

City of Hartford: Principles For Transit-Oriented Development

New Britain-Hartford Busway Station Area Planning Project

Prepared for the Hartford Station Area Planning Municipal Advisory Committee

Prepared by Crosby | Schlessinger | Smallridge, LLC and the Capitol Region Council of Governments

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Transit-Oriented Development Principles

What is Transit-Oriented Development and Why Consider It?¹

Transit is an important component of life in any metropolitan area, linking jobs, housing, recreation, and services. Compact, mixed-use development goes hand-in-hand with transit systems, because both serve pedestrians and reduce auto-dependency. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many cities were built up around transit systems of railroads, subways, and/or streetcars. By the 1890's throughout greater Hartford, the region had an extensive and excellent system of streetcars and rail service. At first, residents were loyal to public transportation and were reluctant to accept the automobile despite the fact that the American automobile industry got its start in Hartford.² Nevertheless, interest in the automobile grew and by 1930, automobiles had replaced the region's streetcar system as the dominant mode of transportation.

Across the nation in the 1970s, problems such as traffic congestion, suburban sprawl, and downtown decay generated new interest in Transit Oriented Development (TOD). Some smaller-sized cities have made remarkable progress in the area of TOD in recent years. In the 1970s, Portland, Oregon embarked upon a strategy to counter the forces of suburban sprawl, investing heavily in the transit system and focusing high-density development in the downtown area and around light-rail stations and bus routes. As a result, Portland has become one of the most transit-friendly cities in the country. The downtown is a vibrant commercial center, and the city is becoming a popular tourist destination.

In the Hartford region, buses carry many workers to their jobs, and many city and some suburban residents use the bus system in off-peak hours for a variety of other trips. Since 1997, ridership in the region has been on an upward trend, even though most routes follow older development patterns. CROCOG completed a Regional Transit Strategy in 2001 and is certain that there is unmet transit need in the region that can be tapped, especially if transit operations better reflect current development patterns.

With the planned construction of the New Britain/Hartford busway³, there is an opportunity to use the new transit line as a framework for TOD. The busway stations could be surrounded with compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly villages, townhouse neighborhoods, or office clusters. Although such development would not eliminate the need for cars, it would increase the opportunity and the feasibility of taking transit for some people, particularly for the commute to work, and thus reduce today's dependency on the automobile.

¹ This explanation of TOD is an extract from chapter 5 of the *Livable Communities Toolkit: A Best Practices Manual for Metropolitan Regions* prepared by Abeles Phillips Preiss & Shapiro, Inc. for the Capitol Region Council of Governments in 2002. The complete chapter is available at www.crcog.org/publications.

² Weaver, Glen. *Hartford: An Illustrated History of Connecticut's Capital*. Hartford: Windsor Publications, 1982. Albert Pope started the Pope Manufacturing Company in Hartford in 1890, and in 1895, Pope and his colleagues produced their first gasoline-powered automobile, the "Pope Hartford". By 1897, Pope unwisely shifted his focus from gasoline to electric automobiles, and Detroit soon took over Hartford's role as the center of gasoline-powered automobile production in the U.S.

³ A "busway" is defined as a type of rapid transit that functions similarly to a light rail system. It follows a fixed, exclusive guideway that is not accessible to other vehicles. The busway vehicles are rubber-tire, like a car, not rail. Busway stations are in fixed locations that are more widely spaced than on-street bus stops, and buses would run on a more frequent schedule than local buses, more akin to a subway system.

Many transit systems are designed in a "park-and-ride" format, where a transit line is superimposed upon a predominantly auto-oriented landscape. Although the park-and-ride format is an improvement because it increases transportation options, the transit-oriented option is even better because it can combine land use and transportation making efficient use of both. In the transit-oriented option, land use, development, and street patterns are actually re-organized in order to encourage walking to and from the station and to concentrate development where infrastructure can support it. The station area is not just a parking lot, but an activity center and neighborhood node. Emphasis is placed on architectural detailing and facades, streetscape amenities, landscaping, and parks to create a sense of place and high quality of life.

