

# Corridor Specific Analyses



## **PARK STREET CORRIDOR**

The Park Street Corridor, defined geographically as stretching from the Interstate 84 overpass east of Sisson Avenue to Prospect Avenue bordering West Hartford, consists of over 70 businesses and represents the main commercial corridor for Parkville. The area successfully functions both as a center for convenience shopping for the neighborhood as well as retail and entertaining destination from a broader customer base. Business to business operations and services are also well represented in the corridor, including graphics, printing and office supplies. Parkville's Community Center (including a senior center, day care center and branch library) and Elementary School is situated at the crossroads of Park and Sisson Avenue providing an important community focal point and anchor for Parkville and the surrounding area.

Many of the businesses reflect the unique ethnic diversity of Parkville. This is most apparent in the numerous Portuguese specialty food, fish and meat markets, bakeries and restaurants that became established in the district in the 1960s. More recently, the area has witnessed a surge in Asian and Latino businesses that have responded to the growth of these ethnic groups in Parkville. Asian businesses in particular, many of them Vietnamese, have been particularly active in recent years.

In comparison to other neighborhood business districts in Hartford, Parkville's Park Street stands out as a highly viable, well-balanced business/retail community with no glaring retail gaps. Restaurants and specialty foods comprise nearly a third of the establishments on the street. Critical community-based establishments are also found on the corridor including a small grocery store (as well as numerous ethnic food marts), an

## **PARKVILLE ECONOMIC STUDY**

independent drug store and a bank. Office use is also found on the corridor as represented by the 50,000 square foot building at 2074 Park Street, recently purchased and upgraded by Carlos Mouta, and reportedly leasing well.

Park Street has a healthy mix of long established and newly arrived businesses. Most are owner-occupied. There is little evidence of blight and few retail vacancies suggesting a stable retail commercial environment. Meanwhile acquisition interest in the area is reportedly strong.



The area has benefited enormously from the City's façade program with well over half of the storefronts between Francis Avenue and Prospect Avenue participating thus providing a unifying visual theme to the street. A decline in crime on Park Street linked to an aggressive community policing program is another factor contributing to the stability of the corridor.

Due to Park Street's linkage between suburbs and downtown Hartford, traffic is significant along the corridor providing ample exposure to shops and businesses along the way. Park Street also provides easy access to I-84 via Sisson Avenue and West Boulevard.

### **MARKET ISSUES**

#### ***Few Retail/Service Gaps but Opportunities Exist***

From the perspective of community-based retail, there are no glaring retail/merchant gaps on Park Street, particularly in light of the business base on Prospect Avenue, New Park Avenue and just over the border into Frog Hollow. The level of retail and service businesses in this area attests to the strong drawing power of Park Street to markets outside of the immediate neighborhood.

## **PARKVILLE ECONOMIC STUDY**

The standard convenience oriented businesses are well represented on the corridor including a grocery store, pharmacy, bank and an assortment of food establishments. Rounding out this group are numerous ethnic-based businesses, including Portuguese, Asian, and Latino establishments that serve an important constituent market in the neighborhood. Nevertheless, there are a number of recruitment opportunities that could be explored in the few vacancies that do exist or if future real estate options occur.



While it would appear that Park Street in Parkville has no serious retail gaps, potential opportunities exist for general merchandise, apparel, personal care products, dry-cleaning/laundromat, and footwear stores. Due to Parkville's sizable concentration of ethnic restaurants and specialty food businesses, recruitment of additional like or complementary businesses should be undertaken when such opportunities arise. Encouraging other ethnic or theme restaurants to locate in Parkville would strengthen Parkville's claim to diversity and enhance its customer draw.

### ***Low Consumer Awareness***

Some local businesses cite low consumer awareness or confused identity of Parkville by neighboring communities and the region as an issue that limits business growth in the district. This issue is critical given the low to modest spending power in the immediate neighborhood and the need to draw from a wider geographic area to sustain the district. Notably, this issue exists despite the presence of an extraordinary mix of retail and businesses on Park Street that serve and respond to a broad band of customers and ethnic groups. Some businesses indicate that the Parkville

## **PARKVILLE ECONOMIC STUDY**

district's image gets confused with the Frog Hollow section of Park Street, more often in a negative manner. Others feel that there is little knowledge of Parkville's district outside its existing resident base or among customers who previously lived in Parkville. In either case, most businesses and residents agree that only modest efforts have been made in promoting the district and its businesses.

The Parkville Business Association should seek ways to expand its budget (donations, increase in dues, grants, etc.) to underwrite the implementation of a three year marketing/communication plan for the district. Ideally, an outside consultant should be retained to assist the Association in developing the elements of this plan. This plan should provide a strategy on how to positively "brand" and merchandise the district to both the immediate community and broader region. Components of the plan should include recommendations on logo and collateral material, advertising strategy, events opportunities, public relations plan, and a budget and implementation strategy. Business development should also be a part of the plan. Assistance from the Spanish-American Merchants Association (SAMA) may be helpful in launching this effort.



### **NEW PARK AVENUE CORRIDOR**

The New Park Avenue corridor in Parkville consists of two distinct zones. The first zone, stretching from the intersection of Park Street and New Park to Francis Court is predominantly institutional (Community Center, School and Church) and multi-family residential that includes some homes with storefronts and stand-alone businesses. The residential/commercial uses are exclusively located on the

## **PARKVILLE ECONOMIC STUDY**

east side of the corridor. Dominating the west side of the street is the Community Center/Elementary School and three churches.

The business mix in this area is varied and includes among others a hair salon, a cleaner, liquor store, travel agency, gym, cafe and a printing company. Many of the buildings are average to marginal in condition. There is one area of noticeable blight at the corner of Francis Court and New Park Avenue involving a number of vacant buildings.



Beyond Francis Court, New Park Avenue becomes distinctly large scale commercial in character supported by in-fill national or franchise operations. Stop & Shop, Crown Theatres, and Hollywood Video are three very recent developments that have set the tone for this type of development. Major retailers that include BJs Wholesale, Home Depot and Raymour & Flanigan Furniture further reinforces this image as New Park Avenue proceeds into West Hartford.

Automotive/truck dealerships are also becoming prominent on the corridor with a Mack Truck dealership utilizing the former Carpenter Steel site and a Dan Crowley Chevrolet (and Hummer) dealership opening at the Heublein building next to the Crown Theatres. Office use is also found in this area, best represented by the New Park Office and Conference Center which offers 61 office suites and 5 conference facilities. This serves as an excellent example of re-use of marketable industrial space.

The evolution of the large commercial uses on New Park

## **PARKVILLE ECONOMIC STUDY**

Avenue in Hartford have been very recent, spurred in large part through the redevelopment of the vast Heublein real estate parcels. Only the parking lot across from the Crown Theatres remains. Continued commercial interest in the New Park Avenue area south of Francis Court is expected due to good highway access and the critical mass of retail now in place in the area. The focus of much of the new retail on New Park Avenue, however, is likely to center more on the West Hartford side due to land availability, proximity of other big boxes and a more favorable tax environment.

### **MARKET ISSUES**

#### ***Retail/Commercial Opportunity***

The most obvious retail opportunity on New Park Avenue is associated with an unused parking area located across from the theatre complex. A cleared site of under 1.5 acres, the parcel could accommodate approximately a footprint of 15,000 to 20,000 square feet of commercial/retail space, depending on parking requirements. Logical uses could include expanded entertainment uses such as restaurant (Applebee's, TGI Friday's, Red Lobster) or community-based retail such as home furnishings (Pier 1, Bed, Bath & Beyond, etc.) and off-price/outlet type stores. The limiting factor is that the site is an infill location rather than the corner lot preferred by most retailers/commercial users. Nevertheless, the property is highly visible and well located on a busy corridor across from the theatres. The property is now being marketed for retail commercial use by a commercial broker.

Given the few site options in this corridor, the Parkville community should determine if there are any unmet retail or service needs that could be accommodated at the site. This

## **PARKVILLE ECONOMIC STUDY**

information could be solicited through surveys or public forums. The results could be provided to the broker to better assist him/her on marketing and tenant recruitment.

### ***Kane Street Connection***

While New Park Avenue has been the major focus of commercial attention in Parkville, Kane Street represents a future area for development. This street connects the two busy corridors of Prospect and New Park and has the advantage of being largely non-residential. Parcels on the street are generally large and few in number making assemblage for development easier (one is even for sale).

An analysis should be undertaken to determine the area's capacity and opportunities for future development. Issues relating to traffic, zoning, present and anticipated uses, environmental conditions, present ownership profile, community impact and needs and potential for economic development should be explored. Transit-related development should also be explored given that the proposed New Britain/Hartford Busway Station is at the east end of Kane Street Extension next to Stop & Shop.



### **CAPITOL AVENUE CORRIDOR**

Capitol Avenue, like Park Street to the south, serves as an important east-west corridor for Parkville, Hartford and the region. West of Parkville, Capitol Avenue connects with the suburbs via West Boulevard and ultimately Farmington Avenue while the downtown serves as its eastern terminus. The corridor also serves as a northern dividing line between the Parkville neighborhood and the West End community. Linkages to I-84 can be made easily from Capitol Avenue via

## **PARKVILLE ECONOMIC STUDY**

Sisson Avenue.

Unlike Park Street, however, land use on Capitol Avenue within Parkville is almost exclusively residential and predominately rental. In most cases rental housing is found in larger, multi-storied complexes dating back to the early mid-1900s. A number of garden complexes dating to mid 1960-70s are also found on the corridor. In addition, there are also numerous examples of multi-family homes of historic quality and interest.

Commercial uses on the corridor are nominal and largely convenience oriented. One of the more active businesses is a dry cleaner at the corner of Amity Street and Capitol Avenue. At the eastern end of Capitol (south side), U-Haul has a storage and rental business. Other businesses include a bar, convenience store, and a gas station. At the intersection of Capitol and South Whitney, a car repair and welding business are a blighting influence and may affect efforts to market the area.



### **MARKET ISSUES**

#### ***Upgrade Gateway at Capitol and Prospect Avenue***

A vacant gas station at the corner of Capitol and Prospect Avenue serves as an uninviting entrance into the Parkville neighborhood. Visual inspection of the site indicates that at times it is being used for truck storage. Redevelopment of this site could be affected by environmental issues. Its location at a key intersection, however, is highly visible and potentially desirable. This site should be the subject of investigation of DEP records to determine if there are any recorded environmental issues such as underground tanks or

## **PARKVILLE ECONOMIC STUDY**

oil spills, and a mini-analysis to determine options for reuse.

### ***Promote Redevelopment of 962 Capitol Avenue***

This vacant parcel is being targeted for mixed-use development or housing. Acquisition of the property by an area investor (the owner of the Barridon Building) was complicated by the presence of tax liens. The NRZ should monitor progress on plans for redevelopment of the parcel and encourage the owner to upgrade the perimeter property with fencing and landscaping while long-term redevelopment plans are being developed.

## Market Analysis Summary of Recommendations

### PARK STREET

- Market Gaps:
- general merchandise
  - apparel
  - personal care products
  - dry cleaning/laundromat
  - footwear
  - complementary or similar ethnic/theme restaurants

- Actions:
- Secure additional funds through the Business Association to implement a 3 year marketing plan focused on providing promotion and merchandising.
  - Discuss need for assistance with SAMA

### NEW PARK AVENUE

- Market Gaps:
- retail opportunity (infill) for unutilized parking lot across from Crown Theatres

- Actions:
- Resident survey of desired or unmet services to guide commercial brokers
  - Analysis of Kane Street for potential transit linkages, land assembly and marketing

### CAPITOL AVENUE

- Market Gaps:
- limited retail/convenience uses

- Actions:
- Infill opportunity at Capitol and Prospect:
    - identify ownership, search public CTDEP records for evidence of environmental contamination and analyze reuse options.
    - monitor 962 Capitol Avenue and encourage owner to upgrade site while redevelopment is considered.