



*The catalyst that ignites Connecticut's Main Streets as the  
Cornerstones of Thriving Communities*



## Overview

- About CT Main Street Center
- History: *Forces & Trends that Changed Downtown*
- The Main Street Program: *Why it was Developed, How it is Organized, Components of a Vibrant Main Street*

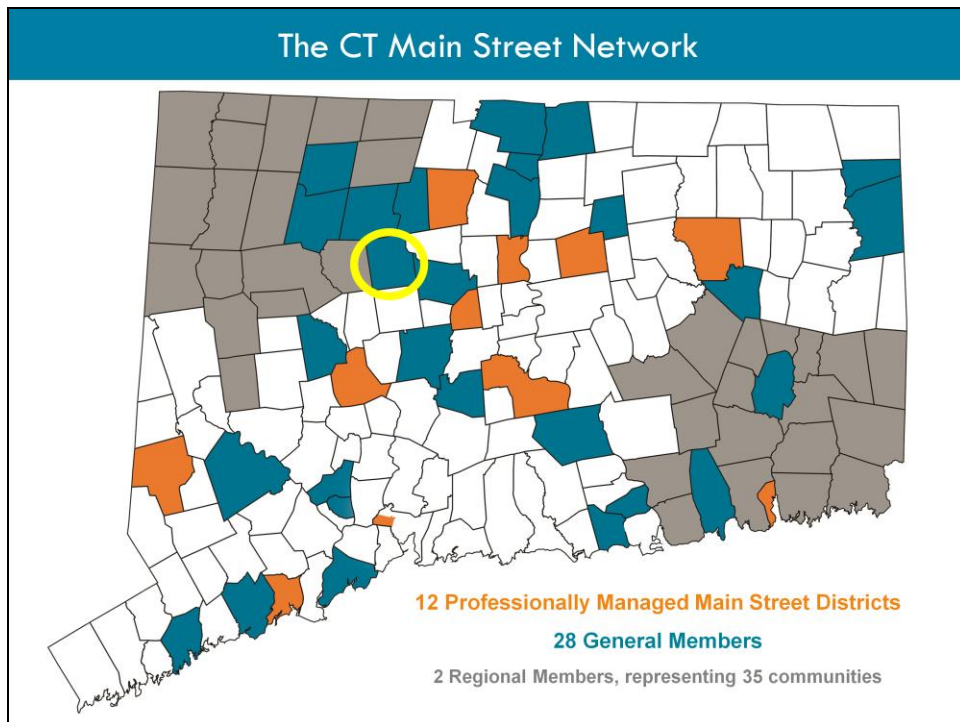
What we'll cover tonight...



**CT Main Street Center's Mission is ...to be the catalyst that ignites Connecticut's Main Streets as the cornerstones of thriving communities."**

**The CT Main Street Network features neighborhoods of all sizes.**

We function as a "professional association" for downtowns and municipalities. We provide education, resources, and advocacy. We act as the champion for Connecticut's downtowns.



The Connecticut Main Street Network extends throughout our State, and this network includes professionally managed downtowns & neighborhood districts; municipal planning & economic development departments; and two regional organizations representing the interests of many towns.

## Professional Affiliates



And in 2016 we started a Professional Affiliate Membership program for industry professionals. Currently we have 20 professional affiliates with expertise in marketing, economic development, urban planning, preservation, transportation, responsible growth policies and more.



## The CT Main Street Network

- Education & Training
- Networking Events
  
- Advocacy & Public Policy
  
- Publicity
- Success Stories
- Communications

[ctmainstreet.org](http://ctmainstreet.org)



### We offer:

Educational offerings & networking events (either FREE or discount):

- ½ day workshops (we post all presentation material on our website)
- Late-day networking events in partnership with CT Economic Development Assoc.
- Quarterly members-only info-sharing events: The BRIDGE Series
- Main Street Open House events, hosted by professional affiliate members

Website ([ctmainstreet.org](http://ctmainstreet.org)) & social media

- Members-Only page:
- Our Education & Resources page provides links to hundreds of sites, organized by category
- Regular posts of Main Street activity on FB, Twitter

Monthly e-newsletter (15<sup>th</sup> of each month)

We have introduced our new Member Communications Kit this fall. In it you will find guidance and examples of writing press releases, using online programs for newsletters and infographics, etc. ***Check out our Member Resource Page – and social media!***

## OUR HISTORIC MAIN STREETS Centers of Community Life

Vibrant neighborhoods with  
a mix of uses:

- Retail & dining
- Residential & office
- Government & institutions
- Multi modal transportation

However, there were forces  
and trends that changed the  
course of Main Street...