Although transit does not unilaterally redefine market and development patterns, it can serve as a framework for new and clustered development *when coordinated with TOD planning and zoning techniques*. Transit serves pedestrians. If the areas around the station are zoned for higher-density, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly development, then pedestrians can be enticed to walk from the transit station to their destination or from their point of origin to the station. A TOD plan would:

- 1 Provide real alternatives to driving and reduce auto-dependency;
- 2 Generate pedestrian activity that can support retail stores (if the scale of development is sizable);
- 3 Create opportunities for infill development and redevelopment in underutilized areas;
- 4 Generate more market support for higher-density housing, in part by reducing auto-dependency for commuters.

Much of the literature on TOD has focused on rail systems. However, a busway — with a dedicated right-of-way and fixed stops — would function like a rail transit system and therefore contains the elements essential for a TOD market response: a fixed place in space that developers can count on and fast, convenient service that riders can count on.

What Role do these TOD Principles have in Municipal Land Use Policy?

The New Britain/Hartford busway will run from downtown Hartford along the Amtrak right-of-way, running just through or near the Asylum Hill and the Parkville neighborhoods of Hartford, the Elmwood section of West Hartford, the northwestern areas of Newington, and along the east side of New Britain and into downtown New Britain. Following this path, the busway will cut through extremely different neighborhoods, built with a wide range of land uses and densities. Nearly all areas along the planned New Britain/Hartford busway have already been developed, but there are opportunities for infill development and intensification, through brownfield reclamation, development of vacant lots or parking lots, and/or redevelopment. In each community through which the busway runs, the character of TOD would have to be tailored to the local conditions while preserving standards essential for TOD. These principles are guidelines that should assist localities in their efforts to ensure the transportation investment provides economic and community benefits at the same time local land use practices support the public's transportation investment.

The TOD Principles were prepared as the first step in a much more detailed area plan for seven of the stations. The intent was to provide some general information for all station areas so that even for those areas that do not have a full station area plan, some preliminary guidelines will exist. The seven station areas for which detailed plans were prepared are: Downtown New Britain, East and Cedar Streets (a combined plan encompassing both stations), New Park at Flatbush Avenue, Park Street, Sigourney at Aetna, and Union. The five stations for which only Principles were prepared are: East Main Street, Newington Junction, Elmwood, New Park at Kane Street, and the Legislative Office Building.

The Principles, along with the full station area plans, were prepared under the direction of Municipal Advisory Committees with technical assistance provided by the Capitol Region Council of Governments and a TOD consultant team led by the Crosby | Schlessinger | Smallridge. The committees consisted of municipal staff and elected officials as well as members of local boards, commission, and/or neighborhood/business associations. *A committee's adoption of the Principles does not in itself change local land use policies but does begin the discussion towards consideration of revised land use policies that are specific only to the ¼ to ½ mile radius around each station.* Actual policy change, such as amendments to Plans of Conservation and Development, zoning, capital improvements, or economic incentives will still need to go through local public processes.

