

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: WOOSTER SQUARE PLANNING STUDY, Public Hearing and Adoption
REPORT: 1524-14
ADVICE: Adopt Wooster Square Planning Study by Attached Resolution

BACKGROUND

In February 2015, the Office of Economic Development Administration (EDA) was awarded a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) planning grant in the amount of \$125,000 by the State Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to promote TOD efforts and job creation strategy for the Downtown New Haven and neighborhoods surrounding Union Station. The first element of this grant was to develop future land use and transportation concepts for the southerly portion of the Wooster Square Water Street neighborhood. The second element was to develop a comprehensive transportation-demand management program in and around the Downtown Crossing district by partnering with the leading employers in this area.

The Study Area is mapped within the enclosed report titled *Wooster Square Planning Study* on Page 8 and also includes Wooster Square local historic district. The planning process began in June 2016. The staff and consultants met with the Wooster Square residents several times to discuss planning options. Seven community stakeholders from various backgrounds were selected for the planning process by the planning team. Two large community meetings (attended by an average of 50 residents each time) and five stakeholder meetings were conducted by the planning team since then.

The general recommendations for the area include: ensuring safe and accessible connection from Wooster Square to Downtown; embracing and promoting the culture and diversity of Wooster Square; prioritizing pedestrian improvements in Wooster Square area; including new open spaces and re-designing streetscapes; finding more productive uses for under-utilized sites to bring additional amenities to the neighborhood. The recommendations for State Street, north of Chapel Street, are: curb extensions to minimize crossing distances where feasible, i.e., at intersections or mid-block crossings; new public spaces to reclaim excess space as public plazas or pocket parks, where feasible; accommodation of on-street parking by reducing the width of over-sized travel lanes; accommodation of curb separated bike lanes by reducing the width of over-sized travel lanes; a dedicated, protected bicycle lane to provide a future link to the Farmington Canal Greenway; promoting infill development along the series of surface parking lots that occupy State Street.

In addition to these general recommendations for the study area and for State Street, north of Chapel Street, three planning options for State Street, south of Chapel Street (area designated between Chapel Street and Water Street), were discussed in detail at the last community meeting held on October 5, 2016. These are described below:

Option 1: Promote development on the eastern edge of State Street keeping the one-way loop along State Street, south of Chapel Street and promoting mixed-use development on two potential development sites that are city-owned.

Option 2: Maintain one-way circulation of State Street from Crown Street, south of Water Street, but create a forced right hand turn from State Street North onto State Street. Promote mixed use development with parking on the lower floor on the larger developable parcel north of State Street and Crown Street intersection.

Option 3: Re-design State Street to function as a fully two-way street along the length of the study area corridor, from Water Street to Chapel Street, thereby continuing State Street as a true two-way street. Allow curb separated protected bike lanes on either side of the street or put them on the same side as a two-way cycle track. Eliminate the need for State Street North, thereby opening up additional area for future development and turn the area east of the Knight of Columbus building into a linear park, connecting to the Vision Trail.

The pros and cons of each of these options are discussed in detail within the enclosed report. Option 3 was largely favored by the residents who attended the community meeting on October 5, 2016. A retail and housing

assessment report is also enclosed within the study, which evaluates the current market potential for mixed use developments within the Study Area.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS:

Downtown New Haven is currently transforming with several new residential developments, large scale commercial and institutional growth, and growing arts, cultural, and dining activities. The Downtown Crossing project is changing travel patterns in and around Route 34 corridor. Recent market interest in investing in the Wooster Square/Downtown area is evident through the residential projects that are proposed for development on the edge of Wooster Square and Downtown i.e., 87 Union Street property (299 dwellings), 630 Chapel Street property (166 dwellings), and 673 Chapel Street property (72 dwellings).

The proposed land use and transportation concept plan for this area is therefore critical in promoting opportunities to live and work within this district, and to prepare potential sites for development through necessary zoning amendments. This plan is generally consistent with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan for the Downtown/Wooster Square neighborhood such as: promoting direct connectivity from Downtown to Wooster Square neighborhood, encouraging a bike to work environment and filling the missing gaps between existing and proposed trail network and encouraging pedestrian activity through the promotion of mixed use developments (Pages IV-32 and IV-33 of *New Haven Vision 2025*).

ADVICE:

The Commission understands that the proposed Wooster Square Planning study is conceptual in nature and that the staff would conduct further study on developing a comprehensive transportation demand-management program by partnering with leading employers, thus implementing the second element of the TOD grant. The Commission supports the vision and goals outlined in this TOD Study for the southern Downtown/Wooster Square area by Resolution, as stated in Attachment 1.

ADOPTED: December 21, 2016
Edward Mattison
Chair

ATTEST: 
Karyn M. Gilvarg, AIA
Executive Director



**CITY PLAN COMMISSION
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT
RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, It is the duty of the City Plan Commission to prepare and recommend development plans for the improvement of the entire City or any portion thereof based on the Charter of the City of New Haven, Article VII, Section 3 L (3) (a);

WHEREAS, The Office of Economic Development Administration (EDA) prepared a Wooster Square Planning Study for the southern portion of Downtown/Wooster Square neighborhood with Transit Oriented Development (TOD) grant assistance from the State Office of Policy and Management (OPM);

WHEREAS, The City Plan Commission finds that the vision and goals outlined within this Plan are generally consistent with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan for the Downtown/Wooster Square neighborhood such as: promoting direct connectivity from Downtown to Wooster Square neighborhood, encouraging a bike to work environment and filling the missing gaps between existing and proposed trail network and encouraging pedestrian activity through the promotion of mixed use developments (Pages IV-32 and IV-33 of *New Haven Vision 2025*);

WHEREAS, City Staff conducted five stakeholder meetings and two large community meetings within the past six months to develop three conceptual alternatives for promoting transit oriented development within the study area;

WHEREAS, Due to the on-going public investments in the Downtown and recent market interest in Wooster Square neighborhood, such type of a plan is timely and critical in promoting opportunities to live and work in the area, and to prepare potential infill sites for development through necessary zoning amendments;

WHEREAS, The City Plan Commission commends the collaborative effort between City Staff, stakeholders and consultants;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Plan Commission of the City of New Haven, that the City Plan Commission does hereby adopt the Wooster Square Planning Study for the southern portion of Downtown/Wooster Square neighborhood.

ADOPTED: December 21, 2016
Edward Mattison
Chair

ATTEST:
Karyn M. Gilvarg, AIA
Executive Director