### **Historically, Main Street was the center of community life.**

Vibrant downtown with a mix of uses:

- Retail & dining – *on ground floor*
- Residential & office – *upper floors*
- Government & institutions – *City Hall, Post Office, Libraries, Houses of Worship, etc.*
- Multi modal transportation (*Notice the various transit options in this photo: streetcar, trolley, auto, bike, on foot – 1920's, Lower Chapel Street, New Haven*)

However, there were forces and trends that changed the course of Main Streets...





## **2) Auto / Accessibility**

National Highway Act of 1956 provided people with ability to move to the suburbs. But many highways cut a swath through our downtowns.

- In CT, we see this in Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, Waterbury, New Britain, Norwich, and more.



### 3) Urban Renewal:

As people moved to new suburban development, *retail followed people*. In misguided efforts to make downtown more appealing to mall shoppers, decisions were made to demolish and compromise the historic fabric – often to create surface parking lots; many times because it is part of the American culture that “newer is better”.



In the late 1970s the National Trust for Historic Preservation developed a pilot program designed to address the neglect and demolition of historic downtowns. They discovered that *downtowns had lost their value in these four distinct areas.*

This Main Street Approach was developed to address the **restoration of these values simultaneously.** Both comprehensive and incremental, this is intended to be a framework guiding revitalization efforts.



**“Restoring Civic Value”** - *Engaging the community and public & private sector partners; convening and working toward consensus.*

Communications & Public Relations:

- *Active outreach and engagement to attract people to become involved*
- *Platforms, such as newsletters, website, social media, etc. that convey information about the work in downtown*

Developing public/private partnerships & engaging our local institutions and leaders

- *Business community, civic and governmental partners, community anchors (colleges, hospitals, etc.)*



***Restoring Civic Value is all about Community Engagement.***

- Do you have a university, community college close by? Engage with the high school.
- Another anchor institution (hospital) or major employer?
- The faith-based community and social services

These are all sources of expertise, energy, knowledge – and possible residents, customers and partners & volunteers.



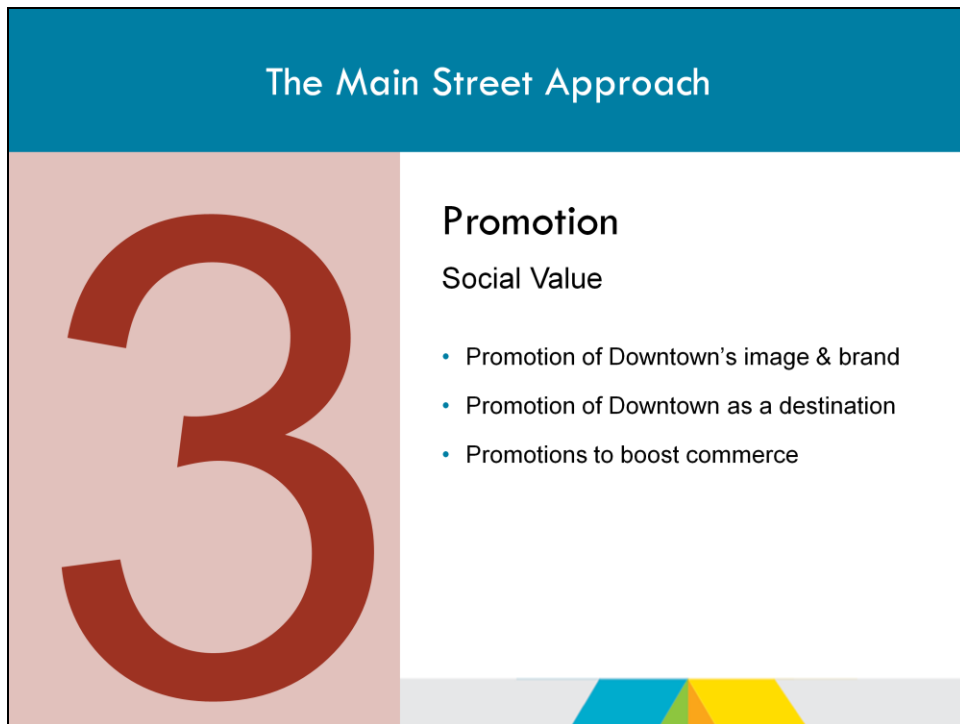
**“Restoring Physical Value”** – *getting the district in top physical shape: ensuring downtown is well-planned, welcoming, and attractive.*

- Preservation & adaptive reuse of historic buildings, design guidelines and standards, façade programs, etc.
- Pedestrian-orientation, parking, way-finding & signage, information systems (ease of use for the community)
- Visual training, beautification projects, etc.
- Placemaking & programming public spaces
- Streetscape plans, traffic plans, master planning, etc.