An Introduction to General TOD Principles

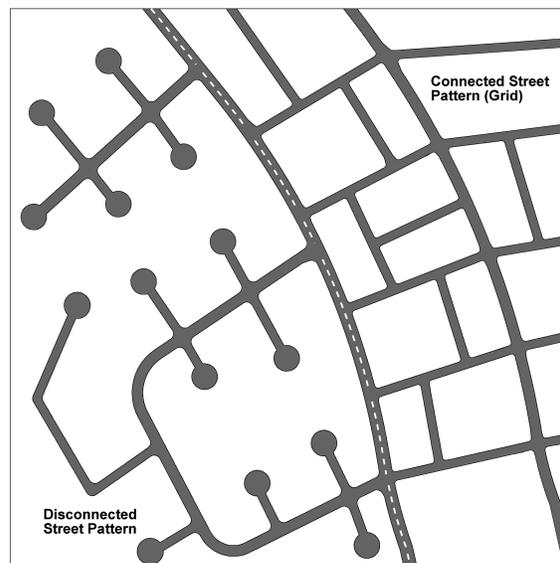
This Introduction section presents Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) principles generally applicable to the areas around rapid transit stations, such as the stations along the New Britain-Hartford Busway. There are two main categories of consideration in transit supportive assessments: Station Approach & Access and Station Area Development. Both of these apply **only** to the rapid transit area of influence, which is ¼ to ½ mile around a station, with the ¼ mile being of greatest importance. This standard is used because ½ mile around a station is approximately the comfortable walk distance to and from a station.

While these principles may contrast with other municipal development policies, policymakers and citizens should consider that Transit-Oriented Development policies would only be applied to very particular area(s) within a community. The premise is that a municipality crafts special development policies for the area because of the unique opportunities the rapid transit investment offers. TOD strives to coordinate a major investment of the public's resources in transportation with the use of land around the investment to make both more efficient.

These principles are presented as activities that should be considered in all station areas, and evaluated for appropriateness, but may not apply to all areas because of the particular characteristics of a station area. Following the introduction are specific transit-supportive ideas for the actual station areas themselves.

Station Approach & Access

- Provide direct pedestrian connections from surrounding neighborhoods such as that provided by a grid street system. The adjacent illustration shows two different approaches to street systems. A connected (grid) street system is one in which streets are continuous, or connect to other through streets, with no dead ends or cul-de-sacs. Pedestrians can take the easiest and most direct routes to the transit station and other destinations under the grid pattern.
- Create a safe walking environment (adequate sidewalk width, pedestrian scale lighting, designated crosswalks, and limited curb cuts – as illustrated in the attached prototypical sections).



- Consider implementing roadway sections provided in attached prototypical sections as one mechanism to help control vehicular speed and to better define areas for respective travel modes. Traffic calming techniques such as reducing the travel lane width and incorporating planting strips may also be helpful to balance the mix of transportation modes (walking, bicycling, motoring) that are likely to be utilized around a station.
- Consider incorporating access management techniques such as shared driveways and turning movement restrictions (e.g. right turn in/right turn out).
- Create gateways where appropriate to establish that one is entering a different, and transit-oriented, place.
- Pay attention to and examine pedestrian access at underpasses and overpasses. Walkways and stairs should provide direct and safe pedestrian access and clear lines of site between the street, station and platforms, with no blind corners and no dead ends.
- Provide adequate, safe vehicular and pedestrian access to new development around the stations.

Station Area Development

- Encourage development of mid to high density housing and/or commercial and office uses that create high-density employment.
- Discourage new heavy industrial or auto-oriented uses; encourage change of use from existing heavy industrial or auto-oriented uses. Auto-oriented uses include those uses such as auto sales and service, stores that specialize in large and/or bulk items, and other uses that are land intensive with low employment densities. People driving to a business in a station area do not make it “auto-oriented”. Transit-oriented development recognizes that businesses in the station area will need to rely on vehicular traffic as well as transit riders.
- Some light industrial uses can be transit supportive if they have the following characteristics: high employment density; no outdoor storage; buildings sited to face street, attractive street edge and pedestrian-friendly entrance for employees; loading and truck parking to back of site, screened from view from active pedestrian streets.
- Encourage commuter and neighborhood uses such as convenience stores, drycleaners, daycare, video rental and restaurants with take-out service immediately adjacent to the station.
- Create amenities (plazas, streetscape improvements, open space) to attract new transit-oriented development.
- Encourage development of active ground floor commercial uses to increase street level activity around stations.
- Explore joint development opportunities such as retail, office (public or private) or medium to high-density housing. Joint development is a type of development in which a public agency joins with a private developer or other public agency to bring about transit-supportive development, generally on the station site. Potential incentives to developers include cost savings such as shared costs for site preparation and land acquisition.
- To enliven pedestrian environment, site buildings at street edges

