

Bloomfield Town Center Economic Development Commission

Town Center Economic Development Plan

Overview

December 3, 2024

- Community Engagement
- **Economic Development Goals & Strategies**
- Zoning Analysis
- Comprehensive Town Center Market Analysis
- Analysis of Past & Current Plans that will impact the Town Center District
- Business & Development Attraction
- Conceptual Plans & Designs focusing on the interconnection of the Town Center area
- Produce a reality-based Plan that is achievable and actionable, a Plan that meets the current and future needs of the community.
- Chapter 132 Municipal Development Plan

“Transform Bloomfield Town Center for our generations to come.”

Bloomfield Town Center Economic Development Commission

Municipal Development Agency – Development Plan

Overview

December 3, 2024

Municipal Development Plan Overview

1. ***Municipal Development Plan:*** In accordance with CGS Section 8-189, “The development agency may initiate a development project by preparing a project plan... The project plan shall meet an identified public need and include:
 - A legal description of the land within the project area;
 - a description of the present condition and uses of such land or building;
 - a description of the process utilized by the agency to prepare the plan and a description of alternative approaches considered to achieve project objectives;
 - a description of the types and locations of land uses or building uses proposed for the project area;
 - a description of the types and locations of present and proposed streets, sidewalks and sanitary, utility and other facilities and the types and locations of other proposed site improvements;
 - statements of the present and proposed zoning classification and subdivision status of the project area and the areas adjacent to the project area;
 - a plan for relocating project-area occupants;
 - a financing plan;
 - an administrative plan;
 - a marketability and proposed land-use study or building use study if required by the commissioner;
 - appraisal reports and title searches;
 - a description of the public benefits of the project including, but not limited to,
 - the number of jobs which the development agency anticipates would be created by the project;
 - the estimated property tax benefits;
 - the number and types of existing housing units in the municipality in which the project would be located, and in contiguous municipalities, which would be available to employees filling such jobs;

- a general description of infrastructure improvements, including public access, facilities or use, that the development agency anticipates may be needed to implement the development plan;
- a general description of the development agency's goals for blight remediation or, if known, environmental remediation;
- a general description of any aesthetic improvements that the development agency anticipates may be generated by the project;
- a general description of the project's intended role in increasing or sustaining market value of land in the municipality;
- a general description of the project's intended role in assisting residents of the municipality to improve their standard of living; and
- a general statement of the project's role in maintaining or enhancing the competitiveness of the municipality;
- findings that
 - the land and buildings within the project area will be used principally for industrial or business purposes;
 - the plan is in accordance with the plan of conservation and development for the municipality..., and the plan of development of the regional council of governments..., if any, for the region within which the municipality is located;
 - the plan was prepared giving due consideration to the state plan of conservation and development...any other state-wide planning program objectives of the state or state agencies as coordinated by the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management; and
 - the project will contribute to the economic welfare of the municipality and the state; and that to carry out and administer the project, public action under this chapter is required; and
- a preliminary statement describing the proposed process for acquiring each parcel of real property, including findings that
 - public benefits resulting from the development plan will outweigh any private benefits;
 - existing use of the real property cannot be feasibly integrated into the overall development plan for the project;
 - acquisition by eminent domain is reasonably necessary to successfully achieve the objectives of such development plan; and
 - the development plan is not for the primary purpose of increasing local tax revenues. [...]

2. ***Adoption – Development Plan:*** In accordance with CGS Section 8-191, “Before the development agency adopts a plan for a development project,

- (1) the planning commission of the municipality shall find that the plan is in accord with the plan of development for the municipality; and
- (2) the regional council of governments for the region [CRCOG] ... shall find that such plan is in accord with the plan of development for such region, or if such council fails to make a finding concerning the plan within thirty-five days of receipt of the plan by such council, it shall be presumed that such council does not disapprove of the plan; and
- (3) the development agency shall hold at least one public hearing on the plan. At least thirty-five days prior to any public hearing, the development agency shall post the plan on the Internet web site of the development agency, if any.

Upon approval by the development agency, the agency shall submit the plan to the legislative body [Bloomfield Town Council] which shall vote to approve or disapprove the plan.

Notice of the time, place and subject of any public hearing held under this section shall be published once in a newspaper of general circulation in the municipality, such publication to be made not less than one week nor more than three weeks prior to the date set for the hearing.

3. **Property Acquisition:** In accordance with CGS Section 8-193, "After approval of the development plan...the development agency may proceed by purchase, lease, exchange or gift with the acquisition or rental of real property within the project area and real property and interests therein for rights-of-way and other easements to and from the project area.

