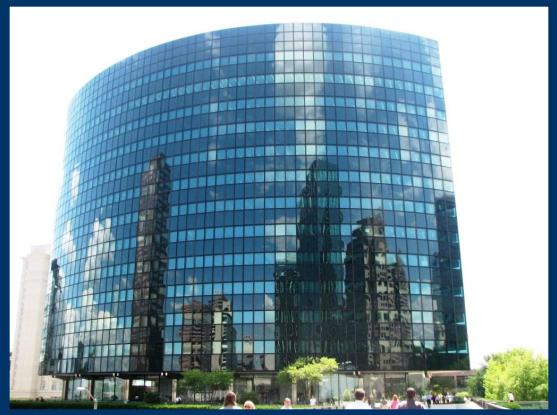
One City, One Plan

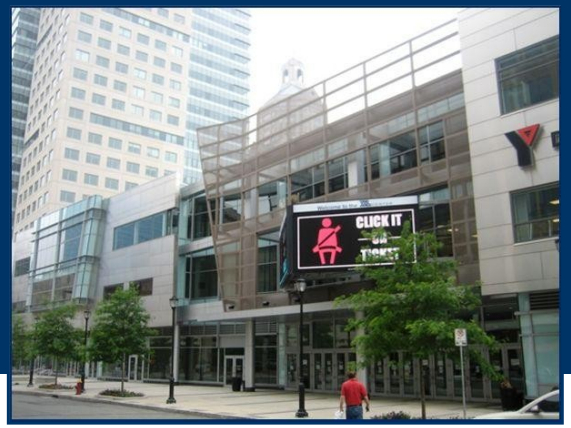
Downtown Plan

Chapter 10

KEY TOPICS

- Description & Vision
- Hartford 2010
- Front Street
- Downtown North
- Market Segments
- Proposed Developments
- Commercial Market
- Entertainment
- Culture
- Regional Connectivity
- Goals & Objectives





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Introduction

Recently many American cities have seen a movement of people, particularly young professionals and empty nesters, back into downtowns. Vibrant urban settings with a mix of uses that afford residents opportunities for employment, residential living, entertainment, culture and regional connectivity in a compact pedestrian-friendly setting are attractive to residents. Downtowns like Hartford offer access to entertainment, bars, restaurants, and cultural venues unlike their suburban counterparts.

The purpose of this chapter is to address the Downtown's current conditions and begin to frame a comprehensive vision of the Downtown's future. It will also serve to update the existing Downtown Plan which was adopted in 1998.

Description

Downtown Hartford is the governmental, institutional and cultural center of a metropolitan region of approximately 1.2 million people. The extent of the Downtown is shown in the figure to the right. The high-rise office buildings and state government offices are centered around the focal point of Bushnell Park, with its numerous features of historic, architectural and natural significance. The recent addition of new housing units in the Downtown area, including several high-end apartment complexes, has added to the mix of office space, restaurants, entertainment venues and cultural attractions. Other recent additions into the downtown include the relocation of Capitol Community College to the former G. Fox building, development in the Adriaen's Landing project area, including the Connecticut Convention Center and the Connecticut Center for Science and Exploration, Morgan St. Garage, Hartford Marriott Downtown Hotel, and the construction of the Public Safety Complex.

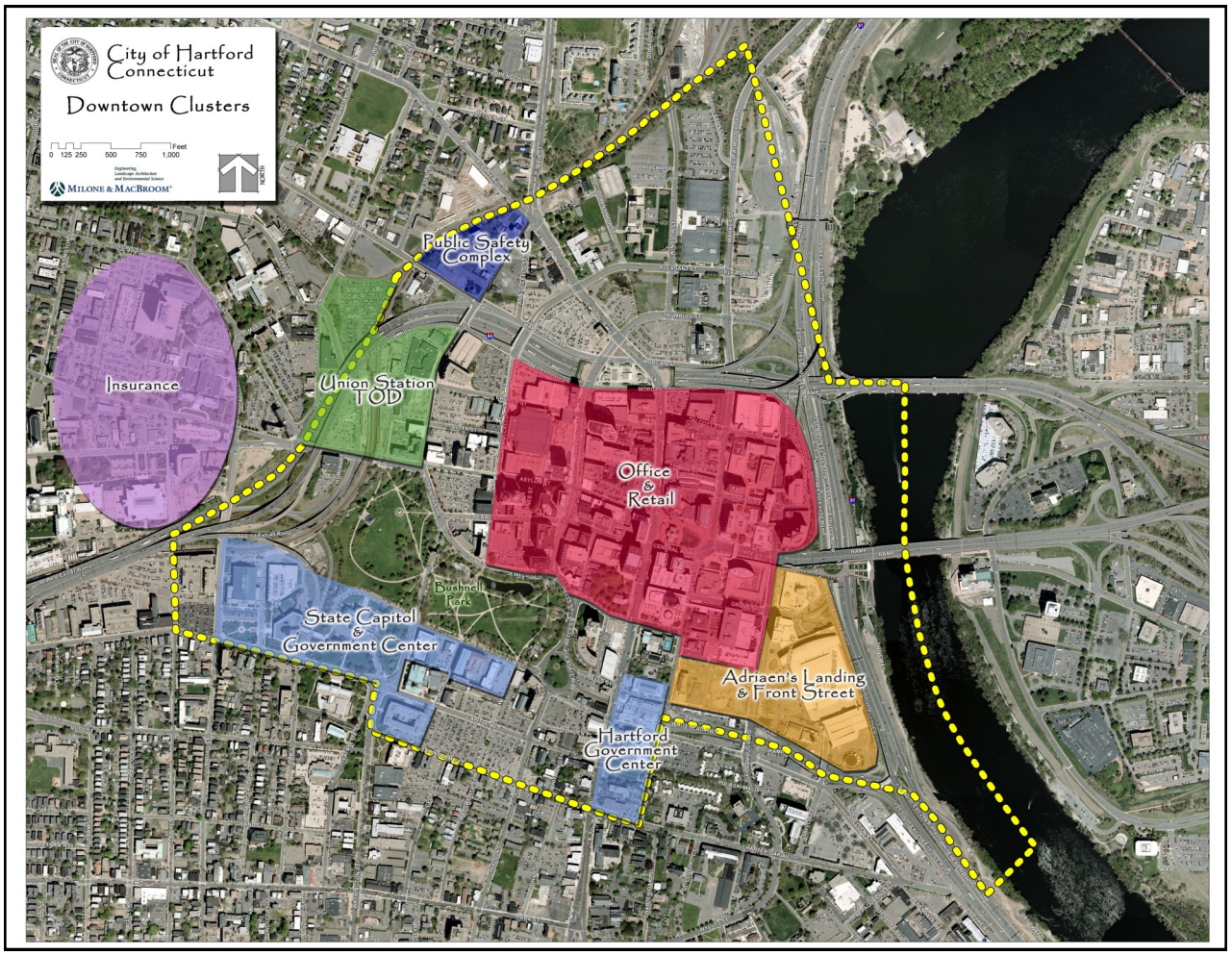
Hartford's Downtown is complex in terms of land use, having a mix of uses both horizontally and vertically. The overall land use distribution includes a mix of institutional (24%), commercial (18%), open space (7%), residential (3%), vacant land (7%), and transportation (41%). This mix of different uses has given Downtown Hartford the vibrant character befitting the center of a major metropolitan region.

Vision

The most important ingredient for a vibrant Downtown Hartford is population. "Population" can take many forms; it includes people who live downtown and work downtown. It also includes people who visit the downtown area to shop, dine, or attend an entertainment or cultural event. It includes commuters arriving and departing at Union Station, and making bus transfers on Main Street. It includes students attending one of the secondary or post-secondary educational facilities within the Downtown.

Downtown Hartford

Statehouse Square



Downtown Clusters

Based upon an analysis of the existing land use and the characteristics of the housing stock, there are approximately 2,500 to 2,800 residents living in Downtown Hartford. A resident population of between 8,000 and 10,000 people is needed for a vibrant Downtown Hartford that is self-sustaining, which means that Downtown Hartford has a large enough resident population to support a reasonably extensive array of activities and land uses without requiring a periodic influx of visitors from outside the City for economic survival.

This element of self-sufficiency flows into the second desirable characteristic, that of regional attractiveness. Once a downtown area has reached a level of self-sufficiency, it tends to be viewed as "successful," thereby increasing its positive visibility and attracting visitors from the surrounding region. A downtown that is generally viewed as successful can also attract additional new businesses and residents much more easily than one that is viewed as unsuccessful or unappealing; the influx of additional new businesses and residents further strengthens the downtown's self-sufficiency. In terms of downtown development, success tends to foster more success.

In order to accommodate this resident population level, it is estimated that between 5,000 and 6,000 housing units would be needed in Downtown Hartford, assuming an average of roughly 1.8 persons per housing unit. This total compares to an estimated 1,600 housing units currently located in the defined Downtown area. These units should represent a diverse cross-section of housing types, not just one or two housing forms that are presently en vogue. These housing types should include active adult

housing, housing for college students, housing for young professionals and housing for families. New housing should include an affordable component that enables residents of all economic levels to participate in the Downtown residential market.