- Encourage shared parking as well as parking that is easily accessible on foot to many destinations so that customers can “park once and shop often”.
 - Encourage infill development to fill gaps in street edge.
 - Explore opportunities to change street patterns to provide better parcelization of larger properties.
 - Change parking regulations to provide both minimums (which may be less than that required in areas not as well served by transit) and maximums (for example, 5% above minimum) and shared parking incentives to encourage transit use and increase the density of development around the stations.
-

The TOD Principles for each of the station areas are based on examination at all stations of:

- Development opportunities, the market for TOD-related land uses, ownership patterns, available land and existing uses
- The physical environment including vehicular and pedestrian access and physical attributes/constraints
- The regulatory environment

The package for each municipality includes:

- A map of the existing zoning for the area encompassing each of the stations
- A map indicating housing density along the entire corridor
- A map indicating generalized land use along the entire corridor
- Guidelines for prototypical roadway sections

The package for each station area includes:

- A brief written description of the station area and the design principles
- An opportunities and constraints map of the station area
- A plan of the area within the quarter mile radius around the station illustrating the Design and Development Principles
- A proposed revised site plan for the station (Legislative Office Building, Parkville and Flatbush)
- A proposed Station Area Development Concept for vacant/underutilized land immediately adjacent to the station (New Park Avenue)

Union Station

Existing Conditions

The Union Station area is dominated by the existing station, a major highway interchange, Bushnell Park and large surface parking lots that provide strong opportunities for future redevelopment. As a result of several transportation initiatives, including this project, the Griffin Corridor busway and the Manchester busway, the proposed Springfield/New Haven commuter rail, the existing Amtrak and intercity bus services, and the highway interchange, the station area has excellent access. It is also conveniently located with respect to major downtown destinations including the Civic Center and other entertainment and retail venues as well as major employers. City initiatives to encourage downtown housing and other revitalization activities create the prospect for developing a lively pedestrian environment.

Existing connections to the north, east and west are inhospitable to pedestrians. However, the recently completed *A New Farmington Avenue* planning study includes conceptual plans for pedestrian improvements along Farmington Avenue and the *Asylum Hill Neighborhood Strategic Plan* outlines pedestrian improvements for Sigourney, Garden and Asylum Streets. The Farmington Avenue plan is moving towards the final design stage.