[At this point in the process, Bloomfield will need to secure two appraisals to establish fair market value as defined by statute. The average of the two appraisals is used for fair market value. The Town should then make a fair market value offer to acquire property.]

The development agency may, with the approval of the legislative body...and in the name of the municipality, acquire by eminent domain real property located within the project area...in the same manner that a redevelopment agency may acquire real property under sections 8-128 to 8-133...except that no real property may be acquired by eminent domain pursuant to this subsection for the primary purpose of increasing local tax revenue.

- **Public Hearing:** The development agency shall conduct a public hearing on any proposed acquisition of real property by eminent domain. The development agency shall cause notice of the time, place and subject of the hearing to be published in a newspaper...not more than ten days before the date set for the hearing. Not less than ten days before the date of the hearing, the development agency shall send, by first class mail, notice of the time, place and subject of the hearing to the owners of record of the real property and to all owners of real property within one hundred feet of the real property to be acquired by eminent domain. [The development agency shall approve the acquisition by eminent domain by vote of a majority of the members.]
- **Town Council:** No parcel of real property may be acquired by eminent domain under this section except by approval by vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the legislative

body of the municipality... Such approval shall be by separate vote on each parcel of real property to be acquired... The legislative body...shall not approve the use of eminent domain by the development agency unless the legislative body...has:

- considered the benefits to the public and any private entity that will result from the development project and determined that the public benefits outweigh any private benefits,
- determined that the current use of the real property cannot be feasibly integrated into the overall development plan, and
- determined that the acquisition of the real property by eminent domain is reasonably necessary to successfully achieve the objectives of the development plan.

The municipality shall cause notice of any approved acquisition by eminent domain under this subdivision to be published in a newspaper...not more than ten days after such approval.

The owner-occupant of property acquired by eminent domain under this section may file an application in the superior court for the judicial district in which the municipality is located to enjoin the acquisition of such property. The court may issue such injunction if the court finds that the development agency or municipality failed to comply with the requirements of this chapter.

4. **Once Real Property is Acquired:** In accordance with CGS Section 8-193, “The development agency may, with the approval of the legislative body...and in the name of such municipality, transfer by sale or lease at fair market value or fair rental value, as the case may be, the whole or any part of the real property in the project area to any person, in accordance with the project plan and such disposition plans....

A development agency shall have all the powers necessary or convenient to undertake and carry out development plans and development projects, including the power to clear, demolish, repair, rehabilitate, operate, or insure real property while it is in its possession, to make site improvements essential to the preparation of land for its use in accordance with the development plan, to install, construct or reconstruct streets, utilities and other improvements necessary for carrying out the objectives of the development project...

Bloomfield Town Center Economic Development Commission

Town Center Economic Development Plan

Findings

December 3, 2024

Findings:

- Macro and micro economic forces beyond Bloomfield's control contributed to the decline of the Town Center.
- Decades of change in demographics (household structure), consumer behavior (retail), and the rise of other (competitive) locations (local and regional) resulted in a weaker Town Center (market) that struggles to compete for investment (time, energy, and money), prosperity, and vibrancy.
- The soft- to weak-market has resulted in varying degrees of disinvestment, vacancy, and deferred maintenance.
- Functional obsolescence is the greatest threat to many properties in the Town Center and the Town Center overall.
- (Re)positioning Bloomfield Town Center to compete (for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy) is as much about a '*psychology of place*' as it is about real estate investment and (re)development—low community self-esteem and little confidence in market have resulted in a loss of community pride.
 - *Placemaking*: planning, design, development, and management of public (and quasi-public) places (Town Center) that are functional and meaningful to the community.
- The lack of community pride and new norms (deferred maintenance) reinforce the soft- to weak-market conditions, resulting in a Town Center that struggles to compete for investment. The loss or lack of investment (deferred maintenance and limited new investment), in turn, results in limited prosperity and decreased vibrancy.
- If Bloomfield is to successfully reposition the Town Center to compete for investment, it must inspire pride, build confidence, and grow market demand.
- Due to soft- to weak-market conditions; the high cost of construction (new and rehab), high interest rates, and marginal rents (return of investment), the Town of Bloomfield must be a willing partner in the (re)positioning of the Town Center.
 - Public Private Partnerships
 - Investing in both the public and private realm

Bloomfield Town Center Economic Development Commission
Town Center Economic Development Plan
Public Investment Strategies

December 3, 2024

Recommended Public Improvements – Town Center [TIF District Plan]

To successfully reposition the Town Center to compete for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy, the Town of Bloomfield (the community) must invest in itself—invest in the Town Center. The following recommended improvements (public investments) are aimed at creating new investments in the public realm—the Town leading by example, while engaging property owners in the importance of investment.