In order to achieve a vibrant economy in Downtown, increased economic activity and (perhaps most importantly) diversification of economic uses have to occur. We estimate that existing commercial space occupancy must increase to the following levels:

- Class A Office Space Occupancy = 95%
- Class B and C Office Space Occupancy = 85%-90%
- Retail Space Occupancy = 90%

Downtown Hartford currently possesses a number of well-established residential, employment, entertainment, cultural and government activity nodes that are already quite successful as shown on the figure titled "Downtown Clusters" An integral part of Downtown's future success will be improving the connections between these existing nodes in a comprehensive manner. These enhanced connections, which will consist primarily of land use, urban design and transportation elements, must also provide a range of activities that occur at different times of each day, and on different days of the week. Doing so will ensure that areas of Downtown that connect its major activity nodes in fact become 24/7 centers of activity themselves and will enable a seamless transition between Downtown's established assets.

However, economic activity in the Downtown needs to diversify. The Downtown cannot rely solely on government and corporate office jobs interspersed with limited service sector employment. A wider base of economic sectors needs to be established in Downtown.

Hartford 2010– Downtown Convergence Trident

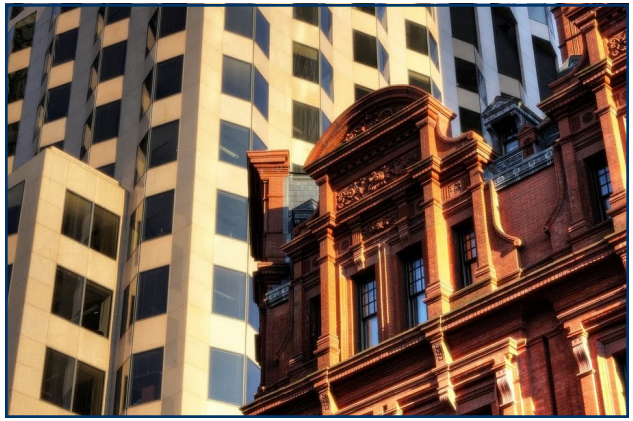
The 2010 study focused on key intersections referred to as "Tridents" serving the City and inner ring suburbs of East Hartford, Bloomfield, West Hartford, Wethersfield, and Windsor. The Tridents are Terry Square, Upper Albany, Downtown North, Asylum and Farmington, Downtown Convergence and South Green. The vision and key initiatives of the Downtown Convergence Trident are summarized below. The Downtown North Trident is discussed later in this chapter.

A historic Main Street that looks and functions as the central "address" for Downtown is needed to further spur high-value development throughout the center city. This involves amplifying the physical hospitality of Main Street and environs to invite more shopping, dining, tourism, and center city living.

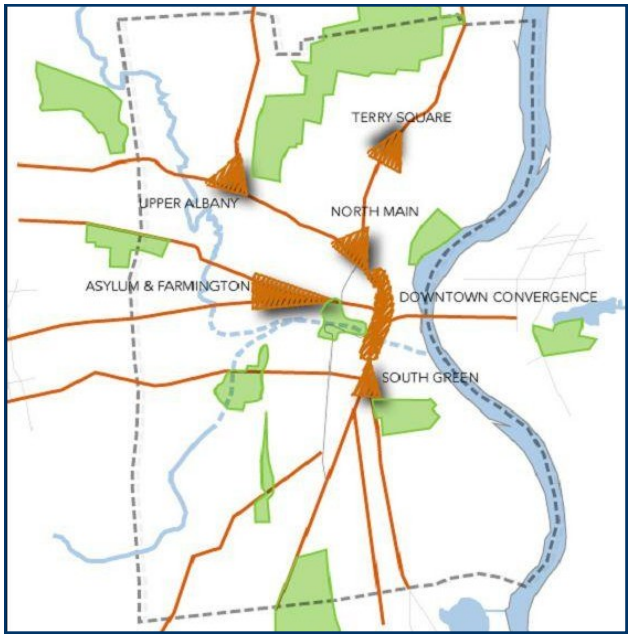
Key Initiatives

- Redesign Main Street including street-

Hartford 21 contains 262 market-rate apartments.



The Downtown cannot rely solely on government and corporate office jobs.



Hartford Metro Alliance's 2010 Tridents

scape improvements

- Improve facades and streetscapes
- Develop a plan to attract specific retail activity
- Relocate bus transfer points from Main Street and redistribute through-transit away from Main Street
- Rationalize parking
- Utilize the HBID to improve cleanliness and security
- Enforce traffic and noise ordinances
- Evaluate current marketing and promotion activities

Work/Employment

Although the City of Hartford has experienced an decline in employment over the past fifty years, particularly in the retail and manufacturing sectors, Downtown Hartford remains an employment center of both regional and national significance. A substantial number of insurance industry and other corporate jobs, combined with a large aggregation of state government jobs, helps make the City the largest employment center in Connecticut. However, Downtown Hartford currently has a 20% office space vacancy rate and a 40% retail space vacancy rate, indicative of the fact that there is still a need to improve the economic base of this area. Going forward, Hartford will need to reduce its office and retail vacancy rates, as well as diversify its employment base through the scientific/technical services, medical, and arts and entertainment sectors.

Entertainment & Culture

A mix of entertainment uses and cultural activities within the Downtown is important to the city's vitality. The following are major cultural attractions that draw visitors to Hartford's Downtown:

- The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts
- Bushnell Park performance pavilion
- Wadsworth Atheneum
- Hartford Stage Company
- Hartford Theater Works
- Old State House
- Science Center
- Mortensen's Riverfront Plaza
- the Convention Center
- Science Center
- Civic Center
- Allyn Street bars and nightclubs
- Restaurants along Main Street, State House Square, and Trumbull Street

Cultural and entertainment resources not only draw visitors to the City but also enhance the city's image making it attractive to new residents and play a major role in supporting retail and restaurant establishments in the Downtown. Highlighting and promoting Hartford's cultural assets as a collective unit is central to defining Downtown as an arts and cultural center.

Residential Life

Although Hartford has a large workforce (80,000 jobs in Downtown) very few workers reside in Hartford. Hartford has a relatively small number of housing units when compared to downtowns of similar size. Despite recent additions of new housing units in the Downtown, including several high-end apartment complexes, there is still a gap between housing and employment. Closing this gap by creating ground floor shopping and entertainment with living and working areas above creates a diverse, vibrant and attractive atmosphere in which resident can work, live and play.

Existing Residential Developments

There are approximately 50 properties in the Downtown area that are either residential developments or mixed use buildings containing residential units. These properties are home to roughly 1,600 housing units in a variety of residential types and styles. Over 500 units are condominiums and apartments that are part of the Bushnell Realty development, located on the block bounded by Main Street, Gold Street, Lewis Street and Wells Street. An additional 262 units are found in the Hartford 21 residential tower at the corner of Trumbull Street and Asylum Street, which were constructed in 2006. The remaining 800 to 850 units are scattered around the Downtown area in buildings that range from single-unit structures to 100-unit apartment buildings. The list below and shown in figure titled "Residential Clusters" provides a summary of some of the newest additions to Downtown Hartford's housing stock.

- The Metropolitan (246 Pearl Street) – 50 condominium units, completed in 2006.
- 55 on the Park – 130 market-rate apartments overlooking Bushnell Park, completed in 2007.
- Trumbull on the Park – 100 market-rate apartments with ground-floor retail space and associated parking garage, completed in 2005.
- 18 Temple Street (Sage-Allen Building) – Mixed-use project with 78 market-rate apartments and 42 student townhome units, along with retail space and a parking garage, completed in 2007.
- Hartford 21 – 262 market-rate apartments in a 36-story building, completed in 2006.