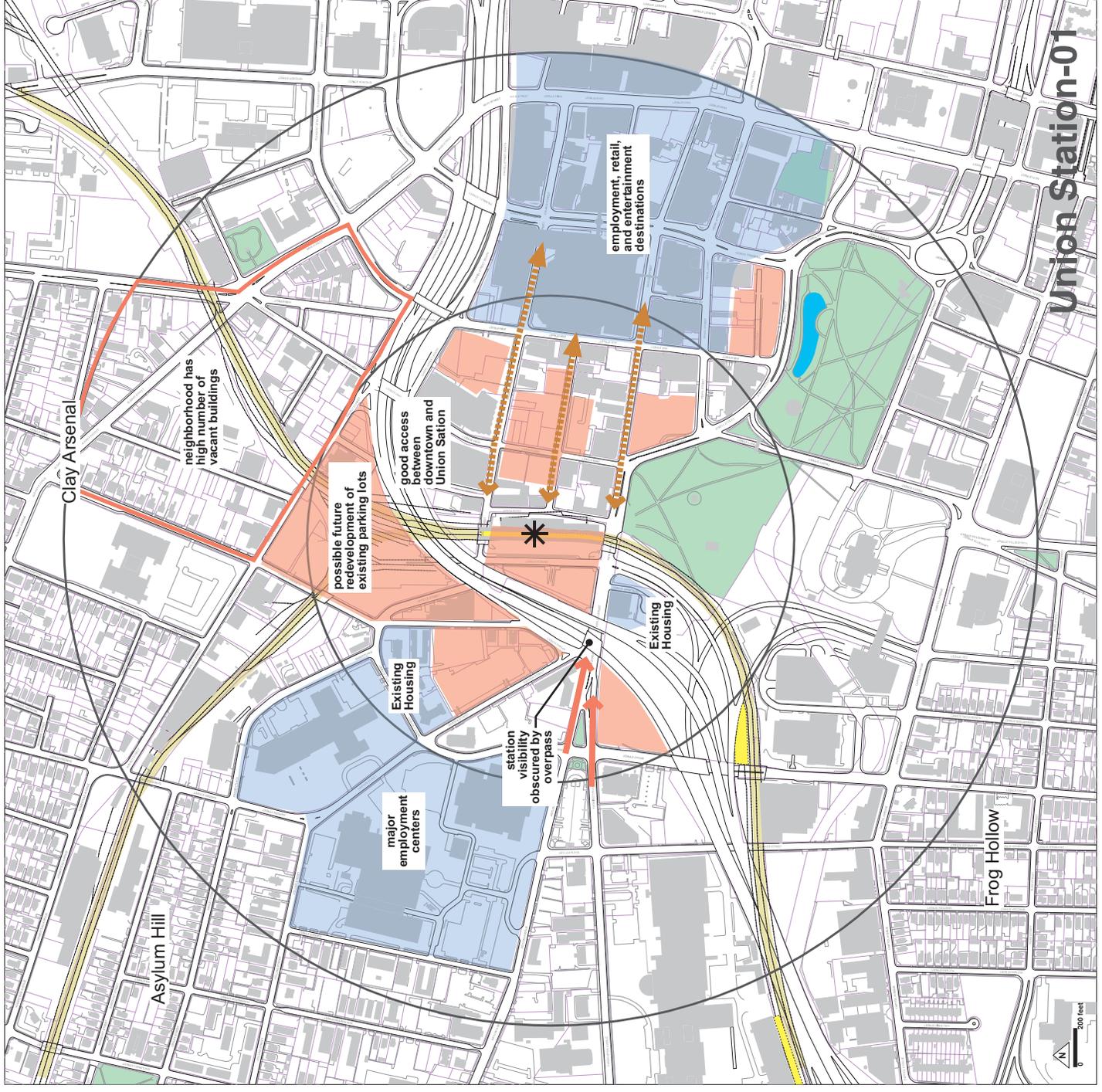
Southeast of I 84, the area within the ¼ mile radius is zoned C-1 Commercial. Northwest of I-84, the land is zoned C-2 Commercial and R-01 Residential/Office. These zones are generally consistent with TOD principles, in terms of both allowable uses and parking requirements. The C-1 and C-2 zones allow multi-family housing with no density restrictions, the R-01 allows up to 300 residents per acre (lot coverage, open space and FAR requirements would reduce the actual achievable densities). The City's planning department has drafted a proposed TOD overlay district that would further restrict auto-oriented uses and limit allowable off-street parking.

Design Principle Recommendations

The following recommendations, specific to the Union Station Area, are in addition to the general principles on pages 1 and 2, which apply to all of the stations:

1. Provide safe, attractive pedestrian connections to the station along Garden, Spring, Myrtle, Church and Asylum Streets from the Asylum Hill neighborhood to the west; along Asylum Street from downtown to the east and along Broad Street from Frog Hollow to the south (see attached prototypical roadway sections). Encourage the implementation of the pedestrian improvements recommended in *A New Farmington Avenue* and the *Asylum Hill Neighborhood Strategic Plan* described above.
2. Leverage the transportation investment at Union Station to integrate retail, residential/office and structured parking development with the transit facility on the station parking lot behind Union Station to the west. Ground floor retail would help to create activity along Asylum Street and upper floor residential units/office space would have beautiful views of Bushnell Park, the capitol and downtown.
3. Encourage redevelopment of the surrounding surface lots for medium to high density retail and housing use with direct pedestrian connections to Union Station. Redevelopment of these parcels will greatly improve the pedestrian environment around Union Station. Structured parking would be required to replace the existing surface parking and to accommodate parking requirements for the new development.
4. Encourage the adoption of the TOD Overlay Zoning District (see above).