Most importantly, many of these improvements have been conceptualized and discussed in various forms and to various degrees since the adoption of the Bloomfield Center Plan (2013). The estimated costs are provided for general planning purposes and are based on 2020 costs (\$4,046,700). Using a 3% rate of inflation, 2025 estimates total \$4,691,234—GY is working on revised numbers.

For planning purposes, conduct an engineering study of the recommended improvements and develop a 3-to-5-year implementation strategy funded by CIP.

Improvement Recommendations on Following Page

Town Center Public Improvements

Improvements	Location	Description	Units & Cost	Estimated Costs
Sidewalks, Driveway Aprons	Various	Sidewalk installation to improve the pedestrian experience. In many locations, the driveways cut through the sidewalks. This project is aimed at extending sidewalks through all driveway aprons.	Approx. 700 linear feet or 3,500 square feet. Cost Est. = \$12/sq. ft.	\$42,000
Sidewalks, New	Tunxis Avenue	New sidewalks to be installed along the west-side of Tunxis Avenue, south from the entrance of <i>Alexandria Manor</i> .	Approx. 1,000 linear feet or 5,000 square feet. Cost Est. = \$20/sq. ft	\$100,000
Sidewalks, New	Tunxis Avenue	New sidewalks installed along the east side of Tunxis Avenue, south from Geissler's to just north of Wintonbury Avenue.	Approx. 1,350 linear feet or 6,750 square feet. Cost Est. = \$20/sq. ft	\$135,000
Bus Shelters	Various	Install formal and high-quality bus shelters.	7 Shelters at \$17,000 each.	\$119,000
Decorative Lighting	Park & Jerome	Pedestrian scale decorative light should be installed along the sidewalks Park and Jerome Avenues. The area extends east of Tunis Ave to the Silas Deane Pawn Plaza and south of Park Avenue to the driveway of 37 Jerome Ave and north to Wintonbury. [Expand area/number?]	Space at 50 apart on each side of the road, approx. 106 lights at \$20,000 each.	\$2,120,000
Town Hall Paving [?]	Front Circle	Resurface the front circle of the Town Hall Parking lot. [Reconfigure Entrance]	Approx. 22,000 sq. ft. at \$15/sq. ft.	\$330,000
Shared Parking Connections	Town Hall	Connect the parking lots of Town Hall, Rite Aid, Funeral Home, and Republic with driveway connections and shared parking agreements.	Approx. 60 linear feet of 24-foot-wide pavement at \$350 per foot.	\$21,000
Jerome Ave – North Parking	Republic	Widen the west-side of Jerome along the Wintonbury site (like the section at Heirloom Apts.) to accommodate 28 on-street parking spaces.	Approx. 625 linear feet of road widening at \$450/linear foot.	\$281,250
Jerome Ave – South Parking	Republic	Widen the west-side of Jerome in front of Republic and 37 Jerome (like the section at Heirloom Apts.) to accommodate 10 on-street parking spaces.	Approx. 200 linear feet of road widening at \$450/linear foot.	\$99,000
Town Green Expansion	Town Green	New recommendation, not included in the Plan or budget.		\$000,000
Sub-Total				\$3,247,250
Design & Legal		Projected design and legal service fees.		\$150,000
Contingency		Inflation and over-runs.	20% of project	\$649,450
Total				\$4,046,700

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Town Center Economic Development Plan

Private Investment Opportunities

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Recommended Private Investment Opportunities – Public Private Partnership

The list of seven to nine properties below includes properties that have been determined to exhibit market weaknesses, most notably conditions of deferred maintenance and functional obsolescence. Therefore, improvement to these properties is critical to the (re)positioning of Bloomfield Town Center to compete for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy. The fact is, these properties are the result of weakened commercial real estate markets—the changes in retail and consumer behavior—and their weakened conditions create a drag on the overall Town Center market.