Future Residential Centers

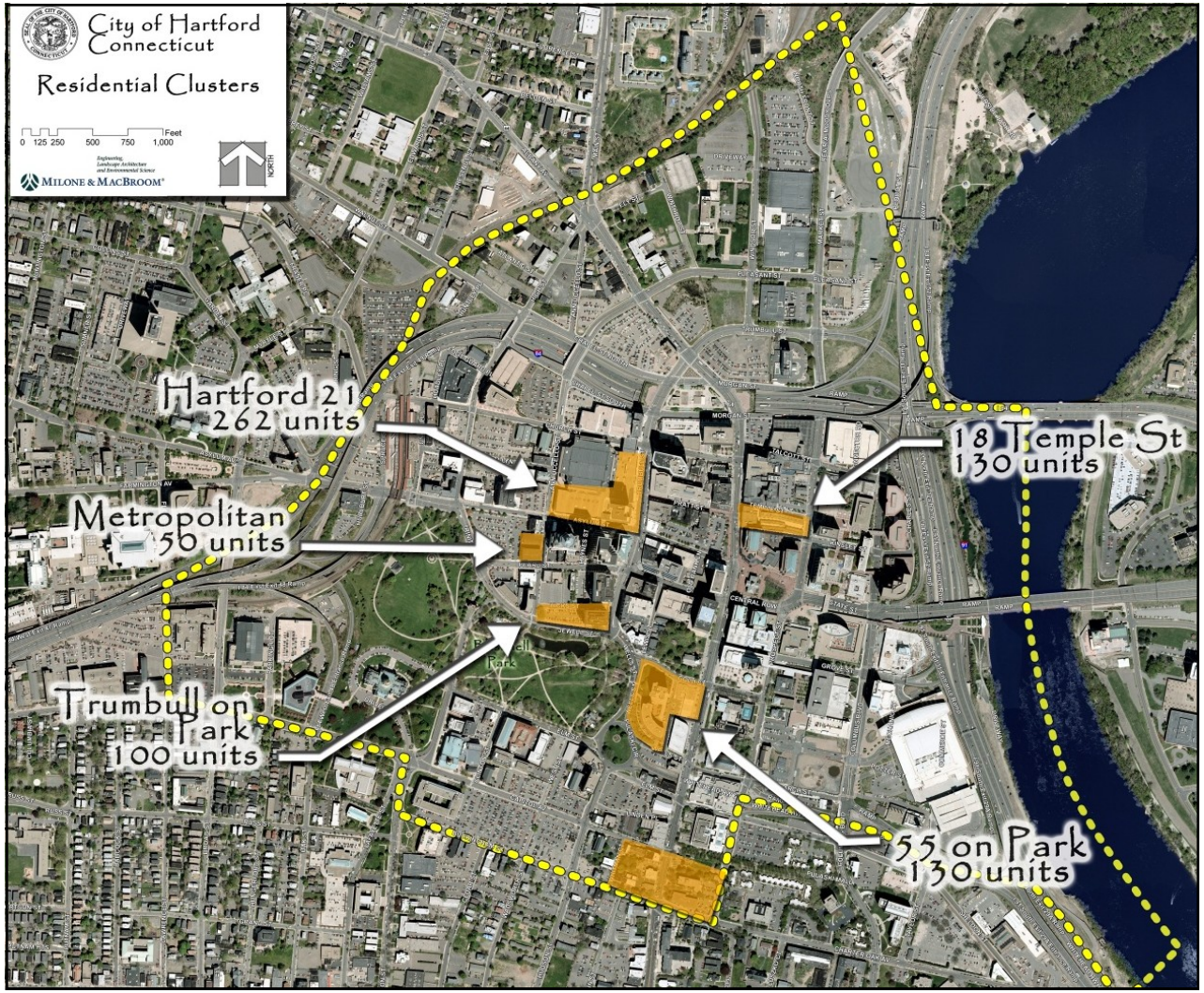
TOD around Union Station

Union Station is envisioned to be the multimodal transportation hub for the entire greater Hartford region (an area with a population of approximately 1.2 million). Planned enhancements to Union Station itself, as well as to the area and infrastructure surrounding the station, will help turn this vision into reality. With the proposed New-Britain-Hartford Busway and both commuter and high-speed rail service coming through Union Station, the station is a

Trumbull on the Park

Sage Allen Apartments

logical focal point for higher density development. This ancillary "transit-oriented development" should include a significant residential component.



Downtown's Residential Clusters

Union Station Connectivity Project

As part of the City's application process for a federal Transportation Improvements Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant, the Union Station Connectivity Project was developed. This project is intended to address a number of transportation, traffic circulation and urban design issues in the area around Union Station that impede the physical and operational integration between transportation modes, the insurance campuses, the balance of Downtown, and the Asylum Hill neighborhood.

The Union Station Connectivity Project is part of a larger planning, development and transportation initiative in Downtown Hartford called the Transportation Pathways Strategy (TPS). This initiative will be described in greater detail later in this chapter. However, it is important to note the following elements of the TPS as they relate to future residential development in the Downtown.

410 Asylum Street

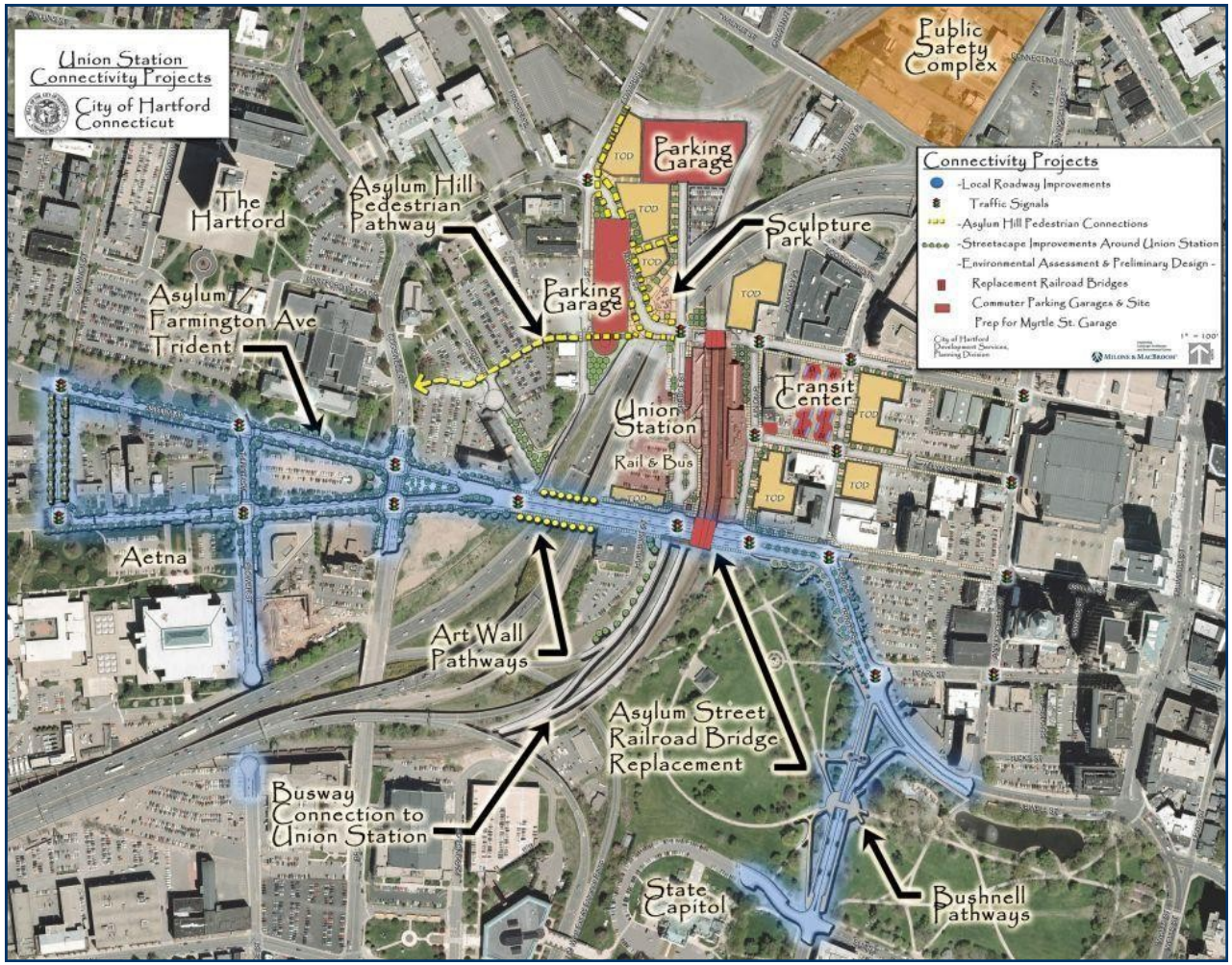
A portent of the future in transit-oriented development around Union Station is the renovation of 410 Asylum Street, situated at the corner of Asylum Street and High Street. This historic structure is being renovated and converted into 70 apartment units, of which 56 (80%) will be affordable housing. The building will also include ground floor retail and commercial space, and will be LEED-certified.

Front Street

As part of the Front Street District component of Phase II of the Adriaen's Landing development project, approximately 200 market-rate rental housing units are planned for construction as part of a mixed use environment. Construction of these units will greatly help in establishing a residential presence in this part of Downtown Hartford. The City should pursue and encourage additional residential development opportunities in the surrounding area that can build upon the successful development of the Connecticut Convention Center, the Connecticut Science Center and the Marriott Hotel, and could further strengthen the residential environment of this area.