Issues & Opportunities Union Station



quarter and half mile radius
(5 & 10 minute walk)



potential development
opportunity



transit patron origins
and destinations



key pedestrian routes
to transit stations



station site

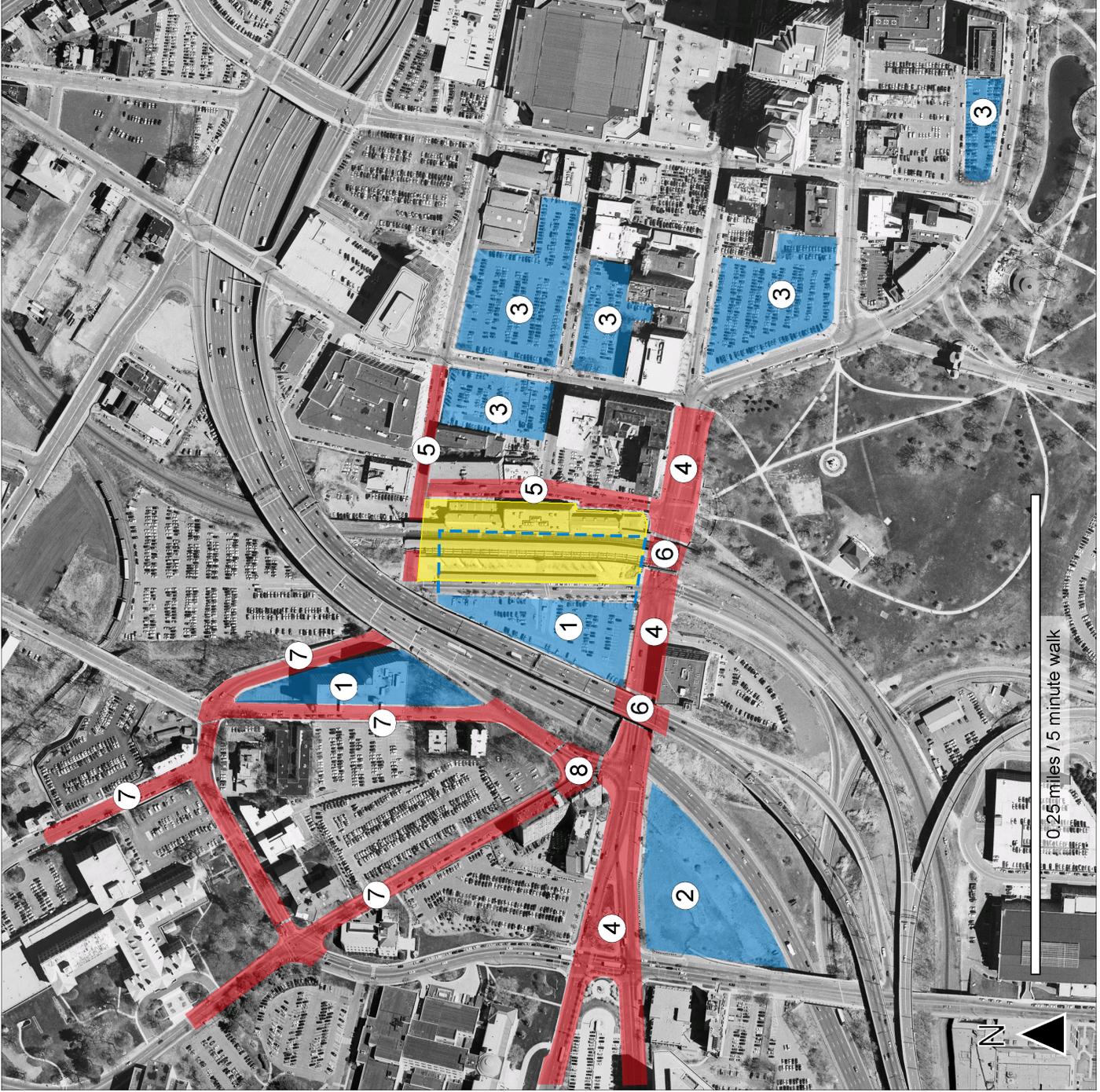


other issues or opportunities -
see note

Design & Development Principles

Union Station

- 1 Encourage development of mid to high density housing, retail, and office uses. Include structured parking and maximize number of spaces to accommodate the combined needs of building users and commuters using Union Station. Provide direct access from new development to Union Station.
- 2 Encourage development of mid to high density housing, retail, and/or office uses.
- 3 Encourage development of mid to high density retail and housing. Insure development of pedestrian oriented streetscape with direct connections to Union Station.
- 4 Improve streetscape and provide traffic calming features in roadway, as planned in neighborhood traffic planning documents.
- 5 Improve streetscape (adequate sidewalk width, pedestrian scale lighting, designated crosswalks, limited curb cuts, planting)
- 6 Improve environment at underpasses. Provide "gateway design elements" at underpass to enhance presence of station.
- 7 Create a safe walking environment between "The Hartford" and the Asylum Hill neighborhood to the north, and Union Station.
- 8 Enhance pedestrian safety at street crossings. Provide adequate pedestrian phase and designated crosswalks.



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Legislative Office Building

Existing Environment

The LOB Station site is surrounded by the backs of buildings, parking lots, highway ramps, roadway overpasses and the railroad. The station is located within close proximity to a dense residential neighborhood to the south, a number of major area employers to the south, west and east, and Bushnell Park to the east. However, the isolated pedestrian routes to the station from both employment destinations and the neighborhood, and the station's very limited visibility from the surrounding area, make security for transit users a particularly important design consideration. The recently cleared state owned parcel at the northeast corner of Broad and Capitol represents the only opportunity for transit oriented development around the station.