***The Design Function is about:***

- Planning, Preservation, Adaptive Reuse
- Clean, well-lit sidewalks and street trees
- Attractive and welcoming storefronts that fit within the context of your unique downtown
- Streets for all users (not just cars, but pedestrians, bikers, strollers, wheelchairs, people of all ages and abilities)



**“Restoring Social Value”** – *promoting the district’s unique characteristics and assets.*

**Begins with -**

- Understanding the market (your demographics & purchasing habits) and developing your brand.
- Special events, festivals, parades and parties; Art Walks, Historic tours, etc. that create a unique sense of place and bring people downtown.
- Destination Marketing, retail events and promotions; joint advertising, brochures, etc. that promote the district as a whole, and help businesses understand how they can attract customers.



***Restoring Social Value begins with understanding your audience, then creating programming that positions downtown as a destination.***

- Special events in downtown should be strategic, with your target audiences in mind.
- Businesses benefit from special events because people who enjoy a big parade or special event will return to stroll, shop and explore.



**“Restoring Economic Value”** – *diversifying the district’s economic base.*

*Begins with working relationships with downtown property & business owners*

- Workshops and one-on-one counseling, technical assistance, maintaining valuable business information, etc.
- Technical assistance, fee waivers, loan assistance
- Market niche studies, cluster studies, consumer & resident surveys – for businesses to understand the market
- Incentives, ease of regulatory process for business & property owners
- Redevelopment & Adaptive Reuse for mixed-use (residential & retail)



***Again, improving the economic vitality of downtown begins with understanding your market. Know your numbers!***

- Who lives in town, what do they purchase, and where?
  - Do businesses capture zip codes from customers?
  - Do you capture information from event attendees (how far did they travel to attend? What would they like to do on their return visit?)
- Do you have an up-to-date inventory of downtown buildings and businesses?
- Are you missing out on a vibrant downtown economy because the upper floors of downtown buildings are vacant?
  - Retail always follows people: if people aren't living downtown, your small businesses will suffer

## Business Health on Main Street: *What are retailers/restaurants looking for?*

- How many potential customers can be captured?
- How much do they spend on average?
- Do they match my customer profile?
- What is the price, quality, and character of the surrounding retail competition?



First, we must understand the conditions on the ground. It helps to understand that we're looking for both qualitative and quantitative input.

1. Community Outreach: get their vision of what Main Street/downtown can be.
2. Gather the Hard Data: Who is our market? What are their buying habits, and what will they support?



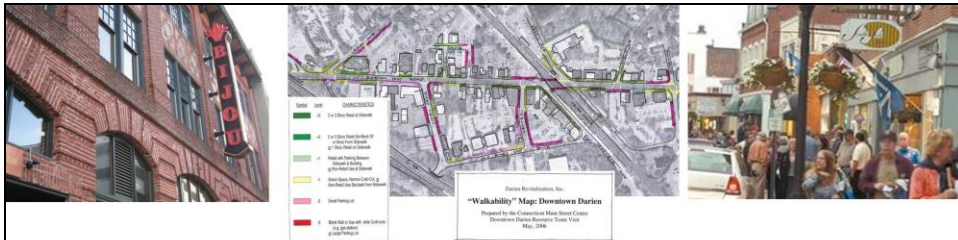
Main Street utilizes a preservation & place-based economic development strategy.



## Basic Principle

Revitalization of your downtown built around its unique natural and built environment.

- This approach provides you with an organizing structure, that keeps you focused, around which *your own unique plan of action* is developed.
- Most communities have plenty of plans and studies, but lack the capacity and organizational infrastructure to implement the recommendations.



## Building an Action Plan for Downtown

1. Research your Market, Develop the Vision
2. SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats)
3. Transformation Strategies / Goal Setting
4. Project Identification
5. Work planning: Projects, resources & partners, timeline, budget
6. Implementation and communication

The structure of the Main Street Four Point Approach addresses ***Restoring the Value of Downtown***. Begins with basic Strategic Planning for Downtown.