Capitol Avenue Corridor

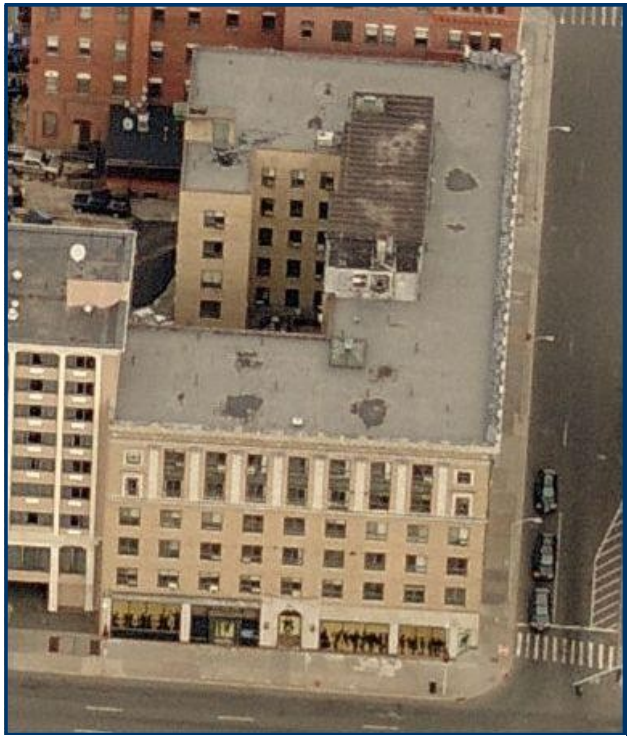
The Capitol Avenue Corridor will be a crucial area for future development in Downtown Hartford. This corridor can be generally described as being bounded by Elm Street to the north, Main Street to the east, Buckingham Street to the south and Washington Street/Trinity Street to the west. Presently, this area includes state government offices, the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, one large office building, a mix of a few small residential and retail buildings, and expansive areas of surface parking. In the future, however, the Capitol Avenue Corridor can be a mixed use neighborhood within Downtown that combines a variety of land uses and activities, including a significant residential component.



Union Station Connectivity

Replacing the existing surface parking lots with structured parking and developing available land with new commercial, residential and mixed use buildings will serve two key purposes. First, it will enliven this part of Downtown beyond the

Trumbull Street and Asylum Street



410 Asylum Street is being converted into apartments

hours of 9:00am to 5:00pm. Second, an improved and expanded built environment and urban design pattern will serve as a strong connection between the State Capitol/Bushnell Center area to the west and the Wadsworth Atheneum/City Hall complex and Adriaen's Landing development project to the east. As will be described later in this chapter, this improved connectivity will also have positive impacts on the economic and cultural fabric of Downtown Hartford.

Recently, an urban design initiative was undertaken for both the Capitol Avenue corridor and Downtown Hartford in general entitled "The iQuilt – Capitol District Vision Plan and Hartford's Pathways of Innovation." This initiative was sponsored by the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts and the Greater Hartford Arts Council, and prepared by Suisman Urban Design. One component of this initiative calls for utilizing Capitol Avenue as a means of "connecting" the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts with the Wadsworth Atheneum via Main Street. Housing would play a key role in this connection, and would be combined with retail development and one or more new parking garages to form an built form and activity "link" between the two cultural institutions.

Downtown North

The primary goal of the Downtown North Project is to remove obsolete and blighted buildings from a critical perimeter area of the Downtown, conduct site assemblage, and create a development opportunity for mixed use development, rehabilitation of historic structures, and educational and commercial development that will strengthen the development patterns of the Project Area. An additional goal of the Downtown North Project is to create a pattern of development that provides a strong and effective linkage between the core Downtown area south of Interstate 84 and the residential neighborhoods north of the Project Area.

As part of the Downtown North redevelopment plan, the Project Area was divided into several sub-areas, each of which has a different redevelopment focus. The two sub-areas with a residential component are described in greater detail below.

The **Trumbull-Main Village Sub-Area** is bounded by Pleasant Street to the north and west, Chapel Street North and Morgan Street North to the south, and Market Street to the east. This sub-area also includes the platform that extends over Interstate 84 between Trumbull Street and Main Street. Trumbull Street and Main Street are the key traffic routes through this neighborhood, forming a prominent focal point for the neighborhood at their intersection point at the present location of 1161-1179 Main Street building. The Bank of America data center and the Crowne Plaza Hotel are envisioned to remain. The two blocks along Pleasant Street and Trum-

bull Street between Windsor Street and North Chapel Street are envisioned to be developed as higher density residential, which would provide a substantial customer base for existing retail and commercial space along Trumbull Street on the southern side of Interstate 84, only three to four blocks away.

The undeveloped area between the Crowne Plaza Hotel and Main Street is planned for a mix of retail stores, restaurants, entertainment venues, and upper floor residential units. Finally, the small triangular area formed by Main Street, Trumbull Street and North Chapel Street may be utilized as a public art and sculpture park to help connect the neighborhood with the platform across Interstate 84 into the core Downtown area. This linkage would tie into other pedestrian and "greenway" elements throughout the Project Area to form a continuous greenway connection between Downtown, the new magnet school at the former Barnard-Brown site and existing park space along the Connecticut River.

The Ann Street Historic Corridor Sub-Area is bounded by Main Street, Pleasant Street, Chapel Street North and High Street; Ann Uccello Street itself cuts through this two-block area from north to south. Proposed uses include rehabilitating the existing historic structures in this area and supplementing them with in-fill development on vacant lots or surface parking lots in the area.

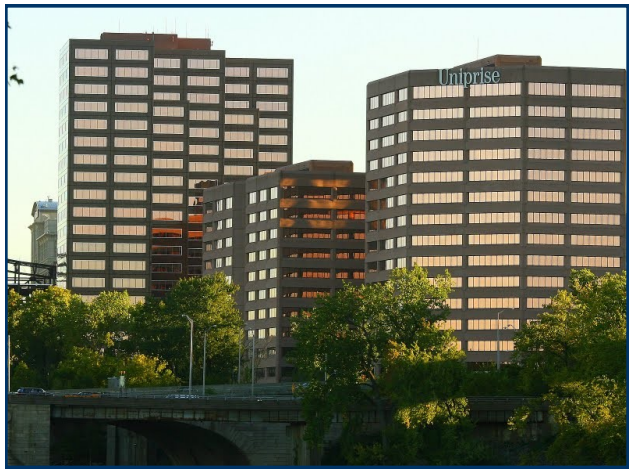
The reconfiguration of the six-way intersection on Main Street at the north end of this area, possibly as a roundabout with a water feature as suggested in the 2010 Plan and by the Urban Land Institute (ULI), may occur as part of the redevelopment effort. Ann Uccello Street could possibly be closed to vehicular traffic and converted into a pedestrian street. Both existing buildings that currently face onto Ann Uccello Street and newly constructed buildings along Ann Uccello Street would have access along the street. Three-story "walk-up" townhomes and small professional offices and stores are envisioned for a pedestrianized Ann Uccello Street.

Portions of this sub-area that front on Main Street and Pleasant Street are envisioned for ground floor commercial space with apartments located on the upper floors. Building heights would generally not exceed four or five stories. The portion of the sub-area fronting on High Street across from the future Public Safety Complex would serve as either well-designed surface or structured parking for the area. Any structured parking would be designed to include commercial space along its ground floor frontage.

Hartford 2010– Downtown North Trident

Vision

Downtown North is a regionally significant, mixed-use, high-density development, taking



Columbus Boulevard Office Towers

The Convention Center & Marriott Hotel

Replacing surface parking with structured parking will provide new land for development.

advantage of the area's assemblages and accessibility. Potentially, over 3,000 jobs will be created and the trident will attract approximately 400 new residents.

Key Initiatives

- Attract investors to stimulate development
- Cleanup vacant sites
- Mothball or revitalize vacant buildings
- Review area traffic patterns
- Demolish identified structures
- Implement new streetscapes
- Identify development for Market & Pequot site
- Conduct market demand analysis
- Provide more efficient operations for the power grid
- Coordinate efforts with HPA to establish neighborhood parking plan

Selected Infill Locations

In addition to the larger areas of development identified above, residential development should be considered in other parts of Downtown Hartford as an infill use where logical. Infill housing should be utilized not only to add to the critical density of Downtown residents, but also a means to improve land use and urban activity in key areas of Downtown.

Market Segments

The following residential market segments should be pursued:

College/University Students

Students are an important asset to Downtown Hartford. They rent apartments, patronize businesses, get involved in the arts & culture scene, and generally enliven the neighborhood. Downtown is home to three colleges– Capital Community College, Rensselaer at Hartford, and a branch the University of Connecticut School of Business.

Capital Community College is the only public undergraduate institution in the City of Hartford. With over 3,600 students, it is one of the most ethnically diverse campuses in New England**.** Rensselaer at Hartford is the Hartford, CT branch of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute of Troy, NY and provides graduate-level education for working professionals. Around 800-900 students attend the school annually at the Hartford center and at the smaller Groton, CT regional distance learning center. The UConn Business School offers part time and executive MBA programs at its Hartford branch. The Downtown is a prime location in which the students who attend these schools may choose to live.

Many students at the other five colleges located within the City of Hartford may also choose to live, work and play Downtown. These colleges are:

- Trinity College– over 2,200 fulltime undergraduate students
- University of Hartford– over 7,300 students on three campuses in Hartford,

West Hartford & Bloomfield. Over 3,300 students olive on-campus.