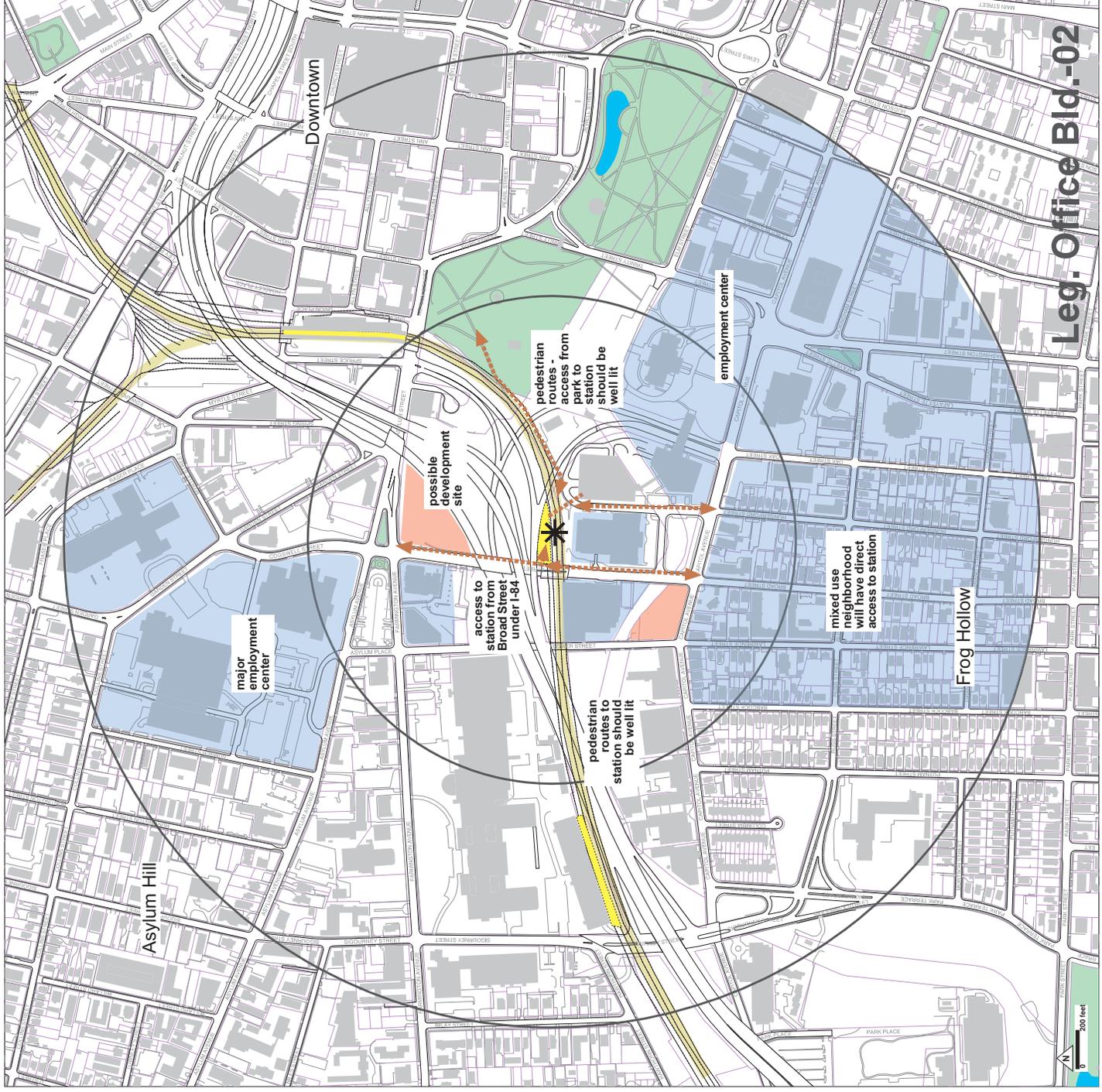
Pedestrian access to the site is limited to the Broad Street overpass, the LOB garage access road and the path connecting to Bushnell Park. These recommendations will improve the overall pedestrian environment, but will have limited impact on station access.

Design Principle Recommendations

The following recommendations, specific to the LOB Station Area, are in addition to the general principles on pages 1 and 2, which apply to all of the stations:

1. Design the station to include a major presence at street level along Broad Street. To improve safety and security, pedestrian connections (both stairs and paths) from this entrance to the station below should be designed to be as visible as possible from the street, with no dead ends or blind corners (see attached station plan). Signage will also be very important to direct pedestrians to the station.
2. Improve the pedestrian environment along Broad Street to the west of the station with designated crosswalks, planting, and attractive sidewalks and lighting (see attached prototypical roadway sections).
3. Improve the pedestrian environment along the LOB entrance road from Capitol Avenue and from the well-used Bushnell Park pathway to the station and LOB garage with improved sidewalks and lighting.
4. Provide a pull-off on Broad Street to allow pick-up and drop-off space for private vehicles.
5. Encourage the implementation of the pedestrian improvements recommended in *A New Farmington Avenue* and the *Asylum Hill Neighborhood Strategic Plan* described above (under Union Station). These recommendations will improve the overall pedestrian environment, but will have limited impact on station access.
6. Provide a small park & ride lot at the station.

Issues & Opportunities Legislative Office Building



-  quarter and half mile radius (5 & 10 minute walk)
-  potential development opportunity
-  transit patron origins and destinations
-  key pedestrian routes to transit stations
-  station site
-  other issues or opportunities - see note