Address	Year Built	Appraised Value	Assessed Value	SF	Acres
756 PARK AVE	1946	\$204,000	\$142,800	2,524	0.77
836 PARK AVE	1971	\$1,088,900	\$762,230	6,522	0.92
836 PARK AVE	1970	\$5,983,300	\$3,488,310	38,879	8.54
64 JEROME AVE	N/A	\$193,700	\$135,590	N/A	1.33
29 WINTONBURY AVE	1956	\$399,000	\$279,300	4770	0.51
45 WINTONBURY AVE	?	?	?	?	?
34 JEROME AVE	1972	\$2,538,500	\$1,776,950	12,880	3.72
37 JEROME AVE	1971	\$509,500	\$356,650	7,432	0.53
6 MOUNTAIN ROAD	?	?	?	?	?

The government, the Town of Bloomfield, cannot make or force a property owner to invest in their property. To successfully reposition the Town Center to compete for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy, the Town of Bloomfield (the community) must invest in itself—invest in the Town Center beyond the public realm. To accomplish this, the Town of Bloomfield will need to be a partner in the (re)positioning of private property. Being a partner—engaging in a public private partnership—means the Town of Bloomfield will need to come to the table with public incentives aimed at overcoming market weaknesses and encouraging the property owners to invest in their properties. The primary tools (incentives) the Town of Bloomfield can provide as partner to encourage improvement and investment, are Tax Abatements, Tax Increment Financing (TIF), and Credit Enhancement Agreements.

- *Tax Abatements:* As authorized by CGS 12-65b and the Town of Bloomfield may enter into tax fixing agreements with property owners. Therefore, in the case of the Town Center, especially

the seven to nine properties identified as opportunities, the Town can offer Tax Abatements as incentives to property owners willing or wanting to invest in their properties.

- *Tax Increment Financing:* With the establishment of tax increment financing districts (Sec. 18-10 of the Town Code), the Town of Bloomfield can enter TIF agreements with property owners to incentivize investment in those properties. While better suited for large projects, the TIF Plan authorized up to 70% of the increase in the assessed value of the TIF District (or property) to be captured to fund investments in public infrastructure and private development—typically public bonds are issued to fund the investments and the TIF capture funds are used to pay the bonds.
- *Credit Enhancement Agreements (CEA):* Authorized through the TIF authority, the Town may enter CEA with property owners. The CEA allows the Town to capture up to 70% of the increase in the assessed value to reimburse the developer/owner for public and private investments.

The type of improvements, the amount of investment, or the pre and post development needs for each of the opportunity properties (or other properties in the Town Center), will determine which incentive approach (abatement, TIF, or CEA) is best. For example, facade improvements may be suitable for incentivizing through a tax abatement designed to reimburse the improvement costs in part or in full depending on the need, while TIF or CEA may be best suited for large (re)development projects that include public infrastructure and substantial private investment. Other incentives, such as permit fee reductions or waivers, flexible zoning, and as-of-right land use permits can also be used to encourage investment and improvement.

Bloomfield Town Center Economic Development Commission

Town Center Economic Development Plan

Property Improvement Strategy

December 3, 2024

Recommended Property Investment Process - Strategy

The key to repositioning the Town Center to compete for investment, prosperity, and vibrancy will be to engage property owners (and developers) in the Town desire to create meaningful improvement and investment in the Town Center. The aim is to create confidence, build community pride, and grow demand. The foundation to this will be this Town Center Economic Development Strategy, Town of Bloomfields commitment to public investment, and to be a willing partner in private investment.

The following is a preliminary step-by-step strategy for engaging property owners with the aim of creating improvement and investment.

1. Identify potential property improvements and investment estimates for priority 'opportunity' properties.
2. Develop public incentive package for each of the priority 'opportunity' properties based on the above estimates.
3. Engage Town Center property owners, collectively, in a discussion of Town's Plan and commitment to public investments for the Town Center. This discussion should seek to leverage public investment to encourage private investment. In addition, this discussion should emphasize the Town's willingness to be a partner and provide incentives.
4. Engage priority 'opportunity' property owners individually in discussion about improvements and investments in their property and the Town's willingness to partner with public incentives.
5. If priority 'opportunity' properties improvements go beyond rehabilitation, engage developers (development community) in discussions of potential uses and incentives with the aim of connecting developers with property owners.
6. If priority 'opportunity' properties improvements go beyond rehabilitation and require more direct public involvement—development authority engagement—execute the Chapter 132 requirements for property acquisition and follow the steps below:
 - a. Get two appraisals as required by Chapter 132.
 - b. Based on appraisals, make a fair market value offer to purchase property. Per Chapter 132, the fair market value is 125% of appraised value.
 - c. If offer is not accepted by the property owner, execute Chapter 132 authority for use of eminent domain.