- UConn Law School
- St Joseph's College
- Hartford Seminary

Finally, four additional colleges are located near Hartford, and the Downtown draws students from these schools as well:

- Albertus Magnus College– East Hartford
- Goodwin College Central Connecticut State University—New Britain
- The University of Connecticut- West Hartford
- Medical & Dental School -Farmington

One residential development that caters to the student population is the Temple Street Student Housing development on Main & Temple Streets. The University of Hartford supports this facility containing 120 units.

Active Adult/"Empty Nesters"

As noted in the Housing chapter of this Plan, Hartford lacks private market "active adult" or age-restricted housing units. Hartford's housing for the elderly is concentrated in public low-income housing. Younger members of the over age 55 demographic who are in the market for age-restricted housing have bought units in such housing developments located in suburban communities primarily because of locational desirability, but also likely because of a lack of similar type housing product within the City of Hartford.

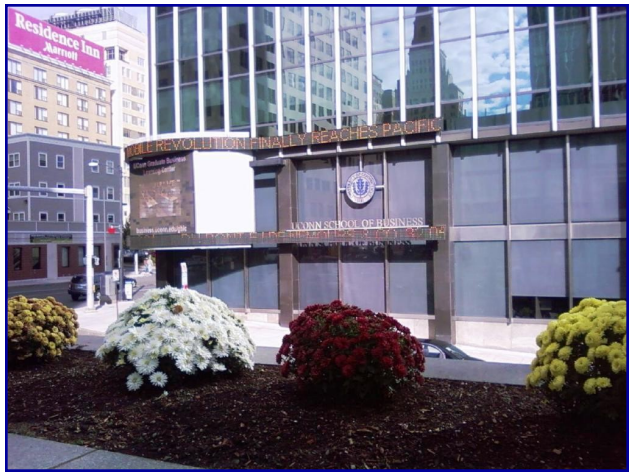
As the population of the greater Hartford metropolitan region continues to age, this demographic will be an important source of new households for the Downtown area, provided that the right housing product is available for them.

Young Professionals

Young professionals already populate many of the new housing units built in Downtown over the past decade. They also often occupy the units with the highest rents or sales prices in the Downtown area. The amount of disposable income available from these households that could be spent at Downtown businesses is an important support mechanism for the Downtown economy. Studio and one-bedroom apartments in well-appointed residential buildings, along with high-rise condominiums, should continue to be a key component of Downtown's housing stock.

Families

Creating housing for families should be a priority for the Downtown residential market strategy. While most housing for families is naturally found in the residential neighborhoods of the City, adding family-oriented housing units to Downtown's housing stock would accomplish two key objectives. First, it would advance the goal of diversifying the social and economic characteristics of housing in the Downtown area by mixing in units that are not geared toward



UConn School of Business Downtown Campus

These townhouses are part of the 120-unit 18 Temple Street student complex

Members of Hartford Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs (HYPE)

Families are an important sector to attract to the Downtown.

one- or two-member households. Second, it would inject an additional element of vitality into the social fabric of Downtown. Having families reside in Downtown Hartford would help prevent the social dynamic of the area from becoming too weighted toward one demographic or socio-economic strata.

Affordable Housing Component

As indicated by the housing market analysis in the Housing chapter of this Plan, there is a considerable difference between the cost of housing in Downtown Hartford and the cost of housing in the balance of the City. While this is a positive in that Hartford offers housing available for at all economic levels, it does raise the question of the affordability of Downtown housing, particularly for current residents of Hartford's many neighborhoods. An affordable housing component should be included as part of the Downtown residential market strategy. One possible approach to addressing this issue would be to require that all new residential or mixed use developments in Downtown that would contain 10 units of housing or more must set aside 10% of the units as affordable housing.

Work/Employment

Downtown Hartford is home to approximately 80,000 jobs. Private sector employment in the Downtown area historically has been concentrated in the insurance, finance and general corporate office sectors. Downtown Hartford is also one of biggest centers for the legal profession in the state, having several large and notable law firms. In addition, the State of Connecticut employs over 12,000 people in Hartford, most of who work in the Downtown area. The City of Hartford itself also has a large number of employees in the Downtown.

Existing Major Employers/Commercial Nodes

Downtown Hartford has several industry clusters and commercial nodes of activity that generally define the characteristics of its economic base. These include:

Insurance Industry

Three of the top five employers in Hartford are in the insurance industry and have offices located in or adjacent to the Downtown:

- The Hartford: 13,000 employees
- Aetna Life and Casualty: 7,450
- The Travelers Co: 6,200 employees

City Place/City Place II/Goodwin Square

These three adjacent office towers provide a combined total of 86 floors and 1.5 million square feet of office and ground floor commercial space.

Trumbull/Main/Market

The three parallel corridors of Trumbull Street, Main Street and Market Street form the economic center of Downtown Hartford. This

area contains State House Square and City Place, two of the most significant office complexes in the Downtown.

State Government Offices

State of Connecticut government offices are generally concentrated in the southwest quadrant of Downtown, south of Bushnell Park and clustered in the vicinity of the State Capitol.

Proposed Developments

Aetna-Asylum Hill Campus Consolidation

Aetna is in the process of a $220 million corporate campus renovation and consolidation project that includes the $40 million reconstruction and expansion of an existing parking garage; a new $27 million, 1,150 space parking garage; and extensive renovations to parts of its main headquarters building. Over 3,000 employees will move to the renovated campus by 2010.

Public Safety Complex

The new unified Public Safety Complex, which is under construction at High Street and Atlantic Street, will include 135,000 square feet of space for Fire Department administration, fire marshals, central dispatch and the Police Department. The $85 million complex will also include sheltered and gated parking, as well as new streetscape and urban design amenities.

Constitution Plaza East Redevelopment Project

Proposed redevelopment of 3 Constitution Plaza (Broadcast House site) and 5 Constitution Plaza (former Sonesta Hotel) for a signature, mixed use development containing commercial space, residential units and ground floor retail is planned.

AI Tech Center

Located within the Constitution Plaza East redevelopment area, the AI Tech Center is a proposed 12 story, $40 million office tower that will replace the former Broadcast House building at 3 Constitution Plaza. The development is expected to be completed in 2010, and will include 12,000 square feet of retail space and 200,000 square feet of office, flex and laboratory space.

Future Commercial Connections and Markets

Insurance Campuses

With the large concentration of employees on their respective corporate campuses, it is imperative that the Aetna and The Hartford insurance companies be better connected with the balance of Downtown. In particular, linkages to Union Station and its present and future multimodal transportation offerings are critical. Improved connections between Downtown and the insurance campuses will better integrate the 15,000 employees of these two companies with the fabric of Downtown Hartford and will provide an expanded customer bases for retail and service sector businesses in Downtown.

The Travelers

The Aetna

Constitution Plaza

Insurance campuses like The Hartford need better connections to the Downtown.

State Government Offices

While Bushnell Park is a tremendous asset for Downtown Hartford, its expansive dimensions serve as a barrier between the State Capitol and its associated state government offices on the southern side of the park, and the Union Station area on the north side of the park. Linking the land uses and activities on each side of the park with one another should be a high-priority goal for the City. The City already has a strategy to improve the connections across Bushnell Park as part of the Union Station Connectivity Project, which includes improvements along Trinity Street.

Office Space Market

The Hartford Market Office Report for the second quarter of 2009, published by Cushman and Wakefield, indicates that the vacancy rate for Class A office space in Downtown Hartford is 19%, while the vacancy rate for all office space in the Downtown is 22%. While the on-going economic recession is likely the factor having the largest impact on escalating office vacancy rates, a more vibrant Downtown environment would almost certainly help to bring the office vacancy rate to a lower level. The City's goal for office space in the Downtown should be to actively recruit businesses to fill existing vacant space, while at the same time making the area more vibrant through new housing and better connections to existing assets.

Retail Space Market

A retail survey completed by the City of Hartford's Economic Development Division in June 2009 found that approximately 40% of Downtown Hartford's retail space (203,352 sq. ft.) is currently vacant. In order to reduce this vacancy rate, Hartford will need not only more people ***in*** the Downtown, but more people ***walking around*** Downtown. Accomplishing this will require two elements: more Downtown residents and better connections between the "live, work and play" areas of Downtown.

Until these two elements are developed in the Downtown area, the retail market in Downtown Hartford will be slow to improve. As more housing units are added and better connections implemented, available retail space will begin to be absorbed by the market. However, with over 200,000 square feet of vacant retail space at the present time, the development of additional retail space should not be a high priority over the short-term future. Small additions to the retail space supply in select locations could be supported, provided that they are included as part of a unified mixed-use development, and not simply stand-alone properties.

Diversification of Downtown Economic Base

In order to ensure continued economic vitality in the future, Downtown Hartford's economy cannot be oriented around a handful of business

types. Diversification of the Downtown's economic base is critical for the area to thrive. In order to accomplish this goal, the following industry sectors have been identified for recruitment targets:

- Health Care/Medical
- Scientific/Technical Services
- Arts & Entertainment

Entertainment

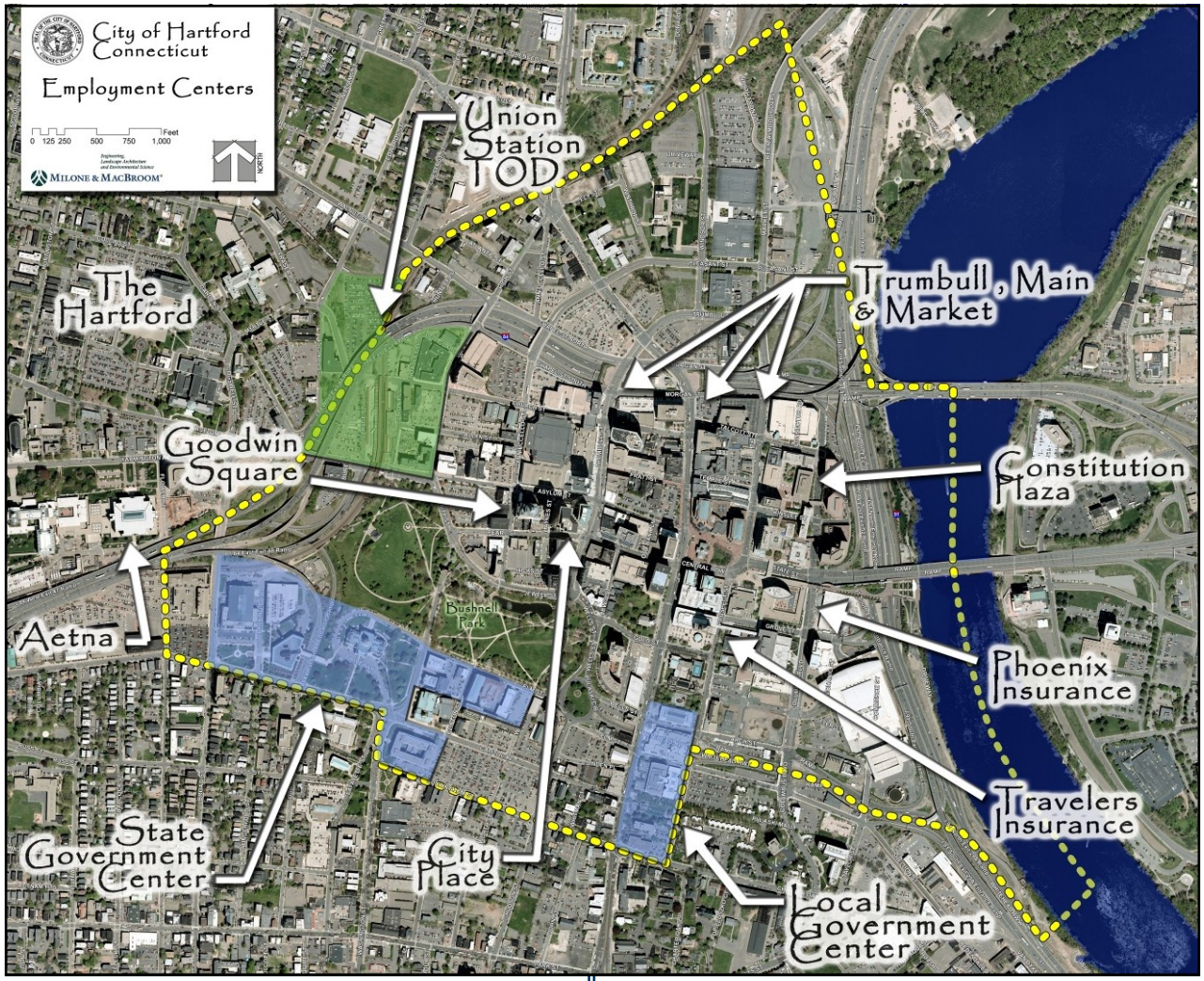
Existing Entertainment Centers

Allyn Street/Asylum Street Area

The Allyn Street/Asylum Street area is home to many of Downtown Hartford's bars and clubs. A total of 23 restaurants, bars and clubs can be found along Allyn Street, Union Place, Ann Uccello Street and Asylum Street between Trumbull Street and Union Place. This area is the center of Downtown's nightlife.

XL Center

Previously known as the Hartford Civic Center, the XL Center is the largest sports and entertainment venue in the State of Connecticut. Managed by Madison Square Garden, the 16,000-seat XL Center hosts sporting events, concerts, trade shows, conventions/conferences and cultural events. In 2009-2010, the XL Center will be the venue for 11 University of Connecticut men's basketball games and 8 women's basketball games, as well as the Big East Conference's women's basketball tournament. The XL Center is also home to the Hartford Wolfpack, the City's minor league hockey team, and hosts occasional NBA games for the Boston Celtics.



Downtown's Employment Centers

Connecticut Center for Science and Exploration

Begun in 2006, the recently completed Connecti-

Asylum Street

The XL Center is Connecticut's largest sports and entertainment venue.

cut Science Center encompasses 144,000 square feet of floor space, including 40,000 square feet of exhibit space; a 200 seat theater; four specially designed learning laboratories; conference and multi-purpose space; interactive sculpture; an observation deck; and parking facilities for up to 460 vehicles. It is projected that over 400,000 people will visit the Science Center annually. The facility will be an integral part of the adjacent Adriaen's Landing development.

Connecticut Convention Center

The 540,000-square-foot Connecticut Convention Center is situated on a 33-acre parcel adjacent to I-91 and the Connecticut River, and is the anchor component of the larger Adriaen's Landing economic development project. The Convention Center has 140,000 square feet of exhibit space; a 40,000 square foot ballroom; 25,000 square feet of meeting space; and 2,339 attached parking spaces. The Convention Center is already connected to the new Hartford Marriott Downtown hotel, and will eventually be connected via a pedestrian bridge to the new Connecticut Science Center and the Riverfront Walk. The Convention Center currently attracts an average of 250,000 visitors annually.

Hotels

While not entertainment venues per se, Downtown Hartford's hotels provide a critical support system for the larger entertainment and cultural venues in the area. In recent years, several hotels have been renovated or newly constructed including:

- The Hilton: 404 rooms
- The Marriott: 409 rooms
- Homewood Suites (formerly the Bond Hotel): 116 rooms.
- Holiday Inn Express: 129 rooms
- Crown Plaza: 350 rooms
- Residence Inn: 120 rooms
- The Goodwin Hotel: renovated and seeking a new operator
- Best Western: Planned for Market & Pequot

Future Retail & Entertainment Connections

Improvements to connections among entertainment areas need to be made in order to leverage attendance Improvements should include a mix of the following elements:

- Conversion of surface parking lots into structured parking
- Infill residential development, where appropriate
- Development of businesses with evening and weekend peak uses, such as:
- Restaurants
- Bars/pubs/clubs
- Live music venues
- Galleries/exhibition space
- Wayfinding/signage improvements
- Streetscape improvements (lighting, furniture, fixtures, etc.)

Connections should be focused between the following:

- Allyn Street between Union Station & XL Center- Utilize mixed use, infill development to complete the built form along Allyn Street, providing a seamless connection between Union Station and the XL Center.
- Trumbull Street between Civic Center and Crowne Plaza Hotel/Downtown North- Fully implement the Downtown North Redevelopment Plan, and improve the linkage between this area and the rest of Downtown along Trumbull. Urban design elements such as streetscape improvements, signage, tree plantings and bike lanes could be utilized to bridge the gap between these areas over Interstate 84.
- Civic Center with Science Center/ Convention Center
- Focus attention along the following blocks:
  - Asylum Street, between Trumbull Street and Main Street
  - Pratt Street, between Trumbull Street and Main Street
  - Pearl Street, between Trumbull Street and Main Street
  - Main Street, between Pratt Street and Pearl Street
  - Central Row, from Main Street to Prospect Street
  - State Street, from Prospect Street to Columbus Boulevard
  - Prospect Street, from Central Row to Grove Street
  - Grove Street, from Prospect Street to Columbus Boulevard

Culture

Existing Cultural Centers

Downtown Hartford possesses a number of excellent cultural, historic and educational attractions. These assets provide a strong foundation upon which the City can continue to build its cultural landscape.

The following list of assets provides an overview of the key cultural assets in Downtown Hartford:

- Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts
- Wadsworth Atheneum
- XL Center
- Connecticut Center for Science and Exploration
- Hartford Stage
- TheaterWorks
- Bushnell Park & Pavilion
- State Capitol
- Connecticut State Museum/Supreme Court
- Old State House
- Ancient Burial Ground

Future Cultural Connections

The key to capitalizing on Downtown Hartford's numerous cultural assets is to enhance their interconnectedness. At the present time, these assets are dispersed around different parts of the Downtown, with few connections between them. Individual arts and culture venues and attractions often benefit most when they are

The Marriott Hotel and Connecticut Convention Center

Homewood Suites

The Connecticut Science Center

located in close proximity to other such venues and attractions. The City of Hartford may not have an "arts district" in its Downtown currently, but can effectively create in the future by better linking existing cultural assets together through appropriate land uses, urban design elements and transportation corridors.

The following are three key connectivity initiatives that would better knit together the arts and culture of Downtown Hartford.

1) Create better connections between the XL Center, the Science Center/Convention Center area, the Hartford Stage and the Wadsworth Atheneum. Focus attention along the following blocks:

- Asylum Street, between Trumbull Street and Main Street
- Pratt Street, between Trumbull Street and Main Street
- Pearl Street, between Trumbull Street and Main Street
- Main Street, between Church Street and Gold Street
- Atheneum Square North, between Main Street to Prospect Street
- Central Row, from Main Street to Prospect Street
- State Street, from Prospect Street to Columbus Boulevard
- Prospect Street, from Atheneum Square North to Grove Street
- Grove Street, from Prospect Street to Columbus Boulevard

Improvements should include a mix of the following elements:

- Conversion of surface parking lots into structured parking
- Infill residential development, where appropriate
- Development of additional cultural uses, such as:
  - Galleries/exhibition space
  - Performance space
  - Small museums
  - Arts education facilities
- Wayfinding/signage improvements
- Streetscape improvements (lighting, furniture, fixtures, etc.)

2) Improve the cultural linkages along Capitol Avenue and Main Street to form a coherent urban design and cultural activity connection between the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts and the Wadsworth Atheneum.

- Utilize the iQuilt study as a general blueprint for enhancing the cultural connectivity along this corridor.
- Encourage infill residential development among new cultural-oriented land uses
- Utilize urban design elements, such as unique architecture, signage and streetscape improvements.

3) Improve the connectivity between land uses and activities on each side of Bushnell Park with

one another.

- Implement proposed Trinity Street and Bushnell Park pathway improvements as outlined in the City of Hartford's TIGER grant application
- Improve lighting in Bushnell Park to facilitate crossing the park during nighttime hours
- Improve signage and wayfinding elements throughout the park.

iQuilt

iQuilt is a joint effort between The Bushnell and the Greater Hartford Arts Council to create a plan that will make it easy and enjoyable to walk from one of Hartford's cultural sites and institutions to the others, while linking them conceptually around the theme of cultural innovation. An innovative wayfinding system utilizing signs, plaques, and artwork will help accomplish this. The quilt in "iQuilt" refers to the loose grid of north-south and east-west streets bounded by Buckingham/Charter Oak Avenue, I-84 and the Connecticut River. The plan will also highlight a "Green Seam," a "Red Thread," and a "Blue Belt," as themed walking tours.

Regional Connectivity

Downtown is not only the mass transit hub for the City and region, but also serves as a key connection between greater New England and Connecticut's third largest city, New Haven. Downtown is located at the intersection of two interstate highways (I-84 and I-91) and is served by several other highways including State Route 2, State Route 15, and US Route 44. Several local roads radiate out from Downtown. These include: Wethersfield Ave, Franklin Ave, Washington St, New Britain Ave, Park Street, Capitol Ave, Farmington Ave, Asylum Ave, Albany Ave and North Main St. Downtown's highway system combined with collectors and local streets provide exceptional vehicular access to and within the Downtown.

Located along the western boundary of the Downtown is Union Station, the heart of the regions mass transit system. Union Station plays an important role in interregional and interstate rail and bus service, and in the future will be the centerpiece of Hartford's Transit Oriented Development, combining both the New Britain Hartford Busway and the New Haven – Hartford – Springfield (NHHS) Commuter Rail. The station is also a significant cultural and historic asset. Erected in 1843, the station is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Hartford Transportation Pathways Strategy

The Hartford Transportation Pathways Strategy for the Hartford Hub (HTPS) represents the assemblage of many transportation improvement and transit-oriented development (TOD) initiatives in the area around Hartford's Union Station. These initiatives are in many different

Bushnell Park & Pavilion is a key cultural asset.

iQuilt's Walkways of Innovation

stages of development. Some already have a creation level of funding procured, and require only a small additional amount of funding to proceed to bidding and construction. Other initiatives are in the design and permitting phases, while still more are in the conceptual development phase. Many of these initiatives have proceeded along their own individual development tracks. The TIGER application process has provided the City of Hartford, the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT), the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and the Greater Hartford Transit District (GHTD) with the impetus to join together and coordinate the development of these numerous projects and initiatives.

The HTPS initiatives can be roughly categorized into the following four "pathways":

- **Modal Pathways -** Adding and Augmenting Transportation Modes
- **Service Pathways**- Supportive Services for Multi-Modal Transportation
- **Connection Pathways-** Facilitating Connections to Neighborhoods and Jobs
- **Development Pathways-** Transit-Oriented Development Generated by Multi-Modal Transportation

Modal Pathways

The Modal Pathways component of the HTPS includes the following initiatives:

- New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Commuter Rail Service
- New Britain-Hartford Busway

Service Pathways

The Service Pathways component of the HTPS includes the following initiatives:

- Union Station Bus Transit Center
- Improvements to interior of Union Station, including track and platform upgrades
- Improvements to Union Station site to reconfigure bus bays
- Asylum Street railroad bridge replacement
- Church Street railroad bridge replacement
- Structured parking and surface parking lots

Connection Pathways

The Connection Pathways component of the HTPS includes the following initiatives:

- Reconfiguration of Farmington Ave./ Asylum St. "Trident"
- General traffic circulation and signalization improvements
- Reconfiguration of Trinity Street and Bushnell Park pathways
- Closure of Flower Street
- Closure of Garden Street
- Asylum Hill pedestrian pathway
- Extension of Sumner Street
- Art Wall pathway and railroad bridge replacement – Asylum Street
- Myrtle Street sculpture park
- Access improvements around Union

Station for taxis, bicycles and pedestrians ("Complete Streets")

- Streetscape improvements along several streets

Development Pathways

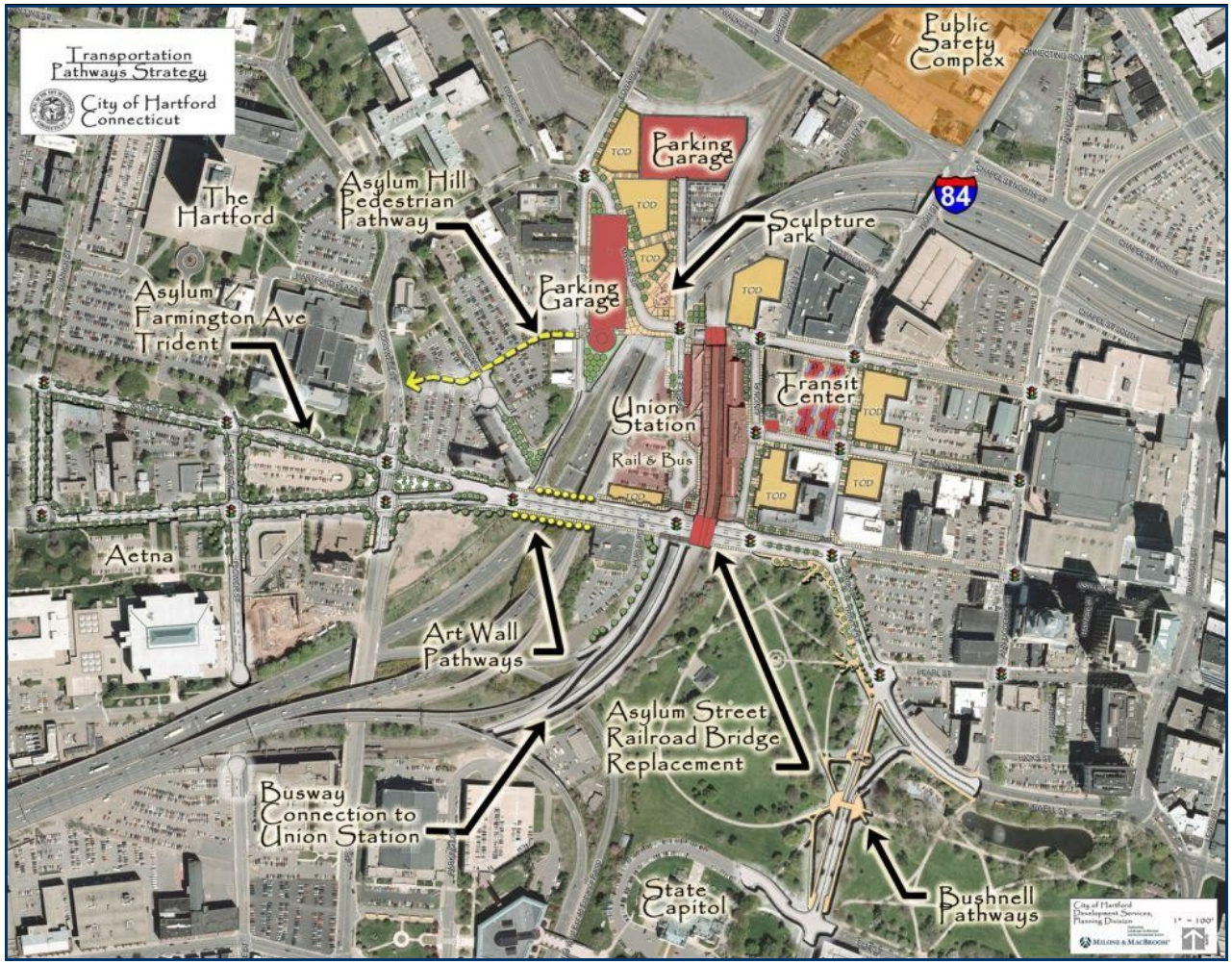
The Development Pathways component of the HTPS includes the following initiatives:

- Mixed use development along:
- Asylum Street
- Myrtle Street
- Union Place
- High Street
- Development of jobs and economic activity around Union Station and in surrounding neighborhoods
- Increased residential presence in this part of Downtown Hartford to improve "livability"

The New Britain – Hartford Busway

The New Britain – Hartford Busway Project is a proposed bus rapid transit line running from Union Station, Hartford to a terminal in downtown New Britain. The proposed rapid transit line will run approximately 9.4 miles and be constructed by the Connecticut Department of Transportation. Up to eleven transit stations will serve the users of the busway. Bus rapid transit (BRT) is a special roadway treatment for buses that can substantially upgrade bus system performance. Buses using this corridor will have more competitive travel times when compared with automobiles, since they will bypass congestion on arterial streets and I-84. According to the CT DOT, revenue operations of the busway are expected to begin late in 2013.

The NHHS Commuter Rail is a proposed commuter rail line running from New Haven to Hartford, Connecticut and Springfield, Massa-



Hartford Transportation Pathway Strategies

chusetts. The proposed commuter line could also provide connections to Bradley International Airport, links to Amtrak Intercity service and a direct link to the existing Metro North and Shore Line East Commuter Rail in New Haven. The implementation of the New Haven – Hartford – Springfield Commuter Rail would benefit the region's transportation networks and stimulate economic growth throughout the state. Additional commuter rail services with the addition of new stations along the Interstate 91 corridor will ease the high amount of traffic delays and limit the amount of harmful emissions released into the atmosphere. The proposed commuter rail is intended to provide an attractive transit option for residents in the neighboring areas, create economic development and transit-oriented development opportunities.

The Griffin Busway corridor project explored the potential for bus rapid transit (BRT) service in the northwest corridor from downtown Hartford to Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks. The project is being designed to build transit ridership in the corridor, insure the viability of Union Station as the busway terminus and insure that the busway busses can be efficiently added to the downtown transit traffic. The result of these improvements will help provide a transit hub, strengthen trunk service and improve transportation to employment sites for City residents.

The Hartford Bus System is operated by Connecticut Transit (CT TRANSIT) which is owned by the Connecticut Department of Transportation. CT TRANSIT Hartford is the largest division of CT TRANSIT and operates over 30 local and 12 express bus routes throughout Hartford County. Many local routes operate 7 days a week and serve 26 towns in the Capital Region.

The Hartford Metropolitan bus system makes connections with the Middletown Area Transit and CT TRANSIT New Britain. Bus service to the Downtown is excellent with over two dozen local bus routes and numerous commuter routes converging on the Downtown. CT Transit's Star Shuttle is a free Downtown shuttle that operates every 12 minutes Monday through Friday from 7 AM to 11 PM, and Saturday from 3 PM to 11 PM. The shuttle has fifteen stops at hotels, historic and cultural sights, restaurants and other popular venues in the Downtown.

A circulation study by Vanassse Hangan Brustlin Inc. (VHB) is currently underway for the Downtown. The purpose of the study is to identify opportunities to improve the downtown transportation network. Enhancing the downtown transportation network will promote economic growth and investments, improve regional and local connectivity, and create accessibility through a variety of transportation modes, including walking, transit, and driving. Key project objectives are to: enhance economic vitality of downtown, strengthen connections

between areas of city, strengthen pedestrian connections and walkability, Improve vehicle access, Reinforce/establish key gateway intersections and roadway corridors, improve wayfinding, support on-going transit initiatives and target key downtown corridors for transportation improvements.

Downtown West Section II Redevelopment Plan

Completed and adopted in the fall of 2008, the Downtown West Section II Redevelopment Plan encompasses 13 properties located along Walnut Street, Edwards Street, Spring Street, Myrtle Street and Huntley Place. This redevelopment plan provides for transit-oriented development and possibly structured parking that is supportive of the nearby insurance industry facilities, neighborhood needs and Union Station. Transit-hub support space and small-scale commercial space to serve surrounding residential neighborhoods is also envisioned. The centerpiece of the plan is the acquisition and demolition of 1-7 Myrtle Street, also known as the vacant Capitol West office building.

While this area is located along the western periphery of the Downtown area, its successful redevelopment is critical to support future transit-oriented development initiatives on the western side of Downtown.

Goals & Objectives

GOAL 1: Create new housing units Downtown.

Objectives:

- Establish a goal to allow for at least 4,500 additional housing units, potentially in the following locations:
  - Union Station– 500 units
  - Bank of America- 200 units
  - Capitol & Buckingham Area– 500 units
  - Old YMCA– 100 units
  - Front Street– 300 units
  - Columbus Boulevard Corridor (Front Street)—1500 units
  - Main & Asylum– 300 units
  - Main & Park– 250 units
  - Downtown North– 1000 units
- Ensure new housing is affordable for a variety of income groups by creating set-aside requirements.
- Ensure new housing is appropriate for the following market segments: students, active adult/empty nesters, young professionals, families.
- Pursue & encourage additional residential development in the area surrounding Front Street.

GOAL 2: Promote mixed use development.

Objectives:

- Address potential conflicts between entertainment & residential uses.
- Develop a Green Print plan for vacant

and underutilized buildings and surface parking lots.

- Incentivize development with a housing component.

GOAL 3: Enhance pedestrian connections.

Objectives:

- Increase pedestrian level of service by redesigning key intersections and areas including:
  - Columbus & State
  - Connections between Main Street and Bushnell Park
- Develop a wayfinding plan to improve connects among existing cultural activity centers & entertainment areas .
- Improve the pedestrian experience by implementing streetscapes.

GOAL 4: Improve Downtown transit options.

Objectives:

- Expand bus hours & routes to match activities.

GOAL 5: Improve vehicular circulation & connectivity.

Objectives:

- Implement the recommendations from the Downtown Circulation Study:
  - Reconfigure Columbus Boulevard from a one-way to a two-way street
  - Reconfigure Main Street from a one -way to a two-way street
  - Reconfigure Asylum Avenue from a one-way to a two-way street
  - Reconfigure Main Street from a one -way to a two-way street
  - Reconfigure the Main St/High St/ Ann St/Albany Ave intersection
  - Create a new road from Walnut St. to Pleasant St.

GOAL 6: Rationalize Downtown parking.

Objectives:

- Create a comprehensive parking strategy for Downtown and the neighborhoods that will:
  - Encourage removal of surface parking
  - Replace surface parking with mixed use development
  - Create structured parking with ground floor retail
  - Address alternatives to free suburban parking

GOAL 7: Encourage 24/7 activity.

Objectives:

- Develop businesses with evening and weekend peak uses such as restaurants, bars, clubs, live music venues and galleries/exhibition space.
- Create public spaces that can serve as spontaneous gathering points.

GOAL 8: Diversify Downtown's economic base.

Objectives:

- Establish a taskforce to attract scientific/

technical services, medical, arts & entertainment sectors.

GOAL 9: Increase occupancy & improve appearance of existing commercial buildings.

Objectives:

- Establish a taskforce to create a retail marketing strategy with aggressive performance measures.
- Strive to increase existing commercial space occupancy rates to the following levels:
  - Class A Office Space Occupancy= 95%
  - Class B and C Office Space Occupancy= 85%-90%
  - Retail Space Occupancy= 90%

GOAL 10: Promote Hartford through marketing.

Objectives:

- Highlight and promote Hartford's cultural assets as a collective unit.

GOAL 11: Make specific corridor and area improvements.

Objectives:

- Improve the Capitol Avenue Corridor by creating a mixed-use neighborhood, replacing surfacing parking with structured parking, and developing available land with new buildings.
- Improve Main Street by studying alternate design concepts to improve functionality, aesthetics, pedestrian accessibility and circulation.
- Improve Main Street by implementing the 2010 Downtown Convergence recommendations.
- Implement the Downtown North Redevelopment Plan.
- Develop Urban Design Standards for Downtown North.

GOAL 12: Improve regional connectivity.

Objectives:

- Implement BRT, Commuter Rail, & Union Station upgrades.