- **Vision:** Declares your intentions for downtown / what does success look like? Should lead the way to any necessary planning & regulatory changes.
- **Market:** Start with basic data: know your numbers (age, income, families? Single-family residential? Where do they work?, etc.) CERC Profile a good start, but dig as deep as you can.
- **Goals:** developed out of SWOT analysis (unique to your downtown – begin with Clean, Safe, Attractive & Fun!). Most will start with *Catalyst Strategy*.
- **Projects** will advance your goals, and speak to your markets and opportunities.

## Westville Village Renaissance Alliance

### Vision Statement

At the base of majestic West Rock, Westville Village is an inviting historic neighborhood center within the City of New Haven. Nestled between active parks and greenways, this walkable, sustainable community blends the best of small town living with a dynamic urban setting. Westville Village is a vibrant social, cultural and economic hub where residents and visitors of all ages live, learn, work, create, dine, shop and play.

### Mission Statement

The Westville Village Renaissance Alliance's mission is to partner with local businesses, property owners, residents, and public and private institutions to foster and sustain economic development, cultural vitality, and community engagement in Westville Village and the surrounding neighborhoods, while emphasizing historic preservation and placemaking.

**Westville Village:** a small, urban village center within the City of New Haven. It features small independently owned shops, restaurants, and an established and diverse residential community. It is also a short distance from SCSU.

WVRA was established in 2006 and has a full time executive director, a part time promotions & marketing coordinator, and interns from SCSU.

## Westville Village Renaissance Alliance

### Goals

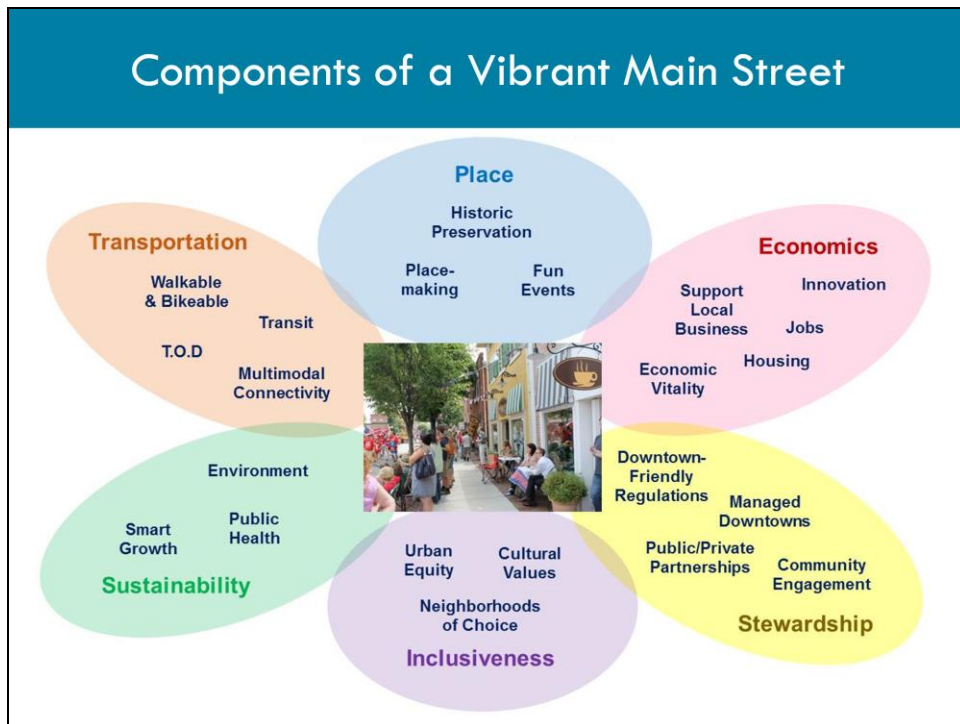
- Position WVRA as the advocate, partner, master planner, coordinator and manager of Westville Village.
- Enhance and promote the image of Westville Village to attract and engage residents, visitors and new businesses.
- Engage existing businesses and assist them to better serve their customers; identifying opportunities for them to expand, and identify an appropriate mix of new and compatible uses in Westville Village properties.
- Foster and activate an urban village environment that is attractive, vibrant and pedestrian-friendly.

