

First Steps

Bartholomew Business Park can be established through an evolving series of increasingly sophisticated actions. Almost immediately, the Parkville Revitalization Association can begin to "verbalize" its references to the corridor as a business park. From this point on, implementation would occur on three simultaneous fronts:

- Physical Establishment
- Marketing and Promotion
- Neighborhood Improvements

Action No. 1: Implementation Organization

Consider an ad-hoc committee of service providers, businesses, and NRZ members to outline an approach to developing a logo and preparing a marketing program. This committee could also serve to address issues of mutual interest addressing the park. Formal or informal representation with the Parkville Business Association should also be considered.

Action No. 2: Instant Recognition

Erecting a sign, visible from the highway, identifying the park by name will bring immediate attention to the area. The recently completed *Pope Park West and Environs Study* recommends a similar sign to signify the entire neighborhood. The PRA should discuss the dual purposes of this sign.

Action No. 3: State Funding for a Municipal Development Plan (MDP)

Contact the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development's (DECD) Division of

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Infrastructure and Real Estate (Chester Camarata, Executive Director – 860/270-8140) to solicit planning grant monies for preparing an MDP and requesting state implementation funding assistance.

Funded in part by the State with the balance paid by the host community, an MDP identifies necessary public improvements, property acquisitions, relocations, implementation schedule and costs for undertaking desired economic development initiatives requiring state funding. The geographic boundary of the MDP could include all appropriate properties surrounding the Park that would benefit from inclusion. Specific actions that may be considered under the MDP could include:

- Targeted demolition to prepare sites for private development
- Infrastructure improvements to support reuse or redevelopment (utilities, parking, roadways)
- Environmental investigations
- Powers of eminent domain to gain control of targeted properties

The MDP also includes an established threshold of aesthetic quality. The major point to be made is the opportunity to expand and enhance an established business area that has turned the corner on becoming more stable but still needs support in creating development opportunities. Moreover, improvements would further leverage other planned public investments for the area.

Action No. 4: Pursue Off-Street Parking Options

Lack of parking is most acute for the businesses and agencies in the multi-tenanted office building at 250 Hamilton Street

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where the regional office for the Department of Children and Families is located, the recently purchased 1477 Park Street (former Barridon Building) and 1429 Park Street. The use of the now vacant parcel at 17-35 Bartholomew for parking for adjacent businesses, as opposed to transit-related development for the Busway Station at Francis Avenue, is currently being explored.

Off-street parking will continue to be a limiting factor to redevelopment regardless of on-going initiatives to create additional parking opportunities. Although the Association had initially supported a pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks to create a linkage between the Francis Avenue Station and any subsequent development at 17-35 Bartholomew, the need for parking, at least in the short term, is a compelling argument for supporting its use for parking. By functioning as a parking resource for a currently underutilized industrial building, this parcel would spur a successfully leased property that could generate a significant amount of spin-off interest in the remaining corridor. Nonetheless, pedestrian connections and improved pathways should remain priorities. More efficient internal site configurations and shared parking opportunities should be the first priorities.

In the longer term, the Association must consider the feasibility and cost of the pedestrian connection in light of the approvals necessary and the potential specifications that may be necessary to gain approval (see Appendix D).

The owner of 1477 and 1429 Park Street has begun discussions with DOT on the use of space under the I-84 overpass for additional parking. Such a parking area would

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probably only be used by those within easy walking distance; however the availability of a shuttle bus in the morning and afternoon (as recommended in previous studies) could expand the usefulness of this parking to more corridor businesses.

Parking which accommodates future growth in the corridor might also be explored along Pope Park Highway. In some cases demolition of marginal buildings may be warranted. Because of costs associated with construction, maintenance and public safety provisions, structured parking may not be feasible. Under certain circumstances (usually involving the support of a significant new employee base), public subsidy of this cost may be a possibility. An MDP may provide the appropriate funding mechanism for this pursuit.

The placement of existing buildings, sited during a time when there was no need for parking, hinders the creation of parking resources. Creative and cooperative arrangements will be necessary to meet parking requirements. Further complicating the issue is the City's current zoning code. The following uses have no parking requirements: all types of manufacturing, printing, publishing and allied industries, business services, contract construction services, wholesale trade, motor vehicle transportation, railroad, rapid rail transit and street railroad transportation. For many of the land uses stipulated (office, for example) the requirements appear to be considerably less than those found in other urban areas. Furthermore parking demands by tenants and businesses often exceed the requirements stipulated in the zoning code.

Action No. 5: Highest and Best Use Analyses of Targeted Redevelopment Sites

Highest and Best Use analyses can be an important tool in developing marketing strategies for a particular site. An analysis includes a detailed assessment into the current and future markets to determine the best sustainable use of the site while taking into consideration physical capabilities. The initial market analysis and development concepts prepared as part of this study provide a suitable foundation for this type of analysis. A more detailed analysis would help identify specific end users and should also flush out decisions regarding adaptive reuse versus demolition, historic clearances, environmental remediation and other hurdles associated with redeveloping former industrial sites.

Action No. 6: Improve the Aesthetics of Existing Businesses/Properties

Establishing guidelines for aesthetic improvements to individual properties along Bartholomew will set the tone for future redevelopment. Private businesses and property owners should be encouraged to perform context-sensitive upgrades that contribute to the overall visual cohesiveness of the Park. Recent improvements to 1429 Park Street (now known as Parkville Square) sets a good example of ornamental fencing and landscaping replacing chain link fence.

Improvements to individual private properties should also dovetail with improvements in the public right-of-way. Streetscape and gateway improvements recommended in the

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recently completed *Pope Park West and Environs* report, if extended down Bartholomew Avenue, would provide a public leverage to the property owners to re-invest in aesthetic improvements. Improvements in the public right-of-way achieved through streetscaping provide only a partial solution to aesthetic enhancements that can play a significant bearing on the marketability of an area. The Association could spearhead some type of cooperative grant-loan program or seek funding from suitable sources. A few guidelines to be considered are:

- Use of ornamental fencing
- Elimination of unnecessary fencing
- Effective screening of loading areas
- Landscaping of front yards and parking lots
- Replacement of flood lights with full cut-off luminaries
- Enhancement of arrival areas and entrances
- Landscaped buffers adjacent to residential areas

These guidelines should also be translated into the City's zoning ordinance to ensure new development meets the same standards.

Action No. 7: Directional/Way-Finding Signage From Access Nodes

Providing directional signage from Sisson and Flatbush Avenues would provide instant recognition of the Park while helping to alleviate difficulties with truck traffic destined for the Park. Signage would play an increasingly critical role as new businesses/tenants are brought to the Park.

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Signage is often incorporated into an overall streetscape improvement plan but rather than wait for implementation of broad scale public improvements, directional signage at the two access nodes would provide a low-cost mechanism in support of marketing the Park. The signage does not necessarily have to pertain exclusively to the Park. Funds could be raised through the cooperation of area businesses. There may be possible links to the City's gateway signage program or other initiatives sponsored by adjacent neighborhood groups.

Action No. 8: Designation of a Railroad Depot Zone

Designated appropriate properties located next to the rail line allows any company completing an approved project in the zone to be granted similar benefits (enhanced abatements and business tax credits) to existing Enterprise Zone benefits. This mechanism may greatly enhance the marketing of certain properties. This designation is granted by the Commissioner of DECD. (Contact: Walter Piotrowski 860/270-8142).

Action No. 9: Extend Streetscape/Gateway Proposals to Include Bartholomew Avenue

Streetscape improvements to Bartholomew Avenue can be used as a public investment to leverage private interests. The *Pope Park West and Environs* study recommends a series of streetscape improvements throughout the neighborhood. It would be advantageous to continue these improvements down Bartholomew Avenue. Although streetscaping alone does not stimulate economic re-investment it is an important piece of the puzzle. Streetscape funding is often easier to secure than other actions,

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implementation is swifter, and the apparent improvements can be used to build upon less obvious or longer-term economic initiatives.

As the streetscape design process unfolds, there are a number of physical issues that should be considered as the design program is developed:

- Unnecessary curb cuts need to be eliminated to provide for access management.
- Curbs and curb height need to be restored to define the travelway and control parking.
- Sidewalks need to be repaired/replaced. Street trees/lawn strips should be added to create scale and a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. Street signs and directional signage need to be revamped for both informational and aesthetic purposes.
- Enhance pedestrian connections through attractive crosswalks, suitable lighting and safe, attractive linkages to the busway, the neighborhood, the South Park River Greenway and nearby park areas.

Cooperation of private property owners will be necessary for these elements to be addressed. The overall goal is to seamlessly integrate public and private improvements so that the corridor is visually unified.