amenities.

Neighborhood Connector
Neighborhood Connectors traverse several neighborhoods and form the backbone of a multimodal street network. They provide continuous walking and bicycle routes and still accommodate major bus routes and vehicle flow. They are essential to the flow of people between neighborhoods.



Parkway
Parkways are typically characterized by long uninterrupted stretches running parallel open space systems. Parkways run along uninterrupted stretches of open spaces and have fewer intersections. While this makes them convenient for motor vehicles, it can make it difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross.

- The Downtown West neighborhood lends itself to the Downtown Mixed-use street typology. While it carries a fair amount of capacity, it also has an active street life at all hours of the day and is a mix of uses.
- Trumbull Street is the east-west border where the downtown streets lend themselves more to the Downtown Commercial typology.
- Main Street is a focus and destination for local residents and already has an appropriate neighborhood scale similar to the Neighborhood Main Street.
- The streets that prove the most difficult for creating a sense of place are the oversized and poorly animated streets in Downtown North, such as Market Street and Pleasant Street.
- Future development in the area should consider how these streets might be activated to make the area a place that people will want to visit rather than pass through.

The existing street frontage along Main Street is indicative of the local retail and scale typical of Neighborhood Main Streets.

Market Street is indicative of a Neighborhood Connector street; however, it currently lacks amenities that might make it a pleasant transition between neighborhoods.

In Downtown West, Asylum Street provides a variety of uses and a scale that is similar to the Downtown Mixed-use street type.

The State Capitol building sits in the center of Bushnell Park, which runs along the southern edge of Asylum Street and Jewell Street, acting as a primary parkway.

Planning Strategy

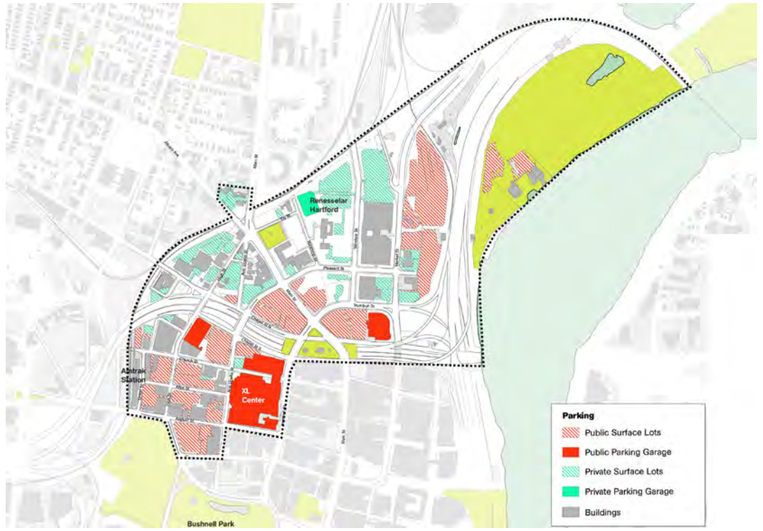
An examination of character, use, parcel conditions and proximities between these areas begins to frame how future planning may be approached.

Inventory and Assessment

Evaluating parcels based on their use, availability, ownership, and proximity to existing development help define where future development may occur.

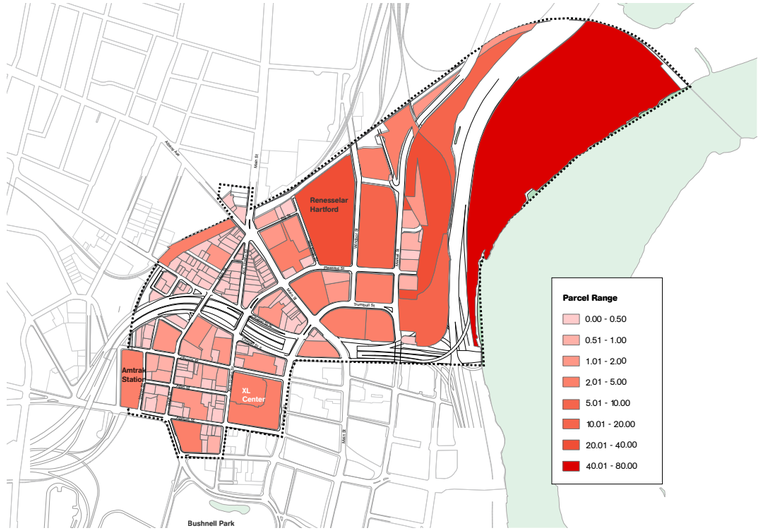
Parking Inventory

The amount of parking presents an opportunity for significant redevelopment. The majority of parking consists of surface lots, some of which are striped, while others act as overflow parking for large events. There are approximately 9,356 off-street parking spaces within the study area. This figure includes both private and public surface lots and garages. Of these, 7,016 are spaces in garages or lots available to the public, 2,340 are private spaces in garages or lots. There are four garages within the study area that are available to the public. City owned surface parking lots should be considered when evaluating the development potential of selected areas.



Parking Inventory: An initial analysis of the number and type of parking spaces can begin to illuminate where development opportunities may occur.

Parking Spaces	Surface	Garage	Total
Public	5,010	2,006	7,016
Private	1,542	798	2,340
Total	6,552	2,804	9,356



Parcel Size: An examination of the the parcel sizes within the study area reveal that larger scale development opportunities are more likely along Market Street, and Pleasant Street and Trumbull Street between Main and Market Street.

Parcel Ranges

An analysis of the parcel ranges in the study area demonstrates the disparity in parcel sizes. Downtown West's parcels range from smaller half-acre infill sites to mid-size parcels generally used for an institutional or civic use, such as the Post Office and XL Center. The neighborhood fabric of the area surrounding Main Street, Ann Uccello Street and High Street reveals, through its intricate make up of parcels, the scale of the neighborhood that it once was.

The mark of Urban Renewal planning is evident in the area between Main Street and Market Street where Travelers Insurance and Rennselaer Hartford are located. Some of these larger parcels are under city control and are therefore good candidates for redevelopment. The largest parcel in the study area boundary is Riverside Park, which of course will not be subject to development, but rather landscape improvements.