### Goals developed from SWOT analysis

- High traffic count (26 k/day) – but cars that zoomed through at dangerous speeds (Whalley Ave. a major arterial)
- Committed & engaged owners, residents – but key absentee property owners
- Entrepreneurial artists & craftspeople that help create a niche market
- Great signature events – but no plan for operating these events (so they were in danger of collapsing if organizers suddenly departed)
- Proximity (geographic and programmatic) to both Yale and SCSU – but they weren't engaging either university
- Downtown and other neighborhoods getting more attention from City Hall than Westville – they needed to be the voice of the neighborhood

WVRA Action Plan				
Goals	Organization	Design	Economic Vitality	Promotion
1) Position WVRA as the advocate and manager of Westville Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch membership campaign</li> <li>June fundraising event</li> <li>Develop a Speakers Bureau to attract partner orgs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Photo inventory of physical challenges</li> <li>Collaborate on West River clean-up event</li> <li>Engage DOT &amp; City on crosswalk issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ID all vacancies-work with prop owners to discuss</li> <li>Host Commercial Realtor Open House</li> <li>Survey shoppers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop WVRA brand, logo, tagline, website, etc.</li> <li>"Shop" workplan around to engage potential partners</li> </ul>
2) Enhance and promote the image to attract & engage residents, visitors and new businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop master database of members, volunteers, merchants</li> <li>Public Master Plan Workshop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve parking signage (temp), while working on Master Plan</li> <li>Work with City Seed to improve access to Farmers' Market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With merchants, develop themed events</li> <li>Initiate shared parking dialogue with prop owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish weekly email blasts to promote activities &amp; events</li> <li>Detailed workplans for each event (Rock-to-Rock, ArtWalk, Westville Weds, etc.)</li> </ul>
3) Engage/assist existing businesses; identify opportunities for them to expand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage nonprofit stakeholders in the district (faith-based, senior housing, CT Cntr for Children, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey merchants on customer needs (parking, walkability)</li> <li>Work with merchants on maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host bi-monthly merchant open houses</li> <li>Survey merchants re: small business needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With ER committee, develop campaign to market Westville Village to potential businesses</li> </ul>
4) Foster an attractive, vibrant and pedestrian friendly urban village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fund development strategy for walkability research/concept plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage DOT, CT Transit; ped, bike, transit improvements</li> <li>ID / implement short-term improvements to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with City re: availability of façade improvement stimulus \$\$</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish Retail Advisory Committee</li> <li>Build customer database for the Village</li> </ul>

- Disciplined approach to building a database of volunteers, merchants, etc.; developing building and business inventory, creating detailed workplans
- Commitment to working with partners already in Westville and New Haven – uncovering their common challenges and opportunities
- Advocating for the needs of the district with ConnDOT, CT Transit and the City
- Ensuring that each of their events is based on a clear target market, is fully workplanned, funded and measured for success



## COMPONENTS OF A VIBRANT MAIN STREET

- Vibrant, sustainable Main Streets – and healthy communities – depend on having a full range of outstanding components including housing, retail, transportation, businesses, arts, culture, events, historic places, outdoor space, pedestrian and bike-friendly streets, and connection and access to other places.
- For our communities – and Connecticut as a whole – to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond, *we must attract, retain and nurture the talent* that will fuel the information age economy.
- What this population craves to nurture their innovative spirit is to live in *authentic, walkable, dynamic, connected places*.
- Connecticut offers a wonderful collection of these kinds of places, from our larger urban downtowns and neighborhoods, to our small town and village centers.

## Key Characteristics of Millennials



- 77 million nationally
- Civic minded, tech savvy, and wary after the Great Recession
- Want transit options and walkable communities

- According to an 2014 APA Study of Millennials and Baby Boomers, *56% of Millennials would prefer to live someday in a walkable community*, whether that's in an urban, suburban or rural location.
- Only 8% of Millennials prefer living in a suburb (if they can afford it) that requires driving to most places. 59% said there are not enough transportation alternatives where they live, and *80% cite living expenses as important in choosing where to live*; *65% said affordable housing is a priority*.

*Quick Facts*  
**Millennials in Connecticut** *yesct!*  
 How are young people today different from young people in the 1990s?

Age  
 18-34

**Population**

Millennials are a smaller share of the population.

2013 21%

1990 28%

**Education**

More Millennials  
 are educated...



Bachelor's Degree or Higher

24%



1990

28%



2013

**Employment**

... But fewer are employed while making less

Employed Population

74.4%

67.3%

1990 2013

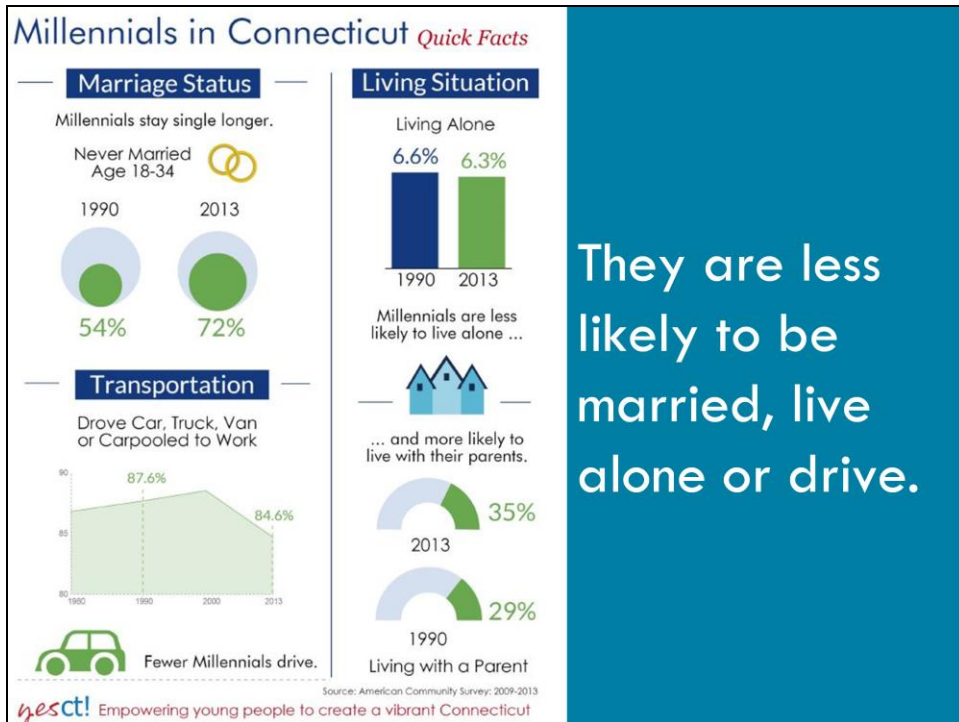
Median Earnings for Full Time Workers



Today's  
 Millennials are  
 better  
 educated, but  
 earning less  
 than their  
 predecessors.

**Millennials in CT** - Comparing young people in the 1990's vs now:

- fewer young people
- more educated but earning less
- less likely to drive, live alone or be married
- average \$30K of student debt



**The Perfect Storm** – they’re already starting in the hole with student debt, while earning less than their predecessors, leaving less money for housing and transportation in a state that already has high housing costs and lots of suburbia.

Housing in CT is expensive

- I. 6<sup>th</sup> highest median monthly housing cost
- II. 8<sup>th</sup> highest rental cost

Cost of transit is also a factor

- I. Transportation is 19% of the average household budget.
- II. Living .5mi from transit reduces cost to 9%

# What do Millennials want?

- Smaller
- Denser
- More affordable
- Walkable neighborhoods
- Preferably close to transit
- Interesting amenities



Walkable, transit-bountiful, mixed-use and diverse communities solve many issues at once:

- Desired by both Millennials and Baby Boomers
- They have also been shown to weather economic downturns far better than single-use communities
- A win-win-win for young people, boomers, and local economies

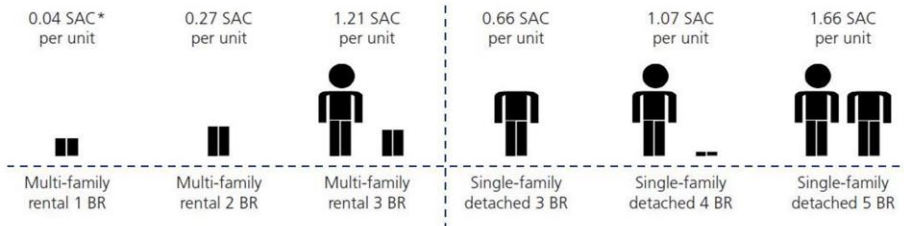
***Burlington's Plan of Conservation & Development articulates the need for diversity in market rate housing stock that is attainable for millennials & empty-nesters – while also supporting ground floor retail in your future town center.***

# Mythbusters

**FACT: Denser + Millennials ≠ Children and higher school budgets.**

## Only larger homes bring many school-age children

Rutgers University's Center for Urban Policy Research analysis (June 2006) of Connecticut's number of school age children living in various housing types indicate the following averages:



There is a common, pervasive fear that building for young adults will mean an influx of children, resulting in higher taxes and school budgets. **THIS IS NOT TRUE!**

From their peak in 2004-2005, school enrollments are expected to drop 17% by 2020. Between 2015-2025 school-age population is projected to fall in all but 16 CT school districts between. *Source: UConn CT State Data Center (via Partnership for Strong Communities and HomeCT)*

In fact the opposite is true. You get what you build for. If communities only build single family houses on large lots, all they are going to get is families.

## A healthy Main Street starts with *Clean, Safe, Attractive & Fun*

- **Clean Team:** Sidewalks, streets, plantings, etc.
- **Code Enforcement:** Blight, public safety, noise, health
- **Downtown Ambassador Program:**  
“Welcome!”, maps & guides, etc.
- **Signage & Wayfinding:** Gateways, parking, districts, attractions, places to sit, etc.
- **Attractive Storefronts:** Window displays, clean entrances, appropriate lighting
- **Healthy Businesses:** respond to the market-customer service, inventory control, cross-promoting, etc.

### **We begin with *Quality of Life* issues:**

- Redefine public safety issues (inappropriate social behavior and blighted building conditions) as economic development issues. Investment won't happen if the district is not welcoming.
- Convening Code Enforcement Teams, made up of police, building inspection, fire marshal, etc. to cite unsafe and blighted conditions.
- Visual elements and amenities that make people feel welcome in downtown.
- Healthy business environment, addressing the unique markets of the community.



Much like a shopping mall has a management company which ensures its success, **downtown needs comprehensive management.**

Some CT Main Street members are professionally managed downtowns, but most members will begin with a partnership of municipal staff, a chamber, a business association, and major employers, anchor institutions, arts organizations, and more.

**The Main Street program builds coalitions around bringing downtown back to life.**

## Benefits of a Managed Main Street

- Community Pride
- Local Leadership
- Culture of Collaboration
- Creates Jobs
- Increased Property Values

### Qualitative Benefits





As we say in our mission statement, *“Main Streets are the cornerstones of thriving communities”*. A managed downtown:

- Enhances surrounding industrial and commercial development
- Protects and nurtures historic assets in downtown
- Increases the tax base by developing vacant and underutilized buildings
- Supports one of the community’s largest employers and taxpayers: Downtown

Main Street is a *proven* approach  
that builds on *your* strengths.


The Main Street Approach ensures that local organizations:

- Achieve incremental and sustainable progress
- Follow a plan
- Public/Private Partnerships are key
- Use the unique historic and natural assets that already exist

**Town of Burlington – Initiatives Taken**

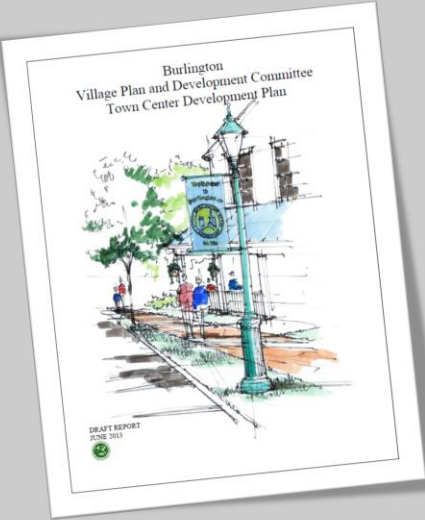
- Economic Development Strategy - 2003
- Resident Surveys - 2003, 2005, 2012
- Central Business Zone & Overlay Regulations - 2007
- Plan of Conservation & Development - 2009
- Village Center Plan of Development - 2012
- State Grants: Public Water Line Extensions - 2011, 2012
- Easements: Library Lane a Town Road - 2013
- State Grant & Town Match: Sidewalks - 2014



## Town of Burlington

There have been recent wise investments on the part of the Town, in infrastructure. This complements and encourages future private investment.

Private sector developers won't invest in a community without evidence that the public sector is doing the right thing. This includes infrastructure improvements, updated zoning, and clear and efficient permitting processes.



**OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) New England Village Design
- 2) Pedestrian Orientation
- 3) Mix of Uses: Residential & Retail, Civic Campus, Town Green
- 4) Community & Recreation

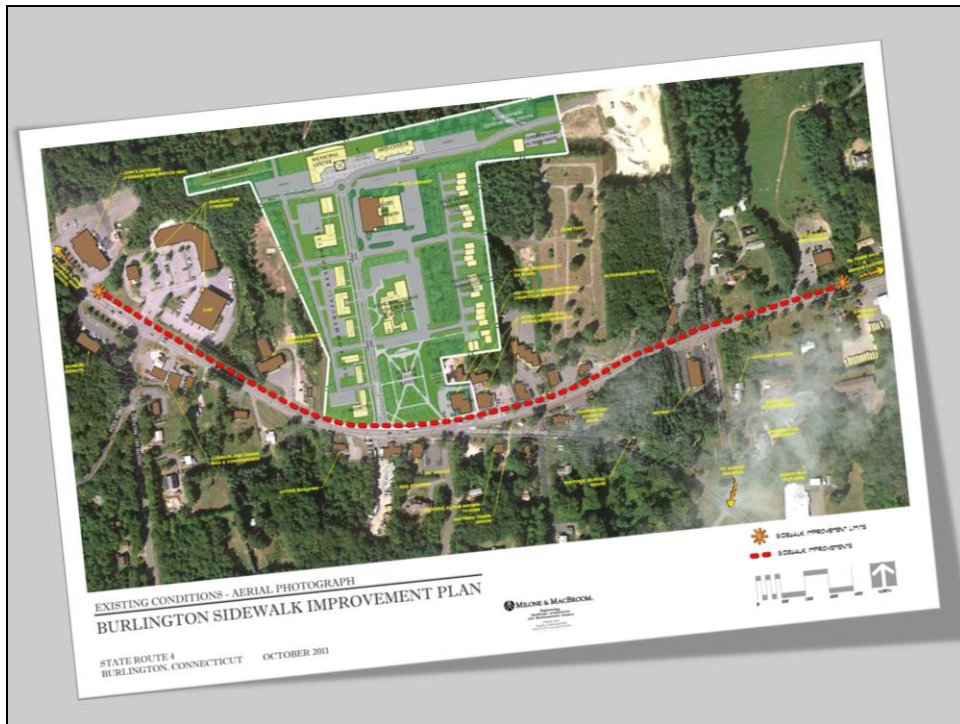
*“Develop a vision for the Burlington Town Center that respects its historical character and creates economic opportunities and incentives for sustainable mixed-use development that attracts residents and visitors.”*

Burlington has made great efforts in planning a Town Center – this is to be commended.

- Without a plan you don’t get anywhere – and you certainly won’t get funding for what you want to accomplish.

We believe that a plan also invites the community to the table: to develop it, to refine it, and certainly to comment on and approve it.

- You need the market data (demographics, psychographics of your citizens; where are they shopping & dining now?; what quality of life indicators are important to them?)
- You need the community to help articulate your vision for a Town Center – and be part of the implementation, in ways both large and small.



Your concept plan for the Town Center has all of the physical components of a vibrant Main Street.

# WHAT'S NEXT?



Tap into resources that are here for you:

**NW Hills Council of Governments** – planning, small business resources, economic data, and more.

<http://northwesthillscog.org/>

**UConn Extension, CT Economic Resource Center, CT Data Collaborative** – community & economic development services, data and market analysis assistance.

<http://communities.extension.uconn.edu/>

<https://www.cerc.com/>

<http://ctdata.org/services/>



**Begin to utilize this organizing structure to address the development and needs of the Town Center.**

*I recommend reaching out to Mansfield Downtown Partnership, which is the organization that, for 12 years, worked to engage the community and build the partnerships necessary in order to develop Storrs Center.*

- *Obviously, Burlington's town center will be quite different – but the community consensus-building, and the approach to managing what you will have is the same.*



## Collaborating Organizations

Organized under the Four Point grid, identify those organizations and institutions in town and in the region that have the capacity to bring people together to address the needs of the town center.

## CT Main Street Center Founding Sponsors:

**EVERSOURCE**

**Connecticut**  
*still revolutionary*

Department of Economic and  
Community Development

## CT Main Street Center Growth Sponsors:



**Connecticut**  
*still revolutionary*

State Historic Preservation Office

Connecticut Main Street Center's founding sponsors are Eversource and DECD.

Our growth sponsors are United Illuminating (UIL Holdings) and CT State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

## Main Street Forums for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Sponsors:



Our education and networking programming is sponsored by:

- Webster Bank
- NewAlliance Foundation
- United Illuminating
- Fuss & O'Neill
- CDM Smith
- CT Economic Resource Center

## We Partner With:



Department of Economic and  
Community Development

State Historic Preservation Office



Office of the Arts



CT Main Street Center partners with a number of state and public agencies.

[www.ctmainstreet.org](http://www.ctmainstreet